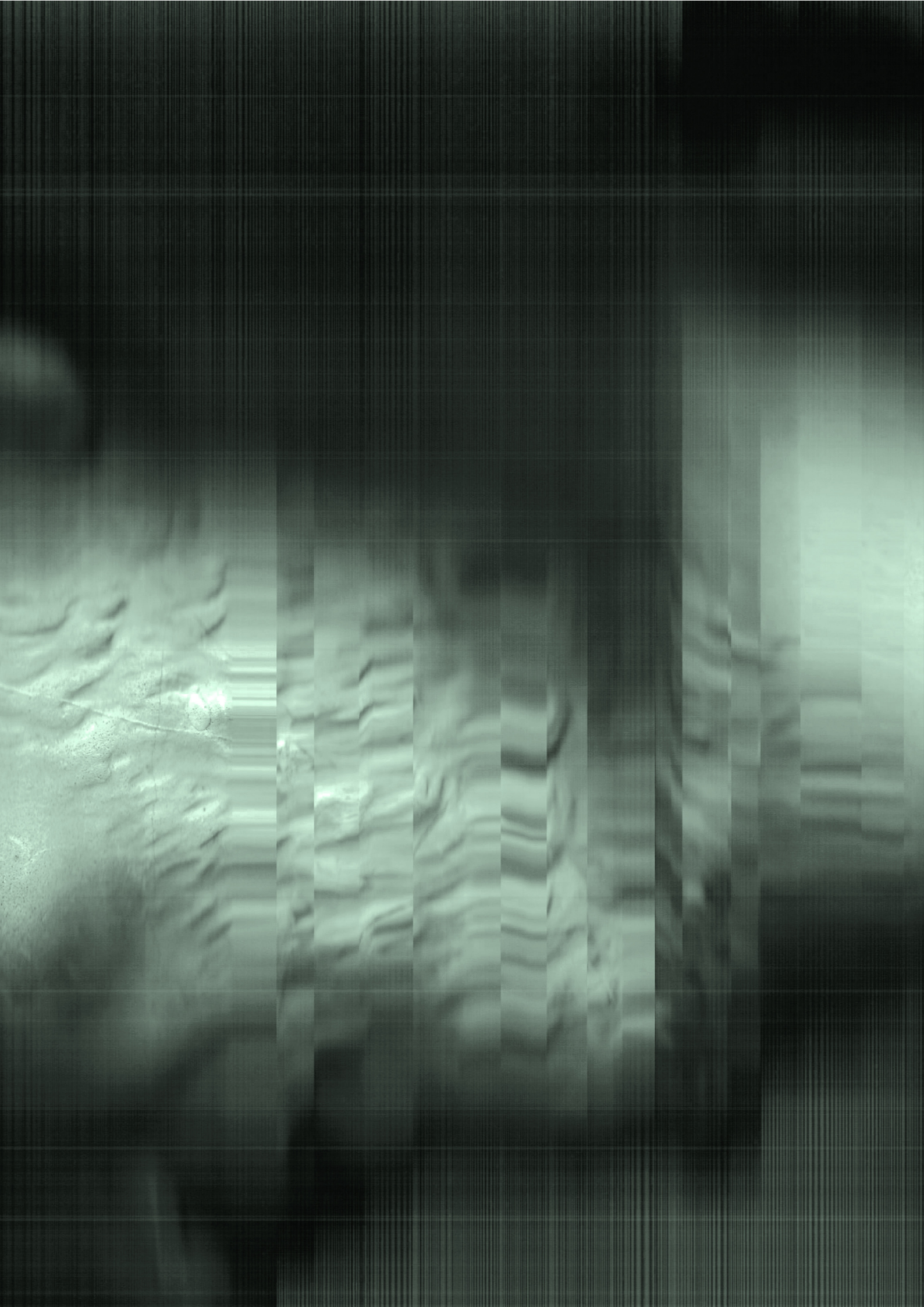




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Set *in* Stone

on what we long to forget and
what we choose to remember

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Taking the cast of a relief for the Imperial Museum during the Mount Nemrud expedition in 1883. © Istanbul





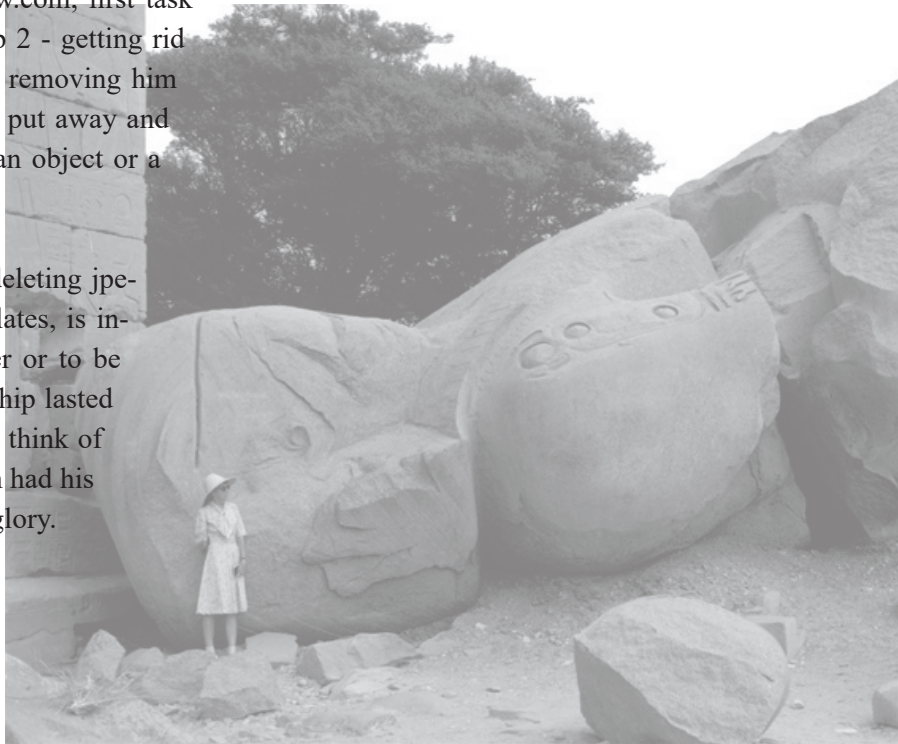
To overcome something, do we need to forget it? But can we even forget?

It could be said that our life, in its essential form, consists of a constant balance between thoughts that we long to forget and memories we wish to remember forever. To erase and destroy things appears to be as significant to human existence as remembering them: from putting away the presents that someone offered us once, to toppling a statue that for years or decades stood on a public square. To hide away things inside boxes, to bury them or to destroy them with no trace, is an attempt at erasing something from history -whether our personal history, or a national one. The feeling and the intention are the same; it's the scale that changes. Precisely because of these shared experiences, we all sympathize and understand the feeling of wanting to forget, as a solution to overcoming a traumatic event.



A year ago, I found myself navigating through Google, wasting hours in searches on how to forget someone. Eventually, I came across websites revealing how to forget a person, step-by-step. Following these steps, as described on the website WikiHow.com, first task was to cut off physical contact¹, followed by Step 2 - getting rid of what reminds one of that person, and Step 3 - removing him or her from one's electronic life.² In other words, put away and eliminate any reminders of that person, whether an object or a photo on Facebook.

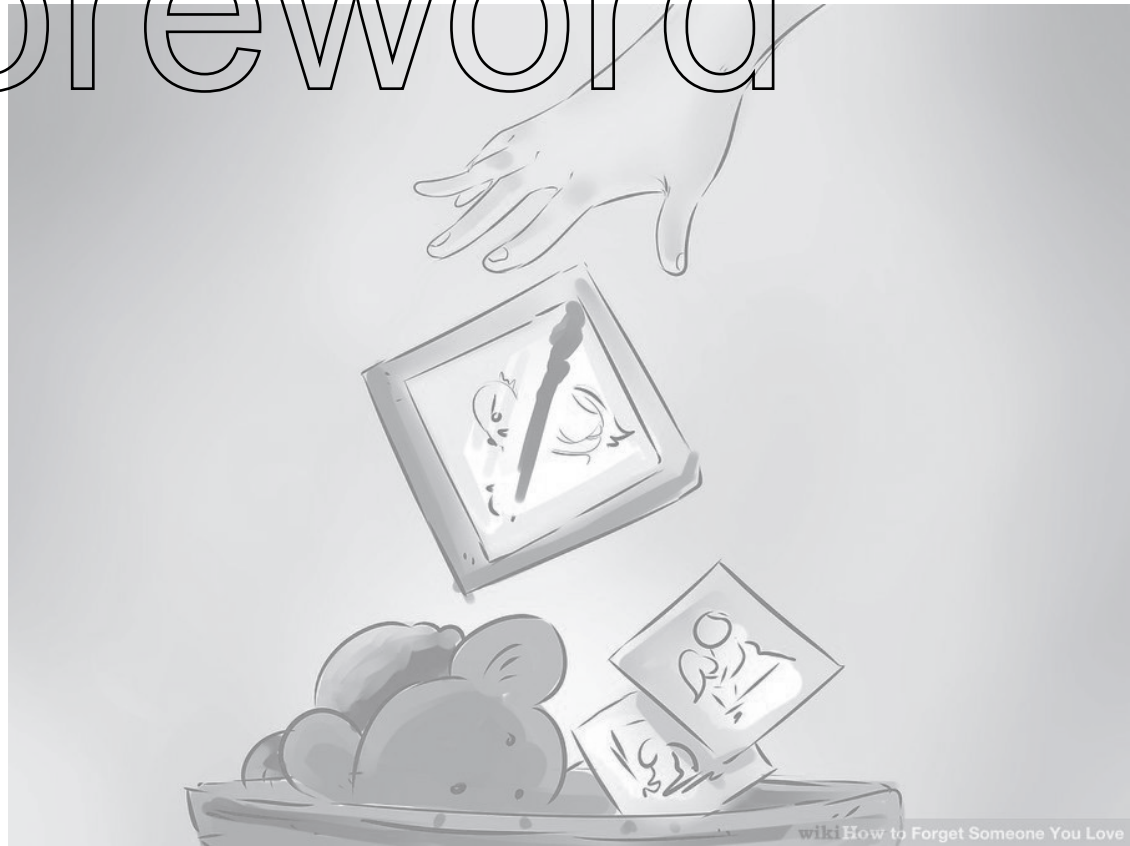
Finding ourselves either burning love notes and deleting jpegs, or toppling statues and removing memorial plates, is intrinsically linked to a previous wish to remember or to be remembered. Whether because while the relationship lasted we adored to keep every single item that made us think of that person, or because a once acclaimed politician had his or her statues raised all over town to signify their glory.



Foreword



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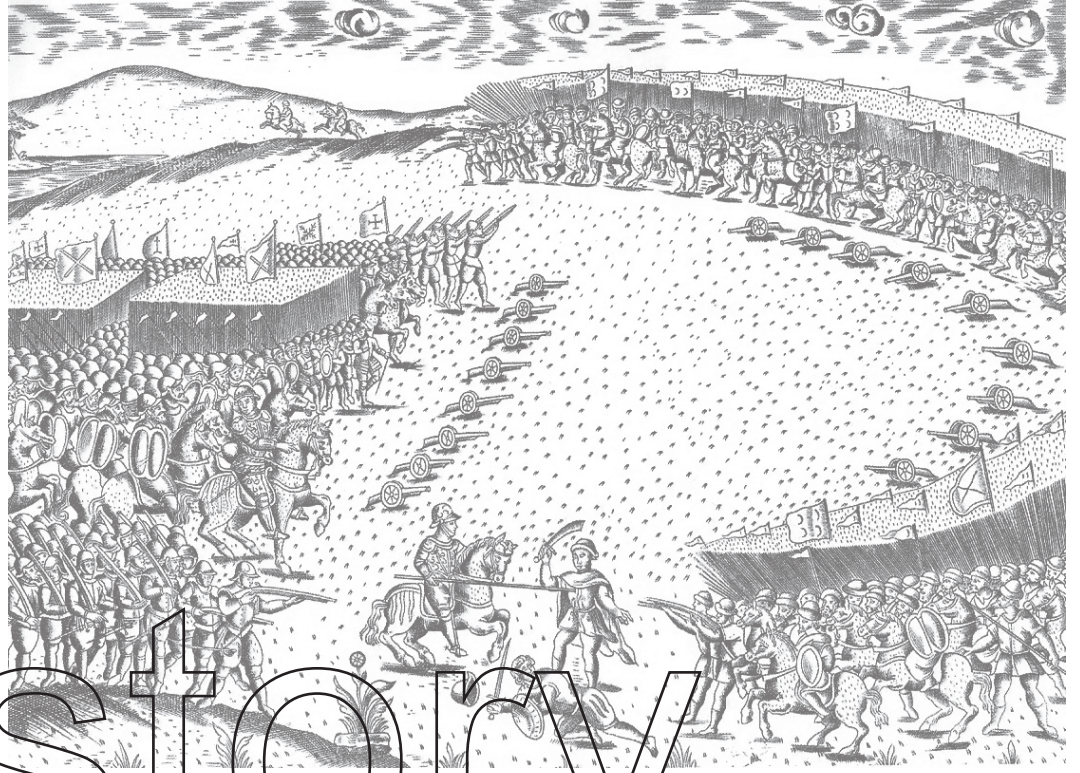
wikiHow to Forget Someone You Love

Much of what we remember is linked to physical objects that exist around, contact with which triggers the information we've accumulated inside our brain⁴ over time. Conscious of these connections between objects and memory, as well as the limits of our existence, we become attached to objects as a form of guarantee for longevity beyond death – a form of immortality. As such, societies have developed various cultures of representation and monumentality which encompassed humans' lives and especially their fear of being forgotten. We've turned to reproductions as a way to guarantee the prevalence of ourselves over time, whether through statues, paintings, jpegs, or video recordings.

What the WikiHow to do list appears to undermine, is the immaterial aspect of remembrance. One can delete, erase, cut, get rid, remove, abolish, burn, and topple all material things that remind us of someone, but what to do with the memories we can't erase, such as those stored inside our brain?

Set in Stone revolves around the persistence of memory concerning the materiality and immateriality of existence. It questions our capacity to endure (being remembered) beyond materiality (a body) or representation. This written work balances between, on one hand, what is necessary for one to be remembered or to be forgotten, analyzed from the perspective of the cult of the self in art and social networks, and on the other, the revolutions that in recent times have attempted to overthrow governments based on the cult of personality.

- ¹ <http://www.wikihow.com/Forget-a-Person>
- ² [Ibid](#)
- ³ [Ibid](#)
- ⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2017/jan/29/a-neuroscientist-explains-how-the-brain-stores-memories-podcast>



A story
of loss and
broken
pieces



d

Rossio Train Station moments after King Sebastian's statue was toppled, Lisbon 2016, © Lusa/Facebook



King Sebastian's statue after the incident, Lisbon 2016 ©, Lusa

'How to make thought without a body possible. A thought that continues to exist after the death of the human body. Thought without a body is the prerequisite for thinking of the death of all bodies, solar or terrestrial, and of the death of thoughts that are inseparable from those bodies,' poses Jean-François Lyotard in his oeuvre The Inhuman¹. He continues, 'but 'without a body' in this exact sense: without the complex living terrestrial organism known as the human body. Not without hardware, obviously.'

Dom Sebastian I, was the 16th King of Portugal, having reigned from 1577 until his death in combat during the battle of Alcácer-Quibir in Morocco 1578. Sebastian had little time to accomplish much during his fourteen-month reign. Nevertheless, he managed to institute legal reforms, restructure much of the administrative, judicial, and military services, and, amid the plague, improve the health care of the Portuguese kingdom.²

In the XVI century, Portugal was still waging war with other empires. On the 4th of August 1578, near the town of Ksar-el-Kebir, Morocco, the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir took place. The Portuguese front suffered a severe defeat, the consequences of which are remembered to this day. King Sebastian was almost certainly killed in the battle, last seen riding headlong into the enemy lines.³

How to make thought

Not yet married, thus having left no descendants, his death caused a severe crisis in the empire. Weakened by the defeat and the loss of the King, the Portuguese kingdom also had to cope with the loss in combat of thousands of human lives and to afford the high ransoms of the survivors captured by Morocco, leading to the indebtedness and financial ruin of Portugal. The Spanish kingdom managed to take advantage of this weak moment, proceeding to invade Portugal, instituting the Iberian Union.⁴ Lasting for 80 years, this loss of sovereignty became the darkest period in the Portuguese history.

King Sebastian's body was not immediately transported back to Portugal, not until years after the battle, leading the Portuguese people to believe that the king hadn't died, but was either imprisoned or in hiding. Therefore, the cir-

Found facsimile of King Sebastian's statue, Lisbon 2016, © Lusa



without a body

cumstances of his death weren't immediately clarified, to the point that even today, history books do not agree on the details of his demise. Without a King, without a body, and amid the loss of sovereignty and impoverishment of their kingdom, the Portuguese held onto the belief that one day their lost king would return on a foggy morning to save his people. And so was originated the myth of Sebastianism, founded in the hope of the return of a savior that will restore the national glory and prestige, much as in the return of King Arthur in England, or that of the Messiah in the Judeo-Christian faith.⁵

The myth of Sebastianism has survived to our day, entrenched in the collective memory of the Portuguese, commonly used as an expression that refers to not only patriotism and nostalgia, but also the feeling of incompleteness and incentive of hope. Sebastian's figure isn't remembered for his achievements as a monarch, as much as it is remembered for the circumstances of his disappearance, narrated and referred across Portuguese literature and culture to our times.

It is interesting that the origin of such myth departs from the fact that the King's body was not immediately transported to Portugal. Throughout history, a few Sebastians popped up, instigating the belief that the King had not died. In fact, his burial site is still a topic of debate, with, as recently as 2009, historical theories⁶ proposing a different burial site than that where his official Tomb is situated: The Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon.

Despite the numerous versions of his death, there has never been an official investigation on this issue, with historians now requesting the exhumation of Sebastian's remains at Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon, to put an end to the myth.⁷

If in the XVI century there was the need for physical evidence, three centuries later, with the invention of photography, images became facts.

With photographs and videos, one can demonstrate that a place, something, or someone exists, and that something happened, allowing others to experience them at a distance. As with many other denoted historic personalities, Sebastian of Portugal, while alive, was portrayed by the painters working for the Royal Court.⁸ Nevertheless, due to his short reign, only a few portraits were made at the time, and even fewer survived till today. Interestingly, probably due to the myth of Sebastianism, Sebastian of Portugal has inspired many artists and artisans throughout time to reproduce his image. One of these cases, a public space statue made in stone by the sculptor José Simões de Almeida was installed in June 1890 on the façade of Rossio Train Station in Lisbon, to mark the inauguration of the building.⁹ There, King Sebastian's statue stood for almost 126 years until the 3rd of May 2016, when a tourist tried to climb the statue to take a selfie with it and accidentally knocked it down.¹⁰

In the days after the incident, the social networks and the media were flooded with comments and reports of the issue.¹¹ Suddenly, it was as if King Sebastian had died again and no one knew the whereabouts of his body. While professional artwork restorers analyzed the possibility of retrieving the statue piece by piece, a group of historians, museum directors, and public asset managers went on a quest to come up with a substitution. Perhaps fortunately, Rossio's Sebastian had left an 'offspring': a copy of the statue, made in the XXth century, was found, and is currently being evaluated for its use as a replacement.

The accidental clash between a tourist's cult of the self and the cultural worship of a denoted historic figure exposed one other reality that, perhaps, the memory and myth of King Sebastian are so intrinsic to the Portuguese, that it won't be necessary to have a representation to guarantee that he is not forgotten. Or is it?

ly possible.

Jean-François Lyotard ¹

¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Can Thought go on without a Body?*, in 'The Inhuman', 1988, Editions Galilée

² Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, Rui Ramos, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, *História de Portugal*, A Esfera dos Livros, 2012

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

Joel Carlos de Souza Andrade, *Em demanda do Sebastianismo em Portugal e no Brasil: um estudo comparativo (séculos XIX/XX)*, Universidade de Coimbra, 2014

⁶ Miguel Sanches de Baena e Paulo Alexandre Loução, *Os Grandes Enigmas da História de Portugal*, ed. Enigma, 2009

⁷ <https://www.publico.pt/2007/04/11/culturaipilson/noticia/historiadores-querem-acabar-com-o-mito-de-d-sebastiao-1290853>

⁸ Sónia Louro, *A Vida Secreta de D. Sebastião*, Saída de Emergência, 2008

⁹ <https://www.publico.pt/2016/05/04/local/noticia/estatua-de-d-sebastiao-na-estacao-do-rossio-em-lisboa-destruida-por-jovem-1730941>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/11/travel/selfie-statue-portugal>, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-portugal-statue-selfie-idUSKCN0XV28Z>



© www.wikihow.com

Step 1: Cut off physical contact



American soldier covers Saddam Hussein's statue with an American flag, Baghdad, 2003, © REUTERS

*'The monument, here used in relation to public sculpture, is a particular kind of thing. By virtue of its placement in an open, accessible location, it reaches a wide audience and because of this reach is often understood as an object of collective import, whether speaking to supposed universal truths or serving as a receptacle for memorialization. This understanding of the 'monument' and sculpture's connection to the notion of monumentality has undergone considerable revision in recent years, but the history of public things has always been tenuous and problematic. And yet, in the face of such instability, monuments continue to endure; entrenched both in physical space and the collective consciousness. Beyond the subject matter, they were created to convey, public sculptures become receptors for much larger issues, and nodes for exchange: meeting points, sites of grief and triumph, landmarks, and social gathering places. These functions insulate the work in a way, making any proposed extrication or destruction difficult.'*¹

As history demonstrates us, statues have always been toppled and intervened upon, used as tools for the members of society to express their needs and feelings towards someone. To topple someone's statue in the public space has strong symbolism. Much like putting away everything that reminds you of a loss of a loved one, to pull down a politician's statue represents a symbolic execution of his/her government.

