

**SOCIALIST POSTCOLONIAL AESTHETICS  
IN YUGOSLAVIA, 1945–1999**



# **NONALIGNED MODERNISM**



**BOJANA VIDEKANIĆ**

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*Socialist Postcolonial Aesthetics  
in Yugoslavia, 1945–1985*

Bojana Videkanić

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*To the light of my life Yana and Yara, to my partner in crime Beri,  
my dear mama and tata, and all true Yugoslavs*



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# NONALIGNED MODERNISM



# Introduction

In 1952 Antun Augustinčić, one of Yugoslavia's most prominent sculptors and President Josip Broz Tito's personal friend, was commissioned to create a monumental sculpture that would become Yugoslavia's contribution to the new United Nations Headquarters on the banks of the East River in New York. The monument, entitled *Peace*, is an equestrian representation of a woman holding the globe in her right hand and an olive branch in her extended left hand. In a symbolic reversal, the artist replaced the usual male figure of a warrior representing political and military prowess with a strong female figure representing leadership toward peace. When asked about the reversed symbolism, Augustinčić stated simply, "there would be more chance for peace if women, instead of men, made political decisions about it."<sup>1</sup> Other formal elements of the sculpture, such as the figure's tense upward body posture and strong gaze, her dress and cape trailing behind her, and the horse's dynamic, forward movement, all symbolize the politically important active pursuit of peace – a pursuit that defined socialist Yugoslavia's entire *raison d'être* in the decades to come. Augustinčić echoed this policy in his answer to a journalist's question about his use of a horse, an animal usually associated with war and military conquest, in a monument to peace, by saying that "we have to fight for peace."<sup>2</sup>

Two years later, in 1954, Augustinčić began another large project, this time in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he designed *Yekatit 12: Monument*

to *Victims of Fascism* (figure 0.1) as a gift to the Ethiopian people. The monument reinforced the affinities and connections between the two countries, especially their shared history of casualties and suffering endured in the fight against fascism. As with the *Peace* monument in New York, the artist did not shy away from creating politically engaged work. Part of Augustinčić's design deliberately focused on Ethiopian sacrifices, as he aimed to represent the brutal nature of the Italian conquest. The resulting monument is emotionally and narratively charged. In one particularly dramatic scene (figure 0.2) he created several large compositional groups consisting of figures of Ethiopians – women, children, and men – in gruesome moments of death, torture, and suffering, contrasting their anguished bodies with Italian soldiers who are represented as alienated, standing upright, emotionally flat, and ostensibly unmoved by the human suffering around them. The monument's form thus directly reflected its political content in its graphic portrayal of the brutal nature of imperialism and war. By extension, it also represented Ethiopian and Yugoslav anticolonial stances that foreshadowed future policies of the Non-Aligned Movement. Although usually thought of as socialist realist,<sup>3</sup> Augustinčić's work demonstrated modernist formal tendencies<sup>4</sup> while at the same time remaining committed to socially and politically engaged content. Both before and after the Second World War, his work presented an amalgam of naturalism, modernism, and political awareness. It is precisely this mixture that so poignantly reflected the politics of the 1950s in Yugoslavia.

The decade of the 1950s was crucial in Yugoslavia's battle for survival, as the socialist country opened up to the world. Its leadership fought both for international recognition and against efforts by the Soviet Union to incorporate the country into the Eastern Bloc. Augustinčić's two monuments are an aesthetic embodiment of the efforts made by the Yugoslavs to move away from the dangers of the growing Cold War divide and at the same time maintain the ideals on which the country was built, namely, antifascism, anti-imperialism, and anticapitalism. With their commitment to naturalism in form and political and social emancipation in content, Augustinčić's monuments foreshadowed some of the major



o.1 Antun Augustinčić, *Yekatit 12: Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia





o.2 Antun Augustinčić, *Yekatit 12: Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, detail of relief

institutional structures and aesthetic concerns of nonaligned modernism, a loose but nonetheless specific set of cultural and artistic practices that developed under Yugoslavia's idiosyncratic sociopolitical system.

This book examines the emergence and development of nonaligned modernism in Yugoslavia as its varied artistic and cultural trajectories arose from the early postwar period and developed over the next several decades of the mid and late twentieth century. In revisiting the history of exhibitions, aesthetic debates, cultural infrastructure, and networks that appeared in this period, locally and internationally, this book defines nonaligned modernism as a synthesis of influences from indigenous Yugoslav artistic traditions, nascent aesthetic traditions and networks of the Global South, and already existing Western modernist structures.

## 6 *Nonaligned Modernism*

Artists, curators, and administrators who feature in this book moved with ease between modernism and local artistic forms. Indeed, they readily appropriated various technical innovations, conceptual frameworks/procedures, and aesthetic sensibilities found in international modernism while at the same time adapting these modernist features to their local political and social needs. The resulting artistic and cultural practices were varied in formal and thematic approaches, strategies, and demands, and at the same time maintained a shared commitment to socialism, anti-imperialism, and peaceful coexistence.

This analysis of nonaligned modernism is traced through specific examples that demonstrate its core formal, conceptual, and sociopolitical values and practices. The examples chosen – the 1949 national exhibition organized by the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists in chapter 1, Yugoslav representation at the Venice Biennale and MOMA's *Modern Art in the United States* in chapter 2, international exhibitions and collaborations as part of Yugoslavia's nonaligned cultural diplomacy in chapter 3, and the Ljubljana Biennale in chapter 4 – are representative of mainstream art and therefore illustrate cultural policies and practices at the highest official level. Such cultural ventures speak to the ways in which modernism in Yugoslavia oscillated between various power structures, institutions, political and aesthetic ideas, and historical discourses as different stakeholders attempted to develop Yugoslavia's unique cultural language, suffused with utopian idealism and negotiated between aesthetics and politics. The book therefore makes two interventions. One is art historical and stakes the claim to Yugoslav nonaligned modernism's rightful place in the international art historical discourse, adding its case study to the expanding field of global modernisms as these developed outside and parallel to Western art. It also provides a contribution to the expansion and realignment of modernist art within post-Yugoslav art historiography, which in its earlier iterations understood modernism's political and ideological contexts as an impediment rather than a strength. In its particular engagement with art history, the book thus reveals key links between national and international political developments and the cultural-artistic trajectories that shaped the art of this era. The second intervention

has a broader cultural aim. Through its interdisciplinary approach, the book highlights the active role that Yugoslav culture played in countering Western cultural hegemony. Via its active participation in lively international anticolonial and socialist movements and debates, Yugoslavia made a real contribution to the building of transnational cultural and socioeconomic networks. In order to address these issues, the narrative of the book is interdisciplinary, always in-between various voices of artists, politicians, intellectuals, critics, and historians, employing a materialist humanist-socialist approach to reading history.

These central aims are closely related to three interconnected broader questions. First, to what degree can selected examples contribute to creating models for a more radical understanding of art's role in society, outside of its normative cultural significance? Second, can the relationship between aesthetics and progressive leftist politics, in spite of Walter Benjamin's warning against "aesthetization of politics,"<sup>5</sup> be theorized as productive rather than simple propagandistic manufacture of meaning? Finally, can art play a vanguard role in shaping progressive, equitable, transnational cultural narratives?

The concept of nonaligned modernism offers a twofold answer to these questions. Nonaligned modernism represents a form of art that grew outside the so-called developed Western world, in the wake of the Second World War, and in the context of anticolonial and socialist politics. These circumstances inevitably shaped its relationship to aesthetics. Nonaligned modernism accepted elements of the Western modernist ethos not only because of its convenience but also because of its prevalence and hegemony, which permeated all structures of international art. The use of aspects of modernism to create a new and alternative aesthetic was both forced and strategic. Here it is useful to borrow from Édouard Glissant's notion of forced poetics, which he qualified as a way for those who were using the language<sup>6</sup> of the colonizer to subvert it. In other words, the local population subversively defied and deconstructed the language of the colonizer, which it was forced to use, despite the ambiguity and tension embedded in all such endeavours: "This is the strategy that comes into play when a harmonious practice of the langue is impossible:

that is, an attempt to build a language on the basis of an antagonistic or subversive relationship to the langue, which the subject nevertheless has to use. The Caribbean speaker has to ‘force his way’ through the langue toward a language that may not be part of the internal logic of this langue. Forced poetics emerges from this opposition between a langue that one uses and a language that one needs.”<sup>7</sup> Glissant continues: “Forced poetics, or counter poetics, is practiced by a community which cannot express itself directly through an autonomous activity of its members. In order to pinpoint this lack of autonomy, the speaker condemns himself to a kind of non-power and to the impossibility of expression.”<sup>8</sup>

Nonaligned modernism borrowed from Western ideas of modernism in the manner of Glissant’s forced poetics – it used them because it was forced to do so by the infrastructure of the international art world; however, it created its own, more political aesthetic forms. For this reason, nonaligned modernism answers the question whether art can coexist with politics in order to serve a greater purpose in a different way since nonaligned modernism in this case represents those who were marginalized in the international art world.

The second way in which nonaligned modernism addresses some of the above-mentioned questions is that it represented a vanguard aesthetic form that anticipated the arrival of postcolonial aesthetic by forty or fifty years.<sup>9</sup> Okwui Enwezor observed in 2003 that contemporary art is refracted not only aesthetically or culturally, but also politically, as a result of the new “geopolitical configuration and its postimperial transformation” that constitutes “the postcolonial constellation.”<sup>10</sup> This postcolonial constellation, which reaches its full force in the late 1990s, was present and gaining strength in non-Western developing countries much earlier: this can be observed by studying the transnational exchange prior to 1989. Nonaligned modernism was part of this constellation and provides insight into the process of reworlding art history<sup>11</sup> that has been taking place for the last twenty years. In its form and content, nonaligned modernism therefore contributed to the reworlding of art by grappling with hegemonic aesthetic and political forces. It did so by employing the format of art exhibitions, art exchanges, transnational building projects,

and the creation of institutions as forms of cultural and political advocacy on the highest national and international level.

Nonaligned modernism can therefore be defined as an aesthetico-political practice that developed between the end of the Second World War and into the late twentieth century in Yugoslavia. It is especially visible in institutional practices – political, diplomatic, and cultural relationships; museum policies; and curatorial projects. These form the core of this book as it traces the history of artistic diplomacy as one of its key components. More recent international art historical discourse has discussed these practices in different terms. For example, Chika Okeke-Agulu uses the term “postcolonial modernism” in the Nigerian context; Elaine O’Brien calls it “global modernism”; and Esther Gabara uses “errant modernism” when talking about Brazilian and Mexican photography.<sup>12</sup> Even though each author deals with different countries and continents, they all describe forms of modernist practices that developed in tension with Western modernism. The work of Klara Kemp-Welch on East European artistic and political networks is also relevant in tracing the connections between politics and sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> Nonaligned modernism is closely related to all of these practices. These cultural forms developed in response to anticolonial political projects (such as various independence movements) that sought national independence or political and economic agency for the newly decolonized nations, non-aligned status with respect to the two blocs, and viable alternative forms of political and cultural exchange outside Western hegemony. Unlike Western modernism, which committed to aesthetic autonomy from the social and the political in response to German fascism and Soviet Stalinism,<sup>14</sup> nonaligned modernism and related forms were deeply enmeshed with politics precisely because they rested on emancipatory ideas of anticolonialism and economic and cultural emancipation. Such modernisms could not afford, nor did they want, to be separated from the social or the political circumstances from which they arose. All of this was true for nonaligned modernism as it appeared in the socialist Yugoslavia, and especially because of that country’s commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement.

But where and how does nonaligned modernism fit within the already existing Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav art historiography? When considered as a cultural or aesthetic category, modernism in Yugoslavia is usually divided into three periods that roughly correspond to the changes in perceptions and reception of modernism since the mid 1940s. These periods are the initial socialist realist stage in which modernism was rejected, followed by an embrace of what was described as socialist modernism, and finally a move toward late modernism and its rejection. During the initial stage (roughly 1945–54) art historians and critics rallied against international modernism, rejecting it as bourgeois and counterrevolutionary. The art historical texts from this period showcase the scope of the impact that the politics of the day had on the artistic milieu. The most influential advocates of socialist realism were Grga Gamulin, Oto Bihalj-Merin, and Aleksa Čelebonović. Their writings were primarily concerned with weeding out traces of modernist formalist tendencies, a history that I discuss in chapter 1 of this book.

By far the most influential voice of the group was Gamulin. He wielded influence not only through exhibition reviews and catalogue essays but also by establishing the Croatian – and by extension, Yugoslav – postwar discipline of art history. Gamulin rejected modernism in general not only because of its so-called bourgeois character but also because such works did not “shape phenomena nor information, nor the yearnings of humanity that break into the consciousness and emerge victorious.”<sup>15</sup> In one of the most influential texts of the socialist realist period, “Along with the Idolatry of Cézannism” (1946), published in *Republika*, a monthly journal for literature, art, and society, Gamulin attacked the work of Cézanne in particular. Cézanne was seen as the “father” of formalism. He argued that Cézanne’s art could be used as a didactic tool to teach the visual language of art, but that the young generation of socialist artists had to be careful not to fall into the trap of Cézanne’s “formalist idolatry.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, Gamulin advocated clarity and “truthfulness” to reality in artistic expression. Gamulin decried the lack of humanist values in Cézanne’s art, arguing that his “paintings are devoid of feelings for the joy and sorrow of man, for his happiness and tragedy.”<sup>17</sup> The emphasis on art as formally analytic, he believed, turned the modernist aesthetic into an anti-humanist project.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to socialist realist art criticism and history, a number of intellectuals and artists of the time supported modernism: the EXAT 51 group, Rudi Supek, Radoslav Putar, and so forth. The two streams often clashed in public and brought both formal and political arguments to larger Yugoslav audiences, especially because many of their texts were published in daily newspapers. The modernists did not renounce socialist politics, however. For the most part, the literature of this period reveals a complex narrative of art production and reception built on a serious investment by both sides in understanding how Yugoslav art could thrive in the new socialist context.

The second period of modernist reception in Yugoslavia emerged once modernism became a politically and aesthetically more attractive option. At this point art historical accounts of the Yugoslav art establishment began to favour a modernist aesthetic, supporting artists who espoused it. This period lasted several decades. Steva Lukić and Miodrag Protić were the most influential early commentators to extensively explore the development of modernism in Yugoslavia. Protić was arguably the most prominent writer and historian of modernism and has penned numerous studies of international and domestic modernist developments. In these, he discusses Yugoslav art in light of the formal language of modernist criticism and aesthetics. While his work is crucial for understanding Yugoslav relationships with international modernism, Protić addresses many theoretical aspects of contemporary and historical art, arguing for the value and place of abstraction in modern societies. He strongly critiqued simplified rejections of abstraction, arguing that all forms of art, whether abstract or not, are relevant for the development of Yugoslav national art. What Protić's texts lacked was a richer investigation of the relationship between the social, the political, and the aesthetic. Although he never denounced the link between the two, he also never fully explored the possibilities that their interaction afforded. Steva Lukić's was a much more politicized body of work, with the author arguing against the most prevalent forms of socialist modernism because he believed they were too directly in the service of the state.

In the late 1960s a younger generation of art historians came to the fore. Ješa Denegri was the pivotal figure in this period. He started writing

in the mid 1960s and his career spanned both the modernist and postmodernist eras. Denegri was, and still is, arguably the most prolific and influential critic of this mid-generation. He is the author of numerous essays, criticism, and books on the subject of Yugoslav modernism and postmodernism. He was also a curator of contemporary art for almost forty years, organizing numerous influential exhibitions of modernist, conceptual, postconceptual, and new media art. Denegri did not directly engage questions of the relationship between politics and aesthetics during socialism. Political issues were usually implied through the critique of problematic forms of modernism, and of socialism as well. Political contexts stayed in the background of his work as a constant companion to the rising postsocialist aesthetic of the 1970s.

After 1990, and especially in the last fifteen years, Denegri and some of his contemporaries (such as Vera Horvat-Pintarić) published texts in which they reconstruct their own work, and the work of artists of the time, in a more politically and socially engaged context.<sup>19</sup> One of Denegri's major contributions to the study of the socialist modernist period in Yugoslavia is the notion that it was characterized by two streams or, as he puts it, "two lines": the first being official modernism, and the second its alternative, less official forms.<sup>20</sup> The official modernist, formalist art criticism was characterized by an ostensibly apolitical stance, while nevertheless retaining ideological adherence to official socialist dogma. Although Denegri does not explicitly make the link, one can see that such paradoxically apolitical-political art, art history, and criticism parallels the forms of supposedly apolitical international modernism found across the Western world and elsewhere. The apolitical character of late modernist art was famously described as an entrenchment of the autonomous.<sup>21</sup> Denegri accepted this reading of modernism, at least in part. Unlike Peter Bürger, who first put forward the critique of autonomy in modernist art, Denegri claims that artists and critics belonging to the second line sought alternative forms of socialist aesthetics within the system of state-socialism, but without falling into the trap of dogma found in official art. This politically engaged art created the conditions for the birth of postsocialist practices and theory in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and beyond.



Another recent example of careful scholarship on socialist art is Ljiljana Kolečnik's *Između Istoka i Zapada: Hrvatska umjetnost i kritika 50-ih godina* (2006). Here, Kolečnik studies a large body of writing on art from the 1940s and 1950s in Croatia and Yugoslavia, meticulously analyzing the political and social implications of socialist realist and modernist art under state socialism. Her book is the first to consider modernism in relation to both the Soviets and the West, and while it is one of the most important to come out of the region in the last two decades, it is not without problems. Although she provides a careful analysis of the historiographical trajectory of art criticism during the socialist realist period and immediately after, she tends to interpret the sociopolitical context of Yugoslav socialist culture from a classical liberal perspective.<sup>22</sup> This perspective leads her to conclude that Yugoslav socialism was inherently authoritarian, undemocratic, and difficult to maintain. Her reading of the tensions during the socialist realist period in Croatian art is critical of the polemics of socialist realist critics like Grga Gamulin. In Kolečnik's text there is no room for more sympathetic and nuanced readings of socialist realism. She fails to credit the genuine political convictions and commitment on the part of many artists and critics to make socialism work and create a new national identity through culture. And while she does offer a critique of international modernism, Kolečnik understands modernism to be a more palatable idea than those proposed by socialist realist artists and critics, or those offered by writers such as Miroslav Krleža, who called for constituting an indigenous Yugoslav national art.

The history of art under socialism receives a similar treatment in other key texts, including *Impossible Histories* (1998), the first English-language survey of the Yugoslav avant-garde and one of the rare English-language texts to study this period. In the introduction, Miško Šuvaković claims that "Yugoslavia was a state of untenable, even impossible, connections and clashes among the cultures of Middle Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East, from its founding in 1918 to its dissolution in 1991."<sup>23</sup> Such claims about Yugoslavia's political and cultural impossibility rest on a liberal conception of the modern nation-state as a repository of homogeneous, self-contained identities.<sup>24</sup> Even though the impossibility signalled

by Šuvaković refers to the state, it more importantly indicates the impossibility of the avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes – the main theme of the book.<sup>25</sup> *Nonaligned Modernism* challenges and complicates the idea of Yugoslavia's impossibility, and the impossibility of its culture, by exploring the variety of artistic voices expressed on the Yugoslav cultural scene, the relative freedom of expression, the multiple attempts to revitalize and reimagine socialism, and so forth. Unlike the texts in *Impossible Histories*, this book treats Yugoslav art as intrinsically connected to the country's sociopolitical and economic context, which takes a prominent place in the research. And while *Impossible Histories* builds the narrative of Yugoslav avant-garde and neo-avant-garde via a variety of artistic movements, framing them within familiar histories of Western art, *Nonaligned Modernism* posits that Yugoslavia's art took on an entirely idiosyncratic shape because of its sociopolitical heterogeneity and thereby did not conform to standard aesthetic categories found in Western modernism or history of the avant-gardes.

While this book enters into a dialogue with the above-mentioned art historical narratives, it does so by continually emphasizing the key influence of politics, and the role of larger international contexts – the Cold War and the Non-Aligned Movement. This approach makes an intervention into the history of Yugoslavia's modernism by offering a more overtly political take on the period. It therefore also intervenes into the history of modernism in general, proposing that Yugoslav and other similar alternative modernist aesthetic practices differ from Western modernism in terms of their innately and inextricably political nature. In other words, nonaligned modernism, and its counterparts in Asia, Africa, and South and Central America, were not only artistic, cultural categories, but were also political categories. As such, this book finds affinities among a new generation of post-Yugoslav scholars, who are interrogating socialist art and culture from a Marxist and neo-Marxist perspective, fusing it with studies of race, gender, nationalism, identity, globalization, capitalism, and colonialism.<sup>26</sup> Among these, Vladimir Kulić's reassessment of Yugoslav architecture within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and Armin Medoch's study of New Tendencies are especially

relevant as each author makes a clear case for Yugoslavian art's in-between place in art historical narratives.<sup>27</sup> Medosch in particular makes a link between the Non-Aligned Movement and international art networks, stating that “nonalignment also provided the basis to make Yugoslavia a country that could become a contact zone for artists from the East and West.”<sup>28</sup> Medosch employs the term “nonaligned modernism” to point to the specificities of Yugoslav modernity, also the central argument of this book. Unlike Medosch's usage of the term, however, which is more narrowly applied to discuss the contexts and influences as they related to the New Tendencies group, this book broadens the term considerably to apply it to multiple viewpoints, artistic groups, and organizations. In short, nonaligned modernism was a connecting structure to the entirety of artistic practices in Yugoslavia (even those that might have been in opposition) as it opened up the world to Yugoslav artists and audiences. The question that haunts all studies of this subject, including this one, is how to theorize, historicize, and navigate complex relationships between art and politics, and art and the social. As art developed in tension with East European and Western social contexts, and as many artists positioned themselves in opposition to the Yugoslav state, while they at the same time worked within the structures of the state, the tracing of the political interests and strands is challenging but crucial for putting together a more complete picture of twentieth-century art in the region.

This book also brings to the fore a materialist reading of the country's artistic history in its constant relationship with sociopolitical and economic forces. As such it counters two opposing revisionist historical trends concerning socialism in Yugoslavia that have developed over the past twenty-five years. One strand seeks to represent Yugoslav socialist culture as oppressive and totalitarian; the other presents it more in line with liberal Western models. This book rejects both. Instead, it posits that Yugoslav cultural workers and officials were invested in anti-fascist, socialist, and decolonizing political and cultural models long before they became popular in the West at the end of the twentieth century. Early in the 1940s they sought to develop alternative culture by reaching out to their non-Western counterparts as a way to oppose bloc politics and

growing post-Second World War neo-imperialist tendencies. Specifically, this paradigm is demonstrated through a discussion of Yugoslavia's artistic and political history, which led to the development of its particular form of modernism.

Socialist Yugoslavia's history represents a contested and marginal space in the history of the twentieth century, one usually used to illustrate the perils of socialism and/or of ethnic nationalism.<sup>29</sup> From the perspective of most historical accounts, this past is primarily reduced to one among modernity's many failed emancipatory experiments. And yet, even though socialist Yugoslavia's culture was among a number of progressive projects that were not allowed to survive the late twentieth-century's political and social turmoil, this history needs to be re-examined and salvaged in order to rectify a blind spot in recent historical accounts, reclaiming its place within global cultural histories.

Re-examination of Yugoslavia's art and culture is necessary for three reasons. The most obvious is that Yugoslavia's cultural history is still virtually absent from current broader international cultural histories, and especially histories of modernism. This blind spot can be attributed to the 1990s wars of secession, which have impeded analyses of Yugoslav culture outside of the discourse of nationalism and violence. It can also be attributed to the fact that the new countries formed after Yugoslavia's disintegration have succumbed to ethno-nationalist rhetoric, are economically and politically devastated, largely dependent on foreign aid/loans, and in the grip of post-Fordist capitalism. In short, the new countries have been transformed into free zones of corporate capitalism<sup>30</sup> without political agency, and are prone to historical amnesia.<sup>31</sup> Re-evaluation of Yugoslav socialist cultural history is also required because many recent accounts of socialist histories either flirt with nationalism (and in some cases with neo-fascism), or for the most part reproduce liberal analyses of the past. Such analyses describe Yugoslavia's socialist art as either an oppressive communist cultural form, or as a slightly different, but ultimately Western form of modernism.<sup>32</sup> This book complicates such narratives by pointing out that Yugoslavia developed a specific artistic history here termed nonaligned modernism. Finally, a re-evaluation of

the socialist culture is necessary in order to revitalize a socialist-humanist approach to Yugoslavia's artistic/cultural history. Such re-evaluation takes as its starting point ideas of antifascism, self-management, nonalignment, anti-imperialism/colonialism, and progressive political aesthetic, all of which were core tenets of nonaligned modernism and can serve as a basis for future progressive models of cultural organization.

It is a particular challenge to establish a proper intellectual, social, and historical context when writing about the art and culture of a society that no longer exists. When it comes to the former Yugoslavia, contextualization is crucial because its sociocultural and political identities have often been misread and misrepresented, especially after its 1991–95 dissolution. There is a great deal of literature, both academic and non-academic, that examines the breakup of the Eastern Bloc and the political, social, and cultural issues around its disintegration.<sup>33</sup> The war in the former Yugoslavia and its aftermath played a major part in these analyses, both because of Yugoslavia's proximity to Western Europe and because of its violent breakup.<sup>34</sup> The country's breakup is still most commonly attributed to a rise in ethnic nationalisms fuelled by internal and ancient hatreds.<sup>35</sup> Such analyses are made from a standpoint of liberal political theory, assuming that a modern nation-state is a sovereign, homogeneous unit.<sup>36</sup> These discourses fail to recognize the complexity of Yugoslav socialism's attempt to manage the country's multiethnic makeup, colonial history, sociopolitical structure, and relationships to international political and economic systems outside liberal structures. In studies based on a liberal critique of ethnic nationalism and state legitimation in Yugoslavia, such as Sabrina Ramet's, the main arguments are usually that Yugoslavia was an impossible creation imposed through an authoritarian socialist regime. As such, the country was fated to dissolve.<sup>37</sup> Another important implication embedded in liberal reading is a paternalistic notion that its peoples, and especially its leadership, were not mature enough to create a viable nation-state. The violence of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s was (and still is) attributed to the violent nature of the Balkan peoples, its histories, and the failures of the Yugoslav form of socialism.

There have been alternate analyses of Yugoslav history and its breakup that point to the relevance of the socialist political economy and its role, most notably Susan L. Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (1995). Woodward argues that instead of falling back on entrenched causations of the war as "resulting from peculiarly Balkan hatreds or Serbian aggression," the conflict needs to be understood as one of larger, international political disintegration.<sup>38</sup> Central to her argument is that the West (the US and European Union in particular) gravely underestimated "the interrelation that exists between the internal affairs of most countries and the international environment," and ignoring this "led to many paradoxes and had counterintuitive results" in dealing with the Yugoslav crisis.<sup>39</sup> A complex interconnectedness between various loans, national debt, trade tariffs, and the influence of US-imposed economic and social measures, influenced the final dissolution of the country. Woodward's analysis is crucial to understanding nonaligned modernism because it implicates powerful international forces in shaping Yugoslavia's fate, and in part brings to bear colonial theory as an important aspect of analyzing the country's history.

The history of how Yugoslavia, as part of the Balkans, has been and continues to be represented is crucial in making sense of how Yugoslav communists steered the trajectory of the socialist revolution, and how artists and intellectuals discussed here have chosen to theorize nonaligned modernism. Balkanism and postcoloniality, with their important critique of colonial representations of the other, are therefore the first theoretical structures used to investigate nonaligned modernity. Rather than analyzing Yugoslavia as a paradigmatic failed modern state, its history is constructed as an experiment in forming a hybrid modern, multinational, multicultural state; in other words, as an alternative socialist form.

A number of historical studies have drawn on earlier discourses that depicted the region as a dark, barbaric, anti-modern place, haunted by its own violent ghosts. Although this large body of writing developed over centuries, it never amounted to a systematic study of the Balkans.<sup>40</sup> It began as travelogues and journalistic accounts that were later incorporated into academic studies of the region. One of the most famous of

the more contemporary accounts of Balkan history is Robert D. Kaplan's book, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, written at the height of the Yugoslav dissolution. He offers a historical journey into the heart of what he calls "the original Third World," which birthed the world's "first terrorists" and perfected ethnic conflict.<sup>41</sup> In the prologue Kaplan quotes numerous journalists, politicians, historians, and writers who depict the region as continuously volatile. While Kaplan's book has been disputed and critiqued since its publication, especially by such authors as Tomislav Longinović, Vesna Goldsworthy, and Dušan Bijelić, the analysis of Yugoslavia and the Balkans proposed by Kaplan still reverberates throughout both popular writing and academic circles.<sup>42</sup>

Maria Todorova has termed this discursive construction of the region "Balkanism," linking it explicitly to Edward Said's theory of Orientalism.<sup>43</sup> Through an analysis of the language used to represent the region, Todorova pointed to the construction of a dichotomy between the modernizing force of the Western Enlightenment and its "other" embodied in the Balkans.<sup>44</sup> She argued that Western European modernity needed multiple others in order to position itself as the centre of the civilized world. Yugoslav "authoritarian" socialism (despite being hailed as superior to its Soviet counterpart) and Yugoslavia's violent dissolution were used to fortify the centuries-old narratives that Todorova analyzed in her book.

Milica Bakić-Hayden pushes Todorova's thesis further in "Nesting Orientalism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia" (1995), as does Vesna Goldsworthy in *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998). Bakić-Hayden argues that while Said's *Orientalism* is indeed an important text for understanding the Balkans, the Balkanist discourse requires a specific analysis of the complex network of essentialized identities in both the West and the Balkans.<sup>45</sup> Dušan Bijelić echoes this: "Without denying overlaps with Orientalism, the Balkan scholar insists that Balkanism has different representational mechanisms. While Said argues that the East/West Orientalism binary refers to a 'project rather than a place,' Bakić-Hayden claims that, in the former Yugoslavia, Orientalism is a *subjectivational practice* by which all ethnic groups define

the 'other' as the East of them; in doing so, they do not only Orientalize the 'other,' but also Occidentalize themselves as the West of the 'other.'"<sup>46</sup> Bijelić's and Bakić-Hayden's analysis of the Balkans in relationship to the West portrays a connection in which various ethnic groups have embodied stereotypical images of themselves through a complex mechanism of hierarchical colonial subject-construction; on the other hand, the West had also essentialized its own position as one always in divergence from its dark Eastern neighbours.

The apparatus of colonial subjugation and subject-creation described in the above-mentioned texts has a psychological dimension that recalls Frantz Fanon's analysis of psychological aspects of Western colonialism.<sup>47</sup> Racialized trauma produces subtle mechanisms of subjugation of the colonized mind as the colonized are made to conform to the white colonial ideal. "The more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets."<sup>48</sup> Although the experiences of African colonization and the subjugation of the millions of people from that continent cannot be directly compared to the Yugoslav situation, the psychological dimension of subjugation and its effects nevertheless suggests that a similar *mechanism* is at play within the Balkanist discourse. Western ideological construction of the Balkans and its presumed "irrationality" are internalized and even reproduced in acts of subjugation committed by the Balkan peoples against one another.<sup>49</sup> This closed circle demands additional "othering" as the Occidental border is moved further and further East. The source of this violence – both epistemic and actual – is not some nebulous construct of the dark Balkan psyche, but the imposed normalization of a Western subjectivity as the only possible way of being in the space of the Balkan everyday.

Although it is necessary to dissect this deeply embedded notion of the Balkans through a methodology similar to Orientalism, it is also crucial to embed it in its own geographical position.<sup>50</sup> East and the West have always been unstable categories in a region that is perpetually in-between. Bijelić suggests that recognizing this gives concreteness to the crucial difference of the Balkanist discourse.<sup>51</sup> Once Balkanism is properly investigated and positioned, it reveals that the peoples of the region have



constantly resisted the universalist rationalities of the academic language often used to frame the region. It also becomes evident that the region was colonized in particular ways, and that the multitude of ethnic, religious, national, and cultural groupings established amorphous and idiosyncratic relationships to that history of colonization and the forms of identity that came out of it.<sup>52</sup> This means that the Balkans, and the territory that was formerly Yugoslavia in particular, were, and still are, in a constant state of flux, evading clear-cut definitions of nationalism, the nation-state, modern identity, and so forth. For Bijelić this means that Yugoslavia could never be placed in the neat, universalist categories often employed in the academy.

Part of the critique of the Western hegemony in Yugoslavia, therefore, also has to come from an understanding of the colonial relationships in the Balkans. These relationships also cannot be separated from ideas of modernity, liberal and neoliberal discourses, and finally discourses of capitalism itself. Production of subjectivity is never detached from its economic effects; economic considerations are closely imbricated with Yugoslavia's positioning in twentieth-century Cold War geopolitics. Rastko Močnik's critique of capitalism's relationship to colonization in the Balkans frames the construction of the Balkanist discourse both in its past, but also through the present, a present that has been marked by forms of neocolonial rule.<sup>53</sup> These current relationships are shaped by the varied forces of globalization and by European policies of integration and assimilation. More than that, neocolonial relationships were forced through the geopolitical and military apparatuses of Western organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>54</sup> All of these have influenced the development of a general understanding of the region as backward, fuelling a number of academic and policy-making efforts to interpret the breakup of Yugoslavia as an example of old hatreds rather than Western economic and political policies that rested not only on recent but also on centuries-old economic and political circumstances. Močnik's argument therefore dispels the idea that Yugoslavs are disposed toward violence and cruelty, while at the same time offering a

constructive critique of the systemic violence that does indeed exist in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Including a critique of colonialism and neoliberalism in a discussion of Yugoslavia's history, therefore, means that to fully understand its socialist culture, one must see it as existing in tension with modernity<sup>55</sup> and read it against the grain of standard analyses of modernity. As one of the most ubiquitous and contested terms in recent theory and history, "modernity" continues to haunt contemporary consciousness despite being pronounced dead decades ago by postmodern discourse. There have been numerous excellent studies of modernity's impact and development over the years.<sup>56</sup> Many of these have qualified it as a general movement toward specific modes of political discourse emerging along with industrialization and establishing frameworks such as the secular state, individual rights, and development of universal legal and social systems. Twentieth-century critiques of modernity were central in shaping our current understanding of modernity's history and legacy. One effective critique of the Enlightenment and modernity diagnosed the basic problems of modernity as centred on a radical removal of the subject from the world in which s/he lives, and the consequent objectification, or instrumentalization, of that world (reflected in the abuse of resources and nature, for example).<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, modernity was structured through the dual forces of modern capitalism and the development of technological-scientific systems unseen in the history of humankind. Such a complex matrix of relationships between intellectual, economic, and cultural systems produced an ultimate mastery over all other forms of life, and the seemingly ultimate mastery of the Western world over all other cultures and societies.

In the last twenty years, theorists and historians have grappled with the idea of modernity by proposing alternative views of modernity's origins and development. Charles Taylor emphasizes the importance of recognizing "cultural modernity" as a way of problematizing the multiplicity of experiences in modernity and even the rejections of modernity found across the globe in the last two hundred years.<sup>58</sup> According to Taylor, there are two theories of modernity: the cultural and the a-cultural. The

former seeks to understand modernity as developing in relation to its sociocultural basis, which the latter (and dominant) approach tends to elide. A-cultural theories ignore the social, political, or cultural roots for the development of different modern paradigms.<sup>59</sup>

Postcolonial theory and history have been even more productive in their analysis of modernity, ultimately shifting accounts of modernity toward more multifaceted and fragmentary definitions. They have challenged the view of modernity as a primarily Western movement in various fields of intellectual, social, and political life. It has become clear that modernity is neither a Western “invention” nor did it take hold of the world in one overarching sweep.<sup>60</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod proposes that all the iconic elements attributed to the European expansion of the sixteenth century, and believed to have ushered in European dominance in the world, have existed previously and across the globe in China, Egypt, India, and other countries.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Walter D. Mignolo deconstructs narratives of Western hegemony, proposing an existence of other “world systems” each of which had predominance over world economic, technological, and social exchanges long before Europeans came to prominence.<sup>62</sup> Hegemonic relationships in the last four to five hundred years do not stem from the West’s innate superiority but from a system of well-established world economies into which Europeans inserted themselves as aggressive “newcomers.”<sup>63</sup> Consequently, modernity could not have developed uniformly across the world; rather, its movement across time and space was dependent on the relationship between the West and world systems existing prior to its hegemony. The category of modernity is therefore flawed but necessary.

The question is whether it is possible to salvage forms of thinking found in modernity’s theoretical language, forms which allow for emancipatory practices, without ignoring the violent history of modernity’s trajectory? If modernity is framed as an unfinished project, and if instead of digging its grave, it is rethought, then what is required is to think of it in dialectical terms. In other words, any serious engagement with modernity will automatically contain modernity’s radical, progressive critique, acknowledging its failures. The dialectical approach enables

current progressive historiography and cultural theory to use elements of the project that might still be worth saving,<sup>64</sup> while at the same time recognizing their imbrication in modernity's complicated discourse while also tarrying with its many faults. In Adorno's words, "Even on methodological grounds I do not believe that we can distantiate Occidental rationalism, under the hard gaze of a fictive ethnology of the present, into an object of neutral contemplation and simply leap out of the discourse of modernity."<sup>65</sup> Without rejecting the significance of postcolonial and other critiques of modernity, it is important to emphasize the value in holding on to specific elements of modernity that should not be rejected along with the rest of its problematic legacy. This requires recognition of the paradox of the West positioning itself as the modernizing, democratic force while inflicting brutal imperial subordination on other cultures. It would, however, be imprecise to say that Western modernity simply "took over" the world and imposed its socio/political and economic structures. A richer, more nuanced approach is required to uncover the complexities of modernity as it developed in the rest of the world not only because of the Western colonial and imperial project but at times in spite of it.

More recently, the so-called alternative theories of modernity offer one way of dealing with the burden of modernity. The call for reinvestigation of modernity to include multiple, complex, and idiosyncratic movements and points of contact between Western modernity and modernism, and the permutation of these social and cultural forms in the rest of the world, is key.<sup>66</sup> Shmuel Eisenstadt suggests that "The idea of multiple modernities presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world – indeed to explain the history of modernity – is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of social programs. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programs of modernity, holding very different views of what makes societies modern."<sup>67</sup> Modernity was, therefore, never a unified movement toward structural social transformation; rather it was always an uneven constitution and reconstitution of

complex ideas and practices. “To think in terms of ‘alternative modernities’ is to admit that modernity is inescapable.”<sup>68</sup> Thinking in systematic, manifold, and interdisciplinary ways about modernity remedies three problematic, long-standing issues in modernist scholarship. First, it problematizes simplistic critiques of modernity that can often be found in late twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship.<sup>69</sup> Second, it provides a new language for constructing multiple narratives for thinking about modernity from the point of view of those who were often relegated to the margins of the modern ethos. And finally, it provides a basis for constructing a response to the current surge of amnesiac histories that create artificial breaks with various historical narratives and conveniently circumvent the legacies that those pasts affirmed.<sup>70</sup>

Contemporary Western idioms tend to contextualize the Cold War past in polar opposites (East versus West, communism versus capitalism). The uniformity provided by this view often has triumphalist characteristics, especially after the fall of communism in 1989. The triumph of capitalism has often been framed as the inevitable outcome of the progress of the modern age. Post-1989 rampant neoliberalization of academic discourse has produced narratives that were too quick with their rejection of the various forms of socialism and communism that have developed in the twentieth century. The potential value of progressive socialist political and cultural ideas in combatting new forms of colonialism, rising inequality, and coming ecological disaster, however, suggests that a discussion of the merits and possibilities of socialist thought needs to be reopened. New theories of socialism need to be embedded in contemporary postcolonial theory and outside traditional constructions of modernity. Analyses of nonaligned modernism as it appeared in the socialist Yugoslavia offer one perspective in such theoretical and historical interventions. By uncovering crucial elements of the Yugoslav socialist culture, this book aims to tease out an alternative discourse of modernity and provide insights into the ways in which parallel twentieth-century world systems were constructed among diverse nations.

Aligning with both new Yugoslav scholarship and the work of international scholars, and in dialogue with broader analyses of the region through

a postcolonial lens, this book proposes a more complex periodization and definition of Yugoslav modernist art. Instead of a dualistic opposition between socialist politics, modernist art, and various avant-garde and neo-avant-garde practices, the book proposes that a far more symbiotic relationship existed between them. Yugoslav socialism's opening to international politics meant that art and its institutions would also benefit. Indeed, as the case studies in this book point out, many artists, curators, and cultural workers were able to operate nationally and internationally as a result of Yugoslavia's fairly liberal view of culture's importance in diplomacy, advocacy, and the building of its image in the world. The resulting periodization therefore takes into consideration these shifts and policy moves and proposes that Yugoslav modernist history can be separated into three periods. The first started at the onset of the Second World War and lasted into its immediate aftermath, which saw a more active political, socialist realist aesthetic. Between 1954 and the early 1960s with Yugoslavia's gradual opening to the world, we see a steady onset of socialist modernism which, in following with international modernist trends, was somewhat removed from politics, yet at the same time retained clear political narratives (artistic institutional structures were embedded in socialism; it had no art market; and themes associated with socialist ideals and political motifs, for example, subtle anti-capitalist and/or anti-imperialist rhetoric, were regularly presented). Starting in the mid 1960s, with Yugoslavia's key role in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement, the relatively politically subdued socialist modernism turned toward active participation in international political and diplomatic discourses, thereby gaining aesthetic and political agency, with clear political and diplomatic goals that reflected nonaligned values. These three periods are representative of the mainstream artistic productions that operated at the highest state levels. Less mainstream, neo-avant-garde, or underground artistic practices, while vigorous throughout the period, were less interested in pursuing overt nonaligned policies and are therefore not part of this book's scope. It is, however, important to note that both mainstream and alternative movements coexisted, operating within institutions, but also fluidly moving between the alternative, or what Denegri had called the "second line,"<sup>71</sup> cultures and the mainstream.<sup>72</sup>



o.3 Heads of states and delegations at the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries, Belgrade, 5 September 1961

The chapters in this book follow the main outlines of this periodization. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the aesthetic, institutional, and political background that followed and framed the development of nonaligned modernism in Yugoslavia. Chapters 3 and 4 closely follow this periodization by providing a concrete articulation of nonaligned modernism and its cultural institutions. The first chapter covers the early period of cultural development in socialist Yugoslavia during and right after the Second World War, characterized by a brief brush with socialist realism (between 1941 and the 1950s). The focus of the chapter is the first official exhibition of the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists, which was the most prestigious artist organization in the country when the exhibition was held in 1949. The exhibition is analyzed as an example of Yugoslavia's struggle to make sense of and implement socialist realism as an official theoretical, cultural, and political category. Its development paralleled the state's own wrestling with notions of socialist governance and its proper implementation. Difficulties with socialist realist aesthetic and the ensuing paradoxes in its adaptation in Yugoslav art are at the core of the

dialogues, theoretical discourses, and critical responses to the first exhibition. The analysis uses a number of first-hand accounts and reviews of the artworks shown at the 1949 exhibition to argue that Yugoslav socialist realist art was in fact a hybrid of Soviet socialist realist doctrine and modernist aesthetics. This argument goes against the grain of most art historical accounts of the period, which are committed to reading Yugoslav socialist realism as rigid and unforgiving. Most importantly, the hybridity between socialist realism and modernism, and the strong political character of Yugoslav art, are essential to this period, and proved crucial for the future establishment of nonaligned modernism. Debates that took place during this period formed a basis for further implementation of pragmatic aesthetic practices at work in nonaligned modernist art.

The second chapter discusses the adoption and adaptation of modernism as an official form of socialist culture. This process was influenced by internal and external factors, most importantly Yugoslavia's estrangement from the mainstream international socialist governance, and the rising influence of American foreign policy on Yugoslavia's economic and political and thereby cultural structures. In parallel to these tectonic political shifts, international modernism, especially its American version, became increasingly influential for Yugoslavia's nascent cultural scene. Once they became official policy, various forms of socialist modernism developed quickly at all levels of Yugoslav mainstream art. This chapter focuses on analyzing exhibitions that most clearly reflected the historic shifts of the mid-1950s. One is Yugoslavia's participation at the Venice Biennale, and strategies that various official and unofficial stakeholders used to represent the country to the world, such as paying close attention to how cultural diplomacy could be useful in showcasing the state's ongoing liberalization and receptiveness to international politics and culture, especially modernist art, in the national public sphere. The second example is the Museum of Modern Art's (MOMA's) first large-scale exhibition in Yugoslavia in 1956, which was one of the first exhibitions of American art. MOMA's show further echoes the complicated and layered narratives of modernism as it took hold in Yugoslavia. The chapter also outlines some of the basic elements of socialist modernist aesthetic, pointing to its more



reactive qualities. In other words, socialist modernism was at this stage still a reaction to Yugoslavia's encounter with international modernism.

Chapters 3 and 4 theorize nonaligned modernism and its political goals (especially as they related to the Non-Aligned Movement). A case is made for Yugoslavia's entry into a more active phase in influencing international politics, and its careful first steps toward building alliances with nonaligned partners are emphasized. In chapter 3, the Non-Aligned Movement and its cultural legacies are defined through analysis of international cultural diplomacy, exhibitions, cultural agreements, and various artistic initiatives, which were meant to build a parallel transnational nonaligned culture. The chapter also situates Yugoslavia's move toward the Non-Aligned Movement through careful discussion of the historical precedents of its investment in anticolonial politics. Nonaligned modernism is followed as it transforms from its 1950s beginnings as a progressive modernist aesthetic toward its active political involvement in representing the ideals of nonalignment. Of note was Yugoslavia's active participation in various forms of international cultural initiatives, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and other vigorous cultural exchanges pushed through the Committee for International Cultural Relations, as well as academic and cultural exchange with the world through all sorts of granting programs and agencies. The fourth chapter continues defining what nonaligned modernism meant by concentrating on one specific example – the Ljubljana Biennale. The chapter follows the biennale's development from its initially pragmatic goals of simply seeking to represent Yugoslavia as a player on the international art scene toward a realization that Yugoslav art could serve as a beacon for inclusive, equitable representation of all cultures in contemporary art. One of the major themes in this chapter is the biennale's founders and organizers' recognition that Yugoslav art could serve as an aesthetic and political mediator between Yugoslavia, the West, the East, and the narratives of the nonaligned. As a consequence, the ideals of the nonaligned modernist aesthetic were fully realized, and now used to promote the Non-Aligned Movement and Yugoslavia as a counterbalance to the divided world.

# 1

## From Socialist Realism to Yugoslav Alternative Aesthetic, 1945–1954

### Precarious Histories

In 1949, the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists' opened its inaugural exhibition in the city of Ljubljana. The exhibition, designed to showcase the work of members of this new association, represented the official voice of the fine arts in Yugoslavia. An important task of the Union was to affirm the principles of the Soviet socialist realist aesthetic as outlined in their first conference held in 1947. In the introduction to the show's catalogue the organizers stated, "The first federal exhibition represents a small review of the newest achievements in our art in line with the struggle for the new socialist-realism and as such it equally addresses audience and artists. It should assist in finding an urgently needed answer to a whole spectrum of important questions which have not been properly highlighted."<sup>2</sup> This statement embodies a postwar eagerness on the part of some Yugoslav cultural workers to espouse socialist realism and thereby participate in building a new society based on socialist principles. This period was characterized by attempts to define and institutionalize Yugoslav socialist art and lasted roughly until Yugoslavia's official break with the

Soviet Union in 1949. Between 1945 and 1949, the Yugoslav Communist Party and many prominent members of the art establishment held the view that art should actively participate in building a socialist society, and that to that end it should be completely integrated with the new state's socioeconomic and political efforts, and easily understood by the masses.

The 1949 show, however, did not fully succeed in its stated goal of showcasing representative socialist realist works. In fact, as this chapter shows, socialist realism as an artistic form never fully took root in Yugoslavia in the ideologically and aesthetically pure form advocated by some in the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Many of the artworks did not conform to socialist realist tenets as theorized by some in the Soviet Union,<sup>4</sup> displaying instead a broad variety of aesthetic and stylistic forms. The works in the show were emblematic of an artistic and cultural life driven by ambiguous and often contradictory forces: ideologically correct works in line with the official voice of the state, on the one hand, and darker, more abstruse reflections on postwar life, on the other. More importantly, the works also mirrored the volatile and difficult context of postwar Yugoslavia, ravaged by war and attempting to create a new society. Even during these early days of Socialist Yugoslavia – a time of the most rigorous, even Stalinist, political dogma – artists showed a great deal of agency, and a complex and varied relationship to the aesthetic and political concerns of their time.

The heterogeneity of Yugoslav artistic production embodied in the 1949 exhibition paralleled the country's complex sociopolitical situation. Yugoslavia emerged from the war as an agrarian society, shaped through the centuries by its powerful colonial masters (Austro-Hungarians, Italians, Germans, French, and Ottomans). The decimation of its meager industrial sector during the war forced the new Yugoslav state to confront modernity's exigencies of fast industrialization and building a unified national identity and culture, while at the same time forming relationships with the rest of the world. These pressures, coupled with the difficulties of postwar rebuilding and economic development, deeply influenced artistic and cultural production, making them the site of crucial social shifts. The postwar years of devastation and poverty were marked by "a radical situation" (food shortages, lack of housing

and infrastructure, shortages of basic art materials) that determined the way artists negotiated and understood cultural work.<sup>5</sup> Yugoslav postwar art cannot be understood outside these key contexts: its relationship to the politics and culture of the prewar kingdom, the Second World War partisan struggle for liberation, and finally, the Yugoslav socialist leadership's recognition that the country and its people needed to determine their own fate outside of the pre and postwar colonial and imperial power struggles.

Some of the debates and tensions that are traced through an analysis of the first exhibition of the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists form the kernel of what will become, first, socialist modernism and then nonaligned modernism in the 1960s. In other words, the complexity of the aesthetic and political terrain in the Yugoslavia of the 1940s and early 1950s analyzed in this chapter, and especially the idiosyncratic nature of the relationships within the Yugoslav artistic and cultural milieu, provided the basis for the shift toward socialist and after that nonaligned modernism.

Major facets of these nascent artistic and cultural forms are found in the interaction between various state and nonstate actors – represented by official and unofficial artistic networks comprising politicians, cultural administrators, individual artists, artists' groups, professional unions, academics, art critics, and other intellectuals, fiercely debating artistic policy – with Yugoslav cultural policies as they shifted in response to the country's changing geopolitical status. Furthermore, Yugoslavia's status as a new nation-state, its in-between international position, its cultural diversity, and especially its quest for national self-determination in the wake of anticolonial politics affected developments in art. And yet another complication was Yugoslavia's precarious relationship to the hegemony of modernity and modernism as the country adopted the modernist aesthetic and adapted to these influences from its position on the margins of the Western world.

Consequently, what is at play in the immediate postwar period is a state of crisis, or a radical situation (both politically and aesthetically). Yugoslav cultural and political stakeholders publicly debated ideas of how to build a completely new society while at the same time trying to

survive a dangerous conflict with the Soviet Union. Their attempts and experiments contributed to a diversity of positions on what Yugoslav art should be, but these contained some ambiguous, and sometimes paradoxical, standpoints. This ambiguity held a certain potential for the development of an entirely new artistic model structured by a uniquely Yugoslav cultural climate imbued with antifascist ideals, self-management, political decentralization, and emerging ideas of nonalignment. In short, as this chapter shows, Yugoslavia's precarious political, social, and cultural situation is precisely what created the necessary preconditions for elaboration of a cohesive anti-imperialist policy embodied in the Non-Aligned Movement, and secured the infrastructural and conceptual coherence for articulation of nonaligned modernism in artistic institutions and relationships.

## The Exhibition

Seventy-nine artists participated in the Union's 1949 inaugural exhibition. The exhibition travelled to three cities (Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana), and while it was initially set to begin in Belgrade, scheduling demands forced the organizers to move the first stop to Ljubljana. A national jury<sup>6</sup> chose sixty-nine paintings, twenty-seven prints and drawings, and thirty-eight sculptures from the six provinces that constituted Socialist Yugoslavia. Although there were earlier group shows held by provincial unions, this was the first federal exhibition presenting the work of the Yugoslav Union formed two years earlier. It was also the first, and arguably the last, national display of socialist realist tendencies.

