

Antun Augustinčić: Artistic Freedom in the Framework of Monumental Sculpture



Antun Augustinčić: Umjetnička sloboda u kontekstu spomeničke skulpture

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SAŽETAK

Antun Augustinčić (Klanjec, 1900. – Zagreb, 1979.) odrastao je u maloj sredini Klanjca pomažući ocu, zidarskom majstoru, pri čemu je došao u dodir s umijećem oblikovanja i umjetničkim obrtom. Kao mlad kipar formirao se na zagrebačkoj likovnoj akademiji, gdje je od profesora Rudolfa Valdeca i Roberta Frangeš-Mihanovića primio prve poduke i usvojio pravila zanata u kiparstvu, a uz Ivana Meštrovića imao prilike doći u kontakt s pravilima spomeničke plastike. Odlaskom na studij u Pariz susreo se s djelima Augustea Rodina i Antoinea Bourdellea, koje je, uz Donatella, kasnije navodio kao relevantne za vlastiti kiparski razvoj. Po povratku iz Pariza živio je kao slobodni umjetnik. Izvodio je nadgrobne figure, portrete i ženske aktove te sudjelovao u opsežnim radovima na Meštrovićevu mauzoleju u Otavicama. Godine 1929. bio je jedan od osnivača Udruženja umjetnika Zemlja i čvrsto se svrstao uz lijevo orijentirane umjetnike, što će ostati njegov svjetonazorski i politički stav do kraja života. Nakon početnih stilizacija na tragu Meštrovića i *art decoa*, potkraj 20-ih i početkom 30-ih godina 20. stoljeća razvio je svoje kiparske postulate kojima će ostati vjeran do smrti. Izvanredna vještina modeliranja, zanatska kompetencija i figuracija utemeljena na realizmu postale su karakteristike Augustinčićeva kiparstva. To se pokazalo pogodnim za spomeničku plastiku, koja je u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji doživjela zamah komemorativnim spomenicima dinastiji Karađorđevića.

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the life and work of sculptor Antun Augustinčić (Klanjec, 1900 – Zagreb, 1979) and focuses on elements of his sculptural oeuvre. After providing a brief overview of his artistic development, sculptural career and legacy, we elaborate on the selected examples of monuments created by Augustinčić in the period between the 1930s and the 1970s. We consider monuments in Kragujevac 1932, Varaždin 1935, Niš 1937, for Katowice 1936–1939, in Geneva 1939, *Portrait of the Croatian Poglavnik Ante Pavelić* 1942, and monuments produced in post-war Yugoslavia: in Batina 1947, Kumrovec 1948, New York 1954, Addis Ababa 1955, Harar 1959, Banja Luka 1961 and Gornja Stubica 1973. On the basis of previous research and new findings, we examine the sculptor's freedom in determining the concept and manner of realization of monumental works, whereby Augustinčić's monuments are interpreted in the context of the relationship between the artist and the client. The question that arises is that of the autonomy of artistic expression in the framework of monumental sculpture, particularly in terms of state commissions. Attention is devoted to the reception of Augustinčić's sculptural oeuvre during turbulent changes in social structures in this region.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

Antun Augustinčić, sculpture, monuments, 20th century art, Croatia, Yugoslavia.

Svoj prvi veći spomenički projekt izveo je u suradnji s Jozom Kljakovićem (*Spomenik palim Šumadincima*, Kragujevac, 1932.), pri čemu je u kiparskoj dionici vidljiva ekspresionistička dramatika na tragu Ernsta Barlacha. Nakon toga Augustinčić je svoje kiparstvo oslobodio stilizacije i jasno se usmjerio k realizmu. Takva je bila i spomenička figura kralja Aleksandra koju je izveo u Varaždinu 1935., nakon što je njegova skica bila prezentirana članovima Odbora za podizanje spomenika. U diskursu o umjetničkoj slobodi u okviru spomeničke plastike, i u Kragujevcu i u Varaždinu došla je do izražaja Augustinčićeva sposobnost prikaza vješto pokrenutih i uvjerljivo impostiranih figura unutar čvrsto definiranih zahtjeva naručitelja.

Augustinčić je 30-ih godina razvio osobitu sklonost prema konjaničkim spomenicima: vještina u njihovoj izradi priskrbila mu je pobjede na natječajima te su oni postali njegov ostentativni spomenički motiv. Prvi svoj konjanički kip izveo je na *Spomeniku palim Nišlijama* (Niš, 1939.), za koji je pobijedio na natječaju upravo skicom konjaničke figure. Za ostale figure na tom spomeniku može se reći kako su svojom dramatikom i uvjerljivošću ostavile dubok dojam, pa čak i premašile ograničeni receptivni kapacitet tadašnjih građana Niša.

Gotovo istodobno s niškim spomenikom Augustinčić stvara konjanički spomenik koji se može smatrati ne samo najboljim u njegovu opusu, nego i jednim od najboljih u hrvatskom kiparstvu 20. stoljeća. Riječ je o *Spomeniku Šleskom ustanku i maršalu Pilsudskom* za Katowice (1936. – 1939.), koji mu je priskrbio priznanje u širem europskom kontekstu, a važan je i stoga što je to bio prvi slučaj da je naš kipar pobijedio na međunarodnom kiparskom natječaju.

Izražajna figuracija i odlična suradnja s arhitektom Dragom Galićem doveli su Augustinčića do statusa spomeničkog kipara čija su djela bila vrlo tražena na lokalnoj i na državnoj razini. Uz izvedbe koje je dobio na natječajima, Augustinčić je izvodio i spomenike na temelju direktne narudžbe, držeći se usvojenih likovnih rješenja (*Rudar* u Ženevi). Nakon spomenika izvedenih za Karađorđeviće, Augustinčić je dočekao Drugi svjetski rat u Zagrebu kao jedan od naših najuglednijih kipara, od kojega je i poglavnik Ante Pavelić naručio svoj portret (1942.).

Prelaskom na partizanski teritorij 1943. započinje njegova afirmacija kao kipara bliskog novoj vlasti, čiji utjecaj seže i izvan umjetničkih krugova. U sklopu vojne misije 1944. u Moskvi zajedno s Đorđem Andrejevićem Kunom izrađuje znamenja novo uspostavljene države Jugoslavije. Poslije rata sudjeluje u osnivanju i vođenju državnih institucija (profesor i dekan ALU-a, voditelj majstorske radionice, akademik), a blizak je s Josipom Brozom Titom, s kojim ga veže prijeratna suradnja. Već 1947., na inicijativu Sovjeta, jugoslavenski državni vrh angažirao ga je da izvede jedan od najvećih spomenika u tadašnjoj Europi, *Spomenik zahvalnosti Crvenoj armiji* u Batinoj Skeli. Iako arhitektonski odlično riješen (D. Galić), kiparski je sveden na ilustraciju heroike te predstavlja paradigmatški primjer socrealizma. Za razliku od

tog spomenika, portretna figura Tita (*Spomenik Titu*), koju je izveo 1948. za Kumrovec, primjer je uvjerljive figuracije i svojevrsnoga spomeničkog intimizma.

Tijekom 1950-ih Augustinčić sa suradnicima u svojoj majstorskoj radionici u Zagrebu izvodi naručene spomenike u funkciji kulturne diplomacije tadašnje Jugoslavije. Prvi i najveći takav spomenik jest konjanički spomenik *Mir* postavljen ispred sjedišta Ujedinjenih naroda u New Yorku (1954.), koji svjedoči o Augustinčićevoj superiornosti u konjaničkoj skulpturi, no više kao primjer zanatske kompetencije nego umjetničke invencije. Slijede tri spomenika za Etiopiju koje je izveo u suradnji s Franom Kršinićem po narudžbi cara Hailea Selassiea: *Spomenik žrtvama fašizma* u Addis Abebi 1955., *Spomenik rasu Makonnenu* u Hararu 1957. te *Spomenik etiopskom partizanu* u Holeti 1959. Spomenik u Addis Abebi riješen je kao samostalna invencija dvojice kipara koja se oslanja na etiopsko povijesno i kulturno naslijeđe, dok su spomenici u Hararu i Holeti bili znatno definirani odredbama naručitelja. Do kraja svojeg spomeničkog djelovanja Augustinčić će izvesti još dva velika projekta u kojima se morao prilagoditi konfiguraciji terena, ali je imao apsolutnu slobodu likovnog oblikovanja: *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima* iznad Banje Luke (1961.) te *Spomenik Seljačkoj buni i Matiji Gupcu* u Gornjoj Stubici (1973.). *Spomenik palim Krajišnicima* inventivan je jedino u arhitektonskom pogledu; kiparski je svojom jednoznačnošću i simplificiranom naracijom megalomanski primjer *Biblije pauperum* i upotrebe kiparstva u svrhu ideološke indoktrinacije. Može se reći da je to posljednji njegov spomenik s jasnim obilježjima socrealizma. Dominacija narativnosti u kiparskoj dionici obilježje je i *Spomenika Seljačkoj buni i Matiji Gupcu*, no za razliku od banjalučkog, ta je narativnost slojevita i prožeta imaginativnim elementima temeljenima na *Baladama Petrice Kerempuha* Miroslava Krleže. Ovdje treba naglasiti činjenicu da je narudžbu za stubički spomenik Augustinčić prihvatio tek nakon javnoga anonimnog natječaja koji nije iznjedrio prvu, izvedbenu nagradu.

Dok je njegov društveni ugled na vrhuncu, u diskursu spomeničke plastike njegov umjetnički razvoj staje. Augustinčić u svojem spomeničkom kiparstvu ponavlja usvojena rješenja, s tim što prijeratna morfologija dobiva novu ideološku ikonografiju. Samostalno određuje način izvedbe imajući umjetničku autonomiju unutar prihvaćenih ideoloških okvira. Moglo bi se reći kako se u slučaju Augustinčića može govoriti o svojevrsnom apsurdu: u prijeratnom razdoblju imao je ograničenja naručitelja, a bio je likovno slobodniji i napredniji od konkurencije. U razdoblju Jugoslavije nitko mu nije nametao ograničenja, no svojim ustrajanjem na provjerenim rješenjima tradicionalne figuracije u službi ideologije bio je sam sebi najveći cenzor. U poslijeratnom razdoblju, Augustinčić svoj umjetnički kapacitet nije pokazao kroz velike spomeničke projekte, nego kroz spomenički intimizam te kroz seriju ženskih torza i portrete. Upravo je u tišini atelijera tijekom 50-ih godina nastao niz izvrsnih ženskih torza koja stoje s onu stranu rasprava o figuraciji ili apstrakciji i svjedoče o njegovu kiparskom majstorstvu.

