

Research paper

## **BUILT HERITAGE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MONUMENT ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE TJENTIŠTE MEMORIAL COMPLEX**

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### **Abstract**

*The research objective is to determine the context of the natural environment and the built environment in it, through the prism of the author of the memorial complex as the sender of the message to the visitor who is its recipient. The paper will be focused on the memorial complex Tjentište in Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Hercegovina and architectural values of the monument "Battle on Sutjeska" by the sculptor Miodrag Živković. The main goal is to detect the spatial and ambient values of the projected trajectory that the visitor crosses and to recognize the relationship that the monument establishes with its environment. The significance of the research is based on the attitude about the importance of preserving the built heritage, recognizing its values and passing it on to future generations. The applied scientific methods are a theoretical review, analysis of archival materials, case study and spatial analysis. The research is predominantly based on the gathering of archival materials in the form of drawings, plans, photographs, written documents, and the relevant materials are collected in archives, libraries and museums. The results refer to the presentation of the role of space in the process of creating collective memory in the context of social, economic, political, and cultural circumstances with a special focus on the importance of built heritage in the complex process of establishing a relationship with the past. The significance of the work is reflected in highlighting the role of architectural design and the values of monument as element that inherit testimonies of the past.*

**Key words:** *Built heritage, Collective memory, Tjentište memorial complex, Spatial analysis*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The perception of the role of the monument and its understanding as a synonym for artistic, sculptural and architectural works dedicated to the People's Liberation Struggle during the Second World War and their creation from a close connection with current politics resulted most often in abstract works of art of high aesthetic value. The diversity of marking the place of suffering was reflected in a wide range from modest memorial plaques to monumental sculptural solutions and urban-architectural complexes of great artistic value. The division of activity according to Aristotle into praxis - an activity that is significant in itself and poesis - an activity whose goal is a product that enables another activity, is important for understanding artistic activity. Accordingly, it is important to understand artistic action as poesis - it has a purpose in another, more precisely in human being. [1] The Second World War marked the territory of the former Yugoslavia with great suffering, with the aim of emphasizing the importance of the lives lost in the People's Liberation Struggle, after the end of the war the state leadership was actively engaged in marking the places of suffering. Architecture and sculpture become a medium for conveying a political message. Social interaction made the monument a place for constructing the ethical norms of the community [2]. By building memorial complexes, the past of high anti-fascist ideals is represented. This recognized the possibility and power of architecture to preserve the past with the possibility of experiencing and understanding the continuity of culture and tradition, where it is important to understand existence not only in spatial and material reality, but also in cultural, mental and temporal reality. Understanding this relates to the constitution of official memory of past events within the framework of contemporary society. Official memory is fed primarily by what is visible at one particular moment - in the form of a performed ritual, a published text, a built monument [3]. The reference and creation of official remembrance of the events and suffering from the Second World War has its spatial manifestation through the creation of memorial complexes in which monuments are assigned a significant role in the transmission of memory. The motive of passing on memories becomes extremely important in terms of communication between different generations, those who were witnesses and participants in war conflicts and future generations who were not direct participants, but through visits to memorial complexes adopted testimonies about the events of the past. The role of the monument thus becomes the possession of a narrative about the event to which it bears witness with the power of transmitting memories and transposing them to future generations.

## 2 PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

The monument on Tjentište was built with the aim of marking and memorializing the battle on Sutjeska. In historical chronicles, the battle is recorded as the fifth offensive and lasted from May 15 to June 15, 1943, known as the German war operation "Schwarz" [4]. During the battle, 7,356 people from the NOVJ (*People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia*) died, of which 6,753 were men and 603 were women. The significance and role of the Battle of Sutjeska has been characterized by historians as one of the most significant battles of the NOVJ fought during the Second World War. Establishing an analogy with the entire context of war conflicts during the Second World War, the importance and role of the Battle of Sutjeska, by many historians, has been compared to the Battle of Stalingrad. By

