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Black Lives Matter: An Architectural Historian's View from Europe

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Black Lives Matters began in the United States, where it has included the dismantlement of commemorations of the Confederacy, a breakaway state established to preserve slavery. In Europe it has sparked discussions of local monuments as well as drawn unprecedented attention to the way in which the slave trade and enslaved labour funded the construction of cities and country estates. This now needs to be acknowledged in public space. The challenge presents an appropriate moment to remember the ties that bind commemorative structures on both sides of the Atlantic and the impact that tributes to European nationalism have had on diverse strands of modern American architecture. These connections provide a back story for the newly discovered relevance, and at time effectiveness, of representational sculpture, which they integrated into built forms that appeared to embed regimes of all stripes in their local landscapes. Abstract counter-monuments often proved effective in addressing the Holocaust. Substituting the human figure for the shards of a shattered past that have long been juxtaposed in German memoryscapes with visions of a utopian future may possibly provide a means of acknowledging the pain that runs through the cities that many of us inhabit. This in turn may prove to be an important step on the way to building the more equitable future for which we attempt to prepare the way as we work to decolonize our curricula.

Introduction

Black lives matter. Few would disagree with that worthy sentiment, but what does it mean to historians of architecture, and especially to those based in Europe? Such scholars seek to explain why the built environment looks the way that it does. This includes understanding how it was funded, the sources of the materials out of which it was built, and what values it commemorates. Moreover, many historians of architecture are also called upon to offer expert opinions regarding what structures should be offered legal protection so that they remain in place, as well as how to conserve them and how to educate the general public about them. Finally, as experts regarding the built traces of the past, having documented processes of commemoration in public space and how they have changed over time, we may carry this expertise into participation and helping to craft new memoryscapes.

There are thus many paths the discipline can take to address the challenges that Black Lives Matter poses. Although architectural historians are trained to support the retention of cultural heritage, we can shift gears and in appropriate cases support its removal. We also have a responsibility to draw attention to the physical traces of slavery and colonialism that have often slipped from public consciousness. This includes connecting the dots in new ways, as the case study given here that links neo-medieval nationalism in Europe and white suprematism in the United States seeks to do, as well as continuing to draw attention to existing knowledge. And we can encourage efforts to give literal form to a more inclusive Europe. This list, which introduces the topics covered in what follows is, however, by no means exhaustive.

The Removal of Monuments

There are many ways in which public history takes physical form. Figural statuary has been important in this regard in Europe since antiquity and became ubiquitous in many of the continent's cities across the course of the 19th century. Statues have also been the most obvious target of recent protests. Alex Fialho notes that 'while monuments are perceived as large-scale and longstanding, history demonstrates that the tenuous ideologies monuments represent make them particularly susceptible to contestation, and that the removal and destruction of monuments are often tantamount to incitements for political change' (2021: 19). Historians of architecture have made important contributions to this discussion. Most notably, on 19 June 2020, the Society of Architectural Historians, a group that more often encourages retaining built heritage, called for the removal of monuments to the Confederacy from public spaces across the United States (Green 2020a). While in the United States, Black Lives Matter has sparked calls for the removal of such monuments above all when they

memorialize figures associated with slavery, in Europe the focus has more often been on the colonial-era exploitation of Africa. Rhodes Must Fall protests began in 2015; these called for the statue of Cecil Rhodes to be removed from Oxford University, where he funded prestigious scholarships (Rawlinson 2016). This followed protests the year before that led to the removal of another Rhodes statue, this one on the campus of the University of Cape Town in South Africa ('Cheers and Protests' 2015). In Belgium statues of King Leopold II were the focus of protests in the summer of 2020 because of his role as the proprietor of the Congo Free State. Antwerp removed its statue of him weeks before Richmond, Virginia, in the United States, began to dismantle the Confederate memorials on Monument Avenue (Pronczuk and Zaveri 2020).

Statues of enslavers are not as common in Europe as memorials to Confederates are in parts of the United States, but anger against them could be just as palpable, as the widely publicized tossing of a statue of Edward Colston into the Bristol harbour clearly showed (Gayle 2021). The work of the Irish sculptor John Cassidy, it was erected in 1895 in honour of Colston's philanthropic contributions to his native city. Colston made part of his fortune through his membership in the Royal African Company, of which he was at one point deputy governor. It sold West Africans into slavery in the Caribbean and along what is now the East Coast of the United States (Morgan 2020; Nasar 2020).

