



THE
TWENTY-FIRST
SLAV EPIC

A CENTURY AFTER SLAVS FOR HUMANITY



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June 14, 2026

Version v1.0

Abstract

This paper proposes *Slav Epic 21*, an independent six-faced symbolic monument derived from Alphonse Mucha's *Slav Epic* one century after its concluding canvas, *The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity* (1926). The project does not propose a twenty-first painting in Mucha's hand. Instead, it treats the original twenty canvases as a symbolic source system whose recurring forms — language, memory, war, treaty, exile, labor, custody, revival, shadow, and humanity — can be read, organized, and projected into a new public-memory object.

The paper privileges 1926 as the date of symbolic completion because *Slavs for Humanity* is the final painting's terminal claim, while acknowledging 1928 as the cycle's later public presentation. Written from the centennial vantage of 2026, the paper treats 2021 as the final pre-rupture threshold before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 transformed the symbolic, political, and cultural atmosphere surrounding Slavic peoples and cultures.

Slav Epic 21 is specified as a conceptually buildable monument measuring 4.05 meters wide, 4.80 meters high, and 4.05 meters deep. The object preserves the frontal proportions of *Slavs for Humanity* and extends them into space. It is not a cube imposed onto the *Slav Epic*; it is the final canvas given depth.

Its top face, **Humanity Reawakened**, carries the final promise forward without declaring it fulfilled. Its bottom face, **War and Shadows**, holds violence, empire, occupation, authoritarianism, broken promises, and rupture as the buried pressure beneath the work. Its four visible side faces — **Voices and Memories**, **Sovereignty and Promise**, **A Carried Homeland**, and **The Common Work** — organize the century after 1926 through language, culture, statehood, exile, diaspora, labor, care, and repair.

The resulting monument does not treat the century after *Slavs for Humanity* as a simple fulfillment or refutation of Mucha's final hope. It treats that century as a renewed historical trial of the same claim: that a people marked by suffering may still offer language, memory, work, witness, and wounded hope to humanity.

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Independent Proposal Note

This paper is an independent speculative design proposal. It is not affiliated with, authorized by, or endorsed by the Mucha Foundation, the Mucha family, the City of Prague, or any institution connected to the original *Slav Epic* canvases. It does not claim to speak for Alphonse Mucha, to predict what Mucha would have painted, or to create an official continuation of the cycle.

The proposed work extends the symbolic system of the *Slav Epic*, not the authorship of Mucha.

1. Introduction: The Problem of a Twenty-First Work

The *Slav Epic* is a series of twenty monumental canvases depicting the history, memory, suffering, and symbolic destiny of the Slavic peoples. [1]

The *Slav Epic* ends with a promise: *Slavs for Humanity*. [2]

That promise is not merely the title of the twentieth canvas. It is the final claim of the cycle. After twenty monumental paintings of origin, ritual, language, law, reform, war, exile, labor, revival, and sacrifice, Alphonse Mucha's concluding image gathers Slavic history into a claim about humanity. The point is not only endurance. It is that what has been endured can be offered outward.

A century later, that final claim cannot be repeated innocently. The century after *Slavs for Humanity* included extraordinary cultural, political, intellectual, religious, and diasporic contribution. It also included fascism, genocide, occupation, Stalinism, communist rule, censorship, exile, ethnic violence, broken treaties, postwar reconstruction, post-communist transition, renewed statehood, global migration, digital visibility, and the return of full-scale war through one Slavic-majority state's invasion of another.

A war by one Slavic-majority state against another did not merely add a new shadow to the century after *Slavs for Humanity*; it wounded the shared horizon that Mucha's final title placed before humanity.

This paper begins from the premise that the century after *Slavs for Humanity* does not simply refute Mucha's final hope. Nor does it fulfill that hope in any simple way. The final painting declared that Slavic history could be offered to humanity because it had passed through suffering, not because suffering had ended. The century that followed tested that claim again.

The question, then, is not what Mucha would have painted next, nor whether a new work can be added to the cycle as an official continuation. The original cycle is complete. The question is different:

What kind of twenty-first work could answer the final promise of the *Slav Epic* without pretending to continue Mucha's hand?

This paper proposes that such a work should not take the form of another frontal canvas. A twenty-first painting would risk imitating the original cycle while simplifying the century that followed it. Slavic peoples and cultures after 1926 became too plural, diasporic, technologically mediated, politically fractured, and morally unresolved to be represented from a single point of view.

Instead, this paper proposes *Slav Epic 21*: a six-faced symbolic monument derived from the dimensions and symbolic architecture of *Slavs for Humanity*. The proposed object preserves the final canvas's frontal proportions and extends them into depth, distributing the century after 1926 across top, underside, and visible side faces.

This is not a proposal for a monument to Slavic triumph. It is a proposal for a public-memory object built around a wounded promise. It asks how language, memory, work, witness, sovereignty, exile, and culture were carried through the century after *Slavs for Humanity*, and how the rupture after 2021 forces that inheritance back under judgment.

The purpose of the paper is therefore not to complete the *Slav Epic*. It is to derive from it. The original twenty canvases are treated as a symbolic source system. Each painting returns a node. Each node generates a rule. Each rule is compiled into the proposed monument.

Slav Epic 21 does not answer *Slavs for Humanity* by declaring the promise fulfilled. It answers by giving that promise a form in which it can be carried, wounded, judged, and reawakened.

2. Symbolic Completion and Boundary Conditions

A twenty-first response to the *Slav Epic* requires a clear account of time. The proposed work depends on four dates: 1926, 1928, 2021, and 2026. Each date has a different function.

2.1 Symbolic Completion: 1926 and 1928

The *Slav Epic* has more than one relevant ending. The final canvas, *The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity*, is dated 1926. The completed cycle later entered its public and civic life in 1928, when Mucha and Charles Crane presented the series to the City of Prague as a gift to the nation. [3]

The 1928 presentation belongs to the institutional history of the *Slav Epic*: how it entered public life and how questions of ownership, placement, and permanent display have continued around it. [4] [5]

This paper privileges 1926 because it is concerned with symbolic completion rather than exhibition timing. The proposed work does not respond primarily to the public presentation of the cycle. It responds to the internal symbolic life of the cycle and to the concluding claim made by the final painting.

For that reason, 1926 is the operative hinge of this paper. The question is not what should happen one century after the public exhibition of the cycle. The question is what should happen one century after the cycle's final image declared *Slavs for Humanity*.

2.2 The Pre-Rupture Threshold: 2021 and 2022

The proposed monument is written from the centennial vantage of 2026, but it treats 2021 as the final pre-rupture threshold of the century after *Slavs for Humanity*: the last full year before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. [6]

This is not a claim that 2021 was a year of perfect peace, unity, or innocence. The shadow was already present. Slavic histories before 2022 included war, occupation, authoritarianism, censorship, displacement, ethnic violence, imperial memory, and unresolved state conflict.

The significance of 2021 is different. It was the final year before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 transformed the symbolic, political, and cultural atmosphere surrounding Slavic peoples and cultures. After that point, the preceding century could no longer be read in the same light. Cultural contribution, diaspora, language, sovereignty, and memory all became newly shadowed by the rupture that followed.

The force of 2021 is therefore retrospective. It was not experienced universally as a final year of peace, unity, or stability, and it should not be romanticized as such. Its significance becomes visible only after the rupture that followed. From the vantage of 2026, 2021 appears as the last full

atmosphere before the full-scale invasion made the inherited category of Slavic solidarity morally impossible to treat innocently. A war by one Slavic-majority state against another did not merely add a new shadow to the century after *Slavs for Humanity*; it wounded the very shared horizon that Mucha's final title placed before humanity.

The work therefore ends at 2021 not because the century is complete, and not because the shadow was absent before 2022. It ends there because the rupture that followed changed how the preceding century could be read. The invasion did not create the shadow. It revealed how near to the surface the shadow had remained.

This temporal structure has precedent inside the *Slav Epic* itself. Mucha's final canvas is dated 1926, but it does not simply depict the mid-1920s. Its central dawn is organized around the end of the First World War, the collapse of Austria-Hungary, and the emergence of Czechoslovak independence. The painting looks backward from its moment of completion toward the rupture that made its hope visible.

Slav Epic 21 follows that temporal logic. Conceived from the centennial position of 2026, it looks back to 2021 as the last visible atmosphere before the war-shadow changed the meaning of what preceded it.

2.3 The Convergence of Twenty-One

The number twenty-one operates as convergence rather than numerology.

It marks the proposed work's position after the original twenty canvases. It recalls 2021 as the final pre-rupture threshold. It also places the project inside the twenty-first century, where the final promise of *Slavs for Humanity* must be reread after digital globalization, diaspora, post-communist transition, renewed sovereignty, and war.

