WORLD HERITAGE USA

Monuments Toolkit

ICOMOS-USA

International Council on Monuments and Sites

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The International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

ICOMOS is a global non-governmental organization associated with UNESCO. Its mission is to promote the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of monuments, building complexes and sites. ICOMOS is an Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO. As a global organization, ICOMOS has gradually built the philosophical and doctrinal framework of heritage on an international level.

The U.S. National Committee of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS-USA)

As part of the worldwide ICOMOS network, ICOMOS-USA promotes the conservation of world heritage and stronger connections to the global heritage community through advocacy, education, and the international exchange of people and ideas. ICOMOS-USA guides and promotes activities in support of worldwide heritage conservation through an extensive membership network of preservation professionals, institutions, and organizations, including specialized scientific committees. ICOMOS-USA is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization with 501(c)(3) status.

World Heritage USA

World Heritage USA operates to support the work of ICOMOS-USA. The organization's activities provide a gateway for U.S. citizens to experience and participate in international heritage conservation activities and for the international community to learn about the rich and diverse heritage of the United States. In doing so, World Heritage USA upholds and advances the broad goals of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Convention.

With a unique voice, World Heritage USA engages in advocacy surrounding the wide range of challenges and disruptions taking place to effective heritage conservation in the United States and worldwide. The ICOMOS-USA annual symposia support the exploration of key issues facing the cultural heritage sector and identify innovative pathways forward through the exchange of scholarship and ideas.

Programs & Projects

- The International Exchange Program works with global partners to provide hands-on training opportunities for emerging professionals in the cultural heritage field.
- The Emerging Professionals Program supports those beginning their career in the cultural heritage sector and heritage-related fields through knowledge-sharing, networking opportunities, and professional development resources.
- The International Underground Railroad Project seeks to identify and document stories of self-liberation across the Americas as told by freedom seekers and their descendants.

Letter from the President

It is with great excitement that I introduce the Monuments Toolkit, a thoughtfully curated collection of case studies designed to connect elected officials, government workers, community leaders, and the general public who are invested in reimagining the monuments landscape. This resource embodies a collective effort to address the complex legacies of monuments and their role in perpetuating systemic inequities while envisioning a more inclusive and equitable future.

The Monuments Toolkit emerged from an intensive two-year project by researchers at World Heritage USA. This initiative involved visiting communities across the nation and engaging with government officials, community leaders, historians, artists, and residents at the forefront of critical conversations about monuments. What we found was a vibrant, ongoing dialogue about how monuments can reflect shared histories and values while fostering equity, inclusion, and collaboration.

At World Heritage USA, we firmly believe that cultural and natural heritage are not only vital connections to the past but also crucial tools for sustainable development and global understanding. This toolkit is a testament to that belief. It highlights real-world examples of the challenges communities face, the innovative strategies they develop, and the meaningful impacts they achieve—all through the lens of reexamining and transforming the role of monuments in society.

It is our hope that it sparks ideas, fosters collaboration, and empowers action to bring communities together to develop strategies to address contentious monuments and to understand nuances of history and create space to amplify the stories of overlooked histories. This toolkit is a practical guide to inform your efforts.

As we navigate this pivotal moment in the evolving landscape of heritage preservation, let us share knowledge, learn from one another, and forge innovative pathways together. The Monuments Toolkit is a step in that shared journey, a resource designed to help communities, officials, and advocates reimagine the legacies we choose to preserve for future generations.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Mellon Foundation for their steadfast support of the Monuments Toolkit Project. Together, we can ensure that the stories and legacies we choose to uplift reflect the diversity, complexity, and richness of our shared human experience.

Douglas C. Comer, Ph.D.

President, ICOMOS-USA

Introduction

The murder of George Floyd in 2020 was the tipping point. The public began taking to the streets to remove problematic monuments in their communities. A monument to John C. Calhoun was taken down in Charleston, South Carolina. A monument to Junípero Serra was taken down in Sacramento, California. A statue of a Union soldier was taken down in Denver, Colorado. After years of inaction by local governments, members of the community organized for the removal of the monuments and, in some cases, took it upon themselves to act.

As of this writing in 2023, the monuments' removal can be examined at some distance. What happened after the monuments were removed? What were the results of these actions? Before World Heritage USA commenced its work on monuments of oppression, four organizations had done substantial research on the monuments landscape: the Contested Histories Initiative in the Netherlands; the National Monument Audit produced by Monument Lab in partnership with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Whose Heritage?* project; and the Atlanta History Center's Confederate Monument Toolkit. This report will revisit their work and continue where the studies left off.

Examining the Existing Landscape

The National Monument Audit assessed the universe of monuments in the United States and compiled key data including geographic coordinates. The team at World Heritage USA used this information to select sites for the case studies featured in the Monuments Toolkit. Other factors in the selection of sites were: increased news reports about a site; geographic diversity; and significance to the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) experience in the US.

The inclusion of international case studies in the toolkit brings in diverse perspectives and approaches, fostering informed decision-making and cross-cultural dialogue for communities grappling with controversial monuments.

Key Conclusions of the Studies

Study	Date Published	Key Conclusions
National Monument Audit, *Monument Lab*	December 2021	Monuments have always changed. Most in the US reflect war and conquest and fundamentally misrepresent our history.

Continued on the next page.

Study	Date Published	Key Conclusions
Contested Histories Initiative	February 2021	Statues are symptoms of deeper issues. Given that historical narratives are conflicting, the challenge is how to conduct stakeholder engagement that is inclusive and does not create further divisions. The Initiative also explores the legal frameworks that govern the removal of monuments.
Whose Heritage? Southern Poverty Law Center, 3rd Edition	January 2022	Monument categories are necessary for deciphering the true intent behind the building of monuments of oppression. Researching the era and noting trends in social movements can illuminate the relationships between these movements and monuments. It is inefficient to wait for another tragedy to occur before taking action against monuments of oppression. Provided with resources and information to facilitate new approaches, communities should be able to reassess their public spaces.
Atlanta History Center Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide	2016	When addressing a Confederate monument, it is important to understand who erected the monument, why they erected it, and why they chose the specific site. A resource page offers guidelines for researchers; resources for conducting productive conversations; and a list of books, research projects, and the latest news on the subject.

All the studies examined how understanding history, community context, and community engagement directly correlates with actions related to monuments.

Examining Historical Context

Many of the thousands of monuments to historical figures in the US were erected at seemingly random times. However, closer examination of context and contemporary political trends often reveals a concerted effort to promote a one-sided version of history. The role of the Daughters of the Confederacy in establishing Confederate monuments is the most salient example.

The American Civil War raged from 1861 to 1865 over the issue of slavery. Both the Union and the Confederacy constructed monuments and named buildings and parks to honor their heroes in the years immediately after the war. However, in the former Confederate states of the South, there were significant spikes in monument building in the early 1900s and again in the 1950s-1960s (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). Why these spikes?

The late 1800s to the early 1900s saw the rise of Jim Crow, a system of laws enacted in the American South that enforced racial segregation and rolled back the gains that had been made during Reconstruction. The 1950s and 1960s were the key years of the Civil Rights Movement, which sought to eradicate Jim Crow (ibid.). Even erected many decades after the Civil War, Confederate monuments and symbology became potent tools of white supremacy and emblems of Southern white identity in general. For all too many Americans, however, they symbolized racialized violence and a system of disenfranchisement from civic and economic engagement in the US (ibid.).

There are many monuments in the US whose histories are more nuanced. For example, monuments to Christopher Columbus are symbols of pride for Italian Americans, who were once marginalized in the US (National Italian American Foundation, n.d.). However, Columbus' arrival in the Americas brought immeasurable suffering to Indigenous

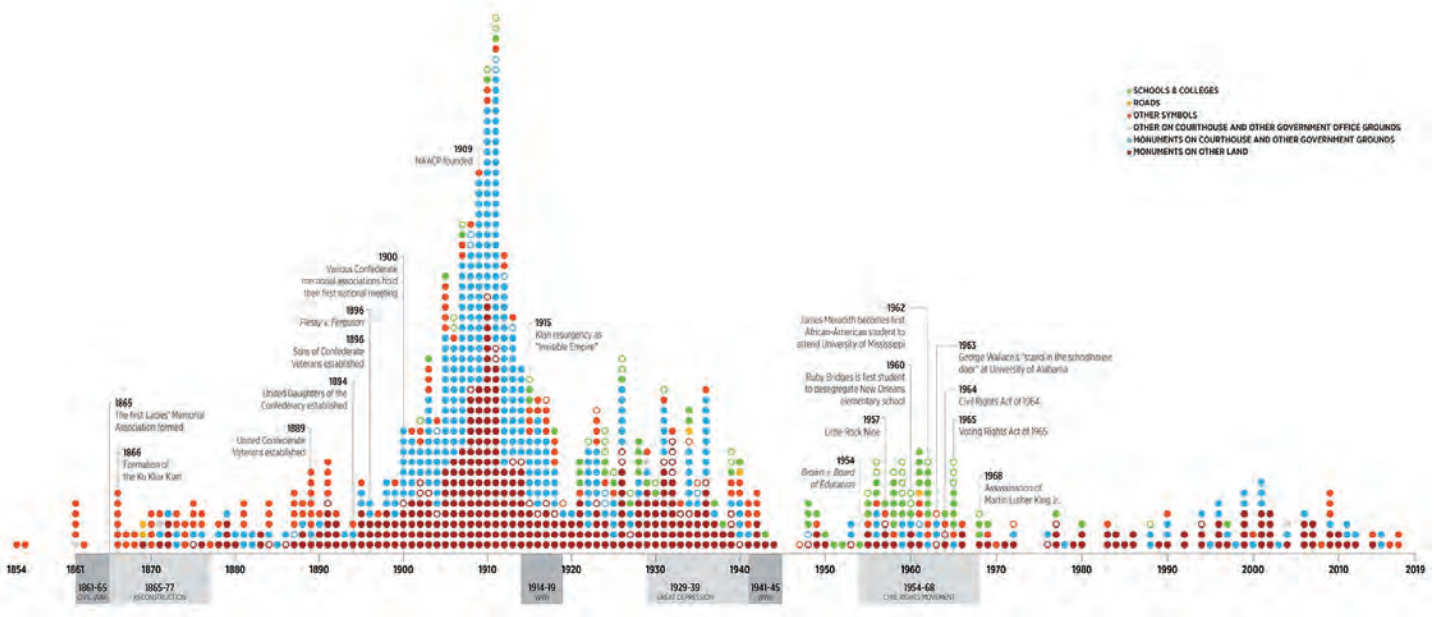


Image Credit: Southern Poverty Law Center

Americans (Onondaga Nation, 2020). Thus, a single statue of a historical figure can represent pride for one group and pain for another. When studied in terms of the BIPOC experience in the US, many monuments are shown to exist in this nuanced space.

Even so, it is clear that collective public memory as glimpsed in our nation's monuments is tightly correlated with deeper societal problems that have not been resolved, including problems of environmental, economic, and social injustice. These issues, in turn, are prompting broader societal discussions of power, representation, and equity. As communities grapple with these issues, they are confronted with the task of addressing historical injustices and fostering inclusive narratives that resonate with the experiences of all citizens.

Defining Oppression

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines oppression as "prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority, control, or power; tyranny; exploitation." Some monuments are the very crystallization of this concept, because a monument is an assertion of power by those who erect it—and the embodiment of ideal attributes as *defined by* that group. What types of actions oppress people? Most importantly, what happens when people are denied access to education, or when they are denied a voice? In other words, what happens when their full humanity is not acknowledged? Philosopher Iris Young in her seminal book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) explains this aspect of oppression:

> No matter which definition you use, oppression is when people reduce the potential for other people to be fully human. In other words, oppression is when people make other people less human. This could mean treating them in a dehumanizing manner. But it could also mean denying people language, education, and other opportunities that might make them become fully human in both mind and body.

When groups of people are denied full participation in the greater societal discourse —when there is no acknowledgment or visual representation of their contributions—an erasure happens. Because of this erasure, achievements as well as traumas remain hidden. The erasure feeds into tropes and stereotypes of communities and further exacerbates the sense of being "the other." This can be seen in racist policies that do not recognize the humanity of BIPOC groups and ignore their role in the development of the United States.

A country's history is as diverse as its citizens. Ensuring that history and monuments reflect diversity not only offers validation for marginalized groups, but also creates a fuller, more accurate common history. Malgorzata Kalinowska, who wrote about the role of collective memory and collective consciousness in society, explains, "This allows for individuals living within a society to participate in a shared cultural space and contain their individual historical experience within its particular symbols and signs" (Kalinowska, 2007).

Oppression Connected to Monuments

The Contested Histories Initiative researched controversial monuments in its publication *Contested Histories in Public Spaces: Principles, Processes, Best Practices*. The study found that points of contention were typically symptoms of deeper issues in society —usually injustices experienced by marginalized or underserved communities (Contested Histories Initiative, 2021). Like the Contested Histories Initiative, the Monuments Toolkit team observed that many US monuments are symptoms of larger issues related to oppression. It also became clear that the absence of monuments contributes to oppression. If the task of a monument is to tell the story of a given society, or, as Francis Fukuyama (2016) posits, to show

> ...what it takes to become a genuine member of the community, how can not having a monument contribute to the sense of being othered and a perpetual foreigner? How does this affect policies and what is the process to get these unacknowledged stories to the forefront?

The Southern Poverty Law Center's *Whose Heritage?* project examines newer monuments that counter the Lost Cause narrative. This World Heritage USA toolkit looks at monuments that not only counter racist rhetoric, but also call attention to overlooked stories. This theme gets its fullest treatment in the case study on memorials to Chinese railroad workers, who were one quarter of the railroad workforce in the US in the 1860s (Zraick and Lee, 2021).

Community Context and the Disposition of Monuments

To understand why a particular action regarding a monument was successful in one community but not another, it is essential to examine community context. What was the local political climate? What was the demographic makeup of the local governing body and population? Did the locality issue a public apology for a historic wrong? Was there a truth-and-reconciliation process? Benjamin et al. studied the role of local politics in the removal of statues. The study found that there is greater success in addressing problematic monuments when the voting body is BIPOC. The study also explored the political orientation of a town as a factor in addressing monuments. Benjamin et al. (2020) explain:

> [O]ur results provide meaningful answers to what has led—and will potentially lead—to the removal of Confederate monuments as well as present a paradox for those officials who may seek to bring them down. Given that many of the monuments are in Southern states with Republican vote shares, the ability of some politicians may be constrained by both the law and a desire to keep the city's voting majority content.

The authors make a direct connection between local politics and the chances of a locality peacefully addressing its troubling monuments. Charleston, South Carolina, initiated a

truth-and-reconciliation process and in 2018 issued a public apology for its role in the slave trade. In 2021, the city of San Jose, California, issued a proclamation apologizing for its role in nearly a century of violence and discrimination against the Chinese community (Taylor, 2021).

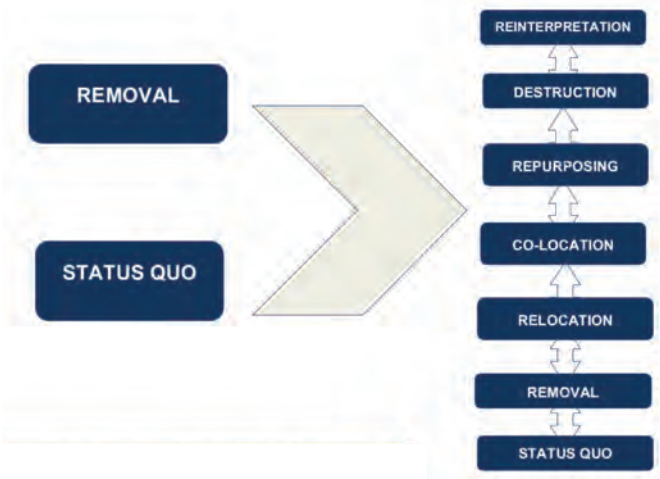
Following is a discussion of the action frameworks that shape various collaborative processes involving the public, elected officials, and public agencies.

Defining the Monument Course of Action Frameworks

World Heritage USA's Monuments Toolkit team has developed a set of frameworks to guide communities in their decision-making around troubling monuments. The frameworks reflect actions that communities *have* taken or *could* take in the future. The frameworks are: Removal, Relocation, Reinterpretation/Recontextualization, Repurposing, Co-location, Destruction, and Status Quo.

The frameworks with the most productive outcomes are the ones that convene all community stakeholders. This approach not only fosters cathartic conversations but also opens an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to work together on the disposition of existing monuments or the creation of new ones.

The following frameworks describe possible actions. As illustrated in the chart below, the actions are not necessarily the final disposition of the monuments. As the discussion begins, the monument may be in a state of removal. It may later be recontextualized in a museum. These actions, whether construed as inaction and avoidance or as action and openness to challenges, are vital steps in the ongoing dialogue surrounding controversial monuments.



A community has many options when it comes to addressing a problematic monument. The most fruitful outcomes involve a collaboration between government and community stakeholders. The following case studies will expand upon the groundwork laid by the National Monument Audit, the Atlanta History Center, the Contested Histories Initiative, and the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Whose Heritage?* project.

FRAMEWORKS

REMOVAL is the act or process of extracting the monument from its original location. The monument exists in its original form, but it is not accessible to the general public (i.e., it is in storage or non-public archives). In these case studies, "removal" refers to the initial intervention by a government entity.

RELOCATION is the act of moving the monument from its original location to an alternate setting. The monument retains its original meaning and the general public has access to the monument. This is different from removal in that the public still has access to the monument.

REINTERPRETATION/RECONTEXTUALIZATION is the act of transforming the significance of the monument. The original monument may or may not be located in its original location.

REPURPOSING is the physical act of transforming the basic materials of the monument into another object—for example, salvaging metal from a statue to create an entirely different statue.

CO-LOCATION is the act of placing additional monuments adjacent to the original monument to temper its meaning and significance.

DESTRUCTION is the act of physically demolishing the monument with no intention to reuse materials or display the remnants in any setting.

STATUS QUO is the act of inaction. The monument is allowed to exist without any type of intervention.

Definitions

Monument: A statue, structure (excluding occupiable buildings), or plaque created to commemorate a person or event.

Monument of Oppression: Any monument constructed to purposefully perpetuate fear, inaccurate tellings of history, racism, or xenophobia, and any monuments that communities have determined to be oppressive or harmful to their communities.

Monument of Upliftment: A monument erected by a marginalized community to foreground forgotten stories. These narratives have been suppressed politically or violently and tend to involve powerful individuals and groups.

Monument of Reconciliation: A monument that reconciles with historical traumas.

