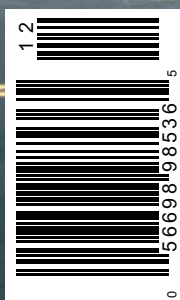


Cabinet

A QUARTERLY OF ART AND CULTURE

ISSUE 42 **FORGETTING**

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ARTIST PROJECTS / MONUMENT TO FORGETTING

Although the concept of “monumentality” has over time become associated with form—with a sense of exaggerated physical scale—the word itself actually points toward function, derived as it is from the Latin *monere*, meaning “to remind or warn.” In this, the word is aligned with monuments’ more familiar cultural presence—structures designed to commemorate a person or event. Ubiquitous in public space across the centuries and in every part of the world, monuments pronounce against the inevitability of forgetting because, as conventional wisdom has it, a failure to remember is one of the most dangerous failures of all.

For this issue, our question was whether a monument could be designed to memorialize the very thing that it is designed to prevent—namely, forgetting. This was the brief given to the artists featured here: to imagine monuments that were not intended to memorialize things, people, or episodes that either have been historically suppressed (some forgotten hero, some forgotten atrocity) or were insufficiently consequential to meet the criteria for conventional historical inscription (a lost glove, say). Instead, the editors asked the participants to consider monuments to the act of forgetting itself—to erasure, amnesia, Nietzschean “active” forgetting, Freudian repression, and more. The resulting projects appear on—and, in one case, disappear from—the following pages.

page 88: John Beech, *Found-Photo Drawing #125*, 2010. Courtesy of John Beech and Peter Blum Gallery, New York.

page 89: Eigil zu TAGE-Ravn, *A Monument to Forgetting*, 2011.

page 90–91: Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler, *90–91 Missing Page*, 2011.

page 92: Liz Glynn, *Inverse Obelisk*, 2011.

page 93: Olav Westphalen, *Proposal for a Monument for Some American City*, 2011.

1.5.2010
Beech
125



A MONUMENT TO FORGETTING

When I entered the Jama Masjid in Amedabad, I took off my shoes. A sweeper in a long white shirt pulled me to the side, near the entrance, and we stood in the colonnade. He pointed to a large black paving stone set in the floor, and led me across it, treading deliberately. And then, taking out a piece of paper, he drew a picture of a sculpture—some Hindu temple icon—sketchily on a damp, blue, lined sheet. He held it up for me, and as I looked, he slowly rotated the figure until it was upside down. Then, smiling, he pointed at the black stone across which we had just walked. And I understood: that broad tile was, in fact, the underside of the plinth of a buried Hindu sculpture. We had desecrated it together, performing the attentive ritual of oblivion.

There's a great Hank Williams song that goes "*I forgot to remember to forget.*" I'm always trying to get it out of my head.

Inverse Obelisk

Instructions:

- I. *It* is nebulous, undefined.
- II. Deep trench, soft ground, site unknown.
- II. Put *it* deep under ground.



IV. Sediment fills the void.

V. *It* disintegrates.

VI. New ground is formed.

VII. A void to build upon.

VIII. The resulting monument is the experience lived above ground and its physical footprint.

IX. No prior knowledge remains of what came before





MONUMENT TO FORGETTING

A BLINKING SIGN THAT SAYS 'SEX' TENDS TO MAKE PEOPLE FORGET ANYTHING ELSE. THE QUALIFIER 'OK' IN CONNECTION WITH 'SEX' MAKES THEM STOP THINKING ABOUT SEX AS WELL. FORGETTING IS COMPLETE!



Illustration from William Caxton's first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, printed ca. 1476. Courtesy The British Library Board.