

# 19<sup>th</sup> AMEND. ART SELECTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, August 13, 2020, 5:00 P.M. – 7:43 P.M. via Zoom

Committee Members present: Tanya Ford-Crump, Sarah Burks, Barbara Berenson, Gail Willett, Jane Kamensky, Vanessa Till Hooper, Marian Darlington-Hope, Kim Bernstein, Kimberly Sansoucy, Allison Crosbie, Barbara Thomas, Golnaz Tabatabai, Victoria Harris, Cecily Miller, Elisa Hamilton, Kathy Watkins, Naomie Stephen, Marilee Meyer, Isabel Stern, Amanda Moore, Bertha Pantoja, Anne Labadie

Committee Members absent: Denise Jillson

City staff present: Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager; Jennifer Mathews, Asst. to the City Manager; Lillian Hsu, Director of Public Art and Exhibitions; Hilary Zelson, Public Art Administrator

## Meeting Opening & Introductions

- Jennifer Mathews opens meeting:
  - Clarifies she is not a member of the Committee, but will be facilitating tonight's meeting with Lillian Hsu and Hilary Zelson. Thanks Committee for participation in project and all the work they're putting in.
  - Public meeting is being conducted remotely through Zoom, consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus.
  - This is a Q&A meeting with the artists. Opportunity for Committee to meet them and ask questions in real time, and we have a very large group. Not a decision-making meeting. Committee will meet again Sept. 3, 2020 to discuss the proposals in depth and select a winning artist.
  - Public attendees should be able to hear, and in most cases see, Committee members participating in tonight's meeting. However – given purpose of tonight's meeting and Committee size – there will not be a public comment period.
- JM goes through Zoom features and general meeting etiquette. Gives agenda overview:
  - Introductions
  - Artist Q&A – During each artist's time slot, Lillian Hsu will begin by asking the questions that Committee members provided individually in advance through SlideRoom. Will then open to other Committee questions as time permits.
  - Committee Discussion
- JM summarizes project background, including site selection:
  - April 2019 – smaller Nineteenth Amendment Centennial Committee formed; meeting regularly since.
  - Aug. & Sept. 2019 – Call to Artists requests artist submissions.
  - Oct. 2019 – Art Jury selects four finalists to develop artwork proposals.

- Dec. 2019 – Committee issues Guidelines for Finalist Artists, which named Common as site. Common was selected after extensive Committee work, including site visits and public presentations to stakeholder groups, including the Cambridge Historical Commission.
- Jan. & Feb. 2020 – Community meetings on project. Artists attended February meeting and received direct feedback from public attendees.
- June 15, 2020 – Artist proposals submitted (deadline extended from April 13, 2020 due to COVID-19).
- July & Aug. 2020 – Public comment period. All comments have been compiled and sent to Committee; also posted online. Formal comment period closed Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup> but staff will continue compiling and circulating comments received.
- Know there have been comments specific to siting on the Common rather than the artwork proposals. Discussing the proposals tonight. Please remember artists cannot speak to site; they were instructed to design for the Common.
- Introductions:
  - All Committee members present introduce themselves, summarizing affiliation with City or community groups and any previous work on the project. [View the Selection Committee member list here.](#)

## Artist Q&A

- Lillian Hsu introduces artists as their time slots begin. Thanks for all their work, patience as the process has been adjusted, and for joining tonight to answer questions.

### Azra Aksamija - *The Future to be Rewritten*

- LH asks compiled questions and AA responds to each:

**1. Please describe the process you will recommend for the selection of speakers and quotations.**

Important to include the voices of those marginalized. Was contacted by many Black students at MIT advocating strongly that the quotes are informed by the community and include diverse perspectives. Would work with stakeholder groups of Black, indigenous, and LGBTQ people, and various age groups to get *their* feedback on the quotes. That would be supported with research and work with historians and archivists.

**2. Tell us more about what you see as the Cambridge-specific parts of the work and the stories to which it speaks?**

Different arrangements of the quotes carry different meanings. Quotes used on the horizontal elements would speak more to the bigger issues/have a national focus. Quotes on the vertical elements would be Cambridge quotes and aspects. This horizontal and vertical layering references the history and concept of cross-writing. For example, proposal included quotes from Grace Johnson and Maria Baldwin.

