

Social Dress New Orleans – 730 Days After

Public Art Installation by Takashi Horisaki

Socrates Sculpture Park, NYC

Free and open to the public

3201 Vernon Blvd (at Broadway) in Long Island City, Queens

Exhibition Dates: July 29 - October 28th, 2007

Displayed on the East River overlooking the New York skyline, Social Dress New Orleans – 730 Days After is a ghostly full-scale latex replica of a demolished Lower Ninth Ward shotgun-style home.

Sculptor and performance artist Takashi Horisaki (b. 1974, Japan) announces the exhibition of his latest installation at Socrates Sculpture Park. The culmination of a three-month effort at 1941 Caffin Avenue, located in the still-devastated Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, *Social Dress New Orleans – 730 Days After* opened Sunday July 29th in Long Island City, Queens. It will remain on view through October 28.



Beautifully juxtaposing the bustling New York skyline with physical remnants of destruction in New Orleans, Horisaki has envisioned a way to make this tragedy tangible to those far removed from the disaster. It is the artist's hope that his project will inspire further support for Louisiana's recovery efforts.

Tuesday, July 11th, marked the completion of Horisaki's mold casting and peeling process in New Orleans. He applied layers of latex mixed with paint to create a textured 3-D print of a house that was demolished by the US Army Corps of Engineers only hours after the completion of Horisaki's production. The fabric-like rubber skin was then transported and hung on a steel-and-wire frame, mimicking the shape and dimensions of the original structure. Horisaki worked with great urgency to complete the project, racing against ambiguous deadlines imposed by City Hall. Under the impending threat of demolition, Horisaki mobilized a community of active Louisiana artists, friends and volunteers to complete the casting. Since the project's inception this spring, the struggle for the artwork's creation has been documented on the artist's blog (<http://socialdress-neworleans.blogspot.com>).

In March Horisaki was granted permission by former residents to use the property, but soon afterward learned of the Army Corps' plan to level the house. Situated in an area of the Lower Ninth Ward heavily damaged by the storm and in danger of collapse, 1941 Caffin Ave had been scheduled for demolition on the very week Horisaki was to begin production. Uncertain how to legally complete his project in time, Horisaki worked with lawyer Bruce G. Whittaker, who read about the art project in the New Orleans' *Times Picayune*. Whittaker volunteered to negotiate with the city to delay demolition until the completion of the latex mold, while the US Army Corps of Engineers kept Horisaki apprised of any changes to the demolition schedule.

Beyond the political troubles of the city, illustrated by his own struggles with the city government, Horisaki's concern extends to the preservation of the coastal wetlands in the Gulf area. In his project blog, Horisaki writes, "Every day working at the house I can see so many lizards, bugs and creatures that I have never seen in other places. There is a variety of life that is unique to this place. It is rather beautiful, but it will disappear if the wetlands erode."

Having spent his first three years in America living in New Orleans and earning a BFA from Loyola University, but currently residing in New York, Horisaki sees himself as a sort of bridge. "A former professor told me how difficult it is for him to make his own artwork still, and so I wondered if I— a neutral observer, not exactly an outsider, but with some distance and perspective on the situation —could express their feelings through my sculpture."

Exposing a few of the complex social, political and environmental systems at work within this fragile landscape, Horisaki's project explores contemporary terrain shared by Gordon Matta-Clark, Christo, Maya Lin, and Robert Smithson. *Social Dress New Orleans – 730 Days After* monumentalizes the tragedies endured by past and present Louisiana residents by confronting viewers with a concrete example of the scale of the disaster in New Orleans. In the artist's words, "This piece is not a look at what was, this is what is."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About Recovery in Louisiana

Almost two years ago on August 31, 2005, eighty percent of New Orleans was flooded by storm surges following Hurricane Katrina, destroying over 200,000 properties. While many residents have expressed interest in rebuilding, only about 22% of applications for Road Home grants – a program providing capital for homeowners with hurricane damage – have gone to closing as of August 2007, a full year after the inception of the program and nearly two years after Hurricane Katrina. Both the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans East Plaza are still threatened by hurricanes due to their proximity to the canal system, including the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), whose levees were breached in 2005. Congress originally authorized construction of the MRGO in 1956 as a quicker route between the Gulf of Mexico and the Port of New Orleans, although local residents have long opposed its existence due to the danger it poses in the form of increased storm surges and destruction to the protective wetlands. In March 2007 the City of New Orleans announced plans to accelerate the rebuilding effort, identifying 17 targeted recovery zones. The 1941 Caffin Avenue property lies within one of the two zones most in need of an organized reconstruction effort. In May 2007 the US Army Corps of Engineers announced a decision to plug the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), in an effort to mitigate possible flooding of these two areas in during future hurricanes. Officials now say that a dam could be built by the start of next hurricane season, if Congress approves construction plans quickly.

