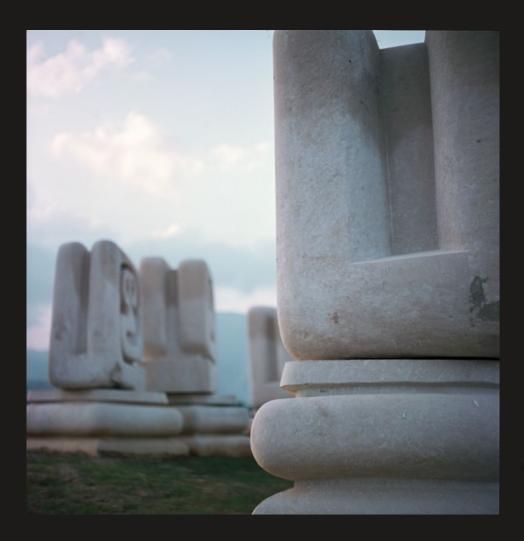


Bogdanović Yugoslav Memorials through the Eyes of Their Architect Bogdanović

The Museum of Modern Art New York



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Foreword

Bogdanović by Bogdanović presents a suite of captivating photographs taken by the late Yugoslav architect, writer, and politician Bogdan Bogdanović of a select number of the many monuments and sites of commemoration he designed. Born in 1922 in Belgrade, into a cosmopolitan family with ties to the local Surrealist circles, Bogdanović studied architecture in his hometown and would rise to become one of the most important architects and public intellectuals in socialist Yugoslavia. Parallel to international currents of postmodern critique, Bogdanović also made a name for himself as an early and outspoken critic of those tendencies in postwar architecture culture that privileged technocratic and functionalist problem-solving over the creation of memorable spaces in the service of society.

Bogdanović's many monuments, which were built throughout the culturally and topographically diverse territory of the former Yugoslavia, manifest a poetic sensibility. Given his background, Bogdanović's work has often been characterized as a Surrealist architecture, and indeed his plastically articulate structures conjure with uncanny power strong yet oneiric images. Usually embedded in large-scale parklike settings, Bogdanović's monuments are as much stunning objects as they are landscapes of experience that transform the passive visitor into an engaged participant in the act of contemplative commemoration. Like the monuments themselves, Bogdanović's idiosyncratic photographic interpretations of his built work convey a sense of the dreamlike—and elicit a visceral response to the calamitous loss of human life that these monuments commemorate.

A few of Bogdanović's monuments have received a great deal of attention in recent years on various social media platforms, where they have, through ignorance, often been branded as "Soviet" or "Communist," when their primary purpose was to memorialize the victims of fascism, the sites of concentration camps, and various atrocities of World War II—their unifying program of collective recollection of shared trauma, heroism, and perseverance serving the ideological and social aims of the newly founded Yugoslav state. By once again giving voice to the author of these powerful creations, this book is intended to recover the original memorial function of these structures and their role in fostering a vibrant, multiethnic society.

Bogdanović by Bogdanović is the result of Vladimir Kulić and Wolfgang Thaler's research into Bogdanović's private photo archive. We are thankful to Vladimir for having brought this visual trove to our attention as we worked together organizing the exhibition (July 15, 2018–January 13, 2019) and editing the book Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980. Like the latter, the present volume attempts to position Bogdanović's legacy in various contexts. While the society in and for which these works were originally conceived no longer exists, Bogdanović by Bogdanović is a striking illustration of their ongoing historical and aesthetic relevance.

MARTINO STIERLI

The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design The Museum of Modern Art

Mound of the Undefeated (Partisan Necropolis)

