

IMPOSSIBLE

HISTORIES

Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991



edited by Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković

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edited by Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković

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Preface: The History of a Book

Almost every book has at least three different histories: the history of the writing and production, the collection of narrations or histories that the book itself speaks of, and the history of incongruent, differential, and divergent readings. *Impossible Histories* grew out of a series of conversations that took place between Belgrade and Boston, as one century was giving way to the next, as Serbia was witnessing the dismantling of a dictatorship that had lasted from 1987 to October 5, 2000. That the idea for this book was born when the idea of a reunited Europe was born, at the end of the time when the world was divided into blocs, is no coincidence. Indeed, the awareness of how present history affects the memory of the past informs all of the essays in this book, and the repairing of bridges between people separated by walls and wars became a metaphor for an editorial operation that would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve even a few years earlier. *Impossible Histories* speaks of a state, a society, and a culture (Yugoslavia) that no longer exist and of the attitudes of the new states, societies, and cultures (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian) toward that same Yugoslavia, from which they emerged during the 1990s.

This book was written with the hope of establishing and confronting analytic and synthetic discourses on Yugoslav art, culture, and society for a region that has not done this for itself before. *Impossible Histories* was also designed for readers from Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia who know very little about the remote world lying between the East and the West, the world that exists in the borderland between democratic and totalitarian states. The book talks of worlds of constant change, deep rifts, and tragic conflicts. This is why it interprets art as a true and indicative symptom of small yet complex, elusive, and paradoxically

confronted cultures and, if we may say it without sounding too ambitious, civilizations.

The book has its micro- and macrosocial stories. The story begins in Belgrade. The two of us, Miško Šuvaković, a professor of the theory of art and aesthetics, and Dubravka Djurić, a poet, translator, and literary theoretician, are from Belgrade. Miško Šuvaković has been studying the history and theory of the avant-gardes since the second half of the 1970s. Dubravka Djurić translated American poets in the course of the 1980s.

In the summer of 1991, the poets Charles Bernstein and James Sherry visited Belgrade and Novi Sad. They were our last guests from the West. An era of war, economic crisis, dictatorship, and Balkan horror began after 1991. In the spring of 1994, we spent time at SUNY Buffalo, then in New York, Boston, San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles. We made professional contacts and friendships with the poets Charles Bernstein, James Sherry, Robert Creeley, Raymond Federman, Joan Retallack, Nick Piombino, Bruce Andrews, Jerome Rothenberg, David Antin, Douglas Messerli, Michael Palmer, Barrett Watten, Ron Silliman and Rae Armantrout, Erica Hunt, Michael Basinski, Juliana Spahr, Joel Kuszai, Kristin Prevallet, as well as with literary theoreticians Marjorie Perloff, Renee Riese Hubert, Judd D. Hubert, Charlotte Douglas, Robert J. Bertholf, and art theoreticians Robert C. Morgan and John C. Welchman, and we also met older Fluxus artists such as Jackson Mac Low and Henry Flint, and painter Susan Bee.

In 1999 Dubravka Djurić established email contact with Jed Rasula, American poet and literary theoretician. Jed Rasula, meanwhile, had been corresponding for a number of years with another writer known for his work on avant-garde poets, Roger Conover, who in his day job—as editor of books on visual culture at the MIT Press—had been active in producing a series of books on the avant-gardes and modern movements of Eastern Europe. The subject of the Yugoslav avant-garde came up in the course of their exchanges, and Rasula gave Conover our names. When Conover first wrote to us, he was waiting for a visa from the Yugoslav government in order to travel to Belgrade. He had been trying to obtain this document for several years in order to bring to completion discussions he had begun with the Belgrade Circle philosophers during a previous meeting with them in Sarajevo—discussions that eventually led to the publication of the critical anthology *Balkan as Metaphor*. In a series of email exchanges over the next few months, we gradually constructed a detailed picture of what we wanted this book, *Impossible Histories*, to accomplish. This plan was conceived during the last days of Europe's last dictatorship—first as a book about the historical avant-

gades in the first half of the twentieth century in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), then as a book that would examine the meaning of the art, culture, and society of Yugoslavia from its inception in 1918 to its end in 1991. But as much as the book was to bring about closure—to provide a record of the century just ended—we perceived it as an opening onto something else. To be able to focus on activities such as writing and editing again, and to be able to engage our colleagues in discussions about music, architecture, poetry, and theater—this was a door out of the darkness and into a possible future light.

When Roger Conover arrived in Belgrade in October 2000, the city was in chaos. Slobodan Milošević's dictatorship had just fallen, and no one knew what to expect next. Serbia was still in a state of trauma; nothing was working, and connections to the outside world were broken. Among the many problems to which we had become accustomed at the time, there was no sanctioned way of getting funds into or out of the country. Relations between banks in Yugoslavia and most Western countries including the United States had been severed during the war. But if we were to start this project, we needed some kind of advance payment so that we could hire translators, photographers, etc. Conover solved this problem by literally carrying our royalty advance to us from Boston to Belgrade. When he arrived at our home, he took off his boots and handed us the cash which he had transported across several borders concealed beneath his soles.

During our first tense meeting, the future of the book still too uncertain for confidence and the future of Belgrade still too uncertain for celebration, we exchanged ideas about the codes and mechanisms of avant-gardes in Europe, in Eastern Europe, in Central Europe, and in the Balkans, and punctuated our discussions with views on many other subjects, from poetry to Soros Centers to Nikola Tesla. We leafed through the magazine *Zenit* and talked about how to get copies of *October* and other MIT Press publications to Belgrade.

Comparing notes on eluvive lives and texts—Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos vs. Arthur Cravan, Goran Djordjević vs. Kazimir Malevich, Ljubomir Micić vs. Nikola Tesla—we embarked on a period of editorial exchange, interrogation, and debate that still continues. In the background of this exchange are a number of writers, curators, and artists who are not represented as authors in this book, but whose work and activities have enriched the terms of that debate and enlarged its frames of reference. Most of the writers in this book are indebted directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, to Aleksandar Flaker, Vida Golubović, Branka Stipančić, Irina Subotić, Gojko

Tešić, and Branislav Dimitrijević. Their work provided much of the documentary foundation and critical traction that made *Impossible Histories* possible.

Most of the writers we thought best qualified to treat the subjects we wanted to cover accepted the assignments we gave them with enthusiasm: philosopher and scholar on aesthetics Aleš Erjavec from Ljubljana, poet and literary theoretician Vladimir Kopić from Novi Sad, painter and painting theoretician Sonja Briski Uzelac from Belgrade and Zagreb, art history professor and critic Ješa Denegri from Belgrade, art theoretician and curator Leonida Kovač from Zagreb, art theoretician and activist Marina Gržinić from Ljubljana, curator and collector Darko Šimičić from Zagreb, art and architecture theoretician Peter Krečić from Ljubljana, musicologist Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman from Belgrade, dramaturg Eda Čufer from Ljubljana, film theoretician Nevena Daković from Belgrade, culture sociologist Gregor Tomc from Ljubljana, and curator Barbara Borčić from Ljubljana. This book would not exist were it not for the seriousness of their commitment to it during difficult times. After their essays were written, there followed a long period of translating, correcting, and editing the texts. This we did not do alone, but in collaboration with Branka Nikolić, Jelena Babšek, Stephen Agnew, and Nada Seferović as well as with Clare Zubac and Ellen Elias-Bursać. Photographer Vlada Popović managed the complex process of filming and processing the photographs for the book's illustrations.

Research on the avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes was a banned and buried topic in socialist Yugoslavia, much as it was in the other real-socialist societies of Central and Eastern Europe up until the end of the 1960s. Critics, theoreticians, and historians of fine arts, literature, music, film, and theater studied "that" new art, but their studies were most often hidden from the eyes of the public. During the 1960s and 1970s, Yugoslavia became the most open country of the Eastern bloc. During the 1980s it was a highly liberal late socialist state. Not until the 1980s did knowledge of the avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes, parallel with the emerging post-avant-gardes, become part of public culture, education, and university and scholarly research. The research and scholarship of many critics, theoreticians, and art historians were of significance for *Impossible Histories*, and their contributions to the research deserve mention here.

The historical avant-gardes have been an important issue in the theoretical and literary-theoretical studies of Professor Aleksandar Flaker and his associates in Zagreb since the late 1960s. Aleksandar Flaker, Dubravka Ugrešić, Dubravka Oraić Tolić, and Irena Lukšić led definitive research into the Eastern European avant-gardes, particularly the Russian, Yugoslav, and

Croatian avant-gardes. Professor Flaker offered a bold new definition of the avant-garde as the “optimal projection.” According to him the “optimal projection” does not mean an ideally structured future space, nor does it even attempt to define it. Rather, it means movement as the choice of an “optimal variant” within the prevailing reality.

Scholars Radoslav Putar, Dimitrije Bašičević (Mangelos), Vera Horvat-Pintarić, Marijan Susovski, and Željko Koščević researched the visual art avant-garde in Zagreb in parallel to research into the literary avant-garde. Their writings were essential to this book. Branimir Donat in theater and literature, and Hrvoje Turković in film, explored the discoveries and interpretations of the historical avant-gardes.

Research into the avant-gardes was conducted in several parallel systems in Slovenia. The literary avant-gardes were studied by Dušan Pirjevec, Aleš Berger, Anton Ocvirk, Marjan Dolgan, Denis Poniž, Janko Kos, Drago Bajt, and Lado Kralj. Professor Dušan Pirjevec in the early 1960s posited a theory of the “death of the subject” in literature pointing out the path of theoretical transformation from Heideggerian phenomenology and existentialism into structuralism. In visual art and architecture the research was carried out by Tomaž Brejc, Jure Mikuž, Peter Krečič, and Stane Bernik. Tomaž Brejc introduced a thesis on “dark modernism” that had unexpected and dramatic consequences for the development of Slovenian modernism.

Dušan Moravec, Emil Hrvatin, and Tea Štoka studied the theatrical avant-garde, while Marija Bergamo, Ivan Klemenčič, and Borut Loparnik focused on the musical avant-garde. There were philosophical/aesthetic and political/scholarly debates on the historical avant-gardes by Lev Kreft, Aleš Erjavec, Janez Vrečko, Marina Gržinić, and Tine Hribar, all of them scholars of aesthetics in Ljubljana.

Professor Kreft worked out an authentic and provocative theory of relations between the leftist political and leftist art projects in the avant-gardes. An influential approach to understanding the relationships between politics and society, in other words between art and culture, in the twentieth century was proposed by a group of Slovenian theoreticians of a Lacanian orientation, most of all by theoreticians and philosophers Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, Braco Rotar, and Rastko Močnik. These introduced the influential term “materialistic theory of ideology” and made possible the ideological analysis of high and popular art in the culture of late socialism and postsocialism.

Research into the historical avant-gardes was kept from the public eye for a long time. The pioneering studies were done by art historian Zoran Markuš, art theoreticians Oto Bihalji-Merin and Miodrag B. Protić, novelist

Bora Ćosić, and literary theoreticians Svetla Lukić and Predrag Palavestra. Within the artistic and theoretical space of Serbia, Oto Bihalji-Merin made it possible to link the concepts of the historical avant-gardes of the 1920s and the neo-avant-gardes of the 1950s and 1960s. Miodrag B. Protić started the first museum of contemporary art in Eastern Europe and proposed a systematic and elaborated concept of modernism under socialist conditions. The first systematic and institutional study of modern and avant-garde art in Yugoslavia began thanks to his efforts. In the late 1960s, novelist Bora Ćosić published the first reprints of the dadaist magazines *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz* in the neo-avant-garde pro-Fluxus magazine *Rok*. The development of complex theoretical research of the historical avant-gardes began in the 1970s and continued to the 1990s. Lazar Trifunović, Ješa Denegri, Irina Subotić, Milanka Todić, Jasna Tijardović, and Jasna Jovanov were involved in theoretical work of this type for the fine arts.

Professor Ješa Denegri introduced the term “the second line” in the art of the twentieth century and so remarked that in the history of modernism and of modernism under real socialism there are two important and opposed concepts of modernity. The first is the decorative, vitalistic, and idealess moderate modernistic art that became the official state art of socialist Yugoslavia after the period of socialist realism. The second, the radical, experimental, and cosmopolitan art, he calls the second line, existing on the margins of official culture: the avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, and post-avant-garde phenomena of the twentieth century. During the 1990s, Denegri also introduced the notion of “Yugoslav cultural space,” observing that the state and the culture were not one and the same. The disappearance of the state of Yugoslavia left us with the historical and current question of Yugoslav culture and art, rather than the Yugoslav cultures and arts.

The practice and theories of the avant-gardes were studied and documented in the history of literature. The important avant-garde historians are Gojko Tešić, Vida Golubović, Aleksandar Petrov, Branko Aleksić, Slobodanka Peković, Jelena Novaković, Marija Cindori, Svetlana Slapšak, Milivoj Nenin, and Bojana Stojanović-Pantović. The literary historian Gojko Tešić made an exhaustive study of avant-garde manifestos and polemical materials. For him the polemic was the essential feature of the Serbian literary avant-garde. Marija Bergamo and Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman wrote on the musical avant-garde. The theatrical avant-garde was investigated by Mirjana Miočinović, Dragan Klaić, Jovan Ćirilov, Aleksandra Jovićević, and Radoslav Lazić. Dušan Stojanović, Branko Vučićević, and Nevena Daković wrote on avant-garde film. Architect Ljiljana Blagojević has written with

insight on the ways in which avant-garde activities and experiments in the visual arts influenced the design of buildings in Belgrade between the world wars. Research on the historical avant-gardes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia comes from literary historians Hanifa Kapidžić-Osmanagić and Radoslav Vučković together with art historians Azra Begić, Meliha Husedžinović, Aco Adamović, Boris Petkovski, Suzana Milevska, Zoran Petrovski, Nebojša Vilić, and Petar Ćuković.

Also of importance for understanding the neo-avant-gardes and post-avant-gardes are the major theoretical, critical, and historical works of our contemporaries who have worked both on promoting the neo-avant-gardes (1950s and 1960s) and on locating these phenomena in history. Among the Slovenian historians and theoreticians whose past work is most relevant to this project are Tomaž Brejc, Jure Mikuž, Andrej Medved, Igor Žabel, Zdenka Badovinac, Marina Gržinić, Lilijan Stepančić, and Tomislav Vignjević. In Croatia, the work of Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar, Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos, Nena Dimitrijević, Marijan Susovski, Davor Matičević, Zvonko Maković, Branka Stipančić, and Leonida Kovač must be acknowledged. Active in Serbia were Oto Bihalji-Merin, Pavle Stefanović, Ješa Denegri, Biljana Tomić, Irina Subotić, Miodrag B. Protić, Dunja Blažević, Bojana Pejić, Jasna Tijardović, Slobodan Mijušković, Lidiya Merenik, Sava Stepanov, Branislav Dimitrijević, Dejan Sretenović, and others.

In literary theory, those who focused on the neo-avant-garde in Slovenia were Taras Kermauner, Franci Zagoričnik, Denis Poniž, Janko Kos, Rastko Močnik, Tine Hribar, and Boris A. Novak. Taras Kermauner introduced the term “reistic literature,” commenting on research into reductivism, the presence and absence of the subject in art. Darko Kolibaš, Branko Bošnjak, Zvonimir Mrkonjić, Josip Stošić, Goran Rem, and Branko Čegec were focused on neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde history and literary theory in Croatia. In Serbia, major research in literary history and theory was done by Bora Čosić, Vladimir Kopićl, Radoman Kordić, Miroljub Todorović, Ostoja Kisić, Ivan Negrišorac, Slobodan Blagojević, and Hamdija Demirović.

An extremely important position in the domain of interdisciplinary studies of the visual and verbal is occupied by the research of Vladan Radovanović, who outlined the idea of the “vocovisual.” Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman and Nikša Gligo wrote about the fields of new music. Ranko Munitić and Hrvoje Turković have written on experimental film, while Aldo Milohnić, Eda Čufer, Emil Hrvatin, Tomaž Toporičić, Jovan Ćirilov, and Milena Dragičević Šešić have made important contributions to the discourse of late modernist, neo-avant-garde, and postmodern theater.

At the end of the twentieth century, many artists persistently raised questions on the meaning and impact of the avant-garde. These were primarily members of the Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) movement, members of the Irwin group, theater director Dragan Živadinov, composer Vladan Radovanović, theater directors Dijana Milošević and Ivana Vujić, playwright Nenad Prokić, film director Karpo Godina, and conceptual artists Braco Dimitrijević, Mladen Stilinović, Vlado Martek, Raša Todosijević, Neša Paripović, and Bálint Szombathy and others.

Also indispensable to the study of the avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes are the archives of many institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, the National Museum in Belgrade, the National Library in Belgrade, the Belgrade Museum of Applied Arts, the Literature and Art Institute in Belgrade, the Yugoslav Cinémathèque in Belgrade, the Museum of Modern Visual Art in Novi Sad, the Matica srpska Gallery in Novi Sad, the Estate of Milena Pavlović Barilli in Požarevac, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Zagreb Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Tošo Dabac archive in Zagreb, the Modern Gallery in Ljubljana, the Slovenian National Theater Museum in Ljubljana, the Avgust Černigoj Gallery in Lipica, the Goriški Museum in Kromberk, the Museum of Human Revolutiōn in Ljubljana, the Obalne Galleries in Piran, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje. We have reproduced many works from these institutional collections, as well as from private collections and the archives of various artists.

In closing, we recall the words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who once wrote that “a characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political.” *Impossible Histories* considers art and reveals, through art, the complex network of narration, fiction, and phantasms that manage or are being managed by the machinery of politics: art and politics intertwine in an unbearable drone.

translated by Jelena Babšek and Stephen Agnew

Introduction: Art and Politics

1

Impossible Histories

Miško Šuvaković

Why Impossible Histories?

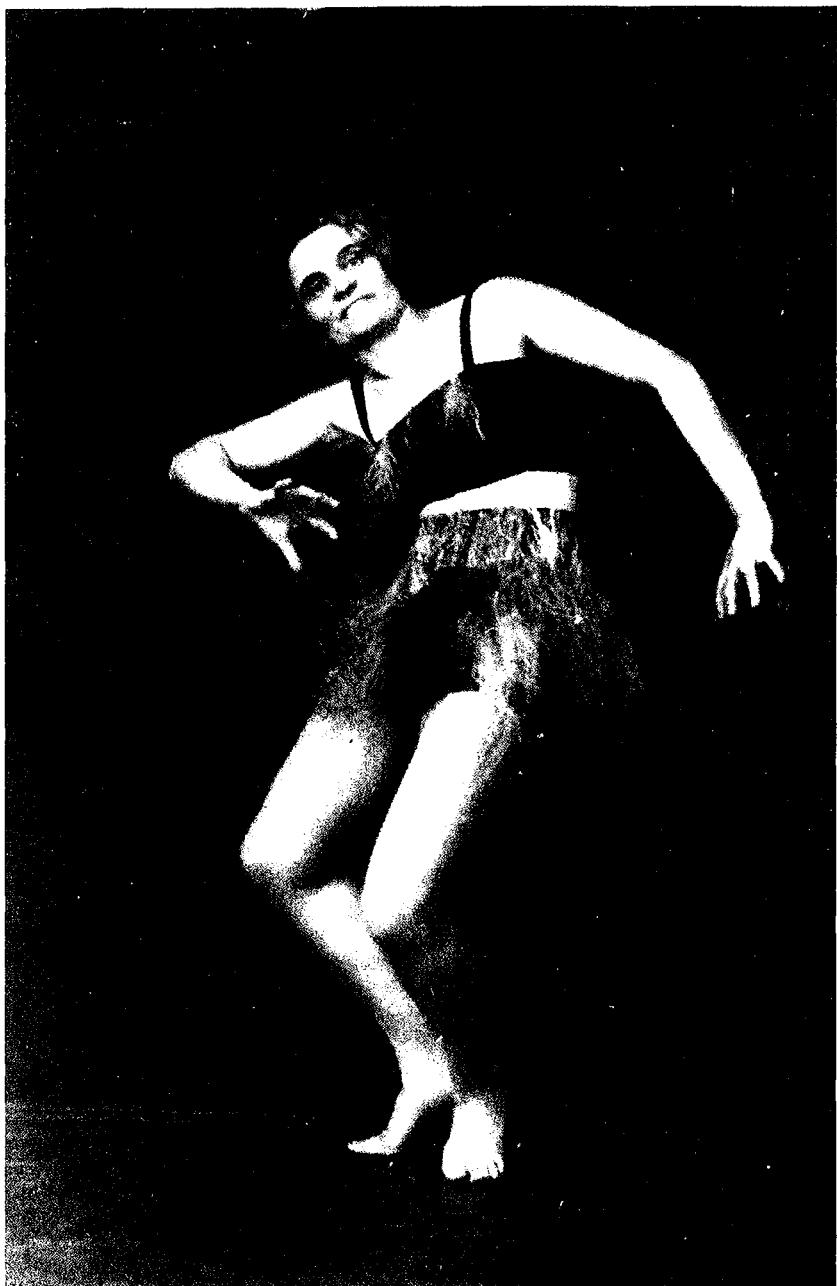
Yugoslavia was a state of untenable, even impossible, connections and clashes among the cultures of Middle Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East from its founding in 1918 to its dissolution in 1991. It was, moreover, a state of kindred yet opposed ethnic and national communities. Yugoslavia grew out of the ruins of the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian empires. It broke up twice, once at the beginning of World War II, during the German Nazi occupation, and again after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Each collapse (in 1939 and 1991) took the form of a class, religious, and ethnic war. All the transcendent political models of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were part of the Yugoslav rise and fall, bourgeois national capitalism and liberal capitalist fascism, nationalism and revolutionary communism, Stalinism, real socialism, self-governing socialism, postsocialist patriotism, and transitional postsocialism. In all of the Yugoslav cultures (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Montenegrin, and those of the Vojvodina and Kosovo), furthermore, there were political and cultural voices for and against a real state, for a real culture or a virtual Yugoslavia. Historic Yugoslavia was permanently in conflict, flux, and redefinition. One may speak of there being a Yugoslavia in the historical sense (1918–1991), but also a Yugoslav culture as a dynamic territory for cultural and political exchange among the Yugoslav peoples and the peoples of the Balkans and Middle Europe.

The subtitle *Historic Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991* draws attention to the focus of this book: the historic and contextual relations among artistic practices that radically investigate and motivate art, culture, and society.



¹
Two Belgrade feminists, c. 1930s. Private collection.

Maga Magazinović, *Višepolarna težnja u pokretu* [Multipolar Tendencies in Movement], 1932. Photograph by Lončarević; published in Maga Magazinović, *Telesna kultura kao vaspitanje i umetnost* [Physical Culture as Education and Art].



In the Yugoslav cultures, the avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes were invariably somewhere out on the edge, far from the eyes and ears of the greater public, hidden, censored, suppressed, misunderstood, banned, indeed forgotten. For example, I learned of the avant-garde political and mystical author Dimitrije Mitrinović,¹ one of the first to write on expressionism and futurism in the region of the former Yugoslavia, from the diaries of Paul Klee² rather than from mainstream art history or literature. Even today it is impossible to determine with any certainty the exact identity of a person whose pseudonym was MID,³ author of two radical intertextual books, *The Metaphysics of Nothing* and *The Sexual Equilibrium of Money* (1926). There are conflicting theories today: this may be a pseudonym for Ljubomir Micić, the founder of *Zenit*, or of the mysterious Mita Dimitrijević about whom nothing is known, or it may be the pseudonym of a bank clerk associated with the *Zenit* people in the 1920s. There are also a number of versions for the place and time of death of the zenitist and anti-Dada artist Branko Ve Poljanski.⁴ Some say he died a vagrant under a Seine bridge in Paris in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Others claim he had children and lived on for several years after World War II. Serbian and Croatian histories of literature still refuse to give Micić his rightful place in literature. All of this gives the story of the Yugoslav avant-gardes its mystery: elusive and impossible.

Between the two world wars, while Yugoslavia was a bourgeois, multi-national state, avant-gardes were treated as the far left fringe, thereby excluded from the corpus of national literature and art. After World War II, when Yugoslavia became a socialist, multinational state, the avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes were treated as extreme expressions of Western bourgeois or civilian decadence, cosmopolitanism, and political subversion.⁵ There is frequent mention of the import of foreign ideas from the West, challenging the reigning real-socialist ethics and socialist aesthetic. Academic work and discovery began only in the late 1970s, but as of the 1990s there were still no interpretations of the impossible, maladjusted, and elusive avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes.

A number of historians, art theorists, philologists, and scholars of aesthetics have dedicated their work to the avant-gardes. Within Slavic studies Aleksandar Flaker⁶ began complex and detailed research into the theory and history of the avant-gardes in Zagreb in the 1970s. He even proposed an important definition of the avant-garde as an art practice based on an optimal projection. Dubravka Ugrešić⁷ and Dubravka Oraić Tolić worked with him to research and study the avant-garde. Flaker's theoretical research on the avant-garde triggered its study in other Yugoslav centers as well. Art historians

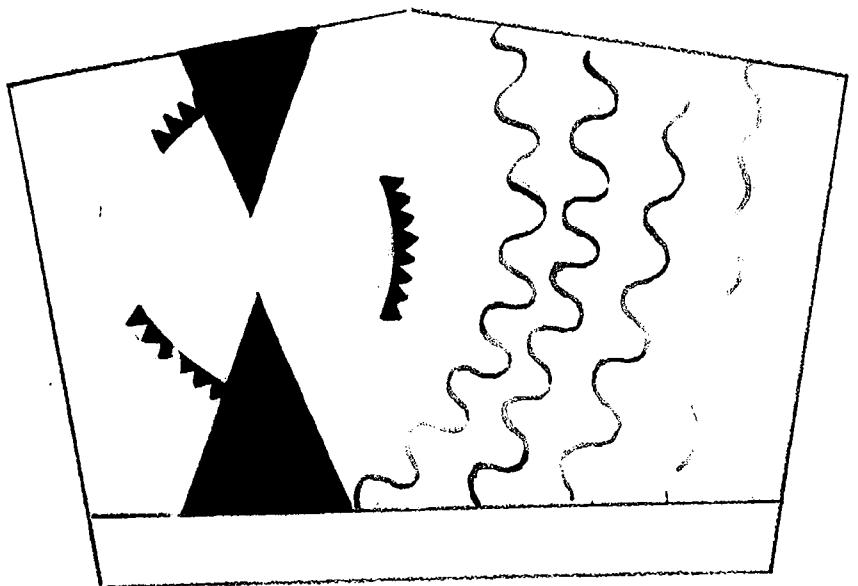


³
Dimitrije Mitrinović as a young man, c. 1918. Private collection.



⁴
Ljubomir Micić, c. 1920. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

Sergej Glumac, *Studije za mehanički teatar* [Studies for Mechanical Theater], 1923–1926, watercolor. Owner unknown.



Vera Horvat-Pintarić and Želimir Koščević in Zagreb worked on the avant-gardes, as did literary theorists Denis Poniž, Aleš Berger,⁸ and Janez Vrečko, scholars of aesthetics Aleš Erjavec⁹ and Lev Kreft,¹⁰ art and architecture historian Peter Krečič,¹¹ art historian Tomaž Brejc, and Jure Mikuž in Slovenia.

In Serbia, the study of the avant-garde was anticipated by the work of art critic Stevan Markuš and art theorist Miodrag B. Protić,¹² and taken further in the art history studies of Ješa Denegri and Irina Subotić,¹³ art theorists Sonja Briski Uzelac and Miško Šuvaković,¹⁴ and theorists and literary historians Vida Golubović¹⁵ and Gojko Tešić.¹⁶ Radovan Vučković studied the literary avant-gardes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷

Despite the attention given the subject, information on avant-garde movements has not been integrated into the dominant discourse of national culture in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, or Montenegro. This is why, even as this book goes to print, the problem of the avant-garde can be defined as a problem of impossible histories and impossible transfers of art to culture in historical Yugoslavia (1918–1991).

There are uncertain, dramatic stories of multinational states born at one historic moment and disappearing in another scattered throughout European history. These are stories of complex ethnic, geographic, cultural, and artistic processes, building broader identities and cultures out of various smaller identities and cultures, often at odds with each other. In modern European times, such states have included the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918), the Soviet Union (USSR, 1917–1991), the Republic of Czechoslovakia (1918–1993), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia¹⁸ (1918–1941), and then, after World War II, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia¹⁹ (1945–1991).

The political and social history of Yugoslavia went through several stages:

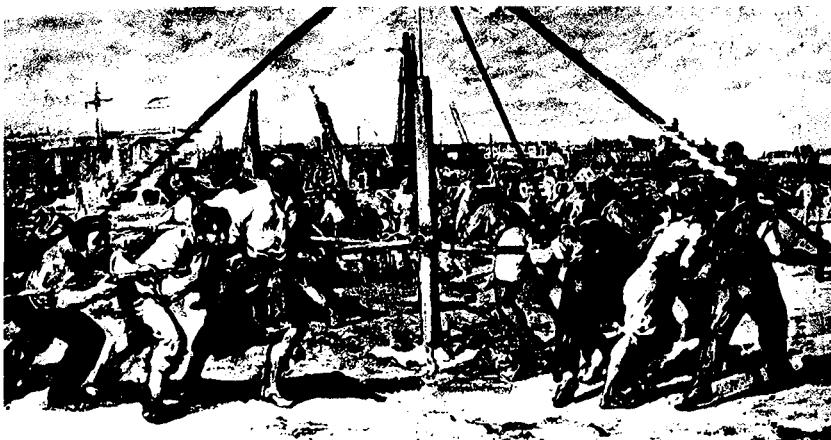
- The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941), from the end of World War I and breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The South Slavic peoples joined into a single state under the Serbian Karadjordjević dynasty until the outbreak of World War II and German occupation of Yugoslavia (1941). This phase is often referred to as the first Yugoslavia.
- The Second World War (1941–1945). The Yugoslav lands were occupied by Nazi Germany, with territories under Quisling rule. The communist revolution began both as resistance to German occupation and a revolution for the transformation from a bourgeois to a classless society.
- After World War II. The country became known as Tito's socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1980), or the second Yugoslavia. There was an initial period of ties with the Soviet political bloc (1945–1948), followed by the emergence of self-governing socialism, and a complex, multiethnic federal state (1950–1980) standing, politically, somewhere between the Eastern and Western blocs, building ties with the third world through the movement of nonalignment.
- After President Tito's death. The Yugoslav federation disintegrated, supplanted by the rise of national states and their relatively hermetic cultures (1980–1991). This period drew to a close during the 1990s with the dramatic postsocialist wars between the pro-Serbian federal army and the nascent national armed forces. These were the wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the province of Kosovo in southern Serbia.

Modernity, Modernism, Modernisms, and Realisms

In the cultures of Slovenes,²⁰ Croats, Serbs, Muslims from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonians, and Montenegrins, modernities are late or overdue romanticist concepts creating a patriarchal, national, bourgeois culture or state. Modern culture and modern societies are the emancipations of national cultures based on folklore identities along the way to establishing a civil, bourgeois state order. Modern art is what Western, meaning European, art is called in the smaller Balkan and Middle European cultures throughout, in romanticism, impressionism, symbolism, and the Secession. Over time, modern art entered the mainstream of contemporary bourgeois society along avenues such as intimism and bourgeois realism. The art of intimism builds an image of everyday life and privacy; in bourgeois realism the art is of national, political, and social identities. In the field of society and culture, modernism means a speedy and progressive transformation of rural, ethnic societies into national, bourgeois societies, from the world of rural farming to urban industry. Modernism has also meant the integration of the Yugoslav cultures into international art, into the cultural, economic, and political processes of Middle Europe, then more widely into Western civilizations. Modernism first finds its artistic voice in the expressly autonomous and highly aestheticized languages of late stylized impressionism, symbolism, and Secession, and then in moderate expressionism, decorative cubism, and different versions of postcubist neoclassicism.

Leftist social realism²¹ and right-wing capitalist realism emerged in reaction to modernist international culture. Leftist social realism was linked to the Communist Party's political program in an artistic (painting, prose, poetry, theater) critique of the bourgeois society of the 1920s and an attack on autonomy in the artistic sense of the word, meaning the apolitical quality of modernist art and its aestheticism. There was a clash on the literary left²² in the 1930s between supporters of the utilitarian notion that art must serve the Party and the revolutionary struggle, and the view that though art must be critical of society it should nevertheless retain its autonomy. The leading figure in the debate was Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, who fought for a critical yet autonomous modern art. After World War II, leftist social realism went on to become the ascendant art of Tito's real-socialist Yugoslavia and was called socialist realism.

In the 1920s and 1930s capitalist realism represented and described everyday bourgeois life, later to introduce elements of folklore into high art and herald mythical, national, and religious topics in the spirit of the prevailing



6

Boža Ilić, *Sondiranje terena na Novom Beogradu* [Sounding the Terrain in New Belgrade], 1948, oil on canvas, 240 x 440 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



7

Gojmir Anton Kos, *Prvi kongres KP Slovenije* [First Congress of the Slovenian Communist Party], 1952, oil on canvas, 113 x 275 cm. Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, Ljubljana.



8

Vojin Bakić, model of monument *For Marx and Engels*, 1953, height 300 cm, destroyed. (left)



9

Miroslav Krleža, 1923. Private collection. (right)

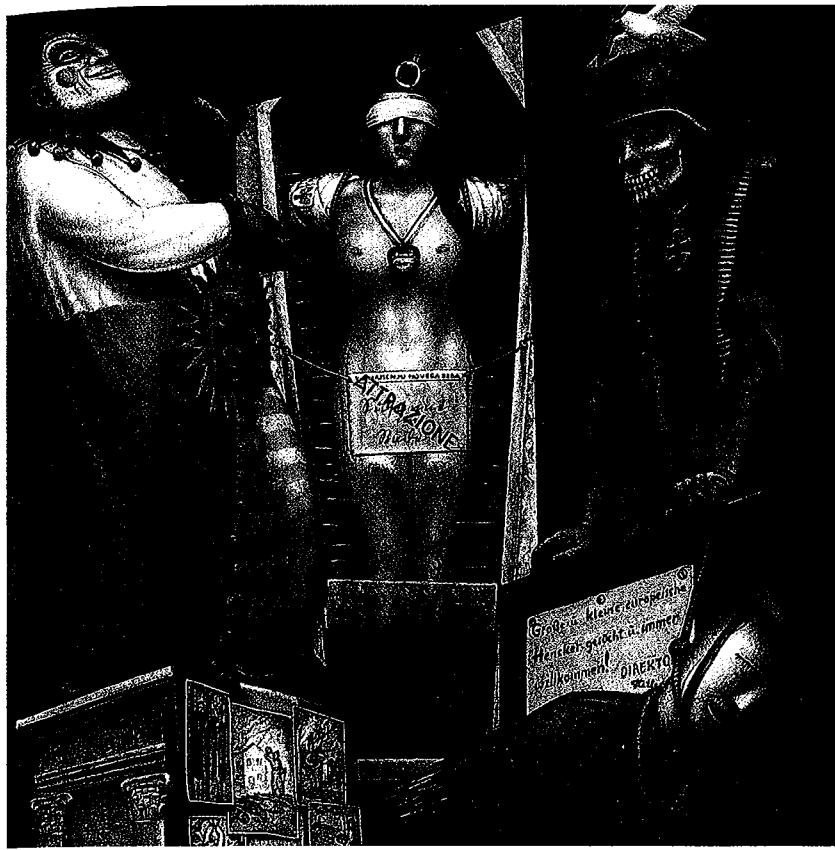
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state policy. An approach known as “integral Yugoslavhood” came to life in painting, sculpture, and architecture as an offshoot of capitalist realism. This was a specific visual language using modern rational forms with stylized, mythical symbols, primarily taken from South Slavic mythologies. Hence the birth of an eclectic style: Slavic mythology sparred with Masonic symbols and the politics of the Slavic peoples’ integration into a united “superior nation” (for example, in the sculptures by Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović from his St. Vitus’ Day period). In Slovenia, the basic works of capitalist realism (intimism, religious, and, ultimately, nationalistically religious political painting) were the work of the Kralj brothers. Tone Kralj created a series of allegorical political-religious frescoes in time for the Italian Fascist occupation of part of Slovenia (1942–1944).

After World War II began the period of socialist realism under the domination of Soviet politics. Between 1945 to 1950, socialist realism was introduced as an antimodernist, prevailing view of art and culture. The theory of socialist realism was advocated by Boris Ziherl, Oto Bihalji-Merin, and Milovan Djilas. From the perspective of socialist realism, the modernism between the two world wars and current international modernism were expressions of bourgeois decadence, aestheticism, or an artistic formalism incompatible with progressive and revolutionary views of society, culture, and art. And while socialist realism had been born as a critical and revolutionary movement acting against modernist, capitalist, and avant-garde art between the two world wars, it was, in the revolutionary and postrevolutionary periods in Yugoslavia, part of a wider European move toward realism as an optimal projection of the revolutionary present and the future realization of an ideal communist society. By the early 1950s, however, with the distancing of Tito’s Yugoslavia from the Eastern bloc and the rejection of the USSR’s influence on Yugoslav politics and culture, the society opened to Western modernist art.

A particular phenomenon emerged in Yugoslavia that literary theorist Svetla Lukić dubbed “socialist aestheticism.”²³ Socialist aestheticism was a modernist reaction to socialist realism in Yugoslav art after 1950. This reaction takes the form of aestheticized, nondogmatic, ideologically neutral, and artistically independent expression and presentation.

During the 1950s, with the ascendance of a postrevolutionary bureaucracy, and with a modicum of social liberalization and overtures to the West, the attitude toward art shifted. Artists were no longer expected to present only possible and optimal revolutionary and communist realities, but could venture into autonomous aesthetics. Because Yugoslavia stood, politically



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Tone Kralj, *Circus Nazzi*, 1944, oil on canvas. Goriški muzej, Kromberk.

speaking, wedged between the Eastern and Western blocs at the time, it moved to embrace Western art as the forerunner in moderate, aestheticized forms.

In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, socialist aestheticism evolved into "moderate modernism," the new mainstream. This was a middle path between the abstract and the figurative, between the modern and the traditional, between regionalism and internationalism, with an emphasis on intimistic views. On the one hand this allowed artists to approach the mainstream of international Western modernism, while on the other it was a voice of resistance to the more radical versions of modernism (from abstraction to the neo-avant-gardes). Socialist statism, focused on the laws of form and pictorial problems, was modern enough to encourage a general openness toward artworks, yet both traditional enough (the changed aesthetic of the intimism of the 1930s) to satisfy new tastes arising from social conformism, and inert enough to fit into the myth of a happy, unified community. In other words,

aestheticism had all it needed to blend in with the projected image of a partly liberalized socialist society.

Within mainstream socialist aestheticism and, later, moderate modernism, examples of high modernism in painting, sculpture, poetry, prose, or the theater were shocking. It was possible, in other words, to speak of two dominant modernist models in Yugoslavia between 1918 and 1980. One was a modernism that was part of the incipient capitalist society that led to integration into international movements and helped to constitute national culture, while the other was a modernism during the time of real socialism²⁴—a modernism that came forward as the Soviet socialist regime withdrew, while still moderate, uncommitted, and highly aestheticized.

Yugoslav Avant-gardes

The Yugoslav avant-gardes²⁵ were a multiplicity of shocking, experimental, transmedia and interdisciplinary manifestations in the realm between literature and the visual arts in the Slavic south (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina) between 1918 and 1935. Specific avant-garde cultures such as those in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia formed in the South Slavic cultural region in the 1920s and early 1930s. These were not, however, isolated from one another, rather they were defined by intertextual and intersubjective exchanges and influence. The writers and artists Stanislav Vinaver, Antun Gustav Matoš, Tin Ujević, Mihailo Petrov, Branko Ve Poljanski, Ljubomir Micić, Jo Klek (Josip Seissel), Dragan Aleksić, Miroslav Krleža, Marko Ristić, Avgust Černigoj, and Vlado Habunek worked in Serbia, Croatia, or Slovenia creating a flow of ideas, controversial situations, and acts that built the open, unstable, and inconsistent world of the avant-garde in Yugoslavia.

The situation in art and culture in the Slavic south before World War I was complex. In the Kingdom of Serbia there were foundations and values in place for a national, moderate, modernist culture in a bourgeois society. French culture exerted a considerable influence. Slovenia, Croatia, the Vojvodina, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, were parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Their milieu was determined in part by a swing toward national cultures and a quest for national identities, but also by the larger cultural framework of a Middle European modernity (a cosmopolitanism and eclecticism that surfaced, spurred by Vienna, Budapest, Munich, Berlin, and Prague). This was when the political and cultural idea of Yugoslavhood took shape as a project for the future union of the South Slavic peoples. Avant-garde forms were created between 1910 and 1918 that antic-

ipated the then contemporary modernist avant-garde ideas of postimpressionism, symbolism, Secession, futurism, expressionism, but these did not build into avant-garde movements.

Aspirations toward an avant-garde were evident first in the South Slavic countries under Austro-Hungarian rule from 1910 to 1917. In the magazine *Ljubljanski zvon* (1909), Friderik Jovančič wrote of the futurist manifestos and the Marinetti school. Dimitrije Mitrinović, poet, anarchist, and a member of the Mlada Bosna group endorsing the overthrow of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans, published his "Aesthetic Contemplations" in *Bosanska vila* (Sarajevo, 1913). In it he presents ideas very close to German expressionism and Italian futurism, creating an aesthetic and ethical vision of a new art and culture. He spent 1914 in Munich where, according to Paul Klee, he gave a lecture on the new art, discussing the expressionist and abstract painting of Wassily Kandinsky. At this point he was encountering theosophical thinking. He began work on "Bases of the Future"—a project for an international political and spiritual movement with Kandinsky's backing. In Zadar, Joso Matošić had a futurist magazine, *Zvirk*, in the works in 1914. It never did see the light of day. Also mentioned as members of the futurist group were Anton Aralica and Antun Gustav Matoš. The discourse on futurism was also under way in the poetry of Janko Polić Kamov and Matoš. In 1917, Miroslav Krleža published "Croatian Rhapsody" (in the magazine *Savremenik* [Contemporary]) in which he denied the national mythology and the poetics of Croatian Secession and created an optimal projection of the cosmopolis, hinting at avant-garde aspirations to an all-inclusive work of art. Antun Branko Šimić's magazines, *Vijavica* [Snowstorm] (1917–1918) and *Juriš* [Charge] (1919), were in line with the expressionist trends and tenor of the German magazine *Der Sturm*. Krleža and August Cesarec published the expressionist magazine *Plamen* [Flame] (1919).

In the kingdom of Serbia, Stanislav Vinaver anticipated expressionism, futurism, and cubism in his *telegrafski soneti* [Telegraph Sonnets] (1911) and "Manifesto of the Expressionistic School" (1920), and in the notion of the bohemian and accursed artist (Sima Pandurović and Vladislav Petković Dis). Postimpressionist painting (Cézannism) and the expressionism of Croatian and Serbian painters before and during World War I (Marino Tartalja, Zlatko Šulentić, Ljubo Babić, Petar Dobrović, Nadežda Petrović) placed the movement more within European modernist painting than as an anticipation of radical manifest expressionism and the avant-garde.

With the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes or, as it was later called, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, cultural circles formed in Ljubljana,

Zagreb, and Belgrade and began to interact. In this new state bourgeois society began to take hold, and there were the first signs of moderate national modernisms and tensions, and of rivalries between the ethnic groups. This went hand in hand with integration into international political, economic, and cultural trends. It was under these conditions that avant-garde movements with explicit programs were born and distanced themselves from the modernist matrix in a series of outbursts. The first avant-garde magazine was *Svetokret—List za ekspediciju na severni pol čovekovog duha* [A Magazine for an Expedition to the North Pole of the Human Spirit], published in Ljubljana in 1921 by Virgil Poljanski (Branko Micić, Branko Ve Poljanski). The magazine was entirely the work of Poljanski and was explicitly of a cosmopolitan and a Yugoslav character (published by a Serb from Croatia, intervening pro-dadaistically into Slovenian culture).

A pro-dadaist or post-dadaist avant-garde followed on the expressionist and futurist avant-garde in Croatia²⁶ from before World War I. Ljubomir Micić launched the international magazine *Zenit* [Zenith] in Zagreb in 1921, manifestly starting a new avant-garde Balkan movement with expressionism, futurism, dadaism, and constructivism during its six years of operation. Micić's work is characterized by a paradoxical and polemic confrontation of Croatian and Serbian cultural and national ideology. Zenitism began and was initially active in Zagreb from 1921 to 1923, then based in Belgrade from 1924 to 1926. The magazine brought together a number of collaborators: Zagreb avant-gardists Marijan Mikac, Andro Jutronić, Jo Klek, Vilko Gecan, Vinko Foretić-Vis, Vjera Biller, and Dragan Aleksić, and the Belgrade avant-gardists Mihailo Petrov, Boško Tokin, Rastko Petrović, and Stanislav Vinaver. Internationally, zenitism worked closely with the French poet Ivan Goll and with Alexander Archipenko, Robert Delaunay, Ilya Ehrenburg, Wassily Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, Louis Lozowick, Theo van Doesburg, Hannes Meyer, and László Moholy-Nagy, among others. From 1921 to 1923, Micić and Poljanski formed an informal Zagreb avant-garde circle. Micić, however, was constantly clashing with official Zagreb culture. He was forced to leave Zagreb in 1923 and move to Belgrade. The November–December 1921 edition of *Kritika* marks a rift between the avant-gardists and the modernists. The Belgrade art group Alfa (Alek Braun, Miloš Crnjanski, Stanislav Krakov, Dušan Matić, Rastko Petrović, Boško Tokin, and Stanislav Vinaver) published a proclamation in *Kritika* marking a break with zenitism, meaning also with the avant-garde. The conflict between the avant-gardists (the movement around *Zenit*) and the modernists (the informal group Alfa) was based on the difference between, on the one hand, the avant-garde position as articulated in



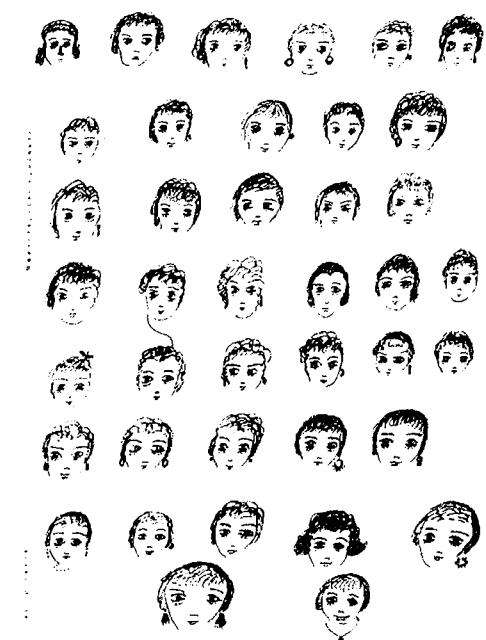
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Branko Ve Poljanski in the 1920s. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



12

Anuška Micić in the 1920s, and drawings, photograph from *Zenit* magazine. Private collection.



manifestos and the aspiration to a collective (rather than a personal) definition of the art movement, and, on the other, modernist poetry rooted in individual, highly aestheticized artistic (poetic) expression.

Experiments in the theater field were anticipated by a group of young zenithists (Dragutin Herjanić, Josif Klek, Višnja Kranjčević, Zvonimir Megler, Vlado Pilar, Dušan Plavšić Jr., Čedo Plavšić, Miloš Somborski, and Miho Šen) known as Putnici [The Travelers] active in 1922 and 1923. Two international dadaist magazines by Dragan Aleksić were published during 1922 in Zagreb—*Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz*—while Poljanski published the anti-dadaist magazine *Dada-Jok*. Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, and Richard



13

Unknown artist, photograph of Marijan Mikac, 1920s, photocollage. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



14

Franjo Mosinger, *L'Horreur*, 1933, photograph. Muzej za obrt, Zagreb.

Huelsenbeck, prominent figures of European dadaism, collaborated with *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz*. Aleksić introduced the term *Yugo-Dada*, and spoke of cities holding dadaist events (matinees): Zagreb, Belgrade, Osijek, Vinkovci, Novi Sad, Ljubljana, and Split. Poet August Cesarec visited the USSR in late 1923 and early 1924 as a representative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. He wrote the article "LEF in Yugoslavia" for the leftist pro-avant-garde magazine *LEF* and published the article "Contemporary Russian Painters. Art in the Revolution and the Abstract in Art. Kandinsky, Malevich, Tatlin" in *Književna republika* [Literary Republic] (Zagreb, 1924). This article was a radical leftist critique of modern and avant-garde art, speaking of the obstacles to the reception of avant-garde works in mass socialist culture, in the working class. Croatian surrealism appeared in the late 1930s. Unlike in Belgrade, this was not so much a movement as an individual poetic. Habunek, a theater director, was the first to try his hand at it. He cultivated a close relationship with the Belgrade surrealists and with architect Josip Seissel (zenitist Jo Klek's real name) in his post-Zenit phase. There were also poets in Croatia with an affinity for surrealism: Šime Vučetić and Drago Ivanišević and, later, Radovan Ivšić, the leading figure in Croatian surrealism. Ivšić formed close ties with André Breton after World War II.

Rivalries were typical for the avant-garde in Serbia²⁷ in the 1920s, between, on the one hand, the work of the zenitist Micić brothers and Dragan Aleksić beginning in 1923—a trend that could be dubbed the Croatian-Serb Belgrade avant-garde—and, on the other, the Serbian (Belgrade) avant-garde, with its roots in modernistic reappraisals going back to the magazine *Putevi* [Paths] (1822–1824) via the almanac *Crno na belo* [Black on White] (1924), *Hipnos* (1922–1923), *Svedočanstva* [Testimonies] (1924–1925), *50 u Evropi* [50 in Europe] (1928), and to the Belgrade surrealist movement—*Nemoguće* [Impossible] (1930), *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* [Surrealism Here and Now] (1931–1932), surrealist publications, and so on.

The Belgrade avant-garde developed through a multitude of catastrophic, shocking, innovative, and transmedia pro-dadaist events, realizations, and actions and came to its end at the time surrealism became established and superseded it. In 1924, Ljubomir Micić organized "The First Zenit International Exhibition of New Art" in the Stanković music school. Taking part were Peeters, Lozowick, Balsamadžieva, Bojadžiev, Delaunay, Archipenko, Kandinsky, Lissitzky, Foretić-Vis, Gecan, Klek, Petrov, and others. Zenitists Micić, Mikac, and Poljanski took part as representatives of the Yugoslav avant-garde in the international Exhibition of Revolutionary Art of the West in Moscow in 1926. The postexpressionist, activist, and pro-dadaist



¹⁵
Dragan Aleksić in the 1920s. Private collection.

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET
¹⁷Knjnička Odsjeka za komparativnu književnost
HR-10000 Zagreb, Ivana Lučića 3

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Josip Seissel, *Družina [A Gang]*, c. 1924–1925,
Zagreb, photograph. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.



17

Radovan Ivšić and André Breton, 1954. Photograph by Sperry
Lea; published in Radovan Ivšić, *U nepovrat* [Off into No Return]
(Zagreb: GZH, 1990).

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movement of Yugoslav Hungarians gathered in the Hungarian-language avant-garde magazine *Út* [Path] (1922–1925) was active in the Vojvodina (Novi Sad and Subotica) in the 1920s. *Út* had much in common with the Hungarian activism of Lajos Kassák, while the Subotica dadaists gathered around the Dada club and the action program of Dada matinees (Zoltán Csuka, Endre Arató, Árpád Láng, Miklós Fischer) were close to the dadaism of Sándor Barta. The Subotica dadaists were in direct contact with zenitism and Aleksic's dadaism.



18

Micić Gecan [To Micić from Gecan], 1925, New York, magazine photograph. Private collection.

Avant-garde activities in Slovenia²⁸ were linked to the magazines *Svetokret* (1921), Anton Podbevšek's *Rdeči pilot* [Red Pilot] (1922), *Ljubljanski zvon* [Ljubljana Bell], Ferdo Delak's *Novi oder* [New Stage] (1924), and *Tank* (1927–1928), as well as to Srečko Kosovel's poetry experiments (1926) and the constructivist art experiments of Černigoj in Ljubljana (1924) and Trieste (1925–1929). Poljanski held zenitist evenings in April 1925 in the *Mestni dom* in Ljubljana. Ljubomir Micić was a Paris associate of the magazine *Tank* and through it tried to revive the idea of zenitism. Černigoj attended a seminar held by Wassily Kandinsky and László Moholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus avant-garde constructivist school in Weimar. According to the Bauhaus archives, a number of other artists besides Černigoj from Yugoslavia were educated there: Mas Barnyai, Otti Berger, August Bohutinsky, Selman Selmanagić, and Ivana Tomljenović. In Trieste, Černigoj founded a constructivist group that included Giorgio Carmelich, Edvard Stepančič, Zorko Lah, Josip Vlah, and Ivan (Giovanni) Poljak and Tea Černigoj. Černigoj's constructivist group created a radical art whose results and solutions can be compared with the results of Bauhaus constructivism and the Soviet constructivism of El Lissitzky. A futuristic group, *Pokret futurista Julijiske krajine* [Futurist Movement of Giulia Province], was active in Trieste and Gorizia under the guidance of Djordjo Karmelić, Emilio Dolfi, and Pocarini and in very close association with the Slovenian avant-garde artist Milko Bambič.

The Yugoslav avant-garde belonged to the small or nonparadigmatic avant-gardes of the Middle European circle and had much in common with the Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian avant-gardes. Typically it had a feel for the spirit of the times and nomadic movement within the domain of hard-won artistic freedoms. Terms such as the Yugoslav, or Balkan, avant-garde never took hold, though some, particularly Micić, had ambitions to introduce them. Specific to this work is the way text, image, and media overlap in literature and art. The common ground among the Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian avant-gardes was that the initial spark of literary experiment transformed, through magazines as works of art, into an avant-garde intertextual model of research using a number of genres. The basics of the history of the Yugoslav avant-garde from 1921 to 1932 are defined by the magazines *Svetokret*, *Zenit*, *Dada Tank*, *Dada Jazz*, *Dada-Jok*, *Út*, *Hipnos*, *50 u Evropi*, *Rdeči pilot*, *Novi oder*, *Tank*, the almanac *Nemoguće*, and *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*. These magazines were not only literary works or literary mediators (communicators) with a specific art typography, but intertextual and interpictorial experimental creations forming an avant-garde model of textual visual expression.



19

Avgust Černigoj, *Fredo Delak*, 1927, destroyed. Published in *Der Sturm*, no. 10 (Berlin, 1929).



20

Ljubomir Micić, *Velika zenitistička večernja* [Big Zenitist Evening], Zagreb, January 31, 1923, poster. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

Such magazines were avant-garde art products or works of art. Magazines were the medium and stage for the intervention of the Yugoslav avant-gardes between the two world wars. The creative and activist undertakings of the Yugoslav avant-gardists follow a similar path. They range from the expressionist and revolutionary shouted poetical rhetoric of the manifesto typical of the spiritual climate of World War I trauma and drama, to the collage/montage techniques bringing image and word together into a creation with more than one genre: visual text (visual poetry, collages, montages), magazine designs, and artists' books (dadaists, zenitists, surrealists, constructivists).

Three evident concepts lie behind collage/montage works: either the artists in their work destroy and parody utilitarian meanings and the value of language and art presentations (the dadaist approach), or they merge a dadaist

and constructivist aesthetic with popular culture (commercial, radio, film art), making the work of art a symbol and metaphor for modern culture (futurism, zenitism, and constructivism), or they interpret nonlogical, automatic, simulative and meaningless visual or literary collage/montage works as expressions of the unconscious, a dream, suppressed sexuality, and political distance from bourgeois ideology (the surrealists).

In the work of some artists there was an evident move away from experiments in literature and art toward the paratheatrical (performances): zenit evenings in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Petrinja, Topusko, and Sisak, dadaist matinees and actions in Prague, Zagreb, Belgrade, and Subotica, Delak's futurist-constructivist theater experiments in Ljubljana and Gorizia.

The Yugoslav avant-garde was rife with rivalry and controversy between avant-gardists and modernists, zenitists and dadaists, zenitists and surrealists, avant-garde artists and socially committed artists, the intellectual Party left and the intellectual non-Party left. Movements and groups were led by strong individuals: zenitism by Ljubomir Micić, dadaism by Dragan Aleksić, hypnism by Rade Drainac, constructivism by Avgust Černigoj, surrealism by Marko Ristić. It was frequently the case that an entire movement was identified with the work of one person. Dragan Aleksić was the Dada man, the force behind the entire movement, while Ljubomir Micić was the leading and at times single consistent zenitist who brought in associates. Marko Ristić was the organizer and most active of the Belgrade surrealists while, in the tradition of the surrealist movement, he was also an authoritarian leader (the traumatic father) in the style of Breton. The utopian ideas of the entire art work (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) in Yugoslav avant-gardes were embodied only in manifesto

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Dragan Aleksić, *DA DA*, Osijek, 1922,
poster. Private collection.

Načrt je D. Brac, Viškova.



22

Nikola Vučo, Jelka Vučo, Marko Ristić, Ševa Ristić, 1929, photograph. Muzej primenjene umetnosti, Belgrade.

platforms and utopian or projected trends (Mitrinović's New Age, Krleža's *kozmopoliz*, Micić's barbarogenius and the Balkanization of Europe, Jo Klek's Zeniteum), unlike the paradigmatic Russian and German avant-gardes striving for the whole of art through architecture (the Bauhaus building), theater (Oskar Schlemmer's mathematical dance), monumental sculpture (Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*), and public mass performance and theatrical experiment (the art of LEF).

From an ideological point of view, the Yugoslav avant-gardes were leftist. Some were tied, directly or indirectly, to Marxism and the Communist Party. Others were critically subversive in regard to the values, meanings, and modes of expression in modern bourgeois society and its culture. Yet others were antiauthoritarian, anarchistic, and shocking in their specific and intra-avant-garde characteristics (ideals of freedom, differences, qualities).

Clear distinctions existed among the various avant-garde approaches. Krleža and the circle of intellectuals linked to him were defined as the non-Party left of critical, modernist intellectuals. Aleksić's dadaism was leftist in the aesthetic sense, working as it did with linguistic forms of expression

established in leftist dadaism. It was not, however, defined as leftist in terms of either practical politics or program. Micić's zenithism had contradictory, eclectic, and shocking ideological characteristics and, in the broadest sense, may be defined as an anarchist approach using a variety of strategies for provocation within the greater ideologies of pan-Slavism, nationalism, Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Bolshevik revolutionary rhetoric, Trotskyism, and nomadic, anarchist strategies of permanent changes of view, forms of expression, values, and ideologies. Belgrade surrealism began in the vein of highly aestheticized bourgeois modernism, later to be theoretically termed Freudian Marxism at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. In the 1930s, it turned into the revolutionary art of social realism after a modernist and avant-garde period of self-criticism. Kosovel, Delak, and Černigoj declared themselves in terms of program to be leftist, revolutionary, and constructive artists.

A series of avant-garde magazines, *Mladina* [Youth] (Ljubljana, 1924–1928), *Večnost* [Eternity] (1926), *Nova Literatura* [New Literature] (Belgrade, 1928–1930), *Stožer* [Headquarters] (Belgrade, 1930–1933), *Kritika* [Critique] (Zagreb, 1924–1928), *Danas* [Today] (Zagreb, 1934), and *Pečat* [Seal] (Zagreb, 1939–1940), followed the movements within the framework of the socialist left and of the critical art of the late 1920s and 1930s.

The leftist magazines are noted for their concrete political and aesthetic orientation. For example, Pavle Bihalji, Oto Bihalji, and Branko Gavella's *Nova Literatura* retained its avant-garde dadaist collage/montaging character and interest in the avant-garde experiment and high modernistic art. Pavle Bihalji made photomontages for the magazine and for publications by Nolit closely resembling the functionalistic design of John Heartfield.

The magazines backing the Kharkov trend of social realism were *Stožer*, *Literatura* (Zagreb, 1931–1933), and *Kultura* (Zagreb, 1933). They were characterized by the project of proletarian art and literature that meant criticizing modernism and the avant-garde as expressions of bourgeois decadence.

Krleža's magazine *Danas* was a modernistic, critical herald addressing debates on modernism, the avant-garde, and social realism with equal self-assurance. The cover designs of the Minerva editions of Krleža's and Ehrenburg's books, akin to Bihalji's photomontages, were the work of Zagreb artist Franjo Bruck, who made ra-courses and montage structures typical of constructivist photography. Constructivist and dadaistically engaged photo collages were also contributed by Ivan Sabolić, using both political and commonplace topics.

The Yugoslav Neo-avant-garde

The term neo-avant-garde²⁹ refers to the second wave of the avant-garde, which may be defined in a number of different ways: as a rehashing of the first avant-garde, as a maturation, or as something entirely distinct from the earlier movement. The first position asserts that the avant-garde of the first decades of the twentieth century was the period of pioneering art work, while the avant-garde after World War II was secondhand, a reworking of the first (according, for instance, to Peter Bürger). The second interpretation claims that the avant-garde after World War II was the coming of age of the utopias and projects of the early avant-gardes, while the third sees the neo-avant-garde as a specific and relatively autonomous set of movements and individual work between 1950 and 1968, creating, with high and late modernism, a complex picture of aesthetic, artistic, and ideological forms, solutions, ideas, and projects of modernity.

Historic avant-gardes are seen as the precursor to modernism, while the neo-avant-garde is considered a critical practice on the fringes of mainstream modernist culture. The avant-garde artists or their students shaped and developed the neo-avant-garde and continued with the avant-garde project during and after World War II. While the art of high modernism in the West, or of moderate modernism in Yugoslavia, aspired to narrowing art to a strictly professional and media framework, the neo-avant-garde sought to expand art into everyday life (urbanism, design, advertising, political conflicts, emancipation of the individual, psychotherapy), spiritual teaching (links with Eastern mysticism and religious teaching), and theoretical teaching (Marxism as the New Left in the West, Praxis in Yugoslavia, structuralism and materialistic poststructuralism, alternative psychiatry). The neo-avant-garde reached its peak in the 1968 youth and student rebellion.

The defeat of the alternative youth revolution was also the end of the neo-avant-garde. Paradoxically, the 1968 alternative youth culture brought the neo-avant-garde (metaphorically, the last avant-garde) into confrontation with the early avant-garde (the anticipation of postmodernism). It brought the art of firsthand expression face to face with the art of metareflection. The demise of the neo-avant-garde is seen in the impossibility of bringing about revolutionary changes in the individual and the society through art, in the breakdown of modernist utopian projects because of the entrenchment of bureaucratic institutional models of society, the integration of the experimental and formal achievements of the neo-avant-garde arts into a mainstream, modernist high or mass art and culture.

The neo-avant-garde in Tito's Yugoslavia happened between 1951 and 1973. It began as a continuation of the prewar modernistic and avant-garde practice on the margins of the dominant socialist culture in the country (Josif Klek) or abroad (Vane Bor, Radovan Ivšić). This includes the work of writers (Stanislav Vinaver, Ljubiša Jocić, Oskar Davičo) who aimed at reinstating modernism in the process of overcoming socialist realism. The authentic neo-avant-garde of the 1950s was born as a gesture of defiance against social realism and bourgeois modernism by projecting the eventual space of the art experiment and overstepping the traditional media boundaries of art disciplines. The Exat 51 group founded geometric abstraction and a constructivist utopia. Vladan Radovanović and Josip Stošić anticipated visual-poetic research, while Radovanović and Leonid Šejka of the Belgrade group Mediaala focused their work on a gestural action art close to the ideas of neo-Dada, Fluxus, and the happening. The neo-avant-garde reached its peak in the 1960s and branched out in a variety of actions and experimental directions, from experimental prose (Bora Čosić, Vlado Kristl) via twelve-tone music (Milko Kelemen) to the neoconstructivist (the New Tendencies movement) and the ludist (the OHO group, Tomislav Gotovac) experiment. As the 1970s dawned, neo-avant-garde experiments were transformed into conceptual art. The last neo-avant-garde exhibition was held in Zagreb in 1973 under the title *Tendencije 5* [Tendencies 5], bringing together neoconstructivism, computer art, and visual research (Koloman Novak, Vlado Bonačić, Juraj Dobrović) and the research of conceptual artists (Braco Dimitrijević, Goran Trbuljak, Slavko Matković, the OHO group).

In Yugoslavia the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s developed in three distinct national models: one found in Serbia, one in Croatia, and one in Slovenia. In Serbia³⁰ there were distinct groups involved in the neo-avant-garde in Belgrade (art, literature, music, and film), and in Novi Sad and Zrenjanin (literary-textual experiments joining concrete and visual poetry).

The Belgrade neo-avant-garde was close to the destructive, shocking, gestural, and linguistic/conceptual actionism of neo-Dada, Fluxus, and happenings. It cultivated ties with French new wave film, American underground culture, and structuralist literary experiments. The common ground for various gestures lay in creating a multimedia work of art or a work where the media eluded definition, joining the visual, discursive, acoustic, and existential. In the 1960s, Vladan Radovanović developed models of vocal/visual work, creating an authentic space for multimedia experiment comparable to research in visual or concrete poetry, experimental music, and Fluxus. Šejka, paradoxically, confronted the antimodernist ideals of integral fantastic painting

evoking the ideals of Renaissance craft and spiritual wholeness by using fragmentary, behavioral, and experimental ideas of assemblage and happening. Typical was their interest in warehouses, junkyards, and garbage dumps, bringing a convergence with the ideas of “junk art” (the art of the junkyard). Miroljub Todorović began his visual/poetic research through the work of a signalist group and movement in the field of visual and concrete poetry.

At the end of the 1960s, novelist Bora Čosić launched the magazine *Rok* (1969–1970) based on the ideas of mixed media, a magazine that was both an art magazine and a work of art. In the theoretical sense and in terms of concept, *Rok* was the pinnacle of the Belgrade neo-avant-garde, joining together, within the integral context of a magazine, experiments in literature, essay, poetry, painting, and music, referencing the international strategies of neo-Dada and Fluxus.

The avant-garde individuals and organizations active in Belgrade were Kino klub Belgrade, with experimental short and long films (Makavejev, Rakonjac), BITEF (the Belgrade International Theater Festival), presenting key works of international neo-avant-garde theater (Grotowski, Brook, Schechner, Living Theater, Wilson), the neo-avant-garde music research of Radovanović and Paul Pignon, and art historian Biljana Tomić who, within the work of Gallery 212 associated with BITEF, developed a particular form of visual poetry called typoevery, defining the concept of permanent and total art (visual poetry, arte povera, body art, happening). She showed her work abroad and drew attention to the transformation from the neo-avant-garde to the post-avant-garde.

Neoconstructivist work was going on individually in the Belgrade neo-avant-garde, linked to the Croatian New Tendencies movement. Typical of these were Koloman Novak's luminous/kinetic ambiences, Zoran Radović's mechanical (oscillatory) geometric drawings, and the computer graphics of Petar Milojević, who lived and worked in Canada.

The Zrenjanin, Subotica, and Novi Sad neo-avant-garde developed within the framework of literary textual experiments. The textual experiments led to research aiming at concrete and visual poetry (Vujica Rešin Tucić, Vojislav Despotov, Bogdanka Poznanović, the Bosch + Bosch group, Judita Šalgo, Zoran Mirković) and the post-avant-garde, paratheatrical, and textual practice of conceptual art (the KôD and \exists groups).

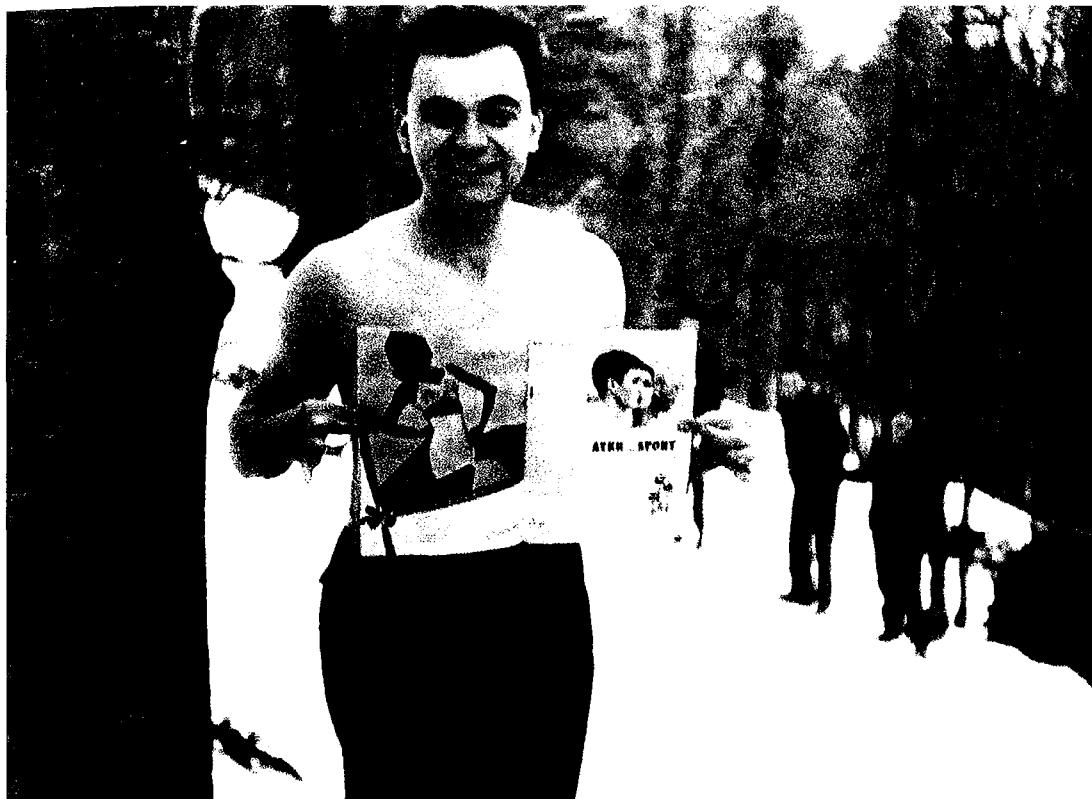
The Croatian neo-avant-garde³¹ had all the features of the international neo-avant-garde. The principal approaches were: (1) the early geometric abstraction of the group Exat 51 (1951–1956), (2) the international post-Informel and neoconstructivist New Tendencies movement (1961–1973),

including the Gestaltist, kinetic, optical, computer, and visual research of the new plastic language, (3) the Gorgona group (1961–1965), working in the spirit of post-Informel, and (4) visual poetry (Josip Stošić). The manifesto of the Exat group speaks of the affirmation of abstract art, experimental research work, erasure of all boundaries between the fine and the applied arts, the integration of art into modern life. The Gorgona group worked in parallel with the New Tendencies movement as a spiritual-and-art pro-Fluxus and pro-dadaist alternative to neoconstructivism. Gorgona aspired to the spirit of antiart, absurdity, irony, and Zen contemplation. The visual poet Josip Stošić developed the poetics of researching the visual/semantic relationships between words and text. He started with research and experiments with poetic texts and moved on to textual objects and textual ambiences. The textual experiments of the philosopher Darko Kolibaš emerged from poststructuralist (Lacan and Derrida) language research.

Neo-avant-garde³² projects in Slovenia were linked to the work of the magazine *Perspektive* [Perspectives] and the OHO group. *Perspectives*

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Tomislav Gotovac, *Pokazivanje magazina Elle* [Showing *Elle Magazine*], 1962, photograph. Artist's collection.



(1960–1964) brought together a number of artists, literary theorists, philosophers, and political dissidents who worked in the atmosphere of abandoning social realism and refocusing to deal with issues of national culture and opening to the West. *Perspectives* introduced to Slovenian culture the problem of existentialist opinion on the subject of society and art. The artists affiliated with the magazine included Taras Kermauner, a theorist of structuralism, Jože Pučnik, a nationalist dissident, Rudi Šeligo, author of experimental prose, Dušan Jovanović, director and playwright, poets Veno Taufer, Tomaž Šalamun, Iztok Geister, and others. The OHO group, the OHO movement, and OHO Catalog set in motion, between 1962 and 1969, a unique process for the Slovenian neo-avant-garde. Unlike the situation among the Serbian and Croatian movements, characterized by a historic discontinuity between the neo-avant-garde and the post-avant-garde (conceptual art, new art practice), a continuity between the neo-avant-garde and the post-avant-garde was established within the OHO group.

Three distinct periods of the Slovenian neo-avant-garde can be identified. First was the reist period, created in the spirit of phenomenological philosophy and linked to concrete poetry, film experiments, work on art books, and pop art articles (Kranj, 1962–1968). Next was the structuralist period or late reism, linked with structuralist theory and its integration into visual concretist research and ludism (1968–1970), and finally the post-avant-garde period from arte povera and process art to land art and conceptual art (1969–1971).

The Slovenian avant-garde produced consistent, systematic, multimedia work on experiments with language, perception, and social alternatives. The OHO group attracted not only artists but also essayists, philosophers, and sociologists. OHO was inclined toward the spiritual sphere, to Martin Heidegger's philosophy and critique of humanism (rejection of the concept that man is at the heart of the world), structuralist models of language systems, and a mystical questioning of the nonvisual world.

The Yugoslav Post-avant-garde

The post-avant-garde included art movements, groups, and individual analytical, critical, parodic, and simulative strategies for finishing, for criticism, and for second-degree (meta-) use of modernist and avant-garde art and culture. As opposed to the avant-gardes (idealistic utopia) and the neo-avant-gardes (concrete utopia), the post-avant-garde is a posthistoric complex of manifestations that reexamines, presents, destroys, deconstructs, thereby creating an archaeology of modernism, avant-gardes, and neo-avant-gardes.

The early post-avant-garde,³³ active at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s as high modernism (in the West) and moderate modernism (in the East), turned to late modernism in anticipation of postmodern consciousness and culture. It was based on a critique of modernist dogmas, especially on a critique of the theory of modern art, for example that of Clement Greenberg, and on the relativization of media boundaries and disciplines based on one medium—for example pop art, with the damage it caused to the boundary between high and popular culture, and minimal art with its development of specific objects and installations that were neither painting nor sculpture.

The eclectic post-avant-garde³⁴ of the late 1970s and early 1980s was also known as “eclectic postmodernism” and was marked by the poetics of a soft, posthistoric return to the fictional and narrative in literature, painting, theater, and film (trans-avant-garde, neoromanticism, neoexpressionism). It was based on beliefs in the end of history and the age, the notion that art originating at the close of the twentieth century had the features of the posthistoric

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Vlasta Delimar, *Jebanje je tužno* [Fucking Is Sad], 1986, performance.
Artist's collection.



style. This meant that late twentieth-century art was a transitional form bridging a historical gap between the history of the West at its demise and a new, as yet unborn cycle for the future that still cannot be predicted. Furthermore there was an expectation that the art of the current moment should turn to the reexamination and consumption of the historic and stylistic meanings of Western art (retrotrends) while at the same time seeking possible alternatives to cultural domination (a pro-avant-gardist trend).

One special phenomenon of the post-avant-gardes is the art of postsocialism.³⁵ Postsocialism is a postmodern state of the former real-socialist societies and states. It is described as a transitional period between bureaucratic real-socialist society and liberal late capitalism. There is a paradoxical link in postsocialism between distinct and heterogeneous social systems and forms of production and consumption in the culture. For example, real socialism, liberal capitalism, and national bourgeois early modern capitalism are all present in society at once. At issue here is the relationship between a real state order (the confrontation of the institutions of real socialism and late capitalism) and a fictional state order (the confrontation of the ways of presenting postmodern sources of the nation and society, the omitted or censored phases of modernism in the times of real socialism and the unachieved forms of consumption or enjoyment of late capitalism).

In terms of art, postsocialism includes four global systems of presentation. Art may be treated as a symptom of real-socialist ideological powers (phantasm), meaning some form of subversive production of the wrong sense, as in Russian perestroika art, Chinese cynical realism, or the Slovenian retro-avant-garde. In another of these global systems of presentation there is a return to premodern or early modern forms of research that had been established in realism, romanticism, and neoclassicism, or rather, in socialist realist, fascist, or national socialist art. All these phenomena may be termed postsocialist national realism. Yet another approach is an asymmetrical collective reexamination of the modernist formations either omitted or only superficially noted in national art history during real socialism. Finally, postsocialist art explores those phenomena following and participating in events on the transnational scene, primarily of the first world in its postmodern condition (Irwin, Vlasta Delimar).

The development of the post-avant-garde in Yugoslavia is identified from 1969 to 1995 as a group of phenomena in conceptual art (1969–1971), in eclectic postmodernism (1981–1986), and in retro-avant-gardes (1981 to now).

This is one of the possible histories of the avant-gardes in the history of Yugoslavia. Other stories remain to be told, but the articles here discuss the wonderful and eerie games that have changed the very nature of art by confronting art and society in the battle for meaning, sense, and existence. It is a story of limits and the powerful and horrifying efforts of artists of different generations to face the limits of the worlds in which they have lived. This book is dedicated to the memory of those people.

translated by Jelena Babšek and Stephen Agnew

Notes

1. Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića: Počeci srpske književne avangarde* [The Dogma and Utopia of Dimitrije Mitrinović: The Beginnings of the Serbian Literary Avant-garde] (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1977); and Predrag Palavestra, *Književnost Mlade Bosne* [The Literature of Mlada Bosna] (Belgrade: Art and Literature Institute, 1994).
2. Felix Klee, ed., *The Diaries of Paul Klee 1898–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 280.
3. Gojko Tešić, “MID = DIM ili pesnik absolutno ničega” [MID = DIM or a Poet of Absolutely Nothing], in Gojko Tešić, ed., *Metafizika ničega (uvod)* [The Metaphysics of Nothing, Introduction] (Belgrade: Otkrovenje, 1996).
4. Zoran Markuš, ed., *Slikar i pesnik Branko Ve Poljanski 1897–?* [Painter and Poet Branko Ve Poljanski 1897–?] (Opovo: Gallery Jovan Popović, 1974).
5. Milan Bogdanović, *Slom modernizma izmedju dva rata* [The Collapse of Modernism between the Two World Wars] (Belgrade: People's University, 1949).
6. Aleksandar Flaker, *Poetika osporavanja. Avangarda i književna ljevica* [The Poetics of Contestation] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1984); and Aleksandar Flaker, *Nomadi ljetopote: intermedijalne studije* [Nomads of Beauty: Intermedial Studies] (Zagreb: GZH, 1988).
7. Aleksandar Flaker and Dubravka Ugrešić, eds., *Pojmovnik ruske avangarde* [A Glossary of the Russian Avant-garde] (Zagreb: GZH, 1984–1993).
8. Aleš Berger, ed., *Tank Reprint* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1987).
9. Aleš Erjavec, *Ideologija in umetnost modernizma* [Ideology and the Art of Modernism] (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1987).
10. Lev Kreft, *Spopad na umetniški levici (med vojnama)* [Fight on the Left in Art (Between the Wars)] (Slovenija: Državna založba, 1989).
11. Peter Krečič, *Slovenski konstruktivizem in njegovi evropski okviri* [Slovenian Constructivism and Its European Context] (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1989).
12. Miodrag Protić edited a series of catalogs under the collective title “Jugoslovenska umetnost XX veka” [Yugoslav Art of the Twentieth Century], Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, which came out from the mid-1960s to the beginning

- of the 1980s. Also see Miodrag B. Protić, *Srpsko slikarstvo XX veka* [Serbian Twentieth-Century Painting] (Belgrade: Nolit, 1970).
13. Irina Subotić, ed., *Zenit i avangarda 20ih godina* [Zenit and the Avant-garde of the 1920s] (Belgrade: National Museum, 1983).
 14. Miško Šuvaković, ed., *Scene jezika—Uloga teksta u likovnim umetnostima—Fragmentarne istorije 1920–1990 I–II* [The Stage of Language—Role of the Text in the Fine Arts—Fragmentary Histories 1920–1990 I–II] (Belgrade: ULUS, 1989); and Miško Šuvaković, *Estetika apstraktog slikarstva: Apstraktna umetnost i teorija umetnika 20ih godina* [The Aesthetic of Abstract Painting: Abstract Art and Theory of Artists of the 1920s] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1998).
 15. Vida Golubović and Staniša Tutnjević, eds., *Srpska avangarda u periodici* [The Serbian Avant-garde in Periodicals] (Belgrade: Matica srpska and the Literature and Art Institute, 1996).
 16. Gojko Tešić, ed., *Zli volšebnici: polemike i pamfleti u srpskoj književnosti 1917–1943 I–III* [The Evil Sorcerers: Polemics and Pamphlets in Serbian Literature 1917–1943 I–III] (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1983).
 17. Radovan Vučković, *Avangardna poezija* [Avant-garde Poetry] (Banja Luka: Glas, 1984).
 18. The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established after World War I and soon changed its name to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
 19. After World War II, socialist (or Tito's) Yugoslavia changed its name a number of times; it was called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRJ), then the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ), and ultimately the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ).
 20. Tomaž Brejc, *Temni modernizem: Slike, teorije, interpretacije* [Dark Modernism: Paintings, Theory, Interpretation] (Ljubljana: CZ, 1991).
 21. Miodrag B. Protić, ed., *1929–1950: nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost nor-a, socijalistički realizam* [1929–1950: Surrealism, Postsurrealism, Social Art, the Art of the War for National Liberation, Socialist Realism] (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1969).
 22. Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928–1952* [Clash on the Literary Left 1928–1952] (Zagreb, 1970).
 23. Ješa Denegri, "Socijalistički estetizam" [Socialist Aestheticism], in *Pedesete: teme srpske umetnosti 1950–1960* [The Fifties: Themes from Serbian Art 1950–1960] (Belgrade: Svetovi, 1993), pp. 104–110.
 24. Jure Mikuž, *Slovensko moderno slikarstvo in zahodna umetnost—od preloma s socialističnim realizmom do konceptualizma* [Slovenian Modern Painting and Western Art—From the Break with Socialist Realism to Conceptualism] (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1995).
 25. Krisztina Passuth, *Les Avant-gardes de l'Europe centrale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988); Timothy D. Benson, ed., *Central European Avant-gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930* (Los Angeles: LACMA, and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

26. Želimir Koščević, ed., *Tendencije avangardi u hrvatskoj modernoj umjetnosti 1919–1941* [Avant-garde Tendencies in Croatian Modern Art 1919–1941] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1982–1983).
27. Gojko Tešić, *Srpska avangarda u polemičkom kontekstu (dvadesete godine)* [The Serbian Avant-garde in a Polemical Context, the Twenties] (Novi Sad: Svetovi, 1991).
28. Breda Ilich Klančnik and Igor Zabel, eds., *Tank! Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda* [Tank! Slovenian Historical Avant-garde] (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1998).
29. Miško Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950* [A Glossary of Modern and Postmodern Fine Arts and Theory after 1950] (Belgrade and Novi Sad: SANU and Prometej, 1999).
30. Ješa Denegri, *Šezdesete: teme srpske umetnosti (1960–1970)* [The Sixties: Themes of Serbian Art, 1960–1970] (Novi Sad: Svetovi, 1995).
31. Ješa Denegri, *Umjetnost konstruktivnog pristupa: Exat 51, Nove Tendencije* [Art of the Constructive Approach: Exat 51, New Tendencies] (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2000).
32. Lev Kreft, *Zjeban od absolutnega—Perspektivovci in perspektivaši: portret skupine* [Fucked Up by Absolute—People from Perspektive Magazine: Group Portrait] (Ljubljana: ZPS, 1998); Igor Zabel, ed., *Grupa OHO—Retrospektiva* [The OHO Group, a Retrospective] (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1994); and Miško Šuvaković, *Anatomija angelov: Razprave o umetnosti in teoriji v Sloveniji po letu 1960* [The Anatomy of Angels: Discussion on Art and Theory in Slovenia since 1960] (Ljubljana: ZPS, 2001).
33. Marijan Susovski, ed., *Nova umjetnička praksa 1966–1978* [New Artistic Practice 1966–1978] (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1978).
34. Andrej Medved, *Poetike osamdesetih let v slikarstvu in kiparstvu* [Poetics of the 1980s in Painting and Sculpture] (Koper: Edition Artes, 1991).
35. Marina Gržinić, ed., *Fiction Reconstructed: Eastern Europe, Post-Socialism and the Retro-Avantgarde* (Vienna: Springerin, 2000).

