

MEMORABILIA IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Instructor: Enrique Cavelier

Contact: ecavelier@gsd.harvard.edu

Description:

In the last decade, the world has experienced an effervescent examination of the fate of monuments in the public domain. This debate has rendered statues into political targets and the spaces around them into areas of civil discussion. From Charlottesville (US) to Bristol (UK) to Cali (Colombia), we have seen how political actors have activated previously invisible objects in the urban landscape.

Despite this renewed activation of monuments, these objects in the public domain have always been surrounded by the mundanity of urban life. How many of us have stopped, driven around, or respited at a monument and have not been bothered to question its existence? Away from special occasions and activations, how much do memorials matter more than benches or stop signs in the public domain?

Starting with Andrew M. Shaken's "The Everyday Life of Memorials" as a foundation argument, the course aims to explore and discuss the plasticity of memorials in public spaces. Varying from active political spaces of contestation to mere decor of the urban landscape, we will examine the role of memorials in the public domain.

During five days in January, the course will ask us to become fieldworkers to explore, experience, and record a memorial physically. By studying its historical context, physical site, material conditions, spatial relationship, and everydayness- to borrow Shaken's term- we will debate and question the role each site plays in its specific public setting. Throughout the course, we will learn to create a fieldwork journal, take and examine photographs, record video and sound in public spaces and develop a platform of discussion to share our findings with a general audience.

Course Structure

We start each day with a short discussion of the experiences of being in the field. Then, the course time is divided into presentations and discussions of each participant's work (15 min per student) then followed by a 30 min discussion of the next day's task.

Monday, January 9th, 2023: Memorabilia: why monuments?

Introduction of participants and presentation to sites of exploration

Short presentation/lecture/discussion: Memorabilia: why monuments?

Task 1 handled

Asynchronous: Individual fieldwork

Tuesday, January 10th, 2023: Situating a monument in a public space

Fieldwork Debrief

Participants presentations and discussions (work posted on the course Miro board)

Task 2 handled

Asynchronous: Individual fieldwork

Wednesday, January 11th, 2023: The everydayness of a monument

Fieldwork Debrief

Participants presentations and discussions (work posted on the course Miro board)

Task 3 handled

Asynchronous: Individual fieldwork

Thursday, January 12th, 2023: Materials of permanence and ephemerality

Fieldwork Debrief

Participants presentations and discussions (work posted on the course Miro board)

Task 4 handled

Asynchronous: Curation of the work

Friday, January 13th, 2023: Presenting and sharing in the public domain.

Participants presentations and discussions (work posted on the course Miro board)

Final comments and discussion

Celebration!

Bibliography

Freud, Sigmund, and James Strachey. "First Lecture." *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works; (1910)*, Vintage, London, 2001, pp. 9–20.

Shanken, Andrew Michael. *The Everyday Life of Memorials*. Zone Books, 2022.