

***Lima I[NN]Memoriam***  
**In Transit to Democracy: Shaping Public History**  
**in the Urban Landscape<sup>1</sup>**

Dorota Biczal

A tourist traveling in Peru is most likely on her way to admire the wonders of the Inca Empire around the ancient city of Cuzco, with the iconic Machu Picchu as a mandatory highlight of her itinerary. If she decides to make a brief stop in Lima, she is encouraged to go on an organized tour of the capital. Such a mode of sightseeing is not only supposed to protect her from the threat of robbery or kidnapping but, above all, the tour is proposed as the most efficient and time-effective way to see the major landmarks of this “large, sprawling, and confusing” metropolis, the fifth-largest in Latin America, housing nearly one third of Peru’s population.<sup>2</sup> Such a tour typically includes the historic center—a UNESCO World Heritage site—with its colonial architecture, the government palace and the cathedral on the main square, which until 2003 featured the contentious statue of Francisco Pizarro, the city’s conquistador founder.<sup>3</sup> And it culminates in the Miraflores district—the

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank George Flaherty and my colleagues from the Spring 2012 seminar “Media, Memory, and the City” at the University of Texas at Austin, for their feedback on the preliminary version of this essay, and Daniel Quiles for his invaluable comments on the final draft.

<sup>2</sup> Today the population of Metropolitan Lima is just above 8.5 million while the population of the entire country slightly exceeds 30 million. Depending on how statistics are interpreted, Lima is the fifth or the sixth largest city in Latin America. This travel narrative is culled together from numerous Western guidebooks and English language websites, as well as from personal experience—that is, advice I received prior to my first trip to Lima. The words “large,” “sprawling,” and “confusing” were perhaps the most common in the repertoire of adjectives used by these sources to describe the capital.

<sup>3</sup> Pizarro founded Lima on January 18, 1535. He died and is buried there. The equestrian statue of Pizarro by American sculptor Charles Rumsey (donated to the city by the artist’s widow) was placed on Plaza Mayor in 1935 to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city’s foundation, but also as a conservative effort to reinforce Peru’s rootedness in the Hispanic tradition and culture, and to maintain oligarchic social order. Always controversial, it was removed from its

touristic heart of present day Lima—with its numerous dance clubs, lavish restaurants, its Parque del Amor, adorned with giant figurative sculptures of frolicking couples slightly reminiscent of the art of Botero, and Larcomar, a gargantuan shopping mall carved into a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Occasionally, for those who have more time at their disposal, the itinerary includes the port of Callao, a historic entryway into the heartland of the country, and a few of the archaeological sites of the coast, such as the Sanctuary of Pachacamac, 40 km south of the city center. The locations along such a route have specifically assigned temporalities; some are distinctly historic—ancient, colonial, or republican—while others are “modern.” Together they string a teleological narrative that sets up a seamless and what seems like an inevitable progression of development: from the skill of ancient builders through the art of colonial architecture to the opulence of contemporary entertainment centers.<sup>4</sup> This is the official history of Lima that is being projected not only to foreign visitors but also to the inhabitants of the country: the expression of an attitude and an aspiration that the daily paper *La República* called “a cursed tendency to erase from [the Peruvian] conscience anything inconvenient and a persistent mania to convert [the] past into a manicured illusion of an ‘ideal city.’”<sup>5</sup>

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The project *Lima I[NN]Memoriam*, realized for the Third Ibero-American Biennial of Contemporary Art of Lima, 2002, sought to counter such an

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central location in 2003 and placed, in 2004, in a more discreet site, Parque de la Muralla. See: Rafael Varón Gabai, “La estatua de Francisco Pizarro en Lima. Historia e identidad nacional,” *Revista de Indias* LXVI/236 (2006), 217–36. Also: James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26–28.

<sup>4</sup> Valerie Fraser observes how the unwavering reliance on the Western conception of architecture led to the distinction between indigenous skill and European art, which resulted in the submission of the former to the latter. Valerie Fraser, “The Idea of architecture,” in *Architecture of Conquest: Building the Vice-Royalty of Peru, 1535–1635* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 21–50.

I maintain that even though indigenous traditions have been incorporated in many ways into the official nationalistic discourse, their subordinate position has essentially not changed throughout the twentieth century.

