GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Utilities Infrastructure | Memorial to the Enslaved Persons of George Mason’s Gunston Hall

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GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL I MEMORIAL TEAM MEMBERS

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FIGURE PANELS
GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL | PANEL ORIENTATION

BRONZE FIGURE PANEL CONCEPTS

- Figures on left represent two enslaved individuals about whom we know some details of their lives and roles at Gunston Hall.
- Each panel relates back to the Mason statue and prompts viewers to consider power balances. The panels also relate back to the statue through materiality.
- The panels opposite the figures list the names of all the known individuals enslaved at Gunston Hall.

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PERKINS+WILL
The Enslaved People of George Mason’s Gunston Hall

In 1795, Grandfather Eilbeck’s Last Will and Testament gave one enslaved child to each of George Mason’s six children. This is how Penny came to labor in Virginia. A bequeathed gift to young Ann (Nancy) Mason, Penny was taken from her enslaved community on a Maryland plantation to Gunston Hall. At the time, both girls were about ten years old.
GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL | JAMES PANEL - PERSPECTIVES

They did not just endure: they lived and created and passed down strength and power and hope and love.  
Roger Wilkins

James was George Mason’s personal attendant who worked long hours in the distinctive “livery,” or service, uniform. James would have stood by the proprietor of Gunston Hall, ready to fulfill any order or duty. James prepared his master’s wigs, waited table for the Mason family, opened the front door for gentry, and traveled with his owner.

On the plantation, many enslaved people labored outside the house. They cultivated the soil, producing two primary cash crops, tobacco and then wheat.

JAMES PANEL RELATIONSHIP

- The position of James represents a relationship of challenge to Mason; he looks down towards the statue cut out as he presents a quill (an important GMU’s branding element). This change in relationship nods to how society has evolved and reminds students of the power of their own words.
GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL | DIALOGUE MARKERS

DIALOGUE MARKER 1 (PAST)
- Indicates where a person should stand to see alignment between memorial panel and Mason statue.
- Text provides prompt for considering power balances in Mason’s time.
- Bare footprint used to emphasize standing in the place of those from the past.

DIALOGUE MARKER 2 (TODAY)
- Indicates where a person should stand to see alignment between memorial panel and Mason statue.
- Text provides prompt for considering power balances have changed since Mason’s time.
- Outline footprint used to suggest current reflection on time change/progress.

TEXT
Consider how slavery and freedom coexisted in America.

TEXT
Consider how rights have changed since Mason’s time.
INCORPORATION INTO STATUE BASE
GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL  |  NARRATIVE ORGANIZATION

A VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS

B OBJECTIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

C MASON’S WILL [PLUS BRICK]

D LETTER TO JOHN MASON

GMU ENSLAVED PERSONS MEMORIAL  |  FEBRUARY 6, 2019
Virginia Declaration of Rights (June 12, 1776)

“That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights…namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty,… pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.”

Objections to This Constitution of Government (November 22, 1787)

“There is no Declaration of Rights…Nor are the people secured even in the enjoyment of the benefit of the common law.”

Last Will and Testament (March 20, 1773)

“I give and bequeath unto each of my four Daughters, Ann Mason, Sarah Mason, Mary Mason, and Elizabeth Mason, and to each of their heirs for ever, … the following Slaves with their Increase respectively from the date of this my Will…. I confirm …a Negro Girl named Penny to my Daughter Ann.”

George Mason Letter to John Mason (March 13, 1789)

“…I am truly conscious of having acted from the purest motives of honesty, and love to my country, according to that measure of judgment which God has bestowed on me, and I would not forfeit the approbation of my own mind for the approbation of any man, or all the men upon earth.”
BRICK CONCEPT:

Single bronze brick (created from 3D scan of original brick) is placed at the corner of the base of the Mason statue.

- The brick with enslaved person’s thumb print is a facsimile of an uncovered artifact from Gunston Hall plantation. The actual brick (ca. 1700s) was found near an old building site.
- The bronze brick sits within the brick base of the statue, so would sit nestled in amount a brick context. However the bronze material sets this brick apart from the other clay bricks as an act of disruption.
- Bronze brick serves as the literal foundation for Mason himself, calling to mind the fact that Mason could not have had his standing in society without the institution of slavery to stand upon.
- Physical touching of the fingerprint indentations in the bronze brick will result in a patina over time, similar to that of Mason’s foot.
INCORPORATION INTO FOUNTAIN
We have no hope of solving our problems without harnessing the diversity, the energy, and the creativity of all our people.

Roger Wilkins
Reorient pebbles (currently in the GMP) to be set vertically, orienting into spiraling patterns.
- Final pattern to be determined during the mock-up process, but shall relate to the idea of wake, as it relates to transatlantic slave trade, mourning, and being awake/present.

RESEARCH
- Pattern relates back to GMU’s research into rock and shell deposits found beneath slave cabins.