

**COUNTERMONUMENTALITY AND MEMORY: THE CASE OF THE GLORIETA DE
COLÓN MONUMENT IN MEXICO CITY**

by © Nadia Ruiz Peralta

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ABSTRACT

The Christopher Columbus monument on Reforma Avenue in Mexico City stood for over one hundred years. However, since the turn of the twenty-first century, the monument has become the target of countermonumental actions. This research project questions the entanglement between countermonumentality, collective memory, and heritage through the analysis of the materiality at the site of the monument. Themes of feminism, anti-monumentality, public space appropriation, and the use of archaeological artifacts to construct a state-sanctioned history arose via this study.

Keywords: Monumentality, collective memory, counter-monumentality, heritage, archaeology of the contemporary world.

GENERAL SUMMARY

The thesis focuses on Mexico City's Christopher Columbus monument, which has become the subject of interventions. It explores the relationship between collective memory and heritage by analyzing the physical aspects of the site and the developments after its removal. The study examines themes such as feminism, alternative monumentality, public space appropriation, and the use of archaeological artifacts in constructing history.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACW Archaeology of the Contemporary World

INAH *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (National Institute of Anthropology and History)

SEP *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (Secretariat of Public Education)

INBAL *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura* (National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature)

CNPI *Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios* (National Coordination of Indian Peoples)

COMAEP *Comité de Monumentos y Obras artísticas en Espacios Públicos de la Ciudad de México* (Committee of Monuments and Artistic Works in Public Spaces of Mexico City)

FAML *Frente Amplio de las Mujeres que Luchan* (Broad Front of Women who Fight)

YWA Young Woman of Amajac

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mexico City's Reforma Avenue is a route that has remained important for more than a century. This avenue, also known as the "Promenade of the Reform," has more than one hundred years of history. It was designed and used for many years as a nationalist ideological instrument to enhance the developing Mexican identity (Zárate Toscano, 2003; Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004; Martínez Assad, 2005). The Avenue articulated a discourse told by its monuments perpetuated since its construction. One of the elements in this ensemble is a monument dedicated to "*Cristobal Colón*" (Christopher Columbus) (Figure 1). This space is known as "*La Glorieta de Colón*" (The Columbus Roundabout) or simply the Columbus Monument, interchangeably.

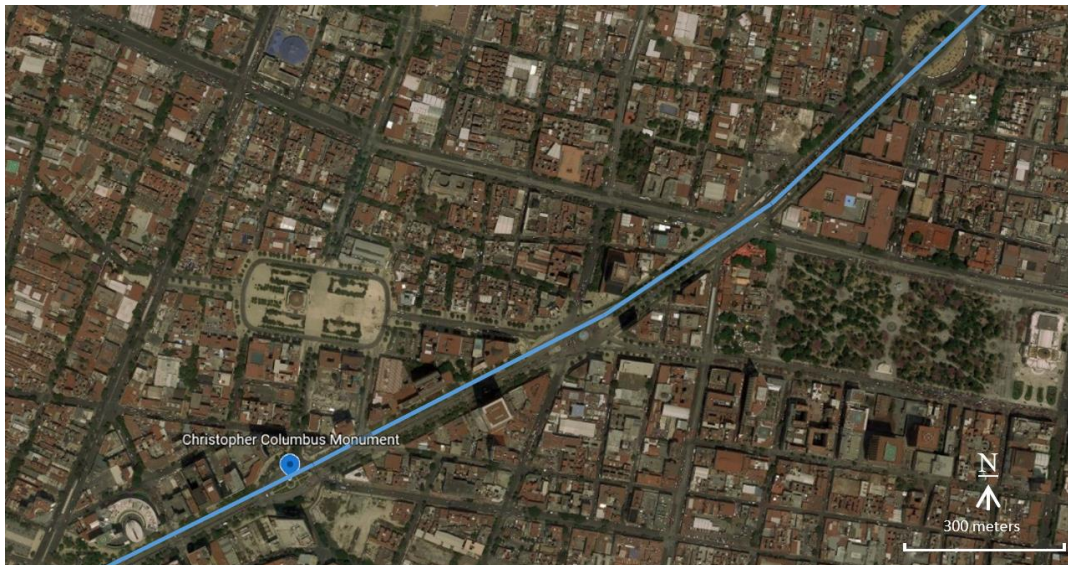


Figure 1. The localization of the monument. Data: Google (2019).

The monument consisted of six sculptures. The central figure was Christopher Columbus, with his right hand raised to heaven and his left hand withdrawing a veil from the world. At his feet were the figures of four frays, critical supporting characters of the colonial enterprise in

Mexico, and one Indigenous person (Figure 2). The monument became an urban landmark, so public transportation stations and surrounding businesses bear its name.



Figure 2. The Glorieta de Colón as it stood for a century. Source: ProtoplasmaKid (2013).

The monument, built in the 19th century, has been repeatedly damaged every October 12th during the celebrations of "Columbus Day" or its Mexican equivalent, "*El día de la Raza*," since 1989 (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020). From 2016 onward, the monument has been the target of graffiti and paintings, for which the quarry pedestal is covered with several layers of paint (Zárate Toscano, 2005). On social media, a collective organized the *Lo vamos a derribar* (We will tear it down) movement in October 2020 to have the monument taken down. To prevent damage to the monument, the Government of Mexico City removed it for its restoration, and it was never exhibited again in the roundabout that bears his name (Morán Breña, 2020; Hecksher, 2021). Years later, the Government of Mexico City decided to relocate the statue to the National Museum of the Viceroyalty (Corona, 2023).

Subsequently, the government began to ponder options for its replacement and thus presented the "Tlali" initiative to replace the monument with a sculpture depicting a large monolithic female head. However, experts and Indigenous voices harshly criticized the project, and the Government Head Office of Mexico City withdrew it (El Universal, 2021). Following these events, a feminist organization assembled an antimonument on the empty roundabout pedestal and renamed the site "*Glorieta de las Mujeres Que Luchan*" (Roundabout of the Fighting Women). Although there have been attempts by the authorities of Mexico City to remove it, this antimonument is present to this day, albeit plans are ongoing for its replacement for a government-sanctioned alternative. The authorities determined that a reproduction of the Huasteca figure of the Young Ruler of Amajac would occupy the area (Ortíz Armas, 2021).

The thesis explores the link between monumentality and countermonumentality by focusing on this case that raises questions about what is deemed worthy of memorialization and heritage status and how things earn or lose this status. It is crucial not to overlook the context in which these questions are asked. Due to the country's strong heritage legislature, the debate about post-colonialism and colonialism in Mexico carries a unique significance. This specificity makes it essential to consider what heritage truly means in this country.

The objective of this thesis was to achieve a deep understanding of the case of the Columbus Roundabout in Mexico City, its historical context, and the latest events associated with it, including the assembly of the feminist antimonument and the future projects planned for the site. This research enabled me to examine the entanglement of heritage, memory, and heritage-making values in removing Cristobal Colon's monument. It also allowed me to question if I could understand the monument as an appropriation of heritage and identify the actors involved in the removal and assembly of these monuments. The questions that guided the thesis were: What happened to the

Cristobal Colón Roundabout before, during, and after, its removal? What processes resulted in the assemblage of the antimonument and the Young Woman of Amajac Project? What is the role played by heritage and memory in this process of countermonumentality?

The significance of this study resides in how the archaeological field interacts with the populace through memory-based interactions with the past. This study also gave me a perspective on how the population interacts with its historical and archaeological heritage. As remarked, the values of the monuments are not perennial, so it is essential to understand how changes in values in societies materialize in their interaction with monuments.

For this work, the author planned interviews with members of the Broad Front of Women Who Fight and COMAEP (Committee of Monuments and Artistic Works in Public Spaces of Mexico City). Only the Broad Front of Women Who Fight members agreed to the interview. The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research reviewed these interviews and found they complied with Memorial University's ethics policy.

I intended to respect what was conveyed to me in these interviews. One crucial point I came across is the use of Spanish and the "Roundabout of the Fighting Women" created by the Broad Front of Women Who Fight. They designated their constructed antimonument as feminine, using "*Antimonumenta*" instead of "*Antimonumento*." In Spanish, the difference between the two words lies in the last letter, indicating gender. In English, nouns do not have gender; the correct word would be antimonument, even if feminine or masculine. However, I maintain the gendered term even in English to respect the Broad Front of Women who Fight information. Therefore, in this text, I use the word "*Antimonumenta*" to denote its femininity, as conveyed by them.

The first chapter focuses on the conceptual framework. Monumentality and counter-monumentality are among the ideas explored via the lens of contemporary archaeology by focusing on memory and heritage. Chapter two delves into the monument of Christopher Columbus from the 19th century, a historical review of its creation from its planning and manufacture, its inauguration, and the social engagement at the site in the first half of the 20th century. For this chapter, a thorough examination of the geographical context was essential. Therefore, I conducted an investigation of Reforma Avenue, delving into its sculptural aspects to gain a comprehensive understanding. The third chapter concentrates on the latest events from the second half of the 20th century and the countermonumental acts performed at the site until the monument's removal in October 2021. Chapter four looks at the latest developments relating to the roundabout. I analyzed the antimonument erected by the *Frente Amplio de las Mujeres que Luchan* (Broad Front of the Fighting Women), from its manufacture to the most recent events involving its possible destruction. This chapter also describes the government proposals for the site, the Tlali initiative, and the Young Woman of Amajac Project by focusing on what each proposal for the public space would entail on Reforma Avenue.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

My work falls within the umbrella of what is being called "Archaeology of the Contemporary Past," "Archaeologies of the Contemporary World" (hereafter ACW), or "Archaeology of Supermodernity" (González-Ruibal, 2008; Harrison & Breithoff, 2017; Pétursdóttir, 2017; Magnani, et al., 2022). In short, this theoretical approach seeks to challenge the archaeological convention of temporality to focus archaeological methodology on the present.

ACW questions archaeology's traditional manner of investigation, broadening the scope of archaeological inquiry, rethinking the discipline as the study of the resilience of objects, of what remains present, or as Þóra Pétursdóttir (2017, p. 198) articulates it is: "simply the discipline of things." Therefore, it invites reflection on what is implied by objects' permanence and longevity or volatility. It prompts us to analyze what the physical remnants of the past suggest about the present and whether archaeological remnants are intrusions of the past (Van Dyke, 2019). The ACW seeks to distance itself from a focus on the abandoned and the ruinous to approach our own living material cultures. This study approach also brings attention to the short-lived and ephemeral situations of the present, making visible patterns of behavior and innovation through the analysis of space and materiality (Magnani, et al., 2022). The ACW makes it possible to explore archaeology from a multitemporal perspective, focusing on understanding the present and how the future assembles in the present (Harrison & Breithoff, 2017, p. 213) without losing sight of the fact that past events continue to exist physically and are deposited within the present, interacting and engaging with one another over time with human and non-human actors.

ACW is the theoretical foundation for this research, allowing a different approach to heritage. For instance, Rodney Harrison (2015) suggests that we must think about heritage as a way of assembling futures, from the past, into the present. At the same time, this perspective invites

reflection on the consequences of conservation practices (Holtorf, 2018; DeSilvey & Harrison, 2020; Harrison, 2020). The ACW allows for a more dynamic understanding of heritage that recognizes decay and damage as unavoidable and a necessary component of cultural restoration, via which communities renegotiate and reconstitute their heritage and identity. In other words: the entanglement and articulation among different times enact different times simultaneously (Harrison & Breithoff, 2017, p. 209).

My research within this innovative viewpoint on heritage focuses on a field of study called "difficult heritage" or "negative heritage." This approach is characterized by a focus on the "shameful past," with themes such as the remains of clandestine detention centers (Zarankin & Salerno, 2011), incarceration facilities and their architectural landscape (Weiss, 2011), nuclear disaster sites (Schlanger, et al., 2016), and, nazi propaganda celebration areas (Burstöm & Gelderblom, 2011). The archaeology of difficult heritage analyzes: "the marking as significant history—that is, as heritage—atrocities perpetrated and abhorred by the nation that committed them" (Macdonald, 2015). This stance on heritage calls into question how heritage is conceptualized as something positive but instead recognizes that it is not always the case, and thus must be reexamined to understand how to handle historical artifacts entangled in shameful pasts (Burstöm & Gelderblom, 2011, p. 273). These studies also involve analyzing what is worthy of remembrance and, therefore, to be preserved, looking for the place of such objects in the present and whether they are protected with didactic purposes or as thought-provoking experiences (Ibid., p. 278).

In essence, ACW permits the inclusion of contemporary social themes in archaeology: inequality, violence against minority or disempowered groups, colonialism, identity, social polarization, and how these reflect in material practices. One among them is countermonumentality.

2.1 HERITAGE / PATRIMONIO

Given that the Committee of Monuments and Artistic Works in Public Spaces of Mexico City (COMAEP) designates the Christopher Columbus monument as heritage, this study investigates how this concept is evolving. It is also essential to talk about the processes of *heritagization*¹. I seek to focus on the particularities of heritage management in Mexico.

Because of the different meanings associated with the term "*patrimonio*" in Spanish, it is essential to acknowledge the linguistic differences between the languages when comparing it to the English word "heritage." The Royal Spanish Academy dictionary describes it as: "Estate that someone inherits from their ancestors." (Real Academia de la Lengua Española, 2022).

The Latin word *patrimonium* etymologically gives rise to the noun "*patrimonio*." In my opinion, the term "*patrimonio*" closely relates to both "patria" (homeland) and patriarchy. However, the word "heritage," which derives from the Anglo-French verb "*heriter*," meaning "to inherit" or "make an heir" (Merriam-Webster, 2022), does not contain this meaning

Traditional definitions of heritage often emphasize the importance of preserving valuable objects for future generations to inherit. These objects, whether tangible or intangible, are either considered as communal (ie. "everyone's") or personal/familial. Josep Ballart (1997, p. 17) and Bonfil Batalla (2003, p. 47) detail that societies use heritage objects to: "face their problems [...] to formulate and try to realize their aspirations and projects; to imagine, enjoy and express themselves." Traditionally, people have considered heritage as identifying an object or a set of objects as their own throughout generations, and that this status *appears* historically when an individual or a group of individuals make this identification (Josep Ballart 1997, p. 17). I emphasize the word "appears" to convey that the specific qualities of objects (particularly tangible

¹ Understanding this concept as the focus on the active process of how heritage comes into being.

heritage) emerge spontaneously and transform autonomously without any guidance from anyone. This traditional definition presupposes the existence of a hidden social force that operates autonomously over time. Which at the same time implies innocent neutrality, while, on the contrary, valorizing an object is an action conducted by agents. In this sense, presupposing an autonomous hidden force *invisibilizes* both the activities carried out by the dominant elites who participate in this action and the male hegemony perpetuated in the processes of *patrimonialization* (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2017).

Rodney Harrison (2015) proposes an approach to heritage that distances itself from the "Western" or "modern" tradition. He suggests an alternative that eliminates the separation between natural and cultural heritage. In this manner, heritage could be conceived: "as collaborative, dialogical and interactive, a material-discursive process in which past and future arise out of dialogue and encounter between multiple embodied subjects in (and with) the present" (Ibid., p.27).

For this project, I adopt a perspective that views heritage as a mediator that can: "transform, translate, distort, or modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry." (Latour, 2005, p. 39). In this way, I ensure that using this concept will impact the research beyond being an intermediary that: "transports meaning without transformation" (Ibid.) and in which we consider the existence of different agencies beyond the human.

I believe that Matthew J. Hill's (2018a, p. 1182; 2018b) perspective on the concept of heritage is particularly helpful. The author discusses heritage as a mediator with an agency, clarifying that this perspective does not require intentionality for objects or concepts. However, the inclusion of heritage can impact the course of action. Hill emphasizes the interconnections and complex aggregations that result from heritage-making, focusing on who and how people participate in the actions, culminating in heritage as "heritage otherwise." The author emphasizes the object's

significance and its "thingness" in heritage. This perspective of heritage otherwise allows an approach to heritage as made and unmade, focusing on the processes and assemblages that result in heritage, moving away from the idea of heritage as a series of spontaneous values that attach themselves to an object autonomously. I believe that the way heritage is studied, in which conservation and protection are the fundamental pillars of the concept, loses sight of the dynamic process and prevents us from considering the opposite progression of *patrimonialization*, in which heritage becomes undone, in the words of Harrison (2015, p. 32): "If certain objects, places, and practices become important at particular times and in particular places for the maintenance of the past in the present, it follows that they may, like humans, come and go, live and die, pass from one state to another." This dynamism plays a role in how countermonumentality processes happen.

To understand "heritagization" or "patrimonialización," we must discuss the values traditionally constituting heritage. Actions imbue things with the status of being heritage. Spanish-speaking literature often mentions it as "*poner en valor*" (valuation) as part of the language used by international institutions to define what heritage is.

In the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of World Heritage, UNESCO differentiates cultural heritage as monuments, ensembles, and sites, which are: "[...] of outstanding universal **value** from the point of view of history, art or science". Or "[...] outstanding universal **value** from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view" (UNESCO, 1972, emphasis by me). Gándara Vázquez examines in depth these same values in his work on heritage valuation, in which he proposes five dimensions of heritage value: aesthetic, historical, symbolic, scientific, and economic (Gándara Vázquez, 2015), and by Ballart (1997), who characterizes the values of heritage by use-value, formal or symbolic-significant value. González-Varas Ibañez (2014), based on the typology of Alois Riegl, makes a typology of values in which the reminiscent values (such

as historical value, antiquity) are in opposition to contemporary values (instrumental, artistic value, amongst others.). Reminiscent values "arise from the recognition of its belonging to the historical past" (Ibid., p. 37), and contemporary values deal with the object's present independently of its belonging to the past; The value of a thing originates from its capacity to satisfy material or spiritual needs. I believe this typology could help us understand the heritage-making processes constructed through values generally conceived as heritage creation.

It is crucial to examine the agents that attribute values to objects and recognize that when creating heritage artifacts, there are: "value judgments, active choices, and assumptions of societal consensus" (Marschall, 2017, p. 206). A limited group of people use political will to conduct these actions, causing disagreements about what is "significant" and should be protected and conserved.

The "authorized heritage discourse" is promoted by cultural elites who prioritize specific artifact values (Hill, 2018a). According to Jiménez-Esquina (2017, p. 33), this practice involves selecting and reworking cultural elements for new social uses, leading to fossilization and perpetuation. Jiménez-Esquina (Ibid.) invites us to question: "not only how and who makes heritage but how it makes us." In this thesis, I focus on clarifying the exclusion of specific individuals in *patrimonialization*, prioritization of values, and the purpose and beneficiaries of this process, acknowledging its political nature as a tool to sustain nationalist discourse.

In Mexico, the approach to heritage differs from that in the rest of North America, as the Federal Law of Monuments and Archaeological, Artistic, and Historic Zones legislate what meets the criteria of heritage. This law describes the obligation of the corresponding authorities to: "...preserve the cultural heritage of the Nation" (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión, 1972), explicitly referring to the protection of archaeological property. This law defines the

responsibilities of restoration, conservation, and management of movable and immovable historical and artistic properties worthy of protection. It designates which government agencies have the authority to appoint and protect heritage, with the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA), and other cultural institutes being the leading managers of cultural heritage. This document privileges the protection of archaeological monuments, defined as: "Movable and immovable property, a product of cultures prior to the establishment of the Hispanic culture in the national territory [...]" (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión, 1972). By this definition, objects after 1521 are only historical. This temporal margin is standard in America due to the chronology of the arrival of European colonizers to the continent. When speaking of historical heritage, European authors such as Tugores and Planas (2006) use different margins linked to the invention of written records.

Mainly INAH officials have access to cultural resources and make decisions on their management. According to Armstrong-Fumero (2018), federal legislation creates an: "ontology of heritage objects," segregating and legally empowering them as non-human entities. The management of these objects has consequences for human interaction as things are legally protected and exist autonomously from most interventions. The author refers to this as the "artifactual surface" (Armstrong-Fumero, 2018, p. 1309). As a result, while heritage is promoted as belonging to "all Mexicans," only a select few can actually interact with these materials, as the law as mentioned earlier legislates the conservation of heritage objects in its sixth article, which prohibits any action on these objects without prior permission from the institutions mentioned above.

2.2 MEMORY

The study of memory is one of the theoretical pillars of this inquiry. Therefore, it is crucial to define the concept. It is likewise essential to conceptualize and delimit the concepts of collective memory, commemoration, and the importance of monumentality as the materialization of memory. Firstly, it is necessary to discuss the term's vagueness. For example, the use of the term memory has been overextended in such a way that it could be understood even as identity, culture, or context (Berliner, 2005, p. 198).

