

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

Beti Žerovc

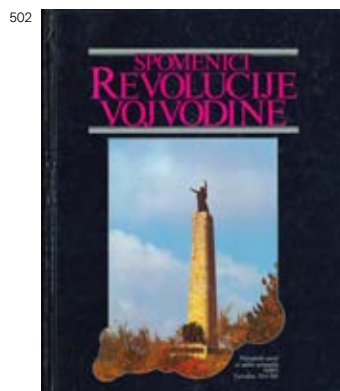
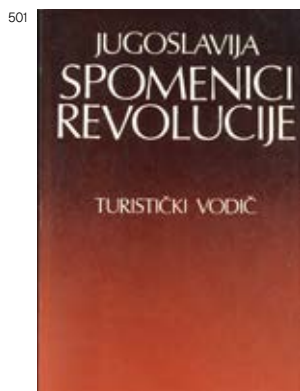
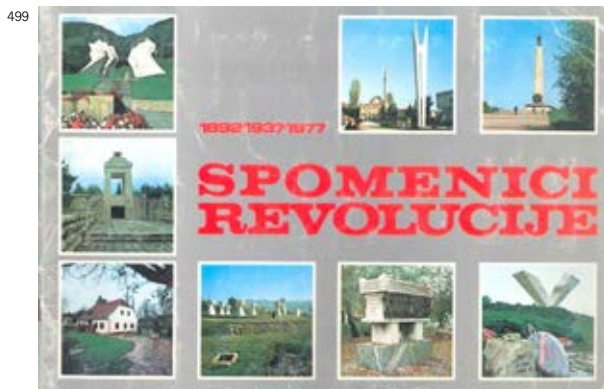
**Can the High Modernism
of Yugoslav Monuments Be
Viewed as a Trojan Horse
of Capitalism in Socialism?**

Here I will address a number of complex issues that have been troubling me ever since I started dealing with Yugoslavia's monuments dedicated to the events and ideas related to the Second World War, primarily Yugoslav antifascist resistance, the People's Liberation Struggle, and the socialist revolution. If we accept the idea that monuments are meant to reinforce the social system that builds them, can we also expect them to work in a different direction and contribute to the reproduction of that social system's inner contradictions, and thus to its decline and collapse? Not just if they are in some way "poor" monuments, but also if, in their essence, they are not well aligned with, and do not resonate with, the ideology they are supposed to promote? For me, the core question in our specific case is whether the high modernism of the Yugoslav post-war monuments that today have become an object of global fascination, and, indeed, the monuments themselves, might in some sense have been a Trojan Horse of capitalism, helping to undermine Yugoslav socialism. And, if they were a Trojan Horse, then in what way did they function as such? How and why did they originate? And what does it mean that now, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, they are being celebrated?

I am led to such questions not only by the fact that these high-modernist monuments, even when they first appeared, were criticized for not being particularly suitable for the reproduction of socialist values, but also by the way they are received today. Not only is the current global enthusiasm not neutral, that is, not fascinated by the entirety of Yugoslavia's socialist war memorials, but the enthusiasm also does not extend to the entirety of the ideas the memorials were meant to promote. From today's perspective, this select group of large-scale memorials is presented in ways that significantly reduce their original meaning; even references to their most essential semantic elements, such as the class struggle, fade from view. This happens also on the level of naming: these monuments of the revolution, as they were frequently called – at least in a certain era and in the most important Yugoslav monographs on the subject (figs. 496–502) – are today referred to by such terms less and less. The aesthetic aspect now explicitly becomes the focus of interest, and these high-modernist creations, interpreted in terms of the Western art canon, appear increasingly as more or less successful works of art.

I was also led to my enquiries by the living reactions in my local environment. On the one hand, there were the sceptical questions of my students, born after Yugoslavia's collapse, about the effectiveness and acceptance of the high-modernist monuments in the socialist period, and at the time of their construction, in what was still a predominantly rural country.¹ Even more influential, on the other hand,

1 To summarize a few more of the essential issues raised by students: Why is the world suddenly interested in these old Yugoslav monuments (and not, for instance, in some other part of our art history)? Why is this interest confined only to a very specific segment of these monuments? And why are these monuments so easily integrated into the Western art system if they are, or at least are meant to be, essentially anticapitalist works that glorify the achievements of the class struggle and the revolution? I discussed these issues with students in various departments of the University of Ljubljana and elsewhere, including the post-graduate seminar "Monument, Performance, Ritual, Body" in 2015, which eventually led to the creation of the present book. See the introduction to this book, p. 15; see also the video of my lecture "Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?", November 10, 2018, presented as part of the



496–502
Yugoslav books and other publications on monuments with the word “revolution” in the title (including a sticker album, fig. 499, and a tourist guide, fig. 501).

were the reflections of those who had lived with the monuments since their creation. In my conversations with this latter group, what regularly stood out as particularly disturbing was not so much the fact that the monuments seemingly failed to produce tangible support for state policy and ideology (of which even old Partisan fighters were often critical), but rather the incongruity of monuments that inherently, in their hermeticism and elitism, overtly excluded ordinary people, leaving them high and dry, in a country that supposedly exalted them. These monuments thus became a visible metaphor of sorts for a society that, contrary to its own postulates, was increasingly divided by class.²

For this reason, and because today, in the telling turnabout noted above, it is precisely this segment of post-war Yugoslav monument production that people are fascinated by and celebrate, I will try as much as possible in this chapter to take the side of those who were, and still are, excluded from understanding these works. Also for this reason, I define such phenomena as artistic freedom, the Western art canon, high modernist art, etc., directly, if at times a little awkwardly and one-dimensionally, as capitalist, Western, and bourgeois in order to underscore that they were developed mainly in class-based societies, in the West, and, significantly, within capitalism, which assigned them, and continues to assign them, expressly ideological functions. Such reductions might make us lose sight of the fact that, at least to some degree, these are general modern phenomena and the shared inheritance of the Enlightenment, while an emphasis on the monuments' conformity to Western artistic parameters would obscure the role of Yugoslavia's

series "Shifting Sites: Territories and Space", organized by the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf9WrGTzRUQ> (accessed August 29, 2019).

- 2 Perhaps counter to expectations based on the claim that the Yugoslav system was totalitarian, this system, in fact, cultivated wide-ranging discussions on all sorts of issues in newspapers and other media and in its communities and organizations such as the veterans' associations. In such discussions, lay opinions about monuments were rejected by the professional art field with increasing sharpness – and more explicitly after the break with the Soviets in 1948 and as the generation of older, realist sculptors withdrew from the scene – with comments such as "Let the cobbler stick to his last", assertions that lay opinions represented a narrow-minded political view, and so on. See, for example, the works cited in my chapter, "The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941", in the present book, p. 53, n. 64. It should be stressed that the art field was hardly united in its attitude towards the monuments: criticism was directed at their overproduction, their overly ambitious aims, their stylistic choices, and the excessive resources that went into them. But the view that it should be the art professionals who primarily determined the concept and form of the monuments was always at least latently present. This was true even for the younger generations, who were usually critical of the earlier monuments, regardless of their style, and who wished to align monument production with more contemporary trends in art and architecture. Compare Branislav Dimitrijević, "Egypt or October: The Canonisation of Memorial Sculpture and Dynamics in Yugoslav Art Criticism", in *Nonument*, ed. Miloš Kosec, Neja Tomšič, and Martin Bricelj Baraga, Museum of Transitory Art, Ljubljana, 2020, pp. 78–104.

Many Yugoslavs were aware of the growing divide between the art field and socialist collectivist doctrine and repeatedly warned about it. The nature of this difficult and often frustrating relationship is well fleshed out in exhaustive conversations on culture with representatives of large workers' collectives from all over Yugoslavia in Ivan Jakopović, *Radnici, kultura, revolucija: Razgovori s radnicima*, Zavod za kulturu Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1976.

own modernist development and tradition.³ In our case, however, it is essential that we are aware, first and foremost, that not everyone participates equally in these phenomena and the processes associated with them; the recent reception of Yugoslavia's high-modernist monuments, for instance, is a prime example of how the Western art system integrates artistic phenomena whenever and however it pleases. We must realize, too, that artistic phenomena formed under a system that explicitly advocates individualism cannot have a positive effect in a system that explicitly advocates collectivity and the equality of all – certainly not when it comes to such fields as the design of public monuments, which takes place mainly outside the art world and is explicitly intended for the entire population.

In this light, then, I wish to examine how Yugoslavia devised its ideological apparatus and positioned art within it, particularly, of course, with regard to the monument field, and how these monuments survive and function in various post-Yugoslav contexts. I am interested in which levels of society, or social groups, are in different periods and contexts most positively disposed towards the high-modernist monuments, are their creators, or generate interest in them. Raising this sort of structural question may point us towards understanding both the origin of these monuments and the contradictions accumulated within them. For instance, why and how did the myths about the universality of high modernism and artistic freedom and autonomy become accepted in the art field in socialist Yugoslavia if the country lacked such key factors as an art market and rich collectors, a group that was well served by such myths and played a large role in their establishment in the West?⁴ Who filled this role in socialist Yugoslavia? And how did such views about art come to be accepted in monument design, given the fact that even in the West they were not an undisputed practice in the field, even though the West presented itself in the post-war decades as the homeland of artist freedom and the belief in it?