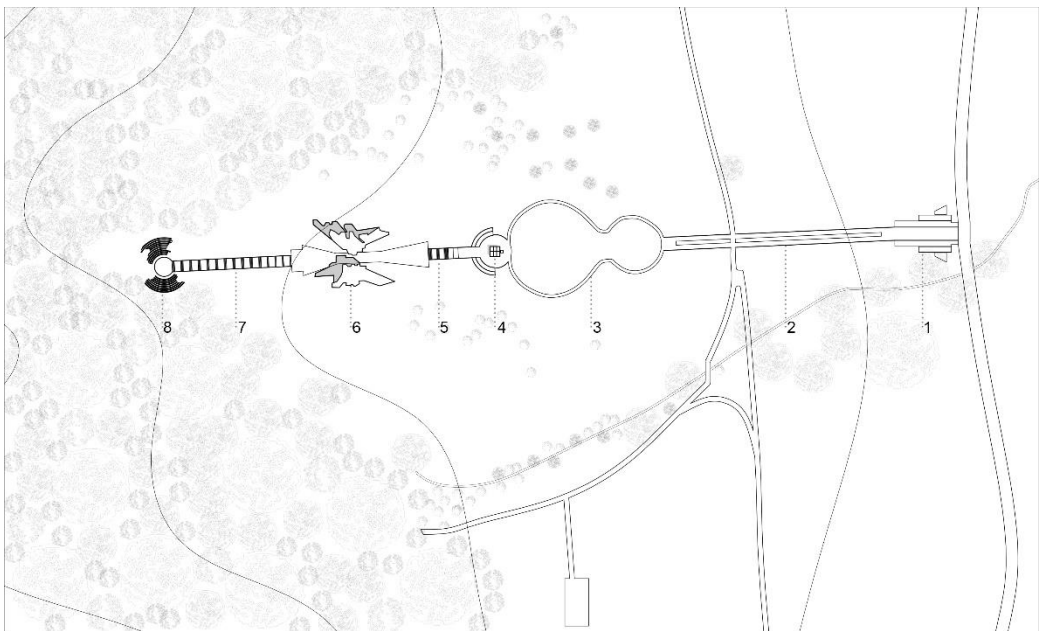
establishing this parallel, the Battle of Sutjeska or the fifth offensive acquired the status of an important historical event, the marking and memorialization of which became part of the socio-cultural aspect and an integral part of collective memory. The memorialization of this event in the spatial-architectural sense was manifested by the construction of a monument as a central symbol of the battle at the place from where the breakthrough of the enemy's encirclement began. The memorial complex of the Battle of Sutjeska, colloquially known as the "Valley of Heroes", is located within the Sutjeska National Park. Within the Sutjeska National Park there are 8 landmarks related to the period of the Second World War. The most dominant monument of the battle on Sutjeska is the work of the sculptor Miodrag Živković, and next to it, 7 other places characteristic of the battle itself are marked. The following places are marked: the grave of Sava Kovačević - the place of death of the commander of the Third Division, the grave of Nurija Pozdrerac, then the place of death of the National Hero Šerif Loj, the place of wounding of Tito, as well as Ljuba's grave and monuments erected to the II Dalmatian and IV Montenegrin Brigades. It was also planned to mark another 79 significant localities according to the events of the fifth offensive in the area of the national park, but their marking was never realized [5]. The central part of the "Valley of Heroes" is a monument to the battle on Sutjeska with an ossuary, as well as a memorial house with panoramic views of the battle. The memorial house built in 1975 is located in the immediate vicinity of the monument and was designed by architect Ranko Radović, with a characteristic design inspired by the steep roofs of mountain houses. The interior of the memorial house is painted with frescoes by Krsto Hegedušić, which represent panoramic views of the battle on Sutjeska. As part of the memorial house, there is a list of 7,376 names and surnames of the soldiers who died on Sutjeska called "Roll call on Tjentištu". Also within the memorial house are 13 frescoes by Krsto Hegedušić on an area of 124 m<sup>2</sup>, made in fresco secco and fresco buono technique, and on them are presented the themes and scenes of the battle itself. The importance and role of the Battle of Sutjeska in the post-war period and its status in the social context is evidenced by the speech held at the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the battle, in which the battle of Sutjeska was characterized as the most famous epic of the national liberation struggle, an epic that lives and will live forever with unquenchable brilliance [5]. An important segment in the composition "Valley of Heroes" is a memorial - an ossuary built in 1958 according to the project of Sakib Hadzihalilović. The remains of 3,301 participants of the Battle of Sutjeska were transferred to the memorial ossuary. According to the original project, an access staircase led to the ossuary itself, overcoming a height difference of 33 meters. The staircase led to the access rectangular plateau of 209.18 m<sup>2</sup>, paved with stone slabs. The ossuary itself is buried in the ground and has a volume of 200 m<sup>3</sup>. Above the surface of the earth is a stone cube measuring 5 x 5 meters built from 6 stone blocks measuring 80x166.5x250 cm, which is separated from the ground by 30 cm by a recessed plinth. Until the construction of the Sutjeska Battle Monument in 1971, the memorial ossuary was the central element of the "Valley of Heroes" and the main commemorative place. The fact that the ossuary was given the epithet of the central element in the composition "Valley of Heroes" is also indicated by the condition of the competition for the monument to the Battle of Sutjeska, according to which the monument must not obscure the view of the ossuary [3]. The competition was announced in 1962 and was of an open nature, however, on April 10, 1962, Miodrag Živković received a request from SUBNOR to participate in the competition. The original project envisaged the construction of a stone bridge 255 meters

