Prospective Memories
Futures of Monument Design

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Abstract

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Prospective Memories: Futures of Monument Design explores the role of design in shaping collective memory along with the resulting discourse generated by the monuments that inhabit our public spaces. These forms serve as physical embodiments of perceived significance and are designed with the intention to influence the value systems of future generations. Conventional design paradigms for monuments have emphasized permanence and unchangeability, leading to an inherited public memorial landscape that struggles to accommodate evolving community identities.

This thesis proposes the re-evaluation of conventional monument design frameworks by using diegetic prototypes to explore prospective scenarios that transform monuments from static objects into active participants in cultural and political dialogues. Ultimately, this research aims to offer a point of reflection through which designers can critique the status quo, priming a future monument landscape that is better able to reflect and adapt to contemporary societal shifts.

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Visual Communication

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Design is integral to the development and expression of societal identities.

Background

Design is a fundamentally human activity that shapes societal identity.

Design is an action human beings take to embody our understanding of significance through physical artifacts. These objects display our negotiations and conclusions about what is valued, validating intangible ideas to ourselves and allowing us to share them with others.

Communities showcase their values through a myriad of media. The values of a society are communicated *collective memories*, "embodied in ancestral customs, repetitions, and traditions" (Penderson, 2022). Many of these expressions of culture develop organically over long spans of time between people and their social interactions. Penderson (2022), referring to the work of Pierre Nora, argues that modern memory focuses on narratives that rely "entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image." In an overwhelming ocean of available data, the simplicity and straightforwardness of narrative makes the past comprehensible. Design artifacts become consistent anchors in dynamic social and information landscapes. They act as tangible bridges that create direct relationships with abstract concepts. As Penderson (2022) explains, memory artifacts give "discursive meaning to what can only be experienced emotionally and connect us materially to these psychic landscapes."

Design
"to fundamentally shape what it is to be human" (Wakkary, 2021)

Collective Memory
intentionally constructed narratives "backed up by material media, symbols, and practices" which are intended to be shared and transmitted from "generation to generation" (Assmann, 2008; p. 55)

"embodied in ancestral customs, repetitions, and traditions" (Penderson, 2022)

Collective Memories:
The Forum for Critique of Societal Identity

Collective memories are intentionally designed by constituencies to intentionally influence the future of society indefinitely through time. These echoing implications make the act of designing collective memory an inherently political practice. When constituencies partake in design of collective memory, participating designers must make ethical considerations due to their role as the social engineers. Adversarial design approaches can be used to responsibly engage in constructive discourse while formulating the narratives and design artifacts that represent what the future ought to be. As part of this discourse, a multi-tiered societal audience, inclusive of the universal, the general, and the individual, creates the framework through which the impact of collective memory can be speculated about. Design artifacts symbolic of collective memory then communicate narratives to these audiences through linguistic, visual, and experiential means, and thus become the non-human designers of the future who perpetuate critical discourse around societal identity.

INTRODUCTION

In situations where designers are involved in the representation of shared experiences and values of a society, design becomes a participatory form of society-building through the discussion and representation of collective memory. In this section, I refer to the work of Assmann (2008), Apaydin (2020), Doolan (2021), and Gedi & Elam (1996) to understand how memoriologists define collective memory and observe its impact on culture. Additionally, I refer to the work of Cuppen (2012), DiSalvo (2012), Rosner (2018), Simon (1996), Tharp & Tharp (2022), and Wakkary (2012) to explore the ethical considerations designers must make while engaging in a constituency. Finally, I define the audiences who are impacted by the design of collective memory so that designers may consider audience relationships with memory and design artifacts, which become the forum for critique of social identity.

While there is debate over the definition of "collective memory" as to whether it is categorically a type of memory (Assmann, 2008; Gedi & Elam, 1996; Doolan, 2021), I will refer to collective memory in this essay as the intentionally constructed narratives "backed up by material media, symbols, and practices" which are intended to be shared and transmitted from "generation to generation" (Assmann, 2008; p. 55). This definition has three components, which will be used to structure this essay. Collective memories are designed, communicated, and indefinite in nature.

Constituency
A "political structure that convenes humans and nonhumans together to 'discuss' design."
(Wakkary, 2012; p. 24)

Collective memories are designed, communicated, and indefinite in nature.

CONSTITUENCIES

Collective memory is designed by *constituencies*, which Wakkary (2012; p. 24) describes as "political structure that convenes humans and non-humans together to 'discuss' design." Constituencies are composed of participating constituents, a design process, and a context within space and time. Human constituents range from practitioners who are professionally trained in the field of design to stakeholders who are "involved in, affected by, knowledgeable of, or having relevant expertise or experience on the issue at stake (based on Van Asselt and Rijkens-Klomp, 2002)" (Cuppen, 2012). No matter their professional training or background, all constituents are considered to be designers because they aim to influence a vision of what society ought to be. Simon (1996) explains that "everyone designs who devises a course of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones," therefore, when human constituents who participate in the design process are referred to, they will be called *"designers"* regardless of their professional training or background.

Designer
A being "who devises a course of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones."
(Simon, 1996; p. 111)

Design Artifacts
"Artifacts are both conceptual and tangible, embodying paths to ideal future uses and human experiences."
(Wakkary, 2012; p. 235)

Myth
The fabrication of historical narrative to serve a socio-ideological purpose.
(Gedi & Elan, 1996)

Adversarial Design
A "type of political design" which "express[es] or enable[s] a particular political perspective known as agonism."
(DiSalvo, 2012)

Collective memories and the *design artifacts* which represent them are directly informed by those entities who are able to access participation in the design process. They are those "whose bodies and stories [are] counted as design knowledge" (Rosner, 2018). A constituent can be a member of the constituency, but not be a designer due to a circumstance that inhibits their engagement. Thus, access to participation as a designer is part of a constituency's political structure. Access determines whose voices are heard, whose are not, and therefore, which constituents are granted the power to actively design the collective memory for society.

If participation in the design process is regarded as inconsequential, the design of collective memory has the potential to be usurped to perpetuate a narrowed view of the present with the intent of altering the perception of history in the future. Simon (1996; p.153) explains that when society is positioned as the client, design becomes a "game between the planners and those behaviors they seek to influence." For example, historiography has been utilized by planners throughout the centuries as a tool to transcend time, maintain existing political and social power structures, and consciously encourage the erasure or building of cultural heritage (Assmann, 2008 & Apaydin, 2020). This is done through the creation of what Gedi and Elan (1996) identify as *"myth,"* or the fabrication of historical narrative to serve a socio-ideological purpose. By creating collective memories, designers create a mythos of the present and become the social engineers of the future through its influence.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Designers of collective memory, therefore, have three major ethical responsibilities to consider due to their role as social engineers. First, is to ensure that there is a **diversity of designers** from the constituency engaged in discussions. Diversity contributes to what Cuppen (2012) calls "quality of knowledge," which can be established by structuring an engagement process to support constructive conflict. DiSalvo (2012) interprets constructive conflict as an approach that is integral to *adversarial design*, a type of critical design that relies on agonism to invite cultural critique. Intentional creation of conflict via plurality informs the design process and addresses the political nature of the constituency. Adversarial design invites a spectrum of experiences and knowledge into discourse with the intent of negotiating the preferred impact of a collective memory on society.

The second is ethical responsibility is to recognize the **intentionality of the constituency**. Wakkary explains that in order to recognize intentionality, constituents must identify the relational nature of the "something" that is being designed and the "who [that] is doing the designing" (2012; p. 13). I would add that since a constituency is the political structure through which design occurs, that describing the design process is also imperative to fully comprehend intentionality. In the case of collective memory, the *what* that is being designed is the mythos of the memory, the *who* are those that are counted as design knowledge, and the *how* is composed of adversarial design approaches. This thesis proposes adapting *discursive design* approaches defined by Tharp & Tharp (2018) for product design to define intentionality for monument design.

Through the identification of a constituency's *whats*, *whos*, and *hows*, designers can come to know how they as individuals are situated in relationship to others—whether they be humans, non-humans, or the systems in which they inhabit. Wakkary (2012; pg. 4) refers to the work of Barad (2007) and Haraway (1985) to define this spatial context as *relational ontology*, or the interconnected nature of existing. An understanding of intentionality and situatedness allows designers to be cognizant of and responsible for their biases—which will inherently inform the design process and any subsequent resolutions (Alexander, 1964; Halbwachs, 1991 from Assmann 2008).

Once designers recognize their spatial relationships, they must then consider their third ethical responsibility—**responsibility toward the future**. Predictions about the future, Simon (1996) writes, are the "weakest points in our armor of fact" because there is insufficient data. Designers can only prepare for or anticipate the future by speculating about the probable, plausible, and possible (Dunne & Raby, 2013) because the future

Intentionality
The relational nature of the "something" that is being designed and the "who [that] is doing the designing"
(Wakkary, 2012; p. 13)

Discursive Design
a design methodology whose "primary motivation [...] is to achieve audience reflection"
(Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

"a form of discourse-through design" involving "the association with or embodiment of discourse in an artifact."
(Tharp & Tharp, 2018, p. 102)

Relational Ontology
the interconnected nature of existing
(Haraway, 2003 from Wakkary, 2012)

READ MORE

See page 78 to learn more about discursive design.

REFLECT

How am I actively ensuring diversity of designers?

How do I consider plurality in the composition of my constituencies?

How does my design process intentionally support constructive conflict?

is just beyond us—the result of innumerable, complex relationships derived from the present. Rittel & Weber argue that whenever we implement a solution in the present, the results are "consequential," leaving "'traces' that cannot be undone" (1973; p. 139), and Wakkary (2021, pg. 23) explains that "the designer of things [is] accountable for what it designs into the world and what it leaves behind" as even if the material form of the artifact is removed, the effects of designing will not be able to be reversed. In other words, as our basis for accurate prediction is insufficient, designing can result in unforeseen ripple effects on society. Therefore, it is socially responsible for designers to acknowledge not only our context within time but to also discuss the potential unintended consequences to future audiences who will engage with the collective memory and its associated design artifacts.

To achieve more responsible design practices, Simon (1996) suggests expanding the definition of the client to encompass society. His framework, while successful in its expansion, is nonetheless too vague to inform design decisions and discounts the import of the individual. The broader definition opens an opportunity for political corruption due to its lack of specificity, while the original client is too narrow to be considered alone. Therefore, I recommend that the designer improve upon Simon's suggestion by designing for frameworks that address the triality of the universal, the general, and the individual audiences. The categorization of society into three distinct audiences allows the conveyance of messages to be analyzed in a check and balance system. Simon (1996) describes such an approach as one of subsystems which provide feedback from top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Simply put, the proposed audience frameworks *(see Figure 1.1)* encourage constructive conflict due to plurality, which will inherently inform the design process and resolutions (Alexander, 1964; Halbwachs, 1991 from Assmann 2008). The three audience frameworks I will describe have varying degrees of adjacency to memory and allow the designers to craft more complex, nuanced mythologies for the sake of future critical discourse.

AUDIENCE

Autobiographical Memory memory created through neurological processes of direct experience and are "formed in a social context" (Gedi & Elam, 1996, p. 34–35)

The **universal** audience is representative of society at large. This audience has a vertical relationship with memory (Doolan, 2021) because it is indirectly associated with the memory due to space or time. The universal audience is left with an impression of the memory and its meaning through design artifacts but does not experience the memory due to its context. The narrative it experiences is the overarching myth, which is the simplest version of the memory. This audience can therefore only act as an interpreter of the memory via symbolic communications, as they are to whom it is transmitted most abstractly. As stated previously, the danger of only designing for society is that is a vague audience with an abstract narrative which can easily be appropriated. However, the universal audience is beneficial in that it provides a macro, thematic summation, which creates cohesion between contextual and personal narratives. In summary, the universal audience allows the overarching mythos to prevail through the boundaries of time.

The **general** audience has a secondary relationship with the collective memory. The general audience is a less expansive representation of society when compared to the universal. Their cultural identity is influenced by the memory due to their contextual adjacency within society or coexistence with it in time. Doolan (2021) describes this as a horizontal relationship with memory. The general audience may not engage with memory directly, but their identities are affected by it. They therefore actualize the perpetuation of the memory's import and existence. This audience also upholds the existence of individual memories by creating the social framework through which a memory can be formed (Gedi & Elam, 1996, p. 36). The general audience validates the legitimacy of the collective memory, bridging the abstract and experience.

The **individual** audience has a direct relationship with collective memory. The communal, first-hand experiences of many individuals become the catalyst for the formation of a universal narrative for society at large. Individuals possess *autobiographical memories*, which are created through neurological processes of

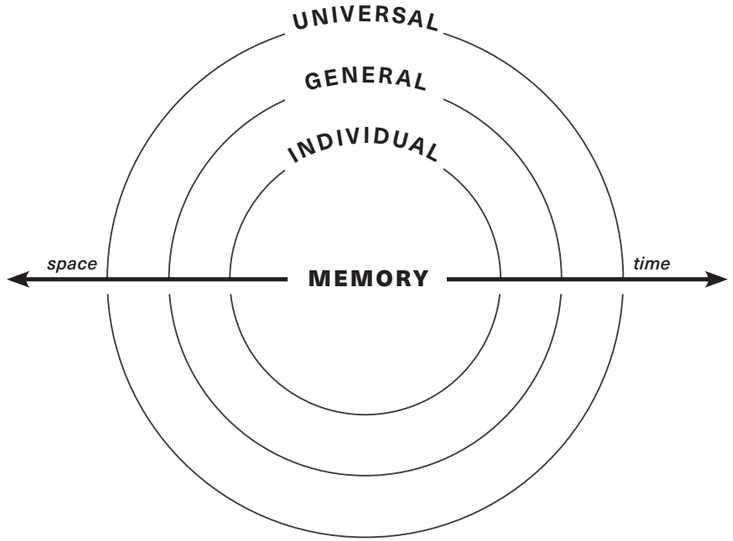


Figure 1.1
Frameworks of society as the audience

	AUDIENCE	NARRATIVE	RELATIONSHIP
UNIVERSAL	Society at large	Mythos	Indirect Vertical
GENERAL	Secondary relationship	Contextual	Adjacent Horizontal
INDIVIDUAL	Immediate relationship	Experienced	Direct Personal

READ MORE

See page 56–57 to learn more about master narratives.

Momentos
design artifacts that "require the person to have personally experienced the past being recalled" (Handa, 2021)

Quasimomentos
"objects that, by either being actually from the past or having the semblance of such, gives a sense of the past to those who did not actually experience the past." (Handa, 2021)

direct experience and are "formed in a social context" (Gedi & Elam, 1996, p. 34–35), represented by the general audience. These memories "cannot be embodied by another person, but they can be shared with others" (Assmann, 2008) through storytelling. The immediate experiences of the individual audience inform critical discourse by contextualizing abstract concepts at a relatable, human scale.

When collective memory is represented as a design artifact, its tangible characteristics allow for audiences to modify their relationship to memory. Representation of collective memory is not limited by medium, and can be communicated via linguistic, visual, and experiential means to activate cognitive processes and encode new autobiographical memories. For example, even if an individual was not alive when the events that called for the design of collective memory occurred, they would be considered to be part of the universal audience. The physical design artifact can transport experiential qualities of events through time to be experienced directly. This means that design artifacts, the symbolic representations of intentionally constructed narratives, provide the opportunity for universal and general audiences to engage on an individual level through a one-to-one sensorial experience *(see Figure 1.2).* The design artifact, through its semiotic and experiential attributes, transforms memory relationships beyond the confines of space and time by creating a sustained, irreversible reverberation that originates from design.

Handa describes the relationship of memory artifacts to audiences via the terms momentos and quasimomentos. *Momentos* have a direct relationship to an individual audience. They "by definition require the person to have personally experienced the past being recalled" (Handa, 2021). *Quasimomentos*, on the other hand, are experienced by general and universal audiences. They are "objects that, by either being actually from the past or having the semblance of such, gives a sense of the past to those who did not actually experience the past." These design artifacts persist through space and time. In other words, the semiotic and sensorial qualities of quasimomentos support a sense of

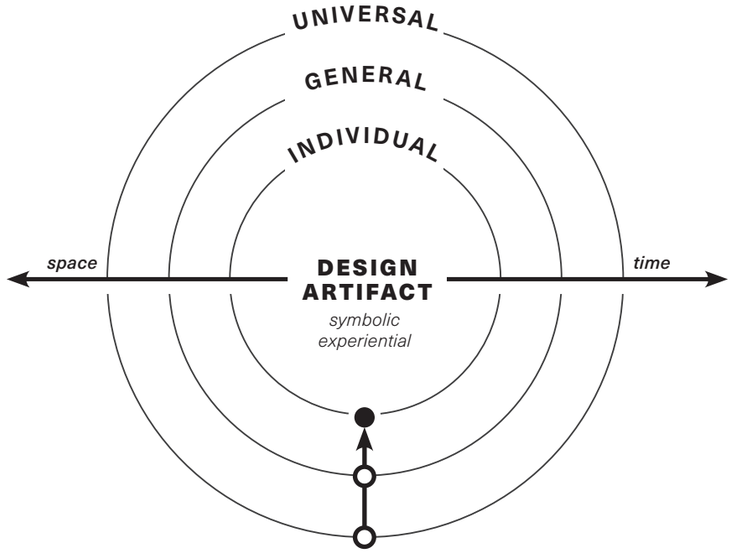


Figure 1.2
Design artifacts, as symbolic representations of collective memories, allow universal audiences to simulate direct engagement with memories.

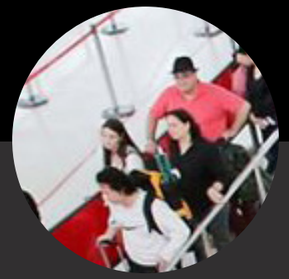
time travel or a relationship with a memory that one cannot directly experience. It must be noted, however, that encoded visual aesthetics and experiential design elements are only part of the equation. Influences regarding audience perception can range from prior knowledge, demographics, the current weather, and even the visitor's mood.

The repercussions caused by design artifacts once again highlight the political nature of collective memory. Quasimomentos, through their enduring nature across space and time, become active players in the formation of future societal identity. They exist in an unpredictable context, impact unknown audiences, and are the perpetuating symbols of political and power dynamics through the ages. These collective memory artifacts become part of future constituencies as non-human designers and invite the critique of societal identity when engaged with.

Examples of Audience Relationships to Memory

INDIVIDUAL

First responders have a direct relationship with the attack at the World Trade Center



GENERAL

Americans collectively take action to increase security protocols at airports and public spaces

UNIVERSAL

US generations born after 2001 learn about the attacks on 9/11 as part of their school curriculum

9/11 ATTACKS

space + time

AUDIENCE

Figure 1.3
The collective memory of September 11, 2001 is used to illustrate audience frameworks and memory artifacts.

9/11 Attacks
(Library of Congress, 2001; Raymond, 2021; De La Cruz, R. R., 2015)

Memory Artifacts
(Finn, 2001; Braff, 2024; Bambach, 2011; Westervelt, 2017)

MEMORY ARTIFACTS

MISSING PERSONS SIGNS

In the days and weeks following the attack, people filled the city of New York with missing persons signs.

CLEAR BAGS

In response to the attacks, Americans saw increased security and new rules put in place at airports. Companies responded to new laws by making products, such as clear bags to carry small containers of liquids.

TRIBUTES

On the 10 year anniversary of 9/11, visitors to the World Trade Center Site and nearby areas left ribbons that read “Remember to love.”

MEMORIAL

In 2014, a memorial on the site of the World Trade Center was opened to the public in commemoration of the lives lost on that day.

Critique is inherent in the memory discourse.

Cultural anthropologist Assmann (2008) asserts that the "process of critique is inherent in the memory discourse." Critique is the way in which a society forms its heritage. Apaydin (2020) explains that memory and heritage are active—both are forms of construction and reconstruction that are performative. They are "both are accumulated through time, [and] they are also shaped and developed in the present, which in turn gives direction to the future" (Apaydin 2020). The existence of design artifacts enable dialogue around memory and heritage to accumulate through time by representing moments of political consensus. These moments can be compared, contrasted, and engage new constituencies in the reevaluation and redesign of collective memory. Tharp & Tharp (2022) describe this phenomenon as "discourse-through-design" wherein the design artifact is "used within 'spaces of confrontation'" to discuss the desirable consequences. As non-human designers, design artifacts become the figures that actively engage future society in critical discourse, and they are the conduit through which cultures continue to evolve.

CONCLUSION

All in all, design interventions that define collective memory create a lasting definition of society that pervade and continue to be reinterpreted through time. As social engineers, designers are "planners [who] are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate; the effects can matter a great deal to those people that are touched by those actions" (Rittel and Weber, 1973; p. 144). Designers are responsible for recognizing, acknowledging, and navigating the influence of who, what, where, how, and why on the created outcome. This includes the bias of their intent and the impact of that bias on others as they introduce a cultural declaration of what constituencies determine to be fact into the fabric of space and time. To do this, designers must understand their context within the constituency of which they are a part. This includes, but is not limited to, their relationship to society, locus within history, and the design process itself. Designers can use adversarial design approaches to engage in plural, constructive discourse while speculating about collective memory and its impact on the future. Then, when memory is physically manifested as an artifact of heritage, this non-human entity takes on the role of designer by becoming an actor within future discourse. The formal design and discursive nature of these physical, symbolic representations of collective memory are the forums for the continued critique of societal identity.

The Significance of Design: Frameworks for Meaning

Design
the practice of "making sense (of things)"
(Krippendorf, 1989 from Norman and Verganti, 2014)

Design Artifacts
"Artifacts are both conceptual and tangible, embodying paths to ideal future uses and human experiences."
(Wakkary, 2012; p. 235)

Meaning is an intangible quality of design that generates value and manifests through design artifacts in the form of semantics and significance. While the frameworks for understanding semantics are well defined by design theorists (Krippendorf, 1989; Krippendorf, 2004; Erlhoff and Marshall, 2008; Tharp & Tharp, 2022), frameworks for significance remain elusive. By applying psychological methodologies (Noguchi, 2020; Wegner, 1998) to design practices, one can facilitate organized negotiations regarding significance using three meaning frameworks: *purpose-to-agent*, *agent-to-self*, and *agent-to-others*. Within these frameworks, participation and reification generate points of coherence in the form of identity and objectivity. These well-defined points of reference create the consistency required for the verification of significance in dynamic environments. By strategically using these frameworks to negotiate significance, designers are empowered to holistically consider meaning and be intentional about their role in societal discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The search for meaning is an intrinsic part of the human experience. The quest for understanding and purpose is well documented throughout the centuries in philosophy, religion, the sciences, and literature (Wong, 2012). Methodological approaches use lines of questioning, categorization, and other logic frameworks in attempts to analyze and define the ambiguous concept, while practices that involve creative expression interpret and generate new meaning. Regardless of method, the contemporaneous search in these areas of thought demonstrate a universal desire to make sense of the world. *Design* is one such practice where meaning is created, yet, even as a value-generating source of radical innovation, there are not comprehensive methodologies for understanding significance in design. (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Norman and Verganti, 2014).

According to Krippendorf (1989), design is the practice of "making sense (of things)." During the design process, learning is conducted through analysis and discourse. This process involves a variety of activities including, but not limited to, analogical reasoning, problem framing, collaborating, simulating, modal shifts, and the creation of design artifacts to embody the new, learned knowledge (Cross, 2001; Knight, Daymond, and Paroutis, 2020). These methods of design thinking are, in effect, "the language that a society uses to create objects that reflect its purpose and values." (Sudjic, 2008 from Giacomin, 2017). They are not only means of learning and knowledge generation, but they are search strategies to achieve design's core mission: "to fashion things so that we may have meaningful interactions with the world" (Boradkar, 2010 from Giacomin, 2017). Ultimately, design is the advancement of knowledge through a multi-modal conversation with the world around us—a form of rhetoric wherein designers inquire and create meaning through discursive practices.

If design is a process of meaning-making, one must define the ways meaning is referred to in design discourse. The first, *semantic* meaning, is supported by a robust history of research (Krippendorf, 1989; Krippendorf, 2004; Erlhoff and Marshall, 2008; Tharp & Tharp, 2022). Semantic meaning refers to the communicative qualities of design artifacts through *semiotics* (Krippendorf, 1989). Semiotics, the interpretation of symbols and signs, related to design artifacts need not only be linguistic in nature as the term suggests from its common use. Rather, the semantic nature of design artifacts can be composed of any sensory stimuli that can be directly experienced by an audience. The second interpretation of meaning in design refers to the perception of value to a constituency. This meaningfulness, which will henceforth be referred to as *significance* to discern it from semantic meaning (de Muijnck, 2012), can only be inferred via relationships to referents. Because frameworks for significance are lacking in design discourse, this paper seeks to apply methodologies from psychology (Noguchi, 2020; Wegner, 1998) to design in order to clearly define how significance can be understood within this meaning-making practice.

Meaning
"shared mental representation of possible relationships among things, relationships, and events"
(Baumeister 1991; MacKenzie and Baumeister 2014 from Noguchi, 2020)

Semantics
"content of signs, that is, their meaning and reference. A designed object can be analyzed on three different levels: autonomous (as relating exclusively to its form), semantic (as relating to its symbolic meaning), and pragmatic (as relating to its (>) function)."
(Erlhoff and Marshall, 2008)

Semiotics
the interpretation of symbols and signs
(Erlhoff and Marshall, 2008)

Significance
meaningfulness
(de Muijnck, 2012)

Frames
"the areas of the solution space in which [designers] choose to explore"
(Cross, 2001)

Agent
"a target person or object" whose meaning "arises when there are reference points for the target"
(Noguchi, 2020, p. 3122)

FRAMEWORKS

In design practice, *frames* are problem-solving approaches which allow one to "find and formulate problems within the broad context of the design brief" (Cross, 2001 in reference to Schön, 1985). Just as design uses frameworks to define problem spaces, so does meaning to determine significance within the broad context of social systems. Noguchi (2020, p. 3121–3122) asserts that "meaning does not occur without frames that can situate a target in the frames" because meaning cannot be comprehended without reference points. He has therefore defined three meaning frameworks to understand significance in life from a psychological perspective. These frameworks—*purpose-to-agent, agent-to-self, and agent-to-others*—will be used as a foundation to understand meaning in the realm of design practice *(see Figure 2.1)*.

In the **purpose-to-agent** frame, meaning is derived from internally generated motivations or goals (Noguchi, 2020). Since designers are those who are motivated by "changing existing situations into preferred ones" (Simon, 1996), design is thus able to be defined as a process of meaning-making by the purpose-to-agent framework. In this context, significance is personal, originating from a subjective, biased construct within the mind. Purpose delineates clear internal motivations, which enables designers to determine priorities as they engage in the practice of design (Simon, 1996).

An example of a designer who exemplifies the purpose-to-agent framework is graphic designer Lucienne Roberts of LucienneRoberts+. She believes "the decisions we make define us, in our ethical choices we reveal who we are" (Roberts, 2006). Her purpose is evidenced by how she conducts her design practice *(see Figure 2.2)*. She explains that her agency acts intentionally according to their purpose by engaging "in projects aimed at non-specialist audiences that challenge received ideas—and all our work is underpinned by an abiding interest in the role of graphic design in the wider world and definitions of ethical design" (Roberts, 2023). All in all, Roberts demonstrates how significance originating from a well-defined philosophical identity influences action, intent, and perception.

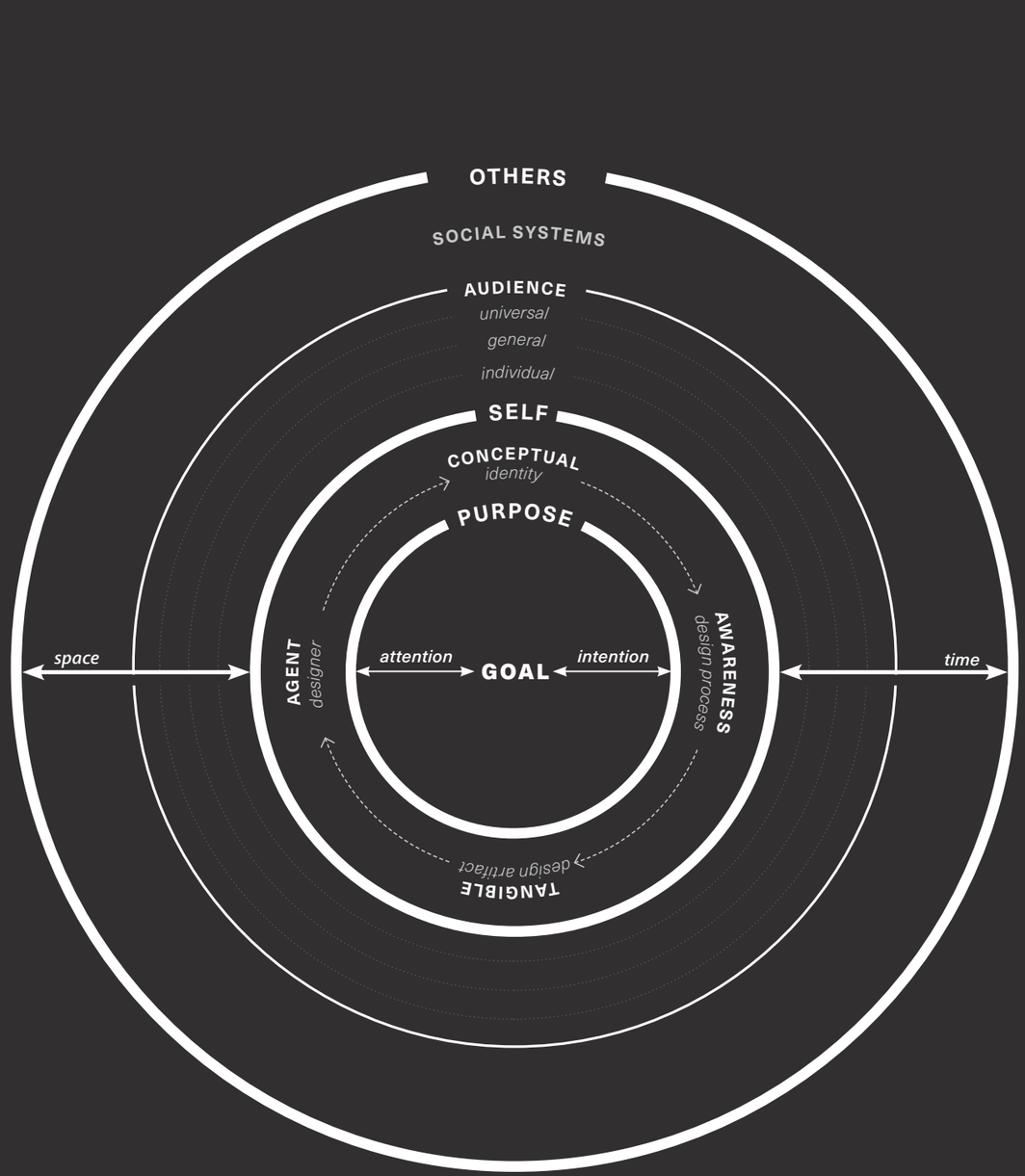


Figure 2.1
Frameworks for significance and their relationships across time and space.
(Adapted from Noguchi, 2020, Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981)

The **agent-to-self** frame differs from the purpose-to-agent frame in that significance stems from an individual's perception of their own identity, or self-awareness. Alexander (1964) describes design as a "self conscious process" wherein individuality and artistry inform meaning. The pursuit of lines of inquiry, reflection-in-action, and other behaviors related to design thinking (Cross, 2001) all contribute to self-awareness and significance. In other words, designers attain self identity by participating in the design process.

Figure 2.2

Purpose-to-Agent
Sample of design artifacts from LucienneRoberts+ exhibiting the impact of the purpose-to-agent meaning framework (Roberts, 2023)

Knowledge gained through the design process is represented via design artifacts, which are "both conceptual and tangible, embodying paths to ideal future uses and human experiences" (Wakkary, 2021, p.235). They are the things, like an object or a system, created deliberately through a design process to embody designers' ideological purpose. Wakkary (2021) regards these acts of inference as part of the biographical nature of design, wherein design artifacts are non-human extensions of the human designer. He states that "the value of the designer of things cannot be separated from the lifeworld it contributed to through designing things" (Wakkary, 2021, p. 238). They are one in the same— a dyadic self. By viewing the designer through Wakkary's biographical lens, the agent-to-self framework also becomes a means of assigning responsibility to the designer their legacy of meaning-making. The agent, who is also referred to as the self, is a dual entity composed of both the designer and an intentionally created design artifact that persists through time.

