

DESIRES

AND

CONTRADICTIONS

**Exhibiting Art and
Architecture in
Slovenia 1947–1979**

Edited by Beti Žerovc, Miha Valant, Vladimir Vidmar


UNIVERSITY
OF LJUBLJANA

FF
Faculty
of Arts

**IGOR ZABEL
ASSOCIATION
FOR CULTURE
AND THEORY**

**IGOR ZABEL
ASSOCIATION
FOR CULTURE
AND THEORY**

 **FF**
UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA Faculty of Arts

Ljubljana, 2026

DESIRES

AND

**Exhibiting Art and
Architecture in
Slovenia 1947–1979**

CONTRADICTIONS

Edited by Beti Žerovc, Miha Valant, Vladimir Vidmar

Table of Contents

6	Acknowledgements
8	Beti Žerovc <i>On Desires, Contradictions and Exhibiting Art – Introduction</i>
28	Katarina Mohar <i>Exchange of Fine Art Exhibitions Between the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Soviet Union</i>
68	Nika Grabar <i>The Construction of the “Yugoslav Architecture” Idea Through the Prism of Two Post-War Exhibitions</i>
106	Cvetka Požar, Maja Vardjan <i>Housing for Our Conditions and Family and Household: Exhibitions of Model Apartments and Their Role in Promoting New Concepts of Living</i>
140	Vladimir Vidmar <i>Almost America: Travelling Visual Art Exhibitions from the USA at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Between 1953 and 1979</i>
186	Gregor Dražil <i>The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Exhibiting Slovenian Artists in the West: The Cases of West Germany and Italy</i>
216	Meta Kordiš <i>The Right Address to Settle Your Art Matters: The Development of the Ljubljanska banka Fine Art Collection</i>
254	Tina Fortič Jakopič <i>The Fine Art Collection of the Museum of National Liberation of the People’s Republic of Slovenia/Museum of the People’s Revolution of Slovenia and Its Exhibiting</i>
292	Ivan Smiljanić <i>Revolution Within Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People’s Army</i>
324	Tina Palaić <i>Non-European Collections in Goričane: An Intertwinement of Exhibition Discourses</i>
360	List of Abbreviations
364	Sources of Visual Material

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of many years of work, patience and collaborative efforts of the research group Exhibiting of Art and Architecture Between Artistic and Ideological Concepts: Case Study of Slovenia, 1947–1979 (J6-3137). We would like to thank all authors of the chapters – Gregor Dražil, Tina Fortič Jakopič, Nika Grabar, Meta Kordiš, Katarina Mohar, Tina Palaić, Cvetka Požar, Ivan Smiljanić and Maja Vardjan – for their valuable contributions.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the peer reviewers Tamara Bjažić Klarin, Bojan Godeša, Ljiljana Kolešnik, Nenad Lajbenšperger, Tanja Petrović, Jure Ramšak, Luka Skansi, Ana Sladojević and Nadja Zgonik, whose careful reading and thoughtful comments made an important contribution to shaping the content of the monograph. We would like to express our special thanks to Martina Malešič for her assistance in editing the texts related to architecture.

The monograph would not have been possible without the many collaborators who helped in obtaining archival and visual material and who, through their advice and information, contributed to a better understanding of the exhibiting of art in Slovenia after the Second World War.

The visual material was kindly provided by individuals as well as by museums and other institutions: the Museum of Architecture and Design, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the International Centre of Graphic Arts, the National and University Library of Slovenia, the MUZA – Museum and Gallery and the Maribor Art Gallery.

We would like to thank Urška Jurman for editorial assistance, Katja Kosi, Borut Praper, Barbara Skubic for translations, Ana Čavić for copy editing, Mario Batelić for proofreading the layout and Žan Kobal for the design of the monograph.

Editors

Beti Žerovc

On Desires, Contradictions and Exhibiting Art – Introduction

On the Research Project

The book *Desires and Contradictions: Exhibiting Art and Architecture in Slovenia 1947–1979* explores and interprets art and architecture through the prism of how it was exhibited and institutionalised in the selected period. The period is framed by two exhibitions which, through their organisation, content orientation, the selection of works and the responses they elicited, reflect the historical situation of their time. The first is the 1947 *Exhibition of Soviet Painters (Razstava sovjetskih slikarjev)*, presented in the still officially unopened premises of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. The exhibition toured the Yugoslav republics and the countries of the Eastern Bloc and represents an important event for the understanding of the brief period of the Yugoslav rapprochement to the Soviet Union in the field of art, which was interrupted as early as June 1948 with Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform. Intended as an example of the art of Socialist Realism, the exhibition failed to convince at least part of the Slovenian expert public. The second exhibition, the large retrospective *Slovenian Fine Arts 1945–1978 (Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978)*, was prepared in 1979 by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the Architectural Museum Ljubljana. It presented a broad spectrum of architecture, design and art – from figurative memorial sculptures and book illustrations to the projects by The OHO Group – yet through its specific mode of presentation and interpretation, it also importantly reinforced the evaluation of achievements according to the criteria of the Western canon and confirmed modernism as the most important current of Slovenian artistic production during the period under consideration.¹ By opening up towards postmodernism favourable to regionalism – which, in contrast to modernist internationalism, once again popularised the search for the *genius loci* – and by consolidating the perception of the Slovenian cultural space as a distinct entity within the Yugoslav context, it symbolically opened a new chapter of the 1980s.

This book was created within the project research group Exhibiting of Art and Architecture Between Artistic and Ideological Concepts: Case Study of Slovenia, 1947–1979 (J6-3137). It is closely connected with the group's other activities, particularly the research on the development of Slovenian exhibiting infrastructure in the same period, presented on the website *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979 (Razstavljanje v Sloveniji 1947–1979)*. It is also linked to the research on interwar exhibiting in Ljubljana, carried out concurrently within another project at the Department of Art History of the Faculty of Arts, University of

1 The resonant exhibition was accompanied by an ambitious three volume catalogue: Stane Bernik et al. (eds.), *Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978* (exhibition catalogue), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1979.

Ljubljana.² In the course of these studies, the emerging structure of Slovenian exhibition venues gradually became clear, at least in its basic outlines – who established a particular type of venue, when and why. At the same time, the remarkable progress, indeed a leap, that this field experienced during the researched period also came to the fore. After the war, the modest pre-war situation – the only two regular Ljubljana venues in the interwar years were the Jakopič Pavilion and the National Gallery – was supplemented by cooperative initiatives and occasional events, usually held in non-purpose-built spaces. Yet within only a few decades, by the end of the 1970s, a wide-spread, polycentric and largely professionalised network of exhibition venues had been established, comprising numerous specialised institutions and well-developed inter-institutional connections at home and abroad (guest and exchange exhibitions, recurring exhibitions, painting colonies, sculpture symposia and so on).³

While researching exhibiting practices, the accelerated development and expansion of the entire field under consideration also became evident. Alongside the existing study programmes in art history and architecture, the Academy of Fine Arts was founded in Ljubljana in 1945. Conditions and benefits for artists improved, and they rapidly organised themselves into an increasing number of professional and amateur associations throughout the republic.⁴ The media coverage and professional writing on art also intensified, supported by specialised journals; and, with the 1964 merger of *Arhitekt* and *Likovna revija*, the still unsurpassed journal *Sinteza* was founded.⁵ Because development-oriented cultural policies were common in Europe at the time, the intensity of development in Slovenia is not exceptional, but the local art-friendly socialist doctrine did lend these processes a specific hue,⁶ among other things through increased

- 2 *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979*, razstavljanjevsloveniji.si, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 21.11.2025); Miha Valant and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Razstave v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945*, Društvo Igor Zabel za kulturo in teorijo, Ljubljana, 2023.
- 3 The aforementioned professionalisation is also evidenced by the project of surveying and exploring all the venues, undertaken by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana from 1974 on, both by its findings and by the project per se. One of the surveyors published her findings in a concise article: Eva Gspan, “Oris stanja slovenskih galerij in razstavišč”, *Argo*, no. 22, 1983, pp. 47–66.
- 4 Vesna Čopič and Gregor Tomc, *Kulturna politika v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana, 1997, pp. 46, 50–53, 60–64, 78–80; Petja Grafenauer, Nataša Ivanović and Urška Barut, “Kako je Mala galerija prenehala biti društvena in postala moderna”, *Likovne besede*, no. 113, 2019, p. 35 and throughout.
- 5 The website *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979* (see no. 2) provides full access to the journals *Likovni svet*, *Arhitekt*, *Likovna revija* and *Sinteza*, which were digitalised as part of this project.
- 6 For the increase in funding that Yugoslavia and Slovenia allocated to culture, see: Branka Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije: 1946–1963*, Glasnik, Beograd, 2013, p. 140; Čopič and Tomc, 1997 (see no. 4), pp. 67, 113–126.

commissions and employment opportunities. The country’s ambitions in education, for example, required a large and diverse segment of art professionals, from art teachers to illustrators.⁷ Public, particularly monumental, sculpture flourished, as did the use of art in furnishing a truly broad range of spaces, from shops, public canteens, factories and schools to banks and hotels.⁸ Given today’s prevalent perception about a weak socialist art market, the vitality of commissioning and marketing works of art at the time is striking, although the situation, of course, differed from that in the West: the state did not want to – and without truly wealthy individuals also couldn’t – establish a market characterised by unreasonably high prices of artworks. Despite scant research of this field, it is evident that the opportunities for artists to make a living improved significantly compared with the pre-war period.⁹

On Parallel Worlds

In this book, the factual approach is enhanced by an in-depth focus on selected aspects of exhibiting, observing them particularly through the prism of the Yugoslav political order, its doctrine and its geopolitical perspectives. We must also take into account that the Yugoslav socio-political and economic circumstances in the just over three decades under consideration were far from monolithic; the chapters that address the entire period particularly seek to patiently unveil the shifting temporal contexts necessary for understanding and situating the issues discussed. These contexts almost invariably require

- 7 On the accelerated development of illustration after 1945, see: Špelca Čopič, “Knjižna ilustracija”, in: Stane Bernik et al. (eds.), *Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978* (exhibition catalogue), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1979, pp. 81–88.
- 8 See *Likovne umetnine za javne ustanove v Sloveniji: 1945–1991*, umetnostzakupnost.si, 2025, URL: <https://umetnostzakupnost.si> (accessed 18.10.2025). For a systematic analysis of the phenomenon in Croatia, see: Patricia Počanić, “Narudžbe i otkupi umjetničkih djela za interijere javnih institucija u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih.”, *Peristil*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2019, pp. 179–201.
- 9 Only partial research has been done, primarily of individual institutions that (also) engaged in sales. Commercial galleries, similar to those in the West, began appearing sporadically, and not before the 1970s. For most of the time, there existed more modest shops where art supplies and books, as well as artworks, were available for purchase (e.g. as a part of the Mladinska knjiga retail network). A large portion of the commissions and sales, at least in the first post-war decades, took place through professional associations, and sales also occurred through galleries, since exhibitions were most often commercial. Eva Jamnik, “Prodajne galerije v Sloveniji 1945–1979: Delovno gradivo”, razstavljanjevsloveniji.si, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 28.1.2026); Grafenauer, Ivanović and Barut, 2019 (see no. 4), pp. 33–38; Ana Kutleša, “Culture on the Market – The Gallery of Contemporary Art in the Early 1960s”, in: Aleksandra Sekulić and Dušan Grlja (eds.), *Performing the Museum: The Reader*, Muzej savremene umetnosti Vojvodine, Novi Sad, 2016, pp. 154–167. See also no. 16, 30 and 33.

explanation on several levels. The specific focus of this book – largely studies of travelling exhibitions – alone makes us move between the local, Slovenian, Yugoslav and international contexts, and when it comes to the latter, we encounter the intricate complexity of Yugoslav foreign policy in the global arena.

The exhibitions are traceable through archival documents, accompanying publications and media reporting and discourse (art critiques, newspaper polemics, etc.) which can be followed – to a lesser or greater extent – in connection with each of them. Throughout the research process, the exhibitions – considered the basic units of our research – emerged as tangible, realised products with definable traits and coordinates, as well as with objectives and political charge. They are inextricably linked to those who enable and finance them¹⁰ and, rather than the artists, they bring forward other professionals in the field: curators and other exhibition organisers, art critics and other reporters on cultural life, intermediaries and art dealers, etc. Tracing the media reporting and behind-the-scenes discussions that accompanied the currents of exhibition activity and the emergence of new exhibition venues – much of which involved a more or less covert struggle for resources – allowed us to discern the basic contours of the field under study somewhat differently from how art history typically records it, along with its internal controversies, which seem to define it crucially. Along with the usual intergenerational “jostling” that is characteristic of the Western art canon – where younger protagonists, in their continual struggle for primacy, surpass their predecessors and which we historicise as formative moments in the field of art¹¹ – there is another polarity, perhaps an even more enduring one. The state, unable to establish a cultural model particular to socialism – although it clearly deemed such a model as absolutely essential for the desired transformation of social relations¹² – allowed two parallel, mostly antagonistic segments to emerge. For the most part, these

10 For an overview of the Slovenian and Yugoslav cultural policy and its implementation in the studied period, see: Čopič and Tomc, 1997 (see no. 4); Doknić, 2013 (see no. 6); Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in: Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 59–90.

11 For the methodology and comparative inquiry into the functioning of the art fields, see: Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of Literary Field*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996, pp. 55–121, 132 and throughout; Heike Munder and Ulf Wuggenig (eds.), *Das Kunstfeld: Eine Studie über Akteure und Institutionen der zeitgenössischen Kunst am Beispiel von Zürich, Wien, Hamburg und Paris*, JRP Ringier, Zürich, 2012. See also no. 18.

12 The origin of this view is Marxist thought on the key role of cultural emancipation within the general emancipation of the working class. Ivan Jakopović, *Radnici, kultura, revolucija*, Zavod za kulturu Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1976, p. 21 and throughout.

segments coexisted peacefully and even overlapped, but at times – or, regarding certain aspects permanently and, as time passed, increasingly – they would openly have a negative reaction to each other.¹³

The first of these segments is the sphere of high art: a highly active and hierarchised art scene, composed almost exclusively of formally trained professionals, art historians and artists, with ties predominantly to urban environments and the most professionalised institutions. Instead of undertaking persistent efforts to articulate and implement a model of cultural production particular to socialism, it mostly followed the trends, norms and evaluative criteria of the Western art system; in other words, it represented the concepts and value systems of bourgeois art and followed the capitalist cultural model whenever circumstances allowed. Although this regularly put it at odds with the socialist doctrine, its key agents guided the policy of the Slovene art field and controlled both its essential exhibition infrastructure and its international art exchange.

The other of these two segments was the broad spectrum of visual art production which received targeted support from the state, in line with its political principles. These principles were grounded in the desire for culture and art to cease being elitist commodities of the detached upper echelons of society and instead realise their potential for fostering a more just society, improving the quality of life for individuals and also supporting the state’s doctrine. The latter was most clearly manifested as the so-called art of the revolution, while with the former culture was socialised most intensively through amateur artistic activities across all levels of society, from students to workers. With the early Yugoslav notion of establishing a cultural model specific to socialism – considered necessary for a profound transformation of social relations – the reconfiguration of the relationship between the amateur and the professional was of central importance: it required abandoning bourgeois notions of the role of expertise and canonical evaluation in favour of greater inclusivity. However, when we look at the actual development of Slovene visual art, it appears that despite the rapidly expanding network and widespreadness of amateur artistic activity, this aspect increasingly remained little more than a promise on paper, bringing no meaningful change to the position or authority of high art. Politically, the project unfolded for most of the researched

13 For the topics and particular issues that appear on this and the next five pages, see: Beti Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941” and “Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?”, in: Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 52–57, 375–397.

period in a mitigated form, aimed primarily at overcoming the workers' alienation in the production process and grounded in the assumption that only a cultured, or culturally active, individual would be capable of realising socialism in a meaningful way.¹⁴ For us, art historians, this diverse segment of visual art production already presents difficulties at the level of identifying and understanding its basic characteristics and activities, because we ourselves were also educated within the parameters of high art and were primarily taught to see and evaluate it – a task made easier because high art, unlike the rest of visual art production, is systematically archived and historicised.¹⁵ Having internalised the view that everything else is more or less unworthy of our attention or essentially none of our business, we often fail to realise that we overlook and fail to account for a broader whole, or that this inevitably renders us biased.

The high-art segment was, as a rule, not in favour of the under-scoring and extensive financing of this second segment, particularly as they often competed for resources, and some ambitious amateurs were also remarkably successful in the art market.¹⁶ It also responded rather poorly when the state demanded more connectivity with it, or when non-academic artists expressed more explicit ambitions to exhibit their work. It did not shy away from subjecting such artistic productions to sharply worded public criticism whenever they appeared, either as standalone exhibitions or as presentations by individual artists within general exhibitions, collections or representative displays abroad, in venues that it perceived as exclusively its own, such as major, highest-ranking exhibition spaces.¹⁷ It is precisely in this

14 On art amateurism as a means of humanisation and softening the unfavourable consequences of industrialisation, with instructions to organise activities, see: Milan Butina, "Amatersko likovno delovanje in družbeni centri", *Likovna revija*, vol. 1, no. 6, June 1963, pp. i, xxxiv–xxxv. For more on the earliest notions, established already during the People's Liberation Struggle, see: Ana Hofman, "Revolution is Learned Faster than Culture":¹ On the Amateur-Professional Relationship in the Artistic Legacies of the People's Liberation Struggle", *Anthropos*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2024, pp. 81–98.

15 Let us note that the visual art field is historicised differently and far more intensively than other fields of art, and that the veneration of artworks, for example through exhaustive and very expensive catalogues, is directly linked to their market prices and their placement within the canon.

16 In 1967, the well-known amateur painter Jože Horvat-Jaki even opened a private art gallery. He was also internationally represented by a foreign gallerist. Juro Kislinger, "Nazarje št. 58: Jakijeva domačija", *Večer*, vol. 23, no. 263, 11.11.1967, p. 3; T. B., "Naivno slikarstvo za naivne gledalce", *Sodobnost*, vol. 18, no. 6, 1970, pp. 675–676; Aleksander Bassin, "Naivni 70", *Sodobnost*, vol. 18, no. 12, 1970, pp. 1279–1281.

17 See last part of Ivan Smiljanič's chapter "Revolution Within Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People's Army", in this book. On the pointlessness of sending amateurs, albeit well-known, to exhibitions abroad, see, for example, Stane Bernik, "Trigon 67", *Sinteza*, vol. 2, no. 8, 1967, p. 68; Tanja Zimmermann,

discourse that we can tangibly discern what the art scene proclaimed to be "right" and "wrong", and that, above all, it openly denounced anything that did not conform to the dictates of the Western art system. When this system presented itself as universal, unbiased and devoted only to "pure" art – in which a very specific form of autonomy and freedom is required in order for the genius individual to produce artworks of outstanding quality – the art scene enthroned this mythology and dogma as proper, literal truths. Based on that – dogmas turned axioms – it then proceeded to judge both the socialist cultural-political practices that refused to yield to it and the disempowerment of cultural elites, even though this was one of the first socialist postulates.¹⁸

The antagonism intensified and became more visible after the mid-1960s, when the state initiated more pronounced decentralisation processes, while its economic reforms turned it into an increasingly more contradictory amalgam of declarative socialism and market-oriented economy. With all that, social stratification and the strengthening of the elites, including cultural elites, increased. In this context, the Slovenian art scene typically aligned itself with local liberal politics, increasingly antagonistic towards Belgrade.¹⁹ Within such a constellation, it could further accentuate its national dimensions and its autonomy, and, together with politics, it advocated and enacted the process of Westernisation as a kind of natural turning of Slovenian society towards the values of humanism, development, modernity, democracy and freedom, rather than (also) acknowledging its participation in a constructed, politically motivated process whose key objectives were the distancing from communism and the spread of a mindset compatible with capitalism.²⁰ By this period, it seems that any kind of deviation

"Oto Bihalji-Merin and the Concept of the 'Naive' in the 1950s", *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2018, p. 197.

18 Among other things, the Western art system systematically enshrines, as one of its basic postulates, the idea that the most successful individual is entitled to more than others, and that this entitlement is natural and just, or at least acceptable. Its impact on society is exerted above all through its own behaviour, as it projects – brutally clearly and incessantly to the broadest public – the (dis)proportions in artists' incomes and in the veneration they receive. For the role of the myth of artistic freedom needed for the battle of the greats for primacy to continue undisturbed, see the chapter "Beautiful Freedom" in Beti Žerovc, *When Attitudes Become the Norm: The Contemporary Curator and Institutional Art*, Društvo Igor Zabel za kulturo in teorijo and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2015, pp. 166–174. The constant self-mythification of Western art, that conceals its ideological nature and structurally conditioned success, also required that Yugoslav protagonists adapt their own biographies to it, in which their paths developed as a constant struggle, without support and amid resistance from all sides, although facts often tell a different story. Žerovc, 2023 (see no. 13), pp. 54, 385.

19 Kolešnik, 2023 (see no. 10), pp. 79–81, 84. Čopič and Tomc, 1997 (see no. 4), pp. 57.

20 For Westernisation as a process of transfer of values, ideas and culture from the USA to (Western) European societies between 1945 and 1970 or the transatlantic

in Yugoslav cultural practices from Western cultural models and the Western art system was no longer seen, by any criterion, as understandable or as good and proper, since those models were themselves, by virtue of privileging elites, exclusivist and regressive. For the Yugoslav art professionals infatuated with the smooth operation of the Western art system in which they, owing to their socialist background, could never be truly competitive and successful, such deviations became, above all, sources of unease, frustration and even shame.²¹

The antagonism between the two segments intensified further during the so-called years of lead. The increasingly unpopular Yugoslav federal politics, that was losing authority and support in Slovenia, used the reforms in the mid-1970s to organise the cultural sector according to the principles of self-management as well, which turned

circular exchange, aimed at shaping opinions among the intellectual elites in order to fight communism in the ideational reorientation of society after fascism, see: Veronika Floch, "Reflecting the American Cultural Canon: Vienna's Museum of the Twentieth Century", in: Waldemar Zacharasiewicz and Siegfried Beer (eds.), *The Context of Westernization Discourses, Cultural Politics, Transfer & Propaganda: Mediated Narratives and Images in Austrian-American Relations*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2021, pp. 347–372. Floch explores the presence of these processes in Austrian art, where the USA employed a number of strategies similar to those used in Yugoslavia. Many public and parapolitical institutions participated in this process, foremost among them the MoMA, which worked closely with the US State Department. Among other things, it influenced the directors of the two major museums of contemporary art in Austria and Yugoslavia at the time of their almost simultaneous conception and construction: Werner Hofmann with the Museum of the 20th Century (today mumok) that opened in 1962, and Miodrag Protić of the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art that opened in 1965. Like Hofmann, Protić developed the museum's basic concept partly through conversations with the MoMA's director, René d'Harnoncourt, when he spent several months in the US during its preparations. Žerovc, 2023 (see no. 13), p. 54; Floch, 2021 (see beginning of this footnote), pp. 363–370.

21 The protagonists who were as fully committed to Westernisation, as we read in the previous footnote, either didn't see or didn't want to see that both the failure and success of Yugoslav art in the West were largely conditioned by the interests of Western Cold War cultural policies. In the 1970s, the Western foreign cultural policy cooled its previously intensive collaboration with them and their institutions as their natural allies, while simultaneously increasing direct, personal invitations to younger artists who were often critical of the state. Some of them rather quickly achieved the highly desired international success that Yugoslav artists had previously been unable to attain, despite the extraordinary international fluidity of the Yugoslav art scene. Because this success now unfolded largely outside the framework of domestic institutions, it was increasingly seen within the art scene as evidence of their incompetence and, more broadly, the incompetence of the Yugoslav cultural policy. On how the Western art system dictated Yugoslavs' evaluation of their own art, and why art that wasn't declaratively critical towards Yugoslavia could not be successful abroad, see the introduction to Vladimir Vidmar's chapter "Almost America: Travelling Visual Art Exhibitions from the USA at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Between 1953 and 1979", in this book, particularly footnote 7.

out to be extremely stressful and difficult to implement.²² At the same time, after suppressing the liberal tendencies in political life throughout Yugoslavia, it once again, and for the last time, launched a wave of pronounced attempts at the socialisation of culture under Marxist slogans such as "art for all" and "culture to the workers".²³ Although many Yugoslavs were aware of the growing divide between high art and the socialist collectivist doctrine and repeatedly pointed to it, it is precisely the clumsy implementation of the socialisation of culture during this last wave that shows, over time, the complete status-based dominance of the high-art segment, whose position had already been consolidated through inter-segmental altercations in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁴ While the practices of the other segment were gradually excluded from key art institutions, the classlessness and universality of high art became sufficiently established "truths" to justify the literal imposition of high art even on industrial workers, for example, by installing artworks into industrial plants or organising art exhibitions in factory canteens. Such gestures led not only to absurdity, as they obviously made no real sense, but also to a genuinely harmful situation. This revealed, in the most literal way, that something was deeply wrong with a state that turned the very people who were supposed to be at the centre of its attention – the workers – into a problem, because they were either unable or unwilling to consume high art, and which actually made a turnabout from demands to eliminate art that was alienated from the masses on the grounds that it was harmful to socialism, only to end up prescribing that very art to everyone.²⁵

Very little is written about this phenomenon in Slovenia nowadays, but Vlatko Čakširan explores it thoroughly in the exhibition catalogue *Kolonija likovnih umjetnika Željezare Sisak 1971–1990*, using the Sisak Iron Works in Croatia as a case study. The plant supported the cultural-artistic activities of its workers abundantly and employed scores of cultural promoters for this purpose. These promoters, among other tasks, were wrestling with the actual task of developing an appreciation of high art among the workers.²⁶ Their experiences, recorded in

22 Čopič and Tomc, 1997 (see no. 4), pp. 64–80 and throughout.

23 Kolečnik, 2023 (see no. 10), pp. 60–62, 84–86 and throughout. For the large-scale Slovenian campaign *Man, Work, Culture* whose key objective was specifically to make culture accessible to the working class, see: Franček Brglez (ed.), *Človek, delo, kultura: Ocene, analize, razmišljanja in zapiski*, Komunist, Ljubljana, 1977.

24 See no. 16, 17.

25 The nature of this hard and, over time, increasingly more frustrating relationship is clearly charted through the in-depth interviews on culture with the representatives of the large working collectives all over Yugoslavia in: Jakopović, 1976 (see no. 12).

26 Vlatko Čakširan, *Kolonija likovnih umjetnika Željezare Sisak 1971–1990: Povijesni pregled* (exhibition catalogue), Gradski muzej, Sisak, 2012, pp. 53–58.

surveys about this topic, testify that their mission did not go as planned. They repeatedly stated that workers were not interested in classical music, that the exhibitions went unvisited etc., down to harsh reproaches that workers had no culture or no need for it. Some promoters did question the expectations of the task they were entrusted with, but they didn't blame themselves for the problems, and even less so the artists; instead, they shifted more blame on the workers. Čakširan concludes:

Such thinking, indeed, reveals the actual situation, which clashes with the proclaimed ideas about bringing art to the workers. The fact is that the workers were not educated well enough to be able to grasp all that was expected of them. A worker was supposed to become a kind of "superworker", who needed to be an expert in their own workplace while at the same time possessing the ability to think creatively in matters of art and, if possible, also have their own artistic inclinations, which would be reflected in literature, visual art, music, theatre, etc. Such a worker was supposed to be the bearer of the high-quality socialist transformation of society. Unfortunately, this idea was never realised. The idealism of the intellectual elite was never fully transferred to the level of the working classes.²⁷

On the Studies in This Book

Nine very different studies each have one chapter in this book. They are loosely grouped into three sections, partly according to their subject matter and partly according to the chronology. The first chapter, "Exchange of Fine Art Exhibitions Between the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Soviet Union", offers an in-depth analysis of the period of a few years when Yugoslavia followed the Soviet cultural model and artistic principles, as well as the intense contacts between the two countries. This was followed by a complete break in relations, during which the official cultural exchange between Yugoslavia and the members of the Cominform was entirely suspended from 1948 until Stalin's death in 1953. After contact resumed, the exchange remained weak and highly doctrinaire; visiting exhibitions were received with a significant level of reservation on both sides. The Soviet side openly objected to Yugoslavs using the exchange to bring modernism into the USSR, which they regarded as ideologically problematic. In Slovenia, meanwhile, visiting Soviet exhibitions were often used by critics as evidence of the quality and modernity of Slovene art, compared to the outdated and inadequate Soviet art. The exchange of exhibitions with Eastern Bloc countries was further weakened by

27 Ibid., p. 57.

the decentralisation and reorganisation of cultural exchange that Yugoslavia gradually implemented from the mid-1960s onwards. At the state level, only the major representative exhibitions of federal interest continued to be coordinated, while the rest of the organisation and financing of bilateral exchanges was transferred to the republics. The Slovenian art scene showed no serious interest in exchanging exhibitions with the USSR throughout the entire period under consideration. The chapter clearly traces the trajectory of a socialist state that was, in the bipolar Cold War world, at least in the field of fine arts, completely detached from the Eastern Bloc countries, even at times when Yugoslavia and those countries were experiencing political rapprochement. The Slovenian art scene, for its part, adopted – wherever possible and quite visibly – the same attitude towards Soviet art as that promulgated by the Western art system.

The chapter "The Construction of the 'Yugoslav Architecture' Idea Through the Prism of Two Post-War Exhibitions" first lays out the exceptionally complex domestic and international background of the exhibitions *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY (Arhitektura narodov FLRJ; 1949, Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana)* and *Architecture of Yugoslavia (Arhitektura Jugoslavije; 1951, Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana)*, paying particular attention to the organisers of both Ljubljana exhibitions: the Society of Engineers and Technicians of Slovenia and the Slovenian Architects' Society. It then explores and compares how the exhibitions functioned as mechanisms to promote the ideas of progress meant to support, through architecture, the transformation of the Yugoslav society from a rural one with a low level of industrialisation into a modern 20th-century socialist society. The first exhibition, conceived during what were still our "Soviet" years, focused on development by emphasising technical and construction solutions and largely presented projects concerned with the post-war rebuilding of the country, while the second one – originally prepared for the 1951 congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in Rabat under the title *How Does the Architect Perform His New Tasks?* – was already shaped by reflections on how and why the role of architecture should differ from engineering and construction, as well as by architects' demands for the recognition of architecture as an autonomous profession. At the same time, another key challenge emerged: how the country should present itself abroad, or construct itself as a recognisable subject in the field of architecture, and what "Yugoslav architecture" even was, or should be. The discussions focused on identifying their own version of Socialist Realism, on rejecting Western formalism and on considering the role of the country's established building traditions. The debates regularly included rational technical and economic criteria, along with conclusions that Yugoslav architecture, based on new social processes, still had to be discovered.

This second chapter thus already introduces one of the larger, general issues of Yugoslav culture: how a country without a shared artistic tradition and history could, while respecting its internal diversities, construct a coherent artistic past and present with a convincing front – one that would also align with the state’s doctrine. In the rare, more ambitious attempts of actually shaping a shared Yugoslav narrative – rather than merely assembling representative group exhibitions – Slovenians either did not achieve sufficient visibility, did not (sufficiently) recognise themselves or considered those attempts less important than establishing their own Slovenian narrative (as can be seen from, for example, the aforementioned historicisation and evaluation of Slovenian art production through the exhibition *Slovenian Fine Arts 1945–1978*).²⁸ The processes of forming not only a common Yugoslav art narrative but an actual Yugoslav field of art were further hampered by interethnic antagonisms and rivalries, by resentments and disputes among cultural workers throughout the country and, above all, by the fact that some South Slavic nations entered the new country with still unrealised programmes of national emancipation which, strongly supported by their national cultural elites, they were unwilling to abandon even in the second Yugoslavia.

The chapter “*Housing for Our Conditions and Family and Household: Exhibitions of Model Apartments and Their Role in Promoting New Concepts of Living*” examines a narrow group of exhibitions whose impact, however, unfolds across a broad spectrum. Primarily aimed at the broadest public, the consumers of the exhibited goods, as well as the economy and industry that were instrumental in the realisation of presented products and programmes, these exhibitions had a clear industrial-development and economic dimension. With their modernity grounded in functionality and their accessible, user-oriented approach – for example, informing visitors about innovations in residential construction and interior design through direct encounters with model apartments built on a 1:1 scale – they also contributed to educating citizens on new, urban living. They served as important promoters of progressive housing policy ideas and, for everyone involved in the housing issues, as a platform for exploring, addressing and demonstrating

28 About the very well-known attempt by Miroslav Krleža on the occasion of the first big Yugoslav art exhibition in the West after the Second World War, in Paris in 1950, and the inobtrusive participation of Slovenian artists, see the text that was also written as a part of this research project: Katarina Mohar, “Slovenian frescoes at Yugoslav medieval art exhibitions during the 1950s”, in: Mija Oter Gorenčič (ed.), *Medieval Murals: New Perspectives and Research Approaches*, Založba ZRC, Ljubljana, 2024, pp. 313–338. For the outstanding response of the Slovenian art scene to the exhibition *Slovenian Fine Arts 1945–1978*, see, particularly last seven minutes: Asta Vrečko, “Razstava Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978 leta 1979”, igorzabel.org, 2019, URL: <https://vimeo.com/401967594> (accessed 16.11.2025).

solutions to society’s pertinent needs in providing quality living conditions for all. As seen with the introduction of the concept of housing communities, the exhibition medium proved highly effective for architects in presenting their visions and the potential of new approaches to interested policymakers, who had placed housing construction at the forefront of their social programme.

While the exhibitions, discussed in this chapter, took place in non-art venues – such as fairgrounds or residential buildings – most of the architectural exhibitions discussed in this book were nevertheless still held in art galleries, mostly at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.²⁹ This revealed that architecture “lives” differently, and far less through exhibitions than the rest of the art production that was presented there. Not only must architectural objects and interior design be usable as well as aesthetic, and thus architectural exhibitions address visitors more directly, but architecture also isn’t created with exhibitions in mind; it is merely presented in them, and, in the process, typically translated into another medium. Although Slovenian architects, much like artists, were not without aspirations to position their works within the Western architectural canon, the exhibition format did not serve as a key medium for a canonisation which likely also would not have produced the kinds of economic returns that were decisive for them.³⁰ Consequently, they were less compelled to conform to the dogmas of the Western art doctrine in their exhibitions and could more easily focus on actual problems, thereby successfully aligning themselves with socialist programme objectives.³¹

The next section brings together three chapters that focus predominantly on high art. Chapters four and five explore the relationship between the Slovenian art field and the international art world, with

29 The Museum of Architecture Ljubljana (now Museum of Architecture and Design) was founded in 1972 and opened to the public in 1974.

30 Although the market reality of the art field under socialism is poorly researched, a clear connection can nevertheless be discerned between exhibition activity and the economic success of artists. Indirectly, it is also shown in the chapters by Gregor Dražil, “The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Exhibiting Slovenian Artists in the West: The Cases of West Germany and Italy”, and Meta Kordiš, “The Right Address to Settle Your Art Matters: The Development of the Ljubljanska banka Fine Art Collection”, in this book, particularly as related to Zoran Kržišnik and the group of artists connected with him. See also chapter: “Almost America: Travelling Visual Art Exhibitions from the USA at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Between 1953 and 1979”, in this book, particularly pp. 180–181.

31 As a part of this research project, a forthcoming academic article by Martina Malešič will provide an overview of the development of architectural and design exhibiting in Slovenia throughout the researched period, also in conjunction with the parallel development of professional organisations and associations in the field.

a particular focus on contacts with West Germany, Italy and the United States of America.³² The chapter “Almost America: Travelling Visual Art Exhibitions from the USA at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Between 1953 and 1979” exhaustively follows the remarkable steady stream of art – and, to a lesser extent, design – exhibitions that the US sent to Yugoslavia and the feebler response of the US, in terms of the Yugoslav exhibitions that it hosted in return. The chapter seeks to understand the thus far unexplored extraordinary situation in which the walls of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana were suddenly graced by numerous large-scale works of outstanding “museum quality” by Pollock, Newman, Rothko and others. It argues that this outstanding corpus of Cold War exchange offers a privileged insight into the contradictions of the Yugoslav state and society and also reveals the paradoxical and often delicate role that its art scene played in the articulation of the common social interest. The US recognised its modern art as a potential Trojan horse for the conscious infiltration of ideological cargo via ostensibly completely innocent content, even into countries with a different ideological orientation. In Yugoslavia, such initiatives received a warm welcome: not only did the local art scene fail to reflect critically on the potential ideological issues behind such offerings, it also regarded Western influences as the only relevant and binding standard and persistently strove to shape the local art system in accordance with the Western model. Within such a constellation, and given that the US was, at the time, one of Yugoslavia’s key political and economic partners, the US with its exhibition programmes likely contributed significantly to the fact that Yugoslav art professionals, as early as the 1950s, confidently embraced the stance they inherited from the previous state formations, which looked up to Western ideals and the capitalist cultural model.

Chapter five, “The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Exhibiting Slovenian Artists in the West: The Cases of West Germany and Italy”, directs our attention to the protagonists and the international network of the art system, and to the exhibition as the key medium for integrating those protagonists into it. It examines the interrelation between the international networking that took place around the Slovenian flagship exhibition project, the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts (est. 1955), and the intensive exhibiting of Slovenian artists in West German and Italian art venues. Through the prism of the Ljubljana Biennale’s potential influence, it looks at the intermediaries involved in exhibition activities, the frequency and the dynamics of exhibiting by Slovenian artists, the type and status

32 See also: Rea Zupin, “Izmenjava likovnih razstav med Avstrijo in Slovenijo 1945–1990: Delovno gradivo”, razstavljanjevsloveniji.si, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 28.1.2026).

of the venues that hosted them, without overlooking the significant share of private, commercial galleries among them. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of Zoran Kržišnik, the long-time director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the director of the Ljubljana Biennale, with its growing international reputation, who was one of the most influential figures in the Slovenian and Yugoslav art system. In this capacity, he was often invited to collaborate on graphic art and other exhibitions abroad. He selected the Yugoslav representatives for these exhibitions on many occasions and often served as a member of international juries that awarded prizes. All this enabled him to launch selected Slovenian and Yugoslav artists onto the international scene and, by “lobbying” for awards, provide them with additional promotion. At the same time, this strengthened his own position, and the chapter argues that it is in fact impossible to clearly separate his personal network and symbolic capital from those of the institutions he headed. Such concentration of power was, and still is, typical for the central protagonists in the Western art system – a system that is highly hierarchical and grounded in individualism and competitiveness – thus putting other protagonists in a position of considerable dependence on them.³³ For a number of Slovenian art professionals, we can discern a pronounced dependence on Kržišnik, on multiple levels: there were times when he was not only difficult to bypass when seeking entry into the international art system, but also, as we shall see, when it came to selling artworks.

The chapter largely confirms the findings from chapter one and chapter four through its analysis of the presence and activities of foreign art professionals within the Biennale, which shows where and with whom the top tier of the Slovenian art scene sought to align itself in the international art field. For example, while the presence of experts from the Eastern Bloc on Biennale juries was limited, and the participating members were – as much as the circumstances allowed – also inclined towards the Western modes of artistic evaluation, the Western jurors were more numerous, more respected and more visible in the media. There were no jury members from non-aligned countries.

The chapter “The Right Address to Settle Your Art Matters: The Development of the Ljubljanska banka Fine Art Collection” uses the case study of the creation and expansion of the aforementioned collection, as well as the interior design and art furnishing of the branches of Ljubljanska banka, particularly in the 1970s, to study the company’s support and investments in art. It finds – as noted in the first part of this introduction – that these developments unfolded

33 For the functioning of art professionals through the concentration of different forms of capital, see Bourdieu, 1996 (see no. 11), pp. 141–173 and throughout.

within the broader framework of the state's social and cultural policies, which, at that time, increasingly shifted responsibility for culture and art onto municipalities and companies. The companies enacted these responsibilities by promoting well-being for their employees and clients through art and by supporting local communities. Under the then-current concepts of socialisation of culture and humanisation of living, this policy brought about, among other things, the organisation of exhibitions by companies, even opening exhibition spaces on company premises, and the practice of regularly outfitting premises with artworks, which over time grew into proper collections. The process went hand in hand with the shift from the numerous art commissions for site-specific paintings and interior design to mostly decorating with purchased artworks, particularly by key Slovenian modernists. Such works even found their way into factory production halls, although the focus of these activities gradually shifted towards more prestigious settings, such as banks and hotels. Our research identified similar situations elsewhere: while modest, local environments could more easily shape artistic activities and assert their interests and aesthetic preferences, the most urban, prestigious or otherwise attractive locations were dominated by protagonists positioned at the very top of the Slovenian art system and at the centre of its network of connections – above all Zoran Kržičnik, together with his circle of collaborators and artists. As the art field expanded, particularly from the late 1960s onwards, younger art historians began joining him in similar constellations, among them Aleksander Bassin and Stane Bernik.³⁴

If art historians already struggle to accept the extent to which exhibiting high art is burdened with political and other non-artistic interests – since we are accustomed to studying art according to very different, far more idealistic parameters – we are even less prepared, as we have indicated in the beginning, for the task of analysing Yugoslavia's strong support for, and the flourishing of, artistic production outside the parameters of the Western art canon. In order to grasp some of the diversity and specifics of the Yugoslav cultural project, that indicated an attempt to establish some kind of "third way" also in the fields of art and culture, we conducted research in collaboration

34 Because the market reality differed from the one in the West, art professionals didn't have to share their power with the commercial sector: at the same time, they served simultaneously as curators or professors and intermediaries for large acquisitions of artworks, commissions and furnishing of new buildings. A special status within this system was held by the elusive Lojze Gostiša. See Tina Fortič Jakopič's chapter "The Fine Art Collection of the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia/Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia and Its Exhibiting" in this book, pp. 281–282.

with colleagues from other academic disciplines, and the findings are presented in the final third of this book.

Over time, the state developed a distinct segment of the so-called art of the revolution, linked to the wartime past and the sacralisation of the socialist doctrine which was enacted, for example, in monuments dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle and the Revolution, the museums of the National Liberation Struggle and Revolution, specialised publications, the continuation of the so-called Partisan art, etc. This is presented in the chapter "The Fine Art Collection of the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia/Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia and Its Exhibiting", which demonstrates the museum's significant engagement with art including its remarkable production of art exhibitions. The museum's 1962 name change reflects a shift in its mission: when, from the late 1950s – as the younger generations stopped clinging to the heroic narrative of combat and the victory of the National Liberation Struggle – the state tried, through various means, to keep the memory of it alive, to situate it meaningfully by connecting it to similar pre- and post-war events, and thus to also reinforce its current doctrine. The core of the narrative of this segment was the socialist revolution, presented as an ongoing struggle for a better and more just world. In line with this ideological shift, from then on, Yugoslav museums of the National Liberation Struggle and Revolution also focused on content linked to the pre-war workers' movement and post-war socialist construction. In practice, this meant that the Ljubljana museum began collecting art from both before and after the Second World War, and it also started studying Partisan art in relation to these two periods. Post-war art, which the museum encouraged and collected, was understood in this context as its logical continuation. In this way, a kind of parallel art current emerged: while art institutions mostly shied away from this type of production, the Yugoslav museums of National Liberation Struggle and Revolution assumed the role of fostering, cultivating and promoting it, allowing for a broad spectrum of artistic expressions, including Socialist Realism. It is worth noting that this segment, too, reveals the presence of key protagonists of the art scene in its most prestigious projects, meaning that artistic production aligned with Western trends permeated even this field.³⁵

35 An example of this are commissions for monuments of the National Liberation Struggle and Revolution, where the most prestigious and lucrative projects in the country were controlled by the key representatives of high art. Sanja Horvatinčič, "Beyond the Modernist Paradigm: Critical Perspective on Authorship in Yugoslav Memorial Production", in: Sanja Horvatinčič and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 306–310; Žerovc, 2023 (see no. 13), pp. 387–392.

As described in the introduction, the state sought to ensure that culture and art would no longer be the exclusive privilege of the upper classes and, therefore, aimed to socialise them also by promoting amateur art. In its project of cultural dissemination, it was very successful, managing to involve a large segment of the population. Amateur art assumed an important position in the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) as well, even more so because culture was, just as it was in the Partisan movement, regarded as an inseparable part of the army's activities. It was meant to elevate the soldiers' level of cultural education, strengthen the bonds between Yugoslavs and promote the values of comradeship and solidarity.³⁶ The chapter "Revolution Within Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People's Army" first examines what kind of art activity even took place in the YPA, in what ways and to what extent. It finds, among other things, that amateurism was not the only type of artistic production in the army: it intersected with the work of trained artists, or those studying art, who were doing their military service, as well as with exhibitions of works by established civilian artists organised by the army. A variety of artistic registers thus overlapped within the art activities of the army, yet few observers recognised this diversity, engaged with it or reflected on it. When this diverse production was exhibited, particularly in renowned art venues, established art criticism, operating within the value system of high art, often treated it as a monolithic whole and evaluated it according to its own standards, which most of the works neither met nor aspired to meet. In such circumstances, contact with high art could result in decidedly poor publicity for the other participating parties; with increasing caustic and derisive commentary, whose effects probably also extended beyond the usual scope of art criticism when confined only to questions inherent to the discipline.³⁷ While this can only be inferred, such writing probably contributed to the devaluation of amateur creativity and served to prove the incompetence of the YPA, which was already losing its popularity in certain parts of the country.

The chapter "Non-European Collections in Goričane: An Inter-twinement of Exhibition Discourses" examines the Museum of Non-European Cultures Goričane, established in 1964 as the first Yugoslav institution dedicated to collecting and exhibiting non-European ethnological heritage. It housed the non-European collections, assembled in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, previously kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, as well as new acquisitions that were mostly the result of Yugoslav contacts and exchanges within

36 Cf.: Tanja Petrović, *Utopia of the Uniform: Affective Afterlives of the Yugoslav People's Army*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2024.

37 See no. 19.

the Non-Aligned Movement. The chapter offers a concise overview of the very diverse exhibitions held at the museum during this period, including several devoted to contemporary art.³⁸ Owing to the large number of exhibitions connected with non-aligned countries, and the discourses they generated, we can discern the attitudes towards those countries and their cultures. If – given Yugoslavia's declarative politics of non-alignment – one would expect both the museum and the press coverage of its activities to adopt a clearly anticolonial, anti-racist, non-Eurocentric orientation, the discourse that accompanied the exhibitions instead often reflected an ambivalent attitude – on the one hand, towards the developing countries and cultures and the arts of their peoples, and, on the other hand, towards the West. Although curators and journalists routinely criticised Western colonial projects, they nevertheless often approached the exhibitions through a lens that exoticised the Other and styled themselves as more developed and modern in relation to the presented countries, thereby aligning themselves with attitudes that Western countries have held since colonial times. A similar effect – one emphasising the "civilisation" and "development" of the Slovenian milieu – was produced by the enthusiastic comparison between Slovenians who worked, researched and collected in non-European countries (whether missionaries or Yugoslav ambassadors) and Western researchers and collectors.

Researching and understanding the phenomena addressed in the third section are further complicated by the fact that the state projects and institutions, or the framework that once supported them, either no longer exist or have been radically transformed. The Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane was, after it had been closed for years, abolished in 2001. The National Museum of Contemporary History, as the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia is now called, rarely takes a position on its socialist-era artistic legacy. As for the material related to the YPA, an institution that, for many former Yugoslavs, became the hated aggressor in the 1990s, there is simply no place where it could be naturally accommodated.

38 We could not make a definite conclusion as to why the exhibitions of contemporary art from non-aligned countries were often shown at the Museum of Non-European Cultures Goričane, rather than in Ljubljana art galleries.

Katarina Mohar

Exchange of Fine Art Exhibitions Between the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Soviet Union



In the first years after the Second World War, Yugoslavia's international cultural cooperation primarily focused on the countries of the Eastern Bloc. The main aim of these relations was to affirm its own culture, familiarise itself with "brotherly" cultures and train its own workforce.¹ As in its domestic policy, the young country was also heavily dependent on the Soviet Union and its support for the renewal of its cultural life. Even before the split with Cominform in 1948, the countries exchanged two major exhibition projects to strengthen their own position within the coalition. Together with the more important selected exhibitions organised within the framework of state cultural exchanges until the end of the 1970s, these two events provide an important starting point for an insight into the still under-researched features of the development of cultural relations between Yugoslavia and Slovenia and the Soviet Union and its allies, which will be discussed in this chapter by examining the exchanged exhibitions. While cultural relations with other Eastern Bloc countries varied and warrant separate studies, the material analysed suggests that, at least in the field of exhibition exchanges, Yugoslavia adopted a broadly similar approach. These relations are therefore discussed only briefly, primarily to contextualise its engagement with the Soviet Union.

Certain Aspects of Soviet Influence on the Yugoslav Cultural Landscape

Similarly to elsewhere in the world since the October Revolution, Soviet influences also reverberated in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. However, due to different cultural traditions and historical backgrounds, they met with different reactions in different parts of the country – stronger in Orthodox Serbia, for example, and less pronounced in Slovenia, which historically had stronger cultural and political ties to Central Europe.² They shaped the Yugoslav cultural landscape from the 1930s onwards, when they were clearly reflected in the cultural and political programme of the increasingly influential Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY).³ They also had a considerable influence on the Yugoslav art scene via other countries with which Yugoslavia maintained friendly relations in the interwar period,⁴ and were reflected

- 1 Branka Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije: 1946–1963*, Glasnik, Belgrade, 2013, pp. 237–238.
- 2 Aleš Gabrič, "Sprememba kulturnopolitične usmeritve po informbirojevskem sporu", *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 38, no. 1–2, 1998, p. 137.
- 3 Aleš Gabrič, *Slovenska agitpropovska kulturna politika: 1945–1952*, Mladika, Ljubljana, 1991, p. 479.
- 4 For international exchange in the field of exhibition activities see, e.g. Hana Čeferin, "Jakopičev paviljon v jugoslovanskem in mednarodnem kontekstu med obema vojnama", in: Miha Valant and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Razstave v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, 2023, pp. 89–93.

in particular in the social art of the 1930s.⁵ The influence of Socialist Realism as a cultural model manifested itself in the so-called Conflict on the Literary Left,⁶ which, with its problematisation of the role of art in society and the question of its (in)dependence on political goals, also had a clear influence on the fine arts, albeit far less directly than in literature. Many cultural figures were involved in the efforts to establish the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union in 1940,⁷ while the adoption of the Soviet model was also supported by some Yugoslav artists who, during their visits to the Soviet Union, became acquainted with the peculiarities of the organisation and functioning of the cultural model there.⁸

After the war, the Soviet system became the model for the political, social and cultural organisation of socialist Yugoslavia. Its influences were also evident in the development and organisation of the previously underdeveloped artistic infrastructure under state control, e.g. in the establishment of central associations of fine artists or in the introduction of traditional forms of lectures and master classes in the field of education at art academies.⁹ Socialist Realism, which

had previously found expression primarily in the left-wing, socially engaged art of the 1930s, became the only officially approved form of artistic creation in Yugoslavia.¹⁰

During this period, the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, which had a special department for cultural relations with foreign countries,¹¹ and the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), based in Moscow, were responsible for cultural cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Both organisations worked closely with the Society for Cultural Cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR.¹² The society was founded in the winter of 1945 under the leadership of Rodoljub Čolaković, and branches were soon established in the republics. The Slovenian branch was founded in June of the same year and Fran Albreht was elected president.¹³ Rather than focusing on cultural cooperation or exchange, the society focused more on Soviet propaganda – including the publication of the illustrated magazine *Jugoslavija SSSR* – thus furthering efforts to bring Yugoslavia as close as possible to the Soviet model.¹⁴

In the early post-war years, the members of the Slovenian branch organised weekly radio broadcasts, lectures and Russian language courses, led the project to erect the memorial to the Red Army in Murska Sobota and organised numerous exhibitions in cooperation with the Society for Cultural Cooperation between Yugoslavia

5 On Soviet influences on Serbian art, which were particularly evident in the activities of the illegal art group *Život*, see Nikola Dedić, “Socijalni realizmi: Ka postavangardnoj kritici društva”, in: Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji XX vek: II: Realizmi i modernizmi oko hladnog rata*, vol. 2, Orion Art, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 77–97.

6 Ibid. Goran Miloradović, *Lepota pod nadzorom: Sovjetski kulturni uticaji u Jugoslaviji 1945–1955*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 100–103. According to the Party's views, artistic expression and content should always be subject to politics, while the opponents defended artistic freedom as the most important aspect of the work of art and supported the views of Miroslav Krleža. Krleža, who argued in favour of the independence of art, which nevertheless had to be critical and committed, played the central role in this conflict. On this conflict, see Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, Liber, Zagreb, 1970; Velimir Visković, “Sukob na ljevici”, in: Velimir Visković (ed.), *Krležijana (1993–99)*, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2024, URL: <https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak/sukob-na-ljevici> (accessed 24.4.2024).

7 On the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union see: Božo Repe, “Društvo prijateljev Sovjetske zveze”, *Borec*, vol. 41, no. 9, 1989, pp. 900–919.

8 After his return from Russian captivity, the painter Veno Pilon, among others, reported on cultural life in the Soviet Union (Veno Pilon, “Boljševiki in umetnost”, *Svoboda*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1919, pp. 22–25; Veno Pilon, “Umetniška vzgoja pri boljševikih”, *Svoboda*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1919, pp. 42–44); Croatian sculptor and later the rector of the Zagreb academy, Antun Augustinčić, one of the most influential Yugoslav artists, visited Moscow during the Second World War (Davorin Vujčić, “Majstorske radionice likovnih umjetnosti: Majstorska radionica Antuna Augustinčića”, *Anali Galerije Antuna Augustinčića*, vol. 26, 2007, p. 37).

9 Ljiljana Kolešnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 50-ih godina*, Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2006, pp. 30–31. On studying at the Ljubljana academy see Vladimir Koch, “Akademija upodabljačih umetnosti – najvišji zavod za vzgoju umetniškega naraščaja”, *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 20, 23.5.1947, pp. 10–11; Milček Komelj, *Kronika Marjana Pogačnika o zaljubljenih v umetnost*, KUD Logos, Ljubljana, 2005, pp. 309–310; for master classes that were introduced in Yugoslavia at the same time as in the Soviet Union see Vujčić, 2007, (see no. 8), pp. 35–39.

10 Nikola Dedić, “Socijalistički realizam: Optimalne projekcije novog društva”, in: Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji XX vek: II: Realizmi i modernizmi oko hladnog rata*, vol. 2, Orion Art, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 223–224.

11 “Vladislav Ribnikar Podpredsedništvu Vlade, opis organizacije Ministrstva prosvete DFJ in naloge posameznih enot, 13.3.1945, AJ 313-2-6”, in: Branka Doknić, Milić F. Petrović and Ivan Hofman (eds.), *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945–1952: Zbornik dokumenata*, vol. 1., Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 2009, p. 134. The department's tasks included the exchange of scientists, lecturers, exhibitions, catalogues, art reproductions and books, joint activities by artists, guest appearances by literary and art associations, groups and individuals as well as student exchanges.

12 The USSR also organised cultural exchanges with other allied countries through bilateral associations linked to the VOKS. See Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), p. 201.

13 Gabrič, 1991 (see no. 3), p. 546; Gabrič, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 139. Albreht belonged to a group of Slovenian writers who founded the left-wing magazine *Sodobnost* in 1939. This was primarily the result of the group's separation from the magazine *Ljubljanski zvon*, of which Albreht was editor between 1922 and 1932, due to differing views on the Slovenian national question. See Neža Zajc, “Albreht, Fran (1889–1963)”, in: *Slovenska biografija*, Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, Ljubljana, 2013, URL: <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi126966/#novi-slovenski-biografski-leksikon> (accessed 22.1.2024); Fran Albreht (ed.), *Kriza Ljubljanskega zvona*, Kritika, Ljubljana, 1932.

14 Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), p. 203. For cultural cooperation between the countries see also Leonid Yanovich Gibiansky, “Sotrudnichestvo SSSR i novoy Yugoslavii v sfere kul'tury: Vzaimodeystvie obshchestvennykh organizacij dvuh stran”, *Sovjetskij soyz i novaya Yugoslaviya: 1941–1947 gg*, Nauka, Moscow, 1987, pp. 154–165.

and the USSR, 66 of them in 1947.¹⁵ Most of these exhibitions, both in Slovenia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, were documentary in nature, based on photographs, and thematically revolved around the propaganda of the Soviet system. Although they were rather modest projects, they were opened in the presence of important figures from political and cultural life in order to increase their reach and prestige.¹⁶ They were staged in many cities, usually at least in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. Until the conflict with the Cominform, exhibitions on USSR agriculture, kolkhozes and sovkhoses were organised in Slovenia, as well as an exhibition of children's drawings *Mother and Child (Mati in otrok; Ministry of Social Welfare, June 1947)*,¹⁷ *Friendship of the Peoples of the USSR (Priateljstvo narodov ZSSR; Jakopič Pavilion, 10–24 March 1946)*¹⁸ and the most resounding, *The Architecture of the USSR (Arhitektura ZSSR; Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 30 May–15 June 1948)*.¹⁹ The first exhibition of Soviet fine art in Yugoslavia was the photo exhibition *Soviet Sculpture (Sovjetsko kiparstvo)*, which presented the works of 43 sculptors of different generations from the past decades. The presentation conveyed “the impression of serious art, without any kind of experiment”.²⁰ After the exhibition was shown in Belgrade in spring 1946 (Art Pavilion, 1–12 May), it travelled to Zagreb (Salon Ullrich, May–June) and Split (February 1947)²¹ and was also to be shown in Ljubljana.²² Several Soviet artworks were also featured in the exhibition

15 Anonymous, “Rad Društva za kulturnu saradnju Jugoslavije sa Sovjetskim savezom”, *Jugoslavija SSSR*, no. 5, March 1946, p. 47. The duties of the Slovenian branch are listed in: *Pravila Društva za kulturno sodelovanje Slovenije z ZSSR*, Društvo za kulturno sodelovanje Slovenije z ZSSR, Ljubljana, 1945.

16 Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), p. 213.

17 Anonymous, “Razstave”, *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 25, 27.6.1947, p. 609. The exhibition was also organised in Zagreb (6–19 January 1946): see Suzana Leček, “Likovna umjetnost u društvenom životu Hrvatske 1945–1947”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 22, no. 1–2, 1990, p. 145; and possibly also in Belgrade.

18 Anonymous, “Rad Društva ...”, 1946 (see no. 15), p. 47. The exhibition was also organised in Belgrade (Faculty of Law, 26 August–16 September 1945), while in Slovenia, a presentation in Maribor was also planned.

19 Before this, it was shown in Belgrade (Gallery of the Serbian Academy of Science, October 1947) with 26,000 visitors; in Zagreb (7–30 November 1947) with 15,000 visitors and in Sarajevo (location and dates unknown) with 13,000 visitors (Anonymous, “Rad Društva ...”, 1946 (see no. 15), p. 47). About the exhibition: MT, “Razstava arhitekture narodov ZSSR”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 9, no. 131, 3.6.1948, p. 3; Edvard Ravnikar, “Razstava Sovjetske arhitekture v Ljubljani”, *Novi svet*, vol. 3, no. 7–8, 1948, pp. 612–615.

20 T. P., “Sovjetsko kiparstvo v fotografijah”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 7, no. 120, 25.5.1946, p. 6.

21 Zagreb: Leček, 1990 (see no. 17), p. 147; Anonymous, “Split: Kulturni zapiski: Razstava fotografij sovjetskih kiparjev v Splitu”, *Ljudski tednik*, vol. 2, no. 55, 20.2.1947, p. 7.

22 It is not clear from the periodical press whether the exhibition was actually shown in Slovenia; when it is mentioned in connection with similar events, only the exhibition in Belgrade is mentioned; see T.[one] P.[otokar], “Razstava štirih sovjetskih

The Struggle of Slavic Peoples for Independence and Freedom (Borba slavenskih naroda za nezavisnost i slobodu), which was prepared on the occasion of the *Slavic Congress* in Belgrade in December 1946 and mainly comprised documentary photographs and historical artefacts.²³ The exhibition with photographic reproductions of the paintings from the Tretyakov Gallery was also shown in several Yugoslav capitals (Art Cooperative, Ljubljana, 8–21 June 1948).²⁴

The Exhibition of Soviet Painters in Ljubljana in 1947

The most ambitious Soviet art exhibition in Yugoslavia was the *Exhibition of Soviet Painters (Razstava sovjetskih slikarjev)*, which took place in Belgrade, Zagreb, Novi Sad and Skopje²⁵ and was also ceremonially opened in Ljubljana on the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution (Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 7–22 November 1947). The first major exhibition of Soviet art after the Second World War presented the works of leading representatives of Soviet Socialist Realism: paintings and watercolours by Aleksandr and Sergey Gerasimov, Aleksandr Deyneka and Arkady Plastov. The exhibition was shown not only in Yugoslavia but also travelled to Vienna, Prague, Bucharest and Sofia.²⁶

The Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) and the Society for Cultural Cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR were named in the press as the main organisers of the exhibition. However, the

umetnikov”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 203, 29.8.1947, p. 4; Anonymous, “Jugoslovska kronika”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 268, 14.11.1947, p. 5.

23 The exhibition comprised the Czech, Polish, Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Soviet section, with the latter being the largest. Anonymous, “Razstava ‘Borba slovanskih narodov’ ob Slovanskem kongresu v Beogradu”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 299, 19.12.1946, p. 3.

24 In Zagreb (and probably also in Belgrade), 233 mainly black-and-white small-format photographic reproductions were exhibited. Reproductions of paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries predominated, but three older icons and some works from the 20th century were also shown. In Ljubljana, 150 reproductions were exhibited, although the exact selection is not known. See Tone Potokar, “Razstava reprodukcij ruskega dorevolucijskega slikarstva”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 9, no. 193, 14.8.1948, p. 5; Anonymous, “Z razstave reprodukcij slik Tretjakovske galerije”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 9, no. 140, 14.6.1948, p. 3; Anonymous, “Kratke vesti”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 9, no. 143, 17.6.1948, p. 2; Anonymous, “Izložba reprodukcija slika Tretjakovske galerije”, *Borba*, vol. 8, no. 140, 12.6.1948, p. 5.

25 Belgrade, Art Pavilion in the Kalemegdan Park, 30 August 1947; Zagreb, Art Pavilion, 9–30 October 1947; Novi Sad, Gallery of Matica srpska, 5–21 December 1947; Skopje, National Museum, 1948. The exhibition was on display for a total of 95 days in the five cities and was seen by 130,587 visitors; Anonymous, “Rad Društva za kulturnu saradnju Jugoslavije sa SSSR”, *Jugoslavija SSSR*, no. 22, August 1947, p. 30.

26 Vienna, Museum of Applied Arts, 20 February–23 March 1947; Prague, Mánes, 12 April 1947. The exhibition in Sofia is mentioned in: Tatyana Judkevich (ed.), *Deyneka: Zhivopis*, Interrosa, Moscow, 2010, p. 175; in Budapest in: O. Yu. Klokova (ed.), *Aleksandr Gerasimov: k 135-letyu khudozhnika*, Palace Editions, Saint Petersburg, 2016, p. 137.

catalogue names as members of the organising committee, along with several other central figures of Yugoslav fine art,²⁷ the highest representatives of the relevant Soviet institutions: the Soviet Embassy in Yugoslavia, the VOKS, the Art Committee at the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the painter Aleksandr Gerasimov,²⁸ one of the leading figures of the Soviet art scene and also one of the four artists whose works were selected for the exhibition. During the preparations for the exhibition, Gerasimov visited Yugoslavia several times and met with local artists, gave expert lectures and also supervised the design of the first exhibition, which took place in Belgrade and was attended by Josip Broz - Tito, among others.²⁹ According to archival data, but also based on a comparison with exhibition catalogues from other European countries, the exhibition was designed entirely by the Soviet side, while local experts were only involved in slightly adapting it to the exhibition space, translating the texts and publishing the catalogues according to the given templates, as well as organising the media coverage. In Ljubljana, these tasks were carried out by Stane Mikuž from the Ministry of Education, the President of the Slovenian Society for Cultural Cooperation with the USSR Fran Albreht, the Director of the National Gallery Ivan Zorman and the Rector of the Academy of Fine Art Božidar Jakac.³⁰ The completion of the rooms in the still unfinished Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana was the most urgent problem, as it had not yet been glazed days before the opening.³¹

- 27 *Razstava del sovjetskih slikarjev* (exhibition catalogue), Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, 1947. The rector of the University of Belgrade, Stevan Jakovljević, the rectors of all three fine art academies (Antun Augustinčić, Božidar Jakac, Toma Rosandić), the sculptor Sreten Stojanović as chairman of the municipal council of the People's Front and the painter and professor at the academy and head of the department of literature, music and fine art at the Ministry of Education of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Đorđe Andrejević Kun, were also named as members of the organising committee.
- 28 Aleksandr Gerasimov (1881–1963) was the leading exponent of socialist realist painting, Stalin's portraitist and an ardent advocate of Zhdanovshchina, often referred to as Gerasimovshchina. He received the first honourable title in art, the People's Artist of the USSR Award, and became a member of the Academy of Arts of the Soviet Union at the time of the exhibition and, later, its president.
- 29 Anonymous, "Rad Društva za kulturnu saradnju ...", 1947 (see no. 25), p. 30. He held at least one lecture in Slovenia, at the Union Hotel in Ljubljana, where he lectured together with the author of the article about the exhibition, S. P. Lebedjanski. (S. P. Lebedjanski, "izložba dela sovjetskih slikara u Beogradu", *Jugoslavija SSSR*, no. 22, August 1947, pp. 8–12); see Pokrajinski arhiv Nova Gorica, SI_PANG/1113/002/003_00131, Invitation from the Society for Cultural Cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR to a meeting and conversation with two Soviet painters, 30.7.1947.
- 30 Razstave NG, a folder with documents regarding the organisation of the exhibition of works by Soviet painters, "Ivan Zorman to Society for Cultural Cooperation between Slovenia and the USSR, Pro memoria, 30.10.1947", NG Archives XI/10, Archives of the National Gallery Ljubljana (hereinafter NG Archives).
- 31 Razstave NG, a folder with documents regarding the organisation of the exhibition of works by Soviet painters, "Poročilo o poteku dela, 24.12.1947", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

In addition to brief presentations of the artists and a list of the works, the exhibition catalogue contained full-page reproductions of selected artworks and an introductory text that provided a framework for understanding the exhibition.³² The text was the same regardless of the country in which the exhibition was shown. In addition to the usual explanation of Socialist Realism, the rejection of abstraction and "formalism",³³ an unknown author emphasised that the works on display were the result of optimal conditions "for the full development of creative individuality"³⁴ and demonstrated four different approaches to painting. Apart from a few high-quality exceptions, however, the selection offered a rather monotonous panorama of Soviet artworks, presenting only clearly political paintings that served as propaganda for socialism and socialist life, as well as conventional still lifes, vedutas and landscapes (figs. 1–6).

The same points emphasised in the catalogue were also uncritically reproduced in the contemporary press, which reported extensively on the exhibition and described it in superlatives.³⁵ Writers in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana generally agreed that this type of artworks, showing the diversity of Socialist Realism, its progressiveness and humanism, should be an example for Yugoslav artists.³⁶ The exhibition namely offered the Yugoslav (professional) public the first opportunity to come into direct, first-hand contact with Soviet socialist realist painting.

Although the media reported exclusively on the enthusiasm for the artistic production presented in the exhibition, the reception by the public was rather mixed, as evidenced by the surviving book of

- 32 *Razstava del sovjetskih slikarjev*, 1947 (see no. 27).
- 33 In the Soviet Union, this term was used to describe a form of modernist, bourgeois art which, together with "naturalism" (vulgar, photographic imitation of reality without artistic value), was seen as the antithesis of Socialist Realism. For more, see: Maria Silina, "The Struggle Against Naturalism: Soviet Art from the 1920s to the 1950s", *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2016, pp. 91–104.
- 34 *Razstava del sovjetskih slikarjev*, 1947 (see no. 27).
- 35 See, e.g. Lebedjanski, 1947 (see no. 29), pp. 8–12; T.[one] P.[otokar], 1947 (see no. 22), p. 4; Anonymous, "V Beogradu je bila v nedeljo slavnostno odprta razstava del sovjetskih slikarjev", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 8, no. 206, 2.9.1947, p. 2; Stane Mikuž, "Umetnostna razstava sovjetskih slikarjev", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 262, 7.11.1947, p. 5; Anonymous, "Otvoritev razstave štirih sovjetskih slikarjev v Moderni galeriji v Ljubljani", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 8, no. 263, 9.11.1947, p. 8; Stane Mikuž, "Ob zaključku razstave sovjetskih slikarjev v Moderni galeriji", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 276, 23.11.1947, p. 5; France Uršič, "K razstavi sovjetskih umetnikov", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 8, no. 278, 24.11.1947, p. 4.
- 36 On the reception in Belgrade see Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), pp. 196–199; Lora Mitić, "The Exhibition of Four Soviet Painters in Belgrade, 1947", *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art*, vol. 4, Lomonosov Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University, Moscow and St. Petersburg, 2014, pp. 579–582; in Zagreb: Leček, 1990 (see no. 17), pp. 153–154. On the reception in Czechoslovakia see *Střetnutí - sovětské malířství a současné umění*, Otakar Mrkvička (ed.), Vladimír Žikeš, Prague, 1947.





1–6
Installation views from the *Exhibition of Soviet Painters* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1947.

impressions.³⁷ Slovenian artists and experts refrained from public commentary. It was only much later that art historians wrote about Božidar Jakac's alleged disappointment, in particular about the works of the famous Aleksandr Gerasimov, Fran Tratnik's criticism and Gabrijel Stupica's scepticism of the exhibition.³⁸ However, the otherwise very positive reviews in the contemporary press show that they were written in response to the negative reactions to the exhibition (which were not recorded at the time). After the exhibition closed, Stane Mikuž wrote in one of these reviews: "In a way, I can understand the sceptics! We had expected a certain new, unimagined form. But no new – we should say absolutely new – forms exist. Nevertheless, the meaning, the content of this exhibition is completely new – a new aspiration and a new life. A new, healthy art – A Kolkhoz Celebration, The Defence of Sevastopol, the joy of life!"³⁹ One of the most vocal advocates of Socialist Realism at the time, Čoro Škodlar,⁴⁰ noted that most local artists were (wrongly) disappointed by the exhibition, mainly because they assumed it would offer a clear definition of Socialist Realism and failed to recognise some outstanding works among what were, in fact, mostly insignificant or even poor exhibits.⁴¹

After the conflict with the Cominform, which led to a change in attitude towards Socialist Realism even among the most influential cultural policy decision-makers, the exhibition gained importance as

37 For the selection of transcripts from the book of impressions of the Belgrade exhibition see Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), pp. 196–197; comp. Anonymous, "Posetioci o izložbi sovjetskih slikara", *Borba*, vol. 12, no. 233, 30.9.1947, p. 2. The Slovenian book of impressions has not survived.

38 Jelisava-Špelca Čopič, "Povojno desetletje", *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, vol. 50, 2014, p. 282; Komelj, 2005 (see no. 9), p. 324. Božidar Jakac gave a speech at the opening of the exhibition in Ljubljana in which he primarily emphasised the quality of older Russian art from the Middle Ages and the late 19th century and stressed the importance of "Slavic art". He only briefly touched on Western *l'art pour l'art* and the "fallacy" of Futurism and completely avoided passing judgement on Socialist Realism. See Anonymous, "Otvoritev razstave ...", 1947 (see no. 35), p. 8.

39 Mikuž, 1947 (see no. 35), p. 5.

40 Škodlar, himself a painter, was a fervent advocate of realisms. As early as the interwar period, he vehemently opposed contemporary modernist tendencies and art with a social touch. His art criticism from this period flirted with views on art that were close to the cultural and political perspectives of the Nazis; more in: Lara Mejač, "Medijsko poročanje in likovna kritika o razstavah v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945", in: Miha Valant and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Razstave v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, 2023, pp. 73–76. His critique of France Kralj's statue *Nature* (1936) attracted a great deal of attention and was most likely the catalyst for the vandalism of the sculpture on Muzejski trg in Ljubljana. Damir Globočnik, "Spomeniška afera na Muzejskem trgu v Ljubljani", *Zgodovina za vse*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2019, pp. 42–68.

41 Čoro Škodlar, "Problemi sodobne likovne umetnosti: Ob razstavi v Moderni galeriji", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 10, no. 43, 20.2.1949, p. 4.

the event during which Yugoslav artists and critics articulated their dissenting opinions towards Soviet models in art. In the Slovenian art scene, however, such statements were not documented. There, this view was shaped, above all, by the resounding polemic about the value of Impressionist art that developed around the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1949.⁴² In Croatia, the unconvincing nature and empty rhetoric of the presented Soviet fine art was emphasised in 1950 by the painter Krsto Hegedušić and the art historian Grgo Gamulin, who otherwise held completely opposing views on the role of art in society and the necessity for its alignment with the Party.⁴³ Miroslav Krleža expressed a similarly strong opinion at the *Third Congress of Yugoslav Writers* in Ljubljana in 1952, where he sharply criticised Socialist Realism and described “Gerasimov and Co.” and Zhdanovism as a provincial school of painting.⁴⁴ The speech, which was seen as a turning point for the future development of the Yugoslav art space and its departure from Socialist Realism, also reflected (at least) a partial resolution of the ideological differences that had arisen from the Conflict on the Literary Left in the interwar period.⁴⁵

The Exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries in the USSR, 1947*

According to the available sources, only one art exhibition from Yugoslavia was organised in the Soviet Union during this period, which was also the first Yugoslav exhibition to travel abroad after the Second World War. While the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries (Slikarstvo in kiparstvo narodov Jugoslavije 19. in 20. stoletja)* was initially presented to the domestic public in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana⁴⁶ – albeit different

in scope – it was primarily aimed at the international public, or more precisely at the “Slavic brother nations”.⁴⁷ It was first presented in Moscow (at the Pushkin Museum, 12 June 1947) and later travelled to Leningrad, Bucharest, Bratislava, Prague, Warsaw, Krakow and Budapest (fig. 7). The exhibition was also to be shown in Romania, but was cancelled after the conflict with the Cominform in spring 1948 and the severing of relations with the Soviet allies.⁴⁸

The idea for the exhibition is said to date back to the first months after the war,⁴⁹ but the final agreement on the exchange was reached by the Chairman of the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the FPRY Vladislav Ribnikar and the President of the VOKS Vladimir Semyonovich Kemenov at a meeting in the Soviet Union in April and May 1946.⁵⁰ The preparations, which were led and financed by the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the FPRY, began in June 1946 and the opening was to take place in Moscow in October of the same year. However, this period proved to be too short to realise such an ambitious project. In addition to the selection process and the recasting of the selected sculptures, a brochure and a richly illustrated catalogue, with reproductions of at least one work

42 Iztok Durjava, “Slovenski impresionizem v luči polemike 1948–1949 in pogled v zgodovino”, in: Barbara Borčič and Jure Mikuž (eds.), *Potlačena umetnost*, Open Society Institute, Ljubljana, 1999, pp. 78–84. The way in which the polemic unfolded points to a changed assessment of Soviet influences, even by the highest representatives and cultural policy makers. See also: Gabrič, 1991 (see no. 3), p. 600.

43 Grgo Gamulin, “O položaju naše likovne umjetnosti”, *Književne novine*, vol. 3, no. 7, 14.2.1950, p. 3; -bič, “Slikar-mojster Krsto Hegedušić k problemom likovne umetnosti”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 11, no. 47, 23.2.1950, p. 4. About their public polemic see Ljiljana Kolešnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska likovna kritika 50-ih godina: Izabrani tekstovi*, Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, Zagreb, pp. 8–14; Kolešnik, 2006 (see no. 9), pp. 70–77.

44 Miroslav Krleža, “Govor na Kongresu književnika u Ljubljani”, *Republika*, vol. 8, no. 10–11, 1952, p. 213.

45 Comp. Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), p. 100. For more on the impact of this speech on the Slovenian art scene see Gabrič, 1991 (see no. 3), pp. 647–649.

46 Belgrade, 29 September–29 October 1946; Zagreb, Pavilion, Modern Gallery, 5 January–15 February 1947; Ljubljana, National Gallery, 15 March–15 April 1947. About the exhibition: Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Slikarstvo i vajarstvo naroda Jugoslavije devetnaestog i dvadesetog veka”, *Jugoslavija SSSR*, no. 13, 1946, pp. 42–46; Stane Mikuž, “Razstava

slikarstva in kiparstva narodov Jugoslavije XIX. in XX. stoletja v Ljubljani”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 64, 16.3.1947, p. 3; Emilijan Cevc, “Razstava slikarstva in kiparstva narodov Jugoslavije 19. in 20. stoletja”, *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 12, 28.3.1947, p. 7; Grgo Gamulin, “Izložba slikarstva i vajarstva naroda Jugoslavije XIX. in XX. veka u domovini i inostranstvu”, *Umetnost*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1949, pp. 64–66.

47 *Slikarstvo in kiparstvo narodov Jugoslavije 19. in 20. stoletja* (exhibition catalogue), Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, 1947, p. 4.

48 Leningrad, Small Hermitage, July–August 1947; Bucharest, September (?) 1947 (several artworks were returned at the end of September; see Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, “Letter from Ivan Zorman to the Ministry of Education”, NG XI/10, NG Archives); Bratislava, November–December 1947; Prague, Mánes, 15 January–15 February 1948; Warsaw, National Museum in Warsaw, 8 March–8 April 1948; Krakow, 25 April–17 May 1948. The surviving sources regarding the last exhibition state only that it opened shortly before the adoption of the Cominform resolution in Budapest and that it was very coolly received. See Gamulin, 1949 (see no. 46), p. 66. On the planned tour locations, see: “Komitet za kulturu i umetnost pri Vladi FNRJ, Plan rada, 1948, AJ 314-10-40”, in: Branka Doknić, Milić F. Petrović and Ivan Hofman (eds.), *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije: 1945–1952*, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 2009, p. 246. The exhibition was also planned to travel to Sweden, but this was never realised. Certain documents in the Croatian State Archives indicate that (part of?) the exhibits were sent from Warsaw to Sweden and from there via Denmark back to Yugoslavia to ensure their safe return after the conflict with the Cominform. However, the currently inaccessible documents from the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade should be obtained and consulted in order to fully clarify the course of events. I would like to thank Dr Ljiljana Kolešnik for this information.

49 Doknić, 2013 (see no. 1), p. 238.

50 Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, “Letter from the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the FPRY to the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, 1.8.1946”, NG XI/10, NG Archives.



A newspaper report from the magazine *Tovariš* about the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1947.

by each participating artist and an introduction by Miroslav Krleža, were to be published.⁵¹

Local committees were responsible for selecting the works from the individual republics. In Slovenia, the selection was prepared by a steering committee consisting of Stane Mikuž (chairman), Božidar Jakac, France Stele, Ivan Zorman, Marij Pregelj, Dore Klemenčič, Boris Kalin, Zoran Didek and Fran Šijanec. Invitations to participate were intended to be sent to all sculptors and painters, some of whom were invited in person.⁵² The artists who created works with motifs

51 Before October, the exhibition was to be shown in Belgrade and later travel from Moscow to (at least) Poland and Czechoslovakia: Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik dodatka k seji odbora za razstavo v Moskvi, 26.6.1946, p. 1"; "Zapisnik seje za jug. umetniško razstavo v Moskvi, 26.6.1946, p. 1"; "Zapisnik seje PORM, 1.7.1946, p. 3", NG XI/10, NG Archives. In July 1946, Yugoslavia asked for the exhibition to be postponed: Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik seje pripravljalnega odbora za razstavo v Moskvi, 12.7.1946", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

52 Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik seje PORM, 1.7.1946, p. 2", NG XI/10, NG Archives. France Kralj initially did not accept the invitation, but eventually joined after visits from Dana Pajnič and later Ivan Zorman. Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik seje PORM, 17.8.1946, pp. 1–2", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

from the People's Liberation War, which were particularly sought after, were offered a fee and allowed a leave of absence from work to create them.⁵³ The exact number of works selected in Slovenia is not known. One hundred paintings and 25 sculptures were to be sent to Belgrade,⁵⁴ where the Central Committee, composed of members of the Committee and representatives of the republics (Slovenia was represented by Zoran Didek and Karel Putrih),⁵⁵ made the final selection, which was more concerned with the quality of the exhibits than with the proportional representation of the continuous timeline of artistic progress.⁵⁶ The so-called "republican key", or quotas according to republics, was not taken into account either.⁵⁷ The first, "working" version of the exhibition took place in Belgrade and included 494 works from all Yugoslav republics. Some were rejected before the opening, a further 96 works were excluded between the exhibitions in Zagreb and Ljubljana and another 46 shortly before the exhibition travelled abroad.

The exhibited panorama of 19th century Yugoslav art painted a credible picture of Slovenian art production according to the established criteria of art history. The selection mainly comprised bourgeois portraits, from Biedermeier to Romanticism and Realism, with only a few genre examples and very few landscapes and historical paintings. The Slovenian Impressionists and the Croatian Munich Circle were also well represented. Partisan prints and sculptures, especially works by Meštrović, Augustinčič and Radauš,⁵⁸ occupied an important place among the artworks, which the catalogue placed in a broad, ill-defined category of works "from the First World War to the present" (figs. 8–11).⁵⁹

53 Slovenian artists who received payment were Maksim Sedej, Zoran Didek, Rajko Slapernik, Fran Pavlovec and Riko Debenjak. Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Izpisek iz knjige izdatkov za Jugoslovansko razstavo v Moskvi", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

54 Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik seje pripravljalnega odbora za razstavo v Moskvi, 12.7.1946", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

55 "Komitet za kulturo i umetnost pri Vladi FNRJ svim Republičkim ministarstvima prosvete, 1. Plenarna sednica Komiteta za kulturo i umetnost pri Vladi FNRJ, 6.8.1946, AJ 314-10-40", in: Branka Doknić, Milić F. Petrović and Ivan Hofman (eds.), *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije: 1945–1952*, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 2009, p. 341; Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Telegram from Stane Mikuž to the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the FPRY, 5.9.1946", NG XI/10, NG Archives.

56 Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, "Zapisnik dodatka k seji odbora za razstavo v Moskvi, 26.6.1946, p. 1", Arhiv NG XI/10, NG Archives.

57 The most strongly represented works in the exhibition in Moscow came from Croatian artists (around 45%), followed by Serbs (around 26%), Slovenians (around 22%), Bosnians, Montenegrins and Macedonians. The republican quotas were a form of political support for a predetermined equal representation from each of the republics.

58 The exhibition in the Soviet Union showed 180 paintings, 116 prints, 55 sculptures and 8 medals.

59 *Vystavka zhivopisi i skulptury narodov Yugoslavii XIX i XX vekov* (exhibition catalogue), Moscow and Leningrad, 1947, p. 32.

The exhibited works, including those that “do not go beyond the confines of artistic formalism” and should be “condemned [...] according to scientific aesthetics and criticism”, were intended to offer an objective representation of the historical development of art.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, certain works, particularly from the interwar period, were excluded from the selection planned for abroad. Although the reason for this decision is not documented, it is not surprising given the official interpretation of fine art at the time and points to the continuation of the Conflict on the Literary Left from the interwar period. Much is explained by the foreword in the catalogue for the Soviet audience, which is significantly longer and entirely different from the Slovenian or Croatian versions.⁶¹ It offers a general overview of the history of art of the Yugoslav peoples and devotes a great deal of attention to the older art that was not shown in the exhibition. The text, written by an unknown author, first outlines the development of fine art from the Middle Ages to Impressionism in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia and then moves on to art after 1918, briefly including Macedonia and Montenegro.⁶² In discussing the interwar period, the negative influence of politics is highlighted, which is said to have led to problematic experiments with form, particularly among painters – of which the author of the catalogue foreword considers the move away from realism and the interest in colour to be the most controversial. He points to Expressionism as a profoundly negative tendency and even names two of its “victims”, the Kralj brothers.⁶³ Apart from a single post-war print (*The Banished*, 1921), a woodcut by Tone Kralj, their work was omitted, as were the works of other Expressionists and those of the Fourth Generation. Oil paintings by Miha Maleš (*Houses by the Water*), Franc Pavlovec (*Portrait of a Woman*) and Fran Tratnik (*Redhead*, 1919), for example, which were shown in the Belgrade

60 *Slikarstvo in kiparstvo narodov Jugoslavije 19. in 20. stoletja*, 1947 (see no. 47), pp. 4–5.

61 *Vystavka zhivopisi i skulptury narodov Jugoslavii XIX i XX vekov*, 1947 (see no. 59). Compare *Slikarstvo i kiparstvo naroda Jugoslavije 19. i 20. vijeka* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Umjetnički paviljon, Zagreb, 1947; *Slikarstvo in kiparstvo narodov Jugoslavije 19. in 20. stoletja*, 1947 (see no. 47). For the exhibition in Belgrade, for reasons of urgency, a list of works without accompanying text or illustrations was offered instead of the catalogue: *Slikarstvo i vajarstvo naroda Jugoslavije XIX i XX veka* (exhibition brochure), Belgrade, 1946.

62 The republics contributed historical overviews of their art, while the final editing of the catalogue was carried out by a single author (unknown in the archival sources) appointed by the Committee. The overview of Slovenian art was written by France Stele. Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, “Letter from the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of the FPRY to the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, 5.8.1946”, NG XI/10, NG Archives; Razstave NG, Razstava v Moskvi, “Zapisnik seje PORM, 22.8.1946”, NG XI/10, NG Archives.

63 *Vystavka zhivopisi i skulptury narodov Jugoslavii XIX i XX vekov*, 1947 (see no. 59), p. 18.

exhibition, were not included in the Moscow exhibition.⁶⁴ The selection often favoured works that were more acceptable from the point of view of Socialist Realism and its theorists. This can be seen in the example of the painting *The Girl with the Accordion* (1946), for which Gojmir Anton Kos received the Prešeren Award, which was included in the final selection of exhibits, in contrast to two of his older, colouristic paintings *The Road* (1938) and *Still Life*, which were only shown in Belgrade. After the Belgrade exhibition, a third painting by Anton Ažbe was added to the selection – *A Man from Gorenjska (A Bavarian)* – probably because of his role as an art teacher of Russian artists.⁶⁵

The major Soviet newspapers reported on the exhibition only briefly and without particular interest, but there were also some longer articles that largely repeated the most important points from the catalogue text. Overall, the exhibition was described as an illustration of the development of Yugoslav art during the struggle against the oppressor, with particular praise for sculpture and (Partisan) printmaking, less so for historical painting, while interwar painting was viewed with scepticism.⁶⁶ A meeting of artists from both countries was also organised on the occasion of the Moscow exhibition, at which the art historian Aleksei Sidorov gave a lecture on Soviet perspectives on Yugoslav art. From the brief reports of Božidar Jakac, the Croatian art historian Grgo Gamulin and the Serbian literary writer Jovan Popović,⁶⁷ who attended the meeting as members of the Yugoslav delegation, it is clear that the exhibits served to emphasise the

64 Works by Božidar Jakac were selected for the Soviet Union, but none from his expressionist period. The exhibition showed paintings by Lovro Janša, Jožef Tominc, Mihael Stroj, Jurij and Janez Šubic, Jožef Petkovšek, Ferdo Vesel, Ivana Kobilca, Anton Ažbe, Ivan Grohar, Rihard Jakopič, Matija Jama, Matej Sternen, Gojmir Anton Kos, Božidar Jakac, Stane Kregar, France Mihelič, Nikolaj Omersa, Maksim Sedej, Gabrijel Stupica, Marij Pregelj; prints by Franc Kavčič, Anton Karinger, Hinko Smrekar, Božidar Jakac, Tone Kralj, Drago Vidmar, Lojze Spacal, Riko Debenjak, Maksim Sedej, Božo Pengov, Dore Klemenčič, Vito Globočnik, Alenka Gerlovič; sculptures by Alojz Gangl, Ivan Zajc, Lojze Dolinar, Boris Kalin, Frančišek Smerdu, Karl Putrih; medals by Vladimir Štoviček, Stane Dremelj.

65 Ažbe’s influence on Soviet artists was widely recognised in the Soviet Union. Among others, Igor Grabar wrote about him in: Igor Grabar, *Moya zhizn’: Avtomonografiya*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1937, pp. 119–146. For a comprehensive bibliography see Viktor Iosifovič Baranovski and Irina Borisovna Hlebnikova, *Anton Ažbe in ruski slikarji*, Rosinvest, Ljubljana, 2002, pp. 215–223.

66 Longer reviews: Ju. Skalov, “Izobrazitel’noe iskusstvo Jugoslavii”, *Vechernyaya Moskva*, no. 137, 13.6.1947, p. 3; Anonymous, “Yugoslavskaya vystavka”, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, no. 24, 13.6.1947, p. 4; M. Orlova, “Khudozhniki Jugoslavii”, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, no. 25, 20.6.1947, p. 3. For the reactions of Soviet critics to the exhibition see also H. G., “Jugoslovanska razstava v Moskvi”, *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 29, 25.7.1947, p. 14.

67 Herbert Grün, “Sovjetska dežela, ljudje in umetnost: Pomenek z Božidarjem Jakcem”, *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 28, 15.3.1947, pp. 671–672; Gamulin, 1949 (see no. 46), p. 66; Jovan Popović, “Susret dveju srodnih umetnosti: S puta po Sovjetskom savezu”, *Borba*, vol. 12, no. 165, 13.7.1947, pp. 4–5.



8-11
Installation views from the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the National Gallery in Ljubljana in 1947.

role of Slavic artists in the development of European art and to try to relativise the importance of Western art for their work (figs. 12–14). “Munich, Vienna – these were not just foreign schools. Russian artists studied in Munich under a Yugoslav, a Slovenian, Ažbe. In Vienna there were Czechs and Poles. But those who studied abroad always returned home, to their people, and freed themselves from influences. Impressionism did not just come from Paris, it was in the air.”⁶⁸ The Impressionist works on display, which were otherwise largely overlooked in the reviews of Soviet critics,⁶⁹ were described as more realistic than French naturalism, with the exception of the works of Vlaho Bukovac, while the works from the interwar period were recognised as having a conceptually clear artistic position despite the influence of the Paris School. Moscow was allegedly particularly impressed by Yugoslav sculpture, which was described as even better than Soviet sculpture.⁷⁰

The reactions to the exhibition reflect the uneven exchange within Soviet-Yugoslav cultural relations, which were strongly in favour of the Soviet Union in the first post-war years.⁷¹ This is seen in the discourse in the media, which was positive on both sides – both with regard to the reception of the Yugoslav exhibition in the Soviet Union and in the case of the exhibition of Soviet painters in Yugoslavia. A comparison of the reports, which were much more numerous in Yugoslavia, reveals a clear divide between the countries’ views on the exchange. The Soviet critics maintained a certain critical note in their observations and assessed the quality of the exhibited works (from the perspective of the officially sanctioned art canon of Socialist Realism), which the Yugoslav side also described as one of the prime goals of the exhibition, namely to obtain an evaluation of their own art from the Soviets. The Yugoslav media, on the other hand, embraced the exhibition of Soviet painting with enthusiasm. It was expected that it would provide guidelines for the future development of art, as the USSR was seen as a role model, a “teacher”, in the construction of socialism.

