

COLLEGE *for* Creative STUDIES

DGR685A Special Project **d.Tree Studio**

Term: Fall 2021
Class Meeting Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays 7-10pm
Class Meeting Hours: 6 hours
Class Location: B112 (Woodshop, Ford Campus)
Credits: 3
Instructors: Dr. Ian Lambert, & TBC
Office Location: 9th Floor, Taubman Center
Phone: 313 664 1474
Email: dtree@collegeforcreativestudies.edu
Office Hours: 8:30-4:30

THIS SYLLABUS IS POSTED ON CANVAS

This syllabus is subject to change. All changes will be posted on Canvas. It is the student's responsibility to stay informed of all assignments/deliverables and deadlines.

I. Course Catalog Description

d.Tree Studio: Upcycling Our Detroit Trees as Artistic Narrative

Background

The d.Tree Studio project is a collaboration between The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (The Wright) and the College for Creative Studies (CCS) that emerged in 2018 when dying trees were noticed on The Wright's campus. The Wright has been on a sustainability journey since 2015 and, in partnership with CCS, saw an opportunity to honor the legacy of the trees and their Detroit roots and celebrate the beauty of African material culture by co-creating a course experience for new and emerging artists.

The Wright and CCS have combined their respective institutional expertise to intentionally design a woodshop class that will frame an understanding of African material culture and the science of trees in the context of African American and tree experiences in Detroit. The project will utilize readings and guest speakers and include object making.

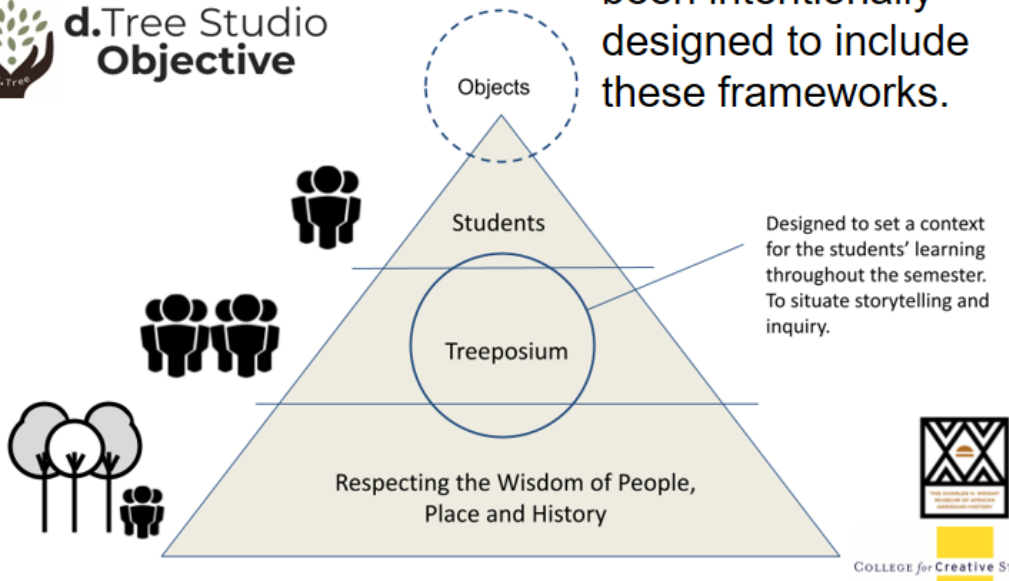
Intention

d.Tree Studio explores connections between design, African American material culture/ history, and sustainability. The studio affirms that there is a deep connection between story making and object making. It acknowledges that objects are not neutral and challenges us to see the stories embedded within objects that convey belonging, respect, and wisdom.

The Zelkova trees were cut, milled, to be transformed from wood to lumber which extended their life cycle. The trees' new form allows us to explore its transition to an artifact that examines the past, present, and future of African American experiences in Detroit.

Frameworks

The d.Tree Studio and Treeposium have been intentionally designed to include these frameworks.



