

LigoranoReese

Melted Dreams: Art Installation to Vanish During Conventions

By Kristen De Groot
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SF

248 Utah Street
SF, CA 94103
+ 415 399 1439

PHILADELPHIA (AP) -- "The American Dream" will melt away during the Republican and Democratic national conventions.

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313 W 14th Street 2F
New York, NY
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Two artists from Brooklyn are installing massive ice sculptures of the words "The American Dream" in Cleveland and Philadelphia during those cities' conventions.

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Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese hope their 4,000-pound sculptures prompt viewers to think about issues of racial and income inequality and the erosion of opportunity.

"I think that it is such an overused idea and word and thought we should take it to the streets and watch it disappear," Reese said. "We want to see what kind of reactions it could provoke."

The sculptors, known by their collaborative name of LigoranoReese, have created similar projects at previous conventions: A sculpture of the words "Middle Class" melted away in Tampa, Florida, and Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2012. "Democracy" vanished during the Democratic National Convention in Denver in 2008.

But they haven't just focused on conventions. Among other installations, the word "Economy" deteriorated in front of the State Supreme Court in New York City on Oct. 29, 2008, the anniversary of the 1929 stock market crash.

On July 19, the duo will install Cleveland's version of "The American Dream" at Transformer Station. The City Club of Cleveland will have a series of free panel discussions on the idea of the American Dream.

In Philadelphia, the work will be positioned July 25 on Independence Mall near the National Constitution Center and just up the street from the Liberty Bell, which "will really add to the depth of what we're

doing," Reese said. Poets and writers will read works on the topic, a belief that every American should have an equal chance at prosperity, success and upward social mobility by working hard.

They choose ice for these works because they wanted to make the sculpture like a piece of performance art, as well as use a medium with which the public is familiar.

"It is a very engaging art form. People don't have any hesitations to approach it," Reese said. "They've been to a party or social event that has ice sculptures. But to see a word like democracy disappear is challenging and moving."

They work with local ice carvers, who take the artists' designs to create the letters. The carvers freeze a huge slab of water 40 inches high by 20 inches wide by about 10 inches thick. Each letter is carved individually and then placed on blocks they fuse to once water is poured over them. They're lit by LED lights from below and can take anywhere from six hours to 26 hours to dissolve, Reese said.

Ice sculptor Shintaro Okamoto's studio in New York will be carving the Philadelphia piece, and he's worked with them since their first sculpture.

"I think it's a very powerful series," he said.

In the current political climate, he said, there is a "sense of urgency that I think everyone is feeling. Watching ice melt kind of physicalizes that."

And what will become of all that melted ice?

Ligorano and Reese have a Kickstarter campaign, and one portion invited participants to buy the sculpture's "tears."

"We're going to bottle The American Dream," Ligorano said.