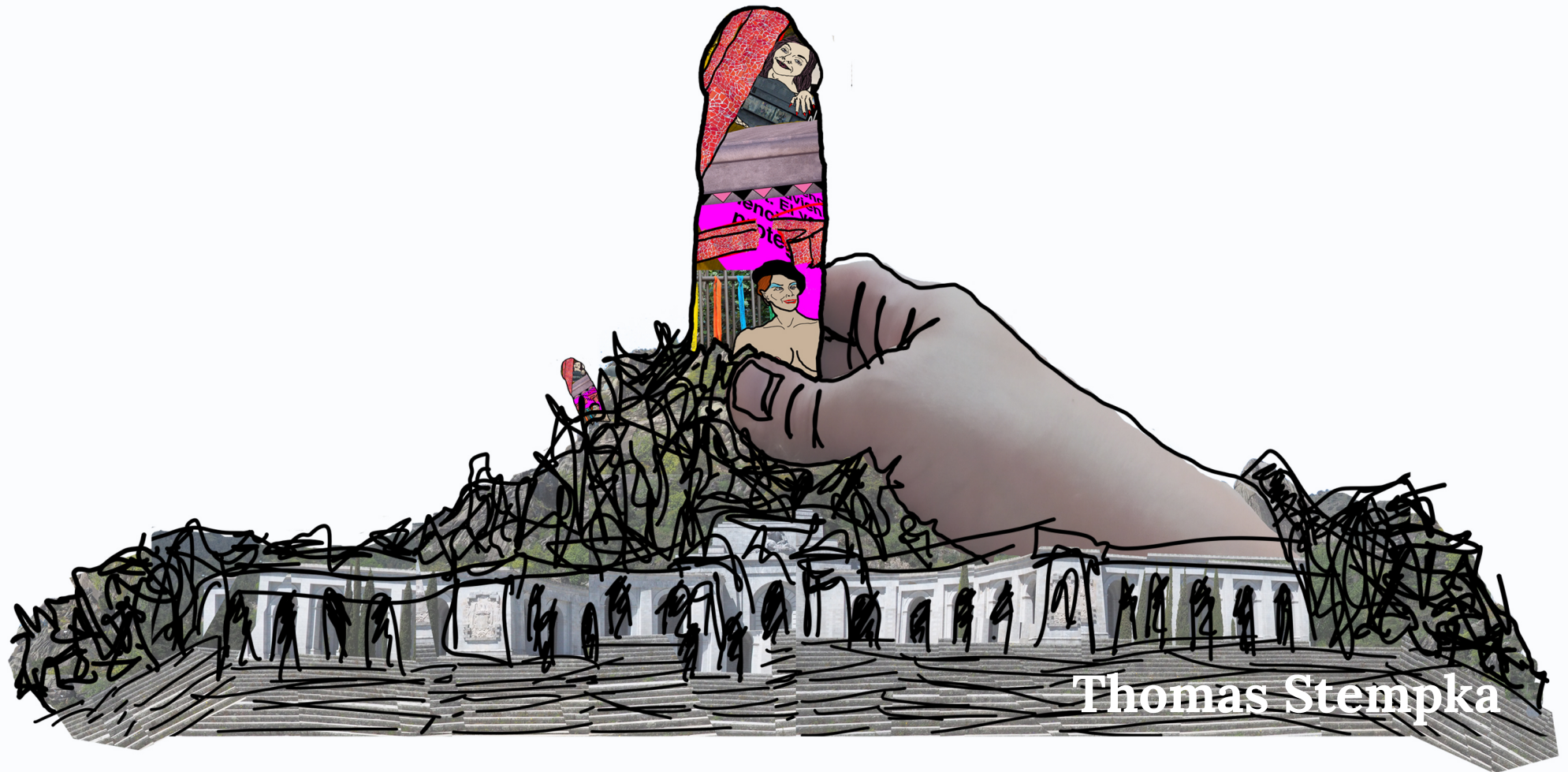


Queer Erections:

**Counter-Monuments
for the
Counter-Culture**



Titel: Queer Erections: Counter-Monuments for the Counter-Culture

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Abstract

In the last decade, we have started to re-examine the questions posed by Post-War German artists and designers as they looked toward a new standard of building monuments with a post-modern perspective. With a special look at LGBTQ+ Monuments in Europe, this project looks to define principles of “queer design” and how to apply them to projects meant to reinvigorate Gaixample – an historically gay neighborhood in Barcelona’s Eixample district. Using Visionary Architecture and Anti-Design as starting points, the aim is to create a series of “modern monuments to diversity”. Three possible approaches to design (Designer as Creator, Designer as Provocateur, Designer as Catalyst) lead to six urban design interventions which engage with LGBTQ+ history and experiences. It is said that a modern monument is a paradox, and the prevailing winds are pushing back on the need for such structures, but the aim of Queer Erections to showcase how valuable monuments can be in contemporary society.

Keywords: Queer, Monument, Urban Design, Public Art

Abstracte

Durant la darrera dècada s'ha començat un procés de revaluació de les qüestions plantejades pels artistes i dissenyadors alemanys de la postguerra que intentaven crear un nou paradigma per construir monuments amb una perspectiva postmoderna. Amb un especial interès en els monuments LGBTQ+ a Europa, aquest projecte busca definir els principis d'un “disseny queer” i com es podrien implementar en projectes amb la intenció de revitalitzar el ‘Gaixample’ – un barri històricament ocupat per la comunitat gai a l'Eixample de Barcelona. Treballant a partir de l'arquitectura visionària i l'antidisseny, s'intenta crear una sèrie de “monuments moderns a la diversitat”. Tres possibles visions del disseny (Dissenyador com a Creador, Dissenyador com a Provocador, Dissenyador com a Catalitzador) donen origen a sis intervencions de disseny urbà que interactuen amb la història i l'experiència LGBTQ+. Es diu que el monument modern és una paradoxa i les tendències del pensament contemporani disminueixen la necessitat d'aquestes estructures, però l'objectiu de Queer Erections és posar de manifest la importància d'aquests monuments per a la societat contemporània.

Paraules clau: queer, monument, disseny urbà, art públic

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INTRODUCTION

Faggot. Maricón. Dyke. Tranny. Queer. Words that have historically been weaponized against the LGBT+ community. Bile that most members of the Community have had thrust upon them by strangers walking on the street as they walk to grocery store. As a queer man in his 30's, I have heard these names shouted, whispered and embodied in fists thrown my way throughout my life. As deplorable as these attacks are, they are, unfortunately, a way of life for many in the LGBT+ community. Over the years, some of us have reappropriated these terms, wearing them as badges of honor, flying in the face of intolerance and hate. I was raised in a fairly-tolerant part of the United States, studied fine arts and design in Austria, and worked/loved/traveled/exhibited my art across South America, the US and Europe over the past decade-and-a-half. In these travels I had, at times,

curbed my natural predilection of dressing and acting in a way many have described as flamboyant. I have been taunted and physically assaulted on three different continents, in essence, only for being that which I am. Quite a bizarre line of attack, if you are an empathetic human being. I share these personal tidbits not to play a victim or ask for pity, rather, assert that they are as much a part of my personal lived experience as my 2-meter-stature and ability to sleep for 14 hours on command. Create from what you know, I have been told over my years of education: well, this work is the culmination of such lived experiences.

In March 2021, I was given the opportunity to work on a project with a group of colleagues from my MBDesign program funded by Barcelona Activa (an arm of Barcelona City Council) to re-activate the neighborhood of Esquerra de l'Eixample. An historical neighborhood bordering the Ciutat Vella (old town – current center of Barcelona), Esquerra de l'Eixample is known for its modernista architecture and engaged citizenry (earning it a spot as Time Out's "#1 Coolest Neighborhood in the World" in

2020¹ (only to be left off for 2021, oh the tastemakers). It is also home to Gaixample (Catalan for “gay” + Eixample), a corner of the neighborhood which has been the focal point for the LGBT+ community in Barcelona since the 1990s (this barri is further described later in this work). The overreaching goal of this project was to invite young designers to re-imagine the planned pedestrianization of this neighborhood, called Superilles². My artistic and design works have recently been oscillated between public space and the idea of queer design. With these new urban constructions, I found a perfect laboratory to test out my designs. After brainstorming with members of ACEGAL (LGTBIQ Chamber of Commerce) and our group of students and professors, we decided to split up the work into thematic groups. I was presented the idea to work on urban monuments to diversity. An open-ended task to be sure. The mere thought of building monuments in 2021, can seem rather archaic.

Over the past couple years, we, as a society, came to the conclusion that the mere idea of a monument is quite

¹ Duñó, Borja. “L’Esquerra de l’Eixample es el mejor barrio del mundo del 2020.” Time Out Barcelona, 13 Oct. 2020.

passé. Historical markers for cultures and times gone by. No place for such structures as we bravely march towards better days. Honestly, as I took on this project, my inner iconoclast yowled: “MONUMENTS ARE DEAD! TEAR DOWN THE LOT OF THEM!” An enigmatic melange of my transient lifestyle and general partiality to disorder, I ignored this inner voice and took many a long walk through the streets of Barcelona to clear my head. As in every large, historical city, monuments are everywhere you look. Surrounded by overgrown bushes, situated in the hustle and bustle of a shopping street, skipped over by people in business attire on the way to their meeting or stoically presiding over a quiet square, monuments followed my every step as I paced across this asphalt circus. Plaça d’Espanya playing the classic role of MONUMENT most obviously. Not only an inhumanely proportioned traffic circle, it takes shape with a central fountain, flanked on all sides by other monuments: the Venetian Towers, the former Plaza de Toros de las Arenas (currently used as a shopping mall) with the regal Palau Nacional (home of the MNAC museum) perched on

<https://www.timeout.es/barcelona/es/noticias/lesquerra-de-leixample-es-el-mejor-barrio-del-mundo-del-2020-100620>.

² for more information, see: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/superilles/en/>

Montjuic looking down upon its comrades in monumentality.

While such ostentacious designs are rather tedious and overplayed throughout Europe, it is impossible to ignore such creatures of concrete. Visual slaps across your face screaming for attention. On my strolls across the many ramblas in Barcelona, it was not only the brutish monuments which caught my eye, yet also the more humanely scaled (and life-giving) Font de Canaletes water fountain at the head of La Rambla. Tradition dictates that if you drink from this fountain you will return to Barcelona. It also serves the central celebration point for the FC Barcelona fans. The inner iconoclast may have a want to destroy, but there is a sense of whimsy and genius loci associated with the most touristy monuments in a city. Even the smallest water fountain or gaudiest historical war monument in a forgotten neighborhood of the city can serve as a meeting point, a point of reference for locals.

Traversing Barcelona, slowly striding past monuments small and large, wet and dry, painfully descriptive and painfully abstract, it was hard to not appreciate their power and potential.

Growing up near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (site of the bloodiest battle in the US Civil War, occurring in 1863), the word “monument” for me conjures up images of costumed men giving dramatic readings of war speeches next to large iron sculptures of soldiers on horseback. Naturally, these are based on gigantic marble plinths. An avid reader of history, I often associated monuments with the past tense. Places people died. Places where buildings once stood proud. Places to remember. This is where my inner iconoclast reared its head once more, yet, this time, full of curiosity. Why do you associate monuments with the past? Why can't you have a monument to the future? To something more abstract? Do you need a metal plaque with a name and date to make a monument?, it asked me. These questions would linger and soak into my psyche as I traversed the city. Now coming from a more phenomenological perspective, I let my imagination run wild. That couple sitting on a bench across the street from me on Carrer de Sants, wildly arguing, seemingly for the last time ... the bench on which they sit is no longer a bench after today, it has transformed into The Breakup Bench. The bench where their relationship fell apart. A monument to their own demise.

Becoming aware of this new, hyper-personal approach, the idea of a monument stopped being something historical, something stale, something dead. A normal object imbued with the stories of its users. To most people passing by, it's just a bench, but to that couple, and me, the witness, it is an integral part of their Barcelona life: a monument.

Musings of a flaneur, I digress! Back to the business of this proposal for Barcelona Activa!

Armed with this newfound appreciation for the idea of monuments, I excitedly sat in front of my laptop eagerly awaiting the next meeting to discuss the project at hand. After a couple productive rounds of meetings and learning what ACEGAL was all about—it aims to promote commercial activity in the area with a particular concentration on raising awareness for the LBGT+ community, including facilitating the PRIDE Barcelona celebration – my mind began to swirl. It was impression that they were thinking of a landmark-esque monument, but my mind swirls became mind knots: imagining how I could twist and subvert this wish for Instagram-friendly structures. Talking with commercial stakeholders in the neighborhood and mixing my personal knowledge of the area (having many friends in the area and having visited many of the establishments over the last 10 years of visits

and residencies in Barcelona), I decided to tackle this idea of creating modern monuments for Gaixample, put to imbue any such designs with the idea of not just being queer monuments, but embodying the ideas and experiences of queer.

Calling upon my travels around the world, especially as a proud queer being, I started to dream about what kind of monuments I wished to see as I visited cities. Beyond mere objects, items which created more questions than they answered. Not just to make you remember, rather to you look around at the current situation. Structures to pique your interest and haunt you for days, wondering why they existed. No more random-frozen-men-on-horses-going-nowhere-while-waving-flags on marble-pedestals-dwarfing-pedestrians, of that much I could be sure.

Monuments from a human perspective.
Monuments in a slightly obscure
sense of the word.
Monuments subverting past definitions
Monuments to activate spaces.
Monuments to showcase queer existence.
Monuments to actively question
their own existence.
Monuments as strategy.
Monuments as tactics.

Look around, the world has enough monuments.

The world needs counter-monuments
for the counter-culture.

The world needs queer erections.

Placing Monuments

A Brief History of Monuments

“The very notion of a modern monument is a contradiction in terms: if it is a monument, it cannot be modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.”

- Lewis Mumford³

Well, I guess that sums it up. It's impossible.

Lewis Mumford, noted architectural critic for *The New Yorker* in the early 20th century, wrote this acerbic quip well before the current rush to deny monuments their

³ Mumford, Lewis, “The Death of the Monument”, in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 266.

due process. Holding this quote as a truism, all monuments must be historical in nature. Let us forget about the time space continuum and the fact that he wrote this in 1937, thereby making it no longer modern, thereby excusing all “modern monuments” from 1937 because they would now be considered historical in 2021. Helmets on, seat belts strapped, time for a time traveling overview of nothing less than the history of man-made monuments since the beginning of time.

The word monument is often tied to the term memorial, that is to say, something that commemorates/ memorializes a person/place/thing/ideal. The word itself comes from the Latin word “monēre” which means “to remind”⁴. Although little is known about the specific purposes of ancient monuments, many of the first ones were thought to be of religious significance or used for funeral purposes. The Great Pyramids of Giza are perhaps the most well-known monuments, built as tombs for their pharaohs, and used as sites of worship. With the advent of tools in the Bronze and Iron Ages, such structures

⁴ American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. S.v. “monument.” Accessed 13 Sep 2021 from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/monument>

were given more detailed forms, as stones could be carved more delicately and simple tools were used to move much larger rocks, such as the Talaiotic monuments on Menorca [see fig 1].



Fig 1: Talaiotic Monument on Menorca, Author's Image [photograph] 2021

With time and technological advances, monuments began to take on more societal importance. Normally built of metal or stone, these were structures and objects meant to last. Notable figures in history and battles/wars were

the most used subjects for centuries. Linguistically, monumental is used to describe something of great size or importance. The Eiffel Tower, as an example, was built for the World's Fair of 1889, to showcase newfound abilities in construction with iron and steel. Its original purpose was a fair attraction, but it has reached the level of a monument, symbolizing the city of Paris.

This is not meant to be comprehensive overview of all the monuments in the entire world, rather a look at some specific movements within the world of monument-building that changed the perception of what monuments are. We all know what men on horses and heroic stances next to water fountains look like, but I am more interested the why we build monuments. In my native United States, we do not have the thousands of years of historical monuments which exists Europe. Most of our monuments were built to beautify streets and plazas, giving a sense of space. Yes, there are generally some historical ties between subject and place, but by and large we built monuments to be monuments: to show and display a very specific narrative, which can be read as means to *remind* who has the power.

Monument Lab, an organization based in Philadelphia dedicated to studying the importance of monuments, released their "National Monument Audit" in 2021. They

define a monument as “a statement of power and presence in public...Monuments are not endpoints for history, but touchstones between generations.”⁵ They completed an exhaustive list of 48,178 monuments in the United States. Abraham Lincoln (President during the Civil War) has the most statues in his honor with 193. There are 4,528 monuments dedicated to men, while only 274 to woman. And of these female sculptures, 23 are mermaids, that is to say, mythological women.⁶ Thirty three percent of all monuments commemorate wars, but only 9% veterans of the wars. These numbers in general tell us that American monuments “represent white men, glorify war and conquest and distort U.S. History.”⁷ This is not just a problem in the United States, of course. Western Europe is saddled with questionable historical truths and lies made of marble and bronze.

The following pages will shed some light on monuments which dare(d) to break the mold of what a classic monument entails. As we look to the future, and our

⁵ Farber, Mobley, Allen. “Monuments Must Change,” in *National Monument Audit*, Monument Lab, 2021, 4.

