

Shaping Revolutionary Memory

**The Production of Monuments
in Socialist Yugoslavia**

Edited by Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovec

Contents

- 9 Acknowledgements
- 12 Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc
Yugoslav Monuments Dedicated to the Antifascist Resistance, the People’s Liberation Struggle, and the Revolution – Introduction
- 20 Beti Žerovc
The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941
- 58 Ljiljana Kolečnik
Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia
- 92 Heike Karge
Local Practices and “Memory from Above”: On the Building of War Monuments in Yugoslavia
- 114 Sanja Horvatinčić
From Storytelling to Re-enactment: Strategies of Monument-Making in Socialist Yugoslavia
- 148 Sabina Tanović
Anticipating the Future: Architectural Solutions for Sites of Violence and Trauma in Yugoslavia and Europe as Precursors of Contemporary Memorials
- 170 Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc
Yugoslav Monuments Dedicated to the Antifascist Resistance, the People’s Liberation Struggle, and the Revolution – In Photographs
- 272 Bojana Pejić in conversation with Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc
The Politics of Gender Representation and the Spatialization of Power in Socialist Yugoslavia
- 298 Sanja Horvatinčić
Beyond the Modernist Paradigm: Critical Perspectives on Authorship in Yugoslav Memorial Production

336	Marija Đorđević How to Remember? Commemorations at Memorial Sites Associated with the People's Liberation Struggle
358	Vladimir Kulić Post-Socialist Orientalism: Yugoslav Monuments and Their Reception in the Media
374	Beti Žerovc Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?
406	List of Abbreviations
409	Contributors
410	Index
416	Sources of Images

**Sanja Horvatinčić and
Betī Žerovc**

**Yugoslav Monuments
Dedicated to the
Antifascist Resistance,
the People's Liberation
Struggle, and the
Revolution – Introduction**

The present volume attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of a large segment of the memorial production and practices that emerged in socialist Yugoslavia.¹ It discusses memorials and monuments that were meant to commemorate or celebrate events, people, and ideas related to the period of the Second World War (1941–1945), with a specific focus on the antifascist liberation war of the peoples of Yugoslavia, their participation in international antifascist movements, and the revolutionary class struggle waged, first and foremost, by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.² According to some estimates, more than thirty thousand such monuments and memorial markers were built on the territory of the former Yugoslavia by the end of the 1980s, and some were also erected beyond the country's borders.³

Although we are dealing with relatively young monuments – some are little more than thirty years old – one of the essential aspects of this large production is that it represents a state and political system that no longer exist. Today these monuments are dispersed across seven sovereign countries, which treat them in very different ways, depending on their specific post-separation, post-socialist reality. Even in parts of the former country where the monuments are tolerated or to some degree integrated into the new official discourses as representative of the fight against fascism or the People's Liberation Struggle, they are “silenced” in their role as propagators of the Yugoslav ideals of “brotherhood and unity” and anti-nationalism, and even more so as commemorations of the proletarian revolution. In other places, however, the status of these monuments is more uncertain, and many have been repeatedly vandalized, destroyed, damaged, or altered over the past thirty years.

Such pronounced dissonance continues to make this heritage challenging in various ways for a variety of social stakeholders, not least for academic scholars. It is often difficult to explain where the history to which these monuments belong begins and ends – a rather short but also very complex history shared by the nations and ethnic groups in this part of Europe – and how the political contexts of the region so swiftly and dramatically changed over the course of the 20th century. What is more,

