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Skeletons of the Balkans: Colossal Monuments to Yugoslavia Under the Leadership of Josip Broz Tito

Sarah Weaver
Art History
University of North Carolina at Asheville
One University Heights
Asheville, North Carolina 28804 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Laurel Taylor

Abstract

The second half of the twentieth century saw the creation of the socialist state of Yugoslavia under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. This nation sought to unify a multitude of distinct and often opposing cultures into a functioning state that broke from the non-progressive Eastern Europe stereotype. This thesis seeks to explore the utilization of federally commissioned public sculpture as a means of both propaganda and artistic innovation. In particular, this thesis delves into the details of various colossal abstract sculptures located in the former Yugoslavia and the context of their commission as well as their aesthetics. This research explores the break with Soviet aesthetic tradition as a parallel to western art movements of the time and the statements that were made by such similarities. Socialist Realism was considered the only appropriate artistic style in the USSR at the time and by rejecting such a style, Yugoslav artists made both political and artistic statements. The idea of a non-representational historical monument was virtually unheard of during this time period and the fact that a government utilized these methods to strengthen a sense of togetherness proves incredibly unique. The colossal sculptures under investigation interact with and transform the landscape in which they are situated. They were symbols of the socialist nation, frequently visited by tourists, but have been left to rot after the breakup of the nations encompassing Yugoslavia.

1. Introduction

> The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language, chance and foolishness.
>
> -Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

From 1953 to 1980, Josip Broz Tito ruled what was known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, attempting to bring both national unity and economic opportunity to a culturally diverse Southeastern Europe that bore complex history. Though Yugoslavia made headlines around the globe for its violent political turmoil and downfall that took place during the 1990s, Tito was known to many as a "benevolent dictator" who made a conscious venture to bring together many historically diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups in order to form one homogenous south Slavic nation that was economically and culturally compatible with the rest of Europe.[1] One of the methods Tito and fellow Yugoslav leaders utilized in pursuing this goal was the federal commission of works of modern art that were to be displayed to the people and were to convey the strength of a unified South Slav nation.

As a part of the attempt to politically and culturally homogenize the Balkan Peninsula, Tito commissioned monuments and sculptures as a form of propaganda of cultural unity and pride as well as remembrance for civilian

casualties. During the 1950s through the 1980s, this included the production of a series of colossal works spread across the countryside of what are now Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and Vojvodina—six Socialist Republics and two Socialist Autonomous Provinces. The monuments, or "Spomenik" as they are referred to in the languages of Southeastern Europe, commemorate and honor various World War II battles, sites of concentration camps, sites of massacres of the Yugoslav peoples and other locations of historical and political strife.[2]

These colossal tributes loom over visitors, transforming the space that they inhabit as they command the full attention of the viewer. They are of a large enough scale that they border on architectural innovations, with some works functioning both as sculpture and as an inhabitable building. They therefore depart from the conventional dimensions of sculpture and monuments and elicit the conscious thought and analysis of the viewer. These were most commonly designed by well-known Yugoslav artists, who were chosen because they were revered in the Yugoslav art world at the time of the monuments' commission. Tito carefully selected them to convey his ideas.

The modernist style in art was adopted in Yugoslavia after the nation broke from Stalin in 1948 and was used to signify to Yugoslavs both the stark difference between their homeland and the USSR, as well as to symbolize the future of their people as a place similar to a Western European nation.[3] Public sculpture was an art form "in which Tito and the Yugoslav state had a direct interest in the role it was expected to play in welding together the individual republics of Yugoslavia with a myth of partisan heroism and unity, and through the cult of Tito."[4] These works occupied a meaningful position in Tito's campaign and unfortunately, with the fall of Yugoslavia in 1991, many were destroyed, while those that remained were often abandoned and have since fallen into a state of disrepair. Just as the notion of a unified Southeastern European nation has been abandoned, so too have many monumental icons of Tito's regime. These works now serve as a concrete reminder of the drastic measures taken in order to unify an area with a very tumultuous history and varying social, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. They can be examined as propaganda for a people who constantly struggled for a unified identity.

2. Tito as Dictator

The second Yugoslavia originated in a tumultuous environment under Josef Broz Tito in 1945. On November 29, 1945 in Belgrade, Serbia, delegates from the Constituent assembly voted unanimously to abolish the monarchy and replace it with the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Initially, the government of Yugoslavia intended to follow the Soviet model of government, in which "a hierarchical party apparatus controlled a fictional federation and pursued rapid development of heady industry."[5] The government was a federation of six republics, with the republics of Macedonia and Montenegro remaining separate and an Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which was ethnically mixed, and the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, primarily made up of Albanians.

Yugoslav government under Tito was responsible for repairing the damages from World War Two and establishing an economic system similar to that of the Soviets, but poverty was very common in rural areas. Modernization was a primary concern, as was being able to demonstrate that Yugoslavia had the ability to self govern. Much of the trade of the nation was directed towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe at the time and development of heavy industry and economic growth was emphasized. After the Second World War, the "Yugoslav idea experienced a renaissance in a way that would not have been possible without the discrediting of the Serbian monarchy and the collaboration of nationalists from all sides with the axis powers."[6] In an interview regarding life in Macedonia following the fall of communism, Herbi Elmazi, a Muslim Albanian living in Skopje states that:

> To us Tito had a certain, what do you call it, *charisma*. To me, unlike some of the communist dictators in other countries, he put our welfare ahead of the line. Or you might say he combined it to produce the best situation for all of us…Coexistance was on a high level. Tito promoted brotherhood and unity. And we were economically powerful. Tito asserted Yugoslavia's national interests in opposition to Soviet rule and my family lived in peace and relative prosperity. What could be wrong with that?[7]

Tito's government was based on the ideas of brotherhood and unity and believed that all individuals within the nation had the same rights and were obligated to support one another. Policies of remembrance of the Second World War were considered official and systematic and his policy of nationalism was victim-centered.[8] The

intention of these policies was to remind civilians of Partisan antifascist struggles and to create a new socialist political order.

