

Skupno. Posebno. Posamično. / *Shared. Particular. Individual.*

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V svetu in tudi pri nas je zadnja leta veliko govora o kontekstualizaciji spomenikov povojne dobe, o njihovi umestitvi v posebni zgodovinski trenutek socialistične Jugoslavije. Ob tem, da predstavimo nabor dobre trideseterice pomembnih spomenikov, je naš namen z razstavo in številko AB-ja tudi iztrgati ta opus iz ideološkega konteksta in ga umestiti v širšo perspektivo, na oder svetovne produkcije, ki ne bi bil kontaminiran z eksotičnostjo »režima za železno zaveso«.

Pri tem se odpirajo številne dileme. Pri spomenikih je ponavadi prvo vprašanje, kaj slavijo. Časovna distanca seveda vpliva na položaj spomenikov v družbi, njihova vloga in pomen se spreminjata. Vprašanje je, ali se je njihova sporočilnost skozi časovno in historično distanco izpraznila ali pa je v kakršnemkoli smislu še aktualna. Pri tem gre za njihovo pozicijo znotraj širšega časovnega in prostorskega okvira.

Ali je danes še pomembna simbolna vloga, ki so jo imele ob nastanku zgodovinske skulpture, kot na primer poznoantični kip Marka Avrelija na Michelangelovem Kapitolu ali zgodnjerenesančni Donatellov konjenik Gattamelata v Padovi? Ti in mnogi drugi so dobili javno, urbano funkcijo, njihov izvorni namen, slavljenje vojščaka ali diktatorja, je postal nepomemben. Podobna usoda bo najbrž, v generaciji ali dveh, doletela tudi spomenike povojne Jugoslavije.

Brisanje izvornega pomena je najbrž neogibna posledica časovne oddaljenosti. Ali to pomeni, da so njihovi pomeni porozni, da so prilagodljivi in da dopuščajo ponovno interpretacijo, da so, recimo, politično popravljivi? Ob nastanku so bila to dela, ki so se, vsaj navidez, neposredno referirala na oblast. Cilj oblasti je bila reprezentacija ideologije, njeno pojmovno in znakovno ozadje pa naj bi bila ikonografija »nove, socialistične države«. S časom se je ta zveza rahljala in postala manj pomembna. Takrat je stopila v ospredje umetniška kakovost, ki je odločala, kateri spomeniki bodo preživeli in kateri ne.

Žal pa kakovost ni edina, ki določa preživetje spomenikov.

Teritoriji in prebivalci bivše Jugoslavije se soočajo s svojimi tragičnimi zgodovinami, ki segajo prek obdobja socializma v preteklost, sedanost in prihodnost. Ne razrešene travme iz preteklosti se še vedno izražajo tudi z brezmejno voljo po desakralizaciji in nasilju. Tako so nekateri spomeniki uničeni, drugi vandalizirani ali zapuščeni, večina jih je ogroženih.

V vseh postjugoslovanskih družbah se srečujemo z močnimi procesi zgodovinskega revizionizma. Tako v nekaterih okoljih številne spomenike celo sistemsko in sistematično uničujejo.

Anestetizirani zahodni svet slabo razume vzvode in procese, ki stojijo za balkansko neukročenoostjo. Nekateri, zlasti zahodni raziskovalci, bi s krinko ljubezni do eksotičnega in ponovno najdene kontinuitete radi prikrili imperialistična stališča in težnje. V njihovi interpretaciji so spomeniki zreducirani na ostalino, ki je vsem povsem na razpolago: to naj bi bila dela brez identitete, poistovetena z maskarado in s frivolnim klepetom, ki so lahko tarča avanturističnih potovanj in poljubnih rekonstrukcij.

Gre za neke vrste banket nad spomeniki, tretiranimi kot trupla. Prevladujeta karikatura, posmeh (nehoten?), ne zgolj v odnosu do konteksta, ampak tudi do samih spomenikov.

