



Everything New Orleans

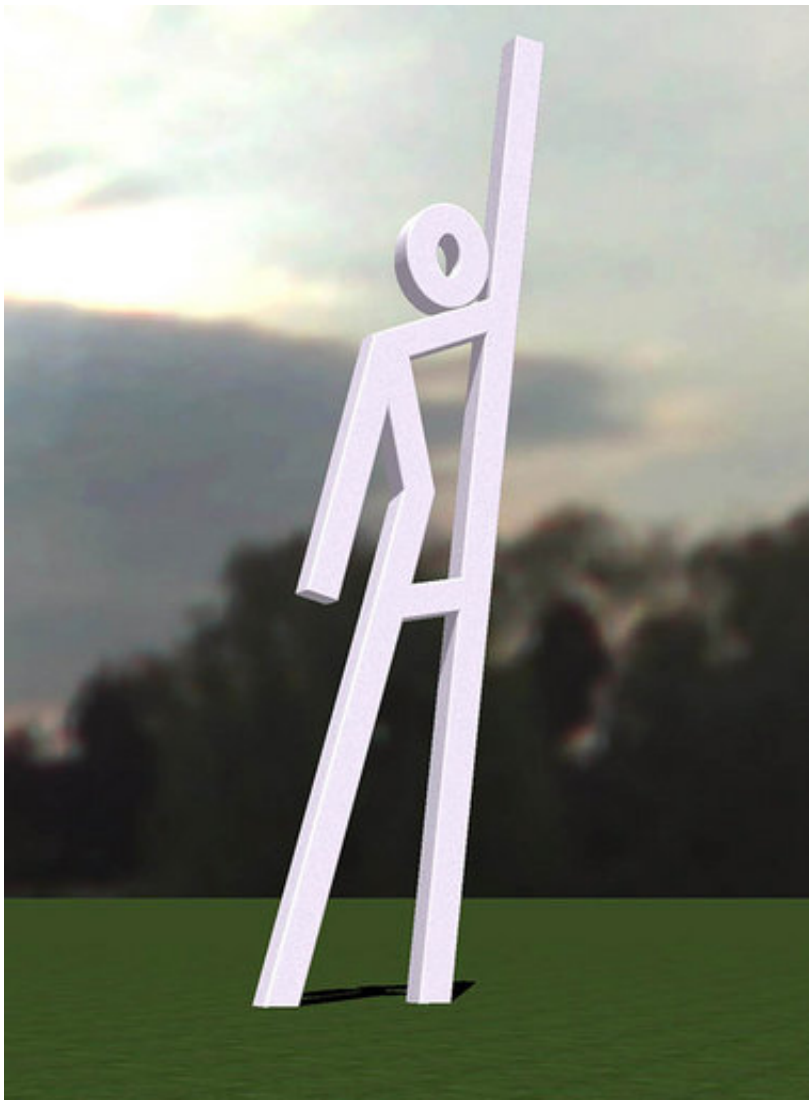
Hurricane evacuation pickup spots to feature tall steel artwork

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By **Michelle Krupa, The Times-Picayune**

After city officials decided there was no safe place in New Orleans to shelter residents during a major hurricane, they created **a bus system to shuttle evacuees from 17 neighborhood pickup spots** to the Union Passenger Terminal, where residents could board charter buses to state-designated shelters.



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'Wave' by Douglas Kornfeld will serve as an icon at mustering points where people will gather for transportation out of New Orleans in case of an emergency.

But when Hurricane Gustav blew through in 2008, many complained they didn't know where to catch the free ride.

Starting this year, finding the pickup locations, dubbed EvacuSpots, should be far less confounding thanks to the installation of identical, 12-foot sculptures at sites citywide.

The pieces, made of white stainless steel tubes, resemble a three-dimensional stick figure with its left arm raised above its O-shaped head as if hailing a cab or bus.