It is important to note Tito's break from Stalin in 1948, which culminated from a variety of factors, and in turn was the reason behind the eventual Yugoslav break from Soviet-style art. Stalin saw the independent communist Yugoslavia as a threat to his hold on Eastern Europe, causing resentment that strained the relationship between Tito and Stalin. Stalin's refusals to aid Partisans during World War Two and the fact that the Soviet army looted and raped Yugoslavia in 1944 and 1945 caused resentment on the Yugoslav side. In early 1948, the Soviet Union claimed that they liberated Yugoslavia and facilitated the Partisan victory. In March 1948, the Soviets withdrew their military forces from Yugoslavia, causing the Yugoslavs to criticize them. Relations became very heated and in Bucharest in 1948, the Cominform[9] expelled Yugoslavia.

3. Systems of Official Memory

Both the first and second Yugoslav states had strong systems of synthetically produced memory, which led to the production of countless physical commemorations for historical events. The Communist party of Yugoslavia had an undeniable agenda to shape the course of history and the way that citizens of the state thought of past struggles and triumphs. The inclusion of an event as represented by monument signifies the government's desire for its remembrance among civilians; on the contrary, the exclusion of an event as represented by a memorial represented the government's desire for civilians to forget such a thing ever happened.

The ideas behind an identity are often misconceived as being unchangeable, but are actually "not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena…we are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities."[10] Memories are shaped and influenced by the manner in which histories are written, and in Communist Yugoslavia, the writing of history was controlled by the state and only the state. The past was written according to the present and was legitimized in leaders' comprehension of the mechanisms of a socialist state. This is not to say that histories that could be deemed "unofficial" did not exist—rather, it is important to take into account the fact that they were influenced, to varying degrees, by the conditions and environment under which they were created.

One of the most prominent examples of a skewing of history as told by the socialist state in Yugoslavia was the myth of the superior state of the communists and their partisan army as opposed to the *Ustaše* and *Četnik*.[11] The communist party "admitted to having fought a tough, vicious war [during the Second World War] and to having executed many traitors and war criminals, [but] they did not admit to having themselves committed massacres."[12] Instead, they placed this blame on the *Ustaše*, who were known to have killed masses of Jews, Serbs and Gypsies—they were said to have been more brutal than even the Nazis.

4. The Yugoslav Break from Stalinist Aesthetics

The advent of socialist ideas in Yugoslavia after the end of the Second World War was accompanied by a parallel set of aesthetic ideas. In the USSR, "abstraction was seen as 'revisionist', 'formalist', 'self-referential' and inaccessible to all but an elite, while figuration was seen to represent humanistic principles and to demonstrate the artist's responsibility…to work in an accessible mode for working people."[13] Many modernists felt that a socialist state should develop its own artistic standards—but this aspiration was virtually unattainable due to the poor socioeconomic state following the war. Instead of an entirely new canon of art, "a moderately progressive approach [was taken], maintaining continuity with the socially engaged prewar modernism."[14] This allowed artists and architects to work from a previous standard, while still embracing a new system of government as an authority in artistic practice. Unfortunately, this new standard was to be directly affected by relations between Tito's Yugoslavia and Stalin's USSR.

In the Soviet Union, public monuments were created so that Stalin could assert his influence and control over an area. Soviet aesthetic values asserted the importance of subject matter that valued the utopian future of the communist state. Sculptors creating these works had to remain within specific aesthetic boundaries, which were imposed upon artists through the:

> reform of the art academies on Soviet lines to exclude 'formalist' professors and teaching practices; the creation of a monolithic and obedient artists; union; the banning of the private art market, making artists completely dependent on state orders; the institution of annual exhibitions which were thematically and stylistically policed by communist art critics; the takeover and centralization of the art press on the model of the Soviet journal *Iskusstvo*; and the energetic promotion of Soviet art through 'friendship months', cultural exchanges and exhibitions of reproductions of the masterworks of Socialist Realism.[15]

Tito's Split with Stalin in 1948 caused Yugoslavia's artistic break with the Socialist Realism style. The 1950 annual congress of the Association of Croatian Artists (ULUH) was among the first to condemn this style of art. At the aforementioned congress, painter Krsto Hegedušić gave a testimony to convince others of the detrimental effects of Stalinist-style art, stating that it could be "taken as a reminder that there was an attempt to coerce artists into creating Socialist Realist works in Postwar Yugoslavia and that there was also a concomitant need for de-Stalinisation or liberalization in the Yugoslav art worlds at the beginning of the 1950s."[16]

Along with a break from the aesthetics of Stalin's art, a new standard for public structure was established in Yugoslavia, and it was expected to be "figurative, realist and uplifting."[17] Along with this break this break came Tito's adoption of a modernist style of aesthetics. In 1951, a meeting of prominent architects in Dubrovnik brought the promotion of modernist International Style of architecture. Later the same year a group of artists known as EXAT 51 were starting to create abstract works of art in Zagreb.

