

MONUMENTS OF DISSIDENCE: 3D MODELS OF THE SOCIAL UNREST IN CHILE BY THE ARTIST COLLECTIVE ANTES DEL OLVIDO

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Monumentos de la disidencia: Modelos 3D de la revuelta social en Chile por el Colectivo de Artistas
Antes del Olvido

Monumentos à dissidência: modelagens tridimensionais da revolta social em Chile pelo coletivo
artístico Antes del Olvido

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ABSTRACT:

The artist collective Antes del Olvido formed in 2019 during the crisis in Chile to document significant locations of the protest as 3D models. Their goal is "to collectively produce an archive of the uprising" as "a political tool, an artifact for collective memory." Drawing on the concept of activism, I discuss various aspects of these images: first, their place among cellphone snapshots, graffiti, the urban fabric, and the circulation of symbols across these media. Second, I investigate the importance of location and movement in the protests and its preservation in the 3D models. Finally, I reflect on their role as citizen-generated monuments in providing agency to the artists and the public in shaping historical memory.

KEYWORDS:

activism, social unrest, Chile, 3D rendering, monuments, archive.

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RESUMEN:

El colectivo artístico Antes del Olvido se formó en 2019 durante la crisis en Chile para documentar lugares importantes de la protesta en forma de modelos 3D. Su objetivo es “producir colectivamente un archivo del estallido” como “una herramienta política, un artefacto para la memoria colectiva”. Basándonos en el concepto de activismo, analizamos varios aspectos de estas imágenes: primero, su lugar entre las instantáneas fotográficas, los grafitis y el tejido urbano, y la circulación de símbolos a través de estos medios. Segundo, investigamos la importancia de la ubicación y el movimiento en la protesta y su conservación en los modelos 3D. Por último, reflexionamos sobre su papel como monumentos generados por los ciudadanos al proporcionar agencia a los artistas y al público en la configuración de la memoria histórica.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

activismo, estallido social, Chile, 3D rendering, monumentos, archivo.

RESUMO:

O coletivo artístico Antes del Olvido formou-se em 2019, em meio da crise em Chile, para documentar locais importantes da protesta, com a modelagem tridimensional. Seu objetivo é “gerar coletivamente um espólio da eclosão social” como “instrumento político ou artefacto para a memória coletiva”. Baseados no conceito de ativismo, fizemos uma análise de diferentes aspectos de estas imagens: primeiro, o seu local entre as fotografias instantâneas, os grafitis e o tecido urbano, e a circulação de símbolos por estes meios. Segundo, pesquisamos a importância da posição e o movimento na protesta e sua conservação nas modelagens tridimensionais. Terceiro, refletimos sobre seu papel como instrumentos gerados pelos cidadãos, por prover agência aos artistas e ao público na configuração da memória histórica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

ativismo, eclosão social, Chile, modelagem tridimensional, monumentos, espólio.

THE CRISES IN CHILE

In early October 2019, the Chilean, state-owned company Metro S.A. increased ticket prices for its network of subway and bus transportation in the capital Santiago, the second largest in Latin America. This new rise was but another step in a steady development, resulting in a near doubling of the prices since 2007. In the metropolitan region of over seven million inhabitants, the company transports up to three million during weekdays.¹ The working and middle classes reacted negatively to the new measure, and in the week of October 14 high school students staged mass protests in the metro stations, jumping over the turnstiles to “evade” paying (this went on to become an early catchword during the protests). Many older students and blue- and white-collar workers solidarized with the pupils and joined the evasion actions. The police, in turn, reacted harshly against this act of civil disobedience, and sent hundreds of security forces to the stations to restore order. Violent incidents between police and protesters followed, and in the evening of Friday, October 18 (now known as 18O), the

1. T13, “Casi 3 millones: Metro de Santiago tuvo el día con más pasajeros de su historia,” *T13*, May 1, 2019, <https://www.t13.cl/noticia/nacional/record-historico-metro-santiago-transporta-casi-3-millones-pasajeros-diario>.



