



## Counter-Ceremonial: Contemporary Artists and Queen Victoria Monuments

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As the embodiment of empire, Victoria became a symbol of allegiance and resistance, love and loathing. This is nowhere more apparent than in the many monuments memorializing her across the United Kingdom and around the world. At a moment when public sculpture has become increasingly controversial, as witnessed by the removal of Confederate monuments in the American South or the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement, monuments to Victoria are also coming under scrutiny. While many statues have been damaged or defaced from Bristol to Bangkok, and from Montreal to Delhi – important interventions in themselves – more interesting reactions have come from artists. Around the globe, art projects have worked with Victoria monuments in order to find a way of engaging with their troubled history, offering a critical reframing that can break the often unproductive arguments about removal or retention. This article juxtaposes works by Tatsurou Bashi, Sophie Ernst, Hew Locke, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary Kirkham, and Hadley+Maxwell, exploring the artists' engagement with the material form of the monuments and the connections between Victoria's self-made image and its unmaking in the works discussed.

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On 26 January 2021, on the national holiday of Australia Day, five thousand protestors gathered at the statue of Victoria in Brisbane. The statue, located in Queens Gardens, was erected in 1906 as a sign of Queensland's loyalty to the empire and commemorating the recently dead empress who had presided over the formation of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The monument is a replica of the statue by Thomas Brock that is also to be found in Hove, Carlisle, Portsmouth, Belfast, and Bangalore, and so represents not only Victoria's relationship with Australia, but also Australia's relationship to the wider empire.<sup>2</sup> The protestors splashed the statue with red paint, before wrapping it in the Aboriginal flag, and held up a large sign reading 'Not the Queen's Land', punning on the name of the state. After speeches, the crowd marched through the streets of the city, carrying a large Aboriginal flag. For the protestors, this was not Australia Day, marking a moment of origin to be celebrated, but Invasion Day, commemorating a moment of crisis that continued to the present. While Victoria was not born at the moment of invasion in 1788, her statue symbolizes her complicity in the subsequent history of violence, attempted genocide, and theft; indeed, a history over which she presided. And while the sculpture was made after her death, as most of these imperial monuments were, they conform to an image that she created in both general terms — as the dutiful mother and grandmother of nation and empire who has given everything for her children and grandchildren — and in the specific form and iconography expressing that identity.

The protest in Brisbane, and the use of the statue of Victoria as its focus, is one of many similar events, and events that are increasingly common in the midst of the current debate about the problem of the monument in the wake of the Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall movements, the question of decolonization, and the much needed challenge to Confederate statues in the American South. It is inevitable that statues of Victoria should be part of this reassessment of the public monument. Victoria, the ardent imperialist, in fashioning the image of empress still present around the globe, turned herself into the political symbol of empire and colonialism.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, she is distinctive in this sense: while there is no single figure who can stand for the slave trade in its entirety, Victoria willingly became the icon of empire and has remained so. Moreover, unlike slavers, she crafted this very icon. In this article I shall present some

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<sup>1</sup> Lisanne Gibson and Joanna Besley, *Monumental Queensland: Signposts on a Cultural Landscape* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), pp. 20–21.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Brock, *Thomas Brock: Forgotten Sculptor of the Victoria Memorial*, ed. by John Sankey (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt point out that Victoria's image was first and foremost a sculptural image. See 'Introduction: Sculpture Victorious', in *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901*, ed. by Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 15–55 (p. 42); and 'Victorian Sculpture', in *Sculpture Victorious*, pp. 56–101 (pp. 56–57).

recent responses to Victoria monuments in the work of artists. While very unlike the challenges made by protests and attacks, these artworks are nevertheless contiguous with such actions; the artists, too, engage critically with the political force of imperial monuments — and therefore Victoria’s image — in the twenty-first century. As such I discuss the works explicitly as part of sculptural and imperial history, rather than from the perspectives of contemporary art discourses and, particularly, as a further element in the continuing history of Victoria’s self-fashioning.

Recent attacks, of course, are part of a longer continuous history of anti-colonial interventions and debates about the monumental presence of Victoria in colonial and postcolonial nations. Statues were defaced or damaged from the very moment that Victoria’s monumental image began to appear. Thus, the statue in Mumbai (Bombay as it then was) by Matthew Noble, installed under an elaborate Gothic canopy and unveiled in 1872, was the target of a political attack by Damodar Hari Chapekar and his brother in October 1896. Chapekar poured tar and plaster over the Queen’s effigy and hung a garland of shoes around her neck, in parody of the regalia with which the statue was bedecked.<sup>4</sup> Similar attacks happened elsewhere in India and far beyond throughout the twentieth century, often involving the daubing of statues with paint and graffiti. More violently, statues of Victoria were dynamited in Georgetown, Guyana, in 1954, and nine years later the statue in Quebec City during court hearings against members of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) as part of a broader terror campaign.<sup>5</sup> In both cases the attacks exemplify the shaping of local politics by the legacy of empire. Statues were removed or relocated at moments of decolonization as official responses by the State. In Lahore in 1951 the statue of Victoria was removed to the Lahore Museum (and in 1974 replaced with an image of the Koran in the same elaborate architectural frame, signalling the transition from British colony to independent Islamic nation). Similar removals — and at times reinstallations — took place across the empire. This is merely a handful of examples, but indicate that contemporary attacks, some of which I discuss in what follows, are part of a long history of anti-imperial struggle.

For those committed to retaining the monuments, a popular argument is that removal amounts to an erasing of history. What this argument overlooks is that the

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<sup>4</sup> *Autobiography of Damodar Hari Chapekar*, Bombay Police Abstracts, 1910, pp. 995–1015 <<https://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/VOL-II/autobiography.pdf>> [accessed 25 November 2021] (pp. 999–1001). For helpful historical contexts, see Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 219; and Joseph McQuade, *A Genealogy of Terrorism: Colonial Law and the Origins of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Hatt, ‘Sculpture and Ceremonial’, in *Sculpture Victorious*, pp. 102–47 (p. 145); and Colin M. Coates, ‘French-Canadians’ Ambivalence to the British Empire’, in *Canada and the British Empire*, ed. by Phillip Buckner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 181–99.

monument itself has already erased history. Like colonialism itself, the presence of Victoria at the heart of the place has already silenced the history of indigenous peoples. The monument, of course, will always present a partial history: that is both inherent in the limits of the form and in its political intention. The Victoria at Brisbane, for example, was erected to celebrate and naturalize settler colonialism and to wipe away the Aboriginal presence. The radical response to this has been that monuments should simply be destroyed. This position claims that because such statues explicitly and uncritically celebrate imperial activity, they are morally compromised and are acts of violence in their own right.

Between destruction and retention lies the possibility of recontextualization or, to use Catherine Hall's term, 're-remembering'.<sup>6</sup> What this might mean in both theory and practice is less clear-cut in terms of necessary action and potential efficacy. In Hove in 2021 a petition circulated, demanding more contextual labelling for the town's statue of Victoria (which is the same Brock statue as in Brisbane). The petition noted:

The statue of Queen Victoria in Hove proudly declares her the Ind Imperatrix (Empress of India). This is a title given to her because of the British colonisation of India. It is estimated that the colonisation lead [sic] to the death of 35 million Indian people. [...] Proudly declaring Queen Victoria the Empress of India implies a glory to the Empire which is unfounded. We ask that a sign is [sic] placed near the statue that gives a brief account of the impact of colonisation, including the estimated number of deaths.<sup>7</sup>

The petition only gained 366 signatures, but what is more interesting is the demand for a 'brief account' of what is a fearfully complex history, including much to be said about the presence of South Asians in the city, particularly Indian soldiers serving in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Catherine Hall, 'Whose Memories? Edward Long and the Work of Re-Remembering', in *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, ed. by Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 129–49; and Catherine Hall, 'Troubling Memories: Nineteenth-Century Histories of the Slave Trade and Slavery', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 21 (2011), 147–69.