Don't touch our leader!

The Guardian⁷



Euromaidan square, Kiev 2013, © VICE



¹ Martin R. Sullivan in <https://sculpturalthings.com/2013/03/20/the-absence-of-monuments/>
² <http://www.journalism.org/2012/11/28/role-social-media-arab-uprisings>
³ <http://www.wikihow.com/Forget-a-Person>

Between 2008 and 2014, the beginning of this millennium was distinguished by crowds of people gathered in protests that sparked all over the globe, from Iceland and Greece to the Arab Spring, from Occupy Wall Street to the Ukrainian Revolution. These actions and demonstrations, incentivized by the economic crisis and political discontent, were largely enhanced and backed by the internet, and in particular the social networks.² Today, when researching that period of history, it is remarkable to observe how the execution of statues and figures of politicians, along with other nationalist symbols such as flags, marked these events as a form of self-expression (to which I will return in ‘Step 4 - Express your emotions’).³

The relationship that individuals and society have with statues is especially revealing of the profound dual role that statues play in civil society, as much as in the religious sphere. Hence it is only natural that the toppling of statues has always come side by side with their raising. A statue and a monument can be utilized both to reinforce and wreck someone, as the history of violence towards statues tells us, and as the recent revolutions have shown.



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Protests in Tahrir square, Egypt 2011, © CNN

Seen by some as a villain and by others as a hero, toppling Lenin's statues in Ukraine served as means for Ukrainian citizens to express their desire to revolutionize a political situation by means of cutting off from their political past, whereas to restore, keep, and take care of those same symbols of the past represents a form of expressing diverging opinions.⁴ This may help to explain why, when the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation was initiated, one of the actions first taken by Russian soldiers was to salvage Lenin's statues that had been toppled just days before, later followed by the restoration of the Soviet symbols that had been vandalized, and the protection of the still standing and untouched Soviet monuments in the region.⁵ *'In Simferopol, someone affixed a sign to the pedestal of the Lenin statue, imploring "Don't touch our leader!" and next to it stood a sign, "Crimea against Nazis!" On a WWII monument nearby, a sign decorated with the Soviet hammer and sickle said "Hands off our history! Memory! Pride!" At pro-Russia protests, people brought Soviet flags and portraits of Stalin.'*⁶

What was really at stake in these 'battles' over monuments was the fact that there are details in peoples' every-day environments that inform so much on its past. A city's planning can determine how those living in it will cohabit, from public parks to rest and play, to its public squares to protest. Monuments, memorials, and statues are scattered in between city's limits, on its squares, parks, and façades, referencing that place's and peoples' past, and as such serving as foundations to their collective memory.



⁴ <http://america.aljazeera.com/features/2014/3/dispatch-from-crimea.html>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/ukraine-topples-biggest-remaining-lenin-statue>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/apr/11/skopje-macedonia-architecture-2014-project-building>

⁸ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/19/let-them-eat-alexander-the-great-statues-skopje-2014-macedonia-colorful-revolution/>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/apr/11/skopje-macedonia-architecture-2014-project-building>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Marina Warner, in online Frieze magazine, 2015, <https://frieze.com/article/falling-idols>



And there is the country's ongoing bitter dispute with Greece, which continues to block the country's accession to international organizations like NATO and the European Union because of its name.⁸ It's natural that a relatively new state would want to define its own place and create some connection with a seemingly-settled history, but Macedonia's lack of an independent or national history, combined with its first instance of independence, have resulted in Skopje becoming the city of the kitsch Monuments.⁹ Where grand representations of Macedonian-born Alexander the Great and Mother Theresa inhabit the same space as those of Michael Jackson and other figures more indicative of a global collective memory rather than a local one, having the locals opposing the poorly thought-through decisions behind Skopje's public planning.¹⁰ What was supposed to inspire a stronger national identity, instead inspired a national protest movement, which, arguably and ironically may have contributed more to the building of Macedonian national identity.

Exhibited in public, those statues of *heroes or villains* are in a vulnerable position to time's vicissitudes: *'Harbors, piazzas, parks and city streets unfold past exploits in a palimpsest document – the stories statues tell, in stone and bronze, are simply bedded down, stratum upon stratum, in the built environment's haunted unconscious. 'You walk through a great city,' wrote Charles Baudelaire in his essay 'Salon de 1859', 'and your eyes are drawn upwards [...] for in the public squares, at the corners of crossroads, motionless characters, taller than those who pass by at their feet, relate to you in a silent language high legends of glory, of war, of knowledge, of suffering [...] The stone phantom seizes you for a few instants and orders you, in the name of the past, to think of things which are not of this world.'*¹¹ Time certainly has an effect, but the biggest demonstration of this vulnerable position, might be their resistance to a social-political revolution or shift.

Interestingly, to reference certain people and events through monuments by definition excludes others, and as such can be used as a form of editing history and memory. A pertinent example of this is how a politically-funded project by the name of Skopje2014⁷ served as vehicle for the relatively new Republic of Macedonia, to reconfigure the monumental landscape of its capital city Skopje. The raising of monuments was seen as a way to configure and settle an independent history to that former Yugoslavian state, that had previously always been attached to other states or empires. In 1991, Macedonia emerged as its own country from the dissipation of Yugoslavia and began to establish itself on the world stage – but with little assistance from its neighbors. Modern-day Bulgaria denies the existence of a separate Macedonian language; Serbia does not acknowledge the existence of an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church.



© 20th Century Fox

Step 2:
Get rid of
what
reminds
you of
the person





Toppled statue of Napoleon, Commune de Paris, 1910, © Public Domain

forgetting has been the norm...

Removal of King George's II statue, New York city, William Walcut, 1776, © art.com



Never before, have we been so immersed in technology and in envisioning the future. Never before, have we, on the other hand, been so enthusiastic about the past, and about documenting the present. Perhaps it is the fear of loss, which has us looking back regularly; perhaps it is the excitement that comes from these new machines¹ that allow us to scan and print temples; perhaps it is mere, unfounded longing and nostalgia; perhaps it is because we still fail to understand ourselves.

How much about our history can artistic and archaeological artifacts tell us? The land we walk upon bears artifacts and vestiges that allow us to trace the past of humankind and to understand ourselves. For example, archeological excavations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Eastern territories have been pivotal to Western historiography². Yto Barrada's *Faux Départ* (2015) exhibited last year at Secession Wien³, documents the elaborate Moroccan industry of fake fossils, which arose in response to the

accelerated increase in demand for African fossils in the twentieth century. Drawing attention to the process of accumulation of fake cultural artifacts, brought about by the demands of contemporary economy, was subsequently linked to the cultural tourism industry and the cultural imagination in the wake of the colonial and archaeological expeditions of the nineteenth century.⁴ Barrada sheds light on our obsession with the past, which is so strong that the actual remaining artifacts are insufficient to satiate our need to preserve and possess it.

Commending on the human necessity to deal with the infinity of time and the ungraspable past, Umberto Eco notes that we '*make lists because we don't want to die*'⁵, as we're incapable of comprehending our immaterial death. '*And how, as a human being, does one face infinity? How does one attempt to grasp the incomprehensible? Through lists, through catalogs, through collections in museums and encyclopedias and dictionaries.*'⁶

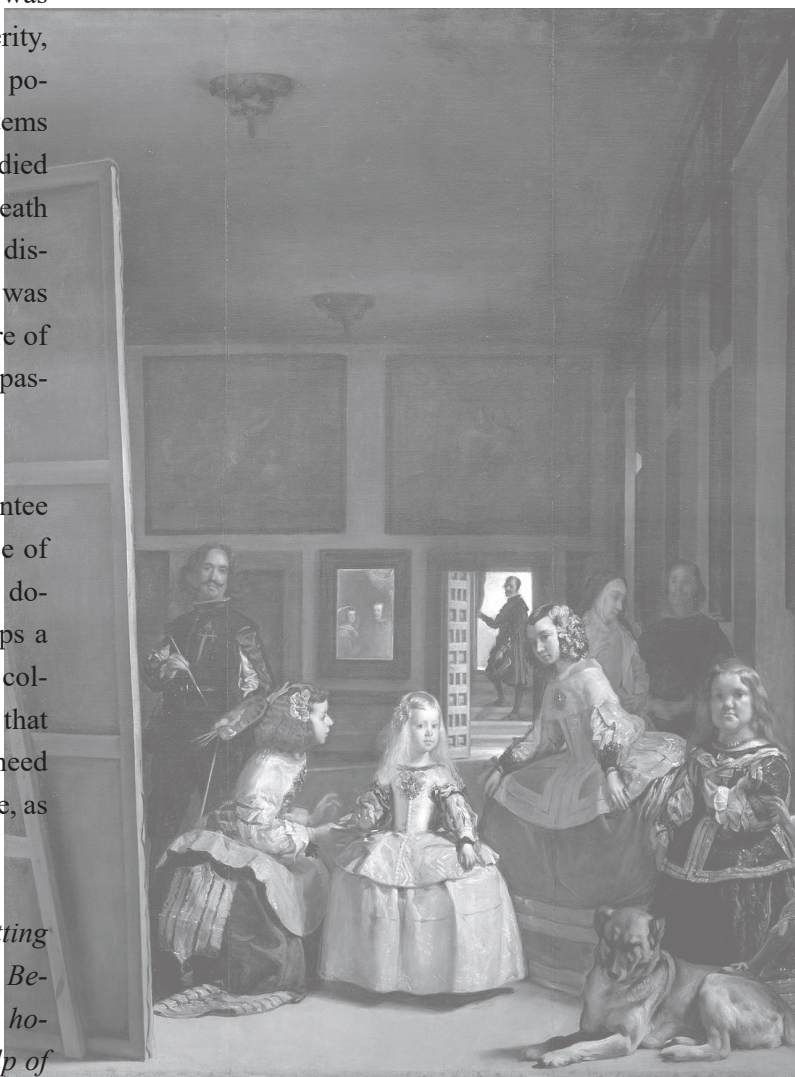
Art, before the invention of photography, acquired a core function in carrying (as representations) historical events and one's memory for posterity. The sculpture might be the oldest form of such act, traces of hand sculpted figures having been found along with the earliest vestiges of humankind. It seems as though already the early humans realized that the existence of a figure would always outlive them, and as such could figures be utilized as traces of their existence, immortalizing them through statues and statuettes, monuments, and carved inscriptions.

Conscious of the limits of our existence, we're attached to objects as a form of guaranteeing longevity beyond death. Hence have humans, over time, turned to representing in pictures or three-dimensional forms: themselves, the deceased, mythological entities, religious figures, or the immaterial such as emotions. Representations as lists, as they could guarantee that what was enacted in a physical form would prevail for posterity, both applied to the existence of an individual, and political or religious use. The persistence of those items over time would guarantee that what they embodied would echo in the upcoming epochs, despite the death of that someone. "Historically, the monument – as distinguished from all other things that are present – was supposed to endure for all time"⁷, so has the culture of representation and monumentality always encompassed humans' lives and their fear of being forgotten.

We've turned to reproductions as a way to guarantee the prevalence of ourselves over time. Our practice of keeping the past and reproducing it, in between documenting and sharing our daily present, is perhaps a symptom of this condition. Museum galleries and collections become lists of referenced, studied items that reference ourselves and our cultural project. We need these things to comprehend and justify our existence, as well as the existence of others from the past.

*'Since the beginning of time, for us humans, forgetting has been the norm and remembering the exception. Because of digital technology and global networks, however, this balance has shifted. Today, with the help of widespread technology, forgetting has become the exception, and remembering the default.'*⁸

- ¹ <http://www.newpalmyra.org/>
- ² Sofia Lemos, 'On Dust' 2016
- ³ <https://www.secession.at/en/exhibition/yo-barrada>
- ⁴ Sofia Lemos, 'On Dust', 2016
- ⁵ Humberto Eco, in interview with Der Spiegel on his book 'The Infinity of Lists', 2009
- ⁶ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-dont-want-to-die-a-659577.html>
- ⁷ Dan Graham, 'Models and Monuments: The Plague of Architecture', in Arts Magazine 41 March 1967
- ⁸ Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, 'Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age', 2009

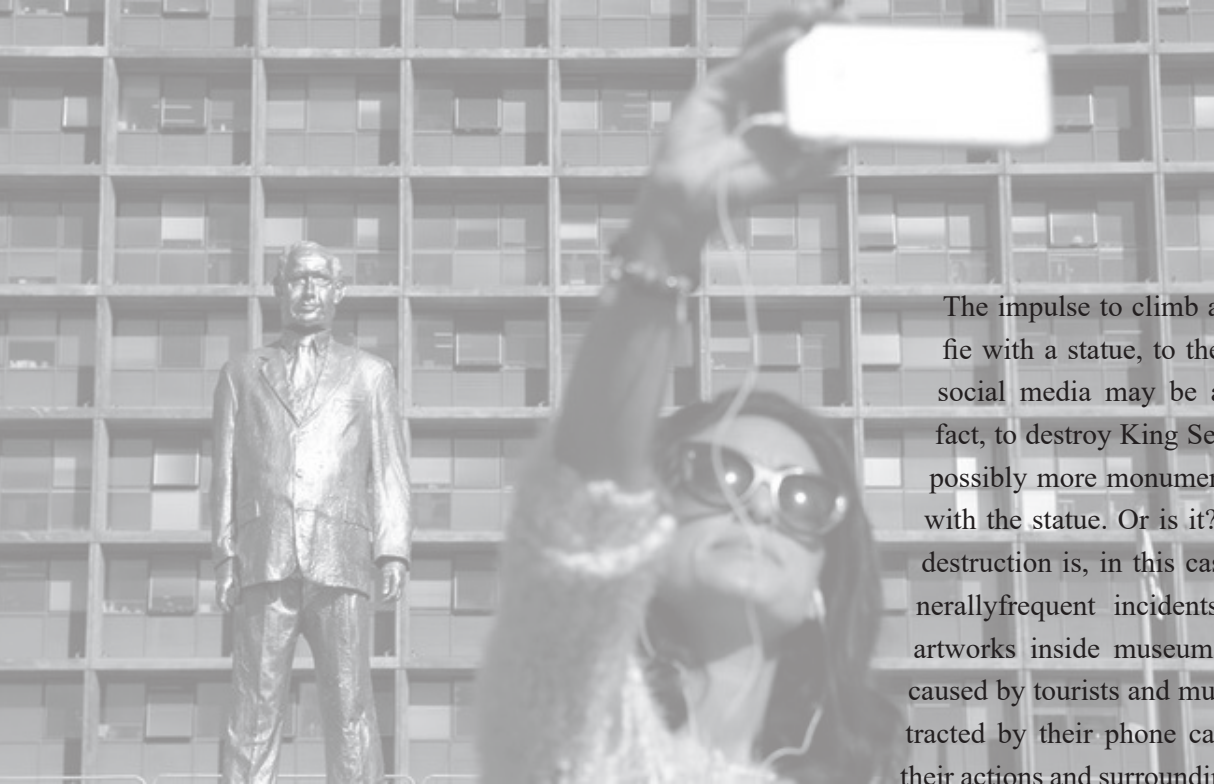


Las Meninas, Diego Velázquez, 1656-57, Museo del Prado, © Public Domain





Yto Barrada, *Faux Départ*, video still, 2015, © Yto Barrada



The impulse to climb a façade and take a selfie with a statue, to then share that instant on social media may be a reflection of that. In fact, to destroy King Sebastian's statue is quite possibly more monumental than taking a selfie with the statue. Or is it? The King's accidental destruction is, in this case, symbolic of the generally frequent incidents involving statues and artworks inside museums, where accidents are caused by tourists and museum visitors who, distracted by their phone cameras, fail to examine their actions and surroundings correctly. Accidents happen, but what to say about the intentional toppling of statues?

The advances in technology and in the proliferation of information we have access to today, have drastically shifted the relation between the "I" and the "self," as we ever more carefully cultivate the image of ourselves which we exhibit to others. Through this process of self-curating our image, we engage in a cult of personality that is no longer exclusive of a political persona or a public figure, but of each and every one of us, distributed by online posts and photographs, then enhanced by likes and reposts. Monumentality is, hence, subjective. We do not build statues of public figures as often as before, but we publicly expose ourselves more than before.

While the tourist who accidentally toppled King Sebastian because of a selfie, chose not to reveal his identity to the media, the men and women that acted upon the statues of Hafez Al-Assad, Saddam Hussein, Lenin, Hosni Mubarak, and, more recently, Donald Trump's effigy, had a divergent attitude. These protesters enthusiastically shared their doings and actions on the social networks and allowed the media to film as they brought down, defaced, and burned those

Across this investigation, I've asked myself if most humans don't share the awe of being forgotten after their death, the fear of never being remembered? If deep down we all do not wish to become monumental? But in the modern, fast-paced reality, where images, moments, news, and events overlap each other, detracting us from focusing on something; and where Youtube videos that were shared millions of times make the evening news among reports on refugee crisis, American and European elections, climate change, peace attempts, etc, what does it mean to be monumental today?

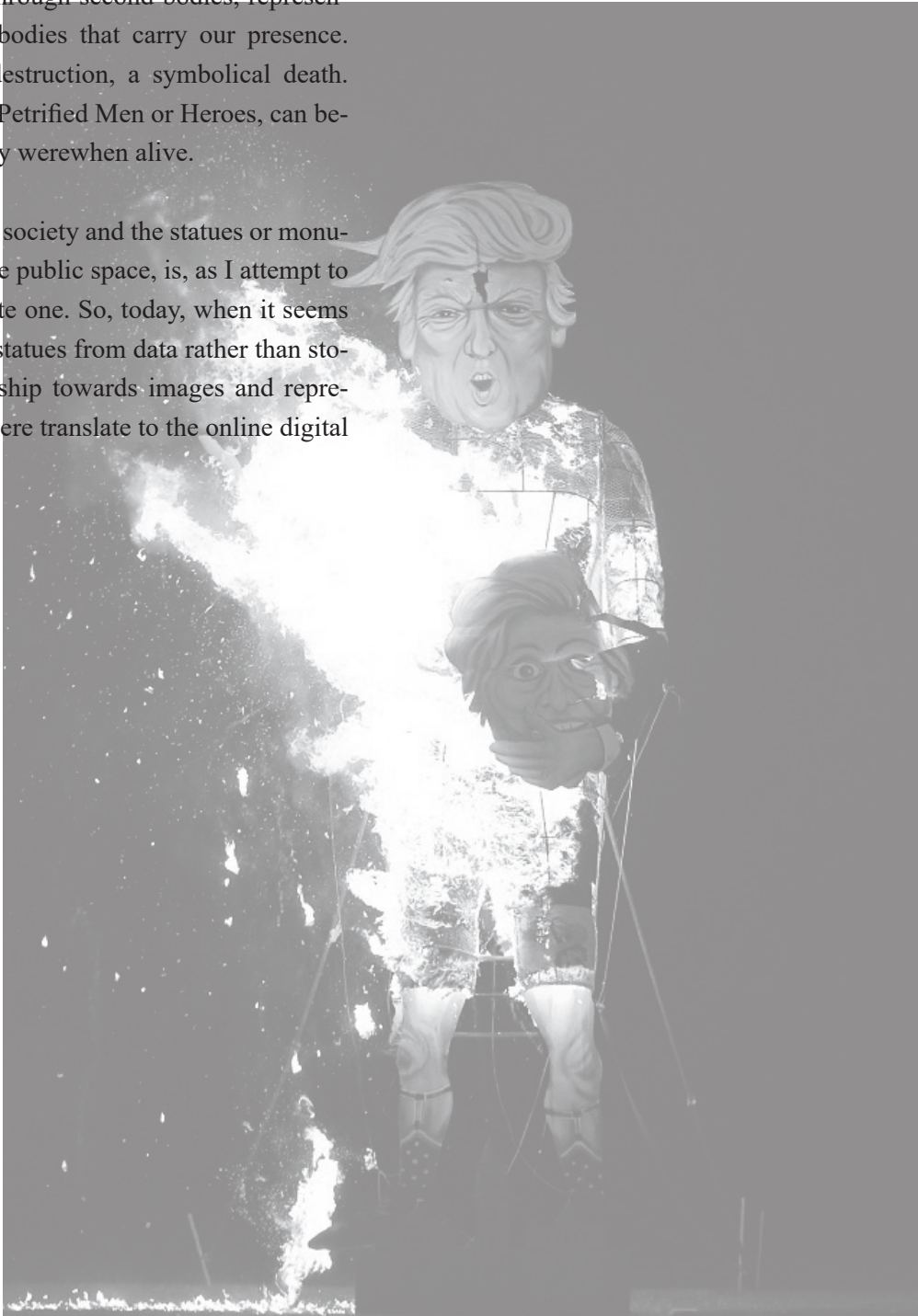
*...and
remembering
the
exception*

Viktor Mayer-Schönberger ⁸

images. Anonymous, it was as if their faces and bodies replaced that of the figure that dropped or the face that lost its features; a clash of personalities: that of the dictator versus the visages of the thousands of anonymous protesters.

To deface, to destroy, to burn, and to bury a statue is an attempt at erasing something, or causing it to be forgotten. The destruction of everything that concerns the memory of someone, whether it is the belongings of someone you wish to forget or the only remaining statue of an undesired politician, can contribute to the process of erasing that person from history. We survive through second bodies, representational threedimensional bodies that carry our presence. Their destruction is our destruction, a symbolical death. Placed out in public, these Petrified Men or Heroes, can become more fragile than they werewhen alive.

The relationship between a society and the statues or monuments that surround it in the public space, is, as I attempt to demonstrate, a very intimate one. So, today, when it seems that we increasingly build statues from data rather than stone, how does this relationship towards images and representations in the public sphere translate to the online digital public domain?



