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Bel Falleiros, Process image of *America (un)known*, 2020, Courtesy the Artist, Photo by Sara Morgan.

Ten artists selected through an open-call competition present new public monuments at Socrates Sculpture Park beginning October 10, 2020

New York City, September 17, 2020 – As discourse surrounding monuments in American society rapidly evolves, Socrates Sculpture Park unveils ten new monuments by artists awarded the Park's 2020 *Socrates Annual* Fellowship: Daniel Bejar, Fontaine Capel, Patrick Costello, Dionisio Cortes Ortega, Bel Falleiros, Jenny Polak, Aya Rodriguez-Izumi, Andrea Solstad, Kiyon Williams, and Sandy Williams IV.

The 2020 Artist Fellows' projects comprise *Call and Response*, the second part of Socrates' *MONUMENTS NOW* exhibition. The first part of *MONUMENTS NOW* opened summer 2020 with major new commissions by acclaimed artists Jeffrey Gibson, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Xaviera Simmons. *Call and Response* goes on view October 10th alongside Gibson, Ramírez Jonas, and Simmons' works. The third and final part of the exhibition, *The Next Generation*, also opens October 10th with a monument sculpture and 'zine collectively realized by local high-school students participating in the Park's Socrateens art education program

As a whole, *MONUMENTS NOW*, seeks to highlight underrepresented narratives and commemorate marginalized peoples. Within this scope, the 2020 Artist Fellows projects range widely – from championing the civil servants who deliver fresh drinking water to somber mediation on the legacy of American chattel slavery. Many works encourage public engagement and all are united through common interest in community agency and power.

CALL AND RESPONSE PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Daniel Bejar, *Monument for Immigrants (In Advance of an ICE Raid)*

Reminiscent of the boulder-with-plaque historic markers that are common across parks nationwide, Bejar plays with ideas of visibility both in terms of public monuments and human rights as it pertains to citizenship. In response to recent raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Bejar's *Monument for Immigrants* provides a utilitarian escape hatch for undocumented people to enter and safely hide inside.

Fontaine Capel, *Proposal for a Monument (Two)*

Two iconic New York City brownstone stoops face each other as if in conversation – holding space for dialog around the built environment, gentrification and displacement, and monumentality. Simultaneously, the work provides a physical space to rest, distantly gather, perform, and exchange. An audio component plays a series of “stoop stories” shared by NYC residents, elevating the average person and commonplace experience to the monumental. Capel is also a 2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow.

Dionisio Cortes Ortega, *Croton Arch of Triumph*

This one-to-one-scale cross section of the Old Croton Aqueduct unearths the hidden infrastructure of New York City as an homage to foresight, planning, and public service. The aqueduct, which opened in 1842 in an effort to mitigate wide-spread fires and industrial pollution of local water sources, is a feat of ingenuity, engineering, and cooperation among government, community and private enterprise. Cortes Ortega's monument suggests that learning from history may be a means of confronting the new water crises we face today.

Patrick Costello, *Ceding Ground*

An empty center holds space for the contemplation of history's relationship to current conflicts in this garden, which is rendered to match the dimensions of decorative plantings surrounding the Robert E. Lee monument in Charlottesville, VA – the site of the infamously violent Unite the Right rally in 2017. Costello replaces Classical-style low hedges, English boxwoods, Japanese hollies and peonies – all associated with the United States' colonial slavery-fueled economy – with plant species native to the region surrounding Socrates for centuries before European colonization. Costello is also the 2020 Devra Freeland Artist Fellow in memory of Devra Freeland, who participated in *The 2017 Socrates Annual*.

Bel Falleiros, *America (un)known*

Contrasting with the phallic monuments to Columbus and other “New World” colonizers scattered across the Americas, this horizontal circle formed of clay-bricks celebrates ancestral and Indigenous modes of construction that bring humans, earth, and the cosmos together. Etched in various bricks are phrases composed by Black, Latinx and Indigenous people of the Americas that touch on ideas of home, belonging, and memory.

