Smashing statues:

the performative and archaeological dimensions of collective vandalism.

Gustavo Rigon

0887846

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Toine Minnaert

Master of Arts

Arts and Society

Netherlands, 2022

Gustavo Rigon

Abstract

Violence against statues and monuments as a form of radical activism is not new. However, in 2020, During Black Lives Matter protests, the media covered a series of collective iconoclastic attacks, commonly known as vandalism, where more than five hundred statues and memorials around the world were defaced, modified, or destroyed by artists and activist citizens. The topple down of Colston statue in Bristol culminated in the exhibition of its remains at the local history archive, Mshed Museum, where the formation of archaeology through performative violence is observed. To investigate this formation, it is questioned how vandalism, as a situated, subversive social performance, can provide potential insights into our experience with the past when visiting museums.

Performance theory and notions of archaeology seek to elucidate heritage formation through subversive social performances. Dramaturgical analysis, usually applied to art performances, allows the mapping and interpretation of all the possible theatrical means employed in the configuration of the topple down of a statue as a social performance, extending its lenses to the display and archival of survival remains in an institutional context. In the last decades, community and identity crises have faced museums, putting into question their definition and societal relevance. Here, curatorial practices come to the fore in the reassemble and recontextualization of the performance of the past. Thus it holds museums accountable for how these curatorial statements are displayed.

The interdisciplinarity found in the case study at stake is seen as significant to foment the insights this research aims to reach. As argued, both performative and archaeological dimensions of vandalism are, ultimately, social and cultural constructions of reality. Its study is considered essential for enriching our experience with past-present narratives and the formation of contemporary society.

Gustavo Rigon

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Images have been the focus of human passion and disgust to the point that destroying them would generate new urban landscapes, communicate our true senses, and contest societal values. Iconoclastic attacks on artefacts are considered highly viral events in which discussions on past-present cultural representation, social norms and political positionalities take place. Some examples are the defacement of Stalin's statue in Ukraine in 2015 and attacks on the Jew's holocaust memorial in Germany and the Mona Lisa at the Louvre in 2022.

While vandalism is not new, during #RhodesMustFall and #BLM protests in 2015 and 2020, the world experienced an outbreak of iconoclastic attacks on the architecture of the urban space, where more than five hundred statues and monuments related to controversial colonial legacies were modified, defaced, or even destroyed by activist citizens. As much as a radical form of cultural contestation, vandalism is seen as destructive, irrational, gut-driven civil disobedience. However, violent acts toward artefacts are seen as a constructive assemblage of meaning-making processes when observing it through performative lenses. Whereas part of a global-scale protest, the case study at stake seems to reveal the formation of site-specific social and cultural restorations in which tangible and intangible traces are left behind.

It is argued that current reality's social and cultural constructions and interpretations of the past may depend on rituals, encounters or events that subvert hegemonic social norms. Statues and monuments, as much as artworks, are not neutral. Their participation in performative social events may lead to the display of its survival remains in the museum. Therefore, common grounds are observed between performance and archaeology. By framing vandalism as a subversive social performance, the research attempts to investigate, through

dramaturgy, the topple down of a statue in the public space and its archival and display in the context of a museum.

Additionally, the awareness of the interdisciplinarity encountered in the case study puzzles this research. The frame of vandalism as a social performance narrows to observing the performance causes and conditions that lead to the display of archaeological remains. Concomitantly, when entering the museum world, another performative experience takes place. Therefore, archaeology and dramaturgy converge with contemporary curatorial practices, offering valuable insights into the exhibition and archival of artefacts.

For the study of these convergences, the first chapter builds an introduction and my position in the research, posing both dimensions of vandalism towards statues and monuments: performance and the performativity turn by Bal (2019) and archaeology by Shanks (2005). The second chapter unfolds a constellation of concepts able to frame vandalism against statues as a politically subversive, site-specific situated social performance, revealing tangible and intangible formations explored in depth through *Dramaturgical Analysis*. The choice of the relational approach presented by Merx and Nibbelink (2021) allows the researcher to map the conditions of the social performance such as *composition, spectator* and *context* and reveal meaning-making processes through thinking *statements, spectatorship*, and *situatedness*. In the last chapter, performance and archaeology converge on a new stage, the museum. Here, a dramaturgical analysis of the selected acts that compose our analytical object *The fall*, *Secret location* and *Resurgence* takes place, followed by a discussion on issues museums may be facing in the last decade and the potentialities offered by dramaturgical lenses to museum curatorial practices.

Indeed, Performance and archaeology as lenses were necessary for selecting theories and concepts to explain vandalism towards statues and heritage sites as a social performance. However, some terms in the analysis may vary. For instance, to conceptualise "iconoclastic

attacks", "destructive acts", or "acts of violence" was used to refer to "vandalism". In the analysis, "viewers", "citizens", and "the public" may refer to "spectators", while "active citizens" and "activists" may refer to "performers". Likewise, my position as a researcher may vary between spectator, dramaturg, archaeologist, and curator, sometimes without detaching one perspective from another.

1.1 Analytical object

The topple down of Edward Colston statue during Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol and its exhibition and archival at the local museum is the study case of this thesis. The case choice lies in its dramatic discourse as a social performance in which the artefact is seen as the lead performer, travelling through different situations of action and thought circles, from its staged attempt of destruction in the public space to its redisplay in an art institution. This context shift is considered a key point since it questions forms of collective cultural contestation and logging for social justice and the formation and display of cultural heritage. Social performances require selecting a route from point A to point Z[1]. The broader timeline of events[2] serves as a base to see which events occur between the starting point, the fall of the Colston statue, and its endpoint, the display and archival at Mshed Museum[3].

To implement the methodological approach, the case study is divided into three acts. 1) *The fall*: on June 7, 2020, protestors gathered around the statue. The statue is tagged with paint and toppled down. The group roll the statue through the street, heading to Pelos's bridge at Avon River. Protestors drop it inside the river.

---

[1] (Nibbelink and Merx 2021)
[2] See Appendix.
[3] Mshed Museum is part of Bristol Council Museums.

2) *Secret location*: on Jun 11, 2020, at six o'clock in the morning, the statue was recovered from the river by Bristol Council and brought to a secret location. While off-stage, the statue's plinth becomes occupied by activist citizens, anonymous and established artists.

3) *Resurgence*: on Jun 4, 2021, the statue reappears displayed at MShed Museum until Jan 3, 2022. The statue is currently archived, and its display is only available through a virtual exhibition.

1.2 Research question

The selection of acts regarding the fall of Edward Colston statue is situated in a protest event. Reframing this sequence of acts as the considered performative event, the main question of this research is posed: how can a dramaturgical analysis on subversive social performances, such as vandalism towards statues and monuments, provide insights on contemporary archaeology within museum curatorial practices?

Further, the following sub-questions draw the path to the answer. First, it is necessary to understand how social performances come into being. Narrowing it to the case study at stake, collective vandalism towards statues and monuments is destructive, although considered a constructive radical form of cultural and political contestation. Therefore, it is questioned: how are these encounters seen, rather, as politically subversive and generative social performances, and how are they formed? Secondly, how can Dramaturgy, usually applied in theatre and art performances, serve as an approach to enquiry about social performances outside and inside the museum? And ultimately, how do archaeology and dramaturgy insights converge with curatorial practices in museums and contribute to the latter's development? Indeed, the acts that compose the study case pose the path for these questions and may point out the contemporary relation between performance, archaeology, and curatorial practices.

1.3 Performance and performativity

Performance and Performance Art are well-known words since the 60's art movements and aesthetics literature, commonly used to describe a theatrical play, an opera or a concert. At the same time, Performativity gained popularity as a theoretical concept in an entirely different context, mainly by Butler's perspective on gender in the 90s. As a concept, Performativity shares borders with art, travelling through language and philosophy, although definitions remain blurred. What is performative in a performance? Despite complex, in *Travelling concepts in Humanities*, Mieke Bal (2002) attempts to map these routes to reveal differences and common points, which some I judge necessary to the study of our analytical object: the play of memory and intention.

Performance as the creation of a spectacle mainly concerns the implementation of artistic strategies in a unique execution of a work. In a performance, it is possible to identify the combination of a particular type of stage, a performer, and a spectator. Art performances can be seen as "a single occurrence of a repeatable, preexisting text or score"[4], a situated event that breaks the sense of predictability, precisely because it challenges the normality of everyday life social codes.

In contrast, in the vein of speech-act theory, *performativity* may essentially be defined as an aspect of a word that does what it says, a word that is "the act itself"[5], here and now. As well stated by Bal "on one side, the cynical, 'pure' performance, theatricality staged for delight, amuse¬ment, or brief outside sentiment; on the other side, the romantic, 'pure' Performativity, affect, doing something to arouse strong feeling" (p. 201). Therefore, it is understood that performance makes the conscious use of theatrical means and artistic

---

[4] (Bal 2002)
[5] (Bal 2002, 175)

strategies to uniquely communicate with the outer world. At the same time, Performativity seems to be activated through the embodiment of affect. Take the example of Butler's gender performativity, where gender is not seen as a performance, but as a performative entity.

It is observed that Performance and Performativity can, to a certain extent, be able to apply theatrical means at different levels. However, it is noted that it is by exploring memory and intention that the performativity turn becomes clear. Bal stresses that a performance would be unthinkable without memory and that it only comes into being by referring to memorised scores, gestures, expressions, a diction that fits the role. Even for improvisation, is necessary the pre-existence of a structure that will sustain it[6]. Intention, on the other hand, seems to contribute to emphasising the address to the spectator and the statements it may convey within the spectrum of artistic and social contexts.

The author also points out the situatedness of the performative. Memory and intention, when situated, connect the performative with culture and history. It concerns the past, although it happens in the present. Moreover, a performance will always refer to a memory of the performer, a memory that is culturally, socially, and politically embedded. Closer to the performativity turn, the author believes that memory and intention bridge the performance world with the cultural agency of the performance, where pre-defined theatrical roles may constantly shift. It is when tangible and intangible bodies become performative agents of the performance.

Moreover, while a staged situation will certainly make you think of something, the viewer's response to the performance address may occur by the encounter of the past work's making to the present situatedness of the viewer. In other words, the viewer's response is not necessarily pre-scripted in the performance. However, they may rely on the performativity of

---

[6] (Bal 2002, 176)

their memory alone, intertwined with the intentions the performance performativity may evoke. Therefore, through memory and intention, subjectivity emerges, and a stage in the social sphere is formed.

