

CONFRONTED MONUMENTS: NEW ROLES FOR HERITAGE IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL DISAGREEMENTS

Monumentos confrontados: nuevos roles para el patrimonio ante los desencuentros sociales

Monumentos enfrentados: novos papéis do patrimônio diante das desavenças sociais

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Intervention of the statue of Francisco I. Madero, work of the author Javier Marín.

Photograph taken during the march on 8 March 2020 in Mexico City. Yúmari Pérez, 2020

ABSTRACT

The attacks on monuments —street art¹, mutilations, being brought down— that have been seen around the world recently, cannot go unnoticed by heritage academics. It is a phenomenon that heralds the obsolescence of ideas and theories adopted so far on heritage and its conservation. Throughout this work, reflections are made about heritage as cultural heritage, explaining how commemorative monuments differ from historical monuments, a topic that comes under the limelight when talking about museification and petrification of heritage. To give context to this phenomenon, three attacks on monuments are addressed the march of November 8th, 2018 in Santiago de Chile, when people brought down statues in the US and England within the Black Lives Matter movement and the #NoMeCuidanMeViolan movement, in Mexico. The reflection considers the motivations behind these actions against heritage, the reactions of hegemonic groups and, more than anything, the resignifications and redefinitions that are taking place or could take place, as a result of all this, about cultural heritage.

Keywords: monuments, cultural heritage, restoration theory, social movements, memory

RESUMEN

La agresión a monumentos —pintas², mutilaciones, derribos—, que se han visto recientemente en todo el mundo, no puede pasar desapercibida para los estudiosos del patrimonio. Es un fenómeno que anuncia la obsolescencia de ideas y teorías adoptadas hasta ahora sobre el patrimonio y su conservación. A lo largo del trabajo se reflexiona en torno al patrimonio como herencia cultural, y se explica cómo los monumentos conmemorativos difieren de los monumentos históricos, un asunto que adquiere centralidad cuando se habla de museificación y petrificación del patrimonio. Para situar este fenómeno en la realidad, se abordan tres situaciones de asalto a monumentos —la marcha del 8 de noviembre de 2018 en Santiago de Chile, el derribo de estatuas en EUA e Inglaterra dentro del movimiento Black Lives Matter y el movimiento #NoMeCuidanMeViolan en México—. La reflexión es en torno a las motivaciones que llevan a estas actuaciones sobre el patrimonio, a las reacciones que se generan de parte de los grupos hegemónicos y, más que nada, en cuanto a las resignificaciones y redefiniciones que se van dando o pudieran darse, a partir de todo esto, sobre el patrimonio cultural.

Palabras Clave: monumentos, patrimonio cultural, teoría de la restauración, movimientos sociales, memoria

RESUMO

O ataque a monumentos —pinturas, mutilações, demolições— recentemente vistos em todo o mundo, não pode passar despercebido aos estudiosos do patrimônio. É um fenômeno que anuncia a obsolescência das ideias e teorias até então adotadas sobre o patrimônio e sua conservação. Ao longo da obra, é refletida sobre o patrimônio como patrimônio cultural, e é explicado como os monumentos comemorativos se diferenciam dos monumentos históricos, questão que adquire centralidade quando se fala em museificação e petrificação do patrimônio. Para colocar este fenômeno em realidade, três situações de assalto a monumentos são abordadas —a marcha de 8 de novembro de 2018 em Santiago do Chile, a demolição de estátuas nos Estados Unidos e na Inglaterra dentro do movimento Black Lives Matter e o movimento #NoMeCuidanMeViolan no México— o último é tratado de forma mais extensa. A reflexão gira em torno das motivações que levam a essas ações sobre o patrimônio, das reações que se geram por parte dos grupos hegemônicos e, mais do que tudo, quanto às resignificações e redefinições que estão ocorrendo ou que poderiam ser atribuídas a partir de tudo isso no patrimônio cultural.

Palavras Chave: monumentos, patrimônio cultural, teoria da restauração, movimentos sociais, memória

1 We use the word street art throughout the text to refer to free painting, considered illegal, that is made on the surfaces of properties and sculpted monuments located in public spaces. In some countries, this is a synonym of graffiti, murals and tags.

