War, Revolution and Memory (Zagreb, 17-18 Feb 17)

Zagreb, Feb 17–18, 2017
Deadline: Nov 1, 2016

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War, Revolution and Memory: Post-War Monuments in Post-Communist Europe
International Conference

World War II caused a collective trauma in the memory of Europeans, which resulted in the erection of countless monuments all over Europe to commemorate the events and battles as well as the civilian and military victims. In the period of almost 45 years, numerous memorial sites were created in the Communist Europe. Contrary to the dominant belief that the monuments in the Eastern Bloc and Non-aligned Yugoslavia were created exclusively in the spirit of Socialist Realism and erected by order of state authorities, typologically and stylistically these monuments form a heterogeneous group, and were erected both by the state and the local communities.

Since their creation, and due to the fact that they were conceived as "intentional monuments" (in the sense of Riegl's gewollte Denkmale), a number of governmental regulations have been adopted in order to ensure that this heritage is adequately protected and maintained.

The decline of Communism and the introduction of the market economy and multi-party system in the newly emerged countries resulted in multiple effects, both on the institutional and symbolic level. On the institutional and legislative level, it brought significant changes within the legal framework, functioning of institutions and civil services of the post-socialist countries. On the symbolic level this led to rejection of the bearers of symbolic capital of the former system.

Therefore, the perception of monuments created in the period of Real Socialism to commemorate World War II was rapidly changing, and the meaning they conveyed, as well as their memorial and aesthetic value were being questioned, challenged and/or denied. Often violent, break with the former regime resulted in their relocation, temporary or permanent removal from the public space and vandalism or destruction. Norbert Huse tried to define these phenomena by devising the category of uncomfortable architectural monuments (unbequeme Baudenkmale). Twenty-seven years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we are still witnessing the denial, destruction and marginalization of these monuments as unacceptable, unsightly, totalitarian, etc.

The attempts to reevaluate this heritage, as well as to develop different strategies of its public presentation, differ from state to state, and the criteria and guidelines that should be used to devise a "new" perception, followed by the management and maintenance of the denied monuments, mainly depend on the political and economic situation in different countries.

Taking into account the scope of this heritage, the efforts invested in rediscovery, protection and

conservation treatment of memorials require significant funds. But before raising the question of funding, one should ask if and for whom this disputed heritage should be restored? In what ways did the change of political paradigm make these monuments undesirable in the post-socialist countries? Have processes of denial and suppression contributed to the cancellation of an inherent ideological charge of these monuments? If so, are we allowed to treat them exclusively as aesthetic objects, particularly when they are preserved in fragments? Should these monuments, as relics of a forgotten past, be seen as a part of the tourism industry? Could the damaged or destroyed artifacts be restored to their original state or should the conservation treatment also commemorate the period of denial and suppression? What is the role of heritage communities in relation to survival and revival of this heritage?

These questions will be discussed at an international conference in the following sessions:

- MONUMENT PROTECTION AND TRANSITION – preservation of World War II monuments in the former Eastern Bloc and Yugoslavia and the impact of recent political history on the reception of monuments (revaluation processes, historical revisionism and perception, memorial and aesthetic evaluation)

- PRACTICE OF PROTECTION AND CHANGES TO THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK –
Legislative changes and their impact on the issues of jurisdiction and management, ownership, etc. (role of management in the processes of rediscovery, research and conservation)

- EXAMPLES OF MANAGEMENT – the models of managing monuments and memorial complexes, good and bad practices, socialist heritage and tourism

- CONSERVATION – the problems of maintenance, interpretation and representation of World War II monuments, use of traditional methodologies within a changed system of values.

The conference is organised by NGO SF:ius – Social Fringe: interesting untold stories in cooperation with ICOMOS Croatia as a part of the international project INAPPROPRIATE MONUMENTS.

Project INAPPROPRIATE MONUMENTS is supported by European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and Swiss Government trough the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The official language of the conference is English.

The conference organizers will subsidize the cost of accommodation for non-Zagreb participants.

Please submit 500-word abstracts and a short bio (in English) to sfius@sfius.org by November 1st 2016. The successful participants will be notified by November 15th.

Reference:
CFP: War, Revolution and Memory (Zagreb, 17-18 Feb 17). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 6, 2016 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/13886>.