

M ONUMENTS DEDICATED TO LABOR AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

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In this paper I analyze monuments dedicated to labor and the labor movement that were built during the socialist period in the former Yugoslavia. Due to their supposed commemorative character, these monuments have often been left out of scholarly surveys and analyses. After presenting an overview of the pre-World War II era labor-themed sculpture in the European and Yugoslav contexts, I will analyze the role of this genre of memorialization in the construction of the official narrative of social memory in socialist Yugoslavia. The three thematic units defined in this paper shall be presented through an analysis of selected case studies that point to the specificity of the conceptual and formal approach to the topic of work and labor in socialist Yugoslavia.

Key words: memorial sculpture, socialist Yugoslavia, revolutionary workers' movement, workers' self-management, social memory

Introduction

The practice of inscribing social memory and symbols of collective identity into public space is a universal characteristic found throughout all cultural and historical periods, regardless of which social system organizes a given society. In order to become part of collective memory, concepts and images have to be presented through events, persons, and places as well as infused with the particular collective's idea of important truths; both aspects then create specific figures of memory (Assmann 2006: 53). Apart from other contexts, figures of memory are found in sculptural and architectural forms that have traditionally been used as successful media of mass communication that speak through visual patterns recognizable within a given social frame. If we turn to monuments created within the European cultural circle, their morphological, stylistic, and iconographic features are characterized by both the formal and stylistic determinants of a specific historical period, as well as by the patron's ideological motivation. The patron's preference for a specific typology and iconography either establishes or breaks continuity with the recognizable visual patterns that are part of the wide repertoire and a long tradition of the European memorial sculpture. Considering the transparency of ideological and political motivations inherent to all commissions and constructions of monuments, the parameters of historical and artistic valorization of this kind of sculptural/architectural production from the socialist period should not be focused exclusively on the formal and stylistic analysis of their sculptural or architectural elements, but should include those cultural and social aspects that underpin the understanding of their historical value as well as their contemporary reception (Horvatinčić 2013: 219-221). Monuments dedicated to labor from the period of socialist Yugoslavia should therefore be analyzed both within the context of the diachronic development of this sculptural genre, and in comparison with their equivalents constructed under different social and political regimes during the second half of

the twentieth century. Although labor-themed sculpture cannot be separated from the larger corpus of memorial sculpture from the socialist period in Yugoslavia, it does form a discrete subgroup within it. Along with its iconographic repertoire, labor-themed sculpture plays an active role in the creation of economic, social, and political reality. In addition, it is characterized by specific mechanisms of appropriation of new formal possibilities of the sculptural medium in order to transmit social memory. Focusing on characteristic themes through an analysis of selected case studies of labor-themed sculpture, this paper aims to show formal, iconographic, and conceptual specificities of the building of monuments dedicated to labor and the labor movement in Yugoslavia, conditioned by the social and political context of the Yugoslavian self-management socialism.

Monuments and the Theme of Labor until 1945

Every epoch, every people have left monuments that are to the highest degree representative of its history, of its activity, of its religion. It was like a need to affirm an ideal and to specify it, with the help of the plastic arts. Will not our epoch leave a monument worthy to summarize our fecund activity? After having elevated admirable cathedrals to our religious faith, columns and arches of triumph to military glory, will not men elevate a monument to the glory of work and to creative thought, an homage to the indefatigable workmen and to fecund thinkers? We must elevate this monument. It corresponds to the mentality of our time; it will be its highest expression, its purest symbol.¹

As a precedent for using monuments in the process of establishing new ideological paradigms, the French revolution brought about the mass practice of placing secular sculptures in public, mostly urban spaces; moreover, this practice has become characteristic of the modernity of European social systems. Although it represents a new form of social and political practice, one that presupposes a systematic expansion of 'agitational and integrational propaganda' (Leith 1991: 3) and aims to form and raise the awareness of new national, class, gender or other identities, the sculptural form itself builds upon traditional morphological categories and iconographic templates that characterize religious and monarchic monuments (busts, equestrian monuments, allegorical statuary, obelisks, etc.).

Representations of work and labor in the medium of public memorial sculpture—understood as a form of conscious, public representation of the working class, and not as a decorative architectural element or part of an allegorical cycle—appears for the first time in the 19th century as a response to the industrial revolution, social stratification of classes, intensification of capitalist exploitation, and the consequent awareness of the worker as a political subject. However, due to its ideological unsuitability, this subject matter was underrepresented in European public sculpture, especially in the period before the October Revolution. The first artist to autonomously represent working men and women in the medium of memorial sculpture was the Belgian sculptor Constantin Meunier (Van Gelder 2005: 73), who also authored the first public memorial dedicated to labor (1980–1893). While Meunier's elaborate sculptural composition does not represent a significant departure from the memorial morphology of that period, the model for the French sculptor Auguste Rodin's *Monument to Labor* (1898–1899) envisioned as a monumental 30-meter spiral tower, al-

¹ From the international committee's manifesto to build Auguste Rodin's *Monument to labor*, in 1907. (Sanders 1978: 481).

most anticipates, with its allusion to ‘endless progress’ (Sanders 1978: 478), the basic form of Vladimir Tatlin’s unrealized project for *The Monument to the Third International* from 1920. Although both Meunier’s and Rodin’s sculptural depiction of labor remain integrated in the elaborate symbolic sculptural composition, Rodin’s project additionally creates a framework for a conscious affirmation of this new political subject through a realistic representation of the worker figure (Sanders 1978: 479). Due to the escalation of socialist demands in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, Rodin’s affirmation of labor was deemed ideologically inappropriate; consequently, it was never realized, despite the ten years of planning and the existence of an international petition in support of its construction² (Sanders 1987: 482). The persistent refusal by the French government and private investors to finance the construction of the *Monument to Labor* illustrates the critical role of the patron’s ideological position and political opportunism. For this reason, during the 19th century the topic of labor was tied primarily to more accessible artistic media—especially drawing and graphic arts—that will remain recognizable carriers of social- and class-consciousness in the art practice of liberal and capitalist societies throughout the 20th century.