Donald Trump's effigy burned in the UK, 2016, © Leon Neal / Getty Images





Syrian rebel fighters celebrate territorial victory by Afez Al-Assad's Defaced statue, Reuters: Khalil Ashaw 2015. © Khalil Ashawi/REUTERS



Turkey Blocks @TurkeyBlocks · 3 de nov de 2016
Confirmed: Twitter, Facebook and YouTube blocked by throttling in #Turkey - developing incident
turkeyblocks.org/2016/11/04/soc...

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Fri Nov 04 2016 01:50:00 GMT+0300
https://twitter.com 4565 DOWN
https://facebook.com 5002 DOWN
https://youtube.com 5001 DOWN
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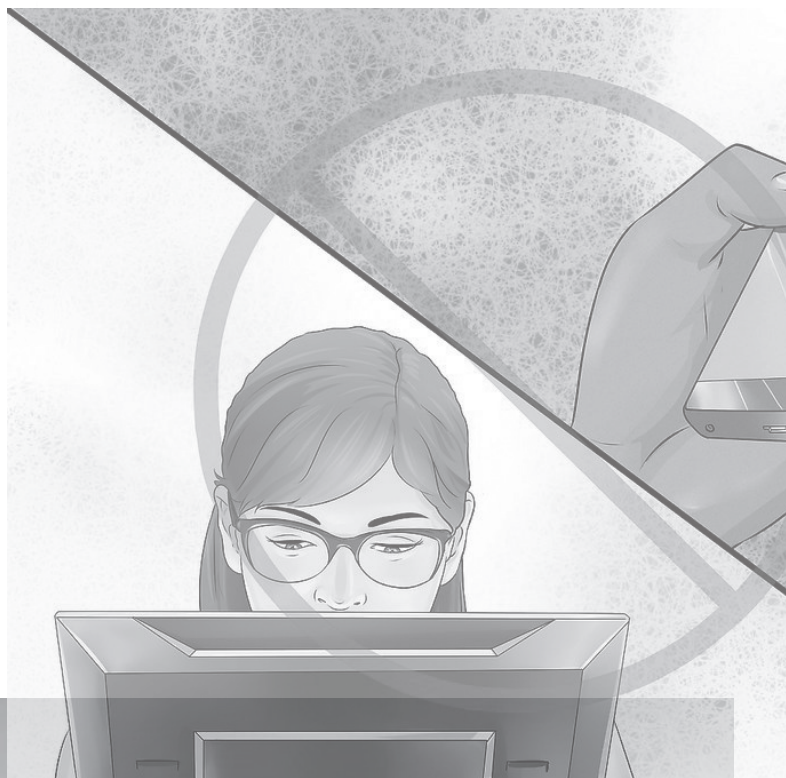


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Seguir

Update: WhatsApp messaging service block in #Turkey confirmed, joining Twitter, Facebook and YouTube shutdowns
[turkeyblocks.org/2016/11/04/soc ...](http://turkeyblocks.org/2016/11/04/soc...)

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Fri Nov 04 2016 02:44:38 GMT+0300 (+03)
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https://twitter.com 4028 DOWN
https://facebook.com 5005 DOWN
https://youtube.com 5002 DOWN
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© www.wikihow.com

Photo montage found online, of selfie taken at Lenin Memorial in Ulan-Ude, Russia, ©Tumblr





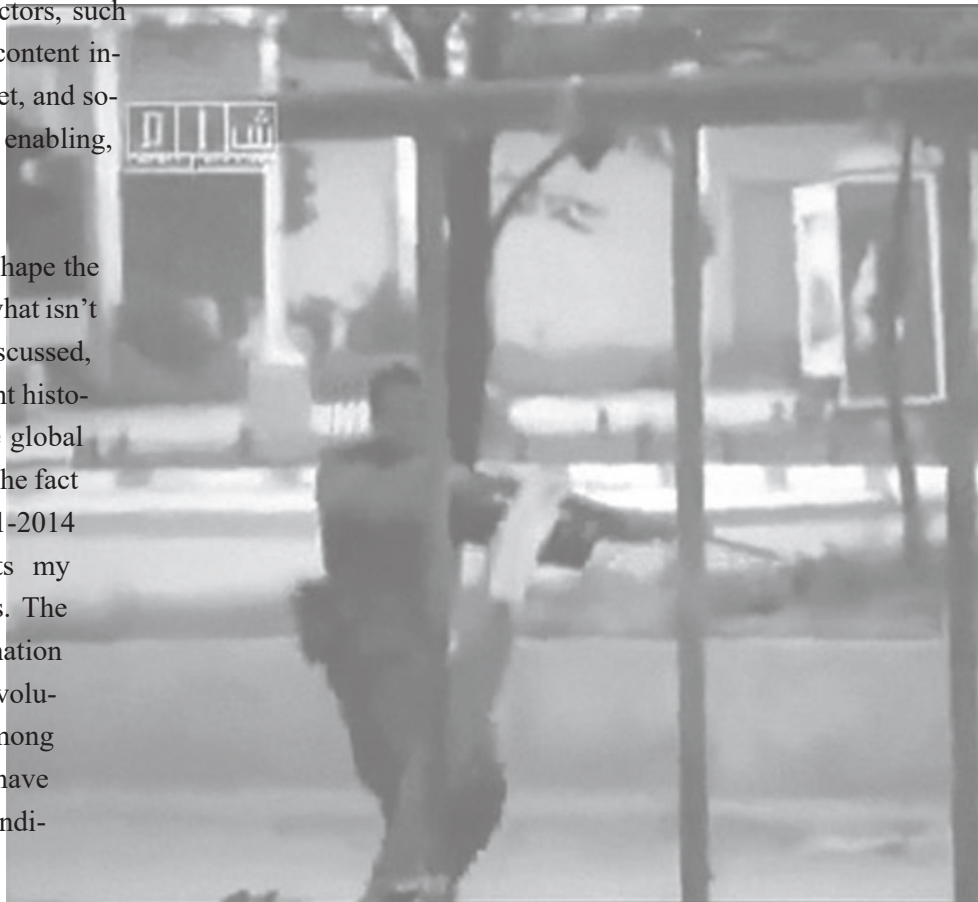
Step 3:
Remove
him/her
from your
electronic
life

The internet revolutions to

We all saw the masses of people toppling the statues of politicians these past years, whether on TV or online, and if one hasn't, on Youtube it is still possible to find those video accounts.¹ The sparks of revolutions and demonstrations that encircled the globe are surely among the most important developments of this period in history, symbolized most notably by the daunting images of crowds larger than city squares, toppling statues off their pedestals. Among other factors, such as the economic crisis and the political discontent incentivizing these demonstrations, the internet, and social media in particular, had a core role in enabling, enhancing, and communicating them.

Just like our interactions with monuments shape the collective memory by defining what is and what isn't worth remembering, as I have previously discussed, I am interested in observing how these recent historic events will or will not participate in the global collective memory in the near future. Or, if the fact that I was part of these movements (2011-2014 anti-austerity protests in Portugal) affects my memory more than it does of other events. The internet, in its capacity as the major information distributor that allows others to follow revolutions, national elections, royal weddings, among other (ir)relevant international events, may have transformed the way in which a global and individual collective memory is shaped.

It unarguably changed the way in which revolutions take place today², from the information and content it provides, to the modes of transmission it allows and supports. Twitter Revolution³ refers to the importance that Twitter had as a communication tool used by protestors and demonstrators who were facing internet censorship, during the Egypt revolution of 2011 and the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine in 2013. The Internet and the social media enabled the protesters to navigate around the imposed internet sanctions of certain websites (such as Youtube in Turkey⁴), by providing alternative ways of accessing social network services.



Rabih Mroué, *The Pixelated Revolution*, video still, 2012, ©

This, in turn, allowed protestors to overcome the press as the main information vehicle (commonly controlled by the government they intended to overthrow), and ultimately to have their actions echo even further, reaching international press, internet users, and basically everyone's News Feeds. The civilian was suddenly a protester and a reporter, live streaming his/her experiences of the revolution directly on Facebook and Twitter. This monumental development has been made evident and eternalized in Lebanese artist RabihMroué's work "The Pixelated Revolution". He provided a narrative to the images culled from the Internet and Youtube videos, posted by civilians attempting to document the latest acts of violence in the ongoing Syrian Revolution, where the witnesses have documented and shared their footage to tell of their experience.⁵

changed the way in which take place today

BBC²

Rabih Mroué



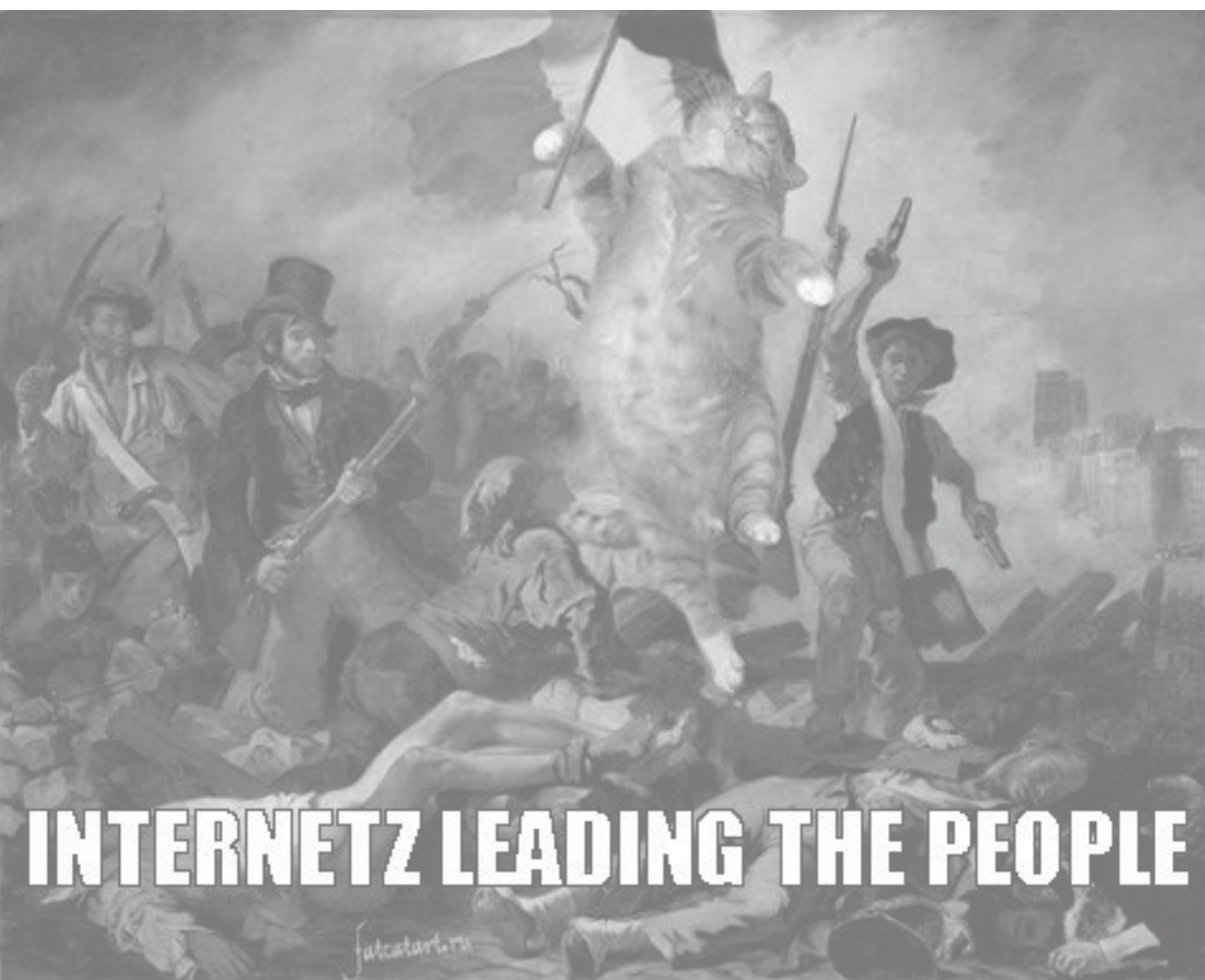
Heba Amin, *Speak2Tweet Project*, video still, 2011 - ongoing, © Heba Amin

The internet and the social media played a vital role in the outcome of revolutions in another important aspect. Speak2Tweet was a service developed by Google and Twitter, to help people stay connected when an Internet connection is unavailable, specifically in response to the Internet shutdown during the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The service was reactivated in Syria when Bashar Al-Assad's government shut down the Internet. Speak2Tweet consists of a communications service which allows users to leave a "tweet" on Twitter by calling a designated international telephone number and leaving a voice message. This technology had an immediate effect, as many militants participating in the Egyptian revolution utilized it: soldiers, civilians, and others were using Speak2Tweet to record their messages and have them reach others on Twitter. Egyptian Artist Heba Amin has managed to retrieve all the voice recordings left at Speak2Tweet service, with which she has founded the Speak2Tweet art project, based on the following concept:

*While Speak2Tweet didn't necessarily serve the practical functions that Facebook and Twitter fulfilled in mobilizing people, it nevertheless composed a unique archive of the collective psyche. The platform played a unique role that was particular to the time it was launched; recorded speech is what set it apart from any other social networking platform. An accumulation of emotionally moving recordings preserved the moments of the fragile emotional state of the Egyptian people. Egypt's revolution is still an ongoing process. Only time will tell where the country and its future generations will end up. What we can say with certainty, however, is that social media, online platforms, and digital documentation provided a plethora of information for future generations to draw from and construct multiple collective memories. This project attempts to preserve the messages from the Speak2Tweet archive.'*⁶

In the digital era, we document and upload our routines, so that even experiences from years ago can be re-introduced into the present moment, as if they never lost their presence. Today, events become memorable and remain vivid because their consequences echo in our present, and their memory lasts long in accounts, reports, photographs and videos that have been uploaded, reposted, and spread all over the web.

*'When things go viral, and one seems to be able to go back in time online, it appears as if the experience of time has drastically changed these days. Not that long ago, the city, its monuments, libraries, archives, and inhabitants appeared to be the only source of information on the past, on time traveling. With the introduction of internet and the digital as tools to collect, produce and transform information, past, present and future have become ever more close to one another. The Internet is organized in a less historicist way than traditional libraries and museums. The most interesting aspect of the web as an archive is precisely the possibilities for decontextualization and recontextualization through the operations of cut and paste that the internet offers to its users.'*⁷



Online found photomontage, © Tumblr

Liberty Leading the People, Eugène Delacroix, oil on canvas, 1830, © Getty



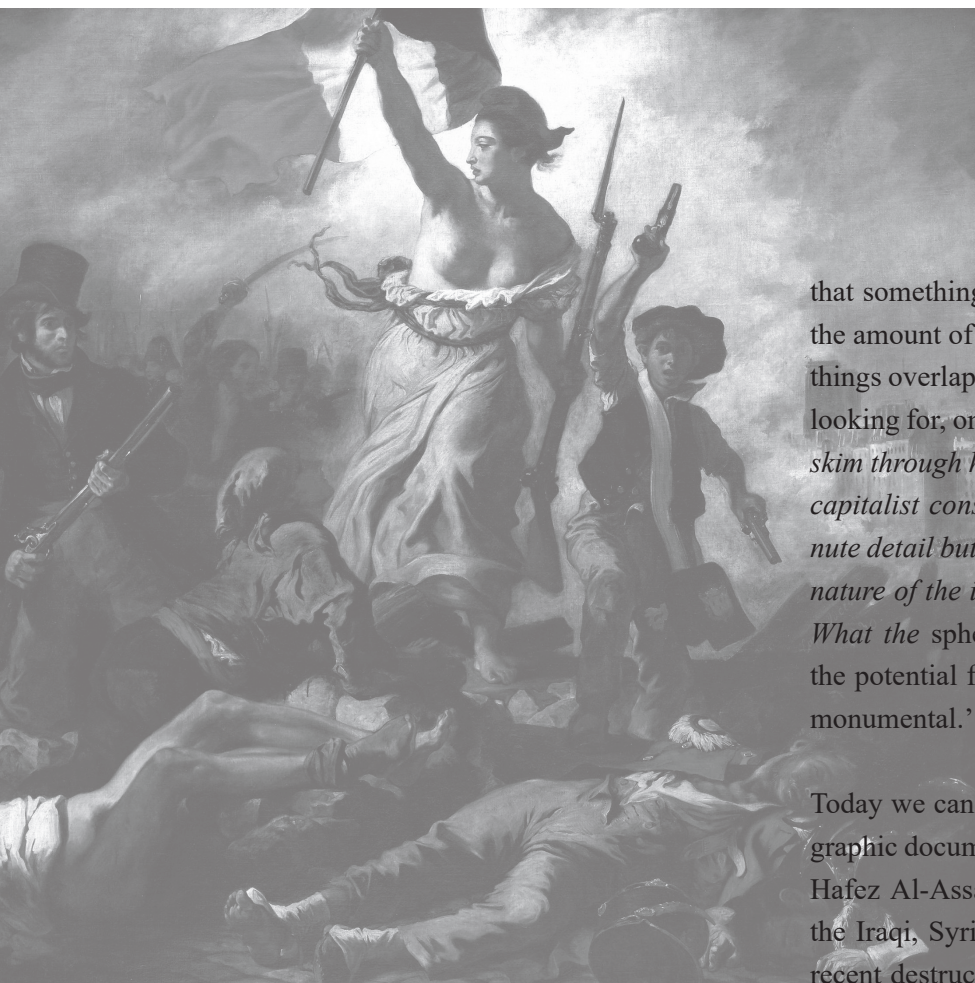
*One seems
able to go
back in
time online.*

Boris Groys ⁷

One can imagine that in the 16th century, when King Sebastian died, not as much information circulated among the population as it does today. Looking back at the recent Arab Spring, the Economist points out “the protesters’ message spreads virally through social networks, making it impossible to suppress and highlighting the extent of public support for the revolution. The combination of improved publishing technology and social networks is a catalyst for social change where previous efforts had failed.”⁸

- ¹ Saddam Hussein Statue Pulled Down To The Ground: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWxsZYK6IPU>
 Egyptian Revolution- 18 Days in 10 Minutes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_IR3XJ1zTw
 Hafez Al-Assad statue is taken down in Raqqa, Syria: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG2_MKxZiRA
 Protesters topple Lenin monument in Kiev : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRrTAS1TngY>
² <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-18013662>
<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530566/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/>
³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter_Revolution
⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/27/google-youtube-ban-turkey-erdogan>
⁵ Fawz Kabra, 2012 in <http://www.ibraaz.org/news/21>
⁶ Heba Amin on her Project Speak2Tweet in <http://www.projectspeak2tweet.com/>

- ⁷ Boris Groys, *The Truth of Art*, e-flux Journal #71, 2016
⁸ <https://medium.economist.com/how-the-16th-century-invented-social-media-a132128d715c>
⁹ Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age*, Princeton Press, 2009
¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/aug/29/facebook-fires-trending-topics-team-algorithm>
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/22/social-media-election-facebook-filter-bubbles>



that something will not disappear. At the same time, with the amount of uncategorized information available online, things overlap each other, and in order to find what you are looking for, one sometimes has to dig deep: *'Regularly, we skim through hyperlinks, skating from images of conflict to capitalist consumerism, we are entrenched deep into minute detail but always comforted and bound by the generic nature of the interfaces we use: our browser and screens. What the sphere of the web enables most powerfully is the potential for circulation, the potential of the viral, the monumental.'*⁹

Today we can watch, over and over, the video and photographic documentation that is online of Saddam Hussein's, Hafez Al-Assad's, and Lenin's statues being toppled by the Iraqi, Syrian, and Ukrainian people, as we watch the recent destruction of Palmyra. To watch from far as things fall apart or get destroyed has become recurrent to our eyes. The 21st century has offered us the possibility to be aware of all, and to choose the information that reaches us¹⁰, as Facebook's algorithms condition the information that our News Feed shows based on our friends, likes, searched and general activity. Is it possible for these new methods of circulating information to change the way we remember today, or how we define history for future? Can all this information that is produced, posted, and is every day circulating, survive?

Despite information circulation being less abundant in the past and having fewer means to disperse itself, events and persons have nevertheless been remembered in history. Their role in shaping the world has been communicated through written accounts, artworks, or through a creation of an oral historical account. Our present is marked by interesting times, where the importance of an event appears to be determined by the number of reposts it has, and the online digital existence seems to have become the guarantee

*'The list is the origin of culture. It's part of the history of art and literature. What does culture want? To make infinity comprehensible. It also wants to create order -- not always, but often. And how, as a human being, does one face infinity? How does one attempt to grasp the incomprehensible? Through lists, through catalogs, through collections in museums and encyclopedias and dictionaries. There is an allure to enumerating how many women Don Giovanni slept with: It was 2,063, at least according to Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte. We also have completely practical lists -- the shopping list, the will, the menu -- that are also cultural achievements in their own right. The list doesn't destroy culture; it creates it. Wherever you look in cultural history, you will find lists. In fact, there is a dizzying array: lists of saints, armies, and medicinal plants, or of treasures and book titles. Think of the nature collections of the 16th century.'*¹¹

Our use of social media and technology today appears to be a straight-forward evolution of Eco's thoughts on how lists are a human and cultural need. News Feeds on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr, present themselves as a historicized list of what our online life and activity have been since we joined the online sphere. They enable us to publish our enlisted daily life and activity, expanding the practice of the cult of personality to all internet users. Everyone can have a Facebook account, even King Sebastian and other deceased figures have one, politicians are social media users, and even social media non-users lives' eventually collide with these accounts, as illustrated by Trump's tweets making the evening news.