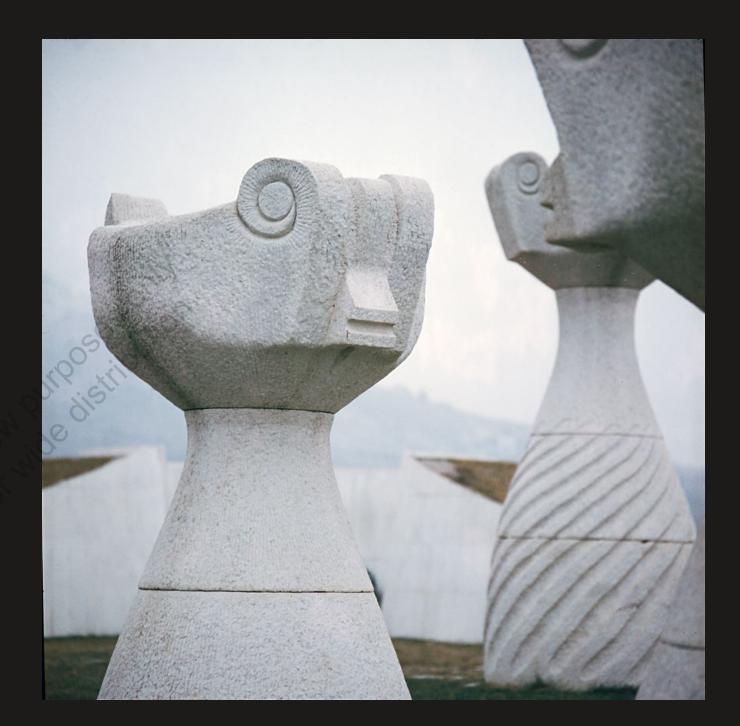
Prilep, Macedonia. 1960-61

Commissioned by the local municipality, this site commemorates the eight hundred local Partisan fighters killed in World War II. It consists of a commemorative mound and a plateau in front of it featuring a group of eight stone figures. The mound has an open-air cavity at its center, which can be entered from the plateau to access the names of the deceased carved into marble walls. Today, the memorial is well maintained as part of a larger public park.



The arrangement suggests figures dancing. We produced two more foundations than the actual number of figures in order to have a bit of leeway in finding the best configuration. Some future archaeologist will theorize why there were extra foundations. I designed the largest of the figures by drawing it on the wall of my studio from different angles. So the figure ended up being as tall as the ceiling height would allow. —BOGDAN BOGDANOVIĆ





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Everything finds its place. Everything has already been invented.

Partisan Memorial Cemetery

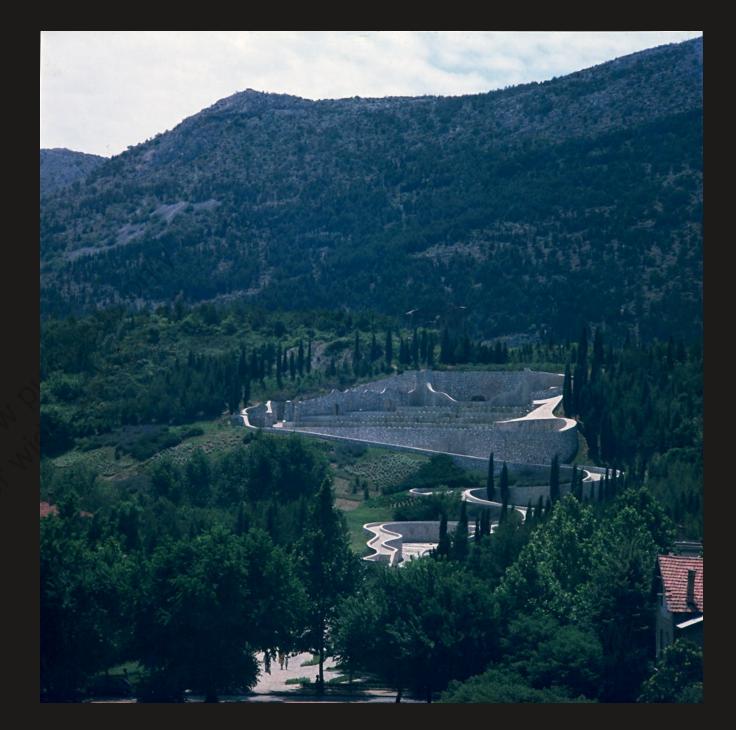
Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1959-65

