

african art in unusual places



THE BENIN LEOPARDS OF DUPONT CIRCLE

These two cast leopards have served for many years as fierce sentinels on the front stoop of a 1907 Dupont Circle townhouse in Washington, DC ... admittedly, seated on their haunches. Curious as to how they came to be placed here, I contacted the homeowner, who said that he and his wife were walking along Connecticut Avenue one day when they spotted these leopards on sale at the bead shop Bedazzled. Once purchased, the leopards were bolted onto the front stoop of their home. One night, students on spring break revelries removed one of the leopards as well as an ornamental lion from a nearby hotel entrance. Next morning the leopard was discovered "humping" the lion down the block on the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and M Street. The leopard was rescued.

Clearly, something more secure had to be devised. The owner filled the cavities of the leopards with cement and embedded a rod through the cement and onto the limestone pedestal. And there they sit today, permanently restored to their dignified position.

Janet Stanley

Photos: Janet Stanley

