

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION MEETING

A regular meeting of the Public Art Commission took place on Wednesday, February 4, 2009, at 5:45 P.M. in the 2nd Floor Conference room at 344 Broadway.

The following members were present:

Gregory Williams
Stephanie Boyé
Terri Hensick
Mags Harries
Cynthia Smith
Miriam Stewart
Julie Graham

Staff present:

Lillian Hsu, Director of Public Art and Exhibitions
Jeremy Gaucher, Public Art Administrator

Artist Team present:

Ted Clausen, Artist

1) Artist Proposal Presentation for Prince Hall Memorial

Visuals:

- Two, not-to-scale models of proposal (one of monument, one of entire rotunda)
- Sample piece of black granite

Handouts:

- Time line of the artist selection process and individuals who have been involved.
- Council order to select a site for the Memorial
- Original RFP, Spring 2008
- Approval from the Historical Commission in 2007 for the Prince Hall Committee to move forward
- Minutes to the Historical Commission meeting.
- Brief history of Prince Hall, the person.
- Ted Clausen, artist statement/bio
- Ted Clausen's public art proposal
- Excerpt on Prince Hall from *African American National Biography*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
- List of members on the original Prince Hall Memorial Committee
- List of members on the current Prince Hall Memorial Committee
- CAC Gifts and Donations Policy, which should serve as a guide to the PAC for considering this proposal

Presentation by Ted Clausen: The idea for the project began with research. Among the many things Ted discovered was that Prince Hall was a founding member of two pivotal American movements: civil rights and Free Masons. His question then became 'how to tell the story' by letting actions and words (his and those that followed his footsteps) speak for themselves – without qualifiers and descriptions.

The proposed work, to be located on the Cambridge Common “Rotunda”, consists of 5 black granite tablets (6ft. high, 6 in. wide, 2½ in. thick) in a 3/4-circular diameter of 6-7 ft. across. The outside of the tablets will have a matte finish, while the inside will have a polished finish. There will be quotes and statements etched into the surfaces on both sides.

The quotes on the model are not complete or final. The final text will be chosen by the Prince Hall Committee and the artist. There will be approximately 2-3 times as many quotes as shown on the models. The concept is that the quotes on the outside will be from other individuals who have spoken or written about the principles of Prince Hall’s life, while the inside will reveal quotes attributed to Prince Hall and will feature larger text that declares (one word on each stone) “I Am Mister Prince Hall”.

The Artist plans to engage CRLS students to help in his further research of quotes, working with one class to research and edit the final text. This is something the artist believes strongly in and has always included this outreach as part of his creative process.

The artist explained that he designed the piece, as requested by the RFP, within footprint restrictions (height and overall footprint) and in keeping with the aesthetics and scale of its surroundings but different enough to stand out. The granite was chosen to be easy to maintain.

The artist also explained that the piece will be installed in an area that is surfaced with cobblestones, so there is some limited accessibility to the site.

See Handout for more details: “Ted Clausen’s public art proposal”

PAC Questions and Comments:

PAC Comment: The PAC is aware of a planned renovation of the Cambridge Common in the near future, which may have some bearing on the cobblestones and accessibility.

PAC Question: Has the artist considered requesting the cannons to be repositioned?

Answer: The artist had not.

PAC Question: How easily can graffiti be removed from granite?

Answer: Can be cleaned with solvents. Polished side will be easier, but both are possible.

PAC Question: Due to the mysterious nature of the personal history of Prince Hall, how concerned are you that texts are verifiable?

Answer: It is an issue due to this fact. We do not want to have its credibility diminished, so quotes that are ambiguous would need to be attributed accordingly i.e. “attributed to”, “legend has it”, etc.

PAC Question: What will you do about 20th century quotes that will have copyright issues?

Answer: Artist will ask permission. He has done this in the past and it has always been successful.

PAC Question: Have you decided on a font.

Answer: Not at this time.

PAC Question: Have you considered entrance text on supplemental tablets or on ground plates to alleviate any overcrowding of text on tablets (as the open space shown on the model is nice)?
Answer: Artist has considered this; it was tabled; he may look into it again. Artist very much does not want the amount of text to be overwhelming.

PAC Question: How will you treat the ground on the installation site?
Answer: This has not been decided due to snow currently covering ground of proposed site, and the artist being unable to fully consider the site.