Concerning this, Ramos's (2011, p. 132) definition develops a solid foundation to expand further, stating that memory is: "The social practice of bringing the past to the present." This definition clarifies that memory refers to two temporal moments and that a social sphere is always involved. On the other hand, in his text Berliner (2005, p. 201) talks about how some scholars discuss memory: "as the way lasting traces of the past persist within us, as the transmission and persistence of cultural elements through generations" emphasizing the persistence of cultural elements, so that memory becomes an instrument for approaching cultural continuity and endurance, whereby the past influences the present by accumulating and guiding our actions (Ibid., pp. 201-205). The last definition emphasizes that memory depends on agents who actively remember or forget. Thus the past is always mediated by memory (Radstone, 2005), or as Hite (2012, p. 1) puts it: "Memory is constitutive of who we are and how we interpret the here and now." This characteristic of memory will be significant since memory as a tool is useful to construct national myths.

The memory perspective that suits this research is not individual or personal but pluralistic. This approach has been called cultural memory, social memory, public memory, or collective

memory. Halbwachs' work is one of the most well-known writings on collective memory (1992). The author considers that people acquire their memories in society. Within this same society, agents actively recall, reorganize, and localize their memories (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). For this author, what constitutes the collective framework of memory is the: "sum, or combination of individual recollections of many members of the same society" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 39). This recollection is unfixed with society's predominating thoughts and equally mediated by the present.

As mentioned above, I consider memory as a social act, but it is not easy to discern what we are referring to and in what way memory could be collective. Is it about a shared recollection among a group or a significant event remembered by many regardless of individual memory? Essentially, does it describe a particular event that most people can recollect? When discussing memory, it is essential to avoid treating it as an independent social force that determines human behavior, as cautioned by Bollmer (2011, p. 451). By focusing on assemblages—the new things formed via the interplay of human and non-human actors—I hope to comprehend memory as something more complex than that.

David Bollmer (2011) considers that we must examine: "how memory creates collective political bodies produced in specific relations of power" (Ibid., p. 451) instead of thinking about people who remember the same thing. What is significant are the assemblages creation and how memory is helpful to unify groups, considering that the action of "interacting" with the past is always in service and for the benefit of the present. In this way, a model of collective memory is discernible where: "...collectives emerge through the articulation of individual humans together through approximations of shared psychic memories" (Ibid., p. 451). Bollmer defines memory as a productive collective action and considers that the communal formation aspect of memory is a matter of study. From his perspective, what is critical is the literal and material formation of

collectives, which gather through the invocation of historical texts or references. It is also necessary to mention that, given the transient nature of collective's formation, it must be performed repeatedly for memory to persist over extended periods (Ibid., p. 458). What happens when a collective perceives an object differently over time after the performance stops? Is this a reason for counter-monumental actions?

By examining how groups engage with cultural elements that persist over time, particularly concerning references to the past, we can comprehend the social and varied nature of memory as mediated in the present. To approach these references, one can focus on civic remembrances and counter-monumental activities conducted on the material objects, which are monumental materials. We must also take into consideration that memory and interpretations of the past are not monoliths for which there is a consensus and are, as such, a terrain of dispute among the members of a group, thus every collective: "Fights in arenas where senses of belonging, political projects and valuations of differences are disputed" (Ramos, 2011, p. 141), in other words, this volatility could be characterized as: "memories are lived, ongoing social practices, ever in motion" (Hite, 2012, p. 21).

The monument space is also essential since social memory is always spatially situated (Van Dyke, 2019). Concerning the matter relevant to this research, even though government officials removed the Columbus monument, the place where it stood holds significance. The geographical context where the traffic circle is, is part of a larger assemblage whose discourse has been built for almost two hundred years, and it is in this same context where the anti-monument has been erected and where other monuments are planned.

To address the significance of the physical context, I will refer to Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, referring to places imbued with collective memory. However,

scholars have rethought this concept in recent years as it can create a partial vision of the past. Van Dyke (2019) coined the term *lieux de discorde* to talk about places that contain different versions of the past. I believe it is important to highlight another trait of *lieux de mémoire*, which, in Peter Catterall's (2017, p. 634) words: "if they cease meaningfully to commemorate-, then they also cease to be *lieux de mémoire*."

Examining the materiality of the places of memory is crucial; structures, objects, and people can interact through these places: [to] "Recall past events and feelings that are connected to particular meanings. These meanings are then put in a narrative order and linked", (Zarankin & Salerno, 2011, pp. 94,95). Frank and Ristic (2020, p. 566) suggest that when someone removes a monument from its place it: "operates as a practice of 'deterritorialization' whereby it destabilizes fixed and exclusive place identities and shifts towards a more progressive sense of place based on different connections and interactions.

Referring now to the many interpretations of memory, it is essential to draw attention to one of the elements that, in my opinion, is fundamental for this research: the political dimension of memory, which is intertwined with commemoration activities. Brow (from Ramos, 2011, p.141) considers that the act of: "bringing the past to the present is a political practice." Furthermore, Radstone (2008, p. 32) deliberates that: "where memory is concerned, the personal is political." This author draws attention to the close relationship between politics and memory because the selection and discrimination of memories used as justifications in the service of dominant powers have the potential to lead to violent acts in the present and in the past and to problematize issues of identity. Thus, the capacities of memory are useful on the one hand, to remember and exalt figures or circumstances for future preservation or to forget what the dominant political forces consider to

be against the project they are creating. Resistance results in: "subaltern memories" or "counter-memories" that challenge the imposed past.

Political nuances are evident in how state-sanctioned commemorations have framed hegemonic memory. Commemorative actions are transformative and more than symbolic exercises to acknowledge the past. They could be considered a practice which seeks to inscribe official state-sanctioned symbolic reminders of collective experience into the present, shaping collective memory (Hite, 2012; Azarmandi, 2016). Then, both commemorative monuments and memorials could be considered or used as tools of propaganda. In postcolonial settings like Mexico, dominant factions used commemorative monuments to establish power and educate the people on national heroes, shaping a collective and homogeneous historical memory (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 433). González-Varas Ibañez (2014, p. 53) offers an insightful perspective on commemorative monuments, stating that acts enable a monument to stay commemorative and "alive" through "identity exaltation" in the active practice of collective memory. The author's viewpoint highlights that this process is, in some cases, not revitalized in the present but remains anchored in the past. The memory is therefore "emptied" as the monument only serves as an ornament for the city. Then the monument is placed in a "defeated" past (Ibid., p. 53).

2.3 MONUMENTS AND MONUMENTALITY

Before discussing countermonumentality, it is necessary to define the term 'monument' and explain how it differs from 'monumentality.' Felix Levenson (2019) suggests that a monument is the physical form and monumentality is the meaning. Monumentality involves more than just the physical aspects of a monument, such as its size or visibility. Instead, it pertains to how a monument functions, the interactions it facilitates between people and objects, and how these objects are

infused with cultural values and symbols (Osborne, 2014, p. 12). Traditionally, a monument is viewed as a large object worthy of celebration in art history, although James Osborne has challenged this perspective (Ibid). They are aesthetically significant objects of enduring, economic, political, or legal value (Nelson & Olin, 2003) and are very poignantly also meant to be public objects that may become heritage. Levenson (2019, p. 22) explains it this way: Affection makes a monument, what distinguishes it is: "...either a perceptual impact on a personal or cultural level or a personal or cultural investment in the monument." Thus, society creates monumentality as they assign meanings and symbolism attached to the monument. In this instance, Osborne (2014) emphasizes that a relationship between the object and the person is constantly renegotiated. The specificity of monumentality is crucial for counter-monumentality because while the physical object may persist, its meanings and symbolisms continuously change over time, leading to the different meanings with which the objects are imbued.

Since one of the monuments' main goals is to be an object that commemorates or memorializes an event, Osborne (Ibid.) considers the definition's direct relationship to memory. Even the etymological origin of the words points to the meaning "to remind." The materialization of remembrance dates to the 18th century when monuments were places of memory and commemoration. In the early 20th century, they began to be seen as communicators between the past and future (Levenson, 2019, p. 19).

I consider it essential to distinguish between memorial and monument for this discussion. Katherine Hite (2012) provides a distinction. She asserts that the difference between a monument and a memorial is that a memorial aims to: "commemorate the past in ways that recognize sacrifice or loss" (Ibid., p. 7) in addition to containing symbolic power, while modern monuments: "champion grand projects or leaders, they herald past greatness." However, it is essential to

remember that the author addresses contemporary government-sponsored statues and memorials. Arthur Danto (Ibid., p.7) argues that the distinction lies in the purpose of the object: we create monuments to ensure that we always remember, while we build memorials to ensure that we never forget. Consequently, memorials often highlight the names of those memorialized (Sapega, 2008, p. 30).

The Columbus Monument has the characteristics of a contemporary government-sponsored monument and of a historical monument following the Mexican regulations for movable or immovable heritage (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión, 1972). Christopher Columbus was once associated with progress and discovery (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004), and the government authorities of the 19th century sponsored his monument to commemorate his feats. However, the meanings associated with the monument have changed over time, and it is now controversial. Consequently, Columbus monuments are subjected to counter-monumental actions as sites of the replication of violence (Mbembe from Azarmandi, 2016, p.57) and as a "violent representation of the past" (Ibid), as this type of monument represents the memorialization of colonial violence, which is deliberately socially forgotten with the denial of the colonial past.

2.4 COUNTER-MONUMENTALITY

Counter-monumentality is a recent concept that has different meanings. At the concept's core, however, it is a confrontation of the traditional forms of monumentality and their purposes. It is important to note that few works examine counter-monumental acts from a viewpoint other than artistic. I will begin with the definitions that refer to counter-monument creation.

Michael Rothberg (2004, p. 469) defines countermonumentality as a self-reflexive aesthetic form that subverts traditional expectations of what constitutes a monument. These artistic interventions are dynamic, temporary, fleeting, and deliberately unaesthetic. It is an ongoing process that combines the past and present through performances (Moshenska, cited in Osborne, 2017). Osborne (Ibid.) distinguishes various kinds of countermonumental projects: commemorating events through unconventional means or, through dialogic artworks that engage directly with existing conventional monuments in creative artistic interventions of "unremembering."

Antimonuments are one of these subversive forms of counter-monumentality. The deconstruction of monumental components to serve as: "a tool for the service and survival of individual and communal memory" is what we can refer to as anti-monument. (González de Gortari, 2012, p. 4). Anti-monuments seek to move away from the imposition of a monolithic nationalist identity to seek discussion and collective enrichment through the appropriation and resignification of public space. In this way, the purpose of the anti-monument is "to be a container of the new symbols that our time requires" (González de Gortari, 2012, p. 5). Seligmann-Silva (2020) considers that this type of sculptural expression is etymologically contrary to a monument. Although both concepts derive from the Latin *monere*, "Antimonument" is closer to "to warn" than to "to remember," They are places of remembrance of the painful past, admonitions of violence, and homages to the dead, as Hite (2012, p. 14) puts it: "Not allowing society to forget is central to the concept of Counter-monumentality."

Another dimension of countermonumental actions is iconoclasm (Osborne, 2017). Damaging a monument to obliterate it constitutes a violation with severe consequences. When a monument is attacked, so is: "... society's sense of itself and its past" (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 4). These same authors state, "The potential for destruction or defacement may be the most meaningful

aspect of the monuments' existence as an object." Consequently, when monumental discourse turns iconoclastic, "it engages the objecthood of the monument at its core" (Ibid., p. 205). Marschall (2017, p. 207) considers that we must make a distinction between the substance of the monuments (considered as the historical figure itself or the commemorated event) and the quality (the values and meanings associated with them). This implies that iconoclastic acts interact directly with the monumentality of the sculpture.

The reasons behind iconoclastic acts have frequently been discussed (Marschall, 2017; Osborne, 2017; Nordenflycht, 2021). They may stem from political unrest, disagreements over heritage, and dissatisfaction with historical symbols (Marschall, 2017). Some argue that these acts signify forgotten commemoration (Elsner, 2003).

Forgetting can be conceived as an active, purposeful, and collectively performed act (Elsner, 2003). This type of action could also arise from political and activist movements that have emerged in recent years including campaigns such as "Rhodes Must Fall" in 2015, the crusade that set in motion the removal of the Christopher Columbus monument, or "We will tear him down" (*Lo vamos a derribar*) in 2020, in what has been considered "reckoning with the world's colonial and imperial past" (Borhes, 2021, p. 94).

Counter-monumental acts can include removing monuments, painting, graffiti, fragmenting, intervening, or interacting with the objects in a way that changes their composition. I characterize it as "iconoclasm" and not as "vandalism" since vandalism implies an adverse action without reason behind it, while we understand countermonumental actions as meaningful actions that are linked to questioning the symbols of the past (Borhes, 2021). Nevertheless, some authors have adopted the term, such as Lai (2020, p. 602), who, while speaking of political vandalism,

characterizes it as: "the unauthorized defacement, destruction or removal of political symbols" akin to counter-speech, political vandalism exercised on monuments, seeks to communicate the repudiation of the exposed political symbols, or may also aim at the removal of state-sponsored tainted symbols, or minimally the recontextualization of this type of monument (Lai, 2020). Marschall (2017, p. 205) believes these actions seek to question and differentiate what is considered valuable heritage from an oppressive symbol of the past worth destroying. This differentiation is inevitably contested and political.

Archaeologists must reflect on the stakes involved in these kinds of iconoclastic relations. One could view this type of action as a threat to the study material, implying that the destruction of objects from the past jeopardizes: "not only the monument but also the professional discipline." (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 206) Historically, archaeologists have had almost exclusive authority to interact with archaeological objects. We have considered ourselves the only ones able to interact adequately with these objects, always putting the idea of preservation as the pinnacle of our objectives and, consequently, keeping it away from the general population for its conservation and subsequent enjoyment for generations to come. In this practice, we also create a barrier between people, their heritage, and their interaction. It is then necessary to add that archaeological work is not objective and is always involved in power relations. In Mexico, as we will see below, federal regulations regulate archaeological work and subsequently is a political tool.

In this research, I aim to explore how past materiality intrudes on the present. To understand this, I need to consider what happens to an object when counter-monumental processes are exercised and how memory is involved in iconoclasm (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 209). Jas Elsner (2003, p.210) considers that the modified object "signals both its pre-damaged state...and its new or altered state". The thing becomes a palimpsest, showing various past moments with diverse

cultural, political, and social meanings. Consequently, the changes made distinguish the new monument from the old one. Although we can observe these modifications in monument alterations, removing entire monuments has different implications. We could consider that the relationship with memory will also be distinct in these cases.

Based on these theories, memory, counter-monumental actions, and heritage-entangled concepts are all considered in relation to the site of the former Christopher Columbus monument. I seek to understand the events mentioned through these, with a dynamic perspective, in which heritage objects are made and unmade. The faculties of memory inform the cultural and countermonumental actions described below.

3 THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS MONUMENT

In this chapter, I seek to contextualize the monument to Christopher Columbus as part of an assemblage of commemorative sculptures.

Mexico achieved its independence in 1821. The political history of the first years of independent Mexico was turbulent. By the 1860s, after the second French intervention on Mexican soil, Maximilian of Habsburg established the second Mexican Empire (Cosío Villegas, 2000; Escalante Gonzalbo, et al., 2008; Zárate, 2017).

In the early 19th century, most sculptures erected in Mexico City were predominantly religious, except for "El Caballito" (The Little Horse), an equestrian statue of Charles IV of Spain (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 417). The importance of this sculpture comes not only from its secularity but also from the fact that it is the first one that existed in the space that would eventually become Reforma Avenue. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the government had developed an interest in promoting national identity through association with public figures. To do this, they erected monuments of these figures that would go beyond: "...the threshold of immortality to become heroes" (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 418). The sculptures created a shared identity for the new nation using standardized cultural elements representing its history. They built the monument honoring Christopher Columbus with this goal in mind. The monument was more than only a solitary sculpture in a roundabout but was part of a monumental assemblage of six traffic circles in which six monuments were installed. Below, I will provide an overview of how Reforma Avenue was created and developed over time.

3.1 LA AVENIDA DE LA REFORMA (REFORMA AVENUE)

The "*Paseo de la Reforma*" (Promenade of the Reform") or "*Avenida de la Reforma*" (Reforma Avenue) is one of the most important streets in the city, regarded as "the most important symbolic monumental route in the American continent" (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004, p. 67).

Maximilian of Habsburg laid out the "*Promenade of the Emperor*" (Paseo del Emperador) in 1865 to connect Mexico City with the Castle of Chapultepec, the imperial residence at the time. They planned the route to be a 3 kilometers long pedestrian street (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004, p. 67; Martínez Assad, 2005) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The Avenue and its traffic circles on an 1866 map. Source: SegundoImperioMX (2014).

It was also the emperor's idea to create an ensemble of monuments. He wanted a memorial to commemorate the Mexican Independence built in the *Plaza Mayor* of the capital, made of marble and representing the individuals involved in the country's quest for independence: Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, José María Morelos y Pavón, and Agustín de Iturbide, but this project did not materialize (Ibid., p. 25). The planning of the avenue with a sequence of roundabouts, seen in maps from 1866 onwards, reflects the emperor's vision for a sculptural ensemble.

The republic overthrew the emperor, and Benito Juárez achieved victory before anyone erected any sculptures. Then, the street changed its name from "Imperial Promenade" briefly to "Degollado Avenue." In honor of Santos Degollado, a liberal politician, Mexico's Minister of Foreign and Domestic Relations (Secretary of Culture, 2019). Then, in 1872, after Juárez's death, the walkway was officially renamed "Promenade of the Reform." The Reform refers to a civil war between liberals and conservatives, which took place from 1858 to 1861. The conflict takes its name from the reform laws included in the constitution in 1872.

After several subsequent presidents, the road's construction remained a priority. Each president had a specific goal, apparent in the monuments established on the road. Work continued with a great impulse to beautify the avenue during the *Porfiriato* (a political period during which Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico from 1877 to 1911). The policy oscillated from exalting nationalist and historical values to cosmopolitan and modern (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004, p. 214). During this political period, *Porfiriato* officials decided to build six traffic circles and monuments to occupy them and began construction.



Figure 4. Close-up of Reforma Avenue in the 20th century. Source: Library of Congress (1907).

On a map from 1907 (Figure 4); we can observe the avenue and the six roundabouts built. It ran west to east and began with the entrance to the Chapultepec Castle. By 1910, four sculptures adorned four roundabouts. The equestrian statue of Charles IV '*El Caballito*.' occupied the first of them. The monument to Christopher Columbus occupied the second traffic circle, and the first roundabout built to place a monument on the avenue (Zavala, 1991). On the third roundabout, they placed the statue of Cuauhtémoc (the last Tlatoani, ruler of the Mexica of Tenochtitlán) created by Francisco Jimenez in 1878 (Galindo y Villa, 1901). The statue of The Angel of Independence, designed by Antonio Rivas Mercado, assumed the fourth location (Secretary of Culture, 2019). The intention was to develop innovative areas with symbolic meaning that people would value visually and for what they stood for (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 424).

We could consider Reforma Avenue as the materialization of the construction of the idea of a nation or what Zárate (2003, p. 438) refers to as: "the material symbols of Mexicanity." Understanding the discourse as a pedagogical tool, we could interpret the avenue as a metropolitan museum, "an open book of history" (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 438), or as a timeline.

By examining the arrangement of the monuments along the avenue, we can gain a deeper understanding of the objective behind the sculptures. Acknowledging Mexico's European roots, the monument to "El Caballito" stands alongside the Columbus monument. Transitioning to recognize the Indigenous roots of the Mexican people, a monument to Cuauhtémoc is erected in the next traffic circle. Moving forward, the Monument to Independence emerges as a celebration of national heroes. As a result, the avenue transforms into a tangible embodiment of patriotic history and a repository of collective memory (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 441). The author believes the state uses this practice to control memory by choosing which facts to emphasize, excluding those that

challenge its legitimacy and interests. Therefore, examining the sculptural ensemble to which the Columbus monument belonged is essential.

3.1.1 The Charles IV Statue

Manuel Tolsa created the equestrian statue of Charles IV, commonly known as "El Caballito" (The little horse). The statue, inaugurated in 1803, was intended to honor the King of Spain. However, the sculpture was problematic following the Mexican War of Independence in 1821. Consequently, government officials relocated the sculpture multiple times—from the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City to the University, then to the Conservatory of Music. Finally, in 1852, the statue found its place in a traffic circle located on the outskirts of the city by order of the president of the republic, Mariano Arista (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 421; Martínez Assad, 2005). Thus, the monument's installation preceded Reforma Avenue's creation but was later included in the monumental discourse (Galindo y Villa, 1906).



