The Sculpture of William Edmondson
Tombstones, Garden Ornaments, and Stonework

Edited by Marin R. Sullivan | With essays by Learotha Williams Jr., Renée Ater, Kéla Jackson, Anne Monahan, Ellen Macfarlane, and Betsy Phillips

The Sculpture of William Edmondson: Tombstones, Garden Ornaments, and Stonework is the first large-scale museum examination of artist William Edmondson’s career in over twenty years. Organized by Cheekwood Curator of Sculpture Marin R. Sullivan, the exhibition draws upon new scholarship and methodologies to contextualize Edmondson’s sculpture, both within the histories of Nashville during the Interwar years and the art histories of modern art in the United States.

Edmondson has largely been confined to narratives that focus on his artistic discovery by white patrons in the 1930s, his work’s formal resonance with so-called primitivism and direct carving techniques, and his place in the traditions of African American “outsider” art. This exhibition revisits Edmondson’s work within these frameworks, but also seeks to reevaluate his sculpture on its own terms and as part of a comprehensive practice that included the creation of commercial objects rather than strictly fine art.

The exhibition’s title references the sign that hung on the outside of Edmondson’s studio, advertising what was for sale and on view to the public in his yard, including tombstones, birdbaths, and statuary meant to be used and intended for outdoor rather than gallery display.

MARIN R. SULLIVAN is a Chicago-based art historian, consultant, and curator. She is curator-at-large at Cheekwood Estate & Gardens in Nashville and the author of Sculptural Materiality in the Age of Conceptualism and Alloys: American Sculpture and Architecture at Midcentury, as well as numerous essays and articles in publications including American Art, Art History, History of Photography, and Sculpture Journal.
Was Nashville once home to a giant race of humans? No, but in 1845, you could have paid a quarter to see the remains of one who allegedly lived here before the Flood. That summer, Middle Tennessee well diggers had unearthed the skeleton of an American mastodon. Before it went on display, it was modified and augmented with wooden “bones” to make it look more like a human being and passed off as an antediluvian giant. Then, like so many Nashvillians, after a little success here, it went on tour and disappeared from history.

But this fake history of a race of pre-Nashville giants isn’t the only bad history of what, and who, was here before Nashville. Sources written for schoolchildren and the public lead us to believe that the first Euro-Americans arrived in Nashville to find a pristine landscape inhabited only by buffalo and boundless nature, entirely untouched by human hands. Instead, the roots of our city extend some fourteen thousand years before Illinois lieutenant-governor-turned-fur-trader Timothy Demonbreun set foot at Sulphur Dell.

During the period between about AD 1000 and 1425, a thriving Native American culture known to archaeologists as the Middle Cumberland Mississippian lived along the Cumberland River and its tributaries in today’s Davidson County. Earthen mounds built to hold the houses or burials of the upper class overlooked both banks of the Cumberland near what is now downtown Nashville. Surrounding densely packed village areas including family homes, cemeteries, and public spaces stretched for several miles through Shelby Bottoms and the McFerrin Park, Bicentennial Mall, and Germantown neighborhoods. Other villages were scattered across the Nashville landscape, including in the modern neighborhoods of Richland, Sylvan Park, Lipscomb, Duncan Wood, Centennial Park, Belle Meade, White Bridge, and Cherokee Park. While the Mississipians built the first urban landscape in what would become Nashville, theirs is only one of the stories of the city’s deep past, a history that includes mastodons, saber-toothed cats, and millennia of Native American settlement along the Cumberland River.

This book is the first public-facing effort by legitimate archaeologists to articulate the history of what happened here before Nashville happened.
When a Robot Decides to Die and Other Stories

Francisco García González
Translated by Bradley J. Nelson

A manufactured and preprogrammed serial killer; a suicidal robot; a romantic necrophiliac; and an archaeologist who feeds the perverse desires of aficionados of the apocalypse—Francisco García González’s stories map out literary and metafictional approaches to the sci-fi universe in ways that echo the humor and violence of Miguel de Cervantes, María de Zayas, Jorge Luis Borges, Rosa Montero, and Roberto Bolaño.

With an accompanying essay by translator Bradley J. Nelson that presents García González’s oeuvre to contemporary readers and scholars of Spanish-language literature, this science fiction collection introduces Anglophones to a truly unique author. García González turns a black mirror on contemporary society and its relation both to history and to the future. His insightfulness and relevance draw comparisons with Margaret Atwood, Neal Stephenson, and China Miéville, though his verbal economy and elegance are more akin to Cormac McCarthy, producing both disturbingly uncanny violence and unexpected comedy.