⁶ Brockell, Gillian, “America’s 50,000 Monuments: More Mermaids than Congresswomen, More Confederates than Abolitionists,” *Washington Post*. 6 Oct 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/10/06/public-monuments-audit-mermaids-confederates/>.

society becomes more aware of historical and contemporary oppressions, will we continue to speak the same sculptural language as our ancestors? Monuments continue to pop up all around us, and hopefully with a more inclusive grasp. Will we learn to go beyond memorializing those who created the power gap? How should we memorialize those left out of history’s spotlight, the forgotten minorities that history has typically overlooked? Will we only move forward by removing and rewriting these built narratives? If it is indeed impossible to build a modern monument as Lewis Mumford states, perhaps it’s time for us to plan for *future* monuments. The only way forward is to look to the past, so we’ll jump to the first important break with Classical Monument History: Post-War Germany.

⁷ “Monuments Focused on White Men and War Distort History ...” *Philanthropy New Digest*, 5 Oct 2021. <https://www.philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/monuments-focused-on-white-men-and-war-distort-history-study-finds>.

Counter-Monuments

or: How Post-War Germany Learned to Question the Pedestal and Love the Void

The sunken fountain is not the memorial at all. It is only history turned into a pedestal, an invitation to passersby who stand upon it to search for the memorial in their own heads. For only there is the memorial to be found.

- Horst Hoheisel⁸

After the War to End all Wars (WWI), it did not take us humans much longer to start blowing each other up on a scale never seen before (again). After cleaning up the rubble and resumption nation-building, the idea of guilt seemed to stick around longer than before. No longer was

⁸ Horst Hoheisel, "Rathaus-Platz-Wunde," in *Aschrottbrunnen: offene Wunde der Stadtgeschichte* (Kassel, 1989) quoted in James E. Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory" in *Harvard Design Magazine*. Fall 1999.

is it a sense that the "good guys" beat the "bad guys", but a real reflection and inspection of what happened during the war. Nowhere was this as clear as Post-War Germany. The site of some of humanity's most voracious atrocities, concentration camps and genocide galore, the Holocaust presented us with quite the conundrum. How do we memorialize something on this scale? Should we even try? There were infinite design competitions to concretize this sense of loss: memorials, museums, reconstructions. In a country full bombed out cities and a scarred landscape, the future was obviously on the horizon, but no one could imagine what would appear after the smoke cleared. Germany was faced with a seemingly impenetrable wall of existential angst. As James E. Young asked, "How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis, whose rules, does a nation remember its own barbarity?"⁹ Memorializing the victims were the culprits themselves. Quite the predicament.

In Kassel, central Germany, these questions were being raised while attempting to redesign the main square. The

⁹ Young, James E. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today" in *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 1992, 270.

Aschrott-Brunnen (Aschrott's fountain) was the focal point of the town before the war [fig 2]. Being designed by a Jewish artist, the Nazis cleared it, removing the vestiges of Jewish Kassel from the public's eye. It remained a hole in the ground for four years until locals filled with earth and flower, nicknaming it "Aschrott's grave"¹⁰. Horst Hoheisel, a local artist, was chosen to head a design of a new fountain in 1984. One of the first truly counter-monuments to take shape, Hoheisel proposed a negative-form monument. Flipping the pre-existing fountain upside down, this new sculpture used the design to pierce the ground "as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens – so that such things never happen again"⁵ [fig. 3]. The final design included running water, a sunken fountain, separated from viewers under an iron gate and glass floor. The visitor is left to look down at this new visible scar in the town, partially reflected back in the glass. No longer were people expected to look up at the grandeur of a waterjets gleaming in the sunlight, this counter-monument brought a much darker, *real* experience.

¹⁰ Young, "The Counter Memory," 288.

Gone was the fantasy of yore, these new monuments would force us to look inside ourselves instead of being gobsmacked by history.

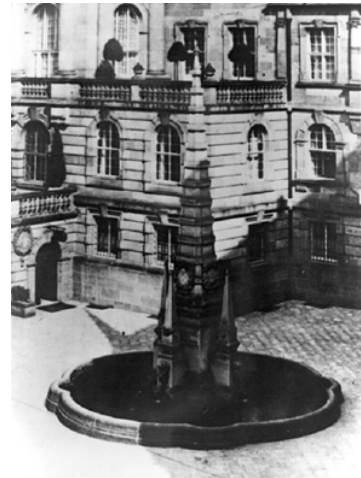


Fig 2: Aschrott-Brunnen (pre-war)
Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies,
University of Minnesota [photograph]
1908



Fig 3: Eistreter, Aschrottbrunnent Monument completed [photograph] 2009

Shortly after Hoheisel's negative-form monument, Jochen and Esther designed their *Gegendenkmal* (Counter-monument) for the city of Hamburg. As if poetically intertwined, it was unveiled in 1986, the same year as Hoheisel's negative-form fountain. Joachen Gerz said at the time, "What we did not want was an enormous pedestal with something on it presuming to tell people what they ought to think"¹¹. It was meant to be a "Monument against Facism, War and Violence - and for Peace and Human Rights". Historical concepts of monuments would be again thrown out, replaced by a more nuanced, reflective view of what a monument could and should be. They wanted to remove the idea of a monument as a fascist object dictating actions of the people. Using a concept we in the 2000s would market as Participatory Design, the Gerzes designed a twelve meter high-one meter square pillar in the middle of a pedestrian shopping mall in the suburb of Harburg [fig 4].

We invite the citizens of Harburg and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day, it

¹¹ Young, "The Counter Memory," 274.

will have disappeared completely and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.

- Jochen & Esther Gerz¹²



Fig 4: Monument Against Fascism, War & Violence. P.C.- Archiv, Hamburg, Manhnmal [photography] 1986

¹² Gerz, Jochen & Esther quoted in Young, "The Counter Memory," 276.



Fig 5: Gerz Monument sunken into the ground. By Diagram Lajard [photograph] 2011 .

Citizens were invited to write their names on the pillar in solidarity, and seven years later, the entire structure would disappear [fig 5], lasting only in the memory of those who took part and in pictures. At least that was the plan. Instead the pillar became a center for graffiti, and at times, fascist slogans and neo-nazi writings of hate.

¹³ Gerz, Jochen. "Monument against Fascism." Jochen Gerz. Accessed 13 Aug 2021. <https://jochengerz.eu/works/monument-against-fascism>.

There was a debate whether it should be cleaned or left, but the Gerzes were adamant that it stay untouched by the designers, allowing it to be a reflection of the people. A striking pillar that ended up a non-descript square that reads "In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice."¹³

This work mocks not just the idea of a monument, but taunted the populace. Giving them a choice of adding to the pillar with messages of hope, scratches and nonsense filled this Monument against facism. Quite telling of our society and perhaps it says more about us than any standing monument good. Surely the shame is that the monument is now underground and can only be experienced in books and writings, but the Gerzes' work, in my eyes, remains one of the most powerful and thoughtful reflections on how monuments should look, how they should act and how we should remember them.

With Horheisel's sunken fountain and the Gerzes' disappearing pillar, we were given to similar yet different

approachest to reimagining the monument as an entity. Historical monuments before were rather cut and dry, winners and losers would be entombed in stone, remembered in figures and symbols, like a children's book. The story was there, you just had to read the beautifully carved/pressed plaque to know the story. If it was fancy, you would have a tasteful water feature to placate the viewers. These post-war German had a much more intellectually critical approach. These two are just a sampling of Holocaust (counter) Monuments across Germany. Bringing the artistic notions of void and performance to designing memorials (no surprise that they were conceptual artists as opposed to trained architects), they started to merge the world of visual arts and design.

To be sure, they had their detractors, as many people love their tried-and-true gallant-man-on-marble-horse, but they lead a change to challenge such classic notions. Of all the questions zee Germans were raising, what would happen next? After we bury and disappear the monuments, what do we do to remember? My inner iconoclast jumped for joy at reading about Hoheisel's 1995

proposal for the redesign of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, symbol of the reconstructed capital (the competition would later be given to Eisenmann and his concrete slabs). How to best make a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe? Blow up the Brandenburg Gate. More descriptively, blow up the gate, spread its dust all over the site and place granite slabs over it. Entombing the past.¹⁴ Provocative to be sure, but after more contemplation, even my inner iconoclast thought it to be a tad too violent. Lover of blowing things up that I am, sometimes, an olive branch must be offered. Violence begets violence.

That being said, twenty years later and we are maybe just coming around to realizing how prophetic Hoheisel's Berlin approach would be....

¹⁴ Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine*

Damnatio memoriae:

21st Century Monuments

After the slate of holocaust memorials in Germany questioned what monuments should represent, how they should look and what they should do for the community, a new wave of existential monumental drama would appear in the 2010s. It may have been long overdue, but 150 years after the US Civil War (1861-5), we Americans started to really examine and question the granite figures parading around our streets and boulevards. As a product of the US education system in Pennsylvania (just above the Mason Dixon Line which divided the Northern states from the Southern states), our national history was jammed down our throats. Aside from a smattering of months learning English and French history (with some Nazis thrown in for good measure), we mostly learned strictly about our own continent: the colonies, the American Revolution, westward expansion, Civil War,

Reconstruction and stopped at the World Wars. We spent three years learning about the Civil War/Reconstruction period, so one would think we would have a decent grasp on the history and importance of this period. My comrades in the South learned an entirely different curriculum.

When I was 9 years old, I was on a road trip with my parents to Florida. We made a stop at Bubba's BBQ in Columbia, South Carolina. As the youngest, I was given the money and told to get some sandwiches to go to fuel us for the rest of the trip. When I entered it was like walking into an episode of the Twilight Zone, I was surrounded by Confederate flags and mini statues of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee (two famous generals from the Confederacy) were sold for \$5. Next to these strangely proportioned plastic figures was a small bookshelf. "The War of Northern Aggression", "Honest Abe Wasn't Very Honest", and "The Modern Confederate States of America" were being sold for \$0.50. When I walked up to the counter and placed the order for mouth-watering delights of a slow roasted honey mustard vinegar-marinated pulled pork sandwich (with extra pickles and coleslaw on top), I was greeted with "The Little Yankee wants 4 Honey Mustards to go!". Up

until that point, I had traveled many states in the Northeast and Midwest United States, but never in the Deep South. I had only learned the basics about the Civil War (North = good, freedom lovers & South = bad, slave owners), but this experience had such a profound impact on me, here I am writing about it 25 years later in my Master thesis.

I only had \$1, so I snatched up two books, and the cashier told me, very stoically, “Now you learn the truth about this country.” I ran to the car, sandwiches and books in hand, and told my parents about what just transpired. They laughed and told me, we’re not in the north anymore. We may not have the centuries and centuries of empires that Europe has, but at least Pennsylvania is one of the “historical” states of the US, with plenty of historical buildings and monuments telling the story of young nation. As I said before, I grew up some miles from Gettysburg, PA, site of the bloodiest battle of the Civil War. In my high school, we had an after school: “Civil War Club” in which students (aged 13-18 years old, mind you), dressed up in wool coats and re-created the Battle of Gettysburg four time per year on the actual battlefields in Gettysburg. Hundreds of thousands of spectators visit this small town for the 4th of July, Labor Day and

Memorial Day to watch these battles take place in one of the largest National Parks in the US. There are 1,328 monuments, markers and memorials in the Gettysburg National Military Park [fig 6].



Fig 6: Monument on Gettysburg Battlefield. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.

I have visited this park numerous times as a child in school, and as an adult when I visit my parents, as it is a rather majestic 20km bike ride over small hills in and out of small towns and battlefields (which are ironically beautiful fields of wild flowers these days).

As years passed and I learned more about the North/South divide in greater detail, I would go on more trips to southern cities such as Richmond, Virginia and Savannah, Georgia. I would take special note of the amount of Confederate soldiers and generals which still protected their parks and plazas in even the smallest town. Reading deeper into this divided history, I was surprised to learn that most of these monuments were built not during the Confederacy by the states governments', but by a group called Daughters of the Confederacy. Its members are descendants of Confederate soldiers, and between 1900 and 1950 they erected around 500 monuments to the various Confederates.¹⁵ That is, to say, a half century *after* the South lost the Civil War.

While monumental sites like Gettysburg make sense to me, it's a site of important battle and there are equal

¹⁵ Breed, Allen G. "The Lost Cause': The Women's Group Fighting for Confederate Monuments." *Guardian*, 10 Aug 2018.

numbers of Northern/Southern monuments, and it's Federal National Park, when you walk down Monument Avenue in Richmond, it's another story. Richmond was the capital of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. After the war, Monument Avenue was built to honor those who fought for the South. The US Civil War is much too complex to tackle here in detail, but its effects on race relations in a unified USA still exist. While they never fully said as much, it's common knowledge as to why the Daughters of the Confederacy built their statues: to show that even though they lost the physical war, their "culture" still lives on. Large numbers of descendants of African-American slaves left the South in the early 1900s, as the Klu Klux Klan (a horrifically violent white supremacist group) and other radical conservative groups took hold. These were sculpture and monuments meant to scare and terrify those who stayed, taunting them: *You may be free, but you are not welcome here.*

Back to the BBQ! As I visited Columbia, South Carolina in 1996, Bubba's BBQ was not just a roadside pitstop full of southern delicacies, rather it was a monument itself. A monument to the failed insurrection against the US. As a 9 year old, I knew how fucked up this was. For many of us

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/aug/10/united-daughters-of-the-confederacy-statues-lawsuit>.

in the US, the Confederate flag is a symbol of treason and hatred. It is commonly used by openly racist and white nationalist organizations, but it protected by many in the South as “just part of our culture, Honey, pay it no heed”.

Obviously if a 9-year-old from the suburbs of Pennsylvania could sense something was off, these misgivings spread throughout the American populace for decades. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, protest began to spring up across the US. While there have been many smaller protests over the years, this one moved at a much larger and quicker pace. Partly due to the well-organized group Black Lives Matter, cities small and large in the US began to have daily protests objecting to the recent racist, deadly actions of American police officer in a number of slain African-Americans. The numbers of protesters grew, and often took place in plazas which were named for / included statues of notable slave-owners/Confederates. In Richmond, the largest protest took place on Monument Avenue, were Richard E. Lee’s statue (man riding his horse upon a marble plinth, surprise!) was covered in graffiti [fig 7].

Numerous statues on Southern college campuses and cities were attacked by protestors and started to fall, or disappear into the night by local governments that wanted to pre-empt any destruction. It started against

current racial inequality, but there was a new thirst to tear down monuments large and small. Confederate soldier were beheaded across the United States, and Columbus would also see the anti-colonial sentiment strike many of his monuments (though more Columbus statues would survive, as his misdeeds are maybe too far in the past to really feel today for most Americans).

So, the horses no longer stood over our towns and plazas. Those glistening marble and bronze men of yesteryear were nowhere to be found, what next?

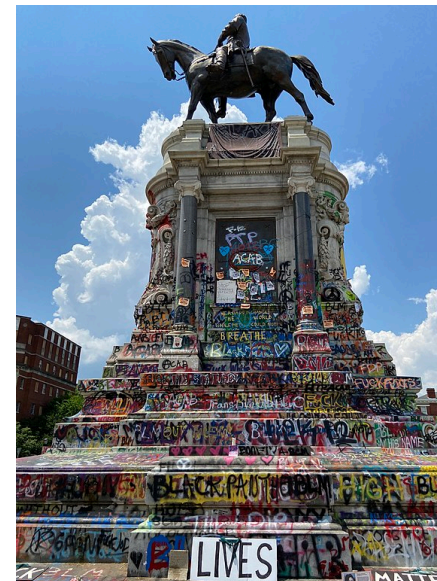


Fig 7: Robert E. Lee statue covered in Graffiti . By Mk17b [photograph] 2021.

The spark that the US initiated started to flare up across the world: in Bristol, England Edward Colston went for a bath in the River Avon and King Leopold II would see his reign overlooking Brussels come to an end 200 hundred years after he seized Congo and would become responsible for millions of deaths. Even in Barcelona, the proud Catalans felt compelled to remove Antonio López, noted slave trader, from a prominent plaza in the Gothic Quarter. The mixed signals about the removal were clear in Barcelona, when the statues removal was *celebrated* with a marching band, children’s workshops and a firework show.¹⁶[fig 8,9].



Fig 8: Comedians performance at Antonio Lopez statue's removal. By Barcelona City Hall [photograph] 2018.



Fig 9: Empty Plinth. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.

¹⁶ Acn. “Barcelona Removes Slave Trader Statue.” Catalan News, 5 Mar 2018. <https://www.catalannews.com/society-science/item/barcelona-removes-slave-trader-statue>.

Some more conservative proponents call this quest for destruction historical revisionism: “You’re destroying history! Someone please save these random-men-on-horses!” The removal of slave owners and other flavors of awful human beings is hardly equivalent to the Taliban’s destruction and removal of the Buddhas of Bamiyan (6th century religious statues which were found incompatible with the Taliban’s “modern” religious teachings and blown up with dynamite) [fig 10].



Fig 10. *Buddha of Bamiyan - Before and After*. Berghe Vanden and Marco Bonavoglia. [photograph] 2005

While there must be something said for retaining aspects of history, humanity has been around for a long time and fought just a couple wars over ownership of various parts of this spinning rock. I do not presume to be the one to say which statues can stay and which should be go (no single person does), but it seems that if a general consensus says that a specific monument is found offensive, breeds hatred and causes people to protest, let them eat cake! Off with their (marble) heads!

