

RE-TERRITORIALIZING

"Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship"

by
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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2020

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abstract

The silhouettes of colossal Soviet monuments in Bulgaria shaped the landscape of the nation, both physically, and metaphorically. Many remain abandoned, some have been removed, a few modified, but their controversy remains forever in history. One of them, now abandoned, landed on a hill and with obstinate assurance still stands – The Park-Monument of The Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship in Varna. A ghostly iron fist, hidden in its shadow, continues to haunt the nation. Its existence in Bulgaria, as with other monuments around the world, tied to past ideologies, is highly contested. The relevance of existing monuments and their relationship to an oppressive regime remains controversial.

I confront the Friendship Monument by confronting my personal past. This subjective story, as it relates to this particular monument, also relates to a larger issue: A dominating power exist, both inside and outside the human body and psyche. I challenge power; the power of the dominator over the dominated. I investigate this power by engaging the monument, by collecting drawings and images, and by making artefacts. I make models, casts, collages, in a mode of serious play, I experiment with my relations to power through what the monument awakens in me. I open it up and expose what is hidden and locked away, so that I can bring into light the darkest moments of my past.

The Friendship Monument must continue to jog the memory, to stimulate a reoccurring and rhythmic re-

evaluation of the past to inform the future. The territory that comes with a socialist past is anchored in my present, through the legacy of the Soviet Union embodied in this monument, and it is not a territory that I want to continue to accept. The power over the people, the totalitarianism, the domination of an era manifested through this particular monument, is something I will confront repeatedly.

Through this archive of drawings, photographs, and memories, I make an assemblage of parts that interact and inform each other in the hope of creating a new territory. I can also, in the future, come back to and replenish a memoir from a new territorial perspective.

acknowledgments

Supervisor: Dereck Revington

Committee: Anne Bordeleau, Robert Jan van Pelt

External: Margaret Krawecka

Editor: Shanne Nathaniel Stines

To my supervisor, Dereck Revington: thank you for your invaluable support. You inspired me when I was down and grounded me when I was drifting away. Without your guidance I would not have pushed my own limits; to seek what I don't see, to explore, to face fear, to fly into pieces and to come back together renewed.

To my committee member, Anne Bordeleau, for your insight, receptivity, and inspiration, thank you infinitely.

To Professor Krassimira Vatcheva and Architect Zhechka Ilieva, who helped me begin my research in Bulgaria, and made me feel welcome and apart of their community. To architect Ognian Kamenov, who readily met with me and shared his insights and the drawings of his father architect Kamen Goranov. To Kristian Oblakov – a local historian – and Vladimir Ivanov – an artist, for sharing their knowledge, and thoughts. To Dafina Nedelcheva and Hristyan Petrov, for sharing their experiences and access to original drawings early on in my process.

To my dear friends who have always helped me in need, with or without my asking, and for the timeless conversations, thank you.

To Aleem, our daily discussions have opened my heart and mind to new territories and made me perceptive to other worlds that used to seem alien to me. Thank you for your patience, compassion, love, and for listening to my confessions countless times.

dedication

To my mother who died too young, but nevertheless always inspired me and will continue to inspire me.

To my sister and my father, thank you for your limitless love and believing in me unconditionally.

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*Note: All images are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

preface

When I started my graduate degree, I knew the focus of my thesis was going to be the Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship in Varna, Bulgaria. I have chosen this particular example of Soviet architecture mainly because I was familiar with it, I had memories with it, and because it was a part of my past.

The architect of the Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship was Kamen Goranov. Architect Goranov, who in partnership with a team of local sculptors Alyosha Kafedzhiiski and Eugene Barumov, won in the final round of the competition for the concept design of a monument themed “the Soviet Army as liberator of Bulgaria from the Nazism.”¹ The term liberator is not adequate as it is a well-known fact that Bulgaria was not an ally of Nazi Germany on that September day in 1944, when the Soviet Army entered the country. Many call the monument the Friendship Monument in Varna, for short. It was built in 1978, under socialist regime in Bulgaria. These were difficult times, as strong social and political control was being enforced on the people. In a way, the times were very similar to the ones described in dystopian novels such as “1984” and “Brave New World.” Individuals could not freely express thoughts and opinions, especially if they were in discordance with those of the regime. I know from my family that they were not allowed to exit the country, and many products originating in the western world were banned.

Totalitarianism seems to be making a comeback globally, and in that sense it is important to note that totalitarian ideas are not easily defeated, because they continue

1 Nikolay Savov, *Pametnicite na Varna*, (Sofia: Bars, 2010).

to exist in some shape or form, and echo through the decades. For example, I learned about a recent usability study and plans for future use of the Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship, which was started by Dafina Nedelcheva², a historical researcher located in New York. She had been working on it for a while, when it was abruptly stopped for undisclosed reasons on the insistence of the Russian Consul General in Varna. It seems as though Totalitarian thinking has never completely left modern society and may be on the rise again. After learning about it from Nedelcheva, and considering there is very little knowledge about the Soviet Regime's³ history in Bulgaria – even within Bulgaria itself, I saw the topic as an inspiring cultural undertaking. At that time I did not know in what way exactly I was going to be examining the monument. There are many questions surrounding the Friendship Monument. Some were never asked, others were answered too quickly. I first had to discover which were the questions most important to me.

After some time spent researching the history of socialism and its monuments, I started to see the concepts developed in "A Thousand Plateaus" and "What is Philosophy?" by Deleuze and Guattari's as

2 Dafina Nedelcheva is a historian living and working in New York, who in collaboration with the architect Hristyan Petrov also from New York, who have spent countless hours and resources working to develop a proposal for a future use of the Friendship Monument.

3 I will expand on the Soviet Regime in the Chapter 1. referenced: Leszek Kolakowski, *What is Socialism?*, (Warsaw: n.p., 1956), quoted in Owen Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism*, (Bungay: Allen Lane, 2015), 1. Leopold Labedz, *the Use and Abuse of Sovietology*, (New Brunswick, (U.S.A.): Transaction Publishers, 1989), 135-137.

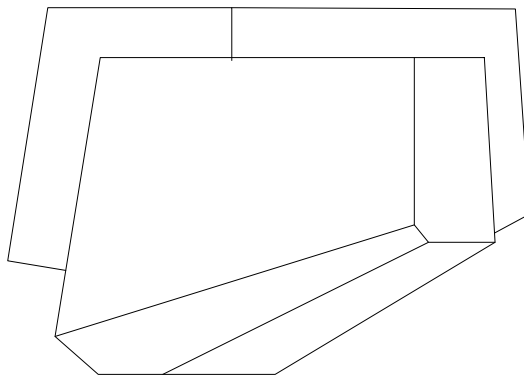
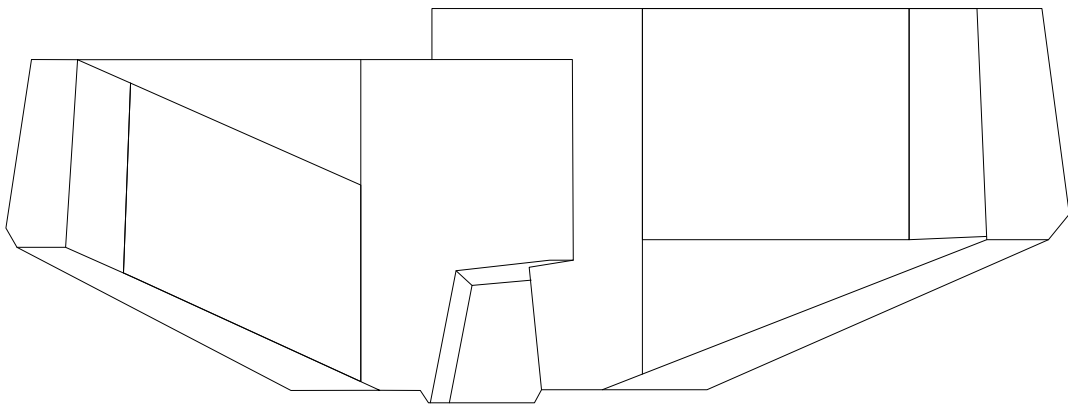
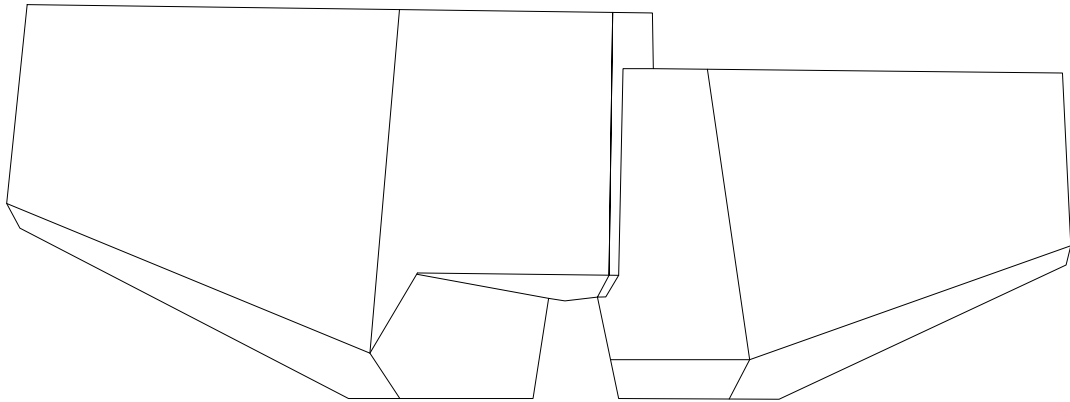
the most appropriate lens through which to view the monument in its contextual entirety. Their method of understanding the world as a rhizome rather than a tree inspired me to expand on knowledge horizontally and allowed me to follow paths in surprising directions with no predetermined outcomes. I initially aspired to design an adaptive reuse project for the monument, but in time I discovered, that I need a much longer, in-depth study due to my personal relationship to the monument and my personal trauma. I had to walk a longer road, or better yet, many different roads, to challenge fears and preconceived ideas of designs and solutions. Through these concepts, which I will expand on, I examined and explored this monument as well as my subjective relationship to it.

Each section has its own importance, and each one is constructed to be equally telling of the process through which I investigate the focus of this thesis. Through this, I create a horizontally structured argument, similar to the rhizome. The rhizomatic structure resists the hierarchical organization. The structure of the rhizome is like grass, everything is equally involved in maintaining its integrity.⁴

As my research advanced, I received funding to visit Bulgaria and to conduct an on-site study. There, I was acquainted with architects, historians, and artists from

4 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Translated by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Varna who were knowledgeable and inspiring. While in Bulgaria, studying the monument, I gathered vast amounts of information. Access to archived blueprints helped me greatly in my initial research into the monument, its interior spaces, the topography and circulation network around the park. The archives also had a record of my Great-grandfather's dossier, which was one of the most difficult parts – it was not only a long and tedious task to locate them, but processing the information was mentally straining. Nevertheless it certainly brought more clarity to the seriousness of the reality in the face of the Friendship Monument.



"The monument's action is not memory but fabulation."
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1994)

introduction

With this thesis I inquire into the political, sociological, and psychological forces which informed the ideology and aesthetics behind the creation of the Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship in Varna, Bulgaria. The monument synthesizes the motivation, culture, and historical zeitgeist that created it and its careful study allows for a fuller understanding of why certain historic events become possible if not inevitable. The very nature of this monument demanded that I research Bulgaria's socialist past in some detail. It also demanded that I measure its impact on the nation, on my family and more specifically on my maternal ancestors as told through their stories.

In hindsight, the reason I started this research into this particular Soviet monument was because I always wanted to connect with my maternal lineage but didn't know where to begin. Intuitively the Friendship Monument captured me, propelled me, and gave me fuel for my journey into the past. My family, starting with my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, down to me, were either living under, or had grown up under, or were born during the Soviet Regime. My grandmother, the last surviving member of my maternal lineage, is now deaf, and suffering from dementia. My mother has long passed, and so has my maternal grandfather. I know that my great-grandfather was tortured by the communist regime in Bulgaria and died within a year of his release from prison. His wife, my great-grandmother, became deranged after his death and lived the rest of her life in

a mental institution. My mother passed away when I was eleven and I never had the chance to learn more from her about her past. My grandmother used to tell me stories about her own life as a young woman before, during, and after socialism, including stories about her father being imprisoned and tortured by the communists. I subconsciously longed to gain a fuller understanding of my own family history and the difficult environment in which their lives unfolded. All the stories she told me when I was younger affected me subconsciously. Living away from my family in Bulgaria for over fifteen years triggered me to confront the painful unrealized urge to reconnect, and to communicate with them, be they living or not.

Looking back, after all my research into the history of socialism in Bulgaria, I see their lives and experiences through a different lens. This personal story is only unique in its particularities, but it is similar to the stories of many other families in Bulgaria, who were negatively affected by the exercised dogma of the Totalitarian regime – all in fulfillment of Utopian promises to the nation. The regime's effects on the people reverberate through many generations, and its ideology is communicated through the Friendship Monument. My personal story and the monument are related as well as relevant through the inherent architectural purpose of monuments to embody and communicate ideologies which can cause irreversible damages.

Since Soviet monuments¹ were built on prominent sites in Bulgaria, as in all other Eastern Bloc countries, they shape the landscape and physically stand out due to their large scale and strategic location. Placed to be visible from afar, they commemorate battles, wars, and heroic victories that usually glorify the Red Army.² Permanence, certainty, and power are integral to any monument and that is especially true of the Friendship Monument in Varna. The imposing totalitarian propaganda this monument radiates is strikingly powerful.

After the fall of Socialism in Bulgaria in 1989 and the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe, the Friendship Monument's existence and current condition have become controversial. With the passing of time, the regime's impact, as conveyed through the monument, proves to be long lasting. To expose its power as merely propaganda built on historical falsehoods, and to challenge its echoing oppressiveness, I will oppose the monument with real facts of my individual experiences. I will relive the pain that was caused through dogma

1 The Soviet monuments I am referring to are the large scale (ranging from 17m to 75m in height) monumental, buildings with a sculptural quality, built in Bulgaria during Soviet regime between 1944 and 1989. They were typically placed in a key location, on top of a hill, visible from a great distance and from within the city, which they were built for. These monuments were also meant to be visible to anyone approaching the given city from as far as 40-50 km away. Most of them were abandoned upon the end of the regime.

2 Red Army, Russian Krasnaya Armiya, Soviet army created by the Communist government after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The name Red Army was abandoned in 1946, WRITTEN BY: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

and enforcement of unquestioned rules. Remembering an oppressive past, unimaginable violence, and forced silence, I confront the memories of personal traumatic experiences that have not healed. Posing questions about authority, I begin to transform a past wound into scar tissue. I become the vessel for memory, challenging the monument's storytelling powers by remembering, writing and creating, which are critical parts of my healing process.

In its permanence, the Friendship Monument ignores the cycles of time, which causes stagnation. Immersed in a series of artifacts, I attempt to create a counter-monument³ to question this embodied permanence. The concept of a counter-monument was described by James E. Young in his journal article "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today."⁴ The counter-monument is a monument that counters itself. It challenges the premises of its being, it challenges its embodied permanence, and questions its ability to remember truthfully. It is not representational of an event or a persona. The counter-monument transfers the responsibility of remembering from the commemorating object to the viewer.⁵ I find this concept complimentary to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the refrain. The counter monument is in an essence a 'bloc of sensation,'

3 James E. Young, *The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today*, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (The University of Chicago Press, Winter, 1992), pp. 267-296. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343784>

4 James E. Young, *The Counter-Monument*.

5 James E. Young, *The Counter-Monument*.

it captures the refrain of a time that must be remembered. It is conceptual not representational. Since it works on a deeper, sensing level, it can be far more impactful. If the viewer is presented with a sensation, with a certain refrain, they can excavate into their own memory and subconscious fears in order to confront them. Through applying these concepts to the creation of a counter-monument, it should be possible to translate the emotional charge of a historic event or era to the viewer. Even if the event hasn't directly impacted the individual, it is still worth entering its refrain and remembering a pain that has the potential to become universal.

The ideas conveyed through this Friendship Monument go beyond its stated name. The ideology in this monument is not tested – it is only stated. To test anything, one has to look at it over time. If it doesn't fall apart – it stands the test of time. However, if an idea is presented as a given truth it has to appear as if it was proven. The idea has to appear robust, indestructible, and worthy. The Friendship Monument states the Soviet ideology's credibility through its size, material quality, expenditure of resources, and location. To counter the monument's position, I am presenting artifacts that test my understanding of permanence and impermanence, of perfection and imperfection, such as drawings, photography, archives, and self-made artifacts. I also physically explore the Friendship Monument and its tunnels, in an effort to communicate with the past, and to begin to understand its refrain better. I submerge myself in an atmosphere of fear, doubt, uncertainty, and altered

consciousness. This journey is multi-layered; I engage, I record, and later I continue to explore through writing and making.

As I confront the historic memory of the pain inflicted by totalitarianism on a whole nation, I also struggle with the pain caused to my family and its rippling effect on my own life. I re-examine my relationship to power and authority in some deep aspects of my life by challenging the monument's purpose as an object. I turn it into a piece of concrete that can be utilized as furniture. An object I can handle, where my physical or mental state is more capable of handling it. I turn the monument into something that cannot subject me to its power. I cast a model, which is functional as well as conceptual. Simultaneously it can remind me daily of my encounters with the Friendship Monument through its iconic shape resemblance. I make many more casts exploring the perceivable versus the imperceivable using latex. They always remain a mould in my explorations, where the solid has disappeared but remains imprinted into the latex cast. These casts are challenging the memory of the visibly permanent, with the impermanence another medium presents. I confront memories of personal traumatic experiences that have not healed. Still, I find that remembering writing and creating, are critical parts of my healing process.

I make models inspired by human nature, deeply rooted in impermanence and imperfection. I apply the principles of the refrain and territorialization, introduced by Deleuze and Guattari, and confront the pain that

was caused to previous generations in my family and to myself by remembering, questioning, feeling, thinking, and rhythmically changing. This process exposes the family trauma to the ever-changing nature of time and allows for a new refrain to begin.

In a story exploring the Friendship Monument I jump in and out of my character, using a third person omniscient voice. By that, I attempt to relate my thoughts to my feelings and to connect to myself from different angles. My subjective experience becomes someone else's. As I observe the character, I aim to objectify my personal fears. Observing a third person personify my emotions helped me extract them from myself for a moment and gave me time to process them. Through the story I enter into the refrain of the monument as an assemblage. I enter its territory, become a part of its refrain, and become a part of the assemblage. The assemblage is a machine, that has interconnected parts, which are defined by everything else within it. As a result, in my encounters with the monument I enter the assemblage and therefore influence its new cycles by de-territorializing and re-territorializing. Paying attention to the movements from internal to external forces, creating friction between my emotions and my visible body, something germinates. A new assemblage begins to form.⁶

⁶ I am referring to Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory as well as to Manuel deLanda's Assemblage theory interpretation which I will discuss later.



1.0 POWER OVER
the monument refrain

the context

The context in which the Friendship Monument exists has morphed in time through the changes of the political climate. The monument becomes possible through the process in which the communists enter Bulgaria with the help of the Soviet army. Their ideas of equality once pure and perhaps even innocent become a Totalitarian regime with unyielding rules. They terrorize millions of people and create a propaganda monument to their ideology. This ideology appears invincible – morally and intellectually powerful. It doesn't glorify the human, it glorifies the regime and the army. This regime homogenizes the people.

In the city of Varna, the "Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship" was raised on top of a steep hill called Turna Tepe at the edge of the city. The Russian forces had a base in this location and successfully overtook Varna from the Ottomans during the Russo-Turkish wars¹. Before the Soviet regime entered Bulgaria, this mound was occupied by vineyards and orchards. In the Socialist era after the end of WWII, the hill was named the Brotherhood tumulus (Братската Могилa),² "the site became an ossuary for the remains of local fallen fighters against fascism" who died in the Varna metropolitan area

1 Nikolay Savov, "The Russian Monuments In Varna", (Varna: Bars Agency, 2005), 46-49

2 Dafina Nedelcheva, *The Politics of Memory in (Re)Building Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship in Varna, Bulgaria*. (n.l.: n.p., 2018), 8.

in the period 1923 -1944." And "...in a solemn procession relatives of the fallen fighters buried small red boxes containing the remains of the dead."³ In the public memory the change of the name from hill to Brotherhood tumulus was a strategy of the Soviet Union to marry their image to that of Tsarist Russia⁴.

At the fall of the Soviet regime in Bulgaria, the context transforms into a rejection. The values of the dictatorship transform into hate and refusal to face the meaning of the monument. Abandonment is the context of this artifact of a difficult past for thirty years. With years of neglect, it becomes a place of absurdity, the symbol of greatness and of dictatorship, becomes a symbol of hate and darkness, and a place undignified. The new generation who is unfamiliar with this past is unassuming. The place becomes a romantic hangout of their youth, the size becomes a backdrop, the weight of the symbolism is imperceptible for them through their innocence.

Finally, the current cycle of its context demands looking back. What is the monument's purpose? Who are the people of Bulgaria and where do they stand as a society in regard to this public place? Are they communists, are

3 Dafina Nedelcheva, *The Politics of Memory in (Re)Building Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship*

4 Dafina Nedelcheva, *The Politics of Memory in (Re)Building Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship*

they democrats, or are they the forgetful ones? How does one make sense of the Friendship Monument as a symbol of oppression? Is demolishing appropriate, or is neutralizing it, so it doesn't remind of this propaganda, as a symbol of delusional ideology? Or is perhaps anything else possible that has not been considered and would allow for another context to form? These are questions that are not easy to answer, and quick solutions may exacerbate the current issue. This is why I am summoning the forces of the refrain – the extensive and the intensive properties – to bring out clarity into what the monument means.

intensive & extensive Forces

An extensive property is measurable, while an intensive property cannot be experienced objectively. "The refrain is how rhythm stakes out a territory from chaos that resonates with and intensifies the body. Territory is always the coming together both of spatiotemporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness, actuality) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate, virtual, and open-ended), that is, it is the coupling of a milieu and a rhythm."¹

The Friendship Monument's extensive qualities like precise location, weight, height, width are measurable, quantifiable forces. Architectural drawings are the territorializing extensive properties. Its intensive qualities such as material, texture, light, colour, and temperature are its non-measurable subjective forces through which any territory is being defined. One way they can be conveyed is through photographs. These qualities, or I should say forces, are the Friendship Monument's percepts, and affects. The measurable and immeasurable forces of the monument coalesce to become a territory or are territorialized. This territory is an expression that is challenging and meaningful to me. These are the forces that I aim to understand, and I hope to convey in the process of my work.

¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *CHAOS, TERRITORY, ART: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 2008), 19.

territorialization

The term territorialization can have different meanings. It can be functional, affective and conceptual. I am not discussing the process through which the land is urbanized functionally or settled for productivity. I am interested in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical concept of qualities and forces being territorializing¹. The way in which I employ this method of organization, is through paying attention to the intensive and extensive forces of the Friendship Monument. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of territorializing is defined as a moment in which organization and clarity emerges out of that chaos. A moment because it is related to time, and at different times, the territory may be redefined. It may also be de-territorialized and re-territorialized. This happens, when a territory is being framed. The extents of the territory are defined, the delineation defines the territory and its parts, and the parts also define the territory. Each part interacts with every other part thereby being defined continually and simultaneously. The intensive and extensive properties are a part of that interaction and together they define the territory and its outreach creating a conceptual territory with expressivity² and sensation³. Architecture and art are such territories. "Framing is how chaos becomes territory. Framing is the means by which

1 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 315.

2 Definition of expressivity 1: the relative capacity of a gene to affect the phenotype of the organism of which it is a part. "Expressivity." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, Accessed March 19, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expressivity>.

3 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 316.

objects are delimited, qualities unleashed and art made possible.”⁴

The concept of territorialization is important and appropriate to relate to the Friendship Monument in this thesis because I am investigating a monument that was built in an era before I can remember. I can only see the monument through the lens of my time and my subjective view. The concept of territorialization helps me understand the monument’s changing nature, through the elements that define and create its territory. I can then observe how the interaction of these elements, or forces, define it and allow it to cyclically redefine itself through time. This concept is not only applicable in art and architecture, but also on a social, political, and on an individual scale.

⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *CHAOS, TERRITORY, ART*.

*archive
drawings*

The following images present the architect's original drawings. Most architectural drawings in this archive date from 1975 to 1977. The park-monument opened its doors to the public in 1978 and in the evening hours 180 spotlights illuminated the impressive shape of the structure and the stylized figures¹. The 7th symphony of Shostakovitch draped over the hill for many hours each day, and an eternal fire fueled by an underground system, burned from within a large bronze cube at the foot of the stylized concrete wings. A central axis organizes the space from South to North² with a main stair with 302 steps along the long axis named "Staircase of Victors." Concentric ring like alleyways spread though the site interconnected with stairs. Once a visitor reaches the top, walking the main staircase, they arrive at the base of the bronze cube and their gaze passes straight through the emblematic archway looking North (See FIG 54). Above it bronze letters read "Friendship for centuries throughout centuries" (See FIG 75), now barely legible. The monument as a symbol built to be illuminated – a conqueror and its newly inhabited hill, visible even at night far into the Black Sea.

1 Darmon Richter, "MONUMENT TO THE BULGARIAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP, Varna, Bulgaria," Monumentalism, Accessed March 19, 2020, <http://www.monumentalism.net/varna-bulgarian-soviet-friendship/>.

2 North Here is not True North. I have a considered the closest orientation to be North to South, however as the North arrow indicates, the orientation is more precisely North/North-West to South/South-East.

The drawings frame the monument's extensive forces, they describe its topography, its access points, its orientation, the composition of the design elements, a height, a proportion. They also show an uninterrupted line of view from the bottom of the hill to the top where the monument is fully visible.

Investigating the drawings in detail and seeing the spaces in person gave me an unique perspective. I can imagine the spaces with their intended extensive and intensive qualities, layered on top of my personal memories. However, I don't reach into a memory as a material for this mental reconstruction, but into the monument's percepts and affects as autonomous beings, building with blocks of time.¹

1 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 168

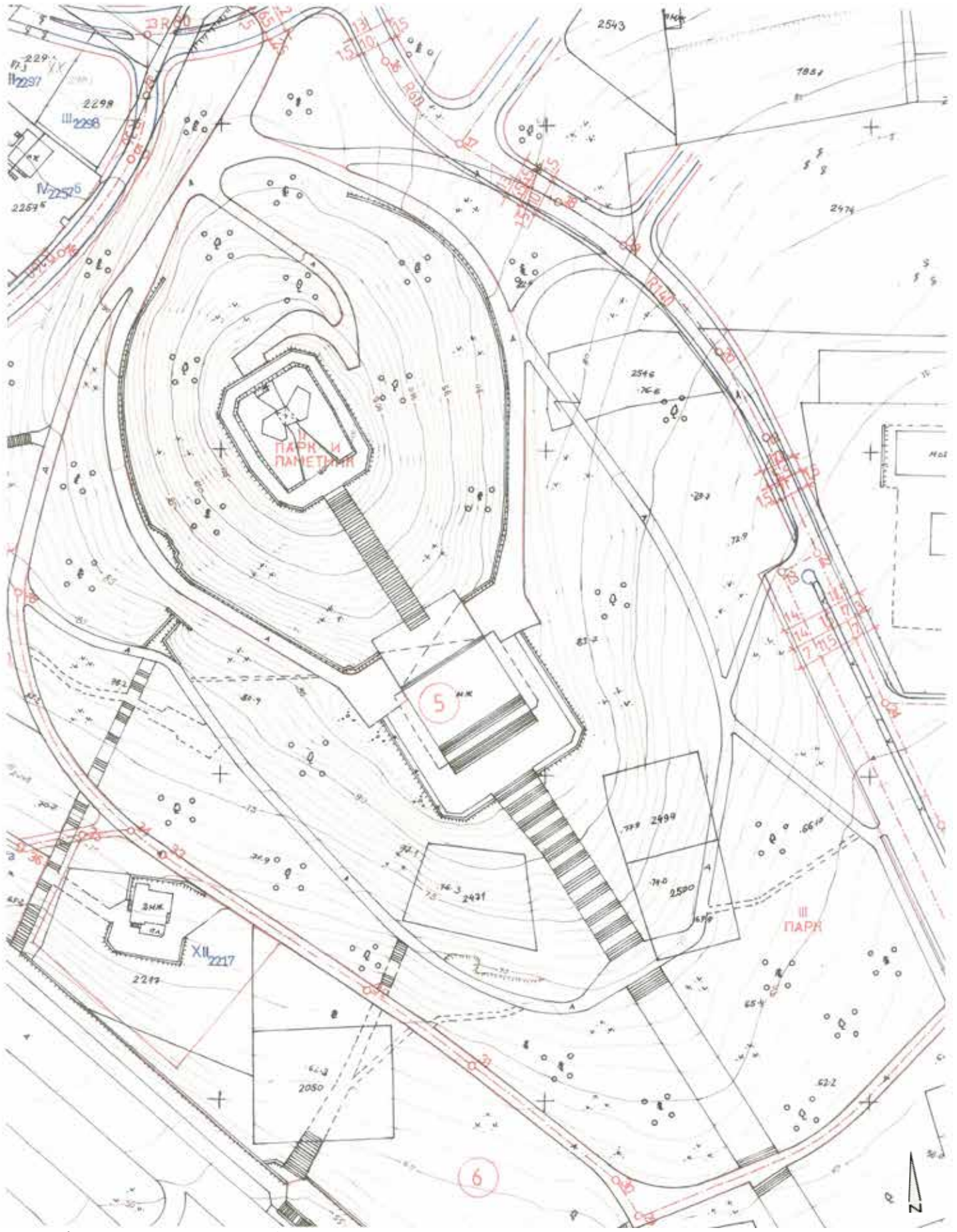
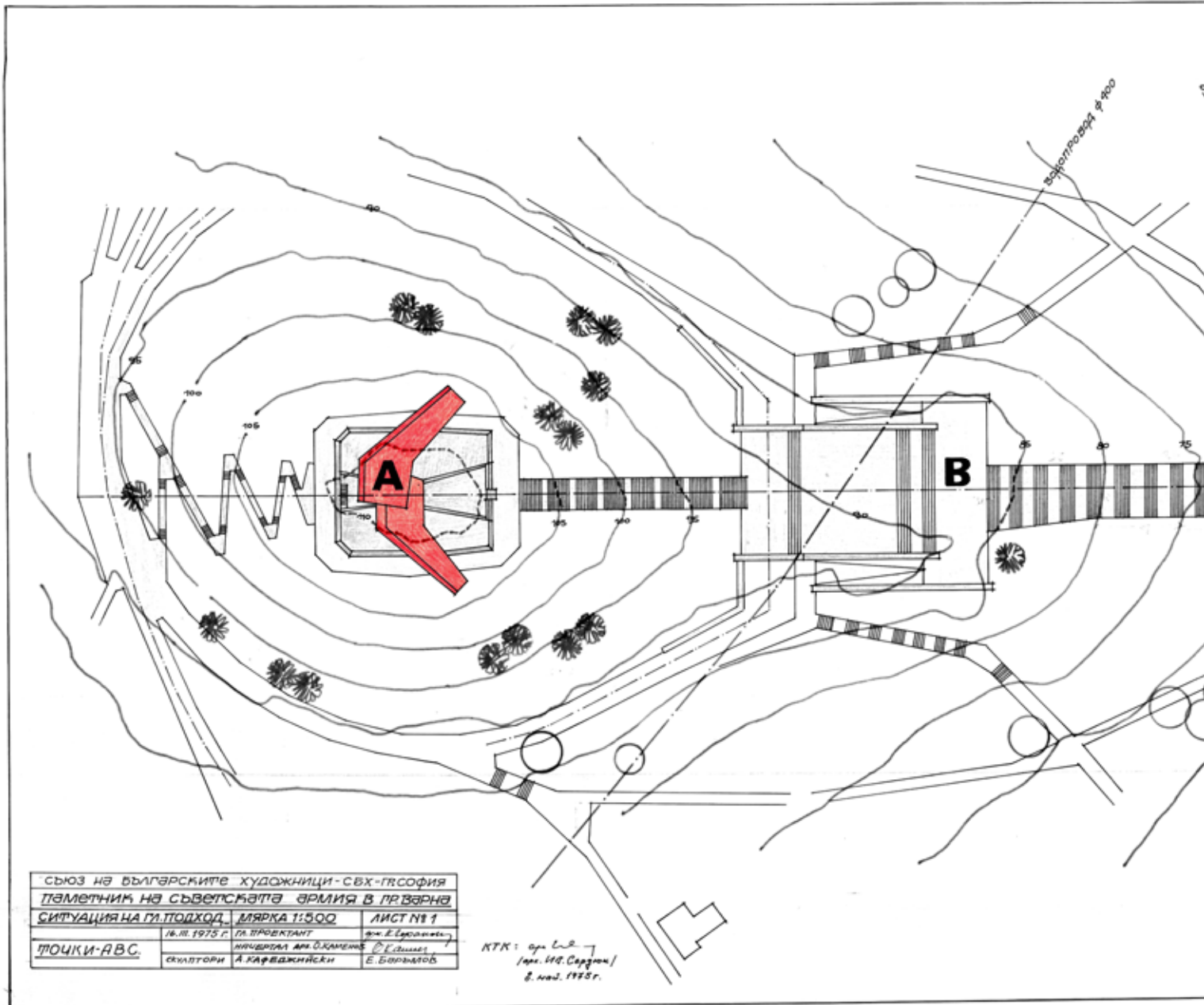


FIG 1. Infrastructure & Zoning Site Plan



СЪЮЗ НА БЪЛГАРСКИТЕ ХУДОЖНИЦИ - СВХ - ГРСОФИЯ		
ПАМЕТНИК НА СЪВЕТСКАТА АРМИЯ В ПРВАНА		
СИТУАЦИЯ НА ПЛ. ПОДХОД		
16. II. 1975 г.	ПЛ. ПРОЕКТАНТ	ЛИСТ № 1
	НИЦЕРГАЛ АНН ОХАМЕНС	Ф. Е. СЕРДЖОН
ТЪЧКИ А-В С.	СКУЛТОРИ	А. КАРВАЖИНСКИ Е. БОЛЪМБОВ

КТК: Фр. Ел. Серджон
1/пр. 140. Серджон/
8. ноем. 1975 г.

