

## Monuments and Memory: Iconoclasm and Urbanfallism

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyse the practices of iconoclasm and urbanfallism as forms of intervention in cultural heritage, with a view to questioning traditional notions of memory and identity. By demolishing or modifying monuments, artists and activists contest prevailing historical narratives and the underlying power relations, proposing alternative frameworks for understanding the past and the present. The objective of this research is to gain insight into the ways in which these practices, despite their controversial nature, contribute to the reconfiguration of urban space and the construction of alternative memories. The practice of iconoclasm, with historical roots in religion and politics, has increased in frequency in recent decades, driven by various social, political and cultural factors. The demolition of monuments, frequently linked to acts of protest and resistance, challenges the conventional notion of heritage, which is based on the preservation of memory and cultural identity. The concept of urbanfallism, in turn, serves to expand the discussion on the relationship between art, activism and urban space. By appropriating monuments and transforming them into platforms for expression, artists and activists call into question the authority of institutions and official narratives, proposing new ways of inhabiting and signifying public space. The research presents a critical analysis of these concepts, discussing their impact on memory and notions of cultural heritage. The research presents a critical analysis of the ways in which art and activism can transform monuments into spaces for debate and the construction of new identities, challenging official interpretations of history. Through case studies in Brazil and the Iberian Peninsula, it demonstrates how artists and activists can contribute to the construction of a more plural and inclusive memory by questioning the authority of institutions and dominant narratives. However, it is essential that the discussion of these practices is accompanied by a reflection on the limits of intervention in cultural heritage, seeking a balance between preservation and transformation.

### Keywords

iconoclasm; urbanfallism; cultural heritage; memory; art.

### 1. Introduction

Iconoclasm, or the destruction of monuments, is a very recent phenomenon, although it may refer to an ancient practice. According to Fiorillo (2002), “the need to destroy pernicious icons and images dates back to the Byzantine era and took hold with Protestantism and its aversion to the cult of sacred images”. Religious reasons were also behind the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, which marked the Silk Road as it passed through modern-day Afghanistan. The giant sculptures, over two thousand years old, were

destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. In recent years, statues of Stalin, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, among others, have been toppled in various countries for political reasons. There has even been the creation of related neologisms, such as urban fallism, ‘or urban overthrow, literally “non-monuments” or “non-monuments”, originally, and counter-monuments [which] are some of the terms that activism and contemporary art have added to the concepts of specialised critics in the fields of cultural heritage and memory studies’ (Beiguelman, 2020). These statements

form the basis of the following reflections, which aim to revive the theoretical discussion on the role and meaning of monuments, especially with regard to their unfolding in terms of memory.

In order to address the issue of memory, this study considers the heritage values established by the art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) in his seminal work, *The Modern Cult of Monuments* (1902). Riegl's approach emphasises that the values that qualify objects as cultural assets are not inherent, but rather emerge and are sustained within society through the actions of individuals and institutions engaged in their restoration and preservation.

In this theoretical-critical study, the notions of monuments were used to develop the actions of current social groups, identified in iconoclasm and urbanfallism, which try to overcome the past of public heritage originating from a history of slavery, discrimination or predation, identifying new values that establish attachment or aversion. Despite the association with vandalism, these actions can also be seen as a way of making cities more inclusive and fair, and the creative and inclusive appropriation of 'artists' transforms monuments into artistic interventions open to public debate.

The first chapter begins with the origins of heritage and restoration in the 18th century, spearheaded by the ideas of John Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc. The development and maturing of restoration in the 19th century is discussed. To this is added the monument and its origins and the new, broader conceptions brought to Western society by Alois Riegl's book, pointing to the citizen's responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the monument. The following chapter discusses how heritage values, including memory and contemporaneity, can influence the restoration and preservation of public works of art. Chapter 3 presents some cases of vandalised public works in the Iberian Peninsula and Brazil in the context of iconoclasm and urbanfallism. Chapter 4 discusses the value of heritage in the urbanfallism movement.