long and three meters wide, and it was supposed to represent a monumental architectural symbol. The construction of the project was not realized for financial reasons, but also because of the explanation that the bridge did not establish adequate spatial relations with the ossuary. The authors of the project were Bogdan Bogdanović and Ranko Radović, but Bogdanović withdrew from the project due to the short deadline and he was then replaced by Miodrag Živković. The project that was accepted was Miodrag Živković's proposal to build a monumental stone monument that represents a clear and at the same time abstract representation and memory of the battle. In order to emphasize the visibility of the ossuary, the author believes that a sculptural solution should be placed near it, as a new accent and dominant space. The sculptural mass is in a close, functional relationship with the ossuary, with which it forms a whole. The stone masses of the sculpture are dynamically disturbed, aimed upwards. That vertical orientation and dynamism of the two boulders expresses the heroic act of the battle itself, all its moral greatness, its optimistic meaning. The sculptural mass is conceived and executed in such a way that it gives the impression of strength, vigor, and victory. From afar, it resembles the natural environment in which the battle took place, but also a stone massif that ignites. Not far from the ossuary where the remains of the fighters are buried and which means the peace and silence of death, rises a sculptural mass imbued with the breath of life and struggle, as a symbol of the negation of death. On the inner sides of the stone masses, highly stylized figures of fighters can be seen, whose presence ennobles and inspires the entire sculpture with human warmth. The penetration between the boulders symbolically represents the penetration of partisan units, and it forms two masses that, through mutual relations, grow into a whole full of defiant strength. The beginning of the works on the arrangement of the Tjentište memorial complex was started in 1967 and its implementation was planned in three stages. However, work on the monument itself began in 1969, and due to financial deficiencies, the realization of the monument was delayed, which jeopardized the plan for its ceremonial opening scheduled for 1971, the 35th anniversary of the revolution. The compositional solution was reflected in the creation of the access plateau that leads from the parking area to the staircase. A new staircase was built that connects the access plateau and the existing memorial - ossuary. Viewed from the front, the newly built staircase represented a symmetrical composition leading to the plateau of the ossuary. The monument itself is composed of two "stone" masses and is positioned on an elevation after the ossuary. Between the two parts of the monument there is a passage that leads to the last segment in the composition and is spatially manifested by the formation of an amphitheater. The amphitheater, as a frequently used element in the memorial complexes that were created in the post-war period, was formed from white concrete strips on which were written the names of the units that participated in the battles on Sutjeska.

### **3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX**

The method of spatial analysis was applied using various tools, so that while moving along the designed path intended for visitors the different impressions to which the observer was exposed were noted. The noted impulses are related to the perception of the relations that exist between the landscape and the monument itself. Finally, the different levels of "information" that the observer acquires while moving along the designed path were mapped. The monument "Battle on Sutjeska" is monumental sculpture, whose form is

made up of two stone units, which resemble the silhouettes of the gorge, represents an abstract representation of the morphology of the space where the battle took place, emphasizing the harshness of the terrain. The connection between the monument and the environment highlights the interdependence and correlation of form and space, which are such that form determines space and space determines form. From this follows the multiplicity of spatial implications of the monument. These implications do not need to be proven, but it is necessary to point them out and describe the specifics that arise from them [1]. The shape and design of the "arms" of the monument establish relations with the morphological characteristics of the environment and are placed in such a way that they tend towards the tops of the mountains, which symbolizes the exit to victory (Fig. 1). The monument itself carries requirements for the space, more precisely for the landscape. Form presupposes space just as space presupposes form, namely a certain space and a certain form. This once again confirmed the importance of the aesthetic criterion of singularity and uniqueness of each work of art and its environment, which dictates an adequate relationship and approach to space and form from an assumed spatial unity [1].



