

“Living Statues” and Nonuments as “Performative Monument Events” in Post-Socialist South-Eastern Europe

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Abstract

After the fall of the socialist regimes in South and Eastern Europe socialist statues and monuments were either removed, dislocated, or resignified. Several performance practices have been employed to engage with these statues and monuments. Focusing on the role played by artistic memorialization in the processes of dealing with the communist past, this article uses the concepts of “performative monuments” (Widrich) and “memory events” (Etkind) to analyze several examples of what can be called “performative monuments events.” As many statues were removed, the statues witnessed performative practices in the process of their elimination. The monuments that were conserved were dislocated and exhibited as part of “sculpture park museums” and observed nostalgic, ironic practices of tourists that perform the memory of communism by interacting with the monuments. This article analyzes several examples in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania of socialist monuments that have remained in place or that have been dislocated and resignified by contemporary artists using performative practices of memory events that engage monuments. This exploratory research argues that artists, through their “performative monuments events,” try to bring the people back to replace the statues with “living statues” and to question the absurd megalomaniac monuments using metaphorical, material instruments.

Keywords: collective memory; art and politics; monuments; memory politics; South-Eastern Europe

Introduction

Socialist monuments and statues played an essential role during the socialist transformation of the public space and witnessed the performative celebrations of pioneers, the anniversary of the communist parties, or national celebrations. Socialist statuary encompasses monuments and statues of former national or Soviet leaders that were created between 1945 and 1990 in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe, as well as the statues of Soviet soldiers and other types of monuments to celebrate peace, national events, or important national figures. After 1990, the statues that were not removed were collected and exhibited as part of “sculpture park museums” that display them as mere objects, surviving relics, and decontextualized. Other monuments that remained in place, although contested by part of the public opinion, have seen artistic interventions that question their role and value or, on the contrary, support their worth.

In this context, this article investigates the effect of artistic performances that engaged with socialist monuments and statues on the practices of memory-making in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. To situate these artistic interventions in this article, they will be discussed together with other performative practices that were realized in the process of the removal, dislocation, or critical assessment of socialist statuary after 1990.

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The argument put forward is that the performative memory practices that engage with the former statuary of the communist regimes serve the purpose of opening up “a politics of possibility where we can imagine alternative futures” (Plate and Smelik 2013, 12). The methodology used to study these performative practices is that of a small-N comparative analysis, which aims to establish if there are common strategies at work in three countries of South-Eastern Europe after 1990 in what concerns the former statues and monuments. The purpose of the research is that of theory-building, as some of these specific examples have been analyzed as detailed case studies but not in a comparative approach that would help bring forward patterns and models of understanding.

This article uses the approach of the art and politics of memory to study examples of art of memorialization, that is, artistic practices that participate in the ongoing negotiation of the memory of the traumatic past. The art and politics of memory is an interdisciplinary approach that employs the methods of analysis of the role of art in Transitional Justice and Cultural Memory studies, with a focus on visual arts. In this sense, the contributions of Jacques Rancière are a useful tool in clarifying the role of artistic practices during societal transformations.

This approach reunites several analytical foci that have been discussed separately, such as the interest in monuments in the socialist afterworld by art historians (Belcheva 2017), historians (Williams 2008; Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018), geographers (Alderman, Brasher, and Dwyer 2020; Light and Young 2011) or political scientists (Forest and Johnson 2011); and the analysis of performance practices by art history (Jones and Stephenson 2005; Widrich 2014) or performance studies (Taylor 2003; Edkins 2003; Del Campo 2004; Popescu and Schult 2020). At the same time, cultural memory studies (Etkind 2010; Erll and Nunning 2008; Jelin 2001; Bull and Hansen 2020) and the examination of the role of art in transitional processes (Garnsey 2016; Barat 2014; Simic 2015) have not dedicated a lot of attention to the case of monuments (Buckley-Zistel and Schäfer 2014; Drinot 2009; Hite 2007; Milton 2011), and scarcely so in Eastern Europe (Light and Young 2011; Light and Young 2015). Counter-monuments practices have been analyzed especially in what relates to the memory of the Nazi regime (Young 1992) but could be applied to other post-socialist contexts (Isto 2020). Moreover, comparative, transnational regional analyses (De Cesari and Rigney 2014; Preda 2020) are limited. The contribution of this article is to analyze artistic practices of memory that are not discussed by the scientific literature that examines the processes of reckoning with the past (Stan 2008; Stan and Nedelsky 2015). I argue that by looking at performances that engage with the socialist statuary, we can reinforce our understanding of the ways in which societies acknowledged the changes that occurred starting 30 years ago because contemporary artists act as mediators. This article’s purpose is to contribute to the discussion of the role of “art that works politically” (Benjamin in Shefik 2018, 11) in processes of societal transformations through critical aesthetic encounters and the invention of political space (Garnsey 2019, 22, 26).

In what follows, after a brief literature review that places this analysis into the context of the studies on the art and politics of memory, the article is structured into two parts in agreement with the twofold aim of the research. In the first section, this article analyses similar practices in South-Eastern Europe that concern the removal and dislocation of communist monuments and statues in Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. Performative, celebratory practices accompanied the removal of the statuary, and the monuments that are exhibited in the (in)formal parks of statues witness another performative form of interaction – one that is nostalgic, playful, and ironic. In the second section, this article suggests that, beside the joyous and nostalgic approaches concerning monuments, we should acknowledge as part of the cultural policies of reckoning with the past the provocation to reflection that artists propose (Kalo 2017). I argue contemporary artists in the three countries used three performative strategies to resignify the monuments. These artists created “performative monument events” to engage critically with the “nonuments,” whether resorting to “living statues” or producing metaphorical interventions to question the still-standing monuments. Artists act as mediators and use performative practices to bring back the people (the Nonument radioballet by the Ligna Group at the Buzludzha Monument [2019] and Boryana Rossa, *Memory Picture* [2008]). They replace the fallen statues or reproduce the standing bronzes with “living

statues” to show that other, concomitant perspectives can coexist – Alexandra Pirici’s “sculptural actions” or *‘Delicate, Ephemeral Instruments of Engagement’ with the past*; Elisa Cenaliaj, *Welcome dear workers* (2005), Nada Prija, *Humane Communism* (2016), and Kamen Stoyanov, *Hello Lenin* (2003). Finally, they engage in poetic, metaphorical performances to question the absurd of the socialist megalomaniac edifices – Armando Lulaj’s *It Wears as It Grows* (2011) and Florin Tudor and Mona Vătămanu’s *The Dust* (2006).