2

The Three Avant-gardes and Their Context

The Early, the Neo, and the Postmodern

Aleš Erjavec

1. The Forgotten Avant-gardes

Why have the avant-gardes been so neglected within twentieth-century art? A recent survey of Eastern European modern art asks this same question:

Why is it that today these avant-garde figures and movements, which earlier in the century overcame their peripheral location to assume a critical and formative role in the genesis of advanced art, are almost totally forgotten and overlooked? . . . The retreat into relative historical obscurity was not the result of a Western program of wilful ignorance or of cultural chauvinism. Rather it was, in large measure, the consequence of political, social, and even cultural developments in each of the respective nations of this vast expanse of eastern Europe.¹

The author, S. A. Mansbach, concludes that the early avant-gardes often vanished as conservative and nationalist regimes gained ascendancy. For those progressive artists who sought to construct a new world on the fallen eastern empires of tsars, sultans, and kaisers, all too often the only alternatives were accommodation, exile, or in extreme cases extirpation.²

The Western European avant-gardes (dadaism, surrealism, and even futurism) lived on after World War II. In contrast, the avant-gardes of Eastern Europe most often had ceased to exist by the 1930s, whether they were indigenous (as was Czech poetism), or were influenced in part by their Western and Russian counterparts, or, indeed, were a transposition and assimilation of Western European avant-garde trends (surrealism), notable exceptions being the Czech and Polish avant-gardes. In some cases—such as that of

László Moholy-Nagy—avant-garde artists successfully continued their work abroad. In others, their work ended in obscurity: such was the case for Branko Ve Poljanski, active in the zenitist movement and brother of Ljubomir Micić, who disappeared sometime after 1940 among the Paris clochards.

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Ljubomir Micić, 1921. Private collection.



Peter Bürger's influential *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1974) sparked a wide-reaching discussion in Europe on the early twentieth-century avant-gardes, which, in Bürger's terminology and theory, were no longer classified as early, or classical, but as historical. While the first two terms are descriptive, that of the historical avant-gardes has profound theoretical consequences. As Bürger put it, "A contemporary aesthetic can no more neglect the incisive changes that the historical avant-garde movements effected in the realm of art than it can ignore that art has long since entered a post avant-gardiste phase. We characterize that phase by saying that it revived the category of work and that the procedures invented by the avant-garde with antiartistic intent are being used for artistic ends. . . . The revival of art as an institution and the revival of the category 'work' suggest that today, the avant-garde is already historical."³ The early avant-gardes, claimed Bürger,

were an attempt to surmount and erase the barrier between art and life, to sublate art and return it to the praxis of life. This attempt failed; the neo-avant-garde and all other later avant-gardes were but a visible manifestation of the failure of these aims, for they allowed art to drift back into the commodified bourgeois universe.

Avant-garde phenomena in Yugoslavia such as zenithism and Slovenian constructivism represented, with surrealism, the apogee of the early and radical avant-gardism on the territory of the newly formed kingdom of South Slavs. They made use of ideas developed by various foreign avant-garde movements, ranging from Italian to Russian futurism and from expressionism and dadaism to constructivism. They were both eclectic and original—often simply for the way in which they assimilated “foreign” ideas into their own cultural frameworks. The same could be said of developments in the 1980s, when the eclectic artistic character of the postmodern avant-garde strongly resembled its historical granduncles from the early 1920s.

A group of researchers in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Belgrade in the 1980s in disciplines such as comparative literature and literary history, art history, musicology, and architecture, as well as theater, film, and dance, began exploring the neglected early avant-gardes on the territory of Yugoslavia in the period around World War I. By an uncanny Hegelian “cunning of reason” this work coincided with a global proliferation of postmodernist ideas that were immediately appropriated in the former socialist countries, Yugoslavia included, not only as the latest trend but also as one congenial to the cultural traditions of these small cultures. As postmodernism emerged in Yugoslavia it did so with references to the early avant-gardes.

Through most of modern history, the national cultures that were in 1918 to become the officially recognized Yugoslav cultures and nations (the Serbian, the Croatian, and the Slovenian) were dependent on literature and language. Neither Croatia nor Slovenia had had their own national states before Yugoslavia was formed. National sentiments, therefore, hinged on language. It was language (and the ensuing culture) that distinguished, say, a Habsburg Croat or a Slovene from a Hungarian, a German, or an Italian.

Before and during World War I sporadic cases of avant-gardism occurred in what were then still disparate parts of the future country. Examples of this are the Bosnian Serb Dimitrije Mitrinović, who not only modernized Serbian literature but promoted expressionism, futurism, and national utopianism, especially with his “*Estetičke kontemplacije*” [Aesthetic Contemplations] (1913). As early as 1908, Mitrinović argued that his epoch was “characterized by its individualism and liberalism, it is an age of desire



26

Franz Joseph, czar of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Private collection.



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Aleksandar I Karađorđević, king of Yugoslavia. Private collection.

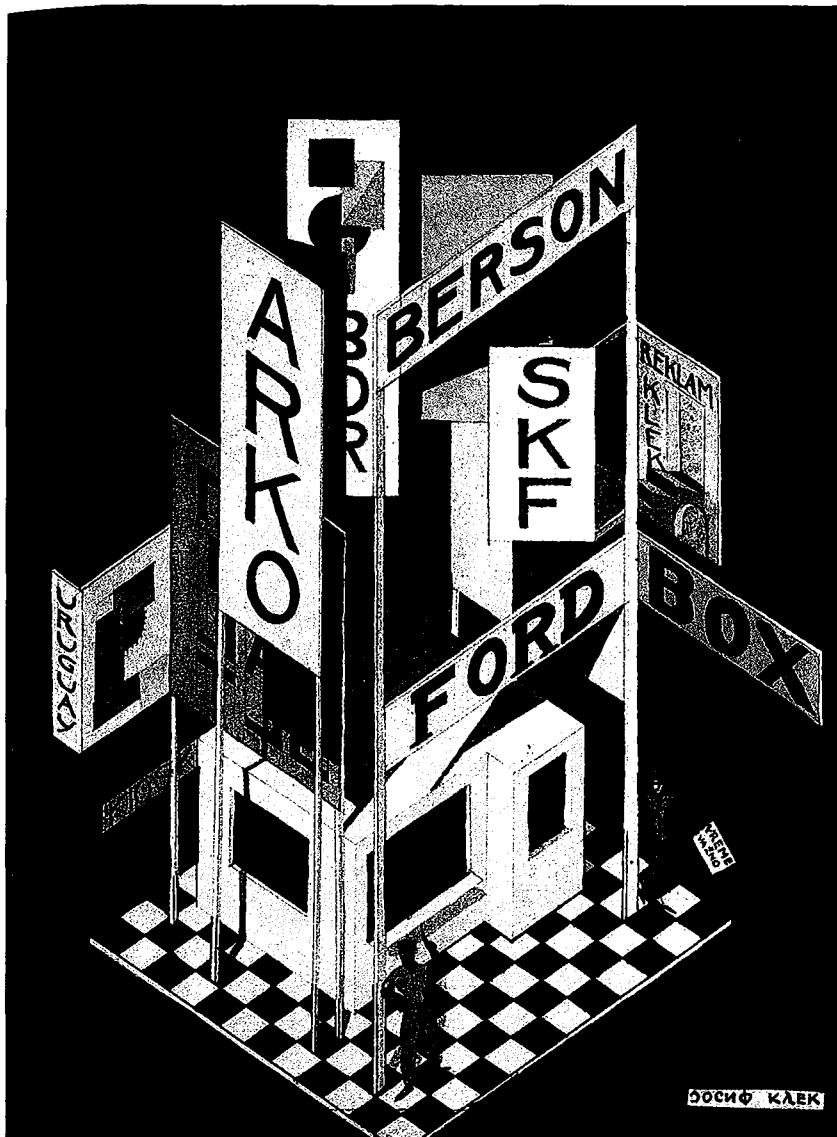
for power and the fullness of one's own individual life."⁴ In 1914 in the coastal town of Zadar the poet Joso Matošić tried to publish *Zvrk* [Whirligig], a futurist journal, but failed, while in the Slovenian town of Novo Mesto in 1915 Anton Podbevšek was at work on his avant-garde series of poems, "Žolta pisma" [The Yellow Letters].

During World War I, the reigning avant-garde influences on what would soon become the new state were expressionism and futurism. But while futurism was certainly a radical avant-garde movement, the status of expressionism is not so clear. What Peter Krečič writes about plastic art in the avant-garde and expressionism in Slovenia is equally true of other parts of Yugoslavia:

The avant-garde and expressionism in Slovenian plastic art share several common features. For some time they perform in parallel. . . . Both movements grow out of a similar spiritual atmosphere. They combat the same "sea of evil" and they boldly demand changes in life and the world as well as in literature and art. In their belief as to how life and the world should change, however, these movements have essential, profound differences. . . . Art is dead for the avant-garde but a new art lives on, attempting in unfamiliar ways to express the new reality, ways of life, technical advances. It anticipates the revolution, and in its utopianism calls for a new man. In art such as this there will no longer be a rift between art and life: art will be life and life will be art.⁵

Expressionism, on the other hand, has no such agenda; it remains primarily an expression of the individual, allowing for empathy that is individual and necessarily subjective. Surrealism, in spite of its aggressiveness and revolutionary fervor, is in this respect (although perhaps only from our vantage point today) closer in spirit to expressionism than to pre-1915 Italian futurism or the radical Russian avant-garde movements such as futurism, constructivism, suprematism, or productivism.

In the first issue of *Zenit* (published in Zagreb in February 1921), the magazine that would be the voice of the new avant-garde movement of zenitism, Micić wrote: "Art belongs to all nations. Art is universal—it embraces the whole of humanity. Therefore there is no specifically national art, even less class art. We poets—artists of this world—we extend our hands to those who think like us *to all for everything* over splintered human skulls."⁶ Since a little further in the same manifesto zenitism proclaims itself to be "abstract metacosmic expressionism," it was not surprising that most of this first issue of the journal was devoted to the work of Egon Schiele. "Although



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Josif Klek, *Reklama* [Advertisement], 1923, India ink and watercolor. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

in 1921 *Zenit* proclaimed zenitism to be poetry and philosophy, expressionism to be painting and music, and cubism to be sculpture and architecture, these ideas soon began to merge in a complex zenitism, a zenitism that will be, with a combinable, or rather an eclectic yet simultaneously authentic art, capable of bringing together and expressing all spiritual potentials. As a synthesis of all paramount human powers this art should exceed all previous arts.”⁷

In its issue of September 23, 1922, *Zenit* already denounced expressionism as a mistake and turned to constructivism. Issue nos. 17–18 (October–November 1922), devoted to “Russian New Art,” contained original contributions by Russian avant-garde artists, while the frontispiece was designed by El Lissitzky. Issue no. 43, published in December 1926, was the last to appear. In it was the article “Zenitism through the Prism of Marxism,” which a Belgrade court accused of “spreading communist propaganda,” while Micić was found guilty of inciting “a change of social order,” in other words, revolution.

During the six years of its existence Micić used his publication to propagate ideas that, in spite of being cosmopolitan and promoting a universal art, nonetheless also pursued a local, national (and regional) agenda. *Zenit* promoted the idea of “an eastern-metacosmic type of superman,” who would have “a superior relation to Mme Europe”⁸ and its worn-out values.

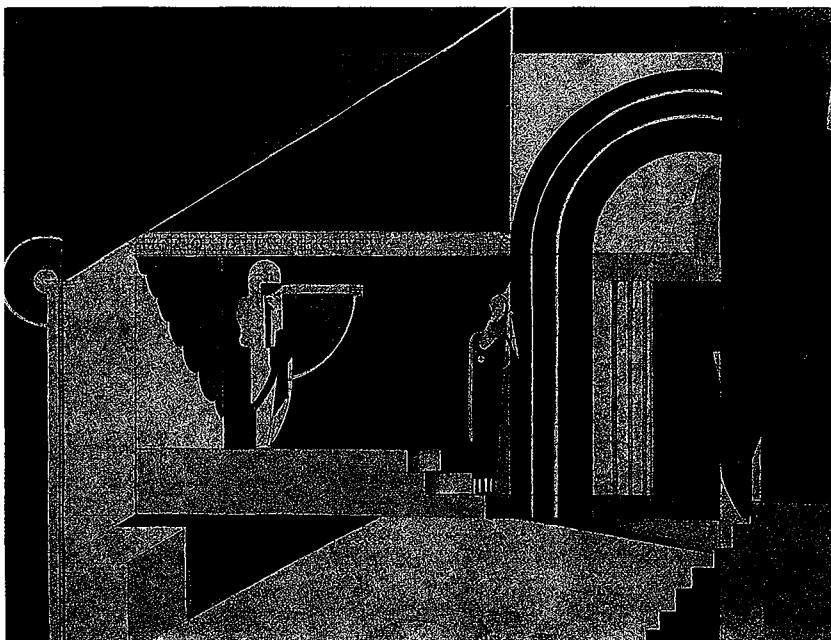
Even though it repudiated all traditions, zenitism acknowledged indigenous roots, which, it believed, could introduce fresh blood and rouse healthy, young, original, and forceful tissue in a fatigued and war-exhausted European civilization. With proclamations of the “Balkanization of Europe,” *Zenit* appeared on the international scene at the beginning of 1921 and was quickly included in the family of the most reputable avant-garde reviews of the time.⁹

Micić’s ideas—another of these being the description of this superman as a “barbarogenius who will revive Europe”—are reminiscent not only of Nietzsche but of the “national” wing of Russian futurism (V. V. Khlebnikov, B. K. Livshits) which promulgated (counter to the cosmopolitan futurism of Mayakovsky’s circle) a negation of culture, an animality, troglodytism, and the Slavic tradition at the expense of the Italo-German one. By using the ideas of German expressionism and blending them with those of Russian futurism, Micić developed the distinctive features of his zenitism that was to serve as a link between the two parts of the continent: *Zenit* was to be the voice of Europe’s East speaking to Europe’s West.

2. Zenitism, Constructivism, Surrealism, and After

Constructivism was the main early avant-garde movement in Slovenia. Here, too, the avant-garde began with poetry and then expanded to include other arts, but while the avant-garde phase of art in Slovenia by 1927 had mostly ended (Avgust Černigoj had to leave for political reasons for Trieste, while poet Srečko Kosovel had died a year earlier), it continued in Serbia with surrealism that developed fully between 1929 and 1932. "As in Paris, so too in Belgrade, surrealism was primarily a literary phenomenon with a pictorial dimension. . . . For much of their technical virtuosity, Serbian surrealists drew on the achievements of constructivism,"¹⁰ and on the visual creations of *Zenit*.

Three different and only partly related avant-garde groups developed in Slovenia. The Slovenian avant-garde began in 1915 in the small town of Novo Mesto in the southeastern part of the country. There Anton Podbevšek (1898–1981), 17 years old at that time, wrote his series of poems "Žolta pisma" [The Yellow Letters] and was at the center of a circle of young, poetically and artistically inclined people. Podbevšek's poems were under the strong influence of Italian futurism, a lengthy report on which had appeared in *Ljubljanski zvon* [Ljubljana Bell], a Ljubljana monthly, immediately after the 1909 publication of Marinetti's "Futurist Manifesto." Podbevšek was writing the poetry for his *Človek z bombami* [The Man with Bombs] between 1915 and 1920. The book was published in 1925.



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Avgust Černigoj, *Scenografija* [Stage Set], 1926, watercolor, 25 x 32.1 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

August Černigoj, *Maskarada*
 [Masquerade], c. 1933. Photograph by
 Mario Lovrenčič; published in *Tank!*
Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda [Tank!]
 The Slovenian Historical Avant-garde
 (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 1998).



In the winter of 1920–1921 the journal *Trije labodje* [Three Swans] appeared in Novo Mesto. It was started by literary critic Josip Vidmar, composer Marij Kogoj (whose expressionist opera *Črne maske* [Black Masks] was performed in 1929), and Podbevšek. The latter was the only radical avant-garde artist in the group, and while the first issue of the magazine was artistically and politically provocative (including a remark that “only one journal with progressive ideology is being published on the Balkan peninsula,”¹¹ referring to *Zenit*), the second issue already drifted into more idyllic waters, praising the local rural countryside and publishing several traditionalist writers and poets. As Vidmar explained much later, Podbevšek “wanted to persuade me and Kogoj that the *Three Swans* should take a socialist route, but we two were exclusively artistically oriented.”¹² After breaking with *Three Swans*, Podbevšek founded the magazine *Rdeči pilot* [Red Pilot] in 1922, a “monthly of revolutionary youth for spiritual insurrection.” Only two volumes of *Red Pilot* were published, but its name reappeared more than six decades later as the name of a Slovenian post-avant-garde theater group in 1987.

In January 1921, Branko Ve Poljanski, who worked in Ljubljana as a little-known actor, started to publish (in Serbo-Croatian) the magazine *Svetokret* (“A Magazine for an Expedition to the North Pole of the Human Spirit”). Only one issue appeared.

The second Slovenian avant-garde group gathered around Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) who for decades after his death was known only for his

lyric poetry. His *Integrali* {Integrals} appeared in 1967, revealing the poet's hitherto unknown face: his constructivist poetry. This visual poetry influenced the Slovenian neo-avant-garde group OHO in the 1960s. Like Podbevšek before him, who soon after the publication of the first issue of *Three Swans* held, in Vidmar's words, "a sensationalist public lecture wherein he announced his conversion to socialism"¹³ and underscored his political views with the title *Red Pilot*, his magazine that was to appear later that year, Kosovel, too, revealed radical political views in his constructivist poems from 1925 and 1926.

The third Slovenian early avant-garde group developed in Trieste around the painter Avgust Černigoj (1898–1985). Černigoj spent the years 1922 and 1923 in Munich and the spring of 1924 in Weimar at the Bauhaus in the class of Moholy-Nagy. Later that year he arrived in Ljubljana and held his "First Constructivist Exposition" there in August. France Klopčič, one of the founders of the Slovenian Communist Party, described the event as follows:

Huge slogans were hung in the hall, positioned vertically, diagonally and on their head: "Capital Is Theft," "The Artist Must Become an Engineer/the Engineer Must Become an Artist." In the exposition there were objects and pictures. Among the objects were individual bicycles, a motorbike, and a typewriter, for the exhibitor's slogan was: *construction is the first expression of our age*. . . . What I saw overturned all the conceptions I had held heretofore about art expositions. I liked the slogan "Capital Is Theft," for I had never seen anything similar before then at an exposition. With curiosity I observed canvases with black squares, with red semicircles or triangles. And why was there a motorbike, where did the simple wooden wheel come from? I didn't know what to think. One thing was of course indisputable: the exposition was a protest against the culture and aesthetics of the bourgeois class, for it demolished what until then could not be questioned.¹⁴

In July 1925 Černigoj organized his second exposition in Ljubljana. Again his aims were educational, for he correctly assumed that his audience, if it was to understand and accept constructivism, first had to be exposed to the artistic developments that led to it. But soon after the closing of the exposition he was accused of harboring communist propaganda. He was forced to leave Ljubljana, so he moved to Trieste. There he started a private art school and founded the Trieste Constructivist Group. He was joined by Edvard Stepančič, another prominent artist. Černigoj followed Malevich, Rodchenko,

and Lissitzky in his work and used constructivist ideas in his linocuts, drawings, and sketches for stage sets and costumes. He joined forces with another Slovenian avant-gardist, Ferdo Delak, who ran a theater group in Gorizia, a town north of Trieste. In 1927 Delak published two issues (numbers 1½ and 1½–3) of the constructivist journal *Tank* in which Černigoj was showcased as the central author. Reminiscent of Micić, Černigoj claimed in the first issue that *Tank*, with its international orientation, “builds a bridge of a new artistic civilization between Europe and the Balkans, this continent with its vigorous, young race.”¹⁵

Černigoj met Branko Ve Poljanski in Ljubljana in 1925 and found out about zenitism. Unlike Kosovel, who was somewhat critical of the ideology of the barbarogenius, Černigoj embraced it wholeheartedly, although the influence is not in any way apparent in his art, most of it high-quality, constructivist works. Still the claim that “The zenitist spirit . . . reemerged in Trieste, in the bosom of a small constructivist group toward 1927” is not far from the truth.¹⁶

Černigoj used the last issue of *Tank* to criticize more traditionalist Slovenian artists such as the expressionist brothers France and Tone Kralj, and wished them “to perish in small, philistine Ljubljana.” But in fact his views were much more moderate, also perhaps because he had earned only limited public recognition in Trieste. His greatest avant-garde achievement there was the participation of his group (Stepančič, Giorgio Carmelich, Ivan Poljak, Zorko Lah, and Josip Vlah) in the 1927 art exposition in the city pavilion. His constructivism after that went into decline. Before this happened, however, Herwarth Walden devoted the January 1928 issue of his journal *Der Sturm* to “Junge Slowenische Kunst” [Young Slovenian Art]—a phrase that was to be echoed in 1984 when Neue Slowenische Kunst came into being as an umbrella organization for Slovenian post-avant-garde groups.

Unlike elsewhere in what would soon be named Yugoslavia, the avant-garde, in Slovenia at least, had come full circle. For this to be possible, the avant-garde had to exist under different conditions than elsewhere in Yugoslavia, not to mention the Soviet Union, where the link between the artistic and the political avant-gardes had assumed different dimensions. As Boris Groys argues, in the Soviet Union, “There would have been no need to suppress the avant-garde if its black squares and transnational poetry had confined themselves to artistic space, but the fact that it was persecuted indicates that it was operating in the same territory as the state.”¹⁷

The difference between the more aestheticized and isolated Slovenian avant-garde artists and those belonging to zenitism is discernible from their



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France Kralj, *Moja žena z beneškim ozadjem*
[My Wife against a Venetian Background], 1932,
oil on canvas. Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.

works. In 1921 Anton Podbevšek used metaphors in a recital of his poetry such as “electric balls, snakes, engines, steel beams,” while in 1925 the other Slovenian avant-garde poet Srečko Kosovel wrote constructivist poems (published in 1967) such as “Kons 5”: “Manure is gold/and gold is manure/Both = 0/0 = ∞/∞ = 0/A B <1, 2, 3./Whoever has no soul/needs no gold,/whoever has a soul/needs no manure./For sure.”¹⁸ Contrary to this mild or spare avant-gardism, Branko Ve Poljanski in a very different Belgrade atmosphere wrote poems such as “Laso materi božoj oko vrata” [A Lasso around the Neck of the Mother of God], the second stanza of which reads: “The mother of God/just stepped into the City-Bar./My, my, my./if you only knew/how many newly born/Christs/with hereditary syphilis/there will be./People! Soon you will no longer know/who is God to whom.”¹⁹

Podbevšek’s collection of poems *Človek z bombami* [Man with Bombs] (also including poems he recited in 1921) from 1925 was hailed that same year as best representing the art of the “young from the end of the World War.” If it was to be published, however, two reviews had to confirm that it did not “oppose the principles of Catholicism.” Kosovel’s constructivist poems were published long after his death. It was then that they influenced Slovenian neo-avant-garde artists. In Poljanski’s case the situation was different. A polemical response to the publication of his poem in the magazine *Zenit* appeared the following year in the journal *Obzor* [Horizon], but his brother, *Zenit*’s editor Ljubomir Micić, responded with the angry article “A Policeman for the Mother of God”—and that was the end of the story. *Zenit* was aggressive by other standards as well. Micić wanted to promote the October Revolution and its constructivist artists without compromise: “Zenit was primarily an organ in search of a national identity and a personal identity. . . . The promoters of the magazine *Zenit*, Ljubomir Micić and his brother Branko Ve (Vergil) Poljanski, always lived on the margin of bourgeois society and even intellectual society, injured and tormented by the hostility or indifference of their surroundings. In such conditions it is hardly surprising that *Zenit* had a very aggressive character.”²⁰

The last issue of *Zenit* appeared in 1926. Constructivism, which had begun in Slovenia, continued in Trieste, on Italian territory. Černigoj’s constructivist period ended in 1929. Nonetheless, the avant-garde did continue, for already in 1927 a group of Serbian surrealists presented their works at the Fifth Yugoslav Exposition. Surrealism was predominantly a Serbian phenomenon in Yugoslavia. It attained international recognition involving numerous poets and artists, such as Marko Ristić, Dušan Matić, and Oskar Davičo. Its first publication was, in 1924, the journal *Svedočanstva* [Testimonies], followed

by the almanac *Nemoguće* [Impossible] in 1930 and the magazine *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* [Surrealism Here and Now] (1931–1932). Matić, Davičo, and Djordje Kostić published the book *Pozicija nadrealizma u društvenom procesu* [The Position of Surrealism in the Social Process] in 1932. In it they renounced surrealism. A debate and a conflict developed on the left, in Europe and in Yugoslavia, between the proponents of artistic freedom and the supporters of partisan literature and art in the 1930s. In Yugoslavia, too, this conflict divided progressive artists. The Yugoslav polemic attained its apogee in 1939–1940 when the prominent Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981) came into conflict with a group of communist writers and ideologues including Milovan Djilas and Edvard Kardelj. A decade later Krleža—by then one of the most respected Yugoslav intellectuals—revived the prewar conflict on the artistic left at the Ljubljana Congress of Writers in 1952 by criticizing the Soviet socialist realism and voicing support for creative freedom.

In January 1929 the country became a dictatorship with the aim of accelerating national and cultural unification. Under these circumstances all the artists active outside academic art and expressionism in Western Europe and some surrealism in the East were committed to socially engaged art and

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Edvard Stepančič, *Tea and Avgust Černigoj*, 1928. Photograph from the catalog *Tank! Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda* [Tank! The Slovenian Historical Avant-garde] (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 1998).





33

Vladimir Dedijer, Milovan Djilas, and Miroslav Krleža. Private collection.

34

Miroslav Krleža and President Josip Broz Tito on Brioni Island, 1953. Private collection.



literature. In this respect the situation in the territory of Yugoslavia was no different from that in neighboring countries; the open situation, so typical for the years following World War I when all options had been available, came to an end. There was a similar historical openness in the 1980s that found one of its visible materializations in the post-avant-garde.

3. The SHS and the Two Yugoslavias

When the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, also known by its acronym the SHS, came into existence on December 1, 1918, the nations of this new country had shared little in terms of history. All were of Slavic origin and had arrived in the territory stretching from present-day Greece to the Alpine valleys at some point in the sixth and seventh centuries, but in the ensuing millennium each had been through a distinct social and cultural evolution. The state that came into being in 1918 was but one way to join the various Slavic nations in this part of Europe. The process of centralization started only slow-

ly in the new country, culminating in the 1929 dictatorship and the change of the country's name to Yugoslavia. After World War II, Tito's regime succeeded in keeping the country in one piece owing to the unique but shared socialist ideology of the Yugoslav third way (a special brand of socialism) and the relative equality of the different national groups. This state did ultimately collapse, however, with the demise of that ideology both locally and globally, and with the rifts that tore apart the country's republics in the 1980s and 1990s. Tito's Yugoslavia consisted of the federal republics, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro, that enjoyed relative autonomy. Most of them had their own languages and cultures, and since in the past some had belonged to the Ottoman and others to the Habsburg empires, they also used at least two scripts (the adapted Roman alphabet, known as Latinica, and Cyrillic) and three main religions: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam. Since the borders between republics ran mostly along ethnic lines, economic differences were frequently equated with ethnic distinctions.

The national cultures existing before the advent of the new country in 1918 remained salient well into Tito's times. While Serbia was firmly a part of the Balkans and Serbian intellectuals were traditionally oriented toward Paris and French culture, those from Croatia, and especially those from Slovenia, tended to find a point of cultural reference in Vienna, German culture, and partly (in the Croatian case) the Hungarian and Italian cultures as well. As a consequence surrealism was very influential in Belgrade but not so in Slovenia, where expressionism reigned in the 1920s and 1930s instead.

Although *Zenit* was not the only avant-garde magazine in Zagreb or Belgrade (two other important publications were *Dada Jazz* and *Dada Tank*, published in 1922 in Zagreb by Dragan Aleksić) it was the most relevant: not only was it original and established and retained contacts with the international avant-garde movements, but it also exerted influence on Slovenian constructivism. In Slovenia, too, there were avant-garde artists who were not affiliated with avant-garde groups. One of these was Kosovel's close friend Ivan Mrak, whose somewhat expressionist theater play *The Carbon Arc Lamp Being Born* caused a huge scandal in Ljubljana in 1925 and led him off into a lonely bohemian life until his death in 1986. While avant-garde artists in Slovenia did form groups, only in the case of Černigoj's constructivism would it be possible to speak of a veritable movement. Elsewhere only zenitism and later (predominantly Serbian) surrealism, with their national and international connections and presence in international avant-garde circles, could aspire to such a name. It was a friend from these circles, F. T. Marinetti, who

helped Ljubomir Micić (jailed in December 1926 for the last issue of *Zenit*) get out of prison in January 1927 and leave for Paris, from where he did not return to Belgrade until 1936. In the Slovenian case international recognition and acclaim came to Černigoj's and Delak's circle of constructivists, in the pages of *Der Sturm* in 1928, when their activity was practically over.

The history of avant-garde movements in Yugoslavia consists of three phases. The first is that of zenitism and surrealism in Serbia and of constructivism in Slovenia; the neo-avant-garde period occurred mainly in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Subotica, Kranj, Ljubljana, and Zagreb, while the post-avant-garde started in Slovenia and remained predominantly Slovenian.

The first period is that of the early, historical or classical avant-gardes. It appears at the time of World War I, but reaches its apogee during the 1920s when Russian constructivism is considered to be the central feature of proletarian culture in the newly formed Soviet Union, the influence of which is strong among the intelligentsia. In this period the idea of a "revolution" and of "proletarian culture" are empty signifiers that could be invested with infinite meanings. Surrealism represents a continuation of this earlier phase, but under different political conditions in the "land of South Slavs" as well as in the Soviet Union proper.

After the initial variety of avant-garde directions during the war period, constructivism becomes the most influential avant-garde in the early 1920s. It is militant, of Slavic origin (a source of familiarity and even patriotism), and involves the social ramifications of artistic actions, a feature common to all the avant-gardes aiming at sublating art and returning it to the "praxis of life."²¹ Because of the plethora of cultural and artistic influences and the ensuing conflicting ideas, zenitism is at the same time both nationalist and cosmopolitan, while in Slovenia constructivism remains, albeit sometimes locally involved, nonetheless more abstract and general when voicing its social and artistic views. This is so also because its various phases are brief, semi-private, and less focused than those of the zenitist movement. In its avant-garde cosmopolitanism, the surrealism in Yugoslavia from the late 1920s and early 1930s resembles that found elsewhere in Europe.

The second period is that of the neo-avant-gardes and occurs mostly in the 1960s. This was possible because by that time Yugoslavia had not only severed its ties with the Soviet bloc (in 1948) and had, after 1959, modified and liberalized its cultural policies, but had also begun articulating and developing a modernism of its own. At that time Yugoslavia had, furthermore, overcome postwar hardships, had begun developing and propagating the ideal of the global nonaligned movement, and had consolidated a brand

of socialism that would, in the early 1970s, become specifically Yugoslav in form, with self-management socialism.

An important threshold in the transition to a Yugoslav brand of socialism, which sent shockwaves throughout Yugoslavia, was a polemic in 1956 between the two most influential Slovenian intellectuals of the time, Josip Vidmar and Boris Ziherl. Vidmar (1895–1992), a critic and writer, had become a prominent public figure after his early involvement in *Three Swans*. In 1941 he was one of the founders of the Slovenian Liberation Front, while after the war he held various posts, among others that of the president of the Slovenian parliament (1946–1953) and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (1952–1976). Ziherl (1910–1976), on the other hand, was a close associate of Tito's and primarily a Marxist ideologue and critic with a strong interest in culture. (Plekhanov and Lukács were his favorite authors.) The controversy appeared at first to be about Lenin's interpretation of Lev Tolstoy, but as it progressed it became increasingly apparent that it was actually about the relationship between art and ideology. Vidmar's views had not changed since the early days of the *Three Swans* when he was "exclusively artistically oriented." Since then his indifference toward the avant-garde remained unchanged, so at least in respect to avant-garde art Vidmar and Ziherl agreed. Where they disagreed was about whether art should have a class function and take a political stance. Ziherl argued that it should, while Vidmar claimed that true art is humanist and therefore by its nature progressive, and has nothing to do with ideology. The controversy ended with no clear winner, although it was later rumored that the Communist Party ordered Ziherl to stop criticizing Vidmar and relinquish the controversy. Vidmar's "victory" over the more dogmatic Ziherl helped pave the way for modernism in poetry and art in general.

The third phase is the post-avant-garde movement in Slovenia in the 1980s, also referred to as the retro-, the trans-, and the postmodern avant-garde. All these terms tell us something about the movement which was known after 1984 as Neue Slowenische Kunst: it was retro because it emulated the retro ideas emerging at the time from Great Britain and Berlin; it was trans- because it was nationally oriented as well as often figurative (as theorized in the early 1970s by Achille Bonito Oliva); and it was postmodern because it was eclectic, transhistorical, and double-coded. The prefix post- is somewhat problematic. While the movement did promote political pluralism (as did the movements in the 1980s designated by this prefix by Charles Jencks, and by Peter Bürger before him), it did so under the guise of a fundamentalist and totalizing avant-garde, very much resembling the historical

avant-gardes. Unlike its artistic Western contemporaries, but much like some Russian, Hungarian, and other postsocialist art movements, it also had an overt political agenda.

A constant feature of the Yugoslav avant-garde in all three of its phases was the importance it ascribed to the visual arts. Since much of the culture in Yugoslavia was language-based, this very emphasis on visual artistic expression represented a certain subversion. This was especially true of art that made use of language for visual purposes. This trend, which began with Marinetti and Apollinaire, can be found in Micić's *Zenit*, in Černigoj, and in Kosovel's *Integrali* [Integrals] (and partly, earlier, in Podbevšek's poetry). It reemerged in the 1960s in the work of groups and movements such as OHO (1966–1971) in Slovenia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, and in the works of the Bosch + Bosch group in the Vojvodina in the 1970s.

After 1965, artists who went on the next year to organize or work with the OHO group²² inaugurated their proto-concretism in the Slovenian student journal *Tribuna*. In the years to follow, OHO explored a range of artistic forms, some of which originated abroad (such as land art) and others of which were indigenous (such as reism, introduced around 1970).

Typical of OHO, as well as of similar trends and individuals elsewhere in Yugoslavia (and also of artists at that time in Czechoslovakia or Poland), was the complete depoliticization of their art. In keeping with much of the neo-avant-garde tradition, such art was to be a purely "modernist" phenomenon, exploring the visual and audial potentials of language and striving to deautomatize language and everyday objects, this being surprisingly similar to the aims of Viktor Shklovsky and the Russian futurists, as well as to the ideas arising from the French nouveau roman: "A work ('item') is an independent thing, not the vehicle of the artist's thoughts and emotions. . . . Reistic drawing has thus far a double function: it points not only to the appearance of the 'depicted' thing, but also to its own independent presence. Using a reistic paradox one might say that it is like a light bulb illuminating not only other things, but also itself."²³

Much of neo-avant-garde activity is political only in its complete lack of attention to political ideas and positions: the artists not only create art that they want to keep completely untainted by politics, but they create art as if politics doesn't exist. As with modernist and avant-garde art of this and the later period in Soviet Eastern Europe, the neo-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia also limited their provocative actions to the realm of art proper, extending them only into the areas opened by body art, land art, and conceptual art. It would be wrong to assume that in the 1960s in Yugoslavia or even in countries such as

Czechoslovakia or Poland there was no private sphere and that the whole of the living world was consumed by ideology (as is typical of totalitarianism in its pure form). The 1960s were the time of the Prague Spring (1968), of a relative political and cultural thaw in the Soviet bloc countries, and of the proliferation of existentialism and the ideas of the young Marx and his early anthropological writings, including the theme of alienation and the resulting reification as developed by the early Georg Lukács. In Yugoslavia nonpoliticized art such as visual poetry and conceptualism coexisted with anthropological Marxism and the more radical ideas emanating from the "Western" Marxism of Theodor Adorno or Herbert Marcuse without provoking much political reaction.

The artistic disciplines in which political views in this period in Yugoslavia (and also in the more liberal among the Soviet bloc countries) were articulated more explicitly were literature, theater, and cinema. The Yugoslav so-called Black Wave movement in cinema (mostly in Serbia and the Vojvodina in the late 1960s) directly opposed the political regime, criticizing and depicting everything tragically, sardonically, or ironically with the

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OHO group: Marko Pogačnik, David Nez, Milenko Matanović, Andraž Šalamun, 1970. Photograph from the OHO archive, reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.



cynicism and nihilism of the 1960s, from the dogmatism and violence of the postwar years, forced collectivization, and the sufferings of political prisoners to the disenchantment of young Marxists attempting to spread revolution in the countryside. While such films (as well as some novels and theater plays) were under frequent political attack, they nevertheless received government funding and presented Yugoslavia at home and abroad as a free and progressive country that could serve as an example both to the socialist East and the capitalist West.

4. "Our Freedom Is the Freedom of Those Who Think Alike"

The year that Tito died, 1980, marks a symbolic divide between a period of relative political, ethnic, and social stability and the beginning of the end of the Yugoslav state.

Criticism of late socialism surfaced in two different ways in the art and literature of the 1980s. The first used established modern and modernist procedures, while the second (the "postmodern") invented new forms of political critique that were in fact not a critique at all, but a novel method of subverting the ruling ideological discourse. What was being attacked were not individual political institutions, political practices, or politicians, but ideological discourse as that symbolic reality in which, in the last stage of (self-management) socialism, all of Yugoslavia became immersed. Combined with the emergent economic and national issues, what had promised to be a liberating political system, which in its initial stage had attracted supporters and followers from all over the world, turned into a demagogic populism consisting of increasingly ineffective political, economic, and discursive practices.

The more familiar type of critique revives the traditional modern division into the archaic, traditional, provincial and rural on the one hand and the new, urban, and cosmopolitan on the other. This division, so typical for the first half of the twentieth century, was brought back in the Yugoslavia of the 1980s by the proponents of pre-1918 mythology, goals, and nostalgia. The cumulative effects of this in the late 1980s abruptly revealed that instead of a homogenous entity there was a symbolic void in Yugoslav society. Combined with the economic impact of total social and political decentralization and the resulting deterioration, what was left at the symbolic level of society was manifested by ineffective everyday official politics. The official political line was flanked both by an authoritarian "Yugoslav" discourse and practice and by radically divergent national intellectual discourses. Intellectuals often saw the solution of the extant irresolvable situation in the

resurrection of their own ethnic communities. This naturally meant the demise of the Yugoslav state, for such communities were many. The essence of the "Yugoslav" position could be illustrated by a favorite slogan of the Yugoslav People's Army, which perceived itself as keeper of the Yugoslav socialist and federalist legacy: "After Tito—Tito!"

Ethnic sentiments were often built on a series of imaginary foundations such as inherent rights and privileges for each of the ethnic groups. Differences in ethnicity or religion materialized in prejudices, while in other cases they were seen in their true light. They were symptoms of irresolvable social, economic, and cultural differences in an economic and political system that had, perhaps, been a good match in the society of the less developed parts of Yugoslavia that were industrial yet still not modernized, but could not cope with the postindustrial society that was emerging in the more developed north of the country.

At first, self-management socialism had received strong support from intellectuals, for it promised to sidestep the drawbacks of the Soviet system such as bureaucracy, a rigid state system, and dogmatism, but also the alienation and exploitation of capitalism. This phase of the self-management idea ended in the 1980s, for its implementation required a complete overhaul of society, including a newspeak that was intended to define the self-management institutions and social relations. What started as a promising political project turned into yet another local socialism.

Writers were the principal early proponents of post-Tito ideas, for the national language was used as the vehicle and the imaginary locus of collective identity. Hence it was writers who articulated or decisively helped to give voice not only to parliamentary but also to national ideas and, consequently, to the ideas of the historical grievances of the various nations. Not that some or many of these were unwarranted or the aspirations unjust. Yet such ideas often existed as ideas alone, for they were, as yet, uncontaminated by ideology and the "whore" of politics (as it was called locally), or by practical concerns for how to implement them in ways that would not impinge upon the similar aspirations of the other national communities.

One of the features Yugoslavia shared with other Eastern European countries was its small culture. But to make things more complicated, in Yugoslavia there were several: Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Kosovar Albanian, Muslim, Montenegrin, and a number of smaller ethnic or regional groups. In such an environment culture was traditionally tied to the nation, while both were essentially linked to politics and to some form of ideology, be it national, religious, or both. Such ideology in its fundamental

form played the role of the semantically open designation that served as the empty signifier to attract and hold any desired meaning, be it freedom, liberty, equality, or democracy. It was this idea of a “better life” for one’s nation (and oneself) that had led the constitutive nations to create the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. A similar idea led people to embrace self-management socialism. Since self-management was a process and a “work in progress,” it was capable of attracting wide intellectual support predominantly following anthropological and European Marxism rather than the orthodox Soviet variety. In Yugoslavia the official ideology was dissident Marxist ideology and theory. Intellectuals, such as those in the Zagreb and Belgrade Praxis circles, were not aparatchiks, rather they resembled their leftist Western counterparts—except that often they had the Party at their side. Under Tito this same state financed avant-garde cinema and theater production, avant-garde art, and modernist avant-garde music—so how was an artist and intellectual to oppose it (or want to oppose it), except by taking on the “dissident” and hence basically conservative stance of promoting “bourgeois” (and often nationalist) ideas and rights instead of genuine social rights arising from a new social order as defined in the ideas of self-management? At that point another way was discovered to oppose a system no longer meeting expectations—but postmodernism was needed to make this possible.

The classic critical literary and artistic position is that of an author who criticizes society, directly or indirectly. For this he may employ a straightforward realist discourse (such as found in the novels of Zola or Upton Sinclair), a parable (such as in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*), or a parody (as found, for example, in Gogol’s play *The Inspector General*). All three critical methods can also be found under socialism. The question here is why they were so often criticized and even banned. The absence of a traditional pluralistic and democratic system offers only a partial answer to this question. As Claude Lefort has shown, the totalitarian systems of the previous century share a social organization wherein the locus of political, ideological, economic, and other powers is identical and is, in the Soviet-type system, centralized in the Party. In a parliamentary democracy there are competing power centers, as represented by different political parties and different segments of society, allowing for competition of ideas, ideologies, views, and interests. The more totalitarian a state is, the more exclusive and uniform the center and its power are. Another characteristic of totalitarianism is that the difference between discourse and power disappears in its ideology.²⁵ Bourgeois society allows for dissent because it allows this difference to exist, since dissent does not necessarily endanger the society’s existence.

Culture and art under socialism were a privileged part of the social universe. Hence, views that would elsewhere be enunciated in the form of a political discourse were presented here in veiled artistic form, for the political discourse was off limits to all but official ideology. That is why artists played such a prominent role in Soviet-type societies, and why art, literature, and culture in general carried such high social status, in spite of being often politically problematic. Intellectuals and culture had played a crucial role in the history of the small national cultures of this part of Europe before the advent of socialism. Their privileged status continued uninterrupted after 1945.

In the more recent past the artists and intellectuals under socialism often lived in what Miklós Haraszti has termed "the velvet prison."²⁶ They enjoyed a high social position and various privileges that set them apart from the common people. In this respect Yugoslavia didn't differ much from the Soviet bloc countries, except that usually the freedom of the Yugoslav artists was greater and they received greater subsidies from their national governments and local communities.

This situation changed in the 1980s with the disintegration of the country and the demise of its specific brand of socialism but also when the turn to the pictorial took hold in Yugoslavia, causing the literary discourse to lose its previously dominant cultural role. Since Yugoslavia consisted of cultures using a number of languages, literature was only partly able to adapt to the changing situation. The role and effect of critical political views expressed in literature or in the political discourse of writers and other intellectuals hence became heavily supplemented by popular culture and also by the post-avant-garde. This latter phenomenon, which appeared not only in Yugoslavia but also in some other, Soviet-type socialist countries (Russia, Hungary, Cuba, and China), contradicts Bürger's opinion that all the avant-gardes after the early or the historical ones have returned to the bosom of bourgeois art. The post-avant-garde in Yugoslavia and the simultaneous alternative culture and subculture (forming a peculiar combination of high art and popular culture) witness that this was not the case. Again, the purpose was to combine artistic and political aims, just as it was in the 1960s in French situationism and in American pop culture and, before, in the earlier avant-garde movements. Art and culture could exert such a force because in the Yugoslavia of the late 1970s and 1980s there was only a weak shared "Yugoslav" culture (mostly evident in pop music) and weak (though very independent) national governments in each individual republic. All of this strengthened the social and political impact of this new culture related to the urban social behavior of the younger generation, disenchanted with obsolete

political slogans and a populist self-management discourse on infinite freedom and continuous progress.

In various parts of Yugoslavia after the 1970s a series of avant-garde artists worked on body art and conceptual art. Located in Belgrade, Zagreb, Subotica, and Novi Sad, they generally limited themselves to neo-avant-garde artistic activities, although sometimes they also held performances revealing their concern for social or political issues. Still, in most cases such activity was limited to individuals. It was only in Slovenia that the post-avant-garde emerged after 1980, evocative in many ways of the early avant-garde. Furthermore, the movement that came into existence attained proportions never before encountered in avant-garde art on the territory of Yugoslavia. It began in 1980 with the punk and retro music of the group Laibach and continued throughout the 1980s with a series of individuals or groups active in the fine arts, theater, design, architecture, film, video, and philosophy. A direct link was established with the heritage of early Slovenian and other avant-gardes: between 1987 and 1988 a theater group that belonged to the movement took the name Rdeči Pilot [Red Pilot], while the Laibach group took Malevich's black cross as its trademark. It was not only the early avant-gardes that were used as a quarry for materials to be recycled in a postmodern setting, but also the tradition of Slovenian fine arts, literature, theater, and architecture. Irwin, a group of painters, made use of well-known Slovenian realist and impressionist paintings, of the few cases of Slovenian socialist realism, of international art (Duchamp, Magritte, Anselm Kiefer), and of Nazikunst. In 1984 various groups of the movement united to form the Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), an umbrella organization that still exists. About a hundred people have been permanent or temporary members of the movement.

The third generation of the avant-garde in Slovenia, starting with the group Laibach, came into existence in the depressive atmosphere of the end of the industrial age. As the social fabric of Yugoslavia was disintegrating, the ruling political discourse increasingly erased the difference between discourse and power. It is no coincidence that the core of the NSK movement, including the members of the Laibach group, came from the coal-mining town of Trbovlje, starting with punk music but then soon turning their attention to creating a "universal work of art" of a kind familiar from romanticism, Wagner, and the early avant-gardes. At the same time Laibach aimed at subverting the political discourse as the essential ideological vehicle and cement of the Yugoslav state. It did this by emulating this discourse itself, proclaiming art to be politics and artists to be politicians, and faithfully copying the early postwar political and ideological language of propaganda, as well as

of cherished national myths. In this way it succeeded in obstructing the ruling political discourse and countering its actions by criticizing them and, later, those of the other groups. Laibach was more socialist than socialism itself and proclaimed its freedom to be the “freedom of those who think alike.” At least in this case there was no claiming that “art has not been integrated into the praxis of life.”²⁷ On the contrary, during the period of the 1980s Laibach, and later other groups that were to form the NSK organization, were an integral and important part of civil society and the political processes which led to an independent Slovenia and which also shaped events in other parts of Yugoslavia.

In 1987 the New Collectivism group of designers submitted a poster for the official Youth Day festival to be held in Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, on May 25 (Tito’s birthday). After the poster won the competition, it was discovered that it was a remake of a 1936 Nazi poster by Richard Klein, raising a series of questions about Yugoslav political reality, its ideals, and their symbolic representation.

In their work the Neue Slowenische Kunst groups copied everything from past national and international works of high and mass culture to contemporary ones, following in this respect the tradition of postmodern eclecticism, the Italian transavanguardia, and the early avant-gardes with their multimedia activities. Works of a similar kind also appeared in other parts of Yugoslavia. There were artists affiliated with the Slovenian Irwin group such as Goran Djordjević or Raša Todosijević in Belgrade (whose works the Slovenian artists copied and whose procedures they appropriated) or Mladen Stilinović in Zagreb.

Musicians and visual artists in the 1980s from various parts of Yugoslavia collaborated and influenced each other strongly. It is perhaps fitting that while the country was falling apart, at a time when hardly anyone on a global scale even mentioned the avant-gardes, its avant-garde artists brought the country together one last time—as they did in the early 1920s when Branko Ve Poljanski published his *Svetokret* in Ljubljana, Micić his *Zenit* in Zagreb, and Černigoj enthusiastically emulated the zenitist discourse.

Notes

1. Steven A. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1.

2. Ibid., p. 2.

3. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 57.
4. Dimitrije Mitrinović, "Nacionalno tlo i modernost" [The National Soil and Modernity], quoted in Predrag Palavestra, *Kritika i avangarda u modernoj srpskoj književnosti* [Criticism and the Avant-garde in Modern Serbian Literature] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1979), p. 207.
5. Peter Krečić, "Slovenska likovna avantgarda in ekspresionizem" [Slovenian Avant-garde and Expressionist Art], in Franc Zadravec, ed., *Obdobje ekspresionizma v slovenskem jeziku, književnosti in kulturi (Obdobja 5)* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1984), pp. 631–632.
6. Ljubomir Micić, "Čovek i Umetnost" [Man and Art], *Zenit* 1 (Zagreb, February 1, 1921), p. 1.
7. Irina Subotić, *Likovni krog revije "Zenit" (1921–1926)* [The Artistic Circle of the Magazine *Zenit*, 1921–1926] (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1995), p. 32.
8. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 32.
9. Irina Subotić, "Zenit and Zenitism," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, no. 17 (Fall 1990), p. 15.
10. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*, p. 234.
11. Quoted in Janez Vrečko, *Srečko Kosovel, slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda in zenitizem* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1986), p. 77.
12. Josip Vidmar, in "Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda 1910–1930," *Sodobnost* 33, no. 3 (Ljubljana, 1985), p. 303.
13. Quoted in Vrečko, *Srečko Kosovel*, 77.
14. France Klopčič, in "Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda 1910–1930," p. 293.
15. Avgust Černigoj, "Saluto!" *Tank*, no. 1 1/2 (Ljubljana, 1927), p. 8.
16. Krisztina Passuth, *Les avant-gardes de l'Europe Centrale, 1907–1927* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 184.
17. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 35.
18. Srečko Kosovel, *Integrals*, trans. Nike Kocjančič Pokorn and Philip Burt, *Litterae Slovenicae, Slovenian Literary Magazine* 36, no. 2 (Ljubljana, 1998), p. 40.
19. Branko Ve Poljanski, "Laso materi božjoj oko vrata" [A Lasso around the Neck of the Mother of God], in Gojko Tešić, ed., *Antologija Albatros, "Filip Višnjić"* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavačku delatnost, 1985), p. 202.
20. Passuth, *Les avant-gardes de l'Europe Centrale*, p. 172.
21. Cf. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, p. 58.
22. "OHO" is a combination of Slovenian words for "eye" [oko] and "ear" [uhu].
23. Igor Zabel, "OHO—From Reism to Conceptual Art," in *OHO. A Retrospective* (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1994), p. 15.
24. Cf. especially Claude Lefort, *Les formes de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).
25. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
26. Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism*, foreword by George Konrad, translated by Katalin and Stephen Landesmann (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
27. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, p. 57.

Part 1: Literature

3

Radical Poetic Practices

Concrete and Visual Poetry in the Avant-garde
and Neo-avant-garde

Dubravka Djurić

In the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the historic literary avant-gardes developed as a reaction to dominant bourgeois modernism and lyrical aestheticism, and as an expressionistic response to the real-life drama of World War I, in other words as a form of reception of international art experiments. Among literary expressions that grew out of these conditions, visual and verbal expressions in avant-garde and neo-avant-garde poetry warrant close attention.

Historic Literary Avant-gardes—Context, Characteristics, and Atmosphere

Marjorie Perloff, the American literary theorist, separated the “Symbolist mode . . . inherited from Eliot and Baudelaire” from the “anti-Symbolist mode of indeterminacy or ‘undecideability’ of literalness and free play.”¹ In a poem of the symbolist tradition, the poet tells the reader about experience or the deeper meaning of life, while traditional literary theory treats elements such as the form and sound dimension of a poem as formal, ornamental, external, and random aesthetic effects. But in radical (antisymbolist) poetic practices, these elements are crucial and inseparable from the poem’s meaning.² The radical poets began researching the space of a piece of paper and would often see a text as a musical score for oral interpretation. They investigated the possibilities of language, using procedures developed in other media, combining genres and creating the effect of multiple genres to overcome the boundaries between different arts. They questioned the civil norms of the society, strongly criticized the idea of art for art’s sake and the high, idealistic aestheticism of lyric poetry. Their work was provocative and ventured into issues of life, politics, ethics, and aesthetics.

The utopian quality of the historic avant-gardes is reflected in the desire of the artists and poets, mainly leftists and anarchists, to have an impact on society, to change it. Literary theorist Denis Poniž points out that art for many people in Slovenia was a springboard into politics. The same could be said for Serbia and Croatia. On the other hand, the avant-garde was limited to small intellectual circles, without an adequate audience or patrons. All of this led to a situation in which “a necessary broader social paradigm”³ that would have paved the way for greater influence and reception of the work in the society was never created.

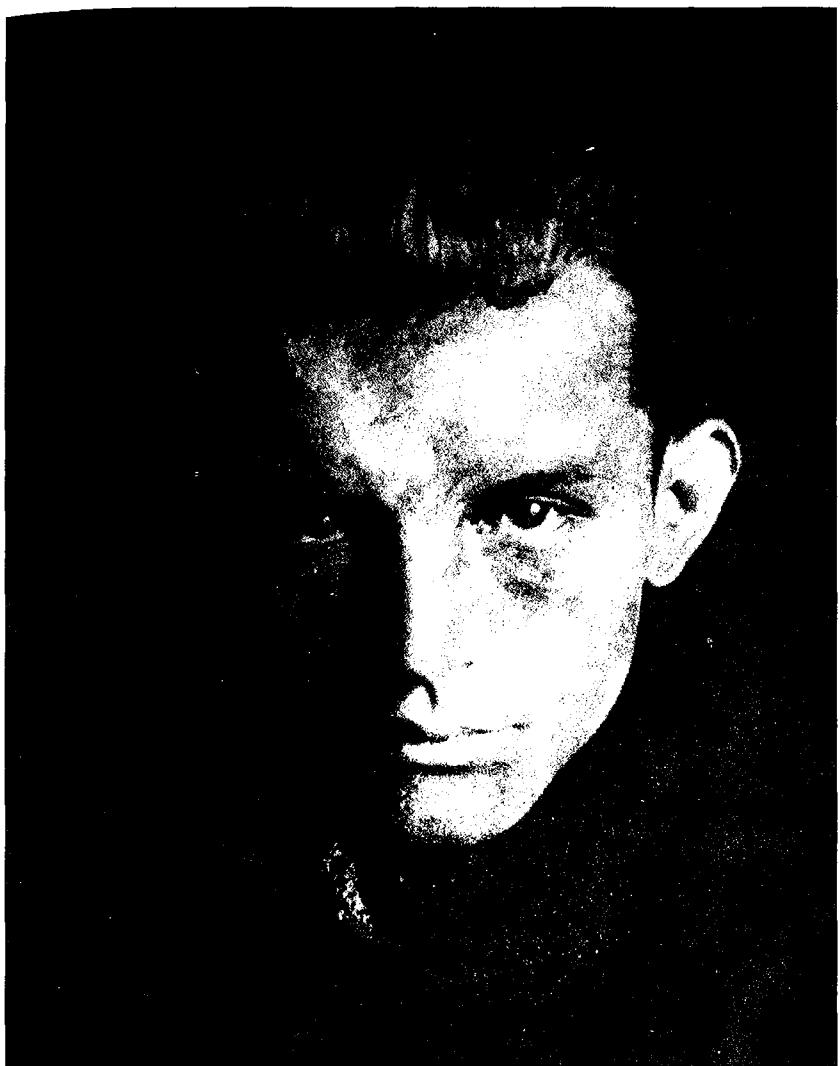
Poets from the avant-garde groups in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia collaborated with one another. Branko Ve Poljanski, a Serb born in Croatia, launched one of the first avant-garde magazines in Ljubljana, *Svetokret*. The Belgrade literary group Alfa published its literary experiments in the Zagreb magazine *Kritika* in 1922. This cooperation was dynamic and often disrupted by disagreements and antagonisms. Zenitist Ljubomir Micić was in permanent conflict with the Croatian and Serbian modernists. His conflict with the Belgrade surrealists lasted for several decades, so these worlds remained at odds even after his death. Yugoslav avant-garde poets also cooperated with the most important protagonists of the avant-garde movements in Europe, with artists from Germany (Schwitters), France (Jean Arp, Ivan Goll), Italy (Marinetti), Czechoslovakia (Teige), and Russia (Blok, Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov). The avant-garde poets emphasized the material aspect and potential of the writing in literature (*écriture*). They underlined the visual and graphic quality of letters, also giving oral interpretations of poetry, treating the sounds of the language as though they were the material with which they worked.

The Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian avant-gardists worked in contexts in which literature and art were identified as constituent parts of the national culture. Some Slavic theorists of the avant-garde speak of the small Slavic nations as philological nations, national groups constituted through their national languages. In this sense national literature is sacred, organic, and untouchable.

The avant-garde attacked the linguistic, political, and national boundaries of the literary language. The canon of modernity was demonstrated and deconstructed in the avant-gardes to the point of parody. The Yugoslav avant-gardes, however, were mainly male avant-gardes, one might even say “macho avant-gardes.” The few female poets who made it into the canon were only able to use strategies of strictly defined female lyric poetry within the greater matrix of the national literature. They could write sentimental or

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Ljubomir Micić, c. 1920. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



patriotic poetry. They were never recognized when they applied strategies of modernist poetry and they were not trusted to write well. There are no women poets in the early avant-garde. In the Yugoslav avant-garde, women were wives, friends, lovers, muses, patrons, or, perhaps, associates. The few women artists worked outside the boundaries of literature, mainly in the field of visual arts (Vjera Biller, Ivana Tomljenović, Milena Pavlović Barilli) and dance (Maga Magazinović, Ana Maletić).

Futurism, Zenitism, Dadaism, and Constructivism in Poetry

The most controversial and disputed figure in Yugoslavia between the two world wars was Ljubomir Micić. This Serb from Croatia launched the review *Zenit* in 1921. It came out until December 1926, first in Zagreb (1921–1924) and then in Belgrade (1924–1926).

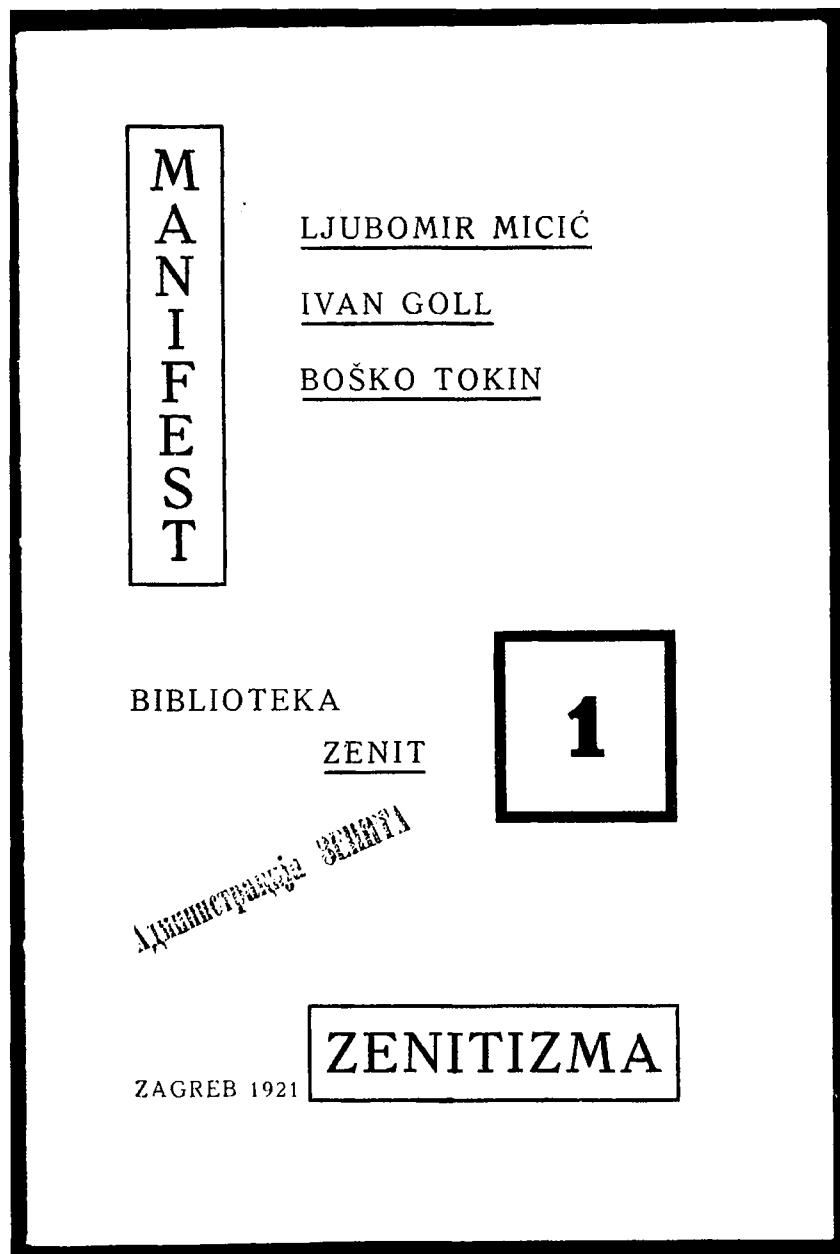
Micić was the principal ideologist of the zenitist movement. He espoused various European avant-garde art movements (expressionism, futurism, Dada, constructivism). Eclectically combining the incompatible (the pro-Western and the anti-Western, the modern and the anti-European), he created a new Balkan movement, taking part in a debate between the East and the West. He emphasized the cultural and political context of the Balkans from which he spoke. In the first edition of *Zenit* (Zagreb, February 1, 1921) he wrote his manifesto “Man and Art.” As a proclaimed pacifist and anarchist, Micić heralded the new age and the art of expressionism that was to create new values, in other words new art forms. He defined zenitism as “abstract metacosmic expressionism.” Zenitism and expressionism reflect the “drama of our soul.” In the October 1921 issue, Ivan Goll proclaimed the demise of expressionism in the article “Der Expressionismus stirbt” [Expressionism Is Dying]. Micić then published in *Zenit* (no. 13, April 1922) “The Categorical Imperative of the Zenitist School of Poetry.” He asserted that “the general condition of existence is paradox/paradox is an element of zenitist poetry.” He demanded that the poet express “life as a physical-metaphysical-cosmic-metacosmic-magnetic-metamagnetic pulse of time (zenitosophy). Express the expansion of life without the logic of a single event. Expansion must be expressed simultaneously—at the same time—every hour. In a single hour a countless number of various illogical events occur, each independent of the other.” The “free, zenitist anticitizen” was required to demonstrate “anti-European and anticultural” behavior, to destroy the pseudo-cultural poetry of “feeling,” “emotion,” and “beauty,” to advocate the Balkanization of Europe and the creation of a new civilization. With his ideas of anti-Europeanism he

was close to Italian futurism as well as to militant, leftist, Russian cubo-futurism.⁴ Micić believed that the time had come for the Balkan region to be more than just Europe's cultural colony, "in which the importation of cultural trash is unlimited and unhindered by law."⁵ He criticized the aesthetic and unconscious adoption of Western styles and their pale and empty imitation in modernistic poetry and painting. He believed the young Balkan race should create its own culture, which itself would be "barbaric." Pure Balkan energy would enrich aged, depleted Europe. With his idea of the barbarogenius he was explicitly adopting, in a Balkan context, Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*.

As an avant-gardist, he discussed all the arts (poetry, prose, theater, painting, sculpture, film, radio), because avant-garde art strategies ruled out a separation of arts and an autonomy of individual media. Although he advocated autonomy in some texts and declared himself opposed to it in some, this depended on the audience he was addressing and what he was aiming to achieve. Micić was, above all, an artist of shock and provocation. Paradox was at the very heart of his discourse, both as an art gesture and as a strategy that he was following as thinker and as poet. The paradox made it possible for various discourses with contradictory ideological premises to coexist. In his manifestos and text poems, he interwove political rhetoric, advertisement, fashion, colloquial speech, and various ideological positions, moving through different geographical and cultural territories, using several voices simultaneously, because the lyrical, poetic "I" had been destroyed.

Micić insisted that "zenitist poetry was not born" but "constructed" and that "THE ZENITISTIC POEM MUST BE A CONSTRUCTION. The surest path to a zenitist poem is surely a constructivist path: consciously—distinctly—geometrically. Feeling has no eminent or imperative function. (What have my feelings got to do with you?)"⁶ Without deviating, he adhered to the principles established as an imperative of the new poetry school in poetic practice, for example in the collected works *Stotinu vam gro-mova—zenistička barbarogenika u 30 činova—sa prologom jednog ludaka, projektom visoke zenističke škole, buntovnom demonstracijom i nekoliko realno-savremenih slika* [I'll be damned—a zenitist barbarogenesis in thirty acts—with a prologue by a madman, a project of the high zenitist school, a rebellious demonstration, and several real/temporary paintings] (1922). He got rid of every shred of aestheticized emotion and sentimentality, so typical of the old art, traces of which could be seen in the poetry of many avant-garde poets. Rapidly tumbling sentences created a dynamic impression. They were fragments of the sensory-perceptive world (material aspects of the mechanized

Ljubomir Micić, Ivan Goll, and Boško Tokin, *The Zenitist Manifesto* (Zagreb, 1921), cover. Private collection.



age), the spiritual and contemplative world of man, the culture and civilization he lives in—fragments of political, social, utopian, philosophical thought. The graphic dimension of his poetry is supplemented with photographs that are, at once, signs of a broader artistic context. Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* suggests Russian constructivism much as the photo-

graph of a projector suggests film framing. Micić used this as a model and evoked poetic simultaneity.

In the introduction to the Zenit edition of the collection of poems *Panika pod suncem* [Panic under the Sun], Micić's brother, Branko Ve Poljanski, intensified the negation: "Negation! I boldly claimed that this is a rock of wisdom and that negation is the sense of life. It is the principal law of nature. . . . There is no eternal logic, everything is rhythmical and in motion. Logic moves too. Zenitism is the new literary logic from which a new philosophy will be born."⁷ He proclaims the arrival of the epoch he calls zenitism. In his manifesto, which was reprinted here from the review *Svetokret*, he shouts: "May it be a glorious October Revolution of the soul, when all old forms will fall like pale, dry leaves!"⁸ According to Poljanski, "Art needn't be logical. Art can be paradoxical! (This means an assassination of all patent forms of music, sculpture, paintings, poems, and so on!) But paradox is not senseless! That's for psychiatrists! *Paradox is the flexibility of the spirit and its plasticity.*"⁹



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Branko Ve Poljanski, c. 1920.
Private collection.

His early poems were inspired by expressionism, which had a crucial influence on the Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian literary scenes in the period around World War I. Poljanski wrote complex textual works, sometimes structured as prose poems. Fragments structured as poetry appear by turns. Traditional literary forms disappear and the multidisciplinary visual-verbal text is born. In his poem “Panoptikum putuje u ogledalo” [The Panopticon Is Traveling into the Mirror] from the collection *Tumbi* [Upside Down], he explains:

Tangible forms are being ground in the mill. Everything is being ground down to ethereal rejuvenation. And then each thing gets its true face:

SHE IS NOT

—
Is not = Is.

Is = Is not.

(Don't be ashamed of being confused, dear reader!)¹⁰

In the manifesto he insists that the example of film should be followed: “Learn from film of the speed of changing place and space, but this film miracle should stand on the firm basis of a single unique idea which is not and cannot be tendentious.”

Poljanski accepts Micić’s term barbarogenius. According to Poljanski, the mission of the barbarogenius is to use “pure barbarogenius and the new spirit of new heroic mankind” to create: “New painting!/Zenitist painting!/New sculpture/Zenitist sculpture!/New poetry./Zenitist poetry./New art!/Zenitist art!” The last collection, *Crveni petao* [Red Rooster], is a long poem that he describes in the preface as “intimate poetry of spring horrors” combined with “the rebelliousness of our mechanical age.” He speaks, with resignation, of the social and cultural context within which he works:

The greatness of the great is possible only in a culturally formed society. So weep not, sister muse!

The society in which this book appears is not a phase in the general advancement of cultures.

The society in which this book appears stands like a wax doll and moves mechanically in the general movement of things and events. Whoever comes closer loses the illusion of the theater game and is overcome by the stench and the poison.¹¹



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Branko Ve Poljanski, *Tumbe* [Upside Down], 1926, book illustration. Private collection.

Dada Man—Beyond the Borders of Semantics: Dragan Aleksić

Dragan Aleksić, another Serb from Croatia, was a close associate of Ljubomir Micić and Branko Ve Poljanski. He joined the dadaist movement in Prague, where he studied from 1920 to 1922. He released two dadaist publications in Zagreb in 1922, *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz*. He wrote dadaist manifestos and dadaist poetry. Hans Richter described these publications as post-dadaist because, after 1924, “there was no Dada, yet the Dadaists remained.”¹² These manifestos, as was the case with the manifestos of Micić and Poljanski, were written, as it were, on the essence of the movement itself. They were defined by the circumstances of local literature and the writers in Croatia and Serbia, but they also aimed to demonstrate the procedure of creativity.

In contrast to the zenitists, and most of all to Micić, Aleksić’s poetry and manifestos are not explicitly political. Aleksić glorifies simultaneity as the greatest of achievements (“simultaneity: it’s common knowledge that it is about arithmetic: as many events as possible in as little time as possible with the fastest possible vibrations: superb”).¹³ He shouts that “a naked human in his first year” is a dadaist. He advocates abstract poetry, emphasizes primitivism, youth, the future, and advocates bruitism: the use of all murmurs and sounds. In the text “Kurt Šviters Dada” [Kurt Schwitters Dada], Aleksić talks about this famous dadaist and also presents his own credo of poetry and art: “Schwitters says: letters are elements of poetry, therefore so are words, sounds, and sentences—Poetry is made by appeal. Sense is important only when it turns up as fact—I make sense into nonsense—I prefer nonsense because it hasn’t been processed artistically for a long time. And this is a personal thing.”¹⁴ Dadaists, like all other radical movements at the time, usurped the hierarchy of Western artistic values, so, in this poem, Aleksić would treat “Dante Alighieri” and a “Congo drum” at the same level. He created poems by introducing words from other languages, and making up words that resembled words from existing languages. Aiming for complete abstraction, he strung together sounds that made no sense. He also experimented with the forms of the novel and drama, transforming them into short forms in which narration or dialogue could occur, but without coherent sense. Aleksić would sometimes break grammar rules, arranging sentences or fragments of sentences illogically. He made use of the grotesque. He borrowed senseless expressions and phrases from the folklore tradition. He organized Dada evenings in Prague, Osijek, and Subotica, and then, as he put it, dadaism withdrew to Belgrade.

The Belgrade Surrealist Movement and the Poetry Experiment

The Belgrade surrealist movement¹⁵ flourished during the 1920s¹⁶ in magazines such as *Putevi* [Paths] (1922–1924), *Svedočanstva* [Testimonies] (1924–1925), and *50 u Evropi* [50 in Europe] (1928), expressing itself manifestly in the almanac *Nemoguće* [Impossible] (1930) and the magazine *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* [Surrealism Here and Now] (1932). Theorist Branko Aleksić wrote that the Belgrade poets (Marko Ristić, Milan Dedinac, Dušan Matić, Aleksandar Vučo, and others) had drifted slowly toward surrealism. Matić studied during the 1920s in Paris. He monitored dadaist and pro-dadaist events and sent Ristić copies of the magazine *Litterature*, published by Breton, Soupault, Aragon, Eluard, and others. The poet Moni de Buli left for Paris in 1925, where he met Breton and began to collaborate with the surrealists. Matić met once with Breton in Paris, also in 1925. Ristić also met Breton in late 1926.

The poet Marko Ristić founded the Belgrade surrealist movement and encouraged cooperation among poets Aleksandar Vučo, Oskar Davičo, and Milan Dedinac, experimental artist Vane Živadinović Bor, painter Radojica Živanović-Noe, poets Djordje Kostić and Dušan Matić, journalist and revolutionary Koča Popović, and Petar Popović. Modernist poet Rastko Petrović was also close to their work.

The surrealists returned to the work of narration the reductive and formal innovations of Dada and constructivism that had been characterized by a break with the Western history of narration. This proved that it was the function of the quote, collage, and montage to constitute visual, visual-textual, and textual appendixes that might be understood as “puzzles,” “automatic drawings,” “texts,” “collages,” “simulations,” or “free associations.” In the political, poetic, and theoretical sense, the Belgrade surrealist movement was Freudo-Marxist, meaning that it based its artistic practice on the theoretical foundations of Marx's critique of society and Freud's critique of the subject.

Koča Popović and Marko Ristić jointly wrote and published the book *Nacrt za jednu fenomenologiju iracionalnog* [A Sketch for a Phenomenology of the Irrational] (1931), which elaborated on the basic principles of the surrealist art experiment. The surrealists established an explicit poetic relationship between the theory and practice of experimental art. In the presurrealist period, Rastko Petrović published a multidisciplinary text titled “Spomenik putevima” [Memorial to Paths] in the magazine *Paths*, 1922, in which he laid out his strategies for the deconstruction of text, the role of the collage and montage, and the intention of the poet to come to grips with exotic spirituality.

Aleksandar Vučo wrote a surrealist poem, "Podvizi družine pet petlića" [The Adventures of a Company of Five Roosters] (1933), that was dedicated to children and to taking children into the world of fantasy. Poet Dušan Matić wrote a preface for the book and made a series of fascinating, fantastic photocollages. The Belgrade surrealists also created individual and collective automatic texts. These included Djordje Kostić's "Automatski tekst" [Automatic Text] (1930) and one by Vane Bor (1933). Živanović-Noe, Vane Bor, Djordje Jovanović, and Aleksandar Vučo created the multidisciplinary theoretical and literary text "Pokušaji simulacije" [Attempts at Simulation] with "Uvod" [Introduction], "Pokušaji simulacija gradijanskog optimizma" [Attempts to Simulate Bourgeois Optimism], "Pokušaji simulacije sujeverija" [Attempts to Simulate Superstition], and "Pokušaji simulacije jedne naročite vrste maštanja" [Attempts to Simulate a Special Kind of Imagination]. This is one of the first examples of post-avant-garde and post-modernist work: poems that simulate, by means of the text, certain states, identities, desires, and powers of the subject. The idea of "simulation" was taken as an important technique for setting the reality of uncertainty in motion (phantasm, association, imagination).

The surrealists worked in prose (stories, novels), poetry (poems, long poems, poem cycles, collections of poems), and text (a multidisciplinary material-verbal system simulating the unconscious). In this sense a surrealist poem always exists on two planes: first, in the concrete, material order of a literary text and second, as a vehicle for the movements of fictional effects (the surprising, imaginary, desired, erotic, fantastic). In surrealist poetry, the visual is achieved by the effects of the semantics of the literary text, but the text itself is more than mere vehicle. It sets up a relative relationship between poetry, prose, essay, and manifesto through a "materialistically conceived text." Most surrealists quit the avant-garde experiments after 1933 and turned to socially engaged and critical writing affiliated with the revolutionary politics of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

Moni de Buli was born to a Belgrade Jewish family. He followed the innovations of cubism and futurism in his poetry and moved in the direction of surrealism. There is an obvious influence of dadaism, neoprimitivism, constructivism, expressionism, and surrealism on his work. De Buli, Risto Ratković, and Rade Drainac were close to Micić and zenitism in their poetry at first, but then broke with him.

De Buli's collection *Krilato zlato* [Winged Gold] was published in 1926.¹⁷ In the preface he says, "My only obligation is to destroy," and explains that he is not a writer but a bandit. This is where we find *Doktor*

Hipnison ili tehnika života [Doctor Hipnison or the Technique of Life], an interdisciplinary text de Buli terms “a screenplay.” The poet uses poetic strategies close to an expressionist voice. Typography distinguishes the types of discourse: verses are printed in italics, graphics are framed with quadrilaterals of various lengths and widths. Prose passages are printed as prose. Some words and word clusters are written in capital letters and there is also a black square framed with a white square. The hero, Hipnison, a character from the expressionist arsenal, is “the typical pattern of a man,” and his surroundings are the typical pattern of a landscape. The ideal, a dream, the heart, the moon, longing for the unknown, the Milky Way, space: all these are elements emanating from romanticism and symbolism. De Buli uses traditional meter and rhyme, but with pathos and a mystic quality. The sensual, loud colors become a completely new linguistic expression. In the prose passages that comprise most of the screenplay, the sentences link syntactically and, to a certain extent, logically (“oko brega beskrajna pustinja purpurne boje” [around the hill an endless desert of purple hue]).

