



August 27, 2025

Alex M. Smith
Katherine Liss
The Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Alex and Katherine:

Creative Philadelphia (Creative PHL) is requesting a conceptual review of the City's Sadie T.M. Alexander statue during the Philadelphia Art Commission meeting on September 10th, 2025. The project is described below.

SUBJECT: Public Art – Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander Statue at Thomas Paine Plaza

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Creative Philadelphia is commissioning a permanent statue honoring Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander. This Public Art opportunity was initiated in partnership with the City's Capital Program Office / Department of Public Property as part of site improvements to Thomas Paine Plaza, located near the Municipal Services Building in Center City Philadelphia. The project will result in a permanent, site-specific statue honoring this African American civil rights activist, trailblazing lawyer, and native Philadelphian. This statue will be among the first three public art statues of historic African American women in the City's collection. This project will also satisfy the Percent for Art requirement for public art on the Thomas Paine Plaza site, which is currently under a transformative renovation.

Dr. Alexander was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in Economics in the United States (1921), the first Black woman to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania Law School (1927), and a founding member of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, among many other firsts. Her legacy includes groundbreaking work in law, economics, and civil rights, and her contributions continue to shape the City's commitment to equity and justice.

In November 2024, Creative Philadelphia issued an open Call for Artists, and 52 artist teams applied. A dedicated Selection Committee, composed of stakeholders who connect to Sadie Alexander's legacy, including representatives of her family, civic and human rights organizations, educational institutions, arts professionals, and City representatives, selected five (5) finalists to provide design proposals. Public input was central to the process, including multiple online engagement sessions and a public survey that received over 1,000 responses.

In July 2025, the City announced that artist Vinnie Bagwell was unanimously selected by the Committee to create the statue titled "Philadelphia's First Lady of the Law, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander". The full figurative sculpture will be cast in bronze and installed at Thomas Paine Plaza. Vinnie Bagwell's design scored highest across all seven survey criteria in the public survey, including artistic excellence, likeness, emotional and educational qualities, and site appropriateness. Bagwell's sculpture captures Dr. Alexander's spirit, grace, intellect, and humanity.

This statue will honor not only Sadie T.M. Alexander's legacy, but also the countless individuals she served and the women whose paths she helped to forge. It will also stand as a powerful reminder of the unwavering spirit and progress our City strives to embody. We look forward to the winning artist, Vinnie Bagwell, presenting her

vision for the Sadie TM Alexander statue to the Philadelphia Art Commission.

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215.686.4596.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marguerite Anglin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a stylized "A".

Marguerite Anglin, RA, NOMA
Public Art Director
Creative Philadelphia

Philadelphia's First Lady of the Law
Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander
Vinnie Bagwell ©2025



ARTIST STATEMENT

My purpose is to be of service: I create mind-opening sculptures for public places to create analogies, to build bridges, to preserve history, and to help others to unlearn hate.



My artistic vision centers on creating candid portraiture that transcends mere likeness to embody compelling stories.



I expand my storytelling by enhancing my three-dimensional sculptures with detailed bas-relief sculpting techniques. Symbolic elements are interwoven to create works that are both historically accurate and that resonate with the viewer.



My goal is to translate the struggles and triumphs of marginalized Black people into universal stories that speak to the shared human condition of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or background.



My subjects have souls who speak to the viewer, and they are meant to be engaged. Thus, I invite intimacy with the viewer by creating low granite pedestals, embellished with polished or incised text, symbols, and graphic designs.



All the pieces connect and tell the story of inspiration: from abolitionists, the peopled contraband camps, and Civil-War soldiers to educators like Walter “Doc” Hurley and Richard A. Tucker. Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander is part of the tapestry.