The paper does not reduce its subject to the twenty-first century alone. Its historical field is the century after the twentieth painting, not merely the years after 2000. But the convergence matters. The twenty-first work, the year 2021, and the twenty-first-century condition meet around the same problem: how to carry a final promise after the world that received it has changed.

Slav Epic 21 therefore belongs to three times at once. It answers a painting dated 1926. It is proposed from the centennial horizon of 2026. It takes 2021 as the final pre-rupture threshold through which the preceding century is reread.

3. The Final Promise: *Slavs for Humanity*

The twentieth painting is not only the end of the *Slav Epic*. It is the cycle's symbolic key.

The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity gathers the preceding nineteen canvases into a single synthetic image. It does not depict one ordinary historical event. It compresses origin, suffering, war, faith, reform, labor, youth, renewal, and liberation into a final visual claim. The painting does not say merely that Slavic peoples have survived. It says that their history can be lifted into a human offering.

That is why the proposed twenty-first work must begin with No. 20. A response to the *Slav Epic* cannot begin by adding new subject matter. It must first understand the architecture of the final image.

The final canvas already contains many of the principles that later become necessary for *Slav Epic 21*. Its history is organized vertically and chromatically: blue marks early Slav history, red marks bloodshed in the Hussite period, shadowed figures occupy the lower register, and a yellow band lights the return of Czech and Slovak soldiers from World War I as the dawn of a new age. [7] Youth appears as the bearer of the future. Branches and wreaths suggest concord, victory, growth, and fragile continuity. A sacred-human horizon rises above the historical field.

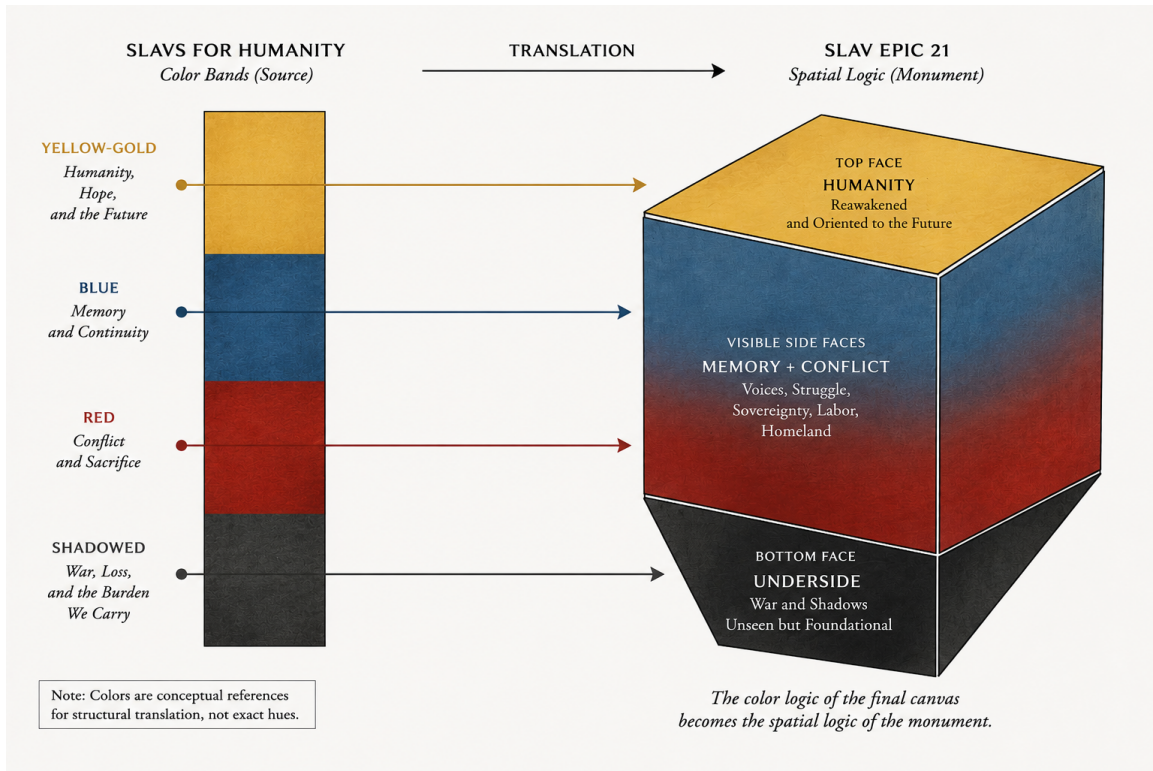


Figure 1: Color-band translation: the blue, red, shadowed, and yellow-gold zones of Slavs for Humanity translated into the spatial logic of Slav Epic 21: memory, conflict, underside, and humanity.

In other words, the final painting already contains the basic grammar of the proposed monument: shadow below, historical memory distributed through color, renewal at the center, and humanity above.

Slav Epic 21 does not abandon that grammar. It spatializes it.

What Mucha organized vertically inside one final canvas, *Slav Epic 21* rotates into space. The shadow that appears beneath the apotheosis becomes the bottom face. The color fields become spatial bands and seams. The promise of humanity becomes the top face. The historical and cultural content that can no longer be held by one frontal image is distributed across four visible sides.

The proposed monument therefore begins as an answer to the final canvas's own structure. It is not a cube imposed onto the *Slav Epic*. It is the final canvas extended into depth.

This distinction is essential. If the monument were merely a contemporary cube, its form would be arbitrary. The proposed object instead derives its frontal proportion from *Slavs for Humanity* itself: 4.05 meters wide by 4.80 meters high. [8] Its depth, 4.05 meters, extends the shorter dimension backward, producing a six-faced object whose frontality is inherited but no longer sufficient.

SLAV EPIC 21 • DIMENSIONAL DIAGRAM

Final canvas proportion extended into depth
4.05 m (W) × 4.80 m (H) × 4.05 m (D)

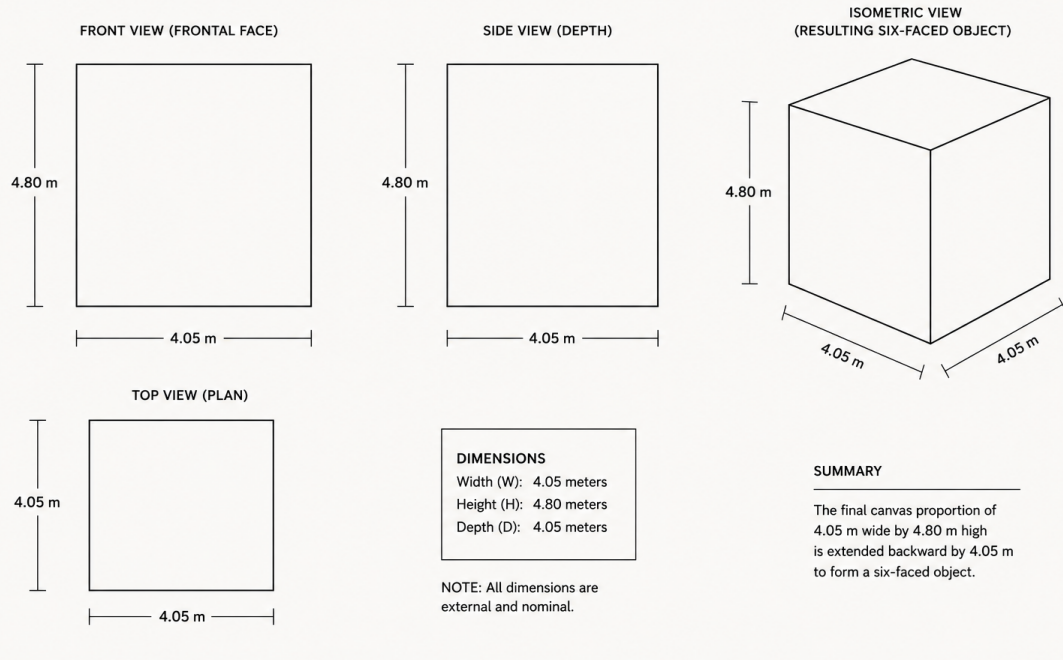


Figure 2: Dimensional diagram: the final canvas proportion of 4.05 meters wide by 4.80 meters high extended backward into a 4.05-meter depth, producing a six-faced object whose frontality is inherited but no longer sufficient.

The final painting is still present. It becomes the entry condition. But it is no longer the whole field of vision.

That is the formal argument of *Slav Epic 21*: a century after *Slavs for Humanity*, the final promise cannot be understood from one face alone. It must be walked around. It must be encountered as top, underside, side, seam, pressure, and return.

