

Contesting Oñate

Sculpting the Shape of Memory

Kathy Freise

After years of debate and contestation, the memorial focused on Spanish conquistador don Juan de Oñate has been installed on the grounds of the Albuquerque Museum. It dominates the northeast corner of the museum's sculpture garden, which was redesigned as part of a substantial museum renovation, completed in early 2005. As planned, one component of the piece, *La Jornada*, focuses on Oñate and settlers accompanying him; it is a group of figures rendered in bronze. The other component, *The Environment* (or *Numbe Whageh*), is a landscape treatment designed to represent the American Indian perspective.

Echoing the lines along which the arguments about the memorial played out, it is appropriate that the two components stand side by side, removed from one another, sharing a space but not an aesthetic. They run parallel to one another, no easy relationship between them. Because the piece is new, response to it is still being formed. But it is easy to surmise that, in the future, the two components will continue to exist as do the groups whose experiences they represent—situated in the same space, claiming it differently. However, these circumstances also create the opportunity for this public art piece to lead viewers to responses more productive than a polarized standoff over history and space.

As Phillip Gonzales notes in the previous chapter, the question of how and whether to create a memorial to Oñate moved through several varia-

tions. What began as an attempt to commemorate a watershed event in New Mexico history, suggested the *Albuquerque Journal*, "has instead been transmogrified into a caricature of political correctness" ("Arts Board Scuttles" 1999, A16). Although the issue of sensitivity on how to interpret historical figures—Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Kit Carson come to mind—has moved in and out of national attention the past several years, this local argument certainly ranks among the most vitriolic, based largely on Oñate's treatment of Ácoma Indians. Imagine advocacy and protests in every form: overflow crowds in city council meetings, prayer vigils, letters to editors, the windows of artists' cars smashed.

The notion of a memorial started in 1997 with a proposal from the Oñate Cuarto Centenario Project Planning Committee, charged with steering a year of commemorative activities around the four hundredth anniversary of Oñate's arrival in New Mexico in 1598. The project was passed to the Albuquerque Arts Board, where its focus was expanded from Oñate alone to American Indians and the settlers who accompanied him.

A trio of artists—one Anglo, one Hispanic, and one American Indian—was commissioned to create a piece that depicted unspecified activity of four hundred years ago. Two of the artists, Betty Sabo and Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera, both of Albuquerque, work in figurative representational bronzes; they sculpted the segment of the memorial that represents Oñate and the settlers. Nora Naranjo-Morse (Tewa of Santa Clara Pueblo), is better known for her large clay figures and large conceptual installations; she designed the environmental work that represents the American Indian perspective.

The project prospectus that was approved describes the three perspectives the artists were asked to interpret:

To mark this place in time, the year 1998, as the Cuartocentenario of the founding of New Mexico. This Public Art Project will (a) commemorate the contributions of the Early Colonizers ("Los Pobladores") who accompanied Juan de Oñate to New Mexico, (b) represent Juan de Oñate, the first Governor of New Mexico, and (c) honor the Native American presence before, during and after the experience of the Oñate Expedition. The resulting memorial will thus represent multiple cultural views of our history.¹

If only the project were as simple as these few sentences suggest. The complexity of the final sentence is elaborated upon in subsequent paragraphs:

The theme includes the history of the arrival in New Mexico of Oñate's Expedition and Los Pobladores, with positive and negative impacts of their arrival, as well as the long-range contributions of Los Pobladores,

the interaction of the settlers with and melding with Native peoples and the Acoma experience of 1599. This theme is intended to provide a broad range of issues for artists to consider as they develop their concepts relating to the visual artwork or significance of symbols. The interaction of Oñate, Los Pobladores and the Native American population of New Mexico began what was, and is, a distinct and diverse New Mexican culture.²

"What was, and is." That brief phrase is not as straightforward as it might seem; inherent within it is a demand to consider all sides of all stories within a single artwork. The word *and* both stops time and moves it forward, demanding a piece that is broad with interpretive possibilities. Here is where the limits of the figurative segment of the piece begin and where the possibilities of the landscape segment also begin—I elaborate on both the limits and the possibilities later. But what is significant to note is that the artists were charged with creating an artwork that is a comment on both history and the present. Whether the completed memorial does meet that requirement is but one question; I argue that the figurative half stays allied to the past, whereas the landscape half is linked to the past and, more productively, to the future.

