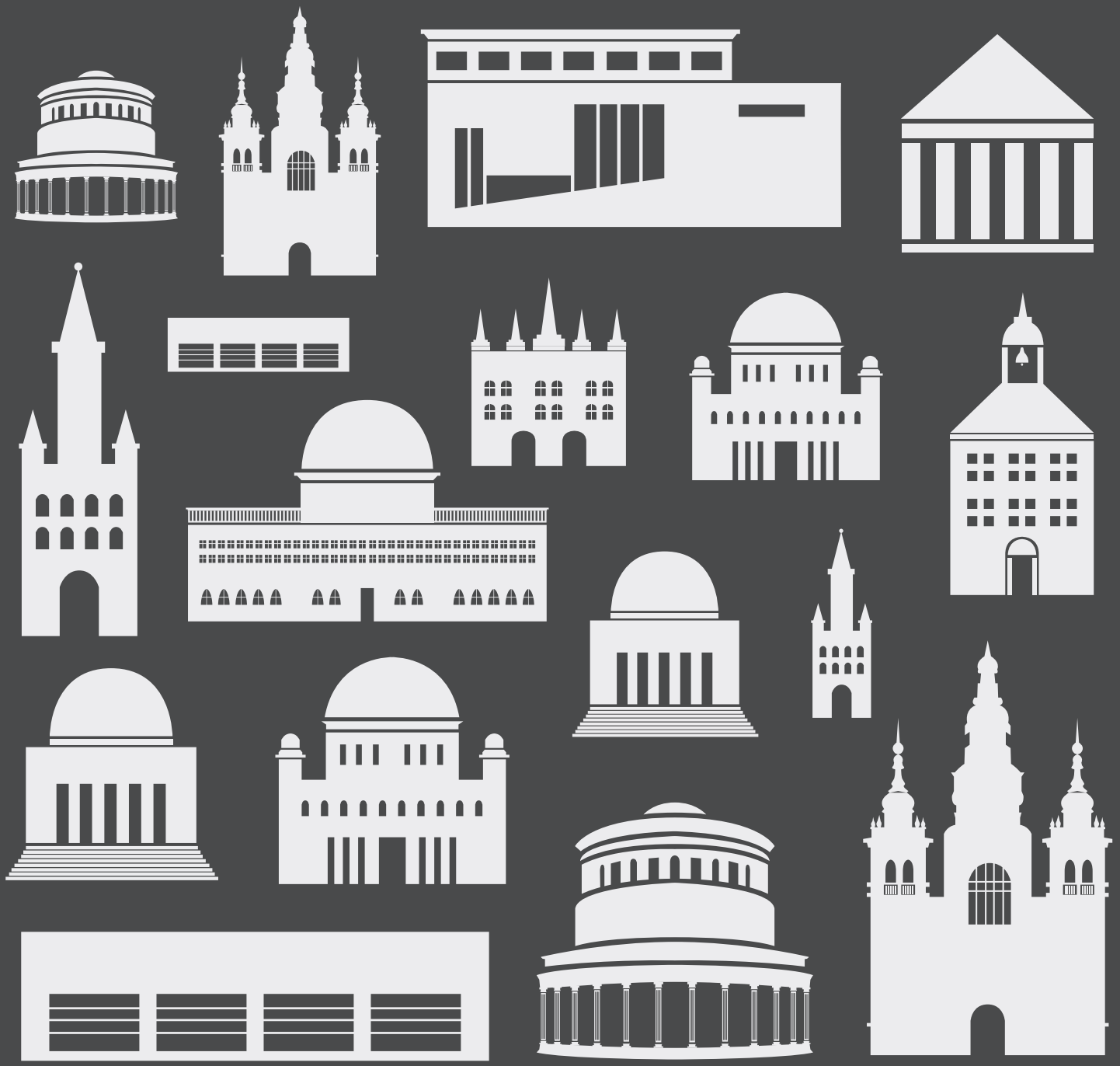

Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010

Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011.

Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds)

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SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME
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Editors
Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius

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National Museums in Serbia: A Story of Intertwined Identities

Olga Manojlović Pintar & Aleksandar Ignjatović

Summary

In our paper, we are analyzing five museums as the comparative objects of research aimed at exploring the processes of identity- and state-building in Serbia over the course of the last two centuries. These museums are: the National Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Yugoslav History, the Museum of African Art, and the Museum of the Victims of Genocide. We defined these museums in terms of the official interpretational discourses and the roles they perform in society both in synchronic and diachronic terms — the latter in particular often being expressed by a range of meanings and functions. These museums have been chosen for closer examination because they represent rather paradigmatic examples of both the institutions and narrative-producers, within the process of identity and state building in Serbia, which have been developed over the course of last two centuries. We analyzed the periods of nineteenth century nation-state building, as well as the twentieth century formation of Yugoslavia and the construction of socialism. Special attention, however, was put on contemporary Serbian society and the relationships between the museum protagonists and museum narratives. Surely, an integral part of the research includes a number of changes and transitions within museum policies and narratives, along with hidden, 'deaf' historical events or cultural phenomena that have not been represented in Serbian museums so far.

The main analytical points and conclusions of the research are: the national museums in Serbia have played important roles within the complexity of representational discourse, which included the nation-building processes. Museum practices constructed national identity as a multifaceted entity, being based on a variety of perspectives: historical, archaeological, ethnological, anthropological, artistic and geographical. However, the museums have produced changeable visions of collective identity, mainly as a result of ideological and political context. Yet museum practices have not merely reflected certain ideological frameworks and political realities, but rather represented constitutive elements of ideological and political context.

Secondly, our analysis is based on a wider understanding of the term 'national museum' and the explanation of the museum network in Serbia, as a complex, interdependent system of policies and narratives, which have a crucial role in the process of identity-building in Serbia. The network has been structured according to the simultaneity of several metanarratives: revolution, state-building, modernization/Europeanization, national authenticity/indigenousness, etc.

Finally, our analysis shows that museum policies and narratives have been based on three general paradigms related to nation- and state-construction processes, each of them being heavily dependent upon interpretational discourse and firmly anchored to ideological and political context. The first one is the paradigm of exceptionalism and uniqueness; the second is the one that supports a rather mediatory concept of national identity, and the third paradigm establishes new interpretations of different historical processes.

Summary table

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
The National Museum	1844	1844	Princely collections and State	State	Archaeology, Art, Visual and Material Culture	National (Serbian/Yugoslav) and international	Prehistory to the present day	Neo-Renaissance style in the central square of Belgrade.
The Museum of Contemporary Art	1962	1959	State	State	Art	Yugoslav narratives until 1991 and Yugoslav as well as international after 1991	20th c.	Modern style located in prominent position in New Belgrade.
The Museum of African Art	1977	1977	Originally private collection, municipality and State	Municipality, State	Art and Material Culture	Traditional and modern African	19th c. to the present	Modern style in the elite residential district in Belgrade.
The Museum of the Victims of Genocide	1995	1992	State	State	Documentary Center	Serbian	WWII onwards	Former bank, modern style in Belgrade.
The Museum of Yugoslav History	1996	1996	State	State	Visual and Material Culture	Yugoslav	20th c.	Former May 25th Museum, modern style, prominent position in elite residential district, Belgrade.

Introduction

The development of the Serbian national consciousness on the territories of the Habsburg Empire was formulated on the tide that swept across Europe in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. As with all other national ideas grounded in the belief of self exclusivism and uniqueness, the ideology of Serbian nationalism was based on two pillars: building the distance from the negative 'other' and restoring/inventing the memory based on the glorious and martyring past, i.e. on the tripartite narrative on the 'Golden Age' — rise, fall and resurrection (Smith 2003). The basic principles of this process were producing a sense of uniqueness and a feeling of collective endangerment, which strengthened ties among the representatives of the social and intellectual elite of ethnic Serbs, connecting them with the parts of other ethnic groups with whom they shared the same territories (Ćirković 2004). The process of construction of Serbian national identity was based on the concept of nation as the community of common language, culture and history. Its wide reception was encouraged and promoted through numerous cultural projects and institutions, directly influencing and reshaping political realities and processes, not only in parts of the southern Hungary, but in the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire (especially the Belgrade Pashaluk).

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Serbian vernacular culture was presented in the wider European framework through the recognition of cultural and linguistic reformers (in the first place Vuk Stefanović Karadzić). In the complex mosaic of European cultures, Serbian vernacular heritage attracted the interest of the romanticists, influencing gradual affirmation of the Balkan national movements, as well as slow delegitimization of the Turkish rule on the Balkans. These phenomena took part simultaneously with the political and cultural decline of the Ottoman Empire. The entropy of the empire, which was most glaring on its periphery, influenced instabilities in the Belgrade Pashaluk for decades. Such a situation opened space for numerous separatist attempts of local dignitaries and their direct confrontation with the central government in Istanbul. This was the context of the outbreak of the First and the Second Serbian Upheavals, which primarily represented the attempt to stabilize political and social life in this Ottoman province on the periphery of the empire. Such cultural and political complexity marked most of the nineteenth century development of Serbia. Once interpreted through the prism of national ideology, the First and the Second Serbian Upheavals acquired quite new political meanings. The processes of Serbian political autonomy recognition inside the Ottoman Empire and the constitution of the modern statehood went simultaneously with the process of national consciousness strengthening and expansion. The representation of the uniqueness and ancientness of Serbian community was emancipated in the region of southeast Europe as part of the wider phenomena of that period, which promoted ideas of freedom, brotherhood and equality and endorsed secularization. The main aim of the elite of the Serbian principality, which received formal autonomy inside the Ottoman Empire in 1830, was to make Serbia the Piedmont of the South Slavs. This political idea, which was based on the assumptions of the linguistic and cultural similarities of South Slavs, led to the formation of different political ideologies that burst after the collapse of both the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires.

The period of gradual expansion of the Serbian political autonomy within the Ottoman Empire lasted more than six decades (the length of time that passed since the outbreak of the

upheavals until the Berlin Congress of 1878 when Serbia was officially recognized as an independent state). During that period, Serbia had actively directed development of the national idea through the rudimentary network of cultural institutions. The expansion of the Serbian national idea was primarily related to the Habsburg territories of the Military Frontier, which for centuries had represented a restless and fluctuating space of borderlands — the space of constant conflicts between two universal empires. The rather long distance from Turkey, which symbolized the Orient in Europe during the whole of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, influenced a radical breakup with the Ottoman legacy and its fierce suppression. This was the main reason for strong avoidance by the Serbian public to include the centuries of common experience as an integral part of the history of the nation. Namely, it was Turkey that was perceived as the negative 'Other' in opposition to whom the new collective identity was created. This was the reason for its selective representation during the last two centuries.

On the other hand, events involving the Serbian national movement inside the Habsburg Empire influenced its direct confrontation with Hungarian nationalism as the main obstacle for the establishment of cultural and political autonomy of Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1848, the Serbian Principality of Vojvodina, while created in the territories historically marked as the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen, was never erased from the Serbian collective memory as a form of Serbian statehood in the Habsburg Empire, actively communicating with the idea of Serbian political and state independence south of the Sava and Danube rivers. This principality was quickly proclaimed, and soon after abolished (Popović, 1990).