Heated debates over how much and when it makes sense to build primarily artistic monuments, and abstract monuments in particular, have been going on at least since the interwar period, including in the West. Scepticism about such practices is often greater among commentators from outside the art world than it is among art enthusiasts and art professionals. But even art professionals generally note that a public monument has other responsibilities beyond being a good work of art, and they often go even further, saying that, since a monument is not merely the personal expression of the artist and is made for the general public, it can and

3 See, for example, *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*, ed. Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2003.

4 On the role of the myth of artistic freedom in the Western art system, see the chapter “Beautiful Freedom”, in Beti Žerovc, *When Attitudes Become the Norm: The Contemporary Curator and Institutional Art*, Archive Books, Berlin, and the Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, 2015, pp. 166–174. Because freedom was valued in the second Yugoslavia as, we might say, the first ideal achievement of the Partisan struggle, the tactic of invoking freedom and warning against its infringement could be very effective, including in the art field. See also Ljiljana Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 50-ih godina*, Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2006, pp. 23, 214, 230–232.

must be evaluated on its ability to generate human reactions. But only rarely do they provide persuasive explanations as to what such reactions should be, how they can be verified, and which aesthetic approaches are demonstrably effective. In this regard, abstraction in particular has been pilloried for its hermeticism, at times to the benefit of other up-and-coming art paradigms. Among others, the linguist, Judaicist, and memory scholar James E. Young, in the introduction to his influential book *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, questions the wisdom of using abstraction in memorial production; he summarizes his and older authors' doubts into two basic strains: "First, how does one refer to events in a medium doomed to refer only to itself? And second, if the aim is to remember – that is, to refer to – a specific person, defeat, or victory, how can it be done abstractly?"⁵

Some theorists approach the issue more broadly, stressing that the difficulty is not just in the specific form of artistic expression, but arises when the intent of the monument is not at the forefront and, instead, the designer is concerned primarily with satisfying the artistic parameters and demands of the art system. In the article "The Impossible Statue", Bernard Ceysson concisely outlines a wide range of doubts about whether modernist art approaches can achieve effective memorials and provides examples of such failed attempts. Among others, the still figural, if cubist, memorial *The Destroyed City*, which Ossip Zadkine made in 1953 for bombed-out Rotterdam, shows that such a sculpture may be understood as a successful work at a certain point in an artist's individual development – where the art system recognizes and declares it as such – but as a memorial it fails to be commemorative; it is only a weak attempt to express both horror and hope.⁶ The philosopher Hilde Hein, too, expressed in clear terms her scepticism about the compatibility of the art world and the real world in the field of making monuments:

Public art is an oxymoron according to the standards of modernist art and aesthetic theory. Modern philosophical aesthetics focuses almost exclusively on subjective experience and a commodified work of art. Art is taken to be the product of an individual and autonomous act of expression and its appreciation is, likewise, a private act of contemplation. By contrast, as a public phenomenon, art must entail the artist's self-negation and deference to a collective community.⁷

- 5 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, and London, 1993, p. 11. On the use of abstraction, or a strongly abstracted language, in Holocaust memorials and the reasons behind it, as well as camp survivors' dissatisfaction with such designs, see Young's comments on pp. 8–11 and throughout the book, as well as Sabina Tanović's chapter, "Anticipating the Future", in the present book, pp. 155–157, especially n. 29.
- 6 Bernard Ceysson, "The Impossible Statue", in *Europa nach der Flut: Kunst 1945–1965*, ed. Silvia Sauquet, Thomas M. Messer et al., Künstlerhaus, Vienna, and Fundación la Caixa, Barcelona, 1995, p. 524 and throughout.
- 7 Hilde Hein, "What is Public Art? Place, Time, and Meaning", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 1, winter 1996, p. 1.

Monuments of the Revolution and the Art System in Which They Were Created

After the Second World War, Yugoslavia, a young country that had existed only since 1918, was in ruins, in need of long-term recovery, and traumatized. Certain recent episodes in which parts of the country had exploited the state of war to exact bloody reckonings or establish political systems independent of Yugoslavia, such as the Independent State of Croatia, had to be forgotten as quickly as possible.⁸ Considered from the perspective of memorial production, this was a country with no internalized common ideology, no clear and positive conception of itself as an integrated Yugoslav community, let alone any generally accepted visualizations of this idea; nor was there any serious shared art system that might translate that idea into monuments to create a coherent story throughout the entire country. A portion of the monuments erected up to this point, especially those relating to the country's monarchical past, had been removed either during the war or right after it.⁹

The next crucial element in the general story of Yugoslav art is that it took place in a country which, having set itself the extraordinary task of setting up a new and distinctive political system, had problems with conceptualizing and establishing both the system as a whole and with every element and field of activity within it. Art was given an important role in the system; Yugoslav leaders valued it, or at the very least they recognized its social significance and potential for a variety of political uses: to support the ideology, to create the country's desired image, etc. The state's positive attitude towards art was soon reflected in an expanded range of art production as well as the rapid growth of the art infrastructure.¹⁰ At the same time, however, the art field and Yugoslav society as a whole were constantly beset by disagreements over what sort of art was needed. Tensions often rose around the dilemma of how to be "a land of workers and peasants", as the state proclaimed itself, in a way that did not have a negative influence and lead to an artistically empty, agitational, regime-serving art, but rather a positive one, with art serving as a constitutive factor in a thriving socialist society and a means of rich personal fulfilment for as much of the population as possible.¹¹

8 For more on this, see, for example, Tea Sindbæk, *Usable History? Representations of Yugoslavia's Difficult Past from 1945 to 2002*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2012. (See also the works cited in n. 50 of this chapter.)

9 For more on this, see Žerovc, "The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941", pp. 21–46.

10 This attitude is clear, too, from the extraordinary increases in the percentage of GDP that Yugoslavia allotted to culture: from 2.7 per cent in 1946, to 6.8 per cent in 1951, to a remarkable 11 per cent in 1960. The economic crisis and other changes, as well as a revised attitude to art and culture, are evident in the drastic reduction of such funds in the early 1960s: only 1 per cent in 1961, and 0.7 per cent in 1963. Branka Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2013, p. 140.

11 For more on such dilemmas and ideological disputes, see the respective chapters by Heike Karge, Ljiljana Kolešnik, and Sanja Horvatinčić in the present book.

Despite such efforts, however, the visual art field soon strayed noticeably from Yugoslavia's egalitarian values and goals, in part due to the influence of external, often entirely political factors. First, in the late 1940s, the break with the Soviet Union and, later, deteriorating relations between the two countries caused a substantial shift in the orientation of Yugoslav art. The Soviet model for visual art, which was never seriously implemented in the years right after the war, not only became undesirable, but what is more, overt support for socialist realism could be taken as pro-Soviet and therefore politically questionable.¹² In art, the country turned explicitly to the West, a move that led, among other things, to the somewhat paradoxical resolution, or at least epilogue, of the heated pre-war debate over the nature of political art, the so-called dispute on the left, in favour of bourgeois tendencies. Describing this shift very generally, in the spirit of the accepted art-world interpretation of it, we could say that, from that point on, visual artists were allowed to work more freely, following their own inclinations, and to do so explicitly, with less obligation to adapt their work to the tastes and needs of the masses or to political dictates. For our purposes, this also meant that artists could now align themselves more freely with the trends, rules, and demands of the Western art system and focus more on making artworks for individual use.¹³

It seems, however, that in the period following the break with the Soviets, Yugoslavia tried seriously and as fairly as possible, if in a very unstructured way, to support the widest possible range of its citizens' diverse visual creativity and need for art. And this variegated whole, focused expressly on community and communal needs – but also making room for high art, albeit without its usual privileged status and without the classic art market – may well have represented a kind of Yugoslav “third way” in the art field. But this possible “third way” never fully developed; among other things, it had no well-established examples on which it could model itself, and the art professionals who steered it and worked in it had themselves usually come from high art and so, wittingly or unwittingly, tended to imbue it with the work methods and values of high art.

12 Compare Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in the present book, pp. 69–73. The dynamic of Yugoslavia's connection with and divergence from the Soviet cultural model is very complex. On the organization of the visual art field in Croatia before the 1948 break, see Suzana Leček, “Likovna umjetnost u društvenom životu Hrvatske 1945–1947.”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 22, nos. 1–2, 1990, pp. 131–156; on developments immediately afterwards, see Ana Šeparović, “ULUH oko Informbiroa: dinamika ideološko-političkog pritiska u likovnom stvaralaštvu”, *Peristil*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2017, pp. 103–116; on the persistence of the Soviet organizational model of culture and art at least in part even years later, see the chapter by Kolečnik cited above. It is worth mentioning that this dynamic differed somewhat from republic to republic, depending, among other things, on the degree of development of the local art institutions.

