

Chapter 83

A Synthesis Paradigm as a Way of Bringing Back to Life the Artistic Monuments Inspired by the Motives of the People's Liberation Struggle and Revolution of Yugoslavia



Meri Batakoja and Tihana Hrastar

Abstract The *artistic monuments inspired by the motives of the People's Liberation Struggle and Revolution of Yugoslavia* are stratified phenomena constructed through a multitude of meanings. They are an indispensable part of important movements of architectural thought: the Yugoslavian avant-garde and the synthesis of all arts as its distinctive operational mode; the process of how the modern non-figurative means became an official language to Yugoslavian socialist ideology as opposed to the soc-realist figuration of the Eastern Bloc; the popularization of the Yugoslavian heritage taking place in the last decade as a unique enclave of the world scene of modern architecture, etc. This paper aims to argument their conception and meaning as a complex synthesis of art, architecture, technology and nature, and at the same time to open a potential health paradigm positioning them in the context of open-air culture, new ritual practices of social memory and new museum-destination types of contemporary art forms. In terms of methodology, this study puts together architectural scholars who actively work on the problem of the synthesis of the arts, offers a detailed review of existing scientific knowledge on artistic monuments in order to provide a new conceptual frame, an instructive yet speculative material that can alter the perception away from the old ideological stand into a new and healthy synthesized experience. Apart from the theorization of this synthesis paradigm as a way of bringing back to life the *artistic monuments inspired by the motives of the People's Liberation Struggle and Revolution of Yugoslavia*, this paper provides criteria for this new conceptual frame and showcases them upon selected case study.

The authors have contributed equally to this work.

The complexity of the title "Artistic Monuments Inspired by the Motives of the People's Liberation Struggle and Revolution of Yugoslavia" is taken from the then prevailing Yugoslavian nomenclature of monuments.

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83.1 Introduction | Previous Research

This paper uses all previous research on the subject of Artistic Monuments, from academic context (dissertations, papers) to popular dissemination (artistic approaches, digital databases and exhibitions)¹ in order to extract a new theoretical approach and to propose a synthesis paradigm to add to Monuments' prospective survival.

What does a complex title *Artistic Monuments Inspired by the Motives of the People's Liberation Struggle and Revolution of Yugoslavia* signify in the first place? The People's Liberation Struggle was waged as a war of the partisans for freedom from the fascist occupation which resulted in the forming of the new Yugoslavian state in 1945. In parallel, the Socialist Revolution of the people further transformed Yugoslavia as a distinct socialist country. The ideology of Yugoslavia was thus based upon two ground-breaking events—People's Liberation Struggle (as a finished process) and the Revolution (as an ever-going process). Due to this self-consciousness, the Communist Party never treated those processes independently while establishing its ideological structures. Even formally, and put in the simplest of terms, the Artistic Monuments consisted of horizontally manipulated form that signified the victims of the fascist terror and a dominating vertical that symbolized the victory and the revolution.² These two elements were often placed next to each other in a monumental location, an elementary nature by itself that added upon this effect of sublime encounter with a monolith of above-average dimensions placed in the middle of wildlife (Tepina 1961).

The Artistic Monuments nurtured rituals of practicing collective memory. Even the dates of inaugurations of the monuments followed strict policy of remembrance, affirming important events of uprising and resistance of the individual Republic, but also of Yugoslavia as a whole. Monuments' immediate surroundings were equipped with functional elements³ that supported established protocols for mass gatherings utilizing a directed play with numerous actors and a convincing ceremonial scenography. Beyond their usage on important dates, the Artistic Monuments were used as a secular space for "common folk celebrations" in the form of organized excursions dedicated to quality time for socialization in open-air and nature, with accompanying cultural and educational activities. Once the focus in the 1980s shifted to

¹ The topic has gained a well-deserved place in the popular culture on the regional and world scene, and its place in the canon of modern architecture was confirmed in the MoMA's exhibition "Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980" of 2019.

