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POSTMONUMENTS?

A DISCONTINUED PROJECT, A CURRENT AND A PROSPECTIVE MONUMENT IN SWEDEN

ABSTRACT

In Sweden, a wave of new monuments can currently be observed, both in terms of what is being monumentalized, and in how it is being executed. This article seeks to understand what is at stake in these processes, which bear similarities to various international examples, by employing the concept of *postmonuments*. Inspired by Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory, the concept focuses on the temporal and commissioning aspects of the "post," rather than on the transmission of memory. The three projects discussed were all initiated between 2018 and 2019 and, at the time of writing remain incomplete. The first of these is a discontinued monument commemorating Swedish colonialism, the second is an LGBTQI+ monument soon to be realized, and the third a prospective Antiracist monument.

Keywords: postmemory, monument, countermonument, difficult heritage, Sweden

A wave of new monuments can currently be observed in Sweden, both in terms of what is being monumentalized and how it is being executed. This article examines three examples of monuments in Sweden: the first being a discontinued project of a monument commemorating Swedish colonialism, the second, an LGBTQI+ monument that will soon be completed, and the third, a prospective Antiracist monument. All three projects were initiated between 2018 and 2019 and, as of January 2023, remain unfinished. They can be contextualized within the international discourse on monuments over the past decade, from the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa, which called for the removal of statues of Apartheid leaders, to the toppling of statues in connection with the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. While similar demands have not gained as much traction in Sweden, I argue that the monuments discussed in this article are directly linked to these movements, not only in terms of their subject matter, but also in how the processes of initiation, commissioning, and potential realization are considered and conceived. These manifold commissions of monuments in Sweden can thus be seen as a reaction to the topics and demands raised by these movements, as well as proactive measures towards potential future demands. This argument is supported by the fact that, parallel to the three monuments discussed, several other monuments are being planned and produced. These include: a Seyfo memorial commemorating the Assyrian genocide of 1915, a number of monuments honoring war veterans, a few monuments dedicated to the Romani population, and one celebrating 100 years of Swedish democracy. While these monuments vary between traditional and experimental in terms of their themes, forms, and conceptualizations, and some delve deeper into contested memory, they all share the common characteristic of shedding light on events and histories that were previously absent from public spaces.

I employ the concept of *postmonuments* as a unifying framework for the examples discussed in this article. This concept encompasses the alleged interests of the commissioning bodies in both the subject matter to be commemorated and the potential for reconciliation. While this term serves as a tool or framework to analyze the monuments under examination and to identify similarities in their objectives, it falls short of fully capturing the unique histories these monuments aim to commemorate. The primary focus of this investigation is to investigate how these monuments embody a temporal continuum through reparative efforts and simultaneously have the potential to signify an end, a rupture, and a new beginning.

CONCEPTUALIZING POSTMONUMENTS

The concept of postmonuments aims to explore the significance and distinctive features of commemorative processes that differentiate them from other monuments. However, before delving further into this discussion, it is essential to address why these projects should be labeled ‘monuments’ in the first place. The Latin word for monument, *monumentum*, literally translates as “something that reminds” and historically,

monuments have served as reminders or celebrations of a nation's or an individual's accomplishments or glory. Nonetheless, there are other aspects to consider, such as figurative, symbolic, and spatial aspects, which set monuments apart from public sculptures. One key distinction is that monuments have a mission beyond the inherent openness of artworks. As I have discussed elsewhere, a monument performs a specific function, while works of art have the potential to serve a multitude of purposes.¹ Expectations surrounding monuments encompass both their intended function as perceived by the commissioning body and their interpretation in the public space. Furthermore, there is an ongoing negotiation regarding the expectations placed upon monuments and what they actually achieve. The commissioning of a monument often differs slightly from that of a permanent public artwork due to the former's focus on the theme to be commemorated that should also be reflected in the artistic expression.