2 Utilizamos a lo largo del texto la palabra pinta para referirnos a la pintura libre, considerada ilegal, que se realiza en las superficies de inmuebles y monumentos escultóricos ubicados en espacios públicos. En algunos países es sinónimo de graffiti, pintada y rayones.

INTRODUCTION

Monuments are, essentially, elements that safeguard the past to pass on a message to the present. Their role is to prevent yesterday from being crushed to dust as time goes by, keeping a sense valid in the now, while adding an inherent aesthetic, so that the idea of beauty is transmitted by rocks and metals and that they teach society about the past. However, there is a moment where these qualities of the monument itself change their meaning for society and questions arise about their relationship with this heritage. The issue of why this "now monument" was created, in another time and society, needs to be constantly raised to face the current social settings and their problems, to validate its meaning and sense of identity or become an object and subject of the manifestation of discontent.

This metamorphosis in the society-heritage ties is manifested in many of the monuments that form part of the urban setting, in the public space, which from a point of view of political philosophy are associated with the *public sphere* or the coming together of people that oversee the exercise of power and speak out about matters concerning common life (Delgado, 2011), as this allows a space of generalized visibility. The aggression against heritage as a means of protest for the injustices each nation endures is not something new, but it had not been triggered with the power and manner that was seen in the last year.

It has been seen, in these forms, that heritage plays a new role, becoming an event, by the acts in themselves, or a background that acts as a support to make the demands expressed by those seeking this visibility, evident. This use of heritage also becomes a limiting factor to communicate the legitimacy of protests, because of the way the official media presents these events. The dilemma is where to lead this discourse, to the middle ground or to the radical extremes. For that reason, it is worth questioning what the meaning of heritage is and where this meaning comes from, to reflect whether there is a new role taken on by monuments, and if they can be considered useful artifacts to state, present and make the messages emerging from today's societies, evident.

HERITAGE, MONUMENTS, AND HISTORIC MONUMENTS

The meaning, scope, interpretation, and limitation of heritage are matters for permanent discussion which are being grounded in changing positions, seeking to adapt to the prevailing winds of the social situation.

It is said that heritage is intrinsically linked to the more pressing challenges humanity is facing, since a collective representation is sought through it, which compels questioning what the ideals of this representativity are, who are presenting and limiting them, what heritage is and is not and how it can be used. Cultural heritage is a means of social cohesion, that can be used in some societies as a political tool, as social recognition and as an element of combat, used to build and resignify identities. But, what happens when this memory is no longer important, when it falls by the wayside and thus the memorable artifact stops being a means of identity, a sign of belonging?

Heritage, as it is known, is a polysemic definition that acquires particular meanings depending on the setting it is used in. For UNESCO, the organization that works as an international forum for the discussion and dissemination of education, culture and science, cultural heritage is simultaneously a product and a process "that provides societies with a flow of resources that are inherited from the past, created in the present, and transmitted to future generations for their benefit" (2014). Under this dynamic concept, distant from the rhetoric of nostalgia for the past, it is possible to understand heritage as a means and, at the same time, as a living process, contrasting with views that insist on characterizing it as something immovable. The proposal is to move towards another conception of cultural assets, whether tangible or intangible, to stop seeing them as vestiges of a time gone by that have to be conserved in an alleged ideal model, and much less when we talk about

living manifestations, that are continuously reproduced in a concurrence of permanent formation.

It is through significant heritage manifestations that people remember and recognize their belonging to a social group and a community; although cultural identity is not just one, but rather multiple, and always relational and contextual, that is to say, dynamic and procedural (Marcos, 2010). Heritage, a kind of social symbology to uphold and pass on collective memory, is formed by the representative assets of each society. And it can be said that these heritage assets hold a triple dimension: physical, social and mental, namely, material and symbolic.

