

*Landscapes of Care: Photography, Film, Modern Architecture
and Landscape Heritage*



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Ways of seeing architecture and landscape in the voids of presence. The case of a health resort on the Adriatic coast of Croatia

Jasna Galjer

Abstract:

The article examines the multi-layered roles of photography and film in "cultural translation," representing architecture and landscape as a mediated place of conflicting visions, meanings and experiences. Taking the concept of the "production of space" as a starting point, it aims to contextualise the mediatory practices of photography and film by means of analysing the case study of a multifunctional building – the Kravica Children's Health Resort – designed in the 1960s by Rikard Marasović on the Adriatic coast of Croatia (formerly Yugoslavia). Focusing on an analysis of three paradigmatic examples of visual practices, the photographic series by Wolfgang Thaler (2011), the episode Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest filmed as part of the documentary series Slumbering Concrete (2016), and the experimental film A Record of Landscape without Prehistory by the artistic duo Doplgenger (2020), the article explores how photography and film communicate quality, in particular how mediated representations (re)create current interpretation and understanding of the intertwined heritage of modern architecture and landscape. Examining aspects of recording the site from different perspectives, a series of questions arise when addressing the issue of space, focused on its role in reshaping meanings, memories, emotions and experiences, narrating not only what architecture and landscape are but also what they could become and how they might be constituted in the context of different cultural identities.

Keywords: mediatisation, architecture, photography, film, socialist modernism

Jasna Galjer is an art historian and Professor at the University of Zagreb. Before joining the University, she worked at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb as a curator of the collections of architecture and design. She is the author of various essays and monographs on architectural criticism, cultural history of periodicals, architectural photography, history of exhibitions and design.

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Despite recent historiographic interest in the architecture of socialist modernism, attitudes towards the heritage of the period from 1945 to 1989 are still ambivalent. However, its negative portrayal as a relic of a repressive communist regime is gradually becoming mitigated by research that has shown a surprisingly high-level popular trend of constructing the narrative of socialist modernism as culturally dominant in the architecture of socialist Yugoslavia.¹

The project *Iconic Ruins? Post-war Socialist Architecture in the Visegrad Countries* confirms the premise that it is precisely the connection with the now defunct political system which plays a key role in examining contemporary attitudes towards architectural heritage and memory.² This is a particularly sensitive issue in the case of specific social roles assumed by architecture, where the disappearance of social conditions and original purpose brings into focus the ethical and cultural integrity of the variable and unstable relationship between architecture and the social environment. The presumptions that the modernity of socially engaged architecture is conditioned by political ideology and discovering the "absent present"³ of this modernity in the space "in-between" of what is culturally dominant in the East and the West are a constant of architectural historiography.⁴ This is confirmed by the prevalence of particular subjects and iconic architectural examples in media, from photography to exhibitions and experimental films.⁵ This article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of a selection of media strategies, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the heritage of modernism, which continues to be contested, in order to establish the critical decolonisation of its memory as a metaphor of the Balkans as the "Other". That current models need to be redefined is confirmed by the problematic nature of collective identity theses which use the example of the construct of the Balkans as the "Other".⁶

1 The timeframe of the "second", i.e. socialist Yugoslavia is most often given as the period from 1945 to 1992.

2 The exhibition is part of a multinational project titled *Shared Cities: Creative Momentum* – a European cultural platform addressing the contemporary urban challenges of European cities.

3 Victor Buchli, and Lucas Gavin, eds., *The Absent Present: Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 2001).

4 Ákos Moravánszky, and Judith Hopfengärtner, eds., *Re-Humanizing Architecture: New Forms of Community, 1950–1970* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017); Ákos Moravánszky, and Judith Hopfengärtner, eds., *Re-Humanizing Architecture: New Forms of Community, 1950–1970* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017); Ákos Moravánszky, and Karl R. Kegler, eds., *Re-Scaling the Environment: New Landscapes of Design, 1960–1980* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017).

5 Sanjin Pejković, "Displaced Film Memories in the post-Yugoslav Context," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 4, no. 2 (2017): 89–101; 100.

6 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Maria Todorova, and Zsuzsa Gille, eds., *Post-communist Nostalgia* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010).

