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wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

Mechanisms of Memory: Remembrance in Contemporary Art Practices in the Post-Yugoslav Space

verfasst von / submitted by
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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2019 / Vienna 2019

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it
appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 835

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears
on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Kunstgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Prof. Noit Banai, PhD

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Prof. Dr. Noit Banai for being instrumental in shaping my critical mind. Thank you for your unwavering support over the years, your encouragement and all the creative time we spent together.

I am extremely grateful to my dear friend Georgia Curran, for proofreading this thesis and helping me shape it into the work it is today.

A special thank you to all of my friends who supported me throughout this process, my wonderful frustracija. collective and all the colleagues that made this Master's program such a treat. Lastly, my gratitude goes to my family, my parents and my brother, without whose support I would not be able to achieve my goals.

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Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to examine the practice of artists who are concerned with the subject of memory and social amnesia. In the following, I analyze works produced between the year 2000 until the present, by artists who are either from the South Slavic region or are in other ways connected to the geo-political context of Yugoslavia, in particular to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. From the year 2000 onward, there has been a periodical influx of artists coming from the post-Yugoslav space who are considering the problematics of politics of memory through the appropriation of anti-fascist monuments in their work. It is essential to situate and analyze the many aspects of these works and their importance in a contemporary context.

This thesis thus examines the distinct art practices the selected artists employ in approaching memory and remembrance of the ‘shared-forgotten’ past of Yugoslavia. With the rise of nationalism and the collapse of Yugoslavia, the ultimate desire of the newly established governments has been to distance themselves from the shared communist history. Often, these memories were equalized with the anti-fascist past and thus obliterated altogether. Therefore, this thesis considers the strategies through which the selected artists approach this subject.

The destruction of the anti-fascist history of Yugoslavia is best conveyed through the examination of the commemorative monuments built during the Tito presidency (1953–1980). Although their official purpose was to commemorate the victims of fascism, their main goal was to gather all the peoples¹ of Yugoslavia under one banner of ‘brotherhood and unity’. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, most of these monuments were either demolished or given another purpose, in the hopes of erasing the old. Consequently, all of the artworks that I analyze reference, subtly or otherwise, the places and objects that are connected to and commemorate the Yugoslav legacy via the anti-fascist monument.

By employing theories on collective memory, the importance of the monuments will be explained, as structures of remembrance, that simultaneously, commemorate and shape

¹ *Narodi* (peoples) and *narodnosti* were the general terms that were used to define all the dominant Slavic peoples and all other national minorities living on the Yugoslav territory.

collective memories. Utilizing said theories, I further explain and classify different memory strategies as well as shed light on various means of memory destruction. The specific monuments as well as the sites appropriated by the chosen artists represent an anchor of memory in history that needs to be rehabilitated. The thesis closely scrutinizes the events connected to the erasure of specific memories as well as the revival of these memories through the selected works.

Since the fall of Yugoslavia, the political situation in the Balkans remains unchanged. The ethnic animosities became internalized in the society, while the days of ‘brotherhood and unity’ have been reduced to a myth. The past has not been addressed properly and the hostility between the countries has not yet diminished. On the contrary, with the upsurge of nationalist politics in the last couple of years, the friction has only grown stronger. The relevance of this thesis lies precisely in the inability of the countries of the former Yugoslavia (namely Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia) to reconcile with the past and embrace their antifascist legacy. The selected artists -- because of their engagement with the unwanted past -- are being ignored in their respective countries. All of them have left their countries of origin, pursuing better conditions for existence but also a stronger visibility and support for their art and, most importantly, a place where their political stance would have a better impact. This thesis strives to acknowledge the importance of artistic actions of dredging up the past, in the context of reestablishing the antifascist memory, but also as being the platform for questioning today’s politics of exclusion.

Literature Review

The relevant literature for this thesis consists of a mix between primary, secondary literature and press articles (including interviews). The thesis itself is multidisciplinary in that it is not solely concerned with art history but also with the disciplines of history, sociology, psychology and social anthropology.

There has been a fair amount of academic scholarship written about the importance of monuments to memory and its erasure. Papers such as *Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow*, written by Benjamin

Forest and Juliet Johnson² in 2002, and *Cultural policies, identities and monument building in Southeastern Europe* by Milena Dragičević Šešić³ from 2001 situate monuments as a principal link between memory and national identity. Using their theories, it makes it possible to better understand the need for building, and later, the need for systematic destruction of the NOB⁴ monuments throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia.

In the last couple of years, there has been an increased global interest for the anti-fascist Yugoslav monuments. Many articles focusing on these structures were published in magazines such as *The Guardian*⁵ and *Smithsonian*⁶. Nevertheless, this interest revolves mostly around their modernist, brutalist and, one might say, futurist aesthetic. The monuments have been appropriated for fashion, music videos⁷ and other, while being stripped of their history and symbolism through this appropriation. In addition, many of these articles are in reality connected to the Dutch photographer Jan Kempnaers and his series of photographs named *Spomeniks*, which will be approached later in the thesis. Although these articles do not participate in the contribution to the field, it is important to be aware of them. They point to, although superficial for now, a revival of the Yugoslav antifascist monuments, and with it, the reintroduction of the memories that were left to decay.

The importance of the anti-fascist Yugoslav monuments and the erasure of memories they symbolized came to the attention of scholars only in the recent past, albeit rarely. What follows are articles that emerged as most significant while researching this particular topic. The first article, by Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović in 2010, is titled *Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Function of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space*⁸ and was published as a chapter of the *Symbols that Bind, Symbols that Divide* book. In the article, the

² Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet–Era Monuments and Post–Soviet National Identity in Moscow, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 92, No. 3., September 2002, pp. 524-547.

³ Milena Dragičević Šešić, Cultural Policies, Cultural Identities and Monument Building in Southeastern Europe, in: *Cultural Identity Politics in the (Post-)Transitional Societies*, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 31-46.

⁴ NOB= Narodno Oslobođilačka Borba also known as National Liberation Struggle

⁵ Joshua Surtees, *Spomeniks: the second world war memorials that look like alien art*, 18th June 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/international>

⁶ Jennifer Billock, *Massive, Awe-Inspiring Sculptures Dot the Former Yugoslav Countryside*, 17th September 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/>

⁷ Alan Walker (feat. Au/Ra and Tomine Harket), 27.07.2018., *Darkside* [Video file]

⁸ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, *Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Function of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space*, in: *Symbols that Bind, Symbols that Divide*, 2014, pp. 13-37.

authors explain the reasons behind the rise of extreme nationalism in Yugoslavia that ultimately marked its dissolution. They analyze how newly-created nations took care of the memories of the country that no longer existed and, more importantly, the different ways of engaging with the monuments as physical representations of these memories. This scholarly text was crucial for the grounding of the thesis historically. Moreover, this thesis updates Begić and Mraović's theory of the interconnection between addressing the past regime and the intensity with which the NOB monuments were handled. The theory was significant for a better understanding of how the past was reinterpreted, appropriated or vigorously erased for the needs of the newly founded states.

Another important article, by the art historian Sanja Horvatinčić, *The Formal Heterogeneity of Monumental Sculpture and Strategy of Memory in Socialist Yugoslavia*⁹, was published in 2012 within the museum institution magazine *Anali Galerije Antuna Augustinčića*. This article became integral for the methodological research of the connection between monuments and memory. Horvatinčić analyses the monumental sculpture from the period of socialist Yugoslavia in the context of the interdisciplinary field of memory studies. Following the framework of memory studies provided by Siegfried J. Schmidt, the author focuses on Yugoslav memory politics and its active depiction of social memory in the form of a monument.

An interesting article dealing with the partisan monuments and their rehabilitation is written by Gal Kirn and Robert Burghardt under the name *Yugoslav Partisan Memorials: Between Memorial Genre, Revolutionary Aesthetics and Ideological Recuperation*¹⁰ and published in the *Manifesta Journal* No.16. This article was instrumental in my methodological approach to the Yugoslav antifascist monuments, namely, their analysis through the prism of the ideology they were built upon. Moreover, the authors follow how the perspective of this ideology and the monuments changed throughout the turbulent history of this area. Expanding on the article's formal study of the abstract forms of the monuments, I was able to research the cause

⁹ Sanja Horvatinčić, *The Formal Heterogeneity of Monumental Sculpture and Strategy of Memory in Socialist Yugoslavia*, *Anali Galerije Antuna Augustinčića*, No.31., 2012, pp. 81-106.

¹⁰ Gal Kirn, Robert Burghardt, *Yugoslavian Partisan Memorials: Between Memorial Genre, Revolutionary Aesthetics and Ideological Recuperation*, in: *Manifesta Journal. Of Regret and Other Back Pages*, No.16., n.d., pp. 66-75.

for the occurrence of not only the abstract form but also the fluidity of said monuments in terms of representation.

As it has already become clear, through the introduction of selected literature, the value of the antifascist Yugoslav monuments as physical representatives of the memory of the former regime has been properly addressed in many scholarly writings. Nevertheless, most of the articles and texts approach this particular topic from a historical point of view, explaining and concretizing the past. My thesis aims to take on the NOB monuments and the antifascist ideology they carry within themselves and to situate a place for them in the present. The way monuments have been treated can point to different ways that nationalism has transformed the memory spaces in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. What is also being overlooked are the efforts of contemporary artists coming from the territory of the former Yugoslavia that are engaging with the antifascist past in their work in order to uncover the archived and censored memories. Furthermore, through addressing the past (in the works, the past is mainly represented in a form of the monument) and bringing it to the present, they are making visible the many forms of oppression and ethno-nationalist antagonisms that are still more than visible in the states of Ex-Yugoslavia. My thesis tends to closely inspect the works of the selected artists and treat this gap in the field, addressing the connection between the antifascist legacy, NOB monuments, contemporary artists and present forms of fascism.

Methodology

The methodology focuses on the analysis of the questions of politics of memory – how memory was made, distorted, and erased – during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and what mechanisms contemporary artists employ to start a constructive dialogue about this memory in the present.

In order to ground the thesis in the field of memory studies, I engage with the study of collective memory studied by Maurice Halbwachs as well as the continuation of this research, by Jan Assmann, amongst other researchers and writers. Assmann, who extended Halbwachs' studies to communicative and cultural memory, proved to be very helpful in examining the events connected to the erasure of the specific memories as well as the rehabilitation of these memories through the selected artworks. Assmann's main methodological contribution to my work is the definition and classification of different types of memory, namely collective, communicative and cultural memory. This author's interpretations of different types of

memory were instrumental in better understanding how the nationalist thought was carried through the collective of a country, as well as how were the memory spaces changed by this nationalist insertion.

When writing about memory, one also has to study the methods of forgetting. Subsequently, the comparative research done by Aleida Assmann between various ways of forgetting is taken into consideration. Assmann differentiates between the passive and active ways of forgetting, arguing that the storing of memory (in an archive) does not exist in a totalitarian state. The scholarly writings of Aleida Assmann were utilized for the comprehension of the mediation of memory in SFR Yugoslavia as well as in the countries that were constituted after the breakup of the country.

In the interest of grounding the importance of the anti-fascist Yugoslav monuments as the symbols of the erased past as well as the different treatment they received after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, I examine a number of authors that are making the connection between memory and the symbolism monuments carry. Next to the articles mentioned in the Literature Review, the concept *lieux de memoire* coined by the French historian Pierre Nora in his three-volume collection of books *Les Lieux de Memoire*¹¹ is explored. The concept is defined by Nora as “... any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community”. This definition is important for my further research. By constituting the National Liberation War monuments as *lieux de memoire*, the material triggers for collective memory, I tend to illuminate the crucial role monuments bore for constituting the ‘brotherhood and unity’ ideology.

This thesis also offers a comprehensive examination of the history of Yugoslavia as a whole and of the newly constituted countries. For the main body, I draw on the writings of many authors in order to give a complete and, more importantly, objective outlook on the making, breaking and subsequent forgetting of memory on this particular geopolitical space. Some of the authors are Bette Denich with her article *Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies*

¹¹ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

*and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide*¹² and Heike Karge with *Mediated Remembrance*¹³. Bette Denich's article was of significant importance for determining how the memory in SFR Yugoslavia was 'made' and how it was extended throughout the Federal Republic. Heike Karge utilizes the phrase *mediation of remembrance* for describing the construction of a universal Yugoslav history based on the promise of a better future. Both of these writings were formative because they pointed out to the discrepancies in the memory mediation, thus making it easier to establish ethno-centrism in the late years of the SFRY.

An article that was crucial in the methodological research of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the acceleration of nationalist thought within SFR Yugoslavia is *Unimagined communities: the power of memory and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia* written by Ilana R. Bet-El¹⁴. Approaching the words "I remember" as a transformation platform, with the power to transmute every event into a personal memory, Ilana R. Bet-El gives examples of five different historical times that were used simultaneously in the dissolving SFR Yugoslavia in order to corroborate the nationalist claims.

The concept of nostalgia, precisely Yugo-nostalgia, as a sentimentality for the past lived or imagined, is scrutinized in the thesis. For a methodological analysis of different types of Yugo-nostalgia that is present in today's society of the post-Yugoslav countries, most beneficial were the theories of Zala Volčič and Monika Palmberger. Volčič examines various aspects of (Yugo)nostalgia and categorizes three main nostalgias: revisionist, aesthetic and escapist.¹⁵ Building upon Volčič's categorization, I propose a fourth nostalgia towards the former Yugoslavia. In this aspect Monika Palmberger's article *Nostalgia Matters: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as Potential Vision for a Better Future*¹⁶ was crucial for this addition. Palmberger argues that nostalgia over the past can reflect creativeness toward a better future.

¹² Bette Denich, Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide, in: *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2. (1994), pp. 367-390.

¹³ Heike Karge, Mediated remembrance: local practices of remembering the Second World War in Tito's Yugoslavia, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 16:1, 2009, pp. 49-62.

¹⁴ Ilana R. Bet-El, Unimagined communities: the power of memory and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, in: *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe : Studies in the Presence of the Past*, 2004.

¹⁵ Zala Volčič, Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24:1, 2007, pp. 21-38.

¹⁶ Palmberger, Monika, Nostalgia Matters: Nostalgia for Yugoslavia as Potential Vision for a Better Future, *Sociologija* 4, 2008, pp. 99-114.

Regarding the sources used for the specific artists whose work has been selected for this thesis. My research contains various exhibition catalogues, art magazines as well as the websites of the artists themselves, different art projects and art initiatives. Many of the sources concerning the specific artists only exist in the form of press articles available on the Internet. Although most of the artists are known names in the European contemporary art scene, very few academic articles have been written about these specific works, especially in the context of the politics of memory.

The 2016 article by Antonio Grgić titled *Shadows of the Ruined Monuments: Non-Documenting of Performances as a Negation of the Magical Dimension of a Picture, Text or History*¹⁷¹⁸ written for the magazine for contemporary visual arts *Život Umjetnosti* was important during my search for the definition of the selected works. He states that in the works of Siniša Labrović and David Maljković, the artists are producing “a performative monument to a still existing but forgotten monument”¹⁹. Moreover, Grgić argues that nowadays the only possible antifascist monument is indeed a performative one. Grgić’s interpretation of the works of Labrović and Maljković was decisive for finding an appropriate way to approach and analyze the works that will be showcased later in the thesis. Further in the text, he goes on to explain his performance “Sjene/Shadows” (2015) in which he commemorates destroyed monuments by drawing their shadows on the pavement as producing a new immaterial monument. Expanding on the term ‘immaterial monument’, used by Grgić, helped with the close analysis of the chosen works of Milica Tomić addressed in this thesis. His article opens up a different way of looking at works that take in hand the antifascist past of Yugoslavia, as actions of resistance against forgetting but also as a reaction to contemporary politics of the countries in the post-Yugoslav space.

Two authors that should be mentioned when researching the work of Siniša Labrović are Sanja Potkonjak and Tomislav Pletenac. Their contribution to the book post-Yugoslav

¹⁷ Antonio Grgić, *Sjene Srušenih Spomenika: nedokumentiranje performansa kao negacija magijske dimenzije slike, teksta ili historije*, *Život umjetnosti* no. 96., 2016, pp. 130-139.

¹⁸ Translation of the title was done by the author of the thesis. The full original name of the article is *Sjene Srušenih Spomenika: nedokumentiranje performansa kao negacija magijske dimenzije slike, teksta ili historije*.

¹⁹ Antonio Grgić, 2016, p. 134.

Constellations²⁰ as well as the research paper *When Monuments Get Alive – “The Art of Remembrance” in Public Space*²¹ is an insightful read about the different contemporary artistic approaches to the collective memory of Socialism and re-memorialization of the antifascist monuments in Croatia.

Importance of topic

The disintegration of Yugoslavia occurred almost thirty years ago, circa 1992. This recent past is not only continuously under the process of reinterpretation but is also undergoing active construction on both the collective and individual level. Due to the rise of exclusive nationalism, which is still very prevalent today, and the selectivity of remembering and forgetting it is imposing, there is a grave discrepancy in the memory of the shared Yugoslav past. The communist history has been equalized with the anti-fascist struggle that SFRY (Socialist Federative Republic Yugoslavia) was built upon then erased altogether.

In the years after the breakup of Yugoslavia, namely between 1992 and 1995, while socialism was indeed left in the past, the monuments that were built remained as a tangible remainder of this collective apparatus. They symbolized the shared socialist past and the antifascist struggle of ‘the people’ and so they became the targets, symbolically and de facto, of the dominant regimes. Monuments are closely linked to memory as well as to remembering as a process. Since remembering always occurs in a specific context, it is not surprising that in the time of major changes entire landscapes are symbolically unmade and remade to influence collective memory and the process of remembering. Many of the monuments were vandalized and destroyed, but because of their ambiguous and modern exterior, a number of them were easily integrated into the new nationalist narrative of the new nation states. No matter what actions were made on them, in the end, these monuments were almost entirely stripped of their initial purpose and symbolism.

²⁰ Sanja Potkonjak, Tomislav Pletenac, *The Art and Craft of Memory: Re-Memorialization Practices in Post-Socialist*

Croatia, in: *Post-Yugoslav Constellations Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, 2016, pp. 65-82.

²¹ Sanja Potkonjak, Tomislav Pletenac, *Kada spomenici ožive – “umjetnost sjećanja” u javnom prostoru*, in: *Stud. ethnol. Croat.*, Vol. 23, 2011, pp. 7-24.

In the current political climate in which right-wing politics is once again growing stronger, not only in the post-Yugoslav space but in the whole of Europe, artists who are addressing the problematics of the past and the process of memory have a very important task. How are these artists approaching the questions of erased memory in the context of their own countries? In what way are specific artists appropriating and referencing the spaces and objects of remembrance? What is the significance of working with the past, specifically using the motif of a monument which represents the erased past of a country, in a contemporary context?

While treating the questions of the unwanted past, these artists are not only re-visioning the forgotten and ignored history, but also opening the way to new mechanisms of interpretation of Yugoslavia. With the goal of remembering, they are also deconstructing the many myths on which the new countries based their exclusive nationality as well as their hatred towards the old regime. By using the monuments in their work, the artists are engaging in the process of remembrance but also giving these monumental sculptures back their initial symbolism. Ultimately, by re-visioning the past, they are pinpointing to the discrepancies and far right politics of exclusion that is happening today.

Contribution to knowledge

Approaching memory through the scope of the antifascist Yugoslav monuments is not a broadly researched subject. The article written by Sadina Begić and Boriša Mraović in 2010, by the name of *Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Function of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space*²² is one of the few academic papers dealing with the question of erased past in the connection to the Yugoslav anti-fascist monuments and memorials. In this article, the writers explain the reasons behind the rise of extreme nationalism in Yugoslavia that ultimately marked its dissolution. They analyzed how newly-made nations treated the memories of the country that no longer existed and, more importantly, the different ways of engaging with the monuments as physical representations of these memories. This article provides a methodological framework that this thesis would like to develop and contribute to.

²² Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, pp. 13-37.

Consulting different approaches to memory studies, one of the goals of this thesis is to examine how countries like Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia dealt with the Yugoslav socialist monuments. More importantly, by analyzing this approach to the monuments, one can shed light on the treatment of the shared history in these countries. My goal is to inspect the reasoning behind different behaviors towards the Yugoslav history in the respective countries and especially how these actions reflected on the Yugoslav monuments. Furthermore, with the close analysis of the artists and their work in connection to memory studies, I am examining alternatives to engaging with the past. This thesis is considered as an interdisciplinary work, with its main objective to fill the gap that occurred within the theories in this particular field.

In the last ten years there has been an increasing interest for the Yugoslav anti-fascist monuments and memorial sites. While many articles have been written, their ambiguous exterior has led to a narrow focus on their brutalist architecture and visual characteristics, while neglecting their symbolic value as well as the cause for their subsequent demise. One of the contributions of my thesis is thus to situate the monuments in a different framework, one that does not isolate them within one discipline but activates them alongside various considerations – with the issue of memory and processes of remembering as central discourses.

Another goal is to present the varied layers of these monuments and what they stood for through the history of this territory during the Tito presidency and in its aftermath. I consider how the rise of nationalism and the breakup of Yugoslavia affected their initial symbolism and ask what they can reveal to us about contemporary politics.

One of the most significant contributions of this thesis is to the artists coming from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Artists coming from the so called “post-Yugoslav²³ space”²⁴ have been marginalized by Western art history and they have not been properly represented. Moreover, these artists, working with the socialist past of Yugoslavia, have largely been ignored in their own countries as well. Platforms for the revision of the past in these countries are scarce, and most of the artists whose works I analyze have not had any kind of academic consideration. An article written by Antonio Grgić in 2016 by the name *Shadows*

²³ More about the concept of post-Yugoslavia can be found in: Mitja Velikonja, *Ways of Remembering Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav rear-view mirror*, in: *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective*, 2017, pp: 515- 548.

²⁴ The term “post-Yugoslav space” refers, in this thesis, to the territory that once constituted SFR Yugoslavia, and to the new states that were created out of the Yugoslav federation.

*of the Ruined Monuments: Non-Documenting of Performances as a Negation of the magical dimension of a picture, text or history*²⁵ is very important in these terms, because it came closest to making a connection between the works contemporary artists produced in relation to erased memory.

The research undertaken with this thesis contributes to the analysis of the chosen work through the framework of memory studies. Moreover, it contributes by inserting new artistic practices into the discipline of art history and, with that, helps shed visibility to the contemporary art coming from the post-Yugoslav space.

Limitations and key assumptions

The thesis focuses on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, specifically on the way Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia have been negotiating their shared forgotten past. My thesis will not closely examine the topic of memory and social amnesia within the rest of the countries that comprised SFR Yugoslavia, namely Macedonia, Slovenia, etc. The three above mentioned countries are the focal point of the thesis for their turbulent interrelationship and the extreme way with which they coped with their mutual antifascist legacy.

The thesis does not analyze nor compare countries of the Eastern Block with specific countries of Yugoslavia. It also restrains itself from analyzing the way monuments have been treated in other former Communist countries. I do not attempt to make parallels or connections between countries and different variations of the totalitarian regime, since it is not relevant to my research.

Although the Yugoslav World War II monuments and memorials are an important part of my thesis, I do not go into a detailed analysis of all the monuments and memorial sites situated in this specific area. I closely examine their general purpose and symbolic value, the way they were treated after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and how they are being appropriated today by contemporary artists. They represent the physical manifestation of the notion of brotherhood and unity, anti-fascism and shared history; through them, I can analyze the workings of collective memory and the erasure of history. Examining the monuments, their architecture and the spaces they were built upon is too extensive of an undertaking and ultimately not the

²⁵ Antonio Grgić, 2016, pp. 130-139.

aim of this thesis. The main focus is on the contemporary artists as well as their work and, through this framework, the anti-fascist monuments are inspected.

The main limitation concerns the artists that have been chosen for this thesis. I closely examine works of specific artists coming from the post-Yugoslav region, namely Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, and the distinct art practices they employ in approaching the memory and remembrance of the shared forgotten past of Yugoslavia. I do not attempt to introduce all the artists coming from this region who may be addressing the erasure of the memory and the anti-fascist legacy. In addition, the artists from other countries that comprised SFR Yugoslavia will not be included. The artworks I am addressing in the thesis were made from the year 2000 onward; therefore, one of the limitations that concerns my thesis is a temporal one.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is organized in three parts: the first establishes the historical framework while the second engages with the theoretical background used for this study. The third part consists of the case studies of four different artists: Milica Tomić, Siniša Labrović, David Maljković and Braco Dimitrijević.

The first chapter, titled “Building a Lie on a Distorted Truth” closely looks at the history of Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav context with the emphasis on monuments. Here, the formation of SFR Yugoslavia after World War II, as well as its subsequent dismantlement following the death of Tito is examined. The symbolism monuments exuded during the existence of this country is analyzed as well as the way they have been treated after the dissolution. I am interested in how their initial symbolism changed, and how the newly founded countries with their extreme nationalism handle these physical representations of the memories they wanted to erase.

The second chapter, titled “Collective Memory and Erasure of Past” defines key notions of memory studies that are used as a framework for better understanding the historical context as well as the analysis of the selected artworks. Differences between mediated, collective and individual memory are defined with the help of, primarily, Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, bringing to light different understandings of the notion of remembrance. Amongst

others, Aleida Assmann's definitions of active and passive ways of forgetting²⁶ are also taken into consideration. Finally, the notion of "Yugonostalgia"²⁷ as a product of late capitalism is also be mentioned.