The word *monument* and the acceptance of *historic monument* refer more to a stratified idea of cultural assets, they precede the current concepts of heritage. In the 19th century, and still even in the mid-20th century, the notion of *monument* would refer to material assets of the past that deserved to be preserved. Françoise Choay, in her emblematic book, *L'Allégorie du patrimoine*, presents the direct relationship that monuments have with memory, which she identifies with its Latin root: *monumentum*, derived from *monere*, to notice, to remember. Thus, the monument can arouse, through emotion, a living memory, an invoked and summoned past. In the end, it is any artifact that helps a community remember itself so that the future generations remember people, events or beliefs; it acts on the memory, mobilizing it from affectivity; it evokes a past that far from being just any past, it is one that has been chosen with vital purposes, in the means that it acts to invoke the identity of a community (Choay, 2007).

Alois Riegl, in his already hundred-year old work, *The Modern Cult of Monuments*², focused on establishing the difference between monument and historic monument. The first one he defined as an intended creation, that arose looking to satisfy certain practical needs or particular ideals. Meanwhile, the historic monument is an unintended creation (Riegl, 1903). Following the Rieglian theory, Choay agrees in the characterization of the historic monument: "it has not been initially wanted (*ungewollte*) nor created as such; it becomes so a posteriori, from the converging views of the historian and aficionado who choose it from the mass of existing buildings where monuments represent a small part" (2007).

Regarding the conservation and durability of *monuments*, the same author talks about forgetting, disinterest and obsolescence, which end up leading to their disappearance. She also refers to the voluntary, negative destruction, which occurs for religious, political, or ideological reasons. In contrast, historic monuments, despite or perhaps because they are assumed as such by imposition and a posteriori, receive other guarantees for their conservation and permanence: "On the contrary, in the means it is inserted in an unchanging and definitive place in the objectified whole and immobilized for knowledge, the historic monument demands, following the logic of that knowledge and, at least in theory, its unconditional conservation" (Choay, 2007). This idea is useful to approach a first explanation of why the deliberate aggression towards certain historic monuments causes so much consternation: it is perceived as an unacceptable act, because it unnerves the certainty that historic monuments are immutable lasting assets, historic references of an objectified past, whose existence is conditioned to their own material integrity.

Questioning the exemplary and petrified idea that heritage is often characterized by, it is somewhat uncomfortable for the majority, and also for hegemonic groups and, for specialists of the past or for broader sectors of society, that see in those monuments a means of identity. At all times, the ruling is the almost unidirectional conservation. This is an issue that causes exaltation, as cultural heritage permanently and in infinite circumstances is presented as being

2 This work was published in 1903. In it, the definitive concepts and principles about monuments are summarized, as they were understood in the 20th century.

in danger of disappearing, creating great concern: tourism, urban development, mercantilism, widespread media, among others.

Nowadays, heritage should be thought over; not just as a State-imposed hierarchical structure, but rather as cultural heritage that does not necessarily need to be protected, but as one that should be understood from its initial sense, an element that represents society of a period, but also of what it has gone through. It is in this way that the values deposited in heritage cannot be permanent and unchanging, and now less than ever; when it is constantly given new meaning due to the great influence of tourism, trade, migration and mass media (Arizpe, 2000).

In this way, the monument seeks to be cultural heritage, starting by bringing together exceptional values and collective identity, that are fixed in a material matter. This connection forms part of cultural identity, that can be defined as a set of values, traditions, symbols, beliefs, and forms of behavior that act as cohesive factors in a social group (González-Varas, 2014). These traits, to continue in the present, should be linked as an ideological concept in current society, but in this process of association "the re-reading and resignification of history and memory decisively intervene" (González-Varas, 2014), which initially work to form a national doctrine, but also have an influence in the identities of marginalized groups which, in some cases, start to become the majority. It is in this moment that the symbolic meaning of the monument may lead to confrontation.

CULTURAL HERITAGE FACING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In recent times, aggression towards heritage assets, particularly historic monuments, arises as an ever more widespread globalized phenomenon, as part of acts of protest of given social groups which have been wronged by the State. Certainly, in many cases these are acts of vandalism, but there are other aspects to which attention must be paid, trying to understand them in their basis rather than the form, before making the go-to opinion that these behaviors are wrong.