In German, there exists a seemingly useful distinction between *Denkmal* and *Mahnmal*, where the former tends to refer to deeds and moments of glory, while the latter commemorates and memorializes victims of war and suffering. However, in practice, such a clear division does not exist. For instance, the monument for Jewish victims of the Holocaust is referred to as *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, but there are also colloquial terms such as the *Holocaust-Mahnmal*. Swedish and English lack a comparable conceptual division, although there are several terms in circulation, such as "monuments," "memorials," and "memory art" in English. The German terms *Gedenkstätte* or *Mahnmal* imply a call to action, to remember rather than simply memorialize, and to mourn rather than honor. In Swedish, concepts that translate as "memorial site," "memorial mark," or "memory care" similarly imply a sense of mourning, whereas "monument" remains an overarching category encompassing everything from statues of kings and commemorations of victims of natural disasters to contemporary performative interventions labeled by artists or commissioners as "monuments." In the two examples under development, namely the LGBTQI+ and Antiracist monuments, the terms "artwork" and "monument" are used interchangeably. However, the ultimate objective of the commission is to create a monument. This differs from artworks that are labeled as monuments at the artist's own initiative, where the labeling itself can be understood as an artistic intention to evoke or frame a specific interpretation of the work. Calling a work of art a monument inscribes it in a certain (art) history, implying a mission and an intention to memorialize.

My employment of the term "post" in this context draws from Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory. She defines postmemory as "an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture."² Her term is related to intergenerational memory and, as she herself acknowledges, emerged in an era marked by various "posts," which I would argue we are no longer in. Hirsch initially formulated the concept of postmemory in the early 1990s, and she has developed it since. However, it originated by reference to notions such as

¹ R. Katz Thor, "Monumental Tiredness – The Time and Function of Monuments," in A. Enqvist, K. Modig, R. Katz Thor, J. Zawieja (eds), *Public Memory, Public Art – Reflections on Monuments and Memorial Art Today*, Stockholm 2022, p. 20.

² M. Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2008), p. 106.

“post-colonialism,” “post-secularism,” or “post-humanity.”³ Currently, we find ourselves in an era characterized more by “de-” or “un-” terms, such as “decoloniality,” and of “un-learning.” Nevertheless, Hirsch insists that postmemory shares certain characteristics with other “posts” such as *their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them, marking a particular end-of-century/turn-of-century moment of looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms* and that it is not merely a method or an idea but a ‘structure’ of *inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience*.⁴ In this article, I propose a reading of specific monuments as postmonuments, defined by a similar conflict of continuity and rupture, whereby they simultaneously evoke the historical violence of oppression and racism, and the commissioner’s desire to heal and to make reparation, even though the subject matter they seek to commemorate is still an issue of current relevance. Hence, the uniqueness of these monuments lies in the structural tension between the commemorator, the commemorated, the artistic means, and the temporal status of the monument and its subject matter. They depart from the general notion of monuments in terms of what they commemorate and their processes since they address violence and oppression associated with shame rather than collective grief or pride. Crucially, these monuments are defined as much by their processes as by their objective to memorialize. Preliminarily, postmonuments can be defined by three main factors:

1. They commemorate a difficult heritage, representing past structural wrongdoings that society has yet to reconcile with.
2. They are commissioned, funded, initiated, or built by the same governing body that was structurally, legally, or symbolically responsible for the oppression or wrongdoing they aim to commemorate.
3. They are conceptualized within a framework of vulnerability and repair.

The commissioning of postmonuments facilitates structures for the commemoration of challenging heritages, violent pasts, or oppression. As such, they are processes governed by what they seek to communicate (the subject matter to be commemorated), the impact of the commission on that communication (for example, when a city frames a form of oppression as a thing of the past rather than a present reality), and the form or means of that communication (the potential success or failure of the aesthetic expression).

TEMPORALITIES: COUNTER, PARA AND POST

My proposal to label these monuments using the prefix “post” does not primarily indicate that they succeed chronologically another type of monument, but rather that their conceptual formulation implies that a particular episode of oppression or a violent past

³ M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York 2012, p. 5.