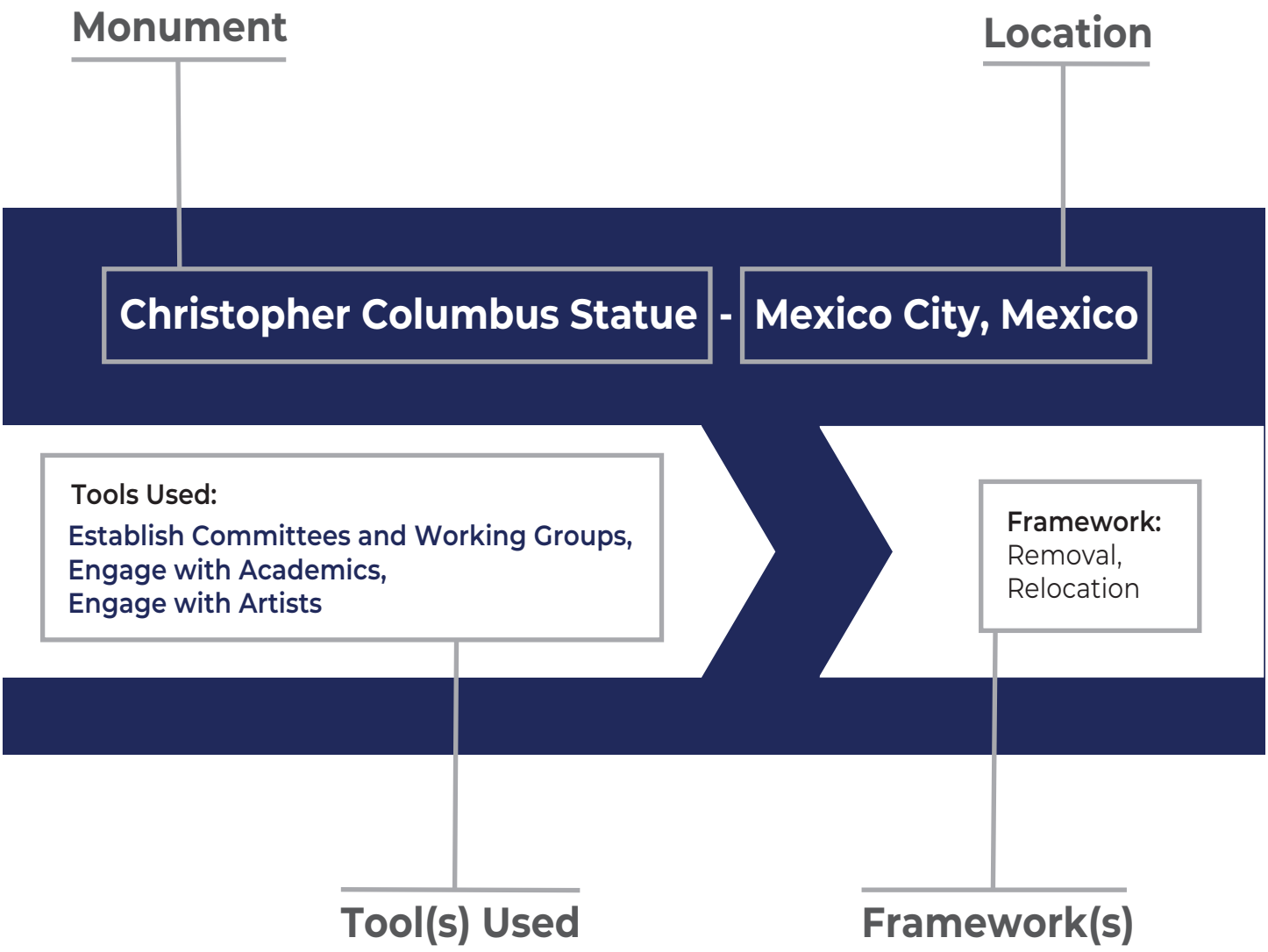
Anti-Monument: A monument that directly challenges all facets of a conventional public monument, including its form, theme, and meaning.

Reconciliation: The restoration of lost trust by means of expressing regret, offering both individual and group restitution, and carrying out specific activities that show genuine societal change.

How to Use the Toolkit

The purpose of the Monuments Toolkit is to connect government officials, community leaders, academics, artists, or interested parties dealing with a contentious monuments landscape through case studies of communities who are facing similar issues.

Each of the case studies highlight the framework and the tools that were utilized.



Tools to Consider in Order to Implement the Monuments Toolkit

When the Monuments Toolkit Project commenced, our team embarked on a comprehensive journey, engaging with diverse communities and a spectrum of stakeholders, including elected officials, municipal, state and federal representatives, community activists, academics, and beyond. Delving into the background of each monument and immersing ourselves in its contextual landscape, we aimed to grasp the entirety of its narrative. Our objective was to explore the array of options available to communities regarding the disposition of monuments, ranging from removal and reinterpretation to destruction, preservation, repurposing, or relocation.

Throughout the development of the Monuments Toolkit, we identified key activities crucial for fostering productive conversations. Our observations consistently highlighted the pivotal role of public processes and community engagement in steering discussions towards impactful outcomes, thereby facilitating the initiation of dialogue on contentious monuments.

Central to navigating these landscapes of contention is the establishment of transparent and inclusive community processes, vital for nurturing trust and fostering meaningful exchanges. Below are the following tools that we identified:

I. **Know your Community.**
II. **Choose a Neutral Setting for Meetings.**
III. **Identify your Stakeholders and Build Partnerships.**
IV. **Establish Committees and Working Groups.**
V. **Engage with Academics.**
VI. **Engage with Artists.**

I. Know your Community.

Truly understanding a community entails more than a surface-level examination gleaned from news articles. It necessitates an open-minded approach and a deep immersion into the community's prevailing sentiments. Identifying stakeholders is paramount, recognizing that in any public-driven discourse, the community holds the reins.

In our case studies, we observed varying degrees of stakeholder engagement, from direct contact with influential figures to broader community involvement. It is imperative to eschew gatekeeping practices and ensure that power dynamics within the community do not hinder inclusive participation.

II. Choose a Neutral Setting for Meetings.

Establishing neutrality is fundamental in fostering trust among stakeholders. Museums, revered as cultural bastions, often serve as ideal venues for hosting such discussions, as evidenced in several case studies.

III. Identify your Stakeholders and Build Partnerships.

Building upon previous insights, community engagement remains the foundational step. As discussions progress to higher levels, identifying key decision-makers becomes imperative. Whether at the government level or within local communities, strategic thinking is essential to ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. For instance, in the case of New York City's monument review, deliberations surrounding the removal of the Thomas Jefferson statue necessitated a broad spectrum of voices.

Innovative partnerships, such as those proposed in the Sam Houston case study, underscore the importance of international collaboration in preserving shared cultural heritage.

IV. Establish Committees and Working Groups.

Drawing inspiration from initiatives such as those in Mexico City, where committees and expert working groups facilitated decision-making regarding historical monuments, we advocate for similar structures. These bodies provide coordination, advisory support, and technical expertise, ensuring informed deliberations.

Continuous check-ins are essential across all stages to ensure the equitable representation of all stakeholders.

V. Engage with Academics.

The insights provided by academics and public historians offer invaluable perspectives, enriching discussions with historical context and facilitating community research.

Their involvement ensures that placemaking practices remain rooted in a holistic understanding of heritage.

VI. Engage with Artists.

Artists play a unique role in capturing the collective emotions of a community by transcending boundaries through evocative expressions. Their involvement can infuse discussions with creativity and empathy, enriching the narrative surrounding monuments.

By embracing these principles and engaging with diverse voices, we can navigate the complexities of monument discourse with sensitivity, inclusivity, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Monuments Toolkit Resources

Podcast: The Monumental Project

The Monumental Project, a podcast created by the Monuments Toolkit, presents a series of thought-provoking dialogues with activists, artists, academics, project founders, legal experts, and beyond. Each episode approaches the intersection of public art, history, and racial justice from a new perspective provided by individuals with a unique and enlightening understanding of the topic at hand. The podcast can be accessed on Spotify, Audible, iTunes or the Monuments Toolkit website (worldheritageusa.org/monumentstoolkit/podcast).

Webinar: The Monuments Toolkit Series

The Monuments Toolkit Webinar Series draws experts together to discuss themes of the Monuments Toolkit Project, dive deeper into particular case studies, and consider unique ways to approach aspects of the monument conversation. Each webinar introduces new voices to help grow and expand thinking around the Toolkit's central questions: How do we address monuments of oppression? What are our options for dealing with painful pieces of our past? How can we learn, heal, and move forward? The webinar series can be accessed on the Monuments Toolkit website (https://worldheritageusa.org/monumentstoolkit/mtwebinar).

Event Series: Monuments Summer, A Season of Dialogue

In 2023, World Heritage USA hosted a bi-coastal panel event series titled *Monuments Summer: A Season of Dialogue*. The panelists discuss how themes of racial injustice, colonialism, and slavery are represented in public art in San Diego, California, and Charleston, South Carolina, two cities where monuments have been at the center of public debate in recent years. Watch "Aspiring Toward a Common History: Next Steps for Improving the Landscape of the Public Monuments in the American South" and the "Monuments Summer: Cabrillo National Monument Dialogue" on the Monuments Toolkit YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@monumentstoolkit1047/videos).

Additional Resources

Websites

Equal Justice Initiative: eji.org

Contested Histories Initiative: contestedhistories.org

NAACP: NAACP.org

Native American Rights Fund: narf.org

Latino Heritage in Historic Preservation: latinoheritage.us/latinxpreservationtoolkit

Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation: apiahip.org

National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO): nathpo.org

Invisible Histories (LGBTQ Archiving & History): invisiblehistory.org

Media

Atlanta History Center: *Monument: The Untold Story of Stone Mountain* (Documentary) - https://youtu.be/GtYiQKeihGw?si=Kpwmuir5ohMyJEKN

American Civil War Museum: *On Monument Ave* (Blog and Online Exhibition) - https://onmonumentave.com/

World Monuments Fund: Confederate Monument Debate: International Perspectives (Virtual Panel) - https://youtu.be/tSuJlGLqi0k?

National Trust for Historic Preservation: Supporting Descendants Who are Saving Their Historic Places (Virtual Panel) - https://youtu.be/g9DxwxDGevw?feature=shared

Sethembile Msezane (Artist): Living Sculptures that Stand for History's Truths (TedTalk) - https://youtu.be/tg_CwQwYNjc?si=0BK6hZMXjksON9Lm

Publications

Reports

Monuments Lab: *National Monuments Audit -*
https://monumentlab.com/monumentlab-nationalmonumentaudit.pdf

Southern Poverty Law Center: *Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy, Third Edition* **-**
https://www.splcenter.org/20220201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy-third-edition

Atlanta History Center: *Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide -*
https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/learning-and-research/projects-initiatives/confederate-monument-interpretation-guide/resources/

Chicago Monuments Project: *Chicago Monuments Project: Recommendations for the Current and Future Collection -*
https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/dca/cmp/cmpreport.pdf

Articles

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Books

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Savage, Kirk. (2011). *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. University of California Press.

Thompson, Erin. (2022). *Smashing Statues: The Rise and Fall of America's Public Monuments*. W.W. Norton and Company.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. (1995). *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press.

Young, Iris. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.

Christopher Columbus Statue - Mexico City, Mexico

Tools Used:

Establish Committees and Working Groups,
Engage with Academics,
Engage with Artists

Framework:
Removal,
Relocation

This case study focuses on the Monumento a Colón (Monument to Christopher Columbus) that was formerly located on Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City, Mexico. The monument is a statuary group composed of five figures. The figures depicted are Columbus himself and the "four friars": Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Fray Diego de Deza, Fray Juan Pérez de Marchena, and Fray Pedro de Gante. The purposes of the study are to examine the historical context in which the monument was erected and to detail the full scope of the issues that led to its removal and relocation.

Christopher Columbus—navigator, cartographer, and governor general of the West Indies in the service of the Spanish crown—remains a controversial figure in the Americas. His detractors view him as a contributor to colonization and an invader who took lands away from Indigenous Peoples. Those who support the monument maintain that he was a benefactor to the West.

Introduction

Mexico became an independent sovereign state on September 27, 1821. In the two centuries since it gained independence from Spain, Mexico has become the ninth-largest economy in the world, exporting a wide range of goods. Mexico has a population of approximately 126 million across a total area of 1.97 million square kilometers. Many Indigenous tribes—the Nahua, Purépucha, Mixtec, Rarámuri, Totonac, and Otomí among them—live in Mexico.

Monument to Columbus

Mexico City's iconic Paseo de la Reforma (Promenade of the Reform) has featured several of the nation's important monuments, including Diana the Huntress and Angel of Independence. Among the most famous and controversial was the Monument to Columbus that stood there for a century and a half.

For nearly 150 years, a statue of Christopher Columbus loomed over one of Mexico City's busiest thoroughfares. But the grand monument space that had honored Christopher

Columbus changed substantially in the short span of eleven months in 2020-21. Today, the roundabout that had been devoted to the “Admiral of the Atlantic” and four Catholic figures of the colonial period is known as Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan (Roundabout of the Women Who Fight). Atop the lofty pedestal is a stainless-steel silhouette of a young woman and the word *justicia* (justice).

Front view of the Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan.
Photo credit: Gilbert C. Correa, Monuments Toolkit Program Assistant.

Creation of the Monument

The Monument to Columbus was constructed in the 1870s on a roundabout at the intersection of Paseo de la Reforma and Avenida Morelos in Mexico City. The statue atop the monument, which is roughly 15 meters high, depicts Christopher Columbus opening a curtain to disclose the world while raising one hand that points to Europe. The mount is composed of two red limestone pedestals. Seated on the bottom pedestal's corners are the four friars: Fray Bartolomé de las Casas preparing to write; Fray Diego de Deza leafing through the pages of the Bible; Fray Juan Pérez de Marchena studying a geographical chart and measuring the distance between Spain and the New World with a compass; and Fray Pedro de Gante holding a cross, an emblem of the Indigenous Peoples' evangelization. Columbus' famous Epistola, a map, and scenes from the conquest of

the Americas are depicted in bas-reliefs on the pedestal's four sides (Mexico Maxico Organization, 2003).

Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico commissioned Manuel Vilar, a Spanish sculptor, to design the first monument to Columbus, but the project was never launched. On a trip to Paris in 1873, Antonio Escandón, heir to a railway fortune, commissioned French sculptor Charles Cordier to create sculptures to commemorate the discovery of the New World and the spread of Christianity. Two years later, the opus was completed and shipped to Mexico. Under the supervision of Mexican engineer Eleuterio Méndes (Tenenbaum, 1994), it was placed in the fast-growing city's second roundabout in 1877. It joined statues of other important figures from Mexican history on the thoroughfare. The project was a gift to the Mexican capital.

Columbus as Malefactor

Critics of Columbus maintain that he was a malefactor who committed many wrongs in the New World. He imposed names on geographical features and referred to the Indigenous Peoples he encountered as *indios*, or Indians. He never explicitly repudiated his claim that he had reached the Far East, and it is unclear to what extent he realized the Americas were an entirely different landmass (Dowlah, 2020). Some scholars also point out that Columbus gained a place in the Western narrative of colonization and empire development based on concepts of who was and was not "civilized" (Bartosik-Vélez, 45).

Columbus was ousted from his position as colonial ruler after being accused by some contemporaries of severe cruelty. Fray Bartolomé recounts in book two of his *History of the Indies* (1561):

> Consider what this history has been telling you of the oppression Columbus imposed on Indian kings and nations in Hispaniola and Veragua; whether he actually did it himself or allowed it to be done, it was an absurd and unrighteous thing. It is not too bold to presume that his own anguish and misfortune were sent as a divine punishment.

Columbus was detained and expelled from Hispaniola in 1500 because of his tense relationship with the King of Spain and the colonial authorities in America. Later, he and his heirs engaged in protracted legal battles about the rights they felt the crown owed them (Dowlah, 2020).

In the first century following his expeditions, Columbus' reputation was damaged by reports of his shortcomings as a colonial governor, and his name was mostly obscured. However, in the late 16th century he began appearing as a figure in Italian and Spanish plays and poems, and this helped save him from oblivion (Wilford, 1991).

Though Columbus was widely honored in the 17th through the 20th centuries, he has been viewed with a more critical eye in recent decades. Much criticism has focused on his treatment of the Indigenous Taínos, whose population declined due to the horrors of

slavery and diseases brought from Europe (Mills and Taylor, 1998).

George Tinker and Mark Freeland, scholars of Native American history, contend that Columbus is to blame for creating a vicious cycle that maximized profits while simultaneously reducing Indigenous populations. They write:

> Colón was directly responsible for instituting this cycle of violence, murder, and slavery... Disease, only in combination with this cycle of brutal colonial violence, could produce the death toll that we see on the island of Española. Therefore, at best, the theory that disease did the business of killing and not the invaders can only be seen as a gratuitous colonizer apologetic .... the truth of the matter is much worse and should be called by its appropriate name: American holocaust denial (Tinker and Freeland, 2008).

The Columbus statue's Catholic iconography and symbolic representation of European domination had made it a target of protesters in recent decades. Demonstrations took place around Mexico on Columbus Day 1992, the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the New World. Following a protest organized by Indigenous groups, workers' unions, and counterculture collectives, the monument in Mexico City was vandalized. Demonstrators tried to topple the Columbus statue by connecting ropes to a bus, but the Mexico City police foiled the attempt. In subsequent demonstrations, the monument was shielded in various ways to prevent the statue from being toppled (Reyes Castro, 2020).

Columbus as Benefactor

Christopher Columbus' admirers maintain that he was a gifted mariner whose actions led to advancements in history and the start of globalization (Boivin, 2012). In fact, Columbus' voyages were deemed such watershed events in world history that the term "pre-Columbian" has historically been used to describe the cultures of the Americas before Columbus' arrival. Made possible by exceptional navigational skills and experience, Columbus' travels led to permanent communication between the two hemispheres. Massive exchanges of organisms, plants, diseases, technology, mineral wealth, and ideas took place during the "Columbian Exchange" that began in 1492.

The historical figure of Columbus drew praise in the British colonies. Puritan preachers turned Columbus into a unifying figure by citing his life story as an example of the "developing American spirit" (West, 1992). In 1692, Cotton Mather connected Columbus' voyages with the Puritans' immigration to North America, describing them as key events in the shaping of the modern period (Bercovitch, 2014). After the American Revolution, the veneration of Christopher Columbus as the founder of the New World grew quickly—part of the effort to create a national history and founding myth with fewer ties to Britain (Burmila, 2017). His name served as the inspiration for Columbia, the female national personification of the original thirteen colonies.

The World's Columbian Exposition was the official name of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, held to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival. The Columbian Issue, the first commemorative stamps ever produced by the United States Postal Service, featured images of Christopher Columbus, Queen Isabella, and other figures from his lifetime.

Historian Kris Lane refutes many of the claims made by critics of Columbus. Questioning whether the term "genocide" is appropriate, Lane contends that Columbus' objectives and carelessness, rather than his deliberate actions, caused mass death and dislocation (Lane, 2015). Other scholars agree with Lane that Columbus "...has been blamed for events far beyond his own reach or knowledge" (Flint, 1999).

Imagery and Oppressive Monuments

How much does imagery add to an oppressive environment? The placement of statues on Mexico City's most iconic avenue—Paseo de la Reforma—adds meaning to what would otherwise be an empty public space. The Monument to Columbus was placed in a prominent location to honor his contributions to the New World as well as the Old. The statues of Columbus (now removed) and Aztec Emperor Cuauhtémoc, along with the Angel of Independence, are the most notable of the monuments. All three were placed in the center of the city's major traffic circles, are publicly accessible, and are highly visible to the approximately 39 million people who travel the street every year (Secretaría del Medio Ambiente del Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, 2023).

Fashioned after the grand boulevards of Europe and opened to the public on February 17, 1867, the nine-mile-long Paseo de la Reforma runs diagonally across the Mexican capital. The thoroughfare was originally known as Paseo de la Emperatriz (Promenade of the Empress) but was renamed in honor of La Reforma (The Reform) after the fall of the empire and Emperor Maximilian's execution (Excélsior, 2013).

The area surrounding the Monument to Columbus saw intense development in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the 1970s, the roundabout was converted to a small central oval to improve traffic flow.

The Monument to Columbus on Paseo de la Reforma is a public work of art that sheds light on power dynamics and a Eurocentric construction of history. Like many monuments to historical figures, it represents a particular group's experience while ignoring historical complexities and other narratives such as those of the Nahua, Purépucha, Mixtec, Rarámuri, Totonac, and Otomí peoples.

Framework: Removal

On October 10, 2020, the government of Mexico City removed the statues of Christopher Columbus and the four friars from the roundabout on Paseo de la Reforma. The Monuments Toolkit team defines removal as "the act or process of extracting the monument from its original location. The monument exists in its original form, however, not accessible to the general public (i.e., in storage or non-public archives)."

