

**SENTINEL LANTERNS** - NYC Percent for Art Commission, Julian LaVerdiere, 2005

**FDNY Engine Company 277 and Ladder Company 112**



The Fire Department of the City of New York is rich with powerful and illuminating iconography; its architecture and firefighting equipment alone are universal symbols of valor, heroism, life and death. These inspiring icons are frequently the subjects of FDNY Seals and Insignias and therefore ideal subjects for public art. All of the FDNY's protective gear merits commemoration, from the signature red alarm lanterns that flank the firehouse facade to the firefighter's frontline weapons of choice, the high caliber water cannon and the fire-axe. These utilitarian tools are the sources of inspiration for this Percent for Art commission. These *Sentinel Lanterns* have been designed to illuminate, sanctify and celebrate the heroic aspects of these quintessential firefighting instruments.

Both Engine Company 277 and Ladder Company 112 share a Coat of Arms and a department jacket patch upon which their favored tools are emblazoned. The selected tools on this emblem represent, the two co-operating Fire Department Companies. The Fire Hose Nozzle signifies the Engine Company and the Fire Axe represents the Ladder Company. These firefighting weapons of protection are the first to be polished and brandished with pride for annual parades and award ceremonies and, sadly, are sometimes the only witnesses recovered from the ashes to pledge the gallantry of their lost firefighter. Their heroic presence and inherent symbolic meaning are the subjects of these proposed sculptures. *Sentinel Lanterns* are intended to pay homage to the spirit of these immortal tools by portraying each of them as virtual eternal flames preserved in states of suspended animation as this new station's signature lanterns.

*Sentinel Lanterns* are contemporary sculptural interpretations of classic firehouse sconces and will evoke the feeling of high-tech reliquaries enshrining luminescent renditions of the stations' heraldic tools. Embedded in solid blocks of acrylic and illuminated from within, the monumental talismans will emanate a deep fire-engine-red glow, the FDNY's hallmark color. The radiant sculptures are designed to be low-maintenance and trouble-free. The solid cast acrylic blocks protecting the delicate internal forms are weather proof, UV-protected and shock-resistant. Once mounted within their protective stainless steel fixtures the two pieces will be as strong and fortified as the FDNY itself. Red LED traffic signal lamps will be used for each lantern's light source. LED fixtures have a five-year life span, are low-wattage, energy-efficient and far safer than conventional lights because they generate little to no heat.

The *Sentinel Lanterns* will stand guard, as eternally vigilant and prepared for battle as the Firefighters who will man this new station itself. The two icons will possess a privileged meaning for the firefighters that serve the station and the City, as well as a powerful and alluring presence for the citizens who observe them from the street as public art.