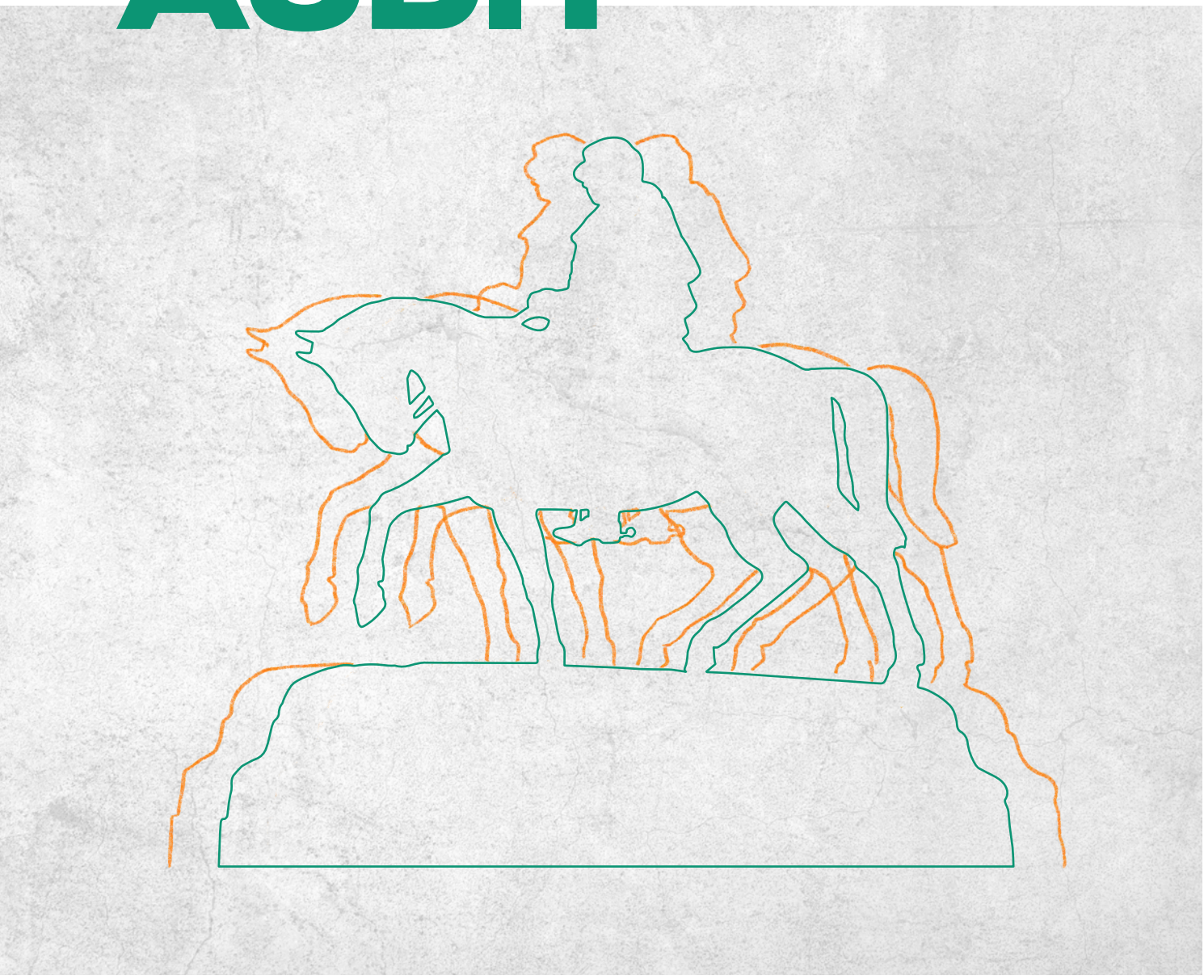
NATIONAL MONUMENT AUDIT



Monument Lab

NATIONAL MONUMENT AUDIT

Monument Lab

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Moving through our public spaces—walking to school, meeting up with colleagues, picnicking or playing games in the park, traveling to other parts of the country, coming together in moments of national grief and joy—we are rarely aware of the monuments and memorials that shape them. We may not notice how just a few stories have been disproportionately commemorated in a country created by multitudes. We may not know which voices are missing, which contributions have been elided, or how much the monuments and memorials now standing misrepresent our collective history.

Monument Lab's *National Monument Audit* gives us a way forward to capture this comprehensive knowledge and begin to build broader awareness of the commemorative landscape we move through every day. The audit's substantive research and analysis provide a means to keep self-evaluating who we are as a nation in our public spaces. The work is a testament to the power of continual learning: learning about the monuments and memorials currently populating our built environment, learning how a few figures and themes came to overshadow the many different collective experiences that make up our past, learning why our commemorative landscape needs to change if we are to move towards a more just and equitable future.

Without the work that Monument Lab has undertaken with this audit, we at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation could not complete what we aim to achieve with our own Monuments Project. This $250 million initiative facilitates broader expressions of the multiplicity of American stories in our public spaces, so that our collective history will be more completely and accurately

represented in them. By seeking, surveying, counting, and analyzing almost half a million historic records, Monument Lab has given us both the tools and the nuanced knowledge to better inform and fulfill the efforts of the Monuments Project itself.

Now that this surveying, analyzing, and learning has begun, we cannot turn back. We cannot unsee what we have seen. We cannot unknow what we now know. As we read through the remarkable findings of the *National Monument Audit*, we learn that permanence in our commemorative landscape is an illusion. We understand that the more durable monuments do not best represent American history, but are instead the result of the most abundant material resources and hegemony in its many forms: racial, ethnic, religious, gender-based. We see that the monuments standing on our streets or in our parks have not stood there for time immemorial. Our built environment is in motion; it always has been in motion. We know this now. We cannot unknow it.

The *National Monument Audit* calls us all to do our part to change our commemorative landscape and to better capture the multivocality of our country in our public spaces.

This work represents our opportunity to learn more, with all the bracing revelations that learning grants.

It is work that is just beginning.

—Elizabeth Alexander
President, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

MONUMENTS MUST CHANGE

...Perhaps no one monument could be made to tell the whole truth of any subject which it might be designed to illustrate.

—Frederick Douglass

We, as a country, are in an intense struggle over our monuments. This moment of monumental reckoning and reimagining is profound but not new. The evolution of our monument landscape is as old as the nation itself. This phenomenon is not unique to the United States and should be contextualized within broader global movements, yet we are faced with complex dilemmas rooted in our particular history and landscape. These include the circumstances of our nation's founding on stolen Indigenous lands, the building of much of our country's foundations by enslaved laborers, and ongoing struggles toward full democracy. Our lack of full acknowledgment or accounting for the harms of our past merges into our present travails. Monuments serve as places to harness public memory and acknowledge collective forgetfulness as twin forces holding up this nation.

Despite the intense spotlight on monuments today, there is no single agreed upon definition of a *monument* in American culture—not in federal and municipal recordkeeping on statuary, not in legislative and judicial systems overseeing public spaces, not in numerous schools of thought, not in everyday understandings. When one calls attention to monuments, one could be referring to statues atop pedestals installed in public spaces with the authority of a government agency or civic institution; designated land formations, historical markers, or architectural sites serving as traces of the past; or transformative declarations rendered through art, poetry, projection, or protest that shift the ways we see our sur-

roundings and ourselves. The unstable nature of the term *monument* is a reminder that the power to convey stories of the past cannot be expressed through any single art form, outlet, or voice.

Karyn Olivier, *The Battle Is Joined*, 2017
Vernon Park, Philadelphia
(Mike Reali/Mural Arts Philadelphia)

The officials who document and care for our inherited monuments have no shared definition or central system for tracking, maintaining, or understanding them. This point cannot be overstated. The confusion over what a monument *is* spurs bureaucratic and social turmoil, as we scramble to remember locally and collectively with disparate tools and objectives. Because conventional monuments are often viewed as one-offs, solitary symbols in a given location, it can be difficult to consider them as a set of linked symbols, sites, and stories across jurisdictions. Generally, however, monuments across locations have been shaped by those with the time, money, and officially sanctioned power to craft and elevate the past in their own image.

Monument Lab defines a *monument* as "a statement of power and presence in public." We formed this definition through tens of thousands of conversations over the last decade in public spaces across the country.[1] We heard how people think of monuments as statues in bronze and marble on pedestals, and how those conventional structures also misrepresent history and fail to do justice to our collective knowledge and experience. Through these conversations, we learned that monuments do more than just help us remember—they make our society's values visible. They also can push us to recognize the ideas that could never be captured or rendered in stone. History does not live in statues. History lives between people. Monuments are not endpoints for history, but touchstones between generations. Throughout our work, we believe that by advancing greater understandings of the expansive role and

MONUMENT LAB DEFINES A MONUMENT AS "A STATEMENT OF POWER AND PRESENCE IN PUBLIC."

ever-changing nature of monuments, we can yield fuller possibilities for civic power and public memory.