The Art and Politics of Memory: Socialist Monuments, Performative Memory, and Memory Events

The role of art in Transitional Justice has been mainly studied from the point of view of its restorative function (Falcon 2018; Bahun 2014). Art can be a “radical form of political representation in times of political transition” (Garnsey 2019), and several studies have analyzed the role of art as an answer to mass atrocity in granting visibility or appeasement to the victims, in involving civil society actors in reconciliation with the past through participatory art (Shefik 2018), and engaging in “performance activism” (Kurze 2019) as bottom-up processes or grassroots initiatives (Shefik 2018; Kurze and Lamont 2019).

Contemporary art practices have not been privileged by these studies, and even less so monuments or memorials that were addressed only in what concerns the memorialization of the victims of the previous regimes. In turn, this article focuses on monuments that were erected by the former socialist regimes as part of their strategies of legitimation, as well as on the actions of contemporary artists that intervene to challenge the status of these monuments and memorials and provoke their audiences to reflect on the legacy of the past (Kalo 2017) in light of contemporary transformations.

In this sense, I use Jacques Rancière’s conceptualization of the “pensive image,” that is, an image in suspense, in-between (2008), and – to borrow from Svetlana Boym’s theorization of “reflective nostalgia” – ambivalent, dwelling on longing and touching perhaps even on the ironic and humorous (Boym 2001). Through the critical, political “aesthetic encounters” (Garnsey 2019, 22) they produce, contemporary artists recall how “art has a transformative potential because it pays attention to details that remain unseen and uses empathy which enables a ‘shared emotional response that can bring people together’” (Faurey and Kerr 2020, 149). Contemporary post-socialist art employs defamiliarization “to convey new perspectives on the past and ultimately to intervene on what and how is remembered in the present” (Kalo 2017, 52); and because artists had a limited socialist experience the concept of post-memory of Marianne Hirsch (2008) can explain how they were influenced by the different discourses on the socialist past to which they were subjected (Kalo 2017, 54).

In this context, this article focuses on artistic performative practices of engagement with the socialist monuments in South-Eastern Europe. In fact, the meaning of the former socialist monuments has changed in the thirty years that have passed since the end of the regimes. According to Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik, the former Soviet monuments/statues represent a form of dissonant heritage, that “may be cause for discord: It is simultaneously perceived as pleasant, resulting in satisfaction, or as distorted, with an unpleasant and painful effect” (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018, 103). Duncan Light and Craig Young observed how the socialist statuary are forms of post-socialist hybrids, as their meaning has been transformed by a series of “de- and re-contextualisations. Evaluations of the socialist past and the individuals represented by statues have changed around them” (Light and Young 2011, 495). The “monumental transformations” have included “co-opting, creating, altering, contesting, ignoring or removing particular monuments” and revealed the “influence of formal political structures on public memory” (Forest and Johnson 2011, 270, 273, 284).

Artistic performance designates practices that developed in the 1960s and 1970s and that have at their center the body of the artist(s). In relation to memory practices, it is interesting that the

significance of a performance is not given but remains open-ended and results from the interaction between those present (Jones and Stephenson 2005, 1). In fact, memory making is performative, and memory is embodied (Edkins 2003, 54; Del Campo 2004); it is the individual body in which memory embodies itself and exposes itself through its gestures and its style (Del Campo 2004). In this sense, performative memory has been thought of as a practice to establish a claim, to reinforce collective memory (Hedges 2015, 67, 69, 71). The role of performance in the practices of memory includes marches and protests, civic ceremonies, rituals, and “the memorial landscape is constituted, shaped, and made important through the bodily performance and display of collective memories’ as the example of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina shows” (Alderman, Brasher, and Dwyer 2020, 44). In other cases – for example, for the remembrance of the Holocaust – performative memory has included mainly two aspects: the performance implicit in memorial actions and the performance of visitors (Popescu and Schult 2020, 137). The performative and participatory practices see the “embodiment of memory in a shared experience, as opposed to the simple artistic representations of a past event which is materialized in monolithic monuments cast in marble, stone, steel or bronze” (Asavei 2015, 214).

Furthermore, since the 1980s, the memorials for the commemoration of the Holocaust in Germany, called counter-monuments by James Young, have used “participatory strategies to make visible aspects of history that have been repressed from collective memory” and have invited visitors to take an active subject position in relation to these memorials, as artists “wanted to trigger processes of confrontation with this particular past and raise self-critical awareness” (Popescu and Schult 2020, 137). The strategies used by counter-monuments aim to invert the signs associated with traditional monuments; their goal is to substitute “invisibility for visibility, ephemerality for permanence, and horizontality for verticality” (Isto 2020, 2).

In the case of South and Eastern Europe the “repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge” that “enacts embodied memory through performances, gestures, orality, movement” (Taylor 2003, 19, 20, 21) engages with the monuments of the communist regime. In this sense, Mechtild Widrich’s concept of “performative monuments” is useful for this analysis of postcommunist interventions with the socialist monuments because it recalls how “performance is itself a form of public art,” and, in fact, performance artists “reoriented public art around an intersection of performance and the monument” (2014, 4, 5). Joseph Beuys’ practice of “social plastic art” played a role in this connection, as a “means of shaping the environment to social ends” with “objects and performances as part of the same stream of activity, which he insisted on portraying as social agitation” (Widrich 2014, 153). Furthermore, the “temporal and performative counter-monument interventions” can problematize monuments and allow for their *re*-thinking by “producing traces of memory, circulating and documenting themselves within cultural memory, creating new ways to think of the future” (Webber-Heffernan 2018, 76, 86). In this sense, Alexander Etkind’s concept of “memory events” designates various types of cultural remembering that range from celebrations and historical debates, to films, novels, and websites (2010b). In this notion, Etkind combined Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* and Alain Badiou’s concept of the “event,” but, in contrast to Nora’s concept, Etkind’s conceptualization of the memory event suggests a singular moment and does not emphasize the continual or static presence of these cultural expressions (Etkind 2010a). To the cultural practices identified by Etkind, this article adds contemporary art and especially performance art practices that involve socialist monuments. Thus, artists’ intervention in relation to monuments of the communist past can provoke a new type of memory event that we can call “performative monument events” or “temporal and performative counter-monument interventions” (Webber-Heffernan 2018, 76), which engage, on one side, with the monuments and, on the other side, with the people.