## 2 Concepts and Theories: Monument, Heritage and Restoration

A monument is a commemorative structure erected to preserve the memory of a significant event or person. The city's role in the creation and preservation of monuments can be considered a social obligation. The term 'monumentum', derived from Latin, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a thing that serves to call to mind and to warn'. The monument has an affective origin and importance, but above all a symbolic one. The concept of a monument originated with the Egyptian mausoleums and pyramids, which were created and consolidated for symbolic or commemorative reasons. However, in Western society, a new perspective emerged with the advent of the historical monument. The monument is no longer considered merely a memorial; rather, it has come to encompass a range of meanings related to art and the development of artificial memories through the printing press, engraving, and photography (Gastal, 2006).

The term 'heritage' was coined to describe an asset intended for the collective enjoyment of a community, whether tangible or intangible. The etymology of the term can be traced back to the Latin *patrionic*, where *patri* denotes "father" and *monium* is a loanword, originally denoting "inheritance." This term was therefore used to refer to the collective of inherited assets that require protection. This is the rationale behind the designation of "integral heritage." Integral heritage is subdivided into two categories: natural/environmental and cultural/historical.

The popularisation of the term 'heritage' was a prominent feature of both the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). During the French Revolution, the term was employed as an abbreviation for an attribute bestowed upon historical monuments that had been subjected to domination. The concept of heritage was further reinforced by the nationalisation of the property of the clergy and royalty, as evidenced in the documents that underpinned this process. The phrase 'everyone's heritage and inheritance' was established, thus inserting the term heritage into the monument, which was announced as 'everyone's heritage'. The Industrial Revolution also contributed to the rapid generalisation of laws for the

protection of monuments, as well as the emergence of restoration as a discipline that began to accompany the development of art history (Choay, 2001).

The concept of restoration began to emerge as a subject of reflection in both England and France. In the eighteenth century, two distinct lines of thought emerged in the context of restoration: the anti-interventionist approach, exemplified by the work of John Ruskin (1819-1900), and the interventionist approach, which was championed by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879). In the words of Ruskin (2008, p. 79), restoration signifies 'the most total destruction that a building can suffer: a destruction from which not a trace can be saved'. This is akin to the futility of attempting to resurrect the past, as it is impossible to reinstate anything that was once grand or beautiful in architectural terms. In contrast, Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire* (2000, p. 29) presented the term as a modern concept, defining restoration as "the re-establishment of a building in a complete state that may never have existed at any given time." This definition contrasts with the anti-interventionist view espoused by Ruskin, which emphasised the importance of preserving historical integrity. The rigidity of certain experiments and the competition between the two positions constituted the foundation for the study of heritage and its subsequent redefinition.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a growing emphasis on the importance of respecting the original material, the traces of time and the stages of the work. This novel approach reached its zenith in the 20th century, with the advent of the concept of documentary value. The evolution of the concept of restoration represents a significant cultural phenomenon. However, this growth can impinge upon a critical and conflicting discourse that is rooted in the dialectical involvement between the formal and documentary circumstances of a monument (Kuhl, 2007).

### 3 Heritage Values: From Worship to Demolition

In relation to a more expansive concept of conservation, which encompasses the collective memory of the inhabitants of a locality or nation who oversee restoration on the basis of its intrinsic value, is the text 'The Modern Cult of Monuments'. The title of a lecture delivered by Alois Riegl prior to his commencement of duties at the Central Commission for the Conservation of the Historical and Artistic Monuments of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The work is conceptual and represents a nascent approach to conservation practice at the time. The author, a member of the Vienna School of Art History, developed his ideas based on concepts present in subsequent documents, particularly heritage legislation such as the Athens Charter and the Venice Charter.

The discourse, which was subsequently published as a book, transcended its original purpose and became an inaugural text on conservation, influencing subsequent discourse on the subject. In 1902, he promoted new legislation for Austrian monuments, distancing himself from existing knowledge in the field and seeking to identify and differentiate the values inherent to monuments. The book is structured around three core chapters, which address the historical evolution of monuments, the values associated with them, and the contemporary values that inform our understanding of their significance. This publication demonstrates that the value attributed to a monument is intrinsic to the monument itself. It emphasises this value in terms of both time and space, presenting the monument as a historical event with the capacity to provide meaning and coherence to the historical monument. It is emphasised that the appreciation of the monument is derived from the viewer's visualisation in the present moment and space, which is distinct from the perception of the author or the provider. In this sense, Riegl (1902) elucidates a crucial insight for the present era: the population must be encouraged to engage with the monument in order to study it, gain familiarity with it and, subsequently, value it.

