

Julie Morel – **Neutral Ground**

Proposal for the Design Advisory Committee

- Brief description of the project
- Context map and photographs of the site
- Photographs of the art piece to be installed
- Materials to be used, general maintenance
- Duration of the project / Planning
- Additional material

Brief description of the project

The purpose of this project is to create an ephemeral visual artwork on one of the neutral grounds of New Orleans. This work will interrogate the functions of these communal spaces, as they are known to be strong cultural, social, and racial markers of identity and community, specific both to the past and present history of New Orleans. This project is the first step to a larger project that will culminate in 2018 with the New Orleans tercentennial, in partnership with the Mint. It will take place in two phases.

The first phase of the project focuses on the artistic work itself (see image next page). The art piece is created specifically for the neutral ground allocated for the project (see context map and photographs of the site). Concretely, this art piece will include a sculptural piece, plants, and two wooden benches. The sculpture itself will take the form of a sentence hanging between two trees on the neutral ground. The sentence will read “No Neutral Ground in the Universe?” This sentence references a quote by C. S. Lewis* stating very authoritatively “There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God, and counterclaimed by Satan.” This rhetorical question alludes to C. S. Lewis’s quote while allowing observers to answer the question on their own, thus constructing their own meaning of the piece.

The typeface created specifically for this occasion and the text will be written with Mardi Gras beads. The beads outline the typeface, leaving an impression of transparency and lightness. While the Mardi Gras beads reflect the rhetorical dimension of the art piece, a flower bed of native Louisiana plants will provide the organic dimension of the work. Located underneath the sentence, the flowerbed is to be viewed as an existing, visual, and social sculptural work, representing an aesthetic point of view. This performative re-appropriation of space will follow exchanges about the use and functions of neutral grounds between the artist, the residents of the community in which the neutral ground is located, and the institutions involved in the project.

While the project will result in the beautification of the neutral ground, the project’s primary purpose is to create a tangible object observers can connect with because of its specific medium of creation common to New Orleans life and culture (beads, plants, wood), and to draw attention to the functions and characteristics of the NOLA neutral grounds.

The second phase of the Neutral Ground project is grounded in in-depth research about the meaning, history, and geography of neutral grounds in the city, through fieldwork and archival work at The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC) and the Mint (Louisiana State Museum collection), both project partners. This inquiry will facilitate the documentation and knowledge of the local context of the project, and will be the basis for a new artistic proposal, to be realized in 2015-2016 in collaboration with the Mint.

Clive Staples Lewis was a 20th century irish novelist, poet, medievalist, essayist and lay theologian who is most known for writing « The Chronicles of Marnia ».

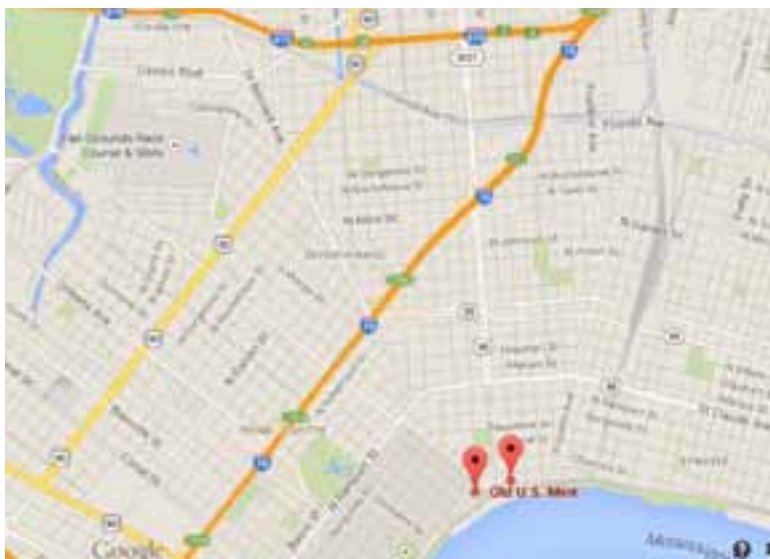


Example of the installation, quick drawing of possible set up.

Context map and photographs of the site

The site chosen for the artwork is the neutral ground situated on Esplanade Ave/Decatur, across from the Mint. This neutral ground was chosen using the following criteria:

- A simple ground with trees, no lawn,
- An unused/parched or misused neutral ground,
- An area centrally located,
- Size requirements: minimum 5 yards in width, maximum 50 yards in length,
- Easily accessible to pedestrians, to allow the inclusion of a seating area,
- A neutral ground on which an artwork does not obstruct drivers' view of traffic or where traffic is fairly slow.



