

The Story of Two Breaches (and a Beheaded Bust): (Re)shaping Public Memory by Radical Interventions in Monuments

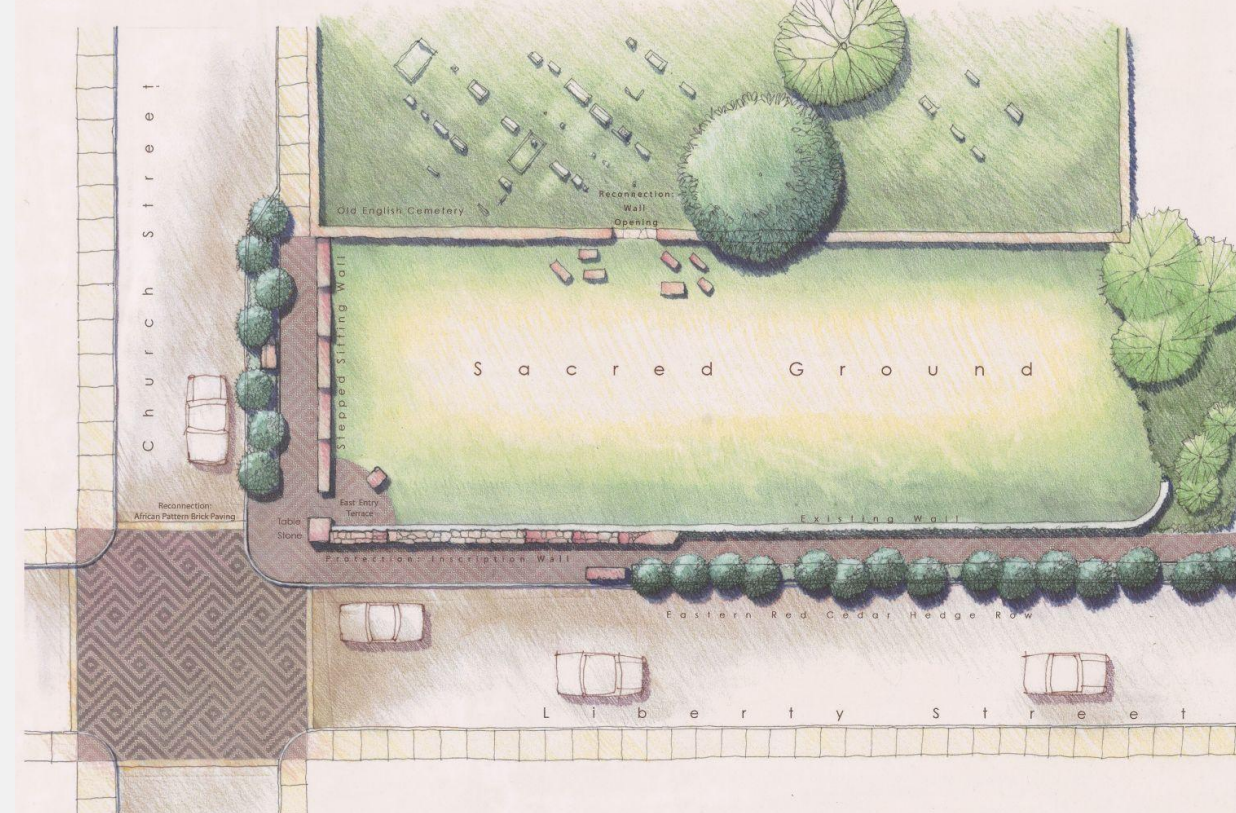
Overview:

In 2005, artist Maggie Smith and landscape architect Sam Reynolds reshaped Oak Grove Freedman's Cemetery into a Memorial. Since 1770, the cemetery has served as a burial ground for free and enslaved African-Americans in Salisbury, NC. The designers proposed a symbolic opening, a breach, in the 1855 stone wall that separated white and black burial sections. The designers sought to symbolically and literally reunite the segregated communities while preserving the historical footprint.

