

Open Call: Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (Central) Library Grand Reading Room

Permanent Public Art Commission

Deadline: **August 31, 2017**

Budget: To be determined, with artist fee up to 20% of the project

Open to all professional artists, designers and art or design teams

The District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) Public Art Program is issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and statements of interest from individual artists, designers or art/design teams for a ceiling treatment to be produced in conjunction with the modernization of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (Central) Library, at 901 G St. NW. This is an opportunity to design a signature visual feature of the Library's Grand Reading Room, drawing upon the Library's vast Special Collections archive of D.C. history. Applicants are asked to submit samples of past work, along with a statement of interest that explains the relevance of past work to this opportunity, by **August 31, 2017**. From this application, a professional Review Panel will award stipends to a group of semifinalists who will develop full proposals (see timeline below).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Following a seven-year focus on improving the infrastructure of its library system, including refurbishing, rebuilding or renovating over fifteen branch libraries, the DCPL has undertaken a three-year modernization of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (Central) Library, at 901 G St. NW. The building, designed by modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, was designated an historic landmark in 2007 and will re-open in 2020 following a three-year modernization led by the world-renowned design team of Mecanoo and Martinez + Johnson Architecture.

Through extensive community outreach and feedback, the DCPL has developed a detailed Library Building Program for the modernized MLK Jr. Memorial Library. In short, it aims to go beyond a library that is merely transactional—a place where you go simply to check out a book—to create a library that truly transforms lives—a world-class library for the 21st Century. For more information on the Library modernization, visit: <https://www.dclibrary.org/mlkfuture>; to view final designs visit: <https://www.slideshare.net/DCPublicLibrary/mlk-final-designs>.

In support of this vision, the Public Art Program at the MLK Jr. Memorial Library celebrates Public Art as a tool for learning, growth and community connection.

PROJECT GOALS: The MLK Jr. Memorial Library Grand Reading Room Ceiling

As a permanent architectural feature, the ceiling of the Grand Reading Room will be a highlight of the building-wide program of public art. The goals for this project are:

- **Visually represent** D.C.'s landscape, geography, and/or streetscape;
- **Create a thematic connection** between the 3rd floor Grand Reading Room and the 4th floor Special Collections area, with its significant holdings of historic D.C. maps and photographs;

- **Complement the architects' vision** for a light-filled, quiet, relaxing space for reading and solitary study that harmonizes with Mies van der Rohe's modernist design;
- **Distinguish the Grand Reading Room** with an iconic visual feature, with the potential to increase a sense of community connection to the Library and its resources;
- **Honor Dr. King's legacy and love of books** by enhancing spaces for lifelong learning that are welcoming and accessible to all.

SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

The Grand Reading Room of the modernized MLK Jr. Memorial Library is a new feature of the modernization, responding to the need for enhanced public space for reading and private study. It is located on the Third Floor, on the eastern side of the building (closest to 9th Street NW).

As shown in the [final designs](#), an open space at the heart of the Grand Reading Room spans two floors. The inset double-height ceiling designated for artwork will be 55' 6" long x 25' 6" wide (1415.25 sq ft). The ceiling will be visible both from the Third Floor Grand Reading Room, below, and from windows on the Fourth Floor that surround this open area. The Fourth Floor windows look into the Library's Special Collections, where the Library's important resources related to Washington history and Black Studies are housed and available for visitors to view.

BUDGET

The budget for design and fabrication of the artwork for the ceiling is to be determined, and will include an artist fee up to 20% of the project. As part of this fee, the selected artist will be required to submit a budget, produce completed designs, select a fabricator and oversee the fabrication and installation of the artwork, with project management by DCPL.

DESIGN CRITERIA

The ceiling design must:

- Integrate with the building architecture, including modernist principles of free-flowing, light-filled open space and clean geometry;
- Distinguish the Grand Reading Room visually;
- Represent Washington, D.C.'s land and/or streetscape—its history, present, and/or future;
- Have the potential for community impact, including increasing a sense of local ownership, investment, and connection to the Library and its resources;
- Feature appropriate degree of contrast, color and detail given indirect lighting and multiple viewing angles, including from 2 stories below.
- Be designed to integrate with or substitute for the existing acoustical ceiling design as determined in consultation with the project team, using plans and specifications to be provided to semifinalists.
- Be coordinated with building schedule and performance requirements as determined through the design development process, including building codes and noise reduction coefficient.
- Be installed in April—September 2019.

