

## **Tension in the union of art and baseball: competition for ownership of the baseball statuary and its influence upon location and design.**

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The erection of statues to baseball's heroes is essentially a modern phenomenon, with over 200 such monuments erected across the United States over the past 2 decades. Yet their design has remained deeply traditional and conservative, typified by the many figures of players hitting and pitching that now adorn US ball parks. Such inertia is posited as the result of tension in the ownership of the image; the natural desire of a sculptor to create their own artistic statement balanced not only by respect for the subject's family and even the subject himself, but also the scrutiny of a devoted fanbase seeking an idealised representation that matches flashbulb memories, and the commercial imperatives of the commissioning sports organisation. However convention is being challenged incrementally, and in ways that are intrinsically linked with a competing stakeholder making a definitive claim upon the subject's identity and image.

Focusing upon three recent baseball statues, we describe the motivations behind and multiple claims of ownership upon each monument. The Boston Red Sox 'Teammates' offers an original perspective on a club commissioned statue, evoking nostalgia through the themes of relationship and comradeship rather than reflected glory. 'Walter Johnson' typifies an emerging style of sport statue in which the sculptor has broken the traditional constraints of figurative sculpture. Finally, 'Albert Pujols' reflects a desire to bind a hero inextricably into the fabric of the city he represents. We then illustrate how the relative weight of ownership claims has impacted upon design, with reference to the genre conventions established by the wider baseball statuary.

We conclude that not only is an evolution in design occurring but that rather than being driven solely by artistic innovation, it is a multi-lineal process in which the increasingly sophisticated marketing strategies of sports organisations and the timeless devotion of supporters to the game's heroes are contributory factors.