Historians of architecture seldom focus explicitly upon statuary, although the public spaces in which such statues serve as indications of shared community values are a core subject of the discipline. Thus the way in which their meaning and the experience of these places morph over time is one we regularly address. Throughout history regime change and other shifts in public opinion have often been accompanied by hostility towards monuments and buildings whose values clash with current political realities, but monuments are more readily demolished than buildings, as the latter can be put to often highly symbolic new purposes. A case in point is the way in which Irish independence did and did not find physical expression in Dublin. Perhaps the most notorious of the many Irish cases in which monuments that championed the British state and its royal family were destroyed concerns Nelson's Pillar in Dublin. It was blown up on 8 and 14 March 1966, in advance of the anniversary of the Easter Rising against the British half a century earlier. The IRA were responsible for the first explosion; the Irish Army finished the job the following week. Dublin Castle, however, the official site of the British viceroy in Ireland, remains intact, as does his residence in Phoenix Park, now the seat of the Irish president.

The removal of monuments can be extremely cathartic. Bryan Clark Green, the conservation officer of the Society of Architectural Historians, described the Confederate

general 'Stonewall' Jackson being lowered from the plinth on Richmond's Monument Avenue, where he had been installed just over a century earlier:

> It was an incredible scene. There was an enormous thunderstorm in progress. Those there could barely see anything. People were cheering, some were just overcome with emotion. It was so loud that at first one could not hear that the nearby church bell — originally offered by the congregation to the Confederacy in 1864 to be melted down for bullets — was ringing. Purchased back from the Secretary of War by a wealthy congregant, the bell survived to herald the end of Richmond's death grip on the Confederacy. It was an amazing experience. (Green 2020b)

Of course, removal alone is never sufficient. A year later, Alexcia Cleveland, a local resident, said to CNN reporter Chandelis Duster, as she watched the statue of Robert E. Lee being taken down from the same avenue, 'I'm glad to see it down, but I would like to see more progress on issues such as police brutality and housing inequality' (Duster 2021).

Traces of Slavery and Colonialism

Although Black Lives Matter challenges us to change some of the places we teach and study, it also should prompt us to revise our understanding of multiple ways that exploitation and appropriation are embedded in many more places. For me, these have proved inescapable. I am the descendent of enslavers who directed the manufacture in Richmond of ammunition and armaments used by the Confederacy. My great-grandmother's uncle gave the dedicatory speech when the statue of Lee was dedicated on Monument Avenue. I grew up in a house in which enslavers had lived beside the enslaved. Moving to Ireland did not allow me to escape associations with slavery. I now teach at University College Dublin whose campus is named for Belfield House, which Finola O'Kane has suggested, was probably named after a sugar plantation in Jamaica worked by enslaved labour (2020: 150−61). The Berkeley library at Trinity College Dublin whose collections I often consult; Berkeley College at Yale University, where as a student I often ate with friends; and Berkeley, California, where I lived while teaching at the eponymous university were all named for Bishop George Berkeley, an enslaver (see First Scholarship Fund).

Meanwhile, European exploitation of Africa taints many of the buildings I teach, including some glibly associated with social reform. Take, for example, the model garden suburb of Port Sunlight outside Liverpool. Its paternalistic recreation of an ideal pre-industrial village undoubtedly provided a high standard of housing for the workers of its patron, Lord Leverhulme, the founder of Lever Brothers (Hubbard and

Shippobottom 2019; Lewis 2012: 93–153). However, the palm oil used in the soap the firm manufactures originally came from West Africa along trading routes established by nearby Liverpool's slave traders (Sargeant 2011).[1] Beginning in 1910, the company sourced this key ingredient from the Belgian Congo, where it had a subsidiary that relied on forced labour (Lewis 2012: 154–98; Marchal 2008).