The painting's lower shadow becomes **War and Shadows**. Its yellow-gold apotheosis becomes **Humanity Reawakened**. Its implied histories of language, reform, law, exile, labor, custody, and renewal become the visible side faces: **Voices and Memories, Sovereignty and Promise, A Carried Homeland, and The Common Work**.

The final canvas made a universal claim through synthesis. The proposed monument answers that claim by rotating it into space.

No. 20 is therefore not simply the last painting in the sequence. It is the source architecture of the twenty-first work: its vertical logic, color logic, moral logic, and dimensional origin.

The task of *Slav Epic 21* is not to improve upon *Slavs for Humanity*. It is to ask what form that promise must take after another century of suffering, transmission, rupture, and contribution has passed through it.

4. Method: From Canvas to Node to Monument

This paper does not treat the original *Slav Epic* canvases as images to be copied. It treats them as a symbolic source system.

Each painting is read through two kinds of traits. The first are internal traits: the painting's role inside the cycle, its visual motifs, its compositional function, and the symbolic work it performs in relation to the other canvases. The second are external traits: the historical event, figure, place, institution, conflict, or tradition that the painting depicts.

Together, these internal and external traits produce what this paper calls a symbolic node.

A symbolic node is not a reduction of the painting to a single meaning. It is the compressed function that the painting returns when read as part of the larger cycle. For example, *The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy* returns the node of mother tongue and sacred language. *Master Jan Hus Preaching at the Bethlehem Chapel* returns the node of public truth. *Petr Chelčický at Vodňany* returns the node of anti-vengeance conscience. *Jan Amos Komenský* returns the node of exile as transmission. *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia* returns the node of free labor.

The purpose of identifying these nodes is not to flatten the paintings. It is to prevent the proposed monument from becoming arbitrary.

Each node generates a design rule. The node of mother tongue requires that the twenty-first work include language as civilizational infrastructure. The node of public truth requires that speech, witness, and moral risk appear in the new object. The node of anti-vengeance conscience requires that war and rupture not be represented as simple enemy violence alone. The node of exile requires that homeland be shown as something carried beyond territory. The node of free labor requires that ordinary workers and caregivers appear as foundations of history, not as background.

The method can therefore be summarized as a sequence:

canvas → internal traits → external traits → symbolic node → design rule → monument face

SLAV EPIC 21 • SOURCE-SYSTEM FLOW

METHOD FOR TRANSLATING EACH ORIGINAL CANVAS INTO THE SIX-FACED MONUMENT

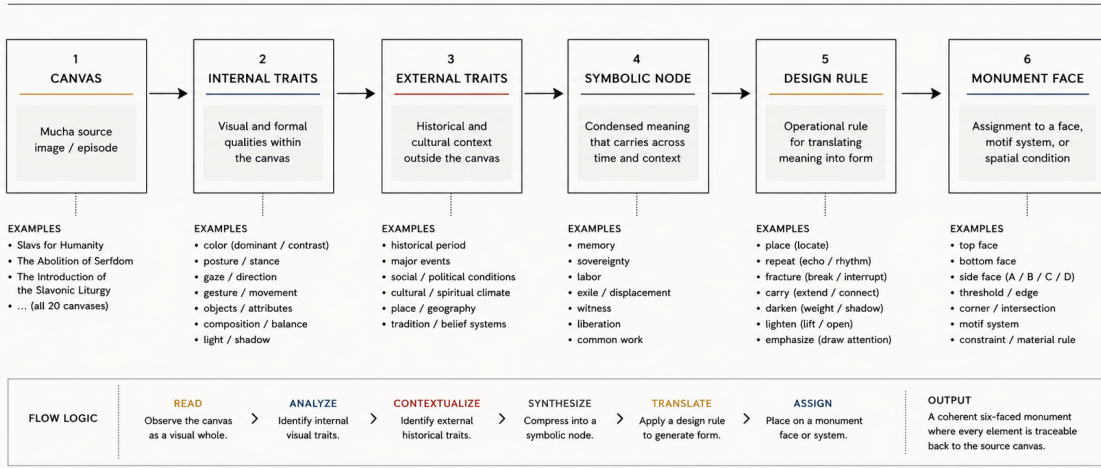


Figure 3: Source-system flow: each original canvas is read through internal and external traits, compressed into a symbolic node, translated into a design rule, and assigned to a monument face, motif, or constraint.

This sequence is not mechanical. It is interpretive. But it is disciplined. It allows the proposed object to be derived from the original cycle's logic rather than invented from taste.

This also clarifies what *Slav Epic 21* is not. It is not a visual sequel. It is not a catalogue of Slavic achievements. It is not a historical encyclopedia. It is not a prediction of Mucha's unrealized intention. It is a projected public-memory object generated from the symbolic returns of the original cycle under the historical conditions of the century that followed.

The proposed monument is therefore built through synthesis. The canvases return nodes. The nodes generate rules. The rules are grouped into faces. The faces are held together by recurring motifs: color bands, linden roots and branches, broken circles, witness figures, and the upward pressure of shadow from below.

This method also explains why the paper does not require reproductions of the original canvases as its primary visual material. The goal is not to re-display the *Slav Epic*, but to extract from it a set of symbolic conditions strong enough to generate a new object.

The original paintings remain the source. Their images, histories, titles, and motifs matter. But *Slav Epic 21* is produced through projection of symbolic structure, not imitation of surface style.

5. The Original Cycle as Source System

If *Slav Epic 21* is to be derived rather than invented, the original twenty paintings must be read as a source system.

The table below summarizes that source-system logic: each canvas returns a symbolic node, each node generates a design rule, and each rule contributes to a face, motif, or constraint within the proposed monument.

Painting titles and sequence follow the Mucha Foundation's listing of the *Slav Epic* cycle, with English title variants normalized for readability. [9]

# Painting	Primary node returned	Rule generated for <i>Slav Epic 21</i>	Monument location
1 <i>The Slavs in Their Original Homeland</i>	Vulnerability under pressure	Slavic history begins under threat, before stable institutions or sovereignty. Shadow must be structural, not incidental.	Bottom face: War and Shadows . The underside begins not with 2022, but with the oldest condition of exposure.
2 <i>The Celebration of Svantovit</i>	Culture before rupture	A cultural world may be most visible just before its destruction. Beauty should be shown with historical premonition.	Voices and Memories , with red and dark pressure rising from below. Supports the pre-rupture logic.
3 <i>The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy</i>	Mother tongue and sacred language	Language is infrastructure. A people enters universality when it can speak, worship, teach, and remember in its own tongue.	Voices and Memories . Scripts, speech, liturgy, translation, and public language.
4 <i>The Bulgarian Tsar Simeon</i>	Literary institution	A people's voice becomes durable when language is institutionalized through literature, schools, courts, and archives.	Voices and Memories . Books, scholarship, schools, cultural institutions, and archives.
5 <i>King Přemysl Otakar II of Bohemia</i>	Dynastic union	Unity is aspirational, staged through fragile institutions, not automatic or permanent.	Sovereignty and Promise . Alliances, borders, diplomacy, institutions, contingent unity.
6 <i>The Coronation of Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan as East Roman Emperor</i>	Law and imperial statecraft	Law is civilizational infrastructure, but state power and empire are morally unstable.	Sovereignty and Promise , with shadow from below. Constitutions, law, courts, and power under judgment.
7 <i>Jan Milič of Kroměříž</i>	Moral reform	Civilization is not achievement alone; it includes the capacity to reform damaged institutions into places of refuge.	The Common Work and Sovereignty and Promise . Care institutions, repair, refuge, and moral self-correction.
8 <i>Master Jan Hus Preaching at the Bethlehem Chapel</i>	Public truth	Truth-speaking becomes historical action when spoken publicly under institutional pressure.	Voices and Memories and Sovereignty and Promise . Public witness, dissent, and speech under pressure.
9 <i>The Meeting at Křížky</i>	Symbol becomes movement	A symbol can condense belief, grievance, identity, and action into collective history.	Cross-face motif. Broken or incomplete circle; public assembly; symbols that mobilize.
10 <i>After the Battle of Grunwald</i>	Victory under mourning	Even justified victory must pass through grief. War should be represented through cost, not spectacle.	Bottom face: War and Shadows . Aftermath, bodies, mourning, subdued victory.
11 <i>After the Battle of Vítkov</i>	Force under truth	Armed defense may be necessary, but force must never become sacred or self-justifying.	Boundary between Sovereignty and Promise and War and Shadows . Lowered weapons; defense under moral judgment.
12 <i>Petr Chelčický at Vodňany</i>	Anti-vengeance conscience	A righteous cause can become destructive when it repays evil with evil. The shadow includes internal violence, not only enemies.	War and Shadows , rising into Sovereignty and Promise . Vengeance, faction, civilian suffering, moral interruption.
13 <i>The Hussite King Jiří of Poděbrady</i>	Treaty and kept promise	Peace is not a feeling; it is an agreement that must be observed. Broken promises belong to the shadow.	Sovereignty and Promise . Treaties, signatures, borders, guarantees, and broken lines.

