



New Monuments Taskforce is a fantastical municipal agency engaged in the dialogue, design and development of Bay Area Monuments and Memorials. Led by a collaborative team of artists, activists, designers and cultural workers, NMT strives to broaden public understanding of local monuments and advise relative civic agencies on the removal, redesign or retention of SF's statuary symbols. We create space for radical research, community-led processes and political engagement through an artistic lens. Our inaugural art initiative, taskforce presents, "The Relic Report (SF)" a two-part publication that evaluates the city's public art and its intersection with our country's racist history.



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The Relic Report

An unofficial municipal study of SF's Monuments

Recent topplings of racist and colonial monuments—representing white patriarchy and racism—have sent the message that symbols of social injustice will no longer stand. In San Francisco, this national movement, along with a decommissioned RFP of the Dr. Maya Angelou monument and the removed Christopher Columbus Statue, have pushed city agencies (SF Arts Commission, Human Rights Commission, Recreation & Parks Department) to evaluate their public statues and “their alignment with our city’s progressive values.”

Wary of the city’s track record, New Monuments Taskforce has self-commissioned a study of their own, **The Relic Report**, and we’re looking at the same dataset: the 87 monuments in SFAC’s Civic Art Collection, Monuments and Memorials. The Relic Report will produce a parallel report that covers similar questions to that of SFAC (historical allegory, community resistance, representation) and also ruminates on the aesthetics, diversity and constructed narratives associated with American memorialization techniques, while introducing community led research processes.

This work considers constructed histories embodied by these objects to make recommendations for the future of monuments in San Francisco. This study is a tour of SF’s monumental landscape, its influences, its meaning, its categorical distribution. We’re asking not only which monuments should remain, but where removed monuments should go. Do we even have a relationship to these artworks? What will replace them? Rather than replace neoclassical monuments to prominent White men with neoclassical monuments of prominent Black and Brown men, how can we design monuments to engage us to think? To see the truth? To see ourselves? To heal? And moving past messaging and aesthetics, how can we build political power and processes that materialize the monuments of the future?

Notes on monuments

ABOUT THE REPORT

The Relic Report is an unofficial municipal study of San Francisco’s monuments and memorials and their intersection with our country’s racist history. The two-part publication documents a playful investigation of monuments in the city’s civic art collection and reflections on what to do next. This booklet, part one, presents research and instructions for citizens interested in rating and reviewing monuments. A research guide of sorts, this booklet is intended to provide fodder for critical conversations. Part two (forthcoming) will be published as a creative culmination of the participants’ reflections and recommendations to the city. The Relic Report will be delivered to city agencies in December to engage the city with the taskforce to discuss SF’s monumental landscape; past, present and future.

WHY NOW?

Amidst a global pandemic, a national reckoning around race, and an approaching election, San Francisco has witnessed social and political reverberations surrounding monuments and public space. Around Juneteenth, protesters toppled several statues (General Ulysses S. Grant, Padre Serra, Francis Scott Key.) That same weekend, the city also removed the Columbus statue from the front of Coit Tower. Similarly, an initially endearing legislative effort by Mark Farrell and Catherine Stefani’s offices to add more women to SF’s civic art collection (see page 4) inadvertently turned after Lava Thomas’s winning contemporary design for a Dr. Maya Angelou memorial was rescinded and a new RFP quickly published. Supervisor Stefani argued, *“As I carry the legislation across the finish line to elevate women in monuments, I wanted to do it in the same way that men have been historically elevated in this city.”* This particular preference of leaning on traditional aesthetics to properly “elevate” individuals through memorialization brings up central questions this study seeks to address. In response to these events, SFAC’s Roberto Ordeñana released a public apology to artist Lava Thomas, citing their systematic failure and the great harm it caused.

These recent events lead to questions of how San Francisco *has* and *should* approach memorialization. More certain now than ever before, is it time for community members to be part of the process of assessing our alignment to our inherited statuary relics and demand what we want for future monuments and memorials.