Rojeni pred letom osemdeset smo v mladosti doživeli prežetost družbenega življenja s socialistično ideologijo in propagando. Heroji so dali imena šolam, tovarnam, ulicam in Tito je imel status faraona in pop zvezde. Vsaka vas je imela svoje obeležje padlim, bitkam, rituali so bili del vsakdanjega življenja, zlasti v šolah. Seveda so se postavljala vprašanja: kako lahko ubežimo; kako je mogoče proizvesti ustvarjalna, inovativna dela, kako je mogoče biti revolucionaren, kako se je mogoče spoprijeti s transformativno osebno spremembo itd. Umetniki so bili v

dilemi med ujetostjo in možnostjo pobega, ki so jo reševali vsak na svoj način, v iskanju ravnotežja med umetniško reprezentacijo, ideologijo in fantazmo.

V socializmu se je razvila celo posebna kultura političnih smešnic, ki je po razpadu nekdanjega sistema izginila. Šala je eden od načinov, kako poveš laž, da bi povedal resnico. Pri spomenikih gre za obratno: kako poveš resnico, da bi poveščal nekaj, v kar morda ne verjameš, pa zato razširiš konstrukcijo pomena na splošne vrednote človečnosti in smisla.

To je bila pozicija, v kateri so ustvarjali tudi arhitekti in kiparji, avtorji naših spomenikov.

Gre za dela in njihove avtorje, ki so z arhitekturno in likovno kakovostjo, nekateri potihem, drugi bolj na glas, iz fragmenta in odsotnosti ustvarjali motive poglobljene refleksije o celoti in o polnosti smisla. Umetnost ima potencial, da prebije okvire danega sveta. Zmogla je navidez nemogočo nalogo, namreč simboliziranje kulture in pietete, s svojo likovno, prostorsko, ambientalno in sporočilno kakovostjo, ne več z deklarativno vsebino, kot pri sočrealizmu.

Umetniki, arhitekti in kiparji so izoblikovali samosvoj univerzum arhitekturnih referenc, ki segajo od arhetipov iz antike prek celotne zgodovine arhitekture do »arhitekture brez arhitektov«, zlasti iz balkanskih regij. Njihovi vzori so bili vzeti iz klasične in sodobne umetnosti ter iz narave, iz eksotičnih kultur in sočasnih modernizmov. Pa vendar niso bili nikoli samo epigonski, saj so reference ponotranjili in iz njih izpeljali novo sintezo, prepojeno z osebno poetiko. Njihov formalni svet je eklektičen, z lastnim stilom in umetniško močjo so dosegali sublimni učinek, ki je po eni strani blizu razsvetljenjskim teorijam lepote in sublimnega (Kant, Burke) iz 18. stoletja, po drugi pa so bili večji tudi modernistične abstrakcije. Poetična abstrakcija je postala način izraza, ki je presegel ideološko dimenzijo naročil in stkal univerzalne pripovedi o pomenu in moči kulture pri celjenju vojnih ran.

Vsekakor je res, da gre pri spomenikih za stičišče med umetnostjo (arhitekturo, kiparstvom) in državo, kar pa tvori problematično, po definiciji spodletelo zvezo. Kaj izraža umetnost? Danes, ko je čas individualizma, se zdi, da izraža osebnost umetnika, njegove estetske ideale in talent. Cenimo edinstvenost, izvirnost in neponovljivost, kratka kult individualnosti.

Še vedno aktualno sporočilo spomenikov je, da moramo, kot umetniki ali kot uporabniki, gledati na svet v širši časovnosti, da nam umetnost izrazi celoto sveta, ne zgolj umetnika samega.

Umetnik pri svojem delovanju potrebuje pogum za korake v neznano. To je tvegani proces, a brez tveganja ni presežka, je le rutina. Kot je zapisal Milan Kundera: »Vsi veliki romani so pametnejši od svojih piscev.« To pomeni, da se navezujejo na sijanje večnosti, da razumejo, da je velika umetnost vedno gradnja, ki se ne nanaša le nase, pač pa na celoto. Rečeno drugače: miti, umetnost in tudi znanost so v svojem bistvu povezani, tvorijo celoto gradnje sveta. Torej velja trditev, da se skozi mit, kakor tudi skozi umetnost oz. gradnjo, približamo resnici.