For the *National Monument Audit*, produced in partnership with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Monument Lab looked at a large-scale trove of this nation's monument data to create a sprawling snapshot of the commemorative landscape. The audit is meant to inform Mellon's landmark Monuments Project, a $250 million investment designed to "transform the way our country's histories are told in public spaces and ensure that future generations inherit a commemorative landscape that venerates and reflects the vast, rich complexity of the American story."

To produce the audit, our research team spent a year scouring almost half a million records of historic properties created and maintained by federal, state, local, tribal, institutional, and publicly assembled sources. We looked for those sites and structures we most conventionally think of as monuments – statues or monoliths constructed with stone or metal, installed or maintained in a public space with the authority of a government agency or institution. For our deepest investigations, we focused on a study set of approximately 50,000 conventional monuments representing data collected from every US state and territory. This study set allows us to better understand the dynamics and trends that have shaped our monument landscape, to pose questions regarding common knowledge about monuments, and to debunk falsehoods and misperceptions within public memory.

Our team dove into research about the life of monuments within and beyond this study set. We also examined monument data to assess what the records reveal and what they obscure, and what data and numbers can and cannot tell us about monuments today. This is not a record of every monument in the US—such an undertaking is impossible, as the debate over what constitutes a monument plays out daily in every corner of the country. This audit is a first of its kind study in scope, building on the work of many other researchers, to review a history of recordkeeping on monuments as a way to explore what we know and what we often fail to grasp about public memory. By viewing monuments as a collection of public assets, rather than as solitary and one-off symbols, we can gain new insights about how monuments function as platforms for civic power and shaping stories in public.

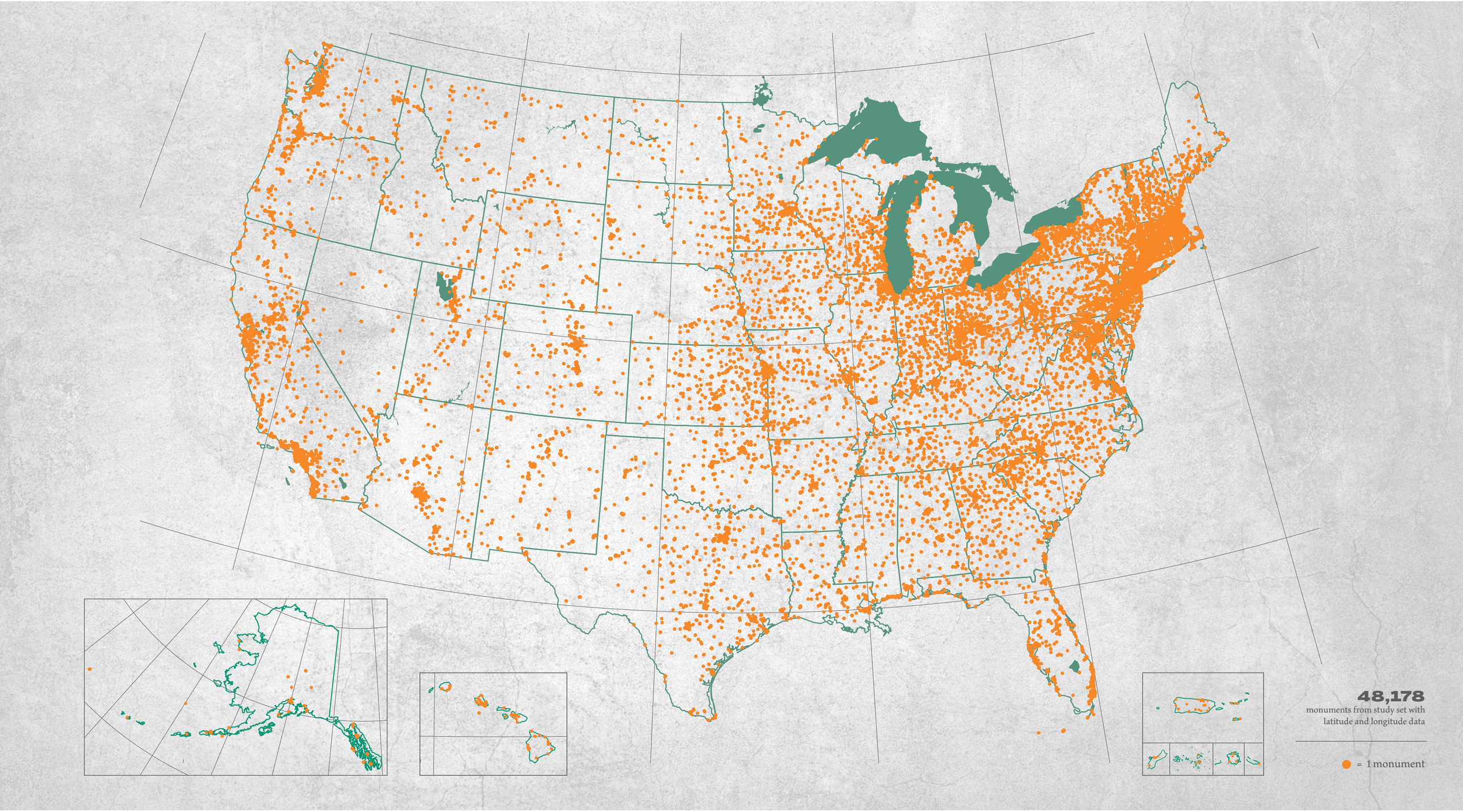
We invite you to carry forward the work of this audit by exploring our study set online and sharing your observations with us. You can find more about this audit throughout this publication, on our website (where you can search the study set and read essays

HISTORY DOES NOT LIVE IN STATUES. HISTORY LIVES BETWEEN PEOPLE.

about the data from members of the research team and invited contributors), and in public programs and dialogues over the next year. We hope this audit and its search interface provides a tool and launching point for further investigations, discoveries, and new approaches to record keeping. We look forward to this snapshot becoming outdated in the coming years, as more studies build on this research and other emerging initiatives in the field, and as we continue to evolve how we build, maintain, and envision monuments.

After conducting this study of monuments—as well as our ongoing research and interventions into the systems that have produced, maintained, and documented them—we are reminded of the power of public art and history to shape circumstances, challenges, and possibilities for transformation. If we seek a nation that lives up to its creed, learns from and labors to repair its past, and connects to its history in ways that are more truthful, complex, and vital, then our monuments must change.

—Paul M. Farber, Sue Mobley, and Laurie Allen
Co-Directors, National Monument Audit,
Monument Lab


48,178
monuments from study set with latitude and longitude data
= 1 monument

READING MONUMENT DATA

EXPLORE

To better understand the current monument landscape, we assembled a team of monument researchers from around the country. Together, we scoured almost half a million records of historic properties created and maintained by federal, state, local, tribal, institutional, and publicly assembled sources. We reached out to State Historic Preservation Offices and federally recognized Tribal Historic Preservation Offices for their most updated records. Each data source we encountered included publicly accessible digital records about cultural objects in a variety of formats. There were data sets we did not have access to because they are privately held, or they were not currently available digitally. There were data sources we did not use because, upon reviewing them, we found that they were primarily constituent parts of, or redundant with, a larger set; they did not offer key information such as location, which would allow us to condense records via relational databases, or they were in the process of being collected or updated during the period of this study.

GATHER

In the end, we worked from forty-two data sources incorporating close to 500,000 individual records that included objects commonly referred to as *monuments*—statues or monoliths constructed with stone or metal, installed or maintained in a public space with the authority of a government agency or institution—as well as nonconventional monument objects like buildings, bridges, streets, historic markers, and place names. Of these forty-two data sources, only one (OpenStreetMap) provides a definition of *monument* as a guide for contributors to tag entries, with warnings about common misuses.[2] Other sources, while not offering a definition of *monument*, included records that broadly included outdoor sculpture, cultural heritage sites, and other public art and history assets.

