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Review article

# **Crises and Reforms of the Body: the Cult of Personality Fragments in Service of Reflection on Social Change<sup>1</sup>**

The use of the body – whether it referred to representations of the leader through media or artistic image, sculpture, photography, or specific choreographed manifestations – is a recognizable tool for building and nurturing the personality cult of Josip Broz Tito and communicating with the People. The crisis of the socialist society and the ideological shift was therefore accompanied by sudden changes, neglect, even literal cutting and melting of the monumental heritage, removal, and destruction of Tito's representations, and the forced oblivion of collective performances that once celebrated Yugoslavia and its leader. In this paper, the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade and its surroundings will serve as the point of departure for further reflection on the creation of a personality cult, as well as its subsequent deconstruction and recontextualization followed by the notion of the body's bond to this space. Starting from the appearance of the literal and the symbolical body of the leader, as well as the collective body in the context of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May performance and commemoration happening in the same area, we will follow how these bodies transform over time at the same place through the medium of contemporary art and curatorial practice.

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## **KEYWORDS:**

body, cult, crisis, contemporary art practice, socialist heritage, monument, performance, Tito, Yugoslavia

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## Introduction

Situating this research in the field of museology and its relation to contemporary art practice, we will rely on the biographical method<sup>2</sup> when reflecting on many *lives* in the space of today's Museum of Yugoslavia and its surroundings. More precisely, the notion of the leaders' body bond to this particular space, whether it be the natural one or the political and represented, symbolical one<sup>3</sup> and its transformations through time, will be in focus of this research. Therefore, starting from the detailed analysis of the models used for the presidential residency creation in the service of ruler's identity building and the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May just across the residency, we will follow how the identity of this space was highlighted with the burial of the leader in its centre and creation of the Memorial, as well as transformed later due to socio-political circumstances. Basing our interests on the bond between (contemporary) art and heritage studies, we will also offer a review of the art and curatorial strategies when issuing the previous identity deeply connected to the cult of personality of the leader and its symbolical body and the role of the Museum in this context from its foundation in 1996 to today.<sup>4</sup>

The notion of the leader's body, or more precisely Tito's body in this research is, as said, connected to the space of his residency in Belgrade, and therefore to his natural and political body on one hand, but also to the represented one mediated through the sculpture and collective performative practice at this place. Recognising the representation of Tito's body as a particular mechanism for the production of the collective identity of Yugoslav society, Maja Brkljačić explains that, in the Yugoslav case, the personification of the social order was not the anthropomorphised body of the Party as in other Communist countries. "In Yugoslavia, the bearer of the master fiction of the order was none other than Tito's body. A collection of stories, rites, and insignia, that focused on Tito, worked to justify the existence of the State. It was not Party which needed to be present everywhere in the most direct possible way to maintain the existing power relations; rather, it was the face of Tito that was the embodiment of the centre that was equated with power."<sup>5</sup> It is therefore important to follow how this symbolical representation of the charismatic leader<sup>6</sup> Tito, being it the sculptural or the collective body

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<sup>2</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-64; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Marija Vasiljević, "Biografija stvari," in *Muzeologija, nova muzeologija, nauka o baštini* (Beograd: Centar za muzeologiju i heritologiju, 2013), 325-34.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> The author of this paper has been an associate of the Museum of Yugoslavia in several projects from 2014 to today and would like to use this occasion to sincerely thank to the whole museum team led by the director Neda Knežević for deeper insights and openness for collaboration, interviews and discussions.

<sup>5</sup> Maja Brkljačić, "Titos Bodies in Word and Image," in *Narodna umjetnost* 40, no. 1 (2003): 99-127.

<sup>6</sup> Radonja Lepasavić, "Tito: harizma kao politička legitimacija – višak sećanja," in *Efekat Tito: Harizma kao politička legitimacija* (Beograd: Muzej istorije Jugoslavije, 2009), 2-13.

during performance was reformed, or even literally ruined when the State it represented finally dissolved. How did the reformation of this *body* influence the place once being the central spot of the representation of the leader? Reflecting on the contemporary theory of performative turn in heritage studies, we will also issue if this place has become a bare landscape, or if it has a potential for a new identity construction through art and curatorial interventions and a new museum audience bringing.