² The Artistic Monuments exemplify the process of how the modern non-figurative means became an official language to Yugoslavian socialist ideology as opposed to the soc-realist figuration of the Eastern Bloc.

³ Commemorative plateau, space for wreaths, torches, flagpoles, etc.

the younger generation, the Artistic Monuments began to further participate in this popular cultural milieu, by hosting youth festivals, car rallies, maritime regattas or rock-and-roll concerts (Horvatinčić 2017). Such performing rituals sustained the group identity and started to signify a distinct mass culture of “yugoslavianism”. As such, Artistic Monuments provide a fascinating example of an adaptable and durable ideological construct that extends from the sublime to the everyday life.

According to the typology of monuments of the Socialist Era made by Horvatincic (2017),⁴ the Artistic Monuments that are the subject of this research are a synonym of Monuments Based upon Innovative Structural Principles. The technological innovation refers to the complex extension of the monument’s utilitarian dimension that crossed the category of architectural sculpture toward the category of public museum, cultural and education center, etc. The technological innovation also stands for the complex sculptural solutions that sought constructively demanding structures and use of innovative delicate materials. But the building process of those complex structures in previously untouched natural sites was a technological challenge in itself.

This organic fusion of the Monument with its natural surrounding formed the foundations for a theory of “placing of the monument” which combines techniques of stage design, control of the *mise-en-scène* and the morphology of nature, all resulting in a dramatic corporeal experience (Bogdanovic 1961).

The Artistic Monuments represented a common problem for architecture, art, urban design, horticulture and politics and demanded a synthesized approach based on creative collaborations. Therefore, this synthesis paradigm is probably the Monuments’ most important and distinctive mark.

83.2 A Synthesis Paradigm in the Context of Health

This paper introduces a comparison of the Yugoslavian Artistic Monuments with the artworks produced by the “new art tendencies” of the period between 1960 and 1990, which expands the current theory of the Monuments and brings forth an addition to their existing synthesis paradigm.

The new art tendencies, represented by the **Minimal** and **Land Art Movements**, are based upon similar conceptual grounds as the Artistic Monuments. Formally, they aim at using the mere physical facts of scale structure and materiality of the artwork to provoke strong encounter through a real bodily experience (including the mind as the most immaterial part of the body). They are often colossal in magnitude (measuring kilometers and being visible on satellite photos) and are inseparable from the ambient they are placed or exhibited in.

⁴ It is a single comprehensive survey of the monuments from Socialist Era on the territory of Croatia.



Fig. 83.1 Petrova Gora Monument—original state from the 1980s. *Source* Copyright 2022 by CCN-images/Turistkomerc Archive

But what is less known about new art tendencies is that both Minimal and Land Art left us with alternative museal⁵ types situated outside the crowdedness of cities, in a form of decentralized, dispersed, faraway “museums” that promote a richer and healthier real life experience (Batakoja 2015).

“When we have to spend hours traveling in order to see something, we do so only when we have a special interest, a special reason to go. We are more willing to spend the time that is necessary to experience the full potential of the works we have gone to see, and we are ready for a different approach to the art. The visit becomes a real life experience and, by spending perhaps a full day on site, we try to understand, in the maximum way possible, what the artists are doing. This is a completely different approach to that of the museum in the city ...” (Papadakis 1991)

In a similar way that the Land Art allowed us to understand the fragile beauty of nature as an early chapter in our evolving notion of the environment, the Artistic Monuments could also unveil an eco-paradigm in the museum context. If the traditional museum paradigm consists of a building, collections, experts and the public, the eco museum paradigm consists of territory, heritage, memory and the community (Babić 2009). This paper applies this eco-paradigm in the context of Artistic Monuments, and repositions the focus from the monument as an isolated and stand-alone building to the totality of the territory it belongs to. The aesthetic heritage then becomes just one layer in the heritage palimpsest of the given territory. Also, the anti-fascist ideology, reviewed and accepted as authentic by the experts, becomes just one memory layer in the totality of memories produced by every visitor and the community. Tomislav Šola (Babić 2009) says that to follow an eco-paradigm in the museum context is to follow a philosophy, a mental and social behavior, transformed into a professional methodology.