The cultural relations that the Soviet Union established with foreign countries via the VOKS during this period were primarily an unidirectional export of ideology and culture that was not based on reciprocity, but rather served to reduce the intrusion of foreign influences.⁷² This was also one of the reasons why the USSR did not sign the agreement on cultural relations with Yugoslavia, which signed such agreements with other socialist countries in Eastern Europe in

68 Grün, 1947 (see no. 67), p. 672.

69 H. G., 1947 (see no. 66), p. 14.

70 Grün, 1947 (see no. 67), p. 672.

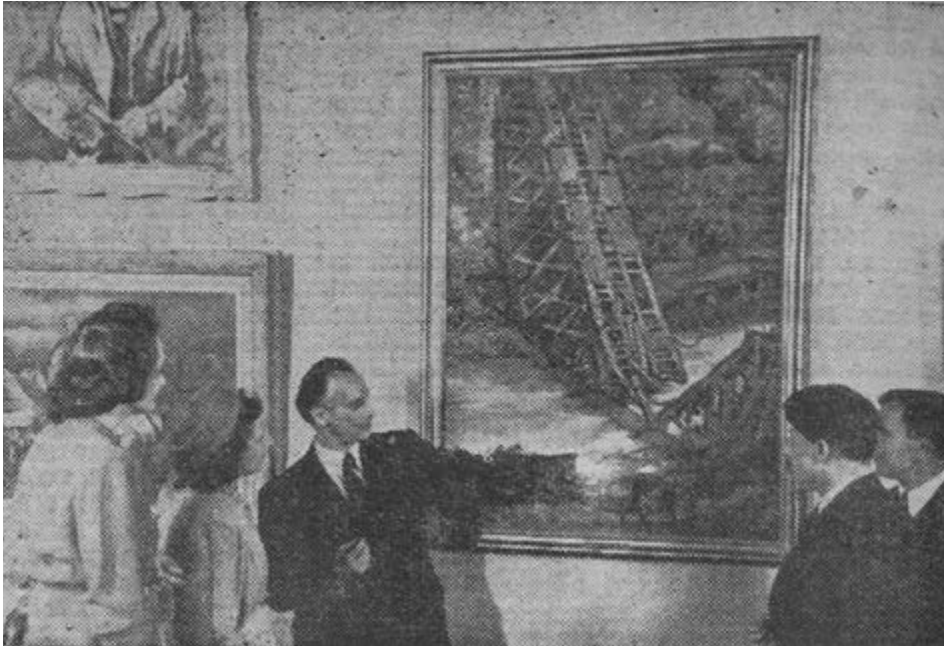
71 Miloradović, 2012 (see no. 6), p. 214.

72 Ibid.



12 Important visitors at the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1947: (left to right) Aleksandr Gundorov (President of the Slavic Committee in Moscow), Vladimir Popović (Ambassador of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union), painters Petar Lubarda and Božidar Jakac and writer Jovan Popović.

13 The sculpture of Josip Broz – Tito by Antun Augustinčić at the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1947. On the right stands the Soviet sculptor Vera Mukhina.



Visitors to the exhibition *Painting and Sculpture of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow in 1947 and painter Marijan Detoni in front of his painting *Partisans Crossing the Neretva River*.

1946/47 and established bilateral associations for cultural cooperation (with Albania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania). Exchanges on the basis of these agreements were much smaller in scope than the Soviet-Yugoslav exchanges. One exception was the cooperation between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, with which close ties already existed before the war.⁷³ There are no noteworthy exhibitions in this period, which is probably due to other priorities and poor material conditions. Against the backdrop of Yugoslavia's striving for hegemony in the Balkans, the most ambitious project was therefore the aforementioned exhibition of 19th and 20th century painting and sculpture, which travelled to most of the partner countries. The *Exhibition of Anti-Fascist Artists from Trieste (Výstava terstských antifašistických umělců)* travelled to Czechoslovakia,⁷⁴ while an exhibition of photographs of Czech and Slovak sculptures was shown in Ljubljana.⁷⁵

73 Ibid., p. 202.

74 Prague, Výstavní síň S. V. Purkyně, opened on 2 March 1948.

75 Anonymous, "Jugoslovanska kronika", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 8, no. 268, 14.11.1947, p. 5. Before Ljubljana, it was staged in Belgrade (closed on 15 November 1947) and in Zagreb (22 November–6 December 1947).

The Informbiro Period

After the break with the Cominform in the spring of 1948, Yugoslavia was excluded from the umbrella organisation of world communist parties due to increasing tensions with the Soviet Union. As a result, the young country found itself in a difficult situation of economic blockade by its former allies and was isolated between East and West.⁷⁶ The period of uncertainty was also characterised by the pressure on artists and the tightened control over their creativity, which only began to ease around 1950.⁷⁷ The gradual liberalisation and turning away from Soviet models in art was initially reflected in the distancing from the aesthetic theory of Socialist Realism and, from 1952, the abolition of Agitprop, also on organisational and infrastructural levels.⁷⁸

After the conflict, Yugoslav (cultural) policy remained unchanged at least until the end of 1948. The programmes of the cultural institutions were not changed either.⁷⁹ When preparing the programmes for the following year, the need for changes was pointed out and only an exhibition on folk art in Poland was planned.⁸⁰ However, this was never realised, as the official cultural exchange between Yugoslavia and the Cominform countries was completely discontinued until Stalin's death in 1953. During the Informbiro period, exhibitions of Bulgarian painter Masha Zhivkova were held in several capitals of the Yugoslav republics, but they were organised outside the bilateral agreements, as the painter had only recently emigrated to Yugoslavia and brought her paintings with her.⁸¹

Normalisation of Relations After Stalin's Death

Two documents were particularly important for relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the period of their gradual normalisation after Stalin's death: the Belgrade Declaration of 1955, which regulated future relations between the countries, and the Moscow

76 Mateja Režek, "Spor z Informbirojem", in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, p. 931.

77 Ana Šeparović, "ULUH oko Informbiroa: Dinamika ideološko-političnog pritiska u likovnom stvaralaštvu", *Peristil*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2017, pp. 105–106.

78 Lidija Merenik, *Umetnost i vlast: Srpsko slikarstvo 1945–1968*, Vujičić kolekcija, Belgrade, 2010, p. 61; Gabrič, 1998 (see no. 2), pp. 143–150. See also Šeparović, 2017 (see no. 77), pp. 103–116.

79 Gabrič, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 142.

80 Ibid., pp. 141–142; Doknić, 2013 (see no. 1), p. 273.

81 *Katalog izložbe slikarskih radova Maše Živkove* (exhibition leaflet), Salon Likum, Zagreb, 1949. About the exhibition: F. S., "Razstava bolgarske slikarice Maše Živkove", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 10, no. 246, 19.10.1949, p. 3; Anonymous, "Kronika", *Ljudski tednik*, vol. 4, no. 189, 29.10.1949, p. 6; Anonymous, "Bolgarska slikarka Maša Živkova: Vlada je prekinila, narod ni prekinil", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 10, no. 252, 24.10.1949, p. 3; Anonymous, "Na razstavi Maše Živkove", *Tovariš*, vol. 5, no. 41, 14.10.1949, p. 14.

Declaration of 1956, which defined relations between the respective Parties. In a brief period of relative harmony during the 1950s, characterised by the first exchange of state visits after the rupture with Cominform between Presidents Nikita Khrushchev and Josip Broz - Tito,⁸² the 5th convention on cultural cooperation was signed in Moscow.⁸³ Based on this agreement, from 1956 the Yugoslav and Soviet sides adopted initially one-year and, later, two-year programmes for cooperation in the fields of education and science, literature, music, film and publishing, while in the fields of fine and applied arts and architecture only a (rare) exchange of artists and a regular, mostly annual exchange of exhibitions was planned. The tasks were assigned to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (from 1953),⁸⁴ the VOKS, which was renamed the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (Soyuz sovetskikh obshchestv druzhby i kul'turnykh svyazey s zarubezhnyimi stranami) in 1958, and the Soviet Embassy in Yugoslavia.⁸⁵

Cultural exchange, particularly in the fields of music, theatre, literature and film, began immediately after the signing of the agreement in 1955, albeit on a smaller scale.⁸⁶ In the summer of the same year, the first presentation of Soviet fine art after the restoration of relations was organised as part of the *1st International Exhibition of Graphic Arts (I. mednarodna grafična razstava; later International Biennale of Graphic Arts)*. The main organiser of the event, Zoran Kržišnik, explained that the Soviet side presented works of their own choice. While the artists from the Western countries typically received personal invitations directly from the organisers, the local selectors

82 Khrushchev visited Belgrade in the spring of 1955, Josip Broz - Tito visited Moscow in the spring of 1956; see Mateja Režek, "Med Vzhodom in Zahodom", in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, p. 984. About relations between the countries in this period see: Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953–1957*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011. About relations with Eastern Bloc countries see: Vladimir Lj. Cveković, "Jugoslavija i istočnoevropske zemlje u susedstvu 1953–1958: Opservacija, akcija, rezultati", *Annales*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2014, pp. 649–660.

83 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, "Konvencija o kulturnoj saradnji između Federativne narodne republike Jugoslavije i Saveza sovjetskih socialističkih republika, 17.5.1956", AY 559/49/109, Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter AY).

84 For more about the functioning of the committee see: Lovorka Magaš Bilandžić, "Izložba 'Sto listova jugoslovenske moderne grafike' Komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom i njezina uloga u razvijanju kulturnih veza Jugoslavije s inozemstvom u prvoj polovini 1950-ih", *Peristil*, no. 62, 2019, pp. 139–157.

85 Doknić, 2013 (see no. 1), p. 278.

86 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, "Pregled kulturne saradnje Jugoslavija-SSSR za 1955/56 godinu i predlozi za 1957 g., pp. 1–2", AY 559/49/109, AY.

from the Eastern Bloc countries were granted full autonomy in choosing the exhibits.⁸⁷ The Soviet Union sent works by older artists, mostly book illustrations and portraits.⁸⁸ Without exception, the Slovenian media welcomed their presence positively and emphasised the importance of the exhibition as an event that successfully brought together Western and Eastern artists, while the Soviet graphic production on display was described as reactionary, with the poor selection of works also being criticised for not doing it justice.⁸⁹

Graphic art was also presented in the first exhibition of exclusively Soviet fine art after the Cominform conflict in Yugoslavia (also in Ljubljana). The exhibition entitled *Masters of Soviet Graphic Art (Mojstri sovjetske grafike; Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 26 June–6 July 1958)*⁹⁰ showed no fewer than 247 works by the six most renowned Soviet graphic artists of the time,⁹¹ which were, however, described as old-fashioned in the rare reviews by Slovenian critics⁹² – as was also the case at the first edition of the International Biennale of Graphic Arts. The next representative exhibition, *Soviet Fine Arts (Sovjetska likovna umetnost; Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 21 October–11 November 1959)*, which presented works by older artists, especially those who had become known before the revolution, as well as some works by generations who had entered the art scene in the 1920s and 1930s, was judged similarly.⁹³ Originally it was to be held in Maribor,

87 Zoran Kržišnik, "Rezultati in perspektive prve mednarodne grafične razstave", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 5, no. 227, 27.9.1955, p. 4; Beti Žerovc, "O kombinacijah: Zoran Kržišnik", *Likovne besede*, no. 81–82, 2007, p. 26.

88 Vladimir Favorsky, Yevgeny Kibrik, Georgy Vereysky. See, e.g. M. S., "1. Mednarodna razstava grafike v Ljubljani: Sovjetska zveza, Češkoslovaška, Romunija, Madžarska, Poljska, Bolgarija", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 16, no. 218, 18.9.1955, p. 5.

89 Luc Menaše, "Umetnostni dogodek: 1. mednarodna grafična razstava v Ljubljani", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 21, no. 160, 10.7.1955, p. 7; M., "Kakor pred pol stoletja: Mednarodna grafična razstava: III", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 5, no. 170, 21.7.1955, p. 4; M. S., 1955 (see no. 88), p. 5.

90 Before that it was organised in Belgrade and Zagreb. B. Pogačnik, "Grafična ilustracija", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 19, no. 151, 29.6.1958, p. 7.

91 Works by Georgy Vereysky and Vladimir Favorsky were selected for the exhibition, both of whom were already known to the Slovenian public from the first international exhibition of graphic art, as well as works by Yury Pimenov, Yevgeny Rachev, David Dubinsky and Valentin Litvinenko.

92 For example: Pogačnik, 1958 (see no. 90), p. 6.

93 The exhibition was an exchange for the exhibition of Yugoslav decorative art. After Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania, it travelled to Belgrade (Art Pavilion in the Kalemegdan Park, July–August 1959). After being held in Ljubljana, it was supposed to travel to Banja Luka, but was cancelled by the Soviet side because the exhibits had been damaged in Albania. Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, "Pregled kulturne saradnje sa SSSR-om u trećem tromesečju 1959 godine, p. 6", AY 559/49/109, AY. The exhibition comprised 151 works by 19 artists. *Sovjetska likovna umetnost* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1959.

but the Soviet side found the local premises too small. The sculpture section was particularly extensive and presented some of the most representative works by the leading protagonists of Soviet sculpture such as Vera Mukhina, Nikolay Tomsky and others, who were also represented by numerous designs for monuments. The most strongly represented artists in the painting section, each with more than 10 paintings, were the Azerbaijani painter Mikayil Abdullayev and the laureate of the highest Soviet state award for art (the so-called Stalin Prize) Vasily Yefanov. The exhibition also presented works by Aleksandr Deyneka and Arkady Plastov, who were already known to the Yugoslav public. Judging by the catalogue titles, most of the artists were presented through their best-known works, which presented a panorama of art production strictly within the framework of Socialist Realism.⁹⁴ Similar to the first Soviet exhibition in Yugoslavia in 1947, the exhibition mainly comprised portraits of politicians and cultural figures, depictions of historical events, still lifes and landscapes. In addition to a broad consensus among critics that the exhibition mainly presented outdated artistic solutions,⁹⁵ the media also criticised the fact that no works by artists of a younger generation were shown and noted that the older works on display were more convincing than the more recent, post-war ones.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, interest in the exhibition was reportedly considerable. There were even reports about the (unexplained) incidents in Belgrade, where the exhibition was held before being transferred to Ljubljana – a fight between two visitors over a negative entry in the book of impressions and an attempt by two other visitors to dismantle Vera Mukhina's famous sculpture *The Worker and the Kolkhoz Woman* (1937).⁹⁷

An exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav painting was proposed by the Commission as the first Yugoslav exhibition in the USSR in the period of improved relations. It was planned for 1957,⁹⁸ but according to Yugoslav reports it was not accepted by the Soviets because the works submitted did not correspond to the spirit of Socialist Realism.

94 Ibid.; M. Milošević, "Ponovo oživljeni akademizam", *Borba*, vol. 24, no. 188, 12.8.1959, p. 7.

95 Ibid.; B. P., "Razstava sovjetske umetnosti", *Delo*, vol. 1, no. 173, 23.10.1959, p. 6. The exhibition in Ljubljana presented 151 works by 19 artists. Ist, "Sovjetska likovna realnost", *Ljubljanski Dnevnik*, vol. 9, no. 249, 26.10.1959, p. 2; Bogdan Pogačnik, "Po razstavi sovjetske umetnosti", *Naši razgledi*, vol. 8, no. 22, 28.11.1959, p. 530; Anonymous, "Sovjetski mojstri v Moderni galeriji", *Tovariš*, vol. 15, no. 43, 1.11.1959, p. 1334. Pogačnik, 1959 (see no. 95), p. 530.

96 "Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, "Pregled kulturne saradnje ...", 1959 (see no. 93): "[...] two well-dressed young men tried to topple Mukhina's 'Worker and Kolkhoz Woman' sculpture, but both ran off when a police officer confronted them."

98 The exact location of the planned exhibition is not mentioned in archive documents.

They were prepared to host an exhibition by the Lada Group instead,⁹⁹ which the Yugoslav side did not agree to because of its lack of relevance, or the exhibition of reproductions of mediaeval frescoes that had already been booked for other exhibition venues.¹⁰⁰ The first Yugoslav art exhibition in the Soviet Union during the thaw in relations was therefore the *Exhibition of Yugoslav Modern Graphic Art (Sovremennaya grafika Jugoslavii)*, which opened in Leningrad in January 1959, after a series of organisational complications, and subsequently travelled to Kiev and Moscow (fig. 15).¹⁰¹ The preparations ran parallel to the organisation of the politically very important *Art Exhibition of Socialist Countries (Vystavka proizvedeniy izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva sotsialisticheskikh stran)* in Moscow (opened on 26 December 1958),¹⁰² the Soviet Union's first major international exhibition project, which was to showcase the art of its allies from Eastern Europe and Asia. Yugoslavia declined the invitation to participate,¹⁰³ which partly explains the difficulties encountered by its representatives in preparing the exhibition of Yugoslav graphic art. It was prepared by the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists, originally with a different concept focussing on contemporary prints from the last two years. As the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow expected too much resistance, the original plan was changed and older works were added.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the exhibition was poorly received in the Soviet Union. Yugoslav sources, which were probably not entirely objective, reported on the efforts to keep the

99 The Yugoslav art association Lada was founded in Belgrade in 1904 and comprised the Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Bulgarian sections. In the period between the two world wars, it mainly brought together painters with a more traditional, conservative artistic expression. Lazar Trifunović, *Srpsko slikarstvo 1900–1950*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1973, pp. 451–452. The reason for the Soviet proposal to exhibit the works of precisely this group is not known.

100 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, "Pregled kulturne saradnje Jugoslavija–SSSR za 1955/56 godinu i predlozi za 1957 g., p. 2", AY 559/49/109, AY.

101 Leningrad, opening 11 January 1959; Kiev, opening 16 March 1959; Moscow, opening 19 June 1959.

102 For more about the exhibition see: Susan E. Reid, "The Exhibition Art of Socialist Countries, Moscow, 1958–1959, and the Contemporary Style", in: David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.), *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2000, pp. 101–132.

103 I would like to thank Dr Ljiljana Kolešnik for the information.

104 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Grafika 1953–1960, "Zabeleška M. Božića, sekretara Ambasade FNRJ u Moskvi o razgovoru sa Slavnovom, zam. načelnika Uprave za veze sa inostranstvom Min. Kulture SSSR, 1.10.1958", AY 559/102/226, AY. During the preparations for the exhibition, Slavnov enquired whether the exhibition would contain many "formalist" works. At the end of the document, there is a thickly crossed-out, barely legible paragraph in which Božić advises the organisers to adapt the selection of works to the host's wishes so as not to provoke a scandal. Forty-seven artists with over 200 works were represented in the exhibition.

number of visitors to a minimum, on hardly any media coverage and on the mixed but, above all, clearly negative reactions of the visitors.¹⁰⁵ Selected texts from the book of impressions were published in Yugoslav newspapers, probably also to demonstrate the progressiveness of Yugoslav art to the local public.¹⁰⁶ In April, after the opening in Kiev, where the exhibition was best received, although the director allegedly publicly criticised every single painting after the official opening,¹⁰⁷ a public forum on the exhibition was even held, to which a representative of the Yugoslav artists was also invited. The exhibition commissioner Boško Karanović declined the invitation, presumably for personal reasons. After a call by the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists, no other candidate agreed to take part in time, probably because they had little interest in taking on the unpleasant task.¹⁰⁸

The events surrounding the exhibition reflect the friction in relations between the countries, which intensified after a brief period of political harmony in the mid-1950s during the protests in Poland and the popular uprising in Hungary in 1956,¹⁰⁹ as well as after the adoption of a new programme by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1958, which led to the cancellation of numerous cultural events.¹¹⁰ The Yugoslav side criticised, above all, the disregard for reciprocity in the agreed exchange programmes and the attempts to minimise Yugoslav influence, which were allegedly much greater than in cooperation with other socialist countries.¹¹¹ Compromises were therefore sought when determining the themes of the exhibitions for the Soviet

105 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Grafika 1953–1960, “P. Karamatijević, B. Karanović, Izveštaj povodom otvaranja izložbe savremene jugoslovanske grafike u Lenjingradu, 28.1.1959”, AY 559/102/226, AY. Nevertheless, the exhibition is said to have met with great interest among artists and intellectuals.

106 Ž. Stekič, “Strasti oko izložbe”, *Vjesnik*, vol. 20, no. 4532, 9.7.1959, p. 8; Žarko Božič, “Knjiga vtisov ali knjiga pogledov”, *Delo*, vol. 1, no. 71, 12.7.1959, p. 6.

107 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, “Saradnja sa SSSR u prvom tromesečju 1959 godine, pp. 4–5”, AJ 559/49/109, AJ. The paintings allegedly reflected “the evacuation of our intelligence and its revisionism”.

108 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, “Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, SSSR, p. 3”, AY 559/49/109, AY.

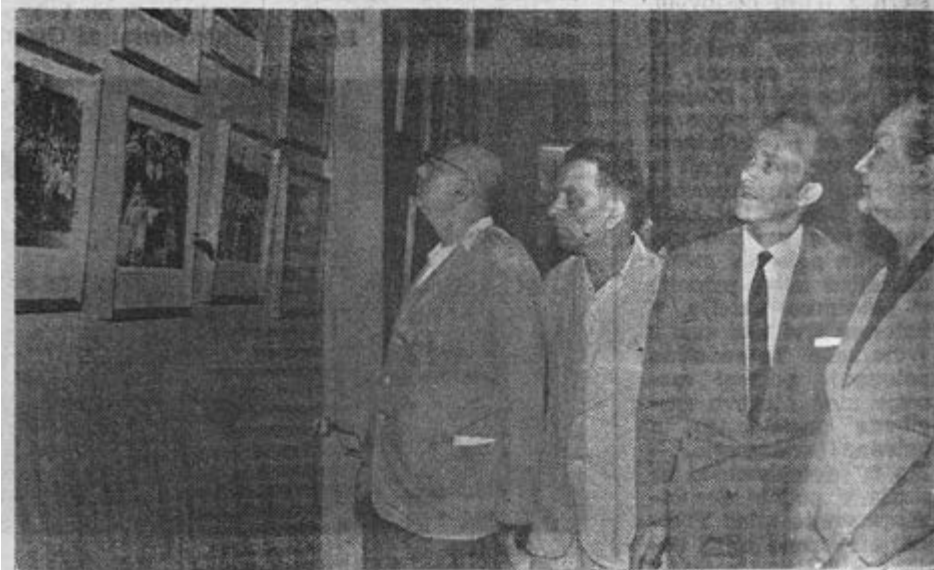
109 Režek, 2006 (see no. 82), p. 984.

110 Doknić, 2013 (see no. 1), pp. 274–275, 278.

111 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, “Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, Pismo Ambasade FNRJ u Moskvi Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 23.3.1960, p. 2”, AY 559/49/109, AY. In 1959, the ratio of realised exchanges was about 5:1 in favour of the USSR. It was explicitly mentioned that the Soviets deliberately bought bad films in order to leave a negative impression of Yugoslav cultural production. See also Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, “Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, Izveštaj o kulturno-prosvetnoj i naučnoj saradnji sa SSSR, 24.6.1964, p. 1”, AY 559/49/109, AY.

Naša sodobna grafika v Moskvi

Sodobna jugoslovanska grafika si pridobiva v umetniškem svetu tudi izven meja naše domovine vse večji sloves. Uspehom naših slikarjev-grafikov na nekaterih bienalah na obeh poloblah (na primer v Benetkah in v Sao Paolu) ter doslej največji grafični razstavi sploh — v Ljubljani — se je pridružila še velika razstava sodobne jugoslovanske grafike v Moskvi. Razstavní prostori v središču Moskve na Kuznjeckem mostu so sprejeli izbrana dela 46 jugoslovanskih umetnikov. Razstava je vzbudila izredno zanimanje med moskovskimi ljubitelji te umetniške zvrsti, med strokovnjaki pa tudi obilico diskusij, predvsem o abstraktnem slikarstvu nasploh. Več kot zanimiva je knjiga vtisov



na razstavi oziroma kar dve, ki sta se napolnili v dneh razstave. Skozi razstavne dvorane »Doma prijateljstva s tujimi deželami« se je vrstilo tisoče Moskovčanov, delavcev, intelektualcev, mladine, pripadnikov Rdeče armade in drugih. Med njimi so bili taki, ki umetniške razstave redno obiskujejo, dokaj pa tudi takih, ki jih je pripeljala radovednost, dobro ali slabonamerna kritičnost ali pa zanimanje in ljubezen do naših ljudstev. Temu primerni so bili tudi zapiski v knjigi vtisov. Tu se vrstijo izrazi največjega občudovanja vse do popolnega odrekanja umetniškega nivoja razstavljalcem. Ne manjka niti strani, kjer se razvija medsebojna diskusija oziroma polemika med stališči posameznih vpisovalcev. Iz vsega opisanega si je skoraj nemogoče ustvariti kak drugačen zaključek razen tega, da je razstava izredno razgibala tako prijatelje umetnosti in naše dežele kakor tudi one »druge«.

A newspaper report from the magazine *Tovariš* about the *Exhibition of Yugoslav Contemporary Graphic Art* in Moscow in 1959.

Union – the requirement to present only works adhering to realism was not completely adhered to, but to such an extent that the exhibitions were accepted.¹¹²

The exhibitions of contemporary Yugoslav art were also generally received with considerable reservations in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. The Yugoslav organising committee of the exhibition of contemporary graphic art in Bulgaria reported particular difficulties, as the hosts demanded photos and descriptions of each work in advance and considered abstract works to be particularly problematic.¹¹³ During this period, only two art exhibitions were organised in Slovenia as part of the international exhibition exchange with the European countries of the Eastern Bloc: *Polish Modern Art (Moderna poljska umetnost; 25 April–14 May 1957)*¹¹⁴ and *Contemporary Art of Czechoslovakia (Sodobna češkoslovaška umetnost; 21 March–8 April 1958)*.¹¹⁵ The state cultural exchange programmes also included artists' appearances at the International Biennale of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, which, however, with the exception of the first biennial mentioned above, were mainly organised and carried out outside official channels. Works that did not pass through the sieve of Soviet selectors were procured via contacts in Riga and exhibited alongside the official selection in various editions of the biennial.¹¹⁶

At the beginning of the 1960s, the members of the Fine Arts Board, which acted on behalf of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, appreciated that four really good exhibitions were available for presentation abroad: the aforementioned exhibition of contemporary graphic art, which became an important part of Yugoslavia's representation abroad, the exhibition of contemporary painting

and sculpture, the exhibition of medieval art and the exhibition of naïve art.¹¹⁷ Since the Board had not had any positive experiences with the presentation of contemporary artistic production in the USSR (and elsewhere in the East), the *Exhibition of Yugoslav Naïve Art (Vystavka narodnykh khudozhnikov-primitivistov Yugoslavii)* was sent there in the winter of 1962/63,¹¹⁸ which proved to be the most successful exchange between the two countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, naïve art enjoyed great popularity throughout the world. In Yugoslavia, it established itself as early as the second half of the 1950s as an art that united the peculiarities of artistic expression of religious and national groups in the ethnically diverse country and represented a contemporary alternative to the art of the Western and Eastern blocs,¹¹⁹ making it particularly suitable for international presentations. The success of this genre was due to Oto Bihalji-Merin, who was one of the most important figures in the international popularisation of naïve art. He was also a member of the Fine Arts Council, which, in the spring of 1962, decided on the Soviet proposal to send an exhibition of naïve art to the USSR as a part of cultural exchange between the countries.¹²⁰ The Council wanted to present the Soviet public with a new, revised version of the exhibition of naïve art, which was to be conceived differently from the previous exhibition that had travelled through European cities and was not considered very successful.¹²¹

112 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, "Veze sa SSSR-om 1956–1960, Pismo Ambasade FNRJ u Moskvi Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 23.3.1960, p. 1", AY 559/49/109, AY.

113 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog ugovora, "Veze sa SSSR-om 1961–1965, Osvrt na izvršenje plana izložbi za 1962, p. 10", AY 559/49/110, AY. For views on abstract art in Bulgaria in the discussed period see Irina Genova, "The Graphic Arts Biennials in the 1950s and 1960s: the Slim 'Cut' in the Iron Curtain – The Bulgarian Case", in: Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski (eds.), *Art beyond Borders: Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945–1989)*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2016, p. 324.

114 Between March and June, it also travelled to Belgrade, Zagreb and Skopje; see *Moderna poljska umetnost: izložba slikarstva i skulpture: Beograd, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Skoplje* (exhibition catalogue), Komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom FNRJ, Belgrade, 1957.

115 About the visit of the Polish painter Andrzej Wróblewski in Belgrade and Ljubljana in 1956 as part of the international cultural exchange between Poland and Yugoslavia see Branislav Dimitrijević, "Folklore, Modernity and Death: Andrzej Wróblewski's Visit to Yugoslavia", in: Magdalena Ziótkowska and Wojciech Grzybała (eds.), *Avoiding Intermediary States: Andrzej Wróblewski (1927–1957)*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2014, p. 494.

116 Žerovc, 2007 (see no. 87), p. 26.

117 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Odbor za likovne umetnosti 1962, "Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Odbora za likovnu umetnost pri Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 19.6.62, p. 17", AY 559/102/190, AY.

118 Leningrad, Hermitage, 12–27 December 1962; Moscow, Pushkin Museum, 10–30 January 1963; the exhibition later travelled to Budapest, Múcsarnok, opening on 2 March 1963, and Vienna, Academy of Fine Arts, opening on 25 April 1963. Ninety-four works by 18 painters and 3 sculptors were exhibited. In return, an exhibition of Soviet artists who had exhibited at the Venice Biennale was organised in Belgrade.

119 Tanja Zimmermann, "Oto Bihalji-Merin in koncept 'naivnih' v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja: Most med socialističnim realizmom in nefiguralno umetnostjo", *Acta historiae artis Slovenica*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2018, pp. 185–187, 189–190. See also Miško Šuvaković, "Naivna umetnost: Izvornost, ideologija i tržište", in: Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji XX vek: II: Realizmi i modernizmi oko hladnog rata*, vol. 2, Orion Art, Belgrade, 2012, pp. 757–770.

120 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Odbor za likovne umetnosti 1962, "Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Odbora za likovnu umetnost pri Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 19.6.1962, p. 50", AY 559/102/190, AY. Bihalji-Merin explained his decision: "It should be sent to Moscow precisely because it is the art of the people, because it is sincere and direct and not at all modern." Originally, the Yugoslav side had planned an exhibition on Yugoslav architecture for the exchange, but it is not clear from the surviving documents whether the Soviets knew about it or not.

121 The organisers of the exhibition in Edinburgh, where it was last shown, complained about the poor organisation and selection of works. Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Odbor za likovne umetnosti 1962, "Zapisnik sa sastanka članova Odbora za likovnu umetnost, 26.3.1962,

All works by academically trained painters were excluded and the focus was placed on naïve art in the narrower sense: the highest quality works available were presented, regardless of the republican key.¹²²

After the trial staging in Zagreb, the exhibition was sent to the Soviet Union, where it was visited by as many as 150,000 visitors, a third more than the 1947 exhibition of Yugoslav art of the 19th and 20th centuries. Two thousand copies of the exhibition catalogue ran out in just two days. It was accompanied by an extensive programme, which included screenings of documentary films¹²³ and a lecture by exhibition commissioner Mirjana Gvozdanović in Leningrad and Moscow. The exhibition also received much better media coverage, including an extensive text in the Hermitage's publication¹²⁴ and a radio programme on Radio Moscow.¹²⁵ However, despite being described as a "rather unusual exhibition"¹²⁶ demonstrating a sincere and direct artistic expression, no criticism or deeper insight into the exhibited works can be gleaned from the available sources.

The Decentralisation of Exchange

Parallel to the increased economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR, bilateral relations in the field of culture began to improve and normalise again after 1963. In January 1963, the *Supplementing Protocol of Cultural Cooperation* was signed to formalise the increasing exchange.¹²⁷ As the Yugoslav side began to realise that it was finally

pp. 5–8", AY 559/102/190, AY. The exhibition was also organised in Warsaw, Prague, Brno (all in 1959) and elsewhere.

- 122 The exhibition comprised 74 paintings and 20 sculptures by artists from the so-called Hlebine School (Ivan Generalić (represented with 15 paintings), Mirko Virius, Franjo Mraz, Franjo Filipović, Mijo Kovačić, Ivan Večenaj, Dragan Gaži, artists from Kovačica (Ondrej Venjarski, Jan Sokol, Martin Paluška, Jan Knjazović) and other visible representatives of naïve art (Matija Skurjeni, Ivan Rabuzin, Eugen Buktenica, Emerik Feješ, Petar Smajić, Lavoslav Torti and Bogoslav Živković).
- 123 *The Funeral of Štefan Halaček* (1960) about the eponymous painting by Ivan Generalić; the film about the sculpture of Bogoslav Živković was shown to the staff of the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum. Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Odbor za likovne umetnosti 1963–1964, "Izvod iz izveštaja M. Gvozdanović o izložbi naivnih u Lenjingradu i Moskvi", AY 559/102/191, AY.
- 124 K. Mytareva, "Vystavka narodnykh khudozhnikov-primitivistov Yugoslavii", *Soobshcheniya Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*, vol. 26, 1965, pp. 63–66.
- 125 The programme was broadcast on 11 January 1963. Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Odbor za likovne umetnosti 1963–1964, "Izvod iz izveštaja M. Gvozdanović o izložbi naivnih u Lenjingradu i Moskvi", AY 559/102/191, AY.
- 126 Anonymous, "Narodne khudozhniki Yugoslavii", *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, no. 7, 15.1.1963, p. 4.
- 127 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog pakta, Veze sa SSSR-om 1961–1965, "Ambasada SFRJ v Moskvi Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 26.2.1964, p. 1", AY 559/49/110, AY.

being treated like any other socialist country in terms of cultural exchange,¹²⁸ it began to show less and less interest in it. The changed priorities in Yugoslav foreign policy also influenced the investments that the authorities made, increasingly for exhibitions in the West and in the Non-Aligned countries. Exhibition exchanges with the socialist countries became even more difficult due to the decentralisation and reorganisation of cultural exchange, which had been gradually implemented since the mid-1960s. While the Commission, which from May 1967 was called the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, retained the responsibility for the coordination of large, representative exhibitions in the interests of the federation and played an important role in decisions on cultural exchange programmes between the countries, most of the organisation and financing of "less important" bilateral contacts and exchanges was transferred to bodies within the republics, above all to the republican commissions (the Slovenian one was founded in 1967).¹²⁹ An important role in the international exchange of art exhibitions during this period was played by the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists, interested galleries and museums¹³⁰ and some of the most influential personalities on the art scene, such as Zoran Kržišnik and, to a lesser extent, Aleksander Bassin.¹³¹ The changes led to a decline in exhibition exchanges with the socialist countries, as there was no longer sufficient interest in them.¹³² While cooperation with developing countries continued to be financed by the federation,¹³³ the priorities in the case of the Eastern Bloc were different. As early as 1967, relations with Hungary and Czechoslovakia were temporarily discontinued, the exchange with Poland was broken off due to the poor financial situation and the programme with Bulgaria was suspended.¹³⁴

128 Ibid., pp. 1–3.

129 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1967–1971, "Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom Republički komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom SR Slovenije, 23.2.1968", AY 559/84/188, AY.

130 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1965–1966, "Skraćeni zapisnik sa sastanka o likovnoj saradnji sa inostranstvom, 8.6.1966, p. 9", AY 559/83/187, AY.

131 Žerovc, 2007 (see no. 87), pp. 24–31; Aleksander Bassin, *Neuvrščeni in vse te razstave so pripomogle k prepoznavnosti umetnosti*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2019.

132 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1967–1971, "Radenko Mišević Saveznoj komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom SIV-a, 19.9.1970"; "Saveznoj komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom SIV-a, 16.9.1970", AY 559/84/188, AY.

133 Teja Merhar, "Mednarodno kulturno sodelovanje Jugoslavije z državami članicami gibanja neuvrščenih", in: Tamara Soban (ed.), *Južna ozvezdja: Poetike neuvrščenih*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2019, p. 45.

134 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1967–1971, "Savez likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 12.5.1967, p. 1", AY 559/84/188, AY.

The exchange and organisation of exhibitions thus became increasingly dependent on the interests of the individual republics and art institutions. One of the increasingly rare Soviet exhibitions in Yugoslavia, *Old Masters from the Hermitage (Stari mojstri iz Ermitaža*; National Gallery of Slovenia, 4 April–23 May 1969), was arranged directly between the National Museum in Belgrade and the Hermitage and later added to the bilateral cultural exchange programme.¹³⁵ Slovenia was also interested in bringing the exhibition to Ljubljana, but had to raise the funds for the organisation itself. The overview of masterpieces of Western painting from the 16th to 18th centuries, in which Russian art was not represented, was received with enthusiasm.¹³⁶ The exchange was made considerably more difficult by the tense Soviet-Yugoslav relations during the Prague Spring of 1968, which caused the Soviet side to unreasonably delay the delivery of the planned exhibits; the Soviets also made it clear that such “obstructions” were in fact the result of the Yugoslav reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.¹³⁷ After the exhibition in Belgrade (which opened on 24 December 1968), the Federal Commission complained to the National Museum in Belgrade about the overly well-attended opening, which it felt was disproportionate to the poor attendance at the openings of two Yugoslav exhibitions organised in Leningrad during the same period.¹³⁸ The authorities namely expected such events to primarily provide a balanced exchange in every respect.¹³⁹ A similar attitude can also be gathered from the background of one of the few solo exhibitions organised as part of the international exchange with the countries of the Eastern Bloc.¹⁴⁰ On the occasion of his monographic exhibition in Bucharest (City Museum, opened on 22 January 1965),

- 135 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1965–1966, “Lazar Trifunović Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 23.12.1966”, AY 559/84/187, AY.
- 136 Within a month of its opening, the exhibition was seen by 20,000 visitors and was subsequently extended. Anonymous, “20.000 obiskovalcev”, *Delo*, vol. 11, no. 129, 13.5.1969, p. 5.
- 137 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1965–1966, “Beleška o razgovoru sa I. K. Kiseljevom, 25.12.1968”, AY 559/83/187, AY.
- 138 The exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav applied art and the exhibition of foreign artists from the collection of the National Museum were opened at the Hermitage in November 1968.
- 139 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Likovna saradnja sa inostranstvom 1967–1971, “Zabeleška o tretmanu jugoslovenskih izložbi u SSSR-u i sovjetske izložbe u Beogradu”; “Lazar Trifunović Saveznoj komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, 29.1.1969”, AY 559/84/188, AY.
- 140 In addition to the exhibition by Marij Pregelj, the two solo exhibitions that travelled to the countries of the Eastern Bloc were by Milo Milunović (Moscow, 16 December 1960–17 January 1961) and by Đorđe Andrejević Kun (German Democratic Republic, November 1963).

Marij Pregelj was told by the Romanian organisers – even before the exhibition opened – that it would be received in exactly the same way as “our exhibition in Belgrade was received, there were 450 visitors”.¹⁴¹ The only exhibition that exclusively presented Slovenian artists in the Soviet Union was a retrospective of prints by Božidar Jakac and post-war woodcuts by France Mihelič in Moscow (House of Fine Artists of the USSR, opened on 18 May 1971) and Leningrad. The Yugoslav media reported on it briefly, but did not give it any special attention, which shows that exhibitions in the Soviet Union were no longer considered particularly important at that time.¹⁴²

Among the Yugoslav art exhibitions that travelled across Eastern Bloc countries during the gradual decentralisation of cultural exchange from 1963 onwards, in addition to the already mentioned exhibition of naïve art, particular attention should be given to the exhibition of paintings and graphics from the National Liberation Struggle and the exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav graphics. These exhibitions were organised by various commissars, and toured through most of the countries of the Eastern Bloc.¹⁴³ Retrospective exhibitions of older art were often selected for exchange, but (non-art) historical exhibitions were usually the favoured choice. In general, cultural exchanges with Eastern Bloc countries tended to focus on other areas, particularly theatre and music. The relevant authorities considered the exchange of art exhibitions to be the least successful part of the otherwise positive cultural cooperation with the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁴

The Federal Commission was dissolved in October 1971 and its duties were taken over by the Federal Institute for International

- 141 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Likovne umetnosti, muzeji i galerije, Izložbe jugoslovenskih umetnika u inostranstvu 1965–1967, “Marij Pregelj, Izveštaj o izložbi Marija Preglja u Bukureštu, 3.2.1965”, AY 559/89/200, AY.
- 142 Tit Vidmar, “Naš čopič na tujem: Božidar Jakac in France Mihelič v Moskvi”, *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 137, 23.5.1971, p. 7. The catalogue (typescript by Špelca Čopič) and the opening speech strongly emphasised their commitment to the People’s Liberation War.
- 143 Exhibitions of contemporary Yugoslav graphic art: Bulgaria, 1962; Czechoslovakia (Prague, Bratislava), 1964. People’s Liberation War exhibitions: Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar), 1963; Soviet Union (Moscow, Minsk), 1965; German Democratic Republic (East Berlin), 1965; Czechoslovakia, 1966; Poland (Warsaw, Palace of Culture and Science), 1966. In 1972, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow hosted the exhibition *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists (NOB v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije)*, which was said to be the largest Yugoslav exhibition organised in the USSR and presented paintings from the Gallery of the YPA Cultural Centre in Belgrade. It also travelled to Minsk and East Berlin. See the chapter by Ivan Smiljanić, “Revolution within Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People’s Army”, in this book, pp. 292–321.
- 144 Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Kulturno prosvetno sodelovanje z ZSSR, “Informacija uz jugoslovenski nacrt programa kulturne saradnje izmedju SFRJ i SSSR za 1977–78–79, p. 5”, SI AS 2176/1055, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter ARS).

Scientific, Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation. A year later, the Interrepublican Coordination Committee for Cultural and Educational Cooperation with Foreign Countries was established,¹⁴⁵ and proposals for exchanges were henceforth collected by the Cultural Community of Slovenia. In 1974, the *Agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Educational Cooperation with the USSR* was signed, which replaced the 1956 agreement and under which the two signatory states continued to adopt cultural exchange programmes from then on for a period of three years.¹⁴⁶ Even during this period, the Yugoslav authorities reported numerous difficulties in implementing the programmes.

The Soviet side repeatedly rejected previously agreed exhibitions, e.g. the exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav art that was planned as part of the central cultural exchange event in 1976, the so-called *Days of Yugoslav Culture in the Soviet Union*.¹⁴⁷ Around 500 Yugoslav artists took part in the major week-long festival, which was held in 30 Soviet cities, including Moscow and Leningrad, but not a single fine art exhibition was included in the programme.¹⁴⁸ The sources often report cancellations or obstacles in the staging of the events and subsequent interventions in the already agreed selection of exhibits.¹⁴⁹ This was also the background to one of the most important Yugoslav exhibition events of the time in the Soviet Union, the travelling exhibition of Slovenian graphic art in the winter of 1978/79. After its success in Georgia, where it was organised as part of the cooperation between

145 It was founded on the basis of the Agreement of the Republics and Provinces on Coordination in the Field of Cultural and Educational Cooperation with Foreign Countries, which was adopted on 9 May 1972. Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Sodelovanje s tujino, "Predlog mera za unapredjivanje organizacije i rada Medjurepubličko-pokrajinskog koordinacionog odbora za kulturnu i prosvetnu saradnju sa inostranstvom, 24.11.1977", SI AS 2176/1050, ARS.

146 Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Kulturno prosvetno sodelovanje z ZSSR, "Informacija uz jugoslovenski nacrt ...", (see no. 144).

147 Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Kulturno prosvetno sodelovanje z ZSSR, "Izveštaj o danima kulture naroda i narodnosti SFRJ u Sovjetskom savezu, 20.12.1976", SI AS 2176/1055, ARS. The programme included performances by the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, the Macedonian National Theatre, the Ivo Lola Ribar Association, a photo exhibition on Yugoslav culture and an exhibition of Yugoslav books as well as film screenings, etc. Anonymous, "Kulturna stičišča", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 249, 23.10.1978, p. 3; Anonymous, "Naš kulturni pohod v SZ", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 275, 24.11.1976, p. 8.

148 Tit Doberšek, "Pohvale in umiki", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 281, 3.12.1976, p. 8.

149 Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Kulturno prosvetno sodelovanje z ZSSR, "Razgovori između jugoslovenske i sovjetske delegacije krajem 1977. godine o pojavama u savremenoj likovnoj umetnosti. Plan priprema, pp. 1–2", SI AS 2176/1050, ARS. It is also interesting to note the instruction to those involved in the negotiations on the programme not to use terms that could be "unpleasant and neuralgic" for the Soviet side, such as artistic freedom, but to insist calmly and resolutely on the basic principles of cultural policy, such as pluralism.

Ljubljana and Tbilisi,¹⁵⁰ it travelled to Moscow on the initiative of the Yugoslav Embassy. Kržišnik's selection of works from the Ljubljana School of Graphic Arts, with which he wanted to present "the greatest possible artistic freedom and the creative currents of contemporary graphic expression",¹⁵¹ was deemed too avant-garde.¹⁵² As a result, the organisers had difficulties finding an exhibition space and, despite the well-attended press conference, the event is said to have received little attention in the local media.¹⁵³

Despite the many changes in the organisation of cultural exchange in Yugoslavia, it remained centrally administered on the Soviet side and therefore continued to take place mainly within the framework of bilateral state programmes. As a result, no outstanding exhibition projects were organised in Slovenia in the 1970s.¹⁵⁴ Exhibitions from other Eastern Bloc countries were also increasingly organised just to comply with the principle of reciprocity, with only a few events having a significant impact on the Yugoslav art scene.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

The exchange of art exhibitions with the Soviet Union only had a major impact on the Slovenian and Yugoslav art scene in the first post-war years and was at its most intensive and diverse during the period of close alliance. The exchange was the most vibrant during the period of close alliance when the countries exchanged their most ambitious exhibition projects. The hosting of the major exhibition of Soviet painters in Ljubljana and other major cities of the country represented an important opportunity to present and assess the models according to which Yugoslav visual art was expected to develop. After the caesura in relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which was

150 Milan Bekić, "Zapažena naša prisutnost", *Vjesnik*, 12.12.1978, p. 5. The exhibition was seen by 40,000 visitors, the catalogues were sold out and the reviews in the media were excellent.

151 Anonymous, "40.000 gledalcev za slovensko grafiko", *Dnevnik*, vol. 28, no. 339, 15.12.1978, p. 5.

152 In the opening speech it was emphasised that the exhibition "is not uniform", that it "raises many questions", but that it brings "something new". See: Vlado Jarc, "'Nekaj novega' na razstavi v Moskvi", *Delo*, vol. 21, no. 9, 12.1.1979, p. 10.

153 Vlado Jarc, "Naši grafiki tudi v Moskvi", *Delo*, vol. 20, no. 280, 5.12.1978, p. 8. As no suitable venues were available, the exhibition was initially opened in the rooms of the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow (on Republic Day 1978) and later moved to the gallery of the Artists' Union of the USSR (10–20 January 1979).

154 From 1974 to 1979, not a single exhibition from the USSR was planned in Slovenia, as the Slovenian side did not submit any proposals. Republiški komite za kulturo Socialistične republike Slovenije, Kulturno prosvetno sodelovanje z ZSSR, "Sodelovanje na področju kulture in prosvete s Sovjetsko zvezo, 25.10.1977", SI AS 2176/1055, ARS.

155 Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Veze sa zemljama Varšavskog pakta, Veze sa SSSR-om 1961–1965, "Osvrt na izvršenje plana izložbi za 1962, p. 11", AY 559/49/110, AY.

represented by the conflict with the Cominform, this exhibition became a stage for the public legitimisation of negative views of Socialist Realism.

After the thaw in relations with the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin, the Yugoslav side tried to use the exchange primarily to prove the progressiveness of Yugoslav art and its art system. In doing so, it often encountered resistance from the Soviet side. The selection of exhibits for the exchange thus required a subtle balancing of strategic interests and what the hosts in the USSR were prepared to accept. A similar tendency can be seen in the reactions to the exhibitions that the Soviets sent to Yugoslavia. The exhibited art production, which consisted almost exclusively of conservative works of pre- and post-war Socialist Realism, served Yugoslav (and Slovenian) critics primarily as proof of the quality and uniqueness of domestic art production in comparison to the outdated solutions presented in the exhibited works of Soviet artists. One exception was the well-attended and warmly welcomed exhibition of Baroque masterpieces from the Hermitage, which, however, did not include any Russian or Soviet works.

In the first years after the restoration of cooperation between the countries, interest in Soviet art was still considerable, but it soon waned, not only because of the uniform material offered by the exhibitions but also because of the shift in the priorities of Yugoslav cultural policy and the decentralisation of international exchange. From the second half of the 1960s, Slovenia was solely responsible for organising the exhibition projects that were to be hosted in the republic. However, as the overview of the sources has shown, there was no particular interest in this type of exchange until the end of the period discussed.

Nika Grabar

The Construction of the “Yugoslav Architecture” Idea Through the Prism of Two Post-War Exhibitions

Two architectural exhibitions were organised at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana shortly after the Second World War. The first one, titled *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY (Arhitektura narodov FLRJ)*, was held in 1949 after its initial presentation in Belgrade the year before. In 1951, the second exhibition, titled *Architecture of Yugoslavia (Arhitektura Jugoslavije)*, was organised, replicating an exhibition presented in Rabat, Morocco, earlier that same year. Apart from the fact that neither of the two exhibitions was first presented in Ljubljana, they were also similar in terms of their content, as they both promoted architecture from the perspective of post-war reconstruction and thus, indirectly, the development of technology in the context of the new socialist society’s planned economy.

Despite the similarities between these two exhibitions, a closer analysis of their concepts and the processes leading to their creation and presentation reveals a vital shift in Slovenian and broader Yugoslav post-war architectural culture. On the one hand, this change was conditioned by the architects’ international activities and, on the other hand, by the architects’ relation to the civil engineers in striving for the recognition of architecture as an autonomous profession in Slovenia and Yugoslavia. The architects based their argument on the idea that apart from the functional criteria, the aesthetic ones were also relevant to architecture. The activities related to the autonomy of the architectural practice and the search for international connections were accompanied by interpreting architecture as a foundation for culture in the context of transformative social processes. However, the way of perceiving and enacting social change in architecture changed from one exhibition to the next.

If the first exhibition focused on development, emphasising the liberation of the masses through the construction of architecture via technology, the second exhibition defined a different relationship between architecture and society, highlighting the national heterogeneity of the Yugoslav nations and its realisation through architecture within the socialist project. In both cases, the idea of “Yugoslav architecture” represented a conceptual tool for establishing a framework for understanding architecture as a vehicle for social change. Representing the Yugoslav socialist project through architecture was an interesting way of promoting ideas of development during the establishment of Cold War infrastructure, as architectural projects integrated different traditions with new technology, in the context of spatial planning, and depicted ambiances of social inclusion. After 1948, the interpretation of the “Yugoslav architecture” idea was interesting in the context of modernising the colonial world and Europe’s reconstruction.

The two exhibitions were held within a short period (1949–1951). Nevertheless, as this was a time that significantly impacted the



socio-political sphere of Yugoslavia, contemplating the processes and circumstances involved in their preparation calls for a chronological examination and analysis of the broader context. Simultaneously, the architectural field was also (re)shaped. For example, the development of monument conservation and professional associations in Yugoslavia was related to the first exhibition. Meanwhile, the second exhibition, held in Rabat, highlighted the specific socio-political characteristics of the Cold War and the architect's role in the development processes of societies undergoing modernisation worldwide. The activities and networks of architects were global. In this context local conditions and traditions as well as international professional networks and development project funding played a key role in the development of architectural thought, thereby contributing to the establishment of a controversial post-war situation. Based on the example of the development of the "Yugoslav architecture" idea, which was also shaped through the processes involved in the exhibitions under discussion, we can understand architecture as a multifaceted phenomenon in the broader field of culture that had a significant impact on socio-political developments.

Architectural Exhibitions and New History

Architectural exhibitions play a specific role in the context of imagining built space. The "transfer of architecture" to a gallery or museum is always a transfer to another medium: architecture is exhibited with photographs, plans and models, and these materials bear witness to objects that have not only aesthetic but also utilitarian value. However, such use also involves a programme, a projection of social processes, while in the case of new buildings, it also entails the creation of content that will only begin to take place if the relevant projects are realised. Furthermore, the buildings' purposes are associated with their use. The two exhibitions under consideration established a specific setting for the reflection on how the post-war Yugoslav socialist society should develop in relation to its historical fabric – which was, in one way or another, intertwined *with* or placed *in* the context of public space – and, above all, how the idea of architecture should be shaped in the context of this relationship.

Since every exhibition has its structure – it also conveys a particular construction of thought, which, in the case of architecture, affects the conception of the future space – the context of this imagined space that the architectural exhibition establishes and its potential consequences are crucial. In this regard, it is not only relevant *what* is presented at architectural exhibitions but also *why* and through what prism.¹

1 According to Henri Lefebvre, imagined or planned and/or conceived space is one of the components in the production of space, which he understands as a threefold

Architectural exhibitions, as such, provide a vital insight into the world of ideas and shed light on the role of architecture in specific historical circumstances. It is important to consider who organises, conceives and finances them, and where they are presented. The thesis of this contribution is that the shifts we can perceive in relation to the two exhibitions are similar to those occurring with the changing role of Yugoslavia in foreign policy after 1948, when its actions were oriented towards the search for the third way within the bloc division of the world.²

During the post-war period, architectural exhibitions were one of the central venues for communicating ideas related to the construction of public space and, along with other artistic fields, had a significant impact on it. Although architecture was not part of the regular programme of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana when it was founded, in 1948, or later, quite a few exhibitions took place at its premises after the war. For example, the abovementioned *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* exhibition was organised by the Society of Engineers and Technicians of Slovenia (DIT Slovenia), which rented the venue in March 1949. Meanwhile, for 10 days in November 1951, visitors could see the second exhibition, *Architecture of Yugoslavia*, organised by the Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS).³

dialectical movement, combined with perceived space and lived space. In this context, architectural exhibitions represent a medium for shaping and communicating development ideas. In the context of the social field, the discourse on spatial design, as an imagined entity, is inherently linked to this. With his conception, Lefebvre aims, among other things, to question the dominant ideologies and their way of managing space. Henri Lefebvre, *Produkcija prostora*, Studia Humanitatis, Ljubljana, 2013.

- 2 For further information about this, see, for example: Tanja Zimmermann, "Novi kontinent – Jugoslavija: Politična geografija 'tretje poti'", *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, vol. 46, 2010, p. 163.
- 3 In the 1940s and 1950s, the following exhibitions were also indirectly associated with architecture: *The Architecture of the USSR* (1948), *The Developing Ljubljana (Ljubljana v razvoju)*, 1948), *Exhibition of the Works of Architectural Students (Razstava del študentov arhitekture)*, 1949), *Fire Safety Exhibition (Razstava požarne varnosti)*, 1949), *Ten Years of the Construction Industry (10 let gradbeništva)*, 1955), *Housing for Our Conditions (Stanovanje za naše razmere)*, 1956), etc. Simultaneously, we can note that during the 1950s, the focus of exhibition contents shifted towards foreign travelling exhibitions, especially those from the West. At the time, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana hosted architecture-related exhibitions such as *Swiss Architecture and Urbanism (Švicarska arhitektura in urbanizem)*, 1951), *Le Corbusier: The New World of Space (Le Corbusier: Novi svet prostora)*, 1953), *Post-War German Architecture (Nemška povojna arhitektura)*, 1954), etc. For further information about the exhibitions during this period, see the documentation and photo library of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (<https://www.mg-lj.si/si/knjiznica-in-arhivi>). A list of exhibitions was also included in the catalogue of the exhibition *Slovenian Fine Arts 1945–1978 (Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978: I* (exhibition catalogue), Stane Bernik et al. (eds.), Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1979, pp. 234–242).

In the post-war period, the DAS and other republican societies, the Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia (Association of DITs of Yugoslavia) and the Association of Architects of Yugoslavia, were the key organisers, originators and producers of the architecture exhibition programme. Thus, they had a notable influence on shaping the architectural profession's development and organisation.

In the context of the post-war reconstruction of Yugoslavia, the presentation of renovations, new buildings and plans in the field of construction – engineering achievements that included not only residential buildings but also public institutions, factories and infrastructure – was exceedingly important. It belonged to the context of developing the space for a new socialist future. In the mid-1940s, the models of how such a reality should be conceived were mainly associated with the example of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.⁴ This was reflected in book production, architectural publications (among others, an entire issue of the *Arhitektura* magazine, no. 4–6, 1947, was devoted to this issue) and architectural exhibitions. For example, in May 1948, the Society for Cultural Cooperation between Slovenia and the USSR organised an exhibition titled *The Architecture of the USSR* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. The exhibition was prepared with the federal level in mind and presented in Belgrade and Zagreb.⁵

Both initially mentioned exhibitions that focused on Yugoslav architecture also paid special attention to the treatment of historical monuments, similar to the exhibition on the USSR's architecture. In the post-war period, it was not only essential to restore monuments but also to redefine what had to be protected, why and how. The legal and organisational arrangements for the protection of monuments varied greatly during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1945, the Slovene National Liberation Committee adopted the *Decree on the Protection of Libraries, Archives, and Cultural Monuments*. Shortly afterwards, a similar decree was adopted in Belgrade, followed by the implementation of the first common Yugoslav act on the

4 For more on this see the chapter by Katarina Mohar, "Exchange of Fine Art Exhibitions Between the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Soviet Union", in this book, pp. 28–66.

5 France Stele, "Arhitektura narodov ZSSR", *Razgledi*, vol. 3, no. 8, 1948, pp. 612–615. Edvard Ravnikar also wrote about the exhibition, see: Edvard Ravnikar, "Razstava sovjetske arhitekture v Ljubljani", *Novi svet*, vol. 3, no. 7–8, 1948, pp. 612–615. The only architecture-related exhibition before *Architecture of Yugoslavia* was the *Exhibition of the Conceptual Plan for the Construction of the Palace of the People's Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (Razstava idejnega načrta za zidavo palače ljudske skupščine LR Slovenije)* in the Jakopič Pavilion. Information from the web page: "Rezultati idejnega natečaja za zidavo palače ljudske skupščine LR Slovenije", *razume.mg-lj.si*, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=91947> (accessed 12.11.2024).

protection of monuments (July 1945), which unified the regulation of monument protection in post-war Yugoslavia for the first time.⁶

The changes in the monument protection system coincided with the organisation of the two exhibitions on Yugoslav architecture (1949 and 1951) and with developments related to the construction of a new architectural history of Yugoslavia.⁷ During this time, the question of a new history also influenced other social activities. In the context of art and art history, we should mention the exhibition *Yugoslav Medieval Art (L'art médiéval Yougoslave)* at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris in 1950, which, like the exhibitions on architecture and its history, contributed to the development of the Yugoslav art concept. The exhibition represented the first major official presentation of Yugoslav art in the West after the war. On this occasion, Miroslav Krleža, the exhibition's curator, expanded the original idea of presenting medieval monastic frescoes from the territory of Serbia with many other cultural achievements from the perspective of the so-called South Slavic civilisation, which remains a controversial field of historical research to this day.⁸ On the other hand, the two architectural exhibitions under consideration presented the historical monuments and visions of the past as well as future concepts and projections. The projects were presented at various scales – from

6 The federal governments established republican or federal institutes in the individual republics, first in Slovenia, in 1945, and in Croatia, where three institutes were founded (in Zagreb, Rijeka and Split). The other relevant institutes were set up later: in 1947 for Serbia and Bosnia, in 1948 for Macedonia, and in 1950 for Montenegro. In 1951, an institute was also established for the province of Vojvodina, while in 1954, the last one was founded for Kosovo. Through this institutional framework, a perspective on historical material emerged, regarded as symbolically significant even within the socialist vision of the multinational community. Summed up after Ivan Komelj, "Odlok SNOS o zaščiti knjižnic, arhivov in kulturnih spomenikov v slovenski in jugoslovanski spomeniški službi", *Varstvo spomenikov*, vol. 27, 1985, pp. 5–7.

7 While various ideas of Yugoslavism had also been considered before, these earlier narratives had not been as elaborate and effective as the post-war examples (in this regard, we should especially underline the work of Miroslav Krleža and Milan Kašanin). In socialist Yugoslavia, the ideas of architecture revolved around different issues than in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. For instance, in socialist Yugoslavia, the state's organisation was no longer based on provinces (or the so-called Banates) but instead on the (predominantly) nationally defined republics. This is the first time that the questions regarding the representation of the individual nations in the context of Yugoslav architecture were addressed in this manner, albeit in the context of the brotherhood and unity ideology. The ground-breaking understanding of the role of architecture in the context of reconstruction, industrialisation and the search for a new way of organising society inevitably led to a changed outlook on the heritage.

8 Ivana Bago, "Jugoslovanski fanonizem v treh (razstavnih) dejanjih: 1950/1972/1989", *igorzabel.org*, 2021, URL: <https://igorzabel.org/sl/novice/2021/Ivana-Bago-fanonizem> (accessed 12.11.2024).

individual buildings and public spaces to infrastructure and landscapes – and included those that had been realised and those still under development. In this regard, both exhibitions presented the newly established socialist state's modernisation in a positive light, into which people could invest their hopes for a better future.

Architecture of the Nations

Not much is known about the *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* exhibition. What we do know is that it was organised by the architectural section of the Society of Engineers and Technicians of Slovenia (DIT Slovenia) at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana between 26 March and 16 April 1949; that the materials for it were prepared by the architects from the sections of the individual republics; that its contents were first presented at the *2nd Congress of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia* in Belgrade under the title *Urbanism and Technical Documentation*;⁹ and that, after Belgrade, the exhibition was also presented in Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo – the latter under the title *Architecture and Urbanism of FPRY (Arhitektura in urbanizem FNRJ)* in the framework of the *2nd Congress of the Yugoslav Builders' Union* in 1949 (fig. 16).¹⁰ At the first stage, the preparation of the materials for the original exhibition was organised by the Belgrade group within the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia together with architects from various republics.

The opening ceremony at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana was attended by the Minister of Construction Ivan Maček and many representatives of the national authorities and public organisations. The exhibition was opened by the President of the DAS, Henrik Čopič. The projects were presented in two thematic sets, one focusing on the architectural history of the Yugoslav nations during various periods, including the time between the two world wars, and the other presenting the projects that portrayed the country's development after the liberation.¹¹

9 In the programme of the *2nd Congress of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia* in Belgrade, the exhibition was announced under the title *The Development of Our Cities and Technical Documentation (Izgradnja naših mest in tehnična knjiga)*. The programme was published as part of the report on the work of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia. Anonymous, "II. kongres inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije u Beogradu od 31.10.1948 do 2.11.1948", *Tehnika*, vol. 3, no. 6–7, 1948, p. 153.

10 Anonymous, "U Sarajevu je otvorena izložba arhitekture i urbanizma", *Naše građevinarstvo*, vol. 3, no. 7, July 1949, p. 574; Edvard Ravnikar, "Ob razstavi arhitekture FLRJ v Moderni galeriji", *Novi svet*, no. 6, 1949, pp. 604–608. Ravnikar also wrote about the exhibition later, in his article about the exhibition in Morocco. See Edvard Ravnikar, "Razstava arhitekture FLRJ", *Arhitekt*, no. 2, January–February 1952, p. 37.

11 The Belgrade and Sarajevo exhibitions also featured books dedicated to technical subjects, which were no longer included among the Ljubljana exhibits. In S. V.,

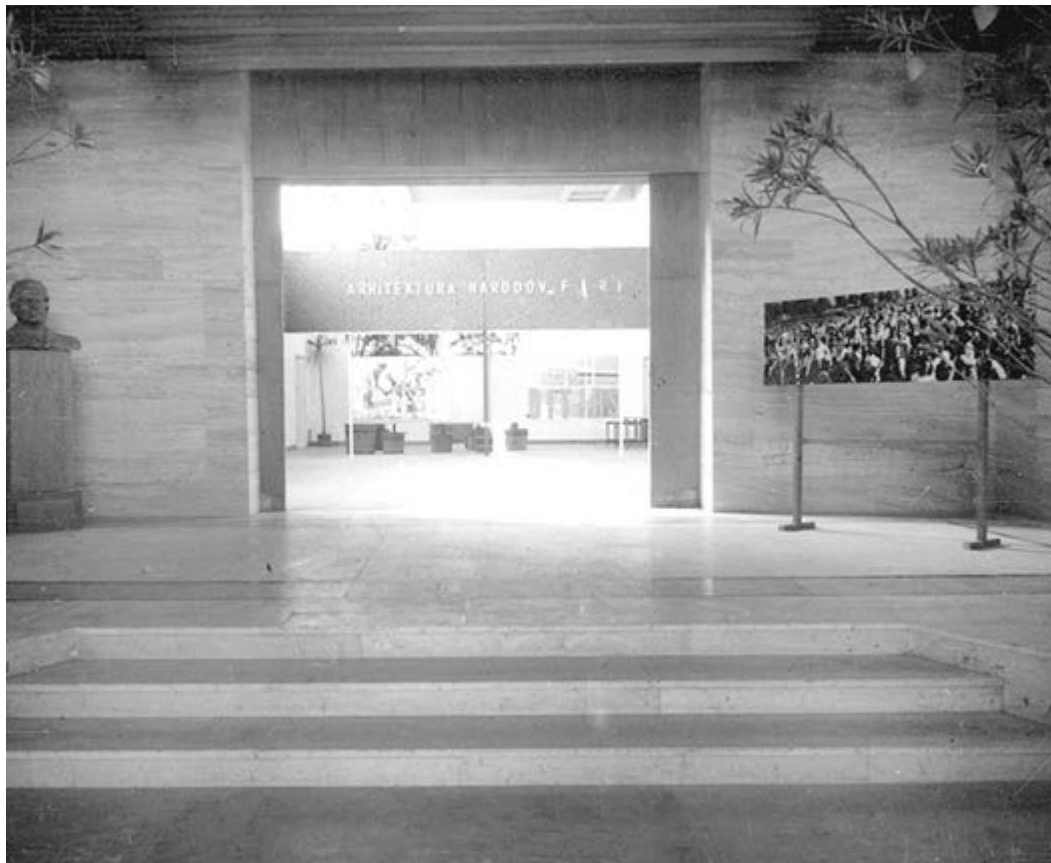


Poster for the exhibition *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1949.

A few photographs from the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana have been preserved, revealing the exhibition's spatial layout at the entrance (figs. 17–20). A rectangular panel showing a photo of a crowd of people was placed on the right side, in front of the entrance to the museum's central area, while straight ahead, towards the exhibition areas, the view opened onto the sign "Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY". The composition included two more panels with photographs: the one on the left showed people on a construction site, while the panel on the right presented an industrial building (either completed or in the final stages of construction) in the middle of a meadow or field, with a large DIT Slovenia inscription under it. The reverse side of the main panel bore the inscription "construction after liberation" and two photographs under it (both close-ups of construction sites, in one case probably the panelling for a reinforced concrete arch framework). Apart from flowers in large planters, nothing else was set up in the central area.

"U Ljubljani je otvorena izložba arhitekture naroda Jugoslavije", *Borba*, vol. 16, no. 77, March 1949, p. 3.

17



18



19



20



17–20
Installation views from the exhibition *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* held in 1949 at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.

In the side rooms, materials related to the reconstruction of cities and monuments, new buildings in the context of urban planning, infrastructure and analyses of historic city centres were presented. We do not have an exact list of the exhibited materials. However, special attention was paid to the city of Ljubljana. A copy of the *Emona Citizen* statue was also placed in front of an orthophoto of Castle Hill and the old city centre of Ljubljana. In addition to plans in various scales, all three rooms included a large number of photographic materials and models but almost no text, except a few inscriptions and descriptions on the plans and legends. The central idea of this travelling exhibition thus revolved around the construction of the architecture of the nations of the FPRY after the liberation, built in cooperation *with* the people and *for* the people. Using modern technology, cities were (re)designed and monuments reconstructed, all in the context of creating a socialist living space. The motifs used for the exhibition poster convey a similar message.

In 1948, the Croatian magazine *Arhitektura*, dedicated to the *2nd Congress of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia* that year, also published an overview of Yugoslav historical monuments, in addition to the *Resolution of the Section of Architects*¹² and the papers presented at the Congress. The preserved photos from the exhibition indicate that the materials published in the magazine were identical to the ones presented at the exhibition. It is not known whether all of the Congress exhibition materials were published; certain elements might have been added, and some sections could have been restructured. Nevertheless, the following can be inferred from the publication: the selection of the materials was interpreted as the heritage of the Yugoslav nations, while the very descriptions suggest that their preparation did not adhere to uniform guidelines and criteria. Moreover, works from many Yugoslav regions were missing. Thus, as the editors state at the end of the publication, the magazine did not cover many

12 The Resolution, defining the role of architecture as adherence to the Five-Year Plan, lists the requirements for its fulfilment in 28 points. Only in point 8 – after the points discussing efficient, economical and high-quality construction (1), knowledge of architectural heritage and technical achievements and application of technical science methods (2), the study of Marxism-Leninism (3), struggle against ideological deviations (4), coexistence with the political and economic life (5), establishment of connections with the construction sites (6) and mobilisation of professional staff in the Association of DITs' administration (7) – does the Resolution state the following: “The concepts of architecture, reduced to simple solutions of utilitarian and narrowly technical aspects, as this is the case in capitalist countries, should be rejected. Instead, we should strive to correctly distinguish between the functional and artistic-conceptual components of architectural works.” Summed up after: Anonymous, “Rezolucija sekcije arhitekata na II. kongresu inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije”, *Arhitektura*, no. 13–17, 1948, p. 5.

works from Istria, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. The presented topics included the following: “Our Coastal Artists from the 9th to the 19th Century”; “Medieval Art of Croatia and Slavonia Until the Baroque”; “The 17th- and 18th-Century Art in Croatia”; “Serbian Medieval Architecture”; “Macedonian National Architecture and Its Reception in Modern Architecture”; while a selection of architecture from Slovenia was presented under the title “The Heritage of Ljubljana”¹³. Based on such presentations, we can also infer the selection of the exhibition materials. At the exhibition, Ljubljana was presented, which is also evident from the photographs of the exhibition in Belgrade and Ljubljana, where the images of the old centre of Ljubljana can also be seen.¹⁴

In Yugoslavia, exhibitions presenting architectural achievements were an important mechanism for promoting the ideas of progress and social transformation into socialism. They were associated with technological innovations that would contribute significantly to the development of new architecture, and they often toured the major Yugoslav cities during the post-war period. Therefore, architecture represented a notable field of social engagement during the post-war reconstruction and construction of space.¹⁵ However, the exhibitions did not only promote technology in architecture. Instead, they promoted technology in all areas of people's lives.

For example, between 6 and 13 March 1948 (the same year as the 2nd Congress), the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia, with the assistance of the individual republican organisations, organised the first *Technology Week* throughout the country. The event took place in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro.¹⁶ The primary purpose of this event was to bring technology closer to the people and enhance the Yugoslav technical culture with many activities and actions. To achieve the most effective cooperation possible, the event organisers reached out to workers, youth and the rural population, using diverse media and organising various activities, including printed materials in all formats (daily, expert and periodical publications), lectures (live and radio broadcasts), shorter and longer professional courses, film screenings, exhibitions, public demonstrations of machine operations, excursions, visits to construction sites and factories as well as visits to schools, colleges and laboratories.

13 Anonymous, “Arhitektonsko naslijeđe naroda Jugoslavije”, *Arhitektura*, no. 13–17, 1948, pp. 6–99.

14 Ibid., p. 136.

15 For more on architecture exhibitions in the postwar period, see note 31 in the introductory text by Beti Žerovc, “On Desires, Contradictions and Exhibiting Art – Introduction,” in this book.

16 Bosnia and Herzegovina organised a *Technology Week* somewhat later, while we do not have the relevant information for Macedonia.

Furthermore, exhibitions would often be organised in the context of fairs. Projects otherwise presented at architectural exhibitions – such as the Litostroj factory, constructed in Ljubljana – could be simultaneously included in exhibitions with other themes. Thus, in 1949, the exhibition titled *Public Utility and Urbanism (Komunalna djelatnost i urbanizam)* was organised in the context of the Zagreb Fair at the Art Pavilion building at Zrinjevac, presenting architecture as part of the historical development of urban planning and public utility activities in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and until 1949.¹⁷ The central part of the exhibition focused on showing “the obstacles in the towns and cities of capitalist countries.”¹⁸ In accordance with the Five-Year Plan, these differences would supposedly disappear in socialist Yugoslavia, as the audience could deduce from the exhibition’s layout concept, meagre textual descriptions, slogans and materials presented in the form of diagrams, plans, models and photographs. This was most clearly promoted by the main panel in the central part of the exhibition focusing on the regulation of villages, towns and cities, which indicated the improved living standard of the “working masses”. The specific aim of the exhibition was to use the example of urban planning to highlight the differences in comparison with the preceding political regimes (which were usually pejoratively labelled as imperialist or capitalist and reproached for not appropriately addressing the population’s housing problems) while simultaneously establishing continuity with the tendencies of modernism in architecture and urbanism. This was also reflected in the urban development schemes, which focused on new infrastructure, housing development, green spaces, industry and other social infrastructure. The issue also involved past developments and historical monuments. Simultaneously, the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia faced organisational challenges at the local and federal levels, as the construction processes took place in the context of social planning while the state administration that was supposed to facilitate these processes was still being established.

17 Vlado Antolić, “Komunalna djelatnost i urbanizam”, *Tehnika*, vol. 4, no. 10–11, 1949, p. 364.

18 “On the one hand, individuals can enjoy all the benefits that modern technology can offer in terms of construction, hygiene, the comfort of houses and apartments, and landscaping of building areas with parks and greenery; while, on the other hand, the rest of the exploited masses live in densely populated areas, in unhygienic houses without any air, sunshine, or greenery, in misery, and with high disease and mortality rates.” From: Anonymous, “Komunalna djelatnost i urbanizam”, *Tehnika*, vol. 4, no. 10–11, 1949, p. 364.

Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia and Architecture

One of the key players promoting engineering among the people, at the national level, was the Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia and Architecture (Association of DITs of Yugoslavia).¹⁹ As stated above, organising exhibitions in various contexts was vital for this organisation’s promotional efforts. Architects also played a unique role in shaping the content by publishing articles on construction and the role of architecture in daily newspapers and expert publications, organising photo and model exhibitions, public lectures and other activities. For example, in 1948, special attention was also paid to the campaign to build cooperative centres.²⁰ People were believed to be highly motivated to work and thus contribute to the development and management of the Yugoslav means of production. After all, these efforts would be for their own benefit, as they themselves would enjoy the rewards of their labour and create a just socialist world after capitalism.

Conceiving and designing architecture was therefore closely intertwined with the post-war efforts of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia, while the search for the possibilities for its realisation could also function as a medium to organise and encourage the masses to engage in construction works throughout Yugoslavia. Simultaneously, the Association’s direct reliance on the government’s planned economy strategies, as set out by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in its Five-Year Plan, was also vital. On the one hand, the Yugoslav socialist project had to address the national questions while, on the other hand, it had to take into account the Cold War context in the process of intensive industrialisation. In this sense, the creation of the new socialist state can be understood as an echo of the Enlightenment project, which, also in the architectural sense, allowed for numerous experiments and unprecedented collaborations but also political conundrums.

The field of architecture was closely intertwined with the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia. However, this organisation’s very name and its changes show that it always had an ambivalent attitude

19 See footnote no. 21.

20 According to the *Arhitektura* magazine, the promotion of technology, which was the primary purpose of *Technology Week*, entailed 472 public lectures attended by 78,000 people, of these 168 in the countryside and 91 in the cities, 102 for workers and 66 for youth. As well as 213 exhibition stands and 25 radio broadcasts, 25 courses were launched and 183 visits to villages were organised. The newspapers published 156 articles. An additional 450 articles were written and 450 activist lectures were organised. Also, 123,200 slogans and posters were printed. Allegedly, 2,500 engineers and technicians actively participated in the *Technology Week*. From K. O., “Povodom tjedna tehnike u FNR Jugoslaviji”, *Arhitektura*, no. 7, 1948, p. 33.

towards architecture. This Belgrade-based Association was the successor to the Association of Engineers and Architects of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which was founded in July 1919 but renamed as the Association of Yugoslav Engineers and Technicians already that September.²¹ After the Second World War, technical societies were organised on several levels throughout Yugoslavia. The DIT Slovenia, which brought together the namesake organisations in Celje, Jesenice, Kranj, Maribor and Trbovlje, was established immediately after the war, in the autumn of 1945. Meanwhile, the decision regarding the state-level organisation was adopted at the *1st Congress of the Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia* in Zagreb, which took place from 5 to 7 May 1946. The Association of DITs of Yugoslavia was founded, and the basis for the entire system of organisation was laid down: the republican societies were reorganised as associations, professional sections into professional associations, while field sections became independent district and municipal societies. Such a system of engineering organisations was later dictated by the so-called decentralisation and democratisation of all public life in 1951 and 1952.²²

The founding Congress emphasised the purpose of the technical disciplines, including architecture, for post-war society as those that would bring progress to the “broader masses”. The latter would therefore adopt new technologies and develop a new society. The reason this had not happened before the war was interpreted on class grounds. In this context, technicians and engineers were often perceived as those who had previously protected the interests of the upper classes, i.e. the capitalists. However, under the paradigm of the new Yugoslavia, the technical disciplines would cooperate primarily with “the masses”, which would, together with socialism, ensure “general social prosperity”.²³

21 The Association of Engineers was founded in July 1919, already in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. It was established as the Association of Engineers and Architects of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, based in Belgrade. However, it was renamed the Association of Yugoslav Engineers and Technicians already in September of the same year. It brought together engineers and technicians who had previously belonged to various societies, associations, sections and chambers, striving, among other things, to ensure the protection of the academic title of engineer or architect, recognition of the profession's proper role, regulation of the status of technical services and development of infrastructure. In addition to the Belgrade section, six other such sections (in Ljubljana, Zagreb, Split, Novi Sad, Sarajevo and Skopje) operated in the Kingdom. See: France Adamič, “Ob 75-letnici prvega društva slovenskih inženirjev”, *Zbornik za zgodovino naravoslovja in tehnike*, vol. 9, 1987, pp. 189–190.

22 Ibid.

23 “In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the leading branches of the economy (industry, mining, commerce, and banks) were in the hands of capitalists and their cartels. The rest of the economy (agriculture and craft industry) was completely subordinated to them.

In the new circumstances, technical professions contributed to the creation of the new socialist living space. The most important question for the architects was *how* this space should be designed. Apart from the functional issues, they were also interested in the aesthetic, artistic and cultural aspects, which the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia often saw as peripheral. The *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* exhibition did not resolve this issue but instead popularised the post-war reconstruction, technology and construction.

Thus, the exhibition was also mentioned in many speeches and published texts that otherwise had no interest in any precise definitions of the role of architecture as opposed to civil engineering or technology. Consequently, when the *architecture* related to the exhibition's contents was discussed, it was unclear what that architecture was supposed to be like. Ideas revolved around developing a unique Yugoslav style of Socialist Realism, folklore, the role of urbanism, and rejecting the formalisms of the West. Nevertheless, most importantly, the rational technical criterion, questions of economic and construction efficiency and the fact that this unique architecture had yet to be discovered based on new social processes were always present.²⁴

The authorities ruthlessly protected the capitalists' privileges. Consequently, the role of the technical intelligentsia essentially boiled down to keeping the proletariat and the working class in bondage and squeezing out as much of their sweat and profit as possible for the capitalists. A part of the technical intelligentsia – the upper class – performed this role consciously because of its multifaceted material and ideological connection with the bourgeoisie, while the others – the lower class – participated in this because of its misery and material dependence on the former. Back then, workers had to perceive most engineers and technicians as henchmen and faithful minions of the capitalist exploiters. [...] We live in different circumstances now. During the liberation war, the old ruling class was destroyed and overthrown. It had to share the fate of the occupiers. The authority is now in the hands of the people. Much of the economy's leading industries have become state-owned. The economy's private sector has been put under state control. The economy no longer represents the source of the capitalists' enrichment and the foundation for their luxurious life. It has been placed at the service of the people and tasked with serving the nation to fulfil its needs. Technological inventions accelerate the country's reconstruction and produce cheaper and better products. In the new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, the technical intelligentsia, as the leading cadre of the country's economy, is destined to play a prominent, noble, and honourable role.” From the opening speech at the *1st Congress of the Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia* by the Chairman of the Central Congress Committee, Engineer H. Mattes, published in: *I. kongres inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije*, Tisak nakladnog zavoda Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1946, p. 12. In the archival folder: Savez inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije, I, II, III kongres, “I. kongres inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije”, ZITJ/1, Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter AY).

24 In 1948, *Tehnika* magazine, the official newsletter of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia, was dedicated to the *2nd Congress of the Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia* and to reviewing the achievements of the Five-Year Plan's second year. It contained numerous speeches and articles on the topic of various technical

Edvard Ravnikar also described his reaction to the exhibition in his article “About the Exhibition of Architecture of the FPRY in the Museum of Modern Art”.²⁵ He criticised the exhibition for allegedly failing to provide a clear picture of Yugoslav architecture after the liberation, create a meaningful whole or clearly illustrate the main issues related to contemporary architecture emerging after the war in the new circumstances. Nevertheless, he described the exhibition as a vital catalyst for discussion: “the topic [is] interesting, and as such, it has encouraged many discussions in the republic and other centres.”²⁶ For Ravnikar, discourse development was crucial, especially in the light of the critical issue of the restoration of cities, basing his deliberation on the specific Slovenian experience related to the reconstruction of Ljubljana after the 1895 earthquake.

In the article, Ravnikar draws on the exhibition to outline guidelines that he associates with the work of the architectural profession and with the question of architecture as fine art. He believed that architecture should not only draw on the folk architecture of the ancestors or the historical architecture of other nations but rather also provide painting and sculpting with the opportunity to flourish in harmony with architectural tasks. He assessed that, during the interwar period, architecture had failed to plan for growth as a factor in social life and expressed his concern regarding the increased risk of “the bare construction of further and further useful volumes”, given the significant resources devoted to construction after the war. He highlighted three crucial aspects that architecture should consider: technical, socio-economic and aesthetic. In Ravnikar’s opinion, all three could only be consolidated through a thorough understanding and popularisation of technology, the economy and other means of expression.²⁷

The very organisation of such an exhibition in 1948 represented an achievement in itself. In this regard, the absence of consistent definitions confronts us with the questions of what we mean when we label a building as architecture and under what conditions the architectural discourse of the post-war period was shaped. The struggle to ensure the autonomy of the architectural profession was also related to the work of architects in post-war Yugoslavia while the architectural exhibitions of this period were one of the ways in which architects could present their ideas to the public in

professions, including architecture. See, for example: Mira Kraigher, “Nekoliko misli o liniji naše arhitekture”, *Arhitektura*, no. 13–17, 1948, pp. 126–129; or S. Planić, “Problematika naše sadašnje arhitekture”, *Tehnika*, vol. 3, no. 10–12, 1948, pp. 288–296.

25 Ravnikar, 1949 (see no. 10), pp. 604–608.

26 Ibid., p. 604.

27 Ibid., pp. 604–608.

an engaged manner and thus participate in the creation of public opinion and development policies. The exhibitions represented an opportunity to organise the broader community around the issues of construction and architecture, thus opening a debate about architecture beyond the topics of mere construction and economy.

Slovenian Architects’ Society

In the post-war period, architecture was a part of the Five-Year Plan. In 1946, when the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia was established, architecture was also formally defined as an activity in the framework of civil engineering, even though architectural sections were mentioned in connection with the exhibitions. The Association’s organisation kept changing: new associations and societies joined, and the system was reorganised. At the time of the *3rd Congress of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia*, held in Belgrade in 1952, nine societies had operated in the framework of the DIT Slovenia: the Society of Civil Engineers and Technicians, the Architects’ Society, the Society of Forestry and Wood Industry Engineers and Technicians, the Chemistry Society, the Society of Geodetic Engineers and Technicians, the Electrical Engineering Society, the Society of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers and Technicians, the Society of Agricultural Engineers and Technicians and the Society for Welding Technology.²⁸

The *1st Consultation of the Architects of the FPRY*, held in Dubrovnik in November 1950, was vital for the organisation of the architectural profession. The main topic of this consultation – a review of the work during the first post-war years – was extended to the question of modernism.²⁹ The results of the meeting were published in three collective volumes.³⁰ The published contributions reflected the architects’ awareness that they now worked in a society that had changed significantly compared to the pre-war capitalist regime, and that they also had to keep fulfilling the purposes and tasks of architecture and urbanism in the new society. The architects

28 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Stanovske zadeve, SI AS 1173/8, Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter ARS).

29 During this period, the Dubrovnik Congress was particularly relevant for the revival of modernist tendencies after it had been harshly criticised in the first post-war years when Soviet Socialist Realism had served as a model for Yugoslav visual arts, literature, theatre and music. After 1948, as the cultural ties with the Soviet Union started loosening, the Soviet model gradually lost its influence. In: Martina Malešič, “Z Vzhoda na Zahod – leto 1948 in njegovi odmevi v slovenski arhitekturni publicistiki”, *Ars & Humanitas*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2015, pp. 106–121.

30 *Referati za I. posvet arhitektov in urbanistov Jugoslavije*, published by Naučna knjiga Belgrade; *Referati posveta arhitektov in urbanistov v Dubrovniku 1950*, published by the DIT of Croatia; *Problemi arhitekture in urbanizma L.R. Slovenije*, published by the architectural section of engineers and technicians of the People’s Republic of Slovenia.

organised the meeting to co-shape the conditions required for the development of contemporary architecture and urbanism.³¹

At the end of 1950, the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia was reorganised by transforming the professional sections into independent professional societies.³² The latter were also influenced by the introduction of workers' self-management as well as by increasing decentralisation at the federal level. Simultaneously, efforts were underway to integrate the independent architects' societies into an association. Thus, the Association of Architects of Yugoslavia was founded in 1952. The DIT Croatia played a notable role in this process, as it organised the founding assembly of the Croatian Architects' Society in June 1951 and invited other architectural sections to participate in the organisation of an association of societies, as proposed by the Serbian Architects' Society.³³

Architects also sought to assert the autonomy of their profession with the government. To this end, they formed several special commissions in Dubrovnik: the Commission for the Systematisation of the Appointment of Architects, the Commission for Design Service Tariffs and the Commission for the Remuneration of the Operational Service.³⁴ In February 1951, in their Proposal for the Implementation of a Special Decree on the Architectural Profession, the Slovenian architects submitted an initiative for a special decree on the architectural profession to the Council for Legislation and the Establishment of People's Power of the Government of the People's Republic of Slovenia, together with a request that the issue of implementing a special federal decree on the architectural profession should be addressed by the Federal Government. Until then, architecture had been considered a specific activity of the construction profession, regulated by a decree of the Federal Government from 1947.³⁵

31 The modernist thought embodied in the *Athens Charter*, which was very familiar to many of the participants, also had a significant influence on the content of the meeting. For example, Edvard Ravnikar, Milorad Pantović and Dušan Grabrijan were Le Corbusier's associates, while his work was also well known to Jovan Krunic, Oliver Minić, Ivan Zdravković and Ljube Pota, while Vlado Antolić even participated in the creation of the Athens Charter. In: Branislav Krstić, *Atinska povelja i misao arhitekata i urbanista FNRJ 1950ih*, B. Krstić, Beograd, 2014, pp. 10–12.

32 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Vabila na seje, sestanke in konference drugih društev, "Danilo Fürst, Vabilo DIT LRS DASu na sestanek predstavnikov vseh sekcij podružnic DITa LRS glede reorganizacije DITa, 30.12.1950", SI AS 1173/8/4, ARS.

33 The event was organised simultaneously with an excursion to Zagreb and a visit to the *Exhibition of Medieval Art of Yugoslavia*. Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Vabila na seje, sestanke in konference drugih društev, "Pavo Jušič, Pismo DITa Hrvatske DASu glede organizacije in izvedbe ustanovne skupščine Društva arhitektov Hrvaške in sestankom v zvezi z ustanovitvijo Zveze arhitektov FNRJ, 30.3.1951", SI AS 1173/8/4, ARS.

34 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Vabila na seje, sestanke in konference drugih društev, "Pavo Jušič, Vabilo na sestanek komisij, 12.8.1950", SI AS 1173/8/4, ARS.

35 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Stanovske zadeve, "Stanislav Rohrman in Danilo Fürst

The proposal was signed by Stanislav Rohrman, the president of the Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS), and Danilo Fürst, its secretary. Just as Ravnikar had highlighted Slovenian cultural tradition in his article, the authors, in a more extensive letter, justified the establishment of an independent architectural profession by referencing past achievements, particularly those linked to the founding of the University of Ljubljana and its architectural department during the interwar period. In their letter, Rohrman and Fürst defined the difference between an architect and a civil engineer:

Civil engineers construct engineering works (railways, roads, bridges, hydropower plants), while in the case of high-rise buildings, which are mainly in the domain of architecture, they are mainly in charge of the structural-technical aspects of the construction, while architects formulate and formalise the buildings' functions in view of their social role and requirements. [...] The architects' work requires a unique insight into social developments, special professional training, creative abilities, and an aptitude for aesthetic questions. Thus, in addition to their technical functions, architects also produce cultural values, just like writers, painters, sculptors, and musicians – they are creators of culture.³⁶

Given the need to solve people's existential problems after the war, architects considered the work organisation related to design and construction acceptable, although it often focused exclusively on function. However, after a few years of development, they deemed it necessary to start thinking about the other dimensions of architectural engagement. In this sense, in the context of the planned economy, the architects belonging to the DAS also started calling for the recognition of architecture as one of the cultural professions, which, while constructing space, is also concerned with the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of human existence.

International Planning and Integration

The architects' activities and organisation were not only related to understanding and interpreting the role of architecture in the context of the Yugoslav post-war reconstruction but also to the international developments and Cold War conflicts. In the framework of the Association of DITs of Yugoslavia, a Commission for International Relations was established. Through it, Yugoslavia sent a petition to

Vladi LRS, Predlog za uveljavljanje posebne uredbe o arhitekturni stroki, 19.11.1951", SI AS 1173/8, ARS.

36 Ibid.

join the international architects' organisation called the International Union of Architects (UIA) in 1949, but did not receive a response.³⁷ What is certain is that the architects were registered as members by the 1951 Congress in Rabat. The Commission also strived more intensively to establish connections with the West, especially with the International Association of Structural Engineers in Zurich, the International Commission on Large Dams in Paris, the International Council on Large Electric Systems in Paris, the World Energy Conference in London and the Society of Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering in Cambridge, USA.³⁸

The development of technology and the economy was a prerequisite for the development of Yugoslav socialism. Both called for new international connections. However, in the context of the bloc division of the world, the possibilities for independent political moves were limited. Tito's disagreements with Stalin, which led to the open Cominform conflict, were related to the resolution of the Trieste issue, while, in 1948, Stalin also demanded that Tito stop supporting the uprising in Greece, as the conflict was causing problems for relations with the USA and Great Britain. The reasons why Yugoslavia incurred Stalin's wrath included its ambitions for regional economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and Greece as well as with Bulgaria. In Bled, in 1947, Yugoslavia signed an agreement with the latter without the consent of the USSR. On 23 December 1947, the newspaper *Republika* published an editorial titled "The Danube Region and the Balkans" as an initiative for the creation of a larger South Slavic community. The newspaper also published Stalin's portrait alongside it, implying that Stalin approved of the agreement, which was not the case.³⁹ The regional moves to facilitate integration with Bulgaria were neither new nor unacceptable, but they were perceived as excessively unconventional.⁴⁰

The disagreements between Yugoslavia and the USSR were related to development planning, also because of the investment projects announced in 1947, which introduced a whole new dynamic to the international scene. When the USA announced a programme of aid for the recovery, reconstruction and stabilisation of the European economy, known as the Marshall Plan, neither the USSR

37 Savez inženjera i tehničara Jugoslavije, I, II, III kongres, "Zapisnik zasedanja Sekretariata za Mednarodne povezave Zveze društev inženirjev in tehnikov Jugoslavije, 24.11.1949, Komisija za mednarodne veze, 1949–1973", ZITJ/1/496/50, AY.