To conclude, a discussion on Bal (2002) performance and the performativity seeks to clarify the intersections between art performances and the so-called "social performances". Moreover, it prepares the terrain to conceptualise social performances related to violence and social injustices and their connection with archaeology and dramaturgy. Memory and intention seem to navigate through "walls made of porous skin"[7] in which the performative and the outer world connect, and matters of staging, spectatorship and social contexts become clear. Lastly, the performativity turn reinforces the situated cultural agency of performers and spectators, showing the presence of cultural memory and its radical contribution to shaping contemporary society.

1.4 Archaeology: an experience of the past in the present

"Images evoke, with connotation and association, and because they cannot be reduced to words. I am keen to explore this poetic" (Shanks, 2002, p. 35)

Images and remains from the past are, indeed, intriguing and seductive. They tease the scientific community, the public visits museums or heritage sites, and governments and institutions have used it as instruments for political strategy and national identity. Collecting human heritage and protecting it within unique places, such as museums, is seen as biased by a national interest in power and control of cultural representations rather than as a source of multi perspectives and cultural knowledge. It led museums to be perceived as institutions stuck in the idea of preservation of imperial power and pure scientific knowledge, resulting in

---

[7] (Kerkhoven 1994)

a collection of relics, objects and reports apparently frozen in time, rarely awakening genuine interest by the public. On the other side, the free interpretation of its display may contribute to holding museums "neutral" and, consequently, politically unaccountable.

In addition, the popularization of the artwork as a cultural product and the consumption of the past as entertainment called for a revisit on the state of archaeology as well the role of the archaeologist when collecting and displaying heritage. According to Shanks (2002), archaeology seems to have ignored the affects and meanings in which these findings resonate within archaeologists themselves and the community these objects and sites belong. The author proposes a challenge to pure reason and scientific discipline established in the creation of modernity "With the death of God as the omniscient narrator comes to a many-sided world, secret and unconscious worlds, paradox and ambiguity as opposed to single objective reality. What storytelling can now cope with the world?"[8] Indeed, life cycles, personal stories, memory, analogy, and the stir of imagination have been marginalized as a subjective response[9]. To a certain extent, stories with people, objects, places, and events have different levels of meaning, stressing the relevancy of archaeology as an experience and hoping for a more concrete and sensuous practice for and in the present. The objectivity of science and the subjectivity of humanities meet in an affirmative conflictual relation, also stressed by the author.

Pearson's contemporary insights of archaeology attempt to respond Shanks critique on pure reason while introducing my position as a researcher archaeologist. Ultimately, it stresses the performative aspect of staged formation and display of archaeology.

---

[8] (Shanks, Experiencing the past - On the character of 2005, 60)
[9] (Shanks, Experiencing the past - On the character of 2005, 58)

The unique event of the past, witnessed by the artefact, is seen as the performance, while its remains are seen as mere survival pieces, existing to remind us of the facts. However, fragments of heritage, when reassembled through a museum narrative, seem to create another performative stage for the public. The intersection of performance and archaeology is noted inside and outside the museum, and dramaturgy can serve as lenses to investigate this complexity.

Therefore, performance, as an ally to archaeology, or even archaeology as a performative discourse itself, seems to enrich understandings of material culture, resonating with the museum's role in contemporary society. The experience with the past can be seen as a play. At the same time, archaeologists are the actors who work in the text of a performance, releasing meanings constructed with the participation of an audience. To make sense, a dialogue is required between how it is performed, how intentions are enacted, the influence of the various situatedness, and how it resonates within social, political, and personal commitments.

Aligned with authenticity, a status of importance given to an object due to its survival through time, the construction of meaning highlights narrative significance and quality. Shanks states such quality as less about the representation of the past object or the understanding of the mechanics and functioning of the past but by "following its symbolic displacement, its translation and transference through different contexts, practices and experiences (…) this is an active making of sense, producing a meaning which was not there in the beginning"[10]. If archaeology tried, to an extent, to sterilize the past, its complexity is now embraced.

---

[10] (Shanks, Experiencing the past - On the character of 2005, 63)

2. Social performances and its subversive potential

In this chapter, attention is given to tangible and intangible formations of social performances in the public space that politically subvert institutionalized social norms. In the book Performance: a critical introduction, Carlson (2018) stresses the views of Goffman, Caillois and Schechner on the performative. The author starts posing Goffman's essential characteristic of social performances, in which an already meaningful set of happenings is isolated from established everyday life activities. Thus situating them in a different context may produce a new relation of meanings and statements.

This very nature of performance, as stated by the author, is seen as a "strip of experiences"[11], a set of acts that deserve attention from an audience due to their quality of subversion towards the outer world; thus, these acts have an effect in the audience. From theatre to social activist performances, protests may drive spectators to sensations of discomfort, elevating the experience of the social from the norms and conducts established by the architecture and power relations in the space. As Caillois beautifully puts it, "the emphasis here is upon subversion, the destruction of "stability," the turning of "lucidity" to "panic," brought about by a foregrounding of physical sensation, an awareness of the body set free from the normal structures of control and meaning" (cited in Carson, 2018), a quality not only seen in art performances or theatre, but also in doing collective vandalism. From Goffman's observations on the social, alongside the idea of staging, transformative performances are seen as "dialogical"[12], where different voices, values systems and aesthetic expressiveness are put into an agonist conversation with one another. It seems that a state of

---

[11] (Goffman 2004, 43)
[12] (Conquergood 2009)

play is created when social performativity and theatrical imagination converge and resonates in the outer world.

While Goffman highlights the subversive potential of specific events for social analysis, Schechner (1985) points out their cultural restoration potential. The author cites societal events such as rituals, aesthetic theatre, carnivals, and social contests as examples of "Restorative behaviour"[13], performances that work as a result of repetition and continued awareness of an 'original behaviour', in which corrupted by myth or memory, it serves as a ground for cultural restoration. This perspective helps us to frame modifications and interventions towards statues through the history of societies as performances that embody narratives and negotiate cultural representations and power relations through the repetitive alteration of images in the public space.

Additionally, theatre and semiotics studies focus on what, where, when, and how the performance makes sense in the world, while theorists of the social consider its purpose. In the vein of Burke, social performances can be, to a certain extent, intentional. The situation of a play, in the social script, allows performers and spectators to perform intended roles, not necessarily played in their everyday life.

To conclude, when observing Goffman's strips of experiences with the contributions of Schechner, Caillois and Burke, it is possible to foreground the play of subversive social performances as a half-real and half-play-acted shape[14], where counter-hegemonic dominance of social norms emerges. Moreover, the intention is seen as a key point in the encounter of spectators (for who), performers (who did) and the world (context) contributing to its formation and analysis, further unfolded and explored.

---

[13] (Schechner 1985, 35)
[14] (Carlson 2018, 35)

2.1 Encounter: I do it, now you do it.

"I articulate my activity, employing rhetorical practices, physical and vocal, in combinations and ratios unusual, unacceptable or even impossible in the everyday life" (Pearson, 2001, p. 16)

An encounter is seen as crucial for the happening of a subversive social performance. It is the moment where people meet people, and people meet the object. Pearson (2001) defines this type of encounter as performative bodies constantly experiencing/expressing/signifying, formed by heterogeneous abilities, traumas, taboos and desires. Impulses meet with others by instinct, instruction, or plan. In order to suspend or reinforce social differences, they agree to engage in extra-daily behaviours together, in a particular style or code. Corroborating with Pearson (2001), Elam (2002) stresses that performances in the public space tend to favour "sociopetal arenas"[15]. That is, when individuals are brought to a situation where they get together, "proxemic and haptic invasion and transgression and a change in status are more likely"[16]. A performance encounter, as a "condition of being with each other"[17], brings a complexity of knowledge, expectations, and survival strategies to the situation.

It is observed that subversive social performances are mostly collective, where relationships between spectators and performers, spectators and spectators, performers and performers are constrained by space in a constant negotiation of what can and what cannot be done.

---

[15] (Elam 2002)
[16] (Pearson, Theatre Archaeology 2001, 20)
[17] (Pearson, Theatre Archaeology 2001, 18)

2.2 Situatedness: the position of the spectator and performer

Archaeological objects, as well as social performances, do not happen in a vacuum. Indeed, the event, the object, performers, and the spectators make sense in a geographical and historical context. Haraway's (1988) perspectives on situated knowledges and politics of location argue that "the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular"[18]. In contrast to the idea of universality and relativity, Haraway's feminist approach to social science emphasises interpretation, critical thinking, and partiality as substantial grounds for knowledge production.

First, the author affirms that the embodiment of knowledge is locatable, and the body, either statue or human, is not seen as a thing, an individual or a resource, but as an agent. For instance, a biological body is seen as a conversation between the objective and subjective, forming and performing through socially, historically, gendered, and natural environmental differences. These boundaries, according to Haraway, materialise in social interaction. Therefore, the body shifts the attention from the individual as unique to be understood as a body formed by shared specificities situated in space and time.

Second, Gallagher (2018) corroborates with Haraway (1988), stating that situatedness is related to how we experience space and is shaped by the dynamic interaction between an embodied organism and its environment[19]. For instance, to understand the complex situation of a British-African living in the UK, it is necessary to consider erased cultural heritages, family relations and political realities in which that body engaged, as well as in which conditions this body is situated when knowledge was produced.

---

[18] (Haraway 1988)
[19] (Gallagher 2018, 20)

It is observed that subversive social performances are formed and performed through past-present living conditions. Therefore, situatedness is seen as essential to analysing and interpreting social performances. In contrast with the Eurocentric idea of universal knowledge, the authors contribute by stating that performative and archaeological situations are rather seen as heterogeneous and specific.

2.3 Site and place: the manipulation of space

More than an organizational principle, space is understood as a condition for the performance. The opposite may be true, when a performance creates the space, a temporal area of playing, a *stage*, where happenings add meanings to a structure already there. As stated by Pearson (2001), "the experience for ten people standing on a bed sheet is somewhat different from people standing in the desert!"[20] Indeed, when arrangements of an event are yet to be demonstrated, it may pose choices for the audience. For instance, if they would start to perform as manipulators of space rather than passively watchers of others doing it.

