



The Mill Sculpture Relocation

“The Mill,” a sculpture by Richmond artist Bradley Robinson, is located at the southern end of the Fifth Street Bridge to Brown’s Island. Intended to reflect the shimmering waters of the river, it stands 16 feet tall and is made of brushed aluminum with bronze edging. The sculpture has a crescent-shaped bench around it, which creates a nice viewing spot. The sculpture was installed as part of the Brent Halsey Bridge project which created a new pedestrian bridge to Brown’s Island at the terminus of 5th Street. The project was completed in December of 2011. Below is a quote from Bradley Robinson regarding the design of the sculpture:

“When designing the sculpture and benches, I was trying to maintain a tension with both the past and present of Richmond. The piece was situated facing a very modern city, yet one could turn around and be enveloped by a wild river that bore the remnants of an earlier industrial age. In the final design, I chose to reference the island’s industrial past but used a material (aluminum) that would relate to the contemporary buildings just across the canal. I also incorporated large granite boulders to acknowledge the natural setting of the island and its roles in powering the mill that once stood there. I wanted to create a simple, elegant form that harmonizes with the surrounding beauty, both natural and architectural. I hoped to create a ‘place’ where people could meet and interact. I wanted to honor all the men and women who labored on and around Brown’s Island, particularly those who worked in the paper mill, which this sculpture directly references.”

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission was established by the 1992 Virginia General Assembly pursuant to House Bill 997. The Commission initiates year-round events that reinforce the Kingian principles, specifically, the Beloved Community, and collaborates with various state and local groups to promote the principles and legacy of Dr. King throughout the Commonwealth. As part of its commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and abolition of slavery in the United States, the Virginia Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission will construct the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument on Brown’s Island.

The monument, designed by Thomas Jay Warren of Oregon, will feature a 12-foot bronze statue representing newly freed slaves. Dedicated to the contributions of African American Virginians in the centuries-long fight for emancipation and freedom, the monument also will highlight notable African American Virginians who have made significant contributions to the emancipation and freedom of formerly enslaved persons or descendants. The base of the monument will feature the names, images, and brief biographical information about eight African American Virginians whose lives were dedicated to Emancipation and freedom — five individuals from the period before Emancipation through 1865, and five who continued to work for freedom from 1866 to 1970.

The MLK Commission has selected the current site of The Mill statue on Brown’s Island as the location for their new Emancipation Monument. The Mill statue must be relocated to another location on the island before the Emancipation Monument planning and construction can be completed. Venture Richmond has been tasked with helping the City and State facilitate that move. This proposal is for the relocation of The Mill statue to a central location further west on the island near the foot of the Tyler Potterfield Bridge. This location was chosen because of the potential of the sculpture to activate that intersection for pedestrians and because it is highly visible from multiple directions. The sculpture, benches, and hardscape will be installed in the same arrangement as they are now with the addition of some plantings. The existing site’s hardscape will be cleanly removed and any disturbed areas reseeded with grass.