Prior to the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, anti-racist groups had started protesting monuments to historical figures associated with colonialism and slavery. These protests grew in number and intensity after Floyd's death. Pointing to Columbus' controversial ideas and actions, protesters vandalized and toppled numerous Columbus statues throughout the Americas (*The New York Times*, 2020).

A protest around the Monument to Columbus on Paseo de la Reforma had been planned for October 12, 2020. When the monument's statues were removed on October 10th for a scheduled restoration by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (Roa, 2020), the protest was shifted to the Columbus monument on the city's Avenida Buenavista (Sánchez, 2020).

The city government announced that the disposition of the monument's sculptures would be decided following a round of discussions. These discussions took place in 2021 as part of the 500th anniversary celebration of the fall of Tenochtitlán (Santiago, 2020).

An *antimonumenta* (anti-monument)—a monument that directly challenges all facets of a conventional public monument, including its form, theme, and meaning—took the place of the statues of Columbus and the four friars. The Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan (Roundabout of the Women Who Fight), which features the sculpture *Vivas Nos Queremos* (*We Want Us Alive*), was installed on September 25, 2021, by several feminist collectives and the relatives of victims of gender violence (Proceso, 2021).

On October 12, 2021, Claudia Sheinbaum, head of the government of Mexico City, suggested replacing the statue of Columbus with a life-sized version of the *Doncella de Amajac* (Young Woman of Amajac), a pre-Hispanic Huastecan artifact, to honor Indigenous women (Agren, 2021). The city government ultimately decided to place the Doncella de Amajac on its own plinth in an adjacent traffic circle (Ruiz, 2023).

The Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan is an example of a monument that uplifts. The Monuments Toolkit team defines a monument of upliftment as "a monument erected by a marginalized community to foreground forgotten stories. These narratives have been suppressed politically or violently and tend to involve powerful individuals and groups."

The Roundabout of the Women Who Fight exemplifies this type of monument because it honors Indigenous women and victims of femicide in Mexico.

In an interview for this case study, Dr. Saúl Alcántara Onofre, president of ICOMOS-Mexico, stated that removal of the statues of Columbus and the friars was necessary:

> There would be a loss of identity and image. But they do have to be removed. Especially to be restored. Those that are historical must be evaluated and analyzed for (historical) integrity.... Tactical urbanism I am against. Our city cannot do this. Transfer the cultural message. May it endure and neither destroy nor undo.

Dr. Alcántara Onofre highlights the need to remove monuments as a way of ensuring their protection as historical objects. Mexico is well positioned for such an undertaking given the country's long history and rich cultural heritage.

Framework: Relocation

When the statues of Columbus and the four friars were removed from Paseo de la

Reforma for restoration, the city government's intention was to relocate them initially to Parque de las Américas, an urban park four kilometers southwest of the roundabout. The Monuments Toolkit team defines relocation as "the act of placing the monument in an alternate setting. The alternate setting is not the original location. The monument retains its original meaning and the general public has access to the monument."

On September 5, 2021, the city declared that the statues would instead be moved to Parque América in Polanco (Andrew, 2021), a neighborhood with Californian-style architecture and an enclave of wealthy European expatriates. The government planned to include the statues in a grand renovation of the park to showcase them more appropriately. In a 2023 interview for this study, Mtra. María Teresa Ocejo Cazáres, professor of architecture at the Autonomous University of Mexico-Azcapotzalco, explained:

> ...These entities (government agencies) decided to move the Monument to Polanco at the Parque de las Américas. It [the park] is surrounded by the Californian style architecture of the 1940s. The idea was to renovate the style and aesthetic of the area.

By 2023, the local government had canceled its plan to rehabilitate the park (possibly because of budgetary constraints). Officials declared that the statues of Columbus and the friars would ultimately be moved instead to the National Museum of the Viceroyalty in Tepotzotlán, State of Mexico (Nava, 2023).

Committees/Working Groups

In addition to removal and relocation, a third proactive approach that was taken in the case of the Monument to Columbus was the formation of committees/working groups. In a 2023 interview for this study, Dr. Alcántara Onofre recounted how he got involved with the statues of Columbus and the friars in 2021:

> I was invited by the Secretary of Urban Development to be on the Committee on Monuments and Artistic Works in Public Spaces of Mexico City (COMAEP). This committee is backed by the Head of Government and is given much autonomy. We see all the problems associated with monuments and infrastructure in public spaces. We learned through the media of Columbus's and Friars' removal. This removal was owed to restoration and also because of threats. A national discussion was opened about the statue and its return. It was decided that it would be best to remove it to preserve its historical fabric. There was A LOT of discussion.... A more radical situation was emerging by groups with vested interests. The whole world used to see it as an aesthetic statue on Paseo de la Reforma tied to the history of the street.

Committees and expert working groups can find solutions to complex problems surrounding monuments. COMAEP provides coordination as well as advisory and technical support for Mexico City regarding the incorporation, relocation, or removal of historical or artistic monuments, mural paintings, sculptures, and other artistic works.

Nelson's Pillar - Dublin, Ireland

Tools Used:

Engage with Artists,
Engage with Academics

Framework:
Reinterpretation/
Recontextualization,
Repurposing,
Destruction

This case study analyzes how individuals, political organizations, academic institutions, municipal groups, and museums interpret and influence interpretations of controversial monuments in Ireland. It narrows its focus specifically to Nelson's Pillar, one of the more famous monuments in Irish history to be toppled. It also examines Irish sentiments toward monuments in general and Ireland's history of defacing controversial monuments.

One of the objectives of this case study is to provide a view of controversial monuments beyond the United States, underscoring the importance of culture in dialogues around monuments. Secondly, this case study expands conversations around the work museums do in interpreting fragments of controversial monuments that have been removed from their original locations. Since fragments of Nelson's Pillar survive in several public spaces from Dublin to Belfast, their displays offer comparisons of different curatorial techniques.

Site Selection

Dublin's monuments to the British monarchy and the British military establishment functioned as signifiers of British imperialism over Ireland. Once those monuments were placed in public spaces, they fell into the public domain where they had the potential to be subverted. Monuments ultimately came to represent the cultural warfare between Irish nationalists and loyalists. Nelson's Pillar is among the most famous contested monuments to have stood in Dublin. Its bombing in 1966 was a political statement that left a lasting mark in Ireland's historical consciousness.

This case study analyzes the changing reactions to Nelson's Pillar, from its unveiling in the 19th century, to its bombing and toppling in 1966, and the display of fragments in museum spaces today. Ireland's unique political history and its reflection in the varied perceptions of Nelson's Pillar provide an international perspective for the Monuments Toolkit Project based in the United States. With increasing calls for contested monuments to be moved into museum spaces, a study of how museums have gone about showing fragments of Nelson's Pillar in their collections is particularly relevant to monument studies today.

Introduction

Irish Monument Making

From the High Crosses of the medieval period to the Spire of Dublin, free-standing monuments have long held a place in the history of Irish sculpture. However, until monuments of illustrious individuals came into fashion in the 18th century, much of Irish sculpture consisted of tomb monuments, stucco work, and other forms of home décor (Crookshank, 1984). It was not until John Van Nost the Younger came to Ireland around 1749 that free-standing monuments of individuals became prevalent in Dublin (ibid.).

In 1717, the Dublin Corporation commissioned Van Nost's father to create an equestrian statue of George I for Essex Bridge. Van Nost the Younger later sculpted statues of George II and George III. His statues of Justice and Mars still stand on Dublin Castle's gates in Upper Castle Yard (ibid.). However, all of his other public statues have been destroyed or removed.

The 19th century saw a proliferation of memorial sculpture in Ireland. As Paula Murphy notes in her monograph on Irish Victorian sculpture, Ireland's political and religious strife "played out in the public monuments" (Murphy, 2010). It was during this point in Irish history that many of the most noted controversial statues were erected and became symbols of Britain's continued imperial grip over Ireland. With their imposing scale, they seemed to leer incongruously over Dublin's impoverished streets.

Why were so many of the British Empire's leading figures commemorated in Ireland, and why was Horatio Nelson selected for the center of one of Dublin's foremost streets? Murphy (2010) writes, "...Dublin was the second largest city in what had become the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland in 1801...It must have seemed perfectly logical to many, therefore, that the second city of the empire would commemorate the man who defeated Napoleon." However, many Irish people did not agree with this logic.

A Short History of Re[Moving] Monuments in Ireland

Irish nationalists have long subverted monuments dedicated to the British monarchy and military establishment erected in Dublin. Most prominent are those dedicated to William III, George I, George II, Horatio Nelson, and the Duke of Wellington (Whelan, 2002). Following its unveiling in 1701, the monument to William III on College Green became the focal point of both loyalist celebrations and demonstrations of resistance to British imperialism. In the early 18th century, Sir John Thomas Gilbert reported that the monument "...was frequently found in the morning decorated with green boughs, bedaubed with filth, or dressed up with hay; it was also a common practice to set a straw figure astride behind that of the King" (Gilbert, 1903).

During the 20th century, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or its affiliates bombed several monuments around Dublin, including monuments to George II, Archibald Montgomerie, William III, and Hugh Gough. Other monuments to the monarchy were simply removed and redisplayed in Australia, England, and elsewhere.

Irish loyalists also participated in such vandalism. Loyalists pulled down the 1798 column at Bandon, Co. Cork, erected in 1901 (Murphy, 2010). In 1921, British troops broke the statue of the Maid of Erin in two. Loyalists also bombed monuments such as the Wolfe Tone statue in St. Stephen's Green and the monument to Daniel O'Connell on O'Connell Street (ibid.).

In Ireland, vandalism of political monuments continues today. In 2016, the Pease statue near Aghalane Bridge on the border between the North and South of Ireland was stolen. Later recovered, the sculpture commemorates the peace following the Good Friday agreement.

While monument vandalism continues in Ireland and Northern Ireland, monuments are also being reclaimed and displayed in new ways. Following its bombing in 1957, the remaining fragments of the Gough Memorial were used to erect a re-imagined version of the work on the grounds of Castle Chillingham in 1990 (Dublin City Council, retrieved 2023).

O'Connell Street as Ireland's Avenue of Monuments

An avenue of monuments running through the center of Ireland's capital, O'Connell Street honors those figures whom Dubliners, and the Irish more generally, perceive as representatives of Irish culture. The individuals depicted on O'Connell Street have cultural weight, especially in light of the role monuments played in political conflicts throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, twelve monuments line O'Connell Street, adorn buildings located on the street, or sit adjacent to the street.

Daniel O'Connell

The most famous of the monuments represents the street's namesake, Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell was the political leader of Ireland's Roman Catholic majority in the first half of the 19th century. Although he failed in his goal to restore the Irish Parliament, which was disbanded by the 1800 Act of Union, he succeeded in Catholic emancipation. On August 8, 1864, Lord Mayor Peter Paul McSwiney laid the Dalkey granite foundation stone, declaring, "The people of Ireland meet today to honour the man whose matchless genius won Emancipation, and whose fearless hand struck off the fetters whereby six million of his country men were held in bondage in their own land" (*The Illustrated London News*, August 20, 1864, p. 202). The mayor of Dublin unveiled the completed monument on August 15, 1882 (Dublin City Council *History of Monuments*, 2003).

William Smith O'Brien

The William Smith O'Brien monument was the first monument erected in the capital to commemorate an individual who took up arms against British rule. William Smith O'Brien was a member of the Protestant nobility who led the failed rebellion of 1848, for which he was sentenced to death. A committee was formed in 1868 to gather subscriptions, and the monument was unveiled on December 26, 1870. In 1929, due to traffic congestion, the

monument was moved from its original location at the junction of Sackville Street and D'Olier Street to just twenty feet south of the junction of O'Connell Street and Lower Abbey Street (Dublin City Council *History of Monuments*, 2003).

Sir John Gray

A nationalist MP, Sir John Gray was chairman of the Dublin Corporation waterworks committee from 1863 until his death in 1875 and played a central role in improving Dublin's water supply. He was also owner of *The Freeman's Journal*. The monument was unveiled on June 24, 1879, just outside the *Journal*'s office (ibid.).

James Larkin

James Larkin was a trade union leader and Irish republican. He was one of the founding members of the Irish Labour Party, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, Workers' Union of Ireland, and Irish Worker League. He also founded the Irish Citizen Army, a paramilitary organization integral to the Easter Rising of 1916 (ibid.).

Spire of Dublin

The Spire of Dublin was erected on the former location of Nelson's Pillar in 2003 to celebrate economic prosperity during a period when Ireland was dubbed the Celtic Tiger. Ian Ritchie Architects designed the spire as part of a competition to replace Nelson's Pillar for the new millennium (ibid.).

Cú Chulainn

Sculpted by Oliver Sheppard, the Cú Chulainn statue is located in the window of the General Post Office. It represents the death of Cú Chulainn, a warrior from Celtic mythology. Unveiled in 1935, it is the official memorial to the Easter Rising of 1916. The statue inspired W.B. Yeats's poem "The Statues" (Goalwin, 2019).

Father Theobald Mathew

Father Mathew was a Capuchin friar known for his nationwide campaign for temperance. The monument was sculpted by Mary Redmond and unveiled in 1893 (Dublin City Council *History of Monuments*, 2003).

Charles Stewart Parnell

The Charles Stewart Parnell monument was one of the last erected in Dublin before Irish independence. It was funded by a volunteer committee spearheaded by John Redmond and chaired by Lord Mayor Daniel Tallon.

James Joyce

The Dublin City Centre Business Association commissioned the James Joyce statue as part of its larger program to pedestrianize Dublin's central retail streets in the 1980s and 1990s. The Joyce sculpture marked the completion of North Earl Street's pedestrianization (Dublin City Council *History of Monuments*, 2003).

Patrick Sheahan

Erected in 1906, the Patrick Sheahan monument is the only non-figurative monument in the area dedicated to an individual. It combines Gothic Revival and Celtic motifs, drawing on the Gaelic revival movement. The monument marks the location where constable Sheahan lost his life attempting to save a workman from toxic fumes in the sewer work site (ibid.).

The Controversy Over Nelson's Pillar Then and Now

Before Nelson's Pillar

In the 1740s, Luke Gardiner, a banker, acquired Drogheda Street and began developing it into a premier residential area with imposing townhouses, a 150-foot-wide street, and a tree-lined mall. By the end of the 18th century, Carlisle Bridge, now replaced by O'Connell Bridge, was erected to link the northside boulevard to the southside of the Liffey (Morash, 2023).

The first statue to stand in the place Nelson's Pillar once occupied on present-day O'Connell Street was that of William Blakeney. Sculpted by John Van Nost the Younger and unveiled on Saint Patrick's Day 1759, it was the first statue to represent an Irishman in Dublin. Blakeney was born in Limerick and went on to have a lengthy military career defending the British Empire in the Seven Years' War (Fallon, 2014).

The Blakeney monument was the victim of frequent vandalism. In 1763, it was thrown off its pedestal and severely damaged (Fallon, 2014). However, exactly when the monument was permanently removed from its place on Sackville Street remains unclear.

Horatio Nelson and his Irish Connections

The year 1798 saw both a failed Irish Rebellion and Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile. Dublin's residents celebrated Nelson's triumph by lighting candles in windows and singing tunes such as "God Save the King" and "Rule Britannia." Britain's triumph at the Battle of the Nile was also a triumph for Irish loyalists (Pakenham, 1992).

Nelson himself was never directly entangled in Irish politics. He had not fought against the Irish republicans in the 1798 rebellion. He also had had no part in the passing of the Acts of Union in 1800, which merged the Parliament of Ireland into the Parliament of the United Kingdom, effectively stripping Dublin of its political significance.

Nelson's only connection to the United Irish revolutionaries was through Edward Marcus Despard, an Irish colonel. Despard had served as superintendent of Honduras but had later turned to political radicalism and joined the United Britons, a movement tied to the United Irish. In 1802, Despard was arrested for conspiring to assassinate King George III (Pakenham, 1992). In the ensuing trial, Nelson acted as a character witness for Despard—support that did not spare the accused from public execution.

Nelson's defense of Despard did not imply Nelson's own support of the Irish republican cause. Even though a quarter to a third of the sailors manning Nelson's fleet were Irish, he had little sympathy for Irish nationalism (Kennedy, 2013).

Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 inspired similar celebrations in Dublin to those held following the Battle of the Nile in 1798. *The Freeman's Journal* (1805) declared that "to the people of Ireland it should particularly be a matter of great exultation." In the hour of his greatest military triumph, Nelson was killed by French musket fire. The Irish press at the time largely treated his legacy with great admiration. Following Nelson's death, the question of how to commemorate him arose.

Nelson's Pillar Over the Years

Erecting Nelson's Pillar

The Napoleonic Wars dominated British politics in the early 19th century and inspired monuments to British victories. Nelson's Pillar and other military monuments, together with public monuments to the British monarchy, served as propaganda for an Anglo-Irish political hegemony (Whelan, 2019).

Plans for a monument to Horatio Nelson in Dublin and a public subscription were launched shortly after his death at Trafalgar. The Corporation of the City of Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, the Earl of Hardwicke, the Duke of Bedford, and the Archbishop of Dublin were among the largest donors (*Nelson's Pillar: A Description*, 1811).

A Committee was then appointed, consisting of both Catholic and Protestant citizens of Dublin. After raising more than £6,408, the Committee commissioned a design by William Wilkins which was then modified by Francis Johnston, designer of the General Post Office (GPO). Thomas Kirk, an Irish sculptor, created the statue of Nelson to stand at the top of the Doric pillar. The foundation stone of Nelson's Pillar was laid on February 15, 1808 (ibid.).

A brass plaque was placed on the foundation stone, inscribed in part:

> By the Blessing of Almighty GOD, To commemorate the Transcendent Heroic Achievements of the Right Honourable HORATIO LORD VISCOUNT NELSON, Duke of Bronti, in Sicily, Vice-Admiral of the White Squadron of His Majesty's Fleet, Who fell Gloriously in the Battle off CAPE TRAFALGAR, on the 21st day of October, 1805 This first STONE of a Triumphal PILLAR was laid on the 15th Day of February, in the year of our Lord, 1808, and in the 48th Year of the Reign of our most GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN, GEORGE THE THIRD.... (Fallon, 2014).

The monument of Wicklow granite and black limestone was finally completed in 1852 at a height of 134 feet, the four sides of the pedestal engraved with the names of the battles where Nelson had achieved his most noted victories (*The Picture of Dublin for 1811*, 1811). A 168-step spiral staircase in the pillar's hollow interior led to a platform that provided a panoramic view of Dublin (ibid.). The tourist destination opened to visitors on October 21,1809 (Henchy, 1948). The pillar became a centerpiece for loyalist celebrations and royal visits.

The Reception of Nelson's Pillar in the 19th and Early 20th Century

Nelson's Pillar elicited mixed reactions throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Publications attacked it for a multitude of reasons. In 1844, one writer for the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* penned the verse:

> That frightful mass of cord, I feels,
> Such lubber foolery to check,
> Should be removed from Nelson's heels
> And put about his Sculptor's neck (Backstay, 1844).

Others complained that it impeded traffic, stating that it "spoils and blocks up our finest street, and literally darkens the two other streets opposite it" (Henchy, 1948). In 1876, the Dublin Corporation considered moving the pillar to one of the city's squares, but the corporation did not have the authority to remove it (Whelan, 2019).

Critiques of the pillar's appearance and placement soon gave way to political critiques. The nationalistic *Irish Monthly Magazine* published a piece by Watty Cox, stating, "The statue of Nelson records the glory of a Mistress and the transformation of our senate into a discount office" (Henchy, 1948).