38 Ibid.

39 Zimmermann, 2010 (see no. 2), p. 170.

40 We mention the aspirations for regional integration because, at the time, several exhibitions of Bulgarian architecture were also organised in Yugoslavia, which, together with the two exhibitions under discussion, indicate the relevance of architectural exhibitions for broader economic integration.

nor the other socialist countries were explicitly excluded. However, it soon became apparent that, in accordance with the Truman Doctrine, the USA had no intention of supporting communism.⁴¹ In June 1947, in Paris, the negotiations between England, France and the USSR regarding the American proposal were thus soon brought to an end.⁴²

Even back then, Tito refrained from responding to Stalin's call to engage in further negotiations with the rest of the Eastern European countries, where the other socialist states also refused to participate in the programme.⁴³ When the USSR, in response to the USA plan, created its own system of economic aid for the countries within its sphere of influence, called the Molotov Plan, Yugoslavia once again refrained from joining. In June 1948, the Tito–Stalin conflict led to Yugoslavia's definitive expulsion from the Cominform. After 1948, Yugoslavia thus had to find new sources of funding for its model of socialism. The exhibition *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY*, described earlier, was conceived in the spirit of the time when new contexts of international cooperation were clearly emerging, and Yugoslavia was increasingly distancing itself from the Soviet Union.

Spatial planning was directly linked to investments and financial aid systems. Yugoslav architects welcomed the new connections, in the framework of the UIA, as an international platform for exchanging knowledge and ideas. The UIA, based in Paris, was established in June 1948, in Lausanne, Switzerland, with the aim of gathering architects around the issue of post-war reconstruction on a global scale, regardless of nationality, ideology or architectural doctrine. After the founding meeting, its congresses were first held in Rabat in 1951, then in Lisbon in 1953, The Hague in 1955, Moscow in 1958, and so

41 "A Look Back at the Marshall Plan", *catalog.archivum.org*, 1987, URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:ce0b7065-d784-4a25-8963-2f3208320e88> (accessed 12.11.2024).

42 Regarding the rejection of the Marshall Plan, Molotov wrote the following: "The question of American economic aid [...] has served as a pretext for the British and French governments to insist on the creation of a new organisation, standing above the European countries and intervening in the internal affairs of the countries of Europe, even to the extent of determining the direction in which the main branches of industry in these countries are to develop [...] There are two roads of international cooperation. One road is based on the development of political and economic relations between states with equal rights [...] There is another road of international cooperation which is based on the dominating position of one of several strong Powers in relation to other countries, which thereby fall into the position of some kind of subordinated states, deprived of independence [...] What will the fulfillment of the Franco-British proposal lead to? It will lead to nothing. It will lead to Britain, France and the group of countries that follow them separating from the rest of Europe, which will split Europe into two groups of states." Molotov to Stalin in: Geoffrey Roberts, "Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 34, no. 8, 1994, p. 1376.

43 Ibid., p. 1378.

on, all over the world. The UIA is still active today and is the only association of architects officially recognised by the United Nations. Architectural exhibitions often accompanied the UIA congresses.⁴⁴

The efforts of Pierre Vago, the driving force behind the organisation and its first Secretary General, to allow all architects without exception to be involved in the UIA stemmed from his personal experience. Born in Budapest in 1910, Vago studied and worked in Paris, where he collaborated with Auguste Perret and worked for the magazine *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*. However, he maintained his connections with Eastern Europe, so when he looked for Soviet architects to join the UIA,⁴⁵ he was assisted by the Bulgarian architect Luben Tonev and Helena Syrkus from Poland, who was also one of the most prominent representatives of the leading international association of modern architecture, the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM).⁴⁶

For the architects, networking in international organisations facilitated the exchange of ideas and represented vital access to knowledge related to the development of new building technologies. During the interwar period, international travel and knowledge exchanges were limited to a certain extent, which also affected the relationship between the Soviet architects and the CIAM. Nevertheless, they still participated in international networks to keep pace with technological developments, especially those related to the construction of large-scale projects in the USA.⁴⁷ The war brought the Allies closer together, and the wartime development of prefabrication construction technologies in the Anglo-American context was particularly interesting for Soviet urban planners. For example,

44 “World Congress of Architects”, *uia-architectes.org*, 2024, URL: <https://www.uia-architectes.org/en/architecture-events/world-congresses-of-architects/page/3> (accessed 9.4.2023).

45 At that time, the Union was still called the RIA (Réunions Internationales des Architectes), founded in 1932. “Pierre Vago”, *culture.gouv.fr*, 2024, URL: <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/regions/Drac-Provence-Alpes-Cote-d-Azur/Politique-et-actions-culturelles/Architecture-contemporaine-remarquable-en-Paca/Les-etudes/Arles-Tarascon-Inventaire-de-la-production-architecturale-et-urbaine-1900-1980/Arles-ville-et-architecture-du-XXe-siecle/Notices-biographiques-des-principaux-architectes-intervenant-a-Arles/Pierre-Vago> (accessed 18.12.2024).

46 Katherine Zubovich, “Debating ‘Democracy’: The International Union of Architects and the Cold War Politics of Expertise”, *Room One Thousand*, no. 4, 2016, p. 106. For further information about the history of the CIAM, see, for example: Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism: 1928–1960*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2000.

47 For example, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) projects, the development of Detroit during this period, the Willow Run Bomber Plant and many others. For more information, see: Eric Mumford, “National Defense Migration and the Transformations of American Urbanism, 1940–1942”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2008, pp. 25–34.

the findings related to such construction were presented at the *American-Soviet Building Conference* in New York in May 1945.⁴⁸

Architecture of Yugoslavia

Yugoslav architects played a proactive role within the UIA, which was also related to the second exhibition under consideration: *Architecture of Yugoslavia*. A duplicate of the latter was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana between 4 and 14 November 1951, in the context of the *People’s Technology Week* (figs. 21–23).⁴⁹ The exhibition had been originally prepared for the UIA Congress in Morocco, held from 24 to 28 September 1951, under the title *How Does the Architect Perform His New Tasks?*⁵⁰

The 2nd Congress of the UIA was initially planned for 1949 in Warsaw, Poland. However, the Poles halted the preparations, partly also because they opposed Yugoslavia’s accession to the organisation. To some extent, the move also involved blackmail or criticism of the UIA leadership, as the latter refused to sign the Peace Declaration or the so-called *Stockholm Appeal* – an initiative to ban nuclear weapons. The initiative was mainly supported by the socialist and Eastern Bloc countries, including Poland.⁵¹ At the time, Helena Syrkus, one of the organisation’s founding members and later one of the vice presidents of the UIA (1957–1965), focused the brunt of the criticism on the organisation and contents of the 2nd Congress. Allegedly, the Polish architect also opposed Yugoslavia’s membership in the UIA.⁵² Due to the dispute, Rabat was chosen as the new venue for the

48 Ibid., p. 107. The topic of the cooperation between the USSR and the USA during the 1930s and 1940s was also partly explored by Jean-Louis Cohen in his book *Architecture in Uniform*, where it is discussed in the context of architectural and technological exchanges. Cohen analyses how – in the 1930s, during the economic crisis and the rise of modernism – specific ideas about the industrialisation of construction and urban planning spread between countries, including the USA and the Soviet Union. During the Second World War, the cooperation became strategic, mainly in the form of technological innovation exchange, industrial production and construction technology methods. Architects in both countries faced the tasks of mass production and standardisation, influencing the development of architecture during and after the war. Although the ideological context was often divisive, the ideas of technological progress were usually accepted as universal. More in: Jean-Louis Cohen, “Producing Production and Workers’ Housing”, *Architecture in Uniform*, Edition Hazans and CCA, Paris, 2011, pp. 81–141.

49 Razstave 1951/1952, “Prošnja in najemna pogodba med DAS in MG za uporabo prostorov MG za postavitev razstave, 30.11.1951, Arhitektura FLRJ/razstava arhitekture Jugoslavije 4.11.1951–14.11.1951”, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

50 “World Congress of Architects”, 2024 (see no. 44).

51 Marcela Hanačková, “CIAM and the Cold War – Helena Syrkus between Modernism and Socialist Realism” (doctoral dissertation), ETH Zürich, Zurich, 2019, pp. 228–229, 450.

52 Tamara Bjažič Klarin and Marcela Hanačková, “Networking into the International Union of Architects (UIA) – Poland vs. Yugoslavia” (conference lecture summary), in:



21–23

Installation views from the exhibition *Architecture of Yugoslavia* held in 1951 at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.

exhibition, where, in addition to Yugoslavia, Brazil, Greece, England, the Netherlands, Italy, Morocco and Mexico also presented the results of their architectural projects.⁵³

Thus, none of the presented projects originated from behind the Iron Curtain, and after the complications with Warsaw, Rabat seemed a more suitable venue for the 2nd Congress. The reason for this was that, at the time, the majority of today's Moroccan territory was still a French colony, though its political future was uncertain. In 1950, the situation was tense because of the increasing pressures against the French colonial government and the growing strength of the nationalist movements that would later lead to negotiations and finally to Morocco's independence in 1956. Because of the unstable political situation in the context of the bloc division of the world, the question of development was open and demanded well-considered answers from the spatial planners.⁵⁴

After the Yugoslav policy focused on the capitalist countries, in search of development options and the related potential funding sources, we can conclude that promoting its development and/or architectural projects at exhibitions and congresses would not have been desirable in the Eastern Bloc's socialist countries. The same was true of exploring the possible ways of working within the UIA, which brought together the architects of both blocs. Dilemmas and divergences related to ideological orientations had been present within the UIA from the very beginning and were later reflected in many complications related to this Union's founding charter. In these circumstances, Rabat, located outside Europe, represented a more appropriate and less controversial venue for the 2nd Congress, as the ideological issues were more easily overlooked in the face of the more immediate local problems. Thus, Yugoslavia presented itself as well.

The complications regarding the Yugoslav exhibition at the UIA Congress in Rabat were also related to developments in Yugoslavia,

Ljiljana Kolečnik (ed.), *Transnational Networking Practices of Central and South-east European Avant-garde*, Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2014, pp. 26–28. About the exhibitions, see also Tamara Bjažić Klarin, "Housing Exhibitions in Croatia in the 1930s and 1950s – from the Subversive Critical Platform to the Vehicle of the New Ideology", in: Gaia Caramellino and Stéphanie Dadour (eds.), *The Housing Project*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2020, pp. 264–289.

53 Anonymous, "Uz međunarodnu izložbu arhitekture u Rabatu", *Arhitektura*, 1951, no. 9–12, pp. 86–87.

54 In Morocco, colonial modernity was manifested in the manner in which the French colonial administration had shaped the built environment to reflect the power of the colonisers and the exoticised image of the colonised. The situation in Morocco illustrates the broader topics of architectural appropriation, segregation and resistance, which are central to the analysis of colonial modernity in the book *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past – Rebellions for the Future*, Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten (eds.), Black Dog Architecture, London and Berlin, 2010.

as can be gleaned from, among other things, the somewhat chaotic documentation related to its preparation. On 28 June 1951, the representatives of architects' societies from almost all Yugoslav republics attended a meeting of the delegates for the *2nd Congress of UIA*. At the meeting, which was held in Belgrade, were Riko Marasović (Croatia), Juraj Neidhardt (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ljube Pota (Macedonia), Dragoljub Momčilović (Serbia), as well as Miloš Somoborski, Leon Kabiljo and Nikola Šercer, who were in charge of the exhibition organisation at the time. The Slovenian representative was not present because of other obligations, while there were no representatives from Montenegro because their society had not yet been established at that time. At the meeting, an agreement was reached regarding the number of representatives, from the individual republics, attending the Congress. It was also decided that the organisation and the final selection of works would be carried out in Belgrade. By that time, the Federal Government had also granted a loan for the event's preparation, though, in fact, it was unclear whether the exhibition would even be presented because the registration deadline – 1 May 1951 – had already passed by then.⁵⁵

At the same meeting, the rough content of the exhibition was also outlined, consisting of 28 panels in two sections. Given the relatively solid concept, the basic idea had most likely already been agreed on at the previous meetings, though no documentation about the exhibition creation process has been preserved.⁵⁶ The introductory part would first present Yugoslavia as a federation of six republics and two autonomous provinces, its customs, history, and its organisations and publications; the second part would focus on the wartime destruction, housing needs, emergency measures, reconstruction and restoration programme; while the third part would present both traditional and modern construction techniques, prefabrication, a modular system and standardised projects. The second part would be divided into three distinct topics: the city centres and towns, their reconstruction and the development of new centres and districts; the individual and collective housing in various districts, presented in the context of its planning, technical equipment and furniture; while the third part would focus on recreational areas and present everything from reforestation, tourism, mountaineering, parks, promenades, as well as playgrounds and sports facilities.⁵⁷

55 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Razstave 1951–1956, "Zapisnik sestanka delegatov določenih za II. Kongres UIA v Maroku, 28.6.1951 v Beogradu", SI ARS 1173/8/3, ARS.

56 During the course of the research, the author consulted the relevant archives (the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and those kept at the Museum of Architecture and Design) but could not find any relevant documentation.

57 See no. 55.

The relevant documentation does not clarify why the Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS) took over the organisation and the selection of works for the exhibition. However, it is clear that the time for the project's realisation was short and that on 14 July 1951, the DAS requested that the Slovenian unit of the National Bank of the FPRY open an account for the so-called Bureau for the Organisation of the Exhibition for the 2nd UIA Congress in Morocco, which it did at that point. The DAS obtained the necessary materials from the other republican societies and invited its members to preview the exhibition at the Faculty of Architecture at 5 Zoisova Street on 20 August 1951, in the afternoon.⁵⁸

The exhibition's leading curator was Edvard Ravnikar, with the participation of Branko Kocmut, France Ivanšek and students from the Faculty of Architecture. The final exhibition followed the guidelines outlined at the Belgrade meeting. However, a few conceptual emphases had also been introduced, adapting the very idea of architecture to the international context or, more precisely, to the guidelines advocated by the UIA while simultaneously placing Yugoslav architectural production in the elusive architectural field within the bloc division of the world. More emphasis was placed on customs and regions, while traditional architecture was interpreted within the various cultural influence zones.

In the introductory part, Yugoslavia was presented with a political map showing the republics and capitals, while its geographical location was illustrated with photographs of the individual regions that were not necessarily nationally but mainly geographically marked (Pannonia, Dalmatia, mountainous regions, etc.). Slavonian folk costumes, folk dances and traditional architecture were also presented. The authors distinguished between Western-influenced (Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Istria) and Eastern-influenced (Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) architecture (figs. 24–25). Meanwhile, the following cities or strongholds were selected as examples of historical architecture, each of them with its specific local identity: Vranduk, Dubrovnik, Mostar, Resava Monastery, Titov Veles, Galičnik and Ljubljana. In addition, during the preparation of the materials, the authors organised an overview of housing developments by individual republics.⁵⁹

The exhibition materials were standardised in the form of posters, and their contents were printed in the exhibition catalogue. Ravnikar also wrote a short introduction for this publication, highlighting the

unequal development of the Yugoslav regions, the importance of housing construction and traditional vernacular architecture, as well as the relevance of typification and industrialisation, which characterised construction as a necessity during the post-war years. In his speech, Ravnikar also made a few points that were not included in the catalogue.⁶⁰ He presented the cultural heritage developed under Western and Eastern influences as something architects had adapted, transformed and supplemented to suit the new circumstances and lay the foundation for future work. He associated the spatial development achievements with the efforts to improve people's living conditions and described them as an expression of the progress achieved due to the revolution of the society, the economy and cultural life. In this regard, he regretted his inability to present the economic results as the basis for the general development of socialism.⁶¹

Morocco and UIA Policy

After the Second World War, Rabat was nevertheless not a neutral area, so we can assume that issues of governance and/or power structures were not desirable topics in architectural discussions at the international congress. As Morocco was still a French colony in 1951, when the UIA Congress took place, the question of its development, at a time when demands for Morocco's independence were being voiced, was rather controversial, and it also significantly affected local spatial planning. Already in the 1930s, architects in Morocco had faced the problem of mass migrations from rural areas to industrialised cities, leading to the construction of improvised settlements (bidonvilles).

Michel Écochard,⁶² who headed the Urban Planning Service, worked on restructuring these areas and constructing housing settlements using new technologies. However, the relevant development strategies were vague and did not address the attitudes towards the inhabitants and territory.⁶³ For the French authorities after the war,

58 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Razstave 1951–1956, "Vabilo članom DAS na razstavo, 20.8.1951", SI ARS 1173/8/3, ARS.

59 *RFP Yugoslavie – exposition internationale d'architecture de l'union internationale des architectes / Rabat Maroc 1951* (exhibition catalogue), Zveza arhitektov Jugoslavije, Ljubljana, 1951.

60 An unsigned typescript of the welcome address, written for the exhibition opening, accompanied the archival copy of the catalogue, which was made available to me during my research and is kept in the archives of the France and Marta Ivanšek Foundation. Although Ravnikar did not attend the opening, the diction and contents of this text are similar to the catalogue introduction, so we can assume he is the author.

61 Edvard Ravnikar, "Preface", in: *RFP Yugoslavie – exposition internationale d'architecture de l'union internationale des architectes / Rabat Maroc 1951* (exhibition catalogue), Zveza arhitektov Jugoslavije, Ljubljana, 1951.

62 Écochard, who graduated from the École des Beaux-Arts art school in 1929, was interested in concrete construction technology. He was also a trained archaeologist. From 1930, he worked as an architect and urban planner in Africa, in the countries under French colonial rule. For further information, see: "Michel Écochard", *arch-net.org*, 2024, URL: <https://www.archnet.org/authorities/33> (accessed 24.6.2024).

63 The development models were a continuation of French colonial planning practices, which favoured efficiency and so-called modernity but were simultaneously based



RFP YOUUGOSLAVIE



5

ARCHITECTURE TRADITIONELLE INFLUENCEE
PAR L'ORIENT
MACEDOINE BOSNIE MONTENEGRO SERBIE

24-25
Panels from the exhibition *Architecture of Yugoslavia* in 1951 in Rabat, Morocco.



RFP YOUUGOSLAVIE



6

ARCHITECTURE TRADITIONELLE INFLUENCEE
PAR L'OCCIDENT
CROATIE DALMATIE SLOVENIE

the Moroccan population became, above all, a new cheap labour force, which could be used to modernise the country – precisely because of the internal migrations and simultaneously the unstable economic situation in Europe.⁶⁴

Écochard was the main reporter at the UIA Congress. At the time, the activities in Morocco – with topics such as the Mediterranean region, urban morphology or horizontal density, the adaptation of architecture to diverse climatic conditions and addressing the need for identity and social inclusion – were, of course, mainly formal and interesting for the CIAM, as well as for many other architects focusing on the architectural planning of European cities.⁶⁵ The idea of Yugoslav architecture, as it had been conceived for the international audience in Rabat, was also presented in Yugoslavia, which, after 1948, built its model of development with the financial assistance of the USA. In doing so, Yugoslavia demonstrated its social ambitions to the West as a socialist country with a soft approach to development, while in the East, it appeared as a country that enjoyed the best of both worlds.

In the context of Morocco and the UIA, Yugoslav architecture, as presented at the exhibition, was interesting in that it developed the space for social inclusion from the perspective of modernisation, associating it with various traditions and combining them with new technologies. The debates and controversies regarding architecture, taking place in Yugoslavia in the context of either engineering or architectural societies, did not interest the UIA in the same manner.

on colonial control. After Morocco's independence, these models were adapted in such a manner that modernist architecture would hopefully become a blend of traditional Moroccan elements to create a new, hybrid urban landscape. This transformation was not without its challenges, as it often resulted in the erasure of cultural heritage and the introduction of top-down planning approaches that failed to consider local needs. More about this in: Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*, The Montacelli Press, New York, 2003, pp. 157–192.

64 Écochard did, in fact, adapt his plans to the specific ways of life of the local cultures, thus contributing to the development of various architectural typologies for different populations. However, these same typologies were simultaneously based on the existing definitions of cultural and racial differences and were consequently emphasised through spatial planning. The latter led to the spatial organisation of housing and urban plans during the 1950s, which divided the Moroccan population according to religion (Jews, Muslims) while distinguishing Europeans as a single category according to various classes. For example, factory workers were thus separated from the upper class. From: Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, "This was Tomorrow: The 'Colonial Modern' and its Blind Spots", *transversal.at*, 2008, URL: <https://transversal.at/transversal/0708/von-osten-karakayal/en> (accessed 22.7.2023).

65 One of them was Adalberto Libera, who was involved in the planning of the Tuscolano district in Rome at the time.

In Yugoslavia, however, their political implications resulted in fundamental ideological dilemmas. Meanwhile, the UIA had faced questions of ideology and politics at the very onset of its activities, while drafting its statute and addressing the question of its democratic organisation and its statute's foundations, which was also reflected in its professional principles. The Union's members expressed different opinions in this regard. Interestingly, democracy was being advocated for by the USSR and Eastern European delegations, while the French, Swiss, Italian and Belgian delegates assumed an undemocratic stance.⁶⁶

The argument for a democratic organisation was particularly emphasised by Karo Semyonovich Halabyan (USSR), who strived to ensure that the UIA would strengthen the architectural profession's authority while underlining the following observation, which we can also find among the Yugoslav architects: that architects in capitalist countries were not given any opportunities for creativity and the development of their profession. Karo Halabyan, one of the first Soviet architects working within the UIA and otherwise the head architect overseeing the reconstruction of Stalingrad, appealed to the leadership to make the UIA "an association of progressive, democratic organisations of workers in architecture [that] undertake to struggle for enduring peace, reinforcement of democracy and progress in culture".⁶⁷ He envisioned that the role of the UIA was to promote these values. Certain Western architects – namely Paul Vischer and Ralph Walker – rejected his appeal, arguing that the UIA should be an organisation without any political goals, as these might prevent the free exchange of opinions and ideas.⁶⁸ After all, culture was supposed to play a different role under socialism and capitalism. Initiating debates on democracy, planning strategies and the related financing of spatial development and infrastructure could lead to direct political engagement and commentary on political developments. The Western representatives of architects in the UIA, at least, wanted to avoid any controversies in this regard.

The final resolution of the 1948 Lausanne Congress is also relevant for the significance of architectural work in post-war Europe. As the architects spoke openly about the loss of the architectural profession's autonomy, from the perspective of the new state planning policies, Luben Tonev argued that the reconstruction of Europe required architects to work hand in hand with technicians, engineers and specialists, as well as economists, sociologists and politicians. And yet, the resolution's final text was worded differently: architects

66 Zubovich, 2016 (see no. 46), pp. 112–116.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 112–116.

were supposed to collaborate with engineers, economists, sociologists, lawyers and others.⁶⁹ Politics and ideology were topics to be avoided. Despite the complications, the UIA played a crucial role in the formation of mechanisms for developing and organising international competitions.

Conclusion

In the context of public space, the exhibitions *Architecture of the Nations of the FPRY* and *Architecture of Yugoslavia* at the turn of the 1940s to the 1950s functioned primarily as a mechanism for promoting the ideas of progress, which would lead the masses through the social transformation from a rural society with a modest level of industrialisation to a modern 20th-century socialist society – in which the newly defined historical architectural achievements had also found their place. The DIT Slovenia, which organised the first exhibition and within which a separate section of architects also operated immediately after the war, played one of the central roles in this physical and social reconstruction. The Society functioned as a medium for organising the masses, which would supposedly “liberate themselves through construction”. The idea of architecture, presented at the exhibition, was conveyed in a similar manner – as a technology of the reconstruction – while architects belonged among the technicians of the new social order, who no longer worked on the side of the capitalists but instead constructed socialism *with* and *for* the people. “Technology to the people!” was merely one of the slogans illustrating the role of architecture from the perspective of construction within the Society and the role of architects, as those who would help co-create this technology in the space.

For the architects, such a perception was acceptable immediately after the war, given the urgent need for reconstruction. However, they also strived for an expanded reflection on the role of architecture and for the government’s recognition of the architectural profession’s autonomy – including by establishing the Slovenian Architects’ Society (DAS). Just as Danilo Fürst and Stanislav Rohrman had articulated in their letter to the government, Edvard Ravnikar, who emphasised not only the technical but also the socio-economic and aesthetic aspects of architecture, likewise advocated for the recognition of architecture as one of the cultural professions and for the simultaneous development of an appropriate discourse. At that time, the architects who actively strived for the recognition of architecture’s social dimension, beyond a purely technical understanding of the world, and also focused on its cultural, aesthetic and sometimes spiritual dimensions, adopted a critical stance towards

69 Ibid.

capitalism and imperialism – in the sense of historical ideologies. However, they simultaneously sought connections with the heritage of modernism, both in artistic terms and by seeking international collaboration in an otherwise politically charged atmosphere.

In the context of the Cold War, technology was anything but neutral. Its development was related to either Western or Eastern international development investments and regional plans that represented a part of the broader development strategies, which also co-shaped the ideas about architecture, as seen in the case of the *Architecture of Yugoslavia* exhibition. In this sense, the architectural heritage was no longer merely national but was interpreted as being influenced by either the West or the East;⁷⁰ technology was not used to liberate the masses but to construct a diverse space of inclusion with the help of modern infrastructure, while architecture’s visual aspects were interpreted as the interplay between traditional patterns and customs and contemporary technologies. The idea of architecture, which was acceptable in the international framework of the UIA as well as at home, did not raise any ideological issues: in this context, the issue of technology was neutralised.

What can be detected in the conception of the idea of Yugoslav architecture in the case of the exhibitions under discussion is a shift towards a more clearly formulated idea of what Yugoslav architecture should be in the material sense. However, this shift obfuscated the numerous transformative processes – a precondition for the broader technological and social transformation – that fundamentally characterised the conception of space. The introduction of new technologies and infrastructures, albeit socially owned, also entailed new ways of organising the masses and managing natural resources. As all of these were associated with development plans, the construction of space primarily followed the technological advancements and the associated processes, while the extent to which it could serve the people depended on the conditions of the state.

Nevertheless, exploring the limits of what was possible in architecture at the time required a sensitivity to the people’s customs, communities and artisanal traditions, as well as a reflection on the role of architecture in the context of the construction of socialist space as defined by the five-year planned economy. This space evolved together with the landscape according to the purpose of social planning, with architecture articulating the new social contents with administrative centres, educational institutions, hospitals,

70 The exhibition panels 5 and 6 were titled “Architecture traditionnelle influencée par l’Orient” (“Traditional Architecture Influenced by the East”) and “Architecture traditionnelle influencée par l’Occident” (“Traditional Architecture Influenced by the West”). In *RFP Yugoslavie*, 1951, (see no. 59), pp. 19–21.

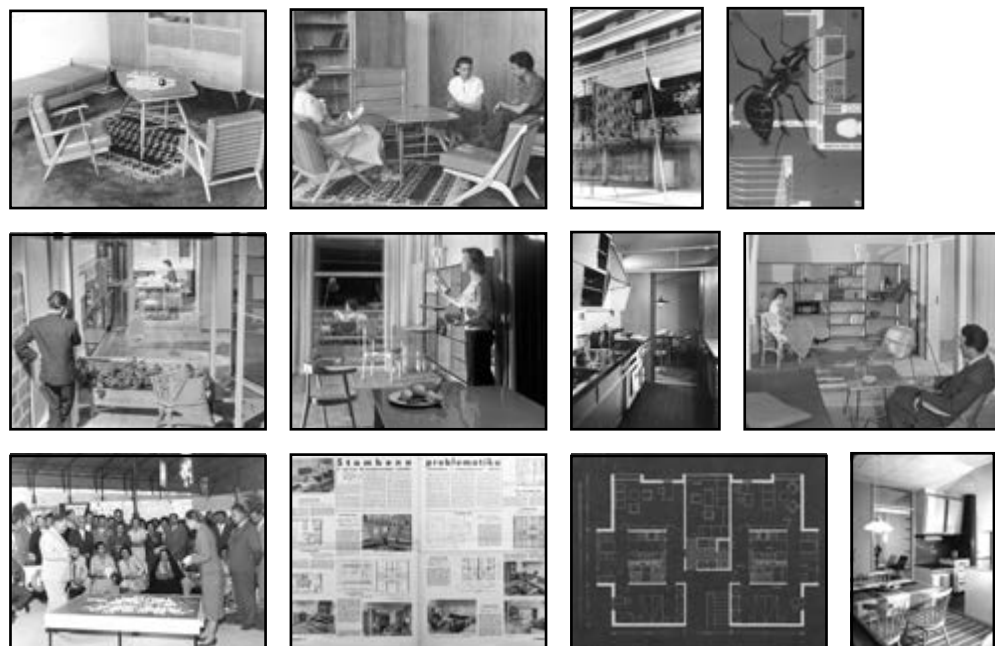
housing, public spaces, recreation spaces, etc. Opening up the architectural form to the broader Yugoslav social space while considering the local conditions was, therefore, not just a formal exploration of the limits of what was possible with new technologies but rather an exploration of the architectural form related to the content of space, which depended on Yugoslavia's political aspirations to realise a new way of life in the socialist future. The questions raised by the eventual end of this future are rather profound for architecture, and exhibitions remain a compelling medium through which architecture can be examined in the public sphere.

Cvetka Požar, Maja Vardjan

Housing for Our Conditions and Family and Household: Exhibitions of Model Apartments and Their Role in Promoting New Concepts of Living

The chapter focuses on the exhibitions that paved the way for more modern approaches to the topic of housing and a contemporary dwelling culture in post-war Yugoslavia. Particularly noteworthy in this context are the exhibitions of model apartments that reflected the basic ideas of the new self-managed social organisation, especially the ideas of equality and emancipation, expressed through the ambition to raise people's living standards, regardless of their social status. The chapter starts from the assumption that the idea of a higher standard of living for all was based on functional housing in all its dimensions (architectural, design, aesthetic, technical, hygienic, sociological). But it also involved the wider housing community, which was demonstrated in the exhibitions organised at federal level. Taking into account the social context, this chapter sheds light on the initiatives and the original intentions and goals that were to be achieved in particular with the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* (*Stanovanje za naše razmere*; 1956) and the exhibitions *Family and Household* (*Porodica i domaćinstvo*; 1958, 1960). These exhibitions showcased furnished model apartments on a 1:1 scale and a model of a prototype residential neighbourhood, which concretised and disseminated the ideas of modern housing construction and a new living culture in Slovenia and throughout Yugoslavia.

In the period between the two world wars, when industrialisation in Slovenia gained significant momentum, new factories and plants were opened almost every month.¹ However, the situation regarding mass housing construction was insufficient to meet the growing demand. Despite the accelerated building activity in the interwar period, housing was scarce and not accessible to all. The poorest sections of the population lived in unbearable conditions due to severe housing shortages. After the Second World War, the poor state of housing, which had been exacerbated by the war, continued. Housing construction did not immediately become a priority, as economic and political interests focused primarily on the development of heavy industry. During this period, housing construction lagged far behind so-called capital construction, which involved investment in the production sectors and took precedence over social standards, including housing and communal services.² The mass production of products was also more focused on industry than on the final consumer, resulting in a shortage of consumer goods on the market. After the abolition of guaranteed supply (via coupons or ration cards) in 1952, when state



1 Žarko Lazarevič, "Industrializacija, obrt, industrija", in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 1, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2005, p. 451.

2 Tone Klemenčič, *Stanovanjsko gospodarstvo*, *Gospodarski vestnik*, Ljubljana, 1985, p. 478.

control over the sale of food and major industrial consumer goods was relaxed after seven years, the demand for goods increased even more.³ This was followed by a gradual transition to the mass production of consumer goods, which, in turn, placed greater emphasis on improving living conditions. An important impetus for housing construction was the change in the financial system in 1953, when the responsibility for housing provision was transferred from the central to the republican and municipal levels and to the respective housing directorates.⁴ The municipalities thus became the basic socio-political communities and, as such, were responsible for housing policies; the process of self-management was also underway in the housing sector.⁵ The *Housing Contribution Act* of 1955 introduced a new and independent source of funding to promote housing construction.⁶ With the newly established municipal housing loan funds, into which the contributions were channelled, the municipalities became commissioners of the construction of a large number of apartments.⁷ As a result, housing institutes were founded in all major cities from the mid-1950s.⁸ This promoted the development of local self-management and encouraged all those directly involved in the issue, at both local and federal levels, to take a more active role. Also important at the time, in relation to housing issues, was the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia,⁹ which was established at the federal level with

3 Marta Rendla, *Kam ploveš standard?: Življenjska raven in socializem*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2018, p. 323. The products that would raise personal standards were difficult to find on the market, as efforts were focused on social (health, social security, education) or infrastructural activities (communal services). Ibid. p. 322. Food and products could only be obtained via ration cards, which were introduced in July 1945 and remained in use until the end of 1952. See Zdenko Čepič, “Preskrba prebivalstva in obvezni odkupi”, in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, p. 893.

4 Srna Mandič, *Stanovanje in država*, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, Ljubljana, 1996, p. 137. As Klemenčič explains, this was based on a constitutional law on the social and political organisation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) and on the federal authorities, which was adopted in 1953 (Ur. l. FLRJ, no. 3-19/53), according to which the municipalities became the basic socio-political community responsible for solving housing problems, among other things. In Klemenčič, 1985 (see no. 2), p. 479.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., pp. 479–480.

7 Ibid., p. 480.

8 The Institute for Housing Construction Ljubljana was founded in 1955; in the same year, institutes were also founded in Kranj, Celje and Maribor.

9 The Law on People's Committees passed in 1952 promoted the development of local self-managing communities. In 1953, 21 Yugoslav towns and municipalities founded the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Yugoslavia of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. See Skupštine SKGOJ 1953–1956,

the aim of connecting cities and municipalities in Yugoslavia, enabling them to work together and find solutions to their problems. From the mid-1950s, raising social standards through the development of light industry, transport and housing construction became one of the fundamental political tasks¹⁰ that laid the foundations for a new, egalitarian social order.¹¹

In the first half of the 1950s, as the massive housing shortage became a more pressing issue, coupled with changes in housing policy laws, architects turned their attention to the complexity of housing construction, which required analytical, comprehensive and well-thought-out approaches that took into account people's needs, lifestyles and habits.¹² Edvard Ravnikar argued in favour of high-quality and integrated housing solutions based on carefully planned spatial layouts according to functionality.¹³ He wrote that “Decent home for everyone [...] is one of the fundamental social

“Stenografske beleške o radu II skupštine Stalne konferencije gradova i gradskih opština FNRJ, održane od 5.–7. oktobra 1953 godine u Mariboru, p. 5”, AJ 495/1, Arhiv Jugoslavije (hereinafter AJ).

The conference operated on democratic principles of cooperation, negotiation and consultation between voluntary and equal members of the municipalities and towns. Its aim was to support the towns and municipalities in matters of urban, communal, economic, cultural and social-health development. It actively dealt with issues of self-management in the local communities (towns and municipalities), with the housing problem of the members being one of the most important. With the new statute adopted at the annual meeting in Ljubljana on 29 May 1956, the organisation was renamed the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia (ibid., p. 33). This name is also used in this chapter.

10 This is stated in numerous political documents from this period. In: Rendla, 2018 (see no. 3), p. 323. By the mid-1950s, around 4,000 new apartments were already being built in Slovenia every year, mainly in the cities and industrial centres. In: Čepič, 2006 (see no. 3), p. 1091.

11 As Branko Bojović notes, the right to housing and the rights arising from it – the right to the undisturbed use of housing and the ban on overcrowding and the relocation of residents – have finally been realised. In: Branko Bojović, “Pregled nad družbeno politiko stanovanjske gradnje v Jugoslaviji”, *Arhitektov bilten*, no. 68–69, 1984, p. 5.

12 See Boris Gabršček, “Referati za I. savetovanje arhitekata i urbanista Jugoslavije”, *Arhitekt*, no. 1, 1951, pp. 54–55; Danilo Fürst, “Prispevek k vprašanju razvoja standarda stanovanj v Sloveniji”, *Arhitekt*, no. 1, 1951, pp. 6–10; Edvard Ravnikar, “Naša gradnja stanovanj in njena sodobna problematika”, *Arhitekt*, no. 9, 1953, p. 14. This was also emphasised in an editorial in the magazine *Arhitekt* in 1953: “Our new architecture will emerge from a deeper study and analysis of the needs of man and society, from the study of the spirit of new building techniques and construction methods, from a better knowledge of the old and the constant search for and study of new materials, from the struggle for the necessary conditions for creative architectonic work, from the study of the spirit of our vernacular architecture and finally, last but not least, from a synthesis of all fine arts.” Editorial, “Za novo arhitekturo”, *Arhitekt*, no. 8, 1953, p. 1.

13 Ravnikar, 1953 (see no. 12), p. 14.

issues of our time and the most important element in assessing a country's standard of living"¹⁴ Better, faster and more rationalised construction was to create affordable housing for all, in line with a modern housing culture that included improved hygienic conditions, the facilitation of housework and general well-being in everyday life. The vast majority of the population had never lived in such conditions and many were unaware of the possibilities of a different, higher quality of living. The more progressive architects were aware of this and proposed solutions. They saw exhibitions as an important medium for informing the general public about new possibilities in the field of housing construction and new ways of living.

Yugoslav architects tackled the problem of housing construction, which was a central architectural issue internationally at the time, besides planning in terms of organisation and theoretical work. They organised and participated in republican, federal and international events. For example, the Association of Architects of Yugoslavia organised a federal conference on housing in Rogaška Slatina from 25 to 28 November 1954. In July 1955, a large delegation from the Association of Architects of Yugoslavia attended the *IV. Congress of the International Union of Architects* (Union internationale des architectes, UIA) in The Hague, which was entitled "Architecture and Evolutions of Building". Edvard Ravnikar and Marko Šlajmer took part on behalf of the Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS), as did engineer Leon Skaberne, the then director of the Institute for Housing Construction.¹⁵ The exhibition presented on 26 panels the current problems of housing construction and the processes of building new residential neighbourhoods in the six Yugoslav republics, as well as current interior designs from 1955 (the kitchen by Branka Tancig, the Rex Lounge Chair by Niko Kralj, etc.).¹⁶

The display of full-scale (1:1) model apartments, along with architectural models of houses and residential blocks, was an established form of presenting innovations in architecture and design dating back to the early 20th century and was well-known to architects.¹⁷

14 Ibid.

15 M. Š., "IV. kongres Mednarodne zveze arhitektov", *Arhitekt*, no. 17, 1955, p. 36. The congress also included a competition for student projects, in which architecture students Vladimir Braco Mušič and Anton Pibernik won third prize for their analysis of a residential neighbourhood in Šiška, which was supervised by Professor Edvard Ravnikar.

16 Zdravko Bregovac, "Haag: Izložba naše arhitekture", *Čovjek i prostor*, no. 35, 1955, p. 3.

17 Architects saw presentations of model apartments and apartment blocks at world exhibitions or at the major housing projects of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Neues Frankfurt (1925–1930), Weißenhofsiedlung Stuttgart (1927), Werkbundsiedlung Vienna (1929–1932), and of the 1950s and 1960s (Helsingborg exhibition in 1955, *Interbau* in Berlin in 1957, etc.). More on this in: Fredie Floré and Rika Devos, "Model Interiors and Model Homes at Expo 58", *DASH: Delft Architectural Studies on Housing*, no. 11, 2014, pp. 32–45; Lucy Creagh, "At the Limits of Architecture: The Housing

Regardless of whether they involved temporary structures or buildings that were occupied by the residents after the exhibition, these projects have certain common characteristics that can be summarised in three types of exhibitions. The first type are exhibitions that were a form of coping with the severe housing crisis and took shape through the shared vision of politics, the economy, architecture and design. The second type are exhibitions that propagated a modern lifestyle with a new spatial organisation and functional, modern furniture and furnishings that stood in sharp contrast to the established, existing lifestyles. The third group comprises exhibitions of model apartments designed with didactic intent as part of broader programmes (e.g. conferences, trade fairs, etc.), with great attention paid to advertising and the media. In the second half of the 1950s, the combination of the first and third types also served to disseminate ideas about new, progressive housing construction and a new living culture in Slovenia, based on the active involvement of architects, designers and numerous professional and economic organisations.

The First Furniture Exhibition and the Introduction of New Forms of Interior Design Exhibiting

In February 1952, the state-owned company Les – Ljubljana organised the first post-war competition for the manufacture of furniture (family bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens). This was prompted by the sharp rise in demand for furniture, which had increased due to the availability of loans for the purchase of furniture.¹⁸ The competition was open to all state companies, cooperatives and craftsmen, but not to architects. The newly founded Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS) reacted immediately, because the condition for participation in the competition was the submission of a sketch of the furniture, which meant that the craftsmen were also expected to design the furniture.¹⁹ In view of what the craftsmen showed at the *II. Exhibition of Local Industry and Crafts of the People's Republic of Slovenia (II. republiška razstava lokalne industrije in obrti LRS)* in 1950, the architects doubted their competence and considered their solutions to be poor, formulaic, unprogressive and "incompatible with the needs of a modern dwelling".²⁰ In the competition announcement, Les also stipulated that visitors to the exhibition would judge the beauty of the furniture. France Ivanšek, one of the founders of the DAS, expressed his concerns, believing

Section of the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition", *DASH: Delft Architectural Studies on Housing*, no. 9, 2013, pp. 9–18.

18 Anonymous, "Razstava pohištva v Ljubljani", *Les*, vol. 4, no. 567, 1952, p. 97.

19 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, "France Ivanšek, 'Ob Lesovem natečaju za izdelavo pohištva', *Bilten Društva arhitektov Slovenije*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1952, pp. 1–2", SI AS 1173/04/III/04.01, Arhiv Republike Slovenije (hereinafter ARS).

20 Ibid.

that the average visitor was not equipped to appreciate the modern design of the furniture due to a lack of knowledge.²¹ Nevertheless, he believed that “[p]eople [...] must be shown the path towards progress also in terms of our housing culture, which they are not entirely familiar with. If they learn about the advantages of modern furniture, they will eagerly embrace it.”²² He called on Les to withdraw the call and organise a new competition for the design proposals, and to produce the furniture, according to the proposals, as soon as the competition was completed. While the original call for entries was not withdrawn, Les did establish contact with the DAS and invited them to participate – an invitation the DAS accepted.

The members of the DAS²³ took on the role of jurors for the *First Furniture Exhibition (Prva razstava pohištva; 1952)*. They suggested new forms of presentation, for example, that the insides of the furniture should be visible. Another suggestion was that the jury’s opinions on the quality of the furniture should be published at the exhibition. This would encourage open communication with visitors and potential buyers and emphasise the efficiency and transparency of both the production and sales processes. The organisers, however, rejected both suggestions. The architects argued in favour of functional, adaptable, multipurpose and affordable furniture which could help raise the standard of living of the entire population. Unfortunately, the manufacturers and retailers did not share their view on the production and use of furniture, as both were primarily focused on commercialisation.²⁴

The *First Furniture Exhibition* attracted 20,000 visitors over just eight days,²⁵ which indicates that there was a great desire and need for new furniture. The furniture produced by the company Konstruktor Maribor and designed by architects Danilo Fürst, Bogo Fink, Boris Jamnik, Marko Šlajmer and Franc Šmid stood out at the exhibition as an example of modern furniture that, thanks to its versatile combinability, allowed individual pieces to be put together according to the

21 Ivanšek qualified his statement by claiming that “the average visitor knows no other ‘beauty’ than that to which he has become accustomed through the poor copies of German-Austrian bourgeois pre-war furniture offered by craftsmen in our country.” Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “France Ivanšek, ‘Ob Lesovem natečaju za izdelavo pohištva’ ...” (see no. 19), p. 2.

22 Ibid.

23 The jury consisted of the architects Franc Cacak, Edvard Ravnikar, Domicijan Serajnik and Branko Simčič. Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “Pismo DAS Republiškemu trgovskemu podjetju Les, Osnutki pohištva, 27.5.1952”, SI AS 1173/04/III/04.01, ARS.

24 Ivanšek said at the time that this was due to fear should “the expert committees downgrade the commercial success of the exhibition”. In: Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “France Ivanšek, ‘Ob Lesovem natečaju za izdelavo pohištva’ ...” (see no. 19), p. 2.

25 The exhibition took place from 2 to 10 July 1952 at the Bežigrad Grammar School in Ljubljana.

needs and financial means of the buyer (figs. 26–27). Even though it was one of the few high-quality furniture solutions at the exhibition, the events surrounding the competition and the exhibition itself stimulated cooperation between retailers, manufacturers and architects and, above all, a discussion within the DAS and, through media publications, also among the general public about the design of modern furniture and its influence on a more modern way of life aimed at reducing the burden of housework and increasing living comfort.²⁶ Interiors with modern furniture designed by the architects were exhibited in 1956 at the first federal exhibition of modern housing, *Housing for Our Conditions*, which was prepared by Slovenian architects and actively supported by politicians and numerous professional organisations.

Housing for Our Conditions:

The First Federal Exhibition of Modern Housing

In 1955, the DAS founded the Housing Commission. At its first meeting, the topic of an “exhibition on contemporary housing”²⁷ was raised, which had already been discussed by the board of the DAS. The members of the commission offered some starting points and suggested considering “1:1 scale models”²⁸ or model apartments, which would allow visitors to learn directly about the advantages of a modern furnished home.²⁹ At the commission’s second meeting, architects Marjan Šorli and Franc Cacak, who were responsible for developing the exhibition concept,³⁰ suggested dividing the exhibition into didactic, commercial and international parts.³¹ Already in the draft for the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions*,³² the DAS emphasised that the

26 Comp. France Ivanšek, “I. razstava pohištva v Ljubljani dobra lekcijska za proizvajalce in oblikovalce”, *Arhitekt*, no. 5, 1952, p. 29.

27 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Komisije 1954–1959, “Zapisnik 1. seje Stanovanjske komisije DAS, 24.6.1955, p. 1”, SI AS 1173/01/01.06, ARS.

28 The meeting was attended by Franc Cacak, Bogo Fink, Danilo Fürst, Pavle Göstl, Jurij Jenšterle, Rudi Mačus, Stanko Rohrman, Marko Šlajmer, Marjan Šorli and Branka Tancig. Invited members who did not attend were: Ilija Arnautović, Boris Gabršček, Mitja Jernejc, Stanko Kristl, Vladimir Mušič and Edvard Ravnikar. Ibid.

29 Before the opening of the exhibition, the magazine *Sodobno gospodinjstvo* emphasised the didactic part of the exhibition, stating that it “demonstrates the modern design and furnishing of individual living spaces. Guides and demonstrators will be on hand to show and explain the advantages of modern furnishings”. In: Anonymous, “Razstava ‘Stanovanje za naše prilike’”, *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 27, 1956, p. 49.

30 The draft was to be completed by 22 July 1955. It was presented at the *Second Meeting of the Housing Commission* in September. See Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Komisije 1954–1959, “Zapisnik 1. seje Stanovanjske komisije DAS” (see no. 27), p. 1.

31 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, Komisije 1954–1959, “Zapisnik 2. seje Stanovanjske komisije DAS, 8.9.1955”, SI AS 1173/01/01.06, ARS.

32 The programme that was put up for discussion was published in 1956 in the brochure: *Stan za naše prilike*, Glavni i organizacioni odbor izložbe, Ljubljana, 1956.



26–27
Modular furniture by architects Danilo Fűrst, Bogo Fink, Boris Jamnik, Marko Šlajmer and Franc Šmid, produced by the company Konstruktor Maribor, at the *First Furniture Exhibition* at the Bežigrad Grammar School in Ljubljana in 1952.

housing issue had not been treated as a complex housing problem in the last decade, that the analyses of housing technology and its economic aspects had been too sporadic and that proven approaches such as terraced houses,³³ built-in furniture, housing cooperatives, etc. had also been neglected.³⁴ They declared that the housing issue should be approached “with less expediency and with more deliberation, discernment and discipline”.³⁵ In the autumn of 1955, the Housing Commission of the DAS drew up a *Proposal for the Didactic Part of the Housing Exhibition*,³⁶ in which the mobilising purpose of the exhibition was emphasised, namely “to inspire new perspectives on housing in all those who are involved in any way in addressing the housing question”.³⁷ The main purpose of the exhibition was therefore to educate the general public and to mobilise and coordinate the industry, especially construction companies, as well as investors.³⁸ These two objectives were to reflect the central theme of the entire exhibition, namely “affordable and comfortable housing in a well-planned neighbourhood”.³⁹ This expressed a clear intent: to offer a comprehensive approach to resolving the housing problem, from the smallest unit – a furnished apartment – to an urbanistically planned residential neighbourhood.⁴⁰ The organisers were fully aware of the economic constraints they were working under, as emphasised by the exhibition’s title, *Housing for Our Conditions*.⁴¹ The phrase “our conditions” refers directly to the circumstances that determined the financing possibilities, the productive potential of the economy and also the purchasing power of the population, which was still relatively low in the 1950s.

33 The idea of a prefabricated terraced house was already recognised during the two world wars in the major European countries as the best solution to the housing problems of the time. In: Tamara Bjažić Klarin, “Housing Exhibitions in Croatia in the 1930s and 1950s – from the Subversive Critical Platform to the Vehicle of the New Ideology”, in: Gaia Caramellino and Stéphanie Dadour (eds.), *The Housing Project: Discourses, Ideals, Models and Politics in the 20th Century Exhibitions*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2020, p. 265.

34 See Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “*Stanovanje za naše prilike*”, typescript, pp. 3–4”, SI AS 1173/24/24.01, ARS.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

36 The proposal was drawn up in collaboration with the representatives of the Institute for Advancement of Households and Urban Planning Association of Slovenia. See Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “*Predlog za program didaktičnega dela razstave o stanovanjih*”, typescript, p. 6”, SI AS 1173/24/24.01, ARS.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*

40 The proposal also did not forget to mention the role of so-called services, which were becoming an important part of the housing community at the time, and pointed out that “in an organised urban unit, some services are shared.” *Ibid.*, p. 4.

41 The records of the DAS often mention this.

The *Proposal for the Didactic Part of the Housing Exhibition* also included a draft for the organisational structure of the entire initiative, as it was already clear at the time that the ambitious goal required the active participation of other societies, associations, institutes and individual experts⁴² in order to jointly develop a holistic approach to the housing problem. Above all, it also required the support, including material support, of those who “could have a direct interest in the overall success of the exhibition”,⁴³ i.e. both the state and the manufacturers, who could hope for new orders which would ultimately contribute to the fulfilment of their commercial purposes. Nevertheless, the educational part of the exhibition was considered as the most important, as one of the overarching aims was to educate both housing developers and future users about modern building methods and living culture. In the exhibition, the organisers set themselves the task of presenting “the solution to the housing problem in all its components, from the housing policy resulting from the systematic analysis of needs and possibilities to the realisations, from the urban and regional designs to the detailed elements, all adapted to our conditions and shown in an objective, comparative way /bad example – good example/.”⁴⁴ The main aim of the exhibition was to present in concrete terms the idea of a progressive housing policy⁴⁵ that was already unfolding at the level of local self-management through the decentralisation of housing construction. At the same time, the architects in particular were concerned with promoting and demonstrating modern methods of housing construction “so that we can build better, more affordable and more interesting homes with our not so limited resources”.⁴⁶

The organisation of this important federal event was undertaken by the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia,⁴⁷ which had

42 The proposal names: Urban Planning Association of Slovenia, Association of Construction Engineers and Technicians of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Urban Planning Council of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Institute for Advancement of Households of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Institute for Material and Construction Research of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Institute for Housing Construction Ljubljana, Association of Construction Companies of the People’s Republic of Slovenia and Association of Construction Project Developers. In: *Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “Predlog za program didaktičnega dela razstave o stanovanjih”* (see no. 36), pp. 2–3.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

47 The publication *Housing for Our Conditions (Stan za naše prilike)*, published in January 1956 (see no. 32), names the following as initiators of the exhibition: Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia, Federal Chamber of Construction, Federal Chamber of Industry, Union of Crafts Chambers of Yugoslavia, Union of Yugoslav Architects, Union of Urban Planning Associations of Yugoslavia, Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia, Union of Economists’ Associations and Union of

proposed⁴⁸ to prepare a conference and an exhibition on housing construction parallel to its annual meeting in Ljubljana in 1956. The exhibition’s organising committee, based in Ljubljana, was led by architect Marjan Tepina, who was then chairman of the Urban Planning Council of the People’s Republic of Slovenia. The committee consisted of 20 additional members from 13 Slovenian societies, chambers, institutes, organisations, faculties and a museum.⁴⁹ The exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* opened on 26 May 1956. The main, so-called commercial part of the exhibition was located in the Exhibition and Convention Centre, while the educational and propaganda part, with model apartments, was shown on the first three floors of the Gradis building in the so-called Kozolec designed by architect Edo Mihevc on Titova (today’s Slovenska) Street in Ljubljana. The exhibition was promoted with modern posters and billboards depicting a large ant above an abstract floor plan of an apartment,⁵⁰ which could be understood as a metaphor for the collective, diligent work of the community during the construction (fig. 28). On the exhibition panels, which are also reproduced in the catalogue, the ant is even depicted as a builder ant (fig. 29). Preparations for the educational and propaganda section of the exhibition centred on the elaboration of 42 theses⁵¹

Women’s Associations of Yugoslavia. Their common goal was to fully engage in the resolution of the housing issue. The organisations appointed a main committee, responsible for the exhibition in Belgrade, and an organising committee in Ljubljana. The DAS “provided a large part of the preparatory and editorial work through its members, contributed a large part of the exhibition material and took care of the technical aspects of setting up the exhibition”. In: Anonymous, “Razstava ‘Stanovanje za naše razmere’”, *Arhitekt*, no. 20, 1956, p. 35.

48 It is not entirely clear when the initiative was launched. At DAS, the exhibition was discussed as early as 24 June 1955 at the *First Meeting of the Housing Commission*. The Urban Planning Association of Slovenia mentioned a joint exhibition of both organisations at the meeting on 5 September 1955, at which Marjan Tepina said that the exhibition would be “an introduction to the previously mentioned meetings of the standing conference of Yugoslav towns and town planners”. *Zveza arhitektov Slovenije*, “Zapisnik seje UDS z dne 5.9.1955, p. 1”, SI AS 1173/24/24.01, ARS.

49 Central Institute of Hygiene of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Slovenian Architects’ Society, Institute of Economics of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Chamber of Crafts of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, Faculty of Technical Sciences Ljubljana, Technical Museum of Slovenia, Chamber of Commerce, Hydro-meteorological Service of the Republic of Slovenia, Urban Planning Association of Slovenia, Institute for Advancement of Households, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Material and Construction Research, Institute for Housing Construction Ljubljana, and Association of Construction Companies.

50 The poster was created by Majda Dobravec under the supervision of Professor Edvard Ravnikar in his seminar, who was also involved in the drawing of the ant.

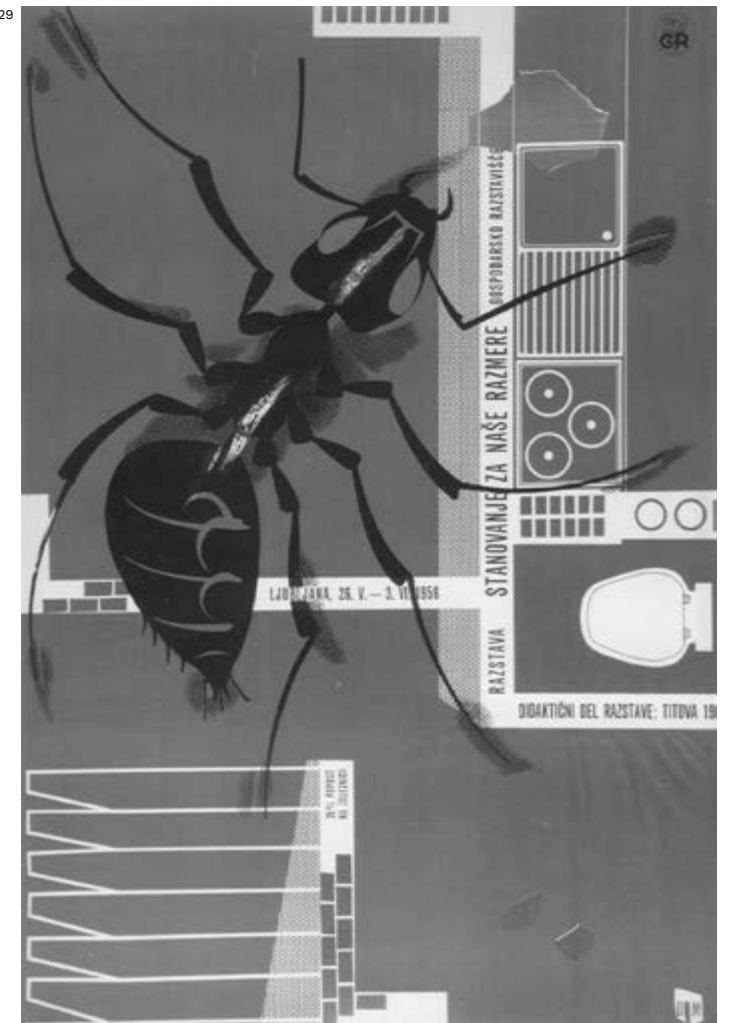
51 The preparation of the so-called fundamental theses took seven months. The final draft was reviewed and finally approved by the editorial committee, which consisted of the following members: Mate Bajlon, Sreten Bjeličić, Obrad Bojović, Milutin Maksimović, Hranislav Stojanović, Dušan Stefanović, Marjan Tepina and Slobodan Vidaković. Four of them – Bjeličić (Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia),



28

Street signage for the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* in front of the residential building known as the “Kozolec” on Titova Street (today Slovenska Street) in Ljubljana in 1956.

29



29

Poster for the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre and the residential building known as the “Kozolec” on Titova Street (today Slovenska Street) in Ljubljana in 1956 (designer: Majda Dobravec).

addressing the analysis of the state of the housing stock, the role of modern technology, architecture, urban planning and the economy in the construction of housing, etc., while also pointing out possible solutions for housing of the future. The theses were grouped and presented through the six central themes of the exhibition: housing for our conditions, elements of the historical development of housing technology and culture in some of our regions, technology, architecture, urbanism and economics. The exhibition posters displayed on the ground floor of Kozolec featured photographs, illustrations, diagrams and, in some cases, short texts,⁵² and were created⁵³ by invited organisations and experts,⁵⁴ which was also noted on the posters. This part of the exhibition was to travel to the other Yugoslav republics, where local organisations would be invited to participate.⁵⁵ There, the exhibition was to be supplemented by local examples that would either confirm or refute the theses presented. In this way, a participatory and democratic approach was pursued, aimed at placing the topic in a contemporary context.

On the first and second floors of Kozolec, three solutions for terraced houses, which had won prizes in the competition, were presented as life-size models with fully furnished interiors (figs. 30–33).⁵⁶

Bojović (Federal Chamber of Construction), Stojanović (Union of Urban Planning Associations of Yugoslavia) and Tepina (president of the organising committee) – were also members of the main committee of the exhibition as representatives of organisations that prepared the exhibition. See *Stan za naše prilike* (exhibition catalogue), Marjan Tepina (ed.), Stalna konferenca gradova Jugoslavije, Ljubljana, 1957, p. 10.

52 The theses were listed and clearly stated in the exhibition catalogue, which was published after the exhibition. Individual exhibition panels were also reproduced. Ibid.

53 The 12-member jury examined the exhibition panels and rejected those that did not agree with the basic theses. Ibid.

54 Only those whose panels were on display in the exhibition are listed in the catalogue: the architect Ivan Vitić, the Macedonian Architects' Society of Macedonia, the Slovenian Architects' Society, Jugomont Zagreb, the Housing Department of the People's Committee of the Zagreb Region, the Technical Museum of Slovenia, the Hydro-meteorological Service of the Republic of Slovenia, the Urban Planning Institute Sarajevo, the Institute for Advancement of Households, the Institute for Material and Construction Research of the People's Republic of Slovenia, the Institute for Housing Construction Ljubljana, the Association for Advancement of Households Zagreb, etc.

55 This intention is already expressed in the catalogue *Stan za naše prilike*, (see no. 51), p. 10, but, given the information available, we assume that it was not realised. The panel section of the educational and propaganda part of the exhibition was shown at the *Family and Household* exhibition in Zagreb in 1957.

56 As part of the preparations for the exhibition, the organising committee announced three architectural competitions, the last of which ended on 1 February 1956: design of a terraced house, design of a sanitary block in a flat and design of rational home furniture. The first prize was awarded to the terraced house "Trata" by Janez Lajovic, Vladimir Mušič, Anton Pibernik and Savin Sever. Second prize went to the terraced

They confirmed the theses of the cost-effectiveness of housing construction, the advantages of using technologically advanced building materials and processes and modern home furnishings, which was undoubtedly why more than 40,000 people visited the exhibition in just eight days. The interiors of the models were carefully furnished with award-winning furniture and other domestically produced pieces by Slovenian and Croatian designers. The interiors were also photographed for promotional purposes. Female and male models posed in the rooms and demonstrated how to use these new modern, rationally designed and furnished apartments. The architect Branka Tancig wrote enthusiastically that this was a real experience for "the visitors, because they were allowed to sit on chairs, open windows, test the firmness of mattresses, check the temperature in the kitchen fridge and so on. No wonder housewives or whole families kept coming back to look at these model homes and enquire about this or that, whatever they wanted to know."⁵⁷ One of the main aims of this exhibition was to encourage the industry to adopt "industrial methods for the whole spectrum of housing production",⁵⁸ including construction materials, prefabricated building elements, interior furnishings and finishing works. Tancig saw bulk orders from builders as a way to boost production and make kitchens available in retail stores. She believed that "if these companies included standardised built-in kitchens of a uniform system in their building programmes",⁵⁹ manufacturers could produce more pieces than were included in the total order, giving the individual buyer the opportunity to purchase a modern kitchen.⁶⁰ Tancig's own search for a pragmatic solution, to make modern (kitchen) furniture more widely available, also reflects the reality of economic conditions at the time, when the supply of consumer goods on the market was still not keeping pace with demand, which was increasing due to rising purchasing power. The slow adaptation of industrial

house "18 – 28 – 38", designed by Danilo Fürst, Fedor Škerlep, Marjan Ferjan and Danilo Jejčič. Third prize went to the "Inter" house, designed by architect Marjan Šorli and technician Jakob Dobrin. The first prize in the competition for rational home furniture went to the project with the code "SK" and the second prize to the project with the code "56", both by Niko Kralj. Both chairs were manufactured by Stol Kamnik. The third prize was awarded to the design studio of the Projektivni biro Tovarne pohištva Nove Gorice, a furniture factory in Nova Gorica. Only the third prize was awarded for designs of sanitary facilities. It went to the project with the code "IM 35" by technician Muhidin Ibrahimović from the company Arhitekt Sarajevo. In: Anonymous, "Izid natečajev", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 22, no. 86, 11.4.1956, p. 7.

57 bt, "Posvetovanje o sodobni stanovanjski izgradnji", *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 31–32, 1956, p. 99.

58 *Stan za naše prilike*, 1957 (see no. 51), p. 10.

59 Branka Tancig, "Kuhinja Centra za napredek gospodinjstva", *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 31–32, 1956, p. 114.

60 Ibid.





30–33

Photographs of the interior of the “Trata” House at the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* in a residential building known as the “Kozolec” in Ljubljana in 1956.

production to demand and, above all, the rigidity of trade, which reacted too slowly for various reasons (fragmentation, disorganisation, lack of interest in faster development), led to rising prices and increasing market volatility.⁶¹ This in turn also led to restricted access to consumer goods.

At the initiative of the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia,⁶² a two-day conference entitled *First Yugoslav Conference on Housing Construction and Housing* was held the day after the opening of the exhibition at the Union Hotel in Ljubljana, at which the deficits and challenges in housing construction and the maintenance of the housing stock were highlighted and, above all, suggestions for improvement were made.⁶³ The main focus was on the rationalisation of construction, standardisation enabling better accessibility, close cooperation between architects, contractors and the industry, and a

61 More in: Rendla, 2018 (see no. 3), p. 325.

62 On 29 May 1956, the 6th Annual Meeting of the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia took place in the Philharmonic Hall in Ljubljana, thus concluding the first days of this major federal event.

63 Anonymous, “Posvetovanje o stanovanjski gradnji”, *Arhitekt*, no. 20, 1956, p. 34.

holistic approach to housing construction, including urban planning and design as integral components. It was stressed that “housing construction is not just about building apartments, but also about the complex design of the territory.”⁶⁴ In line with architect Boris Gabršček’s premise that housing construction should take into account people and the comfort provided by private homes, emphasis was also placed on “psycho-hygienic housing conditions” that enable “rest, recreation and restoration of working capacity” and “facilitate the lives of working people, especially homemakers”.⁶⁵ The politician Vida Tomšič, who was president of the Women’s Antifascist Front (AFŽ) between 1948 and 1953, the forerunner of the Union of Women’s Associations⁶⁶ and one of the organisers of the exhibition, also gave a speech. She pointed out that the demand for housing comes primarily from families and that the question of how modern families live should take centre stage, as the function of a home is not only to provide a roof over one’s head but also to be a presence in the life of a family.⁶⁷ She also emphasised the importance of designing modern homes in such a way that women are relieved of the burden of housework: “Our homes must be designed in such a way that they do not enslave women to housework even more than before due to a lack of space and services.”⁶⁸ The political concept of housing communities was already partially put into practice at that time, particularly through the services that were set up (laundries, repair workshops, childcare services, etc.) to eliminate precisely this type of problem (unequal participation at all levels of social life) – and it was promoted at the highest level at the *Family and Household* exhibitions in Zagreb in 1958 and 1960.

Presentations of the Concept of the Housing Community in the Exhibitions *Family and Household*

Between 1957 and 1960, three exhibitions entitled *Family and Household* were organised at the new Zagreb Fair in Novi Zagreb.⁶⁹ The first *Family and Household* exhibition took the concept of the exhibition in Ljubljana as a source of inspiration.⁷⁰ However, the second exhibition in 1958 was not a mere repetition of the earlier, similar event, as the concept of the *Housing for Our Conditions* exhibition was extended to neighbourhoods and housing communities. This had already been

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 For more on the history of women’s associations see footnote no. 71.

67 Ibid., 1956 (see no. 57), p. 98.

68 Ibid.

69 Bjažič Klarin, 2020 (see no. 33), pp. 278–287.

70 Jasna Galjer, “Je li modernizam još uvijek aktualan?: Sraz realnosti i utopije na izložbama stanova 1950-ih u SFRJ-u”, in: Renata Novak Klemenčič and Martina Malešič (eds.), *Arhitekturna zgodovina 2*, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2014, p. 109.

hinted at in the exhibition in Ljubljana, through exhibition themes and texts, but had not yet been sufficiently developed and visualised as a central lever for improving living standards. Both the exhibition in Ljubljana and the exhibitions in Zagreb had a common format; they were divided into an educational and a commercial part, and had a similar way of presenting the content. However, while the *Housing for Our Conditions* exhibition focused on the ideas of modernisation and a new culture of living from the perspective of architecture and design as well as technological development, the *Family and Household* exhibitions dealt with lifestyle changes related to the social aspects of living in a community. This was closely linked to the efforts of women's organisations in particular and the government itself to ensure equality for all members of society and the emancipation of women in particular. Women's organisations⁷¹ often pointed out that underdeveloped households weakened the position of working women, who had difficulty integrating fully into economic and public life due to the double workload (housework alongside employment). They tackled this problem by influencing the organs of socialist self-management and the development of communes and the communal system.⁷²

The first exhibition *Family and Household* (1957) was organised on the initiative of the Union of Women's Associations of Yugoslavia⁷³

71 The Union of Women's Associations was the successor to AFŽ (founded in 1942), which was dissolved in 1953. Between 1953 and 1960, 42 women's associations were founded in Slovenia, which also dealt with solving housing problems, relieving the burden of housework, organising services, etc. In: Savez ženskih društev Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društev – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961, "Zveza ženskih društev Slovenije: poročilo o številčnem stanju, delu in pomenu ženskih društev v Sloveniji za obdobje od ustanavljanja ženskih društev pa do junija leta 1960, 22.4.1960, p. 5", AJ 345/6, AJ. On the role of women's associations after the Second World War see Mateja Jeraj, *Slovenke na prehodu v socializem: Vloga in položaj ženske v Sloveniji 1945–1953*, Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana, 2005, pp. 118–122; Ana Valič, "Delovanje ženskih družbeno-političnih organizacij med letoma 1945 in 1972 na Slovenskem" (bachelor's thesis), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2020, pp. 19–20; Ana Cergol Paradž and Irena Selišnik, "Akterke ženskega gibanja na socialnem področju: Kontinuitete in prelomi", *Socialno delo*, vol. 62, no. 2–3, 2023, pp. 120–128.

72 Savez ženskih društev Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društev – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961, "Poročilo Zveze ženskih društev Slovenije po IV. kongresu AFŽ, 27.1.1959, p. 2", AJ 345/6, AJ.

73 Archive documents on the organisation of the exhibition show that the Federal Council for Family and Household was founded in Belgrade in May 1957 on the initiative of the Trade Union Confederation of Yugoslavia and other social and economic organisations. It coordinated the activities of 29 social and economic organisations and institutions concerned with solving the problems of families and households. All organisations are listed, including the Union of Women's Associations of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Architects' Society. Each of them also appointed its own representative to this council. In: Savez ženskih društev Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društev – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961,

in cooperation with numerous co-organisers. Slovenian participation in the first exhibition was modest. Due to the very short time available for the preparation of the proposal, the Slovenian Architects' Society (DAS) limited their contribution to the selection of panels from the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* and recommended the organisers contact the architects directly if they wanted to discuss "the possibilities of improvisation with the interiors of their works on the basis of new floor plans".⁷⁴ The second *Family and Household* exhibition in 1958⁷⁵ focused on the idea of the housing community as a central theme of the socio-political agenda of the time. Alongside the workers' councils and the communes, the housing community was one of the fundamental units of self-management. It relied on the commitment of its residents and offered numerous social services to help people, especially families, organise their daily lives.⁷⁶

The exhibition was divided into five sections: "Housing Community – General Section", "Services and Children's Facilities in a Housing Community", "Individual Household", "Housing and Housing Construction", and "Trade and Industry".⁷⁷ The programme booklet listed the organisers and developers of the section concepts and described in detail the exhibition approaches and methods as well as the objectives, elements and exhibits of the section.⁷⁸ The exhibition consisted of seven themed pavilions and three children's playgrounds. The first pavilion, "Housing Community", organised by the Standing Conference

"O nekim aspektima aktivnosti saveznog organizacijskog odbora 'Porodica i domaćinstvo'", AJ 345/4/2029/1, AJ.

74 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, "Dopis Društva arhitektov Slovenije Zagrebškemu biroju I. Mednarodne revijalne razstave Družina in gospodinjstvo 1957, 2.8.1957", AS 1173/23.01–23.11, ARS.

75 The organising committee included: the Central Council of the Union of Women's Associations, the Union of Friends of Youth Associations, the Standing Conference of Towns of Yugoslavia, the federal and republican institutes for advancement of households, the Central Council of the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Red Cross, the National Technical Organisation, the Chambers of Industry, Commerce, Foreign Trade, Hospitality, Agriculture and other chambers, the Zagreb Fair, International and other institutes and organisations. Anonymous, "Velika mednarodna revijalna razstava 'Družina in gospodinjstvo 1958'", *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 56–57, 1958, p. 233.

76 Edvard Kardelj, "O nekim problemima stambene zajednice", *Progres*, vol. 3, no. 4–5, 1958, pp. 4–5. More in: Braco Mušič, *O stanovanjskih skupnostih kot urbanističnem elementu*, Urbanistični inštitut LR Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1960; Breda Mihelič, *Urbanistični razvoj Ljubljane*, Partizanska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1983, pp. 51–61; Jelica Jovanović, "Materializing the self-management: Tracking the commons in Yugoslav housing", in: Stavros Stavrides and Penny Travlou (eds.), *Housing as Commons: Housing Alternatives as Response to the Current Urban Crisis*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2022, pp. 209–232.

77 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, "Program II Mednarodne revijalne izložbe Porodica i domaćinstvo 1958, p. 2", SI AS 1173/14.01–14-09, ARS.

78 Ibid., pp. 1–16.



Janja Lap presents the project and model of an ideal neighbourhood for 5,000 residents to President Tito at the *Family and Household* exhibition at the Zagreb Fair in 1958.

of Towns of Yugoslavia, gave an insight into how everyday life of a housing community in a neighbourhood was organised. A model and a project of an ideal neighbourhood for 5,000 inhabitants, the “Housing Community – General Section” of the republican committee Family and the Household, was exhibited in the entrance area (fig. 34). It was developed in the Ravnikar Seminar at the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, University of Ljubljana, under the direction of architect Edvard Ravnikar and Janja Lap, the head of the design studio.⁷⁹ The presentation also included the investment costs and schematic representations of the organisation and infrastructure of the neighbourhood. The concept of a neighbourhood with a limited number of residents, balanced public programmes and services and well-planned internal organisation represented a systemic, urban and programmatic vision that was intended to serve as a design methodology rather than a project for direct application, as a model for other neighbourhoods and communities.⁸⁰

79 The seminar was attended by Mitja Jernejec, Majda Dobravec, Janez Lajovic and Janja Lap. Mihelič, 1983 (see no. 76), p. 55; Mušič, 1960 (see no. 76), p. 6. Vladimir Brezar explains that “the idea and later even the doctrine of the residential neighbourhood was born precisely in Prof. Ravnikar’s seminar”, in: Vladimir Brezar, “Vloga šole za arhitekturo”, *AB*, no. 68–69, 1984, p. 27.

80 The 1958 *Housing Community Act* defined housing communities as self-managing units of a planned area, whereby the neighbourhood became the spatial unit of the

The exhibition thus not only showed existing achievements, such as examples of already completed housing complexes in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana and other Yugoslav cities,⁸¹ but also the development path of housing communities in the future, which would enable equal inclusion of all family members in society through the so-called socialisation⁸² of domestic work. By presenting a model of a residential neighbourhood for 5,000 people, in which people would live as if in a harmonious city (and not just in a “workers” neighbourhood that only includes the categories of workplace and home),⁸³ with all available infrastructure, the aim was to demonstrate the advantages of such a holistic approach to planning and living in residential neighbourhoods. In an issue of *Progres*⁸⁴ magazine entitled *Stambena zajednica*, published to coincide with the exhibition, it was also emphasised that “the concept of the neighbourhood, which is a complete unit in terms of urban planning and programme, allows us to think and work more realistically than before”.⁸⁵ The programme of the residential neighbourhood, as offered in the presentation, was based on the distinction of three zones, which were intended to meet the different needs and wishes of the residents. These ranged from the more urban centre with the associated infrastructure to the more compact residential section in the middle to the so-called “flexible area of individual single-family houses”⁸⁶ with equally large plots that could be adapted to individual use.

The main objectives of the exhibition, however, were not only concerned with the problem of economic and rational housing construction, the rationalisation and mechanisation of work in individual households and the possibilities of influencing the development of production, consumption and the selling of products for families and households.⁸⁷ Its underlying goals were much more ambitious, namely

housing community, which in turn managed the functioning of the neighbourhood. In: Martina Malešič, “Od naselja do sošeske in od parka do ulice”, in: Luka Skansi (ed.), *Soseske in ulice: Vladimir Braco Mušič in arhitektura velikega merila*, Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana, 2016, p. 40. See also Mušič, 1960 (see no. 76), p. 4. and Mitja Jernejec, “Stanovanjsko naselje danes in jutri”, *Človek in stanovanje*, Urbanistični inštitut LRS, Ljubljana, 1962, p. 54.

81 Galjer, 2014 (see no. 70), p. 111.

82 The term “socialisation” was used in an article in the special issue of the magazine *Progres* published on the occasion of the exhibition: Anonymous, “Stambena zajednica – opšti prikaz”, *Progres*, vol. 3, no. 4–5, 1958, p. 8.

83 Anonymous, “Nastanak programa stambene zajednice”, *Progres*, vol. 3, no. 4–5, 1958, p. 30.

84 The photo report on the everyday life of an average working-class family of four (a smaller cell of a housing community), with one school-age child and another attending kindergarten, clearly showed the advantages of living in a housing community.

85 Anonymous, “Stambena zajednica ...”, 1958 (see no. 82), p. 30.

86 Ibid.

87 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “Program II Međunarodne revijalne izložbe Porodica i domaćinstvo” (see no. 77), p. 6.

to influence the development of new forms of social relationships in a housing community through self-organisation that could relieve the burden on working families.⁸⁸ The services designed to achieve this aim had already been presented at the first *Family and Household* exhibition in 1957⁸⁹ and were given their own section, “Services and Children’s Facilities in a Housing Community”, in the second exhibition. Formally, these were “public institutions (within housing communities) for the collective provision of services to families and households within the community”.⁹⁰ The exhibition clearly reflected current realities and a new social policy,⁹¹ as these services already existed in some places and became increasingly common with the establishment of housing communities after 1958. Prior to this, some of these tasks had already been taken over by associations for the advancement of households or women’s organisations,⁹² which made great efforts to organise various services.⁹³ Thus, a number of services emerged in the mid-1950s, such as soup kitchens, associations of friends of youth offering childcare, offices for household assistance, etc. Their aim was not only to develop activities to relieve the burden on working women, but also to develop activities where unemployed women could

find at least occasional employment.⁹⁴ These ranged from childcare services, school meals, public nutrition, laundries, mending workshops and so on. The associations were more or less successful in this respect; some services (e.g. sewing services) even developed into independent enterprises.⁹⁵ Their activities were based on voluntary labour and the associations’ own resources, which was not a sustainable model in the long term. The *Family and Household* exhibition from 1958 also presented a model for financing services that is partly self-sufficient and partly supported by state subsidies. Self-organisation in a housing community was to be financed by self-imposed contribution, for which there was still no legal basis in the 1950s, by subsidies from political-territorial units, by a combination of personal contributions and subsidies and by organised saving.⁹⁶ This was also to be achieved through the expected stronger economic growth, which would enable the co-financing of services and thus an increase in living standards.⁹⁷

The idea of a housing community, as presented at the exhibition in 1958, was a model that showed the possibilities of integrated and, above all, more complex development not only in the field of urban planning and housing construction but also in the creation of new social relations with emancipatory potential. A year after the exhibition, Živa Beltram, the head of the Institute for Advancement of Households in Ljubljana at the end of the 1950s, wrote that “the advancement of the household is no longer just a question of education, pointing out the importance of healthy nutrition, modern tools and appliances, but has become a question of a new, higher organisation of household work on a very broad scale. The decision of our state and political leaders to give as many citizens as possible the opportunity to better organise their lives by setting up housing communities and services has presented our institutions with an enormous challenge.”⁹⁸

88 Ibid., p. 5.

89 “Anketa o mišljenju posjetilaca sa I. međunarodne revijalne izložbe ‘Porodica i domaćinstvo 1957’; Međunarodna revijalna izložba ‘Porodica i domaćinstvo’, Anketna služba, 1957, p. 14.”; MAO A/ER/16, Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana. In this survey, visitors were asked – in a somewhat ambiguously worded question – to name some of the services presented that they thought could be useful to them.

90 Ibid., p. 14.

91 The new social policy was based on the guidelines of the *7th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia*, which emphasised that “social policy in our society is being transformed into concern for everything that creates a better and more comfortable life for people.” In: Anonymous, “Servisi stambenih zajednica”, *Progres*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1958, p. 70.

92 The magazine *Progres* stated that the first services were only set up on the initiative of the Union of Women’s Associations. Ibid., p. 70. After 1958, most of the tasks of the mentioned associations, as well as the already established services, were placed under the auspices of housing communities, which were established in most Slovenian municipalities at the time. As a result, many associations for the advancement of households and women’s associations ceased their activities. More in: Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društava – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961, “Zveza ženskih društev Slovenije: Poročilo o številčnem stanju, delu in pomenu ženskih društev v Sloveniji za obdobje od ustanavljanja ženskih društev pa do junija letos 1960, 22.IV.1960, pp. 1–11” in “Poročilo Zveze ženskih društev Slovenije po IV. kongresu AFŽ, 27.1.1959, pp. 1–16”, AJ 345/6, AJ.

93 A sewing workshop in Ljubljana, which had been in operation since 1955, was seen as an example of a model service that could also be used elsewhere. See Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društava – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961, “Zapisnik organizacijskega dela ustanovnega občnega zbora Zveze ženskih društev Slovenije, dne 13. decembra 1955, p. 6”, AJ 345/6, AJ.

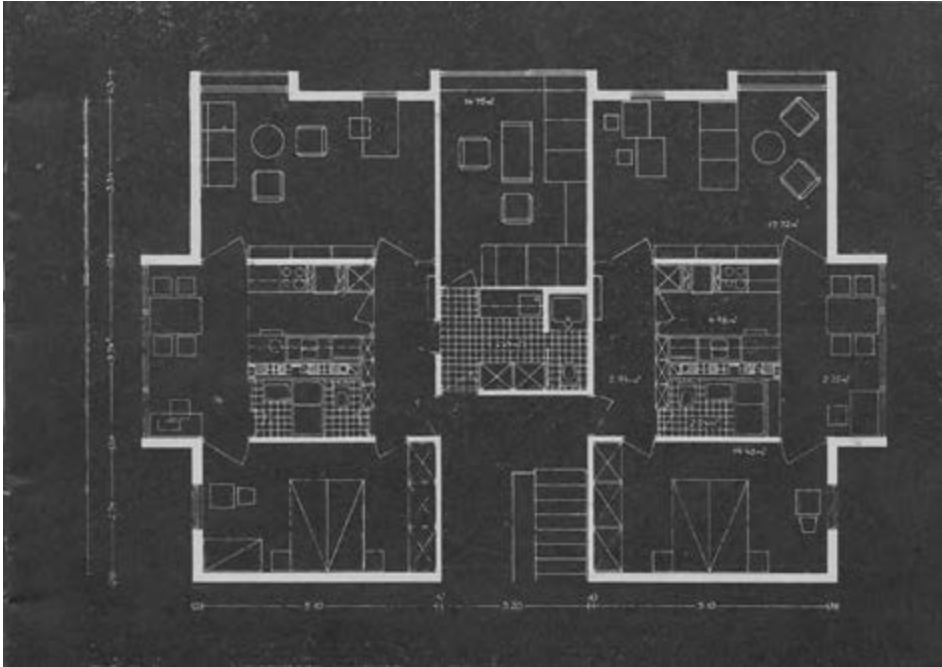
94 Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), Materijali republičkog saveza ženskih društava – Makedonije, Slovenije i Srbije, 1954–1961, “II. ocena društava, p. 1.”, AJ 345/6, AJ.

95 The Celje Women’s Association reported that it had set up a sewing service that had developed into an independent enterprise. The Association for Advancement of Households Maribor reported in 1960 that the mending workshop and the children’s clothes shop had developed into a worker-managed enterprise. It also pointed out that its numerous activities went beyond the concerns of women and that the problems were solved with the workforce and resources of the association alone, in: Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije (SŽDJ), “II. ocena društava” (see no. 94), pp. 14, 16.

96 Zveza arhitektov Slovenije, “Program II Međunarodne revijalne izložbe Porodica i domaćinstvo” (see no. 77), p. 7.

97 See Anonymous, “Stambena zajednica ...”, 1958 (see no. 82), p. 71.

98 Živa Beltram, “Zavodi za napredek gospodinjstva dobivajo svoje pravo mesto”, *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 11–12, 1959, p. 306.



35

An article from the magazine *Čovjek i prostor* featuring various housing models at the exhibition *Family and Household* at the Zagreb Fair in 1958.

36–37

Floor plan and kitchen of a model apartment from the housing towers (Savsko naselje) in Ljubljana, designed by architects Milan Mihelič and Ilija Arnautović, at the *Family and Household* exhibition at the Zagreb Fair in 1958.

The most popular pavilion at the exhibition was the “Housing and Housing Construction” pavilion. It presented nine types of dwellings from the five Yugoslav republics – Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia – ranging from one-person apartments to four- or five-person apartments (fig. 35).⁹⁹ The 1:1 scale models, which were between 31 and 63 square metres in size, were furnished like real apartments: with doors and windows, bathroom and kitchen fittings, fitted wardrobes, furniture and other furnishings. The Belgrade architecture studio Atelje 4 (Đorđe Krekić, Branko Babić, Zvonimir Veber) presented a one-bedroom and two two-bedroom apartments. The architect Vladimir Zarahovič, from Sarajevo, presented a two-bedroom and a two-and-a-half-bedroom apartment. The architects

⁹⁹ Andrija Mutnjaković, “Stambena problematika u okviru II. međunarodne izložbe ‘Porodica i domaćinstvo 1958’”, *Čovjek i prostor*, no. 79, 1958, p. 4.



Dimitar Dimitrov and Slavko Brezovski, from Skopje, presented a three-bedroom apartment. The Institute for Housing Construction of Slovenia showed an already built model flat from the housing towers in Ljubljana (Savsko naselje, 1957–1962) by architects Milan Mihelič and Ilija Arnautović whose design – around a centrally located sanitary duct core – represented a considerable rationalisation of the construction and enabled a high degree of flexibility (figs. 36–37). The Croatian presentation focused on fully furnished two- and three-room apartments by architect Bernardo Bernardi. The flexible floor plan of Bernardi's design allowed for a variety of combinations within the unit, which was achieved by creating a rational spatial unit of so-called deep apartments.¹⁰⁰ Bernardi moved the ancillary rooms to the interior of the floor plan (the room depth is 14 metres), thus enlarging the living area, which was further enhanced by a loggia.

The exhibition was visited by an impressive 1,250,000 visitors. According to surveys conducted, 77.5% of 40,000 respondents were in favour of modern furniture design.¹⁰¹ The furniture available on the market at the time was thirty years old or older and unsuitable for new, smaller homes¹⁰² or the new lifestyle. In addition to the lack of modern furniture on the market, a bigger problem was the inflexibility of the retail sector, which could not keep up with the demand for consumer goods in the 1950s.

This orientation and the aim of harmonising the development of families and households with socialist development in other areas of society was also pursued by the last exhibition *Family and Household* in 1960. In contrast to the previous exhibition, the introductory pavilion "Housing Community"¹⁰³ presented the community model with designs, models, photos and diagrams of the organisation of work in 18 existing housing communities from Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split, Rijeka, Sisak and other cities.¹⁰⁴ This served to demonstrate, through media exposure, a model that works in practice, as well as all the benefits of living in an organised community where services are used to create an environment that meets numerous living, housing and other social needs. These ideas were complemented by the

100 Iva Ceraj, *Bernardo Bernardi: Design Work of an Architect 1951–1985*, Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Hrvatski muzej arhitekture, Zagreb, 2015, p. 78.

101 Galjer, 2014 (see no. 70), p. 114.

102 The floor space of the apartments in the housing towers Savsko naselje in Ljubljana was 52.87 m² in a two-room apartment, 66.61 m² in a three-room apartment and 21.30 m² in a studio.

103 The other pavilions were named: "Department of Family and the Household", "Housing and Housing Construction", "Household Services", "Children's Facilities", "Meal Provision", "Modern Trade and Supply", "We at Rest", "Family and the Household in the Village".

104 Anonymous, "Družina in gospodinjstvo 1960", *Sodobno gospodinjstvo*, no. 77, 1960, p. 130.

"Housing and Housing Construction" pavilion, where eight furnished model apartments were on display.

As part of the third *Family and Household* exhibition in 1960, the organising committee of the "Housing and Housing Construction" pavilion launched an open competition for the "apartment of the near future", which was to provide a housing model that could be easily adapted to the dynamics of everyday life.¹⁰⁵ The very wording of the competition title points to the need to create a new building typology that meets the requirements of an age in which the apartment had become the epitome of comfortable living. The committee unanimously honoured the proposal under the code "00200" by Bernardo Bernardi with collaborators Milica Rosenberg and Adam Petranović.¹⁰⁶ The proposal was presented at a scale of 1:1 on 62.18 m² and pursued the goals of affordability, adaptability and the enhancement of modern living culture made possible by this type of design with all its functional and aesthetic implications.

Conclusion

Large federal exhibitions such as the *Housing for Our Conditions* exhibition and the three *Family and Household* exhibitions were an integral part of the affirmation of the political orientation that placed housing at the centre of its social policy. At the same time, they were also manifestations of the activities and principles of the architectural profession. The exhibitions were aimed both at the general public (end consumers) and at business and industry, which was the main contractor. Individual sections of these exhibitions focused on bringing visitors closer to new developments in both housing construction and interior design through direct experience. The so-called didactic exhibitions presented new housing concepts using 1:1 scale model apartments designed by the architects. These were created primarily due to the housing shortage prevailing at the time, which is why rationalisation through well-designed rooms, made possible by the differentiation of floor plans,¹⁰⁷ proved to be the most sensible solution. Both politicians and architects argued for an appropriate minimum standard of housing quality for all, which was to be realised through mass-produced minimal apartments with standardised basic furnishings,¹⁰⁸ whereby the savings per square metre would be sufficient to finance the interior fittings (built-in wardrobes, kitchen, fitted bathroom). Through the medium of the exhibition, a functional apartment

105 More in: Vladimir Turina, "Fizionomija jednog javnog arhitektonskog natečaja", *Čovjek i prostor*, vol. 7, no. 96, 1960, pp. 1–3.

106 More in: Ceraj, 2015 (see no. 100), pp. 87–94; Bjažić Klarin, 2020 (see no. 33), p. 285.

107 About this in: Ravnikar, 1953 (see no. 12), p. 14.

108 Anonymous, "Natečaj za stanovanjske bloke v Ljubljani, avgust – oktober 1955", *Arhitekt*, no. 18–19, 1956, p. 18.

with rationally designed standardised furniture and furnishings became a means of promoting progress and a modern lifestyle. The approach, based on the analysis of human or social needs, was later extended to the concept of holistically conceived and designed housing communities, which were elaborated and showcased at the 1958 *Family and Household* exhibition as an urban and progressive social model for the planning of a built neighbourhood.

In the 1950s, exhibitions of furniture, model apartments and housing communities were a reflection of current social conditions. They had an educational function, reflected the ideas of a progressive housing policy and were the carriers and promoters of important social changes that influenced further social development. All four federal exhibitions were, above all, a training ground for finding and presenting solutions to current societal needs. The *Family and Household* exhibitions in 1958 and 1960 presented a vision of the future that also addressed the broader social issue of equal inclusion in society. The concept of the self-sufficient neighbourhood incorporates the idea of humanism, which starts from the core and smallest cell of society – the family – whose members become active members of society as their standard of living rises, both through labour productivity and wider socio-cultural engagement. Although the model home exhibitions, in addition to their didactic function, also strongly promoted industrial mass production and consumption, this concept transcended solely economic considerations and became, above all, a vehicle for the democratic idea of quality living conditions for all people in socialist society, regardless of their social status.

Vladimir Vidmar

Almost America: Travelling Visual Art Exhibitions from the USA at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Between 1953 and 1979



The initial starting point for reflecting on the exceptionally rich corpus of American art exhibitions presented in socialist Yugoslavia from the early 1950s until the end of the 1970s are the two countries themselves, explicitly interested in cultural exchange, which recognised cultural diplomacy as a crucial mechanism of foreign policy manoeuvring. Leaning on the local iteration of high modernism – a cultural movement that the capitalist world, in the ideological game of the Cold War, promoted as a herald of freedom, progress and the future – Yugoslavia sought to present itself in its relations with the US in precisely that light. Thus, it hoped to shape and maintain its specific “third way” position in the precarious geopolitical juggling between the two ideologically opposing camps. The US, on the other hand, accepted this game and used it to its own advantage. By exporting their cultural goods, they consciously and deftly implanted their cultural phenomena, including their value system, into other countries – the fundamentally non-capitalist Yugoslav society notwithstanding.¹ Here the Yugoslav art system proved a very receptive ally, as it faithfully adhered to the value categories of the Western art system. The new socialist state failed to decisively articulate and implement its own specific model of cultural production, so the Yugoslav visual art scene – after a brief period of more direct influence of Soviet cultural models² – continued its orientation towards the Western models that it had opted for in its previous state formations.