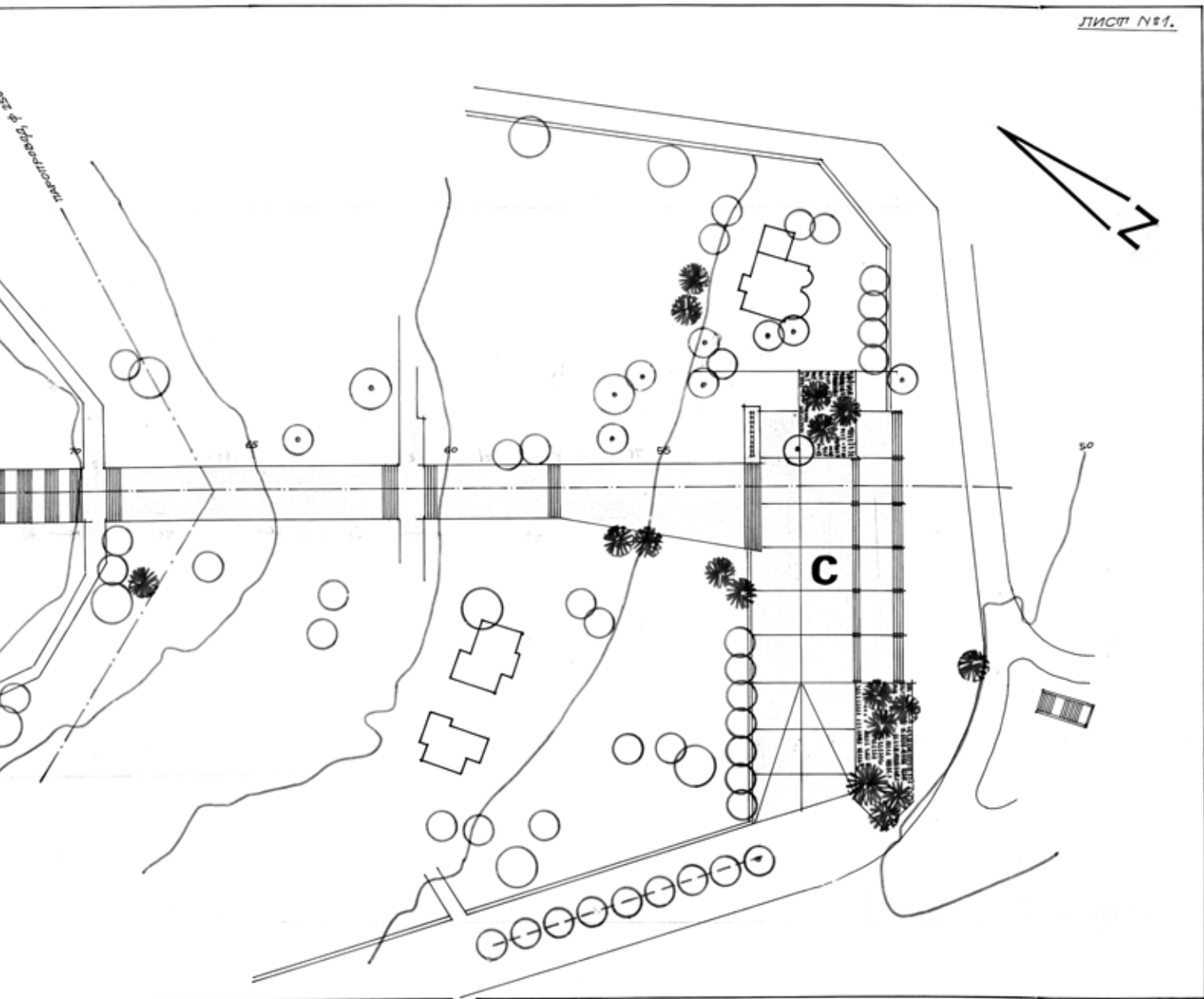
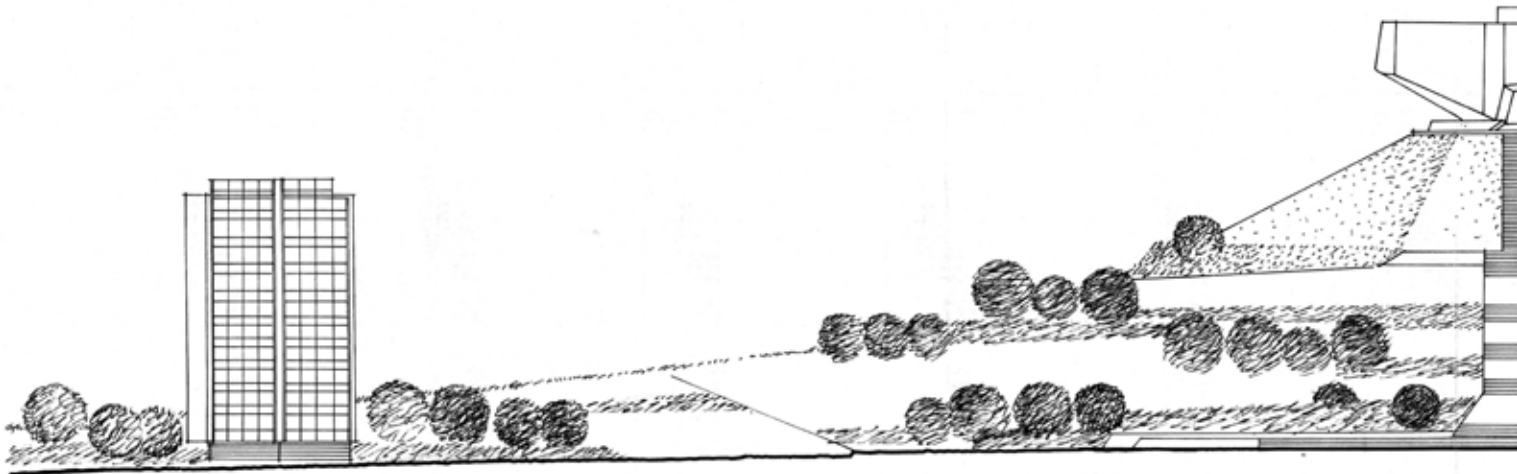
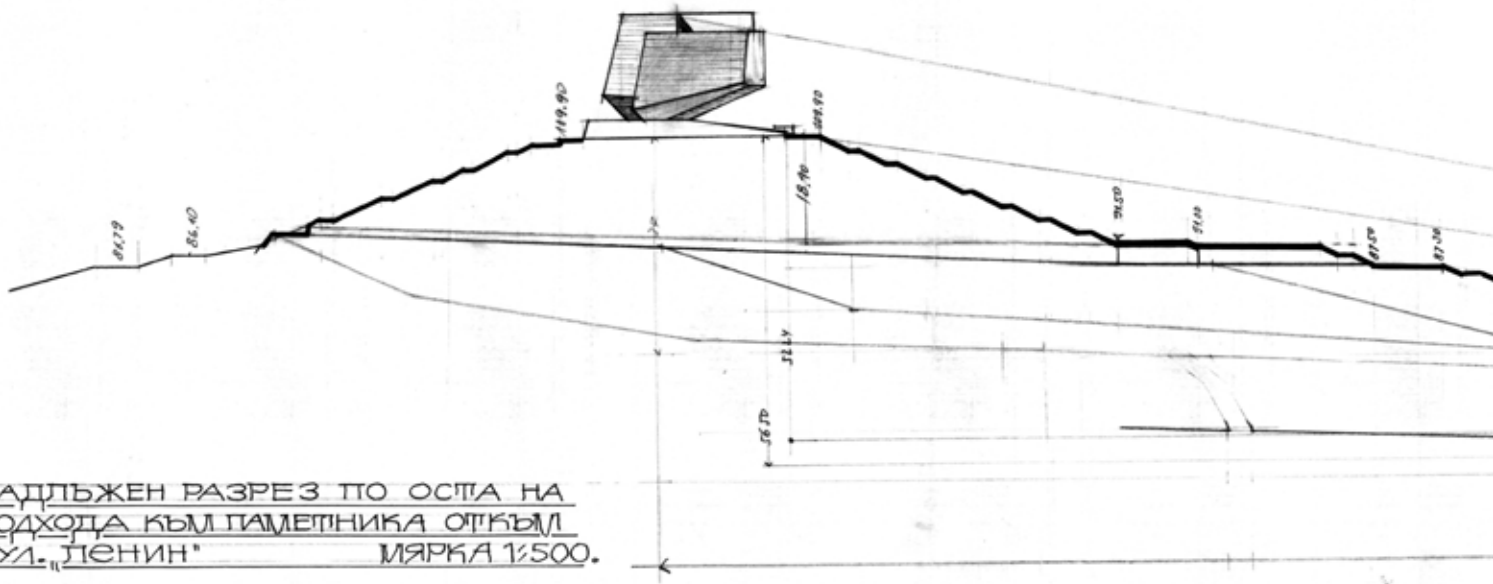
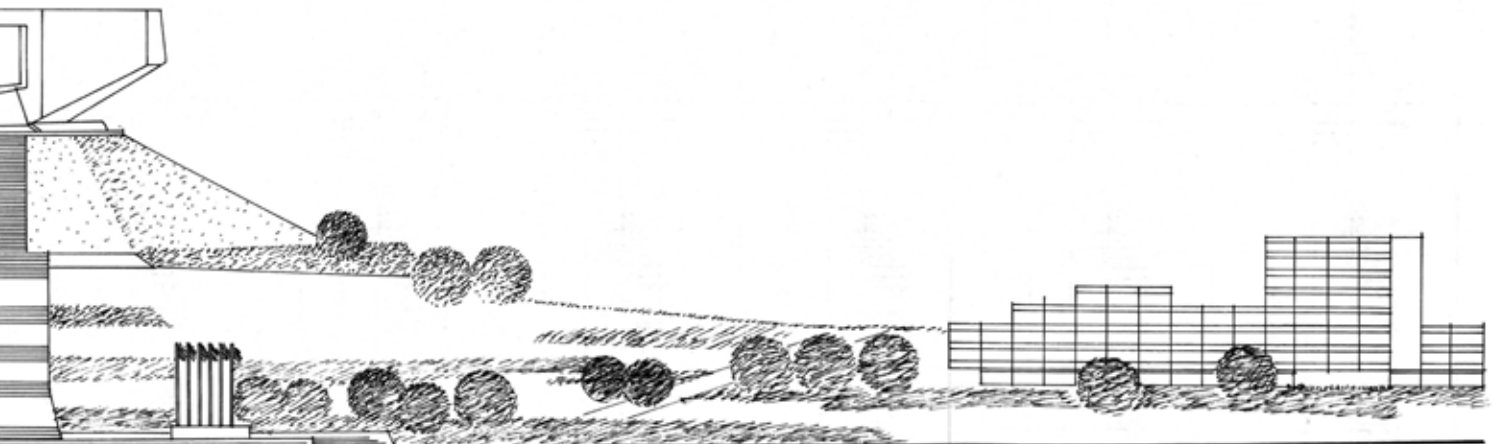
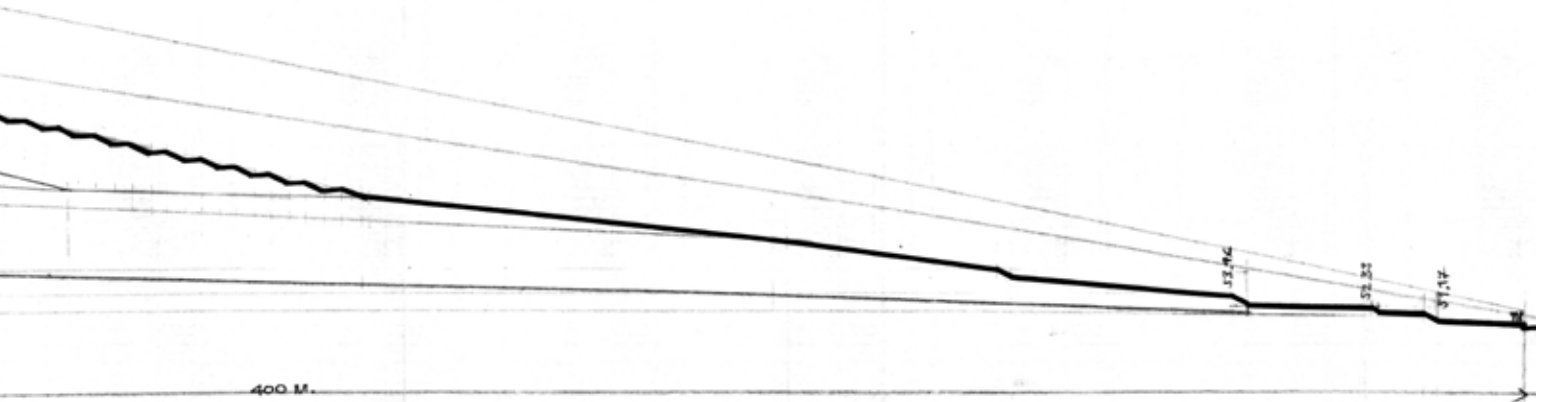


FIG 2. Site Plan - Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship, 16.03.1975



СИЛУЕТ КЪМ МОРЕТО

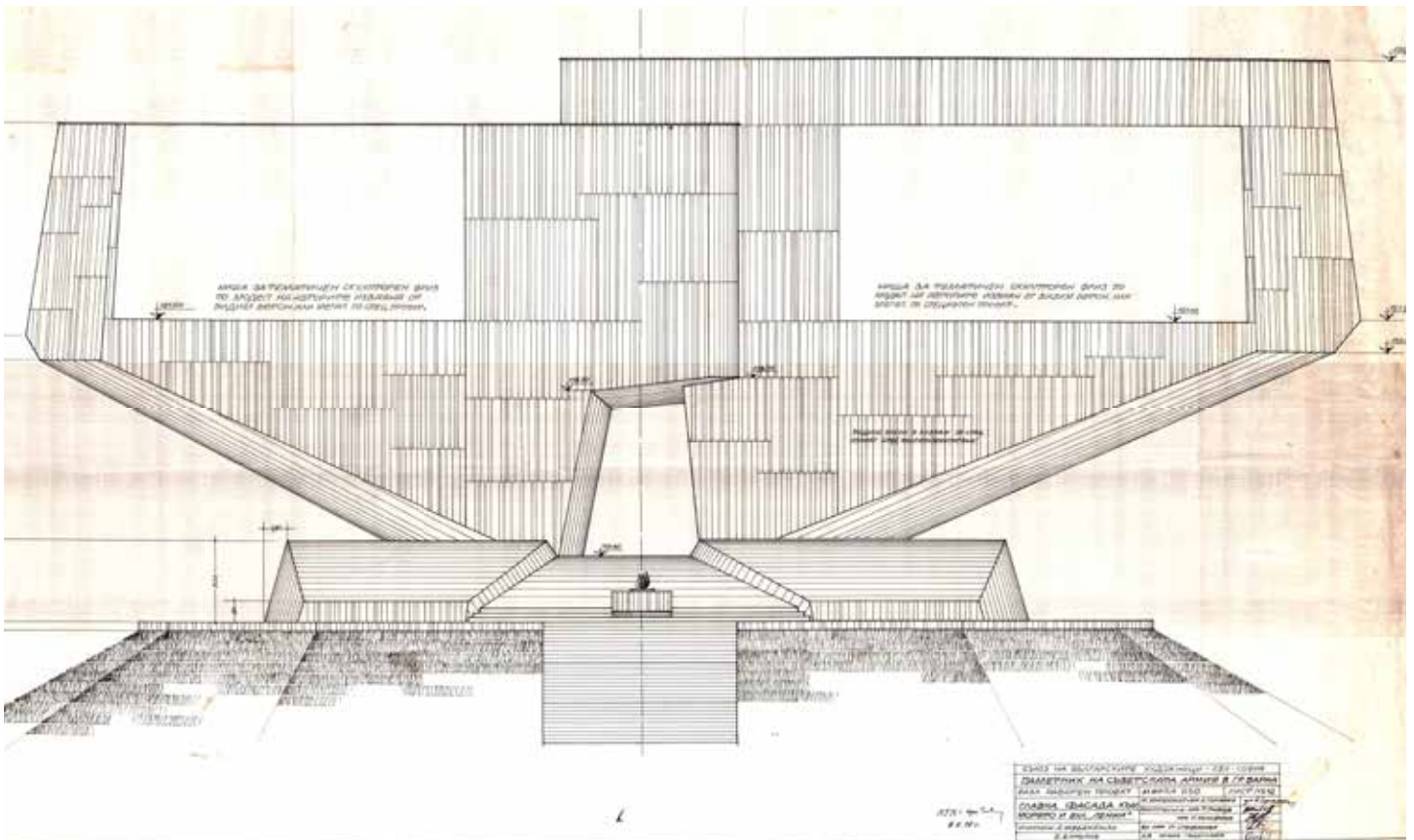
ПАМЕТНИК НА СЪВЕТСКАТА АРМИЯ В ГР. ВАРНА * АВТОРСКИ КОЛЕКТИВ * СКУЛПТОРИ-Д.Л.



M.1:500.

КАФЕДЖИЙСКИ, ЕВГ. БАРЫЛОВ, АРХ. К. ГОРАНОВ.

FIG 3. Site Elevation – Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship, West, Date Unknown
FIG 4. Site Elevation - The Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship, South, Date Unknown



exterior

The front elevation of the monument locates the bronze cube, the archway and the concrete figurative art. Here they are shown to be accommodated for at equal height and in equal size relative to each other. It is also clear that the West wing (right) is larger than the East (left). The footprint of the Friendship Monument is located at the highest part of the hill. The drawings reveal that the hill would have been raised and narrowed to accentuate the top of the hill for the dramatization of the size, shape and grandeur.

FIG 5. Front Elevation – Friendship Monument (Building “A”), 08.05.1975

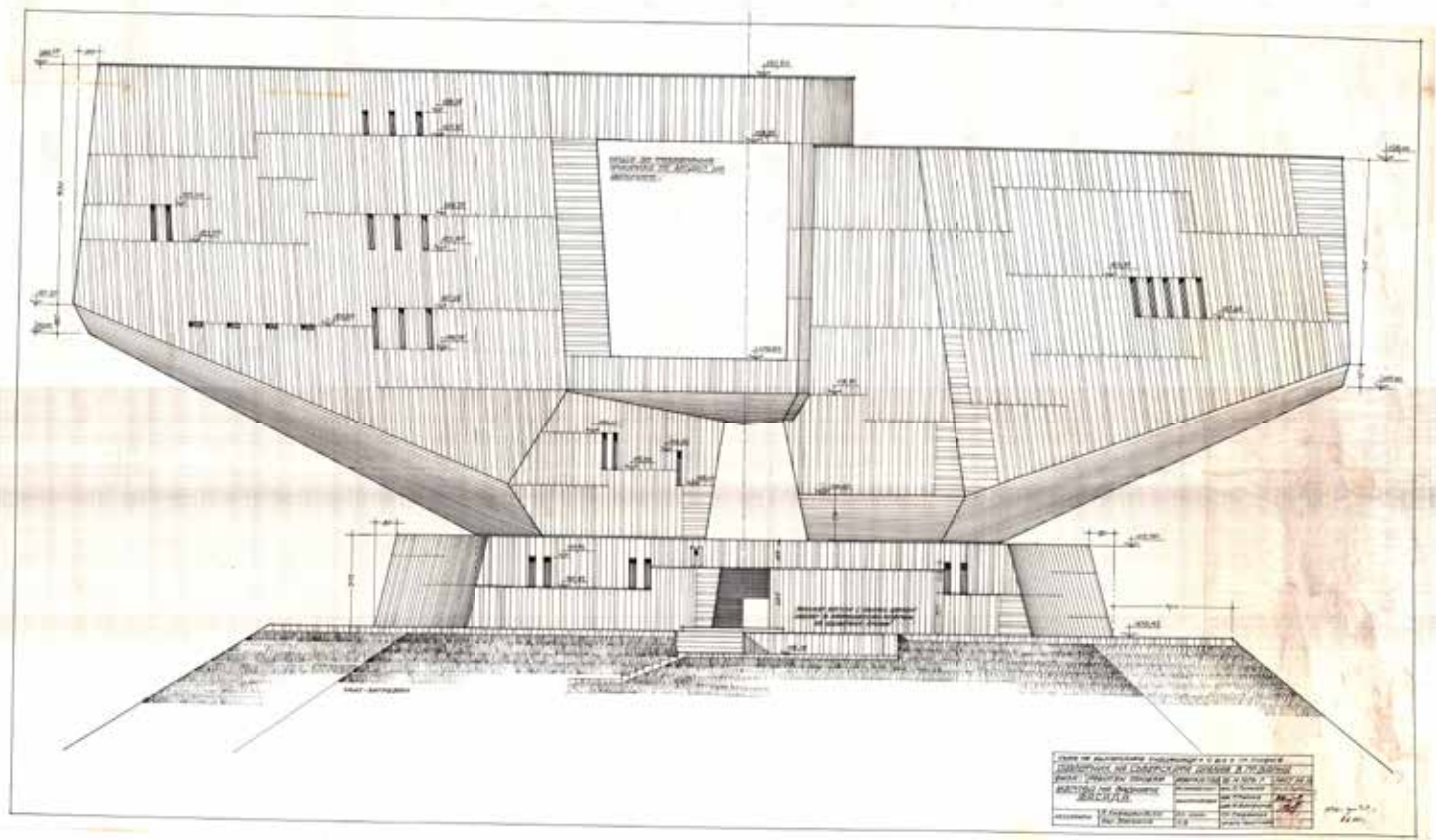
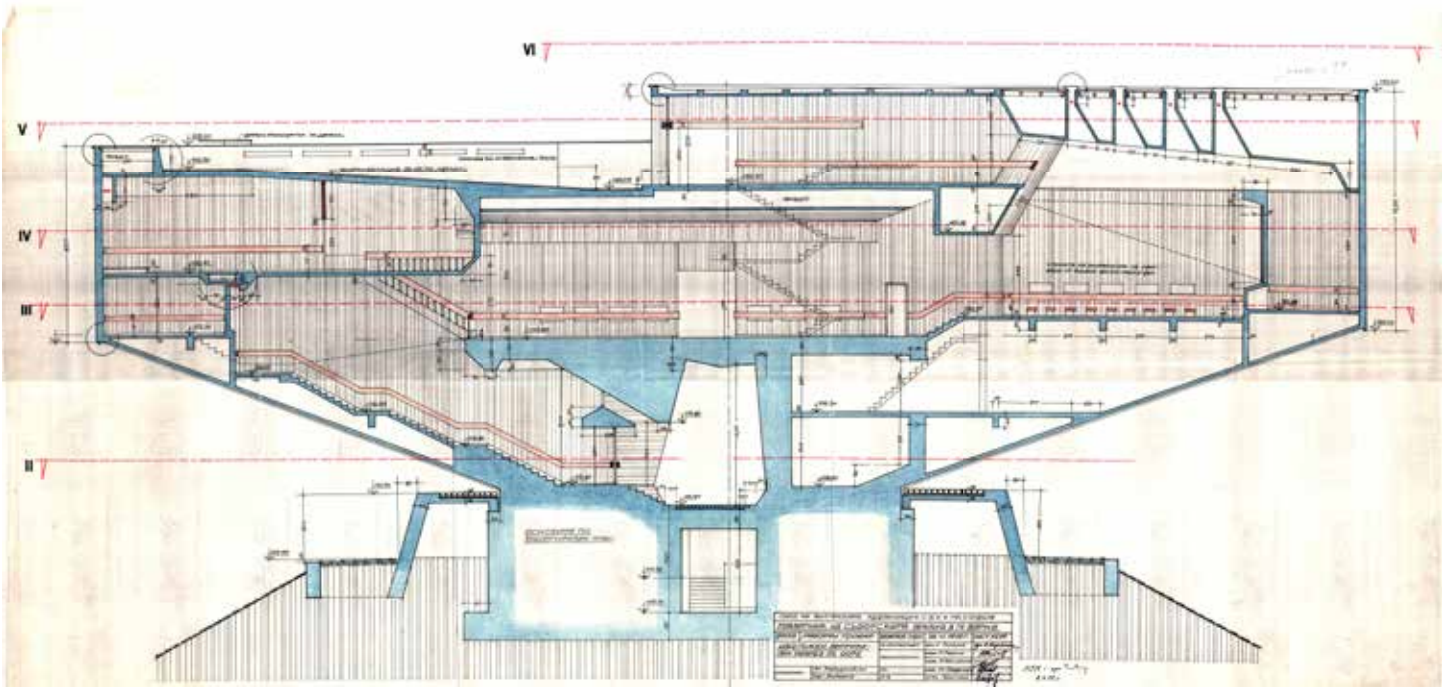


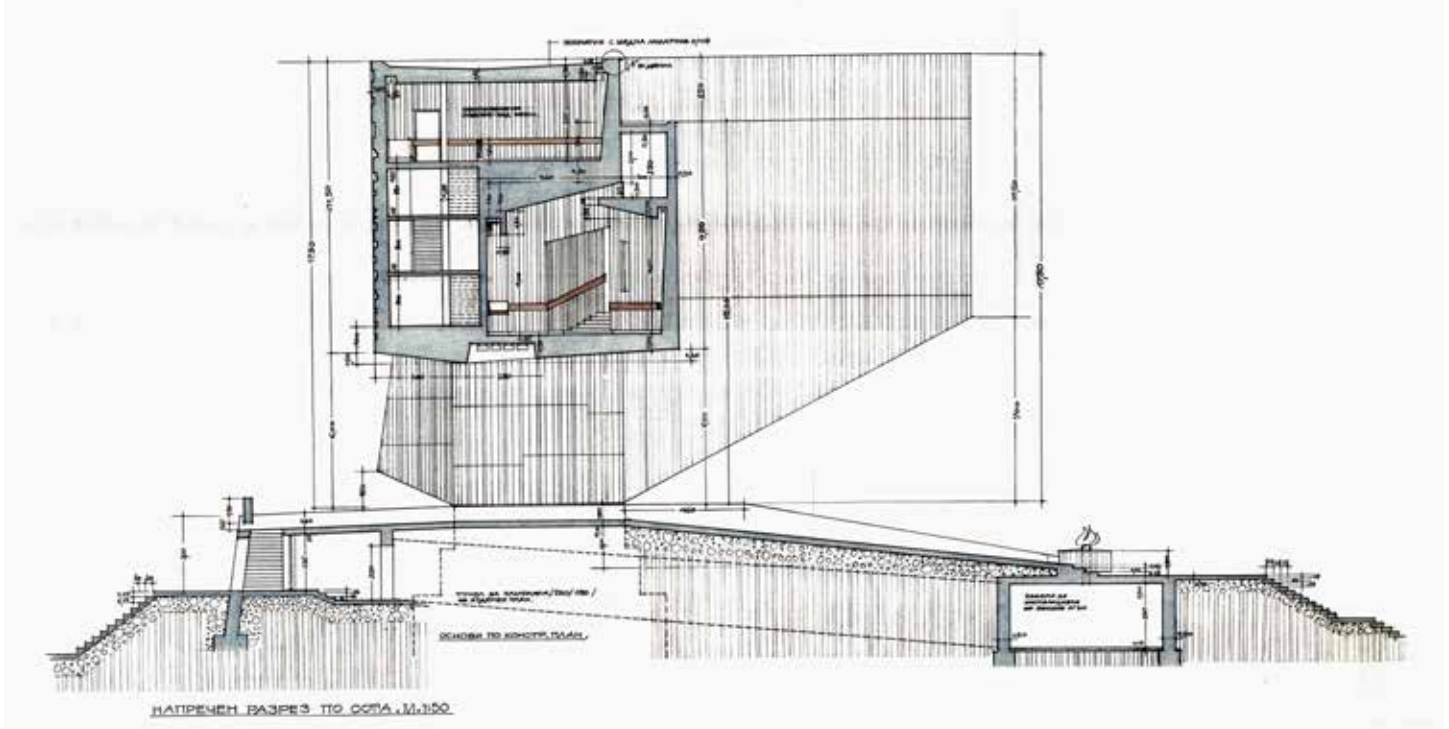
FIG 6. Back Elevation – Friendship Monument (Building "A"), 08.05.1975



interior

The longitudinal section above shows the distribution of spaces on the interior of the monument. A common visitor would proceed through the archway at the center of the monument, then turn left to enter. A few steps up and through the door one would arrive in a small vestibule followed by three flights of stairs culminating at a wall with an inscription, which I will discuss later in chapter three. Behind the wall a small space, possibly a coat check, at which point there would be a landing and a change of direction to continue up to the central chamber via a long ramp. The central chamber is above the archway nested in the interlocking of the east and west wings. As a central gathering space this chamber offers four options. A wide ramp takes one to a large lecture/projection hall to the east (right). An open stair leads up to a small chamber/lecture room to the West (left) of the central space. There is a back stair, accessed through a doorway centrally located in the space,

FIG 7. *Unfolded Longitudinal Section
– Friendship Monument (Building "A"),
08.05.1975*



connecting the lower levels with the rooftop viewing deck and a balcony overlooking the large projection hall and a projection booth. Finally the fourth option out of the central chamber is the ramp that leads back down to the main entrance. The longitudinal section shows in hidden line, the shifting flights as they go down to the podium level, and the cross section shown above, locates the back stairwell in the short direction. The cross-section also outlines a gable ceiling in the central gathering space, with strategic reveals between the planes to allow for a hidden light source. The elevations depict built-in wall light fixtures, fixed into a series of recesses, again with a hidden light source. The finishes annotate sealed concrete walls with marble floor tiles in all public spaces.

