



VIRGINIA CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE

Exhibition About Washington Monument Grounds Inspires Community Dialogue

A dialogue about democracy, civic life, public spaces, and monuments to take place on June 13, 2012 at the Virginia Center for Architecture

May 1, 2012, Richmond, VA — The *National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds* has created a rare opportunity to engage in a national discussion about landscape, democracy, history, and civic life. The competition, which is the subject of the **Virginia Center for Architecture's** current exhibition **Someday in the Park with George**, inspired Jacquelyn Pogue, the director of **Richmond Action Dialogues**, to organize a **Community Dialogue** to engage in conversations about places for public gatherings, sustainable environments, our history, and the relevance of the Washington Monument to our own community and monuments. The **Community Dialogue** will be held at the Virginia Center for Architecture on **June 13, 2012**, from **6:30–8:30 p.m.**

“This exhibit offers a unique experience for dialogue because the focus is not design but ideas,” says Pogue. “Dialogue, as we describe it, is not discussion, debate, deliberation or decision making,” she continues. “It is an invitation to share what is meaningful, evoke group wisdom, stimulate creative thinking, and deepen understanding of ourselves and others.”

The facilitated dialogue offers a structure that includes guidelines for questioning assumptions and exploring diverse perspectives and new insights. The **Community Dialogue** will consider questions like who we are as a people and how can our identity be expressed in public spaces; how should we remember or honor our past and what or who can represent it; what role can monuments play in telling the American story; what elements in public spaces help create a sense of community; and others. The evening starts with a tour of the exhibition **Someday in the Park with George**, and leads into round-table conversations on either preconceived questions or questions inspired by the tour. The Dialogue will be followed by a brief reception.

There is no charge to attend the Community Dialogue. To register to attend, call (804) 644-3041, ext. 100 or visit bit.ly/monumental_dialogue to register online.

About the Exhibition

Discover the history of the grounds and see a series of groundbreaking ideas selected by a jury of distinguished designers, historians, a Washington cultural leader, and a futurist at the **Virginia Center for Architecture's** newest exhibition **Someday in the Park with George: The National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds**. The exhibition is on display at the **Virginia Center for Architecture** through **June 24, 2012**.

Explore the history of the Monument and its grounds, from funding shortages and political disagreements that left the Monument unfinished for nearly 50 years, to the numerous planning and design challenges posed by the site. Discover how Peter Charles L'Enfant's and Thomas Jefferson's visions for a monument to the nation's first president differed and find out why early plans for the grounds didn't work. Add the need to address post-9-11 security concerns to poor geologic conditions, a location on a flood plain at the heart of a living city, and a lack of mature trees, and you begin to understand why a series of ad hoc solutions have been implemented rather than a cohesive plan.

More than 500 participants from across the U.S. and around the world submitted their proposals to address these challenges to the **National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds**, which was launched nearly two years ago. "The National Ideas Competition is an ideal way to spark new thinking from citizens and professionals about this hugely important symbolic space. With fresh, visionary thought the Washington Monument grounds could one day become the real heart of the nation, not necessarily in the way L'Enfant or the McMillan planners envisioned it but in a new way that speaks to the aspirations of the 21st century," says Kirk Savage, winner of the 2010 Charles C. Eldredge Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in American Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum. The competition was conceived by an independent steering committee including James P. Clark, FAIA, Adele Ashkar, ASLA, Lisa Benton-Short, Kenneth R. Bowling, Kent Cooper, FAIA, Judy Scott Feldman, Ph.D., Richard Longstreth, Ph.D. and Ellen Goldstein.

Someday in the Park with George was developed by a team of graduate students from the Museum Studies Program at **George Washington University** under the leadership of Professor Laura Schiavo.

About the Virginia Center for Architecture

The **Virginia Center for Architecture** itself has a strong tie to the **National Mall**. Its home since 2003 is the 27,000-square-foot Tudor-Revival residence built by architect John Russell Pope in 1919. Pope also designed the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the National Archives, and the West Wing of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. In Richmond, Pope designed Broad Street Station, now home to the Science Museum of Virginia.

The **Virginia Center for Architecture** is located at 2501 Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia's historic Fan District. The Center is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. There is no charge for admission. Learn more at www.virginiaarchitecture.org.

About Richmond Action Dialogues

Richmond Action Dialogues is a volunteer group with a mission to facilitate meaningful experiences of dialogue, provide leadership training on group facilitation, and encourage the use of dialogue models that inspire action through civic engagement and community collaboration. For more information, visit <http://www.richmondactiondialogues.com>.