Tschumi (1984) stresses the link between space and events. The architect describes the intrusion of individuals in controlled spaces as acts of violence since performative bodies not only violate controlled spaces, but also generate it by and through a sequence of usages, activities, and incidents brought into spatial architectures[21]. For the author, space and event constantly transgress each other's rules, where it is not clear who came first, movement or space. However, despite the non-implicit hierarchy, this relationship may be asymmetrical in some cases, where space or people clearly dominate each other.

---

[20] (Pearson, Theatre Archaeology 2001, 21)
[21] (Tschumi and Marche 1984)

Further, the relationship between space and people may evoke the idea of place.

Following Pearson's notions on site-specific performances[22], social performances are seen as

conditioned by the coexistence of various specific architectures and personal and historical

narratives, human and non-human[23]. Place is primarily understood as a portion of land, a city

landscape, in which an individual invests bits of emotional life[24]. Therefore, this idea seems

to animate and reenact personal memory, stories and human marks made in the space that

provokes and evokes. Through performance lenses, Pearson (2010) invites us to see events

and places to a deeper level, where interactions with space are not only organized socially but

personally.

To conclude, statues and monuments are seen as part of the urban architecture,

functioning within power relations of space but also embedded in the notion of place. Thus,

people's interventions in the space architecture intersect with place and its particularities.

Presence and absence of a statue are a reminder of something, a sequence of events or a

particular one related to that place and community, such as its uprise and decay.

 In addition, the spectator's choice to interact seems to question the politics of

movement and space, and their performative condition is where poetics may be revealed.

2.4 Notions on vandalism: people and statues

This section proposes an address to violence against statues and its representation, an

essential characteristic of the study case at stake as a social performance. The attack on

---

[22] (Pearson, Site-specific performance 2010) The author focuses on the relation of complexities of the space and artistic performances, although this relationship seems to serve as lenses for inquiry social performances.
[23] (Pearson, Site-specific performance 2010)
[24] (Lippard 1997)

images and representations in the public space is seen as highly political, where the nature of the object and the purpose of the attack is put into question.

Nowadays, vandalism is recognized as a willful and unauthorized modification of any property in the public space, including commemorative artefacts, memorials, buildings, and monuments. Despite commonly perceived as senseless acts of disorder, irrationality, and rage[25], scholars identify the causes of aggression as a way of expressing oneself and having a sense of power over objects that symbolize societal institutions that have power over them[26]. When evoking not only political but performative lenses, such acts of destruction are not seen as evil per se when meaning and purpose[27] come to the fore. Sabine Marschall (2017) problematizes this contradiction, pointing out how the law-and-order enforcement definition of vandalism potentially disguises political conflict or delegitimizes society discontent, especially in a sociopolitical context in which structural racism, marginalization of communities and the celebrative historical precedents are intertwined. It is observed that vandalism is a social performance intrinsically related to the oppression of a marginalized community. Thus, historical and economic contexts are particularly determinant of how the State and the public make sense of such urban interventions.

Further in purpose, Gamboni (1997) and Latour (2002) invite to discuss *Iconoclasm*, a concept to describe acts of destruction against art objects that stand for venerated political or religious institutions in power, historically practised by radicals in social movements. However, Latour actualizes the concept, proposing a semantic shift: while in an Iconoclasm, the motivations for what appears to be an explicit project of destruction are clear; in an *Iconoclash*, "one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by an action for which there is

---

[25] (Marschall 2017)
[26] (Cohen 1973)
[27] (Gamboni 1997)

no way to know, without further inquiry, whether it is destructive or constructive"[28]. In other words, Latour poses an ethical rather than a moral question regarding vandalism, focusing on the motivations that drive such encounters. Iconoclash seems to stress a conflictual relationality, a clash, in which groups expose their beliefs in a context through a communication process. Offering an affirmative view to the dominant idea of vandalism as something purely negative, the author provokes insights about destructive acts as constructive in meaning, functioning as cultural restoration. As stressed by Gamboni, artefacts are not neutral, provoking an emotional and political response from their viewers.

Moreover, Marschall (2017) highlights how destructive acts against statues point to processes of marking and conserving, leading to the display and archival of remains in museums or heritage sites. Which traces of the past deserve conservation and protection, and what is worth destroying? It is an ongoing question for archaeologists and curators since heritage creation seems inherently connected with events of violence and pain.

Image-making, as much as image-breaking, expand discussions on the frame of vandalism as a social performance. Ultimately, it points out exhibition-value and societal relevancy debates within the practice of curating and displaying survival remains, further discussed in this thesis. Further, Dramaturgy steps up as the methodological approach that investigates the bridge between the social performance of the past and its reenactment in the archaeological museum.

---

[28] (Latour and Weibel 2002)

2.5 Methodology: Dramaturgical Analysis

In specialized literature, performances are generally discussed as case studies for theatre and performance theory, although it is not seen in much depth in the analysis of situated social performances. For that, I chose as a prime methodological source Dramaturgical Analysis: a relational approach proposed by Nibbelink and Merx (2021), where the performative conditions of the case study at stake are explored in detail.

For Snow (1986), the scope of dramaturgical analysis is "associated with the social construction and communication of meaning, including formulating roles and characterizations, managing performance regions, controlling information, sustaining dramatic tensions, and orchestrating emotions"[29]. Therefore, the relevancy of this method for this research is based on the following: 1) The authors emphasize its relationality, allowing the performance analysis beyond staging; 2) As stated before, there is no example of the applicability of the method for other than art performance in the literature consulted. However, this use is suggested by the authors and therefore explored in this thesis; 3) The choice of what to focus on in the analysis depends on what the performance foregrounds and the positionality of the analyst-researcher, stated through the theoretical framework. For instance, what perspective one wants to show in the analysis; 4) Dramaturgical Analysis applies to events either from the past or in the present. By exploring "what happened", dramaturgy invites us to remap and reimagine the performance of the past while allowing the study of both documentation and exhibition of remains in the present.

---

[29] Snow et al (1986) cited at (Jones 2020)

To start, Nibbelink and Merx (2021) suggest the employment of interconnected *Planes of dramaturgy*[30], namely *composition, spectator*, and *context*, further explored in detail, to discuss how the arrangement and interpretation of the meaningful coherence of all theatrical means are employed in time and space, and ultimately, how their interplay generates meaning and experience.
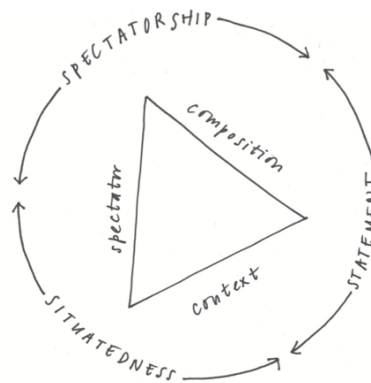

Figure 2. Planes of dramaturgy.

Nibbelink and Merx. 2021. Planes of dramaturgy, 2021.

2.5.1 Planes of dramaturgy: composition, spectator and context

The *compositional plane* refers to the theatrical strategies employed to organize and arrange the performance in space and time. When a stage is formed, bodies and materials engage with various specific movements and positions in space. Following the architect Bernhard Tschumi words, dramaturgy, like in architecture, comprehends "the deliberate deployment of structure to provoke and enable live events"[31]. Indeed, scholars see

---

[30] The authors opt for 'plane' instead of 'layer' to evoke a sense of spatiality. For them, 'plane' indicates a domain, area or *denkpiste*, as the Flemish so aptly put it; a "thinking arena" for playing around with ideas and observations, which is open to interference by other planes.
[31] (Tschumi and Marche 1984)

composition as the 'texture' of the 'architectural tissue' of the performance, which is meaningful itself, thus often offering a particular point of view to the spectator. Therefore, composition questions how all the structures and organizational principles such as movements, objects, costumes, sound, and extra theatrical elements operate in a performance where public or private spaces build conditions for staging.

On the other hand, *spectator plane* focus on how the experience is addressed to the spectator, and which specific sensations and affects are suggested. As Nibbelink (2019) stresses in *Nomadic theatre*, spectators do not occupy the binary position of watching or participating but as an "ambulant" form of active participation in meaning-making processes. The author does not refer to spectators as a reception, an audience; instead, they are individually addressed. Bleeker (2008) theory on spectator's address, in *Visuality in the theatre*, highlights that they are invited to adopt a particular point of view from what is being performed on stage. The *subject of vision* argues that spectators can identify themselves or disagree with what is being suggested by the performance, the *subject seen*. For instance, do spectators feel confronted, frustrated, or welcomed to engage? These experiences are seen as the result of identification or collision between the subject seen and the subject of vision.

The *context plane* concerns the "outer world", the social, political, artistic or economic forces surrounding the performance and how these contribute to the specificity of experiences and future interpretations. As Turner and Behrndt (2008) states, "if dramaturgy concerns the architecture of the theatrical event, we need to look at how a performance is situated within the context of a community, society and the world"[32]. While context draws broader societal conditions of the performance, situatedness is concerned with the spectator experience of it, further discussed in the next section.

---

[32] (Behrndt and Turner 2006, 35)

2.5.2 Planes of analysis: spectatorship, statements and situatedness

A performative event always involves a composition, a spectator, and the context from which it emerges. However, the dramaturgical approach goes beyond spectatorial conditions; thus, matters of *spectatorship*, *situatedness*, and possible *statements* conveyed can be discussed.

Spectatorship invites the discussion on how the performance builds a position for the spectator. Bleeker (2008) suggests two ways in which the spectator can be addressed: *theatrically*, when the performance deploys a specific argument, revealing how the spectator is actively involved in the process of meaning-making and *absorption*, when traces of mediation are erased, and the spectator is drawn into the stage[33]. In fact, even though social performances tend to absorb spectators, they can also be invited to perform theatrically.

In the context of social dissent, statements of different shapes can be conveyed. Statements reveal what the performance is trying to say and how this is achieved by the performance. Acts can question, criticize, or propose an alternative for the 'outer world'. Statements are assumptions or propositions narrowly resonating with particular societal contexts.