The article takes as its starting point Pierre Nora's premise that *lieux de mémoires* are places where history and memories conflict⁷ and goes on to analyse the processes and forms of the deconstruction, manipulation and transformation of their meaning. Particular attention will be paid to media presentation strategies, from nostalgia and melancholy for lost time to the critical redefinition of values, quality and meaning. This is because of specific purposes which are linked to the ideology of the former political system. Their cultural symbolism has still not become part of the value system of contemporary society, urban identity and heritage, as can be seen from a range of diverse purposes, from multifunctional buildings intended for adult education and cultural centres,⁸ industrial facilities that went under during the transition, to whole urbanistic complexes of exhibition pavilions (the Zagreb Fair). However, buildings that had a military purpose in the former system are most often subject to devastation. Because of their military function, they were rarely mentioned even in the architectural press, which is why they were not only unavailable but also unknown to the general public.⁹

Paradoxically, with the end of their original function in the 1990s, these architectural sites began to deteriorate, precisely when they had started to gain visibility and become more available to the public. The process of their discovery includes many contradictory and conflicting aspects of politicality (and politicisation) of the public sphere, which are both an expression and a reflection of a society in transition and are also evident in other post-socialist milieux. However, war in the early 1990s in Croatia, in which the Yugoslav National Army was the occupying force, was an additional burden with regard to subsequent attitudes towards architectural heritage from the socialist period. Instead of being re-evaluated, this type of architecture is still – three decades after Yugoslavia has ceased to exist – labeled as “dark”, “difficult”, “contested”, “dissonant”, and as “negative heritage”. Boris Groys offers an illustrative explanation of this complex and contradictory state. He believes that in former socialist countries the strategy of erasing intellectual, emotional, cultural and political memories is constant.¹⁰ Groys analyses the relationship between public space and social and finds it paradoxical. He argues that the experience of socialist utopia became functional only when the socialist socio-political system had failed. He argues that “if one will the public space to be constituted as a space that, in its turn, can constitute the public – then one has to build this public space, e.g. to build the void, to

7 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, Special Issue: Memory and CounterMemory 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

8 Jasna Galjer, and Sanja Lončar, eds., *The Caring State and Architecture: Sites of Education and Culture in Socialist Countries* (Zagreb: Hrvatsko etnološko društvo / Croatian Ethnological Society, 2021).

9 Former army halls, resorts and hotels include numerous valuable architectural gems which were handed over to local communities and state privatisation funds to be managed as part of the demilitarisation process after 1991. They were then subject to devastation and further decay.

10 Boris Groys, *Public space: From emptiness to paradox* (London–Moscow: Strelka Press, 2012). The author of this article would like to thank Professor Boris Groys for collegial assistance.

build the emptiness where the public can find its place: to let the void, the nothingness, the no-place, the U-Topia, enter the city." Public space is seen here not a construct within the public sphere, nor is it to be found in a void. It is, rather, the void of utopia within privatised spaces and spaces of public interest. Here, voids refer to imaginary vacuums, territories which acquire different meanings through exposure to the eye and spatial experience.

1. The void as metaphor

The former children's health resort of Kravica is used as a case study to examine the question of whether "voids" in contemporary political and social circumstances can assume a universal and/or universally understood meaning and how this meaning might impact the way we see imaginary and real voids in real space. The building dates back to the early 1960s and is specific due to its inventive structuralist approach to spatial design of multifunctional building; however, this example of unwanted heritage has a complex and contradictory status, and its fate hangs in the balance. It was designed in the period 1960–1962, completed in 1964, and it operated until the late 1980s as a health resort for military personnel children who suffered from pulmonary diseases.



[Fig. 1]

Children's Health Resort of Kravica, aerial view. Postcard, 1960s. Courtesy of Makarska Municipal Museum; Inv. No. S-675

Even though it is of high architectural quality, because of its military purpose, the building remained "invisible" and cannot even be found in cadastral plans. The complex was built on municipal land and during construction the army regulated the stream and access roads. The construction documents are kept in the archives of the military port of Lora in Split, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia. Following the departure of the Yugoslav National Army, its owner until 1991, the previously undamaged complex became a centre for refugees from various parts of Croatia affected by the war. In the early 2000s, it was taken over by the Government Asset Management Agency and instead of being revitalised and repurposed, total devastation followed. However, despite this, the building continues to inspire growing interest among architectural professionals, as well as members of the general public who are interested in profit opportunities.

