

The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia

An Educator's Guide: High School



mel.virginia.edu



01

Introduction and Background

Background information on *who* was involved in the Memorial, *what* the Memorial represents, and *how* it was approved and built.

Pages 3 to 4

02

Power of Perspective

Photo Essay: 6-8

The Eyes of Isabella: 9-11

Pages 5 to 12

03

Past to Present

Starter articles and video with multiple activity options to complete Thing-Pair-Share, Check-In/Brain Dump, Connecting Activity

Pages 13-16

04

Going Further

More activities options for educators visiting the MEL

Pages 17 to 23

05

Wrap-Up and Main Ideas

Includes a *glossary* of terms, an annotated *bibliography*, and additional *resources* for further research.

Pages 24 to 25



Over a decade of work led up to the realization of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia. The making of the Memorial was an effort that involved students, faculty, staff, alumni, the design team, and the local community in Charlottesville and Albemarle. After decades of advocacy by students and others, the university inaugurated a process to build the memorial in 2016. Working with the President's Commission on Slavery and the University, the design team hosted numerous community forums and after months of listening, they began the design process. The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers was opened to the public in 2020 and is now a prominent and permanent memorial to this history in the landscape of the university.

This educational module was produced in 2021 and is intended for use by high school educators across the country and those here in our community. This module is intended to be used in conjunction with the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers website, which includes a wealth of information about the history of slavery and resistance, more information on the history and symbolism of the memorial, and information about the community this memorial is designed to honor.

To read a more complete history of the making of the memorial, visit:
<https://mel.virginia.edu/memorial>.



Introducing the Design Team

THE DESIGN TEAM FOR THE MEMORIAL TO ENSLAVED LABORERS

Each member of the team represents a key area of expertise that is essential to the successful completion of the memorial project:

- **Meejin Yoon** is an architect, designer, and principal of Höweler + Yoon Architecture based in Boston. She is also a Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture at MIT. She recently completed the Collier Memorial on MIT's Campus, in honor of the MIT Police Officer slain in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombings.
- **Dr. Mabel O. Wilson** (UVA '85) is a historian and designer. She is a professor of Architecture at Columbia University. She recently published *Begin with the Past: Building the National African American Museum of History and Culture*.
- **Gregg Bleam** of Gregg Bleam Landscape Architect is a landscape architect based locally here in Charlottesville. He has previously taught at the UVA School of Architecture, teaching graduate and undergraduate landscape and architecture courses for ten years.
- **Dr. Frank Dukes** (UVA '75) is a Distinguished Institute Fellow at the Institute for Environmental Negotiation here at UVA. He has extensive experience in facilitating conversations among diverse communities and has led the community engagement portion of the design process.
- **Eto Otitigbe** is a polymedia artist who creates sculpture, installation and public interventions. In 2015 Otitigbe was awarded a CEC Artslink Project Award for travel to Egypt where he participated in outreach projects and explored several of the monumental antiquities. Otitigbe received a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship for study at the National Museum of African Art. Otitigbe's role on the design team is focused on creating imagery for the exterior surface of the memorial that pays tribute to the enslaved laborers. His design process includes historical research, community outreach, and dialogue with members of enslaved descendant communities.

The Power of Perspective

Understanding the meaning behind the design of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers



Photo Essay

Learner Outcomes:

Understand the design elements of the MEL, the history of the timeline and names on the wall, and the Memorial's goals.

Materials:

- On-Site: Camera or smartphone with camera; colored pencils, card stock paper, clipboard/writing surface, WS 1-2
- Off-Site: Photographs/drawings of the MEL, scissors, glue, paper/poster board, computer and printer, printer paper, WS 1-2 activities

Time:

- 20 minutes to present background information
- 20 minutes at the Memorial
- Two class periods: one to determine how photo essays will be presented and to build presentations, and another for presentations.

The Eyes of Isabella Gibbons

Learner Outcomes:

Understand Isabella Gibbons's story, African-American history, and the history on the MEL. Present research in a brochure format to classmates, honing creative and presentation skills.

