



## Football Culture as Sculpture: An Analysis of the World's Soccer Statues



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The Sporting Statues Project



## The Sporting Statues Project

'The monuments erected by a people... reveal who the people really are.'

Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation*.

Statues allow modern individuals and groups to construct, reinvent, consolidate and project their identities by establishing links with their past, displaying the values that society wishes to preserve and celebrate, and hence, by dint of omission, those they wish to forget or ignore.



## The Sporting Statues Project

### Project goals and progress

- ✿ Documenting statuary: [www.sportingstatues.com](http://www.sportingstatues.com)
  - ✿ Providing context for case studies, a resource for further research collaborations and a site for disseminating research. World football statues database unveiled in April 2014, joining existing databases for UK sport, US baseball, world cricket.
- ✿ Developing theory around existence and form:
  - ✿ Five papers published, two in press, collectively assessing genre history, design, process, motivations, and subject selection in football and baseball.



## The World's Football Statuary

- ✿ 320+ subject-specific statues or statue groups
- ✿ 150+ statues with anonymous subjects
- ✿ 400 distinct players, managers, chairmen, depicted
- ✿ 83% of statues, 91% of subject-specific statues erected since 1990...



Further information on every statue at [www.sportingstatues.com](http://www.sportingstatues.com)



## The World's Football Statuary

### Location types:



Club Stadium (46%) City of Birth/Residence (16%)  
City of club - Training Ground - National Stadium  
Museum/Hall of Fame - Gallery - Graveyard



## The World's Football Statuary

### Project Instigators and Funders:



The World's Football Statuary  
Project Instigators and Funders:

The diagram illustrates the various groups and individuals involved in the project. It includes icons for 'CLUB' (two figures), 'LOCAL MEDIA' (a person with a camera), 'STATUE COMMITTEE' (a group of figures), 'LOCAL AUTHORITY' (a person in a uniform), 'FANS' (a group of figures), 'FOOTBALL AUTHORITIES' (a group of figures), 'SUBJECT'S FAMILY' (a person), and 'SCULPTOR' (a person with a statue).

The World's Football Statuary  
Designs:

Action (60%)      Triumph (13%)      Posed (27%)

Flashbulb memories?      Personal (family) memories?

The slide shows three different styles of football statues. The first is 'Action' (60%), showing a player in motion. The second is 'Triumph' (13%), showing a player with arms raised. The third is 'Posed' (27%), showing a player in a static, heroic pose. Below the images are the questions 'Flashbulb memories?' and 'Personal (family) memories?'.

The World's Football Statuary

A global comparison...

- Are there distinct global variations in project instigation, location, and design?
- How does this reflect heterogeneity and homogeneity within global football cultures?

We will now look at a few major differences and regional/cultural subtypes - and also some similarities

The World's Football Statuary

Around the World in Six Football Statues

A world map with green location pins indicating the sites of six football statues. The pins are concentrated in Europe, North America, and Australia.

The World's Football Statuary

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#1 Footballer, Sundby Idrætspark, Copenhagen, 1903

The first football statues:  
North-West Europe, 1900-50.

- Sculptor/artists-led projects. Cultural Olympiads provided ideal showcase
- Non-subject specific
- Reflect variety of artistic/cultural/ political movements

The slide features a photograph of the 'Footballer' statue in Copenhagen, showing a player in a dynamic pose.

The World's Football Statuary

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#1 Footballer, Sundby Idrætspark, Copenhagen, 1903

- 'Vitalistic' art: art to represent an ideal physical state. Part of a wider cultural movement.
- Reflect the amateur ideal (if not reality) of pre-WWII football in much of Northern Europe.

The slide features a photograph of the 'Footballer' statue in Copenhagen, showing a player in a dynamic pose.

The IFC of Iceland

ARND BRONKHORST

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#1 Footballer, Sundby Idrætspark, Copenhagen, 1903

- Contemporary examples from Denmark, Iceland
- Artist-led projects have greater freedom in design compared to commissions



The IFC of Iceland

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Around the World in Six Football Statues



The IFC of Iceland

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Around the World in Six Football Statues

#2 Dragan Mance, Novo Groblje, Belgrade, 1986

- Eastern European statues reflect national mourning cultures in their distinctive locations and subject choice.



