

Flóra Perényi **Collective graveyard
memorials** – presenting the methodology
of an architectural study through
three examples from Budapest
Thesis book

Supervisor:

Árpád Szabó DLA

Budapest University of Technology
and Economics, Faculty of Architecture,
Doctoral School of Architecture

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Summary

The primary goal of this dissertation is the presentation of the architectural characteristics of a special group of memorial architecture, the collective graveyard memorials. The characteristic feature of the works analysed is that they have a dual behaviour, because they provide space for both individual and collective commemoration, and they function as both real or symbolic tombs and memorials. The objects analysed tell stories from the past and aim to shape the future, and therefore the symbols, theatricality and use of space they carry go beyond the architectural style.

The paper looks closely at three examples from the 20th century, seeking to answer the question of how relevant the architectural representation of memorials built in a different style but similar genre is today, what messages they carry and whether they can convey these messages to visitors. The language of form, legibility and perception of these works varies due to different aesthetic and ideological intentions and our constantly changing attitude to the past, therefore the thesis does not attempt to compare examples but to look at them in parallel according to a set of criteria.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters: an introduction describing the subject choice and its actuality, a second chapter explaining the cemeteries and memorials as a separate entities and their historical interconnection, a third, longest section analysing in detail the methodology and the three main works, and a conclusion.

The actuality of the topic is primarily due to the fact that, although the role of monument architecture in the national professional discourse is growing, the group of sites referred to as collective cemetery memorials is not yet a published, less representative part of it - the thesis attempts to fill this gap. In addition, the first chapter also contains an overview of the definition of remembrance in relation to architecture, with a brief extract of the terms on which the thesis will build.

The second chapter outlines the historical phases, changes and present-day image of the two components of the collective graveyard memorial - memorial architecture and European cemeteries - that are relevant to this study. To conclude the chapter and introduce the three case studies discussed below, the evolution of collective cemetery memorials and the relevant architectural works that belong to the common set of the two entities mentioned above are discussed. The first thesis is linked to this, and sets out in general the characteristics of this specific category of memorials.

After a conceptual and historical overview, the third chapter deals with the main body of the dissertation.

After presenting the three aspects of the criteria – dramaturgy, legibility, transience – and analysing them, the paper first presents in detail the plots of the Holocaust Monument in Kozmai Street Cemetery, then the Labour Movement Pantheon in the Fiumei Road Cemetery, and finally the plots of the New Public Cemetery, named National Park of Mourning. The examination of all three case studies is similar in terms of the textual structure, the unified visual and graphic presentation, and the linocuts related to the dramaturgical aspect.

To complement the illustrations placed in the textual part of the study, the archival documentation for each monument is included in a separate appendix.

The summary draws conclusions about the monuments according to each of these aspects, examining separately dramaturgy, legibility and ephemerality - each of which is summarised in a thesis. The fifth thesis, which concludes the final chapter of the dissertation, summarises the relevance of the three works from a present perspective.

In choosing the topic, it was also important to link the dissertation to my own practice, to start to explore issues and to summarise the researched material as a study, which are compatible with my personal interests and reflected in my professional work. The works that are related to the present study, dealing with memorials, will be presented as collected works as the masterpiece of the thesis.

Thesis (1) **Collective graveyard memorials can be defined as a genre in their own right, because on the one hand, like public memorials, they have an ideological or communal narrative, but on the other hand, they also provide a space for another, more direct, private commemoration created by the gravesites. This dual behaviour amplifies the message of the memorial and makes it more personal.**

The first thesis introduces the notion of collective cemetery memorials in general, introducing the genre of case studies analysed in the third, main chapter of the dissertation.

The discussed graveyard memorials do not only process an event or a trauma, but also function as burial sites associated with individuals, thus distinguishing them from public and cemetery memorials; the thesis formulates this difference.

Thesis (2) **A specific aspect of collective cemetery memorials is the spatial dramaturgy that characterises the genre. Due to the location of the memorial, it is both an entry from the city into the cemetery and a preparation on the way to the memorial, which marks the beginning of the process of commemoration, and also to convey the narrative of the spatial arrangement and accessibility of the composition of the work.**

The thesis is a summary of the dramaturgical approach to the three aspects.

