

CALL FOR CHAPTERS

Remembrance of Things Cast: Monuments and Memorials in the Age of #TakeItDown

Edited by Juilee Decker, Associate Professor of History, Rochester Institute of Technology

Initial Interest Deadline: January 31, 2021 via email jdgsh@rit.edu

Cast in bronze, stone or otherwise created of seemingly permanent materials, monuments and memorials bear witness to valor, heroics, or tragedy associated with a person or historic event: as embodied narratives in the public realm, these works perpetuate, both implicitly and explicitly, the proxy battle for a community, culture, or nation's past. However, national reckonings on racial injustice in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere have re-positioned monuments and memorials as an historical tripwire drawn taught by issues of race, colonization, and marginalization. Mounting concerns over extrajudicial killings of black men in the United States and national reckonings on social injustice have played out in our town squares, boulevards, university quadrangles, and administrative edifices in the form of protests, open calls for change, and action. Such grassroots initiatives have made clear how the visual (and nominal) remembrances of some contested historical figures undermine policies and practices of the institutions and communities where their likenesses exist. Thus, efforts entitled #TakeItDown, #RemoveConfederateStatues, and #RhodesMustFall, have recoiled at the very role of such representations and have born witness to acts of destruction, iconoclasm, removal, recontextualization, and/or re-presentation. In particular, the removal of the statue of British imperialist and politician Cecil Rhodes from its plinth at the University of Cape Town in April 2015 has spawned a wide-sweeping reconsideration and re-framing of memorials to figures involved in the Atlantic slave trade, British colonialism, absolute rule, white supremacy, and genocide.

Acknowledging the ways in which the past—which is embodied through monuments and memorials—intrudes into daily life in immediate, persistent, and anxious ways, this call for chapters seeks contributions from researchers, scholars, and practitioners that answer questions about the roles that monuments and memorials play in the staging of cultural, regional, national or other dramas as well as their anxieties, fears, and fabrications. By using monuments and memorials as lenses through which to view race, memory, and the legacies of war, power, and subjugation, this volume aims to show how these works and their visible representations of entitlement, possession, control, and authority can offer, anew, the opportunity to pose and answer questions about whose memory matters and what our symbols say about who we are and what we value. For it is through their desecration, destruction, removal, and re-contextualization, that monuments and memorials can lay to rest those values for which communities no longer have any use. The sculptures become a remembrance of things cast.

This edited volume seeks chapters comprising 5,000 words from authors whose research, scholarship, and/or public practice considers monuments, memorials, public memory, identity, and representation from across the globe. Given the impact of contemporary issues surrounding 19th-and 20th-century constructions, chapters focusing on monuments and memorials created during this era are of primary focus; although authors may tell the stories of earlier material culture and sites and their contestation, *as long as the acts of destruction, iconoclasm, removal, recontextualization, and/or re-presentation have occurred since 2015, the age of #TakeItDown*. Please note that discussion of earlier acts of destruction, iconoclasm, or removal (prior to 2015) is

viable *only if* new meanings, contextualizations, or re-considerations have occurred since 2015 that dramatically alter our understanding of the monument or memorial.

Possible topics might include:

- case studies of the destruction, iconoclasm, removal, recontextualization, and/or re-presentation through repair of a monument or memorial since 2015 and the implications of these acts
- discussion of grassroots iconoclasm in the 21st century, including the toppling of any monuments *other than* the bronze of Edward Colston, which was forcibly removed in June 2020 in Bristol, UK
- analysis of how the removal of monuments and memorials contest historiographies and hagiographies
- positioning of acts of destruction as performative, recursive, or dialogic
- examination of how the modification or destruction of monuments and memorials may be seen as a performative act that questions the political power configured in public space or that questions how public space shapes public memory and politics
- address of the ways in which the disruption of the built environment through monument and memorial removal, in turn, fractures understandings of history, memory, identity, bias, and representation
- discussion of elision from our built environment
- critique of how, through presence and subsequent absence, monuments and memorials offer insight, perspectives, and understandings of communal identity, continuation, and aspiration

Each chapter shall be 20 pages double-spaced plus notes, references, and no more than 2 images. Authors should express their interest by submitting a 500-word abstract, short bio, and any relevant information (such as pertinent URLs) to Juilee Decker jdgsh@rit.edu, by January 31, 2021. Notification of acceptance will be made by February 22, 2021. The abstracts of the proposed chapters and the framing context for the edited volume will undergo peer-review, after which accepted authors must adhere to a deadline of late summer 2021 for completed manuscripts.

The chapters will be positioned in a volume to be published by a major scholarly press. While an editor at Routledge has expressed interest in the volume for their Museum & Heritage Studies list, all materials must undergo peer review before any commitment is made by the publisher.

About the Editor: [Juilee Decker, Ph.D.](#) is an associate professor of history and director of the museum studies + public history program at Rochester Institute of Technology. Her research excavates histories and functions of museums and memorials as part of the process of understanding and critiquing constructions of knowledge and public memory in the U.S. In addition to her publications focused on museums and collections as well as exhibitions, Decker has served as an invited scholar for two National Endowment for the Humanities convenings around monuments and the Civil War (2013 and 2016). She has just completed a history of the national outdoor sculpture initiative in the US (forthcoming) and is currently at work on a manuscript focused on monuments, memorials, meaning-making, and memory practices in Kentucky. Decker earned her Ph.D. from the joint program in art history and museum studies at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Museum of Art.