Exhibitions of American art, which were a regular feature of the Yugoslav cultural offer since the early 1950s, played an important role

- 1 The procedures of the American foreign cultural policy were gradually revealed already during the Cold War while in-depth, comprehensive and individual studies of the phenomenon have been gaining visibility from the late 1990s onwards, for example, Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York, 2000. The interest in the topic has not waned and has expanded beyond narrow academic circles. For example, in 2023, Amei Wallach's film *Taking Venice* addressed the role of American cultural policy in awarding the 1964 Venice Biennale Grand Prize to Robert Rauschenberg. This is significant in the light of this study, because the same artist won the award at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts a year earlier. For the first comprehensive study about Yugoslavia's response to the US Cold War cultural policy and the “Americanisation” in the field of culture, see Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam: Amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 2012.
- 2 To understand this brief era in Slovenia, see the chapter by Katarina Mohar, “Exchange of Fine Art Exhibitions Between the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Soviet Union” in this book, pp. 28–66. For a general overview of the Yugoslav shift from the Soviet cultural model to the cultural policy that enabled the intensive connections between the Yugoslav and US cultural sectors discussed in this chapter, see Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in: Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 59–90. For an overview of visual art production and events that critically includes the Americanisation and American

in this process.³ The dissemination of American artistic models through organised exhibition tours was a part of the broader protocol of Cold War “soft power” strategies.⁴ It relied on the strategies used to expand American political influence, including the systematic and planned export of cultural content from both high culture and mass culture.⁵ A key role was played by the US diplomatic network, particularly the government propaganda agency of the US government, the United States Information Service (USIS), which operated through an extensive network of branches affiliated with US embassies around the world. The USIS represented the propaganda extension of the US diplomatic network and through its four departments – informative programmes, cultural content, media and film – consistently promoted the key ideological aspects of the American way of life. The USIS activities were very well-developed, expansive and well-financed.

influence in Slovenia and Croatia, and wider, see Jure Mikuž, *Slovensko moderno slikarstvo in zahodna umetnost: Od preloma s socialističnim realizmom do konceptualizma*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1995; *Socializam i modernost: Umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950.–1974.*, Ljiljana Kolečnik (ed.), Muzej suvremene umjetnosti and Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2012.

- 3 In addition to the studies about individual exhibitions, Stefana Djokic was the one who most comprehensively studied the phenomenon of the American-Yugoslav visual art exchange, particularly in Stefana Djokic, “Art and Politics: The Role of Art in US-Yugoslav Relations During the Cold War (1948–1970)” (doctoral dissertation), The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 2022. Two people in Slovenia studied this exchange in more detail: Gregor Dražil with “*Menedžer da sem? Sem.*”: *Zoran Kržišnik in začetki prodiranja slovenske moderne umetnosti na zahodno likovno prizorišče*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2020; Nadja Zgonik, “Jugoslovska socialistična umetnost na ameriškem trgu: Primer prodajne galerije Adria Art v New Yorku 1967–1968”, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo*, vol. 49, no. 283, 2021, pp. 30–43. See also lecture: Asta Vrečko, “Razstavljanje likovne umetnosti ZDA na Slovenskem v 60. letih”, igorzabel.org, 22.4.2022, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvOsRhCM3-Q> (accessed 30.6.2025).
- 4 For the concept of “soft power”, see Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, New York, 1990.
- 5 In their cultural policy, the US employed the exhibition format across a broad spectrum, ranging from exhibiting hermetic high art to glittery American consumerism, including entire supermarkets, for example, as a part of the large trade fair exhibitions. For this reason, these seemingly diverse manifestations should be read in relation to one another. At the Zagreb Fair in 1967, the Americans exhibited a supermarket, and then transferred it to Belgrade as a functioning supermarket. Radina Vučetić, “Potrošačko društvo po američkom modelu (jedan pogled na jugoslavensku svakodnevicu šezdesetih)”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2012, pp. 291–292 and throughout. Several similar projects also arrived in Slovenia; due to their proximity to design and visual culture, it is worth mentioning the exhibitions that took place at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre: *The Art of Design in the USA (Umetnost oblikovanja v ZDA)* in 1959 and *Advertising in the USA (Oglaševanje v ZDA)* in 1960, the latter of which also travelled to the Maribor Art Gallery. Bogdan Pogačnik, “Umetnost industrijskega oblikovanja”, *Delo*, vol. 1, no. 152, 2.10.1959, p. 5. *Informator*, Društvo likovnih umetnikov uporabne umetnosti Slovenije (DLUUUS), 1961, p. 11.

They included expanding the impact of American artistic production, often through preparing travelling exhibitions that presented the most current, “modern”, and up-to-date visual art production.⁶

These mechanisms are of key importance to the present chapter, as they merge the aggressive cultural imperialism of the United States on the one hand, and, on the other, the receptiveness of the Yugoslav cultural scene to the products of the capitalist art system and the implementation of its influence, both on the levels of the immediate cultural production and of structural and ideological dimensions. The US recognised modern art as a potential Trojan horse for unloading the ideological cargo into Yugoslavia through seemingly neutral content. At the same time, the local art scene perceived Western influences as the only relevant criterion and persistently tried to shape the local art system according to the Western model.⁷

The art exhibition thus represented a very direct input of the integral, “rounded” cultural product into foreign environments, in our case, a country with a different ideological orientation. In practice, this meant that the exhibition, in terms of concept, content and participating artists, was prepared in the United States. That regularly involved the most eminent American institutions and cultural workers, curators and other art professionals. Contextualisation was usually provided in the form of accompanying essays, brochures and catalogues; it often also included lectures by American experts and screenings of educational films related to the exhibition. Such an “exhibition package” was then sent to the “consumers” abroad, to the interested, ideologically more or less distant countries or their cultural institutions.⁸

- 6 Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008; *Public Diplomacy: Looking Back, Looking Forward – A Commemoration*, The United States Information Agency, Washington, DC, 1999.
- 7 Beti Žerovc, “Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?”, in: Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 375–397. Žerovc emphasises that the purpose of this policy and the ideological matrix supporting it was not only to export its ideology but also, at the same time, to discredit any type of anti-capitalist, collectivist systems and thinking: these were, on the one hand, painted as limiting to freedom and, on the other, as inhibiting serious creations. In this context, modernist abstract art was seen as some sort of litmus test, able to gauge the level of democracy and freedom in a particular state. Žerovc succinctly sums up this ideological matrix that not only spreads specific ideology and destroys the “opponent” but also prevents their inclusion and success in the desired, seemingly universal Western artistic canon. See Barbara Smajila, “Intervju z Beti Žerovc: Futuristični spomeniki Jugoslavije – trojanski konj kapitalizma?”, *n1info.si*, 16.2.2025, URL: <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/futuristicni-spomeniki-jugoslavije-trojanski-konj-kapitalizma> (accessed 30.6.2025).
- 8 A broad palette of different agencies that worked under the auspices of the CIA, the legal and illegal modes of influence and their targets are defined in the

The itinerary of these exhibitions was often not fixed in advance. Most often, their touring schedule adapted to the situation in the field, making the most of politically favourable moments, possibilities that opened on the go and the responsiveness of the targeted institutions. In this way, many of them also arrived in Yugoslavia.⁹ Ljubljana was often the entry point and the first stop on the Yugoslav part of the tour for exhibitions of graphic art, which are discussed in the first chapter. The exhibitions of paintings, tackled in the second chapter, mostly arrived via Belgrade or Zagreb and are of later date. They were more clearly defined in terms of style and offered the Yugoslav audience, among other things, insight into Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, the two phenomena, which, with their ideological and referential framework rooted in individualism and consumerism, were seen as essentially contradictory to the values of a socialist society. A similar ideological dissonance applies to the exhibitions presented in Chapter Three, which expands the focus to include exhibitions of applied arts. With these, the question of a direct clash between capitalist imaginary and socialist values becomes even sharper.

aforementioned book by Frances Stonor Saunders. She meticulously follows how the proponents of intellectual freedom were co-opted into the international network of the ideological collaborators of the US administration and its anti-communist agenda. Saunders, 2000 (see no. 1), pp. 5–115. The collection of essays *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War* records the different parapolitical activities and projects of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Besides the format of an exhibition, which is the focus of this chapter, the CCF engaged in various activities to support different formats of launching and disseminating desired ideological patterns, such as magazines, conferences, contemporary music and theatre productions, etc. In this way, the CCF systematically and methodically created ideological fronts and operated according to worldviews that fit its agendas. See “A Chronological List of Activities of the CCF and IACF”, in: Anselm Franke et al. (eds.), *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt and Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2021, pp. 22–25; Antonia Majaca, “Odysseus of the Nimble Wits: The Spirits of Totalitarianism and the Cultural Cold War’s Entscheidungsproblem”, in: Anselm Franke et al. (eds.), *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt and Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2021, pp. 123–149.

9 This is how the very first and most illustrious exhibition of American art of the 20th century came to Yugoslavia, but it didn’t make it all the way to Ljubljana. Ljiljana Kolešnik writes that: “The exhibition *Modern Art in the U.S.A.* – a smaller-scope version of the exhibition *50 Years of Art in the United States of America: Collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (50 ans d’art aux États-Unis: Collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York)* which was mounted in Paris in 1955, was scheduled to finish its European tour in Vienna in 1956, after stops in Zurich, Barcelona, Frankfurt, London and The Hague. The organiser’s rather sudden decision to extend the tour to Belgrade in July and August of that year should, in my view, be seen as part of the effort to strengthen the American presence in Yugoslavia, following the re-establishment of Yugoslav-Soviet relations a year earlier, which were further strengthened by Tito’s visit to Moscow in June 1956.” Kolešnik, 2023 (see no. 2), p. 75. About the exhibition, also see footnote 76; about the relationships between the diplomatic manoeuvres and travelling exhibitions see footnote 132.

Using the sample of representative group exhibitions created within the broad and multifaceted project of spreading American cultural and political influence, the text examines the openness of Slovenian institutions and individuals to exhibitions of American art. These exhibitions provided an opportunity to not only learn about the most recent and progressive artistic phenomena of the time and to engage with them on the artistic level but also to become acquainted with how they were established, exhibited and institutionalised.¹⁰ Despite the frequent ideological and general discrepancy between the phenomena of American art and art system and the premises of the socialist Yugoslav state, the state did not suppress their influence – at least not directly. On the contrary, it often tried to use them to show its openness and modernity, both outwardly and inwardly.¹¹ We would nevertheless be hard pressed to claim that the Yugoslav state and the visual art scene were uncritical of American artistic influences – the responses from the critical public as well as public officials clearly testify they understood the discrepancies – but they most certainly underestimated the efficiency of the ideological apparatus into which the imported phenomena were embedded. In that respect the influence of the prominent protagonists in the Yugoslav art system would prove decisive, as they were engaged in ongoing dialogue with the state’s decision-making structures that trusted them, but also constantly searched for footholds within the capitalist art system.¹² The visiting US exhibitions were thus an excellent opportunity for them to build and deepen ties with the US art clique and to align the Yugoslav scene as closely as possible with the premises of the Western art system, that is, the American art system, which had become its post-war core. In that respect they were quite successful throughout

10 Mimicking Americans went so far that even the key museum for modern art in the country, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, was designed and built under a strong US influence. Its director, Miodrag B. Protić, in particular, developed the 1958-designed museum that opened in 1965 in consultation with the then director of the MoMA, René d’Harnoncourt, and its previous director, Alfred H. Barr. Protić spent several months conceiving the museum in New York. See Zoran Erić, *50 umetnika iz zbirke Muzeja savremene umetnosti: Jugoslovenska umetnost 1951–1989 / 50 Artists of the Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art: Yugoslav Art from 1951 to 1989*, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 2016, p. 31.

11 Vučetić, 2012 (see no. 1), pp. 6–15. Nadja Zgonik describes how creating the “image” of the country at the same time leaned on ideological concepts of social justice stemming from Marxism, and standard social welfare which had its personification *par excellence* in the lifestyle that was embodied by the USA. Zgonik, 2021 (see no. 3), pp. 32–33.

12 Beti Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941”, in: Sanja Horvatinčić and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory and Archive Books, Ljubljana and Berlin, 2023, pp. 52–57.

the studied period; the entire Yugoslav visual art scene accepted American influences with sustained interest, the state permitted their consolidation within the broader cultural landscape and even provided some support for it, often at the expense of its own ideological message.¹³

The American group exhibitions that reached Slovenia, which are discussed in this chapter, have not yet been the subject of focused and systematic research. Although at least some of them visited several locations in Slovenia, the text will predominantly focus on their stops at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, and mention the rest of their documented Slovenian stops as needed. It is worth mentioning that the quantity of the American group exhibitions during the socialist period was so great that in Ljubljana alone, we can find venues that more or less regularly showcased contemporary American visual (or other) art production. For example, by 1979, the City Art Gallery (est. 1962) had shown *American Watercolours (Ameriški akvarel;* courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in New York – MoMA) in 1964, *Visual Arts Education in the USA (Likovno izobraževanje v ZDA)* in 1965, *American Psychedelic Poster (Ameriški psihadelični plakat)* in 1970, *Contemporary American Graphic Art (Sodobna ameriška grafika)* in 1972 and the *Selection of New American Graphic Design (Izbor novejšega ameriškega grafičnega oblikovanja)* in 1976.¹⁴ We must not forget that there were also exhibitions by individual artists that are not the subject of our research – in addition to the solo exhibitions by the winners of the Grand Prix of the graphic biennials at the subsequent biennials (regularly since 1959), and these were Americans several times. For example, the 1963 winner, Robert Rauschenberg, even had two exhibitions in 1965 in Ljubljana: one as the Grand Prix winner from the previous biennial at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, and another one at the City Art Gallery, where an exhibition package of Rauschenberg's illustrations on the topic of Dante's *Inferno*, which came from the MoMA, was exhibited.¹⁵

13 Vučetić, 2012 (see no. 1), pp. 6, 10, 14. Vučetić hints that the authorities consciously tolerated several phenomena of "Americanisation" as visible signs of the desired standard of living. She also draws attention to them because the emergence of Americanisation successfully crossed the borders of the federal republics (and the emerging ethnic antagonisms), and was, in a way, a unifying moment. Ibid., pp. 10, 14.

14 See "Razstave 1962–2012", in: Mateja Podlesnik (ed.), *Razstava: 50 let Mestne galerije v Ljubljani*, Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane, Ljubljana, 2013, pp. 83, 85, 89, 93.

15 Ibid., p. 85.

1. Ljubljana as the World Capital of Graphic Arts: Exhibitions of American Graphic Arts in the 1950s and 1960s

1.1 International Biennial of Contemporary Color Lithography in Cincinnati – The First Point in the Exhibition Exchange

The first group of exhibitions of US art in Slovenia were the exhibitions of graphic arts. Graphic art was the first and, for a long time, the most dominant medium through which Americans were introduced to the Slovenian visual art audience. The story of the American graphic arts exhibitions is largely parallel to the story of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and the life project of the curator and art historian Zoran Kržišnik: the establishment of Ljubljana as the international centre of graphic arts. The text thus follows the exhibitions of American graphic arts parallel to the presence of the American artists at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, particularly in the 1950s and the 1960s. We will focus on travelling American exhibitions that reached Ljubljana through a combination of networks, those of the US propaganda machine and the professional networks of the Slovenian and American protagonists of the art system, particularly the already mentioned director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Zoran Kržišnik.¹⁶

This segment will look at the first two exhibitions in this series. Linked to the establishment of a long-term collaboration between Kržišnik and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana with the Cincinnati Art Museum, they were a part of a broader, reciprocal exhibition exchange between Ljubljana and the USA.¹⁷ The Museum of Modern

16 The key person behind the exhibition exchange between Yugoslavia and the USA in the 1950s was the then curator of the Cincinnati Art Museum Gustave Von Groschwitz (1906–1991). Von Groschwitz completed his studies in art history on the topic of the development of colour lithography in the 19th century, and remained attached to the graphic medium throughout his career. In the 1930s, he led the graphics art division at the Federal Art Project in New York and, before arriving in Cincinnati, he was curator of prints at Wesleyan University. He also organised big international exhibitions, such as the Carnegie International, when he moved on to his next role as the director of Pittsburgh Museum of Art. "Von Groschwitz, Gustave", *aspace.lib.uiowa.edu*, URL: <https://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/agents/people/257> (accessed 9.7.2025). Even a cursory look at Von Groschwitz's biography shows his experience with large projects of the US government, which can at least hypothetically be read in relation to his engagement in American-Yugoslav exhibition exchanges.

17 According to Von Groschwitz, his impromptu visit to Ljubljana in 1955 and the deep impression that the first edition of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts left on him triggered the later intense exchange between the institution that he led with the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and the Yugoslav visual art scene (Gustave Von Groschwitz, "Uvod", *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija: Izbor iz III. Biennale v Cincinnatiju U.S.A.* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1956, pp. 7–8). We explore Von Groschwitz's participation in the Biennale juries in footnote 67, while the chapter "Reverse Views: Yugoslavs in the USA" (pp. 177–182) touches upon his

Art in Ljubljana maintains an extensive archive of the circumstances surrounding the conception of the mentioned exhibitions, which includes a variety of materials. This demonstrates systematic efforts on the part of both the sender and the recipient to bring exhibitions to Yugoslavia, presenting them in various towns and venues, thereby popularising the graphic art medium and expanding its influence.¹⁸ The interests of the American side and Kržišnik aligned fully on this point, supported by a very similar line of reasoning: graphic art is a flexible medium and an excellent intermediary between painting and the general public; graphic prints are financially accessible and economical, easily distributed and circulated; graphic art, with its commercial orientation, efficiently spreads the modernist expression; and, finally, graphic art is a medium with great potential for artistic experiments.¹⁹ All this was directly and without reservation stated also by the Cincinnati Art Museum in their press releases when opening the *Second International Biennial of Contemporary Color Lithography* in 1952, a selection from which then circulated as a travelling exhibition and reached Ljubljana.²⁰

A travelling exhibition titled *International Exhibition of Color Lithography (Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije)* was thus hosted in the most eminent halls of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana between 20 July and 9 August 1953.²¹ Although the selection of artists was international, we're including it at the beginning of the overview of American exhibition projects in Slovenia, as it was not only the first in the series of presentations of the Cincinnati biennial in the country but also one of the first contacts of the post-war Ljubljana audience with contemporary American art. What is more, there were many American artists among the exhibitors and, with the next "edition" of the travelling selection from the Cincinnati biennial, this collaboration became a presentation of (just) US graphic arts production. Another important figure to reinforce the ties with Cincinnati, besides Zoran Kržišnik,²² was the painter and graphic artist Riko Debenjak, whose

introduction of Yugoslav graphic arts to the American audience in the 1950s. For a detailed study of that see Jennifer Noonan, "A Two-Way Street: International Print-making Exchanges Between Yugoslavia and The United States at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Beyond, 1950–1990", in: Nevenka Šivavec and Gregor Dražil (eds.), *70 let Grafičnega bienala Ljubljana: Zbornik / 70 Years of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts: A Reader*, Mednarodni grafični in likovni center, Ljubljana, 2025, pp. 271–309.

18 See footnote 26.

19 Folder Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, Subfolder Različna korespondenca, "Poročilo Cincinnati art museum", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

20 Ibid.

21 *Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1953.

22 The preserved correspondence shows that the ties between Kržišnik and the museum in Cincinnati go back to at least 1951, because Kržišnik, as the director of the Museum

works were selected for three editions of the biennial in Cincinnati.²³ His prints were also part of the travelling selection from the second Cincinnati biennial and the Cincinnati Art Museum bought some of his exhibited works for its collection. The Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana archive keeps a telling letter from 1952 in which the curator Gustave Von Groschwitz, in addition to listing the technical details regarding the purchase of Debenjak's work, also offered him the possibility of touring the selection from the second Cincinnati biennial in Yugoslavia. He asked Debenjak to convey the offer to the interested museums in the country.²⁴ Because the tour did in fact reach Yugoslavia in the following year, we are justified in thinking that Debenjak played an important role in it.²⁵

The selection of 74 works featured in the *International Exhibition of Color Lithography* exhibition toured London, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, West Berlin, Groningen and Vienna. The exhibition's stop in Yugoslavia was not a part of the original plan – which, as explained in the beginning, was not unusual for US travelling exhibitions as their itinerary often changed on the go: some planned visits were cancelled and, at the same time, new ones were arranged.²⁶ The exhibition featured

of Modern Art in Ljubljana, was the one who organised for the works of Debenjak and Maleš to be sent to the second edition of the Cincinnati biennial. The Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana covered the cost of shipping, and works were selected by the council of the Društvo upodabljaajočih umetnikov. Folder Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, subfolder Udeležba Rika Debenjaka na razstavi (razno), "Korespondenca med Kržišnikom in muzejem v Cincinnatiju", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

23 Besides Debenjak, the other artist who participated in the second biennial in 1952 was Miha Maleš (Folder Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, Subfolder Udeležba Rika Debenjaka na razstavi (razno), "Priloga k izvoznemu dovoljenju, no.1, /2072/51" and "Seznam litografij", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM). The works by Debenjak and Maleš were exhibited at the Cincinnati biennials also in 1954 and 1956. L. A., "Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija", *Slovenski poročevalac*, vol. 17, no. 86, 11.4.1956, p. 5. Following the catalogue, Jennifer Noonan also lists France Mihelič as one of the ten Yugoslav artists exhibiting at the 1954 biennial. Noonan, 2025 (see no. 17), p. 278.

24 Folder Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, Subfolder Udeležba Rika Debenjaka na razstavi (razno), "Pismo von Groschwitzu Riku Debenjaku, 6.6.1952", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

25 This is confirmed in Debenjak's response to Von Groschwitz, kept in the archive of the Cincinnati Art Museum, in which Debenjak informs the curator that he has conveyed the suggestion to the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, which will pass it on to the Ministry of Culture. Noonan, 2025 (see no. 17), p. 278.

26 It is often difficult to work out how the tours of the exhibitions were actually realised at that time. For the exhibition in question, its announced presentation in Zurich was most likely cancelled. It came to us from the Frankfurter Kunstverein, and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana only had to pay for the customs costs and loan, as well as loading and transport to Groningen, the next stop on the tour. They tried to organise further presentation in Yugoslavia from Ljubljana. The Croatian Visual Artists' Association (ULUH) in Zagreb and Serbian Visual Artists' Association (ULUS) in Belgrade offered to host it, but the plans didn't materialise, because their venues

artists from 18 countries, with Americans and Europeans being the most numerous. There was a significant segment of established “masters” among them, including Arp, Léger, Masson, Picasso, de Staël, Villon, Marini, Dix, Miró, Moore and Ernst (figs. 38–39).²⁷

Even a cursory glance at the reproductions in the catalogue reveals that several modernist movements were represented in the exhibition. A reader might get the impression that one of the curator’s main tasks was to present how successfully the technique of colour lithography can convey very diverse modernist artistic approaches. The two catalogue texts confirm this impression: both the brief address by the Cincinnati Art Museum’s director Philip R. Adams and the curator Von Groschwitz’s remarks underline colour lithography’s dexterity in the translation of modernist painting’s influence as one of its greatest virtues and, because of the graphic art’s immense distribution potential, the consequent dissemination of that influence beyond political limits.²⁸

Von Groschwitz did an exemplary curatorial job in the catalogue: by invoking the greatest names, from Toulouse-Lautrec and the Post-Impressionists, via Rouault, Vlaminck and the German Expressionists, he established and legitimised the line of development of colour lithography until its flourishing after the Second World War, especially as part of the École de Paris. From there, he charted the influence of colour lithography on the Anglo-American world, particularly via English artists such as Sutherland and Moore. For Von Groschwitz, the obvious ideal was that of the “spiritual unity” of modernism around the world but, at the same time, its iteration in a series of vernacular local versions. As can be discerned from the text accompanying the exhibition, the fundamental scope of the exhibition was to encourage such development of the artistic idiom.²⁹

The local media covered the exhibition quite intensely, but not particularly in depth. Among the mass of reports, announcements, notices and reproductions, Karl Dobida’s review in *Naša sodobnost* stands out. He provides a brief account of the show along with a more complex evaluation. Despite the presentation of “all the movements around the world” at the exhibition, he notices the dominance of the “most radical ones”, meaning mostly abstract art from Western Europe and the USA.³⁰ Despite the high quality of the presented work, he also notices oscillations, particularly in the cases of empty artism, unlike

couldn’t make the available dates work. Folder Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, Subfolder Različna korespondenca, “Pismo ULUH-a Karlu Dobidi, 24.4.1953” and “Telegram ULUS-a Karlu Dobidi, 27.4.1953”, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

27 *Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije*, 1953 (see no. 21).

28 Von Groschwitz, 1956 (see no. 17), pp. 7–8.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

30 Karel Dobida, “Tri razstave”, *Naša sodobnost*, vol. 1, no. 12, 1953, p. 1150.

38



39



38–39

Installation views from the *International Exhibition of Color Lithography* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1953.

with the Yugoslav representatives, Maleš and Debenjak, who supposedly surpassed the median with their technical excellence and the quality of execution. After a brief overview of the history of the graphic art technique, Dobida comes to the key conclusion that colour lithography has freed itself of its applicative function and developed into a pure art so:

it becomes, in our time, an actual painting on paper, created with distinctly graphic methods, but with greater freshness, directedness and effect. Due to transparency, the viewer can enjoy the shimmer of the lower layers, while the graphic elements make the colour lithography more easily readable. Its constitution can also have a strong decorative impact, occasionally with calligraphic, ornamental, gentle drawing. At times, it begins to lose the character of the graphic print, shifting colour lithography almost to the realm of painting itself.³¹

Colour lithography thus carries the possibility of efficient and quick dissemination of quality visual art production to a wider audience. Dobida also reveals his criterion of evaluating graphic production: the highest quality is the one that expresses national, even folkloric, traits of the space in which it is created, but the more it moves towards pure abstraction, the harder it is, in his opinion, to recognise the artist's personality. "It is ultimately up to human uniqueness, the individuality and the artistic prowess of the artist to make their work retain its value and importance even after the charm of novelty and revolutionary impact has worn off."³²

The second in the series of graphic art exhibitions that presented the selection of colour lithography from the Cincinnati biennial in the 1950s, this time from its third edition, took place at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana between 7 and 26 April 1956 under the title *Modern American Colour Lithography (Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija)*.³³ Compared to the previous one, this exhibition represented a step in a more specific direction, both in terms of content and production. Firstly, this means that the international cast of the biennial in its travelling reiteration morphed into an exhibition of exclusively American colour lithography, while, at the same time, the circumstances of its international circulation were more clearly formalised

31 Ibid., p. 1151.

32 Ibid., p. 1152.

33 *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija: Izbor iz III. Biennale v Cincinnatiju U.S.A.* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1956. The studied exhibitions occasionally appear under different names. The one presented here is also one such case, with the cover page of the catalogue calling it *Ameriška barvna litografija* [American colour lithography] and the inner cover adding "contemporary" to the title.

within the framework of the US propaganda and diplomacy machine. While the 1953 exhibition arrived in Yugoslavia by way of emerging professional contacts and occasional mediation by the American diplomatic missions with solving organisational issues, it seems that *Modern American Colour Lithography* in 1956 was completely integrated within the established scheme of the cultural agenda of the US foreign policy.³⁴ This is clear from the fact that the USIS participated in almost every phase of the project – from initial/provisional negotiations to coordinating logistics and organisational questions, as well as in establishing the expert, art historical – often conjointly ideological – superstructure of the exhibition. Alongside that, there was also the organisation of accompanying events that the USIS encouraged and for which the US side provided materials, promotional films about the US art institutions or experts who lectured on topics connected to the American exhibitions. The archive sources also provide information that, upon the opening, Corinne Spencer, "the aide to the cultural attaché at the US consulate in Zagreb [...] had a lengthy lecture about the event."³⁵ The correspondence with the USIS director at the US Consulate in Zagreb, John Crockett, also reveals an offer for three promotional films about American museums, which the Americans offered to the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana as part of the accompanying programme, and were supposed to come with some additional lectures.³⁶

The exhibition *Modern American Colour Lithography* consisted of 77 graphic prints by 66 American artists. Among the participants, we do find some resonant names, such as Calder or Ernst, although the new generation of American artists prevailed – almost half were under thirty.³⁷ In his introductory text for the Slovenian version of the catalogue the curator Von Groschwitz justified his selection in terms of the "experimental spirit" of the American graphic art of the 1950s, the fact that the United States doesn't have a technical heritage and the circumstance that American graphic artists often print their works

34 The preserved archive documentation of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana shows that, with this exhibition, the US diplomatic missions already served as a unique service of "exporting" American exhibitions, as they very directly participated in the organisation and realisation. Folder *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija*, Subfolder *Korespondenca, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM*.

35 Folder *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija*, Subfolder *Korespondenca*, "Pismo Karla Dobide kulturnemu atašeju pri ameriškem konzulatu v Zagrebu, 4.5.1956", *Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM*.

36 The archival documentation shows that the films were even already translated into Serbo-Croatian, and thus ready for propaganda purposes in Yugoslavia (Folder *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija*, Subfolder *Korespondenca*, "Poročilo, 9.7.1956, gl 836/56" and "dopis Karlu Dobidi iz Ameriškega konzulata v Zagrebu, 4.5.1956", *Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM*).

37 *Ameriška sodobna barvna litografija*, 1956 (see no. 33), pp. 7, 9–14.

themselves, as they are dispersed throughout a vast country and mostly don't have access to specialised printers who operate in larger cities. The exhibition is thus representative of "all the regions from the east to the west", which makes Von Groschwitz conclude: "This is thus a typically American exhibition and its subjects are often determined by local motifs."³⁸ The curator was said to have also followed the outstanding flourishing of colour lithography in the United States: while its first peak at the end of the 19th century was linked to Europe, this second, post-1945 one was very international, but nevertheless points to the irrefutable fact that America is already sovereignly on par with "the best of what Europe has created in the last forty years."³⁹

The contemporary responses to the exhibition in the Slovenian press were relatively numerous, but only rarely did they contribute more than an enthusiastic summary of the curator's explanations on the pioneering position of American graphic art production. *Slovenski poročevalec* thus conveyed Von Groschwitz's interpretations that the lack of tradition in this genre in the USA encourages technical experimenting, new colour combinations and expressive and design possibilities. The circumstance of the American graphic artists printing their lithographs by themselves was particularly underlined, and that was supposed to allow the "artistic perfection and individuality to come to a more direct expression. The exhibition is thus typically American."⁴⁰ As a particular quality, they highlight the closeness of colour lithography to painting: each lithography is an original, "which, with its colourist values at times does not lag behind oil painting at all."⁴¹ But because it is financially accessible, they also recognised its "artistic-educational mission among the people."⁴² The announcement of the exhibition in *Ljudska pravica* highlighted the same aspects – its closeness to painting and, at the same time, financial accessibility – and recognised its great potential for "universality". They also note the technical deftness and experimentality as well as strong modelling after European examples, particularly when it comes to the artists who studied in France.⁴³

Considering all the aspects mentioned so far, *Ljubljanski dnevnik* focused on analysing the exhibition itself. They stressed the "very wide

38 Von Groschwitz, 1956 (see no. 17), pp. 6–7.

39 Ibid. In the same breath, in the catalogue, Von Groschwitz speaks about his visit to the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts in 1955 and his fascination with the quality of the event, which he calls "one of the most important in the entire world". He mentions fruitful meetings with local protagonists and the artistic production, as well as the participation of Yugoslav artists at the biennial in Cincinnati. Ibid., p. 7.

40 L. A., 1956 (see no. 23), p. 5.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 L. A., "Ameriška barvna litografija", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 22, no. 69, 22.3.1956, p. 6.

base of the visual art impulses of the American lithography," which made a unified exhibition difficult, a claim that was illustrated by listing stark differences between different works. Nevertheless, they recognised abstraction or "abstractions of different types" as the "general formal tone of the exhibition".⁴⁴ They found the explanation in the fact that the American artists focused predominantly on solving technical problems, an area in which the critic felt they excelled. They nevertheless warn of "a certain shortcoming in regard to what is essential to the European art lover, namely, the relatively widespread sticking to the surface and superficial effects, which for now still leaves us questioning the author's creativity".⁴⁵ They concluded that the exhibition nevertheless fulfilled the public's aesthetic criteria, even if it could not truly fulfil visual ones, by which they probably meant that successful technical solutions apparently were not always able to successfully convey the artistic message.⁴⁶

1.2 American Graphic Arts Exhibitions After the Founding of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts

The third in the series of exhibitions from the 1950s was created within a slightly different framework, but was realised with the help of very similar organisational networks. The eclectic exhibition *American Graphic Art of the 20th Century (Ameriška grafika 20. stoletja)* was open between 6 February and 2 March 1958 at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.⁴⁷ The archive documentation shows that the organisers were the Jakopič Pavilion in collaboration with the USIS based at the US Consulate in Zagreb.⁴⁸ The title itself indicates a somewhat wider focus, both temporal and technical: it included American graphic production from the beginning of the 20th century in all graphic arts techniques – which the organisers understood to include drawing

44 M., "Cincinnati–Ljubljana: Razstava sodobne ameriške barvne litografije", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 6, no. 95, 21.4.1956, p. 5.

45 Ibid.

46 The author happily concluded with a reference to the firm cultural relations with the Americans. These were reflected in what was simultaneously taking place at the Cincinnati Art Museum: the ongoing 4th edition of the Cincinnati biennial (with Debenjak and Maleš among the participants) and the simultaneous exhibition of the selection from the first edition of the Ljubljana graphic biennial (featuring 11 Yugoslavs, 7 Slovenians among them). Ibid.

47 *Ameriška grafika 20. stoletja* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1958.

48 Among the rare preserved archival documents, there is a rental agreement between the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the Jakopič Pavilion, "represented by comrade Rastko Poljšak", in which the Jakopič Pavilion is listed as the organiser of the exhibition, and the USIS at the US Consulate in Zagreb as the co-organiser. The Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana did not charge rent, just electricity for the duration of the exhibition and the costs of security and cleaning. Folder *Ameriška grafika 20. stoletja*, "Najemna pogodba med Moderno galerijo in Jakopičevim paviljonom", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

and watercolour – although it was mostly the artistic production of the 1950s. When older works were included, it seems it was primarily an attempt to show the development of American graphic art, which some of the Slovenian authors writing about it noticed.⁴⁹ A very large selection was presented: 150 graphic prints, drawings and watercolours by 112 artists that the organisers selected from different American museums. It was yet another travelling exhibition that had, before arriving in Ljubljana, visited France, Poland and the Netherlands, and Ljubljana represented its entry point into Yugoslavia, as afterwards, it went on to Rijeka, Split, Sarajevo and (probably) Dubrovnik.⁵⁰

Slovenian newspaper responses do include a number of news, reports, announcements and reproductions, but only one short – conditionally speaking – review. In it, Melita Stele mentioned the ambition to present the development of the American graphic print and despite the fragmentation of the material – the majority of artists were only represented with a single piece of work – she recognised different movements: from the realism of the early American graphic, grafted with European models of Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Symbolism, Surrealism and abstraction, all the way to the watershed point when the influential English graphic artist S. W. Hayter transferred his famous Atelier 17 to the USA.⁵¹ Stele found the exhibition interesting, and it seems that what most attracted her were the specific American “views”: their “almost naïve attitude to nature and objects that surround the artist, his joy of life and a hundred tiny things” as well as the existential musings of certain presented artists.⁵²

Following the intense American “graphic print” era at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in the 1950s, there was an almost ten-year hiatus.⁵³ The most likely reason was the growing importance of the

49 Melita Stele, “Ameriška grafika XX. stoletja,” *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 24, no. 41, 18.2.1958, p. 5.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid. Hayter established Atelier 17, an influential graphic art school and art workshop, in Paris in 1927, where he had an important role in encouraging modernist experimentation in the graphic medium. Once the war started, he moved Atelier 17 to New York for ten years and there importantly influenced the establishment of the graphic medium among the new generations of American artists, particularly Abstract Expressionists. For the precise timeline of Atelier 17, see “Atelier 17”, atelier17.com, 2000–2024, URL: <http://www.atelier17.com/a173.html> (accessed 1.7.2025).

52 Stele, 1958 (see no. 49), p. 5.

53 During this time, the exhibitions of American graphic prints occurred at other venues around Slovenia. The most ambitious among them was *Graphics of the USA (Grafika ZDA)*, which was on display at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre from 17 June to 17 July 1965. The vast exhibition included art prints – which, similar to the *American Graphic Art of the 20th Century*, also included watercolours and drawings – as well as examples of using graphic print in industry and advertising, which, considering the significant number of reactions in the media, gave the exhibition a popular and educational character (Janez Mesesnel, “Življenjska vloga umetniške

Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, which at that time took over the role of exhibiting graphic arts. Within it, American artists had a prominent role, which will be explained in the next chapter. Despite that, at the end of the 1960s, we come across three exhibitions of American graphic arts but, compared to those from a decade prior, they left a significantly smaller mark – both in archive materials and in contemporary public reactions.

These are the exhibitions from 1968: *Contemporary American Graphic Prints (Sodobna ameriška grafika*; also known as *American Graphic Prints I*) and *40 American Graphic Prints (40 ameriških grafik; or American Graphic Prints II)*.⁵⁴ We know very little about the first one: only the day of the opening of the Ljubljana iteration is known, 4 June 1968, and there are several photos preserved from its opening in the small halls in the basement of Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.⁵⁵ However, the exhibition clearly didn’t reach only Ljubljana since a modest leaflet attests to its stop in Kranj from April of that same year.⁵⁶ In it, we find the names of 27 participating artists and the organiser of the exhibition, the already known USIS from the US Consulate in Zagreb.⁵⁷ We have slightly more information about the second exhibition that was open between 5 and 24 November 1968. The print brochure with a brief introductory text in Serbo-Croatian would have us believe that it was a travelling exhibition with a slightly different itinerary than was usual for previous graphic art exhibitions, as it did not enter Yugoslavia through Ljubljana.⁵⁸

We can attempt to reconstruct the *40 American Graphic Prints* exhibition from the aforementioned sparse accompanying brochure

grafike”, *Delo*, vol. 6, no. 170, 26.6.1965, p. 5). The newspapers tell us it was a travelling exhibition aimed predominantly at the countries behind the Iron Curtain – before Yugoslavia, it had visited the Soviet Union, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland – where over 2 million visitors were said to have seen it. It was said to have come to Yugoslavia with the mediation of the US Embassy in Belgrade and co-organised with the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts. The full experience of American graphic prints was completed with a film that presented colour lithography, as well as a direct presentation of using graphics in industry in different ways, which were organised at the exhibition itself. “Grafična umetnost v ZDA”, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 15, no. 161, 17.6.1965, p. 5. After Ljubljana, the exhibition moved to the Belgrade Fair in the autumn of that same year.

54 Folder 40 ameriških grafik/Ameriška grafika II., “Obrazstavna brošura 40 ameriških grafik”, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

55 Folder 11.653 /1–14/, “Otvoritev razstave Sodobna ameriška grafika”, photographer unknown, Fotoarhiv, MG+MSUM.

56 *Sodobna ameriška grafika* (exhibition catalogue), Gorenjski muzej, Kranj, 1968. The very scant brochure states, besides the names of the 27 exhibiting artists, many of whom were already known to the Ljubljana audience, that the exhibition was “mediated by the department of press and culture at the US consulate in Zagreb.”

57 Ibid.

58 Folder 40 ameriških grafik/Ameriška grafika II., “Obrazstavna brošura ...”, (see no. 54).

and brief reviews by Janez Mesesnel in *Delo* and Aleksander Bassin in *Ljubljanski dnevnik*. The brochure tells us that the exhibition presented 40 works by 33 artists from the last decade. The introductory text emphasises the general popularity, widespreadness and (qualitative and quantitative) productivity of graphic arts in the USA. The list of artists reveals that many of them were already familiar to the Ljubljana audience, as it had the opportunity to see them either at the exhibition in the 1950s (Francis, Albers, Altman, Corita, d’Arcangelo, Barnett, Stanczak) or at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts (Motherwell, Rauschenberg).⁵⁹ In addition to the well-known names, in *Delo* Mesesnel highlighted the new generation of American artists, who were expected to bring with them “new twists, the conceptions of new artistic movements, new notions of art.”⁶⁰ His review takes examples from the exhibition to show a very broad range of approaches, the racially and ethnically diverse “composite of the national selection of the American visual artists – graphic artists” – but despite his best attempts, he failed to recognise the nascent “‘national’ or ‘territorial’ or at least ‘continental’, truly American art.”⁶¹

In his reaction in *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, Bassin focused on the unclear context of the exhibition *40 American Graphic Prints*. The title of his article was “Why such graphic art from the USA?” which Bassin opened by noting that it was unclear who did the selection for the exhibition. Bassin brainstormed about potential better options of graphic arts presentations than the “meagre selection” presented in Ljubljana.⁶² His indignant question about how it is possible that Ljubljana, which crowned itself “the world graphic arts centre”, was overlooked by three contemporary, representative graphic arts exhibitions that were shown in Europe that year, with one of them, prepared by the renowned visual art critic Gene Baro, even being on view in Belgrade.⁶³ He wanted a deeper, more studious insight. The same author concluded the exhibition year 1968 with another, somewhat unusual piece in *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, in which he first identified the problems in the structure of “spreading graphic arts culture here” and found that *40 American Graphic Prints* veered from the quality production seen at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts.⁶⁴ He also mentioned that the Slovenian side had allegedly already contacted the American cultural

59 Ibid.

60 Janez Mesesnel, “Med možnostmi in dosežki: Ob razstavi sodobne ameriške grafike v Moderni galeriji”, *Delo*, vol. 10, no. 320, 22.11.1968, p. 5.

61 Ibid.

62 Aleksander Bassin, “Čemu taka grafika iz ZDA?”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 18, no. 309, 12.11.1968, p. 10.

63 Ibid.

64 Aleksander Bassin, “Likovno pismo iz Ljubljane”, *Večer*, vol. 24, no. 305, 31.12.1968, p. 10.

attaché in Zagreb to secure a promise that in the upcoming year, Ljubljana would once again be able to see “quality presentations of experimental graphics,” while Belgrade was to host a retrospective by Jasper Johns, a recent Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts laureate.⁶⁵

The graphic arts decades at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana closed with the exhibition *New Expressions in American Graphic Arts (Novi izrazi v ameriški grafični umetnosti)*, which was open between 10 and 30 October in 1969. The brief exhibition catalogue tells us that 20 American artists were presented, and the selection was done by Una E. Johnson, the prints and drawings curator at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. In her accompanying text, the curator emphasised the “burgeoning vitality” along with the innovations related to experiments with colour and surface relief.⁶⁶

1.3 American Art at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts

The presence of American visual art at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts would warrant a separate chapter, so the multi-layered presence of Americans at this graphic arts event will only be introduced schematically, with the intent to paint a more wholesome picture of presentations of American art in Slovenia. The connections with the US art system were strong and branched out since the first editions of the biennial in the 1950s: American artists often exhibited there and won awards, and renowned American art professionals participated in the juries. Zoran Kržišnik established important collaborations with renowned US art institutions (for example the MoMA), as well as a series of private galleries (among them, Brooke Alexander, Inc.), graphic publishing houses (Pratt Graphic Art Center, Multiples, Gemini G.E.L. and Universal Limited Art Editions) and others. They either suggested artists for the American section (i.e. worked as consultants) or lent works for exhibitions.⁶⁷

The very fact that the first biennial in 1955 gave the Grand Prix to an American graphic artist, Armin Landeck, clearly shows in which direction it turned to seek its legitimisation. In the years that followed, many of the now very famous American artists appeared among the participants and laureates, debuting at the Biennale in the very beginnings of their international breakthroughs.⁶⁸ The fifth biennial in 1963

65 Ibid.

66 *Novi izrazi v ameriški grafični umetnosti* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1969.

67 One of the consultants was the often mentioned Von Groschwitz, who was a member of the international juries of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts in 1957 and 1961 and prepared the selection of 42 American artists for the edition in 1961. Noonan, 2025 (see no. 17), p. 280.

68 A cursory overview of American presence at the Biennial suffices to show the unbelievably current echo of contemporary tendencies in American visual art, with its

awarded Robert Rauschenberg, which indicated the gradual decline in awarding informel aesthetics at the biennial and the beginning of the rise of the Western European and American new figurative tendencies.⁶⁹ A mere four years later, in 1967, one of the awards went to Jasper Johns, which continued the trend of American new figuration. That year, the American section also introduced James Rosenquist and Larry Rivers and, at the end of the decade, another founder of Pop Art, Ronald Kitaj.⁷⁰

In 1969, the American section was mostly figurative art,⁷¹ with the exception of Frank Stella for whom this was the first appearance at the Biennale, and he also won an award. This announced new trends that led, via rational abstraction, to Minimalism and Conceptual Art. American artists brought new energy to the Biennale at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s precisely with Conceptual Art. The Belgrade-based visual art critic Ješa Denegri thus opined that some Conceptual Art pioneers, among them Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt and Antonio Dias, introduced a “lively, active component within the general physiognomy of the Biennale,” in its 1971 edition.⁷² It is also worth mentioning the first appearance of Edward Ruscha that same year.⁷³ In 1973, they were joined by Brice Marden and Robert Ryman, who was also the recipient of one of the awards. The second half of the 1970s seemingly aligned the American presence at the Biennale with the local discourse of primary painting⁷⁴ with the works of the American artists such as Fred Sandback, Edda Renouf, Mel Bochner and Robert Mangold.⁷⁵

most propulsive and renowned artists. This, in turn, poses a complex question of what the actual circumstances were for the best of the American visual art production to reach Yugoslavia, and the actual capacities for its reception by the local public. A more serious address of this question would require broader and more interdisciplinary research, so it will not be a subject of deep interest in this contribution.

69 See chapter “Oris umetniških premen na grafičnem bienalu med letoma 1960 in 1980” in Gregor Dražil, “Pomen in značilnosti ljubljanskega grafičnega bienala v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja” (doctoral dissertation), Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana (forthcoming).

70 Gregor Dražil, “Nagrajenci in premene likovne umetnosti od prvega bienala do leta 1977”, in: Gregor Dražil (ed.), *Premene v kanonu: Značaj in pomen nagrad mednarodne žirije na ljubljanskem grafičnem bienalu*, Mednarodni likovni grafični center, Ljubljana, 2020, pp. 60–61.

71 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

72 Ješa Denegri, “IX. Međunarodna izložba grafike”, *Polja*, no. 154, 1971, p. 11.

73 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

74 Tomaž Brejc, “Grafika v letu 1977”, *Naši razgledi*, vol. 26, no. 13, 1.7.1977, p. 341.

75 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

2. Travelling Representative Exhibitions of American Art: Between the Imperialism of the Cold War and the Consolidation of the Western Canon

The *American Vanguard Painting* (*Sodobna ameriška umetnost*; also known as *Sodobno ameriško slikarstvo*) exhibition was the first large-scale presentation of the most current production of the most privileged medium of modernism – painting – at the time. Because the extensive and representative overview of American painting of the 20th century, *Modern Art in the United States*, shown in Belgrade in 1956,⁷⁶ never made it to Slovenia, the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting* was an important event: it provided the local art scene with an insight into the latest American visual art production from the second half of the 1950s. When considering the influence of American art, an important fact is that the exhibition was shown in six other cities in Yugoslavia. It began its tour at the Cvijeta Zuzorić Art Pavilion in Kalemegdan (Belgrade), continued at the Art Pavilion in Skopje and at the Modern Gallery in Zagreb, and then in Slovenia at the Maribor Art Gallery (fig. 40) and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, where it was on display between 11 December 1961 and 7 January 1962. It concluded its tour around Yugoslavia at the Gallery of Fine Arts in Rijeka.⁷⁷

Although the exhibition’s custodian Jerome Allan Donson claimed, in the article that was published after the exhibition tour in *Art Journal*, that the exhibition was created on the initiative of Yugoslavia,⁷⁸ this is almost certainly not true. The exhibition was a typical American export product from the time of the Cold War, which the USA conceived with the intent of attaining the widest possible circulation through the European countries, both those that were already in the orbit of American influence and those that the USA wanted to pull into it.⁷⁹

76 The exhibition called *Modern Art in the U.S.A.: A Selection from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York* was prepared by the museum’s then director René d’Harnoncourt, Dorothy Miller and Alfred H. Barr, who selected the works, and the execution was made possible by the US Embassy in Belgrade and the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, at the time led by Marko Ristić. It was a very extensive travelling exhibition of American art, with more than three hundred objects, which visited France, Switzerland, Germany, England, the Netherlands, Austria and also Francoist Spain before coming to Yugoslavia. Branislav Dimitrijević, “‘Iron Curtain Raiser’ – An Exhibition of American Modern Art in Belgrade and its relation to ‘Socialist Modernism’ and ‘Socialist Consumerism’ in SFR Yugoslavia in the 1950s”, *Different Modernisms, Different Avant-Gardes: Problems in Central and Eastern European Art after WW2*, Eesti Kunstimuseum, Tallinn, 2009, pp. 326–342. See also footnote 9.

77 Jerome Allan Donson, “The American Vanguard Exhibitions in Europe”, *Art Journal*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1963, p. 242.

78 Ibid., p. 242.

79 Besides Yugoslavia, where the exhibition visited the most cities by far on the entire tour, the exhibition was also supposed to go to Poland, but this never materialised. According to Donson, the agreement with Poland was not reached. Donson, 1963 (see no. 77) p. 242.



Speech by Branko Rudolf, director of the Maribor Art Gallery, at the opening of the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting* at the Maribor Art Gallery in 1961.

The exhibition was prepared by a group of experts, gathered in a committee chaired by the renowned art historian H. Harvard Arnason, the vice president for art at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.⁸⁰ The group also included John I. Baur from the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Adelyn D. Breeskin, the director of the

80 Ibid. We know Arnason primarily as the author of the famous overview of modern art and, thus, one of the founding authors of the canon of modernism, whose books were formative for generations of art historians. For example, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, which was often reprinted and translated into many languages. Emily Crockett and Lee Sorensen, "Arnason, H. H.", in: *Dictionary of Art Historians*, Duke University, Durham, URL: <https://arthistorians.info/arnasonh> (accessed 9.7.2025).

Baltimore Museum of Art, and Henry R. Hope from the Art Department at Indiana University, who was also responsible for the selection of the participating artists.⁸¹ The group selected 33 artists and, in the next phase, Arnason selected 84 of their works that they loaned either from the artists themselves or the collections of private collectors, museums and galleries.⁸² Jerome Allan Donson, the director of the Long Beach Museum of Art, then travelled with the exhibition and took care of the set up and the presentation of the exhibition in every city. Before the exhibition arrived in Yugoslavia, it was shown in Vienna and Salzburg and, before it returned home, also in London and Darmstadt. The fact that a whole third of the exhibition tour was reserved for Yugoslavia, and the rest generally allocated to the cities in the immediate vicinity of the Eastern Bloc is hard to understand as a coincidence: quite the opposite, it shows the clearly political, propaganda mission of the exhibition.⁸³

The exhibition presented 33 American artists or artists living in the United States, two of whom were women artists (figs. 41–45). A cursory look at the list of participating artists is very telling, because even an art lover who is not an expert can recognise most of them as eminent representatives of 20th-century art.⁸⁴ Both the selection of the artists and the mostly brand new works,⁸⁵ as well as the accompanying text in the catalogue that openly and in superlatives praises Abstract Expressionism⁸⁶ along with its ideological undertone, explicitly reveal that the exhibition was undertaking the mission of founding

81 Donson, 1963 (see no. 77), p. 242.

82 Ibid.

83 Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 70.

84 A look at the photo documentation of the exhibition as well as the list of the participating artists show the pinnacle of high modernist painting: Josef Albers, Milton Avery, William Baziotis, James Brooks, Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, Robert Goodnough, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Philip Guston, Grace Hartigan, Hans Hofmann, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Franz Kline, Loren MacIver, Conrad Marca-Relli, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, David Park, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, Milton Resnick, Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Clyfford Still, Mark Tobey, Bradley Walker Tomlin, Jack Tworkov and Esteban Vicente. See the exhibition catalogue: *Sodobna ameriška umetnost* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1961 and Folders 8192/1-/1-20/ and 8192/1-/21-40/, *Razstava Sodobna ameriška umetnost*, photographer unknown, Fotoarhiv, MG+MSUM.

85 According to the catalogue and photo documentation cited in footnote 84, it was a relatively unified selection of the production from the 1950s, with a few exceptions that were included to underscore the explanation of the development of the style with examples of the broader artistic and spiritual relations.

86 "[T]his exhibition doesn't focus on those masses of recognised American artists that work in a more or less representational style, but instead showcases the most important experimental style in history – abstract expressionism." Harvard Arnason, "Sodobna ameriška umetnost", *Sodobna ameriška umetnost* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1961, n. p.

a new artistic canon. The texts that accompany the exhibition don't lack megalomaniac statements, either, and they all testify to the propagandist orientation of the exhibition and reveal its ambitions. One such statement is in the already mentioned article by the exhibition's custodian, Donson, in which – immediately after the end of the tour – he compared the exhibition's impact on the European visual art scene with the impact that the *Armory Show* had on Americans in 1913!⁸⁷

The specifically defined focus and agenda of the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting* thus became a subject of substantial interest and curiosity, as well as the target of criticism, in the contemporary Slovenian and Yugoslav press. The commentators generally recognised something fresh and new in the exhibition, but they were not entirely sure what to actually make of what they saw.⁸⁸ For this reason, the responses often show attempts at addressing the stylistic groups into which the organisers categorised the selected artists, with the purpose of showing the development curve of Abstract Expressionism, with these segments being inconsistent, poorly defined and quite sparse in comparison to the dominant presence of Action Painting.⁸⁹ Wishing for a clearer definition, some critics attempted to reconstruct for themselves the line of development that led to the selection presented at the exhibition.⁹⁰ Generally speaking, everyone agreed that the exhibition was a first-rate cultural event that presented the works of “first-class painters” of the moment to the Yugoslav audience, but it seems that they all had some difficulties evaluating

87 Donson, 1963 (see no. 77), p. 242.

88 The Yugoslav visual art scene was, generally, very receptive to the most progressive innovations and knew how to read them really well. This exhibition thus showed them that the Abstract Expressionists were no longer truly contemporary; the novelties were in fact presented by the works of Rauschenberg and Johns. Lazar Trifunović, “Američko slikarstvo”, *Nin*, 23.9.1961, n. p. A comparison of expert responses to the exhibition in Ljubljana and London, which Djokic cites, testifies to this: “In contrast to the hostile reception of *Modern Art in the USA* and Abstract Expressionist works in countries such as Britain, where some critics had compared Pollock's abstractions to art created by animals, the Yugoslav reception illustrates a general acceptance and appreciation of US modern art. In fact, the influential art critic and painter Miodrag Protić even implied that the exhibition had successfully placed New York on the Yugoslav radar, replacing Paris as the leading point of cultural reference.” Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 67.

89 In the brief introduction to the improvised brochure listing the exhibited works in Slovenian, the following stylistic subgenres/segments are identified: Pioneers of the Modern Expression, Transitional Style, Lyrical and Surrealist Style, Action Painting, Mathematical Structure, Influence of Cubism, Action Painting Studying the Human Figure and Nature, Abstract Impressionism, Abstract Design, and Surrealist Exploration. Arnason's text for the exhibition was also translated into Slovenian and included in the Serbo-Croatian catalogues. Arnason, 1961 (see no. 86), n. p.

90 See Katarina Ambrožič, “Izložba američke umetnosti”, *Književne novine*, 22.9.1961, p. 5.



American flag above the entrance to the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, during the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting*.

the production beyond the propagated attributes of expression, freedom and individuality.⁹¹

This is obvious from the two longer reactions in the Slovenian press by Špelca Čopič in *Naša sodobnost* and Aleksander Bassin in *Naši razgledi*.⁹² Both have an expert grasp of the issue, but from different points of view. Čopič attributes the “inconsistency of selection” to the tendentious attempt to justify Abstract Expressionism, which, on the one hand, arbitrarily cuts off a large segment of contemporary painting production and, on the other, offers too few works by individual artists to convincingly justify the movement.⁹³ Bassin finds the selection even more problematic, based on the relatively hollow, formalist foundations that, in his opinion, do not enable true possibilities for artistic development.⁹⁴

91 Špelca Čopič, “Sodobno ameriško slikarstvo”, *Naša sodobnost*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1961, pp. 177–179.

92 Ibid.; Aleksander Bassin, “Evolucija, ki je zaman”, *Naši razgledi*, vol. 10, no. 23, 9.12.1961, p. 562.

93 Čopič, 1961 (see no. 91), pp. 177–179.

94 Bassin, 1961 (see no. 92), p. 562.

42



43



42-45

Speech by Zoran Kržišnik, at the opening of the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting* in December 1961, and installation views of the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.

44



45



What newspaper reviews show is that the central problem the Yugoslav critics had with the mentioned exhibition was that – unlike with the 1956 exhibition in Belgrade – it was not even an attempt to present a more wholesome image of American painting, but rather a narrow, new and extremely individually conceived “brand”. The Yugoslav expert public, familiar with the models of the Western art systems, was longing for as broad an insight as possible into their visual art production and the criteria of its evaluation, so it seems that the commentators felt slightly short-changed, expecting more comprehensive information.⁹⁵ This is not surprising as the painting production at the *American Vanguard Painting* exhibition lacked the context that would allow the expert public to evaluate what they had seen. It was a transplant from a completely different cultural climate and a system that was structured differently, so it is unsurprising that this transplant, despite the clear interest of the local art scene, was neither self-evident nor unproblematic. In this sense, we can understand the exhibition as an exemplary model of cultural imperialism, which, under the ideological assumption of the presumed universalism of cultural goods, imposed its own cultural products as self-evident facts, intended for uncritical consumption and imitation.⁹⁶

Similarly complex is the question of the reception of Pop Art in Yugoslavia, which was focused around the exhibition *Pop-art*. In 1966, it toured the cities of Yugoslavia, and it was, after the premiere in Zagreb and a presentation in Belgrade, on display in Ljubljana between 22 April and 9 May of that year. Although the Yugoslav visual art scene had been relatively well acquainted with the phenomenon of Pop Art for several years, it followed the exhibition, despite the divided reactions to the movement and its complex reception, with considerable interest.⁹⁷

95 Čopič, 1961 (see no. 91), pp. 177–179.

96 Vučetić, 2012 (see no. 1), p. 160.

97 Not only did Rauschenberg win an award at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts as early as 1963, with the Venice Biennale the following year, Pop Art became a subject of general interest, including among the Yugoslav cultural public. Besides, as Denegri states, the seminal book by Lucy Lippard on Pop Art from 1966 was translated in Yugoslavia that same year (that is, the same year as the exhibition) and became, according to his testimony, a cult book for the younger generation of artists. Ješa Denegri, “Pop-Art”, *Umetnost*, no. 15, 1968, p. 115. The Belgrade artist Olja Ivanjicki explicitly called herself a pop artist when she returned from her residency as a Ford Fellow in the United States in 1962. The critical responses to her work were generally negative and critically warned of the Americanisation of Yugoslav society, although the interest in her shows was significant. In the article by David Binder for the *New York Times* from 1965, Olja Ivanjicki stated that while the US pop artists get money for their work, all she gets are articles, despite the fact that the artist was, at the time, living and working in a studio paid for by the state. David Binder, “Pop Artist in Belgrade Finds Buyers (Sob) Scarce”, *The New York Times*, 24.10.1965, p. 85. This example is a colourful representation of the paradoxical attitude of (at

The exhibition was smaller in scale, consisting of 33 graphic works by 11 American artists who are today, without exception, considered the founders of the style.⁹⁸ Curated by the American critic Max Kozloff, it consisted of striking, colourful screenprints and a few lithographs, seldom of a large format (Lichtenstein) and typically with the recognisable imagery of American popular culture, advertising and consumerism.⁹⁹ Both the content and the organisational structure can be recognised as a symptom of the already mentioned US agenda of spreading their own cultural influence through soft-power strategies on the one side, and the openness of the local art scene to the influence of the American art system, which it held as a benchmark, on the other. In Ljubljana, the exhibition was displayed at the Museum of Modern Art, which preserves the correspondence between its director, Zoran Kržišnik, and the director of the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art, Miodrag B. Protić. The correspondence reveals that this exhibition also arrived in the country with the mediation of the US diplomatic channels and was – which is stated explicitly – financially supported by the US side.¹⁰⁰ But this time, its producer was not an American art institution, as was the habit before, but directly the American industry, more precisely, the Philip Morris International corporation. The exhibition also included a telling congruence between its visual content and its organisational background: some exhibited works included direct references to products by Philip Morris International, including the famous screenprint *Tobacco Rose* by the artist Mel Ramos (figs. 46–47).

Although we can follow the local reception of Pop Art in Yugoslavia several years before the exhibition, the immediate media reactions to its Ljubljana iteration are relatively scarce. The only notable contribution about it was published in *Ljubljanski dnevnik*. In it, Aleksander Bassin stressed that this was the first occasion for the audience to see a more comprehensive presentation of Pop Art, which tells us that audiences – at least the experts – were at least indirectly familiar with the new art movement. For this reason, he anticipated the response from the general public to range from “shock [...] to partial

least a part of) the Yugoslav art scene towards the system in which they lived and worked. Stefana Djokic, “Yugoslav Perceptions and Translations of Pop Art during the 1960s”, *Art in Translation*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2022, pp. 142–172.

98 Allan D’Arcangelo, Jim Dine, Allen Jones, Gerald Laing, Roy Lichtenstein, Peter Phillips, Mel Ramos, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, John Wesley, Tom Wesselmann. *Pop art* (exhibition catalogue), Press and cultural service of the American Embassy, Belgrade, 1966.

99 Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 119.

100 Folder Pop-Art, Subfolder Korespondenca, “Pismo Miodraga Protića Kržišniku, 30.10.1965”, “Pismo Miodraga Protića Kržišniku, 22.2.1966” and “Telegram Zorana Kržišnika Generalnem konzulatu ZDA Zagreb, 19.5.1966”, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.



46–47
Installation views from the exhibition *Pop-Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1966.

acclamation or total negation.”¹⁰¹ He defined Pop Art as a (justifiable?) response to the hermeticism of Abstract Expressionism and its radical commercialisation. He underlined its sourcing from advertising imagery and sexual content and its leaning on drawing and collage. He praised some exhibited artists who surpassed the “average level”, whether as a testimony to a disoriented modern human or in “the new, pure symbolism” that was, for him, the most crucial contribution of the new painting genre.¹⁰²

However, from today’s perspective we could hardly count “pure symbolism” as the greatest contribution of the *Pop-art* exhibition, since, in reality, the show represented the most explicit case of the implantation of American ideological agenda into the Yugoslav public sphere via the format of an exhibition.¹⁰³ It seems that Yugoslav public officials largely agreed on this point and recognised, in the ideological node of the exhibition, its fundamental incompatibility with the

101 Aleksander Bassin, “Pop-art v ameriški grafiki”, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 16, no. 113, 26.4.1966, p. 7.

102 Ibid. The question of the reception and influences of Pop Art on the Yugoslav visual art scene and the (non-)critical traits of this reception remain complex. See Branislav Dimitrijević, “Pop Art and the Socialist ‘Thing’: Dušan Otašević in the 1960s”, *Tate Papers*, no. 24, 2015, URL: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/24/pop-art-and-the-socialist-thing-dusan-otasevic-in-the-1960s> (accessed 30.6.2025); *Dušan Otašević: Popmodernizam: retrospektivna izložba 1965–2003* (exhibition catalogue), Branislav Dimitrijević (ed.), Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 2003. Side by side with the Belgrade exhibition *Belgrade New Figuration (Beograjska nova figuracija)* from 1966, in Slovenia, we can mention a slightly later exhibition by Kostja Gatnik, Metka Krašovec, Lojze Logar and Franc Novinc at the City Art Gallery in 1970, curated by Aleksander Bassin. It introduced a new generation of artists, which the critics at the time labelled New Figuration or Expressive Figuration, who consciously included elements of Pop Art into their work. We must also mention that it was Bassin who coined the term Expressive Figuration and also became a promoter of this orientation of artistic research. Aleksander Bassin, “Vrenje med mlado generacijo”, *Sinteza*, no. 13–14, 1969–1970, p. 77; Mikuž, 1995 (see no. 2), p. 248; Ana Cebe Podržaj, “Razstava Kostja Gatnik, Metka Krašovec, Lojze Logar, Franc Novinc, Mestna galerija Ljubljana, 1970” (bachelor’s thesis), Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2025. See also: Zdenka Badovinac, “Ekspresivna figuralika mladega ljubljanskega kroga” (bachelor’s thesis), Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 1985; Petja Grafenauer, “Slovenija in nevrščeni pop: Ja i ti i moja coca-cola”, in: Petja Grafenauer (ed.), *Slovenija in nevrščeni pop* (exhibition catalogue), Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Maribor, 2017, pp. 29–54.

103 Bassin was not alone, on the then Yugoslav scene, in omitting the ambivalent nature of Pop Art towards consumerist culture which it criticises but is also charmed by. The critical responses of the Yugoslav scene to the exhibition were often – but not without exceptions – overtly sympathetic. Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), pp. 123–125. The responses that highlight the socially critical dimension of the movement, but ignore its affirmative inclination to the excesses of the capitalist modes of production, are, mildly speaking, unusual if we consider the context of the then socialist country. Tanja Mastnak writes about the assimilation of the elements of Pop Art into Slovenian painting in *Koncept ponavljanja v moderni likovni umetnosti: Slovenske refleksije*, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana, 1988, pp. 60–64.

Yugoslav socialist doctrine.¹⁰⁴ Despite all that, just like many times previously, the Yugoslav art system turned out to be very susceptible to such influences: the exhibition was realised especially because of the persistence of the already mentioned director of the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art, Miodrag B. Protić.¹⁰⁵

For the third exhibition in this chapter, unlike for the exhibition *American Vanguard Painting* (1961/1962), the context was explicitly provided, but it never made it to Ljubljana. The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1979, titled *American Painting of the 1970s* (*Ameriško slikarstvo sedemdesetih let*), was a by-product of a more broadly conceived, ambitious and comprehensive project, originally titled *America Now* or *American Culture: A View of the 1970s*. The exhibition was prepared by the then newly established New Museum in New York under the leadership of its founder Marcia Tucker.¹⁰⁶ It arrived in Yugoslavia in its (more or less) original form and was displayed in Belgrade and in Zagreb as a multi-layered insight into different layers of American cultural production, while the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana only showed a part of it, the contemporary American painting output.¹⁰⁷ Simply looking at the exhibition publications, prepared for the Yugoslav audience in Serbo-Croatian, reveals the different levels of reading this project. In addition to the traditional catalogue of the painting exhibition, the comprehensive exhibition brochure titled *America Now* is more like a colourful pop-cultural magazine than an exhibition publication, as it is a puzzle made of colourful photographs with quotes from both high and popular culture, mixed without any hierarchy. After a brief introductory paragraph by the then president Jimmy Carter, a longer essay positioned American art of the 1970s into a wide network of contemporary social phenomena, institutional structures and *zeitgeist*.¹⁰⁸ The Ljubljana audience was alas deprived of this important part of the context (figs. 48–49).

104 Stefana Djokic lists a document from the Archives of Yugoslavia, which has, in its margins, the refusal of the exhibition proposal by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Considering that all the organisational aspects were taken care of by the organisers, the reason for the refusal was most likely ideological. Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 21.

105 Ibid., pp. 121–122.

106 Mara Gladstone, “Marcia Tucker and the Birth of the New Museum”, *Getty Research Journal*, no. 4, 2012, pp. 187–194.

107 The correspondence between curator Majda Jerman, from the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, and Thomas Craig, from the American Centre in Ljubljana, reveals that, after considering taking the entire exhibition, they only decided to take the painting segment after all. Folder Ameriško slikarstvo 1970tih let, “Pismo Majde Jerman Thomasu L. Craigu, 15.10.1979”, Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

108 Folder Ameriško slikarstvo 1970tih, “America Now, exhibition brochure,” Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

48 Američko slikarstvo sedamdesetih godina



48–49 Catalogue cover for the exhibition *American Painting of the 1970s*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1979, and brochure cover for *America Now*.

The exhibition had only a few thorough critical responses in Slovenian media. Among them, two texts stand out: the review written by the art historian Tomaž Brejc in *Teleks* and the response by the visual art critic Franc Zalar in *Dnevnik*. Both agreed on the central shortcoming of the Ljubljana display, namely, the reduction of the broader exhibition project to a simple painting exhibition. It was this limitation that made it difficult to understand the specific painting production presented in the exhibition, and consequently, the justification for the selection.¹⁰⁹

Zalar's piece mostly attempted to place the Ljubljana selection into the missing context and to depict American culture of that time as "creativity without a certain concept, without a tangible style, a conglomerate of the most private thoughts and sensibility."¹¹⁰ But he also warned of a "certain calculation" that was revealed in the list of "semi-private and private galleries that contributed the exhibited works."¹¹¹ Zalar recognised the art in the USA created, in the first instance, as articles for sale, with their originality being only the most attractive of a series of marketing slogans, at a time of general evaluation of visual art's value(s).¹¹² "This is originality, individual visual expression, measurable in dollars – and nothing else."¹¹³ Zalar's reading of the exhibition is in many aspects very astute and, above all, very modern, regardless of it being perhaps motivated by a certain nostalgia for a time of greater visual "originality". His reaction in *Dnevnik* doesn't read like a sharp criticism; it's more like a reading of a certain *zeitgeist* in which "democratic and original" are mere stakes in the economic game.

Brejc's analysis of the exhibition went into a more expert direction. He used the selection on display to identify the shift from analytical and intellectual endeavours of the painting of the previous decade into "regionalism and pioneer mentality" as well as "private mythology, family circle, feminist representation, decorativeness and simplicity."¹¹⁴ In his opinion, the clear negation of the painting *métier*, typical of the majority of the presented selection, is a calculated deviation.¹¹⁵ The calculation that Zalar attributed to commercial interests, in Brejc's opinion, has an art-historical function of denying the seriousness and self-sufficiency of high modernist production. Brejc also provides us with the missing context for reading the exhibition, but

109 Franc Zalar, "Čas pop arta in nove abstrakcije", *Dnevnik*, vol. 28, no. 303, 6.11.1979, p. 5; Tomaž Brejc, "To bi morali videti, slišati, prebrati", *Teleks*, vol. 35, no. 43, 26.10.1979, p. 13.

110 Zalar, 1979 (see no. 109), p. 5.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Brejc, 1979 (see no. 109), p. 13.

115 Ibid.

a more specific, artistic one, formulated by the specific project of the New Museum and its mastermind, Marcia Tucker. This resulted in a slightly biased selection, the representativeness of which Brejc doubted, issuing a short pharmaceutical warning at the end of his piece: "Attention: use with caution!"¹¹⁶

3. Fragments of a Prettier Everyday: American Design Exhibitions

Alongside the exhibitions of painting, and particularly graphic arts, the field in which Ljubljana strove to become an important player, American creative output of the 1960s and the 1970s reached the Slovenian public also through different exhibitions of design. Ranging from posters to books and other everyday objects, these exhibitions were generally smaller and less prominent in the context of the exhibition policies of art institutions. Part of the reason can probably be found in the prevailing art doctrine of the time, which rested on the Kantian notion of "disinterested judgement" and regarded applied arts as inferior to what was considered "high art". Nevertheless, such exhibitions were, after graphics, among the most numerous. Indeed, the few more important Ljubljana exhibition venues featured at least six of them between 1959 and 1970.¹¹⁷

The first in the series was the *Modern American Applied Art (Sodobna ameriška uporabna umetnost)*, which was shown between 20 March and 2 April 1961 in the small halls of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, and it presented design objects from the art school in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Association of Artists of the Applied Arts from Ljubljana and the Information Service of the US Consulate in Zagreb, a fixture in organising American shows in Ljubljana. The archival materials show that the American side covered all the costs of the exhibition, in return for the free use of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition halls.¹¹⁸ Judging from the few, but enthusiastic media responses, the exhibition achieved its goal and presented to the Yugoslav public artefacts of American design – together with the lifestyle that goes with them – as objects of desire. Janez Mesesnel's report in *Delo* tells us that the displayed objects looked very modern and were chosen precisely because of their above-standard quality. For this reason, Mesesnel – and probably other visitors to the Museum of Modern Art – couldn't avoid comparing the display with the almost contemporary exhibition of Yugoslav design at the same institution, which, in Mesesnel's opinion,

116 Ibid.

117 In addition to the exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana covered in this chapter, there were other exhibitions of American design at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre and (two) at the City Art Gallery. See footnotes 5 and 14.

118 Folder *Sodobna ameriška uporabna umetnost*, "Memorandum of Agreement, 17.3.1961", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.

was showing “all the shortcomings of the pioneering era: both the artist and his work are still searching for their place in society.”¹¹⁹

Between 1 November and 6 November 1967, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana hosted the *American Books Exhibition (Razstava ameriških knjig)*, organised by the Vuk Karadžić publishing house from Belgrade, as a part of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries’ programme. They presented over a hundred mostly scientific and technical publications. Although it was not a commercial exhibition, *Delo* invited interested visitors to contact the publisher for potential purchases.¹²⁰

We only have scant archival materials for the next two exhibitions. Regarding the exhibition dedicated to the American poster, all we know is that it was on display at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana from 22 February to 10 March 1968, but the exhibition *American Poster (Ameriški lepak)* in Novo Mesto has a brochure available.¹²¹ Although the brochure does not reveal the organiser, it is clearer about the participants in the exhibition and its scope. The star-studded list of participants¹²² includes four American artists who had their works exhibited at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts.¹²³ That, in combination with the exhibition essay that defined the poster as the application of graphic art in advertising, clearly indicates that the exhibition needs to be read in the context of the wider project of Ljubljana (and consequently Slovenia) as an international centre for graphic arts. The few newspaper reports of the Ljubljana exhibition tell us that the Novo Mesto version was simply a pared-down selection of the already non-extensive selection of posters, shown in Ljubljana.¹²⁴ The reports reveal that these were the posters the artist prepared either as announcements for their own shows or for other

cultural events, and the commentators noticed the shift from typographical to distinctly visual expressiveness.¹²⁵ Along with the enthusiasm about the visual quality and the fluidity of the border between the commercial and artistic graphic prints, the commentary also indicated a wish for similar fluidity of relationship and the high level of execution in our country.¹²⁶

4. Reverse Views: Yugoslavs in the USA

Although the focus of this text is an overview of the touring exhibitions from the USA in Slovenia, it is necessary, for the broadest understanding of this phenomenon, to present, in conclusion, at least a sketch of efforts in the opposite direction. Like in previous chapters, our focus will be limited to the larger, more representative shows, organised on the highest institutional levels, by either the state or the art system, which culminated in the 1960s. The organisation of the touring exhibitions by Yugoslav artists in the USA was motivated both by the systematic efforts of Yugoslav foreign policy, which used cultural diplomacy to strengthen the international reputation and position of the country in its juggling between the antagonistic blocs, as well as by the persistent interest of the local art system.¹²⁷ The local art scene attempted to maintain continuity with pre-war production and preserve contact with the Western art system, from which it continuously sought legitimisation. It thus provided Yugoslavia with a version of high modernism that ideologically legitimised itself with the slogans of modernity, openness and freedom,¹²⁸ which the Yugoslav cultural diplomacy gladly accepted for its presentations abroad.¹²⁹ This “currency” was particularly handy in relations with the USA, which in the decades after the Second World War worked very hard to retain the

119 Janez Mesesnel, “Ameriška uporabna umetnost”, *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 81, 24.3.1961, p. 6. The subject of comparison is the *DLUUUS Exhibition (the 6th Society Exhibition) (DLUUUS (6. društvena razstava))*, presented at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1961, and later also at the Maribor Art Gallery and in Slovenj Gradec.

120 J. Sn., “Razstava ameriške knjige v Moderni galeriji”, *Delo*, vol. 9, no. 298, 2.11.1967, p. 2.

121 *Ameriški lepak* (exhibition leaflet), Dolenjski muzej, Novo Mesto, 1969.

122 The leaflet lists: Helen Frankenthaler, Jasper Johns, Robert Motherwell, Robert Rauschenberg, Alfred Jensen, Nassos Daphnis, Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Charles Hinman, Bruce Conner, Nicholas Krushenick, Bridget Riley, Theodoros Stamos, Jack Bush and Friedel Dzubas. Ibid.

123 The explanation next to Frankenthaler, Johns, Motherwell and Rauschenberg even exclaims: “all of them exhibited at the world-renowned (!) Biennale of Graphic Arts 1969 in Ljubljana”. Ibid.

124 In the responses by Marjan Tršar and Aleksander Bassin we notice 31 artists presented in Ljubljana (Marijan Tršar, “Ameriški plakat v Moderni galeriji”, *Naši razgledi*, vol. 7, no. 7, 6.4.1968, p. 202; Aleksander Bassin, “Umetnik in plakat”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 18, no. 56, 28.2.1968, p. 7). Based on the invitation, only 16 were presented in Novo Mesto. *Ameriški lepak*, 1969 (see no. 121).

125 The exhibition almost certainly travelled outside Slovenia, as the press reports mention the exhibition brochure in Serbo-Croatian. Bassin, 1968 (see no. 124), p. 7.

126 Ibid.

127 Radina Vučetić made interesting comparisons between artistic production that the Yugoslav authorities sent to the USA and the artistic practices intended for exhibitions in the Eastern Bloc. Particularly poignant here are the stances of the artists towards exhibiting in one or the other bloc, as well as the sometimes surprising cultural identification of Yugoslav officials with the countries of the capitalist West. Vučetić, 2012 (see no. 1), pp. 158–159.

128 The exhibitions of the contemporary visual art production at that time were organised parallel with the exhibitions of Yugoslav Medieval art with which Yugoslavia also wanted to present itself as a country with a rich cultural tradition with its own, specific roots. Ivana Bago, “Yugoslav Fanonism in Three (Exhibitionary) Acts: 1950/1972/1989”, *igorzabel.org*, 2021, URL: <https://igorzabel.org/en/news/2021/ivana-bago-fanonism> (accessed 30.6.2025).

129 Nadja Zgonik emphasises that this was not merely about creating symbolic capital, but also about the direct “monetisation of the Yugoslav marketing brand”: this would market its products more successfully abroad precisely under the slogans of progressiveness and modernity. Zgonik, 2021 (see no. 3), p. 34.

binary image of the world split between the free-thinking capitalist West and the oppression of the socialist East.¹³⁰

This does not in any way imply that the interest for exchange between the American and the Yugoslav art systems was not “genuine”; quite the contrary, it remained so until the end of the era that this text covers. From the 1950s onwards, we can observe a certain reciprocity in the exchange, with the first peak occurring in the intensive contact between the biennials in Ljubljana and Cincinnati. Thus, Gustav Von Groschwitz’s unplanned visit to Ljubljana and the deep impression that the first edition of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts left on him brokered the creation of the exhibition *Selections from the First International Exhibition of Prints, Held at the Modern Gallery, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia*, which, in 1956, presented to the Cincinnati audience the international selection of 84 works. The exhibition also marked the beginning of the intense international exchange between Von Groschwitz and Kržišnik, as well as Von Groschwitz’s participation in the international juries of the Ljubljana biennial, and Kržišnik’s reciprocal selection of Yugoslav artists for the Cincinnati biennial. In 1958, the Cincinnati Art Museum, only a few months after the last edition of the Cincinnati biennial closed, prepared the second in the series of Yugoslav shows, a selection of Yugoslav artists from the second edition of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts.¹³¹

A more complex context is reflected in the circumstances of the exhibition *New Painting from Yugoslavia*, which toured several US cities between 1959 and 1962, during a time of particularly tense Yugoslav-American relations and a tense global political climate.¹³²

130 On the genealogy of justifying the post-war Western liberal democracy in opposition to the totalitarianism of the socialist state systems, see Majaca, 2021 (see no. 8), pp. 125–134; on its implementation in cultural exchange, see Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), pp. 137–146.

131 Noonan, 2025 (see no. 17), p. 280.

132 The geopolitical moment of the early 1960s offers insight into the deep embeddedness of the exhibition exchanges in diplomatic manoeuvres. Tito’s surprisingly pro-Soviet speech at the Belgrade conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 caused a significant deterioration in relations with the West. These further deteriorated in the following years, with the Cuban Missile Crisis, so the cultural exchange was a welcome mechanism for smoothing tensions and the return of Yugoslavia into the American orbit of interest. Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), pp. 77–78. This is the context of both the American tour of *New Painting from Yugoslavia* and the Yugoslav tour of *American Vanguard Painting*, in the years 1961–1962, undoubtedly aimed at retaining American political influence in the country. The turbulent period of the early 1960s, the time of the greatest deterioration of the relations, is marked by Yugoslavia’s loss of the status of the Most Favored Nation (MFN). All this resulted in intensive US diplomatic efforts with which president Kennedy once again gained president Tito’s cooperation: this rapprochement can be seen in the cultural field with the awarding of the first Grand Prix of the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts to Robert Rauschenberg in 1963. Stefana Djokic places this in the context of preparing the ground for Tito’s visit to the US in October that year. (Ibid., pp. 39, 86–88).

The exhibition was organised by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries – it was thus a conscious diplomatic effort on the part of Yugoslavia – in collaboration with the non-governmental, but politically important, American Federation of Arts (AFA).¹³³ The selection of artists, prepared by the curator Zoran Kržišnik, shows the common interest of Yugoslav visual artists and Yugoslavia’s diplomacy to present the country in the USA with the most “progressive” art practices, particularly those that explored the different levels of abstraction.¹³⁴ Despite the high expectations and the great symbolic weight of the project, the exhibition encountered many logistical and organisational problems. Particularly disappointing was the lack of more representative exhibition venues, which greatly displeased the respected members of the Yugoslav scene who were very invested in the preparations, especially the curator.¹³⁵ From this fact, as well as from the reaction of the American commentators, we may conclude that the exhibition was far less successful in the context of the legitimisation of the Yugoslav artistic production and more successful in its diplomatic aspects.

For the next representative exhibition, entitled *Yugoslavia: Contemporary Trends, the Younger Generation* from 1966, the initiative came from the USA, courtesy of curator Herman W. Williams from the respected Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC.¹³⁶ The Yugoslav diplomacy enthusiastically welcomed the initiative, and its realisation was supported by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries as well as the Yugoslav Embassy in Washington, DC. A very telling indicator of the interest of the Yugoslav side was the willingness to give Williams the autonomy in choosing the artists.¹³⁷ The result was an extensive sculpture and painting exhibition that toured in comparably larger and more important venues than the ones that received

133 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

134 Janez Bernik, Jovan Bijelić, Stojan Čelić, Albert Kinert, Milan Konjović, Stane Kregar, Ferdinand Kulmer, Edo Murtić, Šime Perić, Zoran Petrović, Ivan Picelj, Marij Pregelj, Miodrag B. Protić, Gabrijel Stupica, Frano Šimunović, Josip Vaništa. See *New Painting from Yugoslavia* (exhibition catalogue), Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Belgrade, 1961.

135 Stefana Djokic quotes the correspondence from the diplomatic archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, which shows the animosity between the director of the AFA, Moyer, and Kržišnik, and the dissatisfaction of the latter because venerable American venues lacked interest in the exhibition. Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 144.

136 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69); Zgonik, 2021 (see no. 3), p. 35.

137 Four sculptors (Vojin Bakić, Dušan Džamonja, Stevan Luketić and Drago Tršar) and nine painters (Janez Bernik, Stojan Čelić, Oton Gliha, Branko Miljuš, Edo Murtić, Mića Popović, Zlatko Prica, Mladen Srbinović and Vladimir Veličković) participated in the exhibition. *Yugoslavia Contemporary Trends, the Younger Generation* (exhibition catalogue), Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Belgrade, 1966.

the *New Painting from Yugoslavia* a few years prior.¹³⁸ Despite all that, as Stefana Djokic's analysis shows, this exhibition's real impact was its diplomatic success, with American critics remaining trapped in their own superiority complex when evaluating Yugoslav cultural production (fig. 50).¹³⁹

The end of the 1960s represents the peak of the Yugoslav visual art scene presence in the United States. Between 1967 and 1968, the exhibition *Graphic Art from Yugoslavia* visited eight US cities and venues.¹⁴⁰ This period also saw the establishment and subsequent closure of the Adria Art Gallery in New York, the only experiment of its kind, built around a direct and targeted attempt to place Yugoslav visual art production on foreign markets. Both the graphic arts exhibition and the gallery were the brainchild of Zoran Kržišnik, who, with his energy, vision and outstanding international network, worked for decades on the international activity of the Yugoslav visual art scene.¹⁴¹ The gallery was formally established by the Slovenian commercial company Intertrade as a part of its extensive export activities, with the general support of the Yugoslav authorities. It showed the American audience what the local scene recognised as the most representative practices of Yugoslav modernism. The gallery was shortlived, despite certain successes in promoting and marketing the practices of some Yugoslav artists,¹⁴² and there are several hypotheses about the reasons for its short lifespan (fig. 51).¹⁴³ In the context of the theses in this chapter, it is, considering the specific American ideological agendas in the cultural exchange with Yugoslavia, somewhat difficult to imagine that this "acceptance" would ever materialise. Regardless of the burning ambition of the Yugoslav visual art scene to be accepted as equal in the (Western) art system and its (relative) harmony with the efforts of Yugoslav diplomacy, the Yugoslav modernist production in

138 The Fresno Arts Center (Fresno, California), the Denver Art Museum (Denver, Colorado), the Portland Museum of Art (Portland, Maine), the Addison Gallery of American Art (Andover, Massachusetts) and the Milwaukee Art Center (Milwaukee, Wisconsin). Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 169; Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

139 Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), pp. 178–184.

140 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69).

141 For more about the gallery, the context of its establishment and activities, see Dražil, 2020 (see no. 3), pp. 44–52; Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), pp. 228–244; Zgonik, 2021 (see no. 3), pp. 30–43.

142 It nevertheless seems that the commercial and institutional success of artists such as Janez Bernik, Ivan Picelj or Jagoda Buić in the USA at the time was more a result of their previous engagement and the dynamic of the art scene than the Adria Art Gallery's activities. See, for example, Dražil 2020 (see no. 3), p. 31.

143 Several theses were proposed to explain the failure of the Adria Art Gallery, for example, Zgonik, 2021 (see no. 3), pp. 30–43; Dražil, 2020 (see no. 3), pp. 44–52; Beti Žerovc, "O kombinacijah: Zoran Kržišnik," *Likovne besede*, no. 81–82, 2007, pp. 24–31.



A newspaper report from *The Evening Star* about the exhibition *Yugoslavia: Contemporary Trends, the Younger Generation* at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, in 1966.

the final instance was evaluated as either non-genuine or as not of high enough quality.¹⁴⁴

The end of the decade was marked by the extraordinary presence of Yugoslav art in the USA with the exhibition *Yugoslavia: A Report*, conceived at the MoMA in New York by William Lieberman and Riva Castleman in 1969.¹⁴⁵ Smaller in scope but important due to the significance of the venue, the exhibition presented the works of 24 Yugoslav artists. It was supposedly created on the initiative of the Yugoslav government that suggested Lieberman prepare a presentation of Yugoslav graphic artists at the MoMA as early as 1963, when he was responsible for the selection of the American representatives at the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, where he also served as a member of the jury. However, the final selection was done by Castleman, following her extensive study through the

144 Stefana Djokic researched this problem thoroughly in relation to several Yugoslav art exhibitions in the USA. She showed that in case after case, the reactions of the American critics, even when they are positive, often end in lamenting the missing "authentic" (read "exotic") dimension of the Yugoslav visual art expression, along with offering the paternalistically affirmative evaluations of its congruency with international (read "Western") modernism, the standards of which they, as a rule, do not fulfil, at least not completely. Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3) pp. 155–166, 178–183.

145 Dražil, forthcoming (see no. 69); Djokic, 2022 (see no. 3), p. 237.

country in 1968.¹⁴⁶ The mentioned exhibition anticipated the end of the intensive period of representative exhibitions and, parallel to the changing geopolitical position of Yugoslavia and the US, announced different dynamics of the exhibition exchanges in the decades that followed.

Conclusion

The extensive corpus of Yugoslav-American exhibition exchanges from the time of the Cold War provides a privileged insight into the antinomies of the Yugoslav state and society, but particularly reveals the paradoxical and often delicate role that the visual art scene in socialist Yugoslavia played in articulating the common societal interest. The cultural exchange between the two countries represented a first-class performance on the diplomatic stage of the Cold War, through which Yugoslavia received, as we attempted to show in this contribution, outstanding artistic creations from the USA, where the centre of the Western art system had moved after the Second World War. The exhibitions that were the subject of our analysis represented clearly articulated artistic statements and deftly incorporated ideological premises. They were intended for consumption by audiences from a number of countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain who needed to be convinced into accepting the thesis of the binary division of the world and of American cultural superiority in this diagram of power.

For that same reason, Yugoslavia, seen as the least antagonistic to the USA – and, as a rule, also friendly – socialist country, received outstanding contemporary artistic creations. These ambitiously conceived and produced exhibitions were presented at reputable institutions and represented what was said to be the most advanced, free and individually oriented visual expression, free of any ideological servility. The Yugoslav art scene followed these exhibitions with great interest and saw them favourably, but it wasn't uncritical. The studied archival materials indicate that, as a rule, the Yugoslav cultural public was able to read the new artistic guidelines from the USA discerningly. At the same time, it expressed reservations about how these were considered in art historical terms, placed within a historical context and presented to the Yugoslav population as a *fait accompli*. Generally speaking, the Yugoslav audience also recognised the incompatibility of their ideological premises with the principles of the socialist society, but they were far less critical when accepting the general ideological values, on which the presentation of American visual art production was based. This particularly applies to the idea of the freedom of

146 Riva Castleman, "Spomini Američanov v Ljubljani", in: Vesna Teržan (ed.), *Mnemozina: Čas ljubljanskega grafičnega bienala*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2010, pp. 91, 94, 95.

ADRIA ART GALLERY JE SHODILA

SLOVENSKA GALERIJA SREDI NEW YORKA

V sedemnajstem nadstropju nebotičniškega velikana na Madison Avenue v središču New Yorka je že nekaj časa odprta nova galerija Adria Art Gallery, v režiji podjetja za mednarodno trgovino Intertrade Ljubljana in s sodelovanjem ljubljanske Moderne galerije. Težko je po kratkem času, odkar je galerija odprta, govoriti o velikih uspehih. Na vsak način pa pomeni ta galerija prvi jugoslovanski podvig te vrste, veliko privlačnost za vse jugoslovanske slikarje, kiparje in druge upodabljaajoče umetnike kot tudi za umetniške oblikovalce. Saj je bila vse doslej naša umetnost, vabljava za ameriškega ljubitelja in kupca, na obširnem ameriškem trgu neznana.

Znova kulturni razmisli Moderne galerije v Ljubljani, ki po večletni ne tako polni in Američani, je o kletih in podobi za novo galerijo odprta. Srednja galerija, ki je bila namenjena predvsem za izstavitve umetnikov, ki so prišli iz jugoslovanskega prostora, je bila odprta v Ljubljani. V sedemnajstem nadstropju nebotičniškega velikana na Madison Avenue v središču New Yorka je že nekaj časa odprta nova galerija Adria Art Gallery, v režiji podjetja za mednarodno trgovino Intertrade Ljubljana in s sodelovanjem ljubljanske Moderne galerije. Težko je po kratkem času, odkar je galerija odprta, govoriti o velikih uspehih. Na vsak način pa pomeni ta galerija prvi jugoslovanski podvig te vrste, veliko privlačnost za vse jugoslovanske slikarje, kiparje in druge upodabljaajoče umetnike kot tudi za umetniške oblikovalce. Saj je bila vse doslej naša umetnost, vabljava za ameriškega ljubitelja in kupca, na obširnem ameriškem trgu neznana.