In South-Eastern Europe, beyond counter-memory and meaning-making practices, there is a third possibility, the confrontation with the past. Based on the three parameters of “conflictivity, morality and reflexivity,” Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen (2020, 1) have distinguished between three modes of remembering: cosmopolitan, antagonistic, and agonistic. If the cosmopolitan mode of

remembering is “highly self-reflexive,” considers the world as “one big and potentially harmonious entity,” believes “all identities to be constructed, and is able to reflect on the perspectives of both the Self and the Other as victims,” the antagonistic mode “recognizes conflict as a means to eliminate the enemy-other, with the purpose of reaching a conflict-free society – typically imagined in the image of a fictionalized past of ethnic purity” (Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen 2020, 2). Finally, inspired by Chantal Mouffe’s theorization of agonism, “the agonistic mode of remembering recognizes conflict as an ontological and fundamental characteristic of human society, but ... tries to deconstruct the moral pitting of the other as an enemy on moral grounds through social and political contextualization of the historical conflict” (Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen 2020, 7); an “agonistic memory, therefore, incorporates the perspectives of the perpetrators (2).

Moreover, recalling the importance of multiperspectivism as outlined by Astrid Erll, that is, how a narrative is “simultaneously focalized through different subject positions,” Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen support “radical multiperspectivism” (2020, 3). The latter allows “voices and perspectives belonging to antagonistically opposed enemies, typically victims and perpetrators, [to] meet, alongside those of bystanders, traitors, collaborators and so on” (Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen 2020, 3). Because Mouffe’s agonism is considered to rely too much on artistic intervention and to lay “too much responsibility on the artistic community to disrupt hegemonic discourses” (Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen 2020, 5), successful agonistic multiperspectivism needs other means – such as oral history – to arrive at “an agonistic memory discourse” (2020, 4). Moreover, in what concerns the statues of former perpetrators, Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen quote Stiem who argued that “it should not be a question of choosing whether to tear them down or modify them, but of adopting a multilayered, thoroughgoing and complex approach” (4), which contemporary artists propose.

The former socialist monuments and statues that are seen as a form of dissonant heritage (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018) have become post-socialist hybrids (Light and Young). In what follows, this article analyzes several types of “performative monument events” that used various “de- and re-contextualisations” (Light and Young). They constitute an example of agonistic multiperspectivism (Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen 2020). Their analysis can bolster our understanding of the communist past as transmitted by its monumental residues, the socialist statues, and their conceptualization by contemporary artists who, through “performative monument events,” use performance to engage with monuments and their presence.

Removing or Dislocating Socialist Monuments in South-Eastern Europe: Joyous and Ironic Performances

The first socialist monuments in Eastern Europe were built after 1945 by the Soviet Union, after which there were state policies to decorate the public space with the new socialist heroes and symbols. The end of the socialist regimes in South-Eastern Europe was marked by the removal of the men of bronze (Verdery 1999), also referred to as (de)commemoration (Gensburger 2020) or demonumentation (Nonument Group). Statues were pulled out, lifted up, or broken down following a similar pattern. They were destroyed or taken to military cemeteries or museums and replaced by national heroes (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018, 104).

This elimination of socialist statues after the fall of the communist regimes was seen as the catalyst for democracy and political change in an act that seemed cathartic and irreversible. Questioning this irreversibility, the Lithuanian artist Deimantas Narkevičius, in his video work *Once in the XX century* (2004), brought back Lenin on his pedestal in Vilnius, thirteen years after the statue was removed. In some countries of the region, the erasure of the communist symbols has continued after this moment of removal as four former communist countries have introduced so called decommunization laws: Lithuania in 2008, Georgia in 2011, Ukraine in 2015, and Poland in 2016 (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018). Thus, in a work from 2016, Narkevičius registered a new removal: the erasure of eight socialist realist (1952) statues from a bridge in the center of Vilnius in the video work titled *20 July 2015*.

When statues were removed, people celebrated, mounting on the statues and making the sign of victory, or in other cases taking revenge on the statue. This performative removal of the statues of the communist leaders was festive and optimistic for the future. In Romania, the removal of the statue of Lenin was the result of a private initiative, that of Gheorghe Gavrilescu, a crane operator, who pulled down the statue on March 3, 1990 (Light and Young 2011, 497). Removing Lenin's statue in March 1990 was a celebratory event, which involved a priest that sanctified the empty pedestal. In Bulgaria in January 1991, the statue of Lenin that was in place for 25 years was removed from Sofia after the Parliament ordered the elimination of communist symbols. In Albania, Stalin's statue in Tirana was removed in December 1990: "A crane hoisted the bronze statue of the Soviet dictator onto a truck. Covered by a green cloth and lying on its back, the monument was driven off to an undisclosed final destination" (Smale 1990). Then, in February 1991, the statue of Enver Hoxha was also removed from the center of the capital. Demonstrators pulled down the statue with a rope and then towed it to the Tirana university campus; there were reports "that protesters rolled the statue's head into a central square and urinated on it" (*Washington Post*, February 21, 1991).

Afterwards, some of the statues that were removed from their original place were taken to "parks of statues." These exist formally in three capital cities of Eastern Europe: Budapest (Memento Park/Szoborpark, 1993 – 42 statues), Tallinn (Maarjamäe Palace/Soviet statues graveyard – 21 statues), and Sofia (Museum of Socialist Art, 2011 – 77 statues); further, they exist in Lithuania in Druskininkai (Grutas Park/Stalin's World, 2001 – 86 statues), and in Moscow, there is also a Park of Sculptures (Muzeon Park of Arts/Fallen monuments park, 1996). In other countries of the region, such as Romania or Albania, socialist statues were abandoned and became part of the "red tours" or "communist tours," which are increasingly popular among foreign tourists. According to Kuczyńska-Zonik, this displacement neutralized them: no longer on their pedestal, they were "stripped of prestige and authority" and "this depreciation of the Soviet regime (in the form of paintings, statues and fragments of Lenin statues) changed their meaning and made them into commercial goods" (2018, 112). The parks of statues, which are often described as "sculptural graveyards" or as a new type of museum, are, according to Ina Belcheva, found at "the border of memorial museums and art museums, between historical museums and amusement parks" (Belcheva 2017, 107). Belcheva (2017, 103) differentiated between two types: "museums with a more or less pronounced ironic approach (Grutas Park, Memento Park) and art museums with a more conservative approach (Park of Art, Museum of Socialist Art)."