13 For dispute on the left, see Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, p. 25.

The artist's contradictory position in relation to socialism, as delineated in the early 1950s by Miroslav Krleža, one of the most esteemed cultural figures in Yugoslavia at the time, is concisely presented by Rade Pantić in “Od kulture u ‘socializmu’ ka socialističkoj kulturi”, in *Gradove smo vam podigli: O protivrečnostima jugoslovenskog socijalizma*, ed. Vida Knežević and Marko Miletić, Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, Belgrade, 2018, pp. 185–200. For its subsequent development and “socialist aestheticism”, see, among others, Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia, 1945–91*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2016, pp. 9–12, 94–98.



503–509
Examples of murals in public or semi-public spaces.

503–504
Two details from a mural in the concert hall of the state villa (today the hotel Vila Bled), one depicting Partisans at war and the other, a parade of united workers with post-war reconstruction going on behind them, Bled, Slovenia. Slavko Pengov (painter), 1947.

505
The Splitting of the Atom, in the Ruđer Bošković Institute, Zagreb, Croatia. Edo Murtić (painter), 1953.

506
The First Solin Detachment on Mt Dinara 1942, in the hall of the administrative building of the cement factory Cemex Hrvatska, the former Dalmacija Cement plant, Solin, Croatia. Joko Knežević (painter), 1957.

507
Mural in the hall of administrative building of the former Maribor Textile Factory, Maribor, Slovenia. Possibly by Slavko Tihec (sculptor), late 1950s.

508
The Battle of the Sutjeska / Sutjeska, mosaic in the great hall of the Palace of the Federal Executive Council of the SFRY (today the Palace of Serbia), Belgrade, Serbia. Marij Pregelj (painter), 1962.

509
The stainless steel relief in the conference hall of the Social-Political Organizations Building, in which the headquarters of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia was located; today the building houses the Croatian Ministry of the Sea, Transport, and Infrastructure, Zagreb, Croatia. Stevan Luketić (sculptor), 1968.

507



508



509



Art and the control over it were thus gradually consolidated mainly where they had been before the war – in the domain of the middle level of society.¹⁴ Even more so, in fact: with artistic activity and production becoming more and more widespread and accessible, and with the overburdened political sphere increasingly delegating the production and control of art to experts and artists, the direct and particular interests of these experts and artists were able to permeate society on a much wider basis than in the interwar period, when they were primarily dependent on the private sector.

The next important element of this story, then, is that Yugoslav socialism neither took the orchestration of art away from the group described above, nor did it develop its own concept of art; instead, the concept of bourgeois art, which promoted individualism, the extraordinary nature of the artist, and artistic freedom above all else – in keeping with capitalist values and priorities and at odds with those of socialism – found a way to survive in the Yugoslav system.¹⁵ It survived and thrived, entangled in a complicated and patently incoherent mythology that emphasized a utopian faith in the universality and profound humanist mission of art and connected the basic postulates of the modernist and socialist ideologies.¹⁶ To this was added a number of practical “benefits”, such as the idea that modernist artistic and architectural works would internationally attest to Yugoslavia’s modernness and openness, that modernism’s

- 14 For more on this, see Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, pp. 53–57, especially n. 68, where, for instance, I write that this did not lead to an equivalence between different kinds of artist (amateurs, naive artists, academically trained artists, etc.), who would work together towards overcoming the individual’s alienation through art – which also would not be assigned value in terms of the Western canon. While amateurism in art was certainly well supported in Yugoslavia right up to the country’s collapse, its position in relation to high art was soon viewed in essentially the same way as in the West.
- 15 The term *bourgeois art* is not used here as a negative category; rather, it simply designates the culture and art of the upper and middle social strata in class-based, usually capitalist, societies. Such art is realized mostly in the domain of the middle class and is concerned primarily with the reproduction of the political-economic system. This aspect, however, is usually denied, and the art presents itself as universal, and even as a progressive, free art. Understood in this way, bourgeois art was unacceptable to Yugoslav socialism, which viewed it as reactionary and harmful, since it supported a class-based society and, given its frequent hermeticism, was clearly not intended for everyone.

Although the second Yugoslavia claimed that it was at least trying to be a classless society, it nevertheless partly preserved and partly reconstituted its bourgeoisie. It was composed, on the one side, of the political bourgeoisie, and, on the other, mainly of members of the technical and managerial professions, who gradually, on the basis of their education, privileges, way of life, and greater earnings, developed into a distinctive group. A large percentage of the country’s art and cultural professionals may also be placed in this group. This bourgeoisie found little pleasure in being tied to the working class and, instead, desired a position similar to what it had known before socialism, or knew from the West, where a similar social stratum, and its expression and values, was more overtly privileged. See, for example, Branislav Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni socijalizam: Kultura, konzumerizam i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1950–1974)*, Fabrika knjiga, Belgrade, 2016. The Yugoslav bourgeoisie has to a large degree been preserved in the countries that inherited it.

- 16 On the problematic nature of such reasoning, see, for example, Milan Rakita, “Modernization Discourse and Its Discontents”, *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2017, pp. 103–147. Rakita analyses how, in Yugoslavia and its successor states, the discourse of modernity has enabled the reproduction of capitalist values and production relations in ideology, politics, science, and culture, thereby maintaining the historical continuity of Western imperialism and neo-colonialism in disguised ideological forms.

lack of explicitness would help transcend the country's nationalisms as well as, in the memorial field, the great regional differences in the traditions of remembrance and commemoration, and so on. Since the Yugoslav goal was the welfare and intellectual and cultural advancement of the entire society, the questionable aspects of this story were (to put it simply) disregarded in a vague anticipation that modernist art, as part of the general progress, would eventually be more widely accepted.¹⁷

In the young, and later often changing, Yugoslav system, things like elitism, artistic hermeticism, problems of reception, etc., could remain unaddressed or be excused with platitudes, in part because incoherent political theorizing was commonplace and this theory was often at odds with practice. Reading Yugoslav political speeches, treatises, or ordinances today, it is sometimes very difficult to understand which policies were actually implemented and which were merely proclaimed. In practice, in some instances artistic freedom might be taken even more literally than in the West, and in others entirely ignored. The state – in a bizarre vortex of such incoherency, genuine devotion to the ideal of a free and progressive society, and the aggression that appeared when things slipped out of its control – could, for example, financially support and even establish projects like journals, which not only could operate independently of the state but might actually question and criticize state actions. But if a journal's ideas, art, or criticism created too many problems, the state could then quickly shut it down.¹⁸ Discussions about such things usually place too much emphasis on the shutting-down and much too little on the support provided by the state; consequently, it is not well known that, for instance, these conditions also made it possible for the latest art trends to be exhibited at a very early date, and even in the most important art institutions,¹⁹ or for these trends to be richly represented in the remarkable cultural programmes organized, in particular, by major Yugoslav manufacturers – following the principle of “bringing culture to the workers”. The Sisak Iron Works in Croatia is a good example. The company went to great pains to provide its workers with cultural and art activities; to this end, it employed many cultural organizers, displayed artworks even on factory premises,²⁰ and sponsored activities

17 For an understanding of the inner stratification of high-modernist practices in the monument field and an interpretation that relates these to older local traditions, see Horvatinčić's two chapters in the present book, as well as Dimitrijević, “Egypt or October”, pp. 92–95.

18 For more on journals, particularly *Perspektive* and *Praxis*, see Aleš Gabrič, *Socialistična kulturna revolucija: Slovenska kulturna politika 1953–1962*, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 123–127, and Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, pp. 19–21, 145–146, 178–179, and 226–237. Perhaps the most famous examples of publicly supported institutions that criticized the state, including through visual art, were the student cultural centres of the 1970s and 1980s (see Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, pp. 145–146 and 178–179).

19 To give but one example: in the late 1960s, when most of its members were still students in their early twenties, Slovenia's OHO Group, which is considered part of the “New Art Practice”, had a number of exhibitions in important Slovene art institutions, such as the Moderna galerija and City Art Gallery in Ljubljana. The poet Tomaž Šalamun, an occasional member of OHO Group, was also given the opportunity to do curatorial work at the Moderna galerija. See Beti Žerovc, “The OHO Files: Updated”, *Art Margins*, 2013, <https://artmargins.com/the-oho-files> (accessed August 29, 2019). On OHO member Marko Pogačnik's work as a designer of memorials, see Sanja Horvatinčić's chapter “Beyond the Modernist Paradigm”, in the present book, pp. 317–319.