'There would be no history, then, if the instant that I am living through were only perceived, rather than also being remembered as I experience it; if the 'totality of what we are seeing, hearing and experiencing' were not at each moment split into 'actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other'. The formal anachronism, whose prerogative is to display both the intertwining and the hiatus between the possible and the real, is neither anti-historical nor supra-historical, but, so to speak, historicizing.'¹²

¹¹ Umberto Eco, in interview with Der Spiegel on his book *The Infinity of Lists*, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/spiegel-interview-with-umberto-eco-we-like-lists-because-we-don-t-want-to-die-a-659577.html>

¹² Paolo Virno, *Dèjà Vu and the End of History*, 2015 first published in 1999 as *Il Ricordo del Presente*

¹³ http://www.salon.com/1998/11/25/feature_253/

¹⁴ <http://digital-archaeology.org/>

¹⁵ Paolo Virno, *Dèjà Vu and the End of History*, 2015 first published in 1999 as *Il Ricordo del Presente*

Excavations at the Royal Cemetary of Ur, Iraq 1922-34, © Penn Museum

Allegory of Sight "Kunstammer", Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, oil on canvas, 1617-18, © Museo del Prado

The cause and effect of creating and erasing memories from history has been drastically affected by the introduction of internet in our lives. Not solely for what has been previously exposed concerning the cult of the individual personality, but also in the sense of eternity that it appears to offer. When the Internet has even become the place to host Digital Monuments and Memorials such as www.forevermissed.com and www.imorial.com, can we say that we have abandoned the need for a body, for a three-dimensional reproduction of ourselves, for a statue or a public monument of a personality, to instead replace it with online representations of ourselves?

In her article *Net Never Forget*¹² published online in 1998, J. D. Lasica analyses how with the internet, we are creating online digital footprints: *'The Net has forgotten how to forget. This can be both blessing and curse. For many of us, it would be marvelous for our grandchildren to summon up our very first home page. For others, whose online forays may not be the stuff of posterity, a gentle forgetfulness would be far kinder. Once, words were spoken and vanished like vapor in the air; newsprint faded and turned to dust. Today, our pasts are becoming etched like a tattoo into our digital skin'*

The internet is presented as the perfect vehicle for communication, information sharing and infinite content archival. However no one can be sure that the internet or digital file formats, as we know them today, will remain as such in the future. The ever changing nature of the internet can be likened to the layers of soil that cover up the traces of ancient civilizations', the only difference is that this is a much quicker process. The first-ever archaeological dig of the Internet took place in 2010 in London as part of Internet Week Europe. The event showcased a selection of groundbreaking websites from the early days of the web, displaying the hardware and software they were designed for. They dug up findings dated back to as early as 1991.¹⁴ Digital erasure is a reality, from the eternal unknown of what the future might bring, to routine things such as erasing files by accident or a broken hard drive. Over the past forty years technology has evolved immensely, a computer from the 80s can't open files from 2017 and vice-versa. Having that in mind, technology and digital archaeology companies have specialized in keeping, archiving and maintaining all that there is concerning hardware and software since the dawn of the internet until now. So that decades from now the videos of toppled statues in Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine (just to name a few) may be dug out of the Internet or off some hard drive. And we shouldn't forget the archives that companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Whatsapp keep of the information we upload, even after we've erased it.

Internet Archive, digital library © archive.org



'A representation bears the mark of the past,' states Paolo Virno¹⁵, but what will these News Feeds, replete with photos of us, our friends, cat GIFs and live streams of war and revolutions, carry for posterity? Or, upon our reliance on the digital and the online, in the event of a successful removal of someone from one's electronic life, what is there left to represent his/her presence?



Smashing a statue of Hafez al-Assad - syria 25-3-2011



alek ALH



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Setting fire to a statue of Syrian president's father in Al-Resten town on 15/4.

HudaAlHussein
229 views



Mr. President Dr. Bashar al-Assad Eid al-Fitr prayer in Mosque of Hafez al-Assad

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365 views

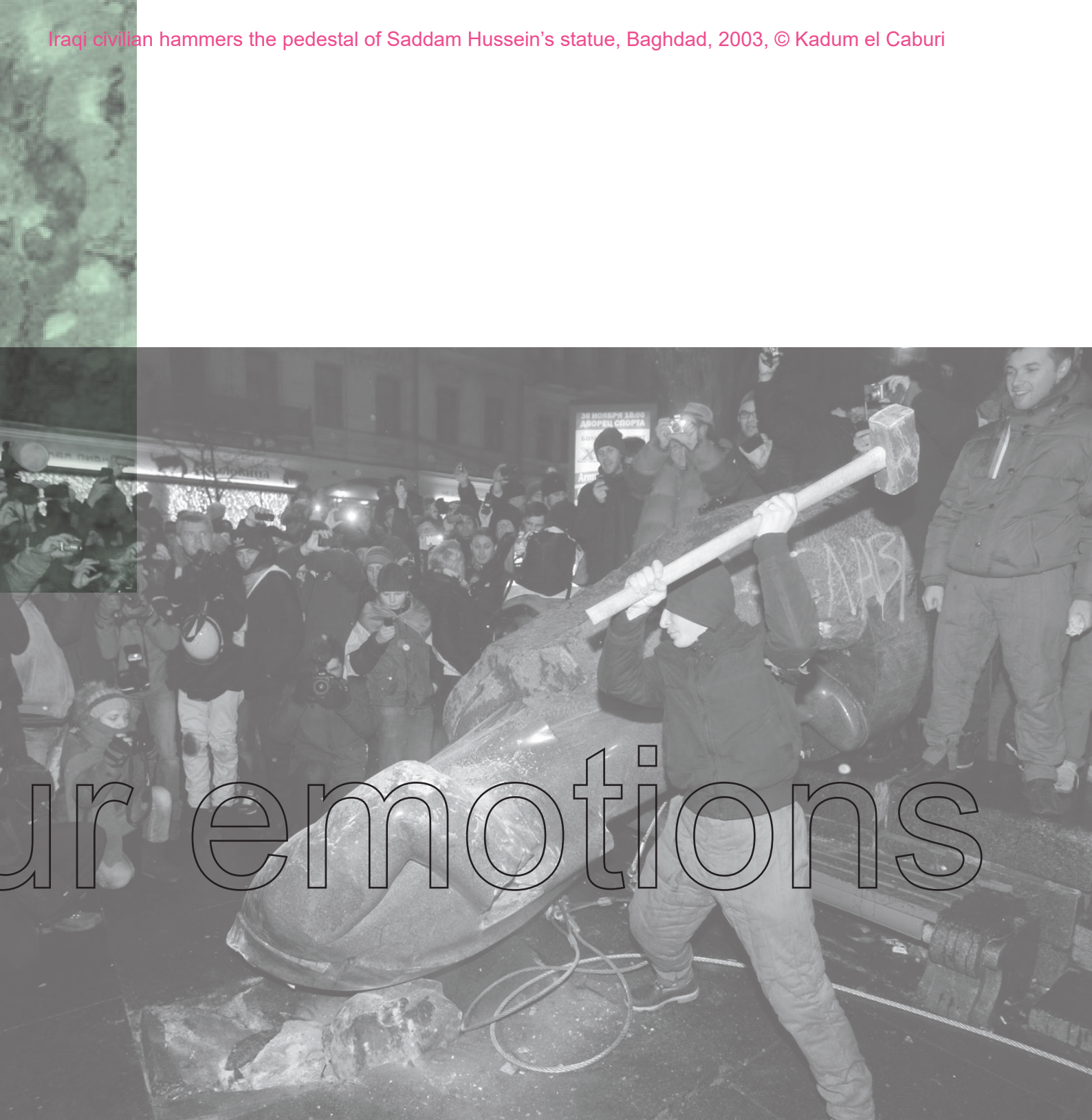




Step 4: Express your



Iraqi civilian hammers the pedestal of Saddam Hussein's statue, Baghdad, 2003, © Kadum el Caburi

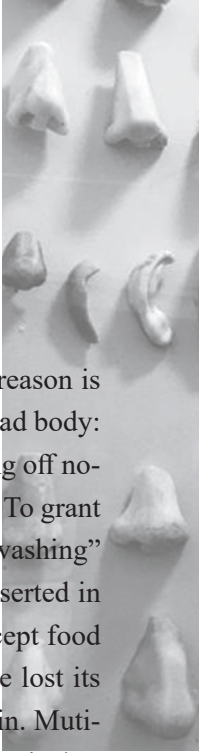


An anti-government protester beats the statue of Vladimir Lenin with a sledgehammer in Kiev, Ukraine, 2013, © AP

*'Mesopotamian statues are almost always found headless. If the heads are preserved, the facial features, particularly lips and noses, are almost always damaged. Though it was not possible to personally examine the way that this damage was inflicted in each case, often the intentional character of injury is obvious. The amount of decapitated and effaced statues also cannot be explained by natural causes.'*¹

The Meroë Head, depicting Emperor Augustus from the Roman Empire, was excavated by the British archaeologist John Garsang in 1910 at the ancient Nubian site of Meroë, Sudan.² The sculpture was found buried beneath a monumental stairway leading to an altar of victory. Many towns in Lower Egypt were adorned with statues of Augustus before the invading armies looted them, in the many conflicts that the Roman Empire had with its opponents. Meroë Head was thought to have been decapitated from its original body, and then purposely buried under the stairs in a sign of humiliation towards the Roman loss of that territory. Those walking up the altar would step on Augustus' head.³ Meroë Head isn't the only case of the intentional beheading of a statue in antiquity. Sculptural representations were in the past comprehended as embodiments of the person they represented. As such, they could be punished for that person's deeds.

But why were the statues decapitated? The likely reason is the same as in the case of the decapitation of the dead body: to ensure that the person is completely dead. 'Cutting off noses and mouths was another way to "kill" the image. To grant life to the statue, the "mouth opening" or "mouth washing" ceremony was performed. By this act, breath was inserted in a statue of wood or stone, and now it was able to accept food and drink. Deprived of its nose and mouth, the image lost its ability to breathe, eat, and drink and became dead again. Mutilation of the nose and the mouth was thus an act antithetical to the mouth-opening ceremony that brought an inanimate object to life.'

⁴

aln



Nasothek, Copenhagen, © Instagram/hsophielawson

*'What has happened that has made images (any sign, work of art, inscription, or picture that acts as a mediation to access something else) the focus of so much passion? To the point that destroying, erasing, or defacing them, has been taken as the ultimate touchstone to prove the validity of one's faith, of one's science, of one's critical acumen, of one's artistic creativity? To the point where being an iconoclast seems the highest virtue, the highest piety, in intellectual circles?'*⁵

- ¹ Natalie N. May, *Decapitation of Statues and Mutation of the Image's facial features*, 2010, in *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Studies in the Ancient Near East in Honor of Joan Goodnick Westenholz*, edited by W. Horowitz, U. Gabbay, and F. Vukosavović, pp. 105-118. Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo 8. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- ² http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/the_mero%20C3%AB_head_of_augustus.aspx
- ³ Ibid
- ⁴ Natalie N. May, *Decapitation of Statues and Mutation of the Image's facial features*, 2010
- ⁵ Bruno Latour, *Iconoclasm*, The MIT Press, 2002

Mesopotamian statues are most always found headless.

Natalie N. May ¹

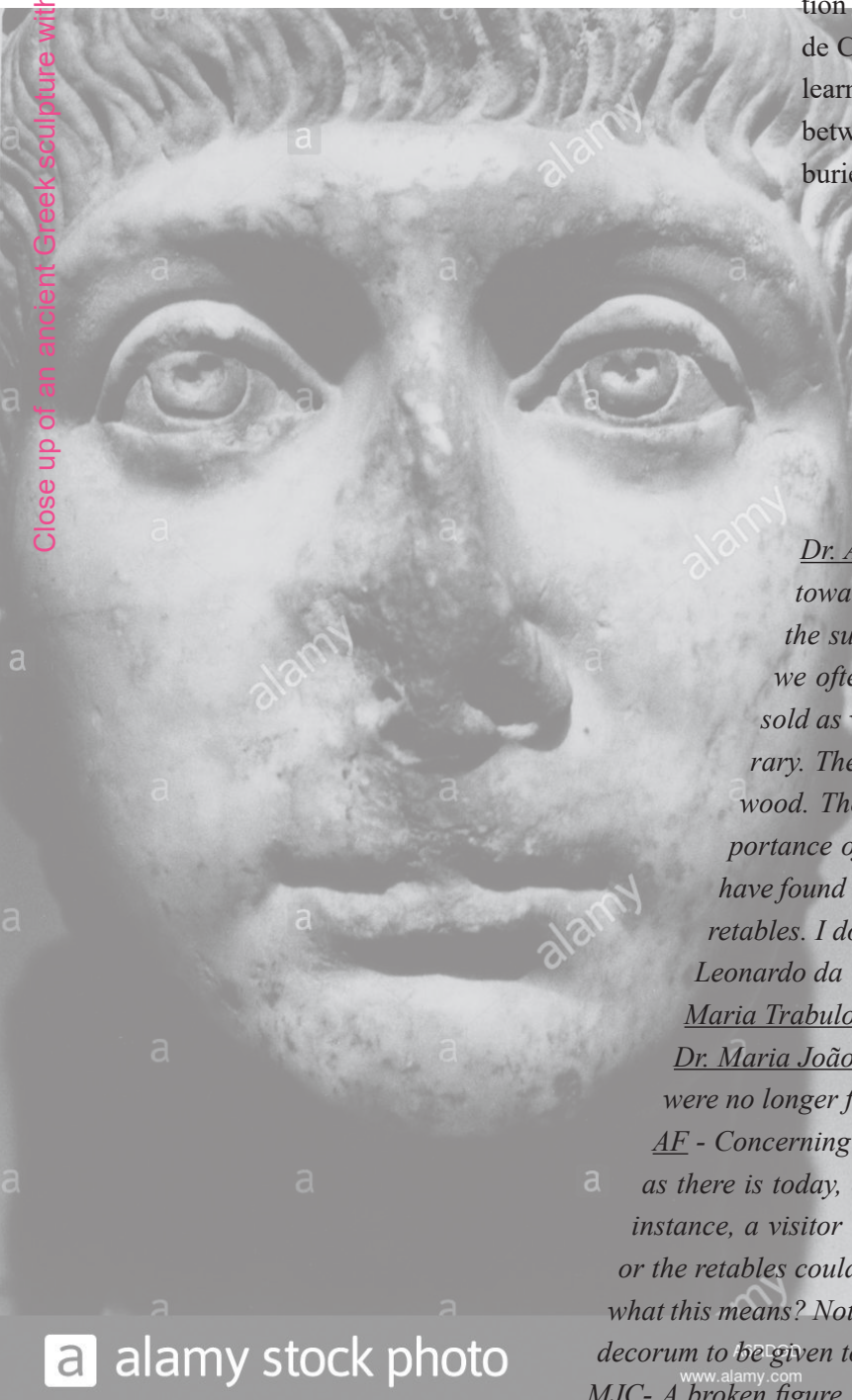


Roman Galerie, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna 2017, © Maria Trabulo

Turkish Prime minister Recep Erdogan gives speech as a hologram at a campaign rally, Turkey, 2014 , © Reuters







 alamy stock photo

A statue was perceived as a living being, and therefore, mutilated statues were sometimes found buried. Such practices have not been constrained only to Antiquity, but also to the more recent times. In conversation with Dr. Anísio Franco and Dr. Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho working at the MNAA Museum in Lisbon, I learn that many Portuguese religious artifacts (originating between the 10th and the 16th century), have been found buried outside of churches all over the country.

Dr. Anísio Franco (AF) - We know of the lack of reverence towards art works from written accounts of people ordering the substitution of retables from churches. In the accounts, we often encounter suggestions for the old one to either be sold as wood or painted over with something more contemporary. These painted wooden retables were treated as ordinary wood. There wasn't a patrimonial conscience towards the importance of the artwork, as we have today. For that reason, we have found 15th-century paintings, under 16th-century Mannerist retables. I doubt that in Italy someone would ever use Raffael's or Leonardo da Vinci's paintings as wood or as a blank canvas.

Maria Trabulo (MT) - But those items were of no value at that time?

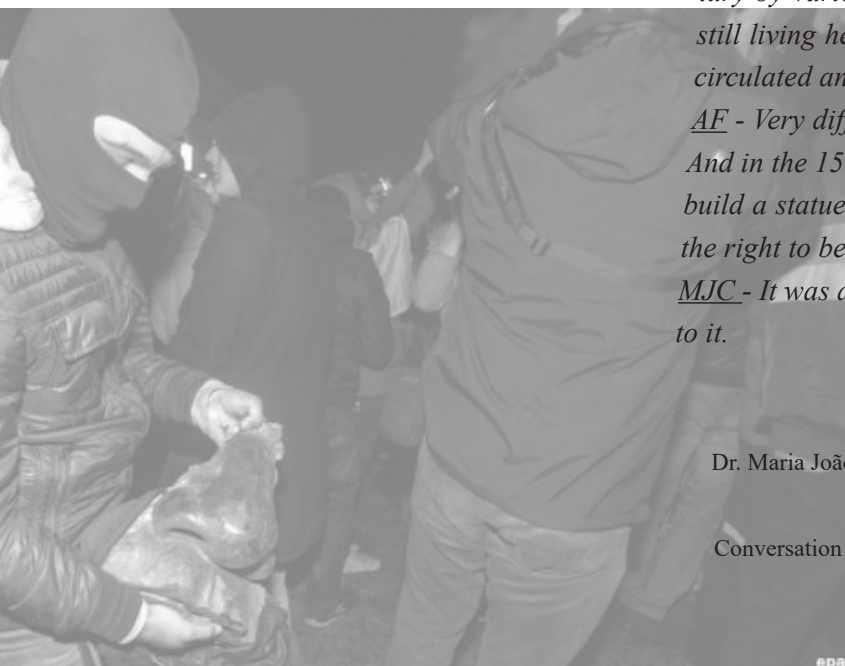
Dr. Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho (MJC) - From the moment they were no longer functional, they would become meaningless.

AF - Concerning the artworks, there was no aesthetical consciousness as there is today, other than that of functionality. There were rules, for instance, a visitor that would walk into a church, looking at the statues or the retables could denounce that they were not decorous. Do you know what this means? Not that the virgin was naked, but that it had not sufficient decorum to be given to worship.

MJC - A broken figure, missing an eye, a limb, or having chipped pain, was unacceptable; there could exist no carelessness in the religious faith. So these items would be taken away.

AF - Buried like humans.

MJ - When broken or damaged they would not be restored but substituted with new ones. A human-like burial ceremony was conducted for the broken or damaged stone figures, and the wood items (statues or paintings) were burned and have its ashes thrown over holy water. These objects embodied sacred figures. Therefore they were sacred and should be treated as such.



MT - I read about statue burial practiced in the Antiquity, among Romans, Egyptians, and Assyrians, but didn't know that the same was practiced later in Europe.

AF - Yes, definitely, we're talking about 15th, 16th and 17th century, strongly in Portugal and Spain due to the religious devotion.

MT - And the Inquisition.

(...)

MJC - I believe that this functionality of the artistic object has been inherited from the Romans.

MT - Nevertheless, the Romans iconoclastic practice was towards political figures and not religious ones.

MJC - We have little-known acts of iconoclasm in Portugal.

AF - And the Inquisition prohibited those. To attack a virgin meant being sent to prison or the dungeon.

MJC - Here (in Portugal) the phenomenon was probably the opposite. The value of one's image was such that in some cases it would become more important than the real person. There is a known case, when in the 15th century, King João II of Portugal, ordered the death of a few men. He ended up supplanting the death of some, and so their bodies were substituted by statues and images representing them, that were then publicly lynched to "death".

MT - I'm having flashbacks of the days after Trump was elected President of the United States, and how protesters built paper and cardboard sculptures of Trump, that they then hanged and burned in public.

MJC - Yes, both in the past as today, the representation is used to symbolically kill the real person, becoming stronger than the actual body.

AF - In each case there is a religious sense to the image, I mean, to idolize and deify someone's image.

MT - Very different from the cult of personality, practiced in Ancient Rome, during the French invasions, or over the 20th and 21st century by various political figures and dictators, when statues of the still living heads of state were raised, or a printed image would be circulated and be affixed everywhere.

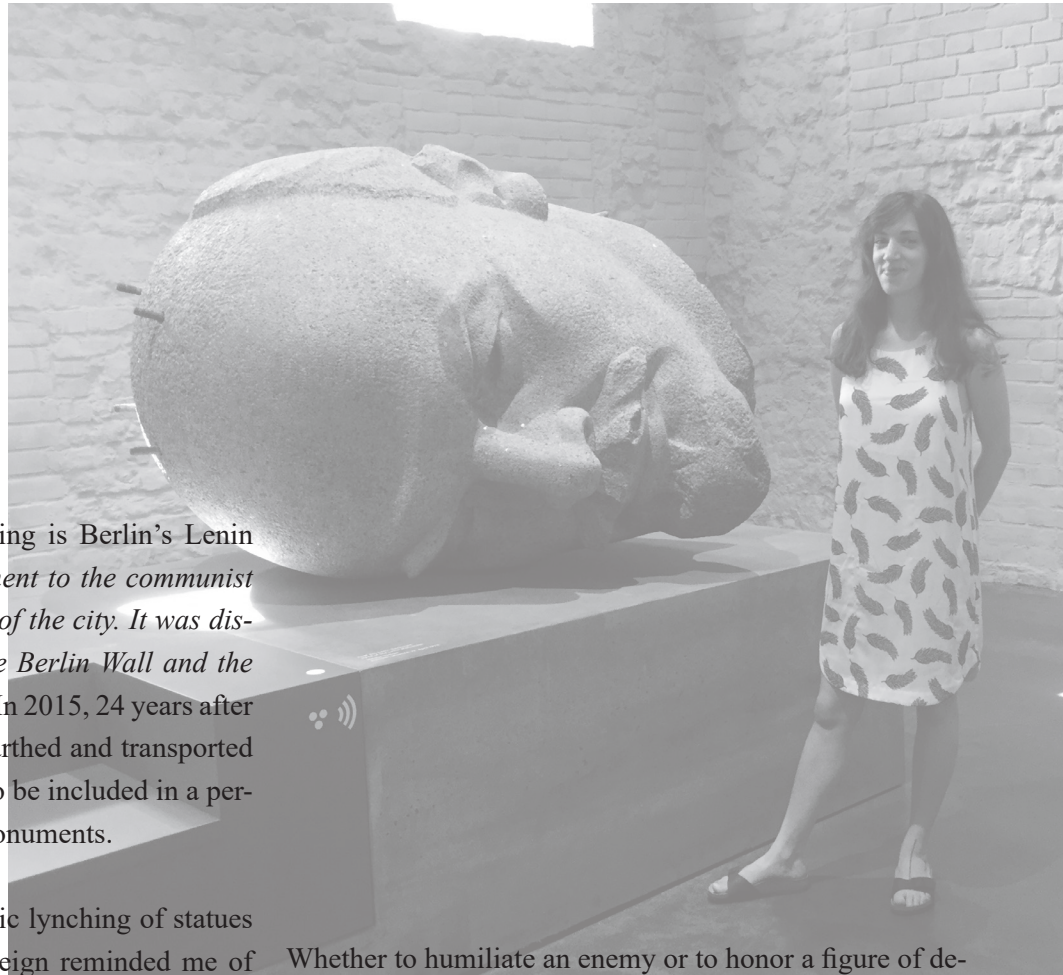
AF - Very different, that is to impose worshipping, in life and death. And in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries in Portugal, one would not build a statue of someone that isn't worshiped. The person only had the right to be turned into a statue after they had died.

