

The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that one hundred years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life.

—WILLIAM FAULKNER

chapter
6

The Civil War and Its Monuments

Visualizing the Past

RICHARD H. PUTNEY

The apparent gaps between visual and verbal expression can effectively be bridged through interdisciplinary projects that combine writing and visualization. As evidence I offer the experience of a writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) course, “Hallowed Ground: Monuments, Memory and the American Civil War,” which I team taught in the spring of 1994. As an associate professor of art history, I was fortunate to have Tom Lingeman, an associate professor of sculpture, as an outstanding collaborator. The course Tom and I gave to undergraduate students used Civil War monuments to achieve an essential goal: that course members understand and appreciate the design, production, and meaning of such memorial sculptures in their historical context. By combining the visual and the verbal, the course gave students multiple ways to internalize what they read and saw—and it enabled them to objectify what was so much a part of their own cultural history. Tom and I wanted students to learn effectively and meaningfully about how the Civil War motivated memorial activities, both verbal and visual; the latter, of course, included the delivery of memorial orations, the writing and publication of literary texts, and the design and production of tangible monuments of granite, marble, and bronze.

Allied with this goal was the desire to have students experience how images and words express powerful ideas and emotions.

Monuments were perfect for such an exercise, because their interpretation required the study of both texts and images. More important, the monuments themselves combined text and image. Nineteenth-century artisans gave them forms powerfully charged with traditional associations, embellished them with inscriptions, and quite often enlivened them with images. Thus, form, image, and word were combined to convey specific historical and cultural messages; moreover, at dedication ceremonies, spoken words endowed monuments with commemorative life. Without question, Civil War monuments provided wonderful material for a course devoted to the exploration of verbal and visual expression within that historical period.

To achieve these objectives we had the students read, analyze, and discuss various primary and secondary texts associated with one of the war's most famous battles, Gettysburg, and to supplement the reading with palpable experiences of memorial landscapes and monuments, especially those at Gettysburg National Military Park. Even more significant was the fact that the students themselves, working in groups, designed and fabricated actual monuments. Such activities, supplemented by a rigorous round of journal assignments, gave each member of the course an intense and immediate encounter with an important event and with the literary and artistic means by which it was preserved in historic memory. Key to the course's structure was its unusual emphasis on combining reading, discussion, writing, sketching, study in the field, and hands-on work in the sculpture studio. Highly experimental, the course required an unusual level of faculty collaboration and a surprisingly unusual approach to interdisciplinary teaching in the fine arts.

Faculty Collaboration: Different Disciplines, A Shared Passion

Faculty collaboration was key to the course's success. Tom is a very talented sculptor who specializes in abstract works cast in bronze, and he is very much a part of the contemporary art scene. I'm an art historian whose specialty is the interpretation of medieval images. Neither of us has had much formal training in the history of the Civil War; however, both of us have read widely on American art and history, and have pursued a keen interest in the history of monuments. Indeed, in a casual discussion in 1991, Tom and I discovered our mutual passion for the sculptures at Gettysburg; I had been systematically photographing them, and Tom had been analyzing their materials and techniques with a sculptor's well-trained eye.

Integrating the Visual and the Verbal: An Unusual Interdisciplinary Approach

Because they share an interest in the visual arts, studio fine arts and art history might seem indistinguishable in the minds of most academics. But just ask art historians or studio artists—or their students!—about the relationship of the two disciplines. Just as composition or math students might resent drawing or visual strategies in the classroom, so, too, studio majors think they have escaped verbal expression. However, as experience shows, the visual artist must rely on the intellect just as the historian makes use of verbal expression. Similarly, the art historian depends on a highly developed sense of visual perception, and, like the artist, is often driven by emotional, aesthetic, or spiritual needs.

In spite of their keen interest in the visual arts, however, students in art history sometimes resemble majors in other, less visually oriented concentrations such as English. Often they are fearful or disdainful of courses in the studio fine arts. They are afraid to test their own aptitudes in terms of hands-on visual expression, or, sadly, they feel that visual and manual skills are trivial compared to verbal ones. On the other hand, studio majors sometimes distrust art history courses, fearing that they will be entrapped in a useless, irrelevant past, be “forced to live in books,” or have their expression confined to the merely verbal. These interdisciplinary tensions in the visual arts reflect similar tensions between other academic disciplines, and they are but a single manifestation of a dichotomy endemic in the western cultural tradition: *the visual and physical are often set in opposition and subjugated to the verbal and intellectual*. Therefore, although what is described here was developed for interdisciplinary teaching in the visual arts, many of the instructional techniques used also apply to teaching in other disciplines.

