Art and its Responses to Changes in Society
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Edited by
Ines Unetič,
Martin Germ,
Martina Malešič,
Asta Vrečko
and Miha Zor

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
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PREFACE

Throughout history, humankind has witnessed the rise and decline of civilisations, governments, and regimes; ideologies and ideas; and social and cultural movements. Even in the most turbulent events, art has always been involved in history, playing various roles and serving different purposes. Processes that were triggered by sociopolitical changes have influenced all layers of society and can therefore be traced and observed in the history of art. In the chapters of this book, we follow iconographic motifs and works of art that have acquired diverse meanings within different periods of history, cultural milieus, and social circumstances, and have often been appropriated by opposing ideologies.

The authors of this book discuss the art of different time periods, from ancient times to the end of the twentieth century, in diverse media, and from various countries. The idea for the book first emerged during discussions at the first international conference for PhD students and recent PhD graduates Decline—Metamorphosis—Rebirth, which took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in September 2014. The aim of the conference was to bring together young researchers from different fields of humanities and social sciences dealing with the topic, since it is especially intriguing to observe these phenomena of changes in art at the intersection of art history and other disciplines. The topic of the conference—the decline—transformation—rebirth paradigm—is frequently encountered in writings on art and other related fields, and remains widespread in some areas of the humanities. This is understandable since this pattern has an archetypal value; it is firmly rooted in symbolic thinking and our perception of the world. If understood correctly—i.e. as a tool of symbolic logic—it can be of use in research and writing about art. Decline, transformation, and rebirth cannot be considered as distinct phenomena—all three phases of the triad are inextricably intertwined. An ending of any process in art can also be a new start. The death of the old concepts, ideas, or forms is often the very condition for new ones to spring forth. The decline—transformation—rebirth triad symbolises a constant and never-ending movement. Each sequence of the movement has its own characteristics and particularities, which have to be identified, analysed, and evaluated without defunct ideas about the evolution of art and any aprioristic judgements. The paradigm is a joint platform for the authors in Art and its
Responses to Changes in Society in their understanding of works of art and processes within art itself, as well as in their treatment of the different subjects presented in this volume.

In the first chapter, The Gorgon Medusa Metamorphoses—From a Declining Pictorial Motif to Survival as a Cinematographic Motif, Annabelle Ruiz studies various forms and meanings of the iconographic motif. She shows an increase of interest for the topic between symbolist-oriented artists at the end of the nineteenth century and again in cinematographic art in the 1960s.

Theresa A. Kutasz demonstrates in A Hellenistic Skyscraper—The Reconceptualisation of the Lost Pharos at Alexandria and its Relationship to American Architecture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century how the Hellenistic lighthouse that once marked the prosperous island of Pharos became a symbol of wealth and glory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in North America. Due to the technological progress, pylors of light became a popular image in the big cities, comparing the fantasy of the old world with the wonder of the new.

In the chapter Angelic Identities: Intersexual Bodies in Klonaris and Thomadaki’s Multimedia Practice, Laura Giudici examines the artist duo Klonaris/Thomadaki of Egyptian and Greek origin and interprets intersexuality in the historical circumstances in which their works were produced. The artists question the common understanding of sexual and gender identity as perceived today and in the past.

Gašper Cerovnik deals with the Christian iconographical motif of the Last Judgement in examples preserved in the lands of Carinthia and Styria (today part of Slovenia and Austria, respectively). In his case study Christoph Schwarz’s Last Judgement and Counter-Reformation in Inner Austria, the author shows close links between artists and patrons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the changes within the iconographic motif as depicted by the artist Christoph Schwarz in different circumstances reinterpreted by other artists.

In the next chapter, The Rebirth of the Amateur Artist: The Effect of Past Opinions on the Amateur Artist in Current Research, Wendy Wiertz shows how the perception of the amateur artist changed through time, from its rise with The Book of the Courtier (1528) to its decline in the eighteenth century. Amateur artists awoke the interest of scholars in the 1970s.

In the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, individuals designed their gardens and implemented them with so-called *staffages*—specific garden elements with different functions. Such gardens were created in England, Germany, and Carniola (today part of Slovenia), as Ines Unetič demonstrates in Diversity in European Garden Art around 1800: “European” Landscape Garden Design with its Staffages and their Functions.

The years around 1800 constitute the main topic in German architectural theory from the beginning of the twentieth century. As Rainer Schützeichel claims in Tradition as a Means of Modernisation—The Crucial Role of the Time “around 1800” for early Twentieth-century Architectural Theory in Germany, vernacular buildings of this period, believed to be the last expressions of stylistic unity, became reference points for architectural reform, modernisation, and the quest for creating a unified German culture in the early twentieth century.

Alenka Di Battista, in Small Houses with Gardens as a Solution to a Housing Crisis, analyses the responses of architects to the growing housing shortage in Slovenia during the interwar period of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of SHS after 1929). Slovenian architects were focusing mainly on providing recommendations and professional advice to the common person on how to construct their own home.

In the chapter In Search of the National—Slovenian Art in the 1930s, Asta Vrečko focuses on the question of constructing a national visual expression. This was one of the most discussed topics in the cultural sphere in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Due to the omnipresent political conflict in the centralistic kingdom, it has manifested in many forms, and different, even contradictory, strategies and historical references were used.