Materials:

- On-Site: WS-2, phone or digital camera (not a requirement)
- Off-Site: Paper, pen/pencil, colored pencils, computer, Canva account

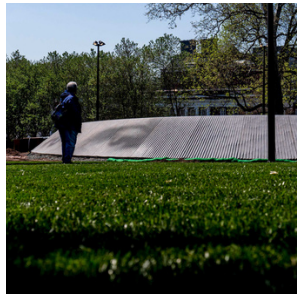
Timeline:

- 20 minutes to look through background info
- 20 minutes at the memorial
- Two class periods after the memorial for work time

01 Activity 1: Photo Essay

What is a Photo Essay?

A photo essay is a story that is created by using photos that convey meaning about a central theme. Using 3-5 photos or drawings, students will create a photo essay about the Memorial.



1 Have students watch this [video](#) to learn about photo essays and see an example of how to use them to tell a story. Share this photo essay made for the Memorial [here](#).

2) Next, inform them that they will be creating a photo essay with 3-5 images of the MEL. Give them the option of using a camera or drawing sketches. If students are not visiting the MEL, give them the option of making 3-5 drawings based on images that they have found online.

3) After informing students of the project and giving them these options, have them complete WS-1 in order to gather their images, explain how they relate to the selected theme, and to start thinking of ideas for how these projects will be presented.

4) Using a think-pair-share framework, have students individually come up with ideas on how the class should present their projects and what format these projects should take (see WS-1-2). Then, have them discuss their ideas with another student for 5 minutes. Finally, have the class come together to decide on how they should present their projects.

5) During and after the presentations, have take notes on other student's work and reflect on what they've learned, asking:

- Upon viewing other presentations, I really liked...
- I would change my project by changing/adding...
- What I learned about the MEL...
- What I learned about the myself...

WS 1-1: Photo Essay Worksheet

Upon viewing the MEL, pick an element you would like to examine further as it relates to your theme.

Your Element:_____

Photos/Drawings: Take 3-5 photos/drawings of different aspects of the MEL that represent your element. You can take photos of the Memorial as a whole, specific names, timeline events, etc. Be creative!

If you are drawing images, your creations don't need to be perfect, as you can keep working on them later. Just try to capture the element you are drawing the best you can!

Write a reflection that connects or describes your photos/drawings. How do these photos express your theme & message? What would you want viewers to understand from your work?

How do you want your final presentation product to look? Do you want to make a slide deck, a poster board, a pin-up gallery, a video, a podcast, a Canva infographic, etc? Write or sketch your ideas.



Based on your ideas for your own presentation, what format should the class follow? Should the class have an art gallery, a science-fair style presentation with poster-boards, a social media account where each student designs a post for their project, etc?

02

Activity 2: The Eyes Of Isabella Gibbons



1) Background: Students will read the information regarding Isabella Gibbons in order to get a better understanding of who she is and her relation to the MEL. See:

https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/2021-09/Gibbons%20Brochure%20%238_0.pdf

2) Observation: Upon visiting the MEL, students will fill out WS-3 (if visiting the MEL is not an option, use the photos provided on WS-4).

3) Application: Students will apply what they have learned to create a brochure about Isabella and other important African American women in history who stood up to and resisted **white supremacy**, from the 1800s to the present day. Students will be required to talk about at least two figures from each era: the 1800s (Isabella counts as one figure), 1900s, and 2000s.

4) For each figure, students must talk give contextual information (name, birth and death date (if deceased), where they lived, etc.), talk about how they resisted white supremacy, and what the lasting effect of their contributions has been. These brochures can either be created on paper with pencils, pens, and colored pencils or digitally.

5) Have students present their brochures to another class of students; have these students give feedback on the brochures (see WS2-4)

Teacher Tip: if you choose to have students create their brochures digitally, have them use Canva, a free online service that makes it easy to make attractive flyers, brochures, etc.:

www.canva.com

WS 2-1: Isabella Gibbons and the MEL

Before Learning More:

Look at the eyes on the back of the Memorial. Describe what you see.