U diskursu recepcije njegove spomeničke produkcije, Augustinčić je od početka svoje kiparske karijere percipiran kao veliki talent koji se oslobodio Meštrovićeva utjecaja i tvrđoglavo krenuo svojim putem. Nakon prvih uspjeha na spomeničkim natječajima, redali su se hvalospjevi u čast njegove uvjerljive figuracije, dramske vjerodostojnosti i umijeća izvedbe u velikim dimenzijama, osobito konjaničkih spomenika. Razdoblje afirmativne recepcije Augustinčićeva kiparstva nastavilo se poslije Drugog svjetskog rata, i to do apologetskih visina. U razdoblju poslije 1945., Augustinčić se kao kipar, kao pedagog, kao društveni djelatnik i kao čovjek bez zadržke uključio u poslijeratnu izgradnju boljeg društva. Sve do 50-ih godina njegova kiparska produkcija prihvaćala se bezuvjetno, a njegov autoritet zamijenio je onaj Ivana Meštrovića prije rata. Kao što su naručitelji kiparskih narudžbi angažirali Meštrovića da odobri gipsane modele mladih kipara prije lijevanja u broncu, tako su sada naručitelji angažirali Augustinčića da bude likovni arbitar koji odlučuje o kvaliteti nečijeg djela. Dokaz je Augustinčićeva statusa na likovnoj sceni poslijeratne Jugoslavije sudjelovanje na 25. *venecijanskom bijenalu* 1950., kad su Jugoslaviju kiparski predstavili Antun Augustinčić, Vanja Radauš, Vojin Bakić i Kosta Angeli Radovani. No stvari su se počele mijenjati dolaskom novih naraštaja likovnih umjetnika i povjesničara umjetnosti 50-ih i 60-ih godina. Na području tadašnje Jugoslavije, a osobito Hrvatske i Zagreba, na umjetničku scenu stupaju grupa EXAT 51, nove tendencije i mladi likovni kritičari poput Radoslava Putara, Dimitrija Bašičevića i Mate Meštrovića, koji, ukorak s vremenom, promoviraju drugačiju likovnu poetiku, osobito apstraktnu umjetnost, oštro napadajući tadašnji umjetnički establišment. Sukob se manifestirao na više načina, od osobnih do principijelnih razina, no jasno je kako u srži konfrontacije nije bila samo umjetnost nego i stjecanje odnosno gubljenje pozicija moći. Augustinčić nije htio ulaziti u direktne sukobe, ali je iz njegovih intervjua razvidno kako nove likovne izričaje smatra zastranjenima i prepušta ih mladima. On je ostao vjeran svojem shvaćanju umjetnosti te se usmjerio na ispunjavanje narudžbi u funkciji kulturne diplomacije tadašnje Jugoslavije i na rad u atelijeru. Spomenička produkcija u Jugoslaviji je tijekom 60-ih i 70-ih godina doživjela procvat s djelima Bogdana Bogdanovića, Vojina Bakića, Dušana Džamonje i Koste Angelija Radovanija, u potpunosti se odmaknuvši od ideološke ikonografije i dosegnuvši visoke likovne razine. Augustinčić u to razdoblje ulazi s nepromijenjenim političkim i umjetničkim stavovima te dočekuje prvi jugoslavenski otvoreni natječaj, za *Spomenik Seljačkoj buni i Matiji Gupcu* u Stubici 1969. Recepcija tog spomenika i napadi na njega primjer su gledanja na Augustinčića kao eksponenta preživjelog vremena, kao još uvijek politički moćnog protagonista države, kao uzurpatora likovne scene koja je zrela za nove umjetnike i novu umjetnost.

Pri slomu Jugoslavije i njezina političkog poretka tijekom 90-ih godina prošlog stoljeća srušeni su mnogi spomenici, pa tako i neki Augustinčićevi. I njega samog i njegovo djelo percipiralo se često pojednostavnjeno i isključivo kao protagonista „neželjene” države. Komunističko i socijalističko nasljeđe pokazalo se kao primjer „teškog” nasljeđa: u

vrijeme Domovinskog rata petokraka zvijezda simbolizirala je okrutno uništavanje Hrvatske i njezinih ljudi, što je rezultiralo velikim animozitetom prema spomenicima iz vremena socijalističke Jugoslavije. Augustinčić je, zbog svoje društvene uloge i bliskosti s Titom, bio poistovjećivan s tim političkim režimom, što je bilo kobno za neka njegova djela. Trebalo je vremena i truda da se njegov kiparski opus sagleda objektivno i izvan ideoloških rovova. Tako su u zadnjih dvadesetak godina — uz izložbe njegovih radova, publikacije i simpozije koji tematiziraju njegov kiparski opus — redali iskazi suvremenika, učenika i suradnika o njemu kao vrhunskom majstoru, kao sposobnom pedagogu i velikodušnom učitelju. Augustinčić se danas s pravom smatra jednim od najvećih kipara 20. stoljeća na ovim prostorima, a neki od njegovih spomenika, njegova intimna plastika i portreti smatraju se najboljim ostvarenjima svojeg doba.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

Antun Augustinčić, kiparstvo, spomenici, umjetnost 20. stoljeća, Hrvatska, Jugoslavija.

INTRODUCTION

After he obtained a degree in sculpture at the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb in 1924, Antun Augustinčić moved to Paris to study at the École des Arts Décoratifs and the Académie des Beaux-Arts. After returning to Croatia, in 1929, he was one of the founders of a distinctly socially engaged art group Zemlja [Earth]. From the 1930s onwards, his work in public sculpture intensified, and he participated in and often won many public monument competitions worldwide. In 1943, he joined the Partisan movement, cooperated closely with Josip Broz Tito and participated in the foundation of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1944, he spent time in Moscow as a member of a military mission, where he worked on the design of insignia for the newly established state; he was one of the designers of the state coat of arms and numerous medals. From 1946 onwards, he worked as a professor (and later, rector) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. In 1949, he became a full member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, was nominated master sculptor, and from 1950 until his death, he was the head of the Master Workshop in sculpture in Zagreb. In 1970, he donated his works to his native town of Klanjec, where the Antun Augustinčić Gallery was opened in 1976, housing a permanent display of the sculptor’s works and developing museum, exhibition and publishing activities. He died in 1979 in Zagreb and was buried in Klanjec in the Gallery sculpture park.¹

During his fifty-year sculptural career, Augustinčić created a prodigious oeuvre: he was an exceptional master of intimate sculpture (particularly female and children nudes and torsos), and strong, psychologically accomplished and expressive portraits, some of which became anthological works in the history of Croatian sculpture. Nevertheless, the monuments he executed earned him a reputation as a master of public sculpture, especially equestrian monuments. D.Kečkemet justifiably stated that Augustinčić, alongside Ivan Meštrović, was our most prominent sculptor of monumental sculpture.² Before World War II, Augustinčić created most of his monuments by participating in public competitions, and those he created after the war were mostly the result of direct commissions.

The question that arises in the discourse about Augustinčić’s (and every other) monumental oeuvre is the possibility and the extent of artistic autonomy in the framework of monumental sculpture, especially when it is the result of a direct state (or some other) commission. We should bear in mind that monumental sculpture has different rules than small-scale sculpture: the monument’s subject matter is most often determined by the client and its commemorative function and regularly by the imperative apologetic approach. With his sculptural talent, craftsmanship and realistic approach, Augustinčić asserted himself as the master of monuments as early as the 1930s, and after World War II, his worldview and ideological convictions were aligned with the state direction, so he became a paradigmatic example of the master of monuments who created artworks

in the service of the state cultural diplomacy. In some of his monuments, he subordinated artistic quality to the subject matter, while in others, he used the commission to achieve his artistic concept.

ORIGINS OF ARTISTIC INTEREST AND STUDYING SCULPTURE IN ZAGREB

Antun Augustinčić grew up poor in a small provincial town in Hrvatsko Zagorje as one of seven children of Adam Augustinčić and Katarina Kralj. His mother, Katarina, was a descendant of pauperized nobility who used her dowry to educate her children. His father, Adam, was a stonemason who had an expressed ambition and skill and who attained an impressive creative level, so Antun, who at a young age spent time by his side, was introduced to the craft and applied arts early on.³ Artworks that he was able to see as a boy in Klanjec were paintings and sculptures in the 17th century Franciscan monastery and church with typical baroque furniture.

After he finished primary school in Klanjec, at the age of 13, Augustinčić moved to Zagreb and enrolled in secondary school, where he showed exceptional artistic talent in free-hand drawing and watercolours. First accounts about Antun’s carvings of heads, animals and sphynxes in soft marl date back to the period of World War I.⁴ In 1918, his remarkable artistic talent led him to the College of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, whose teaching methods were typical of contemporary Central European art schools, while the stylistic characteristics of its professors ranged from strict Academism to Impressionist tendencies. For four years, Augustinčić studied with professors Robert Frangeš Mihanović and Rudolf Valdec, two founding fathers of modern sculpture in Croatia, and during his studies, he excelled as a diligent, skilful, and tenacious student. He acquired a solid education and became aware of the need to be a competent craftsman when creating artwork. Years later, he would say: "Let us put art to the side, gentlemen. Art is, or it is not. Without craftsmanship, there is no art!"⁵ With the arrival of Ivan Meštrović to the College of Arts and Crafts in 1922, the character of the institution changed: art became the focal point, and applied arts were removed from the curriculum.⁶ Augustinčić continued his education in the class of Ivan Meštrović. He graduated in 1924 as one of the most talented students of Meštrović and won a French government scholarship to continue his studies in Paris.

STAY IN PARIS AS THE CRUCIAL FORMATIVE TIME FOR THE ARTIST

In 1925, Augustinčić lived in Asnières-sur-Seine, the north-western suburb of Paris lined with factories, blocks of rental houses and cheap rent.⁷ He lived with his wife Nada and daughter Rosa in a modest apartment with a spacious studio and studied at the École des Arts Décoratifs and the Académie des Beaux-Arts, in the class of professor Jean

¹ This biography of Antun Augustinčić compiles several of his published biographies: *Augustinčić* (monograph, ed. Bogdan Iveković), Kultura, Zagreb 1954; Marković, S., “Predgovor,” “Biografija,” in: *Katalog stalnog postava i fundusa*, (permanent exhibition catalogue, ed. S. Marković), Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Klanjec 1990; Pejković, B. and Vujčić, D., *Antun Augustinčić Gallery* (brochure / guide / permanent exhibition catalogue, ed. B. Pejković), MHZ – Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Klanjec 2005; Vujčić, D., *Medalje, plakete, crteži Antuna Augustinčića* (exhibition catalogue, ed. B. Pejković), MHZ – Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Klanjec 2007.

² Kečkemet, 15.

³ Greblički, Vujčić, 75–76.

⁴ Batušić, 3.

⁵ Šimat Banov, 258

⁶ “In 1922, Ivan Meštrović was elected professor, and his personality influenced the development of pedagogy in that, through the power of his talent, he placed the emphasis in the name of the school, “Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts,” more on the word *art* than on *crafts* like his older predecessors. (...) The main teaching guidelines since the arrival of Meštrović and Becić were to shift the focus from arts and crafts, which had been advocated previously, to... purely artistic endeavours.” Babić, Peić, 27.

⁷ Asnières was depicted as a motif in Georges Seurat’s paintings (*Bathers at Asnières*, 1884, National Gallery, London) and Vincent van Gogh (*Restaurant at Asnières*, 1887, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam).

Antoine Injalbert.⁸ He supported himself and his family by designing perfume bottles for *Coty*, *Lanvin* and *Worth* companies. Slavko Batušić, a friend from that time, said that his bottle designs were shaped like fantastic rhomboids, spheroids, and severed cubes.⁹ Likewise, he participated in interior design competitions and won a Second Prize for the interior design of the *Selfridges* department store in London.¹⁰

During his stay in Paris, he exhibited in the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon des Artistes Français in 1925. In reviews of the exhibition in the Salon des Indépendants, held in Palais de Bois from March 21 to May 3, 1925, the critics noticed an important characteristic of Augustinčić, namely that in the space and time of numerous “-isms,” i.e. seeking departure from traditional expressions, he did not follow their example but looked for his own way: “Antun Augustinčić, sculptor and student of Meštrović exhibited a portrait of a young woman and a symbolic figure. We can expect a lot from this young artist. Among sculptures in the Salon that range between *ordinary studies and futurist grotesques* [italics D.V.], a serious and sensitive work by Augustinčić stands out.”¹¹ The second review notes Meštrović’s influence in the manner in which the female figure was modelled, but also Augustinčić’s departure from the professor’s influence in the exhibited portrait.¹² Indeed, Augustinčić quickly rid himself of Meštrović’s influence and found his own artistic expression based on realistic figuration. One of the best connoisseurs of Augustinčić’s sculpture was the renowned Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, who said that Augustinčić was stubbornly aware that the primary sense of touch represented the most important basis of sculptural sensibility, and he never believed in “sculpture as a conquered matter that could not be felt under fingertips.” He also pointed out Augustinčić’s elementary feeling as a stonemason that protected him from “abstract anxiety and creative uncertainty,” and defined him as a realist with no inclination towards lyrical fragility, who understood the idea of beauty in the classical sense ever since the time he modelled his first sculpture of the Sphinx as a boy in Klanjec.¹³ It was therefore noted that, even as a young man, Augustinčić was stubborn, which was manifested in his sculpture as perseverance in finding his own way and refusing to casually accept novelties, despite having direct insight into an entire spectrum of stylistic expressions that he witnessed during his stay in Paris, the centre of world art at that time. The initial Art Deco stylization and lyricism visible in his figures in the 1920s would soon be replaced by succulent realism with an emphasis on dynamics and movement.