Though Yugoslav artists would eventually respond in a very positive manner to Hegedušić's speech and the call for new forms of art, a break from Stalinist artistic aesthetics took a considerable amount of time. It was not until 1953 that EXAT 51 held their first exhibition in Zagreb. There was a significant lag in the development of a distinct Yugoslav style and generational standards were partially to blame. Art critic Radoslav Putar was notably disappointed in how slow change was taking place and placed particular blame on young artists' failure to be innovative.

The international and domestic success of the Yugoslav modernist art movement during the early 1950s was directly affected by the fact that so many international modernist and abstract art exhibits took place in or toured Yugoslavia during this time period. To Tito, the use of modernist style meant both a sign of the differences between Yugoslav and Soviet Communist practices, as well as a symbol of the hope and promise of a successful future for Yugoslavia. As compared to other Eastern European nations under socialist rule at the time, Yugoslav artists were allowed a great deal of artistic freedom. Stalin's USSR forbade forms of self-expression. This was not the case in Yugoslavia. Yugoslav artists were allowed to travel freely outside of their own nation and collaborate with colleagues around the world.[18] This was a freedom that was taken advantage of, as many artists from different Yugoslav republics were known to collaborate.

5. A Yugoslav Desire for Commemoration

Along with a break from the conventions of the Soviet Union, the aftermath of the Second World War brought a desire to commemorate the immense amount of suffering felt by every Yugoslav during the war. A war that was the cause of such an enormous number of casualties and with which the nation entered a period of socialist rule was in dire need of an artistic memorial—or thousands.

Monuments commemorating a public memory of war heroism and struggle were not new in Tito's Yugoslavia. They were quite common in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. After unification formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, monuments began to promote the ideology of a united state. However, these monumental structures were often of Yugoslav Kings, including Petar I and Aleksandar. In all, approximately 215 monuments to previous rulers had been erected in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia between the years of 1923 and 1940.[19] The Second World War affected Tito's Yugoslavia immensely. Not only did Yugoslavia's past consist of the war, "the war extended its own relevance in Yugoslavia far beyond [May 1945] as a source of the founding values of the postwar order: socialist revolution, antifascism, and the pan-Yugoslav "brotherhood and unity."[20] The war was part of both Yugoslavia's past and ever changing present—something that no civilian could entirely escape. This complex state was what allowed the memory of World War two to occupy artistic minds and allowed the creation of hundreds of pieces of art, music, and film—and notably, hundreds of memorials.

Memorials to the Second World War and surrounding events are scattered among the nations that once made up Yugoslavia and range from small plaques to colossal architecture. Some are located in urban centers while others are placed in rural locations. Directly following the war, "commemorative projects were expected to follow the socialist realist formula: realistic representation, obvious symbolism, and a triumphant mood."[21] This style is demonstrated by Antun Augustinčić and Drago Galić's 1947 *Monument to the Red Army*, located in Batina, Croatia (Fig. 1). This work was the first large-scale monument after the Second World War. It conformed to Soviet traditions, yet retained its own unique characteristics of a Socialist Realism style of commemoration.[22] It was a notable reminder of Soviet influence on both daily life and art at the time, yet was created shortly before separation was established between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The monument does not fail to include a Soviet-style five pointed star, After a break with the USSR was made apparent in the early 1950s, there was no need for sculpture to attempt to follow the Soviet model; this, in addition to a desire to forget all traces of Soviet domination, created a necessity for an aesthetic standard of commemoration to be devised in the Yugoslav state.

Figure 1—*Monument to the Red Army*, Antun Augustinčić and Drago Galić, Batina, Croatia, 1947.

6. Early Yugoslav Monuments

The debate over modernist aesthetics as related to monumental sculpture came to a head in 1953 after the presentation of the young artist Vojin Bakić's model for a Marx and Engels monument that was to be erected in Belgrade. Despite the break with Socialist Realism, his work was not of normal convention for a memorial. Bakić's work was defended by critic Milan Prelog who published a detailed account of the history of Bakić's artistic achievements, the last period of which he identified as a time of breaking with tradition. Prelog felt that the rejection of Bakić's model threatened the future of Croatian art, warning of "the likelihood of 'two art forms' appearing, 'one to fulfill social demand... and the another, which more or less furtively emerges as the result of genuine artistic aspiration."[23] Bakić's work was eventually accepted and his artistic style became a firm standard.

Among the first to contribute to a developing method of commemorating historic events was Serb Bogdan Bogdanović, an artist whose colossal monuments are incredibly significant in the history of Yugoslav art and who contributed to the cultivation of a collective Yugoslav memory through art. The artist was chosen to create the 1952 *Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism*, a commission that came at the early end of his career. Located in the Jewish cemetery of Belgrade, Serbia (Fig. 2), the monument "dispensed with realistic sculpture and replaced it with abstract architectural forms and archetypal funerary symbols." [24]

Figure 2—*Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism*, Bogdan Bogdanović, Belgrade, Serbia, 1951-1952. (Image from *A Flower for the Dead: The Memorials of Bogdan Bogdanović*, Friedrich Achleitner.)

