**HPSS S732-01 Witness Tree Project**

**Art, Memory, Community**

**[in conjunction with FURN 2451]**

**Fall 2023**

Instructor: Daniel Cavicchi

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Class: Monday 9am -12pm, PW 237B

Since 2009, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and the National Park Service (NPS) have worked to develop a collaborative model for teaching and learning centered on witness trees: long-standing trees that have borne witness to the histories of the places where they have stood. The Project arranges for a fallen witness tree to be shipped from a national historic site to RISD, where, in a joint history seminar and design studio, students interpret the history the tree witnessed and make relevant objects from the tree’s wood. In addition to classroom study, the Project variously involves field trips, guest lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and exhibitions of students’ objects.

In this iteration of the Witness Tree Project, we will work with diverse tree species from the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park in Cornish, New Hampshire. Saint-Gaudens was an influential American sculptor and arts advocate at the turn of the twentieth century, whose work–-including 35 prominent public monuments, new U.S. coinage, the National Mall, and the founding of both the Art Students League and the Cornish Art Colony–-provides provocative entry points for understanding art, collective memory, and community. Students will explore the various ways in which communities connect with place through material and craft, how making can serve to memorialize, and the connections that making and material sourcing practices have to the future history of place.

**Learning Objectives**

* To become familiar with the work, life, and historical context of Augustus Saint Gaudens.
* To understand concepts of art and community in the United States, including the social aspects of making and receiving art.
* To learn general trends of, and debates about, memorialization, memory, and commemoration as sources of collective feeling.
* To develop familiarity with the practices of observational and historical research in place-based history.
* To learn about practices of public history as presented by the National Park Service staff at the Saint Gaudens Historical Park.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

Readings

1. Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. $33.00.\*

2. Additional essays from JSTOR, Project MUSE, and online sources, as indicated below.

*\*Available for purchase online; a hardcopy is on Library Reserve.*

NOTE: The readings are listed in the schedule according to when we will discuss them as a class. Please read them by such dates and come to class with questions, analyses, and comments. Having said that, please treat the readings as rich sources to which you can return repeatedly throughout a section of the course and through the course as a whole.

Key Online Sources:

Augustus Saint Gaudens National Historical Park website - <https://www.nps.gov/saga/learn/historyculture/history-culture.htm>

Saint Gaudens Memorial - <https://saint-gaudens.org>

Shaw Memorial Restoration Page: <https://friendsofthepublicgarden.org/shaw54th/>

Commemorative Works in Providence RI - <https://artculturetourism.com/commemorative-works/existing-commemorative-works/>

Monument Lab – [https://monumentlab.com](https://monumentlab.com/)

Canvas

The course has a Canvas site, with the syllabus, PDFs of the readings (if available), and additional features that support extended discussion and communication. Please check it weekly. It can be accessed here: https://www.risd.edu/canvas-hub

Evaluation

1. Class Participation 25%

Please make every effort to organize your time so that you keep up with the reading and come prepared to participate in each class meeting.

2. Mapping Assignment 25%

3. Art Colony Proposal 25%

3. Memorial Analysis 25%

Descriptions of written assignments below.

Practices and Policies

• You will be graded on RISD’s standard A-F scale, with C representing average, and acceptable, work. Since this is a collaborative class, Megan Callahan and I will do the grading together.

• All assignments not completed by the last day of class will result in a F for the course, unless you have made other arrangements with me.

• Plagiarism, including use of content generated by AI, without acknowledgement, in a paper, is a serious offense and may warrant further judicial action. Be sure that you understand what constitutes plagiarism before you begin an assignment. You may find more details in the Academic Code of Conduct: https://policies.risd.edu/academic/academic-code-of-conduct/.

• Your preferred name can and should be used wherever possible in the course of College business and education. Please let me know your preference (privately, if you wish), if it differs from College records.

• In seminar, all class members should be free to express their ideas and opinions about the topics discussed without fear of prejudice, animosity, or retaliation. Personal attacks will not be tolerated.

• Adiverse community of learners requires us to work together with a heightened sensitivity and a collective generosity of purpose to establish respect for our differences and vulnerabilities. We don’t all start at the same place; please let me know if you are unable to fully participate in class.

• I will try to make accommodations for those who need them and who are registered with Disability Support Services. More information: <https://info.risd.edu/disability-support-services-dss/#student-faqs>

• Equity and Compliance has a thorough list of resources which may provide you with added support, as needed, during the semester: <https://equitycompliance.risd.edu/resources-support/>

• The best way to reach me is through email (listed above). I try to answer messages within two working days. I may read, but do not generally respond to, email on weekends or after 8 pm.

SCHEDULE

**Sept 11 - Opening: Art, Memory, Community**

**Sept 18 - Saint Gaudens’ World**

Thayer Toyles, “Augustus Saint Gaudens in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, SPRING 2009, New Series, Vol. 66, No. 4, (SPRING 2009), pp. 4-80. JSTOR

OPTIONAL: Listen to the Saint Gaudens episode of the podcast “The Sculptor’s Funeral”: <http://www.thesculptorsfuneral.com/episodes/2016/11/15/episode-65-augustus-saint-gaudens-part-one>

**Sept 25 - Field Trip to Saint Gaudens National Historical Park, Cornish, New Hampshire\***

National Park Service, *Saint Gaudens National Historical Park Foundation Document*, June 2015.

