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World Monuments

A Critical Perspective for the Elucidation of Art Appreciation Instructors and Students

Andrew Binder

Introduction

Over the last twelve years, I have been embarked on a quest. My quest started out because after teaching art appreciation for several years, I began to feel inadequate as an instructor; because, I had not seen either the art or the monuments that I was teaching my students about. So I embarked on a series of journeys to try and rectify this deficit. On my first journeys I would go see the art and just pick up local color. For example, that you could sit in an outside pizza parlor in Rome across from the Coliseum and view the monument and the streaming traffic from the street adjacent from the Coliseum's grounds (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 162-163). This personal connection to the art and monuments, and being able to put them in contemporary context did indeed make me a better instructor, but I continued onward in my journeys, even beyond the realms of the Western artistic tradition. After several years of this, I realized that many of the monuments that I was visiting were also UNESCO (the United Nations Education and Science Organization) designated World Heritage Sites (WHS), and I started to look for them and visit them specifically in each country that I visited. In a sense, I embarked on a worldwide cultural survey. As of this writing I have visited five continents, 23 countries, and 41 WHS sites, including whole cites, and numerous monuments and cultural artifacts. While I have many more places to visit, I am ready to make some conclusions regarding what I have seen and studied.

Eventually when I had been exposed to the art and monuments from a worldwide perspective, I really realized that the teaching of art appreciation or art history from just the historically developmental or the Modernist perspective was very limited, and much great art was either not covered or minimized when using those perspectives. As an artist myself I had also concluded that Modernism was an artistic path was exhausted as a movement, and either the Postmodern perspectives, or Pluralism

was the best set of philosophical movements that I could draw from conceptually. While all this was happening I would often draw on my travel experiences and photographs from my trips to form the nucleus of my artistic production, and make book works about my experiences. Eventually (while I continued to make my art) I moved away from the teaching of art at the university level, and shifted to the realm of education and teacher training.

This change of perspective has led me to exposure to many different conceptual frameworks, and most particularly (for this article) critical theory. In addition using multicultural education combined with art also has become an interest of mine. As I have assimilated this new (to me) field of practice and theory, notions of how critical theory could be used to help put in perspective art and more specifically monuments started to coalesce.

Critical Theory as a Conceptual Lens

The subject of this article is how critical theory and power relationships can be used to help analyze and interpret monuments and public art, and how this perspective might be useful as a framework for discussion in art appreciation classes as an introduction to the critical perspective in education. The conceptual framework that I will be using to address this survey of monuments is based on a postmodern perspective combined with a multicultural perspective in art education, and the critical foundation of Paulo Freire. In addition, the informal style of how Shirley Stienberg reports her research has also contributed to the way I have constructed this article. Unlike the Modern idea of progress applied to art or one artistic method or style superseding another that is used in many art appreciation and art history classes is the postmodern idea that each art movement should be evaluated in its own context.

Rather than using the concept of an artistic progress of style, postmodern theorists often decode meaning from art, by looking for subtexts of meaning about art from a society and even different branches of knowledge. I have used this concept extensively in this article. In addition, the precepts of multicultural education combined with art education have also been necessary to consider, due to the fact that worldwide examples are used to support this article's thesis. The 2002 book *Exploring Art: a Global, Thematic Approach* by Margaret Lazzari and Dona Schlesier has been a very useful book and it has been as a model for this combination. My data set for this article is monumental examples from art history and personal anecdote. Critical theory will backstop my design and analysis. The relationship of power in terms of education is the main idea of Paulo Freire's seminal 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Many of his ideas and concepts were used to formulate the basis of the power relationships described in the analysis of this article. If postmodern theory is concerned with decoding meaning from within artworks, the analogue in Critical theory is Paulo Freire's idea of "reading

the world” and social constructions of power. This practice is also used to decode and discern power relationships and what they mean to people.

The Pillars of Paulo Freire

The basic ideas that I am using in this article are derived from Paulo Freire’s seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. They are conscientization and praxis. Conscientization is the process of educating people to understand social inequalities, and that such inequalities are social constructions, which can be grappled with and overcome with educational, social, and political means to support social justice. The final idea that I will be using in this article is the concept of Praxis. Praxis means to Freire: Thought coming into being. The thought that Freire wants to actualize is freedom, and freedom is born through critical education and social action. The process of conscientization is being utilized in describing the monuments in a critical way in this article. Since both conscientization and praxis require actions to complete the process, it is my hope that art instructors will see the utility of my critical approach, and use my examples as a skeleton to form an instructional unit about monuments using critical theory, and fill in the aesthetic and historical dimensions, which they are already acquainted with and directly teach.

Critical Theory and Monuments

Monuments are public art, because they operate in the public square, always have a social and political context for their meaning, presentation, and makeup. Multiple perceptions and sometimes conflicting worldviews color the ideas about presentation, placement, and meaning of cultural monuments are intimately tied together. It is no accident that Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed chose the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and the White House as their targets on September 11, 2001. These buildings were the physical symbols manifested as monuments of American financial policies and power: military power / political power.

