

Julie Morel – **Neutral Ground**

Proposal for the Design Advisory Committee

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Brief description of the project

The purpose of this project is to develop an ephemeral visual artwork on one of the Neutral Grounds of New Orleans. This work will interrogate the contemporary issues at stake in these communal spaces, focusing on the fact that they are strong cultural, social and racial markers of identity and community, specific both to the passed and recent history of New Orleans.

This will happen in two phases:

- The first phase of the *Neutral Ground* project is grounded in in-depth research, on site through both fieldwork and archival historical work at The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC) and the Mint (Louisiana State Museum collection), partners of the project.

This inquiry will facilitate the documentation and the development of this proposal contextually.

- The second phase of the project focuses on the artistic work itself, with the production of the art piece on a neutral ground specifically allocated for the project (see *context map and photographs of the site*).

Gardening/Landscaping is the main element of this project. Here gardening is to be viewed as an existing, visual, and social sculptural work, representing an aesthetic point of view, as well as a critical, political view on this public space.

This performative re-appropriation process will take place following exchanges between the artist, the residents of the community in which the neutral ground is located, and with the institutions involved in the project.

The sculpture/space thus created will be a tangible object for everyone to become aware of this specific medium of creation, one that crystallizes a number of stakes through an open, material and "live" form.



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

Final words and shape are to be defined after research at our partners.

Concretely, this sculptural work will take the form of an abstract shape or a word/sentence written in 3D with plants. These vegetal creations do not need to be grounded permanently in the ground. They can be elevated as if they were suspended in the air.

The various native grassy tufts, either plain ones or mixed with local bromeliads and/or flowery gramineae are to grow on a light structure, a method that has been previously used by gardeners and artists (see examples in *Material to be used*). The selection of specific plants will be informed by Parks and Parkways and the New Orleans Botanical Garden.

Height and shape are to be defined depending on site restrictions, and adapted to the chosen ground. Final word(s) and shape are to be defined after research at our partners but they will be a visual

representation/translation of the narratives from the various individuals involved in the project and their use of the neutral ground (residents, institutions, and artist).

Even though its primary purpose will result in the beautification of the chosen neutral ground, the work produced will have an ephemeral life of about five months, including the month of production and growing time.

Once this first project is achieved, a broader proposition for the 2018 New Orleans tercentennial celebrations will be planned, in partnership with the Mint.

Duration of the project

Total duration of the project : 5 months, after which the project will be dismantled.

Phase one, November 2014 : research at the Mint and THNOC, meeting with partners

Phase two, Mid-November to December 2014 : production and implantation of the artwork, maintenance by the artist

Phase three, December to March 2014 : rowing of plants, maintenance by the Mint and/or P&P

End of the project, early April 2014 : project is taken apart under the supervision of the Mint and/or P&P.