The media coverage of these events follows a pattern that tries to emphasize the street art and threats to the integrity of the monuments, instead of reflecting and reporting the reasons behind the event. Headlines like, for example: "Street art on historic monuments are an attack on everyone, said Gutiérrez Müller (Revista Proceso, August 27th 2019)"; "Neglect, street art and hawking jeopardize the cultural heritage of Oaxaca" (El imparcial, July 31st 2019); "Social uprising: Marches, vandalism and destruction in Chile demanding Sebastián Piñera resigns (Miami Diario.com, November 10th 2019)". These headlines and their content also prefer to focus the reader's attention on the visual effect, disregarding other aspects that, from a viewpoint of human rights, are more transcendental: the demands of a society, the reasons behind the march, the demands pointing to abuse and injustice.

This is a phenomenon that has been growing around the world, with greater clarity in America and Europe. Possibly there is no longer a country that does not have street art and destruction on and to its *historic monuments*. This is an outcome of globalization, a process which, as García Canclini explains, is based on neoliberalism, which tries to globally and uniformly impregnate all spheres of social, political and cultural life of current societies (2009), with regrettable outcomes for the wellbeing of an immense majority of citizens, who are left marginalized in poverty and excluded from social welfare. The social standoffs are one of the results of the neoliberal system we live in. Economic inequality and thus, social inequality, are present in the everyday life of our contexts. How do we protest? How do we get the hegemonic groups and leaders to turn around and see the discontent, the abuse, the violence? From people marching naked to slogans written on walls and floors or sculptures being brought down, the citizens' demands seem to have more weight where they are more visible and become more meaningful, on many occasions their connotation is clearly provocative.

THREE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS CONFRONTING THE MONUMENTS

Figure 1

Fire at Pedro de Valdivia University.
Reuters 2019.



Among the many protests that have attacked monuments, ones that have been multiplying in recent years, we have chosen three that we will present and discuss below. Two of the movements that we will speak about are particular to the Latin American context: Chile and Mexico; and a third arose in the USA, with a special kind of echo in other Anglo-Saxon countries. These consider three widely known, recent and iconic movements regarding attacks on monuments as a result of social movements. We will not go into great depth on their description or characterization, nor it is interesting to reconstruct the events, since what is sought is understanding this phenomenon from the conceptualization of cultural heritage and its conservation, as well as from our point of view, as social players. Far from agreeing with the painting and other adverse actions against the integrity of cultural assets, or with any other act of violence, what is looked for is starting a discussion that endorses building positions that, as a union and society, lead us to question the role of heritage in the context of today's conflicts, possibly setting out new notions and definitions thereof and the new role these could have or that they already have in today's societies. The comfortable and functional idea that heritage is a source of identity, recognized and meaningful for all, is in crisis.

In Chile, on October 18th 2019, a social uprising was sparked, by a profound discontent among Chilean citizens, triggered by an increase in Metro tickets, which shed light on feelings of abuse, arising from an economic model that does not create a fair society. On Friday November 8th, a march gathered in Plaza Italia, located in Santiago de Chile and, despite there being many joyful people, acts of vandalism like looting returned; the campus of Pedro de Valdivia University, in a heritage building built in 1915 was also set alight [Figure 1]. The Rector of UPV, Rafael Rosell, reported that the place was vandalized from the afternoon onwards and he lamented in a video about what he interpreted as a "gigantic loss" for Chile and for "Chilean higher education", which in his words violated "the right" to study. In this discourse, it can be deduced that the authorities guilefully use the idea that heritage means and matters equally for everyone, as if the loss of a building would mean the violation of the right to education that, said in passing, was the main issue in the protest.³

This march fostered the citizens pleas on the streets, demanding conclusive profound changes in areas like health, education, and pensions. In the graffiti, one could read "remove the bourgeois press", "stop lying", "it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years", demands captured both on heritage buildings and on government buildings. In this case we must ask ourselves, is there a sense of appropriation of cultural heritage, or is this the best canvas to protest because more minds are reached, because it touches more people, and if not, it surely makes them more uncomfortable. Nobody will make graffiti, street art or destroy the façade of their own home to complain, they would do it to their opponent. Does it then mean that protesters do not see these buildings as their own? Does their label as heritage assets say nothing to them? Do they interpret them as representations of the State and its policies? Do they see them as a sign of the inequality they are suffering?

