

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A DALLAS DRINKING FOUNTAIN PROJECT

lauren woods

Launches November 15, 2013

An interactive, **new media monument** for **Dallas County** offers an unusual perspective on **civil rights history**



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Dallas, Texas, October 18, 2013—For decades, a seemingly innocuous metal plate attached to a marble wall hung above a public drinking fountain in the **Dallas County Records Building**.

One day in 2003, it fell off.

A public outcry ensued as people learned what that metal plate was meant to cover up: traces of a Jim Crow “**White Only**” sign that was removed during desegregation.

The metal plate inadvertently preserved a memory that it was meant to help erase...

A DALLAS DRINKING FOUNTAIN PROJECT, created by conceptual artist lauren woods, is a novel public artwork in three parts launching in Dallas County.

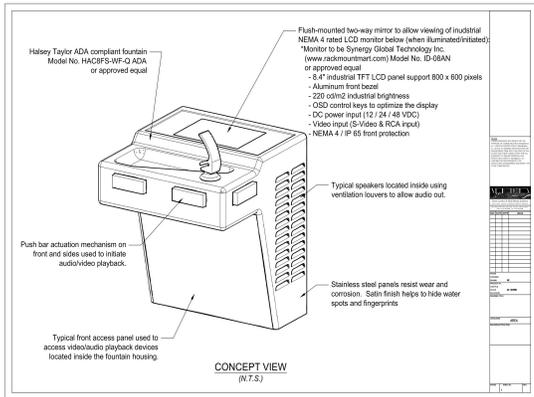
The highlight of this ambitious work is the unveiling of *Drinking Fountain #1* an interactive interventionist new media monument on November 15, 2013 from 12-1pm. The monument will reside on the first floor of the Dallas County Records Building located at 509 Main Street, Dallas, TX 75202 near the John F. Kennedy Memorial.

A transformed, yet still functional, public drinking fountain at the Records Building triggers a projection of digitally-altered newsreel footage of 1960s civil rights protests under the remains of the rediscovered Jim Crow sign. Visitors to the building unknowingly initiate this meditation on history, heroism, civic duty and social change as they attempt to sip water from the seemingly normal drinking fountain. Upon activation, the water flow is suspended for the duration of a 15-second video, resuming after it ends. The sculpture is accessible to the public during normal operating hours of the building.

A DALLAS DRINKING FOUNTAIN PROJECT utilizes the residue from the “White Only” sign to activate a public conversation in Dallas/Fort Worth on the historic Civil Rights Movement. The project wants to shine a bright light on efforts in DFW and by doing so join the larger U.S. movement that is currently examining contemporary public interactions that reveal the residue of segregation. The *re-revealing* of the Jim Crow sign becomes a poignant metaphor as racism and denial of civil rights continue to exist at the structural level in present society.

The project raises many questions including:

- What is a thoughtful way to respect the role of history in our national life, understanding historical and current choices for transient political gain or avoidance of painful subjects?
- When traces of societal racism are found, what collective action is productive for addressing the tendency publicly?
- Which historical voices remain present over time?
- How can public art offer a new relationship to the history of segregation outside of a museum context, when the museum can be read as a dismissive, even insulting cultural institution?
- Does celebration of the artifact reinforce lingering racism and postpone the ongoing healing the U.S. needs in its race relations?
- Where are other historical artifacts similar to the drinking fountain sign found at the Dallas County Records Building?



The unveiling of the monument this year, in cooperation with The Dallas County Commissioners Court, aligns with the 50th anniversary of many important actions that became The U.S. Civil Rights Movement and is one week prior to the city's event that will honor of the memory of John F. Kennedy and the anniversary of his death in November 1963.

In Spring 2014, the second phase of the project presents a series of public programs in collaboration with community partners including The South Dallas Cultural Center, The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, and the Nasher Sculpture Center. These programs will explore social activism and contemporary human and civil rights struggles, as well as discussion surrounding public art, monuments, and social practice.

To extend the idea of civic engagement and meditation on collective memory present at the physical site of the monument, an online platform goes live in 2014 serving as a bridge from a local to an international audience for broader discussion, archiving other sites of similar discovery and contested public memory.

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Collaborators include Dr. W. Marvin Dulaney, New York Foundation for the Arts, and Women and Their Work, with cultural production consulting provided by Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul.

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