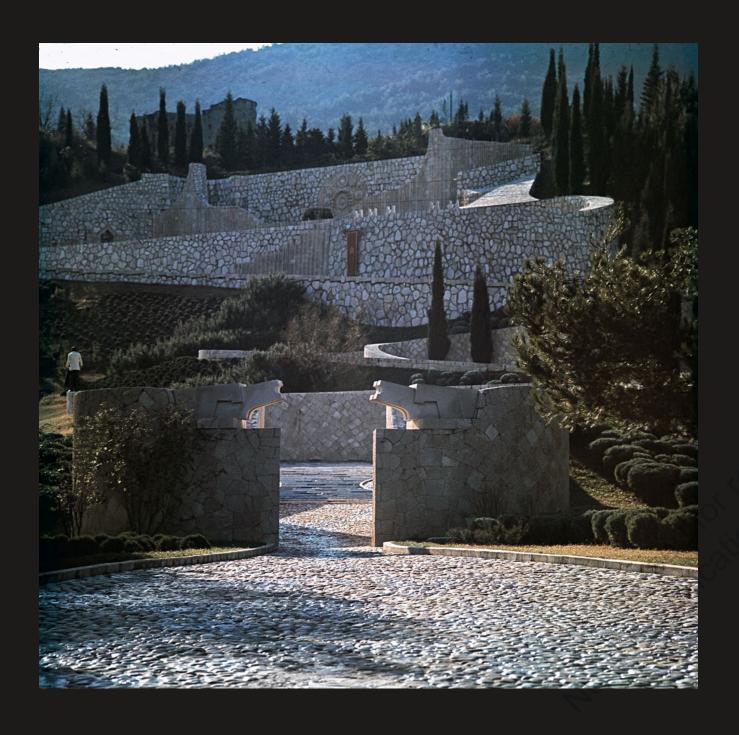
One of Bogdanović's most extensive projects, the cemetery honors

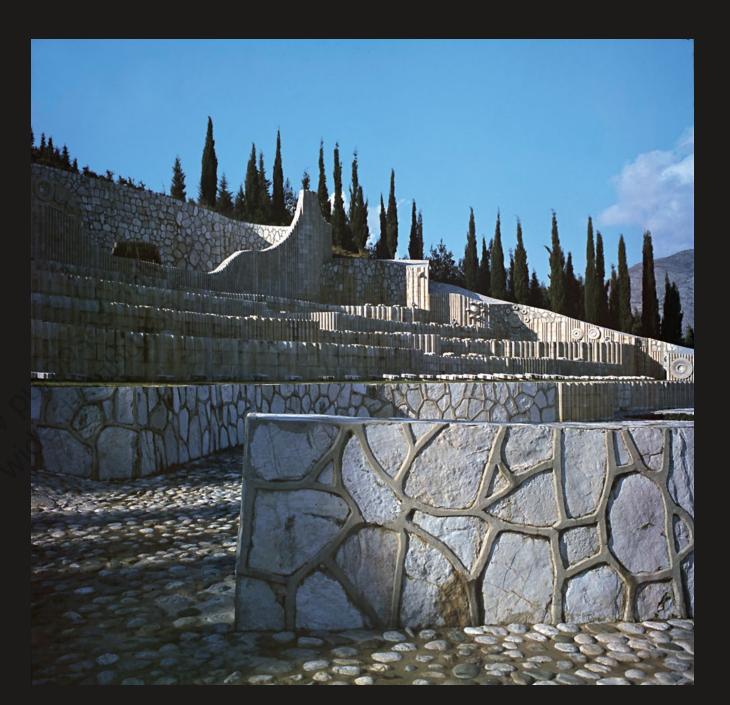
Partisans from the region around the city of Mostar killed in World War II.

Names of some eight hundred known fighters are carved into gravestones laid out on several terraces; an additional several hundred unidentified bodies rest in a collective tomb. After being restored in the mid-2000s, the cemetery suffered renewed vandalism and neglect.

As of April 2018, another restoration of the complex was underway.

