La escultura que cambió el mundo durante 24 horas

El artista Marc Quinn realiza junto a la activista Jen Reid una estatua que la retrata y con la que reemplazaron sin autorización a la del esclavista Edward Colston, derribada el pasado junio en Bristol



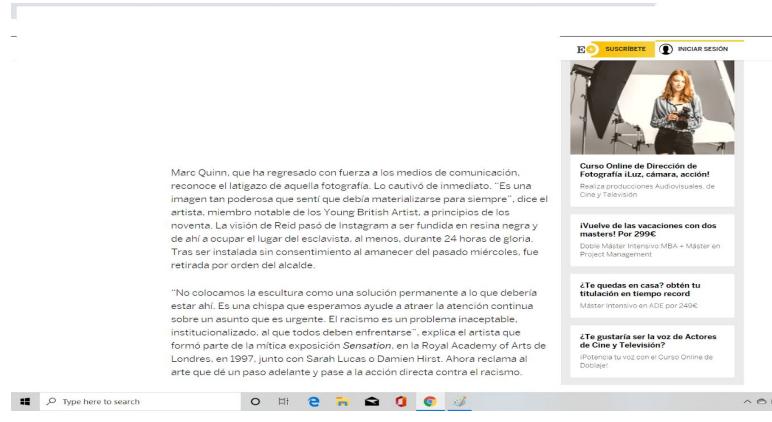
The sculpture that changed the world in 24 hours

The artist Marc Quinn created in collaboration with activist Jen Reid a statue of her and replaced without authorisation the one of slaver Edward Colston, destroyed last June in Bristol, with it.



The artist Marc Quinn (London, 56 years old) found the activist from Bristol (England), Jen Reid, on Instagram. In the photo Jen appeared on a pedestal from which the original sculpture was missing. Throughout last June protests, during the Black Lives Matter, the statue which paid tribute to the XVII century slave trader Edward Colston was withdrawn and thrown into the river. Reid climbed onto the empty pedestal and raised her arm as a reference to the Black Power: "It was a completely spontaneous gesture, I didn't even think about it" explains the protester.

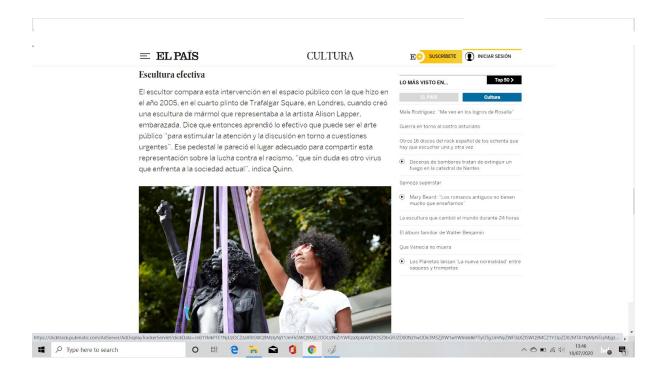
"My immediate thoughts were about the people enslaved who died because of Colston, I would like to empower George Floyd (died for being asphyxiated by a Minneapolis police officer during a brutal arrest), I would like to empower black people like me, who suffered from injustices and inequalities. A wave of power for all of them", adds Reid. In this way arised A Surge of Power (Jen Reid) 2020, a collaboration between the activist and the Londoner sculptor. The claim was to protect the pride and dignity of the neighbors of this city, where the musical groups Portishead and Massive Attack originated. "This sculpture is about protecting my mother, my daughter, Afro-descendants like me. Is about kids seeing it up there", insists Reid.



Marc Quinn, who strongly turned to social media, recognises the impact of that photo. It enthralled him immediately. "It's such a strong image that I felt It had to materialise forever", says the artist, notable member of the Young British Artist, since the beginning of the 90's. Reid's vision went from Instagram to being melted in black resin and took the slaver's place, for 24 hours of glory. After being installed without consent last Wednesday at dawn, it was removed by order of the mayor.

"We don't place the sculpture as a permanent solution to what should stay there. It's a spark we hope will help to attract continuous attention on an urgent matter. Racism is an unacceptable problem, institutionalized, which everyone has to face", explains the artist who formed part of the legendary

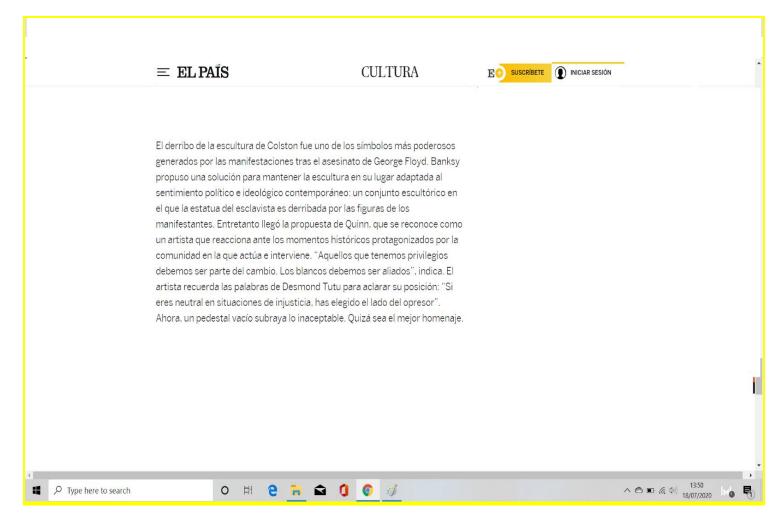
exposition Sensation, at the London Royal Academy of Arts, in 1997 together with Sarah Lucas and Damien Hirst. Now he demands Art to step forward and take direct action against racism.



The sculptor compares this intervencion in the public space to the one he did in 2005, on the fourth plinth of Trafalgar Square, in London, when he created a marble sculpture which represented the pregnant artist Alison Lapper. He says that he then learned how effective can be public art "to encourage the attention and discussion about urgent matters". That pedestal seemed to him the right place to share this representation of fight against racism, "which is undoubtedly another virus facing today's society", says Quinn.



Once removed, if the piece is sold, all profits will be donated to two charity organisations chosen by Jen Reid: Cargo Classroom, a study programme about Afro-descendant history created for Bristol's teenagers and The Black Curriculum, a social enterprise founded in 2019 by young people to address the lack of Afro-descendant British history in the UK study programme.



The demolition of Colston's statue was one of the most powerful symbols generated by the manifestation after George Floyd's murder. Banksy proposed a solution to keep the sculpture in its place adapted to the political and ideological contemporary sentiment: a sculptural ensemble where the slaver's statue is destroyed by the figures of the protesters. Meanwhile arrived Quinn's suggestion, who is recognised as an artist who reacts to historical moments starring the community in which he acts and intervenes. "Those of us who have privileges must be part of the change. White people must be allied", he says. The artist remembers the words of Desmond Tutu to explain his position: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the oppressor's side".

Now an empty pedestal underlines the unacceptable. Perhaps that is the best tribute.