Katarina Mohar examines the relationship between nation and art on the scale of public art in State-Commissioned Depictions of Historical Subjects in Slovenian Historical Painting of the First and Second Yugoslavia. She compares two state-commissioned historical paintings visualising key events from Slovenian history that were executed in very different political atmospheres and for quite different ideological state structures, i.e. the monarchy and the socialist regime after the Second World War.

In Socialist Realism in Slovenian Architecture—Some Remarks on its Appearance and Decline, Martina Malešič presents the context of the appearance and decline of Socialist realism in Slovenian architecture in the post-Second World War years. After the conflict with Informbiro in 1948, Yugoslavia withdrew from the Communist bloc and the Soviet sphere of influence. Socialist realism was rejected and Slovenian architecture once again turned to the West European modernism of the pre-Second World War period.
Sanja Horvatinčić, in *Ballade of the Hanged—the Representation of World War II Atrocities in Yugoslav Memorial Sculpture*, deals with a specific topic of Yugoslav (art) history—its monuments. She delineates new iconographic interpretations and artistic strategies in representing war trauma by analysing several examples of memorials dedicated to people hanged in the territory of former Yugoslavia.

In the last chapter of the book, *Reaffirmation of Christian Symbolism within the City of Zagreb*, Ivana Podnar provides an insight into the changes in the urban iconography of the capital Zagreb that occurred due to the establishment of the independent republic of Croatia in 1991 after the breakup of Yugoslavia. National independence was marked with the return to traditional social values, especially to the Catholic Church, which implied a new symbolic system, including new churches and monuments that strongly marked the urban iconography of Zagreb.

As diverse as the studies may be in their subjects or approaches, it is the idea of the permanent metamorphoses of art in its responses to the cultural milieu—as well as the search for the specific manifestations of this process—that unites them. This selection of case studies addressing various topics, discussing different problems, and offering new interpretations of works of art is a stimulating and provocative read for anyone interested in art and its metamorphoses.

The Editors

**CHAPTER ONE**

THE GORGON MEDUSA METAMORPHOSES: FROM A DECLINING PICTORIAL MOTIF TO SURVIVAL AS A CINEMATOGRAPHIC MOTIF

ANNABELLE RUIZ

The Gorgon Medusa feminine figure, which comes from Greco-Roman mythology, has inspired a great number of artists throughout the centuries and has been depicted in various mediums, thus showing the multiple forms it assumes as an iconographic motif. The birth of the symbolist movement in the second half of the nineteenth century gives us an eclectic pictorial vision of all the aspects of the Medusa’s mythological history and the allegorical symbols that are traditionally assigned to her. Both her hypnotic gaze and her scream of horror portrayed in the different works of art analysed provoke in humankind a sentiment of fascination and dread. This can be partly explained by the divine character of this hybrid creature, which possesses the power to turn others into stone. In her book *L’Homme et la Métamorphose*, Maryvonne Perrot notes that:

If metamorphosis is worrying, it still seems associated with an almighty power, inherent in the fact of not being subjected to a principle of causality and unequivocal generation ... To a certain extent, the metamorphosis presents itself as the expression of divine omnipotent power. In fact, one of the principal divinity characteristics is to be causa sui, if not absolutely, at least to the extent that she is master of her existence. Yet, if the metamorphosed being is not exactly causa sui, nonetheless its appearance seems to be escaping the ordinary laws of generation; and this is why divinity and the power of metamorphosis are so frequently associated. This union remains one of the fundamental motivations of the structure of myths. (Perrot 1979, 10)1

The Gorgon Medusa’s monstrous origin is not described in the first Greek mythological texts.2 Only her physical aspect is known—a hybrid monster
CHAPTER TWELVE

BALLADE OF THE HANGED:
THE REPRESENTATION OF SECOND
WORLD WAR ATROCITIES IN YUGOSLAV
MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

SANJA HORVATINČIĆ

Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (Benjamin 1979, 257)

Despite the considerable production of memorial objects and the proliferation of commemorative practices in all countries damaged or influenced by the Second World War, the problem of the representation of war atrocities, along with the moral and social obligation of keeping the memory and transferring it to future generations, remains one of the central preoccupations of philosophical aesthetics and art practice. This is perhaps most evident in the growing number of inter- and trans-disciplinary studies dealing with the relation between the Holocaust and art, which are opening valuable new perspectives on artistic approaches to the representation of trauma and collective memory. Yet, although the systematic genocide over Europe provoked unprecedented and unparalleled social and cultural reactions, other forms of Second World War atrocities, motivated not (only) by anti-Semitic but primarily ideological and/or military reasons, often remain overlooked or historically relativised. Accordingly, the issue of their artistic representation has not yet been sufficiently addressed. Knowing that brutal war crimes, such as reprisal shootings and public hangings of captives and civilians, had been more characteristic of German invasions and counter-insurgency warfare in east and southeast Europe—that is, in countries that later became a part of either the Eastern Bloc or the Non-Aligned Movement—popular and scholarly discourse on their memorial practices, including the erection of memorials, has often been biased by the bipolar Cold War worldview. Therefore, the political and artistic "value" of memorials commemorating victims and celebrating victories in eastern and southeastern Europe has often been compromised by their overt ideological function, and, as such, remained beyond the (legitimate) scope of an aesthetic and/or art historical analysis. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, monuments built in different Communist regimes have, regardless of their commemorative character, frequently been destroyed or neglected, while the tendency to disqualify them on the basis on their ideological substrate is again growing stronger with the rise of nationalist and xenophobic discourses amid the growing crisis on the European periphery. On the other hand, recent critical analyses of Holocaust art are often limited to the artworks and other cultural products by famous US, Western European, or Israeli artists, filmmakers, or architects. However valuable, the theoretical premises generated from these examples do not, and—in opinion of many contemporary scholars—should not imply a universal experience of Second World War atrocities.