The ceiling design should:

- Reference or incorporate material from DCPL's Special Collections related to Washington D.C. history, including over 8,000 maps from 1612 to the present and over 4 million photographs;
- Incorporate relief, layers, and/or implied depth rather than a solely flat image, creating a feeling of spaciousness without overwhelming the architecture;
- Consider innovative fabrication methods and local fabricators;
- Incorporate recommendations for lighting to be developed in collaboration with the project team pending approval and budget.

TIMELINE

July 2017: Request for Qualifications (RFQ) released

August 2017: RFQ Due

October 2017: Semifinalists Selected

November-December 2017: Finalist Awarded

January-December 2018: Design Development & Review Phase

January-April 2019: Fabrication and shipping

April-September 2019: Installation

SELECTION PROCESS

The DCPL in conjunction with a professional Review Panel will conduct a thorough review of applications. The Review Panel will be comprised of a DCPL representative and experts from the fields of public art, design, architecture, and public history, with collaboration from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Mies van der Rohe Society at Illinois Institute of Technology. In October 2017, the Review Panel, with input from community representatives, will select semifinalists and award stipends to develop full proposals. Each semifinalist will be given detailed site plans and awarded a \$500 honorarium to create a site-specific proposal to include a 2-D schematic design, 3-D scale model, budget, implementation schedule, lighting recommendation, installation plan, maintenance plan, and project narrative that they will present to the Review Panel in November or December 2017. The public will be invited to comment at this meeting; the Review Panel will incorporate this feedback into their final selection. The selected Finalist will be awarded the contract in December 2017, with project management by DCPL. The selected Finalist will be required to submit a budget, produce completed designs during 2018, select a fabricator and oversee the fabrication and installation of the artwork from January-September 2019.

ELIGIBILITY

This RFQ is open to all artists, designers, and art/design teams aged 18 or older. While US citizenship is not required, the lead artist/designer must have a social security number or Federal Tax ID (EIN) in order to receive payment. In the instance of identical scoring, preference will be given to those artists/designers with a demonstrated connection to Washington, D.C. culture, history, and/or landscape through their past work or research (not limited to D.C. residence). A proven track record in public art is not required; however, experience adapting studio work to larger-scale projects and managing complex projects is desired. The ability to work iteratively and collaboratively with design

and project management teams is essential, as is availability to participate in meetings in D.C. intermittently from 2018-2019.

APPLICATION DETAILS FOR RFQ (Due August 31)

- Name, Address, Phone, Email Address, and (optional) Website of artist or team leader
- Statement of Interest explaining relevance of past work to this opportunity (250-500 words)
- Artist or Team Biography (250 words) highlighting relevant credentials and experience
- Resume (Teams should include all resumes in a single PDF)
- 10 Work Samples (high-quality JPGs) Samples should reflect capacity for this opportunity with the majority of projects completed in the last five years
- Optional, if the work cannot be documented well with still images: 1 movie file (3 minutes, maximum)
- Image Script
- Up to six items of support material (e.g. publicity, letters of support, programs, awards, etc.)

REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria, equally weighted:

Artistic Quality— Level of excellence demonstrated in previous work samples, including technical competence, relevance of submitted materials, clarity and completeness of application.

Demonstrated Professional Accomplishment in Chosen Field—exhibition history, awards, honors, and publications, demonstrated proficiency in the medium(s) in which the artist regularly works, and aptitude for project management as indicated by past project information.

Relevance of past work to project goals—including responsiveness of past work to site and/or architecture and desired theme of representing the landscape or streetscape.

Potential for impact—including track record of producing impactful projects and/or thematic relevance of past work.

Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and iteratively—as reflected in past work samples and letter of interest.

In the event of equal scoring on the above criteria, preference will be given to those with a demonstrated connection to Washington, D.C. culture, history, and/or landscape through their past work or research (not limited to D.C. residence)

CONTACT: For questions or accessibility accommodations, please contact Project Consultant, Natalie Campbell, at (202) 656-5089 or publicart@dcplfoundation.org.