Figure 1: Constantin Meunier, *The Miner (The Monument to Labor)*, Bruxelles, 1980–1893

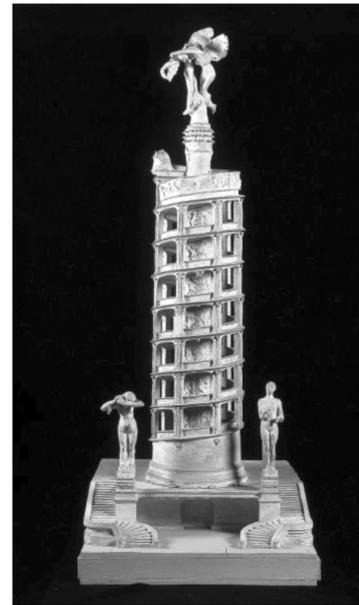


Figure 2: Auguste Rodin, the model for *The Monument to Labor*, 1898–1899. Musée Rodin, Paris (<http://www.museerodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/tower-labour>)

² Supporters of the construction of the *Monument to Labor* included Léon Cladel, Emil Zola, Victor Hugo, and George Clemenceau (Sanders 1978: 478). In 1907, an international committee headed by the art critic Armand Dayot was formed, seeking both national and international support for the construction of the monument. This chapter is prefaced with a quote from their petition.

Before the Communist Party came to power in 1945, the topic of labor was not present in the public memorial sculpture in the region of former Yugoslavia.³ Until WWI, the motifs of workers or peasants in the art centers of the former Yugoslavia (Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana) appeared only as 'genre' scenes typical of 19th century academicism. Robert Jean-Ivanović's 'workers' cycle' (1915–1918) represents the first systematic sculptural treatment of the theme of work and labor, visibly influenced by Constantin Meunier and the literariness of Myslbek's classicist school (Mažuran-Subotić 2005). However, despite the positive reception of his work by contemporary art critics, at the beginning of the 1920s Jean-Ivanović abandons the theme of labor, and turns to intimism (Mažuran-Subotić 1999: 12–14); a shift that was in line with the general post-war turn to either intimate experience or to realistic, immediate observation of nature (Protić 1975: 24). On the other hand, in the domain of public memorial sculpture of the interwar Yugoslavia there was no space for socially engaged art that was prompted by the global economic crisis, severe class conflicts, the strengthening of fascism in Italy and Germany, the Spanish civil war, and by the art of the Comintern in the 1930s (Protić 1975: 26). During the interwar period in Yugoslavia, memorial sculpture was used to affirm national ideas and the propaganda of the ruling dynasty, as well as to express piety to the fallen soldiers and victims of WWI.⁴ This is why Antun Augustinčić's⁵ *Monument to the Miner*, the only realized example of the local sculptural production during the interwar period dedicated to the theme of labor, remains outside the Yugoslav social and political context; in 1939 it was placed in the park surrounding the International Labor Organization⁶ in Geneva, where it remains to this day.

In most European countries, with the exception of the USSR, the beginnings of iconographic and formal templates for monuments dedicated to labor can be found in the socially engaged art of the interwar period, particularly in graphic arts. The leading example of art in the Croatian interwar period is the work produced within the context of the Association of Artists *Zemlja* [Earth]. The association, formed in 1929 with the idea that collective practice and an active role of art were necessary for the social revolution, was formally banned in 1935 due to their open ideological agenda (Prelog 2012: 243). The theme of labor was present within different formal expressions in non-public sculpture, namely, in the works of *Zemlja* members such as Frane Kršinić, Antun Augustinčić, Vanja Radauš, and Petar Smajić. The

³ The monuments built under the influence of fascist ideology during the interwar Italian occupation were consciously left out of the analysis. One such example is Marcello Mascherini's stone sculpture, which was placed in Piazza dell'Impero (Imperial Square) at the end of the 1930s, in the mining town of Raša. Although the sculpture evokes the figure of the miner-soldier, the intention of such a representation of the worker in the medium of memorial sculpture does not represent neither the social and political affirmation of the workers and labor nor does it have an aesthetic function in the public space of the city: "Although the dual identity ascribed to the sculpture is an important syntagm for understanding the underground vocation throughout history, since the miners are compared to soldiers due to their working conditions and constant dangers that their professions entail, and since the military used miners in their offensives due to their experience in setting off mines and their knowledge of explosives, the Italian commemoration of miners does not originate in the qualitative or even an historic-ethnographic analysis of a miner's workday, but is a reflection of the will and the ideal expressed in Mussolini's dominant fascist phrase--*credere, obbedire, combattere* (believe, obey, fight). Consequently, the art that is created under this fascist dictum has a functional character of calling for military obedience in the pit, and not of adding beauty to the worker's day. They will be a faceless army that has to unquestionably submit to the rhythm and volume of work imposed by the governing structures. It is therefore not surprising that after the fall of Italy the work of art was the first to be destroyed, precisely because of the symbolic meaning inherent to it" (Matošević 2007: 25).

⁴ Many monuments dedicated to the Yugoslav monarchy were either removed or destroyed during the occupation or after the Communist Party came to power. It is worth noting that the majority of the artists kept both their social engagement and reputation even after the ideological paradigm had changed (Lojze Dolinar, Sreten Stojanović, Antun Augustinčić), and continued with the same formal and stylistic approaches to memorial sculpture in the interwar period.