In Romania in 1990, after the statues of Lenin and of the Romanian leader Petru Groza were removed, they were abandoned in the courtyard of the Palace of Mogoșoaia, close to Bucharest. According to Light and Young, "being photographed standing on Lenin's statue quickly became part of the performative tourism rituals of the site," and Lenin's statue changed from being a symbol of communist ideology to being a symbol of the end of the communist regime (Light and Young 2011, 498). Several contemporary artists have also used the Romanian Lenin's statue by Boris Caragea (1960) as a pretext to discuss the relationship to the past in Romania: Anca Benera, *The Red Rider* (2007), Irina Botea, *Splendor in the grass* (2010), Mihai Zgondoiu, *The Sleep of Lenin* (2011), and the curatorial project of Ioana Ciocan, *Project 1990* (2010–2014), which focused on the empty pedestal of the former Lenin statue and proposed new projects that relate to Romania's post-communist context. These artists reinterpreted Lenin's fallen statue (Benera) either by interacting with it (Botea) or by copying it and placing it, again, next to its former plinth (Zgondoiu, Ciocan).

The Museum of Socialist Art of Sofia (2011) has an outside garden that includes 77 statues and busts, some of them realized by important Bulgarian artists. According to Ina Belcheva, "in the sculptural park, which is the *de facto* permanent exhibition of the Museum of Socialist Art, the most emblematic monuments from the public space of different Bulgarian towns are presented, alongside with, bizarrely, indoor sculptures from the collections of the National Art Gallery, as well as from the former Museum of the Revolutionary Movement and Home of the Active Combatants Against Fascism and Capitalism" (Belcheva 2017, 114). For Belcheva, the tone used to display the statues is not at all ironic but, on the contrary, very serious and conservative (2017, 114). Moreover, contrary

to the syntagm used for other parks of statues, that of “sculptural graveyards,” the Bulgarian sculptural park “was not seen as a symbolic death of sculptures, but more as a resurrection” (Belcheva 2017, 115).

Since 2013 there is also an “impromptu sculpture park” in Tirana in the courtyard behind the National Art gallery where several statues are presented (among which Lenin, Stalin and a bust of Enver Hoxha) with their heads covered; this has been included in the walking tours of communism that tourists can choose in several Eastern European cities.

Performance plays an important role in the heritage tourism industry as well. In fact, many monuments have “become stages for historical tours and reenactments that carry out such commodification or selling of the past ... Yet, like any memorial or monument, they highlight selective visions of the past” (Alderman, Brasher, and Dwyer 2020, 45). In the context of the parks of statues, whether institutionalized or temporary, we can observe the ironic “performance of visitors” (Popescu and Schult 2020, 137), which is encouraged or staged by the tour guides. The Park in Budapest and Grutas Park in Lithuania involve a brand of “derisive nostalgia,” and “their contested meaning makes them as much emblems of the uncertain future of the current post-communist transition period as they are memorials to the communist past” (Williams 2008, 186). For Light and Young, in the case of the Budapest Statue Park museum, “further layers of meaning are added during the marketing and presentation of the park and its consumption by tourists which are marked by irony and humor rather than serious political and historical intent” (2011, 495). This same ironic perspective is shared by the playful installation of the artist Kamila Szejnoch titled “Swing” and part of the public space project “Carousel Swing Slide” of 2008 in Warsaw. In this intervention, the artist or other visitors could sway from a swing attached to the bronze Berling Army Soldier Monument. This participatory performative playfulness contradicts the seriousness of the monument and what it commemorates.

In South-Eastern Europe, the statues of the Soviet leaders were removed before February 1991 in joyful celebrations; the statues of Lenin in Bucharest and Sofia were removed in March 1990 and January 1991, respectively, whereas the still-standing statue of Stalin was also removed from Tirana in December 1990, followed in February 1991 by the statue of Enver Hoxha. Other socialist statues were collected and exhibited informally as in Bucharest (in the 1990s) and Tirana (since 2013), or later in Sofia as part of the Museum of Socialist Art (2011). They witnessed thereafter an interaction with tourists as part of the so-called “red tours,” which saw visitors performing ironically next to the statues. Thus, the performance of removing the socialist statuary was celebratory in the early 1990s and was followed by an ironic approach toward the statues as part of the (in)formal public displays of socialist art.

Resignifying Socialist Statues through “Performative Monument Events”: Agonistic Multiperspectivism

If the obviously political monuments of communism were destroyed, some, which have an aesthetic value and not a direct political significance, are still present and can be seen as palimpsests. Monuments have been transformed by (re)writing on them, defacing them, putting clothes on them, covering them, or using performance to engage with them.

This is the case of the statues of the Soviet heroes, which are still in place in several Eastern European countries as a result of the agreements between Russia and the former communist countries (Lehti, Jutila, and Jokisipil 2008). In Bucharest, the *Monument of the Soviet Soldier* (Constantin Baraschi 1946) that stood in the central Victory Square was moved during the Ceaușescu regime and then, after 1990, was relocated to the Soviet Cemetery in the northern part of the city. It is now protected as part of the agreement with the Russian Federation. The best-known example of the monument of a Soviet soldier is that of the *Monument of the Soviet Army* (1954) in Sofia, which was realized by a group of artists (Vaska Emanouilova, Mara Georgieva, Lyubomir Dalchev, Ivan Lazarov, Ivan Founev, Petar Doichinov, Vassil Zidarov, Danko Mitov, Ivan

Vassilyov, Lyuven Neikov, and Boris Kapitanov). Since 1993, the monument has been the battleground for those who want to preserve it and those who do not want to. The Russian Federation has also supported its maintenance in place, and in 2010 the NGO Civil Initiative for the Dismantling of the Soviet Army Monument (CIDSAM) was established in Bulgaria. Moreover, several groups attempted to resignify the monument. For example, in 2011, the street art group Destructive Creation painted its soldiers as icons of American pop culture such as Superman, Santa Claus, or Wonder Woman. On August 21, 2013, the day of the Soviet invasion of Prague, the monument was painted in pink, recalling David Cerny's *Pink tank* (1991), while in 2014 it immortalized the Ukrainian crisis. This kind of painted intervention has become a model in Central and Eastern Europe as a way to situate oneself in the politics of memory (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018, 107).