This study aims to indicate the variety and heterogeneity of thematic and formal approaches to representing atrocities in post-Second World War Europe by analysing a set of examples of monuments dedicated to publicly hanged people in the territory of the former Yugoslavia during the socialist period (1945–90). It relies on the premise that, similarly to the issue of the artistic response to the eradication of Jews, the representation of these atrocities through the medium of memorial sculpture presented highly intellectual, moral, and professional challenges to all the commissioners, societies, and artists involved. The questions of why public hangings, as historically, culturally, and symbolically burdened images, became a part of the iconographic repertoire of memorial sculpture in Yugoslavia, and how the formal and conceptual treatment of the human figure was interpreted by Yugoslav artists and adjusted to the parameters of the monumental sculptural genre, are central to this analysis.

Another issue that shall be addressed is the artistic engagement with specific images of suffering that not only participated in the construction of collective memory, but also supported the dominant, Marxist interpretation of the Yugoslav history. The proliferation of memory practices was to a large extent due to the cohesive and ideological potential of the post-war Yugoslav Peoples' Liberation Struggle (later the PLS). Remembering the war was not only a matter of honouring the dead, it was also a means of cherishing and fulfilling the narrative of the long history of the oppressed, one that most surely would have been erased or forgotten had it been for the victory of Fascism. We propose, therefore, to analyse the memorials dedicated to publicly hanged people in Yugoslavia during the Second World War not only as artistic objects functioning as
media of collective memory, but also as symptoms of the historical materialist view of history that lay in the foundations of Yugoslav historiography and memory politics.

**Historical Background**

Public hangings of war hostages and civilians were used as a method of terror, punishment, and/or execution during the Second World War throughout the whole territory in Europe, and were primarily practised by the Nazi, Fascist, and other armies and/or movements that either supported or collaborated with the Axis powers. This method was also used in reprisals against the Western European resistance groups and individuals (France, Italy, Germany), and was regularly practised as the execution or disciplinary method in concentration camps. However, the sight of hanged people was by far most frequent in eastern and southeastern Europe, where Hitler led not only a military but also a racial and ideological war against those groups that Nazi ideology regarded as an existential threat to the German race itself—Communists, Sinti and Roma, and, above all, Jews (Shepherd 2012, 2). Millions of civilians, either as partisan supporters or victims of racism and ethnic cleansing, were killed in reprisal shootings or died from disease and hunger (Wildt and Jurcii 2004, 14). Unprecedented cruelty exercised in the Balkans was the result of both the counter-insurgency campaigns and the ideologically motivated and racially “justified” war on pro-Communist, anti-Fascist Slavic peoples (Shepherd 2012, 5–6; 253–4; Rutherford 2014, ch. 4.II). In the territory of Yugoslavia, racial and ideological hatred was coupled with local nationalist pretensions and ethnic animosity.

A strong and well-organised anti-Fascist movement led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia continuously and seriously jeopardised the strategic war ambitions of Germany and its collaborators’ troops from 1941 on. The reasons for the development of this strong resistance were varied, as elaborated in numerous military history studies, and range from the political motivation in answering the brutal measures of the occupying forces, to the specific configuration of the terrain in the Balkans and eastern Europe, to “the fact that many eastern European countries retain age-old traditions of resistance to foreign invaders” (Pattinson and Shepherd 2010, 1–5). Here, reprisal shootings and public hangings—which were considered to be efficient ways of deterring insurgents and weakening the support of civilians—were massive, frequent (Shepherd 2012, 88, 100, 102, 175; Rutherford 2014, ch. 4.II), and applied extensively in response to the resistance they faced (Shepherd 2012, 256).

The practice of public hangings was done with the aim of humiliation and warning—those suspected as being partisans or their supporters, very often including women, were left hanging for days, often with signs listing their “crimes” attached to their dangling bodies (Rutherford 2014, 4153–4) (see Fig. 12.1).

![Fig. 12.1. Darinka Bitanga, Ekrem Ćurić, Tomo Kljujić, Mujo Selimihodžić, and Božo Skočić hanged by the German occupier in Mostar on November 1943. Source: AFZ Arhiva (2015).](image)

Public hangings were often recorded by perpetrators in order to provide evidence of executing military orders. Thanks to photo documentation, images of hanged people remained not only in the individual memories of eye witnesses, but also became a part of the post-war collective memory of war atrocities. In socialist Yugoslavia, not only did they attest to the extent of the monstrosity of the enemy, but they also carried the message of strong resistance and moral commitment, thus becoming powerful symbols of anti-Fascist martyrdom. Despite the different ideological agenda, these narratives had similar social functions to their Christian counterparts; regardless of the humiliation and torture imposed on them, the Partisans and their people remained uncompromised.
and resilient in their fight for freedom and belief in the final victory.

**Iconographic Disambiguation**

Throughout history, representations of hangings have been predominantly related to the lowest social classes and underprivileged social groups—from punishing deviant female behaviour and suppressing peasants’ uprisings in medieval Europe, to racial violence in the USA. They were aimed at the brutal remembrance of death by evoking a response of horror and functioning as a, “sobering reminder of final submission to an ultimate political or psychological power” (McCullogh 2013, 383).