⁵ Augustinčić's depiction of a laboring miner, which formally and stylistically follows the tradition of the 19th century academic realism, actually represents a modified version of an insurgent on which Augustinčić was working as part of a collection of *Monuments to the Silesian Uprising* in the Polish town of Katowice between 1936 and 1939. Considering that the monument was never fully realized, Augustinčić used the figure with a rifle and reworked it as a dedication to a miner from the Zagorje region (GGA Archives)

⁶ In 1974 Jevgenij Vučetić, one of the icons of Soviet monumental sculpture, described Augustinčić's miner, in the journal *Soviet culture*, as "one of the most magnificent artworks in world art dedicated to artistic work" (*Slobodna Dalmacija* 1974).

presence of similar ideological and programmatic artistic preoccupations in Serbia during the interwar period is visible in the work of the Belgrade-based group *Život* [Life], particularly in Vladeta Piperski's and Stevan Bodnarov's treatment of labor in sculpture, while in Slovenia the appearance and development of this theme is found in the work of sculptors that formed in the early 1920s around *Klub Mladih* [Club of the Young] (namely, France and Tone Kralj, Tine Kos, and Petar Loboda) (Protić 1975: 26; Baldani 1977: 12–13). Generally speaking, in socially engaged artworks created during the interwar Yugoslavia “one doesn't find a specific syntax or style, but a particular kind of social and artistic consciousness and ideology, a point of view not pertaining to sculpture itself but to the outside world” (Protić 1975: 26). Such an attitude resulted in a different relationship of the sculptor towards the depiction of man in general and of the worker in particular: “(...) unlike before, he is now considered part of the social process. The aim is no longer to present him as a canon, legend, myth, history, hero, or as an individually and psychologically nuanced persona, but rather as a representative of a particular social class” (Protić 1975: 26). Considering that until 1945 social- and labor-themed production of monuments was nonexistent—and that of social- and labor-themed sculpture relatively modest—it is also worth noting the role of the “impoverished” media of drawing and graphic arts in the affirmation of the socially engaged approach to the theme of labor (namely, the work of Krsto Hegedušić, Božidar Jakac, Đorđe Andrejević Kun, Nande Vidmar, Vojo Dimitrijević, among others). Artists who worked in this medium created artistic templates for the sculptural treatment of labor on the monumental scale, and therefore played an important role in the development of the postwar memorial sculpture.

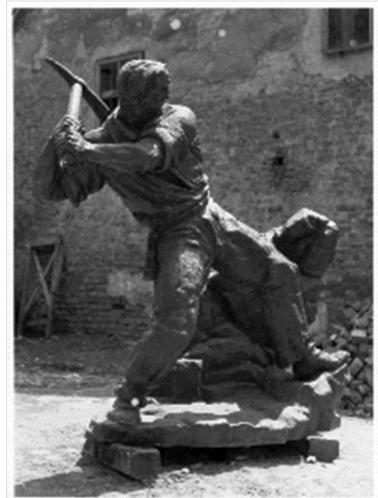


Figure 3: Antun Augustinčić, *The Miner*, 1936–1939. Antun Augustinčić Gallery photo archives

Monuments Dedicated to Labor and the Politics of Memory in Socialist Yugoslavia

The practice of raising monuments in socialist Yugoslavia reflects two central preoccupations of the postwar Yugoslav society. The principal motivation behind the raising of monuments—especially during the period following the war—can be found in the spontaneous

and conventional individual and/or collective need to mark and commemorate the atrocities of the WWII. On the other hand, with the creation of the centralized state apparatus in socialist Yugoslavia—which was between 1945 and 1950 directly influenced by the Soviet model (Kolešnik 2006: 29)—arises a need for the establishment of an official politics of memory by institutionalizing commemorative and celebratory rituals related to the antifascist struggle. Commemorative rituals and the building of monuments became part of the official Yugoslav politics of memory in 1947, when the umbrella association of the war veterans (Alliance Association of WWII Veterans) (*Osnivački kongres 1947: 17-32*) was put in charge of its implementation. One of the pragmatic goals of this type of centralization of memory is related to the need to disseminate ideological propaganda as well as to legitimate the newly formed social and political order under the auspices of the Yugoslav Communist Party, which was the key and indispensable political factor in the liberation of the Yugoslav territory during the WWII (Karge 2014: 33-34). The National Liberation War was thus inherently related to the idea of the socialist revolution as the foundation for the future social and political development; until the break-up of Yugoslavia, this idea was manifested in iconography, as well as in the accompanying textual and visual supplements to memorial sculpture such as the five-pointed star, hammer and sickle, and other symbols.

After 1948, the Yugoslav political leadership was focused on conceptualizing their own model of economy and foreign affairs. Due to Cold War tensions, Yugoslav foreign policy was based on maintaining a balance between the East and West, so that Yugoslavia officially took the neutral position as part of the Non-Aligned Movement. Since the early 1950s, on the other hand, the political economy was organized on the basis of the experimental social and political model of workers' self-management.⁷ This created an additional motivation for the inclusion of the working class identity—along with the memorialization of victims and heroes of the National Liberation War and the celebration of the socialist revolution—into the practice of raising monuments. Furthermore, such an affirmation of social memory, connected specifically to local traditions and protagonists of the labor movement, was proof of the broader social strata's desire for class and social equality. Within this narrative, the implementation of the Yugoslavian self-management socialism was conceived, from the Marxist point of view, as the final stage of social progress. Consequently, monuments dedicated to the protagonists of class struggle were to attest to the hard earned political affirmation of the oppressed social strata, realized only with the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia. The direct link between the socialist reality and the revolutionary labor movement promoted the consciousness of workers as political subjects and projected a positive image of the future as the prerequisites for a successful implementation of the Yugoslav model of workers' self-management. In this respect, Yugoslav monuments dedicated to workers and labor—in particular those built after the introduction of workers' self-management—significantly differ from their counterparts built in the Eastern Bloc countries, in which the production of monuments since 1948, in addition to the largely imposed formal and stylistic elements of socialist realism, included canonized depictions of labor and workers.⁸ Although several examples, especially those created during the Soviet cultural and political domination—such as Lojze Dolinar's monuments *Renewal* (1948) and the *Monument to the Coastal Workers* (1952) in

⁷ "Self-management fulfilled both needs. It provided a justification for the decentralization of economy and business into economic units that were under local, instead of federal control; and it was represented as the 'withering away of the state' as such, which was necessary for the creation of a classless society, since, as Marx says, the state is nothing but the apparatus of the ruling class over the oppressed classes." For a broader analysis of the origin and motives for implementing worker self-management in Yugoslavia (see: Unkovski-Korica 2014).