Another building I regularly feature also challenges the equation of stylistic innovation with social improvement. Lever Brothers entered the Congo only in 1910, after it had become a Belgian colony. Previously, the Free State had been the personal property of King Leopold II, for whom it was run by Edmond van Eetvelde, who commissioned Victor Horta to build him a splendid house in Brussels. It was completed in stages between in 1897 and 1901 (Dernie and Carew-Cox 1995: 112–29) (**Figure 1**). Because Horta also built the headquarters for the Belgian Labour Party, he is often associated with progressive politics, but Belgian Art Nouveau also benefitted enormously from its ties to a particularly exploitative regime. (Sacks 2017: 116–20; Silverman 2011–2012). The citation for four Horta houses inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000 reads, 'The stylistic revolution represented by these works is characterized by their open plan, the diffusion of light, and the brilliant joining of the curved lines of decoration with the structure of the building' ('Major Town Houses' 2000). Here again, however, lightness was achieved at the price of African bodies and resources, as tropical hard woods imported from the Congo joined locally produced steel in the material palette of this building.

Other ties are less direct but still important. Scholars, including Itohan Osayimwese (2017) and Hollyamber Kennedy (2019), have explored the relationships between modernizing German architecture and colonialism. Casual associations between the two persisted even after Germany was stripped of its empire at the end of World War I. The only worker's housing Ludwig Mies van der Rohe designed in Germany stands on Afrikanische Strasse in Berlin (Eggler-Gerozissis 2001: 206–9). The neighbourhood in the city's Wedding district also includes streets named for former German colonies in Cameroon, Togo, and Zanzibar, as well as one called Windhoek, after the German colonial capital of what is now Namibia. Afrikanische Strasse got its name in 1906, when exhibitions featuring 'wild' African women, men, and children (advertised in that order) from the Congo were staged there (de Sousa 2017; 'Afrikanische Viertel in Berlin'). Although Germany's empire was gone by the time Mies built his housing, the street names remind us of the pride that many Germans continued to take in it across the 20th century and beyond.

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[1] I thank Nicola Figgis for first pointing this out to me.

Figure 1: Hotel van Eetvelde, Victor Horta, Brussels, Belgium, 1895–1901. Photo by EmDee, 2009. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Belgique_-_Bruxelles_-_Hôtel_Van_Eetvelde_-_01.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en).

Bruno Schmitz and Architecture in the United States

Our responsibilities as scholars include not only teaching what is already known but asking tougher questions about how the material with which we are familiar furthers white privilege. In my case this means thinking harder about the connections that bind the commemoration of the Civil War to European nationalism, which turn out to also be tied to efforts by those of European descent to naturalize their ownership of lands wrested away from indigenous inhabitants. These connections provide as well a precedent for the newly discovered relevance, and at time effectiveness, of representational sculpture's role in contemporary commemoration.

In 1889, the year before work began on Monument Avenue in Richmond, the president of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, travelled from Washington to the midwestern city of Indianapolis, where he had earlier served as governor of Indiana. He came for the ground-breaking of the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument (**Figure 2**). Completed in 1902, it towers nearly 87 meters. It was the first Civil War memorial to participate in the new vogue in the United States for the colossal, represented above all by the Washington Monument, dedicated in 1884, and the Statue of Liberty, completed two years later (Grigsby 2012). The former rose to a height of 154 meters; the later to 93. Harrison was adamant that the Indianapolis monument was to all troops from the state of Indiana who had served on the Union side of the Civil War, during which he himself had been promoted to the rank of brigadier general, rather than celebrating a single hero of high rank, as the statues soon to be erected in response on Richmond's Monument Avenue did ('Indiana's War Memorial' 1889).

The Indianapolis monument was designed by a young architect from Düsseldorf named Bruno Schmitz. He had probably been encouraged to compete for the commission by the members of the large German community in Indianapolis. Some of them would have heard of his earlier victory in the competition for the Vittore Emmanuele Monument in Rome, although in the end he did not get the commission to build it (Yeats 2020: 55–64, 278–79).

Schmitz was present for the dedication ceremony in Indianapolis in 1888, and he returned several times to the United States in the years that followed. Although the details of exactly what buildings he saw for himself are not clear, these trips familiarized him with photographs at the very least of the work of the architect Henry Hobson Richardson (Tselos 1970: 156; Yeats 2020: 57). In the last years before his premature death in 1886, Richardson invented an architecture of permanence for a country whose white intelligentsia were, at a time of enormous change, insecure about what they saw as its relatively shallow past (this permanence proved elusive, however, as many of

Figure 2: Bruno Schmitz, Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Indianapolis, USA, 1882–1902. Photo by alexeatswhales, 2014. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soldiers'_and_Sailors'_Monument_ (Indianapolis)#/media/File:Monument_Circle,_Indianapolis,_Indiana,_USA.jpg (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en).