Beyond this type of painting intervention on monuments, there are also performances realized by contemporary artists on the empty pedestals of the former statues, or close to the still existing socialist monuments. Different than the performances seen at the moment of the removal of communist statues, or as part of the “red tours” in the parks of statues, this section discusses several performances by contemporary artists that can be conceptualized according to three attitudes with regards to the memory of the communist regime as expressed through its residues. In the first place, the artist appears as a mediator of the past who has the purpose to bring back the people who were left out by the official policies of memory. In the second place, artists act as “living statues” and propose “Delicate, Ephemeral Instruments of Engagement” with the past. Finally, artists enact poetic performances that question the absurd megalomaniac socialist edifices by their metaphorical interventions.

Nonuments and the Artist as a Mediator of the Past: Bring Back the People

Through their performances, the Ligna Group with *Nonument, radioballet in front of Buzludzha Monument* (2019) and Boryana Rossa with *Memory Picture* (2008) create a space for memory that is other than the official one of the Bulgarian government in that it involves the people who were left out by the change of regime.

The Nonument Group is a multidisciplinary artist collective established in 2011 and formed by artists and curator Martin Bricelj Baraga and Neja Tomšič; together with other researchers and institutions, this group maps nonuments and creates public interventions. They define “nonuments as twentieth-century architecture, monuments, public spaces and infrastructural projects that have lost or undergone a shift in symbolic meaning as a consequence of political and social changes” (Archdaily 2020). They were built to glorify and recall but are now forgotten “reminders of unattained utopias, coercion and complicity” (Biennial 2019). In their work, it is important to acknowledge the public space “from the bottom up rather than commemorating official histories” and to “redefine monuments as those spaces where collective social efforts and interactions occur” (Future architecture 2016). The members of the group use participation and performance, including “choreographed gestures, walking,” to stress how most monuments are “the ultimate ambivalent structures, still exerting their original ideological power for some, signifying their impotence for others, or are used as an un-reflected visual fetish” (Urban Transcripts Journal 2019). In this way, nonuments “allow for a variety of different conflicting interpretations to coexist” and “exhibit more plurality than what we build today” (Urban Transcripts Journal 2019).

In their intervention *Nonument, radioballet in front of Buzludzha Monument* (2019), the Ligna Group (together with Stephan Shtereff and Emiliyan Gatsov) invited anonymous participants to take part in a collective performance that involved interacting with the futurist monument (see figure 1). This art intervention was commissioned by the Museum of Humour and Satire (HHS) in Gabrovo, Bulgaria.¹

The Buzludzha monument was built during the 1970s as the “house-monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party.” Erected on a peak of the Balkan Mountains, it can be seen from afar and was



Figure 1. Ligna Group, *Nonument, radioballet in front of Buzludzha Monument* (Gabrovo Biennial, 2019). Photograph by Rosina Pencheva.

inaugurated in 1981 in honor of the Congress that was held there (Vukov 2012). After 1990, its fate provoked many discussions, as some supported its destruction while others argued its use for new purposes: as a museum of communism or a disco club (Vukov 2012). The performance by the Nonument Group was in the form of a radioballet, which is defined as a “an audio script, listened to and acted out by the audience, whose members are taken on a walk around the Buzludzha Monument, experiencing its architecture, revisiting scenes from its history and instructed to perform casual gestures” (Nonument 2019). The participants were taken by bus from three cities in Bulgaria (Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, and Kazanlak). They were asked to bring their phone and headphones in order to listen to a recording of 59 minutes that had been sent by email one day before the performance. The recording includes 12 movements,² which contain instructions to do certain gestures at the same time as the others. For example, in the first movement, they were told to “move forward, not backward”; during the fourth movement, they heard “these are not the bodies organized by a party they are not lined up as if they were locked up, immovable, stiff, inflexible watching the monument in admiration, no they looked to each other it seems to be a different party”; and during the sixth movement, they were to “find a gesture that this statue should become. A collective gesture.”

The audio, which includes four distinct voices, questions ideology and history and takes participants through the repetition of “discreet gestures of protest,” such as those performed by Jiří Kovanda in Prague in 1976, the Academia Ruhu in 1977 in Poland, or by Erdem Gündüz at Gezi Park in Istanbul in 2013. As participants were given different suggestions, one of the voices specified: “We don’t know what the right attitude is to approach this building. We are here to find out. Proposing attitudes, positions, gestures” (Nonument 2019). Several possible attitudes were suggested, including that of a priest or that of the 6,000 workers who worked there, “They knew that some died because of the working conditions, they were here in the wind, every day from morning till evening, most of them Turks and Roma [who] were forced to work for very low wages.” The

voice on the audio recording suggested to get closer to the monument, although it questioned if this will mean they will “become part of the monument and its ideology?” Through this interaction with the monument, participants were called upon to reflect on the question “who is defining what this ruin could become?”; and the audio encouraged them to become a monument themselves “next to Scylla and Charybdis” (Nonument 2019). By creating this collective performance, the Ligna Group enacted a bottom-up reconsideration of the monument, taking into account multiple perspectives on its significance and future role. For example, they asked participants to reconsider communism:

Consider why they have made that decision. Towards the house of the communist party. Towards this ruin of what was supposed to be a house of communism. Could something as the dream of something called communism living in solidarity and in each other’s care and without competition, could something like this be contained in a house or doesn’t something like communism like other -isms already when it becomes an -ism become a ruin? Ruinism. (Nonument 2019).

Nonument, radioballet in front of Buzludzha Monument (2019) is a good example of what Cento Bull and Lauge Hansen call “agonistic multiperspectivism” as it illuminates the simultaneity of memory frameworks in relation to the same past. The members of the group used performance to integrate anonymous participants in this interaction with the nonument that tests different gestures or variants for its possible transformation or memorialization. There is no definitive option; rather, it is an open-ended project of transforming the monuments of the past through a social sculpture as it was theorized by Joseph Beuys. The second example is the performance by Boryana Rossa, *Memory Picture* (2008), engaging the monument “1300 Years of the Bulgarian state” (Valentin Starchev 1981), which was erected in Sofia to celebrate the medieval state of 681. Since its inauguration, it was not appreciated by the public and had different visible problems (Vasileva and Kaleva 2017, 177). The monument was surrounded by a fence in 2001 and then decorated with graffiti (Vasileva and Kaleva 2017, 177). In 2008, when it was threatened to be demolished and replaced with a sport facility or a bar, the Bulgarian artist Boryana Rossa invited the public to interact with it. She invited people “to take a picture of themselves with it, because we thought that these pics will be the only way this monument will remain in history” (Boryana Rossa, email to the author, August 14, 2020). People were asked to write on the wall surrounding the monument – whether they agreed or not with the demolition of the monument – and to take a picture with it. As the artist noted, the opinions of participants were different. Some of the contributors wanted it demolished:

‘We do not want the monument because it is communist, communists are evil, and everything related to them should be demolished.’ Also, all of these people thought this monument is ugly and it is falling apart anyway (it was not maintained for 18 years by then) and is dangerous. Almost all of these people wanted to re-build on its place a military monument, which was built to memorize the death of many Bulgarian soldiers in the Balkan wars. The monument was also a spot of worship for Bulgarian nationalists, who supported Hitler in WW2. This military monument also has a very complicated history (and) it was part of a big architectural ensemble of army buildings, which was dysfunctional by the 1980s when it was demolished along with this monument. On its place was built this monument [together with] the National Palace of Culture. (Boryana Rossa, email to the author, August 14, 2020)

Other participants thought the Monument is part of the history of the country and should be safeguarded.

