
Students in Way’s seminar are studying how recent scholarship on belonging illuminates contemporary and historical art and art history. They are considering how art and culture foster belonging to a place as well as a nation, and the ways that places index belonging, inclusion and exclusion. A primary concern is the way the creation and use of works of art participate in facilitating someone or something belonging or not. There are also questions of what counts as a belonging and how this relates to someone belonging to someone, thing or a place. Ways of facilitating belonging include civilize, salvage, domesticate, diplomacy, accommodate, remember. Examples of forms of belonging include autochthony, citizenship, memory and heritage. Ways of not belonging encompass but are not limited to outsidersness, alienation, dislocation, refugee, and homelessness.

Way charged her students with writing a short paper to explore connections between the roundtable and their seminar studies. What follows is a short paper by graduate student, Sean Miller.
There is a correlation between the function of The Dallas Way: A GLBT History Project and the efforts of Northeast Lexington Initiative (NELI) in their development of the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden (IMMAG). Both organizations are comprised of individuals who are members of groups marginalized by the dominant culture. In both cases, the historical relevancy of these groups is diminished in the way that history has been recorded and is presented. The Dallas Way and NELI function to manage their own histories and in doing so, both seek to bring attention to their histories where the dominant culture fails to adequately do so.

The GLBT community has been marginalized and underrepresented in Dallas society as well as the mainstream culture in general. There has been little or no formal recording of the history of this group within the context of the general history of Dallas. Founding Board Member Robert Emery describes The Dallas Way as a project that involves recording the history of the Dallas GLBT community through essays and oral histories.

In the context of racially divided Lexington Kentucky, NELI decided to design their own vision of the IMMAG which would celebrate and valorize the African American contributions to the city where other mainstream groups were proposing a statue that would essentially celebrate horse racing. (Schein, 822)

“..the Northeast Lexington Initiative recognizes this place of landscape as central to belonging, as crucial to creating a (next) generation of (often) previously marginalized Lexintonians who realize that, in fact, ‘they’ have been as much a part of the city as anyone else, are entitled to the same rights, and are burdened with the same responsibilities of citizenship as anyone in this segregated city.” (Schein, 823)

For a marginalized group, the cultivation of a documented history particular to that group is a step towards recognition of their historical importance in the context of mainstream society. Both The Dallas Way, and NELI are asserting the historical significance of their groups and working towards the inclusion of their histories in the general history of the cities of Dallas and Lexington, respectively.
