

Resignification, Recontextualisation and Reclamation of Colonial Landscape Memorials in the Latin American Context

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The Place Of Memory and the Memory of Place
University of Oxford
June 2023



Isabel La Católica in La Paz, Bolivia
Source: Cholas Paceñas, 2020



Recent reactions to colonial-era memorials have contributed to a renewal of interest in memorialisation as a focal point for social justice and equity.

In the Latin American context, colonial memorials are visual links that are deeply-rooted elements of the region's identity.

Manifestations in Santiago, Chile
Source: Alexis León 2021



Bolivia, 2020



Chile, 2019



Colombia, 2019

These three cases exemplify how such figures become symbols, where the individual figures "stand for" a model of European women's beauty that is seen as discriminatory against native women as well as symbols of colonial and military regimes

Three landscape memorial sites in Latin America as carriers of meaning



Statue of:
Isabella the Catholic
La Paz, Bolivia

1928



Statue of:
Manuel Baquedano
Santiago, Chile

1928



Statue of:
Sebastian de Belalcázar
Morro de Tulcán, Popayán, Cauca
Colombia

1937





1928

Isabel La Católica Statue



La Paz, Bolivia.

Historical Context

The conquest, discovery, and civilisation of the Indians have been achieved thanks to the queen, her Catholic faith, dedication, and money. Isabel La Católica is located in one of the most exclusive areas of La Paz. The queen embodies the ideal of beauty as a “white” woman. The statues represent a racist society.

Role of Public Space

It is part of the historical architectural district in the centre of La Paz. The plaza during the time of the Bolivian dictatorship (1964 to 1982) was a place where people from the left side of the political spectrum could meet. It is a commemorative monument that allows a sense of entering a historical period of the city.

Motives of Protest

The Aymara indigenous people have had the illusion of being recognised as human beings, and that has not happened. Demonstrations and creative interventions broadcast their revolutionary anti-patriarchy message by exploring the transformative power of visual practices and contestations in public spaces, streets and monuments.

1875 Established as *Plaza La Serena* (Serena Square).

1892 Plaza La Serena is renamed Plaza Colon Square in honour of Spanish conqueror Christopher Columbus.

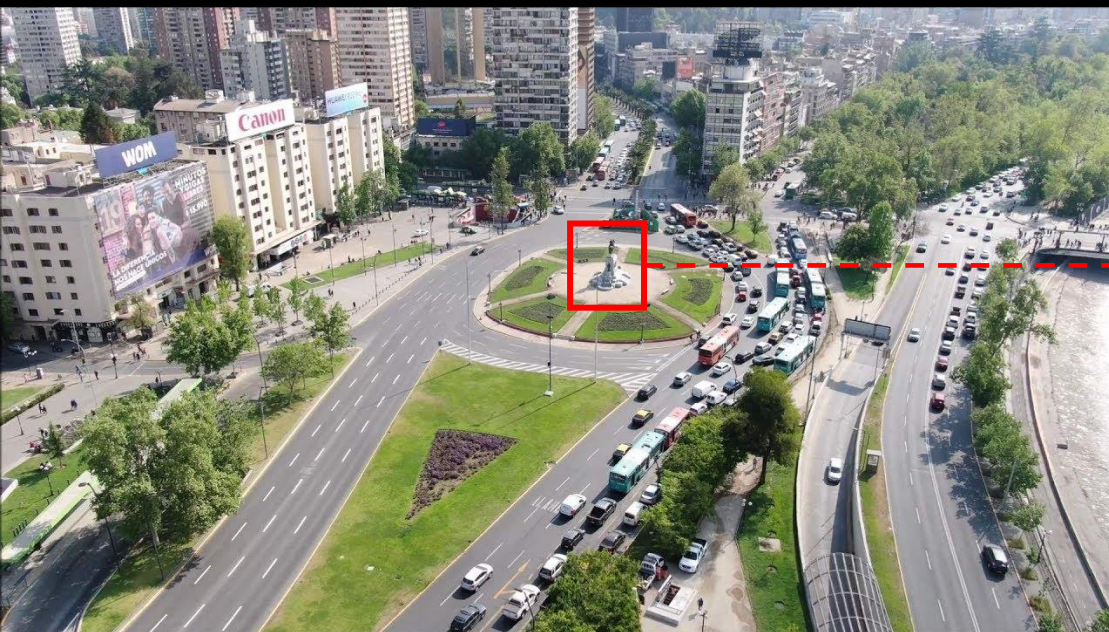
1910 As a celebration of the first centenary of the independence of the Republic of Chile, the Italian government donated a sculpture. The new name was Plaza Italia (Italian Square).

1928 The statue of General Manuel Baquedano is raised on a pedestal at the centre of the Square.

Historical Context Hero of the Pacific War between Chile and Bolivia/Peru. The square is a significant gathering place.
Baquedano is known as a military man who committed genocide against Indians during the war.
The monument has an inherently military identity.
Before the protests in 2019, the statue was historically invisible and disconnected from the citizens.

Role of Public Space Demonstrate the military's power and influence.
The Plaza has served as the starting point for protests.
Promote and reinforce a specific narrative of Chilean history that glorified the military.

Motives of Protest The protest was motivated by the rise in the price of public transportation, which triggered a realisation that the same system and model had been in place for 30 years.
The statue is viewed as a symbol of political power and hierarchy, often representing the national oligarchy.



Santiago de Chile, Chile.



Baquedano Statue



de Belalcázar Statue



Historical Context

Conquerors as heroes.
After independence, the nation starts to build a national identity.
Reflection of white power. Indigenous narratives have been silenced.

Role of Public Space

To testify to the city's origin.
The statue is a marvellous piece of artwork. Tourist site.
A reminder of our colonial past and strongly linked to the city's identity.

Motives of Protest

Unequal monument. Not inclusive of indigenous and poor Colombians.
Symbol of colonialism, genocide, war crimes, rapes, and patriarchy.



El Morro del Tulcán

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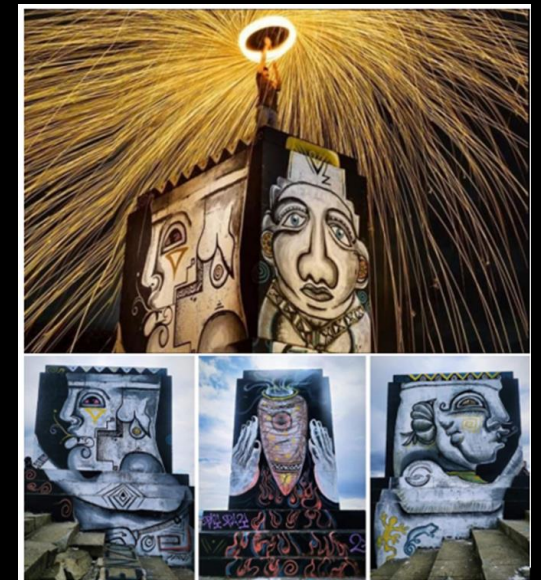
Statue of:
Isabella the Catholic



Statue of:
Manuel Baquedano



Statue of:
Sebastian de Belalcázar



These statues raise questions over **how landscapes can be democratic** when they are dominated by a single voice- that of the past narratives.

The **symbolic power** of these figures themselves and the potency of **their location**. This is due to the dominance of those who have historically held onto power in the country--first the Spanish colonial masters and later the local societal elites. Interventions and on-site responses, such as **dressing, painting or removing the statues**, are tangible expressions of grief and anger, making visible the struggles and exclusion from **historical narratives in public spaces** for centuries.