FIG 8. Cross Section Through the Centre Axis – Friendship Monument (Building “A”), Date Unknown

There are no stone left on the floors anywhere now, except for a few leftover broken pieces. Some of those white marble tiles were left on the observation deck of the monument.

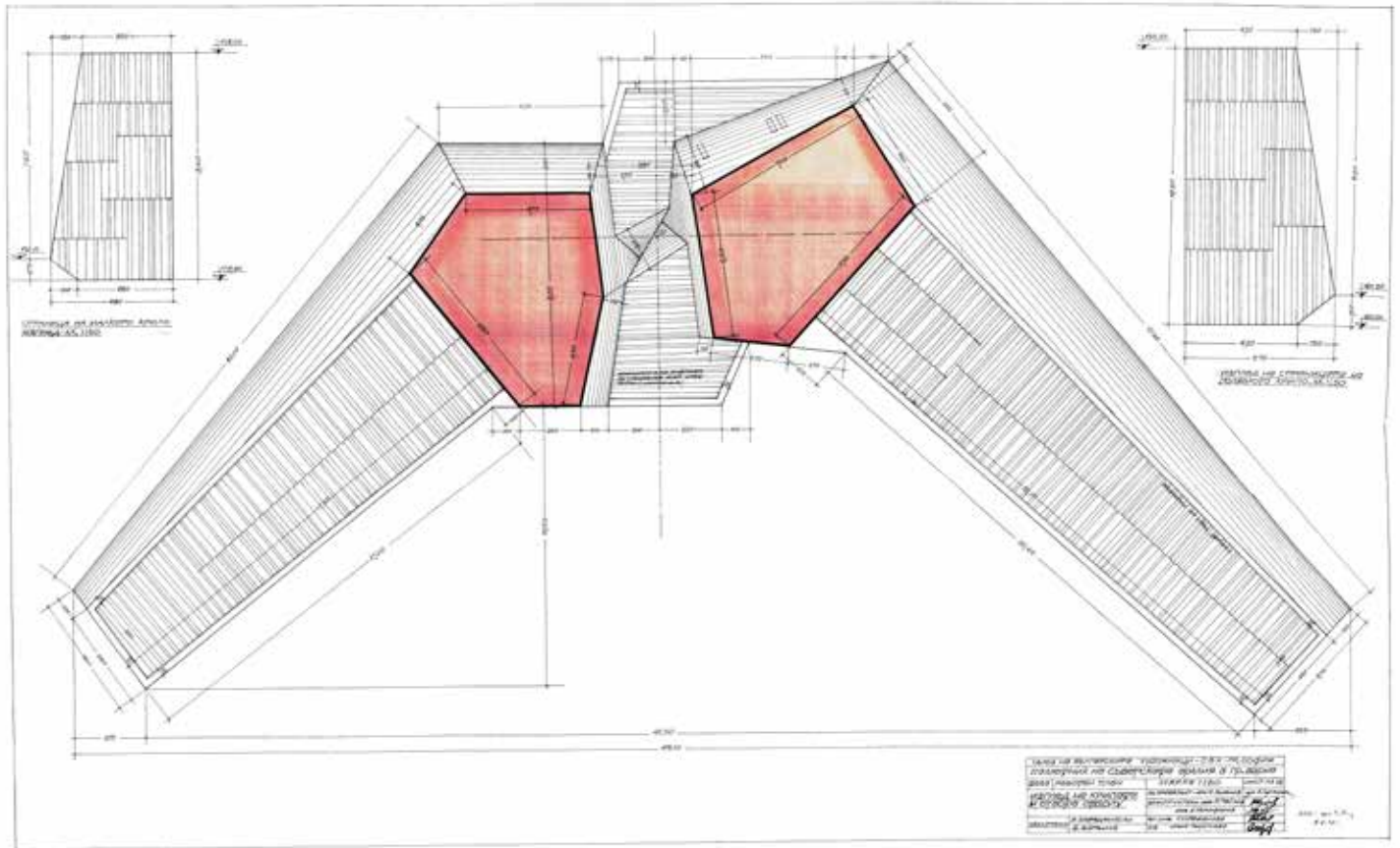


FIG 9. Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument at Foundation, 08.05.1975

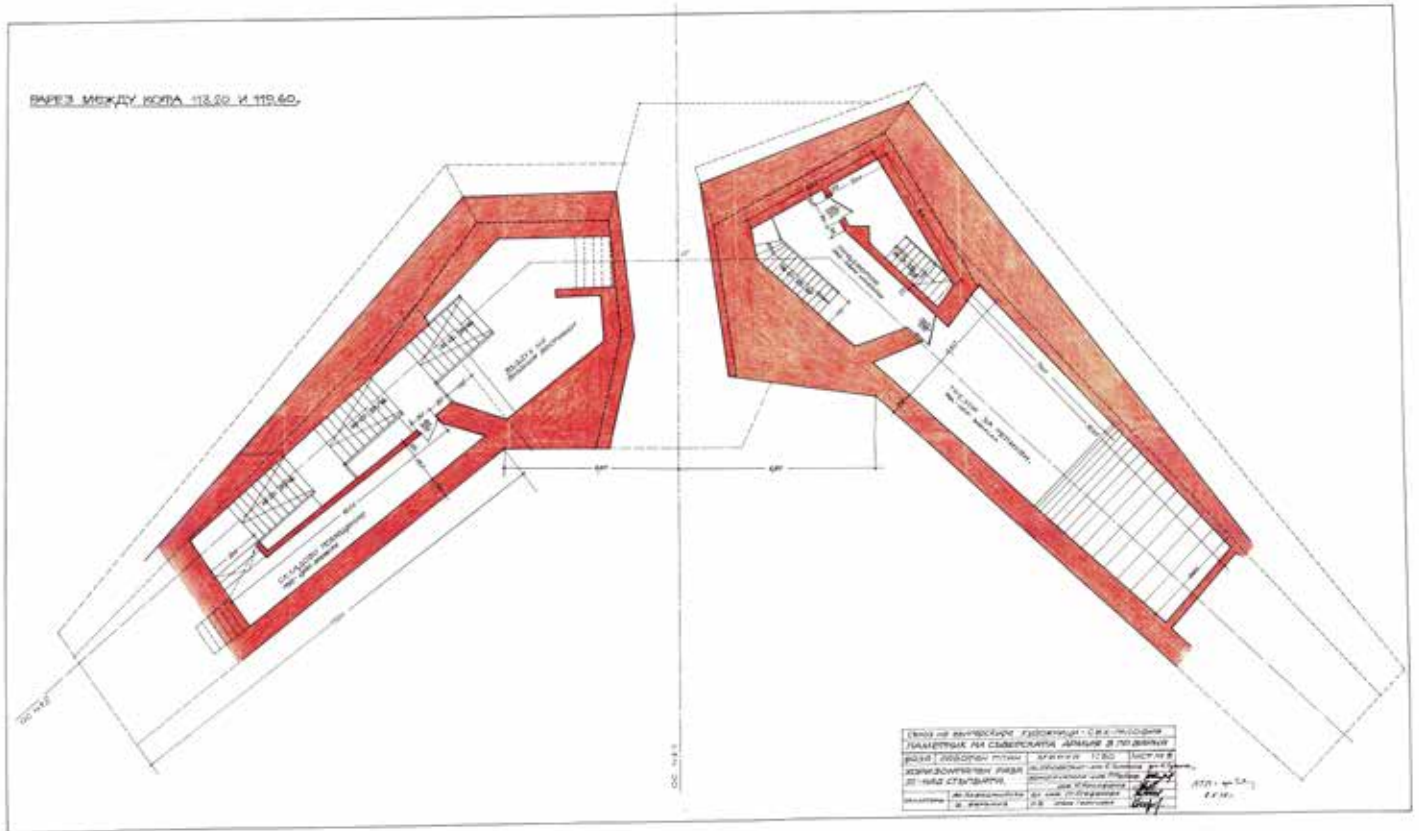


FIG 10. Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument Level 01, 08.05.1975

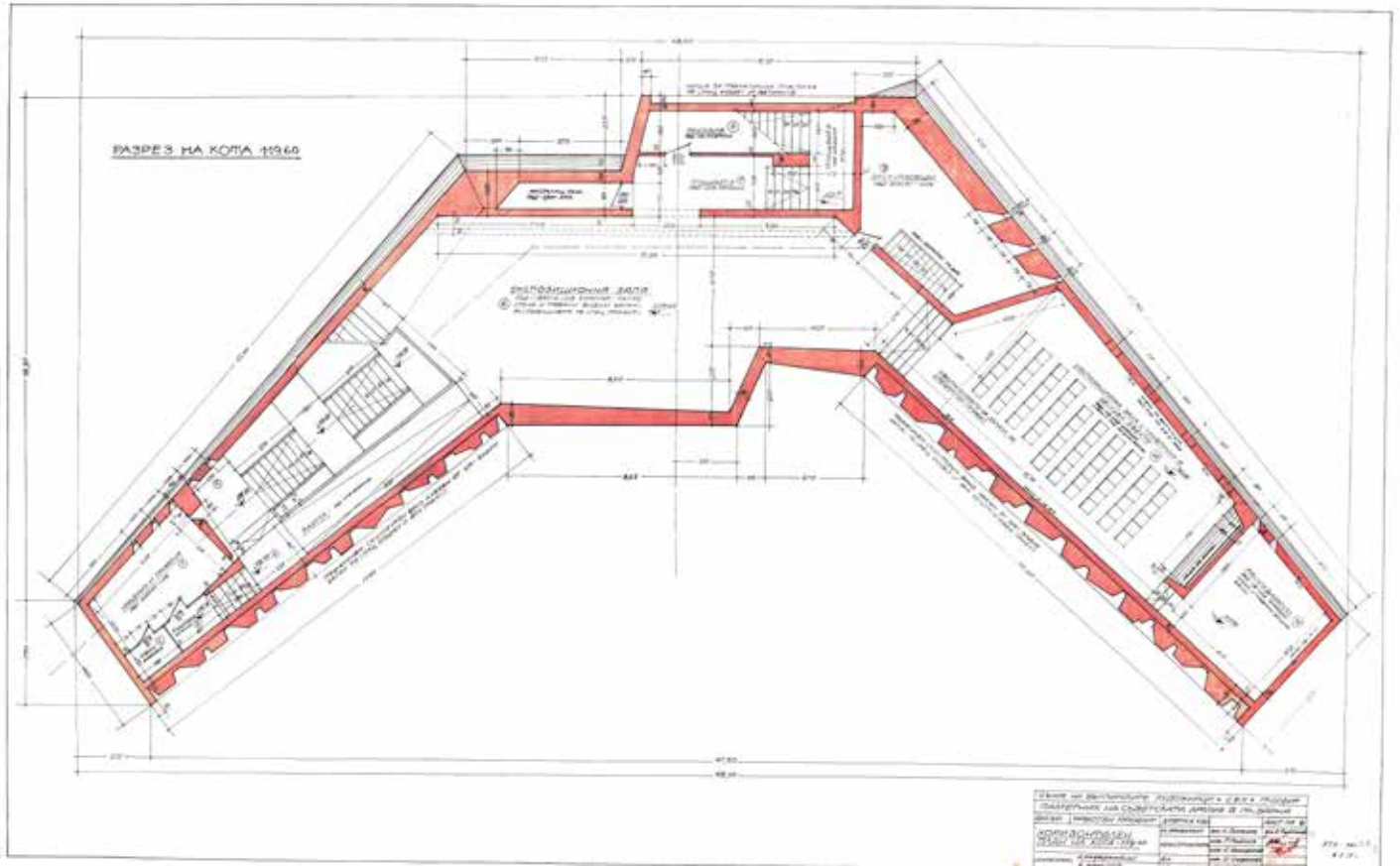


FIG 11. Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument - Level 02

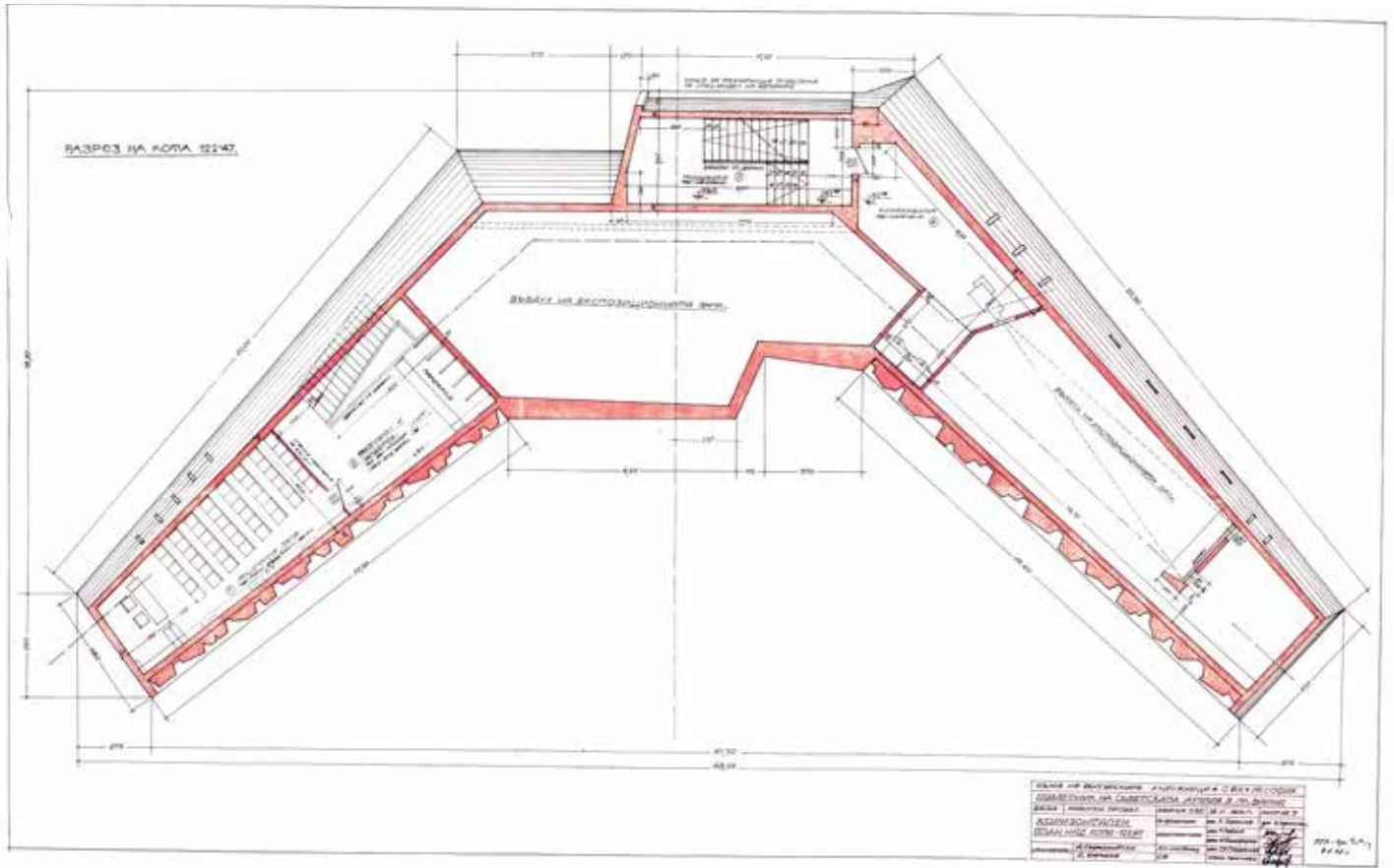


FIG 12. Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument Level 03

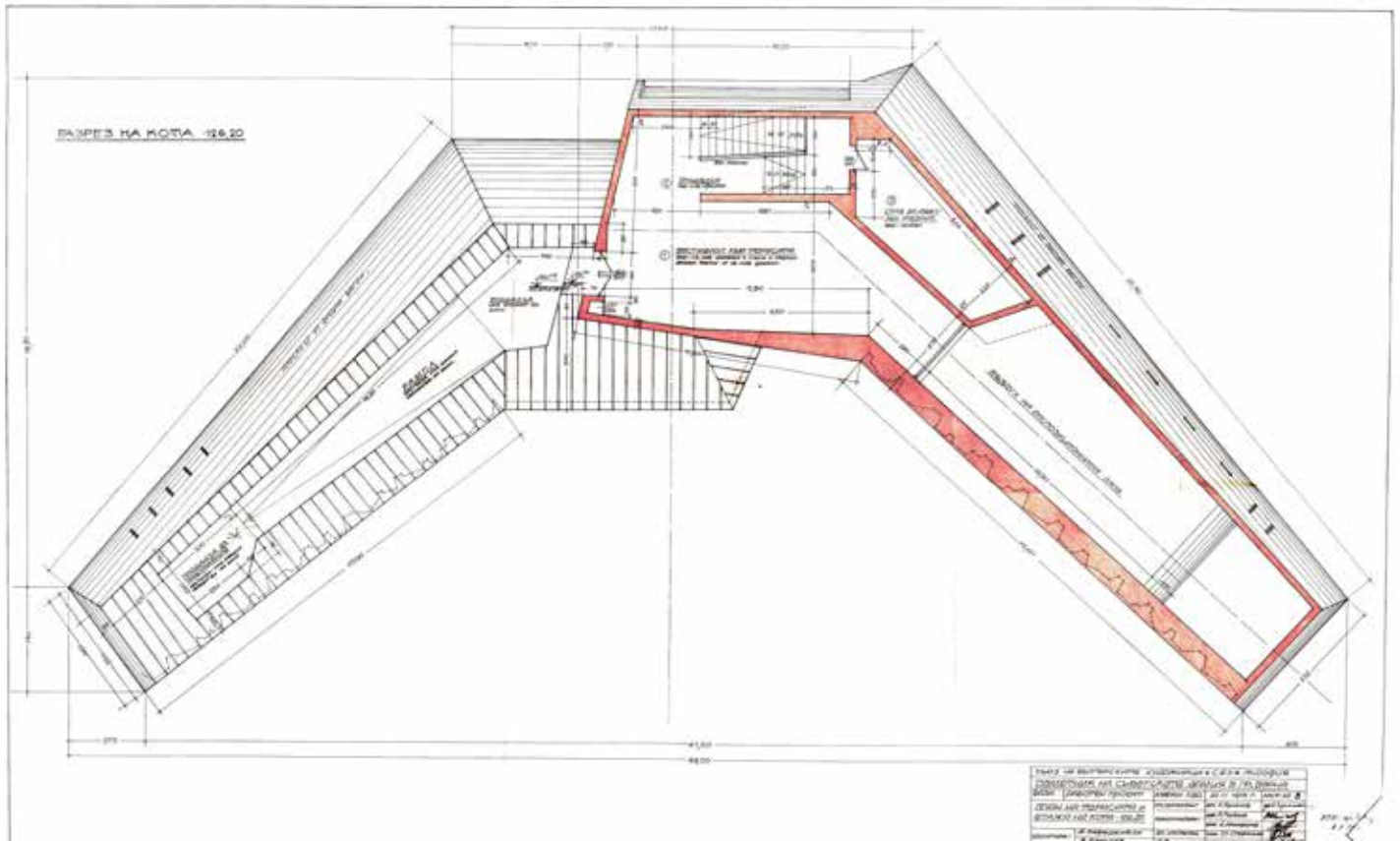


FIG 13. Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument Level 04 at 126.2m elevation, 08.05.1975

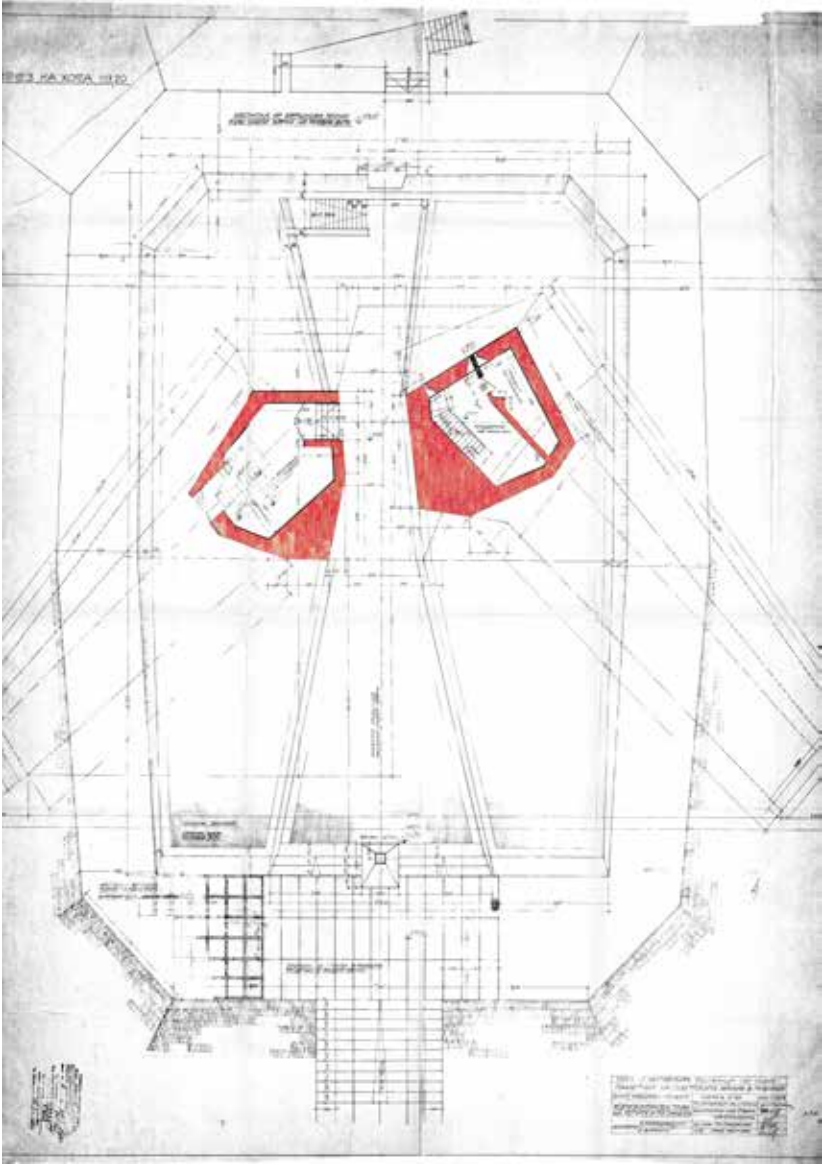


FIG 15. Ground Plan (Building "A") - Friendship Monument - Level 00, 08.05.1975

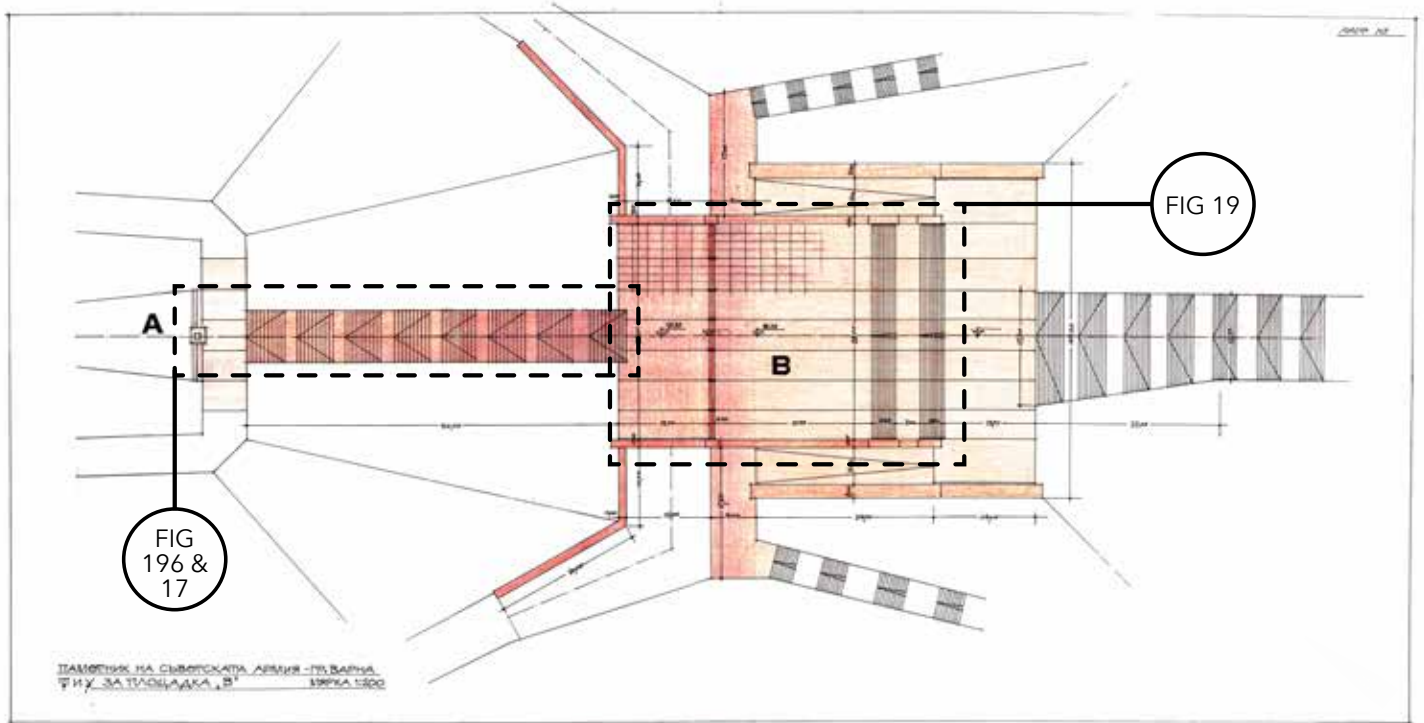


FIG 17. Plan (Building "B") – Main Landing of Staircase of Victors Plan, Date Unknown

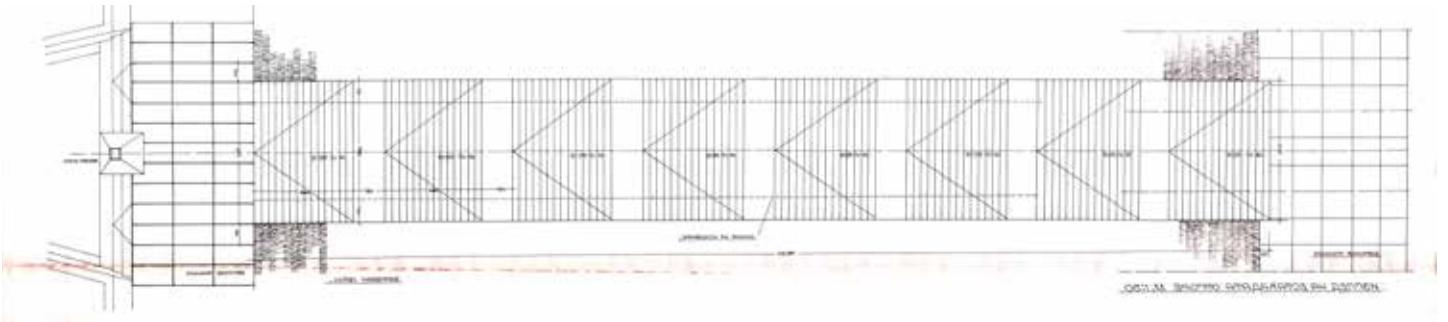


FIG 18. Staircase of Victors Partial Plan –
Pediment to the left, Main Landing to the
Right, 05.09.1975