Much like the status of this architectural site, the "absent present" can be said to characterise its author's entire opus. Very little information is available on the architect Rikard Marasović (1913–1987)¹¹ Perhaps the reason for this lies precisely in the fact that he played an important role in the urbanistic and conservation services of socialist Yugoslavia and participated in prominent restoration projects following 1945. His first experiences with design took place during his studies, at the Zagreb studio of Ernest Weissmann, an associate of Le Corbusier and a representative of the radical school of socially engaged architecture in Croatia in the 1930s.¹² He studied at technical faculties in Paris, Nancy and Berlin, and graduated in Zagreb in 1942. He taught at the Department of Urban Planning (1948–55) of the Technical Faculty of Zagreb, and designed health facilities, hotels and residential buildings. Even though his contemporaries had also noted the quality of his architectural design and recognised the sensitivity and clarity of his volumetric composition, Marasović's activity has remained marginalised in architectural historiography. It is, therefore, not unusual that in the atmosphere of nostalgia for the lost Arcadia of socialist humanism an aura of an "object of mystery" has been bestowed on the derelict health resort, which has thus once again been decontextualised from both a historical and a contemporary social framework. This architectural site is an unwanted metaphor of a time when in socialist Yugoslavia tourist facilities were built at the most attractive coastal locations so that they could be used by children, the ill and workers on holiday. The fact that this building was a product of social policies that afforded everyone a right to rest renders it additionally undesirable in circumstances of neoliberal commodification of spatial quality.

11 Mladen Obad–Šćitaroci, ed., *Sveučilište u Zagrebu–Arhitektonski fakultet, 1919./1920.–1999./2000. osamdeset godina izobrazbe arhitekata u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Arhitektonski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2000); Igor Skopin, "Rikard Marasović (1913–1987)," *Čovjek i prostor* 411, no. 6 (June 1987): 5.

12 Tamara Bjažić–Klarin, *Ernest Weissmann: Društveno angažirana arhitektura 1926.–1939.* [*Socially Engaged Architecture 1926–1939*] (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2015).

2. Synthesis of architecture and landscape: contested quality

The Kravica resort building is located at a juxtaposition of diametrically different configurations: at the foot of the rocky mountain range of Biokovo, in the midst of dense pine forest, and in close proximity to one of the most beautiful stretches of the eastern Adriatic coast. At the core of the central construction, which is on pillars, there is a ramp which creates a dynamic movement spiral. The ramp activates and draws together all spatial segments, opening up its core towards the ambience of the surrounding park. Such an innovative structure and unusual combination of a central building on pillars also allows wind to blow through, regardless of direction, as well as permits equal insolation of all parts of the building. At the same time, the scale of the building achieves harmony with the dynamic balance of heterogeneous ambient qualities (the sea, the vegetation and the rocky terrain) through the rhythmic form of roof planes of varying heights. Particular attention is devoted to combining materials, especially different types and treatments of stone, which lends the architecture a subtle vernacular. The ground floor is dominated by an L-shaped multi-purpose space which separates the circular inner yard from the park. This is where public functions converge: from a sitting room and canteen to a children's playroom and TV room;¹³ Multifunctionality is a consistent aspect of connecting spaces: the roof of the ground floor area is also a spacious terrace where children can spend time outdoors and which is accessible from all the rooms located along the perimeter of the top floor. Apart from the inner, shared terrace, each unit has its own terrace at the level of the canopy of trees in the surrounding park. Owing to this spatial organisation, each segment is double-sided, i.e. it is airy and exposed to the sun, while at the same time, it is protected from excess heat and exposure to wind. The integration of architecture and landscape is consistent at building level as well as in the details, while the expressiveness of construction is a subtle response to the specific function aimed at children. The surprise element of architecture in landscape is not merely an exercise in style, but the result of an intentional process based on the synthesis of a concept and context of architecture that is organically immersed in the landscape.

