

THE JULE COLLINS SMITH MUSEUM OF FINE ART



Object Lab: What is a Monument?

Object Lab is a hybrid gallery classroom connecting Auburn's museum to teaching and research across campus to develop multi-disciplinary inquiry.



AUBURN UNIVERSITY



Daniel Chester French (American, 1850–1931), *Seated Abraham Lincoln*, model, 1916, plaster, 47 ½ x 31 ½ x 33 inches. Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA; gift of the Daniel Chester French Foundation, NT.

INTRODUCTION

Auburn students and professors worked with The Jule to explore themes related to the exhibition *Monuments and Myths: The America of Sculptors Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French*. Throughout the Spring 2023 semester, students visited the museum, discussed the exhibition, considered timely conversations around monuments and engaged with curators from Chesterwood and Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park, the historic homes, and studios of French and Saint-Gaudens. Courses included: *Sculpture as Space, Themes in Contemporary Sculpture, Museum Studies, Poetry II, and Curriculum and Teaching II – Social Science*. Students explored demonstrations of public grief and mourning, patriotism, histories and myths and the dominance and inheritance of Eurocentric aesthetics and values.

As preeminent sculptors of the Gilded Age, Saint-Gaudens' and French's work raises questions of craftsmanship, historical memory and the role of art in public and civic life. The exhibition at Auburn creates an opportunity to interplay Saint-Gaudens and French's work with ongoing debates about monuments in the South, generating geographic and disciplinary questions. The resulting guide is intentionally multimodal, allowing visitors to engage with content in various ways.

Students in *Curriculum and Teaching II – Social Science* developed the exercises within. The prompts are geared toward upper-level elementary, middle, and high school students yet adaptable to all. These questions ask you to **reflect** on your personal views of monuments, **engage** with the monuments by French and Saint-Gaudens, and **imagine** monuments you desire to see in the future. Other contributions include poems, essays and sculptures for the museum website.

Addressing the past means understanding its complexity and questioning whether those histories align with our present values. Further, change means actively thinking through how built environments are not static or neutral entities but are ripe for new perspectives. These student projects are methods of coming to terms with discourse and developing ways forward, and they invite you to do the same.



Daniel Chester French (American, 1850–1931),
Model for Wisconsin, 1913–14, plaster, 35½ x 11½
inches. Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA.
Courtesy American Federation of Arts.

REFLECT

What is a monument?

1. When you hear the word “monument,” what comes to mind?

2. What makes a monument a “monument” and not just a statue or other object?

3. Why do people visit monuments?

Where are monuments located?

Think about monuments located in or around your hometown. Make notes below and write in a journal.

Describe

- The location _____

- What it looks like _____

- How big or small it is _____

- The person or event represented _____

- How you feel approaching it, or how a different person might feel

Sketch one below.



James Earle Fraser
American, 1876–1953
Augustus Saint-Gaudens
1905–26, cast 1979
Bronze
32 x 23 x 16 inches
Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park,
Cornish, NH
Gift of Richard P. Wunder, Maurice
Kawashima, and the Trustees of the
Saint-Gaudens Memorial, 1998



Augustus Saint-Gaudens
American, 1848–1907
*Head of Victory for the William
Tecumseh Sherman Monument*
1897–1902
Plaster
24 x 19 x 22 inches
Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park,
Cornish, NH



Daniel Chester French
American, 1850–1931
Joe's Farewell, 1873
Parian porcelain
35½ x 11½ inches
Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA
Gift of the Daniel Chester French
Foundation



Augustus Saint-Gaudens
American, 1848–1907
Mary Queen of Scots, 1873
Onyx
9¼ x 7¾ x 5¾ inches
Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park,
Cornish, NH
Courtesy American Federation of Arts



Daniel Chester French
American, 1850–1931
Retribution, 1872
Parian porcelain
6½ x 11 x 4½ inches
Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA
Gift of Mrs. Roger C. Wilde, NT

ENGAGE

As you move through the exhibition, find the objects listed. Choose three adjectives to describe them.