The agent-to-self frame is demonstrated by Jonathan Ive, former Chief Design Officer of Apple, Inc. "Without designer Jony Ive," McGarry (2015) writes, "Apple as the world knows it wouldn't exist." The company, in other words, would not have the same significance. Although Ive left Apple after 30 years as an in-house designer, his legacy persists through design artifacts, like the iMac, iPod, iPhone and Apple Park campus, which have become cultural touchstones and benchmarks for innovation (Apple, 2019). His identity is synonymous with Apple's signature portfolio of products, campus, and its brand values because the details of his authorship are embedded throughout each artifact. Through his design leadership during his tenure at Apple, Ive displays the biographical nature of design by showcasing how one's self-identity is indivisible from the creation of significance through design *(see Figure 2.3)*.

The **agent-to-others** frame deals with significance in relationship to outside reference points, like audiences and social systems. At a broad level, the agent-to-others frame describes relational ontology, a philosophical position where "beings do not exist before

Figure 2.3

Agent-to-Self
Jonathan Ive with design artifacts he designed and influenced at Apple, exhibiting the impact of the agent-to-self meaning framework (Mickle, 2024)

Figure 2.4

Agent-to-Others
Protesters attempt to dismantle the statue of Andrew Jackson outside of the White House in Washington, DC, exhibiting the impact of the agent-to-others meaning framework (Braddick, 2020)

relations" (Haraway, 2003 from Wakkary, 2021). Not only can the agent and the other not be known without reference to one another, but by simply existing, *agents* and *others* act as relational reference points that inform the significance of one another.

When applying the agent-to-others meaning framework to design, the *agent* refers to the dyadic designer, composed of the human and nonhuman self, and *others* refers to dynamic ecosystems. Through their coexistence, design artifacts take on their role as discursive agents, enacting a "process of dissemination, reception, and response" (Tharp & Tharp, 2022, p. 102). They, as acts of inference, mark moments in time through the embodiment of learning and knowledge. This is translated into societal identity through participation in a perpetual dialogue where meaning is open to negotiation.

The agent-to-others frame can be observed in the national debate over the significance of Confederate statues in the United States *(see Figure 2.4)*. The intentionality of the design artifacts, their semantic meaning, and their continued existence in public spaces is at the heart of the discussion. LaBode and Levin (2016) explain that the significance of these monuments is in their mere presence as assertions "that the values for which the Confederacy fought, including white supremacy, had not been defeated," and that this meaning has been commonly understood to broad audiences, including but not limited to local, state, and national audiences, over the past century. Alterations to the semantic qualities of the monuments profoundly change their cultural significance, as does their complete removal (LaBode & Levin, 2016). This discourse through modification is in itself a design process, as the meaning of the design artifacts would be redefined through a new resolution to communicate cultural values, whether that be by their alteration or expulsion from public property. Fundamentally, the discourse around Confederate statues showcases the role of design artifacts as discursive agents, their relationship to dynamic societal ecosystems, and their ability to impact the very essence of societal identity years beyond their installation.

COHERENCE

Because significance is formed through such active environments and processes, it is imperative to have points of consistency around which to structure dialogue. Consistent, well-defined references become points from which the gradual evolution of or radical shifts in significance can be measured.

In all of the meaning frameworks, the agent is essential to meaning-making because it is the point of consistency required for significance to be established. Additionally, social scientist Wegner (1998) contends that meaning-related negotiation involves the duality of *participation* and *reification*, which are both elements that serve to introduce *coherence* into the discourse of significance.

Consistency is required for value and significance to be established.

Participation is defined as the experience in which the process of meaning negotiation takes place to serve the ultimate purpose of constructing identity (Wegner, 1998). According to Noguchi (2020), participation serves the critical role of amplifying significance through coherence. While Wegner (1998) uses the term participation to assign discourse solely to social beings and communities, it has been established in design theory that nonhuman entities can be participants in discourse as agents representing the dyadic designer (Wakkary, 2021). Even though these constituents may not be able to have the direct verbal dialogue typically associated with semantic meaning, they are agents who are able to participate in negotiation through their tangible and conceptual qualities.

Because the experience of participation takes place within each of the three meaning frameworks, the frameworks contribute to the definition of identity in their own respective ways. As previously outlined, the purpose-to-agent frame informs philosophical identity, the agent-to-self frame informs self identity, and the agent-to-others frame informs societal identity. While identity as a contextual reference is variable and still subject to some amount of change, it remains one of the most resolute because "people are motivated to maintain self-integrity" (Noguchi, 2020). Coherence of identity, he argues, is crucial to meaning because it creates a definitive point of evaluation and verification (Noguchi, 2020, p. 3128).

Similarly, the concurrent process of reification also strengthens the quality of significance. **Reification** gives "form to our experiences by producing objects" around which negotiations of meaning can be organized (Wegner, 1998). In design, reification is the component of the design process which encapsulates significance via the production of design artifacts. This process of clarifying through making bolsters meaning by creating points of consistency via a design artifact's objectivity.

Csikszentmihaly explains that design artifacts' *objectivity* is "concrete quality and permanence" (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 3). This definition of objectivity has less to do with freedom from bias, and more to do with the nature of being an object or thing. Objectivity encompasses the *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* an artifact is designed. It is composed of both linguistic and experiential semantic meaning—"patterned, meaningful information" that carries the intention of the designer in physical form (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Coherence
consistency of comprehension, a cognitive component of meaning
(Noguchi, 2020, p. 3122)

Participation
"to have or take a part or share with others (in some activity, enterprise, etc.)"
(Webster from Wenger, 1998, p. 55)
(de Muijnck, 2012)

Reification
"To treat (an abstraction) as substantially existing, or as a concrete material object"
(Webster from Wenger, 1998, p. 58)

Objectivity
the nature of being an object or thing (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981)

The intentionality of design artifacts follows the "'embedded-embodied' school of philosophy" described by de Muijnck (2012) where intention is "an emergent phenomenon that is realised over time by whole agents that interact with their environments: something that happens, or is enacted, or is lived out." Recurrent participation with the objectivity of design artifacts allows an artifact to communicate the "image of [...] ideas" from the past "even though there may be no record of how those people spoke or what they believed" (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 14). Objectivity, in other words, is the quality of design artifacts that allows significance to transcend and continue to be negotiated through time. It is through their sensorial characteristics that they can be experienced and reassessed repeatedly as a point of coherence, even in the absence of the human-self.

CONCLUSION

In summary, design is a meaning-generating process wherein meaning manifests through semantics and significance. While considerations of semantic meaning are thoroughly documented by design theorists, strategic ways to consider significance have not been well-defined. To resolve this issue, three meaning frameworks from psychology have been adapted to apply to design practices. These frames, described as *purpose-to-agent, agent-to-self,* and *agent-to-others*, leverage identity and objectivity to strengthen the quality of meaning through participation and reification. Designers who incorporate frameworks for significance into their repertoire will be well-positioned to discuss meaning comprehensively and intentionally, considering both its retrospective and potential future impact on society.

REFLECT

How have I considered my identity in the design process?

What is my philosophical approach to design? Why do I design in the first place?

How do my personal preferences (aesthetic, process, etc) impact my work?

Statements of Power:
The Shapes of Societal identity

Collective Memory Landscape
the spaces wherein design artifacts are intentionally placed as markers of a vested interest in identity for interpretation

Public
an ideal wherein "all kinds of users and their distinct situations, feelings, affiliations, and perspectives" are accommodated via "accessibility, inclusion, and tolerance of difference" (Young from Li, Dang, Song, 2022)

Sacred Sites
sites which "embody people's relation to the land and to the past" (Alexander, 1977)

The *collective memory landscape* consists of the spaces wherein design artifacts are intentionally placed as markers of a vested interest in identity for interpretation by universal audiences. While such spaces may range from the physical to digital, inclusive of spaces like museums, art galleries, and the metaverse, this thesis will focus specifically on design artifacts that exist within public spaces due to their character of being idealistically *public* as defined by Young (referenced in Li, Dang, & Song, 2022). Li, Dang, & Song (2022) contest that "publicness is also a historical concept, the meaning of which keeps changing and being enriched over time," and that the success of true publicness varies. However, it is the aspiration of these spaces to attain an ideal form of publicness that makes them fitting for discussing collective memory.

Alexander, Ishikawa, and Silverstein (1977) describe design artifacts as embellishments of public spaces that intensify the meaning of *"sacred sites."* Such objects "establish ordinances which will protect [sacred sites] absolutely—so that our roots in the visible surroundings cannot be violated" (Alexander, Ishikawa, and Silverstein, 1977). They make an argument that collective memory artifacts, such as monuments, are critical to the preservation of sacred sites due to their psychological and spiritual import as markers of significance and value. From this perspective, coherence is critical to the health of the community because the consistency it maintains through time generates a sense of societal identity.

More contemporary perspectives on public spaces position them as facilitators as a opposed to sacred sites—they are platforms in which society is encouraged to develop and evolve. Jordan Freeman (2024), curator of public art at 4culture in Seattle, Washington, explains, "Public spaces can foster dialogue, reflection, and engagement. These environments are often where social, cultural, and political interactions take place, allowing communities to express collective identities and engage in discourse around shared values and histories. Importantly, they are free, accessible spaces without barriers." They are, in their most ideal state, bastions of accessible, inclusive public engagement where collective memories are able to be formed and shared. From this point of view, public spaces are not places to be preserved, but are places to be activated by discourse.

BRONZE		Created by melting mined metal alloys of copper and tin, cast in molds and commonly used for art and statues; corrodes within a decade and develops discoloration; requires regular maintenance and is susceptible to environmental conditions and human touch that transforms its surface.
MARBLE		The early material of choice for American monuments, it is quarried from rock formations and carved into form by hand. Marble deteriorates slowly over time in outdoor installations due to human intervention, weather, and pollution.
LEAD		Used in previous eras; mined and extracted; moldable and affordable as a material, but removed from broad public use a century ago due to toxicity and instability; degrades within a half a century, and falls into itself without maintenance; susceptible to theft and damage from animals chewing its edges.
GRANITE		Quarried from rock formations, it has often been the first choice for monument makers since the early 20th century due to its durability and ability to be manipulated by industrial tools. Like marble, it can be worn away over time by environmental conditions and human touch.
SANDSTONE/ LIMESTONE		Appealing to sculptors and designers because they offer texture and color, they are formed across geological eras through sedimentation. Sandstone/limestone are especially susceptible to breakdown over decades due to environmental deterioration, pollution, and freeze/thaw cycles.
STEEL		An alloy of iron, it is produced industrially from mined ore and most often associated with industrial design applications. To maintain its durability, it requires regular expert maintenance or it will falter over time when subjected to human intervention and environmental conditions.
WOOD		Forested and carved by hand and with mechanical assistance; lifespan depends on grade of wood and staining; requires regular maintenance, but can be more easily replaced; flammable and susceptible to water damage; with maintenance can be an enduring material for public art.
WHAT'S NEXT?	?	Future monument makers may choose more dynamic materials, allowing for monuments that evolve, change shape, or dissolve over time. These include adaptive reuse, ephemeral projects, recycled materials, 3D printing, or augmented reality. Such materials are already in use by many artists and designers who are committed to employing them to cultivate and share undertold stories found within communities.

Assessed in collaboration with Materials Conservation, Philadelphia

Figure 3.1
Audit of conventional monument materiality (Monument Lab, 2021)

The Past

THE PAST: MONUMENTS

Monuments are a type of design artifact, statuesque or spatial in form language, which build a culture of remembrance that has a permanence in public spaces and in the public consciousness. Architect Michael Villegas (2024) explains that monuments serve as keystones—marks in time that define something specific, whether it is an event or a place. They embody the full spectrum of emotions connected to those stories, the good and the bad, attempting to capture the essence of what they represent. He describes monuments as emergent responses, declaring to society what has come to pass.

Conventionally, intentionally designed monuments have been created to endure. This desire to transcend time through permanence can be traced to coherence of societal identity, semantic narratives such as the display of steadfastness or strength, and pragmatics considerations like weather and erosion. This aspiration for timelessness dictates the form and materiality of monuments. The Monument Lab (2021) has identified the most common conventional materials used include, but are not limited to, bronze, marble, lead, granite, sandstone, steel, and wood *(see Figure 3.1)*. As the organization looks toward the future, they suggest that "Future monument makers may choose more dynamic materials, allowing for monuments that evolve, change shape, or dissolve over time. These include adaptive reuse, ephemeral projects, recycled materials, 3D printing, or augmented reality. Such materials are already in use by many artists and designers who are committed to employing them to cultivate and share under told stories found within communities" (Monument Lab, 2021). This recommendation alludes to a recognized need for new monument design frameworks even if the text does not prescribe a solution or methodology.

In regards to their placement, monuments are sited for influence and visibility in order to effectively communicate their intended narrative. They can be spatially agnostic in relationship to events, placed with no direct tie to the actual locale where something occurred. Most importantly, the hierarchy of the space determines where they are located. Because these artifacts occupy prominent locations in our public spaces, monuments gradually become visually iconic representations of the communities in which they inhabit. They can take on an after-life in the form of marketing materials, community branding, and souvenirs. Whether the meaning of their original narrative is maintained is on a case-by-case basis.

Monuments
"statement(s) of power and presence in public." (Monument Lab, 2021)

Propaganda
the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Monuments represent a narrow view of the past.

The Monument Lab, which published an audit of monuments in the United States in 2021, defines monuments as "statement(s) of power and presence in public." Monuments embody declarations of society's ideology at a specific moment in time and are made with the intent of lasting in that form for generations (Monument Lab, 2021). The utilization of monuments as tools to influence political narratives has been documented since ancient Mesopotamia, making monuments a tradition in human society since at least 2,550 BC (Taylor, 2003). They are categorically a form of *propaganda* due to their political nature. Monuments are created by groups of people with vested interest, whether they had a direct experience with an event or not. A constituency must simply act to make a statement, iconifying their values at a particular moment in time.

Monuments represent a narrow view of the past and promote the narratives of the few whose knowledge and perspectives were counted as valuable at the time of the monument's inception (Rosenfeld, 2000). They may be free and accessible due to their context in the public sphere, but are intentionally designed by constituencies who hold positions of power where they can invest financially, materially, and temporally in a

VALUE

In addition to significance, the term *value* may also refer to their ability to generate economic impact. Jones (2024) explains, "There's also a fiscal reality tied to monuments and tourism. In Australia, there's a trend toward creating 'big' objects—the Big Koala, the Big Boot, the Big Pineapple, the Big Banana. Silo art has also become popular, creating an art trail that encourages visitation to town centers. There's an economic incentive to creating memorable objects that turn towns into destinations" *(see Figure 3.2)*. Such landmarks can especially effective as financial drivers in the era of social media. They are able to facilitate a shared experience of place between people who may not have direct relationships with one another, transcending time and space. The audience members co-exist in a digital shared environment in lieu of sharing personal engagement at the same time.

The phenomenon Jones describes can also be observed historically. In the United States, for instance, the government made financial investments in monuments to encourage tourism in the vast western part of the country. Mount Rushmore, for instance, was proposed in 1923 to draw tourist revenue to South Dakota, and as of 2024 it has been estimated to be a draw for approximately 3 million visitors annually (Mancy, 2024). While these landscapes already had value and significance to the Lakota Sioux and other native populations of the Black Hills, who regarded the landscape itself as sacred, the mountain known as Six Grandfathers was carved to create a monument depicting the founders of the United States government *(see Figure 3.3)*. Furthermore, it utilized classical characteristics from European antiquity to generate value and significance to a colonial, tourist population of European descent. This action, while sold as tourism, also reinforced concurrent communications, whether via action or word, to the native peoples that the Black Hills firmly belonged to the United States government.

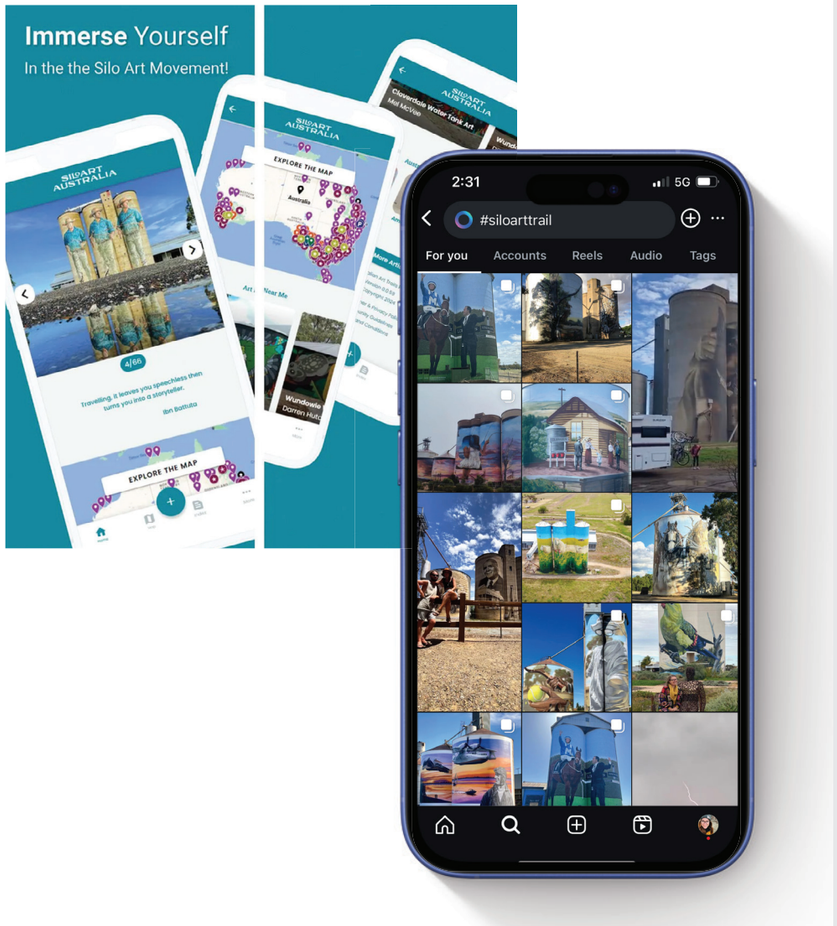
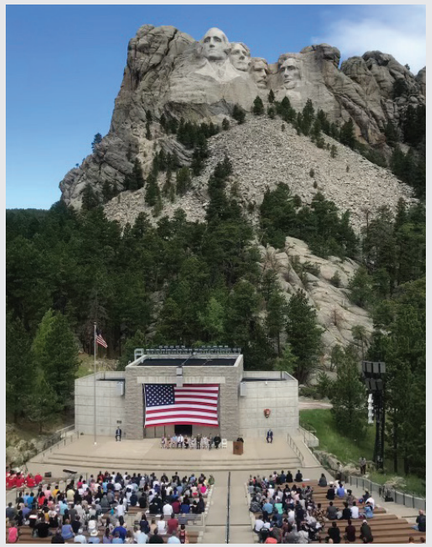


Figure 3.2
Silo Art Australia app reinforces the function of artwork as a tool for economic development. The Instagram hashtag #siloarttrail displays images of society's shared experiences of the large-scale artworks. (Australian Silo Art Trail, 2024; #siloarttrail, 2024)



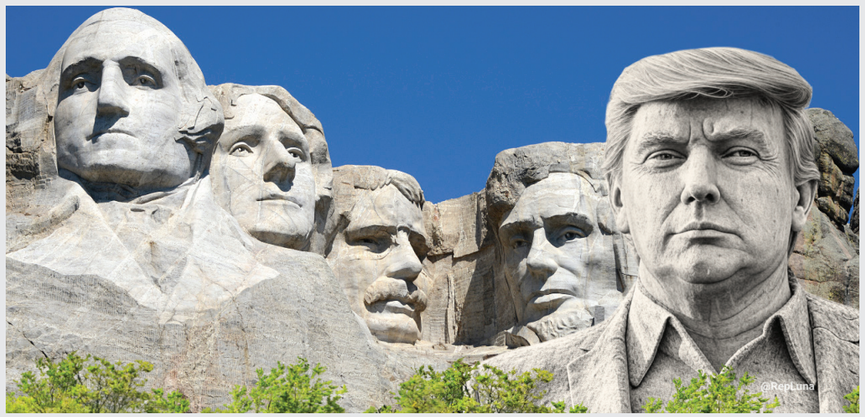


Figure 3.3
Discourse surrounding the presence of monuments in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Top Left: *Mount Rushmore*, a site of American patriotic pilgrimage, carved into the façade of Six Grandfathers. Photo by Bambach, 2022

Top Right: *Crazy Horse Memorial* has been under construction since 1948 and began as a response to Mount Rushmore. The model of the sculpture is seen in the foreground and the in-progress sculpture is visible in the background.
Photo by Bambach, 2022

Bottom: A rendering of *Mount Rushmore* published by Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna (FL-13) alongside the introduction of H.R.792 in 2025, which adds the face of President Donald J. Trump. (Soto, 2025)

In response to the construction of Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse Memorial was privately funded to counter the federal government's imposition of political narratives on indigenous landscapes. While the goal of those constructing the monument was said to elevate Crazy Horse as a hero equal to that of the presidents of the United States government, the sculpture remains controversial amongst local indigenous communities due to its practice of idolatry and marring of yet another sacred mountain. Today, the Crazy Horse Memorial partially funds its construction through tourism.

Mount Rushmore continues to endure as a symbol of significance and value for American societal identity. As of January 2025, it has been elevated once more into the public consciousness as a form of propaganda. Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna (FL-13) announced the introduction of H.R.792 to "direct the Secretary of the Interior to arrange for the carving of the figure of President Donald J. Trump on Mount Rushmore National Memorial" (Soto, 2025). In her press release, she describes the monument as "a timeless symbol of our nation's freedom and strength, [which] deserves to reflect his towering legacy[...]" She explains that through the addition of President Trump to the monument, "he will be forever remembered among the great like Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt." Mount Rushmore, since its inception, has been a symbol synonymous with the vernacular of American patriotism and identity.

narrative that is encoded with shared spaces. Monuments are particularly susceptible to influence by political intent and ideologies due to factors like their occupancy of prominent, civic-owned spaces, the process of their manifestation, and their permanence in the public environment.

Stevens and Franck (2016) describe two approaches to monument design, informal and formal. **Informal** monuments are impromptu, organic assemblages that are created by the public as a form of tribute for remembrance, whereas **formal** narrative frameworks are organized, professionally designed, and installed by constituencies. Several classifications of formal narrative frameworks have been described over the decades, which include, but are not limited to traditionalist, modernist, and critical *(see Figure 3.13)* Depending on the intentionality of the constituency, narrative structures and visual approaches to identity representation can range from restoration to preservation to complete erasure. No matter the intent, designers of monuments take on the role of social engineers, who fabricate artifacts that serve to perpetuate a mythos for socio-ideological purposes.

Stevens and Franck (2016) also outline two methods for communication narrative, which deal with the ambiguity of semantics. The first is referred to as *"closed meanings,"* which are often top-down communication from an authority making a statement to the greater public. They showcase one-way communication that is unambiguous, made with the intent of clear declaration. More figurative monuments, on the other hand, offer *"open meanings."* These discursive objects may share multiple perspectives and convey narratives through experiential means, sparking reflection and inviting criticism. While they have been criticized as "ephemeral, objectless [and] undesirable" due to their obscurity, monuments with open meanings are more egalitarian (Krzyżanowska, 2016). Monuments with open meanings align more directly to the aspiration of public spaces to have publicness, allowing for multiple interpretations and points of engagement for universal audiences to participate in collective memory discourse.

Informal Narratives
impromptu, organic assemblages that are created by the public as a form of tribute for remembrance (Stevens and Franck, 2016)

Formal Narratives
organized, professionally designed, and installed by constituencies (Stevens and Franck, 2016)

Closed Meaning
unambiguous communication, often top-down statements from an authority to the public (Stevens and Franck, 2016)

Open Meaning
ambiguous communication, often sharing multiple perspectives and convey narratives through experiential means, sparking reflection and inviting criticism (Stevens and Franck, 2016)

REFLECT

How do I facilitate the creation of significance and value?

How do I consider my role as a social engineer during my design process?

How do I create opportunities for both closed and open meanings?

RETROACTIVE CRITICISM & DISCOURSE

As communities grapple with the ideals imposed on them by previous generations, critical discourse is able to happen around the monuments themselves. These dialogues take the form of public discussions, exhibitions, and other media. Methodologies like *participatory design* and intentional, constructive conflict in stakeholder dialogues have been outlined in fields ranging from design to political science (Sander, 2013; Cuppen, 2012), which can guide retroactive discussions about these inherited artifacts to develop *counter-memories*. However, communities are contending with the representation of their evolving identities without clear process frameworks for determining what to do about the collective memory artifacts that inhabit their public spaces (Decker, 2023).

In lieu of formal, organized engagement to reckon with the meaning of existing monuments, audiences may use informal means to enhance, criticize, or supplant existing narratives. Such informal changes that modify the character of a monument's original intent is often categorized as *vandalism* due to the power dynamics in place that determine why a monument exists and continues to be permitted in a space. The following examples illustrate how these types of modifications alter the function of monument as an object that memorializes the past, making them active players in the negotiation of identity in present-day discourse.

Subtraction | The right foot of the *Don Juan de Oñate* statue in Alcalde, New Mexico was removed in protest by the Friends of Acoma in 1997 (Romero, 2017). The subtractive action does not negate from the sculpture, but instead adds a new narrative to the statue, which formerly only glorified the conquistador. By removing the foot, the Friends of Acoma draw attention to the atrocities that were overseen by Don Juan de Oñate *(see Figure 3.4)*. "In a notorious act of cruelty," Romero (2017) explains,

Participatory Design
"the activity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design and development process."
(Sander, 2013)

Counter-memories
"based on objection against the official, state-sanctioned memory"
(Foucault, 1977 from Krzyżanowska, 2016)

Vandalism
"willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property"
(Merriam-Webster, 2024)

Figure 3.4

Subtraction
The foot of Oñate from the sculpture of *Don Juan de Oñate*
Designed by Sonny Rivera
Photo by Adria Malcolm for *The New York Times*
(Romero, 2017)

"Oñate is said to have ordered his men to cut a foot off at least 24 male captives." The dismemberment of the statue became a catalyst for discourse around the relationship between the Hispanic, Anglo, and indigenous populations of Alcalde. Romero (2017) remarks, "The foot thief smiled when discussing how his act of sabotage was stirring ghosts," a metaphor for explaining that history does not die but remains alive, even after 450 years. Today, the Oñate wears new, replacement foot, welded to the sculpture at the cost of $10,000 to tax payers. This act of mending and repairing perhaps unwittingly symbolizing where power over historical narratives is held in the community.

Addition | In Nuremberg, Germany, a simple tag added to the *Zeppelinfeld* challenges audiences to consider lessons from history and apply them to the present *(see Figure 3.5)*. The *Zeppelinfeld*, designed by Albert Speer, was built around 1938 by the Nazi Party as a rally site. The grandstand, adorned with an enormous swastika, was used by Adolf Hitler to generate loyalty and support for the Third Reich. On April 22, 1945, American forces destroyed the symbol as part of a victory celebration that coincided with the Soviet liberation of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Today, the site is used for a variety of functions, including auto racing, and is contextualized with formal interpretive signage installed by the City of Nuremberg. The handwritten tag, however, brings the afterlife of this period of history into focus. "Nie Wieder," which translates to "Never Again," is a additive modification which reminds today's society that the lessons of the Second World War should be carried forward into the present. It continues discourse by reminding us of our context—that we are responsible for our political footprint, as it can have disastrous consequences for the future.

Addition can also take on a temporary character through the overlay of digital experiences. Krzysztof Wodiczko, for instance, places projections onto the surfaces of existing monuments to transform them into counter monuments that reflect present-day

Figure 3.5

Addition
"Nie Wieder," which translates to "Never Again," tagged on the *Zeppelinfeld* in Nuremberg, Germany in June of 2024
Photo by Bambach, 2024

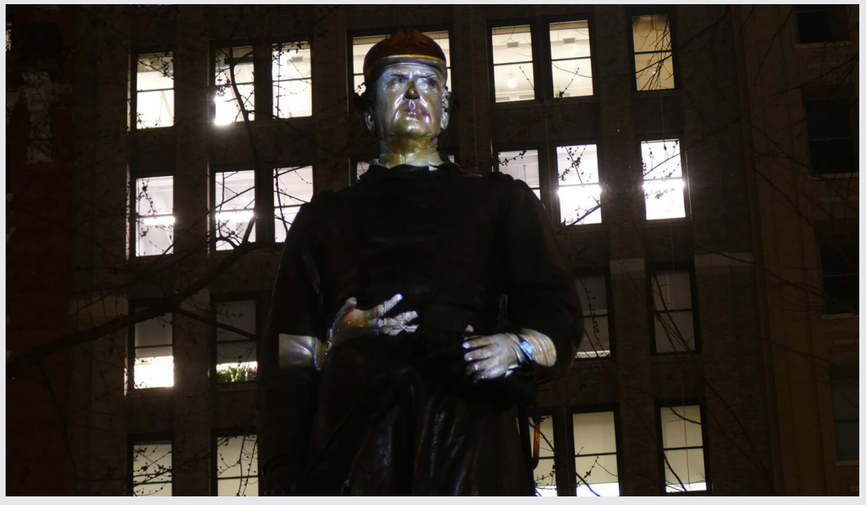


Figure 3.6

Addition
Monument by Wodiczko, 2020
New York, New York

dialogue (2020). In his project *Monument*, Wodiczko gives voice to the experiences of refugees by projecting their likenesses onto a traditional monument of Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, who was a celebrated figure during the American Civil War *(see Figure 3.6)*. Through the addition of the projections, Farragut becomes representative of the impact of war on the lives of those experiencing trauma of displacement.

Adornment | The interpretive signage for *Lenin in Fremont* demystifies not only the meaning of the sculpture in regards to the historical communist regime, but also its relationship to the audience who has adopted this bronze representation of Lenin as a personified member of their community *(see Figure 3.7)*. The sign explains that the sculpture of Lenin has taken on an irreverent persona as a sort of mascot. By those local residents who embrace the sculpture as "quirky," it is decorated for the holidays. The statue has even inspired local restaurants to use visuals for their branding that hearken to the Russian Constructivist movement of the early 20th century, despite their lack of ties to that particular brand of communism. Interestingly, the sign omits discussing the counter-point. There is no description explaining why Lenin is frequently seen with red paint on his hands. For those who see its presence as a glorification of one of history's evildoers, individuals protest its existence by painting the hands of Lenin in red to symbolize the blood he has on his hands (Volodzko, 2023). The addition of paint alters the semantic communication of the statue, contrasting the quirky interpretation.

Similarly, in Scotland, the residents of Glasgow have adorned a statue of the Duke of Wellington with a traffic cone for over 40 years (Scott, 2023). Despite the threat of arrest for vandalism from local authorities, whenever the cone is removed, it is replaced. The traffic cone as a piece of participatory discourse changes the meaning of the statue entirely. From 1844 to the 1980s, the statue simply honored the Duke of Wellington for his military achievements against Napoleon. The addition of the cone in the 1980s

Figure 3.7

Adornment
Lenin in Fremont decorated for Halloween and nearby businesses who have embraced communist iconography for their branding. Designed by Emil Venkov for Poprad, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (now Slovakia) Seattle, Washington USA
Photos by Bambach, 2024

diminishes the venerable narrative of the monument. The out-of-context cone brings an element of light hearted humor to the public space, while also representing a tongue-in-cheek defiance of authority. The street artist Bansky recognized this and used the embellished monument to elevate the Wellington's cone to an icon representative of the city of Glasgow. Today, the *Duke of Wellington* monument facilitates the formation of new, albeit more temporary, representations of collective memory. Adorned with a blue and yellow cone *(see Figure 3.8)*, the community expresses its solidarity with the Ukraine during the Russian invasion. On another day, a blue cone with stars becomes a point of unity around its membership in the EU. Due to this participation by the community, the significance of the statue remains in constant flux.