<u>d.Tree Studio Framework</u>			
	<u>PAST</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>FUTURE</u>
African Material Culture	Masks, Stories Animism	Disrespect	What the Trees Are Trying to Teach us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect people, place & history • Objects are not neutral • Push back on disposability
African Am. & Tree Experience in Detroit	Tree-lined Neighborhoods	Divesting - People & Trees Social, Economic turmoil	
Science	Mycorrhizal Fungi	Roots, Trunk, Branches, Leaves	Grandmother Tree

- II. Course Prerequisites**
Basic practical woodshop skills

III. Detailed Description

The d.Tree Studio project examines the socio-cultural and political history of Detroit through time, in place, and connects the voices of the African-American experience throughout the diaspora using storytelling and inquiry.

Foundational themes of the d.Tree Studio:

- Respecting people, place and history
- Objects are not neutral: All objects mediate, they have meaning and spirit in time and place.
- Learning from the trees: The trees have witnessed the change of relationship in communities over time.

African American History and African Material Culture: Artistic expression is the foundation and cornerstone of communities and cultures around the world. African American experience is no different and holds a rich tapestry of artistic expression using wood as a culture bearer and artistic mediums for centuries. The d. Tree studio takes that experience to frame the learning context for students and to examine the past to tell stories in the present during the class.

Sustainability: Wood is an important resource in many local industries as well as an artistic medium. The project aims to bring attention to urban lumber as a resource within the community. Without intervention, these trees would add to landfills and increase carbon emissions. By making wood objects we are practicing carbon sequestration. The studio uses urban lumber as a sustainable design medium to push back against a disposable culture.

The life of a tree can span years, decades, or centuries where they take root. They catalogue time, environmental change, social experiences, and history of the places where they are planted. They communicate their experiences through their health, their rings, their leaves, and their roots. This studio atelier will examine the experiences of this medium as a lens to inquire, story-tell, and transform this material into mediating objects and artistic narratives.

The Wright and CCS have approached this project with an inclusive lens and purposely avoided traditional media and outreach methods to engage and invite the community to learn more and apply. Instead, through relationships with Keep Growing Detroit and others, there was an effort to make this opportunity as accessible as possible.

Participation: The studio will operate as an atelier with intentionally selected participants who bring their own experiences and expertise to reflective practice. It comprises a 50/50 mix of CCS students and Detroit based storytellers and artists to produce narrative artefacts in response to socio-cultural themes aligned to the mission of the Museum. Participants will learn socio-cultural research methods (storytelling, listening, and inquiry) and practical woodworking techniques in the pursuit of artistic practice. Participants will also explore cultural place making and narrative development methods. At the end of the project, the objects will form part of a public exhibition, and are expected to feature in a short documentary film on the project.

There are six places available to CCS students from across the student community, and six scholarships for new and emerging artists from the Detroit community (incl. Hamtramck and Highland Park), by application. Participants do not need to be expert makers, but should have a basic experience of working with wood. While there will be technical support, being able to use woodworking machines and hand-guided tools safely is important.

Exemplars of similar previous projects



Above: (L) Bowl by Roger Hall; (M) Objects by Catherine Johnstone; (R) from the Wych Elm Project, Edinburgh, 2010



Above: Artefacts from the Witness Tree Project, RISD, 2015: See <https://www.witnesstreeproject.org/2015>

IV. Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. STORYMAKING

- a. Respect and understand community visions for listening to contextual and location-based engagement into socio-cultural theme
- b. Develop a critical understanding of socio-cultural place-making and community advancement.
- c. Critically identify, define, conceptualize and analyze complex problems in response to a thematically informed design brief

2. OBJECT MAKING

- a. Demonstrate originality and creativity in response to a defined design brief through the making of wood artefacts and/or installations
- b. Communicate iteration process with professionals and specialists in the development of responses to a defined design brief
- c. Work with others to bring about proposals for change, development and innovative thinking.