Figure 5. Tolsa's equestrian statue of Charles IV of Spain in 1884. Source: W. H. Jackson (1884).

The monument's survival from destruction is widely known and attributed to the strong opposition it faced from the local population. In Figure 5, we can observe the protective fences erected around the monument.

3.1.2 The Indigenous Past in Public Space

In the 19th century, government officials erected monuments of the country's pre-Hispanic past to establish the idea of the nation, which traced its roots to native populations.

3.1.2.1 *The Cuauhtémoc's Roundabout*

Cuauhtémoc's sculpture (Figure 6) depicts the last Tlatoani of the Mexica empire (the Mexica was the hegemonic society that inhabited the Basin of Mexico from the 14th to the 16th century) and occupies the second *ex-profesa* roundabout. Due to the Art Academy of San Carlos, there was a resurgence of interest in Mexico's Indigenous past in the second half of the 19th century (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004, p. 213). The monument, unveiled in May 1878, depicted the Tlatoani as a valiant emblem of pre-Hispanic history and was built in a neo-pre-Hispanic style. The significance of the Indigenous past through the iconography of the Cuauhtémoc monument aimed to mitigate the "unfavorable" policy towards the nation's Indigenous population (Ibid., p. 215).



Figure 6. Cuauhtémoc's Monument in 1915 Source: National Photo library (1915).

3.1.2.2 The "Green Indians" Sculptures

Vicente Riva Palacio, the development minister, ordered the creation of the statues of Mexica Tlatoanis Ahuízotl and Itzcóatl in 1878 (Martínez Assad, 2005, p. 34). They were mounted in May 1892, stood 5.90 meters tall, and weighed four tons. The sculptures at the Reforma Avenue entrance were two full body, individually sculpted bronze images of the emperors wearing loincloths. In the hands of Ahuízotl (Figure 9), was a staff. In contrast, Itzcóatl (Figure 8) carried a jaguar skin on his head and what appears to be a *macuahuitl*, a pre-Hispanic weapon with obsidian blades. Each figure stood on pyramidal bases, with glyphs and iconography of Mexica appearance. Figure 7 shows how these characters coexisted with the *Caballito* sculpture in the same area.



Figures 7, 8, and 9. The sculptures flanked the Avenue in 1900; Itzcóatl; Ahuízotl. Source: National Photolibrary (1900); Casasola Archive (1925); Casasola Archive (1934).

The population did not receive these sculptures well and began to call them "Aztec mummies" (Martínez Assad, 2005, p. 34). Moreover, a section of the population who held anti-Indigenous views also put pressure to remove them. Ultimately, they were removed by order of the city council in 1898: "in support of aesthetics" (Coudurier, 1910, p. 89). The sculptures were placed at *Paseo de la Viga* in 1901 to be moved later to the north of Mexico City in 1960. The place took the sculptures' name and is currently known as "*Indios Verdes*" (Green Indians) (Zárate Toscano,

2001, p. 422). The sculptures acquired the colloquial designation due to the green patina that developed on their bronze surfaces over the years.

3.1.3 Monument to Independence

Porfirio Díaz's presidency was instrumental in promoting this monument, which aimed to commemorate Mexico's political emancipation and honor the heroes who played a crucial role in achieving independence from the Spanish crown. The project spanned a decade and was officially inaugurated on September 16, 1910, (Martínez Assad, 2005, p. 58) (Figure 10).



Figure 10. The Angel of Independence mid-twentieth century. Source: National Photolibrary (1950).

The ensemble depicts a column topped with an angel, with feminine traits and garlands in their hand. The construction of crypts to accommodate the remains of national heroes (Ibid.) was part of the original plan. Today, all Mexicans recognize this monument as an icon of the city and a venue for public and official celebrations.

3.2 THE AVENUE DEVELOPMENT IN THE 20TH & 21ST CENTURY

In addition to the monuments mentioned above, busts of distinguished men from each state of the Mexican Republic were added to the Avenues sidewalks to: "perpetuate the memory of their most distinguished sons" (Coudurier, 1910, p. 64).

In 1910 artist Francisco Sosa proposed, in the newspaper "*El Partido Liberal*" (The Liberal Party), to place busts of distinguished men from each state of the Mexican Republic on the sides of Reforma Avenue. The Mexico City council approved and sponsored the project; thus, they added thirty-one busts to the avenue, that showed the: "glorification of illustrious Mexicans [a] manifestation of the gratitude of the Mexican people to their heroes [and a contribution] to the embellishment of the city" (Florescano, 2005) (Sosa, 1900). Zarate (2003, p. 428) considers these sculptures as an attempt to give a place to the leaders of other states of the republic to be present in memory.

In the early 1900s, the first stage of constructing the monumental artistic axis along Reforma Avenue focused on depicting important national historical figures. State authorities created the space to materialize the dominant discourse and promote a sense of identity through selective symbols and heroes. These new monuments actively enshrined the actors of independence to establish the foundational myth of the Mexican nation, according to Zárata Toscano (2003, p. 434). Furthermore, Martínez Assad (2005, p. 18) defines these actions as: "the patriotic discourse told by the statues sown along its path."

In the mid-20th century, Reforma Avenue was modernized and developed to accommodate cars and pedestrians. This resulted in significant changes to the avenue's design, including the creation of new sculptural spaces. However, these changes meant the route no longer served as a materialized patriotic pantheon. Mexican identity was firmly established by this time eliminating the political necessity for monumental displays of nationalism (Martínez Assad, 2005). This does

not mean that monument installation ceased. As detailed below, sculptural areas were developed with each of Reforma Avenue's expansions.

Government officials eventually filled the final two vacant traffic circles. The first one contained a palm tree (*Arecaceae*) in 1920, which earned it the name "*Glorieta de la Palma*" (Roundabout of the Palm Tree) (Secretary of Culture, 2019). In 2022, the Palm tree died, so government officials replaced it with a Montezuma cypress, or *Ahuehuete* (*Taxodium mucronatum*), which also perished.

"*La Fuente de la Diana Cazadora*" (The Huntress Diana Fountain) occupied the last traffic circle in 1992 (Secretary of Culture, 2019, p. 59), up to that moment, the only female character in the promenade (Figure 11).

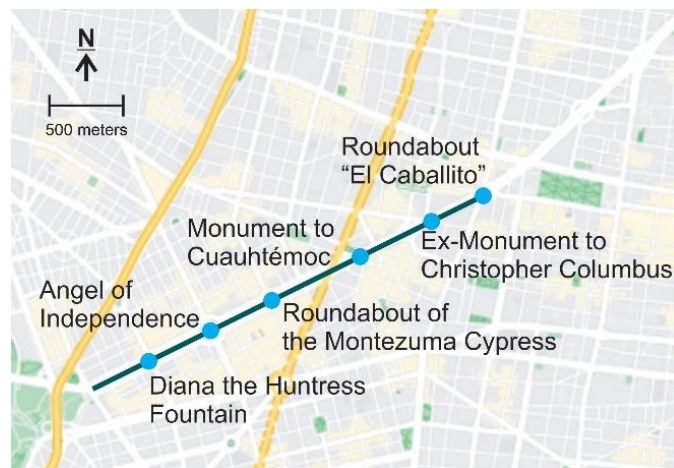


Figure 11. The six traffic circles in the present. Data: Google Maps (2022).

Reforma Avenue was extended to the west between 1927 and 1952, and this development resulted in the creation of more sculptural areas. One of these monuments was the "*Fuente de Petróleo*" or the "Monument to Mexico's Oil Industry" (*Monumento a la Industria Petrolera de México*) in 1952. By 1964, as part of an urban project, the avenue was also extended to the east, and workers constructed three additional traffic circles along the route, starting at the Caballito

roundabout. The first traffic circle contained a sculpture of the Mexica emperor Cuitláhuac built in 1964. The Monuments to José de San Martín in 1973 and to Simon Bolivar in 1976 followed in the remaining traffic circles to the east (Figure 12).

Monumentality narratives acquired an international dimension, even when still looking for the exaltation of notable individuals from this moment on, they were not exclusively Mexican or "national heroes." The new sculptural ensemble portrayed individuals such as Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín, who were of Venezuelan and Argentine nationalities, respectively, and spearheaded the South American nations' struggle for independence.



Figure 12. Reforma Avenue expansion of 1952 and 1964. Data: Google (2022).

3.2.1 The Coatlinchán Tlaloc

Unlike the other pieces listed above, which were created for the Avenue, government officials took the Coatlinchán Tlaloc -a pre-Hispanic monolith- out of its original location to display it. The National Museum of Anthropology and History is located in the western part of the city, on Reforma Avenue. As part of its inauguration festivities in 1964, the monolith was erected at the museum entrance.

Although the sculpture is thought to represent the deity Tlaloc, it has been questioned if it could depict Chalchiuhtlicue (Barba Ahuatzin, 2019). Names for this stone include Lord of the Tecomates, Stone of the Tecomates, and Tlaloc of Coatlinchán. After initial in-situ analysis, experts determined it was most likely a Teotihuacan creation from the classic era (200–900 A.D.) (Quintero Hernández, 2014). INAH officials extracted the monolith from Coatlinchán in the State of Mexico, which is the state next to the capital (Figure 13).



Figure 13. The monolith at the entrance of the museum. Source: Archive Casasola (1966).

The 197-ton monolith was said to be a gift from the Coatlinchán people to: "the Mexican country." After government officials retrieved it from its original location, they paraded it through Mexico City before delivering it to the National Museum of Anthropology. Allegedly, the population of Coatlinchán permitted the extraction in exchange for free lifetime access to the museum for all its inhabitants. The plaque says that the inhabitants of Coatlinchán generously gave away their rain god to guard the museum (Rozenal, 2011, p. 344).

This relocation highlights how officials actively engaged in the museum's construction, driven by the belief that archaeological artifacts originated from the ancestors of all Mexicans. Consequently, they held the view that the comprehensive pre-Hispanic history of the nation should be present in a specific location. However, this monolith was not inside the museum but was set

up as a public monument along the road. The residents of Coatlinchán have recently released a different discourse in which INAH authorities extracted the stone by force, which was not made by all Mexicans' ancestors but exclusively by their ancestors. Consequently, they claim ownership (Ibid.).

The construction of Mexican identity relied on an Indigenous foundation to create a unified historical narrative. This nationalist perspective emphasized the pre-Hispanic cultural heritage as the basis of cultural continuity (Cottom & Olivé Negrete, 2004, p. 746), a practice that gained prominence in the 1960s. As a result, extracting and transforming archaeological artifacts into public monuments became key actions in preserving and constructing this identity rooted in the pre-Hispanic past.

The object was taken from its original place and turned into the: "patrimony of all Mexicans." This expropriating, homogenizing, and marginalizing practice transformed it into an archaeological object through extraction, study, exhibition, and inclusion in a discourse. Thus, it became the property of all Mexicans but remained out of reach for anyone.

Currently, we can observe the prevalence of pre-Hispanic symbols used to represent Mexicanness, for example, in the jerseys of the national soccer team. This idiosyncrasy has consequences for the monopoly of archaeological work and the appropriation of objects that become "heritage." Mexican legislation permits this practice to prioritize preserving archaeological artifacts over all other considerations. After exploring this tangent, let us now return to the general development of Reforma Avenue.

3.2.2 The Late 20th-Century and Early 21st-Century Developments

According to Martínez Assad (2005, p. 157), the monument commemorating the Tlatoani Cuitláhuac was the only one that gave continuity to the initial discourse of the Paseo de la Reforma. After completing the extensions to the east and west and utilizing its sculptural spaces, the concept of the national pantheon was lost.

Governmental projects sought to commemorate international leaders from other countries: Antonio José de Sucre, former President of Bolivia, Ignacy San Paderewski, a Polish diplomat, José Rizal, a contributor to the Philippine revolution, and Winston Churchill, First Minister of the United Kingdom, among others (Secretary of Culture, 2019). The last expansion of the avenue took place in 1995 towards the west. With this, two monuments were added to traffic circles, one dedicated to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Turkey (Secretary of Culture, 2019, p. 67) in 2003 and another dedicated to the mythical figure of Penelope from the Odyssey, sculpted in 1978.

To the east, in 1979, Tolsá's "*El Caballito*" was removed from the place it had occupied since the beginning of the century (Martínez Assad, 2005). By 1997 in the empty space, Sebastian's (Enrique Carbajal González) abstract work was erected. The sculpture, made up of yellow geometric bodies, also represented an equine figure and is known by the same name, "*El Caballito*" (The Little Horse) (Secretary of Culture, 2019, p. 65).

In 1996, there was controversy regarding Reforma Avenue's monuments when the Advisory Commission proposed to continue a century-long construction project to enhance the avenue's historical-pedagogical character. To make room for a sculpture that "embodies Mexicanness," they tried to eliminate insignificant urbanistic elements from the traffic circles, such as the fountain of Diana the Huntress. The commission also suggested replacing the palm tree with a monument: "to the cultural ideals of the viceroyalty" like the famed XII-century author Sor Juana

Inés de la Cruz (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004, p. 70). However, the Avenue maintained its existing monuments.

One of the latest sculptural additions to the avenue was the Stele of Light, made in white quartz and steel (Secretary of Culture, 2019, p. 70), a memorial built for the bicentennial celebration of Mexican Independence. The addition of new monuments has created an assemblage that goes beyond the original nationalist discourse, shaping the current panorama (Figure 14).

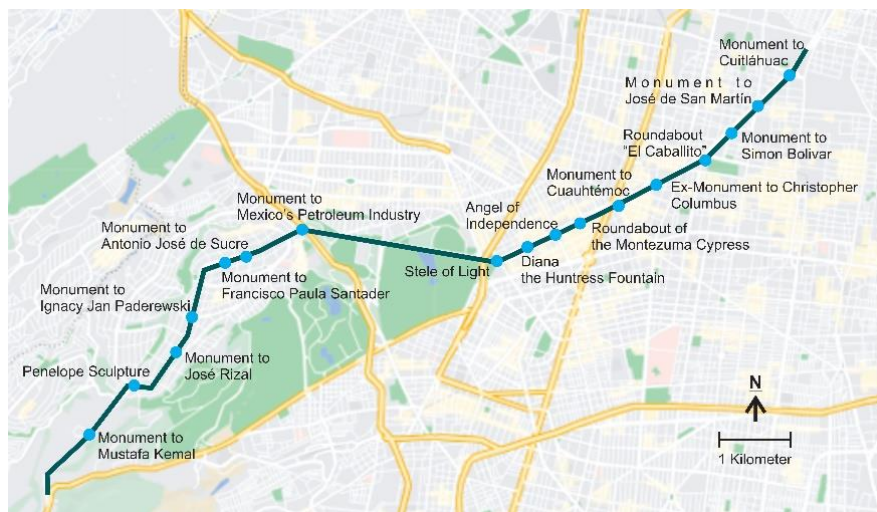


Figure 14. Reforma Avenue in 2022. Data: Google (2022)

Reforma Avenue was developed in six phases and extended to 14.7 kilometers. It currently connects the city's west and north. The area has evolved into a palimpsest of political significance and meanings. Attempts to construct spaces for political projects continue, but many spaces have also been developed for aesthetic pleasure.

Recently in 2020, during Claudia Sheinbaum's leadership as Head of Government of Mexico City, more sculptures were added to the sidewalks of Reforma Avenue. The "*Paseo de las Heroínas*" (Promenade of the Heroines) is dedicated to the: "women who gave us our homeland." The first sculpture represented Leona Vicario, a journalist who participated in México's War of Independence (Noticias Aristegui, 2020). Subsequent monuments depict Josefa Ortíz, and

Gertrudis Bocanegra, participants in the Mexican Independence; Margarita Maza, a supporter of the Republican project (Castañeda, 2021); and Juana Inés de la Cruz, poetess and writer. Sheinbaum stated that this installation establishes a legacy to honor these women with dignity and emphasizes the critical role of women in history. Sheinbaum also declared that the sculptural ensemble contributes to an egalitarian narrative that offers a place to women who were previously made invisible in the new lane of social memory, deconstructing power relations in space (Castañeda, 2021). In this instance, political actions evoke the memory of historical women's through the monument's materiality. It brings to the present the deeds of the selected characters to be part of a discourse. This discourse seeks to make the historical affirmation of women's figures visible as, up until now, it has primarily focused on men.

We can also examine how the Promenade of the Heroines refers to the individual: Josefa Ortiz who was known traditionally as Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez. However, in this circumstance, it was considered inappropriate to keep "De Domínguez," which would denote to whom she was married. Consequently, the "National Pantheon" project is still under construction since politicians continue using the past to further their interests. Essential to notice, too, is that Leona Vicario's sculpture is the first on the avenue to be a female historical individual and the first female body to be depicted wearing garments.

Finally, it is important to note that Reforma Avenue is a space for recreation and protest for the country's inhabitants and has been for dozens of years. Numerous marches take place on this road. The rallies for the Ayotzinapa massacre and the 8M march for Women's Day, among other significant protests, are held annually. It is in this same place where the most important festivities and parades are held, such as the LGBTTTIQ+ pride march and the Day of the Dead parade, amongst others.

The Reforma Avenue monuments were created with a communicative and political purpose by a network of actors, plans, personalities, materialities, and ideas that aligned to shape the avenue and each monument, resulting in a palimpsest of political intentions. They have been assembled and reassembled for over a century through the political will of governmental: from the initial discourse that sought to forge the identity of Mexico through its national heroes to the recent endeavor to make women's contributions to Mexican history more visible.

3.3 THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS MONUMENT

Maximilian of Habsburg conceived in 1865 the first plan to erect a monument to Christopher Columbus on Reforma Avenue (Villalpando, 1982, p. 13). He wanted the memorial to use local materials, only marble from Puebla and Mexican granites. The Catalan artist Manuel Vilar planned, drew, and modeled an idea for a statue in plaster. Still, the project was not realized (Coss y León, 1994, p. 44) until 1892, when the sculpture was ultimately unveiled and installed in the Buenavista Plaza, which served as the train station (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 431) and where it remains to this day.

The monument that was finally placed on Reforma Avenue on the very first roundabout was a new one. It was outlined in 1871 when an invitation to create a statue of Columbus was extended to the artist Ramon Rodríguez Arrangoyti (Villalpando, 1982, p. 14) by a private individual Antonio Escandón. Arrangoyti proceeded to use the existing sketches of Vilar's drawings (Figure 15).

Initially, the plan for the sculpture was to add more effigies to accompany Columbus's leading figure and create a narrative through these sculptures. However, Alejandro Arango y Escandón (Antonio Escandón's nephew) transformed the narrative by changing the sketch. The original plan was to have Christopher Columbus accompanied by anthropomorphic sculptures of

the Mexican seas, including the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the Sea of Cortez (García Pimentel, 1879; Zavala, 1991). Instead, Arango y Escandón decided that the narrative of the sculpture would shift to pay tribute to the "discoverers" and "civilizers" of ancient Mexicans. For this reason, the characters chosen were Friar Pedro de Gante, Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, Friar Torquemada, and Friar Bartolomé de Olmedo (Figure 16) (Ibid.).

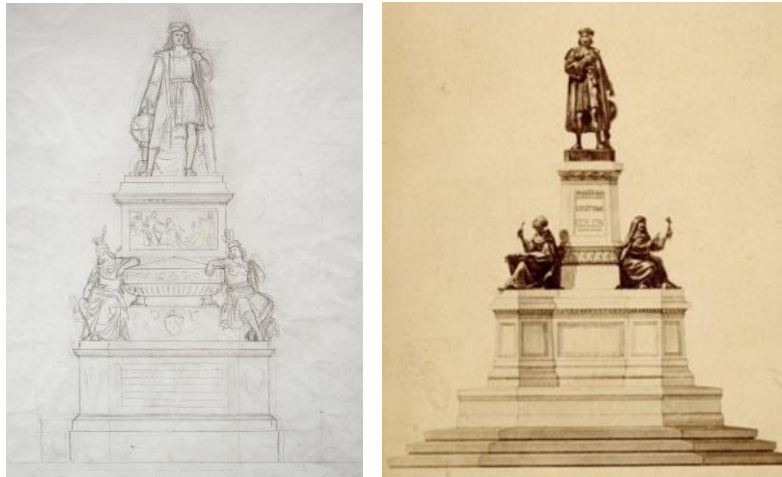


Figure 15. Vilar's sketch of 1850. Source: *Memoricamexico* (1850); Figure 16. Arrangoity's sketch of 1876. Source: National Photo Library (1876).