PERIOD BETWEEN THE
TWO WORLD WARS AND POSITIONING IN
THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Upon his return from Paris, Augustinčić lived as a freelance artist, struggling to survive and build a reputation with his sculptural work and participating in exhibitions. He often worked on funerary sculpture, portraits and female figures commissioned by patrons,¹⁴ and in 1931, Ivan Meštrović

⁸ Sculptor Jean Antoine Injalbert (Béziers, 23 February 1845 – Paris, 20 January 1933), was a stonemason’s son. In 1866, he started studying at the École des Beaux-Arts, with professor Augustin-Alexandre Dumont. At first, he created ornamental sculptures, and in 1874, he won the Rome Prize for his figure of Orpheus, and in 1889, he won the Grand Prize at the World Exhibition in Paris. With portrait busts and allegorical figures, many of his figural compositions were installed in public spaces of Béziers, Montpellier and Paris. His works are kept in the Louvre, Musée d’Orsay and elsewhere.

⁹ Batušić, 4. An interesting fact is that René Lalique was designing perfume bottles for the *Worth* company at the same time. We do not know if Augustinčić worked for any other companies, but the headquarters of the Louis Vuitton company were located in Asnières, and *L’Oreal* company had its headquarters in nearby Clichy, so it is possible they collaborated.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ E.s., 3.

¹² Rupčić, 20.

¹³ Krleža, “Foreword.”

¹⁴ Important patrons of Augustinčić were industrialist Samuel David Aleksander and writer Joe Matošić.

¹⁵ Pintarić, “Javni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića do drugog svjetskog rata.”

¹⁶ After visiting Kragujevac in 1985, Snježana Pintarić (née Bandula) wrote extensive notes on that monument. They are kept in the archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-36.

¹⁷ Pintarić, “Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića,” Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-291.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹ More about art group Zemlja: Depolo, Josip, “Earth 1929 – 1935.” In: 1929 – 1950. Surrealism / Social Art. Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1969; Art and Life Are One: The Artists’ Association Zemlja 1929 – 1935, exhibition catalogue (ed. P. Prelog). Zagreb: Klovićevi dvori Gallery, 2019.



Fig. 1 / Sl. 1 *Monument to the Fallen Soldiers of Šumadija*, Kragujevac, 1932. Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Spomenik palim Šumadincima*, Kragujevac, 1932. Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

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engaged him to work on the Meštrović family mausoleum in Otavice. He also participated in monument competitions that he won and executed in collaboration with other artists (*Monument to Petar Kočić* in Banja Luka, 1932 with Vanja Radauš; *Monument to the Fallen Soldiers of Šumadija* in Kragujevac, 1932 with Jozo Kljaković).¹⁵ We will refer here to the monument in Kragujevac because it was Augustinčić’s first monumental creative endeavour, as well as a step forward in contemporary monumental production, especially at the time and in the region that was full of academic portrait busts. In 1930, the Committee for Monument Construction in Kragujevac¹⁶ launched the competition and defined the location and thematic and formal parameters of the monument: remembering the victims fallen in the First and Second Serbian Uprising, the Balkan Wars and World War I (1804, 1815, 1912, 1914). The first prize was not awarded, and since Augustinčić and painter Jozo Kljaković won the second prize, in early 1931, the Committee signed the construction contract with the two of them. We cannot definitively say which part was created by Augustinčić and which by J. Kljaković. However, it would be safe to assume that Augustinčić worked on the sculptural elements, where the stylized, large and dynamic drapery surfaces, dramatic movement of figures, and expressive physiognomies suggest the influence of Ernst Barlach (Fig. 1). When the photographs of the first finished figures reached Kragujevac, the clients realized it was a different artistic poetics than the one they were accustomed to, so they wanted confirmation of its artistic quality. That was why they hired Ivan Meštrović, the ultimate sculptural arbiter of the time, to approve Augustinčić’s sculptural ideas, which he did unreservedly.¹⁷ The rules of the competition and the restricted space of the square definitely presented a limiting factor for the development of this monument; however, it seems that Augustinčić managed to approach its realization creatively. In this monument, we recognize motifs and solutions that he would later use in his monumental oeuvre. Together with the motif of a female figure on a high pedestal and twin figures,¹⁸ Augustinčić also started to resolve the relationship between figures and extruded elements of the segmented pedestal, build the composition with great movement of masses, incorporate the monument into the urban setting and, no less important, align his ideas with the client demands.

Besides the artistic progress in this period, it is also important to note Augustinčić’s social engagement, i.e. the definition of his leftist orientation. The awareness of social injustice in the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia steered him towards left-wing intellectuals, while the affinity for the Communist ideology would become a constant throughout Augustinčić’s life. In 1929, he participated in the foundation of the art group *Zemlja*, which assembled painters, sculptors and architects who showed great affinity for social themes of its time.¹⁹ By that time, Augustinčić had already developed his sculptural manner based on the knowledge of anatomy and skilful modelling of the realistic figure; this realism now acquired social (and ideological) orientation, which would become a winning combination, particularly in the period after World

War II. Augustinčić did not draw attention to his political convictions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: in the 1930s, he was commissioned to create several monuments celebrating the Karađorđević dynasty. We should point out that the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was favourable for monumental production. S. Pintarić rightly notes that the contemporary social and political context was suitable for monumental production: in the pursuit of affirmation, the young Yugoslav state encouraged the building of monuments that honoured the Karađorđević dynasty, which only intensified after the assassination of King Alexander I Karađorđević in Marseilles in 1934. Likewise, the Balkan Wars and World War I were thematized in monuments, while in Croatia, the assassination of Stjepan Radić, champion of the popular masses, intensified the creation of monuments in his honour.²⁰

The first monument by Augustinčić dedicated to the Karađorđević dynasty was the *Monument to King Alexander* in Varaždin, unveiled in 1935. This artistically correct, realistic and well-proportioned, but traditionally conceived monument was positioned in the central, small King Tomislav Square (Fig.2). The manner in which Augustinčić was awarded the construction was symptomatic: in January 1935, the Varaždin Committee for Monument Construction held a session to discuss the proposals that included a sculptural monument, construction of the almshouse and park design.²¹ Considering the municipality’s financial difficulties and an undefined urban situation, it was concluded that a sculptural monument would be the cheapest and most suitable solution. Coincidentally or not, at that precise moment, Augustinčić personally came to Varaždin with finished sketches for the monument.²² The Committee decided that launching the competition would be expensive so they accepted Augustinčić’s solution of a bronze figure on a stone pedestal.²³ Later during realization, there was a misunderstanding regarding reliefs on the pedestal, which resulted in extensive correspondence providing us with a unique insight into the client’s wishes that the sculptor had to satisfy. Augustinčić finished the reliefs on the eve of the monument installation on September 6, 1935; however, the clients were not satisfied, so they ordered Augustinčić to replace them with new ones as soon as possible, and they defined their content in detail (scenes that were supposed to be depicted in the reliefs, characters’ clothes and similar). They also decided on the manner of representation: “All reliefs should be executed in bas-relief, and it is not necessary that human figures are raised above the surface.”²⁴ Accordingly, Augustinčić did not have a lot of space to manoeuvre and offer his own solutions here, but was put in a position of the executioner of preconceived ideas by the Committee.²⁵

One year after the monument in Varaždin, Augustinčić started to create a more challenging *Monument to the Fallen Citizens of Niš* in Niš.²⁶ Augustinčić won the first prize at the competition launched in 1934, and Rista Stijović and Sreten Stojanović won second and third prize respectively.²⁷ All three of them conceived a monument that had a high pedestal with a figure on top and reliefs at the bottom. The crucial difference



Fig. 2 / Sl. 2 *Monument to King Alexander I Karađorđević*, Varaždin, September 6, 1935. PHOTO: Artur Kulčar, Jr, from the photo album Unveiling of Monument to Chivalric King Alexander I the Unifier, Varaždin City Museum, Photo Archive, GMV 61552. / *Spomenik kralju Aleksandru I. Karađorđeviću*, Varaždin, 6. rujna 1935. FOTO: Artur Kulčar ml., iz foto-albuma Otkrivanje spomenika Viteškom kralju Aleksandru I. Ujedinitelju, Gradski muzej Varaždin, Fotografski arhiv, GMV 61552.



Fig. 3 / Sl. 3 *Monument to the Fallen Citizens of Niš*, Niš, 1980s. PHOTO: Nenad Mladenović, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Spomenik palim Nišlijama*, Niš, 1980e. FOTO: Nenad Mladenović, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

↑

was that Stijović and Stojanović envisaged a male figure on top and Augustinčić an equestrian figure. The competition determined the location, monument type and themes the reliefs were supposed to treat: King Milan Square was set as the location, and reliefs on four sides of the monument were to depict chosen events from the history of Niš, i.e. battles against the Turks and the liberation of Niš in 1877 and 1918.²⁸ Again, Augustinčić was supposed to create a precisely determined iconography and portray historical (commissioned) scenes; however, the accomplished sculptural quality elevates this monument above a work that is simply well done (Fig.3). The monument in Niš is composed of a granite pedestal with two relief units in bronze (plates with bas-reliefs on all four sides of the pedestal in the lower section, and above them, a frieze in high relief that runs around the pedestal) and a bronze equestrian figure of the *Harbinger of Victory* on top, the first monumental equestrian statue by Augustinčić. He had worked on this monument with great passion and announced it in the media as the first realistic monument in the Balkans.²⁹ Indeed, there is not even a trace of stylization in this monument: the elaborate composition is full of moving figures and expressive, dramatic gestures that are rendered realistically with naturalistic elements. The equestrian figure is adequate; however, it merely announced the vehemence and monumentality of Augustinčić’s subsequent equestrian sculptures. The demanding production caused delays: sculptures were being cast in plaster as late as 1936, and the 9-metre-high monument was unveiled at Liberation Square in the city centre on June 28, 1937. Despite its artistic quality, the reception of the monument among the citizens of Niš was not uniformly affirmative, and the objections were related to the content. The paradigmatic example of such “criticism” was published immediately after the monument was unveiled: “Antun Augustinčić’s work is below par. The figure of the harbinger of victory is in a circus position. The flag in his hand is but a rag; warriors created in relief are dressed in poor taste. These men are presented as bellowing figures and not as figures shouting the battle cry as they die to free their brethren. And another thing: Stevan Sindelić, the legendary hero [...] is not shooting at a powder keg but in the air [...] this monument did not achieve its goal, which was the faithful representation of the event.”³⁰ These observations speak more of the receptive abilities of the environment than the quality of Augustinčić’s monument. It is precisely the example of this monument that confirms Augustinčić’s ability to creatively transcend the limitations of the commission and achieve artistic quality despite rigidly set parameters. Likewise, the monument in Niš is a testimony to Augustinčić’s progress in the direction of artistic credibility and his sovereign (even superior) handling of monumental dimensions, while the equestrian figure represents the first in a long line of Augustinčić’s equestrian statues. Soon after Niš, Augustinčić would create two equestrian figures in Skopje (monuments to King Peter and King Alexander on the bridge over the river Vardar, 1937) and the *Monument to King Alexander* in Sombor in 1940. Additionally, in the latter part of the 1930s, he successfully submitted sketches of equestrian figures in competitions for the *Monument to King Peter*

20

Pintarić, “Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića,” 17.

21

Copy of the minutes of the Committee for the erection of the monument dated January 6, 1935. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-141.

22

“The president reports that it was at that exact moment that the sculptor, professor Antun Augustinčić arrived, bringing the plaster model of the monument... a debate ensued... and the committee decided to abandon the competition, and accept professor Augustinčić’s offer.” Copy of the minutes of the Committee for the erection of the monument, dated January 6, 1935. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-141. Frano Kršinić and Julije Čikoš were also interested in creating the monument so they sent their proposals, but, evidently, the Committee decided on the basis of personal contact.

23

The minutes state: “It was then concluded that at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, the chosen committee would, together with professor Antun Augustinčić inspect certain locations in the city that were suitable for installation.” Copy of the minutes of the Committee for the erection of the monument, dated January 6, 1935. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-141. Therefore, the monument was selected first, and its location only after!