Planning an Interdisciplinary Course

Like many professors, Tom and I like to talk a lot, and we worried that this might get in the way of the *collective* planning of the course. To avoid this potential problem we used a planning tactic derived from our experiences in teaching other WAC courses. Working at the same table, each of us wrote informally in a journal about the course goals and the methods to be used in achieving them. When we had finished writing, we read our entries aloud to one another. This method worked well for us because it gave free rein to the brainstorming needed for effective course planning, made each of us listen carefully

to the other's ideas, and gave each of us the floor to present our own. The result was an innovative and effective course plan that synthesized the best ideas from each of us.

Overview of the Course: A Sentimental and Romantic Drama in Three Acts

The eleven-week, quarter-long course was to have three parts. Since the monuments at Gettysburg were driven by the experience of war, the first part, (meant to last two-and-a-half weeks on the quarter system) was devoted to the experience of the Civil War itself; it moved from generalizations about wartime experiences to more focused aspects of the Gettysburg campaign. This portion of the course took place in small classrooms in the art department and made use of texts, images, and artifacts.

The next phase of the course focused on monuments and memorial activities. Although the fighting of a Civil War battle and the placement of monuments on the site are related events, they are also quite distinct. As Tom and I told our students, the soldiers did not carry bronze or granite monuments with them into battle, setting them in place as soon as gunfire had ceased. The Battle of Gettysburg occurred over three days (July 1–3, 1863), and memorialization of the site began quite soon with the dedication of the National Cemetery in November 1863. But only a handful of monuments were erected on the battlefield in the next two decades, and the vast majority of the more than five hundred currently there were dedicated only in the late 1880s and 1890s. Thus, in the second part of the course, our focus was to move from the 1860s to the late 1880s. This phase, lasting a week and a half, was devoted to memorial activities in general, and to the production of monuments in particular. Again we made use of assigned readings, images, and classroom discussion, but we also increased our use of visualization and made field trips to appropriate sites, culminating in a four-day field trip to Gettysburg intended to synthesize all the material covered in the first month.

The third and last portion of the course was the lengthiest and the most intense. The students divided up into small teams and assumed historical roles. Each group represented an association of veterans and artists working in the year 1888, and each was charged with memorializing a single regiment's participation in the Battle of Gettysburg. Specifically, the group members designed and cast a bronze model of a monument for their regiment, wrote the monument's inscriptions, developed a site plan for its placement on the Gettysburg battlefield,

wrote a brief history of the unit's participation in the battle, and composed a speech to be delivered at the monument's dedicatory ceremony. We set aside the last class session—normally reserved for a final examination—for monument dedication ceremonies.

Act I: The Experience of the Civil War

As instructors, our primary purpose was less to impart knowledge to our students than to motivate them to seek it out for themselves. We wanted, above all, to engage students both intellectually and emotionally, and we wanted them to know the class was theirs, not ours. We tried our best to avoid inserting our own values or conclusions into discussions, acting instead as facilitators and moderators.

Our class was limited to fourteen students we had specially recruited for this first attempt at the course. Evenly distributed in terms of gender, six were majors in art history, seven in studio art, and one a double major; only four had previous experience in sculpture. To warm our students to the subject matter, we opened the first course session with a "light and sound show." In a darkened room, with only a brief welcome from Tom and me, we played the first two movements of Dvořák's *American Quartet*. As accompaniment to that exquisite piece, we projected dozens of slides depicting the landscape at Gettysburg and a number of the monuments dedicated there during the 1880s and 1890s. For many of us it was an evocative and powerful experience; both Tom and I got a gut feeling that it engaged students' interest from the start. Shifting from the visual and aural to the verbal, we distributed the first informal writing assignment for the course journal. Entitled "The Civil War and You," it asked students to write informally for about twenty minutes on their own feelings about the Civil War.