### The Body and the Cult of Personality

Today's Museum of Yugoslavia takes place at one part of the former Memorial Centre of Josip Broz Tito which before, during the reign of this leader was a presidential residency. Entering to live in the strategically as well as symbolically important bourgeois villa on Topčider Hill in Belgrade<sup>7</sup> already by the end of the 1940s, through many years of his rulership, Josip Broz Tito has got a particular communist court<sup>8</sup> surrounded with gardens and positioned symbolically between the Boulevard of the October Revolution and Užička street.<sup>9</sup> The residential complex was carefully constructed to reveal the continuity of the Yugoslav ruler and to highlight his identity. The first big reconstruction of the main residency happened already in 1948 when an annex of 196 square meters was built for the president's working cabinet. This room, where official meetings with various delegations and individuals were often held and from which many president's talks were broadcasted, is a central ruler's position where the protocol, i.e. a particular kind of performance during official visits, is always prepared in advance. At the same time, it is constructed as a microcosm, a space in which absolutely none of the many objects is exposed by chance, and which is finally enlivened by the presence of the body of the ruler. The largest number of photographs of Tito in Užička Street was taken from this cabinet, both during various meetings and as individual portraits. The interior was done in a total design – from the desk and additional shelves, coffee tables, and display cases, to

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<sup>7</sup> This part of Belgrade had important strategic and symbolical position of the ruler in the history of Belgrade of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Royal dynasties of Serbia and Yugoslavia, Obrenović and Karađorđević families, had their Palaces on the hill and this position functioned as an important point in the representative image of the ruler. Josip Broz Tito therefore, tendentially took over the top of Topčider Hill. See: Aleksandar Ignjatović, "Otvaranje i popularizacija: Muzej 25. maj i transformacija prostora Dedinja," in *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja*, eds. Olga Manojlović-Pintar et al. (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije – Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2011), 601-14.

<sup>8</sup> We come across the term "communist court" in an interview given to the daily *Borba* (September 5, 1991) by Miroslav Timotijević, then professor of the history of modern art at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Namely, taking part in the inventory of objects of applied art at the White and Old Royal Courts in Belgrade, Timotijević recognizes taking over the model of the spatial arrangement from the royal dynasty in interior decoration at the time of Tito, and he uses the term "communist court". It is interesting that when arranging the residence in Užička, the furniture was transferred from the White Palace or produced following models of stylistic representative furniture based on the interiors of other Western European palaces.

<sup>9</sup> See more about the changing street names in Belgrade due to political ideology in: Dubravka Stojanović, *Kaldrma i asfalt: urbanizacija i evropeizacija Beograda 1890-1914* (Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju – Čigoja štampa, 2009); Srdan Radović, *Grad kao tekst* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2013).

the conference set with seventeen chairs and the smaller reception set with a three-seater and armchairs, to the built-in pedestal for the bust of Lenin, the specially made monumental painting for the wall behind the desk, built-in boards for displaying maps, all the way to the exposed gifts to the president, handy books and appliances – each element had its place and role in building the image of the world and emphasizing the power of its owner. From this cabinet onwards, the idea of creating the president's residence and its surroundings as a kind of ruler's Cabinet of Wonder in which every element emphasizes his identity and confirms him as a sovereign, forks further into the entire complex. Thus, Tito displays his hunting trophies in a separate house in the middle of a delicately composed *paradise garden*, which also includes a small zoo, a billiards house, and a house where he keeps and gladly shows gifts he received from the people of Yugoslavia and many foreign diplomats.<sup>10</sup> Finally, for his seventieth birthday, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1962, Broz received the museum building itself as a gift. This modernist edifice in front of the residential complex stressed the cult of Tito's image during his lifetime and became a bridge connecting the residential complex with the carefully constructed and used surroundings.

