

Equity Audit

City of Pittsburgh Public Art Collection



Pittsburgh: A Multifaceted History

The City of Pittsburgh's public art collection reflects decades of artist commissions, from traditional bronze monuments and war memorials to minimalist steel sculptures and contemporary art installations. Each artwork is an expression of a particular historical context fraught with its own ideological undercurrents, stylistic trends, and social conventions. The following report is meant to act as a step towards more reparative and generative actions that confront historical inequities represented in the collection. This effort comes from a belief that understanding the past, present, and future of the commemorative landscape in Pittsburgh can help build new models of art and storytelling.



About the Audit

As a response to public discussion and subsequent city action around the controversial memorials to **Stephen Foster**, which was removed from public display, and **Christopher Columbus**, which was concealed, **The Department of City Planning** has been engaged in an audit to identify inequity and bias within the city's permanent collection of public art, monuments, and memorials.

The audit is conducted in **three phases**:

1. **2020-2021**: Identify pieces in the collection for immediate evaluation.
2. **2022-2023**: Collection is audited in its entirety through the work of an audit researcher and advisory committee of vital community partners from diverse backgrounds.
3. **2024**: Engage local communities to understand their perceptions and feelings of objects in the public realm.

Phase 2:

Audit Researcher

Keenan Saiz

Advisory Committee

Kent Bey

Samuel Black

Lenora Dingus

Miguel Sague Jr.