The piece consists of two wing-like structures, each measuring approximately 10.5 meters tall, that appear to be parting ways as they curve away from one another, forming what look like open arms or possibly Moses' tablets containing the ten commandments.[25] The two sides of the cemetery are respectively dedicated to the Ashkenazi and Shephardic Jewish communities in Belgrad. Bogdanović originally intended to cast these pieces in concrete, as it was typical of the time, but the local Jewish community felt that stone would appear more natural, and therefore more appropriate; Bogdanović's relationship with stone as a medium continued to develop from this point onward. The presence of a natural material created a more sensual feel to the wings. On the face of one of the wings is a quote from the book of Samuel, and at the back of the left wing is a menorah-like structure with seven arms exists behind the left wing of the piece. The walls surrounding the sculpture (Fig. 3) were built using stone that was taken from dilapidated and destroyed Jewish homes in the area, specifically capitals and cornices and "for the contemporary visitor they are a bizarre sign of collective memory, a wall newspaper of history carved in stone."[26]

Figure 3—Detail of wall of *Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism,* Bogdan Bogdanović, Belgrade, Serbia, 1951-1952. (Image from *A Flower for the Dead: The Memorials of Bogdan Bogdanović*, Friedrich Achleitner.)

In addition to the heavy emotion created by a monument of such content and caliber, the *Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism* contributed to the development of specific Yugoslav methods of commemorating the horrors of the past in a way that diverged from the methods of the Soviet Union. Bogdanović was responsible for being among the first artists to commemorate historical events through the use of a combination of architecture, sculpture and landscape. This sparked "systematic research into new kinds of from, space, and materiality—following in the footsteps of the historical avant-gardes—[and] also provided fertile grounds for commemorative projects."[27] Bogdanović utilized abstracted aesthetics as opposed to Soviet-style realism out of his own accord; he is viewed as one of the first postmodernists in Belgrade.[28] This work "displaced [its] subject of commemoration into a zone between the present and an archaic past, endowing [it] with a sense of timelessness and universality that escaped simple political instrumentality."[29] He was also partially responsible for legitimizing architecture as a means of commemoration, as he was the creator of a synthesis between architecture, sculpture and landscape.

As a comparison, Soviet monuments of the same time period materialized entirely differently from the *Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism.* Considering the *Soviet Army Memorial* (Figs. 4-5) that was erected on a parade grounds in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1953, a considerable difference in artistic style is apparent. The monument was designed by Vaska Emanuilova and Mara Georgieva and commemorates both war heroism and the communist utopia. This work was "conceived at the height of the Stalinist attempt to remake Eastern Europe in the image of the Soviet Union, and it can be read as an historical documentation of the utopian vision of the Stalin era."[30] The monument boasts an imposing stone column of a height of thirty-seven meters and is surrounded at the base by bronze friezes depicting scenes from Russian history. These friezes show the October Revolution of 1917, the Fatherland War of 1941, and the Soviet home front during the war.

The figures depicted in the friezes of this work take on the style of Socialist Realism, a departure from the style of Bogdanović's works. The work succeeds in depicting a 'Russophilia' that was, for the most part, artificially contrived, and which was presented in any way in Bogdanović's early works. The scenes that depict the Bulgarian people greeting Russian soldiers, realized by artist Ivan Funev, are falsely optimistic (Fig. 5). They show Russian soldiers accepting gifts from Bulgarian civilians, as they are greeted with warm hospitality. They are to the extent that they are "full of optimism and pathos; they seem over-the-top and embarrassing and are representative of the radically different political and artistic atmosphere in the Eastern Europe of the 1950s."[31] The friezes at the base of the monument depict scenes of war based around a red flag and showing soldiers in motion and shouting war cries. As a whole, the scenes represent gratefulness for the liberation brought by the Soviet army at the end of the Second World War.

The individual friezes of the Sofia monument are typical of the Socialist Realist style in that they depict a true-to-life aesthetic, mixed promise and power as shown through sculpted musculature and strength. They convey the

material progress and longing to the future that is brought with the ideas of the Soviet utopia. As a whole, "the subject of this war memorial proves to be more about building socialism than commemorating Soviet wartime sacrifices"[32], proving that it works in an entirely different direction than the *Memorial to the Jewish Victims of Fascism.*

7. Jasenovac

Perhaps Bogdanović's most well-known and revered public sculptures is his 1959-1966 *Memorial to the Victims of the Concentration Camp* (Fig. 4), located in Jasenovac, Croatia. This work has been realized on the site of the Jasenovac Concentration camp, which was in operation during the Second World War under the Ustaše regime.[33] The camp has been nicknamed the "Auschwitz of the Balkans" due to the grisly and horrific conditions of the mass-murder of thousands and served as a reminder of the continuously problematic relationship between Serbs and Croats.

Figure 4—*Memorial to the Victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp,* Bogdan Bogdanović, Jasenovac, Croatia, 1959-1966.

It is important to establish the fact that attitudes surrounding the genocides of the Second World War are entirely different in Eastern Europe than they are in Western Europe and the United States. While Western theory provides room for competing stories and new methods of attracting various groups to concentration camp sites, this is not the case in Eastern European culture. Memories of such horrific events are still being collected and analyzed as a part of modern memory. Eastern European nations did not experience "decades of Western Holocaust education, Hollywood movies, or a German model of coming to terms with the past."[34] The fresh state of an open, gaping wound such as the Holocaust in the 1950s provided a challenging and sensitive subject for Bogdan Bogdanović to draw inspiration from. As memory of the genocides of the Second World War have not completely formed into theory appropriate for the creation of a museum experience, one can imagine the difficulty of constructing a work of art from the opinions, memories and emotions that existed in 1959.

