

ARTFORUM



Artist Nicole Awai's poster design for Reclaimed-Water-CC'd. Photo: Nicole Awai.
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HIGH LINE INVITES ARTISTS TO IMAGINE NEW MONUMENTS

The nonprofit organization Friends of the High Line is launching a new initiative that asks artists to imagine what monuments should look like today. Five artists from five cities—Austin, Chicago, Houston, New York, and Toronto—were asked to design posters portraying their ideas for new public artworks. The proposals will be part

of a traveling exhibition for which the posters will be projected at industrial reuse spaces in each location.

Called “New Monuments for New Cities” the project was conceived last year as the national debate over the removal of Confederate-era monuments intensified. “As memorials to the deeply imbalanced history of the Western world are being torn down, the current moment demands critical thought and creativity about the monuments that adorn our cities,” Cecilia Alemani, the director and chief curator of High Line Art, said in a statement. “These proposals from today’s artists offer an inspiring range of vision for how we might eternalize this point in society’s progress.”

Among the proposals submitted was artist Nicole Awai’s rendering of a street drain in the shape of Christopher Columbus’s profile that reads “Reclaimed Water.” While the fifteenth-century Italian explorer is famous for leading

some of the earliest expeditions to the Americas, his legacy also includes the massacre of indigenous people. Statues of the colonist have recently been the sites of protests across North America. Announced earlier this year, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's decision to keep the iconic statue of Columbus at Columbus Circle in Manhattan has been widely contested. While Awai's poster directly confronts the controversy over public monuments, others challenge the notion of what constitutes public art.

Artists participating in the project include Regina Agu, Judith Bernstein, Daniela Cavazos Madrigal, Jamal Cyrus, Eric J. García, the Guerrilla Girls, Coco Guzman, Hans Haacke, An Te Liu, Chris Pappan, Denise Prince, Phillip Pyle, II, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Xaviera Simmons. The exhibition will first open at the Buffalo Bayou in Houston, Texas, in February 2019, and will later travel to the Waller Creek in Austin, Texas; the 606 in Chicago; and the Bentway in Toronto, before it ends its run at the High Line in New York.