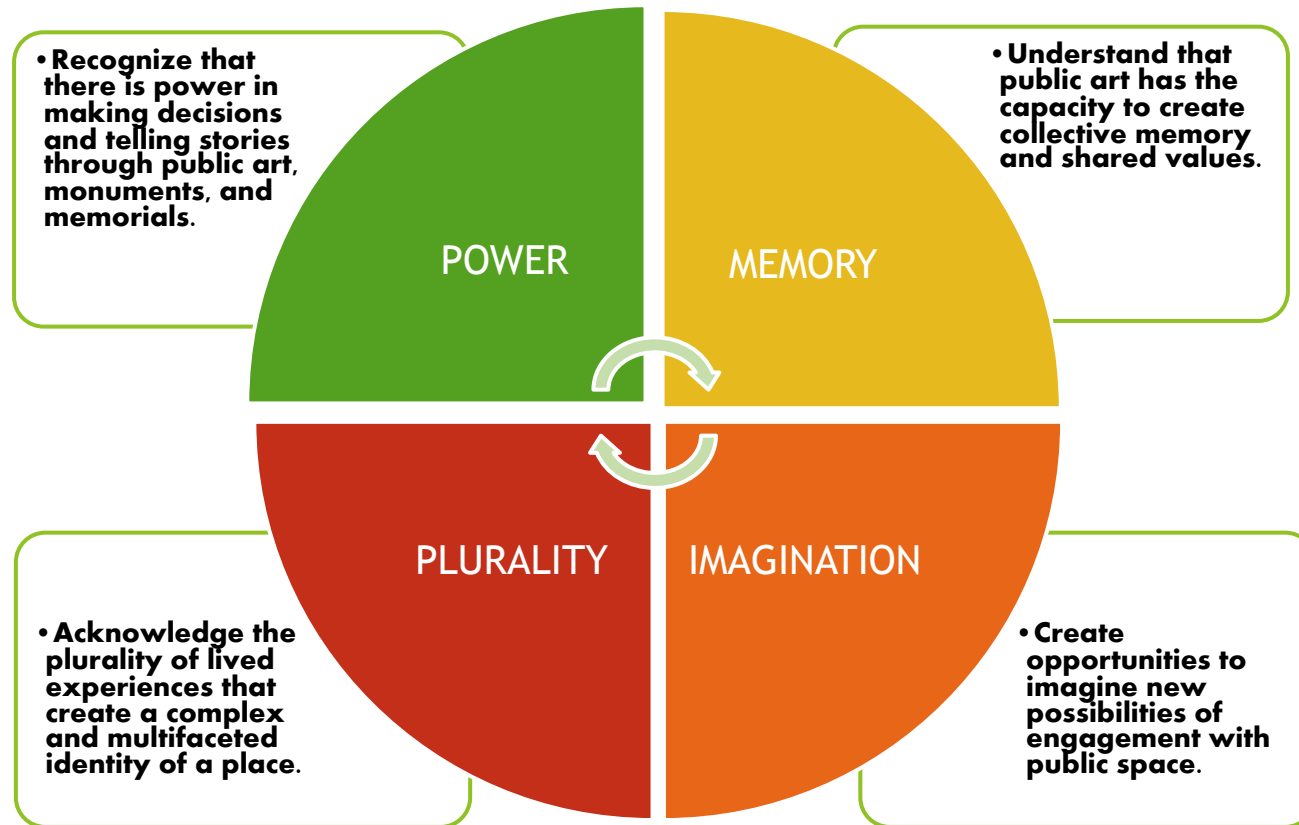
Mary Martin

Kirk Savage

Sara Tang

Research Methodology

The audit researcher worked closely with the advisory committee to identify objects in the collection that warranted closer assessment and to deliberate potential action steps. A major focus throughout the research process was to deeply consider the **symbolic meanings** embedded in each artwork and **how those meanings have changed over time** amidst continually evolving social and political conditions. This research focus was further articulated through the following **4 Guiding Principles**:

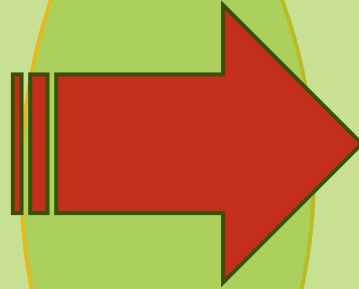


In meetings with the Advisory Committee, each guiding principle served as a framework for complex discussions about how objects in the public art collection reflect and determine local history, politics, and identity. It became crucial to keep these principles in mind when assessing the collection, and each advisor contributed a nuanced perspective that was both scholarly and personal. Their voices were crucial in acknowledging the **complexity of history and the power of storytelling**.

Key Goals of Equity Audit

Review

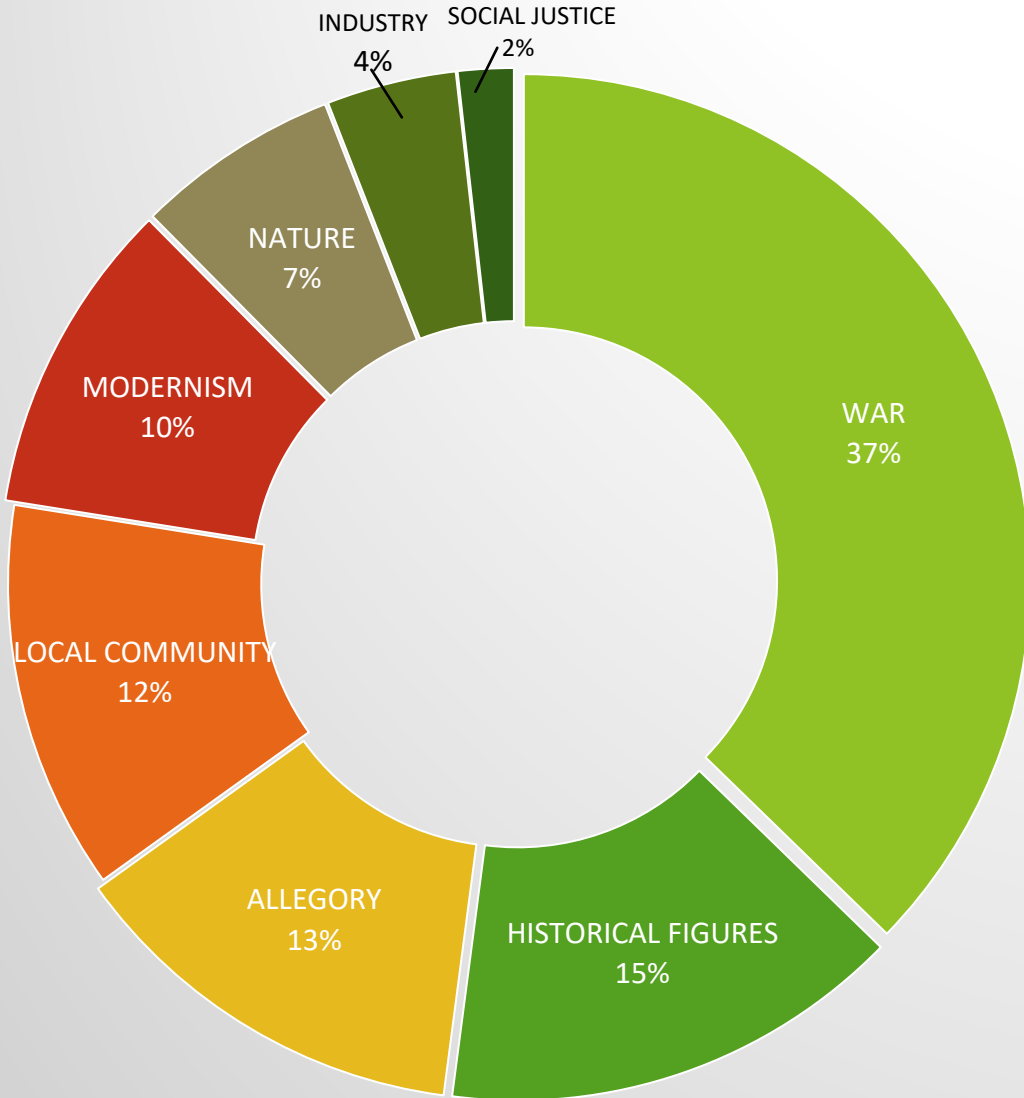
- **Identify** objects in the collection that contain harmful messages or promote inequity.
- **Contextualize** the objects by conducting provenance and historical research.
- **Gather feedback** from the Advisory Committee to look at artworks through multiple perspectives and experiences.



