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Yvonne Shortt, Jenna Boldebuck, & Kelly Li; *African American Marbleization—An Act of Civil Disobedience: Hair Sanctuary*, 2021. Image by Mayuko Fujino.

Thirteen artists offer their interpretations of sanctuary in *The 2021 Socrates Annual*, opening October 2, 2021 at Socrates Sculpture Park

Long Island City, NY, September 16, 2021 – During the past year and a half, places of sanctuary have been more important than ever. A new exhibition opening at Socrates Sculpture Park addresses several interpretations of sanctuary – as spaces of rest and protection; as sacred sites; and as supportive environments. Thirteen artists selected through an open call have created eleven new projects on this theme. Projects were created onsite at the Park’s outdoor studios with financial support and technical assistance as part of the Socrates Annual Fellowship.

The eleven projects selected represent a range of interpretations, drawing from diverse communities, traditions, and artistic strategies to create unique sculptures and installations. Several threads emerge throughout the exhibition, including practices of self-care, the spiritual elements of natural phenomena, and meditations on the conditions that necessitate sanctuary. Some projects provide space for mourning modes of oppression and acknowledge that sanctuaries are not always spaces free from fear.

For many of the artists sanctuary is not necessarily a fixed geographical location, but a time-bound space that is created and recreated against the backdrop of threats such as illness, climate change, the collapse of the social service systems, and violence of racism and colonialism. Sound – both musical and spoken words – situate and unite communities of sanctuary in many of these works, a visceral mode of communicating refuge.

Sanctuary: The 2021 Socrates Annual is on view October 2, 2021 – March 6, 2022. A public opening will take place at the Park on Saturday, October 2nd from 3-6 PM featuring a performance from artist Monsieur Zohore & composer Joshua Coyne at 5 PM.

ARTWORK DESCRIPTIONS

Rachel Frank*

Sentinel Offering Kernos: Woodcock, Oysters, Lichen

Stoneware ceramic, glazes, steel, epoxy, and spray paint

Rachel Frank continues her exploration of our changing ecological relationships with *Sentinel Offering Kernos: Woodcock, Oysters, Lichen*, a large-scale ceramic interpretation of an ancient Greek ringed offering vessel, whose cups held offerings of grain. In Frank's interpretation, the kernos' cups are envisioned in the forms of three local indicator species, whose health or absence offer early signals of environmental change. When filled with grain or water, birds and insects can find nourishment here. The kernos offers a haven, encouraging new ceremonies of ritual and community, inclusive of the local Greek community in Astoria, whose ancestors originated the kernos form.

**2021 Devra Freeland Artist Fellow*

Moko Fukuyama

Shrine

Salvaged oak tree, epoxy resin, acrylic urethane, gravel, landscape edging

Inspired by Shinto spiritualism, Moko Fukuyama's *Shrine* features a group of monolithic wooden sculptures evocative of the form and function of fishing lures. Shinto, Japan's indigenous religion, seeks to cultivate a harmonious relationship between humans, "kami" (deities), and the natural world. *Shrine* also draws upon Fukuyama's upbringing in Japan and her experience with recreational sport-fishing. The 'lures,' carved from logs whose curves, grain and burl inform Fukuyama's sculptural interventions, pay homage to the Shinto legacy of developing the character inherent within a landscape. As an immersive monument, *Shrine* presents fish and forests as symbols of natural abundance, susceptible to principles of scarcity. The oak tree used for the sculpture was donated by East Woods School in Oyster Bay, Long Island, repurposed after it was knocked down by Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Gi (Ginny) Huo

an act or an offering, what if?

Wood, vinyl, paint

Exploring ideas of belief and her own family's heritage, Huo's structure incorporates text and images referencing Mormonism and Korean Shamanism. A wooden archway, steps, and a ramp covered in vinyl landscapes, skyscapes, and words encourage participants to reflect on creating new narratives beyond colonized religious histories. As a part of the project, Huo is recording *What If? Belief Podcast*, which connects, archives, and amplifies the voices of QTBIPOC (Queer / Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) youth, adults, and seniors around how they navigate their own belief systems.

Anina Major

Haven No. 3

Wood, plexi, crushed shells, ceramic shards

Inspired by the structure made to safeguard activist Angela Davis at Madison Square Garden in 1972, Anina Major's *Haven No. 3* is a wood and plexiglass installation built to express the importance of protecting all Black women while simultaneously providing a place for stillness. The crushed shells and ceramic shards installed at the bed of the installation are recurring materials for the artist, who often references her Caribbean heritage.

Jeffrey Meris*

Catch a Stick of Fire II

Aluminum, hardware, glazed stoneware clay, coral bell plants, soil, sunlight, h2o, care

For Jeffrey Meris, self-care includes care for plants. Drawing from his personal ritual of "Self-Care Saturdays," Meris presents *Catch a Stick of Fire II*, an installation of arching aluminum tubes, ceramic vessels whose shape references the Mario character Bullet Bill holding coral bell plants. The branching plant-like sculptural form suggests regeneration and growth as necessary counters to systemic violence.