⁴ M. Hirsch, “The Generation of...,” p. 106.

is now part of history – that we are *past* that experience. However, the concept also addresses the history of monuments, their subject matter, and their forms of aesthetic expression. The examples under consideration are described as “post” rather than “counter” or “para,” as discussed below. They are also “post” in relation to the commissioning body since such projects do not originate from top-down initiatives as typically observed in conventional processes of public monuments.

In the early 1990s, James Young coined the term “countermonuments” to describe the German memorial culture of the time, in which the traditional monument was being questioned as a means of inciting public memory.⁵ Young identified a new type of memorial work, countermonuments, which are *brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very promise of their being*.⁶ One prominent example is The Monument Against Fascism, realized in 1986 by Esther Shalev-Gerz and Jochen Gerz. The project, initiated in 1979 by the city of Hamburg, aimed to counter the wave of neo-fascism in the city. It consisted of a 12-meter-high column clad in lead with a one-meter-square perimeter, installed in a public square. The conceptual framework included an invitation for residents to engrave their names directly onto the surface of the monument using a metal pencil provided, thereby ratifying a collective statement against fascism. Over the next seven years, as each surface became filled with inscriptions, the monument progressively descended into the ground, thus making new surfaces accessible for inscription. All that remains visible now is the top of the monument, level with the ground, and a text explaining its background; glimpses of the column can be seen from the side. According to Young, this monument “against” something paves the way for a new conceptual understanding of what a monument is and does.⁷ It is an expression of something that is considered significant enough not only to be remembered but also to mark opposition against. Hence, it addresses past wrongdoings and articulates a societal opposition to such ideologies in the present. The fascist past is, in a sense, literally buried, yet this act was marred by neo-Nazi slogans on the monument, testifying to the impossibility of completely burying the past.⁸ This monument, along with Young’s interpretation of it, has significantly influenced the discourse on monuments ever since. It has become a prominent framework for understanding monuments that deviate from a conservative nation-building tradition.⁹

However, last year, Nora Sternfeld proposed another concept, the “para-monument.” She describes how these two concepts differ since the para-monument does not address *the idea of a monument negatively but appropriates the form and discourse of the powerful monuments in order to turn these properties against them* and it is thus neither

⁵ J. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven 1993, p. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 34, 37.

⁸ T. Stubblefield, “Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear? The Counter-Monument in Revision,” *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2011), p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

“against” the monument nor defined by it.¹⁰ For Sternfeld, this type of monument is dominated by the quality of being near, next to, or going alongside, both spatially and temporally. Consequently, her concept starkly contrasts with Young’s memorial spaces, which possess a self-refuting quality embedded in their conceptual and aesthetic aspects. The notion of postmonuments draws on and departs from these two concepts in the sense that it entails neither opposition nor proximity. However, all three concepts share a fundamental reflexivity.

At the core of the term “post” lies a question of temporality, which, in the context of monuments and commemorations, is complex. Firstly, all monuments are governed by a temporal structure that encompasses at least three dimensions: the time they commemorate, the time of their construction, and the temporal circumstances in which they are encountered and interpreted by viewers. This is evident in relation to demands for the removal of statues, for instance. Secondly, monuments tend to be perceived as providing closure, which represents a rupture between a before and an after, an ethical and temporal coming to terms with and moving beyond. Thirdly, monuments “fix” a historical event in time, serving as a monument to what they aim to commemorate and implying a commitment to non-forgetting, which is both ethical and temporal. While monuments, in a general sense, are understood as simultaneously oriented towards the past and the future, these monuments exhibit a more complex temporal structure. Postmonuments can be understood as durational and/or open-ended. They are embedded in a framework of vulnerability and repair, representing attempts by societies to grapple with a violent past. This is a temporally based framework which encompasses unstable positions and actions. Furthermore, as discussed above, the prefix “post” does not imply a transition from one state to another, but rather a relationship between pasts and presents, negotiated in terms of continuity and rupture. To fully embrace the notion of vulnerability, a temporal negotiation and reevaluation must remain central. It is a form of situated knowledge, and the threshold it represents allows for new or alternative situations. This ties into what contemporary monuments are expected to accomplish, and labeling them as postmonuments is an attempt to emphasize these prospective achievements. Marianne Hirsch writes: *unlike trauma, vulnerability shapes an open-ended temporality – that of the threshold of an alternate, reimagined reality*.¹¹ I consider postmonuments, and perhaps even commemoration in public space more broadly, as governed by such a “threshold.” Within the framework of vulnerable time, the prefix “post” should not be understood as designating a specific period (such as post-Soviet, postwar, postmodern, etc.), but rather as a state of contingency, of being defined by a past that one also wishes to take a stand against and take responsibility for. The threshold connects rupture with continuity, and the “post” in postmonument gestures towards the possibility of reimagination.