We say “to the victor go the spoils” and frankly it is a rather understandable point. We humans are not known for our rational feelings after we win a battle. Even the “noble” Northern US soldiers became famous for Sherman’s March to the Sea (one of the first examples of “scorched earth” or total war – cities, infrastructure and farms were burned to ash to break the South’s spirit). It is unlikely that Savannah, Georgia would build a sculpture to Sherman for burning most of the city to the ground.

To any reader of history (that discounts most of the population), these actions are not anything new, nor can they be controlled. Changing cultures and tastes prevail, and our cities and monuments adapt to new times. We

can discuss and theorize all we want, but no amount of books on the importance of keeping historical records will quench society's thirst for ACTION NOW!

Back to that earlier question though: what's next?

Not in a strictly existential manner, but what comes next for these empty plinths? Do we leave them empty? Empty tombs, turning them into a new kind of monument – a monument to an empty, forgotten cause, reminding us of our own failed histories? Do we replace them with ... other men (women and nonbinary folk) with or without horses? A crowd-pleasing, colorful abstract sculpture, thereby running away from the issue at hand?

This is exactly the question which American artist Ada Pinkston raises. Since 2016, Ada has examined the importance of monuments in today's society. Before the heads and horses started to roll in 2020, she was performing on plinths across the United States [fig 11].

¹⁷ Mosley, Tonya and Allison Hagan, "Artist Ada Pinkston Asks 'What Would a Monument to All People Look like?'," *Here & Now*, WBUR, 3 Aug 2020,



Fig 11: Performance of Ada Pinkston's *Landmarked II*. Chris Chapa. [photograph] 2019.

She muses that “you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tools,” she says. “So when we're thinking about the concept of creating counter-narratives, I don't think it makes sense to think about another static object”.¹⁴ Ada speaks of her own actions, “All of these public performances and interventions are an example of embodied monuments,” she says. “And I literally am thinking about the ritual of connecting the past and the present.”¹⁷ Her take on the future of monuments is one that is voted on yearly, in constant flux and can be remelted and 3-D printed according to the

<https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/08/03/artist-reimagines-monuments>.

whims of the people.¹⁴ All reasonable demands, but in the face of omnipresent historical monuments surrounding us, it can come off as naïve. A utopian, democratic ideal since it should “include everyone” and be designed “by everyone”. Humans being humans, do we really think this will work? Maybe I am showing some of my more imperialistic tendencies (I curse you, my Prussian ancestors!), but part of what makes a monument and memorial so powerful is that it is permanent. A monument that is built and melted each year can be powerful – but just the act. A monument to the idea of a non-monument (counter-monuments, I see you smiling). But when if we were build a monument/memorial to a very concrete instance in history, for example, making a memorial for victims of racial injustice, would we rather have something akin to Montgomery, Alabama’s National Memorial for Peace and Justice Garden [fig 12] or a sculpture designed by a 10 year old who won a popularity contest ?



Fig 12: National Museum for Peace and Justice - Rise Up by Hank Will Thomas
By Buster-7 [photograph] 2018

Extremes, to be sure, but these are important questions to ask. As I’ve mentioned previously, I am iconoclastic on a molecular level, but I remain aware of the larger picture. If we follow Ada Pinkston’s ideals and exchange one statue with her democratic, temporary 3-D printed object, and on the same street are 10 other granite and bronze people on animals... which comes across as

important? From a very simple perspective if we jump on the train to democratize and oversimplify the idea of designing monuments to everybody, they run the risk of becoming little more than a temporary art exhibition (not to mention the money needed for such actions).

I am a big fan of Ada Pinkton's performances, but I find her dream Future Monument half-baked and painfully crowd-pleasing. Calling out my own unimportance, my ideas should equally be discredited. A single person should never be in charge of creating a monument designed to last forever, no matter their skill. This is where organizations such as Monument Lab come into the picture. Based in Philadelphia, this organization runs workshops, studies and talks about the current state of monuments and their future. While many of their projects veer towards the temporary, they do so in a very knowing way and explain the importance of such tactics. [It should be mentioned that Ada Pinkton was a 2020 Monument Lab Fellow for her work]. The vision includes "disrupting the status quo of how monuments are made, preserved, and interpreted, we hope to contribute to a future society defined by joy, regeneration, and repair."¹⁸

¹⁸ About - monument lab. Accessed 13 Sep 2021.
<https://monumentlab.com/about>.

With more organizations as intersectional and critical as Monument Lab, we could have some hope for a future where monuments/counter-monuments are created with enough thought to last on forever, even if they only are temporary.

I am not a religious man, but I will end this on a gospel-inspired warning to any monuments which may be reading this chapter:

You are but stone, and to dust you shall return.

The Gay Agenda

LGBTQ+ Monuments

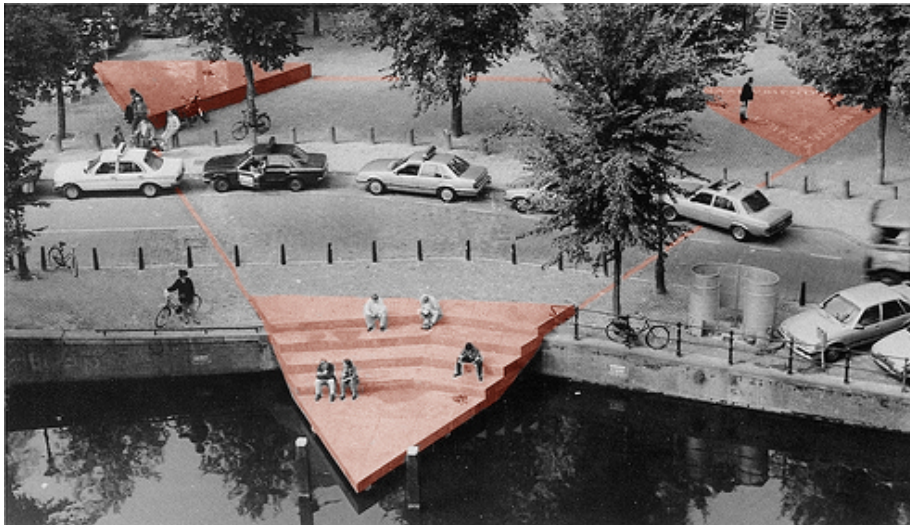


Fig 13: Homomonument. By Bobink [photograph] 2010.

Homomonument (1987) – Amsterdam, NL [fig 13]

One of the first, targeted monuments for the LGBTQ+ Community was the Homomonument in 1987 in Amsterdam, NL. Located on a central canal in the city center, it was built to commemorate the gays and lesbians killed under the Nazi regime. Under the Nazis, homosexual & bisexual men, along with transexual women, were forced to wear an upside down pink triangle to denote the reason for their imprisonment. Holocaust survivor Josef Kohout's story was used in the 1972 book *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel* (The Men With the Pink Triangle), and thereafter became a reappropriated symbol for gay liberation in the 70s throughout the world. Using these powerful and well known symbols, designer Karin Dean created a layout of three pink granite triangles incorporated into the urban landscape. One triangle is located along the canalside, offering steps towards the water; the second is flush with pavement with a line from Dutch Jewish gay poet Jacob Israël de Haan: "Naar Vriendschap Zulk een Mateloos Verlangen" ("Such an endless desire for friendship"); the final triangle is raised, serving as a bench for locals.

Monumento en Memoria de los Gais, Lesbianas y Personas Transexuales Represaliadas (2011) – Barcelona, ES [fig 14]

Almost twenty five years later, Barcelona installed its own monument to the LGBTQ+ Community. Continuing the pink triangle motif, the not-nearly-as-catchily-named Monumento en memoria de los gais, lesbianas y personas transexuales represaliadas sits in Parc de la Ciutadella. This monument lies flush with earth, and is joined by a band of well-kept flowers. Local lore states that it was originally to be located near Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia, but pushback from conservatives led to its current location¹⁹. Parc de la Ciutadella also includes a memorial to Sonia Rescalvo Zafra, a transexual who was brutally murdered by six neo-nazis in 1991. Glorieta de la transsexual Sònia (fig 15) is the official name, and includes a plaque describing the heinous crime.

¹⁹ “Los Memoriales Del Colectivo LGTB.” La transversal cultura, 23 Jun 2021. <https://latransversalcultura.com/los-memoriales-del-colectivo-lgtb/>.



Fig 14: Monumento in Parc de la Ciutadella, Barcelona. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.



Fig 15: Performance in the Glorieta de la transsexual Sònia. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.

This pair of monuments was chosen because of their material and form-related similarities, but also due to the glaring discrepancy of their current uses. This is not meant to be a wrestling smackdown of the granite pink triangles monuments, however there is a clear winner in my view. It must be said that due to financial and visa-related woes, I was unable to visit Amsterdam and Homomonument. However, from asking friends who visited the site and reading about the festivities which take place on/around the Homomonument (every May 5 there is a Liberation Day street party amongst the three triangles), the Barcelona Monumento is clearly lacking in awareness. Asking my local friends (who have lived here for years if not decades), none of them knew about the monument in Ciutadella. That arbiter of taste, Google Maps, does not even have it listed as a site while looking at a map (happily, the Glorieta de Sònia is listed prominently). Ten years after being built, most people pass by the monumento without even a cursory glance. I visited this site 10 times to research its use/popularity, each time spending 10-30 minutes sitting on the nearby grass. Not once did someone walk by to pay respects or even read the inscription. It is located next to one of the largest entrances to the park which should prove a boon. I say that it is clearly a case of a missed opportunity. On the triangle it is inscribed: En memoria de los gais, las

lesbianas y las personas transexuales que han sufrido persecución y represión a lo largo de la historia. Barcelona 2011. (In memory of the gays, lesbians and transsexuals who have suffered persecution and repression throughout history. Barcelona 2011). For *all* the persecuted LGBTQ+ members in the *entirety* of history... this monumento has all the gusto of handpainted sign that reads "Stop hate" minus the handmade charm. The highpoint of the design is clearly the materials, the pink granite has been mined from the city's Montjuic park, bringing a sense of community & belonging to the otherwise milquetoast monumento. The pink triangle has been done much better in many other locations, and more monumentally placed too. It may not be courteous to say such disparaging things about a monument to my fallen brothers and sisters, but surely their loss could and should be better represented by generic garden landscaping. Not every monument needs to scream LOOK AT ME! I'M IMPORTANT! but if you are carrying the cross for so many people, surely a more engaging monument should have been considered.

In addition to this monumento, Barcelona has the Memorial Permanent de la Sida (AIDS Permanent Memorial) designed by architect Patrizia Falcone and gardener Lluís Abad, completed in 2003. Despite its noble

intention to “raise public awareness of the disease”²⁰. It is tucked away in a corner of Montjuic’s Jardí d’Aclimatació de Barcelona (a forgettable garden in the Montjuic Park on the former site of the Italian and Swiss pavilions of the 1929 International Exhibition). This memorial is made up of an olive tree (representing peace) surrounding by slabs of stone, flush with the ground [fig 16].



Fig 16: *Permanent AIDS Memorial*. By Canaan [photograph] 2021.

These slabs are inscribed with the poem “Parlem de tu” by Catalan Poet Miquel Martí i Pol. It starts: “Parlem de tu, però no pas amb pena. Senzillament parlem de tu, de com ens vas deixar [We talk about you, but not with sorrow. We just talk about you, about how you left us]”. This poem was gifted by Martí i Pol before his death to Projecte dels NOMS, an NGO founded in 1993 to respond to the AIDS crisis, which was responsible for creating this memorial¹⁷. Strictly from a visual perspective, this memorial includes the same failings as the monument in Parc de la Ciutadella. Also missing from the omnipotence of Google Maps, the exact location is not even given an exact location on the memorial’s website, which merely list that it’s in the Jardí d’Aclimatació. Granted, this park is not very big, but a little more visibility and advertising would surely make it more noticeable. The most interesting aspect of this memorial is the fact that it represents itself not as just the tree-and-stones-with-poem, but a yearly memorial to the ongoing AIDS crisis. Raising itself from just another sunken stone memorial, Projecte dels NOMS invites speakers, performers and musical guests for a day of reflection and remembrance.

²⁰ “Permanent AIDS memorial “ Catalunya.com. Accessed 8 Aug 2021. <https://www.catalunya.com/permanent-aids-memorial-17-16003-537337?language=en>.

The use of the name *memorial* is also of interest, linguistically speaking. The other LGBTQ+ monument in Barcelona refers to itself as the *Monumento en Memoria*, monument in the memory of... which of course harkens back to the term memorial. These names have always gone hand in hand since the classic monuments thousands of years ago. Both memorials and monuments commemorate an event/thought/space/person/(insert any noun here). Lacking the catchy names of other LGBTQ+ monuments, these two spaces in Barcelona seem to play their cards quite upfront. Announcing exactly what they are, they leave little space for speculation. Unable to find an exact reason why these two works are so named, I can only surmise that the AIDS Memorial views itself as an ongoing event as opposed to a static location/time. The AIDS crisis is far from over, so the memorial is constantly in flux. Adapting itself as medical breakthroughs & cultural shifts occur, and, sadly, as new victims are taken from this disease. As time passes, the annual memorial becomes more crucial, lodging itself into the lives of those in the city as to never let us forget about this decades long. Alternately, the Monumento en Memoria sits there, a sunken triangle guarding the entrance to Parc de la Ciutadella with no events to liven its sedentary stone.

As we see, the monument vs. memorial debate can be quite fluid and subjective, but I have to include what I best term.... a memorial turned monument. Spanish queer/all-around icon La Veneno grew to fame in the 1990s as transexual prostitute-turned-TV personality and singer. Having missed her rise-and-fall in person, my friends told me she was at various times heralded, laughed at, ridiculed and celebrated during her time in the spotlight. Eventually fading off into obscurity after a prison sentence and personal issues, she died under suspicious circumstances in Madrid in 2016. In April 2019, a plaque was dedicated to her in Parque del Oeste, location of her earlier exploits as a sex worker before her fame [fig 17].



Fig 17: Plaque in honor of La Veneno, Parque del Oeste, Madrid. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.

A week after the unveiling it was stolen. Since then, there has been at least 5 attacks on the plaque [fig 18]. It remains a memorial where her adoring fans but also the LGBTQ-phobic crowds. Anti-trans slogans are constantly being spray-painted over the plaque (which has been given an extra layer of protection-via-a-3mm PVC plastic shield drilled into the brick colonnade on which it stands.



Fig 18: Vandalized plaque of La Veneno. By Carla Antonelli [photograph] 2021.

Design notwithstanding, or non-design, as you wish, this simple plaque memorial has engaged such fervor from both her fans and enemies that I declare it the most engaging LGBTQ+ monument, even if it's the most simple. This has more to do with the association of a beloved/hated Spanish idol and the location in the heart of right-wing Madrid. It embodies the challenges and problems of the queer experience itself (more on this later). Torn down, beaten, robbed, adored, idolized... this simple piece of plastic goes to show that sometimes a monument is not built, but lived. Through its experiences and stories thrust upon it, this plaque located in park full of monuments both classical (historical busts galore! – fig 19) to the comically classical (just a 2nd century BC Egyptian temple donated by Egypt - fig 20) has become its most dramatic.



Fig. 19: Classical Monument in Parque del Oeste. Author's Image [photograph] 2021.



Fig 20: *Temple of Debod, Madrid.* Author's Image [photograph] 2021.

A design can be envisioned and dreamed as a centerpoint for the local population, but often times it is the personal aspect of that/who is being monumentalized/memorialized which transforms a piece of plastic into a palpable presence. As the youngest monument listed so far, it has the upper hand in contemporaneity, but it will take years to see if interest in it wanes or remains *du jour* for the hoi polloi.

Defining Queer

... and the problems therewith.

The definition of queer? Sorry to disappoint a reader that was looking for a nice, neat answer, but for me it doesn't exist. At least not a clean, concise, compact definition meant to clearly demonstrate what it is/does/creates/destroys/confuses/confounds/hides.

“Queer” is at once:

- 1) an historical term meaning “strange” or “odd”
- 2) a slur towards homosexuals (late 1800s – present day)
- 3) a verb meaning “to ruin something” (e.g. an agreement, event or situation)
- 4) a fluid, amorphous term for sexual and gender minorities
- 5) a fashionable adjective meant to sell a contemporary thought to an open-minded populace [TITLE OF THIS PAPER, I'M LOOKING AT YOU]

Well, that last one is made up, but as we will see throughout this chapter, it is in danger of coming true.

My aim is not to give a lecture on queer theory, but just a brief overview of what it could mean. If you ask 100 members of the LGBTQ+ community what queer means, you will probably get 100 different answers. If you ask people outside the community, you might get 50 different answers and 50 shrugs. It's an umbrella term that's frustratingly (or deliciously) oblique and hyper-specific. Some use it to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. In 2021, it is rather commonplace to see “queer” in LGBTQ+ friendly locations, (social centers, bars, museums), and literature, (queer studies/theory sections abound in the bookstores which still exist), but outside of these “LGBTQ+ bubbles”, the term has yet to saturate everyday language. Even within in the community, it is still seen as a negative slur, and many are hesitant to use it.

Queer Nation, a confrontational activist organization formed in New York City in 1990, re-claimed this pejorative term in order to bring visibility to anti-gay violence in the US during the peak years of the HIV/AIDS crisis. “We're here, we're queer! Get used to it!” was their official rallying cry [fig 21]. Their tactics (and those of their previous incarnation, ACT UP) are well documented

and should be examined with a closer look for a better overview of the historical struggle of the LGBTQ+ community.²¹



Fig 21: Queer Nation flyers in Houston. By Unknown [photograph] early 1990s.