Figure 3.8

Adornment
Duke of Wellington wearing traffic cones, which have been placed on his head by locals
Designed by artist Carlo Marochetti and erected in 1844
Glasgow, Scotland
(Scott, 2023)

Iconoclasm
the practice of "a person who attacks settled beliefs or institutions" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Removal | *Iconoclasm* is not a new practice— the act of destroying cultural icons and monuments dates back to prehistoric times (Apaydin, 2020). It is a practice that declares ownership of a place and narrative. In the case of authoritarian nation-states, Apaydin (2020) explains that "Monumental or architectural heritage is targeted as a symbol of cultural and collective identity; in containing stored memory, it provides grounds for specific groups to exist as a community. Therefore heritage is usually targeted first, to erase a group's existence and identity and to prevent that group from developing and creating new heritage and memory." In 2003, for example, the United States military toppled a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad, Iraq to symbolize victory over Hussein's power and influence even though the war persisted for near a decade more (Von Tunzelmann, 2021). Von Tunzelmann (2021) writes, "Bringing down Saddam's statue was a greater feat of hyperreality. It would be presented to the world as a climax: the triumph of Operation Iraqi Freedom." The goal of removing the statue was to replace the narrative of Hussein's dominion with a new mythos around the victoriousness of the US military. They did not need to replace the symbol with another as the void created by its removal told a new story, generating a collective memory of the conflict.

Iconoclasm does not need to be an act of military or government power. It can also be an act of protest by those who are challenging an existing condition or power structure. As the United States negotiates its history as nation built on the slave trade and white supremacy, several Confederate monuments have been protested and removed *(see Figure 3.9)*. In the instance of Decatur Square in Atlanta, Georgia, an obelisk installed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1908 became "a focal point of protests and vandalism" in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd (Hurley, 2024). The site sat vacant for four years and was eventually replaced with a statue of US Congressman John Lewis. The new monument stands as a "symbol of peace and progress" in a public space that once symbolized dominance and oppression (Hurley, 2024).

Figure 3.9

Removal
Removal of a Confederate monument in 2020

Replacement monument of US Congressman John Lewis in 2024 (Hurley, 2024)

Master Narrative
simplified, hegemonial histories that serve an ideological purpose (Jarausch & Geyer, 2003)

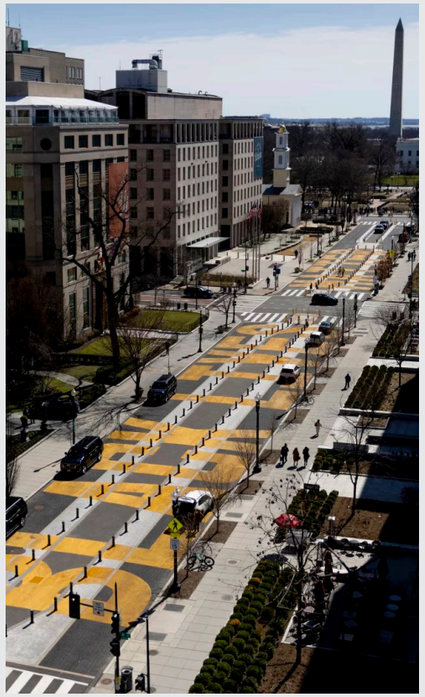
"a term that stems from the anthropological studies of Claude Levi-Strauss, who contrasted the written narrative of colonial masters with the oral stories of native slaves" (Jarausch & Geyer, 2003)

"canonized idological explanations of the past that serve to legitimize certain power relationships" (Jarausch & Geyer, 2003)

In response to such acts of iconoclasm across the United States, President Donald Trump issued an executive order to exercise federal control over the constituencies who have authority to control communal narratives in public spaces. The executive order reads, "Key targets in the violent extremists' campaign against our country are public monuments, memorials, and statues. Their selection of targets reveals a deep ignorance of our history [...]" (The White House, 2020). By positioning the individuals who toppled and defaced to be criminals and suggesting a supposed correct version of history, the executive order places the power to define societal identity as an authority of the nation-state, not the people.

The actions by the public and the responses of the administration highlight the tenuous debate over ownership of public space and its power to define societal identity. As George Orwell describes in his book *1984*, "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 1949). In this instance, the United States government acted to uphold a view of history wherein its "fundamental truth that America is good, [and] her people are virtuous," making illegal the critical discourse being enacted by the American people through protests. The monuments were ordered to be preserved to steer the future of the country toward right-wing belief systems.

During this time, a mural was also installed by protesters on 16th Street in Washington D.C. which declared "Black Lives Matter" (Archie, 2025). While the mural can be perceived as a piece of public art due to its medium and temporary nature, the artwork took on the role of a monument because it was an expression that contested authority and power in the public sphere. The *Black Lives Matter* mural memorialized the Black community's experience of police brutality and its hope for a just future. In response to this public contribution to American societal identity, the second Trump administration reacted five years later by taking part iconoclasm, an activity which it



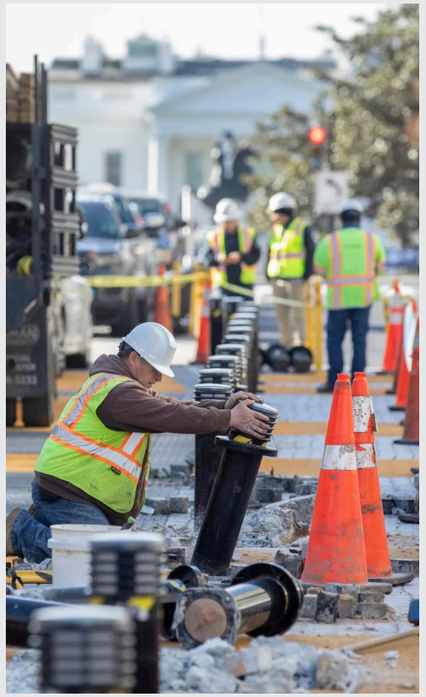


Figure 3.10

Removal
State-sanctioned removal of the *Black Lives Matter* mural (Archie, 2025)

had previously deemed to be vandalism *(see Figure 3.10)*. The Trump administration once again focused on the reclamation of historical narrative to preserve its narrow point of view under the guise of "restoring truth in American history" (The White House, 2025). By intentionally limiting the diversity of voices, the removal of such critical, plural expressions of counter-narratives in public spaces perpetuates a state-sanctioned *master narrative* that intends to control the identity of American as a nation-state.

Figure 3.11

Removal
Screenshots from a promotional video that explains how *Backup Ukraine* functions and how volunteers can participate (Polycam, 2022)

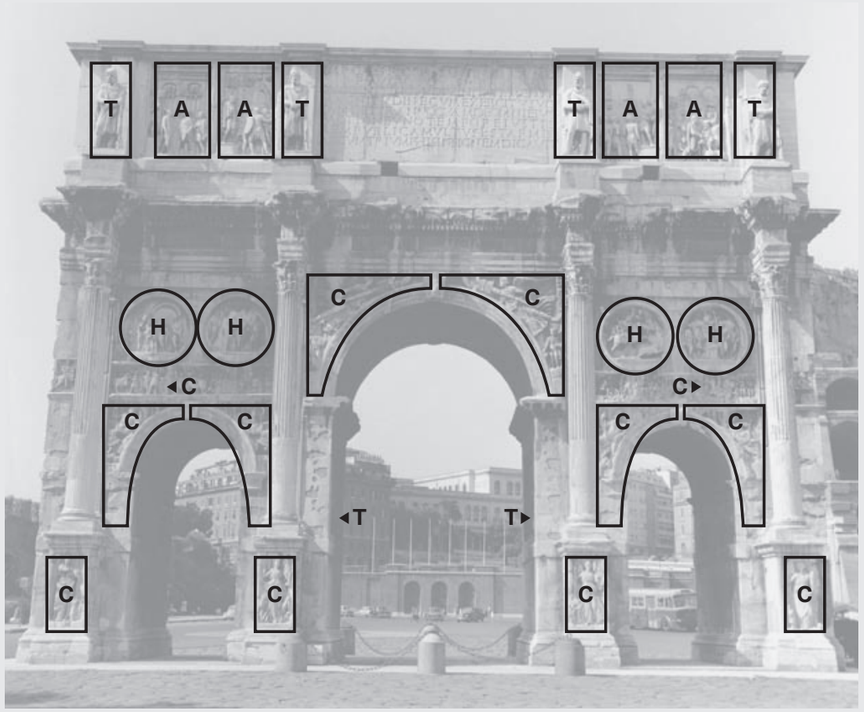
Today, communities are leveraging mobile digital technology to document their cultural icons to protect them from being completely erased. *Backup Ukraine*, for instance, was founded as a means of preserving the heritage of the Ukrainian people during the ongoing Russian War *(see Figure 3.11)*. In an echo of Apaydin’s (2020) aforementioned research, the *Backup Ukraine* website declares that “Destroying a country’s cultural heritage is the fastest way to erase their national identity. In light of Russia’s false denial of Ukrainian sovereign and unique national identity, we take the destruction of the country’s history extremely seriously” (Polycam, 2022). Because of this purpose that Blue Shield Danmark, UNESCO, and other nonprofit entities partnered with Polycam, a company that specializes in 3D capture technology, to design an accessible mobile application that can effectively “store [cultural heritage] in an open, secure online archive — where no bombs can reach” (Polycam, 2022). By using any smart phone device, participants are able take 3D scans of monuments, memorials, public art and other structures of cultural import and upload them to a secure server. While this project does not protect the physical objects from iconoclasm, *Backup Ukraine* puts power into the hands of those whose heritage is being targeted for destruction, providing an opportunity for location-based documentation so future generations can engage with the collective memory artifacts of the Ukrainian people.

Renewal | Traditionally, *spolia* has involved the practice and study of the afterlife of artifacts from antiquity *(see Figure 3.12)*. However, during the post-modernist architectural movement, the term became more broadly applied to “reuse as a form

Spolia
"reuse as a form of new life, with different modalities and myriad inventive outcomes"
(Esch from Brilliant & Kinney, 2011)

Figure 3.12

Renewal
The *Arch of Constantine* in Rome exemplifies the practice of spolia
(Brilliant & Kinney, 2011)



T | Trajanic **H | Hadrianic** **A | Aurelian** **C | Constantinian**

of new life" (Esch from Brilliant & Kinney, 2011), wherein artifacts are given new purpose. Rather than meeting an end to their existence, they are effectively renewed through the encoding of new meaning.

Historically, reuse has been documented in instances of material scarcity or shift in political dominance (Esch from Brilliant & Kinney, 2011). Today, the idea of reuse aligns well to present-day practices of sustainable construction. It is seen as a waste reductive action, especially in architectural practices where material use can have a carbon-heavy footprint and the presence of a form directly impacts the natural environment. Reuse in monument design is generally exhibited through material salvaging and in monuments that use critical narrative frameworks.

Reuse, however, can also carry implications of *appropriation*, especially when the objects being reused are already encoded with semantic meaning, cultural significance, or are procured without consent. Brilliant & Kinney (2011) write, "Spoliation is a form of appropriation distinguished by forcible dispossession and/or material deprivation of the donor object or person. It bears the ethical or moral value assigned to such acts in any given era or culture." The intentions of the original constituency may be lost or intentionally erased, and therefore the reconstituted artifact can, and often does, apply incongruous meaning.

Vergangenheits-bewältigung
the means of mastering the past over a society's history (Rosenfeld, 2020)

CONCLUSION

While it is acknowledged that the narratives represented in our existing public commemorative landscape are incomplete and lack plurality (Labode, 2016; Monument Lab, 2021; Decker, 2023; Jarausch & Geyer, 2003), it is also acknowledged that "there are no best practices for negotiating the post-creation life of monuments and memorials" (Decker, 2023). Aside from public engagement, the Monument Lab (2021) has also noted that "monument records rarely reflect plans [...] to anticipate maintenance nor efforts to make room for interpretation by future generations." Handa (2021) further argues that "it is a fallacy that a piece of architecture is complete when the construction is finished... [it] should take into consideration the after-life[...]."

These examples of vandalism and observations from collective memory and monument experts underscore a fault within the design profession itself. They point out that it is inevitable for societies to engage in the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which describes the continued means of mastering the past. Rosenfeld (2020) explains that this process, while most frequently applied to Germany's collective memory artifacts surrounding the atrocities of World War II, as a experience by cultures across the globe. It encompasses the continued discourse over a society's history and "assures that the past is forever in the process of being mastered" (Rosenfeld, 2020). The past, in other words, is an active being in our present reality. Our collective memory is continually being negotiated, and therefore designers have a responsibility to the future to reconsider static, conventional approaches to monument design.

Designers have a responsibility toward the future to enable negotiation of the past.

Narrative Frameworks in the Public Commemorative Landscape

MONUMENTS

TRADITIONALIST

emphasizes “cultural continuity and tradition”

also includes natural landmarks, such as national monuments

MODERNIST

prioritizes a “clean break with the past and an embrace of the new”

CRITICAL

deliberately preserves traces of the past for future debate

FORMAL

COUNTER

represent a multiplicity of meanings and narratives for audience interpretation

DIDACTIC

intended to convey instruction and information in addition to serving another purpose

TRIBUTE

small or large assemblages created in public space that emerge organically

INFORMAL

PUBLIC ART

PARTICIPATORY

organized by an artist and collaboratively constructed with members of a community

CRITICAL

invokes debate of present-day trends, political systems, and societal norms

TOMBSTONE

markers for displaced peoples or culture due to gentrification

FORMAL

STREET ART

guerrilla artworks that are installed without an official means of authorization

INFORMAL

Figure 3.13

Monuments
(Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, 2024; Dixon, 2012; Highsmith, 2006, 2014, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2000; Stevens & Franck, 2016)

Public Art
(Mudede from Gregory, 2024; Mudede, 2022; FEDDERSEN, 2015; Treisman, 2024)

The Present

PUBLIC ART

The purpose of public art is to activate public spaces by sparking reflection within individuals and conversations between people. In today's practice, they are often discursive counter-narratives to the official, state-sanctioned memories that inhabit our commemorative landscape *(see Figure 3.12)*. The line between monument and public art can be blurred depending on a constituency's intentionality and selection of materiality. There are no rules when it comes to public art in regard to materiality. The selection of materials is usually determined by the artist's intended message and the constraints presented by the longevity of the project.

Artist RYAN! FEDDERSEN (2024), who prioritizes site-specific installations, believes that art has the unique power to provide an experience of introspection. She explains, "the work is completed by the viewer. Once I put [research] into the work, the interpretation is not mine." Art has open meaning—it leaves ambiguity for individuals to have their own experience. Information and contextual research may go into the formation of a piece, but what people take out will often be up to them and will be based on their own knowledge and experiences.

FEDDERSEN explores the nuances of monument and public art in her temporary piece *900*horses*, created for the Tribal Gathering Plaza at Huntington Park in Spokane, Washington *(see Figure 3.14)*. According to her website (2015), her artwork responds to a monument erected in 1946, which triumphantly memorializes slaughter of 900 horses at the hands of the US government in 1858. Alternatively, FEDDERSEN's public artwork honored the memory of the horses and their relationship to the Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and Palouse people, by visualizing the scale of the atrocity and inviting the community to come together to reach new understanding. FEDDERSEN's website states that "As the monument served to reinforce oppressive narratives, the mural sought to create a new conversation regarding the event that reinforced respect and a community coming together, side by side to create a new narrative." In this case, public art not only facilitated remembrance through an alternative lens, but sought to inspire discourse through participation in a shared experience, creating a new collective memory.

Public art manager Jordan Freeman (2024) adds, "At its best, public art isn't just a snapshot of a single moment in time—it evolves, reinterpreted by new generations and cultural shifts. It offers an on-going narrative shaped by present-day experiences and interactions. It's not just about honoring the past, but about sparking conversations that shape the present and future." Successful public art, in other words, is an expression and commentary of the present— something that is actively unfolding.

Tombstone Architecture
markers for displaced peoples or culture due to gentrification
(Mudede, 2022)

Art has open meaning—it leaves ambiguity for individuals to have their own experience.

Public art, however, does not always manifest as a discursive artifact. It can take on the role of a conventional monument when its function is to act as a marker of what once was. Artist Charles Mudede explains this phenomenon as the result of gentrification, dubbing this type of public art as *tombstone architecture* (Mudede, 2022). Mudede provides two examples of this in Seattle, Washington. He first references the maintenance and care given to works of Native American public art. Mudede explains that "Native American culture is not, of course, static but still in development, still changing. [But], tourists don't want to see a postmodern sculpture. They want what's pre-coded as Native American" (Mudede from Gregory, 2024). This preference toward familiar tropes from the past does not allow current Native American expressions to be as highly valued and therefore not invested in. Pre-coded artwork instead acts as a monument to the public's perception of what indigenous art is, effectively freezing the

Figure 3.14
*900*horses*
Installation by RYAN! FEDDERSEN and participants

Spokane, Washington
(Feddersen, 2015)

culture in time. These influences, rooted in perceptions of value and significance, limit continued growth from being expressed through public art.

Secondly, Mudede references the ousting of the Black community in the Central District through gentrification. In this neighborhood, he discusses the installation of artworks that ”represent what’s gone or is in the process of going” (Mudede from Gregory, 2024). Here, new public art that celebrates the Black community is actually marking its displacement. It attempts to celebrate the past culture of the neighborhood that was disrupted by development. Mudede (Gregory, 2024) argues that instead public art should be “up with the times, about the here now, about a culture that is still evolving.” Public art should be an active representation of the present.

Public art may also borrow from conventional monument form language to critique present society. In October of 2024, less than a month before the US presidential election, bronze sculptures by Civic Crafted LLC were given permits by the National Park Service to be installed in Washington, D.C. (Treisman, 2024). They were satirical pieces intended to enshrine iconography associated with the far right to challenge the glorification of the events of recent extremist actions throughout the campaign season *(see Figure 3.15)*. A plaque describes the first sculpture in a facetious tone of voice, “This memorial honors the brave men and women who broke into the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021 to loot, urinate and defecate throughout those hallowed halls in order to overturn an election” (Treisman, 2024). It contextualizes the artist’s representation of Nancy Pelosi’s bronze desk, which is adorned with a hyperbolic, emoji-inspired turd, as a monument intended to preserve the memory of January 6th insurrection rioters who attempted to destroy the ideals of American democracy and identity. The second sculpture of a tiki torch hearkens back to the events of the Unite the Right rally in 2017. This monument also has a plaque, which interprets the torch as paying “tribute to President Donald Trump and the ‘very fine people’ he boldly stood to defend when they marched in Charlottesville, Virginia” (Treisman, 2024). The plaques, in both circumstances, are critical to the success of these monuments as a criticisms of right-wing messaging, as without them, the public artworks could be understood as celebrations of the events.

Public art should be an active representation of the present.

Similarly, bronze and monumental scale were used in New York City’s Times Square to provide a critique of “preconceived notions of identity and representation” (Times Square, 2025). A 12ft tall bronze sculpture of a Black woman in modern, everyday clothing stands to invoke discourse through the intentional juxtaposition of media and subject matter *(see Figure 3.16)*. The artist, Thomas Price, explains that his goal in creating the sculpture is to promote unity through a shared humanity. “Through scale, materiality, and posture, *Grounded in the Stars* disrupts traditional ideas around what

Figure 3.15
Satirical public art positions itself as monument through the use of architypical monument materials
(Triesman, 2024)

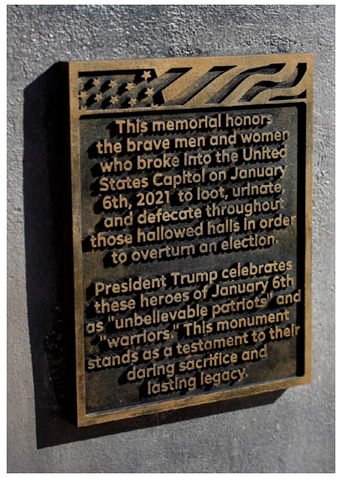
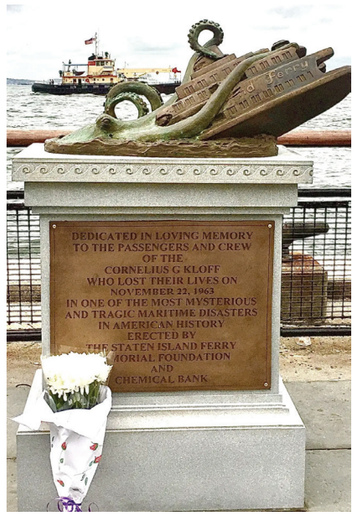


Figure 3.16
Grounded in the Stars
uses materiality and scale to invoke discourse about memorialization
New York, New York
(Times Square, 2025)



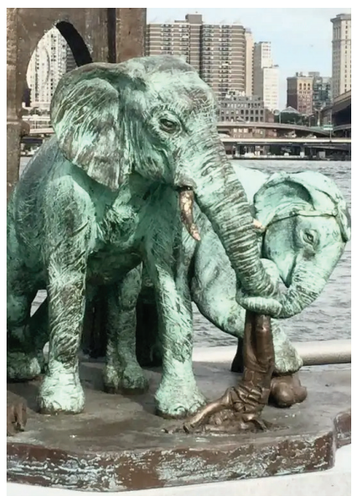


Figure 3.17
Fake monuments created by Joseph Reginella as part of his *NYC Urban Legends* series New York, New York (Frishberg, 2024)

defines a triumphant figure and challenges who should be rendered immortal through monumentalization" (Times Square, 2025). While some celebrate Price's counter-monument and its intended meaning, the sculpture has also resulted in strong objection, evidenced by racist remarks and reactions both at Times Square and on social media (Greenberger, 2025).

Rather than critiquing social ideologies like Civic Crafted LLC and Price, artist Joseph Reginella instead uses the traditional archetypes of monument design to create false histories of New York City *(see Figure 3.17)*. While Reginella's original intent was to create "escapist delights and gateways into a sci-fi version of New York history" (Frishberg, 2024), the bronze sculptures instead dupe the public into believing the fantastical narratives that he has invented. This deceit is evidenced by the hate mail and public commentary he receives from people who are fooled into believing the false histories. By utilizing traditional monument form language, the sculptures adopt the quality of being a truth that has been invested in by the collective society. The sculptures showcase the power monument have as effective propaganda tools, capable of manipulating public belief systems, distorting perceptions of history and reality, and perpetuating fake histories.

Overall, public art seeks to activate public spaces by fostering reflection, dialogue, and reinterpretation. Unlike conventional monuments, this genre of public artifacts is not declarative. Rather, public art embraces open meaning and criticism, which evolves with community engagement. Due to its position as artwork versus a documentation of history, it has the flexibility to take on tones of voice that range from the serious to light hearted. The discursive qualities of public art serve as an exemplar that can guide future frameworks for monument design.

Interpretive Signage
Informational signage that verbally and/or pictorially communicates the historical or cultural context of an object, ecosystem, people, place, or other. Includes historical markers, trail signage, etc.

CONTEXTUALIZING PAST & PRESENT

While critical books and exhibitions are curated by subject matter experts and historians who contextualize identity markers, these forums are oft removed from the physical presence of that which they critique. *Interpretive signage* is one method by which designers attempt to contextualize monuments to encourage critical public engagement. Such signage is primarily informational in order to verbally and pictorially communicate the historical or cultural context of an object, ecosystem, people, place, or other. Such signs include but are not limited to historical markers and plaques.

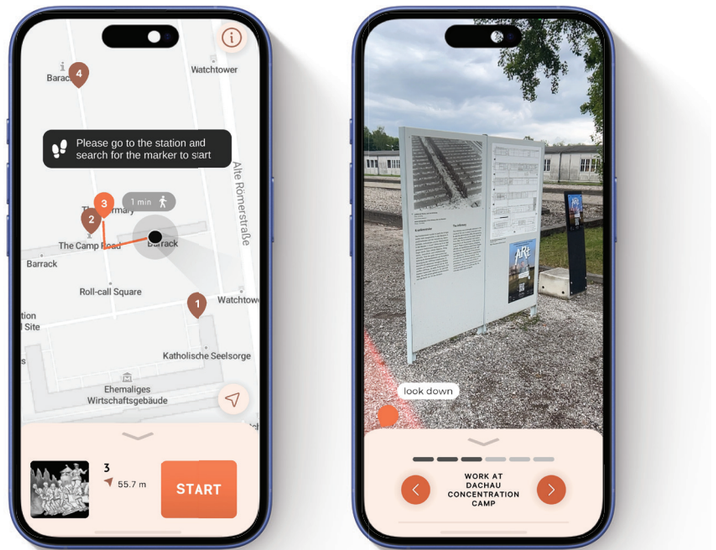
Graphic designer Steve Jones (2024), co-founder and co-owner of Heine Jones in Melbourne, Australia, discusses the importance and role of such signage in his practice. He explains that the briefs he responds to for interpretive signage, like the *Horsham Interpretive Sculpture (see Figure 3.18)*, "specify that the piece we design should have a minimum lifespan of 20 years. But in reality, it's often longer—30, 40, even 50 years." He discusses the ethical responsibility of designers to think of the afterlife of the collective memory artifact once it is installed. "Over that time," Jones (2024) states, "the public changes in terms of demographics and shared history. To ensure the design's longevity and relevance, we work closely with clients to make sure both the design and written content will remain appropriate well into the future [...] Additionally, we've started using QR codes to link digital content to the physical piece, providing further information or multilingual translations." In other words, when a collective memory artifact stays fixed in its form and remains unadaptable for the future, physical and digital content accessible in the adjacent vicinity of the artifact is a strategy designers can employ to perpetuate discourse of and around the immutable object.

At the *Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site* in Germany, interpretive signage attempts to expand the contextual of the memorial by providing access to a site-specific app *(see Figure 3.19)*. Whereas the signage explains to visitors what they are directly experiencing and its overarching context, the digital platform offers a secondary

Figure 3.18
Horsham Interpretive Sculpture
Designed by Heine Jones for Horsham Rural City Council
Sawyer Park, Horsham AUS

space that is able to highlight personal narratives of prisoners. The advantage of this complementary digital space is that visitors can be empowered with the choice to engage with a larger quantity of information based on their emotional bandwidth. This secondary space also offers a shift of attention, compartmentalizing information so visitors are not overwhelmed with content. The disadvantage of this digital space, however, is the context of its use at this particular location. The app requires visitors to be engaged with their cell phones, looking down, while simultaneously walking through a grave site. Visitors' split attention between spaces and resulting inability to maintain reverence could be viewed disrespectful in such a place of remembrance, even if the use of the application is well intended. All in all, digital environments when used appropriately for the context can be effective, but the conditions in which they are used should always be accounted for to ensure ethical responsibility.

Figure 3.19
Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site interpretive signage and Art app
Dachau, Germany



In the neighborhood of Fremont, located in Seattle, Washington USA, a monument of Vladimir Lenin is contextualized in time and space via the use of an interpretive sign to manage its relationship with a universal audience *(see Figure 3.20)*. The monument, designed by Emil Venkov for Poprad, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, is far removed from its original home. The interpretive sign discusses how art can illuminate history and be a tool for provoking emotions and engaging in conversation, stating, that the sculpture represents the "artistic spirit that outlasts failed regimes." It positions the sculpture as an intentional means for discourse in its present location, even though it was not originally conceived to be utilized in that way by Venkov.

In addition to describing how the statue was acquired, the interpretive sign outlines a deaccession plan for *Lenin in Fremont*, making it known that the significance of

Figure 3.20
Lenin in Fremont
Interpretive Signage

Designed by Emil Venkov for Poprad, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (now Slovakia)
Seattle, Washington USA

Deaccession

When discussing *deaccession* plans for public art, Freeman (2024) explains that Seattle takes a technical approach to the removal or relocation of art rather than relying on current trends or perspectives. Plans for deaccession, however, vary widely across the country. "Public art," Freeman (2024) states, "requires ongoing care, and we must balance preserving an artist's intent with managing expectations about lifespan." It is, therefore, up to communities to determine their process for managing their collections.

Beyond the local level, the US has national laws that protect the rights of artists. The Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (U.S. Congress, 1990) "grants the author of a work of visual art the right to claim authorship of such work when publicly displayed" and "grants such an author the right to prevent any destruction, distortion, mutilation, or other modification of that work which would harm his or her reputation or honor." This law is intended to preserve the intended narrative created by the artist and works alongside state and local deaccession laws to ensure the rights of the artist. The law is often referred to as "moral rights," which protects the non-economic values inherent within the discursive objects that contribute to the formation of cultural heritage.

public space has the opportunity to change if someone were interested in purchasing the sculpture for a mere $250,000. It communicates to the present audience that the community maintains a lack of preciousness about the sculpture, positioning it as a novelty item. "Should you decide to buy Vladimir," the sign reads, "Fremont hopes to replace him with a sculpture of John Lennon!" This type of communication, which is uncommon for the vast majority of monuments and interpretive signage, further positions the sculpture and the space in which it occupies as invitations for discourse. It invites interrogation of Fremont's self-declared "quirky" identity, even proposing a new icon that may have no significance to the community beyond being a playful homonym.

(DE)CONTEXTUALIZING PAST & PRESENT

Collective memory artifacts may go through a process of de-contextualization as their original meaning becomes more obscured over space and time. When this occurs, monuments effectively become *landmarks*, or objects that mark locality, to universal audiences. New significance supersedes the original meaning but does not completely replace it. Such design artifacts may become navigational nodes within the public landscape and can become symbolic of a place in and of itself. The prevalence of a monument in new media or as a commercial object may be a contributing factor to this shift in meaning.

Deaccession
to sell or otherwise dispose of (an item in a collection) (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Landmarks
conspicuous objects that mark locality (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

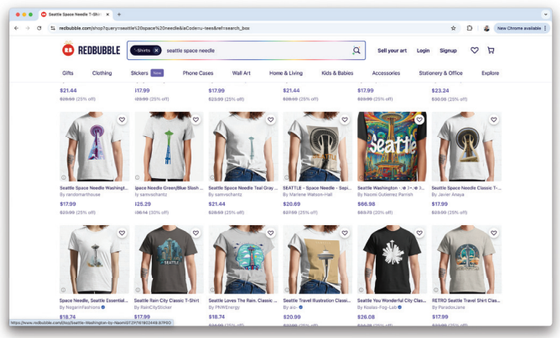
The *Statue of George Washington* on the University of Washington campus, for example, is highlighted as a landmark in a poster to mark the IVA Senior Exhibition in 2017 *(see Figure 3.21)*. Here, the monument is intended to primarily function as a navigational reference for the Odegaard Library, where the exhibition is held. The multiplicity of its meaning is not erased, but its function of landmark is emphasized over the others through stylization. Similarly, the Space Needle in Seattle, Washington is found being used as a landmark on the commercial website Redbubble.com *(see Figure 3.22)*. Printed as a souvenir, it becomes a symbol of the city of Seattle, perhaps used as a momento or quasimomento of one's visit to the city.

CONCLUSION

The collective memory landscape consists of public spaces where design artifacts are intentionally placed to define societal identity. Idealistically, these collective memory artifacts are points of active social, cultural, and political engagement. Despite this, monuments remain politicized and static. While participatory design and counter-narrative have introduced opportunities for multiplicity, conventional monument design practices still emphasize permanence and unchangeability. Such traditions result in an inherited public memorial landscape that struggles to accommodate dynamic community identities. Consequently, the design profession must re-evaluate its

Figure 3.21
IVA Senior Exhibition Poster 2017 featuring the *Statue of George Washington*
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington USA

Figure 3.22
Redbubble retail site, selling tshirts featuring the Seattle Space Needle



approach to collective memory artifacts to address these ongoing challenges. Public art, with its focus on participation, introspection, and open interpretation, provides a foundation for future monument design. The incorporation of these dialogic qualities is essential for creating monuments that evolve alongside changing community identities.

To aid in the interpretation of collective memory artifacts additional contextualization guides the attention of audiences. They can exist in physical or digital spaces, and are especially helpful for audiences when engaging with artifacts that are figurative, abstract, or intentionally have open meaning. Contextualization is especially helpful for understanding objects as consistent cultural reference points as their significance shifts over time.