The exhibition sought to showcase national unity after the war, and it was therefore expected to reflect a cohesive stylistic and ideological visual expression. In the exhibition catalogue organizers state,

with few exceptions our prewar art, especially painting, had more or less all the characteristics of the decadent formalist art launched from Paris. As such, at least in part, it had a decorative

significance and served a very small number of elites. In the light of our new social relations, artists are confronted with very important and complex problems that are impossible to solve with old aesthetic means and methods. Life undeniably imposes a creation of art that will in its content be a reflection, explanation, and a document of this new reality, and in its form be accessible and easily interpreted by the average worker; the creation of an ideas-based art that will be didactic, and boost people's socio-political consciousness, such art will be dear to and needed by our peoples. Under these circumstances an artist stops making artworks solely for the pleasure of rare individuals, and takes an honourable role of a fighter for a better life, for socialism.<sup>7</sup>

This text echoes the Soviet socialist realist rejection of the formalism and intellectualism of the earlier twentieth-century avant-garde movements. The exhibition's written mandate presented a cross-section of conceptual and aesthetic concerns under the "new social conditions." This exhibition would, it was hoped, demonstrate a clear political and formal direction toward socialist realism and signal unity of artistic purpose among Yugoslavia's multiple nationalities. Those who visited the show (critics and general public alike), however, did not see a doctrinal and formal cohesiveness and unity of purpose. In fact, diversity and heterogeneity were the two prevailing leitmotifs noted in reviews of the time.

Even some of the more successful examples were ambiguous when it came to representing the "new socialist context" and clarity of form and content. The two paintings that garnered most attention are also the most representative of Yugoslav idiosyncratic socialist realism – Boza Ilić's *Exploratory Drilling in New Belgrade* (figure 1.1) and Djordje Andrejević Kun's *The Witnesses of Horror* (figure 1.2). Of the two, Ilić's *Exploratory Drilling* is by far the more famous work. (It subsequently became a tragic victim of Yugoslavia's expedient move away from socialist realism.) It was exhibited earlier that year at the annual exhibition of the Serbian Union of Fine Artists, where it also created a sensation. It earned Ilić a place in the Yugoslav Pavilion at the Twenty-Fifth Venice Biennale in 1950. Some

contemporary critics proclaimed that it most clearly demonstrated socialist realist formal and conceptual elements. One called it the greatest painting in recent Yugoslav art history, praising its “spirit” and atmosphere of humanist revival.<sup>8</sup> Ilić’s work is a massive canvas, four-and-a-half metres wide by two-and-a-half metres high. The monumental composition is a hybrid of nineteenth-century history painting and twentieth-century socialist art, with just a hint of impressionism in the loose brushwork in the sky. Its celebration of the anonymous young workers and their back-breaking activities is indebted to the work of nineteenth-century realists such as Courbet, twentieth-century social realists such as the Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco, and German Expressionists such as Käthe Kollwitz.

The painting depicts a scene in the building of the vast new neighbourhoods in the capital city Belgrade. The older city had been destroyed during the German bombardment, and thousands of war refugees and those searching for a better future moved from villages and small towns to the country’s capital, creating a major housing shortage. Immediately after the war the government started a massive building campaign, and a number of suburban neighbourhoods with high-rise apartment blocks were constructed. One of the first tasks before building commenced was the drilling that Ilić depicts in his painting. The background is an industrial building site that spreads far into the horizon. A group of young workers in the foreground, both male and female, are turning the handles of the drilling probe.

The painting’s format, with its pyramidal composition and dynamism created through the mass of bodies in action situated mostly in the foreground, is typical of a nineteenth-century history painting. Ilić binds these formal devices to the project of socialist realism, using them to construct a grand vision of the ordinary worker. The composition is closed, with the drilling probe in the middle and two groups of workers to the left and right. They are neatly framed by a pyramid-shaped scaffold rising around them. The painting’s background is busy with more workers, cranes, drills, and other heavy equipment. A sense of movement is achieved by arranging the two main groups of workers in two diagonals



1.1 Boža Ilić, *Exploratory Drilling in New Belgrade*,  
oil on canvas, 1948

that intersect in the middle of the canvas. Drills, wooden supports, scaffolding, and cranes placed further in the distance create a number of smaller diagonal and vertical movements pointing upward to the sky. This movement seems to direct the viewer's eye to something beyond the canvas, perhaps to a possible future that they are helping to build.

Ilić's workers are young, healthy-looking, and serious. Each person is pictured pushing the drill, pensive, and seemingly without acknowledging the presence of the others. The three workers on the left facing the viewer lead us into the action. Their large, round bodies are pushing against the wooden handle of the drill. The young woman close to the centre is the focal point of the group. Her tall, powerful body creates a strong vertical movement, making her the symbolic core of the painting: an ideal worker full of health and energy. Although the workers' backs are bent into their task, there are no signs of physical strain on their faces as they do this backbreaking work. These idealizations could be read as Ilić's move toward socialist realist typification<sup>9</sup> of the human figure. These signs of typification in Ilić's work were singled out for criticism by



Miodrag Protić in the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Protić argued that the figures have a symbolic presence determined by what they are doing – the important task of rebuilding the nation – but provide no sense of how they feel about what they are doing. He further criticized Ilić's stating that his paintings are, in fact, museum souvenirs of a documentary nature.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, one could read the role of people in *Exploratory Drilling* as setting a standard of behaviour to illustrate desirable attitudes, not to explicitly showcase emotion or explore psychological depths.<sup>12</sup>

The workers do not meet the viewer's gaze; they are looking into the distance or staring directly ahead. This puts them at a certain psychological remove from us, yet we are invited to enter the scene through the open central space flanked by the workers on each side. The compositional conundrum is whether the painter wants us to join in and take hold of one of the wooden handles of the drill, or remain separated from the scene. This somewhat alienating spatial ambiguity and the lack of emotional tension both contribute to the painting's hybrid visual and conceptual structure. Ilić is attempting to remain true to both the formalism of nineteenth-century academic painting and the socialist realist aesthetic.

Another point of diversion from some of the more conservative socialist realist conventions in *Exploratory Drilling* is in the apparent modernist influences on formal elements, including the treatment of painted space. Spatial tension occurs between the two groups of workers in the foreground who represent the narrative, conceptual focus of the painting, and the space and actions taking place in the middle ground and background. All three layers of space are equally busy. As our eyes travel thorough the painting, passing over the building site toward the city in the distance, the artist does not attempt to create atmospheric perspective by having the colour diminish in clarity and saturation.

Ilić's interest in the flattening of space can be read as typical of late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century modernist painting, but Milanka Todić suggests that the use of space in Ilić's painting was also subordinated to a set of optical techniques imported from Soviet socialist realist photography and film.<sup>13</sup> These filmic techniques provided a means to negotiate between recording reality and the formal and conceptual

possibilities of painting: they included in-depth staging, depth of focus, continuity, editing, and extensive use of medium and long shots.<sup>14</sup> Such elements served to mimic the natural movement of the eye, yet at the same time provided the clarity of vision possible only with mechanical devices such as the lens of the camera. This brought to film and photography clarity of spatial organization in which filmmakers and photographers maintained equally sharp focus on objects situated throughout the space. Visual representation of actions, characters, and objects in medium and long shots instead of in close-ups meant that the viewer felt less disoriented as the camera lens mimicked the way our eye sees, at the same time placing the viewer in a privileged position from which they could, in a sense, visually own the entire environment.

*Exploratory Drilling* incorporates some of these filmic techniques for representing space, offering a closed, centralized composition, through which the viewer visually seizes the scene in its entirety. There is, however, a clash in the painting between painterly and photographic space, for example, Ilić's decision to eschew atmospheric perspective and flatten space. Nevertheless, the relative subordination of the painting practice to the principles of total visibility, and to a documentary style of realist representation in response to ideological needs, created an in-between formal composition that incorporated elements of both modernist and socialist realist aesthetic. Jovan Popović noticed at the time what he called "Ilić's crammed composition" and argued that he left no "breathing" room for objects and people in the space.<sup>15</sup> Popović added that the composition was rigid and needed more atmosphere, and noted some hints of "formalist" preoccupations. These observations, even at the time of Ilić's greatest success, point to the work's unreconciled hybrid nature as well as the lack of uniform critical standards for evaluating the work.

Ilić's modernist sympathies are detected more directly by comparing *Exploratory Drilling* to his smaller-scale study for the same painting. The study shows a closely cropped composition, more vibrantly colourful than the finished work, with strong complementary contrasts and saturated hues applied in flat areas. The figures are less naturalistically represented but more lively, and defined by bold black outlines. These stylistic

choices are all features of early twentieth-century modernism, and Ilić almost completely eliminated them in the finished work. As a young artist coming into his own during the Second World War and influenced by revolutionary aesthetic zeal, it is not surprising that Ilić would try to “hide” connections to what critic Grga Gamulin had called “the idolatry of Cézannism.”<sup>16</sup> These interests, however, resurface more obliquely in the finished paintings through Ilić’s ambiguous treatment of space, its implied flatness, and his painterly approach. Once again we see the emergence of a stylistic hybrid: a subtly transgressive form of Yugoslav realism.

Another key work with unorthodox modernist influences from the 1949 exhibition was Djordje Andrejević-Kun’s *The Witnesses of Horror*. This study of an extreme human emotion departed from monumental scenes often found in the illusionistic realism of some famous Soviet socialist realist models, provoking a number of mixed reviews. Kun’s work is a study of emotion and reactions to the horrors of war taking place somewhere outside the picture frame; rather than creating a wide-framed composition to show both the perpetrators and the victims, he focuses only on the “witnesses” who become larger than life heroic figures. Compared to Ilić’s *Exploratory Drilling*, *The Witnesses of Horror* moves even further from the socialist realist norm, most obviously in its departure from the wide field of vision preferred by Ilić and others in order to create an expressionistic intimacy instead. His composition is open-ended, constructed as a close-up of several characters (two children, two older men, and two women) who are part of a larger crowd. The crowd is not fully visible but Kun suggests their presence beyond the canvas through the dark figures in the background cropped by the painting’s borders. The close focus on the people in the foreground and the painting’s confined space, created by overlapping the figures, accentuate the emotional drama depicted on the people’s faces.

A small, somewhat emaciated boy in the foreground of *The Witnesses* has his back turned to the viewer as if running away from us, but at the same time turns his head, directly addressing us with his gaze. We enter the painting via his gesture. The boy’s turned body creates a strong diagonal from the bottom left moving upward and leads us toward the group



1.2 Djordje Andrejević-Kun, *Witnesses of Horror*,  
oil on canvas, 1949

gathered around him. The same upward movement is repeated in the two rows of people crowded in the foreground, and then by the lines of the road directly above their heads. These diagonals create a sense of movement away from whatever is directly in front of the group, and set the viewer before the figures, but slightly off to the side. This creates a sense of disorientation and claustrophobia arising from the tension between the gaze of the viewer and the shock on the faces of people who are turning away from what takes place in front of them.

While the viewer is unsure about how and where to enter Ilić's painting, in *Witnesses*, the viewer is drawn into the work's psychological and emotional space both through the painter's formal decisions (use of perspective, composition, and sense of movement) and through his study of

emotion. The three heads in the background are darkened to intensify the grim mood of the work. *Witnesses* uses the stylistic exaggerations that some ten years earlier Soviet orthodoxy rejected<sup>17</sup> as bourgeois modernist formalism. These characteristics were noted in a strongly worded review by Radovan Zogović.<sup>18</sup> In line with Popović's accusations of hidden formalism, Zogović criticized Kun for leaving three figures in the background unfinished, and for the recurrence of old formalist tendencies. He saw this in the artist's treatment of clothes in the foreground figures. "But when he went on to paint his protagonists' clothes, Kun has allowed himself to give in to the light effects, formalist arrangements and recipes, soulless geometry of various surfaces which formalists call 'resonating of colour,' 'symphony of tonality,' 'richness of colour palette,' 'straightforwardness of expression.' Light effects have imposed themselves as the pre-eminent law, as the 'alpha and omega of creation.'"<sup>19</sup> Zogović goes on to say that despite many serious problems with the work, Kun, as one of the most committed and sincere communist artists, managed to capture the spirit of socialist realist themes and the grandeur of the national liberation during the war.<sup>20</sup> Again an unresolved relationship between realism, formalism, and social commitment is present and clearly embodied in Kun's work and its reception.

Even if *Witnesses* is outside the formal norms of socialist realism, its theme and narrative content are faithful to some of the exigencies of the genre. Most of the ideological content comes from the psychology and the mood of the painting, something Zogović commended Kun for.<sup>21</sup> The main protagonists, while fearful, are not without agency because determination can be felt in their gazes. Kun highlights this by painting them as strong, larger than life, and filling up the space. The woman on the right with an infant in her arms has strong hands and bony facial features; her gaze is steely and defiant. The same is true of the man to her right. While these people are facing the horror of the atrocities committed by the Germans or their allies, their resolve as a group is symbolically representative of the Yugoslav nation as a whole.

Celebrating the suffering and sacrifices of the common man and woman during the war of liberation was the most important theme of

post-Second World War Yugoslav social realism. Eschewing idealized forms of representation (especially as found in some impressionistic socialist realist models) that depicted super-human workers and farmers, Yugoslav artists emphasized the suffering brought on by the war, unity among the many Yugoslav ethnicities, and their painful fight to liberate the country. The depiction of suffering and loss in many of the artworks could also be seen as a direct result of Yugoslav cultural memory, which was built in relationship to the longer history of colonization in the region. Yugoslav national consciousness rested on the close link between Marxism and the history of colonization and imperialism. For Yugoslav communists the depiction of suffering in the war signalled the steep price of the socialist revolution. Kun's expressive work is well suited to representing these traumas, and it succeeds as an example of a psychological visual study of the human condition characteristic of many Yugoslav artists of the period. Similar dark works reflect the complexity of the Yugoslav art scene even at the height of the socialist realist period.

## Building Socialist Art: Reception and Ambiguity

As Ilić's and Kun's examples show, socialist realism was, in principle, the Party-endorsed style, but in practice it took on an ambiguous and idiosyncratic character. The Yugoslav cultural and artistic scene never fully accepted socialist realism in its "purified," highly ideological form, advocated by such fervent supporters as Aleksander Gerasimov and the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russian (AKhRR). Ironically, some of socialist realism's strongest supporters considered the Yugoslav transgressive version of socialist realism purer. Eventually both the state and the art world rejected socialist realism altogether. There were several reasons. The intended socialist realist aesthetic templates were obfuscated in the particular Yugoslav cultural ecosystem and sociopolitical context. This was particularly apparent in the reception and reviews of the 1949 show. The relationships that Yugoslav artistic institutions had to the state and its ideologies were diffused and dependent on internal struggles among

particular artists and critics rather than on fulfilling the Party's wishes. Unlike the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia did not have a prior history of a strong socialist realist art dating back to the 1930s from which they would have to break away. Its artistic institutions developed very differently, or were, in some cases, completely non-existent prior to the Second World War. Finally, Yugoslavia's 1948–49 political break from Stalin completed the break from socialist realism and allowed, even encouraged, a reconsideration of Yugoslavia's aesthetic policy on non-Stalinist terms. These factors created space for divergent views on socialist art and eventually allowed for alternative aesthetic forms to arise.<sup>22</sup>

There were two possible templates for the politically correct forms of art alluded to in the catalogue of the exhibition. The first was the Soviet socialist realist model that was for the first time showcased in Yugoslavia at the 1947 exhibition of four leading Soviet painters, organized in collaboration with Soviet state cultural organizations. The second was a 1948 speech on culture and propaganda by one of the chief Party members, Milovan Djilas. Djilas's speech became the de facto Yugoslav Communist Party line on culture in general and art in particular.

*Exhibition of Works by Soviet Painters* was a travelling exhibition and provided the first opportunity for the broader Yugoslav public to see Soviet art. The works were supposed to serve as a model to the nascent Yugoslav socialist realist aesthetic and provide visual guidelines to the Yugoslav Union's 1949 show. Although the Union's organizers allude to socialist realism in the text of the catalogue, the Soviet aesthetic model was not so clearly translated into the works exhibited at the first national exhibition.

Part of the disconnect between Yugoslav and Soviet artists can be traced back to the Yugoslav perplexity over what truly constituted Soviet socialist realist art, especially as it was represented in the exhibition. Ljiljana Kolešnik points out the confusion Yugoslav artists felt when they visited the 1947 Soviet show. "Most of the socialist realist artistic production in Croatia at the time indeed could not be compared to the works exhibited at that particular show because the framework of Croatian art was not based in experiences of other cultures, but rather in the body of the national art production created during WWII ... Moreover, the



best artistic works of the time, even the ones aimed at mass audiences, were much closer to Expressionism or even Surrealism than they were to the poster realism of Gerasimov or Plastov.”<sup>23</sup> Other critical accounts of the show’s impact expressed sharply negative sentiments, and while the exhibition was well attended, artists and critics were divided as to how to read the work.<sup>24</sup> A pre-eminent proponent of socialist realism in Yugoslav art, Grga Gamulin, disappointedly observed, “it is enough to recall those sloppy and poorly painted dancers; and Gerasimov’s half-dressed and pornographically observed tractor drivers (supposedly they should present to us the heroes of socialist work?) and empty compositions of Deyneka.”<sup>25</sup> In 1969, Dragoslav Djordjević noted that the exhibition created a commotion among Yugoslav artists and critics who became “confused over what they saw as discrepancies between the theory and practice of socialist realism.”<sup>26</sup> The works exhibited did not carry the same power and weight as the theoretical texts that Yugoslav artists and critics read and debated.<sup>27</sup> The confusion they felt could also be attributed to the fact that, as Susan Reid argues, socialist realism in the Soviet Union “never achieved a stable, concrete ontology.”<sup>28</sup> Its “dysfunctionality,” Reid suggests, made it less legible for Yugoslavs to adopt and adapt for their own situation.

The second template for Yugoslav socialist realist art came in a speech by Milovan Djilas at the Fifth Congress of the League of Yugoslav Communists in 1948. Because the Party tried to avoid direct meddling in the theory and criticism of art, this was also the only position elaborated by a Party official.<sup>29</sup> Djilas’s views on art were shaped by his sympathy for the writings of Zhdanov. Djilas called for a Yugoslav aesthetic politicized to its core and used as propaganda.<sup>30</sup> But much to the chagrin of the hardline supporters of socialist realism in Yugoslav art circles, Djilas’s position was not readily reflected in the Union’s 1949 exhibition, nor in the diversity in the Yugoslav art scene. The disconnect between Djilas and members of the Yugoslav fine arts community is also palpable in the mixed reception of the 1949 exhibition.

The two major criticisms of the 1949 exhibition, noted in reviews by several more ideologically committed critics, were a lack of unity (which



would also signal perhaps a lack of cohesiveness in the theoretical underpinnings of Yugoslav socialist realism) and the absence of more prominent artists' works. For example, Aleksa Čelebonović commented on this lack of unity in a review in the Union's own magazine *Umetnost*.<sup>31</sup> He underlined differences among the works presented, in quality, tone, formal structure, and narrative/political concepts, arguing that the lack of unity was a sign of deeper structural problems within the national art organization. Čelebonović, in fact, observed that the national and provincial unions disagreed about the formal criteria, quality, and significance of particular artworks.<sup>32</sup> Reading between the lines, we can surmise that the artworks were in fact so stylistically different that he could not pinpoint a coherent Yugoslav aesthetic. At the end, Čelebonović admitted that even with these stylistic and thematic differences, the exhibition offered a view into the current state of Yugoslav art. He ultimately framed his criticism as a call for better interprovincial collaboration, improved technical training of artists, and more ideological education.<sup>33</sup>

Oto Bihalji-Merin argued in the political daily *Borba* that the exhibition showcased a significant move toward coherent social content and an incremental "freeing from formalist elements of the decadent bourgeois art so foreign to our people."<sup>34</sup> Yet, he observed, there was a considerable absence of true Yugoslav "masterworks"; the show was not representative of the best works of socialist realism, implying that the works were of lower quality than the Soviet examples.<sup>35</sup> Even though socialist realist didacticism and clarity were enforced in theory, and critics such as Čelebonović and Bihalji-Merin called for political rigour in thematic and ideological choices, in reality artists simply did not fully represent a distinctive socialist realist aesthetic.

The persistence of formalism did not pass unnoticed, as one of the staunchest representatives of the socialist realist aesthetic, Jovan Popović, remarked in his review: "In this First Exhibition of the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists, as with the last several provincial exhibitions, we can see how some artists are still trying to keep their old, thematically inadequate manners, hiding them behind subject matter; they take a factory or a construction site as an occasion to create landscapes with ambiance,

or they fade away objects through postimpressionist use of colour.”<sup>36</sup> Popović’s lament over “hidden” formalist tendencies – academic and modern – lurking behind “proper” socialist realist content suggests the impossibility of weeding out all formalist interests. It is also a reminder that beyond nineteenth-century academicism, pre-Second World War Yugoslav art encompassed a wide-ranging set of modernist aesthetic styles and approaches, from Cubism, Fauvism, German Expressionism, and Surrealism to Art Nouveau, Academic Realism, and Viennese Secessionism. All of these influences continued to co-exist after the war, contributing to both formalist interests and a variety of approaches to the socialist realist themes.<sup>37</sup>

Popović’s critique of the Union’s exhibition is typical of this early period when the political rhetoric among some artists and critics demanded that art should be subordinated to the will of the people. That is, artistic form should be subordinated to socialist ideas and national interest. Formalism was to be weeded out in order to create correct aesthetic models. However, what was meant by realism and formalism in practice, by artists themselves, was rather murky. The text of the constitution of the Union of Yugoslav Fine Artists, for example, states that “art is the property of the people, and a tool in its [people’s] progress.”<sup>38</sup> Even though the Union firmly supported art’s role in the building of the new state, the discussions during its official meetings around this time show more nuanced and even ambiguous attitudes toward formalism and art’s new role in society.<sup>39</sup>

At the Union’s executive board meeting immediately following the opening of the 1949 exhibition, its secretary, Branko Šotra, read out a short report about the exhibition’s “successes and failures.”<sup>40</sup> Here the criticism focused primarily on the fact that it was not representative of the greatest artworks created in Yugoslavia since the end of the war, and that it was too varied. The report thus echoed some art critics’ observations. Šotra added that even though the exhibition was not representative enough, it served as a valuable learning experience for the future; “this exhibition will most certainly contribute to finding answers to a whole host of unanswered questions that stand before us – creating a

nationally unified view of the role and significance of art in the life of Man.”<sup>41</sup> This mixed review illustrates that even in this period of zealous aesthetic dogma, artists were not fully clear on what socialist realism should be. After Šotra’s speech, a heated discussion ensued in which the executive debated the success of the 1949 exhibition with respect to the Union’s own previously stated goals.<sup>42</sup> There was no consensus since opinions were thoroughly divided on the criteria for evaluating quality of work and artists’ abilities to paint in a figurative, and therefore politically correct, mode. There were specific criticisms of the Soviet aesthetic models, with Slovene painter Božidar Jakac exclaiming, “we stand on an entirely different foundation from the Russians!” and then clarifying that “just as we are building our own brand of socialism, we should also build art on its own terms.”<sup>43</sup> Others, like Šotra (even as a staunch supporter of socialist realism), offered outright criticism of Soviet art, saying that “Soviet artists’ concepts are correct, but the results that they have attained cannot be considered socialist realism.”<sup>44</sup> In this statement we see what Susan Reid analyzes as the contested terrain “between different artistic factions struggling for dominance within the art world, as well as among the Stalinist bureaucracies that patronized and controlled art” that made socialist realism an unstable idea.<sup>45</sup>

Artists who were leaning toward modernism, such as Petar Lubarda, called for art that was figurative, yet open to change, committed to poetics and what he called “artistic spirit.” In his impassioned plea at the meeting, Lubarda lamented failures of art as sheer transcribing of reality, or its unabashed idealization. “We [Yugoslav artists] were always in search of a truth, and today the possibilities for that are greater, not only spiritually but also materially. It is logical that we are committed to dealing with realism; however, we attack too many things that should not be attacked, that are normal ... I think that which is the best and most constructive in the science of painting should be used as a tool to reach our possibilities. If we extract poetry from art, then we leave it without wings, without upswing.”<sup>46</sup> Without rejecting what the artists of the time called representations of the “new Yugoslav reality,” Lubarda offered a circumspect criticism of what he and other Yugoslavs perceived as vulgar

and tautological Soviet socialist realist aesthetics. He was not alone, as the Union's meeting transcript shows. The 1949 exhibition proved to be a hotly debated item and led to discussions around adjudication of art, poor working condition of artists, relationships between national and provincial art organizations, and finally, and most controversially, to questioning of formalism. At one point Croatian painter Marino Tartaglia asked, "Is the notion of formalism the same in the Soviet Union as in Yugoslavia?"<sup>47</sup> Again the answers were diverse and somewhat confusing. Clearly, Yugoslav artists were not sure whether it was, nor were they sure at that point what they meant by socialist realism either.

Later appraisals of the successes and failures of socialist realist art were staunchly negative, but offer an insight into why Yugoslav art was never fully socialist realist. Miodrag Protić has offered the most prominent art historical account of the period, claiming that most artistic production during socialist realism in Yugoslavia could be described formally as "academic impressionism" characterized by nostalgia and sentimentality.<sup>48</sup> Academic impressionism, as described by Protić, was ideologically problematic for socialist realist hardliners, and while it was present in Soviet art as well, its presence was ambiguous at best.<sup>49</sup> What is also clear from the debates is that impressionism was in fact a shorthand for formalism and academicism. Officially, formalism meant showing too obvious an interest in formal aspects of a work, such as colour or brushwork. Protić argued that "every freer brushstroke, every stronger tone, all thinking in forms and colours, unavoidable in painting" was seen as decadent.<sup>50</sup> Although these views were officially endorsed, and indeed the more extreme supporters of socialist realism among art critics were inclined to look at "every freer brushstroke, every stronger tone" for traces of stylistic and conceptual inconsistencies, in reality most artists continued to work in "transgressive" formalist modes, as the 1949 exhibition shows.<sup>51</sup>

Protić also argued that orthodoxy in Serbian art, and Yugoslav art in general, came from the dictatorship of the provincial and federal artistic unions, rather than direct political pressure from the Party.<sup>52</sup> The early days of socialist realism were marked by an ideological fervour on the part of more dogmatic artists, leading to a "purification" campaign

between 1945 and 1948. During this early stage, several members of the Yugoslavian Union of Fine Artists took control of the Union's exhibiting practices.<sup>53</sup> Official art institutions were run largely by a relatively small contingent of artists who subscribed to an aesthetic model based on the classical academic styles of the nineteenth century, which were not necessarily always in line with socialist realist dogma. These important public institutions included federal and provincial professional art unions, academies of fine art, and various state-owned museums and galleries. It is therefore impossible to look at the development of early Yugoslav art without considering institutions and policies within which such art was created and debated.

Contributing to the solidification of the Academic Realist model (or Impressionist model) was the fact that the country's artistic institutions were formed in the nineteenth century under the direct auspices of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which colonized most Yugoslavian territories, imposing its cultural and institutional structures. The salon model of art education, exhibition, and professional practices was part of the typical Western European artistic culture. This model was incrementally transplanted to the Yugoslav territories during Austro-Hungarian occupation. Classical training using plaster casts, nude model studies, anatomy, and painting techniques were the predominant pedagogical methods, and all these methods contributed to the reception and implementation of realism after the war. Moreover, the majority of artists before the Second World War travelled outside Yugoslavia to receive further art education, or to be fully educated in European schools. Similar institutional histories are found across the non-Western world, especially from the African and Latin American continents. Given the underdeveloped system of art schools and exhibition spaces, the bulk of artists from these places travelled outside to be educated. Drawing a direct correlation between the rise of modernism and the Western colonial project, Everlyn Nicodemus argues that "African modern art responds to colonial relations from the opposite side, the side of the colonized."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, as Nicodemus asserts, "African modern artists, those who have not gone abroad, have worked within limited and weak cultural structures and mostly been

obliged to rely on benevolent foreign expatriates and embassy personnel as their patrons.”<sup>55</sup> A similar history of underdeveloped artistic institutions in pre-Second World War Yugoslav territories assured that vestiges of academic formalism were still present in the postwar period.

Adding to the complexity of Yugoslav art, the Communist Party demanded equal representation of all the ethnic communities in the country at all political and social levels.<sup>56</sup> The resulting social structures afforded a considerable amount of autonomy to the provinces, which in some cases operated as mini-states.<sup>57</sup> The Party was seeking to maintain national unity among diverse peoples of various ethnicities, languages, and socioeconomic development. The result was that all cultural organizations and professional artistic bodies had both federal and provincial representation. Each provincial cultural body operated somewhat differently depending on the monies available and the infrastructure of galleries, museums, and educational institutions. In the years between 1945 and 1950, the Croatian provincial art union organized more exhibitions than all the other provincial unions combined.<sup>58</sup> In other provinces, such as Slovenia, there was no fine arts academy until after the Second World War, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia the numbers of professional artists were minimal.<sup>59</sup> These structural differences further obstructed the implementation of a uniform aesthetic.

On the form-versus-content question, Yugoslav artists were, in the end, more concerned with form, not in the modernist sense, but in terms of clear Academic Realism. Artist unions set up a guild-like system in which specific regulations were enforced within the organizations, while the state distanced itself from what it deemed internal squabbles. Protić noted that “In their role as mediators, Union officials acted as representatives of their artist members before the state and Party forums, and conversely they acted in the role of the state before their membership, all the while their individual beliefs, culture and abilities played a key role in shaping opinions.”<sup>60</sup> While political content remained an important measure of artistic success, the resulting artistic landscape in Yugoslavia was shaped more by internal power struggles than by prosecution and cleansing of artistic form and content.<sup>61</sup> Despite various attempts to impose

more conservative socialist realist aesthetic principles on the Yugoslav artistic scene, socialist realism remained transgressive (or non-existent), especially in its tolerance for the coexistence of various hybrid styles of art and some artists' penchant for "formalism." The 1949 exhibition therefore serves as a marker, or rather a symptom, of the failure of socialist realism; the exhibition's heterogeneity (noted in both official reviews and the Union's own accounts) signalled the coming tides of change. Following 1949, Yugoslav art became engulfed in more open, heated debates over which aesthetic should prevail – the socialist realism of the Soviets or the modernism of the West. Over the next five to six years the influence of the socialist realist aesthetic progressively declined as the international modernist ethos prevailed.

### Aesthetic and Political Alternatives after the 1949 Exhibition

The more pronounced questioning of socialist realism after 1949 and the ensuing cultural debate were spurred on by a new political reality. President Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia were actively moving away from Stalinism. The so-called Tito-Stalin split took place over the course of 1948, and involved complex geopolitical power struggles centred around Tito's pretensions for establishing a Balkan federation, supporting Greek communists in the civil war, and disagreements with Stalin over enforcement of Stalinist economic policies in Yugoslavia. The diplomatic disagreement deepened into an open conflict, which had the potential to escalate into a new armed conflict. Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform and was completely politically and economically alienated from the rest of the Eastern European Bloc and from communists in other countries such as France and Italy. The repercussions were serious and troubling both economically and politically. The Yugoslav leadership decided to go out on its own, away from both the Soviet and the Western blocs.<sup>62</sup> The Tito-Stalin split subsequently forced the Yugoslav state to transform its entire sociopolitical system. Between 1948

and the end of the 1950s a number of alternative solutions appeared, the most important of which were a theory of self-management and later the first formulation of the theory of the Non-Aligned Movement.

And while the 1948 crisis was dealt with on a somewhat ad hoc basis – in other words, it was to a degree unplanned – the resulting cultural and political shift (reflected in the new theory of self-managed socialism) cannot be understood as existing in a vacuum and without historical origins. The theoretical basis for what would eventually become Yugoslav alternative socialism, and its artistic variant, can be traced back to pre-Second World War Yugoslav culture and politics. The phenomenon began in the late 1920s within the ranks of the Yugoslav Communist Party in response to the shift in Soviet politics of the time, and the rising political tensions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Stanko Lasić qualified the debate as “the conflict on the literary Left.”<sup>63</sup> The conflict was, however, political and philosophical as much as it was aesthetic in origin, and it is therefore not literary alone, but interdisciplinary, as Lev Kreft has aptly argued.<sup>64</sup> A group of Yugoslav Marxists recognized the dangers posed by Stalin’s show trials and purges for the Yugoslav Left.<sup>65</sup> The group comprised artists, writers, and intellectuals who, through their discussion of the relationship between art and the Marxist revolution, addressed larger social and political questions of their time. It represented a dialogical confrontation with the forms of oppressive Marxism in politics and art, establishing a precedent for what would become postwar Yugoslav alternative culture.

Equally troublesome internal contexts and conflicts between 1920 and 1938 also shaped the conflict on the Left (both in the late 1920s and after the Second World War). One crucial stressor was the rising dictatorial (proto-fascist) rule of King Alexander I that would in 1929 lead to the so-called January Dictatorship during which the king’s political opposition was systematically dismantled and the Left (the Communist Party, socialists, anarchists, etc.) brutally persecuted and destroyed.<sup>66</sup> Mainstream culture under this increasingly restrictive political and social system was characterized by a number of petit bourgeois aesthetic movements. In visual art this bourgeois aesthetic produced what Miodrag Protić in the 1970s, and more recently Rade Pantić, have dubbed “intimist modernism.”<sup>67</sup> While



their astute readings of culture focus on mainstream painting practices in Serbia, identical trends are found across the region (in Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia). Pantić in particular qualifies interwar modernism as apolitical, individualist, inward looking, nationalist, and elitist in nature. In short, such art was a reflection of the needs and predilections of both the ruling monarchy, which used art to keep the potentially shifting bourgeois alliances close to its own hegemonic political goals,<sup>68</sup> and of the small rising bourgeois class, which desperately wanted to prove its civility and Europeanness to the Yugoslav monarchy and their European masters. These prewar elites, and the culture they supported, were not unlike the elites in Central and Latin America, where they served the colonial political interests (even though some of the countries were sovereign) and supported particular class and racial differentiation.<sup>69</sup> Completely self-referential and formalist in nature, intimist modernism in Yugoslavia was a perfect mechanism of control: “Artistic autonomy based on the ideas of art-for-art-sake aesthetic was not an expression of freedom and democracy in interwar Yugoslavia, but a safe and politically tame form of art that was useful to an exceedingly repressive state. On the other hand it gave artists an illusion of freedom and individualism, as well as a safe financial refuge amidst misery and poverty.”<sup>70</sup> Its dominant formal elements, subject matter, and themes such as urban and rural landscapes, interiors with still lives, portraits, or female nudes, and discussions focused on formal elements of painting such as colour, brushwork, and texture only served to further buttress repressive societal tendencies and placate potential revolutionary cultural and political articulations. Repressive features of the Yugoslav sociopolitical and cultural life in interwar Yugoslavia (especially between 1929 and 1939) deeply affected the ways in which the Left would react to both the pressures from an increasingly aggressive Soviet Union and country’s own domestic dictatorship.

Yugoslav pre-Second World War cultural debates thus developed over a number of years and were shaped by a variety of Marxist positions that had persisted since the early twentieth century.<sup>71</sup> Stanko Lasić describes the fundamental conflict on the Left as the debate over how to create a synthesis between revolution and art, and what the relationship should

be between art and life.<sup>72</sup> In other words, how can revolutionary politics live in an aesthetic, creative form, and how can art formulate and carry on revolutionary struggle? The arguments presented by Yugoslav intellectuals over that decade centred on the appropriateness of modernist and socialist realist aesthetics for revolutionary politics. One group advocated socialist realism as the most politically correct form, while the other held that art had to be both socially/politically engaged and keep its commitment to formal questions. Their discussions echoed similar concerns about modernist and socialist realist aesthetic in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, most notably articulated by Gyorgy Lukacs, Theodor Adorno, Bertolt Brecht, and Walter Benjamin.<sup>73</sup> Yugoslav discussions, however, did not reach a conclusion prior to the Second World War and were therefore reopened in 1945.

Unlike its Western counterparts, Yugoslav prewar debate also involved questions of indigenous Yugoslav artistic production, a debate mostly spurred by the realization that Yugoslavia's history was one of colonization. The leading voices in the pre and postwar conflict were that of the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža and Serbian poet Marko Ristić. Krleža, in particular, proved relevant for the development of postwar Yugoslav socialist political and cultural alternatives because he regularly critiqued Yugoslav subservience to Western colonial powers, advocating instead forms of aesthetic and political decolonization.<sup>74</sup> Between the late 1920s and the late 1950s he consistently attacked socialist realism in polemical texts and essays published in journals, magazines, and daily newspapers. In a powerful speech at the Congress of Yugoslav Writers in 1952, Krleža called for a rejection of socialist realism, marking its unofficial end in Yugoslavia.<sup>75</sup> Krleža's argument was two-pronged and tied to the idea that artistic production should be true to its formal, aesthetic nature on the one hand, and to national, indigenous artistic production on the other. Yugoslav art, he claimed, needed to keep in perspective a set of larger sociopolitical histories involving Yugoslavia's colonial past and its communist, revolutionary present. Art had to address what it is to be a creative and political person, but also what it is to be Yugoslav. An indigenous Yugoslav art would not be embedded in nationalism, but would

take a Marxist stance toward its colonial history.<sup>76</sup> Such art is then both localized, given its particular formulation in native histories, and international, as a socialist, Marxist project, which was for Krleža international in scope.

In light of this complex history, Krleža advocated that Yugoslav revolutionary aesthetic develop in tension with modernism and socialist realism. Its in-between position would be grounded in Yugoslavia's location, figurative and actual, on the margins of Europe, often as its colony.

If we could speak of a Left or a Right program, we are biased in support of the Left realization of our artistic objectives. That this cannot be realized through the genre painting styled on the works of the second half of the nineteenth century, through dilettante quasi-programmatic lyrical practices of Tihonov and Riljski, that this cannot be expressed through Fauvism or through Constructivist and Surrealist or abstract painting or poetry, that is fruitlessly preserved for more than fifty years, that is all beyond doubt. Kandinsky was pointless already in 1913, especially from our perspective of Balkan wars and Austrian liquidation. That Gerasimov's and Zhdanov's right-leaning artistic contra-revolutionary work, together with the idealist theoretical leanings of Todor Pavlov, cannot be of help here is beyond doubt. Once a socialist cultural medium, conscious of its rich past and its cultural mission in contemporary European space and time, is developed, our art will inevitably appear.<sup>77</sup>

Krleža's call for the construction of a uniquely Yugoslav left-leaning art was both a political and an aesthetic response to the pressures of the socialist realist dogma, on the one hand, and what he perceived as a hollow, modernist, ahistorical "l'art pour l'art-ism"<sup>78</sup> on the other. He recognized the political impotence of European avant-gardes whose autonomous artistic production could not convey the reality of the colonial subjugation of the Balkan peoples.<sup>79</sup> Lasić, in his analysis of Krleža's 1952 speech, argues that the development of an apolitical, autonomous

artistic practice did not make sense in the context of the systematic pillaging that Yugoslav peoples had undergone over the centuries.<sup>80</sup> Krleža equally believed that Soviet aesthetic production, with its emphasis on realist dogma that simultaneously retained traditionalist petit bourgeois stylistic elements, could not provide the basis for a revolutionary art. A truly meaningful art could only happen through an integration of art and revolution. Western modernist notions of autonomous art as practised by the European avant-gardes had failed to respond to the needs of life; they could not productively speak to and about the everyday. Equally important were the failures of the Soviet socialist realism that instrumentalized art and stripped it of its basic characteristics (imagination, creativity, experimentation).

In a second speech at the 1954 Congress of Yugoslav Writers,<sup>81</sup> which gave the final blow to socialist realist doctrine, Krleža fully outlined his anticolonial approach to art practice, introducing a more radical idea of art. To follow Western examples of art production for him meant to “exist as an imitation.”<sup>82</sup> His dilemma was how to escape imitating Western and Soviet aesthetic types and put an end to existing on the cultural periphery. Krleža’s suturing of anticolonialism to his aesthetic analysis is crucial to understanding how Yugoslavia’s lack of self-identity and aesthetic identity played out. Stanko Lasić states,

[Krleža’s] response is similar to that of Frantz Fanon: if we stop being an object and become a subject, if we stop being a periphery and become centre, if we come back to ourselves without regard for gods that have created us. That complete negation of Europe and its modern fetishes is in actuality a complete affirmation of the SUBJUGATED and the REJECTED: in the coming to oneself the DISPOSSESSED has to LIVE THROUGH and EXPERIENCE total rejection of the Other which has relegated him to a subhuman. That is the first moment of such dialectic. If the subjugated culture does not live through such dialectic it will never be able to constitute itself as a subject. It will forever stay an imitation.<sup>83</sup>

Situating Yugoslavia's socialist art within the anticolonial discourse of the twentieth century constitutes Krleža's most profound conclusion with respect to the relationship between art and revolution. There can be no political, social, or cultural transformation unless those who have been colonized and relegated to the margins, first, reject those who have subjugated them, and second, engage in a process of acquiring an identity. Political sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and social equality are Krleža's conditions for praxis-based art, which can then be a part of the revolutionary transformation. There is an implied critique of classical Marxist tradition in which postcolonialism exists as an afterthought to the more pressing issues of the socialist transformation.<sup>84</sup> Krleža underlines the importance of the socialist revolution but only as a part of the realization of political and cultural sovereignty in the postcolonial sense. Accordingly, neither socialist realism nor modernism was in touch with the everyday as experienced by the Yugoslav masses. The margin, in this case Yugoslav culture, existed in tension with the hegemonies of the Western world and its Soviet counterpart.

Analysis of the pre- and post-Second World War aesthetic and political contexts and debates, and Krleža's conclusions on the topic, offers us two ways to understand the first exhibition of the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists. One is that the exhibition was the Yugoslav attempt at adopting a socialist realist aesthetic and therefore constituted an inauthentic effort at shaping a revolutionary art. The other is that the exhibition was as an attempt at finding a path between two aesthetic paradigms of the time: modernism and socialist realism. The fact that the exhibition was characterized by a mixture of ambiguous socialist and modernist aesthetic elements supports the first reading. As long as Yugoslav art attempted to mimic international styles, and adopted them without consciously positioning its production with respect to its identity, it would continue to produce poor, inarticulate copies of international art. In that case Bozo Ilić's *Exploratory Drilling* stands at the symbolic intersection of this argument in its attempt at a balance between modernism and socialist realism. The work constructed a formal and narrative hybrid that only partially responded to the political, social, and cultural exigencies of the new Yugoslav state.

At the same time, in support of the second understanding, the artists showing their works at the exhibition were either interested in the idea of socialism or fully committed to it. At stake for them was finding an appropriate balance between their revolutionary zeal and their commitment to art production. Instead of judging the works as incoherent, or inept, we might read them as searching for the right balance between the position at the margins of the European centres of art and membership in the political vanguard of the socialist revolution. The push and pull between the geopolitical powers and aesthetic exigencies is what comes out most clearly in the 1949 exhibition. This tension opened up questions of influence and, more importantly, pointed to the fact that influences (political or artistic) flowing from the centre to the margin are refracted and mutate as they are adopted and adapted in the various cultural contexts. When read through the lens of hegemonic, and somewhat conservative, understandings of formal and conceptual elements of modernism and socialist realism, Yugoslav art in the immediate postwar period would be found lacking. Once we consider it as a hybrid form that adapted to the demands of both aesthetic models in its own idiosyncratic way, we can argue that its short-lived brush with socialist realism provided a basis for the development of further alternatives to the centres of aesthetic power.

The first national exhibition of socialist art also inadvertently pointed to the larger issues in Yugoslav social structures: the search for an indigenous Yugoslav social and political life, one that could provide a small, underdeveloped country with a more powerful international position. The balancing act between the artistic and the political brings to light the tension between the centre and the margin, with Yugoslavia attempting to navigate between its position at the margins and the possibility of finding a way to deflect that position by proposing more radical changes in the discourse of Marxism and modernity.

Anticolonial discourse based in a Marxist aesthetics as offered by Krleža was closely related to the general trend in Yugoslavia at the time to think of socialism as a constellation of anti-imperialist, antibureaucratic forms of revolutionary politics. While in culture this meant rejecting

forms of bourgeois aesthetic, on the one hand, and proscriptive, propagandistic art on the other, in politics it meant adopting more democratic forms of social organization and establishing connections with other countries that exhibited similar attitudes. The solution to the Yugoslav socialist question was found in the theory of self-management.<sup>85</sup>

The basis for self-management socialism was established in the late 1940s by one of the Communist Party leaders, Edvard Kardelj. Together with Milovan Djilas, Kardelj accused the Soviet Union of imperialist appetites, which was also the major reason for Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform.<sup>86</sup> Kardelj initiated two important structural transformations in the Yugoslav social system. One was self-management socialism, and the other was the restructuring of the role and functioning of the Communist Party itself.<sup>87</sup> Gerson Sher writes that "each was in itself a revolutionary innovation designed to strike at the roots of the problems associated with the degeneration of the revolution in the USSR."<sup>88</sup>

The Yugoslav theory of self-management can be defined as a form of social structure constituted by a number of self-organized worker councils that would manage their place of employment. The concept of a worker's council was an idea already discussed in nineteenth-century Marxist thought, but it was abandoned after the state-socialist system prevailed in the twentieth century. The ultimate goal of the self-management system was to gradually get rid of the existing political structures, and the bureaucratic state in particular. Unlike anarchist models, self-management called for numerous self-organizing communities based on a system of self-accountability and responsibility. The communities would decide on their fate through dialogue and debate: in short, direct democracy. According to the theoretical models provided by Kardelj and others, the self-management system would also eliminate the inherent alienation of labour and life under both state socialism and capitalism.

Self-management was further developed by amalgamating it with the emerging international Non-Aligned Movement initiated by Kardelj and President Tito in the late 1950s. Participation in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement helped Yugoslav socialists further their anti-imperialist, postcolonial thinking. These political ideas became the

elemental structure on which socialist Yugoslavia built its future until its demise in 1991. They were imbedded in all social structures and were written into the country's constitution as well as promoted in the cultural and social realms. It was the goal of the Yugoslav political elites to make self-management, the Non-Aligned Movement, and brotherhood and unity the three basic pillars on which the state and its legitimacy rested. Because of this, the way in which a socialist aesthetic developed after 1949 was closely tied to the fate and legitimacy of these theoretical notions. How Yugoslavia would adopt its form of modernism was dependent on how it would adopt its version of socialist self-management.

Kardelj's and Djilas's work on defining and implementing self-management, however, would have been impossible without earlier intellectual preconditions. These preconditions are found in the original debate within the Left in Yugoslavia around the meaning of culture and art in the communist revolution. The polemics around freedom, communist revolution, identity, democracy, and agency were crucial elements in these discussions. While the Yugoslav Communist Party in the late 1920s was trying to survive the authoritarian regime of King Aleksandar, its intellectuals were hard-pressed to properly define the nature of their struggle, especially in light of Stalin's autocracy. Once the new socialist Yugoslavia was formed, the discussions on the intellectual Left became the basis on which Communist Party elites built ways to disassociate from the Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia, then, the artists and cultural workers were the true vanguard of alternative socialist thinking. Without their ideas, the discourses of self-managing socialism would not have taken place. By the same token, the 1949 exhibition was a symptom of the impending, profound social change, rather than a symptom of the failure of socialist realism.

## Missed Opportunities?

The turbulent years immediately after the Second World War were crucial for the development of Yugoslav art. The rejection of the conservative forms of socialist realist aesthetic, the authorized position that ended



unofficially in 1952 and officially in 1954 with Miroslav Krleža's speeches, marked a new beginning for the influx of various modernist influences. If we consider that the first national Yugoslav socialist realist exhibition was held in 1949, and that the first post-Second World War Abstract Expressionist exhibition was held in Zagreb in 1953, we can surmise the scope and speed of the radical shift in aesthetic and cultural concerns. After the official break with socialist realism, those who were once celebrated as the pre-eminent socialist realist artists, such as Boža Ilić, were no longer officially endorsed.<sup>89</sup> Existing in relative obscurity, some of these artists often went back to painting in prewar expressionist, intimate styles, as was the case with Ilić. Exhibitions showcasing more pronounced experiments with modernist forms became a common occurrence, culminating in the development of the official Yugoslav cultural policy, which sought to finance, support, and present modernism as its core value. Throughout the late 1950s Krleža's call for an alternative model of art rooted in political and revolutionary consciousness was left relatively unresolved as nascent socialist modernism was gaining strength. The end of socialist realism, signalled in the writing of Miroslav Krleža, also provided an opportunity to create an interesting, and progressive, alternative form of art making which would be more fully realized at the end of the 1950s when Yugoslav artists, intellectuals, and cultural policymakers decided to adopt the new political theory of nonalignment as a possible aesthetic form. Although this short period in the late 1940s could be read as the time of missed opportunities, it in fact served as a basis for constructing a uniquely Yugoslav cultural milieu that sought to create a delicate balance oscillating between the East and the West, and was crucial in establishing the nonaligned modernist form of the 1960s.

## 2

# Coexistence, Cultural Diplomacy, and the Ascent of Socialist Modernism

The decade of the 1950s was a time of incremental opening up to the world as Yugoslavia sought to keep its international standing relatively unaligned. The continued intermingling of aesthetic and sociopolitical narratives in mainstream Yugoslav art points to the parallels between the country's increasingly complicated internal and external politics and the development of its particular form of modernism. Yugoslavia's negotiations on the perilous Cold War geopolitical scene corresponded with the birth of first, socialist, and then nonaligned modernism as a cultural and artistic phenomenon. Yugoslav audiences were introduced to various forms of international modernism in the 1950s just as the state was initiating its outreach to the West and, more importantly, to countries in Africa, Asia, and South and Central America. By the end of the decade, the state had a change of heart<sup>1</sup> and actively encouraged artists to participate in building socialist culture by adopting formal and conceptual elements of international modernism. The state also incorporated these elements into its new rhetoric of democratic socialist politics. Modernism's entry onto the Yugoslav national cultural stage served as an outward representational mechanism for transferring ideas of universalism, tolerance, and mediation. The adoption of international modernism, and

its adaptation to the Yugoslav context, was directly influenced by already existing modernist proclivities and by important political transformations initiated by the Yugoslav state around this time.

This chapter presents an outline of socialist modernism by examining the interactions between various cultural and sociopolitical forces that allowed its implementation and influenced its formal and conceptual character. Examples of how Yugoslav mainstream artistic institutions and various artistic and cultural players, as well as general audiences, encountered forms of modernism are presented. These examples include large international exhibitions such as Yugoslavia's first post-Second World War appearances at the Venice Biennale, and the first exhibition of American modern art in Yugoslavia in 1956. By linking artistic institutions and their intended audiences within Yugoslavia and internationally to political activism in the form of cultural and economic diplomacy, the chapter traces the ways in which socialist modernism became the official art in Yugoslavia. Or, to put it another way, how art exhibitions, as a form of cultural diplomacy, served as mechanisms in creating and representing what Yugoslav political elites called democratic socialism. More importantly, I emphasize socialist modernism's ascent to official representational language of Yugoslavia's newly minted position between the East and the West; its ascent generated fertile ground for the final transformation of Yugoslav art into nonaligned modernism. Unlike socialist modernism's more reactive character, nonaligned modernism sought to play an active, even transformative role on the international art scene. Its proactive stance reflected the bolder, more ambitious position of the Yugoslav political leadership as it sought to move away from reacting to various international crises and toward playing an active role in shaping international policy – and culture – through the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

## Modernism and Socialist Modernism

Socialist modernism was an alternative form of postwar modernism that developed as a result of Yugoslavia's attempt to be socialist, yet still open

to Western market economies and cultures. Its development, a phase of modernist transformation in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, provided a base from which more idiosyncratic aesthetic forms would develop at the end of the decade and later in the twentieth century. Major characteristics that underpinned Yugoslav socialist modernism were its adoption of aesthetic, formal ideas found in the Western modernist model (abstraction, semi-abstraction, and an emphasis on formal questions) and then its fusing with the socialist political project and its goals. The history of its adoption is intricately connected to the earlier period of socialist realism, the dominant visual expression of the socialist revolution in the tumultuous years immediately after the Second World War. The history of socialist realism's short-lived reign was more complex than usually described in art historical accounts: Yugoslav art had a multifaceted relationship to it, influenced by socialist realism's liveliness and variety, and by the public political and social debates opened by the distancing from the Soviet Union in 1949. The art world was divided between various aesthetic factions: socialist realist supporters, academic traditionalists, advocates of forms of intimist modernism, and those more inclined toward forms of avant-garde aesthetic. These divisions came as a result of the constant negotiation between artistic autonomy and the institutionalized, bureaucratic tendencies of the socialist state, as well as inherited cultural forms and institutional infrastructures. The differences between various camps were, however, more blurred than initially appears, as even the clearer examples of socialist realism exhibited modernist formal tendencies. This hybrid between socialist realism and modernism in Yugoslavia in the 1940s provided a foundation for a relatively smooth transition to socialist modernism of the late 1950s.

