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Caribbean Counter-Monuments: A Visual History of Dissent

Early on in his essay collection *Caribbean Discourse*, Édouard Glissant unfurls a living, spasmodic topography of colonial and postcolonial Martinique. A tangle of green that the roads still do not penetrate winds into the arid grooves of pineapple plots, into the undulations of cane fields, the yawn of the setting sun on a ruined great house, a field of leaves soaked in blood, decaying factories, and the agitated frontier of the beach. The pasts of enslavement, rebellion, and indentureship coexist in the landscape with ongoing labor strikes, land seizures, and the expansion of tourism infrastructure. Distinctions between the markers of human and environmental time, between built and natural features, collapse, giving way to a collective sensorium of historical activations. Glissant writes:

SO HISTORY IS SPREAD OUT BENEATH THIS SURFACE, FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA, FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, FROM THE FOREST TO THE BEACHES. MAROON RESISTANCE AND DENIAL, ENTRENCHMENT AND ENDURANCE, THE WORLD BEYOND AND DREAM. (OUR LANDSCAPE IS ITS OWN MONUMENT: ITS MEANING CAN ONLY BE TRACED ON THE UNDERSIDE. IT IS ALL HISTORY.)[1]

Out of this dense network of ruinate and emergent forms, Glissant assembles a capacious vision of public memory and monumentality. As we survey our inherited memorial landscape, overburdened with the paranoid monoliths of imperial nostalgia, Glissant returns our attention to the historical and narrative accumulations these monoliths simultaneously exhibit and inter in the landscape. He restores faith in the endeavor to read these accumulations as a form of mourning and exhumation, but also as an escalating call for dissent. To “trace the underside” of history is to apprehend the imperial monument, to measure the proportions of the long shadows it casts, and to confront the distortions that lie therein.

Inspired by this alternative vision as it is brought to bear on contested appeals for the removal of imperial statues, the reckoning with institutional legacies, and the redistribution of public attention to underrepresented histories, I turn to the radical aesthetics of the Caribbean and the broader African diaspora. Grappling with the monumental remains of imperial world building, colonialism, and slavery, I trace the underside of history via the counter-monumental methodologies of three Black multidisciplinary artists—Hew Locke,

Citation: Julia Michiko Hori, “Caribbean Counter-Monuments: A Visual History of Dissent,” in the *Avery Review* 61 (April 2023), <https://averyreview.com/issues/61/caribbean-counter-monuments>.

[1] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville, VA: Caraf Books, 1989), 11.

La Vaughn Belle, and Kara Walker—as they excavate the enduring paradigms and mobile artifacts of our troubled post-emancipation present. Their works offer three distinct yet allied theoretical and tactile approaches to counter-monumentality: ornamental spoliation, incendiary architecture, and monumental misremembering.

Read together, their transformative processes devise a material language through which the transatlantic counter-monument can speak. The term “counter-monuments” (or “anti-monuments”) defined by James E. Young as “brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being,” is often applied in the context of postwar German national memory and architectural/sculptural responses to the remaining symbols of Nazi propaganda. Elsewhere, “counter-monument” has been defined by practitioners such as Rafael Lozano-Hemmer as “an action, a performance, which clearly rejects the notion of a monument developed from an elitist point of view as an emblem of power.”[2] Where architectural historians might distinguish between counter-monuments that respond to the wider formal and historical principles of traditional monuments and those that seek to address the cultural capital of specific existing monuments, the multidisciplinary artists and practices examined here present several compelling challenges to this categorical distinction.[3] More often than not, it is the rich combination and extension of these approaches that inform the works of these artists as they appropriate, augment, and fragment the visual and built archetypes of imperial memory and colonial design. Although their interventions differ, as do the aesthetic and political consequences of their work, questions of ornamentation, scale, and durability unite them, posing critical questions that might be applied to any architectural practice or monumental project. Creating beyond the confines of the nation—the very foundation upon which the imperial monument is furnished—these artists insist upon the overlapping transatlantic mobilities, complicities, fragilities, and accretions that give shape, texture, value, and ultimately historical power to the memorial form. Defacement, effacement, and ruination echo in the works amid public calls for the removal of imperial statues, renaming of buildings, and redirection of public attention to underrepresented figures of history. These projects, large and small, stage the expansion, shrinking, and renovation of empire to model new perspectives on the architectural principle of human scale and how to dwell together in public space.