20 Compare the situation in the Zenica Iron Works, where Tomislav Perazić painted murals on the factory walls. See Amarildo Gutić, “Tomislav Perazić, posljednji srorealistički slikar”, *Magazin plus*,

and events throughout Yugoslavia. Over time, it initiated a number of demanding art events: a photography biennial (beginning in 1966), an art colony (beginning in 1971), and prestigious literary awards (beginning in 1976), with the award-winning (and often very hermetically written) books being distributed in large numbers to the employees of the iron works, most of whom were poorly equipped to read modernist literature.²¹ To understand Yugoslavia's decisions in art and culture we need to realize that they were often very contradictory, at times almost poetically offbeat, and that people from the art field were involved in them. After all, it seems easier in the art field to blame the politicians for the contradictions and problems than, say, to blame a poet for not objecting to such things on the grounds that his poetry was written for a select group of people, who most likely did not include iron workers.

Individuals and various interest groups, then, understood this peculiar situation and manipulated and exploited it, more or less successfully, to their advantage, also in the fields of art and architecture. In practice, this meant that, from the early 1950s on, the art field developed an art that was similar to what was in the West – Yugoslav artists received grants to visit the West, Western art was regularly exhibited in the country's most prominent art institutions, and so on.²² As indicated, all of this occurred alongside somewhat different forms of control compared to what art in the West was experiencing: the art market, as it functioned in the West, played practically no role in this regard, unlike politics and, especially, conformity to the mentality and needs of socialism.²³ An enormous number of art commissions were focused on the needs of communities, with clear preference given to widely accessible art forms and techniques: the decoration of public buildings, from factories and hospitals to schools and restaurants (figs. 503–509);²⁴ the installation of public sculptures and

August 7, 2016, <https://magazinplus.eu/tomislav-perazic-posljednji-socrealisticki-slikar> (accessed August 29, 2019).

- 21 The Croatian historian Vlatko Čakširan provided me with the statistic (calculated by Vlado Krnjajić) that by the late 1980s the Sisak Iron Works had in this way distributed some 35,000 books to its employees. See Vlatko Čakširan, *Kolonija likovnih umjetnika Željezare Sisak 1971.-1990.: Povijesni pregled*, ed. Davorka Obradović, Gradski muzej Sisak, Sisak, 2012; Vlatko Čakširan, *Književna nagrada Željezare Sisak 1976.-1990.*, Narodna knjižnica i čitaonica Vlado Gotovac Sisak and Gradski muzej Sisak, Sisak, 2014; and Iskra Baćani and Iva Vidović, *Čelik i nafta: Izložba o izložbi*, Gradski muzej Sisak, Sisak, 2019.
- 22 See Kolečnik, "Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia", pp. 73–79. A separate story is the Yugoslavia's disputed border with Italy, which was not decided until the mid-1950s. While some modernist influences entered Yugoslavia from Italy, it is perhaps even more interesting that for pragmatic reasons, in their effort to win Trieste, the Yugoslav government actively supported modernist art tendencies in that city – among other things they financed a private gallery there, and the art criticism associated with it, in the hope of demonstrating the openness and freedom of Yugoslav society. See Ana Obid, "Razstavljanje tržišnih slovenskih slikarjev v galeriji Škorpiljon", diploma thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 2019, pp. 16–35.
- 23 For specific commonalities between Croatian modernist and neo-avant-garde tendencies and socialist doctrine, which emphasize visions about merging art and life, the demystification of the artist and the artwork, and the synthesized functioning of all fields of visual art and architecture with the intention of aestheticizing public spaces for the general benefit, which criticize the art market, etc., see Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, pp. 149–214, 290, and throughout.
- 24 See Patricia Počanić, "Narudžbe i otkupi umjetničkih djela za interijere javnih institucija u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih", *Peristil*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2019, pp. 179–201; Tihana Hrastar, "Izdvajanje postotka

monuments; the high-quality design and illustration of books, textbooks, and large-edition materials; and, for private use, popular prints, multiples, and the like. Art exhibitions, too, tried to reach the broadest possible public, so there was understandable state support for various kinds of biennials and other large cyclical events, which presented art as a medium for progress, for affirming humanity and global peace, for bringing countries together, for strengthening Yugoslavia's international position, etc.²⁵ It is not surprising, then, that the genre of the sculptural symposium (tellingly called "Forma viva" in Slovenia) was so well received among Yugoslavs, for it literally made visible the idea of the artist as a worker who works for the common good. At such events, artists produced monumental sculptures, often over several months, in the eyes of the entire host community, who then assumed permanent ownership of the works (figs. 510–514).²⁶

Again, we should note that all these things happened without the kind of art market common in the West. Private enterprises in the decades after the war were essentially banned, or allowed to operate only in a very limited form, and I expect it was also the Western art market's clear connection to the profound inequalities of society that explains the lack of a structural position for any similar art market in Yugoslavia.²⁷ Consequently, artists' opportunities for making a living were somewhat different from in the West; they had to survive mainly on public employment, purchases, and public commissions (which, however, were plentiful), as well as the grey economy,²⁸ and they lacked the kind of mediation to the public, sacralization,

graditeljskih investicija za umjetničke intervencije: Inicijative i propisi druge polovice 20. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj i svijetu", *Prostor*, vol. 26, no. 1 (55), 2018, pp. 68–81; and Ana Šeparović, "Od 'sinteze likovnih umjetnosti' do Zagrebačkoga salona: Prilog poznavanju djelovanja ULUH-a 1960-ih", *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, no. 42, 2018, pp. 167–178. Today, much of this decoration has been destroyed or painted over, and even when it is still visible and accessible, it is for the most part no longer present in the public consciousness. In Slovenia, the Maribor Art Gallery to raise awareness of this heritage, organized a good project that sensibly combined such works with contemporary wall art. See the *Digital Guide to Monumental Wall Art Located in Public Spaces*, <http://museum.ms/dvex?id=893&template=4> (accessed October 23, 2020).

- 25 In Slovenj Gradec, in Slovenia, for example, there was even a gallery called the Gallery for Peace (*Galerija za mir*), which was conceived as a venue devoted to presenting ideas about peace, solidarity, and humanism through art. See Andreja Hribernik, "Utopian Moments", in *Performing the Museum: The Reader*, ed. Aleksandra Sekulić and Dušan Grlja, Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina, Novi Sad, 2016, pp. 180–181. The Josip Broz Tito Gallery of the Art of the Non-Aligned Countries (*Galerija umjetnosti nesvrstanih zemalja Josip Broz Tito*), in Montenegro, was founded on similar principles, and on the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement. See Bojana Piškur, "Southern Constellations: Other Histories, Other Modernities" (pp. 18–19) and Marina Čelebić, "The Gallery of Art of the Non-Aligned Countries 'Josip Broz Tito'" (pp. 113–116), both in the exhibition catalogue *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned*, ed. Tamara Soban, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2019, and elsewhere throughout the catalogue.
- 26 See, for example, *Forma viva: 1982–2014: Kostanjevica na Krki, Portorož, Ravne na Koroškem, Maribor*, ed. Goran Milovanović, Galerija Božidar Jakac, Kostanjevica na Krki, and Obalne galerije, Piran, 2015.
- 27 In these territories even before the war, there was no strong tradition of an art market for work by living artists. The Yugoslav state showed its disapproval of private collections of valuable artworks soon after the war, when it implemented its nationalization programme; among other things, the state confiscated prestigious artworks owned by individuals.
- 28 The kind of art market specific to the second Yugoslavia remains largely unresearched; there have been only partial studies, mainly of individual institutions that dealt with (among other things)

510



511



510–514

Scenes from the international sculpture symposium *Forma Viva* in Kostanjevica na Krki, Slovenia (est. 1961).

Sculptor Ryuzo Kawai at work, 1965 (fig. 510). Sculptor Pierre Heyvaert at work, 1965 (fig. 511). Sculptor Ryoichi Tamura, 1972 (fig. 512). Children speaking with the sculptor Brad Goldberg, 1976 (fig. 513). Installing a sculpture by Boško Kučanski next to the Kostanjevica Primary School, 1984 (fig. 514).