- 3. In your presentation, you note the complexities of the history of the suffrage movement. I am not sure how the installation will convey those complexities. Can you please explain how a visitor would come to understand your concept, including a visitor whose learning style is more linear.**

The visual language for the project was hard to find because of these contradictions and complexities in the movement. But the quotes are the most appropriate/accessible way to do that. Could have didactic materials with the visual elements to give more information, such as plaques, an audio guide, a QR code leading to information on a central website, and classes or groups could develop a guide/materials with more depth of information.

- 4. Have your personal experiences affected your proposal, and if so, to what degree?**

Yes. Grew up in Bosnia, which was a dictatorship that transitioned to an autocratic government, leading to a civil conflict and ethnic nationalism. Had family members imprisoned during the conflict. Lesson from this experience was about the need to take care of democracy. Voting rights are a living thing. Want to create a space through which you can learn and embrace the contradictory ideas; and can maintain the flexibility to rewrite the ideas we see as problematic in the future.

- 5. Could you explain why you chose to represent the suffrage movement conceptually, rather than through more embodied personalized figures?**

Didn't feel the physical representation is appropriate. The words are tangible and keep it moving into the future. Find the figural distracting because it becomes about their appearance rather than their ideas. It's about the impact of the words.

- 6. Will this work be lighted at night and, if so, how?**

Left it open. Visualized that it would work with or without lighting. Could work with the lighting of the park as it is or you could do separate lights.

- 7. How important is the LED component of this project?**

It's optional; not a must. Understand there may not be funding and don't want it to be distracting or an additional maintenance issue. Think it could have a beautiful effect, to illuminate it, especially at night in the winter, but it's not critical.

- 8. The benches look beautiful, but I question whether they would be comfortable seating for all body types. What was your process for developing the design of this seating element?**

Want it to be poignant and simple. The vertical elements are "human"-sized (height), and the horizontal could be benches. If the idea is to have it as seating, the benches could be designed for other body types easily. Adjustments are not difficult and can do extensive testing on the comfort for different people. Heard public comment about the desire for a whole class to gather in the space, and the design can be adjusted to accommodate this desire.

**9. How does the pigmented concrete weather?**

It weathers beautifully. Have experience with it in another project in Austria, and even with moss, ice, anything like that, it holds up. It's a living material more so than stone.

**10. If the structural engineer were to determine that the thin vertical supports for the horizontal plinths were not robust enough to handle live load or other potential unusual circumstance, do you have an alternative strategy designed?**

Yes. If it doesn't work, can explore alternatives like modern crossbeams. Want to keep it as thin as it's allowed to be, to keep it light and visually as though it's floating with the steel.

**11. Do the blades glint in the sunlight and will the metal tarnish?**

There are different ways the surface could be prepared. Stainless steel is good for maintenance, but there are some other options to make it less shiny. Some degree of mirroring brings the visitor in and also reflects the grass, making the objects appear lighter. Brass *could* tarnish, but you could do it with a different metal with the gold color reference. Wanted to use the colors from the movement.

- Hilary Zelson opens to additional Committee questions:
  - Marilee Meyer asks **how can this proposal work in the Common as a historic greenspace, since it looks like it would take up a large section?**
    - AA says the piece is scalable and can be made smaller.
  - MM asks **how detail changes will be handled?**
    - LH clarifies that details will change, because these are just concept proposals. That's part of the process.
  - MM supports the quote selection research and wants the Cambridge community to talk about the quotes used. **Asks, what if a structural engineer says changes are needed?**
    - AA says structural engineering review is always part of it and is included in the project budget.
  - Cecily Miller says **the artwork is very contemporary; how does AA see it working with the other Common statues, which are not modern?**
    - AA created a visual link with the periscope – which puts you on visual level with the closest statute – and sees it as speaking to the other/male statues. It is also interactive like the playground. It is a walkable infrastructure, but also a place for sitting and contemplating like other monuments provide. Also sees it as public park furniture, so it works with the space, but also this can step into the future. Preservation is a dynamic dialogue; it's not stuck in a moment.
  