Map and pictures of the site.
Neutral ground on Esplanade Ave/Decatur,
opposite the MINT

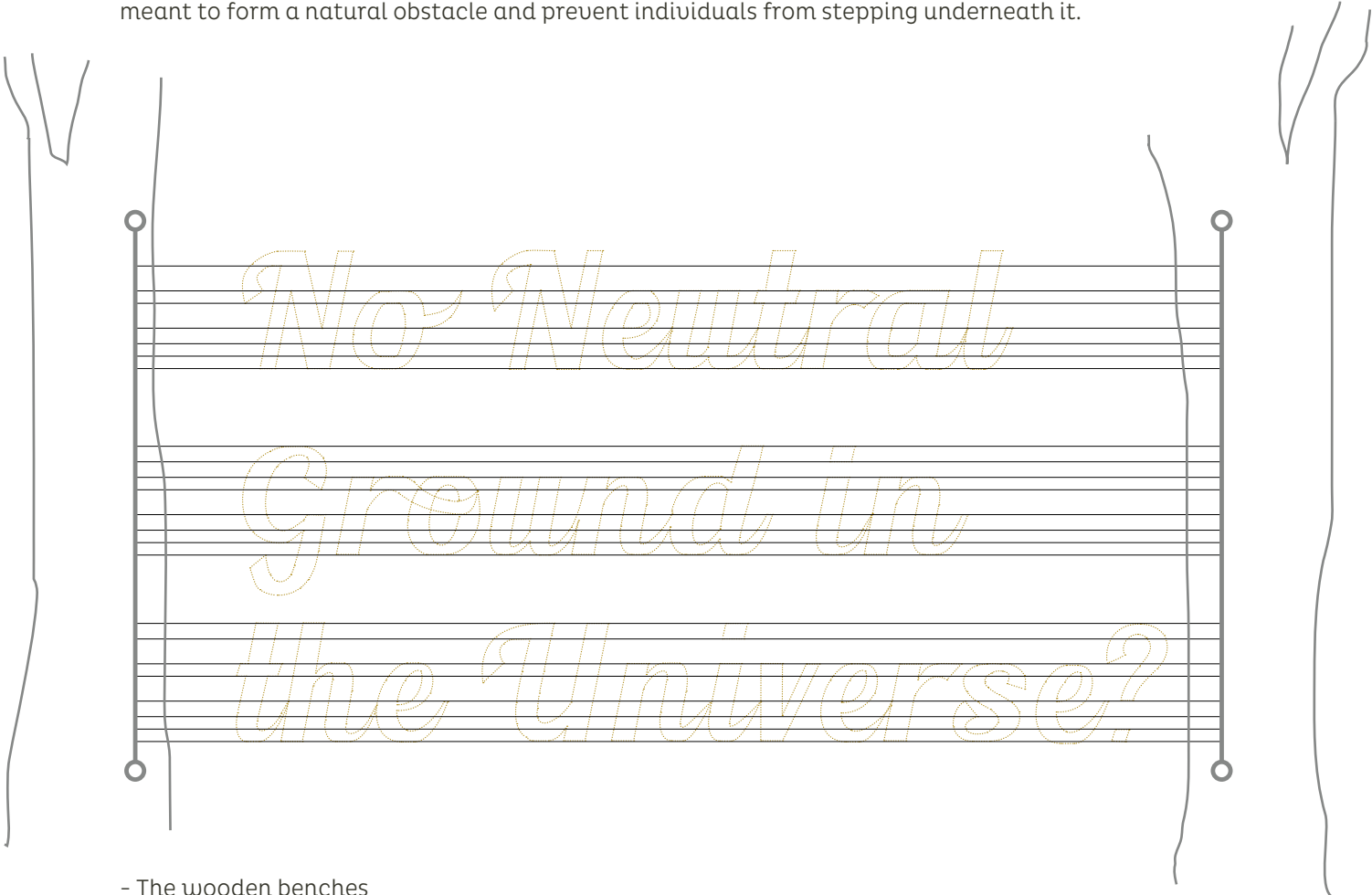
Materials to be used, general maintenance

- The sentence

Two metal cables are fixed to the trees. The cables hold a grid of solid transparent threads (similar to solid fishing lines) to which the Mardi Gras beads are fixed.

Letter size: 9 inch (largest) x 19 inch (highest).

The structure is placed high enough so it is not reachable. Underneath the structure, the plants are meant to form a natural obstacle and prevent individuals from stepping underneath it.

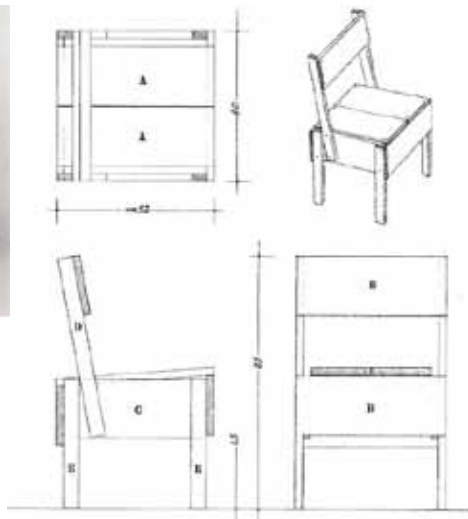


- The wooden benches

The benches are a modification of Enzo Mari's open source chair design. They are constructed with treated marine pinewood, and varnished.

