art exchange

Image: Accra, 1966. By Sam Durant, 2018.
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Photo: Makenzie Goodman

SAM DURANT iconoclasm

EVENTS

Iconoclasm Walking Tour
Wed 8 March 2023
2 – 2.45 pm
Meet in Albert Sloman Library foyer
Admission Free

Join curator Jess Twyman for a tour of Sam Durant's Iconoclasm.

Infiltrating the squares, paths and buildings of campus, Iconoclasm depicts acts of destruction enacted upon public statues and monuments since 1572. Jess will talk about the historic context behind each of the Iconoclasm drawings, and how they still resonate today.

Hot drinks will be served in Art Exchange at the end of the tour.

Artist's Talk:
An Archive of Destruction
Wed 26 April 2023
6 - 7.15 pm
Ivor Crewe Seminar Room
Admission Free

We are excited to be joined by artist Sam Durant and writer/curator Jes Fernie.

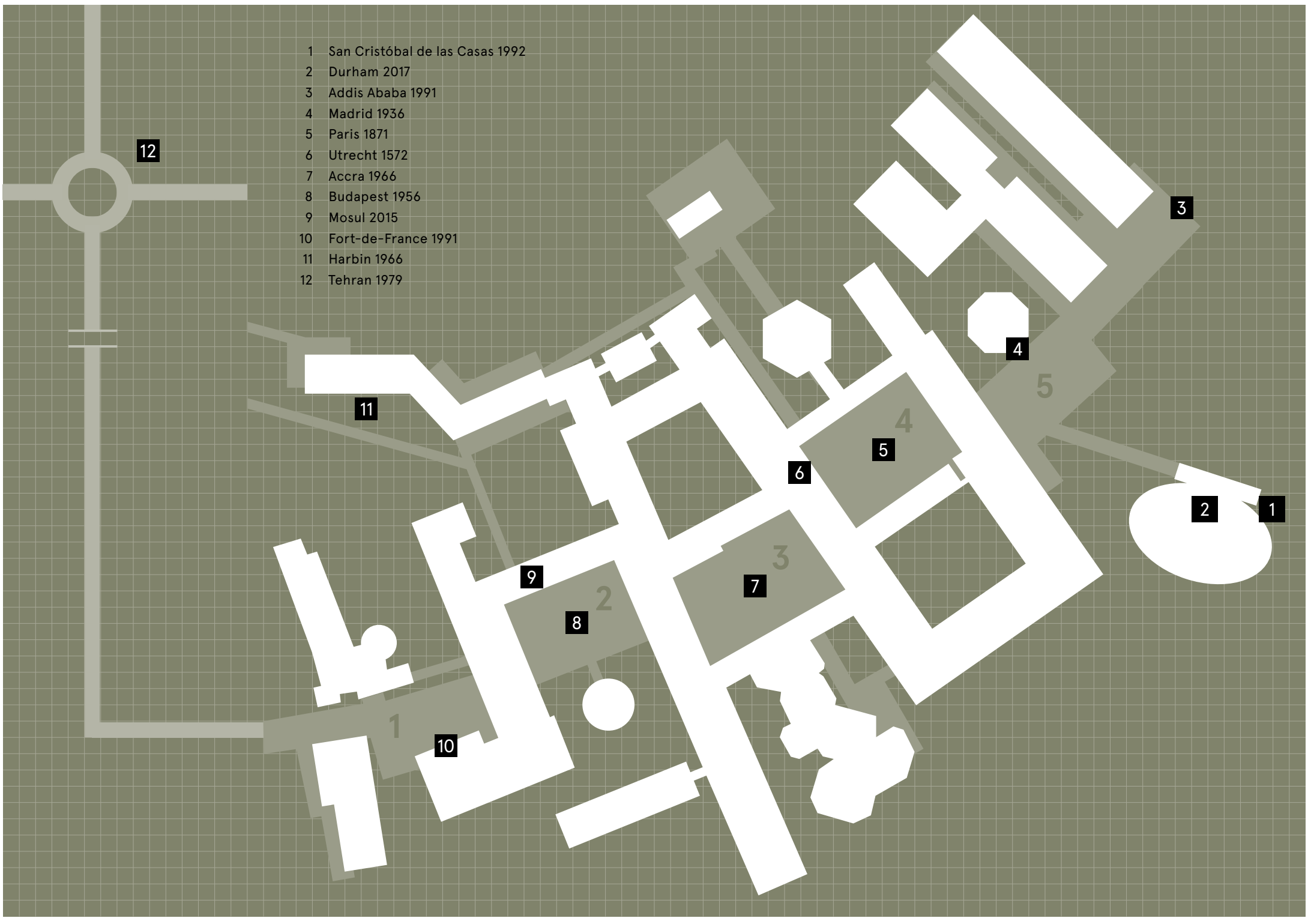
Artist Sam Durant will expand on the ideas behind the making of Iconoclasm, including the placing of his drawings of fallen monuments back in public spaces, as he focuses attention on questions of representation: who gets to occupy these spaces – and who gets to be heard.