THE VISION

I envision Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander in a moment immediately following her groundbreaking academic achievement at the University of Pennsylvania. Still partially dressed in her graduation regalia, she firmly grasps the United States Constitution. This pose encapsulates a pivotal moment, poised at the cusp of a transformative career dedicated to legal and civil-rights advocacy. Her most relevant quote: "The future of our nation depends on our willingness to uphold democracy and justice for all," is polished on the front of a low, wide-beveled pedestal. She *is* "Philadelphia's First Lady of the Law, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander."



PRESENCE

Sadie T.M. Alexander's stance—assured, powerful—mirrors both the weight of challenges overcome and the inherent strength she brought to her fight for equality.

The sculpture's power lies in its details: The outstretched hand, offering engagement and signifying her commitment to accessible justice, complements the Constitution, underscoring the active interpretation and application of law in the pursuit of justice.



REPRESENTATION

Dr. Alexander's opposition to racial oppression was in the tradition of 19th-century scholars Frederick Douglass and Timothy Thomas Fortune as well as later scholars, W.E.B. Du Bois and Asa Philip Randolph. Her uncles: Dr. Nathan Francis Mossell, Dr. Lewis Baxter Moore, and Henry Ossawa Tanner, her husband, Raymond Pace Alexander, and allies: Frank Charles Coleman, Edgar Amos Love, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary McLeod Bethune represented the leading edge of progress in the early 20th century. Other luminaries include: Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall, Constance Baker Motley, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Immortalized on her robe, these pioneers shaped her perspectives to break down barriers and change history.



CHAMPION

Dr. Alexander's gaze—intelligent, determined, yet subtly warm—speaks volumes about her life's journey. The subtle curve of her mouth hints at both the burdens she carried and the triumphs she celebrated.



DISTINCTION

The straw hat, far from mere fashion, symbolizes Sadie T.M. Alexander's conscious assertion of presence in a world that sought to diminish Black women. The crown's expansive shape alludes to her far-reaching influence on generations to come. Magnolias, an artistic license incorporated into the design, represent her resilience and dignified strength—a woman who blossomed amidst adversity.



Fashionable shoes were instruments of empowerment, identity expression, and subtle resistance against societal constraints.