Public art and more specifically public monuments are often connected with power relationships, and often this is the subtext that must be examined about their design, execution, and meanings. Unlocking and interpreting the subtexts of these power relationships can be a useful way of examining and explaining the monuments and putting them in a critical framework in general. Doing this process is exactly the same thing that Freire did in his book when he was “reading the world” for his students. Art appreciation teachers need to be able to do this for their students too. This practice can also be a great way to introduce critical theory, which directly contradicts the hegemonic interpretations generally applied to and about the meaning of many world monuments. This educational contradiction is actually part of the process of enlightenment that leads to social justice and conscientization. While art appreciation instructors do have some experience sifting through analytical

movements that discuss art in the framework of Marxism by 20th century critics or Feminism and western art (as described by activist groups like the Gorilla Girls for example) taking a broader critical perspective might be a more of an alien process, this article hope to address this quandry.

The following analyses of world monuments is meant to involve direct examples that art appreciation instructors can draw upon to learn to “read the world” and put the architecture into a new perspective of meaning.

Hegemony and the Construction of Monuments

A Physical Projection of Power

Of all the world's cultures, the one most obsessed with making and preserving monuments (and those that would dwarf giants) is Ancient Egypt. This makes sense when you remember that the Ancient Egyptian culture was operating almost continuously for 4,000 years. The most iconic examples of Ancient Egyptian monuments are the Great Pyramids and Great Sphinx of Giza. (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 59-61) These monuments represent hundreds of years of development, but they contain the kernel of some of the critical ideas that I wish to speak to. The first thing that is remarkable about the Pyramid fields are that they exhibit a kind of monument “arms race” that normally happens between one culture (or country) versus another. What is very interesting about Egypt is that this culture was competing against its past. What I mean about a monument “arms race” is a kind of large-scale “keeping up with the Joneses” mentality that permeates the monumental works of ancient Egypt. This is most apparent in the Pyramid fields that include Giza to Dahshur, where the successive pyramids (Zoser's step pyramid, Sneferu's red pyramid, and the Great Pyramid are good examples) almost continuously become larger, use finer stone, and finish until the form was perfected. The archeologists and historians tell us that the pyramids were tombs for the pharaohs in the Old Kingdom, so in effect one pharaoh was trying to be greater (perhaps in the afterlife) than those that came before. The public works of the ancient Egyptians' had several uses: It solidified the political power of the Pharaohs, because of the sheer size of ancient Egyptian monuments, they could not but awe the citizenry, peasants, and foreigners: traders, travelers, and diplomats alike. This awe increased the pharaoh's temporal power (because who in their right mind would rebel against a ruler that could make awesome monuments, that were virtually mountains), and since the Pharaoh was also the representation on earth of the ancient Egyptian gods (many monuments show pharaohs dressed in the garb and place of their god Osiris for example) the power of the state religion was also increased. It must also be noted that because of the yearly flooding of the Nile valley, and the displacement of farmers, the Pharaohs had seasonal labor at short ends that they could employ to help create their monuments, so despite the movie myths of 20th and 21st century Hollywood, the rulers of Egypt had willing workers rather than merely slave labor

to make their monuments. Keeping in mind that because of this, and the congruence of the ends of religion and state, the Egyptians were able to create some of the greatest historical monuments with such a community of craftsmen and workers. While it is possible to make monuments as a projection of power to help control a population, it is near impossible to finish them and make them great without a large core of willing workers. (I will speak more about slavery and monuments in other sections of this article.) In addition to aggrandizing the state and its religion, the pyramids in general were personal monuments, and due to their size and simplicity of form, they have an almost timeless aspect. The Pharaohs (especially Khufu who built the largest pyramid) really expected to live life after death contingent to the preservation and existence of the Great Pyramid. This leads us to some interesting critical conclusions, about how the monuments in the Giza plateau were treated over time in both reality and myth, but I will leave it for other sections of this article.

Another take on the “keeping up with the Joneses” aspect of monuments is the case of the Maya who lived in the city of Chichen Itza from the 6th century A.D. In their culture every 57 years they entered another world theologically speaking. They held and projected a calendar many hundreds for years in the future using astronomy and their original numbering system to ensure that they performed the rites necessary to start this new world at the right date and carved their calendars in stone. To commemorate this event they rebuilt their central pyramid every 57 years. But unlike the Egyptians who started new each time, they would use the old pyramid as the core of the new. This way their central pyramid was always the tallest edifice in their city-state and an object of civic pride. Today archeologists have excavated a tunnel that takes you inside the central pyramid at Chichen Itza and visitors can view the top of the earlier pyramid, completely intact with the alters, and carvings (now in the interior) preserved. In addition to being projections of state and religious power, the pyramids of the Maya were also used as places of sacrificial rites, and they were no doubt objects of terror for captives (loosing ball players) and the populations of warring rival city-states.