The *May 25 Museum* could be understood as a symbol of the changing Belgrade after the Second World War and the establishment of socialist ideology. Clarifying systems of legitimation of power through both, inherited and new means in socialist Yugoslavia, the architecture historian Aleksandar Ignjatović interprets the general transformation of the Dedinje quarter and Topčider Hill where the Museum is, from an elite, residential part of the city to a more open, accessible space for citizens, with the newly built "Mostar" Bridge (1967-1974) and the "Prokop" railway station (1977) connected both with the historical centre of the capital and with New Belgrade, the strongest symbol of the new political order. Dedinje quarter and Topčider Hill in Belgrade were important points in the symbolic representation of the rulers – the Obrenović and Karađorđević dynasties, as well as Josip Broz Tito. As Ignjatović explains, they all legitimized their power based on a similar representation of the ruler who, like his residential space, is at the same time in the centre and outside of the political discourse.<sup>11</sup> The area of Dedinje quarter, therefore, is established as a "natural" part of Belgrade, "simultaneously outside and inside the city," gaining a great symbolic potential "to indicate the natural habitus of the ruler who, in that space (from) between, fixes his abode." It is the relationship of unity between the political (in the traditional sense of 'theological') and the demotic (i.e. 'natural') that is at the core of reading the space of Dedinje and the May 25 Museum as a symbol of the source of government authority and a means of legitimating power, emphasizes this author. The dichotomy of space, which corresponds to the aforementioned dual legitimation of the ruler, between a closed, ruling, residential place and an accessible, open, rearranged environment, was highlighted precisely by the building of the May 25 Museum, which stands on the border of the two,

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<sup>10</sup> Milena Jokanović, "Cabinet of Wonder in Užička street," in *The Heritage of Yugoslavia in Representative Buildings*, ed. Vesna Mikelić (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, forthcoming 2024).

<sup>11</sup> See: Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1985).

in front of Tito's residential complex. During the celebration of the *Day of Youth*, after which the Museum is named, this building as well as the stadium across the boulevard (the work of the same architect, Mihajlo Mika Janković, as the Museum building) and the surrounding parks "were becoming places of construction of the political national body and its unity with political body of the ruler."<sup>12</sup> The building of the May 25 Museum conceived as a total work of art, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, i.e. a synthesis of architecture, painting, and sculpture, was therefore located directly in front of the residential complex, and with the idea that the gifts that the president received during his reign would be exhibited here. Thus, Tito as the sovereign of this microcosm in which he is respected by the whole world and loved by every member of Yugoslav society, could fascinate visitors during his lifetime, but also be remembered after his death.<sup>13</sup>

The Day of Youth, however, celebrated every 25<sup>th</sup> of May in the stadium across the Museum building was one of the occasions when the collective performance is engaged in expressing the commune *Yugoslav body*. Delicately prepared and well-practiced choreography celebrating the youth and its future, the leader who is showing the (b)right path to it, as well as the very idea of brotherhood and unity of the people was a powerful didactic tool.<sup>14</sup> The collective body formed on this occasion, similar to the one formed on many commemorative events throughout Yugoslavia, had the function of making a specific space of social reality and conveying the desired message. "Folding exercises have built the image of the team as a strong body that gives recognition to the figure of the leader", concludes Olga Manojlović Pintar.<sup>15</sup> Such events were very visible forms of value creation and presentation due to their ability to temporarily suspend the flow of time and daily activities, as well as due to their deep incorporation into the functioning of the community. Tying the notion of performative heritage<sup>16</sup> to the practices of engaging the collective body during the celebration of Youth Day and commemorations, art historian Marija Đorđević emphasizes the appearance of a particular space creation at the moment of body interaction in a specific place, and issues further what happened with these topoi after the ideological and societal turn. She finally recognizes the often transformation of these spaces of collective memory into bare landscapes, in which only sporadic activities and architectural elements refer to former value systems and practices.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the whole area from the Yugoslav National Army stadium to the plateau

<sup>12</sup> Ignjatović, "Otvaranje i popularizacija: Muzej 25. maj i transformacija prostora Dedinja", 609-610.

<sup>13</sup> Milena Jokanović, "Zgrada muzeja kao muzejski predmet: biografija Muzeja 25. maj u Beogradu," in *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti*, ed. Vladimir Simić (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2021), 277-291.

<sup>14</sup> Nikola Baković, *Brotherhood on the Move. Ritual Mobilities in the Second Yugoslavia* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Olga Manojlović Pintar, "O sletovima," in *Efekat Tito: Harizma kao politička legitimacija* (Beograd: Muzej istorije Jugoslavije, 2009), 41.

