



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1993 Volume I: The Symbolic Language of Architecture and Public Monuments

Memory: A Study of Monuments and Memorials

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.01.06
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This unit is designed to bridge academic research and artistic production for upper level high school students who are enrolled in a two-hour Visual Arts Block at the Co-operative Arts and Humanities High School. The focus of this unit is to examine how artists and architects have through their work participated in the cultural process of preserving a memory. Students will study how monuments and memorials function to communicate a given story and how the artist's creativity and innovation critically determines the form in which this communication will take place. This course is structured to combine a brief historical survey of significant monuments, memorials and works of art that function to preserve memory, with an analysis of the public memorials in New Haven including "temporal marker" such as shrines left on the roadside after a fatal a car accident or street graffiti which names victims of violence with the tag RIP (rest in peace).

On April 29th Terrell McFarlin-James, known as LI, died in a motorcycle accident on Dixwell Avenue. Shortly after his death graffiti artists painted the walls of a building near the location of LI's death in his remembrance. This course will try to demonstrate how this graffiti tag writing is motivated by the same human need to preserve memory that inspired the Roman elite who commissioned sculptors to design and build sarcophagi, and how this human need can be traced through history and exemplified in contemporary works like Mia Lins' Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Through a non-linear approach to presenting historical information, students will develop a critical vocabulary of the formal visual elements used by artists and architects in designing and building memorials. In turn students will use this vocabulary in their studio work. Students will be required to complete two design projects that function as a repository for a memory. The first project will require students to research and build models for a site-specific public memorial in New Haven concerning a topic of their choice; for the second project students will fabricate a temporal memorial. By presenting students with a parallel study of art historical and studio work this course will be based on the premise that one can see further when standing on the shoulders of a giant.

(Recommended for Visual Arts, Grades 9-12)

Key Words

Memorials Monuments Architecture Mexican

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