ONE : Ornamental Spoliation

OUR NUMEROUS MEMORIALS DISSOLVE INTO THE STREETSCAPE.
I WANT LONDONERS TO NOTICE AGAIN ALL THE STATUES SO
FAMILIAR THEY ARE INVISIBLE.[4]
—HEW LOCKE

Since the 1990s, Guyanese-British artist Hew Locke’s practice has reimagined the narrative and aesthetic possibilities of public statues across many historical contexts in Britain, the Caribbean, and the US. Ornamented with and simultaneously degraded by multiple formal processes and residues, his work deploys an aesthetics of excess that confronts the austere gray slabs that preside over

[2] James E. Young, “The Counter Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 271; and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, “Alien Relationships with Public Space,” in *TransUrbanism*, ed. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI, 2002), 155. According to the organizers of the 2014 conference “Monument/Anti-Monument,” the term is thought to have been first used in the 1980s in reference to the work of land artist Robert Smithson, especially his land art piece *Spiral Jetty* (1970). Others point to a 1982 memorial competition brief in West Germany, in which the term “Gegendenkmal” (*gegen*: against; *Denkmal*: monument) emerged.

[3] Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, and Ruth Fazakerley, “Counter-Monuments: The Anti-Monumental and the Dialogic,” *Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 5 (2018): 718.

[4] Hew Locke, artwork text for *Sikandar*, 2010, mixed media maquette, 80 cm, [link](#).

civic spaces, as if to pardon the crimes of those they portray. His maximalist, mixed-media approaches to sculpture, painting, and photography draw on the naturalized memorial landscapes of empire to draw out the composite mythologies and paradoxical textures of their artifice. In Locke's diverse practice, massive, perforated cardboard portraits of the royal family meet the photographs and maquettes of monumental imperial figures, masked and painted, dripping in layers of bright baubles. The use of cheap ephemera such as metal trinkets, ribbon, badges, plastic beads, swords, and flowers, overrides and undermines the enduring authority of Queen Elizabeth, Captain Cook, and Sir George White. Locke commits himself to a layered practice that he refers to as "mindful vandalism."^[5]