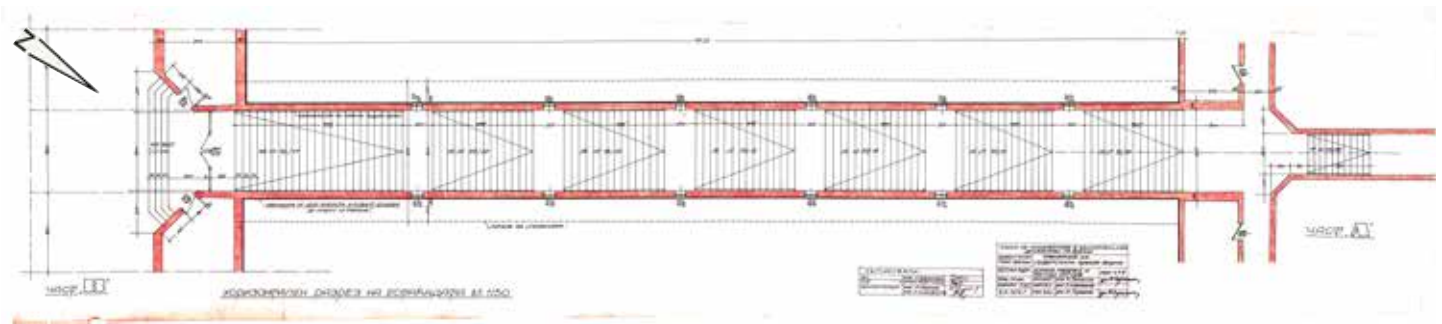


FIG 20. Plan Underground Staircase
 - parallel to exterior staircase above,
 05.09.1975

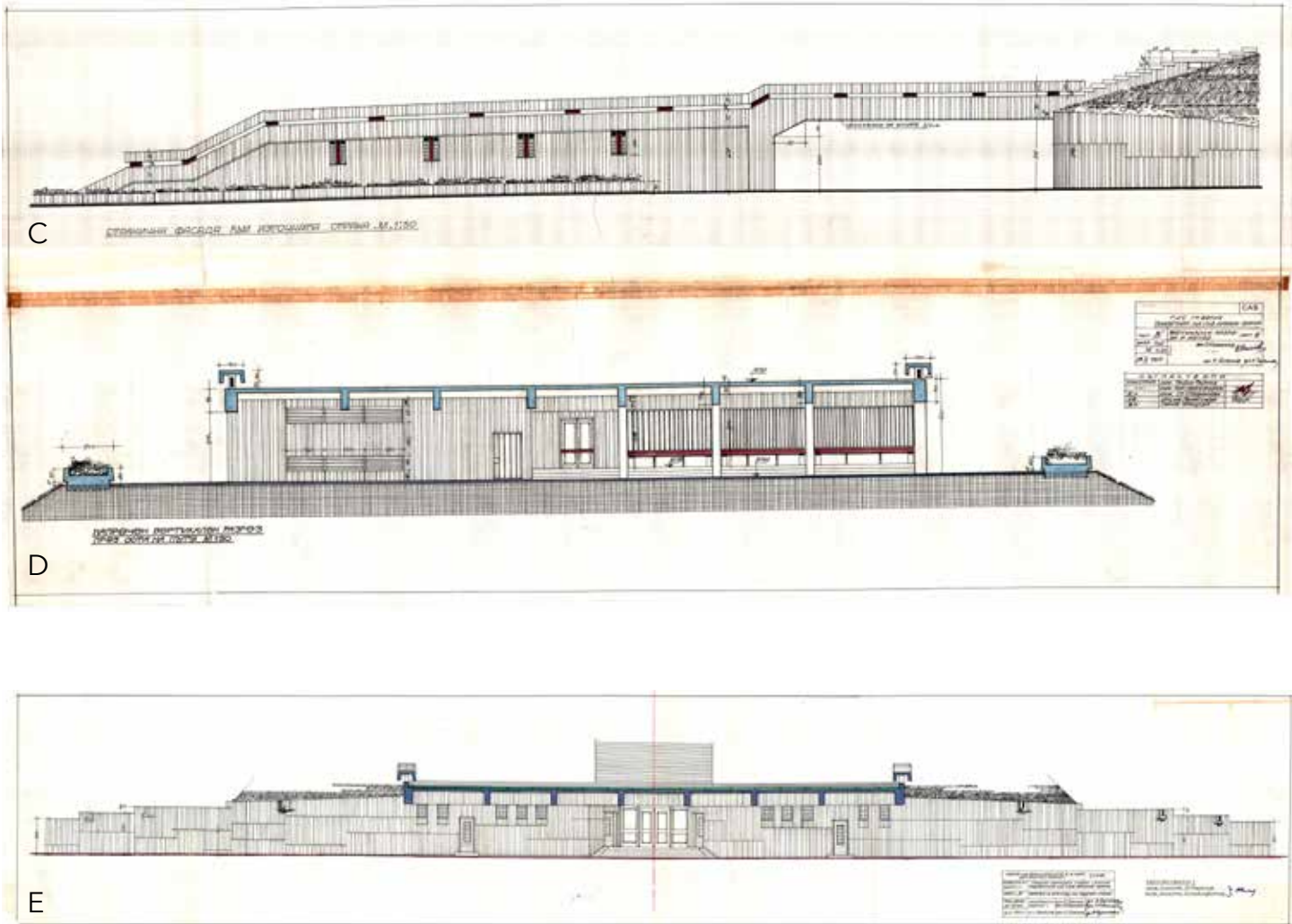
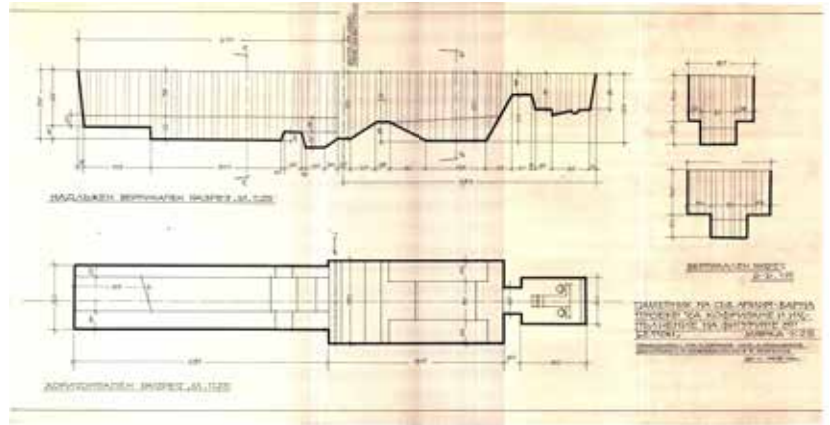


FIG 21. East Facade Elevation (Building "B"), (Top); Cross Section/Elevation (Building "B") looking North, 18. 03.1975, (Middle)
FIG 22. Cross Section/Elevation - Retaining Walls and Floor Structure (Building "B"), looking North, 05. 03.1977, (Bottom)

building "B"

The space shown in the elevations and sections on the left were designed with a museum display space, gift shop and public washrooms (for plan refer to FIG 19). It has access to the underground stairwell that leads up to the pediment of the monument. A secondary set of stairs leads up to the monument's central space through the podium below. The walls in the elevations are shown in board formed concrete and the floors were marble in all main spaces according to the plans.

The walk through space shown in the top elevation is now enclosed with metal industrial doors and is inaccessible. To its left, I peeked through the broken windows, behind metal bars to see a space that is now used as storage for what looks like old furniture.



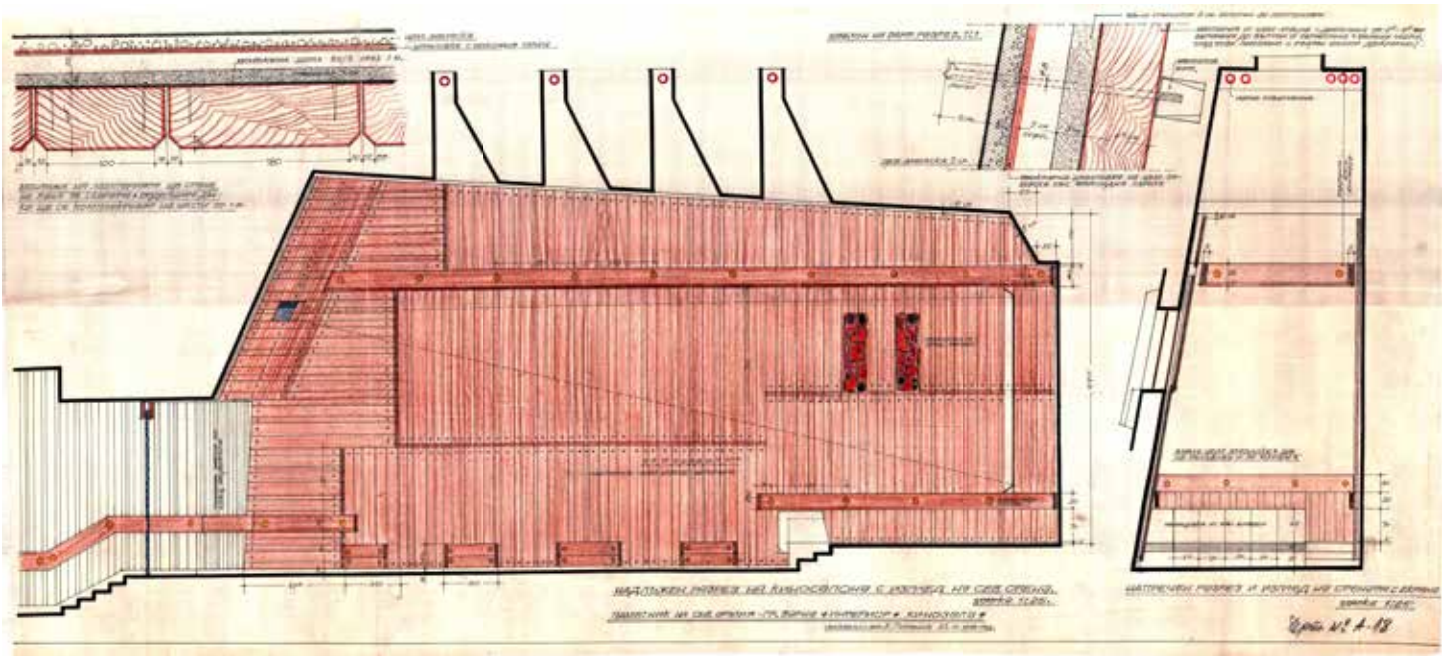
concrete figures

The large-scale figures on the front of the monument were commissioned to a team of two – sculptors Alyosha Kafedzhiiski and Eugene Barumov. They were part of the project team along with architect Kamen Goranov when they won the competition for a monument dedicated to the Soviet Army as the Liberator. Architect Ognian Kamenov shared with me in one of our meetings, that the two sculptors had autonomy over the artistic qualities and the expression of the sculptures, with the approval of the authorities requesting the design.

The drawings on the left show the location of the three female figures in plan and elevation designed to animate the West wing and the drawing above specifies the guiding dimensions for the concrete figures.

FIG 23. Horizontal Section & Elevation of Three Female Figures (left)

FIG 24. Overall Dimensions of Concrete Figures



the main chamber

The architectural drawing on the left shows the intended main chamber design. It was equipped with projection screen, a projection booth, two custom windows with red stained glass, wood wall railing detail, and four extremely deep and wide tapered skylights. This last feature would have been the most impressive one.

Upon seeing it in person, I interpreted it as a spiritual temple of sort – a space for the occult.

FIG 27. Longitudinal Section/Elevation of the Cinema Salon and its North Wall, (Main Chamber); Arch. K. Goranov, 27.04.1978

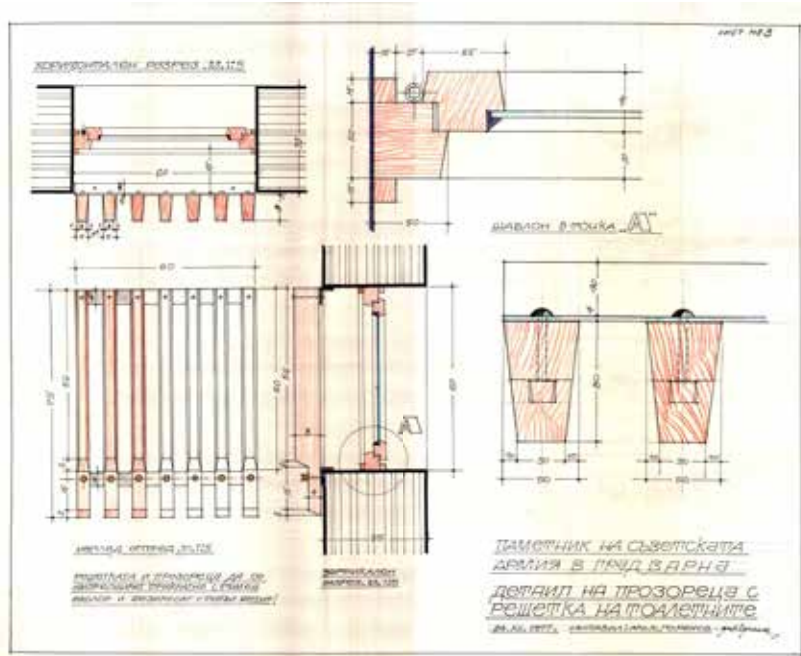
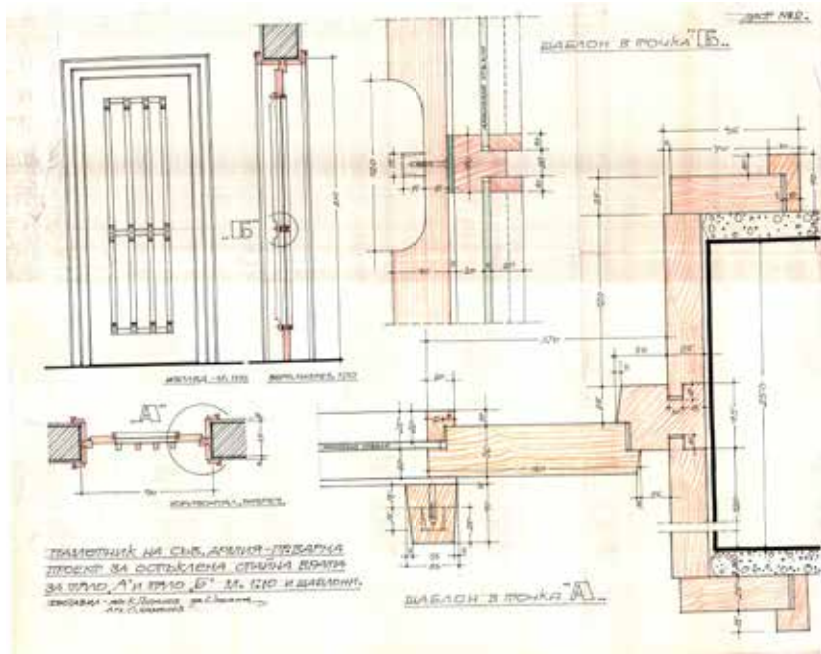


FIG 32. Typical Glazed Door Details, by Arch. K. Goranov and Arch. O. Kamenov, date unknown
FIG 33. Detail – Window with Grille, Washrooms by Arch. K. Goranov, 24.12.1977

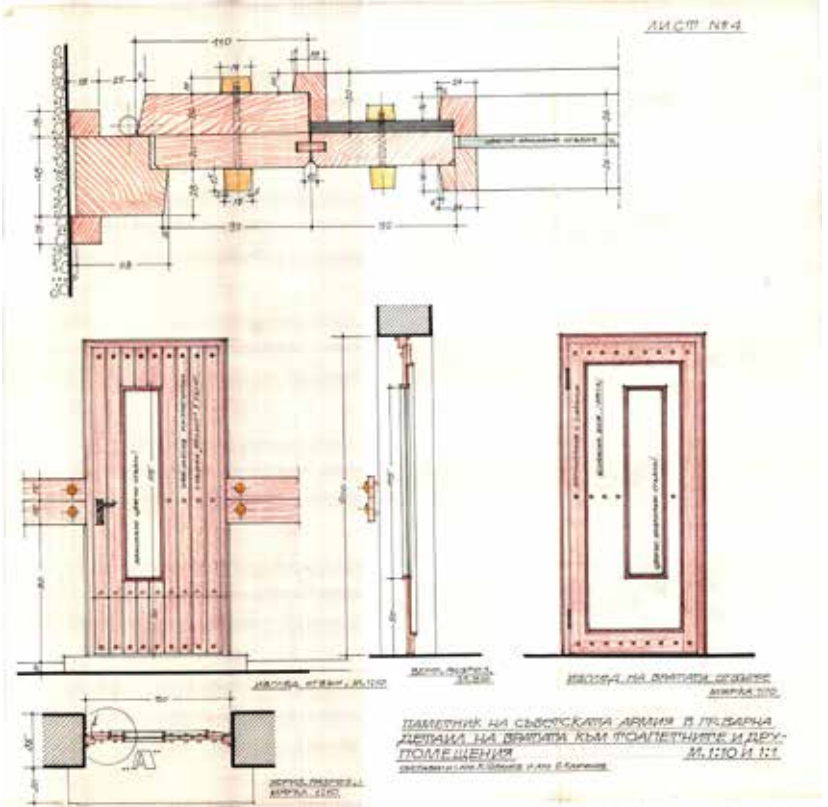
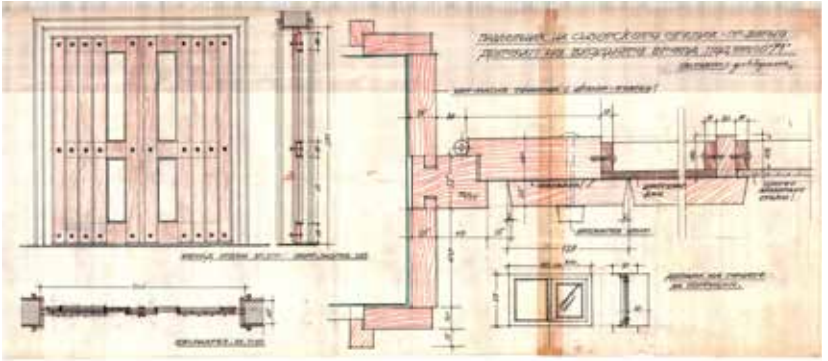
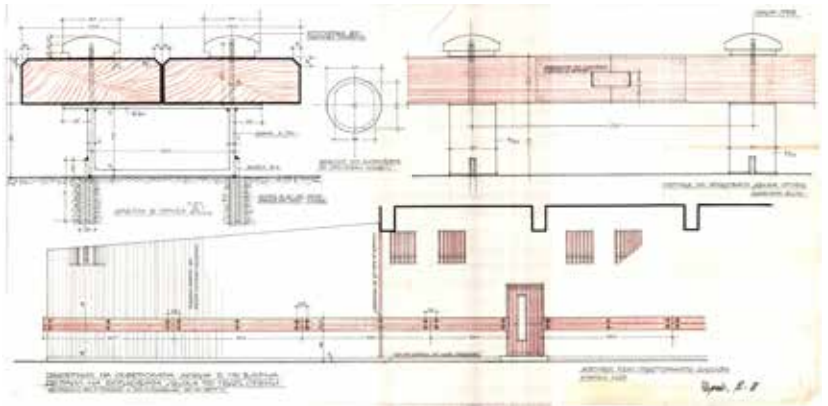


FIG 34. Retaining Wall elevation and Details of Railing Board, by Arch. K. Goranov and Arch. O. Kamenov, 25.12.1977
FIG 35. Detail of Main Entry Door under Body A, and Detail of Window for the Receptionist, by Arch. K. Goranov, date unknown
FIG 36. Details of Door to Washrooms and other Spaces, by Arch. K. Goranov and Arch. O. Kamenov, date unknown

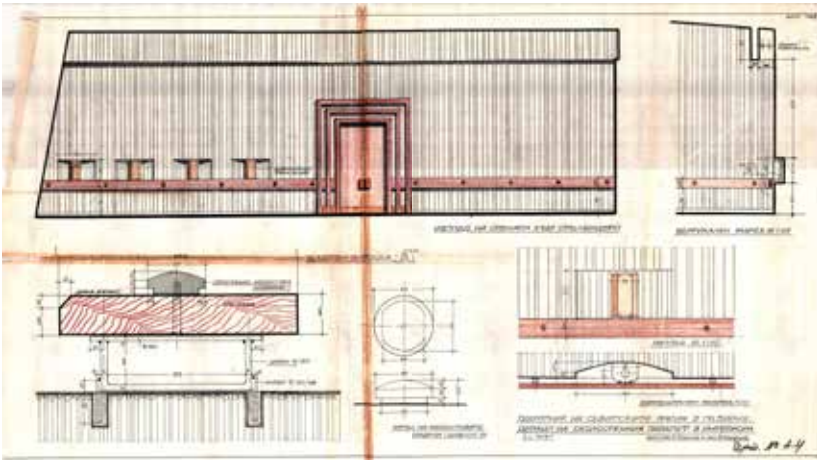
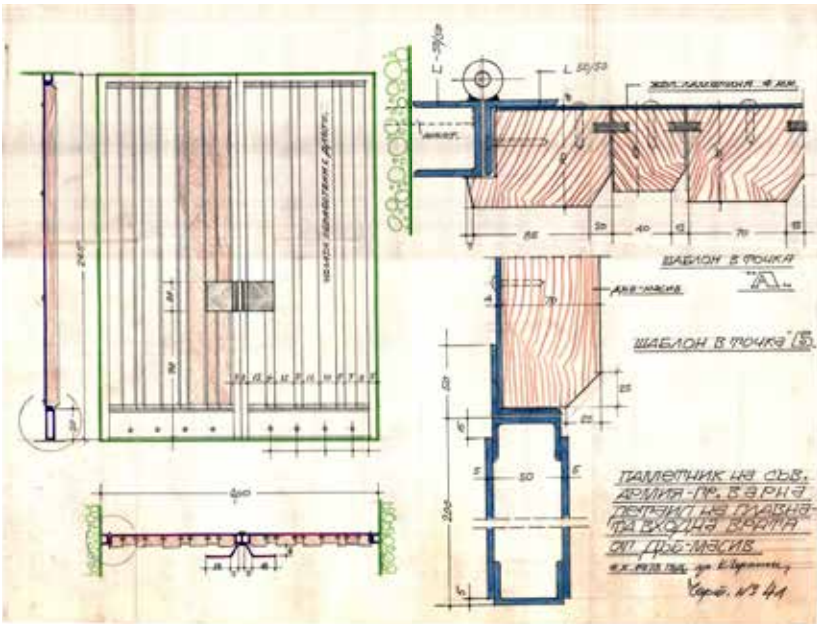


FIG 37. Detail of Main Entry Door from Solid Oak, by Arch. K. Goranov, 04.10.1978
FIG 38. Detail of the Interior Wall Railings, by Arch. K. Goranov and Arch. O. Kamenov, 03..03.1978

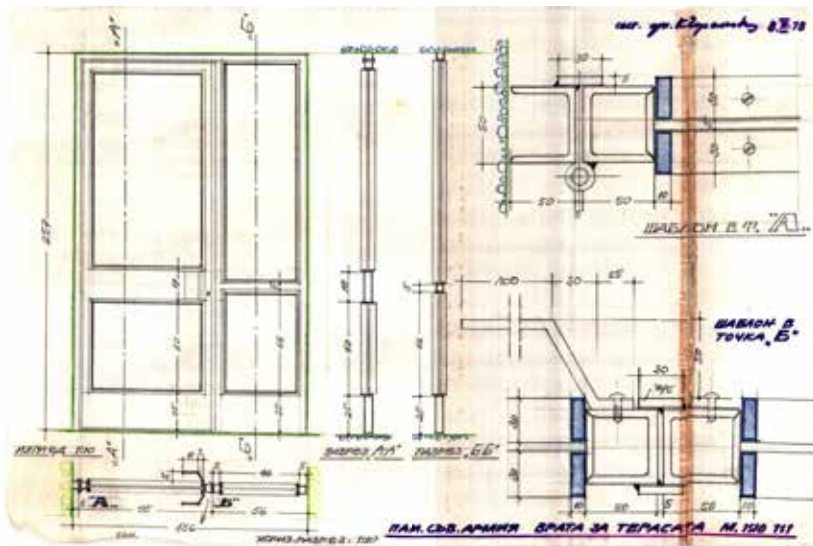
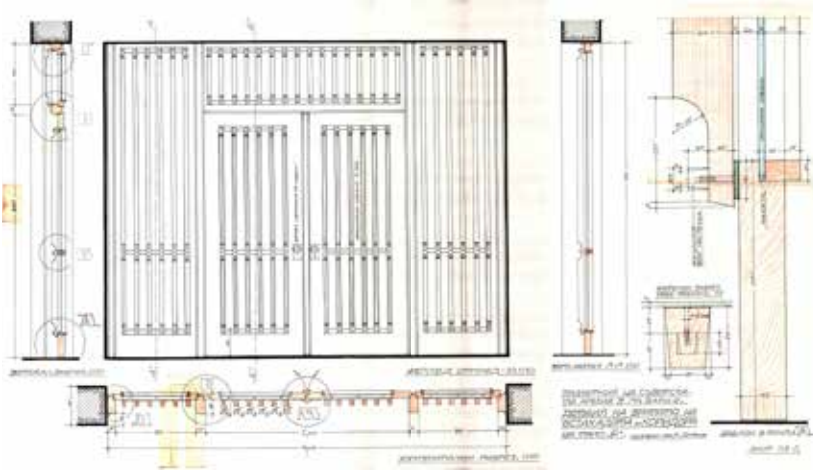


FIG 42. Details of Door to Overpass and Corridor of Building "B", by Arch. K. Goranov, date unknown
FIG 41. Details of Door to Terrace, by Arch. K. Goranov, 08.10.1978

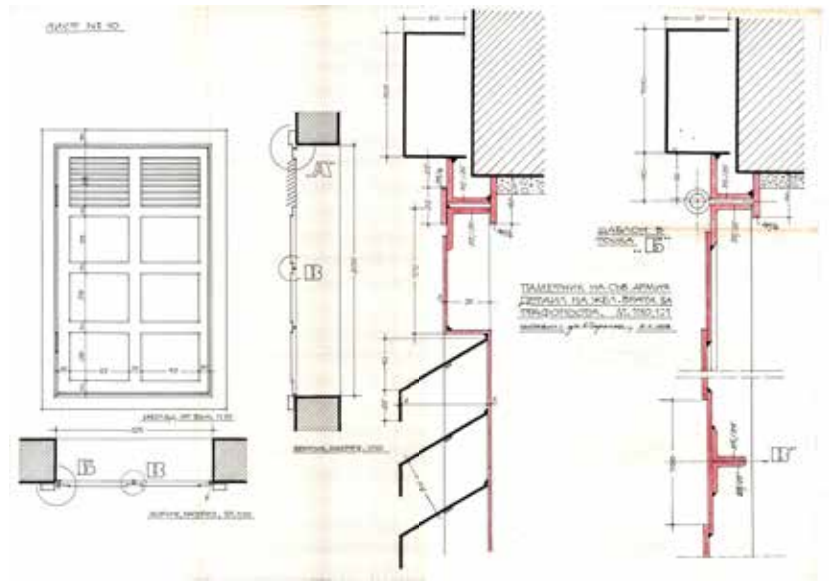


FIG 43. Details of Metal Door to Electrical Substation, by K. Goranov, 05.02.1978

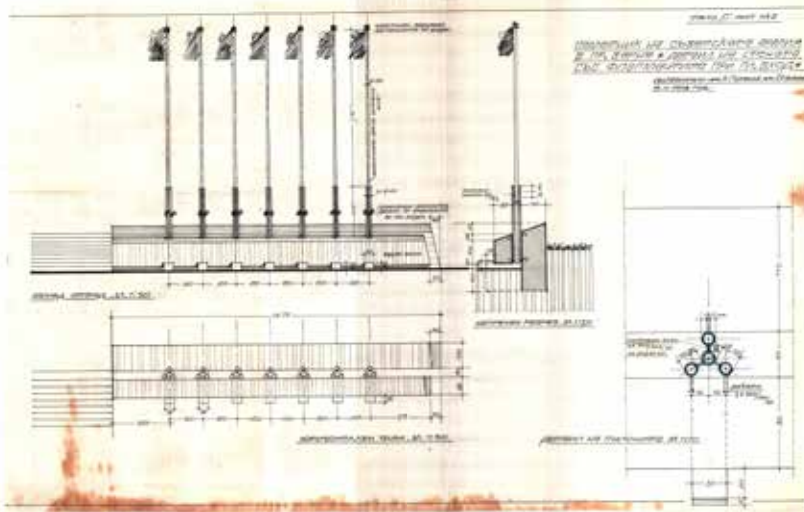
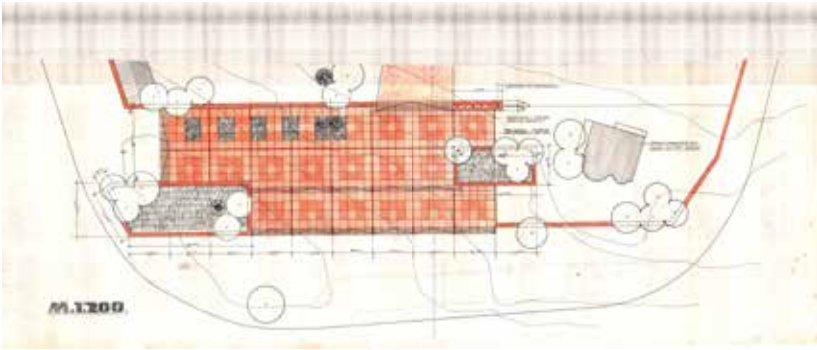