<sup>7</sup> Change.org <<https://www.change.org/p/brighton-and-hove-city-council-add-a-sign-to-the-queen-victoria-statue-in-hove-explaining-the-impact-of-the-empire>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>8</sup> Tim Barringer, 'An Architecture of Imperial Ambivalence: The Patcham Chattri', in *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society*, ed. by Michael J. K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 215–48; and Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

There has been much discussion of counter-monuments.<sup>9</sup> While this has, to date, been realized more in Germany and in post-Soviet states as a form of corrective commemorative practice, the term has been widely used in discussion (even if, as has been pointed out, without sufficient rigour).<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Sir Laurie Magnus, the chairman of Historic England, recently proposed that one of the ways of enabling statues to be retained could be to erect counter-memorials alongside them.<sup>11</sup> In both this model and that of the request for additional signage, there are two related problems. The first is simply the complexity of history, and a history that continues to unfold into the present. While this could be managed in a museum or similar institution, there are limits to what can be done in external public space, and not least because the very siting of the sculpture continues to connote privilege and legitimacy. The second is that these forms conceive the staging of the debate as between two clear sides: imperial or national versus decolonial; or the original monument versus the contextualizing response. This reduces judgement to a straightforward moral choice; and while, of course, a moral choice has to be made, this reduction of politics and history risks turning this into a kind of virtue signalling sticking plaster over the deep wound of empire. The fundamental difficulty here is the assumption that one might simultaneously satisfy unity (an interpretation of the monument that is consensual) and diversity (an interpretation of the monument that allows and generates dissent). As Tim Barringer has noted in relation to the Hove statue of Victoria and its counter-memorial, the Patcham Chattri, the history is one of ‘ambivalence’: the very tension between unity and diversity, and the changing nature of that tension across time, is what requires our attention.

It is here that the work of artists challenges our conventional ways of viewing and interpreting public sculpture. In what follows I present five works that use monuments to Victoria as their subject and material, whether the object itself *in situ* or a photograph or cast of the statue.<sup>12</sup> Rather than counter-monumental, we might identify these works as counter-ceremonial. Ceremonial was always the principal means of animating the statue and realizing its potential for ideological efficacy.<sup>13</sup> From unveilings, through annual celebrations of nation and empire, to the marking of occasions such as state

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); and James F. Osborne, ‘Counter-Monumentality and the Vulnerability of Memory’, *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 17 (2017), 163–87.

<sup>10</sup> Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, ‘Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic’, *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 951–72.

<sup>11</sup> Policy Exchange, History Matters Conference, 2 March 2021 <<https://policyexchange.org.uk/history-matters-conference/>> [accessed 25 November 2021]. Sir Laurie Magnus’s full remarks about Historic England’s policy on contested statues are from 29 min. 56 sec. to 32 min. 50 sec.

<sup>12</sup> A further example, Kara Walker’s *Fons Americanus* (2020), is discussed in the article by John Plunkett in this issue of 19.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Hatt, ‘Sculpture and Ceremonial’, in *Sculpture Victorious*, ed. by Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, pp. 102–43.

funerals, monuments to Victoria across the empire were the focal point, giving meaning to public space and delimiting the public itself, in that ceremonial affirmed the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. In Brisbane the annual Empire Day celebrations began at and revolved around the statue of Victoria, decorated for the occasion, and, as elsewhere, included parades, pageants, the awarding of certificates to children for helping or supporting troops or similar acts of loyalty, and marches for the veterans of imperial wars in Crimea, Sudan, and South Africa.<sup>14</sup> The protest in Brisbane in 2021 was a kind of counter-ceremonial; indeed, it replicated the performances of Empire Day, with Victoria as the spatial and political focus, the speech given alongside the effigy, the use of flags, the adorning of the statue (but with paint rather than flowers), and the march spreading from the monument through the space of the city. It was a thoroughgoing reversal of the historical ceremony, thus reversing the values of the monument and exposing what the image of Victoria had banished from public view.

The artworks shown here are counter-ceremonial in a different way. They do not take orthodox ceremonial forms and repurpose them, but create or evoke new forms of ceremonial; they do not offer a reversal of ceremony, but address the issue of ceremonial itself. Through a range of critical art practices, the artists included here mine the history, reimagining the experience of the monument and its relationship to individual and society. Moreover, they draw out the fact that these monuments are embedded in global networks and signal the relationship between the specific colonies — each of the artists is attentive to the particular location of the monument — and the imperial whole. These artworks address not only what the monument stands for but also what it looks like. If defacements aim to unmask the force of the monument in legitimizing imperialism, these works also explore how the symbol was formed and what is at stake in its sculptural and spatial details; and, crucially, how the physical and iconographic nature of the statue relates to its political function.

We can see five forms of aesthetic counter-ceremonial in the five works, all of which reframe the statue, literally and conceptually, and all of which undo the power of the monument, shifting the locus of power from Victoria to elsewhere. Thus, the monuments are repositioned in ceremonies of the public rally or public political speech, in the rituals of travel and decorating, and in the practices of immersive theatre. The clearest instance of this is the project undertaken by Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary

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<sup>14</sup> For helpful accounts of Empire Day and its creation, see Jim English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 247-76; Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 118-22; and J. O. Springhall, 'Lord Meath, Youth, and Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5.4 (1970), 97-111.

Kirkham in Kitchener, Canada, which reanimates the dead silent sculpture through the projection of living speaking people. In a similar strategy Sophie Ernst's *Silent Empress* (2012) disrupts the statue in Wakefield formally, through the taping of a loudhailer to the Queen's face, and politically, in using a recorded voice to reform public space. In Taturou Bashi's *Villa Victoria* (2002) the uncanny coupling of the banal and the monumental disenchants the statue, while Hew Locke's *Hinterland* (2013) stages a collision of the dream of imperial order with the destabilizing culture of Guyana and beyond. Finally, Hadley+Maxwell's *The Queen Still Falls to You* (2014) literally reshapes the monument and creates an alternative narrative, a theatrical spectacle generating a new ritual form for sculpture and audience.

These counter-ceremonial works engage very closely with their source material, not simply taking Victoria as a generic icon of empire, but thinking carefully about the monument itself, its form, iconography, and location. This necessitates an engagement, whether deliberate or not, with Victoria's own self-fashioning, and there are two aspects of this that these counter-ceremonial strategies expose; indeed, what these works also reveal is the continued power of Victoria's image making. Although these monuments were not commissioned by Victoria, but by institutions and towns and states and nations in order to prove their allegiance to and relationship with empire and the Crown, they are part of a continuum of royal patronage and conform to the image that the Queen created for herself. These contemporary artists use Victoria's two principal strategies to undo or reveal the politics at the heart of the empire's monumental culture: first, the manipulation of public and private and, second, the use of the decorative, of surface to create an image of depth or interiority. We shall see both these aspects reworked by contemporary artists, evidence of the continued force not simply of imperial politics but also of Victoria's image: the representation of herself that she fashioned.