	OBJECT	NAME OF ARTIST	YEAR CREATED	3 ADJECTIVES
1	<i>Lincoln: The Head of State</i>			
2	<i>Head of Mourning Victory</i>			
3	<i>Ulysses S. Grant</i>			
4	<i>Carlotta</i>			
5	<i>Diana</i>			
6	<i>Mary Queen of Scots</i>			
7	<i>Death Mask of William T. Sherman</i>			
8	<i>Adams Memorial</i>			
9	<i>Asia</i>			
10	<i>Mourning Victory</i>			
11	<i>Joe's Farewell</i>			
12	<i>Augustus Saint-Gardens</i>			
13	<i>Spirit of the Waters</i>			
14	<i>Head of Victory</i>			
15	<i>Andromeda</i>			
16	<i>The Puritan</i>			
17	<i>Angel for the Tomb of Edwin</i>			
18	<i>Retribution</i>			
19	<i>Amore Caritas</i>			
20	<i>Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment Memorial</i>			

Self-guided observations

Select one object in the museum. Spend at least two to three minutes looking carefully at the material, color, size, signs of wear and how it's made. Write down what you see.

Examine how the object is placed or situated in the galleries. Curators position objects with purpose. What is around it? Are there similar objects? What is the story, and why is it important?

Based on your observations, when do you think the artist created the object? Why? Who created it? What was their goal? Who is the audience?



Daniel Chester French
American, 1850–1931
George Washington, 1900, cast 1918
Bronze
35½ x 11¾ inches
Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA
Gift of the Daniel Chester French Foundation, NT

IMAGINE

Create your monument

If you were organizing a sculpture project, who or what would you choose to celebrate with a monument built in a public space? Would you celebrate a historical figure or event? What do you want your community to remember?

My monument proposal

If you were organizing a sculpture project, who or what would you choose to celebrate with a monument built in a public space? Would you celebrate a historical figure or event? What do you want your community to remember? Use these prompts to journal.