3. Architectural photography between reality and fiction

In the context of the recent mediatisation of socialist modernism heritage, architectural photography plays a key role. More than any other, this medium documents "objective" reality by manipulating images. This is why the methodological apparatus of "variantology of media" proposed by Siegfried Zielinski is better suited to investigating the media space of architectural

¹³ The 60s in Yugoslavia saw the increased influence of television as a medium. Because many families could not afford a television set, watching TV in public spaces such as community halls and workers' universities constituted a social event.

photography. Instead of historiographical models which reduce research to the dimension of material culture of historical remains, the focus is on discovering media as "spaces of action for constructed attempts to connect what is separated."¹⁴

Photographs are often reduced to instruments of aestheticisation of architectural ideology, which no longer poses a threat and becomes a source of enjoyable visual effects. Richly illustrated photography monographs testify to a trend of portraying this type of architecture as "secondary", thoroughly failing to contribute to the critical examination of the historical and cultural heritage of the socialist modernism project. A significant example of this kind of mediatisation is the exhibition and monograph titled *Socialist Modernism* (2011), which portrays the "dirty magic of socialist architecture" through the photographs of Roman Bezjak.¹⁵

In addition to the example above, a series of photographs by Wolfgang Thaler (2011) aim to reconfigure documentation and photographic fiction, revealing the transformation of the site and the environment from the early 1960s to the contemporary period.¹⁶



14 Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 7.

15 Roman Bezjak (born 1962), a German photographer of Slovene origin who made a name for himself in the early 2000s doing reportage photography.

16 Wolfgang Thaler (born 1969), an Austrian photographer whose oeuvre is centred on architectural photography.

[Fig. 2.1]

Children's Health Resort of Kravica. Photo: Wolfgang Thaler, 2011.
Courtesy of Wolfgang Thaler

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These photographs evoke but also critically interpret former utopian projections of socialism with a “human face” to contrast these, without idealising them, with complete negation and deconstruction. The photographs retain their documentary role but their function is to reveal the processual nature of architecture, cities and landscapes that have been destroyed, while their remains testify to the non–existence of stable categories of the meaning of space.¹⁷

It was with the exhibition titled *Unfinished Modernisations: Reconstructing the Architectural History of Socialist Yugoslavia*, followed by the publication of the book *Unfinished Modernizations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism* (2012), that the process of constructing the narrative of Yugoslav architectural modernism began. However, despite the critical stance towards exploiting “Cold War Modernism”, the issue of what was specifically “Yugoslav” and how it was different from other socialist modernisms remains unresolved. Analogous to this, the publication titled *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatorial Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*¹⁸ which also makes use of Wolfgang Thaler’s photography, focuses on the concepts of interspace and liminality within the geopolitical and cultural framework of Yugoslav space.

A paradigmatic example of the use of this conceptual framework is in the mediation of the Kravica health resort architecture. Thaler’s photographs were taken at a time when the complex was still virtually unknown to the wider public, and by appropriating a serial concept they incorporate a focused critical view of visual facts. While Bezjak examines the similarities between architectural typologies in former socialist countries, Thaler’s flâneur–like investigation focuses on discovering the ideological and social constructs of architecture. It is significant that the photographs mostly show spaces devoid of people. Yet, unlike the highly aestheticised architectural photographs in architectural journals, visual representation explicitly evokes the melancholy of ruins which serve as a reminder of the failed project of a socialist society.

Focusing on the beauty of the ugly,¹⁹ Thaler’s photographs of the abandoned Kravica health resort also frame visual representation of “ordinary” panorama views as site–specific interventions, emphasizing instability and temporariness. Low–angle shots are particularly impressive as they foreground a wealth of colour–rich detail which can only be seen from up close. Repeated sequences and varying motifs indicate an experience of movement and view which is similar to a *tableau vivant*. Graffiti, bits of broken furnishings strewn about, shattered panes of glass, discarded waste and other traces of decay provide a hyperrealistic framework for the void of space.

17 Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, “Scenes from an Unfinished Modernisation,” in *Hintergrund 54: 19th Vienna Architecture Congress: Soviet Modernism 1955–1991. Unknown Stories* (Wien: Architekturzentrum, 2012), 66–77.

18 Maroje Mrduljaš, Vladimir Kulić and Wolfgang Thaler, eds., *Modernism In-between: The Mediatorial Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012).