The poet constantly highlights the artificiality and conventionality of art. One of de Buli’s most beautiful prose-poems, beginning with the word “Satan,” is actually more a surrealist automatic text. In it the sounds blend into one another. In short prose texts of an autoreflexive nature, “Sušta nit” [A Pure Thread] and “Otvorenih očiju” [With Eyes Open], he situates his process of creation between two states, the emotional and the rational. The poet is never completely overcome by emotion, because reason is always lurking there and he cannot fight it or reject it. The poet notes down fragments that emerge from “the spiritual darkness” without order. But de Buli saw through to the truth linked to surrealist automatic writing, that true, spontaneous automatism is impossible, that there is always some self-control involved, that reason always makes a certain choice. Like other poets, Moni de Buli joined various, even contradictory, techniques into a unique literary expression. He described the stormy atmosphere of surrealist revolutions and conformism in Paris and Belgrade in 1928:

Breton voraciously devoured countless revolutionary brochures, but his Bible was still Lev Trotsky’s *My Life*. The magazine *La Révolution surréaliste* changed its name to *La Surréalisme au service de la révolution*. My best friends were in prison in Sremska Mitrovica. I knew the price of revolutionary work and the courage of such people in the Yugoslavia of that time. In France, however, all of this was harmless. At least democracy functioned in some major things. No written or verbal political matter actually led to serious punishment.¹⁸

This was a time of revolutions and counterrevolutions, a time of confrontation between art and political experiments and a time of deviations from the norms of modernism and bourgeois society.

Constructivist Poetry

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Srečko Kosovel, *R detektiv*, 1926, collage.
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica,
Ljubljana.

In his magazine *Rdeči pilot* [Red Pilot], "a rebellious youth monthly for spiritual revolution" (no. 2, 1922), the Slovenian poet Anton Podbevšek published "Politična umetnost" [Political Art], one of the first avant-garde manifestos in Slovenia. Futurism filled the young Podbevšek with enthusiasm. In the poem cycle "Žolta pisma" [Yellow Letters], written just before 1915, he experimented with words. He used shocking, witty remarks and



neologisms and played with the lack of punctuation, with onomatopoetic expressions; he broke words into syllables and created absurd pictures, placing particular emphasis on the artistic and spatial component of the word. He collaborated with the zenitists. His collection *Človek s bombami* [Man with Bombs] was published in 1925.

Another Slovenian poet, Srečko Kosovel, began writing expressionist poetry and then drifted toward futurist expression under the influence of Podbevšek. He learned about constructivism through his friendship with Avgust Černigoj, who studied at the Bauhaus. Then Kosovel began making his first collages. He was in contact with Micić and Poljanski. At the end of 1924, his notes took the form of a construct acting semantically with the diversity of its elements. The new language he began using was a language not only of words and letters but of vertical and horizontal lines, mathematical and other symbols. In his diaries from 1925 Kosovel described the manner in which he built his constructivist poems. "Just as I exploit dissonance in music to create a balance with harmony, I exploit banal expressions in poetry in contrast to something that is special in the poem, something sublime, *golden*."¹⁹ He was also familiar with the actions of the dadaists, and spoke of the dynamism of the new poetry and its contrasting quality at the level of the semantic and metaphorical, although the ethical and spiritual dimension also mattered to him.

Denis Poniž describes Kosovel's poems: "Futurism and dadaism taught the coldest, most sober and insensitive view of the poetic process, glorifying and focusing on the very means, process, and method of assembly. Instead, constructivism as Srečko Kosovel developed it was put on a different, human, ethical basis."²⁰ The elements of constructivist, futurist, and dadaist poetics were personified in the use of contemporary and technical vocabulary. He placed these words next to words originating from the complex of impressionist and more traditional metaphoric connections.

Radical Poetic Practice in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after World War II

After World War II, avant-garde phenomena were almost forgotten in the Yugoslav literatures and cultures. In fact, after the victory of the communist revolution, the entire avant-garde practice of the 1920s was banned and suppressed as an expression of bourgeois decadence and aesthetic formalism in art.

Interest in this work surfaced in the 1960s thanks to the advent of concrete and visual poetry. Srečko Kosovel's book of poems *Integrali* [Integrals]

was published for the first time in Slovenia in 1967, although Kosovel had written the poetry in the mid-1920s. A retrospective of the works of the ženitists (Ljubomir Micić) and dadaists (Dragan Aleksić) was published for the first time as recently as 1969 in the Belgrade magazine *Rok* (1969–1970), edited by neo-avant-garde prose writer Bora Čosić. The republication of the works of avant-garde artists brought back to life poetic strategies that were never completely realized historically but that were revolutionary and avant-garde in their very form. The pictorial and semantic components in these works grew from one to the next. The use of nonlinguistic signs, drawings, lines, and typographic signs was truly a part of the structure of individual texts.

Social Context

Since the period of modernization in Yugoslav cultures there has been an ongoing battle between trends aiming “to preserve authentic national values” (most frequently defined as a struggle against the corrupting influence of the West) and an inclination to choose economic, political, and artistic strategies aimed at integrating local culture into Western cultural trends. Slovenian critic Taras Kernauner wrote, for example, on the salient tendency of Slovenian culture to oppose “imports from the corrupt West,” all of which are “by destiny counter to our naturally humanist, realistic, healthy national soul.”²¹ Croatian critic Branimir Bošnjak explained that a special relationship exists in small cultures between language, literature, and politics. The literary heritage of the past is fashioned into a shield for the protection of national political values. The understanding of literature by Slovenes, as well as Croats, Serbs, and Montenegrins, wrote this author, “always involved the notion of *a political dimension*. So this is how the amalgam that identified language with national values was created, also forming a literature that served as an articulation of national self-importance. In this way, the language almost automatically became a *national value*, just like mythology, political victories and defeats. Language could not be entrusted to someone who mutilated it (Kosovel), who expressed national defeatism, because *readings* turned on the national political issue above all else.”²²

When looking at Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian poetry after World War II, it is interesting to note Bošnjak’s remark that, conceptually, the clearest continuous influence of avant-garde ideas in the sense of exploring the boundaries of the language was found in Slovenian poetry at the time. When the practice of new poetry appeared in the mid-1960s, it was most

clearly expressed and had the strongest presence in Slovenian culture. This does not mean that formalist art was left unexposed to influence from the taste and artistic views of other areas (above all, Serbian and Croatian), but that it continued to be a more or less marginal presence within new cultural tastes. In Bošnjak's assessment, "what had been sporadic in other literatures—the poetry of Josip Sever, Borben Vladović in Croatian literature, the work of the Student Center Art Gallery, and the movement referred to as the New Tendencies in art or in the Novi Sad group poetry workshop, Domonkos, Tolnai, and, later, Vujica Rešin Tucić, affiliated with the Hungarian-language magazine *Új simposion* (New Symposium)—evolved in the Slovenian cultural environment to the degree that it was rocking the boat. Parallel to growth in the freedom to deconstruct the language, treating what had been taboo subjects in literary and, even more broadly, social life, there was growth in resistance to this reductionist concept of literary production."²³ The appearance of new language experience in Croatian or even in Serbian poetry was not as dramatic and radical as it had been in Slovenian poetry. The continuity of surrealism and the poetic research of poets such as Boro Pavlović, Josip Stošić, Josip Sever, Zvonimir Mrkonjić, and several others was just one of the parallel paths that had now become separate varieties. This break was strong in the Slovenian cultural environment: several generations thoroughly changed the picture of the language/world, opening up spaces that had been inconceivable until that time. Kermauner wrote that "each shift of poetic language in the direction of the hitherto unseen, of the new, has meant the undermining of fixed forms of society, the destruction of Truth and Beauty, the deconstruction of human nature."

Vujica Rešin Tucić, Serbian poet and critic from the Vojvodina, writes about poets from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as being of a different poetic cast. He remarks on the existence of just one Yugoslav literary trend comprising authors voicing their critical position on literary transition and the existing concepts of artistic work, who meant to transcend the concept of national literature. The actions that lead to overstepping the boundaries of particular media (the use of photography, film, radio and television, press, theater) tangibly affected poetic procedure. He linked the appearance of reism, visual and concrete poetry, spatialism, and computer and other poetry throughout the Yugoslavia of the day with "the aim of overcoming bourgeois humanism and the concept of literature; and, to a great extent, this coincided with self-governing social processes. In its greater part this was a negation of the inherited state of affairs yet, at the same time, an affirmation of a new social consciousness."²⁴ The deeply rooted, traditional

humanistic understanding of the meaning and role of poetry resulted in a negative attitude from most critics and poets toward experimentation because “a mere experiment” made no sense and could have no artistic, or any other, value.

Neo-avant-garde art in Yugoslav cultures was the ghetto of cosmopolitanism. This was not a revision or a revival of avant-gardes between the two wars, but an authentic, existential response to the ideological, cultural, and artistic demands of the 1950s and 1960s.

Reism and OHO

Slovenian concrete poetry first appeared in 1965 in the student magazine *Tribuna*. According to Denis Poniž, the first “proto-concretist” poems of Franci Zagoričnik, Aleš Kermauner, and Tomaž Šalamun and the visual poems of Marko Pogačnik were published in the magazine in the spring of 1965. The OHO group was set up not long after, initiated by sculptor Marko Pogačnik and poet Iztok Geister Plamen, the leading ideologists of the movement. Also working within this group were Milenko Matanović, Franci Zagoričnik, Matjaž Hanžek, Vojin Kovač Chubby, and Naško Križnar. Radicalizing their understanding of poetic form and of the term “poetry,” they gathered around a doctrine described by Taras Kermauner as reist. Reism describes the penchant of Slovenian poets for placing the word at the center of focus. The word no longer pointed to a world outside language. Poets were moving from meaning to sign. Reist ideology implied that poets had become aware of their devices. They had turned to the medium, the language, and were studying it. Their move was based on autoreflection because alongside their own work they developed a program and definition of their own poetic practice. Marko Pogačnik wrote:

Texts are made of letters. Letters are made of lines. Lines serve the purpose of signaling visually individual sounds in the form of letters. Therefore, in the case of texts, the line is hidden behind the sound of the letter. How then can the line (as the basic element of the page besides printer's ink and paper) be brought to light if not in the form of a drawing? In a drawing a line stands on its own, if the drawing is on the level of self-awareness. A drawing consisting of lines is an indispensable element of the open pages of a newspaper or magazine. Visual poetry, also called topographic poetry, is the revelation of these differentiated (visual-sound) roles of the line.²⁵

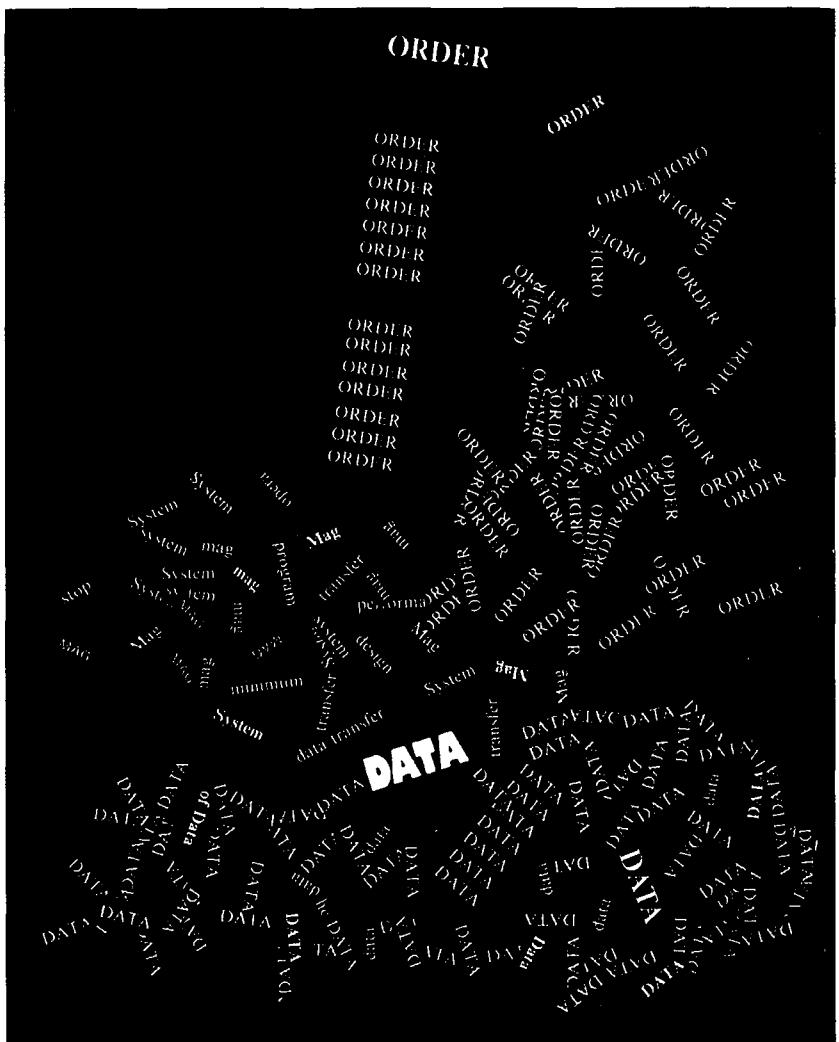
At issue here is a new perception of reality. The poetic and artistic process in the doctrine of reism compels us to see the object in a new, unusual way. We no longer look at it with its utilitarian usefulness in mind. We are not alienated from it. By means of reist doctrine, we approach the object directly. Kermauner wrote that all poets moved "from God, via Man, to Thing." The humanist sense of the work of art had been destroyed. The artwork does not serve to establish communication between people who share the same tragic experience of living. Instead:

The word simply "is," because it carries its meaning within itself as does every other thing under the sun. The humanistic world, so rich with meaning, which has lost its existence, has surrendered its position to the entirely nonsemantic world, deprived of all meaning in its, so to speak, absolute existence. The humanistic world produced literature which said man is beautiful, the pencil is thin, brown and sharp, the relationship between us is unfriendly, mean, amiable, hypocritical, and it added hundreds more of these characteristics. The world that took over from the humanistic, and which we call reistic, endlessly repeats its "is": a pencil is, an eraser is, a bridge is, a word is, a man is. And nothing more. Everything is because it is identical to everything else: everything is everything and everything is the truth.²⁶

Besides the clearly antihumanistic position according to which man, his transcendence, and his existential suffering are of no importance to these poets, the drift toward objectivity also testifies to the disappearance of the subject. Iztok Geister Plamen made an interesting comparison when he said there was a clear distinction in European humanism between the object (thing) and the subject. Contrary to this, objects are given the status of subjects in Zen Buddhism. Every thing is experienced as a subject while, in reism, every thing is experienced as object.

The Slovenian poets dealt with concrete poetry. Franci Zagoričnik dealt radically with the sign. He took it apart completely, dividing it into material elements. His playing with the sign began with semantics, with the meaning of a linguistic sign, first stripped of its meaning through endless repetition or destruction, and then moved toward the actual nonsemantic bearer of the sign. Iztok Geister Plamen wrote the most radical poetry in both the poetic and the artistic sense. Plamen used words, but they were all far from logocentric meanings: the words do not spring from the spirit. Words relate to words. Taras Kermauner described Plamen's poetry as follows:

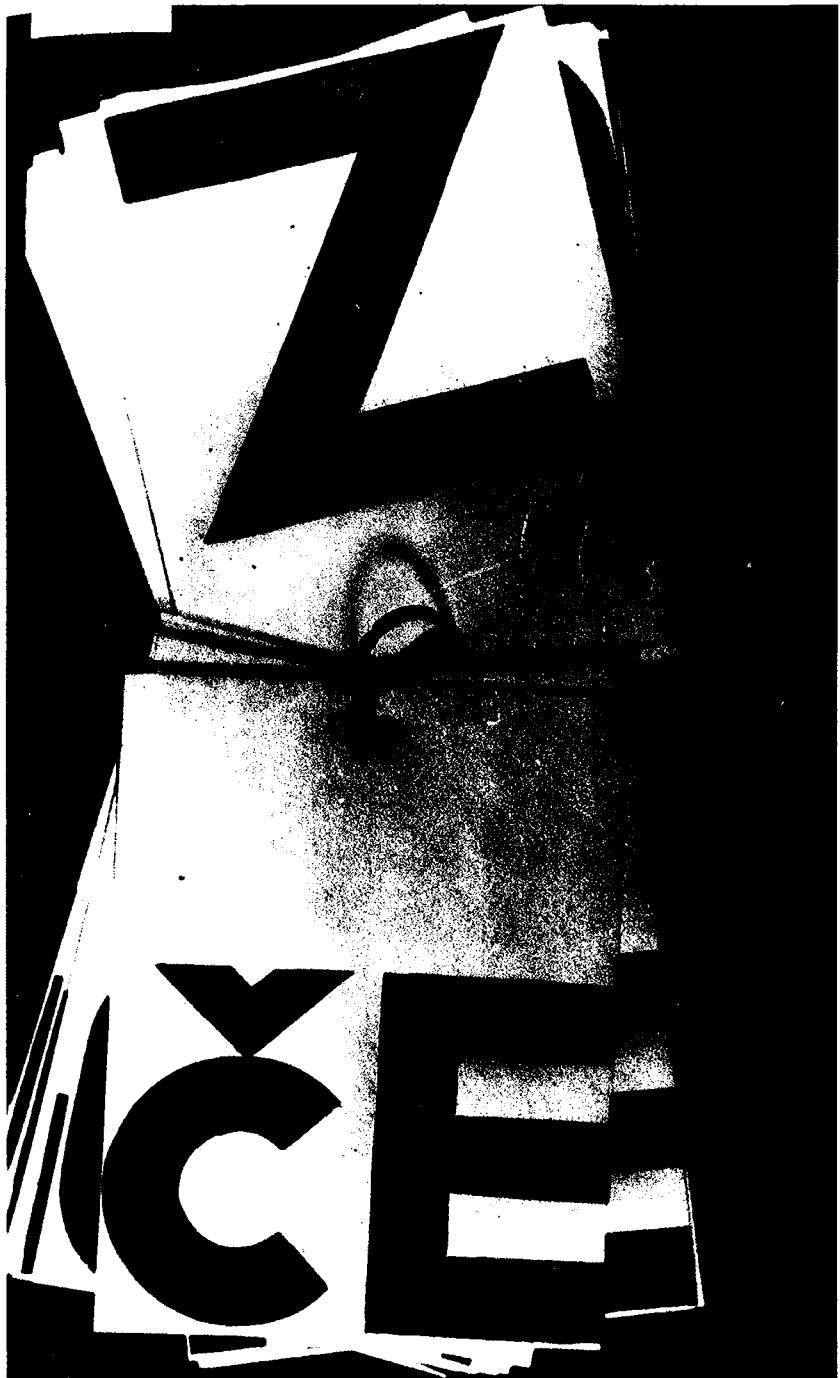
Franci Zagoričnik, *Order*, c. 1970, artist's book. Private collection.



His poems have no single, even negative, social or ethical message. They are not a criticism of nor a parody of such messages, meaning they are some kind of antimessage, but—in a positive sense—they exist in some other, non-Euclidean dimension. To the traditionally schooled reader they are empty, senseless, an irrelevant string of words. This is of course exactly what Plamen's poetry sets out to achieve: to be outside the message on the state of man's soul. Its aim is to construct a different world, still made of words and even sentences, but words and sentences that are no longer strung together in a conventional manner.²⁷

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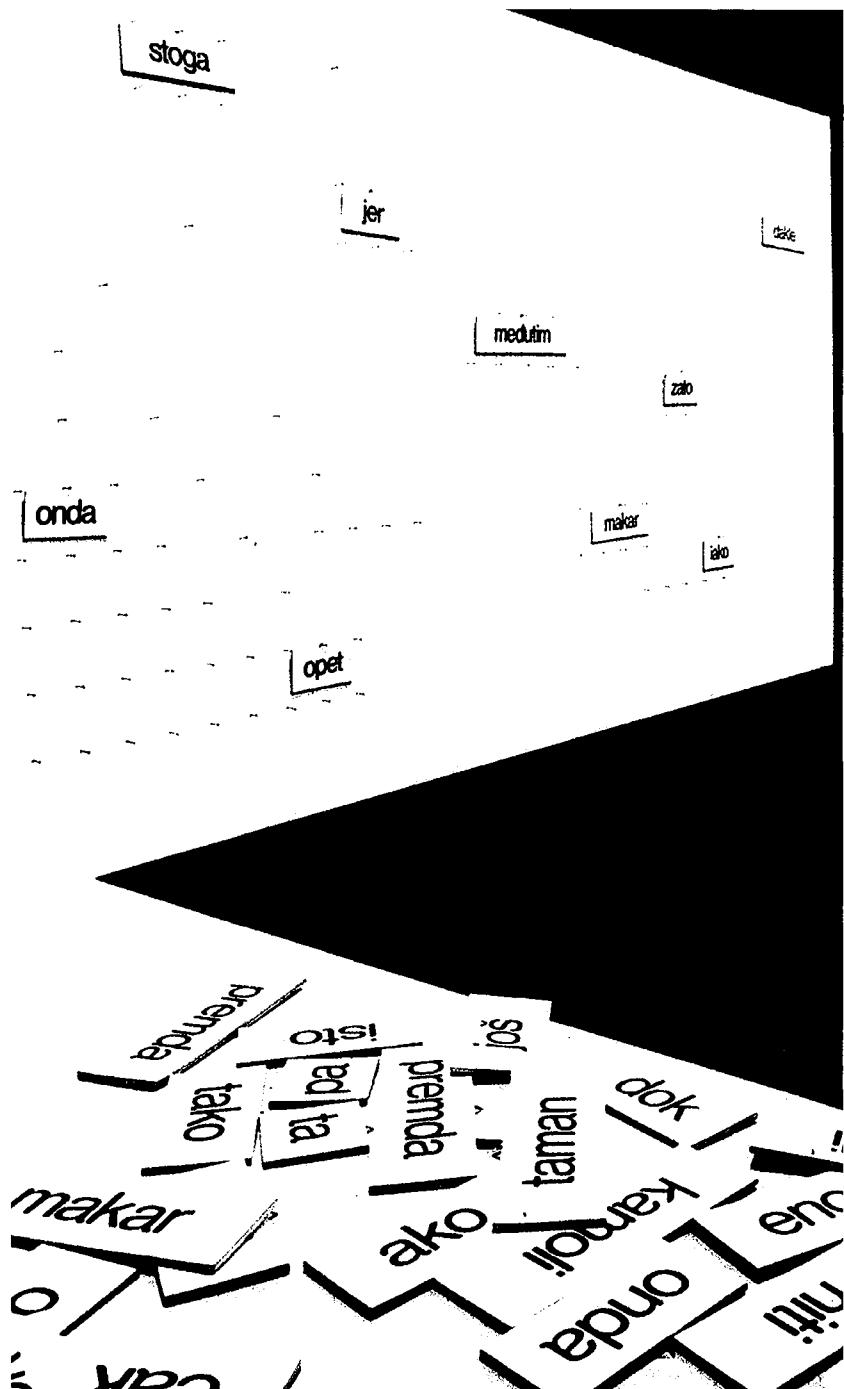
OHO group (I. G. Plamen), 2
Pesmi [2 Poems], 1967, artist's
book. OHO archive. Permission
given by Marko Pogačnik.



I should mention another important way of creating a text—generating it by computer programming. In programmed texts words and sentences are put together in such a way that they do not yield conventional meanings. The text is built according to a system of external, previously defined mathematical combinations. Plamen used this principle in his work, for example in the cycle “Ranculus L. Zlatica” in *Katalog 2* in 1972, then in “Ikebana” in the book *Žalosna Majna* [Mournful Majna]. We find a radical interpretation of this procedure in Marko Pogačnik’s novel *Breskev* [Peach] (*Katalog 2*). The text is created by combining several basic words, for example the nouns *relations*, *space*, *miracle*, *foundation*, *picture*, *contents*, *vision*, *interest*, *sense*, or the verbs *collects*, *multiplies*, *wears*, *decorates*, *sees*, *spreads*, *knows*, *loves*, *forms*, *says*, and so on. Thousands of sentences were generated from combinations of these, such as “Miracle collects relations. Space multiplies relations. Miracle carries the foundations. Picture ripens part. Part knows unit.”

Concrete and Visual Poetry in Croatia

From the 1960s, poetry was researching its own media, but also breaking out of the boundaries of lyric poetry as a genre. The first of such breakthroughs in Croatian experimental poetry was the work of Josip Stošić. In his first collection, *Djerđan* [Necklace], he investigated the relationship between the word and the space of a sheet of paper. The page became part of the poem’s structure. Stošić described this procedure as “speaking of words, objects, and space.”²⁸ The poet first investigated the conventions of written language. He took conjunctions as words that have their own sense in that they determine relations between words and do not have their own full meaning outside the relationships they define. When they are used in a sequence suggesting a sentence, we perceive them as a sentence. If they are put into the structure of a verse, they become poetry for us. Stošić laid them out either on a paper surface or a panel at regular intervals, where they became “visual elements of an ornamental composition.” He brought our capacity for visual perception into the game. If the intervals between the words are irregular, the empty space and the words enter the game of meaning on various different footings. When he placed the words in the space on the panels, he invited the audience to set them up so that the audience became an active participant in constructing the meaning of the work. When words are placed on panels or objects among which we are forced to move, they acquire a spatial dimension in the ambience. If the words are written on mirrors or a chair they become part of our day-to-day life, removing objects from everyday life and transforming them



into something with the characteristics of a work of art. Stošić worked within the structuralist idea of investigating the syntax of the language and the possibility of generating meaning. In his minimalist objectified poetry, he aimed at the desyntagmatization of language. Words, objects, and space created a closed structure that did not refer on the whole to the social and political sphere of reality. Words, objects, and space were completely self-contained.

Zvonimir Mrkonjić experimented with words and with the space of a sheet of paper, arranging the words on the paper following the example of Mallarmé, or grouping them in shapes such as squares.²⁹ In terms of meaning, this poetry was hermetic. Experimental poets writing in Croatia in the 1960s saw language as a medium and poetry as a construction. The lyric subject had been destroyed. If the text is arranged on a sheet of paper, the white spaces become part of the textual structure. Narration is reduced and the spaces between the word clusters and words are such that the logic of reading is clear. Then the words are arranged on the paper more daringly, making it impossible to connect words and syntaxes into meaningful wholes. Mrkonjić introduces found materials such as the contents of a magazine or the copy of a page from a dictionary into his collections, and these then acquire the status of a poem.

Josip Sever translated Mayakovsky and met the legendary, cubo-futurist poet Alexei Kruchenykh at the beginning of the 1960s in Russia. Sever attached himself to cubo-futurist research. In his poetry, “the sound dictates the meaning.” According to critic Dubravka Oraić Tolić, the poet “expressed this linguistic meaning in its archaic purity and unlimited freedom.”³⁰ Like all other poets of the time, Sever also saw language as a medium and often focused on procedure. He built metalinguistic poetic spaces, revealed the arbitrary link between the signifier and the signified, showing how language generates meanings. He aestheticized procedures established by Russian cubo-futurists and included them in the context of a modernist idea on the autonomy of the media.

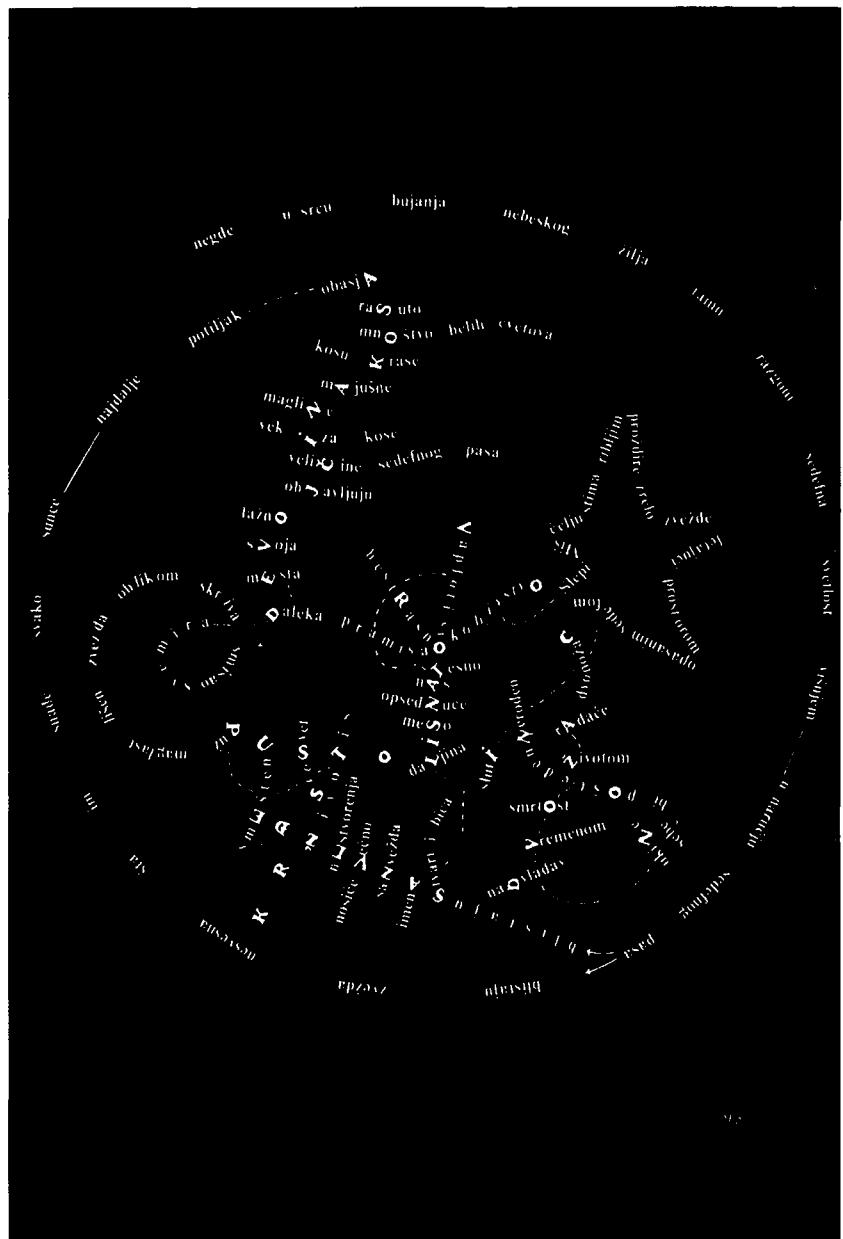
Vlado Martek was an active participant in an informal group of six artists of the 1970s who were concerned with conceptual art. He was interested in the elementary processes in poetry, defining himself as a “prepoet.” Researching the process of writing, Martek arrived at the basic elements, starting with the writing tools that are a prerequisite to writing a poem (pencil, paper, eraser). He exhibited them; thus the objects became the new language used to make “prepoetry.” The poet gave up poetry, left its domain as defined by modern poetry, and entered the domain of the gallery, the realm

of agitation, the realm of human acts themselves. He presented poetry as an oral performance, he investigated its actions and performative modalities.³¹ He destabilized and transformed the autonomy of poetry and broadened it in the direction of the visual and performing arts. Martek defined the sense of poetry as a “socially engaging force.” For him, poetry was not an individual act of making and consuming art. He believed that people should encounter it on the street, see it in the collective activity of reading poetry. To this end he wrote slogans (Read Mayakovsky!), mottos, graffiti, and catchwords.

Visual Research into Poetry in Serbia

The visual investigation of poetry in Serbia was very wide-ranging, from lettrism and concrete poetry to visual and conceptual poetry. Composer and multimedia artist Vladan Radovanović worked in the domain of vocovisual research. Radovanović believed that the vocovisual was a separate field of creativity established through a synthesis of the poetic and the visual. He insisted that the “internal configuration of a work links the vocovisual to music and literature, while the vocovisual is linked to music, abstract painting, sculpture, and also architecture, given the clear color, tone, shape elements, the way of structuring a piece of work, rhythm, proportions, harmony—because all these elements are the basis for a relationship with semantics in vocovisuals.”³² Stepping out into the gallery space, Radovanović created the works *Polieder* (1968) and *Kugla* [Globe] (1971–1974), on which he wrote words. In the book as a medium, poetry was written by making different organic and geometric patterns. His research of the synthesis of word, sound, and image in two-dimensional space was presented in the book *Pustolina* (1968). (*Pustolina* is a neologism coined by Radovanović combining the words for “wasteland” and “adventure.”) He also researched sound poetry, combining several voices speaking the text, as well as working on radiophonic research.

Biljana Tomić introduced the term typoezija. She worked with the visual or graphic aspect of letters as language signs. These communicate with their visual qualities: the size and type of letters, the placement of a letter in the space of the paper, and its relationship with other letters. Vladan Radovanović described this achievement as follows: “A barely adequate deviation from the purely visual art effect appears in Tomić’s work *Typoezija* [Typoezija]. Without being assigned a meaning, the letter will be recognizable as a conventional sign in an unconventional context in which its only value is visual.”³³



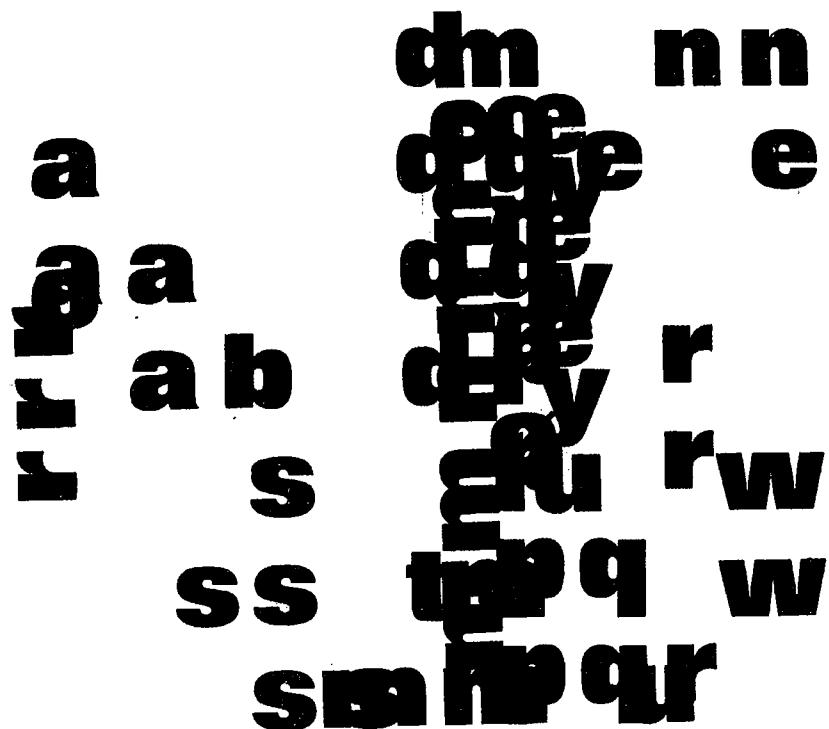
Members of the Subotica group Bosch + Bosch also worked with visual, concrete, and sonorous poetry. Bálint Szombathy, Slavko Matković, Attila Csernik, and Katalin Ladik studied visual poetry, manipulating with strategies of advertising, fashion, the appearance of words in political contexts, syntagma, signs, texts. Poetry was produced in the form of actions in nature or in the ambience of the urban environment.

Miroljub Todorović was one of the founders of the signalist movement. Signalism as a neo-avant-garde movement revived avant-garde activism linked to the ideas of late modernism—technology, communication, information. Todorović wrote that, when connected with science, the rigor of science and “the analogy and sense of the irrational from poetry will make poetry capable of explaining paradoxes and resolving the secret of creation.”³⁴

Members of the Novi Sad groups KôD (Slobodan Tišma, Slavko Bogdanović, Miroslav Mandić, Mirko Radojičić, Pedja Vranešević, Janez

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Biljana Tomić, *Typoezija*, 1968,
collage. Artist's collection.



Kocijančić) and (Ξ (Vladimir Kopić, Miša Živanović, Čeda Drča, Ana Raković) investigated the potential of syntax and semantics, emptying poetry of all meaning, reducing it to the mere material order of language. There was no lyric subject in their poetry, only the contrived subject of the text's "discourse." The self-referencing of linguistic expressions is a part of the construction of a poetic text. They showed the endless capacity of a text to generate the world, and this world existed in language and was made of language. They used the codes of language, literature, art, and theory. The texts are multivocal, multidiscursive. Slobodan Tišma wrote nonfictional, self-referential texts such as "Kao neko" [Like Someone] (1971) and self-referential, fictional, posthistoric texts as poems, such as, for example, "Garden Like That" (1977). In the text, Vladimir Kopić simulated, modeled, reconstructed, and deconstructed textual discourses, pointing to the differences and the delayedness (*différance*) of the lyrical, poetical, and theoretical textual subject. Miroslav Mandić worked with mythical concepts and the paradigms of poets: I as a poet, I as an artist, I as a guru, I as a worker, I as a walker, and so on. Slavko Bogdanović worked on specific anarchistic and pararevolutionary, political, poetical discourse. The textual experiment of the Novi Sad poets, artists, and activists was a provocative breakthrough from the poetic world of the autonomies of language into the world of "material-linguistic production," in a battle for meaning and emancipation in the conditions of real-socialist society.³⁵

The Visual, the Medium of Poetry, and Language in Yugoslav Avant-garde and Neo-avant-garde Poetry

In the Yugoslav avant-gardes (zenitism, dadaism, constructivism, surrealism) and neo-avant-gardes (Slovenian reism, Croatian concretism, Serbian literary experimentation) there was a radical expansion of the horizons of poetic expression. The poem was separated from its traditional lyric foundation and was established as a material, textual proving ground for sensory, topological, graphic, and conceptual investigation. In fact this text deals with the shift from poetry as creation to poetry as research.

translated by Jelena Babšek and Stephen Agnew

Notes

1. Marjorie Perloff, preface to *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1981), p. vii.
2. Charles Bernstein, introduction to *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. Charles Bernstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.
3. Denis Poniž, "Slovenske zgodovinske avantgarde med Podbevšekom in Tankom" [The Slovenian Historical Avant-garde between Podbevšek and Tank], in *Tank: slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda* [Tank: the Slovenian Historical Avant-garde] (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1998).
4. Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla speak of the "contradictory marriage of anarchism and nationalism that characterizes this period, and that reemerges so stridently in 'The Founding and Manifesto.'" Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 19. Discussing Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay, Marjorie Perloff wrote: "Seventy years and two world wars later, it is almost impossible to understand this particular mixture of radicalism and patriotism, of a worldly, international outlook and a violently nationalist faith." Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Movement: Avant-garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 6.
5. Ljubomir Micić, "Nova umetnost" [The New Art], reprinted in the magazine *Književnost*, ed. Vida Golubović and Irina Subotić, no. 8–7 (Belgrade, 1981).
6. Ljubomir Micić, "Kategorički imperativ zenitističke pesničke škole" [The Categorical Imperative of the Zenitist School of Poetry], *Književnost*, no. 8–7 (Belgrade, 1981), p. 1536.
7. Branko Ve Poljanski, *Panika pod suncem* [Panic under the Sun] (Belgrade: Edition Zenit, 1923), p. 1.
8. Branko Ve Poljanski, "Manifest" [Manifesto], in *Panika pod suncem*, p. 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Branko Ve Poljanski, *Tumbe* (Belgrade: Edition Zenit, 1926), p. 20.
11. Branko Ve Poljanski, "Psi laju a pesnici pevaju" [Dogs Bark and Poets Sing], in *Crveni petao* [Red Rooster] (Paris-Belgrade: Edition Zenit, 1927), p. 3.
12. Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 197.
13. Dragan Aleksić, "Kako bi da Vam ne reknem da je DADA . . ." [How Could I Not Tell You That Dada Is . . .], in Dragan Aleksić, *Dada tank: pesme* [Dada tank: Poems], ed. Gojko Tešić (Belgrade: Nolit, 1978), p. 92.
14. Dragan Aleksić, "Kurt Šviters Dada," in ibid., p. 96.
15. Branko Aleksić, ed., *Poezija nadrealizma u Beogradu 1924–1933* [The Poetry of Surrealism in Belgrade 1924–1933] (Belgrade: Rad, 1980).
16. Hanifa Kapidžić-Osmanagić, *Srpski nadrealizam i njegovi odnosi sa francuskim nadrealizmom* [Serbian Surrealism and Its Relationship to French Surrealism] (Sarajevo: Svetlost, 1966).

17. See Moni de Buli, *Krilato zlato* [Winged Gold] (Belgrade, 1926), in Moni de Buli, *Krilato zlato i druge knjige* [Winged Gold and Other Books], ed. and with preface by Milivoj Nenin, Serbian National Library, Dečje novine (Belgrade: Gornji Milanovac, 1989).
18. Moni de Buli, "Sedmiča sa sedam nedelja" [A Week with Seven Sundays], in Moni de Buli, *Zlatne Bube: pesme i podsećanja* [Gold Bugs: Poems and Reminders] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1968), p. 137.
19. Denis Poniž, "Generacija prerane spoznaje i iskustva" [A Generation of Premature Visions and Experience], in Denis Poniž, *Razgovori s literaturom* [Conversations with Literature], trans. Branko Čegec (Rijeka: Publishing Center, 1988), p. 56.
20. Ibid., p. 59.
21. Taras Kermauner, "Fragmentarni prilozi povijesti i analizi konkretne poezije u Sloveniji" [Fragmentary Contributions to the History and Analysis of Concrete Poetry in Slovenia], translated from Slovenian by Ljubomir Stefanović, in *Vidik*, no. 7–9 (1972–1973), pp. 6–7.
22. Branimir Bošnjak, *Proizvodnja života* [Production of Life] (Zagreb: Stvarnost, n.d.), pp. 157–158.
23. Ibid., p. 160.
24. Vujica Rešin Tucić, *Slovo je puklo* [The Letter Broke] (Novi Sad: Izdavač Srpska čitaonica i knjižnica Irig, 1978), p. 93.
25. From Tomaž Brejc, "OHO as an Artistic Phenomenon 1966–1971," in *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, ed. Marijan Susovski (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1978), p. 13.
26. Taras Kermauner, "Humanistička kritika i reistička ne-kritika" [Humanistic Criticism and Reist Noncriticism], in Taras Kermauner, *Eseji i kritike* [Essays and Criticisms], preface, selection, and translation by Marija Mitrović (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1978), p. 61.
27. Kermauner, "Fragmentarni prilozi," p. 8.
28. Josip Stojić, "govor riječi predmeta i prostora" [Speaking of Words Objects and Space], exhibition catalog (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1972).
29. Zvonimir Mrkonjić, *Bjelodano Crnonočno* [Light of Day Dark of Night] (Zagreb: BiblioTeka, 1976). The project was conceived in 1973 as an exhibition of slogans for the Gallery of the Student Center in Zagreb, and was later published as a book.
30. Dubravka Oraić Tolić, "Civilizacijski nomadizam Josipa Severa" [The Civilization Nomadism of Josip Sever], in Josip Sever, *Borealni konj* [Boreal Horse], introductory essay and production by Dubravka Oraić Tolić (Zagreb: Mladost, 1989), p. 11.
31. Dubravka Djurić, "Vlado Martek: Predpozija poezija postpozija" [Vlado Martek: Prepoetry Poetry Postpoetry], *Projektart*, no. 10 (Novi Sad, 1997), p. 56.
32. Quote from Mirjana Veselinović, *Umetnost i izvan nje: poetika i stvaralaštvo Vladana Radovanovića* [Art and Outside It: The Poetic and Creative Work of Vladan Radovanović] (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1991), p. 81.
33. Vladan Radovanović, *Vokovizuel* [Vocovisual] (Belgrade: Nolit, 1987), p. 155.

34. Miško Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950. godine* [A Glossary of Modern and Postmodern Art and Theory after 1950] (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999), p. 305.
35. Group KôD, group (Ξ, group KôD-Ξ retrospective, Gallery of Contemporary Visual Arts Novi Sad, May 1995. Text in the catalog by Miško Šuvaković.

4

Writings of Death and Entertainment

Textual Body and (De)composition of Meaning in Yugoslav Neo-avant-garde
and Post-avant-garde Literature, 1968–1991

Vladimir Kopičl

Allen Ginsberg published three books of poems in 1968, among which *Planet News* is the most commonly mentioned. In addition, he spent a week in prison, although during the Yippie festival in Chicago, along with William C. Burroughs and Jean Genet, he sought to appease thousands of angry people through meditation and pacifist poetry. In the same year Jerome Rothenberg edited and published his highly influential anthology of so-called primitive poetry *Technicians of the Sacred*, Timothy Leary printed two books, *High Priest* and *Politics of Ecstasy*, while Carlos Castaneda went on to do the same with the paradigmatic *The Teachings of Don Juan: The Yaqui Way of Knowledge*.

The same twelve months saw the publication of *Cybernetic Serendipity: The Computer and the Arts*, edited by Jasia Reichardt, as well as numerous important articles published in various periodicals. As a reminder, let us mention the publication of Louis Kampf's pertinent essay "The Humanities and the Inhumanities" in *The Nation* in September and the printing of the article "The Dematerialization of Art" by Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler in *Art International*, while the *International Times* brought its readership the verse form of the text "Paradise Now" by Julian Beck. At that particular time, in one of his high-impact interviews, the guru of the Yippie movement, Abbie Hoffman, declared ideology a mental disease, claiming the supreme goal to be new lifestyles to be lived rather than talked about.

Meanwhile student protests and their subsequent repercussions spread through America, Europe, and, indeed, Yugoslavia. Everything pulsated with social engagement, prophetic gestures, and the energy of change. The world seemed to be breaking apart, while in Ljubljana, the capital of the then Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, the second book by poet Tomaž Šalamun was

published, entitled *Namen pelerine* [The Purpose of the Cloak] (1968). Note the poem “Information”: “i saw a chinaman/what a terrible chinaman.” Somewhat logical, although the same book also contains the very competitive poem “Garden,” containing the verses: “have you seen the sunny garden/i have seen the sunny garden/turn around then/so that your belly is /where your back is now”—and a whole range of similar poetic and poetical inventions without capital letters, without punctuation. In fact, without many of the other things we were used to when it came to writing and reading poetry.

What Šalamun wrote at the time was immediately dubbed reism by the leading Slovenian critic Taras Kermauner, while what Šalamun had written beforehand in his first book *Poker* (1966) had been termed ludism and was also referred to as carnism and linguism. At least two neo-avant-garde literary paradigms burst onto the scene simultaneously. The more prominent poetic protagonists among them, with Šalamun, included Iztok Geister Plamen, Franci Zagoričnik, Matjaž Hanžek, and Aleš Kermauner (reism) and Vojin Kovač Chubby and Tomaž Kralj (ludism). So it stood with poetry, while the prose parallel to reism was written out in grand style by Rudi Šeligo (*Triptih Agate Schwarzkobler* [Agata Schwarzkobler’s Triptych], 1968), while Marko Švabič, Dimitrij Rupel, and several other authors also wrote prose in keeping with the spirit of the times. The majority of the aforementioned authors were members or had at the very least collaborated on the projects of the OHO group, already long located on the edges of the literary, the visual, the theoretical, and the meta-artistic.

Here is how their attitude to life and poetry is described briefly by Taras Kermauner in his essay “The Humanist Critique and the Reist Non-critique,” written at the time:

The poets—from Tomaž Šalamun to the youngest at the head of the Slovenian poetic avant-garde—have increasingly begun to orient themselves toward the Thing. They have thus concluded the road that led through the three images of Being: from God, through Man, to Thing. For them there is no more despair, because there is no hope, no disappointment, there is no faith, no guilt, there is no right or wrong road, no suffering. They do not strive toward projects and so do not know the difference between the imagined and the realized. There is no time that so successfully helped to demolish humanist man. They managed without the past, which they do not feel determined by, and without the future, which does not attract them in the least. They have focused on the eternal now. There is no inside or outside, and thus no transcen-

dence or transcending the given, life out of need and dialectic. All is now, all is eternal immanence, all is total externality, all is only the world of things, physical things which are in space, among which man is only one thing among many. We have disembarked into a world that has finally assumed its long-sought yet unfound solidity. All is absolute positivism, our attitude toward the world is euphoric, we agree to all that *is*, because all equals truth. There are no longer subjects and objects, emitters and receivers. Works of art are not communications through which the inside of one man could communicate with the inside of his neighbor. That is why art objects are not work, they are not a product of our practice, but things: all things—an apple, a forest, a shovel, a broom, a pencil, a word.

A word does not have a meaning conferred on it by man, its creator; a word has no meaning at all that should and can be deciphered. A word simply “*is*,” it carries its meaning within itself like any thing under the sun.

Michel Foucault might well have approved of these lines had he watched as Kermauner wrote them.

The poet I. G. Plamen, on the other hand, commenting on the same subject in the OHO periodical *Pericarežeracirep* (1969), writes:

In the classical art of words the word is thought as an image and has the effect of a word.

In the contemporary art of words the word is thought as a word and has the effect of an image.

Illustrated by the poem from his then recent collection *Pegam and Lambergar* (1968), this would run: “Sunday is a sunny day, Monday is moon’s day//the cistern is a bush//Tuesday/passes/Wednesday is in the best order.”

The Aesthetics of the Real: Analytical Catalogs

In the same year (1968) which saw Šalamun and I. G. Plamen’s privately funded publication of their collections of poems, without any support from official publishers or institutions, Bora Ćosić’s collection of short essays entitled *Sadržaj* [Content] appeared in Belgrade, also in a private edition by the author. The collection was accompanied by the excellent designs of architect Slobodan Mašić and instrumentalized illustrations from the *Brockhaus Lexicon*,

bora ćosić : mixed media

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Bora Ćosić, *Mixed Media*, 1970, artist's book. Private collection.

Bud Sagendorf's comic strips, and *Bizarre* magazine, as well as the numerically marked 33 microessays with seemingly unpretentious topics and titles such as "pod," "pickles," "chewing gum," "vibrator," and "aesopus." Despite the proclaimed low mode of writing, underscored by the regular omission of capital letters in its consistently one-word titles, Ćosić's essays present both complex and open minimalist, nearly collage-like structures. On the level of signification, most often in unison, they problematize highly diverse issues—cosmic, cuisine, or political—with a tendency, as Ćosić himself announces in the preface, to a certain "aesthetic doctrine of reality," with an obvious bent toward depahetizing and demythologizing. Despite, or precisely because of,

the analytical balancing within a confined space and their rather specific narrative, these texts from *Sadržaj* are some of the finest pages of Yugoslav prose of the time. Despite their complete lack of similarity in most other respects, they approach the concurrent tendencies of their fellow writers in Slovenia in their cataloging of the *real*.

This then still invisible bond was to escalate into something quite visible as early as the following year, 1969, with the appearance of the magazine *Rok*, in many respects decisive for the Yugoslav neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde scene, self-defined as a “periodical for literature and the aesthetic study of reality” in the subheading of its first issue. With this masthead proclamation, the lines from the magazine’s program draft sound relatively logical, announcing it would “fight against writing that increasingly ‘took the wrong tack’ . . . by pleasing individuals and making them ‘happy,’” as well as lines calling for constructing “new forms of consciousness, multidimensional, sublime, and liberating.” The issue was largely dedicated to the activities of the Slovenian neo-avant-garde (the OHO group and its collaborators—Rastko Močnik, Franci Zagoričnik, Milenko Matanović, T. Šalamun, and I. G. Plamen), the members of the international Fluxus group (Ayo, George Brecht, Hi Red Center, George Maciunas, and Ben Vautier . . .), the classics of the world and Yugoslav historical avant-garde (Marcel Duchamp, Dragan Aleksić . . .), and finally to the figures and events on the international art scene of the day. This longing for a “liberating consciousness” was quite beyond the reach of the existing aesthetic and political canons of Yugoslav society and art, which was breaking down from within at least in part through the agency of literature, including at least some of the contributors to *Rok*. The magazine editor Bora Čosić made his own contribution to this breakdown. He went on to publish an influential multidisciplinary collage book suitably entitled *Mixed Media* (1970), followed by an important political/ludist bildungsroman *Uloga moje porodice u svetskoj revoluciji* [The Role of My Family in the World Revolution] (1969), followed by the novel *Bel Tempo* (1982) with an ecstatic narrative instrumentalization of TV escapism, and, finally, in the 1980s and 1990s, several voluminous postmodern novels productively contaminated with political and essayist discourse. Poet Mirjana Stefanović was yet another *Rok* editor to crack open the Yugoslav literary paradigm, as was the fascinating multidisciplinary techno-oneirist Vladan Radovanović, while authors such as Milovan Danojlić and Dragoš Kalajić preferred a literary and publicist engagement with traces of nationalist or even “harder” rightist radicalism over the artistic radical engagement of the time.

With a small nod to the “external” factor, for the purposes of this postmapping of the internal (artistic) and external (geographic) cartography of the Yugoslav literary neo-avant-garde of the late 1960s, we should note a certain decentralization of its essential Ljubljana-Belgrade axis. In other words, a significant number of the translations of Slovenian authors into Serbian in the first issue of *Rok* were the work of Dejan Poznanović from Novi Sad (in the northern Serbian multinational autonomous province of the Vojvodina), and the second issue of *Rok* published poems by Vujica Rešin Tucić, another Vojvodina author, with an introduction by Jovica Aćin. Before Tucić moved to Novi Sad and Aćin to Belgrade, both had belonged to a circle of writers with neo-avant-garde leanings from a smaller Vojvodina center: the town of Zrenjanin. There, with the already active, later essential Vojislav Despotov, they wrote their first books and published a joint collection of texts entitled *Pamphlets* (1968).

Tucić’s poems, published in the second issue of *Rok* under the emblematic title “My menstruations,” attracted immediate attention for their obvious proximity to the textual strategies of futurist, dadaist, and zenitist writing and other zones of linguistic/poetic unconventionality. As early as 1970 they were published in the book *Jaje u čeličnoj ljusci* [Egg in a Steel Shell] which shows a clearer correspondence to the ahistorical features of Tucić’s poetry, a tendency to irony, demolishing social and other forms of humor, linguistic *zaum*, neologistic and other forms of ludism, with games of an overdimensioned anecdotal character, but only later, in the poetry of other authors, the “poetics of invention” revisited to a greater extent. Setting aside Tucić’s paragrammatical, metaliterary, and metalinguistically oriented reductionist experiment in the book of poetry *San i kritika* [Dream and Critique] (1977), his later more powerful fixation on something more traditional, his treatment of the theme of existence (*Reform grotesque*, 1983), however paradoxical, is among the lasting constants of the poetic writing of this highly original author, who has also dealt with forms of the visual novel (*Struganje mašte* [Scraping the Imagination, 1982, 1991] and the travesties of the “trivial” novel (*Strahote podzemlja* [The Terrors of the Underground], 1985, 1991) and has proved himself to be a very articulate critic (*Slovo je puklo* [The Letter Has Broken], 1978) and essay writer (*Hladno čelo* [Cold Forehead], 1983).

Tucić’s first book was published by *Tribina mladih* [The Youth Tribune] from Novi Sad, one of the most important strongholds of new cultural currents in Yugoslavia at that time, including the literary avant-garde. Two influential literary magazines were also published by them—*Polja* [Fields] in Serbian, and *Új Symposion* [New Symposium] in Hungarian, with

an editorial policy full of flair and innovation led by Judita Šalgo, Otto Tolnai, Vujica Rešin Tucić, László Végel, and other writers. Both magazines created an intercultural dialogue by publishing and translating exemplary works from the classics of the Serbian and Hungarian historical avant-garde, as well as the contemporary advocates of new writing from the multiethnic and multilingual space of the then Yugoslavia. Literary platforms were also a concept characteristic of the time, dominated not only by the form of events and early performance, but also by poetic (V. R. Tucić, Branko Andrić . . .) and syncretic multimedia, where the literary is only one of the segments (Katalin Ladik and the members of the OHO and KôD groups).

The Poetics of Disruption, the Poetics of the Edge

A group of authors born between 1946 and 1950, including Slobodan Tišma, Mirko Radojičić, Janez Kocijančić, Slavko Bogdanović, Miroslav Mandić, Ferenc Kis Jovak, and a somewhat older Branko Andrić (1942), belonged to the narrow circle of the *Tribina mladih* contributors at that time. They also made up the majority of the editorial board of the Novi Sad university publication *Index*, which was to become a vivid and active training ground during 1969 and 1970 for a highly modernist and neo-avant-garde scene, with a lively collaboration under way between writers and artists from the entire territory of Yugoslavia on its pages dedicated to culture. Here again, what was promoted was the work of the Slovenian reists, conceptual artists, but also writers and postvisual artists of the Zagreb circle, from Zvonko Maković to Braco Dimitrijević, while the aforementioned authors from Novi Sad published their first works in the spirit of the neo-avant-garde and the linguistic orientation of conceptualism. Texts by Slobodan Tišma, Slavko Bogdanović, and Miroslav Mandić can be taken as paradigmatic, while a number of authors gathered around their poetic and metapoetic coordinates. Artistic groups were established, including a kind of movement that was very soon to clash with the exponents of the cultural and political authorities and power. The most influential representative of this group, soon formalized as the KôD group, is certainly Slobodan Tišma, already accepted by the literary establishment as a sophisticated and well-educated young poet of a *sui generis* refinement—at the crossroads between French postsymbolism (P. Reverdy and P. J. Jouve) and the German thought at that time on poetry (H. Fridrich and G. Benn). Fortunately, with only three works published in *Index* in 1970, he managed to overthrow this reputation, establishing one of the most challenging poetic concepts which,

KoD group, Slobodan Tišma, 1970, photograph. Artist's collection.



with its public and "underground" impact, has lasted until today, having found its literary pattern and an expression accessible to fuller perception and reception only a quarter of a century later, in Tišma's first published books *Marinizmi* [Marinisms] (1995) and *Vrt kao to* [Garden as It] (1997). The three works dating from 1970 are "Od 1 do 10" [From 1 to 10], "Kvadrat—Dimenzija greške" [Square—Error Dimension], and "Kao neko" [Like Someone], and all three, in different ways, announce a certain disruption of the traditional aspects of literary creation and the accepted perception

of literature. The first of these, consisting of ten short poems/fragments, the last three containing only a numerical sign, correspond to the reist minimalist strategy (“7. Outside it is snowing on the snow bed/In the house there is hot air”) and neo-Wittgensteinian metalinguistic games (“Always it is all one/that which is all different/Two mice are different from a distance”). The second one confronts the (anti)symbolism of Malevich’s *Square* with the language of the graphic and visual sign, while the third, through 83 statements/texts of broken metagrammatical and metapoetic vistas, and a more linear additional “Note,” problematizes in a disillusioned way the (a)poetic use for poetry and art of the prominent word “as,” literary and other determinism and indeterminism, and modes of concretism and semantic and asemantic textual communication.

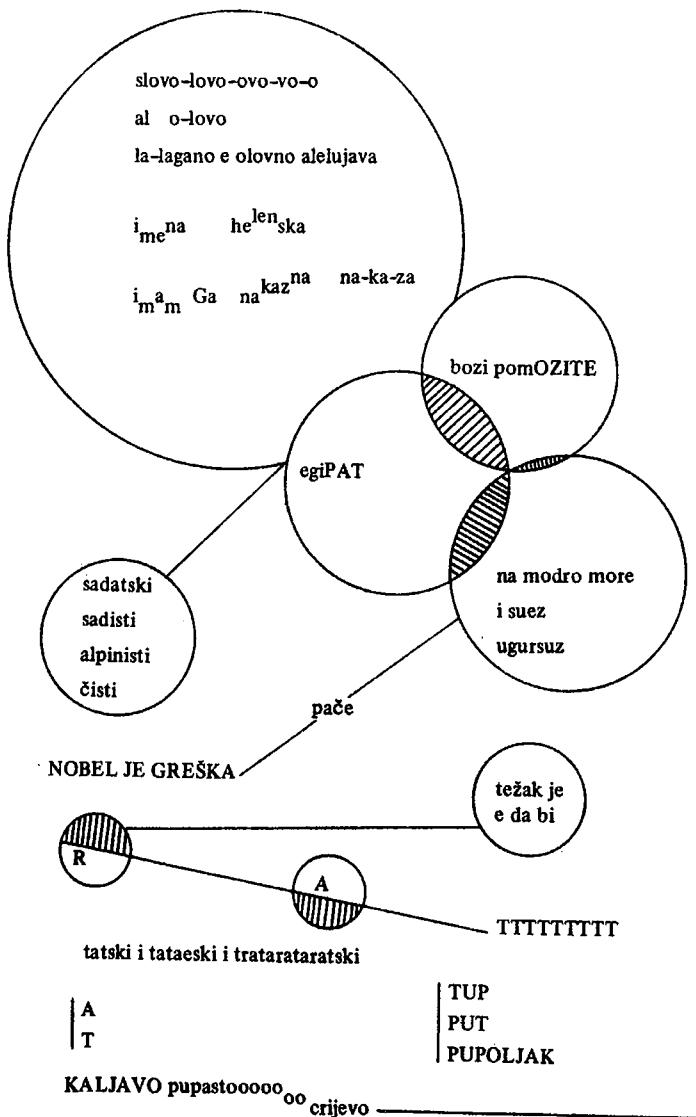
Slavko Bogdanović, whose interests were similar to those of Tišma, was under the theoretical and practical influence of the French situationists, the American counterculture (Yippies), and their paradoxically consonant (anti)artistic movements (Fluxus). What he considered to be his most significant activities were the “actions” or “projects” of hammering down exemplary works by the classic writers of fiction and political literature, both living and dead, and playing up with the ready-made manner of artistic action—whose literary sector also includes his voluminous scientific and poetic work “Porez na promet” [Tax on Transactions], published in *Index* in 1970, in the manner of the toughest concretist travesty with regard to the legally still current “prototext.” The same year also saw the publication of his work *200 Ideas*, a massive fragmented quasi-poetic form in the semantic dialogue of surrealist, Lautréamontian imagery, narcissistic nihilism, and bright catastrophism interspersed with metaliterary shocks (“I will make a closed, that is, an open book/naturally I mean the same book”), which was followed by numerous other works in the visual-textual mode. As a direct result of the “Underground Song of the *Tribina Mladih* in Novi Sad,” a blasphemous verse epistle to his politically endangered colleagues, published in Belgrade in 1971, he was soon sentenced to jail, returning to the literary public several years later in 1997 with a voluminous monograph: *Slavko Bogdanović: Politika tela* [Slavko Bogdanović: Politics of the Body], compiled by Miško Šuvaković, which actually contains all of his main works except the subsequently written stories published in the book *Dingo voli dingač* [Dingo Likes Dingač (wine)] in 1998.

Miroslav Mandić was also responsible for the publication of a few meta-textual poems from 1970 onward. He soon acquired the reputation of the *enfant terrible* of local neoartistic thought and practice, and also had a spell in

prison even more convincing than Bogdanović's, owing to his brilliant textual/ludistic, fragmented, and multidisciplinary political essay "A Poem about a Film," dedicated to the defense of the film *W.R.—Mysteries of the Organism* by Dušan Makavejev. It was not until 1984 that he was permitted to publish again, starting with a cycle of an ecstatic combination of post-avant-garde sign, self-description, and philosophic introspections in the poetic books-projects *Ja sam ti je on* [I Am You Is He] (1984), *Varšava* [Warsaw] (1986), and *Kaja* (1993). He also published a number of books of prose, as well as a journal in several volumes dedicated to his ten-year-long project "The Rose of Wandering"—walks/pilgrimages throughout Europe—promoted and applied as a syncretic art discipline from 1991 to 2001.

Tišma, Bogdanović, and Mandić soon became the nucleus of the Novi Sad multidisciplinary art groups KôD and (Ξ in which literature temporarily cedes its place to higher-profile engagement in the domain of conceptual art, with text/textualism and the linguistic level of expression still playing a central role.

Similar to this, albeit symptomatically extended and multidisciplinary, is the domain of the activities of Slovenian writers, reists, ludists, structuralists, and others, toward the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, who used the Ljubljana magazine *Problemi* as their focal means of expression. It is symptomatic that the dominant representatives of the Croatian literary neo-avant-garde in Zagreb were close to the new phenomena on the visual arts scene, although primarily as critics. This is particularly true of Zvonko Maković, a significant poet and critic who had at the time already published two noteworthy books in a somewhat more classical, phenomenological, Bachelardian style. From 1971 onward, Maković published strong examples of the poetic-textualist practice in the Zagreb periodical *Pitanja* [Questions]. Issue no. 25 of *Pitanja* (the periodical had the subheading "for science and textual research") is particularly illustrative of poetic and other forms of creation of this type (essay, fiction, criticism) in Croatia at the time. Published in June 1971, this particular issue carries a Lacanian essayist anatomy of Miroslav Krleža's work signed by Darko Kolibaš with visible Barthesian accents and a textualist ecstatic form, the fragmented collage/montage prose "Budjenje" [Awakening] by Marin Carić, as well as Zvonko Maković's cycle of textualist poems "Cjelovit vid" [Complete Vision], which perhaps best represents the poetic tendencies of his generation. We use the term "textualist" here because there is no other more illustrative term for what was in fact taking place in the literature of the time. From the end of the 1970s, when the post-avant-garde paradigm was already widely developed, Zagreb critics and poets



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Branko Čegec, "slovo-lovo-ovo . . .,"
1980, a page from the poet's book *Eros—Europa—Arafat*. Private collection.

Branko Čegec and Branko Maleš introduced the terms “linguistic poetry” and “semantic concretism”; this, in Novi Sad and Belgrade, was referred to as “language-breaking poetry” (Ivan Negrišorac’s term), “slant language poetry” (Gjoko Božović’s term), and even “conceptual poetry” (Miško Šuvaković’s term), and there are also other terminological inventions for which we do not have the space here.

Let us take a look, however, at some significant fragments from Maković's "Necjelovit vid" [Incomplete Vision]:

. . . I move my tongue and *utter* a word.

I have memorized a picture and I see it.

I have touched the edge of an object and I feel it.

You feel not like with the eye.

Not like with a word.

You feel with your hand.

I have a hand. I have a hand and I can wave to the picture that I see.

Or:

... I have touched the elements of the world and I myself am becoming an element of that world
objects can likewise touch me
and I will become who I am now.

Or

. . . Because: the word speaks me so that
I. Could later mark on paper something.
Of mine.

What do these fragments mean or show? Well, the same as the texts of their Slovenian, Serbian, and other Yugoslav colleagues, as well as of those abroad. However, they speak about it and show it differently, as the Other, just as they should in the time of Difference, at the exact moment when the Yugoslav literary neo-avant-garde had already encountered its post-avant-garde future that had already reached some of its protagonists at the time, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s.

By Text to Babylon

Let us sketch another Yugoslav writing circle, with the usual coordinates, and then expand it.

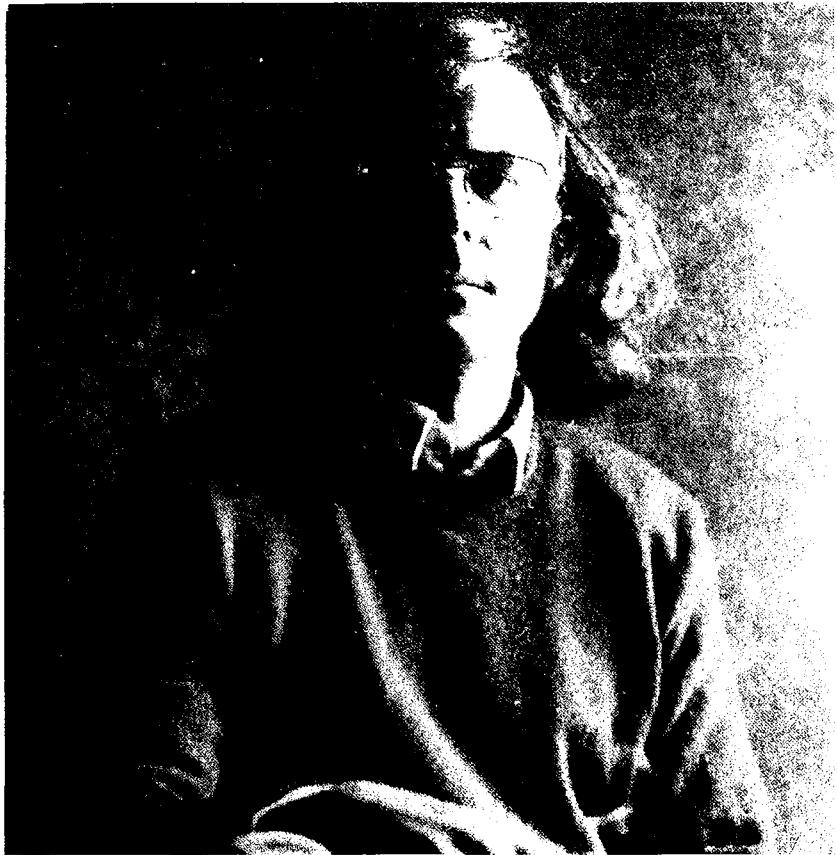
While the Novi Sad literary neo-avant-gardes and art paradigms at the turn of these decades either sit in jail or travel around world exhibitions as successful exponents of the international conceptualist (or rather the visual

art) scene, which was also an asylum of a kind, the innovative literary projects in Belgrade are inconspicuously on the wane or experiencing a temporary transposition into the nonliterary (such as Vladan Radovanović's work in electronic music). In Zagreb we have just been with Maković and Kolibaš, perhaps slighting the works of Zvonimir Mrkonjić or Borben Vladović. They are writers who are referential for the neo-avant-garde paradigm of that time. And we have not even paid a visit to the Croatian cities of Split and its poet Srećko Lorger (*Reparacije* [Reparations], 1968) or Rijeka and the equally significant poetic circle there of Ljubomir Stefanović, Milorad Stojević, and Ivan Rogić Nehajev. There were reasons to do so, but they did not win out.

If we return to Ljubljana, the situation is already different. As Aleš Berger writes in the appendix to the selected poems by Milan Jesih (*Pesme* [Poems]; Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1981):

Those were the years when many twenty-year-olds . . . entered the space of poetry, above all through the door opened for them by Tomaž Šalamun, prodded by his radicalisms, whether they referred to the role and position of poetry or, on the other hand, revealed a new understanding and usage of poetic language, even when, with their own forces, they diverged from their model and inspirer. It was also a time when, thanks to the unusually open publishing policy of *Obzorja*, the Maribor publishing house, in its edition "Znamenja," as well as beyond, the greater part of their production was published immediately, being tested, confronting everyone, without endangering the drawers of other, more traditional authors, or the literary editors' pigeonholes.

The twenty-year-olds Berger alludes to here are Milan Jesih, Ivo Svetina, Milan Dekleva, Andrej Brvar, Ifigenija Zagoričnik, and Boris A. Novak in the world of poetry. Prose is dominated by the new reist novels *Rabel stik* [Soft Touch] (1975) and *Ali naj te z listjem posujem* [Shall I Cover You with Leaves] (1971) of Rudi Šeligo, the ecstatic and in many ways already postmodern prose of Marko Švabič, as well as the prose of Dušan Jovanović, Drago Jančar, and Dimitrij Rupel—joined somewhat later (in influence, but older in age) by Vitomil Zupan, a model of political and literary rebellion. It is essential to emphasize that Šeligo, Jovanović, Jančar, and Svetina also represent, from that time on, the most vital stream of Slovenian—and in many respects also Yugoslav—dramatic literature until the late 1980s, although the matrix of their postmodern dramatic writing reaches back as far as the early 1960s (Dušan Jovanović, *Pupilija, papa Pupilo*



i Pupilčki, performed in 1969). The interest in the stage and staging, pervasive throughout this literary formation, may also be illustrated by the fact that a considerable part of the Slovenian literary avant-garde and later post-avant-garde/postmodern avant-garde centered around informal theater projects and groups such as Pupilja Ferkeverk (Tomaž Kralj, Jesih, Svetina . . .) and Pekarna, and it was precisely through such activities and their echo in the media that a great number of (provocative, politically often negative) reputations and professional ties were built throughout Yugoslavia.

As the new poetic and literary generation drifted away from Šalamun and his version of reism, so did Tomaž Šalamun himself. After the works *Romanje za Maruško* [Pilgrimage after Maruška] (1971) and *Bela Itaka* [White Ithaca] (1972), his poetry moves from the previous radically avant-garde paradigm “toward a position of a certain transexperimental and transtraditional experience” (Denis Poniž’s formulation), a position from which Šalamun wrote dozens of books of such literary intensity and accompanying poetic dis-

persion that they do not necessarily require any additional critical or poetic frills. Of course, through his poetic collections such as *Turbines* (University of Iowa; Windhover Press, Iowa, 1973) and others in English translation, this fact has long been available to American and other English-speaking readers, so let us just add a general assessment that the postmodern amalgam of Šalamun's writing, which he had already embarked upon at that time, moves first from an atypical minimalist divinization of hyperbolized subjectivity/objectivity of linguistic type, on to a *debouchement* of a newly established lyrical subject, and finally into a full cultural and textual hedonism.

The Alexandrian Library in the Balkans

We have long been willing to refer to this textual mood as postmodern, or at least something which is a vital, essential part of the aura of postmodernism. It has also long been clear that this aura revealed its early outlines more plainly in the sphere of theoretical, critical, and fictional writing than in other, less objectual and tangible forms that by their internal logic do not otherwise tend toward transparency. Thus the postmodern literary idiom in Yugoslavia establishes its first firm strongholds precisely in the idiom of prose, where, as gurus of the eastern Yugoslav textual landscape, we can mention Danilo Kiš, Borislav Pekić, Mirko Kovač, Milorad Pavić, and Filip David (the atypical, innovative representatives of the Belgrade literary milieu, whose work and impact reach back to the 1960s), whereas there is also something new in the west of Yugoslavia, but only from the 1970s, with the generation of the so-called young prose or the Borgesians whose key authors are Stjepan Čuić, Drago Kekanović, Goran Tribuson, Pavao Pavličić, Dubravka Ugrešić, Marin Carić, mentioned earlier, and others. Despite the generational and literary asymmetry of these two lines, there is an obvious influence from Jorge Luis Borges, a nonmimetic character, a tendency toward fantasy, a shift from the divinization of the author's personal experience toward the superordination of the erudite principle, intergenre and intertextual games, documentary and quasi-documentary style persiflage, political engagement and its parody, a symbiosis of high and low literary codes, as well as a tendency toward the paraliterary and metaliterary.

This kind of creative literary equilibrium at the *sfumato* border between high modernism and the early postmodernism of the second half of the 1970s is also joined by a new wave of younger Serbian prose writers whose guru and promoter could most justifiably be said to be David Albahari, a fine connoisseur, anthologist, and translator of American metaprose and admirer of

Vladimir Nabokov, Bruno Schultz, and Isaac Bashevis Singer, who soon made a significant shift from that of author of typical urban prose with a realist technique in his books *Porodično vreme* [Family Time] (1973) and *Sudija Dimitrijević* [Judge Dimitrijević] (1978) in the direction of exploring postmodern and minimalist narrative strategies in his works *Obične priče* [Ordinary Stories] (1978) and *Fras u šupi* [Shock in the Shed] (1984). In his texts, marked with an unconcealed fondness for rock music, a sympathy for earlier and current countercultural tendencies and motifs, and efforts toward the dissolution of the classical type of omniscient narrator hidden by an introspective autopoetic meta-subject, Albahari is occupied with the fragmentization of the world. His writing also centers on the analytic atomization of the elements of the sentence, language, and the plot itself. In his later novels (*Mamac* [Bait], *Snežni čovek* [Snow Man]), written in Canada at the end of the 1990s where he was living at the time, he reintroduced some of the temporarily rejected gifts of his early narrative cycle. Furthermore, it was Albahari who succeeded in promoting a whole series of authors of short, mainly postmodern prose and microprose, in the Belgrade periodical *Književna reč* (working with editor and critic Gojko Tešić). The years to come crystallized a circle of authors referred to as young Serbian prose, whose production largely shares the features of the writers of their generation in Croatia as well as their somewhat older colleagues. In addition to Albahari, the most prominent figures in that circle are Svetislav Basara, Mihajlo Pantić, Radoslav Petković, Dragan Velikić, Predrag Marković, Vladimir Pištalo, and Nemanja Mitrović. Together with Djordje Pisarev and Sava Damjanov from the Vojvodina and Miroslav Toholj from Bosnia and Herzegovina, these authors represent the most vital trend of Serbian postmodern literature, canonized by the influential *Antologija srpske proze postmodernog doba* [An Anthology of Serbian Prose of the Postmodern Period] (1992).

Thus outlined, the contours of postmodern prose writing in Yugoslavia before 1991 would certainly be more clearly shaped with the mention of a few more authors: in any case at least Dževad Karahasan from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Emil Filipčič from Slovenia, an influential series of Hungarian authors in the Vojvodina—from Otto Tolnai and László Végel to the (younger) Attila Balázs and a few other members of the second generation of *Symposion*—as well as fresh, new Croatian prose writers centered around the Zagreb periodicals *Quorum* and *Republika* in enviable numbers. In Macedonia the old bard Vlada Urošević writes interesting microprose, and an important new name in postmodern narrative is that of Aleksandar Prokopiev. A detached and solid position (between ovations and denial) was built by

Belgrade author Vladislav Bajac with a series of “geopoetic” novels and sto-rybooks, and since this list may justifiably take on a tendency for centrifuge, it is time to bring it to its inevitable conclusion.

The Smile of a Posthumanist Mask

Vojislav Despotov is an author who began as an angry or tough poetic neo-avant-garde writer toward the end of the 1960s, who could, from his third book of verse (*Perač sapuna* [Soap Washer], 1979), be considered a leading post-avant-garde poet, a lucid essay writer (*Vruć pas* [Hot Dog], 1985), a postmodern novelist with an expressed sense of the posthuman (*Mrtvo mišljenje* [Dead Thinking], 1989) and one of the key figures of the entire Yugoslav neo- and post-avant-garde, although there was almost unanimous consensus on this point only after his tragic and spectacular collapse during the Belgrade promotion of his novel *Drvodelja iz Nabisala* [Woodworker from Nabisal], shortly followed by his death on January 19, 2000.

In the period covered by our analysis, Despotov's influence includes a neo-avant-garde, largely also underground, phase at the turn of the 1970s, when, in addition to publishing works that are later included in his radical-ist linguistic-analytical-zaum verse books-projects *Prvo tj. pesmina slika reči* [First, i.e., the Poem's Image of Words] (1972), *Dnjižepta bibil zizra ubunt* (1976), and *Trening poeziјe* [Training Poetry] (1978), Despotov was also one of the key communicators of the entire neo-scene. This partly happened with his translations from the Slovenian and in other languages (English and German), the editing and publishing of the important *samizdat* magazines, his activities in the current art groups and communes (Neuroart), as well as his engagement in that sensitive creative character with an interdisciplinary mask that we refer to today as “culture critic.” Despotov approached this with mastery in several genres, ranging from essays (*Vruć pas*, 1985) to the fragmented and scientific post-novel (*Mrtvo mišljenje*) to later newspaper and other political comments with a cognate textual aura that are still to be collected and published, to his novelesque trilogy: *Jesen svakog drveta* [The Autumn of Every Tree] (1997), *Europa broj dva* [Europe no. 2] (1998), and *Drvodelja iz Nabisala* (1999), which still awaits a more extensive interpretation.

In addition to all this, Despotov is, if only posthumously, most remarkable today as a poetic magus who considered poetry to be something distinct, separate from the corpus of the rest of what we consider literature. His most important poetic texts derive from the time when “Despotov joined the post-modern ease, adding a postapocalyptic tone to the post-avant-garde discourse”

(Gjoko Božović's comment). Being already a champion of poetic irony and the author of "slant language" and posthumanist discourse, he delved into the texture of the technological usurpation of civilization through an objectual/textual shiver of being. The question is how such singular ideographic legacies were accommodated and managed to survive within the unique body of the text. The answer can be found, for example, in the first three stanzas of the relatively paradigmatic poem by Despotov entitled "Život" [Life]:

The whole of life is a frail can of reality
Prove poets hour after hour
Invented texts are a source of real liturgy
A good sentence moves the universe and a bike
A skillfully composed plot opens Odysseus' eyes

A language game is superior to flesh and blood
A film is also real
It can be felt in the cassette
And watched on Saturday

This is a low blow to philosophy
Life exists nowhere but in books
Or on VHS tapes . . .