FIG 44. Plan of First Landing at Park Entry with Location of Representative Home for GNS Varna, date unknown

FIG 45. Detail of the Wall with the Flag Poles, by Arch K. Goranov and Arch. O. Kamenov, 15.04.1978

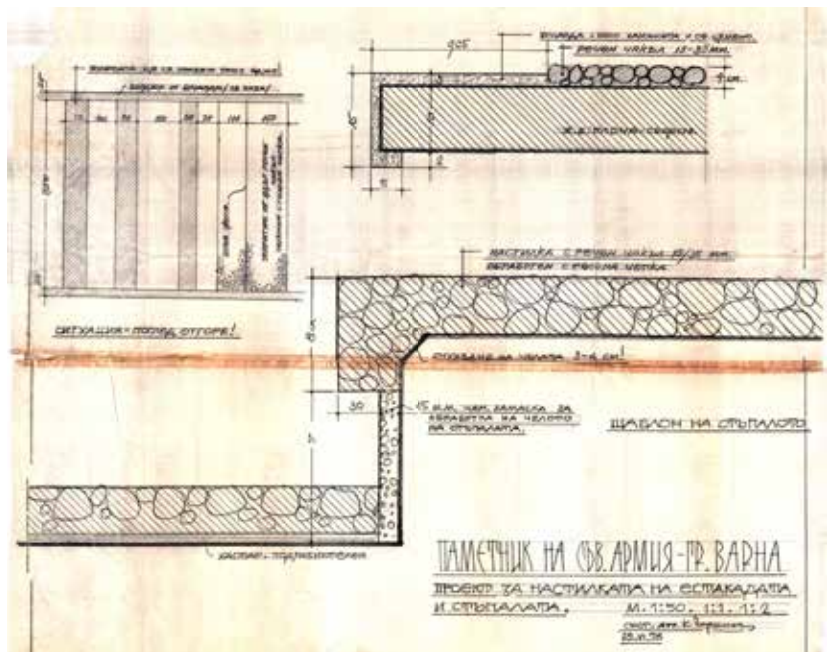
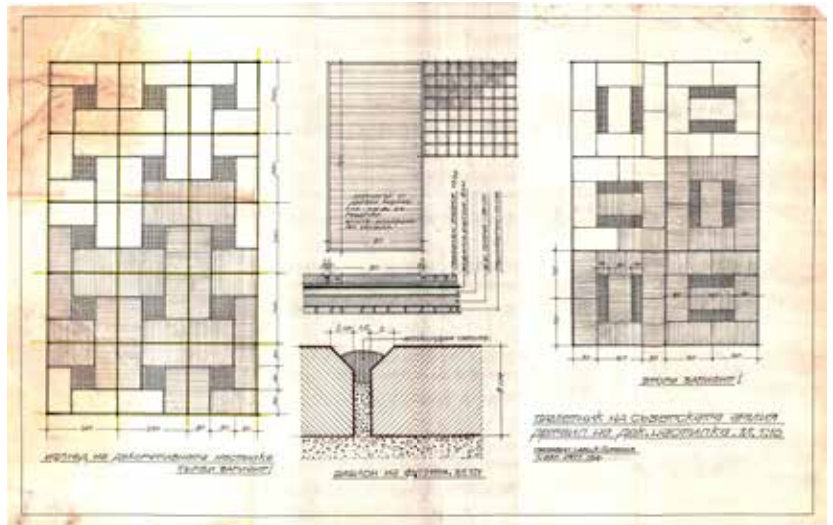


FIG 46. Detail of Decorative Pavement and Grout Profile, By Arch. K. Goranov, 01.10.1977

FIG 47. Pavement for the Overpass and the Stairs, By Arch. K. Goranov , 25.06.1978

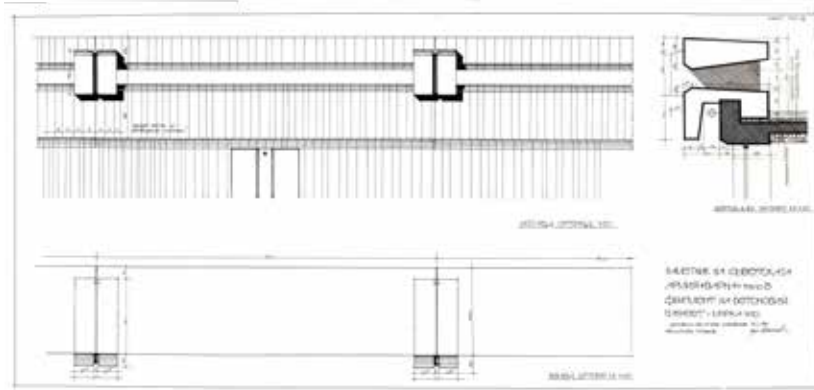
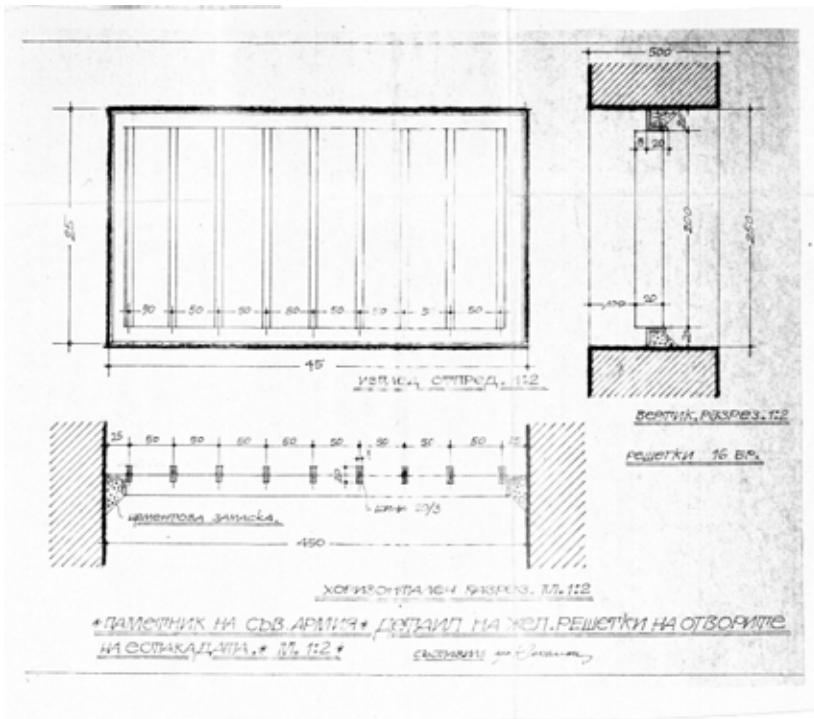


FIG 48. Details – Grille of Openings at the Overpass, by Arch. K. Goranov, date unknown
FIG 49. Building "B" Fragment of the Concrete Railing/Ledge ,by Arch. Ognyan Kamenov and Arch. Kamen Goranov, 11.11.1978

*archive
photography*

In my work, de-territorialization occurs, when I enter the monument and its tunnels. By entering its grounds, I disrupt territories, both mine and the monument's, they interact and as a result they influence one another. In this process they begin to de-territorialize. By photographing, by remembering it in this particular time, I de-territorialize it. I capture its refrain – the graffiti, the random objects, the possibility to enter, the light, the mold, the rubble – its intensive properties. These elements are not a constant; entrances become blocked off, then are tampered with repeatedly, over the last thirty years. The spray paint fades, new signatures appear, new dates with new names are scratched into the blackened paint. The signs of different concepts appear such as the pentagon or sign for anarchy.

The following phase in my project is re-territorializing the Friendship Monument through my work. I enter it, learn from its refrain, from the interactions, and I make artifacts, to create a new kind of monument – my models, casts and my changing self.



the outside



FIG 51. Celebration of Turna Tepe with National leader of the People's Republic of Bulgaria – Todor Zhivkov and other political figures, photographer unknown, date unknown, Source: Varna Free University.





FIG 52. Staircase of Victors – Main Landing
(Labeled on Drawings as Overpass)





FIG 53. *Park main entry – landing at beginning of staircase of victors*





FIG 54. *Staircase of Victors – approach to “Brother” trees midway up*





FIG 55. *Staircase of Victors – view up at landing with the “Brother” trees*





FIG 56. View from west ring alley looking up to Friendship Monument, May 25, 2019 (top left)

FIG 57. Building "B" entrance (overpass), June 25, 2019 (bottom left)

FIG 58. View below main landing looking up to Friendship Monument, May 25, 2019 (middle)

FIG 59. Base of eternal fire Bronze cube in front of pediment stairs looking North, June 25, 2019 (right)





FIG 60. *Female figure 1, detail – June 05, 2019*



FIG 61. *Female figure 2, detail – June 05, 2019*

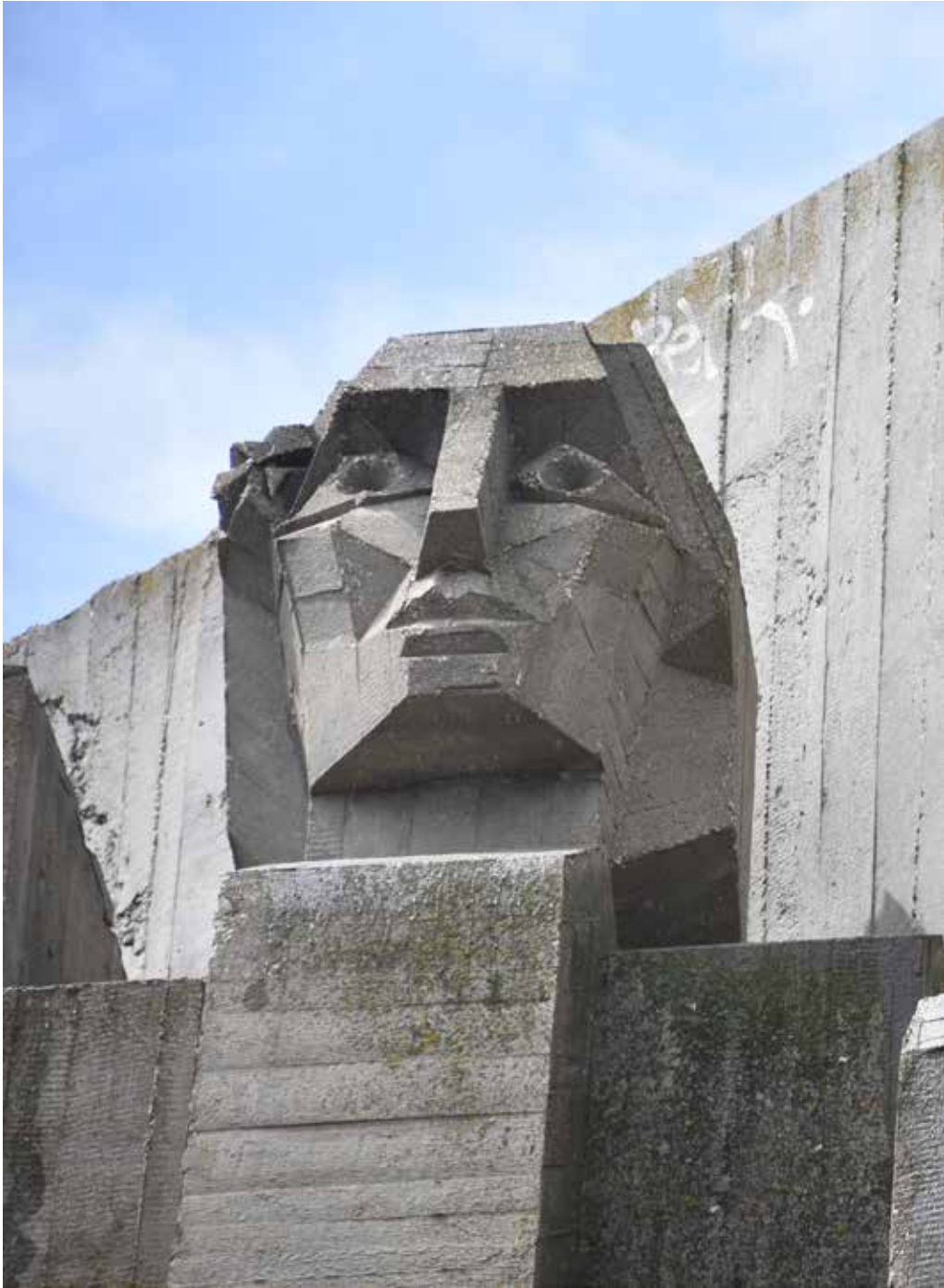


FIG 62. *Female figure three, detail – June 05, 2019*



FIG 63. *Female figure three – empty hands,*
detail - June 05, 2019



FIG 64. *Bulgarian women with gifts - June 05, 2019*

intensive forces

The building has two wings, an east and a west wing. The east wing, with the three female figures on its front, is closest to the city of Varna; the west wing has the four Soviet soldiers with their backs to the north (the direction from which they come – as Russia is North of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

Some historians say that the mythical story on the face of the Friendship Monument represents the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottomans, others say it celebrates the arrival of the Soviet troops in 1944 freeing Bulgaria from Nazism. Rough estimates state that during the Socialist regime in Bulgaria some 30,000 people were killed. Some were convicted and executed in a matter of days; many were executed first and later convicted in being Nazis and Fascist.¹ For that reason many in the older generation I have spoken to, believe that this terrifying violence committed for the fulfillment of a socialist ideology was justified.

The Friendship Monument can be interpreted differently and subjectively. I see symbols and look for their possible meanings. There is an imposed reality over the monument – they are meant to depict the readiness of Bulgaria to receive the Red Army as a Saviour, but is this the reality?

¹ Polia Meshkova, and Diniu Sharlanov, *Bylgarskata Gilotina: Tainite Mehanizmi na Narodniq Syd*, (Sofia: Agenciq Demokratsia, 1994), referenced in: Mediapool, February 01, 2016, <https://www.mediapool.bg/denyat-na-narodniya-sad-v-koito-be-izbit-darzhavniyat-politicheski-i-voenen-elit-news244983.html>.



While the Friendship Monument is territorialized by its elements, I disrupt the territory. Upon entering, I felt signs, almost imperceptible, which I can now interpret. As I walked along its central axis which points into a direction that underlines the importance of the monument, my view is obstructed. The trees around it have grown to such an extent that they interfere with the view. At the top, I notice that the concrete carries stains of intervention. Paint, then plaster sprayed in attempt to cover up the paint. Paint again over the helmet of one of the Soviet soldier figures. Layers of materials to keep explorers out of the interior space – a brick wall, half demolished, pieces of metal sheets and fence sections welded together, cuts and bent sections – signs of the refrain, the percepts and affects left by the intervening forces. I became a part of it - interacted with it – I used the little opening to enter. I infiltrated it with my own story and I de-territorialized it.

FIG 65. Podium entrance blocked - Behind monument at podium level

FIG 66. Podium entrance with a cut away opening



FIG 67. *Blocked main entrance to monument on the interior (left)*

FIG 68. *Blocked main entrance to monument on the exterior*



Three women dressed in traditional gowns greet four soldiers, each woman with a gift – one with a bread, one with a flower, and one is with hobble hands in front her body as if handcuffed. All of them with expressionless faces. The eyes are hollow and mysterious; their hands are static with squared fingers (see FIG 69). Their faces don't smile, there is no emotion. The figures appear to me to be generalized, not as individuals. Together the females are portrayed as pagan through traditional clothing and as a group they appear to be representing Bulgaria. The four soldiers, higher above them, in greater numbers, are arriving from Russia. Their bodies are physically oriented with their backs towards North. Dressed in sharp uniforms with a wind of modernity – as if they bring the future to Bulgaria. This was the message of the Communist party, this was the illusion. The people that protested, the men that went to prison and left their families alone, I don't see them in the story of the this monument.

FIG 69. *Left Wing - three women with gifts - May 15, 2019*



FIG 70. *Right Wing - four soviet soldiers*
May 15, 2019

Looking up at the female figures in the ensemble I am stricken with feelings of confusion and anger that go beyond words. They affect me in a way I cannot describe, yet they are not the affects of the monument, but my own subjective affects. The affects of the monument are the things that make one feel regardless of who one is. The sheer size of a monument of 10,000 tons of concrete and 1,000 tons of armature iron² is designed to impose on the visitor a sensation of reverence and grandeur, and make believable any “truth” that its creators choose to charge it with. The clear message of supremacy and invincibility of the Red Army and the ideology it embodies are conveyed and expressed through the monument’s incredible mass and impressive scale.

Art and architecture working together to immortalize this story. The Bulgarian reality was the Soviet Occupation of Bulgaria. Every detail with its own meaning, putting down roots in the viewer’s subconsciousness. The concrete fades, it stains, the salty maritime air eats away at the edges and rusts the metals, but the monument is always present and visible from many kilometers away. The women will always greet the soldiers coming from the North with offerings. The monument’s fable is independent of its inspiration, it is eternalized. “What is preserved—the thing or the work of

2 Alison Furuto, “Forgotten Monuments From the Communist Era in Bulgaria,” ArchDaily, January 10, 2011, Accessed March 18, 2020, <https://www.archdaily.com/101626/forgotten-monuments-from-the-communist-era-in-bulgaria/>, ISSN 0719-8884.



FIG 71. *Soviet soldiers Detail - June 25, 2019*



art—is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.³

The overall shape of the Friendship Monument reminds of a bird with open wings, which has landed on top of a hill. Its intent was to symbolize the bird of peace. Looking at the monument's front, the inscription above the archway speaks of long lived friendship, but its interlocking concrete wings speak of differences between two nations. The east wing appears to be representing Bulgaria, with the figures of the women on its front. The West wing, larger than the east, with the Soviet soldiers standing higher than the women, representing the Soviet Union. A fertile country but a weak nation, incapable of defending itself, and the great friend from the North brings sternly modern life, technology, order. From their attire to their body location and position in space, friendship is not what comes to mind. Perhaps submission would be more appropriate. Those moments would have forever happened because they are sensations. They are percepts and affects not memories, because they don't belong to anyone. There will be no future in which these moments do not exist. "Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that coexists

3 Giles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 163-164. The authors speak of the ability of art to preserve the percepts and affects of a piece, a sensation, not simply representational, but something that can be felt by one.

FIG 72. *Friendship Monument - front*



with this short duration. So long as the material lasts, the sensation enjoys an eternity in those very moments.”⁴ This concept is very successfully applied, in the design of the monument. For this I believe the Friendship Monument has a value worth keeping, because it is a reminder of the susceptibility of the psyche to give in to the power of the percepts and the affects. To give into a sensation without cognition.

FIG 73. *Friendship Monument, view from below pediment looking towards west wing (left)*

FIG 74. *Friendship Monument, view of east wing from below pediment (right)*

4

Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 166



FIG 75. *Inscription remnants above archway*
– “FRIENDSHIP FOR CENTURIES THROUGHOUT
CENTURIES” (“ДРУЖБА ОТ ВЕКОВЕ ЗА
ВЕКОВЕ”)





FIG 76. Security Camera at back of east wing (top)

FIG 77. Graffiti on east wing back facade (middle)

FIG 78. Graffiti close up





FIG 79. Back entrance to monument descending into podium
FIG 80. View looking South towards the city of Varna standing at the foot of the monument





the inside



FIG 81. Podium Vestibule
FIG 82. Underground Staircase towards
Main Landing
FIG 83. Bottom of underground staircase
leading to Main Landing





FIG 84. Back stairwell, reaching central chamber through back entrance
FIG 85. View from central hall towards main chamber



FIG 86. *Floor below skylights*

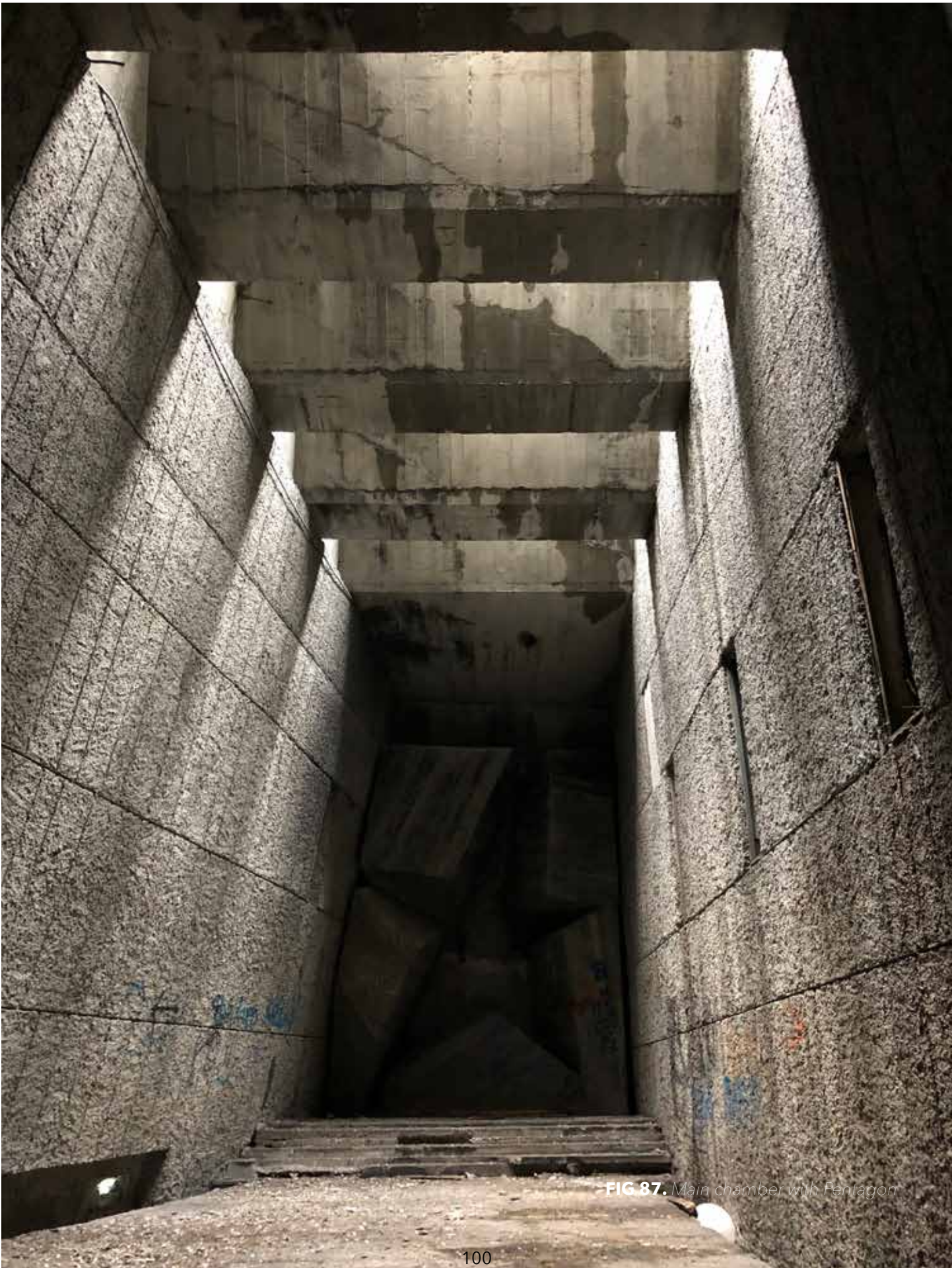


FIG 87. Main chamber with Pentagon



FIG 88. *Main chamber, looking back and up towards terrace above*



FIG 89. Embrasures looking through the back facade close up – Level 4, small chamber at top of West wing
FIG 90. Open stair leading to small chamber above, and a ramp leading to main entrance below
FIG 91. Small space behind inscription wall
FIG 92. Inscription at mid-landing between central chamber and main entrance

ДЕУЖИВАТА СЪ
СЪО СЪВЕТСКИЕ
СЪОЗ
Е ТЪИ ЖИВНЕО
НРОХОДЕНА,
КАКТО СЛЕНЦЕТО
И ВРЕДУХА
ЖИВО СЪНЕСТВО
Е. ДИМИТРОВ



FIG 93. Roof top terrace - view looking North

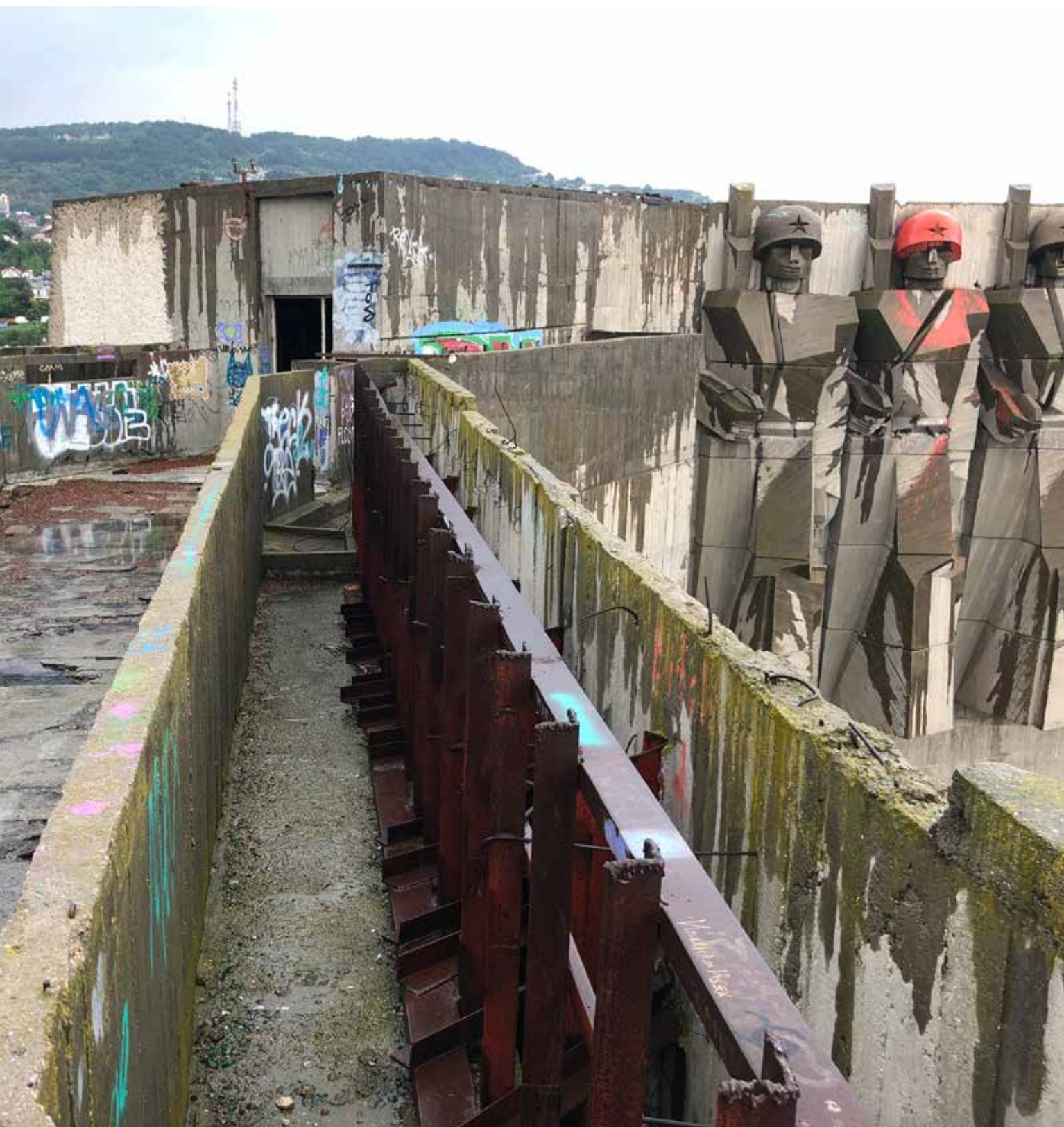




FIG 94. *Roof top terrace - view looking South-East*



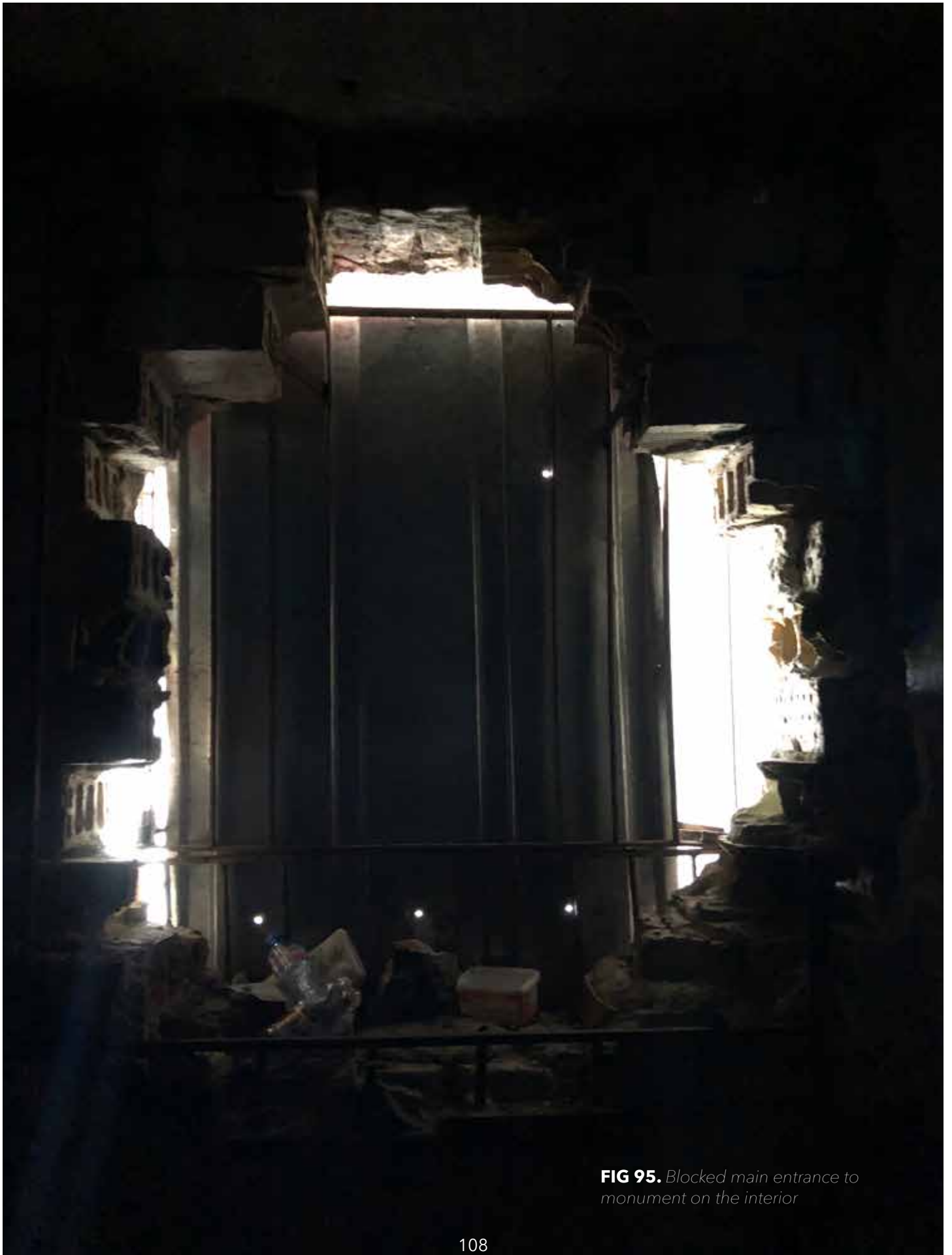


FIG 95. *Blocked main entrance to monument on the interior*



FIG 96. Blocked main entrance to monument on the exterior



tunnels



FIG 97. *Ventilation shaft in park area*
FIG 98. *Ventilation shaft looking down*
FIG 99. *West entrance to tunnels (right)*



Dug into the hill beneath the Friendship Monument, the tunnels are endless arteries, a secret underground network of corridors, narrowing and expanding. The design of this underground network has allowed for spaces with functions that now can only be imagined tracing the remnants and clues left behind. The network of tunnels goes in and out of the hill in multiple locations, through doors or horizontal hatches. The empty space is void of light and flow of oxygen; the air is musky, filled with the smell of rotting animal carcasses and eroding cement. The corridors are marked in a variety of signs like blue or red arrows, pentagons, the anarchy sign, red/white marking tape, an 'X' perhaps marking a specific location, or crossing out the words of others. Some people left their initials on the walls, graffiti signatures, some wrote phrases, offensive words, romantic mementos, phrases in other languages, something that marked their presence in that moment.