<sup>5</sup> “Lima i(nn)memoriam,” *La República*, 28 April 2002 <[www.larepublica.pe/28-04-2002/lima-innmemoriam](http://www.larepublica.pe/28-04-2002/lima-innmemoriam)>. All the translations from Spanish are mine.

idealized image of the Peruvian capital.<sup>6</sup> It was conceived by the Spanish linguist-turned-artist Rogelio López Cuenca and a group of Peruvian artists who adopted the name Túpac Caput for the purpose of the event.<sup>7</sup> *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* tactically utilized the conventional means of the tourist industry—a city plan, street signs, and a bus tour—to *mobilize* urban memory against the “development” teleology of the official history. Its immediate aim was to reveal the fragmented, multi-layered, and violent character of the production of space in the city and render visible the “sites of friction” against the highly orchestrated collage of historical shards, which projects a smooth, uniform, and conflict-free image of the Peruvian capital.<sup>8</sup> At the moment of democratic transition, after the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori (1992–2000) and the end of the Peruvian Internal Conflict (1980–2000),<sup>9</sup> the project employed a consumer-oriented mode of transit to uncover the relentless, continuous violence of modern development, and simultaneously point to its deep roots in the colonial past. In this way it was a challenge to a so-called progress which creates as much poverty as wealth, as much despair as optimism, as many vagabonds as tourists, and as many subalterns as citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Conceived as a multi-faceted project, *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* consisted of a plan of the city of Lima printed in 10,000 copies and distributed for free at the

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<sup>6</sup> You can take the “tour” of *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* at: [www.lopezcuenca.com/lima/index2.html](http://www.lopezcuenca.com/lima/index2.html)

<sup>7</sup> The participating members were: Natalia Iguñiz, Alfredo Márquez, Alejandro Ángeles, Giuseppe de Bernardi, Carlos-León Xjiménez, Cecilia Noriega, Giuliana Migliori, Javier Vargas, Alice Vega, and Marco Durán.

<sup>8</sup> This “immediate objective,” as indicated in the project statement, was firmly rooted in the politics of the moment. The notion of “the highly orchestrated collage of historical shards” is taken from the postmodern “City of Spectacle” described by M. Christine Boyer in *The City of the Collective Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> The outbreak of the Peruvian Internal Conflict coincided with the first democratic elections following a twelve year military dictatorship (1968–80) and the taking up of arms against the state by the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist guerilla group *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and, later in 1984, by MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru). The bloodiest war in the history of Peru, it claimed nearly 70,000 lives, according to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Massive crimes and abuses of human rights occurred during the dictatorship of Fujimori, even after the 1992 capture of the leader of *Sendero Luminoso*, Abimael Guzmán.

<sup>10</sup> I am borrowing the distinction between “tourists and vagabonds” from Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

biennial venues, an interactive map on the project's website, and two actions carried out in the so-called public space of the city.<sup>11</sup> The first one consisted of marking otherwise unremarkable or ubiquitous places with a red crossed circle. While these signs, like the one of the London subway, indicated a stop, they also suggested a prohibition. The same symbol was also used on the otherwise completely abstract, devoid of any identification, black-and-white grid of the printed map. The verso of the map provided photographic documentation and extensive descriptions of the fourteen sites including press accounts and citations from famous philosophers.

The second action of the group was a guided tour of Lima on a tourist bus equipped with a professional driver and a tour guide. The group insisted on such mode of transportation, furbished with a microphone and a sound system, as well as panoramic windows that offered good views of the city, in order to provide physical comfort and optimal sightseeing conditions for the passengers. The use of a high-end vehicle rather than an adapted car contrasted sharply with the common means of mass transit in Lima. Arguably, such a tour would be a novel experience for the inhabitants of the city who are forced to rely for transportation on a chaotic, uncoordinated network of private minibuses and vans, which jam the metropolis.<sup>12</sup> In turn, such a

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<sup>11</sup> According to the architect and urbanist Wiley Ludeña, the country has never really possessed public space. Historically the land has been owned, controlled, and regulated by colonial and postcolonial oligarchies ruling an artificially constructed nation. Grassroots claims to segments of the privatized space, made by the Peruvian popular classes, are equally seen by Ludeña as contributions to the progressively increasing fragmentation of what could have possibly constituted "public space." Wiley Ludeña in an interview with the author, September 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Operating on the BRT (Bus Rapid System) model, the Metropolitano bus—one of the main initiatives of the mayor of Lima Luis Castañeda Ossio—began operating in September 2010, connecting the North and the South with the city center. The electric train, also running along the north-south axis—one of the protagonists of *Lima I[NN]Memoriam*—became fully operational in April 2012, following a twenty five-year long construction process. It is telling that the official inauguration of the train line occurred during the last days of the presidency of Alan García in July 2011, who announced the project in 1986, during his first term in office. However, the train only began test runs in January 2012 and became fully operational in March 2012.

luxurious arrangement would “predispose the participants to follow the rules of the game”<sup>13</sup> by positioning them as privileged tourists that cruise the city.