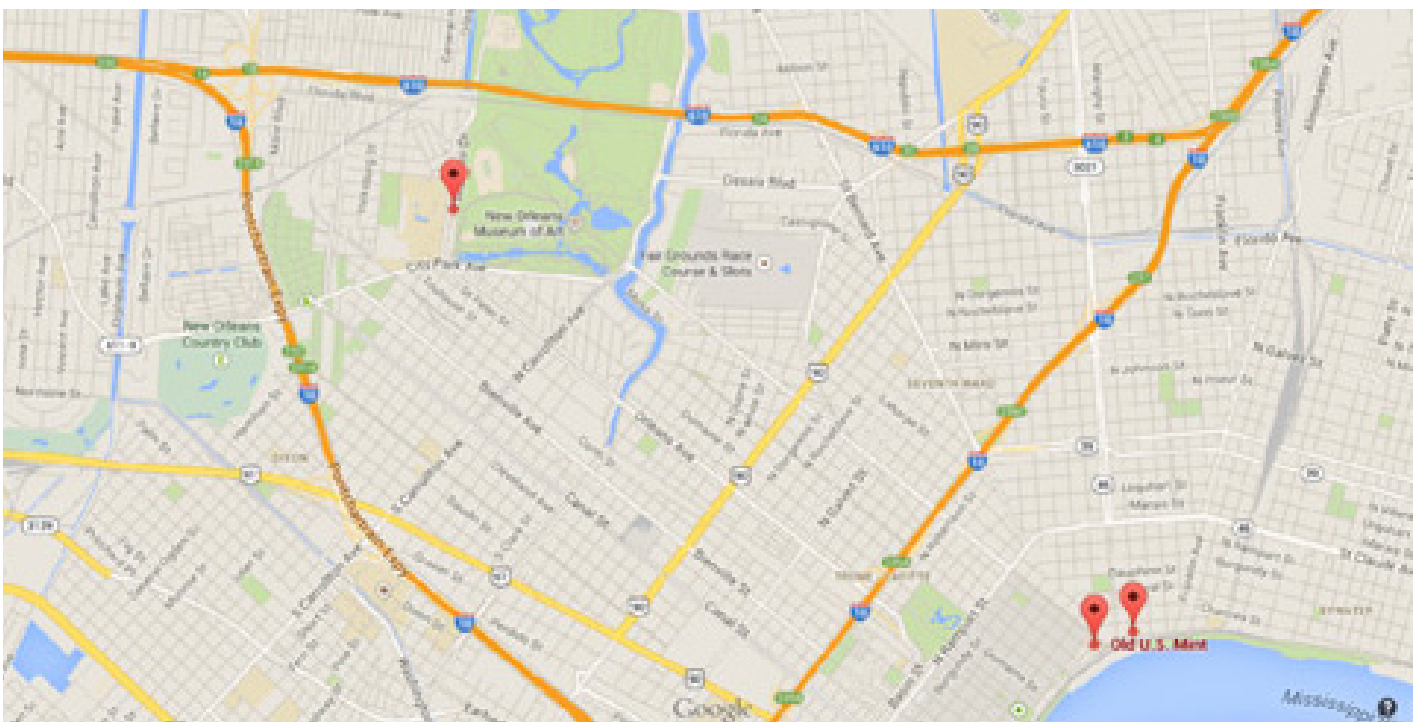
Context map and photographs of the site

The 3 possible implantations of the piece are listed here, in preferred order:

- Neutral ground on Esplanade Ave/Decatur
- Neutral ground on Elysian Fields Ave/Decatur
- Neutral ground on Marconi Dr. near City Park (around Victory ave)

Theses 3 neutral grounds were chosen following these criteria :

- A simple lawn with or without trees (preferably with trees)
- An unused or misused neutral ground, or an unused/parched space
- In an area located centrally
- Size requirements : minimum width around 5 yards, maximum length around 50 yards
- Easily accessible to pedestrian
- A neutral ground on which an artwork would not obstruct drivers' view of traffic or where traffic is slow enough.



The 3 possible sites :

- Neutral ground on Esplanade Ave/Decatur
- Neutral ground on Elysian Fields Ave/Decatur
- Neutral ground on Marconi Dr. /Victory ave



Materials to be used, general maintenance

The installation consists of geotextiles (bidim) specifically designed for this kind of use. These textile tubes are filled with soil and seeds of local grass and gramineae, and are shaped as wished : curves, letters or abstract forms.

The gramineae will grow to maturity over a period of 4 months. All the selected plants will be in shades of green so they can integrate well to the setting.

Depending on the final location, these filled geotextiles will either :

- Be suspended high up from the surrounding trees, with cables suitable to their weight
- Attached and growing on a bamboo structure solidly anchored in the ground

Maintenance is but minimal : it consist of watering and if needed, trimming.

Additional material

1. Examples of similar experiments

To help you understand the possibility of such structures, please find below examples of structures which were already produced in public space by various artists.

Top:

A example of structure to receive plants (Daniela Borroni, Susanna Rossellini & Simona Venturelli). A work by Luc Boniface, realized with grass and cable on a wooden frame.

Middle: Details of the start and evolution of gramineae after a period of 3 months.

Bottom: cables anchored to a wall, structure reusing vegetable crates.



2. Examples of previous realisations by the artist in public space

Top / Iceberg.

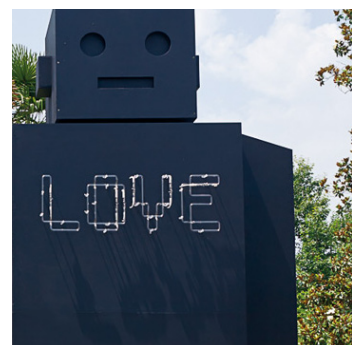
Material: assamblage of styrofoam.

Size: 3m x 1m80

Bottom / Robot and neon light.

Material : plywood on a wood frame structure, traditional neon light and sensors for on/off.

Size: 5m x 3m



THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION
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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