Yugoslav mainstream art opened to high modernist influences in the 1950s, incorporating abstract, semi-abstract, and non-representational formal elements and themes.<sup>2</sup> Its move toward modernism was affected by several crucial elements: a large number of artists who voiced their adherence to a modernist aesthetic; the increasingly powerful influence of the United States and the West on Yugoslav politics, economy, and culture; and finally, Yugoslavia's own internal struggles to find an alternative sociopolitical and

cultural identity to that proposed by the Soviet Union. Eventually, under the pressure of these forces, modernism became the officially sanctioned, state-funded form of art. While it developed in its own idiosyncratic way, it retained some of the crucial high modernist qualities that allowed Yugoslavia to carve out a space on the international art scene. The seemingly neutral, autonomous, individualistic character of high modernism appealed to the Yugoslav state because it was embarking on incorporating alternative political ideas into its self-management system and needed an equally open-minded, internationalized art.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the state and the artists continued to take a pragmatic view of both art and politics – artists saw the value in the state's openness to Western and international cultures, and the state recognized the power of cultural diplomacy.

Given the complex sociocultural and political matrix that shaped the character of official Yugoslav socialist modernism, it is important to place it in a clear relationship to other modernist tendencies across the world – the West in particular. The concept of modernism has been the subject of numerous studies and has been theorized in multiple ways. One of its most interesting characteristics was its malleability,<sup>4</sup> which allowed it to penetrate various societies and cultures across the world, creating hybrid forms along the way. Socialist modernism is but one of several such forms that developed both in spite of modernist hegemony and with its help. In its basic definition, however, high modernism can be characterized as a tendency toward universalism, a belief in utopian possibilities, and a striving toward aesthetic formalism.<sup>5</sup> Although these characteristics by no means capture all of the nuances of modernist cultural activity, their pre-eminence is undeniable. As such, these qualities became a major part of the official language of Yugoslav culture.

Institutionalization of art was another major feature of developments in the global spread of modernism.<sup>6</sup> How artists negotiated their place in the modernist ethos largely depended on how they positioned themselves within specific artistic institutions that modernism created. More importantly, each artistic institution was closely dependent on the ways in which nation-states decided to organize artistic life. Although the modernist aesthetic demanded autonomy of the artist, this autonomy

was tested in all versions of modernism across the globe, as individual artists and institutions had to position themselves vis-à-vis their nation-states, the funding these nation-states provided, and the weight that each nation-state placed on its national cultural production. Yugoslavia was no exception, but how these issues were negotiated and the shape they took in Yugoslavia were unique.

By the postwar period modernism's centre had shifted from Europe to the United States, where its radical utopian impulse shifted, at least in its dominant discourses, toward the liberal values of Western capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Despite this dominance, its characteristics were transformed as it spread to the rest of the world, with specific countries adjusting and adopting its general premises in different ways. Modernism's geographical and political intricacies are astounding, and its ability to hybridize, adapt, and transform itself is uncanny. Each one of its versions developed within its own set of aesthetic and political parameters and characteristics, and Yugoslav modernism was an example of one such version.

In the 1950s, international modernism was going through a major transformation brought on by postwar devastation and Cold War tensions. Influenced by Existentialism, some artists on the European continent, for example, Jean Dubuffet and Antoni Tàpies, lost their faith in the culture of modernism and questioned modernist aesthetic premises by turning to non-professional and "outsider art" in order to point to the modernist failures.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, at critical points during and after the war, modernism crossed the Atlantic and became an American cultural export as New York took over as the economic capital of the West and the capital of Western modernism.<sup>9</sup> This move between Europe and the United States was also felt in Yugoslav art, as some artists accepted modernism's North American features, and others its European.

Postwar, or high, modernism, especially in the United States, became increasingly close to liberal politics, which were on the rise in the West.<sup>10</sup> The liberal emphasis on individualism, entrepreneurship, and subjective human agency provided a counterpoint to the totalitarian regimes of the first half of the twentieth century and the subsequent creation of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>11</sup> Some of those in the modernist movement who

were leftist before the war were now, as a reaction to Soviet totalitarian policies, turning to alternative political views, eventually becoming sympathetic to theorizing modernism as an entirely separate sphere from the social. Yugoslav artists who were searching for an alternative to now-rejected socialist realism found themselves in the middle of this postwar transformation of the modernist ethos, exploring what kind of modernism best suited the emerging moderate socialism.

The transformation toward socialist modernism in 1950s Yugoslavia, therefore, took on a specific character, as artists developed hybrid art that expressed a range of forms somewhere between high modernist apolitical tendencies, their commitment to social change, and the exigencies of various socialist cultural ideals. The tension between these forces engendered new aesthetic practices that aimed to speak to the masses while also remaining committed to the autonomy of art. In the process, Yugoslav mainstream art somewhat moved away from earlier discussions based in a more proscriptive relationship of art to life, and art's role in structuring a new socialist state, as art was now given an autonomous and safely separated aesthetic/cultural sphere of action. At the same time, the aesthetic hegemony of the international modernist movement was asserted not only via cultural opening to the West but also by economic and political policies coming from US-backed Western institutions. The Yugoslav government was aware of Western priorities in the Balkans and it slowly forged new relationships with the West, and the US in particular. Yet while it initially negotiated aid packages and loans with the Americans, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, in the mid-1950s, it initiated negotiations with the emerging economies in the far East, the Middle East, and Africa – in keeping with the commitment to anti-imperialism and newly forged nonaligned partnerships. American political influence, however, was undeniable as Yugoslavia struggled with postwar rebuilding. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica summarizes this tension at the heart of the Yugoslav state-building project:

The argument put forward is that the design of the country's international strategy of non-alignment in the Cold War, its open

development model and its decentralized domestic framework, became inextricably linked with its dependency for security and aid on the superpower blocs, especially the United States. Though the party leadership tried to moderate Yugoslavia's dependency by playing off the two blocs against each other after Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, and diversifying its trade arrangements beyond the superpowers themselves, the country's institutional framework became ever more closely tied to the world market dominated by the West.<sup>12</sup>

As with its economy, "the Americanization of modernism"<sup>13</sup> became a pivotal element in the transformation of the Yugoslav art scene. Although it was practically impossible for Yugoslavia to establish an independent aesthetic (independent from mainstream modernist ideas) at this time, given its precarious international geopolitical and cultural standing, its form of modernism nevertheless developed as a hybrid of high modernist forms and utopian socialist politics.

The international forces that propelled Yugoslavia's quick adoption of modernism were equalled by important shifts in the country's internal political and economic structures. In light of its international unaligned standing and interests, and mounting pressures from the international economic order, the state saw institutionalization, and concomitantly bureaucratization, of the self-management model as the only way to stabilize its socialist system within the international geopolitical system.<sup>14</sup> The work on this started in the early 1960s. Since this process was in some ways contrary to the principles of the original version of self-management,<sup>15</sup> the state was compelled to replace deeper economic transformation with a more liberal apparatus that nominally resembled the earlier revolutionary form. In the process, a gap was created between the high-minded theories initially expressed by the Communist Party's intellectual elite and the actualities of everyday life. The state saw the use of a variety of ideological mechanisms imbued with utopian rhetoric as the only way to compel the people to act in the state's interest and thereby close the gap between theory and practice. Around the same time, the



Party announced that it no longer wished to be the vanguard of the people's revolution; its role would now be to guide and instruct the citizenry toward their socialist future.<sup>16</sup> At that point the Party declared itself simply an ideological, if not a spiritual, leader, employing its "soft powers" of persuasion via cultural, artistic, and educational influence rather than through the overt "hard power" of the police state.

In these circumstances, art, along with the mass media and education, became one of the most important ways through which the state protected its national and international interests. Along with the changes of the state apparatus, cultural institutions were made more complex by the creation of numerous committees, policies, and cultural bodies that regulated the implementation and functioning of cultural processes. Cultural institutions were seen as repositories of the nation's socialist agenda and therefore afforded full state sponsorship. The adoption of socialist modernism as the official visual expression of the state was an important step in its move toward creating socialism with a more human face and guiding, rather than leading, social transformation. In short, the country's attempt to carve out its own socialist path, become an active member of the international community, and participate in the forming of the Non-Aligned Movement constituted the political reasons for the support of socialist modernism.<sup>17</sup>

The character of Yugoslavia's socialist modernism was therefore shaped by its relationship to the Yugoslav state and its institutions, as well as external cultural and political forces. There were two types of socialism at work in Yugoslavia that paralleled the two types of modernism that would develop. One type was the revolutionary socialism related to the prewar and wartime communist struggle, still a part of the official national rhetoric, and the other was the bureaucratic, state socialism that developed later as a consequence of changes in socialist ideals necessitated by changes in global economic and political relations. Revolutionary socialism was in many ways utopian and idealistic. Echoes of it were embedded in the Party's attempts, beginning in the early 1950s, to restructure Yugoslavia via the theory of self-management. Paradoxically, as it initiated this process, the Communist Party leadership

stopped short of full implementation.<sup>18</sup> The second type of socialism resulted from the aborted attempt at reform. The resulting system was a form of state socialism, or bureaucratic socialism, which depended on massive state apparatuses initiated and organized as a way of protecting the interests of the Party and the state instead of the interests of the people.<sup>19</sup> State socialism was at odds with the ideals of its revolutionary counterpart, although the latter was supposedly the type of socialism that the Yugoslavian state officially endorsed. Milovan Djilas, one of the top party leaders (and the most famous Yugoslav dissident), qualified state socialism as the reign of a “new class” of socialist managers and elites.<sup>20</sup> In a series of articles in the late 1950s, Djilas criticized Yugoslav socialism as a new form of class society, run by the socialist bourgeoisie, that furthered inequality and alienation. His words went unheeded and full reform was never fully implemented.

The result was an intricate bureaucratic apparatus and forms of proletarian morality based on a mixture of the remnants of petit bourgeois morals and socialist ideology. The official form of socialist modernism replicated some of these social forms. It was manifested through the publicly endorsed art that supported state ideologies of nation-building, national history, and memory. The works that were favoured celebrated events from the Second World War, referred to brotherhood and unity, and presented expressive, symbolic, emotional content. Their formal aspects were based on semi-abstract still lifes, landscapes, and stylized human forms as artists were now freely engaging in formal experimentation and continued to be expressive in the use of the materials.

The tension between an increasing interest in modernism among Yugoslav artists and the exigencies of socialism, Yugoslav state politics, and its international relations resulted in a style that was committed both to the modernist aesthetic and to the state’s ideological needs. These two forces – one calling for autonomous, self-contained art as found in high modernism, and the other for a politicized culture – were seemingly at odds. Yugoslavia’s version of socialist modernism was steeped in political discourse, but not in the same activist sense as the early twentieth-century avant-gardes, as for example, the Russian Constructivists. Socialist

modernism became distanced from the political, but in its emphasis on the form and the themes preferred by the state, it spoke more emphatically to the liberal politics of late modernity. This was the paradox of socialist modernism: the more it retreated into its own autonomous sphere, the better it served official state politics. This type of indirect political subtext was present not only in the works themselves but also in the discourses of art education, exhibiting, collecting, and in the functioning of other artistic and cultural institutions. The resulting complex Yugoslav cultural structures were bureaucratic and hierarchical, and concomitantly, forward looking and utopian.

Sveta Lukić qualified official socialist modernism as “socialist aestheticism”<sup>21</sup> or a marriage of convenience between art and the political establishment.

The fact that freedom of artistic expression affirmed the right to individual expression matched well with the concepts of particular political structures that aimed to remove one’s own responsibility for the development of art; for artists who were burnt out by socialist realism, it meant that they could distance their work from the social problems and realities of life. The politicized and vain society of the 1960s preferred art that did not disturb, or ask puzzling or “problematic” questions. Aestheticism aimed at discussion of formal laws and pictorial problems was modern enough to appease the general Yugoslav complex of being “open to the west,” traditional enough to satisfy bourgeois tastes developed in the general atmosphere of social conformity, and inert enough to fit into the myth of a happy and unified social whole – in short, it had all the elements to conform to the politically constructed image of the society.<sup>22</sup>

The integration of an apolitical, autonomous art with the ideological demands of the state was achieved through works that were, for the most part, abstract or semi-abstract. This made them vague enough to subsume both the Party’s official agenda and modernist formal autonomy.

The large public memorial sites built across the country are examples. Echoing Lukić's words, art critic Lazar Trifunović described socialist modernism or, as he termed it, aestheticism, as art that did not pose difficult questions, or disturb the cultural, social, or political life of its time.<sup>23</sup> He singled out in this context the December Group and similar movements, which in the 1950s and 1960s dominated the artistic scene in Belgrade and elsewhere in Yugoslavia. It would be wrong, however, to claim that socialist modernism was a unified movement; rather, as Ješa Denegri and Trifunović pointed out, it represented a number of different styles and artistic groups that coexisted throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and later.<sup>24</sup> The works produced in this style could be easily molded to fit any number of meanings. In the end, however, even though there was a general inclination toward formalism, various artists stayed true to the idealist politics of socialism.

Ješa Denegri makes a convincing argument that Yugoslav socialist modernism's retreat into a form of aestheticist<sup>25</sup> art was a symptom of a burgeoning bourgeois culture,<sup>26</sup> or what Milovan Djilas called the "new class," that became the audience for the nascent socialist modernist aesthetic. The departure from earlier forms of art had a particular formal, and subsequently, social character.<sup>27</sup> Denegri also underlines the importance of this artistic expression for the larger state ideology because it was removed from the everyday, or from the praxis of life. Arguably, this meant that socialist modernism was not attempting to address the needs and wants of the people in the way that art in the immediate postwar period had tried to do; it was there, in part, to support the socialist state apparatus.

An aestheticist, apolitical stance, preoccupation with the pictorial and material aspects of art, and with formal questions in general, suited artists who wanted to avoid the scrutiny of political cadres. The new socialist elites were satisfied with this type of art and fully supported it. As one of the pre-eminent Yugoslav modernist architects, Bogdan Bogdanović, explained, President Tito and the Communist Party's attitude toward modernism and abstraction was liberal: "Tito, in all truth, did not have much artistic discernment. But he understood that my monuments were not Russian monuments (at the time, unfortunately, all the best sculptors

had adopted the Russian formula: headless bodies, wounded figures, stretchers ... ) When he saw me, a bizarre man with a surrealist biography, ready to build him constructions that weren't Russian, he said, 'Let him!'"<sup>28</sup> The state needed to present its liberal policies of negotiation with the world powers and openness toward Western-style democracy.<sup>29</sup> As long as artists contributed to these general prescripts without too much political interference, the state did not much care about how they went about doing so. On the other hand, socialist modernism was a transitional phase in the development of Yugoslav postwar art. It developed at the time of Yugoslavia's second moment of crisis, the break from Stalin (the first being the Second World War and its immediate aftermath), and with its somewhat bland and perhaps apolitical overtones, served as a pragmatic strategy of survival as the country became economically, politically, and culturally isolated from the rest of the world. The formal exigencies of modernism in Yugoslavia, therefore, followed closely the country's political moves and responded to the crisis in a constructive way.

One of the major ways in which Yugoslav liberalization became evident was through forms of cultural exchange and diplomacy.<sup>30</sup> The 1950s were a time of vigorous cultural activity despite the fact that the country was still in the midst of reconstruction and suffering severe material shortages. International modernism was showcased through a number of large international exhibitions<sup>31</sup> including the *Exhibition of Contemporary French Art*, Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Skopje (1952)<sup>32</sup>; *Le Corbusier*, Belgrade (1953); *Dutch Painting: A Selection of Works*, Zagreb, Belgrade, Skopje (1953); *Henry Moore: Sculpture and Drawings*, Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana (1955); *American Contemporary Prints*, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Skopje (1956); *Contemporary American Art*, Belgrade (1956); and also through the presence of many international artists at the Ljubljana Biennale from 1955 onward. Apart from such international, national, and local exhibitions, there were also exhibitions of Yugoslav art abroad. A brief look at an abbreviated list of exhibitions between 1950 and 1960 demonstrates how much the state invested in promotion of Yugoslav contemporary and historical art. These exhibitions included *Exhibition of Yugoslav Medieval Art*, Paris (1950);

*Painting and Sculpture in Yugoslavia in XIX and XX Century*, Moscow (1947); *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture*, London (1952); *International Painting Exhibition*, Kampur (1952); *VII Salon des réalités nouvelles*, Paris (1952); *Modern Yugoslav Painting*, Manchester travelling exhibition, New Port, Edinburgh, Coventry (1956); *III Biennale*, Tokyo and Osaka (1955); *Frühjahrsausstellung 1956 Mit Soncerschau Jugoslawischer Graphik und Gedachtnisschau*, Kunsthalle, Vienna (1956); *Grabados Yugoslavos Contemporaneos*, Mexico City (1957); *50 ans d'art moderne*, Brussels (1958); *Guggenheim International Award*, New York (1958); *New Painting from Yugoslavia*, travelling exhibition, across the US (1959–962); *documenta I and II*, Kassel (1955, 1959); continuous presence at the Venice Biennale, Biennale of Sao Paolo, and other annual and biannual international shows; and finally, a number of solo or smaller group exhibitions by Yugoslav artists.

Yugoslav cultural and political leadership understood that culture was a necessary tool in first informing others about Yugoslavia, and then in promoting the country's changing political attitudes (especially its move away from the Soviet model toward one of measured and peaceful coexistence). Yugoslav cultural liberalization, reflected in its espousal of Western cultural values and acceptance of the modernist ethos, was more formally articulated after 1953,<sup>33</sup> when the government formed the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries – a Yugoslav equivalent to the United States Information Service (USIS), British Council, Alliance française, and other similar governmental organizations. The commission was the culmination of ongoing postwar efforts to re-engage with the world.<sup>34</sup> For example, as early as 1944 the American Office of War Information started its operations in Yugoslavia with the arrival of the US Military Mission in Belgrade.<sup>35</sup> The British Council reopened its offices in June 1945 in Belgrade, and the French Reading Room (the precursor to Alliance française) opened in May 1945, also in Belgrade. From 1944, and especially after 1953, until the breakup of the country in the 1990s, the exchange between Yugoslavia and numerous other countries was vigorous, with Yugoslavia opening its cultural information offices in New York, Paris, Cairo, New Delhi, and London, and exchanging art,

books, films, and music recordings. Its international partners sent academics, diplomats, and journalists to Yugoslavia for conferences, study, and university exchanges.<sup>36</sup> Some of the first cultural agreements between Yugoslav government bodies and other countries, including, among others, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, India, Ethiopia, Uganda, and France, were negotiated in these early postwar years, clearly marking the need to negotiate peaceful coexistence with all international players.<sup>37</sup>

Cultural exchange, especially with the West and the US, however, was not without its tensions. The American government clearly wanted to use Yugoslavia to promote its values, while the Yugoslav side, fully aware of the American intentions, used their exchange to show that it was willing to open itself to the world. Consequently, Yugoslav officials were always on guard not just with the Americans, but also with other Western representatives. In one report, the work of USIS was described as an “American propaganda machine” that, according to the unnamed author, changed its tactics from an open attack on communist ideas to a more nuanced approach of sharing American values via newspaper articles, books, radio shows, TV shows, and exhibitions that promoted American lifestyle, democracy, freedom, etc.<sup>38</sup> The document in fact shows that even though the Yugoslav side was well aware of the information and propaganda work of other countries, it needed to “play along” since the country’s openness was a way to ensure its alliances beyond the Soviet Union. Thus, as early as 1950, the Yugoslav government started using cultural diplomacy to shape how Yugoslavia was to be perceived by the international community both in order to be reaccepted into the international fold, and also to ensure procurement of badly needed loans and economic exchange.<sup>39</sup>

Socialist modernism therefore represented a mixture of political and ideological vectors paralleling the country’s ever-greater opening to the West and development of nonaligned policies. The history of select international art events in the 1950s clearly showcases these socialist modernist representational mechanisms. Yugoslav participation at the Venice Biennale in the 1950s exemplifies how socialist modernism offered a useful way to negotiate the country’s unaligned position (which at the time

was still in flux). Similarly, an analysis of the 1956 MOMA exhibition of American art in Belgrade reveals the intricate negotiations between the American and Yugoslav sides to bring the exhibit to the country, shedding some light on its reception in Yugoslavia where vestiges of hardline rhetoric were still present, and yet movement toward the modernist ethos was gaining ground. The analysis of Venice Biennale participation and the MOMA exhibition also traces the Yugoslav search for a proper aesthetic and political language, highlighting some of the socialist modernist features. The arrival of MOMA's exhibition in 1956 pointed to the increasing importance of US policy for Yugoslavia's economic and political survival in the early 1950s, and its role in Cold War politics.

## Yugoslavs at the Venice Biennale

After the war, with a couple of exceptions (in 1948 and 1974), socialist Yugoslavia had an ongoing presence at the Venice Biennale.<sup>40</sup> The biennale has great significance as a representational form, not just in terms of its role in presenting what is current in the international art world, but more so in the political sense. As Frederica and Vittoria Martini stress in their assessment of biennale cultures, their structure is based in particular notions of nationalism and national representation that are closely tied to occupation of space, and “occupation of space based on these narrations establishes a place ripe with subjectivity of power dynamics.”<sup>41</sup> Nancy Jachec similarly argues that the Venice Biennale between 1948 and 1964 was a highly politicized artistic event. She not only examines the polemics around abstraction and realism but also the relevance of political power as it presented itself through aesthetic means. In other words, the artworks exhibited became the de facto symbols of each country's ability to “fit” into a postwar global narrative (with abstraction representing the threshold of that which was the most progressive).<sup>42</sup> Thus, to represent one's nation at the biennale also means to enter particular political and national power dynamics that have repercussions in global geopolitical relations. The Venice Biennale's political power was not lost on the

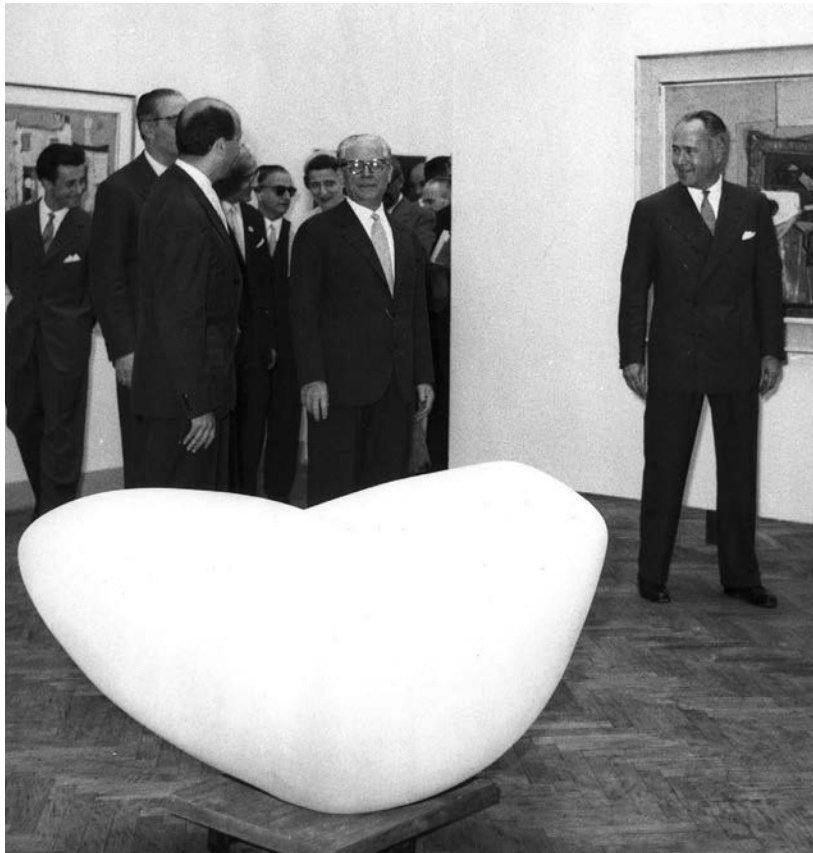




2.1 Aleksa Čelebonović (first row on the left), commissioner of the Yugoslav Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, welcoming Italian prime minister Giovanni Gronchi (first row middle), and Darko Černej, Yugoslav ambassador to Rome (first row right) to the Yugoslav Pavilion for the opening of the Twenty-Eighth Venice Biennale, 19 July 1956

Yugoslav cultural leadership as they diligently worked to make sure that Yugoslavia was properly represented. In his report to the Yugoslav Federal Advising Committee for Culture and Science, Petar Šegedin (Yugoslav commissioner for the 1950 biennale) stressed the importance of presenting the *right* image of Yugoslavia to the world.

We have exhibited the sculptures as if we were presenting them to our domestic audiences, to people who are somewhat familiar with our art, and who are willing to give time and effort to read all the details, without realizing that our pavilion is probably a thirtieth part of a large exhibition ... The overall impression that so-called experts had of our exhibition can be summed up with my own neologism: academic-naturalism. This, in the first



2.2 Aleksa Čelebonović (first row on the left), commissioner of the Yugoslav Pavilion, giving a tour to the Italian prime minister Giovanni Gronchi (first row middle) and Darko Černej, Yugoslav ambassador to Rome (first row right), of the Yugoslav Pavilion for the opening of the Twenty-Eighth Venice Biennale, 19 July 1956

place, means that our endeavours in the field of visual arts are so subordinated to the object that they only operate in the field of naturalism with a propensity for “political” overtones on the one hand and a certain idealization on the other.<sup>43</sup>

Šegedin’s mixed analysis echoes similar complaints from diplomats, international negotiators, and representatives, that Yugoslavia was

fighting an uphill battle in its attempts to change perceptions of being a Balkan backwater. The sometimes disorganized and confusing curation of the exhibit also did not help, as many Yugoslav diplomatic representatives lamented. A few months later, in December 1950, in a letter addressed to the same federal advising committee, Šegedin described his meeting with a group of artists and cultural workers from Milan who were supposed to help Yugoslav cultural officials establish closer links with the contemporary artistic scene in Italy. The meeting was a direct result of Yugoslav participation at the biennale. Šegedin observed that the people he met were “citizens who came to our country either for a free trip, or out of curiosity, and ... who see us as a rather wild and dangerous country, but which could be used for some sort of business in one way or another.”<sup>44</sup> He concluded that Yugoslavia needed to attract the right kind of people. The Yugoslav side was also to blame for some of the tensions in diplomatic relations, especially in the early years after the Second World War when Yugoslav officials held generally negative and suspicious views of the West.<sup>45</sup> However, in general, the Venice Biennale was looked upon as a way to present a new image of Yugoslavia, and therefore selection of artists, exhibition installation, and contextualization of Yugoslav art became primary concerns that would slowly evolve over the coming decade.

Yugoslav artists did not participate in the first postwar biennale in 1948. According to Miljan Milkić this was a direct result of the still prevalent Soviet-style policies and direct influence of the Soviet Union on the decisions of the Yugoslav diplomats. Even though the Italian side offered to help with transportation and restoration of the Yugoslav Pavilion, in the end, “Foreign Affairs Minister Simić informed on 4 May 1948 the Legation in Rome that Yugoslavia would not participate in the 14th International Exhibition of Fine Arts in Venice. The official explanation was that Yugoslav representatives were prevented from participating due to technical reasons.”<sup>46</sup> As early as 1950, the attitude of the Yugoslav side was markedly different. The biennale commissioner Petar Šegedin describes the high stakes and the choices the Yugoslav side was making:

In order to truthfully and precisely evaluate our participation at the Biennale in Venice, it is important to keep in mind the following question: what did we want to accomplish with our participation? No matter how much this question might seem superfluous, or rather, already resolved, it seems to me that asking and answering it will help with realizing important facts. If we went to Venice to confront and oppose all the aesthetic tendencies abundant in contemporary Western art, then things appear in one way; however, if we went to Venice to find understanding, then they appear in a different way. I write this report believing that we wanted to go to Venice to showcase our own artistic efforts in order to find understanding not only with the audiences who judge solely by content and theme but also with those who judge visual expression.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, after the first postwar biennale, Yugoslav participation was guided more directly by Šegedin's call for representing and finding understanding with the West than by confronting it, as was the case in 1948.

Šegedin, however, also noted a certain unevenness of artistic work and inadequate support for logistics, shipping, installing, and contextualizing the exhibition. This was an ongoing theme with Yugoslav participation at the biennale. From the archival records, however, proper contextualization of the art seemed to be the principal problem. In other words, Yugoslav art always needed more context in order to be properly understood than the biennale catalogues allowed. Želimir Košćević observed that many of the Yugoslav commissioners over the years tended to stay conventional in order to fit the biennale's strict cataloguing and representational formats. "This conventional way of interpreting Yugoslav art was not in any way different from all the others in the collective catalogue," and therefore they accepted the fact that what was important was participation, rather than sociopolitical context.<sup>48</sup> These structural issues were amplified by the initial cacophony of styles chosen as representative of the country's official art. The first three biennales (1950–54) were characterized by a combination of socialist realism

and some forms of modernist/intimist styles. In fact, some of the early curatorial choices reflected a more general fluctuation and change in Yugoslav art of the time, as well as the confusion of the artists, critics, and curators over socialist realism. Thus, at the 1950 Venice Biennale Yugoslav organizers offered a selection of socialist realist paintings (by artists such as Boža Ilić, Antun Augustinčić, and Ismet Mujezinović) on the one hand, and on the other, artist Vojin Bakić, Petar Lubarda, and Gajimir Kos, who were modernist. Overall, the 1950 exhibition was a mixed bag, and the Yugoslav pavilion did not get much press coverage or publicity, as commissioner Šegedin lamented.<sup>49</sup>

Yugoslav art at the biennale in 1952 represented a more open move toward modernism. The Yugoslav commissioner at the Twenty-Sixth Venice Biennale was painter Marino Tartaglia – a prewar artist influenced by post-impressionist, expressionist, and futurist tendencies, which he took into his work in the postwar period. Tartaglia's curation was in some ways bold. He chose artists who were controversial, such as Croatian artist Antun Motika whose exhibition in Zagreb earlier that year became a focus of a raucous public debate between socialist realist and modernist critics. Others chosen were Tartaglia's friends or colleagues, who represented more intimate, obtuse, formal, and thematic currents in the art of the early 1950s. Gabrijel Stupica was in the midst of a major formal shift, which led him from representational toward what would become his signature semi-abstract style. This was also the case with others, such as Pedja Milosavljević and Risto Stijović. One of Pedja Milosavljević's canvases, *Earthquake in Dubrovnik* (figure 2.4), is an example of the emerging socialist modernist style. It depicts the aftermath of an earthquake in the coastal city of Dubrovnik. He concentrated on the city's landscape with two human figures in the forefront. The two people and the city are distorted, painted in expressive, impasto brushstrokes, with figures and the background dissolving into one other. The human flesh and the destroyed city landscape are equally unstable, as the painter formally treated them in the same manner. Such emotionally charged work, with no apparent political message, would not have been publically exhibited in the immediate postwar period dominated



2.3 Gojimir A. Kos, *Still Life with a Boy*, oil on canvas, 1948. Exhibited at the Twenty-Fifth Venice Biennale, 1950

by socialist realism. Now, however, Milosavljević's canvas was front and centre as a prime example of Yugoslavia's entry into the postwar modernist scene. *Dubrovnik* represented the overall feeling of the exhibition, which was one of transition and introspection.

The Yugoslav press and critics noted the trend toward modernism and shifted toward moderate acceptance of new formal and thematic trends. Even Grga Gamulin, who earlier that year attacked Antun Motika's work for its decadent characteristics, reviewed the biennale with a sympathetic eye. Praising Stupica's and Emanuel Vidović's work, Gamulin noted that, "based on unity of style and atmosphere, and on overall quality (except sculpture), our pavilion was a unified whole and without a doubt one of the best at the Biennale."<sup>50</sup> In one of his reports from the biennale, Radoslav Putar highlighted several key selections, one of which was the retrospective of De Stijl. His review focused on De Stijl's role in building



2.4 Pedja Milosavljević, *Earthquake in Dubrovnik*, oil on canvas, 1951. Exhibited at the Twenty-Sixth Venice Biennale, 1952

modern art, qualifying the De Stijl exhibition as representative of the dominance of the “rational” as the key identifying feature in art of that time.<sup>51</sup> The arrival of the industrial, geometric, and rational in modern art is also felt in Kosta Angeli Radovani’s discussion of the two main contenders for the grand biennale prize: Marino Marini and Alexander Calder.<sup>52</sup> His analysis echoed more general feelings in Yugoslavia, and perhaps elsewhere in Europe, that the Americans were gaining ground with their new and bold approaches to art. In 1954, curation of artists such as Martin Sedej, with his more expressionistic, bolder woodcut *Melancholy* (figure 2.5), shows a move toward these larger trends. The coming of abstraction and late modernist tendencies with the work of artists such as Calder was telling of a more radical shift in Yugoslav art and culture, one that represented a further move away from the socialist realist doctrine and opened a door for what would happen in 1956 and 1958 when those awkward, transitional tendencies became obsolete.

The key moment that signalled Yugoslavia’s complete turn toward socialist modernism, and toward a new chapter in the country’s international policy, was the participation in the Twenty-Eighth Biennale (1956)





2.5 Maksim Sedej, *Melancholia*, woodcut, 1953. Exhibited at the Twenty-Seventh Venice Biennale, 1954

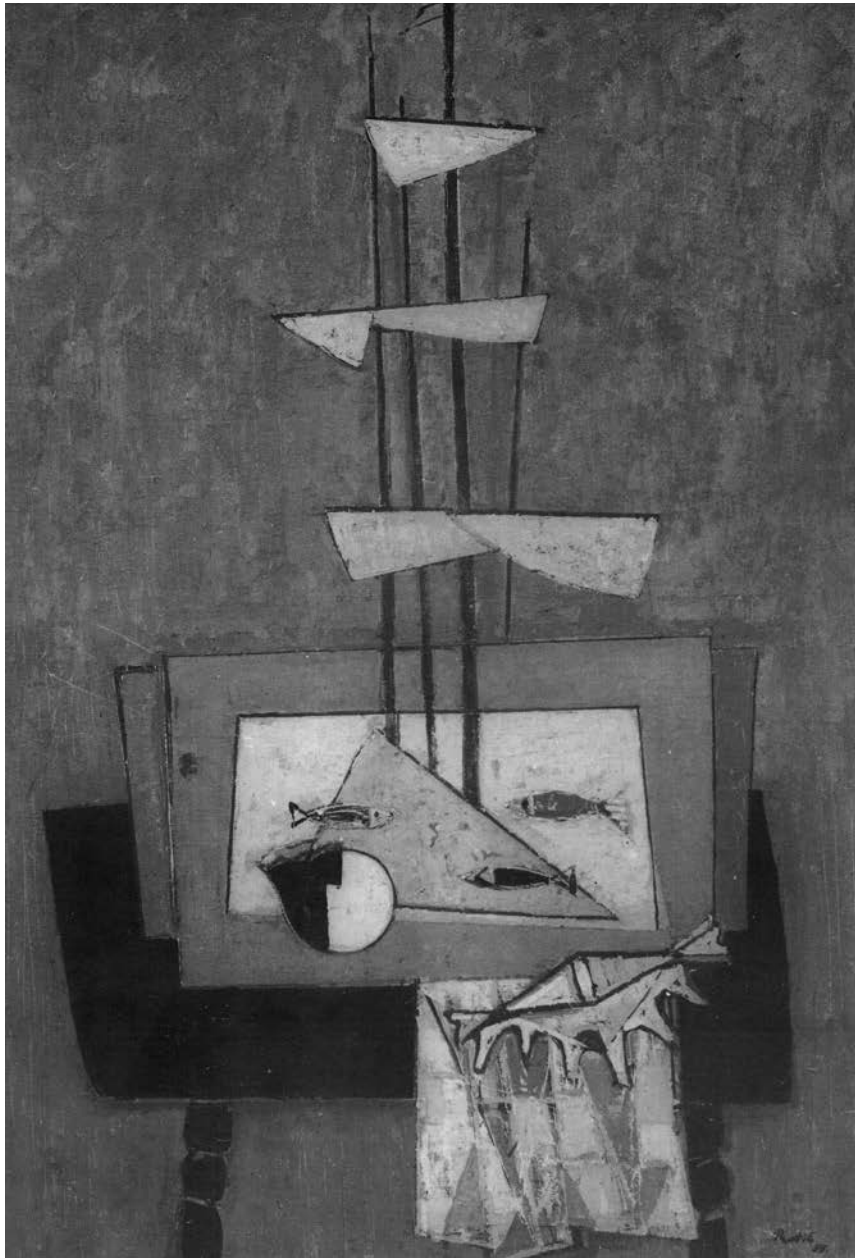
and Twenty-Ninth Biennale (1958). The commissioner for these two biennales was Aleksa Čelebonović, a representative of the younger, aesthetically and ideologically more liberal current in Yugoslav art. He was involved with several modernist art groups, a critic with ties to journals such as *Delo* that advocated a clear break with socialist realism, and very





2.6 Gabrijel Stupica, *Flora*, tempera and oil on canvas, 1958. Exhibited at the Twenty-Ninth Venice Biennale, 1958

much in favour of autonomy of art and abstract/modernist tendencies.<sup>53</sup> His curatorial choices clearly broke from the transitional works of the early 1950s and exemplified the more typically abstract work of Miodrag Protić, Vojin Bakić, Lazar Vujaklija, Olga Jevrić, Edo Murtić, and others. With the exception of Krsto Hegedušić, who was about a decade and a half older, all the artists belonged to a mid-career generation and embraced Yugoslavia's separation from Soviet doctrine. The works were in line with contemporary movements such as Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism. Their transition toward modernism was recognized when Miodrag Protić won the UNESCO prize at the 1956 Biennale.<sup>54</sup> The international press took note of the change in Yugoslav art, with *Arts Magazine* featuring several Yugoslav artists in their reviews in 1958. Domestic press coverage and reviews grew exponentially as well. For example, in 1948 only Grga Gamulin wrote a review for the journal *Umetnost* published by the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists. In other words, what happened at the biennale was at that time only of interest to fine arts professionals



2.7 Miodrag B. Protić, *Composition I*, oil on canvas, 1955. Exhibited at the Twenty-Eighth Venice Biennale, 1956

and a small circle of policymakers. The following biennale in 1950 had only four reviews, while those in 1952 and 1954 numbered around fifteen, with a few daily newspapers publishing shorter observations of what had transpired during the exhibition. The trend changed sharply in 1956, as all the major dailies covered the exhibition, sometimes in a serialized format. Both art critics and journalists were assessing what went on with Yugoslav artists. Considerable emphasis was placed on the way that the international press perceived Yugoslav art, as at least five dailies quoted foreign press descriptions of particular Yugoslav artists. Discussions revolving around international art and modernism were now a normal occurrence, and modernist-leaning critics were no longer shy about expressing support for abstraction. By the end of the decade, even the staunchest ideologues, such as Grga Gamulin, had toned down their language, modifying it to fit the narratives closer to the major international artistic trends. It became clear to all those in the mainstream Yugoslav art scene (artists, critics, state officials, and politicians) that the language of socialist modernism and its perceived openness and universality were better suited to Yugoslavia's need to become fully integrated into international geopolitical networks.

### 1956: MOMA Comes to Yugoslavia

While the Venice Biennale served as a gauge of the shift in perceptions within the Yugoslav art world toward international trends, large visiting exhibitions coming to Yugoslavia were a gauge of how this art was perceived domestically, inevitably changing the Yugoslav art scene. *Modern Art in the United States (Modern Art)* opened in Belgrade on 6 July 1956. The exhibition was organized by MOMA's International Program of Circulating Exhibitions, a department formed only a few years prior to promote American contemporary art (abstract modernism in particular) both domestically and internationally.<sup>55</sup> The show travelled across Europe, with its last scheduled stop in Vienna. Things changed, however, when an American embassy official in Belgrade contacted Porter McCray,



2.8 Exterior view of Kalemegdan Pavilion, venue for the exhibition *Modern Art in the United States: Selections from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6 July–6 August 1956

MOMA's International Program director, requesting that the show be brought to Yugoslavia. In the following weeks and months both Yugoslav and American organizers worked feverishly to bring "Modern Art" to Belgrade. They succeeded. Still, their way was strewn with obstacles as they encountered opposition in both the United States and Yugoslavia to the art exhibited in the show, and the ideas it represented.

Recently, a few art historians have examined the significance of the exhibition for the development of Yugoslav socialist modernism. Ješa Denegri has argued that the show had a great influence on local artists by exposing them to a world of new artistic possibilities.<sup>56</sup> The show was indeed significant to contemporary Yugoslav artists; however, they were already well aware of contemporary modernism since by this time they were formally and informally participating in various forms of international cooperation through education, travel abroad, exhibitions,

symposia, and international literature. Apart from this, several important international exhibitions of contemporary art had already taken place in Yugoslavia in the early 1950s, as noted earlier in this chapter.<sup>57</sup> While *Modern Art* would have offered another opportunity for the artists to see modernist tendencies, the strongest impact of the show was in educating the nearly 25,000 people who visited it – the general public, and in particular, the socialist political cadres who were important for the support and institutionalization of international modernism as an official socialist art. The show's real impact thus lay in officially “breaking the ice” between Yugoslavia and American modernism and opening the door to a flood of other American exhibits.

The story of how *Modern Art in the United States* came to Yugoslavia is therefore a testament to the complex relationship between modernism and Cold War politics in both the United States and Yugoslavia. The show was organized in 1955 under the auspices of MOMA's International Program, directed by Porter McCray, and MOMA's director René d' Harnoncourt, and was curated by several of MOMA's curators, including Dorothy C. Miller, Holger Cahill, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Arthur Drexler. The inaugural exhibition took place in Paris in 1955. While MOMA's intention with this ambitious project (more than five hundred works exhibited in Paris, and three hundred in other European cities) was to promote American postwar modernist art, it also hoped to educate Americans themselves about modernism. In 1956, the United States was at the height of the McCarthy era, and there was a great deal of mistrust of modernism, which was considered communist propaganda at best and an evil conspiracy at worst.<sup>58</sup> Congressman George Dondero's diatribe against abstract art in 1949 encapsulates this antagonistic spirit: “All modern art is Communistic! Cubism aims to destroy by designed disorder. Futurism aims to destroy by the machine myth ... Dadaism aims to destroy by ridicule. Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane. Abstractionism aims to destroy by the denial of reason.”<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, American intellectual elites supported modernism and realized that American modernism was indeed the epitome of the new American nationalism, ready to be used as a tool in combating

communism.<sup>60</sup> Controversy was rife. Porter McCray writes about an episode in the late 1940s when the State Department attempted to build a collection of contemporary American art for cultural promotion. The collection was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and was subsequently labelled communist, creating an unprecedented public outcry against modernism.<sup>61</sup> In 1952 this scandal, and more broadly antimodernist public sentiment, prompted Alfred Barr to write his now famous text defending modernism and its links to American culture.<sup>62</sup> George Kennan's 1955 speech to the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art carried a similar sentiment as he championed modern culture as a way to combat Soviet propaganda. Paradoxically, while modernist art was collected, exhibited, and promoted by the public and cultural institutions, it was at the same time criticized and rejected by various state apparatuses. Indeed, this paradox reverberates in both the United States and Yugoslavia as each country struggled to find the right balance between nationalism and art in the post-Second World War era.

Amid such apprehension about modernism in the 1950s, MOMA took it up upon itself to serve as an international arbiter of American art through education, collection, and curation. Its International Program was established specifically for this purpose. Funded by the Rockefeller brothers, the program organized a number of touring international shows of which *Modern Art in the United States* was the largest in scope and publicity. Interestingly, once *Modern Art* was organized, there was plenty of support for it in the State Department and through USIS offices across Europe. As Greg Barnhisel points out, "in a government as complex as that of the United States, numerous overlapping offices and agencies and officials collaborate or even work at cross-purposes to achieve the same aims ... what this means is that there is no government per se."<sup>63</sup> Consequently, the many diverse arms of the government could not keep track of all the cultural events; thus, in the end, those in the State Department who were supportive of and sensitive to the significance of modernist art prevailed. The show may have also been palatable to the more conservative American officials because, apart



from the abstract works, it contained a large number of works by early twentieth-century realists such as Peter Blume, Charles Burchfield, Ben Shahn, and John Kane. The curators attempted to mediate and balance the didactic nature of the show with its ambition to popularize and promote new American modernism.<sup>64</sup>

Intriguingly, similar tensions existed in Yugoslavia; as already pointed out, suspicious attitudes toward modernism were politically motivated, since modernism was often branded as a form of capitalist propaganda and a conspiracy of Western consumerist culture. While there were many artists, curators, and art historians who supported modernist art, there was still some opposition to it in the ranks of more conservative artists and critics, and among politicians. This opposition slowly subsided after 1949 and Yugoslavia's break with Stalin. In the early 1950s, in a series of public declarations, well-known intellectuals and artists, such as Edvard Kardelj, Rudi Supek, Dimitrije Bašicević, and especially Miroslav Krleža, rejected socialist realism and Soviet culture and politics in general.<sup>65</sup> Yet, as with other European countries, there was a residual fear of "americanization" of the Yugoslav cultural space. This fear was demonstrated by unease over showcasing Western capitalist culture, compounded by some misunderstanding of America as a result of Yugoslavia's historical exposure to the European cultural milieu. Some of the apprehension can be felt in the disapproval that greeted the initial USIS request to bring the exhibition to Belgrade. That disapproval is symbolic of the lack of trust toward American culture, which was the very reason for promoting American art abroad.

### *Travelling to Yugoslavia*

According to Porter McCray, Yugoslavia was not on MOMA's radar when it planned to tour *Modern Art*. In fact, it was only when the show came to Vienna, the intended last stop, that someone in the USIS office of the American embassy in Belgrade contacted McCray to ask if the show could be brought to Yugoslavia. Although McCray never named the embassy official, it was most likely Joseph C. Kolarek, who was, with the

Public Affairs Office, involved in organizing a number of American cultural events, such as bringing the jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie to Belgrade in 1955.<sup>66</sup> When he first approached Yugoslav officials about the idea for the show, Ivan Frol responded, “the exhibition is out of the question, not only because of the space, but also because we cannot work in this way.”<sup>67</sup> He added at the end, “this will be some sort of an American tutti-frutti.”<sup>68</sup> Frol’s quick dismissal can be read as both alluding to a lack of cultural history in the United States (because of which the show was understood as a mish-mash of everything,) and as a fear of americanization. It did not, however, stop Kolarek, and an official letter of invitation was sent directly to the head of the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations, Marko Ristić.<sup>69</sup> Ristić immediately accepted the offer, as did others who worked as consultants at the committee (for example, painter Đorđe Popović). Popović even noted in one of his letters that the MOMA exhibition would be a good “counterpoint to the invasion from the East,” referring to the art from the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup> Officials such as Ristić and Popović represented a new current in official policy; although they were unquestionably part of the official communist apparatus, they were also very much aware of international tendencies. Many of them were pre-Second World War artists educated abroad. Ristić was also a seasoned diplomat who understood the importance of opening Yugoslavia to international relations, especially at a time when Yugoslav officials were working on raising the country’s international profile. These new cadres were sensitive to the ways in which the Western world perceived Yugoslavia and its peoples. Ristić, in particular, understood that Yugoslavia was often misrepresented as a European backwater, and on several occasions called for correcting international perceptions of the region by showcasing new Yugoslav art. He argued that Yugoslav cultural policy should be geared toward correcting “the old-fashioned and one-sided picture, which is even a little offensive for us, that the world often has of us as a picturesque and primitive country in which folklore is the highest artistic goal.”<sup>71</sup> Ristić’s observation echoes that of Kennan who, a few years prior, lamented to MOMA’s International Council that perceptions of America were skewed. Clearly, both sides



felt that cultural misrepresentation was a major obstacle to international political success. Kennan's speech encouraged MOMA's future international curatorial work,<sup>72</sup> while Ristic's was instrumental in establishing the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations (in itself an important marker of Yugoslavia's changing relationship to the West) and ultimately for expediting the process that brought *Modern Art* to Belgrade. Indeed, the committee pushed through its decision in twenty-four hours, and in May 1956 Belgrade officially became the last scheduled stop for *Modern Art*.<sup>73</sup>

With over three hundred works from MOMA's collection, and a few privately owned pieces, representing 158 artists, *Modern Art* proved to be the largest public cultural event in Yugoslavia that year; MOMA's first press release announcing the Belgrade opening described the show's size and place in modern art, and acknowledged the help they received from the American Embassy in Belgrade. The amount of work to be displayed was too large for any one gallery, so the show had to be separated into three spaces: Kalemegdan Pavilion (Cvijeta Zuzorić Pavilion), ULUS (Association of Serbian Fine Artists) Gallery, and the Fresco Gallery.<sup>74</sup> About 124 paintings and sculptures were placed in the Kalemegdan Pavilion, prints and photographs were installed in the ULUS Gallery, and architecture in the Fresco Gallery. The installation of the show, especially painting and sculpture, proved to be difficult. The Yugoslav side paid for part of the installation costs.

Porter McCray, who was there when the works arrived to spearhead the installation, complained of logistical and infrastructural difficulties.

For example, in Belgrade, we were given just an immense, great exhibition hall that was made of yellow and black and white marble, veined marble, to put up Fifty Years of American Art, which had a lot of new American painting and sculpture. And in that case – I think I may have mentioned this before – we had to really transform the interior. That's where my architecture training came in very well because you had to do a lot of mise-en-scène, freestanding walls ... I spent many a whole night on my knees



2.9 Installation view of the exhibition *Modern Art in the United States: Selections from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6 July–6 August 1956, Kalemegdan Pavilion

pleating curtains, which I had never done before, to hide the marble walls on which we could hang the pictures. And hanging a whole great sort of fishbowl of hideous windows draped heavily in cheesecloth, so that we had really rather beautiful diffused light for the sculpture garden. And then we had that exhibition go into three different museums and I did all of that myself.<sup>75</sup>

McCray's complaints about having to do all the work seem exaggerated since the Yugoslav side agreed to take over the organization and installation once the works arrived in Belgrade, and also provide ample staff. With Yugoslavia in the midst of postwar reconstruction and shortages very common, some of the problems might have come from the lack of materials.

