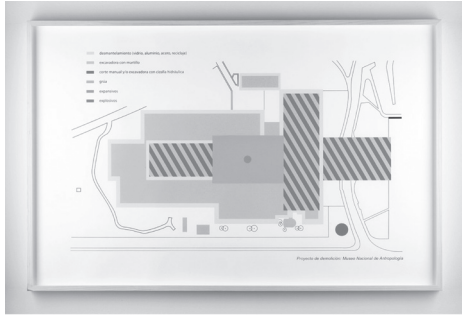


Fig. 3

These schemata describe the gradual disappearance of the building, marking each process with a different colour. The objects in the installation serve as props to illustrate each process, namely: recycling of glass and aluminum, demolition with hydraulic hammers and shears, destruction with expansive demolition grout, and the use of a construction crane to remove some sections of the building.

Fig. 4



The first step of the process is the removal of glass, aluminum, and other recyclable parts of the building.



Fig. 5

The museum's graceful structure is not massive enough to be demolished by explosives—it would not collapse under the force of its own weight. Instead, hydraulic hammers and shears would be used to gradually destroy the concrete and steel structures. The exhibition shows the debris from the museum after this process is completed.



Fig. 6

The column at the centre of the museum's patio would be destroyed using expansive demolition grout. The grout would be poured inside several holes in the concrete cylinder. As part of the exhibit, viewers can see some samples of the uses of this substance.



Fig. 7

Other methods like fire and explosives would be used for destroying the pre-Hispanic pieces and other objects in the museum. A computer-generated clip shows the explosion of a monolith commonly referred to as "Tlaloc." In the early 1960s, President López Mateos had the idea of transporting this sculpture from the town of Coatlinchan to the museum, though many locals resisted the removal of the idol.



Fig. 8

Another section of the project is a series of tours of the museum in which the guide explains the demolition process and discusses with visitors interesting and controversial aspects of the Anthropology Museum.

The year 2010 was highly symbolic for Mexicans. Two of the most important historic movements for the constitution of the country, the War of Independence from Spain (1810) and the Mexican Revolution (1910), were pompously commemorated by government officials and institutions, who desperately tried to convey enthusiasm to the masses with a series of expensive displays of collective chauvinism. Nevertheless, the celebration was completely out of place for many people. Not only were the economic numbers rather bleak, but the war on drugs initiated in 2007 by President Felipe Calderón, who had risen to power amid serious allegations of fraud, had immersed the country in a chaotic spasm of terror. Political strife dissi-



pated whatever optimism remained after the 2000 elections, when the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)¹ was defeated after 71 years in power, as Calderón and his National Action Party (PAN) threw away the opportunity to make significant progress towards a viable democracy. Instead, they sustained corrupt relationships with transnational corporations, which had been protected by the neoliberal politics of their predecessors, and negotiated with the unions that had allowed the PRI to crush political dissent.

Another issue remains hidden beneath the catastrophic war on drugs. The indigenous population, approximately 10 percent of Mexico, has always been the poorest in the country. The internet has allowed a growing awareness of the many problems faced by indigenous people,² who remain unprotected from both organized crime and corporate greed. Indigenous ethnic groups living in Mexico today are helpless as they witness the destruction of their land and the natural resources they depend on to survive. The signing of NAFTA and the reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution—which permits foreign companies to hold mining concessions in Mexico—have only exacerbated these conditions.

There are, however, important pockets of resistance. Groups like the Wixárika (also known as the Huichol) have set up an important defense of sacred sites from Mexican and Canadian companies, whose practices poison water resources, leading to the extinction of many local species of flora and fauna. Also, the Southern state of Chiapas is the home of the notorious Zapatista autonomous zones, which struggle, alongside other forces, against the *talamontes* or illegal logging operations, which are surreptitiously backed by a corrupt local government. The States of Michoacán and Guerrero, among others, have also seen the emergence of self-defence groups that have emerged to protect their communities from the abuses of drug traffickers, multinational corporations, the police, and the military alike.

The introduction of transgenic crops and industrial farming that the current PRI presidency is promoting in Mexico is seen as catastrophic, especially in the case of corn, given that the use of genetically modified seeds would negatively impact the rich variety of corn species—particularly for indigenous communities. Indeed, traditional cultures, relegated for so long, now face extinction by a thoughtless and corrupt model of progress currently affecting many regions of the planet. In this sense, NAFTA has been disastrous. Finally, the extraction of oil, once restricted to the state-run company PEMEX, is now open

to foreign investment, opening the way for the usual irresponsible activities of transnational oil companies whose intervention will permit the environmentally catastrophic extraction of shale gas deposits.

In essence, the Total Destruction of the Anthropology Museum project is a reflection on the attitude of contemporary Mexican society towards the descendants of Mayas, Aztecs, and other pre-Hispanic cultures. The gesture takes into account the ideological use of symbols and museum conventions by economic and political powers. A mock destruction of idols and buildings invites reflection about the ongoing real destruction of these living cultures, whose cosmological vision, relationship to nature, and social organization are perhaps among the most critical in the contemporary neoliberal world, and from which Western culture could learn a great deal.

Notes

1

The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party) is the power structure that emerged from the 1910 Revolution. It held power until the year 2000 and won re-election in 2012.

2

Miguel León-Portilla, one of Mexico's most important anthropologists, pointed out that troops belonging to indigenous communities were crucial in the three most important wars that have defined the core values of the country: the War of Independence, the Reform wars, and the Mexican Revolution. See Miguel León-Portilla, *Independencia, reforma, revolución: ¿y los indios qué?* (Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2011).