



Understanding Our Complicated Past and Reconnecting with Our Layered Histories: An International Ideas Competition

Request for Proposals

Deadline for Submittal: August 31, 2020

Name of Institution: Virginia Tech – Council on Virginia Tech History

Competition Description:

Virginia Tech will recognize its 150th anniversary in 2022. The Council on Virginia Tech History's Public Art Subcommittee is working on creative approaches to highlight the ways in which historically marginalized communities have shaped and continue to shape the university. Our work does not shy away from the difficult and painful histories that are embedded into the fabric of our university; rather, we examine the histories of Native people whose land and knowledge were dispossessed, and enslaved people whose labor and contributions to other people's wealth proved foundational to the university, people whose contributions are not acknowledged in the dominant discourse of Virginia Tech's history. Centering these stories as foundational to the institution allows us to understand the ways in which disenfranchisement has shaped the knowledge of, and emanating from, the university. The Council on Virginia Tech History's Public Art Subcommittee welcomes submissions for all types of public artworks, not limited to physical artworks, that advance the Council's efforts.

Competition Process:

This public art competition will take place in two phases.

- **Phase One:** Artists will submit a proposal that includes a letter of interest, diversity statement, resume/CV, and representative documentation of original work (no more than six images) that responds to the competition call, and a project proposal including a preliminary cost projection.
- **Phase Two:** The competition jury will identify a shortlist of semifinalists, who will be invited to refine and present (in-person) their project proposal and cost projections. Each semifinalist or semifinalist team will receive an honorarium of \$1,500. Final selection(s) will be made from the semifinalists' proposals. The finalists will be provided a \$200 stipend to produce a more detailed materials cost estimate. Total prize money: \$20,000, to be split among the winners.

About Virginia Tech:

Founded in 1872, Virginia Tech pushes the boundaries of knowledge by taking a hands-on, transdisciplinary approach to preparing students to be leaders and problem-solvers. As the commonwealth's most comprehensive university and its leading research institution, Virginia Tech offers about 280 [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) degree programs to more than 34,000 students and manages a research portfolio of more than \$531 million. The university fulfills its role as a land-grant institution by fostering a collaborative environment that integrates technology into all disciplines, so that the Virginia Tech community can serve as a force for positive change around the commonwealth, the country, and the world. Through experiential learning, future-focused research, and an inclusive, spirited culture, Virginia Tech strives to accomplish the charge of its motto *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve). Virginia Tech has a 2,600-acre [campus](#) in Blacksburg, VA, as well as educational and research facilities across the state, [a study-abroad site in Switzerland](#), and a 1,800-acre [agriculture research farm](#). The Blacksburg campus is located in Montgomery County in the New River Valley and is 38 miles southwest of Roanoke, VA.

Public Art Location: Solitude and the Fraction Family House

Solitude dates back more than 200 years and is the oldest structure on campus. Solitude can be understood as a landscape of pain and imposition as well as wealth and privilege. It is part of the grounds of a former plantation owned by the Preston family. The house was expanded in 1851 by Col. Robert Taylor Preston, who received the estate from his father, Virginia Governor James Patton Preston. About 250 acres, the house, and several farm buildings on the estate were purchased by the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Virginia Tech) Board of Visitors in 1872 for \$21,250. The Preston family's holdings supplied both the wealth and the site on which the new college depended.

In April of 2019, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors voted to [memorialize the Fraction Family House](#) at Solitude, a tiny three-room building on the site, the original portion of which was used, perhaps as a dwelling, by enslaved members of the Fraction family and others. The approved resolution was “in acknowledgement of the contributions of the Fraction Family in the creation and emergence of Virginia Tech as a major land-grant university, and in accordance with the university's efforts to transform an historic location.”

In close proximity to the Fraction House, along the edge of the Duck Pond, there were a number of slave cabins that no longer exist.

Long before newcomers from Europe or Africa came to the area in the eighteenth century, it was home to various Native peoples. The Tutelo/Monacan people were early stewards of the land on which the Virginia Tech community works and lives, and they have a continuing connection to the natural resources that support the university's endeavors.

The Native dimension of Virginia Tech's history transcends the area in which the university is situated. The entire land-grant constellation – dozens of institutions of higher education, at least one in every state – originated with the dispossession of Native peoples from a vast region extending from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. Funds from those lands drove the emergence of all land-grant schools, so Virginia Tech is a case study as well as a stand-alone phenomenon. Grants to Virginia came from Montana, Colorado, Kansas, and elsewhere, most of all from California.