24

Copy of the minutes of the committee session dated October 2, 1935. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-141.

25

In November 1936, Augustinčić contacted the committee to apologize because he was unable to finish the new reliefs because of the work on the monument in Niš! Letter from Antun Augustinčić to the Mayor of the City of Varaždin, Stjepan Novaković dated November 19, 1936. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-141. We do not know if he ever finished them. The monument was destroyed in 1941.

26

Pintarić, “Monumentalna plastika Antuna Augustinčića” (diplomski rad), 52.; Pintarić, “Javni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića do drugog svjetskog rata,” 368.

27

Pintarić, “Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića.”

28

Ibid., 102.

29

Škrgić, 6.

30

Pintarić, in “Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića” mentioned an unknown reporter in an article titled “O Spomeniku Palim Nišlijama,” published in the magazine *Revija*, Niš, 1937.

I Karađorđević in Novi Sad and in Sarajevo (second prize), *Monument to Skenderbeg* in Albania (first prize) and *Monument to Justo Jose Urquiza* in Argentina (fourth prize) that were never executed.³¹

Augustinčić’s superiority in the discourse of monumental sculpture, especially his equestrian figures, quickly became prominent in the *Monument to the Silesian Uprising and Marshal Piłsudski* in Katowice, created between 1936 and 1939.³² This is one of the most important monuments in Antun Augustinčić’s oeuvre, and Croatian sculpture in general. The artistic quality was immediately recognized, and for years, M. Krleža wrote affirmatively about the equestrian statue of Piłsudski (Fig. 4). He was aware that any artist, regardless of talent, was necessarily constrained by conventional conditions set by the competition and a task that is always apologetic, and he emphasized Augustinčić’s strength and a long-time restrained and hidden “temperament, that was freed from all constraints in a single moment [...] Piłsudski’s horse is not a parade horse of an important man [...] but an ungroomed, wild, untamed beast [...] Not a single trace of false pathos can be seen on that horse and that horseman! [...] even if we compare it to an entire squadron of European bronze cavalry, no one can deny that this stallion by Augustinčić certainly belongs in the rank of the best equestrian statues worldwide.”³³ Indeed, it could be said that this composition represents the best equestrian monument ever created in this region, and beyond. Years that followed did not endanger that primacy; moreover, it seems that this creative level would never be achieved again. In terms of artistic quality, it is therefore not unusual that, with such a figure and concept, Augustinčić (with his collaborator, architect Drago Galić) won the competition launched by the Polish government in 1936, and we should definitely point out that this was the first time any Croatian sculptor won an international monument competition (in a highly competitive field)! The diplomatic scandal that occurred after the competition winner was announced spoke of great public interest in the matter.³⁴ The Polish people could not accept the fact that a monument to their national hero would be made by a foreigner, so they attempted to obstruct the execution and commission the work from other second-rate Polish artists.³⁵ This resulted in a unanimous protest of the Croatian media, the public and intellectuals. They wrote that the obstruction was a dangerous precedent in international artistic relations and that it would increase the psychosis of distrust between the nations.³⁶ Artists also stood in solidarity with Augustinčić, and after the scandal extended beyond the artistic sphere and moved into the political, the competent authorities decided to lower tensions. Augustinčić started the work, and Polish clients monitored it carefully: before May 1939, the Polish delegation came to Zagreb on three occasions to authorize his work on parts of the monument. From an ambitiously conceived monumental complex (access stairway and plateau, high pedestal with an equestrian figure on top and four figurative groups below) only the 4.5 metres high equestrian statue of Marshal Piłsudski was finished, which was not installed in Katowice until 1991, due to political circumstances.³⁷ The

31 *Augustinčić* (monograph), 1954, VIII; Marković, “Biografija,” 24.
32 Krleža, “Foreword;” Pintarić, “Monumentalna plastika Antuna Augustinčića,” 54; Marković, “U očekivanju otkrivanja Spomenika šleskom ustanku i Jozefu Piłsudskom u Katowicama”, 62–88.
33 Krleža, “Foreword.”
34 Vujčić, “Skulptura Antuna Augustinčića u funkciji kulturne diplomacije,” 29–31.
35 Polish magazine *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny* published an article which said that “... we are paying 11 000 zloty to foreigners, and our artists suffer in squalor.” m.k., “Afera sa spomenikom Piłsudskome,” 11.
36 *Ibid.*
37 Cast in bronze in Zagreb Art Foundry, the equestrian figure of Josef Piłsudski remained in Zagreb until the outbreak of World War II and the occupation of Poland. It was located in the courtyard of the Academy of Fine Arts until 1976, when it was moved to the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec. After the political situation in Poland changed, the Polish authorities sent a series of requests for delivery of the statue, and in 1990, the equestrian figure was transported to Katowice.
38 Marković, “U očekivanju otkrivanja,” 86.
39 At these conferences, D. Cvetković talked about the need to promulgate a law that would improve the social position of workers and their families. *Dragiša Cvetković — njim samim*.
40 “Kip zagorskog rudara za palaču Medjunarodnog ureda rada u Ženevi,” 8.
41 In the 1970s, a new headquarters of the International Labour Organization was being built (opened in 1974 in Grand Saconnex in the Canton of Geneva), after which the sculpture of the Miner was given a new position, in the park that surrounds this organization’s headquarters.



Fig. 4 / Sl. 4 Equestrian figure of Marshal Piłsudski in Zagreb Art Foundry, 1939. Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / Konjanička figura maršala Piłsudskog u Zagrebačkoj ljevaonici umjetnina, 1939. Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.



Fig. 5 / Sl. 5 *Miner* in Zagreb Art Foundry, 1939 (PHOTO: Tošo Dabac, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive). / *Rudar* u Zagrebačkoj ljevaonici umjetnina, 1939. FOTO: Tošo Dabac, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

artistic quality of the monument is indisputable. What made it controversial came from outside the artistic sphere, i.e. the fact that the creation of a monument to the Polish hero was entrusted to a foreigner. Some other objections that came from outside the artistic sphere illustrated the short-sighted perspective of the viewers: they begrudged Augustinčić for creating a stallion and not the mare that Piłsudski had always ridden!³⁸

At the decade’s end, Augustinčić’s reputation as a master of monumental sculpture grew to such a level that his work was in high demand. This is evidenced by the fact that, in the years that followed, Augustinčić increasingly started creating monumental sculptures commissioned by the state without public competition. An example of this is the sculpture *Miner* erected in front of the International Labour Organization in Geneva, which was directly commissioned by a government official. In the 1930s, during the construction of the *Monument to the Fallen Citizens of Niš*, Augustinčić met the then-mayor of Niš, Dragiša Cvetković. Cvetković later became the Minister of Social Policy and Public Health of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and he was active in the International Labour Organization in Geneva, where he participated in important conferences in 1937 and 1938.³⁹ He commissioned the sculpture from Augustinčić for the headquarters of that organization because he wanted to “...emulate other states — and have ours also be represented in the International Labour Organization’s palace with a work that would stylistically align with the work conducted in that palace, so he entrusted Mr. Augustinčić and gave him complete conceptual freedom [italics D.V.].”⁴⁰ Augustinčić used one of the figures he developed for the monument in Poland and created a more than 2-metre tall figure of a miner from Hrvatsko Zagorje powerfully wielding a pick (Fig. 5). The sculpture was cast in bronze in the Zagreb Art Foundry, and in mid-1939, during the time D. Cvetković was acting as the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, it was transported to Geneva and installed in the central hall of the International Labour Organization.⁴¹ The sculpture appropriately demonstrates Augustinčić’s social engagement at the time, and its theme corresponded well with the activity of that organization. Expertly modelled and positioned, with a convincing movement and a faithful depiction of rough physiognomy, the *Miner* won public sympathy. It is important to notice here the successful synergy between a government official who trusted the artist and gave him full artistic autonomy and Augustinčić’s intelligence as a sculptor who proved trustworthy and earned the acclamation of the client and the public.

WAR AND THE POST-WAR PERIOD :
ART ON THE CROSSROADS OF IDEOLOGY AND
HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The breakdown of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the outbreak of World War II and the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) under the leadership of *Poglavnik* (Croatian approximation to Führer, translator’s note) Ante Pavelić,

found Augustinčić professionally established in Europe and living in Zagreb. Like many other artists in Croatia at that time, he was trying to survive in the dangerous conditions of the Ustasha regime. His left-wing worldview and proximity to Communist ideology were well-known: in 1940, he served as the vice president of the Initiative Committee for the foundation of the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union in Zagreb,⁴² and because of his cooperation with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, he was arrested by the Gestapo in 1941 and briefly imprisoned in Graz.⁴³ In spite of that, the NDH leadership was aware of Augustinčić’s reputation, so it was understandable that Ante Pavelić personally commissioned Augustinčić to create his portrait in 1942.⁴⁴ Augustinčić himself described this episode: “One day I received a surprise visit from Pavelić’s secretary who told me I had to immediately create a portrait of Pavelić. I did not even have time to take off my work shoes. Pavelić received me well. He offered me cigarettes and lit them himself; then he ordered me to create his portrait. I warned him that such work could not begin that quickly; since this was the first time I met him, I would have to spend some time observing and studying him”⁴⁵ A few days later, Augustinčić created a psychologically convincing and visually impressive portrait that was showcased as one of the most prominent sculptures at the large exhibition the NDH organized in Berlin, Vienna and Bratislava in 1943 (Fig. 6). When he commissioned that portrait, the client had no apologetic conditions for the artist. Augustinčić created an excellent portrait not because he was an adherent of the regime but simply because he was an exceptional portraitist. This portrait was ranked as one of the best in his oeuvre, but after the war, it disappeared.

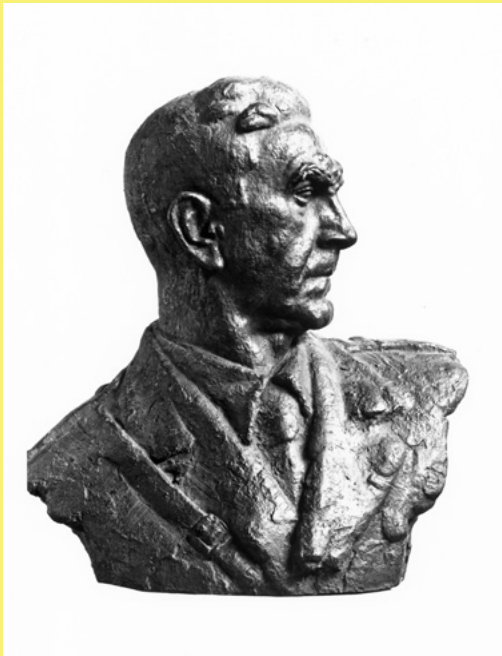


Fig. 6 / Sl. 6 *Portrait of Ante Pavelić*, 1942. PHOTO: Tošo Dabac, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Portret Poglavnika*, 1942. FOTO: Tošo Dabac, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

At the beginning of September 1943, soon after he made the *Poglavnik*’s portrait, Augustinčić escaped from Zagreb, ruled by the Ustasha regime and went to the territory controlled by Tito’s Partisans. He joined Josip Broz Tito (whom he knew from before the war) in the Bosnian town of Jajce, where in November that same year, he participated in the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). At this session, AVNOJ, as the representative body of participants in the anti-fascist struggle in the territory of Yugoslavia decided to strip the legitimacy of the royal dynasty and organize the future state of Yugoslavia as a federation, which would have constitutional importance after the war. On this occasion, Augustinčić was nominated as the AVNOJ vice president.⁴⁶ At this session, Augustinčić designed, together with the Serbian painter Đorđe Andrejević Kun, the Coat of Arms of the new Yugoslav state that was adopted as the official Coat of Arms of the new state after the war and it remained in function, with minor changes, until December 1990.