⁸ For a detailed analysis of the types and themes related to the representation of workers and labor in the countries of the Eastern Block (Poland, Hungary, and Romania) (see Fowkes 2002: 232-277).

Belgrade, or Alojz Kogovšek's *Monument to the Miner* in Ljubljana (1948–1950)—point to a Soviet influence, the larger corpus of plastic arts dedicated to work and labor in the former Yugoslavia cannot be characterized, in the formal sense, as socialist realist, considering that “the majority of authors have retained their prewar poetics, although they have adapted it to a new iconographic foundation” (Protić 1975: 27), as Miodrag M. Protić had pointed out. This is visible even in the earliest examples, such as Frane Kršinić's *Monument to the Fishermen* (1946/47; placed in Bakar in 1970), and even more so after the introduction of the socialist workers' self-management, as the sculptors' search for new formal and stylistic possibilities led to new and more diverse forms of representation of labor in the medium of memorial sculpture (Dušan Džamonja, *The Metalworker*, Slavonski Brod, 1952; the sculpture was destroyed in the early 1990s).

Although monuments dedicated to labor were commissioned and built, with varying intensity, during the entire existence of socialist Yugoslavia, it was only in the 1980s—with the intention of comprehensively classifying and valorizing as well as protecting and restoring memorial sculpture—that this corpus of plastic arts was given its official title: *Monuments to the Revolutionary Labor Movement, the National Liberation War, and the Socialist Revolution*, which even on an administrative level points to the equal roles these three subjects have played in the formation of the memory politics through the medium of memorial sculpture.⁹

An analysis of monuments dedicated to work and labor, constructed throughout former Yugoslavia, points to the fact that their commission and execution was motivated by three basic factors: the construction of a narrative about the historical continuity of the labor movement in Yugoslavia; the importance of the unbreakable tie between the Communist Party and the labor movement; and the emphasis on the participation of the working class in the National Liberation War and the socialist revolution. Thematic subgroups in this sculptural genre include monuments dedicated to: pre-socialist themes (e.g. peasant or national uprisings); the labor movement and prominent revolutionaries of the interwar period; the fallen or prominent members of the workers' collectives in the National Liberation War; and abstract interpretation of the theme of work and labor. Considering that there is an abundance of sculptural types and thematic subgroups, I will limit my analysis to three thematic groups of monuments: monuments dedicated to miners, monuments to workers-fighters, and monuments to workers' self-management. Using previously neglected examples, I will demonstrate the relationship between content and artistic form in the execution of a monument as a medium of social memory; the causes of the formal and stylistic emancipation of memorials during the 1950s; the role of the social and political reality and the application of new strategies of remembering in the depictions of workers and labor; and changes in the understanding of the monuments' social function in the public space.

Monument to the Miner

Depictions of workers have generally been related to the depiction and affirmation of economic activities characteristic for local communities (metallurgy, clothing and textile industry, shipbuilding, etc.), the most common of which were monuments dedicated to miners, both due to a large number of mines in the former Yugoslavia, and also due to extremely hard working conditions and economic exploitation, which led to the first workers' strikes in this industrial sector. In socialist Yugoslavia, monuments were primarily raised to commemorate the strikes that marked the beginning of the 1920s, and to honor the fallen fighters/miners

⁹ See *Odbor...* (1986).

in World War II. Monuments to miners in Trbovlje, Slovenia, and in Husino, in Bosnia and Herzegovina near Tuzla, were therefore not only tied to the local identity and to the emancipation of the working class, but were also used as ideological signifiers of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, seen as the pioneer of the pre-war labor movements and of the victory against fascism in WWII.¹⁰ Monument dedicated to miners from Husino was constructed in 1954, following the initiative of the miners themselves, the city and county board members of SUBNOR in Tuzla, as well as “many public and cultural workers” (A. H. 1952: 4). The process of deciding on the iconography and on the form of this monument is particularly interesting. The monument was entrusted to a young sculptor, Ivan Sabolić (*Vjesnik* 1953), who worked on the sculpture under Antun Augustinčić’s mentorship (Vujičić 2001: 226-239), and who was assisted by two other sculptors, Vjekoslav Rukljač and Alfred Pilc (*Vjesnik* 1953). Sabolić offered several preliminary proposals for the final monument:

One depicts an arm with a pickaxe, 18 meters high, which symbolically reflects the unbreakable resistance of the miner against his enemies. In front of the monument would be an entrance to the tomb decorated with reliefs depicting the life and struggles of the Husino miners. The second proposal was that the monument would depict a miner holding a mining lamp in his raised hand, and an automatic rifle on his shoulder. This figure would be 8 meters high. There is also a model of a fighter who is planting a flag on the mountain Konjuh summit, referring to the well-known verses: “And on the top of the mountain / The flag is fluttering in the wind.” (A. H. 1952: 4)

The construction of this monument was so significant to the local community that they organized a public forum in Tuzla, in order to discuss the final version of the monument. The participants in the discussion included “public and cultural workers, as well as many citizens and representatives of workers’ collectives. They decided that the monument to Husino miners symbolizes a miner who abandons the pickaxe, the drill, and the lamp, and takes a rifle to join the Partisans” (A. H. 1952: 4).



Figure 4: Ivan Sabolić, The Monument to the Husino Miner, Husino, 1953. Photo credit: Marc Schneider, 2011

¹⁰ After a failed negotiation over an increase in wages to the level of a minimum living wage, miners in all Slovenian mines started a strike on 17 Dec 1920; four day later, the miners in Husin and other state mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina also started their strike (Madžar 1984: 17).