Case Study #1



Oak Grove Freedman's Cemetery Memorial: Bird View



Oak Grove Freedman's Cemetery Memorial: Site Plan

In the Netherlands, a similar preservation effort was undertaken in 2010. The Dutch Government service for land management appointed architecture studios of RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon to recover a World Heritage-nominated Bunker. The designers questioned the conventional UNESCO policies on cultural heritage preservation and created a breach in the middle of the concrete mass. Through intentional destruction, the designers aimed to connect monuments' past, present, and future histories.

Case Study #2



Bunker 599: Site Perspective



Bunker 599

These changes are only feasible when they are initiated by authorities and performed by experts. People's unauthorized interventions such as those in Cecil Rhodes' bust in Cape Town, South Africa, are quickly restored.

Research Question:

In my research, I compare these cases, and I bring attention to the active revision of the built environment as part of the heritage process and the recreation of space for alternative readings of the past.

This comparison interrogates the new plural, progressive, and liberal heritage discourse as a method for maintaining authorities' control over heritage as the political landscape evolves.

Comparison Case



Rhodes Memorial: Decapitated Bust

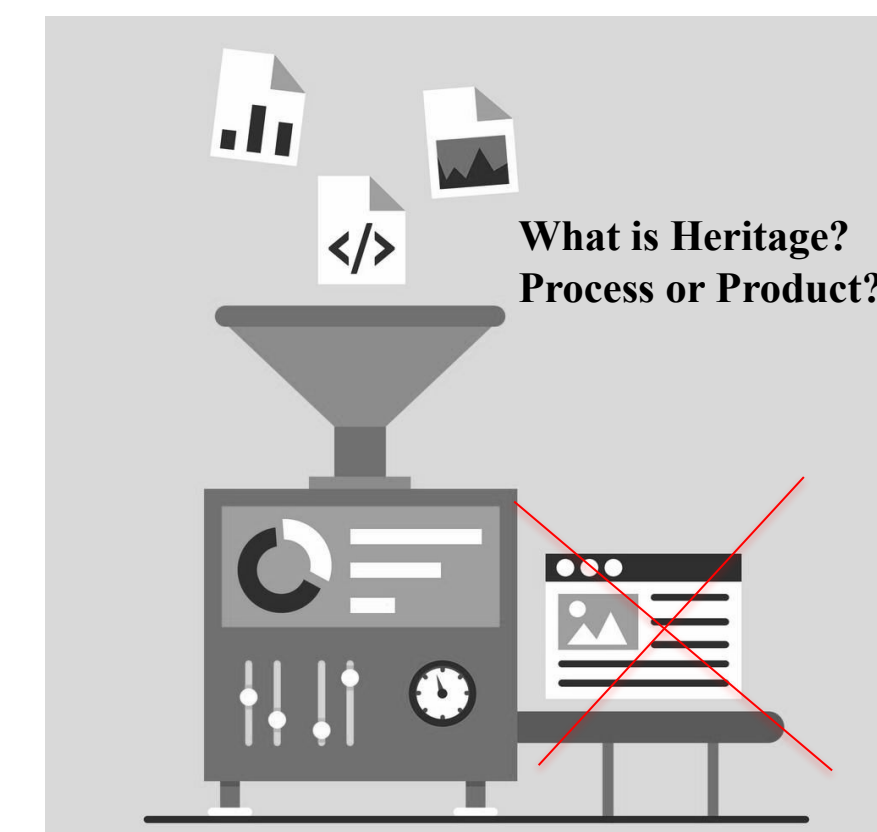
Approach:

Since the publication of Laurajane Smith's *Uses of Heritage* in 2006, heritage has been considered "as a process, not product." The current conservative preservation practices negate the processual notion of heritage and public memory and fixate built heritage into a historical state with no relevance to present and future. One of the new approaches towards heritage preservation is "hardcore heritage," which focuses on imagination and activation, rather than preservation. In this definition, built heritage is a manifestation of change over time, and an invitation to adapt perceptively to the changing values.