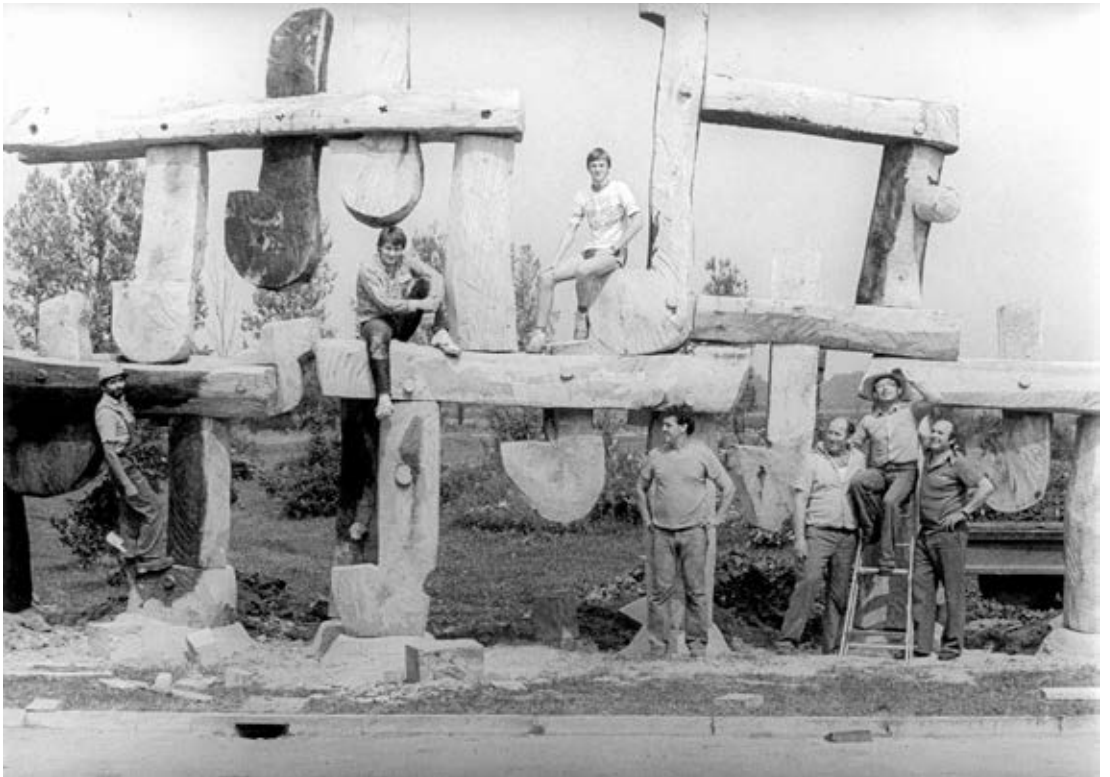
512



513



514



and glamour that private gallerists provided in the West. Beyond the country's borders, in the international area, this meant – very frustratingly, for more ambitious artists – that there was little chance of them achieving more serious success and becoming part of the “universal” (i.e. Western) art canon, which was, and still is, controlled by the art market.²⁹

In Yugoslavia, the fact that high-modernist tendencies developed so well, even in less expected fields such as monument-making, was very likely because major artists, denied real access to the classic art market, were all the more willing to accept public commissions – in line, of course, with the country's specific social needs and situation as outlined above. At the intersection of visual art and architecture, the field of monument production was prestigious and well-funded thanks to its great ideological and political importance; its production capacities were exceptionally high, and it attracted the country's leading artists and architects. And because of the growing power of the techno-managerial bourgeoisie, to which a certain segment of these artists and architects belonged, they were gradually able to organize a considerable degree of creative autonomy for themselves. In doing so, they significantly defined the direction of the monument field not only through the works they created but also

the sale of art. Commercial galleries like those in the West began to appear only in the 1980s; what existed throughout most of the socialist period were more modest shops where one could buy not only art supplies and books on art but also artworks. Also, in the early post-war years, a large share of commissions and sales were handled through trade associations or, with sales, through public galleries, since the works they exhibited were often available for purchase. See Leček, “Likovna umjetnost u društvenom životu Hrvatske 1945.–1947.”; Počanić, “Narudžbe i otkupi umjetničkih djela za interijere javnih institucija u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih”; and Petja Grafenauer, Nataša Ivanović, and Urška Barut, “Kako je Mala galerija prenehala biti društvena in postala moderna”, *Likovne besede*, no. 113, 2019, pp. 33–38. In the 1960s, as Yugoslavia became more market- and export-oriented, it was also turning into an increasingly ideologically confused and contradictory amalgam of egalitarian collectivism and a liberal entrepreneurism interested mainly in economic results. This new orientation also changed the situation of the art market, where transactions took place without much transparency and still without the kind of brokers/merchants that were standard in the West. For a time there were also increased expectations that art galleries might become more commercially oriented, which, especially given the contradictions of “laissez-faire” socialism noted earlier, caused numerous problems for these galleries. See Ana Kutleša, “Culture on the Market: The Gallery of Contemporary Art in the Early 1960s”, in *Didaktička izložba / Didactic Exhibition*, ed. Fokus Grupa and Jasna Jakšić, Fokus Grupa, Rijeka, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2016, pp. 206–239.

With large commissions, collectivistically oriented public art turned into decoration for the more elite buildings (office buildings, hotels, etc.), and with the increasing power of the techno-managerial bourgeoisie, the importance of private collecting also increased. Numerous Yugoslav companies (notably, export-oriented businesses and banks) developed their own prestigious art collections, usually under the direction of art experts. I had several conversations on this subject with, among others, Aleksander Bassin, Brane Kovič, Ciril Oblak, and Gojko Zupan from 2018 to 2021.

29 For more on this particular aspect of the art market and how it was shaped in connection with Central European modernism in particular, see Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1994. Not only artists, but also many curators wracked their brains trying to find ways to overcome the difficulties of gaining entry to the West and its canon. Such an effort may well have been a key factor in the work of Zoran Kržišnik, the long-time director of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana. See Gregor Dražil, “Menedžer da sem? Sem.”: *Zoran Kržišnik in začetki prodiranja slovenske moderne umetnosti na zahodno likovno prizorišče / “Am I a manager? Yes, I am.”: Zoran Kržišnik and How Slovene Modern Art First Penetrated The Western Art World*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2020.

through their involvement in the processes of production at many different levels. Even at the level of commissions, they were solidly embedded in the competition mechanisms, particularly through their involvement in the design of calls for proposals and their participation on selection committees. These committees shaped the field not only by awarding commissions but also through the large monetary prizes for the higher-ranked proposals, which, given the large number of such prizes, could be serious income for monument designers.³⁰ In these ways, too, the quality of monuments visibly improved, by the standards of the Western art canon, even as the competitions' egalitarianism seriously diminished: there was ever less representation even of the voices and tastes of the politicians, let alone those of ordinary people, old Partisans, and veterans' organizations. Together with art historians, artists and architects, too, were often vocally opposed to uneducated tastes being considered in the selection of monument designs, and even to the simple desire for understandable iconography; in such matters, they could be very rude, even belittling, at times towards the people commissioning the monument.³¹ The prominent Croatian art historian Vera Horvat Pintarić, for instance, in an article that asked why more monuments by Dušan Džamonja were not being built (she refused to accept that these monuments were not necessarily universally understandable), concluded by saying:

In this connection, one can ask the following question: Is the language of modern art truly so incomprehensible to the unprofessional observer that in our age a monument of this type has lost all reason for existence? Or is it that the representatives of the social commissioner (who are similarly burdened by obsolescent conventions of the past) are characterized by a degree of (undeveloped) perceptive capacities and atrophied visual thought which is below the average of the same capacities of the so-called general public? Direct experience – whose truth has not yet been confirmed by scientific analysis – leads us to agree with the latter alternative.³²

It is worth noting that these processes, together with an expansion in the size of memorial complexes, were escalating just as the emphasis in the function of memorials was shifting from mournful remembrance and praise of the fallen to support for the state ideology and regime, all of which coincided with mounting economic

30 Here I am speaking about the hierarchically more important competitions; there was greater pluralism when it came to erecting monuments of local importance. On competitions, and the fact that some of the big-name architects were able to circumvent them, see Sanja Horvatinić, "Between Creativity and Pragmatism: A Structural Network Analysis and Quantitative Survey of Federal Competitions for Yugoslav Monuments and Memorial Complexes (1955–1980)", in *Modern and Contemporary Artists' Networks: An Inquiry into Digital History of Art and Architecture*, ed. Ljiljana Kolešnik and Sanja Horvatinić, Institute of Art History, Zagreb, 2018, pp. 124–165. Horvatinić's article makes it clear that an extremely large share of the commissions, awards, and even memberships in juries went to architects and those in related professions, and that the recipients of awards generally came from the country's major urban centres (see the table and map on p. 147 in the article).

31 See nn. 2 and 4, above. In such debates, politicians and veterans' organizations were not necessarily expressing their own personal views and preferences, but rather the discontent of the general public and, in some cases (although, naturally, fewer as the years went by), the feelings of grieving relatives.