Close analyses of the selected artists and their works are performed within chapters three through six. The main topic of the third chapter "Body as a Monument" is the Belgrade-born artist Milica Tomić. Two of her works, *Belgrade Remembers* (2001) and *One day, a burst of machine gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise* (2010) are subjected to a close analysis. Tomić's unique approach to the events that marked the People's Liberation Army fight against the Nazis during the Second World War is the focus of this study. In both works, the artist engages with the places situated in the city of Belgrade, with the aim of breaking the amnesia that permeates these important historical events occurring during the Second World War.

The fourth chapter "In Dialogue with the Monument" focuses on Siniša Labrović and his work *Bandaging the Wounded* (2000). This was Labrović's first public space action and at the same time his entry to his practice as a performance artist. Labrović's specific critique of the apathy towards the antifascist past in Croatia and his personal contact with the monument are considered.

David Maljković and his two video works and projects, *Scenes for a New Heritage* (2004-2006) and *Retired Form* (2008) appear as the main protagonist of the fifth chapter, "Re-imagining the Monument". *Scenes for a New Heritage* travels into the future and depicts the life of an antifascist monument in a time the does not remember its purpose. In *Retired Form*, Maljković gives the neglected structures the opportunity to be reimagined and possibly to be freed from their political and ideological baggage and live a new utopian life.

Finally, the sixth chapter, "Questioning (Obsolete) Monument" analyses the work of Sarajevo-born artist Braco Dimitrijević, *New Monument / Under this stone there is a monument to the victims of war and cold war* (2006). *New Monument* was one of the three winning works

²⁶ Aleida Assmann, Canon and Archive, in: *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 2010, pp. 97-107.

²⁷ Nicole Lindstrom, Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia in Former Yugoslavia, *East Central Europe / ECE*, Vol. 32, No. 1-2, 2005, pp. 191-226.

submitted to the public competition of the multidisciplinary project “De/construction of Monument” that was active from 2004-2007. Through a sarcastic critique of the revisionist politics implemented by the government of Bosnia, Dimitrijević opens up a new discourse, urging the community to begin questioning the missing past of the country.

Chapter One

Building a Lie On a Distorted Truth

In order to comprehend the impact that the revision of forgotten memories carried within itself, one has to start from the beginning and understand the situation in which these memories were made. In this case, with the appropriation of the antifascist Yugoslav monuments, the mapping of the events should start before their creation. The disintegration of Yugoslavia happened almost thirty years ago. This recent past is not only continuously under the process of reinterpretation but is also undergoing active construction at both the collective and individual level.²⁸

This chapter begins by laying the ground for a better understanding of the socio-political structure created after the Second World War inside a new country called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The timeline of this history is divided into three main groups.

The first subchapter examines the formation of Yugoslavia as well as the narrative constructed by Josip Broz Tito that subsequently spurred the creation of modernist monuments. The second subchapter dives into the symbolism that these newly erected monuments carried and communicated throughout the duration of Yugoslavia and their particular visual lexicon of the message of Brotherhood and Unity. The rise of nationalism and subsequent dissolution of Yugoslavia are the subject of the third subchapter.

Using the example of these monuments, subchapter four considers the different erasure and appropriation strategies of the countries that came out of the ashes of Yugoslavia. Additionally, the rise of “turbo sculptures” is also taken into account. Turbo sculptures, a peculiar phenomenon localized on the territory of contemporary Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia, is mentioned in order to clarify the identity crisis of the citizens of these respective countries following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Ultimately, subchapter five sheds light on today’s perspective of the monuments and the increasing interest in the “Spomeniks”.

²⁸ Sandina Begic, Borisa Mraovic, 2014, p. 35.

1.1 Making of Yugoslavia (history of SFRY)

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFR Yugoslavia or SFRY) was built up from the remnants of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was demolished when the Nazi troops occupied the country during the Second World War. The idea of a united country consisting of South Slavs, however, was created much earlier. It was conceived through a desire of the people living on the territory of today's Serbia and Croatia to gain independence from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, empires that had dominated the political and economic life of this area between 1870 and the beginning of the First World War. Territories that were a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1918 formed a monarchy under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This represented a modern state, created after the conclusion of the First World War and the disintegration of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empire.²⁹ In 1929, King Alexander I renamed the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the land of the South Slavs³⁰.

In 1941, during the Second World War, the Kingdom was occupied by the Axis powers. The royal family fled to London, leaving the country in ruins. On November 29th, 1945, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed following the deposition of King Peter II in which he recognized the end of the monarchy and the governing of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia as the legitimate government. Eventually, the country changed its name to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Josip Broz Tito, the leader of the Yugoslav guerrilla movement – partisans – during World War II, went on to become the Prime Minister (1944-1963) and subsequently the President (President for Life) (1953 - 1980) of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with Belgrade as its capital.

The nation consisted of six socialist republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia as well as two autonomous provinces within Serbia - Kosovo and Vojvodina. (fig.1) Yugoslavia was a mix of different cultures, religions and heritage. Although united during the Second World War many of these countries considered each other enemies, fighting on opposite sides. In order to cope with nationalist tendencies, Tito and the

²⁹ Sabrina Villenave, *Memories and reconciliation in Former Yugoslavia*, *Conjuntura Global*, Vol.3, No.1, 2014, p. 49

³⁰ The literal translation of Yugoslavija is The Land of the South Slavs

country's political elite introduced a strict socialist regime, which emphasized the similarities and mutual dependency of different ethnic groups of the six republics within the region. This quickly became the appropriate national narrative, the official "vocabulary of the revolution" which represented not reality as it is, but a vision of the future as it ought to be. For further understanding of the Titoist/Yugoslavism regime, it is important to turn back to the events that occurred on the territory of the (future) Yugoslavia throughout the Second World War.

During the Second World War, the Nazi conquest in 1941 put the Ustasha movement³¹ in charge of the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH)³², including in it a substantial portion of Yugoslav territory. What is important to note is that this regime established a system of repression organized and supervised by home fascists. It was a system that was almost exclusively applied against the local population - especially of minorities: Serbs, Jews, Roma, and the Croatian anti-fascists.

Unlike in Croatia, most of the other Nazi-occupied countries were repressed by these occupying forces. This was a mitigating circumstance since it became possible to transfer the burden of crimes committed during the war solely to an external enemy. In Croatia, however, concentration camps were led by domestic forces; therefore, after the war, the question of responsibility for the crimes committed had to be handled in a different way.

The Ustasha massacres, which occurred in the newly formed Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), evoked an immediate ideological counter reaction from Serbian nationalists, who had organized their own paramilitary forces, by the name of "Chetnik". Their ideology centered around Yugoslav royalism and their objective was dedicated to restoring the pre-war Yugoslav government. "[T]o avoid in the future the great sufferings which the Serbs' neighbors inflict upon them whenever they have an opportunity to do so,"³³ the Chetniks proposed a "homogeneous Serbia,"³⁴ to be accomplished through postwar population exchanges. Building

³¹ Ustasha movement was a Croatian fascist, anti-Yugoslav, ultranationalist and terrorist organization, active between 1929 and 1945.

³² Nezavisna Država Hrvatska = NDH. A puppet state of Nazi Germany from 10th of April 1941 until the early 1945. The head of the state was the "Poglavnik" (a Croatian approximation to the word "Führer") Ante Pavelić.

³³ Bette Denich, 1994, p. 375.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

upon the century-long tradition of expanding a “great Serbia”, the Chetnik projections mirrored the Ustasha program to achieve a “great Croatia”.

For the territory of Yugoslavia, the Second World War also meant a brutal civil war. Mostly in Serbia but also in the other parts of Yugoslavia, a partisan movement was growing.³⁵ The Yugoslav Partisans or the “National Liberation Army (NOB)”³⁶ was the most effective anti-Axis resistance movement in Europe and was led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia with its commander Marshal Josip Broz Tito. The Partisan movement was ultimately not only victorious against the Fascist occupying forces (as well as the Ustasha movement), it also managed to prevail over the likewise antifascist but royalist Chetnik movement that was predominantly taking hold in Serbia. In doing so, the Partisan movement opened up a new path for the realization of the socialist Yugoslavism as a state concept.³⁷

The politics of Yugoslav socialism was based on an attempt to deconstruct the past and present in order to build a prosperous future. Formulating this vision in Yugoslavia’s case was its main ideologue, Edvard Kardelj. Kardelj was one of the leaders of the Liberation Army of Slovenia who later became a federal political leader in socialist Yugoslavia. He is considered the main creator of the Yugoslav socialist system. The new, socialist Yugoslavia was, from its beginning, constructed as the opposite of the old, pre-war one. It was a republic as well as federation, not a monarchy nor a unitary state. as Secondly, it did not aim to construct a Yugoslav nation-state nor a Yugoslav nation. Finally, the new Yugoslav regime aimed for a radical decentralization of the state.³⁸

On an ideological level, the country was built on the concept of “brotherhood and unity” established by the communist resistance movement of all nations that was initiated and cherished in the revolutionary fight led by Josip Broz Tito. The Partisan movement forged Yugoslavia in the course of the Second World War as a revolutionary creation, fighting not only against fascism but also against all political monstrosities that historical fascism has

³⁵ The Yugoslav Partisans or the National Liberation Army was Europe's most effective anti-Nazi resistance movement. The Yugoslav Resistance was led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Second World War. Its commander was Marshal Josip Broz Tito.

³⁶ Narodno Oslobodilačka Borba = NOB

³⁷ Dejan Jović, Croatia in Socialist Yugoslavia, *Reč* 75.21, p. 62.

³⁸ Dejan Jović, Communist Yugoslavia and its “Others”, in: *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, 2006, pp. 277-302.

installed, supported, or provided with ideological references.³⁹ The basic ground for this concept and new Yugoslav identity were two elements – ethnic bonds between South Slavic nations on one side, and their unique socialist structure on the other.⁴⁰

After the Second World War, the political and ideological regime in Yugoslavia became a finely-spun net that made different ethnicities and religions work within the same nation while keeping at bay the ideologies that had led to the ethnic violence during the Second World War. The suppression of memories involving the ethnic conflict was conducted in all fields of social life – through education, media, theatre, film and architecture.

Bette Denich refers to this specific mode of indoctrination encompasses as *Titoist Forgetting*. “In essence, this state-supported collective narrative refused to acknowledge the victims of the Second World War in ethnic terms: all victims of the war, regardless of whether they had died as political opponents fighting the Nazis or whether they were killed because of their ethnicity, were subsumed under the larger category of ‘victims of fascism’.”⁴¹ Other reminders that might ignite interethnic discord and provide an opening for nationalist opponents of the regime were to be kept away from the public eye. From the Titoist regime, the danger was not in the genocide itself, nor its reminders, but in the nationalist ideologies that led to the Second World War atrocities and that lingered after the war, during what appeared to be the successful establishment of a multinational state.⁴²

1.2 Ambiguity of “Brotherhood and Unity”

The War Veterans Union was founded in 1947 with the goal to unite all former partisan fighters in one organization. As a socio-political organization on federal, republican and local levels, the Union saw its primary field of activity as ‘ensuring, paying tribute to, and further developing the traditions of the National Liberation War’⁴³. The Union was structured into a wide range of specialized commissions, with the responsibility of constructing the new

³⁹ Ozren Pupovac, Project Yugoslavia: The Dialectics of the Revolution, *Prelom: Journal for Images and Politics* No.8, 2006, pp. 14.

⁴⁰ Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija – država koja je odumrla. Uspon, kriza i pad Četvrte Jugoslavije*, Samizdat B92, 2003, p. 110.

⁴¹ Stijn Vervaet, Staging the Holocaust in the Land of Brotherhood and Unity: Holocaust Drama in Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2, 2014, p. 231.

⁴² Bette Denich, 1994, p. 370.

⁴³ HR-HDA, 1241/2, SUBNORH/RO 1951, no. 72.

memory of the war. These commissions arranged the erection of war monuments, took care of the graves of fallen war comrades, cooperated with museums and schools and organized the writing of commemorative books as well as local war chronicles. Through their institutionalized activity, War Veterans not only initiated and practiced remembrance of fallen comrades but, more importantly, they acted as a main mediator of remembrance between the local community, the republican and the federal level.⁴⁴

After the war, Josip Broz Tito and the War Veterans Union started commissioning monuments commemorating the victims of fascism. Many of them, built in the 1940s and 1950s, were simple memorial plaques on which the names of the deceased local population were listed. This first phase of memorialization was based on a mixture of popular forms of sculpture and followed the principle of socialist realism.⁴⁵ Many of the monuments commissioned by the War Veterans Union followed the strict program of commemoration without specific ethnic identities or personal characteristics of the fallen individuals.

As it might be expected, not all of the erected memorials reproduced this official narrative. Examples of the non-compliant kind of monuments were emerging all around the country, funded mainly by the local government or local communities. These monuments were not praising the two main elements of socialist Yugoslavia - 'the socialist revolution' and 'brotherhood and unity'. In the local communities, a traditional, dolorous remembrance of the dead dominated the ideologically loaded and officially propagated memories of unified liberation and socialist revolution. These monuments mostly focused on the commemoration of local rather than all-Yugoslav events.⁴⁶

This specific encounter of local practices is important, as the official war narrative was essentially produced with the very aim of delivering a unifying narrative, under the significant catchphrase 'brotherhood and unity'. However, a closer look at these local practices reveals that this syntagm, although widely and most intensely stressed in school textbooks, museums, newspapers and so on, was to remain on a superficial level of official, mostly federal commemorative representations.

⁴⁴ Heike Karge, 2009, p. 50.

⁴⁵ Gal Kirn, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 67.

⁴⁶ Heike Karge, 2009, p. 51.

The second phase, from the mid-1950s to the 1980s, brought an expansive movement of memorial building and memorialization encompassed under the label of “socialist modernism”. These federally financed monuments dedicated to the National Liberation War were, from 1954 onwards, planned mostly by a Special Board at the Central Committee of the Federal War Veterans Union.⁴⁷

Noteworthy here is that the monuments devoted to the partisan struggle do not resemble the many examples of massive socialist realist monuments that are more typical of either Eastern European countries or the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ These monuments did not recall the Second World War, but looked towards a future of freedom, equality, and independence. They stood as a representation of the main goal of socialist Yugoslavia – a better life for everyone – a future that could only exist thanks to the fact that others had given their lives for it.⁴⁹

The monuments were not only modernist, they contained their own peculiar sets of typologies: monumental, symbolic (fists, stars, hands, wings, flowers, and rocks), bold (at times structurally daring), otherworldly and fantastic.⁵⁰ They were made in an abstract manner and, because of that, they belonged to every Yugoslav.⁵¹ The style in which they were built was Socialist Modernism, a universal, abstract style capable of mourning the dead while at the same time promoting national unification. The question arises: How do these modernist and abstract monuments exist in a socialist country? They are not portrait busts of great leaders; they bear no symbols like stars or sickles nor do they depict workers or farmers. Where does this shift from Socialist Realism to Modernism come from?

The year 1948 marks the Tito-Stalin or the Yugoslav-Soviet split. The friction that caused Yugoslavia to be expelled from the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) had many causes, most of which can be linked to Tito’s regional focus and his refusal to accept Moscow as the supreme Communist authority. After the break with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia developed its own socialist politics based on the ideology of non-alignment with a distinct

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁴⁸ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 67.

⁴⁹ Arna Mačkić, “Mortal Cities and Forgotten Monuments”, 9.04.2014, *Failed Architecture*

⁵⁰ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 67.

⁵¹ Willem Jan Neutelings, *Spomenik. The Monuments of Former Yugoslavia*, in: *Commemorate the Past? or Celebrate the Future?*, 2013, p. 19.

historical narrative, centering on Tito's Communist Partisan movement and its accompanying rhetoric, along with a rather liberal cultural politics.⁵²

The resulting 'ideological metamorphosis' of Yugoslav Communists stressed the unique character of the Yugoslav revolution. Additionally, a genuine need to construct a distinctive "Yugoslav way to Socialism" that would be radically different from the Soviet model emerged. The Yugoslav Communist party criticized Soviet Marxism as "revisionism" and instead introduced "original Marxism", a Yugoslav interpretation of Marx's writings.⁵³ After making Edvard Kardelj's interpretation of Marxism the new official political norm, the identity of socialist Yugoslavia was mainly based on a vision of the future assisted with the notion that there is no future without the unity of the peoples.

One of the disputes that ultimately led to Yugoslavia's breakup with the Soviet Union was about the strict usage of the rigid aesthetic dictated by the SSSR, especially the mandatory use of socialist realism in art and architecture.⁵⁴ The official artistic narrative of Yugoslavia began to rapidly distance itself from Socialist Realism soon after the split in 1948. The adoption of the modernist aesthetic by the state authorities, only two years after the Yugoslav-Soviet discord, was established mainly as a signifier of Yugoslavia's independence from the Eastern Bloc. Soon, Socialist Modernism prevailed not only in architecture, but it was especially prominent in sculpture and, later, in other arts such as theatre, cinema, and performance art.⁵⁵

Another important difference between the Yugoslav and the Soviet way of governing is that the Yugoslav state never prescribed an official style in art. Apart from the early post-war period, when Yugoslavia was still a part of the Cominform, throughout the decades leading up to the dissolution of the country, any kind of artistic expression was accepted. The state authorities adopted and appropriated new tendencies and positions in its own cultural policies.

⁵² Vlad Beronja, Stijn Vervaet, After Yugoslavia. Memory on the ruins of history, in: *Post-Yugoslav Constellations Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, 2016, p. 5.

⁵³ Dejan Jović, 2006, pp. 277-302.

⁵⁴ Aaron Kagan Putt, *Abstract Forms/Explicit Intent: Modernist Monuments of Socialist Yugoslavia in Service of the State*, Georgia State University, 2019, p. 29.

⁵⁵ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 69.

An example of the sculptor Vojin Bakić or the architect Bogdan Bogdanović is instructive. Bakić was an artist who spent most of his life working for the state institutions, for whom he executed many public sculptures. Apart from his work for the state, Bakić collaborated with the avant-garde art group EXAT 51⁵⁶, consequently following a path into abstraction and aiming to question traditional patterns of reception / expression. The influences of this collaboration are more than visible on the monuments he produced for the Yugoslav authorities, with examples such as the Monument to the Revolutionary Victory of the People of Slavonia in Kamenska, Croatia, built in 1968 (destroyed in 1992) or *Circles* from 1981, one of the monuments in the Šumarice Memorial Park, Kragujevac, Serbia. Bogdan Bogdanović, a man who considered himself an agnostic, took a critical stance toward the Yugoslav socialist system, all the while fully supporting the partisan struggle. He developed an abstract-surrealist language, which strove toward being universal. His possibly most notable work is the monumental concrete sculpture “Stone Flower”, completed in 1966 and situated near the site of the Jasenovac concentration camp in Croatia.

Adopting and promoting the modernist tendencies served mainly as a means to communicate Yugoslavia’s distinction from the Soviet Union. Additionally, it conveyed the acceptance of the western notions of individuality and freedom of expression that the Modernist movement carried with itself. This departure from the Soviet Union and the simultaneous increase of interest in western influences was an important step in constituting the official Yugoslav model of the “unaligned” state Socialism.⁵⁷

As mentioned above, monuments built from the mid-1950s onward were mainly large abstract structures, employed by the authorities as a symbolic representation of the ideology that was based on a unified nation, moving towards a progressive future. The comprehensive universalism of these structures, seen through their abstraction, made it easy for them to bear different kinds of interpretations and personal associations. Their abstract vocabulary allowed

⁵⁶ EXAT 51 was a Croatian avant-garde group, active from 1950 until 1956. They are most known for organizing five international exhibitions under the name of *Nove Tendencije* (New Tendencies), dedicated to visual research.

⁵⁷ Dejan Jovic, 2006, pp. 277-302.

for an appropriation of meaning that bypasses official narrations, granting access to the monuments even for people who disagreed with their official meaning.⁵⁸

Many of these abstract monuments stand on symbolic sites, where partisan guerrilla fights were taking place during the war. Others were built on places where, during the Second World War, great atrocities against human lives were committed. Following the official narrative of institutionalizing the collective memory of the Second World War, the memorial sites represented partisan universalism, the only social force that really rejected the logic of nationalism and consequently the logic of ethnic cleansing that was imposed by fascist forces.⁵⁹ 'As Communist rule entailed ideological control over the representation of the past, those horrifying events that would disrupt interethnic cooperation were not to be mentioned, except in collective categories, all "victims of fascism" on one side, and all "foreign occupiers and domestic traitors" on the other side.'⁶⁰ Needless to say, some places were easier to 'universalize' than others.

One of the examples of a successful mediated commemoration of a place would be the gigantic project of the memorial area at Tjentište in Sutjeska. (fig.2) The Tjentište monument itself commemorates the fighters and fallen soldiers of the devastating battle of Sutjeska, that took place from May 15th to June 16th, 1943, and in which 7000 lives perished. A massive monument, designed by the sculptor Miodrag Zivković, consisting of two 19m tall white concrete walls. These walls, in their abstract manner, represented wings of victory.⁶¹ Ultimately, the monument, like many others, does not commemorate the pain and death of a great number of people but celebrates victory and the heroes without whose lives lost this would not be possible. Everything was made clear in the opening speech at the ceremony for the inauguration of the central memorial on Tjentište/Sutjeska in 1958, given by Alexander Ranković, the president of the Federal War Veterans Union:

All these territories surrounding Sutjeska, the villages, mountains, forests, meadows and rivers, keep and remind us of the most beautiful memories of the graves of fallen

⁵⁸ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 71.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Bette Denich, 1994, p. 370.

⁶¹ Donald Niebyl, *Tjentište (Тјентуште)*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/>

soldiers, the best sons of our people, and they are at the same time monuments to a glorious past, to a heroic epic, the struggle of our people, who, inspired by revolutionary spirit, gained another important victory in the great National Liberation War. Therefore, Sutjeska has grown into a symbol of moral strength, of determination and of the materialization of brotherhood and unity, this great achievement of our Revolution.⁶²

Since at the Battle of Sutjeska, next to the NDH army, there was a great influx of German and Italian Nazi soldiers, it was easy to put the blame on the “foreign aggressors” and turn the focus to the partisan ideology. Another example of a memory space which instigates the new ideology and commemorates heroic battles and fallen warriors against fascism, is a powerful memorial park and abstract sculpture, in the form of a giant flower, at Jasenovac concentration camp. (fig.3) This concentration camp was built on the site of the largest extermination camp operated by the Hitlerite Independent State of Croatia to effect a final solution against Jews, Gypsies, and the specifically Yugoslav category of Serbs.

It is interesting to notice that the official commemoration of the genocide at Jasenovac was put off and ignored for more than fifteen years after the war. Given the fact that thousands of monuments were built in the country elsewhere, the official disregard towards the victims of Jasenovac needs to be explained. Official commemoration of a place like this was clearly difficult within the frame of the established war narrative, because the very history of the camp challenged one of the most important elements within the officially established war narrative. For the sake of ‘brotherhood and unity’ and in order to reduce Croatian responsibility for the cruelties committed there, the perpetrators were overwhelmingly given the labels of ‘aggressor’, ‘occupying force’ and ‘degenerate individuals’ or even the completely abstract term, ‘enemy’.⁶³

Both victims and perpetrators are identified in the abstract, without specific ethnic identities or other personal characteristics. The Jasenovac monument was erected to be the state sanctioned memorial of mass death⁶⁴ and is one of the very few memorial sites that is not celebrating the

⁶² Heike Karge, 2009, pp. 52-53.

⁶³ Heike Karge, 2009, pp. 54-55.

⁶⁴ Bette Denich, 1994, p. 370.

heroic deaths and lives given for the sake of a brighter future. The Jasenovac memorial complex, along with the monument, is a place that memorializes the uncountable deaths and grief which stayed after. Additionally, since it was one of the few acceptable places where this kind of dolorous moment was approved by the party officials, the Jasenovac monument, the *Stone Flower* soon became the symbol for all the suffering that had occurred during the Second World War.

1.3 Dismantling The Idea of Yugoslavia

At the beginning of the discord that eventually brought the dissolution of the country, Yugoslavia had eight major ethnic populations living in regions that corresponded approximately to the political divisions of the federation. Consequently, the names of the republics generally corresponded to their majority populations. Whereas each region claimed a particular ethnic concentration, no single ethnic group possessed an absolute majority in Yugoslavia.⁶⁵

Peoples of Yugoslavia “imagined” the borders of their respective states as overlapping and clashing. None of the other national groups that constituted the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of the Slovenes, lived within clearly defined ethnic borders inside the federation. Large numbers of Yugoslav peoples lived within one of the other’s “national” territories.

The creation and maintenance of Yugoslavia depended mainly on the interdependence of Serbs and Croats, the country’s two largest national groups. If a separation would occur, Bosnia-Herzegovina posed the greatest challenge to the peaceful break-up of Yugoslavia. Both Serbs and Croats lived on this territory in large numbers, and had historical pretensions to the republic’s territory.⁶⁶ As witnessed in the beginning of the 1990s, the pretensions over large territories in Bosnia and partly Croatia as well as the desire for ethnically clean countries was precisely what led to the interethnic war between these countries.