Until the fairly recent (2001) canonization of Despotov by critics as a key author of Serbian post-avant-garde literature, Belgrade poets Raša Livada and Milutin Petrović enjoyed a similar position for numerous critics, not without grounds but not entirely grounded either, while the pinnacle of Serbian poetic modernity after Vasko Popa and Miodrag Pavlović was held by the neosymbolists Ivan V. Lalić, Borislav Radović, and Aleksandar Ristović—an author whose influence is on the rise. Livada became the child prodigy of Serbian mature modernism at the end of the 1960s with his book *Poprskan znojem skazaljki* [Sprayed by the Sweat of Clock Hands] (1969), reaching his peak in 1976 with the book *Karantin* [Quarantine] in which local historical coloring and toponymics go hand in hand with a mythopoetic imagery. The neo-Cavafian narrative establishes interesting links with paragnomic, ironic quasi-proverbiality and a sort of nonaggressive emphasis on the crisis of modernist sensibility in which it would be equally easy and (un)justified to search for the roots of postmodern sensitivity in verse. Petrović, however, started somewhat less strikingly in 1968 with the book *Tako ona boće* [That's the

Way She Wants It], while according to the authoritative interpreter of Serbian neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde literature, Ivan Negrišorac, he successfully “used certain model experiences of our avant-garde in an aesthetically interesting way” in his poems published in 1974 in the book *Promena* [Change]. It should, of course, be added that among those experiences are also what makes this work innovative—an atypical verism, fragmentation of the poetic phrase, sense, and rhythm, a logical and alogical atomization of the verse, handling the nonarbitrary vocabulary/symbolism on the microplane and an affinity toward strict parasymbolic games on the book/writing macroplane, as well as introducing the aleatory principle of text building—whereby Petrović built a recognizable poetic idiom, to some extent hermetic but evidently vital, influential, and well built upon until today.

In the scene of the 1970s and 1980s, open in the realm of poetry, there is, in addition to the aforementioned poets, a whole series of other authors working in the transitory idiom between the neo-avant-garde and the post-avant-garde, from the eclectic postmodern to the ecstatic forms and ideography of postmodern and post-postmodern writing. The best overview of this scene is given in the instructive critical-poetic compendium of younger Serbian poetry *Šum Vavilona* [Murmur of Babylon] published in 1988 by Mihajlo Pantić and Vasa Pavković, which proclaims Novica Tadić, Slobodan Zubanović, Duško Novaković, Vojislav Despotov, yours truly, the postcommentator initialed V. K., as well as Milovan Marčetić, Nebojša Vasović, and Ivan Negrišorac as the poetic postcoriphees of this microepoch, or microepisteme. Of course, we are not dealing with a movement or poetic unanimity here. On the contrary, the authors concerned are diverse in their formative writing strategies, thematic interests, and poetic origins. Their writing moves from that of Tadić, for instance, who uses a textually economic and linguistically tense proclamation of demonic and catastrophic verism marked by a strong poetic subject tending toward self-annihilation, and goes from there through diminutive excess and internal ethical and eschatological drama, to the ecstatic textual hedonism of Vasović. His work is marked, on the one hand, by a laconic input of traces of tradition and, on the other, by a tendency toward an erotic/ludic game of post-poetry writing that dispenses with anything offered by language boundaries in terms of style, verse energy, knowledge, and resistance to everyday meaning for the sake of a good turn of verse and tone parade.

A significant indication of the anthology *Šum Vavilona* is the fact that it also cites verses written by Radmila Lazić, Ljiljana Djurdjić, Ivana Milankov, Gordana Ćirjanić, and other women poets, albeit without any considerable

identification of those textual-ideological threads which link the poetry of the former two authors with the complex of works written by Nina Živančević, Dubravka Djurić, Jasna Manjulov, Jelena Marinkov, Marija Knežević, Ana Ristović, and Nataša Žižović . . . at that time or later. Naming the nature of these “complex” links would require more space than we have for the feminist politics of textualism, in its “soft” as well as in its “hardest” aspects.

In such a “minus-plus” game of naming authors across the largely diachronic horizon of *Šum Vavilona* and the time it represents, we should certainly also bear in mind the poets who remain absent from this anthology such as Vojislav Karanović and Saša Jelenković and a few other postmodern “melancholics,” as well as Nenad Milošević and Nenad Jovanović—poetically intentionally close to the idioms of the preceding neo- and post-avant-garde—and then the “urbopoeticians” Zoran Ćirić and Zvonko Karanović from the southern Serbian metropolis of Niš. They are authors whose work had already acquired noticeable significance before 1991, though not fully materializing until the mid- and late 1990s, when these names, with D. J. Danilov and Saša Radojčić, are the most frequently mentioned in terms of the freshness and value in contemporary Yugoslav poetry/criticism.

Off Writers in the Center, Order at the Top

While poetry and prose stand facing one another with equal reflections of quality and current interest in the Serbian literature of the decade before Yugoslavia fell apart, strides are made in poetic and textual freshness in the west of Yugoslavia, mainly in the sphere of poetic and dramatic writing.

The poetic, for example, predominates in Croatia, where in addition to Zvonko Maković (who was rising to his phantom of “creative maturity” at the time), there are other authors such as Branko Maleš, Milko Valent, and Branko Čegec, followed by Sead Begović, Goran Rem, Delimir Rešicki, Dražen Mazur, Tomislav Domović, and others. These poets can be divided into “gadgeteers” and “semantic concretists” who grew with the magazines *Off*, *Pitanja*, *Quorum*, and *Republika*, while the textual postulates of both groups, not so precisely differentiated, were best named in critical/poetic works by Maleš and Čegec—perhaps the most authentic Croatian poets of the moment.

“The word is zero of multisexual readings/the word is *signum temporis*/an onomatopoeic shower/above all an asylum to paraguay,” wrote Branko Čegec in his book *Eros—Europa—Arafat* (1980), showing at the same time what “semantic concretism” or “the poetics of invention” could be.

Branko Maleš, on the other hand, seconds this, as it were, with a fragment of “literary production” from his second book *Praksa laži* [The Practice of Lying] (1986) where, on page 15, he “claims,” in picturesque language: “in caviar, pudding, bechamel/live languages!/in the navel, squashed little ear,/my kiss!/thus starts jealousy, politics,/essay!/the mouse dipped its tail into liqueur! I licked/it all over,/let the tongue slave away!/I have been cured! we are going to/the world championship!/we will come in first!/because we are serious!”

According to the poet and critic Branko Bošnjak, “Maleš makes linear reading impossible, introducing commas, exclamation marks, brackets, and intertexts into the textual game in an effort to achieve a multidimensional cacophony of language, a multilayered text-poem, and its irreducible multidimensional interpretation.” The same could be said of almost all the Croatian “textualists” of the 1980s, although each of them introduces some of the side strategies of thinking in language: M. Valent introduces textual eroticism and excess, G. Rem and D. Rešicki pop iconography and the mythemes of rock, Domović surprising mixtures of lyrical tone and a subjectivity effect in the middle of the “dry” concretist idiom.

Poetry similar to the texts written by Croatian semantic concretists is also present in Slovenia at the time, such as the work toward the end of the 1980s by, for example, Novica Novaković, a poet somewhat more akin to the strict, or at least unified, form of text than his Zagreb or Osijek colleagues; but this was no longer a salient trend in Slovenian poetry. In a conversation I had a long time ago with the unwilling patriarch of Slovenian neo- and post-avant-garde poetry, Tomaž Šalamun, I asked him who of the younger poets he considered to be his natural successor and the answer was: “Iztok Osojnik—with all his exuberance and energy,” but it seems that even the bard didn’t quite get it right. The primacy in the Slovenian poetry of the 1980s was soon taken over by the melancholic, formally “arranged” postmodern paradigm with Aleš Debeljak as its leading exponent, although the old proven masters of “formal” poetry were also there—from Boris A. Novak (already a veteran) to Matjaž Kocbek. And there are also the highly rated poetic voices of the masters of metaphoric poetic narrative such as Alojz Ihn, the neosocial impulse of Goran Gluvić or Brane Bitenc, the soft homoerotic verse aura of Brane Mozetič, and the corporeality of the “feminine writing” of Maja Vidmar. Emil Filipčič and Ivo Svetina attain their new creative ascent in the realm of dramatic expression. Filipčič’s play *Atlantida* [Atlantis], for example, and Svetina’s *Šeherezada* [Scheherezade] could be said to be the crown of syncretist postmodern imagination at the level of text, while their

inclination to move in the theatrical directions of Vito Taufer or Tomaž Pandur touches the most resonant signs and symptoms of the Slovenian post-modern, and of the entire art decade. This was the decade that brought an end to the shared life of Yugoslav literature. From 1991 onward the literatures were increasingly distinct and separate for so many reasons, among which was the political demise of this once unified country. The subsequent war horrors are only the most brutal and obvious.

Good old Wassily Kandinsky, struggling with contrary tendencies in his movement toward accuracy and brevity within his own analysis of the figure of the artist, draws a clear distinction between *creative* and *virtuoso* artists in his article entitled "On the Artist," February 1916. Just as he would prefer, according to the nature of things and the logic of his day (the *creative*), we are obliged by the language of the moment as well as by the new reality of art with its *post-* or *post-post-* prefixes to be almost neutral regarding this dichotomy. The *virtuoso* has, in the meantime, with the postmodern, gone up in price. Bearing these parameters in mind, however, concerning the subject, the concrete art formations, and individual art practices we are dealing with in this paracatalog, and in terms of the critical and comprehensive, yet minimalist, design, the following should be added:

Compelled both to condense and select, we have nevertheless given priority (to a degree) to those larger phenomena and individual opuses where the neo- element serves as more than just a prefix. In these cases it is a pivotal contribution to the new paradigm with an obvious excess, a productive excess, whatever that may mean in each case. Distinctions of this kind, where the choice of the author and the *created* are concerned, are much easier when dealing with the neo-avant-garde corpus of Yugoslav literature before the late 1970s, than with the post-avant-garde and the postmodern. At that point the power of the transparently arbitrary loses significance, while dispersion (and entropy?) gain ascendancy.

It would be impossible to provide a critical analysis of everything of importance. We have, therefore, chosen to speak of the representatives of the key, formative impulses, and in particular of some who have fallen victim to bad political/critical qualifications and judgments, as well as of those whose attitudes and influence continued to be synchronous, and active, on a complex multilingual and multiethnic scene that was, fortunately, ruled for some time by genuine bonds and deep-reaching albeit circuitous strategies, in keeping with the spirit of the times and the sense of breakthrough.

Thus our search scheme, perhaps blatantly reversible and reduced to what might seem at first glance to be a mere geographical axis of Ljubljana-

Belgrade-Nov Sad-Zagreb-Ljubljana, might appear unfair to writers from other regions and republics in the former Yugoslav, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Nevertheless, the elusive spiral (rather than vertical) of neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde writing in the former Yugoslavia, from the 1960s to the years of collapse, moved precisely along that axis. Occasionally it had impact elsewhere, but mostly it moved there across the plane of epiphenomena, whether these were the question of the triumph of the intentional over the texture of value, conscious or unconscious poetic mimicry without a genuine orientation to the essential, or something else.

translated by Branka Nikolić

Part II: Visual Art and Architecture

5

Visual Arts in the Avant-gardes between the Two Wars

Sonja Briski Uzelac

Global Remarks

The conceptual and terminological frameworks describing the paradigm of the avant-garde in the cultural and artistic practices of the twentieth century have long been commonly accepted. In a broader sense, the historical avant-garde means a programmatic and poetic, aesthetic and artistic, political and existential critique, and a negation of the autonomy of institutions of culture and the arts in bourgeois society,¹ from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of World War II. The umbrella term *avant-garde* refers to phenomena and movements that demonstrate a radically modernist sort of extravagant activity within collective or individual artistic practices. This activity is based, conceptually, on abrupt cultural discontinuity. The avant-garde was an epochal project and a choice of optimal projections of the universal language of art, involving experiments with various procedures of intertextuality and intermediality.

The Yugoslav avant-garde has more in common with the “small,” or nonparadigmatic, avant-gardes of the Central European circle (such as Czech or Hungarian) than it does with the “great” paradigmatic models of the historical avant-garde (such as Russian or German). Considering the cultural heterogeneity of the new Yugoslav state after World War I, however, one cannot use the collective term “Yugoslav avant-garde” without reservations unless using the plural: avant-gardes. It is even tricky to speak of a Slovenian, or Croatian, or Serbian avant-garde. They are all linked, nevertheless, by common avant-garde features based on an extreme contextual problematization of dominant norms, meanings, and values, as well as research into new formal media signification and other dimensions of work in art and culture. The evolution

of their initial creative and activist procedures demonstrates their mutual kinship. This is particularly evident in the emergence of the avant-garde paradigm in the visual arts. It spans the innovation in the visual arts production of the early modernists shortly before World War I, moves on to the strategy of “expanded communications channels” employed by avant-garde groups led by strong personalities (dadaism/Dragan Aleksić, zenithism/Ljubomir Micić, constructivism/Avgust Černigoj, surrealism/Marko Ristić) during the interwar period, and reaches the crisis of avant-garde acts, caught between left-wing revolutionary projections and right-wing ideological codes on the eve of World War II. Parallel to a problematization of the paradigmatic boundaries of the Yugoslav avant-gardes, let me also remark on a particularly aggravating circumstance: these movements and phenomena are not characterized by straightforward linear development but by a multitude of synchronic and diachronic overlaps and interruptions, and are also shaped locally by the multiple parallel centers of avant-garde events (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade).

Bearing these points in mind, the subject of discussion before us includes the basic trends and forms, but also the key figures and the bonds, relations, and influences that determined the general and specific features of the visual arts articulation of the avant-garde phenomenon as it was localized within Yugoslavia.

Between Self-Awareness and Rootedness

In the geopolitically and culturally heterogeneous pre-1918 years, prior to the formation of a common state of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) with its variety of ethnic and cultural communities and cities, there is obviously no single dynamic of growth in the phenomena of modernity. Each environment had its own tempo and peculiarities, as well as its specific perspective on the meaning of existence, both individual and collective. The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in Europe were marked by conflicts between authority and reason, traditionalism and enlightenment, progression and regression, restoration and revolution. Regarding the peoples of Yugoslavia, one can observe the salient presence of a “liberation” syndrome that was made all the more complex owing to the historical and political circumstances of the time. This grew out of ideas both of individual freedom and of national sovereignty. While ideas about changing man, the world, culture, and art paved the way, on the one hand, for the appearance of a “spiritual autonomy” for modern art, they were also linked inextricably with the complex notion of

"progress," a move toward collective, "national" freedom through individual freedom, and vice versa. Modernism in this part of the world evolved within the nightmare and contradictions of accelerated urbanization, and the fragile communities of the enlightened bourgeoisie. In fact it was a combination of intellectual elites with their newly acquired needs and criteria faced with the overwhelming spirit of the "folk" population, all this coupled with demands for reconciling the national spirit to the challenging rebellions of the new age and projects of universal emancipation.

Such circumstances make it difficult to reconstruct a pure thread of the internal phenomena and stratification from the first realizations of modern art to the appearance of the historical avant-gardes. Nonetheless, modernity in Croatian painting² emerges as paradigmatic in addressing the topic. Although without a proper statehood of its own, Croatia was the first of all the future Yugoslav states at the turn of the twentieth century to constitute the status of art in social terms, in the modern sense.

Josip Juraj Strossmayer's first acts of patronage in Croatia, such as opening art galleries or providing subsidies for artists, were the first moves in this direction. His goal was a gradual, planned, and effective development of art as the hub of cultural policy, mainly at the center of national culture, Zagreb, "under the direct guidance of Isidor Kršnjavi, a representative of the bourgeois social community and an authoritative figure for developing academic aesthetic criteria."³ Kršnjavi provided subsidies for young artists, but also urged them to work with certain European professors. He commissioned artwork, but also advised on topics and supervised their realization. The question, however, as to *what kind* of art was to be promoted had not yet been consciously posed. In the ideological background behind the socially encouraged role for art, from oleographs illustrating historical propaganda to academic realistic solidity, academism was always a part of the social contract. By fulfilling this model form of legalism—a serious Academy, awards—the artist was socially privileged, and therefore became culturally functional and existentially viable (meeting the bourgeois criterion of legitimacy).

It was not until 1894 that the argument of modern realism was put forth. There was mention of "real life" in painting, "full of natural color and light" (Ksaver Šandor Gjalski). This "pleinairism," retaining the principles of value and mixed with elements of symbolism, dominated in the circle of artists gathered around Vlaho Bukovac, Celestin Medović, and Marko Murat. During the same year the events on the nascent art scene multiplied (a growing number of individual and group exhibits, new exhibition spaces, both private and state-owned).

In the midst of a flurry of work and organization (exhibits in Budapest, Copenhagen, and elsewhere), a group of artists centered around Bukovac seceded from the “Art Society” under Kršnjavi’s patronage and established the Society of Croatian Artists (1897). This act of secession marks the first genuine act of social awareness among artists, “a liberation from strict tutelage,” as Kršnjavi himself immediately termed it.

The following period, interrupted by the Great War in 1914, is exceptionally dynamic and, naturally, rife with contradictions. Out of the artists’ newly acquired consciousness, followed by a status crisis (such as a crisis of commissions), dramatic changes began to unfold: programmatic declarations and exhibits, the Croatian Salon. These included the first breakthrough of modernity—the Secession, by the Medulić group. Despite their artistically modest results, the Secession as a critical expression of awareness contributed to the overturn of the “legalist formula”: “the model is the other, opposite and opposed” that is “placed in the concrete cultural and historical context of Western European developments.”⁴

The Secession was a progress-oriented articulation, because, like all the modern movements, secessionist artists worked with the projective ideology of a “new art.” Almost two generations of artists, following the early Secession impulses in conceptualizing the visual arts, found themselves in a vortex created by the beginnings of modern art, in which they sought toeholds in ideas, sensations, style, aesthetics, images, and graphics for art synthesis, above all in a blend of idealism and realism (Vlaho Bukovac, Bela Čikoš, Menci Klement Crnčić, Ferdo Kovačević, Emanuel Vidović, Mirko Rački, Tomislav Krizman, and Ivan Meštrović).

Despite the first formal “rudiments of modernity in Croatian visual arts” (Emanuel Vidović’s symbolism), however, the first painters who strictly painted “for themselves alone” belong to a group of young artists trained in Munich between 1905 and 1910, individualists linked by common references, above all by the first rupture with the Central European (“Viennese provincial”) tradition and a turn toward the legacies of modern French painting which they discovered in Paris.

The group, known as the Munich circle of painters, Miroslav Kraljević, Josip Račić, Vladimir Becić, and Oskar Herman, is structurally a totally new phenomenon. They provoked upheaval in a closed environment by embracing the new ideals of “pure painting.” Although there are remnants of tradition in the aesthetics, poetics, and visual syntax of their paintings, they nevertheless clearly demonstrate the problematics of the construction of the painting subject, through a quick intellectual and formal elaboration of painting

methods. The dominant formal articulation contains the consciousness of a plastic building of forms through the principle of modulation. It leads toward a process of the rationalization of "objectness" which conceals within itself the geometrization and constructive ideal of succinct form, to become the stronghold and cornerstone of the local modern tradition for the coming generations through the Spring Salon. This did not, however, help contemporaries recognize a sense of the foundation of modernity immediately; so according to the memory of the exhibitor himself (Herman), one exhibit held in 1908 received no more than 14 visitors throughout the entire 14 days it was up! The poignancy of a single fate (the untimely death of the painter Račić, who committed suicide in a Paris hotel in 1908) was soon clothed in the mythic aura of national destiny in the division and collision of the old worlds of rooted values and new times of individual liberties and dramatic changes.

The road from Munich to Paris, never the other way round, was also traveled by artists from other parts of the country. Local artists also completed their professional training in other European cities (Vienna, Prague, Krakow, Rome, Florence, Trieste). But the main goal was always Paris. The Parisian spirit of modernity hovered over the first Yugoslav group exhibitions (from 1904 to 1912). At the first Yugoslav exhibit in 1904, while Cézanne was finally triumphing at the Autumn Salon in Paris, the leading painter in Zagreb was Vlaho Bukovac, and Paja Jovanović ruled Belgrade with his luminous compositions of historical content filled with the pathos of national romanticism. Until the fourth and last Yugoslav exhibit, held in Belgrade in 1912, and despite its encounter with the foment of European art, academism barely retreated, or at least it survived simultaneously, in an amalgam of the old and new. In the words of a contemporary, "art appears at this show with the head of Janus: it looks forward with one face, far ahead, while the other constantly directs its gaze to the past."⁵

In the space between two models one can see several sources of modernity. Parallel to the efforts of the painters of the Munich circle, impressionism and expressionism emerged as a hedonistic or dramatic attempt to freeze time in eternity, mainly in the coloristic euphoria of Slovenian painters Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Grohar, and Matija Jama and Serbian painters Nadežda Petrović, Milan Milovanović, Kosta Milićević, and Borivoje Stevanović. It was in Munich, however, that they had all met, at Azbe's school where they also encountered prominent pioneers of modern art (Wassily Kandinsky, Alexei von Jawlensky, and Paul Klee), and they were all moved by the Parisian exhibits, by the daily light and sensation of colors (German museums were the first in the world to exhibit the French impressionists).

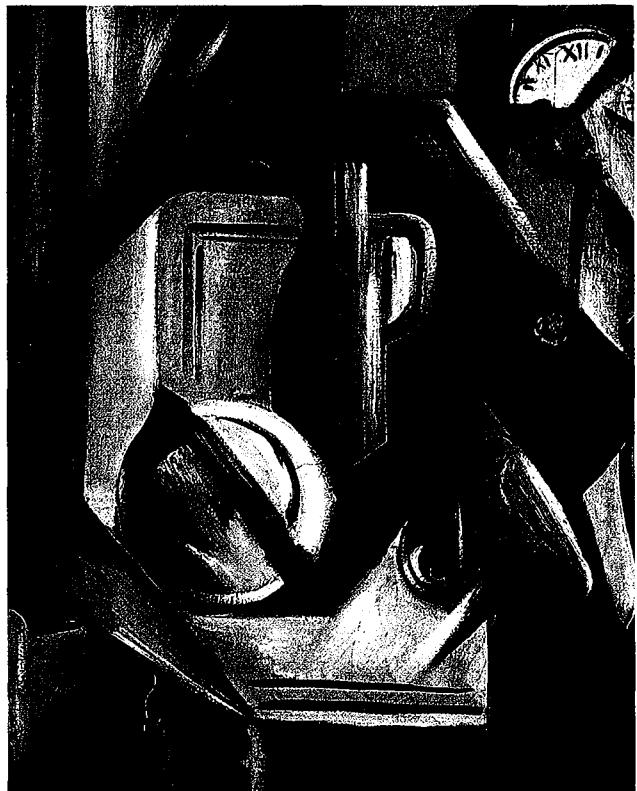


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Jovan Bijelić, *Apstraktni predeo* [Abstract Landscape], 1920, oil on canvas, 78 x 115.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.

51

Sava Šumanović, *Mrtva priroda sa satom* [Still Life with a Clock], 1921, oil on canvas, 91 x 74 cm. Moderna galerija JAZU, Zagreb.





52

Ivan Radović, *Collage*, 1924, watercolor and collage,
25.5 x 33 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.

The Paris experience renewed the ways of seeing, and the new way of seeing changed the world of painting at every level, although thematically it often adhered to the old (“folk”) register. The preoccupation with “impressionist reality” assumed expressionist traits in an inner exaltation before the world, in the power of its evocation. The painting gesture also became dramatic, passionate, a subjective wrestling with canvas and material expressing itself rather than nature, the truth rather than the ideal.

Through the strength of its plastic transposition, a blend of internal anxiety and expression of autonomous color, the work of Nadežda Petrović, rejected initially only to be later accepted, was a measure of the maturity of the Serbian environment, just as the work of the Croatian painter Miroslav Kraljević, despite his untimely death (1913), was a yardstick for that environment in terms of the strength of its visual conceptualization and contemplation of a series of poetic moments of modernism. In fact, even before the new tide of broadly understood expressionism based on Cézannean expression of form merged with various forms of symbolism, artists were already on their way to externalizing internal anxieties, visions, and states. The individualization of sensuous and acute anxiety was introduced into these environments just as they were frenetically searching for an identity of their own, the metropolitan phantoms of cosmopolitanism and universality, dynamism, ambiguity, and the deracination of the artist and intellectual.

Industrial civilization, which had such an impact on artists’ imaginations in the first decades of the twentieth century, brought with it contradictory processes and moods, a multitude of actions and reactions. Artists brought home experiences from the larger world and mixed them with tradition, resulting in a ferment of possibilities and a complex radial development. From the Cézannist nucleus, seen as the basis for common experience and as an element of continuity between the two periods separated by World War I, there were moves in several directions, reverses and fresh starts. “Some went from Cézannism to cubism, others from Cézannism to constructive expressionism. Then, at those opposing points, there was a tendency again to unite. The move to constructive neoclassicism, generally traditionalism, started here, where one recognizes the starting points—Cézannism and cubism on the one hand and expressionism on the other.” In the living practice of art this was all far more complex, although there is general agreement that the third decade of the century was spent “in search of shape and structure, just as the first and the second were given over to a search for light and color.”⁶ This road was trodden in different ways by a great many artists from the region, artists such as Sava Šumanović, Petar Dobrović, and Jovan Bijelić.

There were modernist currents in the mainstream of Yugoslav visual art, "facing Europe" (as also used to be said of the literature of the "Slavic south"), but with an inclination to introduce a cosmopolitan sense, values, and meanings to the identity and language of one's own community. With the abandonment, however, of the social-analytical, cognitive role of art and the acceptance of its aesthetic function, the poetic contexts and communications channels remained within the boundaries of the institution of art. It is only when those contexts and channels are attacked, when the focus of intervention begins to shift from the signified to the signifier, that we are able to speak of avant-garde phenomena. They emerge on the margins of the world of culture and art in their communities, they move independently, nomad-like, in the field of "accomplished artistic liberties," recognizing and adopting the European avant-garde spirit in the period following World War I.

Dada or How to Learn to "Speak European"

The consequences of the world war in Europe were far-reaching: three empires, the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian, were overthrown, and a great revolution fought (October). The foundations of the old world were so shaken that a new age seemed to be rising from the rubble, as if the twentieth century were only just beginning. Both of these traumatic historic events had decisive political ramifications for the South Slavic peoples: the subsequent unification into the Yugoslav state and a profound fascination with the October Revolution in the intellectually strong left. This all happened under circumstances that had scarcely been brushed by the fame and fate of the modern industrial revolution and the accompanying processes of modernization.

The Yugoslav avant-gardes originated as leftist avant-gardes in relation to bourgeois ideology, their objectives transcending national boundaries. They ranged from the expressionist and revolutionary rhetoric of manifestos and programs as articulation of a spiritual climate forged in the "trauma and drama" of total war, to a fascination with the Revolution and its new age utopia. These were, of course, different combinations of left-wing political and aesthetic views, the emphasis being on one or another intellectual conviction. Some held to the critiquing and manifesto-writing left of modernist intellectuals, while others were more or less formally linked to revolutionary Marxism and the Communist Party, and yet others chose a more subversive, anarchic, and nomadic set of strategies among the avant-garde groups and individuals. The leftist orientation or more patently ideological sense, meaning, and values, however, were used by the avant-garde mainly as the material, or signifying

order, of its formal methods and techniques, from general intertextual and interpictorial to particular collage-montage, by means of which it usurped various traditionally or institutionally established boundaries between art and life, high modernist art and its lower forms.

The postwar appearance of dadaism in Yugoslavia, at this significant historical and cultural juncture between the old and the new, was a striking expression of the desire for a place in the coordinate system of European spiritual life. The dadaist “episode” in European avant-garde art, born out of a midwar (1916) crisis of civilization, spirit, and ethics, was critically subversive of the values, meanings, and models of expression used by modern bourgeois society and its culture. Dadaism was a proactive form of nihilism and anarchism, a demystification by means of mystification, from provocation and scandal to a parody of some already-mastered modern methods and approaches such as collage, chance, paradoxical/futurist dynamism. The cultural image of dadaism, with its tone of total negation and freedom, is unambiguously international and universal. A world without boundaries. Art as antiart. The *topos* of individual freedom as a toehold for provocation combined with the development of communications channels drew a Yugoslav group of dadaists to the charismatic personality of Dragan Aleksić, who was first active in Zagreb, then in Vinkovci, Osijek, Novi Sad, Subotica, and Belgrade, using the explicit slogan *Dada-Yugo*.⁷ The short but vertiginous history of this first avant-garde movement within Yugoslav culture began in Prague, among students of Slavic studies there in October 1920, only to end in a nosedive following a turbulent development. In late autumn of 1922, there was an overall deterioration of dadaist activities, in Subotica, as also throughout the network of European dadaist centers.

Regrettably very little material remains intact from the three-year dadaist storm. After the death of Dragan Aleksić the complete archive, cloaked in neglect and oblivion, ended up in a Belgrade dump (in 1958!). Immediately thereafter, however, the personal testimony in a book by Hans Richter, one of the founders and chroniclers of the Dada movement, revived the avant-garde activity that had been so long abandoned on the margins of its own world: “There was intense activity in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, where the magazine *Tank*, published in 1922, had a powerful impact despite the brevity of its life. This magazine, more rebellious and more ‘anti’ than *Ma*, carried the unmistakable stamp of Dada. As far as I have been able to tell, its manifestos and poems were, indeed, Dada-style provocations.”⁸ This does not mean that outside the context of the European avant-garde there was no rel-

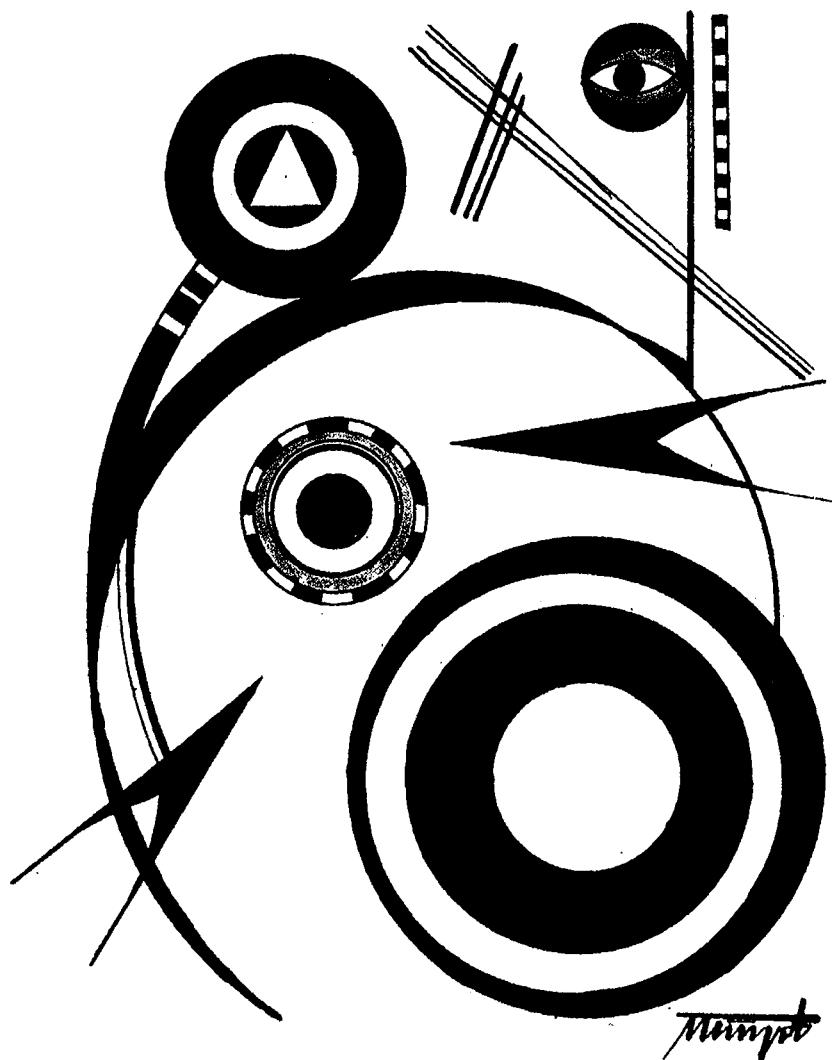
event reception in the local cultural environment. Contemporaries were aware, though not favorably inclined. Hence, among other reasons, the lament of the avant-gardes and their companions, such as the Belgrade poet Rastko Petrović from the 1920s, who said that until we have overcome our desire for Europe and have learned to speak European we will never succeed in discovering what is valuable inside ourselves, let alone expressing it in such a way that it may be of value to the rest of the world. Hence, also, the fanatic dedication to the search for a new art, recognizable, after all, as an integral part of the overarching Dada movement.

Let us return for a moment to Richter's statement, which also points to the central feature of dadaist practice, something the histories of the Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian avant-gardes have in common. It refers to the phenomenon of the magazine, or rather to its newly assumed function: the magazine as an avant-garde art product, an integral "avant-garde work."⁹ It was not only a literary communicator in the more traditional sense. It did more than transmit new and experimental literary works. The magazine in Dada assumed the function of an elementary medium, a fundamental space and material avant-garde invasion of the institution of art. More than just a visual experiment participating in the realization of the magazine, it was an entirely new, integral form of articulation, an "avant-garde intertextual and interpictorial model of expression."

There were experimental textual and pictorial works that determined the basic flow of the history of these Yugoslav avant-gardes from 1921 to 1932: *Svetokret*, *Dada Tank*, *Dada Jazz*, *Zenit*, *Dada-Jok*, *Út*, *Putevi*, *Svedočanstva*, *50 u Evropi*, *Rdeči pilot*, *Novi oder*, *Tank*, and the almanacs *Nemoguće* and *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*. By opting for an intermedia model of expression as the communications channel "of the time," the avant-garde magazine also became an exponent of projections of "utopian inclinations" such as Jo Klek's Zeniteum. As a total project, it is a blend of revolutionary visions of a new world and innovations of technique and form (projections of the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art). The avant-garde strategy of initiating situations and creating a new possible world of art and culture therefore manifested itself in aspects of intercontextual confrontation of the particular within the general.

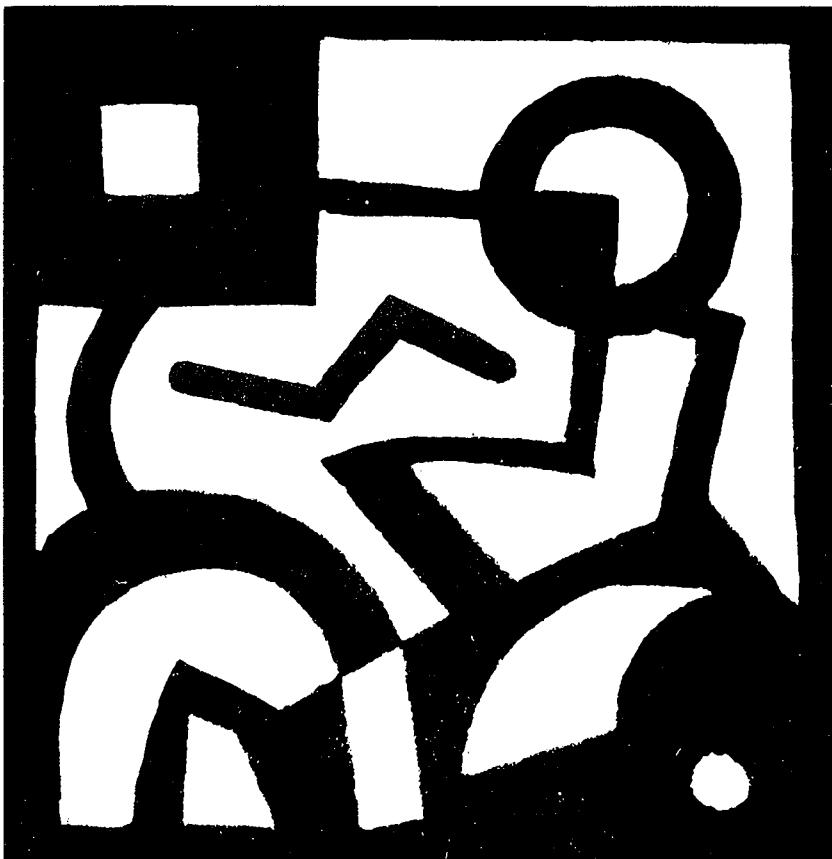
The aims of this strategy also determined the activities of the Dada-Yugo movement. The initial steps were the first salon conference on "orgart" (organic art) held in an "atmosphere of liberated spirit and mind" in Prague, traversed by many dadaists such as Hausmann, Huelsenbeck, Schwitters. Even the futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti appeared once.

Mihailo S. Petrov, *Kompozicija*
[Composition], 1922, India ink and
watercolor, 29 x 22.3 cm. Narodni
muzej, Belgrade.



The Dada-Yugo movement established strong contacts with European dadaists, first with the Czech pro-dadaist group Devětsil and its founder Karel Teige, followed by leading avant-garde artists all over Europe: Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann, Max Ernst, Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, and Lajos Kassák. Finally they joined the dadaist movement, forming a circle of supporters in the Yugoslav community, and participated in dadaist activism until its demise.

The initiator of this strain of activism, Dragan Aleksić, consistently followed his vision of spreading dadaist ideas in the creation of a new atmosphere around art using several avenues, both poetic and propagandistic, with public appearances, lectures, matinees, clubs, advertisements, declarations, leaflets, poems, essays. The axis of his activity, however, remained the magazine. That is also how he presented himself. On a poster of a dadaist matinee (from Osijek) announcing his lecture "On the Dada Movement" he described himself as "editor-in-chief of the *Dada Tank* journal from Zagreb." And as a



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Mihailo S. Petrov, *Kompozicija* [Composition]. Published in *Dada Tank* (1922); private collection.

warning to the citizens, there was a sign at the very bottom of the poster, printed in capital letters, that read: "He who knows nothing about the new does not belong to the twentieth century"!

Before the appearance of the first Dada magazine, however, Aleksić, who already had considerable Dada practice behind him, contributed to Ljubomir Micić's avant-garde magazine *Zenit*. Despite the zenitist avant-garde's antagonism, their collaboration was to continue for as many as 13 issues. It spread Dada fame. At some point Aleksić was joined by Micić's younger brother Branko Ve Poljanski in Prague, where Aleksić read dadaist

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Mihailo S. Petrov, *Kompozicija 77* [Composition 77], 1924, watercolor, 31 x 23.8 cm. Sekretarijat za kulturu SRS, Belgrade.



programmatic words from a twenty-five-meter-long scroll before an excited audience (rebelliousness, Pan-Europe, instinct, limits of consciousness, sleep, destruction . . . in a word “*as-you-like-it-ness*”). During 1921 and 1922 he published critical essays on art in the dadaist mode (“Kurt Schwitters Dada,”¹⁰ “TATLIN HP/s + man,”¹¹ “Archipenko”¹²). He was also preoccupied with dadaist news from New York (jazz, “shimmy,” cabaret, bruitism).

The newly created nucleus of the Dada movement was soon joined by Mihailo S. Petrov, a young Belgrade painter and Russian immigrant by origin. Petrov took part in Dada matinees, and his abstract linocuts, published in *Zenit* as well as in *Dada Tank*, introduced avant-garde radicalism to both magazines.

After a final rupture with Micić, who found it hard to bear Aleksić’s breakthrough to the front lines of the local avant-garde scene, the Dada-Yugo leader continued his internationalization by establishing links with Euro-Dada centers. He addressed Tristan Tzara directly, announcing the first issue of *Dada Tank* and extending an invitation to the European Dada magus for collaboration, at the same time promising the Dada arrival “from the Balkans to Paris” on the direct Simplon Express train line. A Dada center was begun in Zagreb, the Dada Club in Petrinjska Street, and *Dada Tank* finally appeared in May 1922, though with only one issue. *Dada Jazz* appeared hot on its heels in June, also with only one issue.

The zenitist reaction followed in less than no time: Poljanski published *Dada-Jok*, “a vengeful pamphlet” whose anti-dadaist message was contained in the paradox of negation. “Jok” is a word of Turkish origin meaning “no” while the double affirmation “da, da” means “yes, yes” in Serbo-Croatian (hence, *Dada-Jok*: yes/yes/no).

Once the Dada movement had settled in Zagreb, Aleksić set up closer links with Dada activities in the Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Subotica), whose Dada review *Út* [Road] was close to the social revolutionary tone of the Hungarian activists there (emigrants after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet republic) and Kassák’s review *Má* (published in Vienna from 1920). There followed a series of Dada media happenings, drama collages, and other forms of Dada paratheater and the poetics of parody, paradox, shock, and provocation . . . under the slogan “maximum events in minimum time.”

The basic avant-garde function of the anarchic disruption of “bourgeois” life was conceptualized in the usurpation of established media boundaries. Reaching the very pinnacle of the European practice of rebellion, *Dada Tank* specifies the avant-garde overlap of literary and visual arts production at the intersection of the discourse, in its manifesto (prose, poetry, neither-

poetry-nor-prose), and the nondiscourse, in its visual system and typographic structure. By means of a fundamental media twist, by breaking the existing convention about how a magazine should look, the Dada “arbitrary collage” foregrounds the signifying aspect of the sign. Hence the basic methods of destruction/deconstruction of total discourse in painting are collage and montage. Through the use of collage, elements or fragments of a whole are singled out and put, or “glued,” in place of a potential, other whole, while montage effects the matching, the inorganic linking, of elements or fragments of varied origin into a new whole. These methods imply the procedure of citation, the use of linguistic material, other works. They negate the work of art as an “original gift of the unique.” The deconstruction, in Dada, of old structures in search of the new disturbs media boundaries. A typical example of this is the structural organization of the magazine page, in which the visual effect already gives one an impression of what it concerns. In that sense the new typography gains in importance. The expected order of things is usurped: the usual eye movement, the predictable arrangement, the linear series, the convention of punctuation, the proportion between characters and white space, the size of margins and paragraphs, the order, shape, and arrangement of capital and lower-case letters, all this disappears. This sets up a new series of inner coherence vectors. The eye is compelled to see in a new way, to inspect the page in a new way, to read the linguistic ideograms at a glance as a whole, to master the initial visual dynamics—the shuffling, counterpositioning, underlining, framing, frolics, chance—all according to a productive model of the typographic arrangement of a commercial message, where the size and layout of the text give identity to the substance. Thus the avant-garde principle of difficult form (or perception) was built a priori into reading according to the newly arranged typographic order, to the moment of paradox when typographic and graphic units start turning into pure visuality, into a media cluster in keeping with the productive effects of the modern world.

It is curious to note that the main author of these typographic and graphic units, now completely losing their connection to anything verbal, was Aleksić himself, who was also the editor, director, principal article author, and “illustrator-designer.” His main graphic contributor was Mihailo S. Petrov, painter and graphic artist, who in his post-cubist abstract graphic contributions (linocuts and xylographs) enthusiastically joined the new culture of plastic thinking but with more concentration on the effects of visuality (*Self-Portrait with Pipe*, 1921). The new montage principle of textual/sign fragments accentuated the flatness of the background: the text, as a specific instance of relations between points, lines, and surfaces, spreads not into

depth but across the surface. A pioneer of modern graphics in Serbian art, Petrov shows a surprisingly radical plastic concept that crosses the threshold of the media autonomy of graphics as a technical discipline in his first graphic sheets, created after a brief stay in Vienna and his encounter with the ideas of Kandinsky and Kassák. The few extant works—only those that were published in avant-garde magazines—show their functionality of “pure visuality” within a level composition of textual and pictorial integrity, rather than as independent pieces.

The spirit and the elan of the dadaist avant-garde, first condensed in semantic destruction then expanded in a media fervor, was already seen, as early as 1918, as a phenomenon “capable of opening many doors” (Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*).¹³ And the doors did, indeed, open.

Zenitism or Avant-garde Nomadism

Ljubomir Micić, founder of *Zenit* and ideologist of zenitism, was embraced at first, only to be rejected and forgotten later, even in his own country.¹⁴ Micić embodies the international spirit of avant-gardism after World War I in his region. Gazing at the peaks of the European avant-garde as at the “sun in its zenith,” nomadlike he dramatically refused to lower his gaze, knowing that each suddenly lowered gaze meets a vista of darkness.

In his attitude toward avant-garde art Micić’s initial expressionist position transformed, with the ravaging dadaist impulses and the decisive impact of the Russian avant-garde, into a constructivist projection of a “new world,” searching for a balance point where he could situate the avant-garde “point zero” juxtaposing the old and the new, the old Europe and the new Balkans. From there he went as far as the metaphorical construction of “The Second Raid of the Barbarians on Europe” [*Zweiter Barbarendurchbruch*],¹⁵ a late zenitist manifesto for the German literary public. The point is, however, that Micić consistently oscillated between a general fascination with the European avant-garde and a need for confrontation between the imitative principle of art and culture of the old Europe and a “new vision,” without “psychology” and “logic.”

The choice of an international context is shown by the very fact that the subheading to the title *Zenit* from the first to the last issue reads: “international magazine.” In nos. 1–3 this caption was followed by: “for art and culture.” In nos. 4–15 the wording was more precise: “for a new art.” Then, in nos. 17/18–24 the word “zenitism” was added: for zenitism and the new art. This expanded into “a calendar of the new art and contemporary life” in nos.

26/33–35, wording that suggested the juxtaposition of avant-garde life and art, and finally the last issues, nos. 36–43, came out with no subheading at all. During its five years of publication in the avant-garde spirit of the new art, but also of the new man and the new times, Micić's brother Branko Ve Poljanski was another very active contributor. The zenitist avant-garde model essentially relied on the principles and methods of an aesthetic-ethical reevaluation of the European historical avant-garde, from the deconstruction and rejection of the mimetic principle to the radical intermedia approach, which usurped all the other previously existing boundaries in the institution of art.

The appearance of *Zenit* in Zagreb in 1921 saw the Yugoslav avant-garde scene radically open up to the international arena. Micić threw himself into this with passion and conviction, turning to several fields but above all advocating new artistic breakthroughs. In addition to the publication of an exclusively avant-garde medium as a critical front and an international avant-garde forum, he dealt actively and knowledgeably with the practical promotion of the new art in a wide range of communication situations. He organized a series of activities, established a *Zenit* gallery/collection of new art, set up the "First International Exhibition of New Art" in Belgrade in 1924, and included a selection of Yugoslav zenithism at the "Exhibition of Revolutionary Art" in Moscow in 1926.

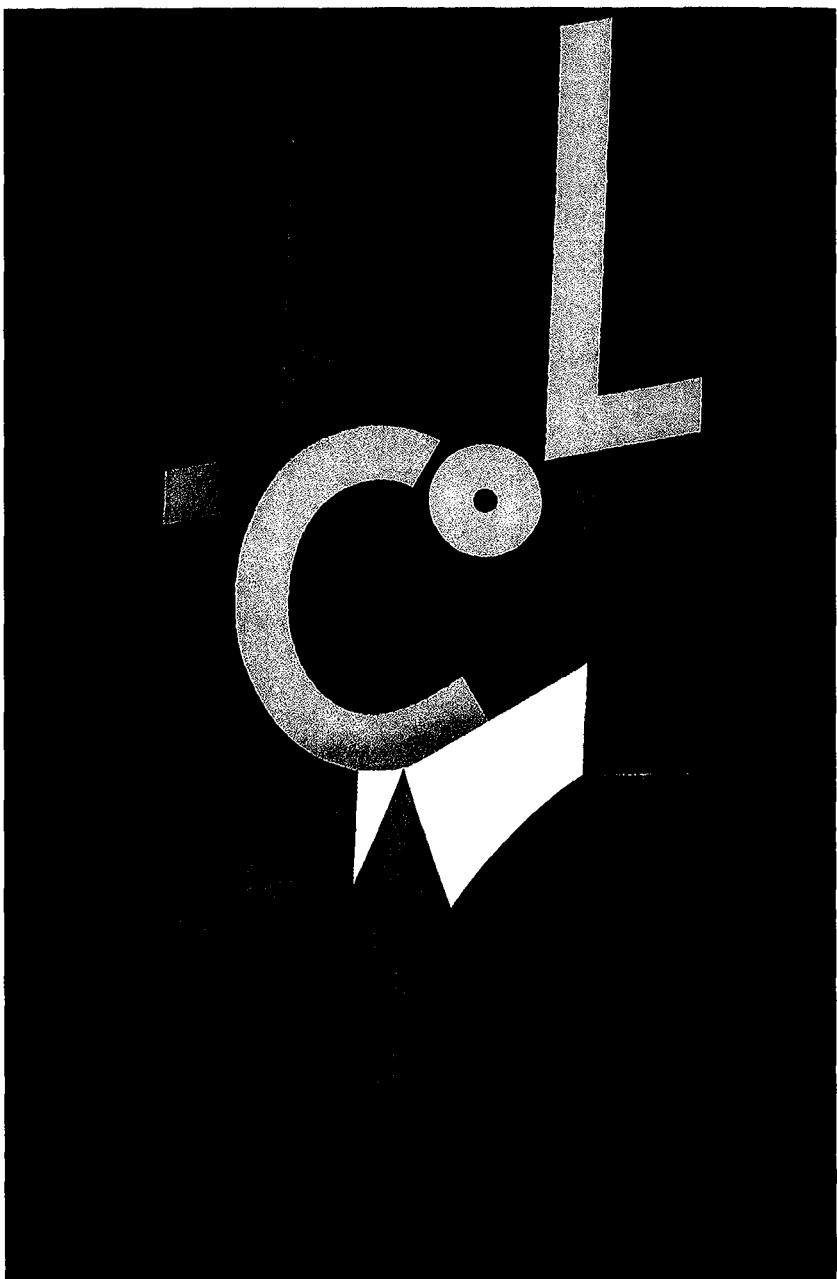
During his stay in Germany in the summer of 1922, when he spent considerable time in Berlin, he made many professional and personal contacts. Through his contacts with the circle around the gallery and the magazine *Der Sturm*, he saw the "First Exhibition of Russian Art." That was when he met El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg. They agreed, among other things, on the publication of a Russian issue of *Zenit* (nos. 17–18, 1922). Micić was, in fact, open to the whole avant-garde culture of the period and followed everything with close attention: expressionism, cubism, futurism, abstraction (especially Kandinsky), suprematism (Kazimir Malevich), Russian constructivism (Vladimir Tatlin), Central European (specifically Polish and Czech) constructivism, Hungarian activism (Lajos Kassák), media experimentation (László Moholy-Nagy), and all the other names associated with these movements, such as Robert Delaunay, Albert Gleizes, and particularly Alexander Archipenko. These names include avant-gardists in the local context, with Petar Dobrović, Sava Šumanović, and Jovan Bijelić. He chose his collaborators Vilko Gecan, Vjera Biller, and particularly Mihailo S. Petrov and Jo Klek locally. He was only contentiously intolerant toward dadaism, despite his initial contact through Kurt Schwitters and even collaboration with some dadaists such as Dragan Aleksić.

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Vilko Gecan, *Portret gospodje Micić* [Portrait of Mrs. Micić], 1921, oil on canvas, 101 x 69 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



Vilko Gecan, sketch for an advertisement poster, 1928. From Joža Ladović, *Vilko Gecan* (Zagreb: Art Studio Azinović, 1997), p. 115.

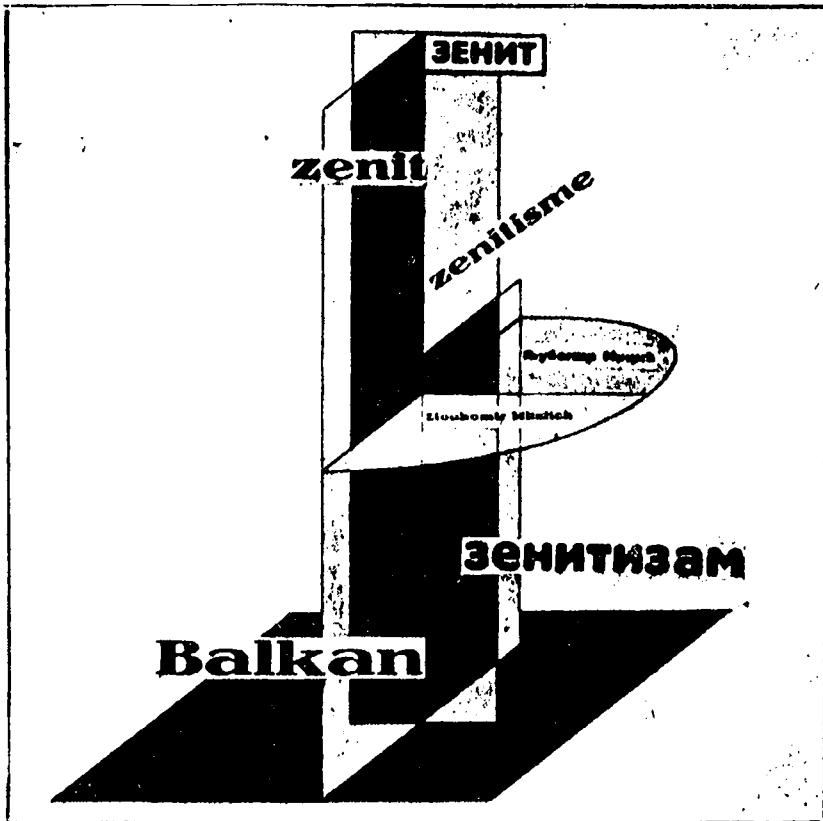




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Vjera Biller, *Pet godina Zenita* [Five Years of Zenit], 1926, pastel, 62 x 47.7 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

Jo Klek, *Zenitistička konstrukcija* [Zenitist Construction], 1923. Published in *Zenit* (1923); private collection.



The poles between which Micić's antiacademic attitude to visuality oscillated were only seemingly in opposition: abstraction with its theoretical postulate of nonobjectivity and total emancipation from the object form ("great abstraction" according to Kandinsky); and a figuration in which any conventionality of representation is abandoned to stylization or caricature, originally and primordially unburdened in observation ("great realistics"). A semantic equivalent to this other extreme of the zero-start position, with emphasis on the radical defiance of cultural and institutional continuity, can be found in Micić's manifesto statement "We are naked and pure"¹⁶ that corresponds to the provocative zenitist concepts of barbarogenius and the Balkanization of Europe.

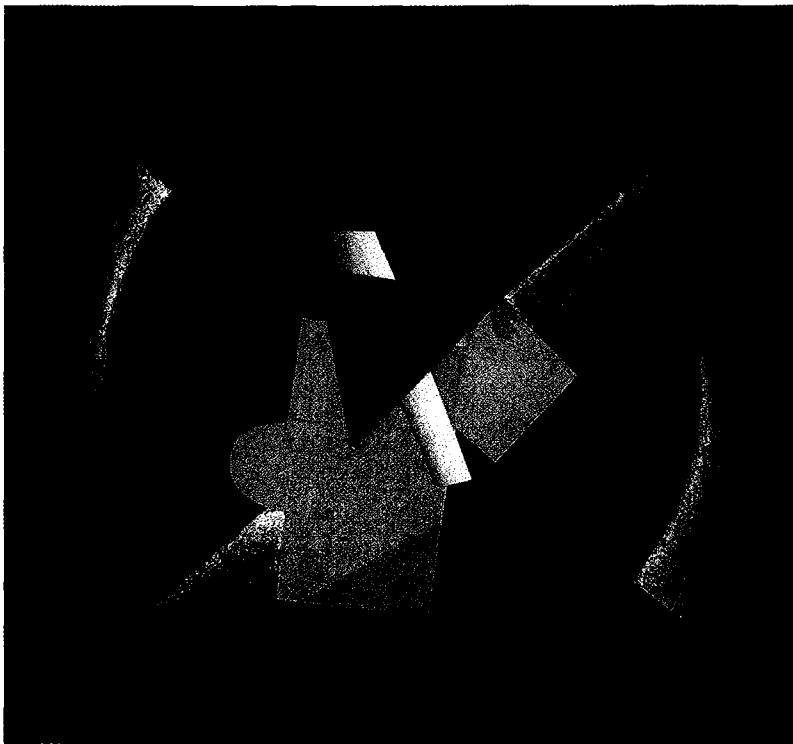
The semantic and visual innovations of the avant-garde antimimeticist concerning representation on a flat surface were particularly manifested in the typographic and visual solutions of *Zenit* and zenitist editions. This new montage logic and typography were generated in a blend of dadaist parody and constructivist visual/shape aesthetics, with topics from a "calendar of con-

temporary life" including popular culture (advertisements, the radio, jazz, fashion, "shimmy," and the cinema). Avant-garde work became the symbol and metaphor of modern culture (futurism, constructivism, and zenithism), an art that "recognizes its time" (Micić). Although the general visual/graphic appearance of the magazine changed from an expressionist affinity to a constructive approach, paralleling conceptual shifts in zenithism (from avant-garde anarchism to a revolutionary culture), the typography remained a particular pictorial and graphic aspect of interaction with a nonreferential cultural and artistic meaning (a rupture with the "natural" word order, speech, and text). The sense is approached by looking rather than just reading: a very attractive visual field is achieved by means of the choice and montage of the word wrap, headers, headlines, writing systems, illustrations, letter and graphic combinations, transposed punctuation, dimensions and rhythms, horizontals, verticals and diagonals, asymmetric tectonics, Proun-style geometrization with black-white-red solutions, advertisements with a blend of letter and pictorial characters, the use of photo documents, typograms, and typo-collages, and the citational interpolation of avant-garde paradigm reproductions, such as Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* or Malevich's *Black Square on White Background*. Everything is thus subjected to a single dominant: an inner organization superordinated to any particular character, text, or visual contribution. The constructive dominant is conceptually determined by the notion of "zenith" in the projection of a new civilization of image and sign, with the expansion of the mass media into everyday modern urban life. This was also the starting chapter in the genesis of Yugoslav modern media and visual culture.

Particularly prominent in that circle as *Zenit* artists were Mihailo S. Petrov and Josip Seissel, whose signature was Josif or Jo Klek (Slavic "klek" = magic circle; a mountain where witches gather!). In the first examples of graphic sheets and drawings by Petrov, Micić had already discerned an avant-garde production in the spirit of zenithism, "the etching of new world features." In that respect, Petrov's *Composition* (ink and watercolor, 1922) is paradigmatic. It is a dynamic realization of circular and linear forms drawing on the experiences of the Russian avant-garde, whose constructivist wing relies on precise "engineering" methods and technical aids such as compasses and rulers (Aleksandr Rodchenko!). Micić himself wrote about those new artists who were not unfamiliar with the laws of physics, geometry, optics, statics, or even machine construction. The radicalism of the new graphic approach of the young artist was noticed as early as 1926 and was described as being formed "far from the academies, at the extreme left of painting."¹⁷

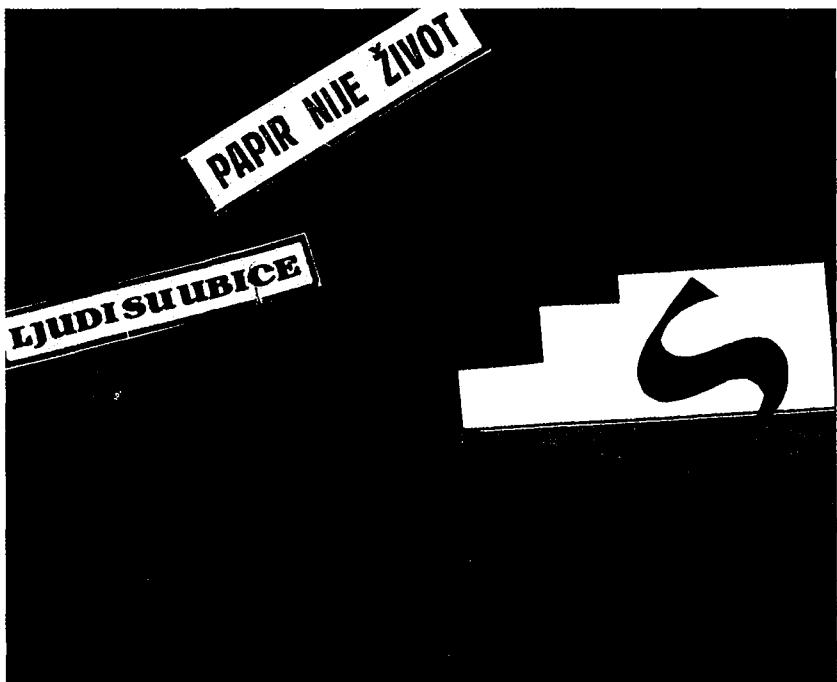
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Jo Klek, *Pafama*, 1922, collage and pastel,
22.6 x 31 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



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Jo Klek, *Ljudi su ubice* [People Are Killers],
1924, collage, 12.7 x 10.5 cm. Narodni
muzej, Belgrade.



The other young artist, Jo Klek, studied engineering, inspired “only by my will for the realization of zenitist Balkan architecture and painting,” as he wrote to Micić in 1923. In contrast to Petrov, he was closely linked to the new zenitist ideology as of 1922. According to Micić he was the first “zenitist painter.” He started very early as a self-taught artist, without a model in the local tradition, producing drawings, temperas, watercolors, stage designs, costumes and curtains for zenitist theater, front pages of zenitist publications such as Marijan Mikac, *Efekt na defektu* [Effect on Defect]. He worked on the Zeniteum and Villa Zenit, conceptual projects of an imaginary, nonfunctional architecture. He created billboards, graphic designs, and logos for all the *Zenit*/zenitist editions. This lasted until his rupture with Micić in 1925, after which the zenitist movement itself gradually began to wane.

Some collages, such as *Construction 56* or *Symmetries in Space—a Sketch for the Zenitist Theater Stage* show the effects of the clear space determination of constructivism as Klek followed in Rodchenko’s footsteps, while others, such as *People Are Killers* or *My Unfaithful*, are more attuned to El Lissitzky. Klek liked to sign himself as a zenitist.

Despite their small format, his works are monumental examples of the deconstruction of Gestalt (the visual whole) by means of collage and montage, interweaving various expressive techniques, significational and media domains, while remaining “emancipated from any literality and history, from any photographic likeness and amateur imitation.”¹⁸

In the spirit of the constructivist feeling for the elements of new art, form, color, space, and material, we witness the birth of the collage *Pafama* (abbreviated from the German *Papier-Farben-Malerei*, paper-color-painting), the title of which was translated by Micić as *Arbos*, abbreviated from *Artija-Boja-Slika*, to mark conceptually the “material of zenitist painting,” which in principle tends toward a Tatlinian sense of building “structures from real material in real space.” Openly supporting Klek’s concept, Micić articulated radical postulates for the first time on the Yugoslav avant-garde scene regarding the extremely autonomous nature of the painting medium and painterly language. According to Micić, “every painting is therefore a nature of its own, and one should not wander outside its frame,” and “*Arbos* painting is the most successful economy of material, work, and effect.”¹⁹

Klek’s ideal of compact constructive form, clearly demonstrated in the paradigmatic drawing *Zenit, Zenitism* (1923), shows a geometric organization of the structure of form, the fracturing of planes, the intersection of opposite optical directions, and regular axonometric representation of space projections. He emphasized this using material transparency with modern materials

such as glass and plastic that introduce the disposition of light as an additional element. This suggested the receiving or rejecting of rays, a widening of the real/concrete, optical/plastic rhythms, which in their “endless movement can be captured on the plane as a projection of the object formed from the points borne by the rays through space.”²⁰

In “Toward Opticoplastics,” his introduction to the volume *Archipenko—Nova plastika*,²¹ Micić had already declared that “zenitism in sculpture” would be a simultaneous concentration of heterogeneous elements in mastering space. In his role as multimedia researcher, Jo Klek introduces a construct with inscriptions to his zenitist opus, looking to Rodchenko’s *Kiosk—Advertisement* of 1923. Rodchenko’s piece in spatial projection announces events in the modern city in bold print. The zenitist optimal projection into the future, regardless of all existential burdens with the border as destiny (Europe—the Balkans), was articulated in Klek’s Zeniteum, a reflection of fascination with the revolutionary futurist/constructivist utopia of the early 1920s. That utopia was performed with the enthusiasm of a dress rehearsal on stage, as for instance in *Sud porote* [The Court of the Jury] at the GZH, Zagreb, 1922, a constructivist montage blend of stage action and film projection, four years before the premiere of Ivan Goll’s *Methusalem* in Paris.

Slovenian Constructivism

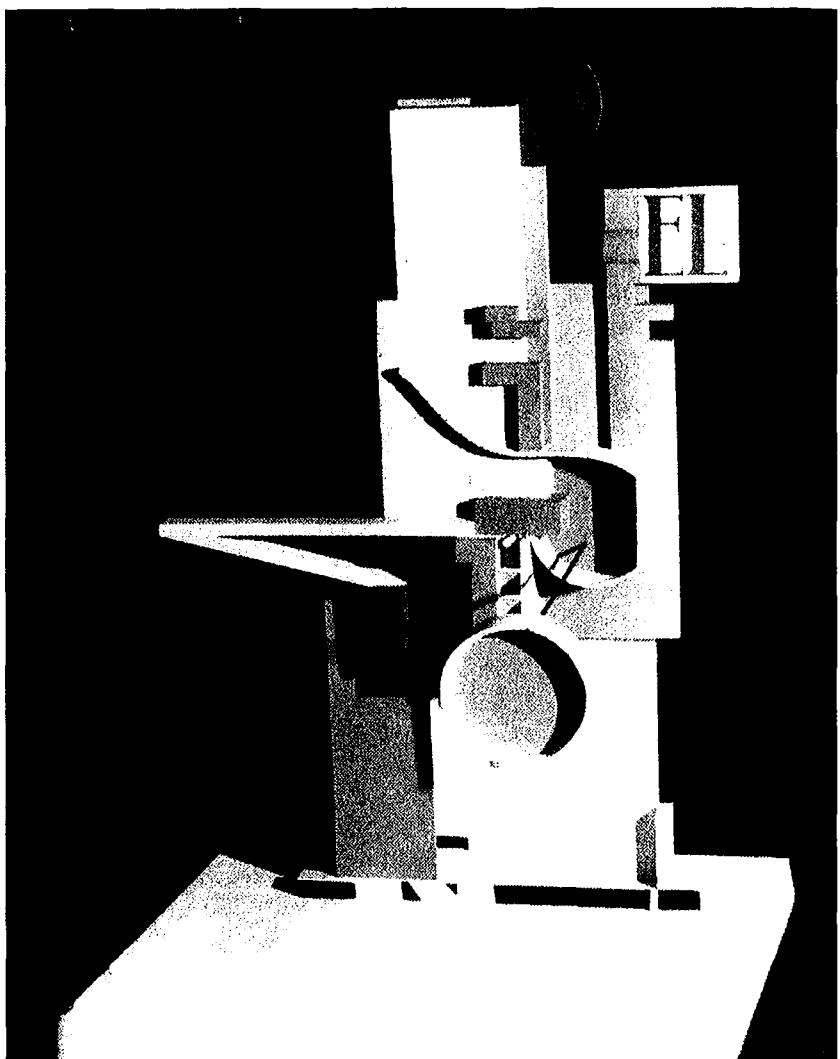
Somewhat later, between 1924 and 1929, an avant-garde group was formed in Slovenia, drawing painters, architects, writers, musicians, and performing artists, increasingly linked by their activist/constructivist orientation and their engagement in stage projects and in the magazine *Tank*, with an explicit constructivist program profile and national and international links along the Ljubljana/Trieste axis. One can immediately apply the term constructivism to this avant-garde group,²² led by Trieste painter Avgust Černigoj and by Ferdo Delak, his friend from Ljubljana, as a general designation for supranational artistic phenomena and movements within the national European groups and undercurrents which marked the 1920s. Under the influence of the Russian artistic experiment, especially the Berlin episode of Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky and their efforts toward a universal synthesis of constructivist experiences, but also influenced by the Weimar Bauhaus and the Moscow INKhUK program through Wassily Kandinsky, László Moholy-Nagy, and Theo van Doesburg, and by Micić’s *Zenit*, Černigoj developed his notion of constructivism in a 1924 exhibition in Ljubljana. Delak called the

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Avgust Černigoj, *Autoportret* [Self-Portrait], 1926. Published in the magazine *Naš glas*; private collection.



Avgust Černigoj, *Skulptura EL* [Sculpture EL], 1924, sculpture. Galerija Avgusta Černigoja, Lipica.

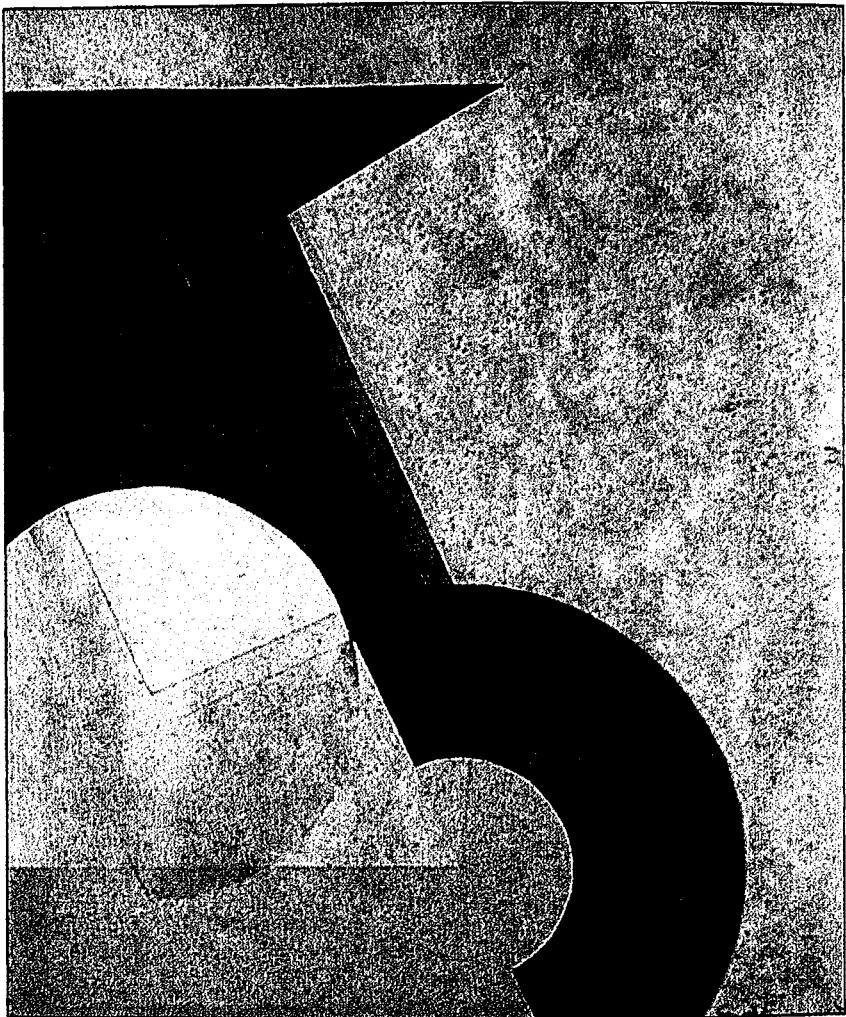


works exhibited in Ljubljana “technical” constructions: functionally formed objects of technical and material culture. The exhibits were a construction of a typewriter, Tatlinian “counter-reliefs,” architectural models, sculptures, machine parts, an engine wheel, and the clothes of an American worker, in fact blue jeans, all in bright basic colors, black and red in combination, furnished with revolutionary posters. The broader public and the cognoscenti were either scandalized or chose to ignore the show: the public because they were defensive about their painstakingly acquired cultural identity, the cognoscenti because as far as they were concerned modernity had already reached its peak in the expressionism that had shaken the Slovenian art scene during World War I. The author’s provocative and proletarian/cult messages and his militant support of the “new art” were accepted only by the left-oriented young, who enthusiastically supported the attempt to revolutionize art by means of constructivism in Ljubljana (1924–1925) and Trieste (1925–1929). As avant-garde strategy had already shifted the focus from the individual, hermetic work of art to an open process and a concept of collective artwork (the total art experiment), the avant-garde tactics of public appearance, provocation, shock, protest, and the manifesto assumed special importance and meaning, used by Černigoj and his followers as the means, but not the goal, for their action and new vision. Like the Russian constructivists, they believed that the “time of destruction has passed and a new time has come: a time of construction” in the principle of the synthesis of modern form-making (the artist as engineer). In that sense Černigoj held a didactic exhibition in 1925 that proved the necessity for a revolutionary road of art moving toward constructivism. That same year saw his political exile from Ljubljana.

Černigoj gathered a group of young artists in Trieste (Giorgio Carmelich and Emilio Mario Dolfi), and it was precisely in the Trieste phase of its activity that Slovenian constructivism reached its climax. As the leader of a constructivist group he wrote programmatic texts and critiques, attempted to open a school based on the Bauhaus model, contested the passive, parochial art of Trieste, and confronted futurism, developing a constructivist and productive practice in the fields of education, painting, architecture, graphics, typography, photographic montage, and stage and costume design. In collaboration with Delak he worked on the constructivist formation of the stage space. With frequent simultaneous stage constructions and montage-type stage solutions, he removed the “fourth wall” (the ramp), as was done in Russian revolutionary theater, geometrizing and dynamizing the stage structure. The sketches for those stages that remain are almost the only original

works of Slovenian constructivism to have survived. Černigoj appeared collectively at the trade unions exhibition in Trieste (1927) with his group of constructivists, in a separate section, displacing the usual notion of individual authorship but also of exhibition space (in keeping with the avant-garde position "long live the new art—minus the gallery/museum and church"). At the same time, he shaped the exhibition space as an atmospheric interactive whole and as a collective work. Single, passive and static exhibits were replaced by "active and dynamic spatial constructions" which, by introducing the concept of expanded or "elastic" space, materialized the project of functional constructivist space. He raised the battle cry in *Tank* (1927): "Long live the new art = constructive! = synthetic! = collective!" In a paradoxical way, however, Černigoj "corrected" the programmatic depersonalization of the work of art and its status by overstepping the strict border that separates constructivism from dadaism. In a series of portraits and photomontages he took the process of the mechanization of man to the absurd (similar to methods used by dadaist Raoul Hausmann).

Černigoj contributed to the avant-garde review *Tank*, published by Ferdo Delak in Ljubljana (two issues were published, the third banned). Thanks to Delak, the activities of the Slovenian avant-garde became known in Europe (through the review *Der Sturm* and the Berlin exhibition in 1928). Taking after *Zenit*, *Tank* was also conceived as an avant-garde publication with an international programmatic orientation, publishing articles in their original languages, with an emphasis on the activist/constructivist component. Černigoj's graphics and Edvard Stepančič's linocuts formed the background to the functional/constructivist typography and the graphic design of the magazine, in the dynamic sign of Lissitzky's "pangeometry" and Malevich's *Black Square*. The shaping of the whole is dominated by interaction between elements and methods such as the architectonics of the background with a white-red-black dynamic purism; typographic iconography using the different sizes and thicknesses of letters, dots, lines, exclamation marks, question marks; and the typomontage method of the convergence of geometric numerical signs and the word *Tank*. The wrapping of the avant-garde propaganda messages suggests shining advertisements of a future metropolis. A special role is played here by photomontage, consistently implementing the constructive principles of visually stressed typographic structure and the horizontal and vertical montage organization of documentary/photographic material from modern city life with skyscrapers, crowd scenes, sports, film, all in the spirit of optimal constructivist projections into the future.



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Edvard Stepančić, *Kompozicija* [Composition],
1927, collage and watercolor, 26.5 x 22 cm.
Private collection.

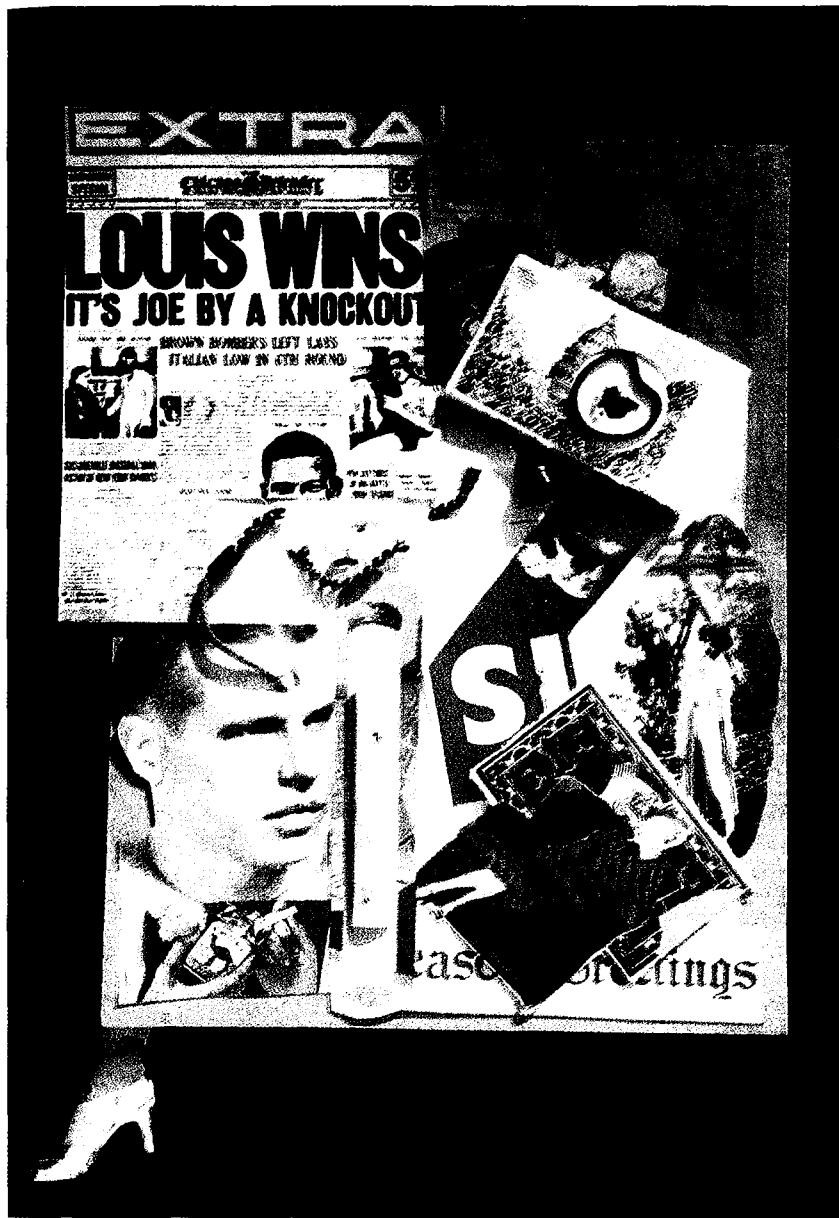
While *Dada Tank* or *Zenit* was riding the wave of the international nomadic and anarchist avant-garde and *Tank* was moving along its activist/constructionist lines, the first surrealist publications appeared on the second wave of the avant-garde experiment. They aspired to anarchist nomadism with a simulational reconstruction of the mimetic narrative, in an attempt to reconcile Freudianism with Marxism. In the surrealist system of the production of meaning and sense there is a new closed context of the avant-garde that subjects overtly avant-garde culture to the Bretonian radical will, the concept of "surrealist orthodoxy." Surrealist production in Belgrade started between 1930 and 1932 on the foundations of the modernist experimental magazines *Putevi* [Roads] and *Svedočanstva* [Testimonies], 1924–1925.

The first collective surrealist publication appeared in 1930: the almanac *Nemoguće—L'impossible*, with manifestos, theoretical texts, statements, surveys, the history of surrealism in Belgrade, automatic texts, poems, letters, photograms, collages, and drawings. Set in motion by Marko Ristić, it was, by and large, a literary movement, and as such was directly linked to Parisian surrealism and André Breton. *Nemoguće* published a programmatic statement on the first page by which, for the sake of a more disciplined collective activity, they renounced "the psychological side of their ego," believing in Rimbaud's notion that the "I is someone else," that one should look for oneself in the mirror of the world, in the miracle of coincidence and accident.

Three issues of the magazine *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* [Surrealism Here and Now] were published during 1931–1932. Its program was more distinctly oriented toward a surrealist questioning of the Freudian basis with the introduction of a dialectical materialistic apparatus (from conceptualization to rhetoric, such as a postulate about "an active and living construction of the conscience which participates in changing the world").²³

In the programmatic texts and the movement's ideology, the theory of surrealism was dominated by a discourse in line with that of the political left. It was structured by the function of power, engaged in sectarianism and the hierarchy of the members of the movement from leader Ristić to renegade Moni de Buli, and in the suppression of anarchist dadaism or observation of the predicted effects of surrealist procedures on the subconscious.