A Hegemonic Warning

To return to Egypt, over one thousand years after Khufu built the Great Pyramid at Giza another Pharaoh (Ramesses II) provides our next use of power that can be symbolized by monuments. I like to think of this idea as the “don’t tread on me” message. Ramesses II was a Pharaoh of the New Kingdom dynasty of ancient Egypt. It is said that he lived 91 years and if this is true he had three times the life of the average life expectancy of the day. It must have seemed to his rival kings that he really was immortal. During his reign (and perhaps because of its length) he had carved many impressive—some would say colossal—representations of himself. The monument of Abu Simbel is one such set of temples. They sport four colossal statues of Ramesses and his queen. Two statues of Ramesses guarding the front

Figure 1: Detail of Abu Simbel, with the relief sculpture of the feet of the giant showing the "Don't tread on me" message. Photos taken by the author.

of a king's temple complex, and next to them two smaller statues of Nefertari (his wife) guarding the queen's temple. While the temples themselves are more than impressive, their subtext (partly because of their placement) is more significant. The temples are located at the far southern reaches of the Ancient Egyptian realm, and staring down south to face their rivals for power in that area: Sudan and the Nubian kingdoms. The not too subtle and clear subtext which is re-emphasized by relief carvings of captive Nubians carved in bar relief at the feet of the statue of Ramesses II: Threaten Egypt and Ramesses II will step on you like insects. In other words, it was a warning and a projection of defensive power. Both temples were moved to rescue them from the flooding that happened after the building of the Aswan High Dam in 1965, and this saving effort spurred the UNESCO world heritage program (Boulat, 1965, pp. 28-33).

The Celebration of Hegemony

Celebrations of power and the reeducation of a people in war and rebellion also have representations in some of the modes of power used by oppressors in making monuments. The most egregious example of this type of monument is the Triumph Arch created by the Ancient Romans. "These arches were built to commemorate military victories or major building projects." (Lazzari & Schlesier, 2002, p. 338). One of the most famous triumphful arches in Rome is the arch of Titus. (Groenewegen-Frankfort & Ashmole, 1987, pp. 450-453). The arch of Titus was created in approximately 81 AD and was founded to commemorate the victory of the Roman general Titus when he suppressed the rebellion of the Jews in Judea (or

present day Jerusalem.) During that conflict the Romans destroyed the great 2nd Temple of Judea and the Wailing Wall is the only shard left of that construction. To commemorate the event the Romans carved realistic panels, showing the loot (including a large menorah) to be brought back to Rome in a procession as booty (Robb, 1963, p. 332). This image is the only depiction existing of the treasures of Judea, as they have been lost to history or destroyed. In addition to visiting the Wailing Wall to write and leave prayers, the Arch of Titus (despite it being originally made for oppressors) has also been used as a site of pilgrimage (at least one time) by Jews who will not walk through it.

When I was there in the year 2000 I was among a group of Russian Jews, and they started to sing spontaneously in Yiddish, and when I asked for a translation, I was told it was a love song about perseverance, and the subtext of the action was essentially: “We shall overcome.”

Reading Monuments as Contestations of Space

Vandalism of Monuments

In this next section, we will turn our analysis on the manipulation of monuments. The despoilment and desecration of monuments can be broken into several levels or types of destruction. Each has a slightly different meaning in terms of power relationships. The first type of despoilment is vandalism. The word vandalism comes from a historical event, the temporary capturing and sacking Rome by the Vandals (a Germanic people) in 455 A.D. This historic event, and perhaps the high regard that historians and Western scholars after the Renaissance had about Greek and Roman artifacts, led to the coining of the term vandalism: which means the senseless damaging of objects (often art) made at great cost. But there is actually a power relationship involved in the act of vandalism. Vandalism gives (often temporary) negative physical power over an object by a person or group that has meaning to someone: Usually that item’s owner. In terms of a monument this means temporary “physical power” over a government or group. Due to the fleeting nature of a vandal’s control however (a guard not being vigilant for example) the monument is only damaged, and not destroyed.

Defacement of Monuments

Defacement of monuments has greater political or religious overtones and ends. Defacement is the selective disfiguring of an object or monument. A good example of this that has a bearing in current cultural wars is the legendary story that Napoleon’s troops shot the nose off of the Great Sphinx during his occupation of Egypt in 1789 in order to demonstrate Western technology’s mastery over the ancients. In a related counter story the Mamluks were instead reputed to have done the deed earlier because of iconoclasm with musket fire (Holmberg, 1995-2007). While both stories are probably apocryphal they have been used in contemporary

speeches and Internet blogs to defame the Western powers or the Islamic worldview in general.

Graffiti and Monuments

Graffiti on the other hand can have another meaning altogether.