MJC - It was an homage, a monument. And not everyone was entitled to it.

Perceived as living beings... an image was understood

A more recent case worth mentioning is Berlin's Lenin Head. *'Once part of a 19 m monument to the communist leader, which towered over the east of the city. It was dismantled in 1991 after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the pieces buried in a secluded forest'*⁶ In 2015, 24 years after its burial, the 3,5-ton head was unearthed and transported to the Spandau Zitadelle in Berlin, to be included in a permanent exhibition about German Monuments.

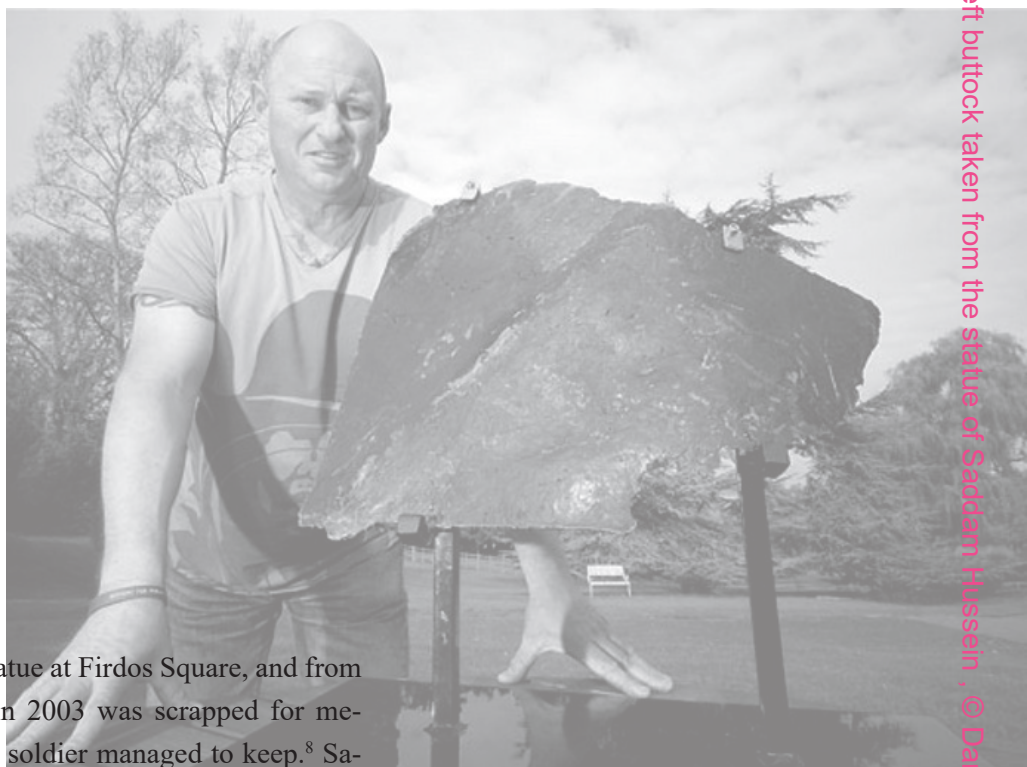
Dr. Carvalho's reference to the public lynching of statues during King João II's of Portugal reign reminded me of how during the French Revolution, the effigies of the kings of Judah once standing on the 13th-century façade of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris *'were beheaded and then buried out of sight. No kings of any kind, then, could be allowed a visible presence, and a magical conflation of name, story, and image led to these stone phantoms being treated as if they were live royals sentenced to the guillotine. The statues remained undiscovered until 1977 when nearby building works uncovered them. Twenty-one heads – chipped, noseless, and bearing the marks of the hammer and the saw – are now mounted for display in the Musée de Cluny, in their grave state of damage as melancholy and trophies on spikes.'*⁷



Whether to humiliate an enemy or to honor a figure of devotion, the very nature of statue burial points to the great ritual importance given to the act of mutilating (accidentally or purposely) someone's sculptural representation. Any perpetrated physical action towards those beings would signify their suffering and death and thus, symbolically, the suffering and death of those they represent. 'Killing' the statues was a ritual act, standing in – though not always substituting altogether – for doing away with the principles and the persons they represented.

In the revolutions of these past years, from Lenin and Stalin to Saddam and Assad, the toppling of a former leader's monument created the visual representation of the people's will to execute the political values those leaders represented. The online live stream, followed by the post and repost of its documentation on the social media, flooded the networks, infusing the life of the event itself with a contagious will of change, as the revolutions went viral

While statues were being toppled or defaced in Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Ukraine, in countries such as Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, the UK, the USA, Brazil, and Turkey, people would gather in the streets in the same fashion, demonstrating in support of change and the revolution. But interestingly, as there were no statues to topple, they would rather alter and deface photographs of the politicians, used in posters at demonstrations, and posts on the social networks. When there is no statue to topple, the digital image can be utilized as the vehicle for the same intention: to represent an emotional state towards someone. This use of digital images to substitute for physical objects is possible as both appear to embody whom and what they represent in a fundamentally similar way.



There is no known copy of Saddam's statue at Firdos Square, and from what I could find, the toppled statue in 2003 was scrapped for metal, apart from a piece that one English soldier managed to keep.⁸ Saddam Hussein's statue no longer exists physically; it was toppled and destroyed, and hence he himself no longer exists. The Iraqi and the Western soldiers did to the abolished president's statue what Ancient civilizations were doing thousands of years ago. Perceived as living beings, for the primary reason that an image was understood as the embodiment of the one who is represented, and as such, it can be punished or adored for his/her deeds. So what does it mean to dig out these decapitated and mutilated statues at archaeological sites today? There is no body of Saddam Hussein's statue, but today, 14 years later, not only can we still remember that image of his statue being toppled, but we can also still find online the videos of that moment.⁹

*as the
embodiement
of what it
represented*

Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho
interview extract

British soldier Nigel Ely with the left buttock taken from the statue of Saddam Hussein . © Daniel Law/PA



Step 5:

Avoid
Encount



ers



Portrait of Acelino Savagio, Antonio Tamagnini, 1491-1504, as retrieved from a fire in 1945, The Bode Museum collection, Berlin, © The Bode Museum



ISIS' destruction of Palmyra, 2016, © SIPA



We watch as statues topple, in the same sense as we admire their disfigured and broken condition inside museums. Importantly, the latter occurs with temporal distance. Few visitors might know that most noses and ears missing on Assyrian statues aren't due to time but instead intentional acts perpetrated by their contemporaries. Or that the reason why we find so many Ancient Roman heads separated from the body, was a political act. What happens when museological institutions either abandon or immediately absorb these decapitated and molested bodies? ¹

*'And what has happened to explain that after every icono-crisis infinite care is taken to reassemble the smashed statues, to save the fragments, to protect the debris? As if it was always necessary to apologize for the destruction of so much beauty, so much horror; as if one was suddenly uncertain about the role and cause of destruction that, before, seemed so urgent, so indispensable; as if the destroyer had suddenly realized that something else had been destroyed by mistake, something for which atonement was now overdue. Are not museums the temples in which sacrifices are made to apologize for so much destruction as if we wanted suddenly to stop destroying and were beginning the indefinite cult of conserving, protecting, repairing?'*²

Latour interestingly conceives the museum as space where such iconoclastic actions, resulting from political events, can be reassembled, protected, and where they can be explained. In fact, Museums allow the space for events in history to be kept, presented, and most importantly, explained within the context of local and universal historical discourse.

Memento Park, an open-air museum in Budapest, and the Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia are both dedicated to the presence of the communist regime in their respective countries and have chosen to present that part of their history through its artistic remnants. Memento Park was inaugurated in 1991, and it exhibits the impressive statues and sculpted plaques from Hungary's Communist period (1949–1989), that were removed from the country's cities once communist regime was removed.³ As its architect, Ákos Eleőd describes his work: 'This park is about dictatorship. And at the same time, because it can be talked about, described, built, this park is about democracy. After all, only democracy is able to give the opportunity to let us think freely about dictatorship.'⁴ The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia opened in 2011, and through its collection of large and small statues, busts, and paintings represents the period from 1944 to 1989, from the time of introduction of communism to Bulgaria to the end of the totalitarian regime.⁵

¹ <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2017/02/vladimir-lenin-heads-statue-destroyed-monument-ukraine/>

² Bruno Latour, *Iconoclasm*, The MIT Press, 2002

³ <http://www.mementopark.hu/>

⁴ <http://www.historytoday.com/martin-evans/after-cold-war>

⁵ <http://www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.uni-jena.de/index.php?id=361>

Are museums the ultimate burial ground for statues?

What changes can arise from the absorption of the icono-crisis debris, as Latour puts it, by museological institutions? Whether they took place in Ancient times or 2014, what does it mean for a museum to exhibit artifacts from political acts and revolutions from the past? Are museums the ultimate burial ground for statues?



Stalin's statue after its removal, Memento Park, Budapest, © Michael Milne

We lament over mundane objects that allude to someone else or a specific moment, as if they were body parts of a broken statue. The Portuguese lamented the destruction of King Sebastian's statue in Rossio, and over time we've lamented the destruction of cultural items that belong to the past. Through our screens, we mourned the destruction of Palmyra, and earlier in 2001 the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan.⁶ It seems natural that these statues, artifacts, paintings, and constructions situate our history, past, and memory, much as a cup of tea from which a beloved person used to always drink does. We accept destruction over time, since, much as our bodies age, so do inanimate objects. And, as Lyotard poses, 'while we talk, the sun is getting older. It will explode in 4.5 billion years. It's just a little beyond the halfway point of its expected lifetime. It's like a man in his early forties with a life expectancy of eighty. With the sun's death, your insoluble questions will be done too. It's possible they'll stay unanswered right up to the end, flawlessly formulated, though now both grounds for raising such questions as well as the place to do this will no longer exist'. He continues, 'in comparison, everything else seems significant. Wars, conflicts, political tension, shifts in opinion, philosophical debates, even passions - everything's dead already if this infinite reserve from which you now draw energy to defer answers, if in short thought as quest, dies out with the sun.'⁷

We are used to death as much as we are used to destruction and decay, as we know that the end is imminent. Nevertheless, those events are harder to accept when they take place unexpectedly early, or in the case of Palmyra and the Bamiyan Buddhas, due to military conflicts.

*Speechless,
dazed
witnesses
of conflicts,
traumatized
subjects
incapable
of telling
their story.*

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev ⁸



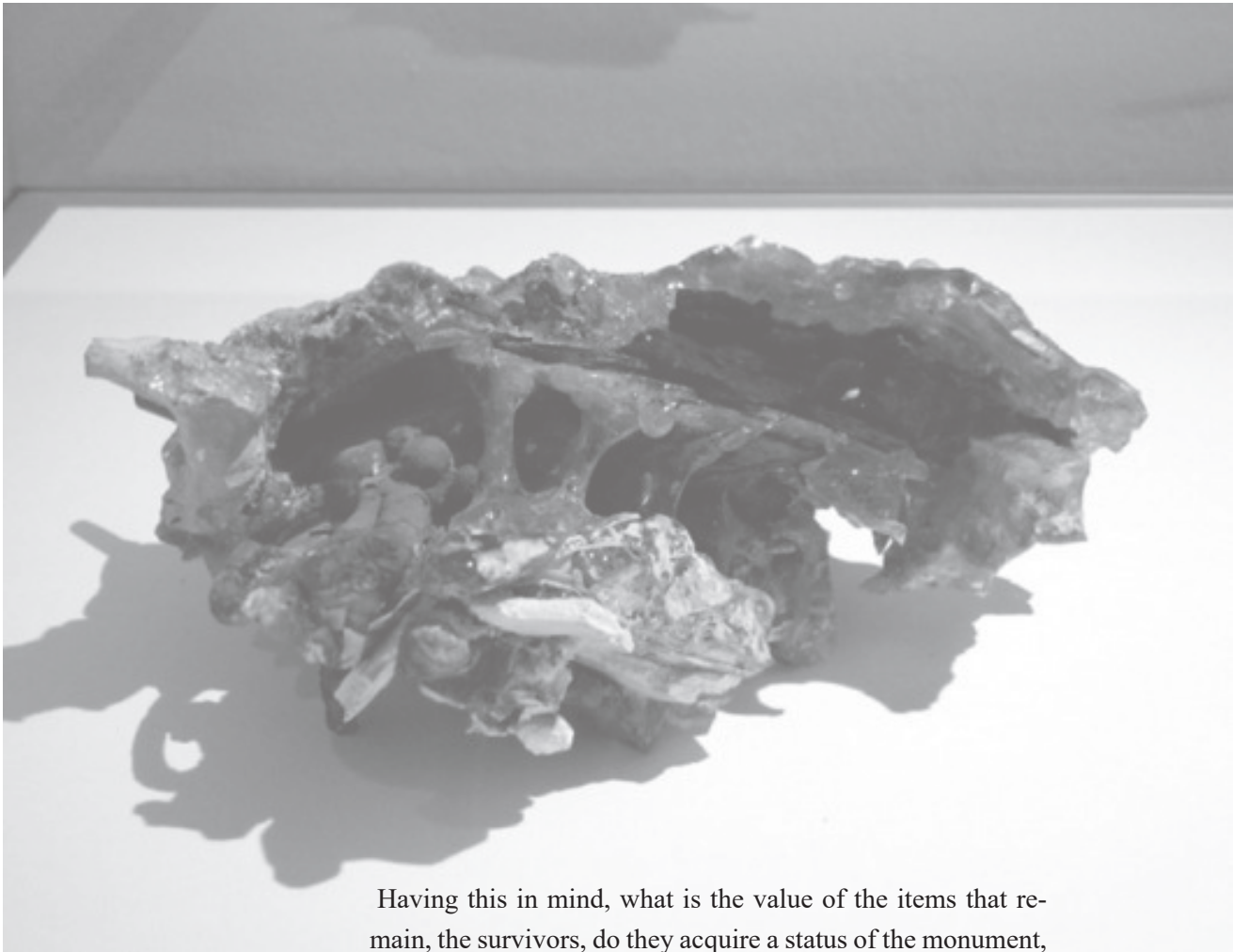
Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, Afghanistan 2001, © NATO/Vimeo

⁶ Marina Warner, *Falling Idols*, Frieze Magazine, 2015

⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, *Can Thought go on without a Body?*, in 'The Inhuman', 1988, Editions Galilée

⁸ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *On the Destruction of Art-or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing*, 100 Notes-100 Thoughts Documenta 13, 2012

⁹ Ibid



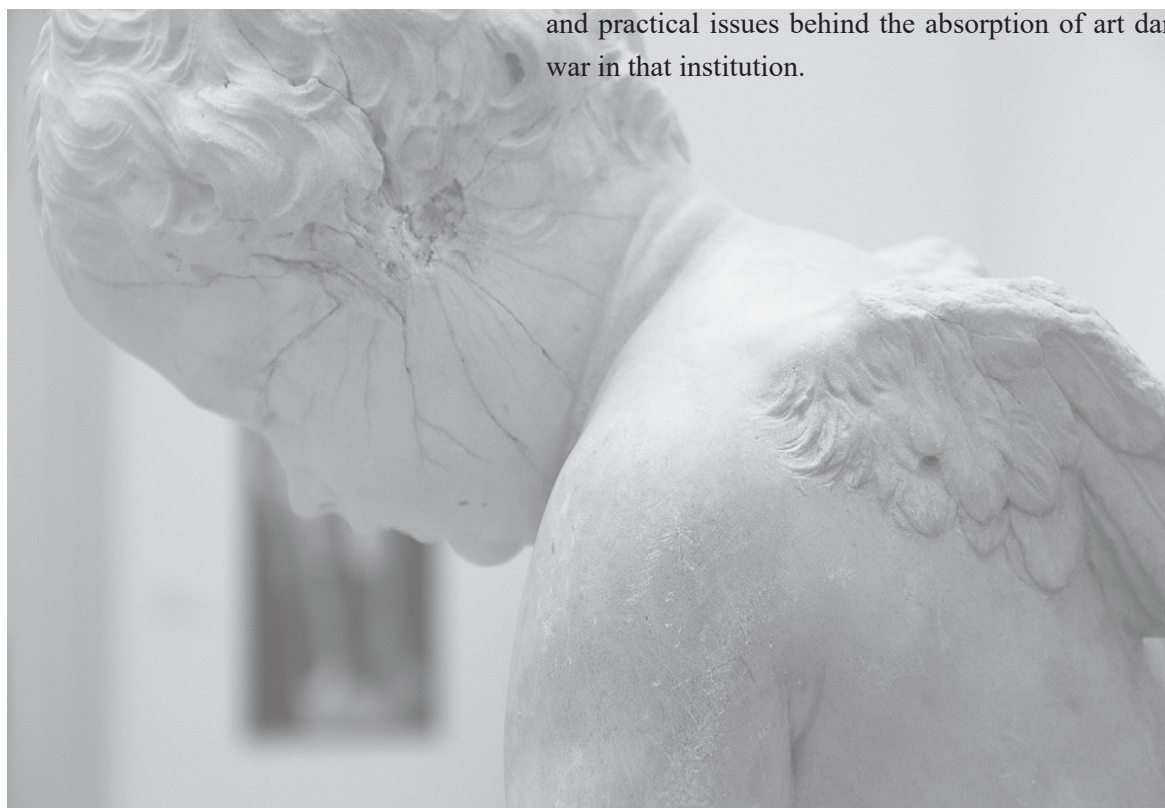
Having this in mind, what is the value of the items that remain, the survivors, do they acquire a status of the monument, for they represent a particularly tragic event in world history, its outcome, human losses and survivals? I'm reminded of my visit to dOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel in 2012, and how in the Rotunda room at the Friedericianum Museum, among other artworks and archaeological items from various epochs, one glass showcase displayed an undefined mass of matter. It consisted of two damaged artifacts (made of metal, ivory, glass, and terracotta) from the National Museum in Beirut - located directly on the demarcation line between West and East Beirut - which had been melted together in a lump as a result of bombing during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990).

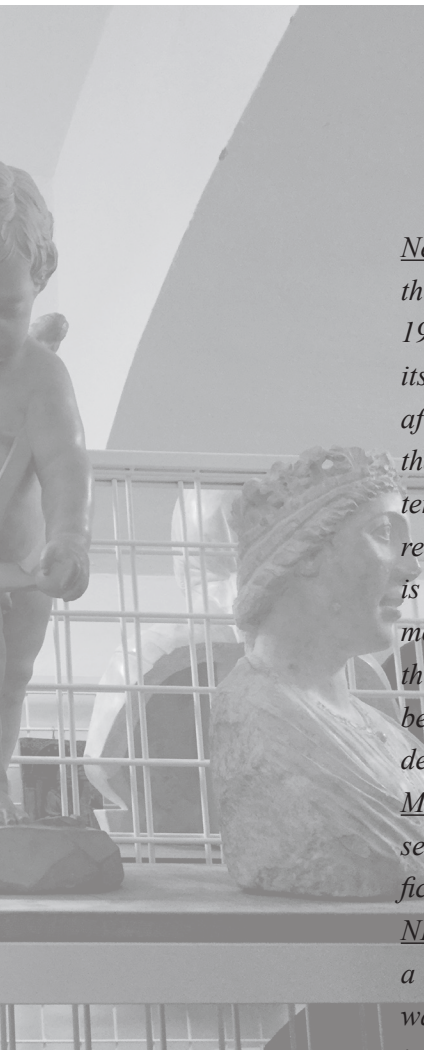
'In her notebook 'On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing', dOCUMENTA 13 curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev⁸ writes: 'This is a collage of fragments precariously held together by a sense that bodies of culture, just like bodies of people and other animate and inanimate elements in the world, survive the knots and circumstances of history sometimes intentionally and sometimes only by chance'. She also speaks of 'traumatized artworks,' which she defines as speechless, dazed witnesses of conflicts, traumatized subjects incapable of telling their story. They are in stand-by mode; they are dumb, withdrawn from visibility and the discourse.'⁹

They are in stand-by mode; they are dumb, withdrawn from visibility and from the discourse.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev ⁸

Last January, I visited the deposits of The Bode Museum in Berlin. There, assistant curator Dr. Neville Rowley led me through the traces of a group of artworks that survived a fire inside a Bunker in 1945 Berlin, shortly after the end of the war. The artworks had been stored there for safe keeping, as to store them in the Museums' underground storage offered little protection against bombings. In the fire, Berlin's Gemäldegalerie lost over 430 paintings and the Skulpturensammlung a third of its holdings including outstanding examples by Donatello, Verrocchio, and Riemenschneider. In what could be retrieved after the fire and the lootings were a few dozen pieces, found either severely damaged, crippled, or broken. I was able to see the portion of surviving pieces from the collection of the Bode Museum. The following excerpt of a recorded conversation with Rowley during this visit sheds some light on the ethical and practical issues behind the absorption of art damaged by war in that institution.





