

WHAT IS (USED TO BE) A MONUMENT?

The attitude of a culture towards monuments is reciprocal to its approach to the past – this relation is a tautological starting point of a large number of attempts to understand the importance of remembering the past in the present regimes of collective and political self-descriptions. If we get an insight into the articulation of modernity through the ways of construction of historical narratives, it becomes clear that today's unstable, uncertain and helpless position of culture and society is a consequence of the inability to identify the messages and lessons from the past and perform them in the current circumstances. This does not mean that it is regrettable that we have abandoned the heroic, victorious narratives of the past that – being embodied in durable sculptural and architectural representations – shaped public spaces, reviving again the famous historical episodes as fulcrums of imaginary collective identity. Situation in which we now build our attitudes towards the past is not a place of Romantic escapism but a space of the uneasy presence of the past, experience and memories which, it seems, we cannot cope with. What monuments do we need today, then?

A Roman arch, understood as one of the first images of direct and indirect transferring of events in the (epic) history and unquestioned memory, is constructed here as an open structure, with no ornamental or monumental aspirations, in order to examine performative and participatory potential of the monument. The reduced spatial organization and the emphasis on the objectness versus symbolic and didactic quality of memorial architecture abolishes representational, passive model of reception and seeks to actively engage the viewer's body in the indicated event which will not give them a predetermined role but leave a reflection of the perceived to their experiential sensibility. The change from the expected to the unfixed manifestation of materialized past initiates a question of sustainability of the inherited glorifying historical narratives and, which is more important related to the initial question, leads us to reconsider the basis on which we build our position in the interweaving of past and present.

If a monument used to be a safe place of historical presence in time, can we imagine it today as a space of activity in the current trends?

Ana Bogdanović