This necessitates a requisite detachment in order to comprehend the concept of value from the vantage point of memory and contemporaneity. In this conceptual framework, we differentiate between intentional value, which is perceived at the time of a monument's creation with the objective of preserving the memory of a specific individual or event, and unintentional value, which arises from the evolving interpretation of monuments over time. This process of evolution and valorization, as postulated by Riegl (1902), extends from the monument's initial creation to the present.

In this sense, Riegl posited the existence of conflicts between values. The value of antiquity prioritises the marks of time over the material, as irrefutable evidence of its former existence. In contrast to the value attributed to contemporary work, which is primarily concerned with utility and the adaptability of ancient monuments for new uses. This is a fundamental requirement for the conservation of these structures in the modern era. This adjustment is discouraged by John Ruskin's non-interventionist current of thought, as it would result in the destruction of the representation of antiquity in order to prioritise historical value, through the bias of safety and the possibility of being inhabited. Furthermore, artistic value must be considered, which can be divided into the value of novelty and relative artistic value. It is essential to pay attention to the relationship between the historical monument and the artistic monument, as they exist simultaneously. This is because the artistic value is diluted with the historical value (Riegl, 1902).

In the 1970s, a significant shift in the valuation of heritage occurred. In the context of an energy crisis, governments began to demonstrate a renewed interest in conservation and preservation, which were increasingly combined with rehabilitation and restoration. To this end, they signed letters of intent, such as the European Charter for Architectural Heritage and the Krakow Charter (2000), which, among other things, emphasised the importance of symbolic value and the right of communities to determine what should be considered heritage.

These charters acknowledge the local population's authority over the monument. However, they do not anticipate the issues that may arise from this revised perception, which could potentially impinge upon the artistic subjectivity of the period in which the monument was created. The will of the people is reflected in the practice of restoration and may be influenced by the extent of valorization: should the appearance of antiquity be preserved or should its historical value be reconstructed? What should be conserved and what should be discarded? The more complex and divergent the powers involved in the discussion, the greater the likelihood of conflict.

As time progresses, the value of heritage extends beyond the possible affection of citizens for the object. The concept of heritage has evolved to encompass resistance, symbolic and even mythical value (Argan, 1992). In the modern era, the notion of a monument is to stimulate memory, which has the effect of diminishing the monument's previous association with mythical meaning. Over the past 400 years, the monument has expanded to encompass a range of complex contents, thereby imbuing it with an aura (Choay, 2001).

In 2015, the inaugural case of the phenomenon designated as "Urban Fallism" was documented. Activists at the University of Cape Town (UCT) inaugurated a different form of socio-political protest that encourages the occupation, modification or even the toppling of monuments installed in urban public spaces. The contexts of activism explore historical and contemporary cases that have arisen from post-colonialism in Africa and the Americas, post-communism and post-imperialism in Europe and Asia, and the wars in the Middle East.

These movements posit that the toppling of monuments is a practice that conveys resistance, particularly political resistance, against marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion. These movements promote democratic values and social justice, representing a tangible means of addressing heritage sites that raise questions about identity and value (Frank, 2020). This novel form of protest subsequently spread to other universities in pursuit of decolonising education. Subsequently, the Fallist

movements transcended the university environment, engaging with global issues. The phenomenon of urban fallism is conceptualised as a form of urban struggle and political engagement.

Urban fallism shapes the past by investigating a range of potential scenarios and variants, as well as examining the attitudes of governments towards policing, cleaning and artists producing counter-monuments. This artistic production is presented as a means of overcoming the past of public heritage. Despite its association with vandalism, urban fallism can also be interpreted as a creative appropriation capable of promoting inclusion and justice. Through artistic interventions, monuments are transformed into public spaces that instigate debates about the past and present of urban space. This perspective paves the way for the remodelling of the future of cities, making them more inclusive and just (Frank, 2020).

#### 4 Creating Values for Heritage

An object may be assigned a number of different values. During the 20th century, there was a notable shift towards greater democratisation of valuation. The popular voice could now determine whether to conserve or destroy. If the citizen is the source of value, then the symbolism is contingent upon the evaluator. An additional value is ascribed to the object, thereby justifying its existence. The value attributed to heritage is predominantly intangible. The symbolic value of an object, as defined by anthropology, is contingent upon the extent to which it evinces symbolism for the recipient, who in turn possesses their own unique symbolism. The focus has shifted from the narrow valuation of knowledge to the verification of personal values through the object in question. This has expanded the potential for objects to be deemed worthy of preservation and to serve as a foundation for protest movements. Monuments, in particular, serve as a conduit for a multitude of human expressions and are integrated into society in diverse ways.