CONNECT

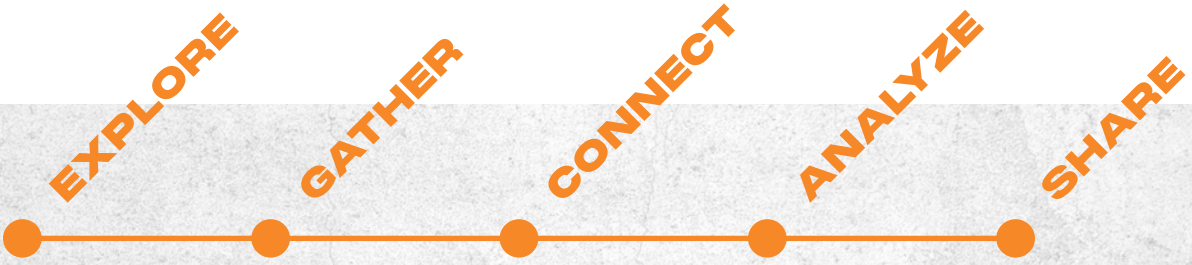
A large part of the work of the audit was accessing, converting, parsing, and mapping that data into a single, standardized data set. Our research team designed an algorithm to determine which of these records included conventional monuments. We produced a final study set of 48,178 monuments out of the source materials. While this study set included many idiosyncrasies, omissions, and glitches from its original data sources, we worked to streamline the data by pulling in geographical information (when available), extract names of people and events, review metadata held in records, and look for duplicates in overlapping data sets. We also cross-referenced this data with biographical sources, including Wikidata. Since so many of the monuments in the study set commemorate individuals, we compiled a Top 50 list of individuals for whom we have the most recorded monuments in the US. This list offers a simplified snapshot of the dominant trends in the monument landscape. We used technical approaches to cross-reference the names within the Wikidata category *human* across multiple categories in each of the forty-two data sources. Public monument records for the Top 50 list of monumental figures were cleaned to remove misidentifications, passing references, and redundant records across and within these data sources.

ANALYZE

The research team explored major themes, trends, case studies, and dynamics underpinning the monument landscape. We examined metadata, and contended with the gaps, shortcomings, and blind spots in the data we encountered. We held focus groups with people who study and engage with monuments—scholars, municipal workers, educators, and artists—to help us understand how the data connected to their own experiences of monuments and how to create and support tools for public access.

SHARE

The findings and data were shared with the Mellon Foundation and then prepared for public release. The *National Monument Audit* exists as a publication, a website, an ongoing series of essays and programs, and a search interface including open-source code on GitHub. For full access to the *National Monument Audit*, visit monumentlab.com/audit.



KEY FINDINGS

I. MONUMENTS HAVE ALWAYS CHANGED.

II. THE MONUMENT LANDSCAPE IS OVERWHELMINGLY WHITE AND MALE.

III. THE MOST COMMON FEATURES OF AMERICAN MONUMENTS REFLECT WAR AND CONQUEST.

IV. THE STORY OF THE UNITED STATES AS TOLD BY OUR CURRENT MONUMENTS MISREPRESENTS OUR HISTORY.

TOP 50

Individuals Recorded in US Public Monuments

1. Abraham Lincoln (193)
2. George Washington (171)
3. Christopher Columbus (149)
4. Martin Luther King Jr. (86)
5. Saint Francis of Assisi (73)
6. Robert E. Lee (59)
7. Casimir Pulaski (51)
8. Benjamin Franklin (48)
9. John F. Kennedy (44)
10. Thomas Jefferson (36)
11. Ulysses S. Grant (35)
12. Stonewall Jackson (33)
13. Jefferson Davis (30)
14. Marquis de Lafayette (30)
15. Andrew Jackson (27)
16. Theodore Roosevelt (27)
17. William McKinley (27)
18. Joan of Arc (26)
19. Nathan Hale (24)
20. William Shakespeare (24)
21. José Marti (23)
22. Thaddeus Kosciuszko (22)
23. William Clark (22)
24. Harriet Tubman (21)
25. Tecumseh (21)
26. Alexander Hamilton (20)
27. Junípero Serra (20)
28. Sacagawea (20)
29. Frederick Douglass (19)
30. Martin Luther (19)
31. Jacques Marquette (18)
32. Dwight Eisenhower (17)
33. Franklin D. Roosevelt (17)
34. Anthony Wayne (16)
35. Merriweather Lewis (16)
36. Simón Bolivar (16)
37. Robert L. Burns (15)
38. St. Paul (15)
39. Washington Irving (14)
40. William Penn (14)
41. George Rogers Clark (13)
42. John Marshall (13)
43. John Sullivan (13)
44. Nathan Bedford Forrest (13)
45. Oliver Hazard Perry (13)
46. Sam Houston (13)
47. Daniel Boone (12)
48. David Glasgow Farragut (12)
49. James Garfield (12)
50. John Logan (12)

This list includes individuals with the most public monuments in the United States. The list was determined with ordinal ranking and based on available monument records. For a full methodology, see the **Process** *section.*

MONUMENTS HAVE ALWAYS CHANGED

The *National Monument Audit* reminds us that monuments are not timeless, permanent, or untouchable. Each and every monument changes over time. Many are made to last with enduring quality—but they are not made to last forever. They are installed, by design, with an expectation that years later someone else will have to contend with their alterations due to common maintenance, weathering, wear and tear, and other transformations in the social and physical settings around them.

Official records highlight changes through several factors, including dates created, dedicated, altered, added to, and removed, as well reports calling for maintenance and detailing decay, disrepair, and routine damage. Monument records rarely reflect plans by the original sponsors to anticipate maintenance nor efforts to make room for interpretation by future generations.

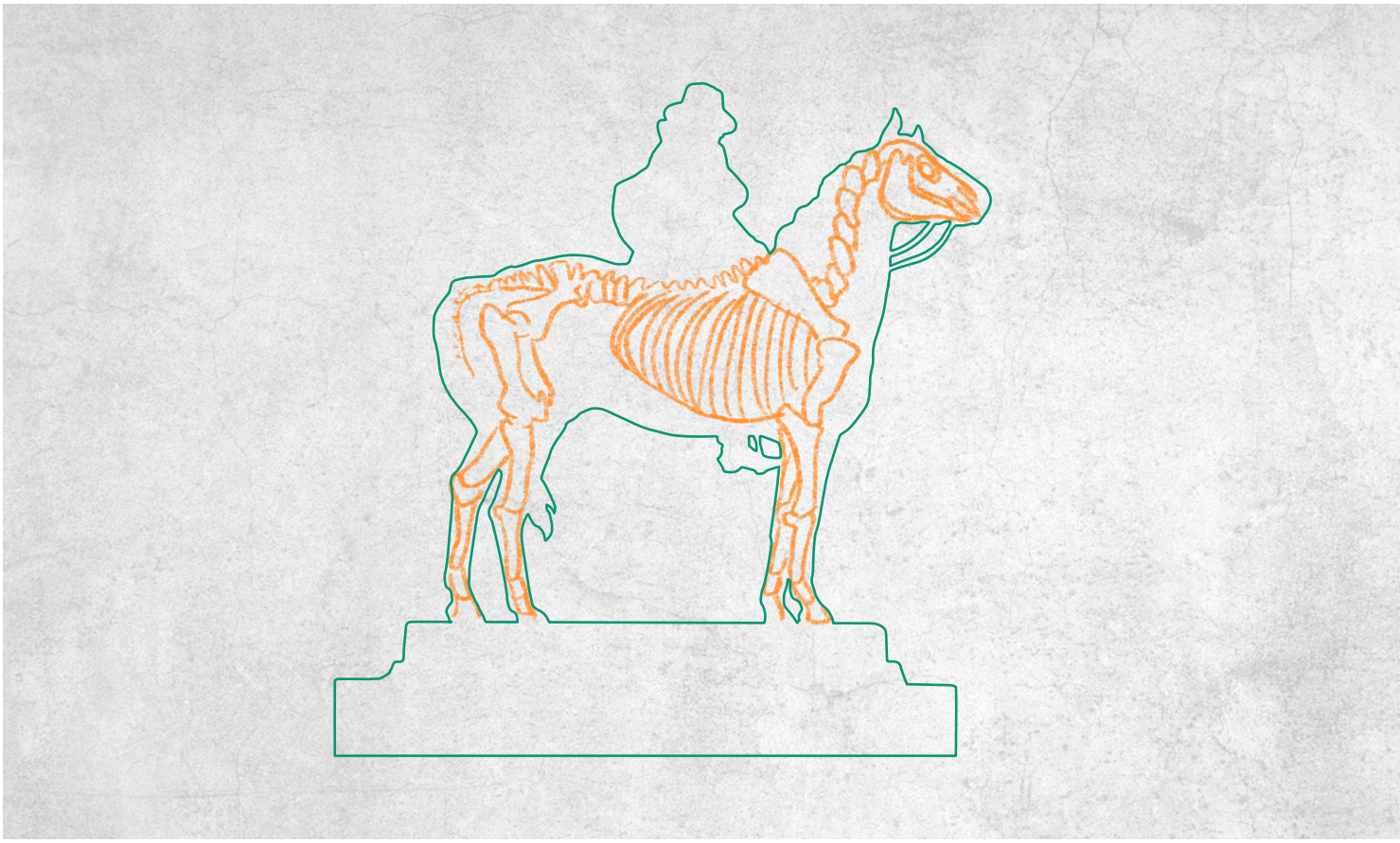
Conventional monuments are created out of materials that require preservation and restoration to withstand the elements. The country's largest source of monument data, the Smithsonian Institution's Save Outdoor Sculpture survey, estimated that at the time of their study in the 1990s nearly half of all outdoor sculptures were in disrepair, largely from rust, mold, pollution, and deferred maintenance.[3] For example, without routine maintenance, bronzes

JUL 9, 1776
First recorded US monument removal

SEPT 8, 2021
Most recent US monument removal

342
Names added to Vietnam Veterans Memorial since dedication[6]

$11.9 BILLION
Deferred maintenance costs for the National Park Service (as of fiscal year 2018)[7]



change color from brown to green, while marble and granite stain and erode based on human interaction and weather conditions. To survive these changes, monuments require people to provide money as well as expertise to preserve and repair them. These kinds of investments require resources, time, and political influence.