By characterizing heritage and public memory as open processes, the physical response to the sites of heritage can be unconstrained to future transformations.

I examine the concept of "hardcore heritage" in memory sites, which can mobilize social change, address spatial inequities, and reshape collective memory of space.

This approach requires us to understand the power of materiality of heritage, move beyond the formal authenticity of heritage, and understand built heritage as a container of social and cultural values that are constantly evolving.



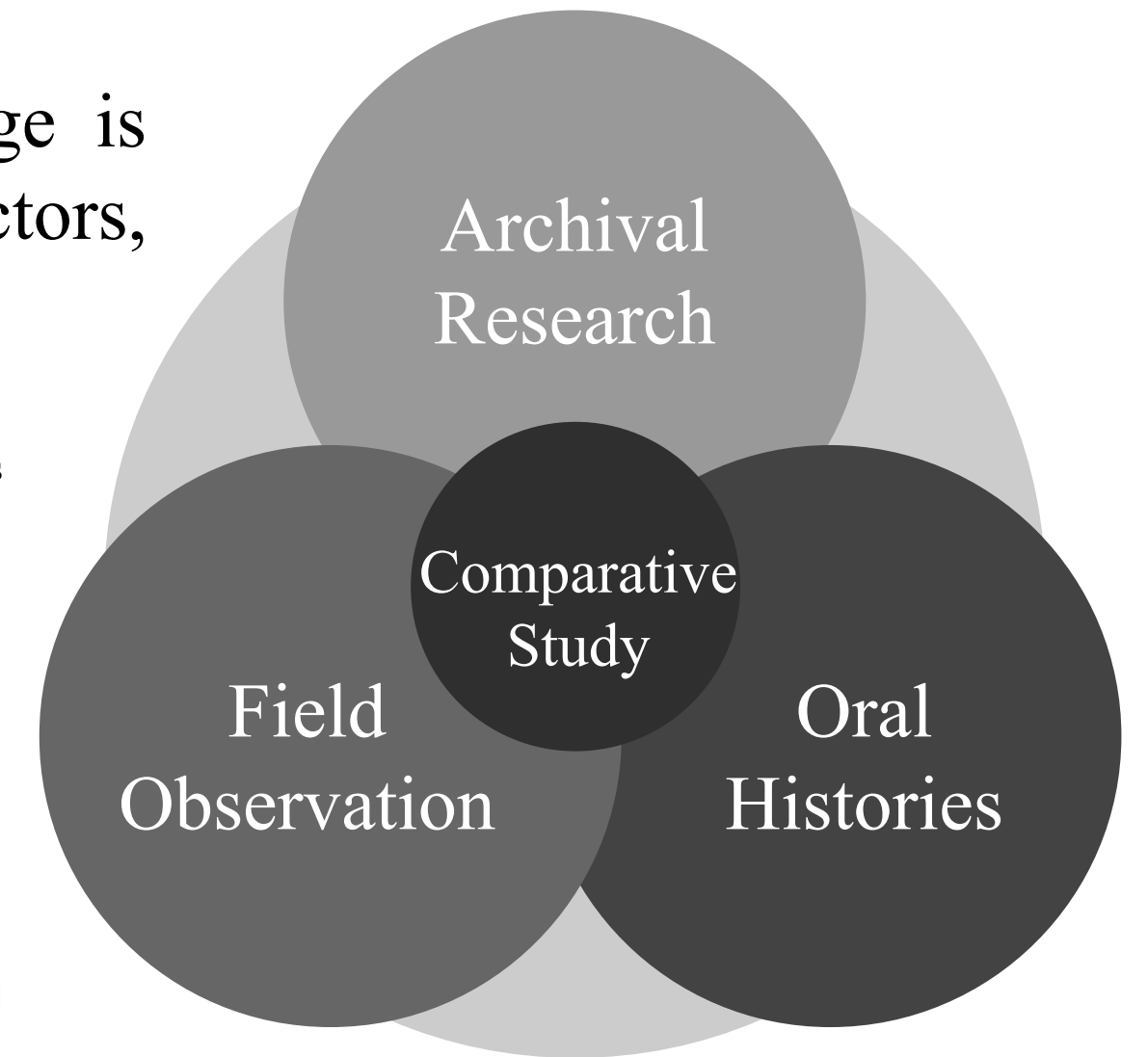
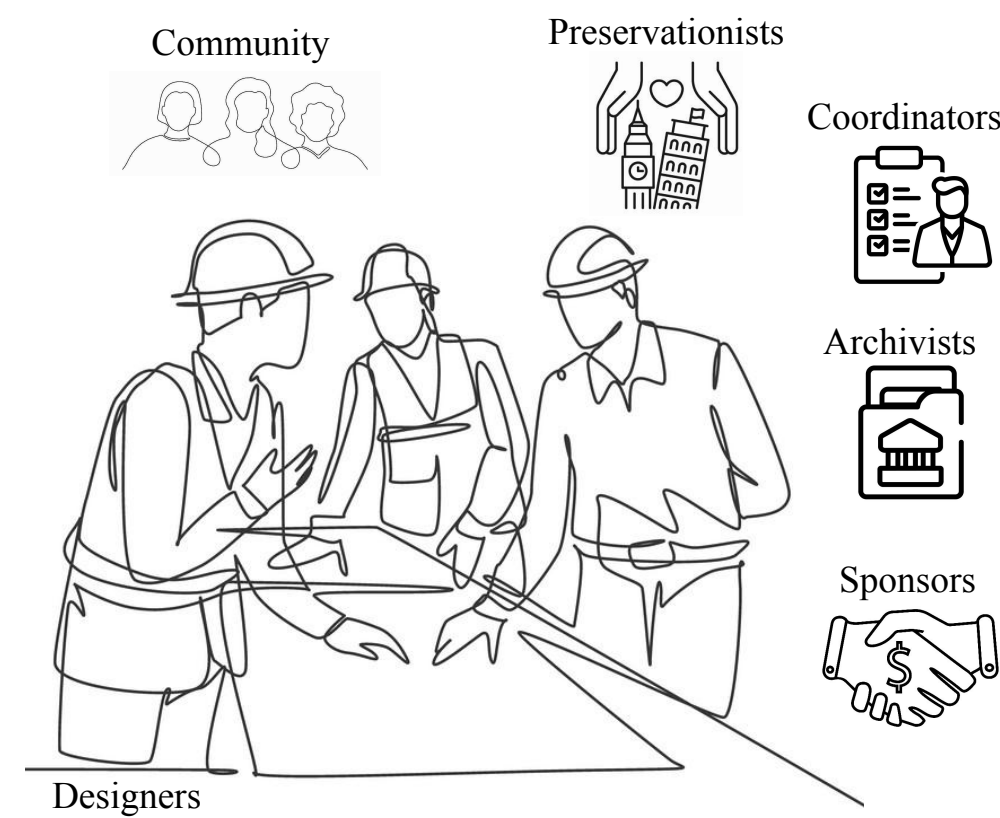
References:

Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Taylor & Francis, 2006)
Erik Rietveld & Ronald Rietveld. "Hardcore Heritage: Imagination for Preservation." *Frontiers in Psychology*. (2017)



Methodology:

Preservation of built heritage is influenced by many factors, commentary, and input.



Outcome:

The expert-community relationship still seems to be a top-down process. The conducted research will help improve the community-expert relationships and provide public historians and communities with examples of creating historical narratives through the incorporation of various voices. This study contributes to the field of public history and historic preservation by providing examples of addressing present concerns and future needs within historical context.

Research of this kind would not only facilitate new opportunities for community-expert relationships, but also help draft new policies on interventions in monuments in order to meet social change and spatial justice goals.