¹⁰ N. Sternfeld, “Counter-Monument and Para-Monument: Politics and Re-membrance in Public Space,” in E. Logar (ed.), *Ort der Unruhe/Place of Unrest*, Klagenfurt/Celovec 2019, pp. 52-61.

¹¹ M. Hirsch, “Vulnerable Times,” in J. Butler, Z. Gambetti, L. Sabsay (eds), *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Durham 2016, p. 80.

THE DISCONTINUED PROJECT OF A MONUMENT

The now abandoned proposal by the Gothenburg Biennale of Contemporary Art (GIBCA) aimed to construct a monument commemorating Sweden's colonial history in Gothenburg. Over two iterations in 2019 and 2021, GIBCA explored the potential for a monument commemorating the years of Swedish colonization of the West Indies. The intended location for the monument was a plot in Gothenburg still colloquially known as *Franska tomten* (The French Lot), which Sweden traded with France in exchange for the island of Saint Barthélemy. As part of the agreement, the French were granted free trade rights in Gothenburg, and the island became a Swedish colony in 1784. Sweden's colonial rule of the island lasted until 1847, after which the territory was sold back to France. The economic activities of Sweden on the island were primarily focused on slave trade.¹² Today, the site shows little evidence of its past. It is an anonymous asphalt square devoid of any acknowledgement of its history or the victims of colonial violence. Adjacent to the site stands Carl Milles' Delaware Monument from 1938, which commemorates Swedish settlement in the US. On the other side, there is a former transatlantic shipping company with sculptural reliefs of ships, trade, and exploration adorning its façade.¹³ The most intriguing, albeit visually problematic, trace of the colonial past on the site is an ornate lamppost, installed during the time of the shipping company. It features depictions of life in the colony, including exotic, mainly African, animals and tribal customs, such as men in loincloths carrying goods on their heads or a palanquin.

GIBCA's engagement with the site relates to its broader interest in alternative historiography. In 2018, they initiated processes for a monument with the aim of commissioning and producing a permanent artwork on site. Iona Leca, the artistic director of GIBCA, explains that by the end of 2019, the biennale had gained a deeper understanding of its possible roles in the creation of on-site memorialization.¹⁴ They chose to engage in a conversation about a monument at the French Lot in collaboration with peers who were directly invested in these issues, such as through public programs. Their intention was to advocate for the site's underdiscussed history to contribute more to the understanding of the city, and, consequently, to become a priority for local and national institutions. However, their efforts at that time were focused on fundraising for permanent and temporary art presentations rather than solely or primarily pursuing a permanent commission on-site.¹⁵ Leca describes how GIBCA's ambition shifted from that of a producer's to that of a facilitator. Initially, they were in contact with Göteborg konst,

¹² K. Rönnbäck, "Franska tomten och den svenska jakten på kolonier," in H. Holgersson, C. Thörn, H. Thörn, M. Wahlström (eds), *Göteborg utforskat*, Gothenburg 2010, p. 179.

¹³ The Delaware Monument was produced and installed in Stockholm in 1938 and was moved to its current site and inaugurated in 1958.