The word GRAFFITI simply means—words or drawings scratched or scribbled on a wall. The word comes from the Greek term “graphein” (to write) and the word “graffiti” itself is plural of the Italian word “graffito.” (Tucker, 2009, para. 3)

Graffiti can be political. A political slogan painted on a national monument for example does have political, and even revolutionary ends. It can be both a great insult to a nation, and proof of malfeasance or weakness by a government, and can show that defiance is possible to an oppressed people. While this type of political graffiti is done, it is rare compared to the majority of graffiti that is painted. In addition, while some graffiti also displays gang signs and marks territory for those groups, most graffiti consists of individual tags that are stylized signatures of the graffiti artists. An elaborate set of abstractions and individual conventions are often used to make the tag unintelligible to outsiders, but graffiti artists can always tell each other's styles, and the obstruction is primarily used to hide identities from outsiders and authorities. In effect what the graffiti artist is doing is actually writing their name on the landscape where they live. Some of these tags evolve into very complicated paintings, icons, and styles. But if you pare all of that away usually only the stylized signature remains. From the point of view of individual graffiti artists, what they really are doing is marking their territory, usually on their neighborhood walls. Graffiti artists are often young marginalized people that paint on other people's property because they have nothing else on a large scale that they can claim ownership of and paint on, and often feel that they never will. If they did own property (and painted on it) they would be classified by society as painting murals, and not doing graffiti.

When a graffiti artist tags a monument, what they are really doing is claiming “psychic ownership” or at the least a connection to that monument. And when it is a great monument like the Great Pyramid they are writing themselves into history too. They are leaving a message: I was here in a physically tangible way. What is interesting about this is that if the graffiti is allowed to age for a very long time and it is not offensive in some other way, it often will be protected and become part of the history of the monument and be preserved by archeologists and the keepers of that monument; thereby, granting the graffiti artist's intention and need. Visitors in addition to having the impulse to write their name on a monument, often create a similar connection when they take a stone from a monument, or even merely touch it. In this way they become one with the legend of the monument if only for a moment.

The Destruction of Monuments

The ultimate and most fanatical reaction to a monument is when a government (and not an unorganized revolutionary movement) destroys a cultural treasure for political or religious reasons. The Taliban bombing of the Giant Bamiyan Buddhas despite their obvious historical, cultural, and even future economic significance to Afghanistan is a direct example of this extremism. Many Islamic clerics around the world pleaded with the Taliban to leave the monuments intact. The Taliban chose to dynamite them. Currently: "Attitudes within Afghanistan to the idea of rebuilding the statues vary. The provincial government is in favor but the country's leading archaeologist decried the idea as a 'Disney re-creation' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 2004, pp. 186-187)" (Bevan, 2006, p. 190).

The Preservation of Monuments

The preservation of monuments is one of the ways that we can see a tangible sign that we are anchored in time. Often the monuments will outlast nations, empires, religions, even whole cultures, and we are left to either cling onto them, actively destroy them, or let them be forgotten and buried in the sands of time. The choice to sustain them or let them go is actually a political (if sometimes economic) choice too. Different cultures and peoples have dealt with this problem in different ways.

The Conversion of Monuments

Other than neglect, the most common reaction to (especially religious) monuments left in a contrary government, a different culture, or religion's care (in the past) is conversion. For example, a temple might get converted into a church, a church into a mosque, and the religious symbols modified, etc. A great example of this would be the Pantheon in Rome. It was first built as the temple of all the Roman gods. *Pan* from the Greek meaning all and *theos* referring to god(s); it is the root of our English word for theology today. After the conversion of Constantine and the fall of Rome, the Pantheon was stripped of all its "pre-Christian" decoration, and informally rechristened as St. Mary Rotonda or Saint Mary of the Round, and recycled as a church (Janson, 1986, pp. 164-165). In this way it was maintained and mostly preserved throughout the Middle Ages, so architects and artists of the Renaissance could use it as a model and inspiration for their own achievements, like the Duomo in Florence (Hartt, 1987, p. 145). It had such a profound effect on the artist Raphael Sanzio that he asked to be buried in the church. In fact you can go visit his tomb there today; it is marked with a plaque on the wall.

The Accommodation of Monuments

In a similar way the Turks after the capture of Constantinople in 1453 also recycled Hagia Sofia, replacing most of the interior decoration in the lower galleries with arabesque and calligraphic designs, but the upper galleries (unseen by the devout) were preserved, despite their depiction of human beings and Christian

iconography. While this preservation is possibly due to the enlightened action of the Turkish rulers, it might also be recognition by them that Islam has roots in Judaism and Christianity. In either case, the action was very magnanimous of the rulers of the day: Power used with enlightenment. What is more interesting about this is that the Turks built in 1609 another monument directly opposite the building nicknamed the Blue Mosque (the Sultan Ahmed Mosque) of equal size and grandeur, perhaps as a cultural rebuttal and response to Hagia Sofia (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 148-250). In Istanbul today they are equally famous and much visited and used still. In fact the Blue Mosque is the National mosque of Turkey. Such an attitude and practice by the Ottoman rulers in cultural accommodation (while not exactly perfect) is very laudable, especially at that time (Preble et al, 1999, p. 352).