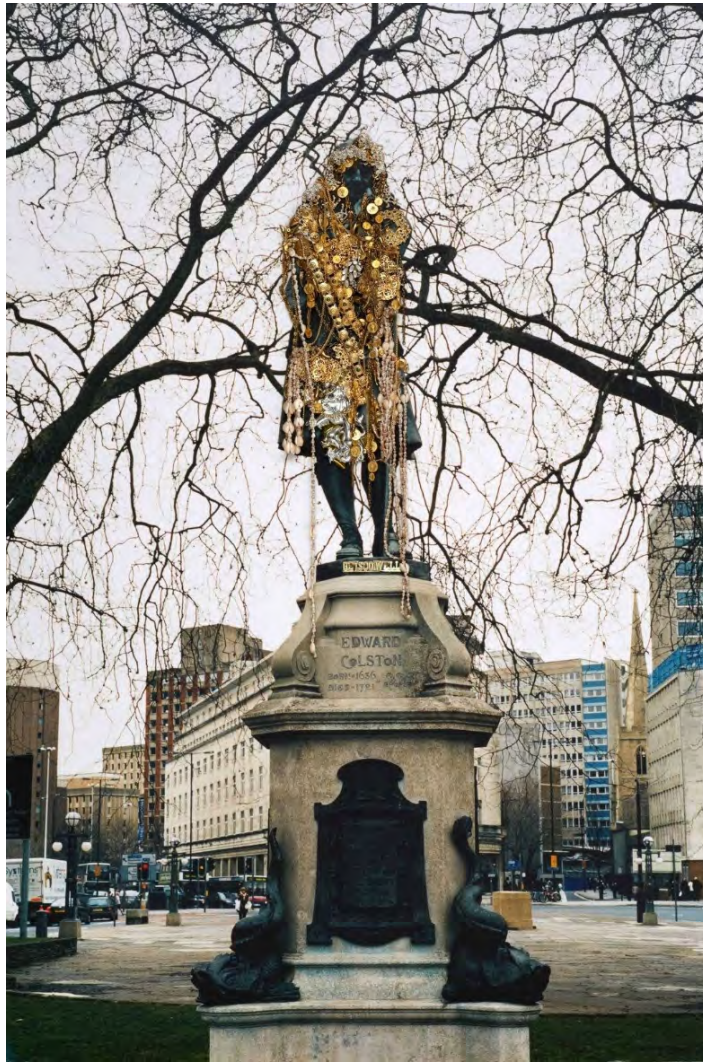
Locke's body of counter-monumental work comprises a growing archive of active subversion, fragmented between representational surfaces and tangible expressions of depth, weight, and scale. Particularly where it concerns his vandalized photographs of statues, altered by drawing and tactile collage, it is not only the figure depicted in the image that necessitates confrontation but also the very technologies of image making. In his 2006 series *Restoration*, Locke punctures photographs of the statues of Edmund Burke, Edward Colston, and Edward VII, overwhelming their forms with masses of string, artificial vines, small daggers, and lengths of fake gold coins. In the process, the individual figures are shrunken and concealed, while the instrument of the monument—a technology of imperial space and memory—is rendered hyper-visible. Encrusted with mass-produced "treasures," these figures' vast accumulation of wealth and growth in public notoriety is reflected in their effigies' suffocation with the morbid growths of imperial spoils and colonial spoliations. In all their claustrophobic glory, the works insistently remind us that it was the environmental degradation and social decay of the enslaved plantation and the colonized village—each, in Frantz Fanon's words, "a world without spaciousness"—that gave picturesque order to the wide boulevards and open squares of metropolitan spaces where imperial monuments live.^[6] When such monuments were designed and installed to preside over public spaces, the violent, extractive logic of plantation monoculture and the blood money it yielded were washed clean of their sins. Under the auspices of built heritage, the chief architects and perpetrators of slavery and colonial violence were transformed into exalted cultural benefactors. Paradoxically, Locke's exuberant piling of imperial spoils onto these iconic imperial statues unveils their cumulative legacies of violence.

Working against the imperial amnesia encrypted in these silent figures and configurations of history, Locke's contrapuntal restorations demand that we "notice again all the statues so familiar they are invisible."^[7] Their paradoxical armor of desecration—especially in the case of Edward VII's parasitic overgrowth foliage, which recalls adaptable military camouflage techniques while effecting spectacular visibility—highlights the ruinous imperial ideologies hiding in plain sight. The delicate yet cumulatively constraining honor of the coins and trinkets the statues wear deploy the soft power (an aesthetic and cultural currency) of monumentality, weaponized against itself.

[5] See Hew Locke, "Photography, Painting, and Impossible Sculpture: Hew Locke's *Natives and Colonials*," interview by Jon Wood, *Sculpture Journal* 15, no. 2 (December 2006): 283; and the exhibition *Mindful Vandalism*, Hales Gallery, London, September 16–October 31, 2020, [link](#).

[6] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 39.

[7] See Locke, artwork text for *Sikander*.



Hew Locke, Colston (*Restoration series*), 2006; C-type photograph mounted on aluminum, MDF and formica, with metal plastic items fixed to the front; 183 x 122 x 7 cm; © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London.