¹⁴ J. Leca, Email to Rebecka Katz Thor, February 14th, 2022.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the local public art institution, and explored an open call by the Charles Felix Lindberg's donation fund, which is the primary local funding resource for public art projects independent of ongoing city development initiatives. The biennale concluded that submitting an application would exceed their mandate, and they believed that proposals of this nature should come from the city's residents rather than organizations that already benefit from city funding. Another dilemma they encountered was whether this colonial history should be approached as a local matter or whether the issues raised by the French Lot's history should be integrated into national self-narratives and become part of the agenda of national organizations with differing symbolic power.¹⁶ They pursued other funding opportunities for art commissions at the French Lot. However, the ambition of a sole monument produced by the biennale was not included in these efforts, nor was the idea of a monument presented to the property owner and their art section.

The endeavor undertaken by GIBCA was experimental and investigative, breaking away from the traditional monument form in a revealing manner. From 2019 to 2021, the biennale collaborated with several public institutions to organize public programmatic and temporary on-site commissions at the French Lot.¹⁷ Concurrently, the physical site of the French Lot became a construction site for the Västlänken project, involving the literal excavation of historical layers. GIBCA approached Trafikverket, the Swedish Transport Administration, and partnered with them for temporary commissions on construction hoardings at the French Lot. Artworks by Eric Magassa, Ibrahim Mahama, and NourbeSe Philip, presented on construction hoardings between 2019 and 2021, were all co-produced with Trafikverket. Additionally, GIBCA invited artists to respond to the site during the 2021 iteration of the biennale and held a seminar in 2020 entitled "Possible Monuments?"¹⁸ Eight artists and writers, including Aria Dean, Ayesha Hameed, Daniela Ortiz, Fatima Moallim, Hanan Benammar, Jimmy Robert, Morgan Quaintance, Runo Lagomarsino, and Ylva Habel, were invited to reflect on the history of the French Lot and imagine a monument or commemoration without the usual limitations of public art, such as durability and accessibility. They were encouraged to reconsider the role of the monument and the monument itself during a time marked by the toppling of statues and reevaluations of public commemorations. Their speculative proposal was presented during the seminar and remains accessible through a dedicated webpage for the project.¹⁹ The following year, the biennale invited

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The partners were: Gothenburg City Library, Gothenburg University, Gothenburg Citytriennale, Folkuniversitet, House of Literature, Public Art Agency Sweden, Skandia Fastigheter, the French Institute in Sweden, the Canadian Embassy, Trafikverket and Västsverige mot rasism!

¹⁸ After the *Possible Monuments?* project was made public, the biennale began a conversation with Park- och naturförvaltningen Göteborg Stad, with the intention to produce some of the artistic proposals for temporary presentation in Gothenburg. The interest to partner was high, support with installment and maintenance was offered, but no funding for art commissions as such existed at that point and the biennial's budget would not suffice for funding.

¹⁹ The project is organized in collaboration by Gothenburg International Biennial for Contemporary Art and Public Art Agency Sweden. Contributors were the artist in dialogue with Lisa Rosendahl, curator GIBCA 2019 & 2021, at <https://possiblemonuments.se/>, 12 May 2023.

Salad Hilowle to respond to the site with a temporary work, and Daniela Ortiz to activate her proposal for “Possible Monuments?” near the Delaware monument.²⁰

THE CURRENT MONUMENT

The monument commemorating LGBTQI+ history and some of the safe spaces for queer communities in the city of Gothenburg is set to be inaugurated in 2023. The initiative for an LGBTQI+ monument stems from the City of Gothenburg’s LGBTQI Council, which is a part of the city’s governing structure. In 2018, the council proposed the project to a foundation for funding (once again Charles Felix Lindberg’s donation fund), and it received support from the municipal council.