Action

- **Synthesize** findings into a research criteria that can be applied to the entire public art collection as well as future decisions such as removals, acquisitions, and commissions.
- **Develop** creative and engaging public programming as opportunities for education and dialogue.

KEY THEMES IN PUBLIC ART COLLECTION



*The percentages are calculated with some objects in the collection counted as part of one or more thematic categories.

Examples from the Collection:

WAR



All Wars Memorial (West End), 1944

HISTORICAL FIGURES

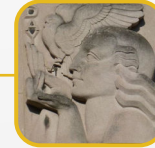


Catahecassa, 1907



Augustus Saint-Gaudens; Christopher Lyman-Magee Memorial, 1908

ALLEGORY



Sidney Waugh; Day, 1939

LOCAL COMMUNITY



Rick Bach; South Side Slopes History Mural, 2004



Joshua Chang & Aaron Ramon; We Are Pittsburgh, 2018

MODERNISM



Peter Calaboyias; Five Factors, 1973

NATURE



Ben Grubb; Untitled, 2018

INDUSTRY



James O' Toole; Molten Memories: Steelworkers Monument, 2001



Louise Pershing; The Flow, 1979

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Carlos Peterson & Howard Graves; Freedom Corner, 2001

Key Points of Inequity:

Dominant Representations

Lack of Diversity

Harmful Messages

WAR

The representation and memorialization of war is the dominant theme in the public art collection.

There is no memorial to the contribution of racial or ethnic minorities in war efforts., such as the African-American 351st Field Artillery Regiment in WWI.

The depiction of war and conquest is decontextualized and romanticized, obscuring a legacy of violence in American history and in the settlement of the Pittsburgh region.

HISTORICAL FIGURES

White men are the most represented demographic at 60%. 80% of these representations are figurative, depicting the person's likeness.