Communities also routinely change monuments by making modifications, including gestures big and small, that upkeep and augment sites dedicated in the past. From the addition of new plaques and wreaths to large-scale renovations, public officials and civic leaders have developed a wide variety of strategies to alter individual monuments, assigning further meaning to them in their respective locations. For example, 342 names have been added or changed on the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* on the National Mall (Maya Lin, 1982). The names of sixty-two Black soldiers that were originally left off were added to the *Robert Gould Shaw and Massachusetts 54th Regiment Memorial* (Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1897) in Boston dedicated nearly a century prior.[4]

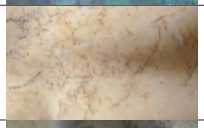
During times of social upheaval and conflict, monuments can undergo drastic changes, ultimately transforming their physical contexts and altering the ways that people are able to engage with them. Through our study, we encountered multiple occasions

when people relocated or removed monuments for reasons other than political controversy: for example, aesthetic updates, the dedications of new parks, moved roadways, and scrap metal drives during World War II.

Despite the tremendous investment in building and maintaining the sanctioned monument landscape, there is also a long legacy of communities resisting ideologies through the strategy of monument protest and removal. For example, the first recorded monument removal in the United States was on July 9, 1776 (statue of King George III of England, New York, New York); as we write this, the most recent removal was on September 8, 2021 (statue of Robert E. Lee, Richmond, Virginia). Though the removal of monuments remains an area of great attention, we estimate that 99.4 percent of conventional monuments remain in place, with each one undergoing continual social, environmental, and material changes in clear and subtle ways.[5]

MATERIAL LIFESPANS

Common Monument Building Materials and Changes Over Time

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

CALL TO ACTION

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Build a new, deeper understanding of how monuments live and function in communities, examine the forces that drive their installation and upkeep in relation to civic power, and reflect on how and why they evolve over time.

THE MONUMENT LANDSCAPE IS OVERWHELMINGLY WHITE AND MALE

The commemorative landscape is dominated by monuments to figures who would be considered white, male, and wealthy in our common understandings today.

The Top 50 represented individuals in our data set include eleven US presidents and twelve US generals. Half of the Top 50 list (50%) enslaved other people. More than a third (40%) were born into family wealth. A large majority (76%) owned land.[8]

Only five of the Top 50 figures were Black/Indigenous: Martin Luther King Jr. (ranked 4th), Harriet Tubman (ranked 24th), Tecumseh (ranked 25th), Sacagawea (ranked 28th), and Frederick Douglass (ranked 29th). There are no US-born Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, or self-identified LGBTQ+ people in the Top 50 list.

Our study finds that monuments to historical men grossly outnumber those to historical women. Joan of Arc, Harriet Tubman, and Sacagawea are the only women represented in the Top 50 list. Beyond the top individuals, we investigated the top 15 individual women in the nation's commemorative landscape. Three are European (Joan of Arc, Marie Curie, Queen Isabella) and three are saints (Joan of Arc, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Kateri Tekakwitha). Feminized bodies often appear in the sanctioned monument

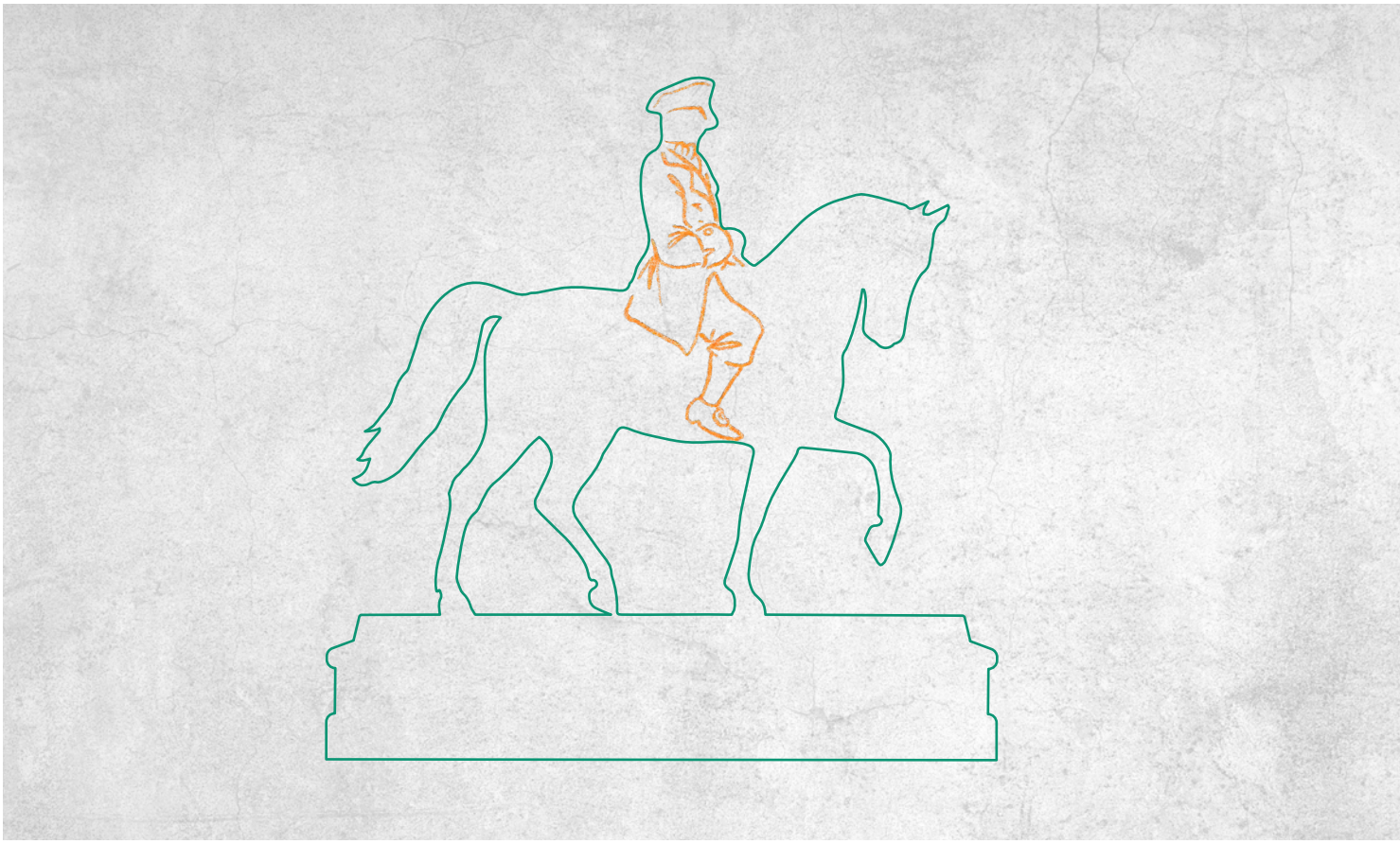
50%
Percentage of the Top 50 who enslaved other people

10%
Percentage of the Top 50 who were Black/Indigenous

6%
Percentage of the Top 50 who were women

22:2
Number of recorded monuments depicting mermaids (22) compared to those depicting US Congresswomen (2)