All these artworks alert us to the fact that the discourse of 'the public' is far more complex than many uses of the term suggest, and that the word as deployed in 'the public', 'public sculpture', 'public space', and 'public sphere' is misaligned in the making, presentation, and reception of these sculptures or installations. The monument is a form that aims to collapse these terms into an unproblematic singularity and, in the case of monuments to Victoria, to assert homogeneity across what John Darwin has described as the 'unfinished' empire.<sup>15</sup>

As Victoria herself knew well, public and private are mutually constitutive categories: there is no simple separation. The circulation of the image she crafted depended on the

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<sup>15</sup> John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2013).

ways in which the mixing of public and private was constantly in process: the deployment of the private to create the public image, and the use of the public to circulate an image of privacy. Victoria's image populated millions of private spaces during her reign and subsequently in the form of coins, prints, books, photographs, ceramics, and other ephemera. In many instances the Queen was meticulous in examining and approving the designs, such as those of coins.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, one can see the crafting of the private Queen in public form in her Highland journals, or in published reports of life at Osborne House and other royal residences. Indeed, Victoria's image was crafted and circulated on the basis that private Queen and public Queen worked in tandem.<sup>17</sup>

The second principal strategy used is decoration and surface. Of course, detailed and decorated surfaces are essential to all public images, particularly monarchs, emperors, and those in power. This is of importance for Victoria not least in managing sex and gender: how to present her female body as both powerful and normatively feminine, politically authoritative, and sentimentally maternal. Her dress, jewels, and regalia, such as the Order of the Garter, also serve to represent the empire as part of what David Cannadine has termed 'ornamentalism', the culture of decoration and pageantry deployed to create social hierarchies for imperial ends, with deference to Victoria, the epitome of the ornamentalist, as its heart.<sup>18</sup> Even the lines on her face in old age, as the somatic decoration of duty and care, served their purpose. Victoria certainly eschewed vanity in her final decades and preferred those sculptures that showed her ageing features. The monument by Edward Onslow Ford in Manchester, unveiled in 1901, is a good example of this. Victoria referred to both the bust and the monument by Ford as 'very fine', ordered various versions, and gave one marble rendition to her grandson Arthur as a birthday present in 1899.<sup>19</sup> The pattern of age traced across her skin served a political purpose. The monument includes a quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2* — 'Let me but bear your love, I'll bear your cares' — as if to clarify that this body

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<sup>16</sup> On coins, for example, see Lewis F. Day, 'New Coins for Old', *Magazine of Art*, January 1887, pp. 416–20; J. L. Lant, 'The Jubilee Coinage of 1887', *British Numismatic Journal*, 43 (1973), 132–41; G. P. Dyer and Mark Stocker, 'Edgar Boehm and the Jubilee Coinage', *British Numismatic Journal*, 54 (1984), 274–88; and Mark Stocker, 'The Coinage of 1893', *British Numismatic Journal*, 66 (1996), 67–86.

<sup>17</sup> For more detailed discussion of this point, see the articles by Morna O'Neill and Joanna Marschner in this issue of 19.

<sup>18</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002). Cannadine's thesis that class or status is more important than race in imperial politics has been much contested, and a number of critics have argued that while it provides a corrective to the reductive binarism of the orientalist model, it fails to acknowledge the racialization of social status.

<sup>19</sup> *Queen Victoria's Journals*, 6 March 1899, 13 May 1898, and 20 May 1899 <<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org>> [accessed 25 November 2021].



is weighed down by the sacrifices of duty in exchange for the people's love, as if the giving up of private pleasure for public service were etched on the skin.<sup>20</sup>

While graffiti, dynamite, and petitions for extending labelling all make a clear proposal about the fate of the monuments, the artworks are not answering the question of what we should do with the monuments. Moreover, they are works of art and cannot simply be reduced to straightforward political statements as if they were equivalent to the 'Not the Queen's Land' sign held up at the Brisbane protest. Instead, they consider how we might reimagine the statues, how we understand them, and the ways in which Victoria's self-fashioning is still operative in global politics, through the aesthetic as much as the political — indeed, using the aesthetic as a means of complicating the political rather than straightforwardly expressing it. We might think of these strategies as reconstitutive defacement, a form that breaks the binary of consensus and antagonism, either supported by a worked out political theory, as in Wodiczko's adherence to Chantal Mouffe's agonistic democracy, or simply by unsettling either assumptions about consensus or the aporia of antagonism.<sup>21</sup>

This, of course, might indicate what many would see as limited political efficacy. These works are ephemeral, are not necessarily public statements in the way that graffiti is, and they are directed at a narrower audience. The subtleties of the works might not be understood easily; certainly not as easily as blood red paint or the word 'Racist'. Nevertheless, what resonates through all the examples that follow is the title Hadley+Maxwell chose for their work: *The Queen Still Falls to You*. If something falls to you, it becomes your duty, your responsibility for something difficult or troubling. The title reminds us that history has not erased this responsibility, and that the act of re-remembering remains a duty; that, in Wodiczko's terms, we need to be an active inner public, rather than a passive outer public surveying the spectacle of empire and its remains.<sup>22</sup> The 'you' in the title remains ambiguous: this is part of the point being made. In the face of competing publics, how can unity and diversity be synthesized, and particularly in the face of Victoria's image, which exemplifies the unity of white empire achieved through the suppression of diversity. Removing the image may be a first step,

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<sup>20</sup> Terry Wyke with Harry Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), pp. 119–21.

<sup>21</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005); Patricia C. Phillips, 'Creating Democracy: A Dialogue with Krzysztof Wodiczko', *Art Journal*, 62.4 (2003), 32–47; Marc James Léger, 'Aesthetic Responsibility: A Conversation with Krzysztof Wodiczko on the Transformative Avant-Garde', *Third Text*, 28 (2014), 123–36; and Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Sharing Strangeness: Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Ægis* and the Question of Hospitality', *Grey Room*, 6 (2002), 26–43.

<sup>22</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko, 'The Inner Public', *Field*, 1 (2015), 27–52 <<http://field-journal.com/issue-1/wodiczko>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

as protests demand; but these aesthetic interventions suggest that a more extended and critical reframing of the monuments is required, counter-ceremonials that serve as a reminder that the Queen still falls to us.

### Tatsurou Bashi, *Villa Victoria* (2002)

*Villa Victoria* was created for the Liverpool Biennial in 2002 and is one of a series of works by Tatsurou Bashi (a pseudonym of Tatzu Nishi) in which domestic or semi-domestic spaces are constructed around public monuments, thus recontextualizing them and, crucially, changing the relationship with the viewer (*Fig. 1*).<sup>23</sup> In this instance the source material was the Victoria Monument in Liverpool, an elaborate piece of Edwardian baroque, created by C. J. Allen and unveiled in 1906. The statue of the Queen stands under a *baldacchino*, with allegorical groups around the dome and a statue of Fame atop it; a Fame that is also a Victory, the allegorical image of the Queen par excellence,



*Fig. 1:* Tatsurou Bashi, *Villa Victoria* (2002). Photograph: Alistair Overbruck. Courtesy of the artist.

<sup>23</sup> Tatzu Nishi, 'Swapping Public and Private', in *Cultural Hijack: Rethinking Intervention*, ed. by Ben Parry with Myriam Tahir and Sally Medlyn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 172–89.

replete with wings and a foot stepping triumphantly on the globe. The architectural exedra around the central statue has four allegorical groups marking its corners, representing Justice, Wisdom, Charity, and Peace, supposedly the virtues not only of Victoria herself but also of her empire.<sup>24</sup> This elaborate setting extends the meaning of the Queen's statue; it makes explicit her global power, her apparent moral status, as well as the grandeur of imperial Britain.

Bashi built a hotel space around the statue of the Queen: a stairway which led to a reception area outside the room and a fully furnished bedroom with an en suite bathroom, which visitors could book for a night's stay. In *Villa Victoria* most of the architecture and sculpture of the monument disappeared: only the huge bronze effigy of the Queen, between columns, remained, an incongruous presence in the quotidian space. For this work, an important starting point was the oft-made observation that public sculpture, in spite of its size, centrality, and presence, is ignored or overlooked. Bashi remarked that 'this phenomenon is much more interesting for me than the historical meaning of monuments' (Nishi, pp. 173, 182). Nevertheless, in returning Victoria to hyper-visibility, Bashi's work does the same for empire and its legacy. It forces its way back into the visual field but is now decontextualized; a reminder that in representing empire, these monuments also decontextualized themselves, replacing history with allegory or reducing indigenous agents to colonial puppets.

While his work brings people closer to the normally distant statue, it creates an uncanny effect; what might have been a more intimate encounter was in fact far from intimate, not least because of the inconsistent scale — the human scale of the room against the monumental scale of Victoria. Moreover, devoid of allegorical symbols and devoid of the ceremonial space, the statue became curiously inert and misplaced. If the monument was designed to animate public space, here the space disenchant the statue. There was an unresolved collision of imperial splendour and generic hotel room, of Edwardian luxury and contemporary functionality.