<sup>16</sup> See: Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd (eds.), *Performing heritage: research, practice and innovation in museum theatre and live interpretation* (Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Marija Đorđević, *Jugoslavija pamti: mesto, telo i pokret za prostore izvođenog nasleđa* (Beograd: Evropa Nostra Srbija, 2021), 35.

in front and the Museum of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, acquired new layers of meaning and transformations of collective body performance over time.

Finally, Josip Broz Tito is even buried in his residential complex, leaving the literate body to dominate Topčider Hill after his death. The House of Flowers, the previous winter garden, became therefore the Mausoleum. In 1982 the *Memorial Centre of Josip Broz Tito* was finally constituted opening doors of the residential complex of the socialist president together with his Museum of Gifts and the Mausoleum for the first time to all citizens. In the 1980s this Centre was visited by 10 to 15 thousand people per day who came to worship the (dead) body of the leader.

### **The Cult of Personality Crisis – The Body Crisis**

Due to the socio-political circumstances and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, many museums in this area, including the Memorial Centre of Josip Broz Tito as well as the Museum of Revolution of Peoples and Nationalities, became ballast, witnesses of an undesirable past whose traces were erased from the present. The collections of those two institutions served as the basis for a new museum creation upon a political decision. It was supposed to place Yugoslavia on the shelf through musealization, in accordance with the understanding of the museum as a storehouse of old and useless things.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Museum of Yugoslav History was founded in 1996, on the site of one-third of the former Memorial Centre,<sup>19</sup> and with the mentioned two collections. During that decade, this space became a liminal, almost completely invisible place of sporadic meetings and non-representative gatherings that were supposed to repeat the Day of Youth celebration rituals and re-engage the collective body. However, neither these attempts to reaffirm the mass performance initiated by the political minorities, nor the attempts to preserve the image that this place on the Topčider slope once represented, were successful. While in the public spaces, everything referring to socialist ideology was neglected – street and institution names were changed and monuments cut, melted down or replaced by others and flags with the five-angle star publicly burnt – the other still preserved yet unwanted heritage was put in the frames of the newly founded historical museum. Therefore, three out of twenty Tito's statues, works of Antun Augustinčić that were positioned in different public spaces and institutions, ended up in the frames of the museum park. The others were mostly destroyed and ended up in the piles of trash where they were traded as secondary material. Contemporary artist, Dragan Srdić was the one to collect some of the cut bodies of Tito's busts and sculptures and to use them for art installations. Therefore, the artwork "Josip Broz Tito 1980–2006" is composed of a transparent box filled with the segments of the cut statues and covered with the white marble plate where this title was written

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<sup>18</sup> Marija Vasiljević, Veselinka Kastratović, Momo Cvijović, "Predistorija: Osnova za razumevanje Muzeja Jugoslavije," <https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/predistorija-osnova-za-razumevanje-muzeja-jugoslavije/>, (accessed on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> The other part of the Memorial Centre was again transformed to the presidential residency in which Slobodan Milošević lived and ruled from. This area is still a state representative property.

in the same way as on the tombstone of Tito, illustrated very well the politics of memory and deconstruction of the personality cult during the marked period.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the celebration of Youth Day at the end of the '90s and early '00s was still bonded to the space in front of the Museum of Yugoslav History through the unofficial gatherings in the Youth Fountain before the May 25 Museum building. Reflecting on these events, curator Marija Đorgović explains: "When I first witnessed the celebration of the Youth Day, I was surprised by the fact that every year on this day, people visit the House of Flowers, leave batons on Tito's grave and organize events in front of the Museum of Yugoslav History. For a couple of years Joška Broz, Tito's grandson, participated in these events, representing himself like Tito's legitimate heir to promote his party."<sup>21</sup> The program of this political party<sup>22</sup> organized at that time at the plateau in front of the Museum included a combination of political speeches, musical and folklore performances, and Joška Broz even accepted relay batons before the participants of this manifestation would place them on the grave, which gave the event new and different perspective on that day and completely changed the appearance of the collective body. Being almost completely neglected by Museum management,<sup>23</sup> these events together with the multilayered heritage of the space, have finally brought to the moment when museum staff started considering inherited visitors as active participants in the reproduction of memory.<sup>24</sup>