Freud's theory dominates surrealist production itself, in the function of a subversion of "artistic painting," whether classical or modern. In such painting the artist is censored, separated from his "true dominant desire," to put it in the words of the authors of *Nacrt za jednu fenomenologiju iracionalnog* ([Draft



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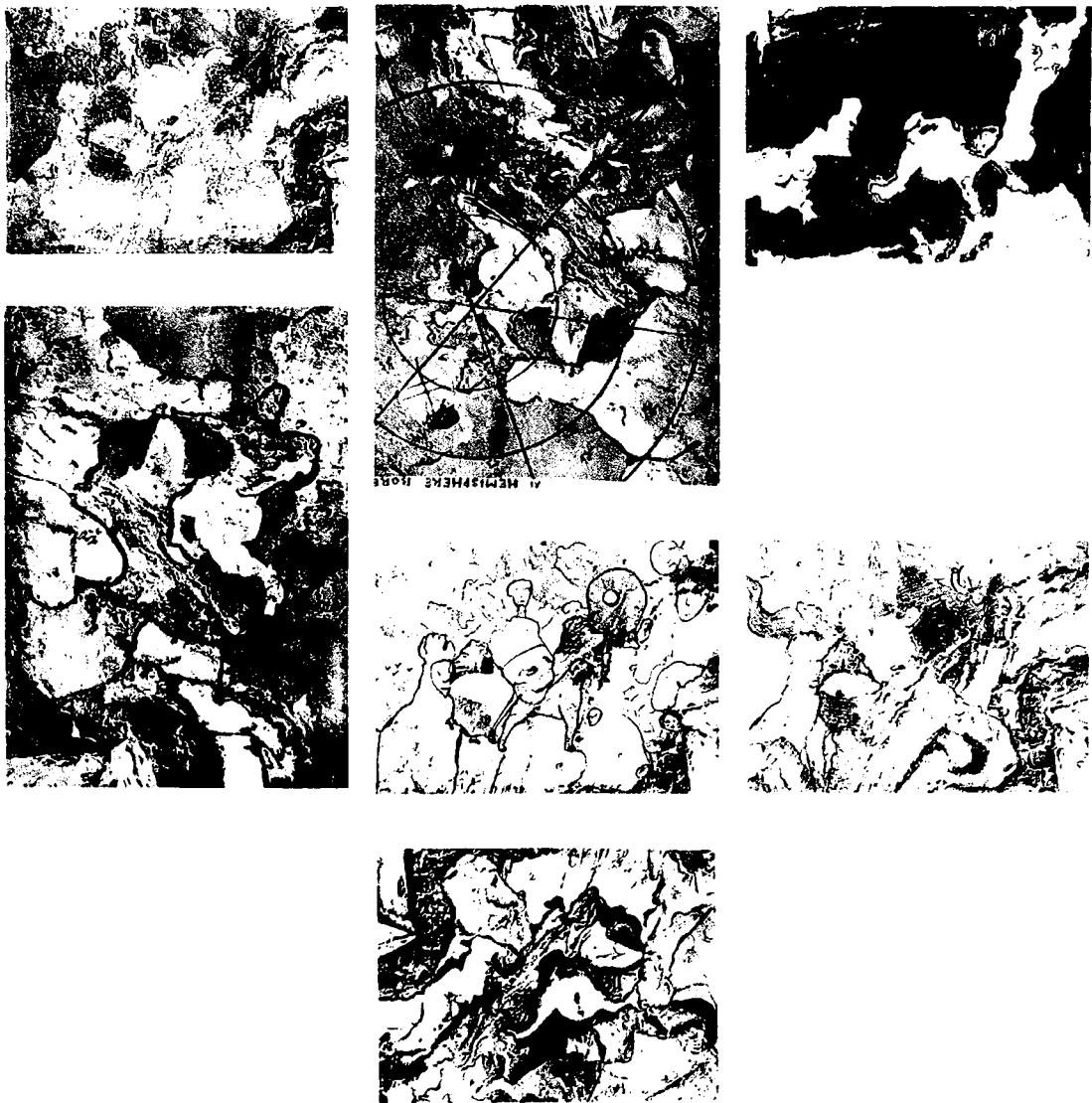
Marko Ristić, *Asamblaž* [Assemblage], 1939, assemblage,
36.2 x 25.2 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade;
from the estate of Marko Ristić.

for a Phenomenology of the Irrational], K. Popović and M. Ristić, 1931), which is hidden in the depths of the subconscious. The artist should be freed from the subject-object opposition, a systematized “numb preconception” of artistic “laws” relying on the senses only as witnesses in the service of reason, to allow the work to become the artist’s full expression, a simulacrum and a magical act, filled with all the “subversive requirements of the subconscious.”

A paradigmatic example of the Belgrade surrealist approach is the project *In Front of a Wall (Simulation of the Paranoiac Delirium of Interpretation. Survey)*.²⁴ The work, collectively signed by R. Ruben (the photographic shot), Marko Ristić, Rastko Petrović, Vane Bor, Radojica Živanović-Noe (the only professional painter among the poets), Milan Dedinac, and Dušan Matić, consists of seven photographs of a section of wall on which each of the authors intervened. In the same issue appeared Ristić’s article “Pred jednim zidom—objašnjenje istoimene strane ilustracija” [In Front of a Wall—An Explanation of the Illustration on the Corresponding Page]. The procedure, according to Ristić, was not a game or a psychological experiment but rather it was a demonstration of method. The result or the “work” itself was not the aim, but merely an element of a process that confirms the effects of subjective inputs. As production dominated by discursive work, it can be divided into four levels: “(1) photograph of the wall (the photographed part of a dilapidated wall); (2) simulation, the term covering a range between free associations and input of potential meanings (phantasms); (3) materialization of the idea, intervention on the photograph of the wall, emphasizing shapes that are the result of simulation; (4) a text about the work, the context of its genesis and a possible context for reading it.”²⁵

Ristić draws the conclusion that by willfully starting a “process of paranoiac and active character thoughts” one can obtain results as authentic and true as if one’s delirium were totally independent of one’s will. Simulation therefore implies a latent paranoiac ability, as concluded by Freud: “Dreams invented by writers stand in the same relation to analysis as do genuine dreams: the same mechanisms of the subconscious as those already familiar to us from the study of dreams participate in a poet’s creative work.”²⁶

This approach yielded many lucid insights into the unexamined depths of art and life. Within surrealist production it fleshed out the bare bones of avant-garde procedures of citation, collage, montage, or assemblage with a semantic addition that enhanced the fullness of “essential affective and emotive relations.” This was a postulate from *Anti-zid*—[Anti-wall].²⁷ The reductive and formal inventions and innovations of dadaism and constructivism gave back to the “work of the narrative” its heterogeneous, plural structure.



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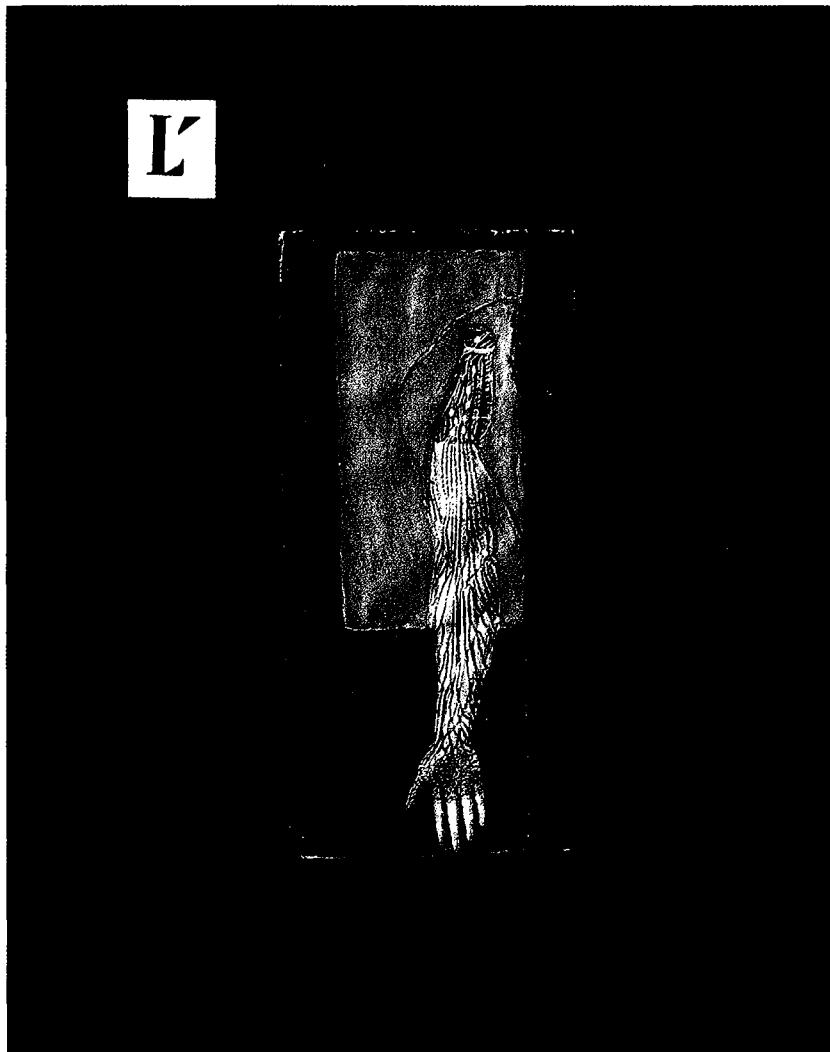
Marko Ristić, Rastko Petrović, Vane Bor, Radojica Živanović-Noe, Milan Dedinac, and Dušan Matić, *Pred jednim zidom (Simulacija paranojačkog delirijuma interpretacije. Anketa)* [In Front of a Wall (Simulation of the Paranoiac Delirium of Interpretation. Survey)], 1932. Published in the magazine *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*; private collection.



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Lula Vučo, Aleksandar Vučo, and Dušan Matić, *Une atmosphère de printemps et de jeunesse*, 1930, collage,
30.2 x 23.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade;
from the estate of Marko Ristić.

Within it there are hidden meanings, as in a rebus, game, coincidence, dream, free association, automatic drawing, or collage. The Belgrade surrealists were attracted by nonlogical, automatic, and simulational visual "texts," interpreted as expressions of the subconscious and the unconscious, suppressed sexuality, phantasm, but also a political distinction with reference to bourgeois ideology. They insisted on the collective aspect of activity, since one does not discover the sense in "artistic work" or "a work of art" such as drawing, collages, assemblage, but rather makes sense within an implied semantic system



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Dušan Matić and Aleksandar Vučo, *L*, 1930, collage, 31.5 x 24.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade; from the estate of Marko Ristić.



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Radojica Živanović-Noe, *Prividjenje u dimu*

[Hallucination in Smoke], 1932, oil on canvas,

65 x 46.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti,

Belgrade.

such as the context of the theory and ideology of surrealism. The context is that “something” outside the work that adds meaning to the created situation, event, or object.

Serbian surrealist attention was particularly drawn to object delirium: “Recently,” say Vane Bor and Ristić in *Anti-zid* in 1932, “surrealism has touched on the notion of the ‘object,’ hidden, on the one hand, by idealist tricks of philosophy and, on the other, by the artistic notion of static sculpture.” As early as 1930, Vučo and Matić made several complicated and irrational objects such as the *Pandemonic Marble* in the shape of a box, a magical camera obscura that unfolds and shows on its two-dimensional surface a Lautréamont-like encounter of the most diverse gadgets (from parts of children’s toys to glued straw, keys, fish). The juxtaposition between the objects, like a collage/montage structure of inconsistent fragments, produces a simulated paranoia that turns into an unexpected rupture.

The surrealist rupture, first in the function of an avant-garde state of mind invoking possible new worlds, fit increasingly into the general tendency of bringing avant-garde groups and individuals closer to the world of the political left by advocating a social solution. The protagonists of the intellectual left in Yugoslavia sparked polemics, referring to “contemporary scientific trends,” especially Marxism and psychoanalysis,²⁸ and this determined the position of the surrealists until the day they found themselves in the dock with followers of the very revolutionary Marxism (the Kharkov line) they themselves had evoked. This was, indeed, already a time when the historical avant-gardes were in crisis: the 1930s mark not only a time when repressive social powers responded to all the avant-garde provocations, but also when the avant-gardes themselves were exhausted.

As the discourse of the left split apart, the space intersected by different paths expanded: in painting, toward the critical and social (in different blends of realism, dadaism, and expressionism) or toward the fantastic. The quiet workshops of Croatian surrealist painters Leo Junek, Krsto Hegedušić, Željko Hegedušić, Vanja Radauš, Antun Motika, and Marijan Detoni, the Zagreb phase of Ivan Tabaković, and the surrealist phase of Josip Seissel, “liberated from the tasks of social theater,”²⁹ who “idealize” the unconscious, obsessive, associative, metaphysical, fantastic, visionary, and hallucinatory, are an indicative case in that sense. Boisterous public theater did prevail following the Krleža and Cesarec social trajectory of avant-garde critique, above all in the group *Zemlja* [Land].

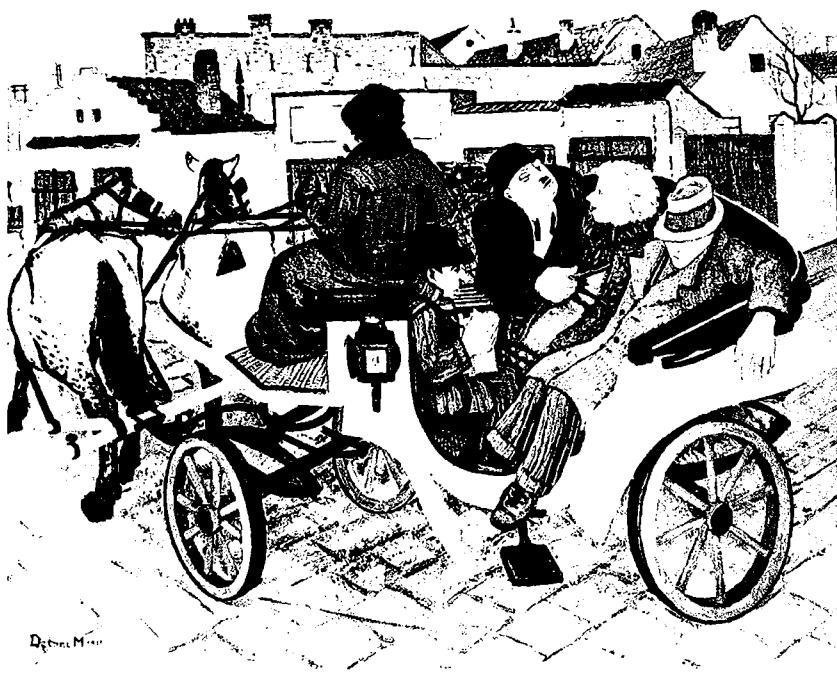
Seissel is a transitory example, as the period draws to a close. He was a prominent architect but was unknown as a painter. After his break with *Zenit*

Ivan Tabaković, *Genius*, 1929, oil on canvas, 70 x 80 cm. Galerija Matice srpske, Novi Sad.



Krsto Hegedušić, *Justitia*, 1934, tempera and oil on canvas, 123 x 105 cm. Umetnička galerija, Skopje.





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Marijan Detoni, *Pijana kočija* [Drunk Coach], 1935, oil on canvas, 99 x 130 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.

he became a surrealist. His Paris works (a portfolio entitled *3 c and Trivia*, 1939) are set between the iconography of the group Zemlja and the fantastic discourse of late surrealism, with a paranoid, critical fancy. The artist problematizes the blend of words and images, the discursive and the nondiscursive, the painted word and the painted painting (scribbled words and scribbled scribbling recognized as pictures), "bits and trifles," and visualizes their break by suggesting that what was hidden there was the unconscious, the sublimated eros. His approach is full of irony, humor, and paradox, declaring the intellectual position of self-criticism.

As for a social critique of painting, marked by the arrival of Zamlja on the scene (1929–1935), it is summarized in Miroslav Krleža's metaphor of a "visual Brabant" from his foreword to the book *Krsto Hegedušić: Podravski motivi* [Krsto Hegedušić: Podravina Motifs] in 1932.³⁰ In a climate of the ideology of socially engaged art, in decades that saw dramatic changes on the eve of World War II, Krleža draws a parallel between the Flemish Brabant of Bruegel's peasant paintings and the contemporary social "paintings" seen in the Drava valley in Croatia from the train. Krsto Hegedušić had already discovered the "peasant" Bruegel back in Paris, and to this discovery he adds the social and critical component found in the painting of Georg Grosz, with



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Josip Seissel, *Po-gačica*, 1939–1940,
India ink and watercolor, 29.5 x 30.5 cm.
Galerije grada Zagreba, Zagreb.

some of his methods of relying on visual subculture, characteristic of the appearance of the historical avant-garde. While Zemlja relied more heavily on folk art (enriched by the Hlebinje school of naive art), the beginning of socially engaged art in Serbia was more closely aligned with the optimistic ideals of proletarian art. It is articulated in an exhibition of the work of Mirko Kujačić, where he showed a framed ready-made shoe "that was taken off a worker's foot"³¹ next to a canvas. The method is both socially engaged and avant-garde ("a dadaist trick"): an aesthetic provocation with social meaning, but of "proleterian art" (this topic of socially engaged art was later adopted by Djordje Andrejević Kun, its best-known protagonist).

The Swan Song of the Avant-garde—Collapse or a Return to Order

The anarchic and nomadic subversion of the narrative and of formalism in the formations of the historical avant-gardes, in constant confrontation with “prejudices of the past,” its canons, conventions, and social norms, always in flux, challenge, or tireless demonstration, did more than effect a shift in ideology. The 1930s are marked by an internal crisis of the avant-garde, a process of idealization contrary to the avant-garde position of the self-critique of art, a return to the symbolic basis for the poetic, metaphysical, fantastic, or



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Branko Ve Poljanski, *Čovek pomerenog oka* [Man with Displaced Eye], c. 1928, drawing. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.

Milena Pavlović Barilli, *Enigmatska kompozicija (Torzo s maskom i crnom rukom)* [Enigmatic Composition (Torso with a Mask and Black Hand)], 1932, oil on canvas, 46 x 60 cm. Estate of Milena Pavlović Barilli, Požarevac.



pseudo-classical (in the painting, for instance, of Milena Pavlović Barilli). Almost shock-weary, there was a return to the narrative, even to an antimodernist "delight" in painting: "Therefore, on the surface of this sunlit globe there are so many things. There is art, the art of painting. To Paint! To Paint! To Paint!" These words were written in the "Manifesto of Panrealism" (1930)³² by none other than poet and painter Branko (Virgil) Ve Poljanski, the proven radical avant-garde artist, cofounder and principal contributor of *Zenit*, as well as originator of anti-Dada work such as *Dada-Jok*. It was actually Poljanski who had started the first avant-garde magazine: *Svetokret: List za ekspediciju na severni pol ljudskog duha* [Svetokret: A Magazine for an Expedition to the North Pole of the Human Spirit] as early as January 1921 in Ljubljana (he was its editor and the only contributor from the first to the last). Poljanski abruptly ended a later turbulent zenitist episode in 1927 by symbolically distributing copies of his latest poetic avant-garde books *Tumbe* [Upside Down] and *Crveni petao* [Red Rooster] in the center of Belgrade, after



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Milena Pavlović Barilli, *Autoportret sa strelecem* [Self-portrait with a Marksman], 1936, oil on canvas, 78.5 x 64.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.

which he left for Paris, dedicating himself completely to painting: oils, watercolors, gouaches, drawings. Abandoning the positions of radical avant-gardism, he approached expressionism and fiction in the “painter’s confession” (Poljanski), in the space of the “subject.” He moved from a radical rejection of subjectivity and individuality, as in his article “What Is Zenitism?” (*De Stijl*, no. 12, 1924–1925), in the name of the “subject of construction,” all the way to a post-avant-garde “first-person narrative.”

translated by Branka Nikolić

Notes

1. Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974).
2. See Božidar Gagro, “Putevi modernosti u hrvatskom slikarstvu” [Pathways of Modernity in Croatian Painting], in 1900–1920: *Počeci jugoslovenskog modernog slikarstva* [The Beginnings of Yugoslav Modern Painting] (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1972), pp. 34–45.
3. Ibid., p. 34.
4. Ibid., p. 36.
5. Vladimir Perković, *The Fourth Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Belgrade* (Delo, 1912), quoted from Miodrag B. Protić, “Počeci jugoslovenskog modernog slikarstva,” introduction to the catalog 1900–1920: *Počeci jugoslovenskog modernog slikarstva*, p. 9.
6. Cf. Miodrag B. Protić, *Treća decenija: konstruktivno slikarstvo* [The Third Decade: Constructive Painting] (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1967), pp. 19 and 20.
7. Jasna Jovanov, *Demistifikacija apokrifa* [The Demystification of the Apocrypha] (Novi Sad: Apostrof, 1999).
8. Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 199. First published 1965.
9. Cf. Miško Šuvaković, “Kontekstualni, intertekstualni i interslikovni aspekti avant-gardnih časopisa,” in *Srpska avangarda u periodicima: zbornik radova* [The Serbian Avant-garde in Periodicals: Papers], ed. Vidosava Golubović and Staniša Tutnjević (Belgrade: Matica srpska, Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1996), p. 112.
10. Published in *Zenit*, no. 5 (1921).
11. Published in *Zenit*, no. 9 (1921).
12. Published in *Dada Jazz*, no. 1 (1922).
13. Quoted from Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 193.
14. Micić was almost forgotten before the exhibit “Zenit and the 1920s Avant-garde” in the National Museum in Belgrade in 1983, when, thanks to the efforts of Irina Subotić and Vida Golubović, there was renewed interest in the Yugoslav avant-garde and its reassessment. See their catalog *Zenit i avangarda 20ih godina* (Belgrade: Narodni muzej Belgrade, Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1983).

15. In the sense of barbarity not as an antipode of culture but rather as its “recovery,” Micić speaks of the barbarogenius as the new man who has resolved that the Balkans be a bridge for the barbarian legions of the new spirit to cross. Cf. Ljubomir Micić, “Manifest—varvarima duha i misli na svim kontinentima” [Manifesto—To Barbarians in Spirit and Thought on All Continents], *Zenit*, no. 38 (1926).
16. Ljubomir Micić, *Manifest zenitizma* [A Manifesto of Zenitism] (Zagreb, 1921), p. 3.
17. Todor Manojlović, “Izložba slike Miloša Golubovića, Vase Pomorišca i Mihaila Petrova” [A Show of Paintings by Miloš Golubović, Vasa Pomorišac, and Mihailo Petrov], *Letopis Matice srpske* 307 (Novi Sad, 1926).
18. Ljubomir Micić, “Nova umetnost” [The New Art], *Zenit*, no. 35 (1924), not paginated.
19. Ibid.
20. Zoran Markuš, *Ljubomir Micić (1895–1971)*: “Zenistička konstrukcija” [Zenitist Construction] (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1978).
21. Ljubomir Micić, introduction to “Prema optikoplastici” [Toward Opticoplastics], in *Archipenko—Nova plastika* [Archipenko—New Sculpture] (Belgrade: Biblioteka Zenit, no. 5, 1923).
22. Cf. Dr. Peter Krečić, *Slovenski konstruktivizem in njegovi evropski okviri* [Slovenian Constructivism and Its European Context] (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1989).
23. In 1930 Marko Ristić, together with 19 other European surrealists, signed a manifesto on starting the magazine *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*.
24. *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*, no. 3 (Belgrade, 1932).
25. According to Miško Šuvaković’s catalog *Scene jezika—uloga teksta u likovnim umetnostima—fragmentarne istorije 1920–1990* [Scenes of Language—the Role of the Text in the Fine Arts—Fragmented Histories 1920–1990] (Belgrade: Udruženje likovnih umetnika Srbije, 1989), p. 14.
26. Sigmund Freud, *Ma vie et la psychanalyse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).
27. Vane Bor and Marko Ristić, *Anti-zid—prilog za pravilnije shvatatanje nadrealizma* [Anti-Wall—A Contribution to a Better Understanding of Surrealism] (Belgrade: Nadrealistička izdanja, 1932).
28. Cf. Božo Kovačević, “Slučaj zagrebačkih revizionista” [The Case of the Zagreb Revisionists], in Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na ljevici 1928–1952* [A Clash on the Left 1928–1952] (Zagreb: Liber, 1970).
29. Igor Zidić, catalog *Nadrealizam. Hrvatska likovna umetnost* [Surrealism. Croatian Fine Art] (Zagreb: Umjetnički paviljon, 1972).
30. Cf. Aleksandar Flaker, *Nomadi ljepote* [The Nomads of Beauty] (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1988), pp. 201–202.
31. Rastko Petrović, “Izložba Mirka Kujačića,” [Mirko Kujačić’s Exhibition], *Politika* (1932).
32. Branko Ve Poljanski, “Manifeste du Panréalisme,” printed in the catalog of his solo show at Galerie Zborowski, Paris, 1930.

6

Inside or Outside “Socialist Modernism”?

Radical Views on the Yugoslav Art Scene, 1950–1970

Ješa Denegri

The concept of a Yugoslav art space denotes the geographic area and political environment in which the polycentric and decentralized, yet at the same time unified and shared, art life of the second Yugoslavia (1945–1991) emerged: polycentric and decentralized because it comprised several cultural environments and their capital cities, ex-republics of that former country, each now an autonomous state; unified and shared because it was interlinked by numerous personal and institutional ties among the many active participants on the Yugoslav art scene at the time. The term “Yugoslav art space” did not necessarily lead to neglect for the uniqueness and specifics of its national cultural surroundings, demanding their abolishment in the name of a unitary concept of “Yugoslav art”; rather, since it was situated within the borders of one and the same country, this art space was densely interspersed with uninterrupted daily links, exchanges, and contacts among the artists themselves as well as among the organizers of the art scene, heads of galleries and museums, critics and contributors to cultural columns in the media—in other words, all the key factors of the local “art world” or “art system” at that time. In their participation abroad at representative selections and international ceremonies (such as the Venice Biennial, the Paris Biennial of Youth, and others), artists from Yugoslavia were represented under the insignia of their common state, and the choice of authors for these events was almost always (often to the detriment of strict and fair criteria of quality) based on what were called “republic quotas” or tokenism, meaning roughly equal representation of participants from some of the leading republics (Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia), with more modest, yet desirable, participation of the representatives of less developed art communities (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia). Within the existing national and local frameworks, each of these

art communities went through its own problematic development and processes. Each possessing its own internal evolutionary continuities and crucial discontinuities, it constructed separate art topographies, cultivated its own traditions, and in different ways integrated itself into the global cultural and art events of the existing historical circumstances. Founded, therefore, as both a polycentric and a unified model of cultural functioning, the “Yugoslav art space” lasted with gradual changes throughout the entire period of the existence of the common state, creating—this is becoming quite transparent today—an intensive and stimulating working environment (in the spheres of exhibition and various other forms of cooperation) in which the majority of its actors felt themselves to be simultaneously members of their narrower or broader national culture and members of international and universal currents of contemporary art, enjoying the benefits as well as coping with the limitations imposed by the specific circumstances in which they inevitably found themselves as active participants on its art scene owing to the social and political system of the “second Yugoslavia.”

From Socialist Realism to Socialist Modernism

It is certain that the political circumstances in which the history of the “second Yugoslavia” took place and its unique political status, wittily referred to in one anecdote as “swinging on the fence between the East and West,” exerted a considerable influence on the resulting “art system,” a system that functioned outside both the rigid ideological pressures prevalent in the countries of real socialism and the advantages and the demands of the art market in the countries of liberal capitalism. The point taken to be the definitive end of the reign of socialist realism is the Congress of the Yugoslav Writer’s Union held in Ljubljana in 1952, with Miroslav Krleža’s exposé. It is generally accepted today that the relatively short period when socialist realism dominated (between 1945 and 1950, more or less) is the historical hiatus dividing twentieth-century Yugoslav art into two long “normal” periods, that is, the first and the second halves of the century. The period of postwar modernism in Yugoslavia can be said to begin at the end of the 1950s, both in the country as a whole and in each of its constituent units, lasting for the next few decades and bringing with it a complex, rich, diversified, and incontestably high-quality series of phenomena, events, and processes in art.¹

The split with the ideology of socialist realism in Yugoslavia in 1948, which occurred as a consequence of the rift with the former ruling political course, demanded a reorientation of cultural policy, one that was undoubtedly

also influenced by the essential contributions of numerous protagonists in various art spheres. Certainly, therefore, had there not been a general shift in the political course, the new cultural and art processes would not have emerged, nor would they have changed the situation on the art scene relatively quickly, in the space of a few years, thus spurring a metamorphosis of the entire art climate. This change, however, did not occur solely for political reasons and interests; the decisive role here was played by the art production itself that soon filled the vacuum of the scene with different substance and means of expression. In addition to being in the spirit of the phenomena—the poetics, trends, concepts, and ideology of the global postwar modernism of the 1950s and 1960s—this art production can also be said, owing to the specifics of the then-Yugoslav social, political, and cultural circumstances, to represent a specific strain of “socialist modernism,” one that in fact emerged as such only in Yugoslavia, thus constituting a unique formation resulting from the cross-breeding of the properties of the Eastern and Western art model. Gradually, however, the latter (Western) model prevailed, a consequence of establishing sufficiently close ties—but never complete integration—of the Yugoslav art space and its specific formation of “socialist modernism” into the corpus of postwar Western modernism, or, more precisely, into the corpus of postwar Western modernisms.

A key role in the establishment of the art system of “socialist modernism” was played by the logistical support of cultural and political institutions that mediated during the touring exhibitions of foreign art in Yugoslavia after 1950, and when Yugoslav selections were presented on the international art scene. A chronicle of these events includes the following key occasions and dates: 1952, “Contemporary French Art,” showing many great names, in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Skopje; 1953, “A Selection of Dutch Paintings,” in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Skopje, with the entire De Stijl crew; a one-man show of Henry Moore in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana in 1955, the catalog with a foreword by Herbert Read; “Contemporary German Graphics and Drawings” in the same cities that same year with a foreword by Will Grohmann; “Contemporary Italian Art,” again in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Skopje, covering artists from Carra and Severini to Vedova, and, the crowning glory of this list, an exhibition of American color lithography in several cities, and the now famous “Contemporary Art of the United States of America” in Belgrade in 1956, selected from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, with, among others, the entire generation of abstract expressionists. Within the context of the elaborate political strategy involved in organizing such prestigious shows of modern American

art in the countries of Western Europe was the implication that Yugoslavia was also included on this circuit because it was within the cultural, and political, sphere of interest with clearly set aims and impact.

It goes without saying that all of these events (as well as other less spectacular ones) from the program of international cultural exchange exerted both a profound and a superficial influence on Yugoslav artists, which, along with other factors, contributed to a reorientation of the total profile of contemporary Yugoslav art, from the recently rejected socialist realism to the essentially different phenomenon of “socialist modernism.” The work shown by Yugoslav artists abroad was equally influential, especially at the Venice Biennial, where Yugoslavia participated in its own pavilion after 1950. No matter what the local criteria were in choosing artists to be included, there was nevertheless an effort to match the standards of international art of the initial postwar decades.² This also holds true, in principle, for the appearance of Yugoslav artists outside of Europe, at the Biennials in São Paulo and Tokyo and the Biennial of Mediterranean countries in Alexandria, where Yugoslav artists were honored with numerous awards. There were also frequent guest appearances of Yugoslav art in many Western European countries, among which the exhibition in Paris in 1961 is particularly prominent, leading the well-known French critic Michel Ragon to offer the following symptomatic praise of this art: “In Yugoslavia living art is at the same time official art.” At home, periodic manifestations of the unification of the Yugoslav art space during the 1950s were represented by the Salon and later the Biennial of Youth within the organization of the Modern Gallery in Rijeka. The year 1961 saw the launch of the Triennial of Contemporary Yugoslav Art in Belgrade, while from 1955 onward there was the regular Biennial of Graphic Art in Ljubljana, an ambitious international exhibition, which, owing to its equal readiness to consider artists not only from Western and Eastern countries but also from the countries known as the Third World, was later to become the true emblem of the cultural policy and the art system of Yugoslav “socialist modernism.” All this (and other factors too numerous to mention here) led to the gradual construction and stabilization of a complex and specific system of art in the second Yugoslavia, a system whose organization was almost entirely based on, materially dependent on, and ideologically supervised by the institutions of political power. However, and this must be admitted, it was also sufficiently flexible to make most of the active artists feel free to participate voluntarily and to the best of their ability, with full conviction, in the building and updating of the culture of their own environment during the initial postwar years and decades, swept up with the opti-

mistic élan of the reconstruction of all aspects of life, including art. For a great majority of artists, this life evolved with the approval and consent of the ruling social and political system. They worked within its limits and offered no opposition to it; opposition of this kind cannot and should not be expected from artists, especially since the system was highly tolerant of them. Many of them were granted privileges, honestly believing they were participating with full rights in the construction of a society claimed throughout the world (by favorably disposed sociologists and political demagogues) to be a unique model: Yugoslav self-management socialism “with a human face.” Parallel to this political model, the unique brand of Yugoslav socialist modernism was established in art as an institutional and productive art world.

A New Mainstream: Socialist Aestheticism

The Yugoslav art world gradually becomes, in the mid-1950s, a relatively homogeneous ideological organism that assumes in the course of time the characteristics and social standing of the mainstream, despite the 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 favored by the powers that governed social promotion (benefits for exhibiting in the country, selections for abroad, purchasing committees, appointments of professors at art academies). This leads us to conclude that the attitude of the authorities toward the modernization of art language, which also includes the protagonists of this modernization, that is, the artists themselves, became more than tolerant, it actually became overtly positive, particularly once the authorities realized that this modernization could be aptly used to build a more acceptable image of the ruling social and political order in the West, toward which they were increasingly turning after the mid-1950s. This therefore answers the question of what led the Parisian critic Ragon to declare that Yugoslavia’s “living art is at the same time official art.” Owing to the internal social processes involved in liberating both social and cultural life, but also because this liberalization was secured by the artists themselves working in their own field, the powers that be finally recognized and accepted the local art of postwar modernism, even going so far as adopting and including art as a strategic interest. This meant that modernism, owing to the social system in which it originated, could only legitimately be termed “socialist.” And when this modernism, at the height of its social acceptance, lost all directive or innovative properties, when it was

definitively entrenched, when it became neutral and passive in relation to its surrounding reality, it was renamed by a circle of Yugoslav art theorists and critics as the concept of “socialist aestheticism,” which, as such, and precisely for being so, assumed all the characteristic prerogatives, positions, and privileges of the “first line” in the art of its community and the historical moment of its creation.

We owe the concept of socialist aestheticism to the Belgrade theorist Svetla Lukic, who introduced it in 1963 with an eye to the situation facing Yugoslav literature during the previous decade, while Lazar Trifunovic transferred that concept and requalified its meaning in the sphere of visual art. Having elaborated it in great detail, he attributed to it the following characteristics:

When one goes further along these lines [regarding S. Lukic's postulate] toward an interpretation of aestheticism, its true nature is soon revealed, as well as what ultimately became of it: the official art ideology of the 1950s. Of course, I use the term “official art ideology” in this case in a broader sense, not as the attitude of the state apparatus and the directive of Party documents, but as the natural affiliation of two similar convictions which suited one another. This fit well within the conceptions of the corresponding political structures, since freedom of creation affirmed the right to personal expression, which could and did mean a denial of responsibility for the destiny of art. For the artists, smoldering in the wake of socialist realism, it meant art's separation from social issues and reality. The type of art that suited this politicized and highly vain society of the 1960s was one that refrained from upsetting it or posing any enigmatic or “awkward” questions. Oriented toward the laws of form and the pictorial problems of painting, aestheticism was sufficiently “modern” to appease the general complex of “openness toward the world,” traditional enough—as a metamorphosed aesthetic of the intimism of the 1930s—to satisfy the new bourgeois taste based in social conformism, and inert enough to fit the myth of a happy and unified community; it had all that it needed to blend in with the politically projected image of society. On the other hand, aestheticism contributed to a purification of the language of painting and its liberation from literary layers, although essentially it did not change the order of its traditional values. Between aestheticism and the salient art problems of the period there gaped a void that reached crisis point toward the end of the 1950s. It caught both the older and middle gen-

eration; there was a feeling of fatigue, ideas were exhausted, aims used up, and Serbian painting thus sped through the process from “revolutionary” to bourgeois art.³

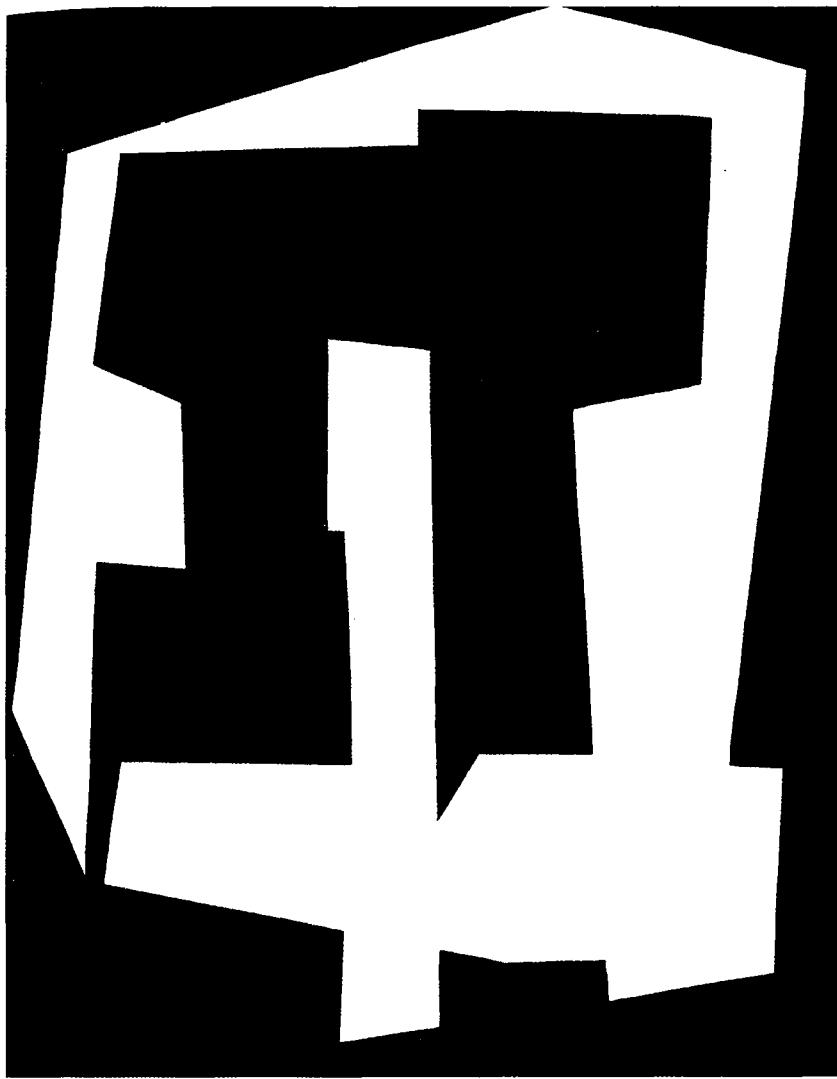
Departure from the Mainstream: The Alternative Route in the Art of the 1950s and 1960s

Trifunović’s account however, does not fit all the Serbian art referred to in the above paragraph, nor the art in the other parts of Yugoslavia during those years. Moreover, where it departed from such a description it was owing to the conscious and direct efforts of the artists or perhaps the unconscious and indirect characteristics of their work, as well as a certain incongruity present in their social status and behavior. Even if they are to be considered as contemporaries and participants in the period of “socialist modernism” owing to their presence on the art scene of their time, these art circles, with their language of expression and mentality, defy or at least resist, and in any case are not congruous with, the features described in Trifunović’s qualification of “socialist aestheticism.” Thus these phenomena could bear the label of the “alternative route,” considering that they sometimes appear in direct opposition to and sometimes in passive avoidance of the phenomena that constitute the new mainstream of Yugoslav postwar art, its “first line” from the perspective of status, without regard for subject matter or value. It should be mentioned at the outset that the lack of such a drastic, open opposition on the Yugoslav art scene at the time does not justify identifying the alternative route on the Yugoslav art scene with the phenomena of political and cultural dissidence such as were manifested in other parts of the real-socialist bloc, nor is the alternative route the opposite member in the binomial official/nonofficial art. It is rather a matter of a different (in comparison with the majority) choice of cultural models, historical predecessors, linguistic terms, and methods of expression, all resulting in more exclusive and extreme positions which, in relation to the positions of dominant moderate modernism, could be labeled as ranging from very radical and radical modernism to neo-avant-garde and hints of post-avant-garde in the sense in which these formations are understood in the European art of the 1950s and 1960s. As for historical forerunners in national culture, the alternative route directly draws upon or indirectly follows the rare and at that time neglected and forgotten legacy of the historical avant-gardes of the 1920s (zenitism and dadaism based in Zagreb, Slovenian constructivism, and Serbian surrealism) as departure points offering more daring possibilities of formation and manifestation

than those the majority of the local art caste had been raised on, that is, the moderate modernist art of a Parisian provenance, or the art that emerged under its dominant influence. The alternative route in the Yugoslav art space of the 1950s and 1960s is precisely *alternative* and *different* because it did not emerge under the aegis of Parisian interwar and postwar modernism, because it takes a critical stance toward that period of Parisian art, opposing it with its own acerbic art discourse, filling that discourse with problems, contents, moods, and intonations that, owing to their juxtaposition, are unwillingly received in the environment of their origin. For those very reasons the alternative route consists of minority and marginalized art groups and individuals, of manifestations and positions that find international art languages, phenomena, circles, flows, movements, contexts and trends closer to themselves than their local counterparts.

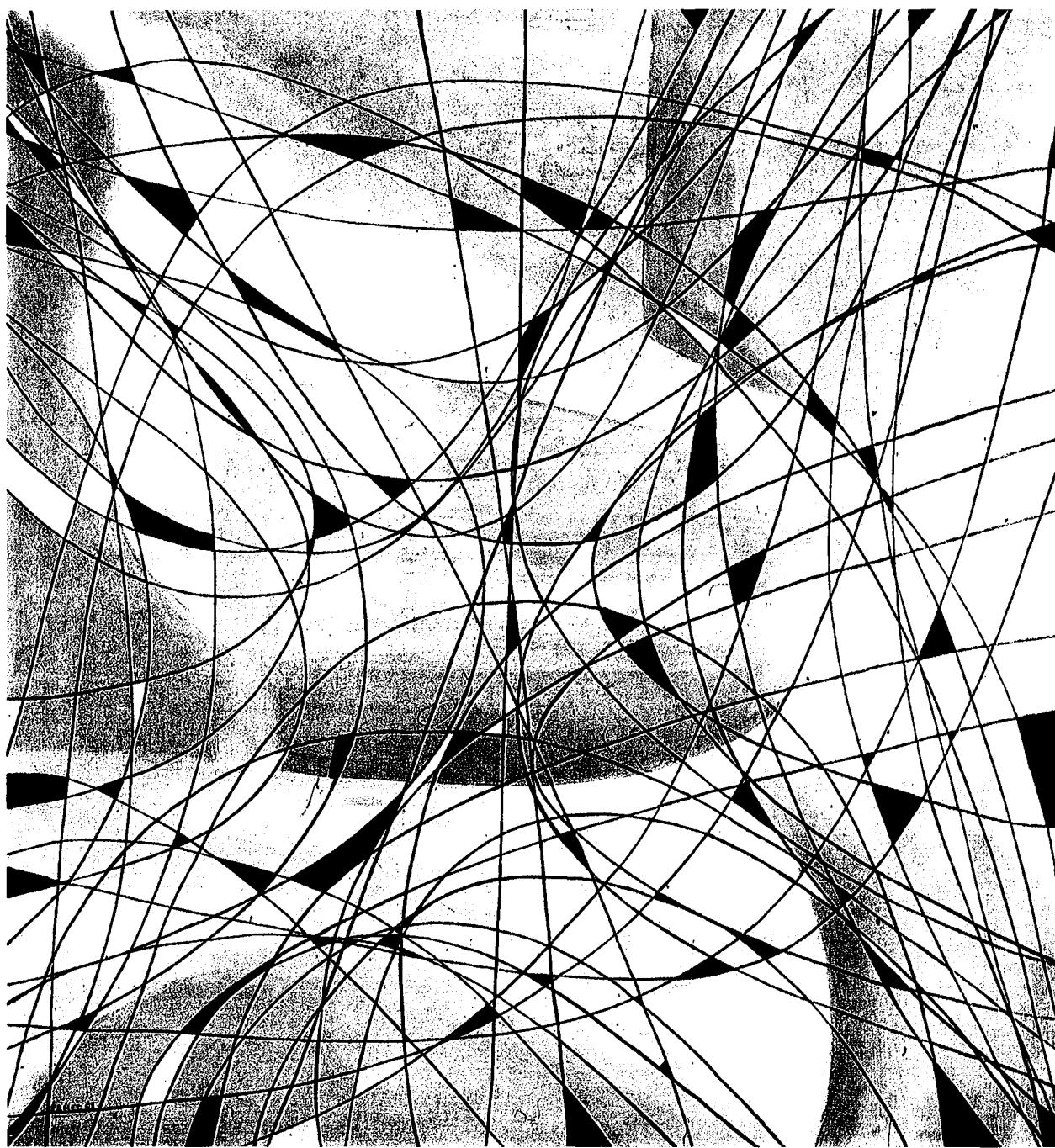
Exat 51

The group Exat (Eksperimentalni ateljer [Experimental Studio]), founded in 1951, introduced a drastic and decisive conceptual break in the art and visual culture of its milieu in the early 1950s in two ways. From the program standpoint, it called for the legitimacy of abstract art, considered at the time to be totally unacceptable, which is why it is opposed both to socialist realism and to the local modernist tradition founded on the basis of interwar intimism and expressionism. The group (whose members were the painters Ivan Picelj, Vlado Kristl, and Aleksandar Srnec, and the architects Božidar Rašica, Vjenceslav Richter, Bernardo Bernardi, Zdravko Bregovac, Zvonimir Radić, and Vladimir Zarahović) met in Zagreb during 1951, publishing their manifesto setting out their program in December of the same year. This was followed by an exhibition of the painters of the group in Zagreb and Belgrade at the beginning of 1953, which in both cases provoked considerable public attention with polemical pro and con effects. Apart from advocating abstraction, the main goal of the group was a "synthesis of visual art" within the system of modern architecture and a struggle for the development of industrial design in an environment where any enterprise in that discipline was barely beginning. Unable, however, to act on all their ideas within an optimal time period, owing to the meager means available postwar, the group carried out smaller-scale interventions in synthesis through the organization of exhibition pavilions at trade fairs both in Yugoslavia and abroad, while on the plane of art they were expressed in the language of geometric abstraction, similar to those that appeared in several European countries at approximately the same



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Ivan Picelj, *Kompozicija XL-1* [Composition XL-1],
1952–1956, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm. Muzej
svremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

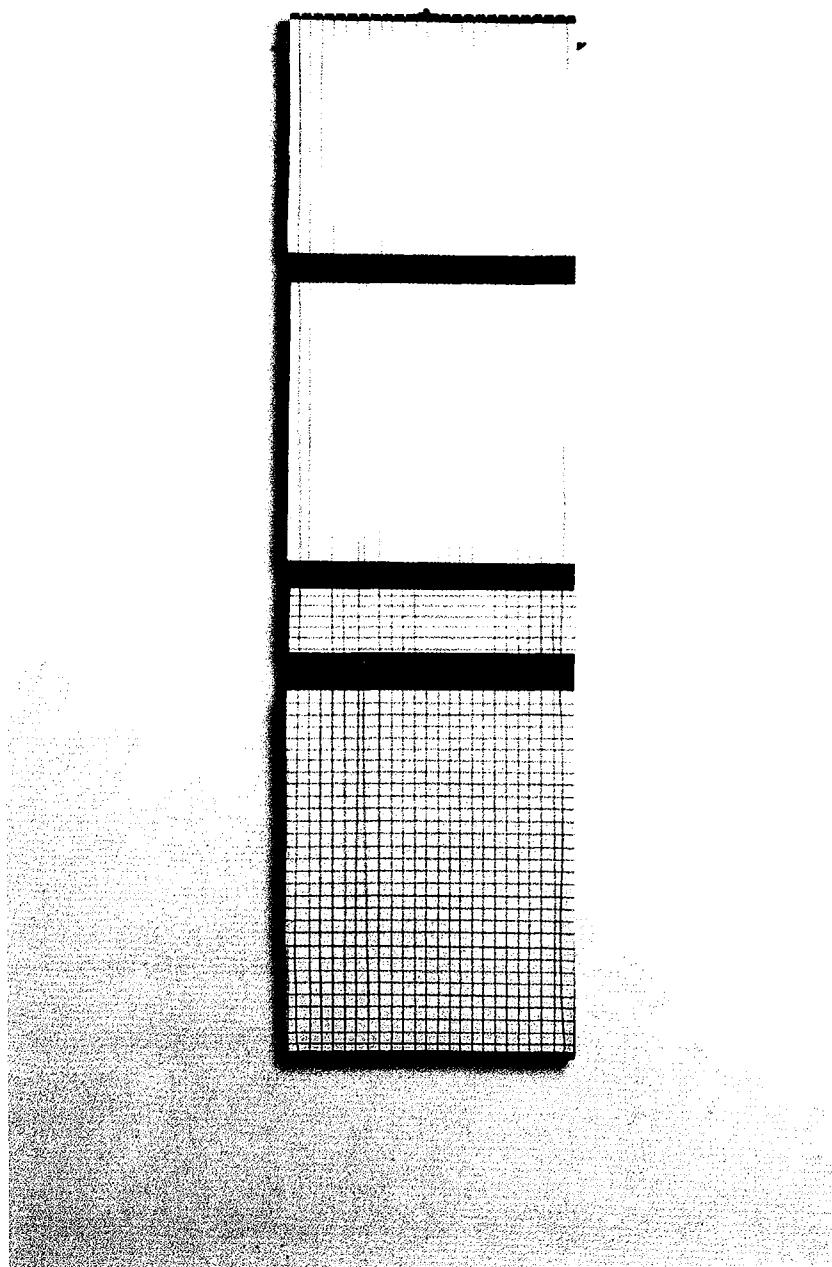


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Aleksandar Srnec, *Kompozicija U-P-14*

[Composition U-P-14], 1953, oil on canvas,

79 x 68.2 cm. Artist's collection.



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Vlado Kristl, *Varijabili VI* [Variables VI], 1962, wood, wire, and paper, 115.3 x 31.3 cm. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

time (the group Espace in France, Movimento Arte Concreta and Forma Uno in Italy, and Nine Abstract Artists in the U.K.). The fact that the members of the Zagreb group were involved in similar international events can be confirmed by their exhibition at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, a promotional exhibition of abstract art in Paris in 1952, where they appeared even before making their debut in their own country. In their basic program and conceptual features, the group is a characteristic phenomenon of the early 1950s, a historical moment when geometric abstract painting can be understood as the typical emblem of the spiritual climate of the time. The Italian critic Piero Pacini, writing about the situation in his own culture, offered the following very convincing diagnosis: "In a society emerging from the devastations and bitterness of war, the idea of geometry seems to be a new myth: it contains the myth of both solidarity and practicality at once, since it is reminiscent of architecture. . . . On the scene of the early postwar period, geometry is one of the signs of optimistic and conscious reconstruction."⁴

When the group Exat 51 definitively ceased their activities and became part of the cultural legacy in which they had originated, two historical judgments summarized their role faithfully and accurately from the standpoint of problematics. The first is by Marko Meštrović:

In Zagreb one can meet representatives of geometric abstract art and followers of the Bauhaus who appeared in 1952 with a complete visual program, seeing the function of art in its broadest sense as the metamorphosis of the entire plastic reality and the abandonment of the traditional concept of the artist with all his burdens in favor of a new type of visual creator able to contribute to the construction of material culture. . . . The scope of the Exat program, at the time of the first significant steps toward the industrialization of the country and in the conditions of a backward material and technical culture, arose as a need for a programmed cultural development, but this was not acceptable precisely because of the very lack of such development, owing to the impossibility of discovering the means of its actualization in the given conditions.⁵

The second is by Vera Horvat-Pintarić:

The awareness among the members of that group of the necessity for a differently oriented creative production and art in general was founded upon the revolutionary traditions of the post-October avant-garde and

the legacy of the Bauhaus and Dutch De Stijl. In this heritage of ideas, the directions for a progressive practice of ideas and methodology were already preset, all the more so considering that the most radical metamorphosis within the field of plastic activity occurred during the revolutionary metamorphosis of society after October. Continuing this legacy—after a long historical hiatus—from the first half of the century, the group Exat 51 set as its main task, first, movement toward a synthesis of all the visual arts and, second, giving an experimental character to that work, since without experiment, progress of a creative approach in visual arts cannot be imagined.⁶

And the same author also states:

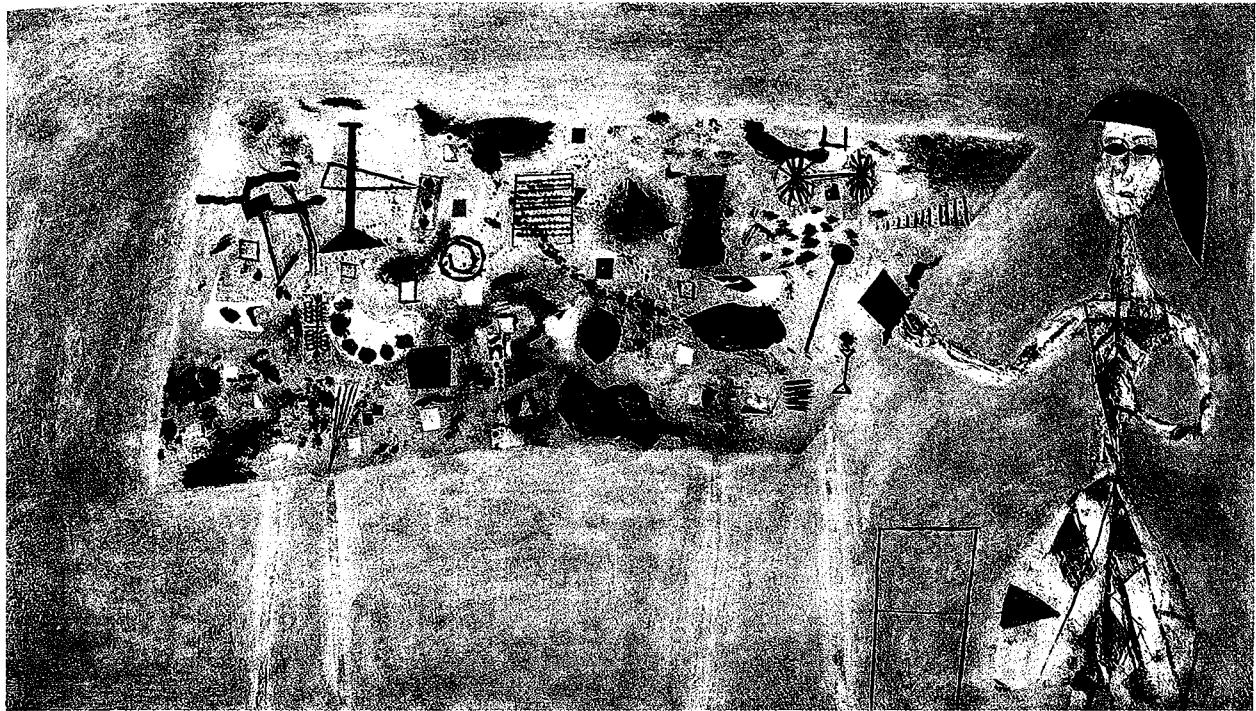
The exceptionally positive activities of this group were evident in the latter period, not so much in the field of geometric abstraction as in the initiation and theoretic elaboration of some of the current issues of contemporary society. In their very clearly formulated program, the group not only emphasized the significance of autonomous plastic values of visual arts, but also put forward as its main task the direction of activity toward a synthesis of plastic arts as well as an elaboration of the problem from the field of visual communication.⁷

From these statements, as well as other evidence that exists regarding the background of Exat, the group apparently emerges not only as a consequence of, but also as the initiator and promoter of, the spiritual and material reconstruction shortly after World War II. Under such circumstances, the group tended to act constructively, that is, in favor of and within the context of the socialist society in the course of construction at the time, acting with the earnest conviction of its members and by no means in response to the demands, commission, or support of the authorities, which tolerated the group no more than they did the other art phenomena of the same historical period. Establishing a different concept of the character of the artist, one who no longer acts as a studio recluse or a gallery exhibitor but as an experimenter in various media, demanding a change in his technical and operative skill, the group should be considered to be the initiator of the mentality of the alternative route in the first half of the 1950s, therefore the principal model of behavior for other alternative phenomena in Croatian and Yugoslav art, regardless of the fact that they later acted in altered contexts and were manifested through different languages and methods of expression.

Slovenian Dark Modernism

We owe the notion of “dark modernism” in Slovenian painting after World War II to art historian and critic Tomaž Brejc, who established and elaborated this idea in his book of the same title published in 1991.⁸ It is a voluminous theoretical and art-historical treatise that raises and analyzes numerous issues concerning global and local (Slovenian) art of the twentieth century, where the thread is the postulate according to which, throughout the historical period of modernism (between 1880 and 1980), there persists an undercurrent of subjective, melodramatic and passionate communication in painting about life and existence. This brand of painting exposes the alarming, traumatic, and profoundly personal confessional psychological states and moods of a solitary artist or individual either experiencing problems adapting to his surroundings or living as an outcast. Contrary to Greenberg’s definition of modernism as “pure” or “purist,” implying that in modernism high formal parameters are required from the painting as a rationally arranged aesthetic object whose essential characteristic is its immanent two-dimensionality and total flatness of the painting space and painting field, the author of this postulate uses the term “dark modernism” to suggest an “impure” and “hybrid” version of modernism. Instead of analytical and self-reflexive features, this version is dominated by cognitive, symbolic, and expressive properties in which the issue of human destiny becomes the essential matter, one dealt with by this art in a highly responsible manner. According to Brejc, to put it as cogently as possible, in this art “the painting becomes a psychic membrane that brings various existential experiences to light, most often in dark and gloomy tones.”

Within the complex of Slovenian dark modernism we can single out a group of artists with separate problematics including, among others, the three leading postwar painters of this group: Gabrijel Stupica, Marij Pregelj, and Marko Šuštarič. We are not dealing with a common development or tendency here, but rather with three strikingly autonomous and authentic personal positions, three mutually close “individual mythologies.” Matko Meštrović described the main element of Stupica’s art as being “above all an extraordinary pictorial culture, that is, a deep study of one’s own life confrontations which are resolved by means of a meditative lyric and poetic effusion and the dispersion of an infantile world that totally sensitizes the elements of concrete phenomenality to the boundaries of the unreal. This appears not only to be conjured up by the painter, however, but also to subsist in the material and object presence. In the poetic relations it is sublimated to dazzling purity.



With such a resolution of opposites in the openness of the creative method itself, albeit enclosed within a seemingly very narrow world, there emerges an extraordinarily harmonious, yet at the same time complex, artistic personality, capable of reconciling the micro- and macrocosm.⁹ The paintings of Stupica's "white period" from the mid-1950s on, with their characteristic subject matter of self-portrait, the artist's studio, and the "bride" (who is, in fact, the transposed figure of his daughter, from little girl to young woman), are fragile and almost painful projections of the artist's phantasms, fears, anxieties, and constant enquiries into the meaning of existence, all this without any final resolution, in extreme uncertainty, in tragic, fatalistic existential cognizance. In contrast to Stupica's intimate individualism, Pregelj is a painter of the Slovenian collective mythical tradition and historical experience. His is pathetic figuration rooted in a deeply etched and thus persistent personal memory of the horrifying time the artist spent in a prison camp during World War II. The torture and suffering of a mutilated body, pain that is not only physical but also of the mind and soul, are the constants of this sinister and highly unsentimental painterly narrative. At its almost polar opposite stands Šuštarič's painting microcosm of the tiniest things and "most

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Gabrijel Stupica, *Deklica pri mizi z igračkami* [Girl at a Table with Toys], 1957, oil and tempera, 71.5 x 124 cm. Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.

Gabrijel Stupica, *Deklica z venčkom* [Girl with a Wreath], 1984–1985, tempera and collage, 102 x 73.3 cm. Private collection.



delicate impressions from the artist's personal life, his memories and dreams, where we may sense his anxiety, his painstaking effort to achieve creative freedom, sometimes even the forebodings of an immanent, premature death.”¹⁰

The painting of Slovenian dark modernism does not follow linguistically and ideologically from the heritage of the historical avant-gardes, but rather proceeds thematically and psychologically from the legacies of expressionism and intimism, and consequently does not belong typologically to the complex of postwar neo-avant-gardes. Despite that, it can be included in the mentality of the alternative route in postwar Slovenian and Yugoslav art, primarily because in contrast to moderate “socialist modernism,” and particularly to socialist aestheticism, this art bore witness to depressive mental states. Moreover, it communicated, without shirking from the search for the distressing facets deep in the artist's being, the discomfort and misery of individual existence in social and political circumstances that did not tolerate such moods easily. By unveiling such a state in a society which, for ideological reasons, systematically rejected the very thought that one of its members may be a being capable of bearing natural and lasting human suffering, the position of dark modernism was alternative to the ruling political and ideological *Weltanschauung*, regardless of the fact that, in the culture of their own environment, its protagonists had obtained the status and rightfully enjoyed the reputation of outstanding artists.

Radical Standpoints in the Serbian Art of the 1950s and 1960s

The Serbian, in fact mostly Belgrade-based, art scene of the 1950s and 1960s is a very complex conglomerate of phenomena among which, after socialist realism, there are no longer any pure or compact linguistic and ideological models, but rather numerous individual expressions and clusters making up a highly heterogeneous physiognomy and polarized landscape. As a reaction to the rule of socialist realism, the early 1950s see the systematic rehabilitation of interwar bourgeois art in 1951 (at the exhibition “Seventy Works of Painting and Sculpture between 1920 and 1949”). At the same time a number of artists formed mainly in Paris in the period between the two wars returned to activity; among the most decisive and most influential of their solo shows was that of Petar Lubarda that same year. Shortly afterward, by singling out a circle of artists from the interwar generation, the Group of Six was founded in 1954, followed by the December Group in the following year that included the nucleus of the first postwar generation. Combined, these phenomena constitute the mainstream bloc of the Serbian art of the 1960s. It

is an art that conquers on its own, but it reached the dominant position in the Yugoslav art system with the support of institutionalized cultural and art life, enjoying the trust of the majority of influential forces that serve to make up this entire art world. And only on the fringes of this ruling complex, whose linguistic and ideological model may be marked by terms such as victorious postwar modernism, moderate modernism, socialist modernism, and socialist aesthericism, are there gatherings, forms of defiance, steps outside, alternatives, or simply more radical standpoints that do not necessarily possess the typical attributes and terminology of the neo-avant-garde, but that play the role in the local environment of the time of revising, moving, undermining, sometimes even abolishing the boundaries of an otherwise firmly established dominant conception of art.

The first such position that makes its appearance in the early postwar years is the Zadar group, formed in 1947. The group was made up of young artists, students at the Belgrade Academy, who went to war-demolished Zadar on their own initiative, to paint freely, without the supervision of their professors, in the spirit of a rudimentary expressionism or noncanonical realism, ideologically (though not linguistically) totally opposed to the ruling model that bore the prefix "socialist." This circle produced the first "dissidents" or "emigrants" in postwar Yugoslav art, since, after organizing solo exhibitions in Belgrade, most of the people referred to as the Zadar commune members left for Paris in the early 1950s to work in this metropolis of European modern art in the freedom they lacked at home, as well as in the hope of gaining recognition and acclaim on the larger international art scene. Bogoljub Jovanović belongs to this same generation. In his series of works on small-format paper from 1953 in the spirit of crude figurative fantasy, and his very rare but already rather abstract paintings from 1955, he clashes with all the models of postwar Serbian art known at the time, becoming perhaps its first (instinctive rather than ideological) outcast. Since he soon ceased to deal with art publicly, Jovanović provides us with an example of behavior that may be interpreted today as the strategy of the "aesthetics of silence."

From the Group of Six we will single out Ivan Tabaković, an artist of a highly unusual and outstanding imagination. His prevailing model of expression, according to Lazar Trifunović, is "modern traditionalism," exemplified by paintings and collages from the mid-1950s onward in which he embarked upon a solitary venture into speculative rather than perceptive art space. Namely, he asked himself whether and how it was possible to portray the invisible in a painting; how, instead of natural phenomena, it was possible to paint the incommensurable regularities by means of which nature acts; what



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Bogoljub Jovanović, *U tri oka* [Three Eyes], 1953,
tempera, 14.5 x 21 cm. Muzej savremene umet-
nosti, Belgrade.

Ivan Tabaković, *Skriveni svetovi* [Hidden Worlds], 1968, combined techniques, 24.7 x 23.5 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.



science could say about it as understood by an artist and not by a scientist. It is an art far beyond visible reality, an art that is entertained by life, not practical life but that of the author's own thoughts and dreams (according to his key series of collages *Life, Thoughts, Dreams*, 1965–1966). Thus the esoteric overrides the material, fantasy rises above reality, and anything ideological is discarded in the name of the author's individual freedom and ability to see the world only as he thinks it should be seen.

"Two phenomena arose in Serbian painting as a reaction to aesthericism and traditionalism: Mediala and Informel. The former attempted to create total painting and recreate the classical tradition of the Renaissance, the latter to demolish classical painting and assert the philosophy of hopelessness and the poetics of the absurd."¹¹ Although inadequate in its description of Mediala, this claim by Trifunović indicates that in postwar Serbian art there



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Dado Djurić, *Audicija* [Audition],
1954, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 55 cm.
Private collection.

Leonid Šejka, *Flaše: Proglasavanje objekta—Destrukcija flaše—Defunktualizovani objekt* [Bottles: Proclamation of the Objects—Destruction of the Bottle—Defunctionalized Object], 1956, 1956, and 1957, height 21.5, 27, and 24 cm. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.



were various aspects of resistance and defiance to the new mainstream of victorious communism, which is basically also supported by Miodrag B. Protić in the following statement about Mediala and Informel: "Fantastic painting in reaction to aestheticism . . . , formless, abstract art: a new painting study and new possibilities of existential statement."¹² The same critic mentions the following characteristic detail concerning Dado Djurić, a member of Mediala in his early Belgrade phase: "While the majority looked up to Manessier, Poliakoff and De Staël, he browsed through reproductions of old masters."¹³ The claims of the critics cited above, that the group Mediala was opposed to the dominant socialist modernism and aestheticism, are essentially correct; the complex, contradictory and controversial totality of this artistic community occasioned the first antimodernist move—and announced an early postmodernist turn—in Serbian art after World War II. Within Mediala, however, certain striking neo-avant-garde steps are evident, only at first glance, paradoxically, but in fact understandably so, in the early work of Leonid Šejka, the principal ideologist and theorist, incontestably the number one personality of this group. His assemblages of discarded objects collected from a garbage dump, from the real and symbolic "trash of civilization," acts of appropriation, and application of the author's signature to



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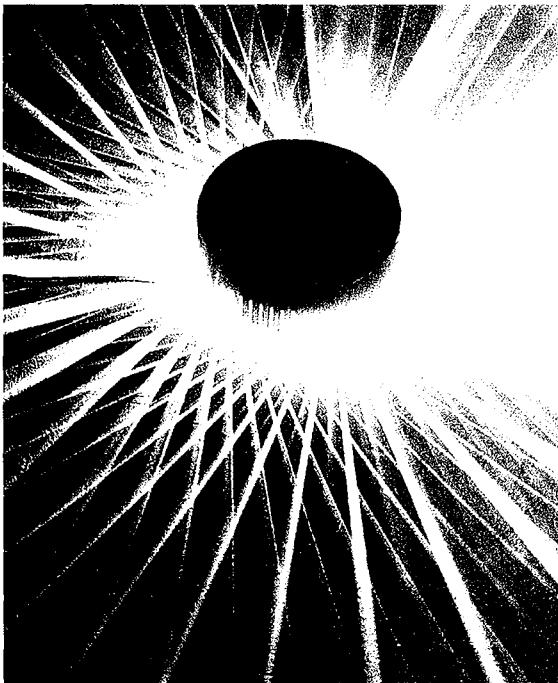
Leonid Šejka, action (c. 1955), series of photographs. Published in *Spot*, no. 2 (Zagreb).

the reality of encountered situations, as in the first actions and events, the personal and corporeal participation of the artist, all from the mid and late 1950s, reveal a familiarity with the legacy of Dada and Duchamp, as well as a coincidence with the phenomena of neo-Dada, new realism, and Fluxus. One of the founders, a short-term member and soon an outcast of Mediala for his own relentless individualism, is Vladan Radovanović, an electronic musician and multimedia experimenter, theorist and practitioner of a verbo/voco/visual synthesis of art, whose personality and behavior as an artist show striking though indirect similarities with the phenomena of Fluxus, concept art, and other methods in the direction of the dematerialization of the art object.

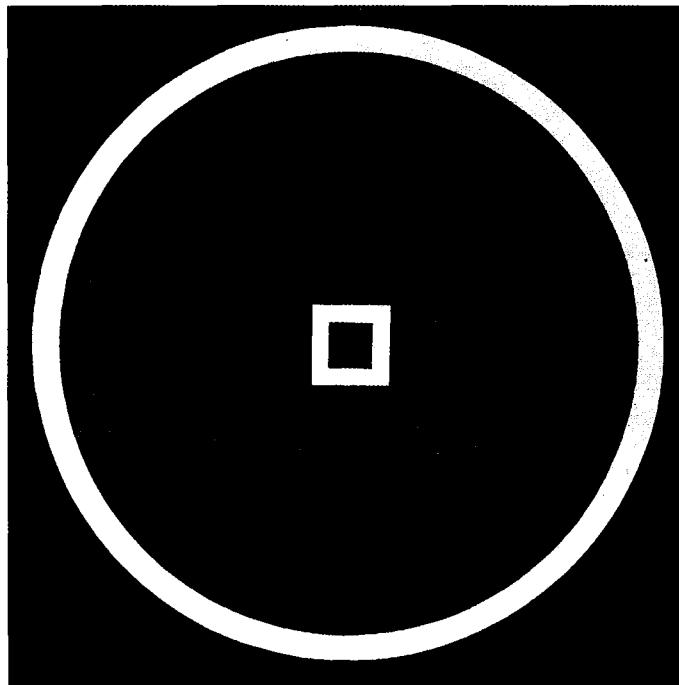
The only Belgrade member of the neoconstructivist movement New Tendencies, and a participant in three international exhibitions held by this movement in Zagreb (1965, 1969, 1973), is Koloman Novak, creator of optical, kinetic, and luminokinetic objects and ambiances. Educated in Belgrade, where he held his first independent exhibitions in the early 1960s, he reached the peak of his career and the most important references in his biography in Vienna, where he resided between 1966 and 1971, participating in the historic "Kinetics" shows at the Museum of Twentieth Century Art in 1967.

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Koloman Novak, *Lumino Disk*, 1967,
metal, bulbs, and motor, 30 x 16 cm.
Artist's collection.



The subject matter of extreme artistic individualism, a position characterized by the strategy of "individual mythologies," marks the work and behavior of Radomir Damnjan, an artist from the Belgrade school active in Italy from the early 1970s. Damnjan began as a prestigious representative of the young generation who matured as painters and earned their first international recognition (in his case an award at the Biennial in São Paulo in 1963, and participation at the exhibition Documenta III in Kassel in 1964) in the last phases of late modernism, and who later went on to question the very character of the foundations of art language in the spirit of postobject, corporeal, mental, analytical, and media art. For him this turnabout is not only linguistic but also, in a specific way, both ideological and political. In other words, by effecting this turnabout, the artist wants to become, or behave, like a conscious "nomad," one who keeps changing the means and methods of his own art so as to avoid any formative or operational schemes, any typological classification of his work, any external threat that his work may be instrumentalized for any purpose, seeking only to remain the artist as indomitable individual, one who constantly leads himself to the verge of the exhaustion of the previous cycle and to the beginning of the next cycle of expression.



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Radomir Damnjan, *Crveni krug* [Red Circle], 1965, oil on canvas, 145 x 145 cm. Private collection.

Informel in Belgrade and Zagreb

A critique analyzing Informel as a characteristic European art phenomenon of the initial postwar decades unambiguously states that Informel does not possess the attributes of a (neo-)avant-garde formation since it does not solicit any possibility of the transformation of the total social situation, and particularly since it does not advocate a progressive vision of the project as an ideological projection into a more favorable human future. (According to G. C. Argan, "Informel is not and does not pretend to be an avant-garde movement; from the outset it did not take the stand of a usurping and innovating polemic but of an art quite different, *autre*, that bears no pattern inherited from the past and no program obligation toward the future.")¹⁴ But if an art form really is so different and really "other" (*autre*) in relation to previous or surrounding art, then it is, after all, an art that stands in contrast and opposition to the central and dominant art currents, and by virtue of this is excluded from the concept and position of the mainstream. In the postwar Yugoslav artistic environment, Informel possesses those same characteristics precisely because by denoting a mood of existential skepticism and defeatism (since, according to Trifunović, it "affirms the philosophy of hopelessness and the poetics of the absurd"), it is genetically opposed to the ruling ideology of the existing socialist political order based on unreserved trust in continuous socialist progress and the positive attitude of the individual toward his own social surroundings. Consequently, Yugoslav Informel is also contrary to the artistic stances that marked and denoted the ruling ideology, such as socialist modernism and aestheticism. That the political authorities at the time saw the entirety of abstract art, and Informel in particular, as an unacceptable foreign implant in the supposedly healthy mind of the national culture is attested to by an attack on "decadent phenomena" which included abstract art, launched in the New Year's message of 1963 by none other than Josip Broz Tito, the state and party leader himself, as well as in several of his other speeches at the beginning of the same year, which had fatal consequences for the art climate as a whole, thus accelerating the crisis of Informel, after which time this otherwise innovative current begins to slacken until its ultimate "slow demise."

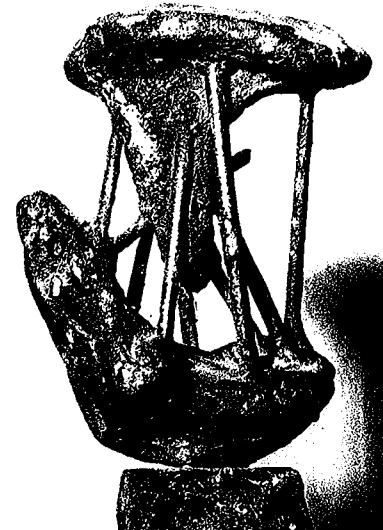
Among the diverse protagonists of Belgrade Informel, whose ascent took place between 1959 and 1963, we find two former members of the Zadar group (the couple Mića Popović and Vera Božičković-Popović), one member of the December Group (Lazar Vozarević), one pursuer of Lubarda's concept of "abstract landscape" (Filo Filipović), and four members of the younger gen-

eration gathered at the Informel exhibition conceptualized by critic Lazar Trifunović in 1962 (Branislav Protić, Zoran Pavlović, V. Todorović, and Živojin Turinski). Trifunović himself played a significant role in the promotion, theoretization, and historicization of Belgrade Informel, which, according to the interpretation of this critic, appears as a standpoint opposed to the previous socialist aestheticism and thus assumes the features of politically engaged art. In other words, according to Trifunović:

Informel rose against aestheticism in the very being of painting as well as against the increasingly strong wave of alienation in society; it became an art of crisis, a consequence of crisis, an expression of crisis, the first serious, deep and overwhelming crisis Serbian painting was to encounter in its modern history. Informel encouraged the crisis, deepened it from both outside and within, demanding a change in essential social, cultural, and artistic criteria. After all, if form in painting is a symbol of the world, which it is, did not its demolition in Informel mean the total negation of external reality, covering the entire range of socioeconomic and socioideological values? In that respect Informel had all the characteristics of engaged painting.¹⁵

Set aside from any declarative membership in the Informel tendency, yet earlier and linguistically much more radical than the aforementioned painters, Belgrade artist Olga Jevrić developed, from the early 1950s on, a type of abstract sculpture related to the terminology of Informel in her choice of material (concrete and iron), irregular form, reduction to elemental mass, as well as a particularly dramatic character of expression. Her appearance (as part of the Yugoslav selection) at the Venice Biennial in 1958 drew the considerable attention of international art critics, who picked this artist out from among the most current European sculptors of the young generation. Jevrić's sculptures are mainly "proposals for monuments" to the victims of the war, but taking into account the absence of easily legible symbolic meaning and thus resistance to any ideological fictionalization, these sculptures remained hidden from public view in small studios and galleries instead of finding their place in monumental formats in exterior environments.

When, in such a complex situation, we begin to recognize more detailed linguistic and conceptual differences among representatives of Informel on the Zagreb art scene in the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s, we are able to discern two parallel, simultaneous, almost equally developed problematic trends. This is not a classification regarding artistic



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Olga Jevrić, *Komplementarne forme I* [Complementary Forms I], 1956, iron, lost.

quality, rather it is a division pertaining to frame of mind, the way the very nature of art was perceived and the method of the artist's integration into the channels of development of art life in his own environment. The first of these trends is made up of painters who, in the expressive terms of Informel and lyric abstraction, maintain an affirmative and positive attitude toward the act of painting and the pictorial values of the painting. O. Petlevski, Ferdinand Kulmer, Š. Perić, I. Kalina, and B. Dogan belong to this trend, all of them graduates of the Krsto Hegedušić master workshop, and along with them the members of the March group, founded in 1957. Based on some general features of their work, this group could be joined, at least in some of its phases, by painters Lj. Ivančić and A. Kinert, and sculptors Dušan Džamonja and S. Luketić. In the broad and linguistically diverse field of Informel painting and lyric abstraction, as well as in the sculpture of rejected, and then reused, metal fragments, the stance taken by these artists belongs essentially to the ideology of moderate and late modernism, which respects rather than rejects the pictorial and plastic features of a visual work, choosing not to penetrate beyond those features into the spirit of the formless "other art" (*un art autre*, to use the term of Paris critic Michel Tapié, author of the term *Art Informel*).

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Members and friends of Gorgona:
Dimitrije Bašičević, Josip Vaništa, Djuro
Seder, Julije Knifer, Radoslav Putar,
Matko Meštrović, Slobodan Vučičević, Ivo
Steiner; Zagreb, 1961. Artist's collection.



GORGONSKA CRNA
NOIR DE GORGONE
GORGONA'S BLACK

On the other hand, this position of Informel as the “other art” is adopted on the Zagreb scene by a circle of painters that includes members of the Gorgona group (J. Vaništa, Dj. Seder, M. Jevšovar, and M. Horvat) and some authors close to this group (I. Gattin and E. Feller), while one person in the circle is a former Exat member (V. Kristl). Regardless of their understandable and considerable mutual differences, the Informel of these artists is essentially antipictorial, antivisual, antiaesthetic, conceptual rather than expressive, reductive and iconoclastic, nonreferential, deprived of reference to anything from the external world apart from the factuality of matter itself, rife with philosophical connotations—hence nihilistic, agnostic, negativist, and, owing to its essentially antitraditionalist characteristics, termed Zagreb radical Informel by the critics who supported it.

Ivo Gattin is the key protagonist of the Zagreb radical Informel as the “other art,” not only because he is an earlier representative of this artistic conception (he completed his first paintings in the spirit of Informel in 1956, exhibiting them individually in 1957), but above all because of his complete conceptual maturity and extreme operative elaboration of this artistic concept. Gattin created his early paintings in dense matter as a mixture of various pigments of cement, sand, resin, wax, and polish, resulting in opaque black “grounds” of rectangular or, less often, oval shape. Shortly afterward, he noticed that such a shape or frame of the painting imposes a boundary to the matter, disrupting its eruptive expansion. He therefore decided to create his painting by burning the matter applied on the coarse jute cloth (by pouring gasoline over it and setting it on fire), and what remains in the ashes ends up as a lump of charred matter which is then fixed onto the background surface, thus giving this lump the appearance and status of an object that can only conditionally be called a painting. Owing to irregular formats, Gattin’s paintings from the early 1960s resemble debris, reminiscent of the ruins that

Ivo Gattin, *Površina sa sedam rupa*
(Surface with Seven Holes), 1961, various
materials, 170 x 122 x 7.5 cm. Muzej
svremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.