The Recycling of Monuments

The recycling of monuments deals with not just their use; a more extreme use of recycling can occur when a monument's materials are used to build new monuments. The most famous example of this occurred when legend has it the outer polished limestone sheathing of the Great Pyramid was used for generations to build palaces and mosques of Egypt; although, it is also said that the sultans did not remove the stones from the edifice itself, this was possibly due to an earthquake. Other examples are not as benign though; a good example of this is the Qutb Minar monument and its accompanying mosques and the archeological complex located near Delhi. The Qutb Minar and its two mosques were created by destroying twenty-seven Jain temples, which were used for parts. But what is interesting about the complex is that many of the walls show carvings from the edifices of the earlier temples, so in effect you can see some of the history carved in stone in front of you. Qutbuddin Aibak (the first Muslim Sultan of India) built the complex in 1193 A.D. as both a political and religious statement against the religions and Indian people recently conquered at that time. The Quatab complex started a new esthetic in India (as well as introduced a new religion.) In fact the closer of the two Mosques to the Minar is the first Mosque built in India. The Islamic rulers replaced the upper castes and became the new aristocrats transplanting their Persian language, texts, arts, and religion, and from that point on (until the Colonial period) Indo Islamic monuments favored geometric design, floral designs, and calligraphy (often taken from passages from the Koran) as decoration for their architecture. The complex was in effect the prototype for future buildings in the Mughal style. It is also quite likely that many Jain and Hindu temples and monuments, due to their almost obsessive use of figurative sculptural elements and possibly erotic content (both forbidden in the new aesthetic), were similarly dispatched in this manner. In fact, during the invasion "Indian monuments were systematically destroyed by the fanatic iconoclasts who formed the backbone of the conquering armies" (Ettinghausen, Grabar, & Jenkins-Madina, 2001, pp. 163-164).

Assimilation and Monuments

An interesting thing can happen when an army invades another country and attempts to stay and become the new upper class. The first stage is the destruction and replacement of the dominant aesthetic and general power base. But if new settlers and populations are not imported to bolster the new ruling class, the rulers will often become assimilated and swallowed up by the larger culture that surrounds them. A good historical example of this is of all the cities that Alexander the Great founded wherever he conquered in the East starting in 323 B.C., most were repatriated after his death, and a majority of his generals lost control of the new territory. The principle accomplishment of Alexander was to distribute Greek culture east, where it got assimilated and reinterpreted in this manner (Preble et al, 1999, p. 321). It is quite striking to see the figure of Buddha but with Hellenistic features (Basham, 1959, p. Plate XXXII).

A Cultural Synthesis and Monuments

If on the other hand an invader remains the ruling class for a very long time, perhaps with immigration and connections to the mother cultures and countries and cultures to begin with, but with lessening influence as time goes on, an accommodation starts to happen, possibly because most of the workers and artisans supporting the new ruling class are indigenous. A synthesis of style and acceptance and even appreciation of the new aesthetic emerges. A prime example of this is embodied in the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal was built in 1632 A.D. by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his beloved third wife (Mumtaz Mahal) who died giving birth to their 14th child. The story goes that Shah Jahan was profoundly in love with his wife, and wracked with grief he spent the next 12 years building her memorial and tomb (Janson, 1986, p. 248). Materials were brought with great expense from all over India (especially the translucent white marble), and semiprecious stones for the floral, arabesque, and calligraphic inlays decorating the building were gathered indigenously, and from countries all over Asia at great expense. Twenty thousand Northern Indian craftsman and workers were recruited for the work. In addition to building the mausoleum and tomb, a garden, a mosque, a library, and massive front gates were also added to the complex. This part of the project took another 10 years. Legend has it that another identical but mirror image mausoleum (created in black marble) was planned to be constructed with a great reflecting pool and garden between them, perhaps to provide a resting place for the Sultan himself, but before this could be started his eldest son Aurangzeb seized power, complaining that the building was bankrupting the kingdom. Shah Jahan was imprisoned in nearby Agra Fort, but his son made sure that the suite that the former ruler was imprisoned in framed the Taj Mahal in its main window. After his death, Shah Jahan was buried alongside his beloved wife in the mausoleum, where they rest together today (Preble et al, 1999, pp. 350-351).