The Future

PROSPECTIVE MEMORIES

Now that it has been established *why* and *how* constituencies have encoded their societal identities historically, one can speculate as to how collective memory practices may evolve in the future *(see Figure 4.1)*. Because designers have a social responsibility for recognizing, acknowledging, and navigating the influence of *who, what, where, how,* and *why* in the design of collective memory artifacts, strategies from *discursive design*, *experience design*, and *design fiction* will be leveraged to create a framework that will support the re-evaluation of conventional monument archetypes.

WHY: DISCURSIVE DESIGN

Discursive design provides a foundation through which the influence of *why* design is being done can be understood and defined *(see Figure 4.2)*. Tharp & Tharp (2018) explain that the discursive design model "does not focus on the continually expanding possibilities of what objects are designed [...] nor does it focus on how [...] Instead it starts from the core—why designers design." It provides a framework to encourage explicit definition of communication efforts in order to effectively achieve audience reflection. The discursive design model walks designers through the definition of *domain, mindset,* and *aim* as a framework through which the intentionality of the constituency can be understood and communicated.

The **domain** seeks to understand the area of activity in which design practices are conducted. Monuments, due to their publicness, exist in the domain of social engagement. This domain contextualizes the collective memory artifact within the *agent-to-others* framework of significance, defining parameters of *where* in time and space. Within the context of social systems, one can come to understand the *who*, composed of the constituency of designers and the multitiered audiences to which they are engaging in discourse.

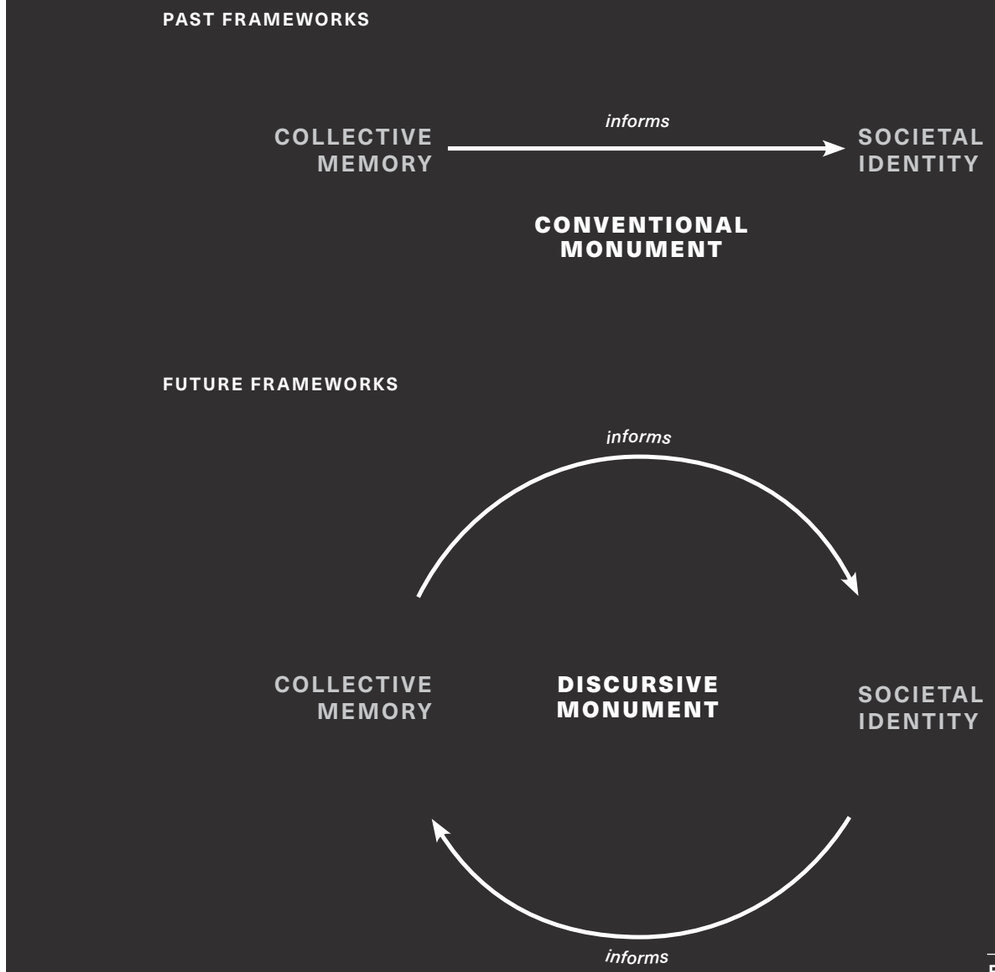
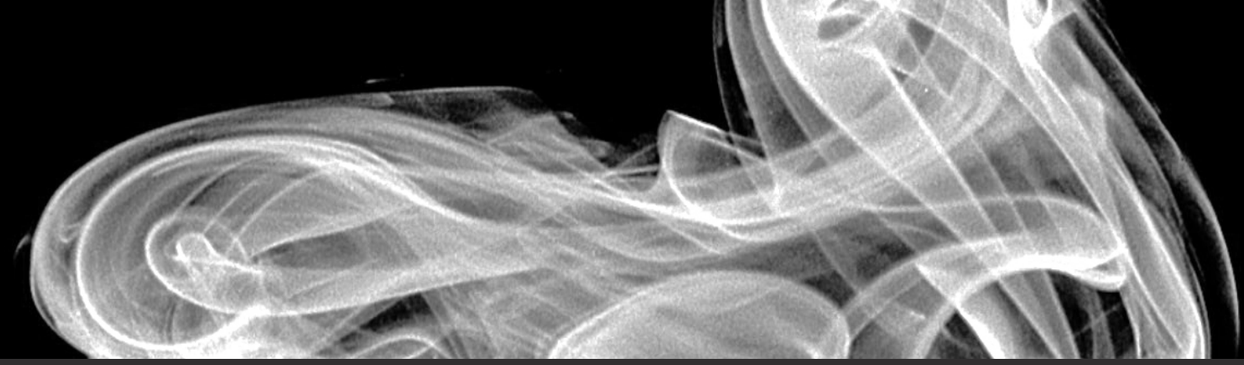


Figure 4.1
Comparison of conventional monument approaches and the proposed discursive monument design approach

Defining Design Intent through Discursive Methodology



WHY

DOMAIN

Social Engagement

Practical Application

Applied Research

Basic Research

MINDSET

Declarative

Suggestive

Inquisitive

Facilitative

Disruptive

AIM

Remind

Inform

Inspire

Provoke

Persuade

HOW

NARRATIVE

Traditional

Modern

Critical

Counter

Didactic

Discursive

APPROACH

Analysis

Description

Classification

Exemplification

Definition

Comparison

Analogy

Narration

Process

Cause and Effect

WHAT

ARTIFACT

Collective Memory

WHERE

LOCUS

Public Space

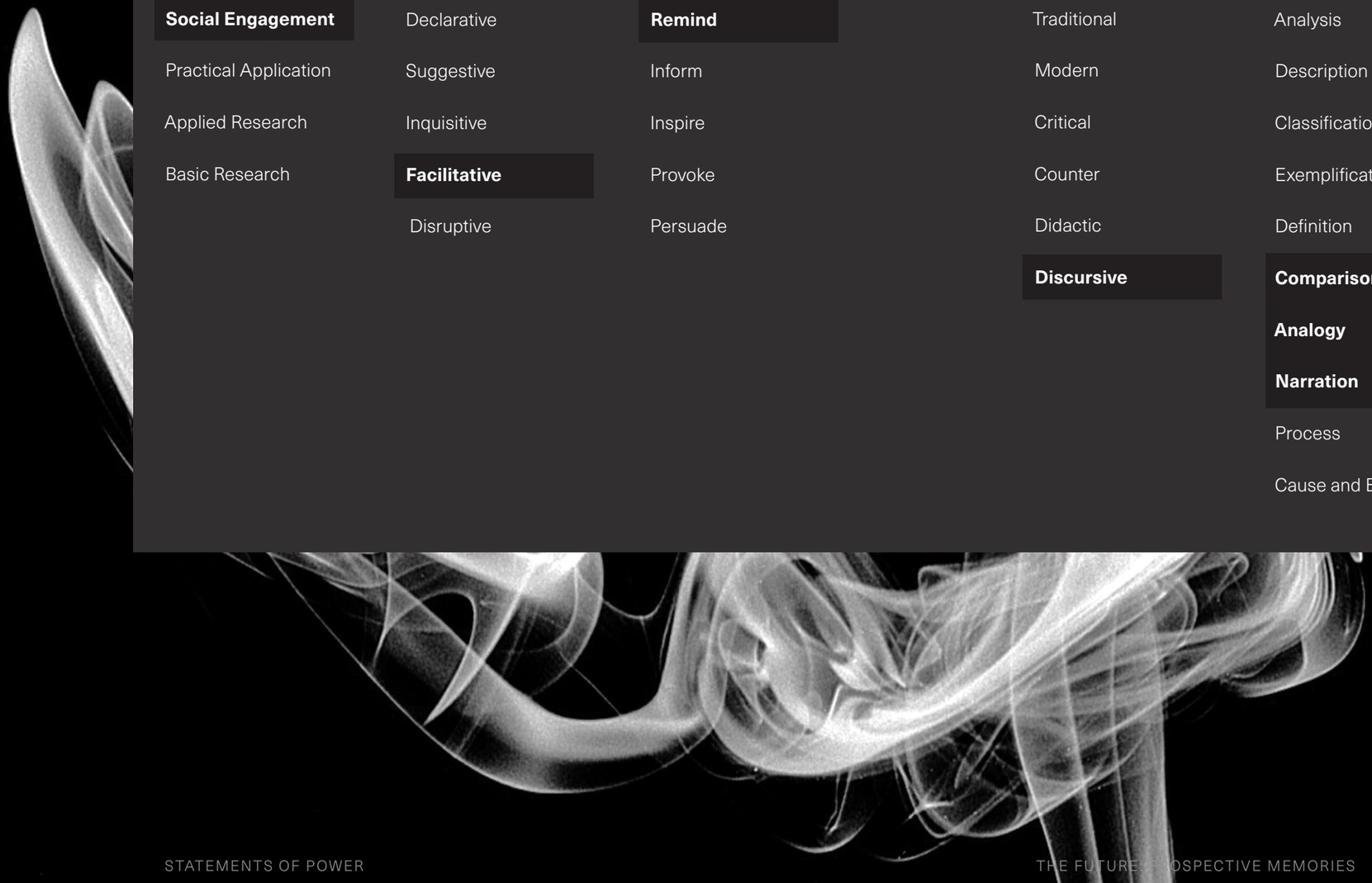


Figure 4.2
Using discursive design methodology to define intentionality for this thesis

Discursive Design
a design methodology whose "primary motivation [...] is to achieve audience reflection" (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Domain
understand the area of activity in which design practices are conducted (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Social Engagement
"discursive design that is made for members of the general public, wherein designers seek to fortify or transform thinking to effect social awareness and understanding of a substantive issue" (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Mindset
motivation or intentionality of a constituency (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Aim
how information is meant to be disseminated and consumed (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

The **mindset** of the constituency describes the motivation, or intentionality behind the reasons for participation and reification. As previously discussed, knowledge of intentionality is an ethical responsibility of designers that enables the recognition of bias. Tharp & Tharp (2018) argue that recognition of mindset can "help designers determine what their project is ultimately about" and improve "communication among fellow designers, collaborators, and other stakeholders who may be working on the same project but under different assumptions." Definition of the design intent is specific to each constituency's political structure and can be defined by engaging in participatory design practices. In an ideal scenario, the definition of mindset can achieve team cohesion within a constituency and result in a design artifact that communicates a clear, well-defined message.

The **aim** turns focus to the framing of messaging for consumption by audiences. Tharp & Tharp (2018) describe aims as "mental effects, since discursive design is foremost an intellectual pursuit of conveying ideas and achieving reflection." In other words, the aim explains how information is meant to be disseminated and consumed, but does not yet define the expression of *how*. Determining a constituency's aim can lead to "better understandings and descriptions of projects" (Tharp & Tharp, 2018), influencing the means through which information is conveyed semantically or sensorially.

All in all, the discursive design method lays the groundwork for facilitating audience reflection through the creation of discursive design artifacts. It is within this framework that monuments, public embodiments of collective memory and conveyors of societal identity, can transcend from being objects that discourse informs to being reciprocal objects through which discourse occurs. By transforming monuments into discursive design artifacts, monuments become designers who inform audience reflection through active participation in the negotiation of memory.

By transforming monuments into discursive design artifacts, monuments become designers who inform audience reflection through active participation in the negotiation of memory.

Discursive Narrative
the use of experiential engagement to immerse an audience in place, narrative, and emotion to stimulate critical thinking and evolve alongside societal shifts in significance and value

HOW: EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Memories are formed through the experience of *place, narrative* and *emotion.* The **place**, or physical and digital spatial environments, becomes the interface through which immersive storytelling takes place. Aike Akhigbe (2024), a 3D artist and interactive designer with a background in architecture, explains that "a room, for example, is an interface for information. You are using it as a tool to organize people and create a condition. The space enables the choreography of this interaction. You are managing physical and invisible forces [...] to shape narratives and discourse." Advancements in technology have allowed for physical environments like rooms to extend into digital spaces. These extended reality (XR) spaces are made accessible through virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR) technologies.

No matter *where* an experience is situated, experience design practices are the lens through which the *how* of **narrative** and **approach** can be determined. In all types of narrative frameworks, *how* the experience happens is critical to the nature of memory formation. Conventional narrative structures for monuments focus the transmission of stories from constituencies to audiences, but do not account for reciprocal relationships as memories are negotiated over space and time. Therefore, this thesis proposes the introduction of *discursive narratives* as the framework through which future monuments should be designed.

I define discursive narrative frameworks as the use of experiential engagement to immerse an audience in place, narrative, and emotion to stimulate critical thinking and evolve alongside societal shifts in significance and value.

As opposed to traditional and modern narrative structures, which utilize erasure as a method to curate specific, narrow stories, discursive narratives directly engage audiences in active dialogue with an object or space. They can encompass the aforementioned critical, counter, and didactic narrative structures, but are not limited to doing so. By facilitating this circular dialogue, discursive monuments are enabled to be participants in critique of mythos.

In the way that public art takes on a level of ambiguity, discursive monuments also embody open meanings that embrace the notion that forgetting is equally important to memory-creation as is remembering. This occurs both due to the means of reification through which *memories are curated* and the *cognitive capacity* of the audience *(see Figure 4.3)*. When constituencies determine which stories to tell, they intentionally select the memories which focus attention on simple, key messages that do not require a significant amount of cognitive capacity for audiences to retain the narrative. Tharp & Tharp (2018) add that "while it would be more straightforward to use words to convey complicated messages, the point of discursive design is to leverage the advantages of objects as a differently powerful means of communicating. Loss of exactness is the price that is paid. As a consequence, designers have to negotiate generality and specificity when trying to connect their ideas with an audience." Semantic and sensorial characteristics are intentionally left open to audience interpretation to stimulate debate.

Immersive storytelling is one tactic designers employ in attempts to have influence over the interpretation of discursive artifacts. Ellen Lupton (Burickson, 2023) explains that "experience design expands the fundamental act of storytelling, pulling the audience into the plot as active players who—in the best of circumstances—change the outcome and are changed by it." Akhigbe (2024) adds that "when you do something—when you live out a story—you take on the message of the narrative because you learn by doing. You use the story to drive understanding through embodiment." Fundamentally, when narrative is well integrated into a physical or digital experience, the journey can ignite **emotional** responses that lead to transformation of value and significance. This kind of immersion, writes Burickson (2023), must not only be physically and psychologically immersive, engaging the senses and emotion, but must also "resonate with an audience's sense of meaning" to be truly memorable.

Immersive Storytelling
experiential engagement with a narrative

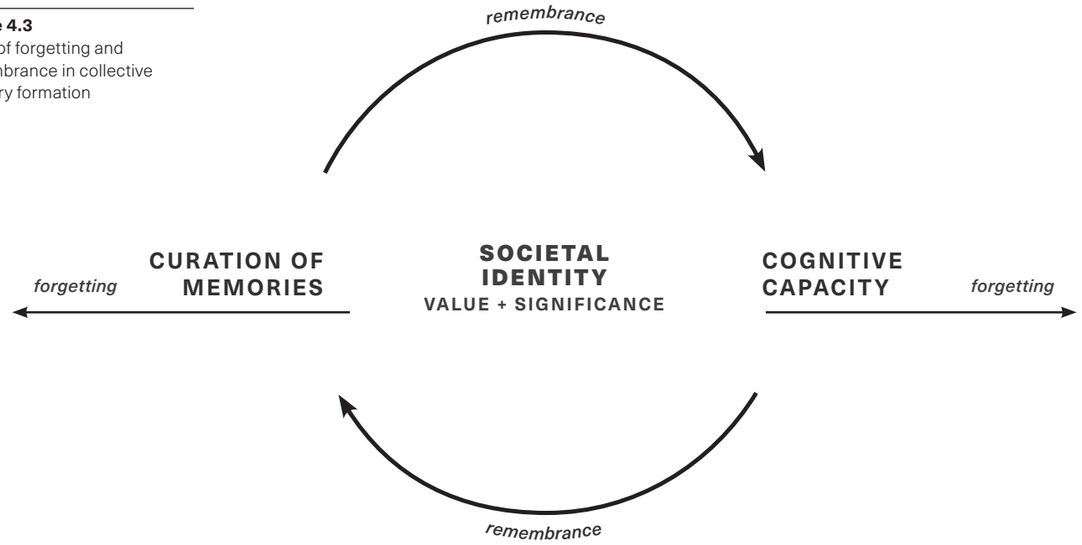
Experience Mapping
a method through which designers outline narratives to manage moments of interaction

One method wherein designers create diagrams to anticipate the touchpoints audiences may interact with design artifacts is known as *experience mapping (see Figure 4.4).* Often employed in user experience design (UX) and architectural practices, this strategic approach leverages infographics to identify narrative arcs in correspondence with moments of emotional and sensorial stimulation at each stage of a design artifact's existence. By mapping such moments of interaction, designers are able to better understand and influence the touchpoints "from which we assemble our memories of an experience" to manage audience attention (Burickson, 2023).

Experience mapping is especially useful because the human brain can only attend to approximately four elements of sensory input at a time (Chun & Most, 2017). "Narrative," Burickson (2023) outlines, "may be experienced as words, but also as colors, sounds, smells, sensations, intuitions, dream connections." Sensorial tools are part of a designer's experiential lexicon and are utilized at touchpoints to pace audiences through immersive storytelling experiences. Designers are enabled to manage the amount of stimuli and information audiences are exposed to at a given time in order to allow content to be recognized, decoded, understood, and reflected upon.

Ultimately, designers are able to influence experiential engagement through semantic and sensorial cues that capture audience attention, provoke reflection, and facilitate transformative experiences. However, they do not have control over the on-going impact of these message-laden cues. The audiences' emotions and responses are something designers can affect, but do not have control over. Perception is unique to the individual. Villegas (2024) remarks, "people bring their own experiences to architecture. Much of the context they overlay during in-person experiences is unrelated to the original myth. The architectural object [...] is less interesting than the activity it creates and the myth it perpetuates. [...] It is therefore important to consider a piece of architecture in its entirety—before, during, and after its life." In other words, the individual perspectives of audiences will result in innumerable interpretations of the reified memory over its lifetime and even beyond its existence. It is this particular dynamic, which breathes cultural value and significance into society, that makes design a fundamental part of the human experience.

Figure 4.3
Cycle of forgetting and remembrance in collective memory formation



Experience Mapping for Discursive Narratives

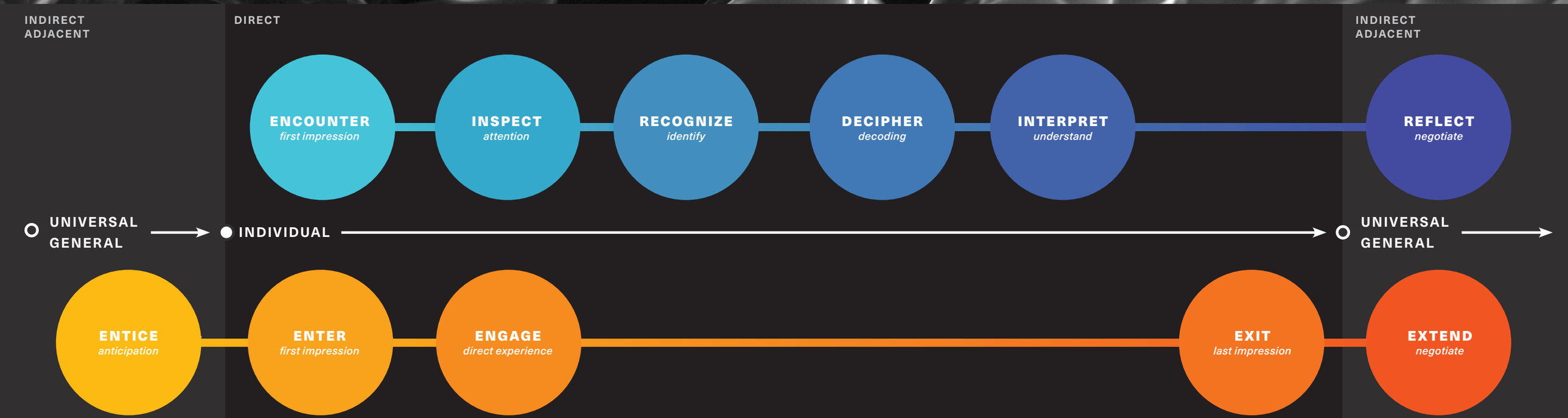


Figure 4.4
Experience mapping for discursive narratives

Top: Discursive Design (Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Center: Audience

Bottom: 5E Journey (Sontag, 2023)

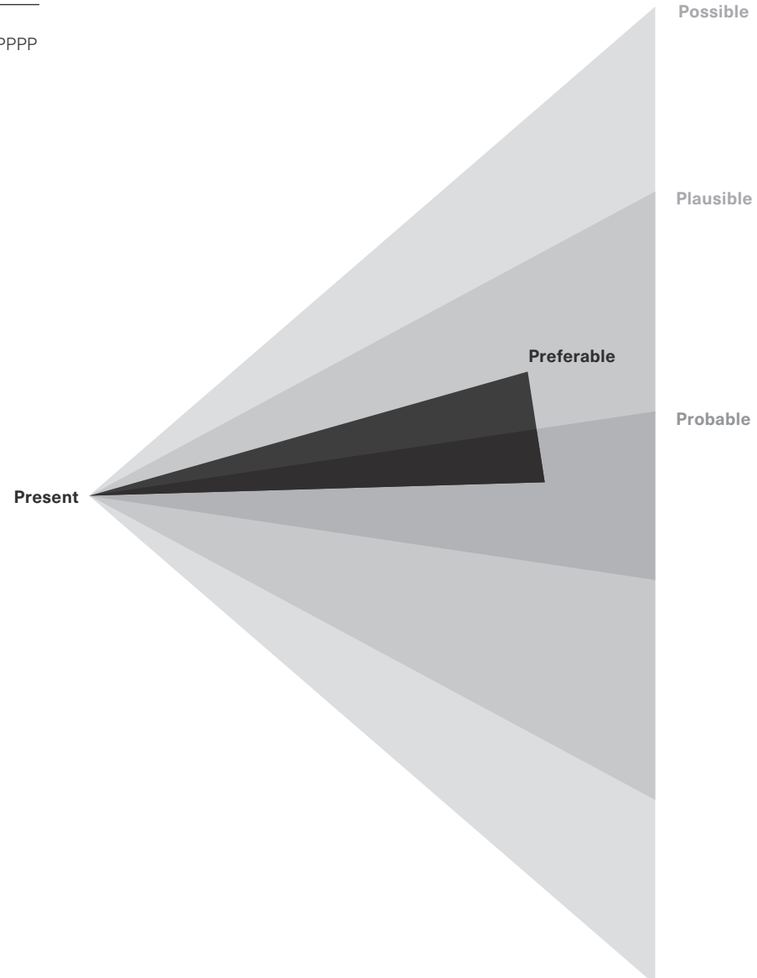


Figure 4.4
A Taxonomy of Futures: PPPP
(Dunne & Raby, 2013)

WHAT: DESIGN FICTION

The future is unknowable. Forecasting practices, such as those focused on finance trends, attempt to predict the future in order to guide business decisions and investments. *Design fiction*, while similar in its future-forward orientation, is a speculative innovation practice which guides participants through thought exercises to challenge their perceptions of possibility. The goal of design fiction is to actively encourage speculation about the *possible* in order to inspire steps toward making a seemingly unattainable reality *plausible* or *probable*. Bleecker, et al. (2022) explain that the methodology introduces "a space for constructive and creative critique" by simulating what might come to pass and opening it to reflective discussion.

In practice, design fiction participants are asked to suspend "their disbelief and allow their imaginations to wander, to momentarily forget how things are now, and wonder about how things could be" (Dunne & Raby, 2013). With barriers like technological feasibility and resource availability temporarily set aside, participants are able to dream about what might be. They encounter what-if scenarios presented to them by a designer that are supported by *diegetic prototypes*. The prototypes function to transport participants into potential futures which are, as Tharp & Tharp (2018) describe, "somehow discordant with the audience's sociocultural reality or ideality." The prototypes are design artifacts that act as tangible referents through which participants are able to challenge their assumptions via sensory engagement.

Diegetic prototypes best serve as challenges to *archetypes*, or "cultural artifacts, usually in some form of media so familiar as to be fixed in the collective psyche" (Bleecker, et al., 2022). This is due to the universal familiarity of archetypes—they are easily comprehensible gateways into reflective dialogue. Through their accessibility, they minimize the complexity of imagining for the participants, reducing barriers to the suspense of disbelief. Rather than focusing on the successfulness of an unfamiliar design artifact that requires learning and explanation, the use of archetypes lowers the barrier of entry into critique, allowing it be more easily directed at the societal implications of rethinking the status quo.

Probable Futures
futures "likely to happen"
(Dunne & Raby, 2013)

Plausible Futures
"the space of what could happen"
(Dunne & Raby, 2013)

Possible Futures
suggested futures
(Dunne & Raby, 2013)

Diegetic Prototypes
refers to the use of fictional objects, products, and technologies to build plausibility and suspend the disbelief of audiences
(Bleecker, et al., 2022)

Archetypes
"cultural artifacts, usually in some form of media so familiar as to be fixed in the collective psyche"
(Bleecker, et al., 2022)

Preferable Futures
ideal, aspirational futures
(Dunne & Raby, 2013)

By considering multiple prospective scenarios wherein debate is facilitated through consideration of diegetic prototypes, design fiction enables constituencies to reflect upon their conceptions of *preferable* futures to create pathways towards what ought to be *(see Figure 4.4)*.

CONCLUSION

In summary, strategies from discursive design, experience design, and design fiction are ideal for reconsidering present-day monument design practices because they provide a structure through which to consider the ethical responsibilities of designers as they seek to define and influence societal identity.

By combining these strategic frameworks within the context of a case study, this thesis will challenge conventional monument design practices to build the foundation for a future public commemorative landscape that is intentionally discursive.

Research & Methodology

How might we envision design futures for the public commemorative landscape?

As designers in the present seek to design new monuments for future generations, the current frameworks of monument design can be critiqued to ensure monuments remain discursive, providing opportunity for reflection.

This thesis uses prospective methods to imagine possible futures for monument design and applies discursive design frameworks to create dissonant scenarios that clarify the designer's goals, mindset, and approach (Tharp & Tharp, 2018). Conway (2016) explains in reference to Liedtka (1998) that this methodology is "intuitive, experimental and necessarily disruptive," essentially aiming to break outside the boundaries of logic for the sake of exploring the infinitely undetermined. It is a form of anticipatory design intended to generate reflection through the creation of diegetic prototypes.

Using a scenario thinking process (Conway, 2016), three possible futures have been generated using patterns described in Dominic Muren's *Survey of Design History* course at the University of Washington (2024). In this course, Muren outlines to his students that innovation in design is derived from significant cultural shifts including, but not limited to, changes in material availability, production, and governmental systems. Such innovation resulting from shifts in culture was coined by Norman & Verganti (2013) as *radical innovation* because it marked a leap in technology or meaning as opposed to the *incremental innovation* observed in human-centered design *(see Figure 5.1)*. It is a transformation in the framing through which design is approached entirely. By leveraging the patterns that spark radical shifts in design practices, the three future scenarios in this thesis are able challenge the constructs of today's experience of society. All scenarios will maintain a consistent subject matter and place to allow for comparison and discussion.

Radical Innovation
"a change in frame (i.e. 'doing what we did not do before')"
(Norman & Verganti, 2013)

Incremental Innovation
"improvements within a given frame of solutions (i.e., 'doing better what we already do')"
(Norman & Verganti, 2013)

Overall, as time advances and new shifts in meaning and identity arise, designers will be challenged to make monuments for unforeseen occurrences. Whether commemorating a climate event, a reconciliation, or new frontier, *Prospective Memories* will empower designers to create future monuments that are not only reflective of the current consensuses but are also capable of evolving with new societal contexts, thereby contributing to a more inclusive cultural heritage.

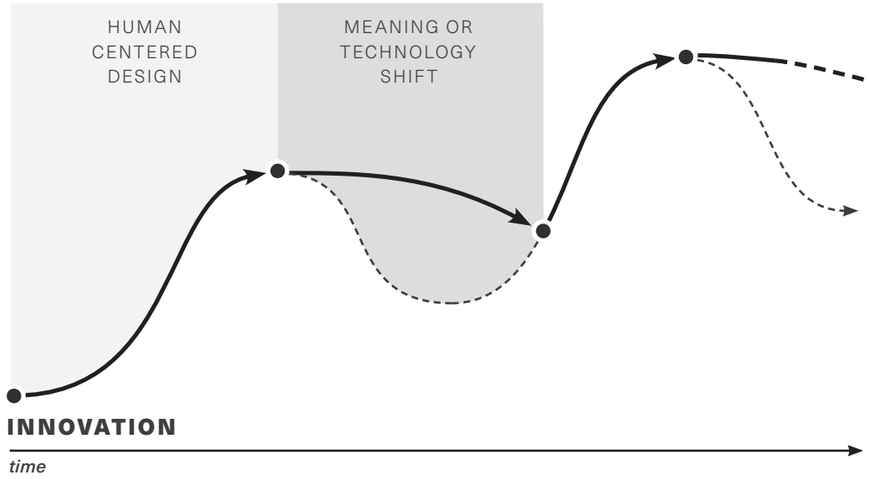


Figure 5.1
Comparison of incremental innovation versus radical innovation as defined by Norman & Verganti (2013)

How might we represent collective memory...

SCENARIO 1: PROHIBITION

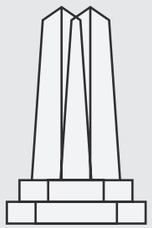
digitally if physical monuments are no longer permitted in public spaces?

This scenario considers the concept of prohibition in order to explore the importance of reification in the formation of societal identity. It envisions a future society wherein the government has banned conventional monuments due to their political nature. They are deemed detrimental to the function of public spaces as truly public entities.

SCENARIO 2: REBELLION

if monuments are no longer designed to be permanent but instead are temporary?

This scenario considers the concept of rebellion against conventional monument archetypes. It envisions a reconsideration of the formal qualities of monuments, exploring the temporal nature of the objects and challenging the assumption of their permanence based on traditional practices. In this scenario, the presence of memorials is permitted, but their enduring nature is restricted.



SCENARIO 3: EVOLUTION

if monuments serve as records of dialogue over centuries of public discourse?

This scenario considers the concept of evolution to challenge the immutability of monuments as they persist through time. It envisions a ritual of change, wherein the intention of monuments is regularly reconsidered. In this scenario, it is acknowledged that monuments represent narrow perspectives and a ritual of creating collective memory is thus used as a means to ensure the narratives present in public spaces are in reference to the modern understanding of the public's societal identity.

