DOI: 10.1111/phis.12224

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Philosophical Issues
A Supplement to NOÛS

Public artifacts and the epistemology of collective material testimony

Quill R Kukla[1,2]

[1]Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA

[2]Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany

Correspondence
Quill R Kukla, Georgetown University Washington, DC, USA
Email: qrkukla@gmail.com

1 | INTRODUCTION

Many artifacts that are part of the public landscape—including monuments, memorials, murals, and many viewing towers, arches, gardens, public sculptures, and buildings—are designed to *communicate knowledge*. It is common to describe such public artifacts as *speech*,[1] and also to describe them as *transmitting knowledge* of one sort or another.[2] But the claim that these artifacts can be knowledge-transmitting speech is not typically developed as the complex claim in philosophy of language and social epistemology that it is. I will argue that such public artifacts can be *testimony*. This raises several philosophically important questions: How can public artifacts be speech, and more specifically, how can they testify? Whose testimony are they? To whom and about what are they testifying? And what is the epistemological status of this testimony—when should it be trusted? Surely if public artifacts can testify, then they can also mislead; it would be strange for them to be a form of testimony that is always trustworthy. Taking seriously their status as testimony means taking seriously as well the ways in which they can communicate false or unentitled claims. I hope that the idea that public artifacts not only communicate but testify is prima facie plausible; it certainly seems like monuments, memorials, and public artworks, for instance, *tell us things*, and that they can *tell the truth* or *lie* to us.

In the philosophical literature on monuments and memorials, one often runs across the claim that such artifacts "speak."[3] But typically, there is no careful distinction drawn between the claim that the artifacts *themselves* are speakers, and the more quotidian claim that they are *speech*, spoken by a more traditional speaker such as an individual person, institution, corporation, or collective. There is a small literature on whether artifactual objects can be speakers, and in particular whether they can assert and testify.[4] But in this essay, I am not trying to argue that artifacts

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.
© 2022 The Authors. *Philosophical Issues* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC.

can themselves speak; I am interested only in the second, less spooky claim, that they can be speech. That they can be speech is no more metaphysically suspect than that writing on a page can be speech.

I am especially interested in public artifacts that at least appear to function as *collective* testimony, communicating collective knowledge. I will call such artifacts *collective material testimony*. Some communicative public artifacts, like murals that are designed and created by a particular artist expressing personal themes, can function as individual testimony. A private memorial may be personal testimony to one individual's grief and memories. But other artifacts speak in a collective voice—that is, in the voice of a group whose members share a 'we' identity and participate in collective action.[5] When a public artifact testifies in a purportedly collective voice, it raises epistemological questions about whether it is reliable speech along at least two dimensions. We might ask, should we trust the content of what it says? Is it in fact transmitting knowledge? But we might also ask, should we trust that the speaker is who it appears to be? Is it in fact speaking in the voice of the collective who it purports to be representing?

I will argue that collective material testimony is *risky* in both these senses. Artifacts can easily mislead us by presenting false, but compelling, content. They may also easily mislead us by presenting themselves as speaking in the voice of someone or some collective that does not actually authorize them. Most of the classic literature on testimony assumes that the epistemological questions are about the reliability of the content of testimony and the trustworthiness of its speaker, but not about the identity of the speaker. But material collective testimony makes vivid that there can be epistemic risks of both sorts, as we will see. I will end by thinking about how such testimony can be more trustworthy, and how we, as epistemic agents, ought to take it up responsibly.

2 | WHAT IS TESTIMONY?

Not all material objects are speech. A tree growing wild in a forest tells us nothing, except perhaps in some highly metaphorical sense. Not even all public artifacts are speech. A public trash can, unless repurposed or marked in some special way, is not speech. For a thing to be speech, its purpose must be to communicate something, and it must be presented by a speaker to an audience. I do not want to say that every object that is speech was made with the *intention* to communicate, for two reasons. First, I think we often communicate without intending to do so. This is why I prefer to talk about the communicative purpose of a thing rather than the communicative intention; we can have goals without intending to. Second, something may be used to communicate even if it was originally made to do something else; objects can be repurposed and given meaning and a communicative function.

Sometimes it is obvious that a public artifact is speech, for instance when it displays words or representational images. Sometimes it is clear from context, for instance when it is named as a memorial. Sometimes, it's not clear whether something is communicative or not; a detective may take an origami figure found at a crime site to be a communication from the criminal, whereas in fact it may have just been left behind by accident. So, it may require some hermeneutic and empirical work to figure out if something is speech.

Not all material artifacts that are speech are *testimony*. An artifact may express an imperative or a warning. It may degrade or subjugate (Lai, 2020). These are all ways of speaking, but they are not testifying. In order to testify, an artifact must *assert* something. To assert, the artifact has to have some kind of content that can be true or false. But this is not enough—not everything that has truth-valuable content is an assertion. Giving a full theory of assertion would take me well

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

beyond the scope of this paper. But at a minimum, an assertion, as a pragmatic category of speech act, must have a speaker; and the speaker must be responsible for the truth and justification of the content of the assertion.[6]

On many accounts of testimony, assertion is still not sufficient for testimony. A testifier not only asserts, but *offers an audience a reason for belief by communicating the content of their own belief*. When we testify, we *tell* someone something, we do not merely send an assertion out into the world. Successful testimony, on many accounts, is a kind of *assurance* from the speaker that the audience can rely on their testimony; it is an undertaking of a commitment on the part of the speaker to let the audience count on them for belief formation.[7] For this speech act be properly entitled, the speaker must have the right kind of *authority* to give this testimony; they must be positioned in a way that makes them epistemically trustworthy, which means they must speak with the right sort of expertise to be reliable and from a position that at least apparently ensures sincerity. Not all reliable evidence with representational content is testimony. As Freiman and Miller (2020) point out, tree rings and thermometers are reliable guides to facts about the world, but they are not testimony. Conversely, not all testimony is reliable. Testimony must present itself as reliable, but it can be insincere or ill-informed.

There are active, complicated debates within the literature on the epistemology of testimony about exactly how to cash out all these conditions, and how testimonial speech may or may not reduce to other kinds of knowledge sources.[8] I am not concerned with these subtleties here, but with an intuitive picture of what kind of speech testimony is. So to summarize, testimony must be an assertion with truth-valuable content; it must at least purport to be produced or used by a responsible speaker who has the proper authority to speak on its topic; it must purport to communicate the content of the beliefs of the speaker; and it must be told to an audience who is invited to rely on it for belief formation. Understanding an artifact as testimony requires not just understanding its content, but its pragmatic form as a *telling*, performed by a speaker with beliefs who at least purports to have authority to testify.