*Figure 1. Situational plan*

*1 - access plateau 2 - path 3 - grand staircase 4 - memorial ossuary 5 - second staircase 6 - monument 7 - third staircase 8 - amphitheater*

The interaction between the form of the monument and the landscape is deepened by the symbolic representation of the space between the two entities. The created space "bordered" by the stone units of the monument symbolizes the space inside the units and the rescue of weak and wounded fighters. The very structure of the monument in the part oriented towards the central passage is characterized by the manifestation of reduced anthropomorphic forms, which highlights the diversity of the treatment of the monument from large strokes that determine its external appearance to the representation of segments of the human body in its "inside". With its design and symbolic representation, the monument possesses a high degree of aesthetic values and a narrative character expressed through appearance in space. The modern age has complexly expressed the

aesthetic function as essential for the functioning of art. It is not just an empty aestheticization, but the spirit and thought of modern art situates the aesthetic-content function, that is, the level of spatial relations where the aesthetic is manifested through the content, which as a new visualization forms a new speech that is identical, full and true [1]. Through the described characteristics and realized values, the unique aesthetic, design and symbolic values of the Sutjeska battle monument are highlighted, whose identity of spatial entities and visual foundations is rooted in the uniqueness, authenticity and specificity of the visual perception.

### 3.1 Views and perception of the complex

The existence of symmetry is highlighted as a dominant term when establishing perceptual relations between the observer and the monument. Namely, the first access plateau was formed around a clearly set axis of symmetry around which it spreads symmetrically with gentle cascades, thus forming a wide access surface. The monument itself, positioned on a hill, although monumental in character and 19 meters high, can be seen from the plateau in the rough outlines of its form with a pronounced contrast of its whiteness against the wooded, green landscape. At this level of perception, with its design, the monument establishes a clear connection with the natural environment and morphological characteristics of the terrain, suggesting the silhouette of mountain outlines. Two branches of the path lead from the plateau to the bottom of the stairs, maintaining the symmetry of the composition with the green grass belt in the middle. At this level of observation, the visitor gets an impression of the relief of the monument's processing and an even stronger connection between the shape of the monument and the space that surrounds it. At the very bottom of the stairs, the monument becomes invisible to the observer due to the morphology of the terrain. The existence of symmetry has been preserved by designing two sets of stairs, although one set is currently destroyed due to a landslide and its reconstruction is planned, with a characteristic circular shape, which overcomes the difference in height between the path and the plateau of the ossuary.



*Figure 2. The relationship between monument and landscape - part 1*

The staircase is made of stone blocks and leads in a steady rhythm with frequent rest stops to the memorial plateau - the ossuary. The ossuary itself has been preserved according to the original project of Sakib Hadzihalilović, but the plateau around it has been changed and has a circular shape with cascading elevations around the perimeter. The axis of the ossuary represents the axis of symmetry, in the extension of which a staircase is formed that leads further to the monument. The perception of the relief treatment of the monument and the hint of its details becomes noticeable by moving towards the monument (Fig. 2).

By further approaching the contours of the monument seen from the observer's position, the silhouettes of the hilly landscape begin, which represents a direct "scenography" at this perceptual level. On a perceptual level, the shape of the two separate masses of the monument still support the sense of symmetry, while on the level of detail, the need for symmetry has been abandoned by relief processing. The tapering plateau leads the visitor towards the passage between the two masses of monuments and enables the reading of the anthropomorphic relief forms executed in the mass of the monuments. The moment stands out as a turning point in perception when one passes between the two masses of the monument - the form opens up and becomes more sophisticated, changing the initial quasi-symmetrical and monolithic appearance [6]. Side views from the "axis of symmetry" towards the monument, for the first time, the monument overhangs the silhouette of the surrounding landscape, and with the arms of the monument, that is, the wings of the monument, the only background becomes the open sky. The continuation of the movement from the plateau of the monument leads the observer to the staircase that leads to the formed amphitheater. The amphitheater was formed on the basis of the natural characteristics of the terrain morphology by cutting white concrete strips on which the names of the units that participated in the battle were written. Positioned on elevated ground in relation to the monument itself the view from the amphitheater allows to observing the monument from above, while the background is the hilly and wooded landscape on the opposite side of the Sutjeska River (Fig. 3).