Richardson's buildings were demolished already before World War II). James O'Gorman has noted of Richardson's use of geological metaphors,

> In the Rockies, Yosemite and Yellowstone were natural forms to rival the man-made landmarks of Europe. One manifestation of this idea is the constant repetition of variations on this theme, found in scientific as well as popular literature, that American landforms were substitutes for European monuments. (1987: 94)

In commissions such as the Ames Monument to the transcontinental railroad, completed in 1882, and the modest gate lodge he built for same family's estate in North Easton, Massachusetts, finished the previous year, Richardson used rusticated stone and even loose boulders to imply that the buildings themselves were natural formations (**Figure 3**). This approach also elided the violence needed to wrest these lands away from their original inhabitants.

Figure 3: Ames Gate Lodge, Henry Hobson Richardson, North Easton, Massachusetts, USA, 1881. Photo by Daderot, 2007. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ames_Gate_Lodge#/media/File:Ames_Gate_Lodge_(North_Easton,_MA)_-_general_view.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Admiration for the Romanesque was widespread in 19th-century Germany, and architectural historians have discerned German influences upon Richardson's adoption of it (Curren 2003). During the early years of Kaiser Wilhelm II's reign, its use by German nationalists stemmed in part from the fact that it had been the style of the period in which the Holy Roman Emperors ruled from the territory of the newly united Germany, rather than from Vienna and Prague, cities that at the end of the nineteenth century belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire (Lane 2000: 73–78, 203–28; Mai 1997: 156). Schmitz did not need Richardson's example to master an indigenous German style. Instead, what he learned from Richardson was how to imply that a building, or in his case a monument, had emerged organically out of the local landscape. This in turn embedded the new German nation, created only in 1871, into sites that connected to histories of earlier empires and of victories over the French.

Upon his return to Germany from the United States, Schmitz almost immediately competed successfully for commissions for three of the largest and most prestigious monuments ever erected in Germany; a fourth, finished only in 1913, eventually followed. The first three celebrate Emperor Wilhelm I, who died in 1888, seventeen years after presiding over German unification at the end of the Franco-Prussian war. The Kyffhäuser Monument (1892–96), the Westphalian Province's Monument to Wilhelm at Porta Westfalica (1892–96), the Rhine Province's Monument to Wilhelm at the German Corner in Koblenz, and the Battle of the Nations Monument (1898–1913) in Leipzig (Hutter 1990; Mai 1997; Busch 2010; Yeats 2020) sit somewhat uncomfortably between the historicism of much 19th-century German architecture and the clear break with the past created by early-20th-century reformers such as Henry van de Velde. Although the overt nationalism of Schmitz's monuments foreshadows the scale and scenography of Nazi spectacles, they are distinctly different in both form and political orientation.

Schmitz's monuments are distinguished by three features that did not figure prominently in Indianapolis. The first is the use throughout of rusticated stone that makes his work appear to emerge organically out of the site, which is either located in nature or, if in a city, well away from other buildings. This he clearly got from Richardson. The second is the scale of the free-standing sculptures of Wilhelm I. Here the impact upon him of the Statue of Liberty, which he would have seen as he sailed into New York harbour, is clear. The third are the sculptures that, although executed by others, are integral to the architecture out of which they appear to grow. Many are clearly based upon what were then the relatively recently excavated ancient Mesopotamian statuary from sites like Ashurnasirpal II's Palace at Nimrud in what is now Iraq. Uncovered beginning in 1845, much of this material is now divided between museums in Asia,

Europe and North America, including Berlin, where Schmitz was living (CDLI n.d.). This art historical choice reinforces the geological metaphor in its evocation of what was understood at the time to be some of the world's earliest monumental architecture.

The Battle of the Nations Monument undoubtedly accounts for much of Schmitz's influence in the United States (**Figure 4**). At a height of more than 90 meters, it remains the tallest of all European memorials. It was also the most resolutely modern in the use Schmitz made of reinforced concrete, although this was largely hidden from view by rusticated stone cladding. Lacking the hilltop sites on which the Kyffhäuser and Porta Westfalica monuments had been built, Schmitz here created an artificial mound into which he appeared to sink the monument. He ringed the entire complex, including the large forecourt, with a hillock capped with trees. The apparent integration with nature is thus intensified here, although the landscape is entirely manmade.