The artists were ultimately left with the charge of answering questions about the legacies of colonization, such as those raised by poet W. S. Merwin:

When they start to wear your clothes
do their dreams become more like yours
who do they look like . . .
when they start to use your language
do they say what you say / who are they in your words. (1989, 62)

Like the questions Merwin poses in his poem, the artists were asked to reflect on the ways in which history passes over the contemporary landscape. The piece of art they were asked to create tries to put some shape to the meetings between people and places, to how the world endures history. The memorial they have designed falls within what French historian Pierre Nora (1994) calls *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory. Within such sites, history and memory interact creatively, addressing the modern dislocation that alters our sense of the past. With no single ideological narrative in place, new means of reactivating the sense of who we are emerge. These, then, are the sites—places, dates, artworks—that exist "[w]here memory crystallizes and secretes itself at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that mem-

ory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity exists” (284). Such sites may themselves be composed of sometimes-oppositional landmarks of the past: real and imaginary, public and private, natural and artificial. As is the case of the Cuartocentenario Memorial, these sites are heavily marked with political and symbolic significance as they try to balance both the stability of the past and the unpredictable future. They are the products of the meeting of history and the will to remember, standing at the “nexus of personal and collective identity” (284).

Before the memorial was approved, design possibilities for it essentially fell into two possible approaches. First, an apartheid approach was considered, which would illustrate the polarized positions within the debate, where either side—Oñate supporters and American Indian supporters—got its own sculpture. This would mean separate but equal monuments—which, in a way, has taken place and is, perhaps, an honest representation of what at least part of life in New Mexico is like today. The second approach was to leave Oñate out of the proposal altogether, but to represent other segments of colonization, such as an image of an American Indian giving food to a Spaniard. Such an approach would acknowledge four centuries of living together and the terms under which that living began. And yet to fail to acknowledge Oñate within such a scene clouded the reason for a monument in the first place.

Either of these positions is flawed, I think. The strictly apartheid approach, separate but equal, tends to turn its back on history. The second approach lets the ghost of Oñate linger unaddressed. In many ways, it does not tell the story any more accurately than the first position. Can the story that those who shaped the memorial were asked to tell, one that invokes imagination to resituate history, be told without the lead character, whether hero or villain?

Months after the artists produced a model, with tearful, accusatory, and pleading public testimonials at every Albuquerque City Council meeting where the memorial was considered, it was approved. On 6 March 2000, the city council voted to build the Cuartocentenario Memorial, with its two linked segments, *La Jornada* (The Journey) and *The Environment* (*Numbe Whageh*), at the Albuquerque Museum. Even in the final consideration of the piece, it was clear that the memorial’s two competing components had some councillors confused and that there was some intention to cut out *The Environment*. However, what the council approved was a piece that would finally cost \$600,000.

The Cuartocentenario Memorial can hardly be missed by visitors to



Figure 24. Betty Sabo and Sonny Rivera, *La Jornada* (The Journey), Albuquerque Museum, 2005. Bronze. 75' long; sixteen life-size figures and assorted livestock and animals. Used by permission of the photographer, Greg Johnston.



Figure 25. *La Jornada*. Detail, front. Used by permission of the photographer, Greg Johnston.



Figure 26. *La Jornada*. Detail, rear. Used by permission of the photographer, Greg Johnston.

Albuquerque's Old Town and certainly not by visitors to the Albuquerque Museum, so commanding is its presence in its location at the intersection of Mountain Road and Nineteenth Street, facing the museum entrance. Although the museum hosts the 33,500-foot-square artwork, it was commissioned by and its installation overseen by the city's One Percent for Art Program.

The two segments of the work run generally parallel to one another, the figurative group installed east of the landscape segment. An unidentified Oñate, his hand outstretched, faces north—as it happens, directly within his field of vision is the National Atomic Museum and a Redstone missile, itself the subject of heated public controversy. (Although the museum and missile are scheduled to relocate, the irony of the settlers facing this particular icon of the future is substantial at this point in time.)

The Nineteenth Street sidewalk runs immediately next to the figurative group, which is placed on a slightly hilly desertlike berm, soil punctuated with boulders and native southwestern plants. This terrain extends without border to the sidewalk, making it easy for visitors to clamber into the tableau, touching the bronze figures, being photographed with the figures or oxen.

Another sidewalk that extends from Nineteenth Street takes a gentle curve into the memorial; however, a waist-high retaining wall runs the length of the figurative group on the side closest to the landscape segment. The wall is the "Ancestral Wall," which lists on bronze plaques the approximately five hundred family names of those who accompanied Oñate on his seven-month journey from Chihuahua. They, then, are the names that started to shape New Mexican history in the sixteenth century and that remain prominent today. In the memorial, they are also literally the names that stand between one culture and the other. The wall is a visual impediment to considering the two memorial segments as part of the same effort because it clearly separates them. They are linked by an unpaved small plaza, which runs alongside the figurative segment's wall and into the landscape segment, which is Albuquerque's first large-scale earthwork.

