

COURSE SYLLABUS

Monuments and Memorials: aspects of constructing national identity and public memory through the visual arts in 20th Century Central and Eastern-Europe

Instructor:

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Department **Nationalism Studies**

Central European University

Semester/term, year

Course level

Credits (# ECTS Credits)

Pre-requisites (if applicable)

Course e-learning site:

Office hours: days, location

Course Description

The terms 'monument' and 'memorial' are often used interchangeably, but in fact they refer to two different things. Publicly erected site markers and visual signs have two different functions in a modern society: 1. they celebrate past events, persons or symbols that are of great importance for the 'positive identity' of a given community, or 2. they may warn the community not to forget negative events, persons or symbols, that people would rather not remember. Architectural and sculptural signs referring to 'positive identity' can be termed "monuments", while those claiming more reflectiveness and critical thinking on behalf of the beholder, are "memorials".

The difference between the two functions has become dramatically manifest in the latest controversy over the official project to erect a brand new monument in the very centre of Budapest, commemorating the occupation of Hungary by Nazi troops in 1944. We will use our distinction between monuments and memorials to understand the harsh criticism the project had received by the public and by historians. These criticisms point to the implied effect of the monument to dismiss

the responsibility of Hungarian authorities and ordinary people for collaborating with Nazi Germany in the Holocaust. We will look at how, during the controversy, proponents of the monument reformulated their own project. Initially, the proposed sculpture was to be a *monument* commemorating a historical event, the loss of Hungarian state-sovereignty. But as a result of the public debate the same statue will stand not as a monument, but as a *memorial* to innocent victims.

In this course we will track back two diametrically opposed traditions of public memorial practice. One is the tradition of state-dictated national monuments, predominant in the last third of the 19th century, in the age of the birth of new nation-states. The other tradition is that of participatory memorials, best represented by the so called *counter-monuments* in contemporary art.

National monuments highlight monumentality as a key feature of national symbolism. By analyzing case studies of such complex architectural settings as the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument to Rome, the Siegessäule-Brandenburger Tor complex in Berlin, or the Millenial Monument in Budapest, we will look at how they serve the purpose of creating a single mythic-heroic narrative of a unified national history and *grandeur* in terms of spatial simultaneity and monumentality. With their oversized dimensions, such monuments were meant not to inform but to overwhelm citizens - a feature that was typical of official Nazi and Soviet spatial environments as well. Particular focus will be placed on post-war monumental practices in communist Hungary, on the consecutive paradigms of monumental sculpture characterizing the Stalinist cult of personality (embodied in the vast *Stalin-monument* by Sándor Mikus in Budapest). We will look at the more moderate monumentalism in the Kádár period (eg. Imre Varga's *Károlyi* and *Béla Kun-monuments*) and then turn to the so called *Memento Park*, an ironic heterotopy outside the capital city, established for communist monuments that had been removed from their original site after the collapse of communism.

In contrast to this didactic tradition, we will also examine a few important monuments of 20th century self-referential modernist sculpture. These are based on a rejection of conventional mimetic and heroic evocation of events. We will look at the most recent paradigm of the so called 'counter-monuments' that are a less institutional, and more self-reflexive way of bringing people to remember traumatic events and losses that otherwise would be rather not remembered - for instance, the Holocaust. Most contemporary monuments and counter-monuments (such as Jochen Gerz's vanishing column in Hamburg-Harburg, Rachel Whiteread's *Nameless Library* in Vienna or Gyula Pauer's *Shoes* at the Danube bank in Budapest) look very different from traditional monuments. Their purpose is not to present another tombstone. They are meant not to console, but to provoke passers-by: to demand interaction, to enforce self-reflection and to make viewers experience the common space they construct around themselves.

Monuments and memorials remember the past, but are meant for the future and are intended to be effective in the actual present. They are integral parts of the so called

visual culture of the day. Therefore, as Nicholas Mirzoeff puts it, they can be treated as 'visual events', i.e. as interactions of the particular visual/spatial signs, the artistic (architectural, sculptural etc.) technology that enables and sustains them and the citizen/viewer. This makes the interdisciplinary approach for us a must: in the analysis of the aesthetical performance of these works, results and methods of art history, anthropology, history and political sciences all should be taken into account.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able

- to understand and reflect upon the difference between history and memory, between communicative and cultural memory;
- to perform a contextual interpretation of public monuments in terms of their aims, purposes and functions in building and strengthening national and other group identities;
- to discuss and judge competing practices of commemoration and contemporary attempts to problematize and reinterpret traditional forms of public monuments and creating new types of memorial spaces ;
- to describe, to discuss and critically evaluate public monuments in terms of their symbolism, rhetorical apparatus, attractive and persuasive power and aesthetical value.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend weekly classes, read the assigned readings and participate in discussions. Beyond this, they will be asked to choose one single monument or memorial place in their own country (if possible), and develop a complex case study on it, i. e. a properly (with pictures, maps and other charts) illustrated 15 minute presentation in class and a final paper (1200-1500 words). The analysis must include historical and political contexts as well as rhetorical and aesthetical aspects of the given case and must be relevant to the topics discussed in the course. Students are welcome to consult on which case to choose in advance. Presentations will be delivered continually and discussed together in the last two classes.