We are also joined by writer/curator Jes Fernie who will tell us about her 'Archive of Destruction', a platform that brings together narratives around destruction and public art. Spanning 100 years and many continents, it tells cumulative stories of vulnerability, interference, rage, fear, boredom and love.

Q&A will be followed by a drinks reception at Art Exchange.

samdurant.net
archiveofdestruction.com
jesfernie.com

University of Essex



Sam Durant
Iconoclasm

For thousands of years monuments have been constructed by one culture, only to be removed by another as attitudes, beliefs and structures of power shift and change. The culture wars are nothing new.

All around the University of Essex are sited Sam Durant's large-scale drawings from the series Iconoclasm, depicting acts of destruction enacted upon public statues and monuments. Based on images found in various historic sources – such as newspaper and television reports – Sam Durant focuses on moments of disruption and calls on current debates about how we relate to these potent symbols placed in public spaces.

Infiltrating the squares, paths and buildings of campus, the drawings document fleeting yet significant moments of historical change. Now reproduced and increased in scale, their appearance within the campus community draws attention to questions of representation: who gets to occupy these spaces – and who gets to be heard? While the University of Essex is yet to mount a statue in one of its squares, these central spaces are where our community has come together for over 50 years during protests and demonstrations; those highly charged moments when students want to create change and build alternative futures.

Iconoclasm is also brought together for a display in the Albert Sloman Library. A printed guide to all the sites around campus will be available from Art Exchange and the Albert Sloman Library, as well as a downloadable version from our website.

To find out more, visit
www.artexchange.org.uk

Sam Durant (born 1961, USA), is a multimedia artist whose works engage with social, political, and cultural issues. His interest in monuments began with 'Proposal for Monument at Altamont Raceway' (1999), continued with 'Proposal for White and Indian Dead Monument Transpositions' (2005) that recontextualises memorials to victims of the conquest of North America, and more recently with 'Proposal for a Public Fountain' (2015) a marble work depicting an anarchist statue being blasted by water canon.

Sam Durant's work has been included in numerous international exhibitions including Documenta 13, the Yokohama Triennial, and the Venice, Liverpool, Whitney Sydney, Panama and Havana Biennials. His work can be found in many public art collections including Tate Modern, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

1
San Cristóbal de las Casas, 1992
The statue of Diego de Mazariegos was toppled on the Christopher Columbus quincentennial, on 12 October 1992. He has been awarded monumental status for his pivotal role in the colonisation of the Chiapas region of Mexico. According to Thomas Benjamin (Professor of Latin American History at Central Michigan University), "One marcher knocked the statue off its base with a sledgehammer, and the crowd then beat it into fragments... After surviving five centuries of systemic violence and exploitation, the natives of the highlands of Chiapas destroyed the premier symbol of their oppression."

2
Durham, 2017
The Confederate Soldiers Monument ("The Boys Who Wore Gray") was a memorial to the soldiers from Durham County who fought for the Confederate States in the American Civil War. The monument was erected in 1924 – nearly 60 years after the end of the Civil War – in front of the Old Durham County Courthouse as part of the coast-to-coast network of confederate monuments designed to intimidate African Americans and uphold white supremacy. As part of nationwide demonstrations that followed the fatal attack on counter-protestors at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the Durham monument was pulled down on 14 August 2017. Others were to follow.

3
Addis Ababa, 1991
Mengistu Haile Mariam was the leader of Ethiopia from 1977 to 1991 and chairman of the military junta that governed the country until his overthrow. During that time, Mengistu pursued an autocratic politics that led to thousands of Ethiopians being killed. The statue of Vladimir Lenin in Addis Ababa was an important government monument representing Mengistu's socialist influences. On 24 May 1991 — when Mengistu fled for refuge in Zimbabwe at the threat of rebel advance— the Lenin statue in Addis Ababa was pulled down. While still living in exile in Zimbabwe, Mengistu was tried and convicted between 1994 and 2006 for genocide.