The project, known as “Gothenburg LGBTQI+ city,” was initiated in 2019. A preparatory study was conducted from 2020 to 2021, involving the participation of numerous LGBTQI+ individuals, organizations, and artists, under the leadership of Gothenburg Art, a section within the culture department of the municipality. As part of the study, artist Sam Hultin created a map, an audio guide, and a city walk called “My Queer Gothenburg.” These works were based on interviews, workshops, and email exchanges with people who shared sites they considered significant for the LGBTQI+ community in the city. Together with archival sources, this work contributed to the choice of location for the monument.

Queerrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek (QRAB), the queer movement’s archive and library, was commissioned to identify five organizations, movements, and events from its archive that were deemed important for the local LGBTQI+ struggle. The collected material was then given to five artists, including Marie Falksten, Leif Holmstrand, Karlsson Rixon, Rudy Loewe, and Kolbeinn Karlsson, who created illustrations based on QRAB’s choices. These illustrations, titled “Illustrated History,” were displayed and handed out as posters during the preparatory study and West Pride 2021.

The preparatory study also involved a wide range of public programs, including panels, screenings, and workshops. Artist Anna Linder/SAQMI curated a film program that spanned over forty years of queer activism and film history. The outcomes of the preparatory study informed the formulation of the commission and the selection of the Esperanto site, while the artist was chosen through a public call. The call referenced the work conducted in the preparatory study, the initial purpose of the monument, and the expectations for a physical monument. It was envisioned as a space for gathering, remembrance, grief, dreaming, joy, manifestation, dialogue, and reflection. The notion of community was deemed central and at the same time the document stressed that the *history of Gothenburg’s LGBTQI+ population is all of our history* and that *the monument could likewise promote the equal rights and value of all people.*²¹

²⁰ Hilowle’s work was temporarily presented on site from Sep-Nov 2021 and Ortiz’s in November 2021.

²¹ “Open call for the LGBTQI+ monument,” City of Gothenburg 2021, at <https://hbtqi.goteborgkonst.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Inbjudan-till-intresseanmalan-hbtqi.pdf>, 12 May 2023.

However, it is simultaneously an issue of artistic rendering. The commission of such a monument is complex in terms of aesthetic expression since it needs to encompass all these different layers and stories and consider that *there is not only one story or fight*, and that *it is of utmost importance that the artistic quality is in focus*.²²

The call for artists was conducted in two steps, following the conventional approach. In the first step, artists were invited to submit their expressions of interest, including motivations for the relevance of their practice to the commission. Three artists were selected to create sketches, and the commission was subsequently awarded to artist Conny Karlsson Lundgren in collaboration with the Gothenburg-based architectural firm New Order. Lundgren's proposal, entitled "Gläntan" (the Glade), comprises several elements. According to the proposal, three floor plans of historical queer spaces in Gothenburg are superimposed, creating a structure resembling a stage or platform. Each floor plan is represented in a 1:1 scale. The bottom one represents the dancefloor of the nightclub Touch, which was located near the site of the monument. The middle one depicts the kitchen of a feminist collective called "Högst upp" ("On the Top") while the top floor plan represents a bedroom from an apartment known as "Josefin's," where illicit parties and gatherings were held prior to the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1944. Atop the floor plans, three marble pillows, scanned from actual pillows belonging to queer Gothenburg residents, will be placed and heated to body temperature. A brass line encircles and intersects the floor plans, symbolizing the path of a freedom march that took place in the city in 1981. The site will also be surrounded by trees, enhancing the sensation of being in a forest glade.

THE PROSPECTIVE MONUMENT

The Antiracist monument in Malmö was initiated by a grassroots civil society initiative in 2019. The initiative aimed to create a memorial for the victims of the racist mass shooter Peter Mangs, who targeted and shot 17 people in the city between 2003 and 2010.²³ The civil society group consists of activists, social workers, a historian, a filmmaker, and a relative of one of the victims, all of whom are key figures in the city's cultural scene. Their call sought to commemorate the victims and to help those who suffered racist violence come to terms with their experiences. The city responded to the initiative and is now collaborating with the initiators on the project. The plan is to unveil a permanent monument in 2024.