V. Required Texts/Materials/Supplies (provided by instructor on LMS)

- Arnoldi, M.J. and Hardin K.L. (Eds) (1996) *African Material Culture*, Indiana University Press
- Boyd, H. (2017) *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination*, New York: HarperCollins
- Costanza-Chock, S (2020), *Design Justice: Community-led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press
- Segy, L. (1952) *African Sculpture Speaks*, New York: A. A. Wyn Inc.
- Sugrue, T.J. (1996) *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (2014)

Films

[Detroit 48202: Conversations Along a Postal Route](#) (2019) Directed by Pamela Sporn

VI. Recommended Texts/Materials/Supplies

- Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art & Architecture*, London: Routledge
- Ingold, T. (2009) *The textility of making*. Cambridge Journal of Economics 2010, 34, pp.91–102 Advance Access publication 9 July 2009
- Jonnes, J. (2016) *Urban Forests: A Natural History of Trees and People in the American Cityscape*, New York: Penguin
- Sandberg, L.A., Bardekjian, A., and Butt, S. (Eds) (2015) *Urban Forests, Trees and Green Space: A Political Ecology Perspective*, New York: Routledge
- Schwarz, C. *The Anarchist Tool Chest* (2011), Lost Press, LLC
- Sherrill, S. (2003) *Harvesting Urban Timber: A Complete Guide*, Fresno: Linden Publishing

All reading materials listed above (V & VI) are available on Canvas or in the CCS library.

Tools / trainings provided by CCS

VII. Important Dates to Remember

Saturday, 11th September – Field trip to Dabls African Bead Museum

Tuesday, 21st September – TREEPOSIUM

Thursday, 25th November – Thanksgiving (no class)

VIII. Schedule

Participants are asked to start preliminary reading/viewing/listening during the summer months.

On day one, participants will be fully briefed on the intentions of the class. There will be an opportunity for questions and further discussion.

The class has been structured into three phases:

Phase 1: Research and Preparation

The first four weeks of the class will allow participants to explore the d.Tree Studio context in greater depth, become familiar with the materials and processes, and undertake some introductory tasks, including a quick self-portrait.

Objectives: Enhance understanding of the context; identify resonant narratives; gain familiarity with woodshop and materials; wood-working exercises.

Phase 2: Create Proposal

In the second four weeks, participants will collate exploratory contextual and creative findings, and devise a proposal in direct response to the brief. Continuing a process of material inquiry, models and maquettes will be used to explore narratives and plan the execution of the final outcome.

Objectives: Ideation of narratives; make maquettes/prototypes; understand limitations of materials and processes

Phase 3: Make and Finesse Artwork

The final six weeks of the class will be devoted to the making and completion of the final creative outcome. This will be included in the exhibition in early 2022.

Objectives: Completion of artefact(s); preparation for exhibition

CALENDAR

A Land Acknowledgement Statement will be read at the start of each class (see appendix 2).

Stg	Wk	Date(s) (w/b)	Topics Covered	Assignment/Deliverable Due following class
Prep		Summer	Preliminary reading/viewing/listening (Participants may also recommend sources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start reading - Watch: Detroit 48202 - Visit Wright Museum (complimentary tickets provided on 31st Aug)
Phase 1: Research and Preparation	1	Tues 7 th Sept	d.Tree Studio Introduction: An Atelier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of studio members - Lecture/Seminar: - Introduction to the wood shop tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interrogate brief - Contextual research - Reading: pp.3-14 of Surgue
		Thurs 9 th Sept	Lecture/seminar: <i>Intersection of Design/Sustainability/ African Material Culture</i> , LaToya Morgan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Woodworking exercise: Object exploration "A self-portrait in wood" - Brainstorming ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contextual research - Listen to Stealing Children to Steal the Land - Reading: pp.17-31 of Surgue
		Saturday 11 th Sept	Visit Dabls African Bead Museum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled tour 	
	2	Tues 14 th Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture: <i>Storytelling & Community Engagement Methods</i> (data collection) - (Research ethics check) How to ask/inquire? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contextual research - Reading: pp.173-209 of Costanza-Chock
		Thurs 16 th Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/seminar: <i>The Sustainability Lens</i>, Ian Lambert - Narrative making - Design ideation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce scale models - Reading: pp.201-216 of Boyd
	3	Tues 21 st Sept	- TREEPOSIUM: Trees in the context of community - neighborhood, experience. 6:30-8:30pm (remote contact, no in-person class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research - Reading
		Thurs 23 rd Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow-up on <i>Treeposium</i> - Woodworking techniques: Learn 3 methods - Storytelling: research / concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design work - Reading - Circling back to context
	4	Tues 28 th Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture: <i>Mediating Objects</i> - Woodworking techniques: Learn 3 more methods - Design development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design work - Reading - Circling back to context
		Thurs 30 th Sept	Lecture/seminar: <i>Thinking Through Making</i> , Ian Lambert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select wood - Group critique and feedback "A self-portrait in wood" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further research and design development - Further reading
	Phase 2: Create	5	Tues 5 th Oct	START MODELING Lecture: <i>Drum, Wood, Dance in the Diaspora</i> , Ajara Alghali <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present proposals, group critique - Group feedback, Next steps
Thurs			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Woodshop Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design modelling