Ever since the recognition of Serbian state independence, and especially after the proclamation of kingdom status in 1882 and the introduction of laws on obligatory military service and compulsory primary education, the period of expansion of the Serbian national idea had started (Hoch's "phase C"). The aspirations of the military and political elite for expansion of the state and the 'unification of all Serbs' provoked political tensions between Belgrade and Vienna. In such a situation, the pro-Austrian politics of the Obrenović royal dynasty were replaced by the new politics characterized by the close connections with the Entente powers. Ever since the Austro-Hungarian empire occupied (1878) and annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908) — the Ottoman province that has been claimed by many Serbian nationalists as Serbian national territory — the new objects of interest became the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. The 1903 coup d'état in Serbia and the inauguration of king Petar I Karadjordjević introduced a new political discourse sharply marked by expansion towards the southern parts of the Peninsula.

During the First Balkan War in 1912, in alliance with the other Balkan nations, Serbia had gained territories of Kosovo that were considered in Serbian national mythology as the cradle of the Serbian medieval state and the very place of its tragic defeat in 1389. A year later, the Second Balkan War led to the demarcation with Bulgaria and conquest of the Vardar river valley (present-day Macedonia). Completely exhausted with the huge human losses, Serbia was not prepared for the continuation of the wars with its imperial enemies in order to take over the territories that were claimed as 'national'. However, Serbia was placed in the middle of the conflict, which occurred after the assassination of the archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28th, 1914. Members of the Young Bosnia movement (declared Serbian and Yugoslav nationalists) responsible for the assassination provoked Vienna to declare war on Serbia,

considering it responsible for the horrible crime. A chain reaction started and, in just one month's time, the entire world was facing the biggest war in its modern history (Mitrović, 2007).

The end of the four-year long war brought radical changes to the Balkans. The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was created and a decade later it was renamed as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The ideology of Yugoslavism gave a new framework to the collective consciousness. From one point, Yugoslavism represented an idealistic narrative aimed at legitimization of the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire and the unification of the culturally close national groups — Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. On the other hand, Yugoslav ideology represented a sort of blind curtain, behind which was hidden a pragmatic idea of national exclusivity, whereby Yugoslavism represented an initial but simultaneously decisive phase on the road to national state formation. Although the ideology of Yugoslavism represented a platform for the south Slav's unity, it brought Yugoslav exclusivism into the public space, which created strong opponents shortly after its establishment and expanded a whole range of political and ideological adversaries. Faced with complex internal disagreements, Yugoslavia tried to secure its position in Europe in the aftermaths of the Second World War by the introduction of the politics of neutrality. However, those efforts did not succeed and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia disintegrated briefly under the fascist attack on April 1941.

The Second World War represented the bloodiest historical event ever held in the Yugoslav territories. Nevertheless, the new political regime, established soon after the end of the war, tried to use the heavy burden of war as the precondition for a new unity and the guarantor of a more secure future. Yugoslav socialism, which developed in direct opposition to Stalin and the USSR, brought extensive modernization, induced the idea of the equality of the classes and sexes, and last but not least, brought equality to all nations through the concept of state federalization. However, economic instabilities and complex political manipulations, culminating after the fall of socialism in Europe, induced the final breakup of the socialist Yugoslav state. In the last decade of the twentieth century, during the period of European unification, the ex Yugoslav territories were marked by cruel wars in which millions of people were displaced and hundreds of thousands killed. Although mainly interpreted as an unsuccessful historical experiment, the Yugoslav experience left a rich heritage for the future. Not even the wars, in which the Yugoslav legacy and socialist traditions were suppressed, succeeded in erasing them.

The fall of Slobodan Milosevic's regime in 2000 did not bring an undisputable breakup with the legacy of nationalism. The unsolved problems of Yugoslav and socialist heritage, as well as public avoidance in facing the burden of the 1990s, further complicated the search for a new identity in the post Yugoslav context. Consequently, the question: whether the experience of the 'Serbian dominated twentieth century' would produce a critical consciousness about the (re)construction of other, not exclusively national political and cultural concepts, is still waiting for an answer. Perhaps the prospect of being a full member of the European Union will bring these questions and answers into a more responsible context.

National museums and cultural policy in Serbia

The complex, and often traumatic, development of the Serbian national identity and the state can be traced in various representations of the past in the public space. Constantly changing cultural policies have reflected and, at the same time, constituted political instability in Serbia since the

beginning of the nineteenth century. The integral part of each and every cultural policy has represented the institutions of museums, many of which had important roles in the construction of the idea of national unity and identity. In a certain sense, like in other European states of the time, museums acted as strong instruments in both the creation and dissemination of the sense of belonging to a community, one that shared the same culture and history. Regardless of the type of museum and narrative focus (cultural history, natural history, ethnography, art, archaeology), they promoted the idea of national unity defining both temporal and territorial boundaries of the nation. During the period of the autonomous Serbian principality and kingdom (from 1830 to 1918), museums took active part in the promotion of Pan Slavic and Yugoslav ideas that would eventually led to the creation of Yugoslavia.

Despite different historical periods and ideological backgrounds, the main actors leading the museum institutions and creating their policies were always standing close to the centers of political power. In most of the cases, the museums in Serbia were inaugurated and owned by the state, whilst their main protagonists had always been high-ranked state employees.

Our analysis examines two paths — the one leading to formative and transformative events in each museum's history seen from the perspective of an identity-construction process, including the processes of the fusion of different museums, their official renaming, reconstructions, adaptations, etc. while another path traces the museums' position in contemporary society and the ways in which the so-called museum network creates and supports the social framework of contemporary Serbia. We studied cultural policies of the museums and the formation of the cultural policy of the state by raising several questions: which different groups in the society (in terms of global and local framework) were included in the process? How have museum policies and narratives dealt with the issue of democratization, nationalism and supra-national identity (the question of Yugoslav but also European identity), which in Serbia, has been mainly perceived through the lens of an East/West dichotomy? Also, we intended to relate changes in museum practices and narratives with the major shifts of dominant political and ideological discourses and the 'shared heritage' (of Yugoslavism, socialism, communism, Europeanism, etc.).

Firstly, we included the question of museum narratives and their relation with the Europeanization agenda primarily in the analysis of the National Museum in Belgrade and its shifting narrative paradigm. Another example was the Museum of Contemporary Art that has been constantly producing supra-national and pro-European narratives since simultaneously opening in 1965 with the national museum. At the same time, we were questioning the perception and the meaning of the terms 'Eastern' and 'Western Europe' in Yugoslavia during the period of the Cold War, as well as the term 'Third World', by analyzing the Museum of African Art. We emphasized the position of the Non-Aligned movement in the process of Yugoslav identity making. Apart from this, there is certainly a great potential for the museums that we are taking into the focus to become the 'authors' of new European narratives.

Analyzing the work of the Museum of Yugoslav History, which was created by fusing the Memorial Center "Josip Broz Tito" and the Museum of Revolution, we traced the position and the importance of museums as cultural institutions and their place in the numerous rituals that constituted the process of collective identity construction during the socialist period. By pointing to the museum of Josip Broz Tito as 'the final destination' for all the batons as well as thousands of the individual and collective presents and gifts sent to the Yugoslav president, we focused

attention on the complex relationship between the leader and the community, which we find of a great interest for our research. In contrast to that example, we were studying the marginal position of the art salons and festivals organized in museum institutions and their inability to influence the creation of a collective identity today.

Finally, when coming to the memory wars, our intention was to present the process of slow, but complete petrifaction of the museum institutions during the last two decades of the twentieth century. As silent observers, and only rarely the active transformers of society, museums have lost their constitutive position in the state. However, even this lack of cultural policy was reflected in the position of the museums as they obtained a specific social catalyst role by becoming part of a broader ideological framework. Our special attention was on contemporary museum practices by the Museum of Genocide and the museums in small local communities in Serbia where such memory wars were most obvious. A significant shift of museum policies and narratives is visible from a victorious to martyr narrative that mainly follows the Yad Vashem model. In other words, there is a shift from multinational and supra-ethnic Yugoslav to different national and ethnic narratives, i.e. appropriation and reinterpretation of museum artifacts (the same that we partly analyzed in regards to the reversal process that characterized the creation of Yugoslav master narratives both in 1918 and 1945 in the National Museum). We marked the transformation of the socialist revolutionary narrative into the new framework insisting on the individualization of the victim.

On March 11, 2006, Slobodan Milošević died in his prison cell in Sheveningen. Four days later, his body was transported to Belgrade and exposed for public mourning. Since almost every official institution in Serbia refused to host the coffin, the government was forced to proclaim a decree ordering where it should be placed. The final decision was: the hall of the Museum of Yugoslav History, regardless of the management's disagreement. Until March 18th, a series of commemorations organized by Milošević 's Socialist Party of Serbia had been performed in Belgrade and Požarevac, a small town in the east of the country - both his birth and burial place. These events symbolized a wide range of ideological concepts and historical narratives that had marked Serbian society since the final decade of the twentieth century. Oddly enough, these concepts and narratives were gathered around the Museum of Yugoslav History.

What were the reasons for such a decision? One can assume that the answers could be recognized as formal, since the place in which the body was displayed had a number of connotations. Firstly, the main museum building is situated in close vicinity to the House of Flowers - Josip Broz Tito's burial site. Secondly, it overlooks the house where Milošević was arrested and then deported to the Central Prison in Belgrade and, subsequently, to The Hague in 2001. Finally, this district of Belgrade - Dedinje and Topčider Hill - represented a residential quarter of the Yugoslav and Serbian elite, including both Tito and Milošević.

Nevertheless, the most intriguing aspect of such an unusual decision was the wide public perception of the museum itself. This institution was conceived as one of the central and monumental narratives of socialist Yugoslav history. During the Communist era, it functioned as a prominent place of pilgrimage for many Yugoslavs. Since 1991, the museum has been gradually fading to oblivion and its original significance has been widely ignored. Thus, the phenomenon of exhibiting Milošević's dead body in a museum could be understood as a certain form of

official break-up with both socialism and Yugoslavia. Having been seen by his political enemies not only as a war criminal, but also as the last symbol of socialism and Yugoslavia (defined by Serbian nationalists as the two biggest threats, illusions and mistakes of the nation), Milošević finally and literally became an artifact exhibited in a museum dedicated to socialist Yugoslavia. Four days later, when his body was transferred to Požarevac and buried behind the walls of his private house, it became a symbolic gesture aimed at making a move towards the Serbian twentieth century. The private character of Milošević's funeral, with music of the Russian *Ryabinuska* that echoed in the courtyard of his family house, seemed to have privatized the ideas of Yugoslavia and socialism, taking them away from the public eyes. How and why was the museum so easily transformed into a funeral chapel? Was it only a mere reflection of the trend of rejecting twentieth century universalistic ideals represented by the Museum of Yugoslav History, along with distancing itself from any mention of Yugoslavism? Namely, parts of the Serbian political and intellectual elite embraced an entirely different set of meanings and values. Public discourse had gradually become exclusively oriented towards ethnocentrism and, not surprisingly, clericalism. The process of gradual transition and transformation of society, however, comprised a new set of universal values as well, symbolized by the ideas of European integrations and liberal globalization. The fact that post-Milošević Serbia had fully embraced the new political culture was evident in the event of the funeral of the Serbian Patriarch in November 2009. It seems that this event introduced a new chapter in the political transition of Serbia.