In 1891, the House of Commons debated moving Nelson's Pillar. Although the bill to remove it passed, the trustees of the pillar once again refused to let the monument be disturbed (Whelan, 2019).

As Home Rule and Irish self-determination moved to the center of Ireland's political discourse, Nelson's Pillar became a point of political contention. By 1905, the Dublin Corporation, its membership now 80 percent nationalist, was slowly distancing itself from the monument it had once lobbied to erect (Fallon, 2014). The tides of Irish politics were swiftly turning.

Nelson's Pillar and the Aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916

On April 24, 1916, the Irish Citizen Army and Irish Volunteers, among other groups, took up arms in hope of establishing an Irish Republic. O'Connell Street became the center of the Easter Rising. Although around 1,200 armed nationalists occupied various parts of Dublin, the General Post Office on O'Connell Street (then called Sackville Street) was the command center (Morash, 2023). Posters of the "Proclamation of an Irish Republic" were pasted up across the city, including on Nelson's Pillar (Fallon, 2014). Bullet holes from the

guns fired during the Easter Rising still dot the monuments on O'Connell Street. Nelson's Pillar, which stood across from the GPO, saw its share of bullets.

While the GPO became a symbol of Irish nationalism following the Easter Rising, Nelson's Pillar became its antithesis. *The Death of Cú Chulainn*, a bronze statue of a mythological Irish warrior by Oliver Sheppard, now became the sculptural emblem of Irish nationalism, while Nelson's Pillar became an even more poignant symbol of Britain's long-held imperial grip over Ireland.

Nelson's Pillar in an Independent Ireland

The formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 changed the political landscape of Ireland. Many revolutionaries became politicians. In February 1922, a month after Ireland gained its independence, James Joyce published *Ulysses* with the iconic line referring to Nelson's statue as "the one-handed adulterer." During that tumultuous year, Nelson's Pillar once again saw action as the Battle of Dublin raged around it.

In 1925, the topic of removing Nelson's Pillar emerged once more. *The Irish Times* (1925) reported "one enterprising Liverpool firm ...has made an offer to the Commissioners to take down the Pillar at a cost of £1,000." The trustees of the pillar were willing to consider removal as long as the pillar was re-erected elsewhere. However, nothing came of this proposal. Again, in 1931, the Dublin Corporation demanded the city manager approach the national government and convince it to pass an Act of the Oireachtas that would sanction the monument's removal (Fallon, 2014).

The Blueshirts, a paramilitary organization founded to protect Irish Free State politicians from the IRA, gave an opinion on the pillar in 1935 in its newspaper, *The Blueshirt* (1935): "O'Connell and all the rest are dominated by a monument to an English sailor who never earned, morally or in any other way, the slightest claim to Irish respect or gratitude...The conqueror is gone, but the scars which he left still remain and the victim will not even try to remove them." Throughout the 1930s, the ideological debate over Dublin's imperial monuments persisted, and many fell as a result either by removal or iconoclasm.

The Bombing of Nelson's Pillar

On March 8, 1966, a small faction associated with the IRA named the Christle Group bombed Nelson's Pillar around 1:30 a.m. No one was injured in the blast, and it succeeded in bringing down the top half of the pillar. Immediately following the explosion, the Garda placed armed officers at other controversial monuments.

There were mixed reactions to the bombing. Senator Owen Dudley Edwards gave a statement, saying, "I, as a Dubliner, felt a sense of loss, not because of Nelson, but...because this pillar symbolised for many Dubliners the centre of the city" (Whelan, 2001). Days later, authorities demolished the remainder of the pillar.

In the days following the bombing, the site became a sightseeing attraction where people would acquire fragments of the pillar for their own collections.

The most famous souvenir from the blast site is Nelson's head. Following the explosion, the head was taken to the Dublin Corporation yard on Ardee Street. There, it was stolen by National College of Art and Design students, who rented it out to fund the Student Union. The head was ultimately returned to the Dublin Corporation and is now on display in the Dublin City Library and Archive.

Replacing Nelson's Pillar

The Nelson Pillar Act of 1969 transferred the site's control over to the Dublin Corporation with significant compensation to the pillar's former trustees (Electronic *Irish Statute Book*, retrieved 2023). In 1998, the city held a competition to fill the space. London architect Ian Ritchie won with his design for the Spire of Dublin, an apolitical monument celebrating Ireland's stunning economic success. Not all Dubliners were pleased with the Spire, with some calling it "the stiletto in the ghetto" and one Dubliner saying, "We didn't like the old one [Nelson's Pillar], and we don't like the new one [the Spire of Dublin]" (Interview with Kimberly Lifton, 2023).

Nelson Now

Although Nelson's Pillar has been replaced with the Spire of Dublin, memory of the monument and its fall have not entirely faded. Inside The Temple Bar, one of the most famous pubs in Dublin, a framed newspaper with the article "Blast Wrecks Nelson Pillar" splashed across the front page still hangs beside other Dublin memorabilia.

More organized efforts have also been made to preserve the memory of Nelson's Pillar. In 2011 or 2012, the Dublin City Library and Archive began an oral history project titled "Memories of 'The Pillar'" to gather "personal views of past events from an everyday perspective...." (Dublin City Library and Archive, 2011-12). The results of the project have not survived if, in fact, the project was ever carried out. However, the fact that the initiative was undertaken demonstrates that Dublin's public institutions perceive that they have a role in preserving histories of contested monuments.

Some Dubliners still feel nostalgia for Nelson's Pillar. A group of residents petitioned for the gates that once surrounded Nelson's Pillar to be placed again in public view. In 2016, a Labour Party member called for the gates to be relocated to O'Connell Street, stating, "I realise there are mixed feelings towards the pillar, but it was part of the history of the city and the gates are one of the last remaining pieces we have" (Kelly, 2016).

Telling the Story of Nelson's Pillar in Fragments

Increasingly, newspaper headlines, local politicians, and activists have been calling for controversial monuments to be removed and safe-housed in museums. One *Los Angeles Times* headline reads "What to do with Confederate monuments? Put them in museums as examples of ugly history, not civic pride" (Knight, 2017). Some Confederate monuments across the United States have already been removed and placed in museum storage facilities

The "retain and explain" approach that Oliver Dowden, UK cultural secretary, and other

governments have taken is not as simple as politicians claim (Harris, 2021; Young, 2021). Many museums do not have the space to collect such large objects, and museum workers may not have the bandwidth to contextualize them. The *Smithsonian* article "Are Museums the Right Home for Confederate Monuments?" examines the role of museums in preserving contentious monuments from the perspective of museum workers:

> Putting monuments in context is anything but a simple, declarative act: power dynamics come into play.... A simple label is not enough. In displaying statues, museums will need to be prepared to contextualize them visually and dramatically, to represent the layers of their history—from the story of their creation to the story of them being taken down and collected (Bryant et al., 2018).

Exhibitions like From *Commemoration to Education: Pompeo Coppini's Statue of Jefferson Davis* at the Briscoe Center of American History, Austin, Texas, and *Unveiled. Berlin and its Monuments* in the Citadel Museum, Spandau, have sought to do such work (Wright, 2018). However, even with museum contextualization, a monument may still intimidate.

In her monograph *Iconoclasm and the Museum,* Stacy Boldrick, an associate professor at the University of Leicester, considers how museums' attitudes have changed when it comes to displaying works that have undergone iconoclasm (Boldrick, 2020). Museums have long tended to be silent about the destruction of objects. The stories behind objects of iconoclasm are particularly difficult to tell because oppositional groups produce conflicting narratives about them. However, in more recent years, issues of iconoclasm have come to the fore, and museums must grapple with iconoclasm in order to remain relevant. Boldrick's monograph examines a number of temporary exhibitions to capture the range of approaches museums have taken to curating objects of iconoclasm.

Unlike museums in the United States, museums in Ireland do not have a substantial donor base. And unlike state-funded museums in Britain, they do not have a substantial looted collection acquired through empire-building. The Tate Britain is, therefore, a drastically different type of museum space than the Little Museum of Dublin or the exhibition space in the Dublin City Library and Archives.

The types of voices that have the power to tell stories in museum spaces also differ from museum to museum. What were once marginalized voices during Britain's occupation of Ireland are now more dominant in Irish museums like the Little Museum of Dublin. However, in Northern Ireland, the voices expressed in the volunteer-run Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum still find themselves marginalized in the country's broader politics. This, along with varied approaches to museum funding, fundamentally influences how museums display fragments of Nelson's Pillar and the types of narratives they tell.

Dublin City Library and Archive

The Dublin City Library and Archive on Pearse Street acquired the head of the Nelson statue from Nelson's Pillar when the Dublin Civic Museum closed for refurbishment

in 2003. The installation of the head at the Dublin City Library and Archive was intended to be temporary, but the Dublin Civic Museum never reopened.

Nelson's head now sits, as it has since the day it entered the second-floor reading room of the Dublin City Library and Archive, on a rectangular pillar tucked in the corner behind long tables. The only label is one that reads "NELSON" just below the head. The Dublin City Library and Archive puts no narrative forward, nor does it offer a permanent exhibition space.

On the level below the reading room is a cleverly designed sitting room just outside the conference area. The wall farthest from the entrance is decorated with an image of what is now O'Connell Street from around 1900. The image is made almost three dimensional by the column in the middle of the room, which is cleverly wrapped in wallpaper to make it appear like Nelson's Pillar. However, there is no discussion of the controversy regarding the monument.

The Dublin City libraries come under the purview of the Dublin City Council, whose mission is to "provide quality services for its citizens and visitors and act to protect and promote Dublin's distinct identity in a way that acknowledges our past and secures our future" (Dublin City Council, n.d.). Ultimately, the primary purpose of the Dublin City Library and Archive is not to curate its collection as an exhibition. Its association with the municipal government may complicate its ability to engage in narratives around controversy.

The Little Museum of Dublin

The Little Museum of Dublin, located in a Georgian townhouse on the edge of St. Stephen's Green, claims to tell "the remarkable story of the Irish capital" (The Little Museum of Dublin, n.d.). Launched in 2011, it acquired its more than 5,000 artifacts through donation. The goal of the museum, according to its website, is "not to sell an ideology but simply to remember the past," which has influenced how it displays Nelson's Pillar (ibid.). A commercial enterprise, the museum is the only institution considered in this case study that charges an admission fee.

The permanent exhibition displays two fragments of Nelson's Pillar, one real and one fake, beside a scaled-down replica of the pillar, and it surrounds the fragments with text to contextualize them. This section of the exhibition is titled "Meet Me at the Pillar: A Short History of Dublin's Most Famous Statue." It begins with an account of who Horatio Nelson was and the pillar's location as a tourist destination. The label then moves on to the 1916 Easter Rising and W.B. Yeats's bi-partisan point of view: "It represents the feeling of Protestant Ireland for a man who helped to break the power of Napoleon. The life and work of the people who built it are part of our tradition. I think we should accept the whole part of this nation and not pick and choose" (ibid.).

Next is the section associated with the two fragments, including a label that reads in part:

> Spot the genuine article. The 1966 explosion was followed by a scramble for relics of the iconic monument.... Here you can see two blocks of granite. The one on the left was donated to the museum by someone who claimed, wrongly, that it was from the Pillar. The piece on the right was recently exhibited in London's Tate Gallery, on loan from this museum (The Little Museum of Dublin, n.d.).

The exhibition does not delve any further into the impulses that led Dubliners to collect fragments of the pillar from the blast site. It simply moves on to the bombing of Nelson's Pillar in a section titled "Down with Nelson!" The concluding paragraph of the "Down with Nelson!" section reflects Dubliners' differing opinions on the monument:

> Reports of crowds cheering as the army carried out their controlled demolition suggest a lighthearted attitude to Nelson's demise. Yet for other Dubliners the Pillar and Nelson were separate things. They cared little about navy battles in the early nineteenth century. For them, the Pillar was a much-loved view of their own ever-changing city. And now it is gone forever (ibid.).

The Little Museum of Dublin's display of the fragments in its collection is the most comprehensive display considered in this case study. Drawing on a number of quotes, it represents the multitude of interpretations that Nelson's Pillar elicited. The exhibition provides a nuanced perspective on the controversy surrounding the pillar without taking an ideological stance.

The Tate Museum's *Art under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm*

When it was initially proposed by Tate Britain's director in 2011, *Art Under Attack* was the first major exhibition in the United Kingdom to focus on iconoclasm in Britain. As exhibition curator Stacy Boldrick words it, the exhibition sought to "portray iconoclasm's inconsistencies and differences in specific historical contexts, and to examine the histories of iconoclastic policies and practices by considering the power, status and reception of particular images and art forms" (Boldrick, 2020). The organizing principle consisted of three thematic sections—"Religion," "Politics," and "Aesthetics"—with objects from each section in chronological order (Barber & Boldrick, 2013).

Art Under Attack displayed two fragments of Nelson's Pillar, one from the Little Museum of Dublin and the other from a private collection, in the section on "Politics." The section was split into two parts, "Politics and Public Space" and a more focused "Suffragettes," with the fragments sorted into the former. Along with a fragment from an equestrian statue of George III, the fragments tell a narrative of iconoclasm and British colonialism.

In attempting to examine as many dimensions of iconoclasm in Britain as possible, the exhibition only touched upon the complicated controversies behind Nelson's Pillar and the other imperial statues from Ireland it displayed. As co-curator, Boldrick pointed out to *The Guardian*, "every room is a subject in itself and could be its own exhibition" (Brown, 2013). Therefore, the exhibition lacks the comprehensive historical contextualization

provided by the Little Museum of Dublin. The fragments become part of a larger narrative related to the resistance to British colonialism globally. As the Tate Britain is a state-funded museum dedicated to British art, the exhibition also marginalizes Irish republican voices by placing Irish republican iconoclasm in a distinctly British narrative. Consequently, Nelson's Pillar becomes part of British history, a history in which Ireland is but a participant. *Art Under Attack* begs the question, is it effective to curate monuments of anti-colonial or post-colonial iconoclasm against the British in a space dominated by Britain, or does this curatorial endeavor belong elsewhere?

Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum

The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum is located outside Belfast's city center next to the Conway Mill Trust, which works for "economic, community, social and cultural redevelopment in Northern Ireland" (Conway Mill Trust website, n.d.). It fundraises in the United States to provide grants to eight community groups in Northern Ireland, including the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum. The museum houses artifacts, including many prison handcrafts, that represent the struggle for Irish freedom.

The museum is an independent body that is entirely volunteer staffed and relies on public donations. Admission is free. The museum's mission statement makes evident its goals:

- To preserve and promote, through art, crafts and artifacts the history of the Republican Struggle for Irish Freedom
- For Republican history to be told by Republicans
- To educate, so that our youth may understand why Republicans fought, died and spent many years in prison for their beliefs
  (Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, n.d.)

The second goal listed here is what sets the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum apart from other institutions explored in this case study. Representing marginalized voices in Northern Irish politics, the museum decenters dominant narratives and centers marginalized histories, taking an innovative approach to inclusion that redefines memorialization.

The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum's collection consists entirely of donations. The fragments of Nelson's Pillar are housed in a glass display case surrounded by items including a penknife with an image of Nelson's Pillar, a Christmas card made by a republican POW in Crumlin Road Prison (1959), and a booklet titled *Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1954 (Amended)*.

Above the objects sitting on the shelf is a label pasted to the back of the display case. It reads in part:

> On the 8th March 1966 shortly after 1:30 am a powerful explosion destroyed the upper portion of the pillar & brought Nelson's statue crashing to the ground amid hundreds of tons of rubble. While the Free State Government condemned the attack as an "outrage" the reaction of the public was

> light-hearted leading to many songs about the incident, including the popular 'Up Went Nelson'....While it was generally assumed that the monument was destroyed by the IRA, an IRA spokesman denied this stating they have no interest in demolishing mere symbols of foreign domination; "We are interested in the destruction of the domination itself". No further information was forthcoming untill 2000, when during a radio interview a former IRA Volunteer, Liam Sutcliffe, claimed he had placed the bomb which detonated in the pillar.. (Spelling and punctuation are preserved).

Unlike the label at the Little Museum of Dublin, this label does not reflect the multiple opinions Dubliners held regarding the bombing in 1966. The label also does not address why the monument was controversial in the first place. Strikingly, it is the only display that is centrally concerned with who bombed the pillar. The way in which the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum contextualizes its fragments is colored by its overarching ideological goal. The museum does not seek to tell an un-ideological narrative like the Little Museum of Dublin or the Ulster Museum's *The Troubles and Beyond* permanent exhibit.

The fragments of Nelson's Pillar are not the only fragments housed in the museum's collection. It also displays sections of walls from the notorious British prison Long Kesh. Unlike mainstream museums, the Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum is not troubled by the anxiety of displaying fragments of iconoclasm because it seeks to tell a different type of story—one outside of the establishment.

Fragments in a Semi-Public Non-Museum Space: The Butler House

Possibly one of the oddest locations where fragments of Nelson's Pillar can be found on display is in the semi-public gardens of the Butler House in Kilkenny, an 18th-century Georgian house that is now a hotel. Sixteen granite blocks from the plinth of Nelson's Pillar encircle a fishpond and serve as sitting areas. While the gardens are largely accessible to the public, they are privately owned.

How the blocks ended up in Kilkenny is still a mystery. The remains of the plinth after it was bombed in 1966 drew the attention of William Walsh, the general manager of the Irish Export Board. Intent on improving the standards of design in Irish industry, Walsh founded the Kilkenny Design Workshops, a government-funded center for research into design. He likely brought the fragments of the plinth from Dublin to the Kilkenny Design Workshop to exhibit them as examples of Irish craftsmanship.

Today, only a small plaque stands beside the fragments to contextualize them. It ends with a paragraph addressing both the controversy surrounding the pillar and the fragments' reason for being in Kilkenny:

> To many, the pillar was a symbol of Imperialism – its bombing was timed to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. But even the rubble left behind was unwanted and these pieces were almost dumped. How they arrived in Kilkenny is still debated, but it seems the admiration for the stone carvers' skill is what brought them to the home of Irish craft and design.

Conclusion

Nelson's Pillar is central to Ireland's history of anti-colonial and post-colonial iconoclasm from the 17th century to today. The pillar illustrates how placing an image of a person in the public domain of an urban space leads to a multitude of interpretations. Nelson's place in Dubliners' collective memory of their urban geography is neither stable nor as coherent as some museums would have visitors believe.

This case study brings to light the complexities behind the curation of fragmented controversial monuments using a comparative methodology. Rather than seeking to identify optimal practices, this case study foregrounds the importance of critically reading how fragments of controversial monuments are contextualized through labels, displays, and the other objects placed around them. By manipulating exhibition space, museums and other institutions determine *how* narratives of Nelson's Pillar are told. The result is a mosaic-like history of the pillar that continues to be modified and expanded.

Monument to Heyward Shepherd - Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Tools Used: Engage with Academics

Framework:
Reinterpretation/
Recontextualization

Historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia (formerly Virginia), witnessed the first major event leading to the Civil War. A large portion of the town has been designated a National Historical Park (NHP) and is managed by the National Park Service (NPS).

In 1859, abolitionist John Brown organized a raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry with the intent to arm African Americans and inspire others to join his cause. Heyward Shepherd, a free African American, would ironically become the first casualty of Brown's raid. This tragedy was later understood as the climax of an interconnected series of events that would involve civil rights leaders, officials, and key figures in history.

The Heyward Shepherd memorial is located a few steps away from the John Brown memorial. Funded by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the medium-sized gray granite marker portrays Shepherd as a martyr to the abolitionists' "attempted insurrection." For this reason, the memorial has sparked controversy since its inception. Both memorials mentioned in this case study are property of the NPS, and several NPS sites within Harpers Ferry are integral to this case study. Visitors tracing the history of Brown's raid can start by exploring the hills of Murphy Farm, where the fort occupied by Brown was reconstructed and opened to the public in 1895; examining the works of civil rights leaders at Storer College, a historically Black college; and immersing themselves in Harpers Ferry's richly atmospheric Lower Town. It is in these places that the stories of Brown's raid and the death of Heyward Shepherd are told through stone, rails, and markers.