Assessment

Students are asked to submit a preliminary version of their presentation and paper by the middle of the term. The paper will be graded according to the considerations of the course's learning outcomes. Final grades will be dependent on class participation (30 %), oral presentation (30 %) and written paper (40 %).

Description and assignments of the classes

Class 1 Introductory lecture: on the relation of social memory and national identity-building and the problem of the difference between memorials and monuments

Two case studies presenting the problem: Horts Hoheisel's Brandenburger Tor/Auschwitz-Tor project and the controversy over the new Monument of the 1944 German Occupation of Hungary in Budapest

Class 2 The 19th century paradigm of national monuments and the birth of the mythic-heroic narrative of a unified national history

Required reading:

Gerő, András: 'The Altar of the Nation: the Millenium Monument in Budapest' In: Gerő, *Imagined History. Chapters form Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Hungarian Symbolic Politics*, Transl. Mario D. Fenyo, Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications Inc., New Jersey, 2006. Pp. 173-212.

Recommended readings:

Gerő, András: *Heroes' Square Budapest. Hungary's History in Stone and Bronze*. Photographs by László Csígó, Corvina Books, Budapest, 1990.

Levinson, Sanford: *Written in Stone. Public Monuments in Changing Societies*. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1998.

Kolstø, Pål (ed.): *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South Eastern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, UK, Burlington, USA, 2014. Introduction, 1-18.

Class 3 Modernity, monumentality and the aesthetization of power in 20th state totalitarianism and the "cult of the personality"

Required reading:

Brown, Matthew Cullerne: *Art under Stalin*. Phaidon, Oxford, 1991. pp. 71-99, 165-188.

Recommended readings:

Szilágyi, Ákos (1992): 'Arcadian Realism: Totalitarian Art in the Twentieth

Century', in: György, P., Turai, H. (eds.), *Art and Society in the Age of Stalin*, Corvina Books, Budapest, 1992. pp. 9-14.

Groys, Boris: *The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1992.

Michalski, Sergiusz., *Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997*, Reaktion Books, London, 1998. pp., 93-153

Class 4 The Changing Mode of Erecting Monuments in communist Hungary from 1949 to 1989)

Required readings:

Sinkó, Katalin (1992): 'Political Rituals: the Raising and Demolition of Monuments', In: György, P., Turai, H. (eds.), *Art and Society in the Age of Stalin*, Corvina Books, Budapest, 1992. pp.73-86.

James, Beverly A., *Imagining Post-Communism. Visual Narratives of Hungary's 1956 Revolution*. Texas A & M University Press, College Station, 2005. Ch. 2. 'The Destruction of the Stalin Monument', pp. 39-60.

Class 5 The problem of site-specificity: the changing status of public monuments in Hungary after 1989. The Memento Park as heterotopia (Excursion to Budatétény, outside Budapest)

Required readings:

Turai, Hedvig (2009): 'Past Unmastered: Hot and Cold Memory in Hungary', *Third Text*, 23: 1, pp. 97-106

James, Beverly A., *Imagining Post-Communism. Visual Narratives of Hungary's 1956 Revolution*. Texas A & M University Press, College Station, 2005. Ch. 1. 'Budapest Statue Park Museum', pp. 21-38.; Ch.3, 'Memorial to the Martyrs of the Counter-Revolution', pp. 61-81.; Ch. 6. , 'Sculpting Heroes in a Post-Radical Age', 145-165.

Recommended reading

Krauss, Rosalind: 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44. Also in: Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1986.

<http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz/assets/images/reading/Krauss.pdf>

Class 6 The problem of site-specific commemoration: memorial practices in post-communist Hungary (1989-) I. Funerary art

Required readings:

Bachman-Rajk-Peternák: Ravatal / Catafalque. NaNe Galéria, [Budapest] [1990]

Ildikó Nagy: 'The Crying of lot 301', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 31, no. 108 (1990), 146-149.

Recommended reading:

Harms, Victoria: *Monument discourse and the Hungarian case: competing political interpretations in Budapest's Monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956*. Budapest, CEU, Budapest College, Thesis, pp. 75-108.