After the death of Tito in 1980, the decade brought a strengthening of nationalist tendencies within the countries of SFR-Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav government began to back away from communism and stepped into the era of “transition” to a capitalist society. Étienne Balibar in

⁶⁵ Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, 1992, pp. 371-372.

⁶⁶ Vesna Pešić, *Serbian Nationalism and The Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*, Peaceworks No.8, United States Institute of Peace, 1996, p. 22.

his book *We, the people of Europe?* states that the end of state communism did not simply act as a freeing mechanism of the national ideas that were kept at bay in the communist countries. Indeed, nationalism strongly charged with ethnocentrism was in the centre of the post-communist “transition”, but one has to be aware of the intense national character of the communist state itself. For Balibar, what happened in Yugoslavia was a gradation of nationalism: “from federal nationalism or imperial nationalism, to regional and from there to local nationalism.”⁶⁷

Balibar supports his claim with the fact that many communist politicians very rapidly transformed into nationalist supporters. Indeed, in Yugoslavia, the initial development of nationalist political strategies was a product of intellectuals and politicians who operated within the still-hegemonic communist parties of the various republics.

In the 1980s, more or less coincidentally after the death of Marshal Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia entered a period of "permanent crisis," with a stagnating economy, inflation that reached extreme levels by 1989, and rising unemployment. What began as an economic crisis gradually became a political one as writers began increasingly to link the troubles of the Yugoslav economy with the complicated and ultimately inefficient nature of the "self-governing socialism"⁶⁸ system that Yugoslavia had institutionalized into the constitution of 1974.⁶⁹

Once the effort had succeeded in breaking the League of Communists of Yugoslavia into separate national communist parties in each republic, this same nationalism was used to discredit, first, the communist system as a valid ideology in most of the republics and, second, the unified Yugoslav state itself.

At the last (and aptly named "extraordinary") congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, in January 1990, the Serbian Communist party sought to reinforce the communist regime's role of holding Yugoslavia together. However, other republican leaders, particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, did not want to continue down that path. They clearly perceived that

⁶⁷ Étienne Balibar, *Europe after Communism*, in: *We, the People of Europe?*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 95.

⁶⁸ In self-governing Socialism, managers of socially owned companies were supervised by worker councils. Worker councils were made up of all employees, therefore each vote counted as one.

⁶⁹ Robert M. Hayden, *Recounting the Dead. The rediscovery and redefinition of wartime massacres in late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia*, in: *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, 1994, p. 169.

a departure from the communist system could serve as a way to break away from Yugoslavia and toward the establishment of their own independent states. Thus, each of the republics was pursuing a separate policy, combining the national cause with ideological choice.⁷⁰

As Titoist Yugoslavia began to crumble in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the memory of the dead that was suppressed, ignored and justified as a means to a better future, became the centre of controversy. By this stage, Slovenia and, soon after, Croatia, were already undergoing a transformation away from the one-party state, with the formation of new political parties and demands for free elections. The demands were met, having the first elections in April of 1990 in Slovenia and in May/June of 1990 in Croatia. In both cases, nationalist non-communist parties won the elections.⁷¹

The main reason for making new countries was ethnic homogeneity. One collectivist ideology – the rule of the workers’ class – had been replaced with the rule of the (ethnically clean) nation. Many commentators on the war that happened in Yugoslavia in the 1990s declared that the events unfolding were an inevitable extension of the Second World War. The trauma of the Second World War had not been addressed properly in the Titoist Yugoslavia thus people could not go through the process of healing and reconciliation. Although painful memories were suppressed from the official narrative, they continued to be present in the scope of private lives of survivors and their descendants.

This initiated the phenomenon that Žarana Papić calls *Turbo-Fascism*. She explains that ‘the prefix “turbo” refers to the specific mixture of politics, culture and “mental powers”. The mixture of rural and urban, pre-modern and post-modern, pop culture and heroines, real and virtual, mystical and “normal,” etc. In this term, despite its naive or innocent appearances, there is still fascism in its proper sense. Like all fascisms, Turbo- Fascism includes and celebrates a pejorative renaming, alienation, and finally removal of the Other.’⁷²

Croatian desire for autonomy and the desire of Serbia to finally have its population under one country, led both Croatian and Serbian nationalists to 19th century formulations of nationhood.

⁷⁰ Vesna Pešić, 1996, p. 21.

⁷¹ Robert M. Hayden, 1994, pp. 174-175.

⁷² Žarana Papić, Europe After 1989: Ethnic wars, the fascisation of social life and body politics in Serbia, in: *Filozofski vestnik/Acta Philosophica*, special issue *The Body*, 2002, p.196.

The revival of the 19th century desire for a nation-state was involved with symbolic revivals of both the memory of the wartime hidden histories as well as old pre-Yugoslav past resentments.⁷³

Concerning the most recent history and the events that occurred during and immediately after World War II, the revival of “hidden” history reflected in recounting the dead and “uncovering” unknown mass graves.

It was a well-known fact that a significant number of anti-Communist and Axis collaborationist fighting forces had retreated from Yugoslavia at the end of World War II, fleeing from persecution. But what was concealed from the public was that the British government had repatriated tens of thousands of these prisoners across the Austrian border to Yugoslavia, where they were executed by Communist-led Partisan troops. Among those executed were Croatian Ustashas, along with Slovenian home guards and Serbian Chetniks. The publication of these revelations stirred up the public and led to the uncovering of actual burial sites.⁷⁴

Exposing this story in 1990, the year of the first free elections in Croatia and Slovenia, provoked an outright media war. Croatian and Slovenian newspapers carried reports about the communist massacres that occurred at the end of the war, while the major Serbian paper, Belgrade's *Politika*, ran a long series of stories on atrocities committed by the Ustasha army during the Independent State of Croatia. The Serbian counter response to the new Croatian history took the form of uncovering whitewashed events of Ustasha massacres and mass graves that had not entered into official histories.⁷⁵

It is critical to notice that the media was the major tool used in the indoctrination of nationalism in peoples' everyday lives and the revival of old resentments and antagonisms. Sealed mass graves were reopened and victims were finally given a proper burial. Television pictures more than explicitly showed the remains, mass-lined and mourned. The propaganda of the newly formed nation states swiftly redesigned a fifty-year-old history, thus crushing the partisan ideology, the “Partisan myth” and assigning the Partisans' lost place of honour to their former enemies — Ustashas, Chetniks, and anti-Communists. The new political leaders dismantled

⁷³ Bette Denich, 1994, p. 372.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁷⁵ Robert M. Hayden, 1994, p. 179.

the old system and built a new one out of the same pieces, simultaneously offering a new utopia: The Nation.

The ideological interpretation of World War II by the Communists was thus shattered. Not only were the Serbs and Croats entitled to 'reclaim their dead' from the imposed ideological oblivion, but also to avenge them. The forthcoming war was presented as the continuation of World War II, which meant that 'accounts could now be settled'.⁷⁶⁷⁷

Two main protagonists that enabled the war in Bosnia to become a battle cry for ethnic cleansing were the Croatian president Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević, the president of Yugoslavia (at that time Serbia along with Montenegro and Kosovo).

Franjo Tuđman was a member of the Croatian Partisans during the Second World War, who later became a nationalist intellectual and ultimately the first President of Croatia while at the head of his party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ⁷⁸) in 1990. Tuđman was very vocal about the role Croatia had to play during the war. Rather than disassociating from the fascist and genocidal history of the Ustasha state, Tuđman refused to apologize about the crimes committed. Moreover, he redefined the atrocities as a necessary step, “an expression of the historical aspiration of the Croatian people (nation) for its own independent state”, thus reaffirming the new Republic of Croatia as a continuation of the Ustasha-led Independent State of Croatia.⁷⁹

The turning point that inevitably led to the war in Bosnia and Croatia was the speech given by Slobodan Milošević, president of Yugoslavia, for the sexcentenary of the battle of Kosovo that happened in 1389.⁸⁰ The speech was given in 1989, at Gazimestan, a site near Priština, where

⁷⁶ Siniša Nikolin, The Rise of Nationalism in Serbia in the 1980s: "The Revenge of the Repressed"?, *Habitus*, No. 9-10, 2003, p. 63.

⁷⁷ Naturally, this is not the only narrative for the war in Bosnia. Many scholarly articles approach this subject from different perspectives. For example, Duško Doder in his article *Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds* from 1993, claims that the war was inevitable because of the centuries-long animosity between the ethnic groups, specifically Serbs and Croats. Other authors, such as Mujeeb R. Khan are treating the war in Bosnia as nothing more than ethnic cleansing. Khan in his article *Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Politics of Religion and Genocide in the "New World Order"* from 1997, argues that the primary aim of Serbian forces in the war was to launch a genocide against the Muslim Bosniaks. One of the few scholarly works that approach the reasoning behind the war in Bosnia objectively and systematically is Nina Caspersen's text *Belgrade, Pale, Knin: Kin-state Control over rebellious puppets?* from 2007.

⁷⁸ Hrvatska demokratska zajednica

⁷⁹ Bette Denich, 1994, p. 376.

⁸⁰ Siniša Nikolin, 2003, p. 62.

the Kosovo Battle, one of the founding symbols of Serbian self-imagination, took place.⁸¹ Milošević invoked a specific, national memory of the battle in which the Serbs were ultimately defeated by the Ottomans and used it as a rallying call, addressing the Serbian people to finally gather its people under one country.

Recalling the timeline from the Battle of Kosovo to the end of the nineteenth century, meant evoking the period of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. This was a period when none of these ethnicities were allowed independent definition, a time of oppression but also of the development of distinctive national identities among each group. This extended period provided memories of both great glory and past abuse to be used at random in the collapsing Yugoslavia as proof of coherent ethnic histories and an absence of any common past.⁸²

Consequently, the republics' leaders were unable to break away peacefully by creating new and separate democratic states.⁸³ The bearing of the past traumas and their displacement in time and in space led to a certain shift in collective memory of the people – to reinterpretation or absolute negation of the collective Yugoslav past and to the self-victimization of the nations. Clearing the traces of the recent past was done by destruction not only of memory but also the material proof of the collective history that did not fit together with the newly-made narrative.

1.4 Tragic Fate of Monuments (Damnatio Memoriae)

Monuments carry a great significance to ideology and politics, but also on a personal level for every individual. They play an important symbolic role in people's lives. Each monument is built for a specific reason and is intended to serve a purpose well-defined by the official political climate. They constitute an integral part of the wider symbolic regime through which people ascribe individual and collective meanings to the past and present. Yet the symbolic value of monuments can, and frequently do, change. They can gain or lose importance depending on the political climate of the time.⁸⁴ Yugoslav antifascist modernist monuments, now scattered throughout the Balkan territory, are places that remind people that the land upon where monuments stand was once called Yugoslavia but that also commemorate the demise of

⁸¹ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, p. 23.

⁸² Ilana R. Bet-El, Unimagined communities: the power of memory and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, in: *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, 2004, p. 210.

⁸³ Vesna Pešić, p.24.

⁸⁴ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, p. 13.

that country. After the constitution of the new nation states, they began to represent both utopia (for many, former Yugoslavia is a utopia: a time when everything was better) and dystopia (the civil war of the 1990s and the collapse of Yugoslavia).⁸⁵

The symbolic reinterpretation of monuments almost exclusively took place in the time of socio-political change. During the war in the 1990s, in an effort to exterminate one epoch and create an illusion of ethnic continuity, socialist monuments, along with religious symbols of ethnic others in the newly founded nation states, became some of the most targeted objects of destruction in the wake of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.⁸⁶ Many monuments were tactically destroyed with bombs and mines by nationalist forces in the early 1990s, while others were vandalized by the pro-nationalist population.⁸⁷

Some of these monuments and memorial sites are located in the cities that were mostly demolished during the civil war, for example Mostar (B&H) (fig. 4) and Vukovar (Croatia). The Partisan Necropolis in Mostar, designed by the famous Yugoslav architect Bogdan Bogdanović, was a cemetery commemorating 810 Partisan fighters originally coming from the city of Mostar. Both the Partisan Necropolis and Dudik Memorial Park in Vukovar (Croatia), which was also designed by Bogdanović, were heavily damaged during the war and, later, neglected and left to ruin.⁸⁸

In Croatia, for example, of the thousands of abstract monuments that once adorned the mountains and cities, only a fraction remains today. Those that were not leveled in the war as symbolic targets for anti-Yugoslav sentiment, were in many cases neglected, graffitied, or vandalized after.⁸⁹ Monument to the Victory of the People of Slavonia, by the Yugoslav architect Vojin Bakić, in the village of Kamenska in north-eastern Croatia, was mined and destroyed by the Croatian Army in 1992 (fig. 5). Monument to Knin Liberators, located in Knin, Croatia, was destroyed in 1995. These are just to name a few.

⁸⁵ Arna Mačkić, 2014, n.p.

⁸⁶ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, p. 13.

⁸⁷ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 73.

⁸⁸ In 2008, a football complex was built inside of the Dudik memorial site. Despite the football complex, Dudik monument was restored in 2013. Partisan memorial cemetery in Mostar still remains extremely neglected.

⁸⁹ Darmon Richter, "The Misunderstood History of the Balkans' Surreal War Memorials", 06.11.2017, *Atlas Obscura*

The most important features of these monuments, their abstract form and their universalism which allowed for personal associations, were under attack. These characteristics were vigorously argued against, mainly by nationalist ideologues who have criticized the monuments for neglecting to show what ‘actually’ happened on the sites they commemorate. Moreover, symbolic representations of the monuments have been perceived as an expression of a particular national interest whilst conveniently suppressing others. Ultimately, the final argument against the form of abstraction, advanced by the political and intellectual elite of the newly formed states was that it comprehensively denies the logic of a “national” form.⁹⁰

One of the main critiques of the monuments was also the fact that they contested the commemoration of victims and the condemnation of the perpetrators. The belief was that they stood against a certain politics of (self)victimization which, in the Yugoslav context, became a very problematic point in light of the civil war in the 1990s. In the last years of SFR Yugoslavia, every Republic saw themselves as a victim and the others as the offenders that are responsible for their ‘suffering’. Since the monuments were intentionally built in a way that no nationalist ideology can be prescribed to them, they never honored victims of a specific republic, therefore, they could not be used for (self)victimization.

Additionally, many intellectuals shared an opinion that the Yugoslav period was in fact a fracture in an otherwise continuous history of their nation. Serbian writer Dobrica Ćosić, who, along with other Serb political writers produced the highly controversial *Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts* of 1986. They regarded Serbia as having an unequal status and being suppressed by the other nations of SFR Yugoslavia.⁹¹ On the other hand, Croatian national leader and the first President of the Republic of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, was responsible for building the Croatian national identity with the narrative of the Croatian thousand-year long struggle to achieve an independent national state.⁹² For them, the abstract Yugoslav monuments became the embodiment of an oppression that was simultaneously emotional, historical and political. The severe abuse of these structures in some countries of

⁹⁰ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p. 72.

⁹¹ Rei Shigeno, Nationalism and Serbian Intellectuals, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 5:1, 2004, pp. 135-159.

⁹² Stevo Đurašković, Nation-building in Franjo Tuđman’s Political Writings, *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 51, No. 5, 2014, p.66.

the former Yugoslavia can be understood through these ideological renderings, as they “do not just symbolize an enemy but are in themselves the enemy.”⁹³ In this instance, they represented the enemy as standing in the way of building an independent state for every nation.

During and after the war in Bosnia, a “re-appropriation of cultural ownership” started to take place in the countries of the former SFR Yugoslavia. This process consisted of ‘nationalizing’ the territory while each country differentiated itself, according to its majority ethnic group. It included erecting monuments that glorify the accomplishments of ‘our’ people or the suffering of ‘our’ heroes and, at the same time, symbolically cleansing the territory by removing monuments and other markers that signify the presence of an unwanted other or an undesired interpretation of the past. Moreover, sectioning one language with its regional dialects into three separate languages, which belonged to a ‘distinct’ ethnic group was also an integral part of this re-appropriation.⁹⁴

Resolving the question of the abstract monuments was an important factor to attend to in order to break all ties with the former regime and to censor the last fifty years. They were tackled in various ways, depending on their significance, location and the amount of antagonism they accumulated. From being destroyed, vandalized or neglected and left to ruin, to being depreciated by the placement of religious objects in and around them or being appropriated by the current nationalistic narrative, each country had its own specific mechanism of addressing this threat to the current political climate.

Many memorial sites were conceived as hybrid complexes, merging leisure and education, architecture with sculpture, objects with the surrounding landscape. Due to the abstract nature and the remote location of these monuments, most of them have been partly forgotten by the public, especially by the younger generations. The roads that lead to them are often narrow and dusty, and many of the monuments still have landmines around them, a lingering reminder of the war in the 1990s. These complexes stand abandoned and completely decontextualized, left to oblivion and wild nature.

⁹³ Robert Bevan, *The destruction of memory: Architecture at war*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 21.

⁹⁴ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, p. 23.

Certain sites have been removed or destroyed in the instances where their narrative has directly countered nationalist interests, such as the anti-fascist sites in Croatia. In Croatia, the era of Yugoslavia was looked upon as the time of the oppression of the Croat people, and the Socialist system governed by Josip Broz Tito was equalized with other totalitarian systems like Nazism and Fascism. The “censorship” by ideological and ethno-national transformation of the monuments and public spaces in general included not only their removal by the authorities, but vandalism or complete destruction by soldiers or paramilitaries. As described by Pavlaković, ‘The devastation of the monuments was particularly extensive in regions mostly affected by the war, they were shot at with machine guns, rocket launchers, tanks, and even blasted to pieces with set explosives.’⁹⁵ This ultimately brought to the destruction, some appointed by the government and some done by private initiatives, of more than 700 monuments and vandalization of more than two thousand memorial statues and tablets.⁹⁶

One recent example clearly shows that the antagonism toward Yugoslav partisan monuments as an opposition to the national narratives is still active. In May 2013, a memorial monument “Tito’s Rose” built in 1985 in Široki Brijeg, a small Croat-dominated town in west Herzegovina, was demolished. Its leveling was initiated and carried out by local authorities.⁹⁷ This was declared as a statement for the redemption for the past. The locals believe that the Partisan army unjustly killed a number of members of the Ustasha from Široki Brijeg towards the end of the war. The presence of the monument was considered an act of hypocrisy and had to be destroyed.

In states such as Slovenia, Serbia or Macedonia, the narrative of self-liberation and partisan struggle was more easily integrated into the new nationalistic narratives and has been reconciled with those of other patriotic groups such as the Serbian Chetniks and Slovene Home Guards, who have received their own memorial sites. The dominant Serbian post-socialist narrative has been marked by attempts at rehabilitating Chetniks who, in the contemporary Serbian political discourse and educational mechanism, are represented as authentic antifascist forces, a representation that stands sharply in contrast to the official socialist narrative. The

⁹⁵ Vjeran Pavlaković, *Blowing Up Brotherhood and Unity: The Fate of World War Two Cultural Heritage in Lika*, in: *The Politics of Heritage and Memory*, 2014, University of Zagreb, pp. 351-426.

⁹⁶ Juraj Hrženjak, ed. *Rušenje Antifašističkih Spomenika u Hrvatskoj 1990-2000*, Savez antifašističkih boraca Hrvatske, 2002, pp. 16-20.

⁹⁷ Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, 2014, p. 27.

WWII crimes committed by the Chetnik forces are purposefully excluded from the Serbian narrative.⁹⁸ Because of this equation of the Chetnik movement to the partisan armies, there has been a degree of selectivity in deciding which monuments to integrate into the national narrative and which to neglect.

In Bosnia, there is an even greater level of selectivity towards the monuments. Essentially, monuments supporting the thesis of continuity of the Bosnian state, drawing mostly from the medieval period, have been preserved and incorporated into the narrative of Bosnia's statehood. Unfortunately, most of the socialist monuments failed to support or to be successfully integrated into this model, therefore they remained largely vandalized and ultimately ignored.⁹⁹

Within Macedonia, the historical revisionism is dramatically visible. Depending on which ethnic groups are the majority in a particular area, monuments can be found in different states. For instance, in the city of Struga, a city inhabited mainly by an Albanian ethnic group, "The Monument to the Revolution," (1974) was neglected and subject to vandalism and damage.¹⁰⁰ In the predominantly ethnic Macedonian parts, the monuments have been well kept.¹⁰¹ Such is the example of the monument complex in Prilep, Burial Mound of the Unbeaten (or simply the Partisan Necropolis) from 1961. The complex has been well taken care of throughout the years and remains well-visited and popular with the local community.

The situation in Kosovo's capital city Priština is even more interesting. Priština is home to two abstract memorials: one in the center of town, known as the "Brotherhood and Unity Memorial," (1961) and another on a hilltop in the Velania neighborhood, called the "Partisan Martyrs' Cemetery." (1961) While the former is not under any institutional protection as a cultural heritage and is mostly neglected, the latter enjoys this privilege. Partisan Martyrs' Cemetery complex was built to honor Partisans who gave their life fighting against the Nazi troops. After the Kosovo war ended in 1999, this memorial was re-appropriated for another group of the dead. War veterans of the latest war started being buried here and even the first

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ From 2016 to 2019, the city of Struga allocated roughly 30.000 Euros for the restoration and rehabilitation of the monument complex – in the hopes of turning it into an attractive modern space for locals and tourists alike to use.

¹⁰¹ Gal Kim, Robert Burghardt, n.d., p.73.

president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, was laid to rest on this location in 2006. The area is now referred to as “The Martyr’s Graves” with the number of new graves amounting to over 40.¹⁰²

After the war in Bosnia, the countries of the former Yugoslavia experienced the creation of a number of sculptures, glorifying non-political international celebrity figures. Aleksandra Domanović gathers them under the term *Turbo Sculptures*¹⁰³. The existence of these sculptures was most likely caused by the identity crisis people were left with after the breakup of Yugoslavia and especially after the war in Bosnia. Some examples of these turbo sculptures include the monument to Bruce Lee in Mostar (fig. 6), Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the statue of Rocky Balboa (fig. 7) in the town of Žitište in Serbia. The statue of the Chinese martial arts star Bruce Lee, from 2005, was built by the youth group Mostar Urban Movement, with monetary help of the German government, as a symbol of solidarity in the ethnically divided city. Two years later, a statue of the fictional boxer Rocky Balboa was built in the town of Žitište in Serbia. This three-meter-high statue was similar to the Rocky monument in Philadelphia and was built in order to ‘revive the region’s reputation and economy’.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the monuments dedicated to the memory of war, these public statues do not refer to the common history of a specific territory. Instead, they are based on modern popular culture and devoid of a geographic specificity.¹⁰⁵

1.5 Re-Branding into Spomeniks

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest for the former Yugoslav antifascist monuments and memorial sites. They started attracting lovers of brutalist architecture most likely after a series of photographs named “Spomeniks” done by an Antwerp-based photographer Jan Kempenaers emerged. Kempenaers spent about three years (2006-2009) traveling and photographing these forgotten memorial sites. In 2010, he gathered all the photographs of the partisan monuments into a publication called “Spomenik”. Although Kempenaers gained international acknowledgment for his photo series of monuments, his

¹⁰² Plator Gashi, “Prishtina’s Yugoslav monuments remain in limbo”, 27.09.2018, *Prishtina Insight*.

¹⁰³ Aleksandra Domanović, 20.05.2014., *Turbo Sculpture 2010-2013* [Video file]

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Jose Villarreal, “National identity is topic in Aleksandra Domanović’s exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel”, 02.04.2012., *Art Daily*.

work was also criticized by many scholars. While focusing exclusively on their aesthetic impact, their alienated location as well as their relationship with the surrounding nature, the photographer completely disregarded their identity as a whole and presented them as empty objects.

From 2013 onwards, the interest in the architecture, specifically the contrast between these monuments and their surrounding landscape, has risen. Nowadays, one can find many articles about the partisan monuments, largely referred to as Spomeniks¹⁰⁶. They are being called “abandoned”¹⁰⁷ “forgotten” and “alien-looking”¹⁰⁸, while predominantly being connected to the work of Jan Kempernaers. While many articles have been written about them, because of the ambiguous exterior of the monuments, most of them focus on the architecture and the visual characteristics. The intense political message they carried (or still carry) with them as well as the reasons behind their abandonment are somehow always bypassed. One thing is for sure and that is that the monuments seem to be almost entirely stripped of their initial purpose and symbolism.

That is not to say that none of the monuments and their complexes still function as spaces of remembrance. With increasing tourism that the hype for the Spomeniks and their brutalist architecture brought, a number of monuments were renovated, and their museums reopened. The Ilinden (Makedonium) Monument in Kruševo, Macedonia, contains a small museum and was externally renovated and re-painted in late 2016 (fig. 8). Similar to Ilinden, Jasenovac Flower Monument, the *Stone Flower*, and the memorial complex in Croatia are in a very good condition with a working museum nearby. The whole complex is being well maintained, with a large number of tourists coming to visit as well as people wishing to pay homage to lives lost.¹⁰⁹

In the local communities, a number of initiatives were made in order to bring back the monuments and with them the “forgotten” antifascist past into the collective memory of the

¹⁰⁶ Spomenik is a Yugoslav word for a monument. The plural of this word would be Spomenici but in Englishised version it came to be Spomeniks

¹⁰⁷ Keith Estiler, “These Forgotten Monuments Make Eastern Europe Look Like an Alien World”, 30.08.2017, *Hyperbeast*.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison Jacobs, “These Yugoslavian Monuments Look Like Relics from an Alien Civilisation”, 07.12.2013, *Business Insider*.