Define: Discursive Methodology

A roadmap for this thesis was created by reviewing models described in Dubberly (2008) and Bleeker, et al. (2022,) which then informed the modification of the user experience (UX) design process outlined in Hillman (2021). The modified UX framework provides a strong foundation for exploring future scenarios of discursive monuments due to its cyclical structure and roots in experience design. Experience and reflection were integrated into the process alongside recommended activities to specifically address the multidisciplinary nature of discursive monument design *(see Figure 5.2)*.

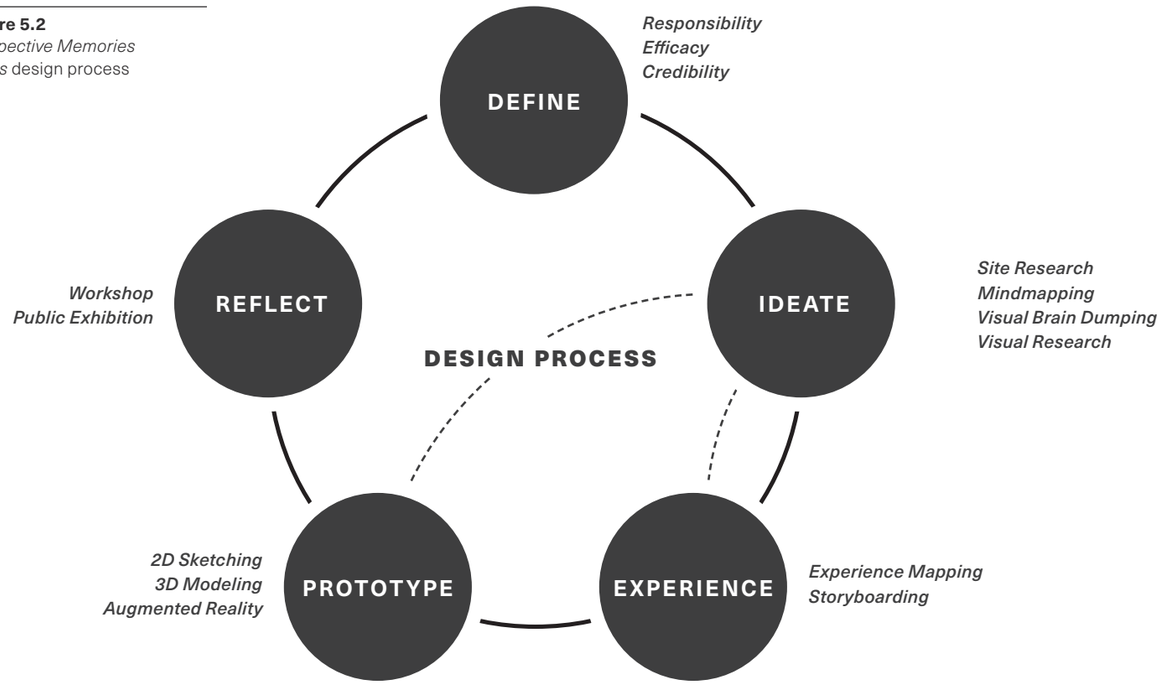


Figure 5.2
Prospective Memories thesis design process

To define a methodological framework in which to explore futures of monument design, discursive design strategies described by Tharp & Tharp (2018) were leveraged to define intentionality *(see Figure 4.2)*.

WHY

The purpose of this project was defined by describing *domain*, *mindset*, and *aim* prior to any formal exploration of the design artifact. The **domain** for this project was *social engagement*, which is an inherent characteristic of collective memory artifacts due to their purposeful communication toward universal audiences. The constituency in the define and ideation stages of the design process were limited to myself and my thesis committee. If this project were to be done as part of a real-world scenario to construct a monument rather than create diegetic prototypes, some of these exercises would have been selected as opportunities for community engagement in order to make the design process more inclusive. However, because the goal of this case study is to challenge narrative structures and formal expression by designers rather than to showcase participatory design methods, explorations were kept to individual exercises.

Mindset, unlike domain, is not inherent in the design of collective memory. It is rather, defined by a constituency's intent, varying from memory to memory. For this case study, I took on a **mindset** of *facilitation* in order to focus my project on intentionally supporting audience reflection. Again, if this were a project intended to be constructed, the mindset would have been defined through a community engagement process.

Finally, my aim for the project was determined by a desire to make the subject matter a hyperobject. *Hyperobjects*, such as climate change and artificial intelligence, can be so large in scope that people develop a perceptual bias wherein their lived experience is the norm, even when data shows otherwise. The **aim** for this case study, to *remind* audiences about climate change through the observable and measurable presence of wildfire smoke, allows for exploration of an attempt to sensitize audiences to a dramatic shift that occurs incrementally over time.

Facilitation
"support partners and assist one another, primary concern is with the discourse itself"
(Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Hyperobject
massively distributed in time and space relative to humans
(Morton, 2013)

Remind
increasing awareness to already familiar
(Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

HOW

The method for this project was determined through the mapping of narrative structures existing in current experiential design theory and presenting discursive narratives as a new alternative to challenge conventional paradigms and address cultural shifts in meaning. The approach to discursive narratives, as with all narrative structures, can vary according to the desired semantic communication and experiential journey. This thesis will utilize **prospective scenarios** to explore a range of approaches to develop and offer a methodology through which design teams can create reflective narratives.

WHAT

This thesis will focus on commemorating the increasing prevalence of **climate-change induced wildfire smoke** as an annual occurrence in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. While the Climate Vulnerability Assessment published by the City of Seattle (2023) identifies that "poor air quality days due to wild fire smoke have been increasing and will become more prevalent and intense due to climate change, [...] subsequently increasing the risk for smoke-related health-related consequences, particularly for sensitive groups such as elders, youth, low-income communities of color, outside laborers, and people without health insurance," this topic has been chosen because it is accessible to a universal audience. It is relatable to anyone who lives in or visits the city during the wildfire season as their health and experience of the outdoors is directly impacted by the simple act of breathing.

According to the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (2023), climate-related hazards are projected to worsen over the years. Events like extreme heat and wildfire smoke days, which were once "historically rare occurrences in Seattle [...] have become an annual occurrence since 2015," affecting the health and daily life of residents. The impacts of such events can often be invisible to the everyday person, as their scale over space and time can be difficult to comprehend and compare.

In 2020, for example, views of the Himalayan Mountains in the state of Punjab, India were made visible during the COVID-19 pandemic for the first time in over 30 years due to the reduction of air pollution caused by lockdown travel restrictions *(see Figure 5.3)*. To anyone under 30 living in Punjab, their perceptual bias may have taught them that the mountains were not typically visible from their homes and that they would need to travel should they want to experience a view of the Dhauladhar range. The experience of seeing the mountains challenged perceptions of "normal," eliciting a strong emotional response and reflection regarding humanity's impact on the planet (Picheta, 2020).

This example illustrates that while data is available and can serve as a record of the past, data is difficult to relate to. Direct experiences are more memorable to individuals as sensory and emotional input is activated in addition to intellectual understanding. Building in reflection through discursive narratives creates the opportunity to make the memory of hyperobjects tangible.

Figure 5.3
Social media posts depicting the Dhauladhar mountain range, which became visible due to air quality improvement (Picheta, 2020)

WHERE

To make the reality of annual, increasing levels of wildfire smoke visible, this project will be sited at **Golden Gardens city park in the Seattle neighborhood of Ballard**. Golden Gardens was selected due to its character as a destination for locals and tourists alike to take pictures, picnic, and light bonfires on the beach while they watch the sun set behind the Olympic Mountain range.

Unlike Mount Rainier, which creates its own weather and is regularly shrouded in clouds even on clear days, the visibility of the Olympic Mountains from Seattle is more consistent and reliable. On days where there is smoke pollution from wildfires, this regularly visible mountain range is not able to be seen, shrouded behind a smoky haze that becomes illuminated in orange at dusk as the golden hour light passes through the polluted air *(see Figure 5.4)*.

A sister-location for this project could be Alki Beach in West Seattle, which shares the qualities of being a destination where locals and tourists also take pictures, picnic, and light bonfires on the beach while they watch the sun set behind the Olympic Mountains.

DOMAIN

Social Engagement

MINDSET

Facilitative

AIM

Remind

NARRATIVE

Discursive

APPROACH

Narration
Analogy
Comparison

ARTIFACT

Wildfire Smoke

LOCUS

Golden Gardens

SEPTEMBER 7, 2024 **AQI 69** MODERATE

APRIL 4, 2025 **AQI 33** GOOD

Figure 5.4
Comparison of air quality index (AQI) and vista visibility at Golden Gardens

Prospect
the characteristic of a landscape that allows for visibility of potential threats (Appleton, 1975)

Mood boards
collection of visual imagery used to convey a concept

Ideate: Research-Through-Design

Before designing towards specific scenarios or determining the approach of the collective memory artifact, a series of exercises from Ellen Lupton's book *Graphic Design Thinking: beyond brainstorming* (2011) were conducted to openly explore concepts before defining solutions preemptively. This tactic enabled further definition of intentionality by documenting information that was selected to move forward in the design process and what was consciously forgotten.

OBSERVATIONAL SITE RESEARCH

As the primary location for the conceptual monument study, Golden Gardens was assessed for viability through first hand observational research *(see Figure 5.5)*. Beach-goer behavior, physical conditions, and mountain vistas were documented to determine the ideal setting for a monument. Initial documentation revealed two promising locations in Zone B, the northern end of the beach that faces west toward the mountains. This area of the beach permits beach fires and is a less active space than more southern locations, which are closer in proximity to parking, restrooms, and recreational equipment. Although still somewhat active, the quieter nature of this space also was observed to be more ideal for reflective practices. This was evidenced via the presence of individuals reading, napping, and silently enjoying the view.

The physical characteristics of both locations B1 and B2 included a sandy surface and element of *prospect*, wherein the expanse of the beach, the Puget Sound, and silhouette of the mountainscape are revealed upon a transition from a path and grove of plants. The locations were sited to be far enough from the water that they would avoid the majority of high tides, perhaps save for an exceptionally high king tide.

MINDMAPPING

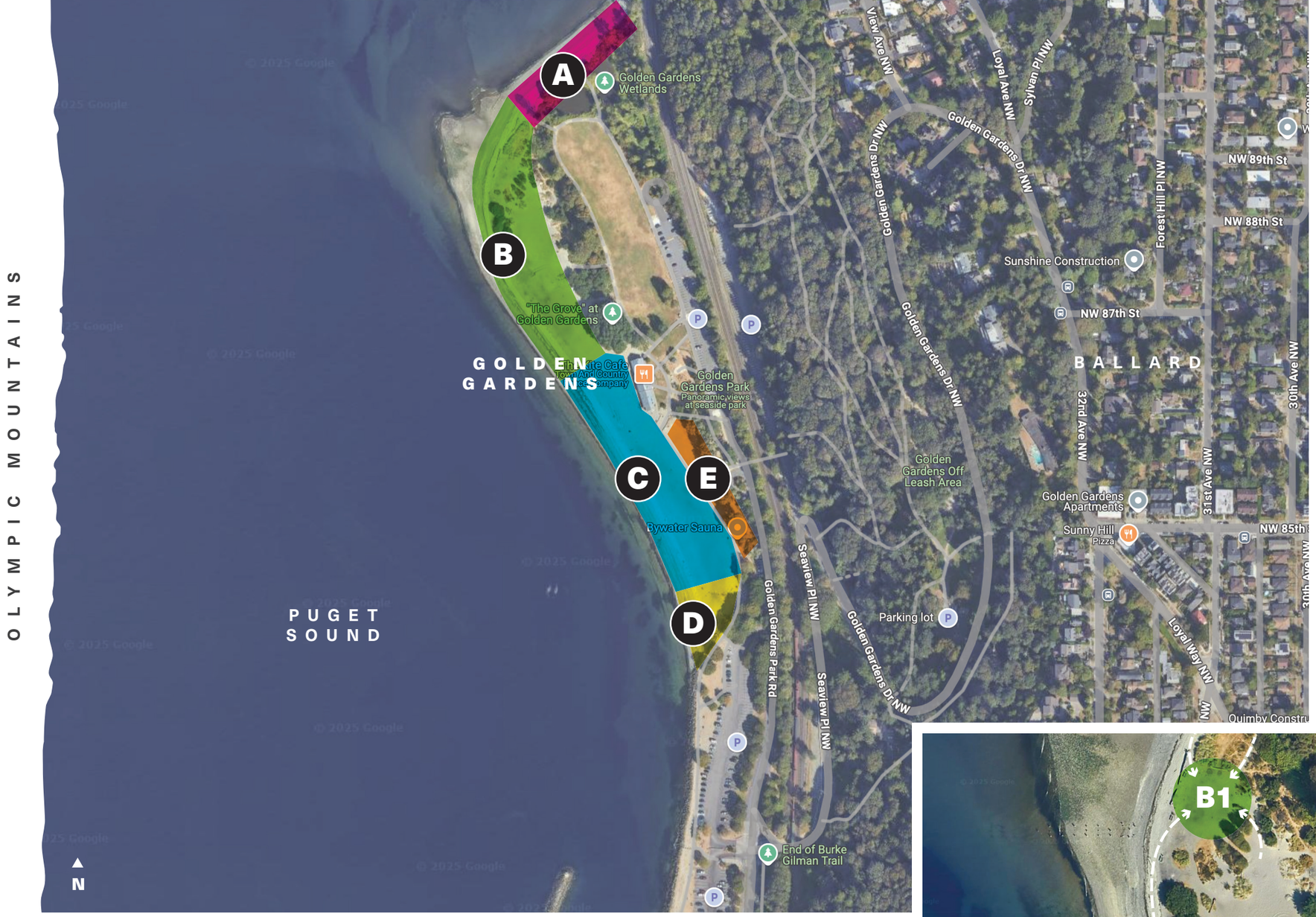
As a first step, mindmapping revealed several storytelling opportunities that could serve as potential form and content for the study *(see Figure 5.6)*. The exercise introduced topic areas that required deeper research to gain a more holistic understanding of wildfire smoke. Themes which arose from this exercise included limitations, safety, visibility, growth, and materiality.

VISUAL BRAIN DUMPING

A series of rough sketches to explore conceptual ideas were created based on themes derived from mindmapping *(see Figure 5.6)*. Just as the experiential elements of design artifacts are able to make abstract collective memories tangible, visual brain dumping began the process of reifying the storytelling opportunities related to climate-change induced wildfire smoke. Visual brain dumping became a first step toward identifying preferred design approaches, allowing a process of discovery to occur before defining a means of expression.

VISUAL RESEARCH

By collecting imagery, the present-day visual landscape that communicates "smoke" was audited to pull inspiration from across disciplines. Lupton (2011) describes this practice as gleaning insights from "everything and everywhere" to challenge the tropes of one's own area of expertise *(see Figure 5.7–9)*. These images acted as data that were then reorganized into *mood boards* to offer three distinct visual expressions for the semantic and experiential communication of wildfire smoke.



A WETLANDS BEACH
BEACH FIRES PERMITTED
Quieter, less active zone
Primarily couples, smaller groups
People reading, relaxing, walking

B NORTH BEACH
BEACH FIRES PERMITTED
Quieter, less active zone
Primarily couples, smaller groups
People reading, relaxing, walking

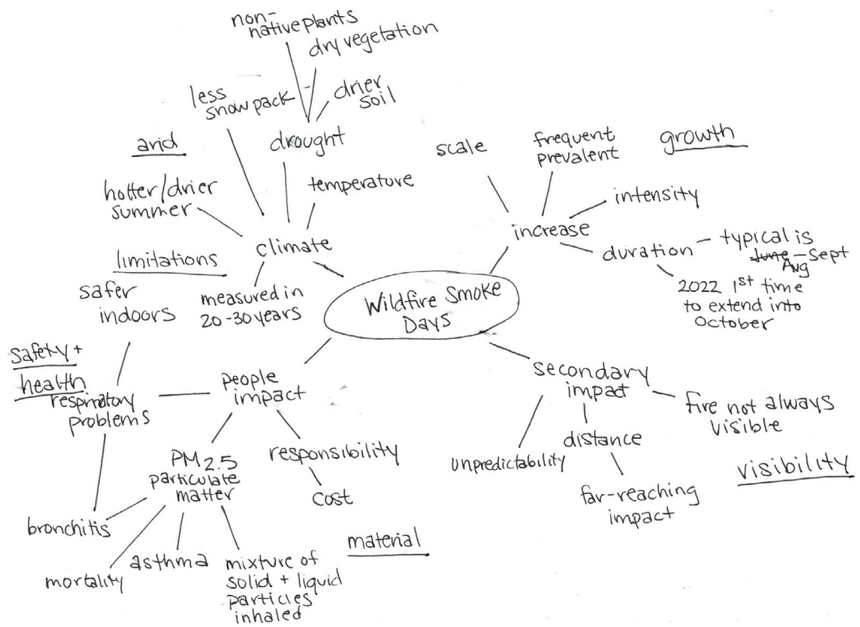
C MAIN BEACH
BEACH FIRES BANNED
Noisy, active zone
Primarily families, larger groups
People socializing, playing volleyball, digging in sand, and swimming

D MOUTH OF STREAM
BEACH FIRES BANNED
Noisy, active zone
Primarily families, children playing, digging in sand, and building dams

E PICNIC GROVE
BEACH FIRES BANNED
GRILLS PERMITTED
Noisy, active zone
Primarily families, children playing, larger gatherings for celebrations

Figure 5.5
Observational site research at Golden Gardens city park

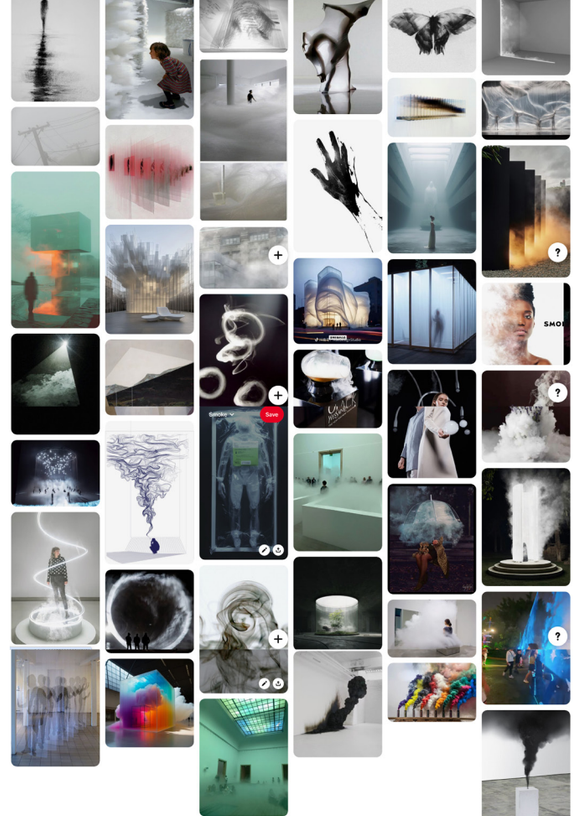
Figure 5.6
Mind mapping, visual brain dumping. and preliminary visual research

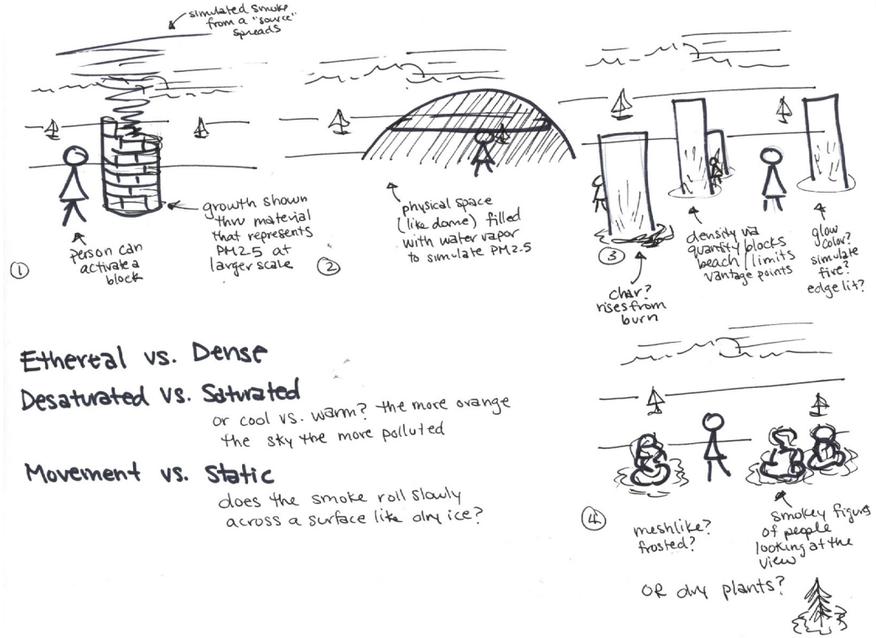


Design concepts will rely on an optimistic view of the future vs. a pessimistic view.

Optimistic: smoke is added to remember the risks created by climate change – the future is climate stable

pessimistic: there is a need to remember a healthy planet to aspire toward a climate stable future





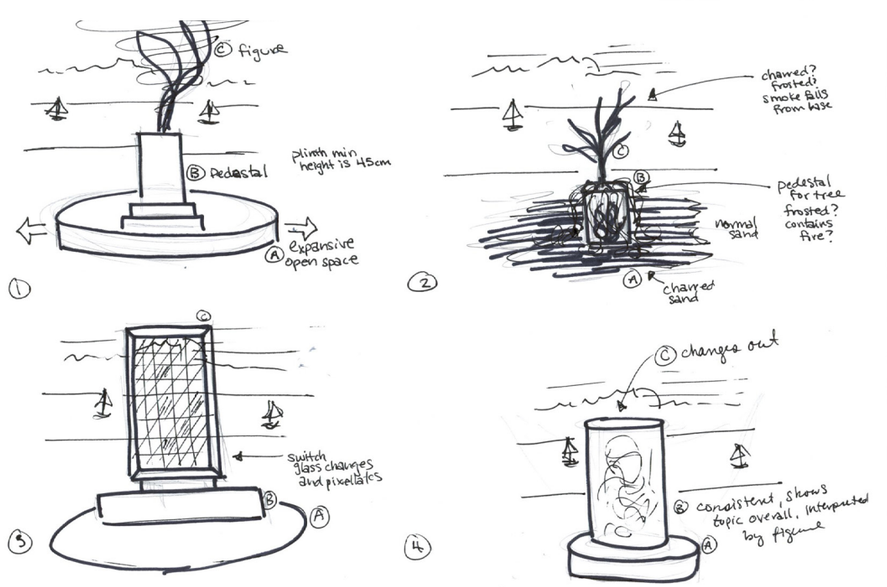
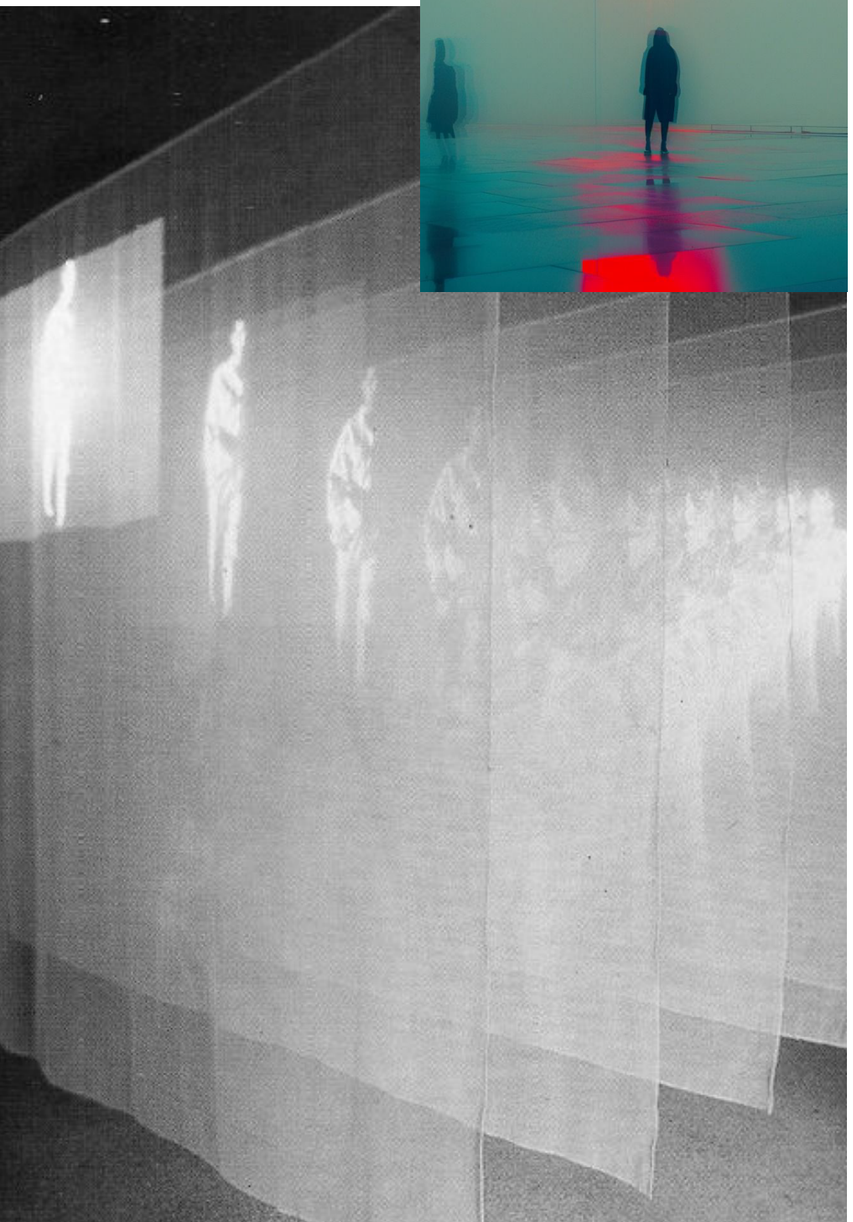


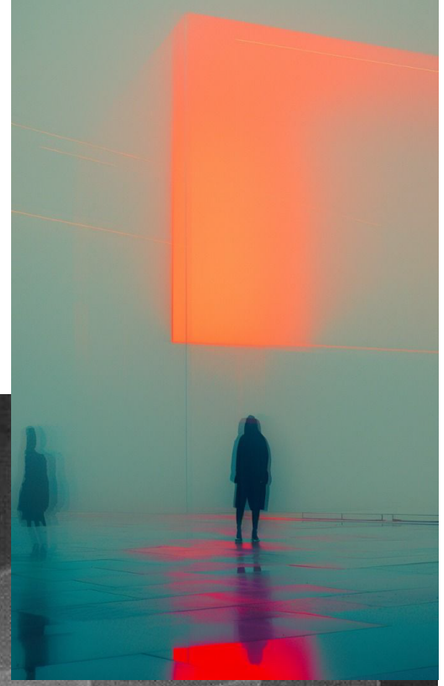
Figure 5.7
Scenario 1 mood board

Figure 5.8
Scenario 2 mood board

B U R N

Figure 5.9
Scenario 3 mood board





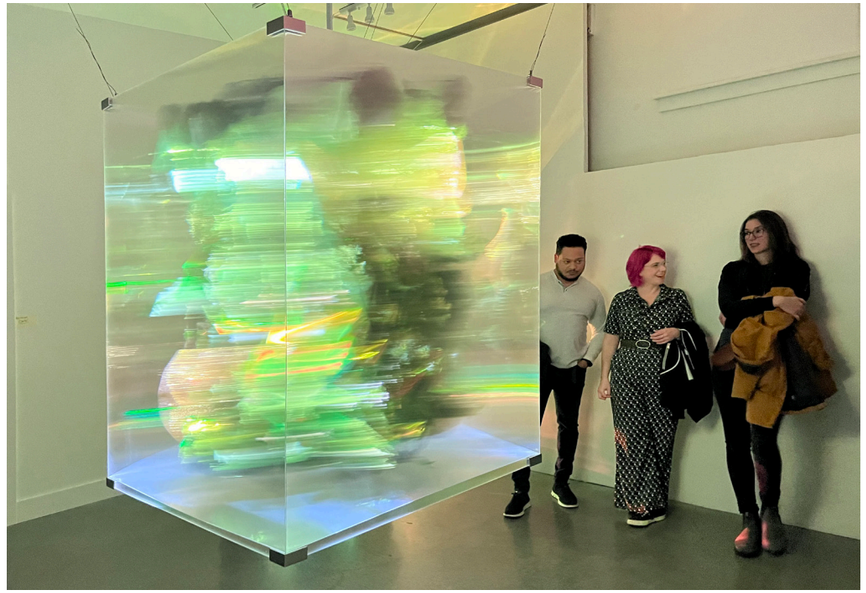
E N V E L O P

VISUAL RESEARCH

In addition to collecting imagery related to the semantic qualities of smoke, I attended two exhibitions in Seattle wherein the artists took on the challenge of representing climate change. This visual research acted as a survey of present-day interpretations of the climate as a hyperobject.

The first was an installation called *Specimens of Time: Burn* by Maja Petrić displayed at The Vestibule gallery *(see Figure 5.10)*. Petrić used real-time temperature data from NOAA to show the disparity between today's ocean temperatures and those of the past. The primary sculpture on display abstracted natural debris and projected light to simulate the sensorial experience of the Olympic Peninsula to create an emotional connection to the climate data.

Figure 5.10
Specimens of Time: Burn
by Maja Petrić



The second exhibition, *Where Water Becomes Sky*, featured the work of Tori Karpenko at the Traver Gallery *(see Figure 5.11)*. During the artist talk, Karpenko discussed the creation of *Invitation*, which was sculpted from a western red cedar and washed with acrylic paint as a memorial to the forest. Karpenko explained that the delicacy of the piece was a reflection of the fragile times in which we live, but is also infused with hope. Karpenko's point of view maintains the hope that humanity will not succumb to despair. He states, "I saw the emotional parallel between loss in nature and the loss that I've personally experienced," and intentionally made the sculpture a presentation of the hope that "life will generate new chapters for me" just as it would for the forest. The sculpture offers the viewer an aspirational perspective that encourages one to be in better balance with nature in order to participate in regeneration.

Figure 5.11
Invitation
by Tori Karpenko

Experience: Immersive Journey

Eventness
a psychological, physical, or ontological experience or moment that has the quality of change; a time and place of change (Burickson, 2023)

Discursive design, user experience (UX), and extended reality (XR) practices all leverage tools to outline experience in order to frame audience immersion (Hillmann, 2021; Marsh, 2022; Sontag, 2023; Tharp & Tharp, 2018). These tools clarify interactive narratives, emotional mapping, and guide designers in structuring *eventness*.

EXPERIENCE MAPPING

Experience maps from discursive design and UX design practices were overlaid to analyze conceptual directions from the ideate phase *(see Figure 5.13)*. The discursive design map is audience-focused, emphasizing the moment of discovering through the audiences' ability to understand discourse and reflect. The 5E experience map, on the other hand, focuses more on elements the design artifact needs to facilitate engagement. While this diagrammatic strategy is more commonly utilized in the context of designing products that are intended to generate returning customers and expand a loyal customer-base, the benefits of this experience map for this thesis lie in its attention to interaction prior to engagement with the design artifact. It, therefore, permits a more concrete definition of the ecosystem in which the design artifact exists. By combining both experience maps, this thesis attempts to build a more holistic outline of the touchpoints with which universal audiences would engage.

An undulating line representative of an emotional journey was also loosely drawn to articulate perception of experience. This line is intended to remind designers that audiences bring their own memories, emotions, and points of view into experiences that are not predictable. Designers might strategically nudge audience members emotionally, but perception will always vary based on their own lived experiences.

The combined experience maps revealed an opportunity to explore dynamic media, as suggested by the Monument Lab (2021). This thesis, therefore, utilizes augmented reality (AR) to visualize all three scenarios. AR allowed for exploration of the notion that an ideal public space would not be owned by any one constituency, as suggested by Young (Li, Dang, & Song, 2022). The physical space, identified with a neutral landmark, instead became an interface to engage with multiplicity. The landmark acted as a portal, intended mark an area of importance and to transition audiences from a purely physical spatial environment to one of extended reality. An additional visual research exercise explored the form language of the portal with a focus on balancing both contrast and integration within the natural landscape of Golden Gardens *(see Figure 5.14)*.