#	Painting	Primary node returned	Rule generated for <i>Slav Epic 21</i>	Monument location
14	<i>The Defense of Sziget by Nikola Zrinski</i>	Tragic sacrifice	Sacrifice may be morally powerful, but it is catastrophic and should not be romanticized.	War and Shadows and lower edges. Siege, impossible choices, tragic refusal, civilians under pressure.
15	<i>The Printing of the Bible of Kralice in Ivančice</i>	Media as memory infrastructure	Language survives when it can be reproduced, carried, taught, hidden, restored, and renewed.	Voices and Memories. Print, publishing, archives, transmission, and digital memory.
16	<i>Jan Amos Komenský / Comenius</i>	Exile as transmission	Exile is both wound and transmission. A people may enter humanity through what it carries abroad.	A Carried Homeland. Diaspora, refugees, teachers, scientists, writers, and families abroad.
17	<i>The Holy Mount Athos</i>	Custody and sacred memory	Preservation itself is contribution. Some inheritance survives through keepers rather than creators.	Cross-face motif, especially Voices and Memories and Humanity Reawakened. Archives, monasteries, icons, ritual, custody.
18	<i>The Oath of Omladina under the Slavic Linden Tree</i>	Oath under roots	Revival is a promise made beneath inherited roots. Future identity is sworn into being, not passively received.	Linden root and branch system across the whole object. Roots below, branches across sides, leaves above.
19	<i>The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia</i>	Free labor	Freedom is incomplete unless it reaches ordinary labor. Workers and caregivers are civilizational foundations.	The Common Work. Work, repair, caregiving, reconstruction, ordinary contribution.
20	<i>The Apotheosis of the Slavs: Slavs for Humanity</i>	Humanity and final promise	The cycle converts national memory into a universal claim. A century later, that claim must be reawakened under judgment.	Whole monument. Dimensions, color grammar, top face, bottom shadow, and the premise of <i>Slav Epic 21</i> .

This table does not exhaust the paintings. It identifies their generative function for the proposed monument. The purpose is not to summarize the *Slav Epic*, but to show how the twenty-first work is constrained by it.

The original cycle does not give *Slav Epic 21* a style to imitate. It gives the proposed work a rule system to project.

5.1 Rule Clusters

The twenty symbolic nodes do not remain separate. They cluster into the six-part architecture of the proposed monument.

War and Shadows The cycle begins under threat and repeatedly returns to violence, aftermath, and moral danger. *The Slavs in Their Original Homeland* establishes exposure before sovereignty. [10] *After the Battle of Grunwald* refuses military triumph by showing victory through mourning. *After the Battle of Vitkov* places force beneath truth. *Petr Chelčický at Vodňany* condemns vengeance from within a righteous movement. [11] *The Defense of Sziget by Nikola Zrinski* treats sacrifice as powerful but catastrophic. [12] The final canvas, *Slavs for Humanity*, preserves shadow beneath apotheosis.

These paintings generate the bottom face, **War and Shadows**. War is not a side theme. It is the underside. It is the pressure beneath language, sovereignty, exile, labor, and hope.

Voices and Memories The cycle repeatedly treats culture and language as civilizational forces. *The Celebration of Svantovít* presents ritual, art, and sacred culture under the sign of coming rupture. [13] *The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy* gives sacred legitimacy to the mother tongue. *The Bulgarian Tsar Simeon* shows language becoming literature and institution. *Master Jan Hus Preaching at the Bethlehem Chapel* turns language into public truth. [14] *The Printing of the Bible of Kralice in Ivančice* makes language reproducible through media. [15] *The Holy Mount Athos* adds custody, ritual, archive, and sacred memory. [16]

These paintings generate **Voices and Memories**. The face is not only about speech. It is about the means by which cultures remember themselves: liturgy, literature, printing, song, film, translation, archives, testimony, and public witness.

Sovereignty and Promise The *Slav Epic* does not treat political life as simple unity. *King Přemysl Otakar II of Bohemia* stages union as dynastic and fragile. *The Coronation of Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan* presents law and imperial statecraft as civilizational but morally unstable. [17] *The Meeting at Křížky* shows belief becoming collective movement. *The Hussite King Jiří of Poděbrady* turns peace into a question of whether treaties are observed. [18] *The Oath of Omladina under the Slavic Linden Tree* makes revival into a promise sworn beneath inherited roots. [19]

These paintings generate **Sovereignty and Promise**. The face holds statehood, law, oath, treaty, independence, dissidence, guarantees, betrayal, and the difficulty of freedom under pressure.

A Carried Homeland The cycle also shows that a people's history is not contained by territory. *Jan Amos Komenský* is the essential node: exile as wound and transmission. [20] Comenius dies outside his homeland, yet his educational and spiritual inheritance enters a wider human field. *The Printing of the Bible of Kralice* and *The Holy Mount Athos* support this logic by showing that language, text, ritual, and custody can survive displacement.

These paintings generate **A Carried Homeland**. The face holds exile, migration, diaspora, refugees, family memory, hybrid identity, and the homeland carried abroad through language, education, ritual, work, and care.

The Common Work The cycle's moral field is not carried only by saints, rulers, soldiers, artists, or martyrs. *Jan Milíč of Kroměříž* turns corrupted space into refuge. [21] *Petr Chelčický at Vodňany* centers civilian suffering and moral repair. *Jan Amos Komenský* transforms loss into educational service. *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia* makes free labor a foundation of social order. [22]

These paintings generate **The Common Work**. The face holds workers, caregivers, teachers, builders, farmers, engineers, nurses, parents, maintainers, and repairers. It insists that history is carried materially by ordinary people.

Humanity Reawakened The final cluster belongs to the top face. *Slavs for Humanity* converts national memory into a universal claim. But after the century that followed, that claim cannot simply be repeated. It must be reawakened.

Humanity Reawakened is therefore not a declaration of completion. It is the top face of a wounded promise. It gathers the visible faces upward while remaining marked by the pressure below. The face does not say that the promise of *Slavs for Humanity* has been fulfilled. It says the promise can still be asked.

The rule clusters define the monument's symbolic architecture. The next question is what historical field those rules must hold. The century after *Slavs for Humanity* is too large to summarize exhaustively, but it can be read through the same modes returned by the original cycle: voice, promise, exile, work, shadow, and humanity.

6. The Century After *Slavs for Humanity*

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* cannot be represented as either fulfillment or failure. It is a century of contribution under recurring shadow.

That is why the proposed monument does not organize the period by nation or chronology. A country-by-country account would create false hierarchy and impossible questions of inclusion. A chronological survey would turn the paper into a compressed history of Slavic peoples and cultures. Neither approach fits the task.

The century is instead organized through the symbolic modes returned by the original cycle: voices and memories, sovereignty and promise, carried homeland, common work, war and shadows, and humanity reawakened.

6.1 Voices and Memories

The century after 1926 was a century of voices multiplied through new forms.

Slavic languages, literatures, songs, films, theater, journalism, religious speech, dissident writing, underground publishing, academic work, popular media, digital archives, and translation all became vehicles through which culture moved beyond local presence.

The point is not that these media created a single Slavic voice. They did the opposite. They made plurality visible. Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Slovenian, Belarusian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and diasporic voices entered the world through different languages, alphabets, genres, ideologies, and historical wounds.

This face therefore cannot be a wall of achievements. It must show culture as transmission under pressure. Language survives by being spoken, printed, sung, translated, coded, archived, taught, remembered, and sometimes hidden. It survives in official institutions and in kitchens, churches, classrooms, prisons, publishing houses, theaters, refugee apartments, hard drives, websites, and family stories.

The face **Voices and Memories** carries that plurality. It is the descendant of the Slavonic liturgy, Hus's public speech, the Bible of Kralice, and the custodial archive. It holds the many ways a people remembers itself without becoming one voice.

6.2 Sovereignty and Promise

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* was also a century of sovereignty promised, denied, recovered, violated, and reimagined.

The final painting's hope was shaped by the end of the First World War and the emergence of Czechoslovak independence. But the century that followed did not stabilize into one clean story

of national freedom. It passed through occupation, war, genocide, Soviet power, communist rule, dissident movements, revolutions, state collapse, independence struggles, post-1989 and post-1991 transitions, European integration, new borders, broken guarantees, and renewed conflict.