The IFC of Iceland

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Around the World in Six Football Statues

#2 Dragan Mance, Novo Groblje, Belgrade, 1986

- Eastern European statue subjects almost always dead before statue commissioned
- Grave statues predominate when subject died during career



The IFC of Iceland

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Around the World in Six Football Statues

#2 Dragan Mance, Novo Groblje, Belgrade, 1986

- Creating and preserving collective memory of heroic figures



The IFC of Iceland

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Around the World in Six Football Statues






Around the World in Six Football Statues

#3 Footballers, Shenzhen Sports School, 2000

- Many Chinese statues, but almost all non-subject specific
- Located in cities and at municipal sports complexes






Around the World in Six Football Statues

#3 Footballers, Shenzhen Sports School, 2000

- Multi-player statues demonstrating teamwork
- Players often tackling and/or with fierce expressions on their face






Around the World in Six Football Statues

#3 Footballers, Shenzhen Sports School, 2000

- Team over individual
- Fierce faces and tackling add appealing dose of partisanship in sites where sport seen as purist skill acquisition






Around the World in Six Football Statues

#3 Footballers, Shenzhen Sports School, 2000

- Will this change as China seeks to grow professional football?
- Will this change as Chinese clubs invest globally and adopt aspects of Westernised football culture?






Around the World in Six Football Statues






Around the World in Six Football Statues

#4 Angel Labruna, CA River Plate, Buenos Aires, 2015

- Fan activism
- Identity
- Proclaiming territory
- Contagion, rivalry, and one-upmanship



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#4 Angel Labruna, CA River Plate, Buenos Aires, 2015

- Argentinian statues largely the result of fan activism
- Importance of rivalry; contagion and one-upmanship



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#4 Angel Labruna, CA River Plate, Buenos Aires, 2015

- Creating and reinforcing community and identity
- Claiming/restating ownership of club's history and 'the game'
- Demonstration of Argentinian fan power?



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#5 Arthur Wharton, The FA, St George's Park, 2014

- Arthur Wharton was the first black professional footballer, playing in the 1880s/1890s, though he appeared in less than 20 Football League or FA cup matches
- Also a supreme all-round athlete



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues

#5 Arthur Wharton, The FA, St George's Park, 2014

- Multicultural Britain, game?
- Reparations?
- Tolerance (re-)Branding?
- PR and Self-importance of football?
- Hegemonic status of football in UK sport?



The FA  
Football

Around the World in Six Football Statues



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

- Typical British statue is located at stadium
- At bigger clubs almost always funded by club or commercial partners



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

- Manager statues largely a British phenomenon...
- (Former) Pre-eminence of the manager (as opposed to coach) in English football



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

- (Re)establishing identity in globalised/hyper-commodified European football,
- (Re)establishing visual identity at modernised identikit stadia



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

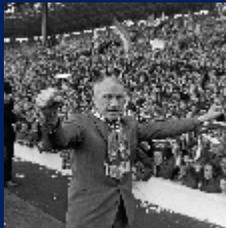
- Authenticity – a multivalent concept...
- ... and statues transmit that authenticity in a multivalent way – ‘all things to all men’
- Appeal to traditional fans, casual fans, tourists..



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

- Nostalgia for a mythical golden era of club, game, and fan experience
- Nostalgia for more located, loyal heroes
- Nostalgia for childhood?



The City School  
 Around the World in Six Football Statues

#6 Bill Shankly, Liverpool FC, Anfield Stadium, 1997

- Heritage-based marketing through this nexus of authenticity and nostalgia - and not just for Liverpool FC...



Around the World in Six Football Statues

**But...**

- ✿ Maybe that's what football statues have always been...
- ✿ ... in 1910 the first footballer statue was bought by Carl Jacobsen... of Carlsberg's! He donated it to the new Copenhagen stadium. Artistic purism used for commercial purposes!



**Sporting Statues Project**

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