Historical Context

Heyward Shepherd was well known throughout Harpers Ferry's Lower Town. He was a relatively prosperous man who worked as a porter at the town's train station and tended the site when the station master, Harpers Ferry Mayor Fontaine Beckham, was absent. News of Brown's plan to raid the federal armory had been leaked prior to the raid, but Brown remained determined to seize the weapons. Shepherd was at the train station when Brown and his men approached Harpers Ferry the night of October 16, 1859. Accounts vary as to the precise details of how and why Shepherd crossed paths with the

raiders. They agree, however, that at about 1:30 a.m. on October 17, shortly after the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) express train arrived from Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia), Shepherd walked to the Potomac River railroad bridge and was confronted by two of Brown's armed men. Ignoring their order to halt, he turned away, but the raiders fired, striking Shepherd in the back just below the heart. Although seriously injured, Shepherd made his way back to the railroad office. He lingered there "in great agony" before dying early on the afternoon of October 17.

Both the railroad and bridge that were present in the shooting of Heyward Shepherd are still in use today.

News of the incident spread quickly. Passengers on the express train immediately notified the president of B&O Railroad, who then informed the President of the United States. Marines were sent to quell the uprising. By the end of the revolt, ten of Brown's men had been killed and five had escaped. Six, including Brown, were hanged in the ensuing weeks and months.

Creation of the Statue

The problematic nature of the Heyward Shepherd monument lies in its inception. In the aftermath of Brown's raid, the public had differing opinions on the event's significance. Some believed that Brown's raid, while morally justified, had failed in its goal of igniting civil war. Other observers regarded Brown as simply a terrorist or madman (Finkelman, 2011).

In 1905, The United Daughters of the Confederacy announced a commission to immortalize Heyward Shepherd in a monument that portrays the treatment and willful service of enslaved people as an honorable venture. Historian Akiko Ochiai writes, "...The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), in cooperation with the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), concentrated their efforts on propagating the Lost Cause version of their war memories" through the Heywerd Shepherd memorial (Ochiai, 2012).

In denouncing John Brown's goals and ideals, the Confederacy created a platform on which the Lost Cause narrative could develop in Harpers Ferry. The monument to Heyward Shepherd was unveiled on October 10, 1931. Unlike many other Confederate monuments, it was not located in a highly visible area. Visitors will find the surprisingly modest memorial on the corner of a large brick building near the fort that Brown and his men had occupied. The chiseled text praises Shepherd as exemplifying "the faithfulness of thousands of negros," despite his standing in Lower Town as a respected freedman.

Site Selection

The first question that must be asked about the Heyward Shepherd monument is why it was placed in its chosen location. Harpers Ferry is a multi-faceted historical site, and careful analysis is required for understanding the full context of the monument.

The significance of the Heyward Shepherd monument is shaped by the events that occurred before and after John Brown's raid. The fort that Brown occupied survived

intense fighting during the Civil War. It was later purchased, reconstructed, and opened to the public by Alexander Murphy on his farmland in 1895. The fort became a site of pilgrimage for members of the Niagara Movement in 1908, prior to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As a nearby NPS marker recounts: "The fort — a symbol of freedom to those once enslaved — became a shrine and helped inspire early civil rights advancements for African Americans" (The Historical Marker Database, 2021).

The Lost Cause narrative, including false depictions of slavery, continues to be seen in icons of the Confederacy. These monuments of oppression are intended to create an idealized image of the South and to recast the Civil War as a conflict over states' rights. Similar approaches can be seen in Arlington National Cemetery's Confederate Memorial (recently removed), which immortalizes the Southern forces as tragic heroes while presenting racist images of the "faithful slave."

Archival evidence demonstrates that the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans commissioned and erected the monument to Heyward Shepherd at least in part to portray John Brown's raid as an "insurrection" and to argue for the moral legitimacy of the Lost Cause. There is also evidence that various groups expressed disapproval of the monument and its message, including then secretary of the NAACP Walter White, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Baltimore newspaper Afro-American.

Framework: Reinterpretation/Recontextualization

There have been several documented attempts to recontextualize the events surrounding John Brown's raid and the monument to Heyward Shepherd. On May 30, 1881, Frederick Douglass focused on Brown's sacrifice in an address given on the campus of Storer College. The address reads in part:

> If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places and men for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia, not Fort Sumter, but Harpers Ferry, and the arsenal, not Col. Anderson, but John Brown, began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free Republic. Until this blow was struck, the prospect for freedom was dim, shadowy and uncertain. The irrepressible conflict was one of words, votes and compromises (NPS, 2015).

During the dedication ceremony for the Heyward Shepherd monument on October 10, 1931, Pearl Tatten, director of the Storer College choir, spoke her piece, to the dismay of many in the audience. As the National Park Service documented in 1995, Tatten said:

> I am the daughter of a Connecticut volunteer, who wore the blue, who fought for the freedom of my people, for which John Brown struck the first blow. Today we are looking forward to the future, forgetting those things of the past. We are pushing forward to a larger freedom, not in the spirit of the black mammy but in the spirit of new freedom and rising youth (Johnson, 1995).

In 1995, the National Park Service introduced an interpretive wayside that included a brief description of the events surrounding Heyward Shepherd's death, the monument's dedication ceremony, and the UDC's quoted reasoning for erecting the monument. It also acknowledged the controversy surrounding the monument that has endured since the dedication ceremony (Shackel, 2003). The wayside's second panel presented "another perspective" using a quote from W.E.B. Du Bois' writing in response to the Shepherd monument (ibid., 144). This recontextualization effort was executed without engaging stakeholders and was ultimately opposed by both the West Virginia chapter of the NAACP and southern heritage groups. The interpretative wayside has since been replaced.

As of January 2024, Pearl Tatten's words are featured on an informational panel adjacent to the Heyward Shepherd memorial. The panel includes the following information:

> "I just had to speak out"- Pearl Tatten
>
> Hearing praise for "faithful slaves" during the dedication of the Heyward Shepherd memorial (to your left), Pearl Tatten interrupted the ceremony. "I am the daughter of a [Union soldier]... who fought for the freedom of my people, for which John Brown struck the first blow."
>
> Tatten challenged the faithful slave stereotype. "We are pushing forward to a larger freedom..." The audience was shocked. "Confederate Daughters gape as she lauds John Brown," reported the Baltimore Afro-American (NPS, 2024).

More recent approaches to interpretation of the monument have sought to affirm that John Brown's actions were for the benefit of enslaved African Americans and that Brown played a crucial role in the abolition of slavery. The public historians and academics engaged in providing interpretation of NPS historic sites and places play a key role in the evolving narrative surrounding the Heyward Shepherd memorial.

As Michael Hosking, curator at the Harpers Ferry NHP, explains, the interpretive program for Harpers Ferry is considering ways to pull the monument away from its association with the Lost Cause so that the stories of men and women like Pearl Tatten can be further developed. "Yes, if I lived in this area at the time [Brown would be] a terrorist," Hosking says. "But looking at this after the fact, do the means justify the ends? We spin that question around [for people to consider]. We try not to sanitize [history]. We try to let the public decide."

Historic spaces in Harpers Ferry continue to invigorate the story of what took place in 1859. Together with the adjacent sites of Murphy's Farm and Storer College, the monument to Heyward Shepherd provides a key piece of context for a pivotal event leading up to the Civil War. However, stakeholders continue to call for the removal of the Heyward Shepherd memorial from public view due its direct intentions to perpetuate the "faithful slave" and Lost Cause myth.

Thomas Jefferson Statue - New York City, New York

Tools Used:

Establish Committees and Working Groups,
Identify Stakeholders and Build Partnerships,
Engage with Academics,
Know your Community

Framework:
Reinterpretation/
Recontextualization

City Hall Park sits in lower Manhattan in a neighborhood called The Civic Center bordered by Tribeca to the west, Chinatown to the north, and the Financial District to the south. The Tweed Courthouse, named after Boss Tweed, leader of the corrupt Tammany Hall political machine, sits at Chambers Street along the northeast side of the park.

Behind the Tweed Courthouse in the middle of City Hall Park is New York City Hall, housing the Mayor's Office and the City Council Chambers. The tree-lined paths of City Hall Park strike a contrast with the surrounding government buildings. Inside the park, people sit on benches reading, eating, and resting. The paths that wind between the Tweed Courthouse and City Hall see a steady flow of people using the park as a cut-through.

During the summer, the City Hall building is nearly hidden by numerous trees from outside the park. For those who do not know the area, only the gates and fences that prevent access to City Hall give a clue that something important is there. Security guards protect the entrances to the grounds of City Hall inside the park.

Members of the public can access City Hall to observe Council sessions or attend tours led by the building historian. The City Council Chambers are on the second floor of the building. This room is where City Council holds committee meetings and votes on legislation. The Chambers was also the location of the New York Thomas Jefferson statue from 1919 to 2021, when it was relocated to the New York Historical Society (NYHS). At the time of its removal, New York City had seen widespread Black Lives Matter protests as a response to the murder of George Floyd. In 2021, a new City Council took office that was the most diverse in the city's history, with more than half of seats held by women and more people of color than any other Council (Hogan and Cruz, 2021).

Historical Context

Thomas Jefferson (April 13, 1743 – July 4, 1826) was the third president of the United States, in office from 1801 to 1809, and one of the authors of the United States' Declaration of Independence. Much of the scholarship and debate around Jefferson tackles the issue of his apparent contradictions.

He owned a profitable plantation, Monticello, and 607 enslaved people during his lifetime (Wilkinson, 2019). He also wrote about concepts believed to be foundational to US democracy, including equality, individual freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

These contradictions informed debates around the removal of the statue of Jefferson in the New York City Hall. Jefferson's stance on religious freedom (he is credited with the first known usage of the phrase "separation of church and state") is also important in understanding the debates around the statue.

Jefferson as founding father plays a crucial role in narratives that tie the United States and American identity to ideals of democracy, equality, and freedom. The lionization of Jefferson as foundational for US democracy and the reality of his role as enslaver present a conundrum for Black Americans involved in politics. What does it mean to work toward equality and various freedoms within a political system that attributes its power to someone who owned enslaved people?

Creation and Location of the Statue

The statue of Thomas Jefferson in New York City was donated to the city in 1834 by Uriah P. Levy. Levy was an officer in the US Navy, a real estate investor, and one of the most successful Jewish Americans of his time. Levy had faced ongoing anti-Semitism while in the navy (Leepson, 2002) and considered Jefferson's support for religious liberty of crucial importance to the lives of Jewish Americans (Sarna, 2021).

In 1833, Levy commissioned prominent French monument maker Jean David d'Angers to create a statue of Jefferson (Leepson, 2002). D'Angers's final product was a bronze statue that was sent to Washington, DC, and now stands in the Capitol building rotunda. The statue in New York City is the painted plaster mold that was used to create the bronze statue.

The archival record on the locations of the statue is incomplete. However, historian Mary Beth Betts has produced a timeline using letters and photographs that trace the movement of the statue (New York Historical Society, 2020). The first location of the statue at City Hall was most likely the Governor's Room, where it remained until at least 1905. Because the Governor's Room was used for receiving guests and for formal receptions, the statue was seen by important visitors to City Hall.

Starting in 1905, the Governor's Room underwent a series of renovations that led to the statue's removal and placement in different locations throughout the building. By 1909, the statue was in the rotunda. It remained there until 1915, when the city's Art Commission (now the Public Design Commission) approved the statue's removal to the basement of the building.

Jefferson Levy, Uriah P. Levy's nephew, wrote a letter asking that the statue be returned to its original location in the Governor's Room. In July 1919, the Board of Aldermen passed a resolution in favor of Levy's suggestion. However, by October 1919 the statue had been

placed in what is now the City Council Chambers. A month later, the Art Commission approved the permanent location of the statue there. The statue remained in the Chambers until 2021, when it was relocated to the New York Historical Society.

The Process of Removal

Calls for Removal

In 2001, City Council Member Charles Barron recommended that the Thomas Jefferson statue be removed and destroyed (Cascone, 2021). While removal of the statue did not gain widespread support at that time, the political moment was quite different two decades later. In 2020, Speaker of the City Council, Corey Johnson, and the Co-Chairs of the Council's Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus sent a letter to New York Mayor Bill de Blasio stating that the statue standing in City Hall was "inappropriate and serves as a constant reminder of the injustices that have plagued communities of color since the inception of our country" (Johnson et al., 2020). The letter was sent to Mayor Bill de Blasio on June 18, 2020, in hopes that it would gain the mayor's support while the issue was taken to the Public Design Commission.

A day after the letter was sent, the mayor announced the creation of the Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission (RRC). The overall goal of the commission was to "understand the effects of structural and institutional racism in New York City" (NYC Office of the Mayor, 2020). One of the commission's specific responsibilities was to decide on questions of public monuments, including the City Hall Jefferson statue. The RRC recommended removal of the statue and forwarded the issue to the Public Design Commission.

The Public Design Commission

The Public Design Commission (PDC) is a New York City agency that oversees decisions on architecture and design, including art and monuments, on city property. It consists of eleven unpaid members appointed by and reporting to the mayor. Membership is comprised of experts in architecture, public space, museums, and art, in addition to three lay people. The mayor is also a member. PDC members vote on proposals submitted by city agencies—usually with little need for extended discussion or public involvement. Once the RRC recommended removal of the statue, the issue was placed on the PDC agenda for the October 18, 2021, meeting. The proposal to relocate the statue to the New York Historical Society developed after conversations between City Council members and the NYHS.

Media Attention

Historians concerned with the decreasing protection of public space and art in New York City learned about the PDC meeting to vote on the location of the statue. Alarmed at the lack of public input on removal, they contacted *The New York Post* to publicize the upcoming decision. A letter signed by seventeen historians was sent to PDC President Signe Nielsen asking that the statue not be moved from City Hall to a private institution.

Other media outlets, including *The New York Times*, began to report on the question of removal, and politicians began commenting on the issue.

The PDC Hearing

As a result of increased public attention, the PDC moved discussion of the Jefferson statue from its October 18, 2021, meeting agenda to its public hearing agenda. The PDC provided an online sign-up process for attendees to make comments. Most of the comments supported leaving the statue in the building. At the public hearing, PDC members voted to remove the statue by January 1, 2022.

However, approval of the NYHS proposal was delayed because of two concerns raised by PDC members: first, that members of the public would not be able to access the statue free of charge; and second, that the public had not had enough time to review the proposal. The NYHS proposal was placed on the November 18, 2021, PDC meeting agenda, and the PDC voted to approve relocation at the NYHS. The Thomas Jefferson statue was shipped to the NYHS on November 21, 2021 (Smart, 2021).

Proposals and Reactions

Removal from City Hall and Relocation to the NYHS

The proposal put forth by members of the City Council called for the Thomas Jefferson statue to be loaned to the NYHS for 10 years, with reevaluation at the end of that period. Expertise in historical interpretation and the handling of works of art was central to the plan. Proponents of the relocation argued that it would allow both preservation of the statue and appropriate contextualization in New York City history. The statue would be used to "invite discussion around a very difficult topic in American history" (NYC Design, 2021a).

Advocates for removal noted Jefferson's reliance on enslavement for his livelihood and his stated belief in the inferiority of Black people. They also pointed to the sexual relationship between Jefferson and Sally Hemings, a 16-year-old girl enslaved by Jefferson (Gordon-Reed, 1997)—a relationship of structural violence in which an enslaved child did not have the ability to give or refuse consent.

Relocation to the Governor's Room

A counterproposal developed by the seventeen historians mentioned above advocated for the relocation and recontextualization of the statue in the City Hall Governor's Room. There, visitors would learn about multiple aspects of Jefferson's life and influence on US history, including both his status as an owner of enslaved people and his influence on democratic ideals. The historians voiced concerns about the decreasing support in New York City for public space and art, pointing out that the NYHS proposal would mean moving public art to a private institution. Speakers also stated that the Governor's Room, containing many other works of art belonging to the city, would be the fittest location. Finally, supporters raised the issue of the need to protect democratic ideals (embodied in

Status Quo

There was also some support for keeping the statue in the City Council Chambers. Supporters of the status quo noted Jefferson's influence in developing a framework for US democracy, opining that it was Jefferson's beliefs on equality that allowed people to realize enslavement was morally wrong. City Council Members Joe Borelli and Steven Matteo (Minority Leader) made statements to the media against removal (Kashiwagi, 2020).

Framework: Recontextualization at the New York Historical Society

For the first six months of its loan, the Jefferson statue was placed in the first-floor Smith Gallery Lobby between the main public entrance and exit doors.

Following this, the statue was moved to the Patricia D. Klingenstein Library Reading Room, where it will be for the remainder of the loan. Whereas the statue had been on a pedestal that raised it over session attendees in the City Council Chambers, the statue is on the floor in the NYHS Reading Room. There are two signs at the foot of the statue. One explains the creation and relocation of the statue and the other directs museum visitors to scan a QR code to hear experts speak about the history of the statue, Thomas Jefferson, and Uriah Levy.

Issues and Recommendations

Elected Officials and Historical Trauma

The Thomas Jefferson statue in New York City differs from many other memorials in that its longtime location in the City Council Chambers meant it was not widely visible. Many New Yorkers are unaware that City Council sessions are open to the public. It was this lack of visibility to a wider public that caused City Council members to initiate and pursue the removal process. Debates and proposals primarily involved public officials and scholars. Only a few members of the public with a particular interest in Jefferson took part.

Advocates for removal pointed out that City Council members were asked to do government business under the looming figure of someone who had both built wealth from enslaved labor and repeatedly described Black people as inferior. The case of the New York City Thomas Jefferson statue illustrates the need to consider the effects of monuments for public officials in addition to the wider public.

Additionally, monuments in government buildings should be analyzed in terms of their effects on full inclusion in political life. When participants in historical atrocities are honored in government work sites, officeholders must decide whether to contend with the heroization of these figures on a regular basis or refrain from political work. This reinforces a two-tier system in which public servants from communities with historically limited political inclusion continue to face obstacles in access to political life.

Safety of Public Officials

During the decision-making process related to the New York City Jefferson statue, at least one person involved received death threats. Threats of racialized violence in retaliation for Black people's involvement in politics (or those seen as supporters) have a long history in the United States (Foner, 2014). Decision making around monuments needs to consider—and ensure—the safety of people working in government and the safety of their families. A culture of fear will have widening negative effects on full participation in public and political life.

Discourses around Historical Atrocities

One notable aspect of the debates around the Jefferson statue was the varied ways that groups supporting different proposals spoke about enslavement. During the PDC hearing the reality of enslavement was acknowledged by supporters of all proposals. However, the full scope and impacts of enslavement were only raised during arguments for full removal. This speaks to the normalization of enslavement in American society. Plans to deal with monuments might consider their role in deconstructing this normalization, which hides or glosses over the full scope of historical atrocities.

Coalition Building

The context of the New York City Thomas Jefferson statue raises the important question of simultaneous erasure of histories. Jefferson's history as owner of enslaved people sits alongside his history as proponent of religious liberty and advocate for inclusion of Jewish people in the United States. Both Black Americans and Jewish Americans contend with the effects of past and current atrocities. Responses to monuments need to reflect full understanding of the trauma, erasure, and exclusion of different groups.

Representations of History

Immovable and unchanging physical objects are not necessarily adequate modes of dealing with history. History involves multiple perspectives, positionalities, and changing understandings over time. Statues designed for permanency frame history as static and preclude multiple perspectives. Governments, artists, and advocates should reimagine the presentation and community processing of historical moments and figures.