Contrasting with a tourist guidebook or a conventional organized city tour, *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* took visitors to the peripheries and overlooked areas of Lima, to the sites that have been neither designated as historic patrimony nor have been assigned value as symbols of the city’s modern development. Rather, by poaching on the existing official structures—to use Michel de Certeau’s phrase—this tactical tour eschewed those sites of cultural heritage strategically deployed to position Lima as an important nexus within global capital flows. The objective was to make visible those places within the city that had been created or, as the flip side of the same process, willfully erased by the violence of development projects. The bracketed double N in the title of the project [NN], the abbreviation for “name unknown,”<sup>14</sup> evoked those marginalized within the state and the rural Andean poor; groups that constituted the majority of the victims of the emblematic violence prompted by the Internal Conflict in Peru.

Among dozens of potential sites, the map and the tour identified, localized, and named fourteen “sites of memory” that gave testimony to the brutal and volatile nature of the production of space in the Peruvian capital during the last three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Among selected locations were sites that highlighted the demographic explosion propelled by internal

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Marita [last name unidentified] in the archive of artist Alfredo Márquez.

<sup>14</sup> It alludes also to the name of the Peruvian group Taller NN, active between 1988 and 1991. Alex Ángeles and Alfredo Márquez, who participated in López Cuenca’s project, were members of this group. The graphic work of Taller NN frequently contrasted iconic figures of the political imaginary of the Left with the images appropriated from the popular press that graphically depicted the bloody fallout of the conflict—masses of nameless, unidentified (and most often rural) bodies.

<sup>15</sup> The narrative that follows is largely based on the descriptions and media clippings included in the map of Lima *I[NN]Memoriam*.

migration and the resulting altered ethnic makeup of Lima's population.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the tourist visited El Montón, a garbage dump less than two kilometers away from the main square and the City Hall of Lima, converted into a squatter site since the first massive illegal occupation of 1935. The tourist also saw an electrical box on the representative Plaza San Martín, where on September 3, 1983, a boy nicknamed Petiso ("shorty" in Spanish) was electrocuted while looking for refuge. Petiso soon after became a symbol for all the street children of Lima, as evidenced by the name of "La Casa de los Petisos," a shelter for homeless children. The tourist also saw a former bullring in the Rímac neighborhood, where the *Carnival Vencedores de Ayacucho* [Victors of Ayacucho] was first held on March 29, 1992, staging a festive takeover of the city by the peasants that were forced to relocate into Lima during the years of violence.

The *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* tourist visited the sites directly affected by the brutality of the Internal Conflict. She saw the locations of demolished electrical towers that, from December 16, 1981, were regularly sabotaged by the Shining Path guerrilla. The destruction of infrastructure that delivered energy to the city made pervasive the effects of terrorist violence on the everyday life of the city's residents. The attempts to protect the towers with landmines deepened the terror as they also led to accidental deaths, mostly of children. In addition, the tourist was guided to the sites of infamous massacres committed by the violence of the state, like the prisons of El Frontón, Lurigancho, and Santa Bárbara, where more than 250 rioting

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<sup>16</sup> Between 1945 and 1990, the population of Lima skyrocketed from 600,000 to over 7 million inhabitants, 50% of which lived in squatter-origin settlements on the outskirts and 25% in the rental slums of the city center. In the 1980s the capital was under pressure of a new wave of Andean migrants, whose rapid influx was exacerbated by the violent armed conflict playing out in the provinces. In search of reprieve, peasants flocked into the city and erected on its outskirts makeshift shelters along the dusty mountains. Although these illegal settlements were not free from clandestine or institutional terror, between 1979 and 1985 alone, the number of the new *barriadas* (or squatter settlements) grew from ten to forty-five. Henry Dietz, *Urban Poverty, Political Participation, and the State: Lima 1970–1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 2; Jean-Claude Driant, *Las barriadas de Lima: Historia e interpretación* [Lima: IFEA (Instituto Frances de Estudios Andinos) and DESCO (Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo), 1991], 183.

inmates, detained on terrorism charges, were extra judicially executed on June 18 and 19, 1986; Barrios Altos, where on November 3, 1991, the secret squad of the intelligence service of the Peruvian Armed Forces killed fifteen partygoers mistaken for members of the Maoist guerilla at a *pollada bailable*<sup>17</sup>; and the National University of Education Enrique Guzmán y Valle, known as La Cantuta, from which nine students and a professor were kidnapped, tortured, and subsequently disappeared on July 8, 1992. A year after the completion of *Lima I[NN]Memoriam*, the Peruvian Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, CVR) officially reported that the governmental units were responsible for nearly half of the victims of the war.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the tour included locations in which the state brutally tried to eradicate other subjects deemed “ungovernable” like El Sexto prison, where a riot of prisoners derived in the public torture of hostages and the massacre of inmates during an attack by the Republican Guard on March 27, 1984. Tourists were also guided to the former locale of the dance club Sagitario (closed in 2001) in the “red zone” of the Cercado of Lima.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the previous decade, the police regularly raided the club while its patrons—who were presented by the media as prostitutes, homosexuals, transvestites, and drug addicts—were often searched, detained, and arrested without charges.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Pollada bailable* can be literally translated as “danceable chicken-party.” *Pollada* is a kind of a party thrown as an informal fundraiser, during which—as the name suggests—*pollo* [chicken] is served.