The designing and creation of the *Memorial to the Victims of the Concentration Camp* was extremely politically fueled and controversial due to varying accounts of the events that took place at the camp as according to Croats and Serbs, respectively. The former communist regime, in addition to many contemporary Serbs, are of the argument that the camp was responsible for the death of 500,000 to 800,000 "antifascists", which included Serbs, Jews and Roma. Current records, which are deemed "official", promote the argument that the camp was responsible for the deaths of 80,000 to 100,000 individuals. This is said to have included at least 47,000 Serbs, 10,000 to 13,000 Jews,

6,000 to 10,000 Roma and 6,000 to 12,000 Croats.[35] The controversy surrounding Serb estimates as to the number of victims of the camp created a hostile environment in which a monument was to be created and the discrepancy of victim estimates has continued after the fall of Tito's Yugoslavia and into the 1980s and 1990s (Fig. 5).

Figure 5—The propaganda-driven nature of the display of controversial victim estimates has carried on long past the fall of Tito's regime.

These controversies reinforce the importance of Tito's contrived history that was devised following the Second World War. The communists were willing to admit that they had fought fiercely but were unwilling to take responsibility for taking part in genocidal massacres.

The erection of a monument at this site was equivalent to Croatia's taking responsibility for the camp—the nation could no longer hide behind the misconception that the Nazi party was responsible for the work. The Croats were not in accordance with the erection of the work, due to Bogdanović's Serbian nationality, while the Serbs rejected the work, as they did not feel that the ideas being commemorated were substantial.

Tito initially faced the erection of this monument with resistance—he wished to spend the nation's funds on monuments reflecting the glory of the Yugoslav people. Jasenovac certainly did not fit with his ideal of "brotherhood and unity" that typically included the silencing of controversial and embarrassing historical events. In the case of the memorial for Jasenovac, public demand for such a monument eventually led to its creation. It is notable that Tito never visited the site.

The memorial at Jasenovac was the fourth public monument that Bogdanović was responsible for and he subsequently paid great attention to the careful planning of the architectural design of the monument. Bogdan Bogdanović's autobiography, *Der verdammte Baumeister* provides an extensive first hand account on the process of designing this work; this passage truly speaks for the process of the design of Yugoslav commemorative monuments as a whole:

> The beginning: In the course of my work on the planning of the monument in Jasenovac it was frequently suggested and even expected that I preoccupy myself with the photographs, the records, the paperwork and eye-witness reports from the few surviving inmates of the camp. I avoided doing so, pushed it to one side, and two or three times I explicitly declined to engage with the material. The sadistic details were stifling, they made me breathless and ruined my concentration. I apologized and tried to explain that I was quite capable of understanding and feeling the metaphysics of the crime, which was also true. The agonizing documentation just depressed me and confused me, and ultimately only meant more work. I knew, by the way, that I would neither look for nor find inspiration by bringing the evil back to life.[36]

At a time when realism was an aesthetic tradition in public sculpture, Bogdanović's personal interpretation of the memory and experiences of a group of people allowed him to construct a work that was representational of the passing of thousands of individuals. He was able to convey the importance of these individuals in the scheme of Yugoslav history and heritage through a non-representational work that took into account his personal interpretation of gravity of such slayings. While many concentration camps were, and still are, commemorated through works that prescribe a narrative to memories of suffering, Bogdanović's departure from personal accounts and records of the occurrences of the camp allowed a deeper emotional interpretation of the horrors of the Holocaust. In the case of Jasenovac, Friedrich Achleitner states that:

> if shapes were perpetuation of the crime and the mutual allocation of accountability—then these were images from an archaic form of remembrance and the overcoming of hate through the utopia of mutual understanding. The stance taken by Josip Broz Tito in deciding on the construction of the monument signalized this sense of helplessness in the face of the almost insoluble problematic isssues involved. And perhaps Bogdan Bogdanović found the right words at the right moment when presenting his project.[37]

The memorial at Jasenovac "itself is a transformed landscape, a visionary artefact."[38] Bogdanović's work towers over a vast field that collectively serves as a memorial site for the concentration camp. The visitor approaches the monument by way of railway tracks, further reminding one of the inhumane conditions of the transport of the camp's victims. The colossal nature of the stone flower signifies its importance as a focal point in a series of monuments and museums in the area.

The monument is not only composed of a colossal concrete flower-like structure, but incorporates the surrounding land with a series of false tumuli, provoking memory of the violent deaths of countless inmates during the camp's operation, many of whom were dumped in unmarked graves. Some of the tumuli are sunken in, while others are mounds above ground. They mark the sites of the barracks, workshops and various other buildings that left no trace following the war.[39] The memorial site is bordered by an old steam locomotive and cattle cars, which provide ghastly insight into the operations of the camp.

The massive sculpture of reinforced concrete consists of petal-like branches that appear to twist as they ascend to the heavens. The petals of the memorial extend from a thick, riveted column-like base that is flanked by curved supports that radiate into the ground on four corners, appearing to grow out of the ground. The column supporting the center of the work has ribs that appear like the veins of the wings of a bat, or the veins of a leaf. The base of the sculpture is supported by arches reminiscent of small flying buttresses. Visitors are able to walk underneath the sculpture, into a small space that is "reminiscent of a crypt."[40]

Upon first glance, the petals of the flower appear to be far too waify and dynamic to have been realized out of concrete. They appear as if they are part of an organic living structure that has been petrified during the process of some sort of movement. Each petal has a conveyed aesthetic of aerodynamism, with holes in the center of each petal (Fig. 6). Their organic aesthetic defies any notion of aesthetic rigidity that could be assumed by the utilization of concrete as a medium.

