

MONUMENTAL FORM/ MEMORIAL TIME

A Multidisciplinary Graduate Symposium

MARCH 10-11, 2017



ADELE H. STAMP
STUDENT UNION
CENTER FOR CAMPUS LIFE

STAMP GALLERY

This event is co-organized by the Stamp Gallery and the Graduate Art History Association at the University of Maryland, College Park. Additional support for the event is provided by the Department of Art History and Archaeology and Graduate Student Government.

Friday, March 10

4:30pm

Benjamin Banneker Room (Stamp 2212)

Introductory Remarks

Raino Isto, University of Maryland

Keynote Lecture: "Washing Off the Brainwash"

Lisi Raskin, Rhode Island School of Design

Reception

Saturday, March 11

Panel 1: Reconsidering Monumentality

10:00am—11:30am, Juan Ramon Jimenez Room (Stamp 2208)

Abby Eron, University of Maryland

“Short of Monumental: Hélène Sardeau’s *The Slave* and the Visualization of Slavery and Emancipation in the New Deal Era”

Can a public sculpture be “colossal” and “heroic,” even part of a “memorial,” without being monumental? Hélène Sardeau’s *The Slave* (1940) suggests this possibility. Part of the Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial in Philadelphia, commissioned by the Fairmount Park Art Association, Sardeau’s six-foot tall, limestone *The Slave* stands as the city’s first permanent, public representation of slavery or emancipation. It contributes to the larger scheme of the Samuel Memorial, intended to be “emblematic of the history of America from the time of the earliest settlers to the present,” a mission specified in philanthropist Ellen Phillips Samuel’s will, which allotted the funds for the project.

As part of the Memorial’s Central Terrace installation, *The Slave* possesses a stylistic coherence with the other commissioned sculptures by various artists that surround it—J. Wallace Kelly’s *The Ploughman*, John B. Flanagan’s *The Miner*, and Heinz Warneke’s *The Immigrant*. This formal continuity belies the troublesome relationship envisioned between free and enslaved labor and fissures in American national identity during this period. While part of this larger ensemble, *The Slave* was also exhibited separately, as the Museum of Modern Art displayed the sculpture as a stand-alone object in the months before its ultimate placement.

The paper’s analysis of *The Slave* is multipronged. It reviews the history of attempts to represent emancipation in the city of Philadelphia. It contextualizes *The Slave* in terms of Sardeau’s oeuvre and in light of New Deal-era artwork, complete with its idealization of masculine bodies. It also looks at the critical commentary surrounding the work and related examples. Traversing the nexus of gender, race, and monumentality, this paper ultimately reveals how *The Slave* does not succeed as a site of memory or of community engagement despite its status as the first permanent, outdoor three-dimensional visualization of emancipation in Philadelphia.

Rebecca D. Pollack, CUNY Graduate Center

“The Failure of the Countermonument: Berlin's Memorials to Victims of the Nazis”

Beginning at the Brandenburg gate and moving south along the Tiergarten, are four distinct memorials to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. They were built all built independently between 2005 and 2014. These memorials are characterized by what James Young refers to as counter monuments, which is the shift from historically traditionally, heroic, monuments to anti-heroic, conceptual monuments that mark ambivalence towards triumphal nationalism and focus on victimization. The four memorials along the Tiergarten are the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2005, the Memorial to Homosexuals, 2008, The Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims, 2012, and most recently, the *Tiergartenstrasse 4* Memorial to the ill and defenseless, 2014. These memorials create a differentiation for victims on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, and physical abilities.

These memorials are counter monuments in that they undo notions of monumentality. They attempt to undo notions of hegemonic power in monuments by broadening the audience to four distinct categories of people who have been discriminated against throughout history. My paper will examine these monuments through their urban context and their role as important tourists sites to demonstrate what results when multiple stories of victimhood are told at one site. The memorials revert back to the status of traditional monumentality that they initially tried to undo. Furthermore, instead of eliminating notions of power, they instead construct hierarchies amongst themselves. Not only do they reinforce traditional notions of monumentality and hierarchies, they generate new ones between these disenfranchised groups. My paper will prove that instead of subverting nationalism, these four memorials paradigm a new type of national memorial core, much like the Mall in DC. Although instead of heroes it champions victimhood to create a national identity for Berlin.