Figure 4: Bruno Schmitz, Battle of the Nations Monument, Leipzig, Germany, 1896–1913. Photo by Kel207, 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monument_to_the_Battle_of_the_Nations#/media/File:VölkerschlachtdenkmalLeipzig.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en).

Schmitz's monuments were seen at the time as contributing to national integration. Koblenz was where the Treaty of Verdun, dividing Charlemagne's empire into thirds, had been drawn up; furthermore, his Koblenz site had been a 13th-century stronghold of the Teutonic Knights. The memorial in Porta Westfalica signalled the return of largely Catholic Westphalia to the Prussian Protestant patriotic fold after the Kulturkampf of

the 1870s (Busch 2010: 32–33, 48). Kyffhäuser stands atop a site strongly associated with the medieval Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich I, known as Barbarossa (Mai 1997: 156). And the Battle of the Nations celebrated a joint Russian and Prussian victory over Napoleon, as well as over the local Saxons (Loest 1984). Moreover, the fusion of myth, monument, and art present in these places provided a stage-set for the emergence of new forms of nationalism rooted not only in the experience of particular landscapes but also in the emotions fostered by the way in which Schmitz's structures framed them (Mai 1997: 137–47; Yeats 182–83). This was something that would appeal to architects and artists working in the United States. At the same time, it should be remembered that, as Aruna D'Souza has declared, monuments 'are not a product of consensus but are constructed in order to make manifest the most raw, the most contested, the most partisan declarations of power and strength' (2021: 31). This was particularly true of the Battle of the Nations Monument, which commemorated a battle in which the local Saxons had been defeated, and a form of German nationalism that was being actively challenged at the time by the rise of the Social Democratic Party.

At least three major figures — Frank Lloyd Wright, Bertram Goodhue, and Gutzon Borglum — infused their designs for buildings and sculptures in the United States with lessons absorbed directly or indirectly from Schmitz's Leipzig monument, which Wright probably saw for himself. The range of these works and of their political associations reveals, however, that just as Schmitz put Richardson's geologically infused Romanesque to new uses, so, too, could those who borrowed from him and his collaborators employ what they had learned from him to serve diverse purposes. Although their politics varied, in all cases the intent was at least in part to naturalize white inhabitation of land that people of European descent had begun to occupy in large numbers only in the 19th century.

Anthony Alofsin has documented the impact the sculpture at the Battle of the Nations Monument had upon Wright's approach to architectural sculpture (1994: 127–33). The possible influence of Schmitz's deft siting of it has been overlooked, however. Taliesin, the house Wright built for himself in 1911, represented a bold new chapter in his integration of architecture and landscape (Levine 1996: 75–111). Many of the strategies he adopted here have precedents in Richardson's work, but Wright had not previously used rusticated stone in this way, while the cutting of the building into the brow of the hill is more sophisticated than anything Richardson had done, but very much in the spirit of Schmitz. The implication that the house had emerged out of the hillside supported both Wright's relationship with Mamah Borthwick and his family's ownership of land that had as recently as the 1830s been occupied by Native Americans.

The second house Wright built for Herbert and Katherine Jacobs, completed in 1948, nearly four decades after the first iteration of Taliesin, is best known as a pioneering example of solar design (Jacobs and Jacobs 1979). But the way in which Wright anchored it into the ground goes much further than what Richardson did in the Ames Gate Lodge, which sits on a flat piece of land (**Figure 5**). By this stage in his career, Wright probably no longer consciously evoked the Battle of the Nations Monument. His understanding of organic architecture, and ours in turn of critical regionalism, in which buildings are often visibly tied to particular places, nonetheless remain inflected by the expression of ownership that was by this time assumed rather than contested.

Figure 5: Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House, Frank Lloyd Wright, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 1948. Photo by TheCatalyst31, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_and_Katherine_Jacobs_Second_House#/media/File:Herbert_and_Katherine_Jacobs_Second_House,_northeast_entrance.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en).