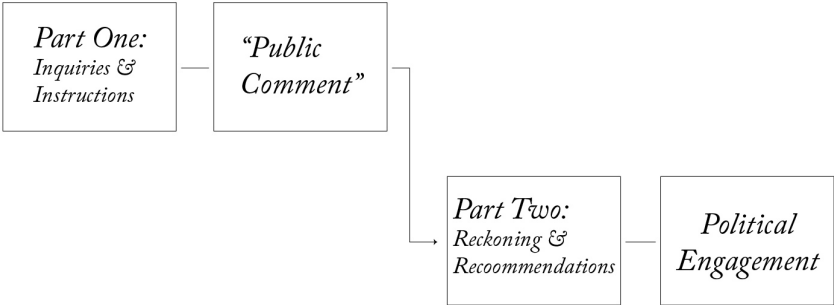
HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is a collection of research, groupings, inquiries and instructions. Think of this booklet as a research guide, an artistic interpretation of qualitative analysis. It introduces defined subgroups as its primary frame of inquiry into the civic monuments in question. Subgroup analysis involves subdividing data points (the monuments) by qualitative characteristics (e.g. historical, race, aesthetic, form) or other variables to identify disparities and differences amongst a population. Subgroups in this study were created through a process of play and provocation, they are: (1) The Boys Club; (2) Original Gentrifiers or OGS; (3) Modern-ish; (4) War and Peace; (5) Artists and Idealists; and (6) What Remains.

Subgroups are meant to initiate inquiry, expose irregularities and function as an entrypoint into a topic. Intended to provide fodder for critical conversations around monuments in question, the subgroup analysis will be linked to the “Public Comment” Survey provided within this booklet. (It’s online too)

We are establishing a “Public Comment” period associated with this publication, allowing residents to participate in defining community goals and recommendations for civic monuments. Reflections and Recommendations will be the subject of our forthcoming publication. We will deliver the two-part publication to relative city agencies in November to inspire political engagement with the taskforce regarding the future of SF’s monuments.

THE PROCESS



The Boys Club

Monuments tell us about who we are, where we have been. So what does that entail when there are three women and fifty-three men represented in the San Francisco Civic Art Collection: Monuments and Memorials. Many men are SF government bureaucrats (mayors, commissioners, engineers) and some are national heroes (presidents, military leaders). Most of the foreign prominent men are European, often gifts of friendship or alliance, which is interesting in itself. Mayor Willie Brown is the only black man memorialized in the collection. Of the women, only two are local (Feinstein and Cooper) and Nightingale was not, a heroic figure to modern nursing, she sits atop Laguna Honda Hospital.

The stark imbalance has been on the radar of the city for some time now. The lack of female representation is the subject of a 2017 legislation by Commissioners Farrell and Stefani to increase the number of female statues to “30% of the total statues,” roughly 25. Stefani’s stated intention is to elevate women as men have been historically elevated and her solution is promoting design in the neoclassical tradition for monuments to women. Is this the only way? Is the solution merely swapping the marble pedestal space of men, for that of women?



2. Benjamin Franklin; 3. James A Garfield; 4. General Henry Halleck; 5. Francis Scott Key; 7. Thomas Starr King; 10. Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial; 11. Goethe and Schiller; 12. Mechanic’s Monument (Peter Donahue); 15. Hall McAllister; 16. William McKinley; 18. Padre Junipero Serra; 19. Robert Burns; 20. General Ulysses S. Grant; 24. Giuseppe Verdi; 25. Miguel Cervantez; 26. George Washington; 27. Frederick Funston; 28. Robert Emmet; 29. James M. Seawell; 30. Dennis T. Sullivan Plaque; 31. General John J. Pershing; 32. Ignatz and Sigmund Steinhart; 33. Abraham Lincoln; 34. Father William D. McKinnon; 35. William Shakespeare; 36. Edward Robeson Taylor; 37. Roald Amundsen; 41. Sun-Yat-Sen;

42. James Rolph Jr; 43. James D. Phelan; 44. Carl G. Larsen; 46. Guglielmo Marconi Memorial Plaque; 48. Edmund Godchaux; 49. Joseph B. Strauss; 50. Andrew Furusetz; 51. Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. 52. Leonardo Da Vinci; 53. William C. Ralston Monument; 54. John McLaren; 55. Angelo J. Rossi; 56. Ludwig Van Beethoven; 57. Frank Marini; 59. St. Francis of Assisi (Feeding the Birds); 61. Miguel Hidalgo Y Costilla; 62. Juan Bautista de Anza; 65. Statue of King Carlos III; 68. Simon Bolivar; 70. Bust of George Moscone; 77. Ashurbanipal; 78. Mohandas K. Gandhi; 79. John F. Shelley; 80. George Moscone; 83. Michael M. OShaughnessy; 84. Willie L Brown; 86. Harvey Milk; 87. Adolph Sutro

Original Gentrifiers (OGs)