Furthermore, the Kalemegdan Pavilion, as one of the oldest purpose-built exhibition spaces in the former Yugoslavia, never had marble walls; rather, it was designed with salon-style, dark walls. Eventually, the exhibition space was renovated and received very modernist, clean-looking walls. Judging by the documentation of the exhibition, McCray's hand is very evident; the show could have been in one of MOMA's own galleries given how the space had been transformed into a modernist "white cube," with clean wide walls with plenty of space between each painting, ample and diffused lighting, and no trace of curtains or marble walls. Sculptures were placed in the middle, thematically corresponding to the paintings on the walls. Following the same high modernist aesthetic, McCray went so far as to bring all the labels directly from MOMA as, according to him, "European labeling was so awful ... [the MOMA team] took bundles of labels, all bevelled edged and in the language of the particular country that had been carefully checked with the other country before we went ... they were all done on a jumbo typewriter here and carried to the exhibition and where possible stuck on the wall."<sup>76</sup>

The cleanness of hanging supported the main purpose of the show, which was to create a chronological history of American art; its didacticism was visible in the curators' organizing of thematic units, as well as in the particular clustering of works (such as placing the early twentieth-century abstraction pieces together with examples of Abstract Expressionist works.) The show also contained a hierarchy of disciplines, with the most coveted and largest space given over to painting and sculpture. The linearity of the themes and historical timelines was reflected in the physical space, which was organized according to the mythological history of modernism in which early twentieth-century representational art incrementally gave way to the abstraction of the 1950s. The show's catalogue design and text both narrate a similar story of art's progression toward an ever-increasing abstract purity. These ideas further reflected aspirations of the American state itself to project an upward trajectory of its national history, one of progression, transformation, and betterment. Curatorial decisions were therefore not devoid of political rhetoric, as some have argued, but were in fact filled with political meanings. The deceptive



2.10 Visitors at the exhibition *Modern Art in the United States: Selections from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6 July–6 August 1956, Kalemegdan Pavilion

apolitical nature of some of the most famous works exhibited (specifically Abstract Expressionist works) was in itself a comment on the success of American cultural propaganda. Larger than life, vigorous, active Abstract Expressionist canvases were meant to convey the move of modernist ideals from the Old World into the bold new world. Paralleling the show's aesthetic trajectory is its political narrative (the one that speaks to the success of cultural diplomacy) in which American political virility leads the way for the rest of the world.<sup>77</sup> The documentation from the Belgrade show speaks to this rhetoric as we see a great number of visitors gathering, keenly looking and discussing the works on exhibit (the opening alone had 700 visitors in attendance.)<sup>78</sup>

The embassy's USIS office, of course, played a large part in organizing and promoting the exhibition; indeed, without it *Modern Art* would never have reached Yugoslavia. The USIS office in Belgrade worked closely with the USIS office in Vienna. "With the Commission's approval, USIS



2.11 Exterior view of Kalemegdan Pavilion, venue for the exhibition *Modern Art in the United States: Selections from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6 July–6 August 1956

handled all publicity connected with the exhibition. In less than a month's time the press and public were informed about the exhibition through USIS press media. In this effort the post was greatly assisted by the material supplied by the Museum of Modern Art and by USIS Vienna.<sup>79</sup> USIS also produced a 138-page catalogue in Serbo-Croatian. The texts were translated, the catalogue was redesigned, and several thousand copies were printed in less than three weeks. USIS also made sure that three thousand German-language copies (prepared earlier for the Vienna exhibition) were distributed to various galleries, cultural organizations, and educational institutions across Yugoslavia prior to the opening on 6 July. This suggests an eagerness on the part of the American diplomatic core to properly inform the Yugoslav public about American culture.

## *A Mixed Reception*

*Modern Art* received a mixed reception across Europe both at the time it was organized and later; its impact was not as far-reaching as MOMA's organizers and USIS had hoped. The contrasting responses focused on the curatorial decisions made by MOMA, the kinds of works that were presented, as well as the fear of this American cultural invasion. The curators' ambitions to present an overarching, linear view of the history of American modern painting resulted in choosing both representational/realist painters and abstract painters to construct a new American tradition. Catherine Dossin argues that the confusion raised by the show in Europe rested on the differing views of what was "representative" American painting; in other words, what MOMA's curators and organizers considered representative of American art diverged from the European understanding of American art.

The European public gained a certain understanding of American art from the show, albeit one that was different from the image Americans had of their own art. Hopper, Wyeth, and Shahn garnered the most praise, as their work was regarded as truly American.<sup>80</sup>

While the show was a frank public success ... it was not the Abstract works which garnered most praise but the realist compositions of Hopper, Wyeth, and Shahn. Painting like Shahn's *Welder* (1936) or Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) were appreciated by the European public for their urban and industrial subject matters and almost cinematographic style, and perceived as truly American.<sup>81</sup>

Ironically, given the curatorial heterogeneity and the ensuing confusion, the show was indeed a type of "tutti-frutti," as Ivo Frol had predicted in his initial response to the exhibition. For Yugoslav visitors, the heterogeneity seemed not that important, as its popularity was exceptional. At a deeper level, numerous artists and intellectuals, such as Marko Ristić,



2.12 Installation view of the exhibition *Modern Art in the United States: Selections from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, 6 July–6 August 1956, Kalemegdan Pavilion

Miodrag Protić, and Radoslav Putar, recognized that the show represented a new era in Yugoslav art. Both Protić and Putar gave positive reviews in national newspapers. In fact, Putar wrote a serialized response to the exhibition. Putar's two longer reviews praised the show's careful and complex curation, extolling the curators' ability to represent major characteristics of American art from the early twentieth century onward.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, Josip Depolo observed that the exhibition represented "the first most complete, well documented, and serious curated exhibition of American art in the twentieth century," and continued by saying that "this exhibition is the most interesting show of its kind to be mounted in Europe in the last year."<sup>83</sup> Finally, in his comprehensive review, Miodrag Protić wrote, "the exhibition is imposing in size, beautifully designed, and it informed our

audiences about art that was not well known in our country as our interests were mostly turned to European art, and, in the last decades, to Paris in particular.”<sup>84</sup> *Modern Art* was therefore well received among the art professionals, but it did not, as some argued, introduce an unknown aesthetic entity. As the critics’ responses show, Yugoslav artists were well versed in various modernist trends, and in this case quite open-minded toward this new kind of American modernism. Most importantly, the reviews point to an acceptance of modernism not just among artists and critics who were by now modernists themselves, but also among the general public.

The exhibition in Belgrade, however, seems not to have been a top priority for MOMA’s officials since only Porter McCray came to the opening on 6 July 1956. In recollecting the events, McCray talked about inviting David Rockefeller to come to Belgrade. Rockefeller was one of MOMA’s board members and a donor through his Rockefeller Fund, which made MOMA’s International Program possible. Rockefeller’s response, however, was brief and rather interesting. He could not come to the opening because he had business plans in Paris. Later on, McCray expressed his deep disappointment given the International Program’s mandate, and the strategic role Yugoslavia played on the geopolitical scene at the time.

In any case, the show opened with great fanfare, and according to a USIS memo there were close to seven hundred visitors, with speeches made by McCray on behalf of MOMA, Robert G. Hooker as a representative for the American Embassy, and Marko Ristić as the president of the Yugoslav Commission for Cultural Relations. According to USIS documents, Ristić noted that he “has never seen an exhibition so handsomely installed in Belgrade.”<sup>85</sup> Notably, of all the exhibition venues, Belgrade’s was by far the most visited. Joseph Kolarek enthusiastically noted that there were altogether 62,000 visitors in the show’s four-week span.<sup>86</sup> By contrast, the Paris show had 14,130 visitors, the Frankfurt show 16,000, the Vienna show 8,749, and the London show 4,908.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, the Belgrade stop was an overwhelming success when measured against the Western European numbers. It speaks to the curiosity and new openness of the Yugoslav general public and political and cultural elites. The actual artistic impact of the show was much more difficult to measure. USIS’s



cultural diplomacy proved to be a great success in Yugoslavia. Whereas Yugoslav leadership was hesitant to accept American culture, the general population was certainly eager to engage with what Americans had to offer. Indeed, this was the very goal of USIS – not so much to influence foreign policymakers but to influence a country’s population by creating a desire for the American dream, which USIS believed would eventually also force its government to adopt it.

### The Cold War Politics Expressed in *Modern Art* and the Venice Biennale

Echoes of the complicated international geopolitical situation in the 1950s were clearly felt in the tone and context of MOMA’s *Modern Art* and Yugoslav participation in the Venice Biennales of the 1950s. When the MOMA exhibition toured Europe in 1955–56 several important international events were brewing. The first were the initial signs of the developing Hungarian counterrevolution in the summer of 1956. The rapprochement between Hungary and the United States would culminate in a bloody crush of the counterrevolution in October 1956. The second was the warming of official relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death. The third key event was the first meeting of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement initiated by President Josip Broz Tito.<sup>88</sup> These events underlay and framed the cultural negotiations about the exhibitions taking place at that time. In his introductory note in MOMA’s exhibition catalogue, director René d’Harnoncourt highlighted Yugoslavia’s important role in developing peaceful and positive international relations. “Cooperation established by Yugoslavia in the field of art activities within the UNESCO<sup>89</sup> mandate, its participation in various international artistic exhibitions, and a rich program through which the Committee of International Relations organizes exhibitions from other countries, are a testimony to Yugoslavia’s affirmation that one of the most powerful instruments of promotion of understanding among various peoples of the world is through exchange of art.”<sup>90</sup> His somewhat

guarded speech also echoes the cautious and, from time to time, ambivalent attitudes of American foreign policymakers in their dealing with Yugoslavia. American officials were worried about the fate of the Yugoslav relationship with the USSR in light of Tito's visit to Moscow in June 1956 when he signed cooperation treaties with the Soviets. They also worried about the rapprochement between Tito, Nasser, and Nehru that same year. According to William Broderick, who served in Yugoslavia in the late 1950s, Karl Rankin, then American ambassador to Yugoslavia, "among others had expressed some concern that this [Yugoslav forays into Asia and Africa] was inimical to U.S. interests and that we should do something to try to stop it."<sup>91</sup> Most of the diplomatic efforts that Americans initiated in Yugoslavia in the late 1950s, including cultural diplomacy, were characterized by cautious support in light of the precarious role the country played in the Cold War.

One of the key elements in lessening this precarity was to ultimately secure Yugoslavia's separation from Soviet influence and sustain its fledgling liberalization. Implementation of these goals came via a series of Western economic policies that, starting in 1949, increasingly propped up Yugoslavia's economy through loans and other economic measures (through the United States, Great Britain, Western Germany, the World Bank, and the IMF).<sup>92</sup> Susan Woodward has written extensively about this particular political and economic strategy, outlining the economic predicament Yugoslavia faced because its ultimate survival depended on American-led economic aid. "The regime survived thanks to U.S. military aid, U.S.-orchestrated economic assistance from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, U.S. Export-Import Bank, and foreign banks; and the restoration of trade relations with the West after August 1949. In exchange, socialist Yugoslavia played a critical role for U.S. global leadership during the Cold War: as a propaganda tool in its anticommunist and anti-Soviet campaign and as an integral element of NATO's policy in the eastern Mediterranean. Jealously guarding its neutrality, Yugoslavia became an important element in the West's policy of containment of the Soviet Union."<sup>93</sup> For the American interests in the eastern Mediterranean, it was crucial to support the Yugoslav economy, especially given their

lingering doubts about Yugoslav intentions toward the West. The loans and Yugoslavia's early induction into international trade agreements were meant to cement its full departure from the Soviets, and support American strategy in Eastern Europe.<sup>94</sup> As a consequence, Yugoslavia managed to develop a solid industrial system, to modernize its economy and society, and to start exporting its goods internationally. The immediate result of these changes was that Yugoslavia became a socialist country that increasingly adopted elements of the market economy.<sup>95</sup> More importantly for its burgeoning culture, Yugoslavia built a vibrant consumer culture, which allowed for the development of a modest art market; it also allowed official artist associations and cultural organizations to move from simply surviving to proactively building a cultural infrastructure. This in turn created ideal conditions for the formation of socialist modernism and its growing public presence on the national and international scene as the new face of a now transformed Yugoslav state.<sup>96</sup>

The diplomatic wrangling over *Modern Art in the United States*, and the varying attitudes of American cultural officials and diplomatic representatives, therefore, express a complex American response to Yugoslavia; on the one hand, these overtures demonstrate American eagerness to support a more moderate form of socialist governance and culture as a counterpoint to the rigidity of the Soviets; but their guarded, careful language also reveals the concern that American and Western officials felt about Yugoslavia's increasingly nonaligned, and consequently, from their point of view, unpredictable actions.<sup>97</sup>

Yugoslav ventures into international contemporary art via the Venice Biennale, and the negotiations around who should and should not represent the state's interests, demonstrate that on the other side, officials wanted to project a new and transformed image of the country. The government had realized that international cooperation (regardless of whether it came from the East or West) and diplomacy were the way to find a new path outside the Soviet sphere of influence. The first crucial example of its departure from both sides in the Cold War came in 1950 when, after extensive advocacy and diplomacy, Yugoslavia was elected to a two-year term on the UN Security Council. It immediately became

embroiled in the Korean crisis.<sup>98</sup> In this first instance of unaligned international political advocacy, the Yugoslav delegation proposed a compromise for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and although its proposal was not accepted, it stood as the first expression of the country's independent action on the world stage.<sup>99</sup>

Cultural diplomacy followed closely on the heels of this breakthrough diplomatic work. Yugoslavia became a member of UNESCO in March 1950, and its cultural attachés quickly became involved with different committees and initiatives. Simultaneously, Yugoslavia also participated in various European cultural initiatives. Marko Ristić, in particular, was actively engaged in public discourses around the role of culture in multilateral relations. In 1951 he wrote what could be deemed the Yugoslav manifesto of cultural diplomacy for the journal *Comprendre*, published by the European Society of Culture.<sup>100</sup> In the text he first critiqued Western European intellectuals for creating an artificial distinction between East and West, thus making East European culture apart from and subordinate to Western culture. He then worked through a complex set of proposals for why and how culture should be open to and accepting of all political, aesthetic, and social forms and norms.

Because contemporary culture – or that which goes with the time – cannot, in its essence, in its becoming, not be an international universal culture, common to all the human race. Although at present it shows a flagrant lack of unity and is still polymorphous (which it will not remain – fortunately, in a certain sense), the conditions under which it is developing allow culture as a whole to be, in its various aspects, more and more synthetic, or better yet – synthesizing. This universality of contemporary culture (in its most advanced aspects), or rather this process of its universalization, of its humanistic integration, presupposes and requires from all the people of culture a conscious and multilateral commitment to make known, to confront, and to bring together the cultures of peoples and nations from all the continents of our planet, this strange little celestial body which

appears immanent to us, and which is day by day smaller, more dense, and more constricted.<sup>101</sup>

His call for open and synthesizing culture and for unity within diversity is the clearest articulation of the Yugoslav political and cultural position at that time: acceptance, negotiation, and above all pragmatism and survival.

Ristić's speech at the opening of the MOMA exhibition in 1956 markedly underlined this same strategy, repeating the earlier manifesto.

Artistic exchange is one of the most powerful tools to be used in creating international understanding. If you'll let me, I would push this a step further: it is not just about international understanding – which is of course very important – but also about something deeper and wider, and that is international cooperation of contemporary national civilizations in building a culture which has no other character than to be a culture of humanity as a whole. In contemporary art, in its different trajectories, in its many currents that we see manifested in the world, we clearly see that only through mutual connectedness and permeation of cultures, do individual national arts find their true space and their true meaning.<sup>102</sup>

His speech is in fact similar to the statement President Tito gave when he met with presidents Nasser and Nehru on Brijuni Island in July 1956, effectively initiating the official negotiations for the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. At that meeting the three heads of state released a joint statement, part of which read, "The newest developments, contacts and negotiations between highest officials of various countries which choose to follow a different international policy, have contributed to a better understanding of mutual viewpoints, and a wider affirmation of ideals of peaceful and active coexistence. The three heads of state believe that such contacts and exchanges should be continued and supported. Last year's Bandung conference has adopted specific tenets which should

be adopted in international relations. The three heads of state affirm the ten tenets which they always supported.”<sup>103</sup> As their statement highlights, the three leaders understood the significance of the Bandung Conference and chose to uphold its stated principles. By doing this they acknowledged the need for continued buttressing of transnational economic, political, and cultural ties between Africa and Asia; signalled the need to include other non-Western countries in the growing movement; were proactive in advocating for the needs of developing countries through the United Nations charters; and, finally, made a direct link between the nascent Non-Aligned Movement and Bundung.<sup>104</sup>

Leo Mateš underscored the uniqueness of what the statement proposed: it supported not only regional cooperation between less developed countries, but also enacted a policy of global (transnational) political action.<sup>105</sup> Ristić’s support for pluralism in art, the call for a wide variety of artistic styles and expressions, and his emphasis on “mutual connectedness and permeation of cultures” was, therefore, in line with Yugoslavia’s official move from international isolation and reactive politics toward active involvement in international relations. The MOMA show, as well as Yugoslavia’s eager participation in international exhibitions between 1952 and 1958, speaks to its growing integration into the international community as it increasingly embraced all forms of art and cultural production. Unlike socialist realism, the new socialist modernist culture now became about exchange, communication, and following of international trends. Ristić also understood that *Modern Art*, as well as other exhibitions of that nature, served a didactic purpose, speaking to Yugoslav audiences about how they should understand Yugoslavia’s current position in the world. This was not insignificant given the fact that after the 1948 split with the Soviet Union, there was a great deal of confusion among Yugoslav citizenry about what their relationship to Soviet political doctrine should be.

Opening to the West was not the only diplomatic and political agenda to emerge from the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict. Between 1949 and 1953 Yugoslav leadership engaged in a number of diplomatic manoeuvres that eventually led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement. As Yugoslavia sought loans and economic aid from the West, it also

approached non-Western, newly decolonized countries, seeking allies among them. President Tito and his immediate advisers pursued these links in light of the difficult relationship with the Soviets prior to the 1948 split. This split had roots in the interwar period and during the war when Stalin actively tried to manipulate Yugoslav partisan resistance.<sup>106</sup> Immediately following its expulsion from the Communist Information Bureau, Yugoslavia openly sought out international allies who did not belong to either of the two blocs. In 1954 President Tito embarked on a lengthy international tour, visiting a number of Asian and Middle Eastern countries. In 1955, after witnessing the developments at the Bandung Conference,<sup>107</sup> Tito made direct overtures to President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and President Jawaharlal Nehru of India. Their cautious diplomatic talks culminated in the Brijuni Conference and subsequent articulation of the basic tenets of the Non-Aligned Movement.

It should not come as a surprise that in the years between 1950 and 1958, when the country embarked on a crucial new geopolitical trajectory, we see an increase in large international exhibitions and vigorous pursuit of cultural diplomacy. Modernist art, introduced to the broader Yugoslav audiences in the 1950s through travelling exhibitions such as MOMA's *Modern Art*, and highly publicized Yugoslav participation in premier international events such as the Venice Biennale, became a perfect vehicle to carry the meanings of universalism, tolerance, and mediation that were now official Yugoslav policy.

Ljiljana Kolečnik has discussed at some length the dispute between socialist realism and modernism and the influence of these large international shows on the Yugoslav artistic scene. She points to the intertwining of political structures and artistic life in the former Yugoslavia, suggesting that Yugoslav culture embraced a modernist orthodoxy through domestic and international debates and pressures.<sup>108</sup> Kolečnik, however, dismisses earlier debates among Yugoslav intellectuals, such as Miroslav Krleža, claiming that modernism was the only way of escaping Yugoslav cultural provincialism.<sup>109</sup> For Kolečnik, MOMA's 1956 exhibition, with its political and economic contexts, represented a welcome change toward modernism as the logical cultural and aesthetic choice for Yugoslav artists.

Kolešnik's tacit dismissal of the earlier Yugoslav cultural debates as exaggerated and dogmatic, however, misses an important point: the debates were pervaded by serious, often confrontational and politicized, but crucial ideas about the nature of art in the twentieth century, in light of the Second World War and anticolonial struggles. These debates were key for the establishment of nonaligned modernism after the end of 1950s. Although indeed in some ways dogmatic, the public discussions of the early postwar period by Yugoslavia's leading critics and artists, among others, marked the first time that the country understood itself as having the potential to intervene in, and even change, Western cultural hegemony, and not as simply on the margins of European culture. The state's concurrent attempts to find an alternative socialist sociopolitical model contributed to how intellectuals imagined that new culture would look. Possibilities envisioned in these early years were important because many of the discussions took place in the public domain (especially those in the form of art reviews and criticism in daily newspapers) and therefore reached a wider audience. These earlier debates provided some essential elements in the development of socialist modernism and nonaligned modernism.

The implementation of socialist modernism is a testament to Yugoslavia's incremental adoption of the official core values (peaceful coexistence, collaboration, universal rights, equality, and mutual respect)<sup>110</sup> of the Non-Aligned Movement, which closely overlapped with the aesthetics of international modernism (universalism, individualism, autonomy). Recognizing the importance and value of coexistence, international cooperation, and equity in representation, the Yugoslav cultural establishment expedited its own version of modernism. In its promotion of universal, humanist, and utopian ideals, socialist modernism paralleled the Yugoslav self-management system based on workers' self-governance and cooperation that would be implemented in the 1960s.<sup>111</sup> Self-management was a natural outcome of Yugoslavia's own Marxist tradition: it sought to espouse international Marxist theory and fuse it with pragmatism.<sup>112</sup> The examples of cultural diplomacy in this chapter tell us that in its foundational moment, Yugoslav modernism developed from a survival tactic (as a way to move away from Soviet political and cultural influence) to a fully fledged



aesthetic, political, and most importantly infrastructural model that sought to actively engage in, and even transform, world culture via its adherence to nonalignment. The years between 1950 and 1960 were a transitional phase of socialist modernism in which we see the first contours of the fully developed nonaligned modernism to develop in the 1960s. During this decade, Yugoslav artists and other cultural workers realized that they could indeed have aesthetic and political agency, instead of seeing themselves as bastardized lesser copies of the Western cultural models.

The hybrid modernist form (first in socialist modernist, and then in nonaligned modernist versions) as it developed in Yugoslavia corresponded to similar movements across the non-Western world that grappled to find an appropriate balance between indigenous cultural needs (in particular in building cultural infrastructure) and the struggle for political independence and place on the international stage. Chika Okeke-Agulu states that “Quite pertinently, there is a general consensus that in these parts of the world, the tapestry of modernity and modernism was not just woven from diverse multicultural threads but was forged during the colonial encounter, as well as from the intermixture of histories, cultures, and subjectivities before and after colonialism.”<sup>113</sup> As Okeke-Agulu further highlights, the pertinent question is “how to describe the foundational concerns of artists whose work was catalyzed by ideas of cultural and social modernity and informed by visions of progress within the context of a sovereign nation.”<sup>114</sup> The foundational question was the same for Yugoslavs as for Nigerians or other newly independent nations – how to build a completely new way of existing in the world, retain sovereignty and agency within it, and build a culture that corresponds to it. Both socialist modernism and nonaligned modernism in Yugoslavia vacillated and struggled to find an artistic and institutional language that would correspond to the real-world political struggles of the state trying to survive the growing world divide. While the socialist modernist period was characterized by reactive cultural policy and forays into the international artistic world, nonaligned modernism would adopt a much more activist tone adapting to the pressures from the West and the East by finding a third way.

# 3

## Nonaligned Modernism in the Making *Building Parallel Transnational Culture*

### Building Nonaligned Ties

*The Third World was not a place. It was a project.<sup>1</sup>*

In June 1977 the Federal Committee for Science and Culture of the Republic of Yugoslavia received a unique and ambitious proposal for a new museum institution with an international focus, the Nonaligned Village and Museum. The project was the brainchild of Tibor Sekelj, now a largely forgotten champion of the Esperanto language and of cultural cooperation among Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries. He was one of Yugoslavia's preeminent Esperantists and a cultural manager who dedicated his entire life to the question of how culture can serve as a bridge between peoples. Among the long list of his professions, he was an artist, museologist, anthropologist, world traveller, and a member, and later president, of the World Esperanto Congress. During the 1970s and 1980s Sekelj actively participated in establishing cultural networks between Yugoslavia and the NAM, and between other countries, through his advocacy of cultural cooperation and active work in UNESCO. In 1972

Sekelj became the director of the City Museum of Subotica, which led to his interest in museology, institutional exhibition practices, and collecting policies. As a direct result of his experiences of working on the ground as a museum director, his studies in museology, and his participation in the International Council of Museums' (ICOM)<sup>2</sup> activities, Sekelj's work became increasingly invested in interdisciplinary approaches to exhibiting. At sixty-four years of age, in 1976, Sekelj defended his master's thesis, "Ethnographic Museum of the Future," which formed the basis for the 1977 proposal. It reached the highest levels of government.

Sekelj's was an ambitious project to create in Yugoslavia a museum and institute of the nonaligned cultures as living proof of the country's commitment to supporting cultures and histories of the NAM and other developing nations. The proposal relied on his theory of museology, which he called "the museum without showcases,"<sup>3</sup> or museum without objects. This was an institution that would not rely exclusively on objects, use traditional techniques of separation between visitors and museum exhibits, or follow the standard taxonomy of cultures. Instead, it was divided into large thematic units based on creating commonalities between cultures as opposed to their separation; it eschewed traditional fetishization of objects in display cases, and advocated the use of new technologies for creating a more immersive visitor experience. "The objects should not be in the centre of attention, because they are not the main subject of our exhibition," Sekelj argued, adding that an object placed in a showcase loses its functional attributes, becoming "alienated from man and his environment."<sup>4</sup> He emphasized the idea of common human heritage "because all peoples of the world have equal rights and responsibilities not only to respect all others, but also to enjoy the fruits of common human civilization."<sup>5</sup> He argued for the creation of interactive, immersive displays that would welcome cultural performances, cooking, storytelling, featuring and educating about different cultures of the NAM and other developing countries. The proposal featured a series of smaller "villages" around a central museum building. Serving as temporary interactive exhibiting spaces, the houses in the villages were supposed to regularly represent various cultural traditions; they were different sizes and constructed according to heritage

or vernacular architecture of world regions. He imagined that these buildings would not simply be dioramas, but would be living, working spaces, used by visitors for meetings, conferences, education, and performances. Adjoined were restaurants and hotels where people would be able to sleep, eat, and socialize. Unlike representational dioramas of the nineteenth century that were little more than human zoos displaying non-Western “others,” the buildings and exhibits that he proposed were living sites where there were no visitors, performers, or display objects. In fact, Sekelj turned conventional museology on its head, advocating the need for people to freely handle objects, use them in their intended context, and experience what role they have in a particular society. Finally, the museum would also serve as a neutral territory for ongoing positive representation and education about NAM achievements and culture conveniently located close to the Western world.

In a later, more refined proposal, the museum was titled “Man and His World,” reflecting a more universal idea of common human heritage. Sekelj also refined his critique of museum institutions and their colonial history. “As a direct result of inadequate information and as a product of deeply seated colonial ideas about worthlessness and inferiority of specific races, peoples, and their cultures in comparison to others,” Yugoslavia needed an institution that would educate about a global human family as advocated by its socialist, self-managed, and nonaligned policies.<sup>6</sup> Acknowledging the need for the Yugoslav public to be educated was only one part of the mission; the other part was educating the world. The central axis of the museum therefore rested on the premise that “there are no inferior and superior peoples ... we have all participated in creating our universal civilization, and therefore, we all have equal rights to participate in redistribution of its gifts.”<sup>7</sup> These conclusions were representative of the larger political and cultural shift that took place in Yugoslavia in the late 1950s in which Yugoslavs realized that they no longer needed to employ reactive cultural and political practices, but in fact could become active participants in building the nonaligned world and countering the hegemony of the West. Just as Tibor Sekelj sought to turn museology on its head, the NAM member states (Yugoslavia included) embarked on the

project of building the Third World, and in the process sought to turn “the Western view of history on its head,” as Vijay Prashad points out.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, for Yugoslavia, participation in the formation of the NAM and associated economic and political fora was a conscious, planned strategy that came out of its colonial history, its experiences in the Second World War, and postwar rebuilding. These events and histories shaped the ways in which Yugoslavia forged ahead in the second half of the twentieth century, and especially the strategies that Yugoslavia used to negotiate its place in the world. As early as 1947, the Yugoslav government embarked on forging links with various non-Western and Western countries via signing a number of economic and cultural bilateral agreements. These early agreements would become one of the primary ways by which Yugoslavia engaged with the world and built some of its first diplomatic links – the most important being the Non-Aligned Movement. Between the 1950s and the end of the 1970s, Yugoslavia signed hundreds of bilateral agreements with its nonaligned allies and other non-Western partners. It is within this strong cultural exchange that nonaligned modernity found its footing.

In this chapter, I discuss various examples of cultural and artistic diplomacy that illustrate Yugoslavia’s new activist approach to international relations, thereby theorizing and historicizing the meaning of nonaligned modernism. Yugoslavia’s cultural ties offer a glimpse into the vigorous cooperation, at the highest level, among the nonaligned nations. The analysis of archival documents from the period shows the complex ways in which the nonaligned countries cooperated and assisted and supported each other. This chapter, therefore, offers a broader view of the various cultural and educational exchanges, of their historical roots and precedents, thus staking a claim for Yugoslavia’s role in, and contribution to, the twentieth-century cultural and political struggles for sovereignty and political agency. In addition, these broader cultural ties give shape to nonaligned modernism as a practical and practised form that existed through its lived experience, rather than through objects alone. At the same time, the chapter opens a dialogue with two recent arguments: the first posits that, in general, the Non-Aligned Movement needs to be



3.1 President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Tito visiting Triennial of Yugoslav Painters, Belgrade, 16 June 1961

understood as a problematic top-down (quasi-democratic) postcolonial liberation project that served as a pretence for dictators to usurp its ideals and networks in order to maintain political power;<sup>9</sup> the second holds that Yugoslav involvement in the NAM was flawed and largely misrepresented. Yugoslavia nominally declared its allegiance to its non-Western allies and support of postcolonial, anti-imperialist politics, but in reality Yugoslav officials used NAM to overstate the country's role in world affairs and exaggerate its commitment to postcolonial politics. Not only did Yugoslavia conveniently use NAM for its own benefit, but in dealing with its partners, it further supported Western white supremacy.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to such arguments, the material historical analysis of the nonaligned project offers an entirely different perspective. First, NAM was indeed a statist project, but the new nation-states, which came out of postwar liberation movements, showed their political agency for the first

time in modern history, and were doing so in the light of the struggles for independence following the Second World War; discrediting the movement on the basis of its adherence to the political structure of the state denies agency to the project of postcolonial state-building that came as a direct result of the legacy of colonialism. In other words, newly freed countries were forced to adopt the nation-state model. Second, while it was indeed a way for Yugoslavia to find its own footing in the treacherous world of Cold War geopolitics, the initial impetus for seeking non-Western, politically progressive allies came from Yugoslavia's own history of revolutionary struggle for independence both prior to, and during the Second World War.

The war in particular was the catalyst for Yugoslavia's future fight for self-determination of nations and against Western hegemony. The war on Yugoslav soil had a three-fold character: it was a war of liberation from the German occupation; it was a Marxist revolution, as the main force leading the anti-Fascist struggle was the Communist Party, which sought to both overthrow the monarchy and establish a socialist state; and finally, it was an anticolonial war, since the impetus behind many of the Yugoslav communist ideals came from the history of colonization in the Balkans.<sup>11</sup> Antifascist resistance – as outlined by the members of the Communist Party, and by other participants from a wide spectrum of political viewpoints – was one of the cornerstones of Yugoslavia's subsequent abandonment of Soviet style governance, its active participation in the creation of the NAM, and solidarity with the developing world. Consequently, this chapter describes nonaligned modernism via an analysis of the complex landscape of international cultural and artistic cooperation through which this modernism was shaped. However, it does so by first considering the *longue durée* of history, which provides the background story to the political forces that shaped nonaligned modernism. The chapter's subsequent analysis of examples of cultural and artistic cooperation tells the story of the institutional mechanisms under which cultural exchange took place, the effectual outcomes these mechanisms had on building the alternative transcultural networks that constituted nonaligned modernism, and the ways in which the art of small nations

ving for sovereignty had to be political in order to survive at all. Finally, the central story the chapter tells is that nonaligned modernism, with its emphasis on international cooperation, signified a concrete move toward creating a parallel cultural and political network comprising non-Western countries on the South-South axis.<sup>12</sup>

## Unstable Histories of the Second World War

Yugoslav cultural and artistic identity and its negotiation of aesthetic and political agendas after the Second World War were deeply influenced by its status as a small country on the edges of large Western empires. Its postwar form of culture, nonaligned modernism, was the product of its internal struggle to shape a coherent working society made up of numerous ethnicities and peoples as well as its struggle to survive vis-à-vis larger international political structures and influences. Nonalignment was one strategy by which small postcolonial countries were able to claim agency in a world in which agency seemed impossible. Nonaligned modernity is a direct outcome of these negotiations between culture, politics, economics, and the international geopolitical order. Yugoslav members of the Communist Party, which formed the postwar government, understood the issues at stake in international power struggles and had acted accordingly, even before the war started. In the 1920s and 1930s the Communist Party of Yugoslavia had to negotiate its very existence with respect to Soviet influence and political pretensions.<sup>13</sup> During the interwar era, the Yugoslav Communist Party negotiated between the demands of the Soviets and the Comintern (mostly to stay in line with Soviet political goals) and the need to devise an indigenous approach to the Communist Revolution. Furthermore, during Stalinist purges, a whole generation of young Yugoslav Communists disappeared, a loss that only furthered Yugoslav distrust of the USSR. Between 1939, when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was occupied by Germany, and 1941, when Yugoslav Communists organized the national liberation movement and resistance activities “officially” began, Yugoslav partisans had to negotiate



the details of their first combat missions against the German and Italian forces with the Comintern.<sup>14</sup> Soviet insistence on particular forms of combat (mainly small sabotage activities against targeted industrial complexes and infrastructure instead of larger military operations), and where and how partisan resistance should function, were all key questions that were debated, often resulting in the Yugoslav side openly acting against Soviet dictates.<sup>15</sup> Yugoslav resistance was supposed to serve purely as a distraction and an impediment to German troops moving further East and at the same time create diversions and destroy some of the industrial and infrastructural assets that Germany held in the Balkans. The Soviet goals set out for Yugoslavia were antithetical to the goals of Yugoslavia itself, which saw the war against occupation as an opportunity to create a new socialist order. This point provided the clearest signs of the future collision between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Parallel to organizing active combat, Yugoslav partisans were forced to participate in protracted diplomatic negotiations over what constituted a legitimate liberation force on Yugoslav territory (mainly because most Yugoslav partisans were Communists and were opposed to the exiled government in London). In short, throughout the war, Yugoslav partisans had to navigate a treacherous terrain on which large empires (the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and the USSR) fought for dominance on the backs of small nations. Within such a constellation, Yugoslav partisans were doubly burdened with survival on the military front – fighting for liberation of the country – and recognition on the diplomatic front. The two were inextricably linked, as the failure of either meant the failure of the whole movement.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to its actions in the past, however, Yugoslavia, for the first time in its history, refused to give in to international pressure, even from its supposed allies, opposing them at almost every turn.<sup>17</sup> Their opposition was two-fold: the partisan resistance openly disobeyed Soviet orders to organize a purely guerrilla war without starting a Marxist revolution; and they resisted pressures from the West (the UK in particular) to accept the Yugoslav government-in-exile as legitimate. Intense military activities were therefore regularly followed by diplomatic discussions and pressure. In 1943 the partisan resistance

formed the first socialist federal government, Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja (AVNOJ),<sup>18</sup> as a result of its significant military victories on the ground, managing to successfully engage the German, Italian, and Bulgarian armies operating on its territories. In fact, German and Italian commands had to allocate unplanned troops and firepower in order to maintain their positions in the Balkans.<sup>19</sup> Western powers and the USSR could not ignore this measurable success, which allowed Yugoslavia's partisans to both keep their strategic territorial gains against the Germans and Italians and continue to organize their new political and social order in the freed territories. This angered the Soviets, the British, and the Americans, all of whom saw Yugoslav partisan advancement and the organization of a new state as a grave threat.

Ironically, the dispute would culminate at the very end of the war with the Trieste Crisis, in which Yugoslav partisans beat American and British troops to the city of Trieste to free it from the Germans, and at the same time, claim it back for the new Yugoslav state.<sup>20</sup> Trieste was a major territorial gain for the Yugoslavs, as this was a territory taken over by the Italians at the end of the First World War. Under Italian control, all non-Italians – who were a majority in the region – were forcibly Italianized. In short, Trieste was considered a colonized Yugoslav territory that had to be returned to the Yugoslav fold. The Trieste Crisis of 1944–45 was the most significant threat to the fragile peace. As a result of the crisis, the official end of the war in Yugoslavia was declared two weeks after Germany's surrender on 8 May 1945, as Yugoslav and Western troops (British, New Zealand, and American) were in a standoff that threatened to continue or change the nature of the war. Through an intense diplomatic negotiation, the standoff ended and the status quo declared until the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947.<sup>21</sup>

Only a year later, in 1948, Yugoslavia would enter its second great international crisis – the expulsion from the Cominform – and begin its alienation from the Eastern Bloc. The Tito-Stalin split was an earth-shattering moment for Yugoslavia because it meant that it no longer had any support or protections from its natural political allies. But it was also one in a series of crises. Starting in 1940, and in a span of five years, the

country survived a devastating war on its territory that destroyed 80 percent of its infrastructure, industry, and agriculture, with over one million dead and two million wounded and disabled.<sup>22</sup> Between 1944 and 1947 it was in a constant state of military alertness as the Allied troops were on its borders, instigating two thousand recorded military provocations (sending grenade fire, planting bombs in official Yugoslav buildings, and using surrendering Axis soldiers to disrupt the establishment of a postwar government).<sup>23</sup> Between 1943 and 1950 Western powers imposed severe economic sanctions by excluding Yugoslavia from the Marshall Plan<sup>24</sup> and from special tax and trade deals given to the recovering countries in Europe.<sup>25</sup> Finally, in 1948 Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, leaving it without support on either side of the emerging Cold War. These years of complete insecurity and crisis at the very end of and immediately after the war were crucial in shaping Yugoslavia's decision to reject both sides in the Cold War.

## Anti-imperialism and Antifascism as the Roots of Nonaligned Politics

If Yugoslavia's Second World War experience was crucial for its in-between stance vis-à-vis the Cold War, its much longer colonial history made it possible for Yugoslavs to find new, and perhaps not so obvious, allies in the Global South. Yugoslav colonial history is not easily defined. It can be placed within several imperial projects, including Venetian, Ottoman, Habsburg (later Austro-Hungarian), Italian, and French. This list does not include conquests and incursions from antiquity to the early medieval period. Various historians and theorists in Balkan studies disagree about applying the term colonial to the region, mainly because Balkan geographical and political positioning is complex and was a site of multiple strategic military and economic interventions.<sup>26</sup> The academic disagreement, as outlined by Dunja Njaradi, mostly hinges on the application of the linguistic demarcation "Balkanism," often used in discursive study of the region's history; it is opposed to Edward Said's

term “Orientalism,” which was borrowed and transformed by scholars, in order to be applied to the Balkans.<sup>27</sup> Njaradi provides a survey of the theoretical terrain in which the Balkans are seen as a postcolonial space by philosophers and literary critics and as a semi-colonial space by those who favour historiographical accounts of the region.<sup>28</sup> What the discussion often misses, however, is the material context in which this discursive and historiographical field is rooted – the real material contexts of life in the colonies – in other words, the competing interests that saw Balkan territory as a land populated by uncivilized barbarians, to be conquered and used for its various resources (natural or human) or as a strategic logistic gateway to either Asia (in the case of the Western powers) or Europe (in the case of the Ottomans). These strategic political and economic goals were, of course, as with any other imperial project, followed by complex discursive practices that justified various instances of domination and violence. This sentiment can be seen in some examples of how the Balkans were perceived by those who engaged in their colonization. For instance, Ebru Boyar cites accounts of the Turkish intelligentsia’s mourning of the loss of the Balkans after the Balkan Wars. He quotes prominent Turkish politician Akçuraoğlu Yusuf: “After ruling with total power over three great continents of the world for 600 years, we were finally expelled from Rumeli [the Balkan Peninsula]. We were driven out by our former shepherds and servants. We must not remove from our hearts, until the Day of Judgment, the pain of this insulting blow which we have received.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Clemens Ruthner presents a number of Austro-Hungarian and German sources from the period of Austro-Hungarian colonization of Bosnia-Herzegovina, some of which clearly state the view that Bosnia (as other colonized parts of the Balkans) was a colonial domain. “One has in German as well as in Western writings often disputed about the term colonies and often viewed it only from the economic or political perspective. In this sense, Austria-Hungary did not have any colonies and – within a contemporary context – never undertook the politics of colonialism. Looking a bit deeper into the term colonial there is hardly a doubt that Bosnia and Herzegovina were taken as colonies and as such remain so for the most part today.”<sup>30</sup>

More importantly, the attitudes of the Austrian and Ottoman rulers were very much in line with the “white man’s burden.” Alan Taylor describes a similar discourse at work, comparing Hapsburg colonial methodology to that of other European powers. In a particularly telling passage, he states,

Bosnia and Herzegovina had not been annexed; therefore, they could not be included in either Austria or Hungary. They became instead the only territorial expression of the “common monarchy” and thus the last relic of the great Hapsburg Monarchy which had once directed a united Empire. The two provinces were the “white man’s burden” of Austria-Hungary. While other European Powers sought colonies in Africa for this purpose, the Habsburg Monarchy exported to Bosnia and Herzegovina its surplus intellectual production – administrators, road builders, archeologists, ethnographers, and even remittance-men. The two provinces received all the benefits of Imperial rule: ponderous public buildings; model barracks for the army of occupation, banks, a good water supply for the centers of administration and for the country resorts where the administrators and army officers recovered from the burden of Empire. The real achievements of Austria-Hungary were not on show: when the Empire fell in 1918, eighty-eight percent of the population was still illiterate.<sup>31</sup>

While it is true that the nature of each empire’s colonial methodology was different when it came to enacting its power in the Balkans, it remains a fact that, as Andreja Živković states, “the very fate of the Balkans was always determined by its division between competing empires.”<sup>32</sup> Each empire sought to conquer and govern the region from its imperial centre,<sup>33</sup> imposing its own sociopolitical systems, culture, and economic networks, ultimately leaving a deep mark on the structure of life in the territories of Yugoslavia.

The effects of the colonial rule in Yugoslavia were multiple, but the most obvious were a general economic and cultural underdevelopment,

unresolved border and ethnic issues, weak social and political institutions, and overall dependency on Western economic help and influence. Yugoslavia's lack of political agency (even when it had a semblance of a state between the two world wars) shaped the goals and aims of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialists and the post-Second World War political efforts of the socialist government, which culminated in its alignment with the Global South.

The colonial history, which shaped general sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts in the territories of the former Yugoslavia from the fifteenth century onward, also produced alternative political and social theories influenced by the rise of various socialist ideas and workers' rights movements and parties.<sup>34</sup> In fact, there was a clear succession of thinkers, activists, and politicians from the nineteenth century to the Second World War who engaged in various discussions around socialist ideas in the context of the Yugoslav colonial situation. Many of these ideas, such as those in the writings of Svetozar Marković, clearly delineated an indigenous take on socialist thought, emphasizing Yugoslav peoples' subjugated position between the two empires (Ottoman and Hapsburg) and the need for a socialist liberation. Andreja Živković comments, "[Svetozar] Marković was the first Balkan socialist to link three elements into an integrated and indissoluble whole: social and political revolution against the imperial ruling class and state as the indispensable precondition of national liberation and unity across existing borders, leading to the emergence of a federation of nations from the ruins of the empire."<sup>35</sup> We see this attitude expressed in a short text Marković wrote in 1875 in which he discusses national liberation and socialist revolution in Serbia, connecting it to a necessity for a pan-Balkan revolution that respects difference and equality of all nationalities in the region: "No! No! Serbia must not be allowed to be sacrificed to the interests of one family, or better still – to the interests of several power-hungry politicians. The Serbian people have no other way but revolution in the Balkan Peninsula, a revolution that would end in the destruction of all the states that today obstruct the unification of the Balkan nations as free peoples and workers with equal rights, as a federation of communes – districts – states – as befits them best."<sup>36</sup>

Others, such as Dimitrije Tucović in a text in *Radničke Novine* from 1908 expresses the connection between the anti-imperialist struggle in the Balkans, socialist revolution, and international revolutionary struggles, saying that “finally, all this robbery by the capitalists of Vienna and Budapest concerns the Serbian proletariat the most ... [Serbian socialists] will remain true to the principles of international socialism and repay the debt to international proletarian solidarity if it protests with utter determination against these new colonial snares closing around the Balkans. Our protest is joined by the protest of the whole international proletariat.”<sup>37</sup> Matko Globačnik traces socialist history in the former Yugoslavia, noting that as early as the 1850s there were proto-socialist trends in certain intellectual and political circles in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia.<sup>38</sup> In a study of the first workers’ associations in Croatia, Josip Cazi argues that throughout the mid-nineteenth century, Balkan socialists were well versed in the operations and activities across the region, regularly supporting each other by sharing information about strikes and political organizing across the Balkans and internationally.<sup>39</sup> In letters and memos shared among the socialist workers’ associations in Croatia and Serbia, we see a clear sentiment of brotherhood and unity with those in the Balkan Peninsula. “I know that each of our brothers across Sava and Danube will be happy to receive news of worker-brothers from across the Balkan Peninsula. We look at you, brothers, how you advance in glory and how you are developing, we salute you from the bottom of our hearts: Long live progress! Long live unity! Long live united brotherly work!”<sup>40</sup> The sentiments expressed in these early days of socialist organization were furthered in the early twentieth century, especially between the two wars. Experiences of the First World War in the Balkans were particularly difficult as territories that would eventually become the Kingdom of Yugoslavia experienced some of the most brutal violence. In many cases, Yugoslav peoples (Croats, Bosnians, Serbs, Macedonians, Slovenians, and others) were forced by their colonial masters (or political patrons) to fight each other for foreign interests. The scars of the Great War produced a clearer vision of the now united Yugoslav socialists. In 1929, during the worst of the suppression under

the fascist rule of King Aleksandar, Yugoslav illegal unions expressed their anti-imperialist anticapitalist goals:

Comrades! Workers!

After the end of the great imperialist war, cheated and disappointed masses of workers in towns and villages instructed by the Russian workers and peasants have seriously imperiled Yugoslavia's newly minted capitalist social order.

Together with bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations, and Franco-English imperialists, financial capital has continued its support for the hegemony of great Serbia, its court and military headed by the bloody King Aleksandar the Last, and has orchestrated a coup d'état on January 6, in hopes of consolidating capitalist social order through fascist dictatorship!

Comrades! Workers!

Down with politics of national oppression!

Down with bloody monarchy!

Down with military fascist dictatorship!

Down with imperialism!

Down with imperialist wars!<sup>41</sup>

In 1935, as the economic and political crisis deepened both in Yugoslavia and internationally, Yugoslav Communists formed a clear position. Almost all issues of the *Bulletin of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia* in the years between 1930 and 1939 expressed the stance of Yugoslav Communists against various forms of aggression and fascism (which they saw at this point as the greatest threat) including the domestic fascist tendencies of the Yugoslav monarchy. Josip Cazi notes that in 1935 the *Bulletin* emphasized the fight against imperialism on the domestic front – against Serbian nationalism and fascism; demanded peace among nations; and highlighted imperialist military actions in South America, the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, and increased instances of fascist violence across Europe.<sup>42</sup> In short, as the Second World War approached, Yugoslav Communists became more vocal about the spread of imperialism and abuse both at home and abroad.



This very brief outline of the histories and general attitudes of the Yugoslav socialists and communists from the nineteenth century onward shows that from very early on Yugoslav communists and socialists were aware of their position as a colony, and the need to create an alternative, federalist, and above all, open approach to the socialist revolution and the creation of the socialist state. The Yugoslav decision to turn away from the Soviet Union and the West after the Second World War, therefore, did not come only because of the breaks and crises that occurred at the end of that war and in its immediate aftermath. Yugoslav's turn toward the Global South and its participation in creating NAM did not come as a sudden decision at the moment of the Cold War crisis, but in fact, as a natural progression of an already existing history of the development of an idiosyncratic socialism in the territories of the southwestern Balkans. More importantly, the creation of NAM was an outcome of an almost one-hundred-year long struggle of the Yugoslav peoples to gain sovereignty from their colonial masters and to create a more just socialist federation. Yugoslavia was ready to reach across the world to the newly minted post-colonial states only because it was itself one such state and understood full well what the struggle for independence and autonomy looked like.

## Toward a Politics of Nonalignment

The period subsequent to the Second World War brought onto the world stage a phenomenon, new at first glance, which we now know as the movement of non-alignment. I say “new at first glance” because it is new in terms of its complex social structure and the intensity of action heralding its entrance on the world political and economic stage rather than in its sociohistorical roots.<sup>43</sup>

As already indicated, the years following the end of the Second World War represented a decade-long struggle for survival. Between 1945 and 1956 Yugoslavia fought for economic and political stability by attempting to secure loans, negotiate trade agreements, export and import goods, and secure diplomatic ties.<sup>44</sup> These years were also the years in which

nonalignment as an idea germinated. The Yugoslav government's main goal was survival and integration into the international community; after 1948, the goal was to find its own version of socialism. Even in the earliest days of the existential crisis, the basic principles of nonalignment were reflected in the state's official international diplomacy. During the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party, held in 1948 in response to the Cominform crisis, Edvard Kardelj outlined Yugoslavia's new political principles: "Comprehensive activities in [the] fight for peace and peaceful collaboration between nation-states, based in equality and within the framework outlined by the United Nations in particular. Economic collaboration with all countries that want to have such cooperation with our country, based in equality and respect for international obligations. Political support to those forces which are fighting for peace, for democracy, for national freedom and independence, and for socialism."<sup>45</sup> Terms such as cooperation, coexistence, and respect for equality and sovereignty of other nations – especially those fighting anticolonial wars – dominate the discourse of the time and are repeatedly emphasized by the principal theoreticians and policymakers like Kardelj. As much as these ideas had to be proven nationally, to the state structures and Yugoslav people, they also had to be proven to the outside world.