¹⁰⁹ Donald Niebyl, *Jasenovac*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/>

people. In Croatia for instance, The Union of Anti-Fascist Fighters and Anti-Fascists of Republic Croatia is relentlessly working on not only gathering likeminded individuals but also on preservation of antifascist tradition.¹¹⁰ In 2002, this organization published a comprehensive collection of information dealing with the demolition and vandalization of the antifascist monuments – “Destruction of the antifascist monuments in Croatia 1990-2000”¹¹¹¹¹². For them, the purpose of this monograph was clear – to preserve from oblivion a glorious period of the fight of the peoples of Croatia against fascism, especially because of the role Croatia played during the Second World War.

Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past is another initiative that is fighting against the extinction of the antifascist memory. Documenta, alongside Saša Šimpraga, Croatian urbanist and artist, established in 2012 The Virtual Museum Dotrščina.¹¹³ Their main objective was to bring back Dotrščina, a memorial park in Zagreb, into the collective memory. The park, where during World War II more than 7,000 people were executed, houses a number of abstract sculptures, crafted by the prominent sculptor Vojin Bakić, that commemorate the lives lost. Today, most of the people living in Zagreb are not aware of the fact that the city’s largest park is a memorial one let alone why it enjoys the status of a cultural monument. The aim of Virtual Museum Dotrščina is to address the topic of the forgotten historical site publicly, with the website but also with various, physical space activities such as temporary artistic interventions in the park, temporary exhibitions in the public space of the city of Zagreb and so on.

One more comprehensive project that can be found online is the Spomenik Database¹¹⁴ – an ongoing project with the aim to document and interpret the Yugoslav partisan monuments and memorial complexes. This ever-growing project was made by an American arts and travel enthusiast Donald Niebyl, whose interest for the Yugoslav monuments was sparked after stumbling upon Jan Kempenaers’ photographs of the Spomeniks of the Former-Yugoslavia online. “However, Kempenaers included minimal information on what they meant, where exactly they were, what happened to them or why they even existed. Even my attempts to learn

¹¹⁰ This organization is independent, non-governmental, multinational and voluntary group of citizens.

¹¹¹ Juraj Hrženjak, ed. *Rušenje Antifašističkih Spomenika u Hrvatskoj 1990-2000*, Savez antifašističkih boraca Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2002.

¹¹² Translation of the title done by the author of the thesis.

¹¹³ Website - <http://www.dotrscina.hr/>

¹¹⁴ Website - <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/>

about them online in any sort of meaningful way yielded surprisingly little comprehensive information,”¹¹⁵ Niebyl explains. Therefore, he took it upon himself to travel every year (from 2016 onwards) to the Balkan area and document not only the visual grandiosity of these monuments but also their history, their purpose and for many of them, their demise. This website and the newly published book “Spomenik Monument Database” represent an extensive research into the individual partisan monuments and is currently one of the very few sites that contain such a vast quantity of Spomenik research.

Most recent and possibly the most extensive representation of Yugoslav architecture in a museum space was in 2018 with the Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) major exhibition called ‘Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980’¹¹⁶. The exhibition focused on introducing the work of the architects of Socialist Yugoslavia to an international audience for the first time. Next to the urban planning solutions created in the communist era, the exhibition examined a number of concrete structures, including some of the antifascist partisan monuments such as Jasenovac, Tjentište and others.¹¹⁷

From 2000 on, there has been a steady influx of artists coming from the post-Yugoslav space who are working with appropriation of the anti-fascist monuments. Different mechanisms and methodologies of approach emerge in their practices. While some artists are drawn to the aesthetic features of the monuments, others choose to grapple with their antifascist legacy. In the current political climate in which right-wing politics is once again growing stronger, not only in the post-Yugoslav space, but in the whole of Europe, artists who are engaging with the problematics of the past and the process of memory have a very important task.

¹¹⁵ Donald Niebyl, “About This Project. The trip”, n.d., *Spomenik Database website*.

¹¹⁶ The duration of the exhibition was from July 15th, 2018 until January 13th, 2019.

¹¹⁷ MOMA, *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*, Martino Stierli, Vladimir Kulić (Eds.), New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 2018. [Exhibition catalogue]

Chapter Two

Collective Memory and the Erasure of Past

The study of memory is an interdisciplinary field. It addresses the interrelation of past and present in sociocultural contexts. Its main interests are the social shape of individual memory as well as of the collective generation of the past, present and future. In this chapter, I elaborate in detail some of the most prominent memory theories. Using them, a new understanding will be shed on the processes of memory mediation and forgetting in SFR Yugoslavia as well as the nation states formed in the wake of its dissolution.

Collective Memory and the Erasure of Past introduces some of the most prominent memory theories. Different aspects of memory and memory workings are addressed and connected to the Yugoslav as well as the post-Yugoslav space. Through these theories, a better understanding of the mediation of memory, emerging old histories and blatant disregard and forgetting of certain events that shaped the past are made possible. The chapter is sectioned in four subchapters.

Notes on Memory Studies subchapter serves as an introduction to the main theoreticians on memory whose work is taken into close consideration. Halbwachs's theories of collective memory, as well as Warburg's term 'social memory', are examined. Further, elaborating on Halbwachs's theory, the arguments of Jan and Aleida Assmann are looked at. The Assmanns used Halbwachs's theory of collective memory as groundwork for elaborating on different *modi operandi* of memory such as communicative and cultural memory as well as the workings of forgetting.

The subchapter *Mediation of Memory* takes a closer look into the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav discourse. *Places of Remembrance* elaborates on Pierre Nora's *lieux de memoire* and the importance of it in the context of the National Liberation War monuments as well as for the resurrection of nationalist symbols in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The fourth subchapter, *(Yugo)Nostalgia*, touches upon the notion of Yugonostalgia and its role in

consumer society as well as in the art sphere. It distinguishes the difference between the Yugonostalgic art and the works that will be represented in the upcoming chapter.

2.1 Notes on Memory Studies

If history is both the past and the narratives
that represent past as historical memory in
relation to present/presence, collective memory
is a conceptualization that expresses a sense
of the continual presence of the past.¹¹⁸

SUSAN A. CRANE

Memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of our own identity, both on a personal and on a collective level. On the inner level, memory is a matter of our neuro-mental system. This is our personal memory, the only form of memory that had been recognized as such before the 1920s. On a social level, memory is a matter of communication and social interaction.

It was the achievement of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs to show that human memory depends greatly, like consciousness in general, on socialization and communication, and that memory can be analyzed as a function of social life. Memory enables people to live in groups and communities and living in groups and communities enables people to build a memory.¹¹⁹

Collective memory is a term coined by Maurice Halbwachs in the second half of the nineteenth century, referring to the shared platform of memories, knowledge and information of a social group that is significantly connected with the group's own identity. Halbwachs was a pioneer of the modern academic study of collective memory with his work *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925) in which he argued that all memory – even personal memory – is a social process, shaped by the various groups (family, religious, geographical, etc.) to which

¹¹⁸ Susan A. Crane, Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory, in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5, 1997, p. 1376.

¹¹⁹ Jan Assmann, Communicative and Cultural Memory, in: *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 2008, p. 109.

individuals belong.¹²⁰ For Halbwachs, studying memory is not a matter of reflecting on the properties of the subjective mind; rather, memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are structured by social arrangements.

It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.¹²¹

Halbwachs argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion outside of their group contexts. Both collective (institutionalized) and individual memory are subject to the needs of the present and can serve as an instrument of power. More importantly, they can change the ways in which events are remembered or forgotten. Groups can even produce memories in individuals of events that they never experienced in any direct sense.¹²² For Halbwachs, studying memory is not a matter of the characteristics of the subjective, individual mind; rather, memory is a matter of how minds work together in society using a “... shared pool of information held in the memories of two or more members of a group”.¹²³

Social groups construct their own images of the world and the self by constantly shaping and reshaping versions of the past. The construction of collective memory is a continuous, multidirectional process in which current events and beliefs guide our reading of the past, while frames of references learned from the past shape our understanding of the present. It is a multidirectional process of concretizing a narrative of the past into a functional, socio-political construct.

In an influential posthumous essay, *Historical Memory and Collective Memory*¹²⁴ (1950), Halbwachs insisted on a distinction between history and collective memory. Whereas history shapes the past in the present through the work of scholars, collective memory exists and is

¹²⁰ Kirk Savage, *History, Memory, and Monuments: An Overview of the Scholarly Literature on Commemoration*, 2007, n.p.

¹²¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 38.

¹²² Jeffrey K. Olick, Collective Memory, in: *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* ed.2, 2008, pp. 609-610.

¹²³ Halwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 1925.

¹²⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *Historical Memory and Collective Memory*, in: *The Collective Memory*, 1950, pp. 50-87.

maintained in specific groups that exist in discrete times and places. These groups maintain a living relation to collective memory, and it is only within such groups that any individual can remember and express personal memories.¹²⁵ "The groups to which I belong vary at different periods of my life," Halbwachs wrote. "But it is from their viewpoint that I consider the past."¹²⁶

This suggests that "the past" is, in fact, multiple pasts. Collective memory is flexible with regard to the events of the past and the individual memories of them. It must allow for lapses of memory as well as the passing of generations. On the contrary, historical memory acts as a marker of the moment and condition in which memory is released from its social constructs and becomes situated instead in the frameworks of chronology and factual detail¹²⁷: "General history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up ... The need to write the history of a period, a society, or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it."¹²⁸

This is the main argument of Halbwachs' comparative study on historical memory: historical memory is the representation of a lost past, and its only anamnesis. The past no longer exists as collective memory. But how can it then be remembered? The difference between collective memory and historical memory for Halbwachs is the separation between lived experience and the preservation of lived experience. "Historical memory, always appearing in the form of historical narrative, is one form of the content of collective memory, but collective memory is also the framework in which historical remembering occurs."¹²⁹

Further, according to Halbwachs, collective memory is, by definition, multiple, with as many memories as there are groups within which to remember, but history is, by definition, "unitary" and single. He believes that the historian aims to include in history as much of the information that is available, assuming that the resulting sum of information will be the closest possible to

¹²⁵ Susan A. Crane, Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory, in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5, 1997, p. 1376.

¹²⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, 1950, p.72.

¹²⁷ Susan A. Crane, 1997, p. 1377.

¹²⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, 1950, p. 78.

¹²⁹ Susan A. Crane, 1997, p. 1373.

the lost, lived reality.¹³⁰ History aims for a universal, objective truth severed from the psychology of social groups.

Looking at the way history has been written, specifically in totalitarian regimes, Halwachs's theory falls short. Through the example of the construction of Yugoslav as well as the new official histories of nation states after the dismembering of SFRY, one can easily contest the definition of history as unitary and objective. History is constantly being re-written and re-politicized in order to better serve the current political system and national pretensions of a country. It is left at the mercy of current leading ideology, which has the power to erase and make wild jumps for the sake of justifying violence.

Another limitation in Halwachs's theory of collective memory is the perception of the groups within which collective memory is perceived as a single all-encompassing brain. It is individuals, with their own (even ever so slightly) different views and experiences that make up the collective memory of the group. It is impossible to assume that, within one group, all the individuals would have the exact same relationship to the collective memory; thus it is very problematic to state that there are as many collective memories as there are groups within which to remember, when in fact, there is even multiple versions of the same collective memory within a single group.

Our personal view of the past does not come primarily from professional historical scholarship but from a plethora of influences and an intersection of relationships to, amongst others, mass media, tourist sites, family tradition, and the spaces of our upbringing with all their regional, ethnic, and class diversity. Personal memory is in today's social sciences understood to be a highly selective, adaptive process of reconstructing the past, shaped by present needs and contexts. It is now also understood that collective memory is a product of social groups and their ever-evolving character, interests and beliefs.¹³¹ Simply put, it is being influenced and constructed.

The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the coining of the term "social memory", by the cultural theorist and art historian Aby Warburg. This term related mainly to the cultural level. Warburg was the first theoretician who treated images as carriers of memory. He

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1377.

¹³¹ Kirk Savage, *History*, 2007, n.p.

attributed a type of "mnemonic energy" to the objectivation¹³² and formation of culture, pointing not only to works of high art, but also to posters, postage stamps, costumes, customs, etc. Warburg, with his research, directed attention of scholars to the power of objectivation of culture to stabilize cultural memory for thousands of years.¹³³

In his publication *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land* (1941), Halbwachs also focused on publicly available commemorative symbols and rituals as the carriers of memory. His argument was that memory imprints itself into the landscape with the help of physical representations, be it a monument or a religious building.¹³⁴

The approach as well as the purpose for the research of these two authors is drastically different. Halbwachs thematizes the nexus between memory and group while Warburg thematizes the one between memory and the language of cultural forms. Nevertheless, their publications brought a drastic shift into the study of collective memory. Their research and definition of collective memory shifted the memory discourse out of a biological framework into a cultural one.¹³⁵

The actual term "cultural memory" as a concept has been developed in detail only in the past four decades. It is, therefore, only since then that the connection between time, identity, and memory in their three dimensions of the personal, social, and cultural has become more and more evident. Building on Halbwachs's research on collective memory, Jan Assmann coined the term "communicative memory" in order to differentiate between the concepts of "cultural memory" and "collective memory". Assmann, in his article *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, explains:

Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity. Halbwachs, however, the inventor of the term "collective memory," was careful to keep his concept of collective memory apart from the realm of traditions,

¹³² Objectivation - The conversion of a concept or abstraction into an object. For more information, look up Harvey, L., 2012-19, Social Research Glossary, Quality Research International

¹³³ Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity, in: *New German Critique*, No. 65, 1995, p. 129.

¹³⁴ Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, Open University Press, 2003, p.16.

¹³⁵ Until Halbwachs' and Warburg's theories, collective memory was largely discussed in terms of being inheritable or „racial memory“ – for further research see C.G. Jung's theory of archetypes.

transmissions, and transferences which we propose to subsume under the term “cultural memory.” We preserve Halbwachs’s distinction by breaking up his concept of collective memory into “communicative” and “cultural memory,” but we insist on including the cultural sphere, which he excluded, in the study of memory. We are, therefore, not arguing for replacing his idea of “collective memory” with “cultural memory”; rather, we distinguish between both forms as two different *modi memorandi*, ways of remembering.¹³⁶

The everyday form of collective memory, which Assmann calls communicative memory is non-institutional. It lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time frame. Its temporal horizon does not extend more than eighty to (at the very most) one hundred years into the past, which equals three or four generations. Through this manner of communication, each individual composes a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is socially mediated and relates to a group. Every individual memory forms itself in communication with others. These “others”, however, are not just any random set of people; rather, they are groups who formulate their unity through a common image of their past. In these terms, Halbwachs gives an example of families, political parties, etc. up to and including nations. Every individual belongs to numerous such groups and therefore entertains numerous collective self-images and memories.¹³⁷

On the other hand, cultural memory is institution-like. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms. External objects as carriers of memory play a role already on the level of personal memory. Our memory, which we possess as beings equipped with a human mind, exists only in constant interaction, not only with other human memories but also with “things,” i.e. outward symbols. The term “memory” is not a metaphor but a metonym based on material contact between a remembering mind and a reminding objects such as various artifacts, feasts, icons, symbols, or landscapes. Things like stories, images, or dishes do not “have” a memory of their own. Nevertheless, they may remind a person and trigger one’s memory, because they carry memories which one has invested into them. On a social level, for groups and societies, the role of external symbols becomes even more important. Groups, of course, do not “have” a memory of their own, mainly tending to construct themselves one by means of things and

¹³⁶ Jan Assmann, 2008, p.110.

¹³⁷ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 1995, p. 127.

places that carry memory, such as monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic institutions.¹³⁸

Just as communicative memory is characterized by its closeness to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday. Cultural memory has its fixed points in the past; its scope does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are crucial events of the past, through which memory is maintained, as Aby Warburg wrote, cultural formation (texts, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).¹³⁹ Through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others. Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society.¹⁴⁰

Cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as being a part of the history of a particular group. This is why Assmann refers to this form of historical consciousness as “memory” and not just as knowledge about the past. While knowledge has no form and is endlessly progressive, memory involves forgetting. Whereas knowledge has a universalist perspective, a tendency towards generalization and standardization, memory, even cultural memory, is local, egocentric, and specific to a group and its values.¹⁴¹

One has to remember in order to belong. Assimilation, the transition of one group into another one, is usually accompanied by an imperative to forget the memories connected with the original identity.¹⁴² If this theory is applied to the Yugoslav context, one can finally discern as certain logic in the events that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The memory of a shared antifascist Yugoslav past had to be forgotten in order to transition into an independent national state. Moreover, just as this memory had to be forgotten, other cultural memory points had to emerge and take hold.

¹³⁸ Jan Assmann, 2008, p. 111.

¹³⁹ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 1995, p. 129.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁴¹ Jan Assmann, 2008, p.113.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p114.

An important part of any memory construction is forgetting. There are various models for dealing with the unwanted past or simply the past that has no use in current discourse. Aleida Assmann distinguishes between two forms of forgetting, a more active and a more passive one.

Active forgetting is implied in intentional acts such as trashing and destroying. Acts of forgetting are a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations. They are, however, violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority.¹⁴³ Censorship, for instance, has been, and still is, a frequently used instrument for destroying various materials.

The passive form of cultural forgetting is related to non-intentional acts such as losing, hiding, dispersing, neglecting, abandoning, or leaving something behind. In these cases, the objects are not materially destroyed; they fall out of the frames of attention, valuation, and use.¹⁴⁴

For Aleida Assmann, remembering, as well as forgetting, has a passive and an active side. The institutions of active memory preserve the past as present while the institutions of passive memory preserve the past as past. A space that is located in between forgetting and remembering is the material archive. The material preserved in the archive is in a state of hibernation. The archive is comprised out of material that is of no immediate importance or use. This material is waiting to be used in a new context, to be given a new life. In Assmann's opinion, this kind of storage of memory does not exist in totalitarian governments. She argues:

In totalitarian states, there is no storing of memory, but for very different reasons. In such a state, as Orwell has shown in his novel 1984, every scrap that is left over from the past has to be changed or eliminated because an authentic piece of evidence has the power to crush the official version of the past on which the rulers base their power. This paranoid effort is deemed necessary for the protection of the state because an independent reference to the past can trigger a counter-history that challenges the totalitarian version of the past and undermines the state.¹⁴⁵

In her article, *Memory, Individual and Collective*, Aleida Assmann introduced another form of memory, namely political memory. For Assmann, individual and communicative memories

¹⁴³ Aleida Assmann, Canon and Archive, in: *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 2010, pp. 97-98.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

are both embodied in lived experience and interaction of an individual. On the contrary, political and cultural memory are mediated. They are also more durable since they are founded on external symbols and material representations. They rely not only on libraries, museums, and monuments, but also on various modes of education and repeated occasions for collective participation.¹⁴⁶

As previously mentioned by Jan Assmann, social forms of memory are, in a sense, short term, they are intergenerational. Unlike them, since the political and cultural memory is made through formation of culture, it is purposefully made to be transgenerational.

Institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, states, the church, or a firm do not “have” a memory; they “make” one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Together with such a memory, these groups and institutions “construct” an identity. Such a memory is based on selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful, and relevant from irrelevant memories.¹⁴⁷

Political memory therefore has to be mediated. This kind of memory inhabits in material media such as coats of honor, flags and other symbols and practices. This material media has to be embedded in the hearts and minds of individuals. The extent to which they take hold there depends on the efficiency of political pedagogy on the one hand and the level of patriotic or ethnic fervor on the other.¹⁴⁸ As seen in the previous chapter, political memory is stronger in ethnically homogeneous groups and nations, or ones that aim to become one.

2.2 Mediation of Memory

Elaborating on Halbwachs’s term of collective memory, Aleida Assmann writes that ‘individual access to collective memory occurs via various channels. They involve mental activities such as cognitive learning (or semantic memory) about the past, imaginative and emotive identification with images, roles, values, and narratives, and various forms of action such as celebrations, processions, and demonstrations.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Aleida Assmann, Memory, Individual and Collective, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, Volume 5, 2006, pp. 210-224.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

When history is being transformed into forms of shared knowledge and collective identification, it becomes a memory. Through participation in the making of national history, history is reconfigured into a particular and emotionally charged version of “our history” or personal memory. It is being configured as a part of a collective as well as individual identity. Collective participation in national memory is implemented in totalitarian states by force using tools such as indoctrination and propaganda. Here, this transformation from general history to “our history/memory” relies on effective symbols and rites that enhance emotions of empathy and identification.¹⁵⁰

Mediation of remembrance is a phrase used by the author Heike Karge in order to describe the process of making a universal Yugoslav history based on the decree of “brotherhood and unity” and the promise of a bright future for all the Republics. Karge states that there were very few, if any possibilities, for non-party individuals or even local authority in Yugoslavia to negotiate officially decreed and highly controlled memory products.

The act of negotiation implies a dialogue between two or more parties, an exchange on an equal basis, aimed at reaching an agreement. This, however, was clearly not to take place in Yugoslavia’s highly controlled official memory space. There was not much space to negotiate with the communist elite, regarding the founding myths of the socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁵¹

However, although the possibilities of negotiating with the authorities in order to mediate the official narrative of Yugoslavia were practically nonexistent, mediation of remembrance happened anyways. It represented a complex space in which personal grief, local practices, cultural codes and political desire to commemorate the past merged together.

Mediation of remembrance practices and war narratives are better understood in terms of an encounter of different forms and practices of remembrance. By ‘encounter’ we mean here that, despite the unilateral control over memory that was projected by the political elite of the Communist Party, there were still remembrance practices that allowed for other forms of social exchange and communication.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁵¹ Heike Karge, 2009, p. 50.

¹⁵² Heike Karge, 2009, p. 50.

Bette Denich states that the main “memory maker” in Yugoslavia was the War Veterans Union, founded in 1947. Their main goal was to unite all former partisan fighters in one organization. They were also responsible for “organizing”, but to all intents and purposes, constructing, war memory in its widest sense. The War Veterans Union built monuments and war memorials all over the former Yugoslavia, and with them helped construct the official cultural and political memory of SFR Yugoslavia.¹⁵³ There was barely a village on the Yugoslav territory that did not have its local war memorial, either in the form of the favorite figurative soldier with a weapon in his hand, a more artistic abstract solution or, at least, small commemorative plaques that were to commemorate certain local war events in the village’s or town’s public places.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main meaning given to the official war narrative by the ruling Communist Party had been a highly future-oriented one. The country successfully achieved liberation and revolution at the same time, and the lives lost were mandatory sacrifices for a better and happier future. Although this may be the case, on an unofficial level, a traditional, mournful remembrance of the dead dominated over the ideologically loaded and officially propagated memories.¹⁵⁴

A great number of monuments built between the end of the war and 1954 were locally funded and were commemorating local rather than all-Yugoslav events. Following the first years of post-war memory building, it seems that the syntagm of “brotherhood and unity”, although stressed in school books, media and museums, remained mainly on a superficial level when it came to commemoration. The fact of the matter is that the painful memory of the war was too raw to be completely suppressed by the government. Ultimately, after the first couple of turbulent post-war years, the strict official narrative took hold in all spheres of public life. The federally financed monuments and memorial complexes to the National Liberation War formed from 1954 onwards composed a successful mixture of commemoration, leisure and education while propagating the postulates of “brotherhood and unity”.

Narrative was an important mechanism through which citizens of former Yugoslav states (in particular Serbia and Croatia) positioned themselves in relation to larger temporal frameworks

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

and to influential discourses on the public level.¹⁵⁵ People negotiated identities through narration, telling stories, and ultimately making an identity of themselves. Narrative identity integrated a sense of self within the context of a larger temporal framework of the collective memory as well as a relationship with the symbols of cultural memory of Yugoslavia.

The massive changes that took place in the post-Yugoslav states required acute renegotiations of identification on the collective as well as the individual level. Newly canonized versions of the past as well as the present reality were constructed and new criteria of legitimacy imposed, which affected people's everyday lives dramatically. One had to come to terms with new states, borders, poverty, status relations, a political system and prescriptions for appropriate behavior.