\*Be prepared to spend the entire day on the trip, 7am to 7 pm.

**Oct 2 – Mapping Assignment Review**

\*Personal Map Due

Create a map of Aspet, based on your understanding of the place. Maps are selective, purposeful representations of a place that quickly communicate multiple levels of detail and scale and can address diverse factors such culture, behavior, and physical environment. Your map may be visual, textual, 3-D or 2-D; it must include at least three “layers” of information. You will be graded on the level of detail achieved, the clarity of the research/observation supporting your information, the unique insight created by the interplay of the map’s layers, and the clarity of the map’s presentation (in class).

**Oct 9 – Indigenous People’s Day**

**Oct 16 – Art Worlds of the Gilded Age**

Suzanne Hinman, *The Grandest Madison Square Garden: Art, Architecture, and Scandal in the Gilded Age*. Syracuse University Press, 2019. EBSCO. Pages 13-65 (Chapters 1-4).

Garnett McCoy, “Visits, Parties, and Cats in the Hall: The Tenth Street Studio Building and Its Inmates in the Nineteenth Century.” *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jan., 1966): 1- 8. JSTOR

Charles Pearo, “Elizabeth Jane Gardner and the American Colony in Paris: ‘Making Hay while the Sun Shines’ in the Business of Art.” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter 2009): 275-312 . JSTOR

OPTIONAL:

Explore information and links at “New York Art Worlds, 1870-1890.” https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/new-york-art-worlds/visiting-guide

**Oct 23 – Modeling Community: The Art Colony**

Geneva M. Gano, excerpt of “Introduction: Modernism Beyond the Metropolis,” from *The little art colony and US modernism: Carmel, Provincetown, Taos*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020: 5-16. EBSCO

Hobbs, Susan. “Thomas Dewing in Cornish, 1885-1905.” *American Art Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1985, pp. 3–32. JSTOR

Annelise K. Madsen, “Private Tribute, Public Art: *The Masque of the Golden Bowl* and the Artistic Beginnings of American Pageantry,” Chapter 11 in Herman Du Toit, Ed., *Pageants & Processions: Image and Idiom as Spectacle*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 161-182. EBSCO

**Oct 30 - Collective Memory: Civil War**

David W. Blight, “The Civil War in American Memory.” Excerpt from *The Civil War Remembered*, National Park Service. https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-civil-war-in-american-memory.htm

Katie Mullis Kresser, “Power and Glory: Brahmin Identity and the Shaw Memorial.” *American Art*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 2006), pp. 32-57. JSTOR

Maurie D. McInnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power.” *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 81 (2016): 125–146. JSTOR

**Nov 3 – Art Colony Proposal**

\*Art Colony Proposal Due – Create a written narrative plan (no more than 5 pages) for a new, communal, artist retreat, by outlining its goals, potential site, and site features. Building on class readings and discussion, pay particular attention to the facilitation of collective or communal making, as well as the appeal of a colony for the current historical moment. You will be graded on how precisely you contextualize the colony’s purpose and address the creation of communal feeling through its structure and activities.

**Nov 6 - Boston Field Trip**

OPTIONAL: Watch the NPS panel “Marching So Boldly: Remembering Black Lives Through History and Art.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0_T-0p0Ac0>

**Nov 13 – Collective Feeling: Memorialization**

Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. LIBRARY RESERVE.

**Nov 20 – Statuary Alienation**

Administration of Donald J. Trump, “Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes.” Executive Order 13934, July 8, 2020. JSTOR

Thomas J. Brown, “Iconoclasm and the Monumental Presence of the Civil War.” *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 2021): 145-163. Project MUSE

Philip Deloria, “Ghosts on the Landscape of Memory and Mending” in *Monuments and Myths: The America of Scultors Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French*. University of Chicago Press, 2023: 31-41. LIBRARY RESERVE

**[Nov 22-26 – Thanksgiving Break]**

**Nov 27 – Art for a New Commons**

Aroussiak Gabrielian, Alison B. Hirsch, “Prosthetic Landscapes: Place and Placelessness in the Digitization of Memorials.” *Future Anterior*, Volume 15, Number 2 (Winter 2018): 112-130. JSTOR

Amy J. Elias, “Editors Forum: The Commons as Network.” *ASAP/Journal*, Volume 1, Number 1 (January 2016): pp. 35-50. JSTOR

Visit Paper Monuments at <https://www.papermonuments.org>

**Dec 4 – Closing: Critique**

**Dec 6 (Liberal Arts Exam Day) – Monument Analysis**

\*Monument Analysis Due (5-8 pages) – Choose an existing public monument, one which you can physically visit, and assess its capacities—past, present, and future—to create communal feeling. This should involve: 1) analysis of its intentions, form, flow, and placement, including comparison with other monuments; 2) analysis of public interaction, derived through observation or interviews; and 3) an imagining of ways to sustain or revive the monument’s social power.