The choice of hotel room was carefully considered. Bashi made a connection with Liverpool as a port city, a place where, historically, people came and went. The hotel room is a temporary residence for those who are travelling and away from a fixed base. Bashi's *Villa Victoria* thus thematized mobility and permanence in the stable presence of the statue set against the movement of colonial trade and governance, and, from the perspective of imperial history, a Victoria that collapses space and time in favour of

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<sup>24</sup> C. J. Allen *1862–1956: Sculptor and Teacher*, ed. by Matthew H. Clough (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003); and Terry Cavanagh, *Public Sculpture of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 43. For a photograph of the unveiling of the monument, see Christopher Crouch, *Design Culture in Liverpool 1880–1914: The Origins of the Liverpool School of Architecture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 99.

unified and unchanging power. This is a reminder too, albeit unwitting, of Victoria's image as a global traveller, taking up residence elsewhere along with her imperial machine.

The hotel room also has a hybrid status, neither fully private nor fully public. Bashi's work swaps public and private but is less directly concerned with political conceptions of the public and more with the question of public space. Indeed, Bashi is interested in the way that public space is controlled and administrated. His works, including this one, have to be approved by public agencies and are usually funded by public-sector bodies, such as the Liverpool Biennial, supported by Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council, for *Villa Victoria* (Nishi, p. 182). These processes, along with the extensive bureaucracy, approvals, and resistance from opponents are all part of the project; the tensions between art and bureaucracy, the possibilities and constraints of public art and its governance, are central to Bashi's work in theory and in practice, and this concern resonates in relation to the apparently natural presence of Victoria in the cityscape.

However, Bashi does not operate with a naively straightforward distinction between public and private. Indeed, *Villa Victoria* mimics the way that Victoria deployed public and private, using the circulation of her private image in domestic spaces to support her public political agency. This is repeated here, but the mismatch of the huge statue in the domestic space serves as a serious joke, asking what if, rather than Parian reductions of her portrait bust, or prints of statues in Osborne House, a full-size monumental sculpture were moved into a private room? And yet, this has a historical truth to it: the Queen did dominate and her image did expand to fill these spaces, conceptually if not physically. The domestication of Victoria's image was central to its ideological efficacy, and here Bashi offers a witty or even absurdist take on the presence and workings of empire in such spaces.

Like Wodiczko and Kirkham's, this work engages with the question of naming, albeit more obliquely. Victoria's name is iconic; that is, it immediately generates a symbol and one that is fixed as a sign of empire and power; its use across the world is a means of asserting legitimate authority and imperial homogeneity. In contrast with this fixity, the artist's name is constantly changing. Indeed, Bashi — better known as Tatzu Nishi — changes his name every year or two, in what he calls the 'name change project'.<sup>25</sup> This is in itself an artistic project, engaging in debates about authorship, the signature, and the branding of the artist in the contemporary art world. Here, though,

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<sup>25</sup> Nishi interview with Chieko Kinoshita, 'The Elusive Frame: "Funny," "Violent," and "Sexy"', in *A Companion to Public Art*, ed. by Cher Krause Knight and Harriet F. Senie (Hoboken: Wiley, 2016), pp. 353–58.

it takes on an additional resonance when brought into contact with Victoria, whose unchanging name is essential to the crafting of her image and its political function.

Unlike the other artists represented here, Bashi does not interfere with the sculpture itself. But in the thoroughgoing spatial relocation and the consequent demand to see the sculpture differently, *Villa Victoria* exposes a temporal misalignment between past and present and poses a question about the presence of this historical object in the contemporary world.

### Sophie Ernst, *Silent Empress* (2012)

In *Silent Empress*, created in 2012, Sophie Ernst attached a loudhailer to the face of the statue of Queen Victoria in Wakefield, Yorkshire, from which issued a monologue comprised of quotations from the journals and letters of the Queen and extracts from speeches and texts by past prime ministers (Blair, Brown, Cameron, Churchill, Gladstone, and Lord Salisbury), as well as Lin Tse-hsü, Chinese Governor General at the time of the First Opium War, and Somerset Maugham (*Fig. 2*). These quotations form a patchwork of statements about empire, generally supportive, and, while recognizing that it was built on exploitation and colonial violence, asserting that no apology is necessary and that silence on the matter is preferable.<sup>26</sup>

Ernst's *Silent Empress* was a public commission for Yorkshire Sculpture Park near Wakefield. This may be why the Wakefield monument was chosen but, given its prevalence around the globe, it was an appropriate example. The statue was modelled by F. J. Williamson in 1904 and unveiled the following year. It is a replica of the statue Williamson originally sculpted for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 1887. Williamson depicted the empress in state robes, complete with crown, sceptre, and pennant decoration. This came to be a particularly popular image of Victoria, both with the Queen herself and with commissioning bodies across the empire, with versions in Hastings, Paisley, Londonderry, Rangoon (Yangon), Perth, Auckland, and Christchurch.<sup>27</sup> Viewing

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<sup>26</sup> Ernst's work coincided with two other projects which made sculptures speak, projects which revealed the tensions about the meanings of public sculptures and how the public is supposed to relate to them, and, as a result, which replayed a familiar contestation of Victoria and her image. On the one hand, the project *Let Our Statues Speak* (2018), organized by the Stuart Hall Foundation, was concerned with revealing what was occluded by public statuary, and with the complexity of histories of and attitudes towards slavery, colonialism, and empire embodied in the objects. This was a project with which Ernst was associated. On the other hand, the *Talking Statues London* project provided a QR code on statues so that people could hear the 'voice' of the sculpture on their phones, thus 'breath[ing] new life into the statues that surround us all'. This project adopted the personal and the sympathetic as the means of creating a relationship between viewer and statue, which, in the case of the two statues of Victoria chosen (voiced by popular actresses including Prunella Scales and Patricia Hodge) replicated the ideological work of Victoria's self-curated image.

<sup>27</sup> See *Queen Victoria's Journals*, 1 December 1886; M. H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of To-Day* (London: Cassell, 1901), p. 30; and Mary Ann Steggle, *Statues of the Raj* (Putney: BASCA, 2000).



Fig. 2: Sophie Ernst, *Silent Empress* (2012). Photograph: courtesy of Sophie Ernst.

Ernst's work from the perspective of the statue's history provides a useful reminder that Wakefield was also the empire, that empire was not just overseas in the colonies but also at home.<sup>28</sup> All these replicas of Williamson's sculpture meant that the same empress at the same moment presided over the global empire, a spatial unity that was unchanging.

The central concern of *Silent Empress* was the legacy of empire and the question of apology for this history. It was not simply about articulating an apology; rather, it raised

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<sup>28</sup> For important volumes in this expanding area of enquiry, see *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. by Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); *The East India Company at Home, 1757–1857*, ed. by Margot Finn and Kate Smith (London: UCL Press, 2018) <<https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/88277>> [accessed 25 November 2021]; and *British Women and Cultural Practices of Empire, 1770–1940*, ed. by Rosie Dias and Kate Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

the question of what an apology might be, what it would mean to apologize, and how to avoid apology as an end point, as if saying sorry simply excused the past and closed debate. Indeed, the use of quotation from Victoria in the 1840s to Gordon Brown's statement, made in a 2005 speech when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, that 'the days of Britain having to apologize for its colonial history are over' underpins the idea that this matter is not something consigned to the past, but — like Victoria's image — has a persistent legacy.<sup>29</sup> Ernst has pointed out that she deploys the conception of apology as *Eingedenken*, as defined by Walter Benjamin. This is to remember the past from the perspective of the present; to conceive the apology not as the completion of the past, a fresh start as it were, but as signalling a continual responsibility.<sup>30</sup>

For Ernst, a first step in addressing this was to attempt 'to expose the rather heroic form of remembering' in European public commemoration and the way in which colonialism was still marked by an aesthetic of presence, moral virtue, and even glamour. How might this heroic form of remembrance be undone? How might one draw out what such heroic image making ignores or actively suppresses? How might the statue as a form of forgetting rather than remembering be brought to public attention?