<sup>18</sup> The final report of CVR was presented in August 2003 following two years of work. For its full text, see: <[www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/pagina01.php](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/pagina01.php)>.

<sup>19</sup> El Cercado de Lima, also commonly referred to as “Centro de Lima” or “Lima Centro,” refers to the name of the Peruvian administrative district that includes what is known as the Historic Center and the immediate surrounding areas. It is the capital and one of forty-three districts that comprise the Province of Lima as well as the location of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima. As James Higgins notes, El Cercado was conceived during the colonial period, parallel to the development of Lima’s Historic Center, as a sort of indigenous ghetto. Not surprisingly, despite its equally deep historical roots it remains outside of the discourse of the official history of Lima. Higgins, Op. Cit. 46–49.

<sup>20</sup> This lumping together, negative coloration, and equation of very different groups is highly reflective of mainstream social norms in Peru.

Finally, the tour led to the sites that consolidated the flipside of urban growth and neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. These gave rise to a vast black market and informal economy. The sprawling underbelly of the center of Lima, the shopping center El Hueco, was the site of a “permanent police intervention,” where pirated goods—tapes, CDs, videocassettes—were regularly confiscated (the project noted two dates: March 13 and 16, 2002). In the zone known as Mesa Redonda, an informal market, around Christmas and New Year’s Eve, tons of fireworks were handled and sold in precarious conditions. On December 29, 2001, a fire consumed several city blocks resulting in at least 274 dead. The tourist was also introduced to the location of CLAE, Centro Latinoamericano de Asesoría Empresarial, a massive pyramid scheme, the collapse of which left its 150,000 clients—mostly unemployed and underemployed—penniless. To the artists behind *Lima I[NN]Memoriam*, “CLAE symbolize[d] the exploitation of greed, of enrichment, but also an aspiration of welfare, that can never be given up, a lucky investment, a revenge against destiny, a miracle.”<sup>21</sup> However, these sites manifesting the vast scope of informal activity in Lima also made visible the phenomenon that Mike Davis called “urbanization without industrialization”—a particular third world product of modern, capitalist urban development.<sup>22</sup>

The tour of the commercial areas ended with the site of a car bomb explosion at the shopping center El Polo in Surco district, which took place on March 20, 2002, sixty hours before a visit of the US president George Bush. According to the newspaper *El Comercio*, the objective of the visit was to promote “friendship and hemispheric integration.”<sup>23</sup> However, the visit was also an obvious indication of the broader US policy in the Andean Region and a prelude to signing the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement in

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<sup>21</sup> *Lima I[NN]memoriam* project map, from my personal archive.

<sup>22</sup> Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London and New York, Verso, 2006), Kindle Edition.

<sup>23</sup> George W. Bush as cited by the newspaper *El Comercio*, 22 March 2002, and quoted by the *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* map.



2006.<sup>24</sup> Last but not least, the memory tour visited the contemporary ruins of Lima: the unfinished elevated tracks of the electric train, “a project of mass transit thwarted by state corruption.”<sup>25</sup> The construction of the train, announced by President Alan García in 1986, was partially developed between 1989 and 1991 with the help of Italian financing, and completely suspended between 1991 and 2002, even though a mass transit system had been a dire need in the rapidly growing metropolis. In 1986 the weekly magazine *Caretas* estimated that approximately 30,000 people traveled during rush hour from the south and the north of the city to the center. It took them up to four hours or longer to traverse the capital. Yet for decades the electric train amounted to nothing but gigantic steel-enforced concrete pillars. Marring the landscape of the city, the unfinished construction gave palpable form to the indolence, corruption, and failure of a state that could not fulfill the promise of creating and organizing a modern metropolis. Even though the vertiginous growth of the capital was the very result of developmental processes, the state would ultimately abandon its people and leave them to fend for themselves. While planned and coordinated public transportation was virtually unavailable to the inhabitants of Lima at the time, *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* deployed a mode of transit accessible to the privileged citizens/ consumers, uncovering the differentiating modalities of power that produces vagabonds and tourists alike.