“In a world of writers and readers addicted to fireworks, Francisco García González shows, once again, that it is possible to illuminate skies without explosions.”

Hispanophone

“Francisco García González is the tenant of his words but the owner of his silences. That seems easy, but it is very hard.”

Lattin Magazine

FRANCISCO GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ is a writer, editor, and screenwriter. He was born in Havana in 1963. He won Cuba’s Hemingway Short Story Prize in 1999.

BRADLEY J. NELSON is a professor of Spanish at Concordia University.
Natural Consequences

Elia Barceló
Translated by Yolanda Molina-Gavilán and Andrea Bell

The Xhroll, an alien humanoid race whose infertility is bringing them near extinction, come into contact with a crew of fertile human astronauts. Their encounter on a remote space station will have significant consequences for both species when a human male winds up impregnated.

Author Elia Barceló’s setup is funny and feminist, and it raises questions of what it means to be “male” or “female”—prescient, considering this novel was first published twenty-five years ago. The anniversary is being celebrated now with the first English-language edition, translated by veteran sci-fi translators Yolanda Molina-Gavilán and Andrea Bell, who also provide a critical introduction.

“Beyond its obvious provocative intention, it is a good science fiction novel, with certain ecological tints and a potent reflection on the power of language.”
Consuelo Abellán, Origen cuántico

“Feminist science fiction, current and angry, written—as is usual with Elia Barceló—in a diaphanous, translucent, and fresh prose.”
Mario Amadas, CCyberdark.net

“A novel this full of reflections, humor, and irony makes a fierce criticism of machismo, patriarchy, and gender roles with all their implications. It is a story with environmental tints that highlight the importance of real equality, language, and its power, as well as how complicated are motherhood and the differential treatment that women receive when they are pregnant. I can do nothing but recommend you run to your nearest bookstore to order the book. It is essential reading that has been automatically transformed into one of my favorites of the year.”
In the Nevernever
Voyage of the Adventure
Retracing the Donelson Party’s Journey to the Founding of Nashville

John Guider | With essays by Jeff Sellers, Learotha Williams Jr., Albert Bender, and Carroll Van West

In the harsh winter of 1779, as the leader of a flotilla of settlers, John Donelson loaded his family and thirty slaves into a forty-foot flatboat at the present site of Kingsport, Tennessee. Their journey into the wilderness led to the founding of a settlement now known as Nashville—over one thousand river miles away. In the fall of 2016, photographer John Guider retraced the Donelson party’s journey in his hand-built 14½’ motorless rowing sailboat while making a visual documentation of the river as it currently exists 240 years later.

This photo book contains more than 120 striking images from the course of the journey, allowing the reader to see how much has changed and how much has remained untouched in the two and a half centuries since Donelson first took to the water. Equally significant, the essays include long-ignored contemporary histories of both the Cherokee whom Donelson encountered and the slaves he brought with him, some of whom did not survive the journey.

Guider, a professional photographer, has created images of every point in the thousand-mile trip from a platform just a few feet above the waterline of three of Tennessee’s most notable rivers.

“This is an angle on Tennessee’s history that is rarely seen or taught. Although we are, thank goodness, currently in a phase when many—or at least some vocal thinkers—question just how great the ‘great men’ of local history really were and hold their actions under a critical microscope, we still rarely venture into truly considering the experiences of the lesser known or marginalized people of Tennessee’s past. Discussion of the ripple effects of past actions on the present landscape rarely ventures beyond politics or the broadest strokes of race relations. This book lives fully in that space.”

Nina Cardona, WPLN, Nashville Public Radio

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JOHN GUIDER is an Emmy Award–winning photographer and author. The Nashville Public Television documentary Voyage of Adventure was honored by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in 2020.

JEFF SELLERS is the director of education and community engagement at the Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, Tennessee.

LEAROTHA WILLIAMS JR. is a professor of African American, Civil War and Reconstruction, and Public History at Tennessee State University and coordinator of the North Nashville Heritage Project.

ALBERT BENDER is a Cherokee activist, historian, political columnist, and reporter.

CARROLL VAN WEST is the director of the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University.