During World War II, Augustinčić, therefore, firmly assumed the position of an artist who performed an important political function, and his friendship with Tito would continue until Augustinčić’s death in 1979. Artistic reputation and political influence led to Augustinčić’s post-war rise, which included his nomination as a professor and rector of the Academy of

42 The Association was not founded at that time.
43 *Augustinčić* (monograph), 1976.
44 Vujčić, “Skulptura Antuna Augustinčića u funkciji kulturne diplomacije,” 34.
45 Augustinčić, 227.
46 The other vice presidents were, Dimitar Vlahov, Marko Vujačić, Moša Pijade and Josip Rus.
47 Vujčić, “Antun Augustinčić: Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army / ‘Ideological Beacon’ and Litmus Monument,” 110–122.
48 Thousands of people died in the Battle of Batina, which ended with the victory of Soviet and Yugoslav forces, and enabled the Red Army’s progress towards Hungary, and the liberation of Baranja by the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOVJ).
49 On November 16, 1970, Antun Augustinčić and Vanja Radauš were interviewed by the then editor of Radio Osijek, Vera Oršanić and they talked about their works in Slavonia and Baranja. Thanks to broadcast editor, Željka Bačić, the copy of the audio recording is kept in the museum documentation of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery, FON-14. Also, about the same monument: Video interview with Antun Augustinčić in Klanjec from the 1970s. Museum documentation of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery, V-77.

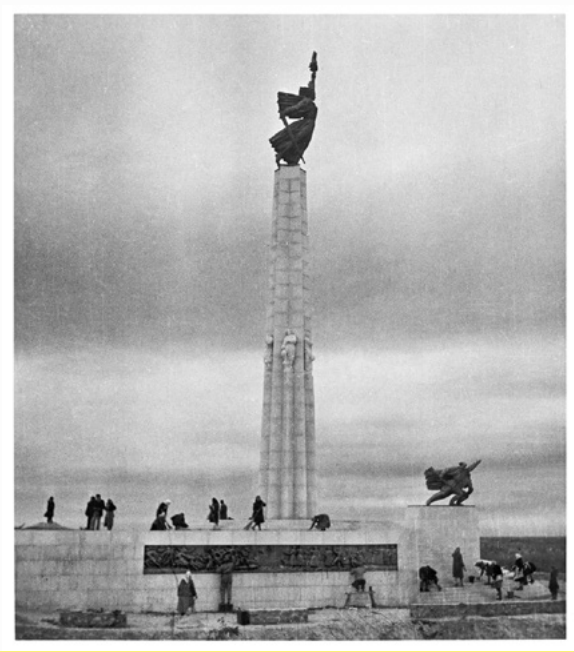


Fig. 7 / Sl. 7 Construction of the *Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army*, Batina, 1947. PHOTO: Tošo Dabac, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive). / *Izgradnja Spomenika zahvalnosti Crvenoj armiji*, Batina, 1947. FOTO: Tošo Dabac, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv).

Fine Arts in Zagreb, membership in the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, establishment and leadership of the Master Workshop in sculpture and large state monument commissions.

One of the greatest monuments built in post-war Europe was the *Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army* in the Croatian town of Batina on the banks of the river Danube.⁴⁷ The monument commemorates one of the bloodiest battles of World War II, when in 1944, the allied units of the Red Army and the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia attempted to cross to the right bank of Danube that was defended by German and Hungarian military forces.⁴⁸ Immediately after the war ended, and in order to commemorate this event, the Yugoslav and Russian governments decided to erect a monument that would symbolize the gratitude of Yugoslav people to the Red Army and its soldiers. The very beginning of the story about this monument represents a paradigmatic example of an attempt by the Russian side to assume absolute control over the monument’s design. In 1945, after Augustinčić returned from Moscow, where he was engaged to create a design for banknotes and medals, he was invited to see Tito to reach an agreement on the monument. Augustinčić himself provided an invaluable record of this event in an interview he gave to Radio Osijek in 1970: “I was given an order to urgently create a sketch for Batina. When I arrived at the studio in Belgrade [...] I encountered a Russian Colonel [...] who brought a sketch that resembled the Fascist monument in Kiel. I told him to roll that sketch back up and that I refuse to work on it, let somebody else do it. Fourteen days later, we were invited to see the Russian ambassador for the second time. He was very polite and offered us coffee, then read a telegram [...] which said: Russian marshals and generals are worthy of praise, they are excellent leaders of the army, but they don’t know anything about *pamyatniks*, monuments, and Augustinčić should be given the freedom to create the kind of monument he wants, as high as he wants. Stalin. So, I spent two and a half years working on the 35-metre-high monument without someone else’s sketch. This was Batina.”⁴⁹

Augustinčić and architect Drago Galić developed this monumental complex together and positioned it on an ellipse-shaped plateau (49 × 24 × 3.5 m) that opened towards the Danube with a semi-circular stairway (Fig. 7). An obelisk dominates the plateau, at the foot of which is a rectangular corbel in the centre of the stairway, which carries a figural group of two fighters attacking. The obelisk is more than 20 meters high, and it sits atop a base with a ten-pointed star cross-section. Halfway up the elevation, five points of the star carry five stone figures that symbolize the branches of the Red Army that took part in the Battle of Batina: *Tankist, Artilleryman, Infantryman, Airman and Sailor*. From halfway to the top, the obelisk has a five-pointed star cross-section, and atop the obelisk stands the statue of *Victory*, a 7-metre-tall female figure looking towards the Danube, with a lowered sword in her right hand and a torch with a five-pointed star raised high in her left hand. Both lateral walls of the plateau have one 10-metre long bronze relief frieze each:

one depicts the Red Army soldiers crossing the Danube and the other the Partisans crossing.⁵⁰ Despite its challenging dimensions, the monument was finished within a short time frame: the preparations were made by Galić and Augustinčić in 1946, they started working in April 1947, and the monument was unveiled on November 9, 1947, on the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution.⁵¹ Also, the Russians applied pressure on Augustinčić’s concept during construction; for example, they wanted two figural groups to be created for the base, which Augustinčić cleverly avoided.⁵²

The monument in Batina represents an important point in Augustinčić’s oeuvre. Architecturally, it is well conceived, and its total dimensions were so impressive that Augustinčić never managed to surpass them. However, this is also an example of a monument in which the autonomy of form was sacrificed to the greatest extent for the benefit of explicit content and its glorification. Stone figures that symbolize different branches of the Red Army were rendered as clear illustrations and depersonalized carriers of attributes. The relief frieze, with its clear differentiation of characters to our “good” and their “bad,” is a comic-book narration of the course of battle and the military victory. Insisting on details and description led to banality, while the expressiveness was reduced to a pathetic and heroic gesture. Victory has a dominant position in the monument and assumes the function of an ideological lighthouse on the Danube.⁵³ According to Snježana Pintarić, with the crowning figure of Victory, Augustinčić came closest to the Soviet social realism model promoted as early as 1937 by the Russian sculptor Vera Mukhina in her sculptures exhibited in the Soviet Pavilion at the World Exhibition in Paris.⁵⁴ The *Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army* was Augustinčić’s first monument that showed absolute conformity of sculptural intention and the official government ideology. This was not the consequence of the client’s demand: Augustinčić insisted on his own artistic concept for the monument that he refused to abandon even after being pressured by the Russians. The interpretation of the monument as a whole is not possible outside the discourse of the post-war political situation because it was built on the basis of the war alliance and created during ideological proximity of Yugoslavia and the USSR before the Cominform resolution.⁵⁵ The construction of the monument in Batina had another far-reaching consequence: it inspired the establishment of Master Workshops in visual arts that were soon founded in Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana, which would produce new masters and where great monuments would be created in the future.⁵⁶

The period after 1945 was a turning point in many areas, including art. As Jasmina Bavaljak rightly stated: “The artistic climate of the post-war period of renovation and construction will thus significantly be determined by the then greatest political role model [...] (USSR). At that time, ideology strongly pervaded aesthetics and art criticism, mobilizing and using some of the intellectual potential for its powerful and implacable propaganda. The artwork had to satisfy criteria of the *socialist idea* (understood by the popular masses),



Fig. 8 / Sl. 8 Antun Augustinčić in front of the *Monument to Tito*, Kumrovec, 1960s. Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / Antun Augustinčić ispred *Spomenika Titu*, Kumrovec, 1960e. Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

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50
The complex was later expanded: in 1962, an ossuary was situated at the foot of the monument, containing the remains of 1,297 fighters, and in 1979, the Batina Battle Memorial Complex, designed by Srećko Lončarević, was built. Today, the monument is faced with the physical danger of a landslide. Previous approval of the Ministry of Culture (Class: UP/I-612-08/10-04/2104, Registration number: 532-04-08/1-10-04 dated November 26, 2010) for work on exploratory drilling and installation of measuring instruments for the purpose of conducting geomechanical investigations of the work on the monument “Pobjeda” with a crypt on Gradac hill in Batina.

51
Architectural parts were made of the Brač stone carved by stonemasons from the village of Pučišća on the island of Brač. Because of demanding sculptural works and short deadlines, Augustinčić required the assistance of his colleagues to help him execute the sketches in large dimensions: Giuseppe Pino Grassi, Radeta Stanković Grga Antunac, Rudolf Ivanković, Frano Kršinić, Ivan Sabolić, Želimir Janeš and Ante Despot.

52
Augustinčić wisely concluded that such requests from the Russian diplomat should be ignored, because by the time the monument was realized, it would be moved far away. Video interview with Antun Augustinčić in Klanjec from the 1970s. Museum documentation of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery, V-77.

53
Vujčić, “Antun Augustinčić: Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army. ‘Ideological Beacon’ and Litmus Monument,” 110–122.

54
Pintarić, “Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića,” 63.

55
The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), founded under the USSR auspices in 1947 passed a Resolution in June 1948, which accused the Communist Party of Yugoslavia of refusing to follow USSR’s instructions. Among other things, they were accused of exhibiting an anti-Soviet attitude, helping Greek communists against the will of the USSR, and for not implementing collectivization of the agricultural sector. In foreign policy, the rift between Yugoslavia and the USSR led to Yugoslavia shifting its alliance to the West, and internally it led to the persecution of all those who remained faithful to the Stalinist concept.

56
Vujčić, “Majstorske radionice likovnih umjetnosti,” 35–86.

57
Bavaljak, 74.

58
The popularity of this sculpture is evidenced by the fact that its sketch and derivative copies were abundantly used: the sketch for the monument was used as a souvenir cast in bronze in several thousand copies, while the sculpture’s fragments (head, bust, torso) were created in different versions (bronze, marble). It is important to note here that the variation of the Monument to Tito, enlarged in height to 630 cm and erected in Velenje in 1977, proved that monumentality is not always a question of dimension.