From the outset, the project has received positive support. The ruling party in the municipality, the Social Democrats, agreed to the creation of a monument and recognized the need for a process of collective mourning. Their main concern was that while

²² Ibid.

²³ M. Masri, R. Nilsson Mohammadi, N. Lunabba, S. Shattak, D. Diaz, "Ett Antirasistiskt minnesmärke skulle visa att vi aldrig glömmer dem som Peter Mangs mördade," *Sydsvenskan*, 2019, at <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2019-05-01/ett-Antirasistiskt-minnesmarke-skulle-visa-att-vi-aldrig-glommer-dem-som-peter-mangs-mordade>, 12 May 2023.

honoring the victims, the monument might inadvertently highlight the shooter in the spotlight.²⁴

The project *Antirasistiskt monument* (Antiracist monument), as developed by the municipality, consists of three components: a permanent artwork, a series of temporary artworks, and a public program. The municipality emphasizes that these parts are interconnected and collectively constitute the Antiracist monument.²⁵ In the fall of 2022, a political decision was made to realize and fund the permanent artwork. In the spring of 2023, a public call will be announced, and an artist will be selected. The specific details of the process have not yet been determined at the time of writing. The aim is to install and inaugurate the monument in 2025. In preparation for the project, similar to the approach taken for the LGBTQI+ monument, five artists and artist collectives were invited to create temporary works. These works were displayed as part of the exhibition “Hela staden är ett monument” (The Whole City is a Monument), which ran from summer 2022 to spring 2023. The artists’ projects encompassed various themes and approaches. Simon Ferner (Arkiv S) created “På våra gator” (On Our Streets 2022), a work mapping the locations of the shootings and placing plaques inscribed with the dates of the attacks. Ikram Abdulkadir’s photographic work, “Yaan Cuskanaa” (2022), portrays her Somali community in Malmö and their experience of racism. Salad Hilowe created a performative city walk inspired by the Baltic exhibition in Malmö in 1914. The work *Den vita staden och tornet som föll* (The White City and the Tower that Fell 2022) aims to reconsider the history of the city in relation to the 1914 exhibition and its construction of a national narrative of Sweden. Hanni Kamaly also explored the city’s history and public space through a multimedia work, comprising video, installation and performance, entitled “UPROOT/DISPLACE” (2022), which focuses on how to reconfigure and contextualize racist ornaments in the Torgbrunn monument by Stig Blomberg from 1964. The stage performance collective Amfi presented parts of their production, including the first act of *Glömskans arkiv* (The Archive of Forgetting 2022-2023) written by poets Felicia Mulinari and Athena Farokhzad, with the full performance scheduled for May 2023.

The final element of the overarching *Antirasistiskt monument* project is an ongoing public program, which aims to shed light on and stimulate discussions as to whose history and experiences are represented in public space. It explores how public art can be conceived in new and expansive ways and what the potential impact of collective remembrance might be. All of these projects are intended to inform in one way or another the development of the permanent artwork. The municipality also describes this endeavor as a new approach to working with projects initiated by civil society, which will inform future methods for addressing contemporary societal issues through public art.

²⁴ E. Fjellman, “Spricka i Malmös styre om antirasistiskt monument,” *Sydsvenskan*, 2019, at <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2019-05-08/spricka-i-malmo-styre-om-antirasistiskt-monument>, 12 May 2023.

²⁵ “Background to Antiracist Monument,” City of Malmö 2022, at <https://malmo.se/Sa-arbetar-vi-med.../Kultur---projekt-och-satsningar/Malmo-konst/Antirasistiskt-monument.html#Bakgrunden-tillAntirasistisktmonument>, 12 May 2023.