Queer has a complicated history, but for the sake of my projects, I call upon the Ladies, Lords and other dignitaries of Queer Theory to shed some inspirational quotes on the topic:

[Q]ueer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability—which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect—queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire.

- Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory*²²

Queer [...] is a polysemic term, or better, a floating signifier, which transfers its own instability to the nouns it modifies when it is used as an adjective.

- Lorenzo Bernini, *Queer Theories*²³

²¹ It is beyond the scope of this project to provide an entire overview of these movements, please see Escoffier, J., *American Homo: Community and Perversity*, (London: Verso, 2018)

²² Jagose, Annamarie, *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996)

²³ Bernini, Lorenzo, *Queer Theories: From Mario Mieli to the Anti-Social Turn*, trans. Michela Baldo and Elena Basile, (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 26

Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. [...] Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. [...] Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. Queerness is also a performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.

- José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*²⁴

I would speculate that queerness in architecture is not necessarily about the specific, intrinsic, or absolute qualities of an object being determinately queer, but rather about the shape-switching, code-switching capacity of these qualities to register multiple forms and effects

- Annie Barrett, “Noncon Form”²⁵

These are not meant to be an exhaustive reach into the rabbit-hole that is intersectional queer theory, but rather a few rays of light on an elusive and quickly changing term. Its popularity has soared in recent years, which is both a blessing and a hinderance. The ensuing visibility should not be frowned upon. Generations of outsiders before us have fought for our rights to parade around town and farm being our authentic selves. However, this newfound popularity put queerness at risk of *queerbaiting*.

Queerbaiting emerged within the field of film theory as a term to describe specific tropes or plotlines that present particular forms of gender or sexual deviance that never take concrete form in order to draw in a queer audience. We could take this a step further towards design: a form of *architectural queerbaiting* could be easily imagined. Something that promises a queer design, but just delivers more of the same, using “queer” as a word used to sell homes and raise the rent.

I am far from the word police, and, as I stated before, “queer” means many things to many people. Feel free to take all these words with all the grains of salt: it’s a very

²⁴ Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1

²⁵ Barrett, Annie, “Noncon Form” in Log Magazine (2017), p. 141

subjective and personal word I hold close to my heart and cerebral cortex. While it may not have a clear definition, I believe that “queer” is of the Other, the Outsider. Outside of the norms of our hetero-patriarchal society. It is a response. It is a paradox. It is dissenting against what is socially accepted as “proper” and “good”. “Queer” questions, prods, satirizes, slashes, collages, burns, examines, dissects, and mocks the prevailing winds of society. Some may see this as unsatisfying and arbitrary, but I argue that such a boundless definition is the only possible definition. Untethered to a strict set of rules, “queer” will twist and turn until we are but dust. Queer is here, get used to it. Or, don’t. Queer don’t give a fuck.

Designing Queer

... and the problem thereof.

Though there has been much discussion of what constitutes “Queer Aesthetics” over the years, it is impossible to pigeonhole queer into a certain mix of style, colors and patterns. Evidently, what many call “camp” these days has been used by many queer icons. Extravagant, tacky, ostentatious, tasteless, in-your-face, and militarily over-the-top is surely what many people think of when they hear queer.



Fig 21: Scene from John Water's *Desperate Living* [movie still] 1977.

Our minds are transported to John Water's trashy backyards in Baltimore in the 1970s [fig 22], Siouxsie Sioux and the British New Romantics traipsing around London in the 1980s and Almodovar's Spain in the 1990s. These wild senses of fashion and taste were pushed by *enfants terribles* of all ages looking to push past societal norms and what the “rest” deemed as “good taste”. Architecture and design have always been more tempered and less capricious than music and fashion. Constructing buildings and creating objects requires years of planning, anchored in the dominant tastes from the time in which they were conceived, they will never be as fluid and free flowing as the fine arts, which change as surely as the morning breeze.

Budgets and the powers-that-be have tamed design ever since it branched off from the decorative arts. Look down at that cell phone in your hand. Scan your living room. Clean lines surrounded that screen covered in greasy fingerprints? Tasteful, simple and exposed wooden furniture – (heaven forbid it be crazy and covered in a classy mother-of-pearl varnish!) – from that purveyor of monotonous global design, Ikea? This is not a treatise on modern design, but the normalization of product design has made architecture look like a bedazzled suburban kid raging against the machine, Molotov cocktails in hand.

Dieter Rams and his manifesto “Ten Principles of Good Design” proved prophetic. In the 1970s, Rams declared Good Design™ “is aesthetic... is unobtrusive.. and makes a product understandable”²⁶. If one inspects his principles through a queer lens, bent on subverting and confusing society, the urge to burn all copies of his writings pulses in all your fingertips. If queer politics denies the power of the gender and sexual binaries and engage in attacking normative discourses, then queer design would do the same to the prevailing winds of the design world. As mentioned before, one cannot tar queer design with the same brush – (doubtful we would use a brush, I imagine a shoe or mop would prove to be more intriguing a tool) – as it is far too much a disparate gang of misfits. Homos though many may be, homogenous they ain’t.

Mutiny upon the good ship design! As my personal aesthetics veer towards what some call tacky and tasteless, it is important to note that these are my musings, and not all queer folk should be burned at the stake for my design moral disparities.

As we explained in the previous chapter, defining queer is difficult enough, let alone adapting it to the puritanical aspects of design. With penchant for subverting the

status quo, relishing in the stupefaction of the society, and bathing in the bewildering and beguiling, queer design gives a magical jolt of electricity to the WORLD OF DESIGN. If done (in)correctly, queer design should be considered a sort of terrorism from the tastemakers. If you put on these imaginary history-scanning glasses, which I am handing to you as you read, and you look carefully over the past 100 years of design, it can be hard to see, but if you squint hard enough there are some beautiful ~~terrorist attacks~~ examples of queer design.

Even if not officially crowned as Examples of Queer Design by the (imaginary) Council of the Royal Queer Academy, the following examples exemplify what I decree to be queer principles.

Not a specific designer or style, but at the pole position is Visionary Architecture. Unbuilt, irrational, imaginative and wacky, Visionary Architecture may only live on paper, but its reach is global, even universal. The twisting staircases of Piranesi’s Prisons [fig 23] land at that sweet spot where Architecture and Art meet. These emotive and

²⁶ De Jong, Cees. *Dieter Rams: Ten Principles for Good Design*. Prestel, 2021

confusing imaginary spaces would be impossible to be built, are structurally unsound and would cause a Civil Engineer to have a heart attack: in other words, queer as fuck.

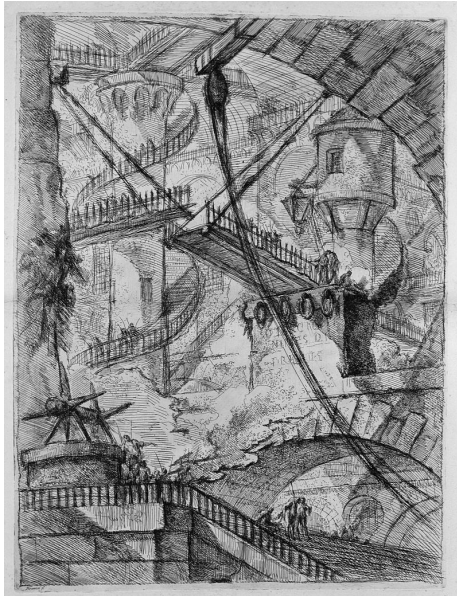


Fig 23: *The Drawbridge* from *Imaginary Prisons*. Giovanni Battista Piranesi [print] 1750

Around the same time as Piranesi, in France, Etienne-Louis Boullée was washing ink with utmost imagination. His most famous work – (which just happens to be a ... MONUMENT, imagine that!) – was the Cenotaph for

Newton. Dreamed up in 1784, Boullée designed a round structure meant to be higher than the Giza Pyramids. This monument to Sir Isaac Newton takes the form of a 500ft sphere surrounded by swooping ramps, dwarfing humans and well beyond the technology of the day [fig 24].

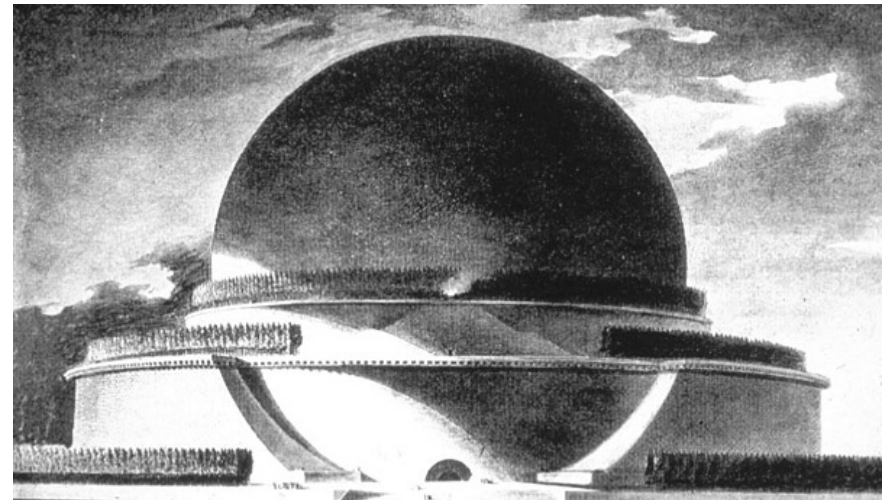


Fig 24: *Cénopathe à Newton*. Étienne-Louis Boullée [drawing] 1784

What is that I hear in the back? These two classical examples are merely inventive architecture, I'm taking quite a stretch to label these as queer? I see them just not just as dreams, but rather concrete forms (despite only existing on paper) of what Muñoz referred to: "rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world"²¹. While I am hardly an architectural historian, I try my best to see them as creations in their respective times of birth. Looking back from 2021 it is easy to see them as fantastical structures, but, at the time, when Vitruvius' tomes of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas* were still going strong centuries after that ol' Roman dude left the earth, Boullée was imploring that "Our buildings should be to some extent poems"²⁷. Boullée designs "signaled the schism of architecture as a pure art from the science of building."²⁸ His shrugged off of historical design hierarchy for buildings which exude emotions and fantastical shapes (Berret's "shape-switching, code-switching capacity" for making a building *more* than a building).

Now, I will admit that with his love of ancient Greek architecture, albeit in exaggerated forms, rationalism and

religion would probably bring him some derision from the militant queers planning the next social revolution; however, if we view him in his socio-historical context, it is clear to see that the seeds of counterculture were strong with this one. Visionary Architecture has been going on for centuries and will never stop. If we take a leap of a couple hundred years, can we not just say classical Visionary Architecture was just an ancient form of what, in 2021, we call *design fiction*? Exploring and criticizing possible futures, as design fiction does, through subversive and provocative measures clearly fits the bill to be defined as queer. Another thought for another time! Design Fiction is out of the realms of this current work, would have strong links with a possible "queer design". Visionary Architecture is so named because it refers to designs that were never actually meant to be built. Many architects hesitate to place them within the realm of Architecture proper for this reason. Created by designers as utopian plans to break up the monotony of contemporary structures, some could say they were trying to destroy their contemporaneous architectural hierarchy, thus making it particularly queer.

²⁷ Boullée, Étienne-Louis. *Architecture, Essay on Art* in Rosenau, Helen. *Boullée & Visionary Architecture* (Academy Editions: London, 1976), 82.

²⁸ Miller, Michelle, 'AD Classics: Cenotaph for Newton / Etienne-Louis Boullée', in *ArchDaily* 10 Sep 2014. <https://www.archdaily.com/544946/ad-classics-cenotaph-for-newton-etienne-louis-boullee>.

Moving on from the 1700s, let us jump forward to the 20th century. Italy in the 1970s, to be exact. Taking Visionary Architecture on a very strong acid trip, Superstudio and Archizoom were the standard-bearers of Italian Radical Design. While the flower-power hippies were in control of San Francisco, these Italian rabble-rousers were in Florence dreaming up utopian/dystopian dreamscapes [fig 25]. Architectural students in an Italy still reeling from the Second World War, these designers lacked the budgets and space to design their super-structures, but they left a permanent imprint on the design world. Their 'Superonda' (1966)] [fig 26] was "one of the first sofas without a skeleton, a challenge to bourgeois conventions for a free way of living."²⁹ Sounds pretty queer to me. This was a sofa that could be moved in a variety of forms, changing from a bed to a sofa or lounge chaise, in a variety of forms. With its undulating, asymmetric waves, the Superonda challenged the hegemony of boxy, modern furniture poisoning living rooms at the time.

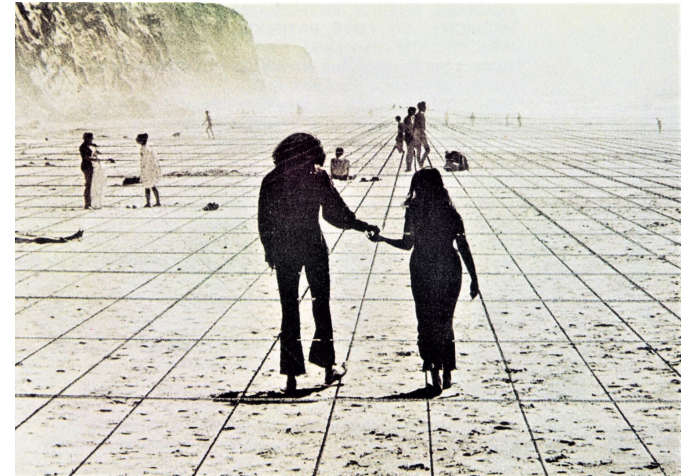


Fig 25: *Supersurface*. Superstudio [collage] 1972.



Fig 26: *Superonda* furniture. Archizoom - Paolo Deganello [photograph] 1966

²⁹ Centro Studi Poltronova, 'Superonda' Poltronova. Accessed: 06 Sep 2021. <https://www.poltronova.it/1967/10/16/superonda/>.

Within Italian Radical Design, there was also Memphis, known for their oversized and awkward furniture, made of garish colors and textures challenging the mid-century modern aesthetic which was peaking around the world. Their 'Carlton' (1981) [fig 27] is officially a room divider, but it takes its cues from a set of drawers and a bookshelf, skewering them into odd shapes, redefining and poking fun at furniture design.



Fig 27: Carlton by Memphis Studio. By Saliko [photograph] 2016.

Using humor and irony, these wily Italians were also laying the groundwork for what we now term Anti-Design. Any definitions of Anti-Design follow closely with the above descriptions of queer design principles. Criticizing consumer culture and questioning the social and political conventions which design had until that point embodied. Their products were meant to be constructed cheaply and replaced to fit with the user's personal affects at any given time, thus taunting the bourgeois notions of good construction.³⁰ Their performative exhibitions were also blurring the lines of design and art. Not satisfied with their surroundings, Italian Radical Design challenged the determined definitions of what furniture could and should do. Beyond stretching and toying with furniture, they had a sense of humor and self-awareness, to the point of burning their own work [fig 28]. Mendini sacrificed his chair in ritual form, elevating a simple piece of furniture to something fantastical. He would say that these 'Lassù' chairs were beyond mere chairs, they were "mini-monuments for spiritual use"³¹.

³⁰ Ironically, this tactic has been enveloped by contemporary consumer capitalism.

³¹ Mendini, Alessandro, quoted in Muraben, Billy, 'Why these Five Objects Defined the Radical Design Movement', *AnOther* 21 Jul 2016

<https://www.anothermag.com/design-living/8888/why-these-five-objects-defined-the-radical-design-movement>



Fig 28: Mendini's Lasso Chair - miniature model on left and burning performance on right. By Galerie Maurer [photograph] 1983.

A strange, fucked up thread throughout history, queer design non-principles can be traced back to a time well before the term queer was used in this sense. So why is it necessary that we even acknowledge queer design exists? Can't we just say that there are always some wacky birds out there, marching to the beat of their own drum? This would be the easy way out. Queer people have fought for our basic human rights and visibility, and so should queer design. We queer folk aren't fighting to be approved by society's guardians of culture, we just want to paradoxically find a visible place in society while also challenging its social mores to the core. To this day, we

are ostracized and attacked on the streets. Challenging the norm in the public eye is deemed dangerous by those who feel threatened by our existence, and this has brainwashed scores of humans into believing it is we who are the enemy. Acknowledging that queer design could exist would be one possible route to finding acceptance in and posing a challenge to a society trained to keep a target on our backs. LGBTQ+ Rights have been riding a wave of gradual acceptance in these last decades, and it is time to cement our existence. Whether the Stonewall Riots, the AIDS crisis, the daily homo-/transphobic attacks in the world, monumentalizing queer history and futurity is the first step for building a safe foundation for future generations of LGBTQ+ people.

It must be said, however, that there are some possible threats to queering design. Design is supported by and helps to create a very consumerist, capitalist society. As queer people and design become more accepted, we run the risk of becoming a marketing gimmick. In 2019, British supermarket chain Marks & Spencer created an LGBT Sandwich (meaning it had lettuce, guacamole, bacon and tomato). [fig 29]. The profits were promised to a homeless LGBTQ+ youth organization, but it was clear that the chain was using the emerging acceptance as a way to earn a few bucks.



