



MONUMENTS & MEMORY

By Martha Norkunas

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In 1989 Martha Norkunas relocated to Lowell, Massachusetts, the center of America's Industrial Revolution, a National Historical Park, and her family's home for 150 years. As cultural affairs director for the federally funded Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, she worked with artists from around the country to interpret the city's past. Traveling throughout Lowell, she found that the city had more than 250 locally constructed monuments memorializing ethnic communities, local men and boys, and many other groups. Realizing the rich potential for exploring issues of memory and history through both the local monuments and the federally funded public art, she began this in-depth study, approaching it in a very personal way.

At the center of Martha Norkunas's narrative is her intimate connection to the city through her family's rich history. She looks for the interplay of the personal and public, singular and collective memory and history through Lowell's public spaces, always examining where her personal memory converges with the history of the city. A recurring theme is the notion of the insider versus the outsider--who has the authority to speak in public and construct history? Lowell has few monuments to women, and Norkunas explores the question of where female and male memory intersect in public spaces, if they do at all, and how women remember and are remembered. This unique combination of personal memoir and professional inquiry allows Norkunas to explore the dynamics of memory and history in an original and engaging way.

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About the Author

Martha Norkunas is the director of the "Project in Interpreting the Texas Past" and author of The Politics of Public Memory.

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