Another opinion was that the monument is a masterpiece of modernist art and architecture and should be preserved as such, no matter what it represents or when it was made. There was a strong support of the artists’ and architects’ unions ... Many young people did not know

what this monument is and what [it] represents. They liked it as a modern architectural piece and as a perfect skateboard location. (Boryana Rossa, email to the author, August 14, 2020)

The monument was dilapidated and declared dangerous in 2009; and finally, in 2017, despite other projects that sought to safeguard it, the Bulgarian authorities demolished it with the support of the mayor's office and of many nationalists (Boryana Rossa, email to the author, August 14, 2020). The monument was replaced by the statue of a lion meant to memorialize the Balkan war soldiers (Boryana Rossa, email to the author, August 14, 2020). Thus, in this case, the artist Boryana Rossa performs the role of mediator between the monument and citizens' memory of the place and creates a space to integrate a final memory of that monument in which the people's opinions are part of what remains.

As discussed above, the first performative strategy of memorialization in relation to nonuments artists employ is that of a mediator for the anonymous representatives of the people who are invited to interact with the abandoned monuments, or nonuments. This form of dissonant heritage (Kuczynska-Zonik) was re-evaluated by the contemporary artists who proposed to change the relationship the public had with these residues of the socialist past. The Ligna Group elaborated a performative monument event that was staged and involved multiple forms of participatory art. Boryana Rossa provided the means for the memorialization of the nonument "1300 Years of the Bulgarian state" by allowing participants to write their opinion and take a last photograph with it, thus enabling them to participate in its memorialization.

Living Statues: "Delicate, Ephemeral Instruments of Engagement" with the Past

"Living statues" are better known today because of their street-art form. In fact, "living statues" were first introduced as an art practice by the Argentinean artist Alberto Greco who, in his 1962 Manifesto, founded Live art/Vivo-Dito in which the artist pointed to something with his finger and gave "contexts and situations an unexpected value which could turn into a work of art" (Greco 2010). Several contemporary artists in South-Eastern Europe act as "living statues" next to the still-standing statues (Alexandra Pirici, Nada Prlja) through "sculptural additions" (Pirici) or by replacing the removed statues (Elisa Cenaliaj, Kamen Stoyanov).

The Romanian artist Alexandra Pirici's practice has seen her adding ephemeral interventions, or what she calls "sculptural actions" to established monuments of Lenin or Columbus (Kourlas 2018). For Pirici, these "sculptural additions" invite viewers to look differently at the monument by placing human bodies in relation to the monuments; she tries to introduce these works as "sculptures in human material creating a tension in materiality," also because the human body is flexible, and not permanent, thus keeping possible the openness of the public space (Pirici 2014). The practice of Alexandra Pirici can be imagined as a way to recontextualize remnants of the past. In the broader discussion concerning the removal of socialist monuments in Eastern Europe, Alexandra Pirici thinks they should be "recontextualized and placed somewhere else in a different setup" (Kourlas 2018). Thus, the artist proposed to add something to the monuments or that a performer enacted a horse and asked:

'What happens if you leave these images alone? Maybe they're harmless.' But I don't think they are. I think there is a subtle way in which these images and our visuals surrounding works on us and shapes us and transforms us ... I thought of those interventions as sculptures in which I could use the body to modify those buildings, instead of bronze or rock to use the body, because it has a certain power, you have something with which to add, to change, to modify. (Kourlas 2018)

Pirici's performance *Soft power* (2014) was realized in the context of Documenta in Saint Petersburg, Russia (see figure 2). In the filmed version of the performance, we see how, slowly, a small group of young performers gather and start to gradually climb on each other's back so as to



Figure 2. Alexandra Pirici, *Soft Power* (2014).

copy the posture of the Lenin statue that is close by. The Lenin statue realized by Sergey Eyseev in front of the Finland station in Saint Petersburg is one of the first statues to be unveiled in 1926 and shows Lenin – with his right hand raised showing the way – on the spot where he held a passionate speech upon his return from Switzerland in 1917. The statue of Lenin the performers reproduce is different because both its pedestal and Lenin itself are made of the bodies of the people, of the performers, and the men-made statue is also smaller than the 4 meters high bronze Lenin. For Pirici, soft power refers to attracting people not through force but through the power to coopt, to gather allies. In 2020, Pirici realized *Pulse, enlivenment of the Kaunas Ninth Forth Movement* in relation to

the monument dedicated to the victims of fascism on a site where thousands of Jewish people were killed in Lithuania. The enlivenment of the monument through a choreographed act for 50 performers is similar to the intervention by the Ligna Group at Buzludzha. In this intervention at Kaunas, participants had to move around the monument in a slowly unfolding choreography that could recall a hora, which is a type of dancing by forming a circle found in several countries in the Balkans (Pirici 2020). These performative additions to public monuments conceived by Pirici are meant to occupy the spaces in which the heroes of history are displayed, without any reference to the people, and at the same time they show the feebleness of power through these ephemeral, discrete add-ons to bronze, marble, or stone men and women.

If Pirici proposed to add something to existing statues, the Albanian artist Nada Prlja suggested to interact lovingly with the still-standing socialist statues, part of the “impromptu” statue park of Tirana. In 2016, the artist organized a performance titled *Humane Communism* (2016) as part of the project “Subversion to Red.” According to the artist’s website, Prlja held a “one day workshop and intervention in the public space” with the aim to create “an image of ‘Humanistic Communism,’ where the group of participants” showed “love and care toward the old socialist monuments, by hugging, caressing, kissing, cleaning and by daydreaming together of a system that might alternate or improve the cruelty of current or new systems to come.” The series of photographs show participants imitating the poses of the abandoned statues in the back courtyard of the Museum of Art in Tirana. The participants also engaged with the statues by laying at their feet or kneeling before them and looking at them from below.