19 Till Briegleb, “The Dirty Magic of Failure,” in *Roman Bezjak: Socialist Modernism*, ed. Inka Schube (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 144–147.



[Fig. 2.2-23]
Children's Health Resort of Kravica. Photo: Wolfgang Thaler, 2011.
Courtesy of Wolfgang Thaler

This void is coded by the failure of the utopian project of the past and the dystopian void of the present;²⁰ however, Thaler's photographs of Kravica are equally focused on the materiality of architecture and landscape. Particular emphasis is placed on the presence of stone, from natural rocks to sculpted blocks. These haptic qualities show that it is impossible to be separated from both the natural environment and emotional experience, which confirms theories that it is not enough to simply view architecture. It is only through feeling it that the opportunity for a complete experience presents itself.²¹ The fact that the theoretical precepts of Christian Norberg-Schulz regarding the phenomenology of space were very influential in Yugoslavia at the time when this architecture originated, presents us with the additional opportunity to interpret the Kravica complex in terms of an intention to reshape the relationship between architecture and landscape.

4. Slumbering Concrete as the instrument of a visual turn: from documentarism to socially engaged criticism

In addition to its documentary appeal, the television series *Slumbering Concrete* (2016–2019), which examines the modernist architecture of socialist Yugoslavia, is intriguing because of its critical approach to the investigation of change and loss of collective and personal memory as a result of radical social change.²² Another important fact to consider is the impact of the national broadcasting company, which broadcast the series, on shaping local public opinion. The series was modelled on earlier media projects under the common title of *Unfinished Modernisations*,²³ and was planned as a series of distinct thematic units, two of which have been realised so far. The first one deals with tourist architecture, the second with memorial and commemorative heritage, while the third and fourth, whose preparation is under way, will take a closer look at post-industrial and post-military complexes and the ambitions of modernisation projects respectively. The central theme of the series is an attempt to introduce the architecture of socialist modernism within the atmosphere of its utopian ambitions and controversial destinies.

20 An inspiring interpretation of dystopian voids was offered by the exhibition titled *Voids of Presence. Between past and future*. Berlin, 2021.

21 Erik Wegerhoff, "Neue Sinnlichkeit. Postcritical Issues Regarding an Architecture of Sensuousness," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 13, no. 2 (2016): 119–137.

22 Direction: Saša Ban, the script by Saša Ban, Maroje Mrduljaš, Nevenka Sablić, Produced by HRT (Croatian Radio Television). The series was awarded the Neven Segvić Award for critical, scientific–research and theoretical achievement by the Association of Croatian Architects for 2016.

23 After Maribor (Slovenia) the exhibition was held in Belgrade (Serbia) and Zadar (Croatia). For information on other activities, see footnotes 20 and 21.

A series of examples of modernist architecture of the 1960s and 1970s represent specific contributions of architecture to social modernisation processes, with an emphasis on social roles in democratisation, emancipation and the emergence of new qualities of everyday life. The series lays bare the fact that even though this architecture has been declared cultural heritage on paper, it is actually unwanted heritage and a symptom of social, political and economic inability to establish a new value system which would enable its revitalisation. Much like the concept of the series of photographs by Wolfgang Thaler, the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest* (2016), which is dedicated to the Kravica health resort, only appears to be documentary in character.



[Fig. 3.1]

Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop

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The introduction to the film narrative begins with the sentence, “deserted and forgotten, these derelict spaces which are slowly being taken over by nature, appear to be remnants of an ancient, vanished civilization.” The meaning of these bleak words is at complete odds with the beauty of the architecture and the Mediterranean landscape, which, as the camera moves in, transforms from a bucolic Arcadia to scenes of apocalyptic dereliction. However, a closer look at the derelict space and crumbling furnishings shows a different reality, that of a perfectly designed space and a dangerous, hellish location.