Although frequently practiced, death by hanging has been rarely featured in the history of art, especially in the sculptural medium. Not only was there no iconographic tradition in the history of European sculpture, but the notion of hanging was also burdened with strong, predominantly negative symbolism. Associated with the idea of guilt and betrayal, Christian iconography features as symbols of divine order imposed on Earth as warnings of obedience and submission. Thus, the mere image of the gallows came to serve as a, “visual insurance to citizens and an example to foreigners that no one would be allowed to disturb the fragile security of the walled community” (Ibid., 384).

Francisco Goya is considered to be the first artist to include the viewer as an active and compassionate participant of scenes of execution, depicted in his famous series of etchings Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War, 1810–20, Museo Nacional del Prado), in which he secretly depicted the atrocities of the Peninsular War mostly committed as a means of suppressing the resistance of the Spanish people. Goya opened the possibility of questioning the motifs and circumstances of the brutal murder; for the first time in the history of Western art, compassion for the hanged was brought to the fore while the authority of the executor was questioned (Hughes 2003, 10–11). Two-hundred years later, a similar reaction was provoked in the observer faced with countless photographs of public hangings by members of Fascist military and police formations in order to document their crimes during the Second World War. While the documentary aspect of Goya’s etchings make them comparable to such photography (Theodore 2004), their critical stance towards injustice places his work at the beginning of socially engaged art that gained momentum in the twentieth century.

In Georg Grosz’s grotesque depictions of Second World War atrocities and the critical view of social and economic inequality of the inter-war Germany, the motif of hanging appeared several times. Since his work left a significant mark on the left-oriented artistic scene in the inter-war Yugoslavia—primarily Zagreb-based artists gathered around the group Zemlja, with the painter Krsto Hegedušić as its protagonist (Magaš Bilandžić and Prelog 2009, 235)—it might have incited or reassured the use of the motif of hanging as a symbol of social inequality. What is more, the motif was also present in the literate work of Miroslav Krleža, the central theoretician of the leftist inter-war scene. With the beginning of the Second World War, many artists belonging to this scene joined the PLS and continued to depict the harsh reality that surrounded them. The prominence of the motif in the wartime drawings offers yet more proof of the frequency of such crimes on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

What interests us for the purpose of this analysis is how the experience of the Second World War influenced the representation and modified the cultural meaning of the motif of hanging in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite the presence of the motif of hanging recorded in numerous war photographs, its artistic representations were still to some extent inhibited due to deeply rooted Judeo-Christian morals, in which, “the most notorious crime, the betrayal of Christ, was followed by the remorse of Judas and his suicide by hanging” (McCullogh 2013, 383), thus connoting the sense of shame and guilt, rather than of martyrdom and heroism. However, in post-war societies in which new narratives of the anti-Fascist struggle and revolution were to substitute Christian ones, it was more likely that the representation of public hanging would appear, especially in those communities in which the image of public hangings already contained emancipatory potential, as was the case in some parts of former Yugoslavia. It was also due to the dominant post-war interpretation of medieval local histories that Second World War hangings gained more symbolic meaning in the society, thus contributing to the resemantisation of the motif itself.

**Between Heroic Gesture and Tragic Form**

Narratives of heroism and martyrdom of the people who, despite high risks, did not yield to the imposed power, served as one of the central strongholds of the argument of people’s widespread willingness and determination to join or support the resistance movement led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which during the Second World War had already laid the foundations of the future political and social order. Therefore, the memory of the war in Yugoslavia relied not only on the experience of a massive and bloody-yet-victorious resistance, but also on the ideological aims of the struggle’s key organisers, who saw the anti-
Fascist agenda as an inseparable part of the revolutionary path leading towards a new social and economic system. It should be emphasised that the ideological parameters of post-war Yugoslavia grew out of, and were defined by, the specific historical experience of the Second World War, and in many aspects were different from those of other post-war Communist regimes.

The Socialist realist agenda—which constituted the official view of art during the first post-war years in Yugoslavia (ca. 1945–55)—aimed at the agitation and communication of the key concepts of the new ideological paradigm, especially when it came to public sculpture. War atrocities were depicted by means of heroic gestures and detailed narrative descriptions, featuring anguished, combatant, or defiant human figures, facing death proudly and fearlessly, thus embodying the ideal of devotion to the revolutionary cause. Apart from fulfilling the primary social function of honouring the deceased, the strong heroic rhetoric of the post-war Yugoslav monuments was an inseparable part of the ideological propaganda.

These mechanisms, however, were not a specificity of the Communist propaganda; they belonged to a long European tradition of the representation of military victories, from which they differed in at least two significant aspects, crucial for the understanding of the novelty in the representation of Second World War atrocities. First, monuments were aimed at honouring the heroism of the “everyman,” especially one belonging to the lower social classes, i.e. workers and peasants. Secondly, they relied not (only) on the iconographic cannon of the Western monumental sculpture (e.g. equestrian statues of orators), but—as the result of the specific local historical experience of the Second World War, and various cultural/artistic influences—produced a new imagery of heroism, which sometimes relied on the photographic recordings of the events that gave them a new sense of authenticity. Such new imagery included the scenes of public hangings, which were utilised as iconic images of transferring the collective memory of both the horror and heroism of the Second World War. Besides being regularly featured in historical studies and memorial museums, they occasionally also served as visual templates for the transposition of the image into the medium of memorial sculpture.