Inspiration for interaction with the portal was taken from a sculpture by Tommy Gregory (2017) entitled *iSculpture* for a public art project in downtown Houston. In this piece, Gregory used the archetype of a pedestal adorned with a small, etched plate with the word "sculpture" to create an interface for participants to transform into the figure of a monument. The installation was intended to reclaim historical narratives from Jim Crow era sculptures, which dominate the public commemorative landscape in the South. By standing upon a plinth of galvanized steel, participants symbolically become the representation of collective memory *(see Figure 5.12)*.



Figure 5.12
iSculpture
by Tommy Gregory
Houston, Texas 2017

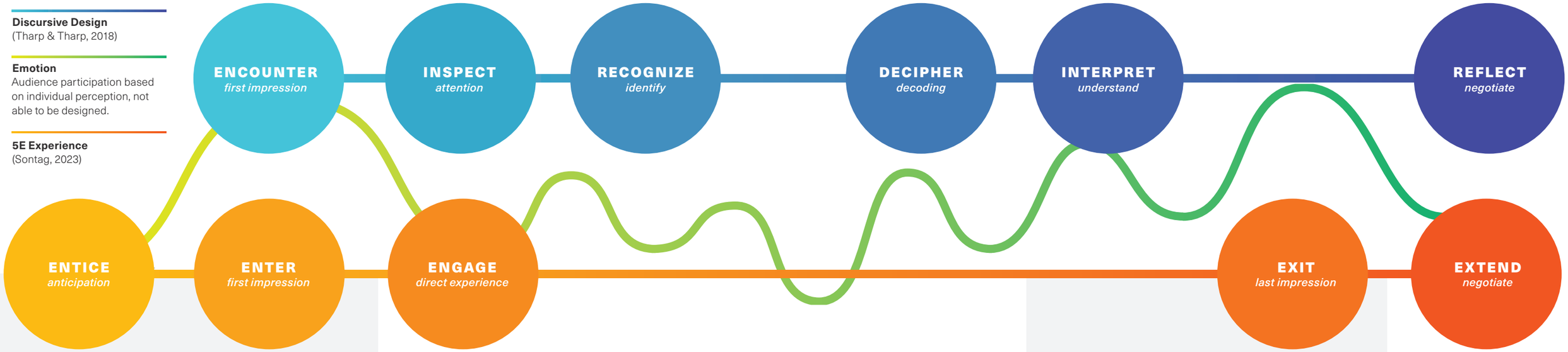
STORYBOARDING

Similar to visual brain dumping, this exercise translates verbally defined design concepts into tangible, physical solutions *(see Figure 5.15)*. Storyboarding begins to bring an element of reality to ideas, enabling critique of viability and reflection on the efficacy of ideas. For this thesis, each scenario concept was developed into a storyboard and paired with a mood board to illustrate that a range of viable discursive solutions could inhabit this locus, again reinforcing the political nature of monuments.

Discursive Design
(Tharp & Tharp, 2018)

Emotion
Audience participation based on individual perception, not able to be designed.

5E Experience
(Sontag, 2023)



ALL

NOTIFICATION
A notification appears on the audience's mobile device, whether it be a modern day smart phone or future wearable technology, to inform of location-based augmented reality (AR) capabilities.

The intent of this notification is to build awareness and create anticipation for encountering AR experiences throughout the public realm.

ALL

PORTAL
Physical artifact functions as portal to indicate a transitional space from the physical spatial environment to an AR enhanced environment.

The audience is given the choice as to whether or not they would like to view the AR experience.

SCENARIO 1
PROHIBITION

EXTENDED REALITY
A **crowd of ethereal individuals** appear on the beach, all gazing towards the horizon.

PROMPT
The audience is prompted to **approach and greet** the figures either verbally or in sign language.

NARRATION
The individuals **verbally respond, explaining** that they are affected by the presence of smoke. The audience is able to ask them questions about their lives.

SCENARIO 2
REBELLION

EXTENDED REALITY
The audience encounters a **digital figure** atop the physical pedestal.

PROMPT
The audience is prompted to **read or listen**.

ANALOGY
The audience is able to attain **contextual information** about the monument figure.

SCENARIO 3
EVOLUTION

EXTENDED REALITY
The audience surrounded with a **navigational ring** that represents a timeline. It moves with the audience as they walk.

PROMPT
The audience is prompted to **activate the timeline** by selecting a year.

COMPARISON
As the audience changes the date, they are able to **compare and contrast** the visibility of the Olympic Mountain range in front of them.

ALL

MEANINGFULNESS
As the audience engages, they can optionally pull up more contextual information about wildfire smoke, climate change, and design intent.

ALL

RETURN TO PHYSICAL
The audience can deactivate their AR experience at any point, returning to a purely physical environment.

SCENARIO 1
PROHIBITION

ANTI-MONUMENT
The audience can **contribute their own story** to enter a public review process and be represented as an ethereal figure with whom people can engage in the AR experience.

SCENARIO 2
REBELLION

TEMPORARY
The audience can **contribute their own interpretation of the subject matter** to enter a public review process and be displayed upon the pedestal.

SCENARIO 3
EVOLUTION

LAYERED DIALOGUE
Data will be collected each year to continue to **build an experiential archive** of the impacts of climate change.

Figure 5.13
Experience mapping

Figure 5.14

Left: Visual brain dumping to inspire portal design

Right: GenAI 3D rendering of portal concept made using a web-based platform, Dzine. Visualization, created in Adobe Illustrator, of augmented reality experience through AR glasses.

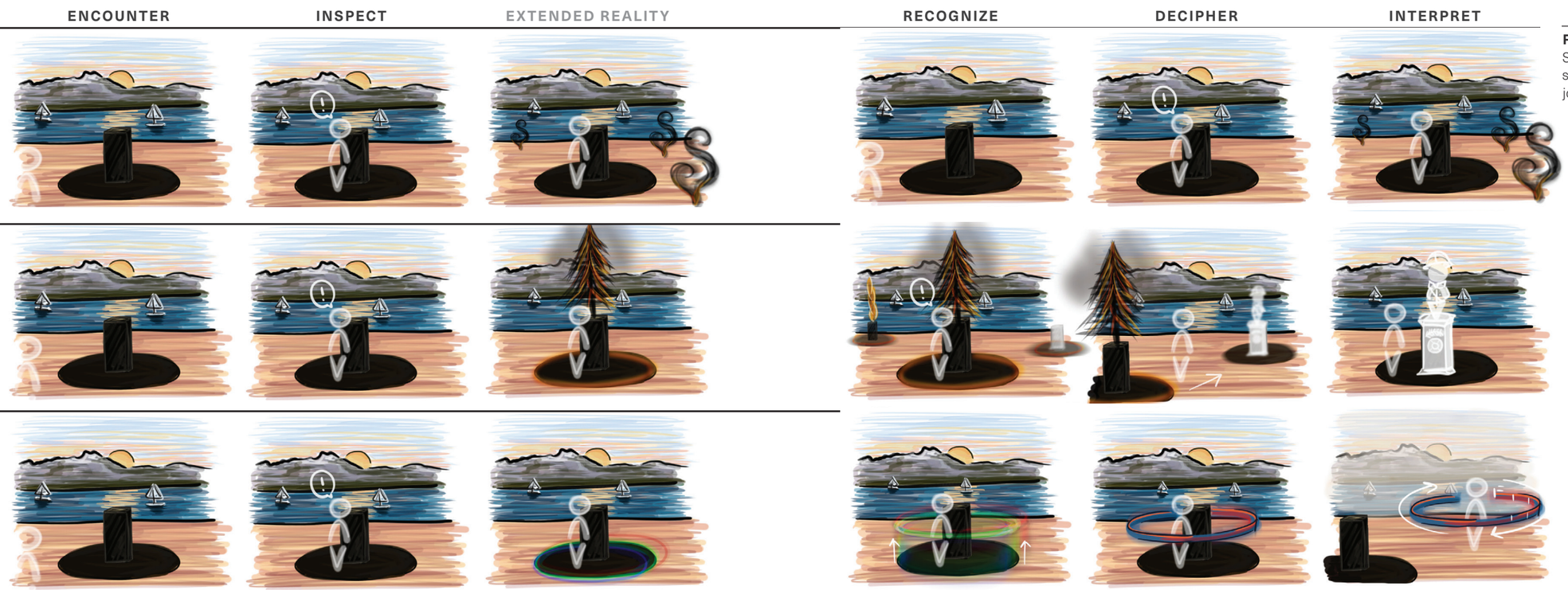


Figure 5.15

Storyboarding for each scenario described in the journey map

Prototype: Concept Development

A designer's role is to undergo the process of reification to transform the conceptual into the tangible. In transforming an idea into a reality, design has the ability to encode the abstract notion of societal identity into artifacts that can be shared with and understood by others.

2D SKETCHING

The physical portal, which would exist in tangible reality, was studied in two-dimensions to quickly determine the appropriateness of its scale and its semantic qualities (*see Figure 5.16)*. The intent of this design was to indicate that digital monument experience would be accessible from that location. The formal studies revealed:

High contrast form and color would make the artifact visibly stand out from the surrounding natural environment

A plinth or pedestal can allude to monument-ness without directly referencing neoclassical bases, fluting, or other symbolism

A shorter artifact would encourage audiences to engage in closer proximity versus observing the object from a distance and gazing upward

Simpler geometric forms carry fewer semantic qualities, allowing the artifact to be more neutral and act as a gateway to host a rich, informative digital experience

A narrow foundation could cause minimal environmental impact

A change in natural surface material could be used to designate a larger area in which the AR activation would initiate

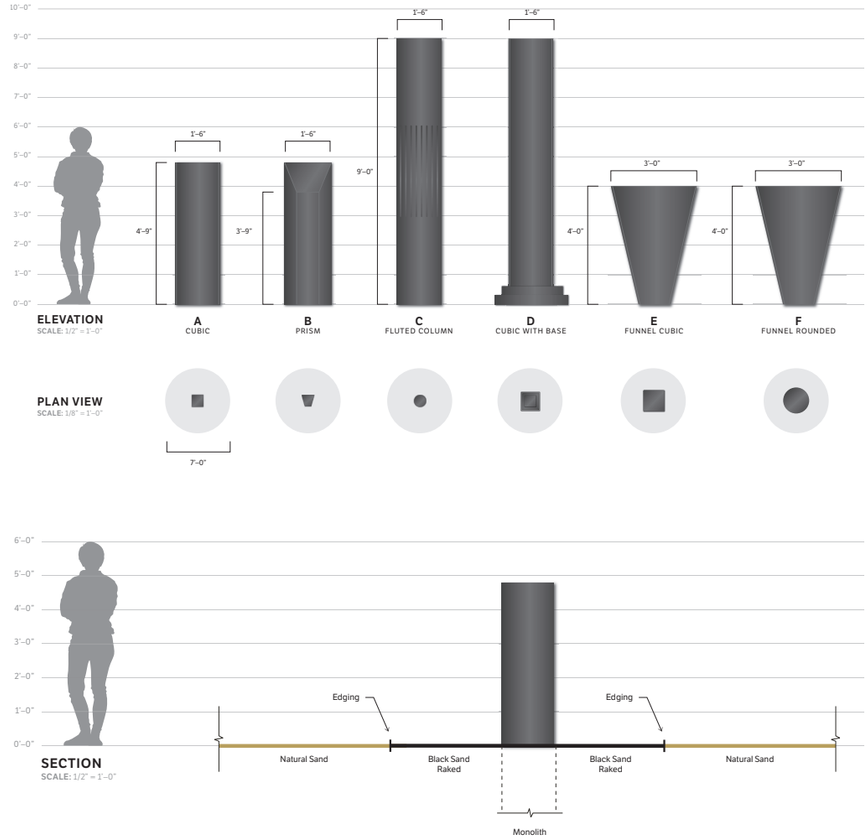


Figure 5.16

Top: To scale sketches of plan and elevation views were created to quickly explore proportion, engagement, and semantic characteristics.

Bottom: Section view shows the impact of the artifact with the natural environment.

3D MODELING

The two-dimensional studies were translated into 3D models to verify assumptions about scale and create an AR experience. First, the three scenarios were illustrated in Sketch Up to show proof of concept (*see Figure 5.18)*. The exercise resulted in a need for clarity around the forms in Scenario 2, as they needed to be distinct from one another to represent clearly different narrative structures (*see Figure 5.17)*.

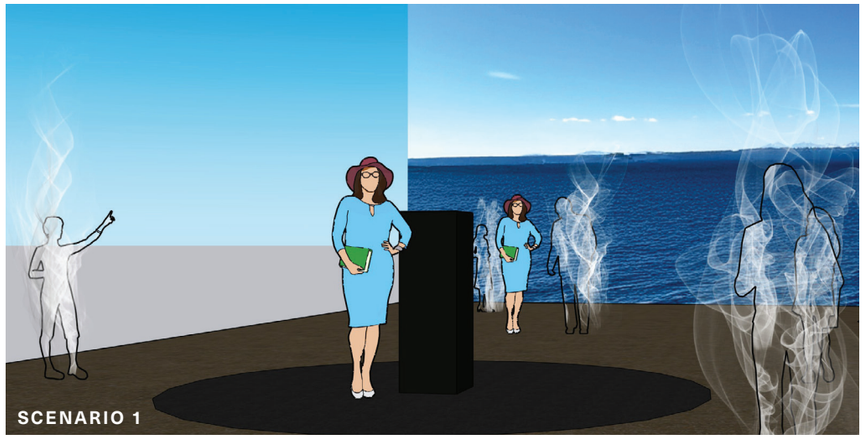
Figure 5.17

Scenario 2
Visual research to clarify narrative frameworks for Scenario 2 monuments, which are most akin to conventional form languages

CRITICAL
Eternal flame burning a charred tree intended to preserve the damage of fires as a warning

TRADITIONAL
Neoclassical, marble with sculpture firefighter intended to honor heroism

DIDACTIC
Flame-like, frosted geometric form intended to warn about the danger of smoke



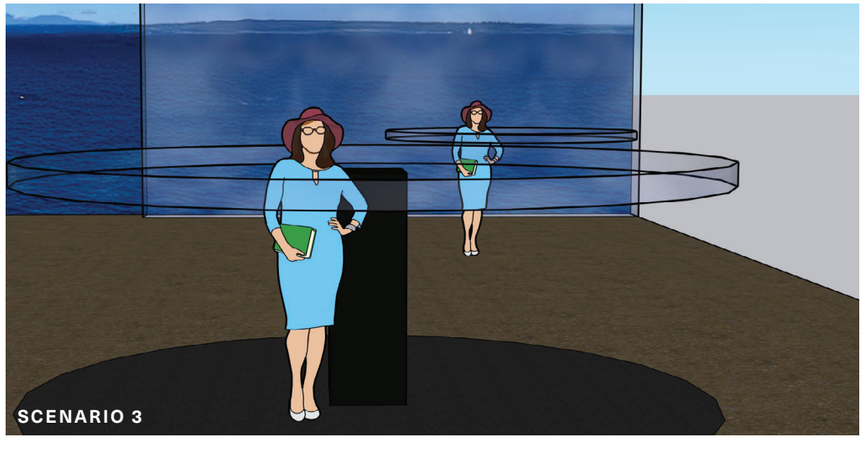


Figure 5.18
Proof of concept mock ups in Sketch Up for each scenario

Once initial studies were completed, I partnered with Seattle-based architectural designer Alyssa Parsons to professionally render concepts in Rhino and export imagery through Enscape. We used online collaboration tools to finalize the design, determine camera views, and appropriately prepare the model to be exported for an augmented reality experience (*see Figure 5.19 and 5.20)*. The ideal scenario would use AR glasses (*see Figure 5.21)*, however, this study uses smart phones to make the gallery experience technologically accessible for the present day.

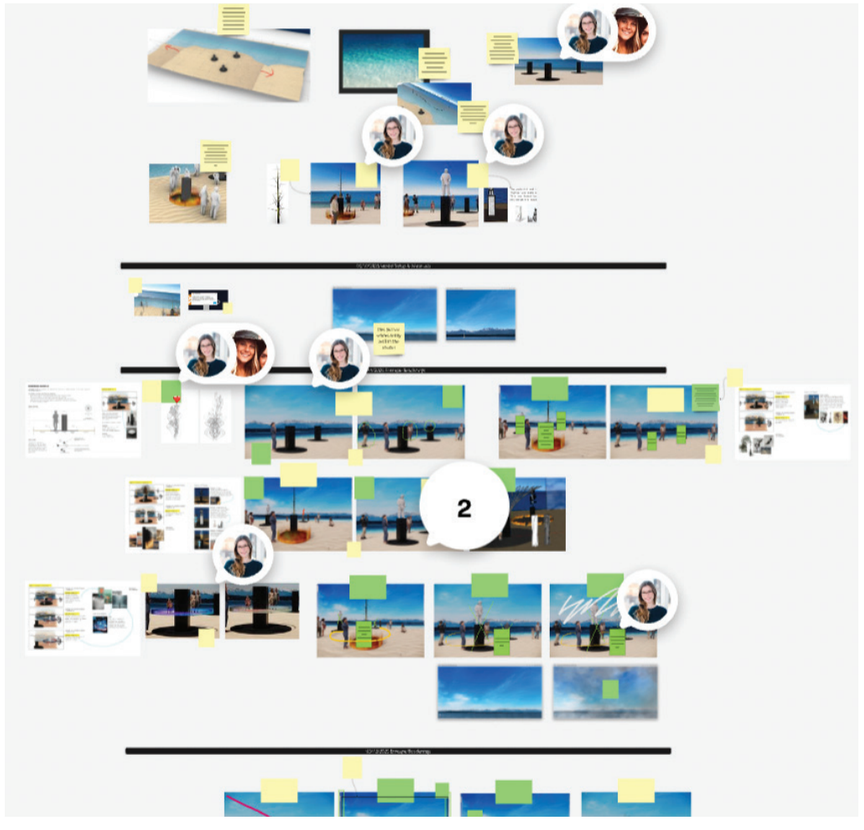


Figure 5.19
Miro board showing remote collaboration with Alyssa Parsons to create realistic renderings of each scenario.

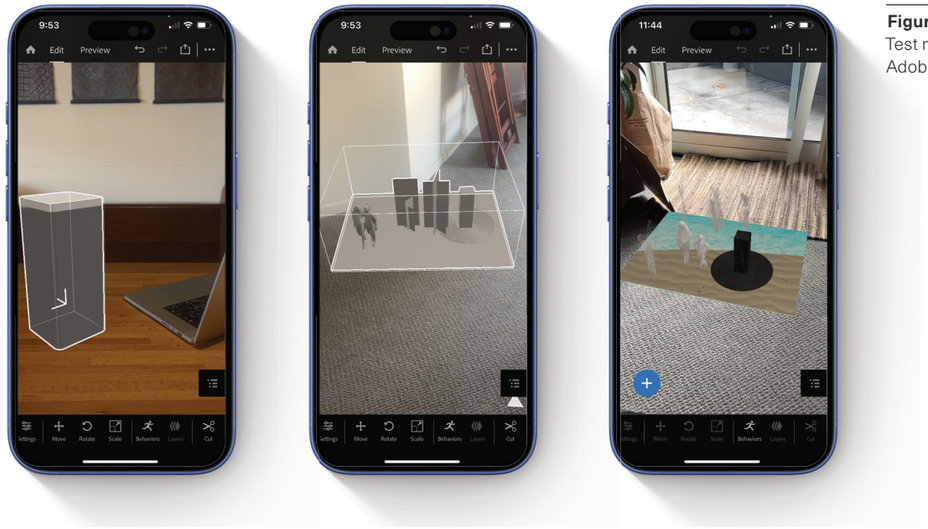


Figure 5.20
Test models exported for Adobe Aero from Rhino

Figure 5.21
AR Glasses on the market by XREAL
(XREAL, 2025)

A monument portal invites audiences into an extended reality experience.

SCENARIO 1
PROHIBITION

Enenra

WHAT

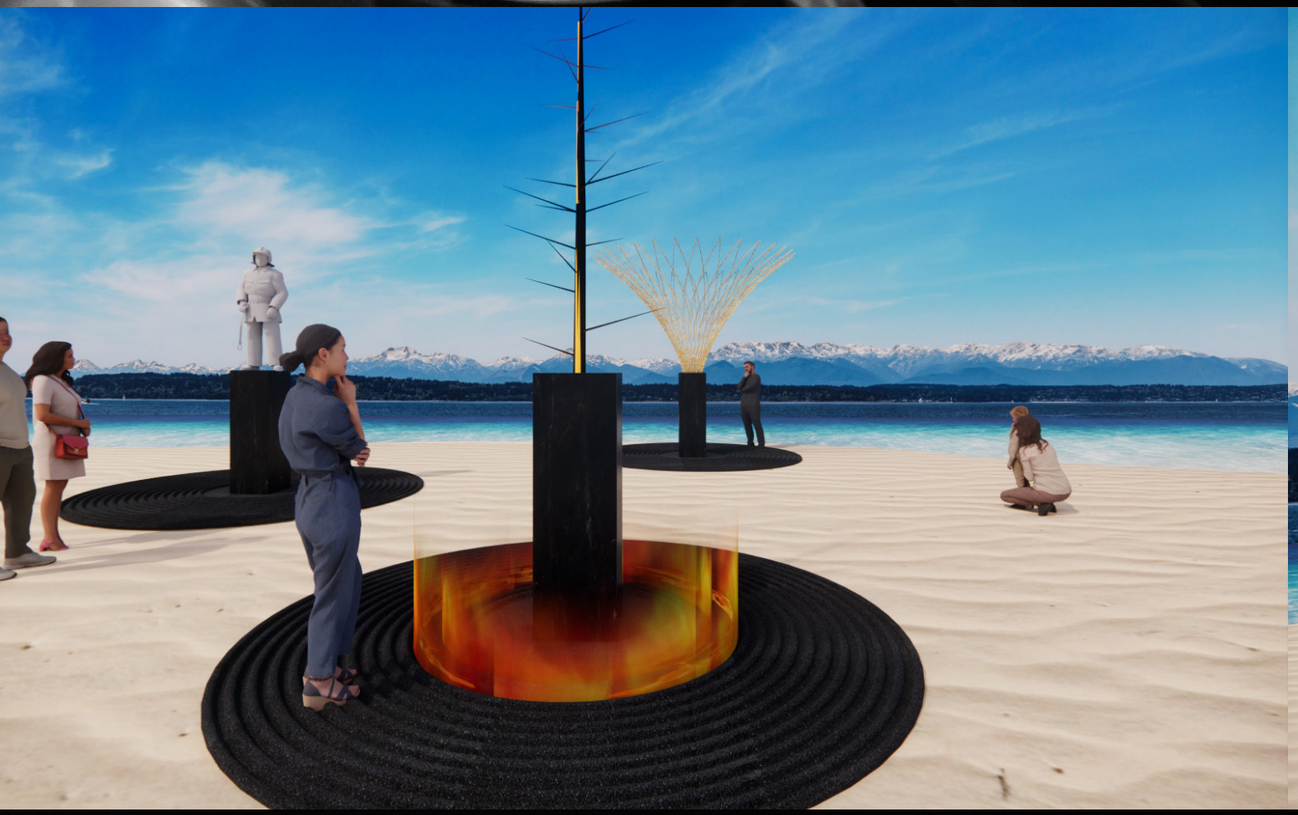
Individuals from the past and present who have experienced the effects of climate-change induced wildfire smoke have preserved their memories into enenra which, in Japanese tradition, are spirits of the dead who manifest as wisps of smoke. The enenra of Golden Gardens are situated on the beach to discuss their experiences with individuals of the present and future.

HOW

The stories and experiences of individuals are collected within a generative AI large language model (LLM) to generate bespoke ChatBots for each person that use their own voice. Their memories are accessible through enenra, which are able to engage in discussion with audiences, responding to dialogue as if they were present.

SCENARIO 2
REBELLION

Archetype



WHAT

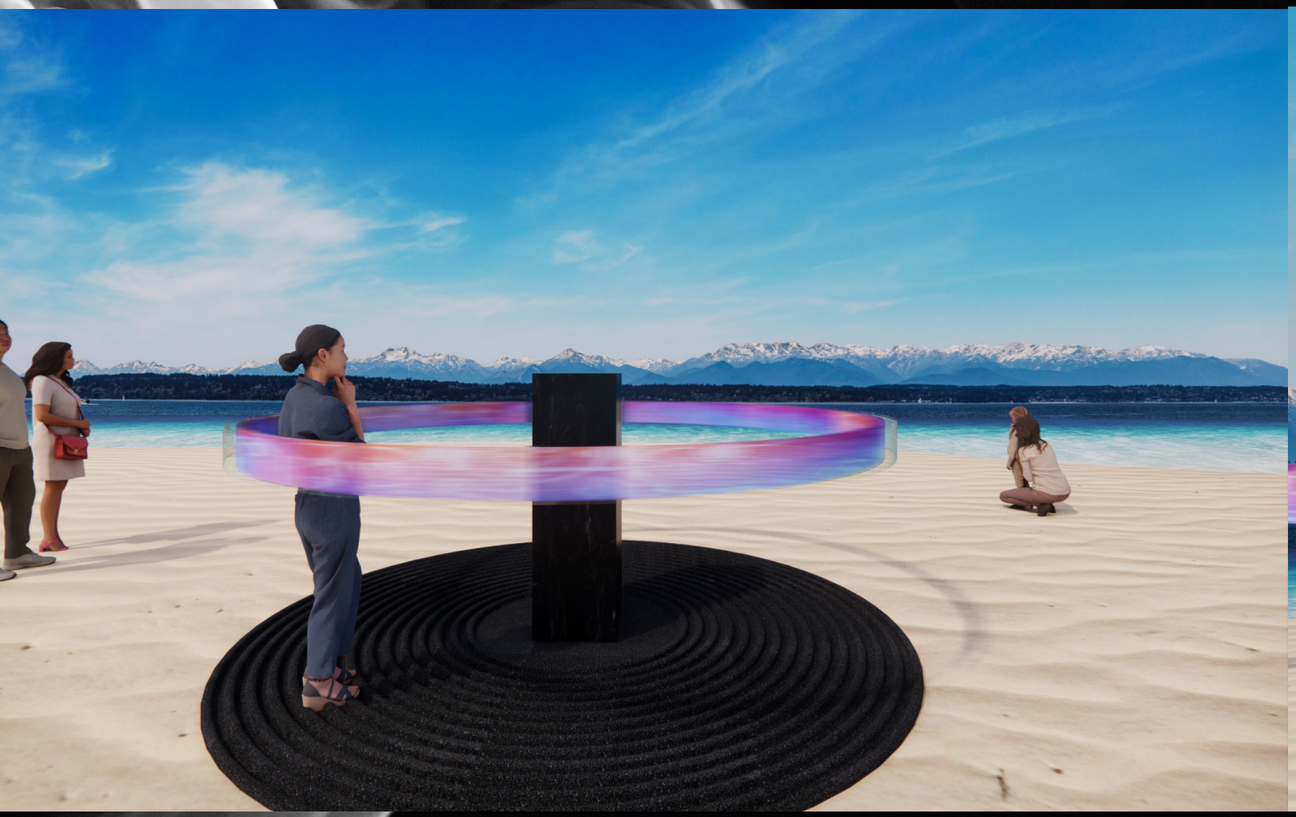
Constituencies from the past and present contribute digital, 3D rendered memorials to climate-change induced wildfire smoke intended to be displayed temporarily through an extended reality experience at Golden Gardens. The digital monuments at Golden Gardens are situated together on the beach to showcase the multiplicity of experiences with the subject matter and prevent singular ownership of the space and narrative.

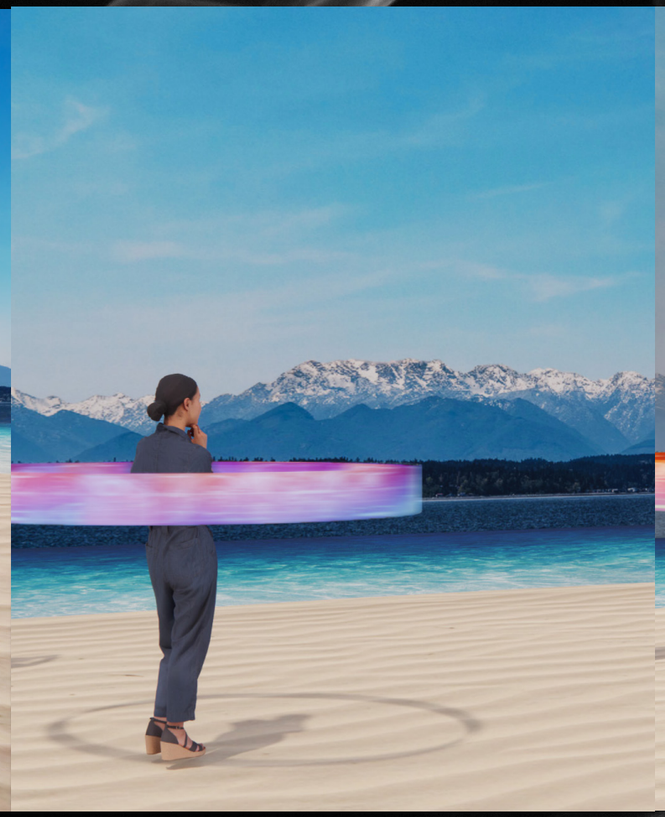
HOW

Monuments are restricted to following conventional archetypes, where a figure sits atop a pedestal. The pedestal is standardized to communicate a shared overarching theme between each of the figures, however, the figures atop the pedestals are customizable to represent the collective memories of the contributing constituencies.

SCENARIO 3
EVOLUTION

Time Travel





WHAT

A timeline of climate-change induced wildfire smoke data from Golden Gardens appears as an interactive ring around the individual. The data acts as a monument to the experience and impact of wildfire smoke by simulating the visibility of the mountains from year to year.

HOW

The timeline accompanies the individual as they meander down the beach, softly transitioning between each year. The visibility of the Olympic Mountains improves in years of good air quality and becomes obscured in years where wildfire smoke increased. The individual can also choose which year to experience should they seek to compare air quality data to enable reflection. If individuals directly experienced smoke at Golden Gardens, they can contribute images to the timeline.

Reflect: Discourse

Discursive design and design fiction underscore reflection as critical to the design process. In both methodologies, the purpose of design is to instigate debate and critique. To facilitate reflection amongst designers in this thesis, a workshop was held with Studio Matthews, a Seattle-based, woman-owned design firm that specializes in experiential design (*see Figure 5.22).*

WORKSHOP

Eight participants from Studio Matthews reflected upon the conventions of monument design in a workshop. The workshop was designed to establish an understanding of the participants' preconceptions of the definition of *monument*, introduce alternative future scenarios, and discuss the potential of the presented futures.

To establish the definition of monument, participants were first asked to provide a verbal description of what they perceived a monument to be. Answers included descriptions of large, permanent objects in prominent locations. Participants were then given five minutes to draw a monument. This was done to create visuals that made their verbal descriptions into artifacts that could be critiqued and discussed. These were set aside for a conversation scheduled at the end of the workshop.

Participants were then asked to transport themselves into a future where augmented reality experiences were part of everyday life and integrated into glasses. In this future, they were asked to consider one of three diegetic prototypes that represented a different approach to discursive monument design. Participants were divided into small groups to discuss the prototypes and fill out a guided reflection, which asked them to critique the imagined experience of the prototypes.

Figure 5.22
Workshop participants engage in discussion about the purpose and design of monuments

REFLECTION

See pages 14, 35, and 45 for personal reflection opportunities.

Once discussion was completed, participants shared back their critique of the scenarios (*see Figure 5.23).* Notably, the participants focused on a discussion about the political nature of the diegetic prototypes. They agreed that the use of augmented reality for all of the scenarios led to a suspicion around the credibility of the monuments. In an era of fake news, alternative facts, and inconsistent data, the use of a digital medium caused the solutions to be perceived as less trustworthy than conventional, physical media. The malleability and ephemerality of the content meant that it could be susceptible to being manipulated over time.

