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New Yorkers will experience new outdoor public art by Jeffrey Gibson, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Xaviera Simmons this summer at Socrates Sculpture Park.

New York City, June 11, 2020 - As the country grapples with both a deadly pandemic and the tragic consequences of systemic racism, Socrates Sculpture Park will open an exhibition of new outdoor monuments this summer. MONUMENTS NOW seeks to address the role of monuments in American society – some of which have been removed in recent days – and presents artist-envisioned monuments highlighting underrepresented histories including queer, Indigenous, and diasporic narratives.

MONUMENTS NOW will evolve over three phases as a cumulative exhibition. Part I opens this summer with major new commissions for monuments by acclaimed artists Jeffrey Gibson, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Xaviera Simmons. Then Parts II & III open together on October 10, 2020. Part II, Call and Response, features ten monuments by artists selected through an open call application process. Part III, The Next Generation, presents a multi-faceted monument project collectively realized by local Queens high school students. Additionally, the Park’s Broadway Billboard above the main entrance will feature a monuments-related artwork by photographer Nona Faustine.

Monuments are created by artists, but ultimately are valued and empowered by society. Throughout the exhibition, Socrates will engage the community through a “visible conversation” which will allow socially distant visitors to respond to the work through an on-site exchange and display process. Artist-curated online activations will also allow viewers to engage with the projects virtually.

For Part I, artist Jeffrey Gibson – a recipient of a 2019 MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” – will present a monument to inclusion and diversity: Because Once You Enter My House, It Becomes Our House. Drawing from Indigenous Mississippian culture, architecture, activist graphic traditions, and queer performative strategies, the large-scale public sculpture projects a future vision of the world that embraces complexities within collective identity. Gibson has also curated a series of performances from Indigenous artists. These performances will be filmed onsite and made available to the public online.

Part I continues with Paul Ramírez Jonas’ Eternal Flame, a monument in the form of a grill which honors the role of cuisine and cooking in cultural cohesion and expression among immigrant communities and identities. Eternal Flame is designed to recognize the importance of dialogue and...
exchange. During this new time of social distancing the grill will not be available for public use, but instead bring people together philosophically and culturally through the common experience of cooking and eating. With this in mind, a series of videos will be released with local and distant chefs invited by the artist to address the meaning of cooking in culture while preparing recipes and relating stories on each dish’s significance. Ramírez Jonas imagines cooking culture as a symbolic eternal flame, enduring in communities for generations, over vast distances.

Xaviera Simmons’ contribution completes Part I and is a series of sculptural forms – each baring landscapes of text culled from historical documents foundational to racial disenfranchisement in the United States. The works are a monument to promises denied, offering insight into governmental policies that continue to shape the racial caste system we live within presently. Simmons will offer a virtual tour and discussion of her works which will be made available to the public online.

For Part II, MONUMENTS NOW: Call and Response, the Park released an open-call for monuments. Applicants were asked to adhere to the topic of monuments. Over 200 proposals were submitted and the following artists were selected: Daniel Bejar, Fontaine Capel (2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellow), Patrick Costello, Dionisio Cortes Ortega, Bel Falleiros, Jenny Polak, Aya Rodriguez-Izumi, Andrea Solstad, Kiyan Williams (2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellow), and Sandy Williams IV (2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellow). Part II will be on view from October 10, 2020.

For the third part, MONUMENTS NOW: The Next Generation, high school students participating in the Park’s arts education program, Socrates, will collectively research and realize a monument sculpture (on view beginning October 10, 2020) and accompanying zine. All three parts of MONUMENTS NOW – I. Jeffrey Gibson, Paul Ramirez Jonas, Xaviera Simmons; II. Call and Response; and III. The Next Generation – will remain at the Park through March 2021.

*Nature and art make us human, heal our psyches, and provide rejuvenation when we most need it. As an urban park, venue for contemporary public art and a cultural anchor in Queens, Socrates is the ideal venue to present new artist-driven perspectives on monuments for a 21st century America.* says John Hatfield, Executive Director of Socrates Sculpture Park.

**SUPPORT**

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**ABOUT SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK**

For over 30 years, Socrates Sculpture Park has been a model of public art production, community activism, and socially inspired place-making. Over 1,000 artists have created and exhibited new works on its five waterfront acres and outdoor studio facilities. Socrates is free and open to the public 365 days a year from 9am to sunset. It is located at 32-01 Vernon Boulevard (at Broadway) in Long Island City, New York. Socrates Sculpture Park is a not-for-profit organization licensed by NYC Parks to manage and program Socrates Sculpture Park, a New York City public park.

**COVID-19 SAFETY**

Socrates remains open to the public at regular hours, 9am – sunset, with free admission. Park policies and updates regarding health and safety can be found at socratessculpturepark.org/Covid19.

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