- 1 Here *socialist Yugoslavia* is used as a synonym for the second Yugoslavia; the first Yugoslavia refers to the period from 1918 to 1941. The terms *socialist Yugoslavia*, the *Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, or simply *Yugoslavia*, are used throughout the book – as is common elsewhere – when it is clear from the context which phase of the country's existence is being referred to. The official names used for the second Yugoslavia in different periods were the following: the *Democratic Federal Yugoslavia* (DFY, 1943–1945), the *Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia* (FPRY, 1945–1963), and the *Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (SFRY, 1963–1992). This last name was in use the longest, and “SFRY”, or simply Yugoslavia, is something we ex-Yugoslavs still have in our ears as the name of our former homeland.
- 2 Sometimes, monuments commemorated people, ideas, and events that preceded the Second World War, primarily from the interwar period. Some monuments, however, referred to even earlier historical episodes, such as formative national breakthroughs or peasant revolts, which in the socialist period were understood as part of the same line in the history of the oppressed and their emancipation.
- 3 Although it seems that these monuments were never fully surveyed on the federal level, this approximate figure, or a quantity expressed as “tens of thousands”, does appear in expert reports as well as in the public media in the 1980s. See, for example: Spomenka Vlatković and Milorad Drašković, “Istorija ne trpi šablone”, *Četvrti jul*, January 17, 1984, p. 1. For monuments built abroad, see the chapter “Yugoslav Monuments Dedicated to the Antifascist Resistance, the People's Liberation Struggle, and the Revolution – In Photographs”, p. 171, n. 2.

while historical entities delineated by geographical boundaries, precise facts and significant dates are one thing, the actual lives of people, which spill beyond such perimeters, are something quite different. For example, over an eighty-year life span, a person could have been born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, been a citizen of the Kingdom of Italy or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the two world wars, spent the Second World War under Italian or German occupation, or in one of the puppet fascist regimes, lived their prime years in socialist Yugoslavia, and died as a citizen of one of the post-Yugoslav countries transitioning to neoliberal capitalism, such as Slovenia or Croatia. For such a person, the main constant throughout these decades of shifting political powers and borders might well have been their nationality, although this part of their identity would also have been repeatedly contested or reframed. The story of the inhabitants of central Yugoslavia would be somewhat different but similarly dynamic and varied, and the same would be true for Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Kosovars. Most of the people living in these territories through the turbulent 20th century witnessed at least three bloody civil wars, of which two were waged as part of global conflicts, with the third and most recent (a set of wars, in fact) erupting after the breakup of Yugoslavia.⁴

In its attempt to grasp the political and historical complexities, while recognizing that memorial and commemorative practices always to some extent transcend their political systems, our book encompasses a somewhat longer historical period, looking also at the diverse cultural and memorial traditions of the various political entities that ruled over the territory of Yugoslavia both before and after these monuments were erected. Seeking to provide as comprehensive an overview of this production as possible, the book examines a wide array of topics related to the monuments, sometimes from different perspectives. We tried to include contributors who are diverse not just in their expertise, but also in their cultural backgrounds, which, naturally, condition their views and approaches (the same is true of the editors, of course). Yugoslav history is difficult to understand and interpret not only from the perspective of outsiders, but also – perhaps even more so – from that of its former citizens. We who live in these territories are also subject to language barriers and cultural lacunae, and, most importantly, our understanding is to a large degree shaped by our life in one of the Yugoslav successor states or in the diaspora. The contributors to this volume are also from different generations, which allows for perspectives both from those who view Yugoslavia at a historical distance and from those who grew up and may even have been professionally active in the political and cultural context of the former country. As co-editors, while we respect the diversity of our fellow contributors' perspectives, we do not necessarily share all their views, nor do we always agree with each other.

4 In this book our focus is not so much on the 20th-century historiography of the second Yugoslavia nor on memories that jarred with the official views and narratives. For these and related phenomena, see, for example, Todor Kuljić, *Kultura sećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, Čigoja, Belgrade, 2006; Tea Sindbæk, *Usable History? Representations of Yugoslavia's Difficult Past from 1945 to 2002*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2012; and Jelena Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution*, Routledge, London and New York, 2020.

