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DC Scraps Environmentalist Art Project Over Pollution Fears

Cait Munro, Wednesday, July 23, 2014



Mia Feuer, *ANTEDILUVIAN* proposal.
Photo: Mia Feuer.

Grist reports that artist Mia Feuer's proposed public installation *ANTEDILUVIAN*, one of the most anticipated projects slated for the city's upcoming 5x5 Festival, has been permanently scrapped. The work proposed that a model gas station be partially submerged in the Anacostia River as a comment on rising sea levels, climate change, and the usage of oil. But months of work and publicity were wasted when the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA) announced last Friday that the project would not be allowed to go forward.

Feuer wrote on her Indiegogo page that despite claims made by the DCCA that the work could be relocated elsewhere in the city, it will not be, and is in fact banned from happening. The Canadian artist told Grist that as word of the project began to spread, several organizations that work with the river and the neighboring southeast DC community of



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Anacostia caught wind of it and were displeased. The reasoning? In a letter from United for a Healthy Anacostia River to the DCCA, the coalition stated, "Given the many years of community investment and hard work to clean up and change the negative perception of the Anacostia River, this kind of project should never have been approved." They added, "If the public misunderstands the art's intended message as permission to put gas or oil in the river, the project could single-handedly set back the river restoration and undo years of effort."

To summarize, a project intended to raise awareness of climate change, which was also slated to coincide with several educational workshops and lectures, was cut because of concerns that local residents mistook it as incentive to dump gas and oil into the river. Fortunately, Feuer is not giving up on the piece. She is currently shopping around for other cities that might be open to hosting it. Meanwhile the proposed educational programming, slated to be held on boats on the river, will still go forward.

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