This example was aimed at presenting the current state of museum practice in Serbia, where the question of the main museums, as the 'places of memory' is highly intriguing. The fact that there is no permanent exhibition in any of the major museums, and that many of them are closed to the public seems very symptomatic. This odd fact might not be founded only in the partial and confusing overlapping conceptions of the key national museums (the National Museum, the Historical Museum of Serbia); in the lack of permanent exhibition policy (the National Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art), or in a rather controversial policies of some of these institutions (the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, the Military Museum). Last but not least, there were, and still are, permanent although not always direct attempts at suppression of some of these museums. In this way, the social and ideological position, as well as the significance of the major museums in Serbia, represent the obvious testimony to the lack of ideological consensus, along with the contemporary complexity of interpretational discourse and the identity construction processes.

Our focus was placed on the analysis of processes in the construction of the museum's narratives. A complex Yugoslav heritage as well as confronting and often conflicting attitudes towards recent wars slowed down these processes, so the new historical paradigm is still lacking a broader social consensus. This seemingly odd situation is quite intriguing. The reluctance of museums in Serbia to deal with tangible and problematic issues of both Yugoslav historical legacy and the wars of the 1990s reflects dominant political discourse. Serbia still lacks social consensus, which affects the political status quo regarding its state borders. The representation of the Yugoslav past is firmly linked with the perception of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and their aftermaths. And vice versa, hidden and 'deaf' historical events from the recent past owe their 'invisibility' solely to political amnesia regarding the Serbian role in both the construction and dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia. As a consequence, both Yugoslav history and the Yugoslav

civil war are still a matter of dispute and as such remain inappropriate for public representation in museums.

Over the course of the last two centuries, there has been a parallel existence of historical representations and several modes of identity-construction, all of which could be traced in museum practices and policies in Serbia. During the years of the Yugoslav dissolution, this complexity went even further by producing an anarchy of the museum practices. Unlike numerous examples of the ex-socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe, including some former Yugoslav republics (where the new democracies eagerly rejected the symbols of communism), such symbols in Serbia have been only partially neglected during the last decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, there has been a certain coexistence of numerous concepts of history and historical representation since the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia.

The complexity of representational discourse, which included the nation-building processes, could be seen in the structure of national narratives in Serbia, amongst which museums hold a prominent place. Museum practices, describing national identity as multifaceted entities, were based on a variety of perspectives. These perspectives of national narratives were characterized by profound simultaneity; yet in certain historical periods some of them had more prominent positions in the public discourse, while others were largely marginalized. It is quite common to comprehend the changeable visions of national identity that were produced by museum practices as being the result of ideological and political contexts in which the museums operated. Yet these national narratives do not merely reflect certain ideological frameworks and political realities. On the contrary, museum practices that constantly produce and sustain national narratives are active, constitutive elements of ideological and political context, which is heavily dependent on the means of its cultural representation. In a certain sense, it becomes clear why the place of museums in the establishing of social value-systems and state- and nation-building processes is extremely important and why the role of these institutions cannot be described as a mere representation of the 'social and historical reality'.

Secondly, different perspectives of national narratives are firmly institutionalized through the diverse cultural practices and scholarly disciplines (political history, art history, archaeology, linguistics, ethnography etc.). Through various museum practices, however, national narratives are always produced by the coordination of these focused views that are institutionalized as a network of different museums — of history, art, ethnography, natural history etc. A museum network, however, does not represent a mere sum of different museums which have a particular place in the public discourse, but rather a complex, interactive system where each museum policy and representational paradigm affects another.

At the same time, a variety of perspectives is subordinated by the simultaneity of several metanarratives which govern their constitution and mechanics. As a rule, some of them are mutually exclusive and it is such exclusion that needs to be examined more closely. In what way, for instance, can the variability of ideological constructs in different political systems (nation-state, multinational state, state of socialism etc.) be explained? In which moment, and why, does a certain museum practice — which is governed and supported by a particular metanarrative — begin to transform itself? Is it possible to trace reversible processes where museum practices redefine metanarratives — as, for example, the exhibiting of the art of social realism during 1930s, great exhibitions of European painting in the National Museum in the late 1930s,

transformation of the National Museum narrative in the 1980s, and finally, the shift in representing the socialist revolution that occurred a decade later to suit the reconstitution of the national identity?

Over the last couple of years, the case of the Museum of Yugoslav History has become an extremely symptomatic example of the reversible process, as this museum was transformed into a place where contemporary artists exhibit their experiments. On the other hand, the simultaneity of different metanarratives in the public discourse appears to be only partial as, in diachronic perspective, some of them are usually more dominant and acceptable.

Another important fact is the issue of interpretation of a museum practice. Namely, a historical distance could affect visibility and recognition of certain metanarratives, as it may become more important and relevant if seen from a historical distance rather than from its original context. In other words, there is a multi-level simultaneity of different narrative perspectives and different metanarratives, both of them being characterized by a great complexity which becomes even greater with the interpretation that regulates their correlations. Thus, how does presupposed historical distance transform historical narrative that is produced by museum policies and furthermore; how does it become a starting point in the process of invention of historical continuity? The answer to these questions is difficult and, at the same time, very complex. In the following case studies we have tried to answer some of these questions and to trace a framework of general interpretation regarding multifaceted museum policies in Serbia from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

Case studies

The National Museum in Belgrade: The emancipation of the nation

The National Museum in Belgrade is the oldest and the most important museum in Serbia. The museum has more than 400,000 objects and 34 archeological, numismatic, artistic and historical collections that have been collected since its foundation in 1844 (Popović 1991; Popović and Jevremović, 1991; Kolarić 1991). The official role of the museum as the national institution responsible for collecting, displaying and interpreting the culture of 'Serbia and the region' has not changed since the nineteenth century: "Although the museum and its content have changed considerably since its foundation, its role and purpose have remained constant: the National Museum is dedicated to protection, interpretation and promotion of a multi-layered cultural heritage of Serbia and the region" (the official web-site of the National Museum in Belgrade). With such a policy and mission, marked by the unclear notion of what the 'region' actually is, the National Museum has a number of significant ideological roles and functions that could be analyzed in both diachronic and synchronic terms.

The National Museum is the first institution to start with an institutionalized protection of art treasures in Serbia. The National Museum in Belgrade was founded in 1844 under the auspices of the Serbian Ministry of Education. Initially, the museum was named the Serbian National Museum. The initiator was the minister Jovan Sterija Popović, at the time one of the most outstanding intellectuals and writers, an ardent supporter of the emancipation policy of the Serbian élite that pursued the ideas of enlightenment with a view of turning Serbia into a European state. Having common interests and goals with the National Library of Serbia, the

museum had been integrated within this institution several decades before the division that occurred in 1881. Namely, until then the National Museum and the National Library had been one institution, sharing similar interests and goals. In the years to come, the museum, along with the Naturalist Cabinet of Belgrade University, provided material for the establishment of the Museum of Natural History that was inaugurated in 1895. On the other hand, the separate Ethnographic Department of the museum was founded in 1901, which would, five years later, become the independent Ethnographic Museum of Serbia.

The formative period in the history of the National Museum was marked with enthusiasm: it was the time of the very first archaeological excavations in Serbia (Prehistoric culture of Mount Rudnik, 1865), along with the first major acquisitions of Western European paintings and sculpture (1871).

The first exhibition of the Museum was organized in 1871, when sculptures of Serbian artist Petar Ubavkić were put on public display. Eleven years later, in 1882, the first exhibition of paintings was held and this time on display were the works of the Serbian painter Katarina Ivanović (Timotijević and Mihailović 2004). Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the museum had organized only temporary exhibitions. The first permanent exhibition was ceremonially opened in 1904, displaying works of art that had already been selected for public display and presented in a catalogue published by the museum four years earlier.

Initially, the museum had five collections: 1) Charts; 2) Books (manuscripts and printed books); 3) Old Stamps; 4) Old Serbian Coins; 5) Old Bulgarian Coins. The written evidence reveals the fact that the museum was originally more like a depository than a museum that had a broader social mission. However, the focus of the collection was not only on Serbia but also on the 'Serbian lands' and reveals the underlying nationalistic narrative of the museum, which acted as an important instrument in the cultural legitimization process of the Kingdom of Serbia's expansionistic policy (Sundhaussen 2007; Pavlowitch 2002).

Constantly faced with a lack of funds and suitable space for the permanent exhibition, the museum was initially situated in the headquarters of the Ministry of Education of Serbia. It was only in 1863 that the museum moved to its first building, obtaining all the features of a museum of the time (Popović 1991). In 1868, the art collection of the museum was split into two parts: the first being dedicated to the "artworks of foreign artists", and the second to "exclusively Serbian artworks" which was further organized into four compartments (Mano-Zisi 1964-1965; Popović 1991: 11). In 1881, the National Museum and the National Library became two independent institutions, according to a special law issued by the state that would, a year later, became an independent kingdom. Due to the increase of the collection, which had been particularly enlarged with the acquisition of the Serbian Scientific Society, the museum had to move to a larger edifice in 1893, where it had remained until the First World War. However, the extensive reconstruction process of the acquired building had lasted until 1904, even though the museum had been opened to the general public in 1900 (Valtrović 1905). The new, second ceremonial opening of the museum coincided with the celebration of the centenary of the First Serbian Uprising that was considered a key event in modern Serbian history. That was the time when the policy of the museum significantly changed, at least in terms of representational narrative of the collection, and it was closely connected to the complex and ramified ideology of Serbian nationalism and expansionism. Instead of solely representing the treasures of Serbia and

the 'Serbian lands', the museum proclaimed its ambitious role to become a museum of South Slavs and to pursue the policy of Yugoslavism that could be seen as a mimicking strategy of the Serbian expansionist policy of the time (Djokić 2003; Banac 1988; Lampe 2000; Allcock 2004; Bakić 2004). At the same time, however, Yugoslavism might represent another, more inclusive concept of national identity that was based on the idea of South Slavs as a single nation. Somewhat dissimilar to concept of Serbian ethnocentrism, Yugoslavism sought to forge a new Yugoslav idea and to disseminate it throughout the public arena, deliberately trying to put aside competing national ideologies — foremost, Serbian and Croatian. Consequently, the new ideology that the Serbian elite pursued simultaneously represented a possibility of exclusion and inclusion of the 'others'. It is such complexity that has been perennially concerned with the twentieth-century process of identity-construction in Serbia.

In the years to follow, museum activities were extended and the permanent exhibition of the museum, accompanied by the new catalogue, became one of the most outstanding national narratives representing Serbian culture along with that of South Slavs (Valtrović 1905; Vasić 1908; 1909; 1910; 1911). The new acquisitions from Croatian artists marked the new policy of the museum, as well as an attempt at the creation of a unique "Yugoslav Art Gallery" which had never materialized because of the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and World War I. In the pre-war period (1844-1912), the museum was "marked by 'fatal temporariness', defined by general cultural policy, and scarred by especially turbulent history of the Balkans" (Veličković 1985).