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During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the years in which Yugoslavia crumbled, until the end of the war in Bosnia in 1995 media played a great role in the revealing of “hidden” memories, as a support for the rising nationalism and as a means for constructing a new political memory and a new, ethnically divided history. Media and memory are closely intertwined — media can enhance, corrupt, extend or replace memory. Collective memory can be mediated and influenced by mass media through filtering, censoring, editing and inscribing past events. Mass media can also serve the function of an archival resource, as Aleida Assmann states, giving particular histories/memories new life in service of the new regime.¹⁵⁷

Ilana R. Bet-El argues that there is a great power in the words “I remember”. Memories that were suppressed during the Tito presidency were undoubtedly spoken in private spheres of life and handed down from generation to generation as important notes of one’s identity and group belonging. These were painful and personal experiences that were transferred into the memory of the collective, although they remained largely private.¹⁵⁸ In the 1980s, with Tito’s death, these memories slowly became public and nationalized. With nationalism taking over, new versions of the past became dominant and they violently pushed other memories into marginality. As a result, these memories were distorted: the personal context of the memories,

¹⁵⁵ Stef Jansen, *Anti-nationalism. Post-Yugoslav resistance and narratives of self and society*, 2000, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ Petra Milički, *Monuments of a Yugo-sized Global Village*, 2013, p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ Ilana R. Bet-el, 2004, p. 208.

their narrative coherence, was eliminated; all that was left was the pain of the past, and anger at its suppression.¹⁵⁹ Words of the past became weapons of war.¹⁶⁰

Besides transferring personal memories, the act of uttering the words “I remember” has the ability to transform any event no matter how collective or how long past into a seemingly real personal memory. This particular mixture of nationalizing private memories while at the same time not distinguishing between former and present historical periods was used as a tool throughout the Yugoslav territory, in order to induce antagonisms between different ethnicities. Keeping a relationship with the past, specifically the traumatic events alive and active, has promoted a historical memory that centres around wars and inter-ethnic animosities.¹⁶¹

Wolfgang Hoepken gives an explanation as to why this kind of war centred history persists in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The author argues that almost all Balkan nation-states were the immediate product of wars. The link between wars and the birth of the nation-state has had enormous consequences for the collective memory in Balkan societies.¹⁶² Therefore, this peculiar connection to war as the primary strategy of nation building, along with favoring the tradition of myth building and the glorification of military violence, is the logical path the newly constructed nation states decided to follow.

The concept of memory, time and history, as used in the newly constituted nation states is similar to what Walter Benjamin calls Messianic time – a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.¹⁶³ In the case of post Yugoslav territory, memory, be it national, collective or individual, becomes a tool that can be used and exploited. This kind of mutated memory, especially in its collective form, gives people a coherent sense of identity as well as a national narrative.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁶¹ Wolfgang Hoepken, War, Memory and Education in a Fragmented Society: The Case of Yugoslavia, in: *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1999, p. 191.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁶³ Walter Benjamin, Theses on the Philosophy of History, 1940, in: *Illuminations*, 1969, pp. 253-264.

¹⁶⁴ Edward W. Said, Invention, Memory, and Place, in: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2000, p. 179.

Ilana R. Bet-El counts five distinct components of historical time and memory that appeared simultaneously during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and continued to be present within the national context of the formed nation states.

The oldest and longest one stretches from the Battle of Kosovo to the end of the nineteenth century, throughout the time when the countries were parts of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. Moreover, this was a time when none of the ethnicities was allowed independent definition. This extended period provided memories of both great glory and ancient misfortunes, used at random in the collapsing Yugoslavia as proof of coherent ethnic histories and an absence of any common past.¹⁶⁵

In Serbia, for example, the newly constituted government have canonized the tragic heroes of the lost battle in Kosovo against the Ottoman Turks in 1389, commemorating them in their annual religious calendar, singing their praises in extended oral epics, and using them as fuel for renewed ethnic battles. The message serves as an invigorating heroic memory, and a stance that this nation will never be a victim again.¹⁶⁶

The next distinct component covers the First World War and the resulting inter-war Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed Yugoslavia. This was a period in which the Ottoman and Habsburg empires had collapsed, and the various ethnic groups received international recognition. Nevertheless, the kingdom was an unstable regime, dominated by the Serbs at the expense of the Croats, the Muslims and the Albanian Kosovars and, as such, it inspired new antagonisms.¹⁶⁷

The third and possibly the most relevant and painful component of historical time used simultaneously is that of the Second World War. From the initial inadequate neutrality of the Kingdom and the subsequent capitulation to the Nazis to the rule of the Croat Ustashe and the rise of the Serb-dominated Partisans; as well as the horrific violence that occurred between these latter two, every country carried its scars. The Second World War also signified the first dismantling of Yugoslavia into an internal bloody war and it created the most prevalent and

¹⁶⁵ Ilana R. Bet-el, 2004, p. 210.

¹⁶⁶ Aleida Assmann, 2006, p. 218.

¹⁶⁷ Ilana R. Bet-el, 2004, pp. 210-211.

divisive personal as well as collective memories. The pain of these memories was after years of suppression easily evoked and used to emphasize the divisive nationalist effect.¹⁶⁸

The fourth component of time is that of Yugoslavia as Tito's state and the early phase of disintegration that followed after his death – to 1987 – where, because of the crumbling economic state of the country, people became frustrated and more aware of the suppression of the national as well as personal memories.¹⁶⁹

Tracing the distinction between a person's experienced memory, on the one hand, and a mere representation, on the other, is important when talking about mediated memory but is also difficult to distinguish. In many cases, there is no definite way of knowing whether something that one remembers is an experienced memory or an episode that has been told by others and was incorporated into one's pool of memories.¹⁷⁰

There are obvious boundaries that can help differentiate between lived and constructed memory. Temporal distinction, for example, help narrow down the scope of lived memories. And yet, there are also some indirect and distorted forms of transmission of the traumatic experience from one generation to the other. Marianne Hirsch coined the term *postmemory* referring to this secondary, inherited memory. It characterizes the experience of those whose upbringing was shaped by preceding traumatic narrative.¹⁷¹ 'Individuals may yet adopt and absorb historical events as part of their history and identity which, as we realize more and more, is not confined to the limits of one's biography but may extend into various generations of one's family or the more recent and distant past of one's national history.'¹⁷² The intensity with which individuals and collectives were influenced by postmemory made the war in Bosnia seemingly the only possible step after the dismantling of Yugoslavia.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.212-213.

¹⁷⁰ Aleida Assmann, 2006, p. 222.

¹⁷¹ Marianne Hirsch, Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile, in: *Poetics Today*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1996, pp. 659-686.

¹⁷² Aleida Assmann, 2006, p.222.

2.3 Places of Remembrance

Too much memory is not an example of a society's confidence in history but an evidence of that society's fear of political change.¹⁷³

CHARLES S. MAIER

Through place-making, we reify both our individual and collective identities. A sense of place is inextricably linked to memory formation, which is crucial to identity formation both on the individual and the collective level. The equation of territory and self, however, is also at the heart of the most malevolent forms of nationalism, which function by excluding outsiders and positing citizenship solely as a means of expressing allegiance to and protecting the homeland.¹⁷⁴ Linking a certain type of memory, such as a political, nation-building memory with a specific place can produce an ethnocentric and threatening society.

Embodying memories in a form of a monument has always been one of the most common ways of working with, processing and reflecting on historical events and figures. The collective memory of a nation is represented and constructed by the monuments it chooses, discards or refuses to erect. They serve as symbols of identity as well as marks of personal and collective memory, and are therefore places where we both recognize and remember.

Commemorating a place upon which an important event happened can have many interpretations, as seen in the previous chapter. Individuals and groups are free to appropriate monuments and memorial complexes for their own personal and private activities of commemoration and memory, in addition to the public exercise of those collective memories. The memorial works as a prosthetic device for memory work in specific ways, unique to each community.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Charles S. Maier, A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial, in: *History and Memory*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1993, p. 150.

¹⁷⁴ Margaret E. Farrar, Amnesia, Nostalgia, and the Politics of Place Memory, in: *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No.4, 2011, pp. 724.

¹⁷⁵ Jan Assmann, 2008, p.

“We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left”¹⁷⁶ are the famous words of the French scholar Pierre Nora. Nora argues that where we earlier were immersed in *milieux de memoire* (worlds of memory) we now, in modern times live disconnected from our past, seeing ourselves detached from our forebears, consciously cultivating the *lieux de memoire* (places of memory) in the attempt to preserve memory in a historical way. Nora claimed that modern societies invest so heavily in *lieux de memoire* (memory sites, such as monuments, museums, archives, and historic places) because these have replaced “real environments of memory”.¹⁷⁷

For Nora, the difference between collective memory and history is not just a distinction, but a conflict, stating that these two contexts are in fundamental opposition. As formulated by Nora, memory “remains in permanent evolution” and is “unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation”. In contrast, “history, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism . . . At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory”¹⁷⁸. As mentioned before, it is often quite difficult to categorize an account of the past indisputably as either memory or history. For example, both official histories produced by the state and the unofficial histories produced outside of its sphere include elements of collective remembering as well as history.¹⁷⁹

In his three volume project, the *Lieux De Memoire* series, Nora employed prominent French historians to locate and describe the “sites” of collective memory. In treating a variety of objects, places, and concepts as “sites,” Nora argues that these sites have become the fixed, externalized locations of what was once an internalized, social collective memory.¹⁸⁰

The way WWII and the National Liberation War were remembered was of crucial importance for the legitimacy of the Yugoslav Party. As mentioned earlier, remembering was a matter of an all-encompassing politics of memory constructed by the governing body. It was a major subject of academic historiography; museums, research institutes, and journals were actively engaged in the professional production of war memories. The war was, after 1954, presented

¹⁷⁶ Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, in: *Representations*, No. 26, 1989, p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 20.

¹⁸⁰ Susan A. Crane, 1997, p. 1379.

in public in a dense and largely uniform net of *lieux de memoire*, since almost all symbolic forms of political/historical memory were dedicated to the memory of war in connection to the "brotherhood and unity" ideology.

Criticizing or working against the official memory of the National Liberation War could lead to an accusation of political crime and exile to Goli Otok, an uninhabited island that was the site of a political prison. Producing legitimacy for the ruling Communist Party, through education and media as well as creating a common identity among the population, were the main objectives of this memory. This collectivistic memory was an important instrument of integration and stability in a fragile regime, which, apart from the ideology of Yugoslav socialism and an unstable economic prosperity, had little to offer to a common identity.¹⁸¹

Addressing the monuments as *lieux de memoire* and as part of cultural memory, one realizes that they are places created at a certain moment, by a given social and cultural context.¹⁸² In the case of the abstract National Liberation War Yugoslav monuments, they were made mainly as places of commemoration but also of leisure, they received a new connotation, being a trigger and a mnemonic device, a physical anchor for the collective memory. Their multipurposefulness connected the past the present and the future into one, since their main role was not to mourn the dead but to celebrate the bright future that these countries can share together. Ultimately, this is also what brought such rage upon them in the years of the breaking of Yugoslavia.

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, social amnesia and suppression encompassed the memories of decades-long peaceful co-existence in one Republic. These memories were changed by the official pretensions to ethnically clean nation states, exclusion of the Others and feelings of frustration that ultimately resulted in violence. Cultural and political memory was re-imagined once more in the fabrication of new national identity, changing of the street names and appropriating a language as "ours".

In Serbia, the new system based its legitimacy not just on nationalism but also on the legacy of socialism. This is best seen in the appropriation of the partisan tradition to exclusively

¹⁸¹ Wolfgang Hoepken, 2003, p. 197.

¹⁸² Dana Pop, Dan-Ionuț Julean, *The Monument: Between Place and Fetishism*, Acta Technica Napocensis: Civil Engineering & Architecture, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2015, p. 6.

Serbian history. The most radical revision happened in Croatia where the World War II Ustasha state was downplayed, concerning its character and its terror.¹⁸³ After Croatia gained its independence in 1991, the Croatian elites resurrected many of the NDH symbols, excluding the time of Yugoslavia from the chronology of the nation.

The developments of the post-war memory culture have been characterized not only by the mentioned removal of the former regime's ideological marks, but also by the establishment of new symbols and the construction of new politics of memory. Monuments embodying the rehabilitated nationalist values, which continue to deepen the unresolved conflicts, have been emerging ever since.¹⁸⁴

2.4. (Yugo)Nostalgia

Today, a longing for Yugoslavia exists in all of its former republics. Nostalgia in the former Yugoslav countries is a social phenomenon mobilizing different cultural practices in an attempt to remember and refine the past and, with it, national identities. Yugonostalgia, as it plays out in all its complexity, opens up many possibilities for coming to terms with the Yugoslav past and its tragic consequences. There are several often overlapping aspects of Yugoslav nostalgia that are at the moment evident in the Balkan region. Zala Volčič names three main ones:

The first is a revisionist type of nostalgia. This is primarily a political phenomenon, invoked mainly by politicians within the context of public debates. Revisionist nostalgia generates the promise of the past as part of a political program of reunification. In doing so, it also takes part in some of the other aspects of nostalgia described below, in order to rewrite the history and issue a call for the renewal of a shared sense of belonging to an imagined Yugoslav community. This revisionist form of nostalgia implies the existence of a sustainable historical reality in order to transform and reshape it in accordance with contemporary political priorities.¹⁸⁵

Secondly, there is the aesthetic nostalgia, which is primarily a cultural phenomenon calling for the preservation of an authentic Yugoslav past. It claims to respect Yugoslav culture and its socialist past as something sacred, to be cherished, but not exploited for political or commercial

¹⁸³ Wolfgang Hoepken, 1999, pp. 205-217.

¹⁸⁴ Petra Milički, 2013, p. 13.

¹⁸⁵ Zala Volčič, 2007, p.28.

gain.¹⁸⁶ This form of nostalgia is closely connected to the escapist understanding of nostalgia as longing for a utopian and heavily mediated version of the past.

Different generations experience nostalgia in various ways. Some people, who lived a part of their life in Yugoslavia, experience nostalgia in relation to their collective memory. This is not simple nostalgia of their youth, because they cannot “turn back time”. It is the realization that there is no prospect of their collective memory continuation. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, there was a break in the process of collective remembering where people needed to recalibrate their memories in order to fit into their national group. This form of nostalgia for collective memory seems to be peculiar to people experiencing the post-socialist condition, as both loss of social trust and the current social insecurity strengthen the longing for a continuity in collective memory.¹⁸⁷

This aspect of Yugonostalgia is a fundamental tool in the process of the preservation of the cultural memory and history of Yugoslavia, both as a state and as an idea. Here, the emphasis is placed on the positive elements of life in Yugoslavia, such as “reasonable economic security, low crime rates, multiculturalism, freedom of movement, international recognition of the country and the overall perception that life in Yugoslavia was more rewarding than it is today in the newly independent states. Understood in this manner, Yugonostalgia seems to be a positive and potentially productive force in the processes of reconciliation in the Balkans.”¹⁸⁸

Third is the escapist, utopian nostalgia. This is a commercial phenomenon that celebrates and exploits the longing for an idyllic Yugoslav past. This type of nostalgia tends to lack any historical context. It rejects historical narratives, relying instead upon commodified symbols of Yugoslav identity.¹⁸⁹ It is a consumer-oriented type of nostalgia- nostalgia of style, the packaging of “nostalgia products” with no explicit appeal to return, no acute sense of loss, and no reference to embodied memory. By using the capitalist system, it brands, markets and transforms Yugo symbols away from the socialism into consumerism.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁸⁷ Zala Volčič, Post-Socialist recollections: Identity and memory in former Yugoslavia, in: *Cultures and Globalization: Heritage, Memory and Identity*, 2011. p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ Zala Volčič, 2011, p. 10.

¹⁸⁹ Zala Volčič, 2007, p. 28.

¹⁹⁰ Zala Volčič, 2011, p. 3..

Here, I would like to propose one more aspect of Yugoslav nostalgia (Yugonostalgia), as argued by Monika Palmberger. Rather than viewing nostalgia for Yugoslavia as only oriented towards the past alone, Palmberger argues that it can also be seen as a certain critique of the present post-socialist reality and may be reflected in visions of a better future.¹⁹¹ As stated before, longing for Yugoslavia, essentially longing for the continuation of collective memory that has been disrupted in the 1990s, has a potential to wedge an individual between “the good old days” and the unsatisfactory present. Another approach to this type of nostalgia suggests that it can also be seen as a critique of nationalist government that are still working to keep the ethnic antagonisms active even today. Moreover, it can lead to a shift where nostalgia becomes less directed towards the past but becomes a source for future aspirations.¹⁹²

Twenty years after the fall of the socialist Yugoslavia (from 2010 onward), there was a sudden proliferation of both scholarly and artistic work on the topic of Yugoslav past. Contemporary post-Yugoslav art practices are becoming increasingly involved in the Yugoslav space and identities. There are many approaches and ways to tap in and appropriate this past, from expressions of individual memory and nostalgia or representations the continuity of Yugoslav (now post-Yugoslav) cultural space¹⁹³ to politically engaged works that deal with the disruption of collective memory and erasure of the past.

Works and the artists presented and examined in the next chapter focus primarily on the destruction of memories and contemporary society as well as the meta post-Yugoslav space rather than on nostalgia. While engaging with the questions of the unwanted past, they are not only re-visioning the forgotten and ignored history, but also opening the way to new mechanisms of interpretation of Yugoslavia. With the goal of remembering, they are also deconstructing the many myths on which the new countries based their exclusive nationality as well as their hatred towards the old regime. By using the monuments in their work, the artists are engaging in the process of remembrance but also giving these monumental sculptures back their initial symbolism. Ultimately, by re-visioning the past, they are pointing to the discrepancies and far right politics of exclusion that is still strong today.

¹⁹¹ Monika Palmberger, 2008, p. 102.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

¹⁹³ Milica Popović and Petra Belč, *Yugonostalgia: Yugoslavia as a metaspace in contemporary art practices*, *Život Umjetnosti*, 2014, p. 19.

Chapter Three

Body as a Monument

3.1 Presentation of the Artist

Milica Tomić was born in 1960 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Until today, her country had changed its borders four times: being SFRY at the beginning through Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, to Serbia with and without Kosovo¹⁹⁴. In 1994 she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, with a master's degree in painting, although she quickly changed her focus to other forms of artistic expression. Today, she is a visual artist primarily working with video, film, photography, performance as well as with light and sound installation, web projects, discussions, etc.

During the 1990s, the presidency of Slobodan Milošević brought a vicious era of censorship and oppression of artistic expression in what was then called Yugoslavia. This time was marked by a certain degradation in the field of arts, and the omnipresent power of kitsch. Art practice which pretended to become the official art of the Milošević era is distinguished for its excessive use of references (folk and historical myths) as well as for the explicit mixture of religion and eroticism. “The very existence of art practices that attempted to make political statements and used political references as rough material, was an achievement, per se.”¹⁹⁵ This period brought, for the work of Milica Tomić, a shift toward politically engaged art. In one of her interviews, she said that for her art, the main reason she became political was Milošević's entry to power. “I became aware that politics crept into our lives and it has become part of our most private, most personal decisions.”¹⁹⁶

Since then, Tomić's work has been focusing on topics including the politics of memorialization, issues of political violence, memory and trauma, nationality and identity, and

¹⁹⁴ After the breakup of SFR Yugoslavia, the territory consisting of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo was called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992–2003). From 2003 until 2006, the name for the same territory was Serbia and Montenegro. The last change was the autonomy of Kosovo in 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Branislav Dimitrijević, The Grand Compromise: On examples of the Use of Political References in Serbian Art of the 90's and its Historical Background, in: *Svet umetnosti/World of art*, 2000/2001, n. p.

¹⁹⁶ Boban Stojanović, Interview with Milica Tomić: “Vreme neprestanog ispitivanja”, *Dnevnik*, 13th December 2010.

the discrepancy between lived experience and representational identity amongst others. Her work employs a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. While positioning herself as the mediator between the workings of power, she complicates the binary notions such as self and the Other, inside/outside and victim/perpetrator.

In 2002, as a response to the commitment to social change and the new forms of collectivity it engenders, Milica Tomić has made a marked shift from individual to collective artistic practice. She became a founding member of an art/theory group, "Grupa Spomenik" (Monument Group) as well as conceiving and initiating the cross-disciplinary project Four Faces of Omarska (2010). Both the group and the project are dedicated to the question of the politics of memory, particularly to the violence that occurred during the war in Bosnia (1992-1995). Working between Belgrade and Graz, Milica Tomić is currently the Head of IZK-Institute for Contemporary Art at TU Graz.

This chapter presents and analyzes two works by Milica Tomić, "One day, instead of one night, a burst of machine gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise" (2010), and "Belgrade Remembers" (2001). While the first performance commemorates, the second recreates and with it activates the places of remembrance, the sites on which the events of the Second World War occurred.

3.2 "One day, instead of one night, a burst of machine-gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise"

The verse that artist Milica Tomić chose for the work's title belongs to a poem by Oskar Davičo¹⁹⁷ (1909-1989), a Serbian and Yugoslav surrealist poet and writer. Davičo was also an activist and a member of the Yugoslav Partisan fighters in the National Liberation Army, Europe's most effective anti-Nazi guerrilla resistance movement during the Second World War.

This work exhibited as a photo and video installation, consists of a series of interventions or, better, actions, that occurred on the streets of Belgrade between September and October 2009. (fig. 9) It is a documentation of the walking actions Tomić carried out in which she revisited

¹⁹⁷ The poem to which these lines belong, "U spomen na tamnovanje Svetozara Markovića / In memory of confinement Svetozar Marković", was written in 1925. The original verse/title of the work is: "Jednoga dana umesto noci, bljesnuce svetlost iz mitraljeza kad svetlost drukce ne moze doci"

sites in the city of Belgrade, where anti-Fascist actions took place during the Second World War. For this occasion, Tomić selected five public places that are not a part of the public memory of Belgrade and its antifascist history.¹⁹⁸ The video follows the artist walking through the streets with a machine gun in one hand and a plastic supermarket bag in the other, passing civilians who are seemingly untroubled by her weapon (fig. 10).

Tomić used a film-editing method, a technique invented by a Russian avant-garde filmmaker Lev Kuleshov in the 1920s, called “creative geography” or artificial landscape. Creative geography, as explained by Mark Joyce in the book *An Introduction to Film Studies*¹⁹⁹ from 1996, is a subset of montage employed for the purposes of making the audience construct a “location in their minds that does not actually exist”²⁰⁰. By implementing this technique, Milica Tomić edits together multiple segments shot on various locations and times in such a way that they appear to occur in a continuous place at a continuous period of time. During the course of two months, she visited and stood for hours on these locations, referring to them as “places that remember”²⁰¹, mapping them in this old/new space, and thereby creating a new territory. By mapping these sites with her presence, the artist and her body became, at least for a short interval, a monument on this land. Using her own body to occupy a space, she commemorates the events that have been erased from the public history of Belgrade and that seldom live in the social memory of people. Because of this editing technique, Tomić’s presence is seemingly trapped in the editing loop, unable to find her way out, doomed to constantly revisit the same places repeatedly. In this way, she is assuming the role of the memories of these places upon herself, memories that still linger, waiting to be addressed.

The significance of the places is underlined by personal stories, heard in the background. Tomić conducted interviews with five Partisan fighters, members of the People’s Liberation Army – men and women alike, in which they spoke about their decision to take part in the antifascist movement of Yugoslavia. The interviews that make up the audio section of this

¹⁹⁸ The places Tomić visited are as follows: Botičeva Street 5, The corner of Cvijićeva and Ruzveltova street, Banjički Venac street, Karađorđeva street 69 and The Railway Bridge.

¹⁹⁹ Mark Joyce, The Soviet montage cinema of the 1920's, in: Jill Neldes, *An Introduction to Film Studies*, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2012. (1996), pp. 389-420.

²⁰⁰ Mark Joyce, 1996, p. 395-399.

²⁰¹ Krista Geneviève Lynes, Formalist Strategies in the Era of New Media, in: *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2015, p. 4.

work are, in fact, a part of another piece by Milica Tomić, made in 2003 under the name *Naknadno o ljubavi* (Afterwards About Love).²⁰² As is the case with *One day...* so too did the name of the 2003 work come as a reference to a prominent Yugoslav poet. *Naknadno o ljubavi* is a name of a poem from Radovan Zagović (1907-1986), a socially engaged poet, who was for a brief time the head of the propaganda of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (1945-1948). The interviews with the Partisans were conducted in Serbo-Croatian, the official language of SFR Yugoslavia and have been subtitled to English. While sharing their personal stories, the interviewers also elaborated on what antifascist struggle means today; in other words, why it is so ignored and forgotten. The atmosphere of apathy on the street is juxtaposed with passionate statements and convictions expressed by the protagonists of the anti-Fascist movement.

Tomić's work also bears a symbolic dedication to the young members of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative, who around the time the artist conducted her actions were imprisoned and awaiting trial accused for international terrorism for protesting in front of the Greek Embassy in Belgrade, in solidarity with demonstrators in Greece.²⁰³ In an interview, Tomić said:

Njeni članovi su uhapšeni baš u toku ove moje šetnje. Smatram da je njihovo hapšenje bio direktan pokušaj, tada 2009 godine, da se uvođenjem regulacija unutar zakona o anti-terorizmu redukuje prostor političkih i građanskih sloboda i pokušaj da se uvede zakonom mogućnost kriminalizacije građanskih sloboda, kao i kriminalizacije politike. I pre svega pravo na konzumaciju javnog prostora i naravno, po meni ključno pitanje: Da li nasilje može biti konstruktivno?²⁰⁴

Its members were arrested in the course of this walk. I consider that their arrest was a direct attempt, then in 2009, to introduce the scope of political and civic freedoms by introducing regulations within the Anti-Terrorism Act and attempting to introduce the possibility of criminalizing civil liberties as well as criminalization of politics. And

²⁰² Davor Konjikušić, Interview with Milica Tomić: "Milica Tomić: Bili smo tamna avangarda globalnih promena", *Novosti*, 2nd May 2017.

²⁰³ Lidija Kujundžić, Interview with Milica Tomić: "Milica Tomić, umetnica buntovnica", *NIN*, 18th March 2010.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Milica Tomić: "40 GODINA PANKA Milica Tomić: Pank nam danas nedostaje", *Nedeljnik*, 26th August 2016.

above all, the right to consume public space and, of course, the key question for me is:
Can violence be constructive?