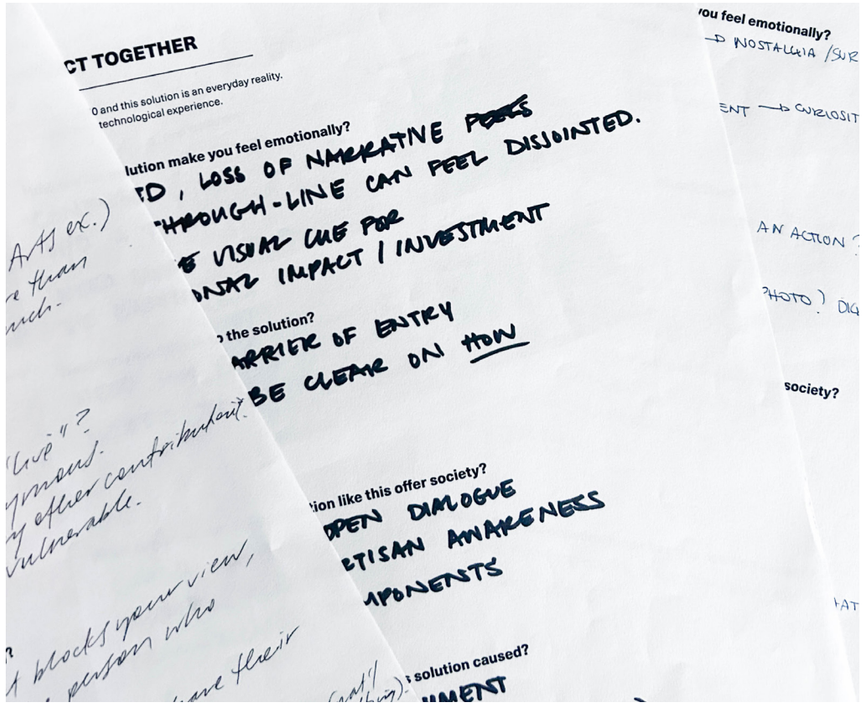


Figure 5.23
Guided reflection responses

GUIDED REFLECTION

How did the solution make you feel **emotionally**?
Would you **contribute** to the solution?
What **opportunities** does a solution like this offer society?
What unintended **consequences** has this solution caused?

SCENARIO 1
PROHIBITION

EMOTION
Hearing voices seems powerful, but seeing figures might be too much . They introduce an **element of risk.**

CONTRIBUTION
More likely to add own story if **anonymous**. At the moment, this feels very vulnerable.

OPPORTUNITY
Allows many people to share their stories in one place. Could also introduce a haze of smoke as a person talks about their experience.

CONSEQUENCES
Experience might be a**larming or distressing.** Am I seeing ghosts? Could be perceived as **political** and not trusted as honest, authentic accounts.

SCENARIO 2
REBELLION

EMOTION
Confused by multiple narratives. What is the connection? Need more visual cues for emotional impact.

CONTRIBUTION
Needs to be clear on how with a **low barrier of entry.**

OPPORTUNITY
Could create an **open dialogue,** increase bipartisan awareness, and include educational components

CONSEQUENCES
Becomes a **monument to the discourse** instead of the story. Is that the point?

SCENARIO 3
EVOLUTION

EMOTION
Pending on the smoke situation in the future, the emotional experience could be **nostalgic** for a past that once was or **instill curiosity** about a potential for smoke.

CONTRIBUTION
If a prompt were provided, like **sharing a photo** or other **digital memory.** A suggestion of action would be needed.

OPPORTUNITY
Allows for a space to **reflect** on the topic, provides an **immersive experience**, evokes a quality of **time travel.**

CONSEQUENCES
Potentially **difficult to separate reality from AR.** What is manufactured and what is real? Can you opt in?

Finally, participants were asked to draw another monument, returning to the first exercise with their new considerations about monuments in mind. The results were shared by each participant in the form of a Before & After presentation, where they described their original perceptions and how these evolved throughout the course of the workshop (*see Figure 5.24 and 5.25)*.

When comparing their original concepts on Sheet A to their new concepts on Sheet B, participants remained consistent in their use of physical design artifacts rather than digital. Scale, however, began to vary as participants explored opportunities for audience interaction in their new concepts. The majority of the original concepts were singular, observable objects that were grand in scale. After discussions about discourse, the new concepts introduced an element of interactivity wherein participants could contribute information. Solutions therefore became either more expansive as they became more spatial in character or more intimate in scale as they invited audiences to contribute directly.

Figure 5.24
Participants sharing their sketches in a Before & After presentation

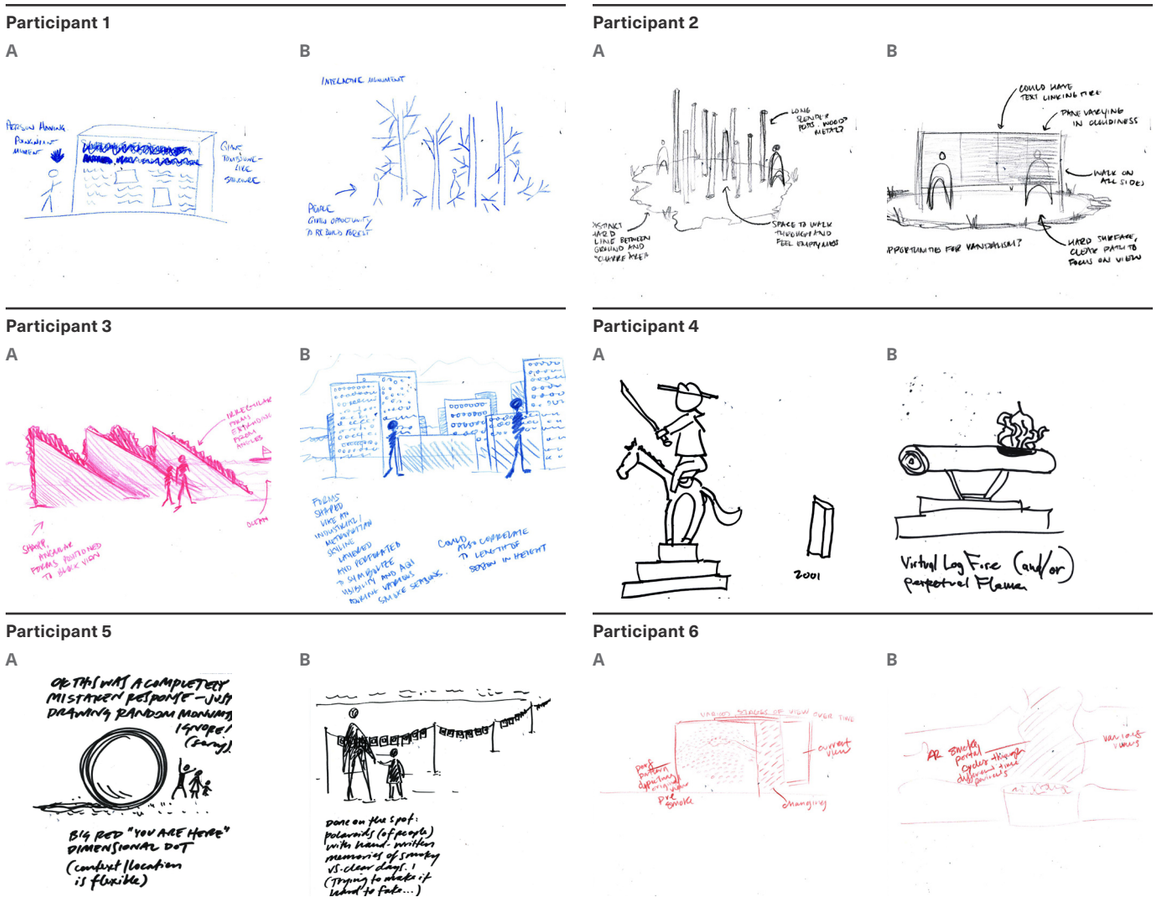


Figure 5.25
Draw a monument
Before & After exercise

Overall, the workshop with Studio Matthews yielded a conversation that permitted designers a moment to pause and reflect upon their current practices. It challenged participants to rethink their assumptions about the public commemorative landscape through the use of diegetic prototypes. Consistency over time became a topic of debate, and the dialogue around this subject brought into review the enduring nature of monuments. The portal represented in the diegetic prototypes, which was proposed as a neutral form to access complex stories, introduced an element of confusion to participants. Participants sought a more overt semantic cue that would help them understand the type of content that could be accessed before engaging with the extended reality experience, similar to how a book cover alludes to the contents. Furthermore, because the narratives represented by the monuments existed only in digital spaces, the presented scenarios were less trusted as relational objects for such a political subject as collective memory.

Yet, as evidenced by their Before & After presentations, participants did find value in the opportunity for physical, semantic monuments to become enhanced through audience participation and digital contextualization. Audience participation was perceived as a means of fostering an individual's direct relationship with a greater societal identity. The second concept sketches of monuments by the workshop participants became more akin to public art than conventional monument approaches. Digital extended realities were recognized as expansive spaces that could permit multiplicity and deeper relational understanding over space and time. By grounding narratives in both physical and digital spaces, more holistic storytelling could be achieved.

EXHIBITION

The prospective scenarios were presented as part of the *2025 University of Washington MFA + MDes Thesis Exhibition* at the Henry Art Gallery. The exhibition was designed to engage visitors in discourse, prompting them to reflect upon the three scenarios explored in the thesis (*see Figure 5.26 and 5.27)*. Upon entry, visitors were immersed into an environment evocative of Golden Gardens (*see Figure 5.28)*. Directed audio from the beach could be heard subtly in the background as visitors approached a sand-covered floor with a portal. Each scenario was introduced by a prompt and corresponding QR code, which allowed visitors to access as AR experience of the vista and each concept.

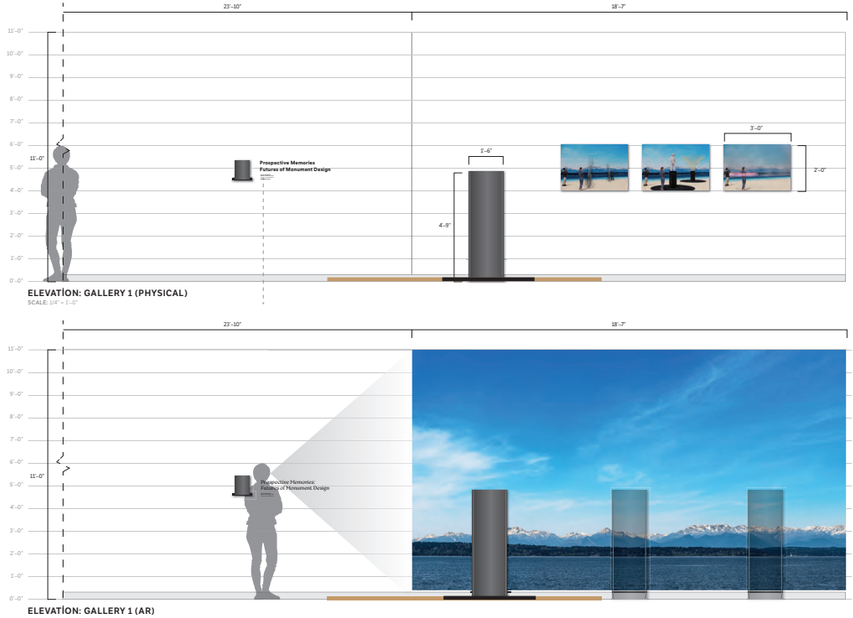


Figure 5.26
Henry Art Gallery exhibition elevations and planning

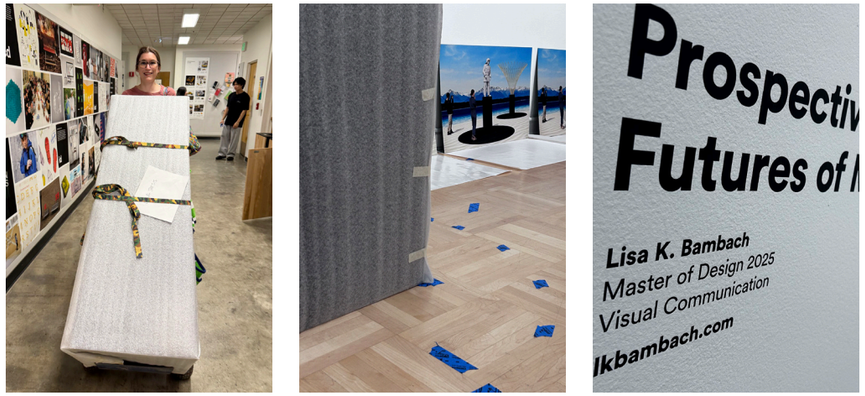


Figure 5.27
Exhibition installation

Pedestal provided by
Rainier Industries, Inc.

Figure 5.28
Prospective Memories
at the Henry Art Gallery

Conclusion

Designers of collective memory have an ethical responsibility toward the future to design with intentionality and enable reflection.

Prospective Memories: Futures of Monument Design advocates for a shift in conventional approaches to monument design, challenging the notion that public monuments must remain static in the face of evolving societal identities. Historically, the public commemorative landscape has functioned to reinforce dominant cultural and political ideologies, which has restricted the representation of collective memory to limited perspectives. As engineers of value and significance, designers have the power to create monuments that instead function as active participants within cultural and political dialogues. *Discursive monuments* are proposed as a new framework to prompt the creation of memory artifacts that embrace multiplicity and embody the evolving nature of collective identity. This approach leverages psychological frameworks for significance, public art practices, and discursive design methodologies to define intention and facilitate reflection both by the designer and audiences.

To critique the strengths and weaknesses of discursive monuments as a future narrative framework, a research-through-design process explored three prospective scenarios. The design process:

Revealed the challenges designers face when negotiating balance between closed and open meaning,

Reinforced the importance of participation through the course of reification, and

Emphasized the opportunities and pitfalls that extended reality experiences present for enhancing contextualization and audience engagement.

Pitfalls were especially evident when monuments existed only in the digital realm, namely, when I explored the idea that public spaces might be made apolitical by moving the semantic qualities of collective memory artifacts to more flexible, digital spaces. Critique of each prospective scenario in the reflective workshop revealed that when content is hidden in digital spaces, identity is not able to be passively related to in our everyday lives. Instead, identity becomes part of a separate reality—a simulation of sorts— no longer able to visibly be touched, dismantled, or constructed. The expression of societal identity becomes a digital sandcastle, able to be washed away with the click of a button, line of code, or AI hallucination. While the process of reifying a memory for a digital space can inspire discourse and reflection, when these design artifacts perpetuate forward through time, their malleability makes them less reliable. Purely digital discursive monuments unable to provide the consistency required for relational contextualization and identity formation.

Physical monuments, in contrast, maintain their consistency because of their tangible nature. They were, therefore, perceived by workshop participants as more substantive. Not only are physical artifacts able to be sensorially felt as part of daily reality, they are able to be experienced without the barrier of technical assistance. While conventional monuments are not discursive themselves, they instigate debate over the representation of identity because of their permanence. Stone and metal cannot be quietly hacked or subversively manipulated without notice. Their unchangeability allows the public to engage in the visible performance of the design process—to build, revise, and dismantle constructs of societal identity.

Workshop reflection also revealed the importance of curated audience engagement when transforming monuments into active agents. When using physical and digital spaces to create discursive monuments, the bridge between the environments must be seamless and prompts for audience participation made clear. Although workshop participants found pitfalls with digital experiences, they suggested that by utilizing extended reality as a contextualization tool similar to interpretive signage, a deeper relational understanding could be fostered, facilitating critical engagement with history and memory.

By embracing discursive monument frameworks, designers can evolve the public commemorative landscape into a space that actively fosters critique and reflection through layered experiences. This new framework transforms monuments into nonhuman designers—active participants in the negotiation of value and significance. Discursive monuments not only memorialize collective memories, but they embody the critique of societal identity.

Monuments of the future will make the negotiation of collective memory and identity visible.

Appendix

Exploratory Studies

The following studies were conducted prior to defining the research direction of this thesis. They explored themes related to collective memory and monuments.

1. MONUMENT ARCHETYPES

Inspired by *A Pattern Language*, which categorizes architectural elements in what Pollan (1997) describes as a systematic field guide that catalogs "all the forms in architecture's vocabulary as if they were parts of nature and he were an obsessed naturalist," *Monument Archetypes* uses Generative AI to unravel the pattern language of monument design in present day culture. Generative AI imaging technology approximates image data through the identification of patterns (Dhaduk, 2023). It generates the average of what presently exists in the world. By prompting the model to generate forms in images of public spaces, we gain an approximation of what figure-ground patterns are assumed to belong in public space in relationship to monuments. Original images of monuments were taken by the author in 2024. Images generated in this study are based on Adobe Firefly's data set of stock images, openly licensed content, and content in the public domain (Adobe, n.d.).

Figure-Ground
a perceptual "phenomenon that occurs when an object appears to be visually conspicuous (figure) while the others appear secondary (ground)" (Puhalla, 2011)

1A Subtraction

The GenAI model was used to remove monuments from public spaces to provoke questions around meaning *(see Figure 6.1)*. The questions being investigated by this series included:

Do these spaces have an identity without the presence of their monuments?

Are monuments even required to express collective memory?

Architectural theory argues that the white space surrounding monuments is where culture occurs (Iacobucci, 2024), however when markers of collective identity are removed, the significance of the spaces are diminished because it shifts the audience relationship. Those who are directly experiencing the space have the ability to generate meaningfulness, but the lack of quasimomento means there is no bridge between general or universal audiences.

1B Figure Pattern

The figure, or intentionally designed markers of meaningfulness, are replaced with GenAI *(see Figure 6.2)*. By approximating patterns, the model suggests forms to fill the void atop hillsides and pedestals. The pattern language that emerges includes the juxtaposition of natural and man-made, religious iconography, utilitarian fixtures, and forms upon pedestals.

The results of the study ask:

Is the intent of the object itself important at all?

Do the monuments still function without a relationship to the space or its sociocultural significance apparent?

Additionally, 1B Figure Pattern depicts how the public interacts with monuments on a day-to-day basis. Tharp & Tharp (2018) explain that when intentionality is critically examined, "the creator's intentions, biography, and the context of production do not matter; just the object itself is the locus for meaning and evaluation. Concern centers upon individual understanding and interpretation of design, with little regard for the intention of the designer." In other words, monuments may exist in our periphery without the audience having full knowledge of its purpose or intent because of their indirect relationship with the quasimomento. Through purposeful effort, we may come to know the *why* of it existing or the *what* it intends to communicate, but the object itself is not engaging us in the conversation.

1B Ground Pattern

The GenAI model is asked to invent the world around the monument, exploring the ground, or contextual settings, in which monuments are placed *(see Figure 6.3)*.

The results of the study ask:

How do audiences, who occupy the ground, engage with the figure?

How does a change in the ground affect the significance of the figure?

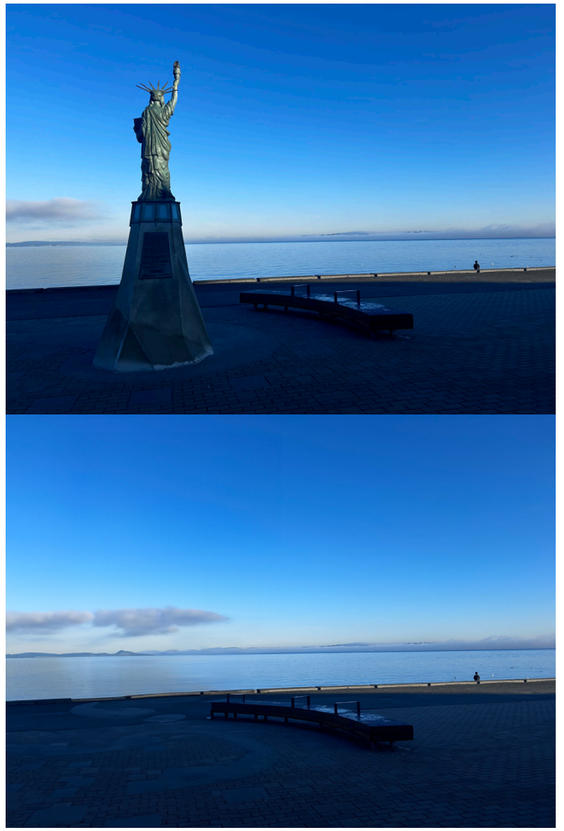
Where I had assumed it would create idyllic cityscapes and places where people engaged with one another, the model instead generated landscapes devoid of people with an element of ruin. Monuments were frequently set against the sky, elevated to a space wherein they could be viewed but remain isolated from the reach of the audience. The pattern language of isolation also appeared in the form of spatial hierarchy. Monuments stood alone as a singular form, dominating the white space created by either the natural landscape or man-made plazas.

Summary

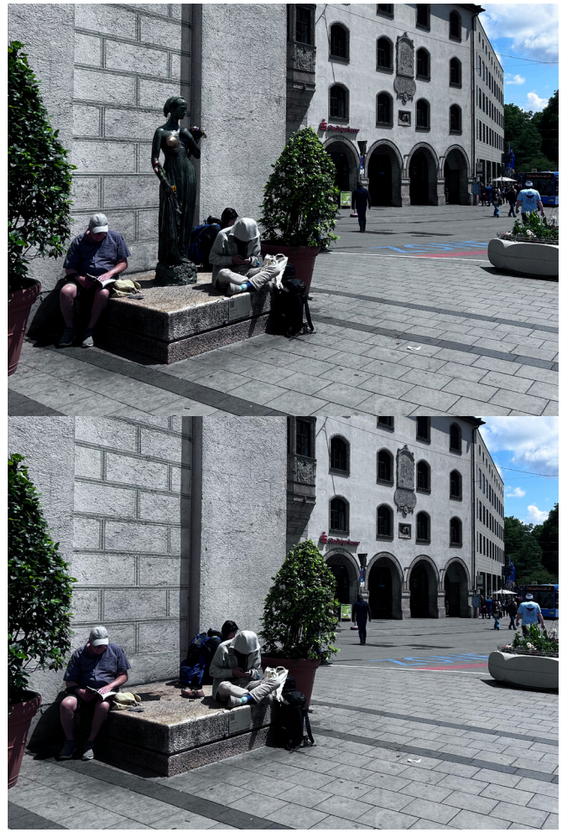
The pattern languages revealed by GenAI reveal the forces and that have caused them to come into being. Monuments often exist in our periphery without full knowledge of their purpose or intent. They make statements, but do not actively engage us in question or conversation. Simply the presence of a monument in a space, despite its intended meaning, can create significance because they are purposefully placed to dominate the landscape. Monuments are functionally landmarks when meaning becomes obscured. As landmarks, monuments give purpose, value, and meaning to space. Monuments generate identity for spaces, transforming them into places.

Square for the Victims of National Socialism
Munich, Germany

Soviet War Memorial
Berlin, Germany



Statue of Liberty at Alki Beach
Seattle, Washington USA



Juliet Capulet
Munich, Germany

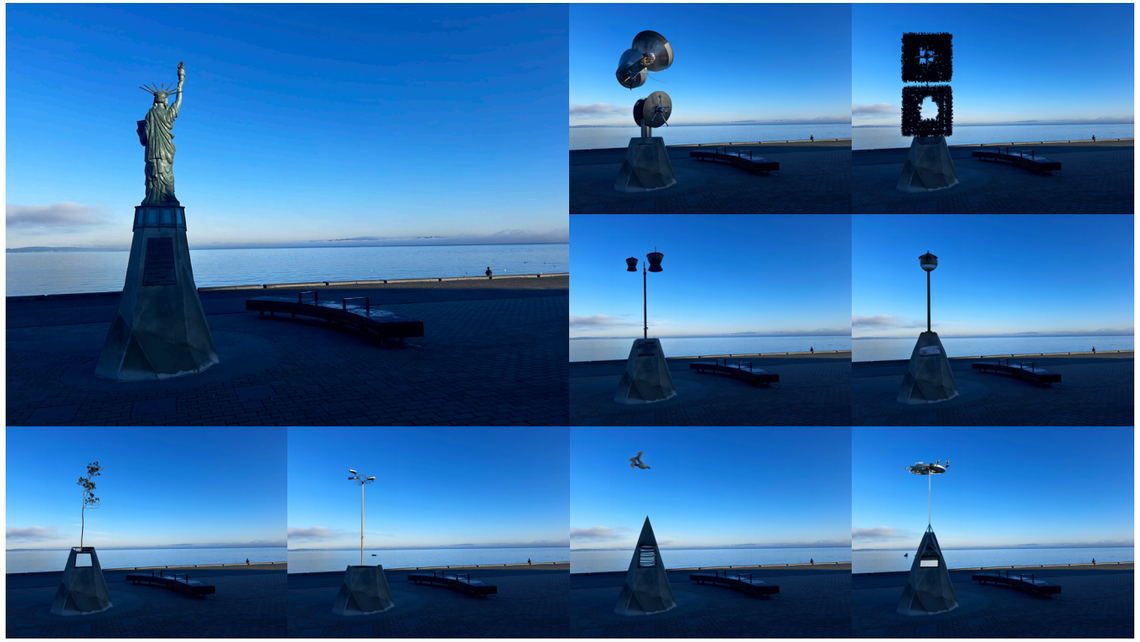
Figure 6.1

1a Subtraction
Present-day monuments are removed from public settings

Soviet War Memorial
Berlin, Germany

President George Washington Monument
Seattle, Washington USA

Ludwig I King of Bayern
Munich, Germany



Statue of Liberty at Alki Beach
Seattle, Washington USA

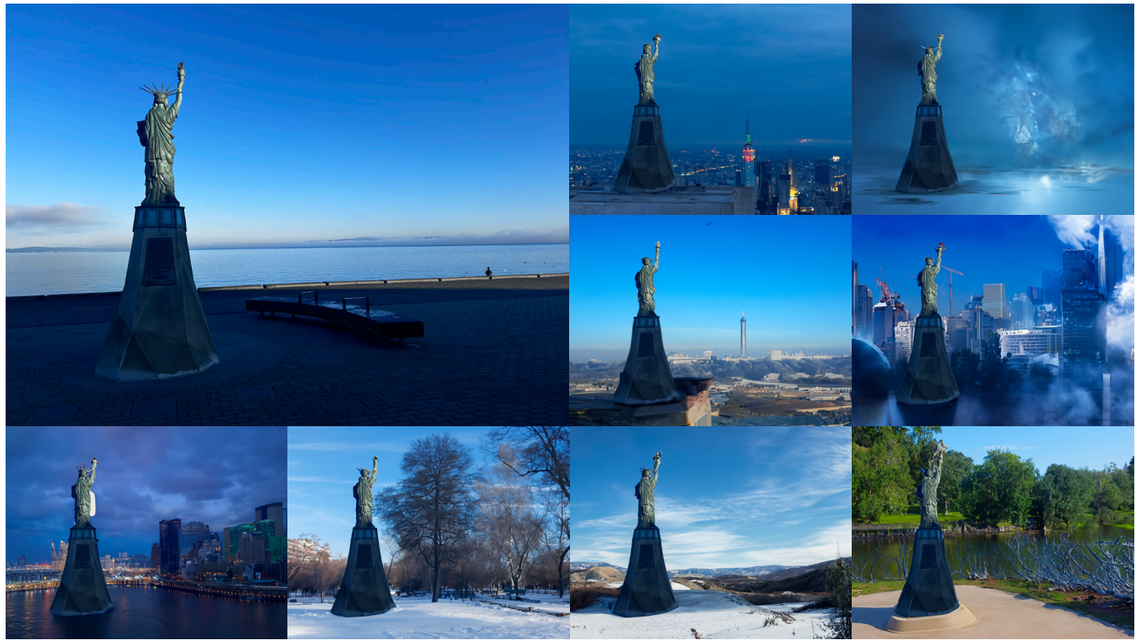
Figure 6.2

1b Figure Pattern
Figures are generated with AI

Soviet War Memorial
Berlin, Germany

President George Washington Monument
Seattle, Washington USA

Ludwig I King of Bayern
Munich, Germany



Statue of Liberty at Alki Beach
Seattle, Washington USA

Figure 6.3

1c Ground Pattern
Scenes are generated with AI

2. CONTEXTUALIZING OBJECTS USING DISCURSIVE METHODS

The Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle, Washington sits along Elliot Bay. It is free to the public and open every day. According to the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), who manages the park, however, there is an existing challenge in visitors' ability to understand the artwork and sometimes to even identify it as part of the park.

To study how artist intent is communicated for audience interpretation, I joined Kristine Matthews' *Design 467: Exhibition Design* class at the University of Washington for a field trip and a design sprint that focused on enriching the visitor experience. "Your challenge for this short project," the project brief stated, "is to brainstorm how a design solution could help one feature of the park become more visible, better understood, and better appreciated."

I selected *Father and Son*, a work by the American artist Louise Bourgeois, as the focus for my design sprint *(see Figure 6.4)*. The SAM website described the piece by outlining the kinetic qualities of the sculpture and its meaning. It read, "As the fountain's water rises and falls, first the father, then the son, are engulfed in water and separated. Bourgeois' representation of father and son portrays a vulnerable and poignant situation, as the two face each other with arms outstretched, striving to overcome a seemingly insurmountable divide."

Following a discursive design approach (Tharp and Tharp 2018), I first set out to define the **domain** in which I am to work. For this project, *social engagement* was prioritized, as the problem space outlined in the project had to do with interpretation.

Second, I sought to understand the **mindsets** and **aims** of both Bourgeois and myself as the designer of an intervention. Through secondary research, I discovered that Bourgeois' work was primarily influenced by surrealism (Seattle Art Museum, 2024). She was quoted on a plaque adjacent to the sculpture as saying, "My childhood has never lost its magic, it has never lost its mystery, and it has never lost its drama..." Additionally,

Figure 6.4
Father and Son
Olympic Sculpture Park
Seattle, Washington USA

Figure 6.5
Father and Son sculpture has a kinetic quality, wherein the height of the water changes at the hour at the toll of the bell

she states, “My work grows from the duel between the isolated individual and the shared awareness of the group. I began to develop an interest in the relationship between two figures. The figures... are turned in on themselves, but they try to be together even through they may not succeed in reaching each other...” From these quotes and understanding of the artist’s previous work, I deduced that the artist approached this piece with a *suggestive* **mindset**. Bourgeois’s work intentionally told a story, but allowed for the viewer to discover this in their interaction with the sculpture. It appeared that her **aim** was to *inform* the viewer by sharing her understanding of relationships to offer the consideration of a new perspective.

As for myself, my **mindset** was to *facilitate* discourse. Whether it be one’s first interaction with the sculpture or hundredth, my **aim** was to *remind*—to increase awareness of that which is already familiar.

Finally, I considered **approach**. While Bourgeois utilized *analogy* to encourage the viewer to emotively connect with the inanimate, anonymous figures within the sculpture, it did not communicate enough alone to resolve incomplete audience perceptions. Because the project brief explained, “The artwork changes every hour: the two fountains alternate: first one fountain lowers to reveal the man, while the other rises to engulf the boy. Then they reverse. (Symbolizing that the father and son remain distant from each other.),” I chose to explore *cause-and-effect* due to the sculpture’s kinetic quality *(see Figure 6.5)*.

Observational Site Research

An hour was spent at the site of the artwork to observe audience interaction with the sculpture *(see Figure 6.6)*. I documented that each individual tended to only interact with the fountain for 5–15 seconds due to the dynamics of the location it occupied. When individuals lingered, it was to pause to take a photo or to use the sculpture as a meeting point. In the latter instance, the sculpture was used as seating. Both of the waiting individuals moved towards the centers of high traffic to hug their companions. The majority of visitors were simply passing by, either using the pedestrian pathway to catch a view of the Olympic Mountain Range or access the Elliot Bay Bike Trail.

The resulting map of behavior was used to identify opportunity spaces for design interventions that could enhance storytelling at the site *(see Figure 6.7)*. The mapping exercise revealed two significant conflicts: 1) there is a blind spot for traffic at the northern side of the fountain where several collisions almost occurred and 2) frequent, high speed traffic comes from the south, via three different access points, to converge together at the mouth of the bike trail. These locations were determined to be inappropriate for interpretative signage due to potential accidents. A third, minor conflict was also identified—tourist photography. For this site in particular, it is important that the interpretive sign does not impede photography of the piece of art as a landmark nor the view of the Puget Sound and mountain range.