### Reaffirmation of the Body

The first activities showing the potential of rethinking the value systems roles and uses of *the body* bond to this space could be traced back to contemporary art initiatives happening in 2011.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, a performance, "The 25<sup>th</sup> of May" created by Marta Jovanović took place in the Youth Fountain more than twenty years after the last official Youth Day celebration. The artist however recreated another situation characteristic of the Yugoslav socialist society, and that is the youth work activities. A total of 54 participants in the performance, organized as a company of brigadiers with a commander at the

<sup>20</sup> Milena Jokanović, *Kabineti čudesa u svetu umetnosti*, (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet – Centar za muzeologiju i heritologiju, 2021), 200-04.

<sup>21</sup> Marija Đorgović, unpublished paper, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Tito's grandson Joška Broz was a president of the Communist Party from 2010 to 2022. However, even before 2010 he was a candidate in front of the Coalition in the Serbian parliamentary elections referring to Josip Broz Tito's rulership with the slogan: "Kud ja stadoh, ti produži" [Where I left off, you go on].

<sup>23</sup> See: Vesna Adić, "Nevidljivi poklonici," in *Muzeologija, nova muzeologija, nauka o baštini* (Beograd – Kruševac: Centar za muzeologiju i heritologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu – Muzej u Kruševcu, 2013), 339-44.

<sup>24</sup> Marija Đorgović, Milena Jokanović, "Living heritage in the Museum of Yugoslav History – visitors as active participants in reproduction of memory," in *Lost and Found: Heimatsuchende und Heimatlose Museen Seminar* (Jena: Friedrich Schiller University, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Museum exhibitions such as "Tito Effect" from 2009 with the accompanying catalogue already quoted in this text show first indications towards the new critical approach to the uses and significations of this space. This new approach is a result of the new management of the Museum of Yugoslavia and the new director of the time: Katarina Živanović. See more: Milena Gnjatović, *Problems of Museum's Image Building During Museum's (Re)construction*, MA Thesis (University of Arts in Belgrade/University Lumier Lion 2, 2014).

head but dressed as contemporary yuppies, gathered in front of the Museum of Yugoslav History for an action that involved planting over 1,000 carnations. As stated on the official Museum website: "The initiation of such actions always presupposed the general social interest. Is there a general social interest today? What is the position of young people within contemporary social relations? Are work activities possible today and whose interest would initiate them? Are these initiatives just another form of manipulation or a true awareness of one's contribution to overall improvement?"<sup>26</sup> The artist aestheticized the entire process and turned the voluntary physical work of young people into an artistic act. While the performance tended to open the aforementioned issues, two days before, Marta Jovanović had also placed a sculpture in the Museum park permanently. The transparent sculpture is, as explained, a monument to the relativity of ideas, ideologies, beliefs, hopes, and plans. Engraved words: *Love, Happiness and Truth* are, according to Jovanović, the essence of human existence and the driving force behind life, politics, and religion. The light material of which the sculpture is made is in opposition to the usual representation of monumental sculpture. The transparency of the sculpture emphasizes the relativity of interpretation of each monumental work, whether it is verbal, written, or material, states the curatorial team of the Museum.<sup>27</sup>

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After this first initiative to rethink the collective body performance values bond to the space of the Yugoslav History Museum, another artistic initiative was commissioned a few months later. The "Fiskulturnik" club and artist Lara Ritoša Roberts were invited to perform the "Yugo Yoga" on the Museum plateau.

This performance combined poses from the Youth Day celebrations and those repeating the look of social-realistic monuments, with gymnastics and yoga movements. The movement was accompanied by sounds of revolutionary songs and a combination of slogans and words from Tito's speeches and *New Age* messages about health and self-awareness. It is performed as an exercise with the speaker announcing poses and describing exercises while the movement was led by the "Sokolski sisters" live. The audience was invited to participate in the exercise, thus becoming an integral part of the performance: "uniting together with the performers in a collective body that breathes and exercises as one."<sup>28</sup> Although this work has been performed several times in different locations worldwide, it was adjusted to the context of this particular space and inspired by the Museum collection and photo documentation. The artists, as they explained, wanted to remind of an important part of the identity, in the creation of which, gymnastics and the Day of Youth massive celebrations certainly had a great influence. "We want the audience to get involved in order to relive that time once again through their body, wouldn't those muscles remember something that was. This performance explores the complexity of the whole situation,

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/program/performans-25-maj/> (accessed on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2024).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/program/yugo-yoga-u-mij/> (accessed March 19<sup>th</sup> 2024).

the present elements of nostalgia, irony and aggression and a very complex feeling towards those events," Ritoša Roberts explained.