Last but not least, we should acknowledge the role, or the “voice”, of the students in the art history department of the University of Ljubljana, whose strong interest in this topic led to the creation of the post-graduate course “Monument, Performance, Ritual, Body” in 2015–2016. This course, from which the present book later evolved, sought to respond to the students’ interest, as well as their perplexity over why the rich memorial legacy of the country that had collapsed before they were even born was suddenly becoming an object of global fascination. The unusual craze for the “cool” brutalism of the Yugoslav high-modernist monuments was puzzling in itself, but so were such questions as: Why did their country’s socialist predecessor build such objects in the first place? Their questions and curiosity provided us with a kind of guiding principle and didactic lens for editing this book.⁵

The Structure of the Book

The chapters are arranged in chronological order, from the 19th century to the present. The texts are supplemented by a substantial amount of visual material: some of these images accompany individual chapters, but most are presented in a special chapter, “Yugoslav Monuments Dedicated to the Antifascist Resistance, the People’s Liberation Struggle, and the Revolution – In Photographs” (pp. 170–271). The selection criteria, organization, and annotation of the visual materials that appear throughout the book are explained in the introduction to that chapter.

The book’s opening chapter, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, by **Beti Žerovc**, examines the terrain from which sprang the production of Yugoslavia’s Second World War monuments. It describes the growing cultural and political connections among the South Slavic peoples during the period when they still lived in different states and discusses various aspects in the formation of the fields of culture and art in these territories both before and after the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918. The chapter attempts to explain the complex cultural and art historical traditions across this geography and the historical conditions that determined the great diversity among the various parts of the new state, including in their attitudes towards public monuments. This is followed by an analysis of how the production of the First World War monuments was established in the new country on the systemic level, where its underlying thinking and artistic influences originated, and who its key creators and advocates were. We learn about the considerable difficulties

5 The course was organized by Beti Žerovc. Some of the guest lecturers in the course later became contributors to this book, and one of them, Sanja Horvatinčič, became its co-editor with Žerovc. See the description of the course under the programme “Art for Collective Use” on the Igor Zabel Association website, <https://www.igorzabel.org/en/programme/2019/art-for-collective-use>. In 2017, the students put together a small exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, in Ljubljana, where due to its popularity with the public it remains on view. They also prepared the catalogue, edited by Marko Jenko and Beti Žerovc, *Življenja spomenikov: Druga svetovna vojna in javni spomeniki v Sloveniji 1945–1980 / The Lives of Monuments: World War II and Public Monuments in Slovenia 1945–1980*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2018.

Yugoslavia faced in this arena, which were fostered not only by internal inter-ethnic and political tensions and a poorly thought-out cultural policy, but also by the lack of shared memories that might unify the country. Even at this early stage in the history of Yugoslav monuments, the question arises as to whether, in this region, monuments might be a more effective technology for divisive rather than cohesive processes.

In the chapter “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, **Ljiljana Kolečnik** provides a systematic historical overview of the development of cultural policies in the second Yugoslavia. Foregrounding their complexity, dynamics, and contradictions, she describes methods and mechanisms for articulating Yugoslav cultural models and policies over successive, yet not strictly or easily delineated, phases – from the short-lived Soviet-inspired Agitprop model of the late 1940s, through the intensive liberalization and the high-modernist understanding of culture associated with the administrative-statist cultural model, followed by the gradual disintegration of this model through the political decentralization and globalization of the 1960s, to the strenuous efforts to establish an authentic self-managed model for culture throughout the political and economic crises of 1970s and 1980s. In addition to her thorough presentation of the main theoretical currents that guided the organization of Yugoslav culture on the institutional level, with its dense bureaucratic apparatus of numerous commissions and councils, Kolečnik also points to the existence of organizationally more dispersed activities: cultural amateurism, segments of the state-run popular culture, and, in the 1970s and 1980s, alternative culture and the youth subculture. Although this chapter does not deal specifically with memorial production, it provides the broader cultural and historical context necessary for its understanding.