Image 1. The march on October 25, 2019 on Plaza Italia, Santiago, with ca. 1.2 million participants. View captured by the webcam of the Galería CIMA. Galería CIMA. *La marcha más grande de Chile*, 2019. Screenshot from YouTube livestream. © Galería CIMA. Santiago de Chile.

situation escalated to unprecedented levels, resulting in the *estallido social* (social outbreak). In the early hours of Saturday, Chile's President Sebastián Piñera declared a state of emergency and handed control of the city over to the military for the first time since the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990.

Despite the repressive measures taken by the right-wing government, the protests grew tremendously in numbers and spread to all major cities, from Arica in the extreme North to Punta Arenas in the extreme South. Marches with tens of thousands of people moved through the streets on every day of the first week. On Friday, October 25, Santiago's main square, Plaza Italia (renamed by the protesters as Plaza Dignidad, a designation that I will take up in the following pages), saw a crowd of around 1.2 million people gather, being the biggest march since the plebiscite of 1988 to say "No" to the continuation of Pinochet's autocratic rule. Within a couple of days, the protest against the rise in metro prices turned into a general expression of disapproval of the government's social policies, not only under Piñera's administration, but in every government since the reinstatement of democracy. The transformation of the democratically elected socialist state of Salvador Allende (1970-1973) into a neoliberal country under Pinochet (1973-1989), and especially the imposed constitution of 1980 that cemented neoliberalism for the generations to come, has left no aspect of private and entrepreneurial life untouched.² The protesters very clearly spelled out the problems looming in society, from the extractivist environmental politics to the privatization (and consequently, scarcity) of water, the dire and expensive private education system, the pension system that funds big corporations but minimally benefits the lower classes, to the rights of indigenous and LGBTQ2SIIA+ communities. These ingrained structures have given rise to a rampant social inequality and a toxic form of classism in the country. To contrast the widespread poverty in Chile, the protesters denounced the numerous public scandals of fraud within the military and police, price-rigging among large food chains, and environmental disasters covered up by companies and administrations alike. While demanding the resignation of the president and his cabinet, the marchers made clear that the problem was not just the current constellation, but 30 years of neoliberal exploitation (the slogan is "*no son 30 pesos, son 30 años*"—"it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years"—, referring to the rise in the price of metro tickets).³

DIMENSIONS OF ART IN PROTESTS

With their demands, the Chilean protests have resonated with concurrent social crises in other countries of Latin America like Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru; in the Near East, like Lebanon and Iran; and in Asia, primarily in Hong Kong. Individual cases of unrest differ in their constellations of reasons, actors, and

2. On the constitution of 1980, see María Olivia Monckeberg, *El saqueo de los grupos económicos al estado chileno* (Santiago de Chile: DeBolsillo, 2015); and Claudia Heiss, "Legitimacy Crisis and the Constitutional Problem in Chile: A Legacy of Authoritarianism." *Constellations* 24 (2017): 470-79.

3. A timely analysis of the first days of the protest and relevant background information can be found in Mario Garcés, "October 2019: Social Uprising in Neoliberal Chile." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 28, n.º. 3 (2020): 483-91.

outcomes, but they all appear to have common roots in the critique of neoliberalism, corruption, and the search for political freedom.⁴ What is more, their organization is based on the exchange of information via social media, providing for a widespread connection between protesters and a rapid diffusion of news and events. Thus, they resemble the great crises of only a few years prior, which became famous for the importance of citizen journalism and amateur footage from the hotspots of the protests. The Arab Spring on the Mediterranean coast of Africa in 2011,⁵ Occupy Wall Street in the USA, also in 2011,⁶ and Euromaidan in Ukraine in 2013, were fueled by Internet-based communication which not only served the local communities but also provided inside knowledge to the world audience.⁷