Once all of us had finished writing, we went around the room. Students introduced themselves and briefly discussed their majors, career goals, and interest in the course subject matter. We then opened the floor to the issues involved in the assignment. Students were hesitant for only a few moments. The lengthy discussion that ensued involved almost everyone in the class and touched on many vital issues, including slavery, pacifism, notions of masculinity, and the essence of the American experience. We learned that one student was a Civil War buff and that several others had ancestors who fought in the war. Also obvious was a nearly universal bias against the Confederacy and some deep divisions over the morality of war (which would become even more visceral during the second class session).

Reversing the usual order of a course, we finished the first day's

session by distributing the syllabus, which, like the course, mixed text and image; after going over the course goals and assignments, we gave students their first reading assignments: Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about the Battle of Gettysburg, *The Killer Angels*, which they were to finish in a week, and Shelby Foote's highly praised account of the battle, "Stars in Their Courses" (1974).

For the second class session, we opened with a journal assignment, intended to provoke contemplation and discussion of the experience of the war, which emphasized the important role played by the imagination in the reconstruction of the past. Asking students to imagine what the war experience might have been like, we gave them the option of assuming the identity of a Civil War soldier; about half did so, and one class member wrote her journal entry in the form of a soldier's letter.

We had originally planned to have a group discussion of this journal topic and to follow it with our only formal lecture in the course, an overview of the Civil War experience of the ordinary soldier based upon the interpretation of drawings, paintings, and photographs from the period. But Tom had a great idea for supplementing and invigorating the lecture. Borrowing a local collector's Civil War arms and accoutrements, he brought them to class; after the group discussion we brought the objects out, explained them, and encouraged students to handle them. This proved to be a fascinating and catalytic experience! There was bit of posturing and affected nonchalance on the part of some students and a good deal of horror on the part of others. Whatever the reaction, the objects—a Springfield rifle with fixed bayonet, for example—made it easy to appreciate the truly lethal nature of the Civil War. Such an experience not only deepened the impact of the lecture that followed, it would prove very useful to a fuller understanding of the assigned readings. Most gratifying was the student conversation on the nature and validity of war, which the writing assignment and the objects provoked. Despite their widely divergent opinions, the students treated one another with great sensitivity and respect.

For the next session we moved to a small seminar room to begin discussions of the assigned texts. The first was devoted to *The Killer Angels*, a book we chose because it presents numerous dramatic situations and fascinating characters in lively prose; moreover, it conveys an essentially accurate, engaging, and nearly unforgettable account of the battle's history. We devised two journal assignments to get at some important aspects of the text: narrative, point of view, structure, character development, and the nature of historicity. The assignments also were intended to stimulate discussion of the book during the second week of the course.

To put it mildly, student response to the book was enthusiastic; Tom and I hardly had to say a thing in our first two-hour discussion. People waxed poetic, argued about the author's point of view, and contemplated the fate of the characters. Their favorite, incidentally, was Joshua Chamberlain, commanding officer of the 20th Maine Volunteers, whose regiment's action on the second day's battle played a major role in Shaara's narrative. This journal entry was typical: "My favorite episode . . . was Chamberlain's defense of Little Round Top. All the noise, confusion, terror and exhilaration of battle were brilliantly portrayed, plus a victory against seemingly hopeless odds is always satisfying—especially when victory comes from brilliant leadership."

We concluded our study of Shaara with an exercise involving visualization. To reinforce their appreciation of space, we asked class members to draw maps of the Gettysburg region without consulting the maps in Shaara's book. Not surprisingly, given the enthusiasm for Shaara, most of the drawings were accurate and useful; for those that weren't, a conversation with their classmates helped students understand why they weren't.