Phase 3: Make and Finesse Artwork		7 th Oct	- Reflective Practice	- Further reading
	6	Tues 12 th Oct	- Group Critique/Feedback - Critical Friends	- Reflective practice - Further reading
		Thurs 14 th Oct	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice Further reading
	7	Tues 19 th Oct	INTERIM REVIEW (20%) - Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice - Further reading
		Thurs 21 th Oct	Lecture/seminar: <i>Advancing Social Change</i> , Peter Hammer - Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice Further reading
	8	Tues 28 th Oct	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice Further reading
		Thurs 30 th Oct	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice - Further reading
	9	Tues 2 nd Nov	Group Critique START MAKING - Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
		Thurs 4 th Nov	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
	10	Tues 9 th Nov	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
		Thurs 11 th Nov	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
	11	Tues 16 th Nov	- Group Critique - Critical Friends - Group feedback	- Reflective practice
		Thurs 18 th Nov	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
	12	Tues 23 rd Nov	- Woodshop Making - Reflective Practice	- Reflective practice
Thurs 25 th Nov		THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS		
13	Tues 30 th Nov	- Woodshop Making - Prepare presentation	- Reflective practice - Prepare presentation	
	Thurs 2 nd Dec	- Woodshop Making - Prepare presentation	- Making - Prepare presentation	
14	Tues 7 th Dec	- Woodshop Making - Prepare presentation	- Making - Prepare presentation	
	Thurs 9 th Dec	- Woodshop Making - Prepare presentation	- Making - Prepare presentation	
15	Tues 14 th	ASSESSMENT (80%) Final presentation with Faculty/ Critical Friends/ The Wright Museum	- Prepare Public Exhibition	
	Thurs 16 th	Feedback	- Prepare Public Exhibition	

Note: Greater detail on this schedule is provided on Canvas. This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be posted on Canvas. It is the student's responsibility to stay informed of all assignments/deliverables and deadlines.

Project assignment explanations are available on the course canvas site

IX. Grading Outcomes

- Research folio
- Development sketches
- Development models
- Finished artefact(S)
- Documentation of research and making processes

X. Basis for Final Grade

a. Assessments/Weighting

Interim Review (week 6) 20%
 Final Presentation (Week 15) 80%

- b. Grading Scale: The graduate grading scale will be used for all participants, unless enrolled on a CCS UG degree, or the credit will be transferred into a UG degree elsewhere.