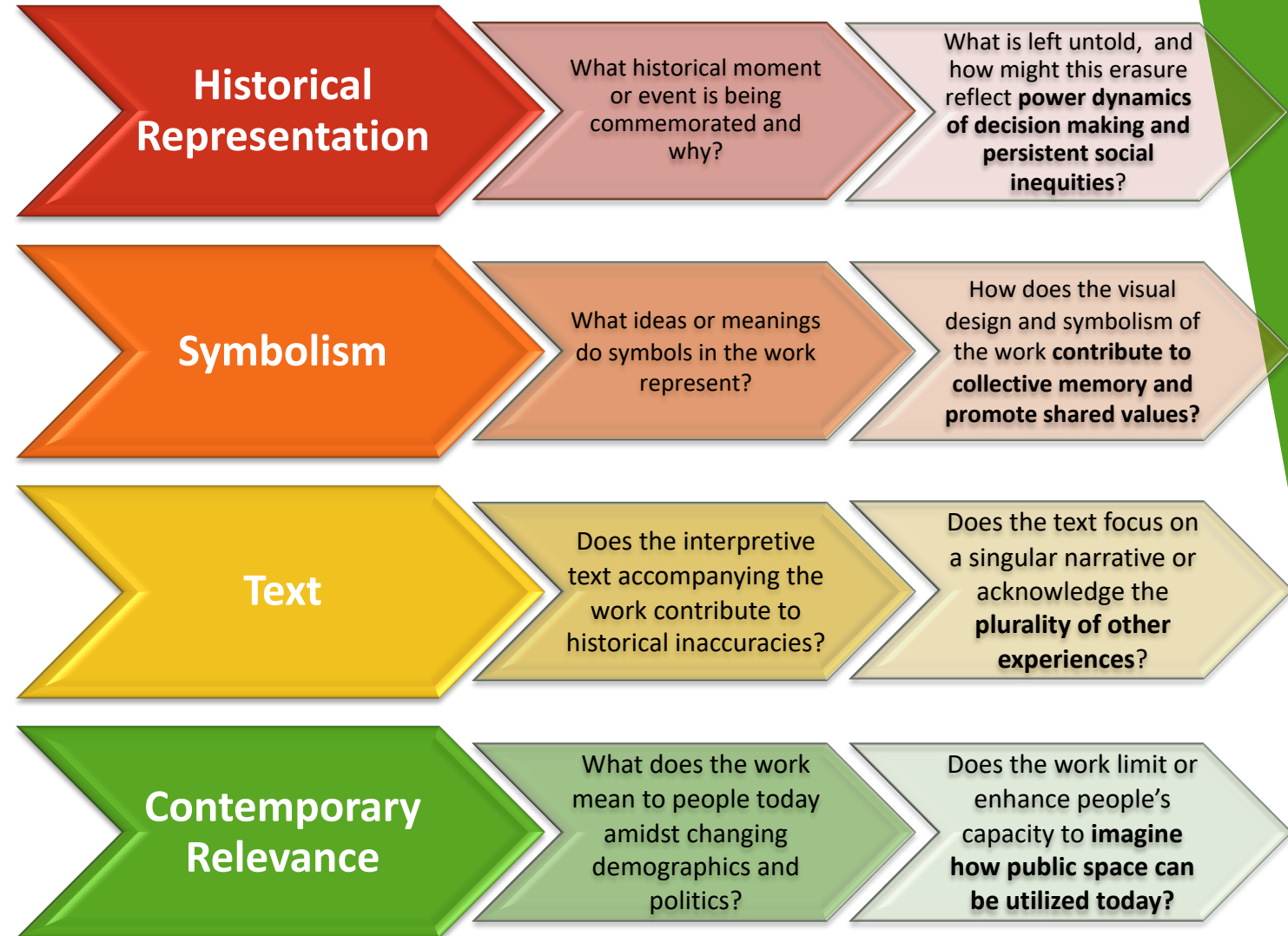
Women, African-Americans, Indigenous, and other minorities are disproportionately underrepresented, constituting approximately 28 % cumulatively.

The depiction of predominately white male historical figures obscures the contributions of other communities in Pittsburgh, creating a one-sided narrative of local history.