In Islamic art history books such as *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* by Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, published in 1994, the Taj Mahal is classified as a masterpiece of Islamic art because it is argued that Moslems mostly designed and directed its construction, despite the fact that non-Moslem craftsmen built it. Contrary to any such cognitive dissonance, the building is beloved by the Indian people, and used as a symbol of the country. Currently the Indian government is taking great pains to ensure the preservation of the monument (which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983). When modern problems like acid rain and industrial pollution were found to be eating away at the monument, a 10,400 Km non-industrial zone was created restricting the emission of pollution, with the Taj Mahal at its center to limit the damage. At this point cottage and craft industries are flourishing in Agra because of these restrictions. If you visit the monument today, you are issued white disposable paper booties to cover your shoes to minimize wear on the monument and the grounds. Electric cabs are reputedly being developed to replace the taxis in the city. All this care is being taken for an Islamic monument by a democratic and predominantly Hindu country, still at loggerheads with its rival and brother country, the predominantly Moslem Pakistan. Such a dichotomy can only be explained because of the beauty of the monument, the romance of the story, and possibly due to the fact that it was built by Indian craftsmen. There has even been an attempt in the Indian Parliament to formally classify the building as a Hindu monument, in a kind of revisionist history. All that can be said about this controversy is that the building is beloved by Moslems, Hindus, Christians, and Jains, and a collective appreciation is expressed by Southeast Asians (and the world) granting the monument a kind of cultural synthesis. "The distinctive profile of this building, like those of the Pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, or the Tower of Pisa, has become an icon for the country in which it stands" (Blair & Bloom, 1994, p. 297).

Colonization of Monuments

The record of European colonialization and the colonial powers regarding the disposition and preservation of monuments is mixed at best. While on the one hand destroying politically inconvenient monuments under their power (especially in times of unrest and war) seemed to be standard practice, the restoration and preservation of archeological monuments was also embarked upon too—especially in the later years of European rule. Examples of criminal cultural destruction of monuments by the European powers abound. Some examples are the burning of the White House during the war of 1812 by the British, and the destruction of the Forbidden City (also by British forces) during the Opium Wars in China. Luckily both monuments were rebuilt. In contrast to this callous disregard for culture, many reconstructions and excavations were also provided by the European powers. Many of the world's archeological sites were preserved due to the individual efforts of European archeologists and explorers. Keeping this mixed record in mind, I would

like to comment on some of the present day controversies and motivations that stem from the effects of colonialization.

The evils of colonilization and colonial rule have long been exposed, especially in terms of critical theory, but I wanted to mention a few cases that have some bearing on power relationships and monuments. The hands-down worst colonial offenders had to be the conquistadors. After the sack and conquest of Mexico City and the rest of the Mexican peninsula, the Spanish systematically burned the books of the Aztecs, Mexica, and the Maya. In Mexico City the whole city was redesigned, the lakes and canals drained, and temples and pyramids were raised to the ground. In fact you can visit the remains of the great Pyramid of the Aztecs, because in a historical accident it was mostly buried by the Spanish, and now it has been converted to a museum and its underground entrance is right next to the Central Cathedral in the Zocalo of Mexico City. Everywhere that the Spanish got a foothold they did their best to minimize indigenous cultures, make them their slaves (at the time), and later subjugate them in everything but name.

Another interesting case involving the Conquistadors can be found in the monuments of Peru. This example is important for explaining why great art and craft cannot be reliably produced through coercion. An example of this can be found in the colonial palace in Cusco Peru, which was built atop and out of an Inca temple. There is a sharp demarcation between the stonework that the Inca craftsmen made for their own religious practice and that which was done for the Spanish invaders. Keep in mind that the same masons possibly made the additions after the conquest, when they were effectively slaves to the Spanish conquistadores. The stonework of the temple section is beautiful; you can't place a piece of paper between the stones. Massive stones are matched and perfectly ground together, which made them virtually earthquake proof. No mortar was used, or metal tools. The Inca accomplished this with only Stone Age technology; it must have been truly a labor of love to the craftsman. In contrast the top layers are utilitarian, and in no way exhibit the same quality, despite the introduction of steel tools by the Spanish. People cannot be forced to make great art or superior craft. Other social methods of control (like employment and unemployment) evolved to attempt to solve this riddle, but even these methods are acknowledged as decidedly second best to free individuals and groups making art or craft for their own reasons.

The Spoils of Hegemony: Monuments and Their Relocation

The last power relationship that I will talk about regarding colonialism and monuments has to do with the removal of monuments and their parts to museums in the West. This problem is tied up with age-old practices such as spoils of war or conquest, property ownership, international law, and the care and preservation of cultural and historical artifacts. As mentioned before, the looting of monuments and other riches up until recently has been something of an accepted practice. This

certainly has happened throughout history, although during colonial times the pace of the practice was accelerated. First silver and gold were plundered from the Americas, and later a market appeared for cultural artifacts. Eventually museums were founded and many of these articles were donated or sold to museums. At this point of development museums, governments, and societies funded archeological and cultural missions throughout the developing world, and received many treasures from these operations, often receiving minimal permission from puppet or subject governments. In the modern era these historical cases of “cultural looting” have resulted in a controversy that deals with complex issues of ownership of artifacts and monuments. Such controversial questions such as: Does the culture or country that made the artifact have rights of possession? What are the property rights of the people that found the artifacts? If the museums bought or had the artifacts lawfully donated to them, do the artifacts belong to that institution? Since it is a priority that these artifacts are preserved for cultural and historical reasons, which country or institution can do the best job in terms of both funding and technology for their preservation? The most famous of these cases involving this controversy is the case of the Elgin Marbles.