59
Horvat, “Sjećanja – 30 godina spomenika MIR u New Yorku.”

60
Vujčić, “Augustinčićev spomenik *Mir* u New Yorku.”

61
Horvat, 68.

62
Horvat, 72.

party loyalty (through the glorification of Communism) and the *national spirit* (as opposed to cosmopolitanism and bourgeois nationalism).⁵⁷ In Augustinčić’s sculptural oeuvre, the post-war period represented a regression compared to the artistic level he reached before the war. Often, it meant giving up on the artistic premise, formative and semantic simplification and creating monuments merely to satisfy the social and state need for the glorification of the National Liberation War or the social order. However, an exception was Augustinčić’s *Monument to Tito*, a portrait figure that is distinguished by authenticity, experience, and artistic quality. The first time Augustinčić portrayed Josip Broz was in November 1943 in Jajce, and the photograph of this portrait session was seen around the world, providing testimony that the Partisan movement in Yugoslavia was not only an armed struggle. That bust was destroyed during military operations, so after the war, Augustinčić voluntarily created a portrait figure of Tito, 210 cm tall, with his head bowed and wearing a long military coat, holding his hands behind his back as he steps forward, and called it *Tito in a Military Coat* (Fig. 8). This image of Tito differed from previous portrayals of revolutionaries and represented an important deviation from the undeniably heroic figuration that characterized the monuments of the time, wherein the adjective socialist is unfounded, i.e. possible only as a superficial identification of theme and style. Moreover, in this case, we can talk about a kind of monumental intimacy. After the first copy of this monumental figure was cast in bronze in October 1948 and installed in front of Tito’s birth house in Kumrovec, additional 20-odd copies were cast by the end of the 1980s, which represents a precedent in Croatian sculpture in terms of the number of casts for a sculpture of that size.⁵⁸

In the Master Workshop at Jabukovac in Zagreb, Antun Augustinčić and his assistants created a series of monuments that were used, among other things, in the service of Yugoslavia’s cultural diplomacy. One of the most imposing was the *Peace Monument*, unveiled in 1954 in New York as a gift from Yugoslavia to the United Nations organization. The circumstances under which this equestrian monument was created were turbulent, as evidenced in the recollections of Krešimir Horvat, a diplomat in the Yugoslav Permanent Mission to the UN from 1952 to 1956,⁵⁹ and from later research.⁶⁰ After World War II, the United Nations General Assembly decided that the UN headquarters would be established in the United States of America. In 1946, New York City and the Rockefeller family donated a plot of land in Manhattan for the purpose of building the UN headquarters. The construction of the complex began in 1949, and each member state was given a specific task of refining the space. The then-Yugoslav government decided to emphasize its commitment to world peace by giving a gift to the United Nations, and they asked Augustinčić to conceive and execute this idea.⁶¹ Augustinčić accepted the task and proposed he create a symbolic equestrian statue. In 1952, he finished the sketch that depicted the monument in great detail: a triumphant female figure (“If women were in charge of politics, there would be no wars,” he said on one occasion)⁶² looking resolutely

straight ahead, holding a globe in her right hand and an olive branch in her raised left hand. The cape fluttering behind her and the movement of the horse suggest a powerful forward momentum, i.e. the symbolic leadership of world nations toward peace. This is why the composition, apart from its title *Peace* (or *Peace Monument*) has another name: *The Herald of Peace*. Augustinčić was given absolute conceptual and artistic freedom. He executed it, with the help of collaborators (primarily, sculptor Velibor Mačukatin), by literally enlarging the sketch. He precisely engineered the position of the monument in relation to the surrounding buildings; however, his idea was not implemented. Since the ultimate evaluation of any monument also depends on its successful positioning in space, it is worth examining this example. In 1952, after the UN complex was largely finished, Augustinčić travelled to New York to personally decide on the exact location of the monument. In agreement with the Board of Design of the UN buildings, led by architect Wallace K. Harrison, who was named its Director of Planning, it was decided that the monument should be installed in front of the General Assembly building, on a large plateau by the northern entrance, through which thousands of visitors pass every day. Augustinčić wanted the monument to be positioned — as he put it — in a eurythmic way, i.e. for there to be a harmonious relation between the position and dimension of the monument, its viewpoint and rhythm, by which it would create a composite unit with the cubes of UN buildings: in an imagined perspectival line that started on top of the vertical 160-metre tall building of the Secretariat, down to the horizontal General Assembly building, *Peace* would be positioned as the final chord of the entire complex.⁶³ Augustinčić wanted to avoid a typical monument placement on the main axis of the plateau; instead, he envisaged it in the corner of the plateau, positioned in such a way that its silhouette is visible against the East River. The UN Commission and the UN Secretary-General, Norwegian Trygve H. Lie approved of the proposal and Augustinčić returned to Zagreb and started working on the monument. In the course of Augustinčić’s work, the UN elected its new Secretary-General, Scandinavian diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld, who changed the decision on the location of the monument. Krešimir Horvat wrote that he disliked the idea of placing the monument on the plateau immediately next to the General Assembly building, and he simply suggested that the monument be positioned at the end of a large lawn near the East River but away from the designed and agreed position.⁶⁴ Augustinčić was unpleasantly surprised by this decision, but despite his arguments and anger, the monument was assigned a new position. Eventually, it was moved approximately 40 metres away from the initially planned location and, although this provided the monument with more space, the original unifying concept and organic connection with the General Assembly building that Augustinčić envisioned were lost⁶⁵ (Fig. 9).

Therefore, the monument itself was created by Augustinčić, but the decision to position it in front of the UN building was not his. In terms of his decision for an equestrian figure to represent world peace, it seems that Augustinčić remained



Fig. 9 / Sl. 9 *Peace Monument*, New York, 1956. PHOTO: L. Goranin, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive). / *Spomenik Mir*, New York, 1956. (FOTO: L. Goranin, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv).

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safely ensconced in his own long-ago proven and adopted solutions. He did not attempt to explore or research new expressive possibilities. In keeping with the traditional figuration of the equestrian sculpture, Augustinčić came into conflict with Dag Hammarskjöld, who preferred contemporary abstract art and considered Augustinčić’s monument anachronistic.⁶⁶ That was the reason why he wanted to move it further away from the entrance to the UN General Assembly. Frankly, this was the beginning of a different reception of his monuments that the sculptor was not accustomed to. Thus far, his monuments were unconditionally accepted and glorified by the media; however, times have changed, and traditional sculpture, such as the figure in bronze or stone, was receding in Western art in favour of new tendencies, both in small-scale and monumental dimensions. Such voices of opposition to Augustinčić’s monumental sculpture will become more frequent also within Croatian art criticism in the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁷ Because of the importance of its location and imposing dimensions, the monument in New York made Augustinčić famous in his homeland and internationally recognized. He was not present at the unveiling ceremony because he was already working on the monument commemorating the victims of fascism in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian monuments that were created by Antun Augustinčić and Frano Kršinić together (in Addis Ababa, Harar and Holetta) were a direct consequence of Yugoslav international policy and its cultural diplomacy. As part of the Non-Aligned Movement that Ethiopia was also a member of, meetings between Tito and the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie intensified in the early 1950s. At the end of July 1954, Haile Selassie visited Yugoslavia, and Augustinčić attended the meeting on the Brijuni Islands. On that occasion, Augustinčić was asked to create a monument in Ethiopia to commemorate the victims of Italian Fascist occupation.⁶⁸ Maro Grbić, grandson of Frano Kršinić wrote that Augustinčić accepted the offer and engaged Kršinić as a collaborator. They both travelled to Addis Ababa at the end of 1954, where they were welcomed by the emperor and given “*free reign* [italics D.V.] to create sketches and budget on the basis of their own experiences in building monuments and collect local historical, ethnic and urban elements. After several weeks of discussions and negotiations, Augustinčić and Kršinić created three models made of improvised materials and submitted them to the Emperor for inspection. He chose the version with an obelisk and, pleased with the sketch, proposed several other monuments in different cities.”⁶⁹ Upon their return to Zagreb, they decided on the monument’s final form: in the centre of a circular plateau stands a three-sided obelisk, 26 metres tall, with two reliefs that run, one above the other, around all three sides of the obelisk. The reliefs, almost fully in the round, depict events that took place between 1935 and 1937: the lower reliefs show the Emperor handing books to children, the attack by the Italian army and the announcement of mobilization, and they are connected with corner figures of a soldier and a spinner; the upper relief depicts the massacre the Italian troops committed upon the people of Addis

63 Vujčić, “Augustinčićev spomenik Mir u New Yorku,” 56.

64 Horvat, 71.

65 In the presence of the media, the monument was officially unveiled on December 2, 1954 by the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, chairman of the IX. Session of the UN General Assembly, Eelco Van Klefens and the then Head of the Yugoslav Permanent Mission to the UN, dr. Jože Brilej.

66 Horvat, 71.

67 Kobia, Gordana, “Mi smo megalomani“ (interview). *Oko*, Zagreb, October 4, 1979.

68 Grbić, “Zajednički radovi Antuna Augustinčića i Frana Kršinića.”

69 *Ibid.*, 4.

Ababa, and with corner figures and motif of the tribulation, there is also the character of Judith. Situated above them, on the edge of the obelisk stands the imperial symbol: the figure of Lion of Judah. Augustinčić and Kršinić developed this iconographic programme during their stay in Ethiopia and modified it during execution. As far as we know, the Ethiopian side did not exert any pressure regarding the precisely defined scenes or appearance of protagonists, nor did they make any other attempts to intervene into the monument concept. Both sculptors took to the task with great care, and it seems that the emperor was more than pleased. The only problems they encountered were technical, not artistic, in nature. The entire monument was officially unveiled on November 2, 1955 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Emperor's coronation, and the monument was more than well received, both in Ethiopia and Yugoslavia (Fig. 10). Moreover, if the opinion of the local population speaks to the success of a monument, then the *Monument to the Victims of Fascism* in Addis Ababa is an example of the function that was successfully achieved: every year, from the day the monument was erected, the commemoration of the Italian massacre was held at the foot of the monument. Following the 1974 regime change, almost all monuments from the Emperor Haile Selassie's time were destroyed, and especially those that had a motif of the Lion of Judah. Surprisingly, the *Monument to the Victims Yekatit 12 / Sidist Kilo*⁷⁰ still stands undisturbed in the same place; moreover, it again became the stage for traditional celebrations.⁷¹

While there was not much interference from the client on the visual aspect or concept of the monument in Addis Ababa, during the execution of the *Monument to Ras Makonnen*⁷² in Harar in 1959, the desire for control was more pronounced. Since it was commemorating Haile Selassie's father, that desire was understandable. It was decided that the monument would be an equestrian statue to be situated in the old Ethiopian city of Harar, governed at one time by both Ras Makonnen and Haile Selassie. Antun Augustinčić stated that, at the invitation of the Imperial Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Public Works and Communications — Addis Ababa, he created and cast in bronze the equestrian monument of Ras Makonnen for Harar in Ethiopia, 3.90 metres tall, that he and Frano Kršinić worked on from 1957 to 1959, and that it was commissioned by His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie.⁷³

The sculptors started creating the monument only after the emperor saw and approved the models.⁷⁴ On that subject, M. Grbić wrote: "After months of negotiations regarding the visual aspect of the monument, Augustinčić and Kršinić created two models and sent them to Addis Ababa for inspection [...] According to written instructions and images, and experiences from previous equestrian monuments [...], Augustinčić and Kršinić created a dignified image of Makonnen in a dress military uniform wearing a chieftain's crown, spear in his right hand and shield in the left, on a strong horse proudly ascending a small hill. The execution of the figure started in late September and it was finished during November with the assistance of Vladimir Herljević. Since



Fig. 10 / Sl. 10 *Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, Addis Ababa, 1955. PHOTO: Tošo Dabac, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Spomenik žrtvama fašizma*, Addis Ababa, 1955. FOTO: Tošo Dabac, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

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Fig. 11 / Sl. 11 *Monument to Ras Makonnen*, Harar, 2013. PHOTO: Denis Pešut, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Spomenik rasu Makonnenu*, Harar, 2013. FOTO: Denis Pešut, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

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The day of the massacre, February 19, 1937, is recorded in the Ethiopian calendar as having occurred on 12 Yekatit, in year 1929, so the monument is known in Ethiopia as *Monument to the Victims of 12 Yekatit*, i.e. *Sidist Kilo*, the name of that city district.

71

Vujčić, "Priče o spomenicima."

72

Ras (in Ethiopian: Duke) Makonnen was the Ethiopian general who became famous during the First Italo-Ethiopian War when in the Battle of Adwa on March 1, 1896, he defeated the Italian army led by General Baratieri. Ras Makonnen was the father of Tafari Makonnen, later known as Emperor Haile Selassie.

73

Augustinčić's request for the issuance of the customs export permit, dated November 11, 1959. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-467.

74

Pintarić, "Javni i nadgrobni spomenici Antuna Augustinčića," 77.

75

Grbić, "Zajednički radovi Antuna Augustinčića i Frana Kršinića," 20.

76

Letter of the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works and Communication, sent to Antun Augustinčić on June 11, 1959. Archive of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Klanjec, archive folder A-467.

77

(b) "Treći spomenik za Etiopiju," *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, January 20, 1959.