My sister Desi, and I ventured into the tunnels together. She was brave, eager to see what was inside, and where it would lead. We squeezed through the small square cut opening in a metal door, an opening to enter the tunnels, reached by one of the west ring alleyways. It was tricky trying to locate it as it was not marked on any of the drawings. I learned about it through other explores sharing their knowledge on the Internet.

A few hundred meters in, Desi's vitality began to falter.



She grew fearful of the disorienting spaces, and of the darkness. Quietly and carefully she followed my every step trusting that I would lead her in and out safely. We reached a door leading to what I guessed was the North side of the hill, but it was blocked. I could see daylight and a cat peeking in through the tiny sliver of opening at the top of the entrance door. We took a few gulps of fresh air and headed back into the tunnels which turned out to be organized in loops leading to the main intersection of corridors and back outside through the door we entered from.

These tunnels are a forbidden territory. This bunker used to have kitchens, bathrooms, toilets, a fully equipped hospital¹, and a hefty ventilation system. The tunnels are territorialized by their intended use and de-territorialized²

1 Since there are no plans available for the tunnels and its spaces, the rumors of a high tech hospital may not be justified, however it is logical that a bunker with living spaces meant for shelter in a time of conflict, is equipped with a hospital.

2 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 316

by its visitors, many of which return. Equipment was removed, broken down, and taken apart, walls were marked with letters, signatures, names, warnings, and signs - *STOP, DO NOT ENTER, LOOK DOWN*. We found two small adjacent rooms, maybe one meter wide by one and a half meters long, each with with a squatting latrine. These old types of toilets still exist today in some places around Bulgaria. Multiple thoughts rushed through my mind as I looked around.

Who were the people that would have used this existence bunker? Did anyone ever use this very toilet? Remnants of spaces designed for human rituals.

As we moved further into the tunnels the letters and signs became scarce. And then nonexistent. Only our presence pushing and pulling the thick air, with each breath. The light of my torch seemed to have been sucked into the endless void and was barely flickering on the side walls. Our voices quiet and trembling in fear from what could be lurking behind the corner and in the darkness beyond the next passage. Fear was overwhelming us, along with curiosity about the unknown, extracting meanings of the tiled walls, potential histories of those squat latrines, and possible findings around the corner.

Each element we encounter, sparks a fragment of a memory. "...any connection also enables a line of flight;"³

³ Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 24.



"...any definition, territory or body can open up to a line of flight that would transform it into something else."⁴We are starting a reaction that could take a 'line of flight'? Once we leave, there will be no traces of our visit. We left no visible signs, no objects behind, no carvings into the walls. Just footsteps in the concrete dust and our thoughts. My sister's sign is her promise to herself to never come back to this place. My sign is my memory, re-territorializing it on these pages.

FIG 100. Cutaway in tunnel entrance door
FIG 101. Beginning of tunnel section

4 Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*. 24





FIG 102. *Tunnels intersection*
FIG 103. *Tunnels intersection*





FIG 104. Tunnel end space with ventilation system remnants

FIG 105. Ventilation system remnants

FIG 106. Electrical switch





FIG 107. Tunnel section with tiled wall finish and drains along the center

FIG 108. Ventilation system with a cutaway

FIG 109. Water closet - Floor metal pan





FIG 110. Vaulted space with unclear program

FIG 111. Corridor with smaller spaces flanking the left side along the way.



*2.0 ARCHIVE OF
ARTEFACTS*
the family refrain

A refrain marks a territory through the interaction of forces. The refrain is a territorial assemblage that is found in the center of chaotic forces¹. According to Deleuze and Guattari the refrain is cyclical but not repetitive as every cycle is unique. "Forces of chaos, terrestrial forces, cosmic forces: all of these confront each other and converge in the territorial refrain."²

My maternal grandmother used to tell me stories about her own father and mother. Back in their day it was still common for young people to marry within the extended family. Her parents were first cousins. I always thought "no wonder everyone seems so crazy in this family, they were relatives! That is what must have made them so unsettled." I was thinking this because ever since I was a child I remember my grandmother and her siblings quarreling a lot. They could never come to an agreement about property. Inheritance was always a starting point for their disagreements. This seemed insane to me. It also made me question whether I myself would one day become insane based on this family's history of intermarriage. My grandmother spoke of her father and mother with great respect but also with great sadness. She never missed a chance to remind me how smart and progressive my great-grandfather was and what a great businessman he came to be. She would also often tell me that my own mother had inherited his sharp mind and quick wit. My grandmother would openly share her regret

1 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 312

2 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 312

that her father's life had been cut so short by tragedy and misfortune. Totalitarian Communism has never been a fertile environment for those with entrepreneurial talent and vision, and it was especially cruel and unjust towards those who came from wealth.

The process of nationalization in Bulgaria after the Second World War was no different than what took place in all other East European countries who were invaded and occupied by the Soviet Army. These societies, until then largely democratic, were subjected to large scale show trials, followed by the inevitable executions, purges, and imprisonment in labour camps to any and all "enemies of the people", whether real or perceived. These "enemies" of communism mostly comprised of the intellectual elite, politicians, journalists, academics, poets, artists, as well as the business elite. The show trial methods throughout the Eastern Bloc were generally directed by the Soviets and usually included confessions signed under torture and fabricated evidence submitted by regime informants. The establishment of the new Socialist order also required the nationalization of almost all private property, including all large industry, manufacturing businesses large and small, and the collectivization of all land ownership without exception. Everything was taken away - property, businesses, personal savings, and finances leaked as fines. My great-grandfather was arrested on the grounds of alleged actions against the communist party and for supporting the opposition. As a result of the ensuing trial, my great-grandfather was inevitably imprisoned, and

ultimately died a year after his release. My grandmother always insisted that his health never recovered from the prison torture and was clearly the cause of his early death. Life for his family became very difficult. His wife became deranged and was sent to a mental institution where she spent the rest of her life.

Torture, in that period of the Soviet regime, was secretly executed. It was deliberately cruel and punitive. Often it was inflicted in a way as to conceal the visible signs of abuse. This was confirmed during my meetings with Hristyan Oblakov, a local historian in Varna. He explained how the interrogators would often tie their subjects' feet and lift them off the ground, leaving them hanging for hours or days at a time, then dropping them suddenly. Many would die instantly from the internal bleeding. Some would survive a short while only to endure the suffering. Oblakov told me that the most he was willing to share with me on the subject of torture was the most bearable. The other torture methods that he had learned about during his research he would not disclose or discuss. The level of cruelty that he uncovered had threatened his own sanity he told me, and so he hoped he would never have to revisit them again.

I do not know how my great-grandfather was tortured. His police file, which became publicly accessible after the fall of Communism, does not show any records of his imprisonment, just fines, denunciations, bills, records of loans, dues, and records of property. The denunciation

letter speaks volumes (FIG 117) about the regime and those times in Bulgaria.

My grandmother had eight brothers and sisters, a total of nine children. At the time of the expropriation of their property, she was attending the Maria Louisa State High School in Varna, which closed down in 1954.³ She was the oldest one and was only seventeen when she was forced out of school with no diploma and no prospect of secondary education. A few years later one of her brothers committed suicide by jumping from the balcony of a building after numerous unsuccessful attempts to escape to the free world.

The rippling effects of Socialist rule in Bulgaria were relentless and brutal. The circle of tragedy and misfortune continued for my family, as it has for millions of families that lived under Soviet dictatorship. This refrain of suffering in my family during and after the Communist regime is marked by tragedy. This tragedy became my personal story growing up and affected me as well, even though I only have faint childhood memories of the Communist era. Sadness, anger, denial, confusion, were locked deep inside me and needed addressing as I matured. Eventually all these suppressed and unaddressed emotions bubbled to the surface and demanded my full

3 Varna Libraries, Department Art, "Devicheska Gimnaziya Maria Luisa – Varna," Libvar, Last modified: May 23, 2014, Visited February 16, 2020, <http://art.blog.libvar.bg/devicheska-gimnaziya-mariya-luiza-varna/>.

attention. They sought an outlet just like an infection that needs to be cut open so it can start healing properly.

The concept of a narrative catharsis has no closure, and neither does my story. "No product results out of the narrative, it is a story to forever return to and forever adhere to. It is not completed; it is a story which forever fails to cure trauma but never fails to try to cure trauma."⁴

⁴ Richard Kearney, "Richard Kearney: Narrative Imagination and Catharsis," Youtube, October 17, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxHjRSyXxcg>

Dossier

20. VIII. 1951 – 19. XII. 1957

Marin Atanasov Radev

Пролетуча Балонца

Досие

на национализирания гараж на
Марци Атанасов Радев, гр. Варна.

20. VIII. 1951 г.

19. XII. 1957 г.

Съдържа 23 листа

1036 1 52

52

FIG 112. Dossier cover, craft paper folder

Разпределение

Фон Мартин Иванов Ръжев

I Актив 2837917

II Пасив

а) Денег	175000
б) Високи	26629
в) Високи	4283348
г) Високи	666345
д) Високи	3579373
Резерван ак. м.л.	2662954
Резерван пасив	3616373
Разлика банк.	953419
Резерв на ак.	
Ак. м.л.	

БЪЛГАРСКА НАРОДНА БАНКА
СТАЛИНСКИ КЛУБ

Гр. Сталин, 17 декември 1946 г.

ДО
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ФИНАНСИТЕ-
"Народни Спаркс"-
С О С И Я.

БЪЛГАРСКА НАРОДНА БАНКА
Разменен клон

Варна, 9 декември 1946 г.

№ 10651

Към № 1725/19.1.1946 г.

В допълнение на писмото на под герман номер до
Министерство на финансите и държавен контрол - отдел "Народни
спаркс" - София, и за отчитане на предявените в крещенски
съобщения на народния банко на банките предприятия на Истан
Атамасов Реден-Вн съобщения, че посочените им вписки в писмото
ли под герман номер пункт 3-а размер на 6.748 лева нови или
стари-168.700 лева се отнасят до величина 2260 посочена в писмото
на народния банко, - в размер на 228.700 лева, която е издана
коледатане на направени вноски от предприятието-превключенник,
като във сумата от 290.000 лева-пер. 1932 и издана изплатена
от същото предприятие-превключенник.

Български народен банко-Варна
Директор: Лудски: 17 декември 1946 г.

Задълженията са с превод от изчисленията от дегене
реду злед на дареци и запис среду перчителствата - от банката
и чероки популярна банка-Сталин.

Същите са възникнали: първото на 5.VI.1946 г., ате
9.V.1946 г. и третото-на 18.VII.1946 г.

Гърните предприятия с удрене към Гръдския дрс-
ат-Сталин.

Настоящото писмо-искане отправяне на осведомение

FIG 115. Active, passive balance and distribution records

FIG 116. Telegram to The Commission from the Bulgarian National Bank

а/ държавни предприятия	.....	ЛВ.	
б/ кооперативни организации	.....	ЛВ.	
в/ обществени учреждения	.....	ЛВ.	
г/ трудачи се	.....	ЛВ.	
д/ чл. 10 от закона /ако случая е единичен или малък брой вписват се тук/	.....	ЛВ.	
е/ .....	.....	ЛВ.	..... ЛЛ
Сума по пасива			<u>4283318</u> ЛВ

РЕКАПИТУЛАЦИЯ

С В Е Д Е Н И Е
за .

МАРИН РАДЕВ - ул. "Ангел Кънчев" № 19.

Преди 9-й септември подпомагаше с парични средства съпротивителното движение и след тая дата, когато и да му е поисквано средства за подпомагане войнишките семейства от кв. "Станко Стайков" винаги е давал по 20,000-30,000 лева. Също така е давал вълна от отпадаците за плетене чорапи и ръкавици за войнишките семейства. Щом е бивало за съпротивата никога не е жалил средства. С прогресивни идеи в което сме напълно уверени.

гр. Сталин, 23. VIII. 1951 г.

При Градски Проомкомбинат

КАДРОВИК:

/Н. Гайдар



УПРАВИТЕЛ НА В. БАНКА:

Към настоящия протокол се прилагат:

1. Проекто-парочния баланс.
2. Подробен опис към него на вземания.
3. Подробен опис към него на задължения.
4. Възраженията на собствениците с приложенията към тях.
5. Списък на тези възражения от изобразителното изкуство.

FIG 117. Denunciation regarding Marin Atanasov Radev on 23.08.1951

REPORT
regarding
MARIN RADEV – ul. Angel Kanchev # 19

Before the 9th of September he has helped the opposition movement with financial assets and after that date, whenever funding had been asked of him for supporting the soldiers' families from neighbourhood "Stanko Stoykov" he had provided each time 20,000-30,000 leva.

Also, he has been giving wool from the leftovers for knitting socks and gloves for the soldiers' families. When it has been for the opposition he had never spared resources. He has progressive ideas, in which we are absolutely convinced.

Stalin city*, 23. VIII. 951

*For a short while, between 1949 -1956 ,Varna had been renamed to Stalin city.

Explorations

While working between making concrete and latex casts, reading, and writing I have been reading all at once *The Waves*¹, *Crime and Punishment*,² *Women Who Run With the Wolves*³, and *The Evidence Room*⁴. *Crime and Punishment* helped me connect with a character that has committed a terrible crime and is being tormented by his own thoughts and choices. Reading it, helped me begin to understand how a human can imagine the most unimaginable acts, go through with them, and make sense of them in their own head. I learned how important every single detail is, when it comes to understanding someone's thought process and emotional development through the life of a perpetrator. It also made me realize that telling a story in the third person is surprisingly intimate. In the following narrative, I write about my experience while walking through the abandoned monument.

1 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, (n.l.: Global Grey ebooks, 2019).
file:///Users/apple/Downloads/waves.pdf.

2 Fyodor Dostoevski, *Crime and Punishment*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1962).

3 Clarisa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003).

4 Anne Bordeleau, Sascha Hastings, Robert Jan van Pelt, and Donald McKay, *The Evidence room*, (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: New Jewish Press, University of Toronto Press, 2016).



FIG 118. *Back Entrance to Monument from podium, level B1*

*temple of delusion,
a monument to
perfection.*

On an extraordinarily humid noon, in late May, a young woman entered the premises of the darkest, most unwelcoming, airless place, where she looked for traces of an era, where the shadows kept a memory of a collective march. A heavy pigeon-feces stench filled her lungs and overwhelmed her. The space has been closed shut for thirty years to aimless walks and the indifferent gazes of the neighbourhood.

She walked carefully like a thief in the dark. Successfully, she managed to climb and squeeze through an opening in the metal fencing, that some other curious soul had cut off. She walked nonchalantly in front of the motion detector, ignoring the unyielding high pitch alarm that had burst out suddenly, then through a demolished masonry wall and headed down the pitch dark set of stairs leading into a bottomless tunnel. This hidden stair ran down a hill, parallel to a main exterior stair - directly above, called "The Staircase of Victors." These stairs lingered in local stories and myths as a connection to a city scale underground network of secret tunnels to a hospital fitted with the most high-tech equipment of the time. Nothing of that high-tech equipment survives to this day, the metals were much too valuable to let rot. Someone surely made a buck taking it to recycling facilities as soon as the place was abandoned in the milestone year of 1989: the fall of communism in Bulgaria.

Ambient light, sent from the cloudy sky outside and through tiny openings lining the top of the wall, one for every fifteen or twenty steps, indicated that the space was unfolding downward. But, the floor was impossible



FIG 119. *Underground staircase parallel to staircase of victors above. At top of stair looking down*

to make out. Inconceivably large droplets of rain made a metallic echoing sound. The woman's heart pounded loud. She could only hear the sound of the blood rushing in her head. Every twenty seconds or so the water made its way down a crack and reverberated through the otherwise dead quiet space. She turned swiftly in all directions to ensure she wasn't being followed. She didn't feel like making new acquaintances at this particular time. Not because she was anxious, quite the contrary; but for about a year now she had been feeling sad and quite angry at people she never knew personally or otherwise. She had become absorbed by thoughts of Soviet times, Communism, this building, her great-grandfather who was tortured by the Soviets, whom she never met, and of the people who thought it paramount to establish that perfect myth. The myth that the Soviet army is the Bulgarian liberator, from the Nazis, and from the Ottoman empire. The myth that would be passed down for centuries to come. She had become unable to converse with anyone on any other level than this one. This place made her feel as if *they* could be right there, behind every wall, through every opening watching her, intervening, because they may feel threatened or judged by her. The Soviets. She wasn't a threat, because she feared them. She was just a little wire that wanted conductivity. To be charged and to take that charge elsewhere. Her mind was spinning out of control. The bottomless dark space pushed her imagination overboard. What kind of people would, in this universe, want to build a place like this?



FIG 120. *Wall opening in stairwell and graffiti*



Somehow, the heavy wet, pungent air and the unexpected sounds made her too aware of how fearful she was and how little those fears helped her move her body through space. At the bottom, the staircase was blocked off with a giant iron double-door and a fence. A black and yellow graffiti sign, which was as tall as her, made her stop for a few seconds and think to herself:

“Why has someone propped a mannequin leg on the wall beside a painted Toxic Warning sign?” She thought, with a perplexed look on her face.

“Am I as rebellious as those people are – as bold?”

Or am I here because I wish to be?

Or perhaps I wish to be rebellious and bold because I am here...”

She walked back up the stairs, now with confidence and curiosity. Emboldened by her encounters with the rebels and the vandalism. She once again walked by the motion detector, triggered the alarm, turned around a right corner and started climbing the utterly dark, narrow and steep staircase. She knew the alarm was only a deterrent because she had come here once before to check if the building was guarded or monitored by security or even the police. It was not. There was still a chance she was wrong, but she was fine because she didn’t break in and it could not therefore be considered as vandalism. Even

FIG 121. *Graffiti - YOU SHOUT BUT NO ONE SEEMS TO HEAR...*



FIG 122. *Graffiti at bottom of underground stair*



if she got caught trespassing, there would be no serious consequences as she was only looking and wandered in.

A few flights of windowless stairs and two indescribable, disorienting, irregularly shaped spaces were marked with countless graffiti tags lining the angled walls. A bizarre chamber with no apparent purpose, lit by slivers in the walls a few flights up. They reminded her of embrasures¹ (see FIG 127). The hints of light lead her to the main hall, where she emerged from the darkness and into some tall space with a weirdly religious feel. The floor was clammy.

The humidity that day, and anxiousness had overwhelmed her, making her sweat as if she was steaming. Her clothes were drenched, and her hair was getting clumpy. The salty droplets had entered both her eyes and she had to close and squeeze them for a few long moments to make the sting dissipate. This toxic place was perhaps detoxing her somehow.

Overwhelmed by the stench and the scrunching sound of layered pigeon feces that stuck to the bottoms of her soles, she made an audible sound of revolt. Her voice scared the pigeons that were resting on the overhead beams between the giant skylights, five or six meters above. She saw the shadows of two pigeons move across the floor

FIG 123. *Underground staircase parallel to staircase of victors above. At bottom of stair looking up.*

¹ "Embrasure." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/embrasure>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2020; Embrasures are small openings in fortresses played on the inside allowing for weaponry aim and protection.



FIG 124. *Motion detector and activated Alarm*

FIG 125. *Flight of Stairs Up*



FIG 126. Room at first landing with traces of human presence

FIG 127. Embrasure-like window sill



FIG 128. *Pigeon feces covered ground underneath skylights*



FIG 129. *Skylights in main chamber*





FIG 130. *Concrete Pentagon Relief at end of main chamber*

FIG 131. *Detail 1 - Metal pin structure supporting concrete paneled sides of pentagon*

FIG 132. *Detail 2 - Metal pin structure supporting concrete paneled sides of pentagon*

and looked up. A couple of tiny feathers were drifting left to right, and right to left, as if following the trajectory of a fly in slow-motion. The rainy overcast weather could be felt in the interior. Ambient light illuminated the tall chamber. Although she had been here once before, she never saw the details of the space as she could now. The three-dimensional pentagon at the end of the chamber had come to life. Its illumination changed as the clouds outside moved with the wind, and it appeared as though the five-pointed star was slowly pulsating, dark, light, dark, light, dark. Similar to a human heart slowed down when the body is asleep, or even slower. Slower.

She approached the wall and examined it, intending to climb into its center recess. Its built form was the outline of the star, empty within, built in concrete, poured into roughly fifteen-centimeter-wide wood plank formwork. The substance of the star was defined by the shadows falling inward into the hollow center and its extremities. She climbed up into the star and swiftly reached and balanced herself on the sharp ridge of two steeply sloped, one and a half meters high, dusty concrete surfaces. She turned around and looked back down at the space, where she stood a minute ago.

She felt sneaky, as if watching secretly from above, from the perfectly shadowed alcove of the star's, one-meter



FIG 133. *View from inside pentagon looking towards the entrance*

FIG 134. *Vie from inside pentagon looking towards skylights*



deep recess. From this new perspective she noticed the rough texture of the two flanking walls, which were tapering in as they were climbing up, closing in on the space. A sudden compulsion to touch them jolted her forward and she slipped; a split second before she could have fallen down at the feet of the pentagon, she caught herself on a pointy corner at the edge of the alcove:

“Close call – almost felt the pigeon excrements with my face! I’ll get back to the prickly wall texture later”

The she turned around facing in, sweating more profusely than before, examining the tiny gap at the very back of the star structure where it connected to the back wall.



"It's actually hollow! Hah!"

She looked back and forth between the two flanking surfaces, the ceiling, and the one she balanced her feet on. There were rusted metal pin connections holding fairly thin, about five centimeters thick, concrete surfaces which enclosed the voids of the spaces between the five points of the star. If this was a space easily accessible to wild beings it would have been the perfect hiding place for nocturnal or slithering creatures. But even nature was having a hard time penetrating this fortress. Only pigeons had access to this space.

"How ironic," she murmured to herself as she recalled the legendary concept for the design of the building, "the bird of peace was only accessible to these little grey birds."

The original idea behind the bird-wing-shaped monument was to represent a bird of peace landed on top of the hill, marking the maritime city of Varna. It did mark it, though with suffering and controversy, not with peace.

She was satisfied with her examination of the pentagon, and turning once again, back towards the open space, skidded her way lower along one of the sloped sides, and half way down she jumped to the feces-padded ground with blobs of white plaster strangely fitting to the space. The walls drew her attention again seconds after



FIG 136. *Opening in wall - Main chamber*
FIG 137. *Opening in wall - secondary space one level up*



her landing back down. She leaned onto the left wall with open palms, fingers stretched out as wide as they could, and neared her cheek to a split-hair distance from the wall, looking up towards the light flooding through the skylights, then moved her face away, keeping her hands in place, turning her gaze forward and looking closely at the texture between her hands, as if trying to zoom in her focus. The rough plaster wall tiles looked like rough stone finish, and for a while she wasn't sure which one it was. But then she concluded that it would have been all stripped down by scavengers had it been stone. Two tiles were missing off the wall, maybe someone was checking the same. Behind some of the missing tiles, the wall was punctured through and outside she could see another concrete wall, parallel to the first one a meter away, lit by diffused light coming in from above. The building had two skins. One was the face to the inside and the other was the face to the outside. An exposed rusted

FIG 138. *Back stair*



steel skeleton connecting the two vertical surfaces was visible. The rain was falling in the cavity. It was full of trash brought in from the wind or by people with god knows what agenda or what despair in their minds. Shoes, rags, t-shirts, a slipper, blankets, mismatched socks, garbage bags, cigarette butts, plastic bottles, beer caps, a coke can, a syringe, rope; there was also a pillow lining the bottom of the crevice. She walked to the end, and back to the beginning of the chamber a few times looking down, staring, then looked back at the space and the scarce light within, and left the room unsatisfied. She promised to herself she'd come back here more than once before she leaves this eerie building.

Stepping back into the darkness of the center hall at the end of a long ramp, she descended into the shadows.

After wandering around, she found another ramp to the left and a stair to the right-hand side at the end of this central gathering space. She had studied the plans of the building for a few months now and was aware of this room's orientation. The ramp was leading down to the formal entrance of the building and the stairs were going up to an upper balcony overlooking - at one end the eerie space with the pentagon, and at the other end - an access to the observation deck. The deck was on top of the left wing of the building, the smaller wing,

FIG 139. Recesses in wall for custom light fixtures, beside opening leading to back stair (left)

FIG 140. Central chamber looking at opening to back stair to the left, and entrance and ramp towards main chamber to the right



FIG 141. Terrace overlooking main chamber with skylights (left)



FIG 142. Roof deck (right)

overlooking the indigo horizon of the Black Sea gently curving on either end and the whole city of Varna with its harbor. She stepped out squinting her eyes from the abrupt change of light gasping for air with mouth wide open. She needed to spend some time here and replenish her spirit and feed her deprived senses. She had been growing weaker by the minute walking around this isolation tank. Her fear had grown, and her brain was numb.

She looked up and gladly let the grey sky cover her face in rain droplets. She remembered a moment of her childhood when she was about five. Her parents weren't home to keep her from mischief. She ran out in the front yard in the pouring rain, plugged up the garden sink, which appeared as a giant tub next to her tiny body. When it was almost filled up she hopped inside it, turned the tap on, and started splashing around. She was happily floating inside the concrete garden basin. Of course, that didn't end well for her as her father showed up and pulled her out briskly, pronouncing her name loudly through his clenched teeth. She didn't know what she did wrong, she knew even then it was better to suffer the consequences of her actions than to ask for permission to do something fun. Pure delight and utter joy was not allowed. There were rules. Rules she didn't understand, she just had to follow. She got punished that day – standing in the



corner, staring in the two walls converging into a tightly curved inner corner and a tiny crack crawling up from the floor. Her imagination was growing wilder every second, but in a fearful, dreadful kind of way. Any kind of devilish creature could squeeze through the crack and pull her into a hidden dungeon underneath the room.

The ramp leading down dove into darkness. She walked carefully down the ramp, examining the floors and ceilings. Along the way she stopped at a mid-level between the two flights. A set of four steps led to a doorway to the right-hand side. She paused at the landing with a moment's hesitation doubting the necessity of examining the curious little room. Her heart was violently beating in her chest; there wasn't any visible light as she turned in all directions and the intensity of complete nothingness made her aware of the utter silence. The only sense she had access to, was her touch and smell, but she was afraid to touch the walls in the dark, so all she had was her feet. She finally took her flashlight out of her pocket, shone it into the space with her hand fully stretched out and flashed the little room in all directions. Slowly she stretched her right leg out and stepped in - toes first, as if she was testing the cold sea waters in May before

FIG 143. Panoramic view of graffiti wall at top level - opening towards main chamber to the right and exit to rood top terrace to the right.



FIG 144. *Ramp down towards mid lower level and main entrance to monument*

deciding to jump in, then peaked her head in. There was no one. There was a square hole in the center of the floor and the wall to her right was only attached to the floor and ceiling. The sides were free of support, set back about half a foot, roughly the size of an average male hand squeezed into a fist. The wall appeared as though it would have had some importance but not from within this room. To her left there was another door opening towards a small rectangular room, roughly one by two meters, which had some semblance of a water closet. The walls were once covered in square white ceramic tiles some of which were still attached to the wall, and an outline of a lavatory on the longer wall across from the door.



The inscription on the wall wasn't fully legible and read thus:

“ДРУЖБАТА НИ СЪС СЪВЕТСКИЯ СЪЮЗ Е ТЪЙ
ЖИЗНЕНО НЕОБХОДИМО, КАКТО СЛЪНЦЕТО И
ВЪЗДУХА – НА ВСЯКО ЖИВО СЪЩЕСТВО
Г. ДИМИТРОВ”

Translated as:

“OUR FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS AS
VITALLY IMPORTANT AS THE SUN AND THE AIR - TO
EVERY LIVING BEING
G. DIMITROV.”

FIG 145. Wall inscription at mid-level between central chamber and main entrance of monument

Vital, necessary? Air, sun, living beings... All of those things that aren't here... She paused and stood still, her brain was throbbing. "Its meaning sounds dubious. Be communist and be allowed to have those basic necessities in order to live. "Pigs!" She thought, "Am I in a temple for praising communism or in a prison for soviet union enemies? Or maybe it's both."

