

Kenneth Treister, FAIA, architect, photographer, author, and sculptor of the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach, Florida, has published in over fifty professional journals, written nine books, and produced four documentaries on architecture, including *Silent Sentinels: The Mystery of Easter Island* (1990).



Courtesy of Helyne Treister

Patricia Vargas Casanova and **Claudio Cristino**, archaeologists, anthropologists, professors, and founders of the University of Chile's Easter Island and Oceania Studies Centre, created the island's archaeology survey of over twenty thousand archaeological sites; directed the restoration of Ahu Tongariki, the largest ceremonial center in Polynesia; and were awarded the prestigious Explorers Club's Lowell Thomas Award (2011) for their life's work on Easter Island.



Courtesy of Michelle Cristino



Courtesy of Atariki Cristino

Jacket photos courtesy of Kenneth Treister
Jacket design by Lila Sanchez

ARCHAEOLOGY → ARCHITECTURE → ART

“EASTER ISLAND, ITS GIGANTIC stone statues, its Polynesian society, and that society's collapse continue to fascinate and mystify the public as well as scientists. This beautifully illustrated book is now the best current account of those riveting themes.”

—**Jared Diamond**, author of *The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?*

“WONDER PERMEATES THE TEXT and images in this fascinating book. The authors present an accurate and authoritative voyage of discovery to many aspects of Easter Island civilization. The book truly enlightens the reader as to the development of architecture, art, and culture. The world as our global village presents Easter Island as a cautionary parable—our memento mori—given the careless exploitation of resources, unsustainable growth, and destruction of nature that we are witnessing. . . . The scholarly research that has gone into this concise and brilliant study of Easter Island is bound to awaken the reader to the enigmas of the past that shape the possibilities of the future.”

—**Daniel Libeskind**, master plan architect, New York's Ground Zero World Trade Center Memorial

“THIS BOOK IS A GIFT to the world by a prestigious architect and a remarkable team of archaeologists who have devoted their entire professional lives to the study of Easter Island. Lavishly illustrated, with a concise and evocative text, it is without doubt the best single source of insight and information for all those enchanted by the wonder and mystery of Rapa Nui. Indeed, were one to have but a single book to inspire a journey to this, the most isolated island on the planet, this would be it.”

—**Wade Davis**, Explorer-in-Residence, National Geographic Society

“NO BETTER TRIO THAN Kenneth Treister, Patricia Vargas Casanova, and Claudio Cristino could come together to write about the sculpture and architecture of *Rapa Nui*. Vargas Casanova and Cristino have spent their entire careers immersed in the prehistory of this remote Polynesian outpost. The heartfelt but intellectually sound narrative in *Easter Island's Silent Sentinels* will satisfy the casual and serious reader alike.”