The participation of the local population in the selection of the appropriate iconography and form of the monument is indicative, considering the customary assumption that the commission of monuments—especially in the immediate postwar period—entailed ideologically imposed formal and iconographic dictates. On the other hand, the artist's relationship towards the commission of the monument points to an appreciation of the local tradition and a subtle reflection on the possibilities of the local population's reception of the monument:

On the one hand, it is necessary to build a rapport with the people in the region where sculpture isn't developed; and on the other hand, the popular song "On the Konjuh Mountain" produced in everybody the idea and the vision of heroic events related to Husino miners, and therefore certain expectations concerning the sculptural realization. (...) We had met earlier and I cannot describe how ardently the miners and citizens of Tuzla are interested in every detail of the future monument. (A. H. 1952: 4)

Regardless of the process of choosing the monument's iconography and symbolism, Sabolić, by using cubist forms, formally and stylistically departs from the dominant academicism of the time. His artistic approach to the figure of the miner should therefore be interpreted in the context of the search among the post-war generation of sculptors for their own formal expression in the medium of monumental sculpture. Their effort was publicly defended by a part of the professional establishment in 1953, when their protagonists reacted critically to the ideologically motivated rejection of Vojin Bakić's model for the *Monument to Marx and Engels* in Belgrade (1951).¹¹ Aware at the time of his colleague's experience, while working on the monument, Sabolić stated that

[P]erhaps some will consider this conceptualization as foreign and will not agree with such an approach to the problem. But my motivation stems from a personal and deep belief and is based on my previous theoretical conflict with the concept of naturalism; because I have practically come to a conclusion that naturalism has no connection to memorial sculpture, and this [insight] will definitely affect my future work. (*Vjesnik* 1953)

However, until the beginning of the 1960s, when the first monuments to miners were constructed in the Slovenian mining town of Trbovlje, concerns over the state commissioners' taste will gradually diminish, due to the complex process of establishing a relatively stable and flexible relationship between the State and the artist, which was for the most part formed during the 1950s (Kolešnik 2005: 308). Despite the fact that it was possible for the commissioner to make ideological and pragmatic demands in the domain of memorial sculpture, the aforementioned process was gradually being reflected in this type of sculptural production as well, leading to more liberal applications of individual sculptural poetics that resulted in the proliferation of formal and stylistic solutions and representations of abstract ideas. Stojan Batić's¹² sculptural oeuvre dedicated to the worker-miner represents a unique example within the Yugoslav memorial sculpture, where the artist's formal and stylistic preoccupations align with the desirable image of work and labor in public space to an extent that today his works are often interpreted as decorative memorial sculpture.¹³ However, considering the importance of mining to the local community's identity, and the 1974 relocation of the sculptures of miners to a location close to Batić's new monument dedicated to the 50th anniversary of

¹¹ The first significant contribution to the understanding of the meaning, the complex cultural and political causes as well as the far-reaching consequences of the refusal of Bakić's model for the *Monument to Marx and Engels* was presented in the book *Između istoka i zapada* (Kolešnik 2006: 312-313), and appended recently with the article "Spomenička plastika Vojina Bakića [Vojin Bakić's Memorial Sculpture]," published in the catalogue for the exhibition "Vojin Bakić. Svjetlonosne forme" [Vojin Bakić. Luminous Forms] (Maković 2014: 193-199).

¹² Stojan Batić was born in 1925 in Trbovlje, where he worked and spent much time in a mine (see Batić 1977).

¹³ Cf. Forte (2002: 56).

the attack on the members of ORJUNA¹⁴—as well their placement at the base of a fresco depicting the development of the labor movement in Trbovlje from the first workers' strikes and the National Liberation War to socialist prosperity—it is clear that these sculptures have a monumental character and an unambiguous ideological background.



Figure 5: Stojan Batič, *The Miner*, Trbovlje, 1961. Institute of Art History photo archives. Photo credit: Paolo Mofardin, 2012

After the *Mining Series* had won the Prešern award¹⁵ in 1960 and had officially been affirmed by art critics,¹⁶ Batič's existential approach to the topic of labor was finally deemed an appropriate form for a public memorial sculpture. This depiction of a miner is further removed from descriptive naturalism, affirming the sculptor's individuality and freedom of interpretation of subject matter, aligning it thus with the principles of the postwar modernism in Western Europe.

Batič could very quickly locate this image in his birthplace, which is known for mining: he found it in a sculptural representation of a miner, not as someone who suffers, but as someone who is a characteristic bearer of all that we call "human condition," the carrier of strength, of weakness, and of the conditions for human survival on Earth. (...) The problem of space was now replaced with the problem of distributing the volumes and balancing the contour that (...) even more so turns into a block, but a block that is, because of its materiality, already interwoven with graphically conceived ornaments and equipped, from above, with a new contour of a head with a helmet, and from below placed on a mount consisting of arches and poles. (Kržišnik 1977: 54)

¹⁴ ORJUNA is an acronym for the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists, which was formed in Slovenia in 1923. When the organization wanted to form its subsidiary in Trbovlje in 1924, communists organized an armed attack against them. Forte 2002: 66.

¹⁵ The *Mining Series* was publicly presented for the first time at the exhibition in the Jakopič's pavillion in Ljubljana in 1959; in 1961 the sculptures were placed in a public space in Trbovlje (np, 1959).

¹⁶ Batič's *Mining Series* received a lot of media attention in magazines and newspapers in 1959 and 1960. (see: MSUM Archives).

In the period of only ten years, the depiction of a miner in Slovenia transformed from a naturalistic and descriptive, standardized sculptural solution of the socialist realism provenance—which can be found in the above mentioned Lojze Kogovšek's *Monument to the Miner*, constructed in the late 1940s—into a modern sculpture that uses new artistic means to dive into the complexity of the worker's individual psychology, thereby creating a collective, almost archetypal symbol of continuity and meaning of the local mining tradition.