**New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow*

Levani (aka Levan Mindiashvili)

127.1 bpm (for my dancing peers)

Steel, laboratory hardware, stainless steel, palm tree buds casted in clear urethane resin, stainless steel powder and silicone gel, lights, sound

Celebrating the political, embodied sanctuary of the queer, underground dance floor, Levani's *127.1 bpm (for my dancing peers)* is a palm-leaf ornamented gate installation activated through dance. The artist considers how the pandemic emphasized the fragility of these spaces for marginalized communities and encountered new ways of gathering (including how "parks were the new clubs"). The sculpture's title references a particularly danceable beat per minute, a speed located within a range considered "magic" by DJs. For Levani, sanctuary is not a destination. Rather they envision it as a double-sided threshold, or portal. Collaborating with the co-creative platform and "Rave Sustainability Project" Rave Scout Cookies, the artist hosts a live DJ'ed dance party *Levani's Room: ecdysis*.

Andrea Ray

Rest Cure

Wood, concrete, speakers, audio equipment

Taking up research into the New York City harbor islands – including the nearby Roosevelt Island (previously known as Welfare Island) – as former sites for the quarantined, incarcerated, and infirm, Andrea Ray creates *Rest Cure*, an audio and participatory installation that invites visitors to recline and listen. A sound recording airs our related sense of alienation under COVID but transforms it to an expanded network of care. The project asks, can the withdrawal from society that the pandemic caused have created a new political subjectivity, one that acknowledges our entangled nature with all others?

LJ Roberts

sleeping with clenched fists, dreaming with clenched fists

Neon mounted on upcycled tornado box springs, eight-channel oscillator, metal

LJ Roberts's neon installation *sleeping with clenched fists, dreaming with clenched fists* translates those words into Yiddish and presents them on a pair of vintage tornado-style bed box springs. The work, which incorporates the handwriting of the artist's father, honors their Jewish heritage and more broadly immigrant communities in New York for which the city serves as sanctuary. The piece marks rest and dreaming as inseparable from both sanctuary and struggle.

Yvonne Shortt, Jenna Boldebuck, & Kelly Li

African American Marbleization-An Act of Civil Disobedience: Hair Sanctuary

Cement, Wood, Steel, Marble Dust, Porcelain, Water

Built with commonly-found cement bricks around a water feature, *African American Marbleization-An Act of Civil Disobedience: Hair Sanctuary* provides a place for reflection and conversation. The collaborative sculpture features hair picks and accompanying audio stories narrating a range of gendered and raced experiences, many celebrating hair and hair care as a kind of sanctuary. The project continues Shortt's series of sculptures *African American Marbleization*, which have often been installed guerilla-style in public spaces.

Monica Torres

Cueva | Cenote

Agua creativa, elementos de la tierra, brillante, alma y presión

(Creative waters, elements of the Earth, glitter, spirit, and pressure)

Cenotes are natural sinkholes of exposed groundwater made after the collapse of bedrock, most associated with the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico and the spiritual practices of the ancient Maya. With her sculpture *Cueva | Cenote*, Torres brings this geological site to Socrates, presenting a perfect circular environment visitors can immerse themselves in. The bottom of the trees surrounding the sculpture are painted white by the artist to represent the sacred Ceiba tree found in Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Peru.

**New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow*

Monsieur Zohore

MZ.19 (Patronus: For Mothers Who've Lost Their Sons & Sons That Lost Their Mothers)

3-D printed polyethylene terephthalate glycol

MZ.19 is a new performative sculptural installation consisting of two glowing 3D-printed statues, one of the Virgin Mary and one of the deer Bambi from the 1942 Disney film. Named after the charm which produces silver protective guardians from the Harry Potter series and connected to George Floyd's last plea for his mother, the figures are memorials intended to create a sanctuary born of light. Zohore commissioned composer Joshua Coyne to develop a score to accompany the works and become the site for a discrete musical performance of Coyne's *Visions of Mary* during the opening, at 5 PM.

**New York Community Trust Van Lier Artist Fellow*

ABOUT THE SOCRATES ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP & EXHIBITION

The Socrates Annual Fellowship (formerly the Emerging Artist Fellowship) and exhibition reflects Socrates' founding commitment to artistic experimentation and excellence. Artists are selected through an open call and receive financial support, access to our outdoor studios, and technical assistance to create new public artworks for inclusion in a Park-wide exhibition.

In 2021, eleven artist projects were selected from over 350 submitted proposals. Participating on the selection committee were two curatorial advisors: Emma Enderby, Chief Curator at The Shed and Lauren Argentina Zelaya, Director of Public Programs at the Brooklyn Museum; as well as former Executive Director, John Hatfield; Curator & Director of Exhibitions, Jess Wilcox and former Curatorial Assistant, Danilo Machado.

SUPPORT

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ABOUT SOCRATES

For 35 years, Socrates Sculpture Park has been a model of public art production, community activism, and socially inspired place-making. Over 1,200 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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