

## Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Nellie Bly- Call for Artists

KEY DATES/EVENTS:	
Event	Date/Time
RFQ Publication Date	June 24, 2019
<b>Phase I-RFQ Due Date*</b>	<b>July 12, 2019 at 3:00 PM</b>
Phase I-Shortlist Interviews	July 22-July 26, 2019
Top Five Chosen	August 2, 2019
<b>Phase II-Concept Design Submitted*</b>	<b>September 13, 2019</b>
Phase II- Interviews	September 16, 2019 -September 20, 2019
Awarded	September 28, 2019
Construction	March- May 2020
Unveiling	May 27, 2020

**RIOC seeks artists interested in creating a public monument that honors the achievements of Nellie Bly and continues an initiative to increase the number of statues on Roosevelt Island that commemorate the accomplishments of important women in New York's history.**

**If you are such an artist, please APPLY to this open call.**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Roosevelt Island**

Roosevelt Island, located between Manhattan and Queens in the East River, has undergone numerous changes both in name and use over its long history. In 1637, the Dutch purchased the land that was originally called 'Minnahanonck' or "nice island" from the indigenous Canarsie people of the Hudson River area. The Dutch went on to use the island for farming and raising hogs; leading to the island being called *Varckens Eylandt* or "Hog Island."

When the British later defeated the Dutch and seized control of their holdings in America, King James II gave "Hog Island" to his sheriff of New York, Captain John Manning.

The island was passed down within Manning's family and, in 1796, his grandson James Blackwell had a clapboard cottage built on his island. The island became known as Blackwell's Island. Today, the home is landmarked and known as Blackwell House.

In 1828, Blackwell's Island was purchased by the City of New York. Later that year, Blackwell's Penitentiary was built by inmates transported from Newgate Penitentiary in Manhattan. The prison opened in 1832. Because of its proximity to Manhattan, inmates at the island's prisons included celebrities like Broadway performer Mae West, singer Billie Holliday, and notoriously corrupt New York City politician "Boss" Tweed.

**The Blackwell Island Insane Asylum - where Nellie Bly was later held - was opened in 1841. Two more hospitals followed soon after: Penitentiary Hospital in 1849 and Charity (City) Hospital in 1857.**

The nation's first hospital to treat patients with smallpox was built on the island in 1856. Smallpox Hospital thus became mandated by city law as the quarantine area for all smallpox sufferers. It closed following the success of the smallpox vaccine. In 1921, Blackwell's Island became Welfare Island to reflect the focus of the island's institutions.

Over time, these institutions became defunct and the island was once again was reimagined when, in 1969, NYC leased the land to NYS Urban Development Corporation. A new vision for residential development on the island was pursued. Several years later, in 1973 the island was again renamed to Roosevelt Island, in honor of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation ("RIO") was created in 1984 by New York State as a public benefit corporation and charged with the duty to develop, operate and manage Roosevelt Island. To date, these broad goals have furthered the development of seven residential complexes, including a build-out that provides approximately 5,758 units of housing to this thriving mixed-income community. The Island's 147 acres support a population of

approximately 14,000 residents. RIOC operates an Aerial Tramway, an on-Island bus service, and maintains a safe environment for the Island’s residents, workers and visitors.

As part of its mission, RIOC strives to enhance the quality of life of Roosevelt Island residents and beautify the island.

## **MONUMENT RECIPIENT**

### **Nellie Bly (1864-1922)**

Nellie Bly (born Elizabeth Cochrane) was born in 1864, in Cochran, Pennsylvania where her family owned a mill. While trying to help make ends meet, she wrote open letter to the editor of Pittsburgh Dispatch to voice negative representation of women in the paper. This earned her first job as a reporter and formed her pseudonym ‘Nellie Bly’ writing pieces addressed to women at that time.

Nellie’s assertiveness impressed Joseph Pulitzer and he hired her to become the first female reporter at his newspaper “New York World”. As an investigative reporter, Nellie went undercover as a mentally ill patient and was admitted to Blackwell Island Insane Asylum in 1887. After her newspaper obtained her release, Bly published her ground breaking six-part series called *Ten Days in the Mad House*. She exposed the shameful conditions at the asylum where women were fed spoiled food, forced to take cold showers and were abused by the attendants. Nellie continued to go undercover to expose institutions from sweat shops to political corruption and voting schemes—all before the age of 25.

Nellie’s progressive investigative reporting on the immigrant and impoverished female experience made a huge impact in the way journalism is performed today. Her experience at The Blackwell Island Insane Asylum shed light on the harsh treatment of marginalized populations and sparked the need for reform of public institutions.

## **SITE LOCATION**

Although RIOC is open to other locations, it is intended that the proposed piece will be in the vicinity of the Octagon Building, which sits on the foundation of the former Blackwell Insane Asylum (**Attachment A**). The prospective areas for the art piece are the following:

**Octagon Park**- located on West Road of the island. The current park provides passive recreation activities for picnic and barbecues and a great view of New York City Skyline.

**Lighthouse Park**- located on the northern most tip of the island, the 3.78-acre park will be expanded early next year to include additional passive and active recreation opportunities for the public.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The proposed piece can be in any form (i.e. digital, monument, sculpture, interactive, etc.) and must also consider the following:

- The piece shall not have impact to adjacent trees, fence, paths, site furnishings or vegetation.
- The design should consider accommodation for public gatherings.
- ADA compliance may be taken into consideration.