Monument to the Worker-Fighter

The participation of workers in the National Liberation War and their resistance to fascism represents one of the most common thematic subgroups of monuments dedicated to work and labor in the former Yugoslavia. The practice of paying respect to the fallen members of the worker collectives was common in all labor organizations in socialist Yugoslavia. It was simultaneously motivated by the need to remember their killed comrades and by the official public ideological identification with the legacy of the antifascist struggle and the socialist revolution. The typological range of this thematic subgroup is extremely wide, spanning from memorial plaques and busts dedicated to the distinguished members of worker collectives to monuments that are thematically more related to the suffering of the workers during the war than to the representation of labor as such. Therefore, in the following section I will focus on two uncharacteristic approaches to this theme, which essentially diverge in their understanding of the possibilities of a formal synthesis and the social function of monuments.

The sculptor Kosta Angeli Radovani's *Monument to the Uprising* or *The Monument to the Fallen Fighters in the Peoples' Revolution 1941 – 1945*, constructed in collaboration with the architect Marijan Haberle, was placed at the port entrance in Stari Grad, Hvar in 1954¹⁷ (Maroević 1988: 59). Formally, the monument represents a departure from the narrative description characteristic of his earlier sculptural works. After negating the pedestal in the *Monument to the Uprising* in Drežnica (1949), Radovani now reaffirms the classical pedestal, accompanied, however, with the reduction of volumes and descriptive elements of the human figure to the universal symbols of human strength and determination. This allowed Radovani to merge the iconographic determinants of worker/sailor/fighter into a singular symbol of the local resistance, a solution that represents a unique approach to the theme of labor. Moreover, by semantically joining the worker and fighter into a single figure of resistance leading to the creation of the new, socialist society, Radovani also achieved the desired effect at the ideological level.

Radovani's sculptural oeuvre is marked by an ongoing insistence on figuration as the basis for a humanistic approach to the sculptural form, "so it can be said that his apparent 'classicism' is sustained by his covert vitalism; in other words, that it is, due to its original ingredients, already immune from any kind of academicism" (Maroević 1988: 30). Although his representation of the worker-fighter from the early 1950s is in line with the affirmation of the worker's social and political position at the inception of the socialist self-management system, on the one hand, and with what Vojin Bakić in 1950 has called "a higher form" suitable for "our new man and for the time in which we live" (Dojčić i Vesić 2012: 60) on the other, his later, but formally almost identical sculpture of the worker in Brinje (*Monument to*

¹⁷ Members of the local community commissioned the monument. The inscription contains the following words: 'The people of Stari Grad on the day 12 November 1954 raise this monument to the fighters fallen in the People's Revolution 1941 – 1945.' (np 1954).

the Miner from Brinje, 1984), appears incongruous against the increasingly evident economic and social crisis of socialism in the 1980s. However, Radovani's insistence on the universal and humanistic message represented in the figurative approach to the human/worker figure should not be disqualified based on its "delay" with respect to the new strategies of mediation of social memory, exemplified by the postmodernist insistence on the *end of history* and *grand narratives*. It is more likely that we are dealing with a conscious insistence on a modernist understanding of the sculptural medium as the essential part of a monument,¹⁸ and with a personal investment in the categories such as "worker" and "labor,"¹⁹ which was manifested through Radovani's attempts to bring artistic creation closer to the working class (Angeli Radovani 1976). Kosta Angeli Radovani sees the shift in the social function of monuments that marked late socialism as the artist's "enlightened relaxation" of his social responsibility. Although he himself admits that: "A monument changes. It can also disappear, become a school, a bridge, a highway, an educational fund, or the newest phototermic machine for the early detection of breast cancer;" the author keeps emphasizing the necessity of the "sharp, simple, almost technical language of the essence," that the monument itself imposes in order to "more fully adhere to its content and material" (Angeli Radovani 2007: 279-280).



Figure 6: Kosta Angeli Radovani, *The Monument to the Fallen Fighters in the Peoples' Revolution*, Stari Grad, Hvar, 1953–1954. Photo credit: Sanja Horvatinčić, 2013



Figure 7: Kosta Angeli Radovani, *The Monument to the Brinje Miner*, Brinje, 1984. Photo credit: Milica Krčmar, 2014

¹⁸ See Angeli Radovani (2007: 237-280).

¹⁹ Radovani's frequent identification with the role of a worker is seen in many interviews he gave to the newspapers (see Heme-roteka IPU).

A different approach to the problem of public responsibility with respect to the medium of sculpture is found in *The Monument to the Fallen Citizens of Solin – Cement Factory Workers*, constructed by the architects Fabijan Barišić, Branko Kalajdžić, Duško Duša and collaborator Mate Smajić in 1968 (Kovač i Vojnović 1976: 152). This monument represents a unique example of a utilitarian sculptural solution dedicated to the fallen members of the factory's worker collective. The modernist bridge morphologically corresponds to the traditional mills on the Jadro River, while the use of cement as the primary material establishes a semantic relationship between the functionality of the object, the industrial tradition of the local populace and the memory of the fallen workers (*Putevima* 1979: 79). A low wall bearing a fitting poem by Jure Kaštelan²⁰ completes the 33-meter long memorial bridge, while the widened entrance plateau carries a semi-transparent memorial wall facing the river Jadro, built out of the names of the fallen workers. By transforming the practice of remembering the fallen workers into a terrain for urban development and social integration of the citizens of Solin, the authors successfully evaded the conventional visual patterns associated with the theme of labor, discovering the commemorative function of transmitting social memory through the utility of the object itself, as well as in the potential for social integration that the memorial bridge creates. This solution completely erases individual artistic expression, while reducing the theme of labor to a subtle symbolism that lies in the materiality of the monument itself.