After the First World War and formation of the new state (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, since 1929; the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), the National Museum continued to pursue the same policy of Yugoslavism that became the official ideological agenda of the new state. However, in the new context of Yugoslavia, the museum kept representing the Serbian master narrative of national emancipation along with the cryptic but obvious idea of Serbs as the principal nation of the state, in spite of the officially proclaimed equality between the three South Slavic nations. The place of the museum in the public discourse was consequently kept and the institution continued to support the idea of a rather distinct, historically authentic Serbian identity. The museum simultaneously narrated the history, culture and art of Serbia and Yugoslavia. However, the permanent exhibition and publications were almost exclusively dedicated to Serbian mediaeval culture. The museum played an ambivalent role in society that, actually, was only a reflection of the much broader phenomenon of dual legitimization that permeated Serbian society and politics during the interwar period. At the same time, the museum - with its pro-Serbian narrative - started to become marginalized; which could be explained by the different political context. Faced with a lack of sufficient funds and a suitable exhibiting space, the museum languished in the shadow of negligence during most of the 1920s. The new political élite was trying to invent a proper Yugoslav tradition and the lack of general consensus was vividly reflected in the policy directed towards the National Museum. In 1919, the museum had only two small rooms in a Belgrade gymnasium; in 1922 it was moved into a former private house, provisionally adapted to suit its new purpose and a year later the museum opened to the public (Popović 1991: 20). The Museum continued to primarily support the narrative of the Serbian statehood and historical traditions, and to extensively publish works dedicated to the art of mediaeval Serbia (Petković 1920; 1921; 1924).

In 1930, the name of the museum was changed to the Museum of History and Arts although it was unofficially renamed in 1924 (Petković 1926; 1927; 1931; 1932; 1935). In 1929, a new museum was founded as a branch of the National Museum and yet as an independent institution, named the Museum of Contemporary Art. This meant that the National Museum split its function between two independent but interrelated institutions each dedicated to different representational discourses. While the Museum of History and Arts was mainly focused on the archaeological and art works of the primarily Serbian past, the Museum of Contemporary Art, dedicated to the modern culture of both South Slavs and Europe, was significantly different since it promoted two distinct ideological agendas. The first was to promote the idea of Serbs and all South Slavs as a modern, civilized European nation; another was to promote the aristocratization of the Yugoslav society. Both agendas were driven by the ideology of Europeanization that would become the driving force of the museum's policy in the 1930s. The Museum of Contemporary Art was founded by an act of the Yugoslav Ministry of Education in 1929 in order to "keep paintings, sculptures and other objects of a similar kind, both foreign and national, that belong to contemporary art" (Popović 1991: 21). Behind the decision to support the new museum stood its royal protagonists - King Aleksandar Karadjordjević and, more importantly, his cousin Prince Paul Karadjordjević, an art pundit educated in England (Subotić 2009a; 2009b; 2011). Apart from modern Yugoslav art (of the XIX-XX century), the museum treasured modern European paintings, most of which came from royal gifts and acquisitions.

In 1935, the Museum of History and Arts merged with the Museum of Contemporary Art to become a single institution. Its name was the Prince Paul Museum, named after the king's cousin who was a Yugoslav regent between 1934 and 1941. The museum acquired a new building, the so-called New Court Palace, which had previously been the residence of King Aleksandar Karadjordjević. Between 1934 and 1936, the building was thoroughly reconstructed to rival the best European museums (Ignjatović 2009). The permanent exhibition, encompassing three capacious floors of the building, consisted of the most prominent artworks of both the Museum of History and Arts and the Museum of Contemporary Art, including the gifts from Prince Paul himself and many foreign aristocrats and donors. The exhibited collection of the museum was divided into several sections: the Historical Section (Čubrić 2009), Archaeological Section (Ninković 2009), Mediaeval Section (Preradović 200) and Art Gallery (Ham-Milovanović 2009; Subotić 2011).

The Museum became one of the most fundamental ideological instruments of the Yugoslav régime that monumentalized the desired narrative of the nation. Among several ideological perspectives that the museum fostered, that of Europeanization was the most significant. To represent Yugoslav and Serbian identity as an integral part of European civilization was an ambitious aim supported by the museum's permanent exhibition and various international exhibitions alike: "We finally have a European-style museum, in which monuments and testimonies of our history and culture have been collected with love, refined taste and unprecedented abundance, a museum representative of our history, a museum representative of our country, which, with a respectable, rich and varied series of artworks and historical antiquities, offers a lively and imposing image, evocative of our nation's centurial cultural and artistic achievement, as well as its various antecedents from ancient times, all the way to

prehistoric age or ages whose gloomy remains demonstrate, or at least suggest, the ancient foundations on which our people later resumed building further" (Manojlović 1936: 181-182). The museum's narrative became an integral part of the identity construction process, as it blurred the discrepancies between various ethnic and historical traditions of the constitutive Yugoslav nationalities. Reinforcing the sense of belonging to a common European civilization acted as a suitable framework for the common identity of all South Slavs. The context in which the Prince Paul Museum reached its peak was marked by growing anti-democratic tendencies and a strong propensity for authoritarianism that was quite common among the European states of the time. The Yugoslav regime tacitly disowned integral Yugoslavism, adopting a more pragmatic, *Realpolitik* ideology. The idea of South Slav unity was no longer emphasized and this shift gave credibility to a quasi-federalization of the country (Ignjatović 2010). It was such policy that the museum narrative fostered.

The collections of the museum were constructed to suit the new needs. Local history was reinterpreted and although the Serbian cultural tradition kept its primary role, the museum had in its permanent exhibition archaeological and art treasures originating from all parts of Yugoslavia (Kašanin 1936; 1937; Bošković 1936). These objects, organized in sections and accompanied by the lavishly illustrated catalogue written by the museum's ambitious director Milan Kašanin (Kašanin 1938), represented a persuasive instrument in creating a sense of belonging to European civilization in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. The museum's narrative suggested that Yugoslavs share common heritage with old European nations - from Prehistory to Modern Era - which legitimized the political profile of the state's élite. The permanent exhibition was organized into several sections that showed Serbs and Yugoslavs as a part of the civilized world. These sections were: the Prehistoric Section, the Numismatic Section, the Classical Lapidarium as a part of the Graeco-Roman Section and finally, the Mediaeval and Historical Sections. On the other hand, the understanding of a nation followed the predominant nationalistic canon of the time: European national schools were arranged and displayed as "national schools" of art. The museum displayed the work of art done by German, French, English, Russian, Dutch, Belgian, Bulgarian and Romanian artists in order to "provide clear, comparative evidence of the art tradition of the European nations" (Kašanin 1938: XI).

During the late 1930s, the Prince Paul Museum arranged numerous international exhibitions that further promoted the same ideology of Europeanization, along with the legitimization of both Prince Regent's political aspirations and the shifting and adaptable political course of the Yugoslav régime. These exhibitions were: Exposition de la peinture moderne française (1936), Modern Danish Art (1937), Turkish Paintings and Publications (1937), Romanian Art (1937), Polish Art (1937), Italian Portrait Through the Centuries (1938), The Exhibition of the German Books – "Art and Science" (1938), La Peinture française au XIXe siècle (1939). In terms of the identity construction process, these exhibitions helped to foster the pro-European identity of the nation. At the same time, the museum was important for the construction of an aristocratic identity of the Serbian and Yugoslav royal dynasty Karadjordjević, not only because of its policy, exhibitions and the fact that a significant part of the display was the royal collection, but also due to the fact that the museum building had been the royal residence until 1935. The Royal Collection was initially transferred to the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1926 and thus fused with the Museum of History and Arts into the Prince Paul Museum in 1934. Following the

common pattern of transformation from royal premises into a museum was part of the process in the construction of a common Yugoslav identity and a way for the cultural emancipation of the whole society (Duncan 1995). Namely, the emancipatory role of the ruling royal dynasty of Serbia, which was connected with different royal houses and the aristocracy of Europe through marriages and private relationships, was one of the crucial segments of political and cultural life in Yugoslavia. In this respect, Prince Paul's personal endeavors in supporting culture was a particularly important issue and the inauguration of the Prince Paul Museum was only a part of a much wider cultural policy. On the other hand, cultural representations of the royal dynasty were aimed at the creation of a common image of Yugoslavia, which included the permanent exhibition of the museum with the clear idea that the very institution was created by King Alexander I and Prince Paul,. Its three nations - the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes – were symbolically united by culture and art and represented as truly European. The museum was established in the former royal palace in Belgrade which King Alexander I had dedicated as a royal museum before his assassination in Marseilles in 1934. Apart from that, the museum played an important role in the process of the "aristocratization" of the whole Yugoslav society. "Surrounded by a park", as Irina Subotić put it, "the Prince Paul Museum was similar to other royal collections or princely residences, it evoked the spirit of luxury, an assemblage of values and wealth. It was deliberately engaged in bringing closer to the public the idea of elitism through particular accents and educational presentations of the highest achievements in art and carefully selected segments of history [...] to present the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as a European state of precious old cultures and significant contemporary artistic possibilities" (Subotić 2011: 16). The permanent exhibition of the museum testified that such emancipatory understanding of the role of the Karadjordjević royal dynasty was one of the central aspects of the museum narrative. The museum policy and its permanent exhibition, which displayed the works of European art along with Yugoslav art heritage, accomplished what the Prince Regent had endeavored to realize in the discourse of international politics — to underscore the European character of the Yugoslav state and bring the Yugoslav nation into the family of European peoples. The architectural image of the museum, which was housed in the former royal palace, was yet another segment of the same ideological narrative. The Neo-Classical style of the building represented an ideal cohesive framework that reinforced not only the alleged 'Europeaness' of Yugoslavia and its culture, but also the then dominant variant of the ideology of Yugoslavism that strove to minimize the impact of ethnocentric ideologies. (Ignjatović 2011).

On the other hand, one of the crucial parts of the museum's permanent exhibition was the gallery of aristocratic portraits from two Serbian royal dynasties - Obrenovićs and Karadjordjevićs - crucial not only as national benefactors but also as the epitome of a domestic, indigenous concept of national identity since both royal families had been rooted in Serbia. That means that the dynastical part of national representation was twofold: on the one hand it reinforced the European, civilizational dimension of the identity of Serbs and Yugoslavs; and on the other hand, the dynastical narrative further supported the concept of the indigenous nation, rooted solely in the authentic vision of identity.

After the Second World War, the Prince Paul Museum shared the destiny of the country which was transformed into the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1944 the name of the museum changed into the Museum of Art that was to be renamed yet again as the National

Museum in 1952. Deprived of its former building that was now used by the political establishment of the new state, the museum moved to a new, temporary location but in 1951 the problem of the museum's location was definitely solved and the institution obtained the representative building which had been thoroughly reconstructed to suit the needs of a modern museum. A year later, the renamed museum - now under its original name, the National Museum - was opened to the public (Mano-Zisi 1954). Yet the building was inadequate for the needs of a modern museum and it was only in 1966, after long and thorough reconstruction of a new edifice, that the museum was ceremonially opened with the spectacular exhibition 'Vincent van Gogh'.

The prominent role of the museum was further reinforced by its new main building which, in fact, was the old edifice built in 1903 as the seat of the former Mortgage Bank in the very center of Belgrade. Having been thoroughly reconstructed in 1952 in order to meet the standards of a museum, with exhibition rooms, archives and libraries, the edifice remained one of the most representative examples of academic, Neo-Renaissance architecture in Belgrade. Apart from the museum's narrative, its newly refreshed exterior became yet another symbolic representation of the European identity of the country and its peoples. In 1964-1966, the interior was further remodeled to suit the growing needs of the museum, with colossal caryatides by Ivan Meštrović stationed in the main hall.

