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After the Deluge Sculptors restore and rework New Orleans monuments.

Reproachful ghosts of buildings will be scattered around New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward this fall as part of Prospect.1, the city's first biennial contemporary art festival. Along with indoor exhibits at some 20 venues, the fair's curators have brought in site-specific sculptures representing structures that New Orleans lost in the Katrina flooding, or should have built beforehand to protect lives, or would do well to commission now to commemorate the tragedy.

Wangechi Mutu, a Kenyan-born artist, is assembling light bulbs into a life-sized outline of a gabled cottage

that once stood near the levees. The owner was able to rebuild the foundation after the storm, but then the contractors absconded with her savings. New York-based sculptor Paul Villinski has transformed a standard metal-skinned FEMA trailer into "Emergency Response Studio"; he's added solar panels and a towering wind turbine, and proposes that artists occupy such mobile housing during emergencies to document the scenes and commiserate with victims. Los Angeles-based sculptor Mark Bradford has cobbled scrapwood into a 69-foot-long ark named Mithra (after a pagan deity) for a basketball court near the aptly named Flood Street. And Robin Rhode, a South African artist based in Berlin, turned a ruined cement-block public toilet into "Contemplation Space," replacing the bathroom fixtures with a fountain. He expects the piece to "touch on subjects such as rebirth, reinvention, vitality, and purity."

Paul Villinski's "Emergency Response Studio" (2008), still in progress



Dan Cameron, the director of Prospect.1, describes the installations as part of "a blast of energy throughout the town." The sculptors, he adds, had a surprisingly easy time wrangling permission to take over the open

spaces: "We've been amazed at the cooperation we've had from owners of sites they didn't know what to do with." Through January 18.

www.prospectneworleans.org

—EVE M. KAHN