In “Local Practices and ‘Memory from Above’: On the Building of War Monuments in Yugoslavia”, **Heike Karge** shifts the focus to memory politics as an important framework for shaping and understanding memorial production and practices. She discusses the role of the “official memory canon” in memorial production in the 1950s and early 1960s, the years when most of the war monuments in Yugoslavia were constructed. More specifically, she deals with the discrepancy between local practices and the official narratives prescribed “from above” about the war and the revolution. Analysing specific plans and competitions for monuments carried out in the 1950s by the highest-ranked federal commissioning bodies, Karge concludes that efforts to implement a centralized Yugoslav memorialization programme by imposing heroic shared narratives and prescribed memorial forms were, at the time, much less successful than originally planned. Among other factors, she points to the agency of artists and architects who did not always show an interest in working under such prescriptions. But she argues primarily that, in the first decade after the war, local actors and communities – who often inscribed their own meanings, needs, and traditions into their *lieux de mémoire* – were the main force behind this production and significantly shaped its overall character.

Looking further at the problem of the social purpose and mediating function of monuments, **Sanja Horvatinčić**, in the chapter “From Storytelling to Re-enactment: Strategies of Monument-Making in Socialist Yugoslavia”, examines commonly employed strategies of memorial production in socialist Yugoslavia. Drawing on her own fieldwork and research practice based on close encounters with a wide range of

monuments and their immediate social contexts, Horvatinčić focuses on the strategies employed to make monuments effective within the predetermined thematic and spatial parameters, approaching them not as exclusively artistic or political tools but as a constituent part of the social fabric. Although some strategies may be more characteristic for specific periods as they relate to general artistic and philosophical trends, this approach resists the idea that there is a single, linear, developmental nature of Yugoslav memorial production. Some strategies, like storytelling and monumentality, exhibit both a longer prehistory and defiant continuity, while others, such as re-enactment, tend to be induced to suit the requirements of specific commemorative aims and practices related to the Yugoslav antifascist and revolutionary past. Citing examples from different periods and regions of Yugoslavia, Horvatinčić elaborates certain key strategies of monument-making – from the focus on preserving wartime “authenticity” and the use of vernacular references to local funerary traditions, through a variety of conventional and innovative storytelling and staging devices, to the use of scenographic arrangements and re-enactments to achieve stronger sense of continuity and presence, to tendencies towards both rational utility and aesthetic monumentality.

The question of what monuments are able to do and aspire to achieve is also treated in **Sabina Tanović**’s chapter “Anticipating the Future: Architectural Solutions for Sites of Violence and Trauma in Yugoslavia and Europe as Precursors of Contemporary Memorials”, but here the focus is on professional modernist architectural production in Yugoslavia from the 1960s to the 1980s. Arguing that this production has been under-recognized in the Western modernist canon, Tanović provides a plethora of examples of how 20th-century war traumas were memorialized and theoretically discussed in the post-war societies of Europe and elsewhere: from the idea of the obsolescence and redundancy of monuments to demands for “living monuments” such as memorial hospitals or schools, and from efforts to create intimate and individualized places of memory to the search for a “new monumentality”. Foregrounding the problem of Holocaust memorialization through architecture, Tanović shows that, to a certain degree, similar tendencies were evolving on both sides of the Cold War ideological divide. With this, she brings us back to Yugoslav production and its new, primarily architectural, commemorative design paradigms focused on both functionality and aesthetics, from museums designed as monumental sculptural works celebrating the antifascist resistance, to elements of local vernacular architecture, to the tendency to encourage the emotional reaction and participation of the visitor as a way of “working through” the past.