—**David W. Steadman**, Florida Museum of Natural History



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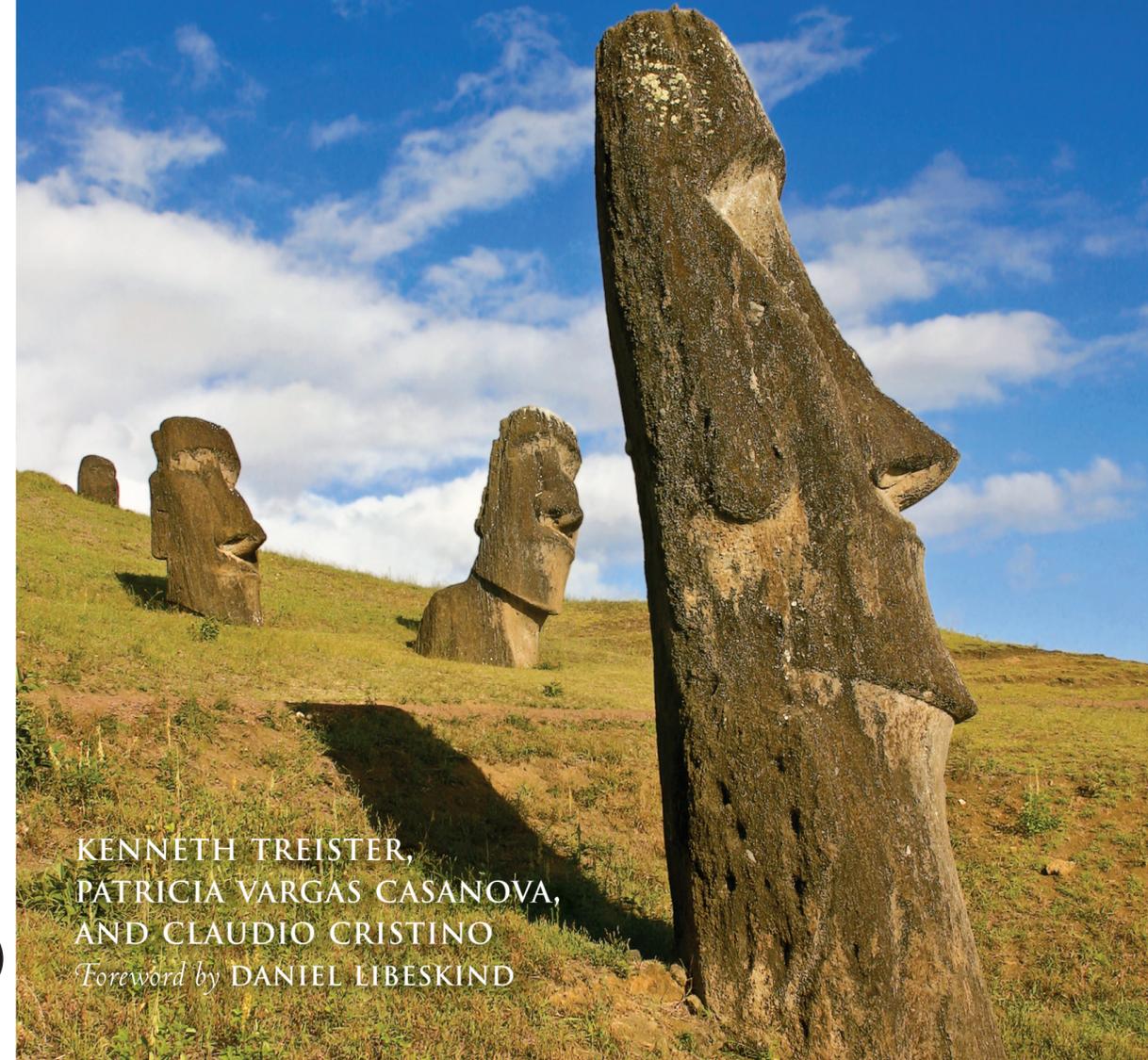


TREISTER
VARGAS
CASANOVA
CRISTINO

EASTER ISLAND'S SILENT SENTINELS

EASTER ISLAND'S SILENT SENTINELS

The Sculpture and Architecture of Rapa Nui



KENNETH TREISTER,
PATRICIA VARGAS CASANOVA,
AND CLAUDIO CRISTINO
Foreword by DANIEL LIBESKIND

IT MAY BE THE LONELIEST SPOT ON EARTH: a sixty-three-square-mile volcanic rock surrounded by a million square miles of ocean, named for the day Dutch explorers discovered it, Easter Sunday, April 5, 1722. Here people created a complex society and developed sophisticated astronomy, exquisite wood sculpture, monumental stone architecture, roads, and a puzzling ideographic script. And then they went about sculpting giant faces in stone.

Easter Island is shrouded in mystery: Who were the first inhabitants and how did they come to settle on the tiny, grass-covered island described by eighteenth-century European visitors? How was it they not only survived but went on to create magnificent art and architecture in a rocky place, almost completely cut off from any other people for several centuries? How did they develop the basic principles of sound architectural design and the use of pure geometry, symmetry, and meaningful standardized patterns of spatial relationships? What motivated them to carve, transport, and erect their giant stone statues, some weighing as much as one hundred metric tons? Why did they topple these statues, in a series of mutually destructive wars, destroying centuries of human effort?

The island's "Golden Age" was the fifteenth century, and from then onward it was downhill. What lasted were the stone sculptures and the fossil shell of its stone architecture.

This survey of the history, culture, and art of Easter Island is the first to examine the island's vernacular architecture, which has always been literally and figuratively overshadowed by the giant stone statues for which Easter Island is famous. Treister conjecturally reconstructs the prehistoric thatched pole houses based on ancient postholes found at Anakena Beach by his coauthors, Vargas Casanova and Cristino. In addition the authors detail the Easter Island Statuary Project's inventory of the colossal *moai* sculptures scattered about the island. They see the *ahu*, the platform for the sculptures, as a spectacular expression of prehistoric megalithic architecture.

Treister and his colleagues also examine the collapse of the Easter Island civilization. Consuming their forests and neglecting their fields, the Easter Islanders sculpted more and more, bigger and bigger. Did their world collapse under the weight of its own glory? Perhaps there's a lesson here for us all.