Though Locke has been commissioned to produce several public works throughout his long career as an artist in the UK, it wasn't until the summer of 2022 that he was permitted to mobilize these practices in direct material contact with an existing monument. Locke's *Foreign Exchange* (unveiled at the 2022 Birmingham Festival) grafted an enormous boat and five replicas of Queen Victoria adorned with British imperial medals onto an existing statue of her in Birmingham's Victoria Square. This surreal and precise large-scale response simultaneously constrains the statue and makes visible the vast and powerful transatlantic circulation of its spatial and ideological underpinnings. Placed at the helm of imperial discovery, conquest, and plunder, the mobile architecture of the boat—one of slavery's most instrumental technologies—centers Victoria's complicity in a many-headed campaign of exploitation, including the trafficking of bodies and the currency of imperial iconography. The replication of her image dilutes the singular potency of the original statue to produce a redundancy haunted by countless imperial monuments dispatched to preside over distant colonial spaces. Expanding the horizon of empire's economy of symbols, the boat's wide berth interrupts the column's vertical penetration of space to produce an unwieldy protuberance around it. It may

be understood as a response to a new legal protection enacted in 2021 for the UK’s historic monuments, commonly known as the “retain and explain” model. This official approach is encapsulated in a statement by Communities Secretary Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP:

WHAT HAS STOOD FOR GENERATIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THOUGHTFULLY, NOT REMOVED ON A WHIM, ANY REMOVAL SHOULD REQUIRE PLANNING PERMISSION AND LOCAL PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO BE PROPERLY CONSULTED. OUR POLICY IN LAW WILL BE CLEAR, THAT WE BELIEVE IN EXPLAINING AND RETAINING HERITAGE, NOT TEARING IT DOWN.[8]

[8] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, “New Legal Protection for England’s Heritage,” news release, January 17, 2021, [link](#).

From one perspective, *Foreign Exchange* exhibits perfect compliance with this conservative policy. The state-sanctioned and, importantly, temporary integration of Locke’s anti-colonial framework with this fixture of the imperial imagination successfully retains and explains the dimensional, embattled space of public memory. At the same time, Locke’s sculptural addition preserves the gap between existing and new forms. The smooth, finished surfaces of the Victorias and the boat appear in stark contrast to the raw wooden scaffolding that still visibly protects the original statue from its new surroundings. Rather than concealing the practical conditions of the work’s contract with such heritage mandates, Locke draws viewers’ attention to it. He preserves not only the statue but also the sense of fragility and indeterminacy of a history still under construction. Arrested between blueprint and edifice, Locke’s *Foreign Exchange* remembers empire’s legacy of crimes and commemorates a future still unfolding. Working with the existing statue’s form, Locke’s temporary renovation remains both complicit and unresolved. An open-ended proposal, its composite form stands as a continuous invitation to construct alternative, additive, and parallel spaces inside the built worlds we have already inherited.



Hew Locke, *Foreign Exchange*, 2022; resin, fibreglass, and steel frame around pre-existing bronze statue; 728 x 435 x 682 cm; photograph by Stuart Whipps, courtesy of the photographer.

TWO: Incendiary Architecture

WE LEARN THAT WE HAVE ANCESTORS THAT WE CAN TALK
TO. WE LEARN THAT THEY CAN TALK BACK AND GUIDE US. WE
LEARN TOO THAT THERE ARE SYSTEMS THAT MUST BE BURNED
OR DESTROYED.[9]
—LA VAUGHN BELLE

[9] “I AM QUEEN MARY Artists La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers Interview—Bridging Two Nations and Narratives,” interview by Nicola Augustyn, *Picture This Post*, October 26, 2021, [link](#).

La Vaughn Belle is a US Virgin Islands–based artist who draws on the fictions and frictions of a variety of forms within a broad colonial materiality: architecture, furniture, pottery, archival documents, photographs, and paintings. Belle has worked within the genre of more conventional monumental forms, as exemplified in her collaborative project with Danish-Trinidadian artist Jeannette Ehlers, *I Am Queen Mary* (2018). This 23-foot-tall statue of Mary Thomas—leader of the 1878 St. Croix labor riot and notably the subject of the first public monument of a Black woman in Denmark—depicts her on a massive stone plinth, seated on a throne. She wields a torch in one hand and a cane knife in the other, memorializing the transformation of these tools of labor into instruments of rebellion. First exhibited at the Copenhagen Workers’ Museum and now installed outside the city’s former Danish West Indian Warehouse, the figure is poised to cut and burn, illuminating the ways in which monuments silently instrumentalize power.