For the next session we read Shelby Foote's account of the battle. His text is a traditional historical narrative but, like Shaara's, it is also beautifully written, engaging, and informative; it also gives a more comprehensive view of the battle of Gettysburg than does *The Killer Angels*. There are many other accounts of the three-day battle, some far too lengthy for our course, others very dry or highly technical. Foote gave us the historical and spatial overview we needed, but he did so in a way that caught the mood of flesh and blood people acting out a drama on a very large stage. We devised a writing assignment to complement this reading that was similar to that for *The Killer Angels*. This too inspired good discussion about the nature and relationship of literature and history, as this student response demonstrates: "The narrator [of Foote's text] is *not* a participant in the battle on either side. While Shaara would at times move into someone's mind and allow the thoughts and feelings of the character to tell the story, Foote remains outside of the characters in the third-person, describing actions in a consistent manner which, while not as enthralling as Shaara's presentation, nevertheless is effective in aiding the reader's understanding of people and events."

We concluded our discussion of Foote's account with a verbal word game on narrative history. I began the game with a single sentence on the development of the Gettysburg campaign (something like: "On the morning of July 1, 1863, John Buford's cavalry confronted Confederate infantry northwest of the town of Gettysburg"). Going around our seminar table in turn, each person was to continue

the story with a single sentence describing the unfolding of events in time and space. Usually it went quickly and smoothly, but at times it was interrupted by outbreaks of dissent. One student's sentence might invoke the mock wrath of other class members ("But you forgot so-and-so. . . ." "No! that came later. . . .") and the temporary halt would lead to a new start. It was engaging and fun, and taught us a lot about the construction of narrative—a spatial skill.

Act II: Commemorating the War

We began the second phase of the course by turning from the history of the battle of Gettysburg to American attitudes and traditions about it. In a single week we were able to accomplish a great deal, and this through a rich conjunction of reading, discussion, visualization, and study in the field. First we read portions of Garry Wills' *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, complementing the book's acute and moving analysis of early memorial activities at Gettysburg with on-site studies of local monuments and their settings. Our goal was to better understand how the production of Civil War monuments participated in and was informed by larger social and cultural forces. The first two chapters in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* concern themselves with precisely this issue: how the words spoken by Lincoln and Edward Everett at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg in November 1863 commemorated the Union sacrifice, and why the enunciation of those words in a specific physical setting—a cemetery—had rich associations for members of American society in the nineteenth-century.

In reading Wills—and the words of Lincoln and Everett—our students explored the attitudes and values that would lead Americans to sponsor, design, and produce an enormous number of monuments to commemorate the war. To understand the forms such monuments would take, we followed our reading of Wills with site visits to memorial landscapes in the Toledo area. The most important of these was Woodlawn, a cemetery begun in the 1870s and located in the northern regions of the city. Tom and I had devised two assignments for the site and, on an appropriately gloomy morning, our group paid a visit. In a light drizzle we wandered, journals and clipboards in hand, through its green, parklike setting. There we followed winding roads and paths, exploring a landscape of ponds, meadows, and gently rolling ridges. All was carefully planted with flowers, shrubs, and large, venerable trees. Throughout, the landscape was marked with monuments of granite, marble, and bronze. What we encountered at Woodlawn, of course, was a product of the "rural cemetery" movement. Extremely characteristic of the nineteenth century, such a

landscape was one of the purest expressions of Romanticism's evocative association of nature, history, memory, and death. Woodlawn that morning provided our students with a palpable experience of the previous century's use of memorial environments and specific monumental forms. Used before the war to mark the graves of individuals, in the decades following the conflict such monuments would be adapted for use as war memorials for urban squares and the more rural landscapes of Civil War battlefields.

Our first assignment asked students to wander alone through the cemetery to explore the essential nature of Woodlawn and to sketch and describe its environment. We concluded our visit with a "scavenger hunt" in one relatively confined section of the cemetery. There, class members were to seek out and draw specific iconographic motifs that Tom and I had discovered on an earlier scouting expedition: sculptural representations of a sleeping lamb, for example, a boulder, a cherub, a sphere, a wreath, and a tree stump. Sketching, like free writing in a journal, is a marvelous aid to learning; even if students have little or no talent for reproducing what they see, the drawing will sharpen their observation, understanding, and recollection. The specific objective in this exercise was to make associations between the expression of themes in memorial texts (introduced in Wills) and the visual motifs in the cemetery to integrate verbal and visual expression.

To complete this day's journey to the nineteenth century we engaged in the personal, the sentimental, and the imaginary. Selecting particularly engaging individual or family monuments, the students were to compose imaginary stories about them as soon as possible after leaving the cemetery; here they used inscriptions and sculptural motifs to inspire literary productions.

