

# **Monument Lab records**

**Ms. Coll. 1400**

**Finding aid prepared by Cassidy Holahan, David Buchanan, Audrey Jaquiss, and Evan  
Curtis Charles Hall.**

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Monument Lab (Art Studio).
<b>Title</b>	Monument Lab records
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 1400
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	2015-2017
<b>Extent</b>	3 linear feet (3 boxes)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Language Note</b>	The bulk of the material is in English, however a few of the proposals and descriptions of projects are in Spanish.
<b>Abstract</b>	Founded in 2012, the Monument Lab is an independent public art and history studio based in Philadelphia. Founded and led by Paul Farber and Ken Lum, Monument Lab works with artists, students, activists, municipal agencies, and cultural institutions on creative avenues for public engagement and collective memory. This collection documents the Monument Lab project, undertaken in partnership with Mural Arts Philadelphia, from 2015 to 2017, addressing the question, "what is an appropriate monument for the current city of Philadelphia?" The project collected 4,500 monument proposals, of which twenty were selected for temporary exhibit at a variety of public sites across the city

**Cite as:**

Monument Lab records, 2015-2017, Ms. Coll. 1400, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

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## Biography/History

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Founded in 2012, the Monument Lab is an independent public art and history studio based in Philadelphia. Founded and led by Paul Farber and Ken Lum, Monument Lab works with artists, students, activists, municipal agencies, and cultural institutions on creative avenues for public engagement and collective memory. Monument Lab focuses on building collaborative projects and facilitating conversations around city monuments across time. The studio and its curatorial team initiates art exhibitions, commissions, research projects, a national fellows program, a web bulletin, and a podcast. The Monument Lab began with classroom conversations between Farber, Lum, and their students. In 2015, the Monument Lab began an initial experimental project wherein students and educators gathered hundreds of monument proposals. This collection focuses on the second phase of this project: a 2017 citywide exhibition in partnership with Mural Arts Philadelphia. The 2017 project took place over nine weeks, during which 20 temporary monuments were installed in 10 different sites: City Hall, Franklin Square, Washington Square, Logan Square, Rittenhouse Square, Penn Treaty Park, Vernon Park, Norris Square, Malcom X Park, and Marconi Plaza. The project also included “special project sites” at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), West Philadelphia, and Kensington, as well as a field research office at the Barnes Foundation on 20th Street. Alongside the temporary installations were shipping container “labs” staffed by research teams comprised of youth researchers, artists, and community members. The project was organized around a central question posed to collaborators and the public: What is an appropriate monument for the current city of Philadelphia? Research teams conducted 250,000 in-person engagements and gathered 4,500 monument proposals which were subsequently scanned and uploaded to OpenDataPhilly (<https://www.opendataphilly.org/showcase/monument-lab-map>) and <http://proposals.monumentlab.com> (some are also available on Monument Lab's website). The research teams recorded interactions with the public in research logs, transferred some proposals on display at PAFA, and analyzed the project in a final *Report to the City* (2018). It was also described in book edited by co-founders Paul M. Farber and Ken Lum ns2: titled, *Monument Lab: Creative Speculations for Philadelphia* (Temple University Press, 2019). The proposals include perspectives and imaginations from a wide range of ages, ideas, and locations. Beyond providing a snapshot of the diversity of public spaces and parks, this project examines the nature of public engagement with monuments and the various ways we pull meaning from them. It gives a sense of how the public impacts and is impacted by monuments, public space, and civic infrastructure more broadly. It also gives a sense of the cultural, artistic, civic, and educational networks in Philadelphia, including the City of Philadelphia; Philadelphia Parks & Recreation; Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy; Historic Philadelphia; Independence National Historical Park; Penn Institute for Urban Research; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Price Lab for Digital Humanities; and the University of Pennsylvania.

**Sources Consulted:**

<http://monumentlab.com/research>

<https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/monumentlab/>

<http://monumentlab.com/monument-lab-project-2017>

<http://monumentlab.com/about-monument-lab>

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection documents the Monument Lab project, undertaken in partnership with Mural Arts Philadelphia, from 2015 to 2017, addressing the questions, "what is an appropriate monument for the current city of Philadelphia?" The project collected 4,500 monument proposals, of which twenty were selected for temporary exhibit at a variety of public sites across the city. This collection contains some of the 4,500 public proposals, information about the 20 projects which were installed in each of the "laboratory" sites, a small number of general oversight files as well as promotional material for the project.