Nor was this the only context in which Schmitz's influence could be seen in the United States. Upon his death in 1924, Bertram Goodhue was widely hailed as having been the country's greatest living architect. This was a stature Wright was widely accorded only a decade later. Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol (1920–32) in Lincoln clearly references schemes by the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, who moved to

the United States in 1923 (Oliver 1983). Saarinen's interest in ziggurat-like massing, visible in his 1908 design for an unrealized Finnish Parliament, and in buildings like the Helsinki Central Station, completed in 1909, out of which human figures appear to grow, can in turn be traced back to Schmitz's work in Leipzig (Yeats 2020: 96–98). Moreover, the sculptural program in Lincoln, executed by Lee Lawrie, best known for his statue of Atlas at Rockefeller Center in New York, naturalises the white settlement in the 1850s of Nebraska (African-Americans are depicted only in the context of their emancipation), while acknowledging its former inhabitants (Luebke 1990). One text reads, 'Honour to pioneers who broke the sod that men to come might live'. Another names the peoples whom the so-called pioneers displaced above a bison whose body bears the Navajo text, 'In beauty I walk, with beauty before me I walk, with beauty behind me I walk, with beauty above and about me I walk'.

Finally, the example of Stone Mountain ties Schmitz back to commemoration of the Civil War, but now of the Confederacy rather than the Union. Stone Mountain was originally conceived by Gutzon Borglum, who went on to initiate Mount Rushmore (Shaff and Shaff 1985; Freeman 1997; Hale 1998; Thompson 2022). In 1821 control of the part of Georgia that includes Stone Mountain was wrenched away from its original inhabitants. Plans to place statues of Confederate figures on the face of the mountain were first voiced in 1914. Although Borglum only carved a head of Robert E. Lee, the original conception was his (**Figure 6**). The style of carving on Stone Mountain owed less to Nimrud or the Battle of the Nations Monument than was the case in Lincoln, Nebraska, but the scale of ambition and the integration of historical figures with live rock were almost certainly stimulated by an awareness of Schmitz, with whose work Borglum may have become familiar when he was in Paris from 1890 to 1893 and in London from 1896 to 1901. It is also likely that some of his Georgia patrons had seen Schmitz's work on trips to Germany or became aware of them by reading travel literature. Borglum's outsize ego undoubtedly further enhanced the appeal of working in the manner initiated by Schmitz.

As completed by Henry Augustus Lukeman and others, the figures of Jefferson Davis, Lee, and Jackson on horseback striding across the face of the mountain comprise the largest memorial to the Confederacy, although it lacked the reflecting pool proposed by Borglum that clearly echoed the forecourt of the Battle of the Nations Monument. Stone Mountain was conceived and finished in the context of local outpourings of racist hate. In 1913 Leo Frank, who was Jewish, was lynched in nearby Marietta. Two years later Caroline Helen Jemison Plane, the honorary life president of the Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, approached Borglum to ask whether he would be interested in carving the proposed memorial. In the same year the Ku Klux

Klan was re-founded atop the mountain, where it would rally annually for decades to come. Borglum joined the Klan in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the Stone Mountain commission. The effort to finally finish Stone Mountain was a direct response to the Civil Rights movement. After the state of Georgia acquired the land, the resulting state park was open to the public in 1965 on the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's assassination, with the memorial finally dedicated in 1970 in the presence of Georgia governor Jimmy Carter and Vice President Spiro Agnew.

Figure 6: Confederate Memorial, Henry Augustus Lukeman et al., Stone Mountain, Georgia, USA, 1914–1970. Photo by Diego Deiso, 2009. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stone_Mountain-Georgia-USA0992.JPG (CC BY-SA).

The story of Schmitz's role in American memorial culture, which commenced when he won the competition for an outsize monument to the defenders of the Union, concluded nearly a century later with an even larger Confederate memorial, almost certainly inconceivable without the example of the nationalist monuments he had erected back in Germany using lessons drawn from his American experience. Although more democratically minded architects made arguably less offensive use of the paradigm he established, these examples should cause us to think twice about what architects and their clients are doing when they attempt to create a strong sense of place that denies other people's legitimate claims to territory and to rights, as well