2011
First monument to an individual person of color (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, DC

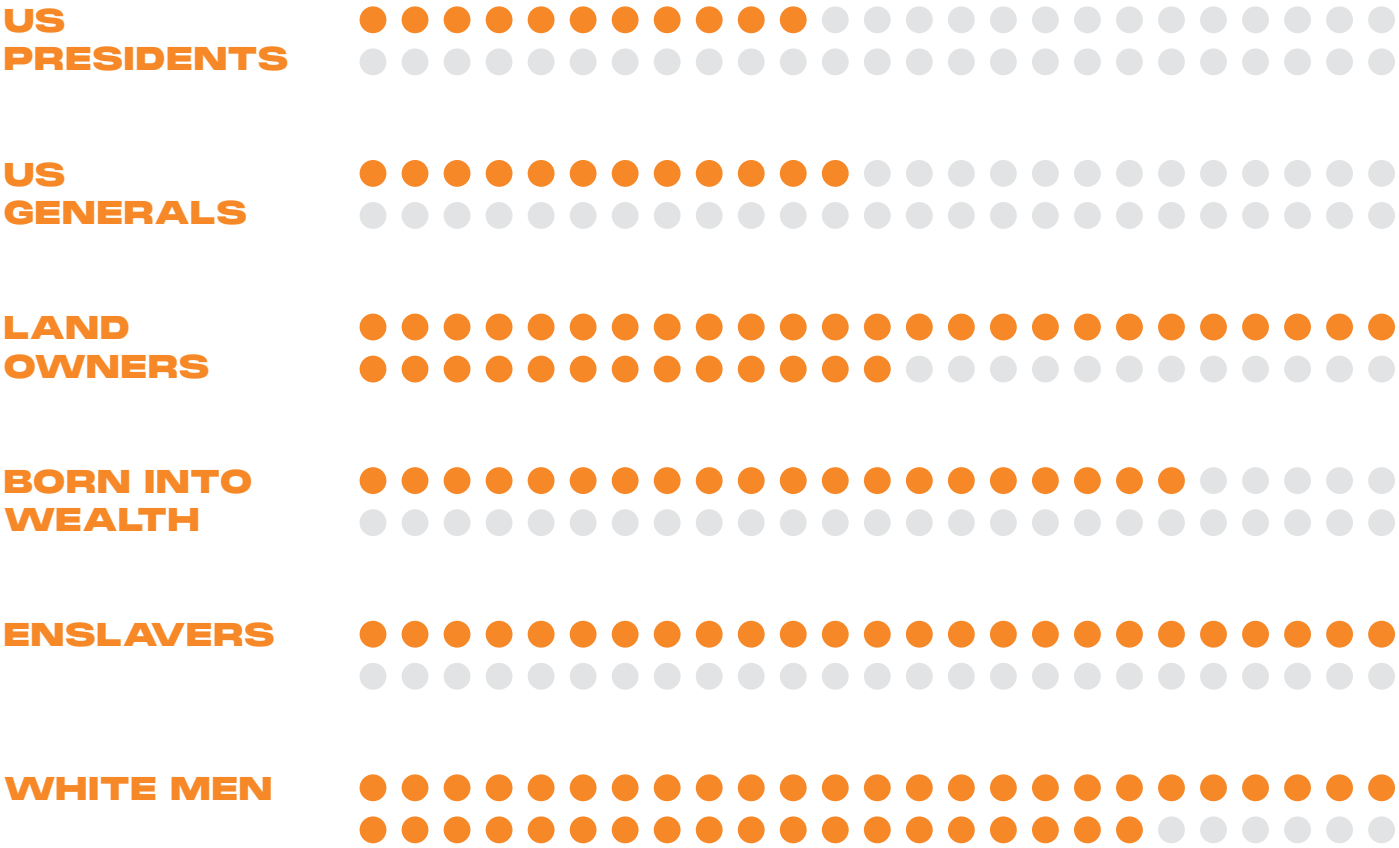


landscape as fictional, mythological, and allegorical figures. For example, within our study set, there are more recorded monuments depicting mermaids (22) than there are monuments to US congresswomen (just two: Barbara Jordan of Texas and Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey).

Ongoing discussions and actions related to the evolving monument landscape could respond to this misrepresentation with more diverse monuments to individuals/groups as well as responses to the long-standing suppression of a more representative understanding of public memory.

MONUMENTAL HEGEMONY

Representation across the Top 50 Individuals Recorded in US Public Monuments



CALL TO ACTION

Support a profound shift in representation to better acknowledge the complexity and multiplicity of this country's history.

THE MOST COMMON FEATURES FOUND IN AMERICAN MONUMENTS REFLECT WAR AND CONQUEST

Violence is the most dominant subject of commemoration across the nation. Thirty-three percent of conventional monuments in the data set, inclusive of memorials, include mentions of war. Walk through many towns and cities across the country, and this data will be reflected in the symbols and stories one encounters: statues of generals immortalized on horseback with cannons and weaponry, or long memorial roll calls of local fallen soldiers carved into stone. One is far less likely to encounter other kinds of stories embedded within communities in monuments—for example, those that center civil rights, public health, neighborhood activism, and education. This dynamic and discrepancy reflect broader investments and values we hold beyond our monument pedestals.

The toll of war on our country is channeled through our monuments. Despite their preponderance, our monuments generally minimize the social and environmental costs of warfare for our veterans, their families, and our communities.

For example, our data set contains 5,917 records for Civil War, but only nine records for monuments commemorating the Reconstruction period following the war. The ratio of records that refer to war and peace monuments is 13:1. The ratio of war to love is 17:1. The ratio of war to care is 59:1.

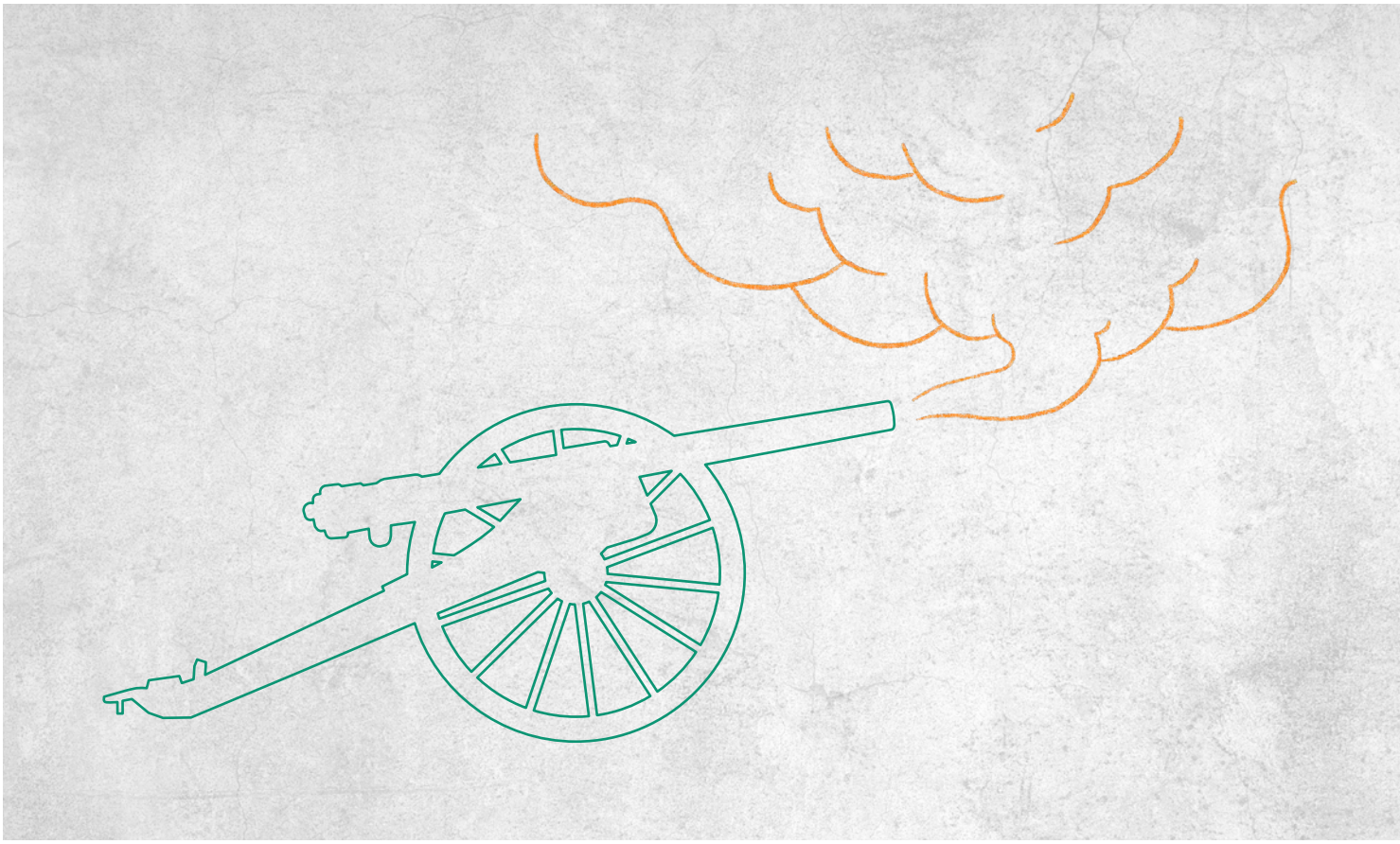
33%
Percentage of recorded monuments that represent war

9%
Percentage of recorded monuments that mention *veterans*

45%
Monuments and markers on the National Mall in Washington, DC that commemorate war