Following expulsion from the Comintern, the Soviet Union managed an active propaganda campaign to create a negative image of Yugoslavia among not just allies in Eastern Europe but also communist and socialist parties on other continents.<sup>46</sup> Tito's crucial initial contacts with India were very slow as a direct result of the Soviet depictions of Yugoslav communists as masquerading imperialists. Historian Svetozar Rajak writes that India's attitude toward Yugoslavia changed once President Nehru's sister, Birjaya Lakshmi Pandit, was sent to Yugoslavia on a fact-finding mission. After that, "Pandit officially invited Tito to visit India."<sup>47</sup> Apparently, Pandit's visit assuaged Nehru's fears about Yugoslav intentions, and he was now ready to open official talks. Tito's subsequent visit to Asia, which included stops in India and Burma, was very successful. After Tito's extensive talks with Nehru, the two leaders "got to know each other personally," cementing their mutual understanding and paving the way for the formation of



3.2 President Tito visiting New Delhi during his first official visit to India. Visit to a rehabilitation centre and an exhibition of children's art, 20 December 1954

the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>48</sup> In December 1954, they issued a joint statement in which they used language similar to that used by Edvard Kardelj, declaring their intention to “devote their energies towards the advancement of peace through negotiations and reconciliation as the means for the resolution of international conflicts.”<sup>49</sup> This was also the first time that the term nonalignment was officially used, signalling the more active role each country wanted to take in building South-South relationships. A key element of the joint statement was the differentiation between the concepts of nonalignment and neutrality: “the policy of non-alignment with blocs, which they pursue, does not represent ‘neutrality’ or ‘neutralism’; neither does it represent passivity as is sometimes alleged. It represents the positive, active and constructive policy that, as its goal, has collective peace as the foundation of collective security.”<sup>50</sup> Contrary to Rajak’s

assessment that prior to the establishment of NAM, Yugoslavia did not in fact have a clear idea of what shape its international policy would take, what emerged from Tito's first major international diplomatic mission was a consolidation of previously existing ideas often stressed in the early postwar period.<sup>51</sup> The initial version of the idea emerged from Yugoslavia's realization that the UN had a particularly crucial role when it came to small postcolonial nation-states advocating on the international scene. In the spring of 1950 (four years prior to his first diplomatic visit to India) Tito stated that Yugoslavs "are absolutely against all blocs and spheres of interest, and the only possible way of resolving international questions is by working at the United Nations. Besides, I have stated earlier that if we want to preserve peace, it is a duty of all of us to address the United Nations regarding all disputes even if it took a long time."<sup>52</sup>

His pronouncement signals Yugoslavs' understanding that the UN was a key institution through which goals of coexistence could be attained. In 1950 Yugoslavia was voted to a two-year term on the UN Security Council, which gave it access to various diplomatic mechanisms within the organization.<sup>53</sup> It used them in order to intervene in the developing Korean crisis. Leo Mateš writes that this was the first time that future members of NAM (India, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria) attempted to act in concert to support a nonmilitary solution to the Korean War.<sup>54</sup> In three of his UN speeches (1948–50), Edvard Kardelj consistently repeated Yugoslav foreign policy: rejecting the two blocs, emphasizing peaceful coexistence, strengthening the UN, reducing armaments, and better implementing economic support for less developed countries.<sup>55</sup> Kardelj also indicated that as a result of the UN's inability to represent all of its members equally, Yugoslavia was forced to act in collaboration with other like-minded countries.<sup>56</sup> As Alvin Rubinstein observes, "through General Assembly resolutions, expanded concepts of international law, and sympathetic voting majorities, the Yugoslavs helped to pioneer small nations' use of the United Nations as a restraint upon the actions of Great Powers."<sup>57</sup>

During the turbulent years between 1948 and 1952, Yugoslavs realized that they could join forces with similar smaller countries, so that in fact, as Rubinstein noted, "[The] United Nations became the Yugoslav

bridge to the Third World.”<sup>58</sup> Also around this time, President Tito and Yugoslav diplomats and politicians embarked on a mission to negotiate more concrete diplomatic contacts with Asia and Africa. Darko Bekić claims that after his first trip to Asia in 1954, and extensive meetings with Nehru, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and Ba U, President Tito became a transformed statesman who now saw beyond London-Ural bipolarity to the allies in the Global South.<sup>59</sup> In his speech in Rijeka immediately after the Asia trip, Tito observed that “we [Yugoslavs] did not really understand these countries [India and Burma] as we should have. We did not know enough about their history, nor their contemporary developments, nor the efforts they are putting towards future development. This two-month visit to the two countries was for us a discovery, because we found a very similar situation to the one in our own country. It is very fortunate that we established relations with them, that we [Yugoslavia, India, and Burma] decided to continue forward together, and to do whatever is within our power to calm the passions that have been ignited across the world.”<sup>60</sup> Yugoslavia’s cautious first encounters with the new allies were a product of complicated sociopolitical and historical circumstances in which neither side fully knew the history of the other; each was influenced by larger more powerful forces that saw Yugoslavia, India, and Burma (and later Egypt) as their own domains. Once personal and diplomatic exchanges took place, it became clear that all the countries could in fact be effective allies.

“Brijuni was the Third World’s Yalta,” as Nasser, Nehru, and Tito met in 1956 on Tito’s ship, *Galeb*, to sketch out the basic structure of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>61</sup> However, in contrast to the 1945 Yalta conference, the three statesmen of this so-called Third World decided that dividing the world into even more spheres of influence was wrong; instead, they proposed to work together to create a viable world for those who had just emerged, or were about to emerge, from colonial rule. The tenets of active political advocacy, anticolonialism, collaboration, and diplomacy feature prominently in the statement released at the end of the meeting.<sup>62</sup> Active coexistence, a term used in that statement, would gain a prominent place in the future NAM discourse. In “Neutralité et non-alignment,” a text

in which he distinguishes between nonalignment and neutrality, Ranko Petković states that in terms of Third World solidarity, neutrality was not a viable option. Active work on peaceful resolution of conflicts, economic collaboration, and action on the international diplomatic front were incompatible with neutrality.<sup>63</sup> In fact, Petković claims that the founders of NAM actively sought to reject neutrality as a Western construct because it did not speak to the sociopolitical, historical, and economic context of the postcolonial states. This was clearly outlined in President Sukarno's opening speech at the 1961 First Non-Aligned Conference.

Non-alignment is not neutrality. Let there be no confusion on that score. No, non-alignment is not neutrality. It is not the sanctimonious attitude of the man who holds himself aloof – ‘a plague on both your houses.’ Non-aligned policy is not a policy of seeking for a neutral position in case of war; non-aligned policy is not a policy of neutrality without its own colour; being non-aligned does not mean becoming a buffer state between the two giant blocs. Non-alignment is active devotion to the lofty cause of independence, abiding peace, social justice, and the freedom to be free. It is the determination to serve this cause; it runs congruent with the social conscience of man.<sup>64</sup>

A nonaligned position did not imply a position of removal or separation but of active engagement. More importantly, as Vijay Prashad points out, it also implied a more complex response to the issues of peace and disarmament. Edvard Kardelj, Prashad writes, “made a distinction between wars of the powerful and wars of the weak”: “the former had to be condemned at all costs, while the latter could be defended in context.”<sup>65</sup> Kardelj concluded that “there is a difference between armed struggle to reject colonialism, and the brinkmanship of nuclear warfare”<sup>66</sup> Consequently, the position of the nonaligned nations was pragmatic: to use various mechanisms of international law and diplomacy for the benefit of those who only a few years prior had no access to representation in international fora nor even the agency to act. Such positionality

was complicated because the decolonization work required to gain such agency – as both Yugoslavia and other members of NAM knew – did not end with the Second World War.

Recently, the Non-Aligned Movement has been criticized for being a continuation of oppressive, top-down, hierarchical politics based in Eurocentric concepts of nationalism.<sup>67</sup> Main focuses of such critiques are that anticolonial work through the mechanisms of the nation-state is impossible<sup>68</sup> and that states that are governed by undemocratic governments cannot advocate on the international scene.<sup>69</sup> While the scope of this book does not allow for a more detailed engagement with this critique, I would note that it inevitably rests on the premise of a superficial performativity of solidarity that relies on the perception of action rather than the genuinely active work of decolonization. Attempts to discredit the Non-Aligned Movement therefore rely on discrediting its function on the global stage. While it can be argued that a top-down approach to anticolonial work could indeed be read as impossible, especially if we are to follow arguments around the hijacking of many anticolonial revolutionary movements on the African continent,<sup>70</sup> it is also the case that so-called Third World nation-states cannot be looked at outside the contexts of the Cold War and post-Second World War sociopolitical and economic complexities. Richard Drayton aptly argues that “the imperial powers of 1945 were determined to preserve their privileged command of the resources and products of the world economy, and a genuine expansion of full citizenship to all their non-white subjects overseas was entertained.”<sup>71</sup> Colonial powers continued to intervene in the politics and economy of their former colonies, thereby precluding successful transition of the postcolonial states to other forms of state organization.<sup>72</sup> Given the predominance of the nation-state model, the persistent Western imperial appetites (as the many documents of NAM’s interventions at the UN testify), and the newly emerging Cold War conflict, “[the] nation-state was, for many reasons, the most likely exit route from colonial domination.”<sup>73</sup>

Drayton makes excellent use of Édouard Glissant’s literary term “free poetics” to describe how the Third World engaged with anticolonial politics and the idea of the nation-state. He juxtaposes Glissant’s free poetics,



in which a creative actor is able to engage his or her reality through their own language, and “‘forced poetics,’ in which a weaker party is forced to seek its aims via the symbolic system of a dominant one.”<sup>74</sup> Drayton’s differentiation via Glissant points to the necessity of gaining agency and sovereignty through the mechanisms of the nation-state and all the symbolic and material privileges it can afford. New postcolonial states could no more extricate themselves from an already existing international imperial order than the new socialist states could extricate themselves from an already existing capitalist economic order. In fact, all such states had to negotiate their international status from a weaker position (weaker in the sense that they were still dependent economically on the more powerful nation-states) and thereby had no choice but to find pragmatic ways to navigate the treacherous terrain of the Cold War.<sup>75</sup> Edvard Kardelj writes that newly independent nation-states “came upon the already formulated principles of international cooperation and the established structure of the new world organization so that, in those early years, they had no alternative but to join as it was.”<sup>76</sup> At the same time, he continues, they would not be “willing to subject themselves to new forms of domination and hegemony.”<sup>77</sup> This is exactly the point of the Non-Aligned Movement’s active politics in which pragmatic, dynamic engagement was the way to use the system against itself. Tito, Sukarno, Nehru, and Nasser, as well as hundreds of NAM diplomats and politicians, have all argued that they were engaged in a long-term dynamic process, painstaking in nature and requiring much negotiation. Kardelj repeated the Yugoslav stance that the UN had to be the structure through which this process must take place. In a 1949 UN speech he stated that it was obvious that the question of human rights and the independence of small countries was closely linked to the problems of their economic development. It was clear to everyone that the discrepancy between the wealth, technical resources, and general economic progress of highly developed countries, on the one hand, and the economic position of underdeveloped countries on the other, represented a clear danger to the pursuit of normal economic relations. What should be sought was an increase in the well-being and strength of each country.<sup>78</sup>



Economic and political struggle are intricately linked, and separating one from the other, Kardelj argued, would be disastrous. Sociopolitical and economic struggle were direct means of attaining independence and each of the NAM countries collaborated on a variety of international fora to sustain this principle. It was also presented in the text of the Declaration of the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Belgrade in 1961: “The participants in the Conference consider that efforts should be made to remove economic imbalance inherited from colonialism and imperialism. They consider it necessary to close, through accelerated economic, industrial and agricultural development, the ever-widening gap in the standards of living between the few economically advanced countries and the many economically less-developed countries.”<sup>79</sup>

Subsequent NAM conferences furthered these economic goals, advocating more concretely both through the UN and outside it for the formation of various international bodies that would oversee and implement policies to improve the economic conditions of developing countries. Ljubica Spaskovska states in her analysis of Yugoslav participation in the creation of the Group of 77 (G77) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) that the idea behind the formation of such bodies was “ending the division of the world into areas of affluence and intolerable poverty.”<sup>80</sup> Although uneven, Spaskovska argues, the efforts made by NAM allies did bear results. “Although the general tone throughout the 1970s was pessimistic, hard data pointed to significant changes: foreign direct investment (FDI) from developing countries in 1980 accounted for 2.7% of the total world stock of FDI, while in 1960 that share was only 1%. Also, up to 1980, developing countries established between 6000 and 8000 subsidiaries abroad ... Similarly, the share of the world industrial output by countries in the South grew from 2% in 1929 to nearly 14% in 1975 and exports from these countries grew from some USD 18 billion in 1950 to an estimated USD 200 billion in 1975.”<sup>81</sup>

The importance of the material contexts of nonaligned advocacy cannot be ignored. Oft repeated claims of the Non-Aligned Movement’s inability to effect real change, its purely “symbolic” or “opportunistic” use of the UN and the global media, and its leaders’ use of NAM credentials to hold

on to power in home countries are all mobilized without consideration for material conditions on the ground. All such critiques ignore NAM's efforts to organize multiple responses to the very real problems facing its membership.<sup>82</sup> To reassert Glissant's argument of forced poetics, the Non-Aligned Movement functioned within the capitalist colonial system forced on its members. Throughout the late twentieth century they attempted to change colonial-capitalist legacies via economic reforms on an international scale, promote the institution of South-South and alternative socioeconomic and cultural exchanges, and fight for agency and equality of the oppressed. The very real ways in which NAM advocated for policy change within the UN cannot be negated, nor can their establishment of parallel alternative economic networks. For example, Yugoslav state-owned companies initiated viable joint ventures with partners in Africa, such as ZECCO-Zambia<sup>83</sup>; S.B.D.; Guinée Conakry<sup>84</sup>; NECCO, Nigeria;<sup>85</sup> S.M.I.R., Algeria; etc.<sup>86</sup> This is what Benita Parry calls a materialist approach<sup>87</sup> to anticolonial histories, an approach that takes into consideration not just the symbolic or discursive ways in which colonialism presented itself but also its intricate relationship with and dependence upon the material, economic, and political structures that underlie it. Global legal, political, and economic systems, which were built well before the Second World War, and which persisted after it, are material spaces within which the nonaligned and other anticolonial movements had to operate. Attempts to bridge political and economic chasms created by colonization were not easy and, as NAM tried to bridge them, they often had to put political efficiency or economic expediency to the side and stick to the principles outlined in their declarations: coexistence, negotiation, respect for agency, and sovereignty of others. It is in this context of a multifaceted approach to transnational anticolonial, and anti-imperialist histories that Yugoslavia's nonaligned modernism can be traced.

## Material Culture and Its Symbolic Order

Nonaligned modernism was produced at the highest official levels – through art exhibitions, cultural events, and international exchange – and through

the everyday practices of the nascent Yugoslav visual and popular culture. Expressions of public support for NAM, an outpouring of positive sentiments toward liberation movements in the developing world, and frequent media and popular narratives that expressed Yugoslav kinship with the Third World were all part of anti-imperialist political presence in everyday life. Countless such examples were found in Yugoslavia and they structured the common ethos of solidarity. Even before the official establishment of NAM, Yugoslavs espoused its principles. For example, during the Suez Crisis of 1956, large public demonstrations were held across Yugoslavia in support of Egypt's sovereignty, as major dailies carried the news of the deepening crisis, reporting stories of the neocolonial efforts of Western powers. On 14 February 1961, only a day after Patrice Lumumba's death was publicly announced to the world, some thirty thousand people came out to the streets of major Yugoslav cities to protest his murder. In September of that year, before the official NAM summit meetings began, President Tito called the gathered world leaders to honour Lumumba's death with a minute of silence, thus publicly condemning his murder. In December 1966 thousands of students were on the streets of Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Belgrade to support the Vietnamese people against American and French colonial military interventions. In April of 1968 mass protests were organized against the official visit of the commander of the American Sixth Fleet to Dubrovnik, and in May of that same year large student protests were held in front of the embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in response to the emergency measures enacted against the actions of German leftists. In June 1968, the largest student protest erupted in Belgrade (smaller ones were held in both Zagreb and Sarajevo) to protest the violence perpetrated by the Soviets against the people of Czechoslovakia. Public urban spaces, major streets, stadiums, and schools in Yugoslavia were named after anti-colonial fighters, international socialists, and cultural and political dignitaries. For example, a large student dormitory in Belgrade built in 1961 was named after Patrice Lumumba (and still carries his name). There were streets and squares named after Jawaharlal Nehru, Haile Selassie, Gamal Nasser, Salvador Allende, Che Guevara, and other major political figures of the NAM. Daily newspapers and television allotted considerable space to



3.3 Moment of silence for the slain Congolese premier Patrice Lumumba at the opening of the Fifteenth Plenary Session of the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries, 5 September 1961

discussions of important Yugoslav allies and world politics as it related to them. In short, after 1956 and the first meeting of the future NAM leaders, the public was exposed to new information about Yugoslavia's geopolitical standing and that of its allies.

Throughout the socialist period, Yugoslav citizens were well informed and actively participated in national and international political debates, so much so that all the major events on the global stage had direct echoes in the public life of the country. Contrary to the usual depictions of the autocratic communist public sphere, Yugoslav media became more diverse at the end of the 1950s, even if they were still heavily ideological.<sup>88</sup> Their diversification in content and rhetoric was a direct result of the falling out with the Soviet Union and was reflected in more targeted news from the Third World (and subsequently nonaligned countries) as well as

a more nuanced tone of stories from the West.<sup>89</sup> News about various anti-colonial revolutions, crises in Asia and Africa, and international political events (such as the Bandung Conference) were a staple of national dailies. Concomitantly, the media were presenting more varied stories and opinions while public protests, support marches, and demonstrations were a regular occurrence, reflecting an emerging nonaligned politics in the public consciousness of Yugoslavia's peoples. Psycho-geographic and symbolic constellations of nonaligned modernity were produced through official politics of the state – its economic policies, cooperation agreements, diplomatic relations, advocacy via the UN and other international bodies, and of course, its leadership in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement itself.

Nonaligned modernity was also produced ephemerally via architecture, public art, and popular forms of culture. These cultural and political forms constituted an affective<sup>90</sup> international and national consciousness, or a nonaligned “imagined community.”<sup>91</sup> Affective imagined communities were structured as much by political life and its official forms (for example, the Brijuni Conference, or the first conference of the non-aligned in Belgrade) as they were by forms of everyday life: architecture and urban spaces and people's movement through them; the visual culture of the socialist everyday (such as media, posters, advertisement); and public mass expressions of feelings and political stances (parades, protests, public speeches, and public interventions). All these activities operated on material and discursive levels as well as conscious and subconscious levels of affect to create a unified structure of feeling – a new transnational imagined community that began developing in the mid 1950s. In parallel to official state efforts, public opinion was crucial to sustaining and actively supporting NAM.

*From the Local to the Global:  
Creating NAM's Cultural Infrastructure*

The Non-Aligned Movement's socialist-leaning policies and advocacy created an anticolonial transnationalism in material terms (alternative



3.4 The first lady of Indonesia, Hartini Sukarno, and Jovanka Broz visiting the School for Applied Arts and Crafts, Zagreb, 2 April 1960

economic networks, support in international diplomatic negotiations, exchange of experts, education, etc.++) and in symbolic terms via cultural diplomacy and savvy use of an increasingly globalized media. “As the insistence on independence from superpowers and the promotion of the interests of decolonizing countries drew the ire of the Western bloc, such nonaligned efforts attracted critical attention and inspired a worldwide community of intellectuals of African and Asian descent,” creating a transnational anticolonial material and symbolic network.<sup>92</sup> After the formation of NAM and its conferences, the member states initiated a more systemic strategy of countering what Tran Van Dinh called “cultural imperialism.”<sup>93</sup> Quoting Amilcar Cabral’s pronouncement that “imperialist domination calls forth cultural oppression and attempts, whether directly or indirectly, to do away with the most important element of the culture of subjected people,” Van Dinh underscored the importance

of incorporating cultural liberation into NAM's official policies.<sup>94</sup> Cabral's point is salient: "the people are only able to create and develop their liberation movement because they keep their culture alive."<sup>95</sup> Yugoslav diplomats, cultural workers, and politicians were deeply aware of the need to use culture as a form of resistance. Edvard Kardelj echoed similar sentiments in 1950 when he asked during his speech at the UN's General Assembly, "should a nation subjected to economic aggression or fighting for its economic independence or striving to overcome its economic and cultural backwardness obtain the economic support of the United Nations?"<sup>96</sup> He goes on to answer, "in our opinion, there is no question but that such support must be given, if only because such questions are so closely linked to the general question of the maintenance of peace."<sup>97</sup> Other Yugoslav officials such as Marko Ristić, the head of the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations, called for cultural cooperation as the basis for peaceful coexistence. In 1951, he outlined a proto-nonaligned cultural manifesto of sorts, in which he foregrounded cultural diplomacy as a pre-eminent tool in nurturing new cultures of coexistence. He argued that "without international cooperation, coexistence is an empty slogan, a frivolous phrase," and goes on to state that understanding cannot exist without exchange, or what he called a "cultural blood transfusion."<sup>98</sup> Like Van Dinh, Cabral, and other nonaligned intellectuals, Ristić recognized that culture is intimately connected to the assertion of sovereignty and is a vital form of establishing understanding and collaboration between countries whose cultures are not represented in the international cultural landscape.

Tran Van Dinh went on to point to the ways in which Western, particularly American, cultural hegemony freely flowed through the global cultural and media space, exposing the doctrine of free flow of information as a form of cultural imperialism that ensured "the imperial ascendancy of the United States."<sup>99</sup> The only way to counter these forms of Western imperialism was to create effective resistance. For Van Dinh, Ristić, Kardelj, and others, a well-organized NAM cultural network was the answer. In fact, in the very first NAM conference declaration in 1961, its leaders named culture as an important part of a "development without



intimidation or hindrance.”<sup>100</sup> In 1964 and 1970 they repeated the same principles; however, Van Dinh points out, “one has to wait until the 4<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Summit held in 1973 in Algiers (attended by seventy-five member nations) to see developed a more scientific analysis of cultural imperialism and a more specific strategy to resist it.”<sup>101</sup> The final declaration in Algiers stated, “It is recognized that the activities of imperialism are not confined solely to political and economic fields but also cover the cultural and social fields, thus imposing an alien ideological domination over the peoples of the developing world. The Heads of State or Government of non-aligned countries accordingly stress the need to reassert indigenous cultural identity and eliminate the harmful consequences of the colonial era and call for preservation of their national culture and traditions.”<sup>102</sup>

One of the key material outcomes of this call was the formation of NAM’s strategy for cultural representation and information. In 1975 six countries, including Yugoslavia, met to devise an agenda for development of a NAM information strategy. In the following year, and through a series of meetings and conferences, NAM countries developed a concrete plan to combat cultural imperialism by forming the Non-Aligned News Agency Pool (NANAP), which was to be based in Yugoslavia.<sup>103</sup> The Yugoslav news agency Tanjug was the main organization to support the newly created NANAP. Through Tanjug’s expertise, personnel, and logistics, and financial support from Yugoslavia, NAM, and the UN, NANAP was to develop an alternative representational structure that would counter the hegemonic Western media representation. In their analysis of Tanjug’s role in initiating and running NANAP, Christian Vukasovich and Oliver Boyd-Barrett argue that Tanjug,

played a remarkable, principled and often misunderstood role in the development of a distinct third world press. Unlike the weak NANAP structure, which always struggled to attain significant client use and resources, the Tanjug model was premised on the presumption of a robust coordinating role, played by an experienced, reasonably well-resourced and ideologically compatible



national agency. Often cited as the primary voice of NANAP, in reality, Tanjug represented far more than that. The agency also represented the genesis and guiding vision of a new model of alternative news that challenged the bilateral hegemonic perspectives of the world being written by the entrenched news agencies of Britain (Reuters), France (AFP), the Soviet Union (TASS), and the United States (AP and UPI).<sup>104</sup>

The authors continue by pointing out that the 1973 NAM Conference, and the subsequent meetings during which cultural representation was discussed, played a pivotal role in forming an alternative media network in which “NANAP was one of several cooperative models that developed in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. News cooperatives such as IPS (Inter Press Service), PANA (Pan African News Agency or PanaPress), NANAP and CANA (Caribbean News Agency) helped change the way in which news is covered in the developing world.”<sup>105</sup> NAM’s Algiers 1973 Declaration developed a program of action in which member countries were to cooperate and share experiences; organize reciprocal visits; exchanges film, books, and media; hold festivals and exhibitions; and exchange scholarship and expertise.<sup>106</sup> Tran Van Dinh recognized this as one of NAM’s concrete steps toward elaboration of a genuine Third World cultural solidarity that would serve to counter the West’s cultural imperialism.

The history of socialist Yugoslavia’s cultural diplomacy both prior to the Non-Aligned Movement and especially after its initiation is a testament to the ways in which Yugoslav leadership recognized the power of culture in regaining agency by those who were marginalized. Representatives of the Yugoslav cultural diplomatic core worked to buttress the political and diplomatic systems established within NAM and to actively support anti-colonial struggles through culture. Contrary to the criticisms that propose a dichotomy between Yugoslavia’s politics and its stance on race, an examination Yugoslav cultural diplomacy sheds light on the movement’s material structures and Yugoslavia’s role in strengthening its NAM allies. In fact, the Yugoslav state, its politicians, cultural workers, diplomats, and others, continually strove to make connections with allies beyond the



3.5 Jovanka Broz visiting the National Museum in Egypt after the Second Conference of the Non-Aligned in Cairo, 15 October 1964

West in order to create alternative political and cultural networks. Like many other Eastern European countries, Yugoslavia could have stayed rather removed, or even antagonistic, toward the South-South partnerships and maintain the status quo in international relations. Instead, it consistently offered collaboration, support, and expertise to build non-Western or nonaligned modernity.

The story of NANAP and Tanjug is only one example of the many ways in which Yugoslavs attempted to establish viable and strong cultural relations with non-Western countries and assert a new form of culture. The impetus to connect with the global South had roots in Yugoslavia's history dating back to the nineteenth-century socialist tradition. After the Second World War, Yugoslavia vigorously supported the development of the UN as the main agency to advocate for countries that were previously underrepresented. Yugoslav officials pushed for the country's early entry



3.6 The first lady of Liberia, Antoinette Tubman, and Jovanka Broz visiting the National Museum in Belgrade, 24 June 1963

not only into the UN's General Assembly, but also into various UNESCO committees and working groups and other international cultural bodies that operated on similar principles (such as the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art [CIHA]). Between UNESCO, CIHA, NANAP, NAM and other international bodies, Yugoslav diplomats were able to enact and support strong cultural representation for Yugoslavia and its allies in the global South. Its twentieth-century postwar ideals, built on NAM principles, became Yugoslavia's primary identity and were subsequently transmitted to its citizenry.

It is within these ideals and constellations of international political, economic, and cultural organizations that Yugoslav nonaligned modernity emerges. Modernist art and culture were inseparable from NAM's identity and as Nancy Jachec rightly points out, Yugoslav and nonaligned support for modernist art and culture was "also used to compete with the

West's sense of ownership of the insights into the human condition that the war [Second World War] had revealed."<sup>107</sup> Jachec further states that "the post-war condition was recognized by its participants not as exclusively Western European, but as a global one, which formed the context in which the NAM was compelled to act."<sup>108</sup> Nonaligned modernist culture was, therefore, a form of resistance to Western cultural imperialism. Yugoslavia's cultural collaboration with other nonaligned countries via international cultural bodies, even though sometimes plagued by bureaucratic slowdowns and prolonged negotiations, was a material form of alternative modernism of the twentieth century.

Nonaligned modernism was most clearly elaborated in Yugoslavia's active involvement with UNESCO and its continual cultural collaboration with international partners through bilateral agreements. "In defending their independence and striving for equitable relations among nations," stated Edvard Kardelj in 1952, "Yugoslav peoples are actually fighting for the conditions on which humanity's progress depends, namely, for the right of each people to develop its creative forces without obstruction."<sup>109</sup> In a programmatic ending to the same speech, Kardelj outlined several diplomatic principles, one of which was to "support the comprehensive development of peaceable economic, political, and cultural cooperation among peoples."<sup>110</sup> These principles spell out the basic tenets of Yugoslavia's approach to cultural diplomacy. Yugoslavia ratified the UN Charter in August 1945, subsequently signing more than twenty other UN-related charters, one of which was the UNESCO charter signed on 31 March 1950.<sup>111</sup> Vladislav Ribnikar, then president of the Committee for Art and Culture, became a delegate to the UN in 1947<sup>112</sup> and to UNESCO in 1950.<sup>113</sup> In February 1951 the Yugoslavs formed a national committee for UNESCO in order to coordinate the country's advocacy abroad.<sup>114</sup> At first, Yugoslav delegates made connections and solicited educational and cultural funds and support; however, as early as 1951 Ribnikar was calling for the use of culture in the promotion of peace, thus making a direct link between what Yugoslav delegations were doing in the General Assembly with the work of UNESCO. He reminded UNESCO's General Assembly that "the only guiding criteria to decide on how to act" on cultural priorities should be peaceful coexistence.<sup>115</sup>

In the decades to follow, Yugoslavia was able to contribute significantly to building UNESCO as an organization, and, in a way, “put its money where its mouth was.” One of the first such big undertakings, begun in 1960, was a project to save the monuments of Nubia. This was also an opportunity for Yugoslavia to help two of its major NAM allies. The Nubia Monuments Campaign, as it was sometimes called, was initiated at the request of the Egyptian and Sudanese governments in 1959, when the consequences of building the Aswan Dam threatened to destroy some of Africa’s oldest and most valuable cultural heritage sites.<sup>116</sup> This became the largest archaeological project ever undertaken and was completed two decades later in 1980. Of the forty-five UNESCO members that participated, twelve were Western countries and thirty-three were either members of NAM or other non-Western countries (notably, Soviet Bloc countries did not participate). Yugoslav representative Branko Novanković signed the official agreement for a contribution of expertise and funds: the amount donated was the equivalent of USD \$226,000, which was a considerable amount for Yugoslavia at the time.<sup>117</sup> Of the participating non-Western countries, the highest donations came from India, Yugoslavia, and Cuba respectively, which of course reflected their close ties to Egypt.<sup>118</sup> A team of archaeologists from the Yugoslav Institute for the Protection of Historic Monuments worked on the removal, transfer, and preservation of a number of murals from Coptic churches Abu Oda, Abdallah Nirqi, and Sheik Abd el Gadir.<sup>119</sup> As part of its funding and promotion commitment to the project, Yugoslavia also released a series of commemorative stamps in 1962.<sup>120</sup>

Apart from participating in the preservation of world heritage and contributing to the development of various policies for conservation and cultural education, Yugoslavia consistently advocated for support in information and technology/educational exchange through various UNESCO committees and subcommittees. When the Non-Aligned News Agency Pool was formed in 1975, Yugoslavia and other nonaligned members continued to press UNESCO to partner with NANAP in developing a more focused, organized counterbalance of information distribution. In 1985, some ten years after NANAP was formed, UNESCO entered a formal



3.7 Jovanka Broz visiting the Museum of Fine Arts in Ulan Bator, during an official visit to Mongolia, 16 April 1968

agreement with the agency to further promote a free and balanced flow of information in partnership with UNESCO's own International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC).<sup>121</sup> The initiative's goals were diversification, promotion of cultural and political content outside the hierarchy of corporate-dominated Western media, education of a new generation of professionals, and building alternative media infrastructure.<sup>122</sup> Even though, as Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett state, the collaboration did not last long, it was an important signal of what non-Western countries could accomplish when allowed to develop without interference.<sup>123</sup> Yugoslavia also supported regular UNESCO meetings. Finally, in 1980 Yugoslavia hosted the Twenty-First General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade and cemented its role as both a mediator and a cultural broker.

Between the 1950s and 1989, Yugoslavia signed bilateral cultural agreements with many of its nonaligned partners. These agreements, and the

various cultural events and activities that stemmed from them, were key to building cultural diplomacy and had a significant impact on both Yugoslavia and its partners. Yugoslav cultural diplomacy relied heavily on these cultural agreements in forging international cooperation; in many ways, their efficacy and success rested on Yugoslavia's unique diplomatic strategy, which was based first and foremost on President Tito's own personal diplomacy, or what Vladimir Petrović terms "summit diplomacy,"<sup>124</sup> and on follow-up of Tito's initial meetings with foreign leaders. Cultural diplomacy was handled through a number of political bodies at the national and provincial levels. At first, cultural relations were delegated via the federal Committee for Art and Culture formed in 1946. In 1948, when it became clear that the work of the committee would have to be far more complex than its initial, simple structure would permit, the organization was enlarged and reorganized into several subcommittees, or departments, one of which was the Department for International Cultural Relations.<sup>125</sup> Finally, in 1948 the Committee for Art and Culture and the Committee for Science and Education joined the Ministry of Culture and Science of Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which would become the primary body to handle all forms of international cultural diplomacy.<sup>126</sup> Even though the two committees joined the ministry, they still existed within the larger body as separate entities. The committee's first, and most influential head was Marko Ristić, under whose influence the Committee for Art and Culture opened up to the world, bringing many international artists to Yugoslavia, ultimately ushering in a modernist ethos that would shape the formation of nonaligned modernism. Through Ristić's open and competent guidance, Yugoslavia reached out to various countries to sign agreements on cultural cooperation. And while we see hundreds and hundreds of agreements, reports, and memos on cultural exchange and the purchase and importing of books, music, and film, we also see a number of proposals for art exhibitions, touring musical and dance ensembles, and educational exchange. Between 1945 and 1956 a majority of the signed documents were with the neighbouring countries of the Soviet Bloc, and with the United States, the UK and France.



Following President Tito's 1955 journey to Asia, the first student exchange contracts were signed and Indian and Burmese students arrived to study in Yugoslavia. Starting in the early 1950s, there is a marked increase in agreements with countries that would later join the non-aligned, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, and India among others. In the span of some thirty years, Yugoslavia signed hundreds of such documents, sometimes multiple times over several years. These agreements led to different levels of cooperation and engagement: opportunities for education; the exchange of expert and technical personnel; the importation of films, books, and music; and art exhibitions and music and dance performances. On occasion, the contracts listed specific names of experts, lecturers, artists, or events, but often they mentioned important international manifestations, such as, for example, the Ljubljana Biennale and the Alexandria Biennale, which in the 1960s became famous international events that were attractive enough to warrant reciprocal agreements with important partners such as India. Finally, the contracts spelled out the logistic and financial side of cultural exchange, which in many cases became a stumbling block.<sup>127</sup> Logistics and financials provide a picture of how Yugoslavia chose to support its nonaligned partners. For example, it provided India with much less financial support in terms of student scholarships and stipends,<sup>128</sup> but was more generous with NAM countries that were financially less stable. Dragomir Bondžić argues that in its willingness to support student refugees from African states that were still fighting against colonial rule (such as Kenya, Rhodesia, Mali, and Senegal), Yugoslavia allowed immediate admission to universities and issued visas without any proper documents, transcripts, or identification papers.<sup>129</sup> The viability of this open policy was shaky at first. Bondžić's analysis shows that in the early 1950s, when Yugoslavia first started to exchange its educators and technical personnel (initially with India and Burma), the number of students and postgraduates interested in coming to the country was very small, between three and ten students a year.<sup>130</sup> However, following the first NAM Conference in 1961, the numbers picked up considerably; in the 1960s and 1970s foreign students represented about one percent of the overall student population.<sup>131</sup>





3.8 Antun Augustinčić in front of the *Yekatit 12 Monument*, Addis Ababa, 1955

Student and technical exchange programs signalled important economic support for Yugoslavia's strategic goals of advocating for economic cooperation with NAM's member countries and its work with the G77 and UNCTAD. Bondžić mentions the statement by Rodoljub Čolaković (vice-president of the Federal Executive Committee, the government's highest executive branch) that "providing scholarships to students from Afro-Asian countries is a long-term investment that needs to be given proper attention and focus."<sup>132</sup> Čolaković meant that the Yugoslav government saw nonaligned students as potential allies who would help build relationships that would ultimately lead to socialist policies.<sup>133</sup> While

the education side of cultural exchanges provided pragmatic support to larger political and economic goals, the exchange of visual art exhibitions, music and dance performances, and other live events represented its symbolic side. These exchanges complemented President Tito's "summit diplomacy," which relied heavily on symbolic representation and discursive visual practices. Cultural diplomacy of this kind was meant to represent Yugoslavia in a positive light to the world, build NAM culture, and eventually constitute a form of alternative transnational modernism.

### Artistic Diplomacy: Nonaligned Modernism in Action

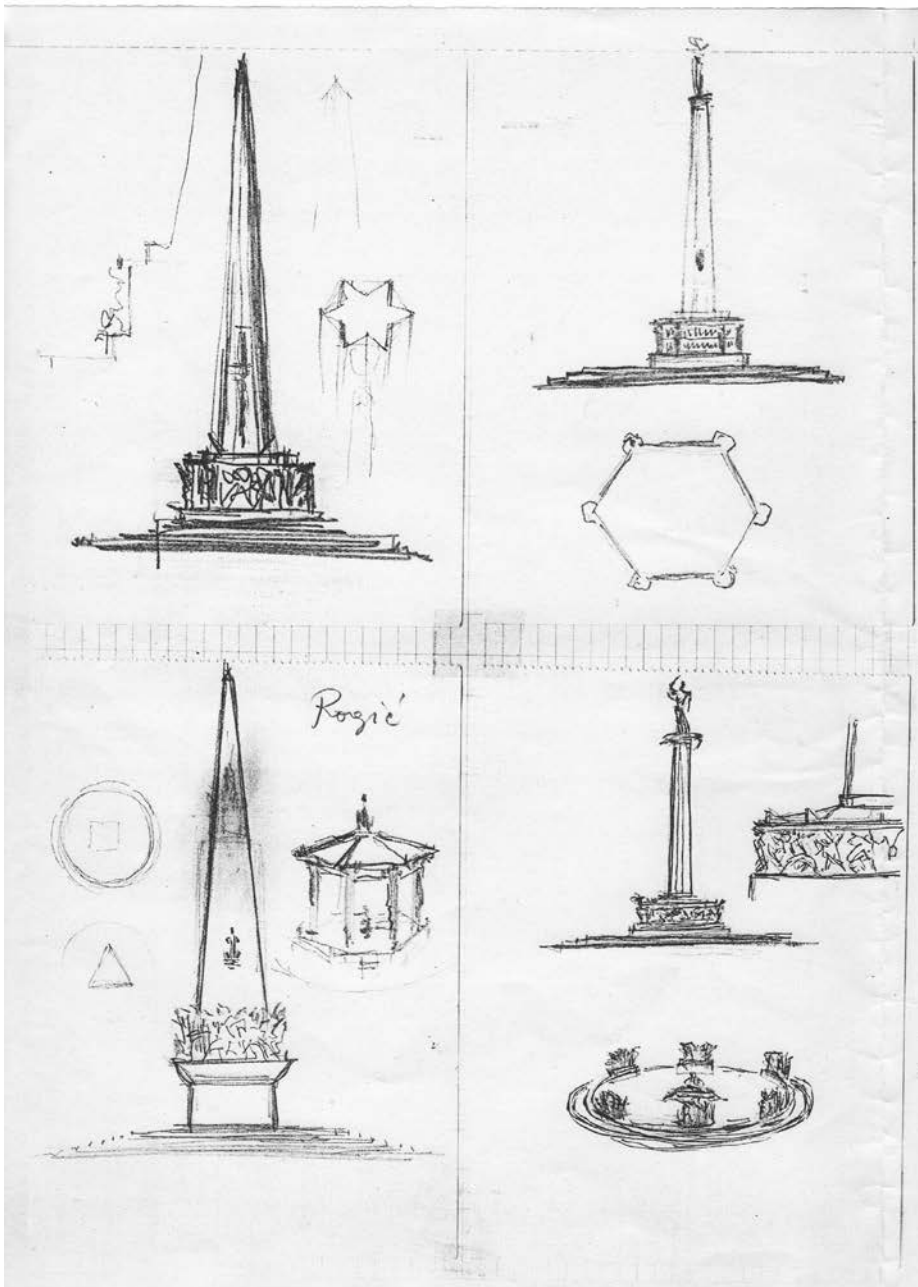
What can we gauge about nonaligned modernism through the artistic diplomacy work of the NAM countries? Along with the above-mentioned technical, media, and educational networks, NAM member states spent considerable time supporting and building artistic exchange. Every major NAM conference and event had accompanying art, design, architecture, and craft exhibitions. In line with Tran Van Dinh's and Amilcar Cabral's calls for creating strong cultural infrastructure through building Third World institutions, Yugoslavia and other NAM countries signed hundreds of artistic exchange agreements that served to represent a counter image of the Third World and indigenous cultures, and helped to establish much-needed art infrastructure (museums, academies, galleries). These contracts outline detailed policies around organizing, funding, and promotion of art, artist residencies, lectures, choir ensemble tours, orchestra and dance tours, literary fairs, art history conferences, etc. A language of nonaligned transculturalism and of its idiosyncratic artistic forms clearly emerges from a closer analysis of the archival documentation pertaining to such cultural exchange agreements. What this analysis reveals is an ongoing effort to create and sustain a parallel art system, which art historians have named global modernism.

Perhaps the best illustration of the nonaligned modernist form is an early example of Yugoslav artistic diplomacy at work – construction of

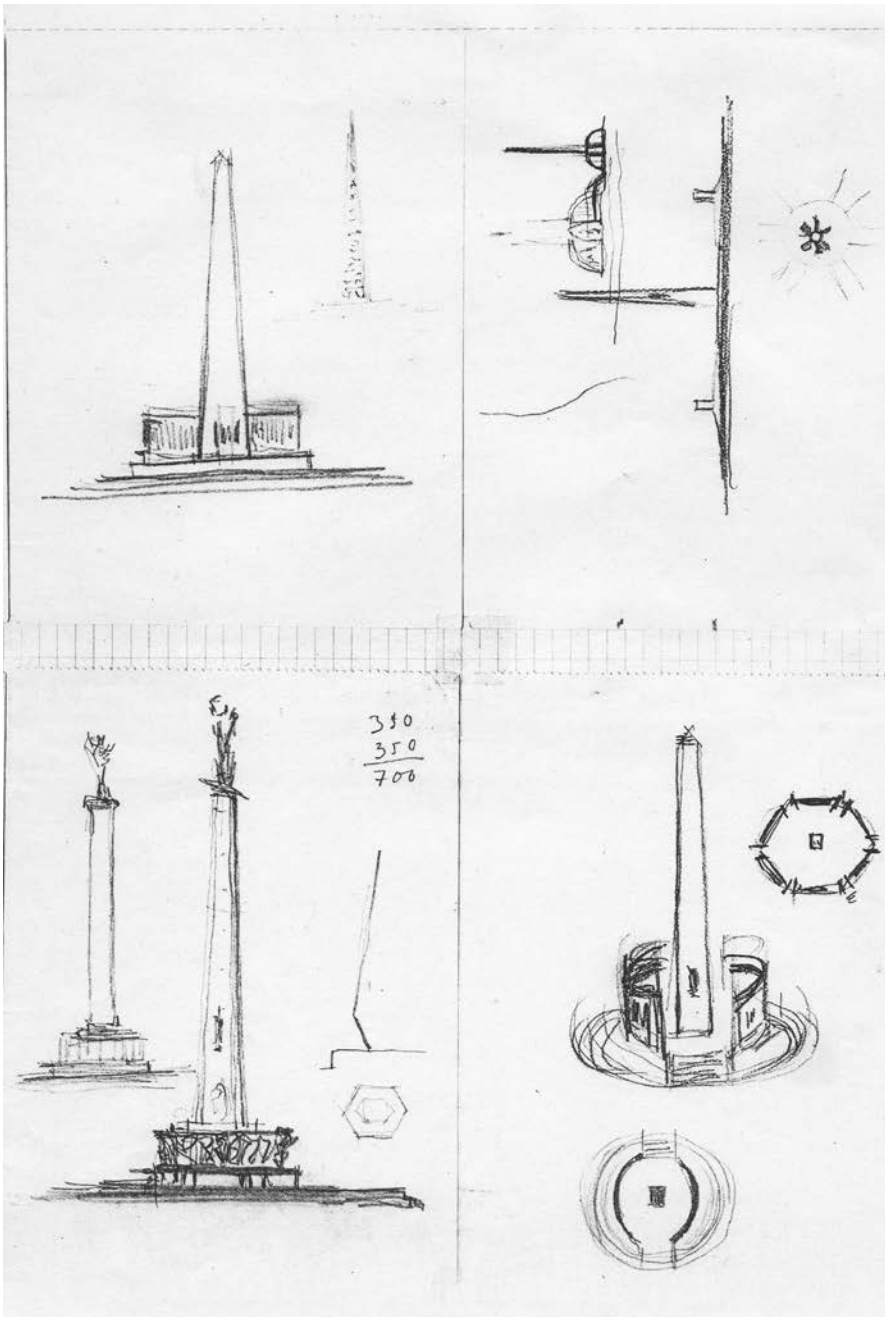


3.9 Antun Augustinčić, clay mock-ups in the artist's studio for the *Yekatit 12 Monument*

*Yekatit 12: Monument to the Victims of Fascism.* This was the first significant artistic exchange between Yugoslavia and Ethiopia and symbolically marked their future close friendship. *Yekatit* therefore stands as the symbolic centre of what NAM was: two countries separated by seven thousand kilometres, on two different continents, in different cultural and racial contexts, yet sharing significant historical, cultural, and political commonalities. The history of how the monument was designed and built, and its iconographic structure, offers further insight into what NAM stood for and why nonaligned diplomacy was part of the global modernist ethos. *Yekatit* was commissioned as a gift to commemorate a common



3.10 Antun Augustinčić, drawings for the Yekati 12 Monument



3.11 Antun Augustinčić, drawings for the *Yekati 12 Monument*

goal – the fight against imperialism and fascism. It was designed by Yugoslav artists, and finalized by Ethiopian engineers and construction firms. Both Yugoslav and Ethiopian materials and resources were used in its construction. And finally, its iconography drew from the history of the Ethiopian state and Yugoslav art history.

The two countries inaugurated their friendly relations in 1946 with the first semi-official dialogues.<sup>134</sup> In 1954 Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie became the first leader of what would become the Non-Aligned Movement to visit Yugoslavia. The seven-day visit was packed with economic, industrial, and cultural tours of the country, and President Tito and Emperor Selassie became not just political allies but also close personal friends. As they discovered during the emperor's trip, the two countries had a great deal in common: they were both occupied by Italian fascist forces and both fought against them. Fascist occupation, and especially the victims of fascist violence and the partisans who fought against it, would become the focus of the initial cultural exchange. The Yugoslav side seems to have suggested erecting the monuments as a token of friendship and a gift.<sup>135</sup> The idea to build a commemorative sculpture as a permanent symbol of the two countries' friendship was presented to Selassie when he visited in July 1954. The two artists commissioned to complete the work were Antun Augustinčić, Tito's close friend, and Frano Kršinić. The two travelled to Ethiopia for research in February 1954.<sup>136</sup> Three designs for the monument were completed in 1955 and presented to the emperor, who approved one. In Augustinčić's own words, the design and building of the monument took all of nine months, which was a record for that time. The chosen design consisted of a 26m high obelisk (in direct reference to the Axum Obelisk, the symbol of the ancient Ethiopian empire) with several groups of life-sized figures arranged in two high relief bands, guarded by the Lion of Judah (the royal symbol) above them. The monument was an architectural-sculptural structure on a raised round platform with seven steps. The obelisk was designed with a reinforced concrete core, enveloped in 210 tonnes of marble plating. The marble was brought in from the Croatian island of Brač, famous for its colour and quality. The high relief figures were cast in Yugoslavia

and assembled in Addis Ababa by the Ethiopian construction company SABA. The monument's original setting was near Menelik II's old palace complex, and surrounded by a great open space visible from the photo documentation taken at the time when the monument was finished. As the city grew, however, the context of the monument changed and it now stands in the middle of Yekatit Square, a busy roundabout surrounded by condo buildings, embassies, hospitals, and museums.

The *Yekatit 12 Monument* is a curious mixture of the clean, geometric lines of the oversized obelisk and the dramatic narrative scenes of the reliefs. Augustinčić's numerous sketches illustrate his attempts at resolving the tension between the architectural element of the obelisk and the needs of the sculpture attached to it. He went back and forth between a rounded column-like shape, and a square shape closer in design to an obelisk. The square design finally chosen was an appropriate form because it more closely resembled the Axum Obelisk, which was its historical exemplar. The artist's decision to go with a square, however, was not based solely on visual resemblance between the two objects; instead, it had strong political connotations that were not lost on Emperor Selassie when he approved Augustinčić's design. The Axum Obelisk was not in Ethiopia at the time: it was pillaged during the Italian occupation years before and remained in Rome until 2009 when it was repatriated. When Italian occupying forces found the Axum site in 1936, and understood its significance, the obelisk was removed and shipped to Italy in 1937. There, it was hastily assembled in Rome to be ready for the 31 October 1937 commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the March on Rome.<sup>137</sup> The symbolism of this action was twofold: it commemorated the fascists' political victory, and it represented the rebuilding of the Roman Empire that Mussolini aspired to. The obelisk's physical placement was equally important. The fascists assembled it in front of the Ministry for Italian Africa, signalling the regime's colonial appetites.<sup>138</sup> The historical context of Axum was therefore key for Augustinčić when he designed *Yekatit* to closely match the earlier obelisk in height and width. Above all, in its political significance, *Yekatit* served as a memorial to Ethiopian sacrifices; it was a daily reminder of colonial violence, and it also served as a stand-in





3.12 Antun Augustinčić, detail, *Yekatit 12: Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

for the pillaged cultural heritage. As Chika Okeke-Agulu highlights, the works of postwar artists across Africa (and other continents where fights for independence were taking place) were equally based in political and formal concerns. These artists “initially imagined their art as constituting



a critical space in which an exhilarating drama of cultural decolonization was enacted.”<sup>139</sup> This critical space in Augustinčić’s work signals Yugoslav artists’ recognition of common political and cultural goals so powerfully enunciated through the hybridity of their version of modernism. Once more, therefore, anticolonial politics featured prominently in an artist’s formal decisions and in this monument’s iconographic scheme.

The two bands of high relief, which run on all sides of the obelisk, constitute the symbolic core of the monument. They chronologically represent the history of Italy’s occupation of Ethiopia between 1935 and 1937. At first there are pre-1935 scenes of the peaceful life of the Ethiopian people and the emperor. These are subsequently replaced by scenes of the brutal occupation that began in 1935 and the massacre of 37,000 civilians. Augustinčić did not shy away from gruesome depictions. Two scenes depict the killing of children; in one a small baby falls to the ground from a horrified parent’s hands. Other scenes show hanging and torture. The interspersing of tense, dramatic scenes of killing with scenes of peaceful life contributes to the monument’s emotional impact. The massacre of innocent civilians, both adults and children, murdered in the most gruesome ways – hanged and trampled – echoes Christian *Pietàs* and depictions of the suffering and deaths of martyrs. The almost demonic symbolism of the motionless and stern figures of Italian fascists becomes even more pronounced in comparison to the human suffering of Ethiopians around them. While seemingly contradictory for a committed Marxist, the artist’s use of religious iconography throughout the monument was in service of his socialist politics. The colonial project represented by the Italian fascist forces is in direct opposition to all stated civilizational goals, including religious, of the Western world. *Yekatit* reveals this hypocrisy in its contrasting formal forces.

Although often described in socialist realist terms, Augustinčić’s work was much more stylistically ambiguous, and he usually borrowed from both modernist and socialist realist aesthetic toolkits. In terms of its symbolic, political, and formal qualities, *Yekatit* is representative of other monumental sculptures in Yugoslavia at the time – a kind of representational, humanistic, and emotionally charged form that spoke to



3.13 Antun Augustinčić, detail, *Yekatit 12: Monument to the Victims of Fascism*, 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

the suffering of common people. This kind of work was rooted in the Yugoslav experience of suffering and death during the Second World War (something that Augustinčić would have known as a partisan fighters), and often portrayed the horrors of occupation through explicit and violent depictions. Thematically and formally, *Yekatit* fits well within the Yugoslav hybrid form of modernism of the 1940s and early 1950s, but in its context – its placement in postcolonial Ethiopia, its linkages to experiences of fascism and colonial violence on an entirely different continent, and its unflinching political messaging – the work also announces some of the formal and conceptual elements of nonaligned modernism. This transnational, transcultural form of modernism was premised not so much on the stylistic and formal purism of high modernist work encountered in the West (with its multiple formations such as Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Enformel, Post-painterly Abstraction, and others,) as on the discursive context of colonialism and postcolonialism



3.14 Official welcome for President Tito in front of the *Yekatit 12 Monument*, 14 December 1955, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

and the structures of the political and economic fight for independence so aptly described by Okeke-Agulu. As such, nonaligned modernism was an idiosyncratic movement shaped both by various necessities of life in the developing world and by existing indigenous artistic forms. It was invested more in political and ideological meaning and symbolism than the purely formal and socially removed artistic expression then dominant on the international modernist scene. In this particular work, we see the nonaligned modernist form – a hybrid creation that finds its aesthetic and political roots in a small Balkan nation and its particular forms of suffering – which is then transplanted to the Horn of Africa to connect to the similar suffering of the people there and fuse the two in a transnational affective visual language.