Before you learn more about these eyes, what would you want to hear about them on this tour? What do you think they represent? Whom do you think they represent? How do they make you feel? How does looking someone else in the eyes make you feel? What does eye contact convey?

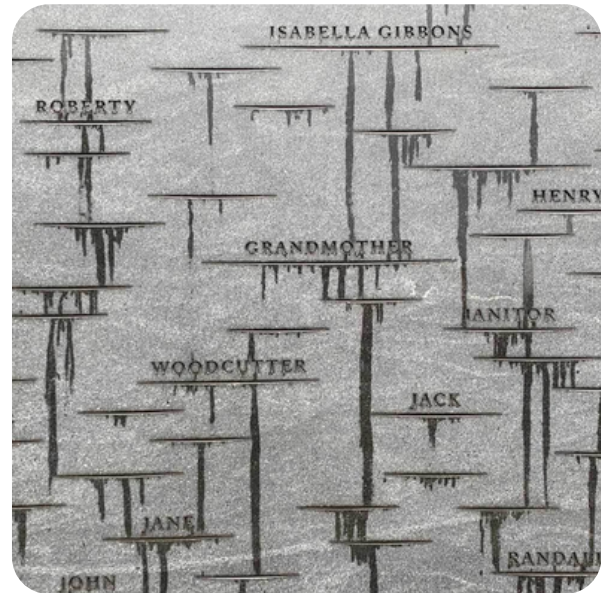
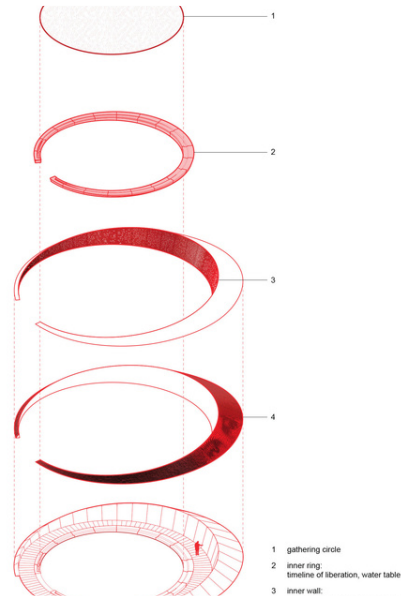
After walking through the MEL:

Where else is Isabella Gibbons on the MEL? What is the significance of this? How does it make you feel? Why do you think the designers chose to incorporate Isabella Gibbons so heavily into the fabric of the Memorial?

After the tour/description of the brochure assignment:

Who is your audience? What do they know about the MEL? What do you want them to walk away from your brochure with? Brainstorm these ideas in addition to what other women in history you will be talking about.

WS 2-2: Isabella Gibbons and the MEL Photos



Feedback

Name of Reviewer:

Name of Presenter:

I really liked...

I think you could change/add...

What I learned...

WS2-3

01

Activity 3:

Timeline: 45-60 mins

History and Research of the Memorial

Learner Outcomes:

Students will understand the impact of the MEL for descendants in the community.

1) Students will read "[Memorial to Enslaved Laborers - Where to Give,](#)" which was a preliminary article written before the Memorial was built describing a few of the aspirations of the designers and other people working to create it.

2) Students will watch [Exploring the Design of UVA's Memorial to Enslaved Laborers](#), a 2-minute introduction tour video to the MEL, its purpose, and design features.

3) Students will engage with one of the following resources:

["Process for Building Memorial to Enslaved Laborers Also Builds Community"](#)

["To Them We Owe Our Deepest Gratitude': UVA Dedicates Memorial to Enslaved Laborers"](#)

["Community reflects on UVA's Memorial to Enslaved Laborers on eve of dedication"](#)

["Hern family members added to UVA Memorial to Enslaved Laborers"](#)

4) Students will then select one of the descendants mentioned in the articles and write down their reflections. What does the MEL mean to the descendant? What does it mean for them to be a descendant? What are their hopes for the MEL?

02

Timeline: 1-1.5 Hours

Activity 4: Visiting the Memorial

Learner Outcomes:

Students will explore personal emotions they experience after learning about visiting the MEL.