4
Madrid, 1936
During the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) iconoclastic activity directed at churches, monasteries and Catholic monuments spread throughout the country. The 'execution' of the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* by militia at Cerro de Los Ángeles near Madrid was the most infamous of widespread destruction of religious property. Built in 1919, it was inaugurated by King Alfonso XIII, who was subsequently deposed by the Spanish Republic in 1931. Because the Catholic Church supported the Nationalist insurgents against the Republicans, the monument became symbolic of the Civil War's struggles.

5
Paris, 1871
The Paris Commune was a revolutionary socialist regime against the French government that seized power for three months, 18 March – 28 May 1871. Erected by Napoleon to celebrate French military victories, the Vendôme Column was considered a "symbol of brutal force and false glory" by the Paris Commune, and the famous painter Gustave Courbet proposed it should be taken down. Before a great crowd on 16 May 1871, quarry workers with ropes pulled it to the ground. In this image, Courbet who worked with the Commune is the ninth figure from the right.

6
Utrecht, 1572
In 1517, a German professor of theology named Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* — which objected to various practices of the Catholic Church — to the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany. Soon after, the Iconoclastic Fury swept across much of Europe, justified by the belief that statues in a house of God were idolatrous images which must be destroyed. One example is St. Martin's Cathedral in Utrecht in the Netherlands, where many of the ornaments on both the exterior and interior of the cathedral were destroyed.

7
Accra, 1966
In 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial power, as the wave of liberation movements successfully swept across the continent. Later, in 1965 the white ruling class of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) declared their freedom from Britain. Ghana criticized the UK for allowing the seizure of power by a white minority, with President Nkrumah calling for military intervention by Ghanaian forces. As Nkrumah pushed for offensive operations, he forced into retirement the army's most senior officers. Historians argue that this led to the military-police coup that overthrew him on 24 February 1966. Nkrumah's statue outside Parliament House was battered to the ground during the coup. Today, the damaged statue has risen again and stands in the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park in Accra.

8
Budapest, 1956
Sam Durant captures a pivotal moment in the escalation of the Cold War, as Hungarians rebelled against Soviet control in Budapest. In 1956 the Stalinist leader, Mátyás Rákosi was overthrown and Hungarian resistance moved into the streets. The massive statue of Joseph Stalin in central Budapest was pulled down in October, but by December the Red Army had crushed the rebellion and restored Hungary to a Soviet client state. It was not until 1989 that Hungary was able to extricate itself from the Soviet Bloc.

9
Mosul, 2015
In a video posted online on 26 February 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) entered the Mosul Museum in Iraq to destroy ancient Assyrian and Akkadian artifacts they deemed "idolatrous." Members of the group are seen pushing over statues and using jackhammers and sledgehammers to deface others. However, not all of the museum's collection were damaged by ISIL. While the most impacted were the Assyrian and Hatrene areas of the museum, the Islamic hall, which held many priceless antiquities, was not destroyed or not shown in the video.

10
Fort-de-France, 1991
Josephine was the wife of Napoleon I and the first Empress of France after he proclaimed himself Emperor. She was the daughter of a powerful sugar plantation owner in Fort-de-France, Martinique, who claimed ownership of over 300 enslaved people. It is believed that Josephine persuaded Napoleon to re-establish slave labour soon after it was abolished to protect her father's interests. Slavery continued for another 50 years. In the mid-1800s, Napoleon III commissioned a monument to Josephine's memory in Fort-de-France. In 1991, the statue — depicting the Empress holding a locket with Napoleon's portrait — was beheaded and splashed with red paint, as it remains today.

11
Harbin 1966
In 1966, China's Communist leader Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution to reassert his authority over the Chinese government. Mao called on the nation's youth to purge the "impure" elements of traditional Buddhist and Daoist society to revive the revolutionary spirit. Red Guards destroyed statues across the county, including this one in Harbin, while exiling, imprisoning and destroying the lives of millions of Chinese people declared "rightists" or "enemies of the people." Intellectuals, artists, musicians, writers and cultural producers were especially targeted.

12
Tehran, 1979
Reza Shah Pahlavi ruled Iran until the British removed him in 1941, leading to the democratic election of President Mohammad Mossadegh in 1951. However, after he nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company two years later, Mossadegh was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. Mohammad Reza, the son of the previous leader Reza Shah Pahlavi, was then installed as Shah and ruled until he was overthrown in the Iranian revolution of 1979. Iranians pulled down this statue of Reza Shah Pahlavi during the revolution.