This opens up the discourse of the work not only to the past but the present as well. The work addresses the erasure of memory of the anti-fascist resistance movement, but also reveals its relevance to the present moment with its new forms of fascism in social life. Obviously, open manifestations of fascism are fairly easy to recognize (just as more and more of them are appearing). Yet, Tomić turns the attention of the spectator to two main factors; firstly, the silent forms of fascism that are becoming normalized through systematic violence and are seeping into the laws and everyday administration practices of the nation-states; and secondly, the mechanisms of oppression and the various symptoms of contemporary fascism that are being presented as unavoidable, pragmatic necessities.²⁰⁵

Unfortunately, we seem to have forgotten our anti-fascist traditions. I have come to realize that we have fascism everywhere today. Here in Serbia, in Switzerland, in Europe, and beyond. Today, you cannot create monuments of stone or concrete anymore. Therefore, I'm much more interested in living monuments that irritate and change our memory.²⁰⁶

Tomić's opinion is that, since the terrorist attacks that occurred in September 2001, the world has been in an era of permanent war. For her, the war against terrorism changed the concept of war and left the people asking who is the terrorized and who the terrorist?²⁰⁷ Today's concept of war implies the normalization of violence and terror.²⁰⁸ Moreover, it constitutes a revision of leftist politics in historical terms, equating leftist and right-wing movements and struggles. In relation to permanent war, in their own time, the antifascist fight as well as the People's Liberation Army were from certain points of view also looked upon as a terrorist attack. In the work "One Day..." Tomić tries to arouse the interest of passers-by in long-forgotten memories. She carried a machine gun in her hand openly in the main streets of Belgrade, through the busy masses of people, and no one seemed to be bothered by this. What this work reveals is a

²⁰⁵ Rastko Močnik, *Koliko fasizma?*, Studia Humanitatis Minora, Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 85-144.

²⁰⁶ Andreas Stadler, Interview with Milica Tomić: "We seem to have forgotten out anti-fascist traditions: Milica Tomić in conversation with Andreas Stadler", in: *Serbia: Frequently Asked question*, 2007, pp. 15.

²⁰⁷ Eugenio Viola, *Milica Tomić One Day*, 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.z2ogalleria.it/>

²⁰⁸ Davor Konjikušić, 2017.

terrifying apathy and the unwillingness of people to break a consensus, even a potentially dangerous one.

3.2.1 Conclusion

“One day instead of one night a burst of machine gun fire will flash, if light cannot come otherwise” documents a public intervention that symbolically constructs an immaterial monument. The artist, aware of the importance of the events that remain un-commemorated, marks these spots on the streets of Belgrade with her own body, conjuring a new, ephemeral monument. This action becomes the new monument to the event via the inscription of her own body into the space.

Another significant aspect is the importance of documentation. While Tomić does indeed recover the past and activates it in the present with her body, thus making the living monument, this action is short lived, namely, it ends as soon as the artist moves from these “places that remember”. By disrupting the passive forgetting of these places, along with the documentation of actions in a form of image, video and testimony, Tomić forms what Aleida Assmann calls the material storage of memory²⁰⁹. The artist uncovers memory from oblivion and pushes it forward into an archive, a place between forgetting and remembering. In doing so, she is giving a new chance for remembrance of these places and invites the public to participate in further uncovering of erased memories of the city. Documentation, specifically video and photographs, in this instance, become a medium which, with the help of a spectator, sets in motion the action of remembering over and over again.

While using her body to commemorate the forgotten past of the successful actions carried out by the People’s Liberation Army, Tomić manages to connect the work to the current political struggles. While connecting the past and the present, the artist also points out the contemporary rise of silent fascism and an alarming right-wing ascendancy throughout Europe. More than that, “One Day...” reveals the indifference of people toward potential violence and the normalization of it through new concepts of war.

²⁰⁹ Aleida Assmann, 2010, p. 103.

3.3 Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory

In 2001, Tomić received an invitation to be photographed for the October issue cover of the lifestyle magazine *Prestup*. She decided to make a series of staged photographs capturing herself hanging from a lamppost on the Terazije square in Belgrade (fig. 11). The series consists of four photographs. Three of them present the artist with her hands tied behind her back, dressed in a knee length skirt, cardigan and boots hanging from a lamppost on the Terazije square, while the fourth photograph shows the street from the viewpoint of the hanged artist.

At the very same place, on August 16th, 1941, five members of the People's Liberation Army were hanged with the goal to intimidate the inhabitants of the city of Belgrade because of the more frequent assassinations and sabotage that was carried out by the members of the resistance movement.²¹⁰ (fig. 12) The initiator and the main organizer of the hanging was the SS Major Karl Kraus, the first head of the Belgrade Gestapo. The place where the five antifascists were hanged was finally commemorated in 1983 by the city of Belgrade. The memorial is made out of two parts, a monument and a bronze plaque (fig. 13). The monument is the work of the sculptor Nikola Janković, and is a four-meter high obelisk, with a relief depicting the hanging.²¹¹ Engraved in the relief are also the verses of a Serbian poet, Vasko Popa:

Recite zemljokradicama da pod ovom našom zvezdom voćke smrti više ne sade, jer će
ih pojesti voće²¹²

Tell the land thieves to stop planting the fruit of death underneath our star, because the
fruit will eat them alive.

The second part is a bronze plaque with the names of the killed patriots and an epitaph acknowledging them as the freedom fighters that were hanged by the fascist occupying forces.

²¹⁰ n.a., *Uz pivo, na vešanje na Terazijama*, 17th August 2017. Retrieved from: <http://mondo.rs/Naslovna>

²¹¹ n.a., *Godišnjica zločina na Terazijama*, 17th August 2017. Retrieved from:
<http://www.rts.rs/page/home/sr.html>

²¹² Olga Manojlović Pintar, Milan Radanović, Milovan Pissari, Nenad Lajbenšperger, Enzo Traverso, *Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941-44. Priručnik za čitanje grada.*, 2013, p. 62.

The bronze plaque has been stolen two times until today and for the time being, the monument stands without any designation or explanation.

The project “Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory” belongs to a bigger series of work called “Remembering”, that Tomić began in Erlauf in 2000. Erlauf, a small town in Austria, was the place where the meeting of the Soviet and American army marked for Austria the end of the Second World War. For the 50-year anniversary of this crucial meeting, two artists, from America and former Soviet Russia, were invited to make a monument commemorating the victory over fascism. Jenny Holzer, the American sculptor, made an obelisk with a laser pointing to the sky, while Oleg Komov, the Soviet-Russian sculptor kept within the tradition of socialist realism and made a bronze statue representing a small girl dressed in traditional Austrian clothing, hugging two soldiers, the representatives of the two armies. Five years later, in 2000, Milica Tomić realized a work “Erlauf Remembers” (fig. 14) that appropriated the sculpture made by Komov. She invited ten Austrians to each stand on the place between the two soldiers, a political space in its right. The goal of this reenactment was to connect the victory of antifascism, to the present and to celebrate it in the consciousness of the people. The photographs were mounted on billboards around Erlauf and they celebrated the 55-year anniversary of the event. However, the billboards featuring people not from Erlauf were found torn down the day after the celebration. This paradoxical racism and fascism, the unacceptance of the Other, even if that Other was from a neighboring village, drove Milica Tomić to make a series of work collectively named “Remembering”.²¹³

“Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory” was a direct response to the post 90s war politics of Serbia. After the war in Bosnia ended in 1995, all the ex-Yugoslav nations built nationally pure separate states, and all of them were renouncing the heritage of the anti-fascist resistance since it was closely linked to the communist past that the new regimes wanted to forget. Serbia was no exception. The governing institutions started to “clean” the public history of all the symbols of antifascism. For example, the story of the five hanged antifascists was completely erased from the history textbooks, while the commemorative monument was taken off the “important monuments” list that was on the website of the city of Belgrade. The turning

²¹³ Sonja Ćirić, Interview with Milica Tomić: “U zrtvinim cipelama”, *Vreme*, No.518, 7th December 2000.

point for the artist was the decision of the City Assembly to cancel the honoring of October 20th as the Belgrade Liberation day.²¹⁴

Tomić purposely invokes the remembrance to the antifascist past as an act of resistance to the collective amnesia. It can only be read as a critical comment on uncritical forgetfulness and ethical numbness of her fellow citizens. Establishment of the continuity with the People's Liberation Army is crucial in the work "Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory" in which the artist performs an act of commemoration of the event which, although marked by plaque and commemorated for a while, did not become a part of the culture of memory, and that fact very directly refers to a current political situation.²¹⁵ On another level, this project was very important not only for referencing and criticizing the political local situation of Serbia but also to the global political situation and the neo fascism that is steadily gaining power in the world.

The subtitle of the work – *Neither Oblivion nor Memory* – points out the way in which the history of the Yugoslav country and the antifascist legacy is being treated in Serbia today. The systematic erasure of political and cultural memory happening continuously after the dissolution of Yugoslavia is effectively disclosed with this project. Although the event of the hanging is commemorated and the story is still alive in the communicative memory of the people, this kind of remembrance is short-lived as it is grounded in the lived experience. The act of forgetting already begun with the erasure of the hanging from the history textbooks and with the stealing of the commemorative plaque. Today, this horrid incident lingers somewhere in between, not completely forgotten but also devoid of any connection to the thousands of people who pass by Terazije square every day.

Tomić uses the power of documentation in the same manner as in the above mentioned work "One day instead of one night a burst of machine gun fire will flash, if light cannot come otherwise." Both of these public space actions were events of which the public was not aware. There was no intentional viewing and the spectators participated unknowingly. They engaged in the process of reenactment with the help of their curious, confused or even scared gazes.

²¹⁴ Lidija Kujundžić, 2010.

²¹⁵ Mirjana Dragosavljević, *The culture of memory: Work on the past and formation of counter-public sphere*, n.d. [Scholarly project] Retrieved from: <https://www.academia.edu/>

The importance of the photographs that documented this action lies in duplicating the process of the ritual gesture of reenactment. Everyone who looks at these photographs becomes a participator by proxy in the act of remembering the five hanged soldiers.

3.3.1 Conclusion

By choosing to reenact the scene of the hanging that happened on the Terazije square, Tomić performed an act of continuity with the anti-fascist liberation movement, confronting it with today's politics of historical revisionism and erasure. Tomić disrupts the act of forgetting by pulling it back to the present. In today's world, the simplification of the history of socialism reduces the entire corpus of socialist modernism to totalitarianism, it erases and pushes into oblivion the emancipatory politics of socialism. Reducing socialism to totalitarianism annuls the politics of antifascism and ultimately negates the outcome of the Second World War.²¹⁶ Tomić's work represents both an acknowledgment of the activists' struggle, as well as a demystification of the understanding of socialism as only a totalitarian political apparatus, and places an emphasis on the emancipatory aspects of the socialist period.²¹⁷

The photo project "Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory" is directly linked to Tomić's 2010 walking action that later came to be known as the work "One day a machine gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise". Both the works not only center on Belgrade's (almost) forgotten sites of the antifascist struggle, but they point out to the same problematics on the local as well as global level. In both actions, Tomić takes the role of the main protagonist, putting herself in the shoes of both the commemorator but also the victim, the person that needs to be commemorated. In both instances, she uses her presence to mark a location and, in that moment, make an immaterial living monument. Both works reveal real places where real lives were lost and the problem of their remembrance. They point out the erasure of antifascist history and the disheartening apathy of the people. On the global level, the works unearth new forms of fascism that are growing stronger every day, assisted by the new revisionist politics that equates Socialism with every other form of totalitarianism and antifascist struggle with terrorism.

²¹⁶ Brooklyn Museum, 28.04.2010., *Global Feminisms: Milica Tomić* [Video file]

²¹⁷ Milica Trakilović, *Moving the Body of the Nation: Women's Self-Performance Art as Subversion of Nationalist Ideologies and Cultural Stereotyping in the Context of ex-Yugoslavia*, 2013, p. 41.

Another important aspect that these two actions share is a gendered one. One of the key components of these works is pointing out the shift of the role of women today in comparison to the Second World War and the National Liberation Struggle. In the time these actions were made, in Serbia, it was almost impossible to imagine a woman as a soldier, her role was reduced to one of entertainment. Milica Tomić connects it with the rise of the *turbo folk*²¹⁸ music, a movement that constructed Serbian identity during the 1990s. Through the lyrics, clothing and behavior that was propagated through this genre and the broader media, the figure of the woman was mainly perceived as a body that helped with the emergence of patriarchal nationalism in Serbia during the 1990s.²¹⁹ Needless to say, the image of a Partisan woman, who played an equal part in the revolutionary struggle, was, through the change of the political system and pop culture, completely destroyed. This is why it is important to notice that these actions are performed by a woman. It is crucial to remember what kind of a role a female body had during the revolution (“Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory”), more importantly, to imagine a woman having a leading role, as it is in “One day a machine gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise.”

²¹⁸ Turbo folk is defined as a musical genre which includes Serbian – and increasingly, Balkan – folk music with elements of electronic, dance, pop and hip-hop music. “Turbofolk as a genre is a symbol of Milosevic’s – ex-president of Serbia – corrupted regime, and mostly used as a political weapon. Before the rule of Milosevic, turbofolk was seen as kitsch and trashy, but during his rule, when crime and propaganda was on the rise, so was the popularity of turbo-folk.” – Katarina Stankovic in Andrijana Pejchinovska, “The Peculiar Yet Unifying World of Turbofolk”, *The Gazelle*, 9th February 2019.

²¹⁹ From an interview with Milica Tomić conducted by the author of the thesis, October 9th 2019.

Chapter Four

In Dialogue with a Monument

4.1 Presentation of the Artist

Siniša Labrović did not start out as an artist. Born in the town of Sinj in 1965, Labrović studied Croatian Language at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar. He completed his studies in 1997 at Zagreb University. He worked as a professor of Croatian language and literature until 2000 when he began dabbling in performance art with his first public space action done in Sinj. From that moment on, he completely focused on art. Labrović received a prize from The Imaginary Academy in Grožnjan²²⁰ for his contribution to a movie *Srce* (Heart). That same year, he had his first solo exhibition at the Art workshop Lazareti at the Gallery Otok in Dubrovnik.²²¹

In Croatia, Labrović is well known to local audiences as a socially engaged performer who, through his artistic practice addresses, reflects and questions a wide range of social and political issues that are plaguing contemporary society in Croatia. In his first performance, “Zavijanje ranjenika / Bandaging the Wounded”, 2000, the artist goes beyond the subject of historical revisionism, raising the problem of the destroyed anti-fascist monumental heritage to the general level of a humane act towards the injured victim. In this work, Labrović tends to the “wounds” of a vandalized monument to the fallen soldiers of the National Liberation War, bandaging the damaged parts as if it were a living being

Later, Labrović quickly turned to societal satire, mainly engaging with the problems of the position of an artist in society as well as mass media and mainstream television’s impact on people. In 2005, the artist attracted the interest of international art world with “Stado.org / Flock.org”. In this work, the artist cast seven sheep as the main protagonists in a reality show, where, as it is with many other reality TV programs, the viewers had the final word through

²²⁰ The Imaginary Academy in Grožnjan, Istria was instituted in 1995, primarily as a summer film school, with workshops for screenwriting, production, documentary, multimedia and acting.

²²¹ Božo Majstorović, *Siniša Labrović solo exhibition*, November 2002. Retrieved from: <http://galum.hr/en/exhibitions/>

the medium of a vote. They could choose their favorite and therefore decide which one would win and which one would lose. The losing sheep were taken to slaughter while the winner would get a lifetime care. The reality show lasted for 12 days and was available for watching and voting on an online platform. Through his work, Labrović parodied the popular reality television shows as well as the people's absurd need for fame, voyeurism and the manipulation of other people's lives.

Labrović turns to performance as well as spatial installation as means for his artistic expression. As a performer he naturally centers his artistic practice on his body, which becomes his tool, medium and artwork at the same time. Using his body to express ideas he does not restrain himself from often drastic moments or interventions onto his own flesh (e.g. cutting, tattooing and surgically removing pieces of his own skin). With the help of self-irony and humor, the artist uses not only his own body but also the physical markers of his social position and to create installations from plastic, bricks, bags, used towels, bags, books and other equipment.²²² Shabbiness, materiality, softness and fragility can be found in Labrović's installations. His work often discomforts the spectator, especially by their unexpected involvement in his performances.

In 2012 Siniša Labrović represented Croatia at the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale, with the work titled *Common Ground*, together with Pula Group, Hrvoslava Brkušić, Igor Bezinović and Boris Cvjetanović.²²³ In 2018, Labrović publicly ended his 'battle with the windmills' that are Croatian politics and conservative society. He currently lives and works in Berlin.

This chapter presents and analyzes Labrović's first performance, "Zavijanje Ranjenika/ Bandaging the wounded" (2000), a public action enacted on a vandalized monument, dedicated to the partisan Liberation fight, in the city of Sinj.

4.2 Bandaging the Wounded, 2000.

Throughout the 1990s, in Croatia, there were two methods of destroying the antifascist monuments. This went hand in hand with the historical revisionism that sought the rehabilitation of the Ustasha regime, constructing the ethnically clean country and denigrating

²²² Katarína Slaninová, *Siniša Labrović. useless, leisure and apple*, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://amtproject.sk/>

²²³ *Ibid.*

the Yugoslav period. The first solution could be named the reshaping of old monuments. Such monuments were simply filled out with new elements. The space remained the same, but instead of red stars the monuments were adorned by Catholic crosses; the antifascist slogans and praises to the partisan fighters were exchanged with Croatian coats of arms with the dedications to the Croatian people. Moreover, new monuments celebrating the first Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman were frequently created.²²⁴

The other methods of handling the past included direct and devastating actions. Over 3,000 antifascist monuments, more than half that were on the Croatian territory, were damaged or destroyed during the 1990s, and many more were vandalized by nationalist graffiti. This systematic devastation was part of the policy of cleansing and the symbolic battle for the new Croatian identity. In other words, it was the cleansing of “foreign”, non-Croatian elements that had to do with the constitution of the socialist Yugoslavia and the People’s Liberation Struggle.²²⁵

In the year 2000, on the 22nd of July, the Anti-Fascist Struggle Day and a national holiday in Croatia, Siniša Labrović performed his first public space action “Bandaging the Wounded” (fig. 15) in his hometown of Sinj. The monument in question is part of a larger sculptural opus of Ivan Mirkovic, a sculptor and a painter from Split who devoted almost an entire decade between 1950 and 1960 to the production of war-themed public memorials. The specific piece that was the object of the artist’s intervention is called the “Memorial to the Fallen Soldiers of Cetinjska Krajina”. Mirkovic dedicated a series of ten similarly themed memorials to the fallen soldiers, that is, for the fallen partisans. This memorial, therefore, may be seen as a place-based memory that subsequently became the object of Labrović’s socially engaged site specific art.²²⁶

The memorial structure of the monument consists of a sculptural composition placed on a two level stone mount depicting a partisan woman holding a wounded man in her arms. The composition in Labrović’s words resembles the one of Pieta, which emphasizes the moment of

²²⁴ Marijana Lubina, *Bandaging Wounds of a Partisan Fighter as an Answer to the Policy of Forgetting*. Paper presented at the conference “Questioning Transitional Dynamics in Redefining Cultural Identities in Southeastern Europe”, 15-16th January 2011, p. 1.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

²²⁶ Sanja Potkonjak and Tomislav Pletenac, *The Art and Craft of Memory: Re-Memorialization Practices in Post-Socialist Croatia*, in: *Post-Yugoslav Constellations. Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, 2016, p. 72.

pathos when seeing it vandalized. In the higher part of the sculptural composition, a standing figure of a victor can be seen, carrying a flag. This small memorial also includes an ossuary. Both parts of the memorial are built to commemorate the memory of the antifascist fighters from the city of Sinj and surrounding villages who were killed during the Second World War.²²⁷

At some point, during the 1990s, the monument was partly ruined by an explosion, aimed to destroy it. It was severely damaged; parts of the sculpture were cut off and many holes were made on its body.²²⁸ A sculpture that depicted the wounded became wounded itself (fig. 16). This vandalizing of an antifascist memorial was done by anonymous nationalists who were never found or convicted for this crime. The explosion did not raise any debate or reaction of the public, as it was usually the case when the monument heritage of World War II was being destroyed. Such an act has not caused an action by the public, which has been silent about the devastation of the monument from the war of national liberation and which apparently considers these actions unworthy of any special attention. Next to the explosion damage, the monument was left to ruin and neglected. It served mostly as a garbage dump and a gathering place for drug addicts.

The documentation of the performance consists of a video documentation, lasting 22 minutes and 55 seconds, and a series of photographs that can be exhibited independently. The video captures Labrović, casually dressed in a white T-shirt with a print and cargo shorts, tending to the monument. At the beginning of the action, Labrović firstly removed the garbage, syringes and bottles from the bottom of the sculpture. Then he approached it as he would a living wounded human being. In the performance, Labrović applied wound medicine on the damaged areas of the monument, after which he bandaged these parts with various gauzes and bandages. He humanizes the monument with his artistic-therapeutic procedure consisting of a classic approach to the injured person as applied in the emergency center. The injured monument is purified from the remains of shrapnel, wounds are treated with medical solution, and in the end, the monument is wrapped and left to recover.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²²⁸ Jelena Prtorić, Performing the political: The Croatian artists staging public resistance to injustice, *The Calvert Journal*, 1st August 2017.

In an interview from 2014, Labrović stated that although this performance did not provoke any official reactions from the municipal government of the city of Sinj, he was threatened personally.²²⁹ Namely, due to the polarizing effect the performance had on the public, the artist was prohibited from teaching Croatian language and literature in the schools. He essentially became, for more than eight years after the action, a *persona non grata* in the city of Sinj. Nevertheless, as Labrović established himself on the international artistic map, his work began to be more accepted in Croatia. This resulted in the video documentation for *Bandaging the Wounded* to be on permanent display in the Fine Arts Gallery in Split, Croatia.²³⁰

Labrović started working on this project in response to the shift in values that marked Croatian politics during the 1990s, which is best described by the exclusion and forgetting of antifascism. In that moment of forgetting, antifascism and its heroes became anonymous subjects of history, distant and unknown, while the collective and individual trauma, memorialized by the ideological apparatus of socialism, transformed into an empty space of non-remembrance of (non)existent victims. Devoid of living memories, antifascist memorials thereby became arbitrary reminders of unsuitable and conflicting narrations of history. The loss of dialogue and memorial legibility – the inability to communicate the ideas of antifascism – is related to the strained relationship between the collective memory constructed by the state, on the one hand, and individual memory, on the other.

Potkonjak and Pletenac use the concept of the *unmemorable* to describe the dynamics of the politics of forgetting. It is a place that exists and commemorates, “remembers” something that is being erased as a part of the political process through which communities are constituted anew.²³¹ Using a language of memory, Labrović found a way to re-memorialize the unmemorable and invisible memory. In this project, the artist set in motion the universal dimension of cultural remembrance. His individual reaction to the collective state of memory and forgetting is not meant to disintegrate the space of remembering but to allow different readings.

²²⁹ Marta Kubala, Radost, nada i bol, in: *LiDraNo*, Županijska smotra, Zagreb, 2014, pp. 338- 339.

²³⁰ Although this work is pivotal for Labrović’s career as a performance artist, information that can be found (online and in a small number of articles written about it) on it is insufficient to say the least. I contacted the artist via email, sadly without any success. Therefore, questions such as - Where was this work first shown? Is the clothes the artist is wearing during the performance relevant? – remain unanswered.

²³¹ Sanja Potkonjak and Tomislav Pletenac, 2016, p. 67.

Labrović recognizes the complex relationship between public and everyday life of memory. His performance was conducted to address the collective usage of public space and its relationship towards historical memory. The bandaging of a wounded monument could have happened in another small town in Croatia, on another main square. The place and the monument the action was performed on are of secondary importance. This points to the epidemic in the form of a violent erasure of memory, which spread throughout the country along with the rise of a nationalist thought. In an interview given in 2015, the artist clarifies that: “Sinj, like any of our ‘healthy’ provinces, is conservative and patriarchal, but the whole of Croatia is actually the sum of both Sinj and Knin and all its villages and towns.”²³² The idea that underlines Labrović’s work is the inability to remember. The artist addresses both the unmemorable and the collective inability of a community to see its own history as the origin of contemporary traumas.²³³

4.3 Conclusion

Labrović criticizes the community’s acceptance of constituting a new Croatian identity, the creation of which demands the eradication of old, in this case, antifascist elements that are linked with socialist Yugoslavia and the partisan movement. He also problematizes the inclination to easily accept violence which creates that sudden change of identity. By executing his performance in broad daylight in a public space, the central park (at the time, a place of devastation), his desire for interaction with the local community that has been silent about the destruction is visible.²³⁴ He is staging his own rebellion, demanding the right to remember.

The purpose of Labrović’s project was to point out to the collective deficit of historical memory. The artist situates himself within the dynamics of collective forgetting. In an interview²³⁵, Labrović explained that his project originated with the feeling that something is wrong with collective memory, that it is going through a process of re-evaluation in which a large portion of memorial content is being forgotten. Labrović was one of the first to “challenge dominant regimes of memory by creating spaces that revisit social relations and imagine new

²³² Paula Bobanović, “Bivši hrvatski učitelj prodavao svoju kožu, pio mokraću i tetovirao splovilo”, *Express.hr.*, 26th September 2015.