Explore: Students will walk around the MEL and read the timeline of events underneath the water ring. They can also explore the MEL and search for other design elements (Gibbon's eyes) mentioned in the articles and the video. (20 minutes)

Think - Pair - Share (20 minutes)

Students will be given pencils and WS 4-1. After giving students time to **think** and complete the worksheet, **pair** them up, and tell them to **share** a few of the ideas and points they wrote down. After a short discussion, ask if anyone would like to share with the rest of the class what they wrote or something their partner shared.

Check-In / Brain Dump (20 minutes)

In this activity, have students complete WS 4-1. This activity is centered on **social-emotional learning** (SEL) as some students may feel the weight that the MEL and its message/purpose carries. Make sure to remind the students these answers will not be shared so they can be as open as they choose. As an educator, it is important for you to complete activities like this, as well, so print yourself a copy!

SEL Extension:

Using small strips of paper have students write the emotions they are feeling. Collect them and read them aloud to the class. This will allow students to anonymously share their feelings.

WS 4-1: Think - Pair - Share

Record how you perceive their thoughts and reactions towards the
MEL and UVA's history with enslaved people

When you first arrived what did you notice and what did you not notice? Why do you think this is?

How does the material physically feel? Why do you think the design team chose this material? Would you have chosen something different?

What questions do you have about the engraved names, occupations, and blank marks?

What is one thing you would change about the MEL? Why?

What is the MEL's purpose and do you think it is fulfilling that purpose?

How has the MEL influenced your perception of the University?

How do you think the MEL is impacting descendants and community members?

WS 4-2: Check In / Brain Dump

The MEL is a powerful place and it is important to check in with yourself and understand your own thoughts and feelings. After viewing and analyzing the me MEL site write your answers below

An emotion I have right now is...

I loved...

I didn't like how...

I am curious about...

I didn't understand...

I thought...but now I think...

Which timeline events caught your attention?

1.

2.

3.

What design elements caught your attention?

1.

2.

3.

Brainstorm: Any other thoughts?

WS4-2

02

Activity 5: How Art Speaks Narratives

Learner Outcomes:

Students will investigate political cartoons as a means of expression. Students will investigate the use of art in the mode of protest in the current day.

Introducing Political Cartoons

Explain how newspapers and other printed sources often included pictorial representations of sentiments. Ask students: Why might this be? Explain how artistic representations convey messages to more people as they are often easier to consume.

Example: Jim Crow Era

Once students have a firm understanding of political cartoons themselves, have students think back to our investigation of Jim Crow (see page 30 for more information). View the political cartoon on the next page and have students write down three pieces of the cartoon that convey a message about the era.

Expansion: BLM Movement

Once students have analyzed the cartoon, have students recall modern movements like the Black Lives Matter Movement, responses to George Floyd's death, and protests in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the following pages, students will see examples of BLM artwork through a mural. Have students discuss what messages are conveyed here and how this artwork changes the narrative.

Conclusion

After comparing the artwork, have students reflect on historical development over time. What has changed? What remains the same? What do you hope to change in your lifetime? What inspires you? What scares you? Have students reflect independently on the following page.

Teacher Hints: It might be better to ground the discussion in objectively what they have seen in the news or heard in discussions and transition that to how they as individuals are feeling, as personal experiences may vary.