According to news reports, from the start of the social uprising in Chile through to January 2020, 329 monuments were damaged, especially in Santiago and Valparaíso, sculptures in streets and squares used as canvas for the demands: "The works almost disappear behind the dozens of markings, spray-painted murals or attached elements". In La Serena, a city to the north of Santiago, the protestors burned and brought down a sculpture of Francisco de Aguirre, the Spanish 16th century conquistador; to place on the same pedestal a sculptured bust, using provisional materials, of an indigenous Diaguita woman, who they called Milanka.

In another context, the bringing down and mutilation of sculptures has been the main manifestation of the *Black Lives Matter* movement, which gained

³ <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/333079-perdida-gigantesca-incendio-universidad-chile>

Figure 2

The statue of Edward Colston having been brought down is thrown into the river, in Bristol, England. Photo: Ben Birchall/Press Association, via Associated Press. New York Times 2020.



great strength after the murder of the African-American man George Floyd, on May 25th 2020, at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis. Once the videos of the shameful criminal act became public, widespread protest began. People talk about up to 26 million Americans heading out to the streets. This is the largest movement of the history of the United States (Larry Buchanan, Quoctrung Bui and Jugal K. Patel, 2020). A few days later, on June 7th in Bristol, England, the bronze statue of Edward Colston, a 17th century slave-trader, was brought down and thrown into the river. After this, dozens of statues associated to slavery and colonialism were decapitated, brought down, or burned. In the United States, on the day to commemorate the end of slavery, another wave of protests against racism took place, painting and bringing down the statues of the country's founding fathers [Figure 2].

Finally, the feminist movement #NoMeCuidanMeViolan (#They-Don'tLookAfterMeTheyRapeMe), which has caused great commotion in Mexico and has stood up and confronted the status quo that defines cultural heritage, which is assumed as untouchable and which everyone must respect. The first march of this movement took place on August 12th 2019 in several cities across Mexico, and four days later a second march was held, which brought thousands of women onto the streets in Mexico City to protest against gender violence and the abuse they have endured from authorities when they ask for help. This march had as a distinctive element, the throwing of pink glitter and paint onto monuments located on public streets. During the protest, the Column of the Angel of Independence was covered with phrases like "Femicidal Mexico" and "It will not fall, we'll bring it down" [Figure 3]. A day later, the Column was closed off and its surroundings boarded up. The Capital's Government and the Federal Culture Secretariat informed the beginning of restoration works for structural damages caused by the 2017 earthquake as the reason behind the closure and boarding up, a maneuver that clearly sought to remove visibility to the protest and its consequences.⁴ The press, both the more conservative and the liberal press, built up a discourse where women were no longer the victims but the aggressors, vandalizing the heritage. The march had included blocking off Insurgentes Ave. and breaking the windows and painting Insurgentes Metrobus station, but nothing was condemned more than the graffiti on the Column of Independence.

Figure 3

Graffiti on the Column of Independence during the march of August 16th, 2019, in Mexico City. Photograph: Santiago Arau (2019, courtesy of the author via Twitter.



4 El Universal published the headline "Angel is being closed for restoration, not because of the graffiti. The restoration of the main monuments of Mexico City coincided with the graffiti made during the "No me cuidan, me violan" (They don't look after me, they rape me) protest, Suarez del Real clarifies, the following day."

REFLECTIONS

The attacks on monuments in these three cases arise amid different contexts and for different reasons. An overall reflection about them helps understand and confirm the wear and tear that ideas about heritage that States, academia and a large part of society up until now had been adopting, have experienced. It may be that these concepts had never acquired the stability needed to face such drastic swift changes like those current societies are experiencing.

In the case of Mexico, the Column of Independence, colloquially known as the *Angel*, is one of the most emblematic monuments and sites of the Mexican capital and has been used for a long time as its logo. It is transformed, when necessary, into a place for festivities of all kinds, political rallies or protests and forms part of the Mexico City "brand", which just like other cities of the world is built under a commercial approach. In this idea, Mexico City adopted some years ago, the emblem "una ciudad con angel" (a city with angel literally, a play on words with angel also meaning charismatic).