**Figure 1.** Au Soir, 1903, Artur Alves Cardoso. Source:

<https://www.belasartes.ulisboa.pt/1o-edicao-do-projeto-crowdfunding-apoie-o-restauro-das-belas-artes-foi-um-sucesso/>

One illustrative example of this phenomenon is the 1903 painting 'Au Soir' by the Portuguese painter Artur Alves Cardoso. The painting, which depicts a rural landscape with two peasants, was vandalised by students from the Reorganisational Movement of the Proletarian Party (MRPP), which was active in Lisbon from 1970 to 1978. The activists left the inscription, "Long live the MRPP Peasant Worker Alliance." In 2016, the painting underwent a restoration process, but the inscription (or vandalism) was preserved, as the decision was made to retain the intervention as a contemporary historical reference.

In 2023, the artist known as Bordalo II conducted an intervention in the bullfighting arena in the city of Vila Franca de Xira, Portugal. The objective was to draw attention to the practice of bullfighting and the suffering of animals. To achieve this, the artist positioned a bullfighter being subjected to torture by the bull beneath the bull that

is traditionally displayed on the building where bullfights take place in Vila Franca de Xira. The inversion of roles, which contravenes Portuguese tradition, prompted public discourse and substantiates the arguments of those who seek to end bullfighting in the country.

The value attributed to the work may be understood to imply its preservation over time, as well as the preservation of its inferences. The El Toro de Osborne is an approximately 14-metre-high billboard in the shape of a bull, constructed entirely of black materials, which was created to advertise a beverage. At present, there are approximately 90 billboards situated in key locations along the Spanish road network. Constructed between 1957 and the late 1960s, the bulls were designed by the artist Manuel Prieto Benítez (1912-1991) for an advertising campaign. Over time, due to the popularity of the majority of the Spanish community, they have become a cultural symbol of Spain.



**Figure 2.** Left: Display of the Bullfight Arena Palha Branco, Vila Franca de Xira, Portugal, 2023. Source: [https://www.cm-vfxira.pt/saber-lazer/cultura-tauromaquica/praca-de-touros-palha-branco/poi?poi\\_id=335](https://www.cm-vfxira.pt/saber-lazer/cultura-tauromaquica/praca-de-touros-palha-branco/poi?poi_id=335) Right: Intervention by Bordalo II, 2023. Fonte: <https://www.nit.pt/cultura/teatro-e-exposicoes/bordalo-ii-faz-nova-investida-contras-touradas-desta-vez-em-vila-franca-de-xira>



**Figure 3.** Left –Toro de Osborne, Murcia, Spain. Fonte: <https://lapaseata.net/2018/09/04/espana-una-grande-libre/>. Right: The bull painted with the rainbow flag in Mallorca, Spain. Fonte: <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/04/13/toros/1302713532.html>

Figure 03 illustrates how the monument has shaped the image of the black bull as a heritage element, recognised as an authentic force in Spanish culture. Consequently, it has become a focal point for numerous activists, who, cognizant of this value and its visibility, have utilized it as a platform for protests. The Movimiento Antitaurino is opposed to the utilization of bulls in events that are still permitted in Spain. In 2011, it painted a rainbow flag on one of the bulls in the city of Mallorca.

The Monument to the Bandeiras (1954), situated within Ibirapuera Park, constitutes a prominent landmark within the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The work by Italian-Brazilian Victor Brecheret (1894-1955) constitutes a tribute to the bandeirantes, who expanded Brazilian territory in the 17th and 18th centuries. As illustrated in Figure 04, the monument is comprised of a diverse array of ethnic groups, including Portuguese, Black, Mameluke, and Indian individuals, as well as the sculptor himself. The sculpture depicts the strenuous endeavour of pulling a monsoon canoe, a vessel utilised for river expeditions during the

period depicted. It may be due to its symbolism that the Monument to the Bandeiras has become a popular venue for a number of interventions. The monument is constructed from granite and measures 50 metres in length and 16 metres in height. In 2016, the monument was painted with coloured paints, an act which was perceived by many to be an act of vandalism. The monument has previously been the subject of protests. In 2013, for instance, indigenous people expressed disquiet at the sculpture's narrative, which portrays the bandeirantes as heroes or brave, thereby overlooking the fact that they were also responsible for the enslavement of the indigenous population. The monument is persistently defaced with graffiti by activist groups (Frank, 2020). In 2017, the monument was equipped with earplugs as part of International Noise Awareness Day. Such actions are perceived by some as an act of disrespect, while others view them as an urban intervention (Verpa, 2017; Jung, 2009).