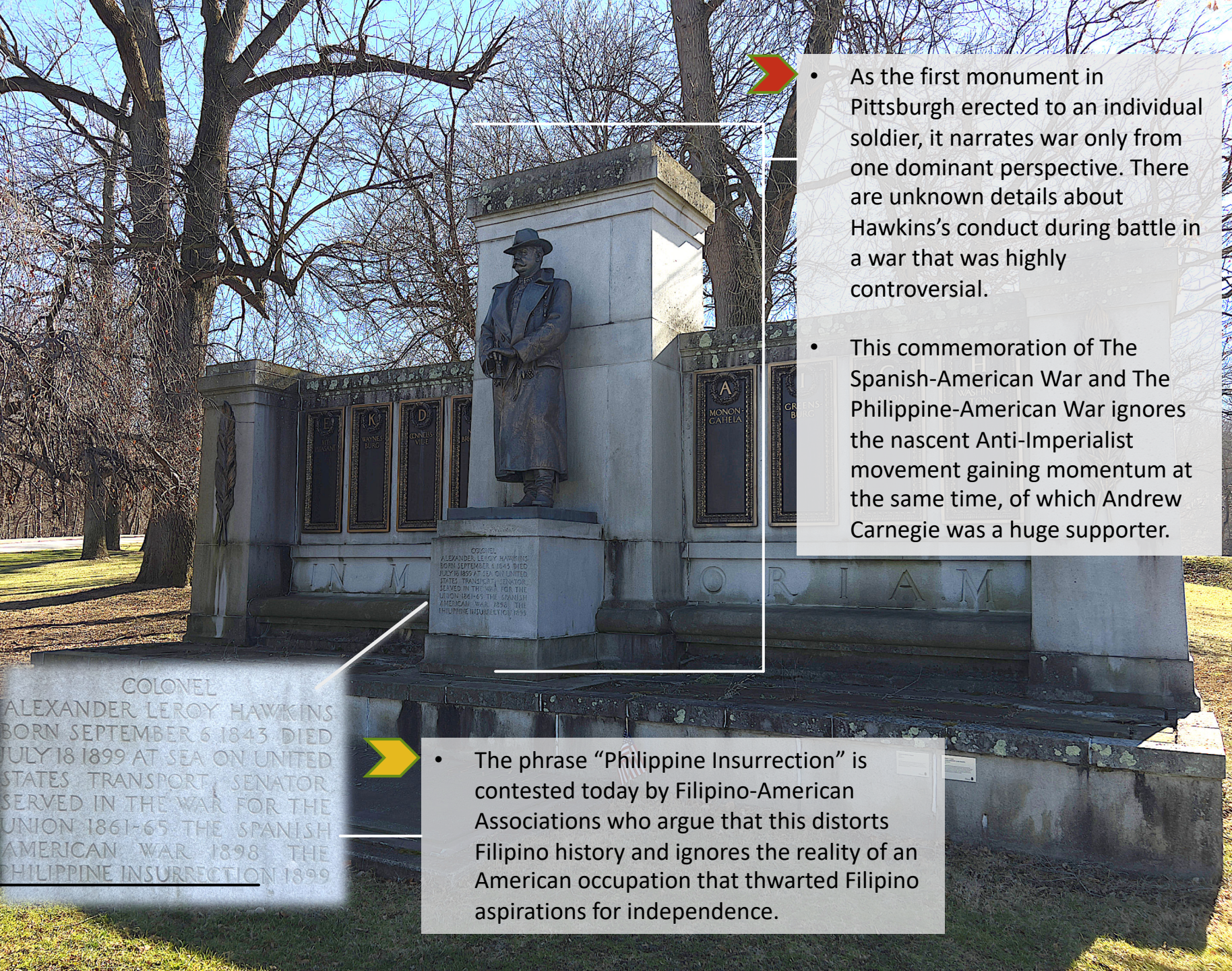
Measuring Inequity

Research Criteria:

This research criteria was developed in dialogue with the Advisory Committee and in line with the four guiding principles of **Power, Memory, Plurality, and Imagination**. Each criteria represents a crucial aspect of how to analyze artwork in the public realm by paying attention to both material and immaterial elements that contribute to inequity and bias.



4 Case Studies



- As the first monument in Pittsburgh erected to an individual soldier, it narrates war only from one dominant perspective. There are unknown details about Hawkins's conduct during battle in a war that was highly controversial.
- This commemoration of The Spanish-American War and The Philippine-American War ignores the nascent Anti-Imperialist movement gaining momentum at the same time, of which Andrew Carnegie was a huge supporter.

COLONEL
ALEXANDER LEROY HAWKINS
BORN SEPTEMBER 6 1843 DIED
JULY 18 1899 AT SEA ON UNITED
STATES TRANSPORT SENATOR
SERVED IN THE WAR FOR THE
UNION 1861-65 THE SPANISH
AMERICAN WAR 1898 THE
PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION 1899