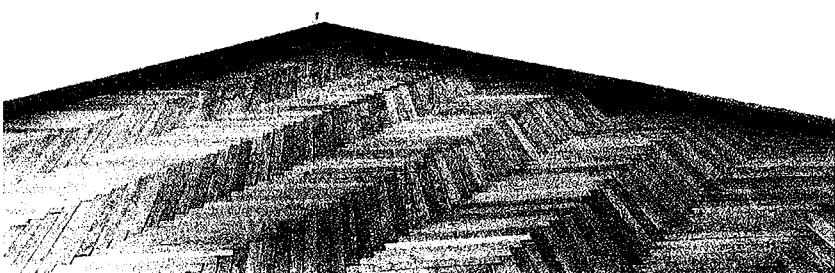
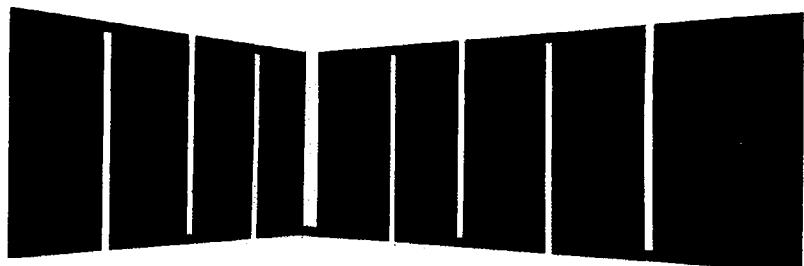
remain after violent cataclysms. Nobody from either the Croatian or the Yugoslav art scene had until that time destroyed a painting so systematically or reduced it so drastically to its very skeleton, to its bare bones. If that is still painting, then it is painting at the level of point zero, it is the end of the art of painting as a painting method, the end of the painting as an aesthetic object, and what remains after Gattin's nonpainting interventions with the means of painting is matter itself as painting or painting as matter itself.

Gorgona

The Gorgona [Gorgon] group (Zagreb, 1959–1966) assembles several well-established and renowned actors from the local art life of that period: the painters J. Vaništa, J. Knifer, and Dj. Seder, sculptor I. Kožarić, M. Horvat (an architect working as a painter), and three critics, Radoslav Putar, Matko Meštrović, and Dimitrije Bašičević, and it was precisely within the framework of Gorgona that Bašičević was to become an artist known under his pseudonym Mangelos. However, not everything that brought about these individuals' affirmation and reputation, what they did and how they appeared in public, can be said to belong entirely to Gorgona, nor can it be identified and linked with the concept of Gorgona. Gorgona is, in fact, their less public, almost secret, "private" meeting and socializing, rather "existing" than

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Julije Knifer, *Meandar u kut*
[Meander in Angle], 1961, oil on
canvas, 143 x 308 and 143 x 199
cm. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti,
Zagreb.



"acting" (as rightly stated by the historian of this group, Nena Dimitrijević), which was manifested—instead of through the usual means of exhibitions of paintings or sculptures or dealing with art criticism—through the publication of the antimagazine also called *Gorgona*, in "Gorgonesque ideas" and "Gorgonesque actions," in a word in "Gorgonesque behavior" beyond the artistic material and aesthetic object. Nena Dimitrijević described and explained the essence of this highly unusual art phenomenon as follows:

Gorgona was the process involved in the search for spiritual and intellectual freedom, a realization which is an end in itself. Apart from the professional obligations of creating an artistic production and the promotion of oneself and one's colleagues in the hierarchy of the local art scene, this group of people gathered together and communicated, motivated only by the presuppositions of their spiritual community and affinity. Regardless of the differences that existed between the singular creative conceptions, what united the members of Gorgona was their common dedication to the spirit of modernism, defined by a recognition of the absurd, the void, and monotony as aesthetic categories, a tendency toward nihilism and metaphysical irony. A modern point of view may deem those spiritual coordinates insufficient to determine the space of activity of an art group, but at the time of Gorgona's formation, Yugoslav art was dominated by the criteria of opposing values, so the vital energy of the group was sparked in their opposition to the art establishment of the time.¹⁶

Opposition to the art establishment of the time meant, in the case of Gorgona, relinquishing the local moderate modernism that had in the course of time not only acquired full legitimacy in the culture of postwar Yugoslav socialism, but had also gradually become the dominant spiritual and artistic climate. To be in opposition to this climate meant implementing a radicalization of modernist methods in art practices, to the extent that they became unacceptable to the criteria of dominant values. This radicalization was manifested through the abandonment of the pictorial aesthetics of painting and plastic aesthetic sculpture in the name of mental presuppositions of work in the same disciplines. Hence, the painting and sculpture of the members of Gorgona is reductionist, concretist, monochromatic or bichromatic, minimalist, nonillusionist, nonreferential, and tautological; hence the occasional interlacing of the painting part of this production with the phenomenon of Zagreb radical Informel. When taken to a more extreme degree, this led to

abandoning painting and sculpture for an art that existed only in the form of art behavior. Although highly nonstandard for the setting in which it emerged, without any stronghold or support in the heritage of its own culture, Gorgona is by no means an extratemporal or extrahistorical art phenomenon. It appeared at a time when there was already enough knowledge about Dada and Duchamp in the local cultural environment. Word spread in informed circles about John Cage, Yves Klein, and Piero Manzoni (with whom the protagonists of Gorgona, Vaništa and Meštrović, were in personal contact), about neo-Dada and new realism, and, owing to the very spirit of the times, Gorgona shows considerable similarities with the mentality of Fluxus. Gorgona is, in fact, a particle of the epochal *Weltanschauung*, marked by a mood of skepticism and doubt in the unbroken progressive development of contemporary civilization as a spiritual state that emerged at certain points on the European cultural map in the early and mid-1950s, such as the Situationist International and its predecessor the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, a critique of functionalism in architecture and industrial design. It appears more widely as a general critique of the alienation of daily life, combined with a mood of increasing discomfort and dissatisfaction with the entire spiritual and social situation in the existing social order, one that was unacceptable to the members of Gorgona not so much for political as for psychological, cultural, and artistic reasons, to which we can also add global existential circumstances and factors.

The nucleus of Gorgonesque practice turned out to be remarkable, especially the work of Knifer, Jevšovar, and Kožarić both in painting and, in one case, in sculpture. Their antimagazine, *Gorgona*, was published in the form of individual works of the type: “the book as the work of an artist” (issues were published by group members Vaništa, Knifer, Jevšovar, and Kožarić and their guests Vasarely, Rot, and Pinter; Manzoni’s contribution, although ready for print, remained unpublished, while the archives of Gorgona contain correspondence with Fontana and Rauschenberg regarding the publication of contributions by them). Gorgonesque practice also consists of various actions, anonymous collective works, texts, inscriptions, and “stories” (where Mangelos particularly excelled), indicating that language was an important medium of Gorgonesque practice, thus linking it to the phenomena of concept art and proto-concept art (conceptual *avant la lettre*). Vaništa, the initiator and organizer of most of the Gorgonesque artistic production, gave the most plausible definition of this phenomenon and, owing to his key role in the group, probably the closest (see the manifestos at the end of this book).¹⁷

New Tendencies as “the Last Avant-garde”

The New Tendencies movement—named after a series of five international exhibitions held in Zagreb between 1961 and 1973—is the common name for the phenomena of neoconstructivist and neoconcretist optical, programmed, kinetic, lumino-kinetic, and computer art, which have been said to make up the “last avant-garde” on the European art scene after World War II (“L’ultima avanguardia—Arte programmata e cinetica,” according to the title of a retrospective show of this movement held in Milan in 1983). We are, indeed, dealing with the last international art movement whose representatives still had hopes (and illusions) for the possibility of change in the social, the political, and, ultimately, the total vision of the contemporary world based on the mediating and guiding role of art and the artist. This hope (and illusion) evaporated shortly after 1968, when it must have become clear to all of them that there would never be any radical change in the relationship between society, politics, and art in the contemporary world. Precisely because it possessed and emphasized such an aspiration, however, the New Tendencies movement can be understood in its essence only with an insight into its global ideology, about which one of the leading theorists of this movement during the first years of its formation, Matko Meštrović, writes convincingly and in great detail. According to Meštrović,

New Tendencies emerged spontaneously in that climate first felt in Old Europe. A positive attitude toward scientific knowledge is a tradition of the pioneers of modern architecture, neoplasticians and Bauhausians, which, although not fully consummated, remained active. What was also active and thriving was the confidence in the potential metamorphosing power of technology and industrialization, and the deeply rooted thought of Marx’s teaching made the approach to social changes and problems constructive. That is why it was possible in Europe to have the first critique and the first confrontation with the components of corruption and alienation as well as a determined demand for the demystification of the concept of art and artistic creation, for unmasking the dominating influence of the art market which speculated with art, treating it contradictorily as both myth and commodity. What was also made possible was a tendency to overcome individualism and a spirit of collective work. Progressive political orientation is also clearly indicated, and the art subject matter is concentrated not on questions of a unique work of art, but on plastic and visual research in an effort to

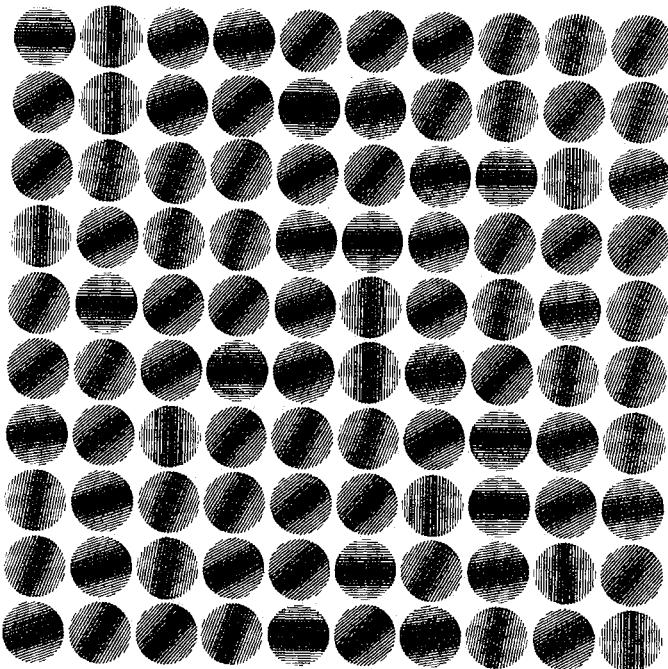
determine the objective mental/physical foundations of the plastic phenomenon and of visual perceptions, thus excluding *a priori* any possibility of interference by subjectivism, individualism, and romanticism, which burden all traditional aesthetics theories. It is understandable that as the principles of industrial production, as the most efficient instrument and method of rapid socialization of material and spiritual values, were also resolutely adopted, so, accordingly, works tend to be conceived in those terms in order to make them both easy to reproduce and accessible.¹⁸

Meštrović was able to become a leading theorist and ideologist of the New Tendencies movement because, among other things, of his presence at the organizational center of this movement in Zagreb, where the movement originated at its first exhibition in 1961 and where it developed further throughout the decade, continuing into the early 1970s. The first exhibition (where former Exat member Picelj and one of the Gorgona members, Knifer, appeared among the local exhibitors) took place exactly ten years after the publication of the Exat 51 manifesto, while the second exhibition of New Tendencies occurred exactly ten years after the appearance of four Exat painters in 1953. Exat members Kristl, Srnec, and Richter, following in the footsteps of Picelj, joined the New Tendencies movement at this second exhibition. It is evident, therefore, that there is an Exat/New Tendencies axis; the link between the two phenomena is primarily personal but also ideological, since it concerns the continuity of an art with a constructivist approach. The Exat 51 group could be said to be the historical background upon which the New Tendencies movement was able to find its organizational center of international dimensions, while the appearance of the New Tendencies movement in Zagreb is a confirmation of the freshness and vitality of the Exat ideas, which, only a decade after the appearance of the group, were already deeply rooted in the art mentality of their own surroundings.

The conclusion, therefore, unmistakably confirms that the initiative for starting a series of five international exhibitions of the New Tendencies movement did not occur in Zagreb by accident, nor was it an outside initiative; there were manifold historical and contemporary predispositions for its creation precisely where it was. As can be clearly seen in retrospect, the appearance of New Tendencies in the early 1960s took place in a brief period of Yugoslav social, economic, and cultural prosperity, a time when this environment was imbued with an optimistic mood of belonging to the modern world and a tendency to adopt, apply, and develop many progressive achievements

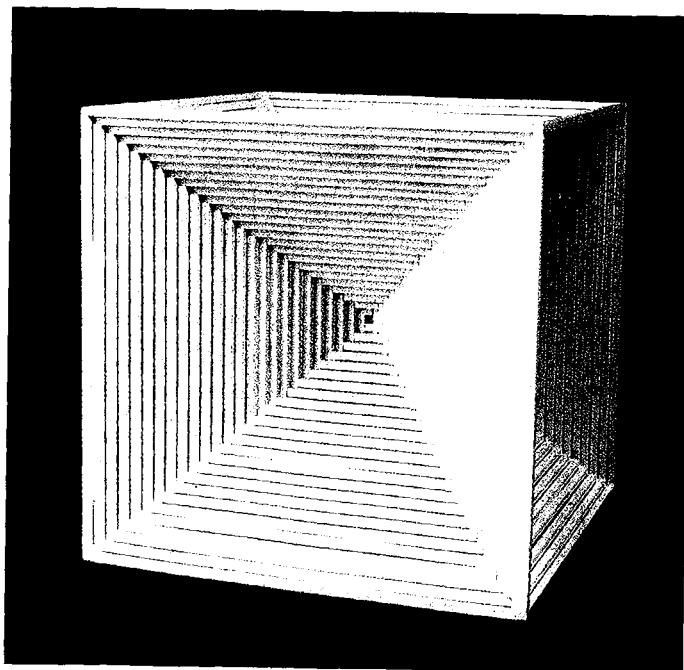
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Ivan Picelj, *Oeuvre programmée no. 1*,
1966, silk screen, 50 x 65 cm. Muzej
suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.



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Juraj Dobrović, *Prostorna konstrukcija*
[Spatial Construction], 1968, wood and
lacquer, 41.2 x 40.8 x 40.6 cm. Muzej
suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.



of contemporary civilization in the specific conditions of Yugoslav society. Moreover, a sense of leadership was cultivated in linking various otherwise separated and often confrontational positions in the modern world on the time-and-space coordinates of the cold war. The Yugoslav, Croatian, and more concretely Zagreb art scene of the 1960s was the hub of an international art movement with an overtly leftist ideology, but also a movement independent of the influences of any real political force, a movement autonomously artistic, that is, ideologically based and oriented according to the independent intentions of its members. This points to the conclusion that nowhere else at a given moment—in the West, ruled by a powerful art market, or in the East, where art was oppressed by an exceedingly rigid ideology—was it possible to find such a center as that of the New Tendencies movement. The foreign participants at the New Tendencies exhibitions in Zagreb were aware of these special circumstances, which is also confirmed by their readiness to participate in those exhibitions in great numbers. The art exhibited at the New Tendencies exhibitions appears today as the art of a time fueled by exceptional optimism—the time and art of the still thriving late modernism and “the last avant-garde,” when in both society and art there remained an unconditional belief in general progress, in the opening of all boundaries, in internationalism, and in positive and progressive changes to everyday existence. All this took place shortly before the illusory nature of many of those beliefs was realized; soon after the exhaustion of this belief, art in the early 1970s arose based on completely different postulates and ideas, developing in new and, again, increasingly radical directions and roads.

translated by Branka Nikolić

Notes

1. Regarding art in Yugoslavia in the first postwar decades see Vera Horvat-Pintarić, “Suvremena jugoslavenska umjetnost” [Contemporary Yugoslav Art], *Razlog* 5 (Zagreb, May 1964); the same text was published in Italian in the journal *Civiltà delle macchine* 3 (May–June 1964); Matko Meštrović, “Osobitost i univerzalnost: Jedan pogled u jugoslavensko slikarstvo posljednjeg decenija” [The Particular and the Universal: A View of Yugoslav Painting over the Last Decade], *Kolo* 2 (February 1964); the same text was published in the book *Od pojedinačnog općem* [From the Individual to the General] (Zagreb: Mladost, 1967); *Jugoslovensko slikarstvo šeste decenije* [Yugoslav Painting of the Sixth Decade], exhibition catalog (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1980); Dunja Blažević, “Who’s That Singing over There? Art in

- Yugoslavia and After . . . 1949–1989,” in the exhibition catalog *Aspects/Positions: 50 Years of Art in Central Europe* (Vienna: Ludwig Museum, 1999–2000).
2. *Venecijanski Biennale i jugoslavenska moderna umjetnost 1895–1988* [The Venetian Biennial and Yugoslav Modern Art 1895–1988] (Zagreb: Edition of the Gallery of the City of Zagreb, 1988).
 3. Lazar Trifunović, *Enformel u Beogradu* [Informel in Belgrade], exhibition catalog (Belgrade: Cvijeta Zuzorić Pavilion, 1982), republished in the book *Studije, ogledi, kritike, 3* [Studies, Reviews, Criticism, 3] (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990).
 4. Piero Pacini, *Gualatiero Nativi*, exhibition catalog (Florence: Gallery Michaud, 1976).
 5. Meštrović, “Osobitost i univerzalnost.”
 6. Vera Horvat-Pintarić, *Vjenceslav Richter*, monograph (Zagreb: Graficki zavod Hrvatske, 1970).
 7. Horvat-Pintarić, “Suvremena jugoslavenska umjetnost.”
 8. Tomaž Brejc, *Temni modernizem: Slike, teorije, interpretacije* [Dark Modernism: Paintings, Theories, Interpretation] (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1991).
 9. Meštrović, “Osobitost i univerzalnost.”
 10. Marijan Tršar, “Slovenačko figurativno slikarstvo” [Slovenian Figurative Painting], in the exhibition catalog *Jugoslavensko slikarstvo šeste decenije*.
 11. Trifunović, “Enformel u Beogradu.”
 12. Miodrag B. Protić, “Slikarstvo šeste decenije u Srbiji” [Painting of the Sixth Decade in Serbia], in the exhibition catalog *Jugoslavensko slikarstvo šeste decenije*.
 13. Protić, “Slikarstvo šeste decenije u Srbiji.”
 14. Giulio Carlo Argan, “Materia, tecnica e storia nell’informale,” 1959, in the book *Salvezza e caduta nell’arte moderna* (Milan, 1964), translated by Matko Meštrović as “Materija, tehnika i povijest u Informelu,” *Književnik* 1 (1961), republished in the book *Studije o modernoj umjetnosti* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1982).
 15. Trifunović, “Enformel u Beogradu.”
 16. Nena Dimitrijević, *Gorgona—umjetnost kao način postojanja*, catalog from a Gorgona retrospective exhibition (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1977).
 17. Ibid.
 18. Matko Meštrović, “Ideologija Novih tendencija” [The Ideology of New Tendencies], in the exhibition catalog *New Tendencies 2* (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1963), republished in the book *Od pojedinačnog općem* (Zagreb: Mladost, 1967).



7

Conceptual Art

Miško Šuvaković

Definitions and History of Conceptual Art

Conceptual art is an autoreflexive, analytical, and protheoretical artistic practice based on the observation of the nature and concept, worlds and institutions of art.¹ Conceptual artwork may be concepts or theoretical objects. Their point is first to disturb the conventions of traditional modernism and the way modernists make, show, receive, and consume art in the form of autonomous, universal artworks. Conceptual artists then engage in theoretical research in realms of artwork that have, in the past, excluded theory, such as the modernistic muteness of the art of painting.

Theoretical conceptual² art is the name given to the verbal debates and the essays that investigate, ponder, and speak of the nature, concept, and objective of art: artwork, reception of art, the art world, a history of art, art institutions, art paradigms, art-making, the artist as a subject, the role of the reader or viewer, and culture. Theoretical conceptual art as a critical and analytical form of art first emerged in the Anglo-Saxon world with the group Art & Language, the Society for Theoretical Art and Analysis, and Joseph Kosuth.³

Analytical art⁴ is an artistic practice based on research into the epistemological, conceptual, and linguistic nature of art in the twentieth century. There are four approaches to defining analytical art. The first considers the analytical propositions, tautology, and logical frivolity in conceptual art. The second looks at the conditions and the reasons for applying the method of analytical philosophy and structuralism to conceptual art. Third are the formalist, linguistic, and semiotic definitions of analytical art to be found in postminimalist and postconceptual art. Fourth is a project on the analytical

trend in twentieth-century art from postimpressionism through analytical cubism to conceptual art and hyperrealism developed by Italian theorist and historian of modern art Filiberto Menna.

Art is analytical when it is defined by the concepts of logical frivolity, tautology, and analytical proposition. The terms mystical conceptual art (Renato Barilli) or transcendental conceptualism⁵ (Tomaž Brejc) describe the metaphysical concepts of this art. These concepts interpret the reduction and dematerialization of an artwork as the focus of the artist and the people researching and directly experiencing spiritual powers such as esoterica, magic, alchemy, ritual, telepathy. In this view the artist does not deal with the world of objects, but rather with a world of intersubjective, psychological, and spiritual relationships.

American critics Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler introduced the phrase “dematerialization of the art object”⁶ (1968) as an alternate to the term conceptual art. “Dematerialization of the art object” implies different examples in which the character of the work of art in question is reduced to a process with the body, or with materials, forms of behavior, and diagrammatic or textual formulations, ranging from the late neo-Dada and Fluxus through arte povera, the antiform art, and postminimalism to theoretical conceptual art.

Conceptual Art and Specific Cultures

Although conceptual art was characterized as an international⁷ style or concept, in other words a language of art, there are, indeed, contextual and cultural differences that distinguish individual conceptual practices between 1968 and 1978. It is possible to speak of an American or, even more narrowly, a New York brand of conceptual art as a post-Duchamp reaction to aesthetics and the dogmas of the Greenbergian formalist high modernism of postpainterly abstraction, with artists such as Sol LeWitt, Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry, Ian Wilson, and Mel Bochner. English conceptual art, on the other hand, with Art & Language and Victor Burgin, was born in the classrooms of modernist art schools.

European conceptual art, with Daniel Buren, Braco Dimitrijević, Marcel Broodthaers, and the Italian arte povera movement, emerged as a post-situationist, New Leftist critique of the art system and art institutions. German conceptual art, however, came into being in the form of research into the mystical borders of the relationship between the individuum and society, with artists Joseph Beuys, Hanne Darboven, and Franz Erhard Walther.

Eastern European conceptual art was born of dramatic political conditions in which very different activities, including formal linguistic analysis of the language of art, public or private behavior such as body art, performance art, and mystical, intersubjective experiments, have always had the same political consequences. Eastern European conceptual art is politicized by the very fact of its critical and decentralized positioning in the political landscape controlled by the bureaucratic structure of single-party political systems.

Yugoslav conceptual art came into being along much the same lines as conceptual art in other parts of Eastern Europe. There was, however, one distinction. During the 1960s and 1970s, Yugoslavia was open to the West and to the influence of the artistic trends of the time.⁸ In this sense, artists such as the members of the OHO group, Braco Dimitrijević, Marina Abramović, Radomir Damjan, and Gergelj Urkom took an active role in all events on the international art scene. Braco Dimitrijević and Marina Abramović shaped their international art during the 1970s:

Yugoslav conceptual art came from groups and individuals from the distinct cultures of Slovenia (Kranj, Ljubljana), Croatia (Split, Zagreb), Serbia (Novi Sad, Subotica, Belgrade, Ruma), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo). It emerged from processes that were called “conceptual art” or “postobject” appearances until 1971, and referred to as “new art,” “expanded media,” and “new art practices” in the 1970s and early 1980s. The term “new art practice” was formulated to refer to various art appearances, events in the visual arts, literature, film, theater, and music that served as analysis, criticism, and subversion of the moderate socialist modernism of that period.⁹

Conceptual Art in Slovenia: The OHO Group, the OHO Catalog Movement, and the Family at Šempas

The OHO group had its roots in Kranj, a Slovenian town near Ljubljana. As high school students, Iztok Geister and Marko Pogačnik began making radical cross-media experiments in poetry and the visual arts (1962 to 1966). This came out of a neo-avant-garde sensibility and a fresh approach to the historical avant-garde (Dada, the Slovenian avant-garde magazine *Tank*, and surrealism). These cross-media experiments were also a critique of mainstream existential modernism in painting, sculpture, poetry, prose, and theater.

In the mid-1960s, OHO set out the theory and practice of reism. Reism is a philosophical and art movement in Slovenian culture that refers to “a return to things themselves.” This is when the artworks called *artikli* (articles) were made (pop art production in real socialism), as was “topographic

poetry" (experiments in visual and concrete poetry). The OHO Catalog movement emerged in Ljubljana (1967–1971), bringing together various figures from the alternative culture scene. These included concrete poets and ludists I. G. Plamen, Franci Zagoričnik, and Matjaž Hanžek, experimental prose writers Rudi Šeligo and Dimitrij Rupel, theorists of structuralism and poststructuralism Taras Kermauner, Slavoj Žižek, Rastko Močnik, and Braco Rotar, and the OHO group artists Tomaž Šalamun, Andraž Šalamun, Marko Pogačnik, Milenko Matanović, and David Nez.

In the second half of the 1960s, the OHO group entered the phase of process art: arte povera, antiform art, land art. OHO became a group of five authors: Pogačnik, Nez, Matanović, Andraž Šalamun, and Tomaž Šalamun. They made works that could no longer be defined as objects ("an object in the center of the world") but as relationships between objects, installations or

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OHO group (Tomaž Šalamun), *Seno* [Hay], 1969, photograph of installation. OHO archive; reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.



families, visible or invisible processes of objects and their mutual relationships, in other words with objects in the field of natural energies (gravitation, warmth, the flow of water). The world is presented as a dynamic order of things between the eye and the ear. The work of art comes into being as an event or a situation in nature and then as a conceptual document and as a presentation in media of an event executed in space and time.

At the very end of the 1960s and the early 1970s came the phase of transcendental conceptualism. Aspects of the world accessible to the senses are not shown or documented. Instead the natural and the human world are presented as an order of relationships that can be given conceptually (in terms) or mentally (in imagination) in the world or the mind. The idea of dematerializing the art object is a framework for presenting the unrepresentable. Tomaž Brejc introduced the term "transcendental conceptualism" in order to describe the activities of the OHO group and its aim of presenting what exists beyond what can be presented through the senses. Their works are the documentation of intersubjective relationships between four artists or four minds (Pogačnik, Matanović, Nez, and Andraž Šalamun). In other words, they worked with a designed, intersubjective "subject" which they called the "OHO man." The OHO man existed through the roles of relationships of the systematic, sensitive, rational, and intuitive. This was the point at which the work of the OHO group became part of international art practice.¹⁰ They exhibited their works at important exhibitions of conceptual art and formed ties with international artists such as Walter de Maria. Public performances were suddenly dropped in 1971. The members of the OHO group opted for an aesthetics of silence.

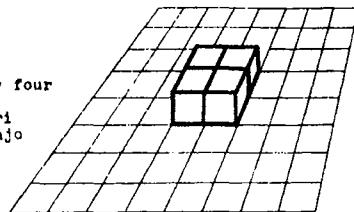
The OHO group disbanded itself in 1971. Its members began living in a commune. The Commune or the Družina u Šempasu [Family at Šempas] was born from a decision by urban artists to live in the countryside. At the very outset, the Commune was an "urban gesture" framed in the movements of the counterculture or the hippy alternative of the late 1960s. At first, going to the Commune at Šempas¹¹ was a gesture of refusal, or one of choosing the aesthetics of silence over the corruptness of the ruling post-modernist world of art and social realist dreariness. In the next step it was also a ludistic game: a return to the ritual and to the ritual nature of the game in everyday life. Life became the substance of art and art lost its autonomy, a specific conceptual quality, owing to the lack of distinction in everyday life. The ideal of the avant-garde (Dada, constructivism, early surrealism) had been won. The exclusivity of art was lost in day-to-day human relations.

OHO group (David Nez), Vremenske strukture [Time Structures], 1970, diagram, 29.7 x 21 cm. OHO archive; reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.

DAVID NEZ, 1970

time-structures, to be documented on 8mm film (1 position-1 frame, 16 frames per second)
object-program
časovne strukture, ki se dokumentirajo na 8mm filmu (1 pozicija-1 sličica, 16 sličic na sekundo)

a grid marked off on floor
units A,B,C,D, presented by four
identical cubes
raster narisani na tla, štiri
identične kocke predstavljajo
enote A,B,C,D

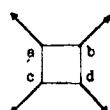


1 unit, a square with
points a,b,c,d
sides ab,ac,bd,cd



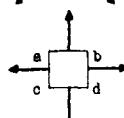
1 enota, kvadrat s
točkami a,b,c,d
stranicami ab,ac,bd,cd

each point selects
a direction of
movement (diagonal)



vseka točka selektira
smer gibanja (diagonalno)

each side selects
a direction of
movement (horizontal,
vertical)

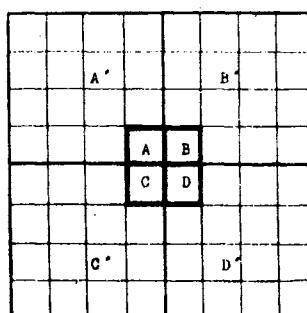


vseka stranica selektira
smer gibanja (horizontalno,
vertikalno)

1 unit = 1 square
1 square x 16 = 1 section
4 sections = total grid
(64 squares)

1 enota = 1 kvadrat
1 kvadrat x 16 = 1 sekcija
4 sekcije = celotni raster
(64 kvadratov)

unit A in section A'
enota A v sekciji A'



enota B v sekciji B'
unit B in section B'

unit C in section C'
enota C v sekciji C'

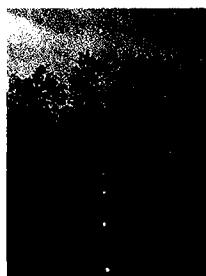
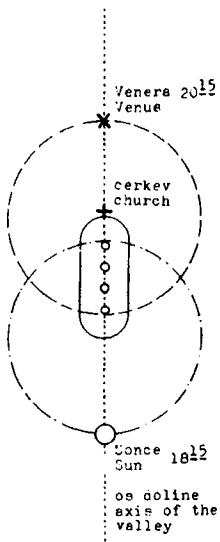
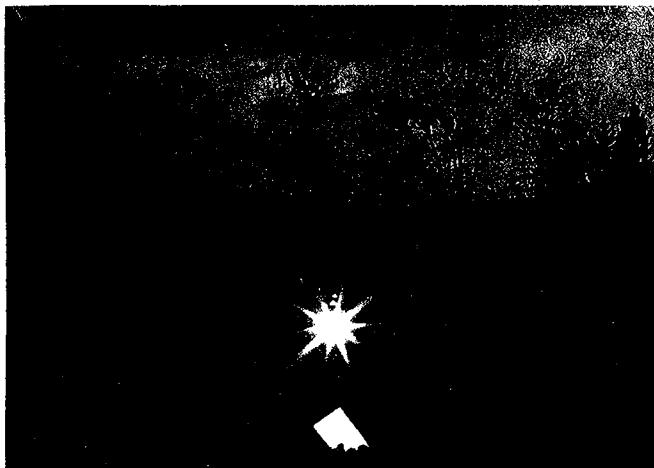
unit D in section D'
enota D v sekciji D'

MILENKO MATAČIĆ, april 1970

telo / body	Izložbena sala Buro Đaković, Sarajevo
film / film	Museum of Modern Art, New York, Information
fotografija / photo	:
tekst / text	:

RELACIJA SOLJE - DOLINA ZARICA - ZVEZDA VENERA
RALATION SUN - ZARICA VALLEY - STAR VENUS

Sončne - ogledala Sun - mirrors
Venera - svijeće Venus - candles

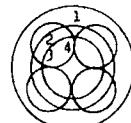
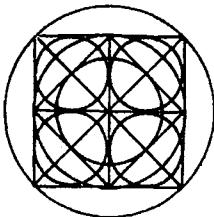


98

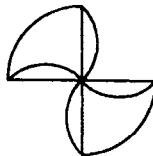
OHO group (Milenco Matanović), *Relacije*
Sončne-dolina Zarice-zvezda Venera [Relation
Sun-Zarica Valley-Star Venus], 1970, diagram
and photographs, 29.7 x 21 cm. OHO archive;
reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.

(3)

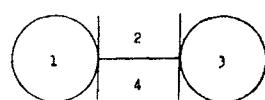
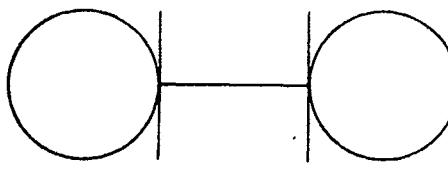
- 10.1.izven-svetna sféra
out-of-world sphere
2.svetna sféra
world-sphere
3.grupna sféra
group sphere
4.individualna sféra
individual sphere



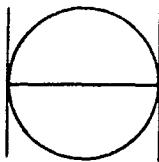
- 11.1.sistematico-razionalna vloga
systematical-rational role
2.sistematično-intuitivna vloga
systematical-intuitive role
3.senzibilno-intuitivna vloga
sensitive-intuitive role
4.senzibilno-razionalna vloga
sensitive-rational role



- 12.1.marko pogičnik
2.david nez
3.andraž šalamun
4.milenko matanović



- 13.1.aplošni del projekta OHO
general part of the project OHO
2.projekt OHO
project OHO
3.posebni del projekta OHO
particular part of the project OHO



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99

OHO group (Marko Pogačnik), *Projekt OHO*
[Project OHO], 1970, diagram, 29.7 x 21 cm.
OHO archive; reproduced by permission of
Marko Pogačnik.

Conceptual Art in Croatia

Conceptual art in Croatia¹² emerged in the late 1960s through criticism and subversion of high modernism (Informel, lyrical, abstract) as well as through the neo-avant-garde experiments of the neoconstructivist movement of the New Tendencies¹³ (1961–1973). Croatian conceptual art was foreshadowed by the work and activities of Gorgona and the activist practices of artists of the Crveni peristil [Red Peristyle] group (Split, 1966), before beginning with the work of Goran Trbuljak and Braco Dimitrijević in Zagreb in 1968.

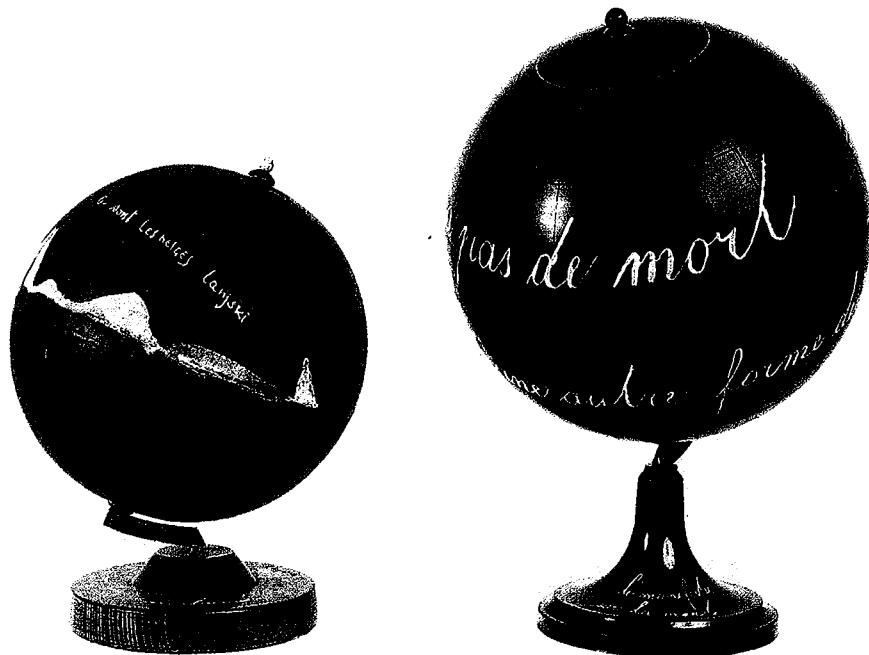
Gorgona¹⁴ was an open art group in touch with Informel, the Kleinian metaphysical new realism, Fluxus, and neo-Dada in Zagreb from 1959 to 1966. In a lucid and critical manner, the Gorgona artists and theorists viewed and dealt with the relationship between the individual and manifestations of the collective, in other words the differences between the public and the private. People who socialized and collaborated within Gorgona included painters Marijan Jevšovar, Julije Knifer, Djuro Seder, and Josip Vaništa, sculptor Ivan Kožarić, architect Miljenko Horvat, art historians Dimitrije Bašičević and Radoslav Putar, sociologist and cultural theorist Matko Meštrović, and later Ivo Steiner and Slobodan Vuličević.

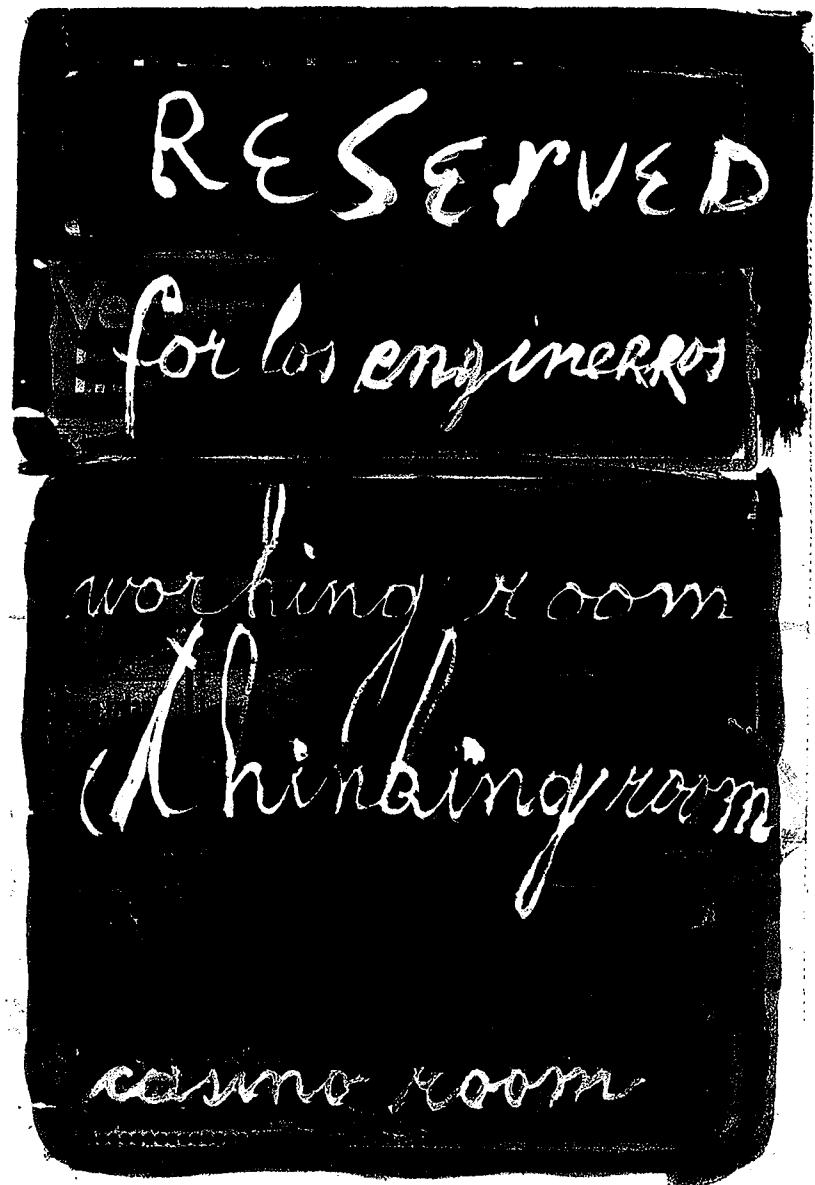
Gorgona was characterized by a sense of radical modernism, an understanding of the crisis of Informel and existentialism, criticism of the object as a completed product/work of art, a sense of the absurd, black humor and metaphysical irony, nihilism, individual ethics as opposed to politicization, and a quest for other art forms. Gorgona and its various activities (a magazine, an association, paintings and sculptures, exhibitions, concepts, action) had much in common with the work and activities of Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni of the Zero group. Judging by the modalities of how these artists behaved, they also had much in common with Fluxus. They differed only by not being politically active and popularist but rather hermetical, elitist, and dandified. What characterizes the paintings of some of the Gorgona members is the intention to make antipaintings by using monotony (Knifer), monochrome (Jevšovar), and primary gestural traces and forms (Seder, Horvat, Vaništa). Projects and concepts were an activity particular to Gorgona. The idea of Gorgona projects and concepts corresponds to the textual works of Fluxus and anticipates certain textual and behavioristic works of conceptual art. Dimitrije Bašičević Mangelos¹⁵ also worked within the Gorgona group and attended Gorgona social events but did not show or exhibit his works (no stories, plates, globes). Mangelos established the protoconceptualist practice of producing unique handmade books, objects, and pictures that link verbal and visual signs and texts.

Crveni peristil [Red Peristyle] was an activist group of artists formed in Split in 1966 and oriented toward postobject art. The group was named after a project by its members to paint the peristyle of the Split cathedral red. The people who collaborated within this group were Pavao Dulčić, Toma Čaleta, Slaven Sumić, Nenad Djapić, Radovan Kogej, Srdjan Blažević, and Vladimir Dodig Trokut. The group was known for its subversive and destructive approach typical of urban post-Duchamp art of the 1960s. In the course of their work they organized many activities aimed at shocking the people of Split, provoking incidents, individual emancipation, and anarchistic individualism. In an eclectic way they mixed into their work underground tactics, hippy behavior, free sexuality, magic, beatnik behavior,

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Mangelos, *Rimbaud no. 2 & Le Manifeste sur la mort*, 1977, objects. Permission given by Zdravka Bašičević and Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.





101

Mangelos, *Reserved for los enginerros*, 1978,
tempera on newspaper, 58 x 43.3 cm. Permission
given by Zdravka Bašičević.



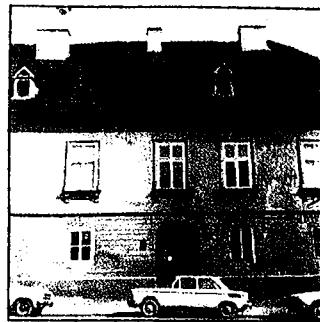
102

Red Peristyle, painting the stones of the
Roman peristyle red, Split, 1968.

drug-taking, and a Fluxus-like drawing of attention from the works of art to action and the act.

Penzioner Tihomir Simčić was the name of a conceptual group founded by Goran Trbuljak and Braco Dimitrijević in 1969 in Zagreb. The group was named after an unknown person whom the artists had met by chance. At the end of the 1960s, Trbuljak and Dimitrijević had taken similar positions in their criticism and subversion of the art system, meaning the status of the artist, the status and function of a work of art, and the role, competence, and power of exhibiting institutions. They worked on concepts of the “anonymous artist,” the “accidental participant (accomplice, viewer),” and the “work of art created by accident.” They problematized the status of the artist in a post-Duchamp and postsituationist manner and exposed to destruction the modernist concept of a great artist who makes an original and unique work of art. Once Penzioner Tihomir Simčić ceased work as a group, Goran Trbuljak¹⁶ worked with and on the model of an anonymous artist, surveys on the status of the artist, and the issue of the relationship between the artist and the art system. Braco Dimitrijević worked on the notion of an accidental passerby, everyday places of historic importance or private places with no historic importance, and the identity and place exhibiting a work of art. In the early 1970s, Braco Dimitrijević moved to the West, where he managed to build a career as an international conceptual artist working with paradoxes of the art system and mechanisms for assigning a place in history to the artist.

A group of six artists,¹⁷ Vlado Martek, Mladen Stilinović, Željko Jerman, Boris Demur, Sven Stilinović, and Fedor Vučemilović, worked in Zagreb from 1975 to 1980. The late conceptual or postconceptual art espoused by the Group of Six claims that there is no one privileged method of making, producing, or, in metalinguial terms, presenting art. Their diverse products, objects, collages, texts, drawings, actions/exhibitions, magazines, pictures, artist's books, and installations are models for usurping the ruling national and state art and ideology. This implies the causes, symptoms, or *points de capiton* that disrupt the normality and “regularity” of the production, distribution, exchange, reception, and consumption of art in the modern society of late socialism. In their work, the distance between the artist and society is lost. What shows is the political subdetermination of each act of art. As Mladen Stilinović put it, “There is no art without consequences.” The aim of their art is not to present the transcendent depth of the spirit, aesthetics, art, day-to-day life, and ideology. They are focused on the deconstruction of the ideology of late socialist realism as a horizon of social definition, ranging from great politics to the politics of everyday life. This is how their many slogans



činjenica da je nekom dana mogućnost da napravi izložbu
važnija je od onoga što će na toj izložbi biti pokazano

goran trbuljak galerija suvremene umjetnosti zagreb katarinin trg 2 14.-21. 5. 1973

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Goran Trbuljak, "The fact that someone has a chance
to hold a show matters more than what will be in that
show," 1973, print. Private collection.

Braco Dimitrijević



INTERVIEW

1974

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Braco Dimitrijević, *Interview*, cover page of
book, 1974. Private collection.



105

Mladen Stilinović, from *Eksploracija mrtvih* [Exploitation of the Dead], 1984–1990. Photograph from artist's collection.

came about (the slogan as artwork). “An attack on my art is an attack on socialism and progress,” wrote Stilinović (1977). Vlado Martek used to say “Every taking up of a pen is an act of honesty” (1976), while Željko Jerman shouted his slogan on the street: “This is not my world” (1978).

Conceptual Art in Serbia

Conceptual art in Serbia¹⁸ began as artists faced the effects, anomalies, and metaphysical boundaries of moderate modernism within real-socialist society. Conceptual art in Serbia came into being as intellectual resistance to moderate modernist anti-intellectualism and aesthetic formalism. This gave rise to ways to overtake, criticize, and subvert modernism.

The evolution of neo-avant-garde experiments in the 1960s led to the activities of Fluxus, neo-Dada, textualism, the vocovisual, and concretism. Artists began working with concepts (ideas, language) and media (the book as

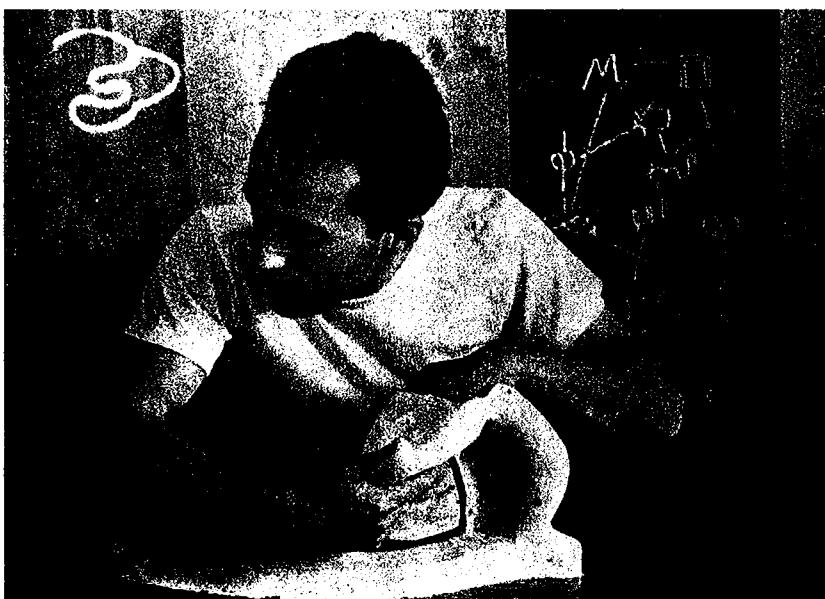


106

Vlado Martek, from *Sentimentalnosti* [Sentimentality], 1985, acrylic on paper, c. 100 x 70 cm. Artist's collection.

107

Vladan Radovanović, *Taktizon 2* and *Ideogram 1*, tactile art work, 1957, photograph of the action with object. Artist's collection.



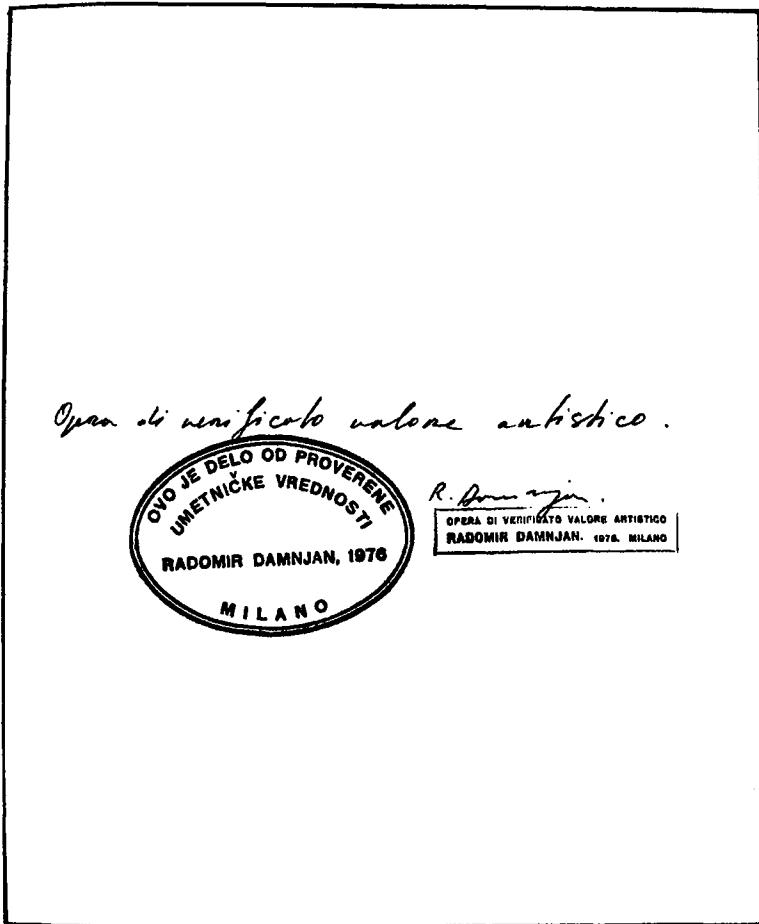
medium, the magazine as medium, and new, unusual media). Of interest here is the work of Vladan Radovanović, who developed specific protoconceptualist and conceptualist works from 1965 to the mid-1970s that were based on the action of the artist, on the relationship between the concept of a work of art and its execution, and so forth. For example, the action *Pričinjavanja* [Apparencies] (1955–1956) is “art work” rather than “a work of art” because it is based on the relationship between a mental, linguistic, and behaviorist event rather than on a completed (manufactured, produced) piece of art.

Belgrade painter Radomir Damnjan contributed an immanent critique of abstract high modernist painting. Damnjan was one of the few abstract painters of high modernism in Serbian culture in the second half of the 1960s. After a fellowship in the United States, he began to paint in a way very similar to postpainterly abstraction, to hard-edge minimalist art. After resolving the basic painterly issues of reductionism, literality, and autonomy of pictorial composition (postpainterly abstraction), he turned abruptly to conceptualization of the artist’s status (the artist as a hypothesis of art) and of the work of art (the relativistic, administrative, and institutional aspects of the identity, status, and value of a work of art).

The Bosch + Bosch group worked in the Hungarian border city of Subotica from 1969 to 1976. This group established a post-avant-garde “thematization” of historic avant-gardes before the Second World War and of the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s. The work of the Bosch + Bosch group, including Slavko Marković, Bálint Szombathy, László Szalma, László Kerekes, Katalin Ladik, Attila Csernik, and Ante Vukov, was nomadic in the sense that they used various means of artistic expression in both an eclectic and an autoreflexive way, from visual poetry, body art, performance art, and land art to textual and analytical conceptual art. Bálint Szombathy introduced two important artistic strategies: the first, to work with the phenomena of politics in social realist societies, for example the performance *Action: Lenin in Budapest* (1972), and the second a complex investigation of the semiology of urban and natural space. The work of the Bosch + Bosch group was also influential in the exchange of information on modern Western art in the hermetic social realist societies of Eastern Europe.

The KôD group,¹⁹ group Ξ,²⁰ and group Ξ-KôD²¹ worked in the domain of process and conceptual art between the 1960s and the 1970s in Novi Sad, the capital city of the Vojvodina. At the turn of the decade, Marxism (real socialism and self-governing socialism) was the context for culture in Novi Sad, but it was also a party power mechanism rather than a behavioral and creative framework for young artists. The work of the KôD

Introduzione
Introduction



Work of Verified Artistic Value - 1976

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Radomir Damnjan, *Work of Verified Artistic Value*,
1976, drawing and text. Private collection.

ESEJ O GRUPI BOSCH + BOSCH NAPISAO
SOMBATI BALINT 1971. g. TEKST VIZU
ELNO GBRADIO, KORISTECI DELOVE
STRIPA "CORRIGAN-GOSPODAR ANDA"
SLAVKO MATKOVIC 1975. g.



109

Slavko Matković, *Esej o grupi Bosch + Bosch* [Essay on Bosch + Bosch Group],
1975, collage. Private collection.

group and group \exists was defined as intertextualism (behavioral, visual, and linguistic languages confronting one another), and metalinguisticality, for which a work of art was meant to provoke a debate on art rather than an aesthetic experience. Group KôD and group \exists explicitly called into question the moderate modernist values of an art product, both in theory and in production. They also raised issues about bureaucratically defined boundaries between the different arts as well as among art, culture, and politics. Yet another focus was the behavior of the artist/bureaucrat, the projected new concept of the artist ranging from artist/theorist through artist/shaman to an anarchist usurping society's values.

Group KôD, group \exists , and group $\exists\text{-KôD}$ worked in performance, textual and diagrammatic analysis of the language of art, and media presentations of the behavior of artists. Members of these groups wrote textual analyses of the term "art," of the artist as an institution, and of the status of conceptual reflection within art. Slavko Bogdanović worked with books and undertook linguistic analyses of arbitrarily selected words. Miroslav Mandić made a paratheoretical critique of the gallery system. Slobodan Tišma investigated procedures for constructing a verbal text. Mirko Radojičić analyzed the term "conceptual art." Using the philosophical analyses of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vladimir Kopić wrote self-reflexive debates on the processes of opinion in conceptual art.

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KôD group, *Fluxus*. Photograph from artist's collection.



Mirko Radojičić, *Koncept 2* [Concept 2],
1971, silk screen, different formats. Artist's
collection.

Vladimir Kopić, *ništa još nije ovde ali neki oblik već može da mu odgovara* [Nothing Is Here Yet but Some Form May Already Fit It], 1973, silk screen. Private collection.

6 Ne: koncept kao umetnost
7 - Umetnost kao koncept



The criticism of the art system of moderate modernism in social realist society was an important issue in the establishment of a group of six artists²² from 1971 to 1974 on the Belgrade art scene. This group established a radical critique of the taste, value, and ideology of ruling moderate modernist art in Belgrade. They used antipainting methods and gestures to provoke, criticize, and repudiate the autonomy of visual artwork. In doing so they demonstrated that a work of art is the product of social and cultural determinants.

Marina Abramović²³ worked on sound ambiences and body art actions from 1971 to 1973. After 1973 she left Yugoslavia and began her international career with body art actions, anthropological and mystical performances. Slobodan Era Milivojević began his research of the behavior of artists using mixed-media works and public happenings. Neša Paripović²⁴

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Marina Abramović, *Ritam 0* [Rhythm 0]. Photograph published in artist's exhibition catalog *Ritam* (Belgrade: Salon MSU, 1975).





PORUKE - MESSAGES
(Sex, Politics, Drugs, Art)

114

Neša Paripović, *Poruke (sex, politics, drugs, art)* [Messages (Sex, Politics, Drugs, Art)], 1979, silk screen, 100 x 70 cm. Private collection.

115

Raša Todosijević, *Was ist Kunst?*, Vienna, 1977.
Photograph from artist's collection.



focused on photographic, film, video, and textual documentation and analysis of the paradox of an artist who denounces painting in the name of his everyday life as an artist. Zoran Popović created a number of works very close to analytical art and then, beginning in 1974, created works in the domain of political art. For him, political art was both a criticism of social realist institutions and at the same time an apologia for the ideals of self-governing socialist society. Dragoljub Raša Todosijević worked within the neo-Dada primary art of painting, textual practice, and performance art. His work took the form of an explicit criticism of modernist painting and its institutions. In the second half of the 1970s he gave a series of dramatic performances in Vienna entitled *Was ist Kunst* in which he simulated the atmosphere of a police interrogation or, in other words, the atmosphere of institutional violence in totalitarian societies. Gergelj Urkom worked in the field of the analytic art of painting and conceptual analyses of the process of painting and the process of picture reception. He has lived in London since 1973, investigating the conceptual, perceptive horizons of painting.

Political conceptual art was initiated through the underground strategies of the Bosch + Bosch group (for example, Szombathy's *Lenin in Budapest* in 1972), or by means of textual pararevolutionary criticism of the politics of bureaucratic real socialism through the outrageous actions of members of the Novi Sad groups January and February and the KôD group. Slavko Bogdanović and Miroslav Mandić were both sentenced to several months in prison in the early 1970s for their political art texts.

Political and critical conceptualism reached its peak with the start of the informal group/movement October 75: Dunja Blažević, Jasna Tijardović, Raša Todosijević, Zoran Popović, Goran Djordjević, Ješa Denegri, Bojana Pejić, and Vladimir Gudac. The October 75 group or movement emerged from the relationship between Belgrade artists and the New York part of the Art & Language group, and through acceptance of the social realist society's demands for an apologetic politicization of art and culture (the insistence of art historian Dunja Blažević on self-governing art). In the course of 1974 and 1975, artist Zoran Popović and critic Jasna Tijardović spent a period of time in New York where they began cooperation with authors at the magazine *Fox* and with the New York part of the Art & Language group. During his stay in New York, Popović filmed a documentary, *Fight in New York* (1975), that shows political art conflicts on the New York art scene between the Art & Language UK group, Art & Language Provisional, the authors of *Fox* magazine, authors at the magazine *Red Herring*, and others.

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Bálint Szombathy, *Lenjin u Budimpešti* [Lenin in Budapest], 1972. Photograph from artist's collection.



Zoran Popović, still from the film *Borba u New Yorku* [Fight in New York], 1976.
Artist's collection.



Analytical art²⁵ branched off in several directions through the work of members of the KôD group and group (Ξ, Gergelj Urkom and Zoran Popović. Its complex and elaborated form was established through the postscientific work of Goran Djordjević (1972–1978) and analytical research of the art of Group 143.²⁶ Goran Djordjević used formal mathematical methods to analyze the problem of visual presentation for the book *Visual Presentation of the Process in the Square System* (1974), for instance. Group 143 introduced to artwork systematic research in the theory of art and culture, elaborating the historical term "theory of the artist" (from the Bauhaus to conceptual art).

A conceptual analysis of the sensual bodily appearance of an object was worked out through the visual and discursive speculative work of the art partnership Verbumprogram²⁷ (Ruma, 1975–1991). Their²⁸ work began in the post-Duchamp tradition of the intervisual confrontation of art object, outer art object, and production design system. Verbumprogram undertook a critical analysis of the design of pop art and metalingual linguistic forecasting of the visual in conceptual art.

"Art as the Semiology of Culture" is the title of a series of art and theory strategies developed in the late 1970s through the environmental works and theoretical interpretations of Zoran Belić Weiss and Nenad Petrović. They began with the creation of environmental works of a primary reductive character (the phenomenon of an empty room, the phenomenon of cosmic emptiness, the phenomenon of floating, the phenomenon of the open and the closed), then faced diverse historical or geographic cultures and the "theo-

reticization" of ambiences as symptoms of culture. As these artists investigated the phenomenon of space (ambience), they focused on the issues of the specificity of ambiances in a particular field of culture, comparing, for example, European and Asian, or the perceptive, rational, and metaphysical spaces.

The ZzIP group (the Association for Space Research, 1983–1989) was started during the 1980s. Various conceptual artists collaborated within ZzIP, such as Marko Pogačnik of the OHO group, Mirko Radojičić from the KÔD group, Miško Šuvaković from Group 143, Dubravka Djurić, Zoran Belić Weiss, and Nenad Petrović. Pogačnik lived in Slovenia, Radojičić in Romania and France, Petrović in the Netherlands, and Djurić, Belić, and Šuvaković in Belgrade. These artists were interested in theoretical research into art and culture. A number of ZzIP associates and members focused on esoteric teachings (Zen Buddhism, anthroposophy, metaphysics, phenomenology), while others turned to analytical philosophy and poststructuralism, toward the linguistic, semiological analysis of the language of art and sign systems of modern and historic cultures. The group published a magazine, *Mentalni prostor* [Mental Space], from 1983 to 1987.

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Group 143 in conversation
on artist's theory, 1979.
Photograph from Group
143 archive.



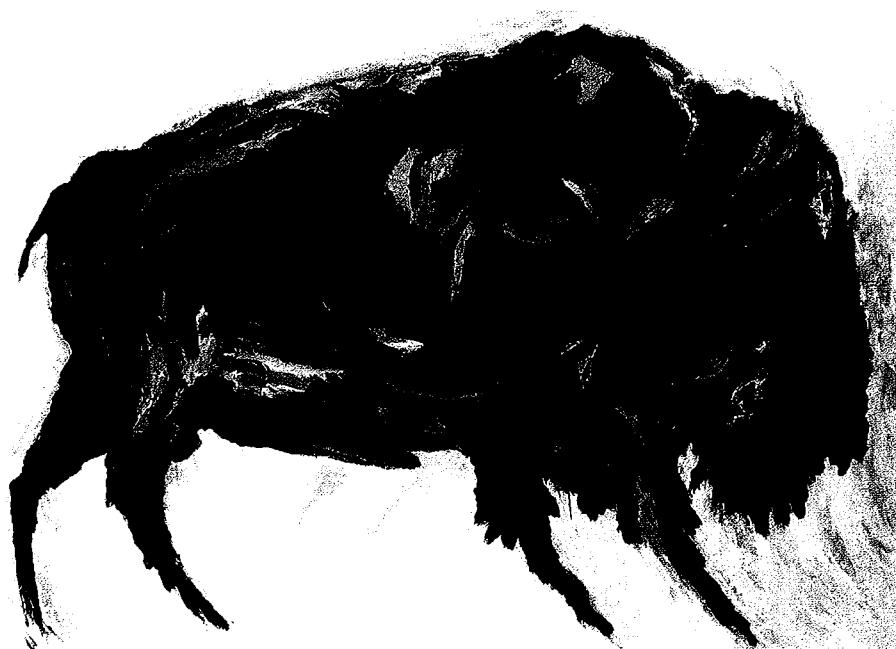
The End of Conceptual Art—Eclectic Postmodern Art of the Eighties

Conceptual art went into crisis at the early 1980s. The balance of power shifted on the international scene, especially in Italy and Germany, and conceptual art was seen as an art form whose time had passed. Painting and sculptural projects and productions were the fashion: the Italian transavanguardia and German neoexpressionism.²⁹ The 1980s were also a time when Yugoslavia was facing an economic crisis and political conflicts were erupting between the leaderships of the nationalist parties. This is when Tito's second Yugoslavia began to disintegrate. In this atmosphere, conceptual art disappeared from the public scene and moved into the world of private or academic research of theory and art history. Only in the late 1980s and early 1990s was conceptual art revitalized with the emergence of an artistic critique of totalitarian systems and the emergence of international neoconceptual art.

The important centers of this new postmodernist painting in Slovenia were the coastal town of Koper and the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana. The poetics of the new art of painting were developed by critics Andrej Medved,³⁰ Tomaž Brejc, Jure Mikuž, and Igor Zabel. Other painters were also actively working in Slovenia: Tugomir Šušnik, Andraž Šalamun, Dušan Kirbiš, Živko Marušič, and Emerik Bernard.

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Andraž Šalamun, *Bizon* [Bison], 1985, oil on canvas, 200 x 302 cm. From the catalog Andrej Medved, *Poetike osamdesetih let v slikarstvu in kiparstvu* (1991).



Šušnik and Bernard arrived at eclectic painting from the fundamental art of painting and analytical painting techniques. In his paintings, Šušnik reinterprets the history of modern art from Matisse to Newman and Rothko. Of interest is the example of Andraž Šalamun, who as a conceptual artist was a member of the OHO group during the 1960s, before turning to action and Dionysian painting of monumental dimensions with abstract or iconic motifs. The postmodernist eclectic painting of the 1980s is an art based on the enjoyment of the act of painting itself and on a rejection of the concept in the name of posthistorical evocation of sensual impressions from the history of painting and sexual fantasies. The influential practices of the Irwin group began in parallel with and in opposition to the eclectic postmodernism of the art of painting that was at work within the Neue Slowenische Kunst³¹ movement. This evolved into a political retro-avant-garde art of painting based on the referential, montage, and simulational depiction of dead images from the great modern political systems (real socialism, fascism, Nazism).

In Croatia, neoexpressionist, eclectic painting was created by Nina Ivančić³² and Edita Schubert.³³ Painter Željko Kipke³⁴ developed a kind of scholarly, mystical, posthistoric painting in which the movements of pattern



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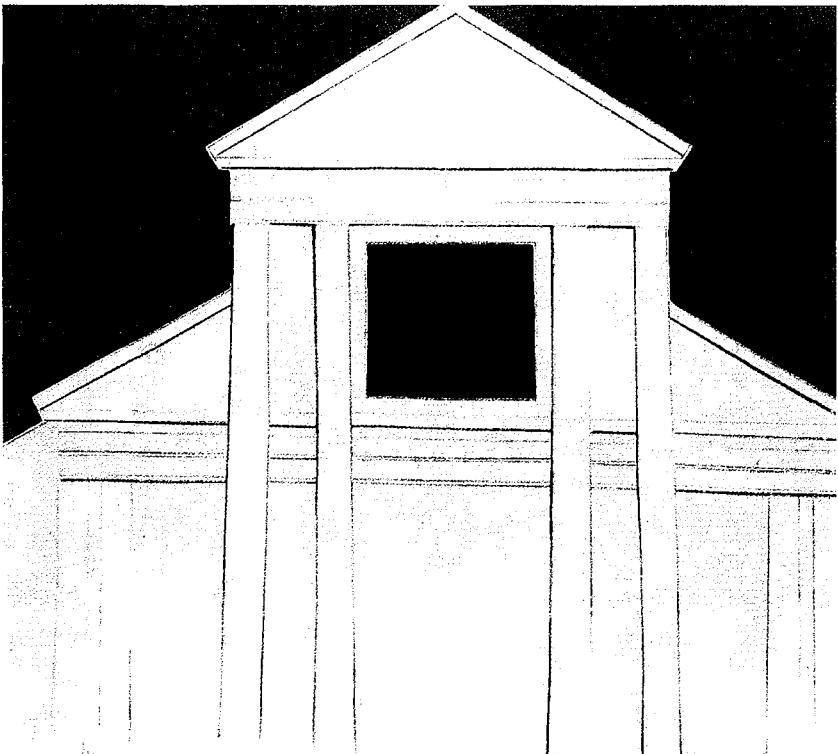
Željko Kipke, *Zenitheum u suterenu* [Zenithium in the Basement], 1989, oil on canvas, 195 x 232 cm.

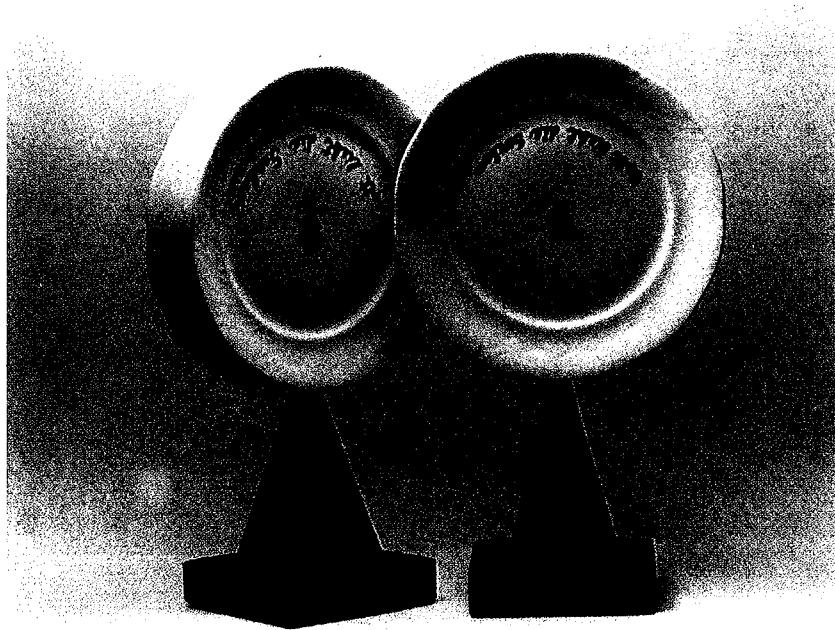
painting, motifs from the life of the historical avant-gardes, and mystical anagrams and formulas confront one another. Kipke also wrote multidisciplinary theoretical texts on painting, art, and culture, reconstructing fragmentary allegorical narrations. There were conceptual artists in the 1980s such as Mladen Stilinović,³⁵ Sven Stilinović, Vlado Martek, and Željko Jerman who turned to the art of painting, working with the look of political signs and using the image as one element of complex narrative/political installations and performances.

Several competing postmodern styles emerged in Serbia during the 1980s.³⁶ Conceptual artist László Kerekes developed a kind of post-naïve, eclectic and brutal, expressionist, figurative painting style in the early part of the decade. The Aleterimago³⁷ group was linked to Italian trans-avant-garde painting practices. Another group of artists called Žestoki [The Fierce] with De Stijl Marković and Vlasta Mikić followed the influence of German neoexpressionism in eclectic and brutal forms. Art theorist and painter Sonja Briski developed a particular kind of scholarly posthistoric painting that reinterprets motifs of architecture and the conditions for reception of a painter's interpretation, based on architectural interiors and exteriors.

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Sonja Briski Uzelac, *Linea Vicentina*, 1988,
coal, oil, and acrylic on canvas, 100 x 110
cm. Artist's collection.





122

Raša Todosijević, *Gott liebt die Serben*, 1990, mixed media, c. 70 x 50 cm. Artist's collection.

Conceptual artist Goran Djordjević abandoned conceptual art and began developing a procedure of copying artworks and critiques of reality. He copied his childhood paintings and works from the history of modernism and especially focused on copying the mythic and modernist works of Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian. Eventually he stopped making public appearances and began supporting the work of simulated (anonymous or mysteriously concealed) artists who were imitating the painting of Malevich and Mondrian.

Conceptual artist Raša Todosijević redirected his political and critical conceptual practice into parodic and cynical paintings and sculptures with which he challenged the Serbian public and the dominant culture of euphoric nationalism. His most typical works are objects and monumental sculptures bearing the caption, in German, "God loves the Serbs." The modernist painter and conceptual artist Radomir Damnjan established eclectic painting based on systems of copying masterpieces of modernism (for instance, reproducing paintings by De Chirico). Staying close to its conceptual analyses, the Vojvodina group Verbumprogram began investigating the phenomena of geometrical abstractionism in painting and sculpture during the 1980s, developing the practice of neo-geo art.

Zvono group, *Autoportret—portret IV* [Self-Portrait—Portrait IV], 1987, mixed media. From the catalog for Dokumenta '87, Sarajevo.

An unusual, eclectic, and provocative atmosphere for making artistic experiments was fomented in Sarajevo³⁸ during the 1980s. Very different artistic positions here came face to face, from the world of film (Emir Kusturica), rock music (the bands Bijelo dugme, Zabranjeno pušenje), theater (Sanjin Jukić), and postconceptual experiments. Young Sarajevo artists Jusuf Hadžifejzović, Radoslav Tadić, Jadran Adamović, and Gera Grozdanić, and artists Hadžić, Čizmić, Hadžihasanović, Kantradžić, Gavranović, and Bukvić linked with the Zvono group, went through the experience of analytical tautological painting and made an about-face toward a new fictional art of painting pop art–focused allegories. Because the beginning of the 1980s also marked the birth of painting neostyles of early eclectic postmodern art, the artists in Sarajevo did not hesitate to link the incompatible, making works of art in a nomadic way with a nod to conceptual art, to neo-Dada, pop art, arte



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Jadran Adamović, *Fly*, 1989, mixed media. Artist's collection.



povera, neoexpressionist German painting, Italian transavanguardia, and the neoconceptual erasing of borders between high and popular art. Conceptual art in Sarajevo was a late phenomenon within which analytical and political conceptual art was transformed into the eclectic and nomadic art of postmodernism, and urban behavior was treated as a medium of artistic expression.

In the late 1980s, eclectic posthistoric works were created in the Macedonian capital of Skopje³⁹ that brought together the subversion of modernist, clean and primary forms by introducing rural or ethnic elements from the mythical worlds of the Balkans. The artists working within this framework were Petre Nikoloski, Gligor Stefanov, Blagoja Manevski, Venko Cvetkov, Aneta Svetieva, Slavčo Sokolovski, and Tome Acievski.

Conceptual art in Yugoslavia was a complex series of processes that provoked, criticized, and theoretically interpreted the anomalies of modernism and social realism. Paradoxically, conceptual art was both the last stage of modernism and the first wave of postmodernism.

Notes

1. Ursula Meyer, ed., *Conceptual Art* (New York: Dutton, 1972); or Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).
2. Joseph Kosuth, "1975," *The Fox* (New York, 1975), pp. 67–96.
3. Charles Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).
4. Filiberto Menna, *La linea analitica dell'arte moderna: Le figure e le icone* (Milan: Giulio Einaudi, 1997).
5. Tomaž Brejc, "OHO as an Artistic Phenomenon 1966–1971," from Marijan Susovski, ed., *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978* (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1978), pp. 13–18.
6. Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialisation of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (1968); Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973).
7. *L'art conceptuel, une perspective* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989).
8. Ješa Denegri, "Art in the Past Decade," in Susovski, ed., *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, pp. 5–12.
9. Ješa Denegri and Biljana Tomić, eds., *Primeri konceptualne umetnosti u Jugoslaviji* [Examples of Conceptual Art in Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art Salon, 1971).
10. They showed in the exhibitions "Information" (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970); "Aktionsraum 1" (Kunstverein, Munich, 1970); and "Concept" (Septième Biennale de Paris, 1971).
11. Tomaž Brejc, "The Family at Shempas," in Susovski, ed., *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, pp. 18–19.
12. Davor Matičević, "The Zagreb Circle," Nena Baljković, "Braco Dimitrijević—Goran Trbuljak," Nena Baljković, "Group of Six Artists," and Ida Biard, "The Galerie des Locataires," in Susovski, ed., *The New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978*, pp. 20–37; Marijan Susovski, ed., *Innovations in Croatian Art of the 1980s* (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1982); Tihomir Milovac, ed., *The Misfits: Conceptualist Strategies in Croatian Contemporary Art* (Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002).
13. Ješa Denegri, *Umjetnost konstruktivnog pristupa – Exat 51, Nove tendencije* [The Art of a Constructive Approach—Exat 51, New Tendencies] (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2000).
14. Nena Dimitrijević, ed., *Gorgona* (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1977).
15. Branka Stipančić, ed., *Mangelos* (Zagreb: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1990).
16. Branka Stipančić, ed., *G. Trbuljak* (Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996).

17. Janka Vukmir, ed., *Group of Six Authors* (Zagreb: SCCA, 1998).
18. Ješa Denegri, Jasna Tijardović, and Jadranka Vinterhalter, eds., *Nova umetnost u Srbiji 1970–1980* [New Art in Serbia 1970–1980] (Belgrade: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1983); Miško Šuvaković, *Asimetrični drugi: Eseji o umetnicima i konceptima* [Asymmetrical Others: Essays on Artists and Concepts] (Novi Sad: Prometej, 1996); and Ješa Denegri, *Sedamdesete: teme srpske umetnosti—Nove prakse (1970–1980)* [The 1970s: Topics of Serbian Art—New Practices (1970–1980)] (Novi Sad: Worlds, 1996).
19. The members of the group were Slobodan Tišma, Slavko Bogdanović, Mirko Radojičić, Miroslav Mandić, Janez Kocjančić, and others.
20. Members of the group were Vladimir Kopićl, Čeda Drča, Ana Raković, and Miša Živanović.
21. Miško Šuvaković, ed., *Group KōD, Group (Ξ), Group (Ξ-KōD)—Retrospective* (Novi Sad: Gallery of Contemporary Art of Painting, 1995).
22. Members of the group were Marina Abramović, Slobodan Era Milivojević, Neša Paripović, Zoran Popović, Dragoljub Raša Todosijević, and Gergelj Urkorn.
23. Marina Abramović, *Artist Body* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1998).
24. Miško Šuvaković, *Neša Paripović: Autoportreti* [Neša Paripović: Self-Portraits] (Novi Sad: Prometej, 1996).
25. Miško Šuvaković, ed., *Primeri analitičkih radova* [Examples of Analytical Works] (Belgrade: SKC Gallery and Gallery New, 1978).
26. Miško Šuvaković, “Analytical Art: Group 143,” in *Asimetrični drugi*, pp. 183–199.
27. Ješa Denegri, ed., *Verbumprogram* (Novi Sad: Gallery of Contemporary Art, 1995).
28. Members of the group were Ratomir Kulić and Vladimir Mattioni.
29. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting,” *October*, no. 16 (1981).
30. Andrej Medved, *Poetike osamdesetih let v slikarstvu in kiparstvu* [Poetics of the Eighties in Painting and Sculpture] (Koper: Edition Artes, 1991).
31. *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (Zagreb: Croatian Graphic Bureau, 1991).
32. *Nina Ivanić* (Belgrade: Salon Museum of Contemporary Art, 1983).
33. Leonida Kovač, *Edita Schubert* (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2001).
34. Ješa Denegri, *Željko Kipke* (Zagreb: Croatian Graphic Bureau, 1991).
35. Spomenka Nikitović, *Mladen Stilinović* (Zagreb: SCCA, 1998).
36. Ješa Denegri, *Osamdesete: teme srpske umetnosti 1980–1990* [The 1980s: Topics of Serbian Art 1980–1990] (Novi Sad: Svetovi, 1997).
37. Members of the group were Tahir Lušić, Nada Alavanja, Vladimir Nikolić, and Mileta Prodanović.
38. Nermina Zildžo, “The Syndrome of Sarajevo’s Cultural Circle,” in *Art and Criticism in Mid Eighties* (Sarajevo: Collegium artisticum, 1986); Radoslav Tadić and Jusuf Hadžifejzović, eds., *Jugoslovenska dokumenta '87* [Yugoslav Documents '87] (Sarajevo: Olimpijski centar Skenderija, 1987); *Jugoslovenska dokumenta '89* [Yugoslav Documents '89] (Sarajevo: Olimpijski centar Skenderija, 1989).
39. Zoran Petrovski, in *Art and Criticism in Mid Eighties*; Nebojša Vilić, *States of Changes? The Postmodernism & the Art of the Eighties* (Skopje: Phoenix, 1994).

8

Neue Slowenische Kunst

Marina Gržinić

Events in the 1980s in Slovenia were particularly marked by certain key productions: the appearance of what is known today as the alternative and/or the Ljubljana subculture movement, the formation of the art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), and a new generation of painters, sculptors, photographers, fashion designers, and video artists who emerged during the decade with an impressive number of fine arts and multimedia projects.

In this context, a special status attaches to the alternative culture or Ljubljana subculture scene (later named “The Art of the Eighties”). This culture did not just produce binding artistic influences, and new strategies and tactics for the production and presentation of works of art, but also encouraged and shaped a series of socialization processes and nonformal institutional bodies that marked and defined the Slovenian cultural scene. Founded primarily on the work of the Student Cultural and Artistic Center in Ljubljana (ŠKUC), the Ljubljana subculture created distinctive productions and organizational forms of culture, despite the exceptionally meager possibilities for functioning in the socialist context of the time. The coming out of Ljubljana’s male homosexuals, and later lesbians, and the constituting of a gay culture (the first of this kind of organized movement in one of the then socialist countries of Eastern Europe), and the establishment of new social movements (The Section for a Culture of Peace at the ŠKUC Forum in 1985, and others), were a part of these processes.

The alternative processes and projects demonstrate the closely knit nature of culture and politics. In the 1980s, art and culture made fundamental contributions to the social and political change with which Slovenia entered the last decade of the second millennium. The alternative culture or

subculture was more than simply a passing fashion or trend (fashion's tradition of unending surplus production never became known in socialism anyway); it signified the reconfiguration of the social and artistic arena, a reconfiguration which, despite underground activity of one sort or another in Eastern European contexts, in Ljubljana experienced its own radical and specific forms. The establishment of new coding not exclusively concerned with art—the visual reconfiguration of the “original” socialist cultural texture and structure—had as one of its consequences the formation of explosive contradictions between the external and the internal, the sexual and the mental, the ordered and the chaotic, as well as the conceptual and the political.