*Figure 3. The relationship between monument and landscape part 2*

Returning to the monument, this landscape becomes a continuous segment of the view, where the dimensions of the monument never go outside the silhouette of the landscape,



but remain within its frame. From the bottom of the stairs, the path leads to the memorial house of Ranko Radović. The path leads over a channel lined with stone and a bridge of very reduced design. By looking at the monument from this distance, the harmony of the form of the monument with the space of the landscape can be read again, with the contrast of the whiteness of the monument and the strips of the amphitheater against the forested areas of the national park.

### 3.2 Materialization and construction

By accepting concrete as an aesthetically relevant material with the knowledge and skill of its application and processing, the entire construction and final appearance of the materialization of the monument of the Battle of Sutjeska was made in concrete. The concrete structure of the monument was created as a result of the collaboration between the sculptor Miodrag Živković and the architect Đorđe Zloković. The construction of the monument was formed by creating individual concrete elements and their grouping, which created a very complex supporting structure made of "chambers" that bear the main load and around which the final elements of the monument's appearance were formed. The creation of such a complex "hollow" construction of the monument required a very complex system of scaffolding and formwork necessary for the execution of such a specific sculptural and artistic achievement (Fig. 4). Due to spatial organization, the applied structural system possesses significant high load-bearing capacity and the structural efficiency was enhanced and the structure was able to "float" due to the fluctuation in density of the inner structural elements [7].



*Figure 4. Construction of the monument*



Specialized engineering units of the Yugoslav People's Army were engaged in the construction of the monument, using both the technical equipment of these units and the personnel. The most impressive evidence of the complexity of the formed three-dimensional structure of load transfer and the way of creating the supporting elements of the monument are the photographs taken during the construction of the monument itself. From an artistic and technical point of view, the conformity of the constructive requirements and the potential of the artistic properties of the monument, expressed precisely by the use of concrete, is manifested. Seen from this aspect, and with the aim of perceiving the final appearance of the monument, it is important to understand that concrete surfaces that are not subsequently hidden and that their "non-processing" does not in any way mean their aesthetic degradation. What follows from this approach is the need to use high-quality concrete for the full expression of its artistic values, but also to satisfy the static load-bearing conditions. Pure forms derived from the need for function and construction appear in all their logic - which was also one of the conceptual bases of the pioneers of contemporary architecture [8]. What characterizes the final appearance of the monument and the final processing of the materialization is the visibility of the layout of the board formwork elements used during the pouring of the concrete masses, whereby the size of the applied formwork varies from the largest elements at the base of the monument to the smaller formwork elements applied on the higher parts of the monument. The method of casting concrete elements plays a significant role, perhaps crucial to the final artistic effect, where the properties of the formwork and the workability of the concrete mass are the main influencing factors [8]. The recognizability of the monument of the battle on Sutjeska, in addition to the already mentioned characteristics, is also its whiteness, which creates a contrast against the landscape, and at the same time achieves authenticity in its appearance and the impression it leaves on the observer. The aforementioned characteristics were achieved by the very technology of making the concrete mass by adding additives that achieved the desired whiteness of the monument. The complexity of the constructed construction of the monument and the symbiosis with its appearance embodied in the concrete mass suggest the importance of knowledge and skill in the application and processing of materials while highlighting all the aesthetic and constructive characteristics that the material possesses, an aspect that was respected to the greatest extent and skilfully applied in the case of the creation of the monument to the Battle of Sutjeska.