Figure 6—Detail of *Memorial to the Victims of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp,* Bogdan Bogdanović, Jasenovac, Croatia, 1959-1966.

The "stone flower" lacks representational significance in the contexts of nationalistic or religious narrative. Instead, it provokes the ideas of hope and rebirth as each petal reaches towards the sky, as a form of remembrance for those who lost their lives in such a violent manner at this location. Bogdanović relies on suggestion and allows the viewer to utilize the imagination in order to draw conclusions regarding the meaning of the aesthetics of the work. The concrete flower is a feat of engineering that evokes hope in a new, more peaceful future at a site that saw indescribable pain. Friedrich Achleitner suggests the parallel between the shape of the memorial and a flower that is placed on the grave of a deceased individual: "Bogdan Bogdanović has placed a massive flower into the landscape for those who found death in Jasenovac, one which is also a sign of remembrance that everybody can understand."[41]

8. Sutjeska

Also iconic in its aesthetic, the *Monument to the Battle of Sutjeska, Tjentište* (Fig. 7) was realized by artist Miodrag Živković in 1973. It commemorates one of the most important and fiercest World War Two battles that took place in Yugoslavia—the Battle of Sutjeska, which took place in 1943.[42] This battle was important in Tito's series of events commemorating the idea of 'brotherhood and unity', as it signified a Yugoslav victory over foreign forces. This particular area was of enough historical importance that an entire park was created in memoriam.

Figure 7—*Monument to the Battle of Sutjeska, Tjentište*, Miodrag Živković, Sutjeska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1973. (Image property of Jan Kempenaers).

Živković's sculpture is part of a series of monuments and memorials make up the Sutjeska National Park. They were constructed from 1958 to 1975 and include a memorial mausoleum, a memorial house, an information center, a youth hostel and various markers commemorating important sites of battle.

The vast mountains provide a landscape that both compliments and reflects the qualities of Živković's monument. It is part of a tradition of ceremonial commemoration of the events that took place as part of the Battle of Sutjeska. It is meant to "remind of the sacrifices made in the fight against fascism with the aim of crating a new social order and class consciousness…the commemoration of this event fostered the myth of both the strength of the Yugoslav peoples and their readiness for political self-determination."[43]

Just as Bogdanović's memorial at Jasenovac strikes at a chord of inner hope and longing for peace, the monument at Sutjeska reaches towards the heavens in a gesture of longing and hope. Its placement in a national park and the surrounding natural environment are of significance. The military that fought in this area during the Second World War were faced with the harsh forces of nature that were present in an area of mountainous terrain, which was the cause of the deaths of many soldiers. It is framed by a backdrop of a large mountain flanked by rolling hills that are covered in greenery. The natural environment provides stark contrast to the harsh, geometric lines of the sculpture, provoking thought of the relationship between man and nature. The sculpture, a man-made object, is placed in the middle of land that appears virtually untouched by man. This causes the viewer to explore the experience of man in both natural and synthetic environments, as experienced by those who fought and gave their lives in this location.

Živković's *Monument to the Battle of Sutjeska, Tjentište* consists of two wings that appear to crouch inwards towards each other, while simultaneously reaching outwards towards the heavens. The faces of each wing are fractured into countless square and rectangular surfaces of varying sizes. This fracturing is reminiscent of the breaking up of planes that was done by Cubist artists during the early twentieth century. The two sides of the monument are similar in shape, yet are not identical. They have variation that reflects the varying, geometrically shattered surfaces of rocks that make up the surrounding mountains and also appear similar to the rocky sides of the banks of the nearby Sutjeska River. The monument also reflects the fracturing of sound and objects that is related to the use of guns and the impact of artillery. The geometric harshness of the aesthetics of this work reflects the harsh realities of battle and it has been suggested that "the broken form of the monument suggests the successful 'breach' of the partisans and their victory."[44] As viewed from the side, the work appears to crouch towards the viewer. It not only extends towards the heavens as a gesture of hope, yet extends towards visitors who walk towards it, providing the viewer with the opportunity to form a mental and emotional connection with the events that occurred at this site.

Though this work incorporates a style that appears to suggest the aesthetics of the surrounding mountains, it does not, in any sense, take realist form. The work departs from traditional public depictions of warfare, as it does not

include any depictions of the soldiers that took part in the battle. The shapes used in this monument are entirely abstract and therefore allow the viewer to interpret the work according to his or her own thoughts and emotions on the battle.

Monument to the Battle of Sutjeska, Tjentište is located in a national park that is well known and easily accessible to the general public of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It serves as a work of art that was viewed by a great number of civilians during the years of Tito's rule—it was visited by hundreds of elementary and secondary school pupils every day. Following the wars of the 1990s, Živković's monument is the only monument of the national park that remains in a well-preserved state.

9. Petrova Gora

Built by Croatian sculptor Vojin Bakić in 1981, the *Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija* (Fig. 8) in Petrova Gora, Croatia, is a prime representation of the decay that monuments of Tito's Yugoslavia have faced after the break of the nation. Bakić was a renowned sculptor who was known for his work with the aforementioned Croatian artist group named EXAT 51. He was responsible for the design of many public sculptures during the Yugoslav era and was well known in the Croatian art world during his lifetime. Bakić was assisted by architect Berislav Šerbetić in the creation of this monument.