"The Angel", just like other contemporary commemorative monuments, at the time of its inauguration (2019) was imposed with an idea of nation, starting from a selective past and it was defined as a *historic monument*. Considering this, it has become an objectified, petrified asset, whose conservation and permanence started to be unquestionable and greater than any other social interest or need. Among other options, the protest chose the Angel as the target of aggression on being a relevant artifact for everyone, in one way or another it could be described as a provocation, a daring act that broke through what was supposed to be untouchable.

As Enrique Florescano explains, the heritage of a nation is not a given fact, but rather a historic construct that involves the interests of the different classes that make it up (1997). It is because of this particular artificial nature of national heritage that the strategies to define it, conserve it and broadcast it commonly fall within an act of simulation, as if the classes and social and ethnic fractures and of other types did not transcend heritage and its historical prestige and meaning (García Canclini, 2009). And not all heritage assets are significant for everyone, although this may be sought, because in fact these are different and unbalanced means of social appropriation.

The attitudes and positions that highlighted and criminalized graffiti on the Angel are proof, paradoxically, that heritage is an artificial creation, an imposition and instrument of homogenization. Among other statements, that of Beatriz Gutiérrez Müller, the honorary president of the Consulting Council of the new National Historic Memory Coordination and wife of the current President of Mexico stands out: "It may be the case of the greatest injustice in world history, but that building or that door is everyone's heritage. Therefore, this is an attack on everyone, regardless of how fair or valid the protest is, whenever it may be, whatever century it is." (Proceso, 2019). The same thing happened in Chile, regarding the destruction of the sculpture of Francisco de Aguirre, the conquistador. The official line fell into the discourse of heritage as being a representative asset of one and all: "As an Institution, we regret the damage to the heritage and monuments. These are public common property that are part of a collective legacy, history and memory that is undrawn or lost" (El Día, 26-10-2019), where the basis of the matter, the legitimate demands are distorted and it offers, in itself, a literal rhetoric: the destruction of a historic, imposed and artificial monument, signifying a past that today is repudiated, to install in its place, an allegorical object, that reclaims the idea of monument in its original sense: that of commemoration and memory that is of interest for

Figure 4
 Statue of Christopher Columbus located in Christopher Columbus Park in Boston, Mass. US, decapitated by the "Black Lives Matter" movement. Photograph: Joseph Prezioso / AFP / Getty Images.



a social group. What is the problem? Why did bringing it down cause so much commotion?

It is worth asking the extent to which the destruction of this and many other sculptures can really transcend the fight against racism and the underlying colonialist thinking in broad social sectors, although it is undeniable that their removal is implied in a reconstruction of the political history of every nation, given that any statue-monument placed on the streets or squares of a city cannot be interpreted in the simplicity of an ornamental object, but rather as linked to the political thinking of those who installed it, and its material permanence is conditioned to the validity of that thinking and the possibilities of its overthrowing.

We ask then, can a monument be revalued, from certain interventions? It can even be talked about with a before and an after, with the monument itself being a factor to provoke change. It assumes a process and a result, as it is simultaneously a production, a transmission and a reproduction process. The destructive actions that many statues have experienced could even be seen as interventions that reinvent and resignify the historic monument: decapitated heroes, pedestals with names and historic events that have nothing on them, sculptures covered with slogans. These new sculptural versions can be connected to the concept of counter-monument, created by James Young regarding those monuments that look to remember crimes and genocides (1992); it seems that some are taking on this role. [Figure 4].

Facing all these events and the confusion and uncertainty they provoked, the Glitter Restorers movement in Mexico must be highlighted. While conserving their critical and supportive position with the female victims, they released a proposal. This movement appeared regarding the street art on the Column of Independence. It is a group formed by almost 600 female architects, historians, art historians, archaeologists and experts in heritage restoration, who issued a communique to ask authorities to not remove the graffiti until attention had been paid to the gender violence problem in the country. Among their arguments, the high social, historic and symbolic relevance of the street art stand out, providing the possibility of a change in the discourse, differentiating the art from the reports, which should be documented in detail by professionals, in order to emphasize and keep alive the collective memory about this event and its causes. Their proposal includes requesting their professional colleagues to not take part in the removal of street art, until the Federal Government implements the actions needed for the solution, that is to say, guaranteeing the safety of women in Mexico (Restauradoras con Glitter, 2019). This group came to be, to a great extent, due to the strong media trend that focused on the street art and not on the basis of the demands, despite their message: "both the columns and the pedestals were left painted with messages against sexual violence and chauvinism". The group says that the street art is a justified sample of desperation on facing the systematic inaction to resolve violence that women suffer and that, in this case, happened with the legitimate appropriation of a symbol in a desperate moment.