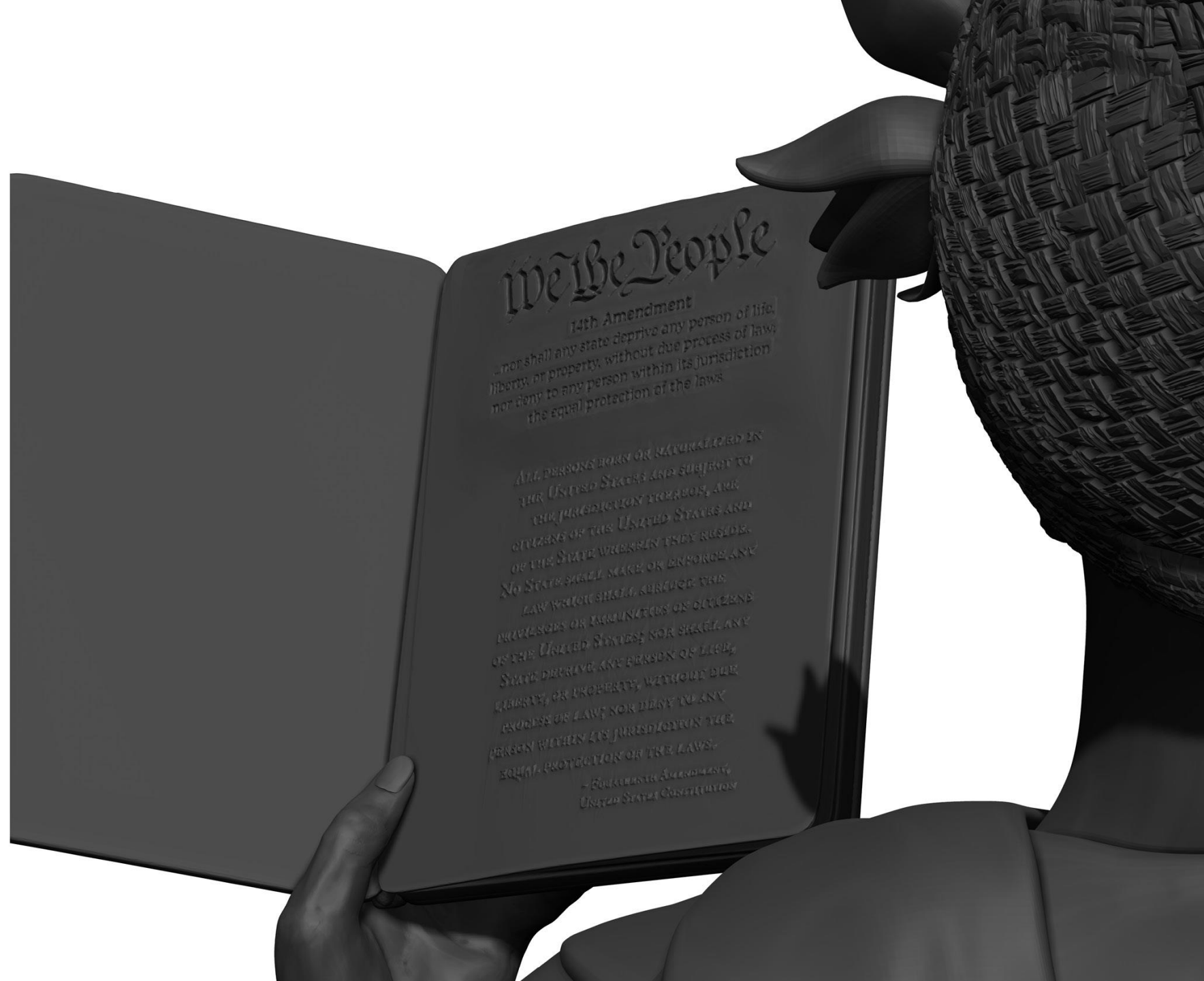


PRINCIPLED

The Constitution of the United States, held in her hand, serves as a powerful symbol of her lifelong commitment to justice and equality.



The Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, a cornerstone of American jurisprudence, mirrors her unwavering dedication to ensuring equal rights for all.



SISTERHOOD

Embossed on the lining of the robe is an African violet, the official flower for her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. It represents the strong bond between its members and their dedication to the organization's ideals. Additionally, the African violet's colors align with those of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., symbolizing the special connection between the two organizations.

The sorority's motto: "Intelligence is the Torch of Wisdom" and the Greek symbols: Delta Sigma Theta are below.



CHANGE AGENT

Each day, the world offers us a choice—to uphold dignity over indifference. Thus, the ripples of the flowing dress and the wind-blown robe represent the forces of change Dr. Alexander navigated and propelled. The Sankofa—an Adinkra symbol representing a philosophy of remembrance—on the back of the robe is a call to action: With bans on our literature, attempts to distort our history, and legislation threatening our existence, it reminds us all of the importance of being stewards of this nation's legacy. Now, more than ever.



ACTIONABLE

Unlearn Hate

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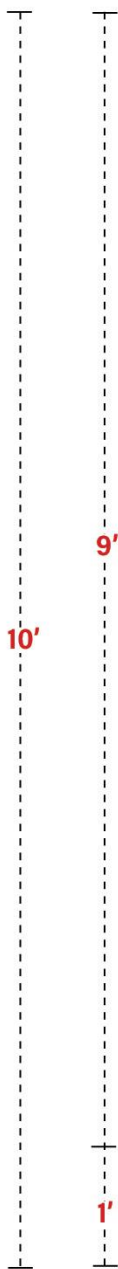
ELEVATION

Sculpture
- 9' H

Pedestal
- 1' H

Overall Height
- 10' H

In-Ground Up-Lighting
- Grade Level
(4) IP67 In-ground LED uplights



SPECIFICATIONS

Sculpture:

