



P(ARTS & CULTURE)RTLAND

February 18, 2025

Dear Historic Landmarks Commission –

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Portland Monuments Project. This memo serves as an overview of recent progress and key developments since February 2024.

In March 2024, Portland City Council adopted a new policy on public art and monuments, establishing a framework for the stewardship, reinterpretation, and removal of monuments in public spaces. The policy was informed by national best practices and recommendations from the Portland's Monument Engagement Process Committee. You can read the final adopted policy here: <https://www.portland.gov/code/5/40#toc--5-40-085-public-monuments-review-criteria->

We've also created a dedicated page that provides ongoing updates on the Portland Monuments Project and the status of each monument: <https://www.portland.gov/arts/monuments/whats-happening-citys-monuments>

Following the adoption of the policy, the City worked with the Mellon Foundation to modify the scope of the grant-funded Portland Monuments Project. In September 2024, the Mellon Foundation approved these modifications, including an expanded list of project partners:

- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)
- Converge 45
- Literary Arts
- Mount Vernon Ladies' Association
- Native American Youth & Family Center (NAYA)
- Native Arts & Cultures Foundation
- Oregon Black Pioneers
- Oregon Historical Society (OHS)
- Portland Art Museum
- Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA)
- Portland Parks Foundation
- Portland State University

As part of the project's public engagement efforts, the Office of Arts & Culture hosted a two-day symposium in October 2024, in partnership with Converge 45 at Portland Community College Cascade Campus. More than 100 participants engaged in person and virtually through breakout

sessions, panel discussions, and a keynote address by Hamza Walker, Director of Los Angeles-based nonprofit art space The Brick. Walker discussed his curatorial project, MONUMENTS, set to debut in Fall 2025, which will feature decommissioned monuments displayed alongside contemporary art. You can watch a recording of Walker's keynote here:

<https://youtu.be/zwr0QalbGJY>

The symposium also featured three panel discussions:

Panel #1: Policy Making

- **Moderator:** Norah Crean
- **Panelists:** John Washington, Amanda Rawson, Teresa Raiford
- **Watch the recording:** <https://youtu.be/kx8UoMD0848>

This panel explored how monuments reflect societal values and historical narratives, emphasizing the need for inclusive dialogues in policymaking. Experts from history, sociology, art, social justice, communications, and urban planning shared insights on policymakers' responsibilities in addressing diverse community perspectives.

Panel #2: Community Perspectives

- **Moderator:** Sandra Hale Schulman
- **Panelists:** Gerald Clarke, Marie Watt
- **Watch the recording:** <https://youtu.be/ALn4cjlboqg>

This discussion delved into the relationship between public monuments and Indigenous perspectives, highlighting how monuments often reflect dominant narratives that may overlook or misrepresent Indigenous histories. Panelists emphasized the importance of decolonizing public spaces and advocating for representations that honor Indigenous experiences.

Panel #3: Artist Perspectives

- **Moderators:** Mack McFarland and Jess Perlitz
- **Panelists:** Ilish Bath, Tannaz Farsi, Chisao Hata, Kanani Miyamoto, Anna Gray + Ryan Wilson Paulsen, Master Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr., Lynn Yarne
- **Watch the recording:** <https://youtu.be/zhrn6c1MwJE>

This session brought together a diverse group of Oregon artists for a dynamic exchange of ideas, exploring new ways to rethink and reimagine public monuments. Panelists challenged traditional narratives, celebrated alternative forms of commemoration, and examined the role of artists in shaping the future of public memory. Through proposals, provocations, and artistic inquiry, the discussion underscored the power of creative expression in engaging communities and reinterpreting shared histories.

Earlier this month, the Office of Arts & Culture published a report from Portland State University summarizing the insights and feedback from the symposium. The report is available online here: <https://www.portland.gov/arts/news/2025/2/10/what-we-heard-portland-monuments-symposium>

Monument Conservation & Reinterpretation

- In **November 2024**, the **Abraham Lincoln sculpture** was sent for repairs. Additional damage was discovered during the restoration process, extending the timeline for its return. The Office of Arts & Culture is in the process of **contracting of an historian and artist** to design **new interpretive materials** that will accompany the monument upon reinstallation.
- The **Theodore Roosevelt Monument** is scheduled for repairs following the completion of the **Abraham Lincoln Monument** later this year.
- The City's public art contractor, **RACC**, is securing an additional conservator to **restore the George Washington Monument**. Simultaneously, the Office of Arts & Culture is identifying a **potential new location** for the monument's reinstallation.

Monument Deaccessioning & Relocation

- The Office of Arts & Culture has initiated the process to deaccession the Harvey Scott and Promised Land Monuments.
- The City of John Day and the family of the artist who created the Promised Land Monument have expressed interest in its future. The Office of Arts & Culture is working with both parties to explore a transfer of ownership.

New Commemorative Works

- A permanent York Bust, replacing the temporary one, is currently in fabrication. Due to the artist's recent surgery, completion is now anticipated later this year. Once completed, the Office of Arts & Culture will engage the public in identifying a new permanent home for the monument.

Lastly, a series of additional community-led activities will be part of the Portland Monuments Project in 2025. We welcome your questions and feedback and look forward to collaborating with you.

Best,



Darion Jones, Assistant Director
Office of Arts & Culture, City of Portland

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Attachments:

- Monuments Symposium Recap: <https://www.portland.gov/arts/monuments/portland-monuments-symposium>
- PSU Report: *(attached)*