32 Vera Horvat Pintarić, "Spomenička skulptura Dušana Džamonje", *Umetnost*, no. 8, 1968, p. 52.

and political crises in Yugoslavia. So in time we had a situation in which the most important monument designers, working under good creative conditions, were devoting themselves to creating and glorifying Yugoslavia's truly heroic and painful past – which certainly required a strong artistic response – but without sufficiently re-examining the social role of art and their own creations at the given moment. At the same time, they seem to have recognized the ever deepening political crisis in the system, which, however, such monuments did nothing to ease, as well as the country's increasing economic distress, which should have demanded a reallocation of funds. That, for the monument-makers, these monuments were also at times primarily about creating ambitious artworks and self-realization, and less, if at all, about artistic support for socialist ideas and the actual society, is indicated by, among other things, the retrospective statements of some of them as well as assertions made at the time by certain artists and art historians who desired monuments that would be “for all eternity” and serve as a kind of universal marker in the space, retaining their value even if the clear reference to the People's Liberation and class struggle was eventually lost.³³ For all these reasons it is not surprising that these artists and their monuments, even if their formal excellence was acknowledged, were often not received positively, even within the art field itself, but came to be felt increasingly as examples of a very problematic artistic hypocrisy.³⁴

Although these in particular were monuments intended to richly reproduce the Yugoslav ideology, the tensions and inconsistencies outlined above suggest that their effect was sooner the opposite: they might even have weakened Yugoslavs' feelings of allegiance to the state and its values. For a large part of the population, these monuments not only did not serve as an effective ideological glue; they were a visible and troubling manifestation of the incoherence and ineffectuality of the country's political sphere, which, instead of addressing actual problems, was concerned with strengthening its ideological apparatuses, and even this it could not do effectively. The incomprehensibility and formal alienation of these high-modernist creations were, as I mentioned at the beginning, easily taken by people as proof of the visible decline of socialist values, the ever greater social stratification in a country that paid less attention to the needs of ordinary people, and the widening divergence and separation between the Yugoslav working class, the top political echelon, and the techno-managerial bourgeoisie.³⁵

33 See Horvatinčić, “Beyond the Modernist Paradigm”, p. 326. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, many important monument designers went on to create memorials with a different ideological orientation.

34 See n. 2, above, and the interview with Bojana Pejić, “The Politics of Gender Representation and the Spatialization of Power in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in the present book, pp. 288–289. Pejić describes how the critical anger of the younger generation was so intense that it impaired their ability to appreciate these works' aesthetic qualities, which now, many years later, she recognizes.

35 The reception of the monuments, of course, includes a broad range of possible responses relating not only to the monuments' artistic style, period, and the sociopolitical situation in which the responses occurred, but also to personal stories, convictions, and practices. It is probably easier for us to accept a monument if it, say, commemorates someone we loved or an event in which we ourselves participated, or if represents our own values and feelings, or even if we simply like visiting it on day trips. The local residents, too, may sometimes come up with their own interpretations of these hermetic monuments. Sanja Horvatinčić, for example, was told by local residents that Zdenko Kolacio's sculptures at Mt Javornica near Drežnica, Croatia, were unfinished (see fig. 351).

515



516



515-516

Yugoslav postcards with the *Monument to the People's Liberation Struggle and the Ilinden Uprising in Kruševo, North Macedonia*, and the *Monument to the Battle of Kozara on Mt Kozara, Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

This incongruity, the growing dissonance, is, perhaps, to some degree illustrated in photographs and postcards from the period in which the high-modernist monuments are shown with people or with commemorative ceremonies taking place around them, which often remained under the control of local communities and veterans' organizations and so were less susceptible to change (figs. 473-477, 515-516). When in these images, which were taken right up to the end of Yugoslavia, we see people in modest clothing or traditional costumes reading speeches, reciting poetry, or performing folk dances in front of the gargantuan futuristic structures, often set somewhere in nature, the monuments' striking discordance with their setting and era becomes visible – that same alienation becomes visible which people looking at these monuments today express when they say these objects seem to have just fallen here from somewhere. But of course they didn't just fall here. The incongruity comes in part from the fact that the people who lived in these, usually, rural places had little



517
Monument to the Revolution of the People of Moslavina
 as viewed from the village of Podgarić, Croatia.

say in the construction of monuments that were of more than local significance, which, instead, were erected in their areas by Yugoslavia's urban, less political than cultural, bourgeoisie.

Unfortunately, we have no scientifically and critically collected testimonies – or at least I know of none – from the period of the monuments' creation to tell us what ordinary people felt about living alongside these fantastical forms. What, for example, did a villager in Podgarić feel when there was suddenly something towering over his house that might well have reminded him of a petrified spaceship or giant eye (fig. 517)? Or what did the person in Nikšić think about the terribly oversized, terribly expensive, and never completed object that no longer knew if it was a monument to the revolution or something more like an urban cultural centre (figs. 518–523)? We can perhaps learn something about this relationship from the frustration and difficulties experienced by the cultural organizers at the Sisak Iron Works, who, among other things, were wrestling with the actual task of developing an appreciation of high art among the working class. They described their experiences in their responses to surveys, which Vlatko Čakširan summarizes in the very informative chapter “Kultura radnicima – Prilog teoretskim raspravama” (“Culture to the Workers – A Contribution to Theoretical Discussions”) in his text for a publication about the company's artistic endeavours.³⁶ The surveys attest to the fact that the process did

36 Čakširan, *Kolonija likovnih umjetnika Željezare Sisak 1971.-1990.*, pp. 53–58.

518



519



520



521



522



523



518-523

The House of the Revolution / Revolution Centre, Nikšić, Montenegro. Marko Mušić (architect), 1979-1989.

The building was never completed and over time it became a public safety hazard. Today the complex has been partially demolished.

not run at all according to the stated expectations, which in the view of some of the cultural organizers were also problematic. But they tended not to blame themselves for the problems, and even less the artists; they laid more of the blame on the workers. Čakširan concludes:

Such thinking, indeed, reveals the actual state of affairs, which clashes with the proclaimed ideas about bringing art to the workers. The fact is that the workers were not well enough educated to be able to grasp all that was expected of them. A worker, indeed, had to become a kind of “superworker”, who needed to be an expert in their own workplace while at the same time possessing the ability to think creatively in matters of art and, if possible, also have their own artistic inclinations, which would be reflected in literature, visual art, music, theatre, etc. Such a worker was supposed to be the means for the high-quality socialist transformation of society. Unfortunately, this idea was never realized. The idealism of the intellectual elite was never fully transferred to the level of the working class.³⁷

From what I have written it is probably becoming clear why these monuments must in no way be understood solely or unequivocally as great achievements by socialist Yugoslavia, and certainly not as some genuine expression of the actually realized socialist self-management society. They are more likely the opposite: metaphors of Yugoslav socialist society as fragile, incoherent, at odds with itself, and perfunctory, while permeated – among the country’s middle social stratum – with the desire for a different sort of world. The monuments, then, help bring to light two major problems with the young political system: first, its awkward handling of its own political and techno-managerial bourgeoisies and their appetites, and second, as a consequence, its failure to devise suitable and effective ideological support mechanisms for itself.

Such reflections also find confirmation in the way these monuments have been made newly relevant since the breakup of Yugoslavia. On the one hand, they have been incorporated into political and inter-ethnic disputes in the Yugoslav successor states, while, on the other, they have become the focus of a truly global enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, however, is coming not from, say, communities of oppressed workers, but from an extremely diverse group of intellectuals, art aficionados, hipsters and social media influencers, and others from around the world – perhaps we could describe them as belonging to some contemporary global bourgeoisie – who are thrilled by the brutalist “cool” and strangeness of these monuments, their unexpectedly superb conceptual and formal design and execution, and the potent

37 Ibid., p. 53. In the surveys we find comments again and again saying that the workers are not interested in serious music, that the exhibitions are poorly attended, etc., as well as blunt accusations that the workers have no culture and no use for culture. So we are again confronted with Yugoslavia’s problematic denial of class differences and the view of high art as being literally universal and positive, and then its indiscriminate application, leading to the paradoxical situation in which workers in a socialist country are, first, forced to consume a culture that is not their own and, then, because they do not accept it in ways consistent with the prescribed expectations, are condemned as uncultured and an obstacle to progress. See also n. 2 in this chapter, particularly Jakopović, *Radnici, kultura, revolucija*.

self-realization of their creators that is manifested in them. At times it seems that only now, in this decontextualized and depoliticized wave of interest, has the artistic message of these monuments finally been able to freely reach its intended recipients.

“Spomeniks” and the Environment in Which They Fascinate

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the monuments dedicated to the antifascist People’s Liberation Struggle and the socialist revolution have been read in various ways in the successor states. Non-artistic readings, if favourable to the monuments, cover a broad spectrum, from an uncomplicated positive and responsible attitude towards the historical heritage to readings that connect these structures with well-developed political convictions, or with a completely unreflective Yugo-nostalgia, or simply the past, if this past is understood as better than the present. In this context every monument is equally “good”, without the kind of distinctions between memorials such as the art canon makes based on its own criteria. This last point holds true also for non-artistic unfavourable readings of the monuments, which often deny these objects any social, political, aesthetic, or other sort of relevance. Many people view the monuments as highly unpleasant, negative, and even harmful, for they view the second Yugoslavia as a primarily, or entirely, negative fact; consequently, they find it hard to tolerate the monuments and may seek to remove them. Unfavourable attitudes were, and are, very much heightened in areas where there were armed reprisals after the fall of Yugoslavia or where inter-ethnic disputes are still very much alive.