La Jornada, by Sonny Rivera and Betty Sabo, is seventy-five feet long, with sixteen life-size bronze human figures and assorted livestock and animals. It gradually increases in height, with the two figures pushing an oxcart out of apparently sinking soil set at ground level. Oñate, at the opposite end of the tableau, stands six feet above the ground. His outstretched right hand holds a scroll, presumably the charter from the king of Spain; his other hand is on his sheathed sword, and his cape appears to blow in the wind. An Indian man, his guide, stands to his right. Next to them is a friar, kneeling.



Figure 27. *La Jornada*. Detail, Ancestral Wall family name plaques. Used by permission of the photographer, Kathy Freise.

Two conquistadors flank Oñate's other side, one looking forward, one looking back, gesturing to the group members about what lies ahead.

Three additional small groups make up the figurative segment. Near the front group is a man carrying a lamb on his shoulders. He's next to a woman on a donkey with a child, and the overtones of Joseph and Mary here cannot be missed. They are surrounded by two rams and three ewes, one of the sheep rearing up to add movement to the scene. To their side is a group of two women and three children. The women are of indeterminate childbearing and child-rearing ages, and they care for a babe in arms, a boy of about three years of age, and a girl perhaps five or six years old.

Next to them a horseman herds four longhorns, one of them fending off a wolf. A conquistador, also mounted on a powerful horse, has a rope attached to his saddle, which is helping pull the *carreta* out of sinking ground. Two men push the cart from the rear, and a teenage boy serves as ox drover. The bronzes are realistic and highly detailed, both people and animals; the only exceptions are the sheep's faces, which have an oddly cartoon quality.

Rivera has said that he hopes viewers use the memorial as an educational experience. "It's got to come out in the open that they [the Spanish] were not destructive people. I want it to show their contributions, the enormous contributions of the horses and cattle and sheep, the livestock. They came with intentions to settle, which they did. They brought the fruit trees, the irrigation, the mining, the silver smithing, Christianity. . . . I want that brought out. To me, that's very important, those things we're still using today" (qtd. in DellaFlora 1999b).

The landscape segment is Nora Naranjo-Morse's *Numbe Whageh* ("Our Center Place" in Tewa), which came to be referred to as *The Environment*. It is a spiral walkway of crushed rock within a hilly landscape that echoes the native landscape of northern New Mexico; this is the same kind of ground across which the bronze figures appear to move. The landscape, sixty feet in diameter, is planted with indigenous vegetation and trees, including rosemary, honey locust, one-seed juniper, cactus, piñon, yucca, sage, and orange globe mallow. Stones and boulders are placed throughout; four of them were donated from the Hopi, Santa Clara, Ácoma, and Taos Pueblos of New Mexico, and they include signatures, marks, and pictorial symbols significant to Pueblo people. The walkway winds down to a mound of stones, where a small stream of water flows from under one stone and across a large boulder.

Visitors can take the spiral walkway out of the piece or use a stepped pathway of red volcanic rock that winds up the western edge of the landscape component. A visitor at the top of its incline stands at the same height as the Oñate figure to the east. Naranjo-Morse said that in creating the piece, she tried to ponder the moment when the indigenous cultures first converged with the Spanish settlers. "I thought of the water in the reflective pond, looking down at yourself, and then thinking how maybe my great-great-grandmother was getting water and looked up and saw something that was going to change her forever" (qtd. in DellaFlora 1999b).

The visual contradiction between the two components of the Cuartocentenario Memorial is striking. At the time of this writing (early 2007), the signage for the memorial that will interpret the piece has been installed only for the bronze segment, so it is not clear to visitors that the pieces have any relationship to one another. At minimum, to stay consistent with the other works in the sculpture garden, the complete signage should include titles, artists, materials, and date of installation. If visitors read that signage, they will understand that the two segments are somehow linked, and, depending on what other information is offered, they will begin to understand some of the relationship between the segments. No interpreta-



Figure 28. Nora Naranjo-Morse, *Numbe Whageh* (Our Center Place, also known as *The Environment*), Albuquerque Museum, 2005. Landscape installation, 60' in diameter; includes plants and trees indigenous to New Mexico. *La Jornada* can be seen in the background. Used by permission of the photographer, Greg Johnston.

tion, of course, can begin to get at the complexities of identity that led to the memorial.