Monuments Dedicated to Workers' Self-Management

A new social value is being commemorated through monuments, the value that arose from the revolutionary currents of our century and that was realized precisely in our country in its essential quality as the individuation and valuation of every man through social management. So the transformation from a "factory commodity nature" (through different phases of being a slave, serf, and proletarian) to a man who can and must govern all aspects of his being has passed through an interesting path paved with monuments, which themselves adequately register every phase of that movement. (am. 1962: 23)

Monuments dedicated to the system of workers' self-management form a smaller, but nonetheless interesting, thematic subgroups within the corpus of monuments dedicated to work and labor. However, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the concept of the Yugoslav socio-economic model is often implicitly present in monuments belonging to other thematic subgroups. They were constructed in order to establish a narrative of the local population's historical aspiration to achieve social equality and workers' rights and to explicitly affirm the new economic model, which as part of the official Yugoslav narrative represents the only path of achieving a utopian projection of the development of a socialist society. In the formal sense, the specificity of this subgroup of monuments lies in the way that the intention of actualizing their content is embodied in the utilitarian and aesthetic function of the fountain on one hand, and in the allusion to the traditional symbol of life and abundance that it projects, on the other. Memorial fountains were considered an integral component of everyday life as a place for meetings, leisure, and rest, which necessarily led to the subordination of their form

²⁰ The poem in question is the second poem in the collection *Pjesme o mojoj zemlji/Poems About my Country*: "My country you are as beautiful as freedom, as the eyes of your heroes who see beyond the grave—how many dead lie below your wet grasses, in the gullet of your rivers they sing—in your song they sing—spiteful in your spite—inside your life they live."

to a utilitarian function. Apart from encouraging social cohesion, memorial fountains dedicated to the workers' self-management were also meant to aesthetically enrich new urban centers, typically connected to the industrial development of cities, as well as to fulfill their didactic function of publicly mediating their ideological content to the new generations of users. Monuments dedicated to workers' self-management were therefore conceptualized as an efficient medium for realizing the programmatic agenda of "modernizing memory," which was present in the Yugoslav politics of memory since the early 1960s.²¹

I will present this thematic subgroup of monuments dedicated to work and labor through the analysis of an unrealized project for *The Monument in Honor of the Zenica Ironworks Workers' Self-management* (1961) and the memorial fountain in Belišće, titled *Six Factories* (1976). The initiative to build a monument in Zenica was started by the worker collective of the largest Yugoslav factory at the time. Although a public competition was announced in 1961, the selected sculptural project—which was supposed to be funded by workers' donations—was never realized (am. 1962: 23). The architect Zdenko Kolacio and the sculptor Kosta Angeli Radovani envisioned an urban plan for the public square in front of the entrance to the main building of the ironworks that would include a pool of water and a central memorial. The authors describe the project proposal as follows:

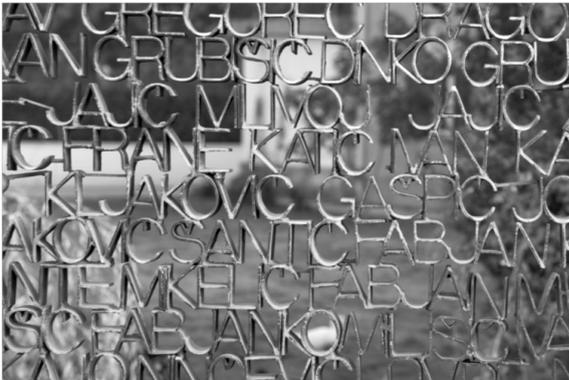


Figure 8 and 9: Fabijan Barišić, Branko Kalajdžić, Duško Duša and Mate Smajjić, *The Monument to the Fallen Citizens of Solin – Cement Factory Workers*, Solin, 1968. Institute of Art History photo archives. Photo credit: Paolo Mofardin, 2012

Ten metal reliefs imprinted on a cement block—whose exact profiling evokes an ironworks product (a traverse or a similar object)—represent through ten images, as in a factory line, the content which is immediately related to the base: workers' self-management. The line is read from bottom up, just as the history of acquiring this social legacy [workers' self-management], one of the crucial characteristics of our social life, is developed along the same rhythm. The illustrative character of the monument is declarative. Its aim is to emphasize the role of work, worker's consciousness, the meaning of workers' self-management through means of production. The head reliefs, which occupy the highest position, conclude the thematic thread that extends from the base to the ridge of the monumental block: the ninth relief symbolizes production in the service of human progress, while the tenth relief represents the life of the younger generations in a world of better future. (am. 1962: 25)

²¹ I refer to the conclusions of the Sixth congress of the Association of Fighters in 1961, which, according to the historian Heike Karge, represents a kind of a temporal boundary in terms of remembering the war in Yugoslavia (Karge 2014: 59–60).

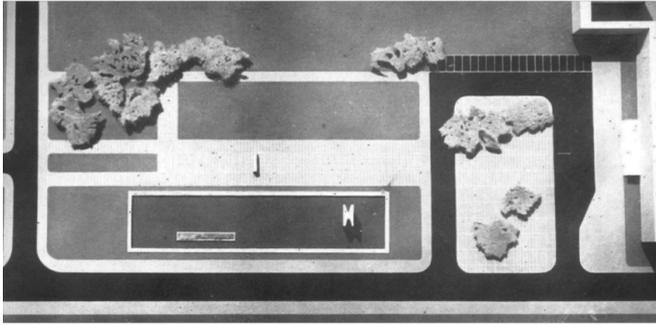


Figure 10: Zdenko Kolacio and Kosta Angeli Radovani, The Monument in Honor of the Zenica Ironworks Workers' Self-management, aerial view (model), 1961, *Arhitektura 3-4* (1962), 23

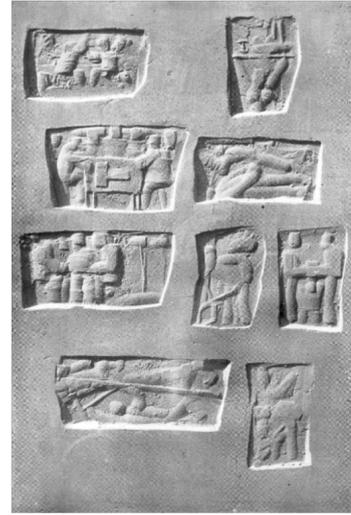


Figure 11: Kosta Angeli Radovani, The Monument in Honor of the Zenica Ironworks Workers' Self-management (detail), 1961, *Arhitektura 3-4* (1962), 24