While the sound is crucial to the project, equally important is the visual and material form of the work, since this directly engages with the form of public sculpture both generally and, here, specifically in terms of Victoria's image. The loudhailer, which appears incongruous on the Edwardian statue, breaks the carefully designed form of the empress's body. Moreover, it hides much of her face, which was so important for Victoria in terms of recognition and the moral signals it gave. The duct tape used, crudely wrapped around the statue to hold the loudhailer in place, offers a hastily constructed and purely practical surface against the finely modelled and detailed surface of the empress. This has two important consequences. The first is that it provides an immediate sense of the collision of past and present, in keeping with the conceptual underpinning of the work. Indeed, it asks of the viewer how one might connect the Edwardian imperial effigy and the contemporary materials of the building trade and

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<sup>29</sup> This is a comment made by Brown at a press conference during a trip to Tanzania in 2005: Benedict Brogan, 'It's time to celebrate the Empire, says Brown', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 2005 <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-334208/Its-time-celebrate-Empire-says-Brown.html>> [accessed 25 November 2021]. This is not straightforwardly representative of Brown's views, which were far more nuanced than this single quotation suggests. While in Tanzania, he gave a speech outlining plans for global aid at a joint Department for International Development and UN Development Programme seminar: *Guardian*, 26 January 2005 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/jan/26/development.uk>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>30</sup> Sophie Ernst, 'Apology and "Eingedenken"', talk at the first *Let Our Statues Speak* workshop, University of Westminster, 22 September 2018.

public life. Moreover, the performance of installation, involving traffic cones, red and white tape, ladder, and the high-vis vests of the technicians installing the work, opens up not only the gap between imperial mythology and the banality of quotidian tasks but also alerts us to the gap between the immaculate image of the empress — splendid, luxurious, and powerful — and the hidden labour and manipulation needed to support this mirage.<sup>31</sup> The second key aesthetic function is that it becomes part of what one might call the work's anti-decoration. Visual elements become parodic of the decorative impulse that shaped Victoria's self-fashioning: thus, the red base of the loudhailer disrupts the monochrome unity of the statue; the red wires and the white iPod attached with blue tape to her wrist serve as an alternative set of jewellery, bracelets, and other adornments (and reminds one of the garland of shoes draped over Victoria in Bombay in 1896 by the Chapekar brothers).

While monumental form is cracked open by Ernst, what is most distinctive is the use of sound: that the silent empress speaks her own words and ventriloquizes others. Some of the quotations are straightforward, such as Churchill's notorious comment about the starvation of Bengali people as 'less serious', not least because 'Indians breed like rabbits'.<sup>32</sup> Others are reframed in order to approach the notion of apology: for example, a line from a letter from Lin Tse-hsü to Victoria about the British opium trade asked, 'By what right do they [...] use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people?'. In *Silent Empress* Victoria poses this question to herself, asking 'By what right did we use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people?'.<sup>33</sup> There are points at which historical detail is inevitably removed. The monologue proclaims 'Liberty for ourselves, Empire over the rest of mankind'. The phrase was taken from a speech made by Gladstone in 1879 but, historically at least, cannot be taken at face value. Gladstone cites this principle as a precedent from ancient Rome that is simply wrong and must not guide British foreign policy.<sup>34</sup> Gladstone, after all, was critical of empire and opposed to expansion. Moreover, given the citing of a letter about the Opium War, one might add that Gladstone believed strongly that the Chinese should be allowed to deal with British opium smugglers as they wished.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This can be seen on the video of the work and its installation at <<https://sophieernst.com/the-silent-empress/>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>32</sup> Churchill made the much quoted remark during an argument with Secretary of State for India, Leo Amery, about the famine in Bengal. See Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), p. 513.

<sup>33</sup> 'Lin Tse-hsü's Moral Advice to Queen Victoria, 1839', in Ssu-yü Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 24-28 (p. 25).

<sup>34</sup> W. E. Gladstone, 'Third Midlothian Speech', in *Political Speeches in Scotland: November and December 1879* (London: Ridgeway, 1879), pp. 95-129 (p. 128).

<sup>35</sup> Gladstone's position is most famously captured in his speech in the House of Commons on 8 April 1840 against war with



Beyond this, Ernst plays somewhat fast and loose with her source material. For example, there are quotations from Victoria which were not originally about empire or foreign policy, but were in personal letters to Vicky, her eldest daughter. Thus, the phrase ‘Yes, it is an awful moment to have to give up one’s innocence’ was in a letter written on the eve of Vicky’s wedding, and originally read, ‘Yes, it is an awful moment to have to give up one’s innocent child to a man.’<sup>36</sup> However, what Ernst appears to be doing here is creating a monologue for Victoria that reconstructs attitudes to empire in the language of her time (and subsequently); or, perhaps a more generous interpretation still, that the words were spoken in an imperial context, one that haunted speech and writing.

The point of Ernst’s work is to make the statue speak the unspoken, including the wish that colonial violence remains unspoken. This is what the silent empress keeps silent, the silence that is the source of her mute statue’s power. Like Wodiczko, Ernst demonstrates the different ways in which sculpture and speech shape and address the public. In this project the tensions of public and private emerged in another way. While this was a public commission, after only thirty minutes, Wakefield Council demanded that the work be removed on the grounds that it was ‘disrespectful’.<sup>37</sup> The end of the video reveals the irony of this, as the sound tag is removed, the installation team leaves the site, and the empress is left, as she was, undisturbed and silent in her injunction to ‘say as little as you can on these subjects’.

### **Hew Locke, *Hinterland* (2013)**

Richard Hope-Pinker’s statue of Victoria stands outside the law courts in Georgetown, Guyana, an imperial presence in an independent republic. In Hew Locke’s photograph, *Hinterland*, the statue is relocated from the orderly context of Georgetown into the hinterland where, ‘surrounded by the ghosts of empire’ as Locke himself puts it, Victoria is transformed by Guyana and its Afro-Creole culture (*Fig. 3*).<sup>38</sup>

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China, in *Hansard*, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 53, cols 800–08 (8 April 1840); and Hans Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca. 1600–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 11–12.

<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the Queen’s counsel to ‘say as little as you can on these subjects [...] be anxious that they should know as little as possible’ is derived from a letter of 1861 to Vicky, the Princess Royal, advising her not to speak to Princess Alice of sexual relations in marriage and childbearing. See Roger Fulford, *Dearest Child: Letters between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal, 1858–1861* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 385.

<sup>37</sup> Hammad Nasar, ‘Opinion: In Order to Be British We Must Acknowledge Our “Indianness”’, *Tate Etc.*, 15 September 2017 <<https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-41-autumn-2017/opinion-hammad-nasar-british-indianness>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>38</sup> Hew Locke, quoted in *Hew Locke: Here’s the Thing*, ed. by Jonathan Watkins and Diana Tuite (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2019), p. 62.



Fig. 3: Hew Locke, *Hinterland* (2013). Acrylic paint, ink, and pen on c-type photograph, 265 × 151.5 cm. © Hew Locke CC BY 4.0, DACS/Artimage 2021. Photo: Charles Littlewood.

The statue was unveiled in 1894 outside what was then the Victoria Law Courts. The subsequent history of the monument parallels that of Guyana's, as one might expect, given that history is one of struggle against colonialism, independence, and the realization of the nation. Thus, anti-colonial protestors dynamited the statue in

1954, blowing off its head and left hand, and the statue was removed in 1970 when Guyana became a republic. Cheddi Jagan, leader of the People's Progressive Party, noted that the removal 'had therapeutic value for the nation and the individual', that it was necessary psychologically as much as it was symbolically.<sup>39</sup> To remove the statue was also to remove the myths of Victoria's self-curated image. As Harold Lutchman noted in the year of Guyana's becoming a republic, 'it was for years part of Guyanese education to be taught that slavery was abolished because of the initiative of Queen Victoria the Good.'<sup>40</sup> However, the statue of Victoria was returned to its original site in 1990.<sup>41</sup> This was, and remains, a contentious move, and the restored empress, occupying again the symbolic spot, suggesting that she remains the legal arbiter, the *fons et origo* of the law, was subject to further attacks, defaced with red paint in 2018.