5,917
Number of recorded monuments that mention the *Civil War*

9
Number of recorded monuments that represent post–Civil War Reconstruction

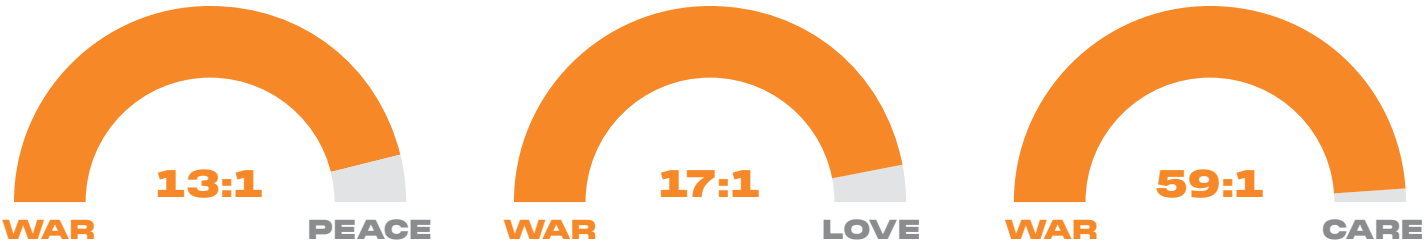


In their content and form, war monuments and memorials also obscure the violence of combat and conquest. A broader approach to indexing monuments of war and conquest, looking through and beyond the data, reveals additional insights into the geography of American conflict. For example, *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* (Gutzom Borglum, 1941) was dynamited out of and carved into the face of the Lakota's Tunkasila Sakpe Paha sacred space and remains a site of struggle over broken treaties today. Entering the term *massacre* into our study set returned one hundred records: fifty-three massacre monuments memorialize the killing of white settlers or soldiers by Indigenous tribes, while only four represent the killing of Native populations by white settlers. There are no results for memorials recognizing massacres of other people of color, despite at least thirty-four documented massacres of Black Americans between 1865 and 1876 alone.[9]

The monument landscape has long reflected the country's history of war and conquest. It also speaks to the national crises of harm, trauma, and grief that are embedded within it. We can envision an approach to commemoration that honors veterans and weighs the extensive toll of war and conquest, and that looks to transform the monument landscape through stories embedded within communities that foster repair and healing.

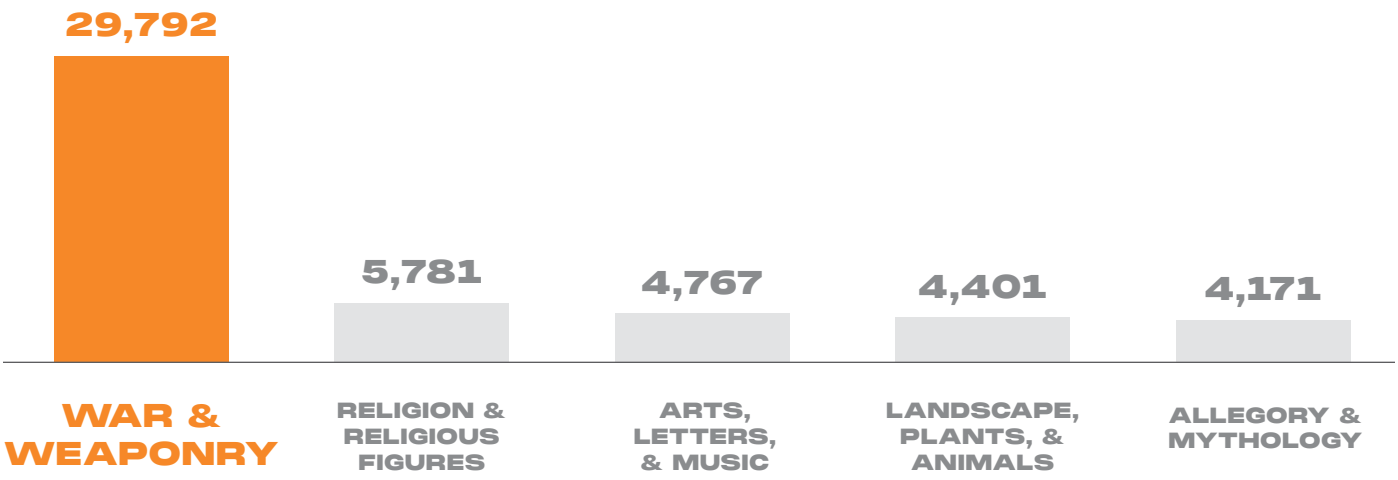
VALUES IN PERSPECTIVE

Ratios of keyword occurrence throughout dataset



TOP 5 ATTRIBUTES

Counts of keywords drawn from monument data sources' full records[10]



CALL TO ACTION

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Reimagine commemoration by elevating stories embedded within communities that foster repair and healing.

THE STORY OF THE UNITED STATES AS TOLD BY OUR CURRENT MONUMENT LANDSCAPE MISREPRESENTS OUR HISTORY

Monuments offer interpretations of the past and play an outsize role in shaping historical narratives and shared memory. In the service of remembering the preferred narratives of their creators, they also can erase, deny, or belittle the historical experience of those who have not had the civic power or privilege to build them. Where inequalities and injustices exist, monuments often perpetuate them.

Monument makers often strive for surface-level markers of historical accuracy, paying close attention to authentic details of clothing, weaponry, and quotation, but often eclipse social factors that inform public memory and broader contexts. This includes elevating figures as singular, without the people who made their contributions possible, or situating them in places they never set foot. Monuments suppress far more than they summon us to remember; they are not mere facts on a pedestal.

Some monuments are obvious fabrications. Several monuments put historical figures together in unlikely combinations. For example, in Camden, New Jersey, *America Receiving the Gift of the Nations* (Nicola D'Ascenzo Studios, 1916) depicts the United States, embodied by an otherwise nondescript white woman, receiving contributions from Moses, Renaissance painters, Christopher Columbus,

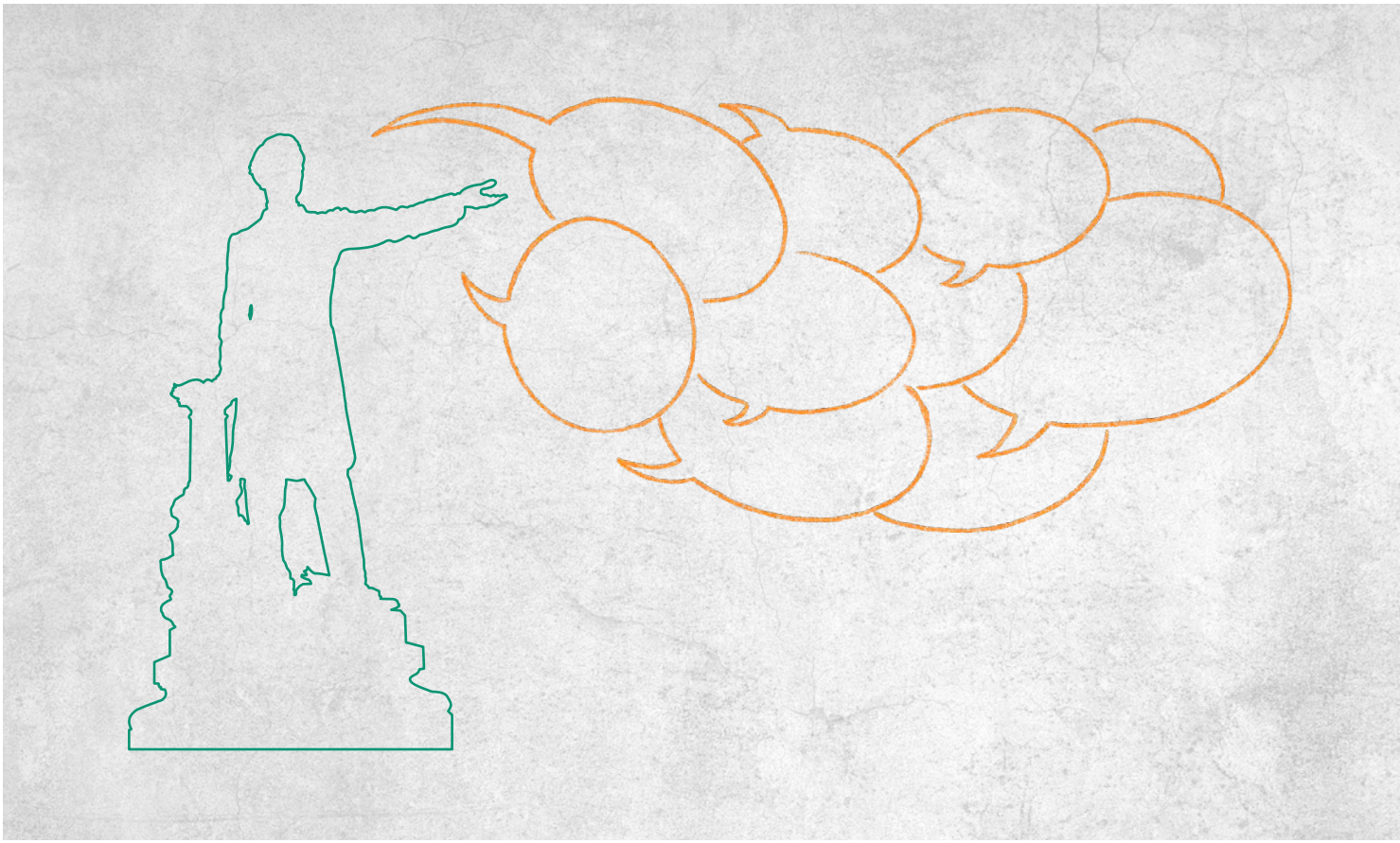
3%
Percentage of recorded Confederate monuments that mention the word *defeat*