Fig 29:Pride Sandwich. Marks & Spencers [photograph] 2019.

These marketing tactics have earned the name of Pinkwashing³²As Pride festivals increase in number across the globe, it has become common for these once-political events to become increasingly commercial. Sponsors, many of which have given money to anti-LGBTQ+ causes or have problematic political views, paint rainbow flags over their logos in an attempt to court what they see as a new niche market to advertise to. As a counterbalance to this scene of Pink Capitalism³³,while the official Pride

³² for more information see Sarah Schulman, "Israel and Pinkwashing," *The New York Times*, 23 Nov 2011

³³ for more information on Pink Capitalism, see Rahaul Rao, "Global homocapitalism," *Radical Philosophy*, Nov/Dec 2015.

Barcelona takes place, there is simultaneously anti-capitalist protest from various groups, including 28J Autònom. They complain of commercial enterprising taking over a political event, and the takeover of a homonormative culture made up of just "gay, white, young and canonically beautiful" men³⁴. Many in the community feel that the LBTQ+ and dissident elements of the community are brushed aside and made to feel unwelcome.

Though nascent, queer design also run the risk of falling into the same trap as Pride events. With changing cultural tastes, could the term "queer design" be attached to a new apartment building in Gaixample? Will the prices go up when queer design takes over? A fear of being sold out for a couple of dollars is always at the back of mind of anyone critical of our capitalist economy. That Carlton room divider we talked about? Those Italians who wanted to change the game and disrupt the system.... Well, Memphis studio is now selling this piece for €14,600.00³⁵.

³⁴ Rubia, Maria. "Pride Barcelona: ¿Una 'Reivindicación Festiva' O 'Capitalismo Rosa'?" *Público*, 28 Jun 2019. <https://www.publico.es/sociedad/pride-barcelona-pride-barcelona-reivindicacion-festiva-capitalismo-rosa.html>.

³⁵ "Carlton." Memphis Milano, 11 May 2021. <https://www.memphis-milano.com/product/carlton/>.

Queer Erections

Introduction

Too many LGBTQ+ monuments and memorials fade away into the background. Much like the community's role in society, pushed aside to be forgotten.

With these Queer Erections, different aspects of the community will have their stories told, shown and celebrated.

As previously mentioned, the need for creating monuments in 2021 seems rather misplaced. From a post-modern designer's brain, this is completely true. However, we must take into account the past centuries of humanity. We traverse streets, plazas and parks full of beheaded men (and only a handful of women), horses, obelisks and fountains reminding of our past "victories"/blunders. As I walked by the existing LGBTQ+ monuments in Barcelona more than a few times without

noticing them, yet coming across numerous historical figures of no importance to me, it became clear that this contemporary viewpoint of "being beyond" the need for monuments was rather quite silly. In 100 years, we will be buried underground, have our ashes mixing with the increasingly poisoned ocean and/or replaced with cyborgs from the coming downfall of humanity (give or take a couple of years).

How will our progeny (and/or robot offspring) remember us? It is an important question. If, for argument's sake, our cities continue in their current form, existing historical reminders and monuments will likely remain. Doubtlessly with less emotional connection as our society evolves/devolves. If we take this holier-than-thou approach to concretizing our contemporary afflictions, struggles and stories, our tales will fail to make it past our generation. Digitization is another matter altogether, but this Urban Crusader forever believes that physical presence will trump an archived image, website or post.

Historically, queer folk have been erased (literally) from historical references and books. Amassing a group of monuments for the city of Barcelona will be akin to planting a flag on the moon: We're here, we're queer... as the classic refrain goes.

Location

As discussed earlier, this project was created in conjunction with various organizations representing Esquerra l'Eixample's Gaixample neighborhood [fig 30], so it comes with a sense of jaw-dropping astonishment that these monuments/counter-monuments will be located in ... (drum roll please) ... the Gaixample neighborhood.

More specifically, they will be centered around the junction of Enric Granados / Consell de Cent [fig 31] site of the soon-to-be pedestrianized zone, or *superilla* in local parlance. Two blocks from Gran Via, two blocks away from the bougie Rambla de Catalunya with its terraced restaurants, and three blocks from Barcelona's most famous shopping street, Passeig de Gràcia, this intersection lies between the more residential streets of Esquerra l'Eixample and the commercial heart of the city. A mix of tourists, students and residents perennially criss cross these streets on their way to work, home or to see the overpriced yet lovely Gaudí masterworks nearby.

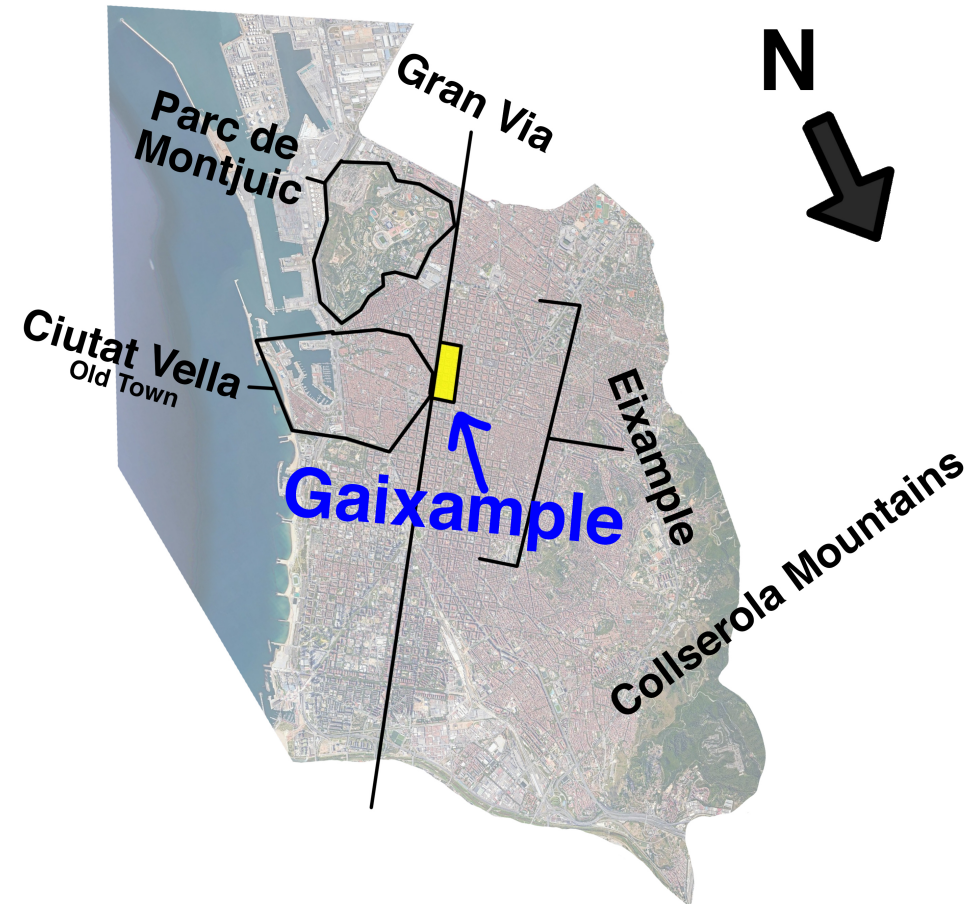


Fig 30. Location of Gaixample. Author's image [illustration] 2021.



Fig 31: Streets of Gaixample. Author's image [Illustration] 2021.

Carrer Enric Granados has been traffic calmed, leading to a resurgent restaurant and bar scene around Plaça Letamendi (though the actual plaza is a ghost park after dark, with the children's playground and dog park closed off) and the trashy gay bars with 3€ mojitos are only a couple steps away on Consell de Cent, heart of Barcelona's Gaixample. The last remaining sex shops and darkrooms are within crawling distance for those of a more sophisticated and refined palate for life's finer exploits.

This area lacks a real sense of space, the streets of Eixample are notorious for looking the same with their sharp building cuts at every intersection. With a cadre of queer monuments, this area will fly the flags for the good ship LGBTQ+. Playing various roles of torchbearers, reminders, guardians, spotlights and superstars, these monuments provide a dramatic and reflective backdrop for the barri to *do its thang*.

Three (possible) Approaches to Design

When tasked to design a monument to diversity, my first thought was: *this is an absurd concept*. Diversity is such a plural and multifaceted and nuanced concept that a monument would never suffice. So, I began to play with the idea of making not just a single monument, but a series of urban interventions/monuments located throughout Gaixample, thereby turning the neighborhood into a living breathing monument. No heroic statues recalling the past, no obelisks signifying nothing, these would need to be symbolic, interactive, active participants on the streets, waiting for the inhabitants to make them whole.

Brainstorming and sketching out ideas, the idea of centering the projects around Enric Granados became the starting point, with the projects on surrounding streets bringing in visitors from Gran Via and Passeig de Gràcia.

Dealing with not just a single plaza, but a swath of the city, these projects needed to have an over-arching theme. From the initial steps, I wanted to make the main protagonists the pedestrians and residents of the barri. After all, the ultimate LGBTQ+ monuments are our bodies. Walking, breathing testaments showcasing what past generations have fought for.

Ideas swirled, thinking of events, pedestals and spotlights. Walking around the neighborhood dozens if not a hundred times, I wanted these projects to showcase what was already there. Esquerra l'Eixample is an historical neighborhood, and I did want to monuments to overpower and take over the pavements and buildings which have stood there for more than 100 years. They should disturb the neighborhood ... but not destroy it.

Unwaveringly a byproduct of the 21st century, my pursuits of mocking and discomforting the status quo belie my love and interest in the past. My designs are rarely ground-breaking in a structural sense: I have never intended to re-invent the wheel and never understood this appetite. We live in an age where thousands of years of our history are at our fingertips, begging to be born anew. Equally not one to just rehash previous projects, I deem a project successful when it shows equal importance to:

- 1) The Physical Site (reaction to immediate environs)
- 2) The Chronological Site (reaction to history and/or future of the area)
- 3) Symbolic Materiality (what the materials *mean*, what the form *means*)

Street grids and unexceptional design have homogenized the boulevards and byways of our cities and towns. Too often cities install bland street furniture or sculptural abstractions which could be placed in Everycity, USA or Everycity, Europe and we would be none the wiser as to where we were standing.

This way of thinking could be taken as a romantic idea of a return to Arts & Crafts (William Morris and John Ruskin, here's to you!), I am not advocating for a revolutionary meltdown of the global design industrial complex (though, it would be welcome), I am far too lazy and apathetic to think on such a scale. My designs come from the world around me, my interactions with them, and an empirical glare into the problems that exist or problems that should be created to make this spinning rock more interesting.

Back to Gaixample! Save these tirades for future unwritten manifestos!

Over the following pages, each project unfurls their historical and physical stories, explaining their site, chronological and material/visual importance.

After many site visits, talks with local businesspeople, friends and strangers in the bars, I had approximately 10 designs to expose various aspects of Gaixample's charms and poisons. Knowing that I had to explain these to official members of various Barcelona departments, some of the more...let's say scandalous ideas were whittled away (adios, sex-labyrinth-in-the-streets!), leaving the eventual 6 ideas which I present here. As I laid them all out on my table, I noticed that some of them shared noticeable shared traits, and others not. After staring at them night and day, drunk and sober, half-awake and in dreams, the common thread became obvious.

My fascination with the past manifested itself into a narration divulging three historically prevalent and personal used approaches to design. By no means all the possible avenues to creation, they presented themselves. I present to you, dear reader....

THE STORY OF THE FALL

(of the designer)

Act I: DESIGNER AS CREATOR

[DESIGN!]

Tale as told as time. Man makes object. People cover in awe and herald object and/or designer as the new messiah.

If DESIGN was a performance, this would be the starring actor which also directed. For the better part of the 20th century (with grudging inroads into the 21st century), this can be seen as the “classic” role of a designer. This would easily describe most of the classical monuments we see in our cities – random-men-on-horses-waving-flags, fountains emulating great battles and forgotten heroes – and an of the modern cathedrals to modern starchitecture. Also includes: THE GODS OF DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE (Corbusier, Gropius, Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Dieter Rams, Philippe Starck) [fig 32].

They know more than you. They know how you should live your life. They will not stop telling you how to live your life.

They drink their coffee from a very expensive Italian-made espresso machine.

This narration was the impulse for: Bent, the Red Ribbon Bench (p.53).



Fig 32: Starchitect Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.
By Naotake Murayama [photograph] 2016.

Act II: DESIGNER AS PROVOCATEUR

[DESIGN?]

Tale to be taken literally? Or, is it all a joke? Person makes object, but something is wrong, it's not what it's supposed to be...right? Generally, this maker is laughed off and ignored by a majority of society... but they will probably be worshipped as a cult figure in the near future.

If DESIGN was a performance, this would be a supporting actor, a jester who relies on improvisation and never gives the same performance twice, oftentimes stealing the show. Holding the mirror to the current state of the world, they break the fourth wall between spectator and user. Generally more subtle than the historical monuments, their weapons were much more theoretical and, I would argue, intellectual. Iconoclasts who bathe in the gutters of the world, such examples include: the Situationists, Venturi and Scott-Brown and their Post-Modern Siblings, Atelier Van Lieshout... along with the German counter-monument comrades, Hoheisel and the Gerzes [fig 33].

They know what you need in your life, but they won't tell you directly. They may make you laugh, or cry. They will confuse you.

They replace the sugar packets in the café with salt packets and sit around waiting for the ensuing spectacle.

This narration was the impulse for: Anarcoma Arregla l'Eixample: una historia de reivindicació (p.58).



Fig 33: Atelier Van Lieshout's Domestikator was found too obscene for Louvre's Gardens.
By CATERS NEWS AGENCY [photography] 2017

Act III: DESIGNER AS CATALYST

[design.]

Tale which has been written, rewritten, passed around for corrections by a democratically elected community council, and told in a circle. A well-meaning group of citizenry that involves the residents in all matters of planning, building and execution.

If DESIGN was a performance, this would be the set designer, who also acts as a moral booster, telling the actors how great they are. Community projects have long been practiced, but in the 21st century, they have taken over the limelight: integrating inhabitants/users into the design process. It can take the name of Social Design or Participatory Design. De-emphasizing the importance on the concrete outcome, the process and sense of inclusion are the keys here. Perhaps the most famous group is the London-based architectural collective Assemble, winners of the 2015 Turner Prize (the UK's most important prize for artists). This approach can be seen in DIY community gardens popping up in your local neighborhood³⁶ [fig 34].

³⁶ more information can be gleamed from Ezio Manzini's *Design, When Everybody Designs* (2015)

They love sustainable fair-trade coffee made with beans with fun names.

They prefer non-fat almond milk, if it's not too much of a problem for you, thanks.

This narration was the impulse for: La Patum de l'Eixample (p.78).



Fig 34: Community Garden in Barcelona's Eixample. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

Last Words Before the Hoedown

Encompassing these three varied approaches to design, my goal was to present a project that could involve differing perspectives to the clients. I am far from a DESIGNER AS CREATOR (i repress my inner messiah complex leanings because this world does not need another white American middle class cis-male telling them how the world should be), but I know that it the easiest pill to swallow for most people, it garners the most attention when you submit a project for a competition. I consider myself more a DESIGNER AS PROVOCATEUR, but the shortcomings are also easy to see. A client rarely wants to pay for what many see as just a joke. Even if it's well-articulated, learned, nuanced project which works on many layers, such projects are often tossed aside as pipe dream. Many consider these art projects, as if there was a discernable limit between art & design. DESIGNER AS CATALYST projects are very of the moment in 2021, almost painfully so. Involving the public is a great way to make a design more compelling and useful, but it runs the risk of being watered down at the end. I have worked on many

³⁷ Douglas, Fredrick quoted in White, Jonathan W and Scott Sandage. "What Frederick Douglass Had to Say about Monuments." Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, 30 Jun 2020.

such projects over the past years, and they often appear to be amateurish and forgettable after a short time. Visually, these veer towards the generic, even with their hyper-local interest. Although, such works also ask if the visual outcome is even important, if it successfully engages the community where it resides.

The absurdity of creating a single monument was described by Fredrick Douglas (noted American freed slave and abolitionist, d. 1895) at the inauguration of the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. in 1876:

...it does not, as seems to me, tell the whole truth, and perhaps no one monument could be made to tell the whole truth of any subject which is might be designed to illustrate³⁷

One monument is never enough, maybe six can shed a bit more light on the queer experience. As such, my proposal is a non-proposal, a mélange of musings, notions, bobbles and bits which have made my heart skip a beat and caused my cortex to conflate opposing strategies and tactics into these queer designs...err, erections.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-frederick-douglass-had-say-about-monuments-180975225/>.

BENT – Red Ribbon Bench

The Red Ribbon Project was started in 1991 in New York by the Visual AIDS artist caucus to bring awareness to the AIDS crisis. The red ribbon remains a copyright free symbol used across the globe (Madrid, Durban, etc) [fig 35] in many iterations as a monument to those lost to the disease.



Fig 35: Red Ribbon AIDS Monument in Chueca, Madrid. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

In Barcelona, the AIDS memorial is hidden in the Jardí d'Acclimatació on Montjuïc. Bringing a larger, more visible AIDS memorial to the Gaixample neighborhood will provide a more in your face reminder of this disease's toll on the LGBTI community.