For our other local field trip, we visited Johnson's Island located along the shore of Lake Erie. Used as a prison camp for captured Confederate officers during the war, the site today includes a fine bronze and granite monument to those who died in captivity dedicated in 1906. We had everyone sketch the monument and record its inscriptions; what followed was a lively group discussion of the monument's iconography.

Having completed the initial reading and field trips, students already possessed a good general knowledge of the battle of Gettysburg and a good introduction to nineteenth-century monuments. They were ready to conclude this second part of the course with an experience of the Gettysburg site. Early on a Thursday morning in late April, we piled into cars and vans, and drove the 400 miles to eastern Pennsylvania.

Our visit provided vivid experiences for all of us, many focusing

Figure 6-1
Monument to General Warren (1888), Little Round Top,
Gettysburg National Military Park



on the evocative relationship of monument and landscape. At times we gathered the entire class at sites of great significance to the course of the battle or at monuments of particular interest. Driving through the dying light of sunset one evening, for example, we parked near the top of Little Round Top, climbed its eastern slope, and passed over the crest to gather around the bronze statue of General Gouverneur K. Warren (see Figure 6-1). Sharing his high vantage point, we encountered a receding vista of rolling ridges cut by dark lines of trees. The dramatic siting made it easy to imagine what Warren had seen and felt during the battle. Indeed, the abstraction of a battlefield map, its topography reduced to contour lines and its regiments of soldiers to

Figure 6-2

Sherri Simon sketches the monument of the 116th Pennsylvania Infantry (1889), the Loop, Gettysburg National Military Park



rectangles, took on a more immediate meaning that was impossible to forget. It was also clear why it had been so important to commemorate Warren's foresight and decisiveness with a well-placed monument.

Another memorable group experience was a presentation on Cemetery Ridge given by Scott Hartwig, an articulate young park historian. Scott spoke to us before a granite obelisk erected in honor of the 69th Pennsylvania Volunteers, a regiment that suffered the brunt of Pickett's Charge on the final day of battle. He cleverly positioned our group so we looked out over a low stone wall, the regiment's only substantial line of defense, to the open fields crossed by Pickett's men in their final assault. The impact of the setting helped us imagine the horrific culmination of the battle. At first summarizing aspects of the regiment's early history, Scott then turned to its fearful experiences on July 3, 1863. Citing from memory the letters and journals of soldiers who had occupied the line of battle that day, Scott delivered an account that was inspiring, at times grisly, and impossible to forget. It was easy to relate to the soldiers of the 69th Pennsylvania, not as mythic heroes, but as ordinary people who had experienced the extraordinary.

Equally as affecting as these group experiences was the work the students did on their own. Our primary assignments for Gettysburg

called for the students to commune individually with the monuments that appealed to them; thus, we asked each one to spend a full day exploring favorite portions of the battlefield, writing general descriptions of at least three monuments and recording their inscriptions, and sketching their images in course journals (Figure 6–2). Our work complete, we left for home the following morning.

Act III: Creating Monuments

Every assignment and course experience, from the opening slide show through the trip to Gettysburg, served as preparation for what followed: six weeks devoted to the design and fabrication of hypothetical monuments for specific sites at Gettysburg. Everyone knew the story of the battle, was well acquainted with the site and its monuments, and was highly motivated to face the course's most difficult challenge. At the beginning of the fifth week, Tom and I divided students into teams, assigned each a Civil War regiment, and distributed instructions for the final course projects.

It was a challenge to divide the students into effective design teams. Because of our classroom discussions, field trips, and shared rooms and meals, everyone knew everyone else, so we didn't have much to guess about in terms of who got along (most did) and who didn't. What was critical, however, was how each group decided to distribute the work on their group assignments. Each team was to act as the monument committee for a single unit that fought at Gettysburg, to design its monument, write its inscriptions, and fabricate a small preliminary model, or maquette, in bronze. It was also to compose a unit history, devise a site plan, and write a dedicatory oration. To help in assembling effective groups, we surveyed class members about what types of activities most interested them (writing, research, drawing or sculpting, for example) and what skills they felt they brought to the table. Tom and I assigned them to teams based upon their responses; obviously, we made sure we didn't have all sculptors in one group and all writers or researchers in another. Although there was to be some division of labor in each group—some would specialize in drawing, molding clay, or writing—we wanted everyone to participate in the creation of all the group's products: monument sketches and maquettes, texts, and site plans.