as about the degree to which supposedly site-specific products of nationalism are, perhaps paradoxically, often transnational.
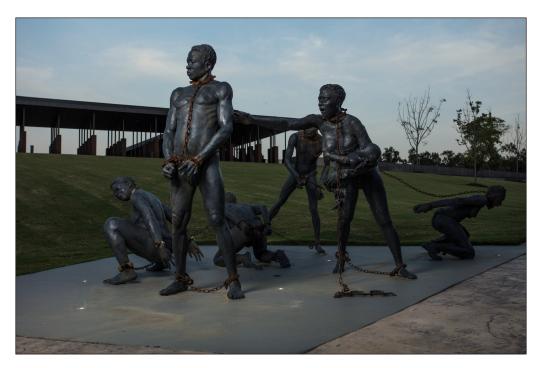
From Counter-Monuments to Figuration?

Finally, the centrality of figural sculpture to recent debates over commemoration challenges historians of architecture who respond to Black Lives Matter by participating in the discussions around the formation of new commemorative environments, to think about the degree to which reckoning with the ways in which Europe has been shaped by enslavement and colonialism may require different strategies than counter-monuments (see Young (1993) for the coining of this term). Although James Young and others, including Andreas Huyssen, understand the approach that Daniel Libeskind, for example, took in his Jewish Museum, as a quintessentially postmodern strategy, its origins lie in postwar juxtapositions of historicist fabric with an Expressionist-infused modernism, as seen in the partial reconstruction by Egon Eiermann of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin (**Figure 7**) (Young 2002; Huyssen 2003; Kappel 2007; James-Chakraborty 2018). Developed to commemorate German suffering, after German reunification this relatively abstract strategy was subsequently applied in the construction of buildings and monuments that acknowledged the crimes of the Third Reich.

But if monuments matter, so, it turns out, do bodies. A powerful source for the abstraction of many of Berlin's memorial landscapes was the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., designed by Maya Lin and completed in 1983. Lin's monument is anchored in her appreciation of land art but also, quite crucially, of the imprint the Hopewell Mound culture left on the Ohio landscape in which she grew up (Min 2009: 198−99). While the completely conventional statues eventually added to it contribute little if anything to its emotional impact, the situation is quite different at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, commissioned by the Equal Justice Initiative and designed in collaboration with MASS Design Group (**Figure 8**). The memorial itself appears abstract but in fact is didactic in much the same way that Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin is. Inside the building is a display of soil samples from counties in which lynchings took place. Outside, Kwame Akoto-Bamfo's statue is intended to remind visitors of the tribulations of slavery; another sculpture by Hank Willis Thomas references contemporary police brutality (Cotter 2018). Here the presence of the human figure is integral to a memorial to the many Blacks who were lynched in the United States, often for crimes they did not commit. Substituting the human figure for the shards of a shattered past that have long been juxtaposed in German memoryscapes with visions of a utopian future may possibly provide a means of acknowledging the pain that runs through the cities that many of us inhabit.

Figure 7: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Franz Schwechten, and Egon Eiermann, Berlin, Germany, 1895, 1961. Photo by GerardM, 2004. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gedächtniskirche1.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Figure 8: National Memorial For Peace and Justice for the Equal Justice Initiative, MASS Design Group, sculpture by Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, Montgomery, Alabama, USA, 2018. Photo by Equal Justice Initiative, n.d. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1htiFnna-Iq4Lw0qux2KpCjYPZVc4zcGk/view?usp=sharing. With permission of the Equal Justice Initiative.

While this in turn may prove to be an important step on the way to building a more equitable future for ourselves and our students, representing such violence may simply re-enact it (Alexander 2004: 175–205; Baker 2015: 94–108; D'Souza 2018; Wilson 2020). Christina Sharpe has argued that 'in the face of Black people's continued eviction from the category of the human, we should not mistake the erection of the monument or memorial for repair, or for the end horizon of something like justice or the fulfillment of something like liberation' (Sharpe 2021: 27). She continues:

No matter the intention, every monument or memorial to atrocities against Black people already contains its failure. Because they are projects of reform and not radical projects, they do not imagine new worlds. They stage encounters. But for whom? Who is the subject seen to be coming to terms with an ongoing brutality imagined as past and then reimagined as an aesthetic project? Who are the subjects imagined as witness and participant in the encounter, and who is imagined by being moved by the encounter and to what end? How is such movement facilitated or inhibited by its architectures? The monument or memorial is a staged encounter in which the terrible grammars of the past, though disrupted, still remain.