One might worry that monuments, murals and the like can't be testimony because they are not discursive entities. Of course, often such artifacts have writing on them, but often they do not, and anyhow, they typically communicate more than is written on them. It is tricky to give a good theory of what counts as speech, once we notice that not all speech acts, given the wide pragmatic variety of speech act types, convey content. A greeting like "Hi!", an expletive, and a call to get someone's attention are all speech, but they don't have content, only pragmatic form. Once we notice this, it becomes quite difficult to say when a material object that is not overtly linguistic is functioning as speech. I am committed to the view that speech must have a speaker and an audience, and a structure rich enough that it can be part of a communicative system that can address an audience and direct attention to a shared world (Kukla & Lance, 2009). It is not straightforward to use this criterion to demarcate exactly what counts as speech. There are many acts that seem borderline communicative that have no propositional content, like sighs, winks, giving someone flowers, and so forth; in these cases, in my view, it takes fine-grained analysis of their pragmatic structure and links to other acts to figure out if they are best classed as speech. Luckily for my purposes, I am interested here specifically in *testimony*, which has traditional propositional content that can be true or false. If we can say that a public artifact tells the truth or misleads, as I think we can, and if it is designed to communicate the content of beliefs, then it doesn't seem to me to push any troubling boundaries to count it as speech. We will see examples as we go along; for now, my point is just that we don't have to believe anything especially mysterious about the material environment or about the nature of speech in order to take some public artifacts as testimony.

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 1 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

3 | PUBLIC ARTIFACTS AS COLLECTIVE MATERIAL TESTIMONY

I claim that public artifacts can be collective material testimony. But what is the nature of such artifactual testimony? Whose speech is it; to whom do these artifacts speak; and what do they say?

3.1 | Who is speaking?

Public artifacts can be the speech of traditional individuals; graffiti tags are a paradigmatic example (although even these can raise complexities, since some tags are crew tags rather than individual tags). Sometimes they are the speech of an institution, like a sign in front of a store or a billboard. But the case that most interests me here is when the speaker is, or appears to be, a collective. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (Figure 1), for instance, presents itself as collective testimony to shared guilt and grief, as well as shared knowledge about the deaths of millions of Jews during the Holocaust. But what makes this a collective speech act, and who is the collective? The memorial had two architects, Peter Eisenman and Buro Happold. But we do not interpret them, nor the crew of people who actually built the memorial, as its speakers; so neither designing nor producing speech is intuitively necessary or sufficient for being its speaker. The memorial's creation is due to a resolution passed by the Bundestag, and the project was managed by a federal foundation. Insofar as we accept that Germany is a democratic representative republic, we might argue that the German people are the collective speaker here. Yet there remains a relatively small but vocal group of far-right extremists in Germany who surely do not see this memorial as their speech. Does it speak on their behalf as well, in virtue of their citizenship? To complicate matters more, the title of the memorial suggests that maybe it is Europe at large who is testifying. Are all Europeans thus the speakers, even though the memorial was designed in and sponsored by Germany?

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

I suggest that the speaker of a piece of collective material testimony is the group that *authorizes* its display and its use as speech, and that is *responsible* for the accuracy of the testimony. Individuals can be parts of collectives that authorize and take responsibility for speech without knowing that they have spoken, and even while disagreeing with the testimony, if they are legitimate members of the group. For the speech act to be a *collective* speech act, as I am using the term, everyone in the collective must identify with that collective and have a legitimate role in participating or collaborating in its collective acts, even if that legitimate role is to delegate authority to a representative. This is in contrast, for instance, to the speech act of a corporation or an institution, which will have many members, but which may be run hierarchically, and may well act without the support or input of its members. Thus speech is that of a collective if there is a genuine process of collective authorization. Everyone must have the opportunity to have their voice represented, even if some people do not agree with the outcome or choose not to bother participating.[ix]

The question of who authorizes and takes responsibility for a public artifact of this sort is not a simple legalistic question, but one that may be contested and may change over time. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was the product of a multi-stage and relatively inclusive social process, involving a competition, an interdisciplinary jury, and multiple rounds of public discussion (Leggewie & Meyer, 2005). There has been an interesting history of dissent within Germany surrounding the memorial, with some calling it too vague, some arguing that it erases the role of the Nazi perpetrators themselves, and others criticizing it for memorializing only murdered Jews, among other controversies. It seems to me that the most natural reading of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, given this history of its production and reception and its placement in the capital of Germany near the physical seat of power, is that its speaker is the German people, despite all of the internal dissent. It stands as collective speech not just because of a top-down act of authorization on behalf of a formally representative government, but as the considered testimony of the German people after internal debate. But this is an interpretation, not a simple fact that can be read off of the memorial itself. Other memorials, such as Civil War memorials in the United States and memorials of colonizers in Belgium, were produced without welcoming the input or collaboration of large portions of the population. They have also been rejected systematically and forcefully by many of the people on whose behalf they originally purported to speak. Thus it does not make sense to take them as the testimony of entire regions or nations. We can say that the far-right in Germany were compelled to participate in a speech act that they did not approve of, but they are still part of the collective who spoke, whereas slaves and colonized people and their descendants never participated in the process of authorizing colonial monuments at all, and so are not part of the collective whose speech they are.

It is a substantial epistemic and hermeneutic task, I am suggesting, to figure out whose voice is concretized in a piece of public collective testimony. Thi Nguyen writes, “It is relatively easy to pick out group expressions, because they are obviously the result of organized group action” (Nguyen, 2019, p. 983). But I don’t understand how this is typically obvious. Public artifacts do not wear their group history upon their surface. A signed public artwork relatively unproblematically speaks in the voice of a single artist. But even when a public artifact that purports to speak in a collective voice names the authority by which it is produced, one can rarely tell without a lot of research the extent to which the work was produced by consensus or through collaboration; whose voices were silenced; and who actually had the cultural capital to get the right to alter the landscape.

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

3.2 | Who is the audience?