**Figure 4.** Monument to the Bandeiras, São Paulo, Brazil. Source: <https://www.mundogump.com.br/irracionalidade/> <https://www.proacustica.org.br/noticias/clipping/monumento-as-bandeiras-ganha-protetor-contra-poluicao-sonora/>

In addition, there are world heritage sites that are esteemed for their visibility. The UK-based organisation Just Stop Oil, comprising individuals engaged in activism against the production of fossil fuels, engages in global media activities pertaining to the climate crisis. Such protests have included the throwing of tomato sauces or soups at works on display in art galleries. Despite the absence of tangible damage to the works, the activists' actions simulate the destruction of a globally appreciated asset, given that the paintings are framed and glazed. In this manner, the activists establish a parallel between the destruction of nature and the destruction of art. The latter has been diminishing over centuries due to harmful human activities, including the use of non-renewable energies. In a recent action, the activists visited the Netherlands and threw tomato sauce at Johannes Vermeer's 1665 painting, 'The Girl with the Pearl Earring'. In London, they threw tomato soup at Van Gogh's painting, 'Sunflowers'. The objective of these protests is to 'compare the destruction of art with the destruction of the planet'.

The same cannot be said for all monuments, however. Some are considered to be a negative valuation of history. The Valle de Los Caídos, or Valley of the Fallen, is a monumental memorial and basilica constructed between 1940 and 1958 in Spain. The monument was constructed by the Republican forces who were vanquished in the Spanish

Civil War (1936-1939) as a memorial to the nationalists who perished during the conflict. Commissioned by the dictator Francisco Franco (1892-1975), the monument also serves as a cemetery where the dictator himself and nationalist fighters are buried. The Valle de Los Caídos is a contentious memorial, as it glorifies the Franco regime and fascism. It is evident that monuments which refer to events such as the Spanish Civil War or the Holocaust do not offer any lessons that can be learned from them. Nevertheless, remembrance is an unavoidable consequence of the occurrence of these events, which are part of the historical record. A visit to such monuments does not evoke a sense of fulfilment; rather, it engenders a sense of emptiness and reflection on the significance of their representation.

Archaeological research employs a scientific methodology to assess the significance of historical sites and objects, considering factors such as their cultural and historical value, their antiquity, rarity, and uniqueness. The establishment of the Côa Archaeological Park and Museum in Portugal, for instance, gave rise to a cultural and political controversy that generated considerable national debate and had ramifications at the international level. The controversy arose from the construction of a dam on the site, which would affect all the Palaeolithic rock inscriptions along the 17 kilometres of the open-air complex. In 1995, the site was classified as a national monument and in 1998 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



The historical and archaeological sciences began to be considered auxiliary disciplines in the preservation and restoration of historical monuments. In 1830, the Gothic-style church of the Colegiada da Oliveira in the city of Guimarães, Portugal, underwent a renovation. The alterations carried out, which included covering the interior with lime and applying stucco to the ceiling decorated by the painter Augusto Roquemont (1804-1852), went beyond the limits of the original Gothic-style memorial and significantly altered the appearance of the church. As we can read in Alexandre Herculano (1839):

'Reading them, the blood rushes through the veins against that fatal idea, which has entered most people's minds, that everything old is bad, or of little moment, when the worst thing there is, and that is the dominant idea of our time; the most ridiculous is the century that accepted it; the most detestable is the hand that translates it into works, stamping on the land of his childhood the inscription that the atheist orders to be placed on his grave: - Here is the sepulchre of Nothing!'