The permanent exhibition of the museum was divided into several sections: the Department of Archaeology Collections, the Department of Mediaeval Art, the Department of the Post-Mediaeval and Modern Art, and the Department of the Numismatics (Popović 1991; Mano-Zisi 1964-1965). Since then, the National Museum has grown, owing to its subsidiary museums: in 1973, the Gallery of Frescoes, a museum which displays copies of religious paintings and decorative plastic of medieval, mainly Serbian monasteries; in 1975, the Museum of Vuk Karadžić and Dositej Obradović, dedicated to two great Serbian educators and reformists of language, and the Memorial Museum of Nadežda and Rastko Petrović, dedicated to two exceptional artists; in 1978, the Museum Lepenski Vir in Donji Milanovac, built at one of the most significant Mesolithic sites in Europe; and in 1996, the Archeological Museum of Djerdap in Kladovo, which displays archeological remains from the Danube region.

The position and role of the museum in the new context significantly changed as socialist Yugoslavia was based on a rather different ideological system: instead of ethnic unitarism, the driving force became the concept of national particularism and socialist patriotism named 'brotherhood and unity'. The promotion of ethnic and national diversity was the most valuable idea within the identity construction process, providing the principal basis for the new, federal structure of the state, utterly sanctioned by the Constitution of 1974. The museum narrative was but one source of legitimization of the new ideological system and the political order of the state. Thus, the museum was entitled to legitimize the state and the nation's new course: diversity instead of unity. At the same time, the complex ideological agenda of socialist Yugoslavia was distinguished by its split with the USSR and the communist block of countries in 1948 and with the construction of a rather unique social and political system that was based on two principal paradigms: the Non-Aligned Movement and Socialist Democracy. The state was trying to keep its 'in-between' position between the East and West and, at the same time, to represent Yugoslav identity as simultaneously authentic and mediatory in its essence. The museum reinforced such

complex ideological agendas through different means: from permanent display of collections and many international temporary exhibitions (both the displays of the National Museum collections abroad and innumerable foreign exhibitions at home), to extensive publication activities. These events and activities undoubtedly testified to the ambitious aim of the Yugoslav élite to construct the identity of the nation as a cultural crossroads, simultaneously insisting on the country's cultural authenticity and the notion of being a progressive member of the European society with which it shares both historical traditions and value systems. Some of the most important exhibitions were: Serbian Painting of the XVIII and XIX Centuries (1945); Yugoslav Painting and Sculpture of the XIX and XX Century (1946); French Painting (1950); Fifty Years of Yugoslav Painting, 1900-1950 (1953), English Watercolors and Drawings (1953); Greeks and Illyrians (1959-1960); From Titian to Tiepolo (1955); Flemish XVII-Century Art (1957); Paul Signac and his Friends (1959); Dutch Drawings of the XVII Century (1960); Icons from Yugoslavia (1964); Vincent van Gogh (1966); Old German Prints (1967); The Face of Mexico (1967); The Neolithic of the Central Balkans (1968); The Treasures of Cyprus (1968); The Old Western European Masters from the Hermitage (1968); Art of Medieval Serbia (1969); The *Russian Peredvizhniki* (1970); Coptic Art (1970); Illyrians and Dacians (1971); German Prints, 1910-1930 (1971); From Délacroix to Picasso: French Painting of the XIX and XX Century (1971); Czech Baroque (1972); Roman Mosaics and Art Treasury od Tunisia (1973); Flemish, Dutch and French Printings of the XVII and XVIII Century (1973); André Lothe and his Yugoslav Disciples (1974); Archaeologicl Exhavations in the People's Republic of China (1974); Archaic Culture in the Middle Balkans (1975); Czech Painting of the XIX and the beginning of the XX Century (1975); Ivan Meštrović (1977); the Neolithic Serbia (1977); The Pre-Columbian Art of Peru (1977); Scythian Gold from the Russian Collections (1977); Thracian Treasuries from Bulgaria (1977); Prehistoric Macedonia (1977); Joseph William Turner: Watercolors and Drawings (1978); The Celts in Gallia: Art and Civilization (1978); Czech Gothic Art, XIV-XVI Century (1979); Traditional Chinese Painting, 1644-1978 (1979); Lepenski Vir (1978); The Art of Angola (1979); Great Mexican Cultures (1979); Mesopotamia (1980); and finally, Old Russian Icons from the *Tretyakov* Gallery (1980), among others. All these exhibitions were key instruments in shaping the state's ideological course during the Cold War that was marked by the oscillations between the East and West.

The ambiguous mission of the National Museum - to narrate both Serbian and Yugoslav culture - was further complicated by the then problematic question of Serbian and Yugoslav identity, interdependencies of two shifting ideological contexts in Yugoslavia that had been increasingly inclined towards ethno-nationalisms until the 1990s. Since the late 1970s and the early 1980s, in the wake of the emerging processes of the federalization of Yugoslavia and the rise of ethno-nationalisms, the museum had significantly expanded its educational and narrational role, supporting the then current ideological process of identity (re)construction. Although the permanent exhibition remained unaltered, numerous temporary exhibitions on Serbian culture, art and history paved the way for a new nationalistic paradigm that dominated museum policy during the 1990s. Among many exhibitions organized in that period, the following are of a special importance: Art Treasury of the Piva Monastery in Montenegro (1980); Art in Serbia from XII to XVII Century (1980); Serbian Pottery (1982); Jewelry on the Territory of Serbia from IX to XV Century (1982); Archaeological Treasures of Serbia (1983); Byzantium and Barbarians on

the Territory of Serbia (1983); The Art of Lepenski Vir (1983); Art Treasury of the Hungarian Serbs (1989); Serbian Art of the World (1990); The Icons of the Kninska Krajina (1997); The Great School from the Karadjordje's Era (1998); Nadežda Petrović: the path of Honor and Glory (1998) and Rings of the Mediaeval Serbian Nobility (1998), to name but a few.

Since 2000, the National Museum has faced many problems concerning not only out-of-date and dilapidated facilities, including the main building (causing the permanent exhibition to be closed for the public), but also suffering from negligence of both the officials and the state's élite. The vision of the role of the museum in Serbian society seems clouded and uncertain today as it is the permanent exhibition. The museum has been completely closed to the public since 2005, as the building needed thorough reconstruction and the whole process of the reconstruction is related to many affairs yet it is not clear whether it is going to be finished.

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade: Between the two worlds

The complexity of the multiple identities and especially the relationships between 'Serbian' and 'Yugoslav' identity within the social, cultural and political framework of Socialist Yugoslavia could be examined if one focused on the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. Having been initiated, built, and financed solely by the Republic of Serbia - then constitutive republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - the museum had an ambitious aim to "show and follow the development of modern Yugoslav art since its origin at the beginning of this century up to now, with the emphasis on its present aspect" (Protić 1965: 214). The idea of founding the Museum of Contemporary Yugoslav Art originated in the beginning of the twentieth century, when Serbian intellectual elite, accompanied with that of the Habsburg Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, had decided to establish the Yugoslav Art Gallery. In the wake of the success of the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Belgrade (1904) and the Yugoslav Art Colony (1905), the idea achieved wide support but lacked sufficient funds. After the First World War, the original initiative had been finally realized in the newly established Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade (1929) (Subotić 2009) that was fused with the Museum of History and Arts in 1934 to form the Prince Paul Museum.

After the Second World War, the need for a museum of modern art was steadily increasing. In 1951, the Museum of Contemporary Art was founded by the initiative of the Council for Art and Education of Serbia (Protić 1965b). The members of the Councils were, intriguingly, solely citizens of Serbia, among which many were artists. After several years of work on the program of the museum, the Museum Council proposed the final concept in 1959, which was accepted by the Council for Culture of Serbia and the Council for Culture of the City of Belgrade. This led first to the decision to officially found the museum and erect its building between 1960 and 1965. In 1965, the Museum of Contemporary art was ceremonially opened to the public, displaying the best pieces from its collection that had originally numbered 3,500 works of art.

In its formative phase, which lasted around twenty years (i.e. until the mid 1980s), the museum had displayed several collections of Yugoslav art: the First Period (1900-1918); the Second Period (1918-1941) and finally, the Third Period (after 1945). The names of the collections, as quite neutral marks, were intended to embody the evolutionary concept of constant development and to outline the vision of Yugoslav art as historically-evolving phenomena. The structure of the museum's collection was based on a set of mutually

interdependent principles, as "the exhibited works should display modern Yugoslav art from its origins up to the present day"; besides, the policy of the museum declared that the display should be presented according to the principle of an "organic whole" and evolutionary development of art. The whole display represented "a dialectical concept of history", whilst the collections were distinguished by the idea of "authenticity", seen as a sum of individual poetics (Protić 1965a: 214-215). It was such interpretation that reflected an ideological formula that legitimized the federalist concept of the state and a vision of a pan-national Yugoslav identity.

The concept that lay beneath the museum narrative, however, was more complex and ramified. Firstly, it was based on progressivism as a principle that permeated and governed the society of socialist Yugoslavia, a constantly reforming country. The position of art as a discourse in such context was inevitably important as it represented, according to the words of the museum's first director, "a symbol of the epoch and society, eager to ascend into the future" (Protić 1965b: 4). Secondly, the museum narrated a vision of the nation in accordance with the ideology of socialist patriotism and 'brotherhood and unity'. Serbian art and culture were constructed as part of a broader Yugoslav identity, and as such, was a complex idea that legitimized the political processes in the country that continually pursued the policy of federalization - of politics, society and culture. Representing the best that Yugoslav art had, the museum's collection was based primarily on 'Serbian modern art' without any clear, unambiguous and publicly declared (or negotiated) notion of what exactly Serbian art was, and what separated it from the art of other Yugoslavs. The official programmatic statement of the museum declared that: "Serbian art is going to be displayed in a wider specter that that of the other Yugoslav nationalities," in spite of the fact that "the museum tends to be Yugoslav in terms of the values shared by non-Serbs alike" (Protić 1965b: 8). If the values that Serbian art reflected were those shared by others, then such a narrative could be established and even elevated to a position of dominance of one national group in Yugoslavia. Here one can find testimony of a clandestine ideology of Serbian nationalism that has been constantly rising since the opening of the museum in 1965.

Even more important, however, was yet another register of the museum narrative, which was also a part of a wider ideological structure. Museum policy was based on the idea of becoming a leading international centre for art. Such an ideal was as ambitious as the Yugoslav régime's propensity for being an avant-garde in the world politics. Its new building, erected in 1965, further emphasized the role of the museum. Having been one of the cutting-edge architectural designs of the time (Protić 1992), it was "an aestheticized place for elegant gatherings [of the communist politicians], a place for new social rituals" (Perović 2003: 191-192). Even to the Western eye, the museum was "the most beautiful building in the whole communist world" — to cite Wolf von Eckardt, the architectural critic of *Washington Post* (Perović 2003: 193).

The building of the museum itself is undoubtedly one of the most influential examples of Yugoslav modernist architecture of a period that also had very similar ideological roles and functions. With its unorthodox and undogmatic visual and spatial concept, which amazingly straddles architecture and sculpture, the building further reinforced the emancipatory narrative of the museum. Seen as the most important work of architecture built in Belgrade and Yugoslavia after the Second World War, both aesthetically superb and far beyond the scope of either Social Realism or standard modernism, it was aimed at representing the country's unorthodox and

liberal variant of socialism and its unquestionable cultural and political inclinations towards the West. In a certain sense, even the urban position of the museum, at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube rivers - one of the most prominent locations in New Belgrade which faces the old fortress in downtown Belgrade, close to the seat of the Federal Government and the Central Committee of the Union of the Communists of Yugoslavia - underlines these ideological messages. Placed in a large, landscaped park close to the rivers, the museum might have been read as a superb work of art, not so dissimilar to many sculptures scattered around it. As with the country and the peoples it represented, the museum thus became a symbolic representation of a distinctive but emancipated European identity that shared universal values and ideas. On the other hand, the park in which the museum was built was an important narrative itself. Named the 'Park of Friendship', it exuded a specific ideological aura which testified both to the concept of Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity' and, more importantly, to the non-aligned policy of Yugoslavia. Indeed, the place was a kind of ideological and political arboretum where an extensive variety of woody plants and saplings were planted by a dazzling number of international political celebrities — from Haile Selassie to Jimmy Carter and Mikhail Gorbachev. In this way, Yugoslavia might have been seen as an integral part of global political and cultural power, a perspective strikingly similar to that of the museum narrative.