The images shared by the dissidents must be understood as an integral part of the protests. More than being a mere byproduct, the information shared online constitutes a second location of opposition. Social media draw up a new space for connection, exchange, and expression. As the media theorist and artist Peter Weibel writes, this form of communication is “turning all humans into transmitters rather than mere receivers.”⁸ Thereby, it has become possible to extend the range of opinions and demands and to invite a mixed-class, politically diverse population to participate in the discussion. Weibel recognizes this as the decisive difference between current crises and their twentieth-century counterparts, particularly during the tumultuous 1960s. It is no longer a student elite, Weibel writes, which is taking their manifesto to the streets, but “a mass of anonymous individuals.” Although this multitude is moving in all kinds of directions in the ongoing debate, there are nonetheless mechanisms and agents of coordination. Among them is the “artist,” a term coined by Italian artist Tatiana Bazzichelli and described by Weibel as an artist whose practices of performance and audience participation, “which have existed in art since the 1960s, are now descending into the world of politics.”⁹ The artist possesses the means to activate and channel the multitude’s participation in the protests, precisely because the “art of the twentieth century has made the boundaries between the various actors (architects, designers, artists, scientists, politicians, citizens) and between aesthetic and nonaesthetic objects and events both permeable and invisible.”¹⁰ This means that the artist does not solely function in either the art discourse or the political debate, but in both, thus providing links between heterogeneous actors and topics. The artist’s “field of action consists of verbal instructions or performative actions,” as “the artwork-as-object has been superseded by open-ended events, installations, actions, processes, games, instructions for action, concepts, and environments.” This dynamic and involvement induced by the artist ultimately elevates the position of the political subject not only from receiver to transmitter through social media, but above all to the status of

4. BBC News, “Why Protesters Are on the Streets Worldwide,” *BBC News*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-50123743>.

5. Nahed Eltantawy and Julie B. Wiest, “Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory,” *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011): 1207-1224; Gadi Wolfsfeld, Elad Segev, and Tamir Sheaffer, “Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Comes First,” *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18, n°. 2 (2013): 115-37.

6. Gavin Brown, Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy (eds.), *Protest Camps in International Context: Spaces, Infrastructures, and Media of Resistance* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2017).

7. Jennifer Dickinson, “*Prosymo Maksymal’nyi Perepost!* Tactical and Discursive Uses of Social Media in Ukraine’s EuroMaidan,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2014): 75-93.

8. Peter Weibel, “People, Politics, and Power,” in *Global Activism: Art and Conflict in the 21st Century*, edited by Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, 2015), 57.

9. Weibel, “People, Politics, and Power,” 58.

10. Weibel, “People, Politics, and Power,” 57.

“the participant, the cocreator, the fellow player.”¹¹ Agency is thus distributed through media structures and collaboration on the protest site.

THE ARTIST COLLECTIVE ANTES DEL OLVIDO

The posters, banners, and graffiti that have been accompanying protests at least since Roman times continue to be a crucial element in the visual manifestation of dissidence. So, too, in the Chilean *estallido*: the demonstrators who have taken to the streets carry their messages above their heads, spelling out their discontent and demanding concrete measures, such as an increase in the minimum wage and a reform of the pension system. Large banners are carried by multiple people on the ground and are shared by thousands as little squares and short videos on social media. The sum of their intervention and production transforms plazas and Instagram accounts alike into protest camps, thus gaining control over public space both on- and offline. Without social media, it can be assumed, the gatherings in Santiago and other major cities would have never reached such an incredible number of participants over a continued period of time. The calls to action and the pictures of the manifestations are shared widely on social networks and have made it possible to communicate snippets of the events to everyone in the world with Internet access.