²³³ *ibid.*, p. 79.

²³⁴ Marijana Lubina, 2011, p. 3.

²³⁵ Sanja Potkonjak and Tomislav Pletenac, Interview with Siniša Labrović, 14th April 2010.

possibilities”²³⁶. The artist starts the process of re-memorialization by highlighting the danger of aggressive, destructive and tacit forms of forgetting. Through these processes, communities enter into collaboration with dominant regimes, in which humanistic messages contained in the memorials that thematize the trauma of the Second World War are negatively re-evaluated. His performance represents a new form of engaging with the cultural memory that consists of resistance against collective forgetting.²³⁷

²³⁶ Sanja Potkonjak and Tomislav Pletenac, 2016, p. 71.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Chapter Five

Re-Imagining the Monument

5.1 Presentation of the Artist

It seems that the more we visually envision the future,
the less we have left for tomorrow.²³⁸

DAVID MALJKOVIĆ

David Maljković was born in 1973 in Rijeka, Croatia, and currently lives and works in Zagreb. He studied Art at the University of Rijeka as well as Painting and Multimedia Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, before attending the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. He uses hybrid media in his installations, combining video, photography, drawing, sculpture, objects and architecture, with a special interest in architectural symbols of the past and their meaning today. Maljković's work often explores themes related to time and the relationship between past and present through abstract objects and digital effects. He focuses on memory and collective amnesia in addition to the possible reconstruction of the future - issues closely linked to the recent history of former Yugoslavia.

The turbulent recent history of Yugoslavia, and its artistic and conceptual Modernist avant-garde utopias of the 1950s and 1960s, have contextualized much of David Maljković's work. In his practice, he frequently engages in a non-linear dialogue with time, in a pursuit to reclaim and reshape past references and forms that have been neglected or destroyed. He frequently revisits and repositions his own work, reconfiguring forms and meanings in order to construct new narratives and open a discourse to different platforms of interpretation. Forgetting and remembering the past is in the center of much of Maljković's art, creating the possibility of new beginnings in the very spaces absent of it.²³⁹

²³⁸ David Maljković, journal entry written between 2007 and 2009 for the project *Out of Projection*.

²³⁹ Rina Carvajal, David Maljković at Leal Rios Foundation, Lisbon, *Mousse Magazine*, 2014.

His works often show abandoned Yugoslav buildings and monuments of the 1960s and 1970s. These structures carry a duality within, reflecting the promise of a better future, while at the same time evoking the failure due to their currently ruinous state. The artist consciously uses examples where ideas of a universal, modernistic progress are linked to a specific understanding of socialism as a potentially radical, experimentally modernistic concept.²⁴⁰

Maljković is most commonly associated with his video works in which he examines failed projects that he turns into possible utopias or uses them as a space for reimagining the future.²⁴¹ An example of this type of working method is the two-channel video installation “Out of Projection”, 2009. The story takes place on a secret Peugeot test track in Souchaux, France. In this 18-minute work, Maljković gathered retired Peugeot workers and gave them freedom to mingle amongst the futuristic prototypes of cars, designed or worked on by these exact workers’ years before. The retired workers served as a medium between the past, present and a visualization of a possible future²⁴², opening up different possibilities of understanding all three time frames.

This chapter analyzes two of David Maljković’s projects, both consisting of a video installation and a series of collages. The works treat the questions of collective memory and the reoccupation of spaces with historical and ideological significance.

5.2 Scene for a New Heritage

Scene for a New Heritage (2004-2006) is one of Maljković’s early projects and consists of a video trilogy and a series of collages. Filmed throughout the course of two years, *Scene for a New Heritage* uses an abandoned socialist monument to imagine a future that might not be too far gone from reality.

The first part of the trilogy is set on May 25th, 2045. Futuristic cars, wrapped in a shiny metal foil, are seen driving along the rural roads and arriving at a neglected monument, an aluminum construction, overgrown with weeds and shrubbery. From a distance, one can see visitors scattered around in small groups. The movie exudes a feeling of mournful nostalgia, a sentimental appreciation for the forgotten. Three young men emerge from the futuristic cars.

²⁴⁰ David Maljković. *Biography*. Retrieved from: <https://www.georgkargl.com/en>

²⁴¹ Cristina Cámara Bello, *Out of Projection*, 2010. Retrieved from: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en>

²⁴² n.a., *David Maljković. Out of Projection*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://anti-utopias.com/>

(fig.17) Set out on a quest for their heritage they start to explore the peculiar structure in front of them, trying to remember its meaning and purpose. In an incomprehensible language (subtitled in English) they discuss the long lost function of the found structure.

“Times were different back then”

“Yes, times that don’t matter to us!”²⁴³

...

“I think it carries a strong message.

“If it were strong, we would see it!”²⁴⁴

They question the significance of the forgotten monument without coming to a conclusion. Tired and confused, they decide to drive away, resolving to return in the future.²⁴⁵ The failure of these young people to establish any connection with the memorial, along with the state of “collective amnesia” created by the historical and political conditions of the country, leaves them permanently searching for new meanings.²⁴⁶

The second part of the trilogy brings the viewer to November 11th, 2063. A figure walks up the road, bordered by snow coated trees. He approaches the monument, at first only seen as a shadow through the white haze. The boy is holding a silver football in his hands as if it is a magical orb (fig. 18). He enters and stands inside the structure, maneuvering the ball in his hands with robotic moves. He walks around the empty interior and gazes into the bleak landscape. The purpose of the building is not revealed.²⁴⁷

The third and final part of the trilogy is named “Scene for a New Heritage”. The date is not disclosed, but it has to be sometime in the future, possibly after 2063. The viewer approaches the monument once again through the trees. In front of the structure there are silver foiled cars and an RV parked randomly (fig. 19). A plethora of various shots reveals a number of young, possibly high-school children, scattered, playing with a ball, a spinning disc or just standing

²⁴³ Oliver Basciano, David Maljković, *Art Review*, 2013, p. 86.

²⁴⁴ Emily Watlington, *Wrapped in Tin Foil: A Report from the Balkans, Sequitur*, Vol. 3., 2016. p. 3.

²⁴⁵ P. H., David Maljković - Scene for New Heritage Trilogy, *Artvehicle*, Vol. 14, 2007.

²⁴⁶ Rina Carvajal, 2014.

²⁴⁷ P. H., 2007.

around. The scene resembles a school outing, which seems unlikely given the neglected and unkempt structure as well as the uninviting, wild landscape.²⁴⁸

The videos are blended by a constant, disorienting soundscape, and the camera's exhaustive exploration of the contours of the monument, seen from different angles. The trilogy itself, on first glance seems to be an entertaining, low budget work of science fiction about a possible outcome for the monuments. In reality, Maljković's project does not only comment on society's capacity to forget and erase. It cannot be described as simple nostalgia. The works reveal how the interpretation of history and its physical representation, the monuments, can change from one era to the other.²⁴⁹ Maljković himself commented on the videos saying that:

'(they are)...about the future, about collective amnesia, about what is going to happen and whether people are going to create a new heritage for themselves...'²⁵⁰

His choice of space and references need to be paid more attention to. The monument, the significance of which the young explorers are trying to uncover, is the Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija, located on Petrova Gora, Croatia. It was built in 1981 and designed by the prominent Yugoslav sculptor Vojin Bakić with the help of the Zagreb-born architect Berislav Šerbetić. During its golden years, the monument housed a vast conference hall, library, reading room, café and museum. With the beginning of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, the monument of Petrova Gora fell to ruin and was constantly targeted, subject to neglect and abuse, with all the historical artifacts that were in the museum and archives stolen or destroyed. The current state of the Petrova Gora monument is one of complete decay and abandonment (fig. 20). Despite the increased interest in Yugoslav memorial architecture and popularity among international tourists, there is still no plan for repairing the monument.²⁵¹

In the third video of the "Scene for a New Heritage" project, the scattered group of children look like they are on a school outing. This detail also references the past. The antifascist monuments were constructed as places of commemoration but also learning and leisure. During the existence of Yugoslavia, many school children, most likely including the artist

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ n.a., *Scene for a New Heritage Trilogy*, 2007. Retrieved from: <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/>

²⁵⁰ P. H., 2007.

²⁵¹ Donald Niebyl, *Petrova Gora*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/>

himself, had mandatory excursions to the abstract monuments. Visiting these monuments, learning about their significance and meaning was a part of the school curricula. Scattered youngsters in the video stand in contrast to the state organized school trips. The excursions were used as a means to learn about the history of Yugoslavia as well as to implement the postulates of 'brotherhood and unity' thus creating a collective memory narrative. On the contrary, the children in Maljković's video seem oblivious to the structure of the Petrova Gora monument, let alone to the antifascist message it was built upon.

Presenting the building memorial but also the park in this state, aimed to evoke particular recollections. Especially for the people who grew up in SFR Yugoslavia, the image of school children surrounding the antifascist monument calls to mind feelings of nostalgia and activates suppressed memories. Moreover, showing the area as it is now, neglected and in ruin, Maljković opens up a platform for a discourse about the fate of said memories as well as of the monument.

The dates that David Maljković chose for the story to take place are also of great significance for the people of Yugoslavia. The title and the date of the first video, May 25th, used to be celebrated as the day of Josip Broz Tito's birthday. It was a public holiday, also celebrating Youth Day, a day when Tito was, traditionally, gifted a baton with a birthday pledge from all the young people of Yugoslavia. Incorporating a date that was so important to the people living in Yugoslavia, represents one more connection between the past, present and the future. Additionally, this date also grounds the video historically, evoking memories of the Youth Day celebrations while also showing the utter negligence for this event in the future. What is more important is the fact that Maljković does not even have to situate his work so far into the future, since the erasure of the Youth Day already happened, with stronger or weaker intensity, in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

It is interesting to notice the different attitudes that people who come in contact with the building, have towards this historical monument, the significance of which is all but lost on them. In the first video the young explorers are aware that the building once bore great significance, although the understanding of it is out of their reach. In this movie, the monument plays an important active role. Progressing to the final video, the groups of teenagers are seemingly indifferent to the setting in which they find themselves. The significance of the place

is lost and the memorial only invokes a meeting place. There is an absolute absence of function, and the monument became a passive motif in the video, simply a backdrop. Compressing the process of cultural forgetting into a three-part video, starting with an exploratory encounter and ending with complete abandonment and disinterest for the surrounding object. History became a matter of fiction and time created a collective amnesia.

5.2.1 Conclusion

The work of David Maljković constantly confronts us with forgotten or invisible heritage, the heritage that is simply not perceived as valuable for the present political situation. The three films are the most striking example of how Maljković projects both forward and backward, into the past and toward the future. By reaching into the past, the artist uses examples that represent the universalism of socialist emancipation, re-evaluates and analyses them in the light of new meanings.

Maljković does not seek to revise or correct the past, but rather to present it as a place of renewed questioning.²⁵² The problematic of the marginalization and erasure of heritage as well as the lack of institutional support is of grave importance to the artist. The main question that Maljković is trying to answer is – How can one treat the form if the ideology has been cast aside?²⁵³ By appropriating this almost invisible²⁵⁴ space that was once full of meaning and significance, the artist gradually opens it for various interpretations. “Scenes for a New Heritage” also helped to bring the work of Vojin Bakic back from oblivion, on a local but also international level.²⁵⁵

If anything, the work reminds us that sometimes, or perhaps more often than not, what we remember and what we forget as a nation are deliberately imposed from above, not only through acts of suppression but also through neglect. Some stories simply stop being useful to the national or collective memory.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Fion Meade, David Maljković, *Abundant Motives*, *Metropolis M*, 2012, p. 4.

²⁵³ Fisen Güner, David Maljković: *Nothing is Lost*, *Elephant*, 2015, p. 120.

²⁵⁴ At the time when the *Scene for a New Heritage* movies were filmed, the monument was neglected and left to decay without tourists to visit.

²⁵⁵ WHW, David Maljković. *Retired Compositions*, *Galerija Nova newspapers*, No. 17, 2009.

²⁵⁶ Fisen Güner, 2015, p. 120.

5.3 Retired Form

The life opus of Vojin Bakić and his architectural designs are something that Maljković paid homage to not solely in “Scene for a New Heritage”. “(The) Retired Form” a 16mm film from 2008, (fig. 21) was shot in the memorial park Dotrščina, Zagreb and it heavily relies on another monument of this prominent sculptor.

Vojin Bakić (1915 - 1992) was one of Croatia’s greatest 20th century modernist sculptors, who was, in the final decades of his career, wrongfully neglected by the art world in Croatia because of his Serbian descent. Bakić is known for taking a radical turn from the traditional way of the monumental memorial sculpture to the more abstract expression. His artistic style focused on depicting life and nature through minimalist geometric forms. In many of his work (including The Monument at Petrova Gora as well as Dotrščina monuments) he experimented with highly polished and reflective stainless steel. Sadly, with the fall of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and the rise of nationalism in the newly formed nation states, many of Bakić’s monuments were targeted with violence, as they were viewed as the symbols of the ‘old system’ that had to be torn down and erased.²⁵⁷

The monument in question is the central piece that Vojin Bakić built for the memorial park Dotrščina (fig. 22). The park itself was the first major 'memorial park' project in the SR²⁵⁸ of Croatia, akin to what the SR of Serbia had already created with the Šumarice park in Kragujevac. Bakić teamed up with the architect and urban planner Dr. Josip Seissel (along with his wife Silvana), and proceeded to make an expansive commemorative sculpture park that opened in 1968. The park itself commemorated the thousands of civilians (mainly Serbs and Roma people) that were executed and buried on this site by the Axis German and Ustashe forces from 1941 until the end of the war. Next to the main monument, Bakić produced a series of six polished stainless steel sculptures, resembling abstract gravestones. The park itself contains a number of monuments designed by other prominent sculptors.

Maljković was inspired by the monument, today stripped of its meaning and standing only as a strange artifact of an erased time. The film depicts a group of older people, who were growing up during WWII, as they approach a large metallic sculpture and stand respectfully, looking as

²⁵⁷ Donald Niebyl, *Vojin Bakić (Bojun Bakuć)*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/>

²⁵⁸ Socialist Republic

if mesmerized by its presence. Although they are not actors, the scene feels staged, all the time while these individuals gather awkwardly round the glistening structure. It seems that they do not know why the object is there in front of them; presumably they have just stumbled upon it.

²⁵⁹ Throughout the action, Maljković films the group looking as if they are trying to communicate with the monument in order to make some sort of sense out of it. The artist follows the people in their trail of thought, waiting for them to come to a conclusion about the structure. This conclusion is up to them, at any moment they can remember what this monument represents and why is it erected in the Dotrščina park, or, they can choose to give it their own interpretation.

A bright light appears to emanate from the object itself as the dark foliage is reflected upon its flat angular planes. It is hard to see the structure against this white light, following the camera movement along its outline, showing that its surface is made out of a hard, mirrored stone. Maljković recasts the monument as an alien abstract form, looking like it does not belong to the space in which it finds itself. What accentuates this alienation is the way the camera never shows the monument's pedestal, nor does it zoom out to reveal the object in its entirety in order for the viewer to understand it.²⁶⁰

The overwhelming sense of not belonging becomes almost tangible during the film, creating an impression that neither the monument nor the people 'fit' into the surrounding space. The non-belonging reflects the current relationship between the monument, the Dotrščina park and the people of Zagreb. Despite being the biggest city park of Zagreb, standing on the outskirts of the city, it is not visited by a great amount of people. Additionally, although this landmark was once well-known and drew many visitors, it lost its importance in the 1990s and has fallen into a state of neglect until 2012 with the establishment of the Virtual Museum Dotrščina. The memory of the events that occurred in the park was completely censored from the mainstream media as well as the school curriculum, leaving generations of people to make their own assumptions about the abstract structures that are scattered throughout the park.

Like in the "*Scenes for a New Heritage*" trilogy, in "*Retired Form*" Maljković bends the time, referencing the past, present and the future within the same frame. *Retired Form* is

²⁵⁹ Jenny, Brownrigg, But to Go Back, *MAP*, 2009, p.75.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

unaccompanied by sound; the only noise that a viewer can hear is the sound of the projector. Reminiscent of past technology, it distances the viewer from what appears to be a futuristic scene. Using retro-futurism, showing depictions of the future produced in an earlier era, a main style in many of his works, Maljković recovers the monument from a past that was, according to the current revisionist politics, never meant to be. By juxtaposing history with the present and future, Maljković opens up the infinitely creative gap between reality and fiction.

The name of the film conveys a story of a structure; a form that had ceased to perform a function it was made for. Quiet and secluded, it was left to oblivion for some other, newer version of a physical representation of an accepted history. In a sense, Maljković takes on the role of a guardian of the relic. With different frames, he reevaluates the monument and its possibilities.²⁶¹

Next to the film, the project consists out of a series of collages. These photographic collages offer a close study of the form and material of Bakić's structure. In the collages, however, the universalist form of the monument is employed reinventing it in idyllic landscapes. Collages and photo assemblages deploy utopian landscapes that were utilized for commercial purposes, taken mainly from old postcards depicting peaceful vacation locations. (fig. 23) By nesting Bakić's monument in the middle of these picturesque images, the monument itself takes on a completely different context, devoid of the previous one. In an interview, Maljković explains:

Ti procesi (transformacije spomenika) imaju više likovno, nego sadržajno značenje. Gledajući na to kao zapostavljeni umjetnički artefakt on postaje oslobođena forma, koja se može pretvoriti u bilo koju drugu formu. Što bi značilo da je društvena neodgovornost prema navedenom spomeniku stvorila svojevrsan hibrid.²⁶²

These processes (of monument transformation) have more of an artistic meaning than a substantive one. Looking at it as a neglected artifact, it becomes a liberated form, which can transform itself into any other form. This would mean that the social irresponsibility towards the mentioned monument ultimately created a kind of a hybrid.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁶² Sandra Križić and Ivana Hanček, Interview with David Maljković, 20th March 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipu.hr/>

5.3.1 Conclusion

The film “Retired Form” tries to answer a question: can one present other ways to interpret the partisan monuments, ones that are devoid of contemporary political and historical currents? Maljković is answering this question by gathering a number of people who lived through WWII, giving them the power to choose their own interpretations of the monument. This freedom of choice and imagination could be a way of breaking the social amnesia and the way of remembering the significance of the monument. On the other hand, one can achieve complete amnesia and perceive the monument as some shiny alien structure or a public park decoration.

The series of collages goes further, casting the initial, and almost completely forgotten, purpose of the monuments aside. The main direction of the collages is to reveal what can happen with the monumental form when it is freed from ideology and what kind of different spaces can be opened by the form without its prescribed content. In this case the ideology, through the rise of nationalism and strict revisionist politics of Croatia, has already abandoned the space of the monument as it is irrelevant for the current political climate. The consequences of this are seen in the neglected and vandalized way these monuments are being treated. Since the monuments are reduced only to form in public space, they started living a completely different life.²⁶³ Because of that, Maljković offers them a peaceful retirement on any of the lovely vacation destinations that he uses in the collages.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

Chapter Six

Questioning (Obsolete) Monument

6.1 Presentation of the Artist

Slobodan “Braco” Dimitrijević was born in Sarajevo in 1948. As his father was a prominent Yugoslav modernist painter, Vojo Dimitrijević, Braco spent most of his early years in an artist studio, constantly trying to find a way to express himself through visual means. One of the first works he produced was in 1963, “The Flag of the World”, replacing the national flag on his boat with the “artist’s flag”, a cloth which was used to clean the brushes in the studio. His interpretation was that this flag can serve as a universal sign for all territorial waters and different seas and it marked the beginning of his artistic interventions into urban landscapes.²⁶⁴ Dimitrijević studied at Zagreb Academy of Art from which he graduated in 1971. Afterwards, he proceeded to complete his post-graduate studies at St Martin’s School of Art, London in 1973. He currently lives and works in Paris.

During his studies, in 1969 together with Goran Trbuljak, Dimitrijević created the “Tihomir Simčić Group”. The group's manifesto stated that members of the group are all those who knowingly or unknowingly create visual change. This main characteristic of the manifesto remained unchanged within Dimitrijević’s oeuvre. His artistic work, from its beginnings, is characterized by an exploration of traditional values, whether they are in the context of art history or history in general. Incorporating coincidence as an important element in the creation of artwork and affirming anonymity through his own work, Dimitrijević renders accepted values relative and incorporates the ordinary in the sphere of art. Utilizing observation and selection of existing facts and objects, instead of creating new artistic interpretation or objects, Dimitrijević with his work suggests the arbitrariness of generally accepted values.²⁶⁵

Dimitrijević first gained prominence with a series of photographic works that he began producing in the early 1970s. On the facades of the Republic Square and Square of Marshall Tito in the city of Zagreb, Croatia, in positions typically reserved for large portraits of

²⁶⁴ Braco Dimitrijević, *Braco Dimitrijević Introduction*, n.d. Retrieved from: <http://bracoDimitrijević.com/>

²⁶⁵ J. Bubaš, *Braco Dimitrijević*, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/>

communist leaders during the national holidays, Dimitrijević installed large photo-portraits of accidental passers-by. Undermining the cult of personality and at the same time affirming everyday life, Braco Dimitrijević thus began his famous cycle of “Passers-by”.²⁶⁶ These works are typical of the artist’s intention to call into question representations in the mass media as well as historical monuments. The series, which is ongoing, acknowledges and elevates the everyday. These works became a global media hit in the following years and were exhibited in London, Paris, Naples and elsewhere.

Dimitrijević has been a leading instigator of artistic interventions in the semiotics of the public space. Furthering the “Casual Passerby” series initiative, in 1979 the artist erected a 12-meter-tall marble obelisk in a public park in Berlin, dedicated to the birthday of a random passer-by whom he had met on the street. Dimitrijević’s groundbreaking work in this area led to the coining of the term *transemorials* by Michel Gauthier²⁶⁷, used to describe the practice of transforming the meaning of monuments, large public portraitures, and memorial plaques.²⁶⁸

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the artist began to incorporate original paintings borrowed from museum collections in his installations. Works of art by acknowledged old or modern masters were integrated in the setup of the work including furniture, arrangements of fruit and vegetables, wild animals and other various everyday objects. This series of work, named “Triptychos Post Historicus”, were realized over five hundred times in numerous museum collections in the last 30 years.²⁶⁹

Braco Dimitrijević’s work, as well as his theoretical book *Tractatus Post Historicus*, (1976) were an important influence on two tendencies that dominate artistic discourse today: critical practices in public space and interventions in museum collections.²⁷⁰

This chapter presents and analyzes Dimitrijević’s work “New Monument/Under This Stone Lies a Monument to the Victims of War and the Cold War”, 2004. The work was erected in front of the Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo as one of the four winning pieces

²⁶⁶ Jean-Hubert Martin, *Interview with Braco Dimitrijević, Culturescapes 1976-1984*, 1984. n.p.

²⁶⁷ Michel Gauthier, *Braco Dimitrijevic – Les transmemoriaux*, Paris, Editions du Regard, 1998.

²⁶⁸ Lara Pan, *Braco Dimitrijević: Louvre is my studio, street is my museum*, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://whiteboxnyc.org/>

²⁶⁹ Braco Dimitrijević, *Braco Dimitrijević Introduction*, n.d. Retrieved from: <http://bracoDimitrijević.com/>

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of the “De/construction of Monument” project’s public competition. In a manner of expression typical to Dimitrijević, this work is an ironic and peculiar statement about the relationship towards the monuments in the city of Sarajevo.

6.2 New Monument / Under this stone there is a monument to the victims of war and Cold War

Braco Dimitrijević represents a different way of working with the past, specifically the problematics of commemoration and subsequent destruction and erasure of the very thing that was commemorated. His work, which is analyzed below, was created within a rigid framework of a specific project. Nevertheless, it does not deviate from Dimitrijević’s general artistic path.

De/construction of Monument was a multidisciplinary project that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the course of three years, from 2004 to 2007. It was established by the Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Art, an independent mobile art center that supports contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian public artwork with Dunja Blažević and Amra Bakšić as the head of the project.²⁷¹ The project was composed as a series of panel discussions, lectures and seminars as well as exhibitions and interventions in public space.

The involvement of public space actions and interventions was aimed at rethinking and reinterpreting existing monuments devoted to both recent and distant pasts, by questioning and redefining their form, function and meaning. The project focused on the individual artists coming from the former Yugoslavia, who, as their referential material, used different representations of the past, aimed at its reinterpretation, demystification or reaffirmation. In the official statement of the project, it is said that ‘dealing with monuments, artists appear through their works in the role of critics of the imposed selective perception and interpretation of past upon which today’s (weltanschauung) is constituted.’²⁷²

The last phase of “De/construction of Monument”, entitled the “New Monument”, was a public competition for a new, reimagined monument and the consequent realization of the winning works. Three monuments have been produced and installed in the city of Sarajevo. The new

²⁷¹ Project leader: Dunja Blažević

Project manager: Amra Bakšić

Local partners: Urban Movement from Mostar, Center for Information’s Decontamination from Banja Luka

German partner: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (Berlin)

Project was supported by German Cultural Foundation (relations), Open Society Fund B&H (OSF B&H)

²⁷² *De/Construction of Monument*, project overview. Retrieved from: <http://scca.ba/>

monuments were offered to the authorities of the city as a gift, with the request of their permanent installation in a public space, thus questioning the ownership of the public space itself. What these works have in common is the critical interpretation of symbolic representations of the old but also the new ideological constructs. The winning works aim to demythologize and de-ideologize history. By making new monuments, the artists create a new reality but also disrupt the manifestations of power.²⁷³ The 'New Monument' is an attempt at re-defining the notion and form of materialization of monuments (as we know them), their function, connotation and message they convey.