- 9' Bronze with buffed black patina

Pedestal

- Size: 6' D. x 1' H.
- Medium: Mesabi® Black Granite
- Sandblasted (All sides)
- Polished Text:
Philadelphia's First Lady of the Law,
Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander
Vinnie Bagwell ©2025
"The future of our nation depends
upon our willingness to uphold
democracy and justice for all."
- 6" x 9" Bevel

Lighting

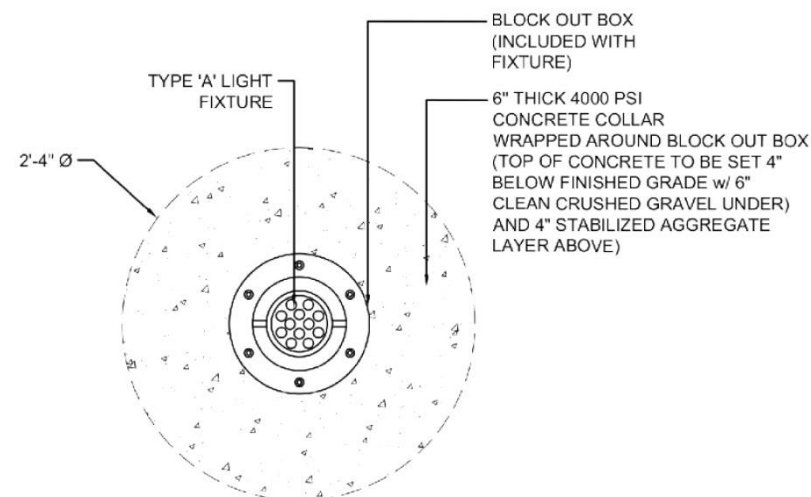
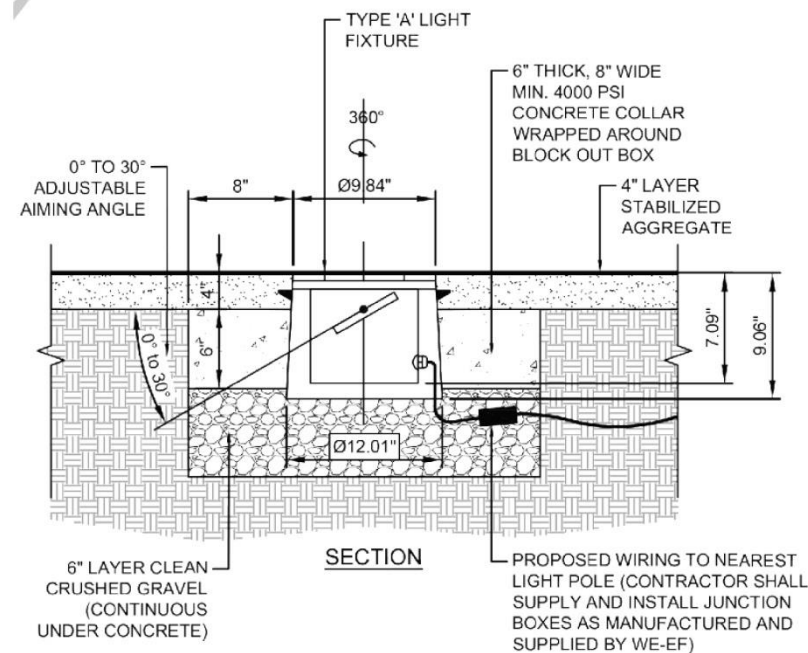
(4) IP67 In-ground LED uplights.



SPECIFICATIONS

In-Ground Uplighting

- (4) IP67 In-ground LED uplights.
- Suitable for flush installation in concrete.
- Features an “offset gimbal-mounted lamp module” that permits 360-degree horizontal tilt and rotation, with a lockable adjustment.





CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

My public artworks serve as teaching tools, bridging the gap between history and contemporary relevance. The beauty of these works is that they are accessible for non-traditional interdisciplinary-teaching approaches. Outreach efforts will be initiated to partner with local community-based organizations, artists, and the public-school district to create experiential-learning programming that will immerse the local community into my creative process and expose art students to school-to-work strategies and the path to self-employment in Philadelphia's public-art arena and beyond.



I am particularly interested in partnering with:

- The Julia L. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School
- The High School for Creative and Performing Arts
- The Palumbo High School
- Rush Arts Philadelphia | Danny Simmons:

In addition, other partners will be sought and welcome during the research-and-development phase of creating public programs, as well.

In-person public programs and pre-recorded/broadcasted programs will be developed to activate the community-at-large and create excitement and interest in the public artwork.



13-MONTH WORK SCHEDULE

Month-01* | September 2025
Execute Agreement | Develop programs

Month-02-07 | October 2025 - March 2026
Enlarge to full size | Wax casting |
Create granite-fabrication documents

Month-08-14 | April - October 2026
Bronze casting | Pour foundation and
install lighting | Execute public programs

Month-15 | November 2026
Ship all materials | Prep | Installation TBD

**Agreement must be executed by September 15, 2025, to meet
"fall 2026" / November deadline for installation.*



PROMISES

Feasibility Statement

I am fully prepared to bring my proposal for this lasting tribute to Sadie T.M. Alexander to life through a collaborative partnership with the City of Philadelphia. The proposal as presented is realistic and can be completed within budget and on the proposed schedule.*

** A 9' bronze is exponentially larger than a life-sized one, and would benefit from a more relaxed schedule. Please consider spring 2027, which marks the 100th anniversary of Sadie T.M. Alexander's admission to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1927. (A media campaign could be devised during fabrication to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026.)*



CONSERVATION

Maintenance

The final Artwork will be of sound, safe construction, capable of withstanding variable weather conditions in the Northern US. All materials will be of high quality, require low maintenance, and will be appropriate to an active pedestrian environment. The sculpture should be cleaned and waxed on an annual basis. Mild soap (Ivory) and water works fine with a soft cloth. A soft toothbrush may be used on stubborn debris. Wax with black KIWI shoe polish. If requested, a local foundry can provide this service. Clean the granite regularly with plain water to rinse off any loose particles of dirt or debris.



Budget

Categorical List of Costs

Category	Details (Brief description of anticipated costs)	Amount
Artist Fee (Mandatory 18%)		\$126,000.
	• Lead Artist / Project Management	
Professional Fees		\$ 70,000
	• Architect	
	• Construction	
	- Structural Design, Engineering, and Oversight Services	
	- Agency Coordination and Approval Compliance	
	- Electrician	
	- Reprographic, Courier, and Other Charges	
	• CGI Consultant	
	• Research and Development	
	• Artist-Led Community Engagement	
	• Graphic Design	
	• Media Management	
Fabrication		\$379,000
	• Studio	
	• Enlargement	
	• Chasing/Refinement	
	• Bronze Cast	
	• Mesabi® Granite Pedestal	
Site Prep (Services provided by the City of Philadelphia)		\$ NA.

Category	Details (Brief description of anticipated costs)	Amount
Installation		\$25,000.
	• Artwork Prep / Shipping / Installation	
	• Lighting	
Administration		\$ 30,000.
	• Attorney/Legal Fees	
	• Insurance	
	• Documentation: Photography/Video	
	• Bookkeeping / Accounting	
Contingency		\$ 70,000.
	• Civic-Engagement Programs	
	• (2) Interns (stipends for time and travel)	
	• Miscellaneous Materials, Supplies, Transportation / Accommodations, Shipping, Price Increases	
TOTAL		\$700,000.

PHOTO CREDITS

City of Philadelphia

Danny Simmons | Rush Arts Philadelphia

Donna Davis

Dorinda Angelucci

Grace Roselli | Pandora's BoxX Project

Jonathan Lewis

Vinnie Bagwell

Thank you.