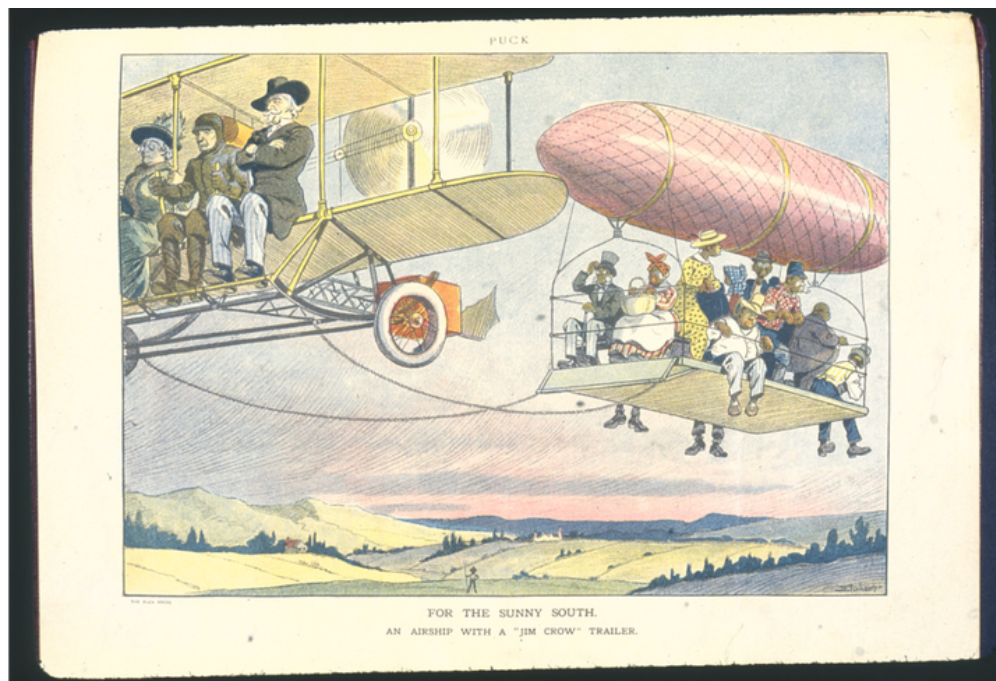
This piece may be especially personal to some students. Do not make students share out. Encourage them to leave their papers anonymous should you collect them in order to remind them that this is a safe space and their feelings are valid.

WS-5: Investigating Political Cartoons

POLITICAL CARTOON FROM THE JIM CROW ERA

Look at the following cartoon. Use the following questions as guides. You do not have to write down answers to them.

1. What are you drawn to? What do you see?
2. What figures do you see? Where are they located? What are they doing?
3. Who is front and center? How much space do certain individuals have?
4. Read the caption. What is it implying?
5. Describe three (3) representations you are drawn to in this image. What do they represent? What do they mean? How do you feel when looking at these parts of the image?



For the sunny South. An airship with a "Jim Crow" trailer, 1913.

REFLECTION

After reviewing the cartoon and using the guiding questions to guide your thinking, find three (3) elements of the picture. List your elements and describe what these elements tell you about this time period.

ELEMENTS	SIGNIFICANCE

WS 5-2: Investigating 21st Century Artworks

ARTWORK FROM THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

Look at the following mural. Use the following questions as guides. You do not have to write down answers to them.

1. What are you drawn to? What do you see?
2. What figures do you see? Where are they located? What are they doing?
3. Who is front and center? How much space do certain aspects have?
4. Read the words. What are they saying? What does this tell you about the Black Lives Matter movement?
5. Describe three (3) representations you are drawn to in this image. What do they represent? What do they mean? How do you feel when looking at these parts of the image?



A George Floyd–inspired mural in Los Angeles, called Unity Wall. Created by Brittney Sprice.

REFLECTION

After reviewing the mural and using the guiding questions to guide your thinking, find three (3) elements of the mural. List your elements and describe what these elements tell you about this time period.

ELEMENTS	SIGNIFICANCE

Activity 6:

More Power of Perspective

Understanding the meaning behind the design of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers



Collage

Learner Outcomes:

Students will use visual representation to reimagine the MEL and understand its meaning.

Materials:

- **On-Site:** Camera or smartphone with a camera; colored pencils, cardstock cut into 4in by 6in squares, clipboard/writing surface
- **Off-Site:** Photographs/drawings created on-site, scissors, glue, paper/poster board, computer, and printer, printer paper

Timeline:

- 20 minutes to present background info
- 20 minutes at the memorial
- Three class periods after going to the memorial (one to create the collage, one to present the collage, and one to combine the collages and create labels)

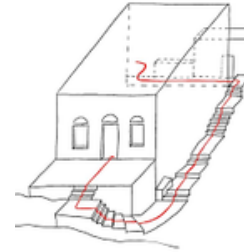
01

Activity 6: Collage

Off-Site

Introducing the "Architectural Promenade"

Students will be introduced to the idea of an "architectural promenade," or the specific way that a space is designed or organized to be "roamed through" or experienced by the people who come to it. In other words, it is the way that a building's design encourages you to walk through it.