0.5%
Percentage of recorded monuments that represent enslaved peoples and abolition efforts

56%
Percentage of recorded pioneer monuments built after 1930

$40 MILLION
Taxpayer funds spent to preserve Confederate symbols and sites, according to *Smithsonian Magazine*[12]

99.4%
Estimated percentage of monuments not toppled or removed in 2020–21



William Penn, Johannes Gutenberg, Walt Whitman, and Dante. In Washington, DC's *Emancipation Memorial* (Thomas Ball, 1876), President Abraham Lincoln is depicted alongside a fugitive enslaved man named Archer Alexander whom he never met, saw, or freed. Our Top 50 list includes historical figures such as Nathan Hale and Sacagawea, whose actual likenesses are largely unknown and whose biographies are unreliable at best.

Specific types of monuments are constructed within particular political, social, and cultural contexts. For instance, the biggest surges of Confederate monuments were dedicated between 1900 and 1920, along with the rise of Jim Crow and a second wave of symbols that marked the resistance to the gains of the civil rights era in the latter half of the twentieth century.[11] Similar to the way that the construction of Confederate monuments was used to exert power over Black Americans in the early twentieth century, statues devoted to a mythologized story of white Western expansion were created in the mid-twentieth century.

Over half (56%) of the results for the search term *pioneer* in our data set were built after 1930, as part of a popular culture's myth-making around the frontier and "Wild West," while diminishing the forcible

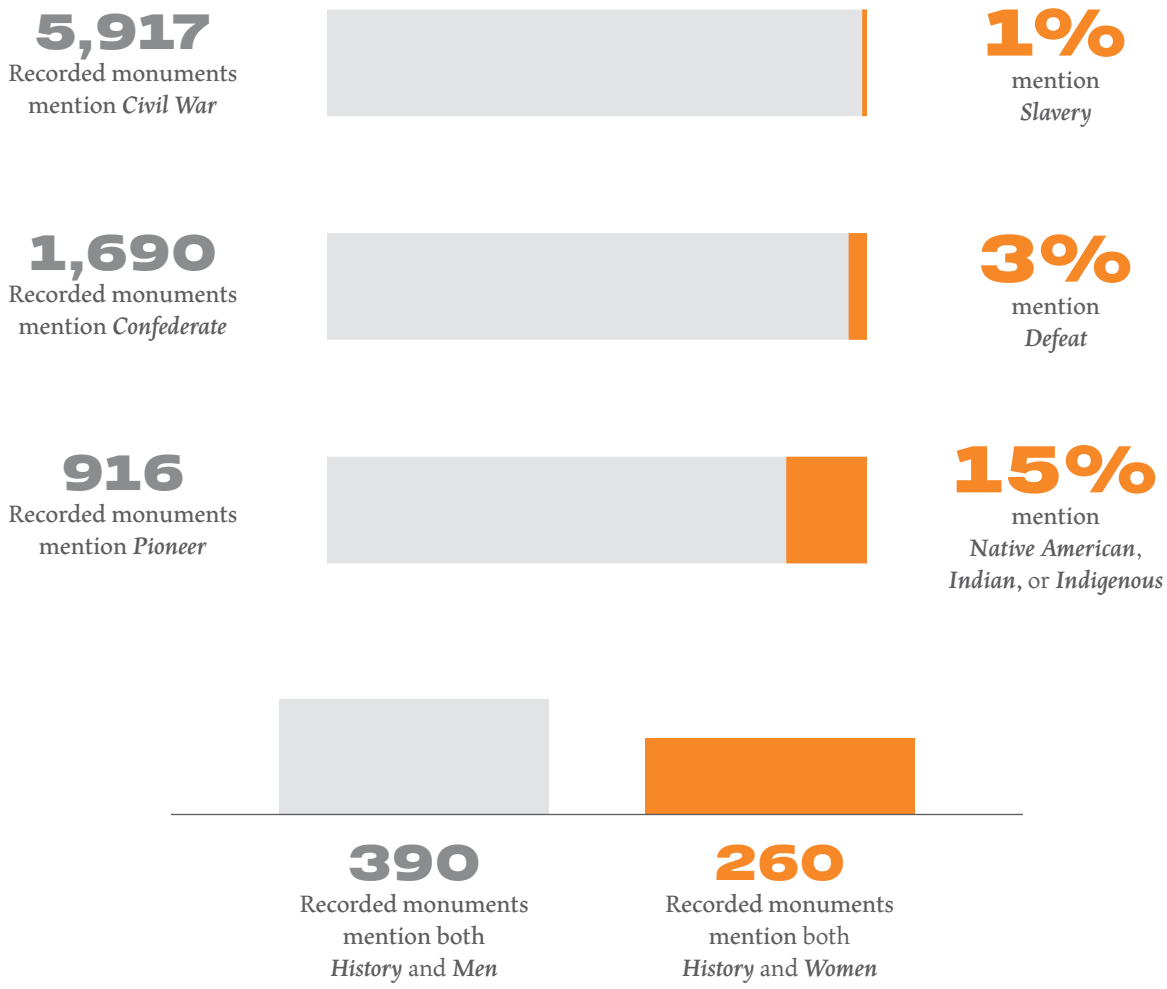
removal of many Indigenous communities from their homelands through armed conflict and land dispossession.

Traditionally, monuments obscure the particular circumstances and motivations behind their own creation. They are presented as timeless and universal.

While monuments are not history, they can and should be held accountable to history. Monuments that perpetuate harmful myths and that portray conquest and oppression as acts of valor require honest reckoning, conceptual dismantling, and active repair.

NARRATIVES IN CONTEXT

Stories and insights from study set searches



CALL TO ACTION

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Engage in a holistic reckoning with monumental erasures and lies and move toward a monument landscape that acknowledges a fuller history of this country.

MAKING HISTORY IN PUBLIC SPACE

Our nation's broader monument landscape continues to evolve, as artists, educators, and activists critically engage our inherited symbols in order to unearth the next generation of monuments. Although our study set of nearly 50,000 monuments comprised conventional monuments that were sanctioned and recorded by institutions, organizations, and governmental agencies, people across diverse communities and regions have different ideas about what monuments could and should be. Our nation's monument data has not yet caught up with the transformation of the monument landscape, especially as more locally led artist and grassroots coalitions confront toxic legacies and open up new processes for representing a fuller history in public spaces.

We can move forward by embracing the idea that monuments must change. It is not enough to attempt to "complete" the monument landscape without responding to long-standing distortions in that landscape and the histories they uphold. We can envision a landscape that reflects a plurality of stories and histories, where monuments serve as waystations along a bending arc of justice. Monuments can be reimagined as places where we encounter the past, present, and future together.

We also can encourage our monument makers and stewards to work with communities to contend with the sites and symbols they have inherited in meaningful and intentional ways; work with municipalities and crowd-sourced platforms to add thoughtful layers of interpretation and map emergent sites of memory; simultaneously push and advocate with local public art and history offices for greater forms of support; and work with artists to envision monuments that move beyond "permanence" and "timelessness" to meet the demands and aspirations of our time.

Through new forms of monumental affirmation, creativity, and resistance, we can repair and reimagine how history lives with us every day.

WE CAN REPAIR AND REIMAGINE HOW HISTORY LIVES WITH US EVERYDAY.

NOTES

1 Monument Lab has engaged in participatory action and artistic research between 2015 and 2021 in the following cities: Austin, Chicago, Houston, New Orleans, New York City, Newark, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and St. Louis, as well as virtual workshops with Americans for the Arts and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

2 "OpenStreet Map Wiki," Wikipedia, updated August 4, 2021, https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Tag:historic%3Dmonument.

3 "Tips, Tales, & Testimonies: To Save Outdoor Sculpture!," Smithsonian Cultural Heritage, Heritage Preservation, Inc., 2002, https://www.culturalheritage.org/docs/default-source/resources/cap/outdoor-collections/tips-tales-and-testimonies-introduction.pdf?sfvrsn=81370b20_2.