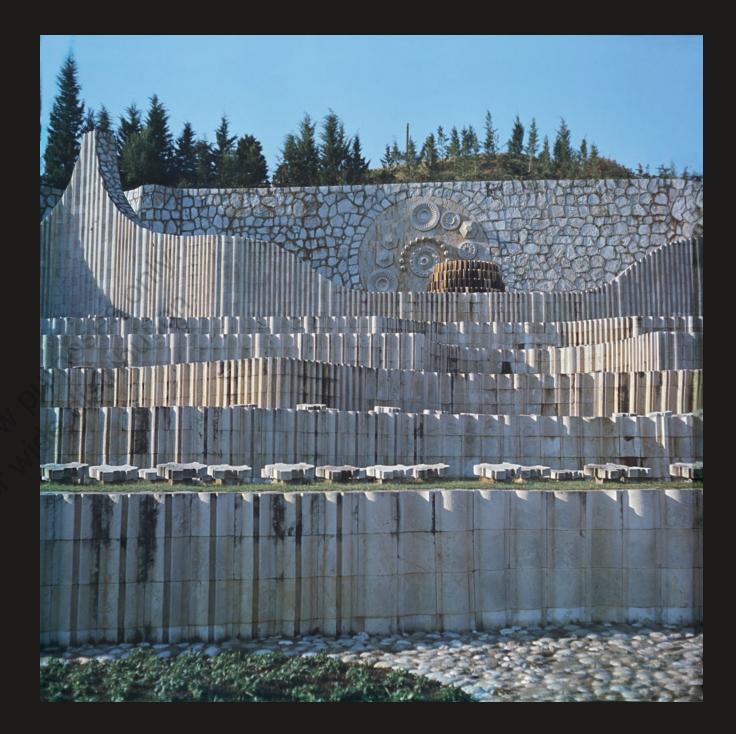


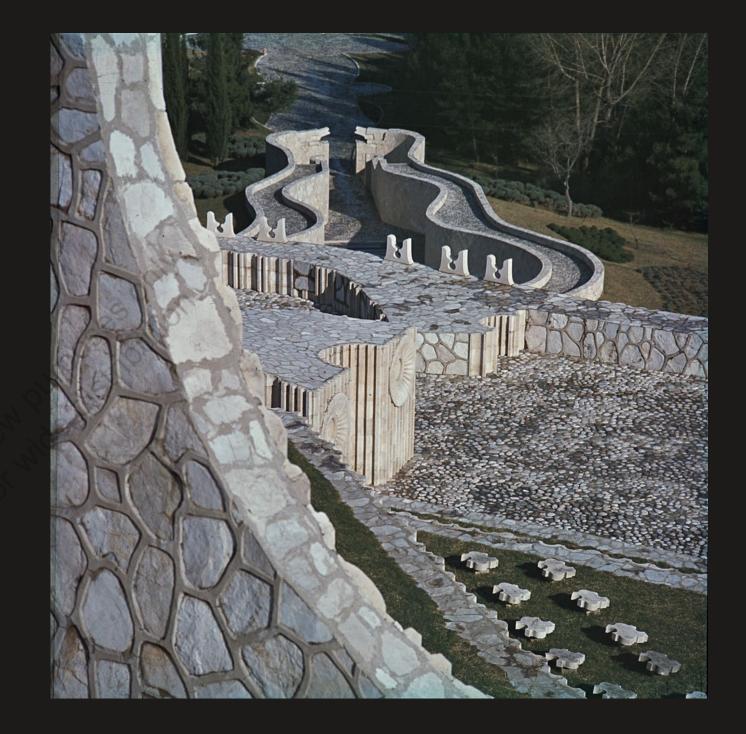






This was a monument to Yugoslav solidarity. It was dedicated to the Mostar battalion. What was most touching to me was that the soldiers were practically children. Their names: Muslim, Serbian, Croatian. It reminded me of the Children's Crusades. A huge percentage were killed. These are cenotaphs, symbolic graves. Some remains were buried here, but not very many.





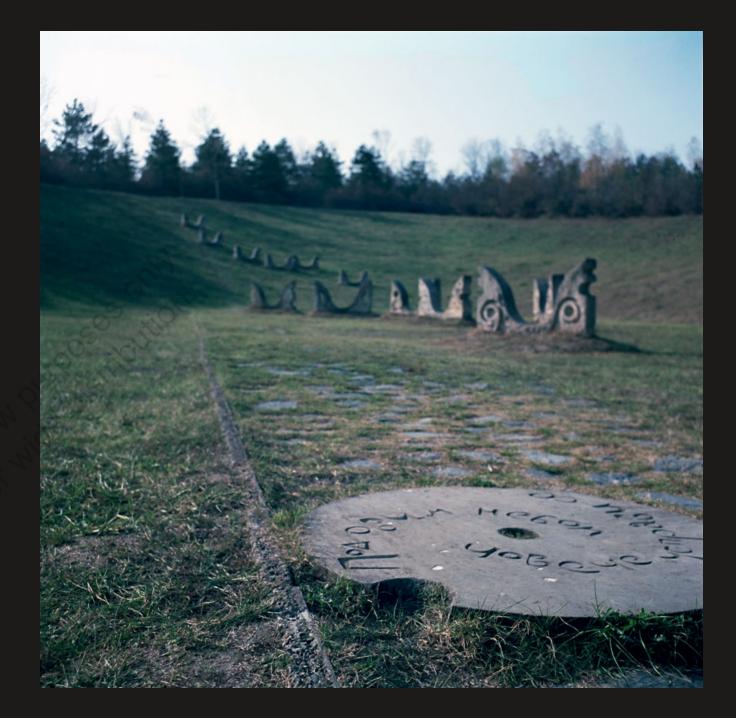
The memorial is badly defaced, but it couldn't be demolished—it is carved into the hill, so it's indestructible. It is surrounded by forest now.