*Hinterland* is not unconnected to such attacks; indeed, Locke describes his practice as 'mindful vandalism'.<sup>42</sup> Of course, his attacks take place on the surface of the photograph rather than on the sculpture itself, since the sculpture is not available for modification.<sup>43</sup> More importantly, rather than defacing or destroying, this aesthetic vandalism is about reimagining the sculpture. Locke uses art as critique, and critique as a means of making art; this is not a simple statement — as graffiti or defacement might be — but a work of art with a more complex engagement with the visual and material qualities of the sculpture, and of the history in which it is embedded.

The treatment of the statue itself emphasizes its violent history. The tracing of lines to mark the contours of the form clarifies the damage to the face and the missing left hand. Moreover, because the broken sceptre is the one part of the statue that remains uncoloured, it appears as if it is falling, as if the Queen were dropping the emblem of imperial authority. Most of the surface of the white monument is adorned with a design of brilliant colours; the plain robes are transformed into a vibrant costume at odds with the demeanour of Victoria and ideal whiteness of marble sculpture. This alternative decoration reflects a major strand of Locke's output, which deals with imperial figures and royalty weighed down with the decoration of empire, and parodies the

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Salkey, *Georgetown Journal* (1972), quoted in Leon Wainwright, 'Visualizing Figures of Caribbean Slavery through Modernism', in *A Companion to Modern Art*, ed. by Pam Meecham (Hoboken: Wiley, 2017), pp. 411–24 (p. 417).

<sup>40</sup> Harold A. Lutchman, 'The Co-operative Republic of Guyana', *Caribbean Studies*, 10.3 (1970), 97–115 (p. 101).

<sup>41</sup> Henry Richard Hope-Pinker, Statue of Queen Victoria, 1894, marble, Georgetown, Guyana <<https://interactive.britishart.yale.edu/victoria-monuments/210/statue-of-queen-victoria>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Fullerton, 'Mindful Vandalism: A Conversation with Hew Locke', *Sculpture*, September/October 2020 <[https://www.halesgallery.com/usr/documents/press/download\\_url/691/elizabeth-fullerton-mindful-vandalism-sculpture-magazine-september-october-2020.pdf](https://www.halesgallery.com/usr/documents/press/download_url/691/elizabeth-fullerton-mindful-vandalism-sculpture-magazine-september-october-2020.pdf)> [accessed 25 November 2021].

<sup>43</sup> Jon Wood, 'Photography, Painting and Impossible Sculpture: Hew Locke's *Natives and Colonials*: Jon Wood in Conversation with Hew Locke', *Sculpture Journal*, 15 (2006), 282–86 (p. 282).

self-fashioning of Victoria, who represented herself covered with the badges of office, products of empire (such as diamonds), and objects symbolizing dynastic authority (Wood, p. 283). However, the decorative surface of *Hinterland* is not the baubles of empire but the stealthy and subversive decoration of the statue by Guyana and its history.

Indeed, colour and whiteness structure the work. Locke has said that he sees colour a means of reinvigorating sculpture, albeit a reinvigoration that simultaneously transforms its meaning. Here, the bright palette is a marked alternative to the pristine whiteness of the cleaning and repair effected before the monument was re-erected outside the law courts in Georgetown. Relocated away from the centre in the hinterland, nature takes over, the pattern on the plinth and figure resembling the way in which moss or lichen grows over stone surfaces, the liquidity of the swamp as a threat to the ostensible permanence of marble. This is also a reminder that the statue, when removed from its original site, had been left in the botanical gardens in the capital.

While there is no literal sound as in the works by Ernst, Wodiczko, and Hadley+Maxwell, Locke nevertheless represents the audible and its relationship to the ceremonial function of public sculpture. *Hinterland* depicts auditory ghosts haunting the silent presence of the marble Queen: four drummer boys, taken from nineteenth-century paintings by William Morris Hunt, George William Joy, and others, but now with ghoulish faces, spectral revenants of heroic sentimentality; a flute-playing girl, quoting a painting by Donna Tucker, the kind of contemporary art abhorred by the art establishment, which evokes fantasies of a tropical idyll, flanked by two skeletons; and behind the Queen, two strange musicians with animal heads playing banjo and harmonica. These 'ghosts of empire' create a counter-ceremonial.

The skeletons flanking the flautist might be gnawing bones or they might be gnawing sugar cane; in the sugar trade the two become equivalents. The visual rhyme between bone and flute connects the fantasy of colonial idyll and the reality of violent production. The world of sugar beyond Guyana is evoked by the semi-animal figures playing banjo and harmonica; the banjo, in particular, raises the spectre of the American Deep South and slavery. Moreover, the grotesque forms are a reminder of Locke's interest in Mexican visual culture: these forms have a kinship with the popular imagery, cartoons of skeletons, and traditions of masquerade in the Day of the Dead. Kobena Mercer has remarked that Locke uses 'cross-cultural assemblage as a critical device for examining fantasies of power'.<sup>44</sup> Together, this mix of sources articulates, first, the global nature of Guyana as a nation, that there is no pure indigeneity to be found but only a complex of

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<sup>44</sup> Kobena Mercer, 'Hew Locke's Postcolonial Baroque', *Small Axe*, 15.1 (2011), 1-25 (p. 3).

transnational links; and, second, Guyana as part of the circum-Atlantic sugar economy, stretching from Europe, via Africa, to South America, the Caribbean, and the USA. The monument, of course, replaced the variegated structures of enslavement, colonialism, and trade with a singular image of empire, of a homogenized geographical power and moral legitimacy; Victoria's image was designed to occlude the patterns of migration and displacement that shaped Guyana.<sup>45</sup>

The colonial order that is supposed to radiate from Victoria as the centre of empire is displaced by disorder. The monumental figure fails to contain the encroaching hinterland peopled by the overlapping, half-visible figures. The statue is haunted by the carnivalesque ceremonial of what it wanted to repress; what was silenced finally makes itself heard. These ghosts return as the sceptre falls and the hinterland reclaims the monument.

#### Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary Kirkham, *Queen Victoria* (2014)

On 12 and 13 June 2014, in Victoria Park, Kitchener, Ontario, Krzysztof Wodiczko projected the bodies of six people onto the statue of Queen Victoria that has pride of place in the park (Fig. 4). The projected participants, five refugees and one woman of



Fig. 4: Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary Kirkham, *Queen Victoria* (2014). Courtesy of CAFKATV.

<sup>45</sup> For more on mobility and migration in Locke's work, see Richard Drayton, 'The Eye through the Mask: Hew Locke and the Arts of Seeing vs. Being (Not) Seen', in *Hew Locke: Here's the Thing*, ed. by Watkins and Tuite, pp. 13-19; also, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Shipscales: Imagining an Ocean of Space', *Anthurium*, 16.2 (2020), 1-12 <<http://doi.org/10.33596/anth.425>>.

indigenous heritage, told the audience their stories. The statue in Kitchener was made by Raffaele Zaccacchini and unveiled in 1911 on Victoria Day, the tenth anniversary of the Queen's death. Victoria Park had been named in 1897 to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. Both the statue and its location were wholly identified with empire and its legacy. The participants' narratives of marginalization and exclusion were told from a position of absolute centrality, both giving them a chance to engage in democratic exchange and to demand recognition, and ironically revealing the limits of democracy in the wake of the settler colonialism represented by Victoria.