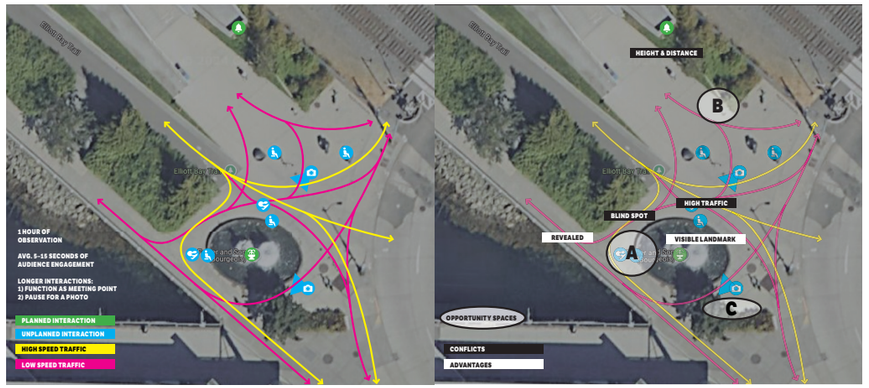


Figure 6.6
Observational research documenting audience behavior mapping at *Father and Son*

Three sketches of conceptual signs were made to explore various means of contextualizing *Father and Son* for audiences:

A. Water Activated Sign | Interpretive signage is mounted on the edge of the fountain itself to access the pool of water. An interactive element allows the audience to scoop water from the fountain and pour water onto either the father or son. This activates hydrochromic paint, which transforms from white to clear when wet. The clear paint reveals the figure once hidden by water.

B. Sister Fountain | Taking advantage of an existing plumbing fixture, this interpretive sign allows the audience to simulate the artwork through direct engagement. By ringing the bell manually, the small-scale fountains reverse the height at which they rise. This sign concept builds an understanding of the relationship between the ringing of the bell hanging from the pedestrian pathway and the fountain.

C. Kinetic Sign | This interpretive sign uses a hidden mechanism that allows the audience to shift images of the water up and down by pulling a tab. The movement reveals hides one figure while revealing the other, simulating the kinetic quality through mechanical means.

Summary

In order to deepen understanding of the artwork's meaning, the duration of audience engagement needed to be intentionally increased. Because it was observed that signs with text and images were quickly passed by, three conceptual designs explored the approach of *cause-and-effect* as a tool to introduce an element of novelty. This type of engagement is intended to instill curiosity, extend attention, and invite audiences to enact the fountain's narrative. Even if participants are not present at the hour to witness the bell ring and the fountain change, they can demonstrate Bourgeois' story.

Figure 6.7
Interpretive signage concepts

3a. RELICS OF COMMUNAL MEMORY

In a conversation about monuments with Seattle-based glass artist Matthew Szösz (2024), he identified donation centers as locations where collective identities accumulate. Szösz compared these places to archaeological sites, where one can discover what was once important to communities by looking at their trash.

Image Study 3a: Relics of Communal Memory therefore started with a trip to the local Goodwill in my neighborhood of Ballard in Seattle, Washington. The Goodwill services neighborhoods to the north west of downtown Seattle *(see Figure 6.8)*, which was originally inhabited by the Duwamish Tribe and later settled by a large population of Scandinavian immigrants. The latest census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) reveals that the community remains predominately white (74.3%) with the next sizable populations identifying as Asian (10.5%) and two or more races (10.2%). The individual artifacts in the Goodwill were reflective not only of this data, which generalizes cultural influences, but represented the intersectionality of the population's identity.

I determined to make three miniature monuments using my learnings from *Image Study 1: Monument Archetypes* and understanding of spolia and appropriation (Brilliant & Kinney, 2011) to create collective memories from the momentos of individuals whose only overtly apparent commonality otherwise might be place. After occupying the "Knick Knacks" aisle of the store for the better part of an hour, I loosely constructed the monuments *(see Figure 6.9)* using the following pattern of criteria:

Minimum of 3 artifacts

Elevated figure

Harmonious color palette and form

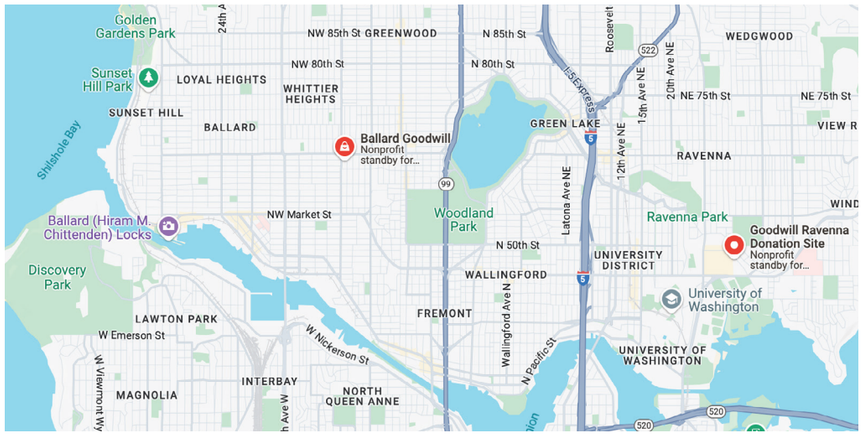
Once the objects where adhered together into a single structure, they were coated in hydrochromic paint *(see Figure 6.10)*. This whitewashing of the forms symbolized the conventional monuments archetypes by hearkening to neoclassicism, effectively freezing the objects in time as if they were carved from stone. The visual style, which emerged during the 18th century, has become the visual language of European idealism, authority, and political power. It incorrectly assumes that the sculptures created in the past by the ancient Romans and Greek did not adorn their sculptures with paint, celebrating simplicity and neutrality. Additionally, by turning the colorful, donated objects to white, the paint also references the verb "to whitewash," intentionally hiding the color and cultural references encoded on the objects.

The monuments were then placed throughout Ballard and photographed using forced perspective with a wide angle camera lens *(see Figure 6.10)*. This technique made them appear as if they proportionally belonged in the public spaces of the community. In the outdoor environment, Seattle's rainy weather activated the hydrochromic paint, turning it from white to clear, revealing the underlying semantic qualities of each object. This interaction communicates that past archetypes can be reconsidered. The full color objects are activated, becoming part of the current public discourse with the intent of being interpreted.

Summary

The design process of *Image Study 3a: Relics of Communal Memory* highlights the political nature of the designer's role. While members of the community were able to contribute items through their donation to Goodwill, they were intentionally excluded from the ability to engage in the process of representing identity through a new monument. This illustrates the role of designers social engineers.

Figure 6.8
Goodwill locations in Seattle, Washington



As a universal audience member, I selected items that personally intrigued me or had formal relationships to one another without understanding their contextual meaning. The original import of the objects to their former owners became convoluted due to space and time, but they remained unified in their significance as representations of people from Ballard. My incomplete knowledge of the objects is synonymous with the understanding of history as a construct. What is not known is just as important as what is— forgetting, heuristics, and ignorance are all parts of memory formation.

To elevate the objects' value once more, I used the privilege of my position as a designer to generate new iconography representative of the greater community. I chose objects with juxtaposing semantic characteristics, unifying them by their formal qualities. The new meaning, which I have imposed upon the community, is left to interpretation.

My aim in this work is twofold: first, to *provoke* designers to reflect on their influence and responsibility in forming collective memory, and second, to *inspire* designers to challenge conventional monument archetypes.

Figure 6.9
Artifacts from the "Knick Knacks" aisle on shelves and in a shopping cart

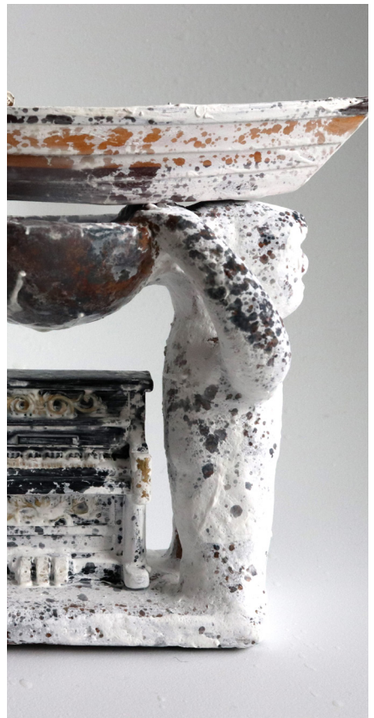


Figure 6.10

3a Relics of Communal Memory
Quasimomentos made from found objects

Left Page: Collective memory artifacts painted white to evoke conventional monument frameworks and whitewashing

Right Page: Collective memory artifacts photograph in Ballard using forced perspective to make them appear like monuments in the public environment

3b. RELICS OF COMMUNAL MEMORY

A second series of monuments was created for display at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. The artifacts follow the same principles as the original series, however they are not whitewashed with hydrochromic paint due to their placement in an indoor environment. They are displayed in a vitrine located at the train station near Terminal A.

Three miniature monuments are crafted from the discarded mementos once belonging to Seattle residents. The objects, which had personal significance to their original owners, now converge to form a new, collective narrative that represents the community. The three sculptures ask viewers to consider how the meaning of objects changes as they move away from their original purpose and are interpreted in new contexts. The new monuments impose a new societal identity onto Ballard.

Figure 6.11

3b Relics of Communal Memory
Collective memory artifacts made from discarded momentos for temporary display at SEA-TAC

4. COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

The United States election of 2024 was a pivotal experience for citizens across the country. The ballot was understood to contain more than just candidates, but represented a vote which would define the identity of America, representing the country in its present and its aspirations for the future.

To document individuals' personal experiences of the week of November 3–9, 2024, participants were asked to share a minimum of five (5) images depicting that which was important to them *(see Figure 6.12)*. Images were not required to be election-related, as it was up to the individual to determine significance. Participants were not selected to represent a particular demographic or political party, although the majority of participants leaned independent and liberal. The images provided by the participants were then assessed to reveal the communal experience of the 2024 election.

4A Content

A pattern of themes arose from the provided imagery *(see Figure 6.13)*. The majority (64%) of photographs were related to daily life, depicting priorities like children, healthcare, nature, and work. Only 18 of the 50 images (36%) were related to the election, depicting both official and handmade political materials and voting. Political materials highlighted the value of issues (55%) over support of candidates (45%). Overall, the participant provided imagery showcase the issues that are truly important to Americans.

4B Color

The color palettes of the images provided were less varied than their content *(see Figure 6.14)*. The majority of the images (56%) were dominantly neutral hues, inclusive of gray, white, and brown. This color palette was greatly influenced by the season and indoor environments in which the photos were taken. When saturated hues were dominant, they were within the spectrum of red and blue. When this was not influenced by the campaign graphics and political memorabilia, which marketed candidates to the American people using the colors of the flag, blue skies defined the overall color impression of the images.

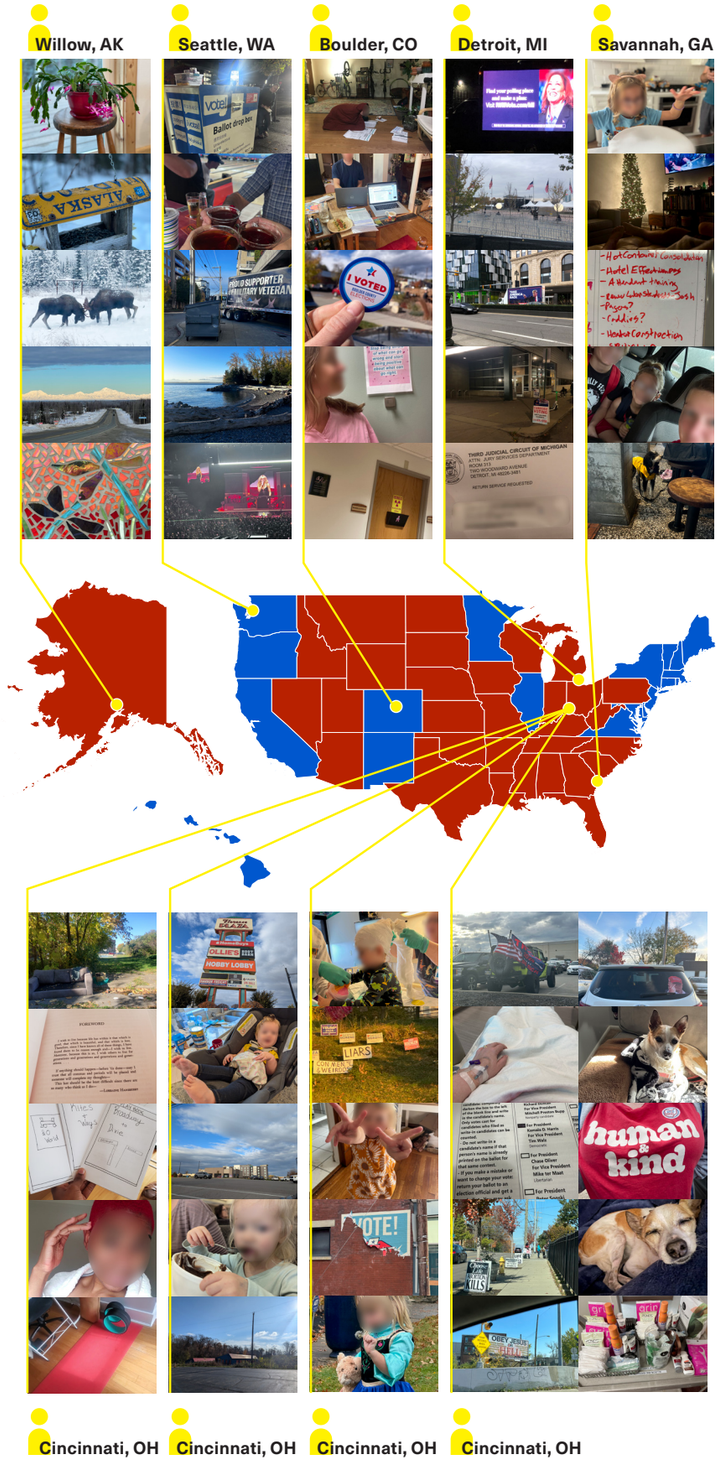


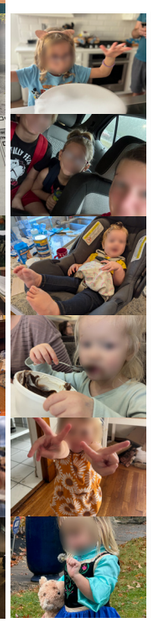
Figure 6.12
Data collected from participants is organized by location and participant.

Figure 6.13

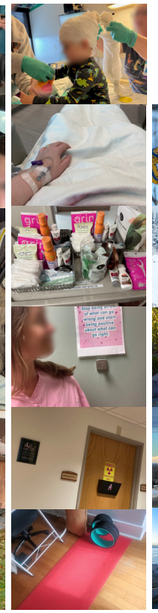
3a Content
Content collected from participants is organized by theme.

Politics

Voting



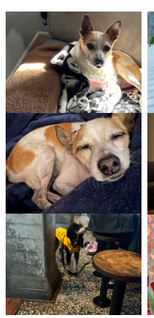
Children



Healthcare

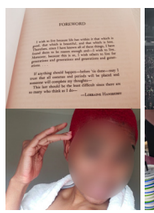
Nature

Work

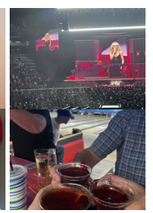


Pets

Home



Self Care



Entertainment

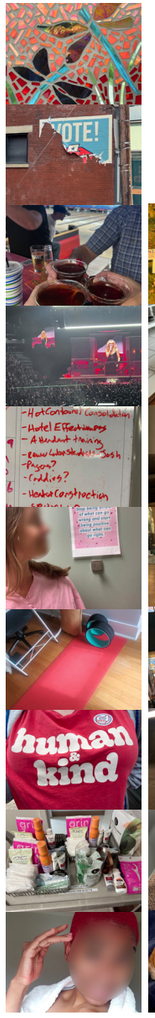
Content

Figure 6.14

3b Color
Content collected from participants is organized by color.

White

Blue



Red

Brown

Gray

Color

Figure 6.15

4c Posters
Posters highlight the rhetoric around significance and value in American culture during the 2024 US Election.

4C Posters

Seven digitally collaged posters were created represent the communal experience of the 2024 US election across America *(see Figure 6.15)*. The posters were made using the following constraints:

Minimum of 3 images

Minimum of 3 participants

Inspired by content theme or color palette

Images cannot be repeatedly utilized

All posters were created in Photoshop, using a variety of masking and blending techniques to create dynamic compositions. Typography pulled from signage and other media unified the disparate images into clear themes, influencing the interpretation of the compositions.

4D ChatBot

Inspired by the concept of using Generative AI technology to converse with the deceased (Carballo, 2023), I trained a custom GPT on the images provided by participants. The chatbot was instructed to converse with college-aged students in the year 2124 to explain the experience of the 2024 US election *(see Figure 6.15)*. Although AI models are known to hallucinate, the GPT model could be seen as a way to preserve the collective memory. It translates memories captured through imagery, generates a memory of the moment in time verbally, and describes the experience of the election.

Summary

During the 2024 US election, the American people were asked to vote on their societal identities. The final posters revealed the rhetoric around significance and value in American culture, contrasting messages of unity with those of division. They act as a collective memory, highlighting the charged emotional state of the country as identity is negotiated.

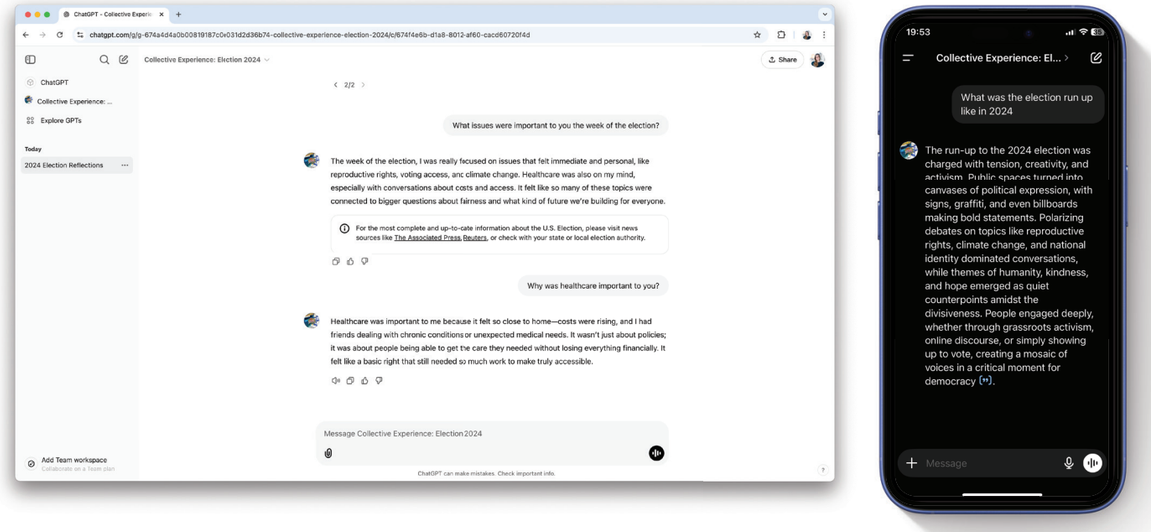


Figure 6.15

4d Chatbot
A ChatGPT chatbot is trained on the images of participant memories and responds to questions about the collective experience of the election.

5. EXPERIENCING VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG

As part of a study abroad experience through the University of Washington Comparative History of Ideas, I completed a research study intended to interpret and define German national identity today. I proposed that one must refer to the perception of individuals' cumulative experiences of the German memorial landscape in order to gain understanding. The selected locations for documentation via diary studies were chosen in alignment with the remembrance frameworks described by Rosenfeld (2020) to ensure that participants were exposed to a broad range of statements about Germany's national identity. This strategy ensured that participant perspectives were based on multiple, potentially competing narratives. The monuments selected for this study were:

Traditionalism: the city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Critical: the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial

Modernist: Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin)

To document perception, three diary studies were conducted using a 5E experience map methodology to document visitor engagement. Participants were asked to document written and photographic responses to represent their perception of these spaces with the goal of understanding how these spaces and objects can create direct relationships to such an abstract concept as identity

Experience mapping is a technique used in design practices to diagram user engagement and is often seen in fields such as user experience (UX) and architectural design. For the purposes of this study, a 5E technique was used to document the following stages of visitor engagement with monuments and memorials: 1) Entice, 2) Enter, 3) Engage, 4) Exit, and 5) Extend (Sontag, 2023). *Entice*, which perhaps is a word more suited for sales and marketing instead of Vergangenheitsbewältigung, refers to the anticipatory stage of an experience. It asks questions like "How did you gain knowledge about the site prior to arrival? What feelings did you have in anticipation of your experience? How did you prepare for your experience, if at all?"

Enter refers to one's first impression of a digital or physical space. It can be likened to a "hook" in writing, which describes the opening statement used to grab the reader's attention. *Engage* is the process of experiencing the space in the moment. This is the direct relationship the visitor has with the semiotic and experiential qualities of the quasi-memento. It is in this stage that the visitor builds their own memories of the past through the collective memory as represented through monument or memorial. *Exit* is the final impression, or the conclusion of the direct experience. Finally, *Extend* refers to the reflective experience of the space through memory and how the visitor disseminates this memory to others. Extension describes the discourse of the collective memory continuing beyond the confines of the space in which its artifact inhabits, enticing others to engage with the artifact themselves.

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

The experiences of the participants were mixed at Rothenburg ob der Tauber *(see Figure 6.16)*. Two of the participants described anxiety around the crowded nature of the site and the faux feeling of a place, likening it to Disneyland. Although the architecture is preserved to project an authentic portrayal of the medieval city, both participants had prior knowledge of the city's function as a site of Nazi propaganda and therefore felt unsettled by the touristic nature of the experience. The third participant, however, entered the experience with optimism towards the way the city presented itself as a tourist site, and had an experience more akin to what is marketed about the city. This participant used words like "treasure" and "real life fairy tale" to describe the experience of the city in contrast to the second participant, who used words like "uncanny." While also slightly unsettled by its function as a propaganda site in the past, Participant 1 recognized that the projection of Rothenburg ob der Tauber in its current form is a uniting element amongst tourists to Germany. The shared experience of this city through iconic photography, the practice of eating chocolate covered snowballs, and shopping for souvenirs allows those who have visited Germany at different times have a consistent memory of their travels that allows them to reminisce together even though they have not physically traveled together. Overall, while the uncanny nature

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See pages 64–65 to learn more about narrative frameworks.

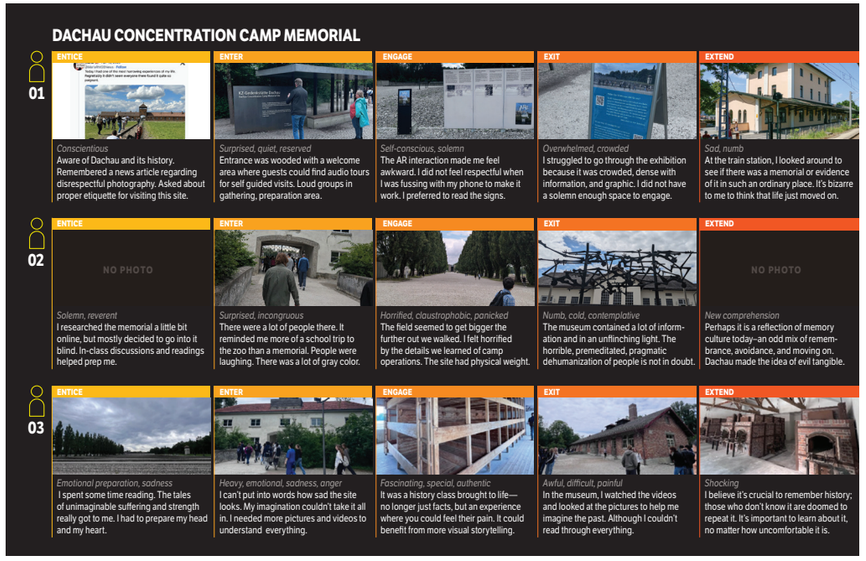
of Rothenburg ob der Tauber exists due to the parallels of its function today to that of the Nazi era, the current use of this place as a tourism pilgrimage site within Germany perpetuates a positive, idyllic memory of Germany's identity that is extended well beyond the engagement to others.

Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial

The three participants, while each had their own personal experience of Dachau, reported parallel emotional journeys *(see Figure 6.17)*. All found the experience to be solemn, quiet, and overwhelming. The feeling of overwhelmed came both from the emotional weight experienced from the memory of murder captured in the preserved, factory-like physical layout of the space. It was also from the immense amount of information that the museum attempted to communicate about the site. All participants mentioned being too overwhelmed by information to read and contemplate the information being presented. The crowded, school trip experience of the concentration camp was also surprising to two of the participants. They found it odd to hear laughter on the site, noted that there was a culture of irreverence from student groups. Reflecting on this, I wondered if there was a desensitization to the site due to the frequency of exposure to the topic in class. I wondered how it could be less normalized in order to maintain reverence. Only one participant attempted to use the AR experience provided by the site to explore artwork made by detainees. They remarked that the use of this digital element also carried a feeling of irreverence due to the use of their cell phone and defaulted to engaging with the signs versus attempting to use the software.

Figure 6.16
Diary study documenting experience in the city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber

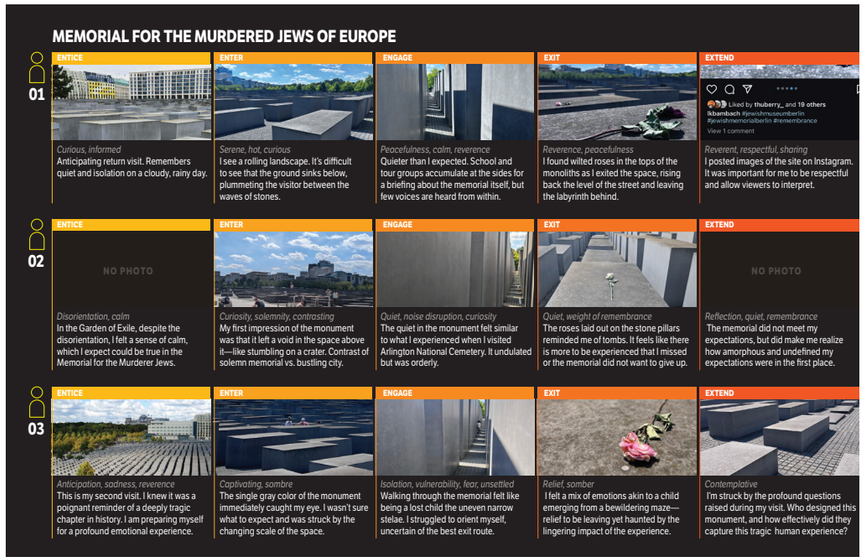
Figure 6.17
Diary study documenting experience of the *Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial*



Memorial For The Murdered Jews Of Europe

The experience of this memorial site was the most consistent between the three participants *(see Figure 6.18)*. While they were physically enabled to wander and take in the experience as they chose, the layers of information and feelings received happened in a consistent sequence. All identified the sound and lighting as key experiential drivers of their engagement experiences and remarked upon the additive ritual-like practice of placing roses atop the monoliths as they left. While none had context for why these roses were present, all participants reported feelings of reverence, somberness, and remembrance. The engagement with this physical space made all participants feel a sense of contemplation and reflection after their visit.

Figure 6.18
Diary study documenting experience of the *Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe*. Designed by post-modernist architect Peter Eisenman Berlin, Germany



Conclusion

The journey of the participants indicated that whether traditional, modern, or critical in their intent, the selected German quasi-mementos displayed a palpable tension between remembrance and forgetting in German memory culture. This is exemplified through the experience of semantic and experiential encoding and engagement. German memory artifacts display that there is a societal intent to inform about the past through memorials, but also to emotionally engage visitors. When sites are primarily information-based, they overwhelm visitors with content, but when they are too abstract they convey emotion but do not provide a clear understanding of the past. The most effective sites are spatial with layered contextual information along the journey. This helps visitors have a direct relationship with what they are seeing and what they are feeling, making the experience less cognitively daunting to process and reflect upon. All in all, the experience of Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Germany is a negotiation between remembrance and forgetting intended to prompt criticism and conversation surrounding past, present, and future identity.

6. MEMORY SYSTEMS

Memory Systems, which I assembled as part of a cognitive psychology class with Professor Adrian Andelin, Ph.D., articulates how memories are formed in the brain through the combination of sensation and emotion *(see Figure 6.19)*. It blends studies by cognitive psychologists to visualize the complexity of memory formation and our limited capacity for attention (Chun & Most, 2017). The diagram also notes that forgetting is a continuous and critical part of the memory formation process, as it supports the encoding of that which was attended to, comprehended, and consolidated through the mind's short and long-term memory.

After assembling this diagram, I reflected on the designer's involvement in the curation of memorable experiences. Designers manipulate the sensorial experiences of environments through artifacts in attempts to control the perceptions of audiences. By framing experiences, taking into account their relational nature, designers can only influence perception. In other words, perception is an individual experience that cannot be dictated or prescribed, but can be framed for reflection.

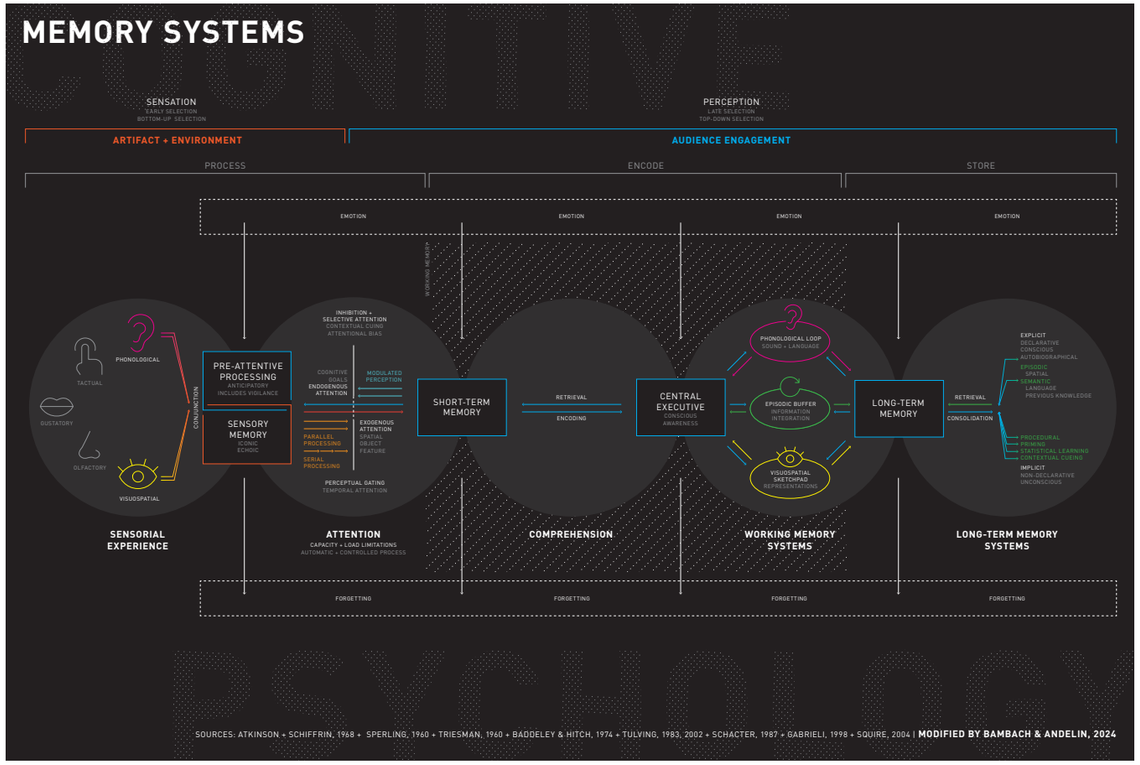


Figure 6.19
Information visualization of cognitive memory systems

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Jemma Radick
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Kent Brookover
LeeAnn Burke
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Mark (Bamboo) Meenan
Millie Brower
Monica Nehls
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Dedicated to
Rudolf Bambach