Following the success of the early bilateral endeavours exemplified in the construction of the *Yekatit 12 Monument*, Yugoslav officials and artists were encouraged to continue. In the early 1960s they embarked on



3.15 President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Tito visiting Antun Augustinčić's studio, 8 April 1960

a more robust path of international cooperation, producing numerous other art projects that expressed NAM cultural policy goals. Yugoslavia's first major opportunity to present itself to the world, and showcase its ability to organize a large international cultural event, was the first NAM summit hosted in Belgrade. As part of the preparations, the Friendship Park project and several temporary monuments were planned both to commemorate the event and also to symbolically announce Yugoslavia's arrival on the world stage. The preparations took months. Belgrade was already in the midst of a postwar construction boom, and many of the buildings that housed federal government offices were brand new or still unfinished. The modernist urbanism of the newly constructed suburbs in Belgrade (also called New Belgrade) was a perfect foil for the symbolic politics of NAM. Several major buildings constituted the core of New Belgrade's urban plan: the Federal Executive Committee Building, the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party Building,



3.16 Friendship Park, Belgrade, 2018



3.17 Friendship Park, Belgrade, 2018

Hotel Yugoslavia, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, as well as several apartment blocks. These buildings were interconnected via major traffic arteries and, most importantly, green spaces. Friendship Park was first proposed by a newly formed youth ecology organization, the Young Mountaineers,<sup>140</sup> as a way to promote conservation and the greening of newly built urban spaces. The first phase of the design and construction was completed just before the opening of the summit so that the initial ceremony could be held in the park. As each head of state arrived,<sup>141</sup> they stopped at the park and planted a tree. The trees were arranged as an arbour, so that eventually, as they grew to full size, their branches would become intertwined to symbolize the interconnectedness of the movement itself. The plan for Friendship Park was based on a simple triangular form, with views opening toward the main urban elements around it – the Federal Executive Committee Building and the Museum of Contemporary Art. It was supposed to integrate three sculptures symbolizing NAM, several access walkways, and a space for each country to add its own representative sculptural elements. Each head of state received a commemorative plaque in the park. However, the rest of the design was never completed. Of special importance were the designs for the three sculptures – an obelisk, a three-part geometric form, and a sphere. Unfortunately, the sculptures were not completed and alternative monuments were erected instead.

While Friendship Park never lived up to its potential, it still represented the ideals of nonaligned modernism with its utopian abstract design that incorporated NAM's clear political and ideological message. Similar projects, erected for NAM meetings and summits, can be found in other nonaligned countries. For example, for the 1979 Summit in Havana, the Cuban government commissioned the building that would serve as the summit headquarters. The well-known Cuban modernist architect and landscape designer Antonio Quintana Simonetti was commissioned to design what would become the Palacio de Convenciones, or Convention Palace. Quintana's design combined his signature brutalist style with indigenous vernacular architectural elements, and fully integrated landscape and greenery. The Palacio was supposed to speak to

the symbolism of the movement with its clean geometric style and the soft, lush landscape that surrounded it. A similar pavilion with an integrated park and monumental sculpture was built in 1992 for the Jakarta summit. The pavilion was situated at the east entrance to the Taman Mini Indonesia, a large entertainment and cultural park built in 1975 and meant to represent Indonesia's national treasures. As with other NAM designs, the *Monument of Friendship of the Non-Aligned Countries* was built as a mixture of abstract and representational forms. It integrates a large fountain above which is a metal sphere representing the globe, and several peace doves representing NAM's pursuit of peace. A small park in the shape of an eye surrounds the entire structure. It has a treed walkway planted by the heads of state when they came for the summit. Finally, another telling example is the sculpture and conference centre built in Lusaka, Zambia for the Third NAM Summit in 1970. This time, the conference centre was built in cooperation with a Yugoslav construction company (Energoprojekt), which was a direct outcome of the Zambia-Yugoslavia economic cooperation agreement. Energoprojekt built the centre in a record 107 days, just in time for the summit. As part of the preparations for the event, the Zambian government also built a commemorative sculpture titled *Third Conference of Non-Aligned Countries September 1970* in downtown Lusaka. This large abstract work is designed as three interconnected needle-like shapes with three interlocked medallions in the middle. The medallions bear an inscription commemorating the date and place of the NAM summit. The futuristic-looking minimalist monument also resembles a space ship, echoing similar developments in North American and European art of the 1970s. These examples are all forms of NAM solidarity and cultural exchange, and, like the Augustinčić monument in Ethiopia, build on modernism's abstract and semi-abstract language to incorporate larger political questions related to anticolonialism, cooperation, and peace-building.

In parallel to the more ambitious architectural and sculptural projects described above, there was a push to curate and organize numerous smaller and larger exhibitions, art residencies, and biennales. Official bilateral contracts signed with NAM countries narrate a story of a rich and





3.18 Friendship Park, Belgrade, 2018



3.19 President Tito with a group of Young Mountaineer Association members planting a plane tree at Friendship Park during the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries, 7 September 1961





3.20 President Tito with a group of Young Mountaineer Association members at Friendship Park during the First Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries, 7 September 1961

varied exchange through art exhibitions. Between the early 1950s and the end of the 1980s, the Yugoslav Committee for Foreign Cultural Relations helped organize, promote, and fund hundreds of individual and group exhibitions of Yugoslav artists abroad, and exhibitions of international artists in Yugoslavia. Among many such examples a few will suffice to illustrate the vigorous nature of exhibitions and the important role they were given in NAM culture.

One of the first was the Alexandria Biennale. Presidents Tito and Nasser had a very amicable and close relationship, and Yugoslav artists' participation in the first Alexandria Biennale in 1955 was key. The curators chose a number of younger artists to represent the country.<sup>142</sup> They continued to represent the country in Alexandria in the following years and their numbers steadily increased. The second important foreign partnership was with India, and the earliest exhibition there was organized in 1957 when the committee funded a group show of contemporary

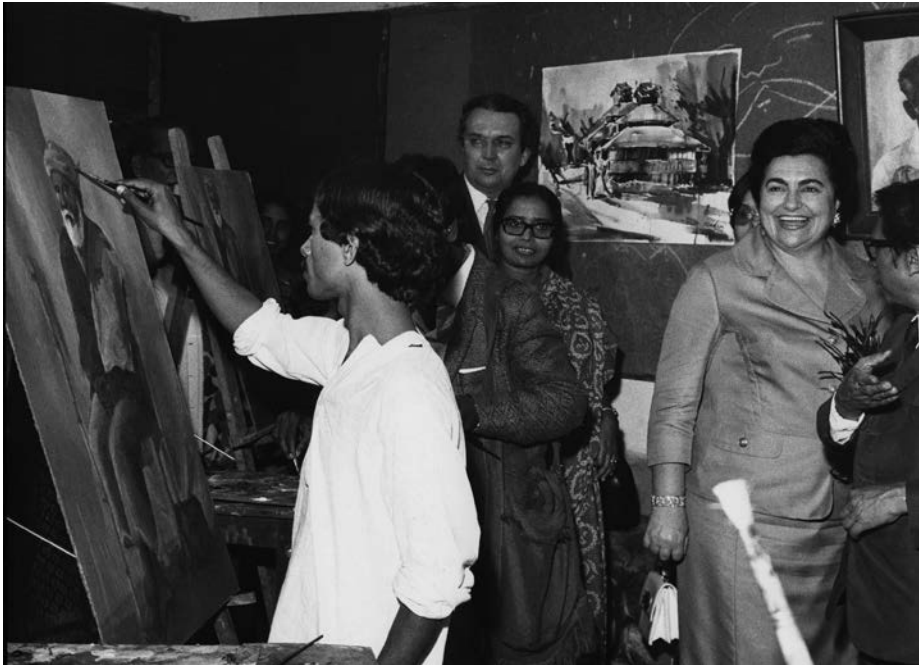


3.21 Monument to the Third Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in 1970, Lusaka, Zambia



3.22 Monument of the Friendship of Non-Aligned Countries, Jakarta, Indonesia

Yugoslav painters in New Delhi. Group exhibitions of Yugoslav artists were organized in Egypt and South Africa that same year.<sup>143</sup> In 1961 more than ten Yugoslav artists participated in the Alexandria Biennale,<sup>144</sup> and five artists showed their work in Sao Paulo a year after the opening of the Brazil-Yugoslav Institute in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>145</sup> Through a reciprocal arrangement with India, painter Petar Lubarda went on a three-month research and residency trip and had an exhibition in 1964.<sup>146</sup> The following year Zlatko Prica also visited India for a residency and research. In 1967 a group exhibition of prints was organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Slavko Tihec presented his sculptures at the Triennale of Modern Art in New Delhi. All these events were part of the cultural exchange and cooperation agreements and were funded by both sides.<sup>147</sup> The trend continued in the 1970s with an almost exponential growth in the number of travelling art exhibitions. The Alexandria Biennale became a trusted partner for Yugoslav artists who regularly presented their work there. In fact, almost every cultural contract between Yugoslavia and Egypt contained references to Alexandria and, in return, Egyptian artists were guaranteed presentation at the Ljubljana Biennale. The first of several exhibitions of Yugoslav art in Algeria took place in the early 1970s. In 1974 the countries exchanged two large exhibitions: the Yugoslav side organized *People's War of Liberation in the Work of Yugoslav Artists*, and the Algerian side sent an exhibition of design and craft and contemporary Algerian painting. These two exhibitions stand as examples of the pragmatic understanding of art in its role as a symbolic representation of politics. On the Algerian side, the art representing a battle against a much stronger fascist enemy spoke to the similar struggles that the Algerian people went through in their war of independence. For their part, the Yugoslav side was hungry for more knowledge about their NAM allies and wanted to educate the public about what was happening in countries outside the Western cultural realm. These sentiments are expressed in all the written reports of conversations between Yugoslav diplomats and their counterparts abroad. The decade of the 1970s was also a busy time in terms of individual artists travelling to various symposia, residencies, and artist colonies across the world.



3.23 Jovanka Broz visiting the College of Painting, Dhaka, during the official visit to Bangladesh, 31 January 1974

The committee also helped bring exhibitions of many non-Western artists to Yugoslavia. Because Mexico and Yugoslavia first established official cultural ties in the late 1940s, some of the earliest exhibitors were Mexican. Initial exchanges were mostly of books, films, and especially music,<sup>148</sup> but in 1958 an exhibition of Mexican architecture was brought first to Belgrade, and then toured several other cities.<sup>149</sup> In 1964 an exhibition of Ethiopian art was organized in Belgrade and travelled to Zagreb and Ljubljana.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps the most ambitious exhibition to travel to Yugoslavia came from Senegal in 1965 and represented a survey of Senegal, Mali, and Guinea art.<sup>151</sup> The organization of the exhibition was a joint effort between Yugoslav museums, the embassy of the Republic of Senegal, Mali and Guinea, and L'Institut français d'Afrique noire (IFAN).<sup>152</sup> NAM artists were also regularly and prominently represented at



3.24 Jovanka Broz visiting the College of Painting, Dhaka, during the official visit to Bangladesh, 31 January 1974

the Ljubljana Biennale and at various exhibitions of so-called naive or folk art. Throughout the 1970s exhibition activities continued along with visits by foreign artists to art colonies and residencies; especially popular were art colonies in Počitelj, Strumica, and Prilep, all of which featured prominently in almost every bilateral agreement.

As art exhibitions, meetings, and art residencies multiplied, their importance within the political structure of the movement grew. At every opportunity heads of state and their entourage paid special attention to art and culture. Photographs from the time show leaders and their

delegations visiting exhibits showcasing indigenous artistic production; shows of children's and student art; exhibitions of industrial, agricultural, and architectural achievements; and art academies and specialized art and craft schools. President Tito and his wife Jovanka made it a point of every visit to other NAM countries, or when hosting NAM leaders, to go to museum exhibitions and visit places of art production and education. This was no coincidence, as positive representations of Third World cultural achievements carried with them symbolic political power. It is precisely because of its cultural capital that art became a tool in the promotion of ideals of peaceful coexistence and collaboration. More importantly, however, it was a way to acknowledge that the cultural imperialism enacted by the Western powers was as insidious as political imperialism and "whenever they [revolutionaries fighting for independence] attacked the latter, they also attacked the former."<sup>153</sup>

The final form of artistic exchange that constituted an important element of nonaligned modernism was a plan to build artistic and cultural institutions, first in Yugoslavia and then elsewhere, as a way to establish a permanent institutional presence for the art and culture of NAM, while at the same time creating a new canon of nonaligned art history. Therefore, concurrent with the exhibitions and the participation of NAM artists in international events, there were several initiatives to open institutions in Yugoslavia solely dedicated to NAM culture. The first such effort on the part of Yugoslav authorities and in collaboration with NAM's cultural committees was the opening of the Museum of African Art and Culture in Belgrade in 1977. This large institution was opened in part because there was strong support in Yugoslavia for a museum dedicated to representing and teaching about the culture of NAM allies from Africa. The initial collection that would form the basis for the museum was donated to the city of Belgrade by the journalist Zdravko Pečar and his wife Veda Zagorac, who was a diplomat. The two first travelled to Egypt on an official diplomatic mission, and then subsequently were sent to Algeria to report on the Algerian War of Independence. They stayed in the region for decades, often travelling back and forth between the Balkans and various posts in Africa. Throughout their professional careers, they supported





3.25 Maria Njerere, the first lady of Tanzania (fifth from left), and Jovanka Broz (first from left) visiting the Gallery of Frescoes, Belgrade, 20 April 1975

many NAM initiatives and were close advisers in diplomatic negotiations. Over the course of several decades they received many gifts and collected art. In 1977 they donated the collection as a seed for the creation of the Museum of African Art and Culture.<sup>154</sup> The museum was a testament to the personal diplomacy and relations that Yugoslav diplomatic philosophy supported.

The second institution that was meant to support NAM cultural initiatives was the Gallery for the Art of the Non-Aligned Countries – Josip Broz Tito, which opened in 1988 in Titograd (today Podgorica), Montenegro. This institute's exclusive mandate was to support and represent contemporary art of the nonaligned. At the time of its opening, the permanent collection had approximately 750 items from fifty-five different countries.<sup>155</sup> Between 1988 and 1990 it organized more than one hundred thematic and solo shows, covering different countries, regions,

periods, and issues.<sup>156</sup> It also had a lively artist residency program, lectures, visiting speakers, and tours. In collaboration with NANAP, the gallery organized a competition and festival of documentary films from NAM countries in 1988 and in 1989. UNESCO was one of the gallery's funding agencies as was NAM and the government of Yugoslavia. In 1989 the gallery was declared a shared institution of all nonaligned countries, and its leadership attempted to create a series of open-ended curatorial and programming strategies to support this decision. Unfortunately, the gallery did not survive beyond 1992 when it was disbanded, its collection and its building incorporated into the Museum of Contemporary Art in Podgorica.<sup>157</sup> The museum's mandate was not continued and today it is referred to as a "curiosity" by its parent institution.<sup>158</sup>

The third and final initiative was an institution solely dedicated to representation, promotion, and collection of NAM cultures. The Village and Museum of the Non-Aligned was, however, never realized. Today only a few proposals and archival documents remain. The first proposal for the museum was ethnographic in nature; in a slightly later iteration it was entitled the Man and His World Museum, and became more complex, less ethnographic, and far more political. Although the project never materialized, it contained some conceptual premises that are worth discussing in the context of cultural diplomacy and institutions. Its creator, Tibor Sekelj, introduced his proposal for this innovative museum by addressing the lack of representation and information about the history, culture, and politics of NAM, noting that there were disparate collections of nonaligned literature, art, media, and history but nothing that would amount to a concerted effort to represent the movement's larger contexts.<sup>159</sup> In addressing the difficulties of countering colonialism, Sekelj proposed to use the museum as a way to educate the Yugoslav public about the sociopolitical discourses of anticolonialism and collaborations between developing countries.<sup>160</sup> Sekelj foreshadowed postcolonial museum interventions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries<sup>161</sup> in his insistence that the museum display should be organized not according to the traditional Western linear narrative, which separates and denigrates non-Western cultures, but thematically by stressing cultural



commonalities. If we compare his methodology with those at work today in most museum institutions, it is clear that the thematic approach is preferred. The four overall thematic units proposed were humans as physical beings, humans and the earth (with emphasis on ecology), humans and society, and humans and their thought. Sekelj makes another interesting observation when discussing how to build a museum institution of this nature in Yugoslavia. He notes that “our country never conquered and owned colonies, it never sent conquerors, missionaries, trade or scientific missions which would come back with loads of ‘exotic’ treasures,” unlike the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>162</sup> “We have no such things,” Sekelj states, and so, in his view, Yugoslavs could not compete with Western institutions.<sup>163</sup> In short, he recognized that Western discourse of display and knowledge of other civilizations was based on plunder and colonial violence, something that Yugoslavia was not, and did not want to be a part of. Ironically, because Yugoslavia was not a colonizer but was itself colonized, its knowledge production and its very commitment to creating an alternative NAM cultural network were doubly difficult. This is the colonial bind, or forced poetics – speaking and acting from a weaker position (lack of resources and infrastructure) while at the same time attempting to gain agency, build institutions, and create new forms of politics and culture.

This chapter gives an account of the contexts and histories of how Yugoslavia came to be one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, and subsequently how that history influenced the cultural infrastructure of nonaligned modernism. Although necessarily incomplete, it offers a general map of key themes and stakeholders who participated in building an alternative transnational cultural network. The overarching narrative is necessary in order to situate the question of nonaligned modernism within a larger international and national setting, while at the same time acknowledging important efforts and examples of artistic work that contributed to the growing forms of global modernisms. This chapter takes a wide and taxonomic approach because the cultural histories of the Non-Aligned Movement are yet to be fully written, and our attempts to reconstruct them from the fragmented historical and archival accounts require

that we recreate conceptual maps of the vibrant networks of exchange that existed from the 1950s to today. What do the histories recounted here offer in terms of better understanding of nonaligned modernism? They offer a complex picture of how various nations across the world negotiated distinct cultural, linguistic, geographic, racial, historical, and political ideas in order to create forms of cooperation and understanding. Despite the difficulties and challenges, illustrated by the number of unfinished projects, the ideas proposed and the concrete collaborations established were indeed real and represent the lived experience of millions of people. Indeed, the Third World was a project.

# 4

## The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts

### *Articulating Nonaligned Modernism*

The Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, established in 1955, is one of the oldest of its kind in the world. Among its key mandates during the socialist era were the showcasing of artists from non-Western (eventually nonaligned) countries and the promotion of Yugoslavia's role in the internationalization of modern art, cultural cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. As with other international exhibitions organized in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, the biennale promoted and legitimized an international modernist aesthetic as an accepted political, social, and cultural form, solidifying the country's transition from hardline Soviet-style governance to a more liberal, socialist-humanist one.

The biennale's inaugural year also proved key for Yugoslav diplomacy. President Tito's trip to India and Burma in January and February of 1955 paved the way for more concrete political and economic relations with non-Western countries, and introduced Yugoslavia to its future Asian allies who at the time had only a vague understanding of the country and its political intentions. In other words, the Yugoslav government was in the midst of formulating alternative diplomatic models that paralleled its new idiosyncratic sociopolitical and cultural forms, as reflected in the



4.1 Exterior view of the Gallery of Modern Art in Ljubljana during the First Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1955

theories of self-management and socialist nonaligned modernism. Along with participation in international cultural cooperation through UNESCO and bilateral cultural exchanges (exhibitions, symposia, mass media, and cultural organizations of the Non-Aligned Movement), the Ljubljana Biennale represented one of the clearest examples of nonaligned modernist

culture. It was the cultural embodiment of Yugoslavia's attempt to build political agency and its active participation in international cooperation through promotion of nonaligned ideals. The Ljubljana Biennale further solidified Yugoslavia's commitment to emancipatory politics and to culture as a way of asserting and maintaining agency. Yugoslavia was flexing both diplomatic and political muscle on the postwar international scene.

The Ljubljana Biennale illustrates how nonaligned policies and doctrines were negotiated and implemented in cultural practice. A direct connection can be made between political and cultural discourses, showing their interaction and interdependence and the crucial role of art and culture in influencing public discourse. The Ljubljana Biennale's curatorial, organizational, and diplomatic operations challenge and decentre the current – and still dominant – art historical narrative, which continues to qualify modernism as a largely Western phenomenon with minority versions existing on the margins. As the material histories of the Ljubljana Biennale suggest, nonaligned modernism and its counterparts across the non-Western world were constituted within multiple geopolitical and cultural programs that presented counternarratives to the dominant cultural discourses. More importantly, these varied international transcultural forms – and collaborations and exchanges – were parallel to the Western mainstream and form a basis for writing an alternative history of culture. The Yugoslav example is especially illuminating as a discussion and articulation of alternative modernism because it successfully employed modernist language in order to assimilate and change it, thus creating its own nonaligned cultural form.

## The Sociopolitical Context of the Biennale

Still in operation today, the Biennale of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana was initiated at the same time as documenta in Kassel, the Biennale of Mediterranean Countries in Alexandria, and just a few years after the Sao Paulo Biennale was established in 1951. That the political, cultural, and social contexts of the biennale were delicate cannot be overstated; the



4.2 Opening of the First Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 3 June 1955

exhibition emerged during one of the more contentious periods in international relations post-Second World War, and more specifically, in the history of socialist Yugoslavia. During the turbulent years that followed the break from the Soviets, President Tito and his closest officials sought new allies with whom to collaborate in the United Nations and elsewhere on the international stage. The result was the “third way” whereby Yugoslavia established connections with the newly formed postcolonial states, first in Asia and then in Africa. Yugoslavia would do well, Tito vowed upon his return from his trip to Asia in 1955, to find new allies in the bipolar world, allies who spoke the same language of anticolonialism, socialism, and emancipation.<sup>1</sup> The Yugoslav leadership officially announced the country’s intention to organize an international movement in 1956 after the Brijuni meeting.<sup>2</sup>

In these early years of Cold War tensions, during which Yugoslavia embarked on creating the Non-Aligned Movement and moved toward self-management as a new form of a socialist state, communicating these

new radical directions both internationally and nationally was key to the country's survival. Mass media and culture were important tools in normalizing somewhat controversial ideas of moving away from Soviet policies and forging a new, and from the 1950s perspective, untested path in international relations. Yugoslav cultural workers and officials involved in creating cultural policy and negotiating the country's cultural and artistic infrastructure recognized an opportunity to expand and develop Yugoslav art within the framework of cultural diplomacy and to use these efforts to educate domestic audiences. In other words, savvy cultural operators saw a way to get the state to fund and support the development of Yugoslav culture by fully embracing its new internationalist outlook. While their initial aim was one of calculated pragmatism, the cultural workers and newly emerged art institutions came to understand and eventually adopt the position that the future of Yugoslav art and culture rested in its non-aligned connections.

### *The Beginnings of the Ljubljana Biennale*

How to wriggle out of the grip of socialist realism?<sup>3</sup> That was one of the fundamental questions that prompted the founders to initiate a large international exhibition in Ljubljana. The Ljubljana Biennale's beginnings thus represent a pragmatic cultural venture. Its organizers also aimed to find a viable way for Slovenia and Yugoslavia to become a node on the international art map and exhibit the best in contemporary art without incurring excessive costs.<sup>4</sup> Bringing contemporary prints to Yugoslavia was the most efficient and expedient way to fulfill this goal.<sup>5</sup> While showcasing some key international artists, prints could be shipped on a minimal budget.<sup>6</sup> The idea for a biennale of printmaking is believed by some to have been concocted by the then-young curator and director of Moderna Galerija, Zoran Kržišnik, together with one of Slovenia's most famous painters and printmakers, Božidar Jakac,<sup>7</sup> who was first inspired by the possibilities of printmaking while visiting one of the largest exhibitions of prints, II Mostra internazionale di bianco e nero (1952), in Lugano, Italy.<sup>8</sup> The more likely scenario, however, is that it was

conceived by Jakac alone. In late 1954, excited by the possibility that they could sell the idea to the Yugoslav authorities, Kržišnik, Jakac, and Karel Dobida took the first steps toward organizing a major exhibition, initially planned as a triennial.<sup>9</sup> Their savvy was evident in their initial communications with the city of Ljubljana and Slovene provincial authorities, which emphasized the exhibition's role as a bridge between Western and Eastern Bloc artists. More importantly, they promised they would bring artists who "represented quality contemporary art."<sup>10</sup> Kržišnik sought to have an international jury and generous prizes to make the exhibition more appealing to the Yugoslav authorities and entice international artists, curators, and art historians to come to Ljubljana.<sup>11</sup> Even in 1955, a time when no one knew or cared about the Ljubljana Biennale and Yugoslav art, Kržišnik was able to secure some noted names, mostly from the West, as both curated artists and jury members. For example, he managed to bring more than one hundred prints by artists affiliated with l'École de Paris and persuaded Italian critic Giuseppe Marchiori and the influential Flemish printmaker Frans Masereel to sit on the jury.<sup>12</sup> The actual organization of the biennale came together relatively quickly; the committee, which included Kržišnik, Jakac, Dobida, Riko Debenjak, France Mihelič, Zvone Miklavič, France Stele, Miha Maleš, Izidor Cankar, and Melita Pivec-Stele (as the committee scribe and administrator), had been struck in early 1954.<sup>13</sup> The committee sent out the first letters of invitation only a few months prior to the opening in June 1955. A sizable group of invited artists responded favourably and made the necessary arrangements to transport their work.<sup>14</sup>

According to Kržišnik's own admission in a 1957 interview for the Croatian newspaper *Vjesnik*, the organization of the first biennale "happened in a somewhat accidental way"; "that was the first attempt to realize an international exhibition of printmaking, that would encompass all possible styles and trajectories in contemporary art in its programming and still retain one key principle – quality in its widest sense."<sup>15</sup> The committee's internal documents show a fair amount of uncertainty about how to proceed with invitations to artists and award adjudication and policies. And while the first exhibition did have some formal guidelines,





4.3 Opening of the First Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 3 June 1955

and the works by the artists from l'École de Paris, which were the core of the exhibition, had been secured, there were many artists added at the last moment and some policies were negotiated “on-the-go.” Some of the negotiation came from the fact that Kržišnik was criticized by the Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists, which complained that “as the representative body of all Yugoslav artists, the association was not consulted as to the participation of Yugoslav artists in the exhibition,” nor, they claimed, was information passed along on how and when the biennale would take place.<sup>16</sup> In response to their complaints, the pragmatic Kržišnik invited



4.4 Visitors at the Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, n.d.

the president of the association, Marko Čelebonović, to join the organizing committee.<sup>17</sup> The biennale was an evolving entity both in its form and its content, and Kržišnik, as its *de facto* architect, resolved all conflicts by privileging collaboration and pragmatism over state and professional structures of governance.

By the second biennale many of the organizational problems had been resolved, and a permanent organizing committee ensured smooth programming for the future. The permanent committee was under Kržišnik's management; he was adamant about ensuring that the right people were invited, proper procedures were followed, and special attention paid to impartiality and fairness in curation, jury selection, and adjudication of awards. In his correspondence with Ivo Frol following the 1955 exhibition, Kržišnik insisted that the biennale should be run by a committee and not by one person;<sup>18</sup> he also shrewdly invited Frol to join the biennale's organization, knowing that the federal committee Frol represented was key to the biennale's future success. He also emphasized that to ensure representation of the entire Yugoslav artistic scene, the committee should include

representatives from all the provinces.<sup>19</sup> Starting with the second biennale in 1957, the committee reflected his intentions. It included several prominent members from the wider Yugoslav artistic community: Ivo Frol, as the representative of the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations; Zdenka Munk, director of the Museum of Arts and Craft in Zagreb; and Marijan Detoni, the president of the printmaking subcommittee of the Yugoslav Association of Fine Artists, among other notable Slovene names.<sup>20</sup> The organizing committee became even more diverse in the following years, including many key figures of Yugoslav art such as Marko Čelebonović, Lazar Trifunović, and Krsto Hegedušić. In addition to curating and organizing, the committee's role was to connect and network with artists and advocate for the biennale both nationally and internationally. With Kržišnik at the helm, this organizing body eventually became a powerful arbiter of taste and new trends in contemporary print, enabling the Ljubljana Biennale to become one of the preeminent print venues in the world.

Securing funding and sponsorships was another of Kržišnik's priorities. Persistent and careful advocacy with Yugoslav state and economic stakeholders was required to maintain the quality of the artwork and attract a large number of artists. While professional artistic bodies and the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations were aware of the benefits of the biennale's success, during its first few years neither the federal government nor the broader Yugoslav public fully understood the importance of the exhibition. In 1955 there was only one full-length article about the Biennale outside Slovenia, the province where the exhibition took place.<sup>21</sup> A few of the major daily newspapers in Belgrade and Zagreb published short notices about the Biennale's opening and closing but not much more. Even though Kržišnik went to great lengths, writing letters to various potential national sponsors (such as the Yugoslav Postal Service) explaining the nature and goals of the exhibition, the responses were lukewarm. In contrast, provincial Slovene organizations, and the city of Ljubljana in particular, responded positively and provided most of the funding for the first two biennales. Even Yugoslav state officials who visited the show were Slovene – Edvard Kardelj came to visit in September

1955<sup>22</sup> in his role as the vice-president of the Federal Executive Council.<sup>23</sup> Pan-Yugoslav financial and political support would happen only four years later during the third Ljubljana Biennale.

As the third biennale opened, and the exhibition reached a critical mass with a large contingent of international artists coming from the East and the West, the federal agencies and broader Yugoslav public finally took note, realizing the biennale's potential and impact. President Tito became its official sponsor in 1959; his support was a key symbolic and political endorsement, a recognition that the biennale had achieved its status as Yugoslavia's most prestigious international art event. That same year, Tito sealed this status when he visited Moderna Galerija<sup>24</sup> to see the exhibit in person. His visit was significant not only because it pointed to the Ljubljana Biennale's influence as a cultural vehicle but also because he made several politically and aesthetically important claims following his visit. The Belgrade daily, *Borba*, reported that, when asked how he felt about the show, Tito observed, "there were many things he liked ... the most important of which was the fact that there were many artists representing a variety of countries and that there was a large contingent of modernist artworks."<sup>25</sup> He then noted, "there were prints that expressed particular themes, and those for which he had no particular affinity, but that such works represented an important stage in the search for new contemporary expressions."<sup>26</sup> Reading between the lines, one can sense Tito's reluctance to make specific declarations about art (a reluctance that he expressed throughout his presidency: he felt unfit to speak on a subject he knew little about); however, he understood that his words had weight and therefore to endorse modernism, even in a convoluted way, was a step forward in building a new and more liberal culture characterized by its difference from the Soviet model. Tito's observations welcomed a new wave of modernist art as a "search for new contemporary expressions," and publicly acknowledged it as official culture. With these important symbolic gestures, the Ljubljana Biennale's financial and political future was set.

As Yugoslav efforts toward liberalization and internationalization increased throughout the 1960s, so did financial, political, and public



4.5 Opening of the Ninth Biennale of the Graphic Arts,  
Ljubljana, 1971

support for the biennale. It gained access to a key cultural granting source – the Moša Pijade Fund<sup>27</sup> – and continued to receive steady sponsorship and funding from federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. The biennale’s yearly operating budget in 1959 was around three million dinars (USD \$10,000) (excluding awards and acquisition budget), and it steadily grew to approximately six million dinars (USD \$70,000) in 1983.<sup>28</sup> In 1957 the biennale had more than 17,000 visitors. The number grew steadily to over 40,000 in 1975 and over 70,000 in the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> Domestic and international press and art critics were generally very positive in their reviews. Croatian art critic Josip Depolo wrote a number of articles about the biennale in the 1960s and 1970s, noting in 1957 that its early success can be attributed to three elements: quality, tolerance, and equity.<sup>30</sup> He continued, “it is obvious that in its work, the jury was not under the influence of various intrigues and calculations, which are nothing more than business transactions of art brokers and their influential galleries through which they favour their protégés.”<sup>31</sup> Others, such as

French critic Jean Bouret, praised the Ljubljana Biennale for giving space to artists from different countries, “especially those that have come to the international art scene late.”<sup>32</sup> He criticized his own government and its cultural policy for not supporting French artists who were at the biennale, stating, “it is too bad that France does not have its own Zoran Kržišnik as an organizer of exhibitions so that he would resolve the confusion in the ranks of French print art.”<sup>33</sup> Largely positive comments, reviews, and analyses continued, with more prominence given to the biennale in the foreign press as the years went by. The foreign press almost always emphasized the biennale’s inclusive, eclectic curation, especially in its representation of non-Western countries, as its great strength. In short, over the years the character and goals of the biennale became rooted in internationalization, and subsequently, in cultural diplomacy.

## The Ljubljana Biennale’s Soft Power

The organizers of the biennale, as with organizers of many artistic events in Yugoslavia at the time, had to be pragmatic in how they framed artistic and cultural production. They opted for internationalization and cultural diplomacy as a way to win over state officials. Kržišnik reminisced that the inspiration for a large exhibition of graphic arts came not only from Bozidar Jakac but also from his own experience when he assisted with the curation of the Yugoslav Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1952. In 1954, and in a semi-clandestine way, Kržišnik went to Paris and there first met with Ossip Zadkin. He managed to persuade him to submit a number of his prints by appealing to their common Slavic heritage.<sup>34</sup> Through Zadkin, Jakac reached other artists associated with l’École de Paris and managed to secure 144 prints.<sup>35</sup> Both Kržišnik and Jakac understood that Yugoslavia’s nonexistent status on the international art scene meant that only by securing high-calibre Western artists could they even begin to think about attracting the attention of the international art world. In later years, Kržišnik explained that Yugoslav culture was then still in the process of de-Stalinization, and wars were waged for and against socialist

realism and modernism. These debates were accelerated and intensified after the 1948 split with Stalin, propelling the Yugoslav art world toward greater acceptance of modernism and striking the final blow against the socialist realist aesthetic in 1954.<sup>36</sup> Concurrent with political liberalization and separation from the postwar realist aesthetic was the intensification of Yugoslav political and cultural internationalization as Yugoslavia sought to build bridges with the West, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. At this point it became much easier to exhibit modernist art and advocate for its adoption in cultural diplomacy, an approach Zoran Kržišnik adopted as his primary strategy. The Ljubljana Biennale greatly benefited from this confluence of events, entering the Yugoslav public sphere at the right time and fully embracing and reflecting the emerging ambitions of the state.

The biennale represents the first articulation of nonaligned modernism as a form of non-Western modernism that hovered between international modernist aesthetic principles and the political and social demands placed on it by international decolonizing and socialist and emancipatory projects. The biennale embraced the ideals of showcasing the widest possible range of international trends in art while also promoting Yugoslav culture. Kržišnik never hid the fact that he sought to “sell” the biennale to Yugoslav state officials by emphasizing its utility as a bridge between East and West, once stating, “it was precisely at our biennale that Soviet prints were exhibited for the first time side by side with the American prints – East met West, North, and South.”<sup>37</sup> In a letter to Ivo Frol, Kržišnik highlighted both the meeting of disparate sides in the Cold War conflict and also pan-Yugoslavism at the biennale. “Since its inception, the biennale had an international, and of course with this, also absolutely a Yugoslav character.”<sup>38</sup> Similar views were also articulated in numerous texts found in the introduction to the biennale’s catalogue. In fact, for the first exhibition in 1955, Kržišnik advertised the burgeoning cosmopolitan culture of Slovenia and Yugoslavia, stating that the choice of Ljubljana came from its culture and tourism history.<sup>39</sup> Further emphasizing the city’s role as an economic and cultural hub, he wrote, “Ljubljana, which is also a crossroads of railroad





4.6 Installation shots of the Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, n.d.

lines and a node of communication routes, is destined by its geographical location to link East and West.”<sup>40</sup> The East and West reference was, of course, a calculated move toward appeasing the Yugoslav Committee for International Cultural Relations, and particularly its president and vice-president, Marko Ristić and Ivo Frol respectively, both of whom were sympathetic to Kržišnik’s endeavours. In a letter to Kržišnik following the first biennale, Ivo Frol stressed that “we need to keep the Biennale going, which in its first iteration showed such great success both in quality and organization, but we can also say in its political



character.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as Frol’s enthusiasm reflects, the biennale fulfilled many of the committee’s central goals as it worked toward “peaceful coexistence” via various international initiatives such as bilateral cultural agreements and its most important initiative – the newly formed Yugoslav National UNESCO Committee.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from understanding the needs of the Yugoslav government in the midst of de-Stalinization, organizers also used their personal and professional networks to gain support. As previously discussed, the first biennale was made possible through Kržišnik’s outreach to individual artists (such as Zadkin) and his use of personal ties established by older Yugoslav artists prior to the Second World War (Jakac, Zoran Musič, Marko Ristić, and others). Personal connections characterize this type of curating; Božidar Jakac’s renown as an artist, partisan fighter, and a politician and Kržišnik’s political and cultural savvy provided the two with various connections in the worlds of national politics, international culture, and entertainment. In an interview from 2007, Kržišnik reminisced: “We set up the biennial in order to make our way into the world. It was a way of opening doors. And – thankfully – I managed to attract important graphic arts experts for the jury, such as the well-known critic from Venice, Giuseppe Marchiori. They were key personalities in the whole of fine arts. This was a confirmation that our event was the beginning of something that was worthy of mention. This first biennial represented the first step with which we indicated to the Yugoslav authorities that another way existed.”<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps more so than Jakac, Kržišnik approached the organization and curation of the biennale as a cultural player and an arts manager, recognizing where the Yugoslav state, its artists, and art organizations placed strategic priorities in order to exploit them. In effect, Kržišnik served as a bridge, taking into account each side’s interests in order to serve his own ambitions of bringing the world to Ljubljana. This approach is clearly one of cultural management, as we know it today, and cultural diplomacy. From its inception in the 1950s and onward, the biennale was a networking platform, one in which politics and culture would meet to effect real-world change. This real-world change

was not only artistic and cultural in nature but also very often political. Kržišnik, and others involved with the biennale, became unofficial Yugoslav ambassadors.

The Italian prime minister at the time, Amintore Fanfani, was also a “Sunday painter” and as he was good enough, I personally invited him to our biennial and he did in fact exhibit here. During the exhibition, he came to Ljubljana and said to me at dinner: ‘You know, I haven’t come to just look at my exhibition, but to ask if you can help me establish contact with your Tito; the situation is such that we on the right and those on the left who are more open should talk to each other.’ I established contact via Stane Dolanc, who was sufficiently open to such things. I know I have digressed here, but what I’m trying to say is how curiously these things are unintentionally connected with politics. On the global stage and especially on the axes Ljubljana-Vienna and Ljubljana-Klagenfurt we often talked in this way. Whenever a political crisis arose between Austria and Slovenia, the late Boris Kraigher would ring and say: ‘You know what, organize an exhibition, I need to meet up with their president.’<sup>44</sup>

The diplomatic role that art played in Yugoslavia became recognized by the political apparatus. Even though Tito commented that he could not understand the intricacies of modernist visual expression when he visited the Ljubljana Biennale, he stated, “It is splendid that this has led to a meeting of artists from the entire world. New directions are becoming established, which, however, I do not understand entirely. The depictions of Jakac are closer to me.” The state left judgment and criticism of art to those in the know – those like Kržišnik – in effect enabling events such as the biennale to become instruments of socialist nonaligned cultural diplomacy.

Part of the Ljubljana Biennale’s success can be attributed to its organizers’ shrewdness in embracing the territory between art and politics in a pragmatic way, not to bring artwork down to the level of propaganda,

but to bring it to the upper echelons of power – into the realm of diplomacy. At a time of critical Cold War escalation, there was a concerted effort across the world to emphasize winning the “hearts and minds” of people on each side of the Cold War divide. The fight for the world’s attention was clearly reflected in the international cultural power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective allies. Public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy as one of its variants became crucial weapons in this cultural Cold War. Although public diplomacy has existed for millennia as a form of statecraft, it was formalized, clearly defined, and used most intensely in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> The term itself can be described as a careful crafting and execution of foreign policies and the building of international relations via outreach, educational advocacy, policy creation, cultural exchange, exhibitions, and other initiatives. Nicholas Cull offers a basic taxonomy consisting of “listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting (IB).”<sup>46</sup> In short, public diplomacy provides a way to construct a particular national world view to influence and attract other countries. In the case of the Cold War, this meant that each side attempted to promote its political and cultural agenda as the only viable one.

Cultural diplomacy, defined by Cull as “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas, and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad,”<sup>47</sup> was a key component of Cold War public diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy also offered a way to produce attractive narratives about a nation. Political scientist Joseph Nye discusses this ability – this “soft power” – to create powerful national narratives.

Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. Soft power uses a different type of currency (not force, not money) to engender cooperation – an attraction to shared values and justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values. Hard and soft power are related because they are both aspects of the ability to achieve one’s purpose by affecting the behavior of others. The

distinction between them is one of degree, both in the nature of the behavior, and in the tangibility of the resources ... Co-optive power – the ability to shape what the others want – can rest on the attractiveness of one's culture and values or the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices.<sup>48</sup>

According to Nye, the resources that produce soft power are most often found in values produced by a nation's culture and in the ability to deploy culture to present these values as desirable to others.<sup>49</sup> Nye's definition implies that culture, and how it is perceived and presented to the international community, involves the creation of an idealized and even coveted national image.

Given Nye's definition of cultural diplomacy as soft power, the Ljubljana Biennale, its success as an ongoing exhibition, and its international standing should be understood in terms of its role in the context of the Cold War and Yugoslav's growing collaboration with the countries of Asia, Africa, and South and Central America. This was obvious to both the organizers of the first biennale and to the political apparatus of the time. Zoran Kržišnik expressed this idea in an interview he gave in 2010. "The social withdrawal from extreme Russian socialism was also in a way a withdrawal from Socialist Realism. Later, the idea of Non-alignment arose and at that time I proved to Marshal Tito, via Crvenkovski, that the Biennial of Graphic Arts was actually a materialization of what was being referred to as openness, which was then seen as Non-alignment. We were already talking about a dialogue between West and East and [had] attracted China and Russia to the first biennial. This was approximately seven or eight years before Russians returned to the Venice Biennale."<sup>50</sup>

Although his intentions to promote nonaligned policies might not have been as clearly articulated at the time of the first biennale in 1955, it is important to note his eventual realization that this was a humanistic and equitable way of showcasing art. What was at first simply eagerness, or pragmatism, or a way to sell the biennale to the Yugoslav officials, later became a conscious and deliberate curatorial methodology, which was inscribed not just in the biennale's constitution but in official Yugoslav

cultural policy via cultural contracts signed between Yugoslavia and various members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

## Curating Nonalignment

By analyzing the process of selection, curation of artists, and awarding of prizes over the Ljubljana Biennale's history, we can see how the exhibition constitutes an example of nonaligned modernism. The first biennale had a predominantly Western group of representatives from France, the United States, Spain, and the United Kingdom among others. However, in keeping with the idea of reaching out to both East and West, there were artists from the Soviet Union and China, as well as Turkey, Korea, and Japan. Archival documentation also shows that letters of invitation were sent to artists from India, Egypt, and Mexico, but they did not respond or participate. In interviews, Kržišnik explained that he had to carefully negotiate how he would curate artists from specific countries. For example, while he was able to handpick artists from most of the countries in Europe, the Americas, and Africa, he left the selection of the Soviet and Chinese artists to their own cultural institutions and hoped for the best. In other words, knowing that state officials in the two countries had to vet who was politically suitable took precedence over choosing the most qualified artists. This careful negotiation was an example of how biennale organizers deliberately, and inevitably, sacrificed quality for full participation.

Subsequent biennales were marked by an increase in the number of artists from Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The first biennale presented 158 artists, with fifty-five from Yugoslavia and non-Western countries.<sup>51</sup> In 1957 there were 251 artists, and of those, seventy-seven were Yugoslav and other non-Western artists,<sup>52</sup> whereas in 1961 the number of artists more than doubled to 331 with around 140 from non-Western countries, including Egypt, India, Turkey, Japan, and Mexico among others.<sup>53</sup> These numbers continued to climb, and in 1977 artists from Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin/Central American, and Eastern European countries (many



4.7 Installing the First Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1955

of whom were people of colour) made up the majority of the biennale, numbering 70 percent.<sup>54</sup> Equally important was the representation of women, which grew from around thirty in the first several exhibitions to more than seventy-five in 1977, representing around 18 percent of artists.<sup>55</sup> A useful comparison can be made with documenta in Kassel as a quintessential example of a Western exhibition dedicated to contemporary art; it had a similar mandate as far as the representation of international trends went, the one obvious difference being that the Ljubljana Biennale strictly showcased graphic arts. In 1955, documenta presented 148 artists, only one of whom, Slovenian painter Zoran Mušič, was not from the West (he was living in France at the time); interestingly, he was close to the organizers of the Ljubljana Biennale and helped by connecting them to French artists. There were also East European immigrants living in the West, painters such as Kandinsky and Kupka. Similar numbers were present in 1964 and 1968 when only a handful of Japanese artists represented the non-Western contingent. More importantly, out of 353 artists



4.8 Sixteenth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, international jury deliberations, Ljubljana, 1985

at documenta in 1964 only seven were women, and out of 152 artists in 1968 only four were women. Things did not change much in 1977, a pivotal year for documenta, when curators showed East German artists for the first time, as well as featuring work of Iranian filmmaker Sohrab Shaheed Salles and Belgian director Chantal Akerman, which sums up the diversity of the exhibition for that year. From the perspective of the postwar international art scene and its ideological shifts during the twentieth century, the Ljubljana Biennale, in comparison, was an enormously diverse exhibition that preceded calls for diversity in contemporary art that would become central to Western art discourses in the late 1990s. Ljubljana was ahead of its time.

The diversity of artists was also reflected in the formal range of styles and approaches to print. This was one of the more contested issues for which the

biennale was criticized in the 1970s. Kržišnik and the organizing team were committed both to inviting artists, and when necessary, relinquishing their curatorial influence to the state organizations that chose artists to participate. Consequently, countries from the Eastern Bloc for the most part pre-selected artists, leaving art critics like Josip Depolo confused by such selection. His confusion was reflected in his assessment of the East European galleries at the 1957 Biennale:

An instructive example for us are the East European exhibitors, whose art is still developing along the lines of dead, official schemas. And here again we can single out the example of Poland, which has begun to distinguish itself in painting, yet the visual language of the exhibitor in this gallery [Polish] was used exactly a hundred years ago. Now, let us assume that the painters in these countries sacrificed their artistic expression in the name of 'clarity,' 'distinctness,' and concepts, meaning, they would at least have to be progressive and combative with their subject-matter. Instead, what do we see? It is in their subject-matter, that the most entrenched European petit bourgeois would delight. When these artists are not escaping into historicism, they are painting saccharine landscapes, empty still lives, stylized folklore, or flowers.<sup>56</sup>

In a more nuanced review, a French critic noted in 1965 that "for the most part in East European countries figuration is dominant," adding that there was a degree of commitment to realism depending on each country, such as more surrealist prints by the Polish and Czech artists, and more illustrative and representational works by Bulgarians, Romanians, and Soviets.<sup>57</sup> Others lamented the loss of quality and commitment to politics.

The heterogeneity of the artworks speaks to the organizers' commitment to equity in representation, something that Josip Depolo noted was the biennale's strength. The coexistence of a variety of approaches and styles, dialogue between the reigning modernist language of abstraction (such as in the works of l'École de Paris and Abstract Expressionists), and





4.9 Interior views of installation, Eighth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1969

the more political aesthetic that was either not abstract or was semi-abstract (such as in Mexican and some Yugoslav art), represented the very heart of the biennale. It is precisely in this juxtaposition and heterogeneity that nonaligned modernism is most vividly articulated. Modernist purity of the 1950s and 1960s, characterized by its apolitical stance and commitment to formal and phenomenological explorations, exemplified in prints of artists Gino Severini, Jean Lurcat, Gustav Signier, Berto Lardera, Victor Vassarely, Zoran Musič, and others, was countered by the more oblique aesthetic styles of non-Western artists such as Leopoldo Mendez, Rufino Tamayo,



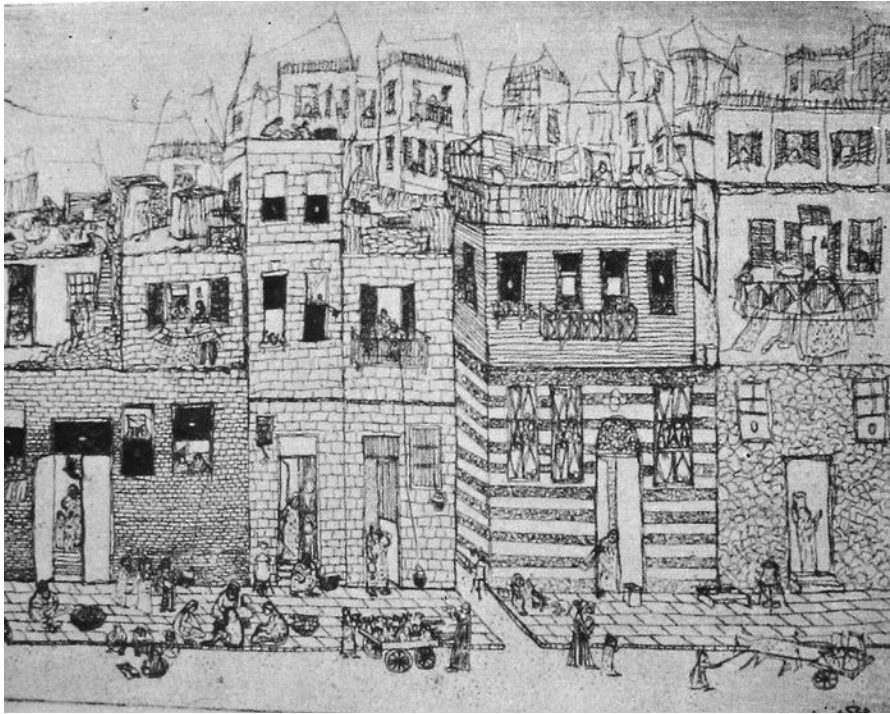
4.10 Rufino Tamayo, *Coyote*, print, n.d. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Copyright: © DR Rufino Tamayo / Heirs / Mexico / Olga and Rufino Tamayo Foundation, AC. Photo: © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Vasso Katrakis, Zlatko Bourek, and Menhat Allah Helmy, who used both abstraction and realism, fluidly passing from one to the other. Such prints explore themes of political agency and the fight for freedom, depict scenes of everyday life, or use indigenous mythology and its relationship to contemporary art.

A case in point is Rufino Tamayo's print *The Wolf and the Moon* presented at the 1957 Biennale. The colour lithograph was one of the two Tamayo prints chosen for the show. It shows Tamayo's iconic image of a wolf (sometimes a dog) howling at the moon. As an Indigenous Mexican artist, Tamayo consistently employed his heritage and background as source material for his work, and this particular print is no exception. The catalogue entry comments on his hybrid aesthetic, which combined

modernist forms with pre-Columbian symbolisms, colours, and narratives.<sup>58</sup> Deeply aware of the politics of indigeneity, Tamayo's work was situated in a French modernist aesthetic; however, it was also deeply embedded in his native Zapotec heritage, displayed here in the figure of the wolf. His work was described as "an alternative but equally historically significant attempt to limn a 'universal' art from American sources without falling into the traps of nationalism or the parochial concerns of contemporary politics."<sup>59</sup>

Another telling example is Egyptian artist Menhat Alla Helmy, who exhibited her work at the biennale twice. Helmy is an interesting artist for a few reasons: she was invested in social issues through her work, she was a woman of colour operating in a still predominantly male world, and she represented one of Yugoslavia's closest nonaligned allies. Two prints reproduced in the 1961 and 1967 catalogues illustrate the artist's main formal and social interests. *Old Cairo*, from 1957, is a tightly constructed composition showing a busy street, packed with a tight row of buildings in the background and groups of people – adults milling about; children playing; street vendors; people entering and exiting homes, looking through windows or talking together. Helmy fills the black and white print with textures, rich patterns, and strong graphic details. The work is bursting with energy, offering an almost documentary-style slice of life. At the same time, because of the artist's overall formal treatment of the surface, the work is somewhat abstract, referencing geometric shapes and patterns. Some sources point out Helmy's lifelong interest in social issues and her commitment to representing everyday life and ordinary people, as well as the socialist revolutionary ideas that influenced her art.<sup>60</sup> Certainly this print speaks to the complex social and political situation of Nasser's Egypt in which the nationalist populist government brutally handled progressive workers' movements and yet enacted deep social and welfare reforms and nationalized private corporations.<sup>61</sup> Helmy's keen eye notices and exalts the ordinary, creating a warm representation of those masses the state instrumentalized. Yet in her representations the masses are not there for political nationalistic exaltation; rather, they signal people's sense of self and identity as collectivity created through everyday social bonds



4.11 Menhat Alla Helmy, *Old Cairo*, print, 1957, from the Biennale of the Graphic Arts Catalogue

of labour, play, and caring. Her work is an example of how alternative modernisms and nonaligned modernism borrow from the native visual traditions of the Middle East (emphasizing geometric patterns found in textiles, and architecture), amplifying them via use of typically modernist interests in the expressive and distorted form found in early modernists such as Otto Dix and Käthe Kollwitz and later modernists such as Pilet Edgard, Jorn Asger, and Cy Twombly. The key to the works of Helmy, Tamayo, and others like them is their attempt to both adopt and reshape the hierarchies of modernism in which they existed, which were in some ways culturally imposed on them but which they also transgressed (or in the case of Helmy, on whose margins they operated and from which they diverged). Such attempts at reshaping aesthetic hierarchies and freely

playing with forms, styles, and techniques, embedding in them relevant political, social, and cultural themes, typifies nonaligned and all other alternative modernisms across the world.