The controversy came about in 1801 AD when Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, gained permission from the local Turkish authorities to remove sculptures from the Acropolis site (then in ruins.) Greece at the time was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. And it can be assumed that the possibly corrupt Turkish officials had less regard for Greece’s treasures than their own. Using his own money, Lord Elgin removed over half of the statues from the site. Pediments and the sculptures were cut from the buildings, and the site was left in shreds; although, it was admittedly not in great shape to begin with at the time. The statues were transported to Great Britain, although some were lost in a shipwreck and had to be recovered. Eventually the sculptures were gifted to the British Museum, which built a special annex to show and preserve them.

At this point (just to complicate matters) it cannot be overstated that the Parthenon and its accompanying statues have had a profound effect on Western civilization through art and architecture (Janson, 1986, pp. 122-124). All one has to do is look around at the buildings of Washington or any European capital to see this influence, especially as a model for government buildings. As far as the sculptures go, classical Greek sculpture served as the prototype for realistic depiction in Western art, and since the Parthenon sculptures are regarded as the pinnacle of sculptural development in Ancient Greece, they are irreplaceable artistic and historical treasures. In addition it can also be argued that realistic depiction as symbolized by the sculptures is the first step in the process of the practice of observation that lead to the scientific method. The Elgin marbles were used as the prototype for this development twice: Once for ancient Greece, and then again as reflected in the study of classicism during the Renaissance.

Flash-forward to the modern day, Greece is it’s own country and is now part

of the European Union, and for years they have advocated for the return of their cultural treasures, and at the top of their list is the Elgin Marbles. While the case has been brought to court, the issue has never been resolved. It must be noted that in the interim Greece has restored the Parthenon site, and ironically removed the remaining sculptures from the Parthenon and replaced them with copies. The originals are kept inside the Acropolis museum near the site for protection from acid rain and pollution. Space is also being kept for the Elgin marbles, if they are eventually repatriated. It must be noted that this is one of the biggest cases that faces the development of the European Union as a complete entity. Observers are watching this case carefully, as a upholding of Greece's position might make a precedent in international law, facilitating dozens of cases against famous museums, and might cause a shuffling of treasures back to their countries of origin.

Monuments Today

The next set of ideas that we will have to concentrate on in terms of power relationships and monuments is their modern origins and their proliferation of meanings. In the West during the late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance a middle class developed in Europe, and this led to monuments being built by organizations and private citizens outside the purview and interests of religions and governments. In the years since then this phenomenon has increased worldwide. Guilds, clubs, and wealthy private citizens have added to the proliferation of monuments and added to the mix of power relationships that they can exhibit. It could be said that during the modern era secular monuments have outpaced and proliferated beyond the construction of both government-sponsored and religiously-funded monuments. Some are created by individual artists (and funded by organizations) rather than the traditional patterns of the aggrandizement of religion and the consolidation of government power. While all of this is true, some of the same impulses and power relationships have been maintained. In this vein, attempting to make the tallest building in the world has been a worldwide obsession after the building of the Empire State building. It is a modern day example of "keeping up with the Joneses" and also of course represents a nod to national pride (even if the buildings are built with private funding.) The Taipei 101 was the tallest building in the world but was supplanted by Dubai's Burj in 2009, and I am sure due to this natural impulse that this title will not stand long.

Due to this enlarging of the table of creators, the subject, meanings, and purposes for monuments have also expanded. Monuments in the public sphere with ends telegraphing everything from love (Robert Indiana's Love statue in Philadelphia) to whimsy (the statue of Alice derived from John Tenniel's illustrations for *Through the Looking-Glass* in New York City's Central Park) in innumerable styles have been placed into the landscape, especially during the modern era. A great example of this stylistic expansion is the Sydney Opera House designed by Jørn Utzon and

was jointly supervised by the government of Australia and the Sydney Opera House Trust. While the aggrandizement of Australia (by producing an modern architectural masterpiece is also a subtext of the project) the real meaning of the building is to be a kind of cathedral or monument to art. It also has an unspoken meaning that directly contradicts a developed world prejudice that in the past maintained that Australia was a “provincial backwater,” in effect Australia is saying with this monument is that the country supports great culture in a topical and modern way, and can compete on the “world’s stage” with any other cultural capital. In the years since its construction, the Sydney Opera House has graced innumerable advertisements for the Australian Tourist trade, and it is one of the most iconic and beloved buildings in the world.

Praxis and World Monuments

With the great exceptions of the destruction and attempted destruction of monuments in the U.S. on September 11, 2001, and the ownership puzzle of the Elgin marbles, one of the most powerful thing about the power subtext of meaning for a majority of the great monuments that I have presented is that their cultural contexts have passed into history. This interestingly presents an opportunity for art educators to present these power relationships in a non-threatening way; because (for example) nobody currently living cares that Ramesses II was warning off the Nubian Kings all of those thousands of years ago, not even the Sudanese of today. This fact allows Art educators to make a case for putting these historic monuments into a critical context before tackling the most controversial cases.