A telling example of such use of the photographic image in the medium of memorial sculpture is the famous image of Stjepan Filipović (a Yugoslav Peoples’ Hero) standing on a bench below the gallows with his hands triumphantly raised above his head, minutes before he was to be hanged by the Chetniks and the police of the Serbian quisling regime on May 22, 1942 in the Serbian town of Valjevo. The image soon became a symbol not only of the Yugoslav PLS, but also of the anti-Fascist resistance in general, and was as such displayed at places such as the Auschwitz memorial complex and the entrance hall of the UN headquarters building in New York (see Fig. 12.2).

Fig. 12.2. Stjepan Filipović before the public execution, Valjevo (Serbia), June 22, 1942. Source: Muzej Revolucije Narodnosti Jugoslavije.
The first sculptural recreation of the image was commissioned in 1949 from Vojin Bakić, one of the most promising Yugoslav sculptors of the post-war generation. After more than six years of work on the sculpture, its destruction in a fire in 1956, and its reconstruction, the monument was finally unveiled in October 1960 in Valjevo. Although the artist’s formal treatment and understanding of sculpture significantly changed during the ten-year process, inaugurating him into an icon of Yugoslav abstract modernism, his treatment of the human figure below the gallows remained a landmark project in the history of Yugoslav memorial sculpture (see Fig. 12.3). The second monument to Stjepan Filipović, planned in the mid-1950s in his birthplace Opuzen in southern Dalmatia (S.R. 1955), by young Croatian sculptors Miro Vuco and Stjepan Gračan, treated the famous photo image in a more descriptive and literal manner, and was unveiled in 1978.

Despite a considerable difference in the artistic quality of these two sculptural interpretations of Filipović’s figure, both projects essentially comply with the socialist realist demands of the representation. On the formal level, however, Bakić achieves a new level of synthesis of content and form, thus contributing one of the key “transitional” cases of monumental genre in Yugoslavia. Within the given limits of the proposed task, he managed to formally reduce and semantically transpose a specific human figure/historical event to a universal symbol. We are not yet, however, dealing with the representation of the atrocity itself; its basic intention is the apotheosis of the iconic image of the heroic past, and, at the same time, the celebration of the *Jetztzeit* (Benjamin 1979, 263), in which the “martyr” represents a new type of heroism, honoured by an unprecedented artist’s sovereignty over new iconographic, formal, and material possibilities, in order to transfer the memory to a new type of collective identity.

At the beginning of the same decade, in his seminal essay on the work of the post-war generation of British sculptors, Herbert Read introduced the term “geometry of fear” in order to describe the feeling of anxiety provoked by malformed and contorted visions of human and/or animal figures. The influence of these and similar tendencies of the post-war European sculptures (such as Germaine Richier and Alberto Giacometti) is recognisable in a series of sculptures from 1957 by a Croatian sculptor Dušan Đamonić, one of the protagonists of the European cultural hubs since 1952. His wounded deer, for example, had been analysed as a mere excuse to express inner tensions and feelings of pain and suffering, which inevitably brought the artist to the realm of abstraction (Horvat Pintarić 1960). When faced with the task of representing war atrocities in the public space, Đamonić applied the same level of abstraction, in this case, however, with the clear aim of creating an individual expression of the collective trauma. First, such a project was conceived as a large, complex structure of bronze and glass, which was to be the spiritual nucleus of an unrealised project for the *Monument to the Victims of Fascism* in Jajinci near Belgrade (1956/7).

In 1960, he finally managed to realise a public memorial artwork—a four-meter high abstract bronze sculpture dedicated to and located at the exact location of the tragedy of 16 publicly hanged men in December 1943 on the outskirts of Zagreb (*Monument of the December Victims, 1960*). By experimenting with a new technique—wire grids filled with concrete that enabled the elasticity and unusual organic structure of the sculpture—Đamonić achieved not only an abstract expressiveness of the form, but also managed to create an eerie visual reminiscence of the men hung by the crooks, whose piercing shapes and harsh edges still provoke a feeling of fear and anxiety (Argan et al. 1981) (see Fig. 12.4).
author(s) created a constructivist “sign” referring to human bodies hanging from the gallows. The image of hanging is ultimately reduced to a form devoid both of individual expression and heroic gestures. The upper horizontal line can also be interpreted both literally—as the gallows—and symbolically, i.e. representing the equality/comradeship of the victims and the common cause for which they died (see Fig. 12.5).

Between the Presence and the Absence of the Human Figure

The issue of the adequate form and method of transferring particular ideological messages or expressing the collective trauma was not the only one preoccupying the artists dealing with the public representation of Second World War atrocities in Yugoslavia. The realistic treatment of the human figure—as the central component of physical suffering—was conflicted with the post-war omnipresent nihilism and disavowal of humanity, irredeemably stained by unprecedented crimes and carrying the burden of collective guilt. The post-war generation of artists was disinclined towards the direct representation of human suffering, especially when it came to monumental sculpture which implied the sense of eternity and grandeur (Ceysson 1995, 523–4). To Sartre, Giacometti’s elongated and disintegrating human figures, often demolished by the author right after completion, offered the best answer to the question of how to mould the human figure and make it, “able to keep the ineffable
grace of seeming perishable.” In praising Giacometti’s artistic method, Sartre concluded, “Never was matter less eternal, more fragile, nearer to the human being” (Sartre 2012, 183).

As explicated, different approaches to the subject of Second World War hangings in Yugoslavia allowed for the avoidance of the direct representation of the central motif, i.e. the human body. In this chapter we deal with monuments whose central subject is exactly the (im)possibility of representing the human body hanging from the gallows. It, on the one hand, was approached through different degrees of formal stylisation, and on the other completely omitted the human presence from the site of horror.