Within Dramaturgy theory, *Situatedness* has an impact on how the spectator makes sense of a performance based on their lived experience in relation to societal contexts. Additionally, it impacts not only the watchers, but the they perform when occupying the stage. This plane of analysis primarily acknowledges the specific social, cultural, economic, and political conditions people live in when socially defined by race, class, gender or physical and psychological capacities. Situatedness can make the spectator fully identify with the

---

[33] (Bleeker 2008, 21)

point of view presented by the performance, and it "might produce a sense of empowerment, especially when this viewpoint relates to a minority perspective"[34]. As seen before, vandalism is a social performance closely related to socially oppressed groups; thus, situatedness play an essential part in identifying specific affects and memories in the formation of the study case of this thesis.

As advised by Nibbelink and Merx (2021), the analysis can combine planes of dramaturgy with planes of analysis, with the possibility of building an particular route, depending on what perspective the analyst-researcher wants to explore. The next chapter put dramaturgical analysis into practice and discuss the common grounds between archaeology and performance.

---

[34] (Nibbelink and Merx 2021, 9)

3. Performance and archaeology convergences

In the so far analysis and literature, it is observed that performance and archaeology are both liminal and heterotopic[35], happening in a convoluted non-linear temporality, and both can construct intimate relations with the formation of space and context, producing poetic and embodied impressions in the plural construction of reality.

To a certain extent, Colston statue can be seen as a performativity of entropy and loss, destruction and construction, death and resurrection – a life cycle of a statue that insists on resisting destruction. The destructive aspect of vandalism is seen as affirmative: it contests cultural representations, exposes present postcolonial struggles and proposes significant political inputs. On one side, a unique happening of a social performance in which the statue's meaning is socially and politically actualized. On the other, the museum encapsulates the performative past in the present through new assemblages.

3.1 Fragments and heterogeneous assemblages

It is observed that both archaeology and performance deal with fragments, surviving traces, documentation, and representation. When thinking remains dramaturgically, beyond the frame of pure reason and scientific evidence, it is possible to see its composition as an assemblage of actions, places, ideologies, and intentions orchestrated in time and space. Dramaturgy as an act of assemblage[36] indicates that, inside and outside the museum, fragments are arranged in a performance to make sense. Then, it is rearranged in another order, ranging from documentary photographs, the memory of participants and collected survival remains. Therefore, observing the case study at stake, the museum is where this

---

[35] Foucault term to define certain cultural, institutional, and discursive spaces that are somehow 'other': disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory or transforming.
[36] (Pearson, Theatre Archaeology 2001)

rearrangement establishes itself. It is in the museum that archaeological and performative conjunctures form as complex pieces of evidence, awaiting to be reinterpreted, reassembled and recontextualized.

Indeed, marks left by human beings in contemporary society can take different shapes. On one side, it is observed the remaining pieces of objects, messages sprayed on a wall, art installations as a response and the actualization of urban landscapes. On the other, photographs from spectators' phones, video recordings from global newspapers, and Twitter messages work as an archive. Although, in the museum, the linear notion of time and space is elevated to another experience, where the visitor can experience reality differently.

As seen before, social performances can be closely related to locatable heritage, where convergences with archaeology outside the museum are seen. However, it is by entering the institutional context of the museum that the study, practice and display of archaeology are highlighted, subsequently intersecting with curating practices. As follows, Dramaturgical analysis is applied in the study case at stake, where performative and archaeological dimensions of collective vandalism, confluence.

3.2 The fall: investigating spectatorship

"The fall" foregrounds the spectator's address and shift of positions when performing the topple down of the statue, thus resulting in a succession of relevant compositional interactions. When investigating matters of spectatorship, it is inevitable to touch upon the spectator's situatedness and its relation to global-local contexts.

In 2020, the world experienced a staged police brutality that resulted in the death of an innocent black man, George Floyd, culminating in a series of vandalism against statues during protests. Social Media and the news were instantly filled with astonishing images of Floyd, alongside burning cars, broken statues and sprayed walls. In Bristol, where anti-racist

and anti-imperialist protests are not new, approximately eleven thousand spectators of movements logging for social justice around the world occupied Bristol streets in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The plinth is surrounded by spectators holding written posters and speechmaking statements such as "Black Lives Matter", "The UK is not innocent", and "White silence = violence". In the meantime, the fall of the statue is performed. Performers leave the position as spectators and climb the plinth to smear red paint on the statue's face while enlacing strings around the statue's head and feet. Strings are collectively pulled by others on stage, making the statue fall and shocking the pavement. Spectators surrounding the plinth respond with a celebratory moment of victory.

Figure 1. The Guardian, 2020.

The statue remains on the ground, still, next to its plinth, partially damaged, for more than an hour. A group of twenty anonymized performers, followed by spectators in their background, move Colston statue for approximately 650 meters. They roll the statue over Anchor Road until Pero's Bridge by using only their bodies.

Figure 2. The Guardian, 2020

At Pero's bridge[37], the statue is thrown inside Avon River, a movement uncommonly seen in the vandalism of statues. By holding strings attached for its fall, the statue is carefully hanged in the harbour border for a few seconds before being released inside the river. Spectators watch it sinking with a sense of delight. That is when Colston statue is officially

---

[37] Pero's bridge was at the time the only monument dedicated to the memory of slaves during colonial period. (Booth, the untold story of Pero's Bridge 2020)

"murdered" by the participants, disappearing from the public gaze. Some spectators

participate as in-site watchers; some get close to the stage holding signs, and others seem

willing to participate in the "rolling statue" choreography. Spectators take photos with their

phones, posting on social media.

Figure 3. The Guardian, 2020

Spectators are identified as the citizens of Bristol experiencing frustration and

displacement by the daily confrontation with celebratory statues related to slavery and

imperialism displayed in public spaces, alongside social injustices taking place as its legacy.

On one side, the performance composition seems to arouse and welcome curious passersby,

activist citizens, politicians, and journalists. On the other, it positions part of spectators as

adversaries, such as the police and the state. The conflict presented by the subject of vision

invites spectators and performers to share a mix of senses such as pain, rage, disgust,

euphoria, tension, fear, passion, and hope. It is observed that spectators who watch the

conflict in-site or through a technological apparatus participate either as performers on stage

or as spectators in its surroundings. When exploring composition, it is inevitable to question

decision-making processes when performers leave the position of spectators and occupy the

stage. For instance, was the toppling down of the statue scripted or was it a decision

spontaneously made on stage? Were decisions taken collectively? What does marking the

statue's face with paint means? And why do people want the statue to disappear from the

public gaze by hiding it underwater instead of leaving it toppled down or even burning it, as

happened with other statues in the US? Why, later, were performers identified as criminals?

Indeed, this compositional logic reinforces a "passion for the real"[38] driven by unmediated

confrontations with an ugly reality. Through a collective vandalism act, it is claimed the

desire for social, political, and public representational change here and now. No more later.

The given societal context is marked by the culmination of radical and unexpected

alterations in the urban public space. For instance, protests such as Rhodes Must Fall at the

University of Cape Town in South Africa (2015) and the decapitation of Lenin's head statue

during Ukrainian protests (2013), are recent demonstrations of public dissent involving

actions of contestation, transformation and removal of a monument from the urban space as

means for political struggle. The fall of statues is a phenomenon recognized by scholars as

"Urban Fallism"[39], in addition to the popularization of political iconoclasm. In the last

decades, Post-colonialism in South Africa, Post-imperialism in Europe and wars in the

Middle East seem to stress the seeking of democracy and social justice through processes of

decolonization and radical politics.

---

[38] (Pauwels 2019)
[39] (Frank and Ristic 2020)

Black Lives Matter movements expanded exponentially to global scale protest, although it awakes the local, specific knowledges. It invites spectators to engage with their personal and collective memory, history, and social wounds. Colston representation is divisive because it was erected to celebrate his philanthropic achievements for the development of the city of Bristol. However, his role as an Atlantic slave trader, who contributed to the trade of almost ninety thousand Africans (of which twenty per cent died on the way)[40], questioned the statue's presence and its meanings in contemporary society. Thus, the situatedness of spectators deemed part of marginalized groups foregrounds the relationship of structural impoverishment of the black community with race, ethnicity, social class, and political inequities. For instance, during #RhodesMustFall protests, students took the opportunity to use the local public space and the broader socio-political discussion to denounce the living conditions of many people of colour in a dominant white western society. Maxwelle, for example, stresses that "We want white people to know how we live. We live in poo. I am from a poor family, we are using portaloos. (…) I have to give Cecil Rhodes a poo shower and whites will have to see it…" (2015). Concomitantly, spectators considered white-British might question the construction of their privilege and White Innocence[41] due to the historical consumption and exploitation of the non-white "Other"[42]. Situatedness lenses stress that politically conservative spectators, for instance, may feel intimidated or attacked, claiming "reverse-racism"[43] or trying to delegitimize acts that challenge hegemonic power relations.

---

[40] (Colston n.d.)
[41] (Wekker 2016)
[42] (Said 2003)
[43] (Ansell 2013) Term first seen in South Africa as "reverse-apartheid".

Finally, matters of spectatorship are addressed. "The fall" challenges the spectator's positionalities in a deep, personal sense, to the point that for some of them, the absorption to the stage is inevitable. Both performers and spectators feel the urge to express an intention as well as a political position. They identify, question, plan, improvise and play with the materiality. Performers seem invited to 'de-sublime' images, reducing problematic artefacts to their basic interests, disposing monuments and statues from their respectable aura, reminding them of their complicity with socio-political issues, and leaving a tangible as well as an intangible mark. Traces of mediation between spectators and performers, stages and places, institutional and non-institutional appear blurred. An in-site performance promotes a close and actively encounter of performers and spectators where a shift of roles may happen. For Pearson (2021), "there is no distance between action and its repercussion"[44]. In addition, it points out the ability of spectators and performers to change locations, creating multiple stages after being drawn by an apparently existing one, as pointed out by Bleeker's absorption theory.

