On 7th June 2020 protestors violently pulled down the statue of Edward Colston, erected in 1895 in the centre of Bristol, UK. A plinth that raised the sculpture above head height was mounted by protesters, who blindfolded the statue, lassoed ropes around its head and hauled it to the ground. The statue severed from its base upon impact and lay prostrated on the ground before the onrushing protesters. One protester placed his knee on its neck, mimicking the actions of Derek Chauvin as he killed George Floyd. Colston’s wealth, accumulated through the slave trade, has been central to urban development of Bristol. This spectacle of protest ruptured the status quo and forced normalised aspects of Britain’s colonial history back into question. Within days sister acts against monuments to slave owners, imperialists, and racists have subsequently appeared in cities across the world. These acts of iconoclasm are helping to recalibrate contemporary discourses around race. As this paper argues, these actions also serve a heuristic function which could be summarised as follows. 1) Threatening public sculptures forces a critical dialogue concerning national values and the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre 1968) 2) Threatening public statues starts a critical dialogue about imperialism, colonialism, and the naturalised histories of cities built on primitive accumulation 3) Threatening public statues raises awareness of public monuments which would otherwise be forgotten elements of the ‘representational space’ (Lefebvre 1974) of the consumer city 4) Because of the above, direct action against public monuments is not only an act of
iconoclastic opposition to the ‘consensus system’ (Rancière 1999: 95) of neoliberal democracy, but the advent of a radically expanded, anarcho-democratic conception of the public university.

• **Author(s) Biography:**
Dr. Richard Hudson-Miles PhD, MA (Leeds), PGCE(PCET), SFHEA, FRSA is an interdisciplinary researcher, whose work operates at the intersections of the history of architecture and design, continental aesthetics, radical social theory, and the sociology of education. He is an expert in the work of Jacques Rancière and its relationship to the history of art, architecture, and design, and will shortly be publishing an introduction to Rancière for the Routledge Critical Thinkers series. He has also published widely on the relation of art education to the current neoliberal conjuncture. He is a member of the artists' collectives @.ac (www.attackdotorg.com) and also currently a reviewer for Marxism and Philosophy, Pedagogy, Culture, and Society, and the International Journal of Education Through Art.