Whether or not figural representation is the direction in which commemoration should head in the case of acknowledging slavery and lynching, it has certainly been effective in other European contexts. I first became cognizant of the power it can still have in another context, that of the fight to legalize abortion in Ireland. A single photograph of the married Indian-born dentist Savita Halappanavar up-ended the terms of the debate (James-Chakraborty 2016: 138–52) (**Figure 9**). Halappanavar died of sepsis when miscarrying a wanted daughter, because the doctor treating her would not abort the non-viable foetus as long as it had a heartbeat. Putting a beautiful, demonstrably middle class and implicitly neither Catholic nor Protestant face on a discussion that had previously been focused on images of foetuses was transformative.

Figure 9: Mural of Savita Halappanavar, Dublin, Ireland, May 2018. Photo by Zcbeaton, 2018. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Savita_Halappanavar_mural,_Dublin.jpg (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en).

Not all of the few monuments to European culpability for the slave trade and for colonial exploitation of Africa take a figural approach, however. The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, for instance, in Nantes, France, completed in 2012, is clearly a counter-monument (**Figure 10**). Although low ceiling heights are intended to recall the cramped conditions on slave ships, its purpose is made clear, not so much through

the forms nestled into the quay along the Loire river, but through texts, a strategy supplemented by a public path lined with information boards on French abolitionism that links the memorial to a permanent exhibition on the slave trade in the city's history museum. Visitors read that the memorial, designed by Krzysztof Wodiczko and Julian Bonder, 'stands in the public space as a reminder to prevent repression of the facts, concealment and forgetting. It is a call to be vigilant in the face of the contemporary forms of slavery in France and in the world' (Musée d'histoire de Nantes). Along the way, they also pass plaques that draw attention to the many ships that set out from Nantes to participate in the lucrative trade, while signage identifies local buildings erected with the profits of these expeditions.

Figure 10: The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Julian Bonder, Nantes, France, 2012. Parcours méditatif. Le Mémorial de l'abolition de l'esclavage. Nantes © Jean-Dominique Billaud — Nautilus/LVAN. Copyright: Jean-Dominique Billaud — Nautilus/LVAN, Nantes.

Statues of Blacks are also beginning to populate Europe's cities in ways intended to encourage pride rather than reproduce suffering. A case in point is La Vaughn Belle and Jeanette Ehler's 'I Am Queen Mary' erected in 2018 in front of the Danish West Indian Warehouse in Copenhagen; fundraising continues for a permanent version in bronze. Its creators note that it was 'timed to be unveiled in the centennial year commemorating the 100th anniversary of Denmark's sale of the Virgin Islands to the

United States' and 'challenges Denmark's role in slavery and commemoration of its colonial history by centring the stories and agency of those who were brought to the Danish West Indies and demonstrates how artists can be leaders in this conversation' (I Am Queen Mary). Particularly notable here is the emphasis on female empowerment at a time when most historical rather than allegorical figures in public space continue to be male. A generation after abolition, Mary Thomas was one of the women who in 1878 led a revolt in St. Croix against the working conditions of former slaves and their descendants. Her pose here is clearly inspired by an iconic photograph of Black Panther leader Huey Newton, taken in 1968 by Blair Stapp, although the weapons she holds are derived from a 19th-century print.

Those of us engaging in the creation of new commemorative landscapes must be ready to move beyond established paradigms. We must also recognize that having a commitment to building more inclusive societies includes a willingness to work with those whose tastes may differ quite radically from our own. Whether or not we personally choose to enter into these discussions, however, we face the challenge of supporting such societies by paying more attention in our scholarship and our teaching to the relationship between the exploitation of Black bodies and the built environment. This includes admitting how iconic buildings from which we have derived considerable aesthetic and intellectual pleasure are nonetheless expressions of cultural, economic, and political systems that have encouraged or profited from such exploitation. These stories are moreover too important to stay buried on the shelves of university libraries and the pages of peer-reviewed journals available only through online subscriptions. They need to be integrated into basic survey courses and into public outreach that furthers awareness of the degree to which all Europeans have, if often unwittingly, benefitted from these legacies. This can be one small step towards ensuring that Black Lives Matter.

Author's Note

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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