

Search for Seacole artist

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Eight artists have been shortlisted in the search for an artist to design a permanent memorial to Mary Seacole, the Jamaican Crimean War heroine, at a Central London site.

Those selected from about 45 entrants include Maurice Blik, who is working on a memorial to wartime children evacuees to be located near St Paul's Cathedral; Martin Jennings, who created the Sir John Betjeman sculpture at St Pancras; and Susan Stockwell, the innovative artist who specialises in using recycled material.

The others on the shortlist are: Georgia Boyd Russell, whose work is on display at Brighton and Hove Library and the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital; Fowokan (Kenneth George Kelly), the Jamaican-born sculptor whose art includes a striking bust of Malcolm X; Bill Woodrow, whose *Regardless of History* sculpture is in the foyer of the British Library; Joy Gregory, the photographic artist; and Etienne Millner, who has made busts of Agatha Christie and Toyah Willcox.

Philomena Davidson, the former president of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, who is organising the selection panel for the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue Appeal, said the shortlist had been extended from six to eight because of the high quality of applicants and to make sure that it includes as broad a sweep of artists as possible.

Ms Davidson said all the shortlisted artists had worked in the public realm. She said they would now be given a more concentrated brief relating to the site at St Thomas' Hospital, across the Thames from the Houses of

Parliament, with a view to putting on an exhibition of their proposed designs in March next year. One design will be selected from this exhibition, and the chosen artist given a more detailed brief that will take in planning permission requirements.

The brief for the memorial is that it should reflect the scale and stature of Seacole's achievements; be contemporary in design and an inspiration to the nursing profession; act as a reminder of the importance of nursing; contain a visual representation of Seacole; and possibly include an interactive element.

The appeal hopes that the selection of the memorial design will help to boost fundraising towards the £450,000 target, of which about £50,000 has been raised.

Seacole, a self-taught nurse and businesswoman, made her way from the West Indies via London to the Crimea in 1854 and set up a rest, refreshment and nursing post. She also went on to the battlefield and treated the wounded of both sides. After the war she arrived in London penniless, and an appeal, supported by dukes, generals and *The Times*, raised enough money to support her. She died in 1881, aged 76, and was buried in northwest London.

Her memory has been revived over the past few decades, her neglected grave refurbished and, four years ago, she was voted the Greatest Black Briton of all time. Seacole has also appeared in a series of Great Britain stamps.

The Crimean War Memorial erected in Central London in 1915 includes a statue of Florence Nightingale but not one for Seacole.

www.maryseacoleappeal.org.uk