But how could everyone participate in creating such a diverse range of products requiring such a diverse range of skills? In the late nineteenth century, monuments commemorating the Civil War were the products of very similar collaborative efforts; artists and craftsmen *made* them, but they worked with committees of veterans, politicians, and

officials to arrive at final designs. We asked our students to contribute to their team efforts in the same way; although everyone was to have particular responsibility for one of the team creations, or to be relied upon for one type of skill or activity, each was to make some contribution to the final appearance or content of everything the group produced.

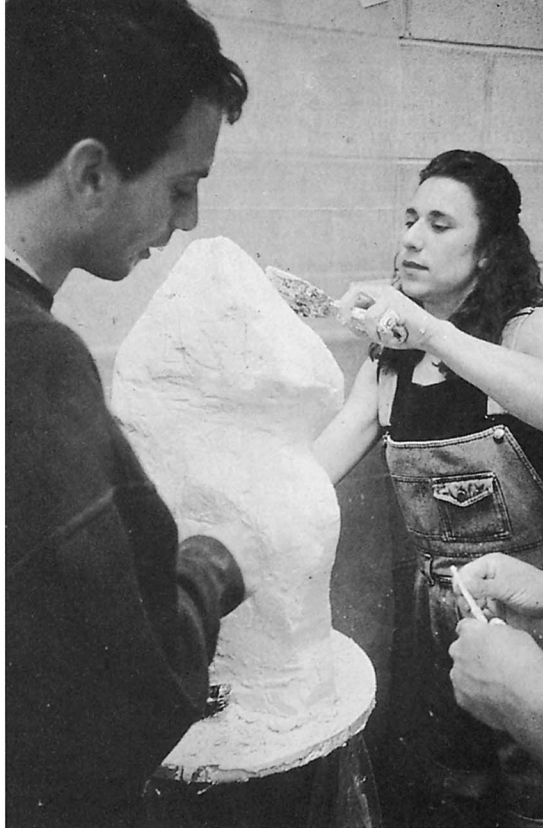
One of the most exciting moments of this class session occurred during the group selection of Civil War units. We asked each team member to write down the type of unit for which they would like to create a monument—Union or Confederate, for example, and infantry, cavalry, or artillery. It was quickly decided that everyone wanted to represent a Union infantry regiment, and that the 20th Maine, the 69th Pennsylvania, and the 6th Wisconsin were all highly desirable choices. The names of these three were placed in a hat (appropriately, a blue Union kepi) and we had a drawing. There was loud cheering as the group that went first had the good fortune to pick the class favorite, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's 20th Maine Regiment, the heroes of Little Round Top. Fortunately the other groups were happy with their picks too, and we turned at last to the distribution and discussion of the final assignments.

An important hypothetical assumption for the final project was that none of the regimental monuments that today grace the battlefield had yet been put in place; the students had to imagine that they were designing for a site as yet unmarked. Each group was to design its monument in a style appropriate to the year 1888, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle, which meant that the design had to be in accordance with the regulations of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, a private association of citizens and veterans that administered the battlefield from 1864 to 1895. The students were given copies of the Association's regulations governing aspects of a monument's design, including its materials ("of granite or real bronze"), the size, quality, and content of its inscriptions ("letters not less than four inches long . . . deeply and distinctly cut . . . with a brief statement of any important movement [the unit] made") and its siting ("on the line of battle . . . [with any] statue or figure of a soldier [facing] the enemy's line"). Assignments in hand, we left the classroom for the last time and headed for Tom's sculpture studio. The most important and exciting phase of the course was about to begin.

On the first day in the studio, Tom introduced students to its layout, its facilities, and any safety hazards. He then gave a brief overview of the various techniques and processes essential to the fabrication of a bronze sculpture. When we set the groups loose to develop their designs and to divide up their essential tasks, each took a work space in the studio and began deliberations.