To better understand the potential long-term response to the Cuartocentenario piece, it is necessary to think more broadly about memorials and monuments in general. As human beings, we feel the need somehow to mark a spot in the world with a name, perhaps some numbers, to shape a challenge to the forces of time. Monuments such as the one discussed here are not tributes to ordinariness such as the quiet memorials that families place along roadsides in bright remembrance of someone beloved who died at the site. They are large in size, in perception, and in public consciousness. In general, monuments designed and chosen to fill a public space are raised to heroes and (less frequently) heroines; they deal with great achievements and noble ideas, at times individually, at times together. They mark individuals, groups, lives and deaths, well-executed ideas and failed accomplishments. Even with a capacity to accommodate and absorb new meaning, monuments remain appropriately sober. Though their forms

move and evolve—arch, column, pyramid, dome, obelisk, wall—monuments persist.

In *Art, Space, and the City* (1997), Malcolm Miles defines monuments primarily as the imposition of a national ideology, with the overlapping role of signifying place. Monuments, perhaps more than any other form of public art, are produced within a dominant framework of values. They stand as elements in the construction of various histories, whether national, regional, or local, which may or may not remain separate from one another. Miles notes: "Monuments suppose at least a partial consensus of values, without which their narrative could not be recognized, although individual monuments may not retain their currency as particular figures fade in public memories, and individual buildings may be disliked" (58). Though their values may be disputed and the categories in which they exist may fade or fall out of favor, monuments in general comprise their own category within material culture. They are familiar; they represent a stability that conceals "the internal contradictions of society and [that] survives the day-to-day fluctuations of history" (58). They assert that those contradictions are, or should be, acceptable, and they do so in ways that are quieter than more forceful methods, such as military action. They nudge people along the path of accepting contradictions or violations. Simply, they help preserve social order. And although they arguably help establish critical historical understanding, they also at once limit it.

Monuments—whether statue, public sculpture, or memorial—have a complicated relationship with time. They present the past or some simulation of it, created, as Miles notes, "to impress contemporary publics with the relation to history of those who hold power and the durability of that relation expressed in stone or bronze" (1997, 59–60). Traditional monuments, like the Oñate figurative group, present an idealized, calm continuity, and it is such a perception that provides them their value. Obviously, the reasons behind monuments vary. They are shaped out of motives that are perhaps clearer than for other forms of public art because they are linked so specifically to memory. Writing about Holocaust memorials, James E. Young summarizes the breadth of rationales behind any memorial: "Some are built in response to traditional Jewish injunctions to remember, others according to a government's need to explain a nation's past to itself. Where the aim of some memorials is to educate the next generation and to inculcate in it a sense of shared experience and destiny, other memorials are conceived as expiations of guilt or as self-aggrandizement. Still others are intended to attract tourists" (1993, 2). These rationales—and possibly others, depending on local circumstances—exist in relationship to one another, even when

they at times contradict one another. What arises in discussions for many contemporary memorials is the question of whether to preserve sites of celebration or sites of loss. Of course, this question is central to the Cuatrocenario Memorial, and it also brings up one way in which I believe the piece is distinctive—its split into competing halves. That split means the piece functions simultaneously as a monument and as a memorial—*La Jornada* serving as monument and *The Environment* serving as memorial. The terms *memorial* and *monument* tend to be used interchangeably. That is certainly the case with the Cuatrocenario piece. I have referred to it as a memorial here because that is how the piece was referenced in most public documents before it was built. Nevertheless, distinctions between monuments and memorials remain, based on intent. Art historian and critic Arthur Danto elaborates:

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus, we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends. . . . Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, excluded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments, we honor ourselves. (1986, 152)

As intention varies, so do codes of remembrance. In general, monuments are built to mark victories rather than defeats. The figures in *La Jornada* are victors in surviving their journey, but their victory over any other people who resisted them—the Ácomas, for instance—is also implied here. Several of the figures appear to smile. In contrast, memorials remember the dead, often those who have been defeated. *The Environment*, in its silence, is a remembrance of the Ácomas, of the centuries past when the land was untouched by Spanish colonization, by museums, by missiles. Marita Sturken suggests: "Whatever triumph a memorial refers to, its depiction of victory is always tempered by a foregrounding of the lives lost" (1997, 47). Monuments signal a set of values; memorials summon those who died for or at the hands of those values—they embody grief, loss, and tribute. According to Charles Griswold, memorials are "a species of pedagogy" that "seeks to instruct posterity about the past and, in so doing, necessarily reaches a decision about what is worth recovering" (1986, 689). For instance, the Lincoln Memorial, a funereal structure, gains force from its implicit reference to Lincoln's untimely death, as Sturken notes: "It embodies the man and his philosophy,

with his words inscribed on its walls" (1997, 48). Conversely, the Washington Monument operates purely symbolically, with no reference to George Washington beyond its title. These differences illustrate another distinction between monuments and memorials that, although fundamental, is not universal. Monuments tend to be anonymous, whereas memorials tend to incorporate names or lists of the dead or lost. This holds partially true in the Cuartocentenario piece. The figures in *La Jornada* are unnamed, though their family names are included on the Ancestral Wall. No names are included in the landscape treatment, but the land itself stands both as that which has been lost and as the commentary on it.

