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## Restoration of Christ the Redeemer statue is completed

The famous statue of Christ with his arms wide open that cariocas and tourists are used to seeing from various points around Rio de Janeiro has been covered up for the last four months by 89 tons of scaffolding. This has been for a good reason: a thorough restoration of the monument that is the symbol of Brazil across the world. More than a hundred people worked with great care to leave the statue in better shape than ever before. This Wednesday (30 June), the Archdiocese of Rio will present everyone who loves Rio and Brazil with the restored statue of Christ the Redeemer, ready once more to be visited.

To celebrate the restoration, blessings will be given throughout the day, and in the evening, at around 9:50 pm, the monument will be lit up with green and yellow lighting. It will be possible to view the statue in these colors for the following seven nights.

### Details of the restoration work

The 30-meter-high statue, standing on an eight-meter pedestal, was built 709 meters above sea level on top of Corcovado Mountain. Next year it will celebrate its 80 th anniversary. Since it was built, various maintenance projects had been carried out on the statue, but recently the accumulated effects of almost eight decades of severe weather conditions called for a complete restoration. As a result, the Archdiocese of Rio entered into a partnership with Vale, with the mining company investing R\$7 million in the restoration, which began in March.

The problems detected were superficial. They did not harm the monument's esthetics, but they required care to prevent them from developing into serious damage. For example, it was necessary to replace more than 60,000 pieces of soapstone within the statue's mosaic covering. These were taken from the same mine in Minas Gerais used when the statue was built.

During the work, technicians discovered a blocked drain. As a result, approximately 300 liters of water was removed from each of the statue's arms. Small cracks were also repaired, joints were redone and the entire statue was cleaned. More than 300 sacks of cement were used in the project. In addition, an internal lighting system was installed to facilitate future maintenance work inside the statue.

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One example of the care taken was the rapid removal of the canvas used to cover the monument after it was damaged in the heavy rains at the beginning of April, so as to avoid pieces of it falling into the forest. According to engineer Clézio Dutra, a partner at Cone, this was the most troublesome period during the project. Strong winds caused a halt to the work, and the rains of 6 April, which closed down both the railroad and access road, put a stop to all work for three days. Immediately afterwards, the workers took up materials using private cars, given that trucks were not able to go up. Great efforts were made to finish the restoration by the deadline.

## History of the monument

Contrary to popular belief, the Christ the Redeemer statue, which stands on top of Corcovado Mountain in Rio de Janeiro, was not a gift from France, nor was it made there. In order to refute these and other myths about the construction of the monument, one must go back in time to 1921, when the idea arose to build a religious monument to mark the centenary of Brazil's independence, which would take place the following year. The "Catholic Circle" organization met to discuss the monument's design and location. Corcovado was chosen from among two other options: the mountains of Sugar Loaf and Santo Antônio. More than 20,000 people signed a petition requesting authorization from President Epitácio Pessoa to erect the statue there.

The statue's design was created by engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, who in 1923 signed a contract with the Christ the Redeemer Organizing Commission to build the monument. In this document, he ceded his design's proprietary rights to the commission, which was succeeded by the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro.

The chosen design depicted Jesus holding a cross in his right hand and the Earth in his left hand. Later, at the request of Archbishop Sebastião Leme, Silva Costa reworked his design to make it a more easily recognizable religious symbol at a distance; with the aid of Brazilian illustrator and painter Carlos Oswald, the figure of Christ took on the now-famous open-armed cross shape.

In order to finalize the design, Silva Costa went to France, where he hired artist Paul Landowski to make scale models of the statue and sculpt its hands and head. There are historical records that the French sculptor, like Silva Costa, ceded all artistic rights to the organization that is now the Archdiocese of Rio, as a condition imposed by the church.

A national fund-raising campaign provided resources with which to build the monument. Churchgoers from all over Brazil made donations. In other words, contrary to what some people think, the statue was produced and funded by Brazilians.

Making the arms was the hardest part because there was no solid ground under them on which to erect scaffolding: the peak of Corcovado Mountain is slender, measuring around 15 meters across. The slightest oversight could have caused a fatal accident. More than 700 meters above sea level, working conditions were extreme, with workers exposed to strong winds, storms, lightning and extremes of temperature. Fortunately, however, there were no accidents during the building work. The monument was inaugurated on 12 October 1931.

## Some interesting facts about the monument

- The small pieces of soapstone used to create the statue's mosaic covering were stuck onto strips of paper by ladies at Nossa Senhora da Glória Parish. Later these strips were fixed to the monument by workers.
- The statue's heart, which can be seen in the image, is also sculpted inside the monument, and is the only internal part covered in soapstone.
- In 1923, Cardinal Sebastião Leme ran a "Monument Week" campaign from 2 to 9 September, to help raise donations to fund the building work. People responded enthusiastically and the result was better than expected.
- Heitor da Silva Costa's idea was to represent the attributes of redemption in a material form. His design gave Jesus' body a cross shape, with erect torso and arms extended horizontally. There are wounds on Christ's hands, representing

proof of his suffering and resurrection. The Sacred Heart symbolizes his infinite love.

- Inside the statue's pedestal there is a chapel with room for 50 worshippers. Three years ago it was transformed into a shrine by Cardinal Eusébio Scheid and now daily masses are held there, as well as christenings and weddings.
- Silva Costa's design was chosen from among a number of others. Adolpho Morales de Los Rios designed a chapel featuring four arch-shaped openings, on top of which was an open-armed Christ standing on the Earth. José Agostinho Reis planned a large cross resting on a ten-meter-high chapel.
- The statue was built out of reinforced concrete. Its head alone weighs 30 tons. Christ's face was designed to look down benignly over the city.
- The soapstone mosaic covering the head and arms is more elaborate than that on the rest of the statue, in order to express details such as eyes and fingers.
- The statue's arms span 28 meters from fingertip to fingertip. Each hand weighs eight tons.

#### Images

- Photographs of the restoration work are available on Vale's online newsroom: [www.vale.com/newsroom](http://www.vale.com/newsroom)
- Videos showing the restoration work, interesting facts and the history of the statue can be seen at [www.parasemprecristoredentor.com.br/restauracao.php](http://www.parasemprecristoredentor.com.br/restauracao.php).

#### More information



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