Thus, the museum played an important role in the construction of the collective identity of Yugoslavs as a prosperous, modern and competitive nation, at least in their own eyes. The collection of Serbian and Yugoslav art, which dominated the permanent exhibition of the museum, was interpreted as an integral part of global culture, and both the collection and the building itself were designed following the example of the New York Museum of Modern Art (Protić 1992: 527).

The Museum of Contemporary Art ought to have become an "instrument of socialization and homogenization" (Protić 1965b: 6). This objective represented the key role of the museum and its complex narrative. The museum was not conceived as "a temple or a cathedral aimed at contemplative individuals" but as "a unity of art, nature and life" (Protić 1965b: 7). The aestheticization of society, as an important ideological issue of socialist Yugoslavia, is clearly evidenced in this concept: aesthetic value was a historical phenomenon that transcended ethnic and cultural differences and, accordingly, reinforced the sense of belonging to the communion of Yugoslavs as free citizens. The ideological agenda was clear: art acted as a cohesive force of a rather complex social and ethnic structure of the country. Furthermore, by supporting the thesis of the autonomy of art, the museum narrative constructed the ideology of the 'socialist democracy' and supported the idea of transition towards a stateless and classless society in the future where all men are free.

At the same time, the Museum of Contemporary Art played an important role in the process of Europeanization of Serbian and Yugoslav identity. Not only did the numerous temporary exhibitions of many artists coming from the West reinforce this process, but also the permanent collection was intended to represent the Yugoslav art scene as an integral part of the European art scene. During the 1960s and 1970s - a time of great pluralization of Yugoslav society and its opening to the West - the museum produced not contradictory, but rather complementary narratives spanning from Yugoslav and Serbian, to European. In the wake of the gradual transformation of political, ideological and social life in both Serbia and Yugoslavia, such a policy

represented an important issue in the concept of multi-identity. Having been simultaneously national, supranational, regional and European, it was such a complex identity of the nation that it might have survived as a model for the ongoing restructuring of Serbian society.

In the wake of turbulent events in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, the marginalized museum was languishing in suspense between life and death (K.R. 1998; Ćirić 1999). After 2000, the museum collection (which had grown to 7,600 works of art by 2006) was, according to the official web-site of the museum, reorganized in order to represent "the most relevant collection of art from the Yugoslav art space [sic!], which existed from 1900 to 1991" and, more notably, the "contemporary art in Serbia, the Balkan region, and, as much as it is possible, Europe and worldwide". The new collections of the museum are: Paintings from 1900 to 1945, Paintings after 1945, Sculptures, Prints and Drawings and finally, New Art Media (photography, film, video etc.). Since 2006, the museum has been closed to the public due to the thorough on-going reconstruction of its heavily dilapidated building.

The Museum of African Art: From margin to center

Ever since its opening in 1977, the Museum of African Art has been the only institution in the region of South East Europe dedicated to the promotion of the arts and cultures of the African continent. Unlike most of the prominent museum institutions exhibiting African art in world centers such as Paris, New York, Washington or London, which bear the legacy/burden of colonial experience, the Belgrade museum was defined as unique in the way it collected the artifacts and in the way it represented them. The fact that all the museum objects have been imported from Africa with written permission from the respective governments was crucial in representation of the new international position of the African societies, as well as the representation of the new Yugoslav position. Museum creators promoted the ideas of liberty and equality among the nations politically induced through the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement was established in 1961, with the organization of the First Non-Aligned Movement Conference in Belgrade. In the divided and constantly fragile world of the Cold War, both super powers and political blocs accepted the idea that the newly liberated African and Asian states should be organized as a separate bloc. Yugoslavia, as a country that refused Soviet domination, but at the same time, never abandoned socialism was an almost natural member of such a Third bloc. (Bogetić 1990). The new museum institution represented the pinnacle of the two-decade-long cultural politics of socialist Yugoslavia balancing between the Eastern and Western blocks, which influenced the process of the specific collective identity making.

The Museum of African Art was created in order to present and save exceptional African art collections, assembled by connoisseurs and art collectors - Veda Zagorac Pečar and Dr Zdravko Pečar. Living in numerous African states during the climax of the anti-colonial movement, Pečars gave strong support to the local political elite transforming ex-colonies into independent states. For more than twenty years, Zdravko Pečar and his wife Veda, traveled across the African continent. He was a reporter whose enormous knowledge and connections moved him to diplomacy. Comparative knowledge of African history, culture, and art, from North to South of the continent, from East to the West, and his close relationship with the African peoples, their customs and everyday life and their rituals resulted in creation of the one of the most valuable art collections from the West of the African continent. Pečars made a huge personal and material

effort collecting pieces of immense value, which constituted an extraordinary collection of African art (Pečar and Pečar 1989). As the representatives of the socialist intellectual elite, museum establishers introduced the new practice of social interaction. Promoting the idea of multiculturalism, they created the original framework for innovative cultural practice in the multinational Yugoslav society.

Owners decided to donate to the City of Belgrade artifacts that they had collected over many decades. At first, ideas to represent numerous African artifacts in the city of Belgrade assigned as part of the collection's ethnographical value, but finally the decision was made to transfer methods of representation from anthropological discourse to artistic discourse. This decision had a strong influence on directing the process of Yugoslav cultural and political identity articulation. The strong position of Yugoslavia on the international scene during the Cold War was expressed through a reevaluation of its foreign and cultural policies. In accordance with the radical political shift, which Yugoslav communists made in 1948, breaking with Stalin and other socialist countries, a new social empathy was created that lasted throughout the decades that followed. Specific forms of cultural politics generated an autochthonous version of socialist practice.

The insistence of state and city officials to establish an independent museum of African art was not only the intention but also a constitutive element of Yugoslav self-perception (Sretenović 2004). With the opening of the museum, citizens were given further arguments upholding the ideals of brotherhood among Yugoslav nations and, at the same time, supporting the image of Yugoslavia as 'primus inter pares' in the Non-Aligned Movement. Strongly promoting anti-imperialism and the process of decolonization, Yugoslav officials established close cultural, economical and political ties with the newly liberated countries of Africa and Asia. Endorsement of their independence was particularly visible in the openness of Yugoslav universities for students from Non-Aligned states. Constantly comparing the Yugoslav anti-fascist movement and the socialist revolution during the Second World War with their decolonization experience, state and party officials intended to create an atmosphere of tolerance and unity among these nations.

Both the creators of the collections and other key persons at the Museum defined the mission statement of the museum after which the established museum institution was created in order to promote confident political relationships between Yugoslavia and newly liberated African states. Elaborated upon in such a way, the museum narrative influenced not only Yugoslav identity but, at the same time, the identities of the African societies. The image of 'strong freedom fighters' and the central position of Marshal Josip Broz Tito became important elements of the new empathy between states and nations. The Non-Aligned Movement was organized on the principles of equality and promotion of mutual respect.

In Yugoslav public space, processes of modernization and dynamic industrial development during 1960s and 1970s - and especially the personal role of Josip Broz Tito - were perceived as the strongest pillars guaranteeing the country's central position within the Non-Aligned Movement's complex network. One of the first photographs of the Non-Aligned Movement founders – presidents Tito, Nehru and Nasser taken in July at the Brioni summit of 1956, showing Tito standing in a white suit between Nehru and Nasser and watching them shake hands – was perceived as the symbol of the Yugoslav central position. As one of the Non-Aligned Movement's leaders, Tito, became a statesman of international reputation, while the citizens of

Yugoslavia - for centuries border guards of the most underdeveloped European empires and peasants from a tiny, marginal Balkan state - were (self) perceived as the champions of global peace politics (Manojlović Pintar 2009).

The opening of the museum was one of the events organized during the month of May in 1977, when socialist Yugoslavia was celebrating the 85th birthday of Josip Broz Tito and forty years of his leadership in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (later re-named in the Union of the Communists of Yugoslavia). On that occasion, as the official website of the museum mentions, the Major of Belgrade Živorad Kovačević stated:

> The Museum of African Art will develop and revolutionize the cultural awareness of our people, bringing them closer to a more global understanding of history and culture, man and society. In the wider range of institutions dedicated to different fields of work and periods, from archaeological or medieval, to contemporary art collections - this Museum, as a collection and a sum of activities - frees us from our inherited Eurocentric and ethnocentric beliefs, cultural prejudice and narrow-mindedness, inspiring a deeper and wider outlook on culture, history and man.

Not only the collection, but also the architecture of the museum, designed to imitate a vernacular cottage from West Africa, represented homage to African culture. Interestingly, the museum was actually designed as a reconstruction and extension of the previously built edifice that hosted the ateliers of some of the leading Yugoslav pro-regime artists. The new building, designed as a museum in 1973-1976 and erected in 1977, was intentionally evocative of indigenous African vernacular architecture. Although the building was a superb example of the 'modern vernacular', the flat roof of the central part was poorly constructed, causing leaks and interior damage. Thus the roof was replaced by the present day cupola, which interestingly, adds further strength to the notion of folkloristic imagery. Despite the fact that the edifice was constructed in the tradition of the Western colonial discourse and the 'authentic' representation of indigenous architecture based on the idea of authenticity, the context of the representation of African culture was rather different. The image of 'authenticity' was finely transferred to a modern architectural language, akin to contemporary brutalism, signifying the Yugoslav symbolical attempts to 'recolonize' Africa by socialism and by a distinct, "Yugoslav model of 'national unity in reconstruction and development' which had to [...] confirm the universalism of the Titoist social politics (Tito: 'the experiences of Yugoslavia are highly esteemed and wanted')". Thus the museum epitomized the Titoist political figure of Africa which "did not represent a figure of an absolute other, the one that is excluded and detached, but a figure of a partner, of a 'younger brother' in marching to socialism" (Sretenović 2004: 26).

Furthermore, its location in a residential city area was aimed at showing Yugoslav support for the young communities and states in a complex network of international relations. In the following years, the founding collection of the museum was enriched through purchases and donations. However, it stayed as a dominant representation of the art and culture of the West African nations and ethnic groups Bamana, Dogon, Kissi, Baga, Marka, Malinka, Bobo, Dan, Gere, Gouro, Senufo, Ashanti, Eve, Baule, Fon, Yoruba, and Bamileke from Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon and Congo. The Museum continued to collect artifacts and to disseminate the knowledge of the African cultures and civilizations. The everyday objects, together with the numerous music instruments, masks

and jewelry created specific insight into the life of the geographically distant, but politically close Yugoslav allies.