Neville Rowley (NR) - This is Putto by Duquesnoy, a classic, in the original you see the trace of a bullet on the boy's head. In the 1990s it was decided by the museum to present the sculpture in its restored state by using a cast copy and keeping the head in its after-war state, with the bullet damage and all. It was a decision that has led to some controversy, as every time someone sees it, is terrified because you see a child who was shot in the head. It just reinforces the impact of the work as a destroyed piece. Therefore it is part of history, but on the other hand, one has to decide what is more important: a work by Duquesnoy or the history that it bears on the surface? (...) Even if the restoration techniques we are using can be reversible, it is nevertheless a significant decision of the museum to decide to reverse a recovery that cost 30.000€ or more.

Maria Trabulo (MR) - So, if you have an original Duquesnoy that is severely damaged and a master copy of the same piece that is in a magnificent state, which one is more important?

NR - The original always, but it also depends on what you have. There is a limit between the original and the cast, and one cannot be so drastic towards these issues. We have here various examples of copies whose value is insignificant when compared to their invaluable originals. But the originals are severely damaged, and in the case of Duquesnoy's Putto, for its restoration, we had to use large cast components, in that sense, the cast became part of the original. So when it comes to damaged artworks, it is tough to draw the line on what is more artistically relevant or culturally valuable.

MT - Nevertheless, a bullet in the head can be distracting from what the artist's intention with the piece was.

NR - Yes, and that issue has been the cause of many disagreements in this institution. The truth is in between, and there is no way to answer that. It is imperative to say that there is no absolute truth, but a position. One can always interpret these differently according to one's background, and the fact that I am an Art Specialist in Italian Renaissance, of French and British origins, working in Berlin, clearly conditions my view on that. We'll have workers here that either because they are German or from another generation, will think differently, and we have to respect that. We also need to take into account that after the effects of the Second World War, this Duquesnoy can no longer be seen as a masterpiece from the 17th century, but as a piece of German and world History.

Dr. Neville Rowley, Italian Renaissance Art Curator,
Gemäldegalerie, and Skulpturensammlung - Bode-Museum Berlin
Conversation extract, Bode Museum, Berlin January 2017



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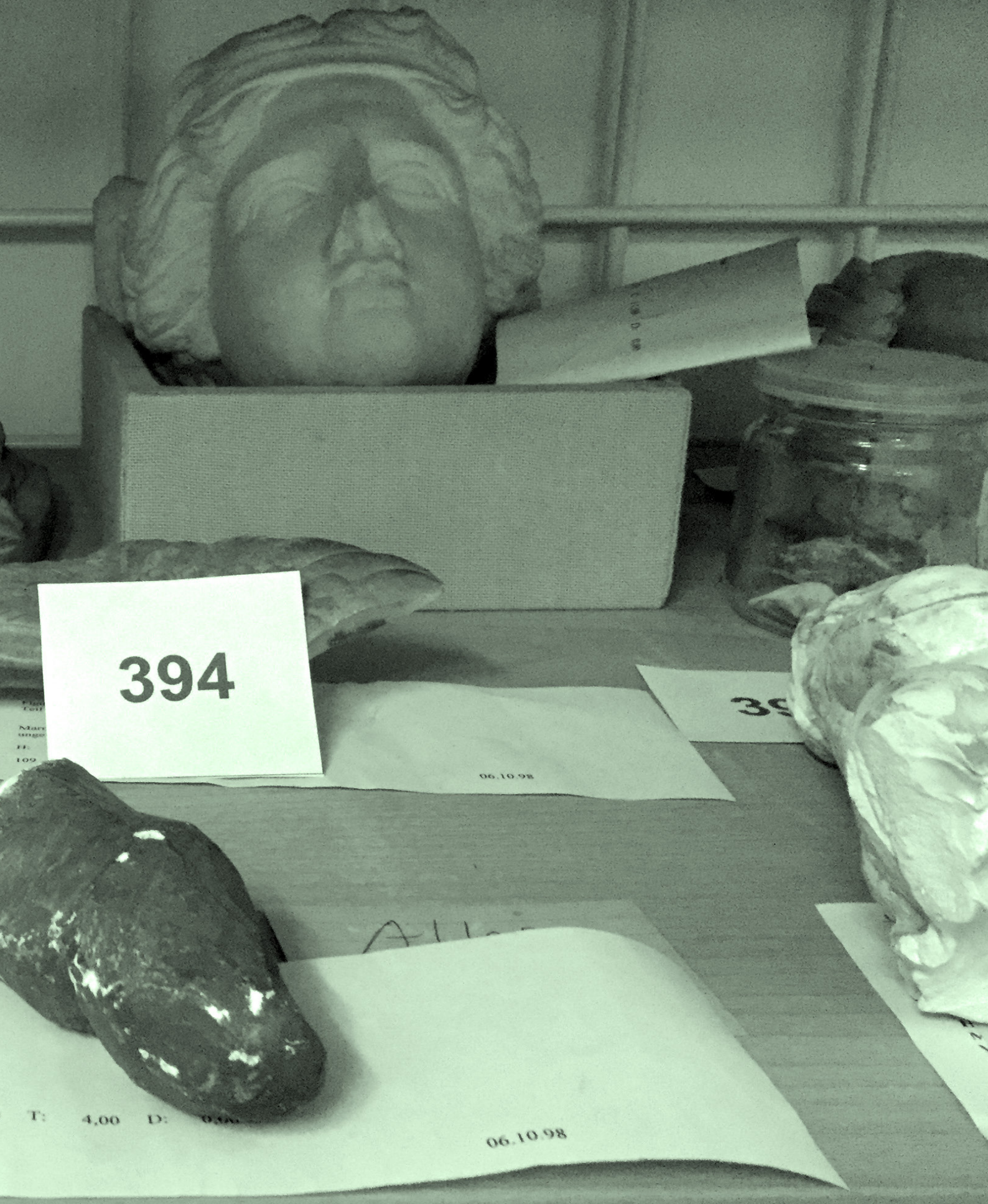
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Another curious case is that of *Portrait of the Princess of Naples*, a 15th century bust by Francesco Laurana. Since 1945, the Bode Museum only possesses its head, as the shoulders were separated from the head at the time of the division of Germany in post-war time and taken to the Soviet Union: 'Until now the head was presented alone, but I find that this presentation looks like something out of the French Revolution, it is as if the princess has been guillotined and her head stuck onto a spear. The Museum does have a plaster cast of this bust that corresponds exactly to the original work and technically it would be possible to recast the shoulders and to unite the head to the shoulders again, to recreate the aesthetic unity of the work.' states Dr. Rowley.



Portrait of a Princess of Naples, Francesco Laurana, ca.1470, exhibited at *The Lost Museum*, The Bode Museum, 2015, © The Bode Museum

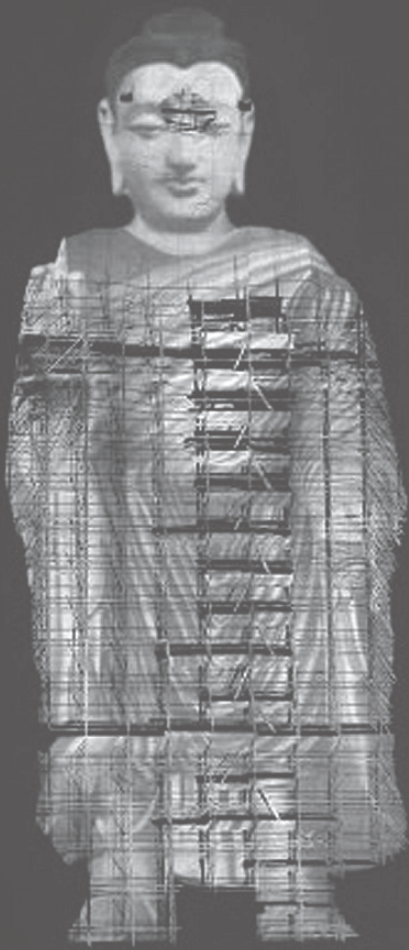


Portrait of a Princess of Naples suddenly became a vivid representation of that episode in German and European history. As of today, the two parts remain separated, having not yet been reunified, unlike the country. I am left wondering on the preservation of art during armed conflicts, and am naturally reminded of Palmyra, and several lootings that museums in Cairo have been subjected to since the Egyptian revolution erupted.¹⁰ How to preserve history during war times and what is the value of those objects that survive?¹¹

The conversation with Dr. Rowley reminds me of Paolo Virno's words on how 'a representation bears the mark of the past.' In the case of *Putto by Duquesnoy*, as a survivor, though disabled, does the piece become representative of the event that deprived it of its limbs? And in the case of the paintings (among them a Botticelli) that disappeared in the fire inside the bunker, now that the originals are gone, what do their photographic glass negatives represent? A loss? A conflict? A substitute?

What to do with the void that is left after something is destroyed and can't be restituted? In the case of a total erasure of a body, how are we to represent a three-dimensional copy, or digital and online version of it?

¹⁰ Looting and burning of the Cairo Museum in 2011 <http://www.lr21.com.uy/mundo/1009122-incendian-en-el-cairo-obras-de-arte-unicas-patrimonio-de-la-humanidad>
¹¹ Hito Steyerl, *A Tank on a Pedestal: Museums in an Age of Planetary Civil War*, e-flux Journal n. 70, 2016 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/70/60543/a-tank-on-a-pedestal-museums-in-an-age-of-planetary-civil-war/>



© AFP/Getty Images

Bamiyan Buddhas recreated using laser 3d projections, 2015, © Xinhua/Rex

Replica of Palmyra's Triumphal Arch placed front of National Gallery, London 2016, © Getty





Step 6:

Replace

Memories

© www.wikihow.com



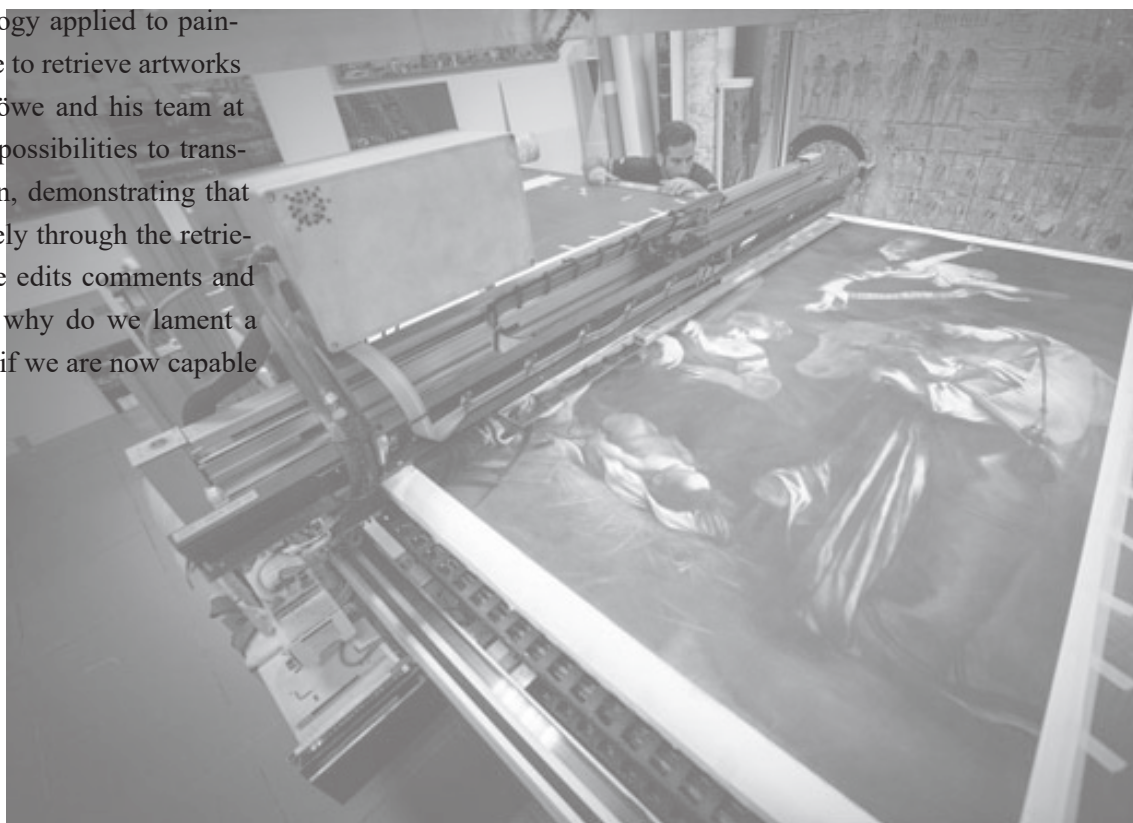
Don't Forget Things



Earlier, I discussed the case of King Sebastian's statue that was destroyed as consequence of a selfie. A copy dating from the 20th century was eventually found, but had there been no reproduction, the technology of today would allow, through scans, digital reconstitution, and 3D printing, for its aesthetical nature to be reproduced and restituted. Today, this is true for King Sebastian's as well as any other toppled or dismantled statue, such as Saddam's, Al-Assad's, or Lenin's.

Adam Löwe founded in 2001 the multi-disciplinary workshop Factum Arte in Madrid, built by a team of artists, technicians, and conservators dedicated to digital mediation, both in the production of works of contemporary artists, as well as in the realization of facsimiles as part of a coherent approach to preservation.¹ Factum Arte was responsible, among many other reproductions, for the making of the exact facsimile of the burial chamber of Tutankhamun that was in 2014 installed at the entrance to the Valley of the King Tutankhamun's tomb in Cairo, and earlier, for the reproduction of Caravaggio's Nativity painting that had been stolen in the 1969 from a small church in Italy and never since found. Its facsimile was achieved using black and white photographs, the dense study of the master's technique and highly advanced 3D printing technology applied to painting techniques.² By being able to retrieve artworks that no longer exist, Adam Löwe and his team at Factum Arte, present us with possibilities to transform time and to slow it down, demonstrating that one can edit time retrospectively through the retrieval of the lost artifacts, as one edits comments and posts on social networks. So why do we lament a broken statue or a lost artifact if we are now capable of reproducing it?

Why do we sometimes sorrow a broken statue or a lost artifact if today we are capable of reproducing it?



- ¹ <http://www.factum-arte.com/aboutus>
- ² <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/dec/10/restoration-lost-beauty-stolen-caravaggio-nativity-replica-brought-palermo>
- ³ Bruno Latour & Adam Löwe, *The migration of the aura or how to explore the original through its facsimiles* A chapter prepared for T. Bartscherer and R. Coover (editors) *Switching Codes. Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, University of Chicago Press pp. 275-297 (with Adam Löwe), 2011
- ⁴ <http://das-verschwundene-museum.smb.museum/>
- ⁵ Julien Chapuis, Stephan Kemperdick, *The Lost Museum: The Berlin Painting and Sculpture Collections 70 Years after World War II*, Michael Imhof Verlag GmbH & Company KG, 2015
- ⁶ Julien Chapuis, lecture on "The Lost Museum", National Gallery of Art, October 2016
<https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/audio-video/video/chapuis-lost-museum.html>

If so much energy is devoted to the search for the original — for archeological and marketing reasons — it is because the possibility of making copies has never been so open-ended. In other words, the intensity of the search for the original depends on the amount of passion and the number of interests triggered by its copies.

(...)

Since all originals have to be reproduced anyway, simply to survive, it is crucial to be able to discriminate between good and bad reproductions. ³



Through Löwe's eyes, art appears to be the ultimate refuge for one's memory, as it gathers all possible representations. What role do then artworks play in forgetting and remembering? I return to the visit I made to the deposits of war damaged artworks from The Bode Museum collection. Since 1945, most of these paintings and sculptures have gradually disappeared from the public's and art historians' awareness. Hence, in 2015 The Bode Museum decided to curate an exhibition that sought to bring masterpieces of the Berlin painting and sculpture collections back into the public consciousness. Dr. Julien Chapuis was the curator, and Dr. Neville Rowley one of his assisting curators.

Entitled 'The Lost Museum'⁴ the exhibition shed light on the historical circumstances of damage and destruction by fire in 1945, the subsequent recovery of numerous works by the Allied forces, and the return of recovered art to the divided city of Berlin in the 1950s.⁵ The exhibition achieved this goal by utilizing plaster casts and photographic reproductions at original size. Regarding the function of the exhibition concerning the artworks, Chapuis stated: "For the sake of retrieving them to history, so that they could be remembered, even if their originals no longer exist."⁶ The focus of the exhibition was thus that these lost and forgotten artworks could once again participate in history. Not being seen, photographed, posted, and reposted, is not to participate in the collective memory, and hence, to be forgotten.





The Lost Museum, exhibition view, The Bode Museum, 2015, © The Bode Museum

⁷ <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/30/68140/art-as-occupation-claims-for-an-autonomy-of-life/> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12442863>
⁸ <http://www.euronews.com/2013/08/28/egypt-hundreds-of-priceless-artifacts-destroyed-in-museum-looting> <http://art-for-a-change.com/blog/2011/02/the-looting-of-the-egyptian-museum.html>
⁹ Julien Chapuis, Stephan Kemperdick, *The Lost Museum: The Berlin Painting and Sculpture Collections 70 Years after World War II*, Michael Imhof Verlag GmbH & Company KG, 2015
¹⁰ Gipsformerei Online Catalogue www2.smb.museum/GF/

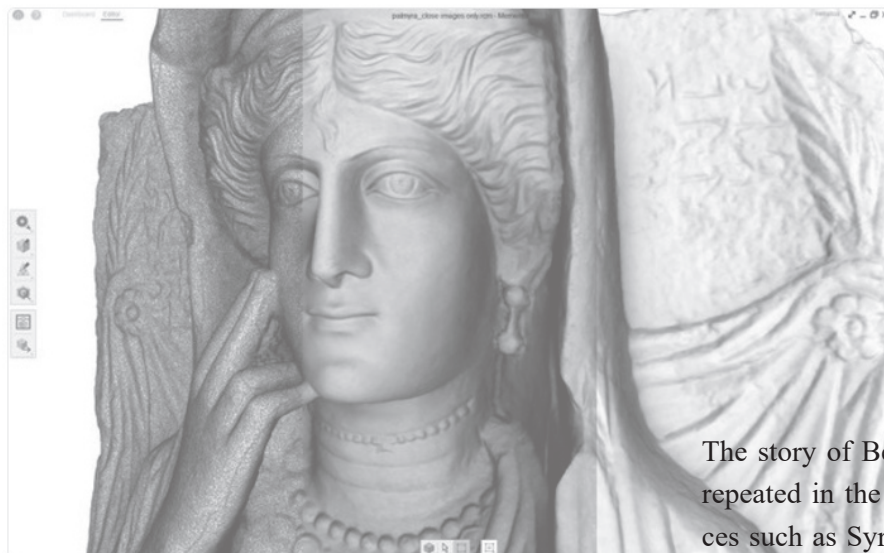
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Smithsonian 3D
@3D_Digi_SI

Seguir

3D scan screenshot of "Haliphat" from
#Palmyra - Learn more at goo.gl/GPhYbe
@FreerSackler @smithsonian



RETWEETS
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CURTIDAS
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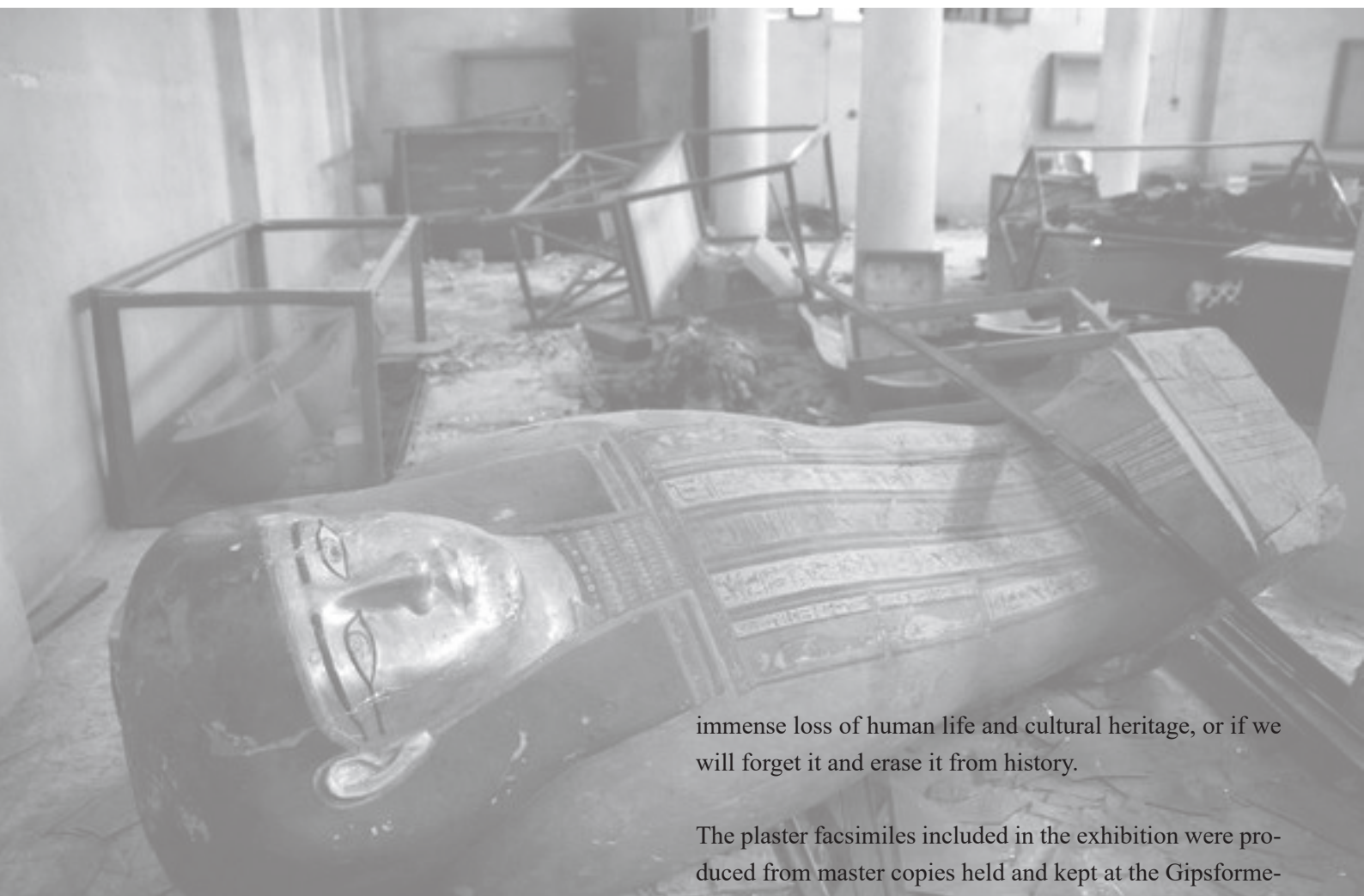
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The story of Berlin and its museums is one that may be repeated in the near future, when the dust settles in places such as Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, as they have recently been the stage for revolutions and armed conflicts, immensely affecting their archaeological and museological patrimony. Visible not only in ISIS' actions in Palmyra, but the looting of the Museums in Cairo between 2012 and 2014 in Egypt.⁷ The case of Berlin sheds light on the decisions museological institutions go through when faced with political revolts and war conflicts: what to save? In 1941 'the first transports of the most valuable objects from the Berlin Museums to safe locations begun'.⁸ As not everything could be transported, there was a need to attribute significance to salvaged objects. And the act of attributing importance to some items and leaving others behind, is in itself a decision of allowing these to be forgotten and excluded from history. Chapuis and Rowley faced very similar decisions, when, 70 years later, they were deciding which artworks to present in 'The Lost Museum' exhibition. Similarly, the same happens when institutions, in general, make a decision to restore one piece rather than another.