During the first half of the 1960s, Nandor Glid—a Serbian-Jewish sculptor who lost most of his family in the Holocaust—worked for more than five years on a sculptural interpretation of the traumatic memory of the public hanging, which he had witnessed during the Second World War when 15 of his friends and comrades were publicly executed in his birth town Subotica. The monument, titled Ballade of the Hanged, was unveiled on November 18, 1967 on the anniversary of the tragic event at the exact location in which the executions were carried out by the occupying pro-Fascist Hungarian authorities (Subotić 2012, 106–7) (see Fig. 12.6).

Interestingly, Glid’s sculptural approach to the representation of war atrocities did not comply with Adorno’s 1951 claim that, “there can be no poetry after Auschwitz” (1983, 34). What is more, the name of the monument was directly influenced by François Villon’s medieval poem Ballade of the Hanged. In this way, whether consciously or not, Glid inscribed his work in the European tradition of keeping the memory of the oppressed alive. Although he came to be internationally recognised due to other memorial projects realised abroad (Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Mathausen, 1957, and Dachau, 1968), Glid considered the monument in Subotica his, “capital achievement: in this work I achieved a sculpture of equal intensity from all sides, which has always been my dream” (Subotić 2012, 107).

A seemingly opposing artistic strategy can be recognised in the complete absence of the human figure, achieved by means of scenographic recreations of historical events, in which the emptiness beneath the gallows plays the central role. The memorial built in 1955 near the Orthodox cemetery on the outskirts of Gospić marks the first attempt in this direction. The sight of the hanged bodies was to be evoked by a spatial disposition of three large gallows-like stone structures, while a contemplative effect was achieved by a pool of water between them. The meaning of the memorial site was completed with the central bronze statue of a mourning woman (see Fig. 12.7).
A more radical version of such a spatial concept was developed by Vladimir Veličković in 1971 in the Serbian town of Zaječar (Kovačević 1981, 47). An architect by profession, he reinvented the scenography of the public hanging of several local leaders of the anti-Fascist movement on the very site of the terror, on a small hill in Kraljevica near the town centre. He used simple, architecturally concrete elements to mark the three gallows and, by tilting them to an extent that defies the laws of gravity, aimed at creating in the spectator the sensation of physical misbalance, anxiety, and fear (see Fig. 12.8).

Fig. 12.7. Vanja Radauš, *Monument to the Victims of the Fascist Terror (Gallows)*, Gospić (Croatia), 1954. Source: Archives of the Serbian National Council (2012).

Fig. 12.8. Vladimir Veličković, *Monument to the Victims of Fascism (Gallows)*, Zaječar (Serbia), 1971. Photo: Nemanja Mitrović.

Throughout his work, primarily in the medium of painting and featuring explicit depictions of death and suffering, Veličković recalls his childhood memory of the Second World War spent in a basement in occupied Belgrade. After finishing the study of architecture, he specialised in painting in 1962/3 at Krsto Hegedušić’s Master Workshop in Zagreb, whose influence certainly contributed to defining his iconographic repertoire. On the other hand, the author’s occasional engagement with theatre scenography definitely contributed to the dramatic spatial disposition of his only memorial project (Subotić 1988, 10–20).

Read’s “geometry of fear” gains a significantly new dimension when applied to this kind of artistic representation of the war atrocity. Both emotional and physical relations between the observer and the commemorative subject of the monument are achieved, thus representing a unique example in the field of memorial sculpture, not only in the former Yugoslav territory, but also in the European context.

By focusing on the motif of hanging as manifested in Yugoslav Second World War memorial production, it is possible to extract at least four significant conclusions that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding
of the post-war European memorial sculpture. First is the long-term effect of Western control and dominance over the mediation of collective memory of the Second World War atrocities, which has led to the formation and perpetuation of a biased experience of the war, and is currently reflected in the (re)evaluation of memorial production in central and southeastern Europe. Second is the claim that the construction of significant images and symbols depended on the long tradition and various cultural and ideological influences which allowed for their (re)emergence and (re)appropriation in given historical circumstances, such as the case with the post-war interpretation of the history of the oppressed, and the specific use of the motif of hanging in Yugoslav memory politics. Third is the richness and novelty of representational strategies used by a number of Yugoslav artists and architects in their efforts to mediate the local memory of Second World War atrocities associated with the burdened symbolic iconography of hanging, as well as their constant and conscious involvement and dialogue with theoretical and practical concerns, primarily those associated with issues of representation of the human figure in post-war European sculpture. Fourth is the strong personal involvement of individual artists in the subject represented, which questions the supposedly defined ideological restrictions when it comes to the public representation and artistic interpretation of the Second World War in the former Socialist countries. Finally, this paper aims at indicating the artistic, cultural, and historical significance of the analysed memorial objects, as well as raising academic awareness of the culturoicide and memoricide done and still being committed over most of them.

Notes

1 The thematic scope of the term “Holocaust artwork” is somewhat unclear, taking into account that some authors understand it rather loosely as, “the class of any artwork that is about the Holocaust, that is, the intentionality or content of which includes references, direct or indirect, to the Nazi project of humiliation, deprivation, degradation, and extermination against the Jews and other marked groups” (Pickford 2013, 3).

2 This phenomenon—especially when it comes to manifestations in the field of cultural politics—has already been discussed by a number of scholars, such as Charles Harrison, Robert Burstow, Max Kozloff, and Eva Cockcroft.