#### **4 TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROLE OF THE MEMORIAL COMPLEX**

The specificity of the function of memorial complexes is their perception as a medium of transmitting social memory, where their role is manifested by transposing the content and fulfilling the function of creating a place of memory [9]. In the context of Sutjeska, passing on social memory and creating a place of remembrance refers to the establishment of relations with the events of the Second World War and the sufferings characteristic of the area where the memorial complex is being built. In the local context, the preservation of the memory of the war appears primarily as an attempt by people to cope with mourning for the dead, where the areas of social action are included: the preservation of memory appears as a business policy, as an artistic process, as a social obligation and as a pedagogical task

[3]. The role of memorial spaces set in this way required the artist, architect or sculptor to create spatial units with a strong character, an authentic and unique narrative of passing on memories and establishing relations with the visitors of the memorial complex. Designing the spatial type of monuments, memorial parks or memorial areas was aimed, among other things, at attracting as many users as possible, especially the younger generation, to authentic locations associated with the NOB. Those spatial entities also implied a specific type of reception of social memory, such as the movement of visitors through nature, following a given route that included famous historical locations. What characterizes the monument on Sutjeska is precisely the power of the narrative about the event, the spatial, symbolic and associative connection. In the structure of Sutjeska's interpretation, the supporting elements were victory, willingness to sacrifice and heroism of the partisans with the emphasized participation of partisan units from different parts of the country, i.e. the presence of a general Yugoslav element [3]. The most dominant events related to the existence of the memorial complex are the commemorative ceremonies organized by the state leadership and in the presence of the highest state officials. The first such ceremony and one of the most attended was held on July 4, 1958, marking the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Sutjeska. The ceremony was attended by the president of the state by laying wreaths on the memorial - ossuary and giving a speech, with an estimated attendance of about 70,000 people [3]. Commemorative festivities were also held in the following period, mostly connected by dates to the anniversaries of the battle or the revolution. On the other hand, the Sutjeska memorial complex became part of the tourist offer and the network of tourist attractions related to the NOB in Yugoslavia. Thus, Sutjeska becomes a kind of brand visited by tourists from all parts of Yugoslavia.

The status and condition of the Tjentište memorial complex in the modern moment differs to a certain extent from other memorial spaces dedicated to the NOB in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Namely, most of the monuments created with the aim of marking the struggle and suffering during the Second World War are mostly in a neglected state, ruined and damaged or even demolished. This, to a certain extent, confirms the views that the official socialist culture of remembrance even with the help of an artistically successful monument and mass visits to such a central place of remembrance could not be passed on to new generations [10]. The Tjentište memorial complex has been under the protection of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of the Republic of Srpska since 2009, after the decision to designate the Tjentište memorial complex as a cultural asset of exceptional importance [11]. During 2017 and 2018, the reconstruction of the memorial complex was carried out, and on that occasion the monument itself was whitewashed, returning it to its original recognizable whiteness. Also, works were carried out on the replacement of paving on the plateau around the monument and on the staircase that connects the memorial ossuary and the monument itself, as well as on the staircase between the monument and the amphitheater. The importance and relationship to the values of the monument on Sutjeska in the contemporary context is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that the first and original model for the memorial was presented to the world public at an exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The artistic values of this sculpture were affirmed before the eyes of the professional and interested public of the West the modern era, which marked the culture of a part of the European in a special way with a convincing visual expression of its time.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As the starting goal in the creation of this work was the spatial analysis of the Tjentište memorial complex with the research of archival material, an overall picture of the origin and development of the space was created, as well as its role in the process of creating memories of the events of the Second World War. From the aspect of spatial, architectural and sculptural characteristics, the work itself represents an imposing achievement that can be classified in the category of the most representative works of art created in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, made with the theme of marking places of suffering and battles. The dominant characteristic that places this work in that category is the continuity of establishing relations with the environment and landscape. This continuity of established relations is manifested at the macro level and the relationship between the monument itself and the entire Sutjeska National Park, through an abstract representation of the characteristic landscape expressed through the design of the monument. At the micro level, the relations between the monument and the landscape are articulated in such a way that they can be seen from the perspective of the visitors while moving along the projected path and approaching the monument itself. For the understanding of the tectonics and symbolic representation of the monument, a significant segment is represented by the preserved written explanations of the monument author Miodrag Živković himself. The symbolism of breakthrough, victory and freedom that the monument carries is also significant in terms of the role of the monument in the social, political, cultural and sociological aspect, which is evidenced by the photos from the festivities held within the complex. From the aspect of the modern life of the monument and its role, as well as the importance attached to it, the inclusion of the original model of the monument in an integral part of the exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, which to a certain extent confirms the aesthetic quality of the work itself and its perception as a representative example of artistic expression from the modern period from the area of the former Yugoslavia.

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