Material is organized in three series: (I) The Monument Lab's administrative files, (II) public engagement materials, including proposals, and (III) promotional materials. The first series includes administrative files dating from 2015 to 2017, featuring a map of the 20 temporary monuments erected in 2017, a hard drive containing data from monument proposals circa 2015 to 2017, a lab managers and staff handbook for the Mural Arts Philadelphia September 2017 projects, and policy files from Logan Square's Lab in 2017.

The bulk of the collection is found in series II which includes original copies of proposals gathered at different sites around the city and field notebooks from volunteers describing the nature of interactions in parks. Participants were given blank proposal sheets which asked for name of monument, location for the monument, zip code and age of proposer, and a description or sketch of the proposed monument. The proposers, representing a wide range in ages (from 2 to at least 73) and ethnicities, took their task in degrees of seriousness, from proposing statues of themselves to reflections of Philadelphia's political and cultural past to the hopes of peace, love, equality, and environmental progressivism for city's future. Sketches range from rough to very skilled and for the most part are extremely thoughtful presentations and reflections of what makes Philadelphia unique as well as areas which citizens clearly see as needing improvement. Lab logs for each location include a record of the number of interactions and the number of proposals for given days; sometimes including descriptions of interactions.

Series III includes a limited amount of promotional and public-facing materials, including a flyer and poster advertising the project, posters describing a few of the selected projects, a coloring book, and newsletters about the project generally and the projects selected.

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## Administrative Information

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### **Access Restrictions**

The bulk of this collection is open to research use, however, access to media on which original computer files are housed is restricted. The Kislak Center will provide access to the information on these materials from duplicate master files. If the original does not already have a copy, it will be sent to an outside vendor for copying. Patrons are financially responsible for the cost. The turnaround time from request to delivery of digital items is about two weeks for up to five items and three to seven weeks for more than five items. Please contact Reprographic Services (reprogr@upenn.edu) for cost estimates and ordering. Once digital items are received, researchers will have access to the files on a dedicated computer in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library

### **Use Restrictions**

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

### **Source of Acquisition**

Gift of Monument Lab, 2018.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **CORPORATE NAME(S)**

- Mural Arts Program (Philadelphia, Pa.).

### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Machine-readable artifacts
- Maps
- Posters
- Promotional materials

- Proposals

## **GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--21st century
- Philadelphia (Pa.)--Social life and customs

## **SUBJECT(S)**

- Art
- Art and society
- Monuments--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia
- Public art
- Public opinion

## Collection Inventory

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### **SERIES I. ADMINISTRATIVE FILES FROM MONUMENT LAB.**

	Box	Folder
Philadelphia city map with projects marked, 2015-2017.	1	1
Hard drive (RESTRICTED), 2015-2017.	1	1
Lab managers and staff handbook and policies and procedures for working in labs, 2017.	1	2
Signage at labs and "stoop tallies", 2017.	3	12

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### **SERIES II. MONUMENT LAB PROPOSALS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.**

	Box	Folder
Proposals, 2015.	1	3-5
City Hall proposals: log books, 2017.	1	6
City Hall proposals, 2017.	1	7-12
City Hall ephemera, 2017.	1	13
Penn Treaty Park log book and proposals, 2017.	2	1
Penn Treaty Park log book, 2017.	2	2-3

Penn Treaty Park ephemera, 2017.	2	4
Rittenhouse Square log books, 2017.	2	5
Rittenhouse Square proposals, 2017.	2	6-7
Franklin Square log books, 2017.	2	8
Franklin Square proposals, 2017.	2	9-10
Malcolm X Park log books, 2017.	2	11
Malcolm X Park proposals, 2017.	2	12-13
Washington Square log books, 2017.	2	14
Washington Square proposals, 2017.	2	15
Logan Square log book and proposals, 2017.	3	1
Logan Square proposals 2/2, 2017.	3	2
Marconi Plaza proposals, 2017.	3	3-4
Norris Square log book and proposals, 2017.	3	5
Vernon Park proposals, 2017.	3	6
Light Labs: PAFA proposals, 2017.	3	7-8
Light Labs: Other Sites, 2017.	3	9-11
Blank proposals, 2015-2017.	3	13

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**SERIES III. PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL.**

	Box	Folder
Flyer for project, 2017.	3	15
Monument and artist descriptions for "On the Threshold," by Kaitlin Pomerantz; "for everyone a garden VIII," by David Hartt; and "Sweet Chariot," by Marisa Williamson, 2015-2017.	3	14
	Box	Folder
Monument and artist descriptions for "Sweet Chariot," by Marisa Williamson, 2017.	107	
	Box	Folder
Monument Lab coloring book and selected images for coloring book, 2015-2017.	3	16
	Box	Folder
Newsletters, 2015, 2017.	107	
Posters, "Change the way we write the history of our city together" and "Propose your monument", 2015-2017.	107	