Znova kulturni razmisli Moderne galerije v Ljubljani, ki po večletni ne tako polni in Američani, je o kletih in podobi za novo galerijo odprta. Srednja galerija, ki je bila namenjena predvsem za izstavitve umetnikov, ki so prišli iz jugoslovanskega prostora, je bila odprta v Ljubljani. V sedemnajstem nadstropju nebotičniškega velikana na Madison Avenue v središču New Yorka je že nekaj časa odprta nova galerija Adria Art Gallery, v režiji podjetja za mednarodno trgovino Intertrade Ljubljana in s sodelovanjem ljubljanske Moderne galerije. Težko je po kratkem času, odkar je galerija odprta, govoriti o velikih uspehih. Na vsak način pa pomeni ta galerija prvi jugoslovanski podvig te vrste, veliko privlačnost za vse jugoslovanske slikarje, kiparje in druge upodabljaajoče umetnike kot tudi za umetniške oblikovalce. Saj je bila vse doslej naša umetnost, vabljava za ameriškega ljubitelja in kupca, na obširnem ameriškem trgu neznana.

Znova kulturni razmisli Moderne galerije v Ljubljani, ki po večletni ne tako polni in Američani, je o kletih in podobi za novo galerijo odprta. Srednja galerija, ki je bila namenjena predvsem za izstavitve umetnikov, ki so prišli iz jugoslovanskega prostora, je bila odprta v Ljubljani. V sedemnajstem nadstropju nebotičniškega velikana na Madison Avenue v središču New Yorka je že nekaj časa odprta nova galerija Adria Art Gallery, v režiji podjetja za mednarodno trgovino Intertrade Ljubljana in s sodelovanjem ljubljanske Moderne galerije. Težko je po kratkem času, odkar je galerija odprta, govoriti o velikih uspehih. Na vsak način pa pomeni ta galerija prvi jugoslovanski podvig te vrste, veliko privlačnost za vse jugoslovanske slikarje, kiparje in druge upodabljaajoče umetnike kot tudi za umetniške oblikovalce. Saj je bila vse doslej naša umetnost, vabljava za ameriškega ljubitelja in kupca, na obširnem ameriškem trgu neznana.

GALERIJA V SEDEMNAJSTEM NADSTROPIJU: slovenska in jugoslovanska umetnost na ameriški občini

Article on the Adria Art Gallery in *Tedenska tribuna* in 1968.

visual expression, from which one was to draw conclusions on the freedom of the society that advertised such freedom. With that, the ideological effect was achieved. It seems that the entire topic under study revolves around a fundamental misunderstanding around the idea of freedom. The Yugoslav visual art scene, in its idealised perception of the USA as a realm of freedom, was in fact unable to see how the freedom of visual creation was guaranteed by the very system which didn't submit it to the market logic, a system in which art education was widely accessible and basic conditions of work for the artists and their contact with the audience was guaranteed – regardless of what the art market dictated. It seems that the protagonists of the Yugoslav art scene, in following what they perceived as a “developed” art system, overlooked this fundamental incompatibility between the idea of art and cultural production as a public good and its inclusion in the current of capitalist production.

Gregor Dražil

The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Exhibiting Slovenian Artists in the West: The Cases of West Germany and Italy



The purpose of this chapter is to outline the interconnections between the international networking taking place in the context of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, established in 1955, and the exhibitions of Slovenian artists in Western art institutions between the middle of the 1950s and the end of the 1970s.¹ While attempting to establish how often Slovenian artists exhibited abroad and in which types of galleries the events took place, the chapter will also discuss these exhibition opportunities from the viewpoint of the Biennale's influence. We will begin the discussion by outlining the broader context of the Yugoslav cultural policy regarding the visual arts and then focus on the functioning of the Biennale of Graphic Arts, attempting to define the development of its international reputation, influence and potential. Particular attention will be given to the role of Zoran Kržišnik, an art historian, long-time director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, head of the Biennale and one of the most prominent figures in the Slovenian and Yugoslav art system. We will show that the Biennale's international networks largely corresponded to the personal social network he maintained. The central part of the contribution will be restricted to reviewing and evaluating the exhibitions of Slovenian artists in two chosen Western European countries: Federal Republic of Germany and Italy.

The Establishment of the Biennale in the Context of the Yugoslav (Cultural) Policy Towards the West

In the early 1950s, Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the West began, influencing the situation in the visual arts. While the visual arts production drew on the local pre-war modernist heritage, it also developed

1 Exhibiting of Slovenian artists in the West has rarely been discussed in the relevant expert literature. The introduction to Zoran Kržišnik's doctoral thesis, in which he outlines, among other things, the Slovenian "penetration" of the Western art arena, represents a vital source. See Zoran Kržišnik, "Vstopanje slovenske likovne umetnosti v svetovni prostor" (doctoral dissertation), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 1994. Among other topics, I elaborate on this issue and on Kržišnik's role in it in Gregor Dražil, "Am I a manager? Yes, I am.": Zoran Kržišnik and How Slovene Modern Art First Penetrated the Western Art World, International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 2020. On the other hand, a comprehensive overview of the exhibitions of Croatian artists abroad during the 1950s, with particular regard to art critics' responses, was presented in Ljiljana Kolečnik's monograph (Ljiljana Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska umjetnost i likovna kritika 50-ih godina*, Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2006, pp. 337–360). Kolečnik also writes about the international connections or networks that formed one of the starting points of the so-called New Tendencies movement in Zagreb (see, for example, Ljiljana Kolečnik, Nikola Bojić and Artur Šilić, "Rekonstrukcija personalne mreže Almira Mavigniera i njezina relacija prema prvoj izložbi Novih tendencija: Primjer primjene mrežne analize i mrežne vizualizacije u povijesti umjetnosti", *Život umjetnosti*, vol. 99, no. 2, 2016, pp. 58–79). Giovanni Rubino writes about the connections between Italy and Yugoslavia (especially Croatia but also Ljubljana) in the 1960s. Giovanni Rubino, "Italian Art in Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1967: An Overlooked Chronicle", *Art@s Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 49–61.

in dialogue with the Western post-war modernist trends. The authorities recognised modernism and the arts, among other things, as a means of “shaping a more acceptable image of [Yugoslavia’s] ruling social and political order in the West”.²

The Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, founded in 1945 immediately after the war, and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, conceptually conceived as early as 1933 but formally established in 1947, represented Slovenia’s two crucial visual arts institutions. While at the Academy, the teaching process and student production during the 1950s gradually paved the way for the turn from realism towards abstraction, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana simultaneously organised the first exhibitions of foreign (Western) art and early abstract works by local artists. In 1952, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana hosted an exhibition of French art, presenting works created from the late 19th century to date. During the following three years, exhibitions of Swiss, Belgian, Austrian and German modern (mostly graphic) art followed, while the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana also hosted the *International Exhibition of Colour Lithography (Mednarodna razstava barvne litografije, 1953)* and the *Xylon International Exhibition of Wood Engravings (Mednarodna razstava lesorezov Xylon, 1954)*.³

During this period, artists, art historians and curators increasingly travelled abroad, especially to Paris. Apart from Veno Pilon and Zoran Mušič, who lived in Paris, from the late 1940s and early 1950s onwards, Slovenian artists and art professionals would more and more frequently visit the French capital for short or long-term study stays. To name but a few, in 1950, France Mihelič resided in Paris for seven months,⁴ Gabrijel Stupica stayed there for a few months that

same year,⁵ while Miha Maleš lived in Paris for more than a year.⁶ Art historians also frequented the city: in 1950, Izidor Cankar visited Paris;⁷ in 1952–1953, Luc Menaše received a grant from the French government, allowing him to spend five months studying in the local museums, galleries and scientific libraries.⁸ Similarly, Špelca Čopič studied in Paris between 1945 and 1948 on a scholarship from the French government.⁹

During the first post-war years, when Yugoslav society, administration, politics and culture were being shaped based on the Soviet model, the exchanges with foreign countries were supervised by the Central Committee’s Agitprop – the body responsible for the ideological conceptualisation and practical implementation of the state’s cultural policy in the Yugoslav centralised state system. Between 1946 and 1948, international cultural exchanges mostly consisted of visits to the Eastern Bloc, while their number was modest due to the poor material conditions.¹⁰ In 1953, the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was established under the auspices of the Council for Science and Culture, which had replaced the Ministry of Science and Culture, abolished in 1950. Under the leadership of the writer and diplomat Marko Ristić, as of 1955, what had initially been an authoritarian and ideologically rigid institution developed into one of the best-organised art and culture bodies in Yugoslavia, capable of tackling exceedingly challenging projects, including many Yugoslav art exhibitions abroad and exhibitions of foreign art in Yugoslavia.¹¹

2 Ješa Denegri, “Inside or Outside ‘Socialist Modernism’? Radical Views on the Yugoslav Art Scene, 1950–1970”, in: Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (eds.), *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2003, p. 175.

For further information about this, see also: Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Konfliktne vizije moderniteta i poslijeratna moderna umjetnost”, in: Ljiljana Kolečnik (ed.), *Socijalizam i modernost: Umjetnost, kultura, politika 1950.–1974.*, Muzej suvremene umjetnosti and Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Zagreb, 2012, p. 130; Miško Šuvaković, “Kulturalna politika od socijalističkog realizma do socijalističkog modernizma”, in: Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Istorija umjetnosti u Srbiji – XX vek: II: Realizmi i modernizmi oko hladnog rata*, Orion Art, Belgrade, 2012, p. 369.

3 Špelca Čopič gives an overview of the developments in the visual arts in the first post-war decade in: Jelisava-Špelca Čopič, “Povojno desetletje”, *M’ars*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1991, pp. 48–52. Marijan Tršar writes about the studies at the Academy, the students’ familiarity with art in the West, travels and other characteristics of the initial post-war period, also in: Marijan Tršar, “Pregledna razstava akademskega slikarja Ivana Seljaka – Čopiča”, *Ivan Seljak – Čopič: Pregledna razstava ob umetniškovi 60-letnici* (exhibition catalogue), Mestni muzej, Idrija, 1988, pp. 5–7.

4 Jure Mikuž, *Slovensko moderno slikarstvo in zahodna umetnost: Od preloma s socialističnim realizmom do konceptualizma*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1995.

5 Irene Mislej, “1950, prelomno leto Vena Piona”, in: Irene Mislej and Alenka Puhar (eds.), *Listi z roba: Kaj sta si pisala Izidor Cankar in Veno Pilon (in marsikaj o tem, kar sta zamolčala)*, Mladinska knjiga Založba, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 23.

6 Breda Ilich Klančnik, “Biografija po letnicah”, in: Nela Malečkar (ed.), *Miha Maleš, slikajoči pesnik*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana and Medobčinski muzej Kamnik, Kamnik, 2017, p. 39.

7 Alenka Puhar, “Domotožje po domačiji in tujini”, in: Irene Mislej and Alenka Puhar (eds.), *Listi z roba: Kaj sta si pisala Izidor Cankar in Veno Pilon (in marsikaj o tem, kar sta zamolčala)*, Mladinska knjiga Založba, Ljubljana, 2015, p. 186.

8 Ksenija Rozman, “Profesor dr. Luc Menaše: Ob petinšestdesetletnici”, *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, vol. 25, 1989, p. 10.

9 Ana Obid elaborates on Špelca Čopič’s Paris period in: Ana Obid, “Špelca Čopič in njeno sodelovanje z Moderno galerijo v Ljubljani” (master’s thesis), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2022, pp. 15–18.

10 Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in: Sanja Horvatinčič and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana and Archive Books, Berlin, 2023, p. 68.

11 Ibid., pp. 74–76. For further information about the Commission, see also: Lovorka Magaš Bilandžić, “Izložba Sto listova jugoslovenske moderne grafike Komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom i njezina uloga u razvijanju kulturnih veza Jugoslavije s inozemstvom u prvoj polovini 1950-ih”, *Peristil*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2019, pp. 140–142.

The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts was founded in 1955, thanks to the state policy at the time and the culmination of the efforts by the circles gathered around the Academy of Fine Arts and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana to promote international activities. On 24 March 1954, the Organising Committee for the *1st International Exhibition of Graphic Arts (I. mednarodna grafična razstava)* in Ljubljana was established.¹² In the smaller group, which carried out most of the organisational work, the curator Zoran Kržišnik swiftly established himself as the leader and was elected secretary of the Committee. Kržišnik, employed at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana as of 1947, soon took over its management. He was among the first Yugoslav art officials to be appointed a full member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) as early as 1954. To secure his position in the Yugoslav art arena, he became a member of the Art Exhibitions Committee, established in 1956 in the framework of the abovementioned Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.¹³ As a member of various organising committees, curator, commissioner, author of texts for exhibition catalogues or in some other manner, Kržišnik was, as of the 1950s, very frequently involved in the organisation of exhibitions abroad under the auspices of the Commission.¹⁴ This was especially true of the period between 1955 and 1965 when the majority of the guest appearances organised by the Commission were curated by Kržišnik, Boris Vižintin and Miodrag B. Protić. During this early period, only Kržišnik and Vižintin, who headed the Rijeka Gallery of Fine Art from 1951, had the appropriate museum infrastructure at their disposal for their curatorial and managerial strategies, as the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art, headed by Protić, was not opened until as late as 1965.¹⁵

12 Debenjak Riko (1923–2015), Dokumentacija o društveni in umetniški dejavnosti (1938–1998), SI PANG 1113/3/2, Pokrajinski arhiv Nova Gorica. Respectable, prominent and well-connected people were appointed to the Committee, including the art historians Izidor Cankar and France Stele, director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana Karel Dobida, curator Zoran Kržišnik and artists Božidar Jakac, Riko Debenjak, Miha Maleš and France Mihelič. Apart from the representatives of the profession, Zvone Miklavčič sat on the Committee as a representative of the Municipal People's Committee of Ljubljana. France Stele, who was elected as the Committee's president, resigned due to his work obligations in Rome and was replaced by Josip Vidmar, the president of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and one of the most influential public figures of the time.

13 For further information about Kržišnik and the early phase of his career, see also Dražil, 2020 (see no. 1).

14 In the continuation of this chapter, we will highlight a prominent exhibition of Yugoslav art in Italy, titled *Contemporary Yugoslav Art (Arte jugoslava contemporanea)*. On the Yugoslav side, this event was organised by the Commission, with Kržišnik's participation. See footnote 28.

15 This circumstance has been brought to my attention by one of this text's reviewers, whom I would like to thank for the information.

After the first Biennale exhibition, the Organising Committee was dissolved. However, already in 1955, the permanent Secretariat for the Organisation of International Exhibitions of Graphic Arts was established at the suggestion of the Municipal People's Committee of Ljubljana, which also financed the Biennale. The Secretariat was responsible for ensuring that the preparations for the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts continued even during the years when the event did not take place, maintaining contacts with foreign artists and institutions and seeking financial sources for future exhibitions.¹⁶ This move transformed the Biennale from an occasional event into an institution (fig. 52). Gradually, the Secretariat exceeded its initial scope. The minutes from 1959 thus state that "in agreement with the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Yugoslav Artists' Union, the Secretariat extended its scope of work to organising foreign graphic arts exhibitions in Yugoslavia and Yugoslav exhibitions abroad"¹⁷

In the absence of more detailed archival sources, the Secretariat's precise legal status, its financial, organisational and personnel structure, and especially its relationship with its parent institution, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, remain unclear. As of the middle of the 1960s, the curator Živa Škodlar Vujić had a prominent role in the Biennale Secretariat alongside its secretary, Mika Briški. The former was responsible for many aspects of organising the biennial exhibition – from receiving and registering the artworks and application forms to communicating with the artists, preparing the materials for the catalogue, receiving foreign guests and organising and overseeing the work of the international jury.¹⁸

The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts and Its International Structure

Foreign experts, who were part of the Biennale's structure, played a crucial role in creating opportunities for the exhibitions of Slovenian artists abroad. Due to their involvement in the event, these experts maintained close contacts with the Biennale's management, especially Zoran Kržišnik, who was a prominent figure capable of leveraging

16 Archives–Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, "Zapisnik seje odbora za I. mednarodno grafično razstavo v Ljubljani dne 28. IX. 1955 ob 20. uri v Moderni galeriji, p. 2", MGLC 1955/F1 13/55, Archives of the International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana (hereinafter Archives of MGLC). The same document contains the first reference to Kržišnik as the Secretariat's secretary, so it seems he was automatically appointed to this post when this body was established.

17 Archives–Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, "Zapisnik 1. seje delovnega odbora za organizacijo Mednarodnih grafičnih razstav dne 16. I. 1959 ob 10. uri v Moderni galeriji v Ljubljani, p. 2", MGLC 1955/F1, Archives of MGLC.

18 In recent years, the author of the present text has held a series of conversations with Živa Škodlar Vujić.

52



53



52

Zoran Kržišnik, the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, welcomes President Josip Broz - Tito and his wife, Jovanka Broz, to the *3rd International Exhibition of Graphic Arts* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1959.

53

The jury for the *5th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts*, meeting at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in early June 1963: (left to right) Mieczysław Porębski (Warsaw), William S. Lieberman (MoMA, New York), Zoran Kržišnik (Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana), Walter Koschatzky (Albertina Museum, Vienna), Jacques Lassaigne (Paris), Umbro Apollonio (Venice Biennale) and Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov (Moscow).

or “cashing in” his cultural, social and symbolic capital, also in the form of exhibition and sales opportunities for the local artists in the foreign (Western) scene.¹⁹

The public was very interested in the presence of the jurors – the members of the international jury that granted the financially and especially symbolically significant awards to the participating artists. The selection of the jury members shows that the Biennale’s organising team always kept a close eye on changes in the international art scene and the emergence of new influential critics, gallerists and art historians. It is important to note that the team did not limit itself to the graphic arts but would instead also invite experts involved in evaluating and presenting the new performative and other contemporary art practices. The structure of the jury was not predetermined geographically, politically or artistically. Nevertheless, the list of jurors in the period between the years 1955 and 1979 reveals certain cultural and political trends (fig. 53). With shorter or longer intermittent breaks, the juries included representatives from France, Italy, West Germany, the USA and Japan, who were occasionally joined by British, Northern European, Swiss, Portuguese and Austrian experts. In the second half of the chapter, we will mostly discuss these Western jurors, though we should emphasise that, in line with the Biennale’s commitment to international inclusiveness, experts from other parts of the world also participated. Jurors from the Soviet Union, politically the strongest country of the Eastern Bloc, participated four times between 1961 and 1967, while one place on the jury was “reserved” for an art expert from Czechoslovakia or Poland ever since the second Biennale (except the 1961 exhibition).²⁰ The jurors from these two countries are considered to have been very much involved in the progressive art scene and exceedingly active in maintaining communication between their local scenes and the Western art scene.

Unlike most of the artists who would send their works by post but would not attend the event in Ljubljana personally, the jurors

19 According to Bourdieu, capital takes three basic forms: economic (money, material resources and financial power, which also represents the core of all other forms of capital); cultural (knowledge, education, skills); and social/societal (adherence to networks and groups). The volume of the social capital possessed by a given person/agent depends on “the size of the network of connections that people can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) possessed in their own right by each of those to whom they are connected”. See: Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital”, in: John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood Press, New York, Westport, London, 1986, p. 249.

20 All information about the jurors, exhibitors, prize winners, consultants and other facts related to the Biennale of Graphic Arts mentioned in this text can be found in the exhibition catalogues.

were, at the invitation of the organisers, in fact present in Ljubljana before and during the opening of the Biennale. Their role was very much highlighted in the media, and they would give interviews and statements to prominent Slovenian outlets. The Biennale's organising team paid considerable attention to the jurors' itinerary, which included, among other things, gatherings at Zoran Kržišnik's home in Žirovnica (figs. 54–59).²¹ As the house was furnished with works by Slovenian and Yugoslav artists, it functioned almost like a promotional gallery, mainly intended for informing foreign guests. It is essential to note that Kržišnik participated in all Biennale juries during the period under consideration. This not only ensured that he had a direct influence on the jury's decisions but also allowed him to discuss potential future collaborations while (in)formally socialising with the jurors.

In addition to the jurors, Kržišnik was associated with many other internationally relevant personalities during the Biennale's preparation and implementation. The first group he collaborated with were the gallerists who sent or loaned works by their protégés to the event. For example, we should underline Tatyana Grosman – the founder of the New York-based graphic publishing house Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), with whom, according to the catalogue, the Biennale's organisers collaborated as of 1963 – and Denise René, who ran the Paris gallery of the same name and was associated with the Biennale as of 1961 (fig. 60).²² The consultants for the national selections represented the second group of foreign associates (which occasionally overlapped with the first one). It included curators and directors of public museums and galleries, private gallerists and publishers, as well as art critics and even visual artists, whom the Biennale organisers entrusted with “curating” a part or even an entire selection of works from a particular country.²³ The organisers established close contacts with the consultants, who would visit Ljubljana, exchange correspondence with Kržišnik, and so on. As we will see in the second part of the chapter, these contacts represented another way of reaching agreements and ensuring opportunities for Slovenian artists to exhibit abroad.

21 On several occasions, the author of the present chapter discussed the gatherings with Mitja Rotovnik, a cultural politician and Kržišnik's close associate and friend.

22 The list is, of course, longer. In the second part of the text, we will refer to some of the Biennale's collaborations with foreign galleries, exploring the specific exhibitions of Slovenian artists abroad.

23 The artists were included in the Biennale exhibition either through an open competition or received an invitation to participate. The organisers sent out the invitations on their own or asked their foreign associates (i.e. consultants) or institutions for assistance and intermediation.

54



55



56



58



57



59



54-59 Reception at the house of Zoran Kržišnik in Žirovnica during the 11th Biennial of Graphic Art in 1975.



Tatyana Grosman, founder of the print publishing house Universal Limited Art Editions in New York, and Edy de Wilde, director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, at the opening of the *8th International Exhibition of Graphic Arts* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1969.

The Biennale was an influential event and exhibiting there was a prestigious opportunity for both Slovenian and foreign artists. Thus, it is unsurprising that, apart from the jurors, partner galleries, publishing houses and consultants, many other foreign guests, artists, art critics and journalists also visited Ljubljana.²⁴ As the preserved photographs show, the Biennale openings were particularly prominent, glamorous events, spiced with a bit of suspense in anticipation of the award winner announcements. They represented an excellent opportunity for socialising and networking.

Research Field Boundaries and Definitions

As we will see in the second part of this chapter, the organisers were able to skilfully leverage the respect and affection of both the artists and the professional public in many of their contacts with foreign countries. However, before we focus on outlining the exhibitions of Slovenian artists abroad and the role that the Biennale and the associated Ljubljana art institutions played in creating these international promotion opportunities, let us first provide a few methodological notes and content clarifications that will guide us in this discussion.

24 Their presence in Ljubljana is more difficult to detect, as they are not listed in the exhibition catalogues and are often not mentioned in the relevant archival materials.

One of the major challenges of our present research is to establish how the particular presentations of Slovenian artists abroad took place: who gave the initiative for a specific exhibition, who organised it, and who conceived its content. The basic data entries listed for a particular exhibition in, for example, the Raz_Ume database of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana²⁵ include the title of the exhibition, the duration, and, in some cases, the list of participating artists and information regarding the existence of a catalogue. If we wish to learn more about a specific exhibition, the main source is the accompanying publication – which we will cite here whenever available.²⁶ However, the research challenges do not necessarily end with identifying the exhibition organisers or initiators. In some cases, it is clear that certain exhibitions were not related to the Biennale – for example, they might have been organised by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries or by some other Yugoslav gallery or museum. Yet, there are also cases where it is impossible to determine whether the exhibition satisfies the criterion of a direct connection to the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts. The relevant catalogues only rarely list the Biennale as the initiator or organiser. More often, the list of names or institutions includes either Zoran Kržišnik (as the head of the Biennale or the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana), the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana as an institution or Mala Galerija²⁷ as the Museum's additional exhibition venue.

As revealed precisely by the information on exhibitions abroad, all three institutions listed above were closely interconnected. It is difficult to separate Zoran Kržišnik's efforts from that of the Biennale, and it is just as hard to distinguish between the Biennale and the Museum of Modern Art or between the latter and its Mala Galerija. It seems that Kržišnik, as the central figure that united these institutions, constantly manoeuvred between them and used them appropriately, as each opportunity required, to achieve the same goal:

25 raz_ume, razume.mg-lj.si, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si> (accessed 13.9.2024).

26 While such publications were often produced, many events also took place without any dedicated brochures or catalogues, or the information contained therein was scarce. In such cases, and when the exhibition catalogues are not stored or accessible in Slovenian libraries, we can resort to the relevant archival sources, media responses or direct testimonies. Apart from the (admittedly incomplete) Biennale archives, kept at the International Centre of Graphic Arts, some information could potentially also be uncovered in other Slovenian or foreign archives (for example, in the archives of the galleries that hosted Slovenian artists) and perhaps during additional conversations with the still-living artists, curators and gallerists. The newspaper archive related to these exhibitions is still waiting to be processed, as it represents a database too extensive for the present research.

27 For further information about the Mala Galerija, see also: Petja Grafenauer, Nataša Ivanović and Urška Barut, "Kako je Mala galerija prenehala biti društvena in postala moderna", *Likovne besede*, no. 113, 2019, pp. 33–38.

to create as many opportunities as possible for exhibiting Slovenian artists abroad. For the purposes of the present research, we have therefore decided not to distinguish between them. Thus, we will list all those exhibitions abroad where the catalogues make it clear that the “Ljubljana circle” – i.e. Kržišnik,²⁸ the Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana or the Mala Galerija – is, in one way or another, responsible for their organisation.

In the continuation, we will only focus on solo and group gallery exhibitions of Slovenian and Yugoslav artists abroad. Nevertheless, we should always keep in mind that recurring exhibitions, i.e. international biennials and triennials, also provided vital opportunities for the international visibility of Slovenian artists. Also, with regard to these exhibitions, the status and influence of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts represented a notable factor, as it was one of the earliest events of its kind and a model for many others, especially graphic biennials and triennials. Zoran Kržišnik, as the head of the Ljubljana exhibition and leveraging his growing international reputation, was frequently invited to participate in graphic art events abroad. He often selected the Yugoslav representatives for these exhibitions and was also frequently chosen as a member of international juries responsible for awarding prizes. This allowed him to introduce the selected Slovenian and Yugoslav artists to the international scene and ensure their quality was confirmed by “lobbying” for awards.

Exhibiting Slovenian Artists in the West from the Biennale's Establishment Until the 1980s: A Review

During the period under consideration, Slovenian artists exhibited in quite a few influential Western institutions. The exhibition *Seven Graphic Artists from Yugoslavia (Zeven grafici uit Joegoslavië)* at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1968, which Kržišnik helped organise, appears exceedingly relevant.²⁹ The exhibition probably resulted from

28 In my overview, I will not list all the exhibitions abroad in which Kržišnik was involved. One such example was the (prominent) exhibition titled *Contemporary Yugoslav Art*, organised in 1956/1957 at the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome and at the Palazzo della Permanente building in Milan. As a member of the exhibition's Executive Committee, Kržišnik contributed the text for the catalogue. Nevertheless, the organisation of this exhibition cannot be associated with the influence or direct activities of the “Ljubljana Circle”, as on the Yugoslav side, the project was organised by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Regarding the exhibition, see *Arte jugoslava contemporanea* (exhibition catalogue), Editalia, Rome, 1956/1957.

29 In an unsigned introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the author thanks Kržišnik for his help with organising the exhibition. The information from the catalogue, which is impossible to find in Slovenian libraries, was kindly provided to me by Bart Brouns from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him.

his acquaintance with Edy de Wilde (1919–2005), the director of Stedelijk Museum at the time, who was a juror at the 1969 and 1971 Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts. In 1981, Zoran Kržišnik prepared a selection of works and wrote the introductory text for the catalogue of the *Yugoslav Prints* exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London.³⁰ We should also mention the cooperation with Japan, which resulted in several exhibitions of Slovenian graphic artists in prominent Japanese art institutions.³¹

The cooperation with the American art scene would deserve a separate chapter.³² In 1967, the Adria Art Gallery opened in the USA. The Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and Zoran Kržišnik were directly involved in the project. The gallery, which has recently received quite a bit of attention from researchers³³ and will therefore not be elaborated on in this chapter, only operated for a short time, but it nevertheless notably attests to Kržišnik's ambition to introduce Yugoslav art to foreign art venues and art markets.

Although it was smaller in scale, we should also highlight the 1969 exhibition of Yugoslav graphic arts at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) due to the importance of the exhibition venue. The exhibition titled *Yugoslavia: A Report* was conceived by the MoMA curators William Lieberman (1924–2005) and Riva Castleman (1930–2014).³⁴ In 1963, Lieberman was invited to select the American representatives for the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts for the first time. According to Castleman's memoirs, the Yugoslav government sent him a proposal for an exhibition of Yugoslav graphic artists at the MoMA already that

30 *Yugoslav Prints* (exhibition catalogue), Tate Gallery Publications, London, 1981.

31 More on the cooperation with the Japanese in: Gregor Dražil, “Oris sodelovanja med Japonsko in Jugoslavijo na področju grafike”, in: Gregor Dražil (ed.), *Simpozij ob razstavi Japonska, Jugoslavija, grafični bienale: Dokumenti sodelovanja: Zbornik prispevkov*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2019, pp. 18–29.

32 For some information on the graphic exchange between the USA and Yugoslavia, see the chapter by Vladimir Vidmar, “Almost America: Travelling Visual Arts Exhibitions from the USA at the Ljubljana Museum of Modern Art Between 1953 and 1979,” in this book, especially pp. 140–184.

33 For further information about the gallery and the circumstances of its establishment, see Dražil, 2020 (see no. 1), pp. 44–52; Stefana Djokic, “Art and Politics: The Role of Art in US–Yugoslav Relations During the Cold War (1948–1970)” (doctoral dissertation), The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 2022, pp. 228–244; Nadja Zgonik, “Jugoslovska socialistična umetnost na amerškem trgu: Primer prodajne galerije Adria Art v New Yorku 1967–1968”, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo*, vol. 49, no. 283, 2021, pp. 30–43.

34 In the immediate post-war period, MoMA's work was closely associated with the ambitions of American politics, which, in the context of the Cold War, strived to establish American modernist art (especially abstract expressionism) as a symbol of the liberal and free (American) culture in the international arena. Frances Stonor Saunders wrote about the connections between the CIA and the MoMA in this context. See: Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York, 2000, pp. 164–174.

same year. Five years later, Castleman completed Lieberman's initial selection of Yugoslav artists with the most recent works. To this end, she travelled throughout Yugoslavia in 1968 to meet with artists and curators, including visiting studios, artists' homes and galleries.³⁵ The exhibition featuring 24 Yugoslav artists, opened on 29 September 1969 and was on display until 30 November of that year.³⁶

We should note that, in the context of the Biennale, although very strong contacts were established with certain countries, they did not always ensure more frequent opportunities for Slovenian artists abroad. As an example, the Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and Kržišnik were closely connected with France from the Biennale's very beginning. After all, the core of the very first Biennale consisted of the artists from the so-called *École de Paris* – i.e. French artists or those who had immigrated to that city in the first half of the 20th century. The Biennale's jury also included many French representatives (Jean Leymarie, Jacques Lassaigne, François Mathey, Jean Clair), while the acknowledgements in the relevant catalogues include many famous French private galleries, such as the already mentioned Denise René, Rive Gauche and La Hune (both first mentioned in 1957) and Lacourière (in 1959). Nevertheless, Slovenian artists rarely exhibited in French galleries.³⁷ The more notable exceptions include the solo exhibitions of Janez Bernik (1963) and Riko Debenjak (1968) at the La Hune bookshop and gallery, curated by Kržišnik's associate Bernard Gheerbrant.³⁸ We should also mention that, in 1966, the Biennale's Secretariat organised an exhibition titled *Yugoslav Graphic Artists (Graveurs Yougoslaves)* as part of the *4th Festival of Visual Arts of the Côte d'Azur* in Nice.³⁹

In the final part of the chapter, we will present some of the results of the previously described research work using the example

of two Western European countries: West Germany and Italy. The decision to focus on these two countries was mostly practical, as the corpus of exhibitions in several or even all Western countries would simply be too extensive. Moreover, these two countries have been selected because exhibitions by Slovenian artists there were rather frequent, and research on the exhibitions keeps revealing fascinating results and patterns.

Federal Republic of Germany

The relations between Yugoslavia and West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) were friendly throughout the period under consideration, ever since the termination of the state of war between the two countries in 1951. For West German diplomacy – a West German embassy opened in Belgrade in 1953 – the post-Cominform Yugoslavia was a “window” into the Eastern Bloc and, as such, represented a prominent foreign policy ally.⁴⁰ In 1957, these relations deteriorated because Yugoslavia recognised the German Democratic Republic, and the FRG thus severed its diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. However, according to Dušan Nečak, the break “was almost ‘friendly’, and both sides regretted it”.⁴¹ With the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1967, Yugoslavia, among other things, managed to secure economic cooperation and aid from the FRG, while for the latter the resumption of relations with Yugoslavia was a domestic political achievement, as it represented a vital step in West Germany's “Ostpolitik” – the policy of normalising its relations with the Eastern Bloc.⁴²

The good relations between the two countries were also reflected in their cooperation with regard to the visual arts, including the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts. Among the experts from the FRG involved in the organisation of the Biennale, three jurors were especially prominent: Werner Schmalenbach⁴³ (a jury member in 1965 and 1967),

35 Riva Castleman, “Spomini Američanov v Ljubljani”, in: Vesna Teržan (ed.), *Mnemozina: Čas ljubljanskega grafičnega bienala*, MGLC, Ljubljana, 2010, pp. 91, 94, 95.

36 Considering the size of the American art scene, the research carried out for the purposes of this chapter shows that the exhibitions of Slovenian and other Yugoslav artists in the USA, which can be associated with the Biennale circle, were not numerous.

37 Unlike Slovenian artists, Croatian artists frequently exhibited in Paris. This is also attested to by the list of Ivan Picelj's exhibitions, which reveals that the artist regularly exhibited his works at the Denise René gallery, a “stronghold” of geometric abstraction, and at many other Parisian exhibition venues as of the 1950s. See: Snježana Pintarić and Ana Škegro, “Exhibitions”, in: Slavica Marković (ed.), *Ivan Picelj – Print portfolios* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej suvremene umjetnosti and Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Kabinet grafike, Zagreb, 2016, pp. 184–197.

38 More about the cooperation with Gheerbrant in Dražil, 2020 (see no. 1), pp. 32–37.

39 *IV^e festival des Arts plastiques de la Côte d'Azur: Graveurs Yougoslaves* (exhibition catalogue), Sekretariat za organizacijo mednarodnih grafičnih razstav v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 1966.

40 Dušan Nečak, “Jugoslavija kot ‘poseben primer/Sonderfall’ v zahodnonemški zunanji politiki”, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2017, pp. 113, 114.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 117. In his monograph, Dušan Nečak elaborates on the “Ostpolitik” policy, especially from the viewpoint of restoring German relations with Yugoslavia. See: Dušan Nečak, “Ostpolitik” *Willyja Brandta in Jugoslavija, 1963–1969*, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2013.

43 As of 1962, Werner Schmalenbach (1920–2010) was the director of the newly established Art Collection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen). He was also the Commissioner of the West German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1960 and a member of the working committee of documenta II and III art exhibitions (1959 and 1964). See, for example: “Schmalenbach, Werner”, in: *Dictionary of Art Historians*, Duke University, Durham, URL: <https://arthistorians.info/schmalenbachw> (accessed 24.1.2024).

Dietrich Mahlow⁴⁴ (1969, 1971 and 1973) and Karl-Heinz Hering⁴⁵ (1975 and 1977). Along with some lesser-known names, all three of them were, at various times, also consultants for the West German selection of works for the Biennale exhibitions.

Certain instances of exhibiting Slovenian artists abroad can be directly linked to these three experts. Thus, in 1971, an exhibition of Yugoslav graphic arts, titled *Contemporaneous IV: Graphics from Yugoslavia (Gegenwart IV: Graphik aus Jugoslawien)*, took place in Düsseldorf under Hering's direction and under the auspices of the Art Society for Rhineland and Westphalia Düsseldorf (Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen).⁴⁶ A year later, the same institution prepared a major overview exhibition titled *Janez Bernik: Graphic Works, Paintings (Janez Bernik: Das graphische Werk, Gemälde)* at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue.⁴⁷ We can probably attribute another Bernik exhibition to Hering,⁴⁸ namely the presentation at the Art Gallery Dreiseitel in Cologne, in the same German federal state. Dietrich Mahlow also brought several Slovenian artists to Germany. In 1971, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg organised an extensive overview exhibition of recent global graphic art, titled *Graphics of the World: International Prints of the Last 25 Years (Graphik der Welt: Internationale Druckgraphik der letzten 25 Jahre)*. As a member of the exhibition's preparatory committee, Kržišnik also included several Slovenian and other Yugoslav artists in the selection. In the same year, an exhibition of Yugoslav graphic arts, titled *Contemporary Yugoslav Prints (Jugoslawische Druckgraphik der Gegenwart)*, opened at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg as well (fig. 61).⁴⁹

44 Between 1956 and 1967, Dietrich Mahlow (1920–2013) was the director of the Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden (see "Geschichte", kunsthalle-baden-baden.de, 2024, URL: <https://kunsthalle-baden-baden.de/ueber-die-kunsthalle/geschichte> (accessed 19.9.2024)). From 1967 to 1971, he was also the director of the Kunsthalle and the Institute for Modern Art (Institut für moderne Kunst) in Nuremberg. In 1970, in the context of the (then turbulent) Venice Biennale, Mahlow, in cooperation with Umro Apollonio, curated a prominent and innovative exhibition project titled *A Proposal for an Experimental Exhibition (Proposta per una esposizione sperimentale)*. See, for example, Vittorio Pajusco, "Umro Apollonio e l'Archivio della Biennale di Venezia (1948–1972)", in: Stefania Portinari and Nico Stringa (eds.), *Storie della Biennale di Venezia*, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2019, pp. 161–162.

45 Karl-Heinz Hering (1928–2015) was a long-time associate and director of the Art Society for Rhineland and Westphalia (Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen).

46 *Gegenwart IV: Graphik aus Jugoslawien* (exhibition catalogue), Melitta Dederichs (ed.), Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1971.

47 *Janez Bernik: Das graphische Werk, Gemälde* (exhibition catalogue), Karl-Heinz Hering (ed.), Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1972.

48 Hering contributed texts for the exhibition catalogue. See: *Janez Bernik: Verzeichnis der Bilder und Graphiken, 1973–1975* (exhibition catalogue), Galerie Dreiseitel, Köln, 1975.

49 *Jugoslawische Druckgraphik der Gegenwart* (exhibition catalogue), Herbert Bessel (ed.), Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft, Nürnberg, 1971. Today's New Museum Nuremberg

Slovenian artists also exhibited in private galleries in the West, including in the FRG. In 1965, Janez Bernik set out on his West German "tour". That year, he exhibited his works at the Kleine Grafik Gallery in Bremen,⁵⁰ headed by Hans D. Voss, who had been a regular guest in Ljubljana as of the middle of the 1960s.⁵¹ In the following year, Bernik had an exhibition at the Anne Abels Gallery in Cologne together with the Croatian artists Edo Murtić and Dušan Džamonja.⁵² In the same year, Bernik was also the subject of an exhibition organised at the Gunar Gallery in Düsseldorf, curated by the gallerist Günter Pooch. Zoran Kržišnik contributed the introductory text for the catalogue and spoke at the exhibition's opening.⁵³

According to Kržišnik, the *New Yugoslav Art (Neue jugoslawische Kunst)* exhibition, which took place in 1961, was a crucial event among the early exhibitions in the public institutions in West Germany associated with the efforts of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.⁵⁴ The exhibition was first shown in the Painting Gallery of the City Museum in Wiesbaden (Städtisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie) and

(Neues Museum Nürnberg) keeps 13 works by Gabrijel Stupica in its collection. See: "Gabrijel Stupica", [nmn.de](https://www.nmn.de), 2009, URL: <https://www.nmn.de/de/museum/archiv/archiv-sammlung/sammlung-r-u/gabrijel-stupica.htm> (accessed 22.4.2024). According to Tomaž Brejc, in 1970, Stupica received a commission from Nuremberg to produce 17 works, of which the abovementioned 13 were apparently completed. See: Tomaž Brejc, "Slike in ateljeji", in: Martina Vovk (ed.), *Gabrijel Stupica (1913–1990): Retrospektiva* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2013, p. 56.

50 "Janez Bernik", razume.mg-lj.si, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=631965> (accessed 13.9.2024). In the following years, several other exhibitions of Yugoslav artists took place in this gallery.

51 Between 1965 and 1975, Voss exhibited his works at every Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, while in 1967, Mala Galerija even held his solo exhibition.

52 According to the information published in the relevant catalogue – *Janez Bernik, Dušan Džamonja, Edo Murtić* (exhibition catalogue), Galerie Anne Abels, Köln, 1966 – the exhibition cannot be directly linked to Ljubljana. However, there is indeed a record in the Biennale archives for 1965 (i.e. a year before the Bernik, Murtić and Džamonja exhibition), stating that Kržišnik sent the catalogue of the 6th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts to the Anne Abels gallery, so some contact had definitely been established: Archives–Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, "Inozemske galerije in muzeji, p. 9", MGLC 1965/F1, Archives of MGLC.

53 *Janez Bernik* (exhibition catalogue), Galerie Gunar, Düsseldorf, 1966.

54 Kržišnik, 1994 (see no. 1), n. p. While Kržišnik states that the exhibition was organised by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, Clemens Weiler, the director of the Painting Gallery (Gemäldegalerie) in Wiesbaden, where the exhibition was first shown, does indeed state in his preface that Kržišnik made it possible for him to visit the studios of various Yugoslav artists. However, he also writes that the selection of the artists was made, in agreement with the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, by Božo Bek, the director of the City Gallery of Contemporary Art (Gradska galerija suvremene umjetnosti) in Zagreb, and Miodrag Protić, the director of the Modern Gallery (Moderna galerija) in Belgrade. See: Clemens Weiler, "Uvod", in: *Neue jugoslawische Kunst* (exhibition catalogue), Städtisches Museum, Wiesbaden, 1961, n. p.



61 Catalogue cover for the exhibition *Contemporary Yugoslav Prints* at Kunsthalle Nürnberg in 1971.

62 Catalogue cover for the exhibition *Yugoslav Prints* at Kunsthalle Bremen in 1967.

63 Catalogue cover for the exhibition *Art from Yugoslavia 1972* at Kunsthalle Mannheim in 1972.

then travelled to the City Museum in Braunschweig (Städtisches Museum), Folkwang Museum in Essen, Sauermond Museum in Aachen and Baden Art Society in Karlsruhe (Badischer Kunstverein).⁵⁵ Thanks to the assistance of the abovementioned artist and gallerist Hans D. Voss, in 1967, two other overview exhibitions of Yugoslav graphic arts were also organised. The first – *Yugoslav Prints (Jugoslawische Druckgraphik)*⁵⁶ – was initially shown at the Bremen Kunsthalle and then also at the Wilhelm-Morgner-Haus in Soest, the Overbeck Society in Lübeck (Overbeck-Gesellschaft), Art Society in Wolfsburg (Kunstverein Wolfsburg), the Märkisches Museum in Witten, the Art Society in Wilhelmshaven (Kunstverein in Wilhelmshaven) and the Lometsch Gallery in Kassel.⁵⁷ The second exhibition – *Yugoslav Graphic Artists (Jugoslawische Grafiker)* – was organised in Oldenburg under the auspices of the Oldenburg Art Society (Oldenburger Kunstverein).⁵⁸ Moreover, in 1971, Voss was also involved in the exhibition titled *Modern Graphic Art from Yugoslavia (Moderne Grafik aus Jugoslawien)* in Paderborn in North Rhine-Westphalia (fig. 62).⁵⁹

In the first half of the 1970s, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, the Biennale management and its associated German “contacts” focused intensively on organising various events in West Germany. In addition to the abovementioned exhibition in Paderborn and the Nuremberg and Düsseldorf guest appearances of 1971 and 1972, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana also organised the exhibition titled *Contemporary Yugoslav Art (Zeitgenössische Jugoslawische Kunst)* in Leverkusen (Forum Leverkusen)⁶⁰ in 1971 and, a year later, the exhibition *Art from Yugoslavia 1972 (Kunst aus Jugoslawien 1972)*

55 The information regarding the exhibition tour can be found in the entry in the RazUme database: “Neue jugoslawische Kunst”, razume.mg-lj.si, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=441961> (accessed 13.9.2024).

56 *Jugoslawische Druckgraphik* (exhibition catalogue), Johann Heinrich Müller (ed.), Kunsthalle, Bremen, 1967.

57 The other stops on the exhibition tour are not mentioned in the catalogue. They are listed after: “Hronologija – grupne izložbe na kojima je izlagana grafika”, in: Sonja Abadžijeva-Dimitrova (ed.), *Jugoslovenska umetnost XX veka: Jugoslovenska grafika: 1950–1980*, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1985, pp. 282, 283. We would like to draw particular attention to the stated chronological list of the group graphic arts exhibitions between 1962 and 1980, as it represents an exceedingly valuable source for studying the exhibitions in Yugoslavia and abroad at that time.

58 *Jugoslawische Grafiker* (exhibition catalogue), Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, 1967.

59 The exhibition in question was organised by the Paderborn Art Society (Kunstverein Paderborn) in cooperation with the Westfälische Kammerspiele Theatre. See the exhibition catalogue: *Moderne Grafik aus Jugoslawien* (exhibition catalogue), Kunstverein Paderborn and Westfälische Kammerspiele, Paderborn, 1971.

60 *Zeitgenössische Jugoslawische Kunst* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1971.

in the Kunsthalle in Mannheim in southwestern Germany (fig. 63).⁶¹ The exhibition *Yugoslav Graphic Art (Jugoslawische Graphiken)*, organised by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, stopped in Mannheim (Kubus) in 1974 and continued the tour that year and the following year in Stuttgart, Hannover and Braunschweig.⁶²

We have yet to mention West Berlin. In 1966, Andrej Jemec exhibited at the Gallery Europa,⁶³ while in 1977, the exhibition *The Ljubljana Graphic School (Die graphische Schule von Ljubljana)* was organised by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana under the auspices of the Graphotek Berlin and the Reinickendorf Cultural Office.⁶⁴

Italy

After the end of the Second World War, the political relations between Italy and Yugoslavia (and in the Cold War context, the broader international community as well) were burdened heavily by the question of Trieste or the territory along the northeastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. The provisional arrangement, under which Yugoslavia was in charge of Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) while the Anglo-American authorities oversaw Zone A, dragged on until as late as 1954 when the FTT was abolished with the so-called London Agreement when Zone A went to Italy while Zone B was annexed to Yugoslavia. Despite this solution, the relations between the two countries remained complicated. It was not until the 1960s that the combination of Italian internal political shifts and the dramatic events in Eastern Europe finally resulted in a mutual awareness that it was essential to finally resolve the issue of the Italian-Yugoslav border. The solution was confirmed in 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Osimo, which contributed significantly to the improvement of the bilateral relations between the two countries.⁶⁵

61 *Kunst aus Jugoslawien 1972: Einige Strömungen der zeitgenössischen jugoslawischen Kunst* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1972. According to the monograph cited in footnote 57, the exhibition was also shown in Saarbrücken (Saarlandmuseum) at the end of 1972. See: "Hronologija – grupne izložbe ...", 1985 (see no. 57), p. 299.

62 The exhibition was first shown in Stuttgart (Central Library/Zentralbücherei), then in Mannheim (Kubus), Hannover (an unknown location) and Braunschweig (Stadthalle). The information on the exhibition's locations is not mentioned in the relevant catalogue – *Jugoslawische Graphiken: Ausstellung von 15 zeitgenössischen Künstlern aus Anlaß der Jugoslawischen Woche in Stuttgart* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1974. Instead, we refer to the information published in "Hronologija – grupne izložbe ...", 1985 (see no. 57), p. 303.

63 According to the artist, the exhibition was not related to Zoran Kržišnik's engagement.

64 *Die graphische Schule von Ljubljana* (exhibition catalogue), Rathaus-Galerie, Reichendorf, 1977.

65 "Introduction", in: Massimo Bucarelli et al. (eds.), *Italy and Tito's Yugoslavia in the Age of International Détente*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, Brussels, etc., 2016, pp. 9–12.

Zoran Kržišnik had been present in Italy – more specifically, at the Venice Biennale – since the early 1950s.⁶⁶ During the 1960s, he was either a commissioner of the Yugoslav Pavilion or a jury member on several occasions. Thus, it is unsurprising that already in 1955, the jury of the very first Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts exhibition included an Italian expert, Giuseppe Marchiori,⁶⁷ who was also a jury member at the following three Biennales (1957–1961). In 1963, 1969 and 1971, this function was performed by Marchiori's good friend Umbro Apollonio⁶⁸ and in 1977 by Franco Solmi.⁶⁹ On various occasions, Marchiori and Apollonio were also consultants for the selection of Italian exhibitors – a role also held by the famous art historian and critic Giulio Carlo Argan⁷⁰ (consultant in 1967, 1969 and 1973) and the artist Getulio Alviani (1979 and 1981) (fig. 64).

The exhibition titled *Slovenian Contemporary Art (L'arte slovena contemporanea)*⁷¹ at the Municipal Museum (Museo civico) in Pistoia,

66 In 1950, when Yugoslavia participated at the Venice Biennale with its own pavilion for the first time after the Second World War, Kržišnik was appointed the assistant to the Yugoslav commissioner, Petar Šegedin.

67 Giuseppe Marchiori (1901–1982) was an Italian art critic and co-founder of the New Arts Front (Fronte Nuovo delle Arti), an Italian art group that brought together various artists, from the realist to abstract movements. See, for example: Claudio Stoppani, "Marchiori, Giuseppe", in: Massimo Bray et al. (eds.), *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, book 69, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani S.p.A., Rome, 2007, URL: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-marchiori_res-cd7e8545-395f-11dd-904a-0016357eee51_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29 (accessed 25.1.2024). Marchiori was particularly committed to maintaining contacts between the West and the East. Among other things, he organised the exchange of Polish and Italian art (Nancy Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948–64: Italy and the Idea of Europe*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2007, p. 95).

68 The Trieste-born Umbro Apollonio (1911–1981) was an art critic, university professor and long-time member of the Venice Biennale organisation. Between 1949 and 1972, he was the director of the Biennale's archives, while since the 1948 Biennale, he was a member of the curatorial team for the various Biennale exhibitions. See, for example, Vittorio Pajusco, "Umbro Apollonio e l'Archivio della Biennale di Venezia (1948–1972)", in: Stefania Portinari and Nico Stringa (eds.), *Storie della Biennale di Venezia*, Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2019, pp. 149–167.

69 Between 1975 and 1987, Franco Solmi (1929–1989) was the director of the Bologna Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (Galleria comunale d'arte moderna di Bologna), today the Bologna Museum of Modern Art (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna).

70 Interestingly, Argan had already been in Ljubljana as a member of the Italian occupation government during the Second World War when his protocol visit to the Jakopič Pavilion had been recorded. More about this in: Neža Lukančič and Ana Obid, "Organizacijski in finančni vidiki razstavljanja v Jakopičevem paviljonu med obema svetovnima vojnama", in: Miha Valant and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Razstave v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, p. 37 (see also p. 625 in the same publication).

71 In the introduction to the catalogue, the organisers thank the "Yugoslav authorities" for the realisation of the exhibition, highlighting the contribution of the Museum of



Zoran Kržišnik in conversation with Italian artist Getulio Alviani at the opening of Alviani's exhibition in Mala Galerija in Ljubljana in 1961.

Tuscany, at the beginning of 1958, which was then moved to Livorno (Casa della cultura), was among the earliest exhibitions of Slovenian art in Italy, resulting from the activities of the circle gathered around the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts.⁷² Connections with the Venetian area were also established very early on. Already in 1959 – “in exchange”⁷³ for the exhibition of Italian graphic arts at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, which had opened in December 1957 – the *National Exhibition of Yugoslav Graphic Arts (Mostra nazionale dell'incisione jugoslava)* was first organised at the Sala Napoleonica hall in Venice⁷⁴ and then moved to several other major Italian cities:

Modern Art in Ljubljana. See: Zoran Kržišnik, “Predgovor”, *Settimana dell'arte moderna* (exhibition catalogue), Comune di Pistoia, Pistoia, 1958, n. p.

72 The information about the relocation of the exhibition to Livorno is quoted after: “Pregled grupnih izložbi sa bibliografijom”, in: *Jugoslovenska umetnost XX veka: Jugoslovensko slikarstvo šeste decenije*, Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1980, p. 379. We would like to underline the stated chronological list of group exhibitions between 1950 and the early 1960s, as it is a very useful source for studying exhibitions in Yugoslavia and abroad at that time.

73 Girolamo Speciale, “Pozdravni nagovor”, in: Zoran Kržišnik, Ljerka Menaše and Giorgio Trentin (eds.), *Mostra nazionale dell'incisione jugoslava* (exhibition catalogue), Comune di Venezia, Venice, 1959, n. p.

74 *Mostra nazionale dell'incisione jugoslava* (exhibition catalogue), Zoran Kržišnik, Ljerka Menaše and Giorgio Trentin (eds.), Comune di Venezia, Venice, 1959.

Turin (Academy of Fine Arts), Milan (Municipal Gallery of Modern Art) and Rome (National Chalcography).⁷⁵

The years 1959 and 1960 also seem exceedingly important for establishing contacts with private Italian galleries.⁷⁶ That year, the group exhibition *Yugoslav Artists (Artisti jugoslavi)* toured Italy. It featured a selection of Slovenian artists (Bernik, Debenjak, Pregelj, Stupica and Tršar) as well as Oton Gliha from Croatia and Petar Lubarda from Serbia. The exhibition resulted from a collaboration between the four Italian private galleries that hosted it (Il Milione in Milan; La Loggia in Bologna; L'Attico in Rome; and La Bussola in Turin), the Premio Morgan's Paint Biennial and Mala Galerija in Ljubljana, which also published the catalogue.⁷⁷ A few years later, in 1963, Gabrijel Stupica held his first solo exhibition in Italy at the L'Attico Gallery,⁷⁸ while in 1966, Janez Bernik had a solo exhibition at La Loggia.⁷⁹ In 1964, the latter also exhibited independently at Il Centro,⁸⁰ a private gallery in Naples run by Renato Bacarelli, who, as archival documents indicate, had been a guest of the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts the year before.⁸¹

In our overview so far, we have also highlighted a few exhibitions of Slovenian artists in Rome. As a brief digression, let us mention that one of Rome's galleries, operating in the period under discussion, was headed by a gallerist born in the territory of present-day Slovenia. We are referring to the gallery called SM 13 Studio of Modern Art (SM 13 Studio d'arte moderna), which operated between 1963 and 1976 and was founded and run by the gallerist Valentina Orsini, born in 1914 in Idrija.⁸² The gallery hosted Italian as well as many Slovenian and Yugoslav contemporary artists. So far, we have not discovered any direct indications that the gallery established contacts with the Slovenian and Yugoslav art scene through the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts or Zoran Kržišnik. However, the story of the SM 13 Gallery definitely deserves to be explored further.

75 The information regarding the relocations of the exhibition is quoted after: “Pregled grupnih izložbi sa bibliografijom”, 1980 (see no. 72), p. 389.

76 The catalogue does not mention the year, and other sources provide conflicting information about the beginning of the exhibition's “tour”.

77 *Artisti jugoslavi: Bernik Janez, Debenjak Riko, Gliha Oton, Lubarda Petar, Pregelj Marij, Stupica Gabrijel, Tršar Drago* (exhibition catalogue), Mala galerija, Ljubljana, [1959/1960?].

78 “Stupica. Prima esposizione in Italia”, *razume.mg-lj.si*, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=671963> (accessed 13.9.2024).

79 “Janez Bernik”, *razume.mg-lj.si*, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=591966> (accessed 13.9.2024).

80 “Janez Bernik”, *razume.mg-lj.si*, 2019, URL: <https://razume.mg-lj.si/razstava.php?id=411964> (accessed 13.9.2024).

81 Archives–Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, “Pismo Renata Bacarellija Zoranu Kržišniku, 29 May 1963”, MGLC 1963/F1, Archives of MGLC.

82 Drago Svobljak, “Orsini, Valentina”, in: Martin Jevnikar (ed.), *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 2, Goriška Mohorjeva družba, Gorica, 1985, pp. 532, 533.

We should also mention at least one other group exhibition of Slovenian artists in an Italian private gallery. In 1968, a group of Slovenian graphic artists exhibited at the Grafica Uno Gallery in Verona. This exhibition, titled *Slovenian Graphic Artists (Incisori sloveni)*,⁸³ can be traced back to the Ljubljana scene and the Biennale, as the Biennale's archives contain a document referring to the Verona gallery as an "external partner" and even mention the number of works sold (as many as 114 prints by Slovenian artists found buyers there).⁸⁴

In 1963, at the invitation of the Society of Artists and Art Lovers from Rimini, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana organised an exhibition titled *Contemporary Yugoslav Graphic Artists (Incisori jugoslavi contemporanei)* at the La Riva Gallery in Rimini.⁸⁵ A year later, Slovenian artists were presented at the Royal Theatre in Parma with the exhibition *Twelve Slovenian Artists (Dodici artisti sloveni)*, and Kržišnik contributed the text for the catalogue.⁸⁶ Among the guest appearances in Italy, which can be linked to Ljubljana's involvement, we should also mention the tour of Slovenian graphic artists with a special exhibition in the context of the 1st Biennial of Prints in Portogruaro in 1970⁸⁷ and the Grupa 69 exhibition at the Bevilacqua La Masa Gallery in Venice in 1976.⁸⁸

We have yet to mention Trieste or the border region, which the Slovenian art scene was particularly well connected with.⁸⁹ The Museum

83 *Incisori sloveni* (exhibition catalogue), Grafica Uno, Verona, 1968.

84 Archives–Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, "Zapisnik I. seje delovnega odbora Sekretariata za mednarodni grafični bienale, 27 September 1968, p. 1", MGLC 1969/F1, Archives of MGLC.

85 *Incisori jugoslavi contemporanei* (exhibition catalogue), Majda Jerman (ed.), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1963.

86 Zoran Kržišnik, "Presentazione", *Dodici artisti sloveni* (exhibition catalogue), Ridotto Teatro Regio Parma, Parma, 1964, n. p.

87 *Retrospettiva di Lino Selvatico, Grafica slovena, I^a Biennale dell'Incisione Triveneta* (exhibition catalogue), Biennale dell'Incisione Triveneta, Portogruaro, 1970.

88 *Gruppo 69: 19 artisti jugoslavi* (exhibition catalogue), Opera Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, 1976.

89 The Scorpion Gallery, which operated between 1946 and 1952, was a notable venue in the history of exhibiting Slovenian artists in Trieste shortly after the war. The fact that Slovenian artists also exhibited here alongside Italians can also be understood in the political context, i.e. in the framework of the abovementioned Yugoslav-Italian dispute over Trieste or the Free Territory of Trieste. The gallery, headed by the Italian Frida de Tuoni, collaborated intensively with the Fine Arts Subsection, an autonomous integral part of the Science and Art Section of the Slovenian-Croatian Educational Association of Trieste, the successor of the Slovenian Educational Association, established on 7 October 1945. Among other projects, the Subsection financed the exhibitions of Slovenian artists at the Scorpion Gallery, also in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. See: Ana Obid, "Razstavljanje tržaških slovenskih slikarjev v Galeriji Škorpiljon" (bachelor's thesis), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2019; Lilijana Stepančič, "Galerija Škorpiljon na meji med političnim Vzhodom in Zahodom v času hladne vojne", *Likovne besede*, no. 108, 2018, pp. 48–60.

of Modern Art in Ljubljana prepared two exhibitions, organised in the Costanzi Palace under the auspices of the Revoltella Museum: the exhibition titled *23 Yugoslav Artists (23 artisti jugoslavi)* in 1967⁹⁰ and the exhibition *11 Slovenian Graphic Artists of the "Ljubljana School" (11 grafici sloveni della "scuola di Lubiana")* in 1981.⁹¹

The expansion of artistic infrastructure in the Slovenian Littoral region from the mid-1960s onwards was also important for fostering connections between the Slovenian and Italian art scenes. In 1974, the local galleries in the region joined together to form the Piran Coastal Galleries.⁹² In the late 1970s, curator and artistic director Andrej Medved joined this institution, playing a significant role in nurturing ties with Italy.⁹³

Conclusion

Based on our research, we can conclude that the Biennale management's international efforts, led by Zoran Kržišnik, produced many concrete results from the late 1950s and especially after the 1960s. The Biennale network and the closely related activities of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana kept creating opportunities for exhibiting abroad. Over the years, the networking resulted in several individual smaller or larger exhibitions in various prominent institutions around the world, such as the aforementioned Stedelijk in Amsterdam, Tate in London, MoMA in New York and Albertina in Vienna; the various guest exhibitions in West Germany, for example in the Kunsthalle art galleries in Düsseldorf, Nuremberg and Bremen; and, for example, the *National Exhibition of Yugoslav Graphic Arts* organised in Venice, Turin, Milan and Rome. We have also highlighted the numerous exhibitions in West German and Italian private galleries, which provided some sales opportunities for Slovenian artists.

It is important to note that Kržišnik strived to promote both Slovenian⁹⁴ and other Yugoslav artists. For practical or logistical

90 *23 artisti jugoslavi/23 jugoslovanskih umetnikov* (exhibition catalogue), Museo Civico Revoltella, Trst and Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1967.

91 *11 grafici Sloveni della "scuola di Lubiana"* (exhibition catalogue), Museo Civico, Trst and Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1981.

92 Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979, *razstavljanjevsloveniji.si*, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 21.11.2025)

93 In Rome, Medved, who had received a scholarship to study there in 1980, met the Italian art critic and founder of the trans-avantgarde Achille Bonito Oliva. Together, they organised a notable group exhibition of Yugoslav and Italian artists titled *Images (Podobe – Immagini)* at the Meduza Gallery in Koper the following year. About the Coastal Galleries, see, for example: Martina Malešič and Asta Vrečko, "Novi prostori, nove podobe", in: Igor Španjol (ed.), *Osemdeseta – Slovenija in Jugoslavija skozi prizmo dogodkov, razstav in diskurzov*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2018, pp. 50, 51.

94 In this context, it seems fitting to underline that Kržišnik's international reputation helped artists from markedly diverse backgrounds. For example, the letter of recom-

reasons, as well as because of the popularity of this medium in the period under consideration, most exhibitions involved graphic arts, though on certain occasions paintings from Yugoslavia were also shown abroad. Meanwhile, Yugoslav sculpture was less frequently presented abroad.

As we have pointed out several times throughout the text, a comprehensive presentation of the exhibitions of Slovenian artists abroad would require much more extensive research (and a longer text). It would have to include a detailed list of exhibitions, as well as a more thorough presentation of the exhibition venues and their (international) reputation, an analysis of the critical responses in the international press, a presentation of the selection of artists who frequently exhibited abroad, etc. Only in this manner would it be possible to assess how successfully Zoran Kržišnik and other Yugoslav “managers” contributed to the visibility of Yugoslav artists in the West.

Such a complex project would be vital for a more precise understanding of the history of the often highlighted but poorly researched Slovenian artists’ exhibitions abroad. Meanwhile, the present contribution can serve as a window into the hitherto rarely discussed story of the international presence of Slovenian artists in the West and the role played in this process by the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts.

mendation that Kržišnik wrote for the poet, artist and art historian Tomaž Šalamun before his departure to Rome in 1968 allowed Šalamun to meet Giulio Carlo Argan and, through him, Palma Bucarelli, the director of Rome’s National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art (Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea). The information comes from an unpublished interview with Šalamun, conducted by Ksenya Gurshtein in 2009, and was cited by Urška Barut in: Urška Barut, “Razstavní projekt Atelje 69: Sodelovanje Tomaža Šalamuna s Skupino OHO in Moderno galerijo v Ljubljani” (master’s thesis), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2019, p. 19.

Meta Kordiš

The Right Address to Settle Your Art Matters: The Development of the Ljubljanska banka Fine Art Collection¹



Using the example of the development and expansion of Ljubljanska banka's fine art collection in the period from 1970 to 1980, this text discusses the company's support for and investment in the fine arts. This practice developed in the context of the state's broader socialist and cultural policy, which was implemented in the form of corporate social responsibility by taking care of the welfare of employees and customers and supporting local communities. At the same time, this was also part of the bank's public relations work and the strengthening of its brand identity. The corporate social responsibility strategy was part of a broader plan to raise living standards and improve the quality of life, to which the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) had committed itself at the VII. Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Ljubljana in 1958, where it was emphasised that the highest goal of socialism is the personal happiness of the individual. "The constant advancement of the material and cultural conditions for the life and labour of the working people" was thus defined as the main goal.² Culture in the broader sense and art in the narrower sense played a significant role in this. The text therefore first presents the political and economic context of investing in the fine arts and the incentives for corporate support of culture as well as the model of cultural policy. It then presents various examples of corporate investment in the fine arts in the form of commissioning or purchasing artworks to furnish their business or factory premises from the late 1950s onwards and supporting various arts events and activities in local communities from the 1960s onwards. Direct incentives aimed at bringing culture and art into businesses in the 1970s, a practice that continued in some places in the form of exhibitions until the end of the 20th century, are also discussed. The core of the text focuses on the beginnings of Ljubljanska banka's fine art collection, which was started as part of the furnishing of the newly built skyscraper on Revolution Square (now Republic Square) with works of art, and on the growth of the collection in parallel with the bank's expansion. The reasons that led to the establishment of the collection are explained, as well as the model of integrating art in the workplace

- 1 The title comes from the slogan of Ljubljanska banka from the 1970s – Ljubljanska banka, the right address to settle your financial matters.
- 2 These goals included ensuring the growth of production and consumption, supplying the population with commodities and guaranteeing a better general, technological and cultural standard. In order to raise the general cultural and educational level of the population, an educational network had to be established, as well as activities such as printing, publishing, radio and television, film, theatre, public libraries, cultural centres, workers' and cultural-educational and other organisations, sports activities, conditions for leisure and quality daily, weekly and annual rest periods. Companies played an important role in the development of this infrastructure and its activities. Marta Rendla, *Kam ploveš standard?: Življenjska raven in socializem*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2018, p. 62.

through various forms of cooperation between architects, artists, art historians and bank employees.

Despite the socialist context of the time, in which the collection was founded, the question arises as to what influence the habitus³ of the bourgeois milieu of art historians and architects had on the selection and placement of fine art in the corporate environment. In other words, to what extent did the socialist doctrine in the Slovenian and Yugoslav art world actually prevail over bourgeois practices? The professional art sphere, especially the part that was shaped by the bourgeois habitus of the pre-war period, was committed to Western (high) art and its rules. These were based on the autonomy of the institution of art and aesthetics, which was established in the 19th century with the beginnings of the capitalist mode of production, bourgeois society and culture, and thus the cultivation of bourgeois taste and, not least, the bourgeois way of life.⁴

The study draws on scientific and specialised literature, newspaper and magazine articles, archival sources, personal correspondence, conversations and semi-structured interviews with people who were directly or indirectly involved in the creation of corporate art collections, with a focus on Ljubljanska banka.⁵ Works from the NLB Art Collection and the collection's inventory book are also important sources, reflecting the dynamics of acquisitions, art trends and tastes at certain periods in the second half of the 20th century.

The Role of the Economy and of Culture in the “Third Way”⁶

In the 1950s, after breaking away from the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia began to develop its own socialist system. New models of management and decision-making, the so-called workers' self-management,⁷ were introduced in the economy, which was also “the beginning of the introduction of self-management as the basis of

the political system of so-called socialist democracy”.⁸ The economy was based on decentralisation, public ownership, workers' self-management and partial compliance with the laws of the market economy.⁹ This allowed for gradual economic growth and consequently improved the standard of living and quality of life, which was also the main goal of the authorities. Companies played a large and important role in this. Namely,

[...] the fundamental relationship between the socialist company and the state was not just about paying taxes. The company was not only a technological and economic unit, but also a special ‘cell’ of the social system that was closely linked to the local community. In this role, it took the form of a universal company that used part of its income to improve the living standards of its employees and accelerate the development of the city and its surroundings.¹⁰

This meant investing in the education and training of employees and in the accessibility of cultural services and goods within the company and in the city in which it was based. With the gradual expansion of the cultural infrastructure network in Slovenia, cultural production and cultural activities also increased, which made culture accessible to the broadest public.¹¹ This was especially important in smaller towns.¹² The economic reform in the 1960s gave companies more

3 More on this in: Pierre Bourdieu, *Praktični čut I in II*, Studia Humanitatis, Ljubljana, 2002, pp. 90–95.

4 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of Literary Field*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996, pp. 55–121, 132; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgment of Taste*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984. See also note 19.

5 I would like to thank Beti Žerovc for her support in this analysis, especially for the large number of bibliographical sources that significantly shaped the research and the text.

6 Yugoslavia adopted the term “third way” from the Soviets, who used it as a pejorative term for Yugoslavia's political disobedience and its renunciation of Soviet socialism. The Yugoslavs used the term in a positive sense to describe their own type of socialism, and it was also adopted by the West. Tanja Zimmermann, “Novi kontinent – Jugoslavija: Politična geografija ‘tretje poti’”, *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, vol. 46, 2010, p. 163. See also no. 19.

7 Zdenko Čepič, “Delavsko samoupravljanje”, in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja*

Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, pp. 961–965. See also: Zdenko Čepič, “Ustava 1974: Preureditev jugoslovanske federacije, delegatski sistem in dogovorna ekonomija”, in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, pp. 1094–1095. With the introduction of workers' self-management and various reforms, the Yugoslav system attempted to decentralise, de-bureaucratise and democratise the Yugoslav political and economic organisation, thereby reducing the influence of the state.

8 Čepič, 2006 (see no. 7), p. 961.

9 The demand to adapt the development policy to the material circumstances and to restructure the economy by giving a greater role to the principles of commodity production and the market came from the lenders (Great Britain, the USA and France) in 1950, when Yugoslavia was on the brink of bankruptcy. Jože Prinčič, “Slovensko gospodarstvo ob koncu druge svetovne vojne do velike reforme (1945–1970)”, in: Zdenko Čepič (ed.), *Preteklost sodobnosti: Izbrana poglavja iz slovenske novejše zgodovine*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 1999, p. 169.

10 Jože Prinčič, “Pogled v zgodovino slovenskega podjetništva”, in: Jurij Fikfak and Jože Prinčič (eds.), *Biti direktor v času socializma: Med idejami in praksami*, Založba ZRC, Ljubljana, 2008, p. 35.

11 Aleš Gabrič, “Razmah slovenske kulture po letu 1945”, in: Zdenko Čepič (ed.), *Preteklost sodobnosti: Izbrana poglavja iz slovenske novejše zgodovine*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 1999, p. 159.

12 Aleš Gabrič, “Kulturnopolitični prelom leta 1948”, in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega*

opportunities to manage the funds from the income generated, which were also invested in common expenditure funds to finance more diverse leisure activities for employees.¹³ The rise in living standards and quality of life meant that people also devoted some of their free time to attending cultural events or even participating in amateur cultural activities.¹⁴ At the same time, the political and economic changes led to an increase in social differences and the emergence of a new middle class, “which gradually became more prominent than the rural population and the workers, as well as to an individualism that manifested itself, among other things, in the transition from mass forms of leisure and entertainment in various cultural and sports associations to forms that did not necessarily require collective identification”.¹⁵ This was reflected in a diverse and varied cultural offering, and thus in the way of life, especially in the cities.¹⁶

In the 1950s, after the break with the Soviets, the authorities abandoned the idea of the utility of art and creative labour. For this reason, a thorough reflection on the meaning and concept of the development of the art system under Yugoslav socialism had to be undertaken. Miroslav Krleža’s contradictory and rather loosely formulated concept of authentic aesthetic socialist engagement, i.e. political engagement in the autonomous sphere of art that opened up to modernism, prevailed.¹⁷ This was seen as a way to develop an authentic

priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, pp. 900–904; Suzana Leček, “Likovna umjetnost društvenom životu Hrvatske 1945–1947”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 22, no. 1/2, 1990, pp. 131–156. Professional and amateur cultural associations were supported organisationally and financially by the republican and local authorities and companies. The latter played an important role in the development of culture and cultural infrastructure, especially in smaller towns, which contributed to higher-quality leisure time and a higher standard of living.

13 Rendla, 2018 (see no. 2), pp. 241–242.

14 Ibid., pp. 11, 251–259; Gabrič, 1999 (see no. 11), pp. 159–164.

15 Božo Repe and Jože Prinčič, *Pred časom: Portret Staneta Kavčiča*, Modrijan, Ljubljana, 2009, p. 76.

16 The new class consisted of educated people who were active in politics and in technical or managerial professions, as well as a considerable proportion of people who were active in culture and the arts. Certain privileges and higher salaries enabled them to lead a lifestyle close to that of the Western middle class. Beti Žerovc, “The Development of Public Monuments and Monuments to the Fallen on the Territory of Yugoslavia from the Late 19th Century to 1941” and “Can the High Modernism of Yugoslav Monuments Be Viewed as a Trojan Horse of Capitalism in Socialism?”, in: Sanja Horvatinčič and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana and Archive Books, Berlin, pp. 52–57, 375–397. Also see no. 21.

17 Rade Pantić, “Od kulture u ‘socijalizmu’ prema socijalističkoj kulturi”, in: Vida Knežević and Marko Miletić (eds.), *Gradove smo vam podigli: O protivrečnostima jugoslovenskog socijalizma*, Centar CZKD – Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, Belgrade, 2018, pp. 193–194.

Yugoslav culture that would be the result of the “fusion of past and present, autocracy and internationalism, as defined by Miroslav Krleža and other ideologues of the ‘third way’”.¹⁸ This divergence paved the way for the autonomy of art, which left the judgement of aesthetic quality to the experts and the public, who demonstrated their appreciation by buying works of art. An “apolitical” high modernism developed into the central orientation of Yugoslav contemporary art, which was advocated and promoted by the experts. The authorities adopted it and also instrumentalised it for the needs of foreign policy.¹⁹ This new cultural policy was based on the continuity of the pre-war bourgeois perception and the positioning of art in the broader social milieu.²⁰ Nevertheless, with the help of numerous companies and as part of the democratisation and socialisation of culture, the authorities built an infrastructure for broad access to culture and art and promoted the dissemination of amateur culture and art, which became the privileged practice of the self-management cultural policy in the 1970s.²¹

Notwithstanding this, socialist self-management did not succeed in developing an authentic model of artistic production and a socialist cultural model that is entirely on the side of the workers, despite a widely accessible and widespread cultural infrastructure, services and production.²² It must also be emphasised that the ideas and practices

18 Tanja Zimmermann, “Introduction”, in: Tanja Zimmermann (ed.), *Balkan Memories: Media Constructions of National and Transnational History*, Transcript, Bielefeld, 2012, p. 13. Krleža described the Balkans as the cradle of European civilisation, which had already emerged in the Middle Ages. In doing so, he turned the established concept of Western European cultural hegemony, which brought progress to South-Eastern Europe, on its head. He gave Yugoslavia the leading role in the wider European context. Zimmermann, 2010 (see no. 6), p. 175.

19 Ljiljana Kolečnik, “Cultural Models and Cultural Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia”, in: Sanja Horvatinčič and Beti Žerovc (eds.), *Shaping Revolutionary Memory: The Production of Monuments in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana and Archive Books, Berlin, 2023, pp. 76, 78.

20 The autonomy of artistic production and the cult of individual and authentic creative aesthetics is a bourgeois concept for understanding art and artistic production that emerged in the 19th century. One of the results of this bourgeois tradition is modernism, which, however, denies its class-based bourgeois origins. Modernism was presented as a universal, progressive and free style of art. Paradoxically, high modernism prevailed in Yugoslavia precisely with the help and support of various art institutions, although the socialist dogma rejected bourgeois art. The latter was seen by socialist ideologues as something regressive and harmful. Bourgeois art promoted and reproduced a class society because (high) modernism, due to its hermeticism, was obviously intended only for a certain class, a specific group of people, an elite who understood and enjoyed this kind of art, and not for everyone, the broad masses of the people and workers. Pantić, 2018 (see no. 17), p. 195; Žerovc, 2023 (see no. 16), pp. 52–57, 375–397.

21 Kolečnik, 2023 (see no. 19), p. 59.

22 Katja Praznik, *Paradoks neplačanega umetniškega dela: Avtonomija umetnosti, avantgarda in kulturna politika na prehodu v postsocializem*, Sophia, Ljubljana, 2016, p. 116.

of the democratisation of culture – access to cultural and artistic content for a wider audience, including the working class – were also characteristic of the cultural policies of those Western European countries that developed various types of welfare states after the Second World War.

Universal Socialist Companies and Investments in the Fine Arts

As part of its improvement of material and production conditions in the field of art, the socialist state promoted a more stable livelihood for artists compared to the pre-war period, when the commissioning and purchasing of artworks was left to the particularly weak free art market.²³ Although the percentage of funds from construction investment projects, intended for art, was not set by law, there were many purchases and commissions for a wide range of artworks.²⁴ In 1958, the *Recommendation of the Council for Culture of the People's Republic of Serbia on the Inclusion of Works of Fine Art in Construction Projects* was drafted,²⁵ which was followed by the federal and local authorities, as well as Yugoslav companies.²⁶ When decorating business premises and façades, especially in new buildings, companies followed the recommendations and suggestions of (mainly) architects, who often wanted to pursue the modernist idea of synthesising art and architecture.²⁷ However, Edvard Ravnikar noted that the desire to interweave and integrate different genres of art and architecture was more of

- 23 Leček, 1990 (see no. 12), pp. 137–147; for more about the art market in Slovenia before the Second World War see *Razstave v Jakopičevem paviljonu med letoma 1919 in 1945*, Miha Valant and Beti Žerovc (eds.), Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory, Ljubljana, 2023.
- 24 A certain percentage of a (mainly public) building investment had to be earmarked for the purchase or commissioning of works of art, which was already practised in some European countries and in the USA. Tihana Hrastar, “Izdvajanje postotaka graditeljskih investicija za umjetničke intervencije: Inicijative i propisi druge polovice 20. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj i svijetu”, *Prostor*, vol. 55, no. 26, 2018, p. 70.
- 25 The practical implementation of this document was the result of numerous efforts by professional organisations of fine artists at local and state levels, first and foremost the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists. Ana Šeparović, “Od ‘sinteze likovnih umjetnosti’ do Zagrebačkog salona: Prilog poznavanju djelovanja ULUH-a 1960-ih”, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, no. 42, 2018, pp. 169–171; Patricia Počanić, “Narudžbe i otkupi umjetničkih djela za interijere javnih institucija u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih”, *Peristil*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2019, pp. 179–201.
- 26 Hrastar, 2018 (see no. 24), p. 72.
- 27 Šeparović, 2018 (see no. 25), pp. 167–178. As early as 1951, the EXAT 51 group advocated the synthesis of different fine art forms, design and architecture. On a smaller scale, its members also succeeded to implement this concept in practice. Their manifesto stated that they saw “the function of art in the broadest sense in transforming the totality of plastic reality and abandoning the traditional notion of the artist with all his burdens – an advantage of the new kind of artist who can contribute to the development of material culture.” Ješa Denegri, “Dve desetletji od prve razstave skupine EXAT-51”, *Sinteza*, no. 28–29, 1973, pp. 98–99.

a theory than a practice. He wrote that “the synthesis of the three branches [painting, architecture and sculpture] at the present stage of separate development cannot be represented otherwise than as a loose construction of improvised proximity in a common space”.²⁸ Nevertheless, Ravnikar and other architects, in collaboration with artists, “improvised” with the placement of artworks within architectural settings and urban spaces, drawing on current theories based on the humanisation of the human environment and adaptation to new social needs.²⁹

In the business sector, the placement of works of art was perhaps most clearly expressed in the furnishing of hotels. Ambitiously designed hotel architecture and interiors, featuring commissioned or purchased artworks, became something of “‘museums’ of modern Yugoslav art”.³⁰ Enterprises in other sectors of the economy kept pace. Between the 1950s and 1970s, murals in various painting techniques were commissioned for interiors³¹ and, less frequently, for façades, which eventually developed into sophisticated, complex and expensive mural artworks.³² In addition, companies bought works of art to decorate their premises or as promotional gifts.³³ Their premises, especially the newly constructed buildings, were usually decorated

- 28 Edvard Ravnikar, “Arhitektura, plastika in slikarstvo”, *Sinteza*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1964, pp. 2–3.
- 29 Rok Žnidaršič, “Metoda projektiranja arhitekta Edvarda Ravnikarja: Arhitektovi postopki prilagajanja spremenljivim pogojem načrtovanja”, *Arhitektov bilten AB*, vol. 34, no. 165–166, 2004, p. 15.
- 30 Luciano Basauri et al, “Constructing an Affordable Arcadia”, in: Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić (eds.), *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, UHA, CCA, Zagreb, 2012, p. 357. One of the first examples of this type was the Hotel Ambassador in Opatija, which was completed in 1966. Vanda Ekl, “Likovniki in notranja arhitektura opatijskega hotela Ambassador”, *Sinteza*, vol. 2, no. 5–6, 1967, pp. 65–68. Attempts at this synthesis first appeared in the interiors of public institutions. More on this in: Počanić, 2019 (see no. 25), pp. 179–201.
- 31 Due to the good business results, the Splošna plovba shipping company decided to decorate its cargo ships along the lines of the decorations for passenger ships. In the 1960s (1959–1968), it commissioned Stojan Batič to design the furnishings, mainly metal reliefs and sculptures, for seven ships built at the Uljanik shipyard in Pula, Croatia. Duška Žitko, *Iztrgano pozabi: Pomorska in umetniška zbirka Splošne plovbe* (exhibition catalogue), Pomorski muzej ‘Sergej Mašera’, Piran, 2022, p. 212.
- 32 More on this in: Mojca Štuhec, *Mariborski murali*, Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Maribor, 2020; Hrastar, 2018 (see no. 24); Počanić, 2019 (see no. 25).
- 33 Records of several rare purchases by companies date back to the early 1950s in Maribor. Meta Kordiš, “Muzej moderne in sodobne umetnosti ter urbane prakse v Mariboru” (doctoral dissertation), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2019, p. 87. According to the recollections of Marko Kordiš, who was the commercial director of the IMP company – Industrijsko montažno podjetje in Ljubljana in the 1970s, the secretary of the municipal League of Communists recommended the purchase of works of art on various occasions, before New Year or on anniversaries. Sometimes the recommendation even mentioned the names of certain Slovenian artists. The company also commissioned New Year’s greeting cards from artists. *Marko Kordiš*, informal conversation, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 13.7.2024.

with art. This was the case for companies such as Metalna Maribor, Mura, Litostroj, Petrol, Emona, Lek,³⁴ Iskra³⁵ and Krka.³⁶ The reasons for decorating the premises were to emphasise the representativeness of the premises or the building itself, the promotion of the company and the so-called humanisation of the workplace, which also improved the working environment and working conditions from an aesthetic point of view. The Iskra company from Kranj, for example, had its own designers who were responsible for the visual appearance of the factory and determined the colour of the walls in the production halls and the placement of works of art wherever possible. Paintings and, more often, prints were mainly placed in the offices.³⁷ Similar practices were applied in Lek³⁸ and Krka,³⁹ but also in Ljubljanska banka, whose renovations and newly constructed business premises and branches aimed for aesthetic sophistication based on the harmonious use of natural materials, appropriate colours, green spaces and, of course, works of art.⁴⁰

When commissioning and acquiring artworks, the question arises as to what extent experts were involved in the selection process and to what extent their selection depended on the preferences and connections of the decision-makers and specialised services in the companies.⁴¹ Planned purchases of fine art for interior decoration, which were made in collaboration with experts, especially architects or art historians and local galleries, and which also marked the beginning

of collections, did not appear until the early 1970s. One of the first examples of this was the equipping of the Ljubljanska banka skyscraper with works of art, which will be discussed in more detail in due course. The bank invited Zoran Kržišnik, the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, to select the artworks.⁴² However, in the 1970s, there were several other interesting examples of art being used as decoration and art collections in companies, created through the collaboration between investors and experts. For example, the newly constructed building of Kreditna banka Maribor, designed by architect Vlado Emeršič in 1975, was decorated with a selection of prints. The interior was designed by architect Mirko Zdovc, who invited Breda Ilich Klančnik, then a trainee at the Maribor Art Gallery, to decorate the rooms with works of art. She prepared the selection in close cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art.⁴³ The selection of artworks for the new building of the Splošna plovba shipping company, designed by architect Janez Kobe and built in Portorož in 1979, was made by Andrej Medved of the Coastal Galleries, but he was not responsible for the placement of the works in the rooms.⁴⁴ In the early 1980s, Ljubljana Airport, designed by architect Ciril Oblak⁴⁵ and completed in 1973, began its own collection under the expert guidance of painter Andrej Jemec.⁴⁶ The clothing manufacturer Mura began to build up an art collection in the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, which included paintings, commissioned prints and photo portfolios⁴⁷ as well as small-scale sculptures by contemporary Slovenian artists.⁴⁸

34 Iztok Premrov, "Zbrano v Leku", lek.si, 2024, URL: <https://www.lek.si/o-nas/galerija-lek/zbrano-v-leku> (accessed 17.3.2024).

35 Ivan Jakopović, *Radnici, kultura, revolucija*, Zavod za kulturo Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1976, p. 321.

36 Krka began its art collection by acquiring works from art colonies in Novo Mesto and the surrounding area, which it also supported financially. Later, the collection was supplemented by more systematic purchases in consultation with experts (e.g. Lojze Gostiša). Mitja Pelko, "KUD Krka in povzetek likovne dejavnosti" (unpublished document), Novo mesto, 2022, p. 1.

37 Branko Komac, head of the information department, said: "We also have designers working here. The designers were not only responsible for the design of the products, but also for the appearance of the factory. We negotiated and were able to paint the walls according to the designer's suggestions. [...] At that time, a number of paintings appeared in our factory. [...] There was also music. The psychologist prescribed what music was most pleasant." Jakopović, 1976 (see no. 35), pp. 300, 320, 321.

38 Premrov, 2024 (see no. 34).

39 Pelko, 2022 (see no. 36), p. 2.

40 Stane Bedene, "Humanizacija poslovnega prostora LB", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, January 1977, p. 2; Stane Bedene, "Petindvajset let razvoja poslovnih prostorov in opreme Ljubljanske banke" (appendix 4/80), *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, August-September 1980, pp. 1-4.

41 About the unplanned purchases and individual judgement of heads of specialist services see Premrov, 2024 (see no. 34).

42 Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, "Komisija za izgradnjo nove poslovne stavbe Predsedniku sveta delovne skupnosti Ljubljanske banke, 20.1.1971", NLB 4444-104/1978-92, Archives of Nova ljubljanska banka (hereinafter NLB Archives); Zoran Kržišnik, "Odločilen in simboličen korak ...", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, February 1972, pp. 1, 8.

43 The selection of artists was similar to that of Ljubljanska banka. The prints were installed in the bank's offices by Breda Ilich Klančnik and Mirko Zdovc. *Breda Ilich Klančnik*, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 12.4.2023.

44 The selection was exhibited at the Civic Gallery Piran in 1979. A catalogue was also published. The selection criteria for the 36 authors were an academic education and membership of the Slovenian Association of Fine Artists (DSLJU). Žitko, 2022 (see no. 31), p. 336.

45 According to Ciril Oblak, highlighting artists from the Gorenjska region was his initiative. *Ciril Oblak*, e-mail communication, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 4.5.2022.

46 Ivan Sedej, *Likovna zbirka in arhitektura ljubljanskega letališča Brnik*, Aerodrom Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 1995.

47 For example, the photo portfolios *By the Mura River* by Jože Kološa - Kološ, which were published by Mura. Jože Kološa, *Ob Muri: Fotomapa / Jože Kološa - Kološ*, Tovarna oblačil in perila Mura, Murska Sobota, 1985; Jože Kološa, *Ob Muri: Fotomapa / Jože Kološa - Kološ*, Tovarna oblačil in perila Mura, Murska Sobota, 1986.

48 Janez Balažič, *Murin park skulptur* (exhibition catalogue), Pomurski muzej Murska Sobota, Murska Sobota, 2012; Janez Balažič, *Murina umetniška zbirka* (exhibition catalogue), Mura, Murska Sobota, 1989.

The main initiators and organisers of these activities were the painter Franc Mesarič and Karel Sukič, who was responsible for the social activities in Mura, among other things.⁴⁹ Mesarič also suggested inviting Stane Bernik to design the sculpture park on the green areas within the Mura factory complex.⁵⁰

In connection with the establishment of art collections and the placement of art in production facilities, the travelling exhibition *The Museum in the Factory* from the Peter Stuyvesant Collection of the Turmac Tobacco Company, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in autumn 1971, should be mentioned.⁵¹ The exhibition attracted great interest and attention because it showed how a Western company began to collect, acquire and house works of art in its premises.⁵² At the same time, it confirmed the existing practices in Slovenia that had emerged through the humanisation of the workplace and the socialisation of art. In Western countries, investment in art was primarily used as a strategy to strengthen corporate brands, with the artwork being primarily valued as a financial investment.⁵³ Nevertheless, such practices enabled and expanded access to art and artworks and supported artists and art infrastructures both in Yugoslavia and in some Western countries.

The exhibition had a certain influence on the art professionals in Slovenia. On the one hand, it confirmed existing good practices, on the other hand, it served as a reference. Stane Bernik referred to

it when explaining his selection and placement of artworks in the Gorenjska oblačila clothing factory from Kranj, built in 1973, which was equipped with both commissioned works to decorate certain rooms⁵⁴ and purchased works.⁵⁵ The artworks were also placed in the production halls. Bernik named the following criteria of selection: the topicality of works by established authors, overcoming the clichés of artistic furnishing of public spaces and the harmonious fusion of works of fine art (paintings, prints, sculptures) with the function and architecture of the space.⁵⁶ One of the two designers of the factory, Ciril Oblak, said that he designed the colourful “designer façade” and also envisioned the integration of art into the premises (figs. 65–67).⁵⁷

Companies also initiated and financed the establishment of art collections. In 1971, the household appliance manufacturer Gorenje commissioned its designer Hari (Harald) Draušbaher and Zoran Kržišnik to set up a collection of 20th century Slovenian art, which it later donated to the municipality of Velenje and ensured that it was accessible to the public and professionally maintained.⁵⁸ Other companies supported art in the urban space. Two out of four open-air sculpture symposia (Forma Viva) were closely linked to companies. In Ravne na Koroškem, the initiative for the Forma Viva in steel came from Franc Fale, the then mayor and later long-time general director of the steelworks, which continuously supported the symposium financially and

49 Janez Balažič, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 19.2.2024.

50 Ibid.; Balažič, 2012 (see no. 48), p. 6.

51 The travelling exhibition presented the works of 40 contemporary artists from the West and works by Yugoslav artists, which were purchased on this occasion by internationally renowned experts on behalf of the company. The criteria for the selection were primarily two-dimensionality and colourfulness, as the works were exhibited in the production halls. The exhibition, which was staged for the first time in 1962 in the new extension to the Stedelijk Museum, was designed by graphic designer Wim Crouwel. The staging of the exhibition in Ljubljana followed the original concept. It contained a soundscape of industrial production and also visually contextualised the placement of artworks in the factory spaces. Breda Misja, “Razstava ustanove Peter Stuyvesant ‘Muzej v tovarni’ v Moderni galeriji v Ljubljani”, *Sinteza*, no. 21–22, 1971, pp. 86–87; Arnold Witte, “The Myth of Corporate Art: The Start of the Peter Stuyvesant Collection and its Alignment with Public Arts Policy in the Netherlands, 1950–1960”, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2021, pp. 346–350.