Zakaj? Umetnost po Dolarju »pomeni narediti prelom. Narediti rez. Rez v kontinuiteti biti, v kontinuiteti preživetja.«¹ Umetnost je povezana z univerzalnostjo in neskončnostjo. V umetnosti ni pomembno vprašanje, ali je umetnost izraz nekega posameznika, neke etnične skupine, naroda ali neke dobe. Pomembno je, da iz partikularnega proizvede univerzalno. In prav način problematičnosti, ki je spremljala genezo spomenikov, te spodletelosti ideološke prisovitve, je tisto, kar jih dela zanimive in posebne. Na delu je nekakšna racionalna iracionalnost, dialektika med tradicijo razsvetljenstva kot podlage znanstvene preobrazbe sveta s pomočjo marksizma, kratka progresistične ideologije, in vrnitvijo k mitom slavljenja herojev in domovine (nekateri bi rekli režima). Ta dvojnost je vedno nerazrešena, tako da spomenike lahko hkrati pojmujejo kot konstitutivne in kot subverzivne za sistem.

Both at home and abroad, there has been a lot of talk in recent years about the contextualisation of post-WW2 era monuments, about placing them in the particular historical moment of socialist Yugoslavia. Along with our desire to showcase a line-up of some thirty significant monuments, it is the intention of the exhibition and the present issue of *ab* to wrest this opus from the ideological context and place it in a wider perspective, on a world-wide stage of production which would not be contaminated with the exoticism of a "regime behind the Iron Curtain".

This opens up a number of dilemmas. When it comes to monuments, the first question is usually what they celebrate. Naturally, the temporal distance affects the status of monuments in a society - their role and significance change. The question is whether their message has been hollowed out due to the temporal and historical distance, or whether it is still current in any conceivable sense. The issue concerns the monuments' position within the wider temporal and spatial framework.

Is the symbolic role from the time of the creation of historical sculptures such as the late-antiquity statue of Marcus Aurelius on Michelangelo's Capitoline Hill or Donatello's early-Renaissance horseman Gattamelata in Padua still significant today? These two and many others have gained a public, urban function; their original purpose of celebrating a warrior or a dictator has become unimportant. A similar fate will probably, within the span of a generation or two, catch up with the monuments of post-war Yugoslavia.

The fading away of the original significance is likely the inevitable consequence of temporal distance. Does this mean that the monuments' meanings are porous, adaptable, and tolerant of reinterpretation - that they are politically repairable, so to speak? At the time of their creation, these works - at least ostensibly - directly referred to the authority. The authority's objectives were the representation of ideology, their notional and semantic background was supposed to be the iconography of the "new, socialist state". Through time, this relationship starts to unravel and becomes less important. At that point, the main role is assumed by the artistic quality, which determines which monuments get to survive and which don't.

Unfortunately, quality isn't the only factor determining the survival of the monuments.

The territories and inhabitants of ex-Yugoslavia are coming to terms with their tragic histories that extend beyond the socialist period into the past, present, and future. Unresolved traumas from the past still manifest themselves also in the boundless tenacity for desacralisation and violence. In consequence, some monuments were destroyed, other vandalised or abandoned, most are threatened.

All the post-Yugoslav societies are encountering strong processes of historical revisionism. In some environments, many monuments are being systemically and systematically destroyed as a result.

The anaesthetised Western world has a poor understanding of the triggers and processes bearing upon the untamed Balkan spirit. Some, especially Western researchers, would like to conceal their imperialist standpoints and tendencies under the guise of love for the exotic and a rediscovered continuity. In their interpretations, the monuments are reduced to remains at everyone's complete disposal. According to them, they are works without identities, identified with masquerade and idle chatter, and being able to act as objects of adventurous travels and any manner of recomposition.

It is a kind of a feast over the monuments which are treated as corpses. There is a preponderance of caricature, derision (unintentional?), not only regarding the context but also the monuments themselves.