3 This tendency in the field of recent Eastern European historiography was recognised by the editors of the book War in a Twilight World: Partisan and Antipartisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939–45: “though a more justifiably critical view of the effectiveness and conduct of communist partisan movement did emerge after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, it has not always been a sufficiently objective view. In the former Soviet Union, for instance, historians within many of the recently formed republics have sometimes excessively downplayed the efforts of the Soviet partisans in order to serve new nationalist agendas” (Pattinson and Shepherd 2010, 5).

4 Among the most frequent case studies in the studies of authors such as Mark Godfrey, James Young, Henry W. Pickford, Michael Rothberg, and others, are: Anselm Kiefer’s paintings, the graphic novel Maus (A. Spiegelman, 1980–91), the film Shoah (C. Lanzmann, 1985), the film Schindler’s List (S. Spielberg, 1993), and German counter-memorials (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Peter Eisenman, 2004; Places of Remembering in the Bavarian Quarter, R. Stih and F. Schnick, 1991; Harburg’s Monument against Fascism, J. Gerz and E. Shalev-Gerz, 1986).

5 The tendency for the generalisation and universalisation of the term “Holocaust” has been problematised and in many cases strongly criticised by renowned contemporary philosophers and theoreticians, including Giorgio Agamben, Zygmunt Bauman, Alain Finkielkraut, George Steiner, and Ronnie S. Landau (Macdonald 2002, 43–8).

6 One of the most horrific crimes was committed in the French town Tulle in 1944. Around one-hundred men were hanged in revenge for the resistance attack on Wehrmacht soldiers (Delaire 1971, 373–4). When it comes to reprisals in Germany, perhaps best known is the public hanging of the leaders of the anti-Nazi youth called Edelweisspiraten (Edelweiss Pirates) in Cologne. The event was commemorated by a bronze plaque with a relief depicting three hanged human figures (Pine 2011, 109).

7 Hitler’s ideological goals of the war in Eastern Europe called for severe measures, “according to Generaloberst Franz Halder, reporting in his war diary on Hitler’s standpoints, this war was not a question of military tribunals. ... the struggle will differ greatly from the struggle in the West. In the East, severity is mildness for the future.” Such atrocities were the result of the conscious violation of all hitherto signed international humanitarian and warfare laws. In May and June 1941, the Wehrmacht leadership issued orders suspending key elements of the laws and customs of war in order to secure the “unprecedented severity” of operation in the East that Hitler called for (Wildt and Jureit 2004, 7).

8 The crimes on the territory of the former Yugoslavia were in the most part committed by the Ustase, an army formation of Hitler’s puppet state NDH (Independent State of Croatia), and the collaboration movement Chetniks on the territory of Serbia and Bosnia.

9 Numerous photos of public hanging, taken mostly in Belarus, Poland, Yugoslavia, Russia, Ukraine, and other Eastern European countries, can be found in online archives such as Yad Vashem (Yad Vashem 2015), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collections (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collections 2015), Biblioteka Znaci (Biblioteka Znaci 2015), and numerous other websites.

10 Rare exceptions of the motif represented in oil painting are James Ensor’s Squelettes se disputant un pendu (Skeletons Fighting for the Body of a Hanged Man, 1891, Musée royal des beaux-arts, Anvers), and a hanged figure in Max Beckmann’s painting Die Nacht (The Night, 1918–1919, Kunstmuseum
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf). In the medium of sculpture, it is difficult to find any depictions of the motif before the Second World War, both in the international and local contexts. It is almost equally rare in post-war European and American sculpture, one of the exceptions being Leonard Baskin’s 1954 sculpture of a hanged man (McCulloagh 2013, 383). In contemporary art, the most notorious example of the use of the motif is Maurizio Cattelan’s hyper-realistic sculpture of three children hanged by a tree in Milan (Untitled, 2004).

11 It was a common motif in the depictions of hell during the Renaissance, when painters borrowed from local events of public executions for the representation of the Last Judgement (McCulloagh 2013, 383).

12 In the late middle ages, the image of a hanged person began to show magical features, “hostile action perpetrated in an image is a means to literally harm the person represented,” thus creating what anthropologists call “image magic” (McCulloagh 2013, 384).

13 Although Jacques Callot’s series of prints Misères et malheurs de la guerre (1632–3), depicting the ‘Thirty Years’ War’s atrocities, predate Goya’s direct representation of public hangings, it has been argued that Goya’s images prove the innovation of the approach to the subject and the fact that the subject matter itself is not sufficient to explain the extraordinary power of Goya’s prints (Licht 1979, 135).

14 One drawing was used for the cover of Wieland Herzfelde’s book Tragigrotesken der Nacht. Träume (1920) (University of Iowa Libraries, 2015).

15 One section of Krleža’s seminal poetry collection Ballades of Petrica Kerempuh, published in 1936, features the motif of hanging (Baba cmitzid pod galgama, Old Lady Sobs beneath the Gallows).

16 The social memory of public hangings during the First World War was still present in some parts of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

17 Since the CPY’s pre-war activities targeted the lower social classes, a substantial percentage of peasants and workers who joined or supported the resistance readily complied with the Communist agenda. This also meant that the official war narrative of the post-war one-party regime left little or no space for the competing narratives of the war. Therefore, a contemporary understanding of the artistic treatment of traumatic events must be based on a complex understanding of the numerous parameters that defined the specificities of the official memory politics in socialist Yugoslavia.