- Committee thanks AA for her work and presentation.

- LH asks compiled questions and NV responds to each:

**1. Although grounded in specific histories, visually, this piece embodies a more generic connection to the 19th Amendment. How do you see this piece as activating knowledge and conversation about the complexity of Women's Suffrage?**

The piece is not complete until the text is complete. That may not have been as clear in the presentation as NV thought. You want to have community input on that text. Would do workshops, 3-5, to get that information and have the historical input. Options for placing the text in the pathway, along the floor of the space, on the ballot box; blank spots allow for the canvas of the text to activate the curiosity of anyone visiting and convey the history for the journey of empowerment.

- LH notes that NV may have already answered these next two questions in her first response:

**2. How could the space for rest and contemplation also provide information about the suffrage movement and long [course of the] 19th Amendment, such as adding more educational elements to your design?**

It's a specific place for people to investigate and learn on their own. But again adding the text will be the main educational element. Can also do more details in the clothing.

**3. Could you say more about the text that would accompany the figures?**

Want text to be developed with the Committee input and community input. Would have a group/feedback process to determine that text.

- Hilary Zelson opens to additional Committee questions:

- Barbara Thomas notes that **in her presentation NV said she would represent the modern figure as a Black woman; and that would be signified by the woman's hair being in braids. Caution against that, because Black women's hair is highly politicized, and this could become stereotypical. Recommend finding a different way to show race or diversity.**

- NV thanks for comment and recognizes using hair as the reference does not work. Included it in proposal but, if doing again, would probably not have. Would work with community to find the right way to do this. In the past has consulted with other artists/Black friends and models to get the right figural representation. Would do that here. Does not want to stereotype.

- BT reiterates – don't date this and don't stereotype. For example if a work had been done in the 1970s it may have shown a woman with an afro to represent her as Black and it's very problematic.

- Jane Kamensky notes that **in her presentation, NV said the figures' hat sizes indicate the period they're from – with a smaller hat representing a woman from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Can NV explain how the hat signifies the period?**
  - NV likes to use small symbols or references in her work to characterize the figures. In her research/proposal development, found these hats from different centuries and used them to show the women from the past.
- Isabel Morse asks **how, if the figures are going to be taller/larger than life-sized, the text written on them will be readable?**
  - NV is very conscious of the height and would make sure text is at a level where it's easy to read. The text would be carved/engraved into the stone so it stands out visually.

Sarah Burks asks **about the material for the path and plaza – bluestone or granite?**

- Figures would be granite, but the oval floor could be bluestone or granite. The bluestone is not quite blue, but it's darker for the floor. Granite lasts a little longer where the bluestone could chip but it's prettier. Flexibility for taste, safety and longevity. Could also use different colors of granite instead of bluestone.
  - Bertha Pantoja asks **why this specific location was selected for the oval seating area, and how NV plans to make it harmonize with the Common?**
    - NV used the location provided in the guidelines. Feels the granite is harmonic with the Common site. Wants easy maintenance and doesn't want to put the figures directly on the grass; want to ensure wheelchair access. Feels the oval makes it contemplative – and the space is only 36 x 18 ft; not huge area covering the grass.
  - Naomie Stephen says **it cannot be stressed enough how politicized the hair is for the African American figure. A report came out just today about Black women's hair and how it impacts employment options, and who knows what the women living through the suffrage movement had to do to their hair to be considered "acceptable." Careful thought needs to be given to how else to represent and symbolize the African American woman. If you look at all the Black women on this meeting, all have different hairstyles. Just like NS can't speak for all Black women, you can't encompass all Black women with the hairstyle. Don't use it.**
    - NV agrees she does not have to use hair at all as a signifier. Needs to do further research.
- Committee thanks NV for her work and presentation.