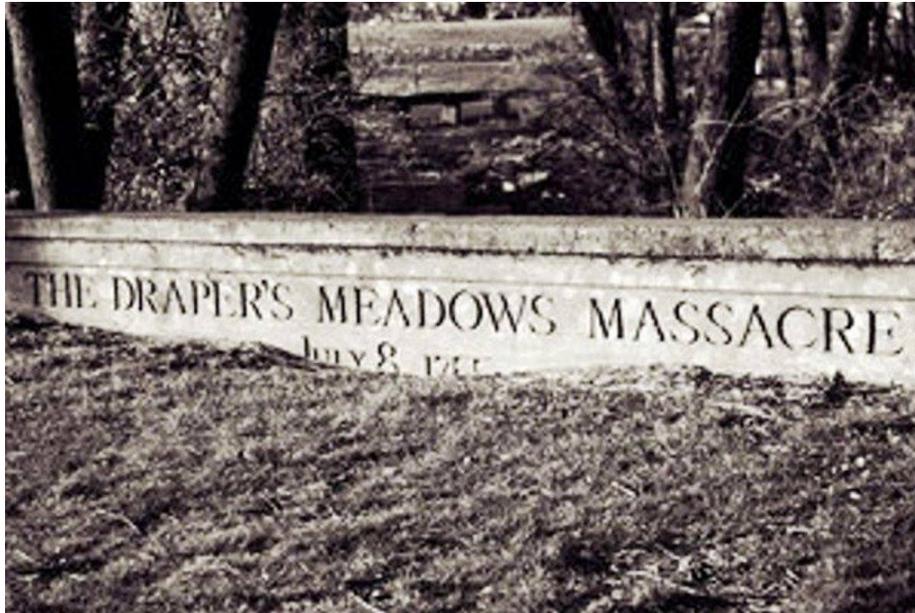
With regard to African Americans, Solitude is the focus, both as a specific local space and as representative of broader issues. These include the expanding settler society and the expropriation of both land and labor, in the interest of promoting economic development and improving white Americans' social mobility and well-being.

Solitude in Context:



Further complicating the history of this site is the story of Mary Draper Ingles, a colonial settler who was abducted in 1755 from Drapers Meadows, understood to be near the Duck Pond and Solitude sites. An existing memorial marker on the site references the attack on the settlement as the “Draper’s Meadows Massacre.”

This site reflects the complicated history of the university and its relationship to settler colonialism and racial capitalism. [Solitude](#) is on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.



Selection Criteria:

The Selection Committee will consider the following:

The development and design for the artwork should:

- Consider the elements of the site as a source of design ideas
- Consider the area surrounding the artwork and its intended uses as described in this call
- Reflect the university's/community's history, diversity, and cultural profile
- Demonstrate the intersecting relationship and influences from the White, Black, and Native American presence
- Contribute to the aesthetic beauty of the area, including elements of the Duck Pond, buildings, and landscape
- Be durable, stable, and suitable for the climate conditions, resistant to UV damage, and safe for public interaction
- Be accomplished within the proposer's preliminary cost projection

Registration Process:

All applications for this competition must be submitted through the [Submission Portal](#). No hard copy nor emailed submissions will be accepted. There is no application fee to apply or to use the online application system. Assistance in using the system is available during regular business hours by email publicart@vt.edu or phone at (540) 231-3703.

Registration and submission materials must include:

- **Letter of Interest:** No more than 500 words that outlines how you might approach this project, what materials you might use, and how this project could relate to your current work.
- **Diversity Statement:** No more than 500 words that illustrates your commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- **Resume/CV:** Chronological resume demonstrating artist's visual art experience. If submitting as a team, a current resume should be submitted for each team member (4 pages max per team member).
- **Examples of Previous Work:** High Resolution JPEG images of the artwork proposed for public display (up to 6 images maximum; 1500 pixels in longest direction). Image details to include: artist name, piece title, dimensions.
- **Submission Proposal:** The proposal must be collated in a single pdf document.
 - It must include an artist's statement regarding concept of the proposal (500 words maximum).
 - No more than five images may be included. At least one image must be scaled appropriately (max 24300px X 2400px), others can include proposed details and none should exceed 5MB.
 - The proposal must include a budget and estimated time necessary for completion.

Note: Applications must be submitted in the recommended format so they may be evaluated in an objective manner by the selection committee. Entries that do not meet submission requirements will not be considered.

Eligibility:

This competition is open to artists aged 18 and older, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender identification, military status, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical ability. Women, minoritized identities, and Native-identifying persons are strongly encouraged to apply. Artist teams may apply and must designate one artist as the lead contact.

We strongly encourage proposals from diverse teams who can explain why this project speaks to them. ***International submissions are welcome, as are student submissions.*** While diverse teams are encouraged, individuals may also register and submit.

Finalists will be selected by a jury of members from the Virginia Tech community. The jury will choose first, second, and third place submissions.

Registration:

Registration opens May 4, 2020, and competition submissions are due August 31, 2020.

All participants must register to enter the competition. There is no registration fee for this competition.

Schedule:

The schedule is as follows:

- **May 4, 2020:** Registration opens
- **August 31, 2020:** Submissions due, with preliminary proposal and cost projection
- **September 15, 2020:** Semifinalists notified; asked to refine proposal and cost estimate
- **November 1, 2020:** Semifinalists' refined proposal and cost estimates due
- **December 1, 2020:** Competition winners announced publicly

Questions?

If you would like more information or clarification, please contact the Council on Virginia Tech Public Art Subcommittee, at publicart@vt.edu or (540) 231-3703.

Additional Sources of Information:

- [The Council on Virginia Tech History](#)
- [Virginia Tech Maps](#)
- About [Solitude](#)

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Solitude

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