First came the Spanish, then came the Pioneers, and finally early American-Dreamers. Fifteen monuments commemorating prominent men of early colonial expeditions, settlement and land development live in the public art collection. The fifteen men commemorated in this group all had a hand in developing the San Francisco we live in today. The Spanish initially arrived by sea in 1770, and Assisi (18) established a headquarters in Monterey/ Carmel. The second Spanish expedition came through Mexico at the behest of King Carlos III (65) and they followed Juan Bautista de Anza (62) through Alta California (of Mexico) up El Camino Real and established missionaries and presidios with Indigenous labor. Nearly 150 years later the Pioneers start rolling in; most of the monuments commemorating the Pioneers are fictional representations of Pioneer life (8, 9, 23) They are larger than life and are littered through downtown San Francisco. Other pioneer prominent figures (15, 57, 53) are men of prominence, Ralston (53) established the California Bank, and developed the most extravagant hotel in California at the time.

The last of the OGs are described as philanthropists, wealthy land owners who paved the way for the SF we know today. Some are chill, Larsen (44) aka “the Gentle Dane” was invested in developing Sunset District. James D Phelan (43) a former mayor committed to “City Beautification” inspired by European cities, is responsible for quite a few monuments in the civic collection today. He unsuccessfully ran for Senate on the campaign “Keep California White.” Complicated and problematic, his visions for San Francisco were grand, they promoted arts and culture, and they built monuments... but only for white wealthy people.



8. Pioneer Monument (James Lick Monument); 9. Native Sons Monument (Admission Day Monument); 15. Hall McAllister; 17. SunDial; 18. Padre Junipero Serra; 23. Pioneer Mother; 43. James D. Phelan; 44. Carl G. Larsen; 53. William C. Ralston Monument; 57. Frank Marini; 58. Christopher Columbus; 59. St. Francis of Assisi (Feeding the Birds); 62. Juan Bautista de Anza; 65. Statue of King Carlos III; 87. Adolph Sutro

Modern-ish

By modern, I mean modern aesthetics. It seems the aesthetic form of monuments we've inherited is limited to pedestals, bronze and marble. Formal gestures often depict roman statuary symbols and details of neoclassical tradition. Some, like Donald Trump, regard this style as noble, honorable, "historical." The majority of monuments within the collection are cast in this style, but the monuments shown here are not...well, kinda.

The seventeen monuments and memorials within this subgroup take shape in "innovative" ways by either an inventive use of materials, or a non-traditional formal gesture. St Francis of the Guns (63) for example is a robed Catholic saint, created from melted gun metal from weapons collected as part of a gun-return program in 1968. The statue displays mosaics of assassinated American political figures. The Holocaust (69) is one of the most honest depictions in the entire collection, by renowned Pop-Artist George Segal. Portals of the Past (21) is a ruin, remnants of a palacial home left standing after the 1906 earthquake, donated to the city as a vessel to spark memory. Unworked Stone is a frequent of this subgroup (22, 37, 38, 64, 67) and commemorates a variety of things: peace offerings, war, a garden. Internatinal Longshoremen & Warehousemen's memorial (71) was a collaborative effort by the artists combining mural and sculpture. 51 and 52, were hard to place, sculptued by Olmstead in a greek fashion, the scale of the heads evoke a mythological vibe. Overall, these modern-ish forms we're the most visually interesting part of the collection, their subject matter was also more broad. This sub-group is a step in the right direction. We can borrow artistic gestures used in this subgroup to design the next wave of monuments.



1. Lottas Fountain; 12. Mechanic's Monument (Peter Donahue); 17. SunDial; 21. Portals of the Past; 22. Luisa Tetrizzini; 37. Roald Amundsen; 38. Doughboy; 46. Guglielmo Marconi Memorial Plaque; 51. Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. 52. Leonardo Da Vinci; 60. Karin Maru Monument; 63. St. Francis of the Guns; 64. Hagiwara Family Plaque; 66. Movement: The First 100 Years; 67. Peace Monument; 69. The Holocaust; 71. International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's; 85. Abraham Lincoln Brigade National Monument; 86. Harvey Milk; 87. Adolph Sutro

War and Peace

Not all war monuments are made the same. In America, ours celebrate triumph, but never ever failure. We didn't even have to be there to celebrate the win: Simon Bolivar (68) and Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo (61) are heroic liberator figures from Mexico and Venezuela offered as gifts from their respective countries.