Governments, as Thoreau mentions, are the means chosen by the people to carry out their will, although they are likewise susceptible to causing abuse and harm before the people can intervene (2014), which is why in the reactions against social injustice, it can be said that the true error is not reacting. Given that heritage is a representation of the institutions and, therefore, the State, this has been interpreted and used as a means to communicate the demands of injustice, because what is desirable is not growing a respect for the law, but for justice, men first and citizens second

Figure 5

Generalized claims during the feminist protests and marches in Mexico City, where it is noted that the life and integrity of women is more important than the monument, statue, or wall. Also, the intervention of the statues of Francisco I. Madero, work of the author, Javier Marin, who on Instagram stated: "Good! That's why it was installed without a pedestal, so that the 'Father of Democracy' was part of the social and democratic protests. Hopefully, it will be left like that, as testimony of this protest." Photos: Twitter 2019 and Yúmari Pérez, 2020.



(Thoreau, 2014). Therefore, it would be unthinkable that the notions and relationships about and with heritage were fixed and beyond the demands of society.

Sectors of contemporary society no longer seem to be identified with the intentions of the past, at least not for those who have not been privileged by it. We must bear in mind that not all monuments are about history, but rather about a given version of history. The value the monument itself has to keep memory and the presence of the past alive in the present can come into conflict if it is not accepted or if its acceptance is controversial. The controversy that this type of actions against the heritage causes, premeditated or otherwise, is so strong that it goes beyond what could be reached. It is for this reason that the reflection and discussion of the role of heritage in the social disagreements of today is forced. [Figure 5].

The importance of the cultural heritage of a community, of a people or of a nation, or thinking that it is possible to act against its integrity without confrontation arising, cannot be denied, but the fact that these transgressions occur, which are mainly collective acts, contradicts the ideals of the current State, calling to understand that the norms or principles holding these up are no longer valid for society, or at least for a part of it. Probably, if after all these disagreements, progress is achieved in human rights and civil matters, these interventions will be remembered as historic. The documentation and records of the demands, when analyzed and interpreted, will become the material needed to build a society where cultural heritage played a transcendental role as the active leading actor of a determining moment.

The social uses of heritage go hand in hand with the transformation processes of society and its players can make changes in their materiality and thus convert the cultural assets into resources. Depending on the temporality, social meanings change, as the heritage models operate as culturally-created symbols that are susceptible to manipulation (Marcos, 2010). It is because of this that it can be thought that the monument in this new stage of life, should be a social recipient, a space of new appropriations, where the protest takes place, where traditional methods of conservation have a space and a new meaning, like the slices of prospection and registry of the

art, so that these are presented as focalized messages, that permanently form part of the monument's history, reassuming this commemorative value that they were created for, as a new layer that helps facilitate the memory or avoid oblivion.

Finally, we must then remember that the conservation of monuments, by public or private institutions, is a phenomenon that is part of modernity (González-Varas, 2014:17), which is why the institutional position, from academia and conservation, is essential to interpret and intercede in these issues. We understand that this is not a simple matter, and we are not so ambitious as to provide a solution when the civil protests cross with cultural heritage, but we do wish that these topics, although they cause misery, are managed, as these are real scenarios we have to face. It is necessary to have a supporting view, so that this heritage, in its active role, in its dynamic process, in the conversation it has as part of society, can be handled from a horizontal point of view and more than as specialists, as members of society.

We leave the door open and the invitation to rethink heritage, not in a binary manner, but rather as the actor of change, with its intervention perhaps being the path towards the transformation of society. That this is not an empty act so that all monuments end up this way, but rather a reflection about the appropriation of our heritage.

“Let the walls say what society silences”.

Popular saying

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