52 The initiative to set up the collection in 1960 and to house and exhibit it in the factory premises in the small town of Zevenaar came from two government-linked (charity) organisations that promoted art and culture among workers in the Netherlands in the 1950s. The company took the initiative to make further acquisitions and expand the collection, for which it provided 1% of the factory’s education fund. Witte, 2021 (see no. 51), pp. 348–350.

53 According to the 1999 data, the maximum value of the collection was three times the amount invested in the acquisition. Ibid., p. 348.

54 *Aquamobile* by Slavko Tihec for the entrance hall, *Luimino* by Dušan Tršar for the entrance façade and a painting by Henrik Marchel for the hall on the second floor. Stane Bernik, “Tovarna Gorenjskih oblačil Kranj”, *Sinteza*, no. 33–35, 1975, pp. 85–89.

55 Ibid.

56 More about this in: Tanja Marolt, “Oprema tovarn in podjetij na primeru kranjske tekstilne tovarne Gorenjska oblačila” (seminar paper), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2023.

57 Ciril Oblak said that due to the location of the factory in the residential area of Zlato Polje, the investor wanted the building to be visually appealing, as it would also serve as a kind of cultural centre in the area. The architect recommended decorating the premises with art. Oblak recalls that he persuaded the director of the factory to acquire works by arguing that both the architecture of the building and the interior design would not go unnoticed by the media, which in turn would mean publicity for the company. To this end, Stane Bernik was asked to select the artworks and ensure that articles were published in various newspapers and magazines. Oblak also said that he had suggested to Bernik that he include the works of artists from Gorenjska – Franc Novinc, Herman Gvardjančič, Vinko Tušek and Henrik Marchel – in his selection. He also said that he made suggestions for the placement of the works in the space. *Ciril Oblak*, e-mail communication, see no. 45.

58 *Milena Koren Božiček*, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 20.3.2023; Tanja Jaklič, “Likovne zbirke kot del poslovnega poslanstva: Od spontanih nakupov do premišljenih odločitev: Večina je na ogled v poslovnih prostorih”, *Delo*, 5.5.2016, URL: <https://old.delo.si/kultura/vizualna-umetnost/likovne-zbirke-kot-poslovnega-poslanstva.html> (accessed 14.4.2023).

65



66



67



65–67

Sculptures by Dušan Tršar and Slavko Tihec and a painting by Silvester Komel in the building of the Gorenjska oblačila factory in Kranj in 1975 (architects: Ciril Oblak and Fedja Klavora).

logistically.⁵⁹ In Maribor, the initiative came from the construction company Stavbar, which operated and financially supported the project for many years, later also in cooperation with the construction companies Gradis and Konstruktor as well as the municipality.⁶⁰ They deserve the credit for establishing the two international public sculpture collections in the two cities.

Companies also supported artistic production locally in other ways: from supporting and organising painting colonies (e.g. Ravne

59 Marko Košan, "Petdeset let Forma vive na Ravnah na Koroškem (1964–2014)", in: Marko Košan (ed.), *Forma viva Ravne 1964–2014* (exhibition catalogue), Občina Ravne na Koroškem, Ravne na Koroškem, 2015, pp. 21–31; France Fale, "Besede Franceta Faleta (1921–2009), 'očeta' Ravenske Forma vive: O pobudah in začetkih", in: Marko Košan (ed.) *Forma viva Ravne 1964–2014*, Občina Ravne na Koroškem, Ravne na Koroškem, 2015, pp. 17–20.

60 Marjeta Ciglencečki, "Forma viva Maribor (1967–1986): Delovišče Maribor", *Acta Historiae Artis Slovenica*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2017, pp. 113–161. The project proved to be a major challenge for the companies, as they were presented with complex plans for the sculptures they were to realise. This required them to research and invent the most suitable technical and technological solutions. Marjeta Ciglencečki, *Forma viva Maribor (1967–1986)*, Založba ZRC, Ljubljana, 2017, p. 6.

na Koroškem Steel Factory,⁶¹ Krka,⁶² Ljubljanska banka⁶³) to handing out purchase awards at various art events (e.g. Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts,⁶⁴ Ex Tempore Piran,⁶⁵ Yugoslav Biennial of Small Sculpture, in Murska Sobota⁶⁶), with which they enriched their collections or the range of their promotional gifts. The companies also used this form of sponsorship as an advertising strategy.

In the last phase of socialist self-management, the democratisation of culture in the companies was also reflected in the organisation of exhibitions. These were usually organised by the companies themselves or in collaboration with experts and local galleries. From the mid-1970s, the number of exhibitions in the entrance halls of companies increased, especially in those with newly constructed buildings, but also in canteens and, less frequently, in production halls. Some companies prepared exhibitions for special occasions and anniversaries; others organised a more regular programme. Janez Mesesnel's 1978 report on the art scene in Ljubljana, which was described as "fragmented, but outstanding in terms of number",⁶⁷ shows how extensive this exhibition practice was in the companies. There was a growing number of exhibition venues in companies,⁶⁸ hotels and other organisations.⁶⁹ However, with some exceptions, the exhibition programmes were inconsistent and of very variable quality, suggesting that they

61 Franc Fale also initiated the founding of the Art Salon, which was led by the painter and head of the propaganda department of the steel factory France Boštjan. France Boštjan also organised art colonies (1970–1988), which attracted academically trained and self-taught artists from Slovenia and Yugoslavia to create works in the factory and its surroundings. Karla Oder, *Mati fabrika, mesto in dom*, Slovensko etnološko društvo, Ljubljana, 2015, pp. 277–278.

62 Pelko, 2022 (see no. 36), p. 1.

63 The Nova Ljubljanska banka (NLB) Art Collection includes several works acquired by the bank's various branches from different art colonies. Meta Kordiš, *NLB inventarna knjiga, umetniška zbirka*.

64 By way of illustration, I would like to refer the reader to a list of purchase awards from the 8th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts in 1969, at which no less than 44 companies purchased works, including Avtotehnika, Autocommerce, Časopis in tiskarna Delo, Elektrotehna, hotels Lev, Slon and Turist, Iskra, Kreditna banka in hranilnica Ljubljana, Metalka, Petrol, Slovenijales, Slovenijašport, Tehnika, Trans-turist, Zavarovalnica Sava and Žito. The unpaginated list with the title *8. mednarodna grafična razstava, '69, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana* can be found in the archives of the International Centre of Graphic Arts. I would like to thank Gregor Dražil for the information.

65 Financially supported by the Splošna plovba shipping company, which has built up its collection through purchase awards. Žitko, 2022 (see no. 31), p. 342.

66 Balažic, 1989 (see no. 48), pp. 5–6.

67 Janez Mesesnel, "Ljubljanska likovna kronika", *Sinteza*, no. 43–44, 1978, p. 127.

68 Krka, Lek, Kompas, Intertrade, Pivovarna Union, Jugobanka, Iskra, Ljubljanska banka, Metalka, Dekorativna, tovarna tkanin etc. Ibid.

69 American Information Center, Ljubljana University Medical Centre, Gallery Borec, Pionirska Library, Community Halls in Gradišče, Šiška, Trnovo, Savsko naselje, Krim - Rudnik, etc. Ibid.

were not well thought out, i.e. they lacked professional guidance. Nevertheless, Mesesnel recognised their value as an important part of the arts infrastructure.⁷⁰

Art exhibitions in companies were just one form of the democratisation of culture, which also included the humanisation of workspaces. The starting point for them was the resolution of the *10th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia* in 1974:

The socialisation and democratisation of cultural activities leads to an active relationship of intensive and equal cooperation between intellectual creators and producers in joint efforts to develop various aspects of cultural life. [...] Greater and better organised efforts must be made to create a cultivated and humanised working environment for workers, to open up the space for links between material production and culture and to create the necessary conditions for working people to enjoy quality leisure time.⁷¹

In practice, this involved encouraging employees to enjoy cultural content and participate in cultural activity and creation. The aim was for culture – in the widest sense and as a sign of civilisational progress – to become an integral part of employees' lives.⁷² In 1976, the League of Communists of Slovenia (LCS) and its weekly newspaper *Komunist* launched a six-month campaign entitled *Man, Labour, Culture*. The extensive campaign promoted numerous cultural activities throughout Slovenia, which were organised in cooperation with mobilised political, workers' and social organisations as well as cultural and interest groups.⁷³ A set of guidelines was drawn up on how companies should approach and programme these cultural events. Thus, from the mid-1970s, one can observe a more systematic and committed practice of organised cultural and creative incentives in companies as part of raising personal and social living standards.⁷⁴ Ljubljanska

70 Ibid.

71 "Resolucije desetega kongresa Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije", supplement, *Komunist*, vol. 32, no. 22, 3.6.1974, pp. 17, 19.

72 Beno Zupančič, *Delavci in kultura*, *Komunist*, Ljubljana, 1975.

73 Franček Brglez (ed.), "Človek, delo, kultura (dokument o kulturi)", *Komunist*, Ljubljana, 1976, p. 109.

For more on the activities see: Marta Rendla, "Mariborski gospodarski gigant TAM v skrbi za izboljšanje življenjske ravni zaposlenih", in: Željko Oset, Aleksandra Berberih Slana and Žarko Lazarevič (eds.), *Mesto in gospodarstvo: Mariborsko gospodarstvo v 20. stoletju*, Muzej narodne osvoboditve Maribor, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Maribor, Ljubljana, 2010, pp. 553–576; Kordiš, 2019 (see no. 33), pp. 123–126; Oder, 2015 (see no. 61), pp. 274–297.

74 The standard of living in Yugoslavia reached its highest level in the 1970s. Rendla, 2018 (see no. 2), p. 340.

banka in particular began to set up cultural commissions after 1976, which, depending on the size of the branch, operated as part of the trade union or the League of Socialist Youth.⁷⁵ They informed employees about cultural activities in the city and organised season tickets for theatres and concerts, lectures and discussions about culture, exhibitions (fig. 68) and cultural events at the bank as well as excursions with a cultural programme, such as visits to museums and monuments or events in larger cities.⁷⁶

At the beginning of 1977, the bank established the Fine Arts Council of Ljubljanska banka (LB) specifically for activities in the field of fine arts.⁷⁷ The task of the Council was to ensure the “continuous artistic education of the bank’s employees”.⁷⁸ In addition to organising exhibitions, publishing exhibition catalogues and press releases,⁷⁹ the Council made proposals for the acquisition of works of art for various purposes and also approved proposals for art decorations, which were prepared by the relevant department together with external collaborators.⁸⁰

The Development of Ljubljanska banka and the Placement of Fine Art in Its Premises

The problem of the humanisation of the workplace and the socialisation of art has been presented using examples from various companies. In the following, I will illustrate the concrete implementation of these two concepts using the example of Ljubljanska banka. Firstly, I will

75 The programme consistently followed the recommendations of the *Man, Labour, Culture* campaign of the newspaper of the LCS, *Komunist*. More on this: “Človek, delo, kultura”, 1976 (see no. 73), p. 109; Ida Rebolj, “... ne le enkratna akcija ...!”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, January 1976, p. 1.

76 Nevenka Lukač, “Kronika neke komisije”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, January 1978, p. 17; Tone Gričnik, “Izostrimo si pogled za lepoto”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, May 1979, p. 9; Anonymous, “Foto vesti”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, no. 6–7, 1980, pp. 1, 10; I. D., “Tudi delež kulture”, *Banka in mi: Časopis delovne skupnosti Kreditne banke Maribor*, vol. 8, no. 9–10, 1979, p. 14; Gojko Antič, “Uticaj kulture na kulturni život čoveka”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, March 1978, p. 10. A choir and a Photo-Cinema section were set up at the Ljubljanska banka headquarters. The latter attracted photography and amateur film enthusiasts who improved their knowledge of photography and film techniques, took part in exhibitions and competitions and contributed photos to the bank’s newsletter.

77 Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, pravilniki, stroški Lik. sveta, “Pravilnik o delu sveta za likovno dejavnost v Ljubljanski banki”, NLB 4444–105/1978–82, NLB Archives.

78 Ibid.

79 External members, who were art critics, were responsible for the press releases. Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, “Dopis: Zadeva Informacija in odločitev o delu Likovnega sveta Ljubljanske banke – združene banke. 13.2.1979”, NLB 4444–104/1978–92, NLB Archives.

80 Ibid.

z razstave oblikovanje v steklu ob 70-letnici lojzeta spacala

Fotografije: Milko Kranec



Article about the exhibition *Lojze Spacal: Exhibition in Honour of the Artist’s 70th Birthday* in the lobby of the Ljubljanska banka branch at Revolution Square (today Republic Square) in Ljubljana in 1977, published in *Glasilo Ljubljanske banke*.

relate the development of the bank to the development of placing different art genres and techniques in business premises, which corresponds to the practices of integrating art into workspaces in other companies. Then I will discuss the final phase of the development of the placement of art in the newly built skyscraper on Revolution Square, which also forms the core of this text.

The legal predecessor of Ljubljanska banka was Komunalna banka Ljubljana, which was founded in 1955 and opened in the building of the former Zadrúžna gospodarska banka on Miklošičeva Street in Ljubljana. The bank quickly expanded its business and built new buildings for its branches and headquarters. The new buildings were adorned with works of art and other decorative elements. A sgraffito was commissioned for the façade of the Domžale branch, which was completed in 1957.⁸¹ The interior of the Konzorcij building at 2 Šubičeva Street in Ljubljana, built in 1961, was decorated with abstract mosaics and had forged ornaments and stylised dragons above the counters.⁸² The offices were decorated with paintings, mainly depicting landscapes and still lifes.⁸³ A similar situation can be found at Mestna hranilnica ljubljanska, which merged with Komunalna banka in 1962 and was renamed Kreditna banka in hranilnica Ljubljana in 1965. In 1961, an extension for youth savings was added to the bank's foyer. The walls at the entrance and around the counters were tiled with colourful mosaics with plant and animal motifs (figs. 69–70). Paintings by Ivana Kobilca and Elza Kastl Obereigner were purchased to decorate the premises.⁸⁴

In the course of the integration process that affected the Yugoslav banking system as part of the major reform of the political and economic system in the 1960s, the bank expanded enormously. By the end of the 1960s, it was the largest in the country with over 48

branches in Slovenia, Yugoslavia and abroad. The building on Šubičeva Street became too small for its diverse activities. Upon delegation from the republican authorities, the bank took over one of the unfinished buildings on Ljubljana's emerging main square, Revolution Square, originally intended for the administration of the republic, as an investor and user in 1967.⁸⁵ The building complex, designed by Edvard Ravnikar and his colleagues,⁸⁶ had to be adapted and remodelled for the purposes of the bank's administrative apparatus, with the possibility of further expanding business activities and offices on the ground floor. The head of the expert group responsible for the investment, Maks Vreča, recalls that the layout and interior design emphasised functionality, with more elaborate furnishing intended only for the bank's administrative offices.⁸⁷ The ground floor of the building, which was extended in 1972, was the main entrance to the building and at the same time to the customer offices, so the bank counter area was the most representative part of the building. A number of technological innovations were used for the new building and the solutions became standard elements in the design of other bank branches of Ljubljanska banka.⁸⁸ The project of furnishing the skyscraper also changed the process of integrating art into the offices, as the bank cooperated not only with architects, who made recommendations for the selection of artworks, but also with experts in the field of art history, specifically Zoran Kržišnik (and the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana).⁸⁹

In 1968, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia's investment bank, Splošna gospodarska banka, was integrated into Kreditna banka in hranilnica. In 1970, it was renamed Ljubljanska banka in order to sharpen its profile and build a strong brand.⁹⁰ In the same year, the

81 Architect Marko Šlajmer. Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 1. Vladimir Lakovič created two series of sgraffito, the first in 1957, the other in 1975, when the building was raised by one storey. Lev Menaše, *Vladimir Lakovič: Retrospektivna razstava* (exhibition catalogue), Mestni muzej Ljubljana – Galerija revolucije, Ljubljana, 1991, p. 13.

82 The building was designed by Drago Umek and the interior by Marjan Božič, who had been the leading interior designer at Komunalna banka Ljubljana since its foundation. Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), pp. 1–4.

83 Contributing artists were Lojze Perko, France Pavlovec, France Slana, Dore Klemenčič – Maj, Evgen Sajovic, Ive Šubic, Peter Adamič, Alojz Kogovšek, Dora Plestenjak, Anton Dremelj, Bruno Vavpotič, etc. Their works were acquired between 1958 and 1966. We can assume that the paintings were acquired from the Borec Publishing House, as labels with the publisher's details (author, title, technique, material and year of creation) can be found on the back of the frames of some of the paintings. Meta Kordiš, "NLB inventarna knjiga, umetniška zbirka".

84 Architect Drago Sevnik. Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), pp. 1–4. Works by Rihard Jakopič, Matija Jama, France Godec, Alenka Gerlovič, Marjan Dovjak, etc. were also acquired in 1959. Meta Kordiš, "NLB inventarna knjiga, umetniška zbirka".

85 The concept and programme content of Revolution Square changed several times since the original starting point in the 1960s while construction work took place over two decades (1961–1983). Jurij Jenšterle, "Trg revolucije, Ljubljana: Arhitekti: Edo Ravnikar s sodelavci", *Sinteza*, no. 30–32, 1974, p. 81; Peter Krečič, "Edvard Ravnikar: Arhitekt, urbanist, oblikovalec, teoretik, univerzitetni profesor in publicist", in: Asja Krečič (ed.), *Edvard Ravnikar: Arhitekt, urbanist, oblikovalec, teoretik, univerzitetni učitelj, publicist: Umetnostnozgodovinski oris* (exhibition catalogue), Arhitekturni muzej, Ljubljana, 1996, p. 31.

86 According to Maks Vreča, the interior and furnishings of the building were designed by Jože Koželj, while the extension and basement were designed by Miloš Bonča. Maks Vreča, "Ljubljanska banka in nova zgradba TR 2" (unpublished memoirs), Ljubljana, 5.3.2020, p. 2; Marta Rendla, Nataša Henig Mišičič and Žarko Lazarevič, *73.000 bančnih dni: Zgodovina, izkušnje in spomini*, in: Irena Čuk and Manja Gradišek (eds.), NLB, Ljubljana, 2020, p. 148.

87 Maks Vreča, "Ljubljanska banka in nova zgradba TR 2" (unpublished memoirs), Ljubljana, 5.3.2020, p. 4.

88 The bankers saw examples of such innovations on expert excursions abroad. *Maks Vreča*, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 10.6.2022.

89 Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, "Komisija za izgradnjo ..." (see no. 42).

90 Rendla, Henig Mišičič and Lazarevič, 2020 (see no. 86), pp. 61–65.



69–70
Interior of the youth savings branch at the Mestna hranilnica ljubljanska on Čopova Street in Ljubljana in the 1960s (architect: Drago Sevnik).

building on Revolution Square became the bank's new headquarters. The "house style"⁹¹ and the general corporate identity⁹² were created, which formed the brand identity of Ljubljanska banka and represented one of its central identifying elements.⁹³

The comprehensive "house style" was co-developed with the architect Sergej Pavlin between 1970 and 1974. In the following years, it was improved and upgraded by the bank's in-house architects.⁹⁴ Pavlin endeavoured to create functional spaces and workplaces

91 The term "house style" appears in the bank's internal newsletter in connection with the development of standards for the visual appearance of the offices and business premises of the branches. It was introduced by Stane Bedene, head of the Construction, Investment Maintenance and Furnishing of Bank Buildings Department, which was responsible for the planning and execution of construction work and the implementation of a uniform interior design and visual identity. Bedene wrote about this frequently in the bank's newsletter: "The introduction of standardised office furniture by the 'Stol' factory and the construction of several new, larger transaction divisions formed the basis for the acceptance of new perspectives and approaches to the bank's interior design, which later led to the 'house style' for the construction and furnishing of the bank buildings." The "house style", as part of the brand's visual identity, means that a Ljubljanska banka office is recognised independently of the visual signs. The expansion of Ljubljanska banka through the integration of other banks meant dealing with different stylistic and functional designs of the business premises. To this end, the "house style" was introduced, which set standards for a unified design of the bank's interiors: a unified (serial) form and functionality of interior design and furniture, a unified layout of workspaces, standards for the use of certain materials and colours, greenery and works of art. Bedene initially used the term "house style" in inverted commas, but later abandoned it. I myself use the term in inverted commas. The term "house style" is basically an archaic expression for what is now known as corporate design and architecture, and is part of a brand's corporate identity. Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), pp. 3–4; Rendla, Henig Miščič and Lazarevič, 2020 (see no. 86), pp. 181–184.

92 The visual identity of Ljubljanska banka was created in 1971 by a group of designers, Judita Skalar, Peter Skalar, Janez Suhadolc and Matjaž Vipotnik. They also created a manual with standards for internal use that defined the implementation. In the 1970s, the group also designed some of the bank's printed materials, such as annual reports, information packs, brochures and posters. Judita Skalar also designed the internal newsletter, exhibition catalogues and exhibitions. Peter Skalar, "Pot k celostni grafični podobi Ljubljanske banke", *Sinteza*, no. 23, 1972, pp. 21–24; Anonymous, "Celostna podoba kot sredstvo koordinacije in racionalizacije", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, February 1978, pp. 6–7. Peter Skalar remembers working closely with his professor Edvard Ravnikar to develop the concept for the design of the bank's trademark on the building. Peter Skalar, "Niz črk kot biser", in: France Ivanšek (ed.), *Hommage á Edvard Ravnikar 1907–1993*, Samozaložba France in Marta Ivanšek, Ljubljana, 1995, p. 354.

93 Marta Rendla, "Blagovna znamka Ljubljanske banke", *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2022 pp. 175–195; Anonymous, "Celostna podoba ...", 1978 (see no. 92), pp. 6–7.

94 For example, Vladimir Ortbafer, Boštjan Hafner and Blaž Milošević (who later changed his name to Blaž Rožanc), who was Pavlin's student. The architect Miloš Bonča also left a visible mark on the "house style". Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), pp. 3–4; Anonymous, "Arhitekt Miloš Bonča, letošnji Prešernov nagrajenec: Ljubljanski banki je dal svoj pečat", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, no. 2–3, 1987, p. 16.

dictated by work technology, banking practices and customer needs.⁹⁵ Stane Bedene, head of the technical department that oversaw the construction work and interior design, wrote that Pavlin insisted on placing works of art in the interior of banks according to principles of humanising workspaces. He saw a work of art as “an integral part of the interior design, integrated into the space and coordinated with its colours. It is thanks to his determination that the interiors of Ljubljanska banka were furnished with works of art as early as the 1970s.”⁹⁶ The quality and appropriate selection of artworks was overseen not only by the architects of the individual projects but also by Ljubljanska banka’s Fine Arts Council.⁹⁷

Stane Bedene was aware of how complex the selection of artworks for a working environment can be:

[...] it requires much more attention to the harmony of the space. The selection of artworks is often met with criticism and a lack of understanding, even when made by renowned experts. The decisive factor for the successful integration of art into the space is the harmonisation of the architect’s basic idea with clearly defined art elements, when the works of art fit harmoniously into the space and are in a predetermined relationship to one another. In such a case, the artworks are created for a specific space on the basis of active cooperation between the designer and the artist. In this case, the interior designers select the artworks that best fit the space from the proposed works.⁹⁸

The new building, the new name and the new corporate identity were part of the bank’s brand and symbolised its business success. By the end of the 1970s, it was already one of the most powerful banks in Yugoslavia, had made a name for itself abroad and was regarded as a national bank. On the basis of the new economic and banking legislation, which provided the framework for the so-called agreed economy,⁹⁹ the process of integrating the banks around Ljubljanska

95 Pavlin wrote that this was a “complex task that required a threefold approach: the design of the furniture, the design of the bank’s brand and the technical realisation of each customisation”. Sergej Pavlin, “Oblikovanje notranjščine”, *Sinteza*, no. 20, 1971, pp. 58–60.

96 Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), p. 2.

97 Ibid.

98 Bedene was aware that the environment had to be pleasant for the employees, because it was primarily intended for them. Bedene, 1980 (see no. 40), p. 4.

99 For more see: Jože Prinčič, “Dogovorna ekonomija”, in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2006, pp. 1101–1104.

banka continued and Ljubljanska banka – Associated Bank was founded in 1978.¹⁰⁰ This banking group consisted of 20 regional banks in Slovenia and Yugoslavia as well as the Associated Bank and many bank offices around the world.¹⁰¹ Parallel to the integration process, the bank renovated the affiliated units and built new buildings. Like the bank’s headquarters, these premises were also furnished with works of art, which will be discussed in due course.

The Foundation of the Art Collection from the Artworks for the Skyscraper Decoration

“The first initiative to decorate the bank’s premises with works of art came from the headquarters of Ljubljanska banka.”¹⁰² The original plan was to decorate only the more representative rooms, such as the counter area, conference rooms and management offices, with works by renowned painters. The paintings *Šentklavž* by Matija Jama and *View from the Forest* by Rihard Jakopič were purchased for the general manager’s office. However, it was later decided to furnish the entire building with contemporary artworks, and the process of selecting the works began even before the building was completed.¹⁰³ Purchases began in 1970 and continued in accordance with the completion of the individual rooms of the skyscraper and the extension. The head of the investment project, Maks Vreča, recalls that the designers, i.e. Edvard Ravnikar and his circle, made suggestions for the selection of artists they appreciated, including Slavko Tihec,¹⁰⁴ Janez Bernik, Andrej Jemec and Gabrijel Stupica. He explained that “other artists were also exerting some pressure through their channels, trying to find a sales opportunity”. For this reason, the general director, Niko Kavčič, decided to hire external experts. Zoran Kržišnik was

100 Kreditna banka in hranilnica Nova Gorica, Kreditna banka Celje and Gorenjska kreditna banka Kranj were integrated and transformed into the bank’s branches. Dolenjska banka in hranilnica Novo mesto was integrated in 1975 and Kreditna banka Maribor, Kreditna banka Koper and Podravska banka Koprivnica in 1978. Rendla, Henig Mišičič and Lazarevič, 2020 (see no. 86), p. 66.

101 At the height of its power in 1989, shortly before it was transformed into a joint stock company, the banking group of Ljubljanska banka – Associated Bank had a network of 430 branches in Yugoslavia, 20 international and one domestic office. It had four mixed-ownership banks in Frankfurt am Main, London, Paris and Vienna, an LBS Bank in New York and 21 agency offices in Europe for Yugoslav employees abroad. The bank was the number one bank in Yugoslavia in terms of collected savings by the population. It employed almost 15,000 people. Its total assets amounted to almost eight billion American dollars, making it 95th in Europe and 211th in the world in terms of capital volume. Rendla, Henig Mišičič and Lazarevič, 2020 (see no. 86), p. 76.

102 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2. According to other sources, the initiative came from the architects. *Maks Vreča*, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 10.6.2022.

103 Ibid.

104 A large-scale sculpture *Genesis of the Core* by Slavko Tihec stands between Maxi-market and the cylindrical entrance to the bank.

commissioned to select the artworks and place them in the premises. Maks Vreča said that when the first draft of Kržišnik's list of selected artists was presented to Ljubljanska banka's Labour Council, which was tasked with confirming the selection and acquisition, a discussion developed about the art decorations and the artists on the list. Artists such as France Peršin, France Slana, Ive Šubic and Dora Plestenjak were suggested. The employees favoured landscapes, Vreča noted, especially those who came from Kreditna banka Ljubljana at 2 Šubičeva Street, who were the majority, and who were used to Lojze Perko's landscapes.¹⁰⁵ The Council finally approved the amended list submitted by the committee for the new building. The list included 31 paintings, 17 small sculptures and 200 prints,¹⁰⁶ with prices and short presentations of the 33 selected artists and their works. Most of the works were created in the 1960s and in 1970, although some also date from the 1950s.¹⁰⁷ The total price for the purchase was 345,900 dinars.¹⁰⁸

No records have been found to justify the choice of artists, artistic genres and techniques. However, there are parallels with the selection of works in the proposal for the decoration of the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre a decade later, which was drawn up by a fine art committee consisting of Lojze Gostiša, Mitja Rotovnik, Zoran Kržišnik and Edvard Ravnikar. The committee, which was tasked with decorating the offices and staircases in the Cankarjev dom, suggested prints by Slovenian artists "because they are of high quality and truly representative, as shown by the various examples of the decoration of representative spaces with graphic artworks".¹⁰⁹ In other

105 *Maks Vreča*, interview (see no. 102).

106 The list was later reduced to 31 paintings, 15 sculptures and 200 prints (which were added by hand). "All the proposed prints were selected from the best prints of our artists and will be printed in small editions. [...] The framing will be done by the framing workshop of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana." Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, "Komisija za izgradnjo nove poslovne stavbe ..." (see no. 42).

107 The oldest work on the list is a work by Božidar Jakac from 1953. Meta Kordiš, "NLB inventarna knjiga, umetniška zbirka".

108 Both the interior design and most of the works of art were acquired through the Slovenijales company (with the exception of the works by Dora Plestenjak and France Slana, which were acquired through the DSLU, and the work by Gabrijel Stupica, which was acquired through the Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, as the bank did not yet have a purchasing and technical department capable of managing such a large investment). Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, "Komisija za izgradnjo ..." (see no. 42).

To illustrate the amount spent on the purchase of works of art: in 1968, 10 kilos of potatoes cost 9.8 dinars, earned in 1.5 hours with the average wage. This price corresponded to 1% of the average monthly wage. The data was prepared by the Institute for Strategic Research in 2021 for the permanent exhibition of the Slovenian Banking Museum.

109 Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana (1976–2014), "Priloga Operativni štab odbora udeležencev družbenega dogovora o izgradnji in financiranju Kulturnega doma Ivan Cankar razpisuje 19. januar 1979, p. 2", SI ZAL LJU/249/1, Historical Archives of Ljubljana. I thank Martina Malešič for the source.

words, solutions were used that had already been tried and tested. But there were also economic reasons, coupled with a range of possibilities offered by this versatile technique, which can "express individual tastes and particular tendencies".¹¹⁰ Slovenian representatives of Naïve art and authors of small sculptures were also nominated for the selection.¹¹¹

The artworks selected for the skyscraper represent the beginnings of the bank's art collection, which offers a kind of overview of Slovenian fine arts of the 1960s, or as the head of the technical department, Stane Bedene, wrote: "A fairly objective overview of the state of Slovenian fine arts around the 1970s."¹¹² The shortlist comprised four female artists and 29 male artists.¹¹³ It is not insignificant that all the artists on the list also founded or later collaborated with Group 69.¹¹⁴ These artists, as well as those who were not nominated by the bank, belonged to the so-called "Kržišnik circle". They were established artists whose success was also ensured by Kržišnik's role as their manager.¹¹⁵

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2.

113 Janez Bernik (4 paintings, 1 tapestry, 14 prints), Janez Boljka (3 sculptures, 5 prints), Bogdan Borčič (5 prints), Jože Ciuha (3 paintings), Peter Černe (3 sculptures), Riko Debenjak (15 prints), Dževad Hozo (15 prints), Jože Horvat - Jaki (2 paintings, 9 prints), Božidar Jakac (9 prints), Andrej Jemec (4 paintings, 1 tapestry, 15 prints), Kiar Bogdan Meško (13 prints), Zdenko Kalin (3 sculptures), Dore Klemenčič - Maj (2 prints), Metka Krašovec (2 prints), Lojze Logar (3 prints), Vladimir Makuc (15 prints), Adriana Maraž (14 prints), France Mihelič (14 prints), France Peršin (2 paintings), Jože Peternej (1 painting), Marjan Pogačnik (14 prints), Marij Pregelj (10 prints), Anton Repnik (2 paintings), France Rotar (2 sculptures), France Slana (2 paintings), Dora Plestenjak (1 painting), Tinca Stegovec (5 prints), Gabrijel Stupica (1 painting, 1 tapestry), Gorazd Šefran (2 prints), Ive Šubic (3 paintings), Marko Šuštaršič (2 paintings), Drago Tršar (4 sculptures) and Karel Zelenko (10 prints). Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, "Komisija za izgradnjo ..." (see no. 42); Mojca Štuhec, "Inventarna knjiga likovnih del, ki so sestavni del namensko načrtovane likovne opreme stolpnice Trg republike 2" (unpublished document), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2014/2015.

114 The founding members were Janez Bernik, Jože Ciuha, Riko Debenjak, Andrej Jemec, Kiar Meško, Adriana Maraž, France Rotar, Gabrijel Stupica, Marko Šuštaršič, Slavko Tihec, Drago Tršar and Dževad Hozo. Metka Krašovec and Gorazd Šefran exhibited with them until 1976. The group explained that they came together out of a need for occasional group exhibitions where they could present their work and meet other artists and experts. In this way, they strengthened their position in the art world. But they also sought "close cooperation with the economy, with any kind of production activity". Jadranka Ljubičič, "Grupa 69", in: Nadja Zgonik (ed.), *Pojmovnik slovenske umetnosti po letu 1945: Pojmi, gibanja, skupine, težnje*, Študentska založba, 2009, pp. 80–82; Gregor Dražil, "Menedžer da sem? Sem." *Zoran Kržišnik in začetek prodiranja slovenske moderne umetnosti na zahodno likovno prizorišče*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2020, p. 55; Anonymous, "Prisotnosti '76", *Grupa 69* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1976, n. p.

115 Dražil, 2020 (see no. 114), p. 55.

The general guidelines for furnishing the skyscraper with works of art were based on the architectural design of the rooms and their purpose. The banker and project manager of the construction and furnishing project, Maks Vreča, remembers that there were not many walls because the building was designed to resemble an industrial production hall, and most of the workplaces were located in the halls. The exterior walls of the building consisted of large glass surfaces, while the interior walls were left in raw concrete. Regarding the final placement of the artworks in relation to what the rooms had to offer, Vreča said that once the works were positioned, he had the impression that “there were relatively few paintings and prints in the building”.¹¹⁶ He also said that he helped Kržišnik with the placement of the works in the rooms. When arranging the works, they took into account who worked in a particular office and what might suit their taste. After the works were arranged in the rooms, the employees were asked for their opinions: some paintings and prints were changed, but the basic arrangement remained unchanged.¹¹⁷ In addition to the arrangement of the artworks throughout the building, their appropriate presentation was also required. This was ensured by natural light and artificial lighting, which was insufficient in some places.¹¹⁸

Three large tapestries were commissioned for the spacious concrete walls in the bank’s counter area. Andrej Jemec remembers that Edvard Ravnikar invited him and Zoran Kržišnik, Janez Bernik and Gabrijel Stupica to a meeting to discuss the tapestries when the construction work was nearing completion. The painters were assigned a wall each and given measurements. Jemec explained that one of the reasons for commissioning large-format tapestries was also to conceal certain installations, i.e. faults in the construction that left certain channels visible.¹¹⁹ His tapestry *The Grand Composition* bears his unmistakable signature of abstraction of curves, arcs and loops in bold colours.¹²⁰ Gabrijel Stupica created a tapestry with a variation of his usual motif of a studio.¹²¹ Janez Bernik created a new painted

116 Maks Vreča, interview (see no. 102).

117 Ibid.

118 Stane Bedene, the head of the bank’s technical department, wrote that “the prints and paintings in the other offices at the headquarters worked very well. However, most of the small sculptures on the upper floors were inadequately lit, which diminished their value as small sculptures”. Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2.

119 Andrej Jemec, interview, conducted by Meta Kordiš, 19.5.2022.

120 The cartoon for the tapestry was produced in a 1:1 ratio on paper in the basement of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. It was woven in Dekorativna in Ljubljana. The artist worked closely with the weavers, especially when mixing the colours, which he considered crucial to his work. Ibid.

121 Andrej Jemec said that when they were leaving the meeting with Ravnikar, he suggested Stupica use his painting *Studio*, which was then on display at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, as the motif for the tapestry. Andrej Jemec, interview

typographic composition of numbers with an apple in the centre and the title 71.¹²² The large tapestries were hung in 1972 and formed the centre of the room.¹²³ The bust of Josip Broz - Tito by sculptor Boris Kalin occupied a prominent place in the entrance hall (figs. 71–73).

The possible reasons for choosing the tapestry technique can perhaps be found in the aforementioned justification for the art decorations in the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre. The fine art committee suggested tapestries for the spacious walls in the first foyer, citing the advantages of this technique:

“a) it is very adaptable to the type of architecture; b) the technique has conquered the world in recent years; c) it creates a warm and rich atmosphere; d) we have top-class, world-renowned cartoonists who specialise in tapestry design; e) and a solid technical basis for realisation (Dekorativna, Ljubljana, and Atelje 61, Novi Sad)”.¹²⁴

The project to decorate the building with paintings, prints, small sculptures and tapestries was completed within two years. During the project, the bank’s newsletter informed employees about the importance of decorating the premises with works of art, introduced artists and explained their works that embellished the premises. Short articles were published in the “Art in our building” section of the bank’s newsletter.¹²⁵ The editors of the first article in this section wrote that they presented:

(see no. 119). Ljubljanska banka bought *Studio* from the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. The tapestry has similar visual, colour and compositional starting points. “The composition shows a light blue interior of an art studio with paintings, drawings, a stand, a mirror and the like,” explained Gabrijel Stupica for the bank’s newsletter section “Art in our building”. Ida Rebolj, “Umetnost v naši hiši: Slikar Gabrijel Stupica”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, October 1972, p. 8.

122 Similar motifs of an apple and numbers can also be seen on the prints that were intended to decorate the bank’s premises. Both tapestries were woven in Atelier 61 in Novi Sad.

123 Half of the total price for a single tapestry was intended for the artist’s fee, the other half for the production costs. Janez Bernik and Andrej Jemec received 58,960 dinars for the tapestries measuring 325 x 644 cm and 310 x 656 cm, Gabrijel Stupica received 15,406 dinars for the tapestry measuring 283 x 415 cm. Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, “Komisija za izgradnjo ...” (see no. 42).

124 Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana (1976–2014), “Priloga Operativni štab ...” (see no. 109).

125 A photo of the artist and an artwork of his choice, not necessarily from the bank’s collection, were published. The newsletter section ran from March 1971 to May 1974, with articles being published regularly in the first two years and only occasionally thereafter. The following artists were featured, in the following order: Jože Horvat - Jaki, Stane Kregar, Andrej Jemec, Janez Bernik, France Slana, Riko Debenjak, Adriana Maraž, France Mihelič, Marjan Pogačnik, Božidar Jakac, Metka Krašovec, Gabrijel Stupica, Zdenko Kalin, Slavko Tihec and Vladimir Makuc.



71-73
Branch of the Ljubljanska banka at Revolution Square (today Republic Square) in Ljubljana in the 1980s (architect: Edvard Ravnikar).



[...] a fairly extensive collection of our fine art. [...] In this way we will bring the fine arts to a wider audience. And because we want to contribute to a better understanding of the works we have acquired and provide you with at least basic information about their creators, we have decided to publish brief explanations of the works by the artists themselves.¹²⁶

After the project was completed, Zoran Kržišnik wrote a separate article for the newsletter in which he presented the selection of works, the importance of furnishing the premises with art and the bank's initiative for such a project.

The building itself is without question one of the most communicative public spaces. Finding the right balance between exterior and interior, between interior design and works of art, is therefore doubly important: from the perspective of the building itself and its purpose, and from the perspective of the work of art and its own life. It is clear that above all we want to create a coherent whole in which the art is given an appropriate place in the space that fits the dimensions of modern – by our standards new – business life; and of course we want to have an example of a successful and harmonious collaboration between the architect and the artist. [...] It is perhaps superfluous to talk about the artistic value of the acquired and presented works: they are undoubtedly visible achievements of Slovenian fine art and artistic expressions of all directions and thus represent not only the artistic moment of our creative upswing, but also embody its broader temporal dimension, offering the visitor a suggestive insight and the owner the distinction of a conscious patron who firmly and resolutely keeps pace with the demands of today and even more so of tomorrow. [...] It is also an indisputable fact that, as everywhere else in the world, the business world in Slovenia is very interested in artistic achievements and views them as business opportunities – as investments. [...] This aspect is particularly important today, when almost everything that is measurable is quantified with numbers and real economic measures. The objection that treating art in this way would mean devaluing it is nonsensical. Quite the opposite! [...] And it is precisely from this point of view that Ljubljanska banka has taken a decisive and – in our opinion – symbolic step towards a conscious commercial approach to a part of the

126 Ida Rebolj, "Umetnost v naši hiši: J. Horvat - Jaki in njegov 'demon'", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, March 1971, p. 8.

national wealth, which, unfortunately, is still too foreign and 'unprofitable' in our society.¹²⁷

Integrating Art into Other Business Premises and Branches of Ljubljanska banka

Although furnishing business premises with works of art became a common feature, as part of the bank's "house style", it was not necessarily an obligatory standard.¹²⁸ The skyscraper, for instance, was an example of good practice in the selection and placement of artworks within an architectural setting. Unfortunately, the interior of the nearby Ljubljana branch building, built in 1974 as part of the urban complex of Revolution Square, did not follow this example.¹²⁹ Stane Bedene, the head of the technical department, wrote: "[...] the result of the fact that the architect, who was in charge of executing the project was not involved in the furnishing, was the oversaturation with similar works by a single artist [...] Andrej Ajdič"¹³⁰

A prime example of the productive collaboration between architect and artist on the interior design was the renovation of the Celje branch in 1973. The interior was designed by Miloš Bonča, while the painter Drago Hrvacki created enamelled metal screens for the bank counters in his style of abstract geometric structures consisting of coloured surfaces. His prints and paintings were mounted on the walls behind and next to the counters (fig. 74).¹³¹ Also exemplary was the collaboration between the artists Zvest Apollonio and Drago Hrvacki and the in-house architect Blaž Milošević in the design of the coloured surfaces for the branch in Bratovševa ploščad, one of the streets of the neighbourhood BS-7 in the northern part of Ljubljana in the same year.¹³²

In most cases, the placement of artworks in new buildings – on which architects, painters and sculptors worked together, sometimes

127 Kržišnik, 1972 (see no. 42), pp. 1, 8.

128 Stane Bedene, who argued in favour of making the integration of art in offices the standard model, gave three examples of good architectural solutions for interiors that reflect the "house style" of Ljubljanska banka, but where the investor unfortunately showed no interest in artistic interventions. Examples: Vrhnik (architect Blaž Milošević, renamed Rožanc), Ljutomer (architect Vladimir Orthaber), Zagreb, Rade Končara Street (architect Boštjan Hafner). Stane Bedene, "Trije avtorji – tri nove ekspozitive Ljubljanske banke", *Ljubljanska banka: glasilo delovne skupnosti*, September 1977, p. 12.

129 Newly constructed extension to the existing buildings in Josipine Turnograjske Street. Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 3.

131 Miloš Bonča, "Oblikovanje notranjščine", *Sinteza*, no. 30–32, 1974, pp. 97–98. Miloš Bonča was quoted in the bank's newsletter: "the colours correspond both with the tectonic structures of the materials and with the psychological needs of the employees and customers". Anonymous, "Običajni bančni pultji so izgubili nekdanjo togost", *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, September 1973, p. 8.

132 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2; Bedene, 1977 (see no. 128), p. 12.



Interior of the branch of the Ljubljanska banka on Vodnik Street in Celje in 1973 (architect: Miloš Bonča; painter: Drago Hrvacki).

more, sometimes less closely – was successful. In the branch building in Nova Gorica, completed in 1975, geometric abstraction sculptures by Danilo Jejčič were installed in the stairwell.¹³³ The bare walls were decorated in 1979 with selected works by children from the 8th International Ex-Tempore Festival for Primary School Pupils organised by the primary school in Solkan.¹³⁴ In the new branch in Škofja Loka, “colour drawings framed under glass by artists of the younger generation living in and around Škofja Loka [...] (Boris Jesih, Franc Novinc, Berko and Pavle Florjančič)”¹³⁵ were installed. Later, the sculpture *Cut-up Sphere* by France Rotar was installed in the counter area. At the end of 1975, the renovation of a dilapidated late mediaeval house in the old city centre into a new business unit was completed.¹³⁶ The bank’s newsletter stated that “part of the renovated premises

133 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2.

134 Some participants even painted on the premises and later exhibited their works. Marjeta Harej, “Banka odprla vrata mladim slikarskim talentom”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, June 1979, p. 18.

135 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 3.

136 In-house architect Vladimir Orthaber transformed the mediaeval building into a modern office with a department for youth savings. The Gothic kitchen was restored in accordance with the guidelines for the protection of historical monuments and the façade was also renovated. Stane Bedene, “Uspela rešitev interierja v Kranju”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, January 1976, p. 9.

is intended for social and cultural purposes, such as permanent art exhibitions and the like”¹³⁷ Architect Tomaž Vuga invited artists from the Slovenian coastal region to create works for the Idrija branch, which opened in 1971. Jože Spacal created a multicoloured mosaic for the forecourt of the bank, which became an “artistic flagship project in Idrija”¹³⁸ The interior was decorated with a sculpture by Negovan Nemec.¹³⁹ The doors of the conference room, which are reminiscent of a distinctive Karst entrance called *porton*, were designed by the painter Rudi Pergar. The walls of the staircase were processed with plastic elements by the painter Danilo Jejčič. The painter Nedeljko Pečanac created the main work above the counters. At the beginning of 1979, an office building was completed in Krško, which housed the offices of the bank, Triglav Insurance and the post office. It was located in the new city centre, right next to the statue of Matija Gubec, and was designed by Miloš Bonča. These premises were also decorated with works of art. However, only works by Nikolaj Omersa and France Slana were acquired. Most of the paintings, for example by Tone Kralj and Petar Lubarda, were borrowed from the Božidar Jakac Gallery near Kostanjevica on the Krka River. Painter Božidar Jakac, however, donated one of his most recent works to the bank.¹⁴⁰

The “house style” and the standards for interior design and signage were also adopted by the newly completed branches in other Yugoslav republics. In 1975, the branch in Zagreb was given new offices in a lower building next to the 23-storey Zagrepčanka office tower.¹⁴¹ Works by Croatian artists were specially commissioned for the counter area: Edo Murtić created a large tapestry and Raoul Goldoni created bright, amorphous structures for the walls on the ground floor, which, according to the head of the technical department, Bedene, corresponded best with the texture and colours of the natural stone cladding (figs. 75–76).¹⁴² The rooms were also furnished with a selection of paintings, prints and drawings by nine Slovenian artists, which were mounted on the neutral-coloured walls.¹⁴³

The interior of the new branch in Titograd (now Podgorica) was designed by the in-house architect Vladimir Orthaber in muted colours

137 Anonymous, “Foto vesti”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, December 1975, p. 11.

138 Anonymous, “Zanimiva likovna oprema”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, January 1978, p. 9.

139 Ibid.

140 Anonymous, “Ohranjena celotna podoba banke”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, March 1979, p. 6.

141 At 94 metres, it was the tallest building in Yugoslavia at the time. Dragan Mustapić, “Do kvalitetnijih usluga i još većeg ugleda”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, June 1975, p. 7.

142 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2.

143 Ibid.

and decorated with works “by artists from Montenegro who are active in the Slovenian cultural sector, the sculptor M. Vuković and the painter R. Pušeljak”¹⁴⁴ as well as prints by Jože Spacal. In Skopje, the offices were adorned with works by Zvest Apollonio and Franc Novinc.¹⁴⁵ In the centre of Priština, the recently completed extension of the office building, whose interior was designed by architect Orthaber, was decorated with selected works by seven Slovenian artists: Jože Ciuha, Andrej Jemec, Metka Krašovec, France Slana, Adriana Maraž, Jože Spacal and Jože Horvat - Jaki, who created a tapestry.¹⁴⁶ In February 1981, the newly founded Ljubljanska banka in Zurich furnished the interiors with paintings by Zvest Apollonio and Silvester Komel and presented them in an exhibition.¹⁴⁷

The economic and political reform at the end of the 1970s redefined the organisational patterns and the mutual relationships between the headquarters, the subsidiaries and the branches, which were given more autonomy. Thus, in the 1980s, the branches became more independent in the selection of art decorations, without relying on the advice and recommendations of the Fine Arts Council, which had an impact on the quality of the works and artists selected. Nevertheless, in almost all branches throughout Yugoslavia and abroad, displaying artworks by Slovenian artists in their offices was a widely accepted practice, as it was felt that “when opening new branches in other cultural environments, the bank should also offer visitors a part of Slovenian cultural creation”¹⁴⁸

In the 1970s, Ljubljanska banka commissioned a number of artworks from all over Slovenia and bought them to use for office furnishings as part of the humanisation of the workplace. But the bank also played a broader social role: it became a patron of Slovenian fine arts and “‘opened up’ as a special kind of exhibition space for numerous Slovenian artists and that part of the population [...] that does not visit professional galleries, but can unexpectedly come across fine art and culture in the broadest sense here,” wrote Stane Bedene.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

In socialist Yugoslavia, the fine arts were assigned an idealised, transformative social role. However, in the context of the socialisation of culture and the humanisation of the workplace, the implementation

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 Stane Bedene, “Likovna oprema slovenskih avtorjev”, *Ljubljanska banka: Glasilo delovne skupnosti*, March 1977, p. 6.

147 Sektor za stike z javnostjo, Likovni svet LB, “Pavel Šavli, Zadeva sodelovanje umetnosti in banke v tujini”, NLB 4444-104/1978-92, NLB Archives.

148 Bedene, 1977 (see no. 40), p. 2.

149 Ibid.



75-76

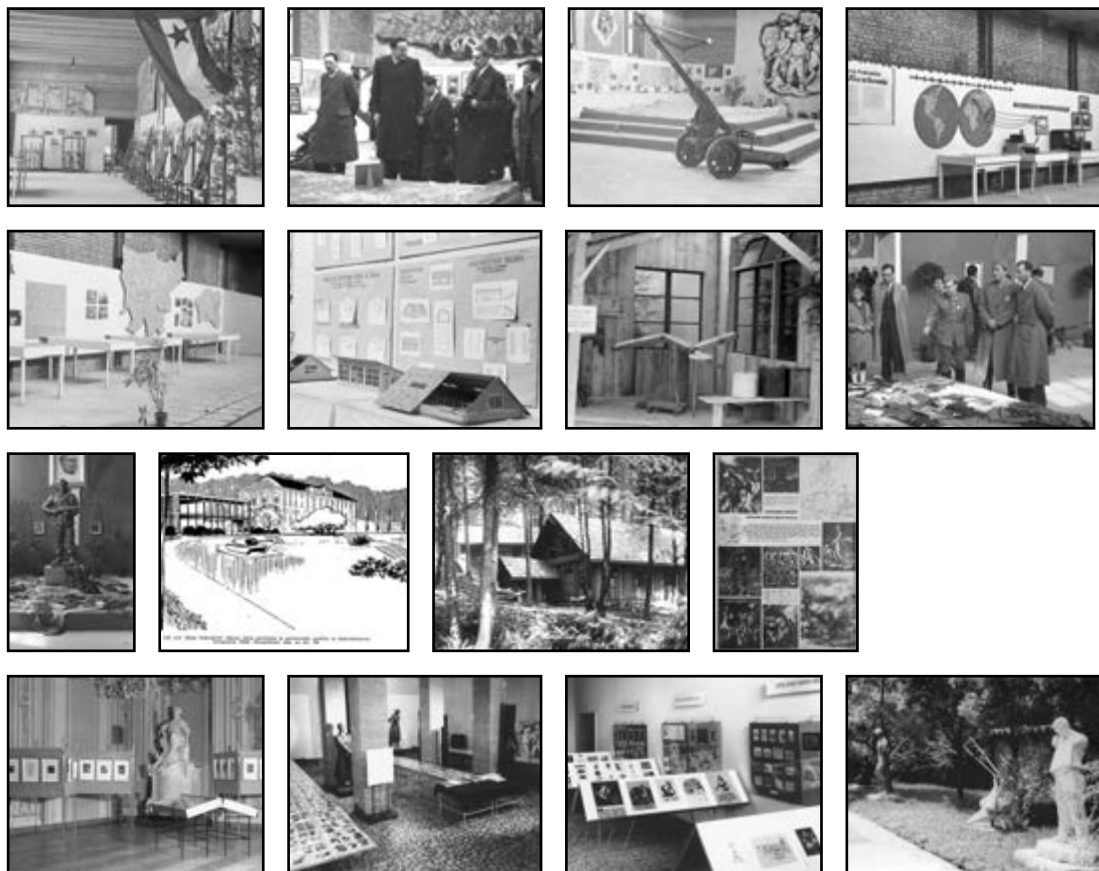
Interior of the branch of the Ljubljanska banka in the annex of the Zagrepčanka office tower in Zagreb in 1976 (architects: Slavko Jelinek and Berislav Vinković; with artworks by Edo Murtić and Raoul Goldoni).

of this role came to a halt halfway through. These two concepts also enabled the commodification of art according to the bourgeois model, as the professional art sphere cultivated the bourgeois concept of art and committed itself to Western (high) art and its rules.

With its extensive network of branches, subsidiaries and agencies in Slovenia, Yugoslavia and the world, Ljubljanska banka made accessible and disseminated contemporary, mainly Slovenian, fine arts, as canonised by the established experts who worked with the bank. With its purchasing and commissioning of artworks and, later, with its exhibition activities and the publication of articles in the internal newsletter and exhibition catalogues, the bank contributed to the humanisation of workplaces and the democratisation of art and its marketability. The art decoration in the offices was an important element of the “house style” and part of the bank’s brand identity. The bank thus instrumentalised art as a strategic investment in its brand and understood the investment in art as an investment in people, in the accessibility of art and the well-being of employees in the workplace and customers in the offices, as well as the artists. Socialist enterprises indeed played an important role in building a network of cultural infrastructures, in promoting, disseminating and democratising art, and in involving employees and local communities in the creation and enjoyment of art. In practice, however, it became apparent that, despite the manifold commitments, the consumption of contemporary fine arts in particular depended to a certain extent on an individual’s taste and knowledge formation, which were, among other things, determined by social (class) position.

Tina Fortič Jakopič

The Fine Art Collection of the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia/ Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia and Its Exhibiting



Contemporary museology maintains that every museum is closely tied to its socio-political context and therefore cannot be neutral or apolitical. Just as a museum institution is rooted in its environment, the presentation of museum collections – the fundamental aim of a museum – is bound to the current time, tradition, history and cultural political conditions within which particular artefacts of cultural heritage are studied.¹ This article presents the collection of fine art that is now part of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia and traces its development from the museum's founding until the end of the 1970s. During this period, the museum was initially called the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia (MNO LRS, 1948–1962) and was later renamed the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia (MLRS, 1962–1994). The article focuses on the changes in the role of the art collection over time and analyses the institution's collection and exhibition policy.²

1. The Beginnings of the Museum's Fine Art Collection

Since the founding of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation (OF) in April 1941, the members of the resistance movement were aware of the importance of culture for the identity and future of the nation. A group of cultural workers joined the OF, and they were also one of its four founding groups (alongside the Communist, Christian Socialist and Sokol groups). They also had a representative on the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front (IO OF), Josip Vidmar, who later became president of the entire OF.³ The cultural workers were involved

- 1 Zvezdana Antos, "Politics and the presentation of cultures in museums", in: Roxana Omar et al. (eds.), *Museums and the Idea of Historical Progress*, Iziko Museums Publications and ICOM-SA, Cape Town, 2014.
- 2 Several authors have written about the development of the museum. The development of the museum's collection policy and the acquisition of artworks have been described in more detail by Iztok Durjava, "Nastanek in ureditev likovne zbirke", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, pp. 53–58. The politics of the museum was discussed using the example of a permanent exhibition from the 1990s by Neža Mrevlje and Katarina Župavec, "Politike in političnost Muzeja novejšje zgodovine Slovenije", in: Božidar Jezernik (ed.), *Med prezentacijo in manipulacijo*, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana, 2010, pp. 81–111. The former museums of the People's Revolution were researched by Andreja Rihter, "Dediščina socializma med pozabo in spominom" (doctoral dissertation), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2015.
- 3 Bojan Godeša, *Kdor ni z nami, je proti nam: Slovenski izobraženci med okupatorji, Osvobodilno fronto in protirevolucionarnim taborom*, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 139–141; Bojan Godeša, "Ustanovitev Osvobodilne fronte slovenskega naroda", in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejšja zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšjo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2005. Josip Vidmar (1895–1992) was a literary and theatre critic, translator, dramaturge and politician. After the war, he held several federal and republican political offices. "Vidmar, Josip", in: Luc Menaše, *Svetovni biografski leksikon: Ljudje in dela v 27.277 geslih*, Mihelač, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 1004.

in various activities (production of visual material and texts, participation in events, etc.) and sought to encourage reflection on “the fundamental questions of Slovenian future”.⁴

After Italy’s capitulation, it became even clearer that “it will be necessary [after the war] to ensure that new directions are practically implemented and that Slovenian life is reorganised on new foundations in all areas”.⁵ Calls for a more systematic organisation of the individual professions became increasingly frequent, along with proposals for a comprehensive review of the functioning and state of the various branches of the economy and culture. At the plenum of the OF on 21 September 1943, Boris Kidrič therefore proposed that individual professional groups organise congresses in order to demonstrate “the commitment of the individual professional groups to the cause of the liberation movement and involve them as much as possible in the National Liberation Struggle”.⁶ As a result, various professional groups did indeed hold sector-specific congresses, with the scientific and cultural workers also holding their own congress in Semič on 4 and 5 January 1944. On this occasion, they outlined a strategy for the activities of the Scientific Institute (ZI), which was founded by the IO OF on 12 January 1944.⁷ Today’s National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia (MNSZS) follows in the tradition of the former ZI, as its collections also contain material gathered by the ZI.

The ZI was the first scientific organisation in the liberated territory of Yugoslavia.⁸ It addressed fundamental questions concerning the shaping of the future of the nation, with particular emphasis on two key issues: the delineation of post-war state borders and the establishment of a new social system through the organisation of various economic sectors and professional fields.⁹ According to the

founding act, the institute’s task was to collect “scientific material and scientific knowledge needed for the National Liberation Struggle in the present and for reconstruction after liberation, as well as to convey the experiences of the National Liberation Struggle to science itself by scientific means”.¹⁰ In carrying out these tasks, the ZI collaborated with legal experts, doctors, engineers, military officers, the Women’s Antifascist Front, the Slovene Youth Association and others – many of whom had also organised their own congresses. The institute also established sections that prepared in-depth studies and other projects in individual professional groups, the results of which were presented to the political and military leadership and also to the public.¹¹ A systematic effort was also made to document and record all materials related to the National Liberation Struggle and the crimes of the occupying forces.¹² One of the most important purposes of this collection was to prepare the material and the studies based on it for the aforementioned post-war negotiations on state borders.¹³

4 France Škerl, “Znanstveni institut”, *Zgodovinski časopis*, vol. 19–20, 1965–1966, p. 32.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. Boris Kidrič (1912–1953) was a co-founder of the Communist Party of Slovenia and later leader of the OF. After the war, he was prime minister of Slovenia and later Yugoslav minister of economy. “Kidrič, Boris”, in: Menaše, 1994 (see no. 3), p. 490.

7 The first director of the ZI was the historian Fran Zwitter, his deputy was the sociologist Boris Zihel. Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 32, 33. M. B., “I. kongres slovenskih kulturnih delavcev na osvobojenem ozemlju”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 5, no. 2, 13.1.1944, pp. 7–8.

8 For more about the ZI see also: Fran Zwitter, “Narodnost in politika pri Slovencih”, *Zgodovinski časopis*, vol. 1, no. 1–4, 1947; Fran Zwitter, “Delo in pomen partizanskega Znanstvenega inštituta”, *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 10, no. 1–2, 1970. Lojze Ude, who headed the legal department together with Darko Černe at the beginning of the ZI, published numerous discussions on border issues in the post-war period. See: Lojze Ude, “Avstrija, pangermanizem in Koroška”, in: Bogo Grafenauer, Lojze Ude and Maks Veselko (eds.), *Koroški zbornik, Državna založba Slovenije*, Ljubljana, 1946, pp. 605–653. Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 34, 37.

9 A number of prominent personalities from Slovenian scientific, economic and cultural circles are said to have played a key role in this process, including Lojze

Dular, Lado Vavpetič, Ivo Pirkovič and Vinko Vrhunec. Zdenko Čepič, *Zamislí o gospodarski ureditvi po drugi svetovni vojni v narodnoosvobodilnem gibanju*, Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 10 and throughout. Lojze Dular (1903–2002) was a mining engineer and economist. After the war, he was deputy minister for mining in the government of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. He was a member of the Yugoslav delegation at the peace conferences in London and Paris. Later he was also deputy federal secretary of industry and construction. Ibid., p. 10. Ivo Pirkovič (1909–1985) was a publicist and historian of the national liberation movement. In 1942, he was arrested by the Italian occupation authorities and, after Italy’s capitulation, he became a collaborator of the ZI and a member of the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Accomplices (KUZOP). “Pirkovič, Ivo”, in: Tončka Stanovnik et al. (eds.), *Osebnosti: Veliki slovenski biografski leksikon M–Ž*, Ljubljana, 2008, p. 847. Vinko Vrhunec (1895–1981) was a lawyer and economist; before the war he was director of the Trbovlje Coal Mining Company. Čepič, 1998 (see beginning of this note), p. 10. Lado Vavpetič (1902–1982) was a lawyer and politician, a member of the Supreme Plenum of the Liberation Front since 1941. After the war, he was briefly minister of trade and supply and later a professor of public administration and administrative procedure at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana. “Vavpetič, Lado”, in: Luc Menaše, *Svetovni biografski leksikon: Ljudje in dela v 27.277 geslih*, Mihelač, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 997.

10 Nataša Urbanc, “50 let Muzeja”, in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 14.

11 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 32, 37, 39.

12 The KUZOP, founded on 20 February 1944, was primarily responsible for this. Damijan Guštin, “Tisk narodnoosvobodilnega gibanja 1944–1945 o organih za ugotavljanje vojnih zločinov”, *Prispevki za novejšjo zgodovino*, vol. 33, no. 1–2, 1993, pp. 111–127. More about the initial work of the commission can be found in the publication of the commission’s president Makso Šnuderl in: Makso Šnuderl, *Fašistično domobransko nasilje nad Slovenci*, Triglav, 1944.

13 Fran Zwitter, “Priprave znanstvenega inštituta za reševanje mejnih vprašanj”, in: Tone Ferenc (ed.), *Osvoboditev Slovenije 1945 (referati z znanstvenega posvetovanja v Ljubljani 22. in 23. decembra 1975)*, Založba Borec, Ljubljana, 1977, p. 258.

The ZI was also involved in the assessment of damage to cultural and historical monuments. Shortly before the end of the war, a Commission for the Determination of Damage to Cultural and Historical Objects was set up in cooperation with the institute. Already during the war, the ZI had planned for the post-war division of collected materials into a library, an archive, a museum and a Partisan gallery after the war, as it collected not only artefacts, but also books, archive material and works of art. The minutes of an undated meeting explicitly mention that the ZI was also to collect “documentary images” that recorded the history of the occupation and the National Liberation Struggle. Božidar Jakac, France Mihelič and Dore Klemenčič-Maj were named as the authors of these “documentary images”¹⁴

In the first post-war years, attempts were made to reorganise the institute and divide its areas of activity into new, more specialised institutions. For example, a special Department for Border Issues was set up, which later operated as “Slovenian centre for expert work on border issues”¹⁵. On 10 February 1948, the ZI ceased its activities completely and the Government of the People’s Republic of Slovenia established the Museum of National Liberation of the People’s Republic of Slovenia (MNO LRS) and the Institute for Ethnic Studies. The materials collected by the ZI were divided between these institutions, with the MNO LRS taking over most of the fine arts collection.¹⁶ The tasks of the newly established museum, which were set out in the Decree on the Establishment of the Museum of National Liberation in 1948, included collecting and organising materials and issuing publications, as well as the provision that the museum materials should be accessible to everyone “for scientific, popular-publicist and also artistic purposes”¹⁷. However, what was meant by artistic purposes was not precisely defined.

A similar situation existed in other Yugoslav republics, where Museums of National Liberation Struggle were established from the mid-1940s onward. In addition, in some existing museums, both in larger and smaller towns, special departments dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle were set up.¹⁸ The local museums or departments relied on the central national museum institutions for the preparation of exhibition content and research. This created a network of similarly organised museums of national liberation, which also actively cooperated with each other. Immediately after

the war, many institutions turned to the ZI to prepare records of wartime events, statistical data, information on fighters, victims, cultural and historical monuments, and more. Later, the MNO LRS in Ljubljana continued to share information on historical events, personalities and documents with other museums and also loaned them its materials for exhibitions.¹⁹ This regular inter-institutional cooperation also contributed to the fact that the newly founded museums of national liberation were soon able to play an important role in creating a collective memory of the war events, and, in doing so, contributed to the legitimisation and ideological grounding of the new post-war political order.²⁰

14 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 42, 47.

15 Zwitter, 1977 (see no. 13), pp. 258, 273.

16 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 43, 44, 60, 61.

17 Odredba vlade LRS št. 5 – zak. 69 z dne 7. februarja 1948, *Uradni list LRS*, no. 7, 1948. For more on the establishment of the MNO LRS see: Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 15.

18 In Slovenia, such departments or smaller museums were later established in Celje, Slovenj Gradec, Maribor and Novo Mesto.

19 In its early days, the MNO LRS was in contact with the city administration of Mostar, which provided the museum with information about the revolutionary uprising in Herzegovina. In 1951, the museum made arrangements for the exchange of journalistic material with the British Imperial War Museum. *Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000*, “455/2, 22.12.1951”, SI AS 2200/7/16, Arhiv Republike Slovenije (hereinafter ARS); *Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000*, “Vložni zapisnik”, SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.

20 Examples of larger, newly founded Yugoslav museums of national liberation are the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia (founded in 1945, its collection is now part of the Croatian History Museum), the Museum of National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (founded in 1945, now the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Museum of the Workers’ Movement and People’s Revolution of Vojvodina (founded in 1956, now the Museum of Vojvodina). In Belgrade, no independent museum of national liberation was originally established, but there was a department dedicated to it within the Military Museum, which became one of the most important museum institutions of National Liberation Struggle in the former country. Later, in 1959, the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities was founded in Belgrade (in 1996 it was merged with the Josip Broz Tito Memorial Centre to form the Museum of Yugoslav History, which has been called the Museum of Yugoslavia since 2016). For more information on the founding of the museums of National Liberation Struggle and the museums of the People’s Revolution and their transformation see: Rihter, 2015 (see no. 2); Dolores Ivanuša, “Djelatnost i zadaci Muzeja revolucije naroda Hrvatske u dokumentiranju povijesti klasnog radničkog pokreta, Saveza komunista Jugoslavije i socijalističke izgradnje”, *Informatica museologica*, vol. 17, no. 1–4, 1986, pp. 26–29; Mladenko Kumović, “Stalne postavke na temu NOR-a i revolucije u Vojvodini”, *Informatica museologica*, vol. 20, no. 3–4, 1989, pp. 19–22; Vanja Lozić, “(Re)Shaping History in Bosnian and Herzegovinian Museums”, *Culture Unbound*, vol. 7, 2015, pp. 307–329; Joel Palhegyi, “Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia”, *Martor*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2018, pp. 17–34; Milica Popović, “Exhibiting Yugoslavia”, *Družboslovne razprave*, vol. 32, no. 81, 2016, pp. 7–24; Milica Popović and Nataša Jagdhuhn, “From Revolution to Nation: Transformation of Historical Museums in (post-)Yugoslav Croatia and Serbia”, *Qualestoria*, no. 2, 2024, pp. 21–45; “Muzej revolucije”, Moni Finci, monifinci.com, 2023, URL: <https://monifinci.com/muzej-revolucije> (accessed 24.4.2025); Marija Vasiljević, Veselinka Kastratović Ristić and Momo Cvijović, “Predistorija: Osnova za razumevanje Muzeja Jugoslavije”, *Muzej Jugoslavije, muzej-jugoslavije.org*, URL: <https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/en/predistorija-osnova-za-razumevanje-muzeja-jugoslavije> (accessed 24.4.2025); Petra Stefičar, “Muzeji revolucije: Dizajn postava izložbi Đuke Kavurića u Hrvatskoj od 1964. do 1975.”, *Život umjetnosti*, vol. 112, no. 1, 2023, pp. 48–67.

In the early years following their foundation, the programmes of the Yugoslav Museums of National Liberation Struggle were based almost exclusively on material from the Second World War. In 1947, the Education Commissariat of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia also launched a nationwide campaign to encourage the collection of artefacts related to the National Liberation Struggle.²¹ From the mid-1950s, however, a gradual shift took place – one that reflected the broader political and ideological changes of the time. Over time, the memory of the Second World War faded, as did the collective enthusiasm for building a new state. It therefore became crucial to reaffirm or give new meaning to the existing political system, whose origins were based not only on the legacy of the Second World War but also on older social ideas and movements. Accordingly, the museums expanded their field of research – from the exclusive study of the period of the National Liberation Struggle to the study of the beginnings of the socialist revolution and narrating the formation of the new post-war system. During this period, most of the major museums were renamed Museums of the People's Revolution and their staff was increased. In this context, the term “revolution” referred to the long-standing endeavours for the rights and sovereignty of the working class, and the museums were one of the platforms for constructing and sustaining this narrative. Museums thus served not only to document, record and commemorate particular events but also to educate and mobilise the population to support the socialist system and thus spread socialist ideals and celebrate the achievements of the young socialist regime.²² A similar transformation took place at the museum in Ljubljana. In 1959, it became part of the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement (IZDG), which now also included the Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia.²³ Despite this institutional merger, the museum consistently sought to maintain its autonomy. In 1962, it regained its status as an independent institution and was renamed the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia (MLRS). It operated under this name until 1994, when it was renamed the National Museum of Contemporary History (later the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, MNSZS).

21 Andreja Rihter, “Cultural Heritage as Part of the Socialist Period in Slovenia”, in: Tanja Roženberger and Jože Hudales (eds.), *Collecting and Collections in Times of War or Political and Social Change*, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana, 2017, p. 157.

22 For this shift in the mission of the museums see references in no. 20.

23 The task of the IZDG was to “scientifically investigate the workers' movement, the activities of the Communist Party and the People's Revolution on the Slovenian territory, as well as socialist construction in the People's Republic of Slovenia”. Aleš Gabrič, “Ustanovitev Inštituta za zgodovino delavskega gibanja”, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino: Ferenčev zbornik*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1997, p. 55.

This chapter examines the changing role of the museum's art collection in the context of a historical museum, through an overview of its exhibition activities in four periods. These periods have been defined based on noticeable shifts in how the museum perceives and manages its art collection and how it presents it to the public. The years marking the boundaries of each period are approximate, and the division into four phases is solely intended to facilitate a clearer understanding of how the role and significance of artworks in the museum have evolved over time. It is worth noting that the museum was sometimes the main organiser of the exhibitions that are the subject of our interest, but in some cases, particularly in the case of exhibitions outside its own premises, it only contributed to the projects. In the latter case, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the museum only loaned works of art for exhibitions in other institutions or whether it also supported them with its own research or organisational work.

2. The First Period: 1944–1951

The first period covers the time from the beginnings of the art collection within the ZI in 1944 until 1951, when the MNO LRS, founded in 1948, was housed in the premises of the Cekin Mansion. Upon its foundation, the MNO LRS acquired the material from the ZI and continued to expand its collection in the following years by systematically collecting in the field. In 1951, it also acquired the important collection of Janko Vertin, the former head of the military department of the City Museum of Ljubljana.²⁴

From the way in which the art was collected during and after the war, and from the way in which the artworks were exhibited in the early years, it can be concluded that the art collection held primarily testimonial value for the ZI and later the MNO LRS. The focus was on collecting artworks as documentary evidence, rather than according to art-historical criteria. It should not be forgotten that both institutions also performed other tasks at the time. These included involvement in the systematic recording of the remnants of wartime events in the field and the establishment and management of sites of remembrance. As a result, the collection later came to include several design proposals for memorial monuments.²⁵ During this period, the ZI and later

24 During and after the Second World War, Janko Vertin (1897–1983) amassed a significant collection of war-related materials, including several works of art. Matija Žgajnar, “Muzejske zbirke”, in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, pp. 39, 41. Detailed information on how the art material entered the art collection from the time of the ZI until the end of the 1990s can be found in: Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), pp. 53–58.

25 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Cenjenemu odboru OF v Kočevju”, SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS. The report on the work of the MNO LRS for the first months of 1952 states that the museum contacted artists to donate casts of their sculptures

the MNO LRS also worked closely with artists, who not only contributed as authors of memorials, but also helped with the recording of material and the creation of topographies. Vladimir Lamut, for example, documented and sketched the Partisan outposts in the field for the ZI,²⁶ which in turn planned to acquire his artworks. This was not an isolated case, as the ZI was already buying works of art in this first period and also commissioning them from artists for its collection.²⁷

2.1 Exhibitions of the First Period

Today's MNSZS still considers its first exhibitions those organised by the ZI in the liberated territories starting in 1944.²⁸ The first was an exhibition of works by Božidar Jakac in Semič, followed by various exhibitions of graphic works, prints, photographs and works created in military workshops.²⁹ The ZI collected much of the material from these exhibitions, which formed the basis for the organisation of further exhibitions during and after the war.³⁰ After the war, it organised exhibitions at various locations.

Among the post-war exhibitions that were organised in collaboration with the ZI, the large exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War (Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni)*, which also appears in the sources under the name *Partisan Exhibition (Partizanska*

on the theme of the National Liberation Struggle to the museum collection. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Svetu za prosveto in kulturo LRS, 15.4.1952", SI AS 2200/7/17, ARS.

26 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Predlog potreb za oktober, Računovodstvo pri predsedstvu vlade LRS, 12.9.1947", SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.

27 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "4.8.1947", SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.

28 Ljudmila Osjak, "Razstave 1944–1998", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 71. The cited list of exhibitions served primarily as a starting point for further investigations and research. It contains inaccuracies with regard to dates and titles of the exhibitions and sometimes cooperations with institutions are mentioned only briefly or not at all (see, e.g. no. 31).

29 *Works of Art by Božidar Jakac (Likovna dela Božidarja Jakca*, 4 January 1944, Semič); *Partisan Printing, Prints and Linocuts (Partizanski tisk, grafična dela in linorezi*, May 1944, Metlika); *Partisan Printing in the Novo Mesto District (Partizanski tisk novomeškega okrožja*, August 1944, Dolenjske Toplice); *Photographs of the Battles of the XIV Division (Fotografije iz borb XIV. divizije*, September 1944, Gornji Grad); *Partisan Printing and Photographs in the Territory of the IX Corps (Partizanski tisk in fotografije s področja IX. korpusa*, November 1944, Ajdovščina); *Partisan Prints (Partizanska grafika*, 13 January 1945, Črnomelj); *Partisan Printing in Gorenjska (Gorenjski partizanski tisk*, February 1945, Cerklje); *Works from the Military Workshops of the VII Corps (Izdelki vojaških delavnic VII. korpusa*, 4 March 1945). Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), pp. 71–83. Judging by the photos, the exhibitions took place in various temporary spaces: Thematic box *Dogodki v MLRS*, Photo Library of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

30 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. See also: Milan Bevc, "O delu in razvoju Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS od ustanovitve do danes", in: Milan Bevc (ed.) *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 1, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, Ljubljana, 1957, p. 154.

razstava), deserves special mention.³¹ It was opened on the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front, on 26 April 1946, in three locations: the National Gallery, the Jakopič Pavilion and the not-yet-completed Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (figs. 77–85). The National Gallery presented "the evolution of the people's government from the creation of the liberated territories to the establishment of the government by the people on the entire territory of Slovenia".³² This part of the exhibition thus presented a variety of materials, from a presentation of the establishment of the Liberation Front and its founders (Edvard Kardelj, Boris Kidrič and Josip Vidmar) to the economic and cultural situation in the Julian March, the development of the liberation struggle, the crimes of the occupying forces in Carinthia and the history of the Slovenes in the Raba River Valley.³³ The Jakopič Pavilion presented 42 Slovenian artists with works that were created after the liberation and whose motifs are linked to "the Partisan struggle, the reconstruction and the new pulse of the Slovenian working people".³⁴ The exhibition included paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures.³⁵

Today's MNSZS has preserved enough photographic material from the part of the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana to reconstruct its appearance with considerable accuracy. Combined with numerous media reactions, it is also possible to get a fairly good grasp of the concept of this ambitious exposition.³⁶ It was thematically divided into different areas of Partisan life and struggle, e.g. Partisan printing works and workshops, medical supplies, Partisan equipment, Liberation Front radio, telegraph activities and weapons. The presentation also included several reconstructions of rooms, e.g. a reconstruction of the interior of a Partisan hospital. Above the numerous historical artefacts, which were placed close together on various stands at different heights, there were also long and wide friezes on the walls with scenes of battles, the transport of the wounded, displacement, shooting hostages, i.e. images that were increasingly regarded as typical Partisan motifs. We assume that these strips with

31 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. Osjak refers to the exhibition only as *Partisan Exhibition* and names only the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the Jakopič Pavilion as exhibition venues.

32 Anonymous, "Otvoritev razstave 'Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni'", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 100, 30.4.1946, p. 4.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Anonymous, "Razstava slovenske upodabljaljoče umetnosti", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 110, 14.5.1946, p. 6.

36 Anonymous, "Gospodarski del razstave 'Osvobodilne fronte' v domovinski vojni", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 108, 11.5.1946, p. 8; Anonymous, "Otvoritev razstave 'Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni'", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 100, 30.4.1946, p. 4; Anonymous, "Otvoritev razstave ...", (see no. 32), p. 4.

monumental scenes were painted exclusively for the exhibition. Placed next to them were also several other works of art and various inscriptions. Together with other exhibited objects and scenic materials – models, maps, vegetation intended to evoke a forest setting – the artworks in this part of the exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana created an ambitious environment, a well-thought-out mise-en-scène that – especially immediately after the war – probably made a strong impression on the visitor. We can assume that the staging approach of combining newly made objects, large paintings and artefacts recently used in the war was an attempt to make the visitor's experience as intense as possible and thus awaken their identification with the ideas of the National Liberation Struggle.

In view of all this, the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* was one of the most important projects of Slovenian cultural policy immediately after the war. Its scope and complexity required the participation of a large number of people, and the opening ceremony was attended by the political leadership of the time.

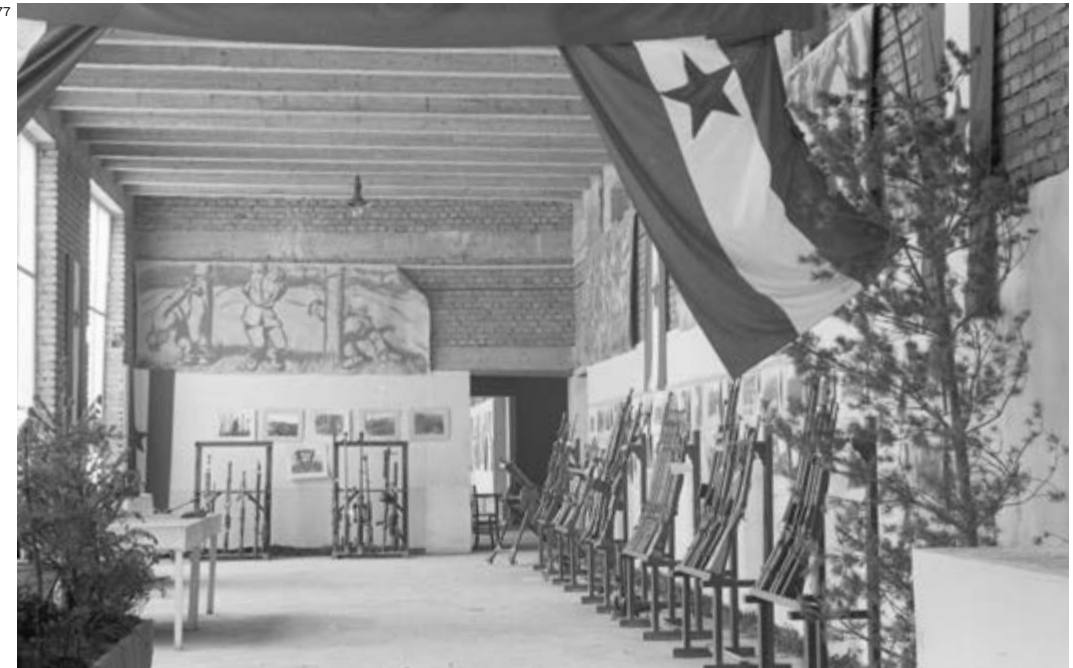
Another important exhibition co-organised by the ZI in the first period was the large exhibition *The National Liberation Struggle in Yugoslavia (La lutte des peuples yougoslaves pour la liberté)*, which was organised in Paris shortly before the Paris Peace Conference, i.e. immediately after the above-mentioned exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War*.³⁷ The Paris exhibition was organised on the initiative of the Yugoslav Embassy in France together with the Association France-Yougoslavie and with the active support and also under the official auspices of numerous key figures of the French post-war intellectual and political elite.³⁸

The ZI provided important and varied material from its collections for this exhibition. Despite the scarcity of information about it, we assume that it was very ambitious and well-thought-out in view of the negotiations at the time about the country's new post-war

37 The exhibition poster indicates the date, 19 June to 15 July, and the location of the exhibition: Les Ambassadeurs, 3, Avenue Gabriel, Place de la Concorde. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. We assume that Les Ambassadeurs refers to the concert hall where the famous cabaret Café des Ambassadeurs operated until 1929. Nathalie Coutelet, "L'expérience partagée au café-concert du XIXe siècle", *Études littéraires*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2023, pp. 97–110.

38 Katarina Todić, "A traditional friendship? France and Yugoslavia in the cold war world, 1944–1969" (doctoral dissertation), McMaster University, Hamilton, 2015, pp. 77–78. A publication with the same title as the exhibition had already been published in 1945: *La lutte des peuples yougoslaves pour la liberté*, France-Yougoslavie, Paris, 1945. As it was published by the same association, France-Yougoslavie, and René Cassin, who also spoke at the opening, contributed the foreword, we can assume that these were related projects. It is very likely that Yugoslavia prepared two similar exhibitions in Paris, one in 1945 and one in 1946. Anonymous, "Jugoslovenska izložba u Parizu", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, vol. 3, no. 167, 10.6.1945, p. 3.

77



78





77-85
 Installation views of a section of the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War*, held in the unfinished premises of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1946.



borders.³⁹ The ZI is also said to have sent 14 artworks to this exhibition, including *The Partisan*, a sculpture by Zdenko Kalin, which was one of the focal points of the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.⁴⁰

Even in the first period, both the ZI and the MNO LRS loaned materials to other exhibitions. For example, when the Inter-Allied Boundary Commission arrived in 1946 to determine the national affiliation of the population in the Littoral, the ZI made its material available for an exhibition of Partisan printing in Trieste.⁴¹

3. The Second Period: 1952–1958

In contrast to the first period, in which the newly founded MNO LRS operated very similarly to the ZI and focused primarily on building up the institution itself and the collection and documentation of material, the second period was characterised by a more structured organisation of the art collection and a clearer acquisition policy. In 1952, the museum also began to inventory the art collection.⁴² The number of works grew rapidly and the art collection made up a large part of the museum's total collection.⁴³ The museum also established itself as an important museum institution in the larger network of Yugoslav museums of the National Liberation Struggle, which also led to an increase in exhibitions in other locations and loans to other institutions.⁴⁴

The way the art collection was managed in the second period suggests that the museum began to assign a particular importance

to it. Unlike in the previous period, the artworks were increasingly treated separately from other museum artefacts and presented accordingly. The museum even considered constructing special buildings for the art collection and for permanent exhibitions of artworks. In 1952, a memorial with portrait sculptures, the Alley of National Heroes, was planned next to the museum.⁴⁵ The following year, perhaps modelled on the Zagreb Gipsoteka (today the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), there were plans to “set up a gypsotheque, i.e. plaster cast sculptures”.⁴⁶ Building an art pavilion, where both Partisan prints and documentary photography would be exhibited, was also under consideration. The main purpose of this pavilion was to popularise the art collection and bring together all the Partisan artworks “in one place”.⁴⁷ It was to be located on the eastern side of the museum complex and divided into exhibition and working spaces.

There would be two exhibition spaces. The first would be for occasional exhibitions with a capacity of up to 150 prints or up to five hundred photographs, the second would be a permanent exhibition space for a maximum of two hundred prints. The gallery would also have its own hall with a cloakroom, a doorman's room and a toilet. The working spaces would include a photo lab, a depot for prints, oil paintings and photographs as well as an office for the pavilion's curator. The film material would be stored in an air-conditioned ‘bunker’ in the basement.⁴⁸

A Heroes' Park was planned around the pavilion, likely a revival of the idea from 1952, when a similar commemorative installation was considered for the space in front of the museum. A concept drawing, by architect Maks Toboljevič, for the new pavilion was also made and published; however, the pavilion was never realised (fig. 86).⁴⁹

In 1956, however, the museum succeeded in reconstructing seven Partisan printshops at the foot of the wooded hill behind the

39 Matija Žgajnar explains that Yugoslavia, with Edvard Kardelj at the forefront, “fought for its new borders at the Paris Peace Conference, especially for the Littoral Region. To win over the French public, the Yugoslav army choir Srečko Kosovel also travelled there.” The same text states that “the French were even more impressed by the exhibition on the Yugoslav Partisan struggle”. For the exhibition, the ZI loaned battle flags from Slovenian battalions, brigades and divisions, radio receivers used in the underground battles, a Partisan cannon, a hand mimeograph, products from Partisan workshops, medical material and the like. Žgajnar, 1998 (see no. 24), pp. 39, 40.

40 The list of objects that the ZI allegedly sent to Paris includes works by Tone Kralj, Maksim Sedej, Božidar Jakac, Dore Klemenčič-Maj, Drago Vidmar, France Mihelič, Nikolaj Pirnat and the aforementioned Kalin. Kalin's *The Partisan* is identical to the statue on the Victory Monument in Murska Sobota, which was unveiled in 1945. At the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* in Ljubljana in 1946, either a different cast of the statue or its patinated maquette was exhibited. Our research did not reveal any information about whether *The Partisan* was actually sent to Paris and where it is located today. Folder Razstava Pariz 1946, “Predmeti izložbe N. O. V. v Parizu od 19.VI.1946 do 15.VII.1946”, Loan Archive of the MNSZS.

41 Žgajnar, 1998 (see no. 24), p. 40.

42 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 53.

43 In 1957, the museum housed seven thousand artefacts, including 1,500 works of art. Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 17.

44 Milan Bevc, “Delo Muzeja narodne osvoboditve v 1958. letu”, in: Milan Bevc (ed.), *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 2, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, Ljubljana, 1958, p. 259.

45 A competition was planned for this project, but no information could be found as to whether it actually took place. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Urad za urbanizem pri MLO, 436/3, 19.12.1952”, SI AS 2200/7/16, ARS.

46 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Obrazložitev k predlogu proračuna za leto 1953”, SI AS 2200/7/17, ARS. The proposal names Frančišek Smerdu, Božo Pengov, Tine Kos, Ivan Zajec and Boris Kalin as possible authors of the sculptures.

47 Bevc, 1957 (see no. 30), p. 158.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., pp. 158, 160. The planning of the art pavilion took place before the founding of today's International Centre of Graphic Arts. Although we have found no actual connection with the creation of this exhibition space, it is a similar idea to the exhibition space for graphic arts in Tivoli Park.

museum (fig. 87).⁵⁰ When they were opened, a temporary exhibition of Partisan illustrations was also opened in the museum building.⁵¹ Originally, life-size wooden buildings were erected and surrounded by wire, which stood on the border between Italy and Germany during the war.⁵² Judging by the photos, the interior of the buildings was later reconstructed or rebuilt. This permanent exhibition thus directly showed the harsh conditions in which these printshops operated and underscored their significance to the resistance movement.⁵³ It is worth noting that by displaying materials from the collections in these buildings, the museum also addressed the problem of the lack of exhibition space.⁵⁴ There were also plans to reconstruct concentration camp watchtowers, but the plans were never realised.⁵⁵

In the second period, it became increasingly important for the museum to visually emphasise the memory of the Second World War and thus also to commemorate important events or people through art. The museum recognised the communicative power of works of art and often commissioned works with motifs of war events when preparing individual exhibitions. One such example was the museum's first exhibition after moving to the Cekin Mansion in 1952 entitled *Ljubljana in the National Liberation Struggle (Ljubljana v narodno-osvobodilni borbi)*. Archival records mention several unnamed paintings commissioned specifically for this exhibition. Based on the photographs, the subject, the date of creation and the date of inclusion in the museum, we assume that one of the commissioned works was *The Shooting of Hostages, 13 October 1942*, painted by Tone Kralj.⁵⁶

50 The intention was "to bring to the small forest behind the Cekin Mansion the atmosphere that was so characteristic of the war period, be it in Lower Slovenia, Styria, the Littoral or Upper Carniola". Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn v Ljubljano", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 6, no. 132, 6.6.1956, p. 3.

51 Anonymous, "Spomenik partizanski tiskani besedi", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 17, no. 171, 22.7.1956, p. 2. The setting up of the printing works was reported in the newspapers of the time. A special edition of *Ljudska pravica* was also published on the occasion of the opening, which was dedicated to the topic of Partisan printing works and the Partisan press. See: *Ljudska pravica: Spominska izdaja ob otvoritvi rekonstrukcij partizanskih tiskarn pri Muzeju narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 22, no. a, 21.7.1956.

52 Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn ...", (see no. 50), p. 3.

53 The reconstructions included: workshop Cankar, the printing house Trilof, the power station (energy system), the engine and cliché workshop rooms of the Partisan printing works Triglav - 11a, the caseroom of the printing house Slovenia and the studio of the printing house Ladopunkt. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71.

54 Bevc, 1957 (see no. 30), p. 154.

55 Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn ...", (see no. 50), p. 3. There is no further information about this project, except for the indication that in 1956 there were plans to reconstruct them in the future.

56 *Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000*, "Svet za prosveto in kulturo LRS (računovodstvo)", 283/2, 1.9.1952", SI AS 2200/7/16, ARS.



Inž. arh. Maks Toboljevič: Idejna skica paviljona za partizansko grafiko in dokumentarno fotografijo NOB. Obrazložitev glej na str. 156.



86 Conceptual sketch for a pavilion dedicated to Partisan graphics and documentary photography next to the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia, designed by Maks Toboljevič (reproduced in *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, 1957).

87 Reconstructed Partisan printshops in the forest near the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia in 1956.

thus understandable, particularly as they were relatively inexpensive to produce and required only minimal organisational resources.

3.1 Exhibitions of the Second Period

In the second period, artworks were mainly presented in the context of historical exhibitions, the aforementioned exhibitions of Partisan prints and independent art exhibitions. Historical exhibitions included the art collection either as a separate part of the exhibition or integrated artworks into the broader exhibition installation. However, the holistic and theatrical approach of enriching the exhibition with monumental paintings and scenographic elements was no longer favoured in this period, as was the case, for example, with the large exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* in the first period.