78

The official website of Afewerk Tekle (<http://www.maitreafewerktekle.com/>) no longer exists. On some of the websites that mention this monument (for example: <https://equestrianstatue.org/makonnen-ras/>), the author pointed out the lack of mention of Augustinčić and Kršinić. Today, this information has been corrected, but there is still insufficient awareness of their authorship.

the final visual aspect was supposed to be approved by the most prominent Ethiopian painter Afewerk Teklé, they waited for his arrival at the beginning of 1959. Finally, after numerous corrections done following written and verbal demands of Ethiopian representatives, the sculpture was submitted for casting"⁷⁵ The said demands were related to iconographic precision, i.e. accuracy of descriptive content and details. The Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works and Communications sent a letter to Augustinčić with precise instructions: "The rider's head must look up, and the treatment of the head must be faithful to the attached drawing [...] The sword should be on the right side of the rider (Ethiopian style), as shown in the original drawing... The horse's head is a bit too small. Which is why the proportions, as well as the slant, must be identical to model B..."⁷⁶ The monument was cast in bronze in the Zagreb Art Foundry and transported to Harar in June 1959, where it was installed in front of the Military Academy (Fig. 11). This equestrian figure, with its picturesque ethnographic details, is different from previous horsemen by Augustinčić. He himself said that they tried to depict "...the true strength of a military commander [...] who has a war-like posture but whose appearance also betrays philosophical contemplation [...] we wanted it to be an artistically powerful work without naturalistic elements and to also contain an element of Ethiopian folklore [...] The statue has one peculiarity, its decorative details; however, they do not irritate but provide its true value."⁷⁷ Another interesting fact is that the aforementioned Ethiopian artist Afewerk Teklè (1932–2012) claims authorship of the monument on his webpage, without even a mention of its true authors, Augustinčić and Kršinić.⁷⁸

During the 1950s, Augustinčić was completely devoted to the creation of monuments for New York and Ethiopia. His Master Workshop resembled a monument factory, while Augustinčić himself, to a large extent, became his associates' supervisor, an authority figure who approved the work that was done, corrected it and provided the final touch to clay models. He was also present when monuments were cast in plaster and bronze, supervising the quality of the work. He was so busy that he rejected many commissions he was offered to build monuments in Yugoslavia, and he sent them to his colleagues who were not so overwhelmed with work.

However, there was one monument that he could not reject because he made a promise to the Association of Fighters of the People's Liberation War of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1948. It was the *Monument to the Fallen Krajišnici* on Banj Hill (formerly Šehitluci) above Banja Luka. This imposing monument, the execution of which was protracted until 1961, as a whole and in its details, deserves the epithet of a monument with the most expressive (neo)soc-realist components in the territory of former Yugoslavia. It is situated atop a hill where the Regional Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Bosanska Krajina was held in 1941 and where the decision was made to initiate an organized national resistance. The monument is conceived as a mausoleum that suggests, with its irregular form, a cave in the hill, with reliefs

on its outer surface that thematise the People’s Liberation War (Fig. 12). Augustinčić’s long-term associate, architect Drago Galić and academic sculptor and professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Grga Antunac participated in building the monument. Antunac, together with a team of sculptors and stonemasons, transferred Augustinčić’s reliefs into stone on the island of Brač. The monument was erected on a concrete structure coated in stone from Brač, it is 24 metres long, 13.5 metres high and 9 metres wide, with a symbolic orientation towards the south, in the direction of Bosanska Krajina. On the mausoleum’s façade, above the entrance, is an almost 6 metres tall relief depiction of a male figure standing in a wide stance, holding a flag, that symbolizes the Party as the conceptual leader of the uprising. Along both lateral sides, there is a relief frieze containing approximately 300 characters, that represent suffering, struggle and victory of the people of that region. The mausoleum’s interior comprises the ossuary and a large painted hall as a thematic continuation of the sculptural interpretation on the external surface of the monument. Despite its interior being unfinished, the monument was officially unveiled on July 27, 1961, on the Day of Uprising of the People of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁹



Fig. 12 / Sl. 12 Monument to the Fallen Krajišnici, Banja Luka, 2012. PHOTO: Darko Bavoľjak, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / Spomenik palim Krajišnicima, Banja Luka, 2012. FOTO: Darko Bavoľjak, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

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In an artistic and art historical discourse, the *Monument to the Fallen Krajišnici in the People’s Liberation War* represents a kind of *Biblia pauperum* that illustrates, commemorates, and interprets the foundational points of ideological historicism in the period between 1941 and 1945. Augustinčić based the sculptural segment on the pre-war, socially engaged theme that was present in his oeuvre since the art group *Zemlja* period; however, in this monument, he used it (in a morphologically robust way, flat and hard) and solely as a means of direct one-dimensional glorification and an ideologically “orthodox” interpretation of historical events. The heroic and pathetic gesture, the narrative with a calculated emotional effect and the comic-book black-and-white description of characters that predominated in the post-war years became clumsy in the context of the early 1960s.⁸⁰

The narrative focus is a dominant characteristic of Augustinčić’s final large-scale sculptural complex, *Monument to the Peasant Revolt and Matija Gubec* in Gornja Stubica, by which the master in the 1970s symbolically returned to the themes of his native land. Domination of narrative content was also the most frequent argument of numerous critical reviews that were directed at this monument. The other objections were related to the public monument competition; however, it seems that the essence of the complaint was the fact that, in the 1970s, it was always the “orthodox,” figurative and well-established artist who was commissioned to create such a large work, and not younger generations who displayed new poetics. The controversy refused to die down long after the monument was unveiled, and misunderstandings surrounding the competition extend to this day. The monument’s theme was deeply rooted in this part of Europe: the large peasant revolt that engulfed parts of Hrvatsko Zagorje and Slovenia in 1573 and was one of the

most powerful and far-reaching conflagrations of popular revolt in the entire Croatian and Slovenian history. Memories of the Revolt lived among the people for a long time, especially in its epicentre, the region of Stubica. After World War II, there was a strong tendency present in Yugoslavia to connect the social and revolutionary foundation of the Peasant Revolt with the current social order, and an awareness of the need to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Revolt appeared relatively early, accompanied by an unequivocal social consensus. This enabled representatives of the small municipality of Donja Stubica to make very ambitious plans for the construction of a memorial site in the mid-1960s. Their initiative brought together key national institutions (from the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Urban Planning Institute of Croatia to the Heritage Foundation and Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia) and received the patronage of the President of SFRY. They not only succeeded in building the monument, but in transforming the entire region of Stubica: the foundation of the Museum of Peasant Uprisings, construction of new primary schools, establishment of health and spa facilities, construction of the water supply system and transport infrastructure. Municipal representatives of Donja Stubica asked Augustinčić to draw the sketch for the monument.⁸¹ On that occasion, they presented him with the land survey map of the selected location on the Samci Hill atop Gornja Stubica, in the immediate vicinity of the former castle of the noble family Oršić. Augustinčić visited Stubica several times that year and drew sketches of concept designs. But his monumental expositions stopped being current on 30 December 1967, when the Law on Erecting Monuments to Historical Events and Persons entered into force, whose Article 4 contains a provision about an obligatory issuance of a competition.⁸² Augustinčić then withdrew from the project, without even considering participating in the competition. He resolutely expressed his opinion in an interview: “Go on, tell Krleža to submit a novella for a competition! You are not going to tell him that, because if you are interested, you will simply order it from him... Because we all know what Krleža can do and how he writes. Therefore, when you order something from him, you expect it to be in his style. It is the same with sculptors. You know, when you commission a sketch from Kršinić, from Radauš, Bakić, Džamonja, or Radovani, what the sketch is going to look like. That is why you commissioned it. If you do not like the concept, not the manner, because you know what the manner of execution will look like, that is another matter entirely. You are going to pay what you owe and continue the search. Besides, I know how competitions work. They are an opportunity for the young and the unknown and, actually, if I were to participate in the competition, everybody would recognize my work. Where is the anonymity in that?”⁸³ Others shared Augustinčić’s opinion: and we would later see that none of the most prominent contemporary sculptors (Frano Kršinić, Vanja Radauš, Vojin Bakić, Dušan Džamonja, Kosta Angeli Radovani...) wanted to participate in the competition. An anonymous, nationwide Yugoslav competition was launched in December 1969 that emphasized the need for the monument and its setting to

79 Bk, “Centralna republička proslava u Banjaluci,” *Krajiške novine*, Banjaluka, January 16, 1961, 1. Soon after the official unveiling, the monument showed first signs of deterioration (water in the interior, cracked stone, parts of the relief falling off) caused by inadequate synergy during construction, time constraints, weather conditions and similar. Today, the monument is again in a poor condition. In 2021, Dalibor Miljević filmed a documentary about the *Monument to the Fallen Krajišnici* and its recent state, titled *The Sufferings of a Monument*.

80 Vujčić, “Antun Augustinčić: Spomenik palim Krajišnicima,” 116.

81 Vujčić, “Spomen na Spomenik,”

82 “In case of erecting monuments of architectural or artistic importance, the request has to attach the documentation with a concept design selected by the special jury of the requesting party, following the issuance of a competition.” Narodne Novine, no. 1, XXIV (CXXX), dated January 12, 1968.

83 Škunca, “Antun Augustinčić: Jedamput natječaj, drugi put ne.”

“fit in organically with real life.” It was decided that the monument would be located near the Oršić Manor. The project was supposed to include a way to organize the area between the castle and the monument, with a special emphasis on both structures being viewed as a functional and spatial unit. Likewise, the authors were asked to pay special attention to the choice of materials that had to be “permanent and appropriate for regional climate.” A total of 86 works, different in artistic poetics and quality, were submitted in the design competition. A jury of experts, composed of art historians, architects, engineers, artists, and politicians analysed them at numerous meetings held during 1970. They held lively and reasoned discussions and expressed opinions on sculptural examination of new forms, rebellion against conventional representations; they talked about the difficulties of transforming ideas into symbols, the function and future of the monument, integrating the monument with the landscape and the castle. Dissonant tones could also be heard, and present throughout was the concern about the model’s feasibility, the financial limitations and short deadline.⁸⁴ Of the six shortlisted works, none of them were awarded first prize and deemed appropriate for execution. Eventually, they concluded there was no time, money or point in launching a new, possibly international, competition. Therefore, at a session held on March 6, 1971, it was decided to contact Augustinčić again. He accepted the offer and was commissioned directly to create the monument.

Augustinčić designed the monument with the intention for it to function as a memorial site and a place of new creation. In order to avoid the collision with the architecture of the Oršić Manor, he did not situate the monument at a clearing next to the castle, but at a hill side overlooking the Stubica valley: “... I saw that it would not function well, that the monument and the castle would not fit well together, that they would fight and want to push one another down the hill. The situation on the other side is completely different. One would not disturb the other, and they will be connected with a circular road, and I think the monument would be more appropriate there.”⁸⁵ He designed the 70-metre-long stone escarpment cut into the hill, thus creating a spacious plateau that was finished with a semi-circular stairway (Fig.13). Two symmetrical monument wings spread horizontally in front of the escarpment, closing the 130° angle (each 20 metres long and 7.5 metres high), filled with bronze reliefs. In front of the reliefs, a 6.5 metres tall figure of Matija Gubec stands on the plateau, with his arms spread and the life-size figure of Petrica Kerempuh⁸⁶ holding a *tambura* instrument in his hands. During 1972 and 1973, constrained by time limits, Augustinčić started to model the relief in clay in his Master Workshop at Jabukovac. The task was tremendous, so Augustinčić engaged his trusted associates, sculptors Nikola Bolčević, Vladimir Herljević, Stanko Jančić, Velibor Mačukatin, Luka Musulin, Vjekoslav Rukljač and Ivan Sabolić. Augustinčić conceived the monument as a stage, both in content and function: auxiliary rooms and a dressing room for actors who would perform on the plateau in front of the monument, were planned in the space



Fig. 13 / Sl. 13 *Monument to the Peasant Revolt and Matija Gubec*, Gornja Stubica, 2013. Photo: Goran Vranić, Antun Augustinčić Gallery, Photo Archive. / *Spomenik Seljačkoj buni i Matiji Gupcu*, Gornja Stubica, 2013. Fotografija: Goran Vranić, Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, Fotografski arhiv.