I Am Queen Mary contributes to a rich transatlantic dialogue with the visual and material archives of slavery and global Black liberation. The statue’s composition and instruments draw inspiration from (and give further dimension to) the iconic 1968 portrait of Black Panther Huey P. Newton seated in a rattan peacock throne, wielding a shotgun and a spear. The coral stone of the plinth, set and framed in concrete, lays bare both the historical depths of the enslaved labor that extracted it from marine deposits to build empires and the supposed neutrality of the pedestal as a formal convention of monumental display. With these gestures, *I am Queen Mary* unsettles and undermines the monumental tropes it utilizes.

In a contrasting approach to the same historical event, Belle’s *Constructed Manumissions* (2017) employs a set of several small, hollow, foundationless wooden structures that exist precariously between scaffolding and houses. These pale forms exhibit the ornate building embellishments made popular in in the town of Frederiksted, St. Croix, during its reconstruction after the labor revolt of 1878. During the uprising, in which plantation workers protested deplorable wages and working conditions, nearly 100 people were killed and 50 plantation houses burned to the ground. Almost 900 acres of sugarcane were destroyed. Caught between dual processes of destruction and unfinished regeneration in space and in memory, these storied structures thus commemorate the revolt. They also reference the designs of working-class and free Black communities who negotiated their freedom in the colonial era through the cultivation of sovereign domestic space yet remained aware of the need for mobility as a survival strategy.

Resisting the durability of the chosen materials and construction associated with conventional historical monuments, these small wooden structures memorialize itinerancy and impermanence. Made without frames or glue,

they are held together with small metal pins and their own weight, representing autonomy and fragility at once. Their capacity to endure rests on a continuous cycle of disassembly and restoration. They are also constructed entirely from the fretwork designs ordinarily featured as architectural ornament (e.g., roof gables); here, the embellishments form the structure itself, “standing alone” as substantive and self-sufficient manifestations of imagination, planning, and technique. At the same time, the negative space between the ornate planks evokes the houses’ uninhabitability; their shelter is provisional, bordering on precarious.



La Vaughn Belle, *Constructed Manumission*, 2017; handmade wooden houses; installation at meter, Copenhagen; courtesy of the artist.

In these terms, *Constructed Manumissions* also spatializes the promissory note of manumission, in which the enslaver was empowered to grant some individuals freedom without challenging the governing premise of slavery. Manumission was a means for advocates and beneficiaries of slavery to manage the public optics of the plantation’s ruling racial economy in the name of mutuality and respect. Belle’s piece reveals the hollowness of this gesture—a house that cannot shelter from the institutional superstructure of slavery is not an inhabitable reality but merely an ornament.

In another series, titled *Cuts and Burns*, she extends her dialogue with architectural fretwork as encoded language in the built world, employing the ornaments as stencils to burn ghostly inscriptions onto scrolls of paper. This material testimony recalls the agricultural techniques of the machete and the fire used to cut cane and burn its waste in the process of rum and sugar

production, here reappropriated as tools of resistance. Written methodically in ash, the scrolls record the uprisings of the unfree not as reactive, randomized eruptions of violence in the landscape but as collectively organized systems of dissent. Resembling the ebb and flow of waves, the markings move in many directions and though contained in a pattern, they record many irregularities, emphasizing the particular within the collective.

From a distance, the long scroll reads like an official ledger, contract, or declaration, with each hole recording an absent presence in the archive. Up close, populated with scorched clusters of orderly violence, the holes mimic the tomblike blueprint of the slave ship—one of the most widely deployed abolitionist images circulated among Whites to give form to the unimaginable conditions endured by enslaved captives. While powerful, such representations also teeter uncomfortably at the edge of violence as spectacle. Perhaps responding to the dehumanizing dangers of this kind of display, the replacement of drawn bodies with etched burn marks sets fire to the archive of slavery. Bereft of the voices of the enslaved, the burn marks reconstitute the archive as a corpus of present absences. Placing these surfaces under the microscope and enlarging their gestures, patterns, and narrative capacities, Belle's incendiary architectures reimagine the edifices, instruments, and testimonies of Black survival and protest. The multiply coded fretwork necessitates the close reading of the built world—passages in both space and historical narrative.