NEW IN PAPERBACK • REGIONAL / NATURE
Race, Religion, and Black Lives Matter
Essays on a Moment and a Movement

Edited by Christopher Cameron and Phillip Luke Sinitiere

Black Lives Matter, like its predecessor movements, embodies flesh and blood through local organizing, national and global protests, hunger strikes, and numerous acts of civil disobedience. Chants like “All night! All day! We’re gonna fight for Freddie Gray!” and “No justice, no fear! Sandra Bland is marching here!” give voice simultaneously to the rage, truth, hope, and insurgency that sustain BLM. While BLM has generously welcomed a broad group of individuals whom religious institutions have historically resisted or rejected, contrary to general perceptions, religion has been neither absent nor excluded from the movement’s activities.

This volume has a simple but far-reaching argument: religion is an important thread in BLM. To advance this claim, Race, Religion, and Black Lives Matter examines religion’s place in the movement through the lenses of history, politics, and culture. While this collection is not exhaustive or comprehensive in its coverage of religion and BLM, it selectively anthologizes unique aspects of Black religious history, thought, and culture in relation to political struggle in the contemporary era. The chapters aim to document historical change in light of current trends and events. The contributors analyze religion and BLM in a historical moment fraught with aggressive, fascist, authoritarian tendencies but also shaped by profound ingenuity, creativity, and insightful perspectives on Black history and culture.

CHRISTOPHER CAMERON is a professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is a founder of the African American Intellectual History Society, the author of To Plead Our Own Cause: African Americans in Massachusetts and the Making of the Antislavery Movement and Black Freethinkers: A History of African American Secularism, and a coeditor of New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition.

PHILLIP LUKE SINITIERE is a professor of history at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston. He is the author of Salvation with a Smile: Joel Osteen, Lakewood Church, and American Christianity and the coeditor of Protest and Propaganda: W. E. B. Du Bois, the “Crisis,” and American History and Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion after “Divided by Faith.”

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Obsession, Aesthetics, and the Iberian City
The Partial Madness of Modern Urban Culture

Benjamin Fraser

Although many depictions of the city in prose, poetry, and visual art can be found dating from earlier periods in human history, *Obsession, Aesthetics, and the Iberian City* emphasizes a particular phase in urban development: the quintessentially modern city that comes into being in the nineteenth century. In social terms, this city is the product of a specialist class of planners engaged in what urban theorist Henri Lefebvre has called the bourgeois science of modern urbanism. One thinks first of the large scale and the wide boulevards of Baron Georges von Haussmann’s Paris or the geometrical planning vision of Ildefons Cerdà’s Barcelona. The modern science of urban design famously inaugurates a new way of thinking about the city; urban modernity is now defined by the triumph of exchange value over use value, and the lived city is eclipsed by the planned city as it is envisioned by capitalists, builders, and speculators. Thus urban plans, architecture, literary prose and poetry, documentary cinema and fiction film, and comics art serve as windows into our modern obsession with urban aesthetics.

This book investigates the social relationships implied in our urban modernity by concentrating on four cities that are in broad strokes representative of the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the Iberian peninsula. Each chapter introduces but moves well beyond an identifiable urban area in a given city, noting the cultural obsession implicit in its reconstruction as well as the role of obsession in its artistic representation of the urban environment. These areas are Barcelona’s Eixample district, Madrid’s Linear City, Lisbon’s central Baixa area, and Bilbao’s Seven Streets, or Zazpikaleak. The theme of obsession—which as explored is synonymous with the concept of partial madness—provides a point of departure for understanding the interconnection of both urbanistic and artistic discourses.

“This is a compelling and groundbreaking book at the crossroads of urban studies, disability studies, cultural studies, and aesthetics. As such, it is a potent illustration of the possibilities opened up by intertwining a disability-inspired approach to urban and cultural studies and vice versa.”

Silvia Bermúdez, author of *Rocking the Boat: Migration and Race in Contemporary Spanish Music*
The Reinvention of Mexico in Contemporary Spanish Travel Writing

Jane Hanley

The long history of transatlantic movement in the Spanish-speaking world has had a significant impact on present-day concepts of Mexico and the implications of representing Mexico and Latin America more generally in Spain and Europe and throughout the world. In addition to analyzing texts that have received little to no critical attention, this book examines the connections between contemporary travel, including the local dynamics of encounters and the global circulation of information, and the significant influence of the history of exchange between Spain and Mexico in the construction of existing ideas of place.

To frame the analysis of contemporary travel writing, author Jane Hanley examines key moments in the history of Mexican-Spanish relations, including the origins of narratives regarding Spaniards’ sense of Mexico’s similarity to and difference from Spain. This history underpins the discussion of the role of Spanish travelers in their encounters with Mexican peoples and places and their reflection on their own role as communicators of cultural meaning and participants in the tourist economy with its impact—both negative and positive—on places.