Dubbed "Wave" by Cambridge, Mass., artist **Douglas Kornfeld**, the sculpture recently was selected through a national competition sponsored by the **Arts Council of New Orleans** and the group **Evacuteer.org**, which recruits volunteers -- mostly young adults -- to help manage the public evacuation program before they leave town themselves.

"I wanted something that would gather your attention but wouldn't be scary," Kornfeld said by phone this week. "I know EvacuSpots is

about the terrible event of evacuation in an emergency, but I also wanted it to have the spirit of New Orleans.

"Everyone is so friendly. Everyone is so smiley," he said. "You have this Southern gentility and hospitality, and I think a waving motion speaks to that."

'Meet me there, Mister'

Since winning the public art contest, Kornfeld added that he's been told his figure calls to mind a Carnival reveler reaching up for a strand of beads.

"I said, 'Oh, my God! We have to put a hook on the end of these so people can throw beads at it,'" he said.

The artist will earn \$200,000 -- about three-quarters of it already in hand -- to complete 16 figures for installation at pickup points including Palmer Park in Carrollton and the Arthur Mondy Center in Algiers.

One "flagship figure," rising 18 feet into the air, also is expected to be erected in "a very prominent location," though the site hasn't been chosen yet, he said.

The Arts Council will seek approval from the city's Design Advisory and Planning Advisory committees before installing the sculptures, said Morgana King, the organization's director of public art.

Evacueer founder Robert Fogarty, who has nicknamed Kornfeld's figure the "Meet me there, Mister," hatched the public art concept as a way to spread the word about the **City-Assisted Evacuation Plan**.

"How do we prepare a city for something that doesn't enter your consciousness every day and typically not until it is an immediate threat?" he said recently in an email.

'We're signed out'

By positioning the sculptures near existing bus stops that double as evacuation pickup points, Fogarty hopes those who may need the service will have seen the sculptures hundreds of times before the next hurricane.



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Chris Granger, The Times-Picayune archive

Hurricane Gustav evacuees return to Union Passenger Terminal on Sept. 5, 2008.

But why not just enlarge or brighten the rectangular signs that currently designate the evacuation pick-up spots?

"We're signed out, as society goes," Fogarty said. "These 17 pickup points are too important to get lost in our collective clutter.

"People may think the waving guys are beautiful, and other may think they're ugly," he said. "In either scenario, they at least remember where it was -- and that's what matters."

Read more

- **Read the report on Evacuteer.org from The New York Times**

For now, Fogarty is focused on raising the final \$50,000 to complete the project.

The Arts Council's Percent for Art Program, which under city law receives 1 percent of eligible capital bonds sold by the city, has committed \$100,000 to the effort, with the remaining money coming from the local architecture firm of Eskew+Dumez+Ripple and some 500 online donors.

Kornfeld said he will begin work in coming weeks.

"I think once we get going, that last piece of the puzzle will fall into place."

At least a few sculptures are expected to be in place by the June 1 start of hurricane season, organizers said.

Storm-proofed sculptures

Massive machines that cut and bend metal will craft the pieces, Kornfeld said, adding that he hopes to contract with a fabricator in the New Orleans area "to keep the money in the community."

As for their height and girth, Kornfeld said he's not worried that his pieces will founder in the very hurricanes they aim to help residents escape.

"There will be a gigantic piece of concrete underground that will be supporting this," he said. "These will not be susceptible to hurricane winds. These will be one of the last things standing."

"Wave" becomes the latest in a long series of public art projects in Kornfeld's portfolio.

Among them is a 2006 installation outside the St. Petersburg Judicial Center in St. Petersburg, Fla. Titled "Face the Jury," it comprises 13 oversize red steel chairs scattered over a half-acre site, a dozen that represent the diverse members of a jury and one for the defendant.

Another, the 2010 "Who are You?" exhibit at the Indiana State University Art Gallery, features giant versions of the international symbol for male painted on the walls surrounding urinals. A nearby ladies' room features vinyl

decals of the iconic female symbol on vanity mirrors.

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