⁵ Museum-like.

Let us consolidate a possible philosophy: Artistic Monuments should be rethought as **museum-sites** far away from the cities, reachable by prolonged **pilgrimage through the landscape** and therefore valued in the context of environmental issues. This new representation of them, as dispersed, faraway “museums,” with their awareness of the “**sense of the place**,” enables healthier and spiritually rich experience by exploiting the territory they are placed in. Additionally, the Artistic Monuments through the “**delicacy of scale structure and material**” are individually capable as the “new art tendencies” of providing authentic aesthetic encounter through a real bodily experience. By putting aside the deeply rooted ideological connotations (one of the main reasons for their neglected state), they should focus toward new “**performing rituals**”, even those not yet discovered. Therefore, by using the totality of available natural and cultural heritage, the Monuments could potentially grow into a once again relevant and healthy building type (Fig. 83.1).⁶

83.3 Case Study of Petrova Gora

The Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija (1970–1981), simply known as Petrova Gora Monument, was conceived as a multifunctional monument building that hosted a Museum of Revolution, consequently exceeding the definition of traditional monuments. It formed a focal point of a larger memorial area with over 70 dispersed historical objects and sites in the midst of preserved nature.⁷

The authentic historical territory was equipped for organized political, cultural and educational visits and recreation so it could be included “in the continuity of contemporary life” (Pavlović 1975). Therefore, the case study of Petrova Gora is elaborated not only as an isolated building, but also through the totality of the territory it belongs to, and illustrates how “the synthesis paradigm” was actually a part of its original concept.

The monumentality of the carefully picked position and its formal appearance (size, form, materials) came as a result of strong intentions for this monument to become a landmark—a representation of Petrova Gora and its fighters, as well as a symbol of the “entire area” and the “entire Revolution” (Knežević 1981). The monument is located on the highest summit in Petrova Gora range, making it visible from great walking distance and via satellite images as well (Fig. 83.2).

During the “pilgrimage” through the wooded terrain, the observer can hardly grasp its actual size of 37 m, which can only be felt at its immediate proximity. This introduces a play with the observer’s perception of scale and invites a bodily experience of the monument. Monument’s verticality and organic curves underline the characteristics of its natural environment and the topography of the hill, while the all-encompassing metal cladding dematerializes its form and reflects the light,

⁶ The impact on health is highly multifaceted, and it extends its exact quantitative aspects connected to the physical wellbeing.

⁷ Petrova Gora Biljeg is protected as “significant landscape” since 1969.



Fig. 83.2 Petrova Gora Monument—airial photography of the current state. *Source* Photo by Ivica Pezić, printed with permission (up left); photo by Mladen Ivanović, printed with permission (up right); photo by Alan Čapljar adopted from Planinarski izazov za ožujak (2021). <https://gojzeki.com/izazov-za-ozujak/> (down)

sky and the surrounding trees. These effects point out to the delicacy of the material that embraces engagement with natural elements such as fog or snow, forming new visual frames in different seasons and periods of day (Hrstar 2020).

Carefully designed objects in its micro context directly contribute to the monument's experience, with a series of axially aligned sequences. The vertical of the monument has its counterpoint in an ascending horizontal axis of a ceremonial path, accompanied with ancillary spaces (service and catering). These secondary objects are located partially underground and covered with grass roof, blending in with the environment (Fig. 83.3).