Class 7 Memorial practices in post-communist Hungary: the problem of the site-specific commemoration II.. 'The House of Terror' between public memorial space and political propaganda

Excursion

Required reading:

Rév, István: 'The Terror of the House', in : Ostow, R.(ed.): *(Re)Visualizing National History. Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millenium*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto-Buffalo-London, 2008. 46-89.

Recommended Reading:

Christensen, Carl: *Performance and Experience at the House of Terror* Budapest, CEU, Budapest College, 2011. Thesis

Class 8 Paradigm shift in the public commemoration of the Holocaust I: the case of the Berlin *Mahnmal*

Required reading

Carrier, Peter: *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989. The Origins and Political Function of the Vél'd'Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin-*. Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2005, 99-153.

Dekel, Irit: *Ways of looking: Observation and transformation at the Holocaust Memorial, Berlin*. *Memory Studies*, January 2009, vol. 2, no. 1, 71-86.
<http://mss.sagepub.com/content/2/1/71>

Class 9 Paradigm shift in the public commemoration of the Holocaust II: the paradigm of counter-monuments

Required reading:

Young, James. E.: *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, 1993. pp. 27-48. ('The Countermonument: Memory against itself in Germany')

Young, James E.: 'Daniel Liebeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture', in: Zelizer, Barbie (ed.) *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, The Athlone Press, London, 2001. 179-198.
<https://kateieichhorn.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/libeskind.pdf>

Recommended reading:

Liebeskind, Daniel: 'Trauma'. In: Hornstein, Sh., Jacobowitz, F. (eds.) *Image and Remembrance: representation of the Holocaust*, Indiana University Press, 2003. 43-58.

Class 10 Holocaust memory and Holocaust memorials in Hungary

Required reading:

Cole, Tim: Turning the Places of Holocaust History into Places of Holocaust Memory. *Holocaust Memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1945-95*. In: Hornstein, Sh., Jacobowitz, F. (eds.): *Image and Remembrance: representation of the Holocaust*, Indiana University Press, 2003. 271-287.

Tudzin, Jessica Taylor : *Holocaust memorials in Budapest, Hungary, 1987-2010: through the words of the memorial artists*. Budapest, CEU, Budapest College, Thesis. Pp 34-40, 41-55.
<http://goya.ceu.hu/record=b1153629~S0>

Zöldi, Blanka: *In Budapest a "living memorial" arises in the shadow of a dead one*
<http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/in-budapest-a-living-memorial-arises-in-the-shadow-of-a-dead-one/>

Class 11 Student's Presentations and Discussion I.

Class 12 Student's Presentations and Discussion II.

Recommended Literature

Adam, P.: *The Arts of the Third Reich*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1992

Alphen, E. van: *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory*. Stanford University Press, 1997

Assmann, Jan: 'What is 'Cultural Memory'?', in: Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies.*, transl. by Rodney Livingstone; Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2006. pp. 1-30.

Carrier, Peter: *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989. The Origins and Political Function of the Vél'd'Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin-*. Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2005,

Dickinson, G., Blair, C., Ott, B. L. [eds.]: *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama, 2010

Foucault, Michel: *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*.
<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>

Gerő, A.: *Imagined History. Chapters from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Hungarian Symbolic Politics*. Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, Inc. Wayne, New Jersey, 2006

Hanisch-Wolfram, Alexander: *Totalitarian Propaganda as Discourse. A comparative look at Austria and France in the Fascist Era*. In: Postoutenko, Kirill (ed.): *Totalitarian Communication. Hierarchies, Codes and Messages*. Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2010. 197-216.

Hinz, B.: *Art in the Third Reich*. New York-Oxford, 1979

Huyssen, A. : 'Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age', in: Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia*. Routledge, London, 1995. 249-260.

Koshar, R.: *From Monuments to Traces. Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990*. University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2000

Kolstø, Pål (ed.): *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South Eastern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, UK, Burlington, USA, 2014.

Krauss, R. E: *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. The MIT Press, Boston, 1977

Niven, B., Paver, C. [eds.]: *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

Nyysönen, Heino: *The Presence of the Past. '1956' after 1956 Hungary*. SoPhi, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, 1999.

Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer: *New Myth, New world. From Nietzsche to Stalinism*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA, 2002. 372-422.

Santner, Eric L. : 'History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma', in: Friedlander, S. (ed.): *Probing the Limits of Representation: "Nazism" and the final solution*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1992. pp. 143-154.

Taylor, R.R. : *The Word in Stone – The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology*. Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1975

Young, J. E.: *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, 1993