## **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)**

An advisory panel comprised of individuals representing a broad range of expertise and backgrounds will assess the bidders and create a shortlist of up to five finalists. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is an effort to solicit artists or artist teams who are interested in being considered to design a permanent public memorial of Nellie Bly, her influence on women's rights and changing the harsh conditions in the former Blackwell Island Insane Asylum.

The review panel will be comprised of representatives from RIOC, professional artist(s) and local Roosevelt Island Community Organization(s).

## **PROJECT BUDGET**

The project's budget will range from \$250,000 to \$500,000 and must include all project costs, including but not limited to the following:

- Artist's fees
- Design service
- Community engagement
- Site preparation
- Engineering
- Fabrication
- Travel
- Transportation of the work to the site
- Insurance
- Permits
- Installation
- Documentation of the artwork
- Contingency

**Please note:** If the artist(s) need additional funding to complete the work, fundraising and other methods for donations are encouraged.

## **WHO MAY APPLY**

Professional visual artists or artist teams, working in any and all media, legally authorized to work in the U.S., and who are at least 18 years of age, are eligible to apply. Employees of the City of New York, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation and RIOC Board Members and their family members are not eligible to apply. If applying as an artist team, please identify the team member who will serve as the lead artist.

## **SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS**

Each selection process is organized into two phases:

Phase I is the Request for Qualification(RFQ) in which artists or artist teams may respond with samples of past work and supplementary materials to be considered. The review panel will review the RFQ and select up to five finalists.

Phase II is a Request for Conceptual Designs in which Finalists will submit a conceptual design for final review by the Committee. One artist will be selected by the Committee from Phase Two to finalize designs, fabricate and install the artwork in partnership with RIOC.

## **PHASE I: REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

As part of Phase I, RIOC invites artists or artist teams to submit examples of past work for the Committee to review. Eligibility is based upon artistic merit as evidenced in previous work, though the artist or artist team need not have completed a prior permanent public commission.

Submissions must be made the following ways:

1. **E-mail:** Submissions can be sent via e-mail to [callforartists@rioc.ny.gov](mailto:callforartists@rioc.ny.gov).
  - a. **NOTE:** For any submissions containing files too large for a standard e-mail, send submissions via drop box to [callforartists@rioc.ny.gov](mailto:callforartists@rioc.ny.gov)
2. **Mail:** Hard Copies can be mailed to:
  - a. **ATTN:** [Amy Firestein]  
Call for Artists-Nellie Bly  
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation  
591 Main Street  
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044

## **Submission Materials**

Artists must submit all the following materials for consideration:

### **1. Statement of Interest (250 words max)**

Provide a narrative description of interest in the campaign and qualifications for undertaking such a project; how your art practice and process can be translated to this project and how you might approach this project. If you are applying as an artist team, your statement of interest should reflect the work and approach of the team.

### **2. Artist's Statement (250 words max)**

Provide a narrative description of past work and current practice, including reference to submitted work samples, as relevant.

### **3. Resume or CV (2 pages max)**

Provide a current resume or CV, highlighting artistic excellence, any teaching experience, community engagement work, and/or experience working with multiple stakeholders. Be sure to include any relevant public or private commissioning experience. If you are applying as an artist team, combine your information into a two-page document that summarizes the team members' qualifications. For example, a four-member team may choose to include a half-page bio for each team member.

### **4. References**

Provide the name, phone number and email addresses of two (2) professional references that have experience working with you as a partner or client on a creative project. Please indicate your relationship to each reference.

### **5. Work Samples**

Provide three completed work samples and no more than ten project samples. Images should be from 70 - 100 dpi. If you have video of your work that is relevant to this project (i.e. a kinetic sculpture or sound element), submit a PDF with a link to the video. If you are applying as an artist team, designate one artist to be the team leader to submit your information, along with team member(s) images and resume/bio(s). Submissions from artist teams should reflect samples from each artist on the team, and not exceed the overall submission limit of 10 images.

### **6. Work Sample List**

Provide a list of submitted work, including title, date, materials and dimensions, locations, and/or running times. Include 1-2 sentence descriptions as needed.

## **PHASE II: REQUEST FOR CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS**

As part of Phase Two, RIOC will invite the selected Finalists to submit conceptual proposals for review by the Committee.

RIOC aspires to commission artwork of the highest caliber possible, and to set a national example for public art commissioning, while reflecting contemporary art practices. The conceptual proposals will be judged against the following criteria:

- Appropriateness of each artist's approach to the site's architecture, function, and users;
- Skilled craftsmanship;
- Clarity of artistic vision;
- Consideration of the cost and durability of the artist's chosen materials; and
- That the artist's public commission is true to his/her/their sensibility.

## **QUESTIONS**

Please direct all inquiries regarding this open call [callforartists@rioc.ny.gov](mailto:callforartists@rioc.ny.gov)

# Attachment A



**Octagon Building**

## Nellie Bly Memorial Location Options

1	Octagon Park
2	Lighthouse Park
2a	RIOC Lot
2b	RIOC Lot 2