This planning phase concluded with the payment of his fee to Rodriguez Arrangoyti. Subsequently, Antonio Escandón took the sketches and commissioned the same monument to the Frenchman Charles Henri Joseph Cordier (Villalpando, 1982, p. 14), an artist whose production focused on busts of people from Africa and Asia (García Pimentel, 1879, p. 21). The sculpture was ordered in Paris in 1873 (Ibid., p. 12) and arrived at the port of Veracruz in December 1875, where it was stored for a year until by the will of the Minister of Development Vicente Riva Palacios (Ibid., p. 14) assembly began in April 1877 (Coudurier, 1910, p. 79).

The sculpture was not meant for Reforma Avenue. Several locations were previously considered, including Santo Domingo Square near the center of the city or Buenavista Square, as Columbus' sculpture symbolized progress, and therefore, it was typical to set monuments to this

figure near train tracks (Gutiérrez Viñuales, 2004), furthermore Columbus was considered ideal since he was a non-conflictive character related to the New World. Eventually, decision makers settled on the exact location that Maximiliano of Habsburg had in mind for his Columbus monument (Villalpando, 1982, p. 15).

Mexico was the first country on the American continent to mount a monument dedicated to Christopher Columbus (Coudurier, 1910). The sculptural ensemble consisted of two red marble bodies on an octagonal granite plinth. The sculpture was mounted on a marble base (Figures 17 and 18).

One of his hands held the veil that covered the American hemisphere, thus revealing the world, and the other hand pointed to the horizon. Four figures were seated on the second body of marble (Ibid., p.96); however, there is some uncertainty on the identity of the four friars represented.



Figure 17. Columbus' monument, close-up of the head. Source: El Reforma. Figure 18. Sculpture in place. Source: El Universal.

Only three authors cited in this study agree on all accounts (Esteva, 1905; Coudurier, 1910; Zavala, 1991). The friars' possible identities include the following: Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Fray Diego de Deza, Juan Pérez de Marchena, Pedro de Gante, Fray Toribio de Benavente, Fray

Juan de Torquemada or Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo (García Pimentel, 1879, p. 2; Galindo y Villa, 1901, p. 121; Esteva, 1905, p. 291; Coudurier, 1910, p. 79; Villalpando, 1982, p. 15; Zavala, 1991).

To determine the identity of the friars, I considered the fact that García Pimentel (1879, p. 22) had direct access to sources when creating this book. He worked closely with Alejandro Arango y Escandón, which is why I believe that the identification of the friars in his work is the most reliable. It is noteworthy to mention that there have been disagreements about the friars' identities since the early 1900s, as Adalberto Esteva (1905) pointed out. In his text, Silvio Zavala (1991) also references this confusion. For the friars' identification, this author refers to a text of 1877 by Francisco Sosa. I will briefly cover the significance of each colonialist character that received frequent mentions.

Fray Pérez de Marchena de Santa Maria de la Rábida was a prominent influence in the court of Isabel de Castilla (García Pimentel, 1879, p. 3). The sculpture portrayed Pérez de Marchena holding a compass, gazing towards the horizon, as if measuring the distance between Spain and the American continent (Figures 19 and 20).



Figures 19 and 20 Pérez de Marchena, in the restoration workshop and on Reforma Avenue. Sources: El Reforma (2020); ProtoplasmaKid (2013).

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas was the Bishop of Chiapas who: "meditates on the defense of the Indians and in procuring their welfare" (Figures 21 and 22) (Ibid., p. 11).



Figures 21 and 22 Bartolomé de las Casas sculpture in situ. Source: and in the workshop. Source: ProtoplasmaKid (2013); El Reforma (2020).

Fray Toribio de Benavente, known in the American continent as Motolinía: "shows to a young Indian the holy cross, symbol not of conquest and slavery, but of redemption and freedom" (Ibid., p. 11). It is this figure whom other authors identify as Pedro de Gante, the founder of the parish of St. Joseph, the Lateran College, and the Girls' College (Esteva, 1905, p. 291).

In this instance, only García Pimentel (1879) and Zavala (1991) refer to the Indigenous person. None of the other texts refers to him as if he were considered an ornament, a symbolic part of the discourse, or not a person (Figures 23 and 24). Mahdis Azarmandi (2016) discussed how colonialist sculptures leave out the stories of colonized people, resulting in the erasure of the Colonial Other. This erasure leads to excluding certain body types from commemoration, consequently becoming no-bodies, nameless and unidentified.



Figures 23 and 24. Indigenous person and Fray Motolinía or Pedro de Gante. Source: Protoplasmakid (2013); MxCity (2016).

The last friar depicted in the monument is Fray Diego Deza or Dehesa. He was a religious Inquisitor who advised Kings Fernando and Isabel and supported Columbus' project, citing the Bible as his source. Accordingly, in the sculpture, he is holding a book (García Pimentel, 1879, p. 4). Some scholars have mistakenly identified this sculpture as Motolinía (Esteva, 1905, p.291) (Figure 24).



Figure 25. Diego Deza sculpture. Source: ProtoplasmaKid (2013).

To the south, there was a bronze casting of the reconstruction of the Convent of La Rábida (Figure 26). This convent is where Christopher Columbus acquired the help of Fray Perez de Marchena to undertake his maritime voyage. To the north, the discovery of the island of Guanahabpi San Salvador (Figures 27 and 28) with the inscription of Antonio Escandón (Galindo y Villa, 1909, p.121).



Figure 26. La Rábida. Source: Garcia Pimentel, L. (1879); Figure 27. Landing in San Salvador. Source: A. Eliz Caballero (2020); Figure 28. Cordier's signature. Source: Silvio Zavala (1991).

On the principal façade of the monument, they carved: "To Cristopher Columbus" (Figure 29). The builders inscribed a legend on the monument's base that indicated the start of construction and the inauguration during Porfirio Díaz's presidency (Figure 30).



Figure 29. Plaque with dedicatory; Figure 30. To Christopher Columbus; Figure 31. Inaugural carvings. Source: Silvio Zavala (1991).

Lastly, a fragment of a letter written by Columbus to Rafael Sánchez (treasurer of the Spaniard Kings) communicated the project's success to the King. The translation from Latin would read:

"Thirty-three days after my departure from Cadiz I arrived at the sea of India, where I found many islands inhabited by countless people, and I took possession of them in the name of the new most felicitous monarch to public proclamation and acclamations, flying the flag and without any contradiction: I named the first one San Salvador, in whose protection I confidently arrived at this and the others."

"Cristophoro Columbo. Antonio Escandón determined to erect this testimony of perpetual admiration to Christopher Columbus, and to offer it to the city of Mexico. Year of 1875" (Figure 30).

The final details that made up the sculptural complex were gas-lit candelabra on every corner and an iron railing surrounding the sculpture since its inauguration in August 1877. As shown in the image below (Figure 32), in addition to the iron fence, the monument had a system of low stone piles and chains to limit access to the space, as well as shrubs and grass decorations.



Figure 32. The monument in 1883. Source: W. H. (William Henry) Jackson (1883).

Once familiar with the sculptures, it is crucial to analyze their postures. In the case of Christopher Columbus, the stance of lifting the veil that covered the New World, which reflects the: "insertion of new lands to the Western civilization" (Zárate Toscano, 2003, p. 437) or as Gutierrez Viñuales (p. 180) observes: "the act of discovery." Gutierrez's text prompts us to consider how secondary figures on a monument can help explain its true ideological purpose (Ibid., p. 179). This monument represents two historical moments of the colonialist enterprise: Columbus' arrival to the continent and the sixteenth-century evangelizing effort. Regarding the contested identity of the friars, we can observe that the actual characters are relegated to the background, and what is crucial is the historical moment they represent.

Before discussing the monument's 20th-century history, I would like to highlight some details about its materiality. It is worth noting that, as seen in the 1883 image, the monument (Figure 32)

has always had physical barriers to divide the space or distance the public from the monument. Individuals approaching the monument would encounter stone piles, chains, and the iron fence. Although the monument at the time of its inauguration was considered a non-problematic figure, and although, as we will discuss later, multiple civic ceremonies were held in this space, it was always deemed necessary to have this spatial divider. Not so for the Cuauhtémoc monument, built that same year, or the Angel of Independence, inaugurated in 1910. None of those monuments have any physical barrier separating the population from the sculpture: on the contrary, both have stairways that allow the people to approach the monument.

In contrast, the steps of the Columbus monument are located behind closed railings. An analogous situation can be seen with the Charles IV monument (Figure 5), enclosed by a metal fence when relocated to Reforma Avenue. As previously stated, this contentious monument was frequently attacked and therefore increased security was necessary.

3.4 THE COLUMBUS MONUMENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Using archival photographs from the Casasola Archive and the National Photographic Library Archives, I want to focus on commemorations at the monument's location in the first half of the 20th century, as this area hosted various commemorative ceremonies. The archived images reveal that a series of performances were repeatedly held at the site, including school ceremonies, events performed by members of the city government, and events sponsored by neighborhood groups with individuals of Spanish heritage. (INAH, 2022).

We can observe one of these ceremonies performed during the 1940s (Figure 33). The floral decorations left at the site indicate the branch of government that performed the ceremonies, in this case, members of the Central Department of the Federal District (the mid-century equivalent of the Head of Government of Mexico City). In addition to the floral decorations, the site was adorned

with floral chains, tricolor banners, and Mexican flags. Public officials and an audience were present during the ceremony.



Figure 33. Civic ceremony sponsored by the Department of the Federal District. Source: Casasola Archive (1930).

Columbus Day, or "*Día de la Raza*" (Day of the Races), was an important day in Mexico's civic commemorations. This celebration was established in the first half of the 20th century and was held annually on October 12th. The Casasola archive has photos of a 1922 celebration in the same place, sponsored by the same branch of government (INAH, 2022). We can see government officials upholding the performance, thus legitimizing, and endorsing the colonial monument by participating in celebratory events and engaging with its symbolism. These actions support and reinforce the beliefs embodied in the statue, exalting Christopher Columbus and the friars' evangelizing mission while endorsing the notion of the "discovery of America" as a positive occurrence. One could interpret this as an example of using collective memory to construct national myths as a political action.

When examining the monument's materiality, we should also consider the changes made as a result of the last decades of the avenue's conversion from a pedestrian-only to a road with vehicles. For decades, the roundabout sustained its original appearance. Nevertheless, in the fourth decade of the 20th century, the roundabout expanded in size. Because the decision to slow traffic was met with strong opposition, officials modified it once again in the 1960s. By narrowing the roundabout, it lost its circular shape and took on an oval shape, creating the appearance it maintained until the beginning of 2021 (Aguirre Botello, 2015) (Figure 34).



Figure 34. Aerial view of the monument in 1965. Source: Mexicomaxico.org (2015).

3.5 HERITAGIZATION AND MEMORY

Understanding the transformation of a monument on Reforma Avenue into a piece cultural heritage involves exploring the intricate relationship between collective memory and the dynamic nature of heritage status. By studying the monument's history over the years, we can perceive heritage as a dynamic concept that is simultaneously subjected to a process of fossilization that intends to keep the status or value of the object in a permanent state. In the subsequent analysis, I delve into the practices that have shaped these objects as heritage, both in practice and as a legal designation.

One of the primary ways in which a monument becomes heritage is through its deep connection to collective memory. Recovering a figure from the distant past, leading to the construction of a monument centuries later, intertwines memory practice with the process of object heritagization. However, it is also worth noting that there are other ways in which we can observe the interplay between memory and heritagization.

Commemorative gatherings occurred at the Christopher Columbus monument during the first half of the twentieth century. Different sectors of society and government institutions organized these congregations. Through various performances, they sought to keep the collective memory of the object 'alive.' At the same time, creating a *lieux de mémoire*, a place to commemorate the individuals whose memory they considered essential to perpetuate in public, civic, and school ceremonies. In this instance, I deliberate that the stakeholders in these performances were interacting with the monumentality of the object and not only with the monument. The identities of the friars, which were already debatable, did not have any relevance to the commemorations. Therefore, the focus was on what the monument represented to them rather than any specific individuals portrayed.

The monument held significance for various sectors of society. For instance, the residents of Spanish neighborhoods might have found an identity connection with the monument. On the other hand, schoolchildren who learned about Mexico's history interacted with the monument. This space held importance for them, allowing them to engage in recurrent commemorative acts related to the past.

However, it is necessary to remember that memory is not a monolith and that not all of society interacted with or identified with the monument. The surrounding fence, consistently present to prevent unwanted interactions, indicates that the monument did not resonate with everyone.

We should remember that politics influences the process of heritagization. Political interests drove the creation and preservation of the monument, which played a significant role in the *patrimonialization* efforts. The monument held importance in shaping Mexican identity and the state, as it justified a shared past through a unifying and homogenizing heritage. In which the past is a single history, and the monument to Columbus becomes a pedagogical tool supporting the national myth. Considering the site as a *lieux de mémoire*, we must emphasize the importance of the location as the monument is significant on its own and as part of the ensemble of monuments along Reforma Avenue. Whether the object would have acquired value outside this collective arrangement is uncertain.

As a result of political and civic factors, the monument to Columbus was affirmed, valued, protected, and maintained throughout the early twentieth century. It gained considerable significance as a reference point, and the surrounding areas became known by its name. The monument's prominence is evident in 19th and 20th-century guides to Mexico City, which describe it as: "noble and severe" (García Pimentel, 1879) or praise its beauty with statements like: "the ensemble could not be more beautiful" (Coudurier, 1910). Specialists also published dedicated books about the monument.

Keeping this in mind, it is crucial to explore the intentional curation of the object's values for its preservation as heritage. The Columbus monument held historical significance due to its age, artistic merits, and scientific qualities. Furthermore, its symbolic value is derived from its association with the national founding myth. While the object's historical, artistic, and scientific importance remained consistent, its symbolic value evolved over time. Conversely, referring to González-Varas Ibañez's typology (2014), we can contrast the enduring values of the object, such as its scientific, artistic, and historical significance, with its contemporary value, which relies solely

on meeting present needs. Thus, we can assert that the Columbus monument of the twentieth century exemplifies the power dynamics of the era's early years when the monumental endeavor was esteemed and successful, satisfying various segments of the population. However, it is crucial to note that the material evidence reveals a lack of universality in this experience.

While undertaking the described processes, Mexico simultaneously established a legal and institutional framework actively responsible for creating and safeguarding the national heritage. This effort was intricately linked to the valuation of heritage, aiming to solidify the values associated with the monument through political influence. In the Mexican legal system, the concept of 'heritage' was initially strongly associated solely with archaeological monuments. However, over the 20th century, the construct expanded to encompass a broader range of things as heritage. Simultaneously, this evolution was reinforced by establishing institutions such as the INAH in 1939 and the INBA (now INBAL) in 1946.

The law currently regulating 'heritage' in Mexico is the Federal Law on Monuments and Archaeological, Artistic, and Historical Zones of 1972 (Sánchez Gaona, 2012). This law protects and designates historical monuments in its article 36 as the: "properties built in the XVI to XIX centuries, destined to temples and their annexes [...]; dissemination, teaching or practice of a religious cult [...] to the public service and ornament and to the use of civil and military authorities...". (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión, 1972). As a result, these "sites" or "objects" are automatically protected by law, without the need for a specific declaration to grant them protection.

Referring to the monument pertinent to this investigation and considering these legal parameters, we can conclude that the Christopher Columbus monument holds heritage status solely based on its creation in the 19th century. The considerations mentioned earlier regarding its

valorization, maintenance, and commemorative actions that actively contributed to its heritage status hold no significance from a legal standpoint. The determining factor is solely its antiquity. It is even somewhat absurd to state that the monument to Columbus did not possess heritage status until its legislation in 1972. This reductionism is inherent in the Mexican laws that form the foundation of all current heritage procedures. These laws grant institutions the authority to oversee and manage heritage but also impose restrictions on who can interact with such objects. As a result, contact with these objects is predominantly limited to the experts authorized by the same institutions.

In subsequent chapters of this thesis, it becomes evident that despite the existing laws and restrictions, numerous stakeholders conceptualize heritage beyond the legal limitations appropriating the public space. Mexican laws governing the curation of cultural heritage are rigid and alienating. Consequently, this has significant implications for the practices associated with the heritage historically considered as "belonging to everyone." As we delve into the following chapters, we will observe that the stakeholders involved in the public space have multiplied in recent years, and they possess a dynamic and ever-changing nature.

4 THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS MONUMENT IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY & 21ST CENTURY

For decades, the monument to Christopher Columbus remained unaltered. It is unclear whether similar ceremonies were performed during the latter part of the 20th century. Still, it is observable in photographs that by the late 1980s, people continued to place flower offerings on the monument (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020). However, the connotations attached to the sculptures started to shift towards the last decade of the 20th century, as we can infer through the public interactions with the monument and the commemoration of Columbus Day.

Beginning in 1989, members of the "National Coordination of Indian Peoples" (Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios) (CNPI) held a march on Reforma Avenue, intending to express disagreement with Mexico's participation in the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Spaniards' arrival to the American continent. The collective claimed the floral offerings placed on the monument by the city government as inappropriate and used the opportunity to demand fair and dignified treatment for Indigenous communities. They also criticized the monument as a symbol of colonial violence (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020).

Two years later, on October 12, 1992, participants of the CNPI collective altered the Columbus monument for the first time and the religious figures surrounding it. The individuals who conducted these iconoclastic acts wore Indigenous attire and interacted with the sculptures by pouring red and yellow paint on the monument of Columbus, Pedro de Gante, and Bartolomé de las Casas (Zavala, 1997). They also hung a blanket over the figure of Perez de Marchena. The slogans the CNPI proclaimed were: "Repudiation to the conqueror," "Respect to the Indigenous people," "Christopher Columbus to the wall," "We do not want Columbus even in the cemetery," and "500

years of resistance", among others (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020). Given that it had been five hundred years since Christopher Columbus first set foot in America, the date's significance was evident in their slogans. The CNPI collective also hung a banner over the Columbus effigy (Figures 35 and 36). After the demonstration, workers from the Mexico City Department of the Federal District restored the monument (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020).



Figures 35 and 36. The banner reads "500 Centenary of the Indigenous Massacre" and "To discover is to exterminate. Culture is to dispossess is to Humiliate is to live". Source: El Universal (2020).

Demonstrators once again interacted with the Columbus monument on October 12, 1993. They broke the lamps around the structure, threw eggs and stones at the monument, and even attempted to remove the hand of one of the friars (Zavala, 1997). This time, the proclamation was: "We are here to repudiate the celebration of the supposed meeting of two worlds." Given the situation, the Mexican Ecologist Party requested the statue's disappearance, arguing: "Although it may be unfortunate for many (...), this is a continent of Indians, and they are already standing up to claim their rights". They also stated: "The discovery could not have been possible because when the Spaniards arrived, the continent was inhabited." Newspaper articles described the intervention as "acts of barbarism" (Zavala, 1997, p. 108).

On the same occasion the following year, the CNPI again performed iconoclastic actions. This time, they aimed to remove the statue of Columbus. Three hundred members of the CNPI participated in the attempted removal. They used ropes, ladders (Figure 37), and even a passenger bus, but the police prevented them from succeeding in removing the monument (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020).



Figure 37. A protester leaning on Diego Deza's head attempts to tear down the monument. Source: El Universal (2020).

Police forces have been present since the first demonstrations at the site. Nevertheless, since 1995, the Metropolitan Police Grenadiers (Mexico's police shock force) began to set up barriers to prevent further events of this kind (Navarrete Rodríguez, 2020). In 1996, on the 504th anniversary of Columbus' arrival, the Metropolitan Police gathered in front of the monument. Consequently, the march continued without interacting with the sculpture (Bordón, 1996). On October 12 of the following year, 1997, the Metropolitan Police Grenadiers once more encircled the Columbus Roundabout in anticipation of potential acts of iconoclasm. The Zapatista Front for National

Liberation marched divided into two groups advocating for the dignity of Indigenous peoples. They marched on Reforma Avenue, gathered in front of the statue of Cuauhtémoc, and passed in front of the Columbus sculptural complex without stopping (Moreno, 1997; Riquelme, 1997).

4.1 THE COLUMBUS MONUMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

After the incidents described above, the police maintained a presence during the protests on "Columbus Day" or "Day of the Races," effectively preventing further conflict. The monument remained unaltered until the 21st century. Due to limited information on public engagement with the monument, I relied on photographic documentation to record changes made to the monument.