It is integral to the publicity of material *public* testimony that its audience may in principle be anyone in public space. This makes it different from other kinds of collective material testimony, which may appear in spaces with curated audiences. For example, archives, even when they are officially open to the public, really invite in only certain kinds of viewers who have a certain amount of cultural literacy, and who are interested in and feel able to engage with artifacts from a kind of scholarly, rarefied epistemic stance. But murals, monuments, and the like that are out in public streets and squares are available to anyone. That said, in ractice, their audience tends to be narrower. To determine to whom a public artifact actually testifies, we need to think about its physical location, its position within the community in which it is located, and its role in the community landscape.

Nguyen (2019), like me, argues that monuments and similar public artifacts are the speech of a group or collective. But he also claims that through these artifacts, groups primarily speak *to themselves*. However, it seems to me that many monuments and other such attractions communicate quite little with locals, even when they speak in locals' collective voice. As Christine Sypnowich (2021) points out, monuments and public art are often 'inert' and 'ignored.' I would argue that is especially true for locals. Partly, this is just because locals get used to them, and they become part of the landscape for them rather than standing out as objects of attention in their own right. Partly, features of the public landscape lose their impact for locals because they cease to compel them to take up a communicative stance towards them. I mean this in the very concrete sense that locals do not take up audience positions relative to these objects, with respect to their physical location or their attentional gaze. While they may run across them in the course of their daily lives, they do not stand in their viewing areas and stare at them from assigned locations. Seasoned locals do not go to their own tourist attractions, except perhaps when they are showing others around their city.

For instance, locals in Washington, DC use the Washington Monument as a point of orientation when they navigate their city, as a place to walk their dogs, and as the starting or endpoint for running races. But they rarely go to the monument and look at it in its own right, or take in its testimony. They do not stand at a middle distance from the Washington Monument, and stare at it. But part of the communicative testimony of that monument is produced by this view—its visual relationship to the monuments to the other presidents and the Capitol Building, and its position at the head of the sweeping expanse of the National Mall, which is lined with museums of space exploration, art and history, and other pieces of a narrative of American might and progress, of which the Washington Monument is the visual summary (Figure 2). Locals do not generally position their bodies so as to absorb this situated testimony, but tourists do. Thus monuments and memorials, and public attractions more generally, primarily successfully testify *to* outsiders who are not local. Remember that testifying, unlike asserting, requires both a speaker and an audience who is being *told* and *assured*. Testifying is thus a success term; a speaker only testifies insofar as someone is the recipient of the testimony.[10] In the case of public artifacts, then, they testify only to those who are physically and attentionally positioned so as to enable the artifacts to communicate to them.

We saw that it is difficult to pin down exactly who the speaker of collective material testimony is. But it certainly seems that often, locals speak through public artifacts that are designed to speak to outsiders, not to themselves. I thus think Nguyen is much too quick in saying that that their primary and typical purpose is self-directed speech. Mostly, these types of artifacts seek

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

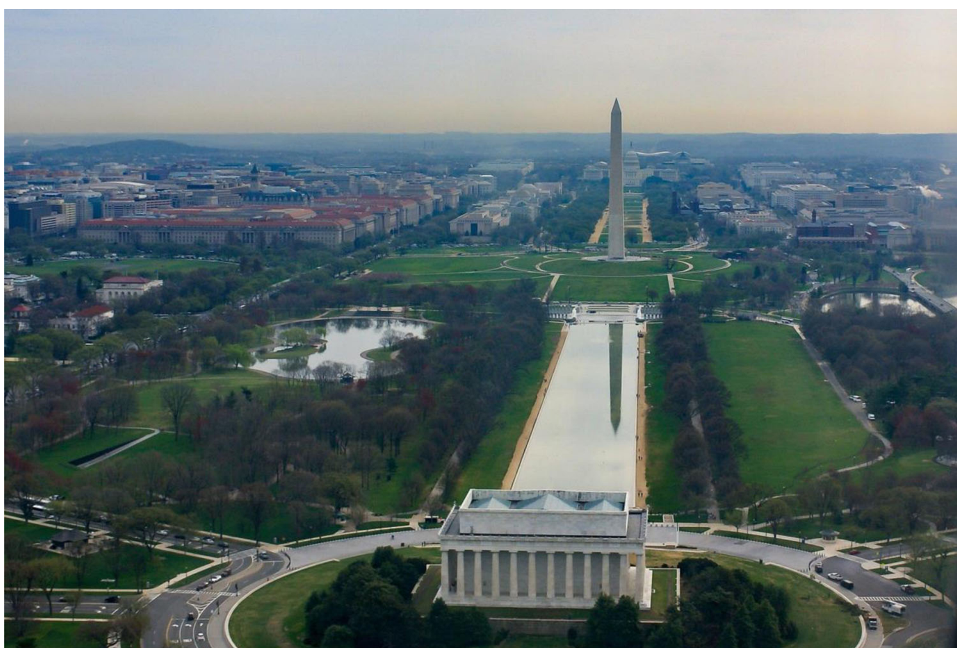

FIGURE 2 The Washington Monument and its surrounding landscape, Washington, DC. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

to curate an identity and a history for a collective and to communicate it to others. Sypnowich writes, "However diverse, monuments have some common aims: to teach, to edify, to connect *us* with events, traditions or people" (Sypnowich, 2021, p. 3, my emphasis). But this leaves open who the 'us' is. Public artifacts speak *to* the people and groups who can be reasonably expected to take up the proper physical and attentional viewing stance towards them, which allows their communicative message to be received. Locals rarely take up these positions, when it comes to grand monuments. The Washington Monument tells the world at large a story about American dominance and power, but it mostly tells Washingtonians, especially the majority of Washingtonians who have little reason in their daily lives to visit the National Mall, how to point themselves southwest.