Helpful Links:

<https://www.spacesmith.com/blog/architectural-promenade>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Promenade_architecture

Introducing the "Joiner"

Students will be introduced to the idea of a "joiner." A "joiner" is a collage made up of images that capture one scene from a variety of different angles at different moments in time.



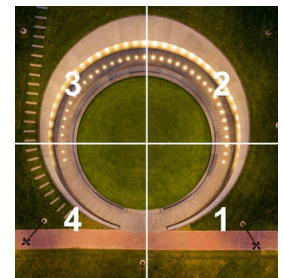
Helpful Links:

<https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/photography/david-hockney-s-joiners/>

Creating a Promenade Joiner

Students will be tasked with creating a "joiner promenade"- a collage of images or drawings that shows how they experienced the Memorial. Students will be in small groups, and each group can choose whether they want to draw or use pictures to create their collage.

The objective at the end will be to create a collage with all of the images that students create. Groups will be assigned a "quadrant" of the Memorial that they will be drawing/photographing. Try to separate students into four equal groups; however, multiple groups can be in one quadrant if there are more than four groups.



Activity 6: Collage (cont.)

For the drawing groups:

Give students 20 minutes to create 10 images per group, each on its own 4in by 6in piece of card stock paper. Students will be encouraged to walk around their quadrant and to draw design elements.

Requirements:

- Include at least three design elements of the Memorial in their illustrations.
- Include at least one event on the timeline and one name/job on the Memorial.

For the photography groups:

Students will be required to photograph at least three design elements on the Memorial. Students will have 20 minutes to take 30 pictures per group. Students will be encouraged to photograph various angles, things, and design elements capture their attention.

Requirements:

- Photograph at least three design elements on the Memorial.
 - Include at least one event on the timeline, one name, and one job on the Memorial.
-

Application of Knowledge:

In their groups, students will compose their images in a “promenade joiner”- a collage of their photographs/drawings.

For the photography groups:

Students will upload images onto their computer and resize their images to create 4in by 6in images; they will then print these images on card stock paper. Students can then glue images onto four square pieces of poster board. Make sure students leave some room on the edges for adding labels later on!

MODIFICATION FOR OFF-SITE WORK.

Follow the activity steps as listed above. Instead of walking around the Memorial, have students search for various photos, design drawings, images, etc. of the Memorial. Encourage them to find photos from different angles, layouts, and times. Follow all other steps as articulated.

Collage (cont.)

Presentation:

Students will create a presentation on their “promenade joiner.” This presentation will discuss any relevant design elements that they chose to photograph/draw. Students will conduct research on the design of the Memorial. They will then be required to talk about at least 3 design elements that are present in their photographs/drawings. They will define these elements, talk about why they chose to photograph/draw them, and what they represent/why they are important.

Students will conduct research on the timeline event(s), individual(s), and job(s) that they chose to represent in their collage.

For the event:

Why did this stick out to you? What happened/what was the context behind this event? What other events were going on around this time that relate to this event? Why do you think this event is important to remember?

For the individual: Who was this individual? What was their job? What do we know about their life?

For the job:

Why did this job stick out to you? What is this job? How was it performed? How difficult was it? What skills/intelligences were needed to perform it? How was this position influential in the history of UVA?

Class Collage:

After students present to their class, they will combine their collages to create a class collage that will be displayed within their school.

Students will create 2-3 sentence labels for the design elements, timeline events, names, and jobs that their group talked about in their presentation. These labels will then be added to the class collage so that viewers can learn more about the Memorial.

Glossary

MEL: Memorial to Enslaved Laborers

Architectural Promenade: The specific way that a space is designed or organized to be “roamed through” or experienced by the people who come to it. In other words, it is the “itinerary” for the space that guides you through it. It is the way that a building’s design encourages you to walk through it

Collage: A composition made up of multiple images or forms grouped together.