i. Graduate Level

A 94-100%	Learning outcomes consistently outstanding, exceptionally high standard, trivial defects only. Fulfils the A grade at an exceptional standard.
A- 90-93%	Learning outcomes achieved in full to the highest standards with comprehensive mastery of skills acquisition and/or use throughout the course and demonstrating a complete learning experience.
B+ 86-89%	Excellent work, some minor defects. Clearly demonstrates high B grade qualities but reveals greater insight and more originality.
B 83-85%	Achieved in full, with broad skills acquisition and/or use throughout the course and demonstrating a considerable learning experience.
B- 80-82%	High standard of work, but with some significant deficiencies. Contains most of the B grade qualities with less insight and originality
C+ 76-79%	Good creditable work, but with a few notable defects. C grade qualities but with greater critical analysis and originality
C 73-75%	Learning outcomes substantially achieved, with an adequate learning experience, but with some weakness in understanding or application within the course.
FAIL 72% and below	Poor skills acquisition and/or use during the module. The learning outcomes not achieved, and with an inadequate or no learning experience. No submission. Proven academic misconduct

ii. Undergraduate Level

A	94-100	B	83-85	C	73-75	D	63-65
A-	90-93	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	86-89	C+	76-79	D+	66-69	F	59 or below

Assignment descriptions and grading rubrics are posted on Canvas.

c. "Incomplete" Grades

Incomplete grades are only available if there are extenuating circumstances and cannot be assigned at midterm. Please reference the College Catalog for a full policy description.

XI. Grade Dissemination

During the semester, assignment grades will be posted on Canvas under My Grades. Midterm and final grades are posted in Web Advisor and are available 48 hours after final submission. See the CCS academic calendar for specific dates.

XII. Other Course Guidelines

a. Attendance

Regular class attendance is essential for learning and academic success. Students are expected to attend all class meetings, on time and for the full duration, and be prepared to work on that day's assignment. Students are responsible for knowing the attendance policy and for adhering to its requirements.

Attendance is taken daily in each class session; students with excessive absences may be penalized. Students who miss 20 percent or more of their scheduled class time may receive a whole grade reduction or potentially fail the course. Exceptions can be made for excused absences, though students are always expected to make up any and all missed assignments.

Students should speak with the instructor about the reason for absences and for excusing them. More extenuating circumstances such as a serious medical issue, a family emergency, or a situation beyond the student's control that may result in multiple absences require appropriate documentation within two weeks of the missed class time in order for the absence to be excused. Students should submit an Absence Explanation form (available on Canvas) to the instructor within two weeks of the absence date in order for it to be considered for an excused absence. Excusing absences, or other exceptions to this attendance policy, is at the sole discretion of the instructor.

CCS students using veterans' benefits will have attendance monitored throughout the semester for reporting purposes to the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA).

b. Professional Preparedness.

Artists and designers, with strong written and verbal skills, and the ability to think critically with contextual awareness are highly valued by clients and colleagues. There are times when you will need to write critically and reflectively on your work and that of others. You will be called upon to evaluate secondary research sources and engage with clients and audiences with contextual sensitivity. Your ability to communicate effectively and work to deadlines is essential in a successful career.

c. Late Work

Late assignments will not be accepted unless extreme circumstances apply, in which case additional time may be negotiated with approval of the instructor. It is your responsibility to turn assignments in on time or else to communicate situations that compromise your ability to do so. Final projects cannot be submitted late.

- d. Extra Credit
To be discussed and approved by the instructor.
- e. Rewrite/Project (or Process) Redevelopment
Complete assignments that were submitted on time may be resubmitted once upon approval from the instructor.
- f. Group Work
All members of an assigned group project will receive the same grade; this grade will factor in cohesiveness of the group and equitable distribution of labor and contributions of ideas.
- g. Participation Expectation
Daily Attendance, Thoughtful & Attentive Listening, Contributions to Classroom Discussions, Feedback to Peers. Worth 10 points at the midterm and 10 points at the final.

XIII. Policies Pertaining to Technology and Media

- a. Canvas
The dissemination of course information is managed through Canvas; students are required to check their Canvas course site regularly as assignments, grades, and announcements will be posted.
- b. CCS Email
Students are required to check their CCS email regularly as this is how the department and College will communicate important information. It is also the method in which faculty will contact students individually.
- c. Professionalism
Cell phones must be turned off or set to vibrate during class time. Email, text messaging, and social networks may not be accessed during class time without the express permission of the instructor.