This intervention is typical of the major strand of Wodiczko's art. As one of the world's leading public artists, he has staged similar projections around the globe, exploring the social and political tensions embodied in monuments and revealing the exclusions at the heart of apparently inclusive statues. His work interrogates the limits of democracy and democratic exchange and the way in which the public sphere, apparently an open space of civil society, is too often transformed into a space of 'publicity' instead, the domain of advertising, media, and corporations. Indeed, Wodiczko's extensive work with monuments around the world has at its heart the question: what is the public in 'public sculpture'? His projections and similar projects ask about both the actual constituency — that is, who is included and who is excluded — and about the conceptual and political understandings of the public that inform these monuments. His work is largely an attempt to complicate and examine the assumptions that are hidden by the all-too-easy articulation of 'public' in both political and everyday discourse and draws on radical trends in democratic theory.<sup>46</sup>

Wodiczko terms his participants — in this case, those whose bodies and voices were projected onto Victoria — the 'inner public', distinguishing them from the outer public, those who form the audience for the work. This is a practical distinction pertaining to the making of his works, but one which also has a political resonance, not least because his 'inner public', as in this work, consists of those who are marginalized and can only become part of the monument's public at a cost. This is pertinent to the crucial role of playwright Gary Kirkham in making the work. Kirkham, as a local writer, liaised with refugee and indigenous peoples, since these communities were not simply there to be gathered up by a world-famous artist, but were already embedded in social structures and hierarchies that required the building of trust. This work of forming the inner

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<sup>46</sup> Again, the work of Chantal Mouffe is pertinent here. For a good account of Mouffe, see Mark Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 180–217. See also, Fred J. Evans, *Public Art and the Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 23–47.

public is part of the artwork itself, and again reveals social divisions that are the legacy of what the Victoria monument represents.

Like Sophie Ernst, Wodiczko and Kirkham make the silent empress speak, and in so doing reveal the power of that silence. However, rather than having the Queen speak the words of those in power, the voices — and projected presences — are of those excluded from the imperial body, or whose inclusion comes at a price of self-abnegation. The superficial flickering images of the participants against the solid bronze of Victoria is metaphorical of social position, and this tension between film and sculpture, the ephemeral and apparently permanent, parallels the participants' testimonies. Lamees Al Athari, for example, a refugee from Iraq who is now a Canadian citizen, describes the difficulty of being Iraqi-Canadian: 'it's not as easy as it sounds', she says, as she describes the strangeness of having to pledge allegiance to the Queen and a new culture.

Importantly, the connection between naming and colonialism emerged in the projection, most forcefully in the testimony of Amy Smoke, a woman of Haudenosaunee heritage. Amy told her tale of a troubled life, rooted in not knowing what her indigenous identity meant. From here, she detailed something of her history of addiction and her recovery, made possible through aboriginal engagement in the form of a healing lodge. In reclaiming her ethnic belonging, she also reclaimed a sense of self, both of which had been negated by colonialism and its legacy. That this story of loss and reclamation emanated from the elevated figure of the empress was largely what made Amy's testimony so poignant.

Naming is central to Amy's story. It begins, of course, with her own name; not only Amy, as an alternative to Victoria, but she also refers to herself as Northern Lights Woman. She makes the point that although the event is staged in Victoria Park, this is not the name given to the space by the Haudenosaunee people: 'You are on our land', she says, bluntly.<sup>47</sup> This alternative nomenclature extends yet further. At one point, Amy is shown cradling her baby, and she says: 'I named her Sky ... for Sky Woman of the Haudenosaunee-Mohawk creation story. Sky Woman fell from the sky and landed on the turtle's back, got up and walked around and made Turtle Island as we know this continent.'<sup>48</sup> Rather than Victoria as the Great Mother and Canada as her dominion, Amy cites the indigenous alternatives, which preceded imperial appropriation of Haudenosaunee land and attack on their culture. The familiarity of the names, their naturalization, bolstered by the statue, is evidence of imperial violence.

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<sup>47</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary Kirkham, *Queen Victoria, Amy #1*, YouTube, 12–13 June 2014 <<https://youtu.be/Vyse-5ModTDk>> [accessed 25 November 2021] (at 1 min. 13 sec.).

<sup>48</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko and Gary Kirkham, *Queen Victoria, Amy #2*, YouTube, 12–13 June 2014 <<https://youtu.be/V3vbYN-LuZCw>> [accessed 25 November 2021] (at 31–45 sec.).

The history of naming has a further dimension, implicit rather than explicit. When the statue to Victoria was raised in 1911, the city was called Berlin — this was a German-Canadian city — and Victoria shared the park with a monument to the Kaiser, a bust by Reinhold Begas, the leading German sculptor. The complementary loyalties of German-Canadians were wholly consonant with Victoria's own family; the Kaiser was her grandson, present at her death in 1901, and having unveiled the Victoria Memorial outside Buckingham Palace on 16 May 1911, just eight days before the unveiling of the Kitchener statue. In 1914, unsurprisingly, things changed. The bust of the Kaiser was removed (subsequently stolen and likely melted down) and in 1916 the city was renamed Kitchener, after Earl Kitchener, the hero of the Boer War, who had just died. The new name emphasized the connection to Britain and its empire.

This, in turn, points to a longer and more complex global history in which this monument is embedded and which adds resonances unarticulated but implicit in Wodiczko and Kirkham's work. The money for the statue was raised by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE). The IODE, whose motto was 'One Flag, One Throne, One Empire', was a hyper-imperialist, white supremacist organization founded in 1899, and one of many women's organizations founded across the empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the Victoria League.<sup>49</sup> The IODE was founded by Margaret Polson Murray after a visit to the UK, during which she was swept up in the jingoism in response to the Second Boer War. Like the naming of Kitchener itself, the war in South Africa determined the shape of empire in Canada. On her return to Canada, Polson Murray decided a women's organization was needed to bolster 'colonial patriotism' and to maintain racial hierarchies in the face of the threats, as she saw it, of migrants and indigenous people.<sup>50</sup> The statue of Victoria, therefore, was intentionally intended as a symbol of white supremacy.

Thus, the statue is no neutral or convenient screen for the inner public's entry into the public sphere. It is the potent symbol of what has barred those people from full democratic engagement. This is not just an engagement with the contemporary moment and democracy in Canada in 2014. With Victoria at the centre, as the material and symbolic fulcrum of the city, it is part of a longer history of political exclusion, of

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<sup>49</sup> Eliza Riedi, 'Women, Gender, and the Promotion of Empire: The Victoria League, 1901-1914', *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), 569-99; Katie Pickles, 'A Link in "the great chain of Empire friendship": The Victoria League in New Zealand', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33 (2005), 29-50; Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000); and Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Jessica Schagerl, 'The Tensions of Global Imperial Community: Canada's Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)', in *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, ed. by Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), pp. 201-15 (p. 203).



the workings of power through public space and its organization. This has been the legacy of Victoria's self-fashioning.

### Hadley+Maxwell, *The Queen Still Falls to You* (2014)

Hadley+Maxwell's immersive installation transformed the statue of Victoria by John Hughes, unveiled in 1908 outside Leinster House, the home of the Royal Dublin Society (Fig. 5). Their work was first shown in a limited form in Australia at Carriageworks for the Sydney Biennale in 2014, and then an expanded version was presented at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin in September and October that year as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Hughes's statue was raised in Dublin to commemorate Victoria's visit to the city in April 1900 and Irish participation in the Boer War.<sup>51</sup> The Queen sat atop the monumental structure, while, at ground level, were three groups: Hibernia at Peace, Fame, and, most significantly, Hibernia at War, showing a dying soldier, clutching his rifle, with an allegorical figure of Ireland about to crown him with a laurel wreath. It was this group

