

Sanja Horvatinčić
Zagreb University

Memorials from the Socialist Era in Croatia – Typology Model

Public monuments built during the second half of the 20th century in Croatia are predominantly associated with commemorating the World War II period, that is, Yugoslav resistance movement (*Peoples' Liberation Struggle*), organized and led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Additionally, they often thematise events and protagonist of the Yugoslav socialist revolution and the history of Yugoslav workers' movement. The number and geographic distribution of these memorials, as well as their typological, iconographic and formal diversity, present an unprecedented phenomenon in Croatian history of secular public art. As such, they are to be analysed as a specific art historical *corpus*. Departing from the idea of the memorial as a medium of social memory, our central arguments for defining and differentiating the *corpus* from the rest of contemporary sculptural/architectural production of that period, are: (1) their strong support of the dominant ideological and political narratives; (2) symbolic function in the society; (3) specific mechanisms of the commission, evaluation and production processes; (4) specific parameters of their social reception.

Various and complex historical, cultural and political factors have contributed to the relatively high quality of a substantial percentage of memorial projects, as well as to the innovative and subtle approach to central moral issue of the post-war Europe – that of how to represent and commemorate the Holocaust and other WWII atrocities. As the Socialist Yugoslavia gained more political confidence and economic stability during the 1950s, representative memorial commissions were becoming more and more open to new formal and conceptual approaches, deliberately departing from the academicism and socialist realist doctrine, which defined memorial production of the early post-war period, when Yugoslavia was under the direct USSR influence until 1948. Talented, well-educated and associated with the European modernist artistic scene, the post-war generation of Croatian sculptors and architects quickly made their way to the most prominent competitions, whose professional jurors were open to innovative concepts and formal reductions to the upmost limits of the abstract form.

The size, form and artistic quality of these memorial objects have recent years caught the attention of the international artists and curators, primarily thanks to the distribution of their images via Internet. However, these photographs present only a small segment of the *corpus* as whole, while their commemorative and ideological content is often being neglected or misinterpreted during the online distribution process. On the other hand, it was primarily their ideological content that motivated massive destruction and devaluation of these memorials after the disintegration of Socialist Yugoslavia and during the Homeland War in Croatia (1991-1995).

The key motivation behind the thesis is to offer a comprehensive analysis of the *corpus* as a whole. Although the selected material, due to practical reasons, had to be limited to the territory of Croatia, we are expecting the results to be applicable to memorial production of the other former republics of Yugoslavia. Based on extensive field work and archival research, the dissertation proposes complete typology of memorials dedicated to the National Liberation Movement, Socialist Revolution and Workers movement from the Socialist era (1945-1990). Formal and stylistic genealogy of proposed typological groups is presented through characteristic examples and analysed both in the relation to European memorial production and to the specificities of local cultural, social and political context. The dissertation also aims to demonstrate the complexity of various social and political functions of memorials, and to address roles of the numerous social factors that lie in the background of the process of their production. Finally, the dissertation is expected to offer the basis for their (re)evaluation, as well as to facilitate and encourage the heritage protection and preservation processes.