The most celebrated war in this subgroup is the Spanish-American War (13, 14, 27, 34, 85) followed by WWI (31, 38) Generals Halleck (4), Ulysses S. Grant (20, toppled), John J. Pershing (31) and Frederick Funston (27) are recognized for their keen military efforts. Doughboy (38) is a popular allegorical heroic figure that honors veterans and casualties from WWI. Though this Doughboy monument is one-of-a-kind, "the Doughboy" was a mass-produced super-hero-like figure of the monuments of 1920s-1930s, resulting in collectibles and memorabilia in miniaturized forms. There are only two monuments in this collection that symbolize peace (61, 67) and they are from Japan, constructed in the same style – a geologic formation inscribed with poetry as a gesture of amity.

Only two monuments in this subgroup claim to focus on the loss of individual life. Maya Lin once said "the only way you can work with history and the only way you can overcome anything is to accept it very very honestly." I believe monuments and memorials to loss of individual life try to work in this idea of acceptance. Monuments should not only teach history but how to move on, how to heal, how to do better.



4. General Henry Halleck; 13. The Dewey Monument (Admiral George Dewey); 14. California Volunteers, Spanish American War, 1898; 20. General Ulysses S. Grant; 27. Frederick Funston; 31. General John J. Pershing; 34. Father William D. McKinnon; 38. Doughboy; 60. Karin Maru Monument; 61. Miguel Hidalgo Y Costilla; 63. St. Francis of the Guns; 64. Hagiwara Family Plaque; 65. Statue of King Carlos III; 66. Movement: The First 100 Years; 67. Peace Monument; 68. Simon Bolivar;

Artists and Idealists

Monuments are tools to inspire. A large trend of the monuments in the SF Civic Art Collections are of admirable men gifted in the arts. Of the twenty-three statuary artifacts in this subgroup, nine (10,11,19,22,24,25,35,41,56) are foreign men in the arts. From Scottish poet Robert Burns (19) to the father of the first Chinese republic, Sun Yat Sen (41). Statues representing the artists and idealists are often gifts to the city and the majority of them litter Golden Gate Park. National cultural heroes include: Benjamin Franklin (2), Abraham Lincoln (22), Washington (26) and Francis Scott Key (5) composer of the Star Spangled Banner. The very first monument in the civic art collection is Lotta Crabtree, a performer and darling of the Gold Rush Era. Lotta's Fountain miraculously survived the 1906 earthquake and became a meeting point for families lost amongst the rubble. The two most recently built statues, Harvey Milk (86) built in 2008, and Adolph Sutro (87) built in 2013 are bronze busts on a marble columns and sit in City Hall.

The newest monument in the Civic Art Collection was supposed to be to Maya Angelou. An effort that began in 2017, the process of rescinding the RFP was a major inspiration for this project as it brought up deep questions about the city's understanding of monuments and their symbolic function in public spaces. The 2017 winning artist Lava Thomas said recently to *New York Times*, "Until the city can prove that it truly cares about the ideals and principles of Maya Angelou, San Francisco doesn't deserve her monument." And I think rightfully so, Dr. Maya Angelou was an artist and idealist in so many ways – her roles as a singer, dancer, director, activist, writer, essayist only covers the surface of her impact. Her influence should be monumentally championed, spotlit, copied for future generations... that may not happen now.



1. Lotta's Fountain; 2. Benjamin Franklin; 5. Francis Scott Key; 7. Thomas Starr King; 10. Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial; 11. Goethe and Schiller; 15. Hall McAllister; 19. Robert Burns; 22. Luisa Tetrizzini; 24. Giuseppe Verdi; 25. Miguel Cervantez; 26. George Washington; 33. Abraham Lincoln; 35. William Shakespeare; 39. California Theatre Plaque; 41. Sun-Yat-Sen; 54. John McLaren; 56. Ludwig Van Beethoven; 80. George Moscone; 86. Harvey Milk; 87. Adolph Sutro

What Remains

What remains are monuments that were hard to place. The monuments represent men, places and events that were historically significant but not necessarily interesting or viscerally relatable in any way.

More importantly, this subgroup brings up questions about our relationship to monuments. When talking to friends and taskforce members about the study, I got comments like, “I thought monuments were a thing of the past,” or “I just walk by these monuments and don’t even bother to look up.” One member mentioned, “I think all the monuments should be taken down and just go away.” and Walter Hood warned me, “Making new monuments is too easy, if we don’t learn from history, this moment will be hi-jacked.”