Like any form of categorization, these distinctions between what constitutes a monument and what constitutes a memorial are arbitrary and fluid. I mention them here because of the ways in which the Cuartocentenario Memorial splits into segments that present both history and mourning in vastly different ways.

This memorial has been asked to transform history into some kind of shape, to reveal some version of reality. The process here is what catches my interest, for it testifies to the power of the imagination. Before any design was approved, people argued over what they had not yet seen, instead responding to the power of the imaginative. The stories that have been told about Oñate, the settlers, and the Ácoma incident have been in print and speech for hundreds of years. It is not as though they circulated publicly for the first time during this particular controversy. But, as I have alluded to, something associated with the quality of art and of monuments in particular contributed to the fierceness of the arguments, to the intensity of the debate. Perhaps that "something" is the way a piece of sculpture in a public space such as a civic plaza or a park turns into a commodity, an object to be passed by. It is (usually) permanently set there, as though the story is settled. Especially if that piece is a monument, it may assume a position that seems almost natural, like a stone in the landscape. Monuments are that pervasive, that much a part of our lives, suggesting themselves as "indigenous, even geological outcroppings in a national landscape" (Young 1993, 2).

The landscape of which monuments are part, of course, is one composed around idealized memory. In such a plane, a monument, Young suggests, "grows as natural to the eye as the landscape in which it stands. Indeed, for memorials to do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of national legitimacy, of the state's seemingly natural right to exist" (1993, 2). It seems to me that an aura of the natural easily transmutes into one of the invisible. In this case, by *invisible* I do not mean only being "absorbed" and "implicitly accepted." I am thinking instead of "disappearing

from thought"; it is this fear that is worth pondering in relation to the intensity of the debate around the Cuartocentenario Memorial. Ironically, the completed work, along with the stories it tells and the positions it claims, risks disappearing psychically, in a manner that may be unique to the monument. Robert Musil writes that "[t]here is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument. They are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed to attract attention. But at the same time, they are impregnated with something that repels attention" (1987, 61). Young suggests that this "something" is an essential stiffness that monuments share with all other images:

As a likeness necessarily vitrifies its otherwise dynamic referent, a monument turns pliant memory to stone. And it is this "finish" that repels our attention, that makes a monument invisible. It is as if a monument's life in the communal mind grows as hard and polished as its exterior form, its significance as fixed as its place in the landscape. For monuments at rest like this—in stasis—seem to present themselves as eternal parts of the landscape, as naturally arranged as nearby trees or rock formations. (1993, 13)

In this view, a monument remains inert, apart from the readings that a viewer imposes on it. What disappears is the monument's own chronology, the events that formed it. No interpretive materials can adequately summarize the conflicted chronology that led this memorial into being, and even if they did exist in the form of a catalog or brochure, they would not likely be viewed by most visitors to the piece. That is not necessarily a problem; I believe that most pieces of public art should be left to speak for themselves. However, because the events that led to the piece's construction will recede from public memory, the piece will be granted the assumption of naturalness. It stands to lose out on opportunities to comment on the set of circumstances that helped it be realized—specifically, the historical and political realities of being a Spanish American or an American Indian in Albuquerque at this time.

The most effective public memorials do not present a narrative as though it is complete. Instead, they point to the tension of the past that seeps into the present and taps into the instability of memory itself. Certainly, effective design and materials are a consideration here. Much has been made, for example, about the ways in which the polished black granite walls of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial at once reflect and implicate viewers. It seems to me that in the Cuartocentenario piece, the landscape segment specifically has the potential to summon such memory and participation. When a memorial performs effectively, viewers are called to

look within themselves for creative possibilities, to consider the actions and motives for memory within the monument's space. They may recall the dead and realize some kind of responsibility for the living. At such moments, viewers are engaging actively with a piece of public art, inserting themselves into a space that initially may seem off limits or complete. This engagement is an act of embodying memory rather than sealing it off or displacing it. And it opens up the notion that an effective piece of art presents people with the opportunity to move closer not just to those remembered there but to themselves. At some level, a monument should both encompass an event from centuries past and offer a kind of resonance for the present.