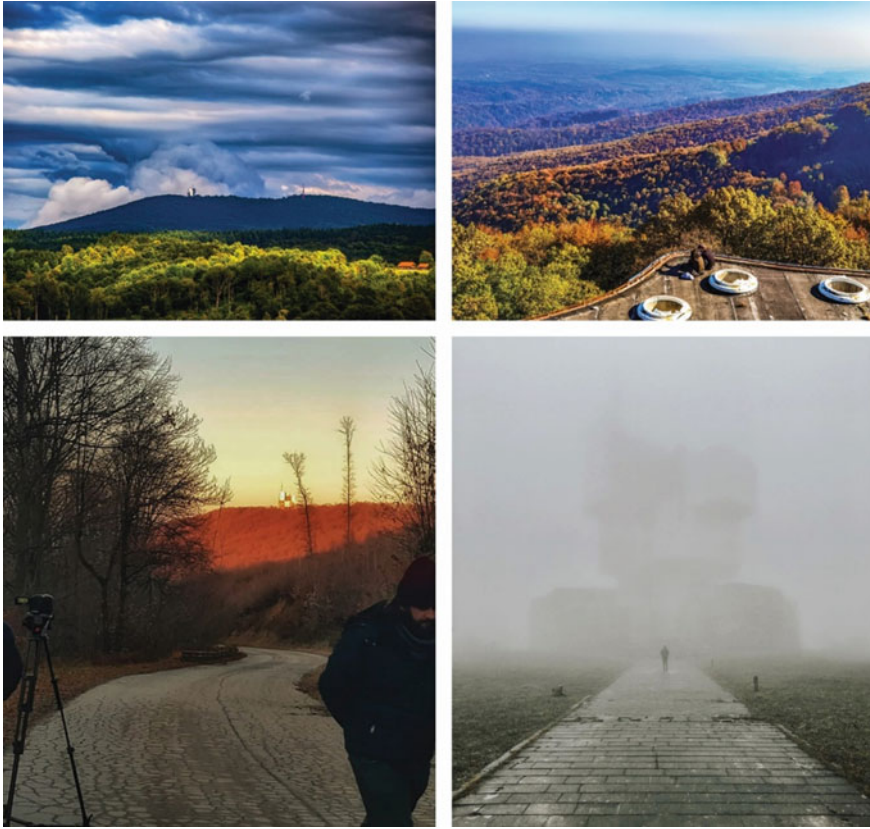


Fig. 83.3 Experiencing Petrova Gora Monument. *Source* Photos by Ivica Pezić, printed with permission (up); photo by Mladen Ivanović, printed with permission (down left); photo by Marko Mihaljević, printed with permission (down right)

This kind of synthesis of art, architecture and nature required intense collaboration between sculptor Vojin Bakić and architect Berislav Šerbetić, who sought the optimal relation between the utilitarian function and the form (with all its symbolic character).⁸ The authors achieved a corresponding interior negative of the outer shell that allowed the sculpture to “live outside and inside” (*Spomenik Revoluciji na Petrovoj gori 1981*). The complex structural solution with a curved cavity provokes spiral movement that culminates in the open observation point at the top of the monument, thus accentuating the element of time and making this event extremely contemplative and corporeal (Fig. 83.4). This ambitious but never completely finished

⁸ In order to achieve a balanced correlation with the nature a landscape architect Dragutin Kiš was included.

project⁹ provided the necessary infrastructure (water, electricity, pedestrian paths, roads, parking spaces, etc.) that enabled the monument to be accessible both by foot and by motor vehicles, and allowed for a wide range of new activities to take place today. Thus, regardless of its current neglected state, the fascination with its form fused with untouched nature attracts experts, scientists, artists and common citizens, forming new secular rituals of practicing collective memory that go far beyond the memorial's initial use.

The monument was the subject of artistic interventions such as the one of Tei Pelant's light painting in 2021, which shows the monument's potential for becoming part of extended in situ art narratives.¹⁰ Due to low level of light pollution, the site is used for various astronomy activities (stargazing, astrophotography), which resulted in the area receiving International Dark Sky Park certification in 2019. Petrova Gora is easily accessible from Croatia's three large towns (Zagreb, Sisak and Karlovac), making it attractive for one-day leisure activities, such as hiking, biking, archery, horse riding, paint ball or visit to Petrovac ornithological park, including organized events such as seasonal mushroom picking, chestnut harvest, movie nights, quad or running races (e.g., Stairs Trail Petrova Gora 2021). Cultural and educational activities are combined with recreational ones on the main Hiking trail of Petrova Gora and two additional educational trails, which pass by several cultural historical sites scattered in the monument's close proximity.

