



Sculptures to mark evacuation points arrive

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NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Seventeen 850-pound stainless steel sculptures arrived in New Orleans on Monday for installation around the city, where they will serve as permanent public art with a purpose: calling attention to pick-up points for residents who need transportation out of town if a pending hurricane leads to an evacuation.

Boston artist Douglas Kornfeld's creations are larger-than-life stick figures, each with an upstretched arm, suggesting someone hailing a cab or a bus.

His design was selected in a competition organized by the Arts Council of New Orleans, which also put up half the \$200,000 cost of the project. The remainder was raised in donations by another nonprofit Evacuteer.org, a group that aids the city in rounding up and training volunteers who coordinate evacuations of people who lack personal transportation.

"It just seemed logical," said Kornfeld, who helped supervise as workers used forklifts and slings to hoist each 14-foot-tall statue from a flatbed truck onto a loading dock. "When you start reading about what they wanted. They wanted to give people rides."

Evacuteer.org got started in 2008 after Hurricane Gustav, as the city continued refining an evacuation system in which problems were dramatically laid bare during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The new 14-foot-tall steel figures made in Ohio will soon be anchored in concrete to supplant the simple street signs now marking evacuation points.

"We're still shooting for getting them all installed by June 1 and the start of hurricane season," said David Morris, a political consultant who donates time to Evacuteer.org.

Kornfeld had to come with a design that was durable as well as aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the purpose. The street side evacuation art, he said, will be able to withstand weather, vandals or an errant driver.

"You could hit it with a truck," Kornfeld said.

Although the art has a serious purpose, Kornfeld said he didn't want it to evoke fear or anxiety in storm-battered New Orleans when another potential disaster is imminent. He said he knew he had hit on a successful concept last year as he made his pitch to the Arts Council panel assembled to choose the winning design.

A person on the street with an upstretched arm can often have a happier meaning in New Orleans, he learned.

"Somebody goes, 'You know, that's what people do when they want people to throw them beads at Mardi Gras?'" Kornfeld recalled. "And I went: 'I won.'"

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