Permanent exhibitions generally present the most important materials of a museum and reflect the fundamental orientation of an institution. The selection of displayed items thus provides an insight into the hierarchy of value attached to the museum's artefacts and shows what content the institution most identifies with and what narratives it aims to communicate to its visitors. In 1955, the renovation of the Cekin Mansion was completed and the museum prepared its first permanent exhibition on the military and political development of the National Liberation Struggle in Slovenia during the Second World War.⁶⁰ Seventy-two works of art were exhibited alongside other material (including weapons, flags, maps, medical material and photographs).⁶¹ In the foyer stood the statue of Tito by Antun Augustinčič, while the entrance hall on the first floor was dedicated to national heroes, with busts of Franc Rozman - Stane (1911–1944) and the recently deceased Boris Kidrič (1912–1953).⁶² The artworks were scattered throughout the building but were mainly concentrated in the central

60 As Kaja Širok notes, the exhibition was well attended, but it was also criticised for focusing too much on “individual heroic narratives, glorifying selected stories and ignoring the collective history of resistance and sacrifice.” Kaja Širok, “Reinterpreting and Transforming ‘Red’ Museums in Yugoslavia”, *Museum International*, vol. 70, no. 3–4, 2018, pp. 26–37, 31.

61 The museum acquired the statue of Josip Broz - Tito from Antun Augustinčič with the intention of placing it in a new permanent exhibition. Negotiations began in 1953. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Letter of Antun Augustinčič to the MNO LRS, 16.12.1953”, SI AS 2200/8/18, ARS. The statue is a version of the famous Tito statue, which was first unveiled in Kumrovec in 1948 and of which several casts were later erected in other Yugoslav cities. In 1958, the statue was moved from the permanent exhibition of the MNO LRS to the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre for the 7th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In 1961, it was moved to the platform in front of the museum, where it remained until the early 1990s, when it was deposited. Ivan Smiljanič, “Spomenik za življenje: Zgodovina koncepta na Slovenskem”, *Retrospektive*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2022, p. 39.

62 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, p. 3”, SI AS 2200/8/18, ARS.



89–90 Artworks on permanent display in the Knight's Hall and a permanent sculpture installation in the museum lobby in 1955. The lobby also hosted rotating temporary exhibitions.



Installation view of the exhibition *Partisan Illustrations* in the museum lobby in 1956.

frescoed hall on the first floor, the so-called Knight's Hall, where a large selection of "the best examples of Partisan art" was exhibited (figs. 89–90).⁶³ With its first permanent exhibition, the museum determined to a certain extent how it wanted to incorporate works of art into its historical exhibitions.⁶⁴ A trend towards inclusion of a significant number of artworks can be discerned, even if only a few of them occupied prominent positions in the exhibitions. They usually complemented other exhibits thematically or formed smaller, comprehensively highlighted sections, as in the 1958 exhibition *Courier Connections in the National Liberation Struggle: An Exhibition in Honour of the Day of the Republic (Kurirske zveze v NOB: Razstava v počastitev Dneva republike)*, in which works by Partisan artists were presented in a separate room.⁶⁵ Judging by the photos, there was a similar

63 Anonymous, "Pred otvoritvijo Muzeja narodne osvoboditve", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 5, no. 92, 19.4.1955, p. 4; Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 17.

64 A short guide to the exhibition with numerous photos of the installation has also been published. *Muzej narodne osvoboditve LR Slovenije*, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LR Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1956.

65 *Kurirske zveze v NOB: Razstava v počastitev Dneva republike* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1958; Bevc, 1958 (see no. 44), p. 259.

arrangement of artworks in the 1958 exhibition *Underground Printing in Occupied Ljubljana (Ilegalni tisk v okupirani Ljubljani)*.⁶⁶

During the second period, the museum also organised special art exhibitions, although these were relatively infrequent. Particularly noteworthy is the aforementioned *Partisan Illustrations* exhibition from 1956, in which the artworks – according to exhibition photographs – were grouped thematically into, for example, illustrations and drawings from the occupying forces' concentration camps, poster illustrations and depictions of hostages (fig. 91).⁶⁷ In the same year, the museum prepared another important specialised art exhibition in Mala Galerija, dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the death of the artist and Partisan Vito Globočnik, whose works were held in large numbers in the museum's collection.⁶⁸

4. The Third Period: 1959–1971

In the late 1950s, the generation for whom the war was only part of their childhood memories were already entering social and political life. They focused on the future and became less and less attached to the heroic narrative of the struggle and victory of the National Liberation Struggle. The state therefore tried to keep the memory alive by various means, to ground it meaningfully in related pre-war events and, at the same time, to convey it to the younger generations in a modern way. In conjunction with the theoretical justification of the socialist self-management system, the museum focused on the narrative of the socialist revolution, presenting it as a still ongoing struggle for a better and fairer world. In line with this ideological shift, the Yugoslav Museums of National Liberation Struggle, as already noted, were gradually renamed Museums of the People's Revolution, thus changing their mission. Subsequently, the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia focused on themes related to the pre-war workers' movement, the National Liberation Struggle or People's Revolution during the war and post-war socialist construction. This thematic and chronological structuring of the museum's contents remained in place until the late 1980s.⁶⁹

The change in the museum's mission also affected its art collection. In practice, this meant that the museum began to collect art from both before and after the Second World War. At the same time, it continued to collect art from the National Liberation Struggle, and studied it in relation to the other two periods. In this context, the

66 *Ilegalni tisk v okupirani Ljubljani: Razstava v počastitev VII. kongresa ZKJ in partizanskega pohoda ob žici* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1958; Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

67 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72; Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

68 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72.

69 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 54.

post-war art that the museum promoted and collected was seen as a kind of logical extension of the art of the National Liberation Struggle.

The number of works of art in the collection grew rapidly during this period. Most of the works were donated to the museum mainly due to the “great desire and willingness of the donors to keep the valuable works safely in an institution that would study them and also make them accessible to the public”.⁷⁰ After 1960, the museum obtained an extensive collection of artefacts, including works of art, through organised acquisitions from various socio-political organisations.⁷¹ It also began acquiring works more systematically through purchases, buying both older and contemporary artistic production.⁷² This was particularly intensified when the museum established the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art (also known as the Commission for the Valuation of Works of Art), which will be discussed in more detail below.

In the third period, the museum established itself in the Slovenian context as an institution that could not be overlooked in the preparation of exhibitions on the art of the National Liberation Struggle. We infer this from the increased number of art exhibitions and, above all, from the numerous collaborations with other institutions in this field. During this period, the museum also showed a clear intent to professionalise the management of the art collection by hiring curators who were trained art historians, which was first done in 1958.⁷³

In the third period, the art collection was cared for by several people, both art historians and other experts. Between 1959 and 1966,

70 Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 3.

71 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 54. An example of such an acquisition are the works of France Mihelič, who donated all his works created during the National Liberation Struggle to the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, which then gave them to the MNO LRS. Vera Visočnik, “O zbirki risb in grafik v Muzeju narodne osvoboditve”, *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1960, p. 353.

72 The report of the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art shows that in 1959 the museum owned over three thousand works by a total of 50 authors. Most of the works in the collection were by Ive Šubic, but Vito Globočnik, Nikolaj Pirnat, Vladimir Lamut, Nande Vidmar, Drago Vidmar, Lojze Lavrič and Alenka Gerlovič were also represented with a large number of works. The report states that the acquisition of works by Božidar Jakac, who is said to have had around 1,200 works, and works by Dore Klemenčič-Maj was also planned. It also states that France Mihelič handed over around seven hundred works to Lojze Gostiša, who was preparing a study of his art to be included in the collection after the exhibition. The report shows that almost all of the works still relate to the war period in terms of content, with only a few dating from the pre-war period and a somewhat larger number from the post-war period. The works from the pre-war period were only to be documented, not acquired. In the following years, however, we can trace a whole series of acquisitions of works of art from the pre-war period, including purchases. Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 3; Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Zapisnik o seji sestanka likovnega referata, 16.11.1959”, SI AS 2200/13/31, ARS.

73 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), pp. 54, 58.

Vera Visočnik was responsible for the art collection, while the art exhibitions were also prepared by the curator Jože Kori.⁷⁴ Alongside them, it is worth highlighting Lojze Gostiša (1923–2019), who was invited to the museum not only to oversee the art collection but also to reconceptualise the role of the museum.⁷⁵ He clearly had strong political backing and his work focused primarily on the effective implementation of current socialist doctrine. Gostiša was a unique combination of a connoisseur of both contemporary and older art, a skilful exhibition organiser and a mediator between official and unwritten political demands and important institutional and other artistic and cultural projects. In practice, his role encompassed that of both cultural organiser and content developer, ensuring that activities aligned with the leading ideological narrative.⁷⁶ After finishing his work at the museum in Ljubljana, he continued with similarly intensive and elusive work at the Gorenjska Museum in Kranj.⁷⁷

Gostiša's position at the museum in Ljubljana is difficult to explain, as he was formally only an external collaborator, while the

74 The curators mentioned above were certainly not the only ones responsible for the artworks. The lack of data on all the people who managed the art collection was a considerable disadvantage for our research. Nataša Jenko, “Seznam redno zaposlenih 1948–1998”, in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik, Muzej novejšje zgodovine*, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 106.

75 Compare: entry Kranj in *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979*, razstavljanjevsloveniji.si, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 21.11.2025).

76 As an art historian, Gostiša researched and promoted various art periods and genres of fine art. He worked into old age. On the occasion of awarding him the Izidor Cankar Award in 2009, the Slovene Art History Society wrote that Gostiša “combined an incredible talent for organisation and a deep insight into the works of important Slovenian artists and other personalities. He presented them to the public in publications, which he also organised, secured funding for, designed and often provided with professional texts. He was the initiator, conceptual leader, organiser and implementer of numerous museum and gallery projects, book editions, mediations in acquisitions, visual designs, memorials etc.” Gostiša has written about Slovenian woodcuts from the 16th century to the present, post-war art (France Mihelič, Albin Rogelj, etc.) and cultural and historical monuments. He also organised exhibitions on socially critical art and the art of the National Liberation Struggle. He researched the legacy of Jože Plečnik and prepared an exhibition about him at the National Gallery in Ljubljana in 1968 and took part in the Plečnik exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1986. He also did important work in researching the work of Janez Vajkard Valvasor and was involved in the publication of a facsimile print of 17 volumes of Valvasor's collection of prints and drawings in 2009 as part of the Janez Vajkard Valvasor Foundation at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He was closely associated with Izidor Cankar and later took care of his estate. Anonymous, “Obrazložilo ob podelitvi nagrade Izidorja Cankarja dr. Lojzetu Gostiši”, *Slovensko umetnostnozgodovinsko društvo*, suzd.si, URL: http://www.suzd.si/images/stories/Nagrade/2009_Gostisa.pdf (accessed 20.1.2025); Milček Komelj, *Enigma Lojze Gostiša: Spomini na srečanja*, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana, 2021.

77 See entry Kranj in *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979* (see no. 75).

statements of former curators and archival documents indicate that in practice he was in fact the one who determined the acquisition and exhibition policies of the museum's art collection at the time.⁷⁸ Archival records, for example, already list him in 1958 as the "chief coordinator of the art collection";⁷⁹ although that same year the museum hired a curator who was an art historian. It should be noted that Gostiša's activities were not limited to the art collection, but that he was involved in most of the museum's exhibition projects.

We assume that it was also thanks to Gostiša's efforts that the museum acquired such a large number of artworks and attracted several inter-institutional exhibition projects during this period. It is likely that he was also involved in the expansion of the museum staff in 1959 by setting up the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art. Several times a year, this commission proposed which works of art should be purchased, evaluated them and also justified their significance for the art collection. Originally, the commission consisted of the sculptor Boris Kalin, the painter Fran Zupan, the art historians Špelca Čopič and Vera Visočnik, the museum director Milan Bevc and Gostiša himself. The commission invited artists to donate works to the museum or offer them for purchase. According to the 1959 annual report, the works selected for purchase were primarily those by artists who, as participants in the National Liberation Struggle, had succeeded in "artistically preserving from oblivion portraits of leaders, scenes of battles and other important events, Partisan hospitals and printing workshops, scenes from Partisan life etc., as well as life in the occupying forces' concentration camps and in the underground, using the most suitable form of artistic expression – primarily drawing and printmaking".⁸⁰ The report also states that "the indispensable work of artists in the field of propaganda should not be overlooked: illustrations for Partisan prints, linocut folders (Pirnat, Mihelič, Klemenčič, Globočnik), leaflets against the occupiers and local traitors (especially Pirnat and Mihelič), posters, designs for Partisan money, people's loan bonds, covers of brochures etc."⁸¹ With a clear collection policy and regular purchases of works, the museum was evidently also seeking to encourage artists to take up or remain committed to the motifs of the National Liberation Struggle and the Revolution.

78 Jenko, 1998 (see no. 74), pp. 105–106; *Vera Visočnik*, informal conversation, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, June 2022; *Iztok Durjava*, informal conversation, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, July 2023.

79 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Zapisnik o seji sestanka likovnega referata, 16.11.1959", SI AS 2200/13/3, ARS.

80 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Poročilo o delu v letu 1959 v Muzeju NO", p. 5, SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

81 Ibid.

4.1 The Exhibitions of the Third Period

In the third period, certain characteristics of the previous period's exhibitions continued, but the museum notably increased the number of independent fine art exhibitions and exhibitions of Partisan prints, while also paying greater attention to the integration of artworks into various historical exhibitions. During this period, the MLRS also loaned works to other institutions, both within Yugoslavia and abroad, which indicates its active role in the institutional museum network of the time.

At this time, the construction of additional pavilions next to the museum was once again being considered. While the Cekin Mansion itself would contain material from the National Liberation Struggle, one pavilion was to house pre-war material and a second would display post-war material. There were also plans to erect monuments to the Spanish Civil War fighters and the fighters for National Liberation Struggle in the museum park.⁸² Sources also indicate that the construction of a gallery for prints from the National Liberation Struggle was also planned.⁸³ The pavilions, the additional building and the monuments were never erected. Nevertheless, the museum prepared two new permanent exhibitions, which did not differ significantly in their approach to the art collection from the museum's first permanent exhibition in 1955. The second permanent exhibition was opened in 1961 and the third in 1965, which was slightly rearranged in 1971.⁸⁴ According to Iztok Durjava, the 1971 permanent exhibition displayed only a "fragment" of the art collection, but at the same time vividly demonstrated "the great expressive power and humanistic message of the rich artistic heritage".⁸⁵ The exhibition featured more than 60 works of art, including designs and copies of monuments to the National Liberation Struggle and the Revolution. The artworks were placed in all the exhibition rooms and in the museum foyer, addressing the visitors throughout the exhibition.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the majority of them were once again concentrated in the Knight's Hall and – judging by surviving photographs – they were not a thematic focal point during this period either.⁸⁷

In the third period, the standards of exhibition preparation changed considerably. Historical exhibitions often had a designated

82 T. P., "Proširenje Muzeja narodnog oslobođenja u Ljubljani", *Vjesnik Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Hrvatske*, vol. 20, no. 4454, 7.4.1959, p. 5.

83 L. J., "Zgrada za galeriju grafike", *Vjesnik Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Hrvatske*, vol. 20, no. 4412, 17.2.1959, p. 4.

84 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Odgovori na pitanja o Muzeju revolucije v Ljubljani, p. 3", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

85 Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 18.

86 Ibid., p. 24.

87 Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

curator who was exclusively responsible for the selection of artworks.⁸⁸ An example of this is the overview historical exhibition *Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Occupying Forces (Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča)* from 1960, curated by Vera Visočnik.⁸⁹ Her research for this exhibition later served as the basis for a published study on art produced in the concentration camps.⁹⁰

In addition to the numerous exhibitions of Partisan prints, which were typical of the two previous periods and still occupied a prominent place in promoting the content of the National Liberation Struggle, the museum also organised various thematic exhibitions of the art collection. These were often accompanied by short catalogues or brochures. In the third period, the number of exhibitions focusing exclusively on art increased significantly, even though the insistence on popularising the content of the National Liberation Struggle persisted. This was in line with simultaneous exhibitions of the art of the National Liberation Struggle in other venues in Ljubljana, such as the gallery of the Cultural Centre of the Yugoslav People's Army,⁹¹ the City Art Gallery or the Mala Galerija. The MLRS also cooperated with other exhibition venues, e.g. with the Mala Galerija for an exhibition of Partisan prints in 1961⁹² and with the City Art Gallery for the exhibition *Art on the Theme of the National Liberation Struggle (1941–1963) (Likovna umetnost z NOB tematiko (1941–1963))*.⁹³ During this period, the MLRS also strengthened its connections with artists and the contemporary art scene through cooperation with the Slovenian Fine Artists'

88 Among the exhibitions, it is worth mentioning the *Women in the National Liberation Struggle* exhibition from 1958, the artistic part of which was prepared by Milan Brezovar. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Pritožba Milana Brezovarja, 27.5.1959", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

89 *Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1960. The exhibition featured 116 works by professional and self-taught artists. Miroslav Luštek, "Občasna razstava 'Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča' v Muzeju narodne osvoboditve", *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1960, p. 359.

90 Vera Visočnik, informal conversation, (see no. 78); *Revolucija in umetnost: risbe iz zaporov in taborišč*, Aleksander Bassin, Vladimir Lakovič and Vera Visočnik (eds.), Soča, Nova Gorica, 1969. After leaving the museum in 1966, Vera Visočnik worked closely with the magazine *Borec*, which frequently published articles on artworks and artists related to the museum's collection.

91 For exhibitions in the Yugoslav People's Army cultural centres see also article by Ivan Smiljanič, *Revolution in Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People's Army* in this book, pp. 293–323.

92 Anonymous, "Razstava partizanske grafike", *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 343, 16.12.1961, p. 1.

93 Anonymous, "22 let odzivov na veliko temo", *Delo*, vol. 5, no. 301, 3.11.1963, p. 5; "Razstave 1962–2012", in: Mateja Podlesnik (ed.), *Razstava: 50 let Mestne galerije v Ljubljani*, Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane, Ljubljana, 2013, p. 83; Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72. Osjak mentions this exhibition under the title *Slovenian Painting on the Theme of the National Liberation Struggle (Slovensko slikarstvo na temo narodnoosvobodilnega boja)*.



Part of the *National Liberation Struggle Sculpture Exhibition* in the garden of Križanke in Ljubljana in July 1965.

Society (DSLJU). One such collaboration was the large *National Liberation Struggle Sculpture Exhibition (Razstava plastik NOB* also known as *Razstava plastik s tematiko narodnoosvobodilnega boja*), held in Križanke as part of the *13th Summer Cultural Events* festival in Ljubljana and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the liberation (fig. 92).⁹⁴

In addition to the overview exhibitions of fine arts, the museum also staged solo exhibitions of individual artists during this period.⁹⁵ Some of them were also presented at other exhibition venues and occasionally toured other Yugoslav cities.⁹⁶

In the 1960s, the MLRS strengthened its ties with other similar Yugoslav and foreign museums and art institutions. As already mentioned, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the MLRS only loaned works of art for exhibitions in other institutions, or whether it also contributed research or organisational input, or even acted as a

94 *Razstava plastik NOB* (leaflet), XIII. Poletne kulturne prireditve, Ljubljana, 1965.

95 For example: *Stane Kumar: Železničarski motivi* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1970; *Janez Boljka: Plastika, grafika* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1970; *Ivan Seljak-Čopič: Ilustracije* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1972.

96 According to Osjak, Stane Kumar's exhibition (see no. 95) travelled to Pančevo and Niš. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 73.

co-organiser. In order to better understand this significant development and its characteristics, we will proceed by presenting a selection of the most prominent projects.

In 1961, the Museum of the People's Revolution of Croatia organised the exhibition *Posters of the Yugoslav Revolutionary Workers' Movement (Izložba plakata Jugoslavenskog revolucionarnog radničkog pokreta)*, for which the museum in Ljubljana loaned works by Nikolaj Pirnat, Ive Šubic, Alenka Gerlovič, Vito Globočnik and others.⁹⁷ In 1963, part of the collection of Partisan prints was shown in the exhibition *Drawings and Prints from the National Liberation War (Crteži i grafike iz narodnooslobodilačkog rata)* at the Military Museum in Belgrade.⁹⁸ In 1965, the museum took part in the exhibition *Yugoslav Fine Arts in the National Liberation War 1941–1945 (Jugoslovenska likovna umetnost u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945)*, organised by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and shown at home and abroad.⁹⁹ In the same year, the museum sent several works by Nikolaj Pirnat to the major Italian exhibition of politically engaged art *Art and Resistance in Europe (Arte e Resistenza in Europa)*.¹⁰⁰ In 1967, the museum loaned several works by artists such as Ante Trstenjak, Nikolaj Pirnat, Stane Kumar, Maksim Sedej and Nande and Drago Vidmar for the exhibition *For Bread and Freedom: Engaged Art in the Yugoslav Regions until 1941 (Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine)* in Osijek. Organised to mark the 100th anniversary of the organised workers' movement in Osijek, it offered a comprehensive professional survey of pre-war Yugoslav socially critical art.¹⁰¹ In 1969, the museum also contributed several works for the exhibition *1929–1950: Surrealism, Post-Surrealism, Social Art, Art of the National*

97 *Izložba plakata jugoslavenskog revolucionarnog radničkog pokreta* (exhibition catalogue), Smiljka Mateljan (ed.), Muzej revolucije naroda Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1961.

98 *Crteži i grafike iz narodnooslobodilačkog rata* (exhibition catalogue), Vojni muzej Beograd, Beogradski grafički zavod, Belgrade, 1963.

99 Several catalogues of this exhibition in various languages are preserved in the MNSZS library, but the institutions in which it was shown are not listed: *Jugoslavskoe izobrazitel'noe tvorchestvo v natsional'no-osvoboditel'noy voyne 1941–1945 g.* (exhibition catalogue), S. Zemcov (ed.), Komissiya po kulturnoi svyazi s inostranstvom SFR Jugoslavii, Belgrade, 1965; *Jugoslavskoe izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo v gody natsional'no-osvoboditel'noy voiny 1941–1945 g.: Katalog grafika* (exhibition catalogue), S. Zemcov (ed.), Sovetsky khudozhnik, Moscow, 1965; *Jugoslavsko izobrazitelno izkustvo prez godinite na NOB, 1941–1945* (exhibition catalogue), Ilija Pavlov (ed.), Bolgarski khudozhnik, Sofia, 1966.

100 *Arte e Resistenza in Europa* (exhibition catalogue), Museo civico Bologna, Galleria civica d'arte moderna Torino, Arti grafiche Tamari, Bologna, 1965.

101 *Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine* (exhibition catalogue), Galerija likovnih umjetnosti Osijek, Osijek, 1967; Tomislav Hruškovec, "Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine", *Telegram*, vol. 8, no. 392, 3.11.1967, pp. 6, 7.

Liberation War, Socialist Realism (1929–1950: Nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam), which was one of the most prestigious overviews of Yugoslav art of the 20th century prepared by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade.¹⁰²

With regard to the MLRS's cooperation with other institutions, it should be mentioned that it also acted in an advisory capacity in the establishment of the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities in Belgrade.¹⁰³ For this purpose, the Ljubljana museum prepared recommendations and descriptions of the functioning of its departments.¹⁰⁴ The aim of this cooperation was also to ensure that "the history of the Slovenian workers movement, including the national liberation struggle, is accurately presented within the framework of this museum [in Belgrade]".¹⁰⁵

5. The Fourth Period: 1972–1979

We have placed the beginning of the fourth period in 1972, when a new generation of curators took over the management of the MLRS's art collection. They took an even more professional and thorough approach to the collection and, in contrast to the previous periods, the museum was also somewhat relieved of the task of constantly popularising the art of the National Liberation Struggle and allowed itself more room – or even freedom – to address a wider range of artistic phenomena. In the third period, the museum's acquisition policy was expanded to embrace a wider historical horizon; in the fourth, attention turned to studying artistic activity itself across a longer span of time. The collection was overseen by several curators-art historians, including Jure Mikuž, who joined the museum in 1972. He was succeeded in 1974 by Iztok Durjava, who on the one hand continued the tradition of exhibiting artworks from the National Liberation Struggle, and on the other expanded the exhibiting of other artistic content. He focused in particular on pre-war socially critical art and also organised exhibitions of post-war works of Socialist Realism.¹⁰⁶

102 *1929–1950: Nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam* (exhibition catalogue), Miodrag B. Protić et al. (eds.), Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1969.

103 *Tekstovi, nacrti, fotografije projekta Muzeja revolucije naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije* (exhibition catalogue), Danica Abramović (ed.), Muzej revolucije naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije, Belgrade, n. d.

104 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Odgovori na pitanja o Muzeju revolucije v Ljubljani, p. 5", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

105 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Upravniku muzeja in načelnikom zgodovinskega oddelka, arhiva in knjižnice, 8.9.1961, p. 1", SI AS 2200/15/36, ARS.

106 Iztok Durjava later also worked outside the museum as an author and contributed texts to exhibition catalogues of other institutions, including *Ekspressionizem in nova*

Although the museum became somewhat less prominent in the public consciousness in the 1970s due to declining interest and even the public's negative attitude towards the general content, it was still able to convey a deep understanding of the collection and also to update it during this period.

5.1 Exhibitions of the Fourth Period

Art exhibitions in the fourth period largely followed the practice of the preceding, third period, when exhibition activity was particularly intense. Although the number of exhibitions did not change significantly, some of them deepened both the art-historical interpretation of the phenomena under consideration and their broader contextualisation.¹⁰⁷

The museum still displayed the permanent exhibition from the previous period, which Jure Mikuž supplemented in 1973 with major artworks on the theme of the Second World War from its collection. The works of 12 painters and 3 sculptors found a place in "one of the side rooms", where "a selection of the best works kept by the museum in its depots" was presented.¹⁰⁸

In the fourth period, too, the exhibitions frequently travelled to other cities in Yugoslavia and abroad, with the exhibitions of Partisan prints still being the most frequently sent on tour. An example of this was the large exhibition *Partisan Prints and Drawings (Partizanska grafika in risba)* from 1975,¹⁰⁹ curated by Jure Mikuž and Iztok Durjava, which travelled to East Berlin, Opicina near Trieste, Bucharest, Amsterdam, Beilen, Rotterdam, Amersfoort, Utrecht, Groningen, Almelo, Orvelte, Herning, Copenhagen, Kragujevac and Minsk after its presentation at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.¹¹⁰

stvarnost na Slovenskem 1920–1930 (exhibition catalogue), Milček Komelj and Igor Kranjc (eds.), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1986. During a period not covered in this article, he also took over the management of the museum in 1995. The art historian Marjeta Mikuž also played an important role in the exhibitions of the art collection. She had been the museum's curator since 1979 and took over as director in 2000.

107 Within the permanent exhibition, however, the focus remained on the art of the National Liberation Struggle, as can be seen from the exhibition guide published by the museum in 1980. The largest part of the exhibition was dedicated to the historical description of events that took place on the Slovenian territory since the beginnings of the workers' movement. The greatest emphasis was on the period of the Second World War, where the fine arts were also briefly mentioned. Matija Žgajnar, *Vodnik po Muzeju ljudske revolucije Slovenije*, Ljubljana, 1980.

108 Janez Mesesnel, "Podoba velikega časa", *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 137, 22.5.1973, p. 8.

109 *Partizanska grafika in risba* (exhibition catalogue), Iztok Durjava and Jure Mikuž (eds.), Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 1975.

110 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 74; *Iztok Durjava*, informal conversation (see no. 78). The exhibition was on display at the Museum of Modern Art for less than three weeks and was then moved to the City Art Gallery due to the organisation of the Biennale of Graphic Arts. As reported in the press at the time, "with additional presentations of all the quality that this work [Slovenian Partisan prints] offers us, the exhibition

In the fourth period, the museum continued its cooperation or even partnership with other Yugoslav or foreign institutions in the organisation of exhibitions. Some of these exhibitions were also fine arts exhibitions, such as the exhibition *Yugoslav Art in the National Liberation Struggle 1941–1945 (Jugoslovenska umetnost u narodno-oslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945)*, which was presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade in 1975.¹¹¹ In 1977, the museum cooperated with the Museum of the People's Revolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo to prepare an exhibition entitled *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Painters-Partisans (Bosansko hercegovski slikarji partizani)*.¹¹² An even larger exhibition followed a year later, when the museum, in cooperation with the Historical Museum of National Liberation in Skopje, the Belgrade Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities and the Association of Fighters of the National Liberation Struggle of Yugoslavia, prepared a travelling exhibition entitled *Antifascist Struggle of Yugoslavs in Former Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Second World War in Works by Fine Artists (Protifašistični boj Jugoslovanov v bivših zaporih in koncentracijskih taboriščih med drugo svetovno vojno v delih likovnih umetnikov)*, which was shown at the City Art Gallery in Ljubljana.¹¹³

The fourth period also saw the organisation of two overview exhibitions dedicated to fine arts and cultural history. In 1974, Jure Mikuž prepared the exhibition *Culture in the National Liberation War (Kultura v narodnoosvobodilnem boju)*, which laid the groundwork for a broader research concept into cultural production during the war.¹¹⁴ In 1976, Durjava prepared the exhibition *Socially Critical Art*,

pursues a further purpose: to promote the recently renewed initiative for a comprehensive, study-based treatment and exhibition of the entire interwar work of Slovenian artists and autodidacts, which would present the first real overview of this material at the broadest level." J.[anez] M.[esesnel], "Podobe nastale v partizanih", *Delo*, vol. 17, no. 97, 25.4.1975, p. 8.

111 *Jugoslovenska umetnost u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej savremene umetnosti Beograd, Belgrade, 1975.

112 *Bosansko hercegovski slikarji partizani* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1977; Janez Mesesnel, "Brez dvoumljenja", *Delo*, vol. 20, no. 81, 7.4.1977, p. 7; *Iztok Durjava*, e-mail communication, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, 10.6.2025.

113 *Antifašističkata borba na Jugoslovenite vo bivšite zatvori i konclogori za vreme na II svetska vojna vo delata na likovnite umetnici* (exhibition catalogue), Sojuz na združenijata na borbite od NOB na SRM, Skopje, 1977; "Razstave 1962–2012", (see no. 93), p. 95. From 1977 onwards, the exhibition travelled from Skopje to Pristina, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Titograd. The author of the exhibition layout in Ljubljana was Iztok Durjava, who not only conceived the exhibition but also made a selection of works by Slovenian artists and participated as a member of the travelling exhibition's expert committee. *Iztok Durjava*, e-mail communication, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, 10.6.2025.

114 The exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Cultural Community of Slovenia. *Kultura v narodnoosvobodilnem boju: Ob tridesetletnici I. kongresa kulturnih*

Prints and Drawings (Socialnokritična umetnost, grafika in risba), in which most of the works of socially critical art owned by the museum were displayed.¹¹⁵ This focus was maintained also in the following years. It is noticeable, however, that during this period the museum concentrated more on the ambitious exploration of certain complex artistic themes than on the preparation of art exhibitions, which served as the basis for important exhibition projects realised only after the end of the 1970s. Since this monograph ends in 1979 these later projects are mentioned here only in passing. In the 1980s, the museum organised the exhibitions *Underground Ljubljana: Art Echoes (Ljubljana v ilegali: Likovni odmevi, 1981)* and *Partisan Posters 1941–1948 (Partizanski plakat 1941–1948, 1982)*¹¹⁶ at the City Art Gallery and the exhibition *Socialist Realism in Slovenian Painting (Socialistični realizem v slovenskem slikarstvu, 1986)* at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Looking back at the exhibition activities of the MLRS, we can see that the role and significance of the art collection within the museum changed significantly over the years. While in the early days the MNO LRS and its art collection acted primarily as a guardian of the shared visual memory of the recent wartime past, in later periods, however, the significance and scope of the museum's art holdings expanded considerably. The collection grew steadily, and with the systematisation of the museum's operations it became better organised and professionally managed. In the permanent and historical exhibitions, the works of art generally played a subordinate role to the main messages of the exhibition, i.e. the interpretation of the history of the Second World War and the justification or consolidation of the post-war socialist society. However, this was often not the case with art exhibitions, or rather, it was true to a lesser extent, as we can observe significant changes in the treatment of artworks in the different periods. Among other things, we notice a constant endeavour to apply artistic criteria and to maintain the best possible contact with the contemporary art scene, artists and professional associations.

delavcev v partizanih in ustanovitve Slovenskega umetniškega kluba: Semič 1944–1974 (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1974.

115 *Socialnokritična umetnost: Grafika in risba* (exhibition catalogue), Iztok Durjava (ed.), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1976.

116 Iztok Durjava, "Predgovor", in: Božena Plevnik (ed.), *Ljubljana v ilegali – likovni odmevi* (exhibition catalogue), Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1981; *Partizanski plakat: 1941–1948* (exhibition catalogue), Božena Plevnik (ed.), Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1982.

117 *Socialistični realizem v slovenskem slikarstvu* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1986.

Ivan Smiljanić

Revolution Within Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People's Army



Historical and Conceptual Starting Points

One of the many areas influenced by the creation and exhibition of visual arts in Yugoslavia was the military. Given the fact that art and the military are only remotely connected today, this connection seems unusual at first glance, but it was an important segment of the activities of the Yugoslav People's Army, which saw it as an organic continuation of the Partisan movement during the Second World War. Culture played an important role in the Partisan struggle – often, both were regarded as equally important. For the Partisans, the struggle not only meant an armed confrontation with the occupiers with the aim of liberation but also characterised their efforts to bring about a change in man as such. Man, who in monarchical, feudal and capitalist systems is limited by his instincts and the social position into which he is born, was to rise intellectually and socially through a revolutionary rebirth brought about by the Partisan movement and its culture, and thus reach a higher, nobler level of humanity.¹ The Partisan movement was to help the individual to realise that he is a free creator who shapes himself and thus his human world and ultimately history.²

After the war, the ideas of the Partisan movement lived on in the ranks of the Yugoslav Army, since 1951 the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), but had to be rethought in order to fit peacetime conditions and the ideological context of socialist self-management. To ensure that culture and art were no longer an elitist good of the upper, wealthier classes, the Yugoslav authorities focused on the so-called socialisation of culture. They encouraged the unleashing of the creative potential of the broad masses, especially the working people,³ and thus promoted participation in amateur art, which was seen as a collective expression of the revolutionary thoughts and beliefs of all citizens.⁴ Amateur art became an important concept within Yugoslav art. Anyone could participate in art, including a member of the military.

Amateur creativity was given an important role within the cultural activities – and thus artistic creation – of the YPA. However, it was not the only form of creativity in the military. It intertwined with the work of students or graduates of art academies who had been conscripted, as well as with exhibitions of established (civilian) artists

1 Đorđe Radišić, "Narodnooslobodilačka borba i socijalistička revolucija kao vid ostvarenja čovekovog prava na kulturu", in: Mihailo Apostolski (ed.), *Kultura i nauka u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu i revoluciji: Radovi sa naučnog skupa*, Savet akademija nauka i umetnosti SFRJ, Skopje, 1984, pp. 454–457.

2 Ibid., pp. 465–466.

3 The system of socialist self-management defined creativity very broadly and even included the process of mass production, arguing that workers also create new objects in the production process. This view was often regarded as an axiom in theoretical discussions and was not specifically addressed by the authors. Compare e.g. Beno Zupančič, *Delavci in kultura*, Komunist, Ljubljana, 1975.

4 Vojislav Vukićević, *Priručnik za kulturne delatnosti u JNA*, Vojnoizdavački zavod, Belgrade, 1982, p. 65.

organised by the army. As in the days of the National Liberation Struggle, there was a great diversity of artistic registers in the army, but this heterogeneity was hardly recognised or reflected. Established art criticism, based on the value system of high art, often viewed art-work produced in the military as monolithic and judged it by standards that most works did not reach or aspire to.

The conceptual underpinning of culture in the YPA was defined by the cultural policy of the state. The intention of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) was to strengthen revolutionary and class consciousness in the military as well as transnational patriotism by emphasising the unity of Yugoslav nations and nationalities through their diversity and the idea of their interpenetration.⁵ As in the Partisan movement, culture was considered an inseparable part of the army's activities and was intended to raise the cultural sophistication of soldiers, strengthen the bonds between Yugoslavs, promote the values of brotherhood, solidarity and work in a community, and encourage good working habits.⁶ Military service was not only intended as a military drill, but as a process that moulded young men into upright, well-behaved and educated citizens. The declared goal of the self-management society was a "well-rounded, humane and free human personality",⁷ because only a cultivated person is capable of building socialism. The importance of cultural education was also emphasised by Josip Broz - Tito:

Cultural-political work is of enormous importance in the true people's army, whose responsibility is to protect not only the borders of our country, but also the achievements of the National Liberation Struggle and to safeguard the rights won through this struggle. [...] Every soldier and senior officer should have the opportunity to fully develop their talents and participate in a variety of cultural activities. The barracks should become a kind of school that not only imparts military knowledge, but also educates the young sons from the villages and towns to become productive members of society in their private lives as well.⁸

5 Anonymous, "Neka pitanja društvene uloge kulturnog života u JNA (pristupni materijal)", in: Voja Vukićević (ed.), *Kulturni život u JNA: Zbirka odabranih radova sa simpozijuma održanog 1970. godine*, Politička uprava and Državni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, Belgrade, 1971, pp. 23–24.

6 Dušan Pejanović et al., *Organizacija SKJ u JNA*, Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, Belgrade, 1986, p. 241; Slavko Samardžija, "Kulturna politika i umetničko stvaralaštvo u JNA" (master's thesis), Fakultet političkih nauka, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Belgrade, 1987, pp. 17–24, 85–87.

7 Gregor Kocijan, *Delavci in kultura*, Republiški svet Zveze sindikatov Slovenije and Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja, Ljubljana, 1970, p. 9.

8 Anonymous, "Uvodna beseda maršala Tita ob prvi številki 'Ljudske armade'", *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 6, no. 141, 5.10.1945, p. 2.

In the early post-war years, culture was not yet able to flourish in the military as most of the attention was focused on the pressing problem of illiteracy. In the early 1950s, the range of activities was expanded to include those in which soldiers were passive recipients of cultural content, such as theatre, but soon afterwards soldiers were given the opportunity to become active creators of culture, initially in the form of orchestras and choirs.⁹ At the same time, it was not desirable for artistic creativity to be understood as light entertainment, because culture is not a handmaiden of the army, as the leading Yugoslav theorist of cultural activities in the Army Vojislav Vukićević claimed: "Cultural activities are not easier, more beautiful and more pleasant than training or any other field of activity in the Army, because they also require effort, knowledge and skill."¹⁰ In the early 1960s, the practice of creating art in the military became more widely accepted, to the general surprise of the Yugoslav daily press:

Can monumental works of art also emerge from circumstances in which two seemingly completely contradictory principles collide – subordination as the basis of the military chain of command and artistic freedom as the foundation of artistic creation? Every day in the barracks throughout Yugoslavia, new works of art are created by the hands of YPA members, which proves that such a dilemma never arises in the YPA, although the military environment does tend to impose certain limits on the artist.¹¹

The soldiers were declaratively free in their cultural creativity. The cultural theorists of the time assure us in their writings that the creative principles of artists were respected in the army. Moreover, even "if the artists' works were to reveal imperfections in some of our bodies, we would not oppose them."¹² However, the promised freedom was somewhat limited, at least regarding the theorising behind the practice. CPY members and senior officers did not interfere in the creative methods and artistic styles of the soldiers for various reasons, whether out of inexperience or to maintain the appearance of openness (even Tito noted that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia did not have the role of an unequivocal arbiter of aesthetic

9 Pejanović et al., 1986 (see no. 6), pp. 269–270.

10 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), p. 17.

11 Franci Božič, "Da bi heroj živeli ...", *Delo*, vol. 16, no. 294, 19.12.1974, p. 10.

12 Dragiša Madžgalj, "Armijanski život kao podsticaj za umetničko stvaralaštvo", in: Voja Vukićević (ed.), *Kulturni život u JNA: Zbirka odabranih radova sa simpozijuma održanog 1970. godine*, Politička uprava and Državni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, Belgrade, 1971, p. 129.

and theoretical criteria and forms of creativity).¹³ But they did – according to their own statements – watch over the socio-political function of art. Dissenting views, especially if they were associated with the overt or covert promotion of nationalism, religion and chauvinism or the negation of the achievements of the revolution,¹⁴ were characterised as undesirable and harmful “relapses into the past”;¹⁵ which is why the military was to actively combat “any attempt to introduce anti-self-managing or other hostile content and interpretations into the army under the guise of cultural-artistic creativity”.¹⁶ Consequently, the CPY representatives reserved the right to criticise the works created in the military: “It is certainly important to make a distinction between those who advocate non-interference because they want to have the freedom to create and those who advocate this for the simple reason of having complete freedom to continue their destructive activities.”¹⁷

At least, such were the assurances given in discussions and official documents. On the other hand, the soldiers had relative freedom in their creative endeavours, at least as long as they did not stumble upon sensitive and forbidden topics and openly satirise, provoke or attack the state regime and its values. If a superior officer recognised a critical aspect in a work (though it was possible for subtle, intellectual or cleverly disguised criticism to slip through the censorship net), the offender would face reprisals, usually in the form of threats, as no example of a soldier-artist being formally punished has yet been documented. One example in this vein is a film by director Karpo Godina, who was sent to Belgrade during his military service in Ajdovščina to make a film for the army, under the wing of the

13 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), p. 15. However, in 1962 and 1963 – perhaps due to improved relations with the Soviet Union – Tito spoke harshly about abstract painting, saying that he was against providing common funds “for some so-called modernist works that have no relation whatsoever to artistic creation and even less to our reality”, and claimed that socialist reality offered artists enough material so that they did not have to take refuge in abstraction. Contrary to its assurances, the state leadership thus partially reserved the right of deciding on the quality of (fine) art. See Radina Vučetić, “Između avangarde i cenzure: Tito i umetnost šezdesetih”, in: Olga Manojlović Pintar, Mile Bjelajac and Radmila Radić (eds.), *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja: Zbornik radova*, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije and Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade, 2011, pp. 695–697.

14 Anonymous, “Neka pitanja ...”, 1971 (see no. 5), p. 24.

15 Mihailo Golubović, “Odnos Saveza komunista prema kulturnom životu u Armiji”, in: Voja Vukićević (ed.), *Kulturni život u JNA: Zbirka odabranih radova sa simpozijuma održanog 1970. godine*, Politička uprava and Državni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, Belgrade, 1971, p. 132.

16 Ernest Mezga, *Politički rad u JNA*, Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, Belgrade, 1988, p. 274.

17 Golubović, 1971 (see no. 15), p. 131.

production house Zastava Film. The result was a 10-minute *About the Art of Love or a Film with 14441 Frames*, which was shot in Štip, Macedonia, and was above all a mockery of the lack of contact between soldiers and women. Godina received permission to film based on an ideologically sound script that had previously been submitted to the military and was inspired by an article in the army magazine *Front*. Despite the outrage in the leadership, Godina was not punished.¹⁸ It seems somewhat paradoxical that the considerable degree of creative freedom was (among other things) a consequence of the uncertainty of the state and its cultural ideologues about what art and creativity should be. While on the one hand it was clear what a soldier was not allowed to endorse openly, there was no agreement on what kind of cultural production fulfilled its social role. The lack of clarity in this area proved to be quite fertile ground for creativity.

From the 1970s onwards, military and civilian experts tried to remedy this lack of consensus by organising large or small conferences on the role of culture in the YPA, where views, experiences and recommendations for future work were exchanged. However, theory was not enough. Even in the years before the disintegration of Yugoslavia, there were cases of commentators who openly admitted that “there are great attempts in this field, but also great swathes of aimlessness”.¹⁹ Criticism of the paternalistic control of the cultural activities of workers and the military “from above” and of the inadequate criteria that led to inferior production and the spread of “folklorism” was also present at the conferences. The lament that soldiers did not spend their free time in a quality way and mainly passed the time with banal products of mass culture, such as comics and cheap films, was constantly heard at the conferences. The dichotomy between the popular interests of the average Yugoslav worker or soldier and the refined artistic taste promoted by the state was never fully resolved. Workers and soldiers became consumers – sometimes even creators – of culture, but of mass culture, which was considered inferior in the eyes of ideologues and theorists, so that the lofty, almost utopian, standards of official policy – the sophistication of people through culture – were not achieved.²⁰ Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the project of disseminating cultural content to the masses was a success,

18 Godina claimed that he was threatened with a prison sentence for this film but was spared after the intervention of a well-known poet and artistic leader of Zastava Film, who tried to explain the importance of artistic freedom to the seven generals who were to interrogate him. Karpo Godina, *On the cinema of Karpo Godina or a book in 71383 words*, Filmkolektiv Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, 2013, pp. 46, 48.

19 Samardžija, 1987 (see no. 6), p. 35.

20 Vlatko Čakširan, *Kolonija likovnih umjetnika Željezare Sisak 1971–1990: Povijesni pregled: Izložba Gradskog muzeja Sisak* (exhibition catalogue), Gradski muzej, Sisak, 2012, p. 53.

even if it was more due to the efforts of individual art enthusiasts and organisers²¹ than to a well-thought-out state project.

Artistic Creativity in a Uniform

Artistic activities in the military were organised within the art sections, active both in the barracks and the cultural centres of the YPA. These were associations of soldiers who were grouped according to their interests, which resulted in the creation of a number of art sections, usually headed by a soldier with professional skills.²² The military usually took care of purchasing the working tools and materials, but this also meant that the artworks created became the property of the military.²³ The premises for the sections' activities – either purpose-built buildings or improvised rooms within the barracks – were usually provided by military clubs, which had been run by the army since 1945. These clubs were intended for the soldiers' leisure activities and often had a cinema, a library, a reading room and rooms for section activities.²⁴

The published figures show that between 1959 and 1978 (except for the missing years 1961 and 1970) over 100,000 different sections were active in the YPA, comprising 1.4 million soldiers, with each section having an average of 11 members. Visual arts sections were small; an average section for visual arts had eight active members and thus lagged behind the average music, chess, education, folklore and choir sections.²⁵

Art in the military was one of the areas that was not dictated by the directives of the General Staff in Belgrade, apart from providing theoretical and organisational guidelines. Whether visual arts activities took place in the barracks depended primarily on two factors. The first was the presence of talented or artistically trained soldiers who were interested in engaging in artistic activities during their military service; the other had to do with the favour or disfavour of the commanding officers of the barracks and the leaders of the military clubs, who, depending on their convictions, education and personality, could either (materially) support the soldiers' initiatives or refuse them, or at least tacitly reject them, usually due to lack of resources.²⁶ Vukićević even spoke of the possibility of transferring talented soldiers to another,

better-equipped barracks or YPA cultural centre if the home barracks could not provide the resources for their creative endeavours.²⁷

In the barracks whose leadership supported cultural activities, soldiers were encouraged to participate in this or that section. In Slovenia, the barracks in Postojna, Ribnica, Novo Mesto and Vrhnika were known for their support of visual arts. The soldier-artists in the barracks in Novo Mesto, for example, "enjoyed the full understanding of the leadership", so that the barracks were considered "a pleasant art corner where young artists took their first steps".²⁸ The commander of the barracks in Vrhnika even declared: "Every single soldier – and they come to us from all over Yugoslavia – leaves a trace in us and in himself. We firmly believe that any kind of creativity of the soldier, which is not necessarily closely related to our main purpose – training – has a double benefit. Since we fulfil this purpose, we can be justifiably satisfied."²⁹

Even if there was support from the leadership, the soldiers' own initiative was the decisive prerequisite for starting a cultural project of any kind. It was not unusual for the artistic initiative to come from the soldiers, as many who served in the army had previously studied at Yugoslav art academies, but amateurs also showed interest. Even the construction and furnishing of the premises for cultural activities, including the studios, were often undertaken by the soldiers themselves.

As far as the choice of motifs was concerned, the soldiers were encouraged to produce primarily military and military-historical images and landscapes (fig. 93). The leadership believed that the military past of the Yugoslav nations, especially the Partisan struggle, was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the soldiers' creativity. While theorists advised caution and urged soldier-artists to create work according to their abilities, many of them, eager for recognition, ambitiously set about creating complex compositions. Others simply did not follow the recommendations because they wanted to create their works in their own way, undeterred by theoretical guidelines. An example is the illustrator Marjan Manček, who painted his first oil painting depicting the Scottish landscape, based on a postcard, during his military service.³⁰

The limitation in the choice of motifs and the less-than-ideal working conditions were generally not an issue for the soldiers – if their assurances are to be believed. The painter Čedomir Vasić, from the barracks in Celje, saw the restrictions as an opportunity to face

21 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), pp. 26–29, 40–43.

22 Advan Hozić, "Kulturno-umetnički amaterizam u jedinicama JNA", in: Voja Vukićević (ed.), *Kulturni život u JNA: Zbirka odabranih radova sa simpozijuma održanog 1970. godine*, Politička uprava and Državni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu, Belgrade, 1971, p. 298; Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), pp. 75–76, 115.

23 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), p. 115.

24 Mezga, 1988 (see no. 16), p. 298.

25 Ibid., pp. 289, 291.

26 Ibid., p. 304.

27 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), p. 118.

28 Slavko Dokl, "Veliko dejanje", *Delo*, vol. 14, no. 221, 15.8.1972, p. 7.

29 N. L., "Vojak v kamnu", *Delo*, vol. 16, no. 178, 2.8.1974, p. 5.

30 *Marjan Manček*, interview, conducted by Ivan Smiljanić, 18.2.2023.



Captain Milorad Ljubisavljević painting in Novo Mesto.

new challenges and find innovative solutions:

From the point of view of artistic creation, it does not seem to matter at all whether I am given a particular theme or whether it is entirely my personal choice. Much more important for me is the fact that artistic creation in the military represents a qualitatively new way of seeing. In other words, it offers the opportunity to come across content that you would not otherwise come across, but which is definitely of value.³¹

Branko Petan from Krško, for example, had words of praise for the

31 Božič, 1974 (see no. 11), p. 10.

working conditions at the Military Academy in Belgrade: “It’s a bit unusual, but we have really excellent conditions here, so anyone who wants to can study on the side. I am a member of a group of young artists who work under the careful supervision of a renowned art professional.”³² Vladimir Savić from Valjevo, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo and a soldier in the garrison in Jelendol, appreciated the understanding and support of his superiors, even though he painted in his attic room; nevertheless, he was provided with tools and materials.³³ The academically trained Serbian sculptor Mirosljub Kostić, who created a sculpture of Franc Rozman - Stane for the barracks in Maribor, was more critical: “I would be even happier if I could work with suitable tools and better materials, for example in stone.”³⁴

The furnishing of the barracks with artworks was at least partly a consequence of the recommendations of the conferences on the dissemination of culture among the working people and in the military. According to these, a workroom or a space in the barracks had to be neatly and harmoniously arranged and decorated with paintings or sculptures.³⁵ It was expected that an environment characterised by a “synthesis of science, technology, architecture and fine art”³⁶ would contribute to the improved well-being of employees and soldiers, to an increase in their general cultural refinement and thus to a practical benefit – better results in production or training. The criticism that theory was not being put into practice was of course also voiced in this area. An important part of the programme to furnish the barracks with artworks were initiatives to put up monuments of Partisan national heroes created by soldiers. To the surprise of the leadership, some were created on the soldiers’ own initiative, others were commissioned. Procuring the materials, setting up the studio and obtaining financial support was a team effort involving everyone: artists, soldiers and senior officers. Sculpting itself was often an unusually sociable affair, with large numbers of soldiers observing the process as it unfolded. The unveiling ceremonies often coincided with the end of military service for the artists, who were often awarded leave or granted early discharge.³⁷

Artistic creation in the military thus had all the characteristics of a mutual exchange. Trained or talented soldier-artists put their talents at the service of the army (and of the state) in order to be

32 S.[lavko] Dokl, “Kadet s čopičem”, *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 100, 13.4.1971, p. 6.

33 L.[ea] M.[encinger], “Vojakova razstava”, *Gorenjski glas*, vol. 41, no. 72, 20.9.1988, p. 5.

34 Drago Vresnik, “Vojak sklesal Stanetov kip”, *Delo*, vol. 16, no. 167, 19.7.1974, p. 7.

35 Kocijan, 1970 (see no. 7), p. 42.

36 Zupančič, 1975 (see no. 3), p. 43.

37 Ivan Smiljanić, “Spomeniki kiparjev vojakov v slovenskih vojašnicah JLA”, *Kronika*, vol. 70, no. 1, 2022, pp. 204–211.

able to practice their art despite their service, to partially avoid training and to preserve a memory of their life in the barracks. The barracks, in turn, became the owner of artworks with military themes or scenes from military history, which – placed in the barracks buildings and in the surrounding area – spread the messages of brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav self-management society and, as symbols, strengthened the identity of the barracks and the army.

Army on Display: YPA Cultural Centres in Slovenia

Studios, exhibitions and artworks set up in ad hoc adapted spaces in the barracks were accessible only to the soldiers and officers stationed there. The places where the achievements of the army were presented to the civilian population were the cultural centres of the YPA. These centres, which began operating in August 1945, were initially intended primarily for events and educational courses for members of the YPA, but eventually developed into cultural and entertainment venues that were open to everyone and thus became a symbol of friendship between the army and the citizens.³⁸

The cultural centres of the YPA were not only exhibition spaces but also ran visual arts sections for soldiers, similar to barracks. Around 1965, the State Secretariat for National Defence allowed soldiers with an art education to acquire the status of soldier-artist, which enabled them to work in larger YPA cultural centres and military clubs, with almost no further obligations and with a supply of working materials. “Their constraints are of a moral nature – it is expected that the subject matter of their work at this time would primarily include military themes,” explained art critic Janez Mesesnel, adding:

But more often than not, it turns out that this constraint is not a constraint at all, but rather a spur, because the impressions of the military are at their freshest and most intense at that moment and can therefore – apart from being a refreshing change – be a relatively difficult task, but one that is appealing to any true artist, simply because of the effort involved in exploring new themes and developing a different sensibility for the subject matter.³⁹

Among the artists who created in this way was Marjan Manček, who said that he became a part of the YPA Cultural Centre in Postojna mainly thanks to the efforts of the head of the cultural centre, Captain Paukovič, who had a deep appreciation for visual arts and

38 Anonymous, “Neka pitanja ...”, 1971 (see no. 5), p. 33; Mezga, 1988 (see no. 16), pp. 301–302, 364–366; Samardžija, 1987 (see no. 6), pp. 55–56.

39 Janez Mesesnel, “Sveže in široko”, *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 94, 6.4.1973, p. 6.



Marjan Manček at the exhibition of his caricatures at the Yugoslav People's Army Cultural Centre in Postojna in 1973.

satire. Manček was given permission to create caricatures about military life and satirical images about the militarisation of the world. In October 1973, an exhibition of his caricatures was opened at the centre, which was very well attended (fig. 94).⁴⁰ The academically trained painter Franc Golob remembers how he and his comrades set up an improvised studio in the YPA Cultural Centre in Rijeka. The army provided them with oil paints, brushes, zinc white, glue and jute, while the soldiers made frames from wooden planks.⁴¹

The academically trained painter Rudi Španzel, who was stationed in the barracks in Šentvid, worked at the YPA Cultural Centre in Ljubljana in 1977. He remembers that he was able to work in relative freedom and even gave painting lessons to the officers. One of his projects, on the grounds of the barracks in Šentvid, included large paintings with motifs from the Second World War. His reputation in the barracks grew through these works, which brought him numerous benefits.⁴² The soldiers were also able to participate in the activities of the YPA cultural centres as curators, designers and organisers of exhibitions. As a soldier, the art critic Aleksander Bassin, for example,

40 Marjan Manček, interview (see no. 30).

41 Franc Golob, interview, conducted by Ivan Smiljanić, 9.3.2023.

42 Rudi Španzel, interview, conducted by Ivan Smiljanić, 15.3.2023.

organised an exhibition at the YPA Cultural Centre in Pula in 1964 to celebrate the Day of the Republic. He managed to borrow from the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia (today the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia) the draft for *Battle on the Sutjeska River* by Marij Pregelj and a canvas, *In Memory of a Dead Comrade*, by Marko Šuštaršič,⁴³ which had to be transported to the cultural centre by train due to its size.⁴⁴

A productive way of looking at the organisational structure of the YPA cultural centres' exhibition policy is to distinguish between three hierarchical levels. At the base were the local centres, i.e. the centres in smaller towns, whose exhibitions were the least ambitious and relied mainly on artworks created by soldiers from the neighbouring barracks and local artists. One level higher were the YPA centres in the capitals of the Yugoslav republics and provinces, where, in addition to soldiers, renowned (civilian) artists from the home republic and other parts of Yugoslavia exhibited their works, which were not necessarily thematically related to military life. Perched on top was the Gallery of the YPA Cultural Centre in Belgrade. With its exhibitions of selected artists and its rich collection, the gallery became the most prestigious and influential institution in the artistic life of the YPA and thus occupied a visible place in the cultural life of Belgrade and Yugoslavia as a whole.

Even though the majority of the exhibition activities of the 20 or so cultural centres of the YPA in Slovenia were not related to fine art (they mainly organised exhibitions of handicrafts, food, etc.), YPA cultural centres were nevertheless the central exhibition spaces for art dealing with the themes of the Yugoslav military and the Partisan struggle. They also exhibited the works of amateur artists, both soldiers and local artists, as many YPA cultural centres welcomed and supported the efforts of local amateurs.

In the 1970s, the criteria for the themes and motifs that soldiers dealt with in their works became looser. Accordingly, there were exhibitions with somewhat lighter subjects such as caricatures or themes that moved away from scenes from military life and landscape painting. For example, the soldier Tibor Gergely exhibited female nudes at the YPA Cultural Centre in Ribnica in 1981.⁴⁵ In a few cases, the YPA cultural centres also exhibited works by canonised artists. In October 1954, the YPA Cultural Centre in Brežice held an exhibition of works by Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, Matej Sternen, Ivan Vavpotič, Maksim Gaspari and Hinko Smrekar, which had been lent by their owners from

43 Aleksander Bassin, *Obris mojega časa*, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana, 2022, p. 60.

44 Aleksander Bassin, interview, conducted by Ivan Smiljanić, 3.3.2023.

45 Anonymous, "Vojak razstavljal", *Dolenjski list*, vol. 32, no. 45, 5.11.1981, p. 20.

neighbouring towns.⁴⁶ Two decades later, a similar project was organised under the auspices of the professional community. In December 1975, an exhibition of works by Matej Sternen, which had been borrowed from the collection of the National Gallery, was opened at the YPA Cultural Centre in Vrhnika. In February of the following year, the centre in Vrhnika also hosted a travelling exhibition of the leading Impressionist painters.⁴⁷

There are currently around 50 documented exhibitions of soldier-artists that took place in Slovenian YPA cultural centres between 1954 and 1990, more frequently from the mid-1960s onwards. In most of the smaller YPA cultural centres, exhibitions of soldier-artists were a rarity. By far the most exhibitions took place in the centres in Ribnica and Novo Mesto, whose leadership strongly supported the soldiers' creative efforts. Moreover, the exhibitions of the soldier-artists did not take place exclusively in the YPA cultural centres.⁴⁸

The situation was different in the main YPA cultural centres of the individual Yugoslav republics. The main Slovenian centre was located in Ljubljana, in the building of the former Hotel Metropol on National Liberation Front Square. It was opened in 1952 and organised its first two exhibitions two years later, which immediately showed that Ljubljana had greater ambitions than the other Slovenian YPA centres. The first exhibition was dedicated to well-known graphic artists such as Ive Šubic, Dore Klemenčič, France Mihelič, Nikolaj Pirnat, Božidar Jakac, France Slana, Tone Kralj and Miha Maleš, while the second exhibition showed the works of five amateur painters from the ranks of the YPA.⁴⁹ In April 1955, the YPA Cultural Centre in Ljubljana founded the officers' art section, which provided its members with material support, offered them expert courses in fine art techniques, and organised an exhibition of their works just one month after its foundation.⁵⁰

After this encouraging start, the gallery activities of the YPA Cultural Centre in Ljubljana ceased for several years. The centre returned to the limelight in 1961, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the uprising, when its representatives announced plans for a proactive exhibition policy:

46 Anonymous, "Vsestranski uspeh Posavskega tedna", *Posavski tednik*, vol. 7, no. 43, 30.10.1954, p. 1.

47 Anonymous, "Razstava impresionistov na Vrhniki", *Delo*, vol. 19, no. 30, 6.2.1976, p. 8.

48 Exhibitions of soldier-artists were also organised at the Pilon Gallery in Ajdovščina, the Meblo Salon in Maribor, the ALP Hotel in Bovec, the library in Tolmin, the Art Salon in Kočevje, the Šivec House in Radovljica, the Textile and Shoe School Centre in Kranj and the Peko Shoe Factory in Tržič, among others.

49 Anonymous, "Paleta ob puški: Dve razstavi v Domu JLA", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 15, no. 298, 22.12.1954, p. 4.

50 Anonymous, "Likovna razstava v Domu JLA v Ljubljani", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 16, no. 111, 15.5.1955, p. 6.

In the YPA cultural centre, where a special room has been transformed into a new gallery where many artists can present their works to the public and especially to YPA members, Major Leopold Mendaš unveiled a rather extensive plan for a new action to popularise visual arts. He said that they seek to bring visual arts closer to all members of the army, in addition to efforts to raise general cultural awareness. At the same time, they will give many young artists and amateurs, who may otherwise find it difficult to access exhibition spaces, the opportunity to present their works. Their aim is to convey art to the public in cycles by focusing on specific themes, and as it is the year of the revolution, most of the exhibitions are finetuned to this particular theme.⁵¹

The 1961 programme included exhibitions of prominent Slovenian artists: Ive Šubic, France Godec, Božidar Jakac, Dora Plestenjak, Slavko Pengov, Nikolaj Omersa, Anton Sigulin and Evgen Sajovic. The artists mainly presented works with non-military motifs. Janez Mesesnel, who reviewed the exhibitions for the daily newspaper *Delo* (Aleksander Bassin wrote reviews of the same exhibitions for *Ljubljanski dnevnik*), wrote quite positively about the efforts of the YPA cultural centre. In mid-1961, he noted that the centre had “already acquired a certain renown as perhaps not the best-equipped, but still quite suitable space for smaller exhibitions”.⁵² By the end of the year, the exhibition space’s reputation had risen even more when it offered “its otherwise modest hall that is not the most suitable for exhibitions” as a replacement space for the demolished Jakopič Pavilion: “This way, our artists can exhibit and maintain at least some thread of continuity in terms of the pavilion’s exhibition activities until a new pavilion is built.”⁵³

The first exhibitions of artists from other Yugoslav republics began to appear alongside exhibitions of Slovenian painters in 1962, and, in 1963, the focus of the exhibitions shifted to them, as the YPA cultural centre followed the army’s policy of promoting brotherhood and unity. Group exhibitions were organised by the 8 March Art Group from Belgrade, as well as by artists from Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija, Skopje (the artist Dimitar Kondovski even exhibited paintings based on Orthodox icons), Banjaluka and Montenegro. The last active seasons were in 1964 and 1965, when members of the Army Art Studio of the Czechoslovak Army presented their works alongside artists from the Yugoslav republics. Mesesnel wrote at the time that “a small but relatively well-equipped space once again hosted artworks by artists

51 B. p., “Dve obliki za popularizacijo umetnosti”, *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 16, 18.1.1961, p. 5.
 52 J.[anez] Mesesnel, “Dobra, moderna tradicionalnost”, *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 178, 1.7.1961, p. 6.
 53 J.[anez] Mesesnel, “Osební razvoj v naročju tradicije”, *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 340, 13.12.1961, p. 4.

who are not normally found in other exhibition pavilions in Ljubljana, [...] especially guests from other cities and republics, amateurs and professionals with different qualities of their work. In this seemingly unorganised way, the leadership of the YPA cultural centre nevertheless offers us a fairly comprehensive overview of the activities in visual arts in our wider homeland, which we would not have had otherwise.”⁵⁴ In the autumn of 1965, the momentum of the centre in Ljubljana slowed down. In 1968, the visual arts section of the Ljubljana YPA cultural centre was revived,⁵⁵ but exhibition activities almost completely ceased.

The First Among Equals: The Gallery of the Yugoslav People’s Army Cultural Centre in Belgrade

The cultural centres of the YPA in larger cities were closely connected to the country’s main centre – the YPA Cultural Centre in Belgrade. It was opened on 25 October 1944 and moved, in 1946, to the building of the former Army Centre in the city centre,⁵⁶ where it is still housed today (as the Home of the Army of Serbia). A gallery was established in the YPA Cultural Centre as early as in 1945. Its main initiators were the Bosnian-Serbian painter and graphic artist Branko Šotra (1906–1960) and Ivan Cvetko (1924–1996), a painter born in Novo Mesto and working in Belgrade. After Šotra’s death, Cvetko took over the administration of the gallery for many years, although he had no formal training. As a communicative leader who was familiar with many Yugoslav artists, he became the most influential person in the field of art exhibitions in the YPA. In 1953, the army set up a gallery space on the ground floor of the Belgrade YPA Cultural Centre, which became the army’s central exhibition space.

Cvetko said in 1971 that the gallery’s primary task was “to bring together, encourage and engage artists to create work on the theme of the revolution”,⁵⁷ which is why it tried to attract as many artists as possible and kept a list of all members of the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists. The gallery’s representatives visited many studios throughout the country to find out about the state of affairs in contemporary Yugoslav art. Based on these findings, they prepared exhibition programmes and encouraged artists to create work on the theme of the National Liberation Struggle.⁵⁸ Every year, the YPA Cultural Centre

54 J.[anez] Mesesnel, “Amaterska eksotika”, *Delo*, vol. 6, no. 315, 19.11.1965, p. 5.
 55 Janez Zadnikar, “Umetniki v sivih haljah”, *Sobotna priloga (Delo)*, vol. 10, no. 231, 24.8.1968, p. 17.
 56 Mezga, 1988 (see no. 16), p. 360; Nikola Kusovac et al., *Umetnička zbirka Doma Vojске Srbije* (exhibition catalogue), Medijski centar Odbrana, Belgrade, 2017, pp. 8, 15.
 57 Ivan Cvetko, “Likovno razstavna politika galerije Doma JLA v Beogradu”, *Borec*, vol. 23, no. 6–7, 1971, p. 489.
 58 Ibid.

organised dozens of short-term exhibitions lasting no longer than two weeks, both by established artists and collectives and by emerging artists. The gallery purchased prize-winning works, creating an anthology collection of Yugoslav art – the only one in the country dedicated primarily to the war and revolution – which, by the mid-1980s, comprised more than 1,500 artworks.⁵⁹ Despite the ubiquitous military motifs, the gallery's administrators claimed that the artists were not interested in depicting the drama of battle but the common man bravely opposing the war and the occupiers, suggesting that the exhibitions embodied an anti-militarist, freedom-loving spirit.⁶⁰

In accordance with its policy of exhibiting the works of artists from all Yugoslav republics, the Belgrade gallery offered numerous Slovenian artists the opportunity to exhibit their works. The first was the exhibition of works by Nikolaj Pirnat, which opened in the summer of 1957.⁶¹ In the 1960s, 20 Slovenian artists presented their works in solo or group exhibitions,⁶² in addition to the group exhibition of artists from the Slovenian coastal region and Istria. In the 1970s, the number of solo exhibitions of Slovenian artists dropped to nine,⁶³ in addition to the nine members of the Slovenian Fine Artists Association from Zasavje. In the 1980s, the situation was very similar: eight artists were presented⁶⁴ as well as members of the Barva Group and the Maribor Fine Artists Society.

Although the Belgrade gallery was more reserved than most YPA cultural centres when it came to exhibitions with lighter content, it nevertheless opened an exhibition in the spring of 1973 with caricatures from military life by Leo Korelc, a captain and editor of military newspapers, who had dealt with the absurdity of the arms race.⁶⁵ At the end of the 1970s, it became customary for exhibitions by Slovenian artists to open on 8 February, the (Slovenian) Day of Culture, and for Slovenian politicians to attend the opening ceremonies. Even if the

59 Ibid., pp. 489–490; Mezga, 1988 (see no. 16), pp. 275, 362–363; Tanjug, “Plodna dejavnost”, *Delo*, vol. 17, no. 25, 31.1.1975, p. 9.

60 *Galerija Doma Jugoslovenske narodne armije Beograd: 1953–1968* (exhibition catalogue), Ivan Cvetko (ed.), Galerija Doma JNA, Belgrade, 1968.

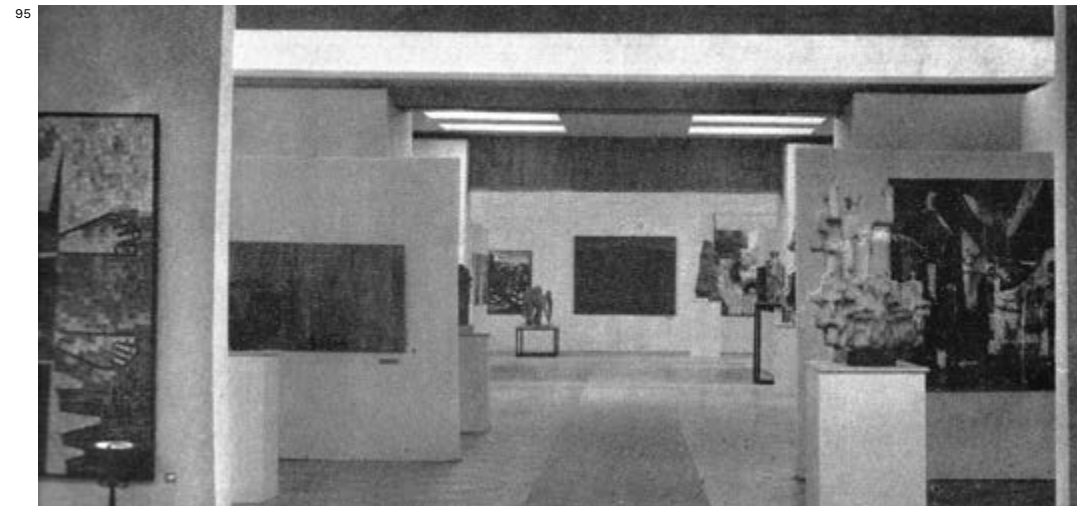
61 Anonymous, “V galeriji doma JLA”, *Tovariš*, vol. 13, no. 29, 28.7.1957, p. 686.

62 Stojan Batič, Janez Bernik, Janez Boljka, Peter Černe, Marjan Dovjak, Božidar Jakac, Boris Kalin, Gojmir Anton Kos, Ludvik Pandur, France Peršin, Dora Plestenjak, Bine Rogelj, Maksim Sedej Jr, France Slana, Gabrijel Stupica, Janez Šibila, Ive Šubic, Marko Šuštaršič, Izidor Urbančič and Janez Vidic.

63 Janez Bernik, Jože Horvat - Jaki, Miha Maleš, Adriana Maraž, Kiar Meško, France Mihelič, Janez Pirnat, France Slana and Tone Svetina.

64 Negovan Nemeč, Ludvik Pandur, Andrej Pavlič, Vladimir Potočnik, Vladimir Štoviček, Jože Šubic and father and son Tone and Vojko Svetina.

65 A. Arko, “Korelčev vojaški smeh”, *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 105, 17.4.1973, p. 8. In 1986, a comics exhibition was opened on the theme of the Partisan struggle. In addition to Korelc, Miki Muster and Jelko Peternelj were also among the exhibiting artists.



95–96

Installation views of the first and the second exhibitions of the *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists* at the Gallery of the Yugoslav People's Army Cultural Centre in Belgrade in 1961 and 1966.

openings of the Slovenian exhibitions had an almost “national” undertone, the exhibitors could count on the attention and sympathy of the Belgrade press.

Slovenian artists also exhibited in the Belgrade gallery in numerous group exhibitions together with artists from other republics with whom they shared similar thematic interest. One of the most unusual is the group exhibition from 1976, which presented five artists, including France Slana, who had travelled the Mediterranean a year earlier as guests of the army on the training ship Galeb and had visited Egypt, Algeria, Libya and Italy together with the students of the Naval Academy. Although they were not obliged to create any work, the cruise inspired them to produce dozens of paintings, watercolours and drawings.⁶⁶

The flagship of the gallery in Belgrade was a series of exhibitions entitled *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists (NOB u delima likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije)*, held every five years from 1961 to 1985 on the anniversary of the founding of the army (figs. 95–96). Ivan Cvetko said this about the exhibitions: “With these works we want to find a new vision of the revolution: our aim is by no means to rehash socialist realism, but to give every artist the opportunity to approach the subject of the revolution based on his own artistic and stylistic starting points.”⁶⁷ The exhibitions were organised – at least from the beginning of the 1970s – in the following way: the organising committee, which consisted of representatives from the gallery, the Belgrade YPA Cultural Centre and the army, invited members of the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists to submit a maximum of two recent works on the theme of the Partisan struggle. The recommended or, more precisely, the authorised themes for the works were defined in the gallery’s policy and embody a concise summary of the Yugoslav revolutionary imaginarium:

Pre-revolutionary period and preparation for the armed uprising. Armed resistance of the People’s Liberation Army and the Yugoslav army of all nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia from the uprising to the end of the war. Uprisings, epic events (Kadinjača, Sutjeska, Kozara, Pohorje, the February march of the Macedonian brigades, Neretva, Igman, etc.) and other themes inspired by the armed resistance of all Yugoslav nations and nationalities. Youth in resistance, diversions, cultural and educational work, movements, hospitals, etc. Portraits of revolutionaries, national

66 Anonymous, “Likovni spomini na križarjenje z Galebom”, *Delo*, vol. 20, no. 12, 17.1.1976, p. 7.

67 Anonymous, “Razstava likovnih del na temo revolucije”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 21, no. 54, 26.2.1971, p. 5.

heroes, commanders, illegals, couriers, fighters. Landscapes of historical sites from the time of the revolution. Still lifes of weapons and equipment of the fighters.⁶⁸

The committee then appointed a jury to decide on the prizes in the categories of painting, sculpture and printmaking. The exhibitors had to send in the works at their own expense and well packaged. The exhibitors from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia sent the works to the YPA cultural centres in the capitals of their respective republics, from where they were transported to Belgrade by lorries. As these were sales exhibitions, the exhibitors had to declare the price of their works, and if a work was purchased, the gallery handed it over to the buyer after the exhibition.⁶⁹

The gallery staff spent a year preparing the first exhibition, which presented 177 artists (including 27 Slovenians)⁷⁰ who had accepted the gallery’s invitation.⁷¹ The YPA, which financed the exhibition, had two representatives on the 13-member jury that awarded the prizes. The other members were representatives of the fine artists’ associations of the individual republics (Slovenia was represented by Riko Debenjak and Zoran Didek) and gallery principals (including Zoran Kržišnik). Slovenian artists received a fair share of the prize fund.⁷² Although the critic Bogdan Pogačnik criticised some of the works in the exhibition in his review, his final verdict was that the organisers showed a “rich understanding for the development of our art on this topic” and predominantly high-quality artistic solutions.⁷³

Encouraged by the success of the first exhibition, the second exhibition in 1966 included almost twice as many artists as the first, but again with the participation of 27 Slovenians. The reviews were still positive, including Pogačnik’s: “It is a valuable realisation that this

68 *III izložba Narodnooslobodilačka borba u delima likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije* (exhibition catalogue), Ivan Cvetko, Rajka Popović and Boris Stanojčić (eds.), Galerija Doma JNA, Belgrade, 1971.

69 Ibid.

70 According to the available data, the most frequently represented Slovenian artist in the exhibitions *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists* was Stojan Batič. The following artists exhibited in at least two exhibitions: Janez Bernik, Janez Boljka, Bogdan Borčić, Božidar Jakac, Janez Knez, France Peršin, Dora Ples-tenjak, Marij Pregelj, Marijan de Reggi, France Slana, Ive Šubic, Marko Šuštaršič, Drago Tršar and Aladar Zahariaš.

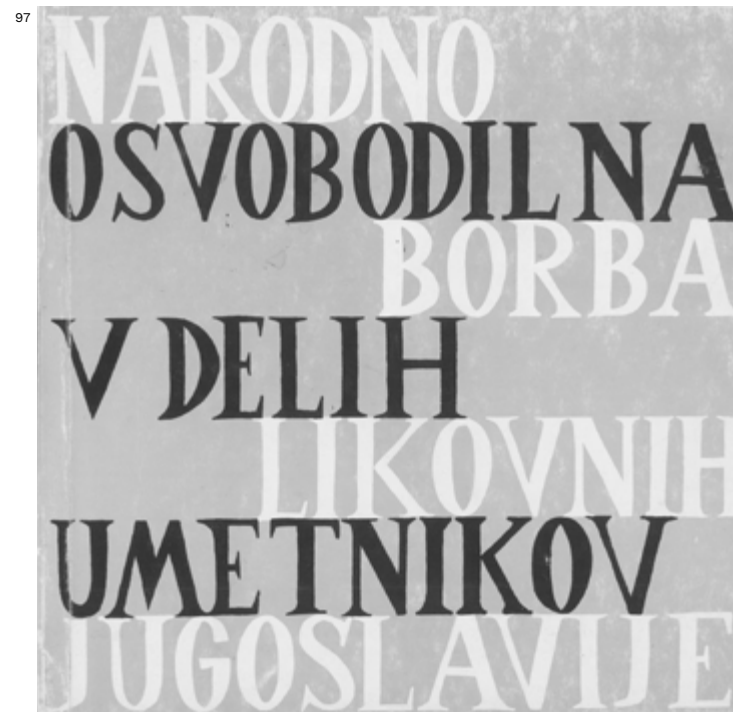
71 Cvetko, 1971 (see no. 57), p. 489.

72 According to the available data, prizes for painting were awarded to Marko Šuštaršič for *Document on the Pohorje Battalion*, 1961, and *Nurses*, 1976, France Mihelič for *War and Chronicler*, 1971, and Jože Šubic (1985); for sculpture to Drago Tršar for *Squad*, 1961, *Partisan Theatre*, 1971, and *In Honour of the XIV Division*, 1985; and for printmaking to Ive Šubic for *Weary*, 1961, Bogdan Borčić for *Internment Dachau*, 1971, and *Dachau Camp, Gas Cell*, 1976, Boge Dimovski (1985) and Hamid Tahir (1985).

73 Bogdan Pogačnik, “Ljudje v skupini”, *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 335, 8.12.1961, p. 4.

artistic initiative came from army circles and that it maintained the quality of execution without programmatic impositions. Between the first and second exhibition on the Partisan struggle at the YPA cultural centre, the YPA cultural centre itself [...] was transformed from an occasional, semi-amateur exhibition space into a new, regular and professional gallery.⁷⁴ The third exhibition in 1971 attracted 387 artists, including 31 Slovenians.⁷⁵ This time the reviews were not quite as favourable. While Vera Visočnik stated that the diversity of the exhibited works was still a sign of quality,⁷⁶ Mesesnel, on the other hand, declared that only a handful of the exhibited works were really successful and quoted an unnamed critic from Belgrade: “Appalling, appalling, this exhibition! It’s just very kitsch!”⁷⁷ The fourth exhibition in 1976 also received critical reviews. Despite higher financial awards, the number of exhibiting artists decreased and with it the number of Slovenian artists, which totalled 17.⁷⁸ Among the reactions of critics who were weary of the hypertrophied exhibitions was the critic of the magazine *Borba*, Zoran Markuš, who described the exhibition as anachronistic and outdated because it lacked the participation of younger artists, adding that the artistic level had also fallen because untrained artists were also exhibited. “Being ‘naive’ and ‘primitive’, even if such an attitude is very sincere, cannot bring meaningful results.”⁷⁹ Markuš and many other critics felt that the visual expressions of Yugoslav ideological and political narratives had become emptied out and irrelevant by the 1970s. Moreover, art experts and critics, who by that time had established themselves as the supreme arbiters of art, insisted on judging the artworks according to the criteria of high art, even if the works judged did not claim to be recognised as such. Attempts to revitalise the lacklustre exhibitions by including younger exhibitors were unsuccessful in both the 1981 and 1985 exhibitions, in which only four Slovenian participants (Stojan Batič, Janez Knez, Marjan de Reggi and Jože Šubic) and Slovenian residents Boge Dimovski and Hamid Tahir took part. Aleksander Bassin was the only member of the now only six-member jury who came from Slovenia.⁸⁰

- 74 B.[ogdan] Pogačnik, “NOB v likovni umetnosti”, *Delo*, vol. 7, no. 334, 10.12.1966, p. 7.
 75 Anonymous, “Beograd: Razstava ‘Narodnoosvobodilni boj v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije’”, *Delo*, vol. 12, no. 46, 17.2.1970, p. 5; Anonymous, “Beograd: Razstava na temo NOB”, *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 18, 21.1.1971, p. 5.
 76 Vera Visočnik, “Udeležba slovenskih likovnih umetnikov na razstavah galerije Doma JNA v Beogradu”, *Borec*, vol. 23, no. 6–7, 1971, p. 491.
 77 Janez Mesesnel, “Malo velikih upodobitev”, *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 208, 3.8.1971, p. 5.
 78 Anonymous, “NOB v delih likovnikov”, *Delo*, vol. 19, no. 42, 20.2.1976, p. 9.
 79 Zoran Markuš, “Rat i revolucija bez pravog izraza”, *Borba*, vol. 55, no. 181, 3.7.1976, p. 11.
 80 6. izložba Narodnooslobodilačka borba u delima likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije: *Pobeda i sloboda* (exhibition catalogue), Boris Stanojčić and Gordana Kaljalović (eds.), Galerija Doma Jugoslovenske narodne armije, Belgrade, 1986; Anonymous, “Nagrade na šestavi razstavi NOB v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije”, *Delo*, vol. 27, no. 116, 21.5.1985, p. 6.





97-102
 Catalogue cover, opening and installation views of the exhibition *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1971.

At the end of the exhibitions, the gallery compiled a selection of the exhibited works (mainly prize-winning and purchased works) and sent them to YPA cultural centres and other exhibition venues. The situation in Slovenia was unique, as none of the guest exhibitions took place in a YPA cultural centre. The first guest exhibition was organised in 1967, following the second exhibition in Belgrade. The selection of 81 works by 70 artists⁸¹ was ceremonially opened at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (figs. 97–102). The works of most of the Slovenian artists who had exhibited in Belgrade were shown alongside the prize-winning works of well-known Yugoslav artists.⁸² Mirko Juteršek wrote that the exhibition was “one of the most interesting themed events in recent times”, but “unfortunately it took place in a rather tight space” so many works were not properly presented; the exhibition was missing, in his opinion, well-known artists and modernist solutions, even if it offered “a fairly unpretentious overview of the lively artistic developments in Yugoslavia in the last decade”.⁸³ At the end of 1971, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana showed a selection of prize-winning and purchased works by 29 artists from the third exhibition in Belgrade. Critics described the exhibition as a slimmed-down version of the original exhibition, but this should not necessarily be taken as a criticism. Niko Goršič accused the Belgrade jury of being overly generous in awarding the prizes: “The fact that we saw a scaled-down exhibition in Ljubljana is only to the advantage of the exhibition itself [...]. Only half [of the works] reach a kind of average level, while only a handful of them can be labelled as – works of art.”⁸⁴ The 1975 exhibition, which included 45 works, was held at the City Art Gallery.⁸⁵ The last exhibition with a selection of 60 works was organised in Ljubljana in 1981, this time in the hall of the Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre.⁸⁶

Although most of the *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists* guest exhibitions took place in Ljubljana, the gallery leadership in the capital did not forget the other Slovenian towns. In 1971, 40 painters and 17 sculptors exhibited their works at the Maribor Art Gallery,⁸⁷ and a year later the Museum of the Revolution

81 *Narodnoosvobodilna borba v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije* (exhibition catalogue), Rajka Popović (ed.), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1967.

82 Anonymous, “Ljubljana: Razstava ‘NOB v delih jugoslovanskih umetnikov’”, *Delo*, vol. 8, no. 52, 24.2.1967, p. 5; b. p., “NOB v delih likovnih umetnikov”, *Delo*, vol. 8, no. 53, 25.2.1967, p. 16.

83 Mirko Juteršek, “NOB v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije”, *Borec*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1967, pp. 281–282.

84 Niko Goršič, “NOB v delih likovnih umetnikov”, *Revija M*, no. 10, 14.3.1972, p. 10.

85 Janez Mesesnel, “Nenehno aktualni”, *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 170, 24.7.1975, p. 5.

86 Dejan Vodovnik, “Razstava likovnih del NOB”, *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 245, 22.10.1981, p. 9.

87 Anonymous, “Maribor: Gostovanje galerije JLA iz Beograda”, *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 52, 24.2.1971, p. 5.

in Celje showed 75 works by 65 artists. Ivan Stopar wrote favourably in his review that the exhibition was the most significant artistic manifestation in Celje in modern times.⁸⁸ A special selection from the Belgrade collection was prepared for the same Celje museum for its exhibition of Yugoslav graphic art with motifs of the National Liberation Struggle in 1973.⁸⁹

The *National Liberation Struggle in the Works of Yugoslav Artists* exhibitions were also an important cultural export of Yugoslav cultural diplomacy, especially to the Eastern Bloc countries and members of the Non-Aligned Movement. In the 1970s, the Belgrade gallery prepared numerous guest exhibitions with works from the collection, in which the Federal Administration for International Scientific, Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation played an important organisational role. In 1972, around 100 works travelled to Moscow, where they were exhibited for a month at the Pushkin Museum⁹⁰ before being brought to Minsk.⁹¹ At the end of the following year, an exhibition of 50 works was organised at the Imperial War Museum in London.⁹² Exhibitions were also opened in Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, China, Mongolia, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Senegal and Angola.⁹³

The second series of annual exhibitions organised by the Belgrade gallery since 1966 was entitled *Soldiers – Fine Artists (Vojaki – likovni umetniki)*; figs. 103–104). The exhibitions usually opened on 22 December, the Day of the YPA. They showed the works that the soldiers had created during their service and awarded prizes determined by the gallery committee. Amateurs made up only a small number of the exhibitors, most of them were graduates of art academies. Ivan Cvetko commented:

Young soldiers like to take the initiative and express their impressions of military life through artistic means. In doing so, they are following in the tradition of the artists who were active in the Partisan units since the beginning of the people’s liberation army. They were fighters and yet remained artists. They fought with arms and – painting. Soldier-artists shed light on life in the army from the inside and their works can help us to develop a better and more humane understanding of a young person in uniform.⁹⁴

88 Ivan Stopar, “Veličina izpovedi”, *Novi tednik*, vol. 26, no. 17, 26.4.1972, p. 7.

89 Anonymous, “Grafika NOV v Celju”, *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 320, 24.11.1973, p. 2.

90 Anonymous, “Moskva: Jugoslovanska razstava”, *Delo*, vol. 14, no. 31, 3.2.1972, p. 6.

91 Anonymous, “Razstava NOB – Minsk”, *Delo*, vol. 14, no. 82, 25.3.1972, p. 14.

92 Anonymous, “Likovna dela o NOV v Londonu”, *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 173, 27.6.1973, p. 7.

93 Mezga, 1988 (see no. 16), p. 363.

94 Cvetko, 1971 (see no. 57), pp. 489–490.



Installation view of the exhibition *Soldiers – Fine Artists* at the Gallery of the Yugoslav People's Army Cultural Centre in Belgrade in 1966.



Catalogue cover for the exhibition *Soldiers – Fine Artists* in Belgrade in 1968.

As far as can be gathered from the scarcely accessible material, Slovenian soldiers were not strongly represented at these exhibitions. At the first exhibition in 1966, the only exhibiting artist from Slovenia was France Votlak, at the second a graduate of the Ljubljana academy, Danilo Prosenč, and at the third Franc Golob, who presented three paintings of which *Post Festum*, renamed *War* in the catalogue, received the strongest response. It shows the feet of a hanged man, hanging above the ground, in front of a dilapidated wall. According to the artist himself, other works from his oeuvre, such as the self-portrait in the style of the musical *Hair*, were unsuitable for exhibitions.⁹⁵

In 1976, Rudi Španzel had visible success when he won the first prize for his painting *My Window* at the exhibition in the Belgrade gallery.⁹⁶ Španzel explains that he had sent several paintings to this exhibition on Cvetko's initiative, who greatly appreciated the artist's work. Later, in a telephone call from Belgrade, Španzel learnt that he had become "the first brush of the army" and was ceremoniously awarded a medal by national hero Franc Tavčar - Rok. The prize also included a meeting with Josip Broz - Tito, who would sit for a portrait. Španzel had two planned receptions in 1977, but both were cancelled under the pretext that Tito felt unwell.⁹⁷

In their choice of motifs, the soldiers continued to orientate themselves mainly towards realistic depictions of military life. They depicted scenes that they knew from their everyday lives: field training, weapons, target practice, guard duty, flying, the navy, radio telegraphy, helping civilians in need, meals, celebrations ... Many created intimate depictions of their immediate surroundings, with a bed, a locker, a uniform, a view from the window and other elements that give the impression of a still life. There is also no shortage of portraits of fellow soldiers and landscapes with a panorama of the barracks. Others focused on the more pleasant parts of a soldier's life: resting during a break, leisure activities, going into town, travelling home or visiting a girlfriend. However, some also tackled more ambitious compositions, such as motifs from the Second World War or Tito's portraits, while others created works that commented on current political and military circumstances, from the Cold War to the Vietnam War and the founding of Biafra. From the mid-1970s, metaphysical depictions of fear emerged, linked to the theme of the military only by the anticipation of nuclear devastation.

The Belgrade gallery also sent prize-winning works by soldier-artists to other cities in Yugoslavia. The first exhibition in Slovenia opened in 1973 at the City Gallery in Ljubljana and showed almost 50 paintings,

95 Franc Golob, interview (see no. 41).

96 Anonymous, "Nagrada slovenskemu slikarju", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 303, 29.12.1976, p. 8.

97 Rudi Španzel, interview (see no. 42).

sculptures and prints. Janez Mesesnel described the works as “documents of a unique, well-conceived attempt that throws a new, thoroughly positive light on the YPA”, adding that they surprise “above all by the breadth of content and intensity of feeling, and impress with a thoroughly contemporary artistic language”.⁹⁸ In 1974, a selection from the Belgrade gallery was shown at the Rotovž Exhibition Salon in Maribor and at the Museum of the Revolution in Celje, where it was seen by over 2,000 people.⁹⁹ Was this high number the result of the organised school visits or does it indicate great interest on the part of the public, which, unlike the specialist public, had not yet grown tired of the exhibitions?