Memorialization of Historical Figures

The commemoration of historical figures should be critically questioned as a mode of remembering history. Narratives that position Jefferson as uniquely influential on American thought do not acknowledge the fact that an idea originates from multiple people, conversations, and contextual influences. Memorializing Jefferson as responsible for the concept of human equality relies on what are undoubtedly silences in the historical record (Trouillot, 2015) regarding the people and contexts that, together, built the concepts for which Jefferson is credited.

Protection of Public Space and Public Access

Decisions around representations of history should reflect current political and economic contexts. The increasing privatization of space documented in New York City closes off opportunities for full inclusion in public life as well as moments for community building (Smith and Low, 2013). Creation and maintenance of the commons provides opportunities to increase inclusion and forge new publics.

Government Processes

The process of deciding on the status and location of the Thomas Jefferson statue was contentious and left all sides feeling frustrated and unheard. This was due in large part to the design of the public-engagement component of the governmental decision-making process. Public hearings are opportunities for presentation, not discussion. The inability of proponents of different proposals to interact with and question each other limits the possibility of a consensus outcome incorporating multiple perspectives. Instead, it frames the process as a contest of competing ideas in which only one perspective can determine the final product.

Monuments to the Chinese American Workers on the Transcontinental Railroad - Salt Lake City and Ogden Utah; Colfax and Sacramento, California

Tools Used:

Establish Committees and Working Groups, Identify Stakeholders and Build Partnerships, Engage with Artists

Framework:
Reinterpretation/
Recontextualization

Photo credit: C.Moore, 2022.

Photo credit: The National Archives, 1869.

Introduction

The mood at Promontory Summit was festive. Hundreds of visitors surrounded the park workers, volunteers, and descendants dressed in their finest period costumes who had come to commemorate the 153rd anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Speeches and reenactments brought the original festivities to life. The presence of politicians, labor leaders, and historians underscored the importance of the event to our nation's history.

Brandon Flint, superintendent of Golden Spike National Historical Park and the day's emcee, hailed the event as a celebration of people who dreamed big (C. Moore, Observation, May 7, 2022). The engineering feat that had made it possible for cities and towns to pop up across the west had been expected to take 14 years. In fact, railroad workers managed to complete the project in half that time.

The workforce that built the Transcontinental Railroad was made up largely of Irish immigrants working from the East and Chinese immigrants working from the West. As construction progressed, Indigenous nations like the Shoshone were displaced from their lands.

The Chinese laborers worked on the most challenging portion of the railroad, having to create passage through the Sierra Mountains with the use of dynamite. In this unforgiving terrain, many who perished during the arduous tasks would never be interred to a final resting place or their remains would have to be retrieved at a later date. Ryan Deringer, a noted scholar of the Transcontinental Railroad, further underscores the dangerous terrain that they navigated:

> When the winter of 1866–1867 turned harsh, work in the Sierras was dreadful. The snow fell so heavily into the freshly graded cuts that it became nearly impossible to dig out. Tunnels were excavated in blizzard-like conditions, as the mountains were covered with as much as thirty feet of snow. Among them, the most daunting was tunnel "Number 6" (Summit Tunnel), which, at a length of 1,659 feet, was the longest on the line, running parallel to the infamous Donner Pass. The tunnel took thirteen months to build and demanded unthinkable energy and perseverance. J. O. Wilder, a surveyor's assistant working near Cisco, noted immediately upon his employment with the Central Pacific that the tunnel-bound Chinese were superior workers, even when compared to the railroads' Irish and native-born men. As Wilder stated, "The Chinese were as steady, hard-working [a] set of men as could be found. With the exception of a few whites at the west end of Tunnel No. 6, the laboring force was entirely composed of Chinamen with white foremen (Deringer, 2019).

In addition to the dangerous working conditions, the workers had to face prevailing racist ideologies. Such ideologies can be seen in a statement from Ohio Representative William Mungen where he refers to Chinese laborers as a "poor, miserable dwarfish race of inferior beings who were docile effeminate, pedantic and cowardly" (ibid.). Despite these attitudes, the Chinese workforce gained respect for their work during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Work and the promise of opportunity define the immigrant experience in the US. Yet just thirteen years after completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This policy barred immigration from China and prevented Chinese immigrants already in the US from becoming citizens. The policy did not apply to immigrant groups from other parts of the world.

For students of US history, the "Champagne Photo" is the iconic representation of westward expansion. However, absent from the photo are the Chinese laborers who made up most of the workforce. Through the lens of the Chinese American experience, this case study will explore remembrance and the creation of monuments that reinterpret existing monuments.

Golden Spike National Historical Park

Promontory Summit is where the Union Pacific Railroad and Central Pacific Railroad met. The site was privately owned until 1953, when the land was transferred to the National Park Service. Journalist Bernice Gibbs Anderson played an important role in creating a park, known today as Golden Spike National Historical Park, to commemorate the laborers who constructed the railroad. The landscape remained essentially unchanged for over 100 years since 1869.

There are three monuments that commemorate the construction of the railroad. The first monument, erected circa 1916, is a white cement pyramid stele that rests upon a white cement base. The monument marks the location of the spike that signified the completion of the railroad.

The second monument was erected in 1969 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Promontory Summit ceremony. Affixed to the granite stele are three bronze panels commemorating the 1869 celebration, honoring the Chinese laborers who constructed the railroad, and declaring the site a National Engineering Landmark.

The third monument, Monument to Their Memory, was installed in 2022. The monument, designed by artist Ilan Averbuch, is a 24 foot tall structure that features sixteen granite railroad ties, and two parallel iron rails. The new monument was designed to honor the Transcontinental Railroad workers of all nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions (National Park Service, 2021).

Monuments and Historical Omissions

How does omission allow false narratives to persist? And how can historical omission oppress members of marginalized groups?

Historically, interpretation of the Transcontinental Railroad focused on engineering feats and the wealthy business executives of the California Pacific Railroad: Leland Stanford, Collis Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker. Noted historian Gordon Chang writes:

> The given historical interpretation of the true construction and completion of the transcontinental line is immensely deficient and one-sided in several ways. It is traditionally told as a story of national triumph and achievement, and as the culmination of “manifest destiny,” the ordained linking of the two coasts of North America and the physical connection of the nation.... The contributions of the Chinese railroad workers are noted, but not fully appreciated, or omitted entirely (Chang and Fishkin, 2016).

When the story of the railroad workers *was* told, it focused on immigrant labor but failed to mention the Chinese labor force. The Chinese laborers' contributions to the development of the railroad were routinely ignored. This exclusion was codified in the iconic “Champagne Photo.”

Historian and journalist Iris Chang (2023) writes:

> The established white elite and the white working class in the United States have viewed the Chinese as perpetual foreigners, a people to be expelled whenever convenient to do one or the other. During an economic depression in the nineteenth century, white laborers killed Chinese competitors and lobbied politicians to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act. Later, in the twentieth century, the United States recruited Chinese scientists and engineers to strengthen American defense during the Cold War, only to harbor suspicions later that some Chinese might be passing nuclear secrets to the PRC (People's Republic of China).

The contributions of the Chinese railroad workers were slighted again during the 100th anniversary celebration at Promontory Summit in 1969. The official program of events focused on Utah's Mormon history and included an appearance of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, remarks from the Utah Travel Council, and remarks from members of the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration Commission and special guests. Contemporary accounts had acknowledged the work of Chinese and Irish laborers in building the railroad (American Association for State and Local History, 1969). Therefore, after persistent efforts to be included in the program, the chairman of the Chinese Historical Society, Phillip Choy, had been invited to speak briefly and to present a plaque that would become a permanent feature of Golden Spike National Park. However, at the last minute, he was not allowed to make remarks (CBS Sunday Morning, 2019). A 1969 publication from the Chinese Historical Society documented the erasure of the Chinese railroad workers in a statement made by John Volpe, former Secretary of Transportation. During a speech, Volpe stated, "Who else but Americans could chisel through miles of solid granite?" (Chinese Historical Society, 1969).

The omission of the historical contributions of a certain group can cause members of that group to feel alienated from the narrative of their country. Helen Zia, who explores Chinese American identity in the United States, writes in her seminal book *Asian American Dreams* (1990):

> What we've been wanting to know is how to become accepted as Americans. For if baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet were enough for us to gain acceptance as Americans, then there would be no periodic refrain about alien Asian spies, no persistent bewilderment toward us as 'strange' and exotic characters, no cries of foul play by Asian Americans and no need for this book.

Ze Min Xiao, board member of the Utah Chapter of the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) Asian Pacific Advocates, further states:

> Being a first generation immigrant and having an accent, you often hear, "You're taking advantage of the infrastructure that's built by others who came before you," assuming, of course, that the others are not really our ancestors (Lo Wang, 2014).

The failure to acknowledge historical contributions creates a persistent state of "othering"—a sense that the American story is not one's own. The first recorded Chinese immigration to the US occurred in 1785, as reported in *The Maryland Journal* (National Archives, n.d.). During the California Gold Rush in the mid-1800s, a major wave of Chinese immigration to the United States took place (Chang, 2003). Furthermore, a soldier of Chinese descent is known to have fought for the Union during the American Civil War. Despite these documented events, Asian Americans are presumed to be from foreigners no matter how many generations they may have been in the US (Hwang, 2021).

Conversations with visitors to the park in 2022 bear this out. One woman did not know of the Chinese railroad workers and thought that Chinese people were present because the "Chinese need to be a part of everything" (C. Moore, Observation, May 2022).

This case study will discuss two collaborative efforts in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Sacramento, California, to tell the true story of Chinese Americans' contributions to the Transcontinental Railroad.

Efforts to Establish Memorials in Salt Lake City, Utah

Margaret Yee grew up during the 1950s and 1960s with stories about her great grandfathers who worked on the Transcontinental Railroad—Wong, who worked as a chef, and Ahn Jin-in, a construction laborer. Yee noted others were provided with room and board, while Chinese workers received only $26 per month with no room or board. Understanding their sacrifice and the sacrifice of other workers, she wanted to make sure their stories were not forgotten.

The approaching 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad was the impetus to create the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association (CRWDA). Determined not to have a repeat of the programmatic insult of 1969, Yee co-founded the CRWDA in 2017 to bring the railroad workers' stories to the foreground. The CRWDA's core mission is to preserve, promote, and protect the contributions made by the Chinese railroad workers in the US (CRWDA, n.d.). The organization also advocates for issues that affect the Chinese American community.

Yee is currently chairwoman of the CRWDA. For many years she owned and operated the Jade Café, the oldest Chinese restaurant in continuous operation in Utah. She has also served as the governor's advisor on Asian affairs.

Collaborations with government entities and historical societies were essential in helping to gain official recognition of the Chinese railroad workers. Every year since the Golden Spike 150, a commemorative event that celebrates the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, there has been a reflection event at the Utah State Capitol. The 2022 event was held in tandem with the Martin Luther King, Jr., Library in Washington, D.C., and honored the memory of Corky Lee, a prolific photographer of the Asian experience in the United States. It was Lee who recaptured the "Champagne Photo," which he titled *Photographic Justice* (C. Moore, Observation, May 2022).

In recent decades, however, there has been increasing interest in the stories of ordinary people that foreground marginalized communities. The CRWDA recently erected a memorial to the Chinese railroad workers at the Utah State Capitol (CRWDA, n.d.). The monument, which features six panels comprised of granite, sandstone, bronze, corten steel, and stainless steel, was made to pay homage to the tools that the workers used to construct the railroad and to represent the terrain of the construction route. The number six is considered a lucky number in Chinese culture.

The effort to honor the Chinese railroad workers also brought attention to other groups. In June 2022, the National Park Service unveiled a work entitled Monument to Their Memory, which honors the workers who built the railroad.

The Golden Spike Foundation is another Utah-based nonprofit dedicated to telling the stories of the diverse people who built the railroad. The foundation's main initiative, Spike 150, helped to convene celebrants for the 150th anniversary of the completion of the railroad.

The organization also commissioned artist Douwe Blumberg, whose works include monuments to military veterans and emergency workers in cities such as Las Vegas and New York City, to create the Golden Spike Monument. The monument will be placed in Golden Spike Park at the Reeder Ranch in 2024. The 43 foot monument is a gold leaf spike inlaid with visual representations of the various people who built the Transcontinental Railroad.

Railroad Museum, Sacramento, California

The effort to recognize the contributions of Chinese railroad workers also unfolded nearly 684 miles away in California. The Gold Run Rest Area in Colfax, California, marks the site where the eastward work of the Transcontinental Railroad began in 1865. The site currently bears a plaque honoring the railroad workers. The approach of the 150th anniversary of the completion of the railroad prompted an effort to foreground the contributions of the railroad workers in particular. Susan Lee, the executive director of the Chinese Historical Society, argued, "Frankly, a plaque at a rest stop near Sacramento is not enough" (NBC, 2016).

The Chinese Railroad Workers Memorial Project began to take shape in 2014, spearheaded by San Francisco Bay Area entrepreneur Steven Lee. Transparency and community outreach were hallmarks of the project from the beginning.

Community engagement sessions during Colfax's Railroad Days in September 2014 provided a platform for the community to learn about the railroad workers' contributions and the proposed memorial plans. One participant was overheard explaining to a young child that "the Chinese help [*sic*] build the Transcontinental Railroad system but really were not acknowledge[d]" (Colfax Railroad Museum, 2016).

The selection process for the artist was also inclusive, with invitations sent to 5,000 sculptors worldwide in September 2015. Out of eighteen proposals, the public had the opportunity to vote for their favorite artist online and in person during a two-week period

in 2016. More than 580 community members voted for the artwork they felt best captured, as Steven Lee explained it, the essence of the Chinese railroad workers' story. That choice was a sculpture by Chinese artist Xuejun Wang (S. Lee, personal communication, March 2, 2022).

Construction of the monument was proceeding smoothly when the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presented unforeseen challenges. Concerns about potential vandalism, exacerbated by anti-Asian hate rhetoric, prompted a decision to relocate the statue to the Railroad Museum in Sacramento. The move underscored a steadfast commitment to preserving cultural heritage even in the face of opposition—more specifically, a commitment to honoring the Chinese railroad workers for generations to come.

The decision to place the statue in the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento was significant in several ways:

- By placing the statue from its originally intended location to a more prominent and secure setting, stakeholders were affirming the importance of preserving and amplifying the stories of marginalized communities who have helped shape American history.

- The placement reflected a broader recognition of the need to confront and address issues of racism and discrimination, particularly given the rise in anti-Asian hate incidents. By acknowledging the risks of vandalism and hate speech directed at the monument, stakeholders were taking proactive steps to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage of Chinese Americans.

- The decision to locate the statue in the California State Railroad Museum has also served as a catalyst for further dialogue and education about the contributions of Chinese railroad workers. Visitors to the museum can engage with interpretive materials, exhibits, and educational programs that provide deeper insights into the history and legacy of the Chinese railroad workers.

By situating the Chinese railroad workers monument in a museum and engaging the public in dialogue and education, stakeholders are not only preserving cultural heritage but also advancing social justice and equity in commemorative practices.

Reinterpretation Framework and Monuments That Tell Undertold Stories

This case study is not about monuments of oppression or controversial monuments. Both examples showcased here are existing monuments that honor the Chinese railroad workers, albeit in small and easily overlooked ways within the broader narrative of the railroad. Against the backdrop of the centennial celebration of 1969 and the rise of anti-Asian hate, there emerged a compelling need for a more substantial gesture: one that would not only highlight forgotten stories but also assert the rightful belonging

of a marginalized community. Though it is not immediately apparent, this case study aligns with the Monuments Toolkit's Reinterpretation Framework. The Toolkit defines reinterpretation as the act of transforming the significance of a monument, whether or not it remains in its original location. Examples include adding interpretive materials that provide additional insight into the monument's context and meaning.

Seen within the Toolkit framework, the creation of a new monument and associated engagement activities served as acts of reinterpretation, tempering and augmenting the meaning of the original monuments. By erecting a new statue and organizing community engagement sessions, stakeholders effectively recontextualized the existing monuments, elevating the narrative of the Chinese Railroad Workers to a more prominent position within the historical landscape.

This process of reinterpretation not only acknowledges the contributions of marginalized groups but also challenges existing narratives that may have downplayed or ignored their significance. By amplifying these undertold stories, the reinterpretation framework aims to foster a more inclusive and equitable representation of history—one that reflects the diverse experiences and contributions of all communities involved.

Moreover, the act of reinterpretation extends beyond the physical realm of monuments to encompass broader societal attitudes and perceptions. By engaging with the public and promoting dialogue around these historical narratives, stakeholders contribute to a deeper understanding of the past and its implications for the present.

The Reinterpretation Framework is a powerful tool for reclaiming marginalized histories, challenging dominant narratives, and fostering a more inclusive commemorative landscape. Through thoughtful engagement and strategic interventions, monuments can become catalysts for social change, prompting critical reflection and inspiring collective action toward a more just and equitable future.

Appeal to the Great Spirit - Boston, Massachusetts

Tools Used:

Identify Stakeholders and Build Partnerships,
Engage with Artists,
Know your community,
Choose a Neutral Setting for Meetings

Framework:
Co-location

Prominently displayed at the entrance to the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, *Appeal to the Great Spirit* was sculpted by American artist Cyrus Dallin in 1908. It was greatly admired at the time of its creation and for many decades thereafter. However, the work has been viewed more critically in recent years and its significance has been tempered by co-location with other displays. This case study briefly examines the history of artistic depictions of Native Americans and describes current approaches to interpreting *Appeal to the Great Spirit* more fully.

Background

Scenes of the lives of Indigenous Peoples have rarely been accurately captured in monuments by non-Native artists in the United States. This is not surprising, given that monument designers of the past have tended to be white men with perspectives vastly different from those of their artistic subjects. Historically, even artists who claimed to respect and draw inspiration from Native American life and imagery have unintentionally muddled the significance of symbols, customs, and clothing. In popular media, there are few examples of Indigenous characters that truly represent Native people and culture.

The legacy of artist Cyrus Dallin is a profound example of the paradox of good intentions. Born in Springville, present-day Utah, in 1861, Dallin had many encounters with the Ute population as he grew up. Over time, he became dismayed at the systemic oppression of the Ute and other Indigenous communities. Heather Leavell, director and curator at the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, writes, “Dallin witnessed the Ute’s way of life change from that of a relatively free people to one of forced confinement, starvation and disease on the barren Uintah reservation. He was deeply disturbed by these and other crimes perpetrated against Native peoples” (Leavell, 2018).

Dallin was an outspoken advocate for fairer treatment of Indigenous Peoples. Leavell (2018) points out that Dallin defended the property and human rights of Native tribes during his time as the chair of the Massachusetts Branch of the Eastern Association of Indian Affairs. He also played a large role in thwarting the Bursum Bill in 1922, which would have enabled non-Native stakeholders to claim Pueblo land if they could prove

that they had maintained a 10-year residency (ibid.). Emily Burns, assistant professor of art history at Auburn University, writes, “In innumerable instances, it has seemed that the Indians had no rights which the white man were bound to respect” (Burns, 2018).

Background of the Site’s Controversy

Despite his activism and staunch defense of Indigenous Peoples, Dallin’s artistic representations of Native tribes miss the mark by today’s standards. Burns (2018) explains that “Dallin’s identity as an Anglo American ultimately situated him at an insurmountable remove from the Native struggles in which he sought to intervene.” His fourth Indigenous monument, *Appeal to the Great Spirit*, was installed outside the Huntington entrance to the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (MFA Boston) in 1912. This is the entrance currently used by the majority of visitors to the museum, including those arriving by tram and car service. The equestrian monument features a calm man; the variety of iconography adorning his body makes him impossible to identify with a specific Indigenous group. His arms are outstretched as he looks to the sky, seemingly in a trance or religious ritual.