About Takashi Horisaki:

Currently residing in Queens, NY, Takashi Horisaki (b.1974, Japan) earned his Bachelors of Fine Art in 2003 from Loyola University in New Orleans. He holds a Masters of Fine Art from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri and a Bachelors of Art from Waseda University in Tokyo. Horisaki's practice is a sculptural exploration of surfaces and the histories contained within their layers. Working with materials ranging from liquid latex and paint to plastic, wood, paper, and rudimentary electronics, Horisaki designs performative systems and object-making processes that become metaphors for the effects of time on our bodies and our environments. Horisaki's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at locations including the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis; Murray Guy Gallery, New York; SCOPE London; Flux Factory Inc, Queens; The LAB Gallery, San Francisco; Elliot Smith Contemporary Art Gallery, St. Louis; Collins C. Diboll Art Gallery, New Orleans; Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans, and the International Sculpture Center Annual Conference. He is the recipient of various awards including the Dedalus Foundation Master of Fine Arts Fellowship and the Laura and William Scholarship at Washington University. Recently he received the Socrates Sculpture Park *Open Space* program grant.

About Socrates Sculpture Park:

Socrates Sculpture Park was an abandoned riverside landfill and illegal dumpsite until 1986 when a coalition of artists and community members, under the leadership of artist Mark di Suvero, transformed it into an open studio and exhibition space for artists and a neighborhood park for local residents. Today it is an internationally renowned outdoor museum and artist residency program that also serves as a vital New York City park offering a wide variety of public services. Socrates Sculpture Park is the only site in the New York Metropolitan area specifically dedicated to providing artists with opportunities to create and exhibit large-scale work in a unique environment that encourages strong interaction between artists, artworks and the public. The Park's existence is based on the belief that reclamation, revitalization and creative expression are essential to the survival, humanity and improvement of our urban environment.

Socrates Sculpture Park is located at 3201 Vernon Blvd (at Broadway) in Long Island City. The grounds are open 365 days a year from 10:00 AM to sunset. Admission is free.

More Information:

www.socialdress-neworleans.blogspot.com
www.takashihorisaki.com
www.socratessculpturepark.org
www.nola.com

Contacts:

Takashi Horisaki studio:
socialdress@gmail.com

Socrates Sculpture Park:
info@socratessculpturepark.org
Tel. (718) 956-1819

The artist is grateful for contributions made by: Socrates Sculpture Park, Rochelle Alfaro, Jessica Bizer, Gerald Cannon, Leon and Terry Christens, Paul Chan, Robert & Sawako Gensure, Max G. Hommel, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Don Marshall, Materials for the Arts, Robert & Sharon Pettus, Michael Rousey, Community Center of St. Bernard, Lee & Michael White, Jazz Foundation of America, Jazzmobile, and Cementex Latex Corp (10% of total latex)

and for the generosity of: Laura Blereau, Mark Carty, Charisse Celino, John and Debi Christens, Luis Cormenaris, Mary Len Costa, Sean Derry, Courtney Egan, Jan Gilbert, Mark Grote, Sharon Lambert, Ambarish Manepalli, Gene Meneray, Ian Rousey, Penny Stallings and Barry Secunda, Abigail Shelton, Glenda Swetson, Richard Tugwell, Elizabeth Underwood, Jurgen Vogt, Stephanie Vu, Brooke Wehner, Bruce Whittaker, Evenstar, Inc., Loyola University New Orleans, US Army Corps of Engineers, Art Council of New Orleans, Vestiges Project / CAC, P.S. Marcato Elevator Co., Inc., North of New Orleans, Sweet Home New Orleans, and many anonymous donors

and his onsite super helpers: James Goedert, Tuyen Nguyen, Rebecca Parker, Kyle Throsselle, Connie Swann, Kimberly Ajamiseba, Kyle Bravo, Marla Kristicevich, Jenny LeBlanc, David Guevara, Christopher Derris, Stu Hollins, Tuyet Nguyen, Stephanie Parker, Stephen C.M. Quick, Alessandra Molli, John Nguyen, Christina Natividad

and extends special thanks to his wife, Andrea Horisaki-Christens

-###-