[Fig. 3.2]

Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop

[Fig. 3.3]

Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop



The architecture that was built during the boom of tourism-related construction in socialist Yugoslavia has indeed been left to decay, but it is by no means forgotten. The episode shows this by documenting the conflict of interest of various actors in current social and political life. Representatives of activist, bottom-up initiatives are trying to mobilise the public in order to influence political centres of power, advocating for the protection of architecture that would, as part of its new function, like a multifunctional contemporary arts centre, gain a new social role of generating cultural production. They are opposed by those who support the idea of repurposing the complex for elite tourism, while the most radical voices believe that the existing building should be torn down so that the attractive location might be better used for tourism purposes. The connection with the photographs of Wolfgang Thaler lies in the emotions behind these actors' attitudes. While some narrators evoke personal memories of idyllic scenes and the joy of living, others see only ugly remnants of concrete. The alternating rhythm of scenes showing opposing views on the environment in which the actors have been filmed, brings to mind a fictional dialogue which lends the film narrative a dimension of direct experience, which turns viewers into participants, an effect which is heightened by the soundscape. The background sounds of cicadas, the sea and the wind occasionally take on the role of the voice of nature. The result is a complete film environment, which convincingly argues the ideology-independent fact that in the 1960s tourist infrastructure intended for the use of children was built in some of the most attractive spots along the coast.

This architecture was an integral part of a social policy according to which everyone had an equal right to a vacation – something that no longer exists in post-socialism. From a historical and narrative distance, *Slumbering Concrete* uses the example of the erstwhile children's health resort of Kravica to render an almost hyperrealistic picture of the ambience of a lost ideal in a natural landscape. It is precisely in this dimension of a synthesis of spatial relations and communication codes of architecture in space, the portrayal of the dynamism of the relationship between the world of children and that of adults, that this film differs most from static scenes which are characteristic of the medium of photography.

5. Towards a deconstruction of media space

In comparison with the deliberate pseudo-documentary narrative of the television series *Slumbering Concrete*, the experimental film by the Dopljenger duo (Isidora Ilić and Boško Prostran) titled *A Record of Landscape Without Prehistory* portrays the derelict former health resort of Kravica as a site of conceptualisation and intertwining of significantly more complex meanings. Appropriating the genre poetics of a visual essay, the film engages in the deconstruction of the linear flow of time, the meaning of the speech act and, eventually, the materiality of film as a medium. The title of the film is a quotation from the eponymous poem by Oskar Davičo (1909–1989), a protagonist of the surrealist and revolutionary movement in Yugoslavia.²⁴ Aware that he was irrevocably losing his powers of comprehension and expression due to aphasia, Davičo attempted to note down unconnected sets of words, thus hoping to preserve at least some traces of their meaning. Paradoxically, these mental images reflect the automatic nature of the stream of consciousness which is related to the surrealist poetics from the author's early work.

The film comprises two frames: a view of the hall, the ramp in the former children's health resort, and a view of the sea from the top floor where the children's bedrooms used to be. The circular form of the architectural object is analogous to the cyclical repetition of text and image, which is further reduced and fragmented with each cycle, reminiscent of memory loss. Against the constant backdrop of cicadas, seagulls and sounds of waves lapping against the shore,²⁵ a female voice intones the words on a postcard once sent from the health resort. However, the seemingly dull intonation, content and images are contradictory, reminiscent of the poetics of the ready-made. We are told the beaches are beautiful in the fall. They are empty and appear to be on the edge of the world. Then the atmosphere grows more apprehensive: before the war... which war? We are walking on the ruins of another time. They stare at us like skulls.

²⁴ Oskar Davičo, *Kairoš-Snimci* (Beograd-Sarajevo: Prosveta-Svijetlost, 1969), 157.

²⁵ By chance, the soundscape in this segment coincides with the Kravica episode of the *Slumbering Concrete* series.



[Fig.4.1- Fig.4.3]

Art collective Doplgenger, series of stills from the film *A Record of Landscape without Prehistory*. Video, 2020. Series of frames. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.doplgenger.org/a-record-of-landscape-without-prehistory/> Courtesy of Doplgenger



These surviving concrete constructions are reminiscent of landscapes of ruins in 17th-century paintings; they are linked by an odd attempt to mediate between history and nature. As the narrative progresses, impressions and memories grow further intertwined, while the linear flow of time and the meanings of words and images become more fractal-like. At the same time, visual representation disintegrates.