XIV. Institutional Policies Pertaining to Student Expectations

- a. CCS Policy for Assigning Credit
Each credit hour of a course represents an average of at least three hours of student work per week, inclusive of in-class time. Hence, students enrolled in a 15-week three-credit hour studio class that meets six hours per week should expect an average of at least three hours of course work outside of class each week. Students enrolled in a 15-week three-credit hour lecture class that meets three hours per week should expect an average of at least six hours of course work outside of class each week. Courses that run for shorter periods, such as the summer semester, still require the work normally assigned in a 15-week semester, approximately 135 hours in total. Please reference the College Catalog for a full policy description.
- b. Disability Access/Learning Challenges
CCS provides accommodations for students with documented learning challenges and /or physical disabilities. Please reference the College Catalog for a full policy description.

- c. **Academic Integrity**
College for Creative Studies adheres to the highest standards of academic integrity throughout the educational experience, in both academic writing and research and in studio work. The College condones no form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, copying, cheating, and other forms of misrepresentation. Students who violate the standards of academic integrity face serious disciplinary consequences, including letters documenting the incident in their permanent record, failure of the assignment, immediate course failure, and/or dismissal from the College. Please reference the College Catalog for a full policy description.
- d. **Deletion/Destruction of Student Work**
The deletion or destruction of digital files, another student's artwork, or College property will result in serious disciplinary consequences. Please reference the College Catalog for a full policy description.

XV. Health and Safety Policies

Students must adhere to all classroom, studio, shop and College safety policies and procedures. Policies and procedures, and tool use instructions can be found on Canvas. Students can also contact their instructor, Department Chair, or studio technician for information about safety policies and procedures.

If a student is pregnant, planning on getting pregnant, or has a pre-existing or chronic health condition, it is the student's responsibility to seek permission from their doctor before using required course materials or working in studios or shops where there are processes or materials that might compromise their health. Students should contact their instructor if they have questions or need to provide Safety Data Sheets to their health care provider.

XVI. Department Policies

In the MFA program, a grade of C (73-75) is the lowest passing grade for the course. Please note 3.0 is the minimum cumulative G.P.A. allowed to maintain acceptable academic standing in the program.

XVII. Student Services Contact Information

Advising – 313-664-7672
Career Development – 313-664-7878
Counseling – 313-664-7830
Financial Aid – 313-664-7497
International Student Services Office – 313-664-7448
Nurse – 313-664-7982
Student Ombudsman – 313-664-7676

APPENDIXES

1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

African American history:

African American history is the interaction of African, American, and African American peoples and cultures beginning in Africa.¹

African material culture:

Refers to African objects that embody the thinking, feelings, productive activities of the members of a culture. It examines the relationship of objects to the societies that produce them and looks at how individuals in an African society use objects in the construction of identity, social formations, and culture.²

Atelier: A group of artists working (individually, sometimes collaboratively) on projects of a shared theme and objectives.

Design and Sustainability: Also referred to as *sustainable design*, a design practice that aims to neutralise negative impacts on the environment and advance carbon sequestration. Sustainability requires a circular economic system and its key tenets include the reduction of consumption, longevity and reusability, and the recycling of materials.

Disposable Culture: Also known as a *throw-away society*, a culture indulged in overconsumption in a production system of disposable items and planned obsolescence.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

The College for Creative Studies respectfully acknowledges that we are on the traditional, contemporary, and ancestral homelands of the Anishinaabe – Council of Three Fires: the Ojibwe/Chippewa, Odawa/Ottawa, and Potawatomi/Bodéwadmi along with their neighbors the Seneca, Delaware, Fox, Shawnee, Loups, Miami and Wyandot who maintained, and continue to preserve lifeways along Detroit’s river banks and throughout the Great Lakes region. Through signing the Treaty of Detroit in 1807, Anishinaabek tribes ceded the land now occupied by the city we stand on. We recognize Michigan is home to 12 federally recognized tribes who continue to steward this land, in remembrance of their ancestors and thinking of future generations.

¹ Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963. *The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York :Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968.

² Arnoldi, Mary Jo, et al., editors. *African Material Culture*. United States of America, Indiana University Press, 1996.