To engage with a completed piece, to allow its textual possibilities to emerge, is to resist some of the limitations it carries, to insist on meanings that extend beyond a material form. It is to enter more fully into attempting to critique the present memory via a piece set largely in the past. It is to recognize that the "shape of memory cannot be divorced from actions taken on its behalf" (Young 1993, 15). I focus on memory here because any monument or memorial, effective or not, exists as a consequence of memory. It puts material form to questions such as which memories to preserve and how, in whose name, to what end. A monument's material form too often takes the place of important individual and collective remembering; the piece itself can appear to override the hard work of engaging, thinking through, committing to action. Engagement with a piece of art can prevent abdicating the job of remembering to an object. Being willing to engage is to opt for a more responsible viewing, to assume that the work of remembering that a monument represents is not automatically completed within the piece. It means being willing to dip into the possibilities that a piece of art offers. A monument is an active text, ground that "can never be cleared of the prior. It saturates us—political powers, social places, duties, infusion of norms, interruptions of protest. . . . [I]t is full, fused and jostling, an active 'stage for struggle'" (DuPlessis 1990, 128). Such activity is the best case, perhaps, for how pieces of public art might function—as vibrant fields that lead viewers into a more involved, thoughtful perspective.

With these considerations, it becomes clear that I am drawn to think about the ways in which a monument holds possibilities for rethinking the political and cultural positions that it may appear to claim. Such a capacity will help the Cuatrocenenario Memorial move beyond what I think the bronze figurative segment of this piece is based on: myth, nationalism, glorification. As noted, public monuments most likely carry such associations. The territories they mark are too vital to disappear entirely. But some aspects of such public art pieces—here I am thinking of *The Environment* portion of

the memorial—can reshape territories and borders so heavily contested and so dearly won. It can tell not just stories of four hundred years ago, but stories that lead into the future.

What I am getting at might be best pointed out by imagining the ways that persons unfamiliar with the debate or with New Mexico's history will look at the memorial. I suspect that they will look at the figurative group and imagine the feel of life in 1598, thinking about the lack of material comfort, the ways people dressed, the terrain of the territory. Their interpretation will be based on a continuum of then and now, a comparison of their present and the past they imagine. Figurative representations such as *La Jornada* tend to lock interpretive possibilities into time, which also locks in the overarching meaning. Even though I am critical of this approach, I must also note that it meets a need within material forms of remembering. Human figures offer the opportunity to translate an event, to present evidence in a way that more abstract approaches may not. This is why Holocaust memorials, for instance, tend to incorporate figurative elements. They are a form of testimony and comfort that resonates with viewers. Young points to the strength of this effect by noting that "even the most popular of abstract monuments, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, was eventually forced to make concessions to the figurative demands of its public. . . . [S]ome of the veterans demanded a more figurative representation of 'actual soldiers' nearby . . . to be joined eventually by a figurative statue of nurses" (1993, 11 n. 16).

The figures in the Cuatrocenenario Memorial are presented as moving through, even struggling upon, a landscape; they look as though they are immersed in experience. However, even their "natural" appearance, an appearance that presents the imaginative past for viewers, is problematic. The language that informs the bodies, in this case, forms a select and artificial narrative. Miles suggests that naturalism, such as that used to interpret these figures, may seem harmless and approachable, but "the transparency it offers disavows complexity through a focus on recognition rather than interpretation, which inhibits ideological readings but does not restrict ideological intention" (1997, 66). His thinking is relevant to the piece under consideration here because the figures and animals *look* correct. They are easily recognized as belonging to, being part of, a time long ago. Perhaps that is both the effect and the intention—a suggestion and an assumption that the figures in the work *belong* upon the land through which they move (or more appropriately, that the land belongs to them). Nothing in this segment of the monument interrogates or questions the activity of the group of figures. There is a sense of no hesitation, no interrogation of the assumptions that accompany the group of settlers. The segment provides no open-

ing, other than the carreta being stuck, for twenty-first-century reflection on the potential problems associated with settlement.

This figurative group presents an idealized image of the process of colonization, an image that supposes a reverence for the notion rather than for its conscripts—a notion that discovery is mostly noble, with some figures smiling along the way. There is a sense that parts of the journey through the desert are arduous, but those figures at the front assume heroic stances. They are the sum of the group, and viewers gather nothing further about various difficult aspects of the journey, such as loss of rations and death. Nor will they hear of the colonizing actions taken on behalf of the king of Spain, such as the violence visited upon the Ácomas. The prevailing sense that the image conveys to a viewer, it seems to me, is triumphant—a summary of having arrived and then remained that communicates inevitability. What can be extrapolated is that the presence represented by these bodies is permanent and somehow triumphant. These bodies represent a particular form of taking territory, of colonizing public space.