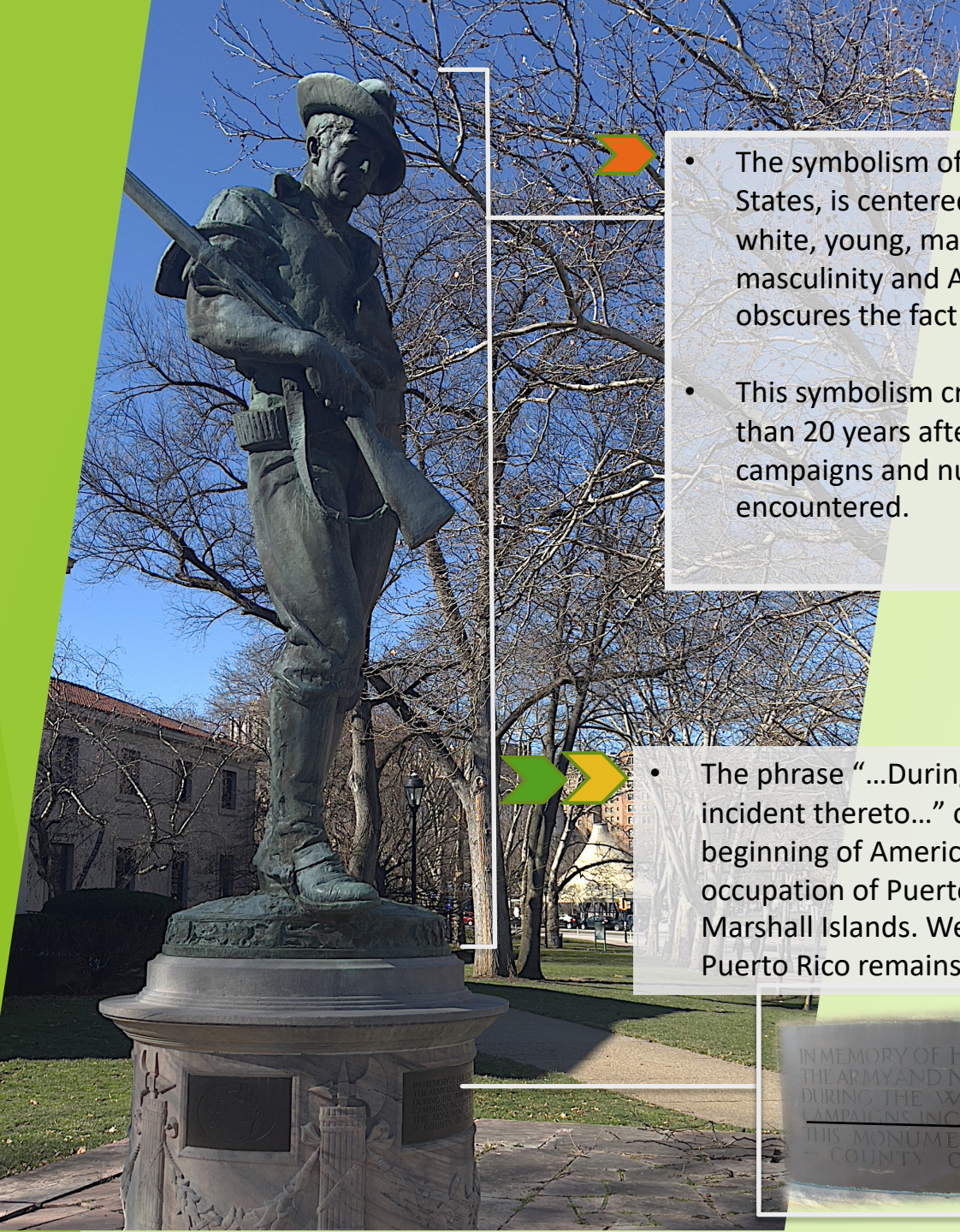
- The phrase "Philippine Insurrection" is contested today by Filipino-American Associations who argue that this distorts Filipino history and ignores the reality of an American occupation that thwarted Filipino aspirations for independence.

Case Study:

*Colonel Alexander Leroy
Hawkins Monument
(1904)*

William Couper

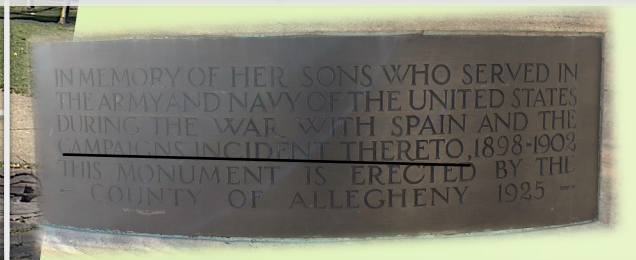




- The symbolism of *The Hiker*, part of 52 editions across the United States, is centered on a romanticized archetype of the soldier as white, young, masculine, and casual, creating a connection between masculinity and American imperial policy. A focus on white identity obscures the fact that American troops were multiracial.
- This symbolism created an idealized memory of the conflict, more than 20 years after it ended, which obscures violent military campaigns and numerous incidents of disease the troops encountered.