Figure 8—*Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija*, Vojin Bakić, Petrova Gora, Croatia, 1981.

The Petrova Gora mountain range, in which the monument is located, was home to the Partisan army's primary military hospital during the Second World War. It was therefore an incredibly important region that was central to the functioning of the Partisan effort. Additionally, villages in this region were the sites of the mass murders of Croatian Serbs by the Ustaša. Therefore, the commemoration of the events that took place here during the Second World War proved very important to Yugoslavs. This spoke to Bakić on a personal level, as he lost four brothers to the mass slayings of the Ustaša.

The monument consists of undulating organic forms that seem to be balanced on top of one another. Each layer compositionally compliments those beneath it, appearing to ripple with the wind and jut out at various locations. The monument is covered in panels of reflective silver-colored metal placed over a structure made of reinforced concrete. The building once gleamed in the sunlight, but currently remains in a neglected state. It was one of the

most architecturally-based sculptural monuments of the era and was also one of the last commissioned monuments before the collapse of Yugoslavia.[45]

Unlike aforementioned works, Bakić's monument has a hollow interior. The inside of the 37-meter monument was designed to be utilized as an educational space. It included a library, a reading room and a museum. The displays on the building's interior were meant to tell the history of the area and to educate individuals of the hardships that the Petrova Gora Mountains had seen. Not only was this work one of remembrance of a lost community, it was also meant to enhance the contemporary community. The interior resembles the aesthetics of an organic structure with waving layers that overlap one another and vary as one's gaze moves upwards.

As with aforementioned monuments, the aesthetics of the work does not immediately evoke associations with the violent acts that occur in the area, due to the abstracted forms that are utilized. However, Bakić's work does seek to utilize the interior of the work to educate and commemorate the events the Partisan struggle and the deaths of civilians in the area. The monument was certainly aesthetically avant-garde at the time that it was designed, and "even in today's seriously dilapidated state, the memorial's 'liquid' forms in stainless steel appear futuristic, despite the fact that in the meantime Frank Gehry made similar approach widely known."[46] Indeed, the building's sleek metallic surface, along with complimenting curved forms strongly resembles the aesthetics of Gehry's design of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao.

Unfortunately, the monument only remained functional from 1981 until 1991. During the Croatian War of Independence, the area came under Serbian control. Due to the monument's location at a high geographical point, it was utilized as a base for Serbian forces to fire rockets into surrounding cities. The very violence of which this monument sought to commemorate was essentially repeated on the grounds of the monument itself. In 1995, Croatians regained control of the area and the monument was used as a field hospital for the wounded.

After the war, the monument was essentially abandoned and fell into complete disuse. As of recently, the monument has greatly suffered due to the looting of scavengers and vandals. Local civilians have stolen much of the metal siding that once covered the monument in order to contribute to the building of other structures in the area. The interior of the building is filled with garbage, as nothing was done in terms of upkeep following the Croatian War of Independence. There is currently little to no governmental action towards the preservation of the monument. The once shining beacon of Yugoslav nationalism now stands full of holes, as defeated as Tito's regime eventually became.

10. Conclusion and Implications

In Eastern Europe, the end of the Second World War brought changes not only in national boundaries and systems of government, but also in concepts of identity and memory. The process of recovery from the tragedies associated with a worldwide war proved to be slow and painful. The colossal nature of the tragedies associated with the war provided opportunity for artistic change and innovation. The cultural changes that took place during the mid-twentieth century in turn introduced a significant change in the aesthetic qualities of commemorative pieces of art, particularly in socialist Yugoslavia under the rule of Josip Broz Tito.

Tito's ideals of brotherhood and unity attempted to homogenize many already existing ethnic and cultural groups on the South Slavic peninsula, in order to create a sense of nationalism as one group of South Slavic peoples. He sought to provide benefits to each and every member of the nation, in order to improve the general quality of life of the Yugoslav people. This was an incredible challenge, considering the amount of historic strife and hostility present between groups native to the area. The attempt to unite these individuals was both difficult and futile. Therefore, Tito utilized any and every method of provoking a sense of togetherness. This included propaganda through innovative and unique works of public art.

Public sculpture commissioned by federal and local governments in Yugoslavia during this period generally broke from Joseph Stalin's tradition of Socialist Realism, which employed a glorified realist aesthetic that was biased towards promotion of Stalin's ideals and Russian conquest and rule of various Eastern European nations. After Tito's official 1948 break from the government of the USSR, Yugoslav art began to diverge from the traditions of Soviet art, which, at the time, was dictated by strict standards established by Stalin.

During the 1950s-1980s, the Yugoslav government sponsored the commission of many abstracted public monuments dedicated to the commemoration of various World War Two battles and the sites of the genocide of the persecution of specific ethnic groups. These monuments do not realistically depict individuals or scenes associated with the events that they seek to commemorate. Instead, they take abstracted, aesthetically intriguing forms that force the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions as to the connections between the visual representation provided

by the work and the event or location that it seeks to commemorate. This abstracted format was innovative and striking during the time period, as it was completely opposed to precedents of commemorative representation. It relies entirely upon the interpretation of the viewer and upon the visual attractiveness and colossal nature of the actual work of art. In seeking to contrive a national sense of reverence for those lost in the Second World War, Tito employed a new Yugoslav standard of sculpture that allowed viewers to feel that they were part of a larger and more powerful nation that was united as one.

