

The world's first memorial sculpture to Mary Wollstonecraft, the foremother of feminism, is finally here

Following a summer of intense debate about public art and which historical figures deserve commemoration, London is welcoming a ground-breaking new sculpture by the iconic British artist Maggi Hambling CBE.

A Sculpture for Mary Wollstonecraft challenges the traditional statue form by elevating an idea, personifying the spirit, rather than depicting the individual. It will be welcomed to London's Newington Green on Tuesday 10th November after over a decade of local campaigning and fundraising.

Friends and supporters can join the celebrations online on Tuesday 10th November following the livestreamed premier of the launch film at 7pm. (See @MaryWOnTheGreen on Facebook and @maryonthegreen on Twitter)

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was the foremother of feminism, an educational pioneer, and an early champion of human rights. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) called for gender equality a century ahead of the suffragettes, prompting Millicent Fawcett to describe her as "the leader in that battle." Despite her ground-breaking writing, contemporary views of her private life meant she was written out of history for far too long.

In 2010 a small group of volunteers formed the Mary on the Green campaign to get Wollstonecraft's legacy recognised on London's Newington Green, close to the site where she lived and worked. In 2018, one of Britain's most distinguished contemporary artists, Maggi Hambling, was selected to design the memorial sculpture.

A Sculpture for Mary Wollstonecraft is cast in silvered bronze, the sculpture combines female forms which commingle and rise together as if one, culminating in the figure of a woman standing free. She is Everywoman, her own person, ready to confront the world. As opposed to traditional male heroic statuary, the free-standing woman has evolved organically from, is supported by, and does not forget, all her predecessors who advocated, campaigned and sacrificed themselves for women's emancipation.

Maggi Hambling said "This sculpture encourages a visual conversation with the obstacles Wollstonecraft overcame, the ideals she strived for, and what she made happen. A vital contemporary discourse for all that is still to be achieved."

Local resident and TV presenter Anita Rani has been a supporter of the campaign group since starring in *An Amazon Stept Out*, a stage production of Wollstonecraft's life, that filled the Shaftesbury Avenue Lyric Theatre in September 2019.

Anita Rani said "We've brought Mary Wollstonecraft right back to where she had some of her best ideas - ideas that changed the world! It's unbelievable how little known she is - especially when you find out what a pioneer she was. She was someone who just never gave up, she always fought for others, she was a badass - and it cost her. Finally, she is getting the recognition she deserves - about time too!"

Bee Rowlatt, author, journalist and chair of Mary on the Green, said “Wollstonecraft’s political legacy is huge – her ideas changed the world. It took courage to fight for human rights and education for all, even more so for someone of Wollstonecraft’s gender and background. But following her early death in childbirth her legacy was buried, in a sustained misogynistic attack. Today we are finally putting this injustice to rights.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

On Mary on The Green

The Mary on the Green campaign celebrates one of history’s most neglected icons, Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft knew poverty and disadvantage from an early age. Yet as one of the key thinkers of the Enlightenment, she challenged society and changed the world. Her life sends a message of encouragement to young people in a world divided along gender and class lines.

Over 90% of London’s monuments celebrate men. This is set against a population of 51% women. **A Sculpture for Mary Wollstonecraft** will be a source of debate and stimulus for events, as well as a visual celebration of diversity and inclusion in a place that needs it more than ever.

The memorial will be a tangible way to share Wollstonecraft’s vision and ideas. The presence of her legacy in a physical form will inspire local young people in Islington, Haringey and Hackney, and send a powerful message across the world.

On Maggi Hambling CBE

Maggi Hambling is one of Britain’s most distinguished contemporary artists. Her work is held in many public collections including, in London, Tate, the British Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery and the V&A. Hambling was the first Artist in Residence at the National Gallery, London in 1980, and won the Jerwood Painting prize (with Patrick Caulfield) in 1995. Following retrospective exhibitions last year in China at CAFA Art Museum, Beijing and Guandong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, her exhibition of new paintings, **Maggi Hambling: 2020** is at Marlborough Gallery, London until 21 November.

Public sculpture and installation include;

A Conversation with Oscar Wilde (1998) Adelaide Street, facing Charing Cross Station, London.

Scallop (2003), on Aldeburgh Beach, Suffolk, for the composer Benjamin Brittain (awarded the first Marsh award for Excellence in Public Sculpture in 2005).

The Brixton Heron (2010), Brixton, London.

The Resurrection Spirit (2013), St Dunstan's Church, Mayfield, East Sussex.

War Requiem (2013), installed annually at Snape Maltings, Suffolk.

The Winchester Tapestries (2013), Winchester Cathedral, Winchester, Hampshire