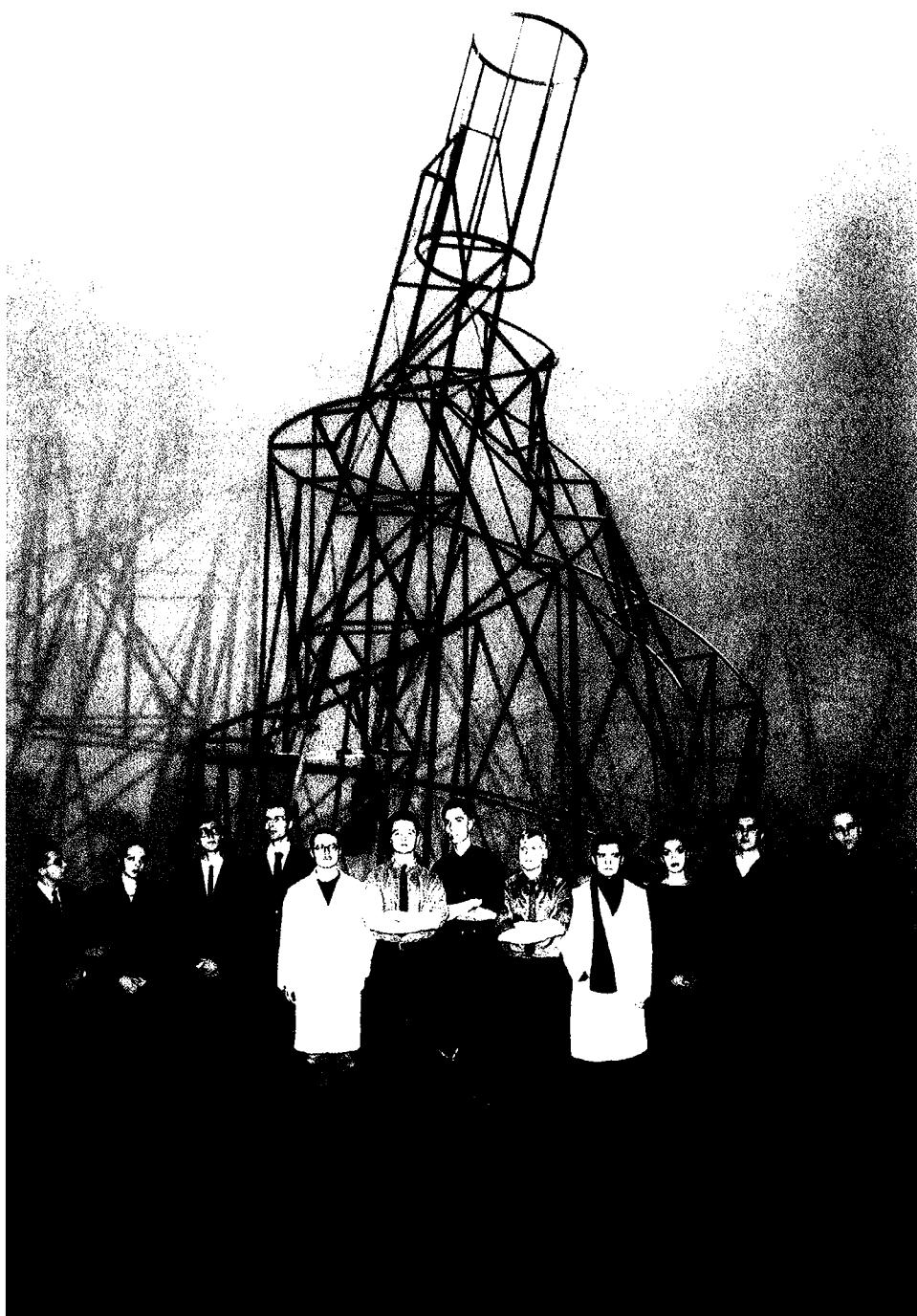
Within such a context the activity of Neue Slowenische Kunst, an art movement or rather an artistic organization with a specific character, was extremely important both in the context of Slovenia and Yugoslavia and beyond. NSK was established in the early 1980s in Slovenia and comprises several entities, coming from a field of industrial music, avant-garde theater, fine arts and design, philosophy, and film production. Nevertheless in the 1980s it is possible to identify clearly three parts or entities at the core of the NSK movement: the music group/rock band Laibach, the visual arts group Irwin, and the “retro-garde” Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater (which was renamed the Red Pilot Cosmokinetic Theater in 1986). The design group New Collectivism had already been part of NSK from the very beginning also.

NSK projects revealed a new cultural context and contributed to the rapid disintegration of the aesthetics and ethical standards of communist culture and identity. NSK members (approximately 30 of them altogether) used all the classic methods of the avant-garde: manifestos, collective performances, public provocations, and intervention in politics. NSK proclaimed itself to be an abstract social body situated in the very sociopolitical space of Europe, which simultaneously represents a western and an eastern phenomenon.

In such a way it is also possible to understand the use of the German name for the movement—Neue Slowenische Kunst—as pointing directly and unequivocally to the influence of the Austrian alpine tradition (especially the populist tradition, present in the Slovenian culture and mentality through symbols of a deer and hunting) on Slovenian culture. The ability to question radically the representational models, the presentation, and the circulation of artistic works in the context of (Eastern) Europe was the basic characteristic of NSK that allows it to intervene in the impossible historical “continuity” of Slovenian and, more generally speaking, Yugoslav and European art.

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Members of the NSK collective, Ljubljana, 1986. Photograph by Marko Modic.

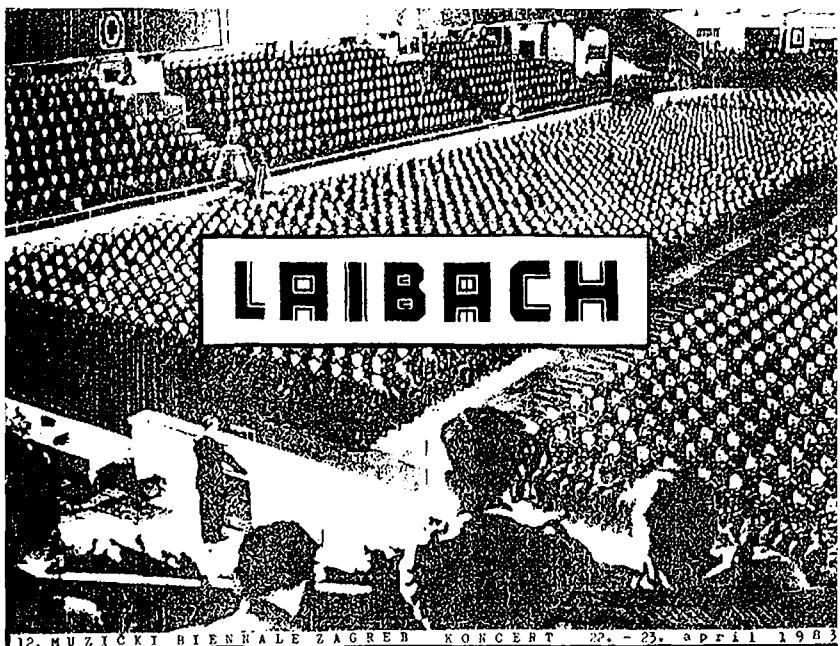


Laibach

Laibach appeared in the context of the Slovenian/ex-Yugoslav (punk) rock 'n' roll movement, but the group was immediately connected with "Nazism" because of specific artistic actions they had conducted from the very beginning. The group's first lead singer played with cut lips and a bloodied face, in line with his insistence on adopting the costume and pose of Mussolini (he was wearing a pseudo-military uniform). With this sort of performance, Laibach clearly demonstrated that the feature which in reality sustains identification with totalitarian power is not singular and evident, but consists of several different, sometimes even not obviously (perceptibly) visible elements. The essential element of every Laibach concert was the form of its performance, which was repeated from one song to another, and therefore became almost obsessive. Our expectations, as far as "content" were concerned, were not fulfilled. Instead of critical distance and mockery, Laibach performed, one might say, a (hyper)literal repetition of the totalitarian ritual. Instead of a direct subversion, we were faced with an almost fanatical identification with the totalitarian ritual performed by the group on the stage. The ideological totalitarian structure was undermined not by parodic imitation-subversion of the totalitarian codes, but by the identification with it.¹

126

Laibach, *The 12th Music Biennial, Zagreb, 1983*, silk screen poster, 49 x 63 cm.



OB STD LETNICI MARXOVE SMRTI



127

Laibach, Ausstellung

Laibach Kunst, 1983, silk screen poster, 100 x 70 cm.

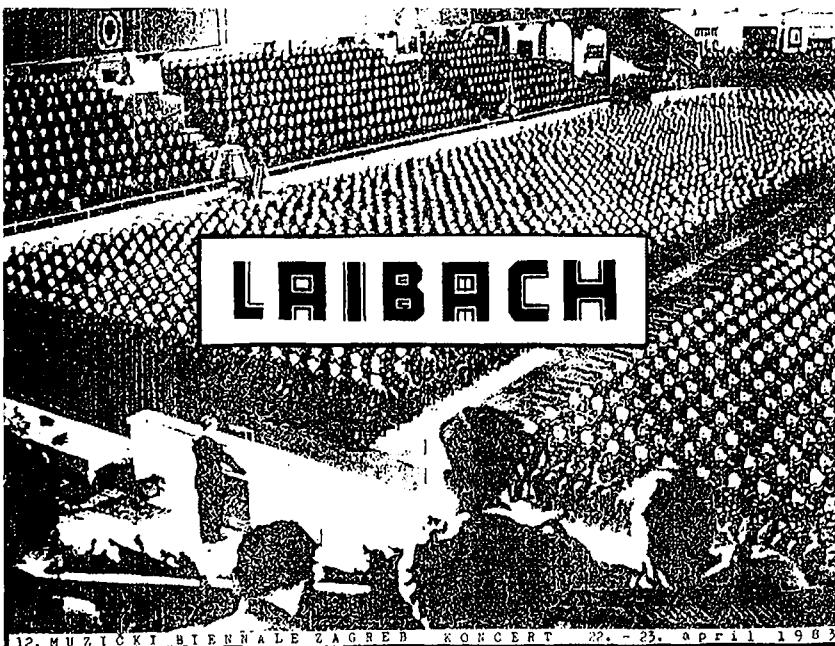
L A I B A C H

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127

Laibach, Ausstellung

Laibach Kunst, 1983, silk
screen poster, 100 x 70 cm.

OB STO LETNICI MARXOVE SMRTI



L A I B A C H



This new art strategy that was introduced into the Eastern European context by Laibach contains, according to Slavoj Žižek, an obscene subversion of the totalitarian ritual in the very form of its performance. Instead of a direct subversion, Laibach publicly staged the phantasmatic structure of totalitarian power in all its obscene ambiguity, and with all its unconscious moments of obscenity, obscenities that the power structure needs constantly to conceal in order to reproduce itself.

Where a standard musical performance transforms chaos into money, and the satisfaction of the audience into the phrase "We'll come again," the rigidity and consistency of Laibach's live performance reached all the way to the destruction of a fascinatingly constructed set involving flags, horns,

light, and background film projections. The suspense was not achieved by a parallel montage of these elements but by setting up affinities between them: between the film material, the architecture, the stage design, and the live performance. The aim was to destroy the very concept of a rock band's performance. This is also connected with the disappearance of the classical music performer. Performers are held back, without any individuality or psychological depth, because the more feelings are restrained, the stronger the emotions are.

The activities of NSK in the 1980s sought to question the very mechanisms that compel us to think, as Norman Bryson puts it, "of a terror intrinsic to sight, which makes it harder to think what makes sight terroristic."² NSK did not posit the gaze as a menace, nor as a natural fact, but rather showed that this menace was a social product determined by power. The result of NSK's concepts, strategies, and tactics in the 1980s was therefore a specific process of denaturalizing the previously "naturalized" socialist cultural values and rituals. However, there was something more. Through their entire conceptual strategy, NSK laid the foundations for a different mode of politics (!), and moreover for a different "politics of sight."³ It was only through the totality of their concepts and the complexity of their productions and presentation that NSK managed to win a place in the social and cultural reality that was completely dominated (if not totalized) by political discourse. I have to further emphasize this important point: The process continued by NSK was not a further unconditional politicization of the whole social life, since the social and cultural reality of communism was already completely politicized, but rather an aesthetic postponement, or even delay, of the political. This was carried out through a constant display and questioning of the extra- or nonideological elements that were at the core of this politicization.

The former Yugoslav state conducted a campaign against Laibach, claiming they were a force seeking terror and destruction, and banned their live performances between 1983 and 1987. But, by casting Laibach in such a role, the state merely reinforced the opinion that "terror and destruction" resided at its own core. Furthermore, the putative choice that was offered by ideological and ahistorical discussions in the 1980s as to whether to permit Laibach's performances confirmed again the phantasmic value of "the forbidden." Such questioning soon gained the status of an index of pluralism in Slovenian social reality. This may be more clearly understood if I review here the case of psychotic censorship carried out by the communist power against the design group New Collectivism, also part of the NSK.

New Collectivism

The design group New Collectivism was the object of ferocious censorship in 1987 for its design of a poster simultaneously celebrating the birthday of President Tito and “Youth Day, 1987.” The poster, which had been judged and accepted by the federal jury of the Yugoslav Youth Organization, a youth branch of the Communist Party, initially won public acclaim for its graphics and “politically” appropriate design. However, a letter published in a Serbian newspaper drew attention to the fact that the poster was a remake of a Nazi work, *The Third Reich*, by Richard Klein (1936). New Collectivism had inverted the Nazi symbols and changed them into socialist symbols: the swastika on the original poster was replaced by a star, and so on. The most cynical point of all was not the inversion of the symbols, but, as was pointed out in numerous analyses, the complete identification of the federal jury with the poster’s visual ideology—the federal jury had initially selected the poster designed by New Collectivism as the most appropriate one. Once their “mirroring” of the communist imagery with the transvestite Nazi symbolism (the latter being, so to speak, the obscene hidden supplement of the former) was revealed, the communist power machine tried, although without success, to put the group in jail.

New Collectivism’s concepts of design awaken memories of historical and avant-garde movements, especially Russian constructivism, productivism, Bauhaus, and De Stijl, which very quickly expanded their artistic concepts with research into typography and the “construction” of books and theater design. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, for example, comments that “Grosz and Heartfield, as early as 1916, when they invented the strategy of montage, became aware of the artistic and cultural power of allegorical appropriations, comparisons and fragmentations.”⁴

An excellent example of these processes is the Christmas card that Dejan Knez (born 1961), the constitutive member of the group Laibach, made in 1981 and sent to his friends. It was a photocopy collage based on a reproduction of the famous surrealist painter René Magritte and his painting *La condition humaine*. From the black and white photocopy of Magritte’s painting, originally done in 1933, Knez cut out the background landscape and replaced it with a picture of one of the parades in honor of Nazism and Hitler that were constantly being performed when Magritte made his picture, in neighboring Germany (while Magritte was living in Belgium). With this act Knez pointed a finger at the social and political background of life and work in the 1930s in Europe. This is why Knez named his photocopy collage *Artist*



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New Collectivism, sketch for the Youth Day poster, 1987, 35 x 24.5 cm. Reproduced by permission of Marina Gržinić.



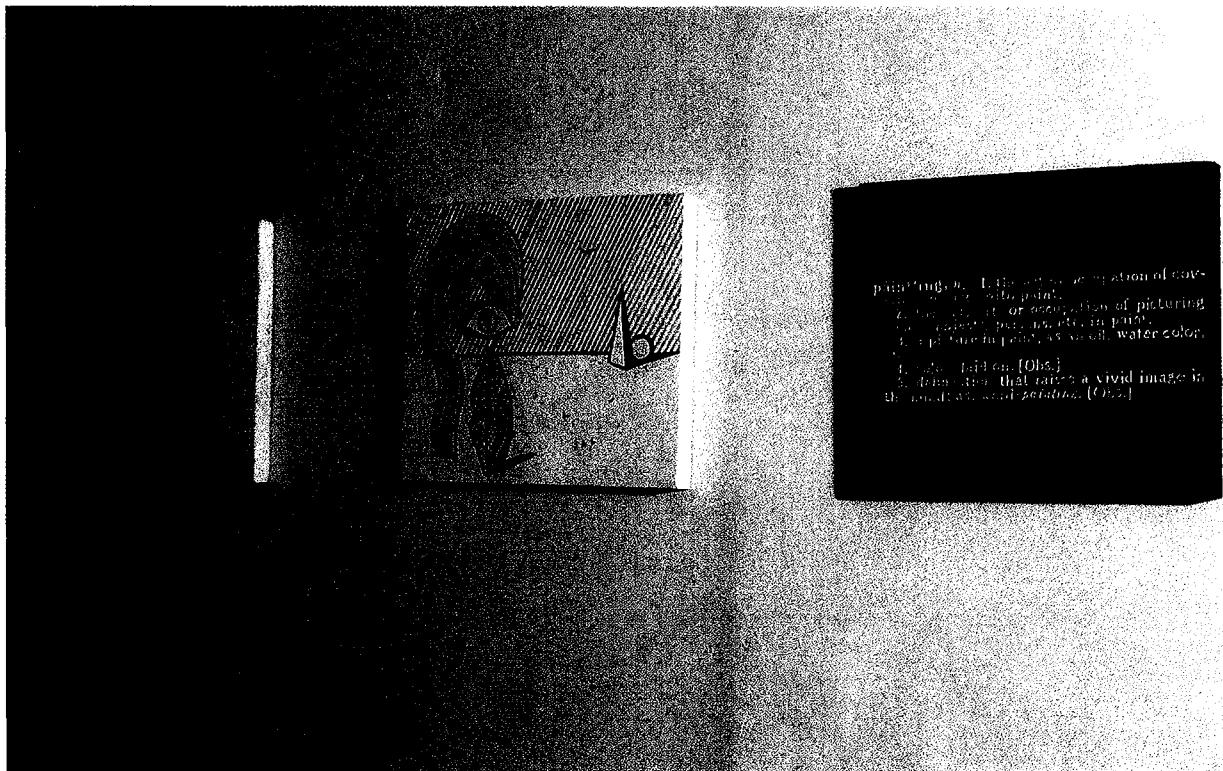
Condition, indicating that artists must be conscious of the political and social condition of a proper work in art.

It is possible to establish a connection and find productive influence between NSK and some other projects in the context of ex-Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the 1980s, Belgrade artist Goran Djordjević (born 1950) began his series called *A Short History of Art*. Djordjević copied works of contemporary art (Malevich, Duchamp, Manzoni, Beuys, and Smithson). He was amused by the absurdity of copying Kosuth's definitions. Slobodan

Mijušković, an art historian from Belgrade, argued that Djordjević does not create paintings to master the painting profession gradually and become a good painter, but to realize certain ideas that cannot be understood on the basis of the characteristics of the artistic medium in which they are mediated. "It seems to me that you paint pictures that we should not treat as paintings," commented Mijušković.⁵ In some other projects during the 1980s, Djordjević copied Mondrian, Andre, and Buren as sappy scenes from kitsch reproductions, thus placing their work in an iconic context that already has a certain meaning. A similar effect is achieved if one paints elements of Mondrian, Malevich, or Stella onto small objects. Thus, a reading is also contextualized through the very basis on which these works are copied, and it depends on its characteristics (and also the material of which it is made), and on how and where the copy of the work is placed. Old paper and frames introduce "noise" into the chronological location of famous works of art. After all, Djordjević argued, are the works of Buren, Beuys, and Andre not presented in the "History" of art precisely by such kitsch reproductions?

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Goran Djordjević, *Malevich, Lichtenstein, Kosuth: 1 in 3 Pictures—Copies*, 1980. Author's collection.



painting, n. 1. the act or occupation of covering a surface with paint.
2. the art, or occupation of picturing
the objects, persons, etc., in paint,
as a picture in paint, as oil, water color,
etc., laid on [Obs.]
3. a drawing that paints a vivid image in
the mind; a vivid picture. [Obs.]

The representational strategy developed here could be termed “double narration,” which operates simultaneously in opposite directions, and which could be seen as a kind of masquerade or posture, presenting itself as something else. Recycling and artistic appropriation are possible strategies of “double narration,” strategies of which Derrida wrote that they are resistant to the point where it is no longer possible to separate “false” (nominal and semantic) and original features, and thus they can no longer be included in the binary philosophical oppositions that they resist and disorganize, without attempting to create a third meaning.⁶

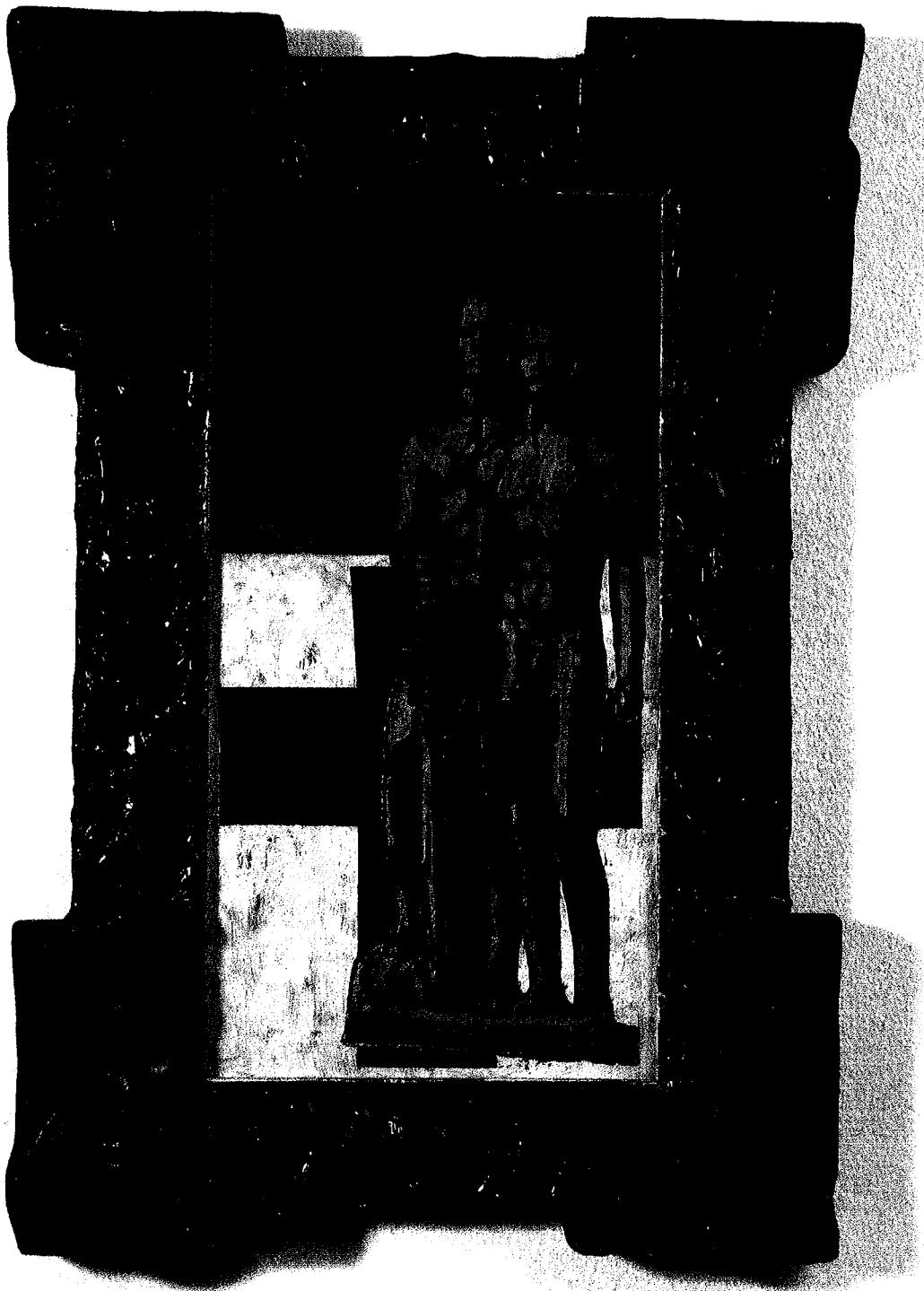
Irwin

A similar reading is possible for the work of the group Irwin, which first appeared under the name Rrose Irwin Selavy, and later “deconstructed” its name to R Irwin S and finally to Irwin.

In 1985 Irwin began to develop *Was ist Kunst?* (What Is Art?), considered to be one of the most important projects it has created. Paintings from *Was ist Kunst?* may be characterized as conventional (that is, oil, canvas, and frame). They are, above all, montages: a repetition of inventions specifically comprising the Slovenian history of art, and, more generally, the socialist realism and modernism of the socialist 1960s. The latter can be characterized as a negative experience, arriving late after the modernism of the West, as a kind of production of kitsch.

Through *Was ist Kunst?* Irwin developed its principal concept of painting most radically: the “retro principle,” the retro-garde maxim. Irwin stated: “A return to ‘bourgeois culture,’ to the manner of its formal execution—easel painting (oil, canvas, and frame)—enables us to give reference to the market and implies the incisiveness that needs to be invested in the iconography of new painting that is present here through its own form; new solutions need to be sought in painting. . . . This is the retro principle, as a regulative matrix, as the framework of an operational procedure and not as a style; the retro principle as a means for analyzing the historical experience of the Slovenian fine arts.”⁷

The iconography of various paintings from *Was ist Kunst?*, based on repetitions and combinations of different painting techniques (for example, montage of printed graphics on canvas, techniques combining drawings in different perspectives, the use of procedures and techniques of the kinetic arts), reveals itself, according to Irwin, “as a recreative procedure that produces a new fine art language. The history of painting is the history of repetition,



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Irwin, *Malevich between the Two Wars*, 1984,
mixed media. Photograph courtesy of NSK.

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Irwin, *Was ist Kunst?*, installation at
Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna,
1990.

which is why it is necessary to encompass its theme precisely, because the intervals that show certain turning points in history are defined very imprecisely. Content as an eclectic collage of various styles and inventions—it is a procedure that dominates the form, not as a new style but as a procedure of recreating painting iconography in a more demanding way.”⁸

On the other hand, all the paintings from *Was ist Kunst?* refer thematically to images connected with the images of the members, performances, or iconography of the group Laibach. The nature of pictorial iconography in the paintings refers almost strictly to the Eastern European context and, more particularly, the Slovenian context, even when it does not concern the reinterpretation and recreation of past artistic models but contemporary ones; that is, the use and reinterpretation of Laibach's iconography. The penetrative force of the *Was ist Kunst?* project is to be comprehended through the stains on the otherwise "classically" defined easel painting. This point of address is where the members of Laibach are portrayed on the canvas: the point that subsequently colors the painting differently and transposes its meaning. These are the places within the paintings that work interpolatively, that subjectivize the observer—determining her/him as a subject. What we seek to emphasize here is precisely that Irwin deals with the production of a subject in art that is in direct contrast to the modernist problem of the subject of production.

The new array of topic brought by Irwin's *Was ist Kunst?* lies not only in the form, on the level of a demanding way of constructing representation-al pictorial models, but also in the strategy of displaying it. *Was ist Kunst?* was, in the 1980s, exhibited in a private apartment—a strategy which encompasses "the intimacy of a Slovenian home"—and it is structured in an inwardly ideological manner. Exhibiting in different private apartments was additionally subjectivized by the choice of the owner and visitors. The "ideological mystification" of the exhibition space is defined by the fact that "history of art" in the last instance is not defined by paintings (a painting is not the subject of painting), but by interpretations. Exhibiting in various private apartments accords with the privacy and the reticence of the domestic circle of a Slovenian home and, at the same time, shows a constant "closure" of art within a circle of connoisseurs.

The method of displaying the *Was ist Kunst?* paintings, in private apartments in Ljubljana, which were only seen by an invited audience, can therefore be interpreted as the presentation and problematization of privacy and the confinement of a place where the history of art is constituted. In its relationship to the underground phenomena of other Eastern European countries—The Russian sotsart and apartment-art (apt-art) movements or the Polish postconceptualism—which were characterized by the paradigm of shaping new artistic "practices" in private spheres that were believed to be completely removed from the system, these projects by Irwin and NSK represented a call for new cultural, political, and artistic institutions and organizations, as well as the formation of new strategies for conceptualization of the

History of Art, so to speak, within the very institutions of the socialist management paradigm of 1980s reality.

At the same time, exhibiting in private apartments is an attempt to externalize the constituent ideological background of the entire *Was ist Kunst?* project, that is, the ban on Laibach's performances in Ljubljana in the mid-1980s. The presentation in private apartments articulated and intensified the negative presence of Laibach in Ljubljana. We should take into account the fact that Irwin's paintings refer directly to Laibach's iconography, and that through the paintings (so to speak, in effigy), the portraits of the members of the group Laibach were displayed publicly.

In *Was ist Kunst?* by Irwin, and in the exhibitions by Laibach Kunst, people who are supposed to have been part of the period of Nazism are portrayed along with members of the banned Laibach group; they are engraved into the iconography of the paintings, as their faces or torso sculptures decorate numerous paintings of the *Was ist Kunst?* project. From a certain perspective, this is an extremely absurd procedure, especially as we are acquainted with the historical intention of portraiture as essential in recording an exact social position in a hierarchy of power. These projects and the iconography they introduce are, therefore, impossible objects and represent a categorical scandal—since the persons portrayed have been removed from all levels of hierarchy (if we recall the ban on Laibach's public performances and appearances in the 1980s). The portrayed were those who could not be located on the map of society—whose portraits should not be painted. This idea also holds true for the anathematized personalities from the so-called period of "Nazikunst."

This is possible to grasp clearly when rethinking the painting/installation named *The Four Seasons* realized by Irwin in 1988. The installation is composed of four huge paintings of female faces set above four doors constructed especially for this installation.

The four seasons are represented by four female faces. Despite *The Four Seasons'* depiction of four monumental female portraits in the portraiture tradition of the Nazi period, we cannot base our criticism purely and solely on this impression. The importance of this work should be recognized through the (de)constructive and almost subversive act of this recycling method, which imposes not a glorification but a distortion. In *The Four Seasons*, Irwin displays the inner structure of the (deeply rationalized) system of perceptual codes that directed the mode of representation of women during the Nazi period. In such a way, the invisible logic that structured the portraits of the period is made visible to the spectator. What Irwin tried to learn from social realism (and later from the Nazikunst trend) was not the psychology of the

re-presented images, but how the paintings which belong to these two periods should look. Thus, they were not trying to comprehend socialist realist authenticity in presenting the images, but the socialist realist or Nazikunst logic of depicting an image—logic, therefore, which places the visual within a rational system of perceptual codes.

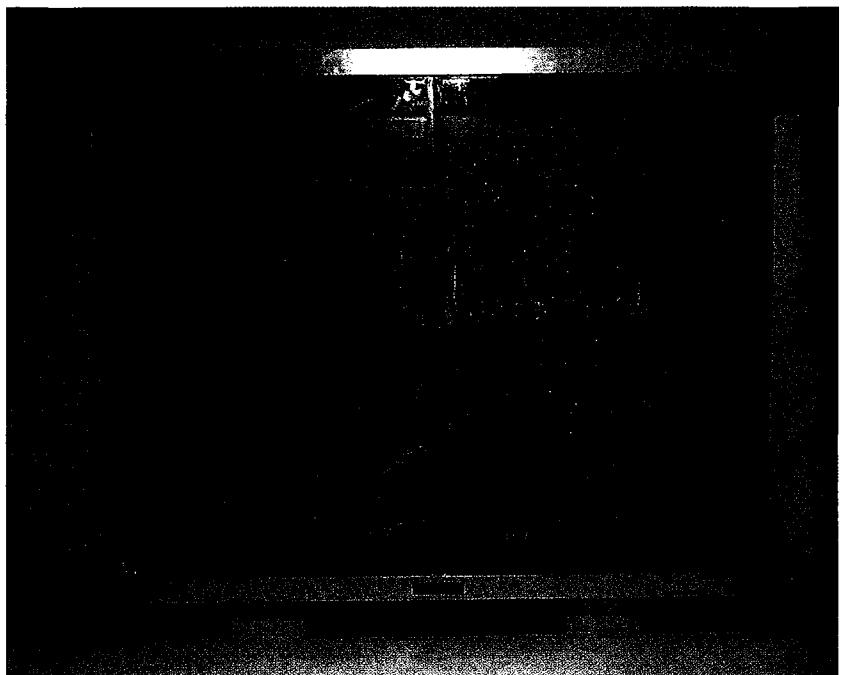
Through their own strategy of representation, Irwin developed not only alternatives in relation to dominant visual principles, but procedures and visual models of false representation (that is, misrepresentation). This is a concept developed by Griselda Pollock,⁹ which explores the means by which a subject is produced; misrepresentation develops “the ruin of representation”¹⁰ precisely on the basis of an unrepresentable object, creating a meaning from its absence. This is confirmed (manifested), for example, by the ruined bodies and faces of female images belonging to the period of Nazikunst in the *Four Seasons* project. This is a specific strategy of resistance and an opposition to corporate systems of representation, which, in terms of gender, class, and race, precisely determines which images can be represented.

In spite of their intersubjectivity, the female faces pointed to history rather than psychology, and became a text about it, which this time is written in images. This transposition can be read entirely conceptually. If, in the 1970s, the Belgrade artist Raša Todosijević, in his series of performances called *Was ist Kunst?*, literally tried to drag this answer out of women by force, painting their faces with colors in the most shocking manner of body art, at the beginning of the 1990s, only the portraits hang before us. In the 1990s, there is no longer a question opening the door. Only answers remain—an accumulation of symptoms.

Irwin’s writing in images can be compared with the work of Christian Boltanski in his *Lesson of Darkness* project. In this case, faces are also colonized by the observer’s knowledge. Because of a certain stereotypical knowledge, we identify in *Lesson of Darkness* the hundreds of faces in the photographs as the faces of victims of the Holocaust, while in the work of Irwin we can identify the female portraits with some forbidden iconography.

Irwin underlines the process of fluidity and fixation of (post)socialist signifiers and borders in such a way that it avoids a complete reinvention of the History of Art and the territory appertaining to it. The inscription of History onto a white surface is, first of all, a discursive act, and, therefore, what we discover as a final process of the inscription of meaning onto the white surface—onto the so-called “empty” Eastern European territory—is always a proper image, or discourse, though in a reversed form. To speak about what is beyond the frontier is to speak about the frontier within ourselves. The

Irwin, *Red Districts*, 1987, mixed media,
collaborators Janez Knez and Tugo
Šušnik. Photograph courtesy of NSK.



consequence is clear: the European postsocialist space is not an empty space, a void, but already an inscribed space, with power, meanings, discourse, names. This last sentence may be reformulated as follows, keeping in mind the aporian status and meaning of the Freudian heritage for modern theory and philosophy: "the other that you or I try to discover is always already me or yourself, but put on its head, in inverted form."¹¹

Irwin's project *Red Districts* (1986) is an excellent explanation of such a saying. The project was done in between *Was ist Kunst?* and the *Four Seasons* cycle. *Red Districts* was composed of paintings constructed as enlargements of original linocuts from the 1950s by the Slovenian painter and graphic artist Janez Knez. The fact that Knez enlarged original linocuts to the format 100 x 140 cm through an episcope, cut from lino(leum) and printed on paper impregnated with pig's blood, is not justified as an attempt to use yet another of the many graphic techniques, but as the realization of objects and graphic works produced through painterly techniques. To these enlargements were added gilt frames, coal (functioning as a passe-partout box), and a small brass plate labeling the project—all of which show the internal logic of bourgeois culture, the constant production of fetish objects in painting. In the final phase, these objects look completely monumental and sacred, to the point that we might designate them as contemporary relics. But they are a special

kind of relic: they are specific products of socialism: socialist realism in art and culture. They are displayed here as the mark of the hidden logic of the art and history of the Eastern European bloc, of socialist realism; as the communist representational visual strategy, which has been kept quiet for a long time and suppressed throughout the 1970s, as something which should be forgotten—as a negative experience. With Irwin's *Red Districts*, we get the repetition of the social realist iconography, but with an excrescent bloody surplus: the one that colored the lives of thousands of painters, artists, whose Revolutionary abstractions were stifled in the bloody Stalinist purges (if we recall only Russian avant-garde history).

With *Red Districts*, we are witness to the tormenting, inert presence of fetish objects. The presence of a fetish object becomes denotative, according to Slavoj Žižek,¹² especially when we comprehend that it functions merely through its "negative" presence; that is, that the object (as a positive given) is, in its presence, an embodiment, a pure confirmation and a sign of its own absence, its own manqué. Or, to put it another way, Irwin's graphic works are fetish objects, which, in their positivism, are pure symbol, "signifiers" of absence: a minus in the art history of the specific product of socialist countries: socialist realism. This is why, beyond every ideology of a return to authenticity and to rootedness, this shift "from a signifier to an object" (as Žižek has stressed) enables the exposure of "a rational center" in the theories of postmodernism. The effect of this transposition, or rather, the effect of the act of desublimation, which is performed constantly by Irwin, lies precisely in the fact that we experience all the fascinating features of an object in the very object itself and, at the same time, notice "what we are dealing with" when we experience that the same object can simultaneously be both disgusting scum (blood and coal) and a sublime, charismatic apparition (monumental and sacred). What determines this difference is merely a symbolic "unary stroke" which is entirely structural, determined by the structural position of the object and not by its "actual features."¹³

Živadinov's Cosmokinetic Theater

Together with fellow NSK members Miran Mohar and Eda Čufer, Dragan Živadinov conceived the retro-garde theater in the early 1980s—the "Theater of the Sisters of Scipio Nasica"—under the name of the Roman consul who ordered the destruction of theaters. The theater went through several stages of metamorphosis and was renamed in the mid-1980s as the Red Pilot Cosmokinetic Theater, to finally become in the early 1990s the Noordung Cosmokinetic Theater.

In the very beginning of the 1990s, when Živadinov explained his further theater trajectory, it sounded like a myth that was slowly to become a reality:

On April 20, 1995, a premiere will be performed in Ljubljana. There will be 12 actors appearing in the premiere. The timing is 8.00 p.m., April 20, 1995, in Ljubljana. The theme will be William Shakespeare. The 12 actors live in Ljubljana. The first reprise is due in 2005, that is, 10 years later, with the same actors, same time, same place, costumes and same stage design. Everything is to be the same except if someone dies. The deceased will be replaced by a symbol. According to the mise-en-scène, where a live actor performed his task, communicating verbally with his coactors, a symbol will be placed there. The spoken parts of the deceased actresses will be replaced by a melody within the same timing. The spoken parts of the deceased actors will be replaced by rhythm. The live actors will act as if the deceased one were present. The second reprise is due in the year 2015. The whole action will thereby be repeated. All the deceased ones will be replaced by symbols. The third reprise is due in 2025, the fourth one in 2035. The last reprise is to take place in 2045. By that time all the actors will be dead. I will be alive and the stage will be full of symbols.

From the beginning the theater section of NSK researched revolutionary changes which take place in the human body in a situation of a changed theatrical space. To be more exact, the theater section of NSK was founded with the aim of renewing theatrical art. At the base of this act lay the triad concept consisting of the analyses of the institution of contemporary theater and performance, the space of theater, and, finally, its ideology. The investigation was developed through an intersection of theater, body, mobility, subjectivity, and mechanics, with more general social phenomena and their realities and especially with contemporary theories of physiological changes. Živadinov inspected the kinetic conceptualizations of new technologies and elaborates on issues of simulation, simulacrum, and the cyborgs/cybernetics/cybernauts. The contemporary time and space paradigm takes on a central role in Živadinov's *biomechanics*, as does the problem of the "subject" as an actor and performer in the electronic age.

With Živadinov, the actor has become the terminal, final location of numerous networks, placed within a global structures of data webs, into the current world of cybernetic space. In the theater actors are not merely theo-

rized but also fabricated by machines. It is not strange that the first theatrical performance by the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater with the title *Retro-garde Event "Hinkemann"* (performed in 1984), inspired by Ernst Toller's drama *Hinkemann* and Bertolt Brecht's *Drums in the Night*, was performed by actors who could hardly move, situated in a specially built iron stage structure. In the next performance, titled *Retro-garde Event "Marija Nablocka,"* premiering in Ljubljana in 1985, the actors were performing very near the heads of the public, as the theater stage was built in such a way that the public had to sit into the stage, being part of it, and thus having only their heads beyond the stage platform. The actors played in between the heads of the audience members, and the audience could feel the actors breathing, smell their skin, and sense each of their biomechanic and psychical theater movements.

In his seminal book *Terminal Identity*,¹⁴ Scott Bukatman defined terminal culture or cyberspace as the culture of an era in which the digital has substituted for the tactile. He further argues (using Jean Baudrillard's terms) that physical action in terminal situations—and what else are Živadinov's biomechanic situations?—returns as a strategy of communication, combining tactile and tactical simulation.¹⁵ The visual and rhetorical recognition of terminal space therefore prepares the subject for a more direct, bodily engagement (Bukatman). Moreover, cyberspace is grounded upon or concentrates on the cybernaut. Timothy Leary reminds us, "The word cybernetic person or cybernaut returns us to the original meaning of 'pilot' and puts the self-reliant person back in the loop."¹⁶ The construction of a new cyberspatial subject thus relies upon a narration of perception followed by kinesis (Bukatman), piloting, mobile distancing, traveling, gravitating. This is exactly the recapitulation of the development of the subject/actor generated by Dragan Živadinov's process of physiognomic theater reconstitution.

Biomechanics refers to a process that combines forms meaning life with mechanics; biomechanics is about motion and action of forces on bodies. The word biomechanics cannot be found in Webster's, but is strongly present in the Russian tradition from the theater to physiology. In this context, I can state that what is for the developed "West" connected with technology and transformation, in the terminology of genetic engineering, the Russians know as biomechanics. It is possible in fact to think about biomechanics as the new artistic genetic engineering. The primary domain of biomechanics is physiology, that is, the science dealing with the functions and vital processes of living organisms and mechanical movements. Biomechanics, as first researched by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), is widely used today in military medicine. Vsevolod E. Meyerhold (1874–1942) with his ideas of the Revolutionary

theater, where the theater is perceived as a mobile space with constructivist elements, introduced biomechanical elements into the theater as sites of dramatically performed actions.

According to multiple references to the social, the political, and the physiological, Živadinov differentiates three stages in biomechanics, with respective technological gadgets, political references, and body parts.

1. Historical biomechanics (until the beginning of the Second World War).
2. Telepresence biomechanics (which started with the Second World War and, I will add, is connected with an increasing expansion of research in rocket technology and astronautics).
3. Cosmic biomechanics (inaugurated by Živadinov's parabolic art project *Noordung Biomechanics*).

Historical biomechanics can be seen as the age of optical technologies. Radio is the most important medium, and the body of an actor participating in historical biomechanic performances is the body of an acrobat. In telepresence biomechanics, television becomes the central apparatus, and it is thus not difficult to see the connection with our proposed electronic technologies and images period. Biomechanic theater is all about the science of motion and action of forces on bodies. The project is about different bodies in parallel worlds. Physical bodies, sexual bodies, social bodies, media bodies, and political bodies. Each territory produces a border body. In biomechanics the change is from muscle to skeleton; exteriors, foreign to one another, are yet absolutely together, are "simultaneity."¹⁷

In biomechanics both the theater and performance meet the Real. If we think about the theater as symbolic space (where the actor represents) and about performance as the process connected with reality (where the actor articulates his or her own nonmediated reality), then the actor transformed into an astronaut is the real of the theater and performance.

In the end there is in fact a fiction:

On April 20, 1995, a premiere will be performed in Ljubljana. There will be 12 actors appearing in the premiere. The timing is 8.00 p.m., April 20, 1995, in Ljubljana. The theme will be William Shakespeare. The 12 actors live in Ljubljana. The first reprise is due in 2005, that is, 10 years later, with the same actors, same time, same place, costumes and same stage design. Everything is to be the same except if someone

dies. The deceased will be replaced by a symbol. According to the *mise-en-scène*, where a live actor performed his task, communicating verbally with his coactors, a symbol will be placed there. The spoken parts of the deceased actresses will be replaced by a melody within the same timing. The spoken parts of the deceased actors will be replaced by rhythm. The live actors will act as if the deceased one were present. (Živadinov)

Notes

1. Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Filozofija skozi psikoanalizo* [Philosophy through Psychoanalysis] (Ljubljana: DDU Univerzum, 1984), pp. 100–130.
2. Cf. Hal Foster, preface to *Vision and Visuality*, ed. H. Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), p. xii.
3. Ibid.
4. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum*, September 1982, p. 43.
5. Slobodan Mijušković, in *ibid*.
6. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 43.
7. Irwin, "A Diary of Work," manuscript (no pagination).
8. Cf. Irwin, "A Diary of Work."
9. Cf. Griselda Pollock, "Feminist Film Practice and Pleasure: A Discussion," in *Formations of Pleasure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 157.
10. Cf. Jo Anna Isaak, "Women: The Ruin of Representation," in *Afterimage*, April 1985, p. 6.
11. Cf. Oliver Marchart "Greetings from Neutopia" (online). Available at nettiment@Desk.nl (1998).
12. Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Problemi teorije fetišizma* [Problems of the Theory of Fetishism] (Ljubljana: DDU Univerzum, 1985).
13. Ibid.
14. Cf. Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 18–19 and 150–160.
15. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 124.
16. Cf. Timothy Leary, "The Cyber-Punk: The Individual as Reality Pilot," in Larry McCaffery, ed., *Storming the Reality Studio* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 252.
17. Ibid.

9

(Im)possible Photographs

Leonida Kovač

Any attempt to write a survey on the subject of photography within the context defined by the historical avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde, and the post-avant-garde and the geopolitical entity that existed in the period between 1918 and 1991 under the name of Yugoslavia means, in effect, constructing an impossible history.

It is a historical fact that the avant-garde is a figure within modernist rhetoric. Modernist thought has been defined as structured on three basic tenets: the specifics of aesthetic experience, the self-sufficiency of the visual, and the teleological evolution of art independent of any other social cause or pressure. Furthermore, in Rosalind Krauss's words, modernism and the avant-garde are functions of the discourse of originality, and that discourse serves much wider interests—and is thus fueled by more diverse institutions—than the restricted circle of professional art-making. The theme of originality, encompassing as it does the notions of authenticity, originals, and origins, is the shared discursive practice of the museum, the historian, and the maker of art. And throughout the nineteenth century all of these institutions were concerted, together, to find the mark, the warrant, the certification of the original.¹

As with the discourse of modernism whose provenance could be recognized in a certain mid-nineteenth-century utopia, the establishment of the state named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 (the name would be changed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia eleven years later) was also catalyzed by a certain utopia: the pan-Slavic idea. A kingdom in its first phase, Yugoslavia was a federation with six republics in its second phase that lasted from the end of World War II to 1991 and the most recent war.

The borders of this state lay along the geographical edges of Central, Eastern, and Mediterranean Europe, uniting territories with divergent cultural

(ethnic, religious, economic, and political) backgrounds. The divergent cultural backgrounds have been acknowledged in the historical and critical writing on twentieth-century art production in the countries that made up the former Yugoslavia. There is frequent mention of the tradition of constructivist art in Croatia, that of surrealism in Serbia, and that of expressionism in Slovenia.

Syntheses of art history with a modernist focus pay particular attention to avant-garde movements and phenomena. It could, indeed, be said that the history of avant-garde art in the first and second Yugoslavias has already been written. The term *avant-garde* has been applied to movements, groups, and projects of the 1920s and 1930s, a period often referred to as the historical *avant-garde*. The term is also used for quite different phenomena from the 1950s: movements openly opposed to the dogma of socialist realism. Indeed, various art practices, or more precisely manifestations of conceptual art in the late 1960s and 1970s for which art criticism in Zagreb and Belgrade invented the name “new art practice,” were and still are often termed *avant-garde* art. Personally, I am not inclined to apply the term *avant-garde* to any art movement appearing after World War II.

During the period between 1918 and 1991, photography in Yugoslavia was treated as applied art more often than as Art. This classification is widespread because art criticism, relying on the modernist paradigm, focused on the concept of creativity or originality, while the broad spectrum of issues of representation was completely neglected. Furthermore, since the early 1950s when some artists and artist groups such as Edo Murtić or the Exat 51 group in Croatia transgressed the dogma of socialist realism by practicing abstract expressionism or geometric abstraction, their nonrepresentational (or rather abstract) art became a synonym of sorts for freedom, both in the artistic and the more usual political sense of the word. Photography as a representational practice *par excellence* was thus unable to take its proper place in the history of art, where a linear chronology was supposed to confirm a “progression” from figuration to abstraction.

It is clear that the term *avant-garde*, whether used within the context of art or some other context, has always had and still retains a certain political charge. Those of us, for instance, who were raised under the communist system are familiar with the platitude “the *avant-garde* of the working class.” Ironically, the *avant-garde* of the working class has never been the real audience for *avant-garde* art. The question that I find the most useful to raise regarding this problem of audience would be: where is the performative power of *avant-garde* art?

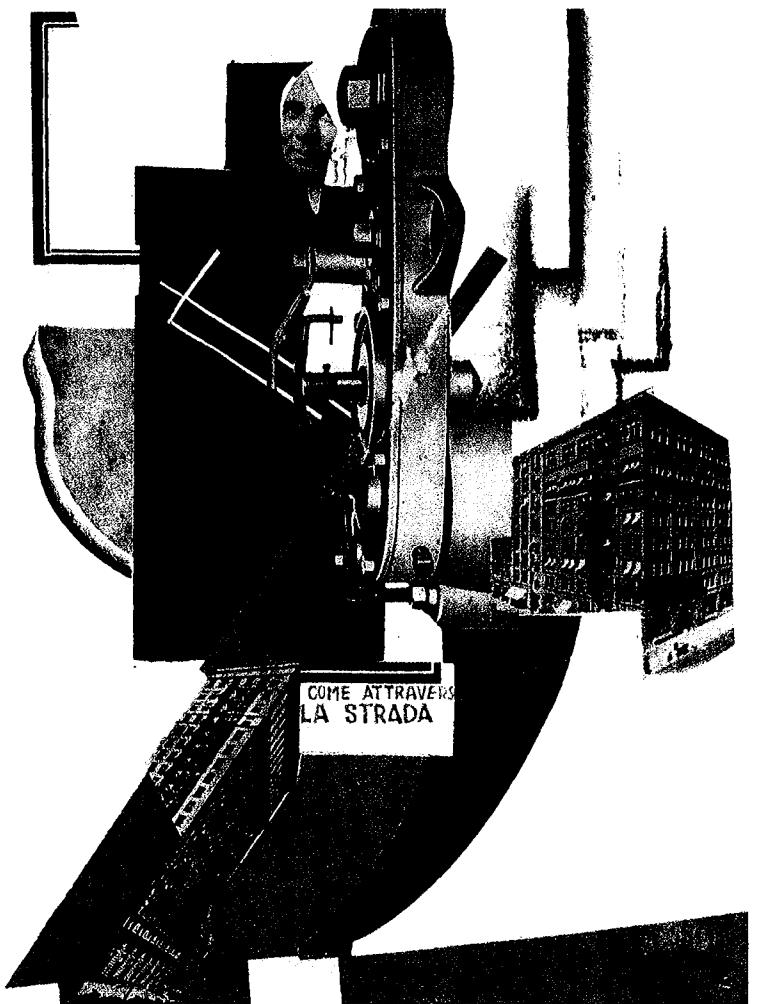
My interest lies more in the historical conditions of a specific art production than in history itself, and that is why I will make no attempt at sketching a history of photography in the former Yugoslavia, preferring instead to discuss photographs the significance of which can be recognized in their performative power at a certain historical moment, within the given social and political conditions. As regards the factual history of photography, these works cannot be considered as points in a logical progression, but rather as outbursts.

Russian constructivism influenced the body of works produced by artists from the countries of the former Yugoslavia during the period between 1920 and 1930 that were later classified under the common denominator of the historical avant-garde. Reliance on constructivist principles is visible in work by Croatian artist Josip Seissel, an architect by training, referred to at the time as Jo Klek, as it is in the works of Slovenes Avgust Černigoj and Edvard Stepančič.

It is worth noting that Černigoj was a student at the Bauhaus in 1924, attending Kandinsky's and Moholy-Nagy's classes. Although he is not thought of as a photographer, a series of photographs from 1933 taken by Manilo Mallabota, entitled *Podplati* [Soles], deserve mention. Černigoj may have posed for them as a model, but I have reason to think that he directed each of the frames. As suggested by the title, the objects of representation were the soles of shoes, located, of course, in the foreground of the photographic image. The choice of the angle of shooting, however, which resulted in a specific kind of foreshortening, establishes a particular link between the spectator and the photographed figure. The spectator, whose presence is implied by the discursive space of these photographs, is addressed by Černigoj's gaze from above, blurred by the distance constructed by the positioning of the gigantic soles that function as a barrier between the space within and outside the photograph.

The performative power of another of the self-portraits directed by Černigoj and photographed by Mario Lavrenčič also lies in the act of addressing the spectator through a direct gaze, but this time mediated by the presence of a mirror. The photograph in question is entitled *Igra z zrcalom* [Game with a Mirror]. It shows Černigoj and his wife looking in a mirror that was leaning toward the surface of the table. While the reflection of their faces shows her looking at him in the mirror, his gaze is mirrored as looking toward the camera lens, which by the very structure of the photograph is declared to be the third protagonist in the scene.

Avgust Černigoj, *Come attraverso la strada*, 1925, collage. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.



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Avgust Černigoj, *Charlie Chaplin*, 1926, collage.

Slovenski gledališki muzej, Ljubljana.



Edvard Stepančić's photograph *Obraz pred zrcalom* [Face in Front of a Mirror] from 1928 is reminiscent of self-portraits by Claude Cahun from approximately the same period that have recently been reviewed in the context of subversions of an identity concept, in the sense of a fixed and unified category.



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Edvard Stepančić, *Portret AB* [Portrait of AB], 1928, photograph. Owner unknown.

During the course of the late 1920s both Černigoj and Stepančić worked on compositions in which they employed the procedures of photo collage invented by Hannah Höch, practiced as one of the basic strategies of the Dada movement. There are around 30 photographs and negatives, as well as several collages and photomontages, by Ivana Meller Tomljenović in a collection held by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. All of the works were produced in 1930 and they are almost the only preserved works by the author, better known as a professor of drawing than as an artist. The reason those photographs have been collected by the museum and inserted into art history is the simple fact that Ivana Meller Tomljenović was a student at the Bauhaus from 1929 until 1930, when she was expelled from the school for her communist affiliation. Since it is impossible to believe that the photographer took no further photographs in the period from her expulsion from the Bauhaus until her death in 1989, the fact that only the works from her Bauhaus episode have been preserved and critically reviewed testifies to the restrictive nature of modernist art history. Most of the photographs are por-

traits of her colleagues, including Naf Rubinstein, Grete Krebs, Thomas Flake, Margit Mengl, and Tibor Weiner. They are all close-ups of faces with typical modernist cropping, taken mostly from a lower angle. The sharp contrast of black and white surfaces, a certain reductivist procedure, and the bias of the foreground within the frame that characterize most of her portraits can also be noticed in the photograph entitled *1 May 1931* (a close-up of the profile of a young man carrying a banner) taken in Berlin, and in one entitled *Cigle* [Bricks] (Dessau, 1930).



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Ivana Tomljenović, *Cigle* [Bricks],
1930, photograph. Muzej
suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

Tomljenović employed the technique of photomontage in graphic design. The best-known sample is the cover page of the brochure *Diktatur in Jugoslawien* issued on the occasion of an exhibition with the same name in Berlin in 1930. The picture on the cover page represents King Aleksandar (who disbanded the Yugoslav parliament in 1929) standing on the naked body of a dead man.

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Ivana Tomljenović, cover page of *Diktatur in Jugoslawien*, 1930, photograph. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

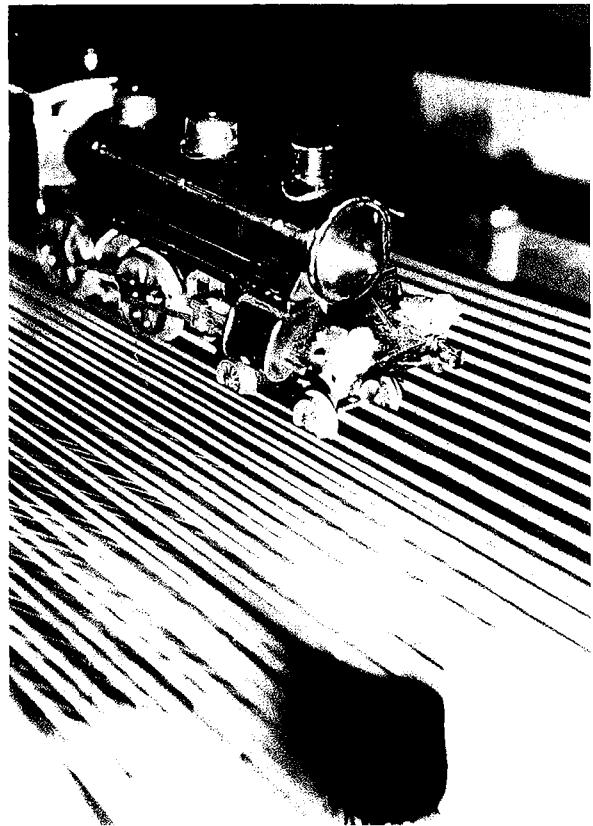


Surrealist photography emerged in Belgrade under an overtly political dictatorship during the 1930s. The photograph entitled *Zadržano bekstvo nadrealnosti* [The Retained Escape of Surreality] taken by Nikola Vučo in 1930 is often acknowledged as the most important work of Serbian surrealism. Showing respect for the basic principles of photographic language, using double exposure and radically cropping the frame, Vučo produced a sort of riddle picture, thereby deconstructing the traditional conception of reality.²



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Nikola Vučo, *Bez naslova* [Untitled], 1930, photograph. Muzej primenjene umetnosti, Belgrade.



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Nikola Vučo, *Zlatni presek obmane* [Golden Cross Section of Illusion], 1930, photograph. Muzej primenjene umetnosti, Belgrade.

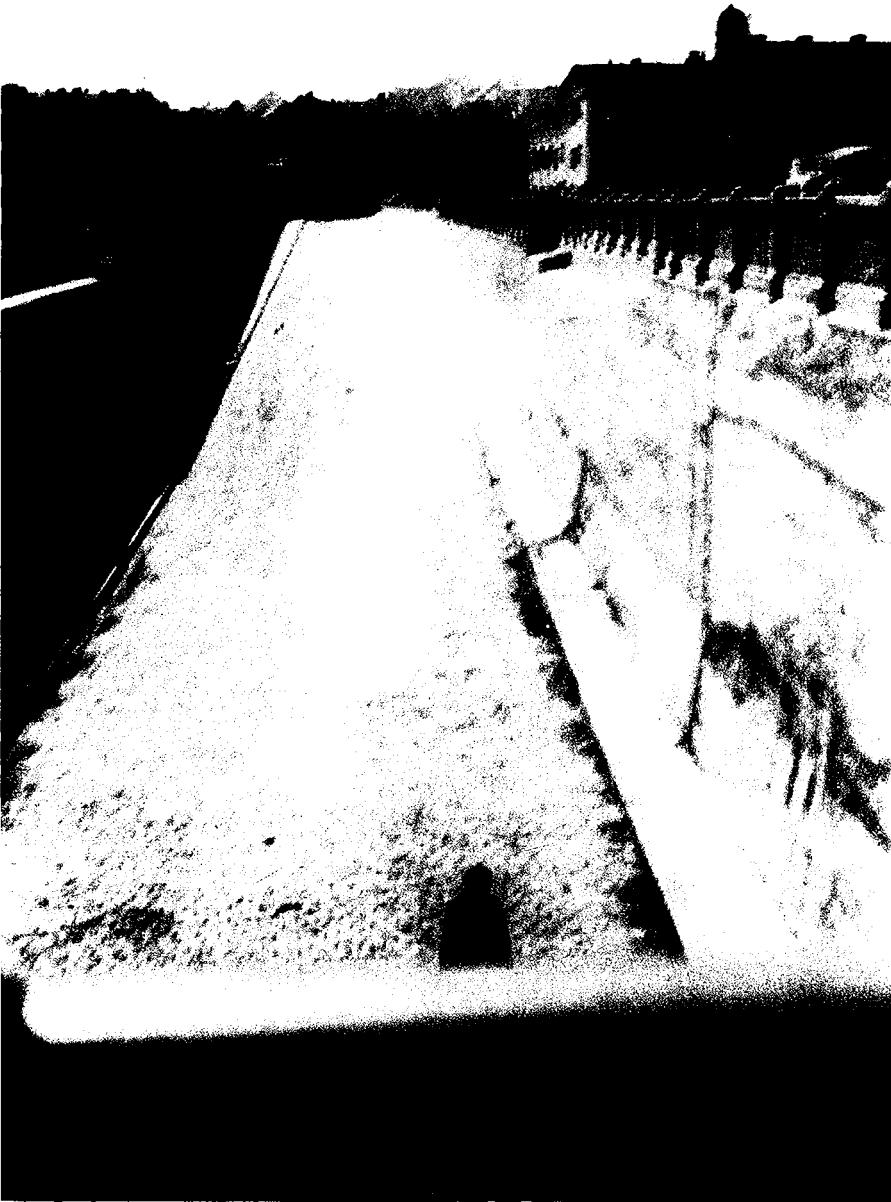
Vane Bor, *Fotogram br. 7* [Photogram no. 7], 1928, photograph. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.

Within the context of Belgrade surrealism, photographs, or to be more precise, photograms, by Vane Živadinović Bor and Marko Ristić are also worth mentioning. The objects in Živadinović's photograms (often composed of pieces of glass) are more or less recognizable and are arranged as parts of a complex structure of multiple meaning.³

It is commonly accepted that modernism is basically an urban phenomenon. Several series of photographs produced by the well-known Croatian photographer Tošo Dabac in the course of the 1930s can be regarded not only as a scan of the social and cultural conditions in Zagreb between the two wars, but as an attempt to deconstruct the general notions and abstract categories



Vane Bor, *Jedan minut pre zločina* [A Minute before the Crime], 1935, photograph.
Muzej savremene umetnosti,
Belgrade.



Tošo Dabac, *Prosjakinja sa detetom* [Beggar with Child], 1932–1933, photograph. Tošo Dabac Archive, Zagreb.



used within daily political rhetoric, such as “city,” “population,” “mass,” “citizens,” and “urban life.” The series of photographs titled *Ljudi s ulice* [People from the Street] (1932–1935) consists of individual portraits of men, women, and children who actually live on the existential fringe. The performative power of these portraits stems from the way they are framed. The photographic image (within which the notion of the city is signified) juxtaposes two levels: the signs of the metropolis’s glamour in the background and the scene, that is, the living experience that stands in opposition to the proclaimed glamour, in the foreground. In 1940, Tošo Dabac made a series entitled *Na ulici* [In the Street]. In comparison with *People from the Street*, which shows an obvious tendency toward realism, those photographs demonstrate a different structure. It is possible to perceive a certain reductionism manifested in the choice of the

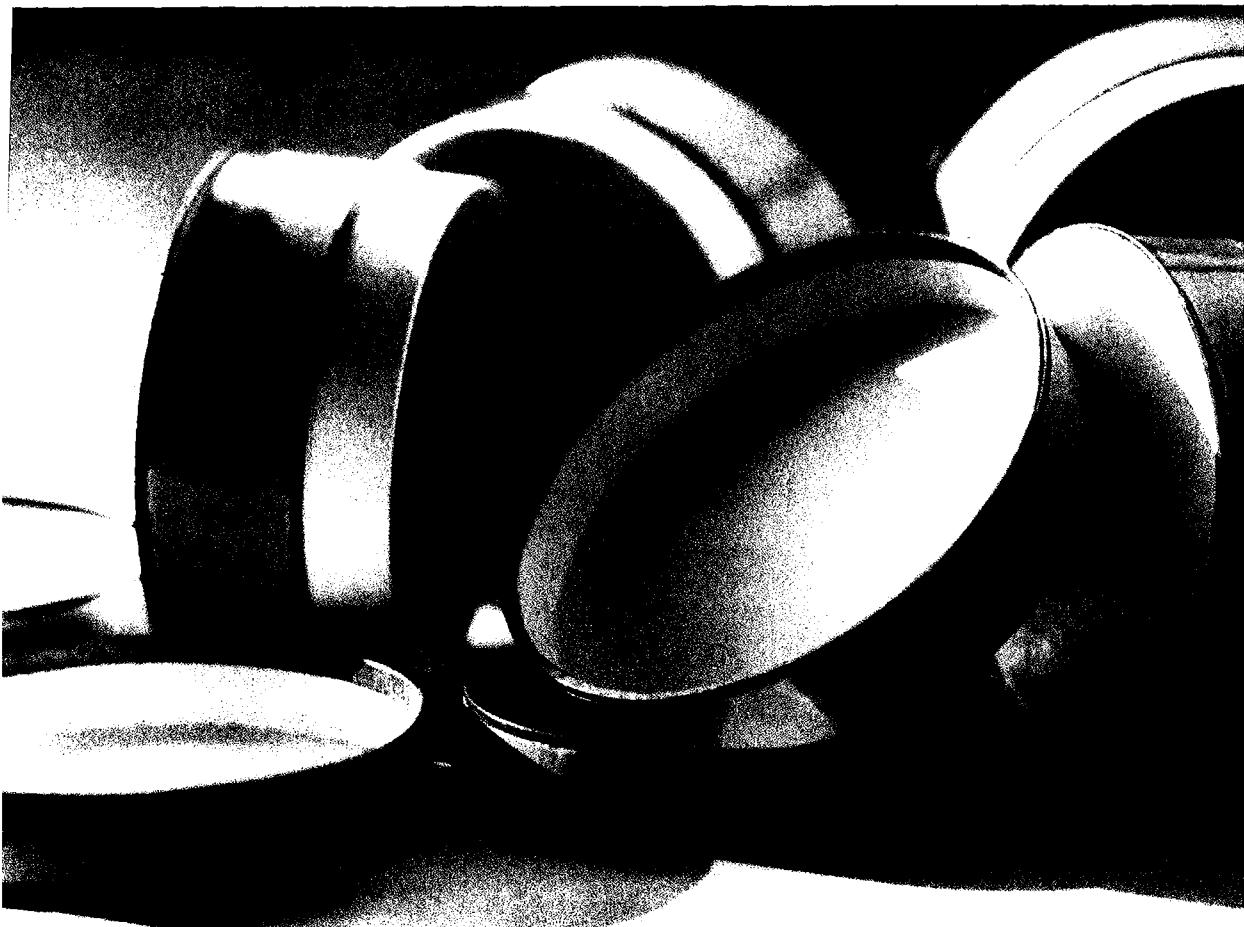
upper angle of shooting, as well as in the lighting. This produces remarkably sharp, dark shadows that in fact become the real objects of representation. The images of walking people who are inseparable from their mighty shadows result in a sort of ornamental structure for the photographic image, and also convey the atmosphere of the forthcoming political turbulence.

Deliberating on the issue of new objectivity (*neue Sachlichkeit*) in Slovenian photography, Lara Štrumej concludes that it is possible to interpret this movement as a rejection by a handful of committed individuals of the prevailing pictorially based tradition. Their rebellion was at its most intense around 1930, fading out by 1935, with only a few photographs known to have been made thereafter. It is an individual venture into the world of material reality undertaken by a few photographers, among whom the more notable figures were Karlo Kocjančič, Fran Krašovec, and Janko Skerlep.⁴

Skerlep's works, for example *Ob Ljubljanici* [By the Ljubljanica River] (1929), *Obodi za rešeta* [Sieve Frames] (1930), or *V kmetskem mlinu—za pogace, za kolače* [In a Peasant Mill—for Pies, for Cakes] (1930), show their formalist orientation. He concentrates on the form of the object or on the material, thus making the plastic qualities the most salient. These images only acquire content when the viewer examines the detail very closely or considers the title. After 1929 Skerlep devoted himself completely to photographing the details of plants. There are far more of these photographs than of any other cluster of motifs.⁵

Photographs by Fran Krašovec produced during the 1930s represent average objects of daily use such as candlestick holders, objects made of glass and cardboard, corrugated paper, or shirt collars. Lara Štrumej recognizes the origins of his approach in the modernist treatment of the photographic medium: optical proximity, an unusual angle of gaze, as well as the imaging of familiar objects that acquire aesthetic connotations in his photographs. This can also be interpreted as a distant reflection of the initial (avant-garde) idea of defamiliarization that demanded the object be represented in ways that were out of the ordinary.⁶

The impact of defamiliarization can be recognized as one of the basic tenets of the informal group of artists and theorists that used the name Gorgona in Zagreb between 1959 and 1966. Basically, Gorgona should be termed a protoconceptual group, since its method of acting was akin to what was called conceptual art a decade later in the discourse of art theory.⁷ Gorgona found the field of reference for its activities in the sociopolitical conditions of both the declarative liberalism and the practical totalitarianism of that period. Gorgona performances were discreet, almost imperceptible to a



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Fran Krašovec, *Karton* [Carton], 1931,
photograph. Moderna galerija,
Ljubljana.

wider audience. Their actions were primarily manifested in a specific method of mutual communication. Special attention was paid to what they called protocolar behavior. This behavior was twofold, or more precisely it had a double articulation. Through their method of communication, Gorgona's members cultivated the manners of bourgeois decency (as opposed to the manners of the "avant-garde of the working class"), while in their correspondence (one of the basic activities of the group) they simulated the mannerisms employed by the communist bureaucracy.

Photography played a specific role in Gorgona performative strategy. Their meetings were "documented" with hundreds of photographs taken by Branko Balić, who, indicatively, was not an "official member" of the group. Furthermore, Gorgona issued an antiperiodical of the same name. The first issue consists of a single photograph printed in the same way on each page of

the publication. Within the vertical frame of the black and white photograph is an empty easel in a shop window.

In the late 1960s and during the course of the 1970s there was a visible paradigm shift from the notion of the “work of art” to that of the “art practice.” The demise of the modernist claim for the purity of a particular art, or more precisely medium, combined with attempts at the deconstruction of the institutional framework by which the notion of art had been defined meant that photography gained recognition as the vehicle for the performative power of the statement. Indeed, the positions of speech were often denoted within the discursive spaces of the photographs that structured the pure statement.

During the late 1960s photography was used as a means of materialization rather than as a medium in the activities of the Slovenian OHO group (Marko Pogačnik, David Nez, Milenko Matanović, and Andraž and Tomaž Šalamun). The actions performed by the OHO group, which might be regarded in the broader context of conceptual art, were, ironically, concerned with the problems of dematerialization that ultimately led them to a brand of metaphysics. Photography was used in the function of documentation, or, in Tomaž Brejc’s words, as “a copy machine.”⁸



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OHO group and Walter De Maria,
Projekt [Project], 1970, photograph
series. OHO archive; reproduced by
permission of Marko Pogačnik.

In contrast, the works of Sanja Iveković produced during the course of the 1970s were stripped of metaphysics in any sense. She uses strategies of disidentification that were commonly accepted in the feminist art practices of the time. Through the juxtaposition of photographic self-portraits (made in the manner of amateur photography) with press or advertisement photographs—stereotypic representations of women—as well as the introduction of autobiographic discourse, her works show that gender identity is not preordained or a fixed or unchangeable category. Instead it is a social construct based on preexisting power relations. For instance, in the work entitled *Tragedija jedne Venere* [The Tragedy of a Venus] (1976) structured in the form of a picture book, Iveković glued press photographs with the related explanation from the “picture-story” about Marilyn Monroe’s life on one page of the book while placing her own photograph—in the same pose or situation as Marilyn—on the opposite page.

The works, or more precisely, performances, of Marina Abramović were always documented by a series of photographs. These photographs also deal with the concept of identity regarded as a social category that has been constructed through different, mutually intersecting social practices. Exposing her own body—not as an object of representation, but as an object that is subjected to the impact of ideology—she problematizes the legitimacy of the border that divides a realm of art from the realm of life. Totalitarianism as a context within which the category of identity is imposed on a certain social subject (object) can be recognized as a referential field of her *Ritam 4* [Rhythm 4], performed in Belgrade in 1974, in which she lay inside a flaming pentagram—a symbol appropriated by the ideology of communism. Furthermore, the autonomous discipline of art as an area constructed by the discursive formations of bourgeois ideology was emphasized in works such as *Umetnost mora biti lepa—umetnik mora biti lep* [Art Must Be Beautiful—the Artist Must Be Beautiful] (1975), which consisted of photographs showing the artist combing and brushing her hair accompanied by a text containing the sentence “I am combing and brushing my hair until my hair and face disfigure.” Even more indicative is her act of changing identity in Amsterdam (1995). While she was sitting as a prostitute in a shop window, the prostitute was present (as the artist) at the opening of her show in De Appel Gallery.

Radomir Damjanjanović Damjan takes as the subject of his work the institutional framework as a set of points within which the notion of art is constructed, as well as the discipline of art history and the position of the individual artist within an artistic tradition. These works explicitly examine the issue of identity. In the series of photographic self-portraits entitled *U čast*



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Radomir Damnjan, *U čast sovjetskoj avangardi* [In Honor of the Soviet Avant-Garde], 1973, photograph. Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

sovjetskoj avangardi [In Honor of the Soviet Avant-garde] (1973), each of the frames shows Damnjan's face with the name of an artist, defined by him as an avant-garde artist, inscribed on his forehead.

Numerous photographic works in the course of the 1970s manifest speech, or rather the way of addressing an audience using the first person singular, as a means of replicating the rhetorical figure of the idealized artist produced through the discourse of bourgeois modernist art history and criticism. *Glave* [Heads], a series of photographic self-portraits by Tomislav Gotovac, the *Prvi psibokibernetički superautoportret* [First Psycho-cybernetic Super-Self-Portrait] photo installation by Željko Borčić, *Rendgenski snimak moga tijela* [X-ray Print of My Own Body] by Željko Jerman, the *Bez naslova* [Untitled]

series of photographs by Neša Paripović, and Miško Šuvaković's photographic triptych explicitly entitled *Identitet* [Identity] are just some of the works that deserve mention here. Jerman created the work *Moja godina 1977* [My Year 1977] in the form of a diary in which he glued a photograph documenting something he had done on a certain day on each of 365 sheets of standard-format white paper, accompanying each photograph with a handwritten explanation.

In the early 1970s Goran Trbuljak used a self-portrait to raise questions about the notion of originality as a founding concept within modernism, or rather within the discourse of the avant-garde. Originality is denied at several levels: the work was exhibited in the form of a poster that consisted of a photographic self-portrait accompanied by the statement "I do not wish to show anything new and original." Another of Trbuljak's posters shows a photographic image of the building housing the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb with these words beneath it: "the fact that somebody has a chance to hold a show matters more than what will be in that show."

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Goran Trbuljak, *Ne želim pokazati ništa novo i originalno* [I Do Not Wish to Show Anything New and Original], 1971, poster.
Private collection, Belgrade.



galerija studentskog centra zagreb, savska 25

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In the early 1970s, autobiographic discourse or obvious play on the pragmatism of the photographic image is evident in a series of works by Braco Dimitrijević entitled *Prolaznik kojeg sam slučajno sreо* [A Passerby Whom I Met by Chance]. Crucial here is that the title of each work contains the precise date and time of an accidental encounter with an anonymous passerby. Instead of documents, however, the photographs function as monuments: gigantic photographic enlargements of portraits, mounted on canvas and hung on the facades of the buildings that surround the places where the encounters between artist and passersby took place. The photographic portrait of an anonymous person, framed in a way reminiscent of photographs used for ID cards, becomes a public monument. The performative nature of Dimitrijević's work is further manifested in the process of erasing the borderline dividing not only the private from the public sphere but, indeed, the realm of art from life. *A Passerby Whom I Met by Chance* was installed in a number of European cities, but it was the cult of personality embodied in Tito's figure in the former Yugoslavia that was often mentioned in reference to this work.

From a distance of twenty years, it is clear today that Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, and with it the communist and single-party ideology on which the former state relied, at the moment of Tito's death. The social and cultural context in which a cult of personality becomes possible was represented in a series of slides by Goranka Matić that were taken on the day of Tito's funeral. The pure absurdity becomes visible from shots focused on arrangements in Belgrade shop windows where Tito's portrait with a black ribbon draped over it as a sign of mourning had been placed among all kinds of commodities ranging from food to underwear.

Several series of photographs by Boris Cvjetanović taken mostly in Zagreb in the course of the 1980s represented precisely those issues about which communist rhetoric (which proclaimed the equality and dignity of all people, their social security, and above all their freedom) remained silent. There is a striking series entitled *Mesnička 6* (a Zagreb address) representing scenes from the life of a mentally ill family living in conditions of extreme poverty, or the *Ljudi iz Šahtova* [People from Manholes] series showing images of people who live underground, in manholes or heating conduits.

During the same period Cvjetanović photographed scenes from hospitals where children suffering from incurable diseases were nursed, or from the neuropsychiatric wards and asylums where alcohol and drug addicts went to be treated. Of no less importance in the context of imaging various levels of the sociocultural environment are his photographs of erotic graffiti scrawled

I will conclude this “impossible history” by giving two examples that can be seen as referring to the notion of the avant-garde. The reader may decide whether and how they do so. Both are photographic works made in Croatia in the autumn of 1991.

The first, Ivan Faktor’s work *Ein Stadt sucht der Mörder 1933–1991*, consists of twelve color photographs, or more precisely video stills, showing nocturnal views of the city of Osijek during an air raid. The photographs are composed in a large rectangle denoting a film screen. To enhance the already clear reference to Fritz Lang’s famous (avant-garde) film, subtitles from that film are also used as an integral part of Faktor’s video stills.

The second example is of a series of photographs that enjoy cult status in the history of Croatian photography. Their author, Pavo Urban, a twenty-year-old student at the Academy of Theater and Film, was killed while taking the pictures. The series of six photographs were developed by someone else from Urban’s negatives and given the title *Posljednji snimci* [The Last Shots]. The photographic image is of a large, innocent cloud over the Stradun—the main street in Dubrovnik—shelled that day, December 6, 1991, by Yugoslav Army paramilitary troops.

Notes

1. Rosalind E. Krauss, “The Originality of the Avant-Garde,” in *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), p. 162.
2. Milanka Todić, “Od piktorijalizma do nadrealizma 1918–1941” [From Pictorialism to Surrealism], in the catalog *Serbian Photography 1839–1989* (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1991), p. 80.
3. Ibid.
4. Lata Štrumej, “European Avant-garde Ideas in the Twenties and New Objectivity in Slovenian Photography,” in *New Objectivity in Slovenian Photography* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 1998), pp. 15–16.
5. Cvetka Požar, “New Objectivity in Janko Skerlep’s Photographic Oeuvre between the Two Wars,” in *New Objectivity in Slovenian Photography*, pp. 31–32.
6. Štrumej, “European Avant-garde Ideas,” p. 19.
7. For more about the Gorgona group see Marija Gattin, “Gorgona, gorgonesco, gorgonico,” in the catalog of the same name (Venice: Biennale delle Arti Visive, 1997).
8. Tomaž Brejc, “OHO kao umjetnosna pojava” [OHO as an Art Phenomenon], in Marijan Susovski, ed., *Nova umjetnička praksa 1968–1978* [New Art Practice 1968–1978] (Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, 1978), p. 16.

10

From Zenit to Mental Space

Avant-garde, Neo-avant-garde, and Post-avant-garde Magazines and Books
in Yugoslavia, 1921–1987

Darko Šimičić

Introduction

Before we undertake the reading and examination of avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, and post-avant-garde magazines and other publications in Yugoslavia from the beginning of the 1920s to the mid-1980s, we should mention similarities to and differences from events transpiring in those years in the broader, international context. Within the heterogeneous national cultures of Yugoslavia (Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, and Hungarian), magazines and other publications have quickly followed and propagated the international avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, and post-avant-garde, or they have served as the mouthpiece for local companion pieces to international artistic movements at the time of their publication.

The magazines and other publications that we are discussing are independent and complete works of art, executed in the layered form of collages consisting of textual and visual elements. They are the result of artistic strategies rather than editorial politics. In the art of the twentieth century, the form of magazines and other publications proved to be of crucial importance in building a strong network, thereby establishing the effective communication system of art, primarily among artists but more broadly among the cultural centers of Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. These ties created the basis for an entire artistic archipelago, an array of individuals, groups, movements, schools, and institutions active in smaller centers.