La Vaughn Belle, *Cuts and Burns*, 2016–present; drawing/installation at meter, Copenhagen; courtesy of the artist.

THREE: Monumental Misremembering

I SAW THE MONUMENT, I TOOK SOME QUICK SNAPSHOTS, MOVING SNAPSHOTS OUT OF THE WINDOW OF THE TAXI AND THEN FORGOT ABOUT IT PROMPTLY AS ONE DOES WITH MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS. I THINK THAT THERE'S THIS VERY PECULIAR QUALITY THAT THEY HAVE OF BEING COMPLETELY INVISIBLE. THE LARGER THEY ARE, IN FACT THE MORE THEY SINK INTO THE BACKGROUND.*[10]

—KARA WALKER

[10] Ann Dingli, "The Invisibility of History: Kara Walker's *Fons Americanus*," *Malta Artpaper*, December 8, 2019, [link](#).

White text on a gray brick wall in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall provides the exhibition statement for Kara Walker's *Fons Americanus: The Daughter of Waters, An Allegorical Wonder* (2019), a sculptural rebuttal to the 1911 Victoria Memorial outside Buckingham Palace.[11] Also acting as the work's unabridged title, this long prelude to the "American Source" offers as much to its readers regarding the imperial legacies of exhibition as about the sculpture itself. Typographically, the floor-to-ceiling composition of the statement mirrors the grand scale of the white fountain of *Fons Americanus*, aggregating many fonts and sizes and spacing them variously as the letters cascade down the wall, transforming text into flowing ornament. Hyperbolically exceeding the descriptive purpose of the exhibition statement, the text becomes an ekphrastic encounter with imperial monumentality. Its tone is both solemn and vociferous, punctuated with the bombastic solicitations of a carnival barker daring "one and all" to come, witness, marvel, and contemplate exotic phenomena. Visitors are directed to "gasp plaintively," "sigh mournfully," and "gaze knowingly," placing the fountain squarely in an active and reactive social arena. And yet, these forcefully prescriptive cues foreclose the possibility of spontaneous response. Before a single visitor has set foot in the gallery space, the viewer has been coercively assembled and deemed a failed witness to its offerings. Thus begins Walker's extended choreography of "monumental misremembering"; elsewhere, she refers to herself as an "unreliable narrator." [12] In light of this admission—which is also a lesson in the simultaneous curiosity, suspicion, and complicity required to engage meaningfully with the work—the monumental fountain emerges as an encrypted counter-archive of imperial fallacies and fallibilities.

[11] The exhibition statement reads: "It is With an Overabundance of Good Cheer / And / Great Enthusiasm / That / We Present the Citizens / of the / OLD WORLD / (Our Captors, Saviours and Intimate Family) / A GIFT and TALISMAN / Toward the Reconciliation of / Our Respective Mother-lands, / AFRIQUE and ALIBION / WITNESS! / The / FONS AMERICANUS / — THE DAUGHTER OF WATERS — / *An Allegorical Wonder* / Behold! The Sworling Drama / Of the Merciless Seas, Routes and Rivers, / Upon which our dark fortunes were traded / And on whose frothy shores lay prostate Captain, Slave and Starfish, alike. / Come, One and All, to Marvel and Contemplate / *The Monumental Misrememberings* / Of Colonial Exploits Yon. / Gasp Plaintively, / Sigh Mournfully, / Gaze Knowingly / And / REGARD / The Immaterial Void of the Abyss / etc. etc. / In a / Delightful Family Friendly Setting / Created by that Celebrated Negress of the New World / Madame Kara E. Walker, NTY." For an image of the statement, see [link](#).

[12] Tate, "Artist Kara Walker—'I'm an Unreliable Narrator' *Fons Americanus* Tate," YouTube, October 25, 2019, 5:58 min, [link](#).

