The Indian’s head

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On the south-west corner of the Plaza de Armas, in a space where prostitution and evangelical preaching coexist, there is a sculpture that seeks to celebrate the indigenous presence in Chile. Sculpted by Enrique Villalobos in 1992, in the early post-dictatorship years and in the context of the fifth centenary of the conquest of the Americas, this public monument was intended as a gesture to show an appreciation for the indigenous peoples. The sculpture is very abstract. Constructed of concrete and granite, it gives the impression of being a rock with sharp cuts which are built one on top of the other, from a thick base to a narrow tip. This construction of cuts bursts onto the square, revealing a section of a broken face on one side, of which we can only see an eye, a nose and half of a mouth. It is a fractured, deconstructed indigenous face, somehow crossed by the edges of the rock.

We know that in this square, the germinal space of conquest and colonial enterprise, almost ten Mapuche heads were publicly displayed in 1541 after the Spanish conquistadores put down an indigenous revolt. It is impossible not to think of those heads when we see the fractured face of the sculpture entitled *Monument to the Indigenous Peoples*. It is a curious tribute, and a grim one to say the least.

From that feeling of gruesomeness and uneasiness, in the heat of the debates generated during the MapsUrbe project, I conceived the artwork presented here: *Cabeza de Indio* (The Indian’s head). Through photography, digital collage and sound, it sought to build from what has been fractured in order to allow a face to emerge, a multitude of faces, really, among the empty and decaying spaces left by the colonial imagination that carved the aforementioned sculpture. Behind that torn face there is still a life, which today seeks to compose itself from a variety of possibilities. In the face of the colonial fracture, today we inhabit possibilities of decolonisation which open up a space to rethink ourselves and to discover our hundreds and thousands of faces. There, the very place where Mapuche heads were exposed as a triumph of colonialism, we infiltrate new aesthetics; we compose upon the inherited fracture, in order to emerge from the very same place in the metropolitan city.