Slobodište Memorial Park

Kruševac, Serbia. 1960-65

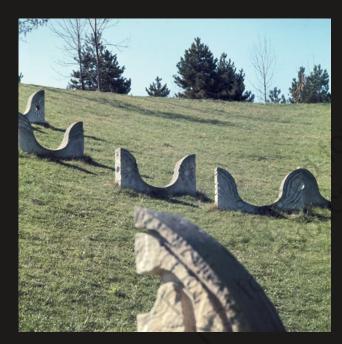
This park commemorates the site where the German army executed more than sixteen hundred local civilians and resistance fighters between 1941 and 1944. The larger of the two earthen amphitheaters Bogdanović designed for the memorial is used for performances, whereas the smaller one, containing twelve stone sculptures, serves a purely symbolic function.

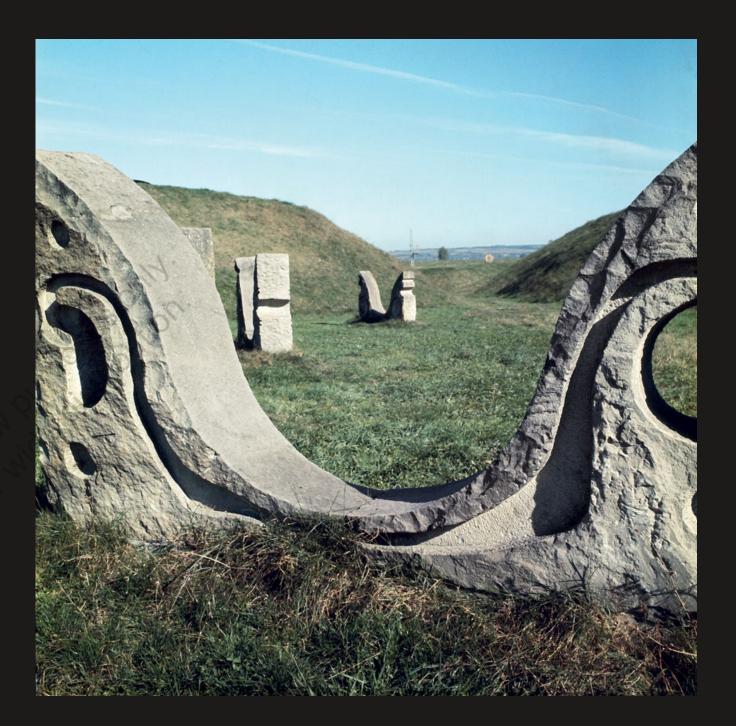
The site is still in active use and is well cared for.



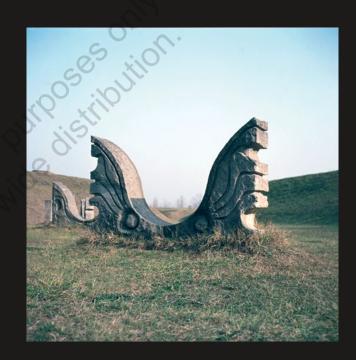
I drew directly on the stone with watered-down ink. The craftsmen already knew what I wanted; they would just ask, "How deep shall we go?" They actively participated in giving shape to the stone. That's how architecture was built for centuries. It's not like that anymore.







I asked a group of schoolchildren to help me organize the figures. I would give them wooden sticks to use as markers and then I'd let them play around. I'd tell them, "Stand there," and they would mark the spots with the sticks. Then I would move them around to try a new configuration. They were very excited. I saw it as a link between architecture and choreography.





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Several organizations helped me publish Bogdan Bogdanović's little-known photographs. This book would not have been possible without the financial support provided by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Equally critical was the generous assistance of the Architekturzentrum Wien, which holds Bogdan Bogdanović's archive and graciously permitted us to reproduce his photographs at the heart of this project. I am especially grateful to AzW's Monika Platzer and Iris Ranzinger for their enthusiasm and understanding. A fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2015 allowed me to begin my research into Bogdanović's intellectual formation. Membership at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in fall 2017 afforded me the time to write.

I owe special thanks to Wolfgang Thaler, who was involved in developing the idea for this book from the very beginning. He assisted in making the initial selection of images, and he also enlisted the aid of Tobias Urban, who kindly allowed us to use his scanning equipment to digitize the photos. Jelica Jovanović invested countless hours carefully scanning the slides and researching Bogdanović's archive.

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VLADIMIR KULIĆ

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