- The phrase “...During the war with Spain and the campaigns incident thereto...” obscures a deeper history of the beginning of American imperialism that resulted in the occupation of Puerto Rico, Guam, The Philippines, and Marshall Islands. We are still dealing with this legacy today as Puerto Rico remains an unincorporated territory of the U.S.



Case Study:

The Hiker (1925)

Allen George Newman





- The symbolism in this work is designed to essentialize a single Indigenous culture, when there are hundreds of different tribes native to the United States possessing diverse cultural and ecological practices.



- While the likeness of the figure is said to be modelled after the Mingo tribe in Eastern Pennsylvania, it is recognized today that woodland tribes did not use smoke signals. This method of communication was typical of Plains and Southwest tribes, creating a historical inaccuracy.



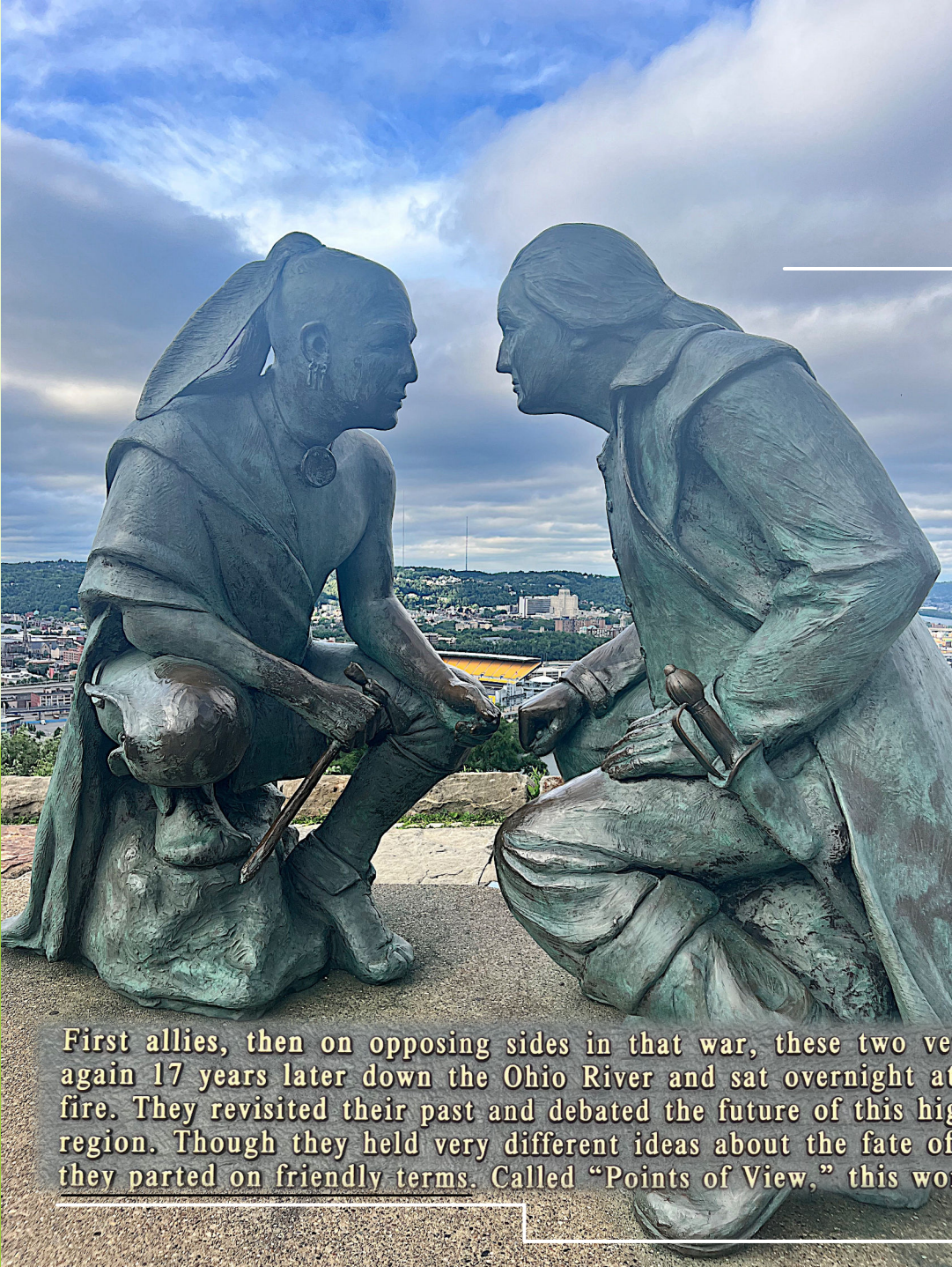
- The word “Primitive” is considered by many people today as an offensive and antiquated term that situates certain cultural practices as inferior to Western society.