Based on the analysis of the collective graveyard memorials discussed in this dissertation, dramaturgy can be divided into two parts: on the one hand, it represents the spatial sequences of processes that take place from the city to the memorial, and on the other hand, it represents the architectural elements responsible for the storytelling and the creation of illusion in the spaces and details of the composition.

In the example of the Holocaust Monument, dramaturgy can be described as a permanent adjective because, although the cemetery location plays an important role, there has been no major rearrangement of the immediate and wider context of the monument since its installation. Similarly, the wider cemetery setting of the Labour Movement Pantheon is permanent, but the changes in the graves and the urns in the Mausoleum bring the dramaturgy to the fore and amplify it. The National Park of Mourning is dynamic in both aspects:

the length and diversity of the cemetery section and the constant rearrangement of the plots and their elements.

Thesis (3) **If not enough time has passed between the installation of the collective graveyard memorial and the triggering event to allow the trauma to be processed, the memorial itself often remains narrative-less, silent, its legibility and interpretability remains at the level of simple communication.**

Keeping in mind the physical and contextual aspects of legibility, the analysis of the case studies shows that there may be a correlation between the time elapsed between the event that triggered the work (trauma, grief, movement) and the construction of the work, and between legibility. The examples analysed show that the shorter the period between the event and the construction, the less able the monument is to accommodate free, diverse visitor narratives.

Kozma Street is one of the first European memorials to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and the names, dates, symbols and inscriptions on it all clarify the message, leaving little room for visitors' own interpretation. The Labour Movement Pantheon is still legible when viewed from the present, but as time goes by, it fades, the specific quotations, scenes of battle and labour symbols become less interpretable, becoming empty decoration. The strong narrative character of the parcels of the National Park of Mourning can be observed in the architectural elements and their legibility, on the one hand, and in the relationship between the parcels, in their historical layering, on the other.

Thesis (4) **The collective graveyard memorials that show the least signs of content ephemerality and thus remain interpretable to a wider audience and a different generation are those that work with universal, cultural, artistic or religious references rather than architectural elements defined by political ideologies.**

In summarising the aspect of material and spatial change, ephemerality and permanence of the examples, it can be concluded that the monuments that have the most potential for intellectual permanence are those that bear international precedents and stylistic features that are known to a wider public.

The Holocaust Monument, with its symbols of the Jewish religion and its modern architecture, is able to appeal to a wide range of visitors, and it is this example that demonstrates the most evidence of durability.

The Labour Movement Pantheon, with its socialist realism style, shows signs of ephemerality with the ideological

imagery of a past era and its decaying built heritage. In this respect, the National Park of Mourning is also dual: some of its elements, the universal metaphors behind the neo-avant-garde formal world, can be interpreted by a wider public, while the architectural forms associated with the revolution can be understood by a much narrower audience.

Thesis (5) The public perception of collective graveyard memorials is constantly changing over time and due to differing opinions, with some components becoming stronger or weaker, while the role of the memorial in professional discourse is more stable.

If the primary role of a monument is to shape the future and create illusion, then we can say that a memorial is successful if it has a wide professional and public audience and/or a large public of visitors.

In looking at the architectural representation of each monument, it can be concluded that its architecture has an impact on the degree of publicity and that the degree of publicity generated is roughly constant over time from monument to monument.

The Martyrs' Monument was not part of the national or international discourse when it was built, and this has not changed since. The documentation available on it is mostly limited to archival plans, with no articles on its architecture in contemporary newspapers or online forums.

The Labour Movement Pantheon received a great deal of publicity at the time of its construction; this suddenly ceased after the change of regime, and the negligence around it has affected both the built environment and the ethos of the memorial. In the last 35 years, its role in public life has diminished to a minimum (a few funerals and commemorations), while in professional life it has been more permanent (although this too has faded since the change of regime), and articles on its architecture and historical context continue to occupy the profession to this day.

The National Park of Mourning is the best known of the three because of its historical interweaving. Both the debates and construction around the plots, the tender for the memorial on plot 300 and the sculpture designed by György Jovánovics have been the subject of great professional and public interest.

The impact of the many articles and publications on the subject lasted from the end of the communism until the mid-2000s, making Plot 300 a cult site. For today's generation, the National Mourning Park is less referred to and less known, but its role in professional life is still significant.

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Budapest University of Technology and Economics,
Faculty of Architecture, Doctoral School of Architecture

Author: Flóra Perényi
Supervisor: Árpád Szabó DLA
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