

Art & the Public Sphere



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Special Issue: 'Monumental Statues, History and Emancipation'

Edited by Dave Beech and Mel Jordan

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: **15 January 2021**

Deadline for articles: **26 March 2021**

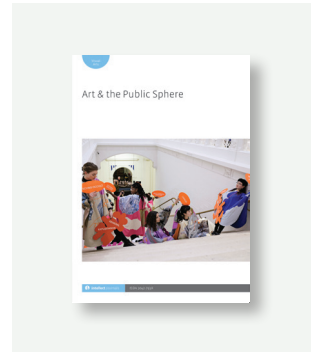
A special issue of the journal invites contributions that particularly address the bundle of questions around the memorialization of imperialism, racism and the slave trade and the various campaigns to remove statues, to rename streets, squares and buildings, and to insert the forgotten histories of exploitation into a critical relationship with the memorials as they remain in public spaces or are transported to museums, junk yards and so on.

On 4 June 2020, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced that Richmond's largest Confederate statue will be removed following the removal of numerous statues in honour of the Confederacy across the United States, in response to the Black Lives Matter protests triggered by the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis on 25 May. On 9 June a statue of Christopher Columbus in Richmond, VA was taken down by protesters, set on fire and then thrown into a lake – less than two hours after protesters gathered in the city's Byrd Park chanting for the statue to be removed. A placard with the words, 'Columbus represents genocide' was leaned on the empty plinth.

On 7 June, Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol pulled down the statue of Edward Colston, the British slave trader. Two days later, a statue of slave owner Robert Milligan was removed from its pedestal on London Docklands. Following this, anti-racist campaigners have called for the removal of a statue of the colonialist Cecil Rhodes in Oxford. This pattern is being repeated. Also, there is a petition to remove the statue of slave trader Robert Geffrye from the Museum of the Home in Hackney. Signatories to the petition argue that we 'should condemn, not celebrate, the slave traders of England's past'.

The British magazine *Art Review* has called this extension of protest into the realm of public art, sardonically, 'the Statue Wars'. These events have led to the renewal of interest in issues around memorialization and the way that public spaces are organized around histories of exploitation, domination and enslavement that shape the national culture and everyday life. Does the removal of statues constitute an erasure of history or a contribution to it? How are we to understand the toppling statues? What is the history of vandalism and removal of statues and monuments? What is the implication of this for our understanding of the public sphere?

Art & the Public Sphere provides a platform for academics, artists, curators, art historians and theorists, whose working practices are broadly concerned with contemporary art's relation to the public sphere.




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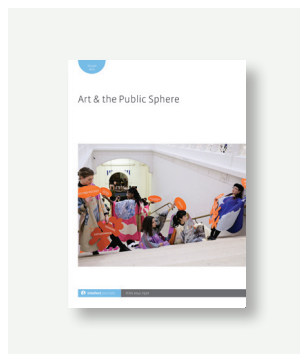
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Art & the Public Sphere also presents a crucial examination of contemporary art's link to the public realm, offering an engaged and responsive forum in which to debate the newly emerging series of developments within contemporary thinking, society and international art practice. *Art & the Public Sphere* invites contributions and interdisciplinary articles, which confront orthodoxies, propagate debate and reflect on art's role in contributing to the public sphere. We encourage fresh approaches to research arising from practice, theory, philosophy and politics, and welcome contributions from new and established researchers, scholars, practitioners and professionals.

If you want to discuss or propose an abstract please contact Mel Jordan: mel.jordan@coventry.ac.uk and Dave Beech dave.beech@clara.co.uk. The journal will be published in May / June 2021

Full submissions to: Mel Jordan: mel.jordan@coventry.ac.uk and Dave Beech: dave.beech@clara.co.uk




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