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At stake in *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* were operations of power involved in the construction of history during a crucial moment, commonly understood as the

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<sup>24</sup> The agreement called Tratado de Libre Comercio (Free Trade Agreement) was signed in 2006, following three-year negotiations, and was ratified in 2006 by the Peruvian Congress and in 2007 by the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. Its implementation began on February 1, 2009. Important precedents for the agreement were 1991 Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA) and 2002 Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA), which—as the name of the second one implies—conditioned liberalization of commerce with the US to the eradication of coca fields in the region.

<sup>25</sup> *Lima I[NN]memoriam* map.

democratic transition after the fall of the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori. Working against the grain of officially sanctioned representations of the “ideal city,” the project unraveled several important facets of these operations. In what follows, I use Michel de Certeau’s notion of consumers, Diana Taylor’s ideas on performativity, and the concept of coloniality, elaborated by Walter Mignolo and Anibal Quijano, in order to illuminate the task undertaken by *Lima I[NN]Memoriam*. To counter the image of the “ideal city” is to reject the persistence of the colonial urban models and their inherent continuous suppression and exclusion of indigenous sectors of society. It is to oppose the development models that employ the term “transition” only in order to maintain and reinforce the existing power structures and inequalities.

The creators of the project consciously quoted and enacted Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Their tour and map of the city of Lima evidenced the gap between the representations produced by the dominant and the dominated. They rendered visible “the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society is concealed by the euphemistic term ‘consumers.’”<sup>26</sup> The plan’s recto and verso alluded to two distinct modes of seeing and understanding that may never meet. An official city map is a product of the totalizing bird’s-eye view of the panoptical technocratic power. It is an administrative and managerial projection: a network of arteries that is as intricate as abstract, and equally exhaustive and devoid of signs of human activity. The map is essentially the geometrical space of urbanists and architects that aspires to normalcy and it represents the establishment of norms for the “drifting” populace that inhabits the earth-bound equivalent of that space.<sup>27</sup> Such a representation can never attest to what the verso of the plan captured through the combination of various

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<sup>26</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), xi–xii.

<sup>27</sup> De Certeau compares mapping to the operations of grammarians and linguists concerned with the construction of “proper meaning” with “a normal and normative level.” De Certeau, Op. Cit. 100.

reports from the ground, photojournalistic photographs, and oral accounts corroborated by daily press.<sup>28</sup> And it will never account for what the tourists/consumers would encounter while traversing Lima.

The mobilization of what the group behind the project recognized as the obscure and suppressed memories of Lima functions on several levels. The use of the city plan and guided tour accomplished more than just a generation of rarely seen urban vistas. The sites subject to violence rarely remain unaltered: they are often irrevocably changed or completely erased. *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* proposed memory as a fragile, fleeting phenomenon, the meaning of which cannot be sited or localized, and as something that is not permanently inscribed into the visible structures of the city—neither architectural landmarks nor city slums.<sup>29</sup> Rather, through the insertion of an alternative narrative into the familiar structure of a city tour, memory was proposed as a performative social phenomenon, as something that needs to be practiced and enacted. Irreducible to archival fragments, as Diana Taylor might say—memories depend on a continuous performance, they require transmission and active remembering.<sup>30</sup>

To posit memory against history is not to understand these elements as opposing forces; rather, it is to recognize that in their mutual imbrications, the question is *what* and *whose* memories are accounted for within the realm of a “public history.”<sup>31</sup> The “public” dimension of history has at least a

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<sup>28</sup> My intention is not to argue for veracity of documentary photography here but to suggest that the type of representations that the press at times employs can greatly vary from the official accounts that attempt to provide a total image of a cohesive city.

<sup>29</sup> I subscribe here to the formulations of James Young on the “location” of meaning. James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Diana Taylor defines performance as a “twice-behaved behavior” that “functions as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity.” Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 2–3.

<sup>31</sup> Dolores Hayden examines this concept in *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 1997).

threefold implication. Firstly, it plays a part in the epistemological exercise of knowing, understanding, or imagining a city. The city is not a given, a fixed place, a cohesive architectural and social fabric, or a static structure consisting of built form, but it is rather a dynamic process, in which competing memories and histories structure, assign and reassign meaning to its various localities and social aspects. The notion of “public dimension” also raises the crucial issue of belonging and citizenship. Who has the right to make claims to public space or the public sphere? These questions are especially pertinent in the postcolonial context and at the moment of democratic transition. Finally, unknown, unwritten memories that are intimately connected to marginalized and oppressed social groups can ultimately serve to establish a more inclusive “public history,” anchored in the political, economic, and social dynamics of urban life, rather than in static, strictly stylistic, and connoisseurship-oriented programs of narrowly conceived architectural preservation.<sup>32</sup> If the latter distinguish only exceptional and rare sites, the map of *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* alluded to the need to encompass the city more broadly. Only red color and discreet numbering distinguished the fourteen described locations from a multitude of other sites, marked with black prohibition signs scattered densely across the surface of the plan, suggesting that the artists selected examples from a multitude of possible cases.