The Ljubljana Biennale's constant striving to achieve equity in representation, however, also engendered criticism, mostly from Slovene and Yugoslav critics. As the number of artworks grew to nearly 1,300 toward the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, critics chastised Kržišnik and the committee for creating too wide a criterion for curating contemporary print, implying a loss in quality. For example, Tit Vidmar wrote in 1975 in *Borba*, "If we use the term 'art' when referring to [the] Graphic Biennale, then we have to use it in a more selective way. If we are talking about art, then it is first of all a convention, which refers to [the] general structure of organizational activities of art. But if we would like to talk about the concrete content of the exhibition, it would be hard to claim that every print [at the biennale] is artistic and possesses an expressive power."<sup>62</sup>

A few others echoed similar concerns. The foreign press, however, while critical on occasion, was much more enthusiastic about the biennale's diversity.<sup>63</sup> Kržišnik fiercely defended the biennale's structure, contending that its organization, which rested on national representation, was necessary in order to show diversity in contemporary print. "If we would remove this principle and curate the show based on artistic movements, it would surely not be topical, and would not be capable of – in the framework of national artists – reveal[ing] what is new in the world."<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, in order to showcase artists from the Eastern Bloc, Africa, and Asia whom the biennale could not contact personally, it was necessary to work within the framework of the nation-state and official national channels. "Their art was sent to us by the state," which was one of the main reasons why the organizers could not abandon the principle of representing artists according to their nation-state.<sup>65</sup>

This difference in representation of artists between the Ljubljana Biennale and its Western counterparts, such as the Venice Biennale and documenta, is telling; each of these international exhibitions attempted to represent their own particular image of the world – a reborn post-Second



4.12 Installation views of Bangladesh, Puerto Rico, and Iraq exhibits at the Twelfth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1977

World War terrain in which art was recognized as a symbolic stand-in for the nation-state and possessed a transformational ethos with the power to unite and endorse. More particularly, in the case of documenta and the Ljubljana Biennale, their ambitions also reflected the very different locations each exhibition held in the twentieth-century geopolitical landscape. Documenta's curation, celebrating European and Western postwar artistic identities, showcased Germany's desired new role as a liberal cultural force via its acceptance of the modernist ethos. Ljubljana's curation had different ambitions.<sup>66</sup> Apart from bringing the world's major artists to a small country on the margins of the West, its goal was to reflect the world of the emerging nations in Asia, Africa, and South and Central America. To this end, organizers and curators of the Ljubljana Biennale engaged in strategic curating that sought to represent the successes, hopes, and dreams of those in the Global South who were emerging from



colonial and imperial domination and to do it without necessarily adhering to standard curatorial discourses of mediation of taste and gatekeeping.<sup>67</sup> In her study of curatorial practice and cultural representation, Mari Carmen Ramirez discusses the standard Western approach to curating as one in which the curator has the authority to decide what constitutes taste and quality, thereby establishing a canon. And conversely, curatorial authority, according to Ramirez, “derives from an absolute – ultimately ideological – set of criteria grounded in the restrictive parameters of the canon of Western (i.e., First World) Modernism /Post-Modernism ... The results [of this arbitration] as we know, often resembled a league championship of winners and losers. The winners usually being artists who readily fit into this tradition; the losers being the art producers of cultures and civilizations outside or marginal to it.”<sup>68</sup>

Ramirez’s indictment of the notions of quality and taste as established by the Western canon is precisely the reason the Ljubljana Biennale organizers accepted Western art but never ceded to its hegemony. In both their collaborative approach to curating and their consistency in inviting artists from all the countries with which Yugoslavia had political, economic, and cultural relations, the Ljubljana Biennale positioned itself outside the standard curatorial practices of the West.

Anthony Gardner and Charles Green discuss the increase in studies of biennales that has occurred since the 1990s.<sup>69</sup> In the usual discussion of the pros and cons of what some critics have called a biennale industry,<sup>70</sup> there are two distinct ideas that frame the biennale as a form of representation. One of these theoretical frameworks, argue Gardner and Green, presents the flood of biennale exhibitions in direct correlation with the growth of global capitalism at the end of the twentieth century, making the biennale industry complicit in the worst forms of economic globalization. The second analytical framework is biennales as examples of temporary utopian spaces in which art brings people from various cultures and nations together at a specific point in time and space to create a democratic, transformed world, and in the process perhaps enacts a change in the society at large<sup>71</sup> – in other words, a kind of multicultural, cosmopolitan utopia that has arisen from the ruins of Western modernism. In the final analysis,



4.13 Installation views of Brazil and Argentina exhibits at the Eighth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1967

both ways of assessing biennales are Western-centric, as they study the biennale primarily from the standpoint of Western cultural and economic structures. Although each theoretical framing device offers some useful discursive strategies to think about possibilities of the biennale as a form, Gardner and Green critique both, proposing a third. Their third model traces a parallel history of the biennales that took place in the Global South as opposed to the West. This parallel history reveals a world of exhibitions across the globe that often shared common themes of cooperation among the newly liberated, emerging Asian and African countries, all of





4.14 Installation view of Chinese exhibits at the Twelfth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1977

which understood full well that the Western world would not be welcoming and that they needed to open alternative spaces of exhibitions and cultural exchange. At the same time, and as was the case with the Ljubljana Biennale, the organizers of such events were also open to collaboration with the West, understanding that they had to negotiate their cultural agency within the already existing colonial cultural system (one created by the West), thereby crafting complex links between Western forms of cultural systems and emerging forms, reflected in the ways in which biennales of the South operated. The hegemony of the Western project was therefore negotiated, worked around, and incorporated into the attempts to create a new world of “culture and coexistence,” as Marko Ristić advocated in his 1952 debates about cultural diplomacy.<sup>72</sup>

Somewhat diverging from Gardiner and Green’s argument, several studies have critiqued the ways in which the biennale cultures have used the idea of cosmopolitanism in the Global South. Jeannine Tang,<sup>73</sup> Julian Stallabrass,<sup>74</sup> Jane Chin Davidson, and Sandra Esslinger,<sup>75</sup> in particular, have called attention to the ways in which the cosmopolitan biennale has

become a vehicle for bringing in large Western audiences and tourists to the edges of the Western world (i.e., the Havana, Guangzhou, Sharjah, Dak'art biennales, and the Johannesburg Biennale, etc.) in order to attempt to integrate these new centres into the already existing structures and networks of the global art world and its markets. As each author shows, these attempts have been steeped in controversy, often failing to fulfill their goals, or simply reiterating the existing dominant narratives. In short, as Tang offers, "The model of international identity championed by biennialization parallels what Saskia Sassen refers to in her work on global cities, as a transnationalization of capital that requires a simultaneous transnationalization of subjectivity, denationalization of space and state – which in fact produces new forms of centralization and control, rather than an actual dispersion of power."<sup>76</sup> While nominally these exhibitions indeed seek geographic diversity in the field of contemporary art (moving beyond purely Western metropolises), the results parallel the post-1989 neoliberalization of the globalized world. The new transnational global centres reproduce forms of marginalization and exclusion along the lines of already existing diffusions of power, as they at the same time reaffirm and deepen Western supremacy (of money and capital), only now dispersed across more global centres.<sup>77</sup>

However, the Ljubljana Biennale, as well as the Sao Paolo and Alexandria biennales and other similar events, started well before the current forms of neoliberalism came to be at the end of the Cold War era; as a result, they developed in very different geopolitical contexts, reflecting the goals of the countries that at the time were either newly established (such as Egypt and Yugoslavia) or attempting to finally break through Western cultural domination. Consequently, these types of events are not just nominally different, but in fact qualitatively different from the more recent exhibitions, if for no other reason than that these countries had more political and economic agency.

The Ljubljana Biennale sits within this parallel history of international exhibitions of the twentieth century as it sought to exercise cultural and sociopolitical agency by representing the world existing outside Western borders. The biennale's cultural kinship lay with exhibitions such as the Alexandria Biennale<sup>78</sup> and broader cultural events



4.15 Installation views at the Twelfth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1977

such as FASTAC '66 and '77,<sup>79</sup> or any number of Pan-African festivals and other similar events that appeared throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in Asia, Africa, and South and Central America. All such cultural undertakings represented forms of what became broadly termed alternative modernities,<sup>80</sup> each with its regional specificities of which nonaligned modernism was one. The Ljubljana Biennale's own sociopolitical context was shaped by ideas emerging from the Non-Aligned Movement and its goals. Of course, all examples of alternative modernities, including nonaligned modernism, and the cultural events that emerged from the alliances between the newly formed post-Second World War nation-states, were also overlaid with ambiguity, as Dominique Malaquais and Cedric Vincent have recently argued.<sup>81</sup> While the stated goals of decolonial cultural events were to counter cultural imperialism, represent cultural accomplishments and the future aims of the so-called developing world, and showcase politics by other means concurrently with the political, economic, and in some

cases armed struggle for liberation, these stated goals were subverted by instances of oppression and violence. Malaquais and Vincent point out that most official events (in their example, Pan-Africanist cultural festivals) represented the normative dominant discourses of each state, since the events were a platform for exercising a particular national project and interests.

This in turn begs a question: what of less visible (or audible) opponents, both of the festival itself and, more broadly, of Senghor's policies? And what of criticism in Algiers, where, as the city officially celebrated the Non-Aligned Movement, torture ran rampant in the jails of the Boumediène regime? Or in Kinshasa, where rumour offered one of the sole means of expressing discontent with Mobutu Sese Seko's violent repression? In Lagos, it is clear that a counter-discourse emerged in reaction to the festival, resulting in the creation of isolated but significant spaces of contestation, a key example of which was a series of concerts organized by the father of Afrobeat, Fela Kuti, a vocal opponent of the military government in power at the time.<sup>82</sup>

Undoubtedly, official culture in the Global South was a contested terrain in which multiple narratives and politics played a role. The Ljubljana and Alexandria biennales were no exception. In fact, one of the complications of the Non-Aligned Movement was the diversity of political strategies and leanings (some countries were monarchies, others were socialist, while still others were dictatorships) that needed to be constantly negotiated. Yugoslavia's view, and that written into the Non-Aligned Movement's charters and declarations, was that even though many of the nations were on the opposite end of the spectrum politically, and sometimes even in open confrontation (for example, Pakistan during the war with Bangladesh over independence), they were to respect the principles of coexistence and acceptance.<sup>83</sup> "To the Yugoslavs, peaceful coexistence meant a parallel coexistence of states regardless of their social and political systems," and more importantly, it meant that the policy of



4.16 Installation views of l'École de Paris at the Fourth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1961

coexistence “neither is nor should it be a policy of defence of the status quo in international relations and even less in internal social relations. It simply means renouncing war as an instrument for the settlement of international contradictions and taking the line of relying upon the results of the internal social development which will ultimately change international relations as well.”<sup>84</sup> Clearly, the Global South, and the Non-Aligned Movement in particular, stood in complex relationships with culture.

Nevertheless, the connecting narratives of the official culture and cultural diplomacy, while embroiled in contested meanings of political action, were invested in a general project of decolonization and struggle for agency. And although these contested and even ambiguous issues need to be included in the historical accounts of the nonaligned project, it is also important to give nonaligned modernism its due. What needs to be recognized is the struggle of the nonaligned modernist project to

emerge from under the forms of old and new colonialisms. Hybridity of formal elements, the ambiguous social and political contexts, and the pragmatic assimilation of Western and indigenous cultural forms could be read not as superficial performativity of solidarity, but rather as a survival tactic, or what Stuart Hall has called a “practice of articulation.”<sup>85</sup> Articulation in the political and representational sense “is a form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions,” and that linkage is “not necessarily determined, absolute, and essential for all times.”<sup>86</sup> In this light, nonaligned modernism represents a calculated political articulation in which very diverse countries, with sometimes opposing political and social priorities, were able to forge an alliance in order to counter the hegemony of Western cultural imperialism. Its formal and aesthetic legacy needs to be recognized as a form of modernity forged outside the Western world and in tension, or tarrying, with elements of Western modernity, yet also adopting some of its emancipatory, humanist goals and some of its material forms. The Ljubljana Biennale and the artistic forms exhibited throughout its history were firmly planted within the discourse of nonaligned modernism and they embodied its political and cultural/aesthetic contradictions.

The history of the Ljubljana Biennale as an example of nonaligned modernism also provides an opportunity to deconstruct dominant imaginaries of the history of modern art and associated political contexts by offering histories of world art outside the grand modernist narratives. Reworlding is a particularly productive constitutive form opposed to the hegemonic narratives of the past. Originating with Gayatri Spivak,<sup>87</sup> the term has recently been taken up by art historians and theorists interested in articulating the ways in which various aesthetic and artistic projects have existed parallel to, and in dialogue with, the dominant ones throughout the twentieth century until today. Reworlding recognizes the colonial processes of cultural domination, and more recently globalization, but allows for a nuanced reading of how dominant cultural forms come to be accepted and adopted by various non-dominant forms. More significantly, reworlding forces dominant art historical discourses to recognize that major artistic movements, institutions, and narratives in the



4.17 Final installation, Eighth Biennale of the Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, 1969

West were influenced and shaped by non-Western artistic traditions that had been thriving and developing alongside it for centuries. In the process of reworlding art history “localization and globalization are taken to be mutually constitutive processes both in constructions of subjectivity and in shaping contemporary art histories at the intersection of national, regional, and global contexts.”<sup>88</sup> In the case of the Ljubljana Biennale, reworlding also implies a close relationship between art and politics, but not necessarily in the instrumentalized sense that Gardner and Green hint at (when discussing the Alexandria and Ljubljana biennales, they point to the problem of state sponsorship of such events and the possibility that the leaders – Nasser and Tito – manipulated the images), as much as in a pragmatic sense. Pragmatism here comes not from political opportunism but from the realization by Yugoslavia and other non-aligned countries that without decolonization and an alternative political and cultural system there could be no shift in the polarization of power. In short, without praxis of articulation there could be no effective struggle against capitalist economic supremacy and its cultural forms. Cultural



diplomacy, the forging of close relationships among various non-Western cultures, and an emphasis on indigenous production are therefore staples of such an approach to art.

It is instructive to be reminded of Amílcar Cabral's assessment of cultural imperialism: "Certainly, imperialist domination calls forth cultural oppression and attempts, either directly or indirectly, to do away with the most important element of the culture of the subject people. But the people are only able to create and develop the liberation movement because they keep their culture alive despite the continual and organized repression of their cultural life and because they continue to resist culturally, even when their political and military resistance is destroyed. And it is cultural resistance which at a given moment can take on new forms – political, economic – to fight foreign domination."<sup>89</sup> It was very clear to the writers and thinkers of the Non-Aligned Movement, such as Cabral and Tran Van Dinh, that any attempt at doing away with oppression also included building and promoting indigenous culture and connecting it with others within the movement and elsewhere. The local-global exchange that Cabral emphasized also brings the narrative of this chapter back to the work of Yugoslav writer Miroslav Krleža, who initiated the Yugoslav move away from socialist realism and in 1954 and called for an indigenous Yugoslav aesthetic via an anticolonial approach to art.<sup>90</sup> To follow Western and Eastern bloc examples of art production meant existing "as an imitation,"<sup>91</sup> and to escape such imitation, Krleža sutured an anticolonialist approach to the aesthetic work of liberation. The non-aligned modernism of the Ljubljana Biennale embodied some of this yearning for indigenous art, transnational connections, collaboration, and decolonization. Despite some of its difficulties in organization and overall limitations, the exhibition reflected the world politics and culture of the twentieth century as one of a multiplicity of alternative voices, which, until recently, were not being discussed.



## Conclusion

*History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit].<sup>1</sup>*

In the early 1980s Yugoslav neo-avant-garde artist Mladen Stilinović initiated his first *Exploitation of the Dead* series (figure 5.1). These elaborate installations featured a variety of iconic symbols of East European culture, socialist politics, and art. Some of the symbols, such as Kazimir Malevich's square, were taken directly from the visual repertoire of the Russian historical avant-gardes. Others were drawn from socialist realist art, or borrowed from a wider symbolic repository of the socialist visual vocabulary: the red star, the hammer and sickle, assorted military paraphernalia, and so forth. Stilinović also transformed the objects to varying degrees by adding his own painted, drawn, written, and sculpted visual commentary. The artist imagined his work as a way of signalling the death of crucial artistic and political ideological apparatuses. The dead he was exploiting were the failed modernist aesthetic propositions, remnants of socialist structures, and ruins of utopian dreams that had turned sour by 1984 when he began the series. Stilinović's art from this period was a voice in the wilderness, a prophesy of the end of an era – the long-protracted death of revolutionary ideas launched into action in October 1917.

The work also prophesied the impending death of socialism in Stilinović's own country, Yugoslavia. *Exploitation* revealed a painful and



5.1 Mladen Stilinović, *Exploitation of the Dead 1984–1990*, exhibition view at documenta 12, Kassel, 2007

traumatic ending to the era of unprecedented development and growth that Yugoslavia experienced between 1945 and 1980. The utopian idealism and optimism embedded in those years came to an end when President Tito died in May 1980. His death threw an already destabilized Yugoslav economy into a tailspin. In the midst of 1980s economic and political tensions,<sup>2</sup> the official Yugoslav political establishment was still attempting to salvage its self-managing social system, and retain the country's viability as an in-between power (one neither East nor West). Despite Stilinović's cynicism about 1980s socialism, Marina Gržinić has convincingly argued<sup>3</sup> that the artist was also mourning the end of the socialist era. Born immediately after the war, Stilinović, with many other Yugoslav baby boomers, helped build the country, bringing it into late twentieth-century modernity. His generation witnessed Yugoslavia's greatest

prosperity and its violent end. *Exploitation of the Dead* therefore hovers in an in-between space: an archive of a time the artist was still living in, yet which he knew was ending.

Grouped images and objects in *Exploitation* were placed in different settings – a portable workers' sleeping container, a wooden house, a gallery wall – and operated as temporary installations containing a number of seemingly conflicting representations, such as avant-garde artwork with symbols of totalitarian Stalinist rule. The artist's continuously morphing installation can also be read as a museum of the end of the socialist world, and a museum of its future. Stilinović was positioned in an inevitably difficult space of in-between – seeing socialism's potential, and its impending end. While such a position afforded an opportunity of being in three temporal realms at once (past and present looking into the future) it also condemned Silinović to a permanent state of flux, constantly searching for the connections between the three. The work thus operates as an unstable archive, both fluctuating (as time passes) and frozen in time (because the time that the archive chronicles is long gone, yet constantly brought back to the surface of the now).

Multiple deaths subliminally announced in *Exploitation* reflected the impending arrival of the postsocialist era of the 1990s, with its problematic socioeconomic shifts toward a market economy. The era of transition, which started with the official dissolution of the country, also meant that all the Yugoslav successor states entered an intense period of symbolic and physical ideological purification, which went hand in hand with the arrival of neoliberal economic policies. Purging, and subsequent physical removal, of all traces of the previous socialist state conveniently went parallel with the rise of various nationalist and neoliberal discourses that served to facilitate the smooth transitioning of vast amounts of public wealth accrued over the prior decades into the hands of private tycoons who would eventually create a wild capitalist economy still at work today. The long process of erasure of the socialist Yugoslavia takes many forms, from destruction of archival material, book burning, toppling and in some cases even dynamiting monuments commemorating the anti-fascist struggle, to changing of street signs, and finally rewriting

history itself. The rampant revisionism at work since the 1990s has meant that the histories of nonaligned cultural networks were under threat and in many cases completely erased or simply ignored. New generations of children are growing up unaware of the many decades the Yugoslav state spent cultivating meaningful alliances with other developing nations and investing in the creation of sociopolitical and cultural networks that could provide agency to the countries involved. Ironically, similar trends took place in other socialist-leaning Non-Aligned Movement member states as most of them transitioned to capitalism.

Seen from a global perspective, the need to examine cultural histories outlined in this book comes into sharper focus. As I write this conclusion in early 2019, a shift has taken place not just in the developing world, but across the globe, toward semantic and material relativization of all attempts at enacting agency: from the vilification of movements for racial, gender, and political equity, to denial of genocide, of oppression, and even demonization of antifascism. In this postmodern, neoliberal world, utopian idealism of the modernist ethos is not only conceptually alien but also inconvenient. It is precisely for this reason that Yugoslav socialist history has significant insights to offer into possible alternative ways of building a society and culture. The unfolding and uncertain future that lies ahead needs material exemplars from the past that can not only provide scaffolding for building equitable socioeconomic relations, but also highlight the possibilities of collaboration between even the most distant cultures.

Between these two current perspectives – the postsocialist one in which Yugoslav nonaligned history is erased, and the global one in which there cannot be room for equitable, working forms of social and economic life – nonaligned histories become not only necessary but crucial for rethinking the future. The question is, then, what can we derive from this case study of Yugoslav nonaligned modernism and socialist postcolonial aesthetics?

The analysis of institutional policies and practices that embody one aspect of nonaligned modernism engenders an alternative interpretation of the cultural and artistic histories in Yugoslavia. The relationship

between the twentieth-century socialist state, its officially enacted cultural institutional policies, and artistic practices was complex and multifaceted. The state's policies were decisive in determining the symbolic, historic, and monetary value of art, and artists participated in the state's sociopolitical program by creating aesthetic-political narratives. This relationship, however, was never smooth; rather it demonstrates some negotiation and even a degree of adversity and tension between the state and art. While scholars have read this adversity as reflecting the lack of freedom of expression in Yugoslav culture, the analysis of the negotiations in the field of culture in fact demonstrates that a healthy public dialogue existed, which contributed to a richness and ultimately, an understanding of various forms of artistic expression. Moreover, in the context of the global art world, it provided Yugoslav artists of all stripes access to world audiences and international exhibition spaces, and brought them to the centre of emerging non-Western art. Contrary to the often-repeated narrative of oppressive state regimes under socialism, Yugoslavia illustrates that things on the ground were much more nuanced and complicated. In fact, it proves that no matter how complicated or flawed it might have been, the Yugoslav state socialist approach to material support of culture through sustained federal and provincial agencies and institutions worked to the benefit of the artists who were able to use its official channels to showcase and promote their work.

Another key characteristic of nonaligned modernism, obliquely presented in the book, is the indirect benefit it provided to the wider Yugoslav art world. Circuitously, nonaligned modernism and its growing artistic networks had a broader influence than strictly in relationship to NAM cultural cooperation. Whereas the focus of my analysis has been artistic and cultural production at the highest international level, which mostly encompassed mainstream art practices, the Yugoslav art world was far more complex. The scope of the book does not allow for a broader discussion of the many examples of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde artistic work, which took place parallel to the mainstream art discussed here. However, artists who were involved with the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde projects also had access to Yugoslav official

international connections, and participated in many of the artistic and cultural exchanges that were initiated through the nonaligned networks. Groups such as EXAT 51, New Tendencies, and OHO group, and artists such as Mladen Stilinović, Marika and Marko Pogačnik, Dimitrije Bašičević-Mangelos, Katalin Ladik, Neša Paripović, Bogdanka Poznanović, Vlasta Delimar, and many others had something to gain from the infrastructure created by the state and by the program of internationalization that was at the heart of the nonaligned movement. While many of the artists were critical of the Yugoslav socialist system and wanted it transformed, they at the same time readily participated in it and gained from its robust support for cultural work. It is precisely in the practices and structures built by the state, in order to support its goals of promoting nonaligned ideals and self-management, that benefits were created for the broader art world in Yugoslavia. Nonaligned modernism therefore influenced more than just mainstream Yugoslav art; it is a wider phenomenon that provided the base upon which other, even oppositional, art practices could take hold. In other words, the institutional infrastructure created during this period to support Yugoslav art, present it to the world, and conversely present global art to Yugoslav audiences, formed a material base upon which all art developed in the socialist and postsocialist period. Indeed, both the institutions built during socialism and the international ties created during it remained even after socialist Yugoslavia disintegrated. This critical material and symbolic infrastructure remains to this day, and artistic institutions in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, though often forgetful of where it came from, are its direct beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the examples of cultural exchange and collaboration discussed in this book provide a direct contribution to creating a historical record of nonaligned cultural achievements and thereby add these forms of art to the canon of global art history. As post-socialist amnesia erased and revised the historical record of socialist art, it also precluded post-Yugoslav historiography from laying claim to the building of progressive art and culture during the twentieth century. Whereas Yugoslav successor states enacted new cultural policies that were dictated from “above,” through Western European and American institutions, they also removed

all traces of the anticolonial, antiracist, socialist, and equity-seeking ideals of the nonaligned. Nonaligned modernism and socialist postcolonial aesthetics remind us of a time when the Yugoslav state apparatus at all levels did not seek approval of the Western powers for its cultural production, and in fact went directly against its edicts. State-funded art can therefore exist and in fact thrive, creating along the way a symbolic and material infrastructure for generations to come. The Ljubljana Biennale is the best example of these mechanisms at work. The biennale was supported through well-funded state economic mechanisms (provincial, federal, and municipal grants), and artists and curators were able to experiment, make bold decisions, and ultimately create a vital institution not only for the region, but internationally. Artistic freedom of expression and state support do not have to be mutually exclusive, but can in fact be productive. When it comes to developing nations seeking to insert themselves into the robust and exclusive international art world, state support and official collaboration between small states at the highest levels is absolutely crucial because of the lack of adequate cultural infrastructure resulting from colonial and neocolonial exploitation. Yugoslav cultural history proves this point over and over again.

Finally, Yugoslav nonaligned modernism also points to the fact that the Yugoslav postcolonial aesthetic did not die with the country, but lives on and struggles for global recognition. Hundreds of artists, academics, theorists, historians, and others from the region have been working since the end of the socialist period to recuperate Yugoslavia's forgotten histories. All these successive attempts have been building a new canon of Yugoslav artistic and cultural history. The analysis of nonaligned modernism and socialist postcolonial aesthetics provides one piece of the puzzle that is Yugoslav socialist history. While not without its shortcomings, Yugoslav socialism was successful in harnessing the best of human potential by recognizing and supporting ideas of equity, collaboration, anti-imperialism, anticapitalism, and agency in all spheres of life. It is the aim of this study to further these goals and place them front and centre in the emerging nonhierarchical Yugoslav and global art worlds.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, “Augustinčićev somenik Mir u New Yorku.”
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See in particular, Kolečnik, “Ikonografija socrealizma.”
- 4 Between 1918 and 1926 the artist attended art academies in Zagreb and Paris, where he became versed in academic realism. However, as Josip Depolo argues in his analysis of Augustinčić’s influences, while in Paris he discovered Rodin and Bourdelle whose particular approach to modernism and realism changed his own style and left a lasting influence. He also studied under Ivan Meštrović, the most famous Croatian sculptor of the era, who is also considered a representative of early modernism. As a result, Augustinčić’s work never became fully realized in the didactic socialist realist sense. Even after the Second World War his work remained committed to a specific expressive form of realism, albeit less experimental and not inclined toward the abstracted forms encountered in the work of the sculptors of the younger generation such as Vojin Bakić. See Depolo, “Augustinčić, Antun,” 45.
- 5 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”
- 6 Glissant proposes a strategy similar to Homi Bhabha’s mimicry, which is a forced use of the discourse of the colonizer but in such a way as to divert and transform it. Glissant differentiates between language and langue, and Celia Britton defines this differentiation as “a collective subjective practice of and attitude to a langue; for the Martinican community, the relationship is a tense and ambivalent one.” She goes on to quote Glissant, who offers



- this definition: “I call [language] a shared attitude, in a given community, of confidence or mistrust in the [*langue* or *langues*] it uses.” Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory*, 30.
- 7 Glissant, “Free and Forced Poetics,” 95.
  - 8 Ibid.
  - 9 Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation,” 58.
  - 10 Ibid.
  - 11 For more on reworlding, see Flores, “Reworlding Modernity,” 34–42; Flores, “Undoing Europe in Southeast Asia,” 58–65; Harding and Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde*; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*; Belting, “Contemporary Art as Global Art”; Antoinette, *Reworlding Art History*.
  - 12 Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism*; O’Brien, “General Introduction”; Gabara, *Errant Modernism*.
  - 13 Kemp-Welch, *Networking the Bloc*.
  - 14 Exemplified in the work of critics such as Clement Greenberg. See, for example, Greenberg, *Art and Culture*.
  - 15 Gamulin, “Along with the Idolatry of Cézannism,” 318.
  - 16 Ibid., 301.
  - 17 Ibid., 319.
  - 18 Gamulin’s criticism echoed a long-standing debate in twentieth-century art over the relationship of art to the social. Of course, the classic Soviet socialist realist tradition grappled with this as well. According to socialist realism, all modernist art was subordinated to the capitalist project, and its emphasis on the form as content was seen as a sign of art’s servitude to bourgeois values. Paradoxically, modernist artists, and especially the avant-gardes, sought to explore artistic form in order to speak to the social content. With socialist realism, the absence of clear political, popular visual language was seen as elitist. Cézanne was singled out because, historically, he had the greatest influence in the development of formal tendencies in European and Western art. When Gamulin attacked Cézanne, he spoke to the history of the anti-formalist movement that was, in Eastern Europe, largely influenced by political questions.
  - 19 See Horvat-Pintarić, ed., *Kritike i eseji: 1952–2002*.
  - 20 Denegri, “Četiri modela ‘Druge Linije’ u hrvatskoj umjetnosti 1950–1970,” 95.
  - 21 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.
  - 22 By classical liberal perspective I mean an understanding of art production as inherently related to ideas of individualism and individual freedoms as these

- developed in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century classical liberal writing of, for example, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Hayek. In the liberal understanding of identity, emphasis is always placed on the autonomy of the individual and freedom of thought and action, and consequently the individual's freedom is the ultimate measure of society's success. (See, in particular, Mill, *On Liberty*; and Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*.)
- 23 Šuvaković, "Introduction," *Impossible Histories*, 3.
- 24 For an in-depth look at the problematic of the idea of the nation-state and Yugoslavia's history, see Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*. For a more general discussion of the idea of the nation-state and its history, see Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.
- 25 While *Impossible Histories* does not problematize the use of the term modernism per se, it does deal with its general problematic in a cursory way. Where my own project differs is in its treatment of modernism. This book is about nonaligned modernism, and therefore does not treat the issue of the avant-gardes; however, the positionality of the politics is crucial to both projects. For Šuvaković and others who deal with the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde, politics is simply a framework to which artists responded, often in oppositional ways. In my treatment of the subject, politics is an integral part of the narrative and something that artists were actively a part of, or even contributed to shaping.
- 26 The intellectuals who belong to this very diverse group investigate various aspects of Yugoslav socialist history. What connects them is an understanding that Yugoslavia's socialism was shaped by its political and social complexities, which were guided by its commitment to progressive socialist ideas, anticapitalism, and anti-imperialism. That group includes Vukov, "Seven Theses on Neobalkanism"; Zinaić, "Twilight of the Proletariat," 19–54; Rakita, "Prilog kritici teorija modernizacije i tranzitologije u društvenim naukama," 7–32; Spaskovska, *The Last Generation*; Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*; Kilibarda, "Non-Aligned Geographies in the Balkans"; Tumbas, "Decision as Art"; Karamanić and Šuber, eds., *Retracing Images*; Jović-Humphrey, "Aimé Césaire and 'Another Face of Europe,'" 117–48; Grubačić, *Don't Mourn, Balkanize!*; Komelj, "The Partisans in Print," 40–70, and "The Partisan Art Revisited," 86–100; Praznik, *Paradoks nepacanega umetniskega dela*; Levi, *Cinema by Other Means*; and many others.
- 27 Kulić, Thaler, and Mrduljaš, *Modernism In-Between*; Medosch, *New Tendencies*.
- 28 Medosch, *New Tendencies*, 245.

- 29 Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*.
- 30 For more on the current state of economic exploitation in the former Yugoslav territories, see Srečković, *Korporativni imperijalizam*; Srečković, “Zelen(ašk) a ekonomija”; Srečković, “Slobodna zona eksploatacije”; Vragolović, “Lanac izrabljivanja u Benettonovim pogonima”; Risović, “Radni logori pod staklenim zvonom liberalizma.”
- 31 Of course there are many alternative and marginal voices that have been advocating for salvaging socialist history; these voices, unfortunately, are not part of the mainstream political or cultural discourse.
- 32 Here I am mostly referring to analyses of Yugoslav art by Piotr Piotrowski, Ljiljana Kishment, and Ivica Župan, among others, and sociopolitical and cultural analyses offered by academics such as Jelena Subotić.
- 33 See Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*; Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – and After*; Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*; Tismaneanu, ed., *The Revolutions of 1989*, to name a few.
- 34 Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*; Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*; Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism*; Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*; Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*.
- 35 See for example, Mojzeš, *Yugoslavian Inferno*; Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*; Bowman, “Xenophobia, Fantasy, and the Nation.”
- 36 The most prominent of such analyses is Ramet’s *The Three Yugoslavias* in which she mounts a careful and detailed analysis of what she calls “three Yugoslavias,” and argues that, contrary to more simplistic arguments based on analyzing ethnicity and nationalism, Yugoslavia’s failure was based in the inability of its political leadership to establish rule of law and political legitimization for that rule of law. Her starting point, however, is what she theorizes are three points of legitimacy of a state: moral legitimacy based on universalist values, political legitimacy, and economic legitimacy. All three are based in the classical liberal theory of Locke, Hume, Bentham, and Mill. Furthermore, as hers is a centrist and Western view of political and social order, Ramet could not find legitimacy in the Communist Party’s attempts at structuring alternative sociopolitical frameworks. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, 22.
- 37 Ibid., 23.
- 38 Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy*, 3.
- 39 Ibid., 3.
- 40 Bijelić, “Introduction: Blowing Up the ‘Bridge,’” 6.
- 41 Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*, xiii.

- 42 For example, Tomislav Longinović argues that writing about nationalism in the Balkans, which in the 1990s described the region in horror-like terms, is in effect a sign of the West's inability "to see its own reflection in the mirror of Balkan temporality," since "it buries its fears of intrusion from the East in the dark chambers of Dracula's castle." Longinović, "Vampires Like Us." Vesna Goldworthy's *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* similarly points out the undercurrent of gothic narratives when it came to the nineteenth-century representations of the Balkans, especially in British literature. Also see Bijelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the 'Bridge.'"
- 43 Said, *Orientalism*.
- 44 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.
- 45 Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms."
- 46 Bijelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the 'Bridge,'" 4.
- 47 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 49 Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms," 920.
- 50 Bijelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the 'Bridge,'" 4.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 53 Močnik, "The Balkans as an Element of Ideological Mechanisms," 79–116.
- 54 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*.
- 55 Rakita, "Modernization Discourse and Its Discontents," 103–48.
- 56 See Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 383; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 430.
- 57 The Enlightenment/modern subject standing at a distance from the world, claiming a hold on that world, still plays a crucial role in contemporary identity formation and political organizing of society. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have critiqued such radical subject formation because it inevitably leads to instrumentalized reason. The linearity of the Enlightenment narrative of progress, its emphasis on and trust in the objectivity of scientific research, betterment through research, and modes of thinking was based on a noble yet flawed logic that demanded an almost religious belief in reason and its capabilities. More importantly, reason is the property of self-contained, free subjects acting according to their will. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno write that "Enlightenment understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters" (1). The liberation of humanity and

- its rise to the pedestal of sovereignty has produced an overall objectification of nature and the world around us, and in many cases other cultures and humans who were not a part of the Enlightenment logic. It is important to underline that Adorno and Horkheimer do not see instrumentalized reason as unique to the Enlightenment; rather they see it as a constant human impetus driven by self-preservation, and more importantly by the need to rule nature. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 282.
- 58 Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” 24–33.
- 59 Taylor, however, stops short of fully acknowledging the existence of other powerful systems that have shaped Western development.
- 60 Various postcolonial theorists such as Spivak, Bhabha, Fanon, and Said, have pointed out the innate problematic of modernity as an oppressive ideology closely linked to Western colonial and imperial expansion. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*
- 61 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 8–12.
- 62 Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 23.
- 63 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 12.
- 64 Habermas is critical of the postmodern condemnation of modernity that claims a space outside modernity’s gates. For Habermas this is an impossibility simply because, although deconstructive in its nature, the language of postmodernity is still steeped in modernist doctrine. Postmodernity thus fails as a radical movement away from modernism. This does not mean, however, that the critique of rationalism and Enlightenment logic should not take place. But according to Habermas, that critique should acknowledge its place in an ongoing project in which modernity is restructuring itself not only through questioning of its own premises but through what Theodor Adorno would call negative thinking, or thinking against thought. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 430.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 66 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 229; Arnason, “Communism and Modernity,” 61–90; Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” 1–29; Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities*; Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*.
- 67 Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” 2.
- 68 Gaonkar, “On Alternative Modernities,” 1.
- 69 Here I particularly want to point to a Western-centric view of history and more recently its narratives of communism, socialism, and coloniality. It is

especially symptomatic that all three terms have a prefix “post” as finished processes that have now opened up ways to the new globalized social and cultural system. I would like to trouble this assertion.

- 70 The often-reverberated idiom of “the dark communist past” was used especially in the early 1990s during the immediate post-communist era. Politicians, as well as other public figures, would initiate this idiom often in order to distinguish themselves from what was perceived as an evil period in the history of post-communist nations. Unlike other communist countries of Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia this term became a political/ideological weapon that served to assert specific nationalistic discourses, which were often brought up as a way of discerning between the seeming freedom which nationalism now provided and the totalitarian system that closed off any possibility of having national identity asserted. Unfortunately, this kind of approach created an amnesiac view of history through which the fifty years spent in communism truly were left in the dark and that period’s legacies never really assessed.
- 71 The theory of the “second line” comes from Ješa Denegri who argues that the second line represented Yugoslav avant-garde and neo-avant-garde movements that coexisted in parallel to the mainstream modernist art. Denegri, “Četiri modela ‘druge linije.”
- 72 A telling example of the fluid movement between mainstream culture and avant-garde practices are the members of EXAT 51, which Denegri places within the second line, that is, in the first wave of Yugoslav avant-gardes after the Second World War. By 1961, however, some of the key members of EXAT 51 participated in organizing the New Tendencies exhibition, which became one of the most important international exhibitions of new media art. The exhibition was one of the official cultural institutions and was endorsed through grants and funding from the state. In other words, New Tendencies operated both as an avant-garde movement and also as a part of the mainstream culture. For more, see Medosch, *New Tendencies*.

## Chapter One

- 1 The Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists was formed in 1947 to coordinate the functioning of the provincial unions, which were formed a couple of years earlier in several Yugoslav republics. Its mandate was also to support artists’ material and financial needs, to advocate for the role of artists in the new

Yugoslav society, and to promote copyright protection and the purchasing of artwork by public institutions. The first president of the union was the Croatian sculptor Antun Augustinčić. The co-vice-presidents were painters Božidar Jakac and Marko Čelebonović. The union represented several hundred members across the country. It grew in size over the next several decades to represent around 1,600 artists in the 1960s. See Prvi kongres likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije 1947, 317-Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ podgrupa umetnost 1947–1952, box 113, folder 80, Arhiv Jugoslavije; Merenik, *Umetnost i vlast 1945–1951*, 35–60.

- 2 Savez Likovnih Umjetnika FNRJ, “Uvod,” *I. Izložba saveza likovnih umetnika FNR Jugoslavije*, n.p.
- 3 I make a clear distinction between the theory of socialist realism and the related debates and practices. While the Yugoslav case represents a hybrid form of socialist realist ideas and practices, a similar variety of forms of socialist realism existed in the Soviet Union and in other East European countries. In fact, as Susan Reid has argued, studies of how socialist realism was practised in the Soviet Union “demonstrate the contingency of socialist realism upon political and artistic power relations at different historical moment,” making it dependent on conflicts among various artistic factions struggling for dominance and therefore never achieving “a stable, concrete ontology.” Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror,” 154.
- 4 More importantly, Soviet artists and theorists of socialist realism were also unclear on the very issue. As recent work on socialist realist aesthetic has shown, rather than adhering to a clear-cut dogma on how reality and political engagement should be presented, Soviet and other East European artists, writers, critics, and even politicians were far more diverse and ambiguous in their understanding and practice of socialist realism.
- 5 Močnik, “The Partisan Symbolic Politics.”
- 6 The organization and jurying of the exhibition was a complicated process. The Union was sensitive to the fact that not all of the provincial unions of artists were equally developed, so they decided that each republic should hold its own jury to select works that would then be sent to a national jury for final selection. Inevitably, chaos ensued as many of the provincial and national jury members were involved with both levels of selection, and the complicated voting system stalled the organizing even further.
- 7 Ibid., n.p. [my translation].
- 8 Popović, “Izložba Saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije,” 3.

- 9 “Typification” describes the tendency to create specific narrative and easily discernible types of characters in paintings. It was a proscription developed in the process of theorizing socialist realist aesthetic in the 1920s and 1930s. See Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 126; and Bown, *Art under Stalin*. Reid argues, on the other hand, that what was meant by typification was in dispute throughout the 1930s and resulted in the Soviet art world’s division into several different factions with opposing opinions. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror.”)
- 10 Protić, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka*, 387.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Protić’s criticism, however, also needs contextualization. As a staunch modernist, he dismissed early postwar Yugoslav art on the basis of its ideological inclinations. But his own attitudes were influenced by an unequivocal, and perhaps even uncritical, acceptance of high modernist aesthetic dogma that dismissed all forms of art that did not conform to it once Yugoslav culture divorced itself from Stalinism. This is also perhaps why Protić was unable to recognize Ilić’s own modernist inclinations buried under political content.
- 13 Todić, *Fotografija i propaganda 1945–1958*, 48. Todić’s argument, however, falls somewhat flat as she never fully explains what she means by “optical reproductive techniques” and how these techniques feature in Ilić’s painting.
- 14 For more on the formal structure of socialist realist cinema, see Närepea, “Nature, Movement, Liminality,” 91.
- 15 Popović, “Izložba Saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije,” 3.
- 16 Grga Gamulin, one of the most prominent theorists of socialist realist art in postwar Yugoslavia, wrote a number of texts in which he explored formal techniques employed by modernist artists. He used such texts to weed out problematic formalist content and “teach” a new generation of socialist artists what not to do in their own work. The most famous of these texts is “Along with the Idolatry of Cézannism,” in which he attacked Cézanne’s work, and in particular his penchant for impressionist formalism and “l’art pour l’art-ism.” In the short years of socialist realist art, Gamulin’s text was key to understanding the basic tenets of the Yugoslav approach to socialist realist theory. Gamulin, “Uz idolatriju Cézannizma.”
- 17 Susan Reid posits that, during the late 1930s debates over what socialist realist aesthetic was, there were several different camps of artists who strongly disagreed as to what socially engaged art should be, or how it should be easily readable to the majority of the people. While standard analyses of socialist



- realism in the West have always emphasized the totalitarian nature of socialist realism under Stalin, Reid argues that the field was much broader and diverse. However, the diversity had its limits and the more conservative views represented by Aleksandr Gerasimov and the “AKHRR camp” were dominant in this period. Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror,” 156.
- 18 Zogović was a staunch Stalinist. Together with Milovan Djilas he belonged to a group of Montenegrin intellectuals who spearheaded the initial, and quite crude, agitprop cultural policy of the early postwar era. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 3: 106.
- 19 Zogović, “K licu čovjeka!” 330.
- 20 Ibid., 331.
- 21 Ibid., 329.
- 22 Divergent views on socialist realism existed across Eastern Europe, and there were modernist tendencies in all of its forms in various countries. What was different in Yugoslavia, however, was that its political break with Stalin allowed for an earlier and faster adoption of modernist tendencies, which in many ways preceded those in other East European countries by some ten to fifteen years.
- 23 Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, 38 [my translation].
- 24 For more on the reception of the show, see Mitić, “The Exhibition of Four Soviet Painters in Belgrade, 1947.”
- 25 Gamulin, “O vulgarizaciji diskusije i umjetnosti.”
- 26 Djordjević, “Socijalistički realizam 1945–1950,” 75.
- 27 The first meeting of the newly formed Yugoslav Union of Fine Artists was held right after the 1947 show, and even though there was much discussion around what constituted socialist realism, there was no mention of the exhibition, nor was there an in-depth discussion of the Soviet aesthetic models.
- 28 Reid, “Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror,” 183.
- 29 Part of Djilas’s zeal can be attributed to his staunch support of the Soviet Union, and the rest to his vision of art as a tool of the state rather than a separate intellectual and creative activity. “Izveštaj sa I. Kongresa saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije,” Zagreb, 17 December 1947, Belgrade Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317: Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, podgrupa Sektor za visoke škole nauku u umetnost, 1947–952, box 113, folder 80.
- 30 Djilas, “Izveštaj o agitaciono-propagandnom radu,” *V Kongres KPJ – Izveštaji i referati*, n.p.
- 31 Čelebonović, “Prva izložba Saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije.”

- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Bihalji-Merin, "Prva izložba Saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije."
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Popović, "Izložba Saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije," 320.
- 37 Kolečnik, *Između istoka i zapada*, 38.
- 38 Ustav saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije, 1947, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, podgrupa Sektor za visoke škole nauku u umetnost, 1947–1952, box 113, folder 80.
- 39 Stenografske beleške: Drugi plenum uprave saveza likovnih umetnika FNRJ, 1949, Arhiv Jugoslavije 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ podgrupa umetnost, 1947–1952, box 113, folder 80.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 The 1947 stated goals were to improve working conditions of the artists, but also to create a unified and revolutionary art for the socialist state. Izveštaj sa I. Kongresa saveza likovnih umetnika Jugoslavije, Zagreb, 17 December 1947, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, podgrupa Sektor za visoke škole nauku u umetnost, 1947–1952, box 113, folder 80.
- 43 Stenografske beleške: Drugi plenum uprave saveza likovnih umetnika FNRJ, 1949, Arhiv Jugoslavije 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ podgrupa umetnost 1947–1952, box 113, folder 80.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Reid, "Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror," 154.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Protić, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka*, 359.
- 49 Matthew Bown has shown that use of Impressionist techniques and conceptual practices went through several phases in Soviet art (it was accepted in the early 1920s only to be rejected at the height of Stalin's pogroms, and finally silently tolerated and somewhat rehabilitated by the end of the 1930s). Nonetheless, Impressionist emphasis on the surface, the brush-stroke, and more general concerns with colour and form, as Bown argues, went against the very nature of socialist realism as it was described by its main proponents. (See Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*). Susan Reid, on the other hand, argues that Impressionism and other more expressive (modernist forms) became acceptable after the Second World War, and even the

- staunchest socialist realist supporters accepted its presence. Christina Kier and Andris Teikmanis agree with Reid's assessment and offer further proof of the variety of formal interests within what is loosely called socialist realism. (See Reid, "Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror," 164; Kier, "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour?," 323–4; Teikmanis, "Towards Models of Socialist Realism," 97–9.) This ambiguous position on Impressionism can also be felt in the Yugoslav critical response to the 1949 exhibition, and in the later accounts of socialist realist practices by art historians such as Protić.
- 50 Protić, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka*, 356. And yet, when Union members discussed the 1949 exhibition, their language is very much imbued with technical (read formal) interests such as whether it is more difficult to paint landscapes or large-scale compositions, and whether the human figure is properly drawn and in perspective.
- 51 Protic, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka*, 360.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid, 355–6; also see Kolešnik, *Između istoka i zapada*.
- 54 Nicodemus, "Introduction: African Modern Art," 18.
- 55 Ibid., 20.
- 56 Spehnjak, "Prosvjetno-kulturna politika u Hrvatskoj 1945–48." See also Miloradović, "'Hegemonisti' i 'revolucionari.'"
- 57 For more on the autonomy of the republics and the relationship between the federal and the provincial organizations, see Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy*.
- 58 Djordjević, "Socijalistički realizam 1945–1950," 72.
- 59 A 1951 report on professional artists' material/economic status states that Bosnia and Herzegovina had only twenty-seven recognized professional artists, Macedonia fourteen, and Montenegro nineteen. The same report states that in 1941 the same provinces had twelve, five, and one artist respectively. At the same time larger provinces such as Serbia had 259 artists in 1951 and eighty-five in 1941. Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, br. fascikle 78, br. jedinice opisa, arhivska jedinica 110 (1–937), Podaci o materijalnom položaju likovnih umetnika. In terms of art institutions, the statistics were similar. A 1955 report on the museum and gallery institutions in Yugoslavia states that in 1939 Serbia (the province with the largest population) had fourteen museums and galleries, Bosnia only three, and Montenegro two. Arhiv Jugoslavije, "Muzeji i galerije: stanje i potrebe," Fond 218, Kultura, Muzeji, fascikla 145.
- 60 Protić, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka*, 360.

- 61 Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i zapada*, 160.
- 62 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, vol. 3. Also see Svetković, “Jugoslavija i istočnoevropske zemlje u susedstvu 1953–1958: Opservacija, akcija, rezultati.”
- 63 See Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, 5.
- 64 Kreft, *Spopad na umetniški levici (međ vojnama)*, 9.
- 65 Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici*, 6–7.
- 66 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 1: III.
- 67 Pantić, “Ideologija intimističkog estetizma u Srpskom modernističkom slikarstvu između dva svetska rata.” According to Pantić, intimist modernism was practised and theorized by various artistic groups that subscribed to mainstream modernism.
- 68 Ironically, this complex mechanism of political and social control rested on the dual role of culture: on the one hand, to outwardly showcase Yugoslavia’s belonging among the imperial European centres, thus proving its maturity as a civilized, democratic nation-state, but on the other hand to keep traditional feudal sociopolitical structures intact. Pantić, “Ideologija intimističkog estetizma,” 480.
- 69 In the late 1970s Cuban poet and cultural critic Roberto Fernández Retamar wrote an essay in which he reflected on the relationship between the Americas and the West. He stressed the ambiguity of the bourgeoisie’s political position vis-à-vis both the independence movements and ongoing class revolutions. According to Retamar, the bourgeois class’s position, based on protecting its tenuous hold on power, prevented it from supporting pan-American movements, instead opting for the creation of more modest projects of building separate nation-states. Retamar, “Our America and the West,” 9.
- 70 Pantić, “Ideologija intimističkog estetizma,” 474.
- 71 As Lev Kreft has shown, there was a variety of political and aesthetic positions on the Yugoslav left in the 1920s and 1930s. In the early 1920s a split occurred on the left between the so-called centrists and leftists that influenced further aesthetic debates between 1929 and 1939. Kreft, *Spopad na umetniški levici (međ vojnama)*, 11.
- 72 Pantić, “Ideologija intimističkog estetizma,” 22.
- 73 See Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*.
- 74 Krleža has done this in both his theoretical nonfiction work and in his fiction. Some of the clearest examples of his critique of the petit bourgeois mentality in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Croatia are *The*

*Return of Philip Latinowicz* (1932), *Ballads of Petrica Kerempuh* (1936), and *Gospoda Glembajevi: drama u tri čina* (*Messrs. Glembay: A Drama in Three Acts from the Life of One Agrarier Patrician Family*) (1928).