Street art is often different. Much street art is specifically placed in ways that locals will encounter it and be called to attend to it in the course of their lived, active use of their city. It often grabs one's attention, not because one made a trip to stand and look at it, but because of how it uses the spaces that locals use anyhow. Such art can indeed speak *to* the very same group that speaks *through* it. For instance, in the South Bronx, a poor neighborhood of New York that is often treated by outsiders as a dead place or a 'no-go' zone, street art is for the most part organized and curated by Tats Cru (also known as the Mural Kings), a crew made up of long-time residents who are established artists in their 40s and 50s. Here, street art is largely put up in consultation with and on behalf of the South Bronx community, which in turn respects it by generally refraining from tagging over or vandalizing it. Tats Cru often produces works that transform everyday places that residents would typically pass through without attention to their surroundings, like the parking lot of a McDonalds, an underpass, or the side of a warehouse. These works often incorporate everyday objects that make up life in the neighborhood—fire hydrants, bodegas, the 6 train—and showcase them as objects of beauty worthy of attention and as important constituents of place

FIGURE 3 Tats Crew Mural, South Bronx [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

identity. There is not much tourism in the South Bronx, and even other residents of New York tend to avoid or ignore it, but these works speak *to* the very community that they speak *for*, testifying that this is a place with an identity and one worth lingering in and attending to. They tell a story about ways of life and values in the community, *to* that community (Figure 3).

3.3 | What do public artifacts say?

The question of what public artifacts say is as complex as the question of what art says, and I certainly won't try to give a comprehensive answer here. Not all of their communicative functions are testimonial, as I pointed out at the start. For instance, Nguyen (2019) argues in detail that public artifacts like monuments often help constitute communities and call on people to make commitments to a set of shared values; these are illocutionary functions other than testifying. As he also points out, they are distinctively good at instilling emotions, which is also not a testimonial function. But they are also good at communicating emotions, values, and moods of their speaker that are hard to convey with explicit language alone, and this is a testimonial function. Nguyen says that what is special about monuments is that they convey emotions, but notice that 'convey' is importantly ambiguous between 'instill' and 'communicate.' Often these functions happen together but they are conceptually distinct. Instilling emotions is not a testimonial function, but communicating emotions is.

There is no particular limit to the content of the collective testimony of public artifacts. But they are especially effective at testifying to the emotions, attitudes, values, memories, and norms

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

of the collective whose testimony they are. That is, not only do they communicate the contents of collective beliefs, but they communicate beliefs about the attitudes of the group: memorials often communicate not just, "this person was great!" but also, "we believe this person was great!" and "we feel pride in this person!" or "This person's deeds express our values!" Of course, public artifacts often also convey straightforward historical facts, through writing or imagery. The historical content of such artifacts tends to be fairly simple: these people died, this battle was won, etc. As Ten-Herng Lai (2020) points out, this makes arguments that we should preserve them so as to preserve our history a bit silly; there are richer and more efficient alternative means of preserving historical facts. However, they are nuanced sources of other sorts of information.

Because of their potentially rich aesthetic form and their extra-linguistic features, public artifacts often embed demonstratives into their propositional testimony. A memorial may tell its audience, "We (collectively) feel *this* kind of grief" for instance, where 'this' is conveyed through the aesthetics of the piece. Or a monument may say, "This person had *this* kind of greatness, and we feel *this* kind of pride in *that* greatness." It may also say, "These events happened *here*," where *here* has a richness of concrete location and place identity that could not be reduced to a description of an objective location. These demonstrative references may not themselves be translatable into neat linguistic descriptions.

4 | PERSPECTIVAL IMMERSION, AUTHORITY, AND COMPELLING TESTIMONY

The collective material testimony of public artifacts is often distinctively compelling. That is, we are especially likely to believe it, and to have a hard time getting critical distance from it. This is so for at least two reasons.

The first reason, which is relatively simple, is that such testimony often appears especially authoritative. Public artifacts are often sponsored by governments, historical societies, foundations, and other such authoritative entities, who give their imprimatur to the testimony. Furthermore, there are almost always norms in place for how one can interact with the object—can it be stepped on, sat on, touched, written on? These norms will not only shape how we encounter it but also convey ideological messages about the import and negotiability of its testimony. Such public artifacts often demand of us, through both physical mechanisms and official norms, that we take up a passive and deferential stance towards them, keeping our distance, often looking upward, and not handling or altering them.[11] In this way, they present themselves as authoritative and not open to critical questioning. Just as expert scientists seem more authoritative when they testify in lab coats or on a panel, and lecturers seem more authoritative when standing at podiums, and judges seem more authoritative from behind a raised bench, similarly monuments, memorials and the like seem more authoritative when they are viewed passively from a middle distance in the midst of a plaza or separated from the rest of the landscape by a viewing area or atop a hill, for example. In all these cases, there is a *choreography of authority* and the viewing position we are assigned in this choreography enhances the apparent authoritative status of the speech.

The second, more complex reason is that in communicating their testimony, public artifacts induct us into a *perspective* on this testimony. From within this perspective, the testimony is woven into other states, stances, and attitudes, from within which it becomes especially compelling and coherent. This is so in at least two, intertwined ways, both of which build on points from the previous section. First, because of their aesthetic qualities, such public artifacts do not merely assert, but also instill emotions, moods, and attitudes that frame and contextualize their testimony. They

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

thereby weave that testimony into a larger set of mental states on the part of the audience. Second, because of their physicality and the way that they are planted in a landscape, they quite literally require us to take up a specific concrete perspective on them, from which they can communicate their testimony.[12]

These two effects are connected: we are inducted into emotions, moods, and attitudes partly *through* the physical stances we must take up in order to let the artifacts testify to us, although their inherent aesthetic properties also contribute to this induction. When someone designs and builds a feature of the public landscape, they do not merely determine the design of the artifact itself, but also its situation within the surrounding landscape, its viewing area, how it will be approached, how people's gaze will be directed, and so forth.

Thus the artifact, in its physical and normative context, exercises control over how its embodied audience will come to have a perspective on it.

I am here borrowing and repurposing an argument from Rachel Fraser (2021). Fraser's argument concerns *narrative testimony*, not material testimony. Fraser writes,

> When I accept simple testimony, I remain largely responsible for the way in which the accepted content is integrated into my overall system of beliefs. To accept a narrative on your say-so is, by contrast, to accept an already-structured bundle of information. To embed content in a narrative is to colour its affective valence and ongoing inferential profile; to accept narrative testimony is to accept these epistemically consequential embeddings. (p. 4026)

Fraser's point is that to follow narrative testimony at all, you can't just take in a set of independent, context-free propositional assertions; you must understand how they are woven together into an interpretive whole. In turn, this inducts you into a specific perspective on the events narrated, which makes each of the events more compelling and plausible. In following the narrative, you mentally coordinate with the testifier and take up her perspective. Fraser writes:

> Co-operative, trusting hearers seeking to mentally coordinate with narrative testifiers will not simply adopt the opinions expressed by the narrative, but will structure and organize information as the narrative suggests. By adopting said structure, the agent allows their perspectival dispositions to be shaped by the speaker. (pp. 4028–4029)

What is a perspective? Here, following Fraser again, I borrow from Elizabeth Camp's various writings on perspectives. Camp argues that perspectives structure our attention and our interpretive dispositions, as well as bringing on board sets of emotional responses. Perspectives shape the questions we ask, our evaluations, and the inferences we draw. Camp writes,

> On my understanding, perspectives are modes of interpretation: open-ended ways of thinking, feeling, and more generally engaging with the world and certain parts thereof. Above all, perspectives are ongoing dispositions to structure one's thoughts, along at least two dimensions. First, a perspective involves dispositions to notice and remember certain types of features rather than others, so that those features are more prominent or salient in one's intuitive thinking, and have more influence in determining one's classifications … Second, a perspective involves dispositions to treat some classes of features as more central than others, in the sense of taking those features to cause, motivate, or otherwise explain many others. (Camp, 2013, pp. 335–336)

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 4 Stoplersteine in Berlin [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Camp argues that perspectival immersion "involves actually, if temporarily, re-structuring our thoughts, by altering what we notice and care about, what explanations we assign, and what emotional and evaluative responses come naturally to us" (Camp, 2017, p. 94). She explores various discursive phenomena that induct us into perspectives. For example, she argues that reading fiction (Camp, 2017) and appreciating metaphors (Camp, 2013) require taking up a perspective, and that slurs are powerful precisely because they cue perspectives (Camp, 2020).

Neither Camp nor Fraser have material testimony in mind, but it seems to me that when public artifacts built into a landscape testify, this is a powerful and highly concrete, literal example of testimony that requires that we take up a perspective and coordinate with a speaker in order to receive and understand it. This is partly because, as in the case of fiction, the aesthetic dimensions of the work call our attention and engage our emotions and values in ways that exceed the propositional content of what it conveys. But even more interestingly, I think, it is because we must physically position ourselves and behave in various ways with respect to the work, and train our attention in specific ways, in order to see what the work is telling us. We quite literally have to take up a material perspective and an attentional stance controlled by the artifact and its position in the landscape in order to understand its testimony. The landscape structures and organizes the context within which the artifact testifies, thereby inducting us into a specific structured space of meaning, attention, emotion and action. Fraser says that people share a perspective when they share a way of looking at the world (Fraser, 2021, p. 4028). In the case of public artifacts that call for certain viewing stances, viewers *literally* share a way of looking at the world.

Consider the *Stolpersteine* ("stumble stones") that are embedded in the ground in Berlin and an increasing number of other European cities (Figure 4). These are small brass squares built

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

into the cobblestones or pavement in front of homes from which Jews were taken during World War II. They are each engraved with the deported person's name and date of birth, the date upon which the person was taken, and the date and place of death if known. Often a building will have a collection of Stolpersteine in front of it, representing a whole family lost. These powerful memorials call for a specific physical perspective in order for them to communicate. No middle-distance viewing of them is possible. They grab us as we are going about our normal business in the city, stop our motion, and drag our gaze down, forging an intimate communicative relationship and pulling us out of the present. One need not go to a special place to look at them. They are strewn about the city, and one finds oneself taking up the appropriate perspective on them just in walking down the street, and going about one's business; one 'stumbles' over them, as their name implies. They tell us about specific narratives and losses that happened on *this* street that we are walking on, in *this* building that we are in front of. Using minimal factual details, but details that are essentially planted in place and orient us towards the place we are standing, they evoke an entire narrative. Our emotions and our attitudes towards where we are and the facts that we have just learned are shaped by this entire physical ballet and its location.

Collective material testimony that is built into the public landscape locks in our perspective on it partly because it *carries its own stable context with it*. Unlike standard written testimony, which may move between different printed pages and computer screens, changing its material embodiment and its location and context, public artifacts that testify have a fixed physical form and a fixed physical place and context, and call for a relatively fixed embodied stance in relation to them.

Camp argues that unlike fiction, in which the author curates a perspective, "the actual world is independently out there, free to be interpreted differently by agents with different concerns or commitments" (Camp, 2017, p. 85). Thus she denies that the actual physical world can induct us into a perspective. This seems to ignore the extent to which the actual world is *designed*. It is not just "out there." Much like a work of fiction, the landscape we typically navigate is shaped by agents, curated, and infused with meaning. It is designed to be viewed and interacted with in specific ways and to communicate specific things.

Fraser argues that perspectivally dependent testimony is especially compelling. By inducting us into a perspective, such testimony situates us in such a way that we are disposed to have the salience responses, emotions, mood, and interpretive frames within which the testimony is plausible and coherent. This induction into a perspective makes us *epistemically dependent*, Fraser argues; it is harder to consider the testimony in a different, critical light when we are brought to take the speaker's perspective on it from the start. I agree, and think the point applies to public material testimony as well. The fact that public artifacts control our physical and (thereby) our mental perspective on them makes their testimony more compelling than standard, decontextualized testimonial speech acts. This is not to say that we cannot resist believing their testimony, or that a critical stance on them is impossible. But it takes work, because of our perspectival immersion and also because of the performance of authoritativeness that we often confront within this perspective.

5 | HOW TRUSTWORTHY IS COLLECTIVE MATERIAL TESTIMONY?

So far, my account of public artifacts that serve as collective material testimony has been descriptive. I have not offered an epistemology of this testimony, in that I have not said anything about when it gives good reason for belief. I argued in the last section that we tend to be compelled by

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

and deferential to this testimony. In this section I argue that it is often distinctively *untrustworthy*, both in the sense that its content is often misleading and in the sense that its speaker is not in fact authoritative. Collective material testimony is thus *risky testimony*: it tends to produce belief in its audience, but at the same time it is also often unentitled, in both the senses I just described. So there is a high risk of a mismatch between whether it produces belief and whether it should produce belief. The untrustworthiness of this kind of testimony, which makes it epistemically risky, comes from several sources.