According to the official website of the museum, the official documents today are stressing that, for thirty years, this institution has made significant contributions to the expansion and nurturing of cultural ties with related relevant institutions abroad, it has worked on the promotion of the principals of multiculturalism and cultural diversity and also in shifting the focus towards the importance of the African and non-European cultural and artistic heritage, recognized by UNESCO on an international level, as an important constituent of world heritage. However, during the 1990s, a decade of wars and international economic and political sanctions, ideals of tolerance and nonviolence were marginalized in Serbian society as well as the museum institution, which was established as the strongest promoter of those ideals. The museum that was creating "awareness of the cultural diversity, and opportunities for a multicultural dialogue" was forgotten during the tragic years of Yugoslav dissolution. Establishing the ideal of tolerance, the Museum of African Art became an utterly neglected institution during the years of fear and violence.

From the present perspective, one can search for a hidden agenda of the Yugoslav communists and political elite upon forming the museum and ask the questions: did the presenter — the one sorting and editing materials, appropriate the dominant position through the role of the evaluator? Did the unintentionally-established dichotomy open public space for the new political concepts that can be defined as a specific and new imperial agenda? The possible answers to those questions always has to start with the statement that the political reality of socialist Yugoslavia and its international engagement and status remained loyal to the founding principles of the Non-Aligned Movement that strongly opposed every political and economic supremacy over its allies.

Today, aside from the permanent display, which mainly features the traditional arts of West Africa, the Museum organizes numerous exhibitions, festivals and lectures as a way of presenting the most important segments of traditional and contemporary African life and art. The purpose of the exhibitions, as well as a diverse range of programs (exhibitions, lectures, film and video screenings, art and music workshops), is to cover not only West Africa, but also the other regions that are underrepresented by material from the museum collection. Publishing exhibition catalogues, program brochures, as well as an annual journal, *Afrika* - Journal of the Museum of African Art, represents an important part of the museum's work. The Museum is also a valuable documentation center containing print archives as well as photo, audio, video and film records.

Masks and sculptures are the most important part of the museum's collection. Other exhibited objects illustrate everyday living in the various African regions and include specific musical instruments, textiles, pottery and ritual ceramics, woodcarvings, bronze sculptures and soapstone figurines. Sorted by the materials from which the objects were made, these collections mixed objects of everyday life and artistic artifacts thus erasing the artificially established line between life and art. Thus, from the organization of the museum's collections, materialized the idea of erasing the boundaries between the margin and the center, between the civilized and the primitive. Furthermore, by using direct contact with the exhibited objects, the museum promotes the 'hands on' approach to visitors, where direct contact with the African cultures is also realized.

The Museum of Genocide Victims: changing the paradigm

During the last decade of the twentieth century; also last decade of the existence of Yugoslavia, national tensions in the public space were manifested through numerous debates concerning the new interpretations of the Second World War and the number of its victims. Perceived and labeled as 'the victims of fascism' during the socialist period, with the introduction of the new (national) paradigm, these victims were identified exclusively on the basis of their national background. With the pluralization and democratization of political life, rather than raising questions concerning historical 'blind spots' both in academic and public discourse, a new wave of of political radicalism and exclusivism emerged. This was done using war victims as the basis for ideological confrontations and national accusations in the Yugoslav multinational state. The search for dead ancestors became the main element for the re-evaluations and revisions of the past. In the public sphere, it was used as a mask for political confrontations with the Yugoslav elite during the processes of privatization and economic transformation.

In Serbia, attempts to centralize a martyr narrative resulted in a specific form of social autism. The genocide of Serbs during the Second World War (1941 - 1945) became the central argument legitimizing political actions at the end of the twentieth century. Focus on the victims of the Ustasha regime in the Independent State of Croatia , which radicalized the political arena in Serbia, resulted in the institutionalization of the martyr narrative. Thus, in July of 1992, the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia established The Museum of Genocide Victims, simultaneously with the outbreak of war in Bosnia. It was organized according to a new Law, which defined the museum's role in "keeping constant memory on the victims of the genocide over Serbian people, by collecting, processing and using data and fulfilling commitments from the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide." In the following sentence, it was added that the "Museum may be engaged in collecting, processing and using information about the genocide over Jews, Roma and members of other peoples and ethnic minorities" (Zakon o osnivanju muzeja žrtava genocida, 2005). The Law, however, did not define, nor specify to whom the formulation "other people and ethnic minorities" should or could refer to. Furthermore, the 22nd of April was proclaimed as a Memorial Day commemorating the victims of genocide, as, on that very day in 1945, a group of prisoners in the Jasenovac concentration camp managed to break out of camp. As the main element in the mission statement of the museum highlighted, any search for the exact number of Serbian victims and their naming was done according to the existing Yad Vashem museum practice (Bulajić 2003).

The initial idea was to establish the museum as an institution based in both Belgrade and Kragujevac, a small Serbian town where the mass murder of the civilian population in October 1941 occured. After the war, Kragujevac became the symbol of Serbian anti-fascism and upheaval and the place where the tragedy took place was transformed into a memorial park. The same form of memorial park became the central symbol of Yugoslav socialist patriotism and the founding element of the state ideology of 'brotherhood and unity'. Numerous monuments, erected at the locations of mass graves represented mise-en-scene for war commemorations throughout the country. In 1967, the memorial museum was erected at the entrance of the memorial park. Several tall pillar-like rectangular shapes of various heights built in brick emphasized the dignity of the monumental building. The museum's interior, which lets in natural

light only from roof lanterns, was imagined as a way of connecting the visitor of the museum with the victims.

Mass killings of the civilian population in Kragujevac and surrounding villages were used as a symbol of war suffering and the same concept was retold in other museums presenting local history after the year 2000 and the fall of Slobodan Milošević. Based on social history, museum institutions were creating a specific historical synthesis of the regional history, constituting the continuity of the local communities. However, the presentation of the Second World War became the object of major changes in interpretation. Nationalization of the anti-fascist movement, which resulted in an equalization of the Partisan and Chetnik movements and that of the mass killings in Serbia during the autumn of 1941, were retold through the national paradigm. Collaboration was contextualized and reevaluated; as was the anti-fascist struggle. The civilian victim, like in most other post-socialist states, became the principal argument for accusation of the communists and equalization of socialism and fascism.

During the last few years, the dialogue and the process of mapping the problems concerning representation of the Second World War, genocide and the Holocaust has been re-opened. The project "What is hidden in the books", brought out by the National Museum of Kraljevo, was the continuation of the Kragujevac museum concept and the initial point in questioning the contemporary image of the war and its participants. In accordance with the Yad Vashem concept, rather than using faceless numbers, personalization of the victim was introduced. Once again, public debate was opened and questioned the political consequences of the misusage and misinterpretations of such an approach.

The Museum of the Victims of Genocide is based in Belgrade, in a building which was, and still is, the seat of various cultural institutions. Today, it is the documentation center, collecting documents and other relevant materials on the suffering of the Serbian people. Although an independent institution, it lacks adequate exhibition space. The solution for this issue is by establishing a direct connection between the ways of representing the Holocaust in Serbia and thus the possible use of the former concentration camp Old Fair (Staro Sajmiste) as the space for both exhibitions and the documentation center. Over the past two decades, the museum established cooperation with numerous similar institutions in the world (Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Vienna, Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Wiederstandes in Vienna etc.). As well, it is searching for the specific concept that will best present the events of the genocide in Serbia and Yugoslavia while, at the same time, respecting and representing the uniqueness of the Holocaust experience. A part of that search lies in the answer to the questions: should Staro Sajmiste, at present a city slum, be organized as a memorial place to victims of the Holocaust among the Jewish population of Serbia; will it be dedicated to the Museum of the Victims of Genocide and, most importantly; will it raise the question of genocide in Srebrenica and mass killings in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo done by Serbs? We strongly support the view that, in the answer to these questions, can be found the future development of Serbian society.

The Museum of Yugoslav History: Establishing the distance

The Museum of Yugoslav History was founded by the decision of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1996. Namely, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was created

after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and consisted of two federal republics – Serbia and Montenegro. It existed for ten years, from April of 1992 until February of 2003, when it was renamed to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Three years later, Serbia and Montenegro became independent states (in June of 2006). It was formed by the fusion of two museum institutions (The Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Nationalities and the Memorial Center "Josip Broz Tito") in an attempt to produce a desirable image of socialism and Yugoslavia — two crucial political concepts of the twentieth century. The Museum of the Revolution was established by the decision of the Central Committee of the Union of the Communists of Yugoslavia on April 19th, 1959. A year later, it was opened. Celebrating four decades of Yugoslav communist party existence, state and party officials institutionalized the official historical narrative in the public space. The intention was to present/create the continuity of the revolutionary traditions and the evolution of the Yugoslav proletariat through the 19th and 20th centuries. Collecting archival documents, photographs and historical objects, the museum was conceived as an important element strengthening Party reputation and legitimizing its central position in the state and in society. That was the main reason why the erection of the museum building represented one of the main goals of the Yugoslav communists during the next two decades. It was supposed to realize the central ideological slogan 'Ongoing Revolution'. Although several competitions were announced, and even the museum foundations placed in close vicinity to the representative building widely known as the Central Committee building, all the works were stopped with the death of Josip Broz Tito on May 4th, 1980.

Instead of the Museum of the Revolution, the central museum institution after his death became the Memorial Center 'Josip Broz Tito', created two years later. For fourteen years it collected and preserved numerous artifacts and documents connected with the life and work of Josip Broz Tito. It encompassed the "May 25th Museum", established in 1962, 'House of Flowers' as well as Tito's burial place and two residential palaces in close vicinity to the museum.

The central exhibiting space of the Memorial center was the building of the 'May 25th Museum' which was the present of the Belgrade municipality to President Tito for his seventieth birthday in May of 1962. Erected in order to preserve gifts received from international politicians, eminent public figures, Yugoslav citizens, political organizations, diverse companies and unions, the May 25th Museum represented one of the pillars of Yugoslav socialist society. Preserving gifts to president Tito, but, also his personal documents and the archive of the Presidential cabinet, the museum became one of the most important institutions constructing the Yugoslav identity and differing it from other East-European states. This was done through the representation of the ideology of 'Brotherhood and Unity' or Samoupravljanje (a specific Yugoslav form of economic practice and management known as Self-Management) and the non-aligned foreign policy.

Not only the museum, but also its building might be seen as one of the central venues of the spatialization of Socialist Yugoslavism. Styled as a standard example of modernist architecture of the 1960s, the museum edifice was interpreted as the epitome of contemporary Yugoslav culture and its complex ideological background. Erected on a vast plateau bordered by a park, its architectural transparency and the minimalism of its details, along with the entrance portico which was imagined to represent the end of the long, stepped promenade flanked by greenery,

could be read as symbolic representations of Yugoslav politics and culture. The openness and lightness of the design corresponded directly to the very nature of Yugoslavia as seen as a liberal society. Its mediatory role in East-West cultural issues was totally opposed to orthodox, Soviet-style communism. Furthermore, the urban setting of the museum simultaneously acted as an additional narrative that was at the front line of the same ideological agenda. Placed on the threshold of Tito's own residence — on the very border between a private realm of the state's leader and green space accessible to the whole community — the edifice stressed not only the idea of the mutual penetration of the museum exhibition and the surrounding open green spaces, but also of the realms of political authority and freedom of society.