- 75 Although Krleža's speech is considered the final blow to socialist realism in Yugoslavia, as early as 1949 Edvard Kardelj, the author of Yugoslavia's "third way," both economically and politically, had proclaimed the bankruptcy of the Soviet cultural and scientific models. In his speech to the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences he characterized the Soviet sociopolitical and cultural model as fetishizing and antidemocratic, and included in his critique the Soviet understanding of art's role in the socialist revolution. Kardelj, "Govor tov. Edvarda Kardelja na svečani skupščini Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti."
- 76 For an in-depth historical discussion of the colonial and semi-colonial histories of the ex-Yugoslav territories, see for example, Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs*; Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.
- 77 Krleža, "Govor na kongresu književnika u Ljubljani on 5 October 1952." [my translation]
- 78 An aesthetic term used mostly in Yugoslav criticism, and in criticism of some Eastern European countries, referring to the notion of art for art's sake. However, it is a version of the original French term, and as such gained a theoretical life of its own, particularly in the context of the twentieth-century Yugoslav critiques of modernism.
- 79 Peter Bürger would argue the same thing decades later. See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Only in the late twentieth century were art historians ready to account for the problematic Western modernist tradition. Postcolonial approaches to art history have brought to the fore numerous instances of orientaling and exoticizing representations in modern art. Books such as Harrison, Frascina, and Perry's *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction*, Flam and Deutch's *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art*, and Antliff and Leighten's *Cubism and Culture* brought to awareness the paradoxes of the modernist tradition. While many artists saw themselves as left-leaning, anti-bourgeois, and even anticolonialist, they were, at the same time, implicated in representational visual practices based in primitivist, Eurocentric discourses. Balkan cultures and their representations in European consciousness fit within the same postcolonial discourse. This observation was crucial for Krleža's rejection of Western modernism, and his call for creation of an indigenous aesthetic production.

- 80 Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, 22.
- 81 Krleža, “Referat na plenumu saveza knjizevnika 10 oktobra 1954.”
- 82 Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, 57.
- 83 Ibid. [my translation]
- 84 Here we see a similarity to other non-Western theorists of the time such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire. For more on contacts between Yugoslav and Caribbean intellectuals, and other intellectuals of colour, in the interwar period, see Jović-Humphrey, “Aimé Césaire and ‘Another Face of Europe.’”
- 85 Kardelj, *Pravci razvoja političkog sistema socijalističkog samoupravljanja*.
- 86 Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia*, 9.
- 87 Ibid., 10.
- 88 Ibid., 11.
- 89 Stevanović writes about Ilić’s removal from public life and his difficult struggles after. See Stevanović, *Boža Ilić*.

## Chapter Two

- 1 As noted in chapter one, the official state policy was to support socialist realism as the approved cultural form, even though, unofficially, a number of different positions on modernism coexisted with this hardline position. As the state broke away from Stalin, it encouraged opening up to both West and East in politics and culture. This opened the doors to freer exchange of ideas, cultural products, and art.
- 2 Protić, ed., *Jugoslovensko slikarstvo šeste decenije*, 17.
- 3 Political scientist S.P. Ramet argues that the failure of the Yugoslav socialist state can be traced back to the 1950s when the state attempted to transform its socialist system by introducing a series of liberal reforms. According to Ramet, these were never fully implemented, which led to a crisis in legitimacy of the state and its eventual breakup. Although Ramet’s argument is problematic, as she insists on a particular political structure based on traditional liberal formulations and ignores a more classic Marxist understanding of state-building, her observation about the attempts on the part of the Yugoslav state to introduce a more democratic approach to social and political organization, and its links to liberalism, are valid and important. It is these precise notions that lent themselves so well to the adoption of modernism in the cultural sphere. For more, see Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*.

- 4 For more on the various theories of modernism and its malleability, see Marter, ed., *Abstract Expressionism*; Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism 1940–1960*; Drucker, *Theorizing Modernism*; Eisenstadt “Multiple Modernities”; Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities*.
- 5 See Drucker, *Theorizing Modernism*.
- 6 This was argued in some of the classical studies on modernism such as Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*; Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* and *The Rules of Art*; more recently, by Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Harris et al., *Modernism in Dispute*; and Pollock and Zemans, *Museums after Modernism*.
- 7 Harris, “Abstract Expressionism and the Politics of Criticism,” 42; Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.
- 8 Guilbaut, “Disdain for the Stain,” 42–4.
- 9 Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 44.
- 10 Jachec, “Modernism, Enlightenment Values, and Clement Greenberg,” 4.
- 11 See Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 30.
- 12 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito’s Yugoslavia*.
- 13 Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 62.
- 14 See Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*; Djilas, *The New Class*.
- 15 Unkovski-Korica examines this period and distinguishes between early forms of self-management of the late 40s and early 50s and those of the late 50s and 1960s. Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito’s Yugoslavia*
- 16 Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*, 35.
- 17 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, vol. 3.
- 18 This is where we see a tension between the will to reform socialism and the inability to move beyond traditional, even conservative, Marxist thought. Historian Hilde Katrine Haug argues that the Party, and Tito in particular, was too pragmatic in its understanding of socialism, and in its implementation, to fully enact the necessary changes that the theory of self-management demanded. If it had been implemented properly, the self-management system would have imparted full authority to the local workers’ organization, in effect creating a form of direct democracy that did not require ideological leadership of the state, or the Communist Party. While a small group of party intellectuals saw this as a welcome outcome of the process of moving toward truly revolutionary ideals, the majority could not allow for the consequences such a system would bring to Yugoslavia. Milovan Djilas was among those who considered self-management a step toward establishing

a democratic socialist system; however, he never managed to change the minds of those in power and instead was arrested and ostracized from the Party. For more, see Haug, *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia*.

- 19 Djilas, *The New Class*, 45.
- 20 Ibid., 45.
- 21 Lukić, “Socijalistički estetizam,” 11.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Trifunović, “Oktobarski salon – u znaku mladih generacija.”
- 24 See Denegri, “Inside or Outside ‘Socialist Modernism?’”; Trifunović, *Enformel u Beogradu*.
- 25 Denegri’s use of the term aestheticism was related to earlier uses of the term by other Yugoslav art historians, most notably Sveta Lukić and Lazar Trifunović, who used it to describe art that was characterized by its inclination to separate itself from the social, to be autonomous, by its insistence on formalism and by ideologically correct and unproblematic narratives.
- 26 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 26.
- 27 “The Yugoslav art world generally becomes, in the mid-1950s, a relatively homogenous ideological organism that assumes in the course of time the characteristics and social standing of the mainstream, despite differing language models used in the articulation of the artists of each generation. We are not, of course, dealing with an official state and party artistic line here in the manner of socialist realism, but this was nevertheless a type of art that was generally, or even particularly, favoured by the powers that governed social promotion (benefits for exhibiting in the country, selections abroad, purchasing committees, and appointments of professors at art academies).”
- 28 Mirlesse, “Interview with Bogdan Bogdanović,” 4.
- 29 Trifunović, *Enformel u Beogradu*, 11.
- 30 Lidija Merenik makes this argument as well. Merenik, *Umetnost i vlast*.
- 31 The first exhibition showcasing forms of international modernism was not in fact organized by an international institution, but by the National Museum in Belgrade. The exhibition, entitled *Newer French Art from the Art Museum Collections*, was opened in March 1950. Along with the usual suspects preferred by more traditional members of the Yugoslav art scene, works by Matisse, Picasso, Duffy, Cézanne, and Modigliani were also shown. These stirred some not-so-favourable reviews, with one by Dragan Jeremić qualifying the exhibition as an example of “French decadent painting” (Jeremić, “Francusko dekadentno slikarstvo”).



- 32 This was, to date, the largest and most important international exhibition to bring in many contemporary French artists who clearly represented modernist tendencies. The exhibition was an enormous success and stirred an impressive response from artists, critics, and politicians. There were an unprecedented fifty reviews, op-ed texts, and more detailed articles about the exhibition. It prompted a lively and engaged discussion among artists and art critics and helped to break the proverbial ice, leading to more open dealings with modernist tendencies.
- 33 Bondžić, “Školovanje studenata iz zemalja u razvoju kao deo spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1950–1961,” 642.
- 34 Leo Mateš argued that Yugoslavia’s pragmatic view of international relations, in seeking to quickly re-enter international politics after the break with Stalin in 1948 and re-engage with the West, comes from the history of the Second World War partisan resistance when alliances were forged even with those international parties that were in opposition to the communist ideals espoused by the Yugoslav partisans. Mateš, *Medjunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 11.
- 35 There was a short break in diplomatic and cultural relations between the two countries. In 1946 the American Office of War Information (OWI) was requested to stop its activities in Belgrade because of its “anticommunist” propaganda. The office was shut down, but soon after resumed work, as the Yugoslav side was assured that the American tactics would change. Internal report, Neka pitanja informativno-propagandne delatnosti SAD u FNRJ 24 October 1962. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, Sektor za visoke škole, nauku i umetnost-veze sa inozemstvom. Fascikla 7.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Yugoslavia started its international campaign for cooperation relatively early. The first agreements on cultural exchange and cooperation between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and Hungary were reached by 1945 and 1946. In the late 1940s a number of Bulgarian and Albanian students arrived to study in Yugoslavia, and in 1953 the first students from Myanmar and India came to study at Yugoslav universities. See Bondžić, “Školovanje studenata iz zemalja u razvoju kao deo spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1950–1961,” 644; Various texts of agreements on cultural exchange and cooperation: Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 317, Sektor za visoke škole, nauku i umetnost-Veze sa inozemstvom. Fascikla 7.
- 38 Ibid.

- 39 Susan Woodward writes about the loans and trade between Yugoslavia and the West in the early 1950s. See Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy*.
- 40 Prior to the formation of the socialist Yugoslavia, there were artists (who can be considered part of the Yugoslav cultural territory) who exhibited at the Venice Biennale. During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, artists regularly showcased their work. For more, see Košćević, *Venecijanski Biennale i jugoslavenska moderna umjetnost*.
- 41 Martini and Martini, *Just Another Exhibition*, 106.
- 42 Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale 1948–1964*, 5.
- 43 Petar Šegedin. Izveštaj o Jugoslovenskom učešću na Venecijanskom Bienalu 17 august, 1950. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, Sektor za visoke škole nauku i kulturu. Fascikla 92.
- 44 Petar Šegedin. Pismo Jugoslovenskom savjetu za nauku i kulturu, 24 decembar, 1950. Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317, Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, Sektor za visoke škole nauku i kulturu. Fascikla 92.
- 45 Milkić, “Diplomacy through Culture,” 250.
- 46 Ibid., 250.
- 47 Petar Šegedin. Izveštaj o Jugoslovenskom učešću na Venecijanskom Bienalu 17 august, 1950. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 317 Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, Sektor za visoke škole nauku i kulturu. Fascikla 92.
- 48 Košćević, *Venecijanski Biennale*, 35.
- 49 Petar Šegedin. Izveštaj o Jugoslovenskom učešću na Venecijanskom Bienalu 17 august, 1950. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 317 Savet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, Sektor za visoke škole nauku i kulturu. Fascikla 92.
- 50 Gamulin, “Zapisi sa Biennala II,” 112.
- 51 Putar, “Poezija racionalnog Utisci sa Bienala u Veneciji 1952.”
- 52 Radovani, “XXVI Biennale 1952: Marini ili Calder.”
- 53 Protić, “Slikarstvo šeste decenije u Srbiji.”
- 54 Košćević, *Venecijanski Biennale*, 36
- 55 Nancy Jachec and Frances Stonor Saunders both posit that acceptance of modernism, especially postwar modernism in the United States, was more controversial and difficult than is usually narrated in the official histories of art. At the height of the McCarthy era, it would have been equally difficult to present a show of Abstract Expressionism in the US as in the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*; Saunders *The Cultural Cold War*.
- 56 Denegri, *Teme Srpske umetnosti 1945–1970*, 95.

- 57 All the major postwar modernist artists from Yugoslavia had international residencies or exhibited internationally both before the war and after it. For example, Vojin Bakić participated in a one-month art residency in Paris in 1949 (Maroević, “Vojin Bakić,” 62). Dušan Džamonja also spent several months in Paris in 1953 (Ž. Sabol, “Dušan Džamonja,” 375–6). Petar Lubarda travelled throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. He had his first solo show in Rome in 1929, and participated in *Salon des Indépendants* in 1927 (Kolarić, “Petar Lubarda,” 209–11). Likewise, Zoran Mušič intermittently lived and worked in Venice and Paris in the 1940s and early 1950s. He exhibited both in Europe and in Yugoslavia (Zalar, “Zoran Mušič,” 402).
- 58 Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*, 7.
- 59 Dondero, “A Speech Given in the United States House of Representatives, 16 August 1949,” in Chipp and Selz, *Theories of Modern Art*, 496.
- 60 Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 254. Nancy Jachec argues that it took at least a decade for the State Department and USIS, as well as MOMA, to realize the importance of Abstract Expressionism for American foreign policy. Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 159.
- 61 Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*, 160.
- 62 Barr, “Is Modern Art Communistic?” reprinted in Sandler and Newman, *Defining Modern Art*, 214–19.
- 63 Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*, 8.
- 64 Catherine Dossin has argued that MOMA’s circulating international exhibitions were in part intended to educate international audiences about the history of American art and also to improve the international prestige of American culture. See Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art*.
- 65 See Krleža, “Govor na kongresu književnika u Ljubljani”; Supek, “Konfuzija oko astratizma”; Bašičević, “Jezik abstraktne umetnosti.”
- 66 Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, 51; Joseph Kolarek wrote several USIS memos from Belgrade about the MOMA show from which it became clear that he was involved in negotiations to bring the show to Belgrade. See Foreign Service Dispatch, USIS Belgrade to USIS Washington, 20 February 1957, 1945–1951, box 46, file 517, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”), Munich Central Collecting Point.
- 67 Ivo Frol, Beleška, poseta kulturnog atašea pri Ambasadi SAD u Beogradu gospodje Mravinje 4 maja 1956 godine. Diplomatski arhiv ministarstva spoljnih poslova, Beograd, Serbia.
- 68 Ibid.

- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Zabeleška Đorđa Popovića o izložbi MOMA u Beogradu. 1956, Belgrade, Diplomatski arhiv ministarstva spoljnih poslova.
- 71 Ristić, *Politička književnost*, 261.
- 72 Kennan's speech is widely accepted as one of the crucial moments in MOMA's history. Kennan was also a member of MOMA's International Council and had a direct say in how future cultural work would proceed.
- 73 Foreign Service Dispatch, Joseph Kolarek usis Belgrade to usis Washington, 20 February 1957, 1945–1951 Box 46 file 517 Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points "Ardelia Hall Collection" Munich Central Collecting Point.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Porter A. McCray interview by Paul Cummings, 17 September–4 October 1977 for the Archives of American Art, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-porter-mccray-12974>.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 For more, see Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism*; Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*; Wulf, *U.S. International Exhibitions during the Cold War*; Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*.
- 78 Foreign Service Dispatch, Joseph Kolarek usis Belgrade to usis Washington, July 1957, box 46, file 517, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points ("Ardelia Hall Collection"): Munich Central Collecting Point.
- 79 Foreign Service Dispatch, Joseph Kolarek usis Belgrade to usis Washington, 20 February 1957. Box 46 file 517 Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points ("Ardelia Hall Collection"): Munich Central Collecting Point.
- 80 Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art*, 135.
- 81 Dossin, "To Drip or to Pop? The European Triumph of American Art," 84.
- 82 Putar, "Suvremena umjetnost Amerike."
- 83 Depolo, "Izložba suvremene američke umjetnosti: u tri beogradska salona."
- 84 Protić, "Američka savremena umetnost."
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Catherine Dossin argues that the show's popularity in Frankfurt was due to MOMA's exceptional promotional campaign and an already powerful American presence in Germany. Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art*, 135.
- 88 This was the first of many meetings between Tito, President Nasser of Egypt and President Nehru of India. The three would become founders and first

signatories of the Non-Aligned Movement. The 1956 meeting in Yugoslavia on Tito's personal ship "Galeb" was organized to set the agenda for the founding of the movement.

- 89 UNESCO was formed under the auspices of the UN as the UN's cultural arm. Its mandate is to protect, promote, fund, and develop world heritage. For more, see "Introducing UNESCO," in UNESCO.org [database online], <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>.
- 90 d'Harnoncourt, "Uvod," in *Katalog savremena umetnost u SAD iz zbirki Museum of Modern Art New York*, Komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom FNRJ, 3. [my translation]
- 91 Ryan, "Interview with William D. Broderick on October 8, 1990," 16; See also Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat*.
- 92 "Prepiska izmedju vlada FNRJ i SAD u vezi sa zaključenjem sporazuma o pomoći u hrani i pomoći za potrebe Jugoslovenskih oružanih snaga," and "Sporazum izmedju vlade FNRJ i vlade SAD u vezi sa davanjem pomoći prema zakonu o hitnoj pomoći Jugoslaviji od 1950 godine," in Petranović and Zečević, eds., *Jugoslavija: 1918–1988*.
- 93 Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy*, 25.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 95 Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*.
- 96 This can be traced throughout the 1950s both in the advocacy of the official artist and architect associations, and also via the work of the ministry responsible for artistic production (Federal Secretariat for Education and Culture). The secretariat's reports on the state of museum institutions reveal the urgency with which officials and artists approached building the infrastructure for housing, exhibiting, and researching art and culture. The Yugoslav association of fine artists also began an advocacy campaign not only to provide better conditions for artists (something that they were also doing in the 1940s), but now demanding the creation of committees to organize the purchase of artists' work in new construction, administrative buildings, and other public spaces, as well as proper representation of artists in international exhibitions. See Muzeji i galerije: stanje i potrebe. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 318 Savezni sekretariat za obrazovanje i kulturu. Obrazloženje opšteg zakona o muzejskim ustanovama 1953–1967. Fascikla 145; Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 318 Savezni sekretariat za obrazovanje i kulturu 1953–1967. Fascikla 145; Macura. Na putu ka integraciji likovnih umjetnosti 31.1. 1964. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 318 Savezni sekretariat za obrazovanje i kulturu. Fascikla 147.

- 97 The propping up of the moderate form of socialism in Yugoslavia as a contrast to the rigidity of Moscow's policies in Eastern Europe parallels the urban renewal of Western Berlin in the 1960s as an instant visual reminder of the advantages of capitalism. However, Americans were never too sure of how the Yugoslav side would react in international negotiations, especially in the UN. With increased Yugoslav presence in the UN (in the Security Council in particular), Americans were worried about Yugoslavia playing "both sides." President Tito and the diplomatic core, as well as the various Yugoslav negotiators and diplomats, were well aware of America's worries and played both sides of the Cold War. See Torbert, "Interview with Robert G. Cleveland on June 9, 1990."
- 98 Mateš, *Medjunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 122.
- 99 Leo Mateš writes that during the critical days when the UN Security Council debated the Korean situation, Yugoslavia put forward an amendment that did not favour either side in the conflict. This amendment was in some ways a prototype of what nonaligned politics would stand for a decade later. At the same Security Council meeting, tellingly, no one voted for the Yugoslav amendment, and the future nonaligned member states India and Egypt abstained. At the same time Yugoslavia was the lone dissenting voice when it came to the American resolution, which was voted in with nine member votes and Yugoslavia abstaining. What is even more important, as Mateš argues, was the subsequent General Assembly debate that followed the Security Council debate, in which future nonaligned member states (Yugoslavia, Syria, India, Egypt, and Lebanon) voted and debated as a bloc. See Mateš, *Medjunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 122.
- 100 The European Society of Culture (sac) was formed in 1950 in order to address the politics of culture; its flagship publication was the journal *Comprendre*. In its pages European and non-European intellectuals debated some of the key issues of their time, the most important of which was the influence of Cold War tensions on cultural production. As part of its mandate, *Comprendre* and SAC initiated a vigorous dialogue with various non-European intellectuals, and those who were behind the so-called Iron Curtain. See Jachec, "The 'Adresse aux Intellectuels de l'Europe et du Monde' (1952) and Its Aftermath." Ristić was particularly troubled by the ways in which SAC framed these interactions. In his critique of the European intellectuals' attempts to connect with the Eastern European cultural workers, Ristić pointed out that Western European intellectuals exhibited a high degree

of prejudice and bias. In fact, reading between the lines of his first text in *Comprendre*, one can see the ways in which Ristić's critique is also a critique of the West and its patronizing, even racist, view of the East, and Yugoslavia in particular. Ristić, "Culture et coexistence," 138.

101 Ristić, "Culture et coexistence," 138.

102 Ristić, "Savremena umetnost u SAC."

103 "Josip Broz Tito, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Jawaharlal Nehru zajednicka izjava potpisana na Brionima 19 jula, 1956," Arhiv Jugoslavije, Kabinet predsednika Republike 837, I-3-c/2.

104 The following principles were produced at the end of the Bandung Conference:

"1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.

4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.

5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

6. Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.

7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.

8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.

10. Respect for justice and international obligation."

"Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955)," 169.

105 Mateš, *Medjunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 136.

106 Mateš, *Počelo je u Beogradu: 20 godina nesvrstanih*, 32.

107 The Bandung Conference, organized in Indonesia in 1955, was a first meeting of newly emerging postcolonial states from Africa and Asia. The

conference was imagined as a way of securing space for the countries that did not belong to either of the two blocs. It became a part of the history of creation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. See Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire*; McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*.

- 108 Kolečnik, *Između istoka i zapada*, 463.
- 109 Kolečnik often uses polemical language when describing squabbles over the meaning and place of art, calling Croatian art between 1945 and 1950 “provincial.” She dismisses the importance of these debates (no matter how dogmatic or political they might seem) on the Croatian and Yugoslavian art scene. Kolečnik, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, 92–4.
- 110 Rao, ed., *Non-Aligned and Developing Countries: Basic Documents*, 6.
- 111 Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 3: 288–91.
- 112 The state’s and the Communist Party’s inability to implement a more radical political reform of socialism created an ongoing tension between different political factions in Yugoslavia. Traditional views on Marxism continually blocked more forward-looking plans for the future of the country, creating a constantly shifting political system. The most complete critique of this is found in the work of the philosophical group Praxis. For more, see Marković and Petrović, eds., *Praxis: Yugoslav Essays in the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences*.
- 113 Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism*, 13.
- 114 *Ibid.*

### Chapter Three

- 1 Prashad, *Darker Nations*, xv.
- 2 The International Council of Museums was created in 1946 as a global non-governmental organization of museum institutions. It maintains formal relations with UNESCO and other cultural and political fora.
- 3 Sekelj, “An Ethnologic Museum of the Future,” 261.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 262.
- 5 Tibor Sekelj, Projekat: Muzej “Čovek i njegov svet.” Arhiv Jugoslavije, fond 320, fascikla 42: Kultura prosveta i nauka.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*



- 8 Prashad, *Darker Nations*, xv.
- 9 This argument is also based on antistatist theories, which hold that emancipatory or progressive projects cannot exist on the level of the state, only on the level of individual actors. For more, see Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement*; Tassin, “Lift Up Your Head, My Brother”; Dietrich, “Arab Oil Belongs to the Arabs.”
- 10 Subotić and Vučetić, “Performing Solidarity.”
- 11 For more on this earlier history of socialism in Yugoslavia and the Balkans, see Živković, *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*.
- 12 The terms South-South cooperation, or Global South, designate cooperation, exchange, and collaboration between developing countries. The impetus for this cooperation came as a direct result of the post-Second World War liberation movements, subsequent creation of new nation-states, and resolutions established at the 1955 Bandung Conference. See Acharya, “Studying the Bandung Conference from a Global IR Perspective.”
- 13 Kovačić, “Kominternu i forsiranje antifašističkog ustanka u Hrvatskoj 1941.-slučaj Kerestinec.”
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Davor Kovačić points out that the Comintern regularly interfered in Yugoslav resistance strategies, often forcing various unnecessary and dangerous missions that supported their military agenda, but not the agenda or the goals of Yugoslav resistance.
- 16 Plenča, “Borba za nezavisnost i integritet, 1941–1948,” 8.
- 17 Early in its history, socialist Yugoslavia had to both oppose and negotiate with the future Cold War powers. The Yugoslav leadership refused certain demands made by the Great Powers, but had to compromise on others. Concessions were necessary in order to gain political, military, and economic support. The US, the UK, and the USSR used food, military, and monetary aid as a form of punishment and to force Yugoslav partisans to comply. Throughout the war, Yugoslavs were blackmailed with sanctions if they disobeyed direct orders. Plenča, “Borba za nezavisnost i integritet, 1941–948,” 11.
- 18 Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja (AVNOJ), or the People’s Anti-fascist Liberation Council, was the first formal state body. It marked the founding of socialist Yugoslavia and later served as a constitutive model for the postwar legal and executive political system.
- 19 Plenča, “Borba za nezavisnost i integritet, 1941–1948,” 42.

- 20 Ibid., 43.
- 21 Ibid., 45.
- 22 Kićović, “Dosledna politika nezavisnosti.”
- 23 Plenča, “Borba za nezavisnost i integritet, 1941–1948,” 45.
- 24 Woodward, *The Balkan Tragedy*, 23.
- 25 Kićović, “Dosledna politika nezavisnosti,” 61.
- 26 Njaradi, “The Balkan Studies.”
- 27 A demarcation first outlined in Maria Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans*.
- 28 Njardi, “The Balkan Studies,” 189.
- 29 İ. ül-Haşim Nureddin Fikri, Dimetokada Kanlı Bir Levha, quoted in Boyar, *Turks and the Balkans*, 79.
- 30 Ruthner, “Habsburg’s Little Orient.”
- 31 Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918*, 166–7.
- 32 Živković, “The Balkan Socialist Tradition and the Balkan Federation, 1871–1915,” 3.
- 33 Some historians (for example, Maria Todorova) have a difficult time placing the Ottoman Empire in the same category as Austro-Hungarian or French imperial projects. Although their approaches to domination and conquest were indeed different, both the Ottomans and the British/French sought to systematically dominate particular regions and extract resources and labour through hegemonic structures imposed from the imperial centre – particular economic and cultural policies, or sheer military might. That the Ottoman Empire afforded a limited autonomy to the subjugated populations does not preclude it from participating in the same imperial process. See Young, *Postcolonialism*; Makdisi, “Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism”; and Green, *Notes from the Balkans*. For a discussion of medieval colonial projects, which sheds further light on the argument about various methodologies of colonization, see Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization*.
- 34 For more, see Cazi, *Prva radnička društva u Hrvatskoj, 1860–1880*; Korać, *Povjest radničkog pokreta u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji I and II*; Mileta, “Preteča komunističkog pokreta: socijalna demokracija u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji 1890–1914”; Živković, *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*; Globačnik, “Najranija recepcija Marxove misli medju južnim Slavenima u Habsburskoj Monarhiji i Srbiji.”
- 35 Živković, “The Origins of the Balkan Socialist Tradition,” 16.
- 36 Marković, “Serbia in the East: Conclusion (1872)” 21.
- 37 Tucović, “Austria-Hungary in the Balkans,” 139.
- 38 Globačnik, “Rana socijalistička misao,” 187.

- 39 Cazi, *Prva radnička društva u Hrvatskoj, 1860–1880*, 233.
- 40 Radnički prijatelj, no. II., quoted in Cazi, *Prva radnička društva u Hrvatskoj, 1860–1880*, 226.
- 41 Proleter, no. 6, Belgrade, 1 December 1929, quoted in Cazi, *S puta reformizma na put klasne borbe: ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez i rad komunista u njemu 1929–1934*, 65.
- 42 Cazi, *Na političkoj liniji komunističke partije*, 275.
- 43 Kardelj, “The Historical Roots of Non-Alignment,” 38.
- 44 Especially problematic were initial trade agreements with the USSR. The Soviets sought to maintain Yugoslavia as a base for resource extraction rather than a possible industrial competitor. As a result, they continually stalled Yugoslavia’s plans for industrial development (the first Five Year Plan) through stalling or breaking trade agreements. Virtually 80 percent of all exported metals and ore were sent to the USSR and countries in Eastern Europe under its tutelage; the agreements to pay in industrial machinery and other equipment, however, were regularly stalled and ultimately not respected. For example, in 1949 a trade agreement with the Soviets that had been achieved with great difficulty a few years prior was broken immediately after Yugoslavia was expelled from the Comintern. The Soviet government owed Yugoslavia millions of dollars and never fully repaid them. Concurrently, Yugoslav attempts to integrate into international economic systems were repeatedly obstructed by the United States and United Kingdom, partially as retaliation for the Trieste crisis, and partially because the two countries were staunchly opposed to a socialist state in the international economic system. Kićović, “Dosledna politika nezavisnosti,” 59.
- 45 Kardelj, “Referat o međunarodnom i unutrašnjem položaju Jugoslavije i borbi KPJ za izgradnju socijalizma,” 300.
- 46 Vuković, “Rezolucija Informbiroa,” 78–9; Also see Mateš, *Međunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*.
- 47 Rajak, “No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest,” 162.
- 48 Ibid., 163.
- 49 Quoted in Rajak, “No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest,” 167.
- 50 Ibid., 168.
- 51 Here I am referring to various statements by politicians and diplomats such as Edvard Kardelj, Koča Popović, and Tito himself, who specifically use the terminology of peaceful coexistence, respecting the sovereignty of other nations, and economic cooperation, all elements of future nonaligned strategy.

- 52 Tito, “In|terview with *New York Tribune* April, 1950.” Quoted in Dadić, *Jugoslavija u svetu*, 123.
- 53 This was a great feat of Yugoslav diplomacy.
- 54 Mateš, *Medjunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije*, 122.
- 55 Kardelj, “Speech at the Hundred and Forty-Eighth Plenary Meeting”; Kardelj, “Speech at the Two Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Plenary Meeting”; Kardelj, “Speech at the UN General Debate.”
- 56 Kardelj, “Speech at the UN General Debate.”
- 57 Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 37.
- 58 Ibid., 37. Also see Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*; Ivanović, “Jugoslavija, SAD i Korejski rat 1950. godine”; Čavoski, “Od Alpa do Himalaja.”
- 59 Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*, 674.
- 60 “Josip Broz Tito’s speech in Rijeka 1954,” quoted in Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*, 674.
- 61 Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.
- 62 The joint statement also highlighted the three leaders’ support for the findings and goals of the Bandung Conference, thus aligning the emerging structure of the nonaligned with the conclusions of the postwar global anti-colonial movement.
- 63 Petković, “Neutralité et non-alignement.”
- 64 “President Sukarno’s opening speech,” in *The Conference of Heads of State*, 27.
- 65 Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 103.
- 66 Ibid., 103.
- 67 In particular, see Parashar, “Terrorism and the Postcolonial ‘State.’”
- 68 Some of these critiques have been noted in Mišković, Fischer-Tine, and Boskovska, *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War*; and more obliquely in Lee, *Making a World after Empire*; Subotić and Vučetić, “Performing Solidarity.” Nationalism in the postcolonial world has been extensively discussed by various authors, including Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*; Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India.”
- 69 Jelena Subotić and Srdjan Vučetić, for example, argue that “twentieth-century Yugoslav participation in the Third World movement in general and NAM in particular was a status-seeking performance – a series of explicitly staged claims of moral authority and leadership.” Subotić and Vučetić, “Performing Solidarity,” 24.

- 70 Drayton, “Federalist Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power,” 404.
- 71 Ibid., 405.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid., 403.
- 75 While the polarity of the two superpowers existed, and while there was a possibility of an alternative to the imperialist-capitalist model, new postcolonial socialist states could attempt to work toward new social formations. As history has shown, as soon as socialism collapsed in 1989, all the alternative forms of socialist and postcolonial political formations were obliterated to be replaced by a neo-imperial one.
- 76 Kardelj, “The Historical Roots of Non-Alignment,” 42.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Kardelj, “Speech at the UN General Debate.”
- 79 Belgrade Declaration of Non-Aligned Countries, 1961, adopted at the First Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, Belgrade, 6 September 1961.
- 80 Spaskovska, “Building a Better World?” 335.
- 81 Ibid., 342.
- 82 For some criticisms of NAM, see Jazić, “The Non-Aligned Movement Yesterday and Today – in the Process of Globalization”; Tassin, “Lift Up Your Head, My Brother”; Luthi, “The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War 1961–1973”; Singh, “Non-Aligned Movement”; Ciment and Hill, eds., “Non-Aligned Movement – The Bandung Conference”; Bourantonis, “Reform of the UN Security Council and the Non-Aligned States”; Pant, “The End of Non-Alignment?”; Bejjani, “The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) A Dead and Rotten Corpse”; Fisher, “Non-Aligned with Reality”; Kalyanaraman, “Was the Non-Aligned Movement ever Relevant for India?”
- 83 Zambia Engineering & Contracting Co. Ltd.
- 84 SBD Guinée Drilling, Guinée, Conakry.
- 85 Nigerian Engineering and Construction Co. (NECCO) Ltd.
- 86 Spaskovska, “Building a Better World?” 7.
- 87 Parry, *Postcolonial Studies*.
- 88 For more on this, see Mihaljević, “Liberalizacija i razvoj medija u komunistickoj Hrvatskoj 1960-ih i na pocetku 1970-ih”; Mihelj, “The Politics of Privatization.”
- 89 Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett maintain that Yugoslavia’s main news agency, Tanjug, “played a major and nonconformist role in the global marketplace

of information and the breaking of historical news events, in a manner that, at least up to 1990, had a strong claim to representation of the perspectives of the non-aligned world” (Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett, “What Happened to Tanjug?” 694). The authors go further, showing that Tanjug was “the first to break news of events such as the last day in office of the first legally elected prime minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, before his assassination in 1961; the US ‘Bay of Pigs’ invasion of Cuba that same year; the US-aided military coup d’état against Chile’s Popular Unity government and its democratically elected president, Salvador Allende, in 1973; the US bombardment of Tripoli (that allegedly killed Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi’s infant adopted daughter) in 1986” (694).

90 Here I especially rely on the work of Nigel Thrift and his theorization of public space and affect. In “Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect,” he makes a clear link between the rise of mass media in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, new urban ways of life, and the creation of the modern public sphere, which was structured as much on the mediated messages found in print as it was on organization of urban space (its architecture) and human everyday use of that space. I use Thrift’s argument to underscore the ways in which mass street protests/manifestations, print/tv/radio narratives, and political rhetoric helped build the consciousness of people in Yugoslavia about who its allies were, and, of course, build understanding and acceptance of nonaligned politics.

91 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

92 Eschen, “Locating the Transnational in the Cold War,” 459.

93 Van Dinh, “Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism.”

94 Cabral, “Address at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, on October 15, 1972,” quoted in Van Dinh, “Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism,” 40.

95 Ibid.

96 Kardelj, “Speech at the UN General Debate.”

97 Ibid.

98 Ristić, “Kultura i koegzistencija,” 288.

99 Van Dinh, “Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism,” 41.

100 Institute of Foreign Affairs, “First NAM Summit – 1961, Belgrade Declaration,” 3.

101 Van Dinh, “Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism,” 42.

102 “Final Document – Political Declaration,” *4<sup>th</sup> Summit Conference of Heads of State of Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, Algiers*.

- 103 Van Dinh, "Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism," 42.
- 104 Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett, "What Happened to Tanjug?" 697.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 "Final Document – Political Declaration," *4<sup>th</sup> Summit Conference of Heads of State of Government of the Non-Aligned Movement*.
- 107 Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948–64*, 146.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Kardelj, "Points of Departure for a Socialist and Democratic Policy in International Relations," 20.
- 110 Ibid., 33.
- 111 Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Organizaciji ujedinjenih nacija 1945–1953*, 19.
- 112 Ibid., 217.
- 113 UNESCO, "Resolutions and Proceedings," Records of the General Conference, Second Extraordinary Session, Paris 1953.
- 114 Prvi plenum Jugoslavenske nacionalne komisije za UNESCO, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 317–92–131, Veze sa UNESCO II 1952.
- 115 "Govor šefa Jugoslovenske delegacije druga Vladislava Ribnikara na VI. Generalnoj Konferenciji UNESCO-a."
- 116 Mohamed, "UNESCO and the World Community in the Greatest Archaeological Rescue Campaign of All Time (1960–1980)," 7.
- 117 UNESCO, "Information about the International Campaign to Save Monuments of Nubia, progress report 1 January to 30 June 1960." See also UNESCO, "Executive Committee Sixth Session: Report of the Committee."
- 118 UNESCO, "Executive Committee Sixth Session: Report of the Committee."
- 119 Medić, "Yugoslav Institute for the Protection of Historic Monuments," 45.
- 120 UNESCO, "Information about the International Campaign to Save to Monuments of Nubia, progress report 1 January to 30 June 1960."
- 121 UNESCO, "Relationships with the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool."
- 122 Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett, "What Happened to Tanjug?"
- 123 Unfortunately, one of the main reasons that NANAP was not successful in the end was that the United States and the United Kingdom pulled out of UNESCO in 1985, leaving the organization without a large portion of its budget. They gave as one of their reasons the politicization of information flows. As Vukasovich and Boyd-Barrett argue, however, member states stood up to the American insistence on keeping the "free flow of information" model as the only model of media and cultural exchange. Ironically, this is exactly the

model that, according to Tran Van Danh, was in fact keeping the cultural imperialist hegemony intact.

- 124 In Petrović's assessment, Tito preferred to forge new diplomatic relations by travelling to different countries and meeting world leaders in person. This, Petrović argues, was an outcome of "the peculiar personality" of Yugoslavia's president. Indeed, between 1944 and 1980 when he died, Tito "made 169 official visits to 92 countries. He also hosted 175 heads of state, 110 prime ministers, 200 ministers of foreign affairs, and over 300 heads of political movements." Tito's diplomatic travels were also large cultural events and visual spectacles in themselves, especially later when he became a sort of political NAM celebrity. But these curious cultural/political diplomatic travels produced an effective network for Yugoslav diplomats, cultural workers, artists, ministers, and others to use and cultivate. Petrović, "Josip Broz Tito's Summit Diplomacy in the International Relations of Socialist Yugoslavia 1944–1961," 578.
- 125 Hofman, "Komitet za kulturu i umetnost pri Vladi fnrj," 46.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 In internal memos of the committee, we often see reports of complaints by foreign students and visitors about the lack of funds, inadequate accommodations, and in some cases cold weather.
- 128 This is ostensibly because India's economy, size, and technical development were much different (i.e., more advanced) than, for example, those in countries still under colonial occupation.
- 129 Bondžić, "Školovanje studenata iz zemalja u razvoju kao deo spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1950–1961," 646.
- 130 Ibid., 645.
- 131 Ibid. For comparison with Yugoslav education statistics, also see Latifić, *Jugoslavija 1945–1990*.
- 132 Bondžić, 645.
- 133 In other words, NAM students who came to study in Yugoslavia could potentially thereby advance when back in their own countries, and would then look favourably on Yugoslavia because of their experiences there.
- 134 Orlović, "More than a Cordial Reception," 153.
- 135 In the same year, Yugoslavia donated a large monument to the new UN Headquarters in New York.
- 136 Grbić, "Zajednički radovi Antuna Augustinčića i Frana Kršinića."



- 137 Scovazzi, "Legal Aspects of the Axum Obelisk Case," 53.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism*, 14.
- 140 "Pokret mladih gorana" can be translated as "young mountaineers"; however, unlike the sport, *gorani* were formed as a tree-planting organization that promoted ecological solutions to socialist development. It is still in existence today.
- 141 Where the summit begun.
- 142 Simaika, *Premiere Biennale de la Mediterranee Alexandrie*.
- 143 Komitet SKJ Drzavnog sekretarijata za inostrane poslove: Političko-ekonomski odnosi sa inostranstvom. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije, 320 Savezni sekretarijat za obrazovanje i kulturu, 1945–1966. Fascikla 224.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 VI Bienal de Sao Paulo, catalogue. Sao Paulo, Brazil: Museu de Arte Moderna Setembro-Dezembro, 1961.
- 146 Zabeleška o razgovoru Janeza Vipotnika sa ambasadorom Indije, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 318, Savezni sekretarijat za obrazovanje i kulturu. Fascikla 22.
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 The history of how Mexican music came to Yugoslavia in the 1950s under these cultural agreements and became the most important international musical influence there is a separate and quite complex history. But it is important to mention that the impact of Mexican popular music on Yugoslav mainstream cultural space was enormous, and persists to this day. For more, see Dean Vuletic, "Generation Number One."
- 149 Prosvetni odnosi između Jugoslavije i zemalja latinske Amerike. Beograd, Arhiv Jugoslavije 318–Savezni sekretarijat za obrazovanje i kulturu 1945–1966. Fascikla 224.
- 150 Odnosi Jugoslavije i Etiopije. Beograd, Arhiv Jugoslavije 318–Savezni sekretarijat za obrazovanje I kulturu 1945-1966. Fascikla 224.
- 151 Korov, "Beograd kao Jugoslovenski interkulturalni grad u kontekstu kulturne suradnje s Afrikom (1961–1971)," 144.
- 152 Ibid.
- 153 Van Dinh, "Non-Alignment and Cultural Imperialism," 39.
- 154 "Istorijat," Muzej Afričke umetnosti.
- 155 Marović, "Galerija umjetnosti nesvrstanih zemalja Josip Broz Tito- Titograd," 48.
- 156 Ibid., 47.
- 157 Centar savremene umjetnosti Crne Gore, "Zbirke."
- 158 Ibid.

- 159 Tibor Sekelj, *Muzej čovek i njegov svet*. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 320  
Savezni komitet za nauku i kulturu: kultura i prosveta. Fascikla 42.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 This refers to the work of curators such as Okwui Enwezor who was one of the first to reimagine the exhibition space both conceptually (including non-Western art) and spatially. Other notable exhibitions are by artists such as Fred Wilson, whose project “Mining the Museum” in Baltimore created a seismic shift in the way objects are presented in exhibitions. See Okwui Enwezor, “Postcolonial Constellation,” and Fred Wilson and Howard Halle, “Mining the Museum.”
- 162 Tibor Sekelj, *Muzej čovek i njegov svet*. Beograd Arhiv Jugoslavije. 320  
Savezni komitet za nauku i kulturu: kultura i prosveta. Fascikla 42.
- 163 Ibid.

## Chapter Four

- 1 “Josip Broz Tito’s speech in Rijeka 1954,” quoted in Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*, 674.
- 2 The meeting organized in 1956 between presidents Tito, Nasser, and Nehru, which became the first unofficial nonaligned meeting.
- 3 Teržan, “Opening Story,” 18.
- 4 Ibid., 19.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 In fact, the core of the first biennale consisted of some forty prints that were collected in Paris from artists connected with L’ École de Paris (prominent European modernists such as Modigliani, Picasso, Brancusi, Vasarely, etc.). He was able to do this through the connections that Yugoslav artists already had with French and European postwar modernists. Teržan, “Opening Story,” 19.
- 7 Jakac was instrumental in organizing the first Academy of Fine Arts in Slovenia. He was an influential pre-Second World War artist, and during the war he fled Ljubljana to fight with the Partisan resistance.
- 8 Škrjanec, *Zgodovina Ljubljanskih grafičnih bienalov*.
- 9 Teržan, “Opening Story,” 20.
- 10 *Vabila umetnikov, vračila grafik*, 1 MGB, Arhiv grafični biennale, Arhivska škatla F2, 1955.

- 11 Telling are many meeting minutes from 1954 and 1955 in which Kržišnik continually talks about the invitation letters he has sent out to various possible jury members in Italy, France, and the United Kingdom. Vabila umetnikov, vračila grafik, 1 MGB, Arhiv grafični biennale, Arhivska škatla F2, 1955
- 12 Zapisnik seje odbora za I. mednarodno grafično razstavo v Ljubljani, 11.01.1955, Zapisnik seje odbora za 1 MGB, Arhiv grafični biennale, Arhivska škatla F2, 1955.
- 13 The fist recorded organizing committee meeting took place on 1 January 1954. (Zapisnik seje odbora za I. mednarodno grafično razstavo v Ljubljani dne 4. I. 1954 ob 12.uri v Moderni galeriji, Vabila umetnikov, vracila grafik, MGB 1, Arhiv graficni biennale, Arhivska škatla F2, 1955.) The committee was temporary; however, once the first biennale closed it became obvious that a permanent body would have to be struck in order to run the exhibition in off years as well. (Kržišnik, pismo Ivi Frolu, 28 oktobra 1955, Vabila umetnikov, vracila grafik, MGB 1, Arhiv graficni biennale, Arhivska škatla F1, 1955.)
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 "II ljubljanski biennale, uskoro međunarodna izložba grafike: razgovor sa Z. Kržišnikom."
- 16 B. Karanović, dopis br. 226. odboru za priredjivanje I. Medjunarodne izložbe u Ljubljani, Beograd 12 juli 1955, Zapisnik žirija, Arhiv grafični biennale, MGB 1, Arhivska škatla F1, 1955.
- 17 Zoran Kržišnik, dopis Marku Čelebonoviću 7, junija 1955, Zapisnik žirija, Arhiv grafični biennale, MGB 1, Arhivska škatla F1, 1955, 1955.
- 18 Zoran Kržišnik, pismo sekretaru Frolu 28. Oktobra 1955, Korespondenca sekretar Z. Kržišnik osebno, Arhiv grafični biennale, Arhivska škatla F1, 1955.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Zapisnik I. redne seje delovnega odbora za II MGR, Arhiv grafički biennale, MGB 2, Arhivska škatla, F1, dokumenti, prijavnice, carina, 1957; see also "Priprave za drugo mednarodno grafično razstavo: sekretarijat je že določen," *Ljudska pravica*, Ljubljana no. 294, 15 December 1956.
- 21 Selaković, "Prva Međunarodna izložba umjetničke grafike u Ljubljani."
- 22 "Edvard Kardelj je obiskal Mednarodno grafično razstavo v Ljubljani," *Slovenski poročevalec*.
- 23 Savezno izvršno vijeće, or the Federal Executive Council, was Yugoslavia's highest governing body. Josip Broz Tito was its president and it usually had two vice-presidents. The council was in existence from 1953 to the end of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991.

- 24 From its inception, the Ljubljana Biennale was managed by Zoran Kržišnik, who, as the director of Moderna Galerija, used his influence to organize the exhibition in the gallery's spaces. This had both financial and promotional benefits.
- 25 "Pretsednik Tito razgledao međunarodnu izložbu grafike u Ljubljani."
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Pregled izdatkov iz dotacije din 1,000.000.- (Sklad Moše Pijade), Arhiv grafički biennale, MGB 3, Arhivska škatla F1, Denarne zadeve, 1959.
- 28 This roughly translates into the following. In 1959 the 3 million Yugoslav dinar budget would translate into around USD \$10,000, or around USD \$80,000 in 2016. In 1983 6 million Yugoslav dinar would translate into around USD \$70,000 or around USD 170,000 in 2016. For exchange rates and calculations, see Stojanović, "Exchange Rate Regimes of the Dinar 1945–1990."
- 29 "Razstava grafike končana"; "Zatvoren Biennale grafike u Ljubljani," *Vjesnik*, Zagreb, 2 October 1957; "Rekordan broj posetilaca na Međunarodnoj izložbi grafike u Ljubljani"; Košir, "Pogled iz već kotov."
- 30 Depolo, "Biennale Grafike."
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Bouret, Jean. "À la 3E Biennale Internationale de la Gravure."
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Košir, "Svijet u 1259 listova," 24–7.
- 35 Košir, "Svijet u 1259 listova."
- 36 Krleža, "Referat na plenumu saveza književnika 10 oktobra 1954."
- 37 Košir, "Svijet u 1259 listova."
- 38 Kržišnik, "Pismo Ivi Frolu 28 oktobra, 1955," Arhiv Grafični Bienale, Ljubljana 1, MGB 1955, Vabila umetnikov, vracila grafik.
- 39 Kržišnik, "Introduction," *Ljubljana 1955 I*.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Frol, "Pismo Kržišniku 4 novembra, 1955," Arhiv Grafični Bienale, Ljubljana 1, MGB 1955, Vabila umetnikov, vracila grafik.
- 42 See Jugoslavenska nacionalna komisija za UNESCO Belgrade, Bilten no. 1, 20 septembar 1951, Arhiv Jugoslavije 317, box 92, Veze sa UNESCO II; Međunarodno kulturne veze. 14 February, 1958, Arhiv Jugoslavije 318, box no. 224, Veze sa UNESCO II.
- 43 Žerovc, "An interview with Zoran Kržišnik," 42.
- 44 Ibid., 45.
- 45 Cull, "Public Diplomacy," 31.

- 46 The Edward R. Murrow Center for Public Diplomacy, “What is Public Diplomacy”; also Cull, “Public Diplomacy,” 31.
- 47 The relationship between public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy is somewhat strained, as Cull explains. According to Cull, many cultural institutions that are involved in what can be defined as cultural diplomacy have recently attempted to distance themselves from the term “public diplomacy,” or diplomacy altogether, for fear of the ideological implications that diplomacy carries with it. It is not within the scope of this paper to further delve into this topic. Cull, “Public Diplomacy,” 33.
- 48 Nye, *Soft Power*, 7.
- 49 Ibid., 6.
- 50 Žerovc, “An Interview with Zoran Kržišnik, Ljubljana,” 42–3.
- 51 Organizacijski odbor za I. mednarodno grafično razstavo v Ljubljani, “Ljubljana 1955: I. Mednarodna grafična razstava,” exhibition catalogue.
- 52 Kržišnik, ed., “II. Mednarodna grafična razstava.”
- 53 Kržišnik, ed., “IV. Mednarodna grafična razstava.”
- 54 Jerman, ed., “12. Mednarodna grafična razstava.”
- 55 By comparison, Delia Gaze writes that under intense pressure from various women artist organizations (Women Artists in Revolution, Where We At, Black Women Artists, etc.), the participation of women in exhibitions rose steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The percentage of women artists shown at the Whitney Annual rose to 22 percent by the 1970s, which is comparable to the numbers we see in the Ljubljana Biennale. See Gaze, “Training and Professionalism: North America,” 119.
- 56 Depolo, “Razlozi uspjeha, uz II. Biennale grafike u ljuljanskoj Modernoj galeriji,” *Vecernji vjesnik*, Zagreb, 17 July 1957.
- 57 D.C. “VIe exposition internationale de la gravure à Ljubljana.”
- 58 Kržišnik, ed., “II. Mednarodna grafična razstava.”
- 59 Coffey, “‘I’m not the Fourth Great One’: Tamayo and Mexican Muralism,” 248.
- 60 Chams, “4 artistes exposent dans 4 salles.”
- 61 El-Mahdi and Marfleet, *Egypt*.
- 62 “Još jednom produžen grafički bijenale u Ljubljani.”
- 63 For example, Barrett, “The Biennale of Graphics, Ljubljana 1973”; Marchiori, “Biennali dell’incisione a Lubiana (1955–1971)”; “Koexistenz der Stile und Moglichkeiten.”
- 64 Košir, “Svijet u 1259 listova.”
- 65 Ibid.

- 66 Of course, another key ambition was to represent Slovenia and Yugoslavia as active cultural forces on the international scene.
- 67 Ramirez, “Brokering Identities,” 15.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Gardner and Green, “Biennials of the South on the Edges of the Global.”
- 70 See O’Neill, “The Curatorial Turn”; Tang, “Biennialization and Its Discontents.”
- 71 Gardner and Green, “Biennials of the South on the Edges of the Global,” 450.
- 72 See, in particular, Ristić, *Politička književnost: za ovu Jugoslaviju 1948–1958*.
- 73 Tang, “Biennialization and Its Discontents”; Tang, “Of Biennials and Biennialists.”
- 74 Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*.
- 75 Davidson and Esslinger, eds., *Global and World Art in the Practice of the University Museum*.
- 76 Tang, “Biennialization and Its Discontents,” 81.
- 77 Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, xxi.
- 78 Nasser was President Tito’s new friend and would become his protégé and one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- 79 Southern, “FESTAC ’77.”
- 80 Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities*.
- 81 Malaquais and Vincent, “PANAFEST.”
- 82 Ibid., 200.
- 83 For more, see Mateš, *Koegzistenicja*.
- 84 Kardelj, quoted in Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 315.
- 85 Grossberg, “On Postmodernism and Articulation,” 141.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.”
- 88 Antoinette, *Reworlding Art History*, xi.
- 89 Cabral, *Return to the Source*, 60.
- 90 Krleža, “Referat na plenumu saveza književnika 10 oktobra 1954.”
- 91 Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952*, 57.

## Conclusion

- 1 Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 261.
- 2 Yugoslavia entered the final phase of the debt crisis in the 1980s, which initiated mobilization “of various forms of protest.” Yugoslavia’s dependence on

foreign debt and its integration into the International Monetary Fund and other similar structures in fact cost the country in the end. The 1980s were the beginning of the economic end. See Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*.

- 3 Gržinič, "Mladen Stilinović – Strategies of the Cynical Mind," 21–38.

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