Her head was spinning more than ever, and the lines around her were blurring out, walls melting away, light and dark fusing into a whirlpool of spinning realities. Black and white, with fractions of colour, pixels of memories, striking her retina with sudden and unexpected force. She had to get out.



FIG 146. *Self portrait – a delirious journey through the belly of a monument, June 25, 2019.*



FIG 147. Interior Perspective 1 & 2 of Gas Chamber Door in The Evidence Room (Siobhan Allman, Anna Longrigg, Donald McKay, Michael Nugent, Nicole Ratajczak, Alexandru Vilcu). Image © The Evidence Room, <https://www.archdaily.com/782447/the-evidence-room/56c9e5dae58ece8f810000dc-the-evidence-room-photo>

the evidence room

The Evidence Room is a project and a book publication that presents a collection of evidence proving the existence of the Holocaust. The book collection showcases architectural and witness drawings from Holocaust survivors, photographs of found objects and of the installation. There are architectural drawings cast in plaster, also doors, gas masks, and an interpretation of one of the gassing columns, amongst others. These artifacts began their journey in the dark era of the Holocaust and reify a time and a space unimaginable, from within the deadliest concentration camp in Poland. The replicas were not identical to the originals, they were painted all white.¹ The book and the installation it describes, is an assemblage of parts that take on a meaning which cannot be deduced by the sum of its parts². The assemblage theory was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari throughout their collaborative book *A Thousand Plateaus* and expanded on by Manuel De Landa in his book *A new Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory & Social Complexity*. The assemblage, performs a task that is unique and irreducible to its components and it only exists because of the interaction between its parts³. This interaction is what defines the parts as well as the whole. Nothing would have the same meaning, purpose or significance if you isolate its parts.⁴ The Evidence Room

1 Anne Bordeleau, Sascha Hastings, Robert Jan van Pelt, and Donald McKay, *The Evidence room*, (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: New Jewish Press, University of Toronto Press, 2016).

2 Manuel DeLanda, *A new Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory & Social Complexity*, (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 31-32.

3 Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, 31-32.

4 Manuel DeLanda, *A new Philosophy of Society*, 31-32.

project is an installation, a monument made of tactile evidence – a physical record. The accompanying book is also a physical record containing the thoughts and reflections of survivors and of the participants involved in the making of the Evidence Room. In the written experience of two participants, assemblage theory is tested and I believe becomes evident.

In his essay Elly Gotz, who is a Holocaust survivor, describes his thoughts and emotions as he walks through *The Evidence Room* project. The description of his visceral experience reminded me how the sense of touch can help one relate to an event, or the realness of a place by its tactility; sensing only happens in the present, what we sense is in the present as well. What we sense replaces our auditory perception of information with a tangible, physical perception communicating not only with our minds but with our bodies as well.

White is a colour of purity and while Elly Gotz appreciates this colour as the uniform finish of all artifacts, the barrier between himself and “too much” realness, white does something else: it presents the pieces ironically as the evidence of an ideology striving for *purity*; responsible for the horrifying deaths of millions of people. That ideology failed, however it caused irreversible damage. The artifacts of the installation are displaced in time and space, de-territorializing Auschwitz, re-territorializing its percepts and affects, and finally creating a new territory which is *The Evidence Room* – a monument of perpetrators – presenting the product of this ideology in a new context. Yet, for Elly Gotz, had the artifacts not

been white they would have had a potential to 'soil' him. To me these white artifacts are far more real for their ability to relate an object to an ideology that soiled an entire nation.

What is chilling is, that the white colour between the viewer and the reality of Auschwitz, as perceived by Elly Gotz, can also connect to a history deep under the white surfaces precisely because the white painted objects compose an assemblage of their own. The colour white is also known to represent the dead, the ones that have lost their vitality.⁵ In this sense perhaps the white paint presents the artifacts as dead, they can no longer fulfill their original purpose to kill. Their new task is to remind; by seeing and feeling the objects we remember the tragedy.

A tangible experience like this, is a reminder that there is a place, deep down inside of humans in which *evil* can flourish if it is allowed, for there is a favourable dark environment. A place in which evil is something which we are unable to be detached from. It is an internal darkness, not external, and therefore human. There is a capacity to breed evil within the soul – a native force that can be either nourished or starved.

Gotz said, that it was hard to imagine but easy to believe the Holocaust was true when you touch and feel the markers of the real event.⁶

5 Clarisa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, 103
6 Bordeleau, Hastings, van Pelt, and McKay, *The Evidence room*.

Another participant in The Evidence Room project also explains her experience as she traced over the architectural drawings. She remembers tracing lines and dimensions for hours, suddenly understanding the meaning of the lines. She was tracing the outlines of a killing machine - the gas chamber and the door leading to it. An architect, with a designation she aspires to obtain, has had a part in allowing these spaces to become possible. She imagined the architects and engineers congratulating one another for their cunning achievement and for the ingenuity of the completed project – the gas chambers, the crematorium, and the camp⁷. The evidence she was tracing, revealed that any human can become an accomplice of a crime. A daunting thought, of which she becomes aware by being jolted into the reality represented by lines. The participant's imagination as she traced the blueprints, is an experience that urges one to remain aware, if one is to resist or even fight this innate darkness.

In an assemblage, all elements work together, and inform one another. All its aspects are the forces defining the territory. When a viewer is in The Evidence Room, they see replicas of gas masks, a gassing column, a door with a metal protection on one side, cans of poison and, architectural drawings and an image starts to form. Then, unexpectedly, a whole other reality is constructed around the visitor. Although replicas painted in white, they are more than real. They evoke a refrain of horror and fear. Auschwitz has been re-territorialized. The Evidence Room Monument – its percepts and affects – works as a whole, as an assemblage to reveal truths and evoke

7 Bordeleau, Hastings, van Pelt, and McKay, *The Evidence room*.

realities, and the sensations of those realities, that must be remembered.

One hopeful outlook that the white surfaces offer is that the monument can be seen as “unwritten upon,” as a promise for the future, an opportunity to defend the right to human life through remembering.

Reading the participants’ experiences helped me connect to my experiences while making artifacts, and understand better the importance of making. It urged me to pay attention to every step of my process and to analyze it later. Every experience when casting communicated haptic thoughts I didn’t process immediately, and which I stored in my memory. As *The Evidence Room* revealed to me, the fundamental importance of a monument is not to recreate a physical space or an event and then give it a new purpose, but to create a bloc of sensation. This allows not simply the remembrance of a certain past, but a journey into a refrain. Through that we can create new refrains, create a difference in the repetition. Face the trauma and begin to heal. Elly Gotz’s journey is comparable to mine, it is subjective but relevant, because it could be anyone’s.



FIG 148. Eva Hesse, *Ennead*, 1966. Acrylic, papier-mâché, plastic, plywood, and string, approximately 96 × 39 × 17 in. (243.8 × 99.1 × 43.2 cm). © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth. Gift of Barbara Lee, The Barbara Lee Collection of Art by Women. Photograph by Abby Robinson. <https://www.icaboston.org/art/eva-hesse/ennead>

eva hesse

I have been obsessed with Eva Hesse's work over the last year. It wasn't until recently I found out that she was born a Jewish in Nazi Germany, fled to New York with her family, and lost many relatives to the Holocaust. Suddenly, I started to see her art in a different way. Her approach and process is what interested me most. I always found her sculptural work with rubber and latex peculiar in a beautiful kind of way, and provocative. It seemed like it had something to do with the body and organs such as skin. This was the most evident to me, but there are others, human forms at a scale we usually don't zoom in to see. I didn't realize how deep she was taking us into her psyche. It seems as though she was trying to lose herself in it—creating a grid, which she would then challenge. She placed a structure, which was there to be questioned—a paneled grid on the wall, with hemispherical nodules at each intersection and a rope coming out of each nodule, out of the wall towards the viewer, intermingled, hanging freely, some attached to the adjacent wall, defining the corner which it occupied (FIG 148). Presenting a grid structure not plain and pure, but with unexpected arteries extending out and falling into place thanks to gravity; another body perhaps an extension of hers, or altogether hers; a body of forces. A body composed by the structuring and the defining force, the one that imposes a solution, only to explode into a chaos of unpredictability—a unique temporality, which the forces of chance and randomness can offer.

Eva Hesse was influenced by Simone de Beauvoir. She wrote about her and quoted her in a journal Hesse kept¹.

The quote was the following:

"What a woman essentially lacks today for doing great things is forgetfulness of herself; but to forget oneself it is first of all necessary to be assured that now and for the future one has found oneself."²

Hesse knew that she had to make a conscious effort to find herself. To do that she needed to lose herself first. The exploration into mediums or materials and unfamiliar grounds like sculpture, was her way of boldly setting out towards ends, that risked disappointment. She struggled with deep trauma and her work helped express her emotions and perhaps helped her to lose and to find herself continuously as a process of healing. Inspired by de Beauvoir, Hesse aimed to become personal and particular and with that came her originality. It makes me wonder if her work also questioned the human as an assemblage – as an organic machine – and tried to examine it in detail? While risking disappointments she also had the opportunity to find rewards which she could not have even hoped for. Her work provokes the viewer to imagine the process of making, in which inevitably gravity and chance fulfill their role.

1 Eva Hesse 1965, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/video/videos/eva-hesse-1965>

2 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1952), 291.



Looking at a rope, suspended in midair, I look up close and it is a rope dipped in liquid latex, pulled down by gravity, intertwined with other latex-ed ropes, hanging stretching, impermanent, fragile, chaotic, at the same time there seems to be a refrain, a moment of organization in the chaos, attachments to suspension cables that highlight those moments – reference points that are also points of departure, a play of forces between the pull of organization and the force of gravity (FIG 149).

The process of making was most important for Hesse, it pushed and pulled her between transcendence and immanence, between forgetfulness of oneself and expression of the personal and the particular. It is the same with my making: trying to understand the Friendship Monument, its affects and percepts as they relate to myself, my family, as well as to a nation.

FIG 149. Eva Hesse, *no title*, 1969-1970, Latex, rope, string, and wire. Rights and reproductions. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth. Photograph by Sheldon C. Collins; <https://whitney.org/collection/works/5551>

francesca woodman

One of the first female artists I encountered that impressed me with her expressibility was Francesca Woodman. Her self portraits captured me and made me pay attention to architectural space in an entirely different way. In ways that are hard, if not impossible, to describe in words. She poses her body in space as if she is part of the space, as if she is the building or as if the building is she. Explorations of her feminine subjectivity allowed her to create something unique for its time and still inspirational today, surely not just to me. Not only that, as I scroll to her countless photographs of herself, I can't help but wonder about her process, how she walked from the camera to her position, did she find refuge in these episodes of expression? I think of her method, her process, and the forces that move her. I read her body and I read her emotions. The spaces and buildings in each photograph take a shape and a meaning now impossible to imagine without her. Or if I dare to, I feel an almost unbearable chill and discomfort. As if something has gone missing and its reality has become stale – void of immediacy, of originality and poise.

Figure 150 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source © Francesca Woodman Estate. <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/francesca-woodman-untitled-new-york-36>

Figure 151 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source © Francesca Woodman Estate. <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/francesca-woodman-untitled-providence-rhode-island-16>

FIG 150. Francesca Woodman. *Untitled - New York, 1979*. Gelatin silver estate print, 8 × 10 in. (20.3 × 25.4 cm). © Francesca Woodman Estate, Ingleby Gallery. <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/francesca-woodman-untitled-new-york-36>

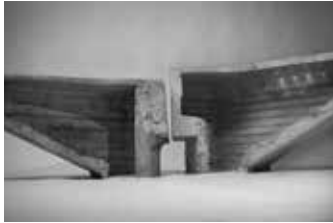
FIG 151. Francesca Woodman. *Untitled - Providence, Rhode Island, 1976*. Gelatin silver estate print, 8 × 10 in (20.3 × 25.4 cm). © Francesca Woodman Estate, Ingleby Gallery. <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/francesca-woodman-untitled-providence-rhode-island-16>

Figure 153 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source © Francesca Woodman Estate. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/francesca-woodman/untitled-rome-a-2vDA6qHP9mJ0QPnBmNrz2g2>

FIG 152. Francesca Woodman. *Untitled, Rome, 1977-1978*. Gelatin silver estate print, 20 x 25 cm. (7.9 x 9.8 in.) © Francesca Woodman Estate, Galerie Clara Maria Sels. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/francesca-woodman/untitled-rome-a-2vDA6qHP9mJ0QPnBmNrz2g2>

Figure 153 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Original source © Francesca Woodman Estate. http://www.artnet.com/artists/francesca-woodman/roma-a-4As5uginHT7_rlqxeawDuw2

FIG 153. Francesca Woodman. *Untitled*, Rome, 1977-1978. Gelatin silver estate print, 138.2 x 25.96 cm. (54.4 x 10.2 in.) © Francesca Woodman Estate, Galerie Clara Maria Sels. http://www.artnet.com/artists/francesca-woodman/roma-a-4As5uginHT7_rlqxeawDuw2



3.0 POWER TO
re-territorialized refrain

the making

I re-territorialized the monument through photographs and models. I scale it down multiple times by building different models, in various scales – 1:750, 1:500, 1:200, 1:100, 1:35. I use different materials, reshape it, simplify it, I open it up. I then seal it with latex and peel the latex off. Here I describe the process in more detail. The images reveal more about a process than about a final output.



FIG 154. *Friendship Monument. Clay model
Front, September 2018*

FIG 155. *Friendship Monument. Clay model
Back, September 2018*



FIG 156. *Friendship Monument. Latex mould, April 2019*

FIG 157. *Friendship Monument. Latex mould removed, April 2019*



FIG 158. *Latex over clay model collage with figure*





FIG 159. *Latex over clay model collage with sitting figure, close up*





FIG 160. Latex mould from clay model - collage with sitting figure, close up





FIG 161. Section of retaining concrete wall used for latex experiment



FIG 162. *Latex experiment from retaining concrete wall, April 2019*



FIG 163. *Simplified concrete model of Friendship monument, two parts, scale 1:35, weight approx. 125kg (275 lb), height of left part 400mm and right part 500mm*





FIG 164. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, East wing - back*



FIG 165. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, West wing - back*

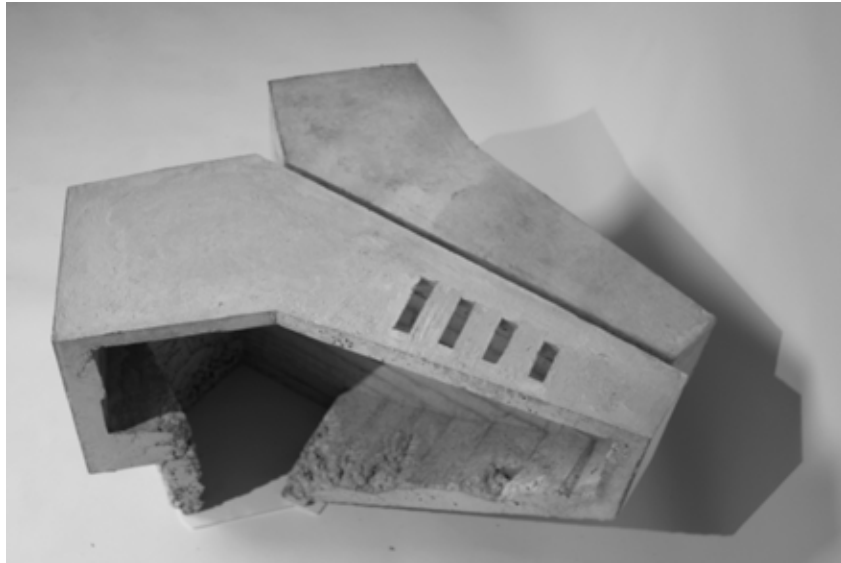


FIG 166. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, rearranged wings from above*



FIG 167. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, rearranged wings close up of back from above*



FIG 168. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, archway with rearranged wings*







FIG 169. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, interior light from above*





FIG 170. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, collage with sitting figure*





FIG 171. *Concrete model of Friendship monument, collage with sitting figures*





FIG 172. Concrete model of Friendship monument, collage with sitting figure in front





FIG 173. *Body and monument interaction series*



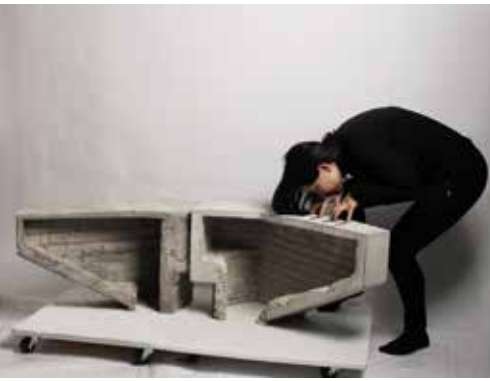


FIG 174. *Body and monument Sequence Series*



FIG 175. *Four-fold latex cast of forearms on a chair, by author.*



FIG 176. "In - out" latex cast of forearms and hands, by author, Sept. 2019



FIG 177. *Latex casts folded and unfolded, by author.*



FIG 178. "In - out" latex cast of forearms and hands, by author, Sept. 2019



FIG 179. *Piece one - concrete model of monument covered in latex*
FIG 180. *Latex texture detail before peeling*



FIG 181. *Peeled latex skin of monument*



FIG 182. *Peeled latex skin of monument suspended in forest by a creek, April, 2020 Mississauga.*



FIG 183. *Peeled latex skin of monument suspended by a creek, April, 2020 Mississauga.*





FIG 184. *Peeled latex skin of monument suspended in forest by a creek, April, 2020 Mississauga.*

FIG 185. *Shadows behind latex skin*

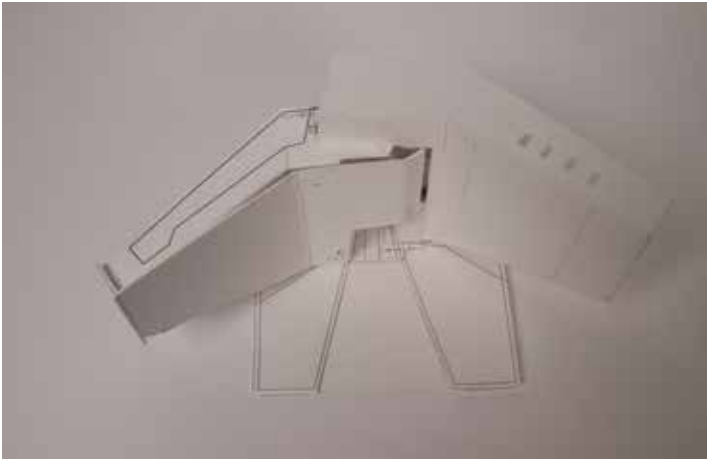


clay and paper models

In the first phase of making multiple models I used clay. I replicated in rough shape different Bulgarian monuments, moulded them with my fingers, dried, then shaved them off. As my fingers were gliding along the wet slippery clay, it felt as if I was giving birth to something, but didn't know what that something was. I was enjoying the process, and it was making me love the objects I was creating. Soon I began to hear contradictory voices in my head: "What a beautiful object! ...Ominous, dark, deceiving." I was taking such care with each form, each facet, each figure, and holding the little monument in my hands manifested a mysterious power over me which I was struggling with and confused by. I was struggling to connect with the monument, to understand it. But this process only gave me insight into the scale and the uniqueness of the form, the rest was becoming less clear.

I am saying this, because at the start of my research, I had a clear objective: to learn more about this curious abandoned monument, and propose a design that would offer a more purposeful space for the public, stripping the monument of its power to empower the local communities. In the process the monument was taking hold of my strength and turning it into doubt and fear. Over time I began to realize that the process

FIG 186. *First clay model of the Friendship Monument*



didn't create doubt and fear, it only made it surface and prompted more making and writing about this experience, which I can now call *awakening* process. It brought my subconscious predators to consciousness.

Searching for understanding, I began to make a sketch paper model which was a long, strenuous process. I aimed at using minimal technology, as in the 70's there were no laser cutters and 3D printers. I printed out the plans and sections, cut them out transferred them onto millboard and tried stacking. That didn't work. Stacking didn't make sense. I was struggling to put them together as there were contradictory dimensions across the different drawings, big overhangs, plans evolving from small to large as you go up, different staircases popping in and out, mid-levels, internal terraces, and there was no vertical core. I had no point of reference, except for the skin. The front facade seemed to be vertical. So I cut the shape of the facade, bent it according to the plan, the two flagging wings forward at an unspecified angle and kept them in place with the sloping up faceted, surfaces underneath each wing, which also had no dimensions and no angles defining them. Then I glued each floor to the front skin as indicated on the drawings elevation which didn't always fit so ripped them off a few times to adjust the plans and shorten or lengthen accordingly until everything started to somewhat fit together. The long hours of work resulted in a sketch model, nothing more.

FIG 187. Paper model above, Dec. 2018

FIG 188. Paper model East side, Dec. 2018



FIG 189. *Latex over concrete retaining wall, Cambridge, 2019.*

FIG 190. *Peeling of latex from concrete retaining wall, Cambridge, 2019.*

FIG 191. *Latex skin hung over branch, movement series, Cambridge, 2019.*

casting in latex

Knowing I wanted to explore the idea of impermanence and fragility with respect to the body, and as a means to question the permanence of the concrete monument and its embodied dogma, I set out to follow in the footsteps of Eva Hesse. I hoped to gain a better understanding of working with latex, its potential in conceptual art, and in thinking about architecture. At the same time I intuitively engaged percept and affect as a method of thinking about the body. My painful journey into the past triggered this direction but played a little role in the process that followed.

The emblematic archway is an important aspect of experiencing the Friendship Monument. I first made a foam core model of the opening alone, and then covered it in latex, using a piece of burlap on one side, then peeled it all off. In another experiment I used latex dipped burlap and tried to form a similar archway with it to create a space with very different qualities.

There were many experiments along the way some of which failed completely and some of which had elements of success. I covered in liquid latex one two-square foot section of the retaining wall by the Grand River in Cambridge, just behind the architecture school¹ and the next day it was ready to be peeled off. The peeling was

¹ The latex on the wall made a couple people very nervous about that, as when you first apply pure liquid latex it looks like white paint. However as it dries it become the familiar yellow tinted rubber-like material that I later peeled off completely, with no trace.



FIG 192. Monument archway leading to main entrance - front view.
FIG 193. Archway -stairs to main entrance on the left.



FIG 194. Monument archway view from back - stairs to main entrance on the right.
FIG 195. Archway close up - view towards the Black Sea.



FIG 196. *Latex dipped burlap experiment - fold detail, Mar. 2019*

FIG 197. *Latex dipped burlap experiment - texture detail, Mar. 2019*



FIG 198. *Latex dipped burlap archway
experiment 1, Mar. 2019*

a bizarre experience; it felt like I was skinning a living creature, except there was concrete underneath the skin. I was pulling one end, and the rough concrete texture was pulling back. The sound of the latex separation alone was enough to make me imagine a real life skinning scenario. The sound was soft and sticky and to my surprise felt strangely perverse. Once it was removed, I draped the piece over a tree branch and filmed its movement for a while, mesmerized by its gentle wrestling, folding in and out in the wind, and its organic noise. By organic I mean, human, natural – alive. I refer to it as '*skin*', because it reminds me of human skin. It was the thickness of genuine leather, and its yellowish opaque texture let the sunlight come through, allowing its shadow to dance along to its movement with lighter and darker spots within. The wind would push the skin towards my face and I'd smell the not-so-pleasant latex odour, which only affirmed its presence and reminded me of its nature. It was an entire sensory experience similar to an auditory-tactile synesthesia² – I could feel the sound in my body.

2 Ward, J. (2007). Acquired auditory-tactile synesthesia. *Annals of Neurology*, 62(5), 429-430. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ana.21281>



plaster

Later, after casting a concrete model, I made a mould of my right hand and arm in alginate, then my left hand and arm. From the alginate mould I cast plaster models, which for a while I kept rearranging within the concrete model to observe proportions between my arms and the model. Finally, some weeks later, I arranged them over a plastic sheet and started layering the latex to get a piece with skin/flesh like thickness and texture – two hands and two forearms set into a square hide. The concrete cast is exactly the height of my forearm measured from my elbow to the tips of my fingers, as well as from the crease of each wing to its cantilevered end.

I made all the different latex models at different stages of my thesis. I would go back and forth between latex, sometimes silicon, and concrete casting, as each one inspired new ideas and prompted me to switch modes.

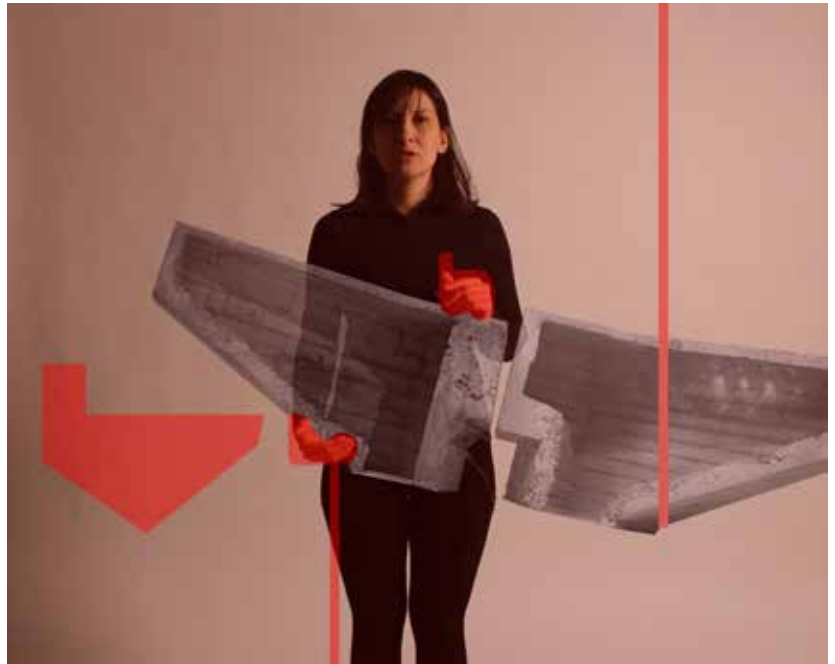
FIG 199. *Casts of arms – from plaster to latex, Cambridge, 2019.*

concrete

In keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of percept and affect, I created a monument of my own – staying away from my personal perceptions and affections, I aimed at capturing the percepts and affects of the monument itself. Its relative weight, its shape, its proportions, materiality, textures. Simultaneously modifying it to following instinct rather than a calculated and rational approach. This was a piece inspired by the Friendship Monument, but is also a work of its own. I engaged sensation, rather than memory. While some memories or imagination may have been provoked unexpectedly, and in some perverse way, this monument is not one that remembers the past, but communicates through percept and affect about the past. As a result, I can now agree with Deleuze and Guattari, this process allowed *my monument* to become "a block of present sensations."¹

The model was chair height. Casting a simplified, scaled-down concrete model of the monument in two parts was how I wanted to relate it to my body. The size made it proportional to my body and physically manageable, while also functional. I had turned the monument into an object for everyday use.

¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy*, 168. "Memory plays a small part in art (even and especially in Proust). It is true that every work of art is a monument, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it."



The height of the model is the distance between the heel of my foot and my knee cap. From there it became sizable to all of my body parts as the distance from my elbows to my finger tips is equal. The scale at which all dimensions were based became 1:35, however the height came first then the scale followed. I have reduced it to an object I can manipulate physically, though with great difficulty, I had the chance of standing on equal ground, and not in its overpowering shadow. As the monument became a two piece model, one half was cast first, using two bags of 30kg concrete mix 5000 psi. I made one half separate from the other so that I would be able to handle it – each half weighing roughly 60 + kilos. That is also the weight of my body currently.

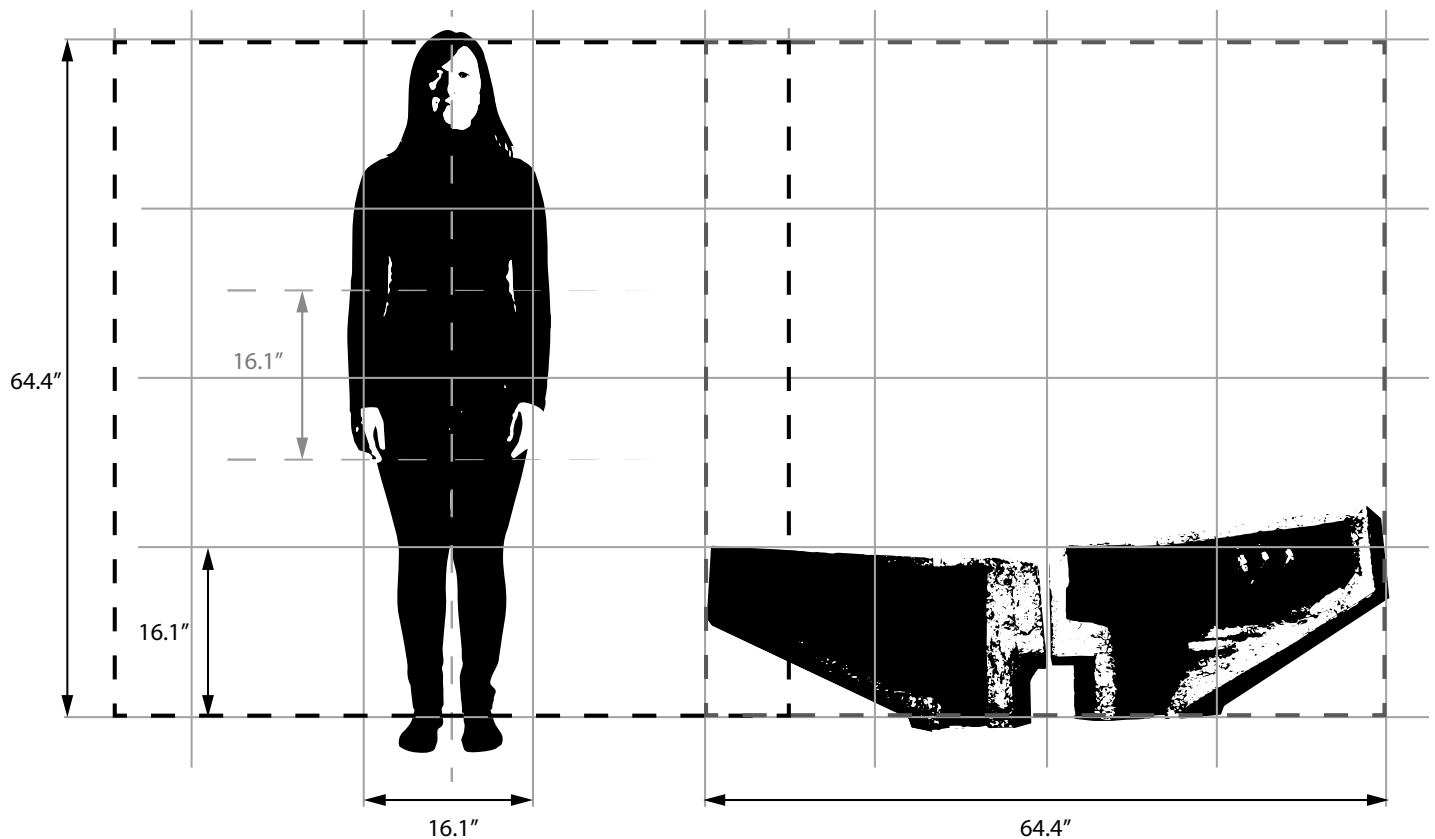
I am 37 years old, the age of my mother when she died. This is important to mention because I can't help but think – if I got here, from this point on I get one more life, another where every year is a gift, a time in which I can challenge all the forces that try to define me. I don't want such life to be wasted in forgetfulness. I'd rather remember everything, place objects and concepts around me that remind me everyday of my great grandfather, great grandmother, their daughter, and her daughter (my mother). Remember their lives, what they have been through. Understand them and through that communicate with them, in a way I could never have hoped for. And as I come back and remember them I will continue to communicate; and it would be different each time. The making of those artifacts is the process

FIG 200. *Digital Collage 01*

in which my thoughts drift – between love and hate, between anger and sadness, between forgetfulness and discovery, between transcendence and immanence. It is not that I have been missing something and trying to find it. On the contrary, everything is there to be remembered and discovered. And when I try to find something it is not because it was missing, but because I am seeking something new.

