

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16th, 2026

**\*\*The Stagville Memorial Project Announces Artist Team for The Stagville Memorial Project Public Artworks to be installed at the Durham Rail Trail Gateway Plaza\*\***

Durham, North Carolina. – The Stagville Memorial Project is excited to announce that local artists Stephen Hayes and Sherrill Roland have teamed up with Durham-based fabricators Cricket Forge to create the Stagville Memorial Project Public Artworks at the Durham Rail Trail. This decision was made by a selection committee composed of Stagville descendants, artists, art administrators, and a Stagville historian after reviewing over 50 responses to the RFQ and conducting several interviews with artist finalists.

“We are thrilled to partner with Stephen Hayes, Sherrill Roland and Cricket Forge to create the Stagville Memorial Project Public Artworks,” said Brandi Neuwith, a Stagville descendant and Stagville Memorial Project Board Member. “The team is an impressive group of visual storytellers committed to engaging the history of Stagville, and the Stagville Descendants community. We are hopeful that the final artworks will inspire the audience to learn more about local history, and to advocate for communities who have historically been left out of the conversation.”

The Stagville Memorial Project Public Artworks is a collection of 3 distinct installations: (1) a sculptural work, (2) creative elements on concrete stairs, and (3) a creative wayfinding sign. All artworks will be installed at the upcoming Durham

Rail Trail located at 501 W. Main St. in downtown Durham, NC in 2027  
(estimated).

“This heartfelt project has seen lengthy planning by many passionate and focused people,” said Aaron Earley, co-owner of Cricket Forge. “We are honored to have been selected by the committee and excited to work together with these artists and the Stagville descendants toward such an ambitious project. It is through diversity of perspective, creativity, research, and genuine interaction we hope to memorialize such an integral part of Durham.”

For more information about our project, please contact  
[info@stagvillememorialproject.org](mailto:info@stagvillememorialproject.org)

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About The Stagville Memorial Project: The Stagville Memorial Project is a Durham-based 501(c)(3) organization committed to highlighting the impact of Stagville and contributions from its descendants in Durham and beyond through public art.

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About Sherrill Roland: Sherrill Roland’s interdisciplinary practice examines the complex intersections of identity, justice, and memory through the lens of personal and collective experience. Drawing from his wrongful incarceration, Roland transforms the visual and material language of the American criminal justice system into meditations on truth, personhood, and resilience. His work reconfigures objects, numbers, and materials associated with confinement — from

correctional ID codes and cinder blocks to Kool-Aid and commissary goods — into sculptural and conceptual forms that question how systems of power define, contain, and erase the individual.

About Stephen Hayes: Stephen Hayes is the Esbenshade Assistant Professor of the Practice of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University. A multi-media sculptor who calls himself a “creator” rather than artist, Hayes is a Durham, NC, native who works in wood, metal, fabric, paper, castings and sound. He is known for making life-size sculptures that address the United States’ conflicted history of slavery. His work has been shown over a decade at galleries and museums, also been shown at the Contemporary Art Museum in Raleigh, Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington, NC, and been reviewed in the New York Times and Washington Post. He created “Boundless,” to commemorate the Black Union soldiers who fought in the American Civil War and used castings from those soldiers’ descendants, and the Anson African Burial Memorial in Charleston SC where he casted 36 pairs of hands of people from the area to represent the 36 enslaved bodies found in a mass grave and collected soil from mass graves around Charleston to make the memorial.

About Cricket Forge: Since 1999 Cricket Forge has created sculptural metal art and furnishings in Durham, NC. They specialize in high-quality custom metalwork, select metal shop services, and wholesale products, using modern technology, U.S. materials, and traditional techniques.

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[www.stagvillememorialproject.org](http://www.stagvillememorialproject.org)