[Mags Harries and Lajos Heder - After the Roses](#)

- LH asks compiled questions and MH and/or LHeder respond to each:

**1. How does your proposal account for the fact that history is not linear but "messy"?**

The path element is linear but other elements aren't. The figures are used to show a personal piece of their time. The rose garden and the platform encourage gathering and participation. The viewer can experience it many ways. Recognize that 100 years later we are still facing obstacles, so don't want to state a lasting or final step. Want to give a space in which to debate history.

**2. How does your proposal account for the fact that many women (e.g. African Americans in the South, Native Americans, Asian Americans, many Latinos) remained disenfranchised after 1920?**

There are two main options for showing this. The path goes on after the ratification timeline and could put text there discussing the ongoing disenfranchisement; there's also the option of adding text in the rose garden. The work isn't answering the question, it's giving the public an assignment to keep looking forward to the future and setting a stage for people to learn in.

**3. While the connection to Cambridge is strong, what would prevent the figures with their photographic portraits from becoming dated?**

Think the figures create an intimacy and a relatability rather than being dated. Suffrage movement was also over the time period when photography was invented. For example, Grimke sisters don't have any historical photos, just drawing/etchings. The translucent nature of the glass also means the figures change with the light; so what appears fixed becomes different when it glows and changes, representing how our views of history can change over time.

**4. One of your sculptures is of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Will you include information that she was against African American women receiving the right to vote?**

Yes. Will include information and the recognition to encourage people to discuss that conflict. This is the gathering space, and where we invite the conversation. There's the possibility for text at the base of the figures; it's a proposal, will be made richer with information and can encourage continued study. Worked with Cambridge Historical Commission and Schlesinger Library and would continue that.

**5. What would be a personal experience that most connects you with your proposal?**

Mags' grandmothers were born in the 1880s and lived during this time, and MH immigrated to the U.S. Has often been the "first" woman during her career – first woman hired at RISD Sculpture Dept, first hired at Brown in her position. The women's movement helped create those possibilities. Also live very close to the site and feel a very personal and emotional involvement in the piece and the City. Will continue to live here, remain part of the community, when the project is done.

Lajos agrees. They have daughters and this project feels very personal to them. LH coached his daughter's soccer on the Common.

**6. Could you be sure to include less well known and celebrated figures, especially local women such as Maria Stewart or Harriet Jacobs?**

Yes. Figures represented/choices can change. Worked with Cambridge Historical Commission to identify women they thought were historically significant and representative, but all can be adjusted, and would seek advice and input on changes.

**7. It is important that the art commemorating women's suffrage efforts be just as permanent as the statues of men surrounding it. How can you ensure that the materials you use are weather-resistant and long-standing, without compromising your artistic vision of transparency?**

Have a conservator who consults on all projects to look at durability. The stainless steel is very strong and durable; also plan to build a full-scale sample to put it outside and test it (could not do this before the proposal due to COVID-19) It's schematic at the moment but it will be developed over time and all fabricators are close by. Have worked with the fabricators before and know their work.

**8. Can you tell us a little more about the durability of the glass fabrication technique (with no protective edging), i.e. have you used this material before or know of its use in outdoor public space elsewhere?**

The glass will also be durable. The image is fired into the glass, similar to how stained glass is made. Know that stained glass used in many historic churches/windows is very durable. Will also have a protective edge of 2 in. metal – may not have been clear in the proposal – but will guard against breaks or damage. Working up a scale model is very important and will resolve problems through the making of it.

**9. Which line item of your budget holds the structural engineer's fees?**

That will be \$500, and it comes out of the foundation and installation budget.

**10. Regarding the Speaker Platform and Megaphone - your current design excludes those who are unable to climb stairs. Would you be open to redesigning this element so that it is more physically accessible?**

Speaker platform also includes a ground level megaphone that would be accessible for anyone who cannot use the stairs. Don't think it would work to have a ramp up to the higher megaphone, and you want cohesion, but can continue to work on that. Also acknowledge the issue of grass for wheelchairs. They would develop a solution.

- Before Hilary Zelson opens to additional Committee questions, MH & LHeder supplement a previous answer:
  - On the timeline question, could include an additional section with condensed summary of “where we are now” or a “modern update.”
  - Activities that would take place at the site are very important – it's not just a physical object or space.