*Lima I[NN]Memoriam* was realized just two years after the end of Alberto Fujimori’s dictatorship and the symbolic end of the twenty-year long Peruvian Internal Conflict. However, while the political system was in transition from a dictatorship into a democratic regime, and the subsequent efforts of the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation emphasized that it was mostly the marginalized and the poor that were affected by the violence, the aggressive neoliberal market reforms initiated during Fujimori’s regime continued

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 6–13.

unchanged and unabated. Since the onset of the democratic transition, the extreme violence of the Internal Conflict has been treated as a singular and anomalous episode within Peruvian history and as a shameful exception within an otherwise peaceful national trajectory. In contrast, *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* made crucial linkages between the terror of the conflict, rapid, uncontrolled urban growth and disintegration, and the rise of informal economy. Hence, it positioned the brutal episodes of the preceding two decades in an expanded context, alluding to the deep-seated structural conditions that underlie Peru's unequal and uneven development.<sup>33</sup> Correspondingly, the "manic" search for an ideal image of Lima, identified by *La República*, should be seen not as a result of the inability to deal with an overwhelming and traumatic past but as a highly conscious policy aimed at positioning the capital as an attractive, competitive modern nexus within the networks of global neoliberal economy.<sup>34</sup>

Despite its ostensibly artistic discourse, the Ibero-American Biennial of Lima—during which *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* was presented—was tightly intertwined with the country's booming neoliberal politics and the plans of urban regeneration. Launched as a project determined to insert the city of Lima and its art scene into global circulation networks, the Biennial was founded in 1997 by the critic Luis Lama, under the auspices of the Center for Visual Arts of the Municipality of Lima that he directed. It was sustained through three editions: 1997, 1999, and 2002. Imitating a model successfully implemented by the Havana Biennial in the 1980s, the Lima Biennial aspired to provide the "marginal" and the small local circuits a dose of visibility within the realm of

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<sup>33</sup> As observed, for example, by Paul Drinot during the session "Peru's Post-CVR Landscape: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on the Legacy of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission," organized by Jo-Marie Burt for the 2012 LASA International Congress (San Francisco, CA, May 24, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> According to Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network, Lima is today a beta level city, "[an] important world city ... instrumental in linking their region or state into the world economy." <[www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t.html)>.

the “universal.”<sup>35</sup> In addition, it had a revisionist ambition: to work against the historical notion of the “closed area” coined in the 1970s by the critic Marta Traba to refer to the “endogamic” artistic production of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay.<sup>36</sup> Peru—and the Andean region in general—was seen as devoid of modern avant-garde movements and imagined to remain in the pre-Hispanic, indigenous past. Given the fact that Traba’s view has persisted in recent writing on Latin American art like Mari Carmen Ramirez’s and Hector Olea’s 2004 mega-survey of the continent, *Inverted Utopias*, the Biennial’s aims seem fairly transparent.

On the other hand, the Municipality of Lima sought to recover the tourist popularity of the Historic Center and capitalize on its inclusion into the UNESCO register as a World Heritage site. However, it was much more than foreign visitors flocking to the city of Cuzco and the Incan ruins of Machu Picchu that the officials hoped to attract. The municipal program “Volver al centro” [Return to the center] of mayor Alberto Andrade, which incorporated recommendations of the Master Plan developed under the architect Jorge Ruiz de Somocurcio, aimed to free the center from the urban squatters and the informal economy that had flourished there since 1970s. Its goal was to bring back to the center the Peruvian middle and upper classes, which had abandoned the district in favor of the suburbs La Molina, Miraflores, and San Isidro. Notably, the vast majority of the first exhibition’s advertisements in the Peruvian press did not mention the art, but encouraged the public to “see what the Biennial did in those [historic] mansions.”<sup>37</sup> In spite of the organizers attempt to make the biennial an event of high artistic quality, the first and the second editions were deemed dubious in the eyes of many local and international critics. However, they unanimously praised the event for its

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<sup>35</sup> Luis Lama (ed.), *I Bienal Iberoamericana de Lima* (Lima: Tele 2000, Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima, 1998), 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 9. Lama refers to Traba’s *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950–1970* (México D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1973).