It is observed that the spectator's social role and situatedness may interfere with how the performance is understood. On the one hand, "The Fall" points out that elaborated affects are seen in the achievement of social justice through immediate, radical interventions. It invites us to feel fear but to overcome it with courage. For some spectators, performers are seen as "heroes", and despite the attributed frame of vandalism, on "the right side of the story"[45]. On the other hand, performances that alter the site architecture are mostly seen as criminal damage or vandalism. Law enforcement and government policies seem to disregard the historical context of the object concerning the actual intentions of such destructive acts, as

---

[44] (Pearson, Site-specific performance 2010, 177)
[45] (Colston n.d.)

well as its affirmative side as a cultural restoration. For instance, the Daily Mail newspaper cover of June 8th, 2020, stamps a photograph of the moment which Colston is dropped into the river with the title "Lawless and Reckless"[46], and Boris Johnson, the UK prime minister, stated that "it is a crime against the council"[47], framing performers as criminals. However, Isin (2019) says that "for acts of citizenship to be acts at all they must call the law into question, and they may, sometimes, break it" (p. 382). This conflictual position stresses how institutional forces may influence how fellow spectators perceive a social performance. Thus, it is observed that spectators seem to perform their social roles accordingly. Others, on the contrary, feel invited to challenge their social role by interacting with performers on stage.

In addition, a spectator's situatedness may interfere with how spectators become performers. Who does feel entitled to perform a toppling down of a statue, and who does not? On one side, the spectator, identified as an African descendant, may feel more intimidated about challenging social norms due to the history of colonization, where marginalization and fear are embedded in memory. On the other, spectators considered white British possibly feel a sense of guilt and shame, being drawn into action not only to repair mistakes of their past generations but to highlight discontent with their history and the desire to make justice to it.

To conclude, dramaturgical discussion on spectatorship is interested in observing movements and interactions of people on stage, the spectator-performer formation and lastly, how their situatedness and social roles influence the way they are addressed by and participate in the performance.

---

[46] (Camber 2020)
[47] (York 2022)

3.3 Secret location: exploring context

"Secret location" is the act that succeeds "The Fall". The temporal absence of the statue promotes the play of political and artistic contexts through new compositional settings in the empty plinth, where spectators may be addressed in different ways.

Approximately four days after "The Fall" was performed, at 6 AM of 11th June 2020, a person operating a machine pulls the statue out of the Avon river and brings it to an unknown location. This first compositional setting indicates the offstage of the statue while highlighting the statue's recovery performance by the state. Despite being out of the public eyes, the statue's presence is sensed, and spectators are aware of its reappropriation by institutional forces.
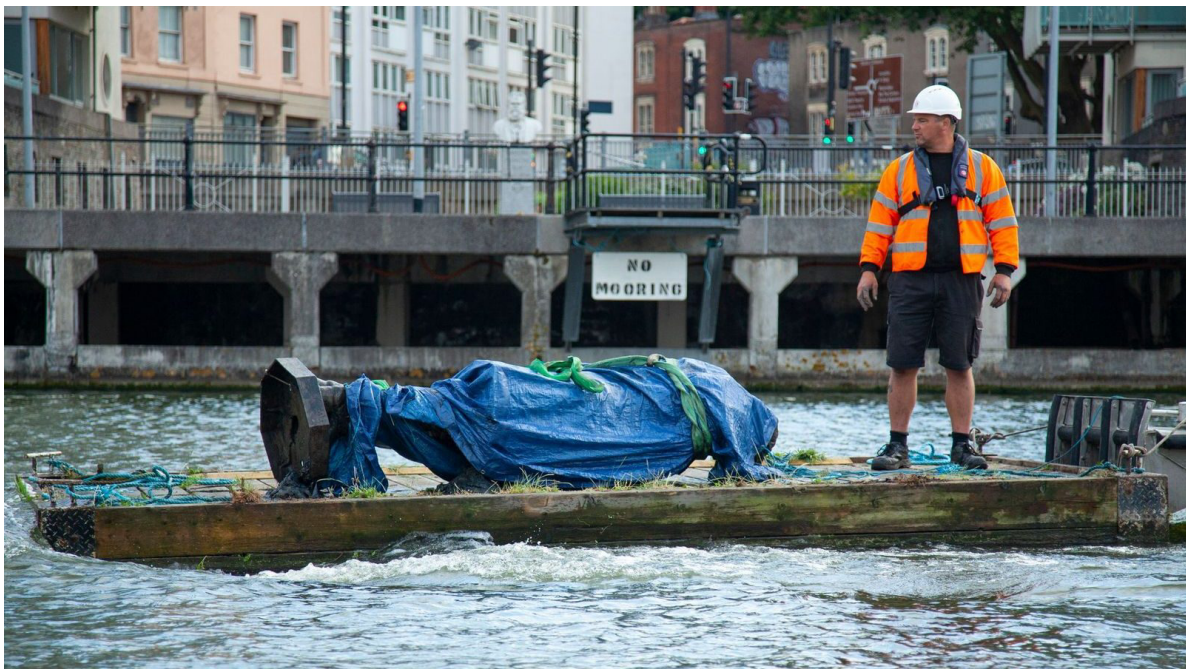

Figure 3. Bristol Live, 2020

As much as presence, absence may serve as a blank canvas for artists to perform more elaborative and non-authorized forms of cultural contestation, extending the discussion on

racism and social injustices. New aesthetic assemblages occupy the empty plinth as a stage, indicating the status of political and contemporary art contexts.

The first intervention appearance is the installation "Fat Bald Man"[48], a sculpture of a human male stuck inside a wheelie bin trash. On one hand, the figure is holding a globe, and on the other, a mobile phone with a text stating "England for the English". The text "Spoiler: St. George was Turkish" is printed in the bin structure, presumably indicating to English patriots commemorating St. George's Day that he was not English but Turkish. The whole sculpture is painted in grey and placed anonymously right next to the empty plinth.

Figure 4. The Guardian, 2020

[48] (Duel 2020)

This artistic intervention captures spectators' attention as it is seen as apart from the architecture of everyday life. They may feel intrigued, questioning, "what is it?", "what does it do?" or "is this art?". For a moment, spectators are deliberately invited to enter the artistic realm, getting involved in the mystery and the game presented by the politics of aesthetics[49]. Additionally, it draws spectators to their situatedness, making them question matters of nationalism and cultural identity. What does it mean to be British? What does it mean to be Turkish? And what does it imply in the context of Brexit? Indeed, the statements it deploys are not always linear or straightforward, although insightful interpretations are observed.

Another relevant intervention is "The surge of power"[50] by the artist Marc Quinn. The life-size statue of the activist Jed Reid, raising the clenched fist in a Black Power salute[51] during #BLM movements, occupies the plinth. The resemblance with Colston statue's design and location pictures Jen's statue as an alternative for the future of celebratory statues and monuments in the public space. Additionally, this artistic statement invites to establish a sense of cultural empowerment and to belong to a group considered oppressed, functioning as a counter-hegemonic form of representation. In the words of Jed Reid (2020), "it stands for Black people like me. It's about Black children seeing it up there. It's something to feel proud of, to have a sense of belonging because we actually do belong here, and we're not going anywhere"[52], which marks a meaningful addition to Black epistemologies regarding the dominance of white western stories and representations.

---

[49] (Rancière 2003)
[50] (Quinn and Reid 2020)
[51] (Duffield 2020)
[52] (Quinn and Reid 2020)

Figure 5. Matt Dunham/The Associated Press, 2021

It is observed that both compositional logics elaborate sensations that create a tension between art and practices of cultural contestation, specifically on politics of representation and public commemoration. While the iconic composition of "The fall" is marked by angry, confrontational, and iconoclastic features, "Secret location" seems to propose more elaborated and artistic forms of political contest. Both "Fat Bald Man" and "A surge of power" are considered an alternative to dominant forms of "decolonial cultural activism"[53]. Indeed, they seem to propose a sense of "sublimation" instead of "desublimation", creating a sphere of aesthetic endeavours and less obvious affects. Similar artistic forms of contestation are observed during protests in South Africa and the US, such as Msezane's (2017) performance "Chapangu: the day Rhodes Fell" (2015)[54]. Situated artistic forms of

---

[53] (Pauwels 2019)
[54] (Msezane 2015)

contestation seem to promote the integration of playfulness with sensorial, memorial, and historical dimensions regarding the ongoing struggle against colonial legacies.

As seen in "The Fall", radical and illegal interventions in the urban public space follow the idea of *political-timing*[55], which invites spectators to question, claim and enact their citizenship actively. In addition to the art installations seen before, another composition is created when citizen-spectators approximate the artist's behaviour. Isin (2009) consider "activist citizens"[56] who usually follow existing daily paths to perform political subjectivity creatively, proposing *democratization of borders*[57] between the personal and the political. This group of spectators answer the justice by creating, for example, a survey box in their neighbourhood, where residents can vote for the change of streets and local business titles related to Colston's legacy. In addition, they made design changes to street signs, writing new titles over the previous ones by hand. These modifications convey the idea of erasing all Edward Colston "belongings" while proposing radical, although more elaborative changes in the urban politics of representation.

The conjecture of the contemporary arts and political timing frame the artistical context of "Secret location". Claire Bishop (2019) discusses the term upon site-specific performances that sits between the activist artist and the social dissent. A *political-timing art*[58] engages socially by presenting a contradiction to the spectator or proposing a solution regarding the political landscape of now. Take the example of the intervention called "Ensacamento" (Bagging, free translation) by the Brazilian art collective 3NOS3 (Sao Paulo, 1979-1982). Artists covered several statues head had their heads covered in black bin bags

---

[55] (Bruguera 2019)
[56] (Isin 2009)
[57] (Balibar 2004)
[58] (Bishop 2019)

during the night. In contrast to traditional Western rubrics of activism and public art, Bishop (2019) stresses that artists can think like politicians to a certain extent. Political timing art interventions seem to sit between the endeavours of the artistic with radical, self-initiated, urgent and daring performances and installations.

The dramaturgical triad applied in "Secret location" ultimately discusses how presence, as much as the "absence" of the statue, activates artistic and political context's performativity. Both anonymous and non-anonymous artists leave the spectator's position and use the empty plinth to perform, highlighting alternative ways to dominant forms of activism and logging for social change. Through creative assemblages, the artistic realm emerges in the empty plinth and other stages as a response to "The Fall" and suggests possibilities for the future. Further, the recovery and preservation of the statue radically changes the composition and seems to activate the performativity of the statue in another context, the museum.

3.4 Resurgence: exploring composition at Mshed Museum

Further in the last act of this analysis, "Resurgence" foregrounds a new stage, the museum. Indeed, this change of context can be framed as a post-performance momentum, where fragments are collected and archived. However, it can also be understood as another performative experience, by re-assembling objective and subjective survival fragments displayed within the art world.

