



**OGLETHORPE
UNIVERSITY
MUSEUM OF ART**

JEO Scholarship Weekend 2025
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Uncomfortable Art Stories: Decolonizing Public Monuments

Art in public spaces is meant to serve the purpose of memorializing or honoring people and events which shaped a community. Its placement is often in a public park or town square which is open to all. Because of this centrality, free access, and placement at the heart of a community, public art becomes a very powerful and constant reminder of the people and events that it memorializes or those whose histories are untold depending upon a viewer's perspective. It may tell an incomplete story or serve as a painful reminder for some. Should these monuments remain and be recontextualized? Should they be removed or destroyed? This seminar will examine the challenges around 4 case studies in the USA and UK:

Monument Case Studies

1. Theodore Roosevelt (New York, NY)
2. Robert E. Lee / Rumors of War by Kehinde Wiley (New York, NY/Richmond, VA)
3. Hannah Duston (Haverhill, MA)
4. Edward Colston /Jen Reid by Marc Quinn (Bristol, England, UK)

Essay Prompt

Consider these 4 cases discussed in seminar today against the backdrop of your reading.

Who decides how and what to memorialize? Is erecting or removing a monument always a political act? As a post-colonial assertion, should there be monuments to the opposition of colonialism, survivors, and victims of colonization, or to heroes of liberation movements against colonialism? Each of these 4 cases was met with a different resolution. Do you agree with the measures used and solutions reached? Why or why not? As you write your essay, consider the issues of museum ethics, cultural heritage, and the rights of the individual.

Reading

Proctor, Alice. *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums and Why We Need to Talk About It*, Introduction, pp. 9-18

“There Must Be a Better Way to Make a Monument”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-13/as-monuments-to-colonialism-fall-what-comes-next>