Finally, the exhibition "Figures of Memories," set in the House of Flowers, opened issues of many lives in today's museum space and the community creating the memorial place here during collective visits and particular performances. The exhibition followed transformations of processions of people coming to this complex on Topčider Hill in previous decades.

The *figures of memories* syntagma, borrowed from the culture of memory theory<sup>29</sup> refers to different images – such as the tombstone itself, as well as objects, photos, and documents including the Condolence books and Memorial books written by thousands of visitors coming here after the funeral – as the visual figures which help nostalgic audience recall their memories and share emotions about the life in Yugoslavia. The exhibition revealed data on the history and visitors to the space which today is the Museum (represented with a big 3D graph) together with big video projections of the contemporary visitors coming to a kind of commemoration every 25<sup>th</sup> of May. In this way, a constant procession of people visiting this space over the years was stressed and the museum audience felt a part of the whole setting when entering the House of Flowers and contributing to the number of visitors in this particular ritual. As curator Marija Đorgović, the author of the exhibition concept concludes: "We could say that the exhibition is less informative, and more performative. It was designed as a scenery in which museum visitors also play their role as an integral part of the set-up, with a very reduced but clear and strong conceptual determination and visual identity which looks more like some site-specific art installation, than a classical museum display."<sup>30</sup> The exhibition was first planned to follow a work-in-progress curatorial approach to refer to a dynamic processual character reflected in a recreation of the exhibition space (House of Flowers) by visitors, who are seen as the main carriers of memory and active participants in its reproduction. They are represented by ritual circulation through the House of Flowers which has been held for more than three decades (visually suggested by huge photographs with procession/line of people all over the interior or standing at Tito's funeral in front of the House of Flowers), the continuing tradition of leaving messages in Memorial room (which is an integral part of the exhibition and where still official delegations come following the constituted protocol) and through notes in visitor books, as well as social interaction between visitors (community) in this site, especially on certain dates bond to Tito's life (such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of May and the 25<sup>th</sup> of May). Finally, the issue of the function of the House of Flowers today was raised for the first time by the Museum institution with this setting, while it was concluded that apart from the audience, there are (still more numerous) visitors who do not perceive

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<sup>29</sup> Alaida Assmann, "Zur Metapher der Erinnerung," in *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung* (Frankfurt: Taschenbuchverlag, 1991), 13-35; Jan Assmann, John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," in *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 125-33.

<sup>30</sup> Marija Đorgović, Milena Jokanović, "Living heritage in the Museum of Yugoslav History – visitors as active participants in reproduction of memory."

this space as a museum but as a mausoleum and a space of memory which is recreated during every ritual visit on the particular dates when the massive body is repeating many times already performed processual movements.

### **The New Body of the Space**

The past couple of years have finally brought new reflections on the cult of personality and body surrounding Josip Broz Tito, tied to this space and the emergence of a new collective body spending time in the Museum complex during "The Museum Matinee."

The artist, Dragan Srdić who collected the destroyed and thrown away statues of Tito, has created another art installation out of them. "The Anatomy Lesson" composed of the segments of the cut busts once representing the life-long president, is today confronted with the tombstone and Tito's literal body buried here. Srdić set this art installation in 2000 for the exhibition organised in the Cultural Centre of Belgrade. It was not until 2020 however, that the Museum curators got permission from the Serbian Government and the Ministry of Culture to acquire it and finally expose it in the House of Flowers, the peak spot for the body cult. Still balancing between the space of memory and commemoration and the gallery, this part of the Museum is especially complex regarding heritage interpretation. This is why many exhibitions set until now were not critical and multi-layered interpretations, but followed the (e)motion of Titostalgic<sup>31</sup> visitors accepting the attitude referring to the proverb: "Do not speak ill about the dead." However, time passed and new audiences who are not living witnesses of the Yugoslav period are ultimately dictating the new relationship towards this particular space as well, while the deconstructed body within the exposed art installation provokes discussions and even anger among the older visitors who still come here to a particular commemoration every 25<sup>th</sup> of May.

