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Questionnaire
Response

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About the Author

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Questionnaire

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Since joining the University of Pittsburgh's History of Art and Architecture (HAA) department in 2013, my pedagogy has focused on analyzing the buildings, exhibitions, and artworks that surround us in Pittsburgh through postcolonial and intersectional lenses. In recent years, my students and I have identified local developments that can be categorized as reparative. Schenley Park's enormous monument to Christopher Columbus, dedicated in 1958, has shifted from being a mostly unchallenged symbol of white supremacy and

settler colonialism to one the city's Arts Commission unanimously voted in 2020 to remove, responding to organized public demands. In 2023, Carnegie Museum of Art relaunched the gallery that introduces visitors to its permanent collection, replacing a chronological, Eurocentric installation with a nonlinear, thematic one that highlights makers who do not necessarily identify as white and/or male. These developments aligned with our own department's launching of a new research Constellation in 2023: [Reparation](#), which we define as "the act of redressing and resisting aggression and erasure in their individual and institutional forms." Participants contend with how the history of art and architecture has enabled cultural dispossession and reinforced unjust social hierarchies and we commit to the work of dismantling and repair by centering listening, care, and reciprocity. Pedagogy, in the form of formal courses and individualized research mentorship, is the arena in which I have most actively worked to nurture reparative histories of art and architecture. On one hand, this involves identifying and supporting reparative efforts that are being carried out in the field. On the other, it involves identifying and articulating the shared characteristics of those efforts, thereby building structures that encourage the promotion, adoption, and adaptation of reparative methods.

These pedagogical commitments came together in the graduate seminar I developed on [Reparation in the History of Art and Architecture](#) to help launch the Constellation in Fall 2023. Eleven graduate students—Camila Aguayo, Monica Daniels, Kale Serrato Doyen, Naren Gao, Amelia Hansen, Zixiao Huang, Rebecca Lowery, Cecilia Muzika-Minteer, Hossein Nakhaei, Shawn Simmons, and Amrita Vinod—and I began by contending with the concept of symbolic (as opposed to financial) reparations. We considered scholarship on examples located in Latin America and the Caribbean before turning to the US National Mall, which we visited together to experience Monument Lab's temporary exhibition [Beyond Granite: Pulling Together](#). In our second unit, we learned from scholar-teachers from across the Americas who have collaborated with descendant communities and museum workers to carry out reparative projects related to Indigenous and Afro-diasporic cultural sites and materials. Students noted how inspired they were to talk with experts Jessie Ryker-Crawford (White Earth Chippewa), Keila Grinberg, and Sandra Rozental about how they have channeled their scholarship into public-facing forms including policy papers, revisionist museography, and documentary films. The topics for our third unit were selected by students, who worked in small groups to identify veins of reparative art and architectural history that resonated with their shared research interests. These included Occupation and Settlement in the Middle East, Reparation in the Digital and Archival Spheres, and Considering Reparation in Pittsburgh. In their final projects, students maintained our seminar's emphasis on public-facing outcomes by developing course syllabi and lectures, proposals for in-person and online exhibitions, and even an educational video modeled on the television program *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. In these diverse forms, students reparatively addressed topics ranging from thirteenth-century Mongolian weavings, to sixteenth-century Mesoamerican and European featherwork, to twenty-first century activist art in Braddock, Pennsylvania.

By showing up for themselves and each other in this graduate seminar, participants learned firsthand that cases for symbolic reparation are present across the subjects that historians of art and architecture study, with no restrictions in terms of temporality, geography, or medium. Indeed, the methods art and architectural historians employ—including considerations of function, agency, materiality, site, provenance, circulation, and historiography—can be highly effective for reading historical cases against the grain to comprehend and redress symbolic and intellectual forms that perpetuate structural inequities. As such, reparative methods offer historians of art and architecture pathways to contribute directly to the pressing social justice struggles of our times. The work we carried out together in this seminar laid the foundation for our department’s Mellon-funded [Reparative Histories of Art and Architecture](#) initiative, through which we are working to identify reparative efforts within the discipline and build structures that can aid in promoting, adopting, and adapting reparative methodologies on a broad scale.

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