<sup>37</sup> It was one of the main slogans of the Biennial that appeared numerous times in the Peruvian daily press. See for example, *El Comercio*, November 9, 1997, n. p.

ability to draw huge crowds into the Historic Center: each edition received more than a million visitors. The streets were finally free of sidewalk vendors, and—in the words of the organizers—the people “who hadn’t been to the center in 15–20 years, returned, enjoying feeling like tourists in their own city.”<sup>38</sup> It was no longer poor rural migrants that dwelled in the center, but artists “turning Lima into an enchanted city, *open to everyone*, occupied by the followers of some crazy magician.”<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with the ameliorative multiculturalist turn of the official policies, the Biennial would be—at least in theory—not just open to everyone, but also to representing everyone. Since its foundation, the official rhetoric of the Biennial emphasized cultural pluralism and claimed to represent the diverse cultural production of the country. Two large, rapidly expanding transnational corporations that underwrote the event, Bellsouth and Telefónica, eagerly took on the sponsorship in order to show that they contributed to “community building” in the country where they conducted their business. According to the acerbic statement of the critics Max Hernández and Jorge Villacorta, the discourse of inclusiveness and the support of the project suited well the interests of “the oligarchy in power searching desperately for national roots and public legitimacy.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, these critics suggested that despite the seeming goal of all these efforts—the creation of a new, unitary and united, image of the Peruvian capital that transcended the divisive past—the old power relationships remained unchanged.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Luis Lama, *El Comercio*, April 6, 1997, C1.

<sup>39</sup> *El Comercio*, October 31, 1999, A2.

<sup>40</sup> Max Hernández and Jorge Villacorta, “Globalización COD,” in *Franquicias Imaginarias. Las Opciones Estéticas en las Artes Plásticas en el Perú de Fin de Siglo* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002). Quoted in: Mauricio Delfín and Miguel Zegarra, “Electronic Art in Peru. The Discovery of an Invisible Territory in the Country of the Incas,” *Third Text* 23/3 (2009), 295–296.

As Christine Boyer manifested in her analysis of urban regeneration projects in Europe and the United States, often deceitfully cohesive, historicized fragments of revitalized architecture obscure the nature of the fragmented, discomposited contemporary cities in disarray.<sup>41</sup> In the era of deindustrialized global capitalism, these so-called historic preservation efforts aim to improve the competitiveness of cities by attracting investment, desirable work force, and tourists. In order to accomplish their mission they must—by extension—remove from sight the fallout of the imperfect modernization and development projects. Consequently, the city that the dominant political and economic powers in Peru want to construct is a bucolic, uncritical Lima, devoid of contradictions between its image and the underlying structural violence. It is no wonder then that the official history of Lima is a sanitized, ideal image based on stylistic and connoisseurship-oriented understanding of architecture and urban material fabric. However, this notion has deeper roots than those dating to the neoliberal economic reforms of the period commonly known as globalization. It harkens back to the Renaissance concept of the Ideal City, which after the Conquest was the model of the new cities of the territory now known as Latin America.<sup>42</sup> Conceived through urbanistic diagrams and theoretical treaties, the Ideal City was organized on a strict, rigid grid pattern: “geometrically laid-out, based on the discovery of perspective, and symmetrically organized around a central square integrating the different powers and institutions.”<sup>43</sup>

Colonial Lima was staked out by Pizarro and founded upon such a programmatic order, with the Municipal Palace, Government Palace,

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<sup>41</sup> Compare: M. Christine Boyer, *The City of the Collective Memory*.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Francois Lejeune “Dreams of Order: Utopia, Cruelty, and Modernity,” in Jean-Francois Lejeune (ed.), *Cruelty & Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 32. “The most recent scholarship and interpretation—generated from Latin America itself—suggest that the conceptual framework of the Latin American city [as a grid plan] was a fluctuating synthesis of four main influences: the new foundations in Spain during the medieval Reconquista; the theories of the Renaissance and the Ideal City; the expression of the rational will of Roman-imperial inspiration; and, finally, the encounter with the pre-Columbian cities and civilizations.”

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



Archbishop's Palace, and Cathedral commanding three sides of the main plaza. For the philosopher Eduardo Subirats, such design constitutes one of the paradigmatic examples of the Latin American "lettered city":

...a city conceived according to the rigor of writing; the city inexorably built according to the writing of law; cities planned according to rules, aims, and means laid out in written form by the colonial power; and cities constructed as legal, theological, and architectural devices adapted to the conversion needs of the indigenous, dispossessed, and rootless mass, to their mobilization as slave and semi-slave labor, and to their administrative and ecclesiastical control.<sup>44</sup>

This orderly, ideal city privileged a certain type of knowledge: the rationality of a Western modernity founded upon *written history* which, according to Walter Mignolo, is one of the main discursive practices in the European Renaissance as well as "a Western regional construct with pretensions to universality."<sup>45</sup> As Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano and Mignolo argue, the hegemony of this history coincides with the process of consolidation of a global power launched with the Conquest and the invention of "Latin America" on the eve of the era of capitalism and colonialism. This persistent relation of