- Hilary Zelson opens to additional Committee questions:
  - Barbara Thomas says **timelines, and what's accepted as fact, can change. For example, grew up learning Pluto is a planet, and now – no Pluto. So what happens if in the future we discover something very negative about one of the figures? And whose research are MH & LHeder using?**
    - MH & LHeder want to give some information, using the research from historians at CHC and others. But are visual artists and put the information out for the conversation. Rely on the Committee and the community to go more into the historical and the details. Don't want to be arbiters. More important to pose questions.
  - Marilee Meyer says **the physical footprint of the proposal is very large. How many of the 9 ft high figures will there be? Will the streamers need to be replaced? Generally worried about the footprint.**
    - Right now 12 figures proposed, but that can be adjusted. Understand the total space is large, but the figures are light and the space is really left open as a gathering space. It is spread over a large space but doesn't take up all that space and you can see the landscape through the figures. The ribbons shown in the proposal would only be temporary or celebratory – thought of the decoration added to graves on Memorial Day.
  - Naomie Stephen says **timeline feels like an attempt to be neutral, but also sweeps a lot under the rug; uses example of Zitkala-Sa – an indigenous suffragist who continued advocacy after 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratification to remind white women that Native disenfranchisement continued. Think the work needs to be honest and provocative. Also has a technical question about the figures – is the glass breakable? How can it be protected?**
    - MH & LHeder *want* to be provocative and inclusive in the piece and in the text that gets added. Don't want to condense it; want to address it bravely and are committed to putting it in honestly. But will need guidance/instruction from the Committee and community on what to add.
    - For the figures, the glass attaches to the metal and there is the protective metal piece. Yes, glass could break if damaged. They'll work with models and an engineer to address anything beyond their knowledge for the glass, but have made some pieces with these same materials that are still standing.
- Committee thanks MH & LHeder for their work and presentation.

[Claudia Reisenberger for Merge Conceptual - #invisible](#)

- LH asks compiled questions and CR responds to each:

- 1. The amphitheater element of your proposal is designed for public convening. How will you ensure that this intention is realized, and do you have any plans to work with local community organizations to develop programming for this space?**

The amphitheater serves three main functions: (1) A gathering space that can be used by the City for events; and which can be developed in collaboration with local groups like CRLS's #HerVote club, Harvard University, elections-related activities, and others. Want the space to be utilized. Also a space for informal gatherings by those using the Common – protests, discussions. (2) Also is a space for private contemplation, perhaps offering an opportunity for a visitor to be introduced to the subject. (3) It's an anchor space for the project; puts the ballot box center stage and introduces the project's other locations throughout the City.

- 2. I have a three-part question regarding the title #invisible. I see how claiming this # can be a powerful component of this project, but can you explain a) why this is a better title than #visible; b) would the title need to include the # in all circumstances, and c) are you at all concerned that the # could become outdated?**

It's important to say that women are still not recognized appropriately in society. There are still exclusions; we haven't overcome it. But in this project, we want to be part of the transition from invisible to visible and lift these stories out of invisibility. Tried the word shown in many different ways and like this format. Think the # has broader meaning than just social media use. It's about connections and the possibility of an infinite number of contributions. But it also encourages the use for social media and can generate conversation.

- 3. If the ballot boxes throughout the city were not possible (for whatever reason), how might you imagine the amphitheater incorporating the idea of scattered boxes into its one location?**

The scattered site is important because it allows you to discover something, and it's not all obvious. People should look for them and will recognize they're everywhere. Makes it more accessible to have throughout the City – the stories are everywhere. But they could also be distributed in different spots on the Common rather than throughout the city, still discoverable.

- 4. How do you see the Hub interacting with the Common's [existing] central circle?**

There are a number of circles on the Common, so this hub would join them. Other monuments are laid out in a circle; the playground area is a circle. Feel like this being a circle works well with them.

- 5. Have you found any personal connection with this project - anything that excites you or speaks to you as a woman?**

Resoundingly yes. As women, we're aware of our privilege in our time now, and that even a generation ago we weren't guaranteed the same things. We have to recognize

those who still don't have it. Has two teenage daughters and have been talking a lot about this. We're very passionate about the topic. Also concerned about voting rights. This is threatened in the current climate. We want to speak to a large audience and make this accessible. In the U.S. people assume voting rights are a given. Feel responsibility to communicate with the public that we have to continue working on it.