The face **Sovereignty and Promise** holds this unstable political inheritance. It does not treat sovereignty as pure triumph. Sovereignty appears as law, constitution, treaty, oath, recognition, border, institution, assembly, protest, and fragile guarantee. It also appears as betrayal, occupation, coercion, censorship, imperial claim, and broken promise.

This is where the original cycle's treaty and oath logic becomes modern. *The Hussite King Jiří of Poděbrady* asks whether treaties are observed. *The Oath of Omladina* asks whether future generations can swear themselves into revival. *After the Battle of Vitkov* asks whether force remains accountable to truth. In the century after 1926, those questions did not disappear. They returned through every contested promise of statehood and freedom.

The face must therefore include dissidents and institutions, constitutions and broken lines, assemblies and prisons, flags and erased borders, public squares and sealed archives. It is the face of freedom as promise rather than possession.

6.3 A Carried Homeland

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* was a century of movement.

War, revolution, occupation, exile, labor migration, academic migration, postwar displacement, political asylum, economic transition, refugeehood, marriage, study, and digital connection moved Slavic peoples and cultures across the world. The homeland did not remain only in territory. It was carried in language, food, prayer, books, names, music, stories, documents, family rituals, photographs, jokes, grief, remittances, schools, churches, clubs, neighborhoods, and online communities.

This face is not only about loss. It is about the strange double condition of diaspora: distance from homeland and expansion into humanity. Comenius is the earlier prototype. He dies outside his homeland, yet his educational inheritance enters a wider world. The same structure recurs across the modern century. Exile wounds culture, but it also carries culture outward.

A Carried Homeland must therefore avoid both nostalgia and assimilation fantasy. It should not imagine a pure homeland preserved unchanged abroad. Nor should it imagine migration as the disappearance of inheritance. It should show homeland as something transformed by carrying.

In this face, memory does not stay still. It travels. It is translated, misremembered, recovered, taught to children, compressed into objects, remade in new languages, and sometimes rediscovered after being nearly lost.

6.4 The Common Work

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* was carried materially by ordinary people.

Not only by rulers, artists, saints, soldiers, dissidents, scientists, or popes. It was carried by workers, farmers, teachers, nurses, parents, builders, miners, drivers, engineers, factory workers, programmers, translators, cleaners, caregivers, priests, archivists, librarians, repair crews, students, grandparents, and migrants sending money home. It was carried by people rebuilding cities, maintaining institutions, teaching children, preserving language, caring for the old, repairing infrastructure, feeding families, crossing borders for work, and starting again after war.

The face **The Common Work** exists to prevent the monument from becoming too elite. It descends from *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia*, but it also draws from Milíč's refuge, Chelčický's civilians, Comenius's educational service, and the repeated presence of ordinary bodies inside the original cycle.

The point is not to romanticize labor. The century included forced labor, exploited labor, ideological labor, industrial discipline, migration pressure, poverty, and exhaustion. Work was not always free. Care was not always honored. Repair was often demanded from those least responsible for the destruction.

For that reason, **The Common Work** should carry dignity without propaganda. It should show hands, tools, classrooms, hospitals, kitchens, fields, scaffolds, machines, ledgers, bread, roads, rail, wires, cradles, and ruins being repaired. It should say that history is not only made by those who proclaim it. It is carried by those who keep life possible.

6.5 War and Shadows

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* was also a century of shadows.

The proposed monument cannot treat violence as a separate topic placed beside culture, sovereignty, diaspora, and labor. War and shadows are not one face among equal themes. They are the underside of all the faces.

This underside includes invasion, occupation, genocide, collaboration, authoritarianism, censorship, deportation, state violence, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, broken treaties, imperial memory, civil fracture, vengeance, and the moral injuries carried by families and institutions long after events end. It includes suffering inflicted on Slavic peoples and suffering inflicted by Slavic states, movements, or actors. It also includes the destroyed and displaced worlds that existed within, across, and alongside Slavic lands.

The bottom face must therefore refuse innocence. It cannot represent the century as a closed ethnic narrative. The Slavic century was entangled with Jewish, Roma, German, Hungarian, Baltic, Mus-

lim, Balkan, and other neighboring and minority histories. To answer *Slavs for Humanity* honestly, the monument must acknowledge that the lands and cultures in question were never sealed from those around them.

The post-2021 rupture belongs here, but it does not begin the shadow. It reveals it. The full-scale war beginning in 2022 forces the century after *Slavs for Humanity* to be reread through a new wound: one Slavic-majority state waging war against another, breaking any easy claim of shared horizon.

But the bottom face should not become spectacle. It should not be the most visually satisfying face of the object. Its force should come from weight, pressure, aftermath, and partial concealment. It should be known before it is seen, sensed before it is consumed.

War and shadows are the buried pressure beneath the work.

6.6 Humanity Reawakened

The top face does not erase the underside. It rises from it.

Humanity Reawakened is not a claim that the promise of *Slavs for Humanity* has been fulfilled. It is a claim that the promise can still stir after renewed trial. It is the face of fragile return: gold not as triumph, but as dawn after darkness; leaves not as completion, but as regrowth; an incomplete circle not as unity achieved, but as concord still being attempted.

This face must remain plural. The century after 1926 included Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, secular, atheist, post-communist, diasporic, and mixed inheritances. No single religious figure, political leader, artist, or nation can carry humanity alone.

The top face gathers the other faces upward without resolving them. Voices and memories rise into witness. Sovereignty and promise rise into dignity. A carried homeland rises into human belonging beyond territory. The common work rises into care, repair, and shared life. War and shadows rise too, preventing the top from becoming innocent.

The final painting offered Slavs to humanity after suffering. The proposed monument asks whether humanity can be reawakened after suffering returns.

7. Why a Single Painting Fails

A twenty-first response to the *Slav Epic* cannot simply be another painting.

This is not because painting is inadequate as an art form. The original cycle proves the opposite. Mucha's canvases carry history, symbol, grief, color, and aspiration at monumental scale. The reason is more specific: after *Slavs for Humanity*, another frontal canvas would imply a kind of unity that the century after 1926 no longer permits.

The twentieth painting could gather the cycle into a single apotheosis because it stood at the end of a sequence organized toward culmination. It could synthesize the past into a final image. It could place shadow below and humanity above. It could offer a dawn.

A century later, that structure cannot simply be repeated. The historical field has changed. Slavic peoples and cultures after 1926 became more plural, more diasporic, more mediated, more politically divergent, and more morally fractured. Their cultural visibility and historical wounds can no longer be gathered honestly into one dominant view.

A single canvas would force these conditions into one frontal resolution. But the century after *Slavs for Humanity* has no single front.

It must be approached by movement. The viewer must begin somewhere, but cannot remain there. A side gives way to another side. A visible face depends on an underside. The top cannot be understood apart from what lies below. The object must make partiality unavoidable.

That is why *Slav Epic 21* takes the form of a six-faced monument. It does not resolve fracture. It gives fracture a structure in which contribution, mourning, and hope can be held together.

The monument may retain an entry plane because it is derived from a canvas, but it refuses a final front. The first face introduces the inherited promise; the remaining faces, the top, and the underside disclose why that promise can no longer be read from one direction.

The viewer must move because the century cannot be faced from one direction.

The six-faced form also prevents the work from becoming a country map. If the sides were assigned to nations, the monument would immediately create hierarchy, omission, and political distortion. Instead, the faces are modes: voices and memories, sovereignty and promise, a carried homeland, the common work, war and shadows, humanity reawakened. Each mode can hold many peoples, many histories, and many contradictions.

This is also why the bottom matters. If war were simply one visible side, it would become one topic among others. But war and shadows are not merely one category in the century after *Slavs for Humanity*. They are the buried pressure underneath the whole work. The underside allows violence to be present without making violence the public face of the monument.

The top matters for the opposite reason. If the work had only visible sides and a buried underside, it would risk becoming a structure of fracture alone. The top face preserves the final claim of the

original cycle: humanity remains the horizon. But in *Slav Epic 21*, humanity is not fulfilled. It is reawakened, wounded, and still under judgment.

The single painting fails because it would be too complete.

The six-faced monument succeeds only if it remains incomplete in the right way: not vague, not unresolved by accident, but structured so that no face can claim the whole.

8. Object Specification: *Slav Epic 21*

Slav Epic 21 is specified as a six-faced symbolic monument derived from the dimensions and internal architecture of *Slavs for Humanity*.

The work is conceptually buildable. This paper defines its symbolic architecture, scale, face logic, viewing conditions, motifs, and interpretive constraints, while leaving final materials, site, fabrication, engineering, budget, and commissioning outside the present scope. The purpose is to specify the object strongly enough that it can be imagined, modeled, debated, and refined.

