

Bristol Removes Statue of Black Protester After Just One Day

The statue of Jen Reid, a BLM protester, was raised on Wednesday in place of a toppled memorial to the slave trader Edward Colston.



A statue called "A Surge of Power (Jen Reid) 2020" by the British artist Marc Quinn was erected in Bristol, England, on Wednesday. Credit...Matt Dunham/Associated Press

By Mark Landler

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LONDON — Jen Reid, the Black Lives Matter protester whose statue was erected in place of a toppled slave trader in Bristol, England, on Wednesday, said just before the unauthorized installation that she did not know whether the city’s authorities would let it stand there for a few months or a single day.

It turned out to be the latter.

Workers removed the resin-and-steel statue of Ms. Reid at dawn Thursday, 24 hours after it was put up, bringing a swift curtain down on an act of guerrilla art that attracted widespread attention but did not impress city leaders.

“I understand people want expression, but the statue has been put up without permission,” the mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, said in a post on Twitter on Wednesday, soon after the figure was installed. “Anything put on the plinth outside of the process we’ve put in place will have to be removed.”

“The people of Bristol will decide its future,” Mr. Rees added of the plinth where the 17th-century slave trader, Edward Colston, once stood before being toppled by protesters last month and thrown into the nearby harbor.

The Bristol City Council said it would hold the statue of Ms. Reid, by the sculptor Marc Quinn, at a local museum for him “to collect or donate to our collection.” Mr. Quinn, who created the sculpture in a few weeks after seeing a photograph of Ms. Reid standing on the plinth during a protest, did not have an immediate response.

Video

In an earlier interview, Mr. Quinn said he did not expect Bristol to leave the statue, titled “A Surge of Power (Jen Reid),” in place permanently, though he hoped it would be there long enough to provoke a conversation about “how we commemorate people in statues.” He called it a “temporary sentence in the conversation.”

Ms. Reid, a fashion stylist, climbed on the plinth during a Black Lives Matter demonstration after the crowd pulled down the bronze statue of Colston that had stood in the city since 1895, rolled it down the street, and dumped it in the harbor. Her pose, with her right arm thrust upward in a defiant gesture, inspired Mr. Quinn after he saw a picture of it on social media.

Part of a cohort of British visual artists known as Young British Artists, Mr. Quinn drew attention in 2005 for a marble sculpture, “Alison Lapper Pregnant,” which depicted a woman with a condition that left her with no arms and shortened legs. It was placed on a plinth in Trafalgar Square in London.

Mr. Quinn plans to install a piece next year on the steps of the New York Public Library that will consist of two identical cubes filled with frozen blood donated by thousands of refugees, as well as non-refugees. Inspired by the migrant crisis, it is meant to capture how under their skin, people are all the same.