Our relationship to monuments as we understand them today is not special, it’s not productive. There’s a strong notion of apathy; of ambiguity towards monuments. DGAF would be an appropriate acronym to summarize our relationship to monuments. I wonder why? Our inherited monuments are tools for controlling narratives, America is guilty of re-writing the history as we know it. (Remember when they told us Indigenous peoples taught us how to grow corn?) Now, we live in a time of extreme change, flux, reckoning, reflection. We are in a moment. And as stated above, this moment cannot be hijacked. In an effort to write differently, this report attempts to look at history with fresh eyes.

How can we build monuments that look like ourselves? That feel familiar, that feel safe? We’re done with marble and bronze, this is a moment of reckoning, reflection and reclamation—this goes for public spaces and symbols.



3. James A Garfield; 6. Ball Thrower; 12. Mechanic’s Monument (Peter Donahue); 16. William McKinley; 26. George Washington; 28. Robert Emmet; 29. James M. Seawell; 30. Dennis T. Sullivan Plaque; 31. General John J. Pershing; 32. Ignatz and Sigmund Steinhart; 33. Abraham Lincoln; 34. Father William D. McKinnon; 36. Edward Robeson Taylor; 37. Roald Amundsen; 39. California Theatre Plaque; 40. Volunteer Fireman Memorial; 42. James Rolph

INTENTIONS

By now, hopefully you have noticed **The Relic Report** is a subjective examination of civic monuments under the guise of an *unofficial* municipal report. This work is a parallel study to an active *official* municipal report by SF Arts Commission, Human Rights Commission, Recreation & Parks Department. This booklet is the first step of The Relic Report's research process, it is a presentation of information on the monuments in the collection. The second step is a public-comment component, to generate community input on their feelings about SF's civic monuments. The Taskforce will gather (virtually) to discuss the citizen responses we receive as part of the public-comment component of the study. The comments you send may be used in the forthcoming publication where we will outline reflections and recommendations to the city on the future of monuments.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Step 1: Read this Booklet (The Relic Report: Part One)
- Step 2: Reflect, Feel free to do your own research, fact-check, create your own questions and inquiries
- Step 3: See enclosed mailer survey, and answer the (5) provided questions. And you can be honest, be imaginative, be weird. This study is not standard in any way, your reflections don't have to be either.
- Step 4: We want to send participants the forthcoming booklet (Part Two.) If you want a copy check that box and provide a mailing address so we can send you a copy in December.
- Step 5: **Mail the *completed* survey back to us at:**
530 Bush St #204, San Francisco, CA 94108
- Step 6: Tell a friend, you can get your hands on this book by emailing us at: newmonumentstaskforce@gmail.com

The Relic Report (SF) is the result of an artistic research project commissioned by Monument Lab and the Goethe Institut SF for their Shaping The Past program, an international art initiative examining innovative monument and memorialization techniques from around the world. The Relic Report (SF) was researched, written, designed and compiled by artist Cheyenne Concepcion. Bettina Wodianka of Goethe-Institut SF and Paul Farber of Monument Lab were key in helping produce this publication.

As part of the art project, Concepcion founded **New Monuments Taskforce**, a fantastical municipal body, to create space and invite artists, activists and arts organization to have a seat at the proverbial table for a discussion around SF's monuments. The taskforce will be pivotal in assessing reflections and making recommendations in the forthcoming publication.

Taskforce members include: Xavier G. Buck (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation); Cheyenne Concepcion (Artist/Designer); Anna Lisa Escobedo (YBCA); Paul Farber (Monument Lab); Elizabeth Gessel (MoAD); Lian Ladia (Organizer/Curator); Natalia Ivanona Mount (ProArts); Dyan Ruiz (People Power Media); Barry Threw (Gray Area); Shamsheer Virk (Zero1); Bettina Wodianka (Goethe Institut); Brenda Zhang, BZ (Artist/Designer)

THANK YOU

This was truly a collaborative effort. While I wrote and compiled the document, the pieces of advice and perspectives from all the taskforce and community members shaped this report a great deal.

Thank you to Bettina Wodianka, Paul Farber, Tricia Kim, Laurie Allen, Lava Thomas, Walter Hood, Tiffany Yau, Barry Threw, Anna Lisa Escobedo, Theolisa Williams, Quentin Langlois, Stella Kim, Brenda Zhang (BZ), Jeremy Ferguson, Bernadette Dia, Shamsheer Virk, Natalia Mount, Xavier Buck, Dyan Ruiz, Elizabeth Gessel. Your wealth of knowledge is priceless.

*If you are reading this booklet digitally,
you can complete this survey online:*