Case Study:

Primitive Science (1939)

Sidney Waugh





First allies, then on opposing sides in that war, these two veterans met again 17 years later down the Ohio River and sat overnight at a council fire. They revisited their past and debated the future of this highly-prized region. Though they held very different ideas about the fate of this area, they parted on friendly terms. Called "Points of View," this work by local



- This work remains very relevant due to it being created quite recently in 2006 and situated at an iconic overlook, serving as a prime photo opportunity for tourists.
- October 25th was named "Point of View Day", decided in a city council vote in 2006, further enshrining the work's contemporary relevance.



- The symbolism in this work offers a feel-good reconstruction of a meeting between George Washington and Seneca Chief Goyasuta, obscuring the violence and disenfranchisement native tribes like the Seneca faced in the region. It also obscures the tragic end of Goyasuta's life.



- The notion that they "parted on friendly terms" is a common refrain to describe this historical event. The phrase originates from George Washington's journal and its accuracy remains contested.

Case Study:

Point of View (2006)

James A. West



Applying Research Criteria to Future Action

Historical Representation



Example Action:

Create a **public symposium** that brings together scholars to reconsider historical representations of the Spanish-American War to complicate how conflict is memorialized especially considering current geopolitical concerns.

Symbolism



Example Action:

Create an **educational initiative on digital platforms** where the public have access to a report on symbols and their meanings in the public art collection, using *The Hiker* as a unique example.

Text



Example Action:

Commission a **temporary site-specific art installation** next to Sidney Waugh's *Primitive Science* sculptural relief that explores the evolving nature of language and problematic terms such as "primitive".

Contemporary Relevance



Example Action:

Create a **series of public programs** that highlights the historical misrepresentations in *Point of View* in collaboration with local Indigenous groups, scholars, artists, and activists.

Using the research criteria can help people evaluate existing objects in the collection to determine what should be removed, relocated, contextualized, modified, or left alone.

- Through what **community engagement mechanisms** can **problematic works** be **recontextualized**?
- How can the city **approach future actions** in a way that is **productive** and **encourages open dialogue** and **public education**?

Looking Back and Moving Forward:

Public Programming & Interpretive Possibilities

Utilize the Public Art Collection as a **learning resource** to teach the public a more **nuanced and complex portrait of American history**.

Create **opportunities** for artists and scholars to **recontextualize** problematic works in the collection and **activate local history** through site-specific temporary projects.

Encourage public feedback and **participation** to set the stage for a more **collaborative** and robust public art program in Pittsburgh.

A large, detailed stone statue of George Washington, shown from the waist up, facing slightly to the right. He is wearing a military-style coat with epaulettes and a powdered wig. The background shows some bare tree branches and a clear blue sky.

Resources

The City of Pittsburgh Public Art Collection

- <https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/public-art-collection>

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

- <https://share.phmc.pa.gov/markers/>

The World War I Memory Inventory Project

- <https://ww1mproject.org/>

The Historical Marker Database

- <https://www.hmdb.org/>

Monument Lab National Monument Audit

- <https://monumentlab.com/audit>

Toppled Monuments Archive

- <https://www.toppledmonumentsarchive.org/>

Forecast: Public Art Review

- <https://forecastpublicart.org/publishing/par/>