I found no evidence of significant alterations or adjustments to the monument during the early decades of the 21st century. The collected photographs indicate that the monument and its sculptural complex remained essentially unchanged in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2014. Still, even if the pictures do not show any difference, there was an intervention at the monument in 2007, for which I could not find any newspaper article or images (Hecksher, 2021). The only alterations observed were rotations of flowers on the planters (Figures 38, 39, and 40), which seem to remain in good condition and with continuous maintenance.



Figures 38, 39, and 40. The monument in 2009, 2012, and 2014. Sources: Gilberto Medrano T. (2009); Denisse Alonso (2012); Eduardo Mac (2014).

In 2015, the situation took a turn when someone threw red paint at Columbus. Unlike the previous incidents, this occurred on January 5 and not during the celebration of Columbus Day. National newspapers reported the incident, and consequently, Miguel Angel Mancera, the Head of the Mexico City Government, announced that renovation works had begun to remove the paint and that there was no permanent damage to the monument (Pérez Courtade, 2015). The Senate Gazette (2015) contradicted these restoration claims and stated that the paint remained on the sculpture by mid-year. It also highlighted the lack of restoration efforts by the Federal District Government requesting the Permanent Commission of the Congress of the Union to develop a restoration plan. The absence of action could indicate a lack of political will to allocate resources for restoring the monument. From that point until its removal, the monument's deterioration remained visible and continued to accumulate, despite the Congress of the Union's involvement.



Figure 41. September 2015, Red paint on Columbus (1) and the base (2). On the main body, the word "OUT" (3).

Source: Arvey Alonso Granada (2015). Figure 42. February 2015, red paint on the base (2). Source: Google (2015).

After the initial cleaning, which we can observe by comparing Figure 41 and Figure 42, we can observe paint on the plaque and possibly more intelligible words under the word "*out*." Due to the photographs' inferior quality, it is impossible to make a definitive assertion regarding this. No maintenance was performed on the sculptural ensemble except for the consistent upkeep of the planters surrounding the monument, which remained in good condition.

Apart from the aforementioned red paint and red graffiti, the photos reveal numerous other graffiti drawings that persisted over the years. Some vanish during restoration efforts, while others continue to emerge. Considering the graffiti as Crownshaw (2008, p. 223) does: "As a sign of living cultural memory" that: "actually validates the monument and is in turn validated by the monument," I proceed to analyze the symbols found over the years on the monument.

None of the consulted sources mention the graffiti depicting the word "*fuera*" (out) (3) (Figure 41). However, it can be observed that, unlike the red paint, an attempt was made to remove it. I cannot confirm whether both counter-monumental actions occurred simultaneously. Nevertheless, in Figure 42, taken in September 2015, it is evident that both coexisted at the time of the photograph. By October 2015, we can observe anarchist symbolism on the plaque situated on the main face of the monument (5) (Figure 43). This symbol persisted for several years, as seen in Figure 43 of March 2016. Additionally, the crimson paint that once covered the monument is still visible in this image.



Figure 43. The sculptural complex's deterioration and graffiti. Source: Daniel Morales (2016).

As of this moment forward, a part of the ironwork fence around the monument was missing (4), and the gate was tied with rope (6) (Figure 43).

In September 2016, someone added more graffiti, accumulating over the previous ones. Red stains are visible over the anarchist symbol (Figure 44), which might be a graffiti stencil. Below that, written in black aerosol: "*Estado Femicida*" (Femicide State) (10), "*Nos Vamos a Defender*" (We Are Going to Defend Ourselves) (9), accompanied by what could be the symbol of Venus representing women, then the word "*Sororidad*" (Sorority) (8). These graffiti were already evident in September 2016, but due to the inferior quality of the available photographs, it is challenging to distinguish them clearly. However, since the graffiti remained in place for an extended period, it was distinguishable in subsequent images, such as in Figure 44. By the end of this year, someone had added the word "*Genial*" (7) (Great).



Figures 44 and 45. September and December 2016. Sources: Luis del Valle (2016), Christian Pozos (2016).

It is important to note that the precise dates of each intervention are unknown. We must consider whether this graffiti could have been present before, as this is our first evidence of their existence. The photos from 2016 capture only the front of the monument, and we lack images from that year showcasing the north or south side of the monument. With this in mind, let us focus on the subsequent photo taken in March 2017.



Figure 46. Feminist slogans. Source: Diego Uriarte (2017).

Graffiti from March 2017, as seen in Figure 46, shared the same concept as previous graffiti and was likely written as feminist proclamations. We can observe "*No es No*" (No means No) (11). "*Feminazi*" (13a, 13b) a derogatory term for a feminist in red and black stencil. "*Machete al macho*" (Machete to the chauvinist) (14). Once again, "*Feminazis*" (15) on black aerosol. In pink stencil "[Unintelligible] *Violenta*" (unintelligible Violent fem.) (16), "*Sigue viendo te vamos a dejar*

tuerto" (Keep looking, we will leave you one-eyed) (17) in a blue stencil. Lastly, there is a stencil doodle depicting male genitalia that appears to be near two gears (12).



Figures 47, 48, and 49. Graffiti related to the Ayotzinapa massacre. Luis Miguel Martínez Reynoso (2017) Emmanuel Baez (2017) Carolina Ariza Gallego (2018).

In March 2017 (Figure 47), a small-scale graffiti on the south side of the monument reads "43" (18), while the rest of the graffiti is unintelligible. This graffiti likely refers to the 43 students from the rural school in Ayotzinapa who vanished in 2014. Following this, also in black graffiti reads: "*Julio no murió, Peña lo mató*" (19) (Julio did not die Peña killed him) (Figures 48 and 49). Suppose this graffiti refers to Julio Mondragon, one of the few students whose body was recovered from the Ayotzinapa massacre, and Enrique Peña Nieto, the Mexican president at the time. In that case, the two graffiti share a common theme.

By September 2018, as seen in Figure 50, someone added more depictions of the anarchy symbol. This particular symbol differed from the ones previously displayed and may be associated with anarchist feminism (20).

Towards the end of the year, large-scale graffiti tags started to appear, including the tag of graffiti artist Zombra (Reddit, 2019) (21) and the word "Axolotes" (22). Adding to the monument's general neglect, it is clear that the metal fence was more damaged and lacked a gate.



Figure 50. December 2018, we can observe more graffiti and trash on the monument's steps. Source: Israel C.

(2018).

Due to the overlapping and intertwined nature of the graffiti on the monument, it is challenging to determine the specific dates when each graffiti slogan was created or added. Other statements thematically connected to the prior ones are discernable in April 2019 (Figure 51). We observe "*Feministas a la Calle [Unintelligible] Patriarcado*" (feminist to the street [unintelligible] patriarchy) (23) in a black stencil, "*Ni una +*" (Not even one more, fem.) (24) in pink graffiti, a proclamation that refers to femicides, and "*Samir Vive*" (Samir Lives) in black graffiti (25), which could refer to the murder of Samir Flores Soberanes an Indigenous activist.



Figure 51. April 2019. Source: Felipe Szymanski (2019).

In August 2019, the government initiated the monument's restoration, focusing on the sculptures in their original location. The restoration process involved covering the monument's pedestal from August to January 2019 (Figure 52).



Figures 52 and 53. The monument before and after. Sources: Cuartoscuro (2020) Fernando López (2020).

The restoration of the monument's base concluded in January 2020. However, since the figure of Columbus still presented red paint on its torso, it can be inferred that the restoration might not have encompassed the statue itself, possibly focusing solely on the marble surfaces (Figure 53). However, after three months, someone graffitied the marble pedestal again in August 2020 (Figures 54 and 55). In this instance, the graffiti was applied directly to the sculptures of Columbus, Pérez

de Marchena, and Diego de Deza. It is possible to read the word: "Zombra" (26), as well as "AL" (27), the number 2020 (28), and "AXS"(29).



Figures 54 and 55. The graffiti over the sculptures in August and December 2020. Sources: Jair Cabrera Torres (2020), Marco Ugarte (2020).

One can speculate that this set of graffiti was drawn at the same time by the same person, most likely by "Zombra," who, as mentioned above, had previously painted their tag on the monument. This marked the second instance of interaction with the figure of Columbus and the first time the friars were subjected to any painting intervention. The sculptural complex was again covered, this time by the police barricades used by the grenadiers.

Before discussing the monument's dismantling, it is essential to analyze these graffiti as they are the most recent addition to the structure. We should assume that graffiti aims to express something, whether it is a political statement, the presence of the artist on a particular spot, or even if, as Marschall (2017, p. 213) puts it, its purpose is to inflict: "malicious damage or acquisitive vandalism." it is still necessary to consider what these graffiti are trying to communicate and if they interact with the object's monumentality.

We could infer that from 1989 onwards, several collectives considered it a: "state-sponsored tainted symbol" (Lai, 2020) whose agency affects the daily life of the people who coexist and interact daily with the monument. Hence, the memory associated with this figure became one of repudiation. This repudiation is made evident from the counter-monumental events that took place starting in the late twentieth century. These actions directly interacted with the meaning and commemoration of the sculptures; they appealed to the character of the colonialist figure, expressing rejection toward its permanence on Reforma Avenue. We can interpret these countermonumental acts as performances of collective memory that imbues the intrusion of the past with new meanings and connotations. The counter-monumental actions in 2015 directly engage with the monument's monumentality and colonialist associations. These actions involved using red paint to simulate blood and the word "out." Signaling a message of violence and a clear dismissal stance towards the monument.

Since 2015, I have observed two significant aspects concerning the monument's graffiti and its continuance. Firstly, there are counter-monumental actions that actively introduce new agents, expressing the repudiation mentioned above. On the other hand, the inaction and neglect of the authorities unwilling to care for the monument and therefore perpetuate its presence. Through the graffiti, the space was conceptualized as: "a stage for the performance of protest" (Marschall, 2017, p. 205), effectively appropriating the monument and space. As a result, additional counter-monumental actions emerged, coupled with the government's failure to restore the monument. Consequently, as the graffiti accumulated, the perception of the space became fixed, making it increasingly difficult to view it differently. Subsequently, graffiti emerged that did not directly engage with the monumental sculptures, aligning more with Marschall's (2017) description.

Regarding the perpetuation of symbols on the monument, for instance, the "A" representing Anarchy can be traced back to the initial counter-monumental interactions with the object. It is recognizable on the blanket used to cover the monument and on the jacket one of the demonstrators wore in 1989 (Figures 35 and 36). As mentioned, this symbol was continuously seen in different graffiti until 2018. The feminist movement also employed symbols on the monument to amplify their demands, making them tangible and visible. Through these actions, they expressed their discontent with the prevailing insecurity and violence against women in Mexico. We can observe the feminist appropriation of derogatory terms like "feminazi." In addition, they utilized phrases that encourage the protection of women and threaten a reciprocal response to the violence perpetrated by the patriarchy. However, an additional interpretation could be considered, one that encompasses not only the perspective of the feminist movement but also delves into the discourse between antagonistic groups. These groups could be expressing their antipathy towards feminist collectives through graffiti, labeling them as "feminazi." Consequently, the graffiti in Figure 46 would have been created at two distinct moments in time. Both interpretations hinge on a meticulous analysis of several factors, including the colors used and the techniques employed. Notably, the term "feminazi" appears three times in the graffiti: twice in singular form and once in plural form, with two instances using red and black stencils and an additional occurrence rendered in freehand black.

Another of the issues raised on the monument is about the violence associated with *the disappeared* in the country, with the graffiti "+43" referring to a massacre and others referring to murdered activists. Then, the monument became a legitimized appropriated canvas for protest graffiti, which could well have been inscribed during one of the marches on Reforma Avenue.

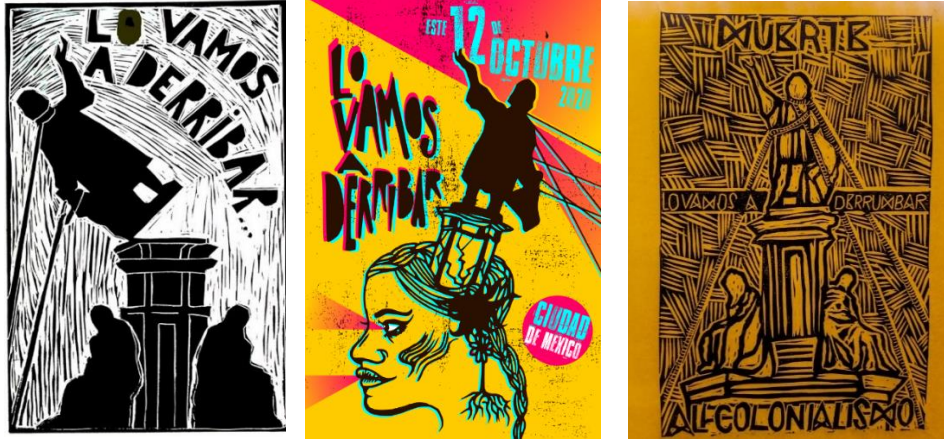
Hite (2012, p. 14) considers that counter-monumentality aims at: "not allowing society to forget." This type of action can be linked to a demand for remembrance. It aims to make visible what these collectives perceive as potentially forgettable. They utilize this monument as a means to represent not only colonial violence and the eradication of Indigenous communities but also as a metonymy for other forms of violence. By doing so, they seek to make visible the violence inflicted upon the disappeared and murdered individuals.

It is crucial to reintroduce an actor somewhat neglected in the preceding pages: Reforma Avenue, which is more than just a physical context for these actions; it holds significant importance in the narrative. Due to the limitations of this research, it is not possible to investigate whether graffiti as a form of protest was employed on other monuments and if this is part of a more complex assemblage between the collectives, the marches, and what the Reforma Avenue means nowadays. However, I consider it a possibility.

4.2 THE MONUMENT'S REMOVAL

In October 2020, a movement called: "*Lo vamos a derribar*" (We are going to tear it down) emerged on social media. Its objective was to demolish the monument (Figures 56, 57, and 58). The statement issued by the protest's organizers stated:

"Symbols and monuments erected by the victors, imposed as patriotic history, along with the Catholic religion and the Spanish language. No more. We assume as a sovereign act the demolition of execrable monuments and as a tribute to the millions of massacred Indigenous and Afro-descendants, our ancestors. We honor their memory and their struggle. We dematerialize the single versions of history and take the floor through counter-monumental and anti-authoritarian action." (La Jornada, 2020).



Figures 56, 57, and 58. "We are going to tear it down"; "Death to Colonialism, we are going to tear it down." Source: Somoselmedio.com (2020).

In order to prevent potential harm to the sculptural complex, the five statues were removed from the pedestal on October 11, 2020, at dawn by the Government of Mexico City, INAH, and INBAL. At the time, the Head of Government stated that they moved the sculptures as they would undergo restoration (Morán Breña, 2020; Sosa, 2020; Hecksher, 2021). The removal was not considered as definitively but rather as: "restoration," as such there were no immediate plans to displace it until afterward when the Government of Mexico City decided to relocate the statue to another place in the city (Jefatura de Gobierno, 2021) to: "a low vandalization area" (Ortíz Armas, 2021).

When the pedestal was empty, parties flocked to the location to post their remarks over the controversy on the police barricades (Figure 59). With the site's seizure in September 2021, the police barriers have become part of the: "*Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan*" (Roundabout of Fighting Women) as feminist collectives renamed the roundabout.



Figure 59. "So Long Genocide" Source: Revista Central (2020).

While the countermonumental actions described in this research occurred within a limited geographic area, removing or obliterating monuments honoring Christopher Columbus has recently transpired in numerous other regions across the continent. As a result, it has become a global phenomenon. Since 2015, the removal of colonialist monuments has been a recurring trend, exemplified by campaigns like: "Rhodes Must Fall." By October 2022, approximately forty monuments or memorials dedicated to the Christopher Columbus figure had been removed (Borhes, 2021; Shin, et al., 2021).

Columbus' sculptures have been removed in Boston, Miami, Connecticut, Baltimore, Richmond, Minneapolis, and other American cities (Marquez, 2021). Likewise, in Philadelphia, a motion is currently under discussion to remove a Columbus statue (NPR, 2021).

In Guatemala, Central America, there was an unsuccessful attempt to topple a sculpture (Reuters, 2021). In South America, other monuments to Columbus have suffered the same fate. In 2013, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a controversy erupted when a memorial to the same character was relocated (Massota, 2021). In Puerto Rico, Indigenous people of Taíno/Arawakan descent endorsed a motion to remove a sculpture (Metro Puerto Rico, 2020). Similarly, in the Dominican

Republic, there have been demonstrations, which on the one hand, criticize the Columbus Day celebration on October 12, as well as the monument of the colonizer (Puertas Caverro, 2021).

In these counter-monumental actions, there is more than just the colonialist figure in common. There is a significant presence of Indigenous voices rising, along with the controversy surrounding the Columbus commemorations held on October 12 across the continent, as was also the case in Mexico. However, it would be erroneous to assume that each of these activities is identical since the memory to which the figure attaches as a symbol varies in different places. For example, in the North American case, it is considered that the commemoration of Columbus can be traced back three hundred years, to the beginning of the independent nation as a unifying symbol that, in the present, is closely linked to identity matters of the Italian-American population (Romano, 2022).

As we return to the discussion of colonialism in Mexico, it is essential to note the political context that has framed those conversations. It is nothing new for the Mexican government to adhere to a glorious pre-Hispanic past on which to base its founding myth, as mentioned in Chapter 2 and as we will continue to analyze in Chapter 5.

Starting in December 2020, the Day of the Races has been renamed: "Day of the Pluricultural Nation" (Mexican Government, 2022). In the same way, the Mexican federal government changed the names of streets, subway stations, and historical sites to reclaim the memory of this homogenized Indigenous past as part of the celebration entitled: "500 Years of Indigenous Resistance."

The celebration took place on August 13, 2021. It aimed to commemorate the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors from a different angle. The focus shifted from seeking reconciliation and acceptance of the circumstances that resulted in the current nation. Instead, the goal was to highlight the resistance of the original populations (Instituto Mexicano de la Radio, 2021).

President López Obrador called on King Felipe VI of Spain and Pope Francis to be part of these actions and commemorations. He asked them to seek forgiveness for the acts committed during the conquest. The goal was to make 2021 the year of historical reconciliation. Consequently, the government of Spain issued a statement: "firmly rejecting" the request, declaring that the circumstances of the past cannot be judged: "in the light of contemporary considerations" (BBC News Mundo, 2019). Some personalities, such as former Prime Minister José María Aznar, have characterized this action as: "indigenism" and reiterated the refusal to ask for forgiveness (Diario Público, 2021).

4.3 THE MONUMENT'S FUTURE

The COMAEP (Committee of Monuments and Artistic Works in Public Spaces of Mexico City) unanimously decided that the sculpture honoring Christopher Columbus should be relocated to America Park within Mexico City's Polanco area, taking into consideration whether: "the suggested location would promote damage to the sculpture." (COMAEP, 2021, p. 2). The committee members concluded that the marches on Reforma Avenue caused vandalism and believed that by removing the sculpture from this context, it would be: "out of these social movements." To reach this conclusion, the committee members compared the monument to the Columbus sculpture in Buenavista, which has remained untouched. They determined that there would be no vandalism in the new residential area (Ibid., pp. 2-3).

The Government of Mexico City scheduled the re-inauguration of the monument to be on October 12, 2022, for the: "Day of the Pluricultural Nation" celebration. However, on October 14, 2022, the Miguel Hidalgo borough, to which the Polanco neighborhood belongs, refused to allow the installation of the sculpture, arguing that America Park is a heritage conservation area. The

Miguel Hidalgo administration declared they recognized the monument's historical and patrimonial value and hoped to reach a joint agreement about its location (Sosa, 2022).

The sculptural ensemble is now in a secret restoration workshop for security reasons, where the sculptures are reported to be in a good state of preservation and under the protection of INAH (Nájera, 2020; INAH, 2021). However, the Government of Mexico City has conclusively decided to move the sculptures to the National Museum of the Viceroyalty, located in the neighboring state of Mexico (Corona, 2023). The decision to recontextualize the monument is frequent for colonialist or "difficult" figures. In this instance, the government would insert the sculptures within the viceregal era, which chronologically spans from 1535 to 1821.

It is observable that Columbus, Pérez de Marchena, and Fray Diego Deza do not correspond chronologically. On the other hand, the rest of the sculptures of the Indigenous person and the friars Motolinía and Bartolomé de las Casas represent characters who lived during this time, so the decision from this logic would make sense. In practice, the Columbus monument will cease to be a monumental object with which it is possible to interact by becoming part of a new assemblage that will change with its presence. It will become a fossilized and recontextualized museum object, where the museum and the INAH will dictate its commemoration.