Zhe Dong, University of Virginia

“Who, When, Where, and What: Rethinking Monumentality through Mao Zedong's Birthplace”

Terms such as monumentality, modernity, political power, and collective memory are not universally valid, but are precarious constructs that categorize the indefinite experience of everyday life. There exists no monumentality that is more authentic or authoritative than the other, but multiple experiences of monumentality, in multiple sites and histories, that contribute to a shared and often misinterpreted discourse. In this paper I use Mao Zedong's birthplace Shaoshan to rethink the complexity in the concept of monumentality. In the first part of the paper, I observe how Shaoshan, a nondescript village in the late-nineteenth century China, was in different time periods reappropriated to partake in various and even conflicting identities, such as a heritage site in the 1950s, a sacred place during the Cultural Revolution, and a commercial center in the so-called Red Tourism. In the second part, I focus on contemporary Shaoshan, analyze how it is interpreted by diverse social actors, and suggest that its seemingly consolidated identity in each period is in fact an illusion. The case of Shaoshan suggests that what we characterize as a monument is inconsistent either in history or in the public reception of a certain time period. In the conclusion, I propose that, instead of sticking to the authoritarian/elitist or the individualistic/existential definition, we could perhaps find the monument somewhere in between.

Panel 2: Monuments of Pilgrimage and Prayer
11:30am—1:00pm, Juan Ramon Jimenez Room (Stamp 2208)

Emily Stanton, Cornell University

“In the Footsteps of Saints and Sheep: The Monumentality of the North Wales Pilgrim's Way”

During the medieval period, Bardsey Island (*Ynys Enlli*) became a prominent and unique pilgrimage destination in North Wales. Reputedly the burial place of 20,000 saints, Bardsey provides an ideal case study of how pilgrimage destinations and routes develop and what role monuments play in marking the way.

The materiality of medieval pilgrimage to Bardsey is most evident in the inscribed stones, Celtic chapels, and holy wells pilgrims encountered while moving through the Welsh countryside. In their landscape settings, these monuments create networks of memories and imbue places with layers of meaning. At first, these monuments were likely sites of intensely local significance – the inscribed stones commemorating the dead and marking boundaries, the Celtic chapels housing the relics of local saints, and the holy wells providing water and curative powers.

After the establishment of a monastery on Bardsey in the 6th century, pilgrims travelling there likely used these monuments as way-markers to aid in constructing mental maps of pathways in the landscape before printed maps became widely available. The monuments imposed an episodic structure on the overall journey, dividing it into a sequence of miniature pilgrimages. Taken altogether, the wells, chapels, and inscribed stones function as a sequence of sites linked together as an archaeological unit. Today, these monuments are incorporated into the modern North Wales Pilgrim's Way, an effort to revitalize the medieval route and promote the history, archaeology, and natural beauty of Wales.

Whether past or present, pilgrimages place much emphasis on the experience of the journey. Acting as physical, tangible reminders of earlier ages, the monuments of the Pilgrim's Way connect the pilgrimage communities traversing the same landscape across different time periods. This feeling of connection to those who journeyed through this place before is part of the experience of pilgrimage, especially on Bardsey today.

Amy Zhang, George Mason University

“The Largest Prayer Wheel in the World”

This paper explores the Dukezong Prayer Wheel and its context, a city called Shangri-la in Yunnan, China. I begin with a description of the prayer wheel, considering its scale, materials, and the iconography of the embossed imagery on multiple thematic levels that encircle the tower structure. I then turn to the history of this structure: how the largest prayer wheel in the world came to be located in Shangri-la; the history and status of the nearby temple and monastery complex; and the development of the city as a site for "cultural heritage" tourism. I hope through exploring the tensions and contradictions embedded in this massive object, I will illuminate analogous tensions and contradictions in the relations of power in contemporary Chinese society.

Panel 3: Monuments Constructed and Deconstructed
2:00—3:30pm, Juan Ramon Jimenez Room (Stamp 2208)

Carrie Cushman, Columbia University

“Isozaki Arata’s Anti-Monument: The Tsukuba City Center in Ruins”

In 1979, the Japanese government commissioned the acclaimed architect Isozaki Arata (1931-) to design the center of a town under construction in the suburbs of Tokyo – Tsukuba Science City – the new location of several universities, research institutions, and the Japanese Space Agency. The development of so-called “new towns” in the 1960-70s was the government’s latest large-scale illustration of the country’s miraculous recovery from World War II and exponential economic growth in the postwar period. A youth of war-torn Japan, Isozaki was deeply troubled by the “shadow of the nation state” in the Tsukuba project.¹ His final design was a response to what he perceived as the dangers of monumentality – a pastiche of world monuments, from the Capitoline Plaza to Louis Sullivan’s skyscrapers, fragmented, inverted, and recast into a ruinous, irregular composition.