Against this concrete example of protest and a broader underlying infrastructure of media and political participation I will discuss the work of the artist collective Antes del Olvido, who count as a vivid example of activism as described by Weibel. Antes del Olvido formed in 2019 shortly after the outbreak of the unrest with the goal of documenting significant locations of the protest, particularly sites extensively covered with graffiti and other interventions into the urban fabric. The core contributors are Cristóbal Cea, Daniela Canales, Felipe Baeza, Francisco Cangas, Josefina Buschmann, Josefina Mellado, Kurt Malonek, Matías Serrano, Pamela Cañoles, Sarai León, Valentina Riquelme, Marcelo Fica, and Vania Montgomery. The technical skills of this group of media artists, photographers, programmers, and designers quickly gave rise to a concerted effort to produce 3D models of the main sites of the protest instead of collecting individual photographs. Countless such photographs are already available, taken by millions of protesters and observers and collected in non-institutional Instagram accounts or published in photobooks.¹² In comparison to these collections of diverse material, Antes del Olvido created their own technical and social platform. Given the time-intensive production of the 3D models, the artists invite anyone interested to participate in workshops where they teach them how to produce the photographic material on the ground and assemble it in the

11. Weibel, “People, Politics, and Power,” 57.

12. See, for instance, on Instagram: <https://instagram.com/estallidovisual>; https://instagram.com/estallidosocial_chile; and <https://instagram.com/museodelestallidosocial>. For books, see: Agencia Uno, *Estallido* (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros, 2019); Sebastián Olivari, *Chile despertó: El estallido social contado por las murallas de la Zona Cero* (Santiago de Chile: Planeta sostenible, 2019). For a discussion of various other projects, see Sebastián Valenzuela Valdivia, “Archivos de la resistencia: La patrimonialización de las huellas comunitarias del estallido social en Chile.” *Revista diagrama* 4 (2020): 34-47.

studio, which allows them to contribute directly to the collective's repertoire of models. Thus, from the very beginning the project is conceived as a "creative learning platform" in which collaboration and sharing of knowledge are the key components. In their statement, the group explicitly underline the relation of this practice to current politics and their work as artists: "Its co-creative form of production echoes the political representative crisis and the desire to find new forms of aesthetic representations while questioning traditional art-market notions of individual authorship." Until the pandemic-induced quarantine in late March 2020, more than 140 people participated in the workshops, producing over one hundred 3D models. Their practice of rendering protest sites as digital 3D models with hundreds of volunteers constitutes, in Weibel's terms, a field of action rather than the creation of objects. As the group explicitly states, their goal is "to collectively produce an archive of the uprising" as "a political tool, an artifact for collective memory."¹³ The activists recognize the protests as cooperative expressions of dissidence and take up this logic by hosting the above-mentioned workshops. Moreover, they acknowledge their own position as political subjects in this crisis and hence not as neutral mediators. They themselves take part in the political discussion and pursue political goals, all the while being conscious of the distributed agency of both the protest and its artistic rendition, communication, and archivization. In fact, this last aspect is a crucial expansion of Weibel's conceptual account of the activist, since performative participation in protests is at the same time captured for posterity and carries a historiographic potential. In this vein, *Antes del Olvido* is similar to other projects developed during the Chilean *estallido* that immediately considered the afterlife of their interventions.

The digitized sites are understood as the public canvas of the protest, and ultimately, as monuments of it. As such, their site-specificity is key, but only in relation to the collaborative practice that created them. Hence, more than being simple documents of street scenes, the work of *Antes del Olvido* seeks a profound connection to the physical spaces and social dynamics of the protests. In the following, I attempt to shed light on various aspects of these 3D images and their place among cellphone snapshots, press photographs, graffiti, the urban fabric itself, and the movement of protesters within the latter. Lastly, I reflect on their role in coming to terms with the current events and how they figure in historical memory. Given that local right-wing mayors have continuously been erasing all visual and material signs of the protest, particularly during the lockdown imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic, the collective's mission has turned out to be prescient, and the preservation and analysis of what they have recorded has become all the more relevant.

13. All quotes taken from the *Antes del Olvido* presskit shared by the collective's members. The models can be looked up on their Internet site: <http://www.antesdelolvido.cl/>.