“A convincing case for the importance of this ‘minor’ genre as key for understanding Spain in its transatlantic context. . . . If I did not know these texts under discussion, I would want to read them.”

Lisa Surwillo, author of Monsters by Trade: Slave Traffickers in Spanish Literature and Culture
This book, available for the first time in English, offers a thorough introductory reading of Jorge Luis Borges, one of the most remarkable and influential writers of the twentieth century. Julio Premat, a specialist in the field of Borges studies, presents the main questions posed by Borges’s often paradoxical writing, and leads the novice through the complexity and breadth of Borges’s vast literary production.

Originally published in French by an Argentine expatriate living in Paris, Borges includes the Argentine specificities of Borges’s work—specificities that are often unrecognized or glossed over in Anglophone readings.

This book is a boon for university students of philosophy and literature, teachers and researchers in these fields who are looking to better understand this complex author, and anyone interested in the advanced study of literature. Somewhere between a guidebook and an exhaustive work of advanced research, Borges is the ultimate stepping-stone into the deeper Borgesian world.

“This work does not incur the awkwardness of simply adapting a certain academic knowledge to a nonspecialized public; it is a commendable work of writing through which a specialist manages to select, rank, and reorder his mastery of a subject in order to encourage entry into the work of the Argentine writer.”

Francisco Aiello, Reseñas CeLeHis
Centenary Subjects
Race, Reason, and Rupture in the Americas

Shawn McDaniel

Centenary Subjects examines the ideological debates and didactic exercises in subject formation during the centenary era of independence (the decade of the 1910s)—the peak of arielismo—and proposes a new reading of the arielista archive that brings into focus the racial anxieties, epistemological and spiritual fissures, and iconoclastic agendas that structure, and at times smother, the ethos of that era.

Arielismo takes its name from José Enrique Rodó’s foundational essay Ariel (1900), a wide-ranging gospel dedicated to Latin American youth that incited a cultural awakening under the banner of the spirit throughout the Americas at an ominous juncture—when the US co-opted the Cuban War of Independence in 1898, effectively rebranding it as the Spanish-American War. Rodó’s optimistic message of transcendence as an antidote to the encroaching empire quickly became one of the most pervasive and malleable paradigms of regional empowerment, reverberating throughout a range of Latin Americanist projects in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Centenary Subjects recovers a series of important but understudied essays penned by arielista writers, radicals, pedagogues, prophets, and politicians of diverse stripes in the early twentieth century, and analyzes how, under the auspices of the arielista platform, young people emerged as historical subjects invested with unprecedented cultural capital, increasing political power, and an urgent mandate to break with the past and transform the sociopolitical and cultural landscape of their countries. But their respective designs harbor racial, epistemological, aesthetic, and anarchistic strains that bring into sharper relief the conflicting signals that the centenary subject had to parse with respect to race, reason, and rupture.

“Significant, original, and timely. This book adds to the range of texts and ideas that can be considered as parts of Rodó’s legacy . . . [and] speaks to our current moment, even as its research contribution will very likely continue to be relevant for years to come.”

Aníbal González-Pérez, author of In Search of the Sacred Book: Religion and the Contemporary Latin American Novel
Toxic Loves, Impossible Futures
Feminist Living as Resistance

Irmgard Emmelhainz

Toxic Loves, Impossible Futures is an homage to a constellation of women writers, feminists, and creators whose voices draw a map of our current global political-environmental crisis and the interlinked massive violence, enabled by the denigration of life and human relationships. In a world in which “a woman’s voice” exists in bodies called on to occupy important positions in corporations, government, and cultural and academic institutions, to work in factories, and to join the army—but whose bodies are systematically rendered vulnerable by gender violence and by the double burden imposed on them to perform both productive and reproductive labor—Emmelhainz asks: What is the task of thought and form in contemporary feminist-situated knowledge? Toxic Loves, Impossible Futures is a collection of essays rethinking feminist issues in the current context of the production of redundant populations, the omnipresence of the technosphere and environmental devastation, toxic relationships, toxic nationalisms, and more.