What or who is the focus of your monument? _____

Why is this important to remember? _____

Where (what location in the world) should your monument be placed? _____

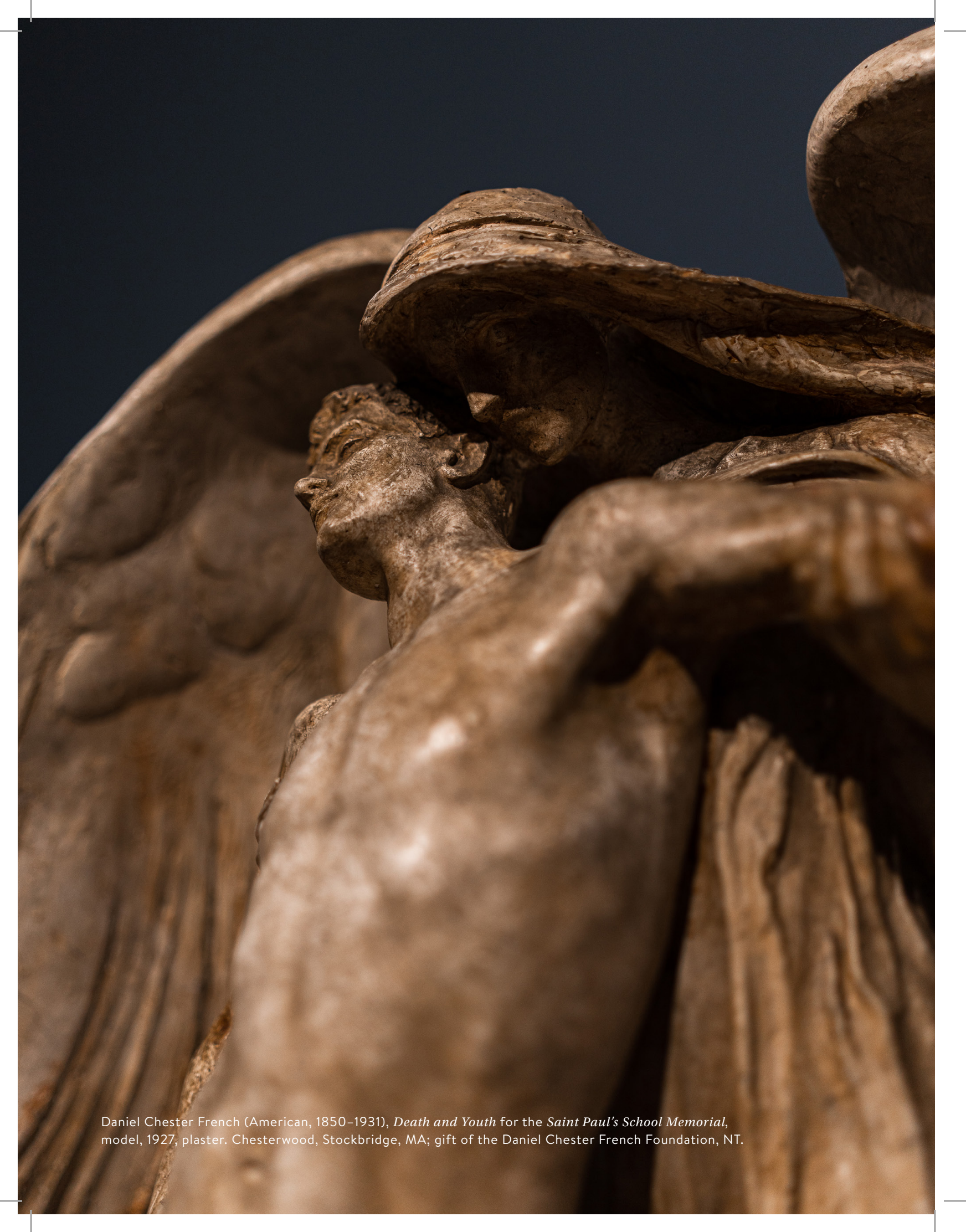
Does this location have meaning? _____

Who is the monument for? Who is the audience for this monument? _____

How do you want your monument to make people feel? _____

What medium or materials would you use to build your monument? _____

Use this page to sketch an outline of your new monument:



Daniel Chester French (American, 1850–1931), *Death and Youth* for the *Saint Paul's School Memorial*, model, 1927, plaster. Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA; gift of the Daniel Chester French Foundation, NT.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Curious to learn more about monuments, American history and public sculpture? The resources below guided many of the Auburn University faculty, staff, and students in investigating monuments and *Monuments and Myths*. Consider the resources below and follow your research interests. What would you add to the list?

POETRY

What Though the Field Be Lost, Christopher Kempf, 2021

Native Guard, Natasha Tretheway, 2006

TEACHING WITH MONUMENTS

Teachable Monuments: Using Public Art to Spark Dialogue and Confront Controversies, edited by Sierra Rooney, Jennifer Wingate, Harriet F. Senie, 2021

Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide for Community Leaders, edited by David B. Allison, 2018

MONUMENT HISTORY AND CULTURE

No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice, Karen L. Cox, 2021

Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies, Sanford Levinson, 1998

Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World, Laura A. Macaluso, 2019

Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America, Kirk Savage, 2018

Monumental Interventions, *Art Papers* vol. 44.2, edited by TK Smith

Smashing Statues: The Rise and Fall of America's Public Monuments, Erin L. Thompson, 2022

The National Monument Audit, 2021, Monument Lab, <https://monumentlab.com/audit>

EARLY EDUCATION

For Spacious Skies: Katharine Lee Bates and the Inspiration for "America the Beautiful", Nancy Churnin, 2020

Her Right Foot, Dave Eggers, 2017

Climbing Lincoln's Steps, Suzanne Slade, 2010

Monument Maker: Daniel Chester French and the Lincoln Memorial, Linda Boothe Sweeney, 2019


Plymouth Rocks!: The Stone-Cold Truth, Jane Yolen, 2020

TWEENS + TEENS

We Deserve Monuments, Jas Hammonds, 2022

A Kind of Spark, Elle McNicoll, 2022

A Different Mirror for Young People: A History for Multicultural America, Ronald Takaki



Daniel Chester French (American, 1850–1931), *Victory from the First Division Memorial*, model, 1923, bronze, 75 ½ x 39 x 26 inches. Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA; gift of the Daniel Chester French Foundation, NT.

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