The established practice of presenting gifts to Tito, which lasted throughout the whole year, reached its climax during the May Day celebrations. During this month, which bore the archetypal symbolism of spring and youth - the symbolism "of renewal, growth, hope and joy" (Hobsbawm 1997: 248), the holiday was introduced to celebrate the birthday of Josip Broz Tito. More than any other state holiday, celebration of May 25th gave an illusion of the president's direct contact with the people and the existence of a special emotional bondage between the leader and citizens (during the socialist period named 'working class'). Celebrations of Tito's birthday, in addition to festivities on May 1st and May 9th, "combined public and private merry-making and good cheer with the assertion of loyalty to the movement" (Hobsbawm 1997: 286). With regular repetition of performances in which virtually the whole society was involved, the imagined unification was achieved in the public space (The Tito Effect 2009).

The celebration timetable, which for weeks ahead defined the schedule and the kind of reception given to hundreds of gift-givers, testified that the presentation of gifts was a politically and socially desirable form of behavior. State and party officials believed they were creating a specific form of social empathy among Yugoslav citizens through process of gift-giving to the President. Thus, the most numerous presenters of gifts were institutions: schools, hospitals, work organizations, sports associations, factories, mines and village cooperatives. In that way, the authenticity of Self-Management practice based on a network of workers' councils as active subjects of society was affirmed.

Among the thousands of gifts, batons represented the most recognizable symbol of the practice of giving presents. Consequently, 22.000 batons became an important part of the museum fund. Every spring, from the end of the Second World War until 1987, mass baton relays were held in Yugoslavia, drafting a unique mental map in which multiple Yugoslav identities were charted. Millions of bodies in motion were presented as a metaphor for a dynamic society running towards a long-lasting and promised future. Even though all the batons were dedicated to Josip Broz Tito, after the death of Stalin, Yugoslav communists as the loudest critics of the cult of personality, introduced changes to the way Tito's birthday was celebrated. Renaming of the May 25th holiday (Tito's birthday) into a Youth Day represented an attempt to affirm new political realities. Since 1957 and until his death in 1980, Tito had received a unique Youth baton at a major Youth rally, held at the Yugoslav People's Army stadium in Belgrade.

The established practice of presenting gifts did not cease immediately with the death of Josip Broz Tito. It continued for some time in the form of pilgrimages and votive giving of flowers and wreaths at his grave in the House of Flowers. Not surprisingly, the May 25th Museum transformed into the Memorial Center 'Josip Broz Tito' and became the main institution

strengthening the 'founding father' symbol of the socialist Yugoslavia. Its position was further reinforced, with the introduction of the Law protecting the life and work of Josip Broz Tito. The Law, requiring obligatory representation of Tito's photographs in all public spaces, together with the infamous article 133 of the Criminal Law sanctioning the verbal delict, became the most important petrifying elements of Yugoslav society during the 1980s. This legislation provoked strong criticism and distance toward both Yugoslavia and socialism by the intellectual and parts of the political elite searching for the democratization of society. They were perceived as legal acts that enabled the introduction of the personality cult and the dismissal of any potential democratic principles.

The Memorial Center 'Josip Broz Tito' and the Museum of the Revolution of the Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities, as central symbolic institutions of socialist Yugoslavia, were marginalized during the years of the wars and dissolution. However, the new museum was formed in Belgrade only a few months after the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement was signed by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović, and the Paris Protocol was signed by French President Jacques Chirac, U.S. President Bill Clinton, UK Prime Minister John Major, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on December 14, 1995. It was named the Museum of the Yugoslav History. It represented one of the first attempts to articulate the official position of both Yugoslavia and socialism in the Serbian public space after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

However, since its constitution, the Museum of Yugoslav History became the object of neglect and manipulations. It became an unofficial private property of Slobodan Milošević, Yugoslav President at that time, and his family. More precisely, two residential villas, with numerous artworks and artifacts and unique sculptures in the surrounding park, which represented constitutive parts of the museum, were excluded from its content. Although an important part of the memorial complex and a space for storage of museum artifacts and belongings, the villas were subjected to extensive renovation under the instructions of the Milošević family. The former Memorial center was divided by a tall wall, which separated the new museum space from Slobodan Milošević 's residential area. During the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, the Old Residence was completely destroyed and Slobodan Milošević and his family moved to the Villa 'Peace' where they had lived until March 2001, when he was arrested. Since then, the museum has existed on the very margin of public interest.

The museum fund included over 200,000 objects divided into 23 collections, which illustrated 20th century Yugoslav history with a special emphasis on the life and work of Josip Broz Tito. The reorganization of this museum institution in 2007 reduced its exhibition place, (the gallery in the center of the city, once belonging to the Museum of the Revolution was excluded from the Museum of Yugoslav History and dedicated to the Historical Museum of Serbia yet the museum artifacts remained the property of The Museum of Yugoslav History) and opened questions regarding the new conception of the museum. During the time of transition and transformation of Serbian society, Yugoslavia and socialism and their numerous ideological and political concepts were subjected to new readings and understandings. The museum presentation of the past was imposed as an important element in the process of establishing distance toward those

historical phenomena.

In view of that fact, the museum's management initiated public discussions searching for a new understanding of the existing museum artifacts and the time that produced them. As the majority of the objects were gifts which Josip Broz Tito received over the past four decades, the new museum concept and exhibition practice reversed the perspective and raised questions not only about the one who was receiving the presents, but also about those who were giving them and finally about the politics that encouraged the practice of giving presents to the leader and a rethinking of the historical role of the state he represented. This new light was put on the people and society, which for three and a half decades preserved the practice of gift-giving to the president.

Today, the Museum of Yugoslav History, as the successor of the previous museum institutions containing the same objects and artifacts, has introduced new perspectives in exhibiting practices by opening its space for the numerous international and domestic artistic performances and exhibitions. Over the past few years, the museum had organized several highly visited exhibitions, presenting Tito's less known photographs that were mainly connected with his private life (Tito' New Years; Tito Photo; Deadly Treasures; Yoko, Lennon, Tito). At the same time, it hosted numerous international exhibitions and artists (October salon, Behind the Wall, Parallel Stories, Chinese Graphics) contextualizing the existing objects and promoting the new ones, thus lightening hidden spots of Yugoslav and Serbian history until the present day.

Conclusion

Focusing on the most important museums in Serbia, we recognized the processes of collective identity construction, which comprise the above-mentioned issues of parallel coexistence, transformation and exclusion of national narratives and meta-narratives. There are at least three paradigms, which we recognized as:

- *Exceptionalism and Uniqueness*

This framework establishes the idea of a collective uniqueness among other states and nations in a comparative perspective. Having been organized to represent the specificities of Serbian and Yugoslav history and identity, these museums (the National Museum, the Museum of Yugoslav History) established the idea of the continuity and eternity of the nation. While exhibiting the cultural heritage, these institutions were taking a prominent role in the ongoing process of spatialization of political power.

- *Bridging Identity* (the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of African Art)

During the Cold War, Yugoslavia was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, perceived by its political allies and its citizens as a cultural and political link between the East and the West. The exhibiting concepts of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of African Art reinforced the idea of Yugoslavia as a *bridge* between the two worlds. In that sense, this paradigm aimed to transfer Yugoslavia's international status from the political margin to the center.

- *Re-Telling History* (the Museum of the Victims of Genocide, the Museum of Yugoslav History)

Official politics legitimizes itself through the new interpretations of different historical processes. By establishing the specific perspective, history receives a new meaning. The Museum of Yugoslav History and the Museum of the Victims of Genocide created a new vision of the past as a permanent social and political revolution, which was supported by the concept of martyrization. Interpreting historical processes as a kind of constant martyrdom, those institutions established and further strengthened the ideas of sacrifice and resurrection of the nation.

The structure of our project, which included the analysis of five museums in the context of historical representation and identity construction processes, takes into account the means, techniques, procedures and institutions which we consider crucial to the process of interpretation of the past in order to suit the wishful image of the nation. We were analyzing museum policies over the last two centuries along with the museums' positions in contemporary Serbian society. Our general conclusion is that Serbia is experiencing a transition period, developing new attitudes towards history and interpretation of its past and identity. Serbia is also deeply marked by reluctance to interpret both events from the recent past (namely, the wars of 1991-1999) and her rich and profound Yugoslav heritage that have sharply marked the Serbian identity since the mid-nineteenth century - since the time when the first Serbian museums were established.

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Annex table

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
National Museum, Belgrade	1844	1844	Princely collections and the state	State	Archaeology, Art, Visual and Material Culture	National (Serbian /Yugoslav) and International	Prehistory to the present day	Neo-Renaissance style in the central square of Belgrade.
Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad	1847	1825	Matica Srpska, the first literary, cultural and scientific society of the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire	Province of Vojvodina	Material and Visual Culture, Art	Dedicated to the territory of the province of Vojvodina; multinational	Prehistory to the present day	Former court building, Neo-Renaissance style, central position in Novi Sad.
Gallery of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad	1864	1847	Matica Srpska, the first literary, cultural and scientific society of the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire	Province of Vojvodina	Art	Serbian	16-19th c.	Former stock exchange, Neo-classical style, central position in Novi Sad.
Natural History Museum, Belgrade	1895	1895	The Naturalist Cabinet of the Great School (University) ; state	State	Natural History Collections	Serbian	-	Former building of the Ottoman garrison in the Belgrade fortress, Ottoman neo-classical style, Belgrade.
National Museum of Požarevac	1896	1895	Citizens — amateurs enthusiasts	The Municipality of Požarevac	Archeology, Material and Visual Culture	Regional and Local	Prehistory to the mid-20th c.	Former private residence, Romanticism, central position in Požarevac.

Ethnographic Museum, Belgrade	1901	1872	Stojan Novaković, historian and diplomat; state	State	Material Culture	Serbian	From the Middle Ages to the present day	Former stock exchange, modern style, central position in Belgrade.
Military Museum, Belgrade	1904	1878	Prince Milan Obrenović IV	State	Material Culture, Archeology and Armory	Serbian and Yugoslav	Prehistory to the present day	Former Military Institute, Romanticism, prominent position in Belgrade.
National Museum of Zrenjanin	1911	1906	Cultural association of the Torontal county	Municipality	Archeology, Material and Visual Culture	Regional and Local	Prehistory to the present day	Former Palace of Finances, Neo-Renaissance, central position in Zrenjanin.
National Museum of the City of Niš	1913	1887	Citizens — enthusiasts, then the Municipality of Niš	Municipality	Archaeology, Art, Visual and Material Culture	National and Local	Prehistory to the present day	Former bank, Neo-classical style, prominent position in Niš.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade	1962	1959	State	State	Art	Yugoslav narratives until 1991 and Yugoslav as well as international after 1991	20th c.	Modern style located in prominent position in New Belgrade.
Historical Museum of Serbia, Belgrade	1963	1950	The Republic of Serbia	State	Material and Visual Culture	National and Civic	From the Middle Ages to the present day	Former bank, modern style located in the centre of Belgrade.

Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Novi Sad	1966	1966	The Province of Vojvodina	The Province of Vojvodina	Art	Regional (Multinational), International	20-21st c.	Former Museum of the Socialist Revolution, modern style, prominent position in Novi Sad.
Museum of African Art, Belgrade	1977	1977	Originally private collection, municipality and state	Municipality , State	Art and Material Culture	Traditional and modern African	19th c. to the present	Modern style in the elite residential district in Belgrade.
Museum of the Victims of Genocide, Belgrade	1995	1992	State	State	Documentary center	National Serbian	WW II onwards	Former bank, modern style in Belgrade.
Museum of Yugoslav History, Belgrade	1996	1996	State	State	Visual and Material Culture	Yugoslav	20th c.	Former May 25th Museum, modern style, prominent position in elite residential disctrict, Belgrade.