A similar type of representation of workers' self-management can be found on the reliefs decorating *The Memorial Fountain Six Factories* in Belišće, where the historical narrative of the factory and the life of the workers are reduced to symbolic representations. Since the identity of Belišće and its citizens is closely connected to the development of the woodworking industry in the 19th century,²² but also to workers' strikes that marked the interwar period (Freitag 1976-1986), the motivation for the raising monuments in the new city center was the 90th anniversary of the factory's founding, and the 25th anniversary of the implementation of the system of workers' self-management (Z. B. 1976). With the restructuring of the Organization of Associated Labor Belišće into the Composite Organization of Associated Labor in 1977 (*Belišće 1977*: 6-8), the factory takes on a new system of managing the worker collective, which provided an additional motivation for the raising of monuments. The title—*Six Factories*—as well the form of the fountain—six leveled and mutually connected circular pools flowing with water—clearly symbolize the joining of the factory's manufacturing plants. The outer surfaces of the fountain are decorated with reliefs depicting the stylized symbols of the factory's development through history: wooden logs, different machinery for wood processing, an allegory depicting the "cultural superstructure" of workers, etc. Unlike the memorial bridge in Solin, which illustrates the theme of labor through the symbolic meaning of the material and the functionality of the object, monuments dedicated to worker self-management retain their narrative aspect in order to relate—in an easily understandable, almost naive and didactic manner—to its users, particularly to the younger generation, the local history of the working class and the essence of workers' self-management system. Due to the cultural and historical specificity of workers' self-management, these strategies of transfer and maintenance of social memory—whose aim was to actualize the Yugoslav

²² The town of Belišće was founded in 1884 with the start of the woodworking factory owned by a private family company S. H. Gutmann. After WWII the ownership of the factory was transferred to the state, which turned it into a combine for chemical and mechanical processing of wood and production of machinery (Ravlić 2013).

economic system and to affirm the worker identity in local communities—represent unique examples of memorial sculpture, not only in the Yugoslav but also in the wider European context.



Figure 12: Ivan Sabolić and Jasna Bogdanović, The Memorial Fountain “Six Factories”, Belišće, 1976. Photo credit: Goran Korov, 2014



Figure 13: Ivan Sabolić and Jasna Bogdanović, The Memorial Fountain “Six Factories”, detail (relief depicting symbols of the cultural superstructure of the worker collective), Belišće, 1976. Photo credit: Goran Korov, 2014

Conclusion

Monuments dedicated to work and labor represent one of the least explored phenomena of the sculptural production during the second half of the 20th century in the former Yugoslavia. Although in terms of their content, they form an integral part of the socialist Yugoslav ideologically heterogeneous sculptural corpus, monuments to labor are almost completely disregarded in the already sparse contemporary scholarship on memorial sculpture and culture of memory in the former Yugoslavia. Reasons for this can be found both in the physical destruction or degradation of many monuments dedicated to work and labor—starting in the early 1990s and continuing to this day on the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia—and in the ideologically motivated neglect or “vulgarization” of the tangible and intangible socialist heritage—in particular of those elements that in the contemporary social and political circumstances carry the unwanted potential for raising awareness of the long tradition of the class and social struggle that marks this region. Namely, establishing a narrative of historical continuity of the struggle for workers’ rights and the affirmation of the working class as an active political subject were key motivators for the building of monuments dedicated to work and labor in socialist Yugoslavia. The unfounded, although habitual assumption that these monuments are of poor quality and that they lack the original artistic approach to the theme of labor, generally associated with the agenda of propaganda and agitation in Soviet socialist realism, appears as specific symptom of neglect of this memorial heritage. However, not

only was the period of Russian cultural and political domination in this region short lived, but also the depictions of workers in socialist Yugoslavia were far more influenced by the sculptors' interwar experience—in the technical and vocational sense as acquired through commissions of large monuments (Augustinčić, Radauš, Stojanović), as well as at the level of ideology, arising from individual tendencies to represent socially relevant themes, which until 1945 could not be realized in the medium of public sculpture. Finally, in the 1950s the introduction of worker self-management system, an experimental social and economic model, was followed by the equally uncertain artistic search for new forms of transmitting content through the medium of public memorial sculpture. Although in the hierarchy of the official politics of memory in socialist Yugoslavia the labor movement received less attention than the National Liberation War or the socialist revolution—which is also the reason why there are fewer monuments related to this theme, and those few that do exist are generally of more modest dimensions—the cultural significance of the entire corpus, as well as the historical and artistic value of its particular pieces, is unquestionable. We are dealing with a unique form of representing the worker as a political subject in the medium of memorial sculpture and of affirming the memory contained in the tradition of the workers' struggle, one that was unimaginable prior to this period. Although several types of monumental representations within this thematic corpus—primarily busts—are marked by a repetition of conventional visual patterns and a “ready-made” quality, a tendency to move away from academicism is noticeable relatively early on, leading to a proliferation of stylistic and formal solutions during the 1950s, and to a new reflection on the traditional function and typology of monuments during the 1960 and 1970s. These were primarily related to the utilitarian quality of the sculptures, ranging from solutions that reduced the theme of labor to the materiality of the object itself to memorial fountains as places of social integration and rest for workers. The examples analyzed in this paper show that a clear ideological motivation for raising monuments dedicated to work and labor in socialist Yugoslavia did not necessarily include the imposition of stylistic or formal approaches to sculpture. In fact, the wide range of artistic solutions in the sculptural interpretation of this theme points to a need for reevaluation of this segment of memorial production on the territory of the entire former Yugoslavia, with respect to conservation and restoration of either destroyed or removed monuments, and with respect to reaffirmation of their symbolic meaning in the contemporary social and political context that is now, perhaps more than ever before, faced with the challenge of finding an adequate solution to the problem of the position and rights of workers.

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