↑

between the escarpment and the reliefs! He incorporated over three hundred figures in reliefs that cover both wings of the monument, the total surface of which is more than 180 m²: one side shows the scenes from the Battle of Stubica (maelstrom of people and horses, the clash between the aristocratic army and rebellious peasants), and the other side a collage of loosely connected scenes, the phantasmagorical *Balade Petrice Kerempuha*, a literary masterpiece of M. Krleža.⁸⁷ *The Monument to the Peasant Revolt and Matija Gubec* was unveiled on October 14, 1973 at a large ceremony attended by thousands of people and the highest political figures in Yugoslavia of the time.⁸⁸

After Augustinčić’s monument was finished, there were many objections: from pseudo-monumentality and schematic figuration to excessive literalness and empty narration, from pathetic gesticulation that evoked post-war heroism to the calculated intention to semantically connect Matija Gubec and Josip Broz. It was considered an anachronistic, neo-soc-realist monument, and its location next to the Oršić Castle was hyperbolically proclaimed as aggressive “monumental vampirism.”⁸⁹ The fact is that Augustinčić’s monument was a paradigmatic example of sculpture that refused to give up on the tried and tested recipes of figuration and narration. It is true that the sculptural segment is not created so much by the visual arts means as it is through verbal communication. Nevertheless, we should consider archival research that shows some of the aforementioned objections were not based on fact but impassioned polemics. The competition, conducted in a democratic fashion and judged fairly, simply did not yield a consensus about a single work that was deemed satisfactory to a degree that merited it becoming the project design. We should also consider the fact that it was Augustinčić who displaced the monument outside the manor’s orbit in order to avoid their collision and point out that the monument in Stubica functions precisely as Augustinčić envisaged it to this day: not only as an integral sculptural fact in space and the collective consciousness but also as a place of gathering and celebrations. Some of the contemporary public perceived the entire commemoration of the Revolt as a demonstration of political will and a (misdirected) extravagance,⁹⁰ neglecting the fact that this part of Hrvatsko Zagorje finally became prosperous as a result. The monument itself (from its concept through the competition to its realization) was considered through an ideological, daily political prism. The factual argumentation of the expert jury about the works that were submitted in the competition was being overlooked, and Augustinčić’s monument did not receive many balanced reviews. Either it was overly praised (mostly in circles whose receptive abilities were not equal to artistic turns) or it was subject to attack by those who wanted to finally depose the protagonists of, in their opinion, a bygone era.

The monument in Stubica was Antun Augustinčić’s final large-scale work; in his later concepts and works, he mostly recycled previously created sculptures. With the donation of his sculptural oeuvre to his native Klanjec and the

84
Competition documentation for the construction of the monument is kept in the museum documentation of the Museums of Hrvatsko Zagorje – Museum of Peasant Uprisings, Gornja Stubica. Dokumentacija o osnivanju i povijesti muzeja, Natječaj općejugoslavenski 1970 (OPM-1/1970).
85
Škunca, “Antun Augustinčić: Jedamput natječaj, drugi put ne.”
86
Petrica Kerempuh is the central literary character in *Balade Petrice Kerempuha* that Miroslav Krleža published in 1936. Petrica Kerempuh, as a vagabond and sardonic jester is based on the Medieval German legend of Till Eulenspiegel.
87
Miroslav Krleža, *Balade Petrice Kerempuha*, Ljubljana, 1936.
88
Lacmanović, “Tito otkrio spomenik.”
89
Ivančević, 27.
90
In conversation with Enes Čengi, Krleža expressed his opinion about the Revolt commemoration and succinctly said that money that was spent on monument construction and Vatroslav Mimica’s film should have been used to build the “Matija Gubec memorial hospital.”

opening of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery to the public in 1976, the master was bringing his work to its conclusion. His frequent visits to Klanjec in the final years of his life were filled with meeting friends and playing chess. Augustinčić died on May 10, 1979 and was buried in Klanjec in the Gallery sculpture park.

FINAL
THOUGHTS

As a young sculptor, Augustinčić was formed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, where he initially studied with professors R.Valdec and R. Frangeš Mihanović, who imparted to him the importance of craftsmanship in sculpture, while alongside I. Meštrović, he was able to come into contact with the rules of monumental sculpture. When he moved to Paris to study, he encountered the works of A. Rodin and A. Bourdelle, whom he later, together with Donatello, named as relevant for his sculptural development. After initial stylizations in the manner of Meštrović and Art Deco, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he developed his own sculptural postulates that he would adhere to until the end of his life. Augustinčić’s sculpture was characterized by exceptional modelling skill, competent craftsmanship and figuration based in realism, which proved amenable to monumental sculpture that was on the ascendance in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, with commemorative monuments to the Karađorđević dynasty, especially after the assassination of King Alexander I in Marseille in 1934. After the first large-scale monumental project with a visible expressionist drama in the manner of E. Barlach, Augustinčić freed his sculpture from stylization and went in the clear direction of realism, and the skilfully moved and convincingly positioned figures. He developed a special affinity for equestrian monuments: aptitude in their execution earned him victories in monument competitions and became his ostentatious monumental motif. In the 1930s, Augustinčić participated in monument competitions and was the first Croatian sculptor to win an international monument competition (*Monument to the Silesian Uprising and Marshal Piłsudski in Katowice*), which garnered him recognition in the broader European context. Expressive figuration and excellent cooperation with architect Drago Galić earned Augustinčić the status of the monumental sculptor whose works were in great demand at local and national levels. With designs he won through competitions, Augustinčić also created monuments based on direct commissions, in keeping with already adopted artistic solutions. In this period, he firmly aligned himself with left-wing artists, and that will remain his worldview and political attitude until the end of his life. After the monuments he created for the Karađorđević dynasty, the outbreak of World War II found Augustinčić in Zagreb established as one of our most prominent sculptors, so *Poglavnik* Ante Pavelić commissioned him to create his portrait. In 1943, Augustinčić joined the Partisan movement and so began his definitive affirmation as a sculptor and a powerful social and political figure (vice president of AVNOJ). In 1944 in Moscow, after he created the insignia for the newly

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established Yugoslav state, he became its first state sculptor. After the war, Augustinčić participated in the foundation and leadership of national institutions (professor and rector of the Academy of Fine Arts, head of the Master Workshop, member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts), and he had a close relationship with Josip Broz Tito, with whom he cooperated before the war. While his social reputation was at its height, in terms of the discourse of monumental sculpture, his development halted. In his monumental sculptures, Augustinčić was repeating previously adopted solutions, the only difference being that the post-war morphology was provided with a new ideological iconography. Monuments commemorating the People’s Liberation War were erected all over former Yugoslavia, and Augustinčić was receiving direct commissions to make them. He was given artistic autonomy within an accepted ideological framework and was able to independently decide on the manner of execution. In Augustinčić’s case, this may have proved somewhat absurd: before the war, he was faced with the limitations imposed by the clients and yet was artistically freer and more progressive than the competition. In the period of Communism, he had no limitations imposed upon his work, and yet, with his insistence on the tried and tested concepts of traditional figuration in the service of ideology, he became his own biggest censor. He created the largest monument in Europe in the 1940s (*Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army*, in Batina) with an excellent architectural concept (D. Galić); however, sculpturally, it was reduced to a banal illustration of heroism, thus representing a paradigmatic example of socrealism. If the complex in Batina is monumental, then the *Monument to the Fallen Krajišnici* atop Banja Luka is a megalomaniac example of the *Biblia pauperum* and of the use of sculpture in the service of Communist indoctrination. Chronologically, the monuments in New York and Ethiopia stand between those two works, and they prove Augustinčić’s superiority in equestrian sculpture, but nothing more than that. In the post-war period, Augustinčić did not demonstrate his artistic capacity in large-scale monumental projects but (absurdly) in monumental intimism, for example, in the *Monument to Tito* that he created in 1948 and a series of female torsos and portraits. In the silence of his studio in the 1950s, he created a series of exceptional female torsos that stand on the other side of discussions on figuration or abstraction, and prove his sculptural mastery.

From the beginning of his career as a sculptor, Augustinčić was perceived as a great talent who rid himself of Meštrović’s influence and stubbornly followed his own path. After his first successes in monument competitions, he was praised for his convincing figuration, dramatic credibility, and skill in executing large dimensions, especially in equestrian monuments. The period of affirmative reception of Augustinčić’s sculpture continued after World War II, and it reached apologetic heights. After 1945, Augustinčić, as a sculptor, pedagogue, public servant, and a human being, participated in building a better post-war society compelled by conviction, not by force. Until the 1950s, his sculptural production was accepted unconditionally, and he replaced

the pre-war authority of I. Meštrović. As clients were previously calling upon I. Meštrović to approve the plaster models of young sculptors before they were cast in bronze, so they were now calling on Augustinčić to serve as an artistic arbiter who decided on the quality of an artwork.⁹¹ Proof of Augustinčić’s status in the post-war art scene in Yugoslavia was his participation in the XXV Venice Biennale in 1950 when Yugoslavia was represented by sculptors Antun Augustinčić, Vanja Radauš, Vojin Bakić and Kosta Angeli Radovani.⁹² However, things started to change with the arrival of new generations of artists and art historians in the early 1950s. In the region of former Yugoslavia, and especially Croatia and Zagreb, groups of artists like *Exat 51*, *New Tendencies*, and young art critics such as Radoslav Putar, Dimitrije Bašičević and Mate Meštrović appeared in the art scene and promoted a different visual poetics, in keeping with the times, especially abstract art, and sharply attacked the current artistic “establishment.” The conflict manifested in several ways, from personal to principled levels; however, it was clear that, essentially, the confrontation was not related only to art but acquiring, i.e. losing positions of power. Augustinčić refused to engage in direct confrontations, but we can see from his interviews that he considered some of the new artistic expressions deviant, leaving them to the younger generations. He remained faithful to his own understanding of art and focused his attention on executing commissions in the service of cultural diplomacy of former Yugoslavia and working in his studio. Monumental production in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s thrived in the works of Bogdan Bogdanović, Vojin Bakić, Dušan Džamonja and Kosta Angeli Radovani, completely removed from ideological iconography and reaching an artistic level that was recently recognized internationally.⁹³ In this period, Augustinčić remained true to his political and artistic opinions, and it was when he was confronted with his first open competition in Yugoslavia, for the monument in Stubica. The reception of that monument (whose execution is elaborated in this paper) and attacks directed against it, represent an example of viewing Augustinčić as an exponent of a bygone era, as a still powerful political protagonist, a usurper of the art scene that was ready for new artists and new art.

During the breakup of Yugoslavia and its Communist system in the 1990s, many monuments built in the former state were destroyed, including some by Augustinčić. He and his work were often perceived in a simplified manner, exclusively as a protagonist of the unpopular state. Communist heritage proved to be a heavy burden: during the Homeland War, the five-pointed star symbolized a cruel destruction of Croatia and its people, and great animosity was aimed at monuments from the Communist era; many were unable to distinguish the Yugoslav regime from the artwork. Augustinčić, with the social role he played and his closeness to Tito, was identified with the Communist regime, which proved fatal for some of his works.⁹⁴ It took time and effort for his sculptural oeuvre to be judged objectively, outside ideological entrenchments. And, in the last twenty-odd years — with exhibitions, publications and symposia that thematised his sculptural body of

work — came statements of contemporaries, students and associates who spoke of him as a superior master, competent pedagogue and generous teacher. Augustinčić is today rightly considered one of the greatest sculptors of the 20th century in this region, and some of his monuments, intimate sculptures and portraits are considered the best works of his time.

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91
In case of the monument in Villefranche, France, by Vanja Radauš, Augustinčić was called to confirm the quality of plaster figures. Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, fund 317.
92
The Pavilion was dominated by Augustinčić’s figure of *Victory* from the *Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army* in Batina, shown in front of the entrance to the pavilion, and *Carrying the Wounded* and the Kumrovec *Monument to Tito* in the exhibition hall.
93
Exhibition “Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980,” MoMA, New York, 2018.
94
During the 1990s, Augustinčić’s monuments in Gradac, Imotski and Nova Gradiška were destroyed, and portraits of Tito and his wife Jovanka were moved from the permanent collection of the Gallery in Klanjec for security reasons. In 2004, Augustinčić’s *Monument to Tito* in Kumrovec was destroyed with planted explosives.

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★★
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ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI	DAVORIN VUJČIĆ	ANTUN AUGUSTINČIĆ: ARTISTIC FREEDOM IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE	ANTUN AUGUSTINČIĆ: UMJETNIČKA SLOBODA U KONTEKSTU SPOMENIČKE SKULPTURE
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