

## Future Anterior, Special Issue: Preservation by Other Means

Future Anterior

Deadline: Aug 31, 2017

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Preservation by Other Means: Contemporary Art and/in Heritage

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In this special issue of Future Anterior, we look to contemporary artistic and architectural practices that open up a critical framework to mine the contested meanings and values of cultural heritage by intervening directly in it or by challenging the institutional containment of heritage within the museum/gallery. In recent years some of the most radical art production has targeted heritage sites. We are interested in mapping the degree to which this move represents an extension of well-established practices such as institutional critique, participatory art, and/or site-specificity. Or, do these more recent interventions represent a new set of concerns that seek to challenge the authority of "world heritage" claims, and along with it the political strategies and rationales for its preservation. What are the cultural motivations, aesthetic ambitions, political charges of these practices? We are particularly interested in examining these emerging practices through the critical lens of experimental preservation. Some of this work takes the problems that beset patrimony as a productive point of departure. In his 2012 installation, *The Total Destruction of the National Museum of Anthropology*, artist Eduardo Abaroa littered the Kurimanzutto Gallery in Mexico City with rubble that simulated the explosion of heritage, understood as both the museum building as well as its collection of indigenous artifacts. Abaroa's provocative gesture suggested that indigenous communities might be better served if their culture was destroyed rather than instrumentalized by the heritage apparatuses of a violent state. In parallel moves, contemporary artists in Lebanon have explored the precarious state of culture in times of war. Walid Raad notes how, during periods of protracted conflict or unrest, "looted treasures or politically compromised artworks remain physically intact but are removed from view, possibly never to be seen again." More radically, Raad posits a scenario in which artworks themselves, "sensing the forthcoming danger deploy

defensive measures: they hide, camouflage, or dissimulate." If one of the effects of a surpassing disaster is the "immaterial withdrawal of tradition," then what does it mean to recover cultural legacies in the wake of a historical rupture?

While the editors of this special issue recognize the importance of protecting collections from looting, vandalism, and physical destruction—particularly in the wake of the recent trend to broadcast attacks on cultural heritage as click bait—we seek papers that take up contemporary artistic interventions that either complicate or challenge the custodial claims of the nation upon built heritage. We invite scholars who are interested in critically examining how artists and architects are intervening in national museums, historic buildings, cities and other heritage sites. We are particularly interested in analyses of how artists, architects and other cultural producers are intervening in heritage to unpack the violent histories of (de)colonization and/or military conflicts that have accompanied the production of heritage in various nation states. We encourage papers addressing methodological issues as well as concrete case studies of contemporary artworks or curatorial practices that engage built heritage from any number of post- or neocolonial contexts.

Possible topics include:

- Experimental cultural practices that challenge the models of heritage advanced by national bureaucracies, 'encyclopedic' museums, intergovernmental institutions, and non-profits.
- Architectural and artistic responses to the privatization of heritage in neo-liberal states.
- The relations between architecture, art, and preservation practices in contemporary conflict zones and/or postcolonial states.
- The contested social and political imaginaries involved in heritage practices and writing about heritage.

Articles submitted for peer review should be no more than 4000 words, with seven to ten illustrations. Text must be formatted in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition. All articles must be submitted in English, and spelling should follow American convention. All submissions must be submitted electronically. Text should be saved as Microsoft Word or RTF format, while accompanying images should be sent as TIFF files with a resolution of at least 300 dpi at 8 by 9 print size. Figures should be numbered clearly in the text. Image captions and credits must be included with submissions. It is the responsibility of the author to secure permissions for image use and pay any reproduction fees. A brief author biography (around 100 words) must accompany the text.

Reference:

CFP: Future Anterior, Special Issue: Preservation by Other Means. In: ArtHist.net, May 4, 2017 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/15440>>.