4.4 COUNTERMONUMENTALITY, MEMORY, AND HERITAGE

The primary objective of this chapter was to explore the relationship between heritage and memory, particularly through the examination of actions surrounding the Christopher Columbus monument over the past fifty years. In this regard, I argue that counter-monumental and commemorative activities can be seen as both acts of remembering and performances of memory. Central to this discussion is the prominence of collective memory and its transformative nature

over time, which influences not only the spatial aspects but also the heritage status of the monument.

In this analysis, I initially concentrated on the commemorative acts at the site. Government-sponsored commemorations were prevalent during the early 20th century. These ceremonies celebrated the national historical memory through the sculptural ensemble, considering them positive and deserving recognition. However, at a certain point, these commemorative actions stopped. Subsequently, the commemorative actions at the site changed, as did the past brought to the present, as we can see with the commemorations since 1982.

We have mentioned that memory is mediated in the present (Radstone, 2005), constantly changing, ongoing, and dynamic. González-Varas Ibañez (2014) considers that monuments stop being "alive" with the lack of active commemoration and, as such, are no longer within the practice of collective memory. In this case, the monument remained "alive" as it held collective memory. However, alternative groups appropriated and re-signified the monument, using it for their performances and reshaping its meaning.

Later, we will revisit the significance of space in relation to memory to focus now on the re-signified monument. Previously associated with progress, the monument has become connected with the colonialist enterprise. The actions surrounding the monument involve various actors, including Indigenous voices, which play a significant role in challenging Christopher Columbus's representation and questioning its significance. This scrutiny has turned the monument into a difficult heritage site, where counter memories of painful pasts intersect with the monument, making it a tangible symbol of present-day injustices. However, recognizing that these

interpretations and interactions are based on the available records is essential as not everyone shared this perspective, as other voices repudiated the countermonumental actions (Zavala, 1997).

The political power, for example, attributed importance to the monument and allocated resources to safeguard it. Perhaps primarily to preserve Reforma Avenue's sculptural ensemble rather than the object's monumentality. However, neglect and lack of care from the Mexico City government coincide with the emergence of counter-monumental activities, highlighting the absence of political will to allocate resources for memory performance. This context emphasizes the significance of the performance of care in preserving the monumental object for its long-term durability.

The re-signified and neglected monument, representing a controversial and colonialist figure, becomes the target of counter-monumental actions conducted by collectives who express their disdain for its symbolism and reappropriate it for their purposes. These actions, repeated over time, eventually led to the monument's removal in 2020. The counter-monumental actions actively appropriated the monument in the broader context of global and local political interactions that target colonialist monuments. As collective memory evolved, the monument served as a reminder of a "shameful past" marked by oppression and violence.

Once removed, the monument still embodies a difficult past, as has been evident in the reluctance of other localities to accept the monument in their territory, proving to be a political liability for local governments. Presently, the National Museum of Viceroyalty will be responsible for the sculptures. Whether the monument will have the opportunity to be reintroduced in a "suitable form of remembering" (Burström, 2011, p. 273) remains uncertain.

I also consider it necessary to analyze the importance of memory in space, considering that memory is spatially situated (Van Dyke, 2019). In this work, we have highlighted the significance of the geographical context within the ensemble of Reforma Avenue. However, it is also crucial to address the memory space shaped through commemorative acts and the impact of the monument's presence, which established an encompassing area around it. To comprehensively analyze the current situation, we must now consider the repercussions of the monument's absence.

Marita Sturken (2020) explores the concept of a "ghostly presence" within specific locations that, despite undergoing renovation, retain the lingering remnants of their past. These absences profoundly impact our perception of time, disrupting the traditional divisions between the past, present, and future. According to Avery Gordon, as cited by Sturken (Ibid.), these ghostly presences alter the experience of being in such spaces.

Consequently, even prior to their repurposing, these places were not genuinely empty. They carry the weight of absence, prompting reflections on past events and the struggles of communities grappling with their country's colonialist history. Sturken (Ibid.) describes this phenomenon as "deterritorialization," a process through which the identity of a place becomes destabilized. As we mentioned, government officials removed the Columbus monument in 2020. From that moment, I consider that what remains on the site are remnants, material, and nominal.

I believe that in the absence of physical monument, the acknowledgment of its former presence can be seen through the depiction of police barriers in Figure 59. Additionally, there is a noticeable commemoration of the now absent figure of Christopher Columbus. However, the area now carries a different focus of commemoration, transforming it into a *lieux de discorde* (Van Dyke, 2019).

Nominally, it is worth noting that the space formerly occupied by the monument has influenced the naming of surrounding establishments. These places, including the restaurant "VIPS Columbus," the parking lot "Deprisa Reforma Columbus," the bus and Metrobus station "Columbus Roundabout," and a branch of Citibanamex bank, continue to bear the name associated with the monument. However, the future remains uncertain regarding whether these businesses and stations will eventually change their names, as the geographical reference they once relied upon no longer exists. It remains to be seen if they seek a new contemporary spatial reference.

Finally, the last topic I would like to address is how we can understand the events described by considering heritage status as something dynamic. There are several characteristics of heritage-making values that the monument maintains: it continues to be important artistically and scientifically. Historically, we could assert that it is even more valuable for being an object that has endured for centuries. However, these values did not stop the countermonumental interventions. Instead, the contemporary or symbolic values associated with the monument's connection to the present carry significant weight for the monument's future.

Therefore, we can understand heritage status as a dynamic concept that is not permanently fixed but ever-changing. While the object in question may still hold significance for a specific population segment and be legally protected, it is crucial to recognize that people and their actions play an active role in shaping the future of heritage objects. Traditionally, the Mexican legislature has fostered a perception that disempowers the population, emphasizing the preservation of patrimonial objects as static and timeless artifacts. However, it is essential to acknowledge the interactive nature of heritage and the agency individuals have in influencing its trajectory. There are now more voices than the government and cultural authorities enacting change. Thus, heritage is a dynamic process that feeds on memory to make and unmake itself.

There is disagreement regarding the absence of Columbus, particularly evident in the media and online discussions. Natalia Majluf (2022) is among those who question removing the object, asserting that: "material remnants from the past are crucial for fostering critical debate" and advocating for its preservation in its original location. However, comprehending historical objects as part of a dynamic process is equally essential for critical discourse and relevant for archaeological research in understanding contemporary society and its challenges. Therefore, strict preservation in their original form or location is not necessarily required.

Columbus's presence and absence have been subjects of study, revealing insights about collective memory, public space, and heritage. The space remains commemorative, serving as a canvas for living memory that calls for the erasure of the colonialist monument and remembrance of present-day violence, as we will address in the next chapter.

5 THE ANTI-MONUMENTS AND THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

Before examining the construction and history of the anti-monument, it is necessary to refer again to our geographical context: Reforma Avenue. In this text, I have described this space as one in which Mexicans can celebrate and make their claims heard through marches. The avenue's connection to memory is evident through both the graffiti on the Columbus monument and the anti-monuments found along the street. As a result, certain social groups are pushing for a name change, transforming it from Reforma Avenue to the Avenue of Memory (Querales Mendoza, 2020).

5.1 REFORMA AVENUE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The anti-monument pertinent to this study is not the first of these expressions created on Reforma Avenue. The anti-monuments I list below are on the first three kilometers of the Avenue addressed in the previous chapters, mirroring the monuments mounted in roundabouts along the avenue (Figure 60).

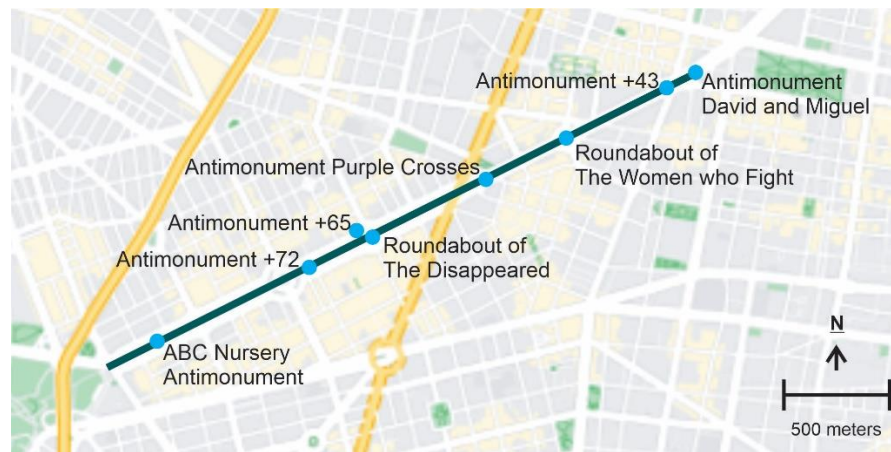


Figure 60. There are currently six anti-monuments on Reforma Avenue. Data: Google (2022).

Several antimonuments share a particular composition: a + symbol and a number. This is the case of the antimonuments +43, +62, and +72. This arrangement serves as a poignant reminder of

the number of individuals who have died and are now missed. I will list the anti-monuments in chronological order as they were created.

The first anti-monument mounted on Reforma Avenue commemorates the missing students of the Ayotzinapa Normal School, whom a criminal organization kidnapped in September 2014 (Figure 61). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the absent students are known as the "43 of Ayotzinapa" and are remembered with the symbol: "+43" and the phrase "We are missing 43" (*Nos faltan 43*). This memorial stands at the location where Tolsá's "El Caballito" once stood, and it coexists with another anti-monument. The sculpture was installed in 2015 and features a red metal + symbol and the number 43 (González Díaz, 2020).



Figure 61. "Because they were taken alive, we want them alive!" Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

Another antimonument memorializes the victims of the ABC daycare center. In the city of Hermosillo, in the state of Sonora, northeastern Mexico, in 2009, a fire occurred in the ABC daycare center, resulting in the death of forty-nine infants, all under five years of age, and seventy more were injured. The antimonument erected in 2017 comprises pastel-colored metal structures shaped like the number "49" and the letters "ABC." Next to it is a sign that reads: "Justice." Across from it were bronze sculptures of infants' shoes bearing the names of the deceased, this last element, by 2022, no longer existed (Figure 62). The tragic incident has been attributed to the three levels

of the Mexican government, with a particular focus on the Mexican Institute of Social Security who granted the concession for the daycare center, which was operating without complying with safety regulations (Antimonumentos Memoria, Verdad y Justicia, 2022, p. 52). As such, the anti-monument faces the offices of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (El País, 2017).



Figure 62. "Never Again!" Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

The Antimonument of David and Miguel" was built in 2018. It memorializes the disappearance of David Ramirez and Miguel Angel Rivera, who were on their way to the beach in Zihuatanejo when they were kidnapped and disappeared in 2012. Their families mounted this anti-monument. It seeks to appeal to the authorities who have allowed the case to go unpunished and to appeal to the empathy of Mexican society to acknowledge not only this case of disappearance but the thousands of active cases in the country. Additionally, it aims to get the community to interact with the anti-monument by putting a padlock on it, thus demanding justice and non-repetition of these crimes (Antimonumentos Memoria, Verdad y Justicia, 2022, p. 136).

The antimonument consists of a blue anthropomorphic body divided in two, and two chairs with their backs to one another. On the back is written "justice" and "truth." On the seats of the chairs: "All of us could be in this place" (*Todos podemos estar en este lugar*). "Kidnapping

unpunished" is accompanied by the date of birth of each missing person (Figure 63). This anti-monument is just across from the "+43" anti-monument in front of Sebastián's *El Caballito* monument (Alonzo Romero, 2018).



Figure 63. Antimonument of David and Miguel. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

This same year, 2018, the "+65" anti-monument was erected in honor of those who died in the mine explosion at Pasta de Conchos in the state of Coahuila in February 2006. The purpose of the sculpture is to demand justice and better working conditions for the miners, as their relatives believe that the tragedy was not accidental but the result of poor safety conditions in the mine. The red metal antimonument consists of the + sign and the number 65 (Figure 64). Over the plus sign, it read horizontally, "With one voice, Rescue now!" (*A una voz Rescate ya!*), the names of the miners who died in the accident were inscribed vertically. In February 2019, the miner's families added another element to this monument: a metal grid with 63 miners' helmets buried in coal (Corral, 2018; Antimonumentos Memoria, Verdad y Justicia, 2022).



Figure 64. "With one voice, Rescue now!" Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

The antimonument "More than 72" (*Más De 72*) was constructed in 2020 to pay tribute to immigrants, primarily from Central America, who lost their lives in the bordering US Mexican state of Tamaulipas in 2010 due to acts of violence. The anti-monument consists of the number 72 sculpted in metal and a red + sign. It reads: "Migrating is a human right" (*Migrar es un derecho humano*). It is also dedicated to every migrant killed or disappeared on their way to the United States of America (Figure 65). The antimonument serves as a plea for justice, as the incident remains unresolved, and recognizes that more than seventy-two individuals have lost their lives in similar circumstances. (González Díaz, 2020).



Figure 65. "Migrating is a human right." Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

It is crucial to include two additional countermonumental actions in this list. The first one is situated at the Cuauhtémoc roundabout, and limited information is available about it. This particular antimonument is dedicated to the victims of femicide and carries the message: "If you are a family member of a femicide victim, this is a space for you." I was unable to determine which collective(s) mounted it. The sculpture features two purple curved crosses leaning against each other (Figure 66). The crosses bear the inscription "Justice" and the names of femicide victims in white. The sculptures were created on November 3, 2019, as indicated by the date on the sculpture. However, the anti-monument has been present on Reforma Avenue from approximately June 2021 to January 2022.



Figure 66. Purple Crosses. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

The second countermonumental action is associated with the activities that took place in the Montezuma Cypress Roundabout. A group is trying to rename the area "The Roundabout of the Disappeared." Similarly to the Roundabout of the Women Who Fight, the collective is painting murals on police barricades. One of these, created in November 2022, reads: "In Mexico City, there

are thousands of disappeared," and "In Mexico, there is no Christmas with +107 thousand missing persons" (Figure 67).



Figure 67. The Roundabout of the Disappeared. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

All these anti-monuments share a common purpose: to evoke collective memory and prevent national tragedies from fading into oblivion by making them visible. They serve as reminders of numerous human losses and highlight themes of injustice and impunity. In contrast to the other monuments on the Avenue, which the Mexican government decreed through affiliated institutions, social organizations constructed these anti-monuments.

However, it is essential to note that once the anti-monuments are erected, the COMAEP must legitimize them; otherwise, there is a constant risk of their removal at any time. When a request is made to keep an antimonument in place, the COMAEP receives the application, decides whether to grant it, and then consults the relevant department responsible for maintaining the sculpture. The decision-making procedure regarding this is documented in the minutes of the committee meetings (COMAEP, 2019).

Finally, before focusing on the antimonument that concerns this work, I would like to briefly refer to one last case of the installation of an antimonument, which, unlike those previously mentioned, was almost immediately removed from the avenue. In the same location of the new "*El Caballito*," an anti-monument dedicated to the victims of the Line 12 tragedy was installed on May 2, 2022. I am referring to those who lost their lives when a subway reinforcement collapsed in

Mexico City. In the tragedy, a whole carriage fell and crushed onto a street, killing twenty-six people among passengers and car drivers. The anti-monument did not memorialize the victims' names like those mentioned above, did not use avatars like the miners' helmets, nor did it contain a number to remind how many lives were lost that day. The sculpture represented the fallen carriage in gold and maroon. The anti-monument featured the following phrase: "The tragedy of the 12th subway line" and "#*fue morena*" (#It was morena), that is, the political party that currently governs the city and the country. An opposition political party created the "#*fue morena*" antimonument (Vargas, 2022). The groups that put up the other anti-monuments rejected this action, stating it: "trivializes a legitimate and completely civic expression." These same groups also believed that by building anti-monuments, Reforma had developed a: "route of memory" to confront and denounce impunity, for which they qualified this particular anti-monument as false and demanded respect (Antimonumentos Memoria, Verdad y Justicia, 2022). The #*fue morena* anti-monument disappeared.

5.2 THE ROUNDABOUT OF THE WOMEN WHO FIGHT

As mentioned, Mexico City's government removed the Columbus monument on October 11, 2020, in the early morning hours. Almost a year later, on September 25, 2021, various groups and organized collectives of feminists, Indigenous women, Afro-descendants, relatives of femicide victims, women searchers (organizations that search for skeletal remains of disappeared people in vacant lots, mass graves, etc.) among others, met and created the "*Frente Amplio de Mujeres que Luchan*" (Broad Front of Women who Fight) (which from here on I will call FAML) (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022b).

This new collective took over the unoccupied space in the roundabout on Reforma Avenue with the creation of the Antimonumenta (Figure 68). The area was renamed the *Glorieta de las*

Mujeres que Luchan (Roundabout of the Women Who Fight). With this act of protest, they sought to recognize the women who have had to take to the streets to demand justice in the face of "the omissions and violence of the Mexican State" (Ibid.). The name that the collective gave to this space, "Roundabout of the Women Who Fight," is inspired by a Zapatista women's meeting (FAML member personal communication, 2022). I use the word "*Antimonumenta*" to denote its femininity, as the FAML did during interviews.



Figure 68. The Antimonument in aerial view, Women's Day March 2022 Source: Andalalucha (2022).

The antimonument is called "*Antimonumenta: Vivas nos queremos*" (We want to live). It encompasses the police barricades and a sculpture of a woman in purple holding up her left fist, occupying the marble pedestal. Around it, the planters were appropriated, maintained, filled with flowers, and renamed "Garden of Memory." Additionally, they created a clothesline for grievances to make visible the answers to: "I did not denounce because..." and: "I did denounce but..." (Figure 69).



Figure 69. The Complaint Clothesline. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

The informational signs (Figure 70) further clarified the objective of the sculptural ensemble. They provide details about the dedication of the antimonument and explain the significance of the Garden of Memory and the Complaints Clothesline. On September 25, 2022, the anniversary of the takeover of the traffic circle, the FAML erected a pink cross in honor of femicide victims. This intervention was called: "Not all of us are here."



Figure 70. Complaint clothesline and information signs. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

5.2.1 The Assembly of the Antimonumenta

The sculpture on the plinth, which depicts a young girl or woman raising her fist, has been adopted as the movement's emblem. It is visible on the Facebook page, used as a symbol on letterhead, and reproductions have been created and placed in other locations. The Mexican

government has also attempted to appropriate it, using it to symbolize female resistance or as a symbol for reflecting on the role of women in history (Frente Amplio de las Mujeres que Luchan, 2022).

The figure is purple, the color of justice and dignity (International Women's Day, 2023). The original sculpture (Figure 71) was made of wood and bound with ropes. When viewed from the side, the word "justice" can be made out on the sculpture. This is the name by which the collective refers to this sculpture: "*Antimonumenta-Justicia*," a monument that seeks to represent every struggling woman and girl in Mexico and worldwide. As it was initially built with perishable material, the original Antimonumenta possessed the ephemeral quality that characterizes this category of counter-monumental acts.



Figure 71. The symbol of the struggle. Source: EneasMx (2021).

The FAML painted the mural across the exterior of a three-meter-high police barricade. The government refers to these metal fences as "peace walls" and uses them to prevent harm to the "national heritage" (Díaz Álvarez, 2021). The paintings over the barricades were simple, designed for a transient existence. This first iteration lasted precisely one day. The front facade of the memorial featured a cross made up of a shovel, a trowel, and a rod (1) —tools used by the women searchers—a raised fist (3), as well as the new name of the roundabout (2) (Figure 72). They also

inscribed the names of the family members of femicide victims and women searchers around the memorial (Figure 73).



Figures 72 and 73. The first iteration of the Roundabout. Sources: EneasMx (2021); Marisol Calva (2021).

Before discussing the subsequent iterations of this anti-monument, let us consider its relationship with the Columbus monument or its absence. Regarding materiality, all the elements, including the plaques, were removed when the government of Mexico City dismantled the old memorial, leaving only the pedestal. However, the FAML has alluded to having appropriated the place deliberately to: "decolonize this patriarchal space" (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022d) and has referred to the site as the one: "occupied for years by a genocidal and colonizing European man" (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2021b).

As the government of Mexico City has decided to reinstall the Columbus monument and reunite the sculptures with the pedestal, the controversy surrounding the Antimonumenta revolves around the marble components of the sculptural complex. The COMAEP considers that the pedestal must be reintegrated with the other features and moved to a new location. They declared that the railings and lampposts on the site are also part of the sculptural ensemble (COMAEP, 2022).