Colour plays a key role in the disintegration process and gradually loses its signifier function, growing more abstract as the images are modified by overexposure. Eventually, it ends in a blue that engulfs the screen. The intensity of the blue and the symbolic significance of the void is reminiscent of the eponymous film by Derek Jarman (1993) as well as the universally understood visual language of the blue of Yves Klein. The monochrome image on the screen is equivalent to the final sentence of the postcard: it is different on the beach – there is no more history. Because sound and image are manipulated, it is unclear if the voice and images

[Fig.4.4– Fig.4.5]

Art collective Doplgenger, series of stills from the film *A Record of Landscape without Prehistory*. Video, 2020. Series of frames. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.doplgenger.org/a-record-of-landscape-without-prehistory/> Courtesy of Doplgenger



belong to the past or the future, but the melancholy that surrounds them suggest that the loss of memory is in fact a symbol of final decay. As the authors Doplgenger say, "the aim is to deconstruct narratives that serve as a template for our memories, in order to question the present as a consequence of these past processes, the decisions and identities which were constructed that way and which participated in the construction of these narratives." Referring to the interpretation of the contemporary ruin offered by the Chilean theorist Cristián Gómez Moya²⁶ they transform the *locus* of Krvavica into a metaphor of the past, linked to the failure of the socialist project and the traumatic period of the 1990s. The cathartic visualisation of the process of forgetting confirms the premise that in this intentional, programmed forgetting it is the media that play a decisive role. In this case, the media (analogue, magnetic and digital) are modified by the editing of "media fragments" which formerly used to shape collective memory, only to become, in post-socialist reality, ideologically programmed symptoms of unwanted memory – a history whose future was taken away.

26 Cristián Gómez Moya, *Ruins* 2011 (March 15, 2023), <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/r/ruins/ruins-cristian-gomez-moya.html>

Conclusion

The selected examples of visual representation demonstrate the double-sidedness of persuasive power in mediating the quality and meaning of architecture vs. the lack of impact in public space. Case studies affirming contextual perspectives, or compelling experimental models of re-interpreting architectural ideas in photography and film, are much more adjustable to reality than constructing narratives, such as the exhibition *Towards a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948–1980*, held in MOMA in 2018.²⁷ When rethinking the meaning of this particular building, the question is: why is it still there, surrounded by other "iconic ruins", remaining in this landscape as voids of liminality?

The example of mediatising architecture is used in the paper to examine a range of approaches, actors and means involved in the construction of the socialist modernism narrative. A comparative analysis of the concepts and performative strategies of media presentations of architecture in an artificial and natural landscape examines the sustainability of the fundamental categories of architectural culture.

The selected examples in which photography and film take on a key role in mediatising architecture and landscape are based on a theoretical and conceptual framework of socialist modernism as a social formation which has realised authentic values in the time of modernity. Regardless of the media format, ranging from a photograph as a code of visual representation and a photographic series as a separate context, to a documentary and finally an experimental film, these media are interlinked insofar as they document the decay and disintegration of architecture in landscape. However, this is not the static, fixed view of an uninterested observer; it is, rather, a subjective view, a dynamic and fluid process of constructing meaning which draws the observer inside. The photographic records of Wolfgang Thaler, the episode of the documentary *Slumbering Concrete* and the experimental film *A Record of Landscape Without Prehistory* – these are consequently only possible to understand within the context of the deconstruction of expression, from visual scenes rich in detail to the monochrome silence of blueness. This deconstruction of visual portrayal is analogous with the disintegration of the system of former values, ranging from the loss of the social role of architecture, the destroyed beauty of architecture merged with the landscape, to the erasing of memories of personal experience of places. The following question remains:

can qualities of architectural culture, contested as a result of socio-political circumstances like the Kravica health resort, survive a (post-)transitional setting? Failures that have so far been the result of attempts to secure this heritage a meaningful existence suggest that the "victory of modernism" as a cultural paradigm is definitely at risk.²⁸ Strategies which rely on photography and film to mediate architecture enhance the opportunities to act, while critical reflection on the topic still presents the greatest challenge.

27 Martino Sterli and Vladimir Kulić, eds., *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948–1980* (New York: MOMA, 2018).

28 Tomislav Premerl, "Pobjeda moderne," *Arhitektura* 30, no.156–157 (1976): 41–54.

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