8.1 Object Type

The proposed work is a six-faced public-memory monument.

It is not a painting, but it is derived from a painting. It is not a cube in the generic modernist sense, but it uses a cubic logic of faces, edges, top, underside, and rotation. It is not a memorial to one event, but a public-memory object for the century after *Slavs for Humanity*.

The work should be understood as a spatialized final canvas. It preserves the frontal inheritance of No. 20 while refusing to let the front complete the meaning.

SLAV EPIC 21 • SIX-FACE MAP

Unfolded net of the monument
Each square represents one face of the six-faced object.

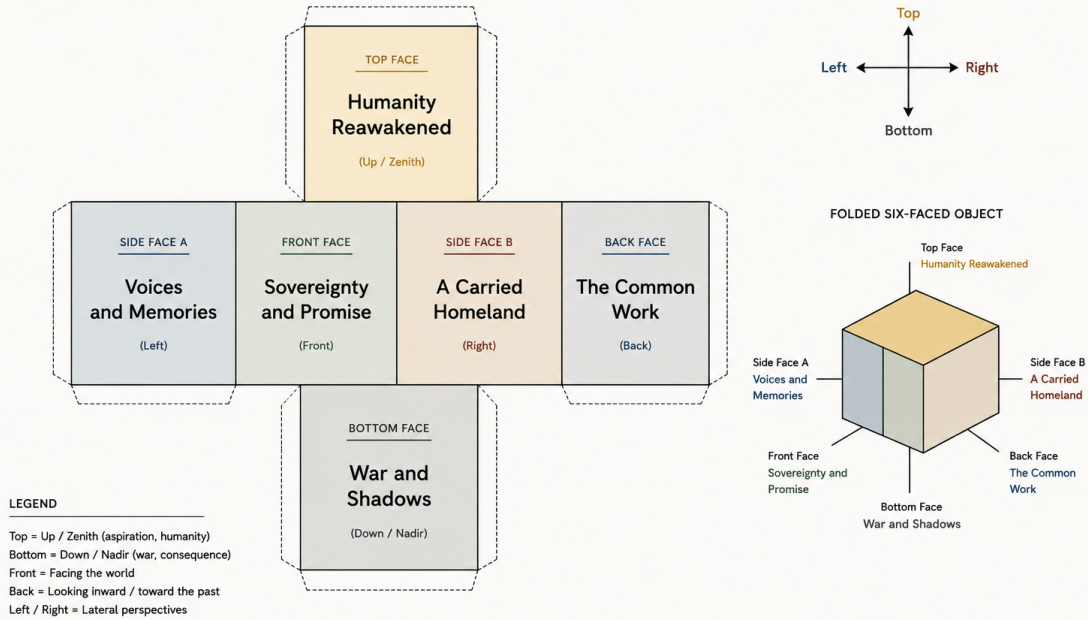


Figure 4: Six-face map: Humanity Reawakened as the top face, War and Shadows as the bottom face, and the four visible side faces as Voices and Memories, Sovereignty and Promise, A Carried Homeland, and The Common Work.

8.2 Dimensions

The monument measures:

4.05 meters wide × 4.80 meters high × 4.05 meters deep

These dimensions are derived from *Slavs for Humanity*, whose vertical format gives the proposed monument its frontal proportion. The width and height of the final canvas become the entry plane of the new object. The width is then extended backward as depth, producing a six-faced form.

The monument is not a generic cube imposed onto the *Slav Epic*. Its form derives from the final canvas: width and height define the entry plane, while the canvas width is extended backward as depth.

The slight verticality matters. A perfect cube would flatten the apotheosis into equal dimensions. The 4.80-meter height preserves the upward reach of the final painting: shadow below, visible history along the sides, and humanity above.

8.3 Viewing Condition

The monument requires movement.

A viewer may begin at an entry face, but no face is complete. The object must be walked around. Its meaning emerges through rotation, return, partial sight, and the awareness that visible faces depend on what cannot be fully seen from the first position.

The work is best understood as a pavilion-scale monument requiring controlled viewing conditions. It does not require a fixed site in this paper, but it requires enough space for rotation, enough control of light to distinguish top from underside, and a floor or plinth condition capable of making the bottom face perceptible without turning it into spectacle.

The underside should be known before it is seen, sensed before it is consumed.

8.4 Top Face: Humanity Reawakened

The top face is **Humanity Reawakened**.

It inherits the yellow-gold dawn logic of *Slavs for Humanity*, but it does not repeat the final painting's hope as completion. It is not a declaration that the promise has been fulfilled. It is a sign that the promise can still stir after renewed trial.

This face should carry light, but not innocence. It may include leaves, open hands, partial concord, many scripts, and a broken or incomplete circle. Its gold should be interrupted by seams or traces of shadow from below.

The top face must remain plural. No single religious figure, nation, leader, artist, dissident, scientist, or martyr may carry humanity alone.

Humanity Reawakened is the top of a wounded object. It is hope after shadow, not hope without shadow.

8.5 Bottom Face: War and Shadows

The bottom face is **War and Shadows**.

This is the buried pressure beneath the work. It holds war, invasion, occupation, authoritarianism, censorship, genocide, deportation, ethnic cleansing, broken treaties, imperial memory, vengeance, collaboration, civilian suffering, and the post-2021 rupture.

The bottom face is not the subject of the work. It is the condition the work stands on.

For that reason, it should not be treated as a spectacular battle surface. It should not become the most dramatic or visually satisfying part of the monument. Its force should come from weight, darkness, pressure, fracture, and partial concealment.

The bottom may be made visible indirectly: through a dark reflective floor, a perimeter gap beneath the object, or a diagrammatic rendering in the paper. It should not invite easy consumption. The viewer should understand that the visible faces rest on something unresolved.

Red and dark pressure should rise from this underside through the seams and lower edges of the visible faces. War and shadows do not remain neatly below. They disturb language, sovereignty, homeland, labor, and humanity.

8.6 Side Face: Voices and Memories

Voices and Memories gathers the cultural and linguistic life of the century.

This face descends from the Slavonic liturgy, the literary court, Hus's public truth, the Bible of Kralice, and the custodial archive. In the modern century, those sources reappear as language, literature, song, film, theater, journalism, archives, translation, testimony, and digital memory.

The face should not present one Slavic voice. It should show plurality: many languages, alphabets, witnesses, songs, prayers, broadcasts, books, recordings, scripts, and fragments of memory. It should include public speech under pressure as well as culture carried through ordinary media.

This face is where the spoken, written, sung, printed, filmed, translated, and remembered world enters the monument.

8.7 Side Face: Sovereignty and Promise

Sovereignty and Promise holds the political and juridical life of the century.

This face descends from dynastic union, law, oath, treaty, reform, and force placed under truth. In the modern century, those sources become independence, constitutions, parliaments, public squares, dissident movements, treaties, guarantees, borders, occupations, prisons, broken lines, and contested recognition.

The face should not present sovereignty as clean triumph. Sovereignty is promise before it is possession. It can be declared, denied, recovered, betrayed, occupied, defended, or broken.

The visual logic of this face should include signatures, borders, oaths, assemblies, documents, flags, erased lines, and figures of public witness. It should also be marked by pressure from below, because promises are most visible when they are threatened.

8.8 Side Face: A Carried Homeland

A Carried Homeland holds exile, diaspora, migration, and memory abroad.

This face descends from Comenius and from the cycle's broader logic of language, print, custody, and displacement. It treats homeland not only as territory, but as something carried through speech, ritual, family, education, objects, food, documents, music, names, photographs, and stories.

The indefinite article matters. This is not *the* carried homeland, as if there were one singular Slavic homeland. It is **A Carried Homeland**: one among many, each altered by exile, migration, memory, loss, and return.

The face should avoid nostalgia. It should not preserve homeland as untouched purity. It should show transformation: inheritance carried into new languages, new cities, new families, new schools, new work, new griefs, and new forms of belonging.

8.9 Side Face: The Common Work

The Common Work holds labor, care, repair, and reconstruction.

This face descends from the abolition of serfdom, but also from the refuge made by Milič, the civilians at Vodňany, and the educational service of Comenius. It exists to prevent the monument from becoming too elite.