5.2.2 The Antimonumenta Making and Unmaking

As was previously mentioned, the first version of the Antimonumenta existed only for one day. Hence, the roundabout has been controversial ever since its conception. It is believed that the mural was removed by the government of Mexico City (Calva, 2021). However, the association soon reclaimed the space again (Forbes Staff, 2021). This time with the use of aerosols, with slogans such as: "We will not be erased" (4) (Figures 74 and 75) and: "Until dignity becomes customary."



Figures 74 and 75. The second iteration of the Antimonumenta, "They are not going to erase us." Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2021).

This revision of the antimonument was also short-lived. The collective reconvened to paint the mural, restoring the same features on October 3, 2021. (Antimonumenta "Vivas Nos Queremos", 2021a). They proceeded to paint the barricades black and painted in white the names of women affected by violence, this time: searching mothers, women attacked with acid, defenders of water and land, displaced women from the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, mothers of the 49 deceased children of the ABC daycare center, Indigenous women, and members of the Marabunta humanitarian peace brigade. They adorned the names with flowers.

On the front of the mural, we find the symbol of the shovel with the trowel again, and the initials USB are the initials of *Unidas Siempre Buscando* (Searching Always United -fem.)

(Personal communication) (Figure 76). This time a white bird is visible over the symbol, representing an eagle (5), the name the seekers use to call each other (Personal communication). To the left are the symbol of feminist anarchism (6) and the slogan: "Neither forgiving nor forgetting" (7).



Figure 76 and 77. The roundabout on October 3, 2021. Sources: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2021); EFE /Sashenka (2021).

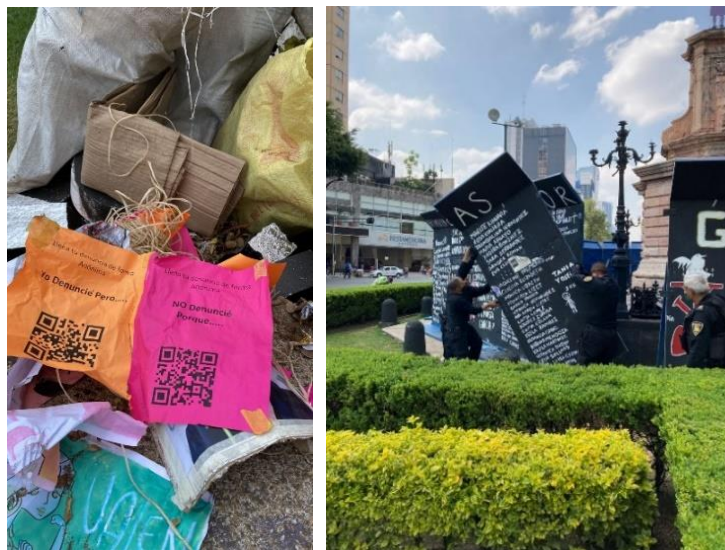
On the same day, October 3, an artistic intervention was also performed, which consisted of painting the perimeter of the traffic circle in pink (Figure 77). This intervention was entitled "*Vulva Glorieta*" (Vulva Roundabout).

On November 25 of the same year, as part of the "International Day Against Gender Abuse," the collective developed the first version of the clothesline. Traditionally, a clothesline served as a space for women to tend to and dry their own and their loved ones' clothing. Today, they use this setup to exhibit their grievances and raise awareness. In the words of the FAML, taken from the informational signs surrounding the monument: "This space is an activist, pedagogical tool to raise our voices and demonstrate solidarity." The words: "I denounced but..." (8) and "I did not denounce because..." (10) were displayed on fabric and modeled on Styrofoam. They printed the denunciations on pink and orange paper (9) (Figure 78).



Figure 78. Denunciation clothesline. Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2021).

The next day, however, the circumstances were repeated since the Government of Mexico City, through cleanup workers, removed the installation (Figure 79). At the same time, police authorities tried to remove the police barricades but ultimately failed, leaving the mural intact (Figure 80).



Figures 79 and 80. On November 26, police authorities attempted to dismantle the space. Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2021).

After these events, the FAML issued a statement appealing to the right to memory and the right to truth, access to justice, and guarantees of non-repetition. They characterized the Mexican government's actions as a re-victimization of official complicity and impunity to erase women and their movements. The letter urged the government to maintain and respect the places of struggle

and memory so as not to forget the events of violence and tragedies. In this statement, the FAML characterized the anti-monument as the: "historical heritage of the city and the country" (Frente Amplio de las Mujeres que Luchan, 2021).

These acts expose the hostile relationship between the federal and Mexico City governments towards feminist collectives. Given their action's impact, providing context to this situation is crucial. The current president, López Obrador, has consistently criticized and denounced the feminist groups' demonstrations, labeling them as "conservative" and accusing them of promoting a "fear campaign" against his government (Maldonado, 2021). López Obrador has frequently used the so-called "peace walls" to enclose the National Palace, which serves as the headquarters of the Mexican federal executive. During those times, feminists have written their complaints on the same fences. The Mexican government's hostility toward feminists was also evident in the "Guacamaya Papers," a leak of information that revealed that the army had classified fifteen feminist collectives as: "extremely radical" and: "antagonists to public safety in Mexico City," classifying them as a danger to the nation. The feminist collectives are on the same list as the country's organized crime and the country's most dangerous cartels (Velasco, 2022).

Even after the events of November 2021, the collective persisted, and days before the commemoration of International Women's Day, March 5, 2022, they planted the "We Are Memory" garden and set up a new clothesline of denunciations. The FAML assembled the latest clothesline version with metal pipes and cemented it, they printed the signs on waterproof tarps, and the wooden figure on the pedestal was replaced by another sculpted in metal (Figures 81 and 82). That same day the FAML installed informative signs made of metal. With these actions, the Roundabout of the Fighting Women loses its ephemeral character and is reclaimed as a permanent place of memory and demand for justice.



Figure 81. The installation of the new sculpture. Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2022) Figure 82.

The new clothesline. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

Soon after, someone damaged the clothesline materials by lifting them off the ground in an attempt to knock them down. In response, the collective quickly organized a repair day at the Women Who Fight traffic circle to fix the ironwork (Antimonumento Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022a). Considering that it is possible for anyone who disagrees with feminist ideology to attempt the removal of the antimonument in a densely populated metropolis, it is challenging to ascertain who is accountable for these removal efforts.

However, a conflict at the site arises from the potential construction of another monument in the same location. It is essential to note that on June 23 of this same year, the Sub-secretary of the Government of Mexico City stated he had contacted the FAML collective to relocate the antimonument. The collective categorically denied that this meeting occurred (Antimonumenta Vivamos Nos Queremos, 2022c).

The first anniversary of the Antimonumenta was on September 25, 2022. To celebrate the collective repainted the mural, this time, there was a greater preponderance of the iconic image of the woman with a raised fist in the mural (11), which was reproduced and planted around the roundabout.



Figure 83. The Antimonumenta in 2023. Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2023).

The mural's facade no longer features the symbol of the seekers, but the sign of feminist anarchism remains (12) (Figure 83). There were also book presentations, a photographic exhibition, artistic participation, and a remembrance ceremony, concluding with the erection of a pink cross (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022e).

5.3 THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

The Head of Government of Mexico City, Claudia Sheinbaum, has presented two alternative projects for the Roundabout as of 2023. However, neither project has materialized: the Tlali Project, featuring an *ex professo* sculpture, and the Young Woman of Amajac Project, which involves an archaeological sculpture (Jefatura de Gobierno, 2023).

5.3.1 The Tlali Project

The Mexican government initiated and developed the planning of this project in parallel to the circumstances described above, dating back to the year 2020, since the removal of the Columbus monument. The government discussed different options for a replacement, and in early September 2021, they introduced the concept of "Tlali."

The name "Tlali" was derived from the Nahuatl -a language spoken in the Mexico Basin- word for earth. As such, the monument would be metaphor for the earth (Figure 84). The monolithic Olmec heads from the pre-classic period influenced Pedro Reyes' Tlali sculpture. In the same way that Olmec's heads are complete without a body, the artist claimed that his sculpture would also be. The eyes would be feline, and the lips would be associated with the jaguar. The headdress would be an allegory of two snakes and the origin of the cosmos, forming the Ollin (symbol of perpetual motion) (El Universal, 2021).

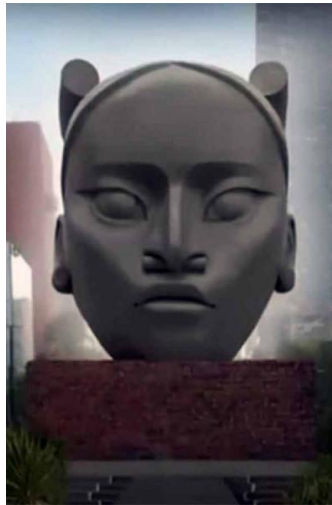


Figure 84. Simulation of Tlali sculpture at the roundabout. Source: AldoFC9 (2021).

In journalistic media, it was stated that the Tlali sculpture would decolonize the space and that through her: "Indigenous women would have a presence" and would be agents: "in front of social problems" (Rodríguez, 2021). However, in a letter dated September 12, 2021, 300 artists declared that the choice of a "white-mestizo" male artist was not appropriate to represent Indigenous women, as this choice: "reproduces the silencing and invisibilization of the struggle of women and their native peoples for their voice to be recognized and heard." They characterized the election of Reyes as: "gender, racist and socioeconomic class discrimination." In order to ensure that a woman (or several women) would create and design the new monument, the letter requested

the establishment of a curatorial committee made up of women artists and curators who self-identify as members of native nations (Proceso, 2021). After the criticism, the Government Head Office of Mexico City withdrew the project (El Universal, 2021). They declared that the INAH, the Secretariat of Culture, and the COMAEP would choose the monument to occupy the space (Guillén, 2021).

5.3.2 The Young Woman of Amajac

At the request of more than 5,000 Indigenous women, the government unveiled the chosen sculpture of "*La Joven de Amajac*" (Young Woman of Amajac) or "*Joven Gobernante de Amajac*" (Young Ruler of Amajac) (from here, I will refer to as YWA) to occupy the roundabout on October 12, 2021, as part of the "Day of the Pluricultural Nation." This monument aims to: "represent women, but in particular Indigenous women, their struggle and what they represent in the history of Mexico [...] recognize Indigenous women who gave us homeland." (Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda, 2021).

During the project's presentation, government officials acknowledged the community of Hidalgo Amajac for their support. The original piece was in an exhibition in September 2021 as part of the "Greatness of Mexico" exhibition at the Museum of Anthropology. This exhibition celebrated "seven centuries of History of Mexico-Tenochtitlán" and "200 years of Independent Mexico" (Museo Nacional de Antropología, 2021). The decision taken by the government officials was deemed by the COMAEP members as a: "milestone in public space usage," "a historic decision" that would break with the 19th-century Eurocentric aesthetic of the Avenue (Ortíz Armas, 2021).

The pre-Hispanic sculpture, discovered in Hidalgo Amajac within the town of Álamo Temapache in Veracruz, Mexico, is a monolith depicting a female figure adorned with a headdress

(Maldonado Vite, 2021), was characterized as "pure," "universal," a figure that would get installed in the collective imaginary about whom no one would have any complaints (Hecksher, 2021). The INAH was appointed to create and position the replica in the ex-Columbus roundabout on Reforma Avenue. A new pedestal, sculptural complement, and informative signage were also developed to enhance the understanding and significance of the sculpture (Ortíz Armas, 2021) (Figure 85).

Despite claims in newspaper headlines stating that the YWA will replace Christopher Columbus, such as: “The Young Woman of Amajac arrives at Reforma to replace Cristóbal Colón” (Romero, 2023) or “The "Young Woman of Amajac" to replace the historic statue of Columbus in Mexico City” (BBC News Mundo, 2021). it would be inaccurate to say that the Young Woman of Amajac is replacing Christopher Columbus, considering that the Columbus monument is already an absence haunting the location.



Figure 85. Simulation of the Young Woman of Amajac on the roundabout. Source: SEDUVI (2021).

The scheduled installation of the YWA replica piece at the chosen site was set for October 2022 (Israde, 2022). However, as of February 2023, the project remains unfinished due to the ongoing conflict with the Roundabout of the Fighting Women (Cruz, 2023). INAH, SEDUVI, ICOMOS Mexico, and other government departments will collaborate to ensure that both symbols align in a "harmonious way," while considering criteria such as urban and landscape balance,

accessibility, and mobility. This will enable citizens to fully utilize the space (COMAEP, 2023, p. 3).

5.3.2.1 The Archaeological Object

The Huasteca is a region of lowlands, mostly plains at the northern end of the tropical strip and wetlands on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. It was a fertile region called Tonacatlalpan, the "land of food" (Figure 86). Researchers have discovered additional monolithic slabs in the Tuxpan-Alámo region where the piece was initially found. Nelly Gutierrez, in 1982, theorized the presence of a sculptural workshop in the area that specialized in stone sculptures. The Huasteca population came from Mayan groups that migrated to the region in approximately 2,000 BC. Currently, the Huasteca population faces forced displacement from their lands, leading them to primarily reside in the northern areas of Veracruz and the neighboring state of San Luis Potosí (Stresser-Péan, 2006).

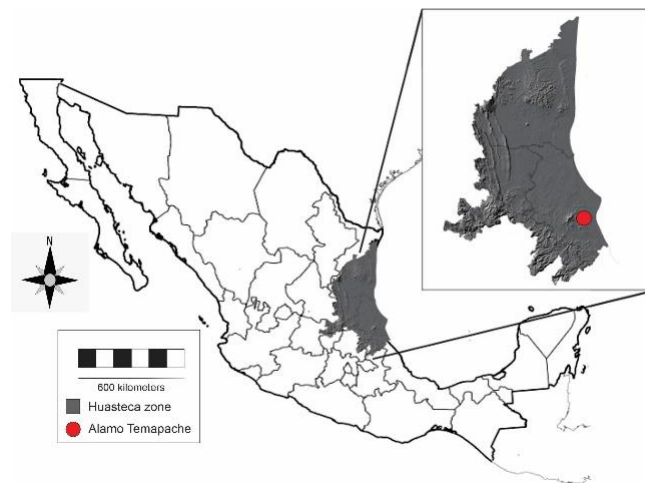


Figure 86. The location of the Huasteca and Alamo Temapache (Data: INEGI, 2002).

On January 1, 2021, the pre-Hispanic piece was unearthed in the Veracruz Huasteca by field workers César Cabrera Cruz and Alejandro Céspedes. Initially, they believed it to be a large

stone and decided to excavate it from their plot. However, when they removed and rotated it with a tractor, they discovered it was a sculpted object (Figures 87 and 88) (Maldonado Vite, 2021).



Figures 87 and 88. The sculpture, when found and once cleaned. Source: César Cabrera Cruz y Alejandro Céspedes (2021).

Cabrera and Céspedes promptly reported the discovery to the authorities, and three days later, INAH Veracruz authorities arrived. The discoverers expressed their desire to become custodians of the artifact, a request that INAH granted through registration and concession of the piece. There are plans to establish an archaeological enclosure to ensure its preservation, possibly as a regional museum (Ibid.; Garibay López, 2021). The monolith is crafted from limestone and measures two meters in length. The human figure carved on it is 1.45 meters tall, with a maximum width of 49 centimeters and an average thickness of 25 centimeters. The engraving is well-preserved, although the headdress has some minor chips. The engraving depicts an anthropomorphic figure with hollowed-out eyes and a mouth that potentially held shell inlays, although none were found. The ears of the piece are indistinct, but the prominence of ear ornaments is notable. The figure exhibits well-defined breasts, leading to the interpretation of its gender as female (Maldonado Vite, 2021).

The figure wears an intricate headdress embellished with five concentric circles, possibly *chalchihuites*. At each headdress's end are larger rings resembling strips or ribbons, likely representing feathers. Additionally, there is a necklace adorned with drop-shaped ornaments called *oyohualli*, whose meaning is unknown. The figure's torso is decorated with a long-sleeved shirt and a vertical sash with three knots. Bracelets are sculpted on her wrists, and she is depicted wearing a skirt. Notably, her feet are bare. The presence of red paint remnants on the headdress's five circles and black residue around the ears and headdress strongly suggests that the figure was originally polychromatic.

Her attire and her headdress reflect her status and lineage. Thus, the figure could be a young, elite female ruler. The Huasteca was a segmented state where women could be rulers, hereditarily, within a dynastic line (Maldonado Vite, 2021). The sculpture's association with the Huasteca tradition is attributed to its location and style. However, it also exhibits elements of central Mexico, particularly in the headdress, which the Aztec Triple Alliance may have influenced. This suggests a possible timeframe for the sculpture around 1450-1521, during the late postclassic period (Ibid.; Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda, 2021).

5.3.2.2 The Young Woman of Amajac Heritagization

As the YWA project is still in the planning stages, conducting an archaeological analysis of the object in place is impossible. However, we can still explore the implications of the object's presence or absence, along with examining the current heritagization practices in Mexico and the role of collective memory in these situations.

We can compare the heritagization practices on Reforma Avenue in the 20th century, as discussed in Chapter 3, with the YWA initiative. While the YWA initiative involved citizen

participation, cultural elites still held privileged positions, as they have for centuries. However, the planning process did include Indigenous voices, demonstrating their power to influence a project, as seen in the case of the Tlali project.

Mexico City's Head of Government, Claudia Sheinbaum, actively sought input from various authorities and institutions while valuing Indigenous communities' voices. Sheinbaum's efforts highlight the historical contributions of women in the city through the YWA and the bronze sculptures that depict historically distinguished women erected in 2020. Sheinbaum intends to curate the past in the present, emphasizing the visibility of women along the Avenue. Moreover, with the YWA, she aims to recognize and empower every Indigenous woman. (Jefatura de Gobierno, 2023). Through this action, she reproduces the same homogenizing practice, although habitually, the government "universalizes" all the Indigenous peoples of Mexico through the Mexica iconography.

Regarding heritage-making practices, I want to explore what values of the YWA would be curated to make it become heritage.

The original YWA is regarded artistically as a piece of great value at a plastic level, as it has exceptional quality (Garibay López, 2021). As well it is considered valuable scientifically and historically. The archaeological object has undergone the process of *patrimonialization*/fossilization, including authentication, valuation, cataloging, storage, and preservation according to legal standards.

Considering that the mentioned values stem from the original piece, one could argue that the replica's value predominantly resides in its contemporary significance rather than its authenticity as an artifact. Regarding its symbolic significance, various actions were taken to create value for

the object, including press releases, press conferences, expert meetings, and displaying the replica in a museum. These efforts were undertaken to establish the double as a heritage object.

There was criticism of the Tlali project, highlighting that it was an elaboration by Pedro Reyes. In contrast, the YWA is seen as a "pure piece" since Indigenous artisans created it. However, it is essential to note that the replica, which will be installed on the roundabout, was not made by Indigenous hands either. Instead, INAH experts created the replica as a monumental object specifically designed for exhibition and visibility within the roundabout.

According to the Mexican laws discussed earlier in this work, the YWA replica would not be considered a heritage object. However, it is essential to acknowledge that in terms of commemoration or satisfying the population that interacts with the space, whether it is a replica or not, it does not hinder the interaction and ownership of the stakeholders with the piece. A relevant example is the replicas of the Huntress Diana and the Angel of Independence sculptures, which currently stand in place of the original works no longer on Reforma Avenue.

The decision to use a replica instead of the original piece for its exhibition deviates from INAH's usual practices, which involve extracting archaeological objects for their recontextualization and separation from their original location of origin. As mentioned, the monolith's extraction, conversion, and exhibition as an archaeological object have occurred. However, since it does not have the necessary dimensions to be mounted and "shine" in the roundabout (Israde, 2022), it will not become a monumental object in the public space of Reforma Avenue. Following the promise made to the people of Álamo Temapache, the town retains possession of the original statue.

Therefore, referring to the role of collective memory or commemorative actions at the site. I can only question, will there be a performance of memory associated with the YWA replica at the

former location of the Christopher Columbus monument? Moreover, if so, what kind of memory will it evoke? What past does the sculpture bring to the present? The monolith was unearthed just two years ago. It does not have a direct link to any historical figure. Instead, it is actively integrated into a discourse seeking to reclaim and empower Indigenous women. Notably, Mexico recognizes seventy-one Indigenous groups (SIC México, 2023). We must question whether Indigenous women from these groups would feel adequately represented by a sculpture of a post-classic, elite woman from the Huasteca. There is a possibility that this space could cease to be a site of memory and become merely an embellishment for the city. The outcome depends on the involvement of additional stakeholders and whether Indigenous communities feel adequately represented, engaging in an active interaction, and redefining the commemorative space collectively and democratically. It remains to be seen who genuinely cares about the monumental object. Still, the COMAEP (2023, p. 3) anticipates that this figure will create a sense of identity within the traffic circle.