'The Lost Museum' presents a challenge to how we remember and tell history. It does this by demonstrating how the process of selection and curation determines if we will remember an artwork that no longer exists, because its disappearance is linked to a historical period marked by an

For 'The Lost Museum' exhibition, dozens of artworks were selected among the lost and severely damaged pieces. As for the paintings, completely taken by the fire, were reproduced to scale, in black and white, from the Museum's image archive. The three-dimensional pieces were presented either in their fragmented current state or recuperated. Remaining pieces deemed historically significant, which disappeared in flames or the subsequent looting of the bunker, were represented through photographs and plaster facsimiles.



Looting of the Malawi Museum, Minya province
Upper Egypt, 2015, © Financial Times

What to save?

immense loss of human life and cultural heritage, or if we will forget it and erase it from history.

The plaster facsimiles included in the exhibition were produced from master copies held and kept at the Gipsformerei in Berlin. Hence, after my visit to the Bode Museum, I proceeded to visit that institution, where I was given a tour by the director Dr. Miguel Helfrich. There, he introduced me to the Gipsformerei's story, and how over the years the institution has been fundamental to the maintenance of sculpture items in all Berlin Museums' collections, among other international museological institutions. Founded in 1819, and housing a collection of over 7.000 handmade plaster casts (some of which are over 200 years and still in use) and master copies of sculptures, whose originals are housed in several German and international museums, or in archeological sites in Greece, Turkey, and the Middle East. Some of the originals no longer exist, as in the case of the sculptures destroyed or severely damaged in WWII. By housing these copies, the Gipsformerei contributes to the preservation of their originals, either replacing them, or helping with the restoration processes. Interestingly, in keeping with its original function, the Gipsformerei allows one to order a copy of some of the casts in the collection. Hence, anyone is able to place an online order, and in a few weeks acquire a painted plaster facsimile of Nefertiti or any other item from the collection.⁹

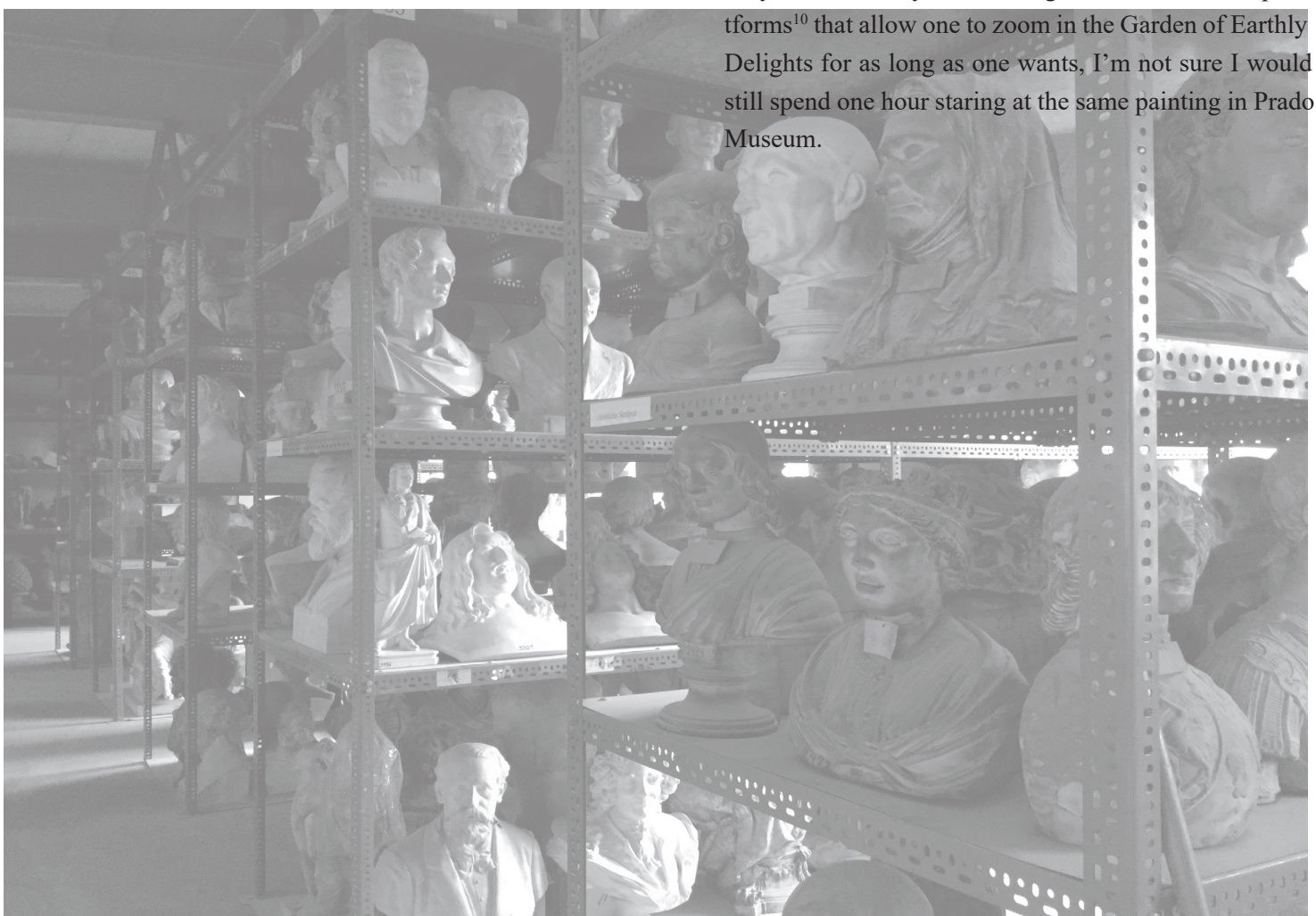




What is relevant about such an institution is that, in some cases, the copies and casts housed at the Gipsformerei are the only remaining images of their original, as the latter was destroyed or is in a decadent preservation state. As Dr. Helfrich informs me, ‘The Gipsformerei is the vivid three-dimensional memory of the Berlin Museums’ sculptural losses.’ It is for this reasons that its survival of the to WWII was so important, as the loss of such a collection would be the final loss of these representations. Ultimately, the loss of the Gipsformerei would have meant the erasure of the original “body” through erasure of the ability to reproduce its copies.

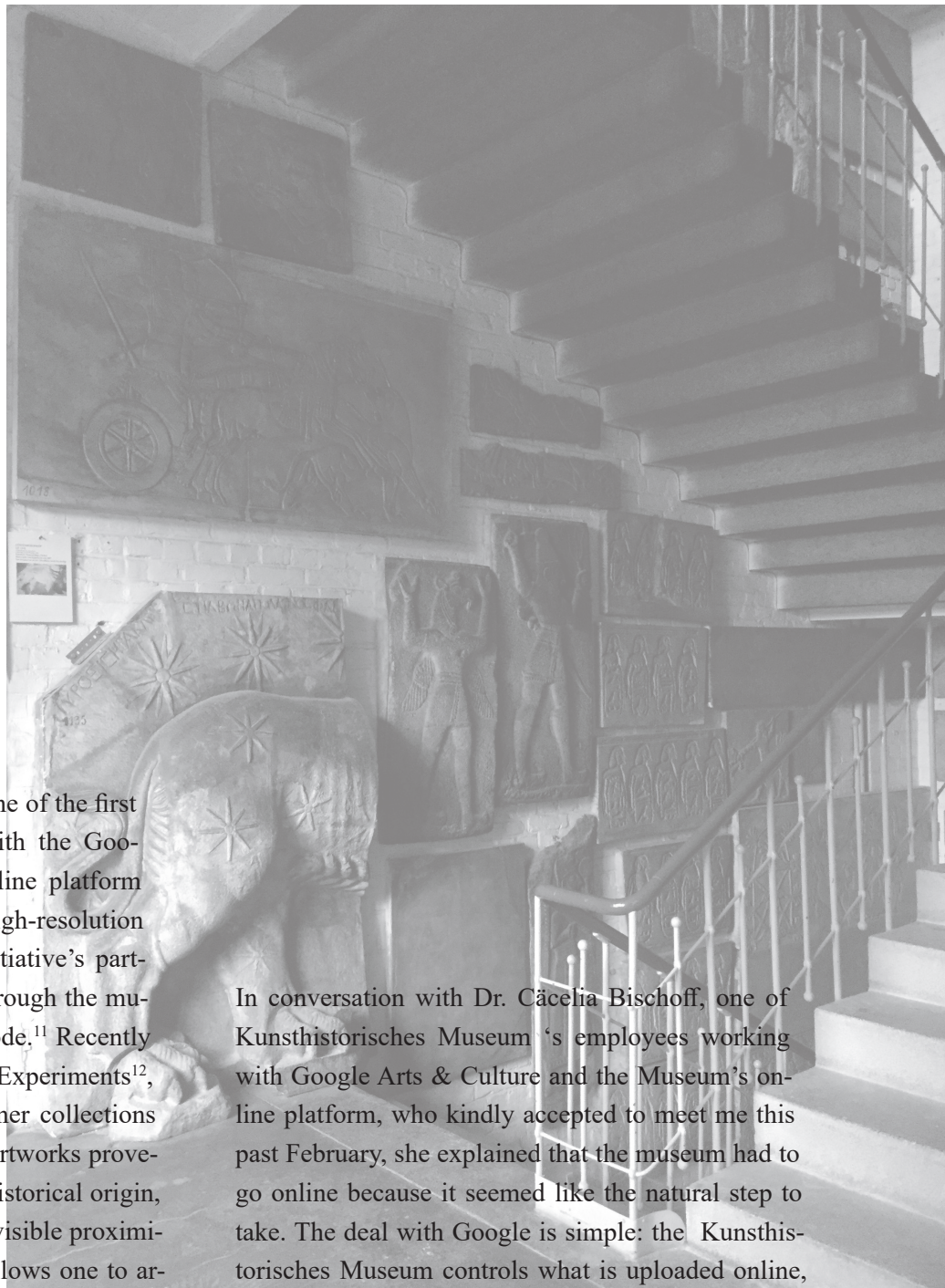
But is it essential for such a “body” to even exist? The participation in the social sphere of museums and art seems to be ever more mediated. Nowadays, we visit a museum, rarely finding the chance to be alone with the artwork. At home, we can often enjoy a work of art in piece, privately.

I was 14 years old when I first saw Hieronymus Bosch’s ‘The Garden of Earthly Delights’ at Prado Museum. I had previously admired the piece in art history books and magazines from the beginning of the 2000s, and sometimes even from the then-scarce internet reproductions. I stood one hour in front of it, and I know this for a fact because at a certain point the museum guard approached me in the fear that a young teenager might be plotting something malicious towards the artwork. And I was never to forget its intricate details. When exiting the museum, I bought myself what has so far been the only copy of an artwork I’ve ever acquired. A small scale digital print on canvas of Bosch’s masterpiece. I looked it up the other day, and was saddened by the low quality of the copy, far worse than what I can achieve today if I were to download any HD file from Google image search and print it myself. If I were 14 years old today, and having visited the online platforms¹⁰ that allow one to zoom in the Garden of Earthly Delights for as long as one wants, I’m not sure I would still spend one hour staring at the same painting in Prado Museum.



But is it important for such a "body" to exist?

The Kunsthistorisches Museum was one of the first European museums to collaborate with the Google Arts & Culture Initiative. An online platform through which the public can access high-resolution images of artworks housed in the Initiative's partner museums, and virtually wander through the museum galleries with the street view mode.¹¹ Recently Google added new features, called Experiments¹², allowing one to interact with all partner collections at once. With these new features, the artworks provenance is not that important, nor their historical origin, as the emphasis is placed on a purely visible proximity. Google Arts & Culture initiative allows one to archive and experience artworks according to popularity, color, hashtags, and similarities, introducing the new ways of historicizing the order of things that reminds of Groys' take on the experience and reconfiguration of time through internet.¹³



In conversation with Dr. Căcelia Bischoff, one of Kunsthistorisches Museum's employees working with Google Arts & Culture and the Museum's online platform, who kindly accepted to meet me this past February, she explained that the museum had to go online because it seemed like the natural step to take. The deal with Google is simple: the Kunsthistorisches Museum controls what is uploaded online, and holds the rights to all the files, as long as they were produced with the museum equipment and staff. It is illegal to download the images, but when I mention that no one follows this rule, Dr. Bischoff agreed. The control of that ephemeral border is utopian, and the truth is that the museum doesn't care much, since every copy is indirectly valuable. Museums profit from copies and facsimiles today, as selfies only prove that one was there, and while everyone can see the reproduction online and in HD, not everyone can be in front of it. The irony couldn't be more hard-hitting: one can buy a replica of the Nefertiti at the Gipsformerei, one can acquire dozens of merchandising with Nefertiti stamped on it, but once at the Neues Museum in Berlin, the Nefertiti Galerie is the only room where photographing isn't allowed.

¹⁰ Online interactive documentary Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* <https://tuinderlusten-jheronimusbosch.ntr.nl/en>

¹¹ Google Arts & Culture <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/?hl=de>

¹² Experiments <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/project?hl=de>

¹³ Boris Groys, *The Truth of Art*, e-flux Journal #71, 2016





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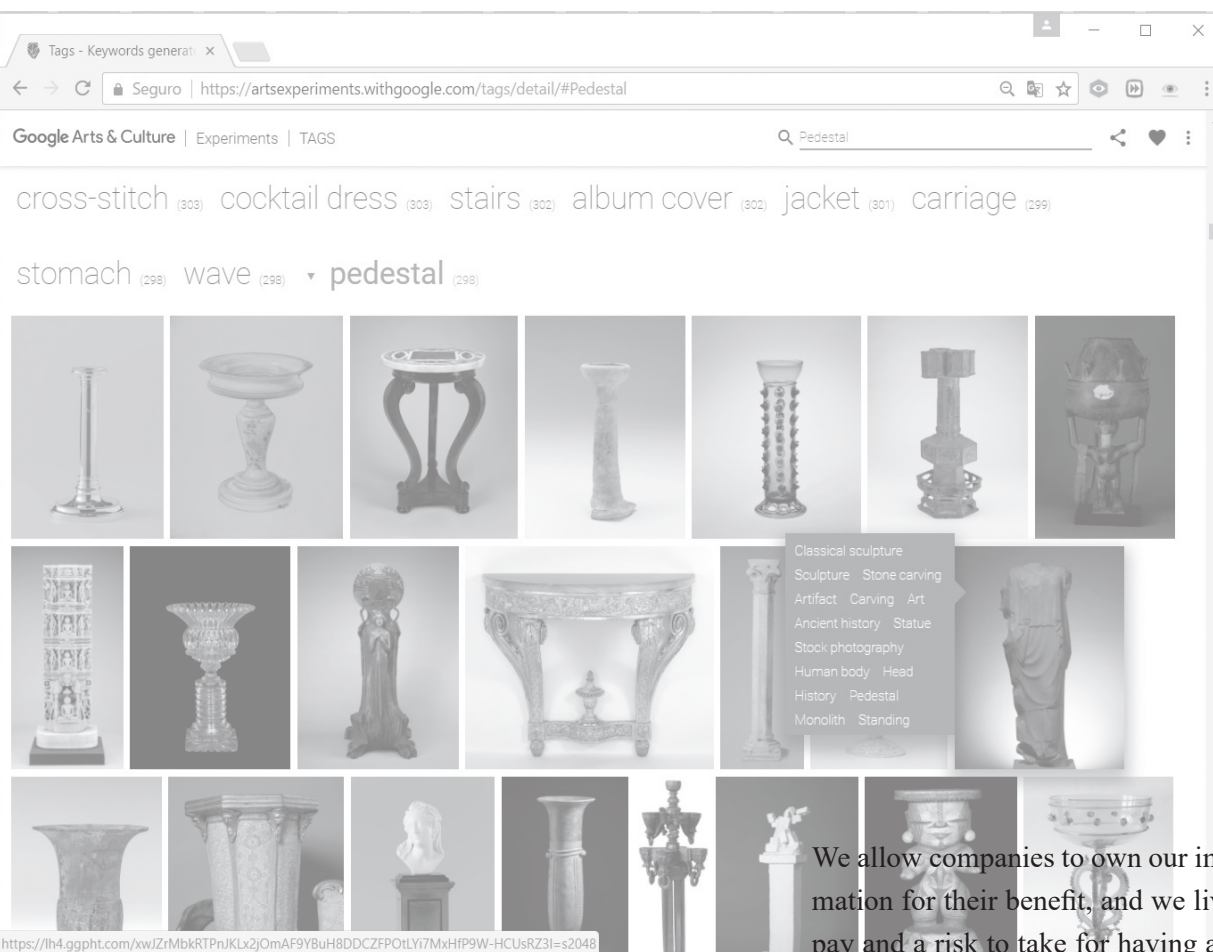
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We allow companies to own our images and use our information for their benefit, and we live with it, it's a price to pay and a risk to take for having an online presence. Museums and their collections seem to be willing to take the same risk. The reproduction and proliferation of images aren't something specific to today. But what is new is the possibility to produce exact copies that are indistinguishable from the original, thanks to modern technology, as demonstrated by Adam Löwe. When I asked Dr. Bischoff about the possibility of Google (or someone else) using the HD files to print three-dimensional 1/1 exact facsimiles of the paintings and to exhibit them: "I guess we have to trust them, hope that will not happen, and that in the meantime the original will remain more valuable."

In conversation with Cäelia Bischoff, I'm told that a participation of the Museum in the social media and online world is urgent, so as to keep the museum and its artworks away from becoming forgotten or losing their historical value and cultural contribution. One of Kunsthistorisches Museum's dearest pieces in the collection has to be Pieter Bruegel's Tower of Babel. It is featured in the Google Arts & Culture as one of the Museum's pièces de résistance: a zoom in artwork,¹⁴ something exclusive of only a few artworks featured in the online platform. Dr. Bischoff points out an important detail about Tower of Babel's digital facsimile: because the KHM does not possess the equipment that such Full-HD digitalization process requires, it had to be done by the Google Arts & Culture team. Thus, the rights to that image belong entirely to the company, and not the museum. Owning the rights of the Full-HD copy of such an artwork feels like holding the artwork itself.

The museum is, therefore, aware of the risks that online availability of artworks might have, and even more of the risk that authorizing an for-profit organization such as Google to have full rights to Full HD files of the most emblematic artworks in the museum. In spite of this awareness, the museum appears to prefer not to attribute too much meaning to it, assuming that the banalization of the original through its reproduction is something from the past, preferring to allow people to see pieces online, hoping for an increase in physical public visitors. In fact, the need to reach required number of visitors and ticket sales increases the need for an online presence. The rule that if you are not online you do not exist and do not communicate, also applies to the artworks in Museum collections.

If you are not online you do not exist



The abundance of reproductions and representations of artworks that we observe today guarantees that the original is a body that will never be thrown off its pedestal by an abundance of its copies. As a matter of fact, I have argued that these reproductions can empower the importance of the original in the collective memory, and ultimately contribute to its restitution, such as in the case of original's destruction. So, does the importance of the original rely on the fact that we need a body to mourn in the event of loss?

King Sebastian was never forgotten, 70 years later the Caravaggios that was stolen in Italy, or the Botticellis Donatellos that disappeared under the 1945 fire in Berlin appear more alive and precious than they would have been if their bodies hadn't burnt. They've become monumental as they do not cease to exist in spite of their destruction and their lack of a body to prove that they are there. As technology continues to evolve, and as long as photo documentation exists, and the capacity of man to register memory in accounts and documents, things may physically disappear, but we can edit time. Things may disappear, but we may not cease to experience them. We can digitalize them, create a 2.0 version them.

'The Lost Museum' and the Gipsformerei have shown us that one can go back and retrieve time. They present us with possibilities of recovering from loss. Google Arts & Culture separates art from temporality, assembling it with the non-linear presentation of time that characterizes the Internet (where the passage of time is recognized by the quality of images)¹⁵ suggesting new ways of experiencing art that may perhaps detract us.