It is observed that Mshed, as a local history museum, seems to take the position of mediator. The transition from public to private spaces highlights the power of the institutional architecture, designed to protect, conserve, display, contextualize and archive the remains of the performance. Within the museum world, a set of conducts and rules reorganize spectators

and objects in space. A "museum attitude"[59] is settled between other spectators and artefacts, where they make sense of social performances inside the museum environment. In the last part of the analysis, dramaturgy is concerned with how spectators experience the performance within the museum setting and what the exhibition design tries to communicate through its documenting, curating and displaying practices.

The composition starts with the statue exiting the secret location and reappearing indoors, staged in a temporary exhibition at Mshed Museum in Bristol. The acquired marks from "The Fall", such as the splash of red painting on the face and "prick" tagged in blue paint, remain. Strings attached to the head and feet have been removed, and the mud covering his body when pulled out of the river is wiped off. The statue is placed in a horizontal position, as it was found, and inside a coffin shape glass box.

Figure 6. Mshed Museum, 2021.

---

[59] (Lehn 2013)

The glass box is located in the centre of the white room, surrounded by approximately six panels with static and moving images regarding the fall of Colston and other statues during #BLM protests. At the entrance of the room, a "What's next?" campaign report is posed to the visitor, followed by Colston's biography and a timeline of historical facts regarding the life of Colston and the statue, since it was erected in 1895 until it topples down, in 2020. Further in the room, a panel with text and images from Black Lives Matter protests and replicas of protestor's signs, such as "I can't breathe" and "Racism is a pandemic too", hang on the wall next to images of other statues modifications and interventions during Black Lives Matter protests, both image-breaking, such as the burning of George Washington statue, and image-making, such as "The surge of power". Media covering, including websites and newspaper titles, are electronically projected on the wall. The white room has an extensive glass window facing the Avon River, where the statue was found.

Inevitably, radical social performances tend to resonate online almost immediately, either because of their viral potential or the necessity of archival. Indeed, online platforms serve as a communication tool for activists, a place where "The fall" was scripted and planned. In "Resurgence", the online works as a replica of the physical museum exhibition. After the "What's next" survey and exhibition closure, a dedicated website[60] to the Colston fall was launched, in which spectators can navigate through the physical exhibition space in a tridimensional online experience. The visitor can control how to move inside the room, zoom in and out on information panels, have access to photographs and texts about the fall of the statue, and find formal education about slavery and colonialism, access to Countering Colston decolonial movement, Bristol Radical History, Bristol History Commission websites and so on. It is observed that the online can also serve as a mode of archival and display.

---

[60] (Museum 2022)

By the classic museum set of rules and display script, spectators may be seen as passive watchers, but they do not necessarily follow that attribution, as affirmed by Vom Lehn (2013). The audience may experience and understand the museum performance in different ways and even create a response to it. For example, discontent spectators wish the statue back to its first stage, the plinth. They created an online campaign, "Save Our Statues", which sees the exhibition at Mshed as a "celebration of criminal violence and mob rule"[61]. The idea was to fully book the slots for visitation at the museum, preventing other visitors from seeing the statue, as an act of boycott of the exhibition. A tweet from "SaveOurStatues" account says "Done with pleasure. Let's get organised and block out the entire exhibition"[62]. Others criticise the boycott campaign, such as the retweet of We are Bristol Commission "See how the Reactionaries are trying to stop anyone seeing the Colston display at @mshedbristol. It's too much for them that in a democratic society, people can choose to visit it for themselves and see the wider history, rather than the narrow narrative from the Colston Cult."[63] Interestingly, despite this thesis's focus on in-site performance, dramaturgical analysis can also investigate how a performance resonates online.

Mediatised by the museum, the object and its narrative are recontextualised, proposing a new experience for the spectator. The exhibition composition seems to stir the imagination about what happened, what it represents and the political significance of its display and redisplay. For instance, the glass box, as part of the architecture of the stage, may position the spectator as an observer, as the piece displayed cannot be any longer modified as it was in the public space, corresponding to the museum's set of rules.

---

[61] (SaveOurStatues 2021)
[62] Ibid
[63] (Booth, B24/7 - MShed tickets blocked in attempt to prevent people seeing Colston Satatue 2021)

The display seems to question political positionalities regarding the event of the past and museum participation. Restaging the object as it was found makes it evident that the museum attempted to document the event as history happens. Despite painful for colonised spectators wishing the statue vanished from existence, its display seems to highlight the contrast between the reasons it was erected in the first place and why its fall was so necessary for a postcolonial context. Indeed, some spectators may still feel intrigued by the display, questioning which side the museum is complacent regarding the preservation of the statue since the people's will was to destroy it.

Likewise, spectators may or may not identify with the subject of vision, being aroused to choose a side: to be "on the right side of the story" and support protestors or condemn their conduct. Therefore, they may have time to wonder and reflect, for example, if vandalism is justifiable as retributive justice or a form of activism. The display highlights the participation of activist citizens during "The fall" and "Secret location" and what kind of actions institutional roles, such as police, politicians and even archaeologists, agreed or disagreed to do. For instance, four protestors went to trial to respond criminally to the statue's topple down. At the same time, after years of neglecting the work of decolonial activists, the government takes the opportunity to revise national statues and monuments connected to colonial legacies in the country. As observed, it activates the ethics of retribute justice and how it substantially contributes to achieving social change. Indeed, smashing a statue is seen as the last call to get political attention deserved towards unsustainable power abuses, social inequities and race discrimination. Despite being commonly seen as destructive, the attack turned the statue into a materialised memory of a specific set of moves and situated meanings. Thus, it may be in the silence of the museum that the archaeological assemblage is recontextualised, interpreted and elevated into a new space and time experience.

As extensively discussed before, race, social class and economic factors define spectators' situatedness, and it may orient their understanding towards the subject of vision in the museum. The display sits between a frame of revenge and social justice, which evokes questions about the spectator's political and ethical positionalities. In turn, the museum display as a performance seems helpful in fostering critical thinking and informal education about colonialism and its legacies in contemporary society. According to the "What's next" survey report[64], the museum seems to provide explanation and room for interpretation while inviting to think about decolonisation practices on politics of representation and cultural modes of activism. Despite actively participating in the discussion, it is noted the maintenance of political neutrality within the museum practice.

Regarding the historical context of museums, a crisis of identity and community engagement seems to face museums since the 90s. Anti-imperialist scholars like Haraway (1984) criticise the museum as a "cultural authority", stating that "museums embodied power, knowledge of white and capitalism"[65]. On an abstract level, museums are defined as a public democratic institutions working on pursuing science, scholarly and publication, as well as the collection, preservation, study, interpretation, and exhibition of "material evidence regarding human marks"[66]. The rebuilding of western society after the Second World War culminated in the popularisation of museums as a representation of power and national identity, which worked to reaffirm the civilised white western Self and the 'exotic' Other[67]. On one side, it culminated in classic Eurocentric ideologies of representation and display of the past in the present; on the other, contemporary feminist voices focus on pluralisation of voices and

---

[64] "What's next" full survey report can be found at (Burch-Brown 2022)
[65] Cited in (Pearson, Theatre Archaeology 2001, 64)
[66] (Harrison 2005)
[67] (Said 2003)

forms of knowledge. These transformations established intellectual and community crises, despite the museum's relevance as a democratic public space for the discussion of artistic, cultural and societal matters recently increased among scholars. Indeed, its community crisis is seen as problematic when questioning who has access to the museum and whose benefits from it. It is possible to conclude that some spectators may not feel invited to visit a museum. One of the reasons may be their unclear function to society, where its imperial legacies of the past contrast with its attempts to engage with marginalised groups in the present.

Therefore, when entering the museum, institutional matters come to the fore, where it is questioned the exhibition value of certain objects and the narrative in which it is displayed to the public.

3.5 Inside the museum: crisis on narrative and exhibition value

On facing the artefact or a heritage site, one tends to ask: what happened here? And what to do with its relevant survival remains? These questions lead us to consider how social and cultural experiences, such as social performances, are documented and represented. In the last act, "The resurgence", it is observed a rearrangement of fragments in a new assemblage: the statue is displayed in a new composition, within the museum context. Since the 90s, museums have faced a series of transformations, putting into question their social role or definition[68]. Problematizing the democratization of narratives (re)presented, the authenticity of objects collected, and how the neoliberal mindset may affect the museum's relevance and experience is pointed as significant. Indeed, in the last decades, intellectual and identity crises have been observed in museums and art galleries, despite the artwork's capacity to evoke affects and foster critical thinking.

[68] (Noce 2019)

As seen in the analysis, the museum narrative is considered a crucial element for constructing historical and cultural identity. Museums may be seen as written books, where the spectator can wonder and indeed, as Pearson (2001) affirms, performances survive as a group of narratives, experienced and remembered by a multitude of perspectives and contexts, from actors to spectators, as well as those who contribute to facilitating it. However, for Shanks (2021), this experience is ultimately marked by information, making social experiences and practices from the past be seen as written facts, presented and perceived as a dominant source of experience. The objectivity seen in classic notions of archaeology seems unable to accommodate the potentialities offered by an encounter with the past, signified by the object on display. Therefore, it is in the museum that past-present encounters occur and classical narratives are questioned. As observed in the analysis, the composition at Mshed museum describes the statue's life based on linear-time facts. As pointed out by the author, facts tend not to survive linear, chronological narrative. If facts only survive the moment they are new, experience in the form of information seems to have less to offer in terms of subjective education about the past-present. It may become a commodity, where the spectator visits the museum by absorbing information but nothing else. An alternative is posed by Dartel Van Daan (2019), from Troppen Museum Amsterdam, can museums learn from other cultures, and not only but from peripheral or other than human forms of knowledge, instead of only learning about them? For instance, can museums think different about time? This may be a potential entry to tackle contemporary issues that ethnographic museums may face.