PAC Question: Do you feel that this project can be completed for the September deadline?
Answer: Yes. It is fast, but doable. Artist has done a previous project in slightly less time.

Artist Presentation adjourns at 6:40pm

PAC Evaluation and Comments:

Question: What is the status of the future Common renovation?
Answer: It is unclear when it will start but it is predicted to be done within the next five years.

Question: Why is the height restricted to 6 feet?
Answer: This was a limit placed by the Historical Commission.
Comment: The PAC feels that being in the shadow of a taller Washington monument detracts from the idea that a Prince Hall monument in the rotunda puts this historical figure on equal ground to the others in the rotunda.

Question: Can PAC discuss the aesthetic merits of the proposal?
Answer: The City of Cambridge Art Gifts and Donations Policy states, in part, that:

“Donations of works of art and of funds for the acquisition of art to the City of Cambridge are referred to the Cambridge Arts Council's Public Art Commission for review. Due to the dwindling number of suitable sites and the increasing size of the City's public art collection, the City shall not accept any donations, which are conditioned upon location at a particular site. The Public Art Commission may establish an independent *jury* of 3-5 qualified art professionals to review the proposed donation with regard to aesthetic criteria. The jurors shall be knowledgeable about visual arts, particularly in public context, and represent varying artistic points of view.”

PAC Comment: The timing of the Prince Hall Memorial project seems inappropriate due to a planned future renovation on the Common. It would perhaps make more sense to incorporate the Memorial project as part of the renovation and include it in proximity of a pathway.

PAC concludes comment and dictates letter of Committee decision on proposal. Committee Letter (See Below).

2) Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

**Cambridge Public Art Commission, Cambridge Arts Council (CAC)
Review and Recommendation for the Prince Hall Memorial
February 4, 2009**

The City of Cambridge Public Art Commission met on February 4, 2009 to review the proposal by Ted Clausen for the Prince Hall Memorial. Commission members present were Stephanie F. Boyé, Julie S. Graham, Mags Harries, Teri Hensick, Cynthia Smith, Miriam Stewart, and Gregory Williams. Lillian Hsu, CAC Director of Public Art, and Jeremy Gaucher, CAC Public Art Administrator, were also present.

The Commission used the City of Cambridge Art Gifts and Donations Policy (see attached) as their guide in evaluating the suitability of the proposed artwork for installation on City property and inclusion in the City's Public Art Collection.

The Public Art Commission commends the efforts of the Prince Hall Memorial Committee and the Honorable Mayor E. Denise Simmons to commemorate Prince Hall in the City of Cambridge. Additionally, the Commission commends the artist, Ted Clausen, for his thorough research and for the thoughtful presentation of his proposal for a Prince Hall Memorial.

However, the Public Art Commission is concerned about two fundamental aspects of the Prince Hall Memorial artist-selection and placement process. (1) The Public Art Commission feels that the artist selection process, which did not follow the customary CAC public art jury guidelines, has compromised the integrity and scope of the public art project. (2) The Public Art Commission questions the constraints on the scale and the site for the Memorial as determined by the Historical Commission.

(1) The Commission believes that the importance of the site (the Cambridge Common) calls for a more carefully considered artist selection process. In addition, the search process should be expanded to include a wider base of artists potentially interested in submitting a proposal.

(2) The Commission also questions the advisability of placing more elements on the rotunda, as currently proposed for this project, as this area is already full of disparate objects, including three cannons and an accompanying tablet, one flagpole, the George Washington monument, the Washington Elm monument, and two smaller tablets - all of different significance, materials, and size. The Commission believes that the proximity, number, scale, and diverse materials of these existing pieces and any future juxtaposition would dilute the potential power of all of them.

We therefore recommend a re-evaluation of the Prince Hall Memorial Project. We are concerned that the accelerated pace of this process is compromising its overall potential integrity and quality. Furthermore, the Commission questions the feasibility of producing and installing the Memorial by September 2009 due to minimal assurance of funding.

For all of the reasons outlined above the Public Art Commission cannot recommend acceptance of the proposed Prince Hall Memorial as presented at this time.

Stephanie F. Boyé
Julie S. Graham
Mags Harries
Teri Hensick
Cynthia Smith
Miriam Stewart
Gregory Williams