In the interview “The Politics of Gender Representation and the Spatialization of Power in Socialist Yugoslavia”, **Bojana Pejić** approaches the phenomenon of Yugoslav memorial production from a more personal perspective, defined by her professional engagement with contemporary art since the late 1960s. The ideas she discusses are based on her doctoral dissertation, “The Communist Body: Towards an Archaeology of Images – The Politics of Representation and the Spatialization of Power in the SFR Yugoslavia (1945–1991)”, which she defended in Germany in the early 2000s; she describes her work on the dissertation as a sort of *Trauerarbeit* – a grieving process – for her lost homeland. Not limiting her observations to monuments, she discusses the general visual regime of socialist Yugoslavia, where she

grew up, lived, and worked. She tries to determine the kind of visual regime that pervaded the country and, so to speak, held it together, and the role played by art and monuments within it. Among other things, she discusses the gender norms pervasive in Yugoslav socialism, focusing on how monuments helped to perpetuate the stereotypical representation of women. While questioning the role of monuments, she also questions the roles of various cultural agents in relation to memorial production, including her own critical attitude as an active young participant in the lively, politicized contemporary art scene towards what she saw as an exaggerated and over-monumentalized state art, regardless of its conservative or modernist formal and aesthetic features.

The notion of authorship in Yugoslav memorial practice is the central issue discussed in **Sanja Horvatinčić**'s chapter "Beyond the Modernist Paradigm: Critical Perspectives on Authorship in Yugoslav Memorial Production". She argues that the field of memorial production in socialist Yugoslavia and the position of the author within it were conditioned by a large and complex set of parameters and social agents, whose power relations and dynamics differed and changed throughout the period. She outlines several characteristic models of authorship linked to the gradual stratification of memorial production, which resulted from the prevalence of the modernist paradigm since the 1950s and the consequent professionalization of the field, with the figure of the "artist-genius" as the most desirable model of authorship. This led to a growing "aesthetic disproportionality" between memorials produced at the highest levels, on the one hand, and semi-professional, amateur, or mass-produced works, on the other – which became especially visible with the enormous investments in large-scale memorial production from the 1960s on. In the second part of the chapter, Horvatinčić challenges the normative role of the artist-genius, with examples of amateur production and craftsmanship as well as specific models of women's participation in this pronouncedly male genre of public art.

In "How to Remember? Commemorations at Memorial Sites Associated with the People's Liberation Struggle", **Marija Đorđević** discusses the performative aspect of commemorative practices in socialist Yugoslavia. She outlines various means of remembering, from community-based events organized "from below", which often featured traditional elements, to elaborate, state-organized commemorations, which were more in tune with the political function of collective remembrance in the new socialist state. Đorđević explains some of the specific features of these practices, pointing among other things to their perhaps less expected religious aspects as well as, in later stages of development, the addition of certain pop-cultural elements intended to keep alive both vanishing memories and the state ideology. She emphasizes the importance of establishing uniform scenographies and rigid scripts, which played an important role in creating meaningful relationships between the memorial sites and the bodies that took part in the commemorative acts. Looking at three case studies that foreground narratives of bravery, sacrifice, and continuity – discourses characteristic of the socialist period – Đorđević underscores the distinction between ceremonies focused on heroism and those focused on victimization, while also tackling issues relating to the post-socialist political appropriation of these performances.

With the chapter "Post-Socialist Orientalism: Yugoslav Monuments and Their Reception in the Media", the discussion shifts to the decades after the breakup of

Yugoslavia. **Vladimir Kulić** delivers a comprehensive overview of the global media representation and fetishization of the Yugoslav modernist architectural and memorial heritage (with examples from online social media, advertising, art photography, music videos, science-fiction films, among others), followed by a critical analysis of the phenomenon. He claims that the monuments' commemorative purpose is often overlooked because they are perceived primarily as the products of a now-defunct socialist system, which automatically disqualifies them from being taken seriously as monuments with social value, even if their formal qualities are greatly admired. Such a reduction of the monuments to "empty shells" also makes their astonishing shapes ideal for various types of commodification, which is usually unrelated or in complete contradiction to their original memorial purpose. Kulić argues further that the discourses woven around these representations echo a new form of Orientalism, which he describes as "a zombie offspring" of the Cold War that establishes a relationship of power over the legacies of socialism by regurgitating tropes established more than seventy years ago. He goes on to note: "For audiences in the West, it still reinforces the long-established anti-communist consensus, while for those in the East, it ensures that they receive the 'correct' interpretation of their own past, in keeping with the crumbling dogmas about the 'end of history'."