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* was not carried only by rulers, saints, soldiers, artists, dissidents, scientists, or popes. It was carried by workers, farmers, teachers, nurses, parents, builders, engineers, drivers, translators, cleaners, caregivers, archivists, librarians, repair crews, migrants, and

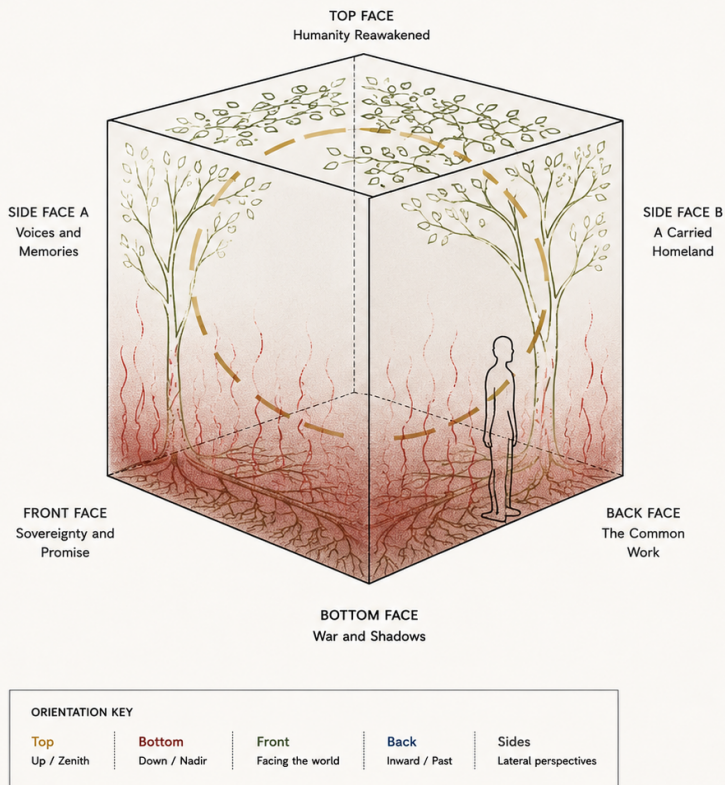
grandparents.

The face should show dignity without propaganda. Work is not always free. Care is not always honored. Repair is often demanded from those least responsible for destruction. The face should therefore hold both material contribution and material burden.

Its visual vocabulary may include hands, tools, bread, scaffolds, classrooms, hospitals, kitchens, rail lines, wires, fields, machines, roads, cradles, and ruins under repair.

SLAV EPIC 21 • MOTIF MAP

Cross-face systems within the six-faced monument



MOTIF SYSTEMS



1. LINDEN SYSTEM

Roots begin on the bottom face and extend across the foundation. Trunks and branches rise along the vertical faces. Leaves inhabit the upper zones and the top face.



2. BROKEN CIRCLE

An incomplete wreath or circle crosses multiple faces, never closing. It signifies an unfinished work and an ongoing responsibility.



3. THRESHOLD WITNESS

A witness figure stands at the threshold or edge, facing outward. Represents presence, memory, and accountability to what lies beyond.



4. RED / DARK PRESSURE

Pressure of conflict, loss, and violence rises from the bottom face. It enters the visible faces and dissipates upward.

NOTE

These systems operate across all faces. They are not confined to a single side.

Figure 5: Motif map: the cross-face systems of Slav Epic 21: linden roots, branches, and leaves; broken or incomplete circle; threshold witness figure; and red/dark pressure rising from the bottom face.

8.10 Cross-Face Motifs

Several motifs move across the entire monument.

The first is the color-band logic inherited from *Slavs for Humanity*: blue memory, red conflict, dark shadow, and yellow-gold humanity. In *Slav Epic 21*, these colors are spatialized. Blue and green move through roots and memory. Red rises through seams. Darkness remains underneath. Gold gathers at the top without becoming pure.

The second is the linden root, branch, and leaf. Roots belong to the underside and lower edges. Branches move across the side faces. Leaves reach toward the top. The linden does not assert false unity. It suggests continuity under fracture.

The third is the wreath or circle. In the final painting, circular forms suggest victory, concord, and unity. In *Slav Epic 21*, the circle should not close easily. It may be broken, incomplete, regrown, or held open. Concord remains possible, but not innocent.

The fourth is the witness figure. Several paintings in the original cycle include figures who look outward toward the viewer. In No. 8, the outward-facing figure appears not only to witness, but to register emotional alarm before the Hus thread breaks into martyrdom, movement, war, conscience, and treaty. *Slav Epic 21* should include at least one threshold witness: a figure whose gaze or expression carries the future pressure already present inside the visible scene.

The fifth is the upward pressure of shadow. War and shadows are below, but they do not stay below. They rise through seams, cracks, color shifts, and lower edges. The visible faces are therefore never pure surfaces. Each one is touched by the underside.

Together, these motifs make the monument readable as one object without allowing any single face to become the whole.

9. Interpretive Constraints

A speculative twenty-first response to the *Slav Epic* requires restraint. The proposed monument can fail not only by being weak, but by being too confident in the wrong ways. Its constraints are therefore part of its design.

9.1 No Official Continuation

Slav Epic 21 is not an official continuation of the *Slav Epic*. It is not affiliated with, authorized by, or endorsed by the Mucha Foundation, the Mucha family, the City of Prague, or any institution connected to the original canvases.

The work is proposed as an independent speculative design. Its legitimacy does not come from institutional succession. It comes from the clarity of its derivation and the seriousness of its response.

9.2 No Imitation of Mucha's Hand

The proposed monument does not attempt to paint in Mucha's style. It does not claim to predict what Mucha would have made. It does not extend his authorship.

It extends the symbolic system of the *Slav Epic*, not the authorship of Mucha.

This distinction is essential. A twenty-first work that imitates Mucha's surface style would risk becoming pastiche. A stronger response must operate at the level of structure: color, sequence, motif, vertical logic, historical synthesis, moral pressure, and final promise.

9.3 No False Slavic Unity

This paper uses "Slavic" as an inherited symbolic category from the *Slav Epic*, not as a claim of political unity, ethnic purity, or civilizational sameness.

The category "Slavic" is historically powerful but politically unstable: Pan-Slavism sought common cultural and political unity among Slavic peoples, while Slavic histories themselves have often been divided by national interests, state conflict, empire, religion, and war. [23]

Slavic peoples and cultures after 1926 did not form one political subject. They diverged across states, religions, alphabets, alliances, empires, ideologies, wars, diasporas, and historical wounds.

This is one reason the work cannot be a single frontal image. The six-faced form exists because the inherited category has fractured. It allows plurality without requiring false harmony.

9.4 No Ethnic Triumph

The monument is not a celebration of Slavic greatness. It is not a catalogue of achievements. It does not answer *Slavs for Humanity* by listing what Slavic peoples gave to the world.

Contribution matters: literature, music, film, science, labor, faith, education, resistance, diaspora, and care all belong in the work. But contribution must appear under judgment.

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* includes violence suffered and violence committed. It includes liberation and domination, witness and censorship, statehood and empire, exile and return, repair and ruin. A serious monument cannot allow achievement to cancel shadow.

9.5 No War Spectacle

War belongs to the monument, but it must not become spectacle.

The bottom face, **War and Shadows**, should not be the most visually thrilling part of the work. It should not turn violence into drama, conquest, or aesthetic excitement. Its function is weight, underside, pressure, aftermath, and warning.

The work must remember the rule returned by *After the Battle of Grunwald*: even victory must pass through mourning. It must remember the rule returned by *After the Battle of Vítkov*: force must answer to truth. It must remember the rule returned by *Petr Chelčický at Vodňany*: a righteous cause can still become destructive.

War is not purified by being defensive. Sacrifice is not purified by being heroic. Violence is never the final truth of the people.

9.6 No Single Religious Resolution

The top face, **Humanity Reawakened**, must remain plural.

The original *Slav Epic* contains Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, reformist, and sacred-human imagery. The century after 1926 must also be read through Jewish, Muslim, secular, atheist, post-communist, diasporic, and mixed inheritances that cannot be gathered under one confessional image.

John Paul II is a major Slavic witness to humanity and cannot be ignored in the paper's historical field. But no single religious figure may carry humanity alone. The monument may include named figures as anchors, but it must not allow any figure, church, state, or nation to resolve the century.

9.7 No Country-Based Faces

The four visible side faces are not assigned to nations.

A country-based structure would immediately create hierarchy, omission, and political distortion. It would force the monument to decide which peoples receive a face and which are subordinated to another face. That would violate the object's purpose.

The side faces are modes, not territories: **Voices and Memories**, **Sovereignty and Promise**, **A Carried Homeland**, and **The Common Work**. Each mode can hold many peoples, many histories, and many contradictions.

9.8 No Exhaustive Inventory

The monument is not an encyclopedia.

The century after *Slavs for Humanity* is too large to represent exhaustively. A complete account of Slavic peoples, states, diasporas, achievements, catastrophes, artists, wars, institutions, and migrations would be impossible. Attempting such completeness would weaken the work.

The monument operates through symbolic compression. It selects modes, motifs, and pressures that can hold many histories without pretending to contain them all.