The bodies are marked—in clothing, tools, weaponry—with signifiers of identity. They are bodies in service to a particular program of ideology. If limited to the late sixteenth century, this ideology is linked to exploring and to naming parts of the world on behalf of a country. If interpreted as contemporary, the ideology is one of permanent presence, a relationship of naturalized and exclusive belonging. The bodies function within what art historian Irit Rogoff calls a “traditional geography, one in which a unity between places and subjects has fused to the point that we can have ideologically marked bodies that signify the specificity of a people, or of a race’s relation to a place” (2000, 145). These bodies articulate a form of cultural memory, engaging with historical narrative in a public sphere.

It seems to me that *La Jornada* is not interested in examining contradictions about the ways in which society represents itself. Instead, it marks a form of cultural heritage, presenting a past that continues to promote civic aspirations and to serve social stability. The figurative group is sanitized in the way that publicly sanctioned art frequently is; it presents a moment in history as both safe and finished. It functions more or less as traditional monuments have in America, its static presence celebrating a defined set of ideals and triumphs.

Although *The Environment*, the landscape component of the design, has also been conceived to suit a particular point of view, it does not contrive time in a way that is so fixed on the past-present continuum. It presents time in a spiral, opening up the possibility of dislocation, introducing the chance of breaking free from past patterns and past assumptions. It addresses the

elements of contested pasts in a more compelling way. Because its emphasis on nonlinear time presents an alternative past—imagining what life would have been like without the presence of the figurative group—it also presents the possibility of alternative futures. It includes the same kind of reflective thinking that the figures engender: What took place here? However, the suggestibility of its materials and its design insists on another question, too: What might take place in the future?

The spiral path descends to the heart of the piece, source of the name *Numbe Whageh*, Tewa for “Our Center Place.” That center, which is a stream, an opening, a womb, is both physical and spiritual. And like the multiple interpretations in its name, the story that *The Environment* tells is not a linear narrative in any sense. Rather, it immediately gives a sense that something is different about the way its history is being told. Viewers have to participate with this segment of the memorial differently than they participate with the figurative segment. They can literally get inside of it, walking down the spiral slope, smelling the plants; they do not need to stand removed or excluded from the story being told.

I want to point out that this landscape component does not function exactly as a countermonument, a form of public art that has emerged in Germany in response to the Holocaust. Such pieces make physical reference to the ways in which history around the Holocaust becomes invisible; they gradually disappear into the ground and stay buried there, for instance. Such countermonuments—or antimonuments—directly take on the problem of monuments that I referred to earlier, which is to negate remembering by blending into the landscape. This landscape treatment at the Albuquerque Museum is not as ardently political as that, though it does refuse a certain degree of forgetfulness with its participatory design. It deliberately slows the ways in which a viewer will engage with it. It decelerates time, enhancing looking, deepening the viewer’s experience “of processing signs in a world of fleeting images and hasty movement” (Bal 1999, 179). The experience of viewing the landscape segment unfolds in time, requiring that a viewer *be* in time in distinctive ways. The segment ties the experience of looking into other sensations—smelling, listening, feeling. Because each sensation takes place in real time, the piece has temporal depth; it makes time matter, as Mieke Bal (1999) suggests. That is to say, on each occasion that a visitor moves through the piece, his or her experience will be different because the piece itself will have changed: the rocks on the pathway will have shifted from other visitors’ feet, and the plants will have grown.

Such shifts call new attention to the experience of being within and seeing the piece, which means a viewer’s interpretation of it can also shift. But

the piece does not seem to work toward a strictly personal interpretation. Instead, it asks that viewers become involved to the extent that they begin to understand the experience of the American Indians that it references. The experience of walking the spiral, although steered through the personal, is a shared experience. Bal again notes: "We all have a history, a sadness, a private pain that informs our public appearance and motivates the force that props us up . . . a strange sense of solidarity between all the players on the world's perverted stage becomes inescapable" (1999, 179).

Although "solidarity" may not be quite the right take on the response that someone who walks through *The Environment* may have, it hints at the possibilities—of empathy, of new understanding, of broader awareness. By participating in the landscape segment, viewers can perhaps move toward a more complex comprehension of the lives and the history referenced there. By extension, they may also arrive at a better understanding of themselves.

My sense of the optimistic possibilities in the landscape segment links back to my assertion that it functions more as a memorial than as a monument. Conversely, the figurative segment is more a monument than a memorial. Consider again part of the definition of monuments and memorials: "We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget" (Danto 1986, 152). In short, these halves of the same piece of public art are coded in notably different ways. *La Jornada*, the figurative segment, counts on a form of vision linked to identification and recognition. *The Environment*, the landscape segment, invokes a vision of imagination, one that tries to suggest that a different way of looking—at art, the land, history—exists. Such idealization is itself a critical political tool, I think, that can open up a broader range of psychic relations—the maps between subjects, places, and identities. Bold enough to pose the question "What if?" the landscape segment marks "those tiny, radiant breakthroughs of possibility" (Rogoff 2000, 12) that call into question the ways in which meaning is constituted and circulated.