The next week was characterized by organized chaos. Students al-

Figure 6-3
The 20th Maine group forms a mold around their
clay image of Col. Joshua Chamberlain

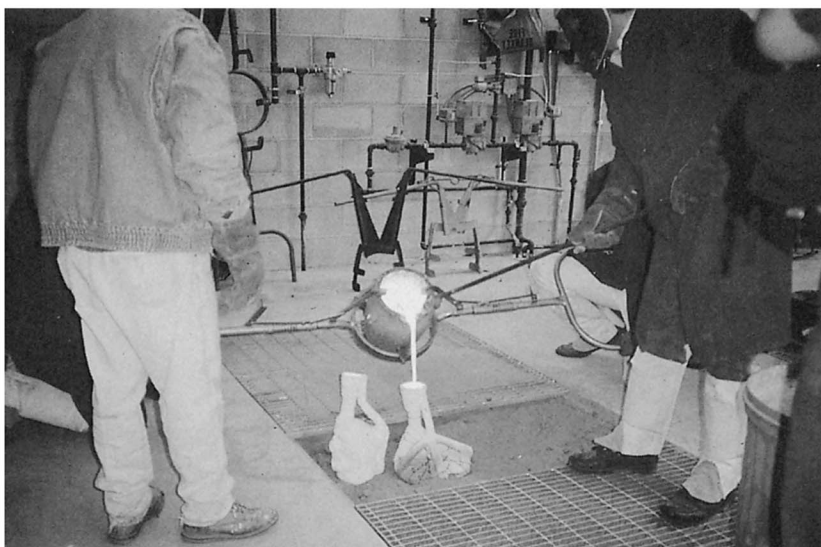


ternately talked quietly, argued, laughed, yelled, ran to the library, sketched, pouted, or wrote in their journals. Surprisingly quickly, they developed both their group rapport and a sophisticated and highly plausible design for a monument. As we had hoped, each member provided input on the group's monument design.

Finishing their designs on paper in a week and a half, the students submitted them to Tom and me acting as the board of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association. We made suggestions and granted final approval; both of us gave consideration to historic plausibility and aesthetics, while Tom made important technical suggestions. Happily, only minor changes were necessary, and the monument designs were

Figure 6-4

Molten bronze enters a mold made by the 69th Pennsylvania group



ready to be transformed from works on paper to more substantial objects. Tom demonstrated the processes for making prototypes in temporary materials like clay, wood, and wax, and for making the molds necessary for the production of the final bronze sculpture. Well-guided by Tom and the team members who were sculpture majors, every single student participated in the physical construction of the prototypes and molds (Figure 6-3); most had never before set foot in a studio. The atmosphere in the studio was intense and—except for the repeated playing of the soundtrack from Ken Burns' PBS documentary on the Civil War—very quiet. Tom and I made suggestions throughout, but students mostly worked in their own groups. Dedicated to the task at hand, most put in extra hours outside class time, especially in the evenings.

As the temporary models in wood, clay and wax neared completion, Tom demonstrated how we would render them in bronze. He taught us how to make molds that would retain the form and detail of our prototypes but also withstand the rigors of the molten metal. Looking like owls in their respirators, students worked with Tom to make strong silica shell molds reinforced by steel wire; a well-constructed mold would give each group a single chance.

Once the molds were finished, we were ready for a training ses-

Figure 6-5
Monument of the 6th Wisconsin group



sion on the most exciting step in the process of fabricating a bronze sculpture—pouring molten bronze. As they watched the glowing yellow metal flow into molds, students felt challenged, even a little scared. (I sure did!) But Tom was reassuring, demonstrating that what seemed complex was the result of a careful sequence of relatively simple processes. Like a good coach he gave us all the inspiration and knowledge we needed to succeed—and we did!