Jenny Polak, *Offshore*

A square chain-link fence cage topped with razor wire perches over the Park's shoreline in the artist's monument to prison abolition. *Offshore* proposes a reverse-commemoration, imagining a monument constructed in the future when offshore prisons and extrajudicial detention no longer occur. Pennants bearing messages from people formerly and currently incarcerated festoon the fence. An optical viewing machine, commonly found at tourist sites for monumental architecture and scenic vistas, allows the public to contemplate this prison-like structure that appears to hover like a ghostly presence.

Aya Rodriguez-Izumi, *Gate: II*

A commemoration of communities that have survived imperialist military occupation, *Gate: II* references the layered histories of Okinawa, Japan, which has endured a heavy United States military presence since World War II. The work combines the aesthetic of the Shinto torii, a gateway to shrines, with the chain link fences of military bases, which often co-opt the Shinto architecture in their own checkpoints. A colorful curtain of acrylic beads, assembled through artist-led community workshops, reflects the individuality of those who brought the work into existence and represents the power of peaceful unity as a confrontation to militarization.

Andrea Solstad, *Untitled*

This irregular tower of handmade aluminum ingots, melted from ubiquitous single-use cans, casts into doubt the preciousness of the materials of monumentality. Centering aluminum's role as currency as well as its material malleability, the artist defamiliarizes the ordinary in a monument to exchange and transformation.

Kiyan William, *Reaching Towards Warmer Suns*

Soil sourced from the Queens-located burial grounds of enslaved African people comprises the flesh of this circle of arms that emerge from the ground like trees in a grove. The hands take on gestures of protest, joy, and communion. With a title that references Richard Wright's writing on The Great Migration, Williams' work bears witness to the historical and ongoing struggles for self-determination of Black American descendants of chattel slavery. Williams is a 2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow.

Sandy Williams IV,* *Wax Monument IV (Wax Flag)*

A monument to living history, this wax flag can be set alight from multiple-wicks and rests perpendicularly upon a pulverized black dirt base shaped like the borough of Queens. Rendered in black and white, the wax flag is reminiscent of – but not equivalent to – the U.S.'s own flag and emblem of patriotism. Alive with transformative potential, the work invites participation, mark-making, melting, and molding of a malleable symbol. Williams is a 2020 New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow.

THE NEXT GENERATION

The Socrateens are a select group of local high school students who meet weekly to develop their creative practices and learn about the art world. The 2019-2020 cohort contributed part three of the *MONUMENTS NOW* exhibition, *The Next Generation*, a collectively realized sculpture installation and 'zine.

2019-2020 Socrateens: Christopher Bislam, Johnaila Cole, Michela Farella, Sohit Gurung, Farzana Ibrahim, Anabella Orellana, Kate Panasci, Aneesa Razak, and Laura Umana. Program designed and facilitated by Socrates Lead Educator, Douglas Paulson. Special thanks to 2019 Socrates Curatorial Fellow Megan Lee and Fabricator Sara Sciabbarrasi.

The 2019-2020 Socrateens, *What's Missing & Monuments Decoder 'Zine*

The four exterior walls of *What's Missing* feature photographs of various Christopher Columbus monuments in New York City. Visitors can enter the structure through portals shaped like Columbus' silhouette. The mirrored interior of the work provides a place for consideration of how public space/land and social visibility/invisibility shape collective consciousness.

The *Monuments Decoder* 'zine spells out the various debates that are currently taking place about monuments in America. In creating this 'zine, the Socrateens drew from conversations and research conducted with members of the public as well as their own ideas and opinions.

SUPPORT

Major support for *The Socrates Annual* Exhibition & Fellowship comes from the New York Community Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Devra Freeland Artist Fund, with additional support from The Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation and The Cowles Charitable Trust. Major exhibition support for *MONUMENTS NOW* comes from the Ford Foundation, VIA Art Fund, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, with additional support from The Lily Auchincloss Foundation and the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation. Additional support for an accompanying publication is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation. Socrates' Exhibition Program is funded by the Charina Foundation, The Sidney E. Frank Foundation, Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation, Agnes Gund, Lambert Foundation, Mark di Suvero and Spacetime C.C. Socrates Sculpture Park is funded, in part, by public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, the New York State Council on the Arts with support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. *MONUMENTS NOW* is organized by Socrates Sculpture Park and curated by Jess Wilcox, Curator & Director of Exhibitions.

ABOUT SOCRATES

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.

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