I use the term *maps* deliberately to describe psychic relations in the previous paragraph because maps signify both location and identity, as this piece of public art does. In this case, the piece produced is being asked to function like a map. At the same time, it is defined and restrained by both location and identity, as a map also is. Maps have been prominent in post-colonial discourse, used both to mark irony and to revise the history of European colonialism. The titles of the segments in the Cuatrocenenario piece, *La Jornada* and *The Environment*, are certainly rich with travel-related associations. The figures in the bronzed group map the landscape as they look forward. The spiraled landscape maps imagination. Both segments of

the piece are essentially mapping loss as well. The moment in which the figures are portrayed has passed; the landscape re-creates the land as it appeared before settlement. Together, the segments map neither a new place nor its occupation, but the "haunting that is the ongoing reality of co-inhabited spaces in which one presence is always at the expense of the other" (Rogoff 2000, 85). The question, posed by Rogoff, then becomes: "How can the doubly inhabited terrains with their often conflicting histories and claims be mapped so that one does not dominate and erase the other, does not become the singular history of the place?" (2000, 104). Or, as artist Naranjo-Morse offers in the documentary about *Numbe Whageh*, "Lee Jenkins of Hopi says 'We are all in this together.' I think that really talks to the idea of moving on. Because now we have this environment and what do we do with it? What do we do with it—all of us?"³

Each of the two segments of the memorial, like the cultures they reflect, can gain a fuller reading only through a reading of the other. They are set into a kind of permanent negotiation with one another, affiliated with history and memory. Again, the relationship to cartography emerges. Rogoff writes: "If the landscape is either overwritten or re-written to include the elided presences which had and still do inhabit it, does that necessarily imply an erasure of the former, its total replacement by the latter? Can terrains and topographies and landscapes have a double consciousness, a mutual inhabitation?" (2000, 108).

I think that the answer to the latter question is yes and that creative terrains such as public art present some of the more compelling possibilities for mapping the ways in which mutual inhabitation takes shape. Offering up such possibilities is perhaps the best and most that can be asked of the Cuatrocenenario piece, which started with an attempt to elide the American Indian presence—recall that the original proposal was for a bust of Oñate. The completed piece no longer attempts such an exclusive position. It instead presents two segments that mirror the ways in which any notion of a collective, unified narrative about how people live in this time and place have been disrupted. The detachment of *La Jornada* and *The Environment*, standing apart from one another, is testament to how partitions and boundaries leave legacies within public policy, even in arenas such as the arts, which are ostensibly more open to dissolution of territories.

This memorial reinforces separateness more than it intends. Nonetheless, such a piece may be necessary to mark a specific contemporary moment while it also signals the need to move forward. Memorials and monuments offer a particularly useful take on presenting opposing points of view because they mesh with both history and memory. They can bring

together both past and present—as the Cuatrocenenario Memorial does—so they can invigorate public life in ways that other pieces of public art cannot. The most effective among them are those that inspire active looking, asking viewers to think about what moves them, what seems out of place with the history they have known, what new understandings they have gained, and what actions they may take in their own lives. In these moments of empathetic looking, art begins to work in a way that reaches past any aesthetic. It shapes the ways in which people examine themselves, their lives, and their world. In these moments, art becomes the map itself—an unknown charting, rich with possibility, that relieves the anxiety of being lost.

55. Darva Chino and Arturo Sandoval to Friends and Allies, e-mail distribution, 13 December 1999; DellaFlora 1999a.

56. All quotations in DellaFlora 2000b, A1, A2, and Potts 2000, A1, A2.

57. Arturo Sandoval to Dear Friends, 20 April 1999, fax, AABD.

58. C. A. Tsosie Jr. to *Albuquerque Journal*, 24 December 2000, B3.

59. The Pueblos changed the spelling of the leader's name from its Spanish derivation "Popé" to "Po'pay," and San Juan Pueblo began the process of changing its name back to its Tewa-language origins.

Chapter 10. Contesting Oñate: Sculpting the Shape of Memory

1. Prospectus, City of Albuquerque Public Art Program, "Capital Implementation Program for the Creation of a Sculptural Memorial Commemorating Spanish Contributions to the Founding of New Mexico, Don Juan de Oñate, the first Governor of New Mexico and the Native American Experience of the Arrival of Oñate and the Colonists," 1998, City of Albuquerque Public Art Program files, Department of Municipal Development.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Numbe Whageh*, Nora Naranjo-Morse, director, nine minutes, forty seconds, City of Albuquerque Public Art Program, 2005, videocassette.

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