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Media Contact & Press Kit:
Sara Morgan | sm@socratessculpturepark.org | 415.845.1138 | bit.ly/MonumentsNow

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, Kiyan 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 “stool 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 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 famously 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 Freelander Artist Fellow in memory of Devra Freelander, 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.
Sculpture City, free making. Wilcox, Andrew Department Lambent Program Foundation. Major SUPPORT

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.


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.

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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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