5.4 THE DISPUTE OVER THE SPACE

We can now examine the conflict arising from the government's proposed project and the pre-existing anti-monument in the roundabout on Reforma Avenue. It is important to note that both the Antimonumenta and the government's project for the same space were conceived simultaneously in September 2021 (El Universal, 2021; Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022b).

In 2022, five days after the Antimonumenta's anniversary, the Government of Mexico City issued an "urgent" statement. The statement conveyed the imminent destruction of the Roundabout of the Women Who Fight and proposed the installation of the sculpture of the Woman Ruler of Amajac on October 12, 2022.

The FAML collective called for a dialogue with the authorities to preserve the space. The authorities did not make public their opinion immediately, so the FAML proceeded to "*acuerpar*" ("en-body") the area, guarding the traffic circle day and night to avoid its destruction. On October 11, the relevant authorities agreed to a meeting with the collective. During the dialogue, they reached an agreement that ensured the space would not be evicted or demolished, and it was decided, " at this time," not to install the YWA sculpture there. The government proposed dedicating the site to both figures. Still, the collective suggested using an alternative location, such as the Diana Huntress roundabout and emphasized the need to reconsider who the public space belongs to (Guzmán, 2022).

Nonetheless, the Mexican government seems persistent in planning and reclaiming the area for their project. In November 2022, they called for the population to participate in a multicultural festival entitled: "Our Indigenous Roots, Amajac" at the site of the Antimonumenta. For this, they misnamed the traffic circle: "Roundabout of the Indigenous Women, of the Women Who Fight the Most" and called for the use of the space for workshops, using the YWA image in the design of the sign (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2022f). This event was canceled.

The conflict escalated to the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City. In a meeting with the commission, the FAML agreed to relinquish the pedestal and other architectural features under the condition that the Antimonumenta is promptly placed on a new plinth, which will be designed and funded by the collective. Additionally, the collective emphasized that the location and height of the Antimonumenta should remain unchanged. The negotiations have not progressed (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2023a).

Unilaterally, the Mexico City government decided that the Young Woman of Amajac sculpture would share the space with the Antimonumenta (Solorzano, 2023a) in February 2023. At

that point, the FAML released a statement denouncing the Claudia Sheinbaum government's harassment campaign to impose this project, which they describe as a: "strategy to support their political-electoral ambitions." They emphasized that this conflict: "is not a discussion about statues" but a denunciation of a national humanitarian crisis and that they are attempting to conceal and deny the presence of this predicament by taking repressive measures. The COMAEP, for its part, in the minutes of the twelfth extraordinary session, has agreed that in this space, there will be coexistence (COMAEP, 2023). The FAML has reiterated that they will not abandon the place, will not accept the imposition, and will continue striving to endure in the space (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2023b).

5.5 ANTIMONUMENTA: PERSISTENCE AND MEMORY

In personal communication, a participant of the collective invites reflection on the symbolism of both the YWA and the Antimonumenta-Justicia. They question whether the YWA, a lithic representation of an elite woman from the Huastec region, truly serves as a unifying image for all Indigenous women. They also acknowledge that the Antimonumenta has been created and maintained by women of Indigenous ancestry, highlighting their active involvement and care (Personal Communication, 2022).

As International Women's Day neared, various groups shared their perspectives. One group, comprised of Mazatec women from the Indigenous population of Oaxaca in southwestern Mexico, voiced their disagreement with being represented by the YWA. They emphasized that within the FAML are women from diverse backgrounds, such as Otomi, Amuzga, Triqui, and Ñomnda. In the same statement, they condemned Sheinbaum's actions and demanded freedom for their political prisoners (Solorzano, 2023b). Sheinbaum has declared that the women who reject the placement of the YWA are "racist and classist" (Guillén, 2023).

According to the FAML, the Antimonumenta-Justicia space holds significance as a site of living memory and community gathering. It has become evident through the annual marches, especially for International Women's Day (Figure 68), that it serves as a starting point for some participants and plays a crucial role in broadcasting the event. In this same space, there are also calls for justice, offerings, artistic interventions, book presentations, open microphones, humanitarian stockpiling, the making of handicrafts, and screenings of movies and documentaries, amongst others. It is as well a space in constant change. Graffiti and stencils are continuously applied and removed on the cement plank. At the same time, there is a continuous rotation of canvas signs demanding justice, particularly for cases of women's disappearance or femicides (Figure 89). Additionally, the space serves as a creative hub where posters for the marches organized by collectives are produced.



Figure 89. All of us are Fátima. You will not be forgotten, Fátima! Source: Antimonumenta "Vivas nos queremos" (2023).

In terms of commemoration, this place can be seen as a living, dynamic space that connects the tragic past with the ongoing struggle of the present. It permits the performance of collective memory, where daily actions aim to bring visibility to the past and prevent it from being forgotten. These actions make visible the names of individuals affected by these issues, including victims and their families. The space is active or "alive" and is performed repeatedly as it, in the words of Hite

(2012, p. 14), "demands the remembrance of the painful past." The collective discourse states this frequently as they refer to memory as a human right to recall this contemporary violence and prevent it from being ignored or minimized (Antimonumenta Vivas Nos Queremos, 2023c). This space has been created, cared for, and maintained by individuals, by relatives of victims, who demand that the names of these victims are memorialized for their absence and the impunity of their cases.

Understanding this area as a site of conflict seems to be another crucial element of the roundabout. The government argues through its actions that this public space should not be used this way and is not the right place to remember these victims. Furthermore, one could claim that the government's destructive actions favor the disappearance and erasure of the victims' names and their relatives' names.

The transition from being the Columbus Roundabout to the Fighting Women Roundabout denotes that it has been reclaimed by a section of society in a decolonizing and feminist movement, as shown in its iconography and rhetoric, and that it is now a site of living memory. It is an appropriated space of protest and claims to memory in the public area. However, unlike other anti-monumental spaces, the COMAEP authorities have not officially recognized the Roundabout of the Fighting Women. As a result, its existence lacks legitimacy, leaving the anti-monument in a constant state of precariousness.

As the avenue undergoes active transformation, the anti-monument plays a significant role in this evolving landscape. Unlike other anti-monuments along the Avenue, this particular one occupies an entire traffic circle, while others are limited to sections of sidewalks. The only comparable instance is the temporary intervention at the *Ahuehete* Roundabout, where the whole area of a traffic circle was also appropriated.

The location within the Avenue is crucial, and relocating the anti-monument elsewhere would not have the same impact. This location holds importance as it is where the annual Women's Day march occurs. It offers easy accessibility on a prominent and busy street, providing ample space for the associated activities. Furthermore, there have been instances where the collective members have closed off the avenue to conduct their activities if they perceive that there is not sufficient space, as seen during the screening of the movie "*Ruido*" (Noise) in February 2023.

It is also important not to lose sight of the material aspect of the anti-monument. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this work, the traffic circle has served as a platform for societal expression for several years. Even before the removal of the Columbus monument, this site had already transformed into a commemorative space representing the call for justice.

We can observe this by looking at the symbols graffitied on the monument. Among these symbols, one has remained significant over many years: the anarchy symbol variation, the emblem of feminist anarchy. This symbol can be seen in photographs taken in December 2018, as depicted in Figure 50, and it is currently displayed on the front of the mural in Figure 83.

The space has been a site of feminist protest since 2018. Furthermore, we can examine the presence of the *Justicia* sculpture, the first female figure in a roundabout along this avenue. Unlike the naked female figures of Diana the Huntress or the Angel of Independence, *Justicia* is wearing garments. The *Antimonumenta-Justicia* aims to be a metonymy of all women in the world, which, unlike the others, it is not presented by its aesthetic characteristics as an ornament. Still, in its simplicity, it seeks to be universal (Figure 71). The conflict over the use of the space and the government's refusal to allocate it for the anti-monument is evident in the materiality of the *Antimonumenta*. I can observe the consequences of antagonism, especially in two instances.

First, it is worth mentioning that the peace walls represent an intertwining of feminists and the police state. Rather than preserving the pedestal of the colonialist figure, the walls played a role in establishing the sculptural space. Mexico City officials erected the barriers to restrict the area and prevent unwanted actions by feminist collectives. However, they were later appropriated and transformed into a canvas, showcasing the names of those who have been lost. This characteristic is shared with traditional memorials, emphasizing the significance of restoring the victim's identity, shedding light on the violence, and advocating for justice.

My second point is better explained by looking at the denunciation clothesline. It was initially made using paper and Styrofoam, but it was reinstalled using metal when removed. It is difficult to predict what would have happened if the circumstances had been different. Perhaps if the space had remained active through the group and performances or had naturally deteriorated, another place of memory would have emerged. One could argue that when agencies outside the area destroyed the space, the collective made it more resistant and lost its ephemerality through antagonism. By comparing Figures 78 and 82, we can observe that the clothesline's arrangement changed after it was destroyed. Previously, it was only visible by its size within the traffic circle, requiring people to approach it directly to visit. However, after its destruction, it was relocated externally, now encircling the traffic circle, and becoming visible from both directions of the Avenue.

The collective has extended the site's boundary along Reforma Avenue by acquiring more areas outside the traffic circle specifically on a wall located south of the Antimonumenta on the Avenue's side (Figure 90). There was also an intervention at the "Columbus Roundabout" Metrobus stop, where they changed the name of the Metrobus stop to "Roundabout of the Women Who Fight." This new name for the roundabout is now recognized on Google, in the press, on newscasts,

in documents from the security secretariat, and by the tourism secretariat. This indicates that the traffic circle has acquired its new name.

The significance of the space goes beyond its physical boundaries. The area will still hold meaning even if the government's project is implemented successfully. It is improbable that the FAML collective will cease their efforts to reclaim public space and preserve memory.



Figure 90. The mural to the south of the traffic circle. Photo: N. Ruiz Peralta (2022).

According to the FAML collective, this conflict is not merely about sculptures but about justice, impunity, and memory. It serves as a reminder to prevent forgetting and downplaying the victims whose names are inscribed on the traffic circle.

The COMAEP (2022) discussion on sharing space focuses solely on the two opposing sculptures: YWA and the Antimonumenta-Justicia. They overlook the other elements of the sculptural complex in this area, such as the memory garden, the denunciation clothesline, informational signs, and the overall significance of the memorial site as a space for gathering, sharing, emotional support, and as a hub for marginalized community collectives.

The FAML collective regards the Antimonumenta as heritage, but it raises the question of whether it embodies traditional values associated with heritage. I want to reflect on whether observing the traditional heritage-making values in the object is possible.

The object does not evoke historical value. Aesthetically it has been characterized by COMAEP experts as an: "improvised sketch," "not by an artist or an architect," replaceable by: "a plaque that would indicate justice, democracy, liberty, and equality," and therefore of little artistic significance (COMAEP, 2022). On the other hand, the scientific and economic values of the antimonument are not self-evident either.

We need to consider the object's reminiscent or contemporary values to assess it. Its heritage-making values appear rooted in the present, serving as a vessel for spiritual needs, memory, and justice. In this case, what holds significance is not its creator or the process of its making but rather the object's references and meanings to the community it represents.

The antimonument is thought-provoking. It is a mnemonic of the past and the traumatic present. When considering the traditional definition of heritage as something useful and functional for imagination, development, enjoyment, and self-expression, the antimonument appears to fulfill these criteria for the collective that created it. Moreover, the space is not limited to the original creators alone. Through various activities, more people have started utilizing the memorial area, becoming aware of its circumstances and the memorialization efforts it embodies.

We can also question whether the replica of the YWA is genuinely an irreplaceable object at risk of extinction or if the Roundabout of the Fighting Women has been entangled since its inception. This raises the point that one of the purposes of heritage is to safeguard "endangered" objects that possess irreplicable authenticity, further emphasizing the need for scrutiny in determining which objects truly warrant preservation.

The conflict has made this space resilient, and feminist organizations actively care for and protect it, ensuring its survival. It is essential to consider that one of the goals of heritage is to

preserve objects to endure over time and receive protection. The collective is concerned about the long-lasting condition of this space for public use. Consequently, they consistently take care of the antimonument, ensuring its preservation and good state of conservation. Despite ongoing marches passing through the location, I found no evidence to suggest that the antimonument has been damaged in any way. Counterintuitively, the graffiti observed in the area does not function as countermonumental actions. Instead, it contributes to the antimonument, becoming an interactive element that further builds upon the monument.

It is essential to emphasize the community's connection to this location. As a place of gathering and memory performance, this location is alive in the collective memory. Part of this performance is the care of the space, which reflects what the monument to Columbus exhausted and is still being performed there. The area has an affective component, which is not just preservation and management but care as well. That concern appears to play a part in the processes of heritage-making, which constitutes a "living" heritage that, in order to be *alive*, has to be "lived" (Segato, 2021, p. 160). I argue that the intertwining between living heritage and collective memory enables us to explore new understandings of heritage. Without this connection, a living heritage cannot be generated, resulting in a heritage that resembles lifelessness (Ibid.).

5.6 MEXICAN HERITAGIZATION PRACTICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Creating and assembling a public monument on Reform Avenue represents a future-making endeavor. These actions involve developing a monumental object that serves both the present and the future. Each project becomes multitemporal, as they create and curate in the present what will be preserved for future generations while also curating remnants from the past.

When analyzing the conflict between the Antimonumenta and the YWA, we can see how deliberate *patrimonialization* is at play. Each party seeks to preserve something for the future: The young woman of Amajac as Sheinbaum's political legacy, while the Antimonumenta aims to bring visibility to violence against women.

Both figures are vying for the visibility and representation of women. However, the YWA's erection leads to the removal of the current sculptural ensemble. Despite intending to preserve the Antimonumenta-*Justicia*, the YWA presence would actively erase the site of memory. The government officials accomplish this by following the same practices of the INAH, which include decontextualizing the pieces and incorporating them into their desired narrative. It leads to the invisibilization of violence, relying solely on the "official heritage" as an exclusive means of valuing and assembling cultural heritage. As discussed in the previous chapter, selecting only the figure Justicia from the current sculptural ensemble could be seen as a practice of forgetting. By preserving only this particular figure, they would overlook the mural displaying the victims' names, the expressions of grievances, and the cross planted in their memory. Such elimination from the traffic circle would essentially deny the deserving permanence of these memories and relegate them to oblivion.

This discussion reveals that heritage management, contrary to the typical practice in Mexican archaeology and the laws governing it, is not the sole starting and ending point for all discourse. Heritage can emerge and evolve without our direct involvement. Its impact extends beyond our professional field or the realm of cultural experts under government control. Collectives form, utilize collective memory and make their concerns visible through public spaces. Heritage can be interacted with, dynamic, fluid, interactive, and actively commemorated. It can be subject to debate and shaped by the voices of Indigenous communities. In this way, heritage becomes a

living entity, intertwining with memory to create a symbiotic assemblage in commemorative practice, not fossilized but fluid, in which the memory is alive.

It is essential to acknowledge that heritagization practices in Mexico are undergoing changes despite the persistence of specific alienating and homogenizing approaches. While the 1972 federal law has clear conceptual limitations and remains in effect, recent developments have occurred. The Federal Law for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples and Communities (Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión, 2021) recognizes the right of ownership over the cultural heritage elements of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities, empowering them to embrace and benefit from their cultural expressions. However, it is worth noting that this law is still subject to the Federal law of 1972.

Considering the ongoing conflict surrounding patrimonial practices, it becomes evident that if these practices are constantly evolving, the concept of patrimony must also adapt for the same reason. Currently, the shift appears to be towards involving a more comprehensive range of stakeholders and giving recognition to previously marginalized voices. However, politics will still significantly influence this matter, despite the emergence of collectives that, through their care and determination to persist, are forging an alternative heritage outside the official framework. These collectives, with their practices, are shaping their own future and contributing to the evolving heritage landscape.

6 CONCLUSION

This research addressed questions regarding the Columbus monument, including the factors leading to counter-monumental actions and the development of commemorative spaces after its removal. I also reflected on the role of heritage and memory in counter-monumentality processes. During my research, it became evident that the focus lies not on the monument's history but on the history of a site of memory.

The multifaceted process of counter-monumentality, intertwined with memory and heritage, was examined in this study. The study explored the expression of collective memory through commemorative performance. Throughout the research process, I realized the significance of caring for the object in relation to contemporary heritage values, which ultimately contributes to the long-lasting presence of a monumental public object.

Additionally, the study discerned ephemeral commemorative actions conducted over time. It examined the significance of repeated performances and how the cessation of such performances and acts of care led to tangible consequences. In this case, these consequences manifested as counter-monumental actions on the Columbus monument.

This investigation yielded the following assertions concerning heritage. To determine if the counter-monumental actions on the Christopher Columbus monument can be seen as appropriating and exploiting heritage, we need to perceive heritage not as an intrinsic quality of the object but as the actions that construct and deconstruct it. Furthermore, understanding heritage in this dynamic manner requires moving away from the notion that all heritage is everyone's and for everyone. During this research, no consensus emerged regarding whether either of the two monumental objects that have occupied the traffic circle are heritage.

In the traditional understanding of heritage, one of its main objectives is to ensure the enduring preservation of objects. However, it is crucial to consider the potentially alienating effect of permanently fossilizing an object, as this can hinder critical examination (Harrison, 2020). Counter-monumentality emerges as a way to reintroduce monuments into a dynamic process of critical scrutiny. It brings forth multiple perspectives that question the monument's moral implications, significance, and legacy, examining how it fits into the present and for whom it is for.

Another aspect of counter-monumentality is the creation of antimonuments. In this research, we observed how Reforma Avenue has changed with their presence, which has multiplied in recent years. When examining the Roundabout of the Women Who Fight, we noticed the preponderance of the memory space and the consequences of antagonism on it. There is an ongoing struggle for the survival of this space, which serves as a reminder of the female victims of violence. The purpose of these antimonuments is to ensure that the memory of these victims lasts, make it visible to the public, and provide a physical site for the collective pursuit of justice. Additionally, through this antimonument, we observed the importance of contemporary values that appreciate its significance even if it does not possess the traditional values associated with patrimonial things.

In this work, I explored the conflict between the governmental project and the feminist project. Motivated by its political convictions, the Mexican government engages in heritagization practices that have been ongoing since the last century, re-signifying and decontextualizing archaeological images and objects. Through its officials and cultural experts, the government exercises authority in deciding what occupies public space and which values are essential for preserving monumental things. This includes emphasizing these objects' antiquity, aesthetics, and historical significance.

Nevertheless, I noticed an increase in the diverse voices of stakeholders participating in creating public monuments. This presents an opportunity to critically examine the actions perpetuated by the existing legislative framework in Mexico and address those marginalized or excluded by it.

Further research is needed to explore the interconnection between counter-monumental actions and the performance of care for the perdurance of a monument. Additionally, it is crucial to delve into the entire avenue as a commemorative space, particularly considering its evolution into a path of remembrance. This transformation allows for the tangible traces of human loss to be witnessed and the visibility of the victims' identities, whose memory is engraved or graffitied on sculptures along the avenue.

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ICEHR Approval #:	20230224-AR
Researcher Portal File #:	20230224
Project Title:	<i>Countermonumentality and memory: The case of the Glorieta de Colón monument in Mexico City.</i>
Associated Funding:	Not Funded
Supervisor:	Dr. Oscar Moro-Abadia
Clearance expiry date:	June 30, 2024

Dear Ms. Nadia Ruiz Peralta:

Thank you for your response to our request for an annual update advising that your project will continue without any changes that would affect ethical relations with human participants.

On behalf of the Chair of ICEHR, I wish to advise that the ethics clearance for this project has been extended to **June 30, 2024**. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2) requires that you submit another annual update to ICEHR on your project prior to this date.

We wish you well with the continuation of your research.

Sincerely,

DEBBY GULLIVER

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)
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ICEHR Number:	20230224-AR
Approval Period:	June 28, 2022 – June 30, 2023
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Oscar Moro-Abadia Department of Archaeology
Title of Project:	<i>Countermonumentality and memory: The case of the Glorieta de Colón monument in Mexico City</i>

June 28, 2022

Ms. Nadia Ruiz Peralta
Department of Archaeology
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Ruiz Peralta:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance for one year*. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* requires that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **June 30, 2023**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Oscar Moro-Abadia, Department of Archaeology