The visible global enthusiasm for Yugoslav monuments over the past two decades is, as a rule, linked to admiration for their formal features and most often directed exclusively at the high-modernist memorials. While these are usually extensive memorial complexes realized over a large space, what is today becoming iconic, what both delights and confounds their global audience, are the immense abstract (or at least seemingly abstract) main sculptures.³⁸ For the most part, these works circulate only as images without any clear explanatory context (figs. 484–495). Or if some sort of context is added, socialist political ideas are often appealingly, if uncritically, pasted onto a high-modernist art mythology. The monuments thus come across not just as visually engaging but also as the answer to the devout wishes of the globalized art crowd for a strong, forceful, elitist art that at the same time is both politically potent and politically correct. Indeed, a superficial reading of these monuments

38 The works are frequently presented as more abstract than they actually are, for instance, by being photographed only from certain angles or only from a distance, so that something that appears completely abstract from afar is, when seen close up, easily recognized as, say, a crowd of people. There is a tendency to criticize today’s photographers for altering the meaning of the monuments in this way, but such criticism fails to ask whether such photographs may not, in fact, be continuing a process begun by the artists themselves, who by suggesting the presence of the revolutionary masses were possibly trying to satisfy the people who commissioned the project and achieve conformity with socialist postulates, while through the large abstract form they were trying to embed the monument as much as possible within the standards of high-modernist art.

allows them to appear almost as the ultimate realization of the high-modernist art mythology, in which the imagined universality of such art is realized and these hermetic, elitist forms are clearly and truly accessible to everyone – and that these forms contributed to the building of a better, more egalitarian world, because otherwise Yugoslavia’s anti-bourgeois self-managed socialist society would not have built them. This way of thinking believes the Yugoslav regime’s projections onto these monuments – projections that probably very few people in Yugoslavia took seriously at the time of their creation – even as it overlooks the critique to which modernism has been subjected for decades in the West, namely, that it is an elitist, non-universal discourse deeply tied to the reproduction of capitalism.³⁹

The recent naive readings and positioning of these works seem to be fundamentally conditioned by, on the one hand, the desires of the contemporary bourgeois individual to have “everything” at once – potent art, a high degree of individualism (still viewed simplistically as proof of the existence of personal freedom), and social justice – and, on the other, the needs of the ideological reproduction of the capitalist system as manifested through the Western art system. In this system, for an artwork to be appealing and at the same time serve as effectively and unproblematically as possible as a supporting element in the veneration of the great individual, it must as much as possible appear to be merely an artwork and as little as possible everything else (private property, a commodity, etc.); its political role, or in our case its deeply contradictory nature, must remain as hidden as possible. These monuments’ inherent anomaly must remain deep in the background – namely, that their conceptual conformity and subordination to a system of views and values that is at odds with the system that erected them can render them literally damaging, or at best useless, to this latter system.

This may (also) be why it is so convenient to refer to these monuments, even in non-Slavic languages, by the opaque South Slavic word *spomeniks*, which reinforces their “weirdness” and separates them from other monuments around the world, thus obviating the need for comparisons, despite there being no scholarly basis for such a distinction. It is also convenient that these monuments appear in photographs in a kind of decontextualized “non-situation”, which most often seems to exist in a kind of a uniformly bleak “non-weather”.⁴⁰ It is similarly convenient that presentations of these monuments are generally in the field of architecture, where they are more easily associated with projects that have clear social dimensions, and less so in the visual art field, where scepticism towards high modernism continues to grow, with many theories critically re-examining its political and economic foundations.⁴¹ It is only

39 See Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, pp. 52–57, especially nn. 63 and 65.

40 The sky’s usual greyness is occasionally replaced by night, with the addition of dramatic lighting. See, for example, the photographs by Sylvain Heraud that accompany Christine Bednarz’s article “Haunting Relics of a Country That No Longer Exists” (with the introductory line “Discover the incredible history behind Yugoslavia’s otherworldly monuments”), *National Geographic*, August 29, 2017, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/former-yugoslavia-monuments> (accessed October 23, 2020).

41 The exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, July 15, 2018–January 13, 2019, offers a prominent example of the monuments being presented in an architectural context.

in such a vaguely constituted conceptual framework and inconsistently delineated context that the monuments can appear as coherent works free of contradictions. This is precisely the kind of environment that allows them to be easily usurped by myth and become something like Roland Barthes' famous example "*quia ego nominor leo*", an evocative phrase that is removed from all the richness of its robust semantic and literary background in order to serve as a grammatical specimen in a schoolboy's Latin grammar.⁴² That is to say, the monuments become, first and foremost, examples of extraordinary, if strange, high-modernist artworks and proof that excellence can occur anywhere an extraordinary individual successfully rises above their surroundings. When considering such processes, it is important to understand that a rich context, even an antagonistic one, is no obstacle to such transpositions and usurpations, but rather, if properly bracketed, can literally be a support for new readings.⁴³ A presentation of Yugoslav architecture and monuments could have been made half a century ago similar to the one that opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in late 2018, but this did not happen.⁴⁴ If such an exhibition might then have told of Yugoslav socialism as an alternative political-economic model to capitalism, then today, in the way it was presented at MoMA, it is also, and maybe primarily, the story of a failed political system that was at its best precisely in those areas where it came closest to capitalism (the exhibition displayed particular enthusiasm for specific high-modernist achievements and so-called market socialism). The New York exhibition could possibly be interpreted politically as a call for a better, more socially aware capitalism, but, given the fact that American capitalism successfully deployed high modernism as an ideological weapon in the Cold War, the exhibition may also be offering flattering testimony to capitalism's methods of conquest and soft power as superlative and enviably long-lasting.

An important factor here is that these monuments do not, as a rule, resist such usurpation by myth. In fact, they desire this confirmation: even if they were born from the artist's sincere, if naive, support for socialism, even if, say, the artist skilfully united in them high modernism and the local tradition, in their essence they desire to be measured and ranked as high as possible on the scale of the Western art canon, which was then, as it still is today, understood as universal. Today this seems like an entirely natural, indeed the only right, path for them, and any objection to the fact or manner of their appearance in new contexts, saying, for example, that they thus lose their constitutive meaning, seems increasingly misguided. In a way, we might say that by appearing in exhibition venues and advertisements for upscale products, they are finally not only where they want to be, but also where they need to be.⁴⁵

42 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 2000, pp. 115–156.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 118–127.

44 It is worth stressing that there has always been at least some awareness in the West of Yugoslavia's high-modernist monuments. Articles about them and their designers appeared in such Western periodicals as the French magazine *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, which in 1963 devoted a special section to these works in an issue (no. 108) on modern sacred (!) architecture, and, in 1980, Yugoslavia itself gave them their own independent exhibition at the Venice Biennale (see figs. 49–50).

45 At least some of the monument designers are delighted that present-day artists, musicians, and others consider their monuments so attractive that they use them to support their own creative work, even if the monuments' constitutive meaning is forgotten as a result. Miodrag Živković, for instance, in

The Monuments and Us, Today and Tomorrow

With the change in the political-economic system on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, we were taken over not by a different country that would reinterpret our monuments, but by a different political-economic system that allows us, or kindly leads us – of course under its own conditions – to do this ourselves.⁴⁶ We who work in the local art world are, generally, very happy to cooperate in this, and our enthusiasm for the high-modernist monuments is in fact more vocal, and more unanimous, than that of our Yugoslav counterparts ever was.⁴⁷

We might see, or at least sense, that there is something problematic about what we are doing, but it is hard to put our finger on it because, as a rule, we sincerely wish that it was not a problem. In most cases, we do not find ourselves in these processes if we do not have at least some fondness for the former Yugoslavia and/or its socialist system, but also not if we do not have an affinity for high art and have not been educated in the Western art canon. So we find ourselves in a dilemma: if we go too far in one direction, we are soon less on the side of socialism and more on the side of capitalism, at least more than we would like to be, since our uncritical support for the high-modernist monuments means necessarily that we are supporting the ideological foundations and apparatuses of capitalism – we are, in a way, acting as capitalist apparatchiks.⁴⁸ But if we go more explicitly in the opposite direction, our critique of art as serving the hegemony will undermine our own position in the art system in which we work, as well as those of our colleagues, who may have no desire to hear facts of this sort being trumpeted. Only with great unease do we go against the current when Balkan creativity, which is otherwise largely unnoticed, is now finally receiving at least some of the attention we so ardently desire from the global art system. We are also troubled by the thought that our criticism might, in the short term at least, even do harm to these monuments and the efforts to preserve them.⁴⁹ So it is a complex

an unpublished interview, enthusiastically told Sanja Horvatinčić how delighted he was to see his monuments appearing in videos by music artists from around the world.