The winning submissions were "Monument to the International Community" by Nebojša Šerić Shoba, "Eglen Park or Pedestal for Remembering" by Nermina Omerbegović and Aida Pasić and "New Monument" by Braco Dimitrijević.

Braco Dimitrijević's "New Monument" (fig. 24), also called "Under this stone there is a monument to the victims of war and Cold War", is a large stone block, with size of 150x150x300 cm. On the stone block, there is a carved text "Under this stone lies a monument to the victims of War and the Cold War" written in four different languages (English, French, German and Bosnian).

Dimitrijević's proposal for the "New Monument" competition can easily be interpreted as a continuation of his previous work, such as "This could be a place of historical importance" (fig. 25) from 1972. His oeuvre has mainly been shaped by the contradictions between moments of historical value and everyday life or important personalities and casual passersby. The stance that his art takes is surely a strong opposition against the political and ideological concepts that are, more often than not, willing to disregard the individual.

Considering the choice of the location for exhibiting the monument, along with its geometric shape and material, the work immediately uncovers a particular symbolic connection with its surroundings. The sculpture was erected next to the Historical Museum of B&H. (fig. 26) This building was founded in 1945 as the Museum of the Revolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its collections and exhibitions played a role in the construction of the Yugoslav ideology of brotherhood and unity by showcasing the history of the National Liberation Struggle - that is,

²⁷³ Dunja Blažević, *New Monument*, October / November 2006. Retrieved from: <http://scca.ba/>

the shared sacrifice of the Yugoslav peoples in the anti-fascist struggle during the Second World War. In 1993, it was transformed into the History Museum of B&H with a mission to convey the ‘complete history of B&H’ from its first mention in historic documents to the last war, primarily with permanent exhibitions such as “Besieged Sarajevo” and “Bosnia and Herzegovina through Centuries”.²⁷⁴ The exhibition “Besieged Sarajevo” aims to show the actions of resistance the people of Sarajevo conducted by leading an everyday life despite living in a besieged city. With respect to the exhibition, Dimitrijević’s work has certain correlation, since “New Monument” also represents an act of resistance in the public space, precisely pointed to the politics that caused the war.

During the war in Bosnia (1992-1995), the city of Sarajevo endured a siege by the Army of Republika Srpska²⁷⁵ that lasted 1,425 days (1.09.1992-29.02.1996). Throughout that time, the ethno-nationalist conflict was conducted with, amongst others, a series of strategic targeting and destruction of specific places of cultural heritage as a means of systematic expulsion of ethnic communities. Next to many sites of religious heritage, such as mosques and churches, a great number of NOB monuments and statues of famous Yugoslavs were mined and destroyed.²⁷⁶ The destruction of the Yugoslav heritage did not stop after the war, since a new, ethnically independent historical continuity needed to be constructed. Some new memorials, like the cross on Zlatište hill, represented an overt abuse of memory in order to irritate and cause ethnic and political tension.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, many of the busts of famous poets, writers and fighters of Yugoslavia disappeared while important people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically people who connected the country with its Ottoman heritage, took their place. Since the country was economically weakened after the war, many of the pedestals on which the busts were standing remained empty for a long time, carrying only a name of a person that was once commemorated.

Dimitrijević states that the “New Monument” has an ironic connotation aimed at countering the “empty monument platforms that can be found all over the city”. His idea to bury the monument can be interpreted as a counter attack to the ‘memory war’ that has been occurring

²⁷⁴ Mirjana Ristić, *Architecture, Urban Space and War. The destruction and reconstruction of Sarajevo*, 2018, p. 196.

²⁷⁵ The city was initially besieged by the Yugoslav People’s Army from the 5th of April 1992.

²⁷⁶ Helen Walasek, *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, 2015, p. 147.

²⁷⁷ Elvira M. Jukić, “Bosnian Serbs Erect Huge Cross Above Sarajevo”, *Balkan Insight*, 22nd September 2014.

in Sarajevo since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This, as Dimitrijević calls it ‘cold war’ took many a victim with itself, including museum and street names amongst other. By essentially putting the monument ‘to rest’ below a massive stone block, Dimitrijević proclaims the death of the monument. It was killed by the revisionist politics of the new regime that needed to cleanse public space of everything that was not distinctly Bosnian. The stone ‘epitaph’ that commemorates the death of the monument challenges the empty spaces around the city and its aim is to fight the social amnesia and general apathy of the residents of the city of Sarajevo. The goal of this spatial gesture of turning the monument upside down is to make the ‘ordinary’ people who pass by the stone block become aware of the missing statues and other erased histories and start asking questions, such as: Does the monument exist at all? Who are the victims and what is the war it is devoted to? What is the cold war that it commemorates?²⁷⁸

6.3 Conclusion

Dimitrijević’s approach to social amnesia is a fairly subtle one. He does not address a particular event or space that failed to be commemorated be it because of simple neglect of history or blatant devastation. His approach is more general and subdued. Through a note of irony, specific for Dimitrijevic’s work, the artist not only criticizes the specific interpretations and erasure of history, but also questions the contemporary status of politics as well as usage of public space.

“New Monument”, the mute stone block, is essentially fluid, free and open for the construction of various interpretations. It shows how history is not ‘set in stone’ but open for political appropriation, redefinition and transformation. Memorials generally exhibit the desire to make a particular version of history visible. Mirjana Ristic in her book “Architecture, urban space and war”, proclaims that Dimitrijevic’s “New Monument” is an “ideologically free monument”²⁷⁹, but is there such a thing as an ideologically free monument? I would argue that this work is somewhat a counter-monument, representing an opposition to the destruction of monuments in Bosnia, specifically in the city of Sarajevo. Moreover, it stands in contrast with the accelerated monument building, exposing their hollow meaning. As such, it becomes a window for rethinking and critiquing the existing ideologically charged commemorative

²⁷⁸ Mirjana Ristić, 2018, p. 197.

²⁷⁹ Mirjana Ristić, 2018, p. 196.

forms. The “New Monument” provides responses to memory struggles by opening up a platform for communication and giving freedom to multiple interpretations of history by anyone who sees it.

As a counter monument, its problematizing of representation of history through ideologically saturated monuments goes deeper than questioning only the new monuments that were erected after the war in Bosnia. It goes further than giving a voice to all the destroyed, vandalized and removed structures. “New Monument” recalls the victims, but at the same time keeps them hidden by burying them underneath the stone block. The block itself serves as an epitaph but also as a pedestal for memorialization. Still, what remains unclear is the identity of the victims it is built for. A question arises: in a space like Sarajevo, where the inter-ethnic war took many victims in its wake, is this kind of a symbolically fluid, comprehensive monument the only acceptable one? Is this monument -- with its universalism -- evoking the idea of the antifascist Yugoslav monuments that gathered all the fallen under one banner, giving everyone the right to commemorate?

Conclusion

This thesis analyzes concrete artistic approaches to the shared Yugoslav history within specific countries. It researches and categorizes various ways of addressing the revisionist politics of newly instituted nation-states of the former Yugoslavia as well as the social amnesia of the people living in them. The thesis focused on the works that, to a certain extent engage with the notion of memorialization and commemoration of the partisan movement as well as the ‘brotherhood and unity’ ideology. Moreover, many of the works appropriate monuments built in the time of former Yugoslavia, in order to break the circle of forgetting and denial.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected works that openly and in the framework of a public space tackle the notion of politics of memory. The main works analyzed in this thesis can be designated into three groups. The first group is comprised of the works of Milica Tomić and Siniša Labrović. The main reason for grouping them is that these artists express themselves in the form of performance. Additionally, Tomić and Labrović engage in a personal way with “places that remember” as well as the places that are or should be commemorated. They do this by appropriating, recreating, or making a monument using their own bodies. Lastly, their approach to history is very specific: they directly attack the problematics of ignored and destroyed history.

Milica Tomić in her work “Belgrade Remembers” carried out a public space action in which she reconstructed a crime committed by the Nazi soldiers over the five partisan fighters during World War II. By hanging herself on a lamppost in Terazije square, she disrupted the act of forgetting the antifascist struggle. Moreover, she brings this event to the present, connecting it to the neglected monument standing on the place of execution, giving it power anew. In a work

directly linked to “Belgrade Remembers”, “One Day a burst of machine gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise” Tomić continues to explore the process of commemoration. In this work, she once again uses her own bodily presence to pay tribute to the forgotten past of the successful actions carried out by the People’s Liberation Army in the city of Belgrade.

While Milica Tomić occupies the places that are of importance for the memory of the antifascist struggle, Siniša Labrović engages directly with the physical representation of this commemoration. With the work “Bandaging the Wounded”, Labrović activated the process of re-memorialization, tending to the wounded monument, thus breaking the dynamics of collective forgetting. His work is a clear critique of the revisionist politics of Croatia and a plea to the people of Sinj to interrupt processes of social amnesia and engage with their own history.

The two works by David Maljković that were analyzed in this Master’s thesis constitute the second group of works. Both “Scene for a New Heritage” and “Retired Form” are video works accompanied by a number of sketches and collages. While, in the first group, the artists effectively use their own bodies in their performances, Maljković remains physical by proxy. In his video work, the artist is using groups of people to convey the feeling of confusion and the veil of amnesia that covers the antifascist monuments in Croatia. In “Scene for a New Heritage” Maljković travels to the future. While the years that he chose are still distant, the mindset of his protagonists is something that touches upon today’s relationship towards the abstract structures. Throughout the trilogy, Maljković opens up questions about the past and constructed national identity whereas in “Retired Form” the artist moves away from the ideology of the monument and focuses on the form itself. The series of sketches predominantly focus on the visual appeal of these structures. In the end, the objects were completely stripped of any historical or political significance and were positioned amid a utopian landscape.

Braco Dimitrijević's work "New monument/ Under this stone there is a monument to the victims of war and Cold War" stands alone. It is important to note that Dimitrijević belongs to a different generation of artists. Born just three years after the Second World War, the artist has a comprehensive oeuvre throughout which he frequently tackles the questions of public space and of who has the right to be remembered. Dimitrijević's approach to Yugoslav history, as well as to the thorough efforts the Bosnian government (specifically the government of the city of Sarajevo) invested in suppression and erasure of the past is significantly different from the other artists. With an underlying irony, the artist uses a mute stone block and a statement which one should believe without concrete proof. Its main goal is to make people question the very existence of this monument. In a broader sense, the goal is to educate people to question not only this monument or the lack thereof but also the many empty pedestals that can be found all around the city of Sarajevo.

An important connection between all these works is a factor that became visible only after analyzing them side by side. While all the pieces, in their own specific ways, access the collective practices of remembering and try to disrupt the revisionist process of history rewriting, they are also fighting against apathy. It seems that the biggest problem that is affecting the public of the countries of the former Yugoslavia is a general sense of apathy and disinterest in history as well as in its subsequent erasure. The artists studied in this thesis aim to wake up the people from their indifference and make them question, rethink and ultimately remember and accept the antifascist history of the community they once lived in and that was called Yugoslavia.

Moreover, none of the artists try to trigger emotions of longing or nostalgia for the "lost past". The purpose of their appropriation of the Yugoslav partisan monuments also goes beyond the

sheer visual appeal of the monuments' architecture. Their focus on the monuments lies primarily in the fact that, although many of them have been destroyed, vandalized or neglected, they are still, in their physicality, a colossal representative of the former regime. By engaging with the antifascist monuments in their work, the artists intensify their goal of transferring the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' from a myth to a lived history. Indeed, their main focus is the restoration of the memory of antifascism, ultimately as a means of identifying and fighting against contemporary forms of oppressive behavior.

Another important link connecting all the works that comprised this thesis are the various uses of spatial and temporal platforms. All the works are site-specific, connected to the places where events from the past happened or to a specific monument commemorating a historical event. Although they are site-specific, every work conveys a much broader message, encompassing not only the area, city or the country in question. The question of social amnesia and mechanisms of remembering and forgetting are problematized in every country of the former Yugoslavia. The approach to the antifascist memory varied; needless to say, the revision of the past brought, in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, to censorship, erasure and appropriation with goals of separation. The group of selected works was analyzed through the prism of memory studies. The goal of it was to better understand the various levels on which memory operates, how it is manipulated and obliterated but also how can it be brought back to light through the form of a performative artistic action, a social action that provides a platform for further discovery.

Additionally, by uncovering the suppressed and abandoned histories, the artists do not only address the past but also turn to the present and future. They pinpoint the destructive fascist governmental policies that are being normalized in the contemporary nation states. It is an

excruciating process of comprehending one's own community in the present and a commentary on the future of that community and its incapability to work through its trauma.

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Appendix 1: illustrations

Chapter 1: Building a Lie on a Distorted Truth

Fig. 1: Map of SFR Yugoslavia (1945-1992)

Source: Perry-Castañeda Library, Map Collection. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 2: Miodrag Živković and Ranko Radović, Monument at Tjentište, Commemorating the Battle of the Sutjeska between German and Partisan forces in 1943 (Bosnia and Herzegovina), 1971, 19 x 25m, poured concrete and rebar.

Source: Jan Kempenaers, Spomenik #16. Tjentište, 2007. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 3: Bogdan Bogdanović, Stone Flower monument, concentration camp Jasenovac, Croatia, 1966, 24 x 35m, poured concrete, rebar and wood.

Source: Jan Kempenaers, *Spomenik #9. Jasenovac*, 2007. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 4: View over a part of the Partisan Necropolis built by Bogdan Bogdanović in 1965, Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina. Comparison between the condition of the area in 1970s and in 2000s.

Source: Arna Mačkić, *The Partisan Necropolis: Mostar's Empty Space*, in: *Failed Architecture*, 2015. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 5: Vojin Bakić, The Monument to the Revolutionary Victory of the People of Slavonia in Kamenska, 1968. Before and after its destruction by the Croatian Army in February 1992. 30m tall monolith, poured concrete, rebar and stainless steel.

Source: Spomenik Database, *Kamenska*. Access: 20.08.2019.

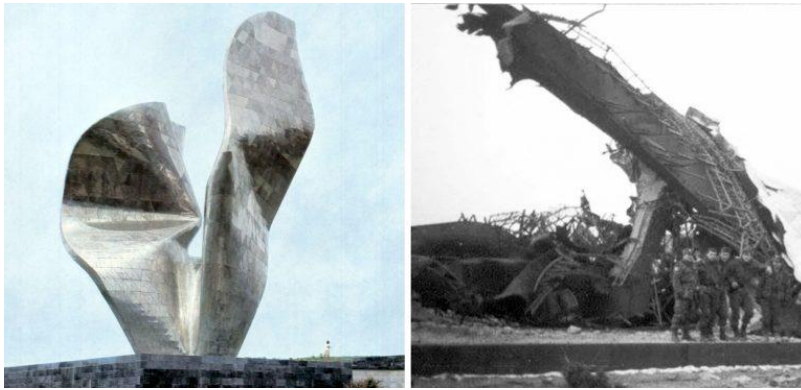


Fig. 6: Ivan Fijolić, *Bruce Lee*, Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2005. 1.68m tall statue, Bronze.

Source: David, Crumm, Matthew Polly interview on the cross-cultural legacy of Bruce Lee, *Readthespirit*. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 7: Boris Staparac, *Rocky Balboa*, Žitište, Serbia, 2007.
3m tall statue, bronze and concrete.

Source: Flickr. Taken on: 21st October 2012. Access: 20.08.2019.

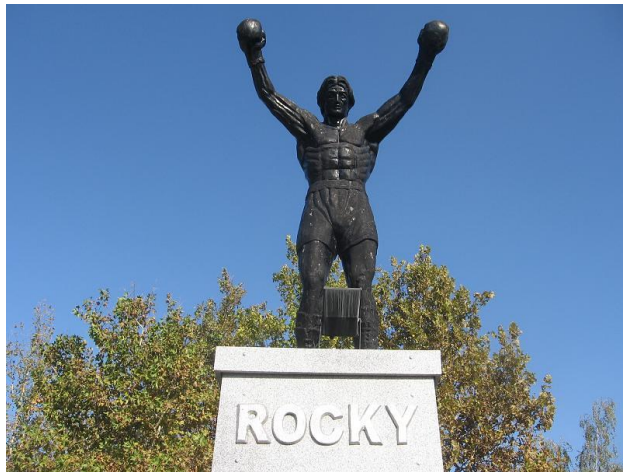


Fig. 8: Jordan and Iskra Grabul, Ilinden Memorial or 'Makedonium', 1974. 25m tall structure, poured concrete, rebar and glass.

Renovated Ilinden Memorial in Kruševo, Macedonia

Source: Flickr. Taken on: 24th December 2004. Access: 20.08.2019.



Chapter 3: Body as a Monument

Fig. 9: Milica Tomić, *One day, instead of one night, a burst of machine-gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise*, 2009. Video still of a performance.

Source: n.a., Burak Delier, Tejal Shah and Milica Tomić, Whitechapel Gallery, 2014.

Access: 21.08.2019.



Fig. 10: Milica Tomić, *One day, instead of one night, a burst of machine-gun fire will flash if light cannot come otherwise*, 2009. Video still of a performance.

Source: Milica Tomić Wordpress. Taken on: September 2009. Access: 20.08.2019.



Fig. 11: Milica Tomić, *Belgrade Remembers. Neither Oblivion nor Memory*, 2001. Photographic documentation of a performance.

Source: Milica Tomić Wordpress. Access: 11. March 2018.



Fig. 12: One of the five Partisan fighters hanged on the Terazije square on the 16th August 1941.

Source: Olga Manojlović Pintar, Milan Radanović, Milovan Pissari, Nenad Lajbenšperger, Enzo Traverso, *Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941-44. Priručnik za čitanje grada*, 2013.



Fig. 13: Nikola Janković, Monument to the hanged patriots, Terazije, Belgrade, Serbia, 1981. 3m x 80cm, bronze on a marble pedestal

Source: Miloš Ljuna, *Svakodnevno prolazite Terazijama, ali retko ko zna za gnusan zločin koji se tu dogodio*, *noizz*, 15th April 2017.



Fig. 14: Milica Tomić, *Erlauf Remembers*, 2000. Photographic documentation.

Source: Milica Tomić Wordpress. Access: 11. March 2018.



Chapter 4: In Dialogue with a Monument

Fig. 15: Siniša Labrović, *Bandaging the Wounded*, 2000. Video still of a performance.

Source: Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 16: Siniša Labrović, *Bandaging the Wounded*, 2000. Video still of a performance.

Source: Courtesy of the artist



Chapter 5: Re-Imagining the Monument

Fig. 17: David Maljković, *Scene For a new Heritage*, 2004-2006. Video still.

Source: OCULA. Access: 21st August 2019.



Fig. 18: David Maljković, *Scene For a new Heritage*, 2004-2006. Video still.

Source: n.a., *Wrapped in Tin Foil: A Report from the Balkans*, *Sequitur*, Vol. 3., 2016.
Access: 21st August 2019.



Fig. 19: David Maljković, *Scene For a new Heritage*, 2004-2006. Video still.

Source: *Ibid.*



Fig. 20: Today's state of the Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija, Petrova Gora, Croatia. Built by Vojin Bakić and Berislav Šerbetić in 1981. 37 x 40m, poured concrete, rebar, steel frame and stainless steel plates.

Source: Flickr. Taken on: 12th June 2016. Access: 21st August 2019.



Fig. 21: David Maljković, *Retired Form*, 2008. Video stills.

Source: Jenny Brownrigg, Jenny Brownrigg looks at the meaning of monuments and memory in the work of Croatian artist David Maljkovic, *MAP magazine*, March 2009. Access: 21.08.2019.

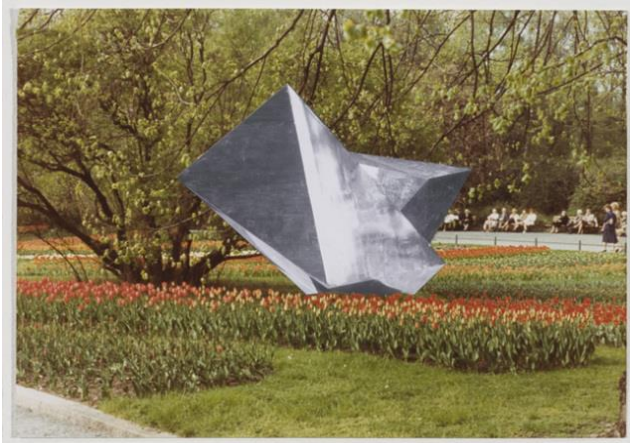


Fig. 22: Vojin Bakić, central sculpture in Memorial park Dotrščina, Zagreb, Croatia. Built in 1968, 2 x 4m, stainless steel and bronze.

Source: Lily Lynch, A Visit to Zagreb's Antifascist Dotrščina Memorial Park, *Balkanist*, 16th August 2017. Access: 21.08.2019.



Fig. 23: David Maljković, *Retired Form*, 2008. Collage on photo paper, 38.1 x 45.7cm
Source: Wordpress, 11th March 2011. Access: 21.08.2019.



Chapter 6: Questioning (Obsolete) Monument

Fig. 24: Braco Dimitrijević, *New Monument/Under This Stone Lies a Monument to the Victims of War and the Cold War*, 2004. Sarajevo, 1.5 x 1.5 x 3m, stone block.

Source: F.M.H., The Power of The (Un)-Monumental, *Uniform November*, 7th July 2017.
Access: 21.08.2019.



Fig. 25: Braco Dimitrijević, *This could be a place of historical importance*, 1972. TATE London, 620 x 801 x 18mm, marble.

Source: TATE Access: 21.08.2019.



Fig. 26: Braco Dimitrijević's *New Monument/Under This Stone Lies a Monument to the Victims of War and the Cold War* 2004 work in front of the Historical Museum of B&H, Sarajevo, B&H. 1.5 x 1.5 x 3m, stone block.

Source: Visit my country – B&H, Historical Museum. Access: 21.08.2019.



Appendix 2: Abstract (English)

The goal of this thesis is to examine the practice of artists who are concerned with the subject of memory and social amnesia. Throughout the thesis, works that are analyzed were produced between the year 2000 until the present, by artists who are either from the South Slavic region or are in other ways connected to the geo-political context of Yugoslavia, in particular to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. Distinct art practices selected artists employ in approaching memory and remembrance of the ‘shared-forgotten’ past of Yugoslavia are being examined in this work.

The destruction of the anti-fascist history of Yugoslavia is best conveyed through the examination of the commemorative monuments built during the Tito presidency (1953–1980). Consequently, all of the artworks that are analyzed reference, subtly or otherwise, the places and objects that are connected to and commemorate the Yugoslav legacy via the anti-fascist monument.

By employing theories on collective memory, the importance of the monuments will be explained, as structures of remembrance, that simultaneously, commemorate and shape collective memories. The thesis closely scrutinizes the events connected to the erasure of specific memories as well as the revival of these memories through the selected works.

The thesis strives to acknowledge the importance of artistic actions of dredging up the past, in the context of reestablishing the antifascist memory, but also as being the platform for questioning today’s politics of exclusion.

Appendix 3: Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)

Ziel dieser Masterarbeit ist es, die Praxis von Künstlern zu untersuchen, die sich mit dem Thema Erinnerung und sozialer Amnesie beschäftigen.

Die Künstler der in dieser Arbeit analysierten Werke, stammen entweder aus der südslawischen Region oder sind auf eine andere Weise mit dem geopolitischen Kontext Jugoslawiens verbunden, insbesondere mit Bosnien und Herzegowina, Kroatien und Serbien. Unterschiedliche künstlerische Praktiken, die im Zeitraum 2000 bis heute entstanden und sich mit der Erinnerung an die „gemeinsam vergessene“ Vergangenheit Jugoslawiens beschäftigen, werden in dieser Arbeit untersucht.

Die Zerstörung der antifaschistischen Geschichte Jugoslawiens wird am besten durch die Untersuchung der Gedenkstätten, die während der Tito-Präsidentschaft (1953-1980) errichtet wurden, veranschaulicht. Folglich beziehen sich alle analysierten Kunstwerke auf subtile oder sonstige Weise auf die Orte und Objekte, die durch das antifaschistische Denkmal mit dem jugoslawischen Erbe verbunden sind und ihm gedenken.

Anhand von Theorien zum kollektiven Gedächtnis wird die Bedeutung der Denkmäler als Erinnerungsstrukturen erklärt, die gleichzeitig gedenken und kollektive Erinnerungen formen. Die Arbeit untersucht jene/die Ereignisse, die mit dem Löschen bestimmter Erinnerungen verbunden sind, sowie die Wiederbelebung dieser Erinnerungen, veranschaulicht durch die ausgewählten Werke.

Diese Masterarbeit strebt die Anerkennung künstlerischer Praktiken zur Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit im Kontext der Wiederherstellung des antifaschistischen Gedächtnisses an, sollte aber auch als Plattform für die Infragestellung der heutigen Politik der Ausgrenzung dienen.