A first problem for the trustworthiness of the collective testimony of public artifacts comes from the fact that often, those who have authoritative and practical control over the design of the public landscape are not the same people as those who can speak on behalf of the community whose territory that landscape is. Local and federal governments, urban planning commissions, and historical societies are among those with disproportionate authority and influence over the public material landscape. But these institutions with authority over public space do not necessarily speak successfully on behalf of the community who they claim to speak for. The fact that things like monuments and official memorials are produced and presented by *authorities* enhances their appearance as *authoritative*. As Lai puts the point, state sponsored public artifacts "speak, sometimes indirectly, purportedly in our name with considerable authority and publicity" (Lai, 2020, p. 2). But these artifacts are produced by *social* authorities who may or may not also be *epistemic* authorities on the beliefs of the communities they purport to speak for. As Lai points out, in a formal sense, state speech (at least in a purported democracy) speaks *for* the people of the state. It can thus easily look *authorized* by the people, but this can be an illusion. We thus can be misled as to *who* is speaking through a public artifact, and to the epistemic authority with which they speak.

Many public artifacts look like the speech of a collective, but in fact only represent the input of a portion of that community, or even of an individual who has taken control of the landscape. Again, not everyone in a collective has to agree with a speech act in order for it to count as a collective speech act, but everyone has to have had the opportunity for their voice to be heard, and to have collaborated in settling on the speech act. For instance, Confederate monuments in the United States and colonial monuments in Belgium, even before they became major topics of public controversy, never did speak for the whole community, as they purported to, but only for socially dominant portions of this community.[13] Near the start of this essay, I proposed that the actual speaker of a piece of testimony, including collective material testimony, is the individual, institution, or collective that *authorizes* the speech, and is *responsible* for the accuracy of the testimony. As I argued, in the case of public artifacts, it is often quite unclear who this speaker is. My added point here is that the social authority and the epistemic authority that stand behind a work are easily conflated but often only indirectly and undependably related.

A second problem for the trustworthiness of public artifacts comes from the fact that their content is especially likely to be biased. Official historical testimony tends to be skewed by a relatively conservative view of history that privileges a dominant narrative and glorifies those in power. Its implicit or explicit goal is often to reproduce systems of privilege. States have an obvious vested interest in telling versions of history that reaffirm their own power and moral authority (Mukherjee et al, 2015). Officially sanctioned testimony is thus untrustworthy with respect to its content in predictable ways. This applies to material testimony just as it applies to more traditional forms of state sanctioned testimony, like official textbooks. And again, official authorities are especially likely to control the landscape.

Of course, not all collective material testimony is state produced or imposed on the landscape top-down. Collectively produced street art is a counterexample. However, it is often hard for such

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 5 "Nothing About Us Without Us is For Us," sponsored by the Municipal Housing Authority, The Shankill, Belfast. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

art to stay up when it is not authorized by the state. In Belfast, for instance, the municipal government covers over murals that testify to local tensions and a troubled history with vapid, anodyne posters bearing messages of peace and community unity. The government-produced mural in Figure 5, for example, was designed to cover over local murals glorifying Loyalists and accusing Republicans of violence. The content of this particular work is quite ironic, since it covers over local, bottom-up testimony with an imposed message about the importance of including people in any meaning-making that goes on about them.

A third reason why collective material testimony tends to be untrustworthy is that it generally speaks in a unified and 'settled' voice that covers over internal diversity and dissent. Collectives rarely have unified views about their own histories, place identities, shared values, and so forth. But most public artifacts, if they are allowed to become stable parts of the landscape at all, present a monolithic view. As Sypnowich puts it,

> The monument, with its partial, often highly ideological perspective, usually that of history's winners, is a contribution to the potential cacophony of voices about what took place, and its significance. But the monument, by its very nature, seeks to have the last word, to silence those other voices and to fix the narrative in stone or bronze. (Sypnowich, 2021, p. 5)

There is simply no *one thing* that the American South has to say about its Confederate history, for example, and preserved and protected Confederate monuments cover over this division. Governments and historical societies and the like produce material testimony and impose it top down on the landscape, and then protect it from interaction and signs of dissent through various policy,

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

surveillance, and material mechanisms—laws, barriers, video cameras and the like. But speech that accurately testifies to the attitudes, emotions, values, and settled views of a community tends to reflect and be the product of dissent and negotiation.

Thus collective material testimony is often untrustworthy, at the level of its content, the apparent voice in which it speaks, and the authority that entitles it. All of these forms of untrustworthiness can be seen as issuing from the fact that different community members have far from equal control over the physical design and makeup of the public landscape itself. But at the same time, as we saw in the last section, critical distance from this testimony is especially difficult, and the testimony is often especially compelling. Its capacity to compel combined with its untrustworthiness makes it epistemically risky.

6 | TRUSTWORTHY TESTIMONY

So when *is* collective material testimony relatively trustworthy? I propose that one way in which collective material testimony becomes more trustworthy is when all community members are able to interact with and mark the landscape, producing features of the landscape that are a sedimented product of collective action. Sypnowich argues that in commemorating indigenous heritage, we should take “Nothing about us without us” as a key principle (Sypnowich, 2021, p. 9). She writes,

> Sometimes this can happen spontaneously: the Macdonald monument in Kingston was recently transformed into a counter-monument, as ceramic hearts, each bearing a number to indicate one of the 215 lives lost in Kamloops, were placed on the tiers of the statue’s plinth. And in communities across Canada, both Indigenous people and their allies have placed scores of pairs of children’s shoes on the steps of city halls and legislatures, comprising an immediate, affecting symbol of the horrors of the past, viewed by the grieving families of the victims, but also curious passers-by, parents and young children. (p. 11)

I suggest that a landscape that people are able to modify is generally going to provide more trustworthy testimony than one that is protected top-down. Collective testimony is more trustworthy when it is collaboratively produced and displays any internal dissent. That there is dissent within the collective then becomes itself part of the content of that collective’s testimony.