Similarly, the Portuguese writer Almeida Garrett (1799-1854) dedicated considerable attention to the safeguarding of heritage in his extensive writings. For Garrett, the concept of national heritage was inextricably linked with the notion of cultural heritage, with a focus on the future. He addressed the subject of monument restoration in Portugal, including the National Theatre, as well as the safeguarding of traditional customs and landscapes. Following a period of travel around the country, Garrett proceeded to offer a critique of the state of conservation of the national monuments. In collaboration with Alexandre Herculano, reinforced his condemnation of the unchecked destruction of artistic works. Garrett assumed the role of defender in response to the neglect of national heritage.

The traditional monument, which lacks any practical function, was universally acknowledged as a means of evoking the collective memory of specific communities. However, the historical monument was constrained by the Western concept of history and its national dimensions. In

contrast, the modern monument has witnessed a gradual erosion of meaning and sense of place, with an emphasis on dismantling boundaries and a lack of rootedness in a single location. Consequently, traditional monuments that fail to align with this new paradigm may be abandoned and forgotten.

Since its installation in 1967, the sculpture 'Porteiro do Inferno' (Doorman of hell) has been the subject of considerable controversy. The sculpture, created in the 1960s by the Brazilian artist Jackson Ribeiro (1928-1997) for the city of João Pessoa, is a two-metre-high work constructed from scrap metal. It represents an abstract form, which the artist used as a critique of industrial development. The sculpture has, however, given rise to a number of alternative interpretations, attracting both supporters and opponents. Practitioners of Afro-Brazilian cults in the city have incorporated the statue into their religious rituals, while residents have organised demonstrations calling for the work's removal, which have taken place in various locations throughout the city over time. The initial site selected for the installation of the sculpture was a garden designed by the architect and artist Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), situated adjacent to the First Baptist Church (Figure 05). The religious organisation then exerted pressure on the government to remove the statue, which was subsequently transported and concealed within a public institution (SOARES, 2013). Subsequently, the sculpture, titled "Porteiro do Inferno," was retrieved and is currently situated in a roundabout in front of the Federal University of Paraíba. The artwork has been the subject of numerous demonstrations by residents demanding its removal. The City Hall of João Pessoa, the proprietor of the statue, has not relocated it thus far (Figure 05).

In terms of the typology of historical heritage, the expectations extend beyond the domain of monumental constructions. In addition, the concept encompasses spontaneous forms of vernacular architecture and even modes of existence. In his 1992 work, Argan (p. 114) characterizes the modern monument as a "character building." Such a structure would be imbued with and



**Figure 5.** Left: O Porteiro do Inferno, 1967. Right: Current photo.

evinced a profound historical significance and idealism. One illustrative example is the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Constructed as a promotional device for the metallurgical industry at the 1889 Universal Exhibition, the tower had such an impact on society that, when threatened with dismantling, the population rebelled. The structure had become a symbol of the city, a tourist attraction and a cultural icon. A comparable instance can be observed in Portugal, albeit on a more modest scale, with the construction of the Padrão dos Descobrimentos. The structure was designed by architect Cottinelli Telmo (1897-1948) and sculptor Leopoldo de Almeida (1898-1975). The initial version was completed in 1940 and comprised perishable materials, including staff. The ephemeral nature of the work was justified by the occasion of the Portuguese World Exhibition. In 1960, the Padrão dos Descobrimentos was rebuilt using resistant materials. Subsequently, in 1985, it underwent renovations to become a place for visitors, with the implementation of a viewpoint and exhibition rooms.

The Monument to the Discoveries (Padrão dos Descobrimentos) in Lisbon, Portugal, has been the focus of protests against the Portuguese colonial period. The edifice, which represents the Portuguese discoverers (with Infante D. Henrique the Navigator at the summit and 32 additional figures from the Portuguese expansion around the globe), was defaced in 2021 with the following inscriptions: "Blindly sailing for money, humanity is drowning in a scarlet sea Lia". The police were called and identified the perpetrator as a foreign national. The Lisbon City Council funded the cleaning operation, which amounted to a total of 2,300 euros plus applicable taxes. Two years later, the inscription was written in black ink. "The nation that killed Africa, Wakanda4Ever." The phrase is an attack on the navigators who colonised Africa and introduces the context of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in which Wakanda is a futuristic nation on the African continent.