Size: 33,46 inch x 19,69 inch x 47,24 inch.

Weight: 88lb.



- The plants

The plants are native to Louisiana, and are either already available on the neutral ground or donated through neighborhood associations. The ultimate selection of these plants will be informed by Parks and Parkways and the New Orleans Botanical Garden.

Height and shape are defined by site restrictions.

Maintenance is minimal: there is no watering or trimming necessary as the chosen plants are self-sufficient and will not exceed a certain height.

Potential choices include, but are not limited to reeds, Colocasia (Thai Elephant ears), and Yucca trees.



Duration of the project

Total duration of the project : 6 months, after which the project will be dismantled.

- November 2014: research at the Mint and THNOC, meeting with partners and Art Council representatives, presentation to P&P (3rd December).
- Last week of December: construction of benches.
- 6th December: potluck on the neutral ground with neighborhood associations, presentation of the project, plant donation.
- 8th - 18th December: production of the artwork (off-site).
- 19th - 23rd December: implantation of the artwork.
- 27th - 29th December: planting, implantation of benches.
- 3rd January: opening of the installation.
- End of the project, early June 2014: installation is taken appart under the supervision of the Mint, plants remains on the ground.

THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION
KEMPER AND LEILA WILLIAMS FOUNDATION
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PRISCILLA LAWRENCE
Executive Director

March 10, 2014

To whom it may concern:

We at The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC), a not-for-profit museum, research center and publisher, have studied and considered the proposal by Julie Morel, instructor from the École des Beaux Arts de Lorient, France, for a collaborative research/artistic project on the public and private spaces constituted by New Orleans's 'neutral grounds' (medians), focusing on the creation of community gardens as a means of cultural expression, and are writing this letter to indicate our support.

Specifically, for the project, THNOC will provide Ms. Morel and any of her students who may be involved with the project with the following:

- access to THNOC's archives of historic maps, plans, photographs and manuscripts, and to any books (including rare books) in our library concerning the origin, structure and evolution of neighborhoods, streets, neutral grounds and gardens in New Orleans;
- research assistance in identifying and locating pertinent materials found in said archives;
- introductions to some of the many researchers of our acquaintance who have expertise in these fields of study;
- in general, any assistance we can offer that will facilitate the project, for example, help with correctly completing and submitting local requests for permits if required.

We believe this to be an entirely worthwhile project in the study and understanding of our city's culture, and that it can serve as a basis for additional research and educational opportunities well beyond its immediate structural and temporal scope.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Lawrence



JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF STATE MUSEUM

CHARLES R. DAVIS
DEPUTY SECRETARY

MARK A. TULLOS, JR.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 28, 2014

Fanny Rolland
Chargée de mission Pôle Résidences
Département Développement et Partenariats
Institut français
8-14 rue du Capitaine Scott
750015 Paris

Dear Ms. Rolland,

Julie Morel, an artist based in Paris, contacted me last December while she was visiting New Orleans. We met to discuss various projects when she found an interest in the archives of the Louisiana Historical Center. We later corresponded about the resources at the Historical Center and the history of New Orleans in a contemporary context. We have been in regular contact since.

Ms. Morel sent us her proposal for "Neutral grounds", her proposed project for the "Résidences Américaines". As we find the project concept both artistically and historically interesting and are confident in Ms. Morel's abilities, we would like to offer our support as partner for this project.

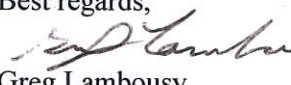
The Louisiana Historical Center, which is located in the New Orleans Mint and is the archive of the Louisiana State Museum, is the largest repository of historical materials related to New Orleans. We host researchers from France and other parts of the world on a regular basis and have internships established with the French Heritage Society, the Ecole des chartes, Ecole du Louvre and others.

We will act as a partner by providing any assistance to facilitate the project, either by allowing access to our research materials or by introducing researchers, local authorities, and others who can help realize the project goals. The Louisiana Historical Center houses the French judicial and notarial records of the colony from 1714-1803 and a large collection of architectural and related documents and plans. These materials will be available to Ms. Morel to help find possible locations for the project.

It is our hope that this project will lead to a long-term relationship and will aid us in our efforts leading to the celebrations and interpretations of the tricentennial of the Founding of New Orleans in 2018.

Please let me know if I can provide further information.

Best regards,


Greg Lambousy
Director of Collections
Louisiana State Museum
1000 Chartres Street
New Orleans, LA 70116