Thus, although people who are outraged at the ‘vandalization’ of Confederate monuments and the like argue that we should leave these things alone so as to ‘preserve our history,’ the vandalized monuments may well be more trustworthy as testimony once they have been defaced (Figure 6). They may be imposed top-down on the landscape by official authorities, but once they are marked by members of the community, they come to testify to community dissent and conflict as well as to the views and emotions of a wider range of community members. This testimony to dissent may well be more accurate, and present a more nuanced view of history, than the original work. When we, as viewers, can *see* that a community has participated in marking the landscape, we can typically be more confident that we are not seeing a message simply backed by social authority, but one collaboratively produced by the community itself, representing a conversation amongst perspectives on history and values.[14] Lai (2020) argues that we sometimes have a *moral* duty to deface politically repugnant monuments, in order in part to undercut their status as authoritative speech with social power to denigrate and subjugate. I would add that this may also be an *epistemic* duty, which makes their testimony more accurate and more entitled. The marking of public

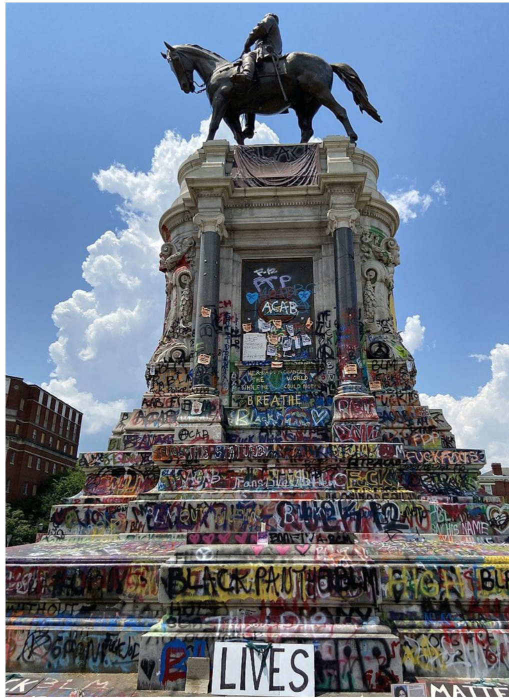

FIGURE 6 Robert E. Lee Monument, Richmond VA, 2020 [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

artifacts can make vivid that the original testimony was untrustworthy, while turning them into a new speech act with different content and a new speaker, attesting to a conflictual history and the actual conflictual emotions and values of the current community.

Generally speaking, additions to the public landscape, including the kinds of spontaneous memorials Sypnowich describes, are unstable and temporary unless they are either protected top-down by legal or spatial mechanisms, or protected bottom-up by a community that insists on maintaining them, or both. That is, if I paint a wall or erect a statue in a park, it is likely to be painted over or removed, either by the state or by other people, unless there is some community buy-in to keeping it. Thus if we see a public artifact that has managed to become a stable part of the landscape, and we wonder whether to trust its testimony, we need to ask how it achieved this stability. Stable artifacts protected bottom-up are generally more trustworthy than those protected top-down.

Nguyen writes,

> Suppose we were in an urban area where residents regularly cleaned off unwanted graffiti, and where local artists regularly painted over older street art with newer pieces. The very persistence of a piece of street art, in these circumstances, can constitute evidence of the approval of that community, as expressed through the community's members consistently refraining from damaging it. In this way, street art might function as the basis for an informal, communal deliberation. … Murals and street art … often begin their lives as attempts by an individual to try and shape the collective values and the collective intentions of some community. At first, they are

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

FIGURE 7 "The Spirit of East Harlem," East Harlem, New York. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

> merely individual declarations, addressed to a group. But over time, the group can come to express and stand behind that individual artistic act. Some murals become 'part of the neighborhood'—a point of community pride, watched over and protected by the neighborhood. (Nguyen, 2019, p. 986)

This kind of collectively adopted and maintained feature of the landscape is especially trustworthy with respect to whose voice it speaks in. It may also be especially trustworthy insofar as it testifies to the values, attitudes, and emotions of the collective.

For instance, a well-known mural in East Harlem in New York, "The Spirit of East Harlem," (Figure 7) testifies to the ways of daily living, the uses of space in the neighborhood, and the value of these practices to the local Puerto Rican community. This mural presents itself as collective material testimony. Its epistemic authority is enhanced by the fact that it has lasted for over 40 years, and has been refurbished and restored twice by community organizations. This seems an excellent example of a work that has the status that Nguyen is talking about. His point is about the role of such works in establishing community identity and calling for shared commitments, but my point is about their distinctive epistemic value. Community control over the landscape is strong in East Harlem, and the landscape accordingly provides relatively trustworthy testimony.

In contrast, elsewhere in New York, for a brief moment in 2017, there was a commissioned mural just outside of the housing project of Queensbridge, honoring local rapper Prodigy, who was half of the duo Mobb Deep. Prodigy had made enemies in Queensbridge by criticizing locals who ended

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

up incarcerated. The mural was vandalized within twenty-four hours of being completed, then immediately refurbished, then vandalized again within three days, after which it was blacked out completely, because authorities saw it as too dangerous to allow neighborhood tensions to be made explicit in this way. Prodigy collaborator Mike Delorean commented, "He scarred some people personally. He talked badly about people … people in jail. People who embraced him… [The mural] just can't exist in Queensbridge where the people he disrespected have kids that will see it every day" (Wallace, 2017). Now, Prodigy is memorialized in Queensbridge only via a few "RIP" tags scrawled here and there in marker. This mural was an example of a public artifact that purported to speak for the community, testifying not only to Prodigy's roots in the area but to his status as a source of community pride. But the testimony was false, and the response of the community made this clear. Arguably, if the vandalized mural had been left up as-is, it would have told a nuanced story about Prodigy's roots and as his vexed history in the community, as well as about some of the tensions within the neighborhood.

7 | TOWARDS A RESPONSIBLE EPISTEMOLOGY OF COLLECTIVE MATERIAL TESTIMONY

I argued that public artifacts can be collective testimony. I also argued that such testimony can be especially compelling, because it presents itself as authoritative and inducts us into a perspective within which it is plausible and coherent. But while compelling, such testimony is often distinctively untrustworthy, I claimed. Thus public artifacts that present themselves as collective material testimony are, I claimed, epistemically *risky*.

This opens up the question of which strategies we, as individuals receivers of such testimony, can use to mitigate this risk. How can we be epistemically responsible readers of our landscape? It is easy to automatically trust what our landscape tells us, in part because it is literally physically difficult not to. The built material environment shapes our motion and attention and physically positions us in ways that automatically give us various perspectives. We need to actively take a critical stance towards what we see and how we move about. This involves asking ourselves questions such as:

1. Who is the actual speaker of this testimony, and who is the apparent speaker?
2. Is the actual speaker trustworthy with respect to the content of the testimony?
3. Is the testimony reaffirming a privileged narrative of self-glorification that obscures other perspectives?
4. Has there been a real opportunity for counterspeech and collaborative speech in building this artifact, or is this artifact imposed, frozen, and protected by top-down mechanisms?
5. If the artifact is a stable feature of the landscape, who is ensuring and preserving that stability?
6. How can we get critical distance from the perspective and norms the artifact is designed to make us take up? This may involve literally moving our body in unexpected ways, looking at the artifact from different angles and distances.