In this paper, I will parse Isozaki’s design in order to demonstrate how his postmodernist strategy challenged the notion of the historical masterpiece, modernist iconographic systems, and the progressive narrative of postwar history propagated by the Japanese state. Central to Isozaki’s reimagining of the city center was the fragmented and potentially incoherent form of the ruin. How did Isozaki deploy the ruin in a critique of monumentality despite and in spite of the deep-seated relationship between the two forms? How did he play with notions of historical time and architectural style so as to open up the symbolically loaded space of the city center to a multiplicity of new, indeterminate meanings? Ultimately, how did ruins free Isozaki from myths of monumental form and modern time?

¹ Isozaki Arata, “Of City, Nation, and Style,” in *Postmodernism and Japan*, Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 51.

Julie Defossez, The Ohio State University

“Monumental Maintenance: Mierle Laderman Ukeles at Fresh Kills”

Swarming seagulls and screeching dump trucks roam the mountains of garbage in Mierle Laderman Ukeles's photographs of Fresh Kills. For decades this Staten Island landfill was the largest dump on earth and it was long-rumored to be visible from space. Until its closure in 2001 it was the physical endpoint of New York City's vast sanitation infrastructure and the final destination for the trash generated by its inhabitants. As the sole artist-in-residence at the Department of Sanitation, Ukeles has engaged with Fresh Kills in various capacities since 1977. The landfill is currently being transformed into a park and Ukeles is collaborating with the city to create a permanent public artwork for the site.

My paper will examine Ukeles's proposal and argue that it allows us to consider Fresh Kills itself as a monument. Viewing it through this lens enables us to see it as a self-produced portrait of the citizens of New York as well as a visual record of consumer capitalism. Ukeles calls garbage “the ultimate social sculpture,”² and part of her project involves materializing this description by having one million New Yorkers contribute a small object to be set in a glass block and etched with a barcode. The blocks will line a path and the barcode will let donors find the location of their object. This inverts the standard logic of landfills by refusing to sever the link between each person and their trash. We are all complicit in the production of landfills and our collective blindness to this process ensures its reproduction. Our trash is visual evidence of our bottomless appetite for consumption and Fresh Kills reveals that its scale is staggering. By making our garbage newly visible, Ukeles's project will let us see ourselves from a fresh perspective.

² Ukeles, “The Power of the Artist and the Power of Art in the Public Doman,” in *Creative Time: The Book*, Anne Pasternak and Ruth Peltason, eds (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 129.

Raino Isto, University of Maryland

“Weak Monumentality: A Theoretical Proposition”

Monumentality as a cultural form remains one of the most conflicted phenomena in contemporary culture, at once representing the pre-modern drive to eternalize and the melodramatic scale of the modernist project. Despite the apparent universality of monumental construction across both time and geography, monuments continue to be associated with totalitarian and authoritarian political systems, and subject to critique as deceptive representations of history. Although the notion of an art autonomous from ideology has long since ceased to be credible, monuments are often aggressively deconstructed as both materializations and symbols of bare power. The monument's status in the course of the uneven and incomplete transition from modernity to postmodernity points to the unresolved anxieties that continue to cohere around bodies, public art, and—ultimately—the possibility of the truth of history.

This paper surveys recent attempts by artists to create works that engage with history and memory by engaging with monumentality. Specifically, it examines a subset of these attempts—largely emergent in postsocialist conditions—that I argue can be described as ‘weak monumentality.’ Weak monumentality is distinct from concepts such as ‘counter-monumentality’ (as described by James E. Young) and ‘anti-monumentality.’ It aims neither at a thoroughly self-conscious deconstruction of monumentality nor at an aggressive confrontation with previous monumental paradigms. Instead, weak monumentality describes practices that continue to draw upon the explicit ideology and practices of monumental construction, embracing the monument's paradoxicality rather than treating it as a foil for avant-garde deconstruction. Attending to the nuances of ‘weak monumentality’ recovers the affective and aesthetic complexity of monuments as living forms.

Concluding Remarks

3:30pm—4:00pm, Juan Ramon Jimenez Room (Stamp 2208)

Grace Yasumura, University of Maryland

Raino Isto, University of Maryland