BETWEEN ONLINE AND OFFLINE IMAGES

Protests are fueled by sharing photos and dates for upcoming marches on social media. But it is as with the hen and the egg: getting together in a physical space is necessary to create photos that are then widely shared to call for more gatherings. The production and dissemination of images that incite action are a circular development, as we see when we consider the example of Negro Matapacos (Black Copkiller). Matapacos was a black dog that accompanied students protesting for better education in Santiago de Chile in 2011. His owners gave him a red *pañuelo* (bandanna), which henceforth became his identifying feature. As seen in a documentary about him,¹⁴ Matapacos used to attack policemen and therefore seemed to express a universal, trans-species dislike of Chilean security forces, who are notorious for their aggressive behavior against protesters. However, he only made the leap from anecdote to icon when someone made a connection to Santiago's many stray dogs often seen running alongside protesters in 2019 and thus revived him symbolically. The dogs in the current unrest have become a recurring motif and they have all merged with the image of the original dog hero. People equipped them and their own pet dogs with red *pañuelos* to multiply his image, visually calling upon his warrior spirit. Dozens of graphic illustrations of the Matapacos then circulated online, but also on t-shirts, tote bags, stickers, photo-interventions on prominent public walls, and even as a giant metal sculpture which was driven around the city (at some point it was burnt down, but its carcass was spontaneously brought to life again with flowers before a new sculpture was built; the flower-Matapacos is one of the models featured in Antes del Olvido).

Seeing the Matapacos both online and offline, in various neighborhoods and social media, immensely increased his visibility and popularity. It became possible to not only passively share his image, but to also assume it. His example shows that it is crucial that online phenomena are also to be found in 'real life,' in physical space, as a means of identification. In this way, he and we are inserted into the complete, everyday scene of the protests, among the water cannons, marching bands, tear gas, and the countless banners copied online and pasted offline. The circular flow between the street and the screen is utterly vital since it also amplifies possibilities of remixing and updating the motif. What is more, the remix fuels its own evolution. A static design of the Matapacos is less likely to be shared continuously than a design that transcends styles and media. A cartoon that becomes a *pañuelo* that becomes a sculpture that becomes a performance is reproduced and shared in each iteration as something new and noteworthy. This renewed momentum is important

14. En Marcha, "Documental Matapaco (2013)", YouTube video, 19:52, <https://youtu.be/wiEFhAAWCiw>.



Image 2. 3D model of the metal carcass of the *Negro Matapacos* sculpture, completely filled with flowers. Antes del Olvido. *Negro Matapacos Veggie*, 2019. 3D model. © Antes del Olvido. Santiago de Chile. Image courtesy of Antes del Olvido. The 3D models can be seen here <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/negro-matapacos-veggie-3e458961013d4284b37509cfd14ea49>

for the community of protesters. It affirms the creativity and stamina of the group, embodies the sentiment that ‘we do not give up,’ and it proves that the community consists of a multitude of people: designers, craftspeople, workers, students, vegans, LGBTQ2SIA+, etc. They all appropriate and remix the base symbol according to their needs and aesthetics and distribute it among their respective sub-communities.

As with the Matapacos, the models produced by Antes del Olvido find themselves in a position between viral online image and its offline application. In the 3D renderings we recognize individual posters and symbols that can turn a simple street corner into an iconic place. The accumulated symbolicity of the physical space, on the other hand, enhances the significance of its photographic captures. The collective production of the 3D models on the ground—circling the object, gathering photographs from all sides—makes it possible to engage in the performativity of the urban fabric and afford it the same importance as the individual motif. In this way, Antes del Olvido allows us to comprehend this peculiar transitory moment of the online-offline turnaround of protest symbols.

