

Mapping Monument Stories

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In part because we become accustomed to the places we inhabit, public monuments tend to become invisible objects in our daily routines. When they do, their stories remain unknown to the general public and their physical appearance of immobility seems to cast their history in stone. Yet, from inception to design, from construction to installation and inauguration, monuments rarely live their lives in a linear fashion. Their biographic trajectories can be made of composite histories and stories of changing networks of actors and of places that participate in their lives, from their first sketch on a piece of paper to their installation, relocation, obliteration, destruction, and reconstruction in public spaces.

My ongoing research project investigates how can we make monuments speak back to us through experimental protocols and films that activate archival and fieldwork materials. These protocols map monument biographies across cities of the Arabian Peninsula by reconstructing the different stages in their biographic trajectory while inquiring how these narratives contribute to the symbolic edification of the state, of cities, and of the role art could play in public space. During the Summer School, I will be presenting excerpts of protocols and films I have been working on collaboratively with an artist and filmmaker, proposing non-linear biographic narratives of monument stories.

Short biography: Anahi Alviso-Marino specializes in political sociology of visual arts in the Arabian Peninsula and is currently co-coordinator and research fellow at the collective “Penser l’urbain par l’image,” Ecole des Ponts ParisTech/University Gustave Eiffel. She obtained her PhD in Political Science at the University Paris 1-Sorbonne and the University of Lausanne, her MA from Columbia University in New York, and her BA from Complutense University in Madrid. She works at the intersection of social sciences and artistic practices and has exhibited her archival and research materials at the Palais de Tokyo (“The enemy of my enemy” by Neïl Beloufa, 2018) and at the Villa Vassilieff (“One of many stories. Art worlds in Yemen,” 2017). Her forthcoming book focuses on art and politics in Yemen, and she is currently working on a collaborative research-creation project dedicated to mapping monument biographies across the Arabian Peninsula supported by the EUR ArTeC (2021), the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts (2021/2022), and by a research residency at Alserkal Arts Foundation (2022).