These reflections and dialogues are an urgent attempt to resist the present in the company of the voices of women like bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, Leslie Jamison, Lina Meruane, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Chris Kraus, Alaíde Foppa, Lorena Wolffer, Sayak Valencia, Pip Day, Veronica Gonzalez Peña, Eimear McBride, Simone de Beauvoir, Elena Poniatowska, Susan Sontag, Margaret Randall, Simone Weil, Arundhati Roy, Marta Lamas, Paul B. Preciado, Dawn Marie Paley, Raquel Gutiérrez, Sara Eliassen, and Silvia Gruner. Toxic Loves, Impossible Futures continues the discussion on how to undo misogyny and dismantle heteropatriarchy’s sublimating and denigrating tricks against women, which are intrinsically linked to colonialism and violence against the Earth.

Irmgard Emmelhainz is an independent translator, writer, researcher, and lecturer based in Mexico City. Her writings on film, the Palestine Question, art, cinema, culture, and neoliberalism have been translated into several languages and presented at an array of international venues. She is the author of The Tyranny of Common Sense: Mexico’s Post-Neoliberal Conversion, El cielo está incompleto: Cuaderno de viaje en Palestina, and Jean-Luc Godard’s Political Filmmaking.
Forensic science provides information and data behind the circumstances of a particular death, but it is culture that imbues death with meaning. With this in mind, Rite, Flesh, and Stone proposes cultural matters of death as its structuring principle, operating as frames of the expression of mortality within a distinct set of coordinates. The chapters offer original approaches to how human remains are handled in the embodied rituals and social performances of contemporary funeral rites of all kinds; furthermore, they explore how dying flesh and corpses are processed by means of biopolitical technologies and the ethics of (self-)care, and how the vibrant and breathing materiality of the living is transformed into stone and analogous kinds of tangible, empirical presence that engender new cartographies of memory. Each coming from a specific disciplinary perspective, authors in this volume problematize conventional ideas about the place of death in contemporary Western societies and cultures using Spain as a case study.

Materials analyzed here—ranging from cinematic and literary fictions to historical archives and anthropological and ethnographic sources—make explicit a dynamic scenario where actors embody a variety of positions toward death and dying, the political production of mortality, and the commemoration of the dead. Ultimately, the goal of this volume is to chart the complex network in which the disenchantment of death and its reenchantment coexist, and biopolitical control over secularized bodies overlaps with new avatars of the religious and nontheistic desires for memorialization and transcendence.

“The essays in this volume move swiftly and deftly across different aspects of culture—fiction and film, but also exhumations, funerals, processions, and inorganic objects. In ways that are at once surprising and innovative, this volume investigates some of the flash points of contemporary Spain.”

Bécquer Seguín, Johns Hopkins University, and writer for The Nation, Slate, Dissent, The Awl, and Public Books

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Winner of the 2020 Norman L. and Roselea J. Goldberg Prize from Vanderbilt University Press for the best book in the area of art or medicine

**What the Signs Say**

Language, Gentrification, and Place-Making in Brooklyn

*Shonna Trinch and Edward Snajdr*

Although we may not think we notice them, storefronts and their signage are meaningful, and the impact they have on people is significant. *What the Signs Say* argues that the public language of storefronts is a key component to the creation of the place known as Brooklyn, New York. Using a sample of more than two thousand storefronts and over a decade of ethnographic observation and interviews, the study charts two very different types of local Brooklyn retail signage. The unique and consistent features of many words, large lettering, and repetition that make up Old School signage both mark and produce an inclusive and open place. In contrast, the linguistic elements of New School signage, such as brevity and wordplay, signal not only the arrival of gentrification, but also the remaking of Brooklyn as distinctive and exclusive.

Shonna Trinch and Edward Snajdr, a sociolinguist and an anthropologist respectively, show how the beliefs and ideas that people take as truths about language and its speakers are deployed in these different sign types. They also present in-depth ethnographic case studies that reveal how gentrification and corporate redevelopment in Brooklyn are intimately connected to public communication, literacy practices, the transformation of motherhood and gender roles, notions of historical preservation, urban planning, and systems of privilege. Far from peripheral or irrelevant, shop signs say loud and clear that language displayed in public always matters.

“What the Signs Say” charts emerging terrains of gentrification through an acute, open-eyed, and deeply contextualized reading of Brooklyn streetscapes and the signs that shape them. This is a fascinating and textured case study in itself. It also models generative new ways of approaching the complex intersections of language, landscape, and social experience.”

*Donald Brenneis*, coeditor of the *Annual Review of Anthropology*

“Strikingly innovative and . . . utterly engaging. We see signage changing with the influx of gentrification, contrasting assumptions about whose Brooklyn it really is, and both older and newer residents invested in a sense of place as incoming chain businesses assuredly are not.”

*Bonnie Urciuoli*, author of *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class*