Finally the day came when each group would “do the pour” for its own sculpture. It began early one morning as a gas furnace melted bronze ingots in a heavy crucible; meanwhile, the just-finished molds were carefully arranged in sand in a foundry casting pit, and Tom had

Figure 6-6
Monument of the 20th Maine group



students rehearse the complex choreography necessary for a safe and successful pour. Once the metal was ready, a pair of students dressed in heat-resistant garments and protective headgear used long poles to hoist the glowing crucible from the furnace. As it rose, so too did the temperature in the room, even for observers standing dozens of feet away. Carrying it like a low-slung sedan chair to the casting pit, they prepared to pour; a third team member ladled off impurities at the top of the glowing crucible, which was lifted and tilted, pouring a stream of yellow-orange metal into the opening at the top of each mold (Figure 6-4). Throughout the hot, noisy process, Tom moved about, yelling out instructions, coaching, and making sure all movements were well coordinated. As the metal flowed, everything was on

the line and our hearts were in our throats. It was scary to realize that some unseen weakspot in a mold might give way, destroying any chance for a successful pour and forcing that group to make an entirely new start on a prototype. In very different ways, Civil War soldiers and our students went through an ordeal by fire.

The foundry gods smiled, for all three pours went well. Students waited hours for the bronze to cool but returned at the earliest opportunity to break open the molds. Scraping and filing the tough shell material soon revealed the flawless forms of the monuments; having cast them in sections, the teams assembled them and applied protective patinas. Three infantrymen graced the monument of the 6th Wisconsin (Figure 6-5); on the side of its rectangular base were two narrative reliefs devoted to the regiment's heroic charge on the first day of the battle. The 69th Pennsylvania was celebrated with a giant minie ball (a rifle bullet with a conical head), perched on a square pedestal and capped by a color bearer with waving flag. Its powerful form signified that regiment's steadfastness in the face of Pickett's Charge. Finally, the 20th Maine group, saying that their regiment deserved a better monument than the one actually perched on Little Round Top, produced a round base carrying the image of their mustachioed commanding officer, Joshua Chamberlain (Figure 6-6).

While its monument moved toward completion, each group drafted and refined its writing projects. The most important of these was the text for the monument dedication speech. For inspiration, I distributed copies of half a dozen examples, written in the 1880s, to each group. We asked that the students give their literary efforts the same feeling of stylistic authenticity they had given their monuments. I believe this challenge made the project more engaging to those who normally found writing a drudge; in their attempts to capture the ring of a different era, many paid closer attention to matters of style than they ever had before. Reading student journals at the end of the course confirmed what our eyes and ears had already told us: all had done research on the history of their regiment, and all had helped design the artistic subject matter and inscriptions for the monuments. Similarly, all had contributed to the essential themes in their group's dedication speech and helped to edit the text.

In the eleventh week of the quarter, students gathered at my house, lugging their heavy monuments into the living room and depositing generous quantities of potluck food in the kitchen. With obvious pride and satisfaction, each group unveiled its monument: one member delivered the dedicatory oration and another reviewed its site plan. Words and objects, objects and words. . . . After generous applause and congratulations, we all sat down to a well-earned feast; the war was over and serenity reigned.

Conclusion

In offering an interdisciplinary course on Gettysburg and its monuments, our goal was never to supplant the experiences of reading and writing or the power of words with exercises in visual perception. Instead, Tom and I wanted to *integrate* meaningful exercises in visual and verbal modes of expression. Our teaching method was not a question of setting the verbal against the visual, but of allying the verbal and the visual, reinforcing both with empirical experience and challenges to the imagination. Expressed more concretely, we might ask who is more likely to learn something meaningful about the 20th Maine at Gettysburg: someone who reads an account of the battle and writes about it, someone who visits Little Round Top and sketches the site, someone who creates a sculpture of Joshua Chamberlain, or someone who does all three? I hope the answer is obvious.

This experience and that of similar courses I have taught have confirmed one of my intuitive feelings about education: well-designed exercises in reading and writing will make someone a far more perceptive interpreter of images, while the study of visual style will make someone a more perceptive reader and a better writer. This phenomenon, I believe, has broad implications for teaching in general, and not just for teachers of studio art or art history. Students in any discipline will understand something better if they don't simply hear about it but read and write about it too; moreover, visualizing it will almost certainly augment the learning process. Learners will understand an object or a space better if they describe it in words and sketch it as well as observe it. An effective way to study the relationship of ideas is not only to write about them, but to diagram them too. Human beings learn and create in a variety of ways; by engaging a broader range of our students' capacities and expressive modes, we as teachers, no matter what our discipline, can provide them with more meaningful and more effective learning experiences.