- 46 It is worth noting that while a number of different countries emerged from the former Yugoslavia, the same change in the political-economic system occurred throughout the region: from Yugoslav socialism to neoliberal capitalism.
- 47 A wide range of people participate in the monuments' reinterpretation – not just historians of art and architecture, but practitioners as well: artists, architects and others who are sometimes deeply involved in a related form of art production, including the building of new monuments.
- 48 It is particularly hard to resist doing the kind of prestigious and, potentially, internationally recognized projects that preserve and universalize the Western art system – studies that, for example, try to prove that Yugoslavs had minimalist, participatory, land-art, or anti-monumentalist monuments even before such things appeared in the West, and so on.
- 49 If, however, we participate in the general enthusiasm over these monuments, we may feel that, as a result, these fragile creations will over time receive protection. Since the end justifies the means, we close our eyes to the fact this protection will come (at least partly) from tendencies opposite to those advocated by the socialist system. What will protect them will be primarily their enrollment in the Western art canon, which means that only a part of Yugoslavia's memorial production will be protected, i.e. the monuments that already, at their core, align with the Western art canon. Tourist options, for instance, are already being developed along these lines; see Sanja Horvatinčić, "Between

situation and our position in it is difficult, but a few principal guidelines, things that seem right to follow or at least have a broader discussion about, are clear.

It is very important to persist in actively preserving the entire legacy of Yugoslavia's monuments to the antifascist People's Liberation Struggle and the socialist revolution as a complete testimony to the period and truly unique historical event when the majority of South Slavs were united in a single state and, as the world looked on, were enthusiastically developing their own, highly egalitarian political system. The high degree of equality enjoyed by its citizens and the development and prosperity it brought to the previously much neglected lower levels of society and to more vulnerable groups made this system, for all its shortcomings, an extraordinary, outstanding accomplishment not just in the history of the region, but more broadly as well. This is how it must be recognized and contemplated, and its cultural heritage should be protected accordingly. At the same time, when thinking about Yugoslavia's memorials, we must keep in mind their intrinsic contradictions and ensure that this work is interpreted in a variety of keys, without any exclusionary and uncritical favouring of the high-modernist monuments.

It is similarly important to remember that, in the region of the former Yugoslavia, the very practice of erecting monuments is extremely problematic. We seem incapable of grasping this fact, perhaps in part because of our uncritical delight over the international interest in our high-modernist monuments. What comes into focus is the fact that a monument can be an attractive work of art, while what recedes into the background is the reality that a monument is, primarily and essentially, a political fact with its own agenda, which can be upsetting and polarizing from the very moment the idea of erecting (or re-erecting) it is first proposed. For this reason, monuments are by their very nature problematic, and even more so in ethnically and religiously mixed territories. Nor should we forget that a monument can be an unpredictable and capricious instrument, and that it will almost certainly be so if its conceptual framing is vague or, as in the case of the Yugoslav monuments, the pertinent stakeholders – the commissioners, artists, and consumers – are not in accord with each other. If presented appropriately, the protected memorial landscape of the second Yugoslavia could bear witness not only to its era and the Yugoslav socialist system, but also to these very issues, and thereby clearly show the monuments to be an unsuccessful project of the past that must not be repeated in the present. Given the inflammatory combination of nationalism and turbo-capitalism that now dominates the region, if memory cannot be organized in any way other than by physically inscribing non-consensual messages in a space, then it is far better to do nothing at all. But unfortunately, that's not what happens.

What is actively happening today in the field of monuments relating to the Second World War and the former Yugoslavia is particularly disturbing in this regard. Historical revisionism and the frequently uncritical rejection of the better qualities of the former regime have become common denominators in all the post-Yugoslav countries. When it comes to the Second World War, the emphasis is, of course, not on

the countries' shared triumph of the class war and antifascist resistance, but rather we increasingly hear explanations that the conflict was mainly about local civil wars. In some places, such revisionism is occurring very quickly and visibly, sometimes with the old monuments being regularly vandalized and new ones erected. In other places, it happens more quietly, but it always causes uneasiness and division.⁵⁰ In these countries, where, at the moment, it is clearly impossible to reach a consensus on history, on the need for reconciliations in relation to the events of the Second World War, and on how to achieve them, it is often artists who in the public space reify these non-consensual revisionist tendencies in the form of new monuments. The artists themselves may not understand (or for their own personal benefit may not wish to understand) how problematic their involvement is in such revisionist processes, to which by this very involvement they are lending legitimacy. Their and the public's persistence in the mythic view of art as something that has a positive effect, and of the artist as the one who through certain special capabilities can intervene in difficult situations in positive, healing ways, cleanses these processes of anything problematic in the eyes of the general public.

What has been happening in Slovenia in recent years is a good example of such developments. Here, a large segment of the country's historians, as well as ordinary people surveyed by the media, do not support an uncritical revisionism that would completely upend the general view of the Partisan resistance and the second Yugoslavia, although at the same time they unequivocally condemn the brutal post-war massacres and Yugoslavia's problematic treatment of political prisoners. Nevertheless, for the past several years in the middle of the Slovene capital there stands – thanks in part to the involvement of artists and architects – an oversized monument which, although officially titled *Monument to the Victims of All Wars*, reinforces in both its story and form the idea that what occurred in Slovenia during the Second World War was primarily a civil war and less a war against fascism and the occupying powers, while at the same time it equates those who were in the antifascist resistance with those who collaborated with the occupiers. A few years ago, surprised by the large number of designers who submitted proposals to the competition for the monument – despite the many years of public debates over whether it was justified and what purpose it would serve – I decided to do a series of interviews with the applicants about why they chose to take part in the competition, but they were so unresponsive and uncomfortable talking about it that I never formalized the project. Apart from usually insisting that they did not agree with revisionism, their answers at times somewhat resembled those of the Yugoslav monument designers – from saying that since the monument was going to be erected in any case, it was better that it at least be a great work of art (which only they were capable of ensuring), to offering some half-baked understanding of minimalist abstraction as being timeless, apolitical, etc. According to what some applicants said, their designs would have critically subverted the set assignment; but given that they were not chosen

50 See, for example, Todor Kuljić, *Kultura sećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, Čigoja, Belgrade, 2006; *Of Red Dragons and Evil Spirits: Post-Communist Historiography between Democratization and the New Politics of History*, ed. Oto Luthar, Central European University Press, Budapest and New York, 2017; 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.

and practically no one knows who they are, what their participation mainly did was only to further legitimize the competition and the monument. It is a sad reality that artists and architects themselves continue to propagate the need for such monuments and justify them in extremely problematic terms, whereby they offer themselves in service to the nation as being able to help it attain some illusory wholeness, restore its health, heal its wounds, and so on – all promises they cannot keep.⁵¹

The story of socialist Yugoslavia's high-modernist monuments, as I am telling it, may at times seem exaggerated or at least naive; if told with other presuppositions and with a focus on other phenomena, it would undoubtedly be different. But given that it is currently those of us who work in the art field in the post-Yugoslav countries who still – unlike researchers in other fields – most refuse to recognize and address certain anomalies and contradictions connected with these monuments, my insistence that we consider these issues is more than reasonable. Our work influences not only our own art field but also the entire interpretation of the monuments phenomenon, including the construction of memory and ideology in the former Yugoslavia. And, what is especially problematic, we make it harder to think about Yugoslav socialism as a sociopolitical model worthy of consideration. Such thinking, indeed, obliges us to acknowledge that Yugoslav socialism also had its bewildering and contradictory aspects as well as, and especially, its shortcomings. It is, I expect, our being trapped inside the art system and its dense mythology that most inhibits us from problematizing the extraordinary artistic autonomy in the monument field of socialist Yugoslavia and asking ourselves why this did not lead to the development of a more inclusive and collectivist artistic expression better suited to the country, but instead led mainly to conformity with the Western canon and the bizarre situation of having socialist monuments that quite plainly contradict socialist values. But until we articulate these issues and bring them to light, and stop facetiously describing as “socialist” something that at its core is not socialist, our interpretations – and those in other fields that rely on them – will be misguided and even damaging. They will easily go on swinging to the “right” and designate the Yugoslav monuments and their creators as totalitarian – despite the fact that artistic freedom is realized to a rare degree in these works – or to the “left” and designate the monuments and their creators as sincere champions of the revolution, the working class, equal rights, the Non-Aligned Movement, and much else, even though these creators and their works show a clear predilection for individualism and the values of bourgeois art.⁵²

- 51 Beti Žerovc, “Spomenik žrtvam vseh vojn in problematike sodobnega postavljanja javnih skulptur in spomenikov v Sloveniji”, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2020, pp. 172–187. Revisionism, it seems, has no particular style. In Skopje, it clothes itself in neohistoricism, while in Ljubljana it finds a model in the socialist heritage itself: the *Monument to the Victims of All Wars* supposedly emulates, among other things, Edvard Ravnikar's two paradigmatic modernist towers not far from where it stands. Such facts negate the myth that art forms can be revolutionary in and of themselves.
- 52 A frequent problem in research remains the researcher's tendency to conform with the demands and stated principles of the ones who funded their work. On the difficulties in research that derive, among other things, from the lack of data that would give us a broader perspective than the usual fixation solely on the field of high art, which regularly and abundantly documents itself, see Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, pp. 55–57.

And by the same token, the practice of building ineffectual monuments will continue to be in demand and attractive, and what is more, we will not find enough solid ground on which to face the difficult but urgent question: What sort of monument, if any, will effectively reproduce the ideology of the welfare-state, egalitarian, and even multi-ethnic society?

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