Collective material testimony is pervasive, especially in densely populated areas. The built world around us has a lot to say, and collectives often express their beliefs about their history, ways of life, values, emotions, and attitudes through shaping and marking the landscape. All this testimony can have rich epistemic value, but it is risky testimony, and good epistemic hygiene

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

requires us to adopt a critical hermeneutic stance towards our built environment, including at the level of our bodily motion and perceptual attention.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

ENDNOTES

[1] Judkins (2019), Nguyen (2019), Scarre (2019), Young (2019).

[2] For instance, Christine Sypnowich (2021) describes monuments as designed to "teach us" things. Carroll (2019) argues that churches maintain and transmit memories. Scarre (2019) argues that memorials *inform* and pass on memories through speech.

[3] Judkins (2019), Scarre (2019).

[4] See Freiman and Miller (2020).

[5] Sypnowich (2021) also makes this distinction between individual and collective testimony. Notice also that while a corporation or institution, these entities may not be collectives for my purposes, because they may be organized and held together top-down, and people who are associated with them may not share a we-identity or take the institution or corporation as speaking for them.

[6] This broad pragmatic commitment is common to a wide range of more detailed views on assertion. My fuller account of assertion can be found in Kukla and Lance (2009).

[7] For instance see Hinchman (2014) and Moran (2005).

[8] See Leonard (2021) for a good summary of these debates.

[9] Thus *collective* assertions, as opposed to the speech acts of other sorts of social entities, are what Lackey (2018) called 'coordinated' as opposed to 'authority-based' assertions.

[10] Similarly, one does not actually issue an order if no one is ordered, and so forth. In the language of Kukla and Lance (2009), testifying has an *agent relative* output; it is directed *at* someone who is normatively shifted by the testimony, unlike regular assertion, which has an *agent neutral* output and can be performed without any audience in particular taking it up.

[11] Interestingly, there have been repeated controversies over the fact that people tend to climb and play on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Unlike most such memorials, it is easy and tempting to do this, and apparently the original architects intended this, but many people find it shocking and disrespectful.

[12] If we take up the wrong stance towards an artifact, or see a representation of it, or otherwise do not perceive them as designed, we can still receive part of their testimony, usually. But the full force and detail of their testimony is usually available only from actually adopting the appropriate physical stance towards them.

[13] See also Bicknell (2019), Gaskell (2019), and Lai (2020).

[14] Yet we still cannot simply count on the artifact now being the speech of the whole collective, since there may be dynamics within the community that encourage some kinds of people and not others to mark the artifact. For example, if a monument is defaced with Swastikas or gang symbols, other people may be too intimidated to mark it themselves. Many thanks to Dan Steinberg for this point and for the Swastika example.

REFERENCES

Bicknell, J. (2019). The physical legacy of a troubled past. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 253–261). Routledge.

Camp, E. (2013). Slurring perspectives. *Analytic Philosophy*, *54*(3), 330–349. https://doi.org/10.1111/phib.12022

Camp, E. (2017). Perspectives in imaginative engagement with fiction. *Philosophical Perspectives*, *31*(1), 73–102. https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12102

Camp, E. (2020). Imaginative frames for scientific inquiry: Metaphors, telling facts, and just-so stories. In A. Levy and P. Godfrey-Smith (eds.), *The scientific imagination* (pp. 304–336). Oxford University Press.

Carroll, N. (2019). Churches as memory machines. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 57–66). Routledge.

Fraser, R. (2021). Narrative testimony. *Philosophical Studies*, *178*(12), 4025–4052. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-021-01635-y

Freiman, O., & Miller, B. (2020). Can Artificial Entities Assert?. In S. Goldberg (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Assertion* (pp. 415–436). Oxford University Press.
Gaskell, I. (2019). For the Union dead: Memorial Hall at Harvard University and the exclusion of the Confederate fallen. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 262–274). Routledge.
Hinchman, E. S. (2014). Assurance and warrant. *Philosopher's Imprint*, *14*(17), 1–50. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3521354.0014.017
Judkins, J. (2019). Layers in London: How buildings remember. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 147–156). Routledge.
Kukla, R., & Lance, M. N. (2009). *'Yo!'and 'Lo!': The pragmatic topography of the space of reasons*. Harvard University Press.
Lackey, J. (2018). Group assertion. *Erkenntnis*, *83*(1), 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-016-9870-2
Lai, T. H. (2020). Political vandalism as counter-speech: A defense of defacing and destroying tainted monuments. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *28*(3), 602–616. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12573
Leggewie, C., & Meyer, E. (2005). *Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht*. Carl Hanser Verlag.
Leonard, N. (2021). Epistemological problems of testimony. In E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/testimony-episprob
Moran, R. (2005). Getting told and being believed. *Philosophers' Imprint*, *5*(5), 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199276011.003.0013
Mukherjee, S., Salter, P. S., & Molina, L. E. (2015). Museum spaces as psychological affordances: Representations of immigration history and national identity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *6*, 692–708. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00692
Nguyen, C. T. (2019). Monuments as commitments: How art speaks to groups and how groups think in art. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *100*(4), 971–994. https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12279
Scarre, G. (2019). How memorials speak to us. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 21–33). Routledge.
Sypnowich, C. (2021). Monuments and monsters: Education, cultural heritage and sites of conscience. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *55*(3), 469–483. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12578
Wallace, R. (2017). Mike Delorean Explains Why Prodigy Mural Can't Exist in Queensbridge. https://hiphopdx.com/news/id.44076/title.mike-delorean-explains-why-prodigy-mural-cant-exist-in-queensbridge#
Young, J. O. (2019). How memorials mean, or how to do things with stones. In J. Bicknell, J. Judkins, and C. Korsmeyer (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on ruins, monuments, and memorials* (pp. 34–44). Routledge.

How to cite this article: Kukla, Q. R. (2022). Public artifacts and the epistemology of collective material testimony. *Philosophical Issues*, *32,* 233–252.
https://doi.org/10.1111/phis.12224

17582237, 2022, 1, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/phis.12224 by Cochrane Germany, Wiley Online Library on [10/05/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License