

Sawyer Seminar to discuss monuments in New Orleans and Mexico City

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The Sawyer Seminar's symposium "Monumental Iconoclasm" considers contemporary challenges to existing monuments in New Orleans and Mexico City. "Jah Defender" by Big Chief Demond Melancon of the Young Seminole Hunters is pictured at the former site of the monument of Jefferson Davis in New Orleans. (Photo by Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee)

Tulane University's Mellon Foundation-sponsored [Sawyer Seminar](#), *Sites of Memory: New Orleans and Place-based Histories in the Americas*, co-organized by Adrian Anagnost and Mia L. Bagneris, art history professors at the School of

Liberal Arts, will launch the third symposium in their multi-part series on Tuesday, April 5.

Sites of Memory, supported by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is a yearlong site-specific inquiry that engages scholars, artists and activists in exploring changing historical narratives in New Orleans and the greater Gulf South region. It takes New Orleans as a key case study for a broader understanding of settler-colonial, formerly slavery-fueled economies in the Americas, using the theme of site-based public history and memorialization. Combining scholarship and public history, the seminar examines accretions of myth and memory at contested sites of public history such as heritage sites, plantations and historic houses, monuments and memorials, “historic” districts and site-specific artworks.

Monumental Iconoclasm: New Orleans and Mexico City, is a multi-part symposium that will run April 5 – 10 and considers contemporary challenges to existing monuments in New Orleans and Mexico City. The third symposium in the Sawyer Seminar focuses on diverse approaches from artists, academics and activists on how to consider past, present and future monuments in New Orleans and Mexico City. Previous symposiums have explored issues of [urban displacement](#) in Valongo Wharf in Rio de Janeiro and sites of the Tremé as well as [innovative approaches](#) to publicly addressing the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade in the Americas, specifically in Louisiana and the Danish West Indies.

On Tuesday, April 5, at 6 p.m., students, staff, faculty and community members are invited to a free screening of CJ Hunt’s *The Neutral Ground* (2021), a documentary film about memory, monuments and how to break up with the confederacy. On Thursday, April 7, at 6 p.m., artist Julieta Gil and artist/activist Abdul Aziz will discuss the parallels between monumental issues in New Orleans and Mexico City through a conversation about their diverse practices. The discussion will be moderated by Guadalupe Garcia. Both the screening and artist talk will be held in Stone Auditorium in the Woldenberg Art Center on Tulane’s uptown campus.

On Friday, April 8, at 1 p.m., the symposium will host a hybrid lecture with Mauricio Tenorio Trillo on presence, absence, irony and Mexico City’s monumental landscape. This talk will consider the historical monumental cityscapes of Mexico City and recent activism along with interventions around la Ángel de la Independencia and Columbus’s pedestal on Mexico City’s Paseo de la Reforma. The lecture will be streamed from the Greenleaf Conference Room in Jones Hall.

Monumental Iconoclasm's final event is a multi-site tour and discussion of the monumental landscape of New Orleans from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 10. Open to 20 guests, registrants must RSVP by emailing Miriam Taylor at mtaylor11@tulane.edu. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with snacks, lunch and transportation provided. This event is intended to garner further understanding of the monumental landscape of the city and how monuments (especially those linked to colonialism, the Confederacy and white supremacy) shape our experiences of city space and the ways in which the city can be knit together or divided through these symbolic forms. Through conversations led by Mia Bagneris, Jeffery Darensbourg of the Atakapa-Ishak Nation, and Big Chief Demond Melancon of the Young Seminole Hunters, this site visit will encourage guests to consider how removal - while not erasing the way these monuments have already shaped experiences of the city - can open space for interventions, offering new ways of interpreting the sites.

More information on the events, the speakers and the Sawyer Seminar can be found at sitesofmemorynola.org.

The 2021/ 2022 Sawyer Seminar at Tulane University is organized by the [Newcomb Art Department](#) and [School of Liberal Arts](#) and sponsored by the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#).