Inviting visitors to sit on the edge of the fountain's lower rim, the design of the exhibition rehearses the casual ways in which many "viewers" of the Victoria Memorial do not simply stand in reverence but play and rest in its shadows, passively coexisting with the narrative space it produces. But unlike the Victoria Memorial, which sits in relation to a line of other monuments, Walker's *Fons* stands as a lone transplant. Moreover, where Victoria's many stairs and courtyard provide a multitude of spaces for gathering and sitting, Walker's invitation to sit is more performative than practical. Less a bench than a precarious ledge, one must perch on it tentatively. The fountain's thin lip both welcomes and strictly delimits participation, exhibiting an urban planning technique instrumentalized in hostile or defensive architectural designs such as the Camden bench.

This hostile architecture is echoed in the fountain’s shark-infested waters that encircle the fountain’s central pictorial narratives, crowned by a wounded nursing figure—the “Daughter of the Waters”—with her head thrown back as she bleeds from a gash in her throat and lactates. These bodily fluids of stolen life both display and erase the carceral embodiment of the enslaved woman, converting the memory of blood and milk into water and illustrating how monuments of empire participate in the material, economic, and narrative washing away of its proximities to colonial brutality. Recalling simultaneously the chemical metamorphoses of sugar refinement, the transformation of plantation profits into cultural institutions, and the powerful role these institutions play in the continued management of their historical intimacies with slavery, the fountain betrays its own self-sustaining ritual of contamination and purification.



Kara Walker, *Fons Americanus*, 2019; Tate Modern, London; courtesy of Ardfern via Wikimedia Commons.

These fountain spouts form a trinity through which the violent flows of Africa, Europe, and the Americas cannot be stanchied. Through this grotesque aggregate of hostile built forms and contaminated imageries, Walker’s anti-monument exposes the imperial monument as an architectural technology of durable, disciplined space, simultaneously betrayed by empire’s own unstoppable flows and violent secretions. The visual noise of its many adulterated references is then amplified by the sound of what she names its “swirling drama.” The sound of rushing water—ordinarily dispersed outdoors or subdued by competing street sounds—is contained in the hall to produce a chorus of white noise. Echoes and mists envelop the viewer in what Walker calls “the miasma of conflicts racial, economic, and cultural.”[13] Here, the noxious historical amnesia ordinarily sealed within the imperial monument is released, breathed into the body, then exhaled. Through this embodied practice, the viewer manifests the idea that, in the words of Stuart Hall, “colonisation was never simply external to the societies of the imperial metropolis” but “was also inscribed deeply within them.”[14]

[13] Katherine McGrath, “Kara Walker’s Fountain at the Tate Modern to Be Destroyed,” *Architectural Digest*, April 15, 2020, [link](#).

[14] Stuart Hall, “Negotiating Caribbean Identities,” *New Left Review* 209 (1995): 3–14.

In the period since I began thinking about these counter-monumental forms, Edward Colston's statue has been toppled and flung into Bristol Harbor. The fate of many more imperial shrines is yet to be decided and public memory, as encoded in the built environment, remains an ideological battleground. Glissant notes that one of the most disturbing consequences of colonization is the enshrinement of a single totalizing History. This is the foundational myth upon which the imperial monument elevates the singular, exceptional protagonists of its unified mission: The struggle against this single History continues.

Distinct from new monuments that seek to "bring visibility" or "give voice" to underrepresented histories without questioning their very apparatus of monumentality, the counter-monument illuminates the ruling political and aesthetic rubrics that govern space and discipline the imagination. Although private and public contexts of exhibition inevitably produce distinct audiences and pose differential barriers across their spaces of display, Locke, Belle, and Walker's deployments of direct references to existing imperial monumental forms and formal strategies of defamiliarization generate a sustained dialogue. These works teach us how to more consciously inherit and inhabit the "disaster-littered, protracted, bloody," and, perhaps most importantly, "unfinished terrain" of imperial occupation across many sites.[15] Linger with the colossal commemorative forms that often inure us to the very histories they claim to memorialize, these artists expose us to empire's vast memorial occupation, ever in search of new fortifications but also subject to the will of our collective refusal.

[15] Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 24.