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<sup>44</sup> Eduardo Subirats, "Writing and Cities," in *Cruelty & Utopia*, 85. Subirats evokes a famous study by Angel Rama, *The Lettered City* (1984). A similar argument is made by Walter Mignolo in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonialization*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). According to Mignolo, Renaissance philosophy of writing is based "on the celebration of the letter and the interrelationship between alphabetic writing and the writing of history" (2). Thus, it constitutes the "beginning of the systematic repression not only of specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols, or knowledge, but above all of the modes of knowing, production of knowledge, production of perspectives, images and image systems, symbols, modes of signification" (3). Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano—in the essay "Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad," in Heraclio Bonilla (ed.), *Los Conquistados: 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992)—similarly asserts: "People without letters were thought of as people without history, and oral narratives were looked at as incoherent and inconsistent" (438). Diana Taylor extends such an argument by contrasting writing and performance. The concept of performance "decenters the historic role of writing [in Latin America] introduced by the Conquest. As Angel Rama notes, 'Written documents are imposed upon [social life] and [...] force it into a mold not at all made to measure. [...] Histories were burned and rewritten to suit the memorizing needs of those in power. The space of written culture, then, as now, seemed easier to control than embodied culture.'" Taylor, Op. Cit. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Mignolo, Op. Cit. 3.

domination continues into the present as a *longue durée* of modernity itself and its inextricable “darker side”: coloniality.<sup>46</sup>

Coloniality enforces both a certain economic world system and particular epistemic schemes. It imposes understanding history as a totality and, following Quijano, as an inevitable progress: as “an evolutionary continuum from primitive to civilized, from traditional to modern, from savage to rational, from pre-capitalism to capitalism.”<sup>47</sup> The typical tourist of Lima recounts precisely this kind of development—from ancient ruins through the colonial Historic Center to a contemporary shopping mall—in which architectural landmarks function as progressive steps within the textual narrative, while the city as a whole is portrayed as an abstract, under-articulated map void of signs of life of its dwellers. As Diana Taylor pointed out, UNESCO’s preservation projects often reflect a deep colonial nostalgia since they protect the cultural heritage produced by the traditional sectors of the society.<sup>48</sup> Hence, by adhering to deep-seated categories and identities, preservation efforts only reinforce long divisions and operations of colonial power. In that way, the Historic Center of Lima, freed from mostly indigenous street vendors, displays the accomplishments of the descendants of the colonizers.

By making visible the phenomena that are ignored or deliberately obscured by the traditional historical narratives and their discursive vehicles, *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* revealed the persistent role of coloniality and the roots of globalization in the economic and epistemological logic of Western modernity. Nonetheless, the few phenomena pointing to the self-reliance, self-

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<sup>46</sup> Quijano defines coloniality as a “general mode of domination in today’s world, once colonialism as a political order has been destroyed.” Anibal Quijano, “Colonialidad y modernidad/ racionalidad,” in *Los Conquistados*, 440.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, *Op. Cit.* 23-24.

determination, and hope of the underprivileged city dwellers—self-constructed settlements, “informal” economy, and the visible presence of the suppressed groups—exposed also an ambiguity intrinsic to modernity. There is a hint of a liberating promise, associated with the emergence of an individualized consciousness, intimately connected to the advent of urban and capitalist social relations.<sup>49</sup> *Lima I[NN]Memoriam* inescapably traced the outrage of the social sectors invisible in the “ideal city” in order to recuperate the individual and collective dignity of a great metropolis of diverse inhabitants; the metropolis whose “ungovernable” denizens resist erasure and elimination; the metropolis inhabited by indigenous people and traditional cultures, as well as unruly, elusive subjectivities that defy identification or allegiance.

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**Dorota Biczal** is a Polish-born writer and an *ad hoc* curator, as well as an artist in hiatus. In theory and in practice, she pursues what Vilém Flusser called “the freedom of a migrant,” which has resulted in experiments in life and work in Poland, Peru, Spain, and the United States. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate at the Center for Latin American Visual Studies (CLAVIS) in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests revolve around the questions of community building, “public sphere,” and art historiographies in the “new democracies” under neoliberal policies in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Her dissertation focuses on artistic and architectural experimental practice and the notions of the public in Lima, Peru, between 1978 and 1989.

Dorota has contributed to many exhibition catalogues, including—most recently—*Perder la forma humana: una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina*, curated by Red Conceptualismos del Sur (Southern Conceptualism Network) for Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS) in Madrid, Spain. Together with Miguel López and Emilio Tarazona she co-curated the exhibition *Teresa Burga’s Chronology: Reports, Diagrams, Intervals 29.09.11* at Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart in the fall of 2011. She also writes art criticism for the Houston-based online magazine *Glasstire*.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 440, 447.