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The contrast between the perception of the space associated with the body cult and a perspective that seeks to completely distance itself from it is also evident during a recent program titled "The Museum Matinee." In this program, the Museum opens the doors of its park to entertainment and the celebration of Yugoslav musical heritage.

In the summer of 2019, a "Picnic at the Museum of Yugoslavia" was organized, inviting audiences to lie on the grass and enjoy covers of Yugoslav hits mixed by contemporary DJs in the Park of Sculptures within the Museum complex. This event evolved the following year into the concept of a regular "Museum Matinee," held every Thursday in September. In subsequent years, the first event of the season was organized specifically to coincide with the celebration of May 25<sup>th</sup>. Such a program proved to be a successful initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic, when organized cultural events were scarce and visitors favoured open-air activities. It revitalized the Museum, helping to mitigate the economic crisis of that year. Over time, the event became a popular Museum program, attracting hundreds of visitors and introducing a younger audience to the space for the first time.

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<sup>31</sup> Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgia. A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz* (Ljubljana: Mirovni Institut/Peace Institute, 2008).

However, the program highlighted a persistent tension regarding the Museum of Yugoslavia's identity. Is it a mausoleum—a solemn site of burial and mass commemoration, where some consider such celebratory events inappropriate—or is it an open institution encouraging new forms of youth celebration and engagement?

### Conclusion

Following the transformation of the space now known as the Museum of Yugoslavia, this research examines the construction and dissolution of the cult of personality through the lens of the ruler's body, whether natural or represented. In parallel, the theoretical concept of place-creation, formed by the interplay of bodies within a landscape, allowed us to recognize the many lives of the Museum of Yugoslavia's area. These include collective body movements on events such as the May 25th celebrations, Tito's funeral, subsequent commemorations, as well as performances by artists and engagements by a new museum audience. Ultimately, it is demonstrated that contemporary art and curatorial practices can reveal the crises and transformations surrounding the use and representation of bodies—whether the ruler's or the collective—both of which are deeply tied to the uses and abuses of this space.

Finally, the current exhibition, opened in autumn 2024 in the Museum of the 25th of May building, focuses on the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille, exploring the commemoration and memorialization of his body after death. It also examines the deconstruction of his legacy at the onset of the Second World War, alongside shifts in ideological discourse<sup>32</sup> we could recognise similar models of the ruler's political body (mis)use and instrumentalization. Shown in this particular space, this exhibition got, therefore, one more layer of signification, which curators have also wittingly recognised offering a tour through the current setting in which they make a comparative analysis of memorialisation of King Alexander I and Josip Broz Tito.<sup>33</sup> In conclusion, it is evident that the galleries and surroundings of the Museum of Yugoslavia, shaped by their prior identities as a mausoleum and their inherited visitors, cannot be regarded as a neutral exhibition complex. Furthermore, the biography of this space presents significant potential for deepening the understanding and interpretation of Yugoslav heritage. Contemporary art practices have proven effective, offering new perspectives on this contested and dissonant heritage while creating a platform for discussion and further research.

<sup>32</sup> The exhibition "Čuvajte (mi) Jugoslaviju" (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, 9.10.2024 - 31.03.2025), <https://muzej-jugoslavije.org/exhibition/cuvajte-mi-jugoslaviju/> (Accessed on December 1st 2024).

<sup>33</sup> Recognising similarities and drawing parallels between memorialisation of the two leaders, curators Biljana Crvenković and Ana Panić guide through the mentioned exhibition on the king's assassination as well as through the park of sculptures where the famous sculpture of Tito, work of Antun Augustinčić is positioned, and the setting "Comrade Tito Has Died" and mentioned art installation of Dragan Srdić "Anatomy Lesson" in the House of Flowers (<https://fb.me/e/2i3zVLDLi>, accessed on December 1st 2024).

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