If these two artists interacted with still-standing statues, other contemporary artists chose to use their body to replace the removed statues of Stalin and Lenin. The Albanian artist Enisa Cenaliaj in *Welcome Dear Workers* (2005) performed on the empty pedestal of a former Stalin statue in Tirana (Bryzgel n.d.). The artist, dressed as a worker, greeted the workers exiting the former Kombinat Stalin Textiles Factory, while “a banner nearby displayed the message: ‘welcome, dear workers’” (Bryzgel n.d.). The performance was not welcomed by the workers themselves who commented “we don’t need any more statues” (Bryzgel n.d.). As Amy Bryzgel notes, the artist was inspired to create this performance because of the changes she observed in that area of Tirana, which used to be for workers and was slowly becoming commercial (Bryzgel n.d.): “The performance draws attention to, and demands recognition of, the working people who not only depend on this area for their livelihood but make it what it is” (Bryzgel n.d.). In a similar gesture, the Bulgarian artist Kamen Stoyanov, in the series of photographs *Hello Lenin* (2003), is shown climbing on the empty pedestal of the Lenin statue in Russe, Bulgaria. He then stands on the plinth as he looked straight ahead. As he acknowledges on his website, the artist’s “conquest of the pedestal” wanted to show how the statue of Lenin was removed 19 years earlier, while the ideology did not disappear.

The second strategy discussed and used by performance artists was that of creating living statues, either next to still-existing statues or in place of former socialist statues. These “post-socialist hybrids” were recontextualized (Light and Young), which altered their original meaning. Through her “sculptural additions” and “sculptural actions,” Alexandra Pirici proposes an alternative to tearing down statues, that of entering a dialogue with them through the presence of living people who enter into a “delicate ephemeral” conversation with the past. In a similar approach, Nada Prlja proposed to interact in a more humane manner with the former socialist statues in Tirana by imitating their poses. By placing real people next to the statues, the two artists show their difference in size: the heroes of bronze are giants. If Pirici and Prlja added to the still-existing statues, Cenaliaj and Stoyanov replaced the missing Stalin and Lenin statues in Tirana and Russe, Bulgaria. By their gestures they questioned the transformation of the context in which the statues had existed. These performative monument events invite the participation of the citizens to the reimagining of the still-existing statues or only existing plinths of former statues by a direct action and as a different kind of human-made counter-monument.

Poetic Performances that Question the Absurd Socialist Megalomaniac Edifices

A third performative strategy is that of engaging with the absurd megalomaniac edifices of the former dictatorships through metaphorical, poetic instruments: with material such as the skeleton of a whale (Lulaj) or dust (Vătămanu and Tudor). The artists chose these symbolic representations to question the monuments and their significance, as well as what these monuments erased.

The Albanian artist Armando Lulaj has several artworks that deal with the socialist past's memory. His filmed performance *It Wears as It Grows* (2011) as part of the *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems*, which also includes the interventions *NEVER* (2012) and *Recapitulation* (2015). *It Wears as It Grows* shows how the past still over-determines the present configuration of the urban space of Tirana and how art can serve as a method to criticize the present configuration (see figure 3). At the center of the film is *The Pyramid* (Piramida), the former museum of Enver Hoxha built after his death in 1986 that still dominates the capital city of Tirana; at the center of the mausoleum was a huge marble statue of the former dictator shown seated. Despite the attempt in 2011 to demolish it, and the different options to repurpose it, the star-shaped building has been abandoned and is now a preferred space for urban intervention by youngsters who skate on top of it or use it as a meeting place. In Lulaj's video, we are shown a group of men who carry the empty carcass of a whale through Tirana and then enter the Pyramid and deposit it in the dark. The men are filmed with a static camera walking on a railway toward the camera; then, the static camera catches glimpses of them, through the city from North to South, crossing a busy intersection, as well as Skanderberg Square in the center of Tirana. We see the evolution of the city from the old city, passing fascist buildings, to the new post-dictatorship architecture. The skeleton of the whale the men carry was captured by the Albanian military navy – “obsessed by the fear of possible attacks to be launched at sea” (Poggi 2011) – after Albania broke with the USSR in 1963. It is preserved in the Museum of Natural History in Tirana where it can still be seen. For Lulaj, the whale represents the power, the state, the body of the past's power and the current one, and that is why he chose to enclose it in the Pyramid (Armando Lulaj, email to the author, September 11, 2020):



Figure 3. Armando Lulaj, *It Wears as It Grows* (2011).

By the way of such a grotesque action, the skeleton was taken from a scientific context and ideally relocated within the political and social history of the country. In the final scene the skeleton is deposited inside the pyramidal mausoleum built to glorify the figure of dictator Enver Hoxha, thus further strengthening the link that, due to a ridiculous misunderstanding, has arisen between the whale and the power system that has turned it into the trophy of a ruinous witch hunt. (Poggi 2011)

The men climbed the stairs of the Pyramid and deposited the whale inside, in the dark. On the screen, in the closing, the video tells us how the mausoleum was built in 1987 by Enver Hoxha's daughter and her husband "to glorify Hoxha and create an eternal monument like the pyramids of Egyptian pharaohs." The exhibition of this artwork in the Venice Biennial included 71 volumes of Enver Hoxha's autobiography in which the artist replaced the portrait of the leader with a vertebra of the cetacean (Bordignon 2015).

If Lulaj used a symbol of the paranoia of the Hoxha regime to question its posthumous significance, the Romanian artists Florin Tudor and Mona Vătămanu have realized three video works that use dust as a material yet poetic instrument to engage with the socialist past: *The Dust* (2006), *Văcărești* (2006–2010), and *Dust/The Beginning of the 21st century* (2007). According to the two artists' website, in "*Dust/The Beginning of the 21st century* (2007), the house growing inside the pavilion functions as [an] excrescence that consumes space, an inbuilt contradiction, a *nonument*." In *The Dust*, Florin Tudor is shown taking dust from the church Schitul Maicilor and carrying it in his pockets. The artist walked carefully from the church, which was moved in 1982, to the empty field in front of the building of the Romanian Academy, which was part of the communist civic center of Bucharest. "He looks up toward the adjacent Romanian Academy building while emptying his pockets of their large quantity of conserved dust and the film ends. The tragicomic absurdity of these performances is metaphorical of the cruel folly behind the enforced upheaval entailed in replacing one ideological emblem of collective life with another" (Rehberg 2009). This filmed performance links the two places: the place where the church was moved to and the place where it used to stand. The former site of the church is now occupied by "the building of Elena Ceausescu," built in the 1980s as part of the systematization of Bucharest by the construction of the Civic Center, which had at its center the House of the People/House of the Republic.