Appeal to the Great Spirit, one of Dallin’s most widely known works, was conceived as part of a series of installations known as *The Indian’s Prayer* (Burns, 2018). Whether or not it was the artist’s decision to reduce the number of figures and change the title of the work is unknown. What is certain is that the lone figure standing outside the MFA Boston has inspired widely varying interpretations over the years.

On Indigenous Peoples Day in 2019, curators at the MFA Boston launched a project that invited Indigenous Peoples to comment on how they perceive Cyrus Dallin's work. Their feedback was displayed on white picket signs strategically placed around the monument space. The installation was later preserved on the museum’s website along with the visitors’ handwritten notes.

Comments indicated a disapproval of Dallin's jumbling of Native American iconography and a preference for more accurate depiction of a particular tribe or tribes. Some Indigenous visitors felt that the man’s pose on the horse was a powerful symbol of defiance. Others saw the pose as supplicating—an idea that would play into the "vanishing race” myth. One visitor remarked, "It tells me that the museum is not for Native people like me, but for white people and their false impressions of reality” (MFA Boston, 2019b). Another visitor wrote in praise of Dallin’s artistry: “Since childhood I have always loved this statue as it always stood as a symbol of pride ... Asnutaneyan! We are still here! - Wunnamwau Thomas Frederick” (MFA Boston, 2019a). The diversity of feedback from the event hints at the difficulty of reimagining *Appeal to the Great Spirit* for contemporary visitors.

Framework: Co-location

The MFA Boston chose the strategy of co-location to temper the meaning of Dallin’s *Appeal to the Great Spirit*. The Monuments Toolkit team defines co-location as “the act of adding additional monuments to temper the meaning and significance of the original monument.” In 2021, the MFA Boston launched a project titled “Garden for Boston” in the

space around *Appeal to the Great Spirit*. Boston local Euka Holmes and Elizabeth James-Perry of the Aquinnah Wampanoag tribe each installed their own project on site: Holmes planted 3,000 sunflowers for "Radiant Community," a project that uses sunflowers to spread beauty and hope throughout the historically Black Boston neighborhood. James-Perry planted a field of corn, beans, and sedges in the shape of a horseshoe crab framed by crusted shells in her installation titled "Raven Reshapes Boston: A Native Corn Garden at the MFA" (MFA Boston, 2021).

Flowers and crops are items of intrinsic cultural value as well as symbols of rebirth. Alongside Dallin's statue, they serve to shift visitors' focus away from the iconography of the monument and toward the space it occupies. This in turn leads to new reflections on the notion of the "disappearance" of Native Americans. In the words of Melissa Ferretti of the Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe, "The truth is that people just don't realize that there are Indigenous people living in their own community … we're actual descendants of the original peoples that were here" (Gordon, 2021).

Indro Montanelli Statue - Milan, Italy

Tools Used: Engage with Artists

Framework:
Status Quo,
Reinterpretation/
Recontextualization

> "*Statues, obelisks, names of streets, squares of public buildings are not traces of our history, but intentional signs by which the present power asserts its right to define the meaning of historical time and public space. They do not serve to remind us that certain people existed, but to celebrate them and propose them as normative and ideal models to be inspired by*" (Portelli, 2020).

Located in a park in Milan, Italy, and dedicated to a controversial historical figure, a statue of Indro Montanelli shows how a symbol of the past can impact the present. As articulated in the quote above, monuments become political devices that present only one perspective on history. They transmit an ethos that many members of the culture, particularly younger generations, no longer recognize.

The case of the Montanelli statue has given rise to a heated and polarizing debate in Italy. Many public figures and institutions see him as a great and revolutionary journalist and director of Milan's daily newspaper, *Corriere della Sera (Evening Courier)*. Many other groups and individuals consider Montanelli a colonizer, a rapist, and a fascist.

The debate regarding the Montanelli statue has mostly remained on a superficial level. However, important questions remain: Should the statue be preserved, removed, or reinterpreted? What are the implications of removing or destroying it? How is the statue perceived by residents of Milan and Italians generally? Is the celebration of good journalism more important than the revelation of racial and gender discrimination and abuse?

This research aims to provide 1) an overview of events related to the statue; 2) the various stakeholders' perspectives; and 3) an exploration of the issues raised by the Montanelli statue case. The first part of this study will describe the various reinterpretations, requests for removal, and protests around the Montanelli statue and the institutional responses to these actions. The second part will examine Montanelli's character and the story of Destà, the child bride, drawing on interviews to analyze the historical context of colonialism. It is worth noting that some parties who were invited to take part in interviews were unwilling or unable to do so. The third part of the study will explore the gender issue as it relates to monuments in public spaces.

The History of the Monument to Montanelli

The monument to Indro Montanelli was created in 2006 by sculptor Vito Tongiani at the behest of Milan city hall and ex-Mayor Gabriele Albertini. The statue is located inside a large public park in the center of Milan. Prior to 2002, the park's name was Public Gardens or Porta Venezia Gardens. Since 2002, the park has primarily been known as Indro Montanelli's Gardens. Montanelli had gone to the park daily and often sat on a bench to read the newspaper. In that same park on June 2, 1977, he was shot in the legs in an assassination attempt by the *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigade).

The statue depicts Montanelli seated on a stack of newspapers and holding a typewriter on his lap. The hat he wore constantly is resting on the ground. The word *Giornalista* (Journalist) is inscribed on the pedestal. Surrounding the statue is a stone wall with a large opening. It is a representation of *La stanza di Montanelli* (Montanelli's room), a famous column in the *Corriere della Sera* that gave readers a chance to communicate with Montanelli himself.

Responses to the Monument

Controversies of different kinds emerged soon after the statue appeared. Early critiques focused on the aesthetics of the statue, the poor resemblance to Montanelli, and, most importantly, the fact that Montanelli himself did not believe in monuments. These controversies mainly involved people who had known Montanelli personally.

The first physical attack on the statue occurred in 2012 when someone daubed Montanelli with red and hid a fake bomb at the foot of the pedestal. No one claimed responsibility, and the protest garnered little media coverage.

In April 2018, the words *razzista* (racist) and *stupratore* (rapist) appeared on the pedestal. The words clearly referred to Montanelli's actions in Africa and, in particular, the relationship between Montanelli and 12-year-old Destà. From this moment on, protests around the statue grew in number and intensity.

On March 8, 2019–International Women's Day–the feminist association *Non Una di Meno* (Not One Less) painted the monument pink. The act was intended to give voice to the girls and women who had suffered the legalized violence of the colonial system.

In mid-2020 in the United States, the killing of George Floyd triggered nationwide protests and a reevaluation of statues depicting controversial figures in history. The echo of these protests was heard in Europe, especially in Britain, Belgium, and France. But until this point, Italy had remained mostly indifferent to the monuments debate.

In June 2020, as the debate over social justice intensified, street artists and activists recontextualized Montanelli's statue by focusing on the story of the child bride. For example, in the first days of June, street artist Ozmo reproduced with a stencil the image of Destà on a pedestal. The child had her mouth painted blue and her left arm raised. The artwork, which no longer exists, was located on Via Torino, a busy street in Milan.

The first strong institutional response to the Montanelli statue came from the LBGTQIA+ pride organization *I Sentinelli di Milano* (the Sentinels of Milan), which asked in an open letter for the removal of the statue and the renaming of the park. Responding that the monument would remain in place, Milan's mayor asked the citizens a series of questions:

> What do we ask characters we want to remember with a statue, with a plaque, with the naming of a street, a square or a garden? Do we ask for an unblemished life? Do we ask for a life in which everything was extremely fair? ...Lives should be judged in their complexity. For all these reasons I think the statue should remain there (Sala, 2020).

In an interview for this case study, I Sentinelli di Milano's Valerio Barbini explained that the organization "...did not expect someone to immediately go and remove the statue and change the name of the park, but what we did expect was a higher quality of debate on the issue from the Milan city hall."

On June 14, 2020, the *Rete Studenti di Milano* (Milan Student Network) daubed Montanelli's statue with red paint and wrote *razzista* and *stupratore* on the pedestal. Later that day, authorities ordered the statue cleaned and opened legal proceedings against those responsible.

On June 28, 2020, artist-activist (and self-styled "artivist") Cristina Donati Meyer placed a doll on Montanelli's lap. When interviewed in 2023, Meyer explained, "As an anti-fascist, politically committed artist, I am glad that the 'monument of shame' exists and remains where it is, exposed to the judgment and desecrating interventions of rational beings.... [I believe I have brought] back to the monument historical truth, meaning, fulfillment, without defacing the statue."

The police responded almost immediately to Meyer's artistic intervention. Alexandra Forcella from the association *Mi Riconosci?* (You Know Me) explained in a 2023 interview: "The fact that armed bodies respond like that to an artistic action is relevant. We are not talking about a random monument; we are talking about an artistic operation against Indro Montanelli and how politics responds to these things."

As of 2021, inside Milan's *Museo delle Culture* (Museum of Culture) there is a reproduction of the statue of Montanelli holding the little doll. Though the police intervened quickly to remove the artwork located in the park, this reproduction allows Cristina Donati Meyer's artistic reinterpretation to exist permanently in a public museum. Ludovica Piazzi from Mi Riconosci? observed in a 2023 interview, "It's very interesting because these are both public spaces and it feels like even institutions are themselves manifestations of a debate in some ways."

The public debate about the Montanelli statue that had begun in 2020 faded as the COVID-19 pandemic dominated Italy's–and the world's–attention. However, the statue has recently returned to the spotlight thanks largely to the activism of Non Una di Meno and other groups.

On June 24, 2023 (International Pride Day), the group *Bproud Milano Plus* hung rainbow flags on the statue of Montanelli, publicly stating,

> ...We contest that the municipality of Milan has named a statue after a war criminal, who committed pedophile rape as part of the fascist occupation in Ethiopia .... Holding our assembly under the statue... is reappropriation of a space that belongs to the democratic community and not to the memory of a Mussolini sympathizer.

On July 22, 2023, *Extinction Rebellion Italia* held the last (as of this writing) protest involving Montanelli's statue. In an effort to call attention to the dangers of climate change and pollution, the group wrapped the monument with caution tape and declared the entire Po Valley "Dangerous for Human Health." Explaining its actions, the group stated,

> Indro Montanelli, who has never disavowed the racism and gender violence of the Italian colonial project, is the symbol of a past, but also of a present, built on the... exploitation of territories, people and resources.... We denounce the short-sightedness of the Italian and regional government regarding... climate change and air pollution (Extinction Rebellion, 2023).

Before delving further into the various perspectives on the statue of Montanelli, it is important to consider several factors.

Even after the social-justice protests following George Floyd's death, views of cultural heritage in Italy have continued to differ from views in other countries. All protests of the Montanelli monument have involved reinterpretation rather than the damage and destruction that have occurred in other countries.

The statue has always been defended and, if necessary, cleaned after protests. This is because, as one of the most influential intellectuals in Italy during the 20th century, Montanelli embodies untouchable values. Professor Karin Pallaver further explained in a 2023 interview:

> ... [B]eyond the symbolic and political significance of these protests against Montanelli's statues, a matter of the State's cultural heritage and artistic heritage comes into play. The statue is a piece of art. The State cannot allow works of art to be defaced for political reasons. This is why the State doesn't remove the statue and if someone dirties it, it's its duty to clean it up.

For activist communities, the Montanelli statue has become a stage from which to make their voices heard. Over time, the monument has been the site of a variety of protests against both moving beyond Italy's colonial past and the things that Montanelli personally said and did. Despite the danger of diluting or confusing protest messages, the statue has become, in the words of Karin Pallaver, "a place that contains certain feelings and where... certain political demonstrations of dissent work. It ... has already worked for

feminist collectives, for Non Una di Meno, for anti-colonial, anti-imperialist student collectives so... these protests will continue to happen."

Valerio Barbini, on behalf of I Sentinelli di Milano, agreed: "It's an identity place even for those who protest against it, perhaps it can continue to be a political battleground... At this point the statue should remain there, as an incentive to react to its presence: a negative symbol can also have a positive impact."

The statue of Montanelli–an uncomfortable and controversial presence for many–has helped focus public opinion on issues that otherwise might have been overlooked.

At this point it is crucial to examine who Indro Montanelli was and why he, and the statue honoring him, have been so controversial.

Montanelli, Colonies, and *Madamato*

Indro Montanelli was born in 1909 in Fucecchio and died in 2001 in Milan. He witnessed–and in some cases, experienced firsthand as a journalist–many of the tumultuous events of the 20th century. In 1983 on a television show on *Rai*, Italy's public broadcasting channel, Montanelli famously said: "I consider myself condemned to journalism, because I wouldn't have known how to do anything else." He was a special correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera*. He founded the daily newspaper *Giornale Nuovo (New Newspaper)* in 1974 and the *Voce (Voice)* in 1994 before returning to the *Corriere* as a columnist.

As a young man Montanelli participated in Italy's colonization of Ethiopia. He was in Spain during the country's civil war. He was also a reporter during World War II, the Russo-Finnish War, and the Hungarian Revolt.

Most of the protests described above focused on one period in Montanelli's life: his involvement in Italian colonialism. In 1935, "Montanelli embarked on the African adventure because, as a nationalist and fascist, he believed in that feat. He saw in it a chance for Italy's redemption, finally stepping up and taking action [...] and finally able to conquer, like other world powers, its sacrosanct *Posto al sole* (place in the sun)" (Montanelli, 2022). For Italy, the colonial gambit came late (compared to the other European powers) and was an almost total failure.

While serving as a volunteer in Ethiopia during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, the 26-year-old Montanelli bought Destà, a 12-year-old girl who had been forced into concubinage. Unions of this type between Italian soldiers and native females were part of the legalized violence of the colonial system known as *Madamato*. Some observers argue that, because Madamato relationships were widely accepted in the colonies, Montanelli's actions in context were defensible. Others staunchly accuse him of child rape. To better understand the colonial context, it is essential to interweave the study of the colonizers with that of the colonized.

Professor Karin Pallaver explained in an interview,

> In the specific Italian case the justification comes from the fact that there were relationships, let's say a contractual form of temporary marriage in some parts of Ethiopia and Eritrea, even before colonization... that was characterized by an agreement between a man and a woman that involved an economic exchange between the two families... [T]he man was obligated to recognize and support the children that were born from this relationship and was also obligated to support his wife. Both could decide to end this relationship.... Italian colonialism was responsible for spreading the use of this kind of temporary contract in all the colonial territory.

After Italy's violent conquest of Eritrea and Somalia, the Italian colonizers sought complex long-term domestic relationships with local women. In these hierarchical relationships, women were subordinated legally, economically, and socially.

In order to increase Italy's prestige, Mussolini decided to expand Italy's colonial possessions. About 300,000 Italian soldiers, including Montanelli, were sent to the colonies in 1935, creating a new imbalance that resulted in violence, rape, and unrest.

In 1937, Mussolini formulated racial laws to accelerate the establishment of a fully hierarchical and fully segregated society. On an institutional level, concubinage was forbidden. Mussolini favored prostitution to prevent the legitimized birth of mixed Italian-African children. Despite Mussolini's wishes, Madamato continued secretly and in a private domestic form.

Researcher Giulia Barrera has studied the history of women and girls during Italian colonization. She explains,

> [They] were very young women who were orphans of father or mother or both parents. These women were therefore in a very weak position.... They came from very poor families so they could not have a dowry.... Then imagine a 14-year-old girl... looking for some domestic work and when she finds an Italian officer or an Italian laborer then the situation changes. The position of this woman compared to the Italian man is very unequal.... This big difference very often generated great exploitation and great violence (Barrera, 2004).

This gives some idea of the situation in which Montanelli and 12-year-old Destà found themselves in colonial Ethiopia.

Montanelli was certainly not the only Italian soldier to participate in the Madamato system. It is probably because he was one of the few who spoke about colonial norms candidly that the media have focused on him. Elena Pirazzoli, who was interviewed for this study, observed, "There is the Montanelli affair, which he himself exposed, claiming it proudly.... and this claim of his, exposed him as a figure." He invariably downplayed the seriousness of the situation and sometimes chose violent words to describe it.

In the 1970s, Montanelli described the situation in a television talk show, saying, “Yes, apparently, I chose very well. She was a very beautiful twelve-year-old Bilen girl. Sorry, but in Africa it’s another thing! [laughter in the audience] And I legally married her in the sense that I bought her from her father….” (Bisiach, RAI 1, 1970). Journalist and activist Elvira Banotti challenged him, saying,

> You said casually you had a twelve years old wife, if we can call her that. And as a 25-year-old man you weren’t appraised of raping a twelve-year-old girl, saying “in Africa these things are commonplace.” I would like to ask you, then, how do you usually understand your relationship with women, in the light of these two statements?

Montanelli reported his relationship with Destà many times until the 2000s, when he described it thus in *La stanza di Montanelli*:

> The girl's name was Destà and she was 14 years old: a detail that in recent times brought upon me the fury of some imbeciles unaware that in tropical countries at 14 years old is already a woman, and past 20 she is an old woman. I had great difficulty in overcoming her smell, due to the goat's tallow with which her hair was soaked, and even more so in establishing a sexual relationship with her because she was from birth infibulated: in addition to opposing an almost insurmountable barrier to my desires (it took, to demolish it, the brutal intervention of her mother), this made her completely insensitive (Montanelli, 2000).

Aside from his accounts of Destà, many of Montanelli’s writings reveal a racist mentality and an eagerness to proclaim the superiority of the white race. Alberto Malvolti, president of the Montanelli-Bassi Foundation, explained in a 2023 interview,

> I had the honor of having known Montanelli personally.... It is understandable that today, the fact that he said on live television that the little girl was 12-years-old and that in Africa certain things worked differently, is perceived as annoying and cynical. After all, Montanelli's character was not afraid to say what he thought and he also had a certain taste in provoking.

Today, Montanelli’s stated views no longer coincide with the views of many Italians, especially those of younger generations. An opinion piece in the independent news magazine *Internazionale* pointed out that "... it is striking that the rank of the indignant over a few paint pots [defacing the monument] are male, white, over fifty, in positions of power. All of them journalists. One wonders: why?"

Behind the Montanelli story lies the real problem: that the full-throated defense of Montanelli and what he represents does not allow Italians to confront their past and the racism still present in Italian society. Those who have defended Montanelli in recent years have done so using the same superficiality and levity with which Italians continue to deal with an uncomfortable past. Although the Italians were colonizers, they are remembered for being good people (*brava gente*); the same goes for Montanelli, who is remembered as a good journalist despite being a colonizer.

Taking a wider view in a 2023 interview, researcher Elena Pirazzoli stated,

> The real problem is that we don't know how many Montanellis there were.... *Madamato* is a complicated subject... some relationships were actually the result of a commercial trade with all the violence that it implies, but others were emotional relationships. So, the issue itself is complex. A big problem is that we have not yet reflected on the Italian colonial past.

Limiting the debate to Montanelli has helped Italian society avoid the larger question of colonialism.

Italy has an uncomfortable past, and that past is exerting a significant influence on the present. What is still missing in post-colonial Italian history is public debate and a decolonization ideology. This would allow Italians to face a complex historical period, the vestiges of which are visible today in the names of streets, buildings, and monuments. A troubling past that is present in the urban space has not yet been discussed collectively in depth.

Framework: Status Quo

In the framework developed by the Monuments Toolkit team, the monument to Indro Montanelli is *status quo*, defined as: "The action of inaction. Allowing the monument to exist without any type of intervention."

Despite attempts by protestors to temporarily reinterpret the monument to Indro Montanelli, the statue remains unchanged in its location. This is in contrast to the disposition of many other monuments that were protested during the summer of 2020.