LOCATION AS SYMBOL AND AS PROOF

Location is not just a component of the existence of symbols, but becomes critical in its own right. To be able to trace where in the city, exactly in which corner or wall or plaza a graffiti or symbol appears, is crucial. The protests have occurred in many parts of the city's *popular* (i.e. working-class) Centro area, and even in affluent business sectors like Providencia and Las Condes. Over the course of five months, however, a certain choreography of protesters and police gradually developed, concentrating the action at specific locations within walking distance of each other. These are, most notably, the Plaza Dignidad, the area around the Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral (GAM), and the seat of government, La Moneda, all located along the Alameda, the city's major thoroughfare and a traditional route for protest marches. These places have been the scene of constant image production, be it of confrontations with the police filmed on cellphones or of the overlay of new posters glued over older ones. The map on the Antes del Olvido website represents the distribution of the main points of action, the most iconic places.

Yet this is not the only benefit of digital records, and it is not specific to the Chilean crisis. The sense of space which the 3D models provide reflect the concern about location that pervades the whole dynamics of the unrest. To know where protests are happening, on what scale, and with what kind of police reaction, has been vital for the people going out on the streets. The livestream of



Image 3. 3D model of the southern façade of the cultural venue Centro Gabriela Mistral (GAM) in Santiago covered in graffiti. Antes del Olvido. GAM Fachada Alameda, Metro U Católica 31nov, 2019. 3D model. © Antes del Olvido. Santiago de Chile. Image courtesy of Antes del Olvido. The 3D models can be seen here: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/gam-fachada-alameda-metro-u-catolica-31nov-ed62218a9fb54cb49a0a1b60a80ffa6a>

the Galería CIMA with a sweeping view onto Plaza Dignidad is the emblematic channel of information distribution in this crisis.¹⁵ It provides an almost panoramic perspective of the situation from the tenth floor of a building directly beside the square, complemented by a secondary Instagram livestream during peak times with additional, flexible angles. This has expanded people's understanding of the place of the protests from a simple indication of the location—Plaza Italia—to an extended radius including access roads, therefore visualizing the whole process of *la marcha* (the march). Through this channel it became possible to see how this process worked: where demonstrators gather, where police position themselves, and where protesters flee after security forces decide to clear the space. Antes del Olvido takes up this heightened sense of space and augments the possibilities of documenting a situation. While the traditional photojournalistic style is determined by tight frames highlighting a particular action, the new aesthetics of CIMA's webcam and the 3D model encompass a wider scenario. This interest is palpable in the thousands of images and videos that are shared live online, and it becomes very concrete in the aftermath of the events, as amateur mobile phone videos and police GoPros are used as evidence in lawsuits. For these to be valuable, it is not the isolated action that counts, but every detail surrounding it. Where did the protesters clash with the police?, from which side-street did the police jump out to attack?, where did the protesters run to afterwards?, and who could have seen what from a specific perspective?: these are some of the questions to be answered in the courts. Frequently, protesters injured by the police would ask their followers on social media whether they had taken videos at a specific time and place to potentially reconstruct the assault and prove the guilt of the officers. With close to 1500 lawsuits filed against Chilean police (out of almost 4000 injured in the demonstrations), this practice acquired considerable importance.¹⁶ Thus, location is no longer a fixed point, an isolated fact, but literally a space of possibilities that is determined by and itself determines the movement of events. The 3D models produced by Antes del Olvido recreate spatial relations between the objects they depict. Hence, the 'sense of space' that sounds like a platitude of 3D rendering is a very real condition of understanding the symbols and interventions born from the country's ongoing crisis.

DISSIDENT MONUMENTS

Contrary to the traditional concept of a monument, Antes del Olvido's 3D models are likely to be outdated a few days after they were rendered. Fridays have become the jour fixe for large-scale protests, and new graffiti and posters are constantly being added to the statues, buildings, and even trees along the main routes of the marches. Government reactions to the protests, such as the

15. Galería CIMA was founded in 2016 as a contemporary art gallery, but quickly turned to political activism due to their privileged location at Plaza Dignidad. The livestream has been active ever since and can be viewed at <https://galeriacima.cl/>.

16. Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Institute of Human Rights), report dated March 19, 2020, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.indh.cl/>.

military-enforced curfew, the *ley anticapucha* (anti-mask law), or new cases of human rights violations have regularly (even daily, during the first weeks) elicited visual responses from the population. Not only the causes for outrage, but also concrete political situations are superseded at a mind-boggling rate. In this case, our lived-time experience comes very close to artificial network time. Just like Instagram stories are designed to disappear, politics, protests, and pictures in Chile are subjected to ephemerality.

This condition constituted an advantage for Piñera's government. Since the outbreak of the crisis, politicians stalled for time, discussing but never implementing any of the changes that were demanded so clearly and loudly during the demonstrations. The fast turnover of events is wearing people out, and the difficulty of keeping track of all the cases of police brutality and instances of social injustice increases the likelihood of these being forgotten by the media and individuals alike. Moreover, the government actively pushed for the erasure of the protest and its images. Three critical moments exemplify this strategy: on November 15, 2019, the morning after the government announced that it would call for a referendum on a new Constitution, the Plaza Dignidad and the Baquedano monument were covered in white fabric, hiding the graffiti and the square's trampled lawn. On February 19, 2020, the walls of the Centro Gabriela Mistral and many adjacent buildings were painted in thick gray paint. And most recently, on March 19, 2020, after the government declared the state of catastrophe because of the coronavirus, the Baquedano monument was again painted over and the statue cleaned.

In this maelstrom of events, Antes del Olvido's 3D models preserve the appearance of these places for posterity, and they are one of several archives trying to structure, contextualize, and maintain the vast visual production of the crisis. However, whereas archives of photographs and videos are collections of momentary actions and their ongoing development, and whereas the erasure of these images in physical space by the government is a superficial, one-off operation, the 3D models are complex constructions. Although they are proof of a specific state of the rendered locations, their logic does not hinge on a constant update of that dataset through time, as in a before-and-after documentation. They are monuments that have emerged from history, have acquired a strong significance through ongoing communication, and are meant to last. The labor-intensive process of producing the 3D models makes the selection a deliberate, self-reflexive process. The monuments replicated by the artists range from the most official type, like the statue of General Manuel Baquedano at the center of Plaza Dignidad, to banalities like street kiosks and mailboxes in the Plaza's vicinity. This diversity is a critical decision by the collective and reflects the stance against traditional monuments since the outbreak of the crisis.



Image 4. 3D model of a vandalized metal structure, presumably a switchbox for streetlights, in the Parque Forestal near Plaza Italia in Santiago. Antes del Olvido. *Caja misterio Parque Forestal Ddic13*, 2019. 3D model. © Antes del Olvido. Santiago de Chile. Image courtesy of Antes del Olvido. The 3D models can be seen here: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/caja-misterio-parque-forestal-dec13-58f921451c824d3d9d34288b762ecd-c5b>

Within the first three weeks, 70 monuments depicting important figures of Chile's official history were attacked all over the country.¹⁷ Among them were tributes to *conquistadores*, such as the statues of Christopher Columbus in Arica, Francisco de Aguirre in La Serena, and Pedro de Valdivia in Temuco. The protesters replaced Aguirre's monument with a sculpture of a woman from the pre-conquest Diaguita culture and put Valdivia's head into the hands of a sculpture of his contemporary indigenous (and victorious) rival, Caupolicán. More recent historical figures were also demolished. In the city located on the Strait of Magellan, Punta Arenas, protesters destroyed a monument to Spanish impresario José Menéndez, who propelled the genocide of the indigenous Selk'nam at the end of the nineteenth century. Last but not least, many monuments celebrating military achievements during the disreputable, money-motivated War of the Pacific against Bolivia and Peru between 1879 and 1884 were targeted as symbols of elitist historiography. The most prominent example of this era is the equestrian monument of a hero in that war, General Baquedano, which has served as a daily changing canvas for messages at the heart of the protest, with protesters climbing the statue and waving their flags in triumph.

17. José Urrejola, "Chile: Destrucción de monumentos como protesta contra la historia oficial," *DW*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/es/chile-destrucci%C3%B3n-de-monumentos-como-protesta-contra-la-historia-oficial/a-51202577>.

18. Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image." *E-Flux Journal* 10 (2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>.

These examples from different regions in Chile not only point out the scope of the protest, but they also challenge the country's notorious centralism. Most State institutions are located in the capital, Santiago, or in nearby Valparaíso (the seat of Congress), and official media tend to show the large gatherings only in these cities. Yet, as the 3D renderings of kiosks and street corners show, the protests were also quite strong in places of no traditional historiographical significance. The attention toward these new sites constitutes a democratization of space, in which working-class areas, such as Santiago's periphery, which experienced harsh police repression, are also able to function as significant locations and become "icons" in their own right and for specific local communities.

While the official monuments in Chilean cities have been designed and installed by the small ruling class, the monuments of Antes del Olvido were created by the people, who thus turned into activists, into transmitters and creators rather than receivers, as Weibel would put it. The word "people" is here understood as a translation of the Spanish "*pueblo*," which conveys a certain pathos, but also a class connotation. What the establishment regards as destruction, vandalism, and obscenity, has turned into a powerful symbol of identification of the lower and even middle classes. The aggressive graffiti and churned up sidewalks are more readily and widely understood than any allegory in bronze. This dissident aesthetic is mirrored in the 3D technology employed by Antes del Olvido. The models are blurry, inexact, and often only show a partial view of the site. Their low quality and collective production make them classic "poor images" as described by Hito Steyerl.¹⁸ In this capacity, they are as much constructed by software as by their socio-political context. The artist collective puts it thus: "The imprecise and ruin-like aesthetics of this lo-fi-guerrilla style photogrammetry resonates with the unstable and precarious environments we live in." Aesthetic perfection is not the goal of these protests or of the monuments (or ruins) created in their wake. If anything, the models demonstrate how fractured such objects are in their meaning and production.

CONCLUSION

The destruction, resignification, and erection of monuments is maybe the most powerful gesture in our contemporary but waning political discourse. It exemplifies the transformation of participation and action by the multitude in social crises. As Weibel argues:

citizens now want to break the monopoly of a party-political caste and participate in political power. They want to assert their ability to act performatively and make decisions, which means turning rhetoric or votes

into action. What is genuinely new about this is the demand for performativity. Performative interventions by activists coupled with mass-media online distribution have shown how citizens can—and want to—play a tangible part in overcoming crisis situations.¹⁹

19. Weibel, “People, Politics, and Power,” 58.

The problem of parliamentary representation is the limiting of individual action through the mills of legal procedure. The infrastructure of social media allows for a more diverse expression of opinions, not only in terms of concurrent populism, but also in the visibilization of productive solutions. Paired with the tools of the activist, these expressions can be put into relation with each other as a legitimate and constructive method of exchange. In this vein, the political options multiply and amplify beyond party manifestos. The messages posted on- and offline by the Chilean protesters, such as the demand to protect the country’s ecosystem and reform the healthcare system, attest to the urgent need and determination to make decisions. Furthermore, pasted onto the monuments of the protest sites, the messages materialize as a performed political discussion, resisting the grind, exhaustion, and ephemerality of established political discourse. Thus, despite their reliance on technology, *Antes del Olvido* do not aim to create a ‘virtual reality’ translating the experience of the city in distress into the digital realm and leaving it there. Rather, their work is helping us to realize (in every sense of the word) and process the concrete events and changes that have occurred in the past year. The 18O upheaval is the biggest crisis since the military dictatorship that ended 30 years ago. The staggering number of injured, tortured, and killed protesters has left a big gash in the country’s social fabric, augmenting the trauma that has been lingering for decades due to a failed historiographical and political reconciliation with the horrors of the dictatorship. The immediate erection and preservation of monuments is a vital process for creating and coping with the memories of the current crisis. *Antes del Olvido*, as a concept, practice, and output, underlines the communal, dissident, and also difficult task of remembering and of bringing about change.



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