I often needed help, especially when I started with the first piece. By the time I began making the second part of the monument I had developed muscle strength, from the first batch of concrete mix. My strength used to be insufficient in even slightly shifting the bag off the pallet in the supply store. I was lucky enough to get help from friends in the architecture school who moved bags for me and lifted them in the mixing process. By the second time around I was handling the bags by myself, with no help. Moving supplies from my car to the workshop, with form work, then mixing, casting, opening the cast and all else. Only moving the models on and off the little mobile platforms they are each placed on is still a impossible for me.

The two final pieces were a left and a right wing onto which I could comfortably sit. The shape had to be simplified for my manual methods were not fit for its complex faceted forms with large overhangs. I structured the form-work so that its face would be missing, it would no longer remain as a giant symbol, a sculpture on top of



a hill but it could become open, make its inside visible to me at all times, honest about its light-less space inside, that had been hidden and locked away.

Beside the objective of turning the monument into a stool, weight considerations and being able to move it around, its open front and the use of its true materiality, I wasn't certain of the end result. And although I am pleased with the outcome, I can't take all the credit as chance had its say. What I learned, while making it all, about myself and about the monument, *is* the real outcome. I learned that I am attached to this mini monument, as the product of my hard work, efforts, and care, acquiring new skills and knowledge, like mixing concrete, building form-work, pouring it outdoors versus indoors², or adding glass fiber to the concrete as reinforcement, since the shape was too complex and the shell too thin to house 10mm thick rebar, and so on. Many more easily overlooked

² There was a good chance the form-work could explode, under the weight and movement of the heavy liquid concrete, which of course happened with the second piece.

FIG 201. Concrete to body dimensions diagram

considerations, like building a dolly to make the model mobile, wearing a mask and vacuuming the concrete dust [as I learned it is a very toxic compound and I can't let the dust fly around in the air when I am cleaning up, which is what happened when I swept it initially].

I also started wondering whether this monument would end up in my apartment and whether would I love it or hate it. Would I put my feet up when drinking my coffee in the morning, and how would that make me feel each day. I don't know the answer to this but I hope I will learn something new because of it.

Memories

My relationship with the Friendship Monument is my metaphor for a relationship with power. It's a love-hate relationship. This monument's powerful forces embody and reverberate an oppressive past. Without confronting it I would remain a compliant subject. When something or someone has 'power over' another, it subjects others to their power, aiming to influence the other to accept their viewpoint, or worst – using force to have others do what one wishes them to.

Am I a victim of socialism or a student of socialism? I am not sure. If I was a student of socialism in the context of Socialist Bulgaria between 1944 and 1989 then I suppose I wouldn't be overcome by anger and angst when I think about the past, and the misfortune of my family, and constantly wonder what if it wasn't that way. I am not a student of socialism. Why was my grandfather imprisoned, why was he tortured, why did he lose everything? Why did his sons and daughters lose their education, their present, their futures, their individuality, taken out of their reality and dropped into another where they were homogenized into a big mass of complacency, and scarred for the rest of their lives? If I was to call myself a victim, I'd have to deconstruct and analyze carefully the memory of my family and my own. The history of traumas that had seemed to define me. It is not simple and it is a long and complex story. If I am a victim of Soviet regime, do I remember it? No. Did it impact me? Yes. Did I realize it did? Not for 33 years.

I hear this sometimes: co-relation doesn't mean causation.

But I'd say, ignorance is not a bliss. So I'll go into it.

This monument is located in the neighborhood where I grew up as a kid. I was innocent to its ideologies, symbolism, and to the context it was created or existed in. In my childhood when I was old enough to explore the surrounding park on my own, it had already been abandoned for about four years, nothing bronze was left. I knew nothing of the place's history other than it felt like a powerful and curious place. It was my secret spot. I went there to collect hazelnuts from a tree only few people knew about. My grandmother had shown it to me when I was six. It was a place of dear memories. But I did not know anything about that place. Did I care to know? It was a nice park with a nice view towards the Black Sea with a big concrete mass on top that had no particular meaning to me at the time. The hill onto which the huge concrete structure had landed on with its stylized 'bird of peace' shape, quietly, almost imperceptibly, whispered spells of submission and looked down with intensity; and I had learned to love it. Now I am learning to question it.

I have no choice but to accept and face everything that passes through my life, destructive or constructive. Learn to sharpen my instincts to detect predatory power, be it political or physical or internal, that has caused pain in the past. For the internal destructive power in humans is just as dangerous as the external. They come from the same source and it is humanly inherent. Death, rape, non-consent, torture, conflict, violence, trauma after

trauma through generations, carving its way deep into my subconsciousness like a gangrene that threatens to dismember my life limb by limb. My innocence as a teenager being taken away from me bit by bit because I have not yet learned to oppose. Because I have lived in a world where I submit to the ones that have a 'power over' me. It's a love hate relationship because it causes me pain, it abuses me, but I keep coming back to it repeatedly without knowing why. Beginning to understand why, is when I began the process of healing. I needed to face it, in order to fight it. There was no bliss in my ignorance. Only confusion, sadness, and submissiveness.

When I began the process of healing I began to outline an archaeological fieldwork of an internal power, one that opposes the predatory power, the totalitarian, authoritarian, or dominant power that puts me to submission.

Pushing a memory away, not recognizing its power, not allowing it to emerge, only deepens the wound of the past and prevents a pathological wound healing to begin – the scarring process.

I was about eleven and a half when my mother passed. My teenage sister was crushed, my father was in despair, I was in disbelief. I remember laying alone in my bedroom a few years afterwards, maybe three or four, crying and questioning my life, my existence, purpose, and asking my deceased mother for answers. No one

was going to give me answers but me. But I was never taught or encouraged to follow my intuition. I somehow grew thinking intuition is this crazy spiritual *thing* that witches have, not human people, and instincts are primal emotions that have to be suppressed. Expectedly, I didn't understand the world and myself as a part of that world at the time. I did not understand that I and only I had the power to answer questions about my place in the world. My six-years-older sister was just as clueless as I was. Later, as a fifteen-year-old girl, I began to look for answers and directions externally. I began to accept what comes my way. A reckless process of dulling my instincts and marching along with a blindfold. It was easy, nothing to mull over, just let it happen, adventure turned into assault, then self-deprecating thoughts. Come what may, destructive or constructive, all the same. It is easy to let someone else decide, and then blame myself for my choices. Then came the time of regret, sulking, confusion, let someone else steer because it's easier, I am just a passenger. A vicious wheel of confusion, decisions, destruction, regrets. Whose fault is it? The violators, or me for letting them violate me. Of course, I didn't want anything bad to happen, but did I stand aside and watch it happen? Did I push the memories in a deep dark place where no one could see them, even myself? And the deeper I pushed them, the harder it was to recognize that I was being dominated. By my memories, experiences, and predators.

I am overcome and pulled apart by the forces of internal

and external violators – my silent scream into the open sky echoes back at me and reverberates between my soul and the gaping abyss, dissolves me into millions of little particles, into fog, into chaotic intensities.

Francis Bacon is an artist that investigates those destructive forces, the tension between the external and internal, recognizing that violence is not a one-way road. Sensation, emotion, force. An interconnected network of affects and percepts, pushing and pulling creating chaos. Deleuze and Guattari speak a lot about chaos and the refrain, and that chaos is particularly present in the art of Bacon. To understand better the power of the refrain as applied concept, I watched a video by Tadas Vinokur, who explains with simple examples what the refrain is, and what its application could be, if it is understood. He explains that chaos has the potential to organize itself through being mapped with the help of the refrain, and this can be useful for example with the organization of political movements. A very interesting reference which made me look more into the potential of the refrain as it relates to my memories, violence, oppressiveness, and healing.

The refrain as presented in *A Thousand Plateaus*, has milieus, territories and rhythms which have the power to create structural patterns in a place of chaos. Milieu is described as a medium, a unit of expression, a durational, cyclical time-space that is articulated as a fusion or cluster of directions in motion that are organizational and



distinct. The role of the refrain as territorial assemblage is highlighted in the song of a bird, the rhythm of a native tribe or region is territorial.¹ Different milieus can interact with each other. For example, the monument standing on a hill may at first appear static, but in reality, its refrain changes all the time in its interaction with other refrains, other territorial assemblages. On sunny days, sharp shadows travel across it. On rainy summer days water runs down it, and fog changes its colour and appearance of texture. The figurative arts on its wings change their intensity with the political art they attracts² (labeled as vandalism by the authorities). The sun, the rain, the art are other milieus that interact with the milieu of the monument which has the power to express and attract. The sun and the rain are cyclical events and they are organizational and distinct; the sun creating shadows that move west to east as the sun moves east to west. Clouds pass by, obscuring the sun, showing us the direction of the wind or clues about the current atmosphere. As it rains the wet stains on the facade grow, and have a direction as well, top to bottom, but because of the wind on that particular day the wetness creates a shapes on the concrete face in a particular and a distinct way from any other rainy

1 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Vol. 2, Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 312

2 In the past, the monument has had the LGBT flag painted on, which is still faintly visible on the back of the monument; the female figure heads have had colourful fabric masks installed over in support of the Pussy Riot; and currently one of the Soviet soldier's helmet is painted over in red.

FIG 202. Soviet soldier with painted helmet in red on East wing

day. There are pigeons living on the monument, flying back and forth between the two wings of the stylized concrete bird, animating its facade with their moving shadows and droppings. Their transience juxtaposes the permanence of the monument with the impermanence of their existence and continuous presence. The birds are territorializing the milieu they create by the rhythms of movement and flight. The rhythms of these events create tension between the milieus and territories established. Conceptually there is the idea of permanence embodied in the monument and the unquestioned event it commemorates, which is somehow fixed in time, and assures its truthfulness with the only fact – it exists. However, nothing is fixed in time, although it may appear as such. It is all milieus, territories, and rhythms that coalesce to become the refrain of the monument. A flap of a pigeon's wings, a rhythm, territorializing the Soviet soldier's helmet, the milieu's answer to chaos.

Many times I counted the 302 steps reaching the monument on its south to north axis, up a mound 100m above sea level. As I marched up the central axis of the park, I wondered why its name is the *Staircase of Victors*; who are the victors? The four soldiers on the face of the East wing wearing Soviet uniforms answered my question.

The monument's interior once meant to be used for the communist party social meetings perhaps, is now home to piles of trash, occasionally squatted by the homeless,

and visited often by urban explorers looking to marvel at the decay of Socialism. Today it is surrounded by a newly developed neighbourhood, but its precise location still carries many memories. The oppressed nation's understanding of reality was continuously poisoned with the Utopian promises of the communist agenda and the Friendship Monument is concrete evidence of their legitimacy depicting a unshakable myth of salvation through the figurative art on its face. Modernity and technology carried from the North on the shoulders of Socialism, portrayed by their clothing and weapons. Gratefulness and submissiveness in return for centuries throughout centuries, underscored by the offerings in the female figures and the inscription above the archway. Socialism gave people something. A sense of security and a sense of certainty for some. For others – fear, captivity, unspeakable thoughts.

Walking through, around, under the body of the monument, touching its walls, breathing the air inside it, hearing the echoing sounds of my steps coalesce with sounds of fluttering pigeon wings and the metallic reverberation of heavy rain drops breaking into concrete floor, was a visceral experience reminding me how my sense of touch, sound, smell, and even taste as my mouth had dried up from anxiety, can help me relate to a time before I was born, to the realness of a place where unimaginable violence was fostered. My imagination was at work. The monument is fulfilling its purpose. False truths. Are humans so easily manipulated? How do we rebel, find our truths, and listen to our own thoughts?

And when we encounter an overpowering authority, how do we recognize and find the strength to question and defy it?

An event and dogma set in time and space, concretized and legitimized by its permanence and scale – that is the monument. The larger, the more unquestionable; the more mysterious, the more awe inspiring. An accomplice of crime. It omits details, atrocities, and freezes time. The complicated historical details, bent, twisted and meshed together to present a simple image that requires no efforts to digest. Atrocities about lives senselessly lost like sacrificial lambs as offerings for good fortune and to wash the earth with blood in a '*renewal*' ritual – for Socialist Bulgaria.

The more I become aware of the consequences of past events related to me directly or indirectly, the more I realized that I am a product of this past. And as long as I am blind to it, I will be defined by it and I would not be able to find a new strength that refuses to comply. I am angry because of my inability to protest, to oppose. I am also hopeful because now I can remember. The positive outlook for the future is that with the gift of remembering I can work towards a world in which I can recognize powers that try to take over me, whether internal or external, and redirect them into a power to defy domination and autocracy.

epilogue

After two months of spending each day in, around, and near the Friendship monument, I wasn't ready to come back to Canada. I suppose I needed time to process all that had happened in Bulgaria – the people I acquainted, some related directly, some indirectly to the monument and to my story. I had gathered a lot of material, archives, photos, drawings, experiences, old newspaper articles, books, but they weren't falling into place yet in my mind's puzzle. They were floating around my head as if in outer space where there is no gravity and no direction, without the required source of power.

There came a prospect for me to climb the second highest mountain in Africa, and the highest mountain in Kenya named Mount Kenya at dizzying 5,199 meters above sea level (m.a.s.l). My partner was in Kenya at the time, visiting family and we were determined to climb this mountain, which also has a technical section of several hundred meters height to reach the highest peak – Batian. We were to approach from the North face of the peak and we planned for about 12 hours to ascend and 5 to descend. This would be the third day after climbing up to Shipton's Hut - base camp at 4,200 m.a.s.l- for 2 days. It sounded like a great challenge to put my willpower and other supernatural powers to the test.

We spent four weeks training in preparation for the challenge. Finally the right time came around and we booked a guide and a team of porters to help with carrying food and sleeping gear. To acclimatize better



we spent 2 days camping in the foothills of the mountain in a town called Naro Moru. To the very last moment I didn't know what to expect from my mind and body in this altitude. I had never before been higher than 2,600 m.a.s.l. I had this great challenge ahead and somehow I didn't acknowledge how extraordinarily difficult it all was until I was at a point of no return. The first day was hard but short, up an asphalt road for three hours and arrived at the first camp - Moses Hut. We were at 3,200 m.a.s.l and a headache kicked in at about 3000 meters. Suddenly altitude sickness became a very real threat. If I were to ascend too fast for what my body can handle and/or let myself dehydrate I could get sick within a day and would have to turn back immediately. Dawn woke us up with heavy raindrops on the fly of our tent. It rained the entire second day of climbing up steep moorlands to base camp. Six hours of struggling in continuous heavy rain, mud, circumstantial rivers, more mud. Drenched, freezing and so exhausted I didn't even feel hunger anymore. For the last hour of our climb, I had to talk myself into moving each leg forward. – "One foot in front of the other, one foot in front..." When we finally reached Shipton's camp I wanted to cry, I was not sure if I was happy to have arrived or terrified of what was to come. I quickly found a bunk bed and forcefully pulled the sticky clothes off my body, shaking uncontrollably.

On the third day, climbing Batian was not possible. Our guide advised us it was snowing and foggy up there and the rock was too slippery for a technical climb. This turned



out to be a good thing as we could now climb the third highest peak – Lenana – to acclimatize better for Batian, and also to rest a bit as this climb was only a three hour hike up to 4985 m.a.s.l., no technical gear required other than winter attire. Snow and sub zero temperatures was definitely something I was not expecting to experience in Africa. But the cold, the wind, the snow in my face, the slippery slopes of shale and rock scramble weren't all there was to the challenge. Altitude was the one condition I had never experienced and I couldn't have prepared for it. Every step was as slow as one long inhale and one quick exhale. Every ten steps or so, a break, a sip of water. At the top of Lenana - a sense of power, a sensation of oneness with the fog covered mountain where I could

FIG 203. *Mount Kenya view from the moorland, day 2 midway to Shipton's Hut*



not see my achievement, by looking at the horizon, but I could painfully feel it in my strained body and expanded lungs. This was just the warm up.

In the dark before sunrise we set out for the technical climb of Batian peak. After two hours of extremely precipitous hike up rock scramble and ice we arrived at the base of the rock – a vertical black granite rock.

Climbing up the steep slopes of Batian peak, 4900 meters above sea level, taking each breath slowly and intently, so as to bring just a few more molecules of extra oxygen into my deprived lungs, I wondered why I keep thinking about a day of exploration, that happened two months earlier when I was walking in the suffocating dark tunnels under the Friendship Monument. How this breathlessness was so very different. In the tunnels I was terrified, and my dizzied head could not think but keep chanting about signs and marks on the way, so as to remember the way out. My head was being clenched in a dark grip of the known and the unknown. Here, in this desolate place on the face of this bare black rock, I

FIG 204. *Mount Kenya Batian and Nelion Peak - view from Shipton's Hut, day three 7am, photo by author*



was equally terrified, but it was somehow invigorating. My only thought was to keep going up and feel the air higher and higher. Why do the things I am sensing now make me perceive it in a way I didn't expect? The sharp bare rocks violently shooting straight up surrounding me on all sides, were being chiseled at this very moment, and every following second the wind, hail, the abruptly falling rocks had their random yet cyclic say. I reached a little ledge and waited patiently for our lead climber to secure us with ropes and gear from above. Standing there, still, I gazed at the absolutely sublime spectacle of forces. The emotion it evoked was mysterious and powerful. It left me inspired and as I tilted my head left to right, I hoped to preserve a mental picture of this moment so I can retain it in my memory.

The perfect moment I had on the top of that mountain makes me think back – I dissect the way it made me feel. Why did it make me feel so tiny yet so charged? And why did the tunnels press me down and compress me inward and make me feel so helpless. If I have to be honest, I would say it was all me. The mountain represented to me an external power, unyielding, unstoppable, magnificent, mysterious force. And there I was – a little speck of blue and white, scraping my nails on the ice-cold rocks, proving that I can do it. Is that it? Well as it turned out I can do it,

FIG 205. Approach to Batian's climb start, day four, 5:30am, photo by author

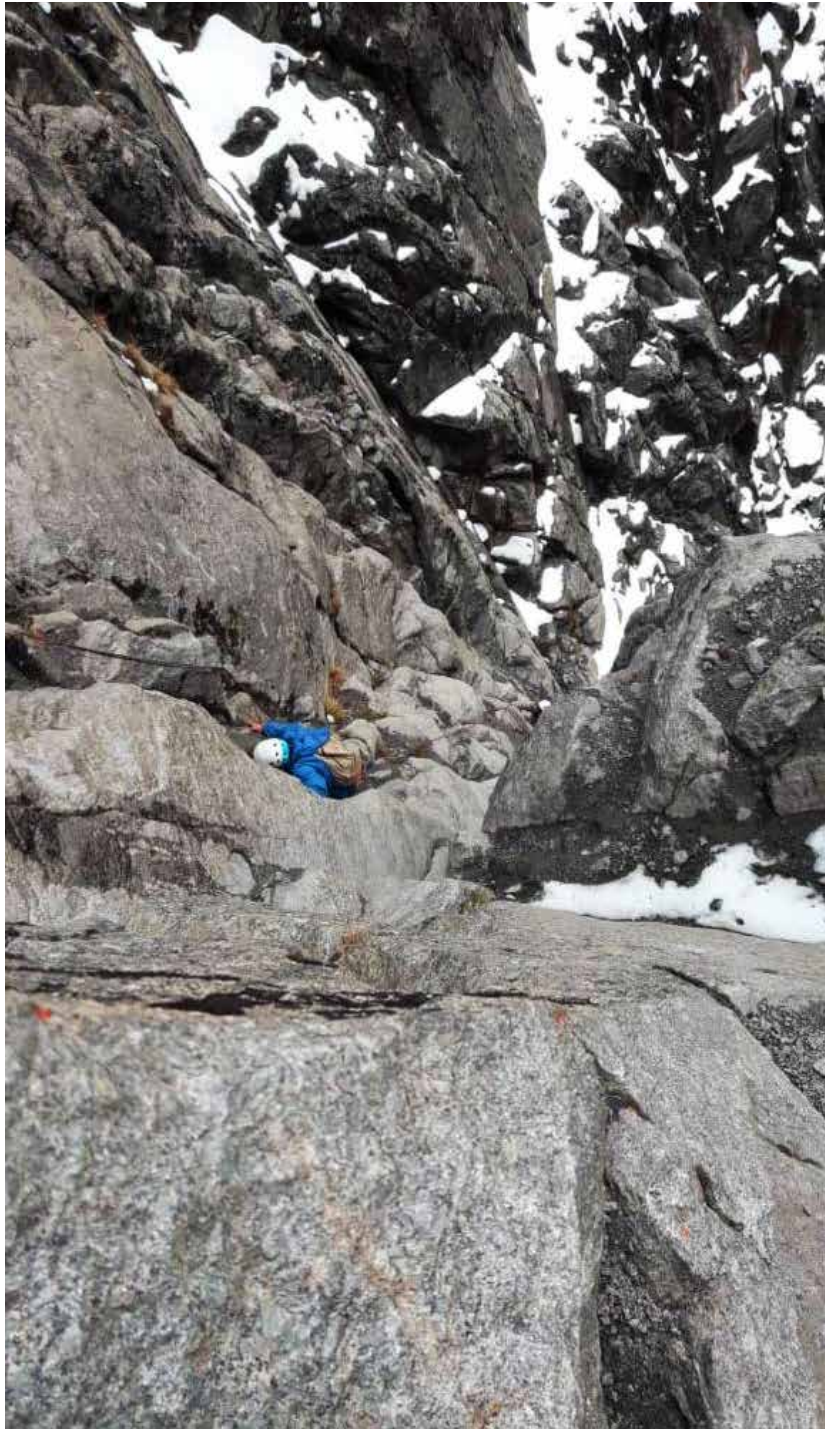


FIG 206. *Mount Kenya technical climb up Batian's Northern face, day four, 12:30pm, photo by the mountaineering guide Duncan*

and so what? I vividly recall the doubts in my mind, the frozen fingers, scratched nails, and the heaviness in my chest but with a lightness in my heart. I wanted to climb, to risk everything, because it made me feel powerful, a conqueror of my own fears. I can persevere. In the blackest of the dark tunnels, my fears were taking over me; thoughts of death, torture, and isolation, flooded with an electric current, intertwining with a network of random thoughts; what I ate that morning, the shoes I chose to wear, and figuring out the colour of a dead cat's corpse I was stepping over, wondering how it died there? How many people have walked these corridors and were they as afraid as I was? And it struck me, suddenly, like ice cold water down my spine as if someone was pulling a bad prank. The tunnels were man made. Of course, that is no significant revelation, out of this context. But it was significant for me. The difference between my fear on the mountain and my fear in the tunnels was that the first one was this external chaotic uncontrollable unpredictable yet regenerative force, and the second was a product of a human force, body and mind, that it is, or it could be as equally a product of my own mind and hands. And if I could have been a part of the building of the tunnels and the monument which cuts a wound into Bulgarian history, could I have been a part of something even more terrible – a predator as much as a victim. These thoughts were tearing my soul into tiny pieces, floating around, never intending to come back to where they started off. It would have been so convenient to say to myself – “these life sucking tunnels were built by terrible men,



the monument was designed and built by the mysterious group of forces behind the Soviet Union. What kind could envision these building blocks for destruction of lives and oppression of bodies? The human kind. Was it worth causing so much pain? And if it was human to loathe, to fear, to hurt, to create as well as to destroy, then I had to stop chasing these mysterious outer forces and focus my attention on the ones that are inside me. If I am to oppose any dominant, oppressive power, then I have to begin with my own destructive dominator that tries to oppress me from within— the quiet and persistent voices of past generations, lodged in the deep creases of my psyche, which through this study I wish to release.

FIG 207. *Return from Batian, running down a scramble, day four, 5:00pm, photo by author*

CONCLUSION



Esplanade
Presents

da:ns festival

TANZTHEATER WUPPERTAL PINA BAUSCH
Nelken (Carnations)
A piece by Pina Bausch

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0:11 / 0:40



FIG 208. Pina Bausch, *Nelken*, performed October 13 to October 16, 2016, Esplanade Theatre, Montréal, YouTube video, screenshot (00:11), posted by Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, "da:ns festival 2016 | Nelken (Carnations) (13 - 16 Oct)" July 26, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=JuBwryZvtO&feature=emb_title







FIG 209. *A bird's flight over the East wing of Friendship Monument*

I have been thinking about Pina Bausch – a German dancer and choreographer – and her choreography of “Nelken” (Pink Carnations).¹ Whilst drawing parallels between the refrain of the Friendship Monument – its cycles, its territory, milieus and rhythms – and the dance-theater “Nelken” I start to see a pattern. The play takes place in a field of pink carnations covering the stage, followed by dance performances by multiple actors exploring power relations. A key moment is when a female dancer wearing stilettos, briefs, and an accordion across her naked torso walks the field of pink carnations. Both, the monument and the play, have a recurring theme – the display of power relationships or the relative power one human has over another.

¹ Pina Bausch. *Nelken*. performed October 13 to October 16, 2016. Esplanade Theatre, Montréal. YouTube, 00:10. posted by Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, “da:ns festival 2016 | Nelken (Carnations) (13 - 16 Oct),” July 26, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=JuBwruyZvtQ&feature=emb_title.

"Female figures cast in concrete. A shadow of a bird flies behind the flower behind the woman's ear, to her cheek, down over the chin and disappears as it grazes by the left shoulder and the chest. The sounds of crickets rush between green grass blades, saturate the air, and roll up the slopes below the their feet. The harsh noon sun passing over, forever drawing shadows on the concrete figure's faces, rendering their eyes looking up dark and deep. The brighter the day the darker and sharper the shadows are. Their eyes struggling to remain a stable center of the unstable chaos. Their hands frozen in time – forever giving.

The rhythmic dance of the milieu – a frame of emotions interacts with the chaos and brings the unconscious to consciousness.

There is a woman marching on the grass slowly stepping over the flowers – some get crushed. She looks down with concern. She is wearing an accordion across her chest, and while holding the musical keys, strides in her high heels through the field of pink carnations, but she isn't playing a melody. She is the melody – the sounds of her concerns and her fears. The flowers underneath her feet reveal the dance of her emotions as they move fluidly through her existence without a rest.

Pushing her limits with increasing intensity, without progression, only episodes of expression, in smooth, and continuous, not homogeneous, pursuit of catharsis."

When encountering an overpowering authority, how do I recognize and find the strength to counter it?

As a memoir of my subjective views and stories, I relate to a larger trauma on a national scale. I hope that if I learn how to continuously heal and to detect and undermine a predatory power, I can translate that into my work as an architect. I used to view my family's stories with sadness and resignation. After this research my eyes are still sad but now I have angry glasses on. My view ranged from opaque smoky-grey to crystal clear.

The examination and critique of this Soviet-era monument and the spaces within it have provided me with a comprehensive context within which I am able to reconnect with my family and to communicate with my ancestors in a way that honours their memory and helps me come to terms with my own past. People whose living connections to their past have been severed by political upheaval and personal tragedy, have a great need to fill the blank spaces of their identity with context that gives meaning to their fractured history. As someone with such a history I find that the Park-Monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship is exactly such a touchstone of symbolism, meaning, and context.

Throughout this project, my process was supported greatly by the concepts developed by Deleuze and Guattari. The concepts of 'territorialization,' 'the refrain,' and James E. Young's 'counter-monument,' guided my explorations and experiments. Studying the refrain, was my pursuit of a change, the difference in the always reoccurring cycles. Applying the concepts of 'percept' and 'affect,' I found

a direction in my methodology – to strive for Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘bloc of sensation.’ This process allowed me to understand how to apply their terminology and their method to approaching architecture, especially monumental architecture. It allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the array of methodology with which to interpret and analyze this monument and to be able to achieve a fuller image of the totality of its meaning.

I started out with curiosity and a rough idea of a final result. Each stage of the research and the making was informed incrementally as I was leaning and applying concepts until the end result was no longer the goal. New directions were revealed. I discovered unexpected outcomes; the ways in which thoughts and imagination drifts into unfamiliar territory, triggered by simple actions, such as listening to the sounds a latex cast makes.

This process or reconstruction of identity may prove to be a long one, but I hope that for me the journey of discovery never stops.

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