

IN BRIEF

Hank Willis Thomas and Yinka Shonibare Among Artists Proposing Major MLK Jr. Monument on Boston Common

Barbara Chase-Riboud, David Adjaye, Hank Willis Thomas, Yinka Shonibare, and Wodiczko are among the finalists of the monumental project.

Jasmine Weber September 25, 2018



“Empty Pulpit Monument” by Barbara Chase-Riboud (all images courtesy of the Boston Art Commission)

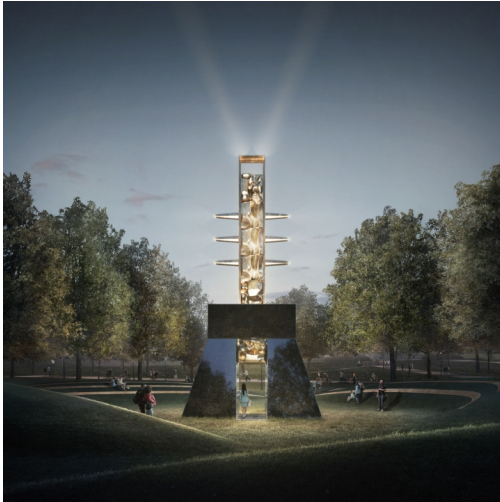
In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. declared, “Boston must become a testing ground for the ideals of freedom.”

Over 50 years later, Boston Common will receive a large-scale memorial to the late Dr. King and his wife Coretta Scott King, designed by one of five possible artistic teams — including Barbara Chase-Riboud, David Adjaye, Hank Willis Thomas, Yinka Shonibare, and Wodiczko.

In December 2017, the City of Boston, via the [Boston Art Commission](#) and [MLK Boston](#), requested artists, designers, and architects submit proposals for a permanent, massive monument in Boston Common to honor the civil rights figurehead, as a “call to action for the pursuit of justice.”

Of 126 entries, five final design proposals were selected by Boston city officials, artists, and academics, with the final say left in the hands of Boston residents. The public is invited to test their art criticism prowess to weigh in on the public monument at MLKBoston.org or at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square and at the Bolling Building in Roxbury. The panel will use the suggestions to select a finalist in November.

Read the artists proposals in their entirety [here](#), and peruse the designs below:



“Empty Pulpit Monument” at night

“Empty Pulpit Monument” — Barbara Chase-Riboud

“My memorial dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King is made of light, stone and bronze. The truncated stone pyramid represents their mission and collaboration, and the searchlight beacon represents their message from the top of the mountain they climbed together. The Memorial is inspired in part by a 17th century carved wooden pulpit, likely resembling the pulpit of the first Martin Luther, which I saw in 2014. This extraordinary object gave me the idea of an empty pulpit to symbolize Martin Luther King Jr.’s silenced voice. From the empty pulpit, the searchlight beacon pierces the darkness. The Indian granite serves as homage to Gandhi’s non-violence movement and inside the passageway is engraved a historic lineage of the diaspora. The floor under the arch repeats the iconic ‘We shall overcome’ slogan. On the back of the monument carved out of the bronze in full view is their most powerful quote: ‘I have decided to stick with LOVE, HATE is too great a burden to bear ... ’”



"Boston's King Memorial" — David Adjaye and Adam Pendleton with Future\ Pace and Gilbane Boston



An aerial view of "Boston's King Memorial"

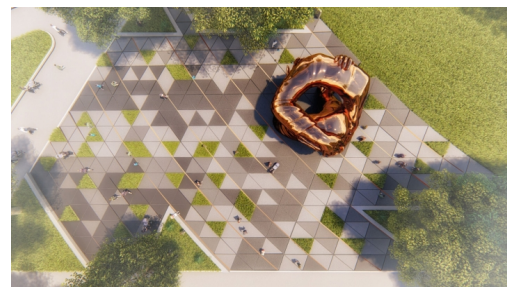
"Boston's King Memorial" — David Adjaye and Adam Pendleton with Future\ Pace and Gilbane Boston

"In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his final speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." Delivered in support of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, the speech is driven by a spatial metaphor: the mountaintop, the point of view of the struggle from which one can see the history of past struggles, as well as a future community to come. King imagines taking a panoramic view of human history and argues that the present is the crucial point, the point at which a Promised Land has become visible on the horizon.

As a metaphor, the mountaintop crystallizes a moment of possibility. It informs our proposed design for Boston's King Memorial: an overlook in black stone, projecting out from Beacon Street to embrace and overlook the Common below."



"The Embrace" — Hank Willis Thomas with MASS Design Group



An aerial view of "The Embrace"

"The Embrace" — Hank Willis Thomas with MASS Design Group

"Beneath the 22-foot-high arms of Dr. King and Coretta Scott, passersby will be reminded of our shared human connection. This memorial will envelop participants, allowing them to be simultaneously vulnerable and protected. The memorial will solidify the ideals of inclusion that the Kings defended in their united life of activism.

We seek to call people into the act of empathy, an idea Coretta Scott captured when she spoke about the power and accessibility of unconditional love, which when embraced, impels people to go into their community, take risks, and change others' lives for the better.

By highlighting the act of embrace, this sculpture shifts the emphasis from singular hero worship to collective action, imploring those curious enough to investigate closer.”



“Avenue Of Peace” — Yinka Shonibare



An aerial view of “Avenue Of Peace”

“Avenue Of Peace” — Yinka Shonibare

“Avenue of Peace is a memorial walkway, sculpture, and water feature set within Boston Common to honour and celebrate the lives and values of Dr. Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King. As pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement and advocates for justice, they championed non-violent protest and worked towards peace. This interactive memorial engages the public with the story of their lives and mission, through a series of 22 inscribed benches and an app that visitors can download. This memorial is not a singular sculpture, but rather a site for public contemplation and understanding. Peace, the cornerstone of their values, is central to the design of this monument.”



“The Ripple Effects” — Wodiczko + Bonder
and Maryann Thompson Architects



An aerial view of “The Ripple Effects”

“The Ripple Effects” — Wodiczko + Bonder and Maryann Thompson Architects

“This project proposes to both celebrate Martin Luther King & Coretta Scott King - their lives and accomplishments- as well as to invite present and future generations to see them as catalysts for an ongoing process of emancipation and transformation. This new public space and forum for engagement, nested in the Boston Common, is created in order to inspire learning, dialogue, and activism now and later. It is not only a symbolic ground for public assembly, for civic celebrations, for cultural activity, individual and group reflection and discussion but also a socially engaging interactive environment, which -as an affirmation of life, love, fellowship and community- will embody a welcoming message, in and from Boston, for generations to come.”

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