Memorial benches are a dime-a-dozen, so the design of this bench is meant to not only stand apart from identikit generic benches, but also fully symbolize the weight of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The form uses the traditional red ribbon, but then it is bent into a more open shape, reaching from the ground to the sky. With this twist comes the name of this structure – “BENT”. It is an historical term for homosexual – referring to the opposite of “straight”. It was originally used in the early 20th century towards thieves and stolen goods, and in the 1950s was adapted to homosexual men in British slang³⁸. It takes the form of a bench along the ground, and slowly wraps around Plaça Letamendi, where it goes airborne, reaching for the sky. As a seating area, it allows for visitors to take a respite from the city, giving them a moment to reflect on the ongoing crisis. The gradual

³⁸ Wayne R., Warren Johansson, William A. Percy, and Stephen Donaldson. *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*. Routledge, 2016. 313.

reach into the sky represents the hope for the future of this pandemic, akin to a hand reaching for help from above.

So far, a simple symbolic bench. BENT will exceed pre-existing benches with its surface. Recalling the nearby Woman and Bird sculpture in Parc Joan Miró [fig 36], a red mosaic covers all sides of this rectangular bench.



Fig 36: Woman and Bird Sculpture in Parc Joan Miró. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

Keeping in tune with creating monuments that truly represent the barrio of Esquerra l'Eixample, the mosaic will be made from donated pieces of ceramic, which are to be collected at various neighborhood events (Mercat de Pagès de Germanetes [farmers' market in a neighborhood run park, etc]). This act of asking businesses and residents elevate this bench from just a monument *in* the neighborhood into a monument *from* the neighborhood. When enough items are collected, there is to be a ground-breaking ceremony, but in this case, a ceramic-breaking ceremony. With the grief and anger that this pandemic inflicted upon the LGBTQ+ community, a chance to break up the donated ceramic goods will provide a collective *destruction therapy*. Although the science is still out if destroying objects is psychologically healthy, in this group setting it is more about a physical action to display the anger towards the anger and indifference many people about the HIV/AIDS crisis' relative lack of media attention in 2021. It has been around so long that it become commonplace to accept it as a way of life. This jolt of community of involvement brings it back to the forefront.

With a simple reinforced-concrete form, the broken ceramics will be placed, covering all of the bench. This too, shall be done by the community. Using the hands of

community members, BENT will be a resident-assisted design in each step of the process. While the actual placing will be done with on-site supervisors, it would be helpful to create some parts of the seating area with rough surfaces, showing the violent and uncomfortable aspects of the crisis. A small part of uncomfortable design to make this bench slightly hostile is needed to separate it from just another tourist friendly photo-op. To get a real sense of the bench, you will come into contact with both smooth and rough bits, symbolizing the uneven levels of importance the crisis has within our broader society.

An uneven ceramic-mosaic bench. The last aspect of this bench will truly put it in a new class of AIDS memorials: blood. Fitting, as it is caused by a virus spread through bodily fluids, including blood. Society views blood with a sense of apprehension, as it is often used to convey fear and horror. When AIDS first appeared in the 1980s, it was thought that the mere touch of an afflicted person could spread the disease. The AIDS crisis hit fever-pitch in the US, and really took hold in the public psyche with Ryan White, a 13 year old boy who was infected by blood infusion in 1984. His struggle to go back to school symbolized America's fear and ignorance of the virus. In

³⁹ Agence France-Presse. "Blood from HIV-Positive People Used to Print Austrian Magazine." *Guardian*, 6 May 2015.

2015, an Austrian men's magazine, *Vanguardist*, printed an issue using blood from HIV positive men mixed with printing ink³⁹. I was living in Vienna during its publication, and the media coverage was quite jarring. There were equal parts of disgust and pride from the public. It was a limited run of 3,000 which quickly sold out. It was meant to de-stigmatize HIV positive blood. Even in 2021 with medication that can make the virus undetectable and untransmittable in patients, there still exists a stigma within the LGBTQ+ community in dating HIV+ men. A common refrain amongst men who date men is describing oneself as "clean" when referring to being HIV negative in dating apps. It promotes the idea that being HIV+ is somehow viewed as being unclean.

Taking the cue from this publication, BENT will be formalized with a thick layer of red paint. Your grandfather's red paint this is not. As *Vanguardist* mixed HIV+ blood in with printing ink, the red paint used in BENT will be created especially for this monument: mixing HIV+ blood (asked via donations from the numerous HIV/AIDS organizations/patients in Barcelona) with HIV - from inhabitants of Esquerra l'Eixample (along with any extra members of the LGBTQ+

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/may/06/blood-from-hiv-positive-people-used-to-print-austrian-magazine>.

Community and community at large willing to donate blood to this public affair). When the HIV+ blood leaves the body and is exposed to oxygen, it is rendered harmless. Mixing HIV+ and HIV- blood symbolizes the reach of the crisis, showing that we are all in this together, and that we should not be separated by a test result.

Each visitor and passerby on Carrer d'Aragó [fig 37] will come face-to-face with the HIV/AIDS crisis. Located at Plaça Letamendi, Bent's dramatic swoop and glistening mosaic will call the attention of every speeding driver along the street.

Less a memorial to those to have succumb to the virus, more of a celebration of unity between among the afflicted and the neighborhood. A concrete narration telling of a time when the inhabitants took a stand and helped create this place of reflection. A brutal reminder that we're all in this together.

Every hand that touches its rough surface does more than just provide a bit of relief from the tired bones they are attached to, it is a beautiful form of skin-to-skin contact, turning them from exhausted pedestrian into an informed and active player in the crisis.



Fig 37: Location of Bent Red Ribbon Bench. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

BENT: more than a memorial bench, a place to embrace and celebrate community.

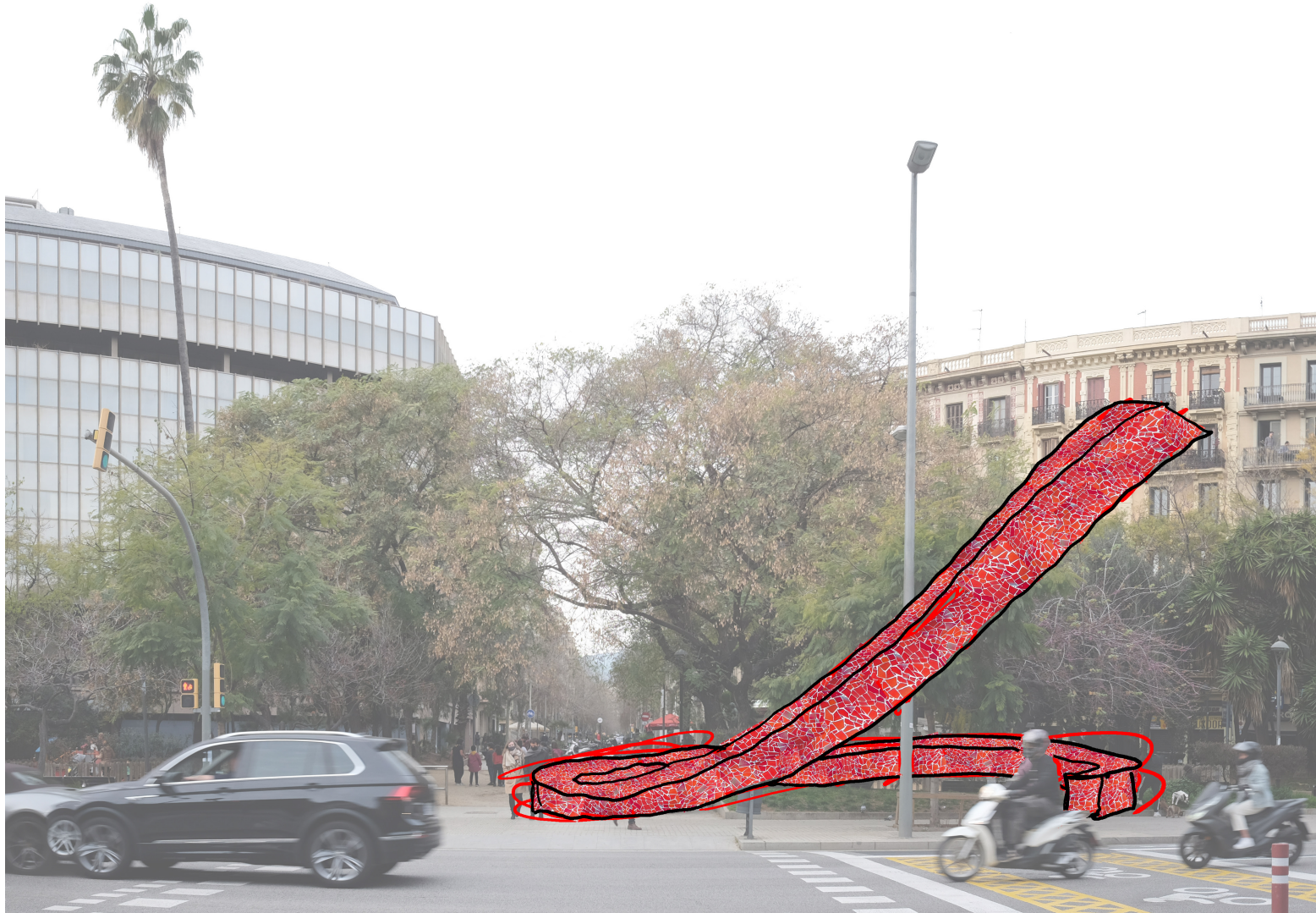


Fig 38: Bent Red Ribbon Bench. Author's image [illustration] 2021..

Ciudad de anarco y carcoma:

Anarcoma Arregla l'Eixample (una historia de reivindicació)

[Anarcoma repairs the Eixample (a tale of vindication)]

Walking down Las Ramblas in the 2010s, one is thrown in a whirlwind of cruise passengers, people hawking overpriced tapas, monstrously-sized jugs of sangria, meanwhile dodging the odd dealer selling weed of suspicious quality and the ubiquitous 1 € beer people. Slight pockets of what most call denegration, but for the most part it's a family affair. As Barcelona has become of the world's main tourist hub, Las Ramblas has transformed into a Disney-esque parade of kiosks, cafes and *quiris* (local slang for foreign tourists). When time

⁴⁰ Savall, Cristina. "UN Icono Llamado Ocaña." *Periódico*, 17 Mar 2012. <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20120317/icono-llamado-ocana-1553441>.

travel become readily available and affordable, a trip back to the 1970s/1980s version of this promenade would surely shock us. Gone be the selfie sticks and gaggles of American high school students, in their place, a hodgepodge of society's undesirables and a declining number of the city's citizens in the cramped center for a walk or visiting one of the classic locales (sadly most of which have disappeared over recent decades).

One of the most notorious characters of this time was Ocaña, something of a pied piper for the outsiders of Barcelona [fig 39]. During their reign, this area of town was an "oasis de libertad."⁴⁰



Fig. 39: José Pérez Ocaña in their casual Sunday look. By Colita, Manola [photograph] 1982.

Ocaña in 2021 means a well-designed, overpriced bar (that guide books probably list as “artsy and creative”) which occupies Plaza Reial’s monumental colonnades. In the 1970s, Ocaña meant a body that defied society’s norms. Regularly prancing around the Las Ramblas, oftentimes wearing nothing at all, or mocking their catholic-Sevillano heritage in traditional flamenco gowns, this body could be seen as the first homegrown queer terrorist. Artist, performer and activist, José Pérez Ocaña brought visibility to a group of people shunned by society. Mind you, in this time it was still a crime to be a homosexual and/or sexual/gender deviant in Spain (thanks Franco!).⁴¹ Strutting their stuff was an act of civil disobedience, a walking monument to the struggle for equal rights which would soon kick off in Catalunya. On June 28, 1977, the Front d’Alliberament Gai de Catalunya (FAGC) would hold the first gay rights demonstration in Barcelona, which ended in some good old fashioned police repression (oh, the 70s... wait....) and injuries to some of the 4,000+ participants.

⁴¹ This scene of deviants can be seen in Ventura Pons’ documentary: *Ocaña, an Intermittent Portrait* (1978)

Ocaña was joined in the neighborhood by the notorious Anarcoma, who presided over Las Ramblas come nighttime. Battering the cobblestones in her thigh-high heeled boots, she protected her fellow *ladies of the night*, as Las Ramblas was the center for the city’s numerous prostitutes who gave visiting sailors a whale of a time. And sometimes syphilis. A sort of transvestite heroine for the downtrodden, Anarcoma’s pronounced facial features were a common sight for those readers of the artist Nazario’s publications “Anarcoma” (1983) and “Anarcoma-2” (1987). Her fame even reached the shores of North America where these were published in English simultaneously. Her thirst for large, veiny, and robotic cocks, orgies with drag queens & riffraff and vengeful attacks on anyone who crossed her can also be seen in copies of *El Víbora*, a noted Spanish erotic comic book series. Did I forget to mention she was a comic book character? Oops.



Fig 40: *Anarcoma on the Prowl*. Taken from *Anarcoma* by Nazario. [comic] 1988.

While far from a household name, Nazario's Anarcoma gained a cult following. The aforementioned bougie restaurant Ocaña occasionally has Anarcoma-themed revelries. She symbolized the free-wheeling Barcelona below Gran Via, the main thoroughfare which separates the old center of Barcelona from the more upscale Eixample-expanded neighborhoods. I have read Nazario's comics since I first picked up a copy of Anarcoma in 2009 in a bookstore in Philadelphia (fun fact: the comics were so kid-friendly, they were banned from comic book stores and were only sold in Sex Shops in the US until the late 1990s) [fig 41].

Fig 41: Anarcoma just being herself.
Taken from *Anarcoma* by Nazario.
[comic] 1988.



As I mentioned, my designs are all required to deeply consider a site's history... and this includes pop-culture and/or fiction. Eixample never appears in the Anarcoma's

comics, she is strictly forbidden to cross that *frontera* of Gran Via, forever relegated to living in the overcrowded center and Las Ramblas. "This is her moment to live her bourgeoisie fantasies!" I delighted in reasoning as I criss-crossed Gaixample's spacious streets. This is a neighborhood with a stunning dearth of monuments, especially between Parc Joan Miro and Passeig de Gràcia. Who better to shine on forever than everyone's favorite deviant, Anarcoma? Exactly. No-one.

It was clear that I would hand an ever-so-special invitation to Anarcoma to join the ranks north of Gran Via, but where would she really be on display.

Looking down Carrer d'Aragó from Passeig de Gràcia, you are given a bountiful view of kilometers across the city in both directions [fig 42]. This road is more akin to a one-way highway for most the city, and is one of the most despised by pedestrians. Even with the added bicycle lane, it remains a treacherous path to cross in Eixample. While I decided that the Enric Granados/ Plaça Letamendi would be my base of operations for this mission, a common refrain I heard from businessmen, tourists and friends alike was "FIX Plaça Letamendi!! – it's cut in half by a highway!". As one of the most used routes going from north to south, its limits are maxed out. Even though the deviant urbanist within me would love

nothing more to pedestrianize the plaza, completing its square shape (instead of its current bifurcation thanks to Aragó), it's a non-starter for planning. Cars may be demons, but they are an integral part of our current cities for the foreseeable future (taxi union, I stand with you and thank you for dragging my drunken body back home after too many cocktails on these streets).



Fig 42: Typical Arago Sunset. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

I stood at Passeig de Gràcia and walked towards Plaça Letamendi, and it was an A-Ha! moment! I was thinking of some sort of pedestrian passage to fully reconnect both parts of the plaza, and like a vision of the Virgin Mary,

divine provenance struck me. While I was doodling (admittedly) very boring elevated cross walks, I saw one thigh-high heeled boot. Looking across the other side of the street, I saw another! I knew those boots, they belonged to Anarcoma! I crossed Aragó closer to Letamendi, and as I stood in the middle of the street, my eyes saw that familiar sight from 2009: I stared down Anarcoma's well-used, entirely professional crotch. The light turned greens, and I was nearly struck by oncoming traffic, but there it was: a prophetic gaze of the Lady of Las Ramblas. Straddling Carrer d'Aragó as only a goddess could, this project emerged from the asphalt. A modern-day Colossus of Rhoads. A New Statue of Liberty (in a very real sense).

A hyperbolic squeal of divine provenance from moi? Well, yes. But that's the story I choose to tell. I sat in Plaça Letamendi for a couple of hours, mulling over this gem of an idea. My rational part took over: Tom, this is *Eixample*, these people classy, they don't want to stare down the vagina of a transvestite prostitute from the 70s every day on their way to work. Rational Tom continued: the height limit of Barcelona will never be swayed for Anarcoma; the price would be too high.

"Well," I thought, "that's the beauty of design – it doesn't have to be built."

Remembering my beloved Visionary Architects who simply dreamt upon paper, if it was good enough for them, it is good enough for me. No worrying about budgets and timelines, this was a project from my heart. An impossible tale of social upward mobility: *Anarcoma Takes Eixample*. Knowing full well how much those apartments facing Plaça Letamendi cost... Let them eat cake. Pay for your beautiful *modernism* building, but this character is just as beautiful and in her paper-drawn veins run the cultural blood of Barcelona.

