

STUDIO INTRODUCTION

“Stories are “more true” than facts because stories are multidimensional. Truth with a capital “T” has many layers. Truths like justice or integrity are too complex to be expressed in a law, a statistic, or a fact. Facts need the context of when, who, and where to become Truths. A story incorporates when and who—lasting minutes or generations and narrating an event or series of events with characters, action and consequences. It occurs in a place or places that gives us a where.”¹

The term *heritage* is etymologically derived from the medieval Latin word *hereditagium*, with roots from the Latin *heres*. *Heres* is connected to English terms such as heir, inheritance, or that which is transmitted from an ancestor. Historically, the interpretation of what constitutes heritage has been subjective and based on what each community deems as a significant past. Our modern understanding of heritage, however, is primarily shaped by a Euro-American praxis that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century.² The intellectual worlds of North America, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe further established this framework following World War II.³ This Euro-American praxis established heritage as a set of wide, generalized standards. The broad standardization of heritage took a technical and operational form through the systemization of the term by *The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO). A branch of the *United Nations* (UN) whose aim is to protect human civilization and promote peace, UNESCO was formed to create regulated *global* standards regarding education, science, and culture after the shock of losing valuable built, environmental, and cultural heritage during World War II.⁴ Through the standardization of World Heritage, heritage has become a global phenomenon that must be valued *similarly* by everyone rather than *community* inheritance based on *community* subjective connections. The notion of heritage has often become homogenous and standardized, where it is analyzed, dissected, and measured.

But heritage is much more beyond the walls, the stones, and the universal value it offers. It holds lives, histories, memories, traditions, and narratives- stories that are sometimes untold or forgotten. While the scientific and precise documentation that UNESCO offers of World Heritage Sites is significant, it sometimes only tells part of the story, the one which is universal, leaving the individual stories and experiences behind. Heritage Considered is a research studio where you are asked to delve deep into a heritage case study of your choosing and look for oral histories and archival documents that uncover the threads of histories that are usually untold.

¹ Simmons 2000

² Harrison 2013: 15-16.

³ Ibid.:15-16.

⁴ It was in 1959, however, that the decision to construct the Aswan High Dam in Egypt opened UNESCO’s eyes to the need for a world definition of heritage and how it can be preserved through global support. For more information about the World Heritage Convention, see UNESCO.2024. “The World Heritage Convention.” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>. Accessed January 20, 2024.

Throughout this studio, we will learn to reconsider what we know about heritage sites. We will learn to look for stories, to listen to voices, to be curious, to question, and to be open to multitudes. Throughout the studio, we will learn to tell and share stories through visual drawings and architectural installations. We will learn to thicken up the line, expand the borders of our drawings, and offer alternative tools to think about and with heritage sites.

ASSIGNMENTS and SCHEDULE⁵

Week 1

Introduction | Considering your site

We will begin with understanding what is at stake. What difficult, neglected, contested stories do heritage sites hold? Why do we need to share these stories? Which site do you want to study? Why?

Week 2-5

Listening to Stories | Individual Research

For the next four weeks, you will work on understanding your site. Read archival material. Is the site a UNESCO World Heritage Site? If so, look at their documents. Look at current news posts about the site. Is the site inhabited? Learn about its history, its present, and its future. As you do your research, begin drawing out the information. How can we represent the research we are finding? What drawing techniques can we use? What tools do we have? We will learn collectively of methods and ways of representation beyond the typical cartesian drawings.

Week 6-9

Telling Stories | Individual Research Design

Now that you know your site, what other representation tools and visual outputs can we create to tell its story? Design the ways in which you will tell the story. Will you make a model, an installation, a video, or an audio?

Week 10- 13

Sharing Stories | Group work

How can we all share our stories together? As a group, we will design and organize an exhibition space for your visual material. Your final review will be in this exhibition space, where all your visual works will be brought together in a story about heritage sites re-considered.

⁵ We will have some guest lectures throughout the studio schedule. These will be announced as soon as they are finalized.