In our youth, those of us born before 1980 experienced social life permeated with socialist ideology and propaganda. Heroes gave their names to schools, factories, streets, and Tito held the status of a pharaoh and a pop star. Every village had its own memorial to battles and those killed in action, and rituals were a part of everyday life, especially in schools. Naturally, questions arose: how can we get away; how is one to produce creatively innovative works, how to be revolutionary, how is one to tackle transformative personal change, etc. Artists were caught in a dilemma between being trapped and the possibility of escape, and they were solving it each in their own way, seeking balance between artistic representation, ideology, and phantasm.

Socialism gave rise to a specific culture of political jokes, which disappeared after the dissolution of the former system. A joke is one of the ways of telling a lie in order to tell the truth. With monuments, it's the opposite: how to tell the truth in order to glorify something that you may not believe in, leading you to extend the construction of meaning to universal values of humanity and meaning as a result. Such was the position framing the creative endeavours of architects and sculptors - the authors of our monuments.

These are works and authors who leveraged architectural and artistic excellence to create - some in whispers, others more boldly - motifs of profound reflection on the totality and the plenitude of meaning from the starting point of fragment and absence. Art has the potential to break through the confines of a given world. It accomplished the seemingly impossible task of symbolising culture and reverence with its artistic, spatial, ambiental, and notional quality, rather than with declarative content, like socialist realism used to do.

Artists, architects, and sculptors carved out an idiosyncratic universe of architectural references ranging from archetypes from the antiquity across the entire history of architecture to "architecture without architects", especially from Balkan regions. They modelled themselves on classical and contemporary art and nature, on exotic cultures and contemporary modernisms. And yet they were never just imitators: they internalised their references and derived from them a new synthesis imbued with an individual poetic. Their formal world is eclectic, they used their own style and artistic power to achieve a sublime effect which on the one hand was approaching Enlightenment theories on beauty and the sublime (Kant, Burke) from the 18th century, but on the other, they were also proficient in modernist abstraction. Poetic abstraction became a manner of expression which transcended the ideological dimension and wove universal narratives on the meaning and power of culture to heal war wounds.

It's certainly true that the monuments stand at the junction of art (architecture, sculpture) and the State - which is, however, a definition of a failed relationship, anytime and anywhere.

What does art express? Today, in the time of individualism, it seems that art expresses the personality of the artist, their aesthetic ideals and talent. We value what is original, one-of-a-kind, first-and-last - in short, the cult of individuality.

The monuments' still-current message is to view the world - as artists or as users - in a broader temporality in order for art to express to us the totality of the world, not just the artist themselves.

In their work, an artist needs courage to take steps into the unknown. This is a process full of risks, but then without risk, nothing exceptional is created, there is only routine. Milan Kundera said, "Great novels are always a little more intelligent than their authors." This means that they latch on the shining-through of eternity; that they understand that great art is always a construction which doesn't rely only on itself but on the totality. In other words: myths, art, and science, too, are connected in their essence, they form the totality of the construction of the world. Therefore, the statement that myth is a pathway to truth, as is art, or rather, construction, holds true.

Why? Art, according to Mladen Dolar, "means to make a break. Make a cut. A cut in the continuity of being, in the continuity of survival."¹ Art is connected with universality and infinity. In art, the question whether art is the expression of an individual, an ethnic group, a nation, or a time period is not important. What is important is its producing the universal out of the particular. And it is the very manner of the problems which accompanied the genesis of monuments, the failure of ideological appropriation, that makes these works interesting and special. There is a kind of irrationality at work here, a dialectics between the tradition of the Enlightenment as the basis for the scientific transformation of the world aided by Marxism, i.e. a progressivist ideology, and the return to the myths of celebrating heroes and the homeland (or the regime, as some would say). This duality is forever unresolved and thus monuments can be thought of as playing both a constitutive and subversive role within the system.

1 Conny Habel: Intervju z Mladenom Dolarjem. V: Mladen Dolar, *Uprizarjanje konceptov, spisi o umetnosti*, Maska, Ljubljana, 2019.

1 Conny Habel: *Interview with Mladen Dolar*. In: Mladen Dolar, *Uprizarjanje konceptov, spisi o umetnosti* (Staging Concepts, writings on art), Maska, Ljubljana, 2019