11.Endnotes

1 Susan Shapiro, *The Curtain Rises: Oral Histories of the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2004), 180.
2 *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia,* ed. Vladimir Kulić, Maroje Mrduljа Mrduljaš and Wolfgang Thaler (Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2012), 222.
3 The Balkan nations always aspired to be part of the Western European sphere in terms of culture, politics and economics, but always seemed to be pushed aside or fall behind—according to John Allcock they have always been a symbol of "otherness". See John B. Allcock. *Explaining Yugoslavia.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
4 Reuben Fowkes, "Croatia/Hungary: Socialist Realist Art Criticism at the Crossroads in the 1950s," *Third Text* 20:2 (2006), 203.
5 Lampe, *Ethnic Nationalism,* 229.
6 Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, Belgrade, *MONUMENTI: promenljivo lice sećanja* (Belgrade: Forum Zivilier Friedensdienst, 2012), 9.
7 Susan Shapiro, *The Curtain Rises: Oral Histories of the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe,* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004), 190.
8 David Bruce MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim-centered propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.
9 The Cominform, or Communist Information Bureau, was a socialist alliance created by Stalin in 1947 that was dominated by the Soviets. It consisted of the Soviet, East Europe, Italian and French communist parties. It was essentially created as a tool for Stalin to manipulate other nations to benefit his own.
10 Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, Belgrade, *MONUMENTI: promenljivo lice sećanja* (Belgrade: Forum Zivilier Friedensdienst, 2012), 12.
11 The Četnik, or Četnik Detachments of the Yugoslav Army of the Fatherland, were Serbian resistant groups during the Second World War who opposed the Nazi party and Croats who allied with the Nazis. They primarily fought against the Partisans.
12 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* ed. Rubie S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 173.
13 Charlotte Benton, "Introduction," in *Figuration/Abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945-1968,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 2.
14Vladimir Kulić, Mrduljaš, Maroje Mrdulja and Thaler, Wolfgang, *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia,* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2012), 216.
15 Reuben Fowkes, "Soviet war memorials in Eastern Europe, 1945-74," in *Figuration/Abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945-1968,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 12.
16 Fowkes, "Croatia/Hungary," 202.
17 Nevenka Stankovic, "The Case of Exploited Modernism: How Yugoslav Communists used the Idea of Modern Art to Promote Political Agendas," *Third Text* 20:2 (2006): 203.
18 Tatjana Macić, "Curatorial Practices in The Other Europe: Critical Analysis of Curatorial Practice in Serbia 1945-2010." Masters diss., University of Amsterdam, 2010.
19 Tatjana Macić, "Curatorial Practices in The Other Europe: Critical Analysis of Curatorial Practice in Serbia 1945-2010." Masters diss., University of Amsterdam, 2010.
20 Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism In-Between,* 221.
21 Ibid, 222.
22 Ibid.

23 Reuben Fowkes, "Croatia/Hungary: Socialist Art Criticism at the Crossroads of the 1950s," *Third Text* 20 (2006), 203.
24 Ibid, 221.
25 Achleitner, Friedrich, *A Flower for the Dead: The Memorials of Bogdan Bogdanović*, (Zurich: Park Books: 2013), 10.
26 Ibid.
27 Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism In-Between,* 223.
28 Ibid, 226.
29 Ibid, 223.
30 Reuben Fowkes, "Soviet war memorials in Eastern Europe, 1945-1974," in *Figuration/Abstr action: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945-1968,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 22.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid, 24.
33 When the Axis forces invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, the Germans and Italians declared their support of the Independent State of Croatia, which was supported by the Ustaše regime. The Independent State of Croatia established the Jasenovac Concentration Camp between August 1941 and February 1942. It consisted of five facilities spread over 200 square kilometers. These camps were utilized for the murder of Jews, Serbs, Roma, Croatian political enemies and other minorities. The Jasenovac camp was located about sixty miles outside of Zagreb and was the location of the murder of between 77,000 and 99,000 people between the years of 1941 and 1945. The camp is infamous for its horrific conditions and torturously cruel guards. Partisan forces overran the camp in May 1945.
34 Rob van Der Laarse, "Beyond Auschwitz? Europe's Terrorscapes in the Age of Postmemory" in *Memory and Postwar Memorials: Confronting the Violence of the Past,* ed. Erik D. Weitz and Jack Zipes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 79.
35 Ibid.
36 Friedrich Achleitner, *A Flower for the Dead,* 41.
37 Achleitner, Friedrich, *A Flower for the Dead: The Memorials of Bogdan Bogdanović*, (Zurich: Park Books: 2013), 42.
38 Ibid, 45.
39 Ibid, 40.
40 Ibid, 44.
41 Ibid, 46.
42 The battle of Sutjeska took place from 15 May to 15 June, 1942, during which, Axis forces attempted to overtake Yugoslav Partisan forces. It was the final and most bloody battle that took place in the area of the Sutjeska river and the surrounding mountains. Over 7,500 Partisan fighters of the National Liberation Army were killed.
43 Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, Belgrade, *MONUMENTI: promenljivo lice sećanja* (Belgrade: Forum Zivilier Friedensdienst, 2012), 55.
44 Ibid.
45 *Modernism In-Between,* ed. Vladimir Kulić, Maroje Mrdulja Mrduljaš and Wolfgang Thaler.
46 Ibid.