Even in my Visionary state, I wanted to make this a relatively grounded project. I scanned my brain's visual history for some fodder. Where have I come across this kind of project before: Buenos Aires and A.I. *Artificial Intelligence* – the 2001 Steven Spielberg film, and a personal favorite. Years ago, I was walking in Buenos Aires's historical San Telmo neighborhood, and came across some street furniture with some cartoon-esque characters sitting idly by [fig 43].



Fig 43: *Mafalda* waiting for Godot. By Carlitos [photograph] 2013.

Mafalda is not very popular in the USA, but after asking around (pre-mobile internet days) I learned she was a beloved comic character to the Argentines. These ornamental furnishings added a sense of whimsy to the streets and lend themselves well to posing tourists.

Another inspirational reference point was the film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. When the robots head towards Rouge City (a kind of free-wheeling New York of the future) to uncover the mysteries of the world, they pass through a large human head – the welcoming gate into town [fig 44]. I remember hearing the anecdote when the

film was released that Stanley Kubrick originally wanted the entrance to Rouge City be between two long legs. When Kubrick died and Spielberg decided to make it more family-friendly, the original concept art was changed for this still provocative, but much less sexual design.



Fig 44: Entrance to Rouge City. Taken from Steven Spielberg's AI: Artificial Intelligence [movie still] 2001.

Recalling Mafalda, I came back to that favorite question of design professors: is it art or design? While I was sitting next to her on the bench, “Of course it’s a sculpture, silly!” But now looking back after years of studying both fine arts and ~~applied arts~~, oops, I mean *design* – Freudian slip

– I wonder where the border between art and design. Rather, I wonder why this border even exists at all. I am reminded of one of the few HEROES I have in this world, Michael Sorkin. When I was visiting his studio office in 2013 trying to decide if I should further study Fine Arts or Urban Design, I pressed him, “I’m just on the fence, man, art or design. I love but can’t decide.” He chortled in the way a knowing grandpa does and replied “There is no fence, it’s in your head. You’re just standing, *man*. Both will lead you to what you do, these barriers only exist in your head.” One of the most clairvoyant phrases I have ever heard. Still, I have known many a professor and critic see my work and exclaim: “It’s not art, it’s design!” or “It’s not design, it’s art!” This exact situation presented itself when I first presented this work, when I was told my monuments “seem more to do with art than with design”. If the guilty party is reading this, please pay attention to the next part: *they are both*. It is my firm belief that art and design are not opposing forces meant to separate work, rather, it’s just a way to sell more magazines and make ever more study departments (having studied fine arts, spatial design, architecture and now, contemporary design – I know the intricacies and similarities of each). After all, most of what we call “design” these days were referred to as applied arts in previous incarnations. I have and (I presume) will continually weaponize both “art” and

“design” in the academic views in all my (future) projects. As another hero, Allan Wexler, I have learned that these distinctions are all but mute:

I make buildings, furniture, vessels, and utensils...
I try to make theater out of everyday life...
I preserve the artifacts of living.
I document the dream.
I protect the dreamer...
I try to give life to the dead
I try to stop time.

- Allen Wrexler, “On the Fine Art of Applied Art”⁴²

These monuments (including the other proposals/Acts) can be called art and design interchangeably. It must be said that this project is done within the realm of a Masters in Contemporary Design in 2021, and any time arguing this delineation be better spent examining the projects for what they are and symbolize and not which subject they most align with.

Playing off this imaginary battle of Art vs Design, I also recalled a team of my favorite thinkers, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Their seminal *Learning from Las*

Vegas was a pivotal book in my architectural upbringing. Growing up in the US suburbs, their chapter regarding the Duck vs Decorated Shed [fig 45] hit the nail on the head for me: finally I started to understand the tacky and cheap built forms swallowing up my suburban streets. But it also made me wonder, what about a Decorated-Shed Duck?

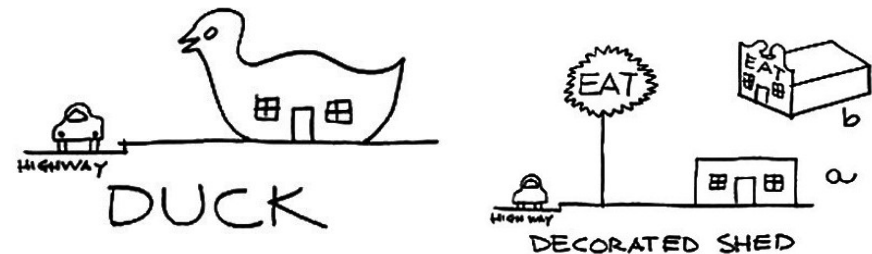


Fig 45: Duck and Decorated Shed taken from *Learning from Las Vegas* by Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour [Illustration] 1972

⁴² Wrexler, Allen quoted in Wrexler, Ellen. *Absurd Thinking: Between Art and Design*, (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2017), 7.

Et voila, I present you to you....

Anarcoma Arregla l'Eixample

Part I: Anarcoma el Pont (Anarcoma the bridge)



Fig 46: Anarcoma el Pont Author's image [Illustration] 2021.

The people cry: It's just a generic pedestrian ramp-bridge with a billboard attached !!

Where and when do we separate the two? And why?
Remind you of a certain decorated shed?
Or perhaps a duck?
When the glue is set and screws stop, they have become one congruous entity.

The people cry: It's out of scale with the area!

Well, it looks like it falls just under the height limit for the area, and trucks can pass under with an extra 2m.

The people cry: No one will ever visit it, it's disgusting!

Are you saying that transbodies are deemed undesirable?

I'm sure quite the opposite will happen. In a supposedly "culturally enlightened and progressive district", surely the people would welcome this celebration of something outside of the binary.

And look! In a knowing nod for the families, the genitals are not visible, rather, it's a viewing platform!
Provocative? Sure. But maybe this mammoth box will

allow to realize that inside we're all just humans. (cue laugh track).

And for visitors, the box/viewing platform is modeling after New York's High Line, and that's a runaway success, let's steal of their thunder. It's a little bit of New York in Barcelona, isn't that what every city dreams of?

After my meditation sessions in Plaça Letamendi imagining the lascivious legs and face of Anarcoma, I started on the 30 min walk home. Like Moses wandering the desert, I was thirsty. Walking down Enric Granados, I turned right onto Carrer de la Diputació. Aha, there it was, a water fountain withing stumbling distance of the pedestrian paradise, at the corner of Diputació / Aribau. Maybe it was the hours of soaking in the Barcelona summer sun, or maybe it was a lack of sleep, or maybe it was weeks of being celibate, but I started to see Anarcoma everywhere: in the windows, behind the trees, her raspy voice (or what I imagine her voice to sound like) filling my ears with naughty thrills. At last! I made it to the fountain. As I reached for the spout to fill my bottle, the Lady of Las Ramblas filled my vision....

Et voila, I present you to you....

Anarcoma Arregla l'Eixample
Part II: Anarcoma el Font
(Anarcoma the Fountain)



Fig 47: *Anarcoma el Font* Author's image [Illustration] 2021.

**The people cry: You already have Anarcoma the Bridge!
We don't need another!**

The more, the merrier! Whereas the bridge gives us more monumental-scaling, the fountain becomes more human-scaled. Anarcoma the Bridge could scare you into giving her your wallet and keys, but the fountain is just another person on the street, enjoying the vibes of her new neighborhood.

The people cry: You just glued a billboard onto an existing fountain!

Oh, now you're just teasing that Art vs Design battle again, but I will not submit! As with the bridge, if we glue on the form of Anarcoma (materials to be determined – but why not cardboard, which just begs to be vandalized) to a classic Barcelona fountain, where do we draw the line? Supposing it's stuck on with the super-est of glue, or welded on with a metal frame, where does the fountain end and “photo” begin? Two becomes one, again.

The people cry: It's just a cheap Manneken Pis! [fig 49]



Fig 48: Manneken Pis. By Myrabella [photograph] 2011

Who you calling cheap? She is a very expensive lady and you can probably not afford her. But yes, the similarities are there. Manneken Pis was historically the main source of water for the residents of Brussels, and it was a knowing joke that they would have to go to this peeing child to get their water.

Well, in an update on the joke, we all drink from plastic bottles, so who needs a public fountain, right? The Brussel volk needed their fountain, but Anarcoma the fountain serves as an Instagram-ready tourist photo waiting to happen... is that not a quite pressing topic in design these days? Even the tackiest of buildings and objects must be considered in the realm of design, not every fountain can be Gaudi-masterpiece.

The people cry: It's vulgar! You are pressing her genitals to get water?

When it's a lovely little boy, we laugh and take pictures, but a two-meter tall trans woman is somehow vulgar? I did have a sense of apprehension with this aspect of the design, knowing that it could be misconstrued as a kind of violence towards the figure, but after discussing this with various folks across the spectrums, they agreed that the genitals were technically hidden (again) and this actually provided a sense of direct contact with this (albeit non-living) trans-entity. It also is a guaranteed crowd pleaser and would bring ever so much joy to the thirsty passerby.

Et voila... voila.

A tale of two Anarcomas.

Nazario is said to have named her as a portmanteau of "anarco y carcoma" (anarchist and woodworm), and with these two proposals, Anarcoma lives up to her name by infesting and embedding Eixample with her own brand of anarchist beauty.

Was it planned that Anarcoma el Pont rhymes with Anarcoma el Font?
(just in Catalan – the English bridge/fountain duo does not have the same ring)?

Nope, it must have been DIVINE PROVENANCE.

The Lady of Las Ramblas works in mysterious ways, and after my prophetic visions, I have fully submitted the Church of Anarcoma

La Patum de Gaixample

How to fully realize a monument embodying the queer experience?

We have been told to repress our true selves, hiding in plain sight during our formative years.

We internalized our feelings and thoughts, for fear of what others may say or think.

We are told to “not be too much” and to “blend in”, as if it was crime to act or look in a way society deems inappropriate.

As the walls of societal acceptance slowly begin to be dismantled, we need a monument to celebrate and showcase our thoughts, actions, and bodies.

It is time to put ourselves on the pedestal.

It is time to express how we feel.

It is time to put ourselves in the spotlight.

Our lives, our experiences, our bodies are the ultimate LGBTQ+ monument.

Taking the name “La Patum” – a Catalan word used to describe ‘fabulous creatures’ from folklore, and the name of a festival in Berga, Catalunya [fig 50] which was named a UNESCO ‘Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity’ in 2005 – these three designs/interventions work in congruence with these aspects of our queer experience.



Fig 49: La Patum in Berga. By Pallares1 [photograph] 2007.

Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes

The first part of La Patum de Gaixample takes the form of a pedestal: a classic structure which references both the past and future of monuments.

The Ley de vagos y maleantes (“Law of Vagrants and Thugs”) was Spanish law approved in 1933 meant to remove, control and detain “dangerous individuals” from society. Under Franco’s dictatorship, in 1954, it was modified to include homosexuals and sexual deviants. “Guilty” homosexuals and trans-vestites/sexuals would be sent to ‘galerías de invertidos’ (galleries of deviants) where they were separated from other prisoners, othering the others even more. With the death of Franco in 1975, a country in transition started to reform the standing laws. Homosexuality was finally descriminalized in 1979, ending decades of governmental detention and ostracization.

⁴³ Bird, Danny. “The Spanish Civil War Monuments Debate Continues.” *Time*, 1 Apr 2019. <https://time.com/5560387/spain-civil-war-monument/>.

⁴⁴ “Spain's 'monstrosity' remembering Franco era.” *European Jewish Press*, 17 Nov 2015.

A pedestal named after this law is intended to reappropriate the terms “vagos y maleantes”. We as a community have re-taken and weaponized “queer” for our own use and taking back this term is a calculated affront to fascism and the Franco dictatorship which still haunts present day Spain. As part of the research, into this project, I made a visit to Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), 30km outside of Madrid. Built between 1939 and 1959, it remains a controversial monument/memorial, a symbol of a gruesome war which tore the country apart. Franco wanted a place which echoed “the grandeur of the monuments of old, which defy time and forgetfulness”⁴³. his body was entombed in the Basilica until 2019 when it was removed. A controversial flashpoint, the Valle de los Caídos contains both graves from the Nationalist and Republican soldiers of the war. According to journalist Jordi Garci Soler, 20,000 political prisoners were forced to work on the site during its construction⁴⁴. It was a frequent site of pro-Franco/fascists rallies until his body was removed in 2019 due to decades of political push from the left.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100124043715/http://www.ejpress.org/article/news/4262>

When I visited in May 2021, it was an empty shell of a fortress. The 150m tall cross, perched on top of the hill containing the crypt and basilica, looms large from a distance, visible from the nearby highway. Upon entering, one is faced with a 30,000m² esplanade [fig 50] plays the part of a stage, with the skyline of Madrid in the distance.



Fig 50: *Where Demons Go to Sleep: Valle de los Caídos*. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

Despite the beautiful Sunday afternoon weather, only a handful of fascists/architectural nerds/curious foreigners were present during my visit. Far removed from any cultural connections to such a contentious place, I could not help but put on a little show. With Franco's body gone and José Antonio Primo de Rivera's (the founder of the fascist Falange Española – precursor to Franco's reigning party) tomb protected by security guards screaming "NO FOTOS! NO FOTOS!" as I played the dumb tourist card and snapped away in the eery Basilica [fig 51].



Fig 51: *Interior of the Basilica*. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

After some speechless moments in this structurally deteriorating tomb (buckets of water everywhere proving that although fascists know how to build an *impressive* structure, they're not great at building a *lasting* structure), I proceeded to twirl, undress and flail my queer ass in front of the Basilica, using the Catalan socialist *La estelada roja* flag [fig 52]. Its impossible to piss on Franco's grave, but I did the best I could before security would usher us away.



Fig 52: Me just out for a nice spring walk, not causing any trouble. Author's image [photography] 2021.

Though clearly not its main objective, the Valle de los Caídos inspired the design of the Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes. Stealing the base of the colonnade [fig 53, this design transports fascist imagery to the streets of Gaixample.

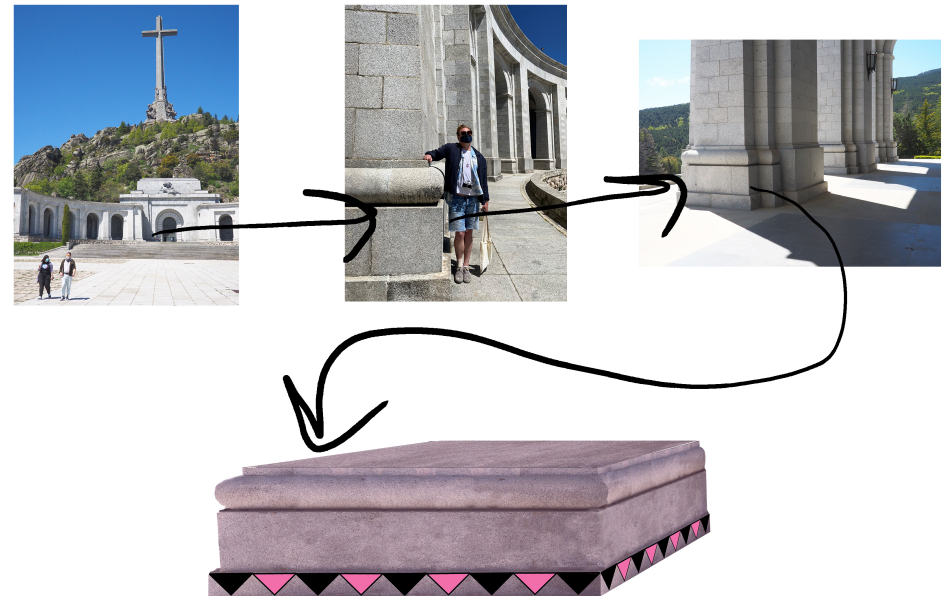


Fig 53: How to Steal From Fascists in 3 Easy Steps. Author's image [photography] 2021.

The Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes will be located at the intersection of Enric Granados / Consell de Cent, the center of the planned pedestrian zone of Gaixample. It will provide a central meeting point for the neighborhood. The plinth is reformatted to a more stage-like structure. Standing 3m x 3m wide and 79cm tall (signifying the year homosexuality was de-criminalized in Spain), the pedestal will be made of a pink granite, which will come from Barcelona's own Montjuic. The same rock that is used in Monument in Parc Ciutadella, it represents the support from the city for the LGBTQ+ community, and its pink hue makes this reappropriated form a little more playful. At its base, the pedestal is surrounded by upside down pink and black triangles [fig 54], originally symbols used by the Nazis to designate homosexuals (pink) and lesbians/transpeople/deviants (black) prisoners in their concentration camps. As seen in the Homonument in Amsterdam, these triangles have also been reappropriated by the LGBTQ+ community.



Fig 54: Pedestal Closeup. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

As with the triangles, the entire pedestal is way to forge a new meaning for the plinth. This pedestal acts as a plinth on those classical monuments, but since its height is much more manageable to jump onto, it is also a stage for all. Attending numerous protests and speeches dedicated to Community, I noticed a lack of permanent pulpits. Each is temporarily put up for a speech and quickly dissembled. The Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes gives us a concrete platform to raise our voices and celebrate our community. When any body rises above the granite, you are literally putting yourself on a pedestal: you are transformed from a body to a monument. It is not my aim to design a specific group of events, as they should be decided on by the community. It is meant as an open place for discussion, relaxation, reflection and pleasure. Drag shows, political speeches, children eating lunch or any manner of action should be welcome. Alternately, if this pedestal remains unused, it is equally a powerfully subtle monument in the neighborhood in the vein of those classic monuments with the "heroes" removed.