Thus, the bones of a whale and dust are the material metaphors of what remains of the power of the dictatorships that physically altered the capital cities by the megalomaniac constructions meant to glorify the dictators, both during their lives and after their passing away. While Lulaj shows young men carrying the skeleton of a whale around Tirana as a symbol of the dictatorial power and placing it in the now-abandoned mausoleum, Tudor and Vătămanu use dust to reenact what was there and was demolished to make place for the new socialist architecture. This third strategy of performative monument events underlined through poetic gestures the absurd weight of the past on the present. The monuments of the dictatorial past are seen dominating the precarious present.

Conclusions: Reflective Performance as a Form of Pensive Memorialization

Following the end of the communist regimes in the region, statues were removed by 1991 and/or dislocated and brought to (in)formal parks of statues. In both situations, the performativity of the memory of communism was expressed. People cheered the removal of the socialist statues as a sign of the end of the regimes, and then, once they were exhibited in parks of statues, they performed an ironic, nostalgic memory by engaging playfully with the statues.

This article has analyzed how contemporary artists in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania used performance to interact with the socialist statuary and the effect of these "performative monument events" on the practices of memory. Contemporary artists have engaged with the past by using different means and representations. This article discussed the use of performance practices to engage with the still-existing or missing socialist statuary. Because "performance is itself a form of

public art” (Widrich 2014), the “performative monument events” are also a type of ephemeral public memory discourse or “memory event” that engages with the dominant memory frameworks. The artistic examples discussed provide a better understanding of the performativity of the socialist monuments as mediated by contemporary artists and introduce another nuance to the meaning of performative in this syntagm, as, in this case, it is about the performance of artists in relation to monuments and not about the performativity of the monuments per se.

At the same time, some of these performances are staged and imagined to be documented through photographs or video, which limits their impact on the public with which they interact. In this sense, memory events – conceptualized by Etkind as unique instants that are momentary as opposed to hard memory – also gain a new meaning through the documentation of these artistic gestures, a documentation that prolongs their duration.

Instead of tearing down the socialist statues, contemporary artists in South-Eastern Europe enacted different possibilities that allow the imagination of alternative futures (Plate and Smelik 2013). Thus, artists used three performative strategies of memorialization involving monuments. In the first place, they acted as mediators and proposed to bring back the people and suggest a new perspective onto the past, one that is open-ended. Both the Ligna Group and Boryana Rossa intermediated the interaction between the people and nonuments either through a staged collective performance or through a photograph with the nonument. The Ligna Group intermediated a bottom-up reassessment of the monument that acknowledged the simultaneity of all possible perspectives on that site. Rossa illustrated in her intervention the creation of a political space through artistic means, which Elisa Garnsey described. These two examples add to the conceptualization of agonistic memory as an example of agonistic multiperspectivism, which underlines the multitude of possible perspectives onto the past.

Secondly, artists replaced the missing statues as ephemeral presences or added real people to the still standing statues as “sculptural additions” (Pirici). The living statues of Pirici, Cenaliaj, Prlja, and Stoyanov created a new, affective interaction with the still-standing statues, or with their empty pedestals, thus showing how human-made counter-monuments can problematize the socialist statuary. Pirici and Prlja exemplified how the public can enter into a dialogue with the monuments instead of just removing them, which can open up further possibilities of understanding the past than erasing their memory.

Finally, artists used material metaphors of absurd power to question the existing monuments. Through the bones of a whale captured by the Hoxha regime and the dust of a moved church to build the Civic Center of Bucharest, Lulaj and Tudor and Vătămanu, respectively, allude to the weight of the past that still looms above the present.

These “performative monument events” provoke a new gaze onto the recent past that can open up a more comprehensive understanding of the possibilities of the people’s intervention in the public space beyond the example of participatory art discussed by Shefik, as the artist is the mediator or the initiator of a critical aesthetic encounter with the legacy of the past.

At the same time, these performative ephemeral interventions underline “agonistic multiperspectivism” onto the past and the significance of its residues, the statues. Artists replaced the missing statues as a way to criticize their present and show how people could become more important than the giant bronze men in articulating a memory of the communist past. Artists propose a multilayered approach to the past that they demonstrate, which is inspired by agonistic memory that includes all perspectives – of the perpetrators, of the victims, and of the former regimes – as a way of understanding the past to better explain its consequences in the present.

Through their interventions, artists change the perspective on the “dissonant heritage” (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2018) that was either demonized or valorized, and question these remnants of the past. These temporal, performative human-made counter-monument interventions problematize and resignify the monuments and, at the same time, show different possibilities of memorialization. In light of the literature on the role of art in transitional justice, the artistic interventions discussed can be conceptualized as examples of reflective performances compared to

the joyous and ironic types of performances in relation to the socialist monuments. These reflective performances that invite the citizens to ponder on the significance of the remnants of the past – besides the condemnatory, victimizing, and ironic gazes – can be considered as forms of pensive or contemplative memorialization. The wider implications for how post-socialist societies remember refers to the possible integration in mnemonic discourses of this multiplicity of memory discourses that surpasses the dichotomy perspective that is predominant in the region.

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Notes

- 1 The connection between the two projects is that members of the Nonument Group were initiators and leaders of a European Union cooperation project MAPS – Mapping and Archiving Public Spaces (2017–2019) – in which one of the partners was the House of Humor and Satire. As part of this project, several artistic interventions on nonuments were realized, and one of them was the Nonument radioballet project on Buzludzha by the LIGNA group.
- 2 Nonument First movement, a decision; Second movement, a rather not a movement; Third movement, meet the angel of history; Fourth movement, Stumble in; Fifth movement, Trip to the stars becomes a star trip; Sixth movement, two scarier rocks; Seventh movement, Stairway to Buzludzha; Eighth movement, Repairing the spaceship; Ninth movement, Listening to the unheard soundwaves; Tenth movement, Countdown; Eleventh movement, Ignition; Twelfth monument, and now Just a Monument.

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