**Figure 6.** Padrão dos Descobrimentos, 2021, Portugal. Source: <https://www.publico.pt/2021/08/08/local/noticia/padrao-descobrimentos-vandalizado-mensagem-ingles-1973480>

The symbolic power of monuments extends beyond their material value. A case in point is the World Trade Center, which was the target of a terrorist attack by the Islamic fundamentalist organisation al-Qaeda in 2001. The significance of the World Trade Center extends beyond its intrinsic value; it represents a symbol of the United States of America.

### 5 The Trajectory of Heritage Value and Artistic Interventions

The quest to understand the different values of heritage has spanned centuries, with different perspectives emerging over time. The popularisation of the idea of heritage during the French Revolution gave rise to the field of study of restoration, generating debates on the different ways of preserving historical monuments. In addition to

the challenge of time, the restoration work carried out today must also contend with another form of damage: the actions caused by the urban fallism movement.

This article presents a series of concepts pertaining to the notion of heritage. It considers the arguments put forth by Alois Riegl in defence of the importance of preserving heritage and the memory of the population. Some monuments evoke a negative memory in the population. This is evidenced by the social repulsion observed in the case of the Valley of the Fallen in Spain and the public work “Porteiro do Inferno” in Brazil. Furthermore, Riegl acknowledges that the value of monuments extends beyond their utilitarian function.

In the nineteenth century, alternative perspectives

emerged that placed a premium on the provenance and the passage of time as factors influencing the value of works of art. In the present era, the value of heritage is frequently contingent upon its practical utility. Consequently, some heritage sites have become the focus of iconoclastic movements or critiques of urban fallism. A number of case studies were presented, demonstrating how writing, painting and sculpture have been repurposed as a means of engaging with contemporary social issues.

There is a growing phenomenon of activists and artists joining forces to create “artist” artists, such as Bordalo II, who utilise artistic interventions on monuments to draw attention to various causes. This approach was exemplified by Bordalo II’s work at the Bullring in Portugal. The efficacy of such actions is demonstrated by the contextualisation of the interventions on monuments such as the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Lisbon), the Monumento às Bandeiras (São Paulo) and images of bulls in Spain within their respective historical and cultural contexts.

The current protests, which involve the throwing of tomato sauce at works of art, do not constitute an in-depth debate about heritage and its relationship to the cause in question. Such actions are superficial and serve only to provide visibility for activists, with no consideration given to the cultural and historical value of the monuments in question.

However, other actions depicted in paintings are not without their own internal narratives. This is exemplified by the painting “Au Soir” by Artur Alves Cardoso, which was the subject of vandalism. The resulting damage was incorporated into the work during a subsequent restoration process, whereby the significance of the vandalism as a record of the social context of the time was acknowledged.

The appreciation of heritage is a complex and constantly evolving process, shaped by a multitude of factors and influenced by a variety of perspectives. It is imperative to consider the disparate perspectives and historical-cultural context of each work when analysing artistic interventions on monuments. Actions that are merely superficial and aimed solely at visibility do not contribute constructively to the debate on the subject.

## Conclusions

If every monument can be both a repository of memory and a site of reflection, then it can transcend its static form, evoking in the communities that surround it a complex array of sentiments, from admiration to repugnance, towards a phenomenon that, despite its intrinsic value, remains paradoxically outside the boundaries of those communities. To comprehend this fossilised enmity, it is necessary to strive for a more encompassing form of remembrance, for in the present era, the sole vestige of this bygone era is the recollection of a time that is now sepulchral. This is a period that has already elapsed and is only apprehended through the senses, giving rise to the sensation of a presence left by others in the remaining vestiges of the departed, manifesting in the superficial architectural elements of the monument.

In the present era, this monument has come to embody a broader and more pluralistic value set that challenges the notion put forth by Alexandre Herculano. This monument is a repository of all things. The monument now encompasses a broader range of social and anthropological issues that differ from those identified by Riegl. The attribution of value is what makes things eternal. The recovery of memory and the consequent acquisition of knowledge about heritage lead to its appreciation. It is unlikely that the inhabitants themselves will commit an act of vandalism against a monument when they are aware of its significance for their personal history as citizens. However, demonstrations that use existing heritage to reflect issues arising from its historical-cultural context are currently recognised as urbanfallism.

## Conflict of Interests and ethics

The authors declare no conflict of interests. The authors also declare full adherence to all journal research ethics policies, namely involving the participation of human subjects anonymity and/ or consent to publish.

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