The title of the last exhibition cycle at the Belgrade gallery was *Armed Forces of the SFRY and General People's Defence in the Works of Yugoslav Artists (Oružane snage SFRJ i opštenarodna odbrana u delima likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije)*. Only three exhibitions were organised, in 1975, 1976 and 1978, all in cooperation with the Federal Secretariat for National Defence. They were based on an initiative that brought civilian artists into the barracks for several days to gain insights into the everyday lives of soldiers, to work closely with and advise the art sections and to create their own works.¹⁰⁰ The motifs used in the exhibitions were an interweaving of scenes from the National Liberation Struggle and military life and were intended to confirm “that a true artist can also find inspiration leading to a genuine artistic result in a SFRY border stone, an aircraft squadron, soldiers in training or on a break, units on the march, tank drivers, marines or members of the general people's resistance.”¹⁰¹ The selection of 30 works was exhibited in Slovenia in the summer of 1977 in the City Gallery in Ljubljana and in the YPA cultural centres in Maribor and Brežice.¹⁰² This type of work was subsequently exhibited in Belgrade as part of the exhibitions entitled *YPA in the Works of Fine Artists (JNA u delima likovnih umetnika)*. The fourth exhibition in 1983 presented 20 older painters and 10 soldier-artists, including Andrej Pavlič,¹⁰³ who won the first prize for the painting *The Time When Hasan Was in Charge of the Glass* (fig. 105). In this painting, which has a surrealist dimension and has little to do with the usual palette of military motifs, Pavlič expressed a rather subversive message. Hasan, from the

98 Mesesnel, 1973 (see no. 39), p. 6.

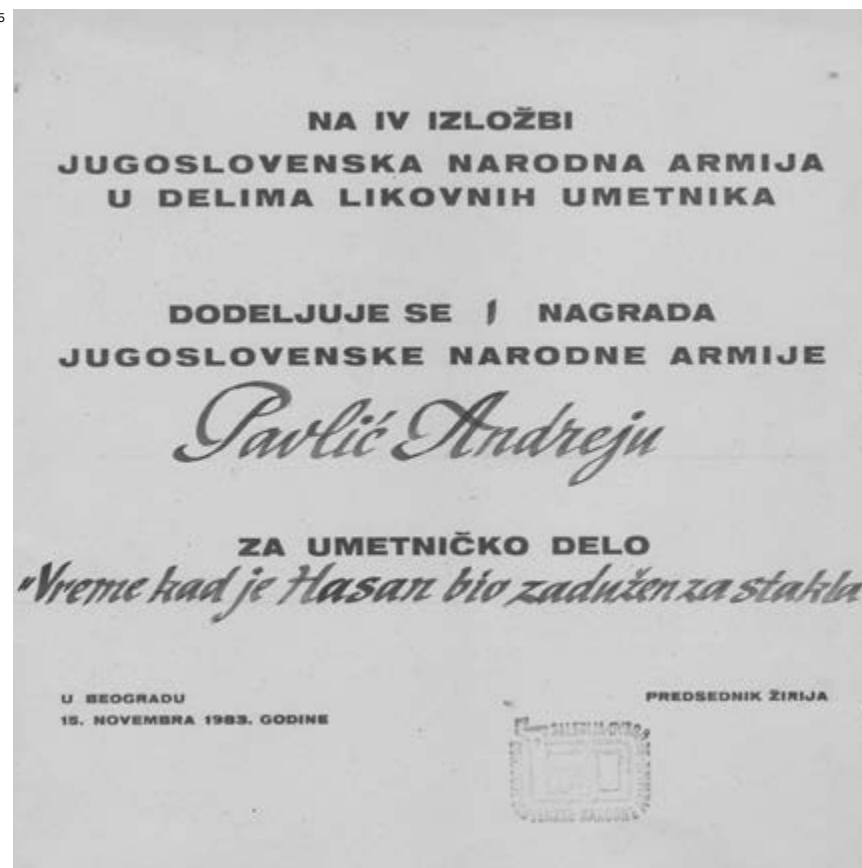
99 S. Mrvič, “Naša armada v delih vojakov”, *Novi tednik*, vol. 28, no. 45, 14.11.1974, p. 8.

100 Vukićević, 1982 (see no. 4), p. 118.

101 Anonymous, “Oborožene sile v delu umetnikov”, *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 272, 21.11.1975, p. 9.

102 *Jugoslovanska ljudska armada in splošna ljudska obramba v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije: Mestna galerija Ljubljana, Dom JLA Maribor, Dom JLA Brežice* (exhibition catalogue), Božena Plevnik (ed.), Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1977.

103 *Četvrta izložba Jugoslovenska narodna armija u delima likovnih umetnika* (exhibition catalogue), Gordana Kaljalović (ed.), Dom JNA, Belgrade, 1983.



Diploma awarded to painter Andrej Pavlič for first prize at the fourth exhibition of the YPA in the Works of Fine Artists at the Gallery of the Yugoslav People's Army Cultural Centre in Belgrade in 1983.

painting's title, otherwise a military comrade of the artist, is in fact a clumsy man who lets everything slip out of his hands, which, in retrospect, foreshadows the disintegration of the army and the state it was supposed to protect. The other exhibited painting by Pavlič, *Remembrance*, shows a five-pointed star on a famous side cap (the so-called titovka) in a still life, which the author interpreted as a reference to the transience of all things and thus also to the decline of the Yugoslav regime.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

In the 1990s, the once-common army became a hated aggressor in the eyes of many former Yugoslavs. As a result, many were no longer able to see military art as anything other than cheap propaganda. Although the disintegration of the country played an important role in the emergence of this view, it is evident that the creation and exhibition of art within the YPA was a complex phenomenon decades before the Yugoslav wars. The field was extremely heterogeneous and veered between high and amateur art, intertwining works of art by absolute amateurs, recently graduated artists and established artists who had not been in contact with the army for years. Since theorists, art critics and ideologues insisted on considering art in the YPA as a unified body of work, they judged it according to the established criteria of high art, which could not be applied to most artworks in this sphere of Yugoslav art. Yugoslavia encouraged the development of amateurism as an expression of the creative potential of the masses and was quite successful with this project of cultural dissemination. However, the more ambitious plans for the spiritual enrichment of citizens through the creation and consumption of high art proved to be unrealistic. The majority of amateur artists both inside and outside the military pursued their own artistic interests, which neither reached nor aspired to the level of high art. Another, as it turned out, unsolvable puzzle was the degree of freedom granted to soldier-artists in their creative expression. While it was clear which subjects were forbidden, it was never specified exactly which artistic solutions were desired, which unintentionally opened up many opportunities for the soldiers to create freely. Culture in the YPA as a whole suffered from the gap between the well-developed theory and the lagging practice, which fell far behind the recommendations and guidelines presented at the conferences. As a result of all these factors, artistic creation in the YPA in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s became unclear in terms of its goals and purpose, empty of content, inherently paradoxical and therefore less and less popular. The collapse of the

country was just the final nail in the coffin of the already shaky artistic corpus, which ultimately lost everything with this rupture: its creators, organisers, critics and consumers – or, in short, its context.

104 Andrej Pavlič, interview, conducted by Ivan Smiljanić, 28.3.2023.

Tina Palaić

Non-European Collections in Goričane: An Intertwinement of Exhibition Discourses



The Museum of Non-European Cultures was the first institution in Yugoslavia to collect and exhibit non-European ethnological heritage. It was located in the baroque Goričane Castle in Medvode, where a variety of exhibitions and events were organised to present non-European countries and the material culture of peoples from other continents. Between 1964 and 2001, the museum operated as a separate branch of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM), which was then housed in the palace of today's National Museum of Slovenia. When the museum in Goričane was founded, the non-European collections acquired in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, which were previously housed in the SEM, were transferred to the castle in Goričane. In the course of its existence, the museum acquired other individual objects and collections, mainly through contacts and exchanges between socialist Yugoslavia and developing countries as part of the policy of non-alignment.¹ More than 80 exhibitions were organised and visitors had the opportunity to learn about non-European cultures through rich accompanying programmes, including guided tours, lectures by museum curators and guest lecturers, film screenings, presentations of Japanese ikebana, performances with Indonesian puppets, and music and dance performances by students from other continents.²

The acquisition of the castle by the SEM was influenced by a number of factors. After the Second World War, the castle was nationalised and initially housed apartments. At the end of 1962, the Municipal People's Committee of Medvode launched an initiative to renovate the castle and set it up as a museum. When the ethnologist and journalist Boris Kuhar assumed the directorship of the SEM in 1963, he immediately recognised the difficulties the museum faced in terms of space, staff and finances.³ In the same year, discussions about the administration of the Goričane Castle began, coinciding with the

- 1 The Non-Aligned Movement brought together numerous independent countries that had emerged after the Second World War, mostly those with a colonial past. One of the founding members was Yugoslavia, where the inaugural meeting of the movement was organised in 1961. The Non-Aligned Movement was primarily a political platform, but it also promoted economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. Cooperation was organised on the basis of international and bilateral agreements and implemented to varying degrees in different areas. More in Aleš Gabrič, "Kulturno in znanstveno sodelovanje neuvrščenih držav v senci političnih dilem", in: Barbara Predan (ed.), *Robovi, stičišča in utopije prijateljstva: Spregledane kulturne izmenjave v senci politike*, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino and Akademija za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje, Ljubljana, 2022, pp. 9–27; Teja Merhar, "Mednarodno kulturno sodelovanje Jugoslavije z državami članicami gibanja neuvrščenih", in: Tamara Soban (ed.), *Južna ozvezdja: Poetike neuvrščenih* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2019, pp. 43–69.
- 2 Tina Palaić, "Muzej neevropskih kultur v Goričanah: Prakse pridobivanja zunajevropskih zbirk, povezanih z gibanjem neuvrščenih", *Etnolog*, vol. 29, 2019, pp. 185–208.
- 3 Boris Kuhar, "Štirideset let Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja", *Slovenski etnograf*, vol. 16–17, 1963–1964, pp. 5–6.

acquisition of the collection of Austro-Hungarian naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr.⁴ and the upcoming anniversary of the Slovenian regional conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), which took place in the castle in September 1934. Kuhar was well connected with other actors in the cultural scene, which undoubtedly contributed to the castle being placed under the administration of the SEM. During his professional career, Kuhar worked closely with the Cultural Community of Slovenia, which was responsible for funding cultural institutions at the time, and was also assistant to the Mayor of Ljubljana for culture.⁵

The SEM prepared an exhibition programme plan for Goričane, which envisioned a memorial room commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Slovenian regional conference of the CPY, exhibitions of Chinese artefacts acquired by Ivan Skušek Jr. and his wife Marija Skušek, and Slovenian mediaeval art in the chapel of the castle (fig. 106).⁶ However, as could be seen at the opening of the museum, the idea of exhibiting mediaeval art was abandoned and the focus was placed instead on non-European cultures. In October 1964, the newspaper *Ljubljanski dnevnik* informed its readers about the additional interest of the museum and also emphasised its uniqueness in Yugoslavia by describing the Museum of Asian, African, American and Australian Cultures, as the museum was initially called, as “the only specialised museum for non-European cultures in Yugoslavia”.⁷ When Boris Kuhar outlined the role of the museum in the magazine *Naši razgledi* in April 1969, he also emphasised its research function and stated that he hoped that “a centre for the study of foreign cultures and peoples”⁸ would be established in the castle in the same year.

4 Boris Kuhar, “Mojih 25 let v muzeju”, *Etnolog*, vol. 23, 2013, pp. 317–321. The naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. (1877–1947) acquired a collection of Chinese artefacts during his stay in Beijing from 1914 to 1920 and kept them in his flat after his return to Ljubljana. Skušek bequeathed the entire collection to Slovenia and, in 1950, it officially became the property of the National Museum. After the death of Skušek’s wife in 1963, the National Museum moved the collection out of Skušek’s flat and partially exhibited it, but there was not enough space to display the entire collection. The following year, it was handed over to the SEM. According to Ralf Čeplak Mencin, curator at the SEM, one of the conditions for the handing over of the collection to the National Museum was that it should be displayed in its entirety, which may have contributed to the Goričane castle being destined for the SEM. More about the Skušek collection in: Ralf Čeplak Mencin, *V deželi nebesnega zmaja*, Založba /*cf., Ljubljana, 2012.

5 Nadja Valentinčič Furlan, *Poklon Borisu Kuharju: 1929–2018*, Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 2019.

6 Boris Kuhar, “Ureditev muzeja v Goričanah”, *Delo*, vol. 6, no. 28, 30.1.1964, p. 2. In the documents analysed, no argumentation for the exhibition of the mediaeval art could be found.

7 Anonymous, “Azija, Oceanija, Amerika in Afrika v gradu na Goričanah”, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 14, no. 282, 15.10.1964, p. 5.

8 Boris Kuhar, “Indijska ljudska umetnost”, *Naši razgledi*, vol. 18, no. 8, 19.4.1969, p. 415.



Installation view of *Cultural-Historical Collection of China*: the first part of the permanent display of the collection of naval officer Ivan Skušek Jr. and his wife Marija Skušek at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1964.

It was not until the mid-1970s, when the number of guest exhibitions from other continents increased, that the museum began to emphasise the aspect of non-alignment more strongly when promoting its exhibitions.⁹ Non-alignment was incorporated into the museum’s concept in the early 1980s, when museum documents defined Goričane as a centre for the study and presentation of the cultures of non-aligned countries. In line with the newly defined orientation, the name of the museum was proposed to be changed from the Museum of Non-European Cultures to the Museum Centre of Non-Aligned Cultures.¹⁰ The leadership’s ideas to restructure the museum in terms

9 Boris Kuhar, “Muzej Goričane – središče za predstavljanje in proučevanje kulture neuvrščenih”, *Komunist*, vol. 37, no. 46, 9.11.1979, p. 32.

10 Anonymous, “Muzej Goričane – Načrt usmeritve razvoja 1981–1985. Dokument prenovе Muzeja neevropskih kultur v Goričanah”, internal document, n.d., Archives of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (hereinafter SEM Archives).

of content, personnel and space were never realised, but were echoed in the press. Journalist Sandi Sitar pointed out in the newspaper *Nedeljski dnevnik* in 1980 that the museum's function was linked to the politics of the non-aligned countries and explained that although the main task of the SEM was to present "Slovenian national culture", it was also "urgent on the one hand to enable comparisons and on the other to present foreign countries that are less and less foreign to us, which is particularly true of the non-aligned countries". He went on to say that there are still proponents of the concept of focusing exclusively on the national past:

Needless to say, such a restriction is not in keeping with the politics of the non-aligned countries. But even if we limit ourselves to the Slovenian context, it is quite obvious that comparisons are essential, as is breaking through the Eurocentric view that denigrates non-European cultures whose traditions and best achievements can match, if not surpass, those of Europe.¹¹

In the second half of the 1980s, the number of guest exhibitions from other non-aligned countries began to decline, and in the 1990s the idea of non-alignment lost its significance due to political changes, as Slovenia, one of the successor states of socialist Yugoslavia, decided not to join the Non-Aligned Movement after its independence. The idea of the museum in Goričane as a separate branch of the SEM persisted for another decade. Despite the efforts of the curator of non-European collections, Ralf Čeplak Mencin, to transform the museum in Goričane into a specialised Museum of Asian and African Cultures,¹² the SEM dissolved it in 2001 and moved the non-European collections to the museum complex in Metelkova in Ljubljana.

Exhibiting in the Museum of Non-European Cultures in the Time of Yugoslavia

The exhibition activities of the Museum of Non-European Cultures were exceptionally rich. The article focuses on the period from 1964, when the Museum of Non-European Cultures was opened, until the late 1980s, more precisely until 1990, when the castle in Goričane was closed for renovation and the non-European collections were exhibited elsewhere. According to the available data, 88 exhibitions

11 Sandi Sitar, "Goričane – okno v svet", *Nedeljski dnevnik*, vol. 17, no. 163, 15.6.1980, p. 17. See also Darinka Kladnik, "Načrti za center neevropskih kultur v Goričanah: Razgiban muzej na pragu Ljubljane", *Dnevnik*, vol. 30, no. 184, 9.7.1981, p. 5.

12 Muzej neevropskih kultur, Medvode, 1996, "Ralf Čeplak Mencin, Muzej azijskih in afriških kultur – enota Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja v dvorcu Goričane", SEM Archives.

were organised in Goričane during the period in question. To get a better overview, I have divided them into six categories:¹³

- 1) original exhibitions drawn from the museum's own collections (22 exhibitions);
- 2) original exhibitions prepared by the museum in collaboration with private collectors (10 exhibitions);
- 3) original exhibitions hosted by Slovenian and other Yugoslav museums (4 exhibitions);¹⁴
- 4) guest exhibitions from other Yugoslav museums (5 exhibitions);
- 5) guest exhibitions organised on the basis of international cooperation agreements (34 exhibitions);
- 6) other exhibitions (13 exhibitions).¹⁵

13 Nadja Valentinčič Furlan has categorised the exhibitions in Goričane museum in a slightly different way, and has also taken into account the renovations of the permanent exhibitions. Nadja Valentinčič Furlan, "Razstavsna dejavnost Muzeja neevropskih kultur Goričane", *Etnolog*, vol. 34, 2024, pp. 125–163.

14 A total of 11 original exhibitions were organised in 17 museums or other venues in Slovenia and in Belgrade. Four of these exhibitions were prepared exclusively to travel, so the categorisation includes this number.

15 These include: *The Memorial Room Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Conference of the CPY (Spominska soba ob 30. obletnici konference KPJ, 1964)*, which was set up in Goričane and was not thematically linked to non-European collections; the exhibition *Goričane Conference and thematic room on the Goričane castle as a Nazi assembly centre during the Second World War (Goričanska konferenca in tematska soba o gradu Goričane kot nacističnem zbirališču med drugo svetovno vojno, 1984)*; the exhibition *Disappearing Herds (Izginjajoče črede)* in 1970, which was organised by the Hunters' Association of Slovenia and the Slovenian Museum of Natural History, while the SEM helped with contacts in Kenya; the exhibition *Foit's Collection of Black Art (Foitova zbirka črnske umetnosti)* in 1971, which was prepared for the Velenje Museum by the then director of the SEM Boris Kuhar. This category also includes exhibitions that cannot be included in the other five categories: the exhibition of paintings *Boris Jesih, 1967*, and the exhibitions *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned: Cuban Culture and Islamic Art (Kulture neuvrščenih: Kultura Kube in islamska umetnost)*, *Contemporary Art in Zaire (Sodobna umetnost Zaira)* and *Old Tunis in the Works of Zoubeir Turki (Stari Tunis v delih slikarja Zoubeir Turkija, 1979)*; the last three were original exhibitions, but we have no information on whether they were organised on the basis of museum collections or in collaboration with collectors. In 1985, the museum prepared the exhibition *Kimekomi Dolls – Traditional Japanese Art (Lutke kimekomi – tradicionalna japonska umetnost)*, which featured dolls made by the wife of diplomat Marcel Koprol, Tatjana Koprol, who had received a certificate for the production of these Japanese dolls from the Japanese school Kyogetsu in Australia. The SEM keeps catalogues of four exhibitions, but they are not recorded in museum reports nor in press media, therefore we cannot prove beyond doubt that they were displayed in the museum: *Today's Japan (Današnji Japan, 1964)*; *Chile and its Economic and Social Development (Čile i njegov ekonomski i socijalni razvoj, 1969)*; *Sketches of the Traditional Architecture of Cyprus (1981)*; *My Granny's House (1981)*.

As part of its exhibition activities, the museum in Goričane regularly presented its own collections, which were either the result of the collecting activities of individuals in the 19th and early 20th century or were acquired over the years of its existence. The former include artefacts acquired by missionaries, merchants, ship captains, travellers, military officers and others who collected objects and photographed the places and people they lived among during their time on other continents. The latter include collections of Slovenians who worked as Yugoslav diplomats and representatives of Yugoslav companies in developing countries and donated or sold their collections to the museum. The museum also worked intensively with private collectors, whose collections were returned to them after the exhibitions were completed. Smaller collections were also assembled by Boris Kuhar and the museum's curator, Pavla Štrukelj, and some were also sold or donated to the museum by students from non-aligned countries and other individuals. A number of exhibitions drawn from the museum's collections travelled to various cities in Slovenia and to Belgrade,¹⁶ while the museum in Goričane hosted exhibitions from other Slovenian museums¹⁷ and the Museum of African Art in Belgrade.¹⁸

Almost half of the exhibition programme in Goričane were exhibitions resulting from international cooperation. Most of these exhibitions were sponsored by embassies or governments of countries as part of international cultural and scientific cooperation and were prepared by museums from these countries or by commissions, scientific institutes or other organisations entrusted with this task. They were financed by the Cultural Community of Slovenia and the Cultural Community of Ljubljana. As a general rule, the museum, which was to present ethnographic material of non-European peoples, did not

hold art exhibitions from developing countries,¹⁹ while the guest exhibitions of contemporary ethnographic material were embedded in the discourse of folk art or applied art from non-aligned nations.²⁰

Starting with the exhibition *Africa in the Collections of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (Afrika v zbirkah Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja)*, which opened in 1966, the museum integrated its original exhibitions into a cycle of temporary exhibitions about Slovenian travellers and collectors who lived and travelled on other continents (fig. 107). Originally entitled *Our Travellers Abroad – Collectors*, the cycle was first renamed *Our Travellers – Collectors* and later *Our Travellers Abroad – Collectors and Researchers*. Beginning with the exhibition *Mexican Masks (Mehiške maske)* in 1976,²¹ guest exhibitions were shown as part of the cycle *Presenting the Peoples of Non-Aligned Countries* and later under the names *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned* and *Cultural Creativity of Non-Aligned and Friendly Countries*. The two thematic cycles, to which the exhibitions were not consistently assigned, suggest that the museum differentiated between exhibitions resulting from the collecting activities of individuals from the territory of Slovenia over various periods of time and guest exhibitions resulting

16 Nova Gorica: *Africa in the Collections of SEM (Afrika v zbirkah SEM, 1967)*; Intershop in Ljubljana: *Egypt (Egipt, 1971)* and *India (Indija, 1972)*; Celje, Murska Sobota and Trbovlje: *Vietnam, 1971*; Slovenj Gradec and Novo Mesto: *Vietnam, 1972*; Velenje: *Batik in East African Contemporary Art (Batik v sodobni umetnosti vzhodne Afrike, 1972)*; Nova Gorica: *Chinese Historical Palaces in Beijing (Kitajske zgodovinske palače v Pekingu, 1973)*; Dušan Kveder's Exhibition Pavilion in Ptuj: *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned (Kulture neuvrščenih dežel, 1978)*; Nova Gorica and Postojna: *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned (Kulture neuvrščenih, 1979)*; Kranj: *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned (Kulture neuvrščenih, 1981)*. Three exhibitions also travelled to Belgrade: *The Art of East Africa (Umetnost vzhodne Afrike, 1973)*, *Batik in East African Contemporary Art, 1980*; and *The Art of Zaire, Congo and Cameroon (Umetnost Zaira, Konga in Kameruna, 1982)*, the last two to the Museum of African Art.

17 Celje Regional Museum: the exhibitions *53 Stations of the Tōkaidō (53 poštnih postaj na cesti Tōkaidō, 1965)* and *Collector and Writer Alma Karlin – Ten-Year Travels Around the World (10 let potovanja okrog sveta zbirateljice in pisateljice Alme Karlin, 1967)*. Ptuj – Ormož Regional Museum: *Dušan Kveder's Ethnological Collection (Etnološka zbirka Dušana Kvedra), 1969*.

18 The exhibitions *Bronze Sculpture from West Africa (Bronasta skulptura zahodne Afrike, 1979)* and *West African Ceramics (Zahodnoafriška keramika, 1984)*.

19 Exceptions were *Exhibition of the Chinese Painters Chow Chian Chiu and Chow Leung Chen from Hong Kong (Razstava kitajskih slikarjev Chow Chian Chiu in Chow Leung Chen iz Hongkonga, 1968)*, which presented painters whose works drew on rich Chinese culture and were kept by a Slovenian collector in his private collection, and the guest exhibitions *Graphic Art of Canadian Eskimo (Grafična umetnost kanadskih Eskimov, 1976)*, which showed traditional cultural symbols, and *Nandalal Bose: An Exhibition by an Indian Painter (Nandalal Bose: Razstava indijskega slikarja, 1986)*, whose works drew on Asian aesthetic traditions rather than European modernism. These artists were probably chosen because their works strongly emphasised tradition.

20 Several exhibitions were not staged in the Goričane Castle but in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana – including the original exhibitions *Indonesian Folk Art (Ljudska umetnost Indonezije, 1964)* and *Vietnam, 1970*, and the guest exhibitions *The Shakers: Life and Production of a Community in the Pioneering Days of America (Tresavci: Življenje in delo neke skupnosti v pionirskih dneh Amerike, 1976)*, *American Folk Art (Tradition of Tradition) (Ameriška ljudska umetnost (izročilo izročila), 1985)* and *Cyprus – the Island of Venus: People and Life (Ciper – otok Venere: Ljudje in življenje, 1985)* – or in the exhibition venue Arkade: *Norway in Paintings and Dolls (Norveška v slikah in lutkah, 1968)* and *Norwegian Folk Art (Norveška ljudska umetnost, 1970)*.

21 Mexico was never a full member of the Non-Aligned Movement (even today it still has observer status) but took part in meetings of developing countries (e.g. the *Cairo Conference on the Problems of Economic Development* in 1962) and signed bilateral agreements with non-aligned countries. More on this in: Vanni Pettinà, "Global Horizons: Mexico, the Third World, and the Non-Aligned Movement at the Time of the 1961 Belgrade Conference", *The International History Review*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2016, pp. 741–764. International activities and the focus on solving the problems of developing countries intensified in the 1970s, when the country was led by President Luis Echeverría, who set the future direction of Mexican foreign policy. See: Georges Fauriol, "Differing Perceptions in Foreign Policy and Security: The Mexican Foreign Policy Tradition", *California Western International Law Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2015, pp. 7–19.



Installation view of *Africa in the Collections of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum* at Goričane Castle in 1966.

from exchanges between non-aligned countries or other cases of international cooperation and collaboration with Yugoslav museums. There were other inconsistencies, for example, the inclusion of exhibitions from developing countries that were not members of the Non-Aligned Movement in the cycle of exhibitions from non-aligned countries.

The museum organised guest exhibitions from developing countries even before 1976, but their increase in the mid-1970s and their subsequent decline in the second half of the 1980s reflect more general changes both in the Non-Aligned Movement itself and in Yugoslav cultural policy. According to historian Dragan Bogetić, the movement stabilised at the end of the 1960s with the formation of its first permanent bodies. The 1970s were generally regarded as the “golden age of the Non-Aligned Movement”, as the member states focused on reorganising existing international economic relations and solving the economic problems of developing countries. After the death of President Tito in 1980, disagreements between the members increased again

and the Non-Aligned Movement began to lose its influence.²² Within Yugoslav cultural policy, the increase in guest exhibitions in Goričane in the second half of the 1970s can be attributed to the reorganisation of the sector, which gave the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for International Scientific, Educational, Cultural and Technical Cooperation more responsibility for organising exhibitions.

Exhibition Discourses in the Museum of Non-European Cultures

With its original and guest exhibitions, the Museum of Non-European Cultures mobilised various discourses that reflected and simultaneously reinforced existing political and cultural tendencies. There were five dominant discourses that addressed the importance of the National Liberation Struggle for Yugoslavia and other member states of the Non-Aligned Movement and developing countries, emphasised non-aligned policies, defended anticolonialism, contributed to the strengthening of national identity by highlighting the role of Slovenian collectors and also contributed to the exoticisation of the Other. The discourse of the National Liberation Struggle was emphasised by the museum mainly in the first decade of its existence, although it can also be detected in the 1980s. In the mid-1970s, it was gradually replaced by a focus on non-alignment and the role of culture and art in the fight against colonialism. The focus on Slovenian collectors and the exoticisation of the Other run through the museum’s entire existence. In the mid-1970s, however, there are some rare appeals to overcome Eurocentrism and European criteria for the valorisation of other cultures, especially in media coverage of the exhibitions. While the discourses of the National Liberation Struggle, non-alignment and anticolonialism were less present and always linked to the commemoration of a specific past or focusing attention on current events, the discourses on Slovenians and the Other reveal deeper and more entrenched conceptions of the self and the Other. The discourses used reflect and reinforce these conceptions, as I will show below. I will also try to shed light on the influence of Yugoslav non-alignment policies on the museum’s activities.

I have analysed these discourses on the basis of a review of scientific and professional articles dealing with the museum’s activities, focusing on the exhibition practices, its exhibition catalogues and the articles published between 1960 and 1990 in daily newspapers (*Delo*, *Večer*, *Ljubljanski dnevnik* and later *Dnevnik*, *Primorski dnevnik*), weekly newspapers (*Komunist*, *Tovariš*, *7 dni*, *Nedeljski dnevnik*) and the biweekly magazine *Naši razgledi*, as well as other periodicals. I also analysed the available archive material from the SEM and from Marinka Oblak, the niece of the museum’s curator Pavla Štrukelj.

22 Dragan Bogetić, “Jugoslavija i nesvrstanost: Prilog prevazilaženju prerasuda i stereotipa”, *Annales*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2014, pp. 615–624.

The Discourse of the National Liberation Struggle

In the first years of its existence, the envisioned social function of the museum was not centred on Yugoslav foreign policy and its orientation towards non-alignment but on the political discourse of the National Liberation Struggle, which was present throughout the period under discussion here. This discourse was largely linked to Goričane Castle itself, which served as a place of remembrance of the regional conference of the CPY that took place there in 1934. When the museum opened in September 1964, the memorial room was inaugurated marking the 30th anniversary of the conference (fig. 108). In 1984, it was renovated and a new exhibition room was added, highlighting the castle's role as a Nazi assembly centre during the Second World War. The last two exhibitions and accompanying events were organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the regional conference of the CPY and the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the museum in Goričane.²³

The museum not only focused on the significance of the National Liberation Struggle for socialist Yugoslavia but also emphasised it as a unifying bridge between nations in the exhibitions of non-European collections. It was particularly emphasised in the exhibition *Vietnam* that opened at the SEM in Ljubljana in 1970. The exhibition was organised in cooperation with the Republican Coordinating Committee for Aid to Victims of Imperial Violence at the Republican Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People and was dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. The newspaper *Ljubljanski dnevnik* reported that the exhibition drew attention to the National Liberation Struggle of the Vietnamese people and was inspired by the realisation that “despite our rather extensive knowledge about the persistent and fierce struggle of the Vietnamese for freedom, we know very little about the cultural and historical character of this nation.”²⁴ The organisers placed newspaper advertisements and asked those who had travelled to Vietnam and bought artefacts there or received them as gifts to lend them to the museum in order to present the country as authentically as possible. The exhibition not only showcased the ethnological characteristics of the Vietnamese, but also highlighted Yugoslavia's efforts to support them in their struggle and emphasised the similarities between the struggles of the Yugoslav and Vietnamese people for their freedom, independence

23 Anonymous, “Proslava v Goričanah v Medvodah”, *Delo*, vol. 26, no. 217, 17.9.1984, p. 1; Beti Bobnar, “Slovesnost ob 50-letnici pokrajinske konference KPJ in 20-letnici muzeja Goričane: Goričane so oživele”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 33, no. 255, 17.9.1984, p. 2; Branko Sosič, “Plod večletnega trdega dela mladih slovenskih komunistov”, *Delo*, vol. 26, no. 217, 17.9.1984, p. 2.

24 Anonymous, “Razstava o Vietnamu”, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 20, no. 335, 11.12.1970, p. 5.

108



109



108

Memorial room, installed on the 30th anniversary of the Slovene Regional Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1964.

109

From the exhibition *Vietnam* at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum on Prešernova Street in Ljubljana in 1970.

and self-determination (fig. 109).²⁵ The media coverage pointed out the topicality of the exhibition and its criticism of the Vietnam War.²⁶

The exhibition *Mongolija: Exhibition of Hele and Stane Kolman's Collection (Mongolija: Razstava zbirke Hele in Staneta Kolmana)*, which opened in 1971, also emphasised the National Liberation Struggle, albeit of the Mongolian people. Boris Kuhar wrote in the catalogue that the exhibition was “a contribution of our museum to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the victory of the revolution in this country and the founding of the Mongolian People's Republic”.²⁷ The role of the National Liberation Struggle in the Second World War was also emphasised by journalist Franc Fideršek, in the catalogue of the exhibition *The Cultures of Non-Aligned Countries: Dušan Kveder's Exhibition Pavilion from 12 October to 15 November 1978*, who foregrounded the importance of the struggle of “nations for national liberation and social progress”²⁸ in his introduction on the politics of non-alignment. The exhibition was organised by the SEM and took place in the Ptuj Museum on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the *Kočevje Assembly – Assembly of the Delegates of the Slovene Nation*.

In 1981, the National Liberation Struggle was highlighted on several occasions. The exhibition *Mexican Folk Art (Mehiška ljudska umetnost)* was opened on the eve of Insurrection Day (22 July), which was an important part of its promotion.²⁹ According to the newspaper *Delo*, the exhibition *El Dorado: Colombian Gold from the 1st to the 16th Century (El Dorado: Zlato iz Kolumbije od 1. do 16. stoletja)* was organised to mark the founding of the Liberation Front on 27 April and the 20th anniversary of the *1st Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement* in Belgrade.³⁰ Political discourse was also activated for the 1982 exhibition *Art of the DPR Korea (Umetnost DLR Koreje)*, about which the journalist Olga Ratej wrote: “It was organised in a friendly tone and with political reverence: with flowers, national flags and photographs of the Korean leader Kim Il Sung and our late president

25 *Vietnam* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1970.

26 VŠ, “V Ljubljani razstava o Vietnamu”, *Delo*, vol. 12, no. 346, 22.12.1970, p. 16; Anonymous, “Razstava o Vietnamu”, *Delo*, vol. 12, no. 332, 8.12.1970, p. 5.

27 Boris Kuhar, “Mongolska zbirka Hele in Staneta Kolmana”, in: *Mongolija: Razstava zbirke Hele in Staneta Kolmana* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1971, p. 2.

28 Franc Fideršek, “Politika neuvrščenosti”, in: Štefka Cobelj (ed.), *Kulture neuvrščenih dežel: Razstavní paviljon Dušana Kvedra v Ptujju od 12. oktobra do 15. novembra 1978* (exhibition catalogue), Pokrajinski muzej v Ptujju, Ptuj, 1978, p. 5.

29 D. Ž., “Razkošje mehiške ljudske umetnosti”, *Primorski dnevnik*, vol. 37, no. 11004, 2.8.1981, p. 5; Anonymous, “Mehiška ljudska umetnost”, *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 166, 21.7.1981, p. 8.

30 B.[oris] K.[uhar], “Razstava oživlja staro in znano legendo o zlatu”, *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 90, 18.4.1981, p. 6.

Josip Broz - Tito.”³¹ The discourse on the National Liberation Struggle as a unifying bridge between Yugoslavia and other non-aligned countries was taken up again and again, but from the mid-1970s it began to merge with the focus on non-alignment.

The Discourse of Non-Alignment

The exhibition catalogues from the first decade of the Museum of Non-European Cultures' activities show that the focus was on friendship with the countries whose material culture was presented, while non-alignment was rarely mentioned directly. Boris Kuhar, the then director of the museum, often wrote in his introductory texts about the importance of presenting the cultures and art of friendly countries;³² friendship between the countries was also emphasised by other authors.³³ Cultural and educational institutions were slow to embrace the concept of non-alignment, as noted by the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which emphasised their lack of interest in cooperation with developing countries.³⁴ Until the mid-1970s, a similarly modest interest in this type of cooperation was also expressed in Slovenia, as the Slovene Orientalist Society³⁵ and in particular the archaeologist and Egyptologist Bernarda Perc, who tried unsuccessfully for years to bring an exhibition from Egypt to Slovenia,³⁶ repeatedly signalled. Perc argued in favour of paying more attention to Oriental studies in our region, “because of Yugoslavia's geographical location, its cultural heritage and its foreign policy orientation”.³⁷ In the newspaper *Dnevnik*, she pointed out that the endeavour to expand cooperation between developing countries would remain

31 Olga Ratej, “Korejska uporabna umetnost iz bogate kulturne dediščine”, *Delo*, vol. 24, no. 262, 10.11.1982, p. 7.

32 Boris Kuhar, “Ljudska umetnost Indonezije v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju”, in: *Ljudska umetnost Indonezije: Razstava zbirke Vere in Aleša Beblerja* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1964, p. 3; *Indijsko zanatstvo: Izložba* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej primenjene umetnosti and Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, Belgrade, 1968; the catalogue is accompanied by an unsigned supplement in Slovenian. Kuhar, 1971 (see no. 27), p. 2.

33 Raden Subijakto, “Razstava, ki nas seznanja z Indonezijo”, in: *Ljudska umetnost Indonezije: Razstava zbirke Vere in Aleša Beblerja* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1964, p. 4; Stane Kolman, “Mongolija”, in: *Mongolija: Razstava zbirke Hele in Staneta Kolmana* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1971, pp. 4–6.

34 Gabrič, 2022 (see no. 1), pp. 9–27; Merhar, 2019 (see no. 1), pp. 43–69.

35 Jože Kastelic et al., “Predgovor”, in: Milan Štante (ed.), *Simpozij Orientalistika in neuvrščeni svet: Stanje in perspektive jugoslovanske orientalistike*, Slovensko orientalistično društvo, Ljubljana, 1977, pp. v–vi.

36 Bernarda Perc, “Razstava iz Egipta”, *Delo*, vol. 14, no. 330, 5.12.1972, p. 7; Bernarda Perc, “Mednarodna razstava: Stari Egipt”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 21, no. 340, 16.12.1972, p. 5.

37 Bernarda Perc, “K neevropskim izročilom”, *Delo*, vol. 17, no. 7, 10.1.1975, p. 9.

a mere political catchphrase “until there is an awareness among us that we belong to the non-aligned countries”.³⁸

More extensive references to the policy of non-alignment and the corresponding coordination of the museum programme and communication with the public can only be found in the Museum of Non-European Cultures in the second half of the 1970s. With the aim of presenting the politics of non-alignment and the cultures of selected non-aligned countries, the museum prepared the exhibition *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned (Kulture neuvrščenih)* in 1977, specifying its collections as a starting point for this endeavour. The announcement of the exhibition emphasised that the aim was to present the movement as clearly as possible, to highlight Josip Broz - Tito's contribution to the “development and spread of the idea of the non-aligned world”, to provide basic facts about all members of the movement and to define the “substance and value of the various African, Asian and South American cultures”.³⁹ According to the report on the exhibitions organised in Goričane, which lists the exhibition *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned: Sri Lanka and India (Kulture neuvrščenih: Šrilanka in Indija)*⁴⁰ for the year 1977, these two countries were presented. This information remains unverified, as a catalogue presumably published by the museum could not be found and the press only announced the exhibition without following it up. The Goričane museum had also prepared an exhibition on the cultures of the non-aligned countries for other venues. At least in the case of the exhibition organised at the Ptuj Regional Museum in 1978, the content was broader. This is clear from the exhibition catalogue *The Cultures of Non-Aligned Countries: Dušan Kveder's Exhibition Pavilion from 12 October to 15 November 1978*, edited by Štefka Cobelj,⁴¹ curator at the Ptuj Regional Museum. The text on the politics of non-alignment was written by journalist Franc Fideršek, who shed light on the origins and development of the movement and emphasised the role of President Tito. A short text entitled “The Cultures of the Non-Aligned” by Boris Kuhar was also included, in which he emphasised that the non-aligned countries had to free themselves from colonialism in order to “begin the search for their history, their identity, their authentic culture, their own self, all that was denied to them for centuries by the white colonial masters”.⁴² The exhibition was intended to fulfil the commitments

38 Bernarda Perc, “Stari Egipt v Ljubljani”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 24, no. 76, 19.3.1975, p. 5.

39 Vili Vuk, “Kulture neuvrščenih”, *Večer*, vol. 33, no. 40, 18.2.1977, p. 6.

40 Anonymous, “Razstave Etnografskega muzeja: (1963–1983)”, *Slovenski etnograf*, vol. 31, 1980/1982, pp. 219–229.

41 For the list of this exhibition's tour stops, see footnote number 16.

42 Boris Kuhar, “Kulture neuvrščenih”, in: Štefka Cobelj (ed.), *Kulture neuvrščenih dežel: Razstavní paviljon Dušana Kvedra v Ptujú od 12. oktobra do 15. novembra 1978* (exhibition catalogue), Pokrajinski muzej v Ptujú, Ptuj, 1978, p. 9.

of the *5th Summit of the Non-Aligned* in Colombo in 1976 and to be part of a larger cycle presenting the cultures and art of the peoples of the non-aligned countries.⁴³ Countries represented in the exhibition included Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Kenya and Tanzania from the African continent, Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia from the Asian continent and Mexico and Peru from Latin America.⁴⁴ Kuhar explained that the aim behind the exhibition was to gain a better understanding of the history, culture and art of these countries, and thus also of our own history and culture, but also emphasised our proximity to the non-aligned countries and our duty to get to know them:

We are presenting these cultures because the peoples of the non-aligned countries are closer to us than ever before. They have become our equal partners in the great movement of the present and the future. These countries have become our equal partners in economic relations and in a broad exchange of cultural achievements. And equal partners require equal consideration at all levels.⁴⁵

The idea of non-alignment was emphasised above all by the guest exhibitions by countries from other continents. Below is an overview of all guest exhibitions by year from 1965, when the museum in Goričane hosted the first exhibition from another continent, to 1990, when the museum was temporarily closed. The overview shows that the exhibitions come from non-aligned countries, developing countries that were not members of the movement, and also from Western countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America. The exhibitions from the non-aligned countries are analysed first, followed by those from other countries, whose status is explained in detail in the footnotes.⁴⁶

An overview of the guest exhibitions prepared by the governments and museums of the non-aligned countries and other non-European countries shows a dynamic mobilisation of the discourse on non-alignment in the promotion of exhibitions. In the second half of the

43 Ibid. Kuhar noted that Tunisia was represented by the Tunisian artist Zoubeir Turki. The exhibition also featured the sculptures of Kenyan artist Louis Mwaniki from Nairobi. Other countries were represented with older everyday objects or anonymous older and contemporary artworks.

44 Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, Tanzania and Kenya in 1964 and Peru in 1973. Mexico was never a member of the movement.

45 Kuhar, 1978 (see no. 42), p. 11.

46 Unless otherwise stated, I am relying on information from the Non-Aligned Movement website, archived by the digital library website Internet Archive as part of the Wayback Machine initiative, 2019, URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/2019032-7085806/https://mnoal.org/nam-members> (accessed 26.1.2024).

1970s, the movement was mentioned with increasing frequency, but in the second half of the 1980s its momentum began to wane. In the catalogues produced for the guest exhibitions, non-alignment was usually mentioned only briefly, emphasising friendship with a non-aligned country and the importance of getting to know its culture, but without reflecting on the links between the countries in detail. The catalogues usually dealt with the history of the country and certain aspects of the culture or art of the people whose material culture the exhibitions presented.

The Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries collaborated with the Museum of Non-European Cultures for the first time in 1965 when it supported the exhibition *Black Art (Črnska umetnost)*. The exhibition was the result of a collaboration between the embassies of Senegal, Mali and Guinea and the African Institute in Dakar⁴⁷ and was conceived as part of the international promotional campaign for the *World Festival of Negro Arts*, which took place in Dakar a year later. The criticism from Slovenia was that the exhibition lacked depth and was not systematic, which was attributed to the insufficient funding of the field.⁴⁸ In 1969, the commission was involved in the organisation of the exhibitions *Indian Folk Art (Indijska ljudska umetnost)* and *Folk and Applied Art of Chile (Čilska ljudska in uporabna umetnost)*.⁴⁹ In the same year, the Goričane museum hosted the exhibition *Gandhi – Centenary of His Birth (Gandhi – stoletnica rojstva)*; the authorship of the exhibition is unknown.⁵⁰ As part of international cooperation, the SEM organised the exhibition *Painting: Washington Art Today (Slikarstvo: Sodobna washingtonska umetnost)* in 1973 in collaboration with the American Information Center, which featured the works of three contemporary American painters.

The importance of getting to know the friendly and non-aligned countries was first emphasised in 1976 on the occasion of the exhibition *Mexican Masks*, although Mexico was not a member of the movement.⁵¹ Also in 1976, two other exhibitions were organised outside the exchange between the non-aligned countries: *The Shakers: Life and Production of a Community in the Pioneering Days of America (Tresavci: Življenje in delo neke skupnosti v pionirskih dneh Amerike)* and *Graphic Art of Canadian Eskimo (Grafična umetnost kanadskih Eskimov)*, which showcased the art of Canada's indigenous peoples. In 1977, non-alignment was again highlighted with the exhibitions *Pre-Columbian Art*

47 Mali and Guinea were members of the Non-Aligned Movement since 1961 and Senegal from 1964.

48 A.[leksander] Bassin, "Črnska umetnost", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 15, no. 332, 10.12.1965, p. 7.

49 India was the founding member of the movement. Chile joined the movement in 1971.

50 Anonymous, "Razstave ...", 1980/1982 (see no. 40), pp. 219–229.

51 See footnote no. 21.

*from Peru (Predkolumbijska umetnost Peruja)*⁵² and *The Culture of Amazon Indians in the Republic of Venezuela (Kultura Indijancev na ozemlju Amazonke v republiki Venezueli)*.⁵³ In 1978, no exhibition from a non-aligned country was organised. In 1979, the Indonesian embassy in Belgrade sponsored the exhibition *Contemporary Indonesian Graphic Art (Indonezijska sodobna grafika)*. Also, in 1979, the SEM collaborated with the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico and the Mexican embassy in Belgrade to organise the exhibition *The Art of the Aztecs (Umetnost Aztekov)*.

In 1980, the museum organised two exhibitions: *The Art of the Makonde from Tanzania (Umetnost Makonde iz Tanzanije)*, which was sponsored by the Tanzanian government as part of cultural and educational cooperation between the countries, and *Awakened Africa in Poetry and Literature (Prebujena Afrika v pesmi in literaturi)*, which presented contemporary publishing from 13 African countries. The books were brought from Belgrade after the symposium *Days of Information on African Literature*. Also in 1980, visitors to Goričane were able to see the exhibition *Chinese Embroidery (Kitajske vezenine)*, which travelled to European cities and was staged in Goričane as part of bilateral cultural and educational cooperation, although China was also not a member of the movement.⁵⁴

1981 was a productive year for the museum, as it organised no fewer than six guest exhibitions. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the *1st Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement*, which took place in Belgrade, the museum presented the exhibitions *Syria Through the Centuries (Sirija skozi stoletja)*, prepared by the Ethnographic Museum in Damascus and co-organised by the Syrian embassy in Belgrade and the SEM,⁵⁵ and *El Dorado: Colombian Gold from the 1st to the 16th Century*, prepared by the Gold Museum in Bogotá, Colombia, although the country was not yet a member of the movement at that time.⁵⁶

52 Boris Kuhar, "Razstava umetnosti starega Peruja", in: Pavla Štrukelj (ed.), *Predkolumbijska umetnost Peruja* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1977, p. 6; Sandi Sitar, "Predkolumbijska umetnost Peruja v Goričanah: Razstava leta", *Dnevnik*, vol. 26, no. 235, 30.8.1977, p. 5.

53 *Indijanci Amazonke: Kultura Indijancev na ozemlju Amazonke v republiki Venezueli: Etnološka zbirka Edgarda Gonzalesa Niña* (exhibition catalogue), Pavla Štrukelj (ed.), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1977, p. 2. Venezuela joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1989.

54 China became an observer member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1992. See: Tom Fowdy, "China's foreign policy is rooted in non-alignment", *china.org.cn*, 30.3.2021, URL: http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2021-03/30/content_77359553.htm (accessed 26.1.2024).

55 Anonymous, "Sirijska umetnost v Muzeju Goričane", *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 216, 18.9.1981, p. 5. Syria became a member of the movement in 1964.

56 P.[avla] Š.[trukelj], "Kultura zlatarske umetnosti iz Kolumbije: Umetniška dela Indijancev iz obdobja od 1. do 16. stoletja", *Primorski dnevnik*, vol. 37, no. 10926, 3.5.1981, p. 4; K.[uhar], 1981 (see no. 30), p. 6. Colombia became a member of the movement in 1983.

The museum also presented an exhibition of *Mexican Folk Art* in cooperation with the Mexican government. Additionally, with funding support from UNESCO's international funding for cultural development, the SEM and the Museum of African Art in Belgrade organised an exhibition titled *South of Sahara (Južno od Sahare)*, featuring art and documentary photographs by Israeli photographer Marli Shamir. Two exhibitions were also organised in cooperation with the embassies of Australia and New Zealand, although these countries were not members of the movement.⁵⁷

Four guest exhibitions were organised in 1982. Only the exhibition *Art of the DPR Korea*⁵⁸ was part of the exchange with the non-aligned countries, of which we only know that it was organised by the SEM, as no further information about other co-organisers was given in the press or in the exhibition catalogue. The exhibitions *Australian Contemporary Pottery (Avstralsko sodobno lončarstvo)*, prepared by the Australian Government's Chamber of Arts and Crafts and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁵⁹ *The Ceramics and Porcelain of China (Kitajska keramika in porcelan)*, which travelled in Europe and was staged in Goričane as part of the bilateral agreement, and *Folk Art in Ecuador (Ljudska umetnost Ekvadorja)*,⁶⁰ whose organiser cannot be identified other than the museum in Goričane, did not fall within the scope of the exchange with the non-aligned countries.

In the following two years, no exchange exhibitions from non-aligned countries were organised in Goričane either, but there were two exhibitions from China. In 1983, the National Museum of History in Beijing organised the exhibition *Chinese New Year: An Exhibition of New Year Paintings (Kitajsko novo leto: Razstava novoletnih slik)* and, a year later, the exhibition *Chinese Paper Cuttings (Kitajske papirnat izrezanke)*. In 1985, visitors once again had the opportunity to see an exhibition from a non-aligned country, namely the exhibition *Cyprus – The Island of Venus: People and Life (Ciper – otok Venere: Ljudje in življenje)*, sponsored by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus⁶¹ as part of the Cyprus-Yugoslavia cultural cooperation programme. In 1985, the museum organised the exhibition *American Folk Art*

Today: Traditions of a Many Peoples (Ameriška ljudska umetnost danes: Tradicije številnih narodov) in cooperation with the American Cultural Center and the exhibition *Mongolian Contemporary Applied Art (Sodobna uporabna umetnost Mongolije)* in cooperation with the Union of Mongolian Artists from Ulaanbaatar.⁶²

In 1986, the exhibition *Nandalal Bose: An Exhibition by an Indian Painter (Nandalal Bose: Razstava indijskega slikarja)* was staged and in 1988, the exhibition *Get to Know Tanzania – from the Discovery of the Oldest Human Skull to the Present Day (Spoznajte Tanzanijo – od odkritja najstarejše človeške lobanje do danes)*, which was organised in cooperation with the "Josip Broz Tito" Gallery for the Art of the Non-Aligned Countries in Titograd⁶³ (today Podgorica, Montenegro) and prepared by Tanzanian experts at the invitation of Yugoslavia. Both exhibitions were organised as part of the exchange between the non-aligned countries.

A closer look at the guest exhibitions from other continents shows that more than half of the exhibitions came from countries that were not (yet) members of the Non-Aligned Movement, although some of them – especially those from Africa and South America – were embedded in this discourse. This suggests that a clear distinction between the non-aligned countries and the countries that were not members of the movement, but with which the museum cooperated on the basis of international agreements, was not particularly important. This direction was possibly taken for reasons of political expediency, as some of these countries joined the movement later, so cultural exchange can be seen as a precursor to this goal. A review of catalogues and other documents has shown that the narratives about the cultures and heritage of the non-aligned did not differ significantly from the narratives about the non-member countries. According to the sources analysed, the Non-Aligned Movement was only specifically addressed in the original exhibition *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned (Kulture neuvrščenih, 1977)*. This could suggest that non-alignment also served as a promotional manoeuvre and a way to secure funding for the exhibitions,⁶⁴ allowing the museum to embed its exhibitions and discourses within the existing political framework of international cooperation and exchange. Nevertheless, it must be

57 The Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, in cooperation with the New Zealand embassy, organised the exhibition *Tangata – the World as Maori See It (Tangata – pogled Maorov na svet)*. The exhibition *The Art of Aborigines – Indigenous Australians* was organised by the Aboriginal Arts Committee of the Australia Council. The exhibitions focused on the theme of indigenous cultures, which falls within the remit of an ethnographic museum.

58 North Korea became a member of the movement in 1975.

59 Olga Ratej, "Lepotije s treh celin v goričanskem muzeju", *Delo*, vol. 24, no. 65, 19.3.1982, p. 11.

60 Ecuador joined the movement in 1983.

61 Cyprus was a member of the movement from 1961 to 2004.

62 Mongolia joined the movement in 1993.

63 The "Josip Broz Tito" Gallery for the Art of the Non-Aligned Countries was inaugurated in 1984 directly under the auspices of the Non-Aligned Movement in Titograd with the aim of collecting and presenting the arts and cultures of the non-aligned and developing countries. See Bojana Piškur, "Južna ozvezdja: Druge zgodovine, druge modernosti", in: Tamara Soban (ed.), *Južna ozvezdja: Poetike neuvrščenih* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2019, pp. 9–24.

64 Boris Kuhar, interview, conducted by Tina Palaić, 28.4.2016.

emphasised that some of the museum's exhibition projects were critical of colonialism and pointed to the devastating consequences it had on society and cultural development in the former colonies. Although the movement itself was not often thematised, some exhibitions drew attention to the principles advocated by the movement, in particular the preservation of heritage and tradition, but also greater fairness and equality between countries.

The Discourse of Anticolonialism

The longstanding efforts of the colonised countries to gain their independence from the colonial powers bore fruit after the Second World War. Culture and cultural heritage played an important role in these processes, as they legitimised the demands for independence and at the same time enabled the former colonies to consolidate their new place in the global system by referring to their long-established cultural traditions. The Non-Aligned Movement placed great emphasis on the anticolonial discourse and often associated it with cultural resistance.⁶⁵ As Bojana Piškur noted, “the most significant component in the relationship between Yugoslavia and the Third World was without a doubt Yugoslavia's identification with and support of anti-colonial struggles globally”.⁶⁶ The Museum of Non-European Cultures' original and guest exhibitions similarly drew attention to the damaging effects of colonialism on the culture and art of subjugated peoples and the importance of their liberation.⁶⁷ Boris Kuhar's exhibition *Akamba – Makonde: The Art of East Africa (Akamba-Makonde: Umetnost vzhodne Afrike)*, which opened in 1970, explicitly emphasised the role of art as a strategy of resistance to colonialism:

Another important feature of the contemporary Makonde must be mentioned. And that is the depiction of resistance to oppression and enslavement. It is reflected above all in sculptures, but also works depicting groups, in which folk and symbolic figures meet in love or in battle. Art has thus also become a means by which these people express their striving for renewal, for a war of liberation. The demons, ghosts and grotesque images familiar from tradition are used today to represent the demons of hunger, exploitation, fear and dehumanisation in colonialism. They represent the struggle against the collaborative role of the church. Nandege and shaitan are still with us, but now as evil spirits

65 Tran Van Dinh, “Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism”, *The Black Scholar (The Non-Aligned Movement)*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1976, pp. 40–41.

66 Piškur, 2019 (see no. 63), p. 13.

67 See Subijakto, 1964 (see no. 33), p. 4; Boris Kuhar, untitled, in: Črnska umetnost (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1965, n.p.

of the modern world, the spirits of the struggle between the forces of colonialism and the power of the people fighting for their freedom.⁶⁸

In the case of the exhibition *The Culture of the Amazon Indians in the Republic of Venezuela (Kultura Indijancev na ozemlju Amazonke v republiki Venezueli, 1977)*, the press drew attention to the greed of capitalism and the harmful consequences of the expansion of Western civilisation in this region. Sandi Sitar pointed out in the newspaper *Nedeljski dnevnik* that civilisation also brings the exploiters of raw materials into the Amazon Rainforest, which endangers the lives of the indigenous peoples in the Amazon and Orinoco basins. He saw this exhibition not just as a display of ethnographic material, but as part of a humane action “in which we all participate with due responsibility” and which sheds light on the question of “the survival of the remains of a once great culture in Slovenia too”.⁶⁹ The historical role of the Spanish in the destruction of indigenous cultures in Latin America was also highlighted in the exhibitions *The Art of the Aztecs (1979)*,⁷⁰ *El Dorado: Colombian Gold from the 1st to the 16th Century (1981)* and *Folk Art in Ecuador (1982)*.⁷¹ In addition to the devastation and plundering of the community by the newcomers, reviews of the *El Dorado* exhibition also emphasised the looting of tombs and the mining of gold.⁷² The review of the exhibition *The Art of Aborigines – Indigenous Australians (Umetnost Aboriginov – staroselcev Avstralije, 1981)* in the newspaper *Večer* called attention to the historical and current destruction of indigenous culture by white colonisation.⁷³

The museum also prepared socially engaged exhibitions to draw attention to the pressing social issues of the day. The exhibition *Food*

68 Boris Kuhar, *Akamba – Makonde: Umetnost vzhodne Afrike* (exhibition catalogue), Slovenski etnografski muzej, Ljubljana, 1970, pp. 7–8. Kuhar emphasised this view on the role of art on the occasion of the Tanzanian government-sponsored guest exhibition *The Art of the Makonde from Tanzania* in 1980. See: Boris Kuhar, “Umetnost Makonde iz Tanzanije”, *Naši razgledi*, vol. 29, no. 142, 5.7.1980, p. 427.

69 Sandi Sitar, “Ob razstavi o Indijancih Amazonke pri nas: Indijanci v Goričanah”, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, vol. 26, no. 91, 3.4.1977, p. 28.

70 Gorazd Makarovič, “‘Prišli smo samo spat’: Za evropske razmere presenetljive kulturnozgodovinske predstave”, *Delo (Sobotna priloga)*, vol. 21, no. 145, 23.6.1979, p. 25; Boris Kuhar, “Zaklad azteške kulture na ogled v Goričanah”, *Delo*, vol. 21, no. 127, 2.6.1979, p. 6.

71 V.[ili] V.[uk], “Ljudska umetnost Ekvadorja: Kulture neuvrščenih na gradu Goričane”, *Večer*, vol. 38, no. 142, 21.6.1982, p. 4.

72 Mario L. Vilhar, “El Dorado v Goričanah: Več kot tisoč obiskovalcev dnevno”, *Javna Tribuna*, vol. 21, no. 203, 1981, p. 6; B. Skalicky, “Kolumbijsko zlato: Priporočamo izlet ob koncu tedna”, *Večer*, vol. 36, no. 110, 15.5.1981, p. 11; Olga Ratej, “‘El Dorado’, zaklad iz zlate Kolumbije”, *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 99, 30.4.1981, p. 6.

73 Vili Vuk, “Odnos do sveta: Razstava v Goričanah: Umetnost staroselcev Avstralije”, *Večer*, vol. 36, no. 169, 25.7.1981, p. 8.



Exhibition panel from the exhibition *Food from Around the World (Africa, Asia)* at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1975.

from *Around the World (Africa, Asia)* (*Kaj jedo po svetu (Afrika, Azija)*, 1975) showed typical foods and objects related to food preparation and eating habits in Africa and Asia. Writings – such as “Two billion people – almost half of humanity are undernourished”; “This year 30 to 40 million people will die of hunger”; “Bread is freedom for the starving” – lined the walls of the gallery and drew attention to the hunger and malnutrition of a large part of the world’s population. The exhibition built on the exoticisation of food and emphasised how different certain habits are compared to ours,⁷⁴ which points to an intertwining of the socially engaged attitude with the processes of

74 Jagoda Vigele, “Okusi so različni”, *7 dni*, vol. 4, no. 47, 20.11.1975, p. 22; Maja Konvalinka, “Jedila, jedilniki, ceniki”, *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 204, 2.9.1975, p. 9.

exoticising the Other and confirms the ambivalent attitude towards non-European nations in the museum’s discourses (fig. 110).

Another exhibition, *South Africa’s Apartheid (Apartheid Južne Afrike)* from 1982, deserves to be highlighted. It was organised by the museum, as can be seen from the announcement in the newspaper, which mentions that it was also shown in other Slovenian cities. It illustrated the historical aspects of the period before colonialism and apartheid in South Africa and the ruinous consequences of the latter for the population. Another important aspect of this exhibition was the inclusion of visitors’ comments and reactions. The exhibition thus functioned as a “living entity” that was constantly updated. Interestingly, the author of the article placed it in a series of exhibitions entitled “The Last Fortresses of Colonialism”,⁷⁵ which shows that the museum planned to dedicate further exhibitions to this theme, but this never happened.

Emphasising the Role of Slovenian Collectors and Strengthening National Identity

Most of the original exhibitions at the Museum of Non-European Cultures were prepared by the curator Pavla Štrukelj (fig. 111).⁷⁶ Some of them were conceived as overview exhibitions of artefacts by country or continent, while others focused on the collections of individual collectors. Štrukelj’s professional and scientific writing on Slovenian collectors focused mainly on important figures of the 19th century and did not address the museum’s practices of cooperation with ambassadors or foreign students. A combination of her articles and media coverage can provide a deeper insight into the two exhibitions that dealt with missionary work in the 19th century. With the exhibition *The Culture of the Black Tribes on the White Nile in the 19th Century (Kultura črnskih plemen ob Belem Nilu v 19. stoletju, 1968)* Pavla Štrukelj presented the efforts of the missionary Ignacij Koblehar in Sudan and present-day South Sudan, and with the exhibition *The Culture of*

75 V.[ili] V.[uk], “Apartheid Južne Afrike: Razstava na Goričanah”, *Večer*, vol. 36, no. 112, 17.5.1982, p. 4.

76 According to the available information about the authors of the exhibitions, the director of the museum, Boris Kuhar, prepared the exhibitions *Akamba – Makonde: The Art of East Africa* (1970) and *Food from Around the World (Africa, Asia)* (1975), as well as the guest exhibition *The Art of the Makonde from Tanzania* (1980) and, for the Velenje Museum, the exhibition *Foit’s Collection of Black Art* (1971). He also prepared three original exhibitions to be hosted in Belgrade and co-authored, with Pavla Štrukelj, the exhibition *The Cultures of the Non-Aligned* (1977), while the rest of the exhibitions were prepared by Pavla Štrukelj. Although Valentinčič Furlan also attributes the exhibition *Batik in the Contemporary Art of East Africa* (1971) to Boris Kuhar, this is not so unambiguous. Some East African art was indeed acquired by Kuhar for the museum, but there is no text from him in the exhibition catalogue. See Valentinčič Furlan, 2024 (see no. 13), pp. 125–163.



Pavla Štrukelj (right) at the 9th International Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) in Chicago in 1973.

the *Ojibwe Indians in the 19th Century* (*Kultura Indijancev Ojibwa v 19. stoletju*, 1975) the missionary activities of Friderik Baraga among the North American natives. In her texts, she portrayed the missionaries as researchers who contributed to a better understanding of the geographical conditions and culture of the people among whom they worked. In doing so, she compared them to Western explorers, but also created a certain distance towards the indigenous peoples who were the subject of the missionaries' explorations. Štrukelj emphasised their self-sacrifice and glorified their activities. She portrayed the missionaries as bearers of civilisation who were active in their role, while the natives were depicted as an anonymous mass and victims of the general social situation who needed help.⁷⁷

This kind of understanding of the role of the missionaries and the situation of the natives among whom they worked is also found in the newspaper coverage of these exhibitions, which suggests that this was also their thematic focus. Vili Vuk, writing for the newspaper

77 For an analysis of her articles see: Tina Palaić, "Pavla Štrukelj: Kustodinja za neevropske kulture v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju med letoma 1955 in 1990", *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2020, pp. 22–33.

Večer, saw the exhibition *The Culture of the Black Tribes on the White Nile in the 19th Century* as "a great confirmation of the success of the explorations of our compatriot Ignacij Knoblehar".⁷⁸ In the newspaper *Nedeljski dnevnik*, Andrej Triler criticised the Western attitude towards the African continent and emphasised Knoblehar's self-sacrifice and his work to help people in need:

Sometimes it seems as if the civilised world proves again and again with its processes how little it knows the people of other continents, how completely incapable it is of engaging with a somewhat different mentality of these people. [...] But Knoblehar loved the black tribes along the Nile. *Although they were black, he saw them as equals*, and not as commodities to be traded or exploited. He learnt about their way of life, he lived like them, he understood them. *He lived for them*. [...] Knoblehar fought against slave hunting and the slave trade, while many of his 'successors' enslaved the entire black continent.⁷⁹

This narrative emphasises the positive aspects of the missionaries' work with the natives, but omits a critical examination of their role in changing the social reality of the people among whom they worked.

Peter Božič, who reviewed the exhibition *The Culture of the Ojibwe Indians in the 19th Century* for the newspaper *Delo*, went even further in his glorification of the missionaries' work and role among the indigenous population. He saw Baraga not only as a baptiser but above all as a preserver and one of the *founders* of Indian culture. This points to a clearly Eurocentric underpinning of the exhibition, which neither provided a broader historical and social context nor reflected on the consequences of the missionaries' activities, let alone how these were linked to imperial politics. Božič idealised Baraga and explained that his willingness to endure any kind of suffering as a missionary resulted from his respect for the right to independence and human dignity. He also emphasised his role as a bearer of civilisation and explained that Baraga taught the natives how to build houses, work and write,⁸⁰ which Pavla Štrukelj also addressed in her discussions of the missionaries' work.⁸¹

78 J.[anez] Z.[adnikar], "Kvedrova etnološka zbirka v Goričanah", *Delo*, vol. 11, no. 291, 23.10.1969, p. 5. See also: V.[ili] V.[uk], "Kultura črnkih plemen: Ob razstavi iz zbirke Ignacija Knobleharja na gradu Goričane", *Večer*, vol. 24, no. 177, 31.7.1968, p. 8.

79 Andrej Triler, "Kultura črnkih plemen ob Belem Nilu v 19. stoletju: Afrika v Goričanah", *Nedeljski dnevnik*, vol. 5, no. 252, 15.9.1968, p. 11. Emphasis in the citation added by the author.

80 Peter Božič, "Slovenec vse za Indijance", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 285, 9.12.1975, p. 10.

81 Pavla Štrukelj, "Etnološka zbirka severnoameriških Indijancev Ojibwa iz 19. stoletja v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju: (Zbiralci Friderik Baraga, Franc Pirc, Ivan Čebul)", *Slovenski etnograf*, vol. 25, no. 25, 1972–1973, pp. 109–142.

The exhibition catalogues and media coverage of the exhibitions can also shed light on the narratives that framed the ambassadors' collecting activities. The authors often emphasised the diligence and dedicated and thorough work of the ambassadors, which allegedly resulted from their interest in and love for the country in which they served. Boris Kuhar, for example, noted that during his service in Indonesia, Aleš Bebler and his wife "amassed a collection of Indonesian folk art with care and determination" and remarked that their collection of Indonesian textiles was one of the few in Europe.⁸² Mario L. Vilhar explained in the newspaper *Plavi putevi* that the Beblers' fascination with indigenous folk art led them to invest all their financial resources in collecting objects, adding that experts considered their collection unique in Europe (fig. 112).⁸³

Similarly, Pavla Štrukelj emphasised the role of the educational background of the ambassador Franček Kos, who was an art historian, in collecting ceramics in Japan. She not only pointed out that one needed an education to collect artworks in Japan but also put Kos on a par with educated Western collectors. Kos began preparing an exhibition for the Museum of Non-European Cultures, but died suddenly before it could be opened. Štrukelj's wish was to organise an exhibition with which "we can remember him and honour him in recognition of the great work he did in faraway Japan with so much joy and which gave us a collection that enables us to understand the beautiful art of Japanese ceramics better and more precisely".⁸⁴ The newspaper *Primorski dnevnik* wrote: "As an erudite art historian and aesthete, Dr Franček Kos and his wife visited many ceramic masters during their stay in Japan and diligently collected artefacts and works of art."⁸⁵ On the occasion of the exhibition of Japanese paintings from Kos' collection a year later (fig. 113), Tit Doberšek wrote a very poetic article for the newspaper *Delo*, which was dedicated to the collectors and highlighted the history of Goričane Castle, at whose door, as he put it, "the East knocked" in 1964:

It was brought to us by those Slovenes from their distant travels, who have travel in their blood and yet know: 'Everywhere is beautiful, but there's no place like home ...'. Each brought with them a bagful of memories: one from the source of the Nile, another from faraway China or from the foothills of Mount Fuji

82 Kuhar, 1964 (see no. 32), p. 3.

83 Mario L. Vilhar, "Vera i dr. Aleš Bebler: Ambasadori kulture", *Plavi putevi*, vol. 5, no. 97, 25.8.1965, p. 25.

84 Pavla Štrukelj, "Sodobna japonska keramika: Razstava v gradu Goričane pri Medvodah", *Delo*, vol. 9, no. 140, 26.5.1967, p. 5.

85 D. K., "Razstava sodobne japonske keramike", *Primorski dnevnik*, vol. 23, no. 6712, 1.6.1967, p. 3.



112
Pavla Štrukelj with Vera Bebler, wife of Aleš Bebler, ambassador to Indonesia, examining their Indonesian collection in the early 1960s.

113
Installation view of the exhibition *Japanese Painting: Presentation of the Collection of Klara and Dr. Franček Kos* at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1968.

or from a myriad of Indonesian islands. And they all marched into the old castle on the Sora River and unlaced their bags.⁸⁶

Similar writings can also be found about the ambassadors Stane Kolman⁸⁷ and Dušan Kveder.⁸⁸

The texts show a tendency to place both the missionaries and the ambassadors on a par with the Western Europeans in their role as explorers and collectors. Despite the emphasis on the cultural and intellectual proximity to the colonial countries, Slovenia's position in the global connections and exchanges that resulted from inter-imperial cooperation or the direct participation of Slovenes in the projects of Western empires was never explicitly addressed in the exhibitions themselves. This was in line with the image that Yugoslavia tried to convey to developing countries: that its goal was never a civilising mission, but to support friendly countries on their path to modernisation.⁸⁹ But basically it amounted to a selective emphasis on the Slovenes' proximity to the civilised West, which can also be read in the light of the consolidation of national identity and, above all, the creation of a sense of cultural proximity to the West, a need that grew out of Slovenia's semi-peripheral or rather intermediate position.

Diametrically opposed to the discourse on the Slovenian collectors is the anticolonial discourse, which points to the ambivalent character of the narratives produced by the museum at this time. However, it also points to a lack of critical reflection on its own position, as this discourse probably unintentionally placed the Slovenians on the side of the colonial project. The Slovenians were also pushed into the role of victims, as shown by the discourse of the National Liberation Struggle, which used resistance against the occupiers, i.e. the colonisers, to create a closeness between the Slovenian people and numerous non-aligned and developing countries. In addition to creating a cultural proximity to the West by emphasising the importance and role of Slovenian collectors, the gap between the Slovenians and the peoples of other continents portrayed was often completed by the exoticisation of the Other.

86 Tit Doberšek, "Nedaleč ob Sori stoji japonski grad", *Delo*, vol. 10, no. 329, 3.12.1968, p. 7.

87 Kuhar, 1971 (see no. 27), p. 2. See also: Anonymous, "Ljubljana: 'Mongolija včeraj in danes'", *Delo*, vol. 13, no. 121, 7.5.1971, p. 5.

88 J.[anez] Z.[adnikar], "Kvedrova etnološka zbirka v Goričanah", *Delo*, vol. 11, no. 291, 23.10.1969, p. 5. See also: V.[ilij] V.[uk], "Razstava etnografske zbirke Dušana Kvedra v Ptujju: Zanimive podrobnosti", *Večer*, vol. 25, no. 188, 14.8.1969, p. 8.

89 Borut Brumen and Nikolai Jeffs, "Afrike", in: Borut Brumen and Nikolai Jeffs (eds.), *Afrike* (Tematska številka *Časopisa za kritiko znanosti*), vol. 29, no. 204, 205, 206, Študentska založba, Ljubljana, 2001, pp. xiv–xvi.

Exoticisation of the Other and Attempting to Overcome It

The exhibition catalogues and media coverage of the exhibitions at the Museum of Non-European Cultures often encouraged their readers to view the people from other continents as static, as if they had stood still in time, and whose way of life only began to change with the arrival of white immigrants. Lamenting the changing ways of life and consequently the changing forms of folk art of non-European peoples evoked the feeling among exhibition visitors and readers of the texts that they had to salvage what could still be saved. The need to preserve the original objects of the indigenous peoples, which are the only remaining witnesses of their traditions and heritage and are now changing through contact with Western civilisation and therefore gradually disappearing, was also often emphasised.⁹⁰ At the *Akamba – Makonde: The Art of East Africa* exhibition in 1970, the author of a review in the newspaper *Delo* noted that the artefacts on display (fig. 114) were primarily intended for sale on the art market, which was estimated to employ up to 6,000 Kenyans, adding: "Apart from the souvenir items, the exhibition also features original everyday and ritual artefacts that carry a strong link to tradition. Although they are mostly recent, they were made using ancient tools and methods. And that gives them the value of an original."⁹¹ The tourist production of souvenirs and its impact on the disappearance of authentic folk art was also addressed by Olga Ratej in her review of the 1981 exhibition *Mexican Folk Art*:

Even if the Indians are very reluctant to work 'on the assembly line', the tourist rush has already spawned a gigantic industry that fills the street shops, and there is no telling how long authentic folk art will be able to resist the standardisation efforts of the souvenir industry. But the display in Goričane is still genuine folk art from the areas and villages that make their own things and are celebrated for it.⁹²

The peoples of other continents were also often discussed as primitive. An interesting case in this context is the exhibition *The Culture of the Black Tribes on the White Nile in the 19th Century* (1968),

90 Pavla Štrukelj, "Afriška zbirka vzhodnosudanskih plemen Bari in Čir v Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju: (Zbiralec Ignacij Knoblehar)", *Slovenski etnograf*, vol. 20, 1967, p. 166. See also Štrukelj, 1972–1973 (see no. 81), pp. 109–142; Štrukelj, 1967 (see no. 84), p. 5; Anonymous, "Razstava o Vietnamu", 1970 (see no. 24), p. 5; Makarovič, 1979 (see no. 70); Franc Zalar, "Ob razstavi 'Mehiške maske' v Goričanah: Magična moč maske", *Dnevnik*, vol. 25, no. 234, 28.8.1976, p. 5; E. N., "Eskimska grafika", *Delo*, vol. 18, no. 42, 20.2.1976, p. 8; Anonymous, "Kitajske vezene v Goričanah", *Delo*, vol. 22, no. 259, 5.11.1980, p. 8; Mitja Košir, "Ljudska umetnost Mehike v gradu Goričane: Ustvarjalna izvornost in bogastvo barv", *Dnevnik*, vol. 30, no. 203, 29.7.1981, p. 5.

91 P. B., "Ljudska umetnost vzhodne Afrike", *Delo*, vol. 12, no. 310, 13.11.1970, p. 5.

92 Olga Ratej, "Mehika se predstavlja", *Delo*, vol. 23, no. 195, 25.8.1981, p. 7.



Sculpture from the exhibition *Akamba – Makonde: The Art of East Africa* at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1970.

which combined the glorification of the missionary Ignacij Knoblehar with an emphasis on the underdevelopment of the people among whom he lived. Janez Zadnikar wrote in the newspaper *Delo* that the exhibited objects impressed the visitor with “the functionality of the form, the ingenuity of the makers [...] the robustness of the objects [...] the surrender to mythological ends [...] and perhaps the enduring will to survive of the former savages.”⁹³ In the newspaper *Večer*, Vili Vuk emphasised the unchanging and static character of the people of the Nile basin:

93 J.[anez] Zadnikar, “Goričanska dejstva: Ob razstavah ‘Kultura črnkih plemen ob Belem Nilu v 19. stoletju’ in ‘Norveška v sliki in lutkah’ v gradu Goričane pri Medvodah”, *Delo*, vol. 10, no. 222, 15.8.1968, p. 5.

The culture of the black tribes in the area covered by our exhibition has probably not changed much (the objects on display date from the mid-19th century). But however we look at it, this collection allows us to recognise at every turn the inventive efforts of the tribes and clans – the people as such – to improve their lives and constantly search for the power that keeps them alive.⁹⁴

A year later, the same author emphasised the hierarchy between African and Asian cultures and placed the art of the Asian peoples above that of the African:

Even though primitive tribes leading a simple life are few and far between even in the world outside of the European culture today, an impressive variety of fully developed cultural forms has emerged which, on the whole, exude the appeal of a higher level of aesthetic perfection. We need only recall the rich heritage that has been handed down to these cultures throughout history in China, Japan, Indonesia, of course India and so on.⁹⁵

Vuk mentioned primitiveness again when he wrote about the exhibition *Folk and Applied Art of Chile* in 1969, but he also pointed out the discrepancy between the technological and spiritual development of these peoples, arguing that because of the low level of technological development, non-European peoples were able to turn inwards and thus develop a higher level of spiritual culture (fig. 115).⁹⁶ Vili Vuk, who was most likely the author of these articles, also referred to the low technological and high spiritual development of Indigenous Australians in his review of the exhibition *The Art of the Aborigines – Indigenous Australians* (1981).⁹⁷

Some authors pointed to their own Eurocentrism and questioned the legitimacy of judging the art and culture of non-European peoples according to European standards. Sandi Sitar rejected the terms underdevelopment, development and progress when he wrote in 1977 about the exhibition *Pre-Columbian Art from Peru*: “It is of course difficult to speak of underdevelopment in this case. At a time when many ‘developed’ nations have little to show for themselves, this exhibition conveys an extraordinary degree of achievement. It puts concepts such as ‘development’, ‘progress’, etc. in perspective and even disqualifies

94 V.[ili] V.[uk], 1968 (see no. 78), p. 8.

95 V.[ili] V.[uk], “Umetnost z vrha: Ob razstavi Indijska ljudska umetnost, odprti na gradu Goričane”, *Večer*, vol. 25, no. 61, 14.3.1969, p. 14.

96 V.[ili] V.[uk], “Umetnost je vsakdan: Ob razstavi Čilska ljudska in uporabna umetnost, odprti na Goričanah”, *Večer*, vol. 25, no. 101, 30.4.1969, p. 10.

97 Vuk, 1981 (see no. 73), p. 8.



Installation view of the exhibition *Folk and Applied Art of Chile* at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1969.

some Eurocentrisms.”⁹⁸ An article about the same exhibition in the newspaper *Prosvetni delavec* called for overcoming Eurocentrism and European criteria for judging other cultures:

With its work to date, the museum in Goričane has contributed enormously to our ability to learn more about the culture and art of non-European nations in Slovenia. Its exhibitions have therefore been indispensable for us to get to know the typical and important civilisational, cultural and artistic phenomena of different nations on different continents. At the same time,

98 Sitar, 1977 (see no. 52), p. 5. For a discussion of these notions in the context of the exhibition *El Dorado: Colombian Gold from the 1st to the 16th Century* see: Sandi Sitar, “‘Kulture neuvrščenih’ v Goričanah: Kolumbijsko zlato”, *Dnevnik*, vol. 30, no. 123, 8.5.1981, p. 5.

getting to know these values has also changed our outdated and often unnecessary idea of the superiority of everything European and made us realise that every culture, as it authentically manifests itself among people, is life-bearing and that its value cannot be measured by the European-derived model of standards.⁹⁹

The importance of overcoming Eurocentrism was also emphasised by Boris Kuhar when he prepared the exhibition on the cultures of the non-aligned countries in 1977:

The main aim of our exhibition is [...] to present the culture of these countries decently and to debunk the myth of Eurocentrism in culture and art. By offering an overview of the cultures of one hundred non-aligned countries, we want to show that Africa, Asia and South America harbour a wealth of artistic creation that we unfortunately know very little about and make little effort to discover.¹⁰⁰

In his review of the 1981 *El Dorado* exhibition (fig. 116), Sandi Sitar encouraged his readers to ask themselves what kind of future they could imagine on the basis of the information provided by the exhibition: “The only thing that makes the European who visits this unique exhibition uncomfortable is the fact that he is – whether he likes it or not – an inheritor and perpetuator of this civilisation. The gold of Colombia therefore not only brings us new information and aesthetic experiences, but also raises a question about the future from the distant past.”¹⁰¹ The idea of imagining the future was also noted by the then curator of the SEM, Gorazd Makarovič, at the exhibition *The Art of the Aztecs* in 1979, who at the same time pointed out the consequences of the aggression of Western culture and the evaluation of other peoples according to European standards:

Western civilisation and its aggression, which spread throughout the world from the 16th century onwards, has caused the disintegration of every culture it came into contact with. Today, Western culture has imposed itself on the world and has been grafted onto all societies. This culture judges everything according to its own tendencies and standards of dubious value and is also increasingly exploiting the very foundations from which

99 I. G., “Predkolumbijska umetnost iz Peruja”, *Prosvetni delavec*, vol. 28, no. 15, 23.9.1977, p. 11.

100 Vuk, 1977 (see no. 39), p. 6.

101 Sitar, 1981 (see no. 98), p. 5.



Special security for the exhibition *El Dorado: Colombian Gold from the 1st to the 16th Century* at the Museum of Non-European Cultures in Goričane Castle in 1981.

it draws its strength. And because it is global, the prospects opened up by such behaviour are quite apocalyptic.¹⁰²

Conclusion

The complex activities of the Museum of Non-European Cultures and the discourses it mobilised through its exhibition activities can only be understood if we place it in the socio-political reality of the second half of the 20th century. In doing so, we must also take into account the legacies of earlier eras, including the knowledge, views and values passed on through the museum's archive, i.e. through objects, photographs, documents and other material preserved by the museum. Museum discourses are the result of the efforts of museum professionals who enter the field with their own ideas, experiences, knowledge and values, while always reflecting the broader social forces and tendencies that either reinforce or undermine them. The museum's

102 Makarovič, 1979 (see no. 70), p. 25.

exhibitions mobilised discourses that were often contradictory and had contradictory effects. On the one hand, they reflected an ambivalent attitude towards the developing countries and the cultures and art of their peoples; on the other, they revealed an essentially ambivalent understanding of the Slovenian (Yugoslav) position towards the West at the time. Although they were critical of the colonial projects of the West, by positioning themselves as more developed and modern vis-à-vis the developing countries, they sought proximity to the Western countries that had defended this world view since the beginning of colonialism.

The museum quickly adapted to the new social circumstances by emphasising the discourses of the National Liberation Struggle and non-alignment, which strengthened both the domestic and foreign policy of socialist Yugoslavia. The principles of friendship and solidarity with the non-aligned countries were set side by side with the condemnation of colonialism and imperialism, denouncing both the Spanish conquerors of the American continent and the devastating consequences of the colonisation of Africa, especially on its culture. The museum not only sought proximity to the non-aligned countries, with which socialist Yugoslavia shared the struggle for freedom and the search for its own path within socialism, but also created and maintained a certain distance from them. This was expressed in the exoticisation of the Other, in the emphasis on differences and particularities, but even more so in the emphasis on the developmental aspect of cultures, the importance of preserving original and authentic objects and, consequently, in the museum's tendency to describe non-European peoples as static and unchanging in the face of the consequences of white domination. The second half of the 1970s saw a critique of Eurocentric ideas and attempts to overcome the concepts of "civilised", "progress" and "primitive" and the legitimacy of evaluating cultures and art according to European standards.

While its narratives created a distance towards non-European peoples, the museum also endeavoured to create a closeness between Slovenian compatriots working in non-European countries and Western researchers and collectors, which was the case both in the presentation of collectors from earlier times and in the portrayal of Yugoslav ambassadors working in non-European countries. The nation-building aspect played an important role here, which, by glorifying the work of these individuals and their comparative positioning in the European space, emphasised the "civilised" and "developed" character of the domestic space, i.e. the ideological proximity to the developed West, an idea that already began to intensify in the late 1980s and was expressed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in Slovenia's moves to join the European Union and its withdrawal from the Non-Aligned Movement.

List of Abbreviations

Throughout the book, several abbreviations are used for the names of political, governmental and civil organisations, institutions and entities in socialist Yugoslavia and beyond, as well as for other commonly referenced terms. While Serbo-Croatian (as it was then known) was the main language used at the federal level, Slovene was used within the context of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. Many of the names also appear in other languages, including Russian, English and French. The abbreviations used in this book are often based on the name in the language in which it was either coined, most commonly used or in which it is more widely recognised in the literature. In the list that follows, each abbreviation is accompanied by the full name in its original language, followed by a translation into English where applicable.

AFA – American Federation of Arts

AFŽ – Antifašistična fronta žensk (Women's Antifascist Front)

AICA – Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art
(International Association of Art Critics)

CCF – Congress for Cultural Freedom

CIAM – Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne
(International Congresses of Modern Architecture)

CPY – Communist Party of Yugoslavia

DAS – Društvo arhitektov Slovenije
(Slovenian Architects' Society)

DIT – Društvo inženirjev in tehnikov
(Society of Engineers and Technicians)

DSLU – Društvo slovenskih likovnih umetnikov
(Slovenian Fine Artists' Society)

FPRY – Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia

FTT – Free Territory of Trieste

IO OF – Izvršni odbor osvobodilne fronte
(Executive Committee of the Liberation Front)

IZDG – Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja
(Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement)

KUZOP – Komisija za ugotavljanje zločinov okupatorjev in njihovih
pomagačev (Commission for the Investigation of Crimes
Committed by the Occupiers and Their Accomplices)

LB – Ljubljanska banka

LCS – League of Communists of Slovenia

MLRS – Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije
(Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia)

MNO LRS – Muzej narodne osvoboditve Ljudske republike Slovenije
(Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic
of Slovenia)

MNSZS – Muzej novejšje in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije
(National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia)

MoMA – Museum of Modern Art New York

OF – Osvobodilna fronta (Liberation Front)

SEM – Slovenski etnografski muzej
(Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

SFRY – Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia

UDS – Urbanistično društvo Slovenije
(Urban Planning Association of Slovenia)

UIA – Union internationale des architectes
(International Union of Architects)

ULUH – Udruženje likovnih umjetnika Hrvatske
(Croatian Visual Artists' Association)

ULUS – Udruženje likovnih umetnika Srbije
(Serbian Visual Artists' Association)

USIS – United States Information Service

VOKS – Vsesoyuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoy svyazi s zagranitsey
(All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign
Countries)

YPA – Yugoslav People's Army

ZI – Znanstveni inštitut (Scientific Institute)

Sources of Visual Material

- 1–6 Photograph: Vlastja Simončič. Courtesy: Muzej novejšje in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 7 Source: *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 26, 4.7.1947, p. 32.
- 8–11 Photograph: Leon Jere. Courtesy: Muzej novejšje in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 12–13 Source: *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 28, 18.7.1947, p. 671.
- 14 Source: *Tovariš*, vol. 3, no. 28, 18.7.1947, p. 672.
- 15 Source: *Tovariš*, vol. 15, no. 31, 9.8.1959, n. p.
- 16 Courtesy: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana.
- 17–20 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 21–23 Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 24–25 Source: *RFP Yugoslavie – exposition internationale d'architecture de l'union internationale des architectes/Rabat Maroc 1951* (exhibition catalogue), Zveza arhitektov Jugoslavije, Ljubljana, 1951, n. p.
- 26–29 Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 30–31 Photograph: Janez Kališnik. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 32 Photograph: Marjan Pfeifer. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 33 Photograph: Janez Kališnik. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 34 Courtesy: Private collection.
- 35 Source: *Čovjek i prostor*, vol. 79, 1958, p. 4.
- 36 Source: *Stanovi LR Slovenije*, Porodica i domaćinstvo, Zagreb, 1958.
- 37 Photograph: Božo Štajer. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.

- 38–39 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 40 Courtesy: Umetnostna galerija Maribor.
- 41–47 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 48 Source: *Američko slikarstvo sedamdesetih godina* (razstavní katalog), Muzej savremene umetnosti, Beograd, 1979.
- 49 Source: Mapa Ameriško slikarstvo 1970tih, "America Now!, obrazstavna brošura", Dokumentacija-arhiv, arhiv, MG+MSUM.
- 50 Source: *The Evening Star*, 6.1.1966, n. p.
- 51 Source: *Tedenska tribuna*, vol. 16, no. 1, 3.1.1968, p. 8.
- 52–53 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 54–59 Courtesy: Arhiv Mednarodnega grafičnega likovnega centra, Ljubljana.
- 60 Photograph: Lado Mlekuž. Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 61 Source: *Jugoslawische Druckgraphik der Gegenwart* (exhibition catalogue), Herbert Bessel (ed.), Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft, Nürnberg, 1971.
- 62 Source: *Jugoslawische Druckgraphik* (exhibition catalogue), Johann Heinrich Müller (ed.), Kunsthalle, Bremen, 1967.
- 63 Source: *Kunst aus Jugoslawien 1972: Einige Strömungen der zeitgenössischen jugoslawischen Kunst* (exhibition catalogue), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1972.
- 64 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 65–67 Photograph: Janez Kališnik. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 68 Source: *Glasiło Ljubljanske banke*, December 1977, p. 16.
- 69 Photograph: Svetozar Busić. Courtesy: Muzej novejše in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.

- 70 Photograph: Edi Šelhaus. Courtesy: Muzej novejše in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 71 Photograph: Damjan Gale. Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 72 Courtesy: Muzej za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, Ljubljana.
- 73 Courtesy: Arhiv MUZA muzej in galerija, Ljubljana.
- 74 Courtesy: Private collection.
- 75–76 Courtesy: Photoalbum: *Poslovni toranj "Vranica"*. Zagra-biensa, Gradska knjižnica, Knjižnice grada Zagreba.
- 77–85 Courtesy: Muzej novejše in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 86 Source: Milan Bevc, "O delu in razvoju Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS od ustanovitve do danes", in: Milan Bevc (ed.), *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 1, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, Ljubljana, 1957, p. 160.
- 87 Courtesy: Muzej novejše in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 88 Source: Luc Menaše, "Partizanska grafika: Najčistejša moderna ljudska umetnost", *Tovariš*, vol. 8, no. 33, 15.8.1952, p. 24.
- 89–92 Courtesy: Muzej novejše in sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.
- 93 Source: *10 let Doma JLA: Novo mesto: 1977–1987*, Jelena Lajišić et al. (ed.), Dom JLA, Novo mesto, 1987, p. 32.
- 94 Courtesy: Private collection.
- 95–96 Source: *Galerija Doma Jugoslovenske narodne armije Beograd: 1953–1968*, Ivan Cvetko (ed.), Galerija Doma JNA, Belgrade, 1968.
- 97 Source: *Narodnoosvobodilna borba v delih likovnih umetnikov Jugoslavije* (exhibition catalogue), Dom JLA, Ljubljana, 1971.

- 98–102 Courtesy: Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.
- 103 Source: *Galerija Doma Jugoslovenske narodne armije Beograd: 1953–1968*, Ivan Cvetko (ed.), Galerija Doma JNA, Belgrade, 1968.
- 104 *Vojnici – likovni umetnici 1968*. (exhibition catalogue), Rajka Popović (ed.), Galerija Doma JNA, Belgrade, 1968.
- 105 Courtesy: Private collection.
- 106–110 Courtesy: Dokumentacija Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja, Ljubljana.
- 111 Courtesy: Arhiv Marinke Oblak.
- 112–116 Courtesy: Dokumentacija Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja, Ljubljana.

The cover image is a composite of two photographs from the exhibitions: *Exhibition of Soviet Painters* (Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 1947; fig. 1) and *American Vanguard Painting* (Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, 1961–1962; fig. 42).

Colophon

Desires and Contradictions: Exhibiting Art and Architecture in Slovenia 1947–1979

Editors

Beti Žerovc, Miha Valant, Vladimir Vidmar

Copy editing

Ana Čavić

Translators

Katja Kosi, Borut Praper, Barbara Skubic

Proofreading

Mario Batelić

Peer reviewers

Tamara Bjažić Klarin, Bojan Godeša, Ljiljana Kolešnik,
Nenad Lajbenšperger, Tanja Petrović, Jure Ramšak,
Luka Skansi, Ana Sladojević, Nadja Zgonik

Authors

Gregor Dražil, Tina Fortič Jakopič, Nika Grabar, Meta Kordiš,
Katarina Mohar, Tina Palaić, Cvetka Požar, Ivan Smiljanić,
Maja Vardjan, Vladimir Vidmar, Beti Žerovc

Design and layout

Žan Kobal

Ljubljana, 2026

Published by

Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory

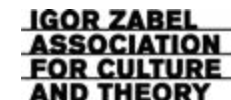
For publisher: Urška Jurman, Programme director

Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts

For publisher: Gregor Majdič, rector of the University of Ljubljana;

Mojca Schlamberger Brezar, dean of the Faculty of Arts

This monograph was financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency from the state budget within the research project Exhibiting of Art and Architecture Between Artistic and Ideological Concepts. Case Study of Slovenia, 1947–1979 (J6-3137) and the research programme Slovenian Art and the Art of Central Europe and the Adriatic (P6-0199).

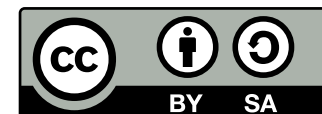


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (except photographs)

First e-edition. Publication is available in Open Access at:

<https://ebooks.uni-lj.si/ZalozbaUL>

DOI: 10.4312/9789612978105



Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili
v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 272674819

ISBN 978-961-297-810-5 (Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, PDF)