Issues for Consideration Regarding the Montanelli Statue

The statue of Indro Montanelli in Milan raises questions beyond the obviously problematic elements of the journalist's life and beliefs.

Elena Pirazzoli again offered a key insight:

> At this point what I find more interesting is to move the discourse to another level: the representation of Montanelli.... It is no coincidence that in Italy it was the Non Una di Meno movement, the first association to throw paint at the statue, chose the color pink, and not red.... The goal was not to 'bloodstain' the statue, as it happened during the second attack, because the protest was not about that kind of violence; but instead, the issue of gender violence.

Despite activist attempts to give voice to the 12-year-old Destà at Montanelli's statue, there is no official trace of her there. Her absence is not surprising, for a 2021 study found that almost every major Italian city lacks a single monument dedicated to women (Lunardon and Piazzi, 2023). The few that do exist in urban spaces are the result of

questionable artistic choices. It was not until 2021 that the city of Milan celebrated the first statue dedicated to a woman.

The statue of Montanelli was dedicated in 2006. Three years earlier, in 2003, a statue by Mario Vinci of two female journalists (like Montanelli) had been erected in the town of Acquapendente. The journalists, Ilaria Alpi and Maria Grazia Cutuli, had both been killed while doing their jobs.

The difference between the representation of Montanelli, a man, and the representation of the female journalists is striking: while the man is dressed and depicted with the tools of his profession, the women are naked. The question that must be asked is: Why is a man with a controversial past represented as a professional but two noncontroversial professional women are represented naked?

Interviewee Elena Pirazzoli commented wryly that "the real provocation is not to paint the statue [as some activists have done], but... to represent Montanelli completely naked." In Italian society a statue of Montanelli naked is, of course, unthinkable, even for activists. Perhaps for this very reason it would be the greatest possible provocation.

The gender issue–that is, the objectification of women to which Non Una di Meno called attention by painting the Montanelli statue pink–has deep roots in Italian history. Montanelli is one representative of a generation that committed gender-based violence against African women. Through the normalization of sexual assault, he and successive generations of men have shaped Italian society in the past and present. This can be seen in many facets of life–from the naked female journalists in the statuary representation, to the delay in guaranteeing certain rights. For example, it was only in 1996 that, in Italy, rape became a crime against the person and not against morality. This legal victory was achieved thanks to many women who had suffered sexual violence.

Despite successes in the struggle for change, these rights are continually challenged by current events. A masculine gaze that has been defined as rape culture is still omnipresent in Italy today. It is closely related to the incidence of femicide in the country (Beise, 2023). It can also be seen as a factor in scandals involving politicians defending their sons from accusations of rape (*La Repubblica*, 2023). Those same politicians were friends of Montanelli and today they defend him vigorously. Montanelli becomes then the representative of a generation that not only committed gender-based violence against African women, but that, through the normalization of rape, continues to affect Italian society in the present.

Today, many Italian cities, notably Milan, are exploring ways to include more representations of women in the urban landscape. However, it is clear that the challenge is deep and complex. The Mi Riconosci? association explains:

> "With this research we hope to show how our women's monuments almost give a visual representation of the institutionalized sexism that pervades our society. Likewise, it becomes clear that it is not possible to solve the problem simply by erecting new statues dedicated to women" (Lunardon and Piazzi, 2023).

Before creating new monuments to women, it is necessary to examine the values embodied in the statues that are already present. It is also important to discern what it is that institutions wish to represent through public monuments. The monument to Montanelli may be a starting point.

Conclusions

Through this research, an attempt has been made to describe the complex issues surrounding the monument to Indro Montanelli in Milan.

The monument invites reflection on two important and interconnected issues from Italy's past that continue to resonate today: colonialism and gender representation. Like the monument itself, these topics are uncomfortable to discuss, which largely explains the lack of political will to address them, from either the right or the left.

For Italian society, the monument to Montanelli is a Pandora's box. When Italians analyze Montanelli's actions and beliefs, they are forced to acknowledge the existence of many more despicable figures. They are obliged to face not only their country's colonial past, but also its fascist past, both of which have left an indelible legacy in cities and the national memory. Anyone who protests the statue of Montanelli must also protest countless building and street names that honor a troubling past.

As Italy faces its difficult heritage, the real danger is the risk of forgetting colonial history altogether or omitting the point of view of those colonized. Nigerian writer and scholar Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) writes, "When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise." This makes the study of Italy's past necessary; if Italians know their country's past, they can demolish all prejudices related to it. So it is largely through school history programs that society can change.

The case of the Montanelli statue in particular can be used to open the type of long and painful debate needed to change minds and challenge the prevailing culture. Some intellectuals have already attempted this. Angelo Del Boca was a researcher who dedicated his life to the study of Italy's colonial past. Drawing on existing studies on the use of gas to exterminate local populations in the colonies, Del Boca opened a polarizing debate in 1996. For many Italians, Del Boca was unforgivably critical of Italy's colonial past. Montanelli himself initially denied everything Del Boca said. It was only several years later that Montanelli admitted that the documents uncovered by historians were indisputable. This historical fact is now recognized on an institutional level, but perhaps not among members of civil society.

Today, thanks to activists and younger Italians, a new collective consciousness is developing around the need to confront the past. The external push provided by the Black Lives Matter movement in the US changed the situation: although it was not deeply absorbed into Italian society, it brought new insights to the question of historical memorialization. The Montanelli monument has ignited a conversation about colonialism and gender issues–a conversation that needed to happen. Although the colonial issue is

the one in the foreground, discussion of the gender representation issue could also prove fruitful, because there has been little talk about it.

Monuments in public spaces affect the public, because they inevitably communicate values that prevailed at a time and place in the past. The questions are: Should people accept, unchallenged, the symbols that institutions have chosen for them? Who do citizens want representing them in the cities in which they live? What values do they want to pass on to future generations?

Occasional protests aside, the statue of Montanelli goes unnoticed today by those who frequent the park. Few people stop by or look at it. Occasionally tourists approach it with curiosity, but they usually walk away without taking a photograph.

Therefore, Montanelli's statue sits quietly until a protest once again returns it to the center of public debate. No one knows what the future holds for the statue of Indro Montanelli. What is clear is that societies change and, with them, the shared set of values on which the culture is based. Perhaps one day those whose stories have been buried in the shadow of controversial figures will be appropriately represented in public works of memorialization.

Sam Houston Statue - Houston, Texas

Tools Used:

Establish Committees and Working Groups, Know your Community

Framework:
Status Quo

Texas is known as the “Lone Star State” because of the flag that was adopted after Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836. The state’s name is derived from the indigenous Caddo word for friends or allies. Texas was admitted as the 28th state in the Union on December 29, 1845, after being an independent nation for nine years. In 1861, Texas left the Union to ally with the Confederacy but officially rejoined the US in 1870.

In the 179 years since it first joined the United States, Texas has boasted some of the most beautiful parks and interesting cities in the country, including Big Bend National Park and the city of San Antonio. In addition to a large and vibrant Hispanic population, Texas is home to several Native American tribes, including the Alabama-Coushatta, the Tigua, and the Kickapoo. In a nod to its rich history, Texas is also home to significant memorials such as the Sam Houston Monument in Houston.

Monument to Sam Houston in Houston, Texas

On a sunny midsummer afternoon, the scent of the nearby Gulf of Mexico fills the heavy, moist air as Houstonians flee indoors to avoid the heat. Hermann Park is quiet and motionless–the massive monument to Texas’s best-known general and statesman rising alone in the center of Hermann Park Drive.

Since its inception in 1992, the Hermann Park Conservancy has used more than $120 million in funds from both the public and private sector to rehabilitate and transform significant portions of the park. Hermann Park welcomes more than six million visitors annually. Many, if not most, visitors see the grand and powerful monument to Sam Houston.

Historical Context

Samuel Houston (March 2, 1793-July 26, 1863) was a general, statesman, and key figure in the Texas Revolution. He was one of the first to represent Texas in the US Senate, and he served as the first and third president of the Republic of Texas. Houston was also the only

person to be elected governor of two different states in the US, serving as the sixth governor of Tennessee and the seventh governor of Texas.

Houston's family moved from Rockbridge County, Virginia, to Maryville, Tennessee, when he was a teenager. After this, Houston established a relationship with Cherokee people that would prove to be life-long. In the War of 1812, he served alongside General Andrew Jackson. Despite his close personal ties to people within the Cherokee Nation, Houston presided over the mass displacement of the Cherokee from Tennessee after the war. Houston was elected to the US House of Representatives in 1823 with the help of Andrew Jackson and others. Five years later, he was elected governor of Tennessee after fervently backing Jackson's presidential bids.

During Jackson's presidency, several local Native American tribes asked Houston to resolve conflicts and convey their needs to the Jackson administration. Houston traveled to Washington D.C. to conduct negotiations on their behalf.

In 1832, Houston moved to Texas. He assisted in setting up Texas' temporary administration following the Battle of Gonzales (the first battle of the Texas Revolution) and was chosen to be commander-in-chief of the Texas Army. During the Battle of San Jacinto, the pivotal fight in Texas's war for independence from Mexico, he led the Texans to victory.

Houston was elected president of Texas in 1836 following the conflict. Due to term constraints, he resigned in 1838, but was re-elected president in 1841. In 1846, Houston was chosen to represent Texas in the US Senate after playing a significant part in the annexation of Texas by the United States. He became a member of the Democratic Party and backed President James K. Polk in pursuing the Mexican-American War (1846-1848).

Houston's unionism and hostility to both Northern and Southern extremists were defining characteristics of his Senate career. He supported the Compromise of 1850, which resolved numerous territorial disputes brought on by the annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War. He also opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, as he thought that its provisions allowing the spread of slavery into newly formed states would fuel regional strife. Houston himself enslaved more than a dozen people of African descent during his lifetime.

After voting against the act, Houston left the Democratic Party. He ran unsuccessfully to be the American Party's presidential candidate in 1856 and the Constitutional Union Party's candidate in 1860. Houston was elected governor of Texas in 1859. In this capacity, he opposed secession and attempted to prevent Texas from joining the Confederate States of America. He was removed from power in 1861 and died in 1863.

Creation of the Monument

The monument to Sam Houston is a public work of art in a public space. It is located within a roundabout at the front entrance to Hermann Park on Hermann Park Drive in downtown Houston.

In his 1916 design for Hermann Park, landscape architect George Kessler suggested a memorial circle. The *Houston Chronicle* began raising funds to construct a monument to Sam Houston as early as 1917. The Women's Municipal Club raised $40,000, the city government contributed $10,000, and the state government contributed $25,000 toward the cost of fabrication.

A publicity campaign in national magazines urged artists to submit designs. Following a three-night exhibition of the entries in Houston's Humble Oil Building, a distinguished group of Houstonians chose the design of Italian American sculptor Enrico Cerracchio (1880–1956). Sam Houston's great-granddaughter unveiled the monument on August 16, 1925, and lumber magnate John Henry Kirby performed the dedication.

The painting *General Sam Houston at San Jacinto* by Stephen Seymour Thomas inspired Cerracchio's design. Houston appears in a long cape and military garb astride his horse Saracen, extending his right arm in the direction of the battleground of San Jacinto, where Texan troops defeated the Mexican army in 1836. The 20 foot tall statue stands on a granite arch that is approximately 25 feet tall.

The plaque under the arch briefly references the problematic nature of the monument:

> Although one of the most controversial figures in Texas history, Sam Houston was also one of the most colorful.

The Sam Houston Monument is part of the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection. The Houston Municipal Arts Commission managed the monument until 2006, when it merged with the Civic Arts Committee and the Cultural Arts Council to become the Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) (Houston Public Library, n.d.). The Houston Arts Alliance is a nonprofit agency that works through contracts with the City of Houston under purview of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA). The MOCA operates under review of the City Council's Arts and Culture Committee.

HAA's Civic Art and Design Division manages the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection. The stated values of the HAA are dedication to the arts, integrity, service, respect, empowerment, transparency, and teamwork (Houston Arts Alliance, n.d.).

Houston as White Supremacist

Though there has been no physical harm to the Houston monument, some individuals and groups have spoken out against it. In a Facebook post promoting a rally in May 2017, Texas Antifa asserted:

> Texans agree the disgusting idols of America's dark days of slavery must be removed to bring internal peace to our country. Several large groups of BLM have also pledged their support for this historic rally against the idols of an oppressive history, hence the name "Anti-Oppression Rally" - These statues are a slap in the face of all Black Americans! (Hlavaty, 2017).

Texas Antifa's planned protest never materialized. However, a rally by supporters of Sam Houston did occur in June 2017 to defend the statue after Texas Antifa's Facebook post advocating for its removal circulated (Lewis, 2017). While there was ultimately no public show of opposition, there was a clear demonstration of support in defense of the Sam Houston Monument as it stands.

Much of the controversy stems from the fact that Houston enslaved people of African descent. He also played a pivotal role in the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836, which paved the way for Texas to become an independent republic. Texas held that status until it became a US state in 1845. The idea of Manifest Destiny had gained a foothold in the US, and Texas statehood was seen by some as validation of unending westward expansion. However, Mexico had not yet acknowledged Texas' independence. The Mexican-American War (1846-48) resulted in a US victory, American control over a vast new territory, and passionate debate over the expansion of slavery.

Houston as Hero

Houston's supporters maintain that he did much that was good for Texas, and they point out that in his public life he was anti-slavery. As a senator, Houston voted against the spread of slavery in the young United States' newest territories. He was also removed as the governor of Texas for not falling in line with other Southern states when the Civil War began.

Cary Wintz, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of History at Texas Southern University in Houston, asserts that:

> His involvement in the Mexican-American War was limited. He was not a general in that war. Mexico lost control of Texas. He did not support the Confederacy. I think that should be celebrated (Correa, 2022).

Many other Texans celebrate Houston's military prowess and ingenuity–traits that proved decisive in the fight for Texan independence at the Battle of San Jacinto. Houston is also admired as the first president of the Lone Star Republic and one of the first two US senators to represent Texas after it joined the Union in 1845.

Site Selection

How much does imagery add to an oppressive environment? Named for oilman and philanthropist George H. Hermann (1843-1914), Hermann Park was Houston's first park. It was initially part of an extensive urban planning project. In 1914, George H. Hermann, who owned large swaths of land in the region and was a member of the city's parks board, bequeathed the tract to be used as a public green space.

The large and dramatic monument to Sam Houston was prominently placed at the center of a busy roundabout to honor Houston's multiple important roles in Texas history. A nonprofit group called the Hermann Park Conservancy, established in 1992, looks after the park's landmarks.

Framework: Status Quo

The Sam Houston monument remains in its location. In the framework developed by the Monuments Toolkit team, the monument is status quo, defined as: "The act of inaction. Allowing the monument to exist without any type of intervention."

The framework for this monument is status quo because it remains whole, intact and without significant alterations in its current and original place. As of the writing of this case study, no decisions, actions or definitive statements have been made to change the location of the monument. The Hermann Park Conservancy continues to maintain the monument.

The Director of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs and the President of the Hermann Park Conservancy were contacted at the time of writing for their perspectives on the monument's position as status quo, but could not be reached.

Houston's Confederate Items Task Force

Following the violent "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner called for the creation of a task force to study Houston's Confederate monuments. The Task Force included city officials, scholars, and community leaders that assessed Houston's monuments connected to slavery and the Confederacy while considering actions such as removal, relocation, and reinterpretation. The task force was called for in August 2017, just a few months after Texas Antifa's facebook post and the rally in support of the Sam Houston statue.

Following the group's investigation, the City of Houston Confederate Items Task Force Final Report was published in March 2018. The report's appendix, "Statues in city art collection related to Confederacy and/or subjects with ties to Civil War or slavery," includes the Sam Houston Monument located in Hermann Park. The "concern" is listed as "Sam Houston was a slave owner but opposed the expansion of slavery and Texas joining the Confederacy" (*City of Houston Confederate Items Task Force Final Report* 2018, Appendix).

Ultimately, the City of Houston Confederate Items Task Force issued recommendations for the removal of two Confederate statues from public grounds. Their fate would be up to the Mayor. Though the Sam Houston Monument was identified in the report's item inventory, it was not chosen for further investigation or recommendation by the Task Force. The report addresses its limited scope:

> While there was a consensus among the Task Force members that all items included on the inventory list could benefit from further public awareness about their place in history and context, it was determined that the scope of the Task Force should remain focused on specific recommendations for City-owned objects related to the Confederacy (ibid., 5).

The two chosen Confederate monuments, the *Spirit of the Confederacy* and Statue of Dick Dowling, were removed from public view in 2020. In October 2023, the Houston City Council passed an ordinance deaccessioning the two statues as well as a statue of Christopher Columbus from the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection. The statue of Columbus was not addressed by the Task Force in 2018, but "after multiple instances of vandalism, the Christopher Columbus statue was similarly deemed to be unsuitable for public display by City of Houston senior staff members" (Houston City Council, 2023).

There is no evidence that a further assessment of the Sam Houston Monument as an item "with ties to Civil War or slavery" (*City of Houston Confederate Items Task Force Final Report* 2018, Appendix) ever occurred. As the Task Force did not identify the Sam Houston statue as requiring a specific recommendation, it is likely that opposition to the monument did not pose a significant obstacle to civic peace.

Legislation Proposed in Response

In response to the controversy around the Sam Houston Monument in 2017, Texas State Senator Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) introduced Senate Bill (S.B.) 112 to "protect Texas' heritage and history" to the state legislature (Texas State Senate, 2017). S.B. 112 prevented any historical monument or memorial that had been on public land for more than 40 years from being removed, altered or renamed. In this bill, a "monument or memorial" was defined as a "permanent monument, memorial, or other designation, including a statue, portrait, plaque, seal, symbol, building name, bridge name, park name, area name or street name" (T.X. S.B. 112, 2017). This bill was designed to severely limit the ability to alter the status of any Texas monument located on public land.

In a Senate of Texas press release, the action around the Sam Houston monument in May and June 2017 is cited as evidence for the necessity of the legislation's introduction. The press release states:

> This legislation is necessary as shown by recent attempts across the state to remove valuable pieces of history from the public. A rally occurred in Hermann Park in Houston earlier this year regarding the removal of the Sam Houston statue. Sam Houston is the namesake of the City of Houston and one of Texas' most important founding fathers (Texas State Senate, 2017).

The bill did not pass in either chamber of the Texas State Legislature. However, Senator Creighton introduced an almost identical bill to the Texas Senate in 2019. This bill, S.B. 1663, passed the State Senate, but was stalled in the House. During debate over S.B. 1663, Senator Borris Miles (D- Houston) called the bill "disgraceful" (Samuels, 2019).

In 2021, Texas State Representative Bryan Slaton (R- Royse City) introduced Assembly Bill 2571 with similar language as the previously mentioned bills banning removal, alteration, or relocation of monuments that had been on state property for over 40 years. The bill died in the House chamber.

Conclusion

There has been little public opposition to the Sam Houston Monument in Hermann Park since its creation. Texas Antifa's opposition effort never materialized. However, it prompted a significant show of support for the monument from the Houston community. It also led to a statewide legislative effort by one Texas State Senator in 2017 to establish a status quo position for all monuments that had existed on public land for more than 40 years. Though the bill did not pass, it was reintroduced to the legislature with slight modifications in 2019 and 2021. These actions speak to the body of support behind maintaining the Sam Houston Monument in the position of status quo.

Though the monument was considered as a piece of Houston public art with ties to slavery, it was not chosen for further assessment by the City of Houston Confederate Items Task Force in 2018. Without additional protest or vandalism surrounding the statue, it appears that the Sam Houston Monument will continue to exist as part of the Houston monument landscape.

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