4 "The Names: Vietnam Veterans Memorial," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/the-names/; David Mehegan, "For These Union Dead," *Boston Globe Magazine*, September 5, 1982, 32-33.

5 This figure is based on the highest estimate of three sources that track monument removals (Wikipedia, Toppled Monuments Archive, and *USA Today*) divided by 50,000, which accounts for our study set (48,178) rounded upward for gaps in record keeping.

6 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

7 "*What Is Deferred Maintenance?*" National Park Service, Updated January 15, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/deferred-maintenance.htm.

8 Family wealth assessed from biographical information drawn from Wikidata. Land ownership assessed from census records, estate records, biographical information drawn from WikiData and Ancestry.com data.

9 Equal Justice Initiative, "Documenting Reconstruction Violence: Known and Unknown Horrors," *Reconstruction in America: Racial Violence after the Civil War, 1865-1876*, vol. 1. (2020): 42-52.

10 There are many more attribute tags than physical monuments because full records may be tagged with multiple attributes. For example, a statue with a horse might be tagged as "landscape, plants, & animals," "allegory & mythology," and "war & weaponry," depending on the context.

11 "*Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy,*" Southern Poverty Law Center, February 1, 2019, https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy.

12 Brian Palmer and Seth Freed Wessler, "The Costs of the Confederacy," *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2018.

DATA SOURCES

Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage

Commemorative Landscapes of North Carolina

Connecticut Historic Property Database

Contemporary Monuments to the Slave Past

Digital Atlas of Micronesia

Florida Master Site File

Georgia's Natural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources GIS

Georgia Historical Markers

Historic Markers Database, Historical Markers, and War Memorials

Hawai'i Register of Historic Places

Illinois County Markers

Jefferson County Kentucky Historic Markers

Kansas Historic Sites

Louisiana Office of Cultural Development Standing Structures and Districts HP Cultural Resources

LUCY, New Jersey's Cultural Resources GIS

MassGIS Data

Mississippi Landmarks

Missouri Historic Districts and Sites

National Capital Planning Commission Memorials in Washington, DC

National Parks Service National Register

National Parks Service Points of Interest

Nebraska Historical Marker Program

Nevada State Historical Markers

New Hampshire Historical Highway Markers

New York City Parks Monuments

New York State Historic Sites

OpenStreetMap

Pennsylvania Historical Markers

Pioneer Monuments

Portland Historic Landmarks

Puerto Rico Registro Nacional de Lugares Históricos

Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission GIS

Smithsonian Save Outdoor Sculpture

South Dakota Statues List

State Historic Sites of North Dakota

Texas Historical Sites Atlas

Utah Markers and Monuments

Veteran Memorials in Oregon

Washington Information System for Architectural & Archaeological Records Data

The World War I Memory Inventory Project

Whose Heritage?

Wyoming Monuments and Markers

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ABOUT MONUMENT LAB

Monument Lab is a nonprofit art and history studio based in Philadelphia. Monument Lab works with artists, students, educators, activists, municipal agencies, and cultural institutions on participatory approaches to public engagement and collective memory. Founded by Paul Farber and Ken Lum in 2012, Monument Lab cultivates and facilitates critical conversations around the past, present, and future of monuments.

As a studio and curatorial team, we collaborate to make generational change in the ways art and history live in public. Our approaches include producing citywide art exhibitions, site-specific commissions, and participatory research initiatives. We aim to inform the processes of public art, as well as the permanent collections of cities, museums, libraries, and open data repositories. Through exhibitions, research programs, editorial platforms, and fellowships, we have connected with hundreds of thousands of people in person and millions online. Monument Lab critically engages our inherited symbols in order to unearth the next generation of monuments that elevate stories of artists, educators, and grassroots coalitions.

For more information or to support our work, visit monumentlab.com and follow @monument_lab.

ABOUT THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

TOP 50 IMAGE CREDITS

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2. Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington*, begun 1795. Oil on canvas. 76.8 x 64.1 cm. Met Museum 07.160.
3. Sebastiano del Piombo, *Portrait of a Man, Said to be Christopher Columbus (born about 1446, died 1506)*, 1519. Oil on canvas. 106.7 x 88.3 cm. Met Museum 00.18.2.
4. Trikosko, Marion S., *Martin Luther King press conference / MST.*, 1964. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2003688129/ Call number: LC-U9-11696-9A.
5. Antoniazzo Romano, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, ca. 1480–81. Tempera and gold on wood, transferred to wood. 160.3 × 59.7 cm. Met Museum 2017.714.
6. Mathew B. Brady, *General Robert E. Lee*, 1865. Albumen silver print from glass negative. 14 × 9.3 cm. Met Museum 2005.100.1213.
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27. Detroit Publishing Company. *Fray Junípero Serra*, California 1913 - 1930. Offset photomechanical print. The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-3f3f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.
28. Frederick Coffay. *Early pioneers and trappers, Sacajawea, the bird woman*. [1800-1850?]. Copy negative. 13 x 10 cm. Denver Public Library Call Number: X-33784.
29. Mathew B. Brady, *Frederick Douglass*, 1880. Albumen silver print from glass negative. 14.7 × 10.2 cm. Met Museum 2005.100.754.
30. Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Martin Luther (1483–1546)*, probably 1532. 33.3 x 23.2 cm. Met Museum 55.220.2.
31. Unknown, *Portrait of Jacques Marquette*, 1670. Unknown size. https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/e471f030-0d92-0135-23f6-0050569601ca-7.
32. Robert F. Cranston, *Dwight David Eisenhower*, 1953. Color carbro print. 39.5 × 31.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery NPG.2013.19.
33. Henry Salem Hubbell, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, 1935. Oil on Masonite. 121.8 × 117 × 0.6 cm. National Portrait Gallery NPG.66.68.
34. George Graham, *Anthony Wayne*, 1796. Mezzotint on paper. 45.4 x 35.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery NPG.79.206.
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36. Bernal, Azevedo. *Libertador Simon Bolivar*, 1922. Photomechanical print: photochrom, color. Photomechanical. 92 x 122 cm https://lccn.loc.gov/2001703585 Call number: PAGA 7, no. 2985 (E size) [P&P].
37. Unknown. *Portrait of Robert Burns, Ayr, Scotland.*, 1890-1900. Photomechanical print: photochrom, color. https://lccn.loc.gov/2001703585 Call number: LOT 13407, no. 017.
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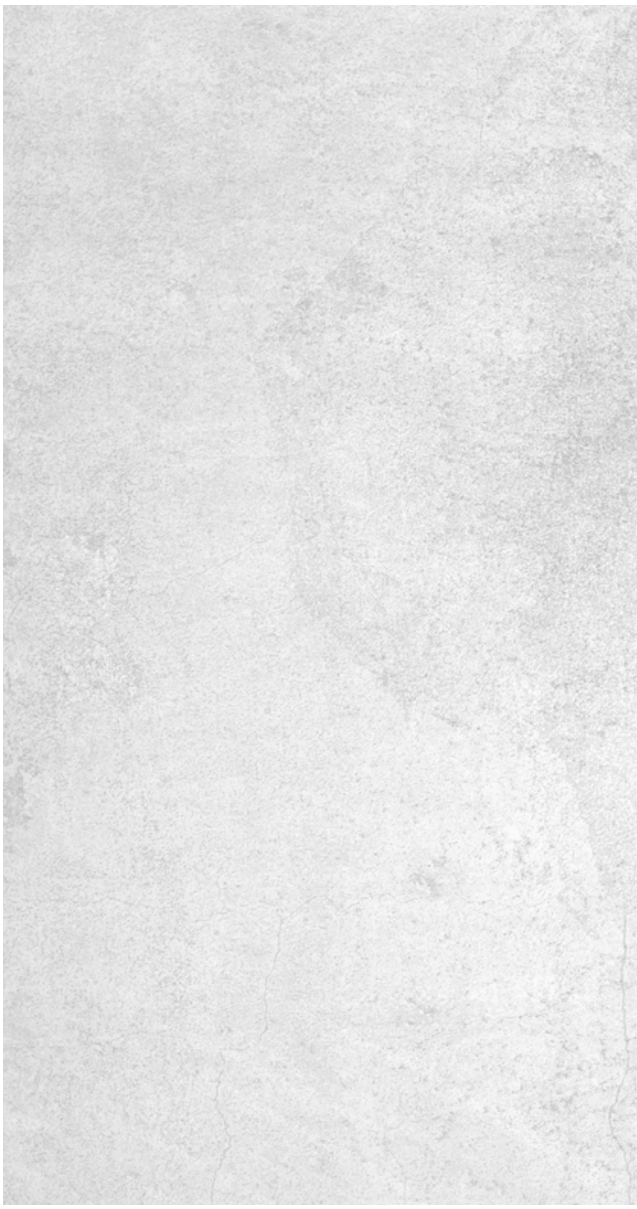

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