9.9 No Sealed Ethnic Narrative

The proposed work must acknowledge that Slavic histories are entangled histories.

The lands and cultures addressed by the *Slav Epic* have never existed in isolation. The century after 1926 includes Jewish, Roma, German, Hungarian, Baltic, Muslim, Balkan, Ottoman, Habsburg, Soviet, European, and diasporic entanglements. A monument answering *Slavs for Humanity* cannot treat the Slavic century as a sealed ethnic narrative.

This does not require the monument to become a monument to every adjacent history. But it requires the work to avoid absorbing those histories into a closed Slavic frame.

9.10 No Moral Neutrality on Rupture

The monument must not be morally neutral about the rupture after 2021.

The full-scale war beginning in 2022 is not merely an unfortunate complication in the paper's timeline. It is the event that forces the preceding century back under judgment.

At the same time, the monument should judge structurally before it judges rhetorically. The broken circle, the bottom face, the red pressure rising through seams, the wounded top, and the 2021 threshold should carry much of the moral force.

The work should not distribute blame vaguely or symmetrically where the rupture itself is not symmetrical.

9.11 No Loss of Beauty

The final constraint is aesthetic and moral.

The paper's method is systematic, but the monument cannot feel mechanical. It must remain beautiful enough to answer the *Slav Epic* and disciplined enough not to betray it.

Technical structure belongs underneath. The surface must carry memory, grief, proportion, silence, witness, and hope.

The work should be personal in devotion, not in narration. Its care should be visible through precision.

10. Conclusion: Wounded Hope Under Judgment

The *Slav Epic* ends by lifting history toward humanity.

That final movement should not be dismissed as naïve. Mucha's concluding claim did not arise from innocence. It came after a cycle of vulnerability, conquest, ritual, language, law, reform, martyrdom, war, exile, labor, and sacrifice. *Slavs for Humanity* does not say that suffering has ended. It says that suffering may be transfigured into a human offering.

The century after 1926 tested that claim again.

It did not produce a simple answer. It produced voices and memories alongside censorship and erasure; sovereignty and promise alongside occupation and broken guarantees; carried homelands alongside exile and displacement; common work, care, reconstruction, and repair alongside exploitation, forced labor, and exhaustion. It produced renewed cultural visibility and global contribution, but also war and shadows that rose again from beneath the historical surface.

For that reason, the twenty-first work cannot be a clean apotheosis. It cannot simply repeat the gold of the final canvas. It cannot pretend that the promise of *Slavs for Humanity* was fulfilled by the century that followed. But neither can it abandon the promise. To answer the *Slav Epic* only with darkness would be to misunderstand the original cycle's deeper grammar. The Epic does not move from suffering to innocence. It moves from suffering to the possibility of offering.

Slav Epic 21 is therefore proposed as a form for carrying that possibility after renewed trial.

Its top face, **Humanity Reawakened**, preserves the upward direction of the final painting without declaring closure. Its bottom face, **War and Shadows**, refuses to let violence disappear beneath cultural achievement. Its visible side faces hold the century through voices, memory, sovereignty, promise, exile, homeland, labor, care, and repair. Its dimensions preserve the final canvas's frontal proportion while giving it depth. Its structure requires movement because the century cannot be faced from one direction.

The proposed monument does not complete the *Slav Epic*. It does not replace the final painting. It does not correct Mucha. It does not speak for him. It accepts the original cycle as complete, then asks what kind of object can stand one century later before its final claim.

Slav Epic 21 does not answer *Slavs for Humanity* by declaring the promise fulfilled.

It answers by refusing to let the promise disappear.

Sources and Notes

The citations below support the paper’s primary factual anchors: the structure of the *Slav Epic* cycle, the dating, dimensions, and visual logic of *Slavs for Humanity*, the 1928 public presentation of the completed cycle, selected painting-specific source nodes, the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the Pan-Slavic context behind the paper’s false-unity constraint.

The proposal itself remains interpretive and speculative. Sources establish the historical and visual frame from which the design argument proceeds; they do not imply institutional authorization or endorsement.

[1] Mucha Foundation, “The Slav Epic,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[2] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.20: Apotheosis: Slavs for Humanity,” 1926, accessed June 13, 2026.

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[8] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.20: Apotheosis: Slavs for Humanity,” dimensions listed as 405 × 480 cm, accessed June 13, 2026.

[9] Mucha Foundation, “The Slav Epic,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[10] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.1: The Slavs in Their Original Homeland,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[11] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.12: Petr Chelčický at Vodňany,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[12] Mucha Foundation, “The Slav Epic,” and “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.14: The Sacrifice at Szigetvár by Nikola Zrinski,” accessed June 13, 2026.

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[17] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.6: The Coronation of Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan as East Roman Emperor,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[18] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.13: The Hussite King Jiří of Poděbrady,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[19] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.18: The Oath of Omladina under the Slavic Linden Tree,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[20] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.16: Jan Amos Komenský / Comenius,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[21] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.7: Jan Milíč of Kroměříž,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[22] Mucha Foundation, “‘The Slav Epic’ cycle No.19: The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia,” accessed June 13, 2026.

[23] Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Pan-Slavism” and “Slav,” accessed June 13, 2026.

Figures and Diagrams

This paper is accompanied by five original diagrams rather than reproductions of the original *Slav Epic* canvases. The purpose of the visual material is not to re-display Mucha's work, but to clarify the derived structure of *Slav Epic 21*.

No reproductions of the original canvases are required for the argument. Original diagrams are used both to keep the paper focused on the derived object and to avoid unnecessary image-rights complexity.

The visual program includes five body-order diagrams:

1. **Color-Band Translation**

Shows how the blue, red, shadowed, and yellow-gold zones of *Slavs for Humanity* translate into the spatial logic of *Slav Epic 21*: memory, conflict, underside, and humanity.

2. **Dimensional Diagram**

Shows how the final canvas proportion of 4.05 meters wide by 4.80 meters high is extended backward into a 4.05-meter depth.

3. **Source-System Flow**

Shows how each original canvas is read through internal and external traits, compressed into a symbolic node, translated into a design rule, and assigned to a monument face, motif, or constraint.

4. **Six-Face Map**

Labels **Humanity Reawakened** as the top face, **War and Shadows** as the bottom face, and the four visible side faces as **Voices and Memories**, **Sovereignty and Promise**, **A Carried Homeland**, and **The Common Work**.

5. **Motif Map**

Shows the cross-face motif systems: linden roots, branches, and leaves; broken or incomplete circle; threshold witness figure; and red/dark pressure rising from the bottom face.

Object Specification Summary

Attribute	Specification
Proposed object name	<i>Slav Epic 21</i>
Object type	Six-faced symbolic public-memory monument
Status	Independent speculative design proposal
Dimensions	4.05 m wide × 4.80 m high × 4.05 m deep
Dimensional source	Final canvas, <i>Slavs for Humanity</i>
Top face	Humanity Reawakened
Bottom face	War and Shadows
Side face	Voices and Memories
Side face	Sovereignty and Promise
Side face	A Carried Homeland
Side face	The Common Work
Primary motifs	Color bands, linden roots, branches, and leaves; broken circle; threshold witness; rising shadow
Installation posture	Conceptually buildable; pavilion-scale or controlled viewing conditions preferred
Exclusions	Not official, not authorized, not a continuation of Mucha's authorship, not a country map, not a war spectacle, not an exhaustive historical inventory

About the Author

Scott Jellen is an independent researcher and protocol designer focused on system design, institutional structure, cultural systems, and long-range public frameworks. His work explores how infrastructure, incentives, governance, memory, and symbolic form shape complex systems across digital, civic, economic, and cultural domains.

About Jellen Protocol Lab

Jellen Protocol Lab is an independent research initiative focused on designing and articulating system-level frameworks across public infrastructure, economic coordination, institutional design, media systems, protocol architecture, and symbolic infrastructure.

Version Notes

v1.0 — Initial public release.

This version establishes the core argument, object specification, six-face structure, dimensional derivation, source-system method, figure set, citation layer, and publication metadata for *Slav Epic 21*.

Publication Metadata

Title: The Twenty-First Slav Epic

Subtitle: A Century After *Slavs for Humanity*

Author: Scott Jellen

Organization: Jellen Protocol Lab

Kind: Speculative Design Whitepaper

Version: v1.0

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20692405

Status: Initial Public Release

Date: June 14, 2026

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Keywords: Slav Epic, Alphonse Mucha, Slavs for Humanity, Pan-Slavism, symbolic infrastructure, public memory, public-memory object, monument design, speculative design, cultural systems, Slavic history, diaspora, sovereignty, exile, labor, war and memory, Jellen Protocol Lab