Whether it's used as a platform, spectacle, place to sit or empty plinth, there is something to be said to stomp on top of this fascist form.

Rising above our troubled history, now it's time we are heard and seen, so all the world can see our pride.

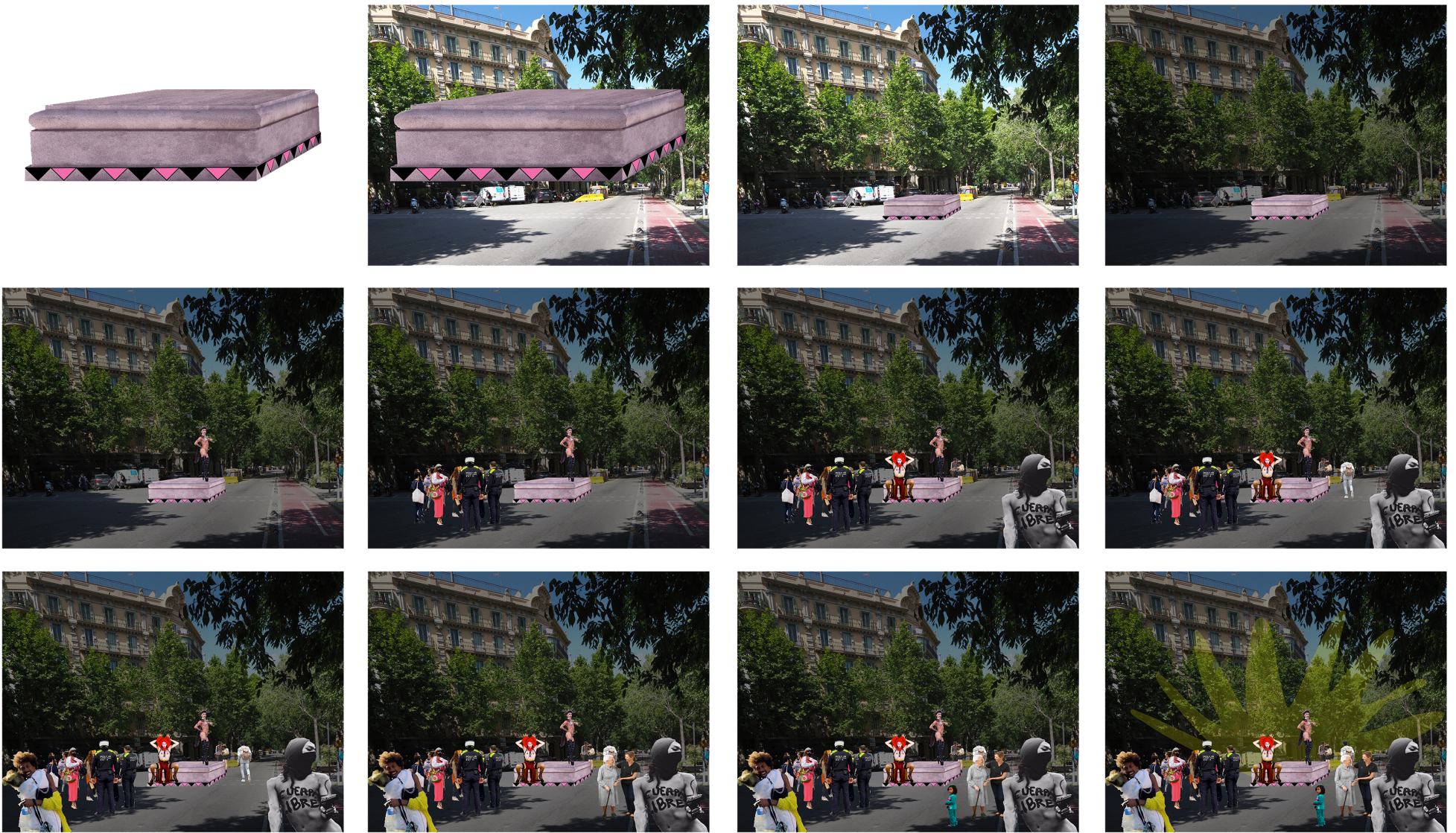


Fig 55: How to Use the Pedestal of Vagos y Maleantes in 11 Easy Steps. Author's image [illustration]



Fig 56: Time to celebrate. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

Reixa Pensant

[Fence of Reflection]

Across from the Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes is the Seminary of Barcelona, along the entire length of Enric Granados. While the vegetation of the interior patios lends a nice to a nice green atmosphere, the roughly 3m tall wall/iron fence form an imposing barrier to an otherwise jovial area [fig 57], normally full of school children and people enjoying a cup of ice cream from next door DeLaCrem Gelateria (I highly recommend their Helado de Maiz – but they do have options for you silly vegans too).



Fig 57: Enric Granados pedestrian zone. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

This structural grid separates us from the Seminary – itself part of a religious institution which has historically repressed and vilified the LGBTQ+ Community. With a simple act, we can reclaim this space, this border for ourselves. Whereas the pedestal gave us a place to stand up, this iron fence gives us a place to showcase our thoughts, dreams and fears in tangible form. A vertical platform, if you will. Walking around Barcelona, it is common to see various groups/organizations using the built urban forms, including iron fences, as a backdrop for their own projects/protests/posters [fig 58].



Fig 58: Barcelona school personalizing its facade. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

In Montreal, the Parc de l'Espoir, used this symbol gesturing of tying ribbons to memorialize HIV/AIDS victims. Funeral homes refused to accept these victims, excluding the possibility of having a traditional funeral. Instead, black ribbons were tied to the trees in park and messages written on the walls, transforming a simple neighborhood park into a “cenotaph”⁴⁵ [fig 59]. Reclaiming this iron bars, the fence along Enric Granados will be turned into a dynamic and symbolic wall for the community with Reixa Pensant.



Fig 59: Montreal Parc l'Espoir full of black ribbons signifying victims of AIDS. By City of Montreal [photograph] 1990s

⁴⁵ Roy, Lillian, and Luca Caruso-Moro. “‘a Cenotaph, Not a Park’: Updates Made to Montreal Park Honouring the Victims of HIV/AIDS.” *CTV News*, 18 Aug 2021.

Reixa Pensant will be completed by the citizenry. Using the colors of the inclusive LGBTQ+ flag, ribbons will be distributed during performance/events (taking place on the Pedestal, for example). People will be given a blank piece of colored ribbon and will be given free rein to write whatever their heart desires upon it. With this handwritten note of love/hope/fear/desire or even hate (the freedom of speech is to be respected – for it is a living part of our society as well), the user is encouraged to tie this ribbon onto the fence. When it is full of such ribbons, this stagnant, imposing fence become a living, breathing monument for Gaixample. With each passing wind, the transcribed tales take flight. Not just a powerful act in tying such intimate thoughts and memories to parts of the city – the colors of the inclusive pride flag make for a beautiful addition to the streetscape, adding a festive atmosphere. An alluring addition to nature’s hues of green and brown. Seeing these ribbons waving in the wind, visitors will be drawn to this fence, and upon closer inspection their curiosity will be peaked by glimpses of writing.

<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/a-cenotaph-not-a-park-updates-made-to-montreal-park-honouring-the-victims-of-hiv-aids-1.5550768>.

Showcasing the voices of the LGBTQ+ Community, Reixa Pensant subverts the historical religious division and proves that the world has not disappeared into fire and brimstone because of our existence.



Fig 60: Close up of hanging ribbons. Author's image [photograph] 2021.



Fig 61: Reixa Pensant reaching out for any body that will listen. Author's image [photograph] 2021.

Passeig de l' Arc de Sant Martí [Rainbow Promenade]

Passeig de Gràcia, Las Ramblas, Rambla de Catalunya, Gran Via.

Barcelona is often associated with its grand promenades. Evenings and weekends these are full of not just the normal hustle and bustle of major city, but of flâneurs, families and other assorted footgoers.

The streets of Esquerra de l'Eixample and Gaixample are full of wide sidewalks, but devoid of a central artery. The Passeig de l' Arc de Sant Martí fills that void. Utilizing the planned planned superilla of Enric Granados/Consell de Cent, these two streets will be filled with an array of spotlights pointed towards the sidewalks. These lights will, like the ribbons of Reixa Pensant, take the colors of the inclusive pride flag. Placed every 10 meters on both sides of the sidewalks, they will be displayed for 10 seconds, turn off, and then the following light will illuminate the pavement. These lights will chase each other throughout this new heart of Gaixample,

creating a welcoming and lively environment every day, from sunset to midnight, or until the last bars close. This area has numerous outdoor cafes, bars, and nightclubs, and this new Passeig will only add to the ambiance.

Outdoor lighting schemes have proven wildly successful, such as Taiwan's Urban Spotlight Arcade [fig 62] or even Barcelona's own Magic Fountain on Montjuic [fig 63].

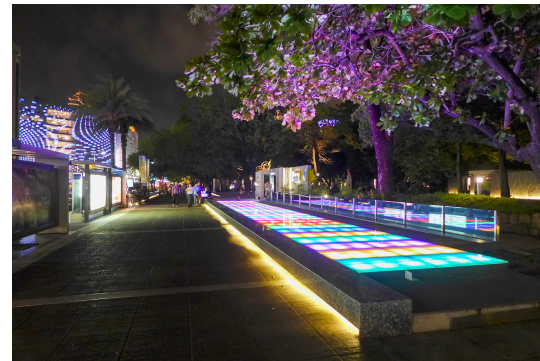


Fig 62: Taiwan's Urban Spotlight Arcade outdoor plaza. By Wpcpey [photography] 2021



Fig 62: Barcelona's Magic Fountain on Montjuic. By Nicholas Gemini [photography] 2018

Far from a simple lightshow, each light will have a message for the pedestrians. Taking the messages written on the ribbons of Reixa Pensant, these words will be projected from the spotlights themselves. The phrase will be shown for 10 seconds, then vanish back into asphalt. From a distance, these lights act as urban beacons, inviting curious pedestrians to partake in this rainbow catwalk [fig 64]. As they come closer, they will notice the words. The temporality of each light act serves as a reason to continue walking, and they entice the visitors/citizens to walk the entire promenade, reading each of the phrases. Since the writings were written and collected from the community, it is a 0 km project, from the people, for the people.

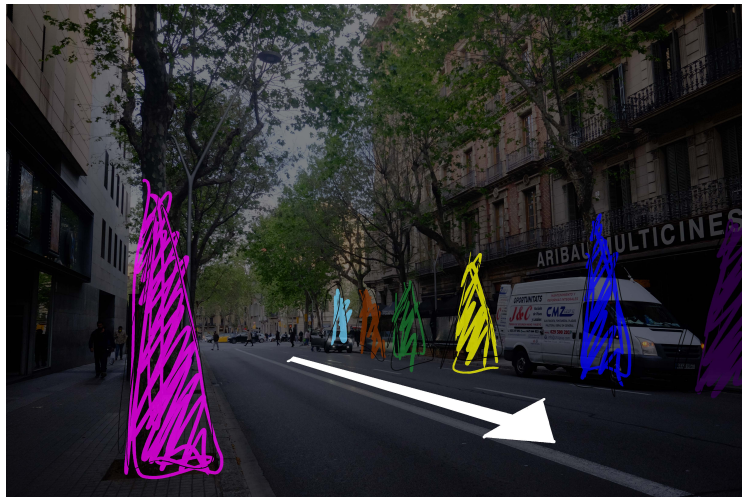


Fig 64: *Traveling the path*. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

Alongside the importance of the community's words being splashed upon the streets, these urban spotlights will increase the safety of this area with the increase in illumination. Compelling more people to the area and making for a more dynamic outdoor space for the visitors of the establishments means more eyes on the streets, thereby only adding safety in numbers.

Runway, spotlights, promenade: the Passeig de l' Arc de Sant Martí brings a generous dash of drama to the streets of Gaixample. When you are out for a walk and the spotlight shines on you, you become the star, baby! When the lights shine for no one, the neighborhood takes back the spotlight, basking in its own urbane glory (for 10 seconds). No matter if it's a member of the LGBTQ+ Community, an innocent bystander, or the city itself, Passeig de l' Arc de Sant Martí is a temporal light monument lighting up the Gaixample nights, celebrating words written by the community while illuminating each passing body.

Passeig de l'Arc de Sant Martí: no només un passeig, un monument murmurant.

[Passeig de l'Arc de Sant Martí: not just a promenade, a whispering monument]



Fig 65: Passeig de l'Arc de Sant Martí sharing the community's words. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

Via three different methods and materials, La Patum de Gaixample figuratively and literally illuminates the community, and creates a new reason to visit the area. It is a common refrain to hear from visitors and locals alike that “there is no there” in Eixample with each intersection blending into the next. By highlighting the crossroads of Enric Granados/ Consell de Cent [fig 66], La Patum centers the focus, turns on the lights, and provides a new heart for the barri.



Fig 66: The new heart of Gaixample. Author's image [illustration] 2021.

A pedestal, hanging ribbons and spotlights: three common items, hardly ground-breaking. However, design need not always be innovative: why reinvent the wheel when the wheel works perfectly fine? Gaixample is a lively district already, with a growing row of LGBTQ+ friendly establishments on Consell de Cent and Plaça Letamendi. These projects work with the area, not trying to carve a new image, rather, showcase what is already there. The performers are already in the bars, with the Pedestal de Vagos y Maleantes they are given an open air opportunity to share their art. The conversations are already going on between the neighbors, Reixa Pensant gives them the chance to share them on the streets. And if you walk these streets at 10pm any given night, you know the members of the Community are already strutting their stuff, Passeig de l' Arc de Sant Martí finally gives them the spotlight they deserve (while the community's verses fill the sidewalk).

This urban triptych celebrates our bodies, allows us to reflect on our lived experiences and gives us a permanent platform to manifest and showcase our realities.

Conclusions

Fleeting Convictions

These preceding pages of dreams, nightmares, clarion calls, acts of desperation, ladders, fountains, spotlights, screams, whispers can be read as many things:

Monuments for Diversity

Monuments for the LGBTQ+ Community

Monuments Representing the Queer Experience

Monuments Shedding a Light on our Past

Monuments Showcasing an Incomplete Future

Monuments Questioning What We Need

As Fredrich Douglas stated, one monument cannot show its subject, and, as I look back at these designs, neither can six. Just like the joke about “How many [insert profession here] does it take to screw in a lightbulb?”, we

could equally say “How many monuments do we need for [insert subject here] ?”

It is innately impossible to design a singular monument to diversity. At best these proposals attempt to bring forth a dialogue of what the Community faces, wants, needs and dreams of.

In the attempt of trying to make a more inclusive set of monuments, having discussions with strangers, friends, shop owners, designers, lovers, and the city of Barcelona itself, I fell into my own trap of creating from within, from what I know.

Not the most inclusive form of designing, to be sure.

Am I aware of the irony in these moments of “divine provenance” and inspiration from the street while at the same time lambasting Designers as Messiahs?

Painfully so.

I guess it’s true we are what we despise the most.

But I try.

My design is not your design, is not her design, is not his design, is not their design.

Design is at once universal and hyper-personal. Where these two collide is where engaging and successful designs come from.

I have never and will never use the term Good Design, as I believe it creates a sense of hierarchy in the profession between good and bad. As with gender identities and so many things in this world, design is very subjective and should not be content with such a simple binary.

Yes, “successful” can also be read as such a term, but I like to believe it as a bit more open. A successful design can be good, bad, helpful, hurtful or none of the above, it all depends on the intent of the designer and the design itself. However, as we have noted with historical monuments, many of those Men-on-Statues were built with the best of intentions during their birth and are currently condemned.

In ten years, I will probably look back at these projects and wonder what the hell I was thinking. Growth, critical analysis, learning and burning are all sacred weapons in the designers’ toolbox.

I will end this inconclusive conclusion with a few musings which can be read as a manifesto-lite (less decrees, than ruminations):

Design is not a solution, Design is a question.

Design is not a process, Design is constantly in process.

Design is not the truth, Design is a truth.

Design is not fact, Design is an opinion.

Design is not singular, Design is plural.

Take from these what you will.

Delete as you find appropriate.

Are these projects necessary? Are these projects design?

If you’re asking existential questions, I’m doing my job.

Nothing is conclusive, enjoy the ride and try not to die.

Unless you want to.

Afterword

Wait a minute... this section wasn't in the table of contents, whatever must that mean?

Ah, the slight of hand from an empathetic jester.... I couldn't leave you with such a pompous, heady ending. If you've made it this far, you must be engaged enough to read even the pages which don't exist at the front of the book. A magician never reveals his tricks, and neither should an author.

From the depths of my cavernous, cholesterol-clogged veins, a hearty thank you for reading all preceding pages. Or whichever ones you didn't skip over. Maybe you agree with me, maybe you didn't. I hope you at least found at least one kernel of beauty within this work.

One statement, one image, one thought that will haunt you, tease you and hug you in the days and years to come.

Some people call me an artist. Some people call me a designer. Some people call me an asshole. Some people call me a lover. I'm not one or the other. I'm all of these, and more. An authentic design reflects its creator, and that is what I strive for in my work. Engaging, plural and leave you wanting more. Is that knot in your stomach pleasing or destructive? Will it turn into butterflies or make you vomit that avocado toast from brunch?

Only time will tell.

See you in the next life.

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