Praxis and the World Heritage Convention

With this end in mind, looking at world culture with a greater perspective is useful. The best framework that I have found to do this is the World Heritage Convention ratified by UNESCO in 1972. The convention states that: “the cultural or natural heritage [is] of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole” (UNESCO, 1972, p. 1). Using this idea it is possible to step back and view conflicts from a greater distance and attempt (for example) to preserve and protect all of the historic and religious sites in Jerusalem, despite the political and religious conflicts regarding the displacement and even stacking of monuments on top of each other in disparate eras. While Critical theory allows a deep understanding of the conflicts, it is the stepping back from the bring of controversy and placing the monuments in a greater framework that allows for all of the world’s cultural heritage to be preserved and appreciated. Keeping this in mind, it is the possible, for example, to appreciate the Dome of the Rock (Ettinghausen, Grabar, & Jenkins-Madina, 2001, pp. 15-17) and the Wailing Wall despite their antithetical conflicts. The World Heritage Convention has pro-

vided for a mechanism for states to nominate and list natural and cultural sites that are of outstanding value to human heritage, this list is called the World Heritage List. As of this writing 186 countries have ratified the convention and listed 890 properties: 689 cultural, 176 natural, and 25 mixed. In addition, two properties have been delisted for non-compliance to the convention. A good example of the list transcending local prejudice are the listing by several countries that were former colonies of European powers (and who have no love for colonialism) of properties that were developed by European settlers in their host countries. Malaysia's 2008 listing of the cities of George Town and Melaka fit the bill for this concept nicely: Where the importance of the sites to history and their intrinsic beauty have outweighed any local political difficulties with Great Britain. When you take this larger perspective other patterns with Critical overtones start to appear.

By orienting students with a global perspective, both ethnic and personal pride in humanities joint achievements can be fostered and maintained. It is a great feeling to know that humanity is capable of feats like the temple complex of Angkor Wat, and a great cautionary tale about our predilection for destruction as symbolized by the Japanese Peace Dome monument which commemorates peace, and was reduced to a ruin by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The concept of humanity's joint responsibility for its cultural treasures helps put in perspective the importance of their preservation, and helps to mediate any intercultural or political dispute. This joint perspective also allows member states to use ideas and practices developed for the preservation of cultural sites. A good example of this knowledge bank would be the Japanese practice of farming mahogany trees for the replacement of the main beams in the wooden temple structures of Kyoto's World Heritage Sites. These buildings are the oldest and largest wooden structures in the world, and some of them have been repaired and reconstructed for more than 800 years. Whole families participate in farming the great trees, and every 90 years or so the pillars are replaced, and seedlings grown for the next cycle. This is sustainable building on a grand scale that the rest of the world needs to come to grips with for the preservation of whole ecologies, and not just World Heritage Sites.

The So What Question?

At the end of this article, I am at the point where I must come to grips with the idea of "so what" and "what is the point" and utility for this set of arguments and research: The best answer that I can give is that critical theory will give a greater depth in probing the meaning of cultural monuments, and the World Heritage convention will allow students to place these controversies in context and foster pride in both ethnic and human achievement, and both of these ends seem to be a powerful way to organize a curriculum for an art appreciation class in a positive way. In addition they will help the students gain in the process of conscientization, which will lead to social justice.

For example, the whole point of colonization by the European powers was to re-create feudalism in their respective colonies, with the dominant culture as the new aristocrats. This involved enslavement and cultural debasement, which became enshrined by the hegemony and was protected by it, even in the educational institutions. It was essential that this perspective be propagated in the past, because the “natives” were generally more numerous than the colonizers. The whole point of “reading the world” is to identify this bias, and to uproot it, especially in education. By talking about the greatest monuments in history, while emphasizing their great aesthetic qualities along with their power relationships, begins to show the way to enlightenment to students, especially in a multicultural environment such as a classroom. This is much better than talking about the influences of Picasso on Cubism, which was just him taking ideas from anonymous African art as a lean towards multiculturalism. Everyone will be able to point to something in pride. The whole point of this is it is impossible to belittle an indigenous culture (even unknowingly) or people while standing on a world heritage site like Teotihuacan or Chichen Itza. Just knowing about them can start the process of conscientization for your students. Where they will be aware of the world and start putting their hands to preserving all heritages and promoting social justice.

Some possible resources that could be helpful for the Art Appreciation teacher are the television series *Adventures in Architecture* by Dan Cruickshank, produced by the BBC in 2010: Episode 6 is entitled “Power” and is of particular interest as it outlines similar content, but with different and contrasting examples. The UNESCO world heritage list online is a great place to visit on the Internet to plan a lesson about world heritage monuments, or to learn more about them: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>. The book *Great White Fathers* by John Taliaferro (2002) is also of interest as it outlines how different people can have contrasting views about the same monument, in this case Mt. Rushmore, and for more information about “reading the world” or “conscientization” there is no better source than Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, or the Freire Project online: <http://www.freireproject.org>.

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