Regardless of its radically reduced number of visitors compared to the Yugoslavian period, the monument's timeless characteristics and today's activities point out to its secularization¹¹ and to the potential for achieving cultural sustainability. Through its size, symbolic expansion of the surrounding nature and the reduction of means of expression (elementary form and uniform material), this monument opens room for individual interpretation and subjective emotional impact, hence strikingly resembling the narrative of new art tendencies. Its conceptualization as a monument with utilitarian function through the synthesis of the art, architecture and nature opens the possibilities for a variety of future uses, as well as for conceptual repositioning towards a new kind of a "decentralized" and "living" museum site. Thus, combining its past connotations and present values, Petrova Gora illustrates the synthesis paradigm in the context of health, an integrated approach that will unite all of its potentials in a single platform of national care (Fig. 83.5).

⁹ Next to budget issues, project's incompleteness is attributed to the first signs of failure of the utopian self-governing socialism and political disintegration of the Yugoslavian society.

¹⁰ Projects such as "Yesterday tomorrow" in 2012, video installations from David Maljković (Scene for New Heritage, 2004), or photographs of Roman Bezjak and Jan Kempnaers turn the public attention towards rethinking and preserving the heritage of socialist modernism. The site has also been used for filming series and music videos.

¹¹ The only persisting memorial activity left is the wreath-laying ceremony on the May 14, that marks the anniversary of the Partisan resistance fighters breaking the siege at Biljega.



Fig. 83.4 Petrova Gora Monument as a sculpture. *Source* Family Archive of Vojin Bakić (up left); copyright 2022 by Nenad Gattin, printed with permission by Photoarchives Nenad Gattin—Institute of Art History Zagreb (up right); photos by Tihana Hrastar (down)

83.4 Conclusion

Although the new national narratives followed by the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia made the Artistic Monuments obsolete as a common ideological ground, this paper introduces a new paradigm built upon novel perceptions of their shared values and prospects for sustainability. Reviewed through the extended synthesis paradigm in the context of health, every Artistic Monument could unveil a different philosophy for sustainability and healthy living, based upon an authentic eco museal experience that integrates the cultural and the natural, the tangible and the intangible as well as the expert's positions and the common citizen's unfolding narratives. Some of the criteria of this conceptual re-framing are a conscious exploitation of the **destination far away from the cities' cultural centers, a pilgrimage through the**



Fig. 83.5 Petrova Gora Monument's secular rituals. *Source* Photo by Ivica Pezić, printed with permission (up); adopted from Stars Trail Petrova Gora (2021). <https://kaportal.net.hr/skriveni-raj-nadohvat-ruke/4131454/> (down left); copyright 2022 by Tei Pelant, printed with permission (down center); photo by Ivan Čujić for the bend "Cura i dečko", printed with permission (down right)

landscape with its totality of heritage, and a real (bodily) experience of nature juxtaposed to the colossal magnitude and the delicacy of the monuments' materiality. The Petrova Gora Monument includes all those criteria and exemplifies the capacity of Artistic Monument to go far beyond its initial use and to **continually mobilize new secular rituals of performing collective memory by attracting the creative and recreational industries** (art, architecture, entertainment, media, sports, etc.). This case study reveals that our relationship with the Artistic Monuments should be treated as fluid and ever evolving, based upon our responsibility toward the environment as an integrated, synthesized category. In the midst of the pandemic, this insight into the Artistic Monuments, further acknowledged a lack of systemic understanding of health in relation to architectural and urban design and a lack of secure spatial patterns for sustaining togetherness, such as planned and programmed retreats in nature and open-air activities. By reviving the forgotten philosophy of the humanist ideal of "leisure" as the total experience of arts and nature, such sites as the Yugoslavian Artistic Monuments can be reimagined from the ideologically obsolete toward relevant synthesis paradigm in the context of health.

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