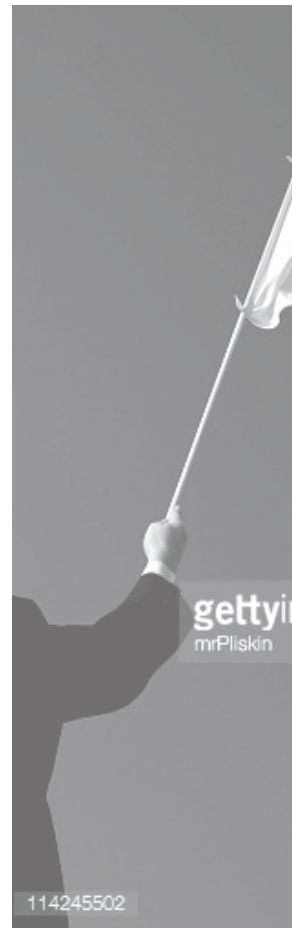
The accessibility of art online is part of the shift to a form of online participation of objects and events; Linking between what was otherwise unlinked objects and events, such as the fusion of art and the social networks as a direct follow up and an integral component of political events, revolutionary acts, or armed conflicts taking place around the world. One may argue that, like in the case of the mediated experience of art offered by Google Arts & Culture, to sign online petitions or to share videos denouncing these conflicts cannot compare to the level of participation of those joining the demonstrations in squares. On the other hand, this online mediation provides a new level of construction of collective memory, potentiating the endurance of those images and events over time in one's mind, regardless of the existence of their representations.

¹⁴ Pieter Bruegel's Tower of Babel
<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/the-tower-of-babel/bAGKODJvfhYQ?hl=de>
¹⁵ Hito Steyerl, *In Defense of the Poor Image*, in *The Wretched of the Screen*, Sternberg press, 2016



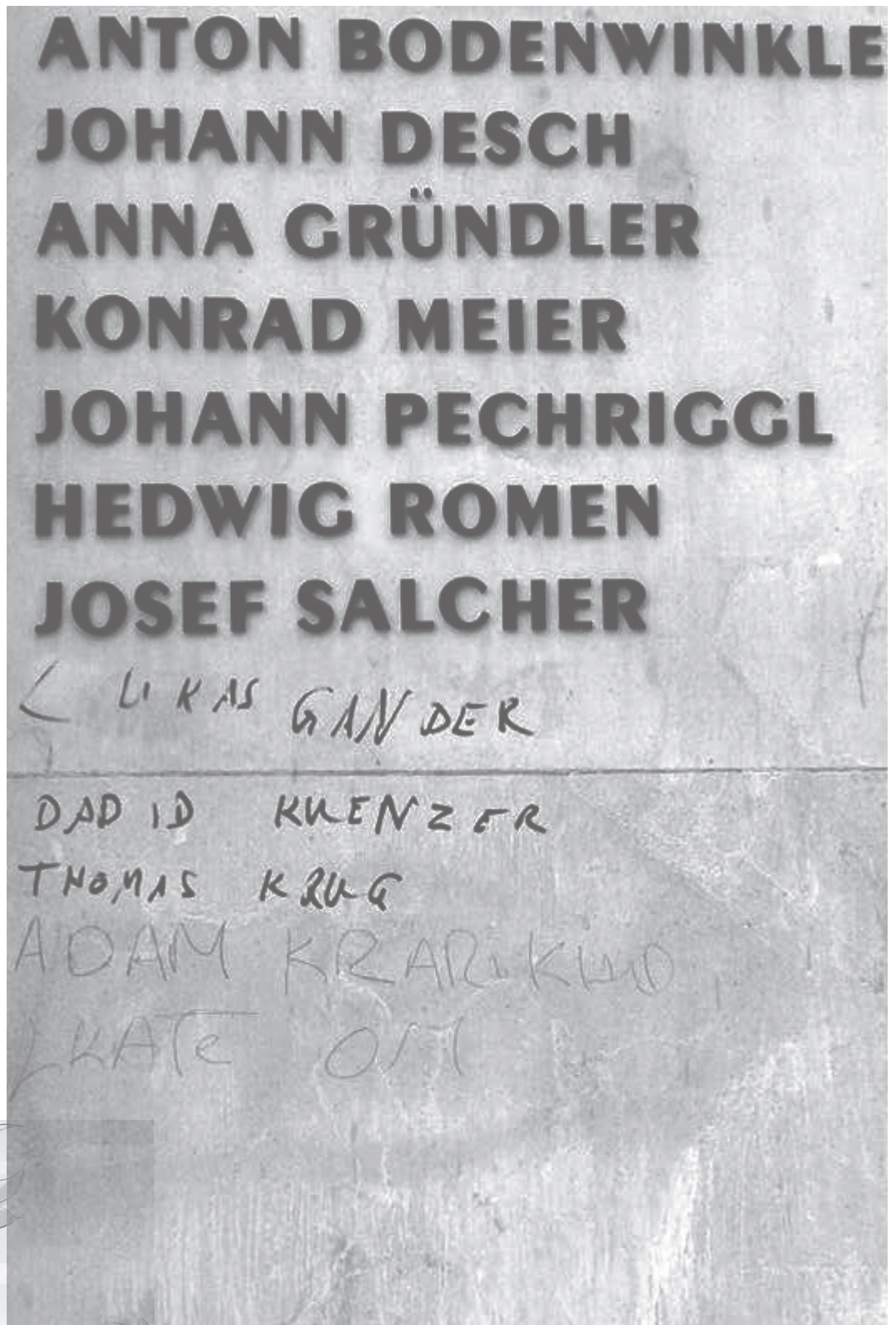
Remnant of a figure, The Bode Museum's Depot, Berlin 2017, © Maria Trabulo

#truce, © Getty



Step 7: Forgive & Forget



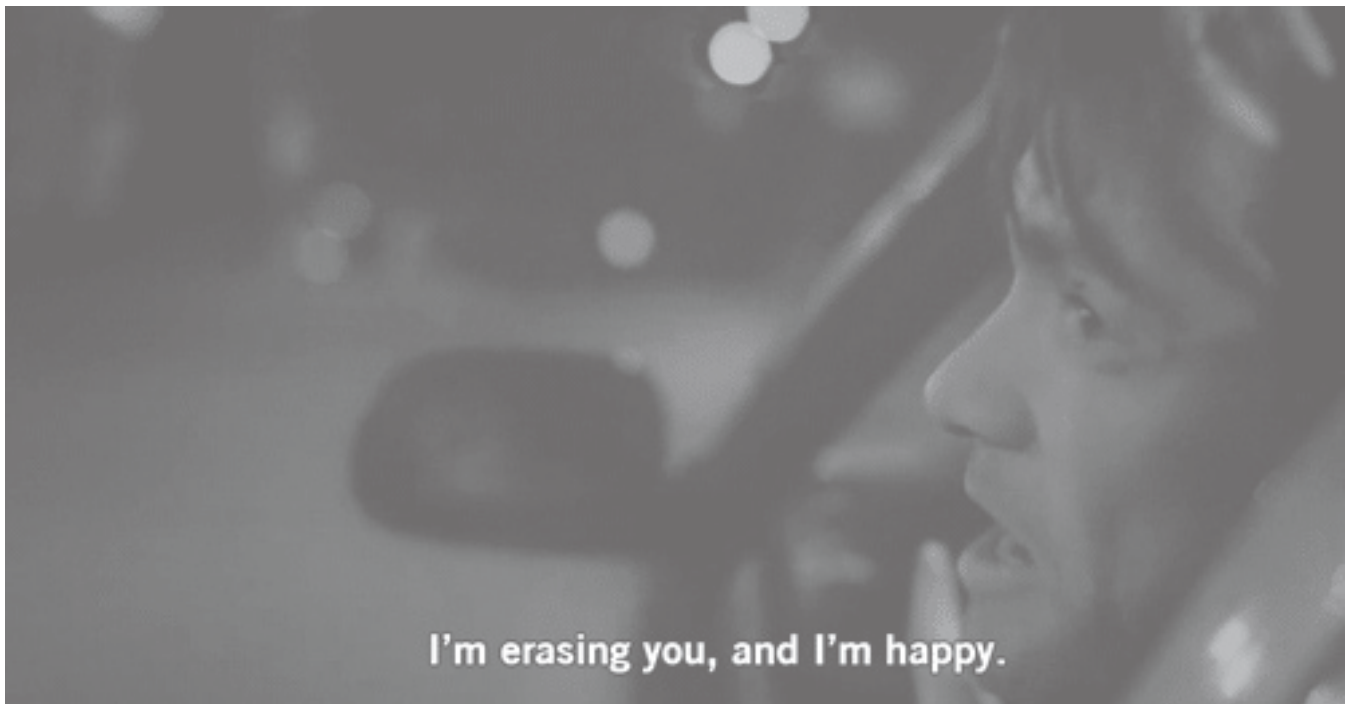


What to do

The inanimate state of a representation appears as the guarantee that it will overcome our death. To destroy it is to annihilate the possibility of that person or event being remembered. But what to do with what one cannot destroy?

In the 2004 film 'The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind', by the French director Michel Gondry, Clementine (Kate Winslet) and Joel (Jim Carrey) form a romantic pair going through sour times in their relationship, by undergoing a procedure to have each other erased from their memories. They pay the company Lacuna, Inc. to erase all memory of the relationship from their brains as they sleep¹. Is acceptance the ultimate treatment, or will we need Gondry's fictional company?

There is something grand about longing for something or someone. For humans, it seems that looking at the past is inevitable, museums and art playing a relevant role in this process.² The Internet merely enhanced this human desire. The internet provides easy access to the artifacts of the past, such as online film archives and libraries, or museums that display their collections, while allowing the present to be archived as it happens - a live stream of a



demonstration or a awards ceremony in equal measure. As such, the internet became another form of representation. It is important for humans to hold on to the past, as a kind of self-identification, hence the symbolical depth behind monuments and other representations. What is a representation after all? Are some things unrepresentable?³ And what happens when there are no images left to represent someone or something in this world? Do we forget about him/her/it?

¹ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338013/?ref_=nv_sr_2

² André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire*, Éditions Gallimard, 1965

³ Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, Verso, 2009

⁴ http://www.salon.com/1998/11/25/feature_253/

with what one can't destroy?

Men and broken statue at the abandoned studio of sculptor Nikolaos Pavlopoulos, Athens 2012, © Dreamstime



The case of King Sebastian exemplifies how the need for a body can be questioned. The perseverance of his memory in the collective arose precisely from the inexistence of a body to mourn. This loss or lack of a physical presence, having become so latent in people's mind, persisted quite possibly beyond what could have been achieved through memorials and statues that could have been raised to commemorate him. The memory of him is a part of the collective, having passed from mouth to mouth over centuries. Is that the ultimate monumentality that I have been wandering about?

Remembering J. D. Lasica's words on how 'The Net has forgotten how to forget.'⁴ could it be that, precisely because of how much information is uploaded on the Net, as layers of dust that set daily, the greatest danger on internet not forgetting has less to do with how the information uploaded on it becomes recorded, but with how many people it reaches? The internet has become a repository, and like any other archiving system, one has to know how to find the information, how to dig it out, from the screen just as from the ground. A post can be erased and no one seems to care; but if a post that has been read and shared is suddenly erased, then its erasure is inefficient. The big danger here is people's gaze. It seems to me that what is a stake here is not how inefficient it can be to erase something from the Web, but the impossibility to erase it from someone's minds, from collective memory.

No matter how painful and time-consuming it might be to erase all the videos uploaded this past decade reporting the defacing of statues and other demonstrations from across the globe, it is nevertheless a possible task, but to erase those images and events from people's minds would be impossible. In the embedded personal and collective memory, lies the limit to forgetting.



A couple takes a selfie atop Cynthia Gutierrez's installation on Lenin's former pedestal, Kiev 2016, © Getty

⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, *Can Thought go on without a Body?*, in 'The Inhuman', 1988, Editions Gallée
⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/14/kyiv-art-installation-lets-ukrainians-knock-lenin-off-pedest>

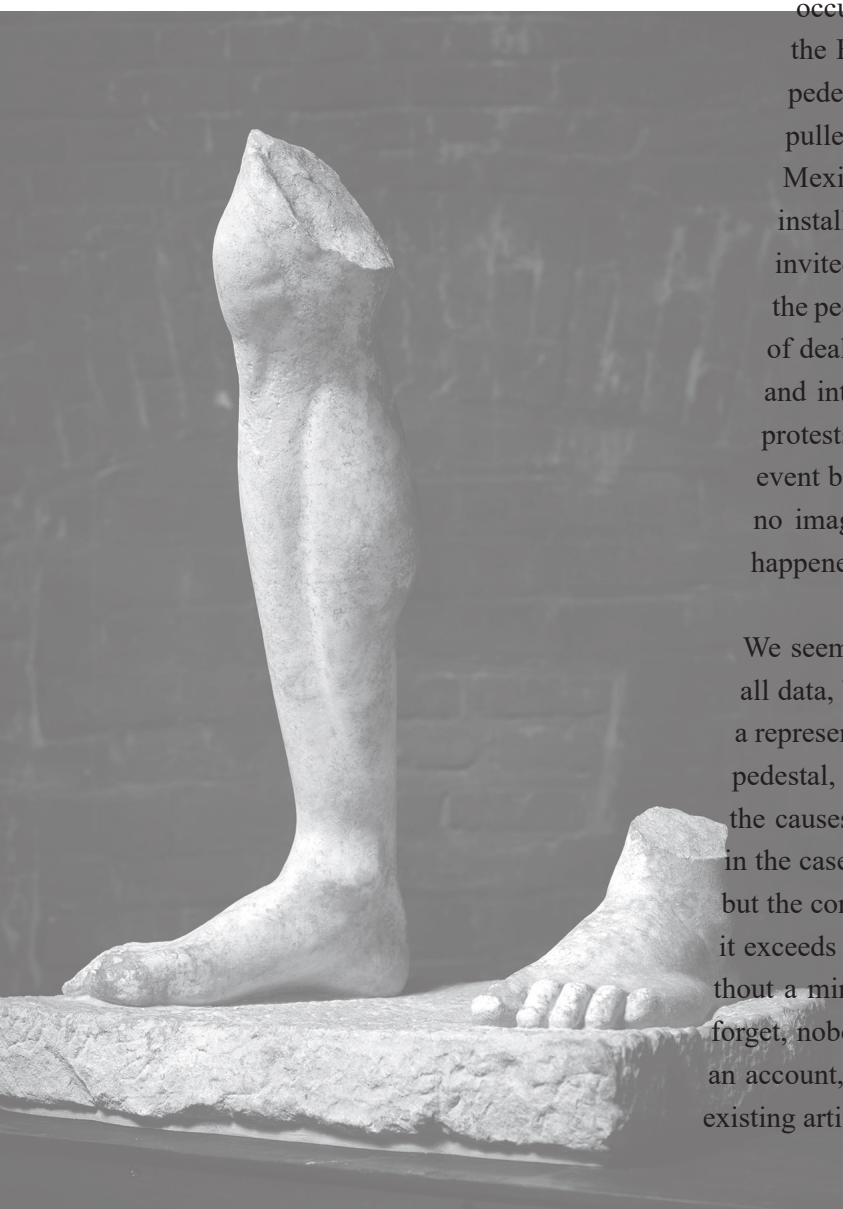
To conclude, when no object remains (and by that, I mean a reproduced body of someone), what could be a possible representation of someone, to avoid or cause his/her erasure from memory? How does memory look like beyond representations? Beyond statues, books, engravings, Papyrus, plates, street names, monuments, Youtube videos, GIFs, collages, Wikipedia pages, and Facebook profiles? In the event of a total erasure of documentation we would face the void, the void of images and representations, so what would an experience of memory be like in that scenario? On what would we rely to reconstitute History? It appears as if humans would be required to think beyond representation, not Lyotard's explosion of the Sun, but the implosion of data, and as Lyotard points out, there is an urge to think if thought can go on without a body.⁵ The role of one's personal and collective memory appears to be vital in the making of this body, making use of one's embedded memories to reconstruct the past.

The desire to forget is dependent and encompassed by the wish to remember. Therefore, a part of that desire is to accept that it may never happen, as one cannot edit thoughts as one can edit time through museums or posts on social networks. The Iraqi hurried to fill the gap of Saddam's pedestal at Firdos Square in Baghdad with a nonfigurative sculpture. The Portuguese hurried to fill the gap of the dead king's body with a legend, and centuries later rushed to find a substitute for the broken statue. Though more than a year later, Rossio Train Station's façade is still missing its figure.



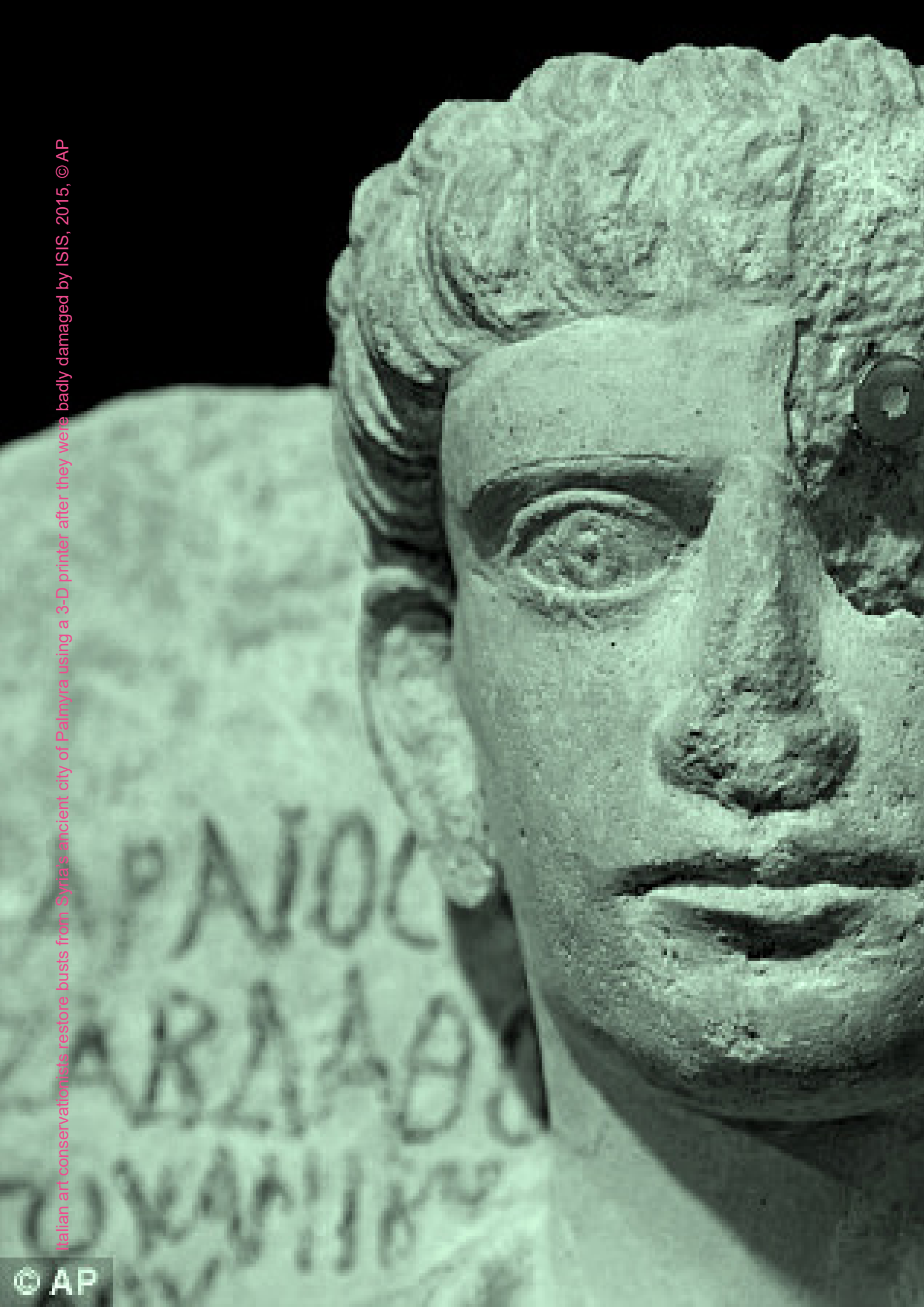
The place remains empty, but perhaps some good can derive from allowing gaps to exist, and to let them naturally be occupied with what else comes next. In Kiev, the stage of the Euromaidan protests and Ukrainian revolt of 2014, the pedestal where a Lenin statue stood for decades until it was pulled from its perch in 2014, has ever since been left empty. Mexican artist Cynthia Gutiérrez used this void to in 2016 install her artwork *Inhabiting Shadows*, which temporarily invited the public to climb a set of steps and access the top of the pedestal, filling its void.⁶ This absence of a body as a form of dealing with an event that left a deep mark on the national and international political structure, such as the Euromaidan protests, provides evidence for how strongly-integrated the event became in the individual and collective memory, as that no image or representation is necessary to account for what happened, other than the annihilation of the previous one.

We seem to have achieved the ability to retain, store and keep all data, but perhaps the survival of humans and things exceeds a representation, the need for a body. In the case of Kiev's empty pedestal, the void induced by the absence of a body reinforces the causes of that action and the events that followed. Much as in the case of King Sebastian, it wasn't so much about his death, but the consequences it had. A thought can go on without a body, it exceeds any representation. But no thought can be reached without a mind and hence without another body, and thus, to truly forget, nobody can exist. Nobody that can remember and provide an account, and nobody that can remember and contextualize the existing artifacts in a historical perspective.



Remnant of a standing male statue, Roman, 2nd Century A.D., © TEFAF

Italian art conservationists restore busts from Syria's ancient city of Palmyra using a 3-D printer after they were badly damaged by ISIS, 2015, © AP





Set in Stone

Maria Trabulo