**6. How will the explicit connection between all the ballot boxes be incorporated into the design of each (perhaps with directions or a map to other locations)?**

One way would be to do a QR code on each box, which links them to the others. A directory at the Common will list the other locations but each box will not have a directory. Think the individual boxes will make people curious and make them figure it out. Individual boxes won't over-advertise.

**7. Can you talk about the relationship between text length and box dimensions?**

Have been working on samples of this, with 36 and 26 point Times New Roman font. Want it to be visible and the 26 point font appears to be readable from about 5 feet away for those with normal vision. Would do a full-size mockup and can adjust the text to make sure it's not overloading the box; but want it to convey a story. Want the text to be accurate and use the technology of storytelling to pull people in and connect; want the stories to be full and interesting.

- Hilary Zelson opens to additional Committee questions:
  - Marilee Meyer **appreciates idea of reaching out into the community and other neighborhoods. But how will someone walking by know it's a ballot box? Also, for the amphitheater in the Common, how will it avoid becoming like the sunken steps in Harvard Square/by Harvard T station – where unhoused often congregate or sleep?**
    - There will be careful ballot box detail design to make it feel unique but ubiquitous too; will make it noticeable. CR is not local, so not positive of the reference to the Harvard Square area but the amphitheater design is flexible. Doesn't have to be concrete steps; how it's accomplished can be developed – for example it could be a clear material. It's not too large but can continue developing and managing that.
  - Cecily Miller asks **how you prevent the ballot boxes from becoming a target for vandalism or destruction – can CR talk about the structure? Also, how do you develop the final content?**
    - For the physical object, will build the box and play around with it. Want it to pull people in. Don't just put on a portrait, the 3-dimensional nature has a different quality; and putting objects inside really makes it more communicative. It becomes living and dramatic. For the text and the hinge on the ballot box, CR working with a metal fabricator; thinking of it more as a gate hinge and more durable materials.

- For the content, there will be lots of research. CR would want help from the community, and to focus on Massachusetts and Cambridge women. It's very important to have a large timeline – from several hundred years ago to now – connecting women. It will take a lot of research to find and represent people; have to look for those stories and look for as many community members' input as possible, to make it diverse.
  - Naomie Stephen **asks about the ballot box design – know you have to make it enduring, but is there a way to have the boxes change with time? Can this become a living box, maybe with a changeable wrapper? For example, a power transformer in front of City Hall has been painted and repainted recently with murals for the Black Lives Matter movement.**
    - Like the boxes to have the same size and look, making them relatable to the others; but some flexibility on the appearance. Don't want it monumental and want it similar to a real ballot box. Can also add to them overtime. Would want to share a prototype with the committee.
  - Isabel Stern **asks what kind of objects CR is thinking of including in the boxes?**
    - Don't know each object yet. For example, with the story of teaching people to write their names as a way to enable them to vote, could use the image/figure of a hand holding a pencil. Each object will be developed for the story and explained with the help of the story.
- Committee thanks CR for her work and presentation.

### Committee Discussion & Next Steps

- Staff confirm no remaining Committee questions or discussion. Thank Committee for their time tonight, and their thoughtful questions of the artists.
- JM & HZ summarize next steps:
  - Aug. 14-24: Complete an evaluation rubric in SlideRoom.
    - Committee members will receive a separate email with instructions on using the Evaluation Criteria sheet. Sheet will also be posted online.
    - Sheet is simply a tool to guide thinking/evaluation and discussion at the Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Is not binding. Decision will be made by discussion and consensus.
    - Criteria were selected by the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Committee/included in the Artists Guidelines, so it's a way of assessing how well they responded to the project directive.
    - HZ available to help anyone who hasn't yet accessed SlideRoom or has questions.
  - Sept. 3: Second Committee meeting. Will receive reminders and Zoom details prior to meeting. Contact staff with any questions.