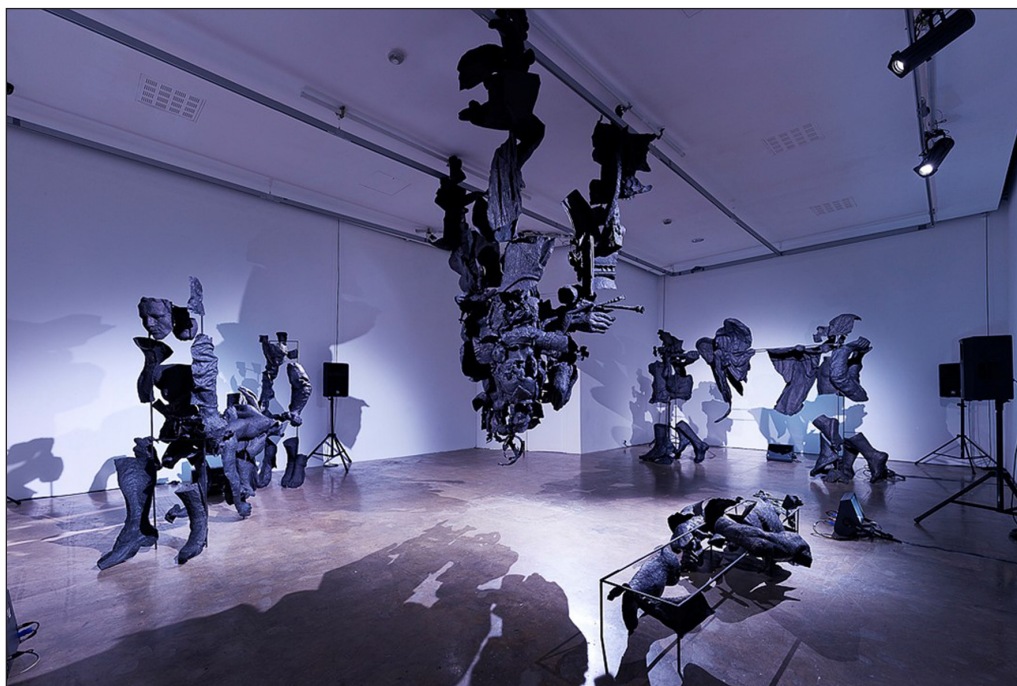


Fig. 5: Hadley+Maxwell, *The Queen Still Falls to You* (2014). Photograph: courtesy of the artists.

<sup>51</sup> Yvonne Whelan, 'Performing Power, Demonstrating Resistance: Interpreting Queen Victoria's Visit to Dublin in 1900', in *(Dis)Placing Empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies*, ed. by Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael M. Roche (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 99–116; and Margarita Cappock, 'The Royal Visits to Dublin', *Dublin Historical Record*, 52 (1999), 94–107.

that crystallized the purpose of the monument as a paean to imperial loyalty. Inevitably, the presence of the British Queen and empress outside what became the parliament building of the Irish Free State in 1922 proved controversial, and in 1948 the monument was dismantled. In 1986 the central statue of Victoria was purchased by Australia to sit outside the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney.<sup>52</sup> The presentation of Hadley+Maxwell's work in Sydney and Dublin was thus related to the history of the monument itself. *The Queen Still Falls to You* has a rough parallel with — or perhaps reversal of — the narrative of the monument's own story, from its unveiling in affirmation of Irish participation in the Boer War, its removal as a response to nationalist politics, and then Victoria's relocation in Australia. Accordingly, the iteration in Sydney used only the Queen's body as material, while the subsequent version in Dublin drew on all parts of the disassembled monument. One might add a further unintended connection: Hadley+Maxwell are Canadian and there is a resonance with the approaches by a number of Canadian cities, including London, Ontario and Vancouver, to purchase Hughes's sculpture in the late 1940s.

The artists worked with the decorative surface of both Queen and statue. This pertains to the actual process of making *The Queen Still Falls to You*. The material is cinefoil, a matt black aluminium foil used in film and theatre to mask light leaks or eliminate reflections. The artists used it to take a cast of the surface of the monument. Thus, the first step was to rematerialize the sculpture as a thin matt surface. These casts were then attached to a steel armature with magnets. The fact that the armature was no longer internal and hidden but wholly visible further emphasized superficiality.

The casts of the monument were reassembled into new sculptural groups: the Queen, Pall-Bearers, Stretcher-Bearers, and Tomb. These partial and fragmented revisions revealed the hollowness of the monument, a metaphorical emptiness inside the grandiloquent ornamental surface. The Queen was at the centre, but now utterly transformed in terms of substance and weight. The volume of the figure remained the same, but now the figure was inverted, presenting a void rather than a fictive solid. Victoria was suddenly weightless as the monument hung in space, seemingly floating upwards, reversing the form and meaning of the sculpture. It is as if empire itself is a dissolving surface; all that is solid, as it were, melting into air.

The other groups were reconfigurations of the remaining sculptures from the original statuary. Hadley+Maxwell retained the fundamental structure of a central

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<sup>52</sup> Hatt, 'Sculpture and Ceremonial', pp. 121, 139–42; and Yvonne Whelan, 'The Construction and Destruction of a Colonial Landscape: Monuments to British Monarchs in Dublin before and after Independence', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28 (2002), 508–33.

figure and three supporting groups, but these now engage in a ritual circling around the Queen and signal death rather than eternal life. The dying soldier and his comrades, attended by a female allegorical figure in the standard iconography of sculptural allegory, become stretcher-bearers and pall-bearers, shifting the focus from noble sacrifice rewarded with eternal life to brute death, the body slain rather than the body transcended. The tomb, which may be that of Victoria herself, reinforces this, as does the blackening of the surface, deadening the patina of the bronze original.

The viewer was able to walk around and between the sculptural fragments, a far more intimate experience than in the original. The Queen's skin, which was a distant screen for the projection of imperial desire, is now disturbingly close, fragile and vulnerable. This experiential engagement was enhanced by the use of coloured light and the uncanny cast shadows on floor, walls, and ceiling, and by a soundtrack.<sup>53</sup> The installation, which had a duration of around twenty minutes, was divided into three sections: 'The Discharge', in which the Queen appears in response to recognition from the public; 'The Goading Crowd', in which that public demands dethronement; and 'The Lamentation', in which the public mourns the Queen's death. In each case the ways in which the crowd or public is formed through a different response to the individual, the Queen, is at stake: as a symbol for affirmation, as a scapegoat, and as the object of veneration.<sup>54</sup> Thus, *The Queen Still Falls to You*, as its title suggests, asks us to consider the complicity of the public in the crafting of Victoria and her image and, by extension, in imperial politics more broadly. The work did not simply reshape the sculpture, but provided an immersive experience with a new narrative, demanding of viewers that they consider their own position as a public for the monument.

Like Locke, Hadley+Maxwell have discussed their work in terms of dealing with ghosts and, like Bashi, they transform the monument's spatial framework to reposition the public audience. In calling back the ghosts of the past and reconceiving the relationship of viewer and sculpture, Hadley+Maxwell bring to our attention certain features of monuments to Victoria that are all too easily overlooked. First, they remind us of the theatricality of public monuments. In a sense the use of the monument for a theatrical display is wholly appropriate, given its role in ceremonial and now, in works such as this one, counter-ceremonial. Second, they astutely insist on the role

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<sup>53</sup> The effects of the *mise en scène* and soundtrack are captured in the video *The Queen Still Falls to You 2014* on Hadley+Maxwell's Vimeo page.

<sup>54</sup> The pseudo-theological structure of the installation, moving through the Christ-like stages of affirmation, scapegoating, death, and veneration, is not incidental. Hadley+Maxwell have commented on the monument as sacred object, and thus connected to rituals of sacralization. See Hadley+Maxwell, *The Queen Still Falls to You*, YouTube, 22 September 2014 <<https://youtu.be/B3HU8FsZKBw>> [accessed 25 November 2021].

of allegorical adjuncts as more than supplementary; they do not merely decorate the figure at the centre, but the meaning of Victoria depends on these additions. To revise the understanding of the supporting cast is to change the significance of the empress herself. Finally, they present the decorative surface as surface; not a skin that reveals an interior, as Victoria herself would have it, but one that hides an emptiness, a myth. Here again, the fiction of imperial ornamentation is exposed, whether in Ireland, Australia, or elsewhere in the world.

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