18 Examples of this type of representation in Yugoslavia, mostly referring to the shooting scenes, are: The Shooting of Hostages, F. Kršinić, Zagreb, Croatia (1950); Memorial to the Fallen and Hostages at Begunje, B. Kalin, Begunje, Slovenia (1949–53); and Memorial to Peasants Shot in Gudovac, V. Bakić (1955).

19 The most famous of these were the hanging of 17-year-old Lepti Radić in Bosanska Krupa, and the mass public hangings in Zagreb, Mostar, Sarajevo, Zenjanin, Šabac, and dozens of other places.

20 This method was also used in memorial production in Western Europe and the USA, e.g. the US Marine Corps War Memorial based on the iconic Joe Rosenthal photograph of the second flag-raising on the island of Iwo Jima during World War II (Horace W. Price and Felix de Weldon, 1954).

21 Unlike most other photographs of this kind, this was taken by a local photographer and later displayed in the window of her photo studio, despite the imposed restrictions (Belić-Korčin-Davidović and Davidović, 110–17).

22 Although representing the recognisable image of Stjepan Filipović, the monument was officially dedicated to the Partisan Detachment of Valjevo and all fighters of the Peoples’ Liberation Movement.

23 The monument was mined and completely destroyed in the transitional and warring climate of the early 1990s, and has not been restored.


25 Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the artist participated in several international competitions, including the Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner (1952–3), Monument of the Victims of Auschwitz (1958), Monument of the Victims of Dachau (1959), and the Second Monument to the Victims of Dachau (1964) (Kozrišnik and Karolyi 1969).

26 Another example of an abstract monument dedicated to hanged people is the Monument to the Hanged Partisans by Serbian sculptor Milivoj Unković, unveiled in the Serbian town of Bor in 1981.

27 The monument was removed and replaced by a Christian crucifix in the early 1990s.

28 Little is known about the design of the monument. Therefore, the reasons for installing 24 instead of 30 vertical posts are also unclear. It could be due to the fact that the remaining six people were hanged at a different location, or that the number of posts is symbolic and not literal.

29 The first approach is recognisable in the following examples: Boris Kalin, Monument to the Fascist Hostages, cemetery Zale in Ljubljana (Slovenia) (1963); Stipe Sikirica, The Witnesses, model for the competition for the Memorial Museum of Peasants’ Uprisings (1972) (Stipe Sikirica Gallery, Sinj); Nikola Janković, Monument to the Hanged Patriots, Terazije in Belgrade (Serbia) (1981).

30 This strategy characterises the following monuments: Vanja Radaš, Monument to the Victims of the Fascist Terror (Gallow), Gospić (Croatia) (1954); Bogdan Bogdanović, segment of the Monument to the Victims of Fascism, New Cemetery in Belgrade (Serbia) (1958); Monument to the Hanged Partisans Ivan Ferek and Slavko Glavor, Rinekovec (Croatia) (1975) (author unknown); Monument to the Hanged Patriots, Vranjske Njive (Montenegro) (author and date unknown).

31 While the emphasis on the occasion of the unveiling of the monument in 1967 was on the victims’ membership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and their active participation in the resistance (Alivirović 1967), in the recent interpretation of the event they are described as only the, “most likely members of the pro-Zionist organization Tehalveh Lavan” (Subotić 2012, 107). Such tendencies of connoting the event to the Jewish genocide rather than the Communist resistance bring us back to the aforementioned issue of the universalisation of the Holocaust.

32 Villon’s poetry “made a significant comeback in the twentieth century, being reinterpreted in the work of B. Brecht in the interwar period, while R. Lowell paid homage to the poem in 1946. The poem reversed and subverted the conventional
understanding of the image of hanging as the symbol of the imposed power of law and order, and the punishment of rebels and criminals. In Yugoslavia, his work was revaluated in the historical materialist reading of art and literature. In 1949–50, the Croatian sculptor Vanja Radaš made two versions of Villon’s figure; in 1957, a biography of the poet by Fritz Habeneck was published in Zagreb. The monument was completely destroyed in the early 1990s and never rebuilt. The hanging was recorded by a photograph which might have influenced the artist’s concept (Marković 1974, 141).

References

Religious Architecture in Seeking Symbolic Status

The twentieth century, particularly its second half, radically changed planning rules, specifically in relation to church architecture. Its unquestionable position in the hierarchy of importance of individual buildings was threatened by the competition of buildings representing the holders of the new power and new social values. The Church lost dominance to the State, and the modern person primarily believed in technological progress, the industry, and their own knowledge that provided them hitherto unimaginable discoveries, from the space industry to medicine, microbiology, and pharmaceutical industries, etc. It seemed that the human touched a new frontier of knowledge that made the dogmas of the Church less popular and acceptable. The historical status of the Church in forming a social, political, and religious framework of public life changed significantly, but in the socialist countries it had some specific characteristics that were the result of the political context. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, founded after the aftermath of the Second World War, was organised exclusively as a secular state, and at the Second Meeting of AVNOJ (the Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia) (Jajce, November 29, 1943), the rules on the status of religious communities were defined, with a clear principle of separation of Church and State. However, Article 25 of the constitution guaranteed citizens the freedom of conscience and religion, so that religious activities were not prohibited, as it had not banned the construction of religious buildings. Conflict between the clergy and the representatives of the party occurred in 1945 with the gradual elimination of the Catechism from the school curriculum, which made it clear that the issue of religious education would be transferred to the sphere of private