On the other side, the image of museums as perpetrators of imperialist and colonial legacies majorly seems to occupy the public imagination. Together with the neoliberal capitalization of culture, artefacts and museums turned into places of entertainment, a

phenomenon called "Disneyfication"[69] of culture. If remains are displayed to be consumed, the past is turned into a commodity. Shanks (2005) points out that subjectivity does not have space in the world of commodities, creating a problem of meaning. Despite contextualized, objects at display are reduced to bodies of voyeuristic appreciation, sterilized aesthetics in which the spectator is seduced to possess and consume. In contemporary society, the spectator buys a trip to the past, a ticket that provides a cultural experience of how things were. However, on one side, the museum as a mediator can limit the spectator to observe and wonder; on the other, as observed in this analysis, spectators can also be seen as agents of the performance, acting within the museum's set of rules. Despite the commoditization of artefacts apparently turning spectators into superficial consumers of a cultural product, it is evident that spectators can question it, a time that allows viewers to build connections. Art exhibitions can be seen performances that do not make sense alone, but with the participation of active viewers, acting in specific contexts and levels of personal and social relevance.

As observed, social and cultural experiences, either inside or outside museums, are narrowly intertwined with personal subjectivity. Authenticity, as discussed, is a status given to objects that survived through time. Interpretative and relational aspects of dramaturgy can contribute to exploring its poetics, map its conditions in time and space, and foster a narrative that makes sense in the present. As observed in this research, scholars point out an archaeology that can do more than measure and describe artefacts. It instead focuses on understanding material culture as a form of situated social reality. As Shanks (2001) suggested, archaeology must constantly submit itself to contemporary meanings and self-reflect on its significance. Different worlds intimately relate to each other, coming into being through the assemblage of fragments that is a performance and archaeology.

---

[69] (Baudrillard 1994)

As Harrison (2005) pointed out, archaeologists and curators are considered constructors of social reality. Therefore, the recontextualisation of objects and narratives from the past comes to the fore. Who determines these frames and how they are constructed is the course of the last section of this chapter.

3.6 Inside the museum: dramaturgy for contemporary curatorial practices

It is observed that archaeology became inherent to the work of curators. It is in the interdisciplinarity of contemporary curatorial practices that curators may find reinvigorating ideas about their role. For instance, art, science and history share common grounds in understanding the world, walking hand in hand in forming new assemblages of meaning and recontextualizations. Contemporary thinking and practice of curating seem to lean on relevancy and urgency here and now; thus, it calls for a new relationship with history and politics. Rapid Response Collecting (RRC), for instance, is a perspective that "documents history as it happens"[70], contributing to recentralize the societal role of museums. As Dartel Van Daan (2009) suggest, "artists are not born fully grown"[71], and this historical praxis may apply to contemporary ethnographical assemblages, which are also a result of a sequence of historical processes. Therefore, as discussed in this research, memory and intention, playing and staging, seems to background the activities of performing, curating and thinking archaeology.

At the same time, it is possible to see that information co-created in a museum experience may depend more on the context formed by the museum than the object itself or its "aura". As Henrietta Lidchi puts it, "If the object is no longer the evidence but the

---

[70] (Cascone 2020)
[71] (Dartel 2009, 30)

metaphor... then the evidence can be found in the quality of the experience"[72]. Objects can be an experience themselves if we can relate to them. In fact, they are not mere objects on display; but vehicles for societies' histories and human subjectivities, which requires recontextualization. Their exhibition value implies a subject behind it, sometimes a collective subject, that is alive, no matter how old the object is. Thus, without ignoring the sometimes-necessary scientific rigour, to relate, it is essential to sense. As Braidotti mentions, to embody new material subjects, it is necessary to create a relational sensibility. Performance and performativity can serve as lenses to look through and beyond the institutional politics of everyday life. At the same time, dramaturgy can be an artistic methodology to assemble, study and represent the subject – a point of interest to both archaeologists and curators.

It is noticed that dramaturg, archaeologist and curator roles are defined by specific perspectives and differ from each other. However, this thesis points out its overlap, contributing to the recontextualization and experience of meaning when reconstructing past events and reassembling the remains in the context of a museum experience. For instance, the dramaturg can reflect on the exhibition as a performance; therefore, the museum becomes a stage. The dramaturg is interested in the theatrical means and connections involved in the social performance of the past and its reenactment in the museum. On the other hand, the curator may be concerned with the exhibition's script, how the narrative is constructed for the museum and the public, and its relevance to today's society. The archaeologist investigates new relations with past-present objects and their exhibition and archival value. It is observed that both curators and dramaturgs may be concerned with matters of statements, spectatorship and situatedness. Archaeology seems to bridge dramaturgy and curatorial practices also

---

[72] Cited in (Dartel 2009, 31)

because, to a certain extent, both dramaturg and curator are trying to build a narrative of the past, here and now.

The dramaturgical intervention seems to foment insightful ideas for contemporary archaeology. In the same way social performances of the past are considered in this research, the display of its narrative in the museum may also consider the situatedness of participants, the intention of actors and their actions, statements conveyed, the composition of the space and the context in which they are and were embedded in. Indeed, the museum as a stage fosters the experience of meaning and restores the relevancy of the archaeologist and curator's work in society, offering museums a way to overcome elitist ideas and offer more democratic access to human and more-than-human heritage. As Dartel Van Daan (2009) questions, "Will everybody then have the feeling that museums are accessible for everybody, not only physically but also at a cognitive and perceptive level?"[73]. Perhaps, the highlight of situated links and connections, causes and consequences, or stress of emotional and creative connectivity may be the dramaturgical contribution to the practice of ethnographic archaeology in museums.

---

[73] (Dartel 2009, 33)

Conclusions

With this thesis, I have attempted to open an investigation about the dramaturgy of social performances and the display of its archaeological remains in the museum. The analysis of different faces of the phenomena on a performative level raises key connections about the cross-disciplinarity between dramaturgy, archaeology and curatorial practices.

The formation of social performances is highly discussed by situationists, interactionists, sociologists and even psychologists. Rather than a school of thought, I followed conditions that make performative events highlight from the complex interactions of everyday life. The subversive iconoclastic approach to politically and culturally contested representations, such as statues and monuments, seems to stress its specificity. On one side, the staging of a performative event always shows an address to a spectator, a performative body and stresses the various worlds in which it resonates. Colston statue is an example of how specific interactions with targeted objects-subjects reveal the formation of contemporary archaeology and the significance of the political context of protests, stressing the history of racial inequality, police violence and decolonial forms of cultural activism.

The architecture of the space is interpreted as a theatrical feature, although it goes beyond an organizational principle. Interactions with the space contribute to evoking the site's subjectivities, thus the notion of place. Archaeological aspects are observed as performative, where processes of destruction or decay by human interventions or ageing are narrowly connected with the locatable, configuring assemblages of heritage and fragmented remains. Therefore, one can conclude that vandalism towards statues and monuments, although pre-scripted and repeatable, is always specific when the intentions of performers, the situatedness of spectators, the collective socio-cultural memory and the context in which it takes place in space and time are considered.

Dramaturgy, as an ally, assists the research in mapping the various moves and steps in which the narrative develops, considering the different perspectives and experiences of one event. In fact, the relationality offered by planes of analysis employed seems to present room for the analysis of performative events other than art performances, a point of inquiry missed in Merx and Nibbelink's (2022) examples, which I further explored. As observed, the analytical outcome of social performances in this research differs from the analysis of art performances in the literature. They share theatrical definitions, although they seem to operate in different ways. Thus, one can conclude that social performances may reside between the performance and performative turn, where definitions of stage, the shift of performer-spectator positions, and its close relation to societal context are observed. Nevertheless, planes of dramaturgy and planes of analysis suggested successfully allows the researcher to reconstruct and reinterpret the objectivities and subjectivities seen on stage.

Regarding performance and archaeology convergences, dramaturgy stressed the understanding of social performances as a social and cultural construction, assemblages of fragments in which objects-subjects, as a driven force, undergo, witness, and survive a sequence of disruptive events. However, when its remains are rearranged in the context of a museum for display, historical documentation and public appreciation, narrative and exhibition value employed are questioned. The mediatization of the museum is a key point in which the performance of the past shifts to another performative experience.

Despite the fact that archaeology has been focused on the objectivity of science, artefacts are not neutral. Therefore, the role of the curator is brought into the discussion. When staging reality, dramaturgs may work with curators to study the performative formation and display of heritage and archaeological remains, considering the subjectivity of the various situated narratives. The combination of different perspectives offered by

archaeologists, dramaturgs and curators may question museums on the quality of visitors' experience with the past and its institutional relevancy in the present context.

The analysis takes as evidence the documentation found online through images, videos and texts. However, it is agreed that an analysis in-loco would enrich the experience with the case study at stake. Moreover, the thesis could have focused on the violence against statues or on the museum's display and archival of contemporary archaeology. However, I chose to explore the different actions that led the statue to its redisplay, which took place within a space and time framework between the event and the museum. This choice highlights the aliveness of the performative and the interdisciplinary implied in the observed phenomena. Therefore, the specialization in connections and differences, mainly found in theory and analysis, may be seen as a contribution and challenge for future inquiry.

Bibliography

Ansell, Amy. 2013. *Race and Ethnicity: The Key Concepts.* Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Bal, Mieke. 2002. "Performance and Performativity." In *Travelling concepts in the*

   humanities : a rough guide, by Mieke Bal, 173. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Balibar, Étienne. 2004. *We, the people of Europe?* . Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulations.* Michigan: The Michigan University

   Press.

Behrndt, Synne, and Cathy Turner. 2006. *Dramaturgy and performance.* London: Palgrave.

Bishop, Claire. 2019. "Rise to the occasion." *ARTFORUM.*

Bleeker, Maaike. 2008. *Visuality in the theatre : the locus of looking.* New York: Palgrave

   Macmillan.

Booth, Martin. 2020. *the untold story of Pero's Bridge.* 14 Jun. Accessed November 2021.

   https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/features/untold-history-peros-bridge/.

Booth, Martin. 2021. *B24/7 - MShed tickets blocked in attempt to prevent people seeing*

   Colston Satatue. 06 June. Accessed May 2022. https://www.bristol247.com/news-

   and-features/news/m-shed-tickets-block-booked-in-attempt-to-prevent-people-seeing-

   colston-statue/.

Bruguera, Tania. 2019. "Notes on political timing specificity." *ARTFORUM.*

Burch-Brown, J & Cole, T et al. 2022. *The Colston Statue: What next? We Are Bristol*

   History Commission Short Report. Bridging Histories: Bristol.

Camber, Rebecca. 2020. *UK Daily Mail - Lawless and Reckless.* 08 june. Accessed February

   2022. https://www.pressreader.com/uk/daily-mail/20200608/281492163547463.