Descendant: In reference to the memorial, a descendant is an individual who is related to an enslaved laborer who worked at UVA

Humanization: To make the human characteristics of a person explicit in order to elicit sympathy and understanding for them

Joiner: A collage made up of images that capture one scene from a variety of different angles at different moments in time.

Joiner Promenade: a collage of images or drawings that shows how they experienced the memorial.

Memorial: A structure made in order to serve as a reminder of a particular event or to honor a particular individual/group of individuals.

Photo Essay: A story that is created by using photos that convey meaning about a central theme.

Resources

Isabella Gibbons

https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/2021-09/Gibbons%20Brochure%20%238_0.pdf

<https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/changemakers/items/show/290>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/16/arts/design/university-of-virginia-enslaved-laborers-memorial.html>

Photo Essay

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILuFEJ9zkaE&feature=emb_logo

<https://news.virginia.edu/content/photos-making-uvas-memorial-enslaved-laborers>

Architectural promenade

<https://www.spacesmith.com/blog/architectural-promenade>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Promenade_architecturale

Joiner

[https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/photography/david-hockney-s-](https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/photography/david-hockney-s-joiners/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201980's%2C%20English,that%20he%20called%20%E2%80%9Cjoiners%E2%80%9D.&text=He%20then%20switched%20to%20photo,the%20scenes%20he%20had%20photographed)

[joiners/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201980's%2C%20English,that%20he%20called%20%E2%80%9Cjoiners%E2%80%9D.&text=He%20then%20switched%20to%20photo,the%20scenes%20he%20had%20photographed](https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/photography/david-hockney-s-joiners/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201980's%2C%20English,that%20he%20called%20%E2%80%9Cjoiners%E2%80%9D.&text=He%20then%20switched%20to%20photo,the%20scenes%20he%20had%20photographed)

Initial concepts for MEL by designers and people who helped create it

<https://giving.virginia.edu/where-to-give/jeffersonian-grounds-initiative/memorial-to-enslaved-laborers>

MEL introductory video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCxdjBiCQ_s

Descendant thoughts on the MEL

<https://news.virginia.edu/content/process-building-memorial-enslaved-laborers-also-builds-community>

How to do rubbing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjlpNupjoCs>

Timeline and Gibbons Eyes' Images

<https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/architecture-as-conscience-memorial-to-enslaved-laborers-in-virginia/>

Background Resources

Slavery At UVA

https://uvamagazine.org/articles/unearthing_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia
https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/inline-files/SlaveryatUVA_FAULKNER_001.pdf
https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/inline-files/SlaveryatUVaBrochure_FINAL.pdf
https://libraetd.lib.virginia.edu/public_view/1v53jx044
<https://slavery.virginia.edu/>
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=a31f53ca6a54439087085d6c313758a5>

Background on MEL

<https://news.virginia.edu/content/process-building-memorial-enslaved-laborers-also-builds-community>
<https://news.virginia.edu/content/commission-hopes-keep-light-uvas-history-slavery>
https://uvamagazine.org/articles/unearthing_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia
<https://giving.virginia.edu/where-to-give/jeffersonian-grounds-initiative/memorial-to-enslaved-laborers>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCxdjBiCQ_s
<https://news.virginia.edu/content/photos-making-uvas-memorial-enslaved-laborers>
<http://www.howeleryoon.com/work/36/uva-memorial>

Isabella Gibbons

https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/2021-09/Gibbons%20Brochure%20%238_0.pdf
<https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/changemakers/items/show/290>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/16/arts/design/university-of-virginia-enslaved-laborers-memorial.html>



The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia

An Educator's Guide: High School

STUDENT DEVELOPERS

Sabrina Shisbey
Eric Guilfoyle
Jacob Beckham

COLLABORATING EDUCATORS

Anne Ernst
Zoë Padrón
John Comazzi
Alexis Mason
Jess Harris
Kellen Renner-Thomas



mel.virginia.edu

