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GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE PRESENTS MONUMENTALITY

The exhibition explores the role of monuments and monumental art, featuring works from antiquity to present day

MONUMENTality
At the Getty Research Institute, Getty Center
December 4, 2018 through April 21, 2019

LOS ANGELES – As the role and meaning of monuments in contemporary culture takes on new urgency, the Getty Research Institute (GRI) is presenting an exhibition that connects these contemporary concerns to the past.

MONUMENTality, on view at the Getty Center from December 4, 2018 through April 21, 2019, invites viewers to consider how the meanings of monuments can change over time and why some monuments endure while others fall.

"In organizing both this extraordinary exhibition and the current scholar year theme, the Getty Research Institute has focused on an especially timely subject – monuments and monumentality. Here, art history has very contemporary implications as many people, especially in the U.S., are passionately debating and re-examining the roles that monuments play in our communities and cities," said Andrew Perchuk,



Table 3, Palace of Soviets Project, Mikhail Karasik (Russian, 1953–2017) From Mikhail Karasik, *The Palace of Soviets: Design Competition* (Saint Petersburg, 2006), Lithograph, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2732-729), © [Mikhail Karasik, 2006](#)



The Toppling of the Vendôme Column, 1871, Bruno Braquehais (French, 1823–1875)
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (95.R.102)

acting director of the Getty Research Institute. "The GRI's special collections are a rich source of archival material that makes it possible to take a broad view of both the varied life of monuments and the concept of the monumental from the classical to the contemporary."

The exhibition investigates various paradigms of monumentality generated through systems of belief

and structures of power, presenting historical rare books, political ephemera, photographs and contemporary art about or inspired by monuments from antiquity to present day.

Artists in the exhibition include Dennis Adams, Annalisa Alloatti, Lane Barden, Mirella Bentivoglio, Joyce Cutler-Shaw, Tacita Dean, Theaster Gates, Leandro Katz, Michael Light, Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, Edward Ranney, Ed Ruscha, Ursula Schulz-Dornburg, Lebbeus Woods, and more.

Objects in the exhibition date back to the 16th century, depicting early modern as well as classical monuments. For example, the renowned 18th-century printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi created grandiose reconstructions of Ancient Rome and a detailed scrolling engraving of Trajan's column, erected in 113 CE. Rare 19th-century photographs document rebelling citizens during the 1871 Paris commune surrounding the toppled statue of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Place Vendôme, illustrating how the erection and destruction of monuments has been a recurring theme from antiquity to the present.

Among the oldest monuments explored in the exhibition are the Nazca lines, hundreds of ancient geoglyphs drawn into the southern desert of Peru by the Nazca people between 200 BCE and 500 CE. Recorded by photographers in the 20th century

these enigmatic monuments are subject to plentiful theories about their meaning and purpose. In the exhibition, they are represented through photographs by Edward Ranney (American, b. 1942) who visited the sites repeatedly throughout the last half of the 20th century.



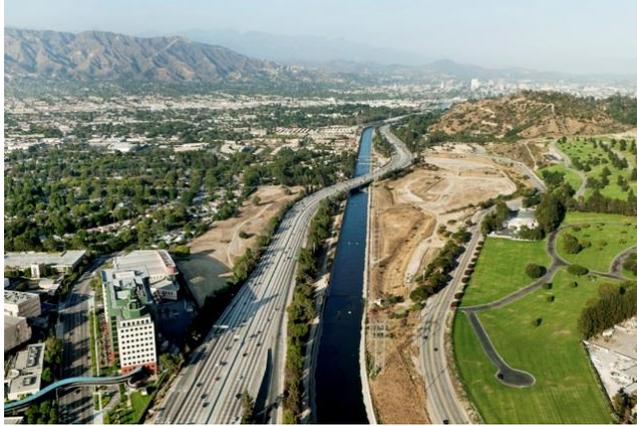
JG (offset) (detail), 2013, Tacita Dean (English, born 1965), Set of 14 handmade offset prints on 250g archival paper, edition of 12 Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2018.PR.18)© Tacita Dean Courtesy the artist; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris; Frith Street Gallery, London; and Niels Borch Jensen Edition, Berlin/Copenhagen

Juxtaposed with the Nazca images are photographs of earthworks created in the 1960s and 1970s by American artists who drew inspiration from these ancient monuments.

"Just as size and scale have been important in human efforts to mark cosmic and geological time, they are used by artists to invoke the monument and locate meaning. The phenomenology of the monument, the power structures behind monuments, and the meanings of monument, even when lost, are compelling subjects for contemporary artists," said Frances Terpak exhibition co-curator and curator of photography at the Getty Research Institute. "Monuments are often made by artists but artists also take on the monument as a subject for exploring, deconstructing, and challenging."

One of the newest objects in the exhibition is a deconstructed monument by Theaster Gates who is currently the artist in residence at the Getty Research Institute. For this exhibition Gates has toppled his own monumental piece *Dancing Minstrel*, 2016/18. Originally exhibited in 2016 as a larger-than-life bobble head depiction of the racist trope of the black minstrel, the installation at the Getty features the oversized parts of the figure scattered across the floor, a dramatic dismantling of a racist stereotype.

The exhibition also considers monumentality in relation to cities, both real and imagined. Design proposals and plans for the never-built Palace of the Soviets



Crossing Under the 134 Freeway, Lane Barden (American, born 1950), from photographic project *The Los Angeles River as Sunken Garden* in the *Linear City* portfolio, 2004–2005, Lane Barden (American, born 1950), Color inkjet print, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2013.R.4), © Lane Barden, 2018

submitted during and after a major international competition in 1931-1933 placed alongside a utopian plan to connect East and West Berlin at the height of the Cold War reveal how power is envisioned through the construction of the city and its monuments. The connection between monuments and the built environment is further explored through printed material, photographs, and ephemera. The impulse to document Los Angeles, for example, has spawned

projects of enormous scope – such as Ed Ruscha's extensive photo-documentations of Los Angeles *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966 and *Hollywood Blvd*, 1973 and 2002 and Lane Barden's *Linear City*, a monumental tool for envisioning the city at the start of the 21st century by mapping its main arteries: water, rail, and automotive.

"Monuments, though often meant to stand for eternity, can physically change over time – from erosion, looting, war, or iconoclasm – or they can stay intact but change in their meaning, losing context or relevance, or becoming integrated with daily life in new ways. And monuments can form organically, through the ways that people interact with the built environment," said Maristella Casciato, exhibition co-curator and curator of architecture at the Getty Research Institute. "*MONUMENTality* investigates the ways that monuments are necessarily dynamic, ultimately reflecting, through their endurance or failure, the world around them."

MONUMENTality is curated by Frances Terpak, Maristella Casciato, and Katherine Rochester.

[More information about the exhibition](#), including a schedule of related programs, is available online at getty.edu.

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The Getty Research Institute is an operating program of the J. Paul Getty Trust. It serves education in the broadest sense by increasing knowledge and understanding about art and its history through advanced research. The Research Institute provides intellectual leadership through its research, exhibition, and publication programs and provides service to a wide range of scholars worldwide through residencies, fellowships, online resources, and a Research Library. The Research Library—housed in the 201,000-square-foot Research Institute building designed by Richard Meier—is one of the largest art and architecture libraries in the world. The general library collections (secondary sources) include almost 900,000 volumes of books, periodicals, and auction catalogues encompassing the history of Western art and related fields in the humanities. The Research Library's special collections include rare books, artists' journals, sketchbooks, architectural drawings and models, photographs, and archival materials.

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