RELATING POSTMONUMENTS

How do these three monuments avoid the risk of whitewashing and become valid acts of transformation? In my view, the processes surrounding these monuments should involve a thorough examination of how the commissioning bodies were in fact complicit in the oppression they now seek to commemorate. The themes of oppression and discrimination addressed by these monuments should be considered on a structural level. In relation to the discontinued project, it is clear that Sweden's colonial past is not well integrated into the national historiography. However, the colonial legacy persists in our societies. Walter D. Mignolo's concept of (de)coloniality as an ongoing temporal, epistemological, and material condition refers to what he calls the Colonial Matrix of Power that still permeates Western societies.²⁶ The notion of continuation is central to this structure, and it also applies to two other monuments that address the oppression of LGBTQI+ individuals and racism. Therefore, it is not possible for a municipality to simply step out of this framework and join the other side, be it activists, victims, or interest groups. However, the success of the LGBTQI+ and Antiracist monuments is based on the initiative and collaboration with relevant interest groups, framing it as a responsibility of the municipality. In this sense, an external party is asserting its right to be memorialized through an official structure. The lack of funding for a permanent monument at the French Lot in Gothenburg can be understood in relation to the absence of a given interest group. The biennale itself did not want to assume that role, and there was no other party that could pursue the project. The question arises as to who this group could be, as individual victims of Swedish colonialism are not easily identifiable. Should it be the descendants of enslaved people from the US whose ships stopped at St Barthélemy? Or should it be all of us living in Sweden today demanding this type of commemoration? One could also question what it would mean for a public art agency to initiate such a project without an external counterpart. Even though the municipalities involved in these projects consider their respective counterparts as integral to the projects, one might argue the opposite and claim that through their own initiative, they would be taking greater responsibility for past and current structures. This seems a particularly pressing matter in the case of commemorating a colonial past that is more distant in time. In both Paris and Lisbon, there are ongoing projects commemorating the victims of slavery. One initiative is led by French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron, and the other is a proposal to the Participative Budget of Lisbon by the NGO Djass – Association of Afro-descendants. These examples illustrate two different strategies: one from the political side and the other from civil society. Due to its grassroots initiative, the monument to the victims of slavery in Lisbon shares more similarities with the LGBTQI+ and Antiracist monuments than the monument in Paris dedicated to the same theme. The Paris example might either become a sincere engagement with

²⁶ W. D. Mignolo, "Coloniality is Far from Over, and So Must be Decoloniality," *Afterall*, vol. 43 (2017), p. 40.

past wrongdoings or be seen as a state apology with all its complexities and potential cynicism.²⁷ In this sense, some postmonuments seem to be caught in a temporal closed after. There is no second or third generation to carry the memory forward, as in the discourse of postmemory.

Memory of different histories should not be seen as competing with one another; the relationship between the memory of coloniality, postmemory, and Holocaust commemoration should be understood as fundamentally multidirectional. *What* should be commemorated and *how* is a continuing discussion, as demonstrated by such memory studies scholars as Rothberg. According to the American studies scholar Adam Hjørthén argues, they believe that *memories are not limited to certain groups but are products of interactions across cultures and geopolitical borders, and are subject to ongoing negotiations and cross-referencing*.²⁸ This holds true for the monuments and memorial processes discussed in this article.

With regard to all three projects – the discontinued monument commemorating Swedish colonialism, the soon-to-be-realized LGBTQI+ monument, and the prospective Antiracist monument – there are existing monuments and absences that they respond to. These monuments aim to acknowledge a previously hidden or invisible history. However, oppression cannot be relegated to the past, as discrimination against LGBTQI+ communities and racism still persist. Therefore, any monument addressing such issues inherently carries the risk of being perceived as a closure.²⁹ Thus, what I argue is that a postmonument should evoke a future-oriented rectification, repair, or societal change. This is the key aspect of the three examples discussed in this article.

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²⁷ M. Gibney, E. Roxstrom, “The Status of State Apologies,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2001), pp. 913-939.

²⁸ A. Hjørthén, “Transatlantic Monuments: On Memories and Ethics of Settler Histories,” *American Studies in Scandinavia*, vol. 53, no. 1 (2021), pp. 95-120.

²⁹ In the fall 2022 general election 20% of the population voted for the Swedish Democrats, a far-right party with roots in the Neo-Nazi movement.

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