Carlson, Marvin. 2018. " Kenneth Burke and dramatism." In *Performance: a critical*

   introduction, by Marvin Carlson. New York: Routledge.

Cascone, Sarah. 2020. *Museums Are Urgently Collecting Homemade Masks and Other Ephemera From the Pandemic to Document History As It Unfolds.* 9 April . https://news.artnet.com/art-world/museums-starting-coronavirus-collections-1827606.

Cohen, Stanley. 1973. " The meaning of the environment." In *Vandalism*, by Colin Ward. London: Architectural Press.

Colston, Countering. n.d. *Decolonize Bristol.* Accessed March 2022. https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com.

Conquergood, Dwight. 2009. "Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance." *Literature in Performance*, 05 June.

Dartel, Daan van. 2009. "Tropen Museum for a change: a symposium report ." Amsterdam.

Duel, Mark. 2020. *Daily Mail: Sculpture of a fat bald man wedged inside wheelie bin and emblazoned with 'St George was Turkish' appears next to empty plinth of Edward Colston's toppled statue.* 16 June. Accessed April 2022. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8427407/Sculpture-fat-bald-ma-appears-Edward-Colston-plinth.html.

Duffield, Charlie. 2020. *Black Lives Matter fist symbol: Meaning and history behind the Black Power raised fist salute.* 19 June. https://inews.co.uk/news/black-lives-matter-fist-symbol-meaning-black-power-history-raised-explained-432838.

Elam, Keir. 2002. *The semiotics of theatre and drama.* London: Routledge.

Frank, Sybille, and Mirjana Ristic. 2020. "Urban fallism." *City*, 14 July: 552-564.

Gallagher, Shaun. 2018. "Situating Interaction in Peripersonal and Extrapersonal Space: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives." In *Situatedness and Place*, by Thomas Hünefeldt and Annika Schlitte. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Gamboni, Dario. 1997. *The destruction of art: iconoclasm and vandalism since the French Revolution.* London: Reaktion.

Goffman, Erving. 2004. "Goffman and Keying." In *Performance: a Critical Introduction*, by Marvin Carlson, 43. New York: Routledge.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, 575-599.

Harrison, Julia. 2005. "Ideas of museums in the 1990s." In *Heritage, Museums and Galleries*, by Gerald Corsane, 43. London: Routledge.

Isin, Engin F. 2009. "Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen." *Subjectivity*, 367–388.

Jones, Leslie Kay. 2020. "#BlackLivesMatter: An Analysis of the Movement as Social Drama." *Humanity & Society*, 92-100.

Kerkhoven, Marianne Van. 1994. *"The theatre is in the city and the city is in the world and its walls are of skin." State of the Union speech Theater Festival.* Accessed 2022. http://sarma.be/docs/3229.

King, Jordan. 2020. *Toppled statue of slave Trader Edward Colston in Bristol is replaced with a dummy of paedophile Jimmy Savile.* 12 July. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8515171/Edward-Colston-replaced-dummy-paedophile-Jimmy-Savile.html.

Latour, Bruno, and Peter Weibel. 2002. *Iconoclash.* Karlsruhe: ZKM.

Lehn, Dirk vom. 2013. "Museum Drama and Interaction Order "Sui Generis"." In *The Drama of Social Life*, by Charles Edgley. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Lippard, Lucy. 1997. *The lure of the local : senses of place in a multicentered society.* London; New York: New Press.

Marschall, Sabine. 2017. "Targeting Statues: Monument "Vandalism" as an Expression of Sociopolitical Protest in South Africa." *African Studies Review* 203-219.

Msezane, Sethembile. 2015. *Rhodes must fall UCT to Oxford.* 29 December. Accessed March

2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GX6IVagb0-s.

Museum, Mshed. 2022. *The Colston Statue: What next?* Accessed May 2022.

https://exhibitions.bristolmuseums.org.uk/the-colston-statue/.

Nibbelink, Liesbeth Groot. 2019. *Nomadic theatre : mobilizing theory and practice on the*

European stage. New York: Methuen Drama.

Nibbelink, Liesbeth, and Sigrid Merx. 2021. "Dramaturgical Analysis." *FORUM+* 4-16.

Noce, Vincent. 2019. *What exactly is a museum? Icom comes to blows over new definition.*

19 August. Accessed July 2022. https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/08/19/what-

exactly-is-a-museum-icom-comes-to-blows-over-new-definition.

Pauwels, Matthias. 2019. "Agonistic Entanglements of Art and Activism: #RhodesMustFall

and Sethembile Msezane's Chapangu Performances." *Aesthetics and politics in the*

South African post-colony , September.

Pearson, Mike. 2001. *Theatre Archaeology.* London: Routledge.

Pearson, Mike. 2010. *Site-specific performance.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Quinn, Marc, and Jen Reid. 2020. *A joint statement from Marc Quinn and Jen Reid.* 15 July.

http://marcquinn.com/studio/news/a-joint-statement-from-marc-quinn-and-jen-reid.

Rancière, Jacques. 2003. *The Politics of Aesthetics .* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Said, Edward W. 2003. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin.

SaveOurStatues. 2021. *Twitter.* 07 June. Accessed April 2022.

https://twitter.com/_SaveOurStatues/status/1401854455792943104?s=20.

Schechner, Richard. 1985. *Between theater & anthropology.* Philadelphia: University of

Pennsylvania Press.

Shanks, Michael, and Christopher Tilley. 1992. *Re-constructing archaeology: theory and*

practice. New York: Routledge.

Shanks, Michael. 2005. *Experiencing the past - On the character of.* London: Routledge.

Tschumi, Bernard, and Jean La Marche. 1984. "Architecture and Disjunction." *Journal of Architectural Education.*

Wekker, Gloria. 2016. *White Innocence- Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race.* Durham: Duke University Press.

York, Joanna. 2022. *Acquittal of 'Colston Four' for toppling slave trader statue ignites UK culture wars.* 07 Jan. Accessed March 2022. https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220107-acquittal-of-protesters-who-toppled-slave-trader-statue-ignites-uk-culture-wars.

Appendix

1. *Full timeline of interventions regarding Edward Colston statue:*

25 May 2020: George Floyd is choked until death by a police officer in the USA.

26 May 2020: In the UK, Colston's slavery role is broadcasted on TV.

1 June 2020: Protestors plan a protest and sign a petition to remove Edward Colston statue. Since 2017 only 50 people signed; in 2020 it went up to 10,000.

7 June 2020: A protest with almost 11,000 people occurred at Park Street, towards the city centre. Colston statue is tagged and toppled down. After 83 mins, 18 protesters rolled the statue from the plinth to Bristol Harbor, dropping it inside the river next to a bridge named after an enslaved person. Police officers refused to intervene, although the Police Department announced investigations and potential prosecutions for criminal damage. In the following days, Girls' school removed their statues. Sadik, the major of London, act on reviewing colonial statues in London, UK.

On the opposite side, right-wing politicians were against the removal of the statue. Richard Eddy called Colston "hero" while Boris Johnson, the current UK Prime Minister, stressed that the attack to Colston statue was a crime against the Council.

9 June 2020: Is George Floyd's funeral in USA. In Bristol, a group of scaffolders tried to locate and retrieve the statue, but it was too deep.

10 June 2020: History Commission was settled to evaluate what to do next with the statue and start a conversation between the Council and the city. Residents of Colston street installed a suggestion box to change the name of their street.

11 June 2020: at 6 am, Bristol Council locates and pulls out the statue from the river, sending it to a secret location. Society of Merchant Venturers agrees that the statue should go to a museum and wants to start a conversation. Regarding the prosecution of activists, Bristol

Council withdraws itself from the responsibility, stating that "it is a matter for the police". A survey taken by the newspaper Bristol Live shows that 57% of the survey sample did not agree with prosecuting protestors.

13 June 2020: In their hundreds, groups of football fans, bikers, and people from military protest in public space against "the war memorial" claiming that "all lives matter". Three were arrested.

14 June 2020: Colston Avenue, the square where Colston plinth is, is renamed to Stephenson Avenue, in honor to Paul Stephenson (in 1963, Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting the company refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors).

15 June 2020: Anonymous artist intervene, installing at the plinth a sculpture called Fat Bald Man, removed by the Council after a couple of days.

16 June 2020: Bristol cathedral removed all the celebrations regarding Edward Colston.

17 June 2020: Bristol Council museums and conservation explain their work. "Museums commission confirmed that "the statue would eventually be going on public display, with all the graffiti that had been sprayed on it, all the Black Lives Matter placards left around the plinth that day, and even with the bicycle wheel that was hooked onto the statue's coat tails when it was lifted out of the harbour" (did not happened this way…)

22 June 2020: Police Department launch a "major appeal" to identify 15 out of 18 protestors that potentially committed criminal damage. Bristol Council formally does a complaint of criminal damage.

30 June 2020: Colston Arms Pub make a survey with costumers for a new name. The first, temporally name was "Ye olde Pubby McDrunkface". Although the official new name chosen is "Open Arms".

11 July 2020: Mannequin Jimmy Savile appears at Edward Colston plinth.

15 July 2020: British Artist Marc Quim used Colston plinth to install a new statue, of the black activist Jen Reid, under the title "a surge of power". The Council removed it a day after. As a response, CARGO (Bristol based creative education movement) created an online platform replicating Colston plinth, where users can replace Colston statue with other artworks.

13 September 2020: Colston Society is dismantled after 275 years.

23 September 2020: Colston Hall changes its name to Bristol Beacon.

01 October 2020: 10 protestors were identified. Six paid a fine (donated to modern slavery charity), and four were sent to Crown Prosecution Service to respond to Criminal Damage.

26 November 2020: Colston Tower's name was changed to Beacon Tower.

2 December 2020: Actor Dave Prowse died. The Statue of Darth Vader appears on Colston plinth as a memorial.

6 December 2020: US cartoon Family Guy mirror the fall of Colston statue in an episode.

9 December 2020: the four protesters charged with criminal damage plead not guilty. The historical activist past against Colston commemorations since 1973 justified the jury decision.

10 December 2020: The famously anonymous artist Banksy, produces an action to help the "Colston4" to celebrate the result of the trial.

4 June 2021 to 3 January 2022: an exhibition of Edward Colston statue takes place for the public at Mshed Museum.