In the last chapter, "Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?", **Beti Žerovc** examines the reception and evaluation of Yugoslav high-modernist monuments by different audiences and in different periods, both in the former and post-Yugoslavia and abroad, and tries to decipher the elusive relationship between these monuments as, on the one hand, remarkable modernist artworks and, on the other, potentially unsuccessful political projects that poorly served the political system in which they were created. Seeking to shed light on this question, Žerovc examines the role monuments played in Yugoslavia's ideological apparatus as well as their position today in various post-Yugoslav contexts. She investigates which levels of society and which social groups have in different periods and contexts been most positively disposed towards the high-modernist monuments, who their creators were, and who sought to generate interest in them, arguing that such structural questions will lead us towards a better understanding of both the origin of these works and the contradictions that accumulated within them. She asks, for example, how the extraordinary autonomy of the author in the field of monuments in socialist Yugoslavia – as opposed to a more inclusive and collectivist-oriented expression, which would be more suited to the country – led to its production being aligned with the Western artistic canon and to monuments that in many ways plainly contradicted the values of socialism.

IZA Editions

Publications series by
the Igor Zabel Association for
Culture and Theory (Ljubljana)
and Archive Books (Berlin).

Series editor

Urška Jurman

**Shaping Revolutionary Memory:
The Production of Monuments
in Socialist Yugoslavia****Editors**

Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc

Language editors

Rawley Grau (general), Kevin Nathaniel Kenjar
("From Storytelling to Re-enactment")

Translators

Rawley Grau ("The Development of
Public Monuments ...", "Can the High
Modernism ..."), Dunja Opatić ("Cultural
Models and Cultural Policies ...")

Peer reviewers

Nenad Lajbenšperger, Miloš Kosec

Executive editor

Urška Jurman

Design and layout

Ivian Kan Mujezinović / Ee

Printing and binding

Florjančič tisk d.o.o.

1200 copies printed

Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023

© 2023 by the authors, Igor Zabel Association
for Culture and Theory, and Archive Books

The editors and publishers made every
reasonable effort to obtain copyright permissions
and properly credit authors and copyright
holders. In a few cases, however, this proved
impossible. We regret any errors and welcome
further information in this regard.

Distribution

Archive Books

mail@archivebooks.org

www.archivebooks.org

The chapter "Cultural Models and Cultural Policies
in Socialist Yugoslavia", by Ljiljana Kolečnik, is the
result of research conducted as part of the project
*GLOB_Exchange – Models and Practices of Global
Cultural Exchange and the Non-aligned Movement:
Research in the Spatio-Temporal Cultural Dynamics*
(IPS-2020-01-3992), supported by the Croatian
Science Foundation.

The chapter "Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav
Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of
Capitalism in Socialism?", by Beti Žerovc, is
the result of research conducted as part of the
project *The Exhibiting of Art and Architecture
between Artistic and Ideological Concepts;
Case Study Of Slovenia, 1947–1979* (J6-3137),
supported by the Slovenian Research Agency.

Published by

Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory
Trg Prekomorskih brigad 1
SI-1000 Ljubljana
info@igorzabel.org
www.igorzabel.org

Archive Books
Reinickendorfer Straße 17
DE-13347 Berlin
mail@archivebooks.org
www.archivebooks.org

Supported by

ERSTE Foundation

ISBN 978-961-94691-3-2
(Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory)

ISBN 978-3-948212-60-5
(Archive Books)

COBISS.SI-ID 135756035

**IGOR ZABEL
ASSOCIATION
FOR CULTURE
AND THEORY**

A B



ERSTE Stiftung