The magazines and other publications are the result of efforts by individuals or small groups of artists. They represent marginal events compared to mainstream national culture. Some of the artists and groups do not follow a straight historical and cultural course but, instead, articulate a series of

discontinuous, fragmented incidents within a culture characterized by drastic disruptions, unexpected turns of events, constant climbs from the zero point, oblivion, and annulment of cultural memory. Almost as a rule, the work of all other individuals or groups is either passed over in silence, ignored, or challenged. Political, social, and individual factors contributed to the discontinuity of culture: police and judicial prohibitions, poverty, the relinquishing of manifest ideas, changes in profession, silence, madness, and violent death. The material from magazines and other publications available today for examination or reading is very often the only trace preserved of works of art (lost or destroyed paintings, collages, photographs, texts, and entire archives) or the only information extant on certain artists or movements. As a rule, artists who were very young and at the peak of their creative power were involved in the magazines that interest us. Among the contributors we observe a small number of women artists, a fact that suggests the patriarchal nature of the cultural and social space. There are remarkable variations in the physical form of the magazines and publications. While avant-garde publications are always and only printed material, neo-avant-garde and post-avant-garde publications are open to innovation and unconventional form.

The magazines and other publications had little influence on local culture. The international languages of the avant-gardes, the neo-avant-gardes, and the post-avant-gardes found no significant and enduring point of support in the traditionally national and exclusive, or ideologically rigid, cultures dominated by the mild form of late-blooming modernism. Critical reception tended to be slow to appear and full of suppression, shocking misapprehensions, marginalization, and flat-out rejection. The avant-gardes, neo-avant-gardes, and post-avant-gardes still have no place in the public discourse of culture. There never has been a transfer from art to culture. Hence collecting the material necessary for writing fragmentary art histories in Yugoslavia is a painstaking process of searching for suppressed words, lost documents, destroyed traces, and forgotten people. Fortunately, those fragments that have been preserved have a subversive power, seductive beauty, and unexpected durability.

Consider one example that lies outside the time frame of this paper but could, in many fields, serve as a model for radical artistic strategies in this area, as an exemplary violation of the national culture. At the beginning of 1914, a group of young writers living in the coastal town of Zadar prepared material for the magazine *Zvuk* [Whirligig], a journal of the Croatian futurist movement. The editor of the magazine and author of several contributions was Joso Matošić, and among the collaborators were the Croatian writers Ulderiko Donadini, Anton Aralica, and Antun Gustav Matoš and leading

Italian futurists Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Giovanni Papini. The magazine was prepared for print (40 pages in 34 cm x 30 cm format), but the publication was forestalled when the Austro-Hungarian authorities arrested Matošić, Pilić, and Aralica in July 1914, on suspicion of involvement in the Sarajevo assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that became the spark to World War I. Matošić was the author of the manifesto "U futurizam" [Into Futurism], handwritten in a circular shape on the front page of the magazine, which proclaimed a disdain for nostalgia and the past, in line with futurist postulates:

Young people! Move on with courage, heart, and daring: to concrete, pave, and asphalt over worn-out passéism, so that Croatian futurism may develop freely, lastingly, and courageously.

It is evident from other contributions by Matošić that he was familiar with Russian futurism as well as the Italian. In addition to a short letter by Marinetti in which he salutes the poets of Zadar, his original text on futurism which was later expanded and published elsewhere under the title "In quest'anno futurista" had been planned for publication in the magazine. Matošić's poems are early examples of phonetic and visual poetry in which various languages (Croatian, Serbian, Hungarian, German, Spanish, and French) are used within the same text. Apart from the articles in *Zvirk*, Matošić, Pilić, and Aralica left no other relevant traces in Croatian culture and, since the magazine went no further than the preparatory stage, their discovery and critical reception happened only in the 1980s, at first abroad and then more locally. Nevertheless, the intentions of these young avant-garde authors, their direct links with leading foreign authors, and the timing with events abroad remain a noteworthy contribution and an important episode in the chronology of the avant-gardes.¹

Part One, 1921–1932

Avant-garde magazines and publications from the 1920s and 1930s appeared in the social and political context of the newly established Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), under the pressure of World War I, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the reverberations of the October Revolution. Artistic activity was concentrated in those centers that had been, until the war, the provincial cultural centers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (with the domination of German

culture in Zagreb and Ljubljana, of Hungarian culture in Novi Sad), or that had recently developed into European-style cultural centers (with the incursion of French culture into Belgrade). During this period, apart from "The Zenit Exhibition of New Art" in Belgrade in 1924, there was no exhibition of international avant-garde works of art mounted in Yugoslavia. The only chance to see original works or the latest in theater or architecture was to travel abroad or look at reproductions and magazine articles. On the other hand, in most cases, visual works of art from the domestic avant-gardes were not publicly displayed at the time they were made but reproduced (hence preserved!) only on the pages of magazines. Therefore avant-garde magazines and other publications are the only form of communication with the international art world and the only true products of the avant-gardes in Yugoslavia that are available.

Zenit, the International Review for New Art

There are many reasons for *Zenit* being the key avant-garde magazine in Yugoslavia. The magazine was published more or less monthly from February 1921 to December 1926, initially in Zagreb and then, from 1924, in Belgrade. Altogether, 43 issues and 34 volumes of varying format and size were published. The founder, editor, and publisher was the poet Ljubomir Micić, who assembled a large crew of local and foreign collaborators. For Micić, the magazine was a platform for propagating his own artistic activity, which he articulated into a movement named zenithism, and with it a model of communication for establishing a direct link with international avant-garde artists, movements, and magazines. Zenitism was established through the overlap of expressionist rhetoric and constructivist aesthetics, moved by the horrors of war and a desire for the new, embracing spiritual and political elements spanning anarchism, mysticism, and nationalism. Despite being strongly under the influence of the European avant-garde, Micić insisted on the autochthonous Balkan "barbarogenius" opposing Europe. In the manifesto "Man and Art," Micić notes:

Our suffering generation is dying out. It has been completely overtaken and destroyed. The ghost of the red war fury with its criminal claws dug graves for us all, for millions of people. One dead body for every two soldiers. Never let us forget that 13 million people were killed during the past decade, that 10 million people died of poverty, that 150 million people became weak. And we, who remained as the last guard,

we endure a common ache in our hearts, a common soul of despair, a common protest: No more war! Never! Never!

Micić invested all his energy into agitation for zenitism and the expansion of his circle of collaborators, but in fact this circle remained changeable and unstable to the point that, from time to time, he found himself isolated, alone with his ideas. The most loyal followers of zenitism were the poets Branko Ve Poljanski (Micić's brother) and Marijan Mikac.

The international character of the magazine was achieved through direct contact with a number of important writers and visual artists, and through collaboration with avant-garde magazines. Pertinent articles on expressionism (the circle connected to the magazine *Der Sturm*, Herwarth Walden, Ivan Goll, Claire Goll), dadaism (Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz), futurism (Marinetti), constructivism (Lajos Kassák), and abstract art (Kandinsky, Malevich, van Doesburg) were frequently published in *Zenit*. A large number of the contributions were poetic pieces (Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky, Blok, Esenin, Jaroslav Seifert, Simon Felshin) and articles on theater and dance (Tairov, Behrens), film (Jean Epstein), and architecture (Gropius). Most of the foreign articles were published in the original languages, and for contributions from local authors both the Roman and the Cyrillic alphabets were used. Apart from Micić, whose contributions appeared in every issue, the circle of collaborators within Yugoslavia varied, because of the frequent clashes and polemics. Among the prominent authors we should single out the dadaist pieces by Dragan Aleksić, Tuna Milinković, and Mihailo S. Petrov, articles on film by Boško Tokin, the poetry of Branko Ve Poljanski, Andro Jutronić, and Marijan Mikac, and the many visual contributions created by Josip Seissel (Jo Klek), Mihailo S. Petrov, Jovan Bijelić, Vilko Gecan, Vinko Foretić-Vis, and others.

The collage of visual and text material in *Zenit* was shaped by the use of typographic elements akin to constructivist design and formed as a complete work, as some sort of avant-garde *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Apart from reproductions of works by international and local visual artists (Survage, Gleizes, Tatlin, Grosz, Delaunay, Archipenko, Picasso, Kandinsky, Seissel, and so on), many graphic works, some of which were made especially for *Zenit*, contributed to the visual appeal of the magazine (by Kassák, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, Teige, Louis Lozowick, Gecan, Petrov). Particularly prominent, both visually and in terms of its content, was *Zenit* no. 17–18 from 1922, dedicated to new Russian art. The editors of this issue were Ilya Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky, who also made the print on the cover. Inside the magazine we find

er design for *Zenit*, no. 17–18
reb, 1922). Private collection.

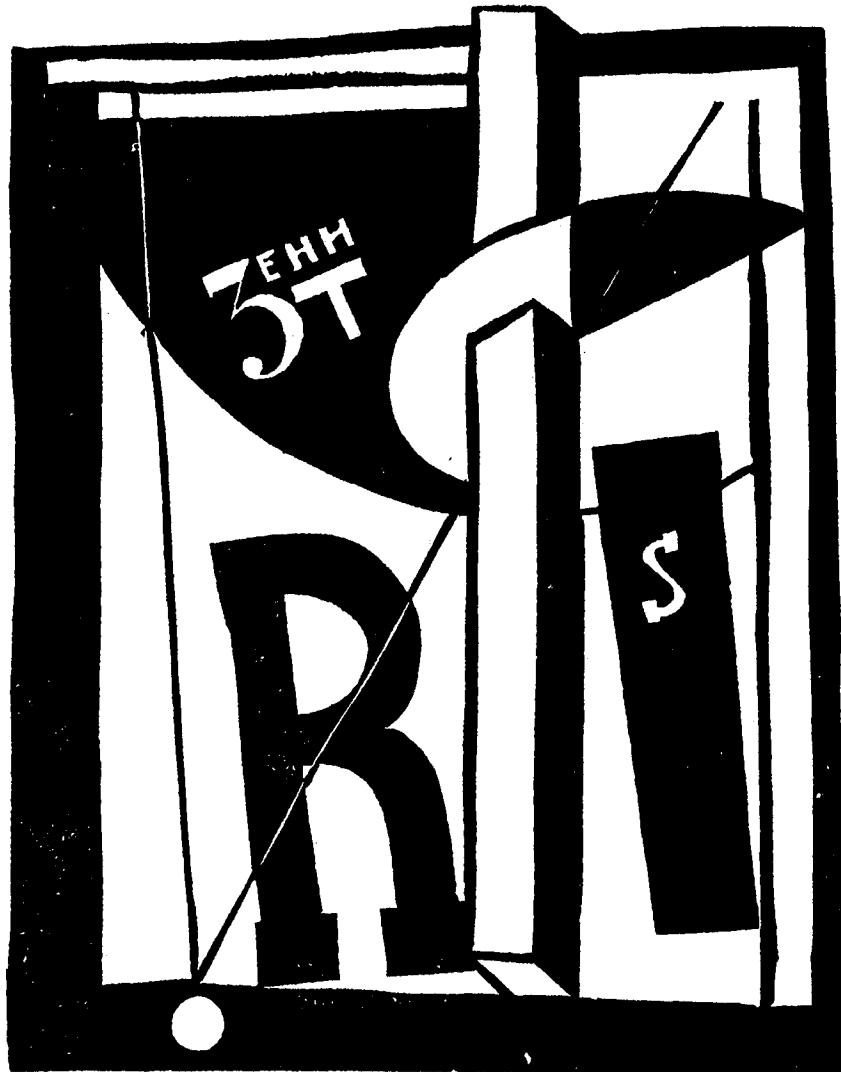
ZENIT

BEOGRAD

S. H. S.

ЗАГРЕБ

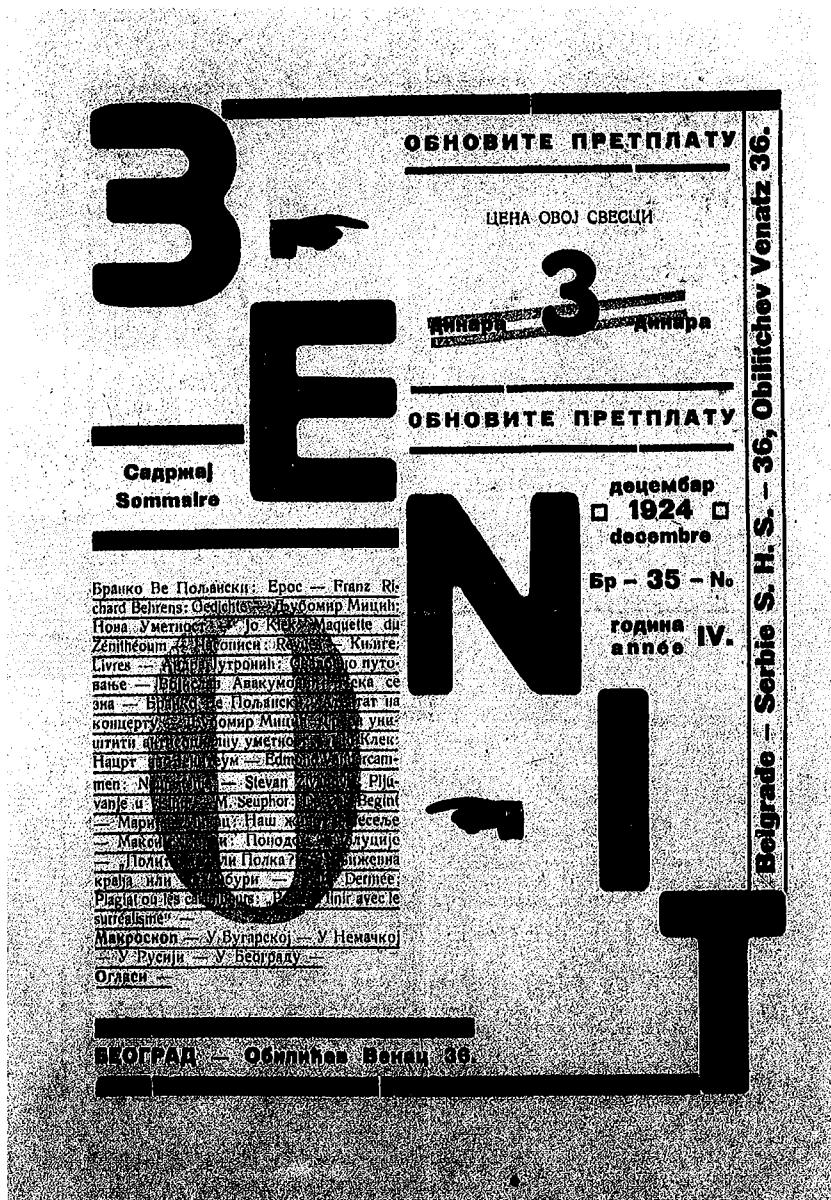
МЕЂУНАРОДНИ ЧАСОВНИК
ЗА ЗЕНИТИЗАМ И НОВУ УМЕНОСТ
REVUE INTERNATIONALE
POUR LE ZENITISME ET L'ART NOUVEAU



F. L. LISICKI

— ruska nova umetnost —

reproductions of some of the key works of the Russian avant-garde (Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Tatlin, Malevich, and others) together with contributions that included the poetry of Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky, a manifesto by Malevich, an article by Tairov on contemporary theater, and a synthetic text on the most recent Russian art written specifically for *Zenit* by Ehrenburg and Lissitzky.



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Cover design for *Zenit*, no. 35
(Belgrade, 1924). Private collection.

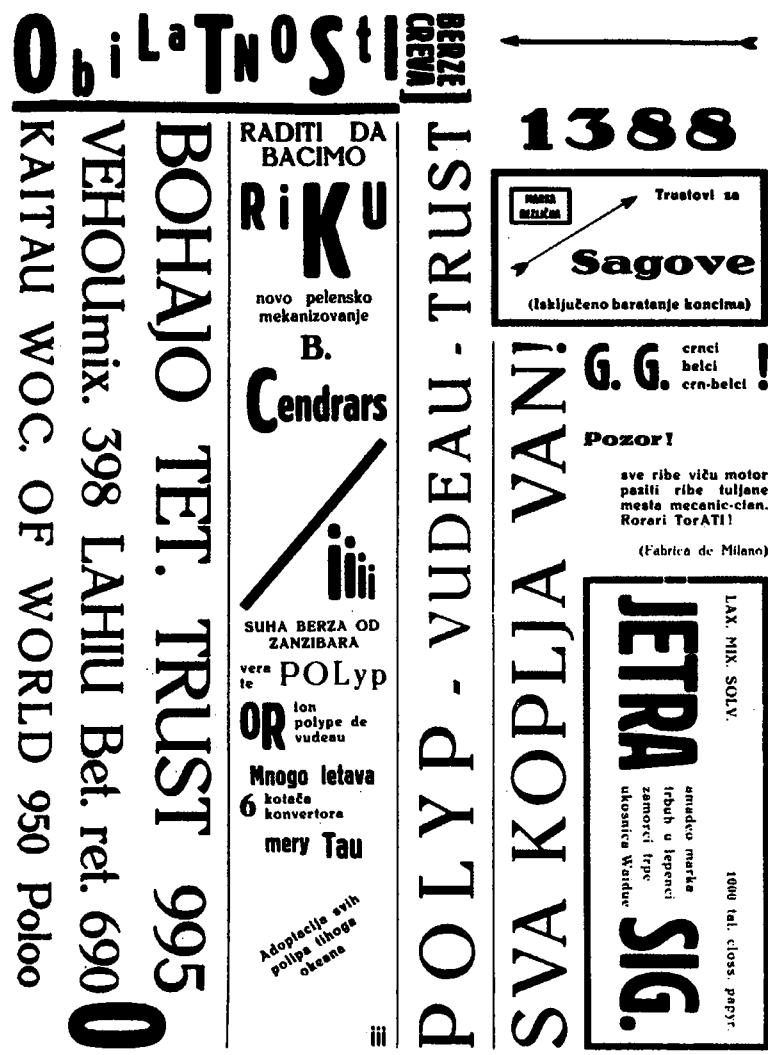
Micić also commissioned and published books in the *Zenit* collection. The first was *Manifest zenitizma* [The Manifesto of Zenitism] of 1921, signed by Micić, Ivan Goll, and Boško Tokin. Other authors in the collection are Ivan Goll with *Paris brennt* [Paris Is Burning], 1921; Micić with *Stotinu vam bogova* [I'll Be Damned] (the book was banned in 1922; the second edition was published that same year as *Kola za spasavanje* [Rescue Car]), *Aeroplan bez motora* [Aircraft without an Engine] in 1925, and *Antievropa* [Anti-Europe] in 1926; Poljanski with *77 samoubica* [77 Suicides] in 1923, *Panika pod suncem* [Panic under the Sun] in 1924, *Tumbe* [Upside Down] in 1926, and *Crveni petao* [Red Rooster] in 1926, Marijan Mikac with *Efekt na defektu* [Effect on Defect] in 1923 and *Fenomen majmuna* [The Ape Phenomenon] in 1925, Mita Dimitrijević-Mid's anonymously published *Metafizika ničega* [Metaphysics of Nothing] in 1926; and the representative album *Archipenko—nova plastika/Archipenko—Plastique nouvelle* with a preface by Micić, in 1923. The covers and layout of these books are small masterpieces of contemporary typography and design.

Micić is a self-contradictory personality: a poet inclined to the radical, a merciless critic, an inventive typographer, editor of the magazine and book series, collector of a remarkable collection of international avant-garde art, agitator for his own movement, and organizer of exhibitions and lectures. All of this is concentrated in a single, complete work of art—the magazine *Zenit*. After the ban of *Zenit* no. 43 stemming from an allegation of “the propagation of Marxism,” and a judicial indictment for endangering the social order, Micić fled Belgrade in December 1926 and settled in Paris, where he published a number of books in French. In 1936 he returned to Belgrade where he published a single issue of an obscure, rightist, nationalist magazine, *Serbianism*. He spent the rest of his life until his death in 1971 in complete anonymity. Zenitism and its creator lived to see their first reevaluation at the end of the 1960s. Shows presenting Micić’s collection and his contribution to the avant-garde were mounted at the beginning of the 1980s.²

Dada-Jok, Dada Tank, Dada Jazz

The short-lived flurry of Dada in Zagreb began within the circle of *Zenit* collaborators. While studying in Prague during the spring of 1921, Dragan Aleksić published a number of dadaist texts and poems in *Zenit*. At the beginning of 1922, *Zenit* announced that Aleksić’s novel *The Eruption of Mister Christ* was to be published in the *Zenit* series. A blowup between Micić and Aleksić, however, led to a nasty rift. The novel was never published and Aleksić continued his activities independently.

The magazine *Dada Tank* was probably published during June 1922 and *Dada Jazz* in September. In the first edition of *Dada Tank*, Aleksić used profane and obscene language, provoking the intervention of the state censors and leading to the second edition being printed with the omission of the questionable expressions. Paradoxically, immediately before these magazines appeared, Branko Ve Poljanski published the anti-Dada magazine *Dada-Jok*, as a critical and subversive response to Aleksić's rigid dadaism.



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A page design for *Dada Tank* (Zagreb, 1922). Private collection.

Dragan Aleksić

Immediately before *Zenit* started coming out, Poljanski published a single issue of the magazine *Svetokret* in January 1921 in Ljubljana. Only his own writing appeared in the magazine, which carried the subheading "A Magazine for an Expedition to the North Pole of the Human Spirit." The pieces "Here I Come" and "Manifesto" proclaimed, in customary postexpressionist language, a trend to the new and a radical withdrawal of old values. There were two poems ("On the Railroad" and "Yearning"), articles on art events in Ljubljana, and criticism. This was the entire content of *Svetokret*. Poljanski edited and published twelve issues of the movie magazine *Kinofon* in Zagreb in 1921.

The magazine *Dada-Jok* is typographically conceived in the style of the dadaist publications of the period. In addition to pieces by Poljanski, it contained articles by Ljubomir Micić and Nina-Naj (the pseudonym of Micić's wife Anuška). These were illustrated with photographs by Poljanski and Micić and reproductions of collages and paintings by Poljanski and Petar Bauk, a tailor and artist from Zagreb. These reproductions represent the only extant trace of these exceptional examples of Dada in Yugoslav visual art. In 1927, after publishing the book *Red Rooster*, which he demonstratively handed out on the streets of Belgrade, Poljanski proceeded to Paris in his brother's footsteps. There he spent his time painting and drawing and, under the sway of surrealism, wrote *The Manifesto of Panrealism*. He died, forgotten, after World War II. Initially read and valued as a writer, Poljanski is today more and more appreciated as an important visual artist. With his typographic design of texts in magazines, the covers of his own books, and a number of surrealist drawings and paintings, Poljanski belongs to the group of artists of the radical artistic avant-garde.

In contrast to Poljanski, who found contributors for *Dada-Jok* only within a narrow artistic and family circle, Dragan Aleksić published a broader range of contributions by prominent dadaist artists in the magazines *Dada Tank* and *Dada Jazz*. Among international artists, he published the works of Tristan Tzara (the poems "Negro Songs" and "Sotho Blacks," the manifestos "Pourquoi je suis devenu charmant, sympathique et deliceux," "Manifeste de Monsieur Aa, l'antiphilosophe," and "Syllogisme colonial"), Kurt Schwitters ("Poem no. 48"), Richard Huelsenbeck (fragments of the introduction to "Dada Almanac"), and the works of two Hungarian poets who wrote under the pseudonyms Erwin Enders and Adam Csont. Of local artists, in addition to himself, he published pieces by Nac Singer, Fer Mill (a pseudonym for Tuna Milinković), Mihailo S. Petrov, Vid Lastov, and Jim Rad. Most of these were from the circle of Aleksić's friends from his schooldays in Vinkovci. The

40 milijuna lona duševnosti za 2 dinara

DAda-JOK

V. Poljanski



DADA-JOK-DADA-JOK

v. pOljaNsKi
V. PoLjAnSki
v. pOliJaNsiK
DaDa
dADA
DaDa
JOK



II. MeRNAMo mErNaMo

roGInA Pa rIgAnDa REGA

FuGiMa tArAndA MaJaDa

KaFiNoia

sMeSki sOkIsKa SoJaDa

mEnE moMo

BeNdOjA

UnDje RUnDA mUnDa

DuM

mERNaMo MeRNAMo

RoMiR telc

sReTnU nOvU gOlnU

1922

UvAžEnIm člAoCiMa PrOčEINiKu mEgE
pRoSvEtU I dRuŠtVu HrVaTsKiH kNJiEVNiKa
Želi UrEdNIštVo

DaDa-JOK!

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Cover design for *Dada-Jok* (Zagreb, 1922).

Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb.

Dragan Aleksić

**DadA
Jazz**
**dada
Jazz**
**DadA
JAZZ**
**„Moći
tući“**

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a**

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z v i ž d u k

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Z A G R E B 1 9 2 2 .

works of foreign authors were published in translation or, as was the case with Tzara's work in *Dada Jazz*, in French. The magazine's appearance was determined by typical Dada typography and examples of visual poetry. Aleksić's poem "The Abundance of the Intestinal Market," published in *Dada Tank*, represents a first-class creation of the typographical and visual poetry of the day. Aleksić promoted dadaism not only in his works in *Zenit* and his own magazines, but also at public matinees in Osijek (August 20, 1922) and Vinkovci (October 1, 1922). He also took part in activist demonstrations in Novi Sad and Subotica. The matinee in Osijek was accompanied by an exhibition of reproductions and original works by a number of artists (Francis Picabia, Raoul Hausmann, László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Arp, Mihailo S. Petrov, Aleksić). After these events, Aleksić gave up artistic activity and worked, until the end of his life, as a journalist. The brief dadaist activity in Zagreb, Osijek, and Vinkovci was concentrated in only a few months in 1922 but is an unquestionable part of the sweep of the national and international avant-garde that was not properly evaluated until much later.³

Út, the Activist Literary and Art Magazine

A group strongly under the influence of Lajos Kassák and the magazine *Ma* [Today] emerged within a circle of young Hungarian writers living in Novi Sad. Under the leadership of Zoltán Csuka, they published the activist magazine *Út* [The Road] in Hungarian between 1922 and 1925. Around the magazine there gathered a wider circle of Hungarian, Serbian, and Croatian contributors. The influence of Kassák on the founders of the magazine was dominant because, paradoxically, these artists gleaned their first knowledge of *Zenit* from the magazine *Ma*. In a manifesto published in the first issue, Csuka wrote:

We live on polyglot soil: here we have a double need to demonstrate our metanationality. We are not offering Hungarian culture, but culture in the Hungarian language! Today, art and culture are already moving toward metanationality and universality.

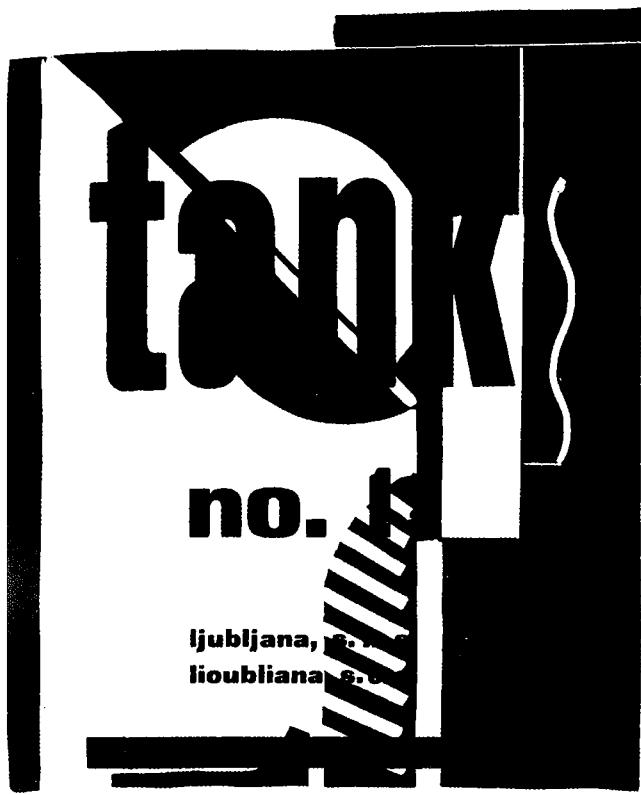
In addition to close cooperation with activists, of particular interest are the number of contributions among Hungarian artists who until then had worked within the influence of the Bauhaus in Weimar: the manifesto of the group KURI (Farkas Molnár, Henrik Stefan, Andor Weininger, Kurt Schmidt, and others), and articles and reproductions by Moholy-Nagy and

Molnár. Among other collaborators we see Dragan Aleksić (the poems "Blasphemy 60" and "Durchtraverse"), Boško Tokin, Ljubomir Micić (an article on zenitism), and Ivan Goll. In addition to the interesting constructivist logotype of the magazine title, the visual contributions range from dadaist visual poetry created by Zoltán Ember, through prints by Mihailo S. Petrov and photographs by Moholy-Nagy, to drawings by George Grosz. Authors associated with the magazine *Hirlap* in Subotica also made a significant contribution within the Hungarian culture in Yugoslavia. *Hirlap* published a whole range of topical texts on dadaism during 1922.⁴

Tank, the International Review of New Art

Slovenian avant-garde artists were active in several centers (Ljubljana, Novo Mesto, Trieste, Gorizia). This activity culminated in the publication of the magazine *Tank* in two volumes (no. 1½ and no. 1½–3) in Ljubljana in 1927. The third volume of *Tank* was prepared for publication but banned by the courts. The editor of the magazine was theater director Fero Delak, and contributors included the most significant names of the Slovenian avant-garde: the painters Avgust Černigoj, Ivo Spinčič, Edvard Stepančič, Ivan Čargo, Veno Pilon, and Miha Maleš, composer Marij Kogoj, and architect Dragotin Fatur. The magazine in many respects followed the example of *Zenit*; it published work by foreign contributors in the original language (German, French, and Croatian; some texts even translated into Esperanto), and there were many visual contributions, with texts created in an interesting constructivist design. The connection is also obvious in the contributions by Micić, Poljanski, and Mikac. Some pieces by authors from abroad were also published in *Tank*: poems by Tristan Tzara, a typographic poem of Kurt Schwitters, and articles on expressionism in music and black art by Herwarth Walden and on the Bauhaus by Willi Nürnberg. *Tank* largely presented a group of Slovenian constructivists led by Avgust Černigoj, who lived in Trieste. Černigoj studied at the Bauhaus and, in 1927, together with his associates, created and displayed an exceptional constructivist environment. Not a single work from that exhibit has been preserved, so we know it only from the reproductions in *Tank* and two monumental paintings by Ivan Čargo on the facade of the theater pavilion at the Ljubljana fair.

When *Tank* was banned, Delak continued to collaborate with international artists and prepared articles with Heinz Luedcke on the Slovenian avant-garde that were published in the magazine *Der Sturm* no. 10 in Berlin in 1929.⁵



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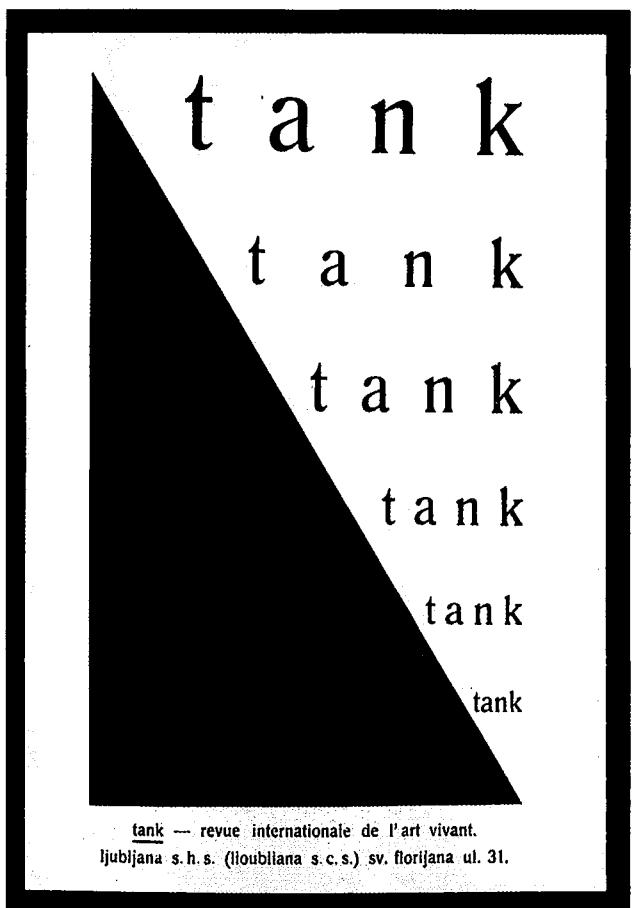
Cover design for *Tank*, no. 1½ (Ljubljana, 1927).

Private collection.

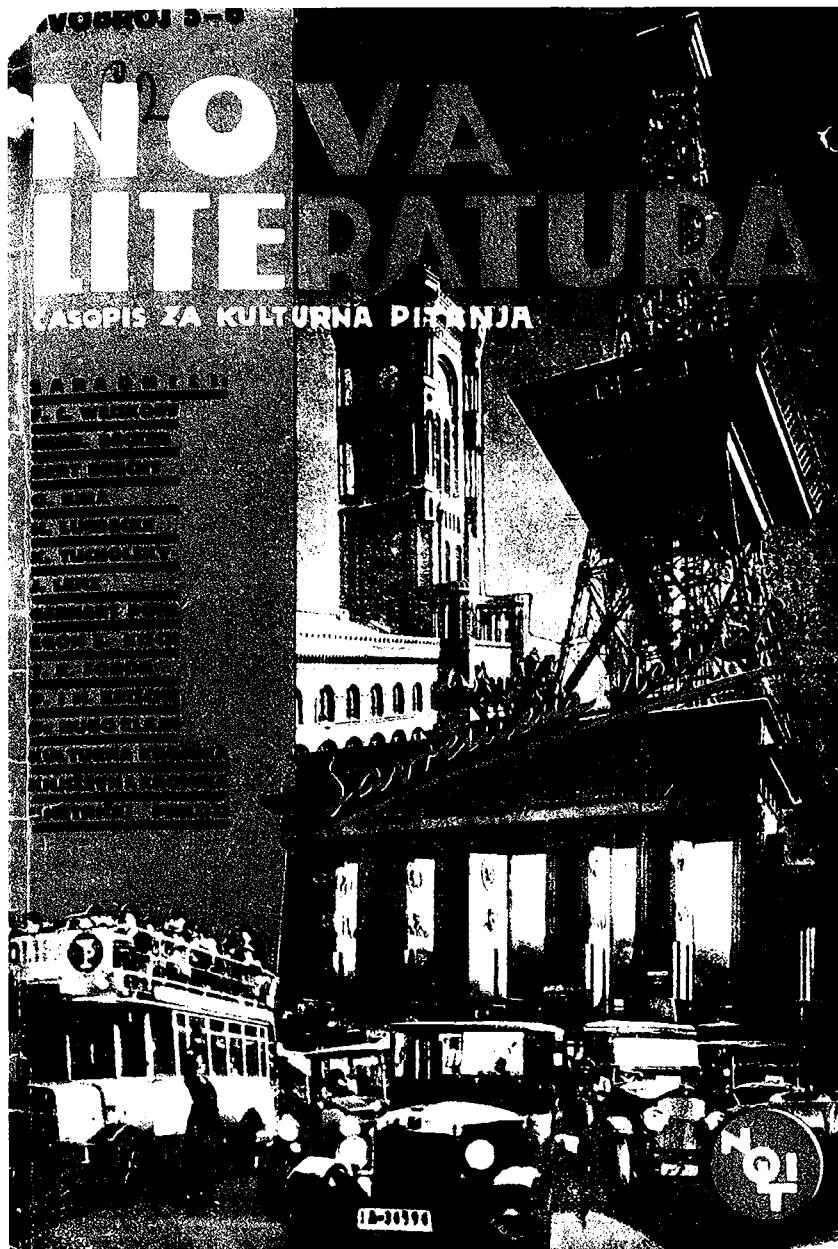
157

Cover design for *Tank*, no. 1½–3 (Ljubljana, 1927).

Private collection.



With the change of social circumstances in the late 1920s and 1930s (the rise of Stalinism in Russia, fascism in Italy, and nazism in Germany, the dictatorship in Yugoslavia) and the flagging subversive energy of the avant-gardes, there was a move toward more direct social engagement. *Nova literatura* [The New Literature] has a special place among the socially less prominent periodicals. The magazine was launched in December 1928, and from then until January 1930 twelve issues were published by Pavle Bihalji, the editor, his brother, writer Oto Bihalji, and Branko Gavella, a theater director. Most of the articles contributed by authors from outside the country were by socially conscious German (Brecht, Tucholsky, Kisch, Anna Seghers), Czech (Hašek), Russian (Gorky), and American authors (Sinclair, Dreiser, London). All the pieces were translated into Serbian. Some issues were thematic, for example "USA" (no. 4/1929), "Contemporary Germany" (5/1929), "Youth" (1/1930). In addition to pieces on literature (Oto Bihalji, Marko Ristić), theater (Gavella), film (Sergei Eisenstein), Marxism, social problems, scientific advances (the theory of relativity, psychoanalysis, chemistry), the social situation of women, and education, there were reviews of art shows, new magazines, and books. There was also good writing on the visual arts: Delak wrote on the Slovenian avant-garde, Oto Bihalji on George Grosz, and Heinz Luedecke on expressionism and exhibitions in Berlin and at the Bauhaus. The magazine published illustrations by artists from abroad (Hans Bellmer, Picasso, Grosz, Max Beckmann, Käthe Kollwitz, Louis Lozowick, Otto Dix, F. Masereel, the architectural drawings of Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier) and by local artists, especially those belonging to socially committed circles (Krsto Hegedušić, Oton Postružnik, Miha Maleš, Tine Kos, Arpad Balaš, et al.). What set this magazine apart from similar Yugoslav magazines of social orientation were the photomontages and cover designs by Pavle Bihalji. Influenced by John Heartfield, Bihalji produced effective, simple work, aimed at direct communication with a broad audience. He made book covers on the same principle for Nolit, publisher of a number of local and foreign authors. Although photomontage was widely accepted in book and magazine design, it had rarely been seen in Yugoslavia. Franjo Bruck produced the covers for a series of books by Miroslav Krleža in the Minerva edition in Zagreb during the 1930s. Despite the ban on his magazine, Pavle Bihalji continued to work in publishing. He died tragically before a firing squad with a group of Communist Party members just after the outbreak of World War II.⁶



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Cover design for *Nova literatura*, no. 5-6 (Belgrade, 1929). Private collection.

Nemoguće *and* Nadrealizam danas i ovde

The surrealist group in Belgrade came together through the activity of several young writers (Marko Ristić, Milan Dedinac, Dušan Matić, Aleksandar Vučo, Djordje Jovanović, Djordje Kostić, Oskar Davičo) associated with the magazines *Putevi* [Roads], 1922–1924, *Svedočanstva* [Testimonies], 1924–1925, and *Tragovi* [Traces], 1928–1929. These and other Serbian and

9

cover design for *Nemoguće* (Belgrade, 1930). Private collection.

МАЈА 1930

Nemoguće



L'impresario

НАДРЕАЛИСТИЧКА ИЗДАЊА
БЕОГРАД
ÉDITIONS SURREALISTES
B E L G R A D E

French writers and painters joined forces in May 1930 in the almanac *Nemoguće/L'impossible*, which, with its sumptuous production and high-quality printing on fine paper, was the most showy avant-garde publication from that period in Yugoslavia. Its 136 large-format pages carried literary and visual contributions by all the Belgrade surrealists (Dedinac, Vane Živadinović Bor, Kostić, Mladen Dimitrijević, Jovanović, Koča Popović, Radojica Živanović-Noe, Aleksandar Vučo, Matić, Davičo, Ristić, Nikola Vučo, and others), as well as some crucial representatives of French surrealism (Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, Louis Aragon, René Char, André Breton, André Thirion). An introduction signed by most of the authors of the surrealist group declares:

Having established that despite their individual differences there is a kindred spirit among all of them and that a single constant detachment holds them apart from all that is imposed upon them as spiritual life, the signatories believe that, in these circumstances, they have been compelled to articulate with greater precision all they have in common and turn to a more disciplined activity, for the sake of which each of them agrees to sacrifice the psychological aspect of their "I." They are determined to make and maintain constant and irreducible the movement of their ongoing ideological and ethical process of definition, even in the unpredictable dialectical moments of this activity. This first joint publication is just one small, visible segment in marking this essential process of definition.

A series of poetic, theoretical, automatic, and prose pieces appear in the almanac, as well as *Čeljust dijalektike* [The Jaws of the Dialectic], descriptions of dreams, and a comprehensive history of Serbian surrealism, *Uzgred budi rečeno* [By the Way], by Matić and Ristić. The pieces by the Serbian surrealists are printed in the Cyrillic alphabet while the pieces by French authors are published in the original. The surrealist innovation of the integration of picture and text is presented by Aleksandar Vučo's screenplay *Shellfish on One's Chest*, in which parts of the text are replaced by drawings and collages. The almanac is richly illustrated with a series of reproductions of collages, drawings, and paintings (Vane Bor, Jovanović, Davičo, Kostić, Živanović-Noe, Rade Stojanović, Matić). A number of photographs by Nikola Vučo and three of Vane Bor's photograms deserve special attention because they are among the few examples of avant-garde photography in Yugoslavia.

Three issues of the magazine *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* [Surrealism Here and Now] were published between June 1931 and June 1932. They included

over design for *Nadrealizam danas ovde*, no. 3 (Belgrade, 1932).
private collection.



Milan DEDINAC, Koča POPOVIĆ, Marko RISTIĆ:

NERAZUMEVANJE DIALEKTIKE ODGOVOR NA KRITIKE MERINA I GALOGAZE

André BRETON: SPOJENI SUDOVI

Salvador DALI: ŽIVEO NADREALIZAM!

Vane BOR: AUTOKRITički PRLOG IZUGAVANOU MORALA IPOEZIJS
POVODOM PRDESETOGODišnjice DARWINOVE Smrti

PRED JEDNIM ZIDOM

SLIKE — SIMULACRIje PARA NOJAČKOG TUMAČENJA

Aleksandar VUČO: ISPOD LJUBAVI

Dorđe JOVANOVić: SNEHAPAUERKA

SADA I OVDE / POTENKINOVA SELA

René CREVEL: PORODICA

PESME

Paul ELUARD, René CHAR, Tristan TZARA,
Benjamin PERET, Dušan MATIĆ, RISTIĆ,
K. POPOVIĆ

ILUSTRACIJE

Salvador DALI, Max ERNST, Joan MIRO,
ŽIVANOVić-NOJE, Dušan MATIĆ, POTO-
GRAFOS, DOKUMENTI



pieces by local authors and by many Paris-based surrealists (Breton, Tzara, Char, Dalí, Crevel, Eluard, Péret). The magazine placed great significance on surveys ("Is Humor a Moral Attitude," "Survey of Desire"), specific themes ("On the Hundredth Anniversary of Hegel's Death," "Autocriticism of Surrealism," "Dreams"), poems and articles, polemics and criticism. At the end of each issue came a group of reproductions of paintings and sculptures (Dalí, Ernst, Živanović-Noe, Tanguy, Giacometti, Matić). This is a surrealist synthesis of pictorial and textual material using photographs and additional comments, explanations, titles, and subtitles ("Dead Symbols of Death"; "Love"; "Now and Here"; "In Lieu of 'Social Art'"; "Surrealist Elements in Modern Social Life"). In the collective work "In Front of a Wall—Simulation of a Paranoiac Delirium of Interpretation," published in the third issue, each of the collaborators (Ristić, Rastko Petrović, Bor, Živanović-Noe, Dedinac, Matić) was required to intervene on a given model, a photograph of an old wall by journalist Raka Ruben. This work followed the idea of collective works such as surveys, automatic texts, or the *cadavre exquis* (a sequential drawing by several people one after the other, each without looking at the previous work). In addition to the almanac *Nemoguće/L'impossible* and the magazine *Surrealism Here and Now*, surrealist authors also published books. From the point of view of the visual arts, the following are worth mention: Milan Dedinac's illustrations in his book *The Public Bird* (1927) and the extraordinary photocollages by Dušan Matić published in Aleksandar Vučo's book *Podvizi družine pet petlića* [The Adventures of a Company of Five Roosters] (1933). While they worked together, the surrealists did not contribute to exhibitions or display their works in any other way.

The organized activity of the Belgrade surrealists came to an end when Oskar Davičo and Djordje Jovanović were arrested and sent to prison as members of the Communist Party. Jovanović was killed in World War II. After the war other surrealists went on to occupy key political and cultural posts. It was only in 1969 that their surviving works were shown to the public, mostly from Marko Ristić's collection, including works by foreign artists (Masson, Ernst, Tanguy).⁷

Part Two, 1961–1987

The period after World War II in the nascent socialist state included a move to greater ideological supervision of artistic production. Not long after Yugoslavia left the USSR-dominated communist bloc in 1948, there was a stride toward liberalization and an opening of the cultural scene to influences

from Western countries. This was especially evident in the early 1950s in the activity of the abstract artists making up the Exat 51 group in Zagreb. Artists were among the first Yugoslav citizens permitted to go abroad to study. Yugoslavia fully opened to the West in the early 1960s when regular international events such as New Tendencies, the Music Biennial in Zagreb, and the International Graphic Biennial in Ljubljana started to be organized and artists began winning major international prizes such as the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Oscar for Animated Film.

Internationalization of the cultural scene was encouraged by institutions such as the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb (from the 1960s), or the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade (from the 1970s).

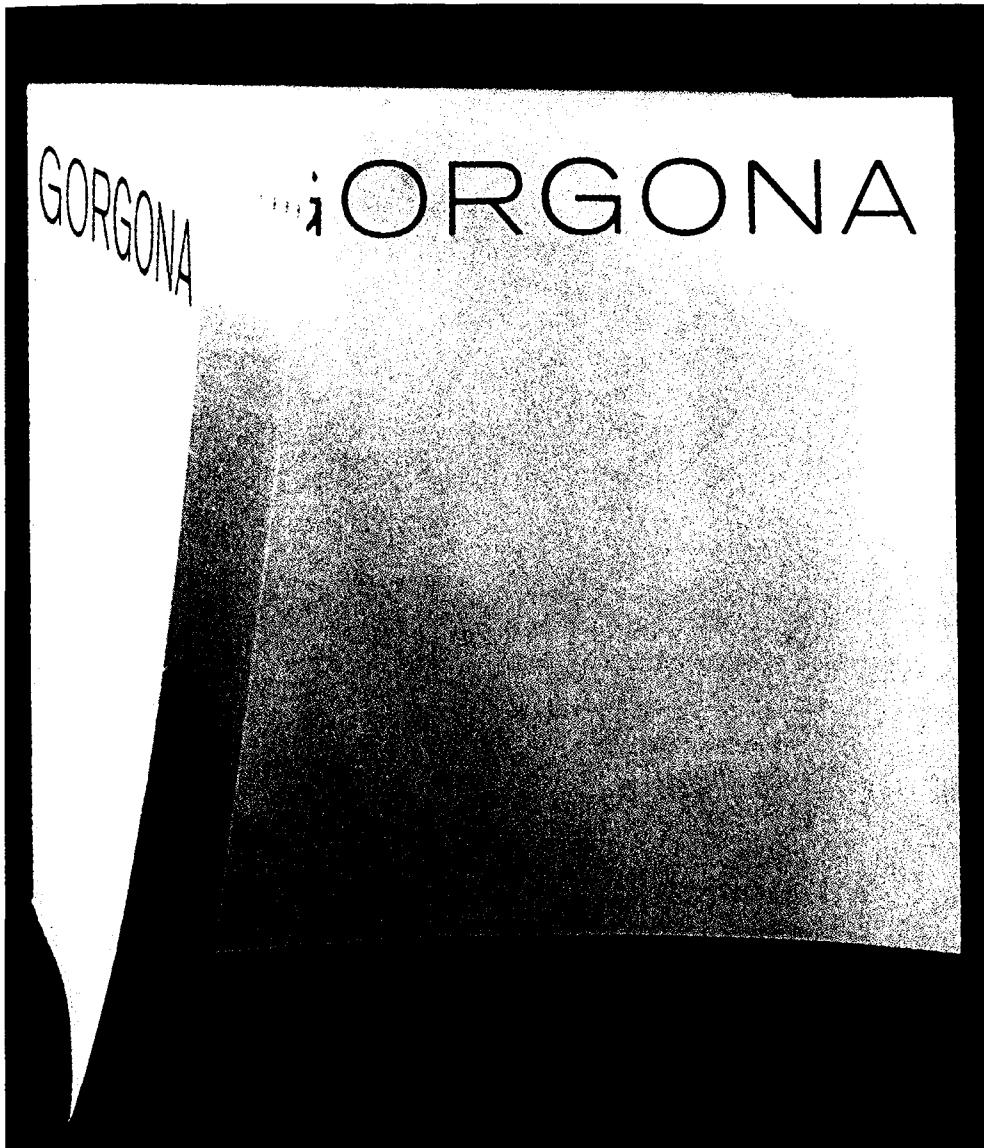
Gorgona, the Antimagazine

At the time when the international New Tendencies movement stepped up its activities in Zagreb outside mainstream galleries and formed a closed association, a new group of artists surfaced. The members of this group were painters Josip Vaništa, Marijan Jevšovar, Julije Knifer, and Djuro Seder, sculptor Ivan Kožarić, architect Miljenko Horvat, and art historian Dimitrije Bašičević, as well as Radoslav Putar and Matko Meštrović. Vaništa formulated the ideas of the group in a collection of short, incoherent thoughts written in 1961:

Gorgona's thinking is serious and spare. Gorgona is for the absolute ephemeral in art. Gorgona does not seek results or work in art. It makes judgments in the light of the situation. It defines itself as the sum of all possible interpretations. Gorgona does not speak of anything.

The group was named after a poem by Dimitrije Bašičević, who worked under the pseudonym Mangelos in his rare public appearances. As well as in the closed internal communications within the group, the work of the members was aired in public shows at Studio G and publication of the antimagazine *Gorgona*.

An overview of the eleven issues published (1961–1966) and a series of unexecuted proposals reveals *Gorgona* as the kind of magazine that is itself a work of art, in which the artist resolves the work within the parameters of Western media. Between 65 and 300 numbered copies of *Gorgona* were published, consisting of several small-format (21 cm x 19 cm) pages. Josip Vaništa produced four issues: in no. 1, nine pages carry a photograph of the same motif, an empty and unattractive shop window photographed in



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Josip Vaništa, cover design for *Gorgona* (1966). Private collection.

Zagreb; the Mona Lisa was reproduced in no. 6 (Vaništa's comment: "I chose a motif which I thought was the most senseless thing to print in a magazine because reproducing the Mona Lisa is the same as leaving the page blank"); issue no. 10 consists of blank pages, with information on the issue printed on a separate sheet of paper inserted into the magazine; in no. 11, the photographic reproduction from the cover is repeated as the only content inside. Julije Knifer edited *Gorgona* no. 2, in which a graphic design with a meander motif is arranged in an endless sequence. Marijan Ježovar presented drawings from the series "Perfect Drawings" in *Gorgona* no. 3. In *Gorgona* no. 5, there was a reproduction of both the front and the back of a Kožarić sculpture, while in no. 7 Miljenko Horvat presented two identical photographs in different stages of photographic development. In *Gorgona* no. 4, Victor Vasarely reproduced a number of geometrical drawings; no. 8 presents the text "The Tea Party" by Harold Pinter; while Dieter Rot, intervening in no. 9, created an original drawing in each individual copy.

A whole raft of proposals for *Gorgona* never saw the light of day. Ivo Gattin's project was to have been produced in the spirit of his Informel works: the pages of the magazine were to be stuck together with sealing wax so that the work would be completed by the individual reader tearing the paper. Other projects that never appeared were those of Piero Manzoni, who submitted three proposals similar to his best-known works of art: in the first, a line was to be drawn straight down the middle of every page, the second proposed a sequence of the letters of the alphabet, while the third was that each page would have Manzoni's fingerprints. Of particular interest is Mangelos's never-realized proposal for an immaterial edition. One issue was to be left out of the series, and this unpublished issue was to be Mangelos's project. Although some members of *Gorgona* actively participated in public cultural life, the group's joint work was done away from the public. After exhibitions in Zagreb and Mönchengladbach in 1977, the thinking and work of *Gorgona* became an influential part of international culture.⁸

Edition a

The international art movement New Tendencies took hold in Zagreb in 1961. The idea fell between kinetic art and neoconstructivism, with an emphasis on visual research and shaping in design and architecture. The movement brought together a number of international artists (group Zero, Enrico Castellani, Piero Dorazio, François Morellet) and local artists (Ivan Picelj, Knifer, Vjenceslav Richter, Vlado Krstl, Aleksandar Srnec, et al.).

Ivan Picelj, a painter who had been active since the early 1950s in the Exat 51 group, launched *Edition a* in 1962 and published it himself. All issues were small-format (16 cm x 16 cm); the number of pages varied and each cover had the same design. A total of seven issues were published up to 1964. In the first, Picelj published a reproduction of a work and a programmatic text, "For Active Art," in which he gave the chronology of constructivism and neoconstructivism, from the magazine *De Stijl* to New Tendencies. On active art, Picelj writes the following:

It is our need, our goal. It is sensual. It is concrete. It is constructive. It is active. It should focus the creative forces on positive social action. It should be present everywhere. It is unnoticeable. It is international and universal. It will change our visual habits in the direction of perceiving the structure, the order, and the whole in relations.

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Ivan Picelj, *anti gravi graphitron*, *Edition a*, no. 4 (1964), artist's book. Private collection.



Picelj was also the author of the fourth issue, with a sequence of black and white graphics accompanied by a short text by Carlo Belloli. In issue no. 3 (1963), Vjenceslav Richter published “Report no. 1” on work on a series of elements in the category of the sphere, and he published reproductions and an article entitled “Systemic Plastic” in issue no. 5 (1964). Victor Vasarely was the author of issue no. 2 in 1963, which contained an article with no heading and one color graphic. The seventh and last issue of *Edition a* was by Getulio Alviani: the reproduction was accompanied by a short text in Italian.

These six issues of *Edition a* were the work of active participants in New Tendencies and are a comprehensive representation of the aesthetics and ideological positions of this movement. Mangelos, who produced issue no. 6 in 1964, took a completely different tack. While his alter ego, Dimitrije Bašičević, had the reputation of an arbiter of primitive and modern art and worked as a director of the Gallery of Primitive Art, as an artist Mangelos was part of the Gorgona group. Mangelos used the term “no-art” for his art work falling between image and text, while “no-stories” were short, absurd stories employing startling combinations of various languages (Croatian, Serbian, French, German, the Roman alphabet, Cyrillic alphabet, Glagolithic alphabet, Gothic lettering, runes) written in a stylized calligraphic hand in books and notebooks, on plates and globes. Four “no-stories” were published in *Edition a*, “la musique,” “l'exercice,” “paysage musical,” and “le konj qui chant.” Hence:

le konj qui chant

it was very late. they finally located the entrance by groping and found themselves inside a magnificent cave where they eagerly awaited a remedy for their uneasiness. that is when this horse came and said: la marquise est sortie à cinque heures.

Mangelos started doing his art in the 1950s far away from human eyes. The no-stories published in this edition were his first publicly presented works. This work became famous through exhibits mounted just before he died in 1987 and today is legendary on the international art scene.⁹

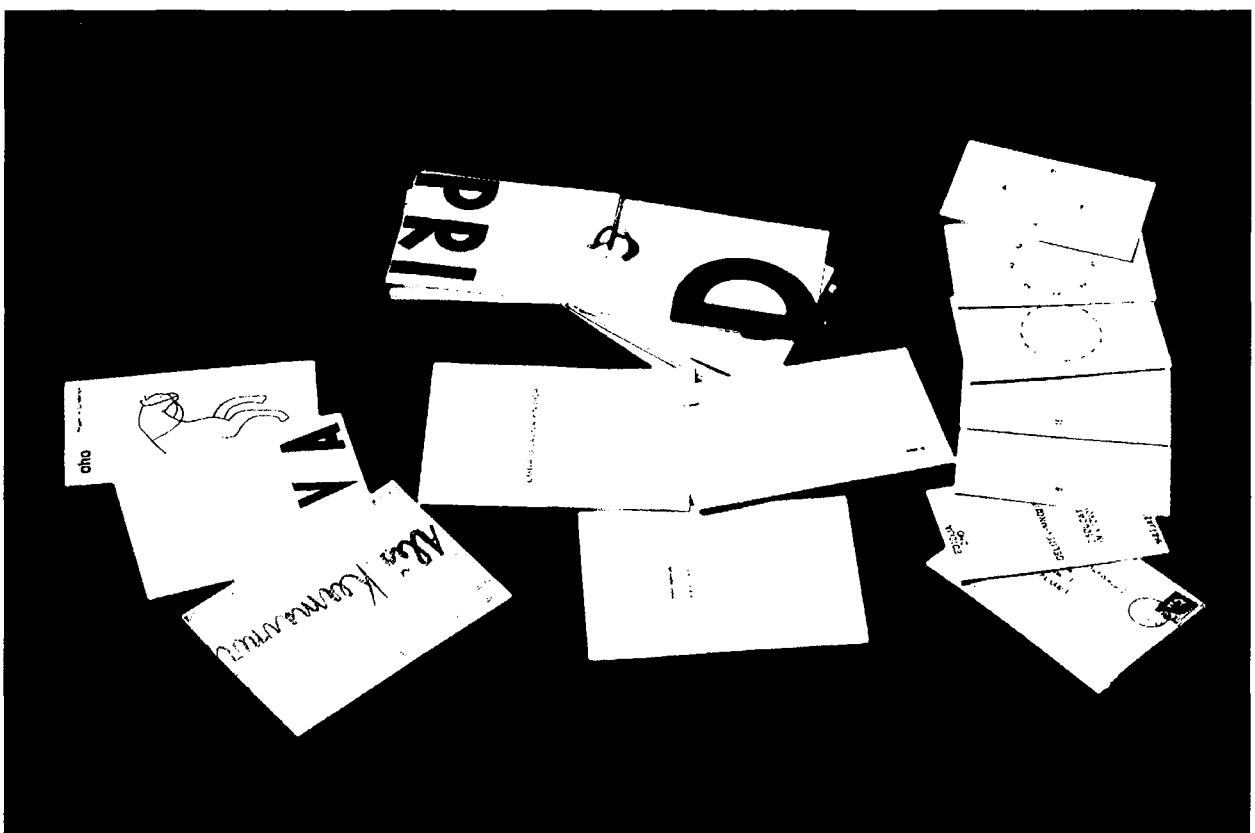
OHO

The activity of the OHO group, in Kranj and Ljubljana between 1966 and 1971, is an early example of the introduction of contemporary forms of artistic activity (happenings, arte povera, the dematerialization of art objects, land art, and so on) into the Slovenian and Yugoslav art scene. The large and shifting membership (the core included Marko Pogačnik, Iztok Geister Plamen, Tomaž Salamun, Milenko Matanović, David Nez, and Matjaž Hanžek) were poets, visual and film artists, critics and theoreticians who produced a series of diverse media works: objects, paintings, drawings, installations, books, and happenings, actions, music, and film.

The name of the group was adopted from a book by Marko Pogačnik and I. G. Plamen in which "OHO" denotes a shape midway between the words *oko* [eye] and *uh* [ear] and underlines the audio-visual nature of the book. The first phase of the group's work was very closely linked to the publication of a collection of 20 or so books and other publications between 1966 and 1968. The work of the group at this point is characterized by reism, from the Latin *res* (thing), the basic and original experience of things themselves, a complex theoretical system involving not only a given aesthetic and a particular approach to art, but also the most minute details of day-to-day life. The reist theory of the object is described by Pogačnik and Plamen in the OHO manifesto:

Objects are real. We come close to the reality of an object by accepting the object the way it is. But what is the object like? The first thing we notice is that the object is silent. Yet the object has something to give! Through words, we can coax the inaudible voice from the object. Only the word hears this voice. The word registers or indicates the voice of the object. Speech expresses the voice marked by words. This is where speech meets music, which is the voice of the object that can be caught by the ear.

The books were printed in small editions and contain drawings, texts, visual poetry, or various interventions shaped in an open work of art. The book itself becomes the object of the artist's attention. None of the elements in it have privileged status. Pogačnik's *Artikel* book from 1966 is a plastic object composed of 27 pages with holes of different sizes, while the *Knjiga z obročkom* [Book with Ring] from 1967 is made up of a series of individual letters printed on pieces of paper joined together by a metal ring. Plamen's *Zvočna knjiga*

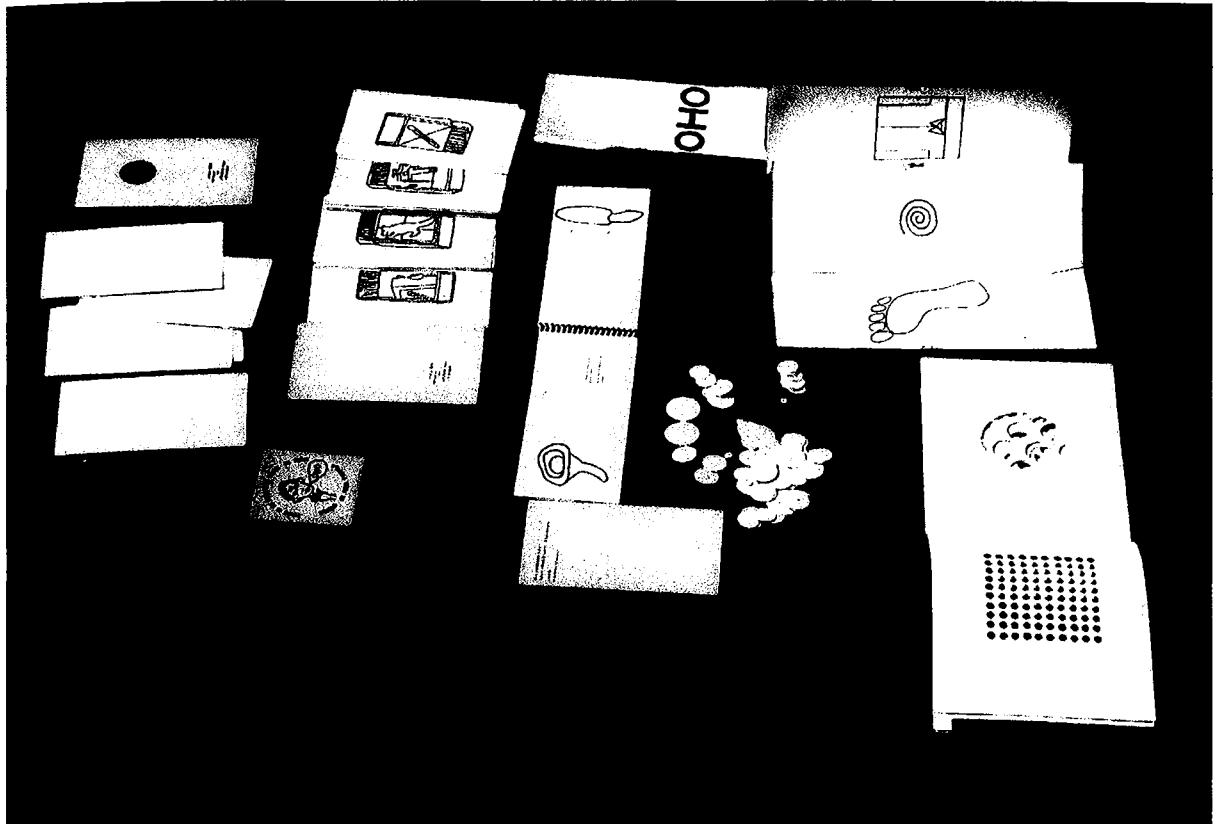


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Cover designs of OHO group's books. OHO archive;
reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.

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Cover designs of OHO group's books. OHO archive;
reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.

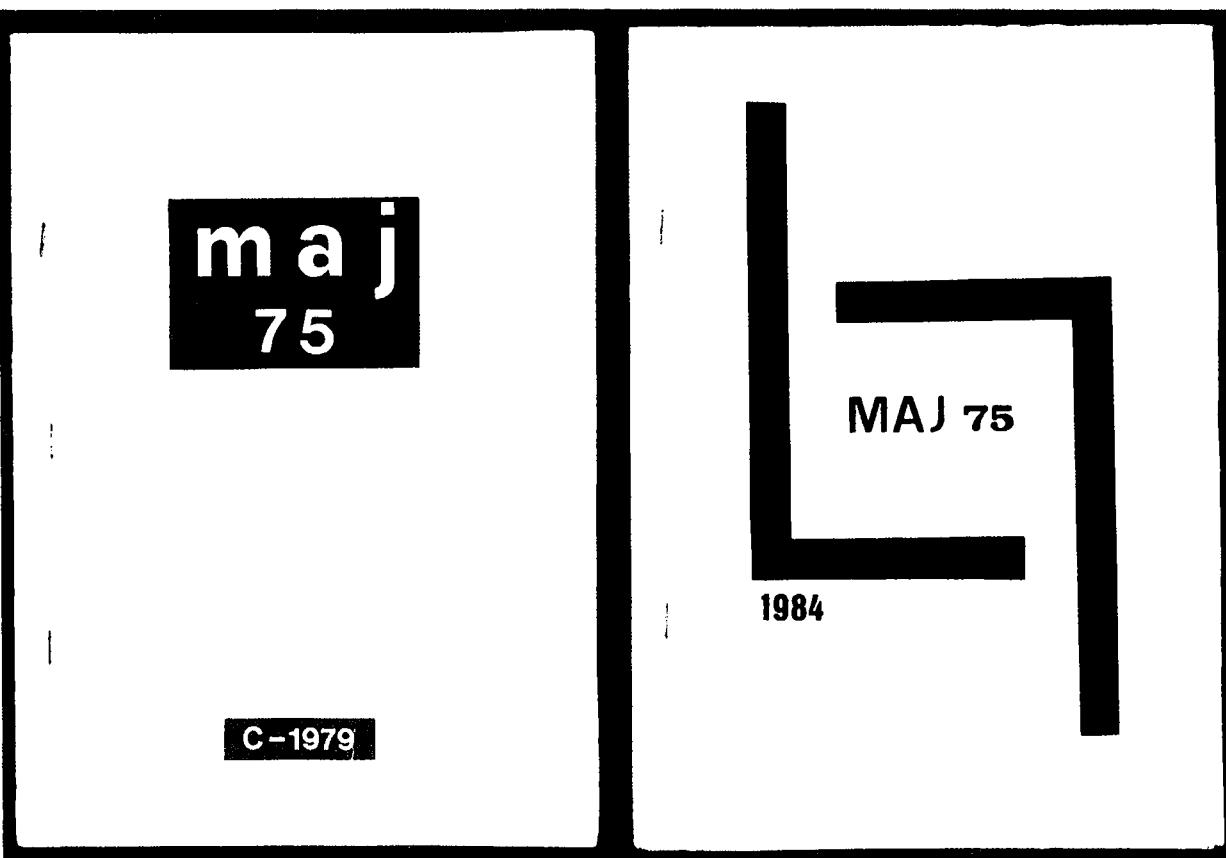


[Sound Book], published in 1967, consists of a piece of rustling paper in a box: the word "silence" is written on the front of the paper sheet; by turning it over, the reader produces a sound and reads on the back of the paper the word "noise." The book *Gobe v knjigi* [Mushrooms in a Book] by Pogačnik and Plamen, published in 1968, presents a series of line drawings of various kinds of mushrooms with short and witty poetic descriptions, and a number of pages have clean visual designs (round perforations and collages of multicolored circles). Also in the collection are various issues in other forms: recorded tapes by Naško Križnar, Milenko Matanović, and I. G. Plamen, Milenko Matanović's visual gramophone records, a series of stickers for matchboxes by Marko Pogačnik, or cards with drawings and texts in boxes, similar in form to Fluxus editions. The group disbanded in 1971, having taken part in international exhibitions in New York, Munich, and Paris and made an impact on the art scene.¹⁰

A group of artists in Zagreb organized a presentation in May 1975 of their works at a community beach on the Sava River. They described the presentation as an "exhibition-action," meaning they had taken an active approach to the presentation of their own work outside the gallery system: some works were performed before the public, leaflets were distributed with information about the works and the form of presentation, and all the artists were present and available for discussion. Among them were painter Boris Demur, photographers Željko Jerman, Sven Stilinović, and Fedor Vučemilović, poet Vlado Martek, and filmmaker Mladen Stilinović. The joint work of these artists, later named the Group of Six, continued unabated until 1979, primarily taking the form of exhibition-actions or solo shows. They mounted about 20 group presentations in public spaces (city squares, streets, the seashore, university halls, yards, and private houses) in Zagreb, Belgrade, Mošćenička

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Cover design for *Maj 75* (Zagreb). Private collection.



Draga, and Venice. Although some exhibition-actions were performed in gallery spaces, the activist principles of presentation were adhered to without compromise. Since 1979 the Group of Six has worked within a larger group of artists drawn to the idea of exhibiting in alternative spaces such as Podrum [The Cellar] (1979–1980) and Prostor Proširenih medija [The Expanded Media Space], later renamed Gallery PM, from 1981 to 1991.

In the summer of 1978 these artists extended their activities by publishing *Maj 75* [May 75], a magazine-catalog named after the date they first appeared together. Martek and Mladen Stilinović launched the magazine, which continued and expanded the basic presentation premise of exhibition-action. The form of the magazine was extremely simple and its execution economical: each artist contributed one or more works in A4 format in the number of copies planned for circulation. The copies were then collated and bound. The covers were usually silkscreened at Željko Jerman and Vlasta Delimar's studio. They would usually make between 100 and 200 copies, and the letters of the Croatian alphabet were used to number them. An important precursor to the idea for the magazine was the hand-made art books of Stilinović and Martek, which they had made in one or just a handful of copies.

The introduction to the first issue was a joint text by the Group of Six that was also reprinted in all other issues with some minor amendments.

a. The reason for originating and creating:

An effort to show work and add verbal support during the presentation. An alternative to the contemporary trend of shaping works of art through the compartmentalization of media and presenting it exclusively through institutions.

b. Blueprint of the profile:

A composite of works by several artists. The quantity of contribution depends entirely on the artist's internal reasons. Works are not complementary except when united by a common viewpoint.

c. The problem of information:

The decision that the artist disposes of conceptualization and dissemination of information.

d. This magazine is an attempt to complement oral information which has been exchanged since May 1975, ever since exhibition-action has been seen as a work in its own right.

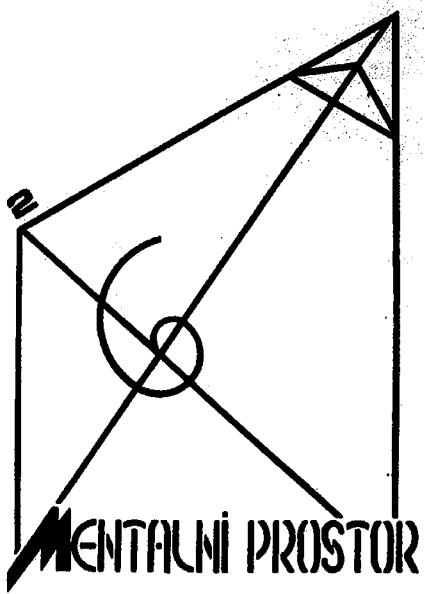
e. The principle of collaboration and the question of criteria are based on the proposition that each artist stands behind his own work.

f. In coming issues we shall attempt to secure collaboration with other artists who hold like views.

Seventeen issues of the magazine were published, several a year, from "A" in 1975 to "LJ" in 1984. They presented almost two hundred works by 53 authors from Yugoslavia (including Zagreb, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Ljubljana, Kranj, Rijeka, Pula, and Sarajevo) and abroad (Venice, Bratislava, Frankfurt). Contributions were presented in various forms of art: drawings, graphics, photographs, collages, printed texts, and so on. Most of them deal with analytical work in the form of texts (Demur, Martek, Stilinović), exploring elementary processes (photography and silk screen printing in Jerman's works, poetry in Martek's works, painting in the works of Željko Kipke and Goran Petercol), the mutual relations of the visual and linguistic signs of politics, power, and money (Mladen and Sven Stilinović, Zlatko Kutnjak, Rajko Radovanović), analyses of male-female relationships (Delimar, Jerman), communication (Delimar). The magazine published manifestos, quotations, visual and concrete poetry, documentation on art actions, and other material. Some issues focused on specific topics: Vlasta Delimar edited issue "F" in 1981, inviting only women artists to collaborate and produce it; issue "E" in 1981 carried documentation of two exhibition-actions; in issue "LJ" in 1984 there was a series of short stories collected by Martek. Issue "K" of 1983 was a special case because of its circulation: only sixteen copies were printed, two for each of the artists involved. Unofficially published and launched, *Maj* 75 was distributed in the same manner, handed out free at exhibition-actions, with only a few copies sold in galleries, the little money made to be spent on paper and covers for the next edition. The magazine ceased publication in 1984 because the common interest in this form of action had dwindled. Through the *Maj* 75 magazine-catalog, the six initiators managed to considerably broaden the distribution of their basic ideas and their work and make contact with other artists and a broader audience. The work of the Group of Six shaped later generations of radical artists in Zagreb, and their work now enjoys critical recognition.¹¹

Mentalni prostor

An informal group of artists and art theorists, the Association for Space Research, got going in Belgrade at the early 1980s (Zoran Belić Weiss, Dubravka Djurić, Nenad Petrović, Marko Pogačnik, Mirko Radojičić, Miško Šuvaković). Because some of the members were living and operating in other places (Novi Sad, Šempas, Amsterdam, Dijon), the work of the community was coordinated by Belić, Djurić, and Šuvaković. The community's point of departure was the analysis, criticism, and development of theoretical work on



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Cover design for *Mentalni prostor*, no. 4
(1987). Private collection.

avant-garde artists. The community developed theoretical writing featuring specification, description, analysis, argument, and discourse. In the course of their activity the members of the group published four anthologies under the title *Mentalni prostor* [Mental Space]. They include texts written by members of the community and translations of pieces written by other authors relevant to their theoretical activity, spanning the new age alternative (the interest in Eastern cultures), analytical philosophy of conceptual art (the analysis of art language), and Lacanian and Deleuzean poststructuralism (discourse on the limits of language). The first issue of *Mental Space* was published in 1983 with an introduction by Miško Šuvaković, dedicated to reconstructing the prehistory of the community on the basis of specific examples. This was followed by the responses of members of the community to four essential questions on joint activity (the form of joint work, the current attitude to space, the current concerns of work and existence, and the relationship between theory and practice in art). The next three issues of *Mental Space* are thematically conceived anthologies of texts and works. In the second issue, in 1984, articles by members were published in groups under such rubrics as "The Transformation of Art" and "The Notion of Beauty in the New Art." The third issue, in 1986, had articles on the seminar topic "Cultures of the East—the Visual Art of the West", and an exhibition called "Archetype" at Belgrade's Ethnographic Museum. In addition to writing by members of the community, there were articles, interviews, and works by a number of international artists (Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović and Ulay, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Agnes Denes, Mary Bauermeister, Herman de Vries, Wolfgang Laib). There was an extensive anthology "Analysis—Textuality—Phenomenology and Visual Art" (*Mental Space* no. 4, 1987) with articles and works by Kathy Acker, Art & Language, Deleuze and Guattari, Lawrence Weiner, Ian Wilson, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. After the group ceased to work together, its members continued their individual artistic and theoretical activity within the country as well as abroad.¹²

translated by Nada Seferović, Jelena Babšek, and Stephen Agnew

Notes

1. There is no comprehensive history of avant-garde, neo-avant garde, and post-avant-garde magazines and publications in Yugoslavia. The key contribution to the theory of avant-garde magazines was written by Miško Šuvaković in his paper "Contextual, Intertextual, and Interpictural Aspects of Avant-Garde Magazines" published in the

collection *Srpska avangarda u periodici* [The Serbian Avant-Garde in Periodicals], ed. Vidosava Golubović and Staniša Tutnjević (Belgrade: Matica srpska and Institut za književnost, 1996), pp. 111–122, in Serbian, with a short summary in English. For the magazine *Zvuk* see Božidar Petrač, *Futurizam u Hrvatskoj* (Pazin, 1995), in Croatian.

2. For Micić and the magazine *Zenit*, see Irina Subotić and Vida Golubović, *Zenit i avangarde 20-tih godina* [Zenit and the Avant-garde of the 1920s] (Belgrade: Narodni muzej and Institut za književnost i umetnost, 1983), in Serbian and English; and Irina Subotić, "Zenit and Zenitism," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, no. 17 (Miami, 1990), pp. 14–25. A reprint of *Zenit* no. 17–18 came out in Belgrade in 1983. Branko Ve Poljanski's books *Panic under the Sun*, *Upside Down*, and *Red Rooster* have been reprinted in book form (Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Belgrade; and Dečije novine, Gornji Milanovac, 1988).

3. The front page of *Dada Tank* has often been reproduced in the literature on dadaism, beginning with Hans Richter's *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. The last, censored issue of *Dada Tank* was reprinted in Zagreb in 1971. About Dragan Aleksić, see Jasna Jovanov and Dragan Kujundžić, "Dada in Yugoslavia (1920–1922)," in *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, vol. 4 (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), pp. 41–63.

4. The activity of Hungarian authors in Yugoslavia has not yet been fully researched. I have not even been able to determine how many issues of the magazine *Út* were published: four are preserved in the National and University Library in Zagreb, and I have been able to partly reconstruct from the literature the content of the remaining issues. For further information on *Út* see Zoltán Csuka, "Ekspresionizam u madjarskoj književnosti u Jugoslaviji" [Expressionism in Hungarian Literature in Yugoslavia], *Kritika* 3 (Zagreb, 1969), pp. 61–64, and Ferenc Nemeth, "Predstavnici srpske avangarde u periodici" [Representatives of the Serbian Avant-Garde in Periodicals], in the collection *Srpska avangarda u periodici*, pp. 387–393.

5. A reprint of *Tank* was published in Ljubljana in 1987. For detailed information on the Slovenian avant-garde see the exhibition catalog *Tank! Slovenska zgodovinska avangarda* [Tank! The Slovenian Historical Avant-garde] (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 1998).

6. A complete set of the magazine *Nova literatura* was reprinted in Belgrade in 1978. For further information on the magazine and the Nolit collection see *Izdavač Pavle Bihali* [Publisher Pavle Bihalji] (Belgrade: Nolit, 1978).

7. For further details on surrealism see the catalog *1929–1950. Nadrealizam. Socijalna umetnost* [1929–1950. Surrealism. Social Art] (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1969). On the Marko Ristić collection see the catalog *Legat Marka Ristića* [The Marko Ristić Estate] (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1993). On Nikola Vučo's photographs see Monika Faber, ed., *Nikola Vučo* (Vienna: Österreichisches Fotoarchiv im Museum moderner Kunst, 1990), in Serbian, German, and French. About the literary and visual works of Vane Bor see the catalog of the retrospective exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 1990, in two volumes. On Croatian and

Serbian surrealism see my article “Voyeuristic Peep,” *Umeni*, nos. 3–4 (Prague, 1997), pp. 375–377.

8. See the catalogs *Gorgona* (Zagreb: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, 1977), in Croatian and English, and *Gorgona* (. . . *Jevšovar, Knifer* . . .) (Dijon: Art Plus Universalité, 1989), in French. On the magazines *Gorgona* and *Maj 75* and on artists' books, see Branka Stipančić, “Artists’ Books and Magazines,” in the catalog *The Singing Horse: Radical Art from Croatia* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1993), and the catalog *Riječi i slike/Words and Images* (Zagreb: SCCA, 1995).

9. On Exat, New Tendencies, and Ivan Picelj see Ješa Denegri, *Umjetnost konstruktivnog pristupa—Exat 51 and New Tendencies* (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2000), in Croatian. On Mangelos see the catalog for the retrospective (Zagreb: Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, 1990), in Croatian and English.

10. On the activity of the OHO group see the catalog of the retrospective (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija Ljubljana; Graz: Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, 1994).

11. See *Grupa šestorice autora/Group of Six Artists*, a catalog for the retrospective (Zagreb: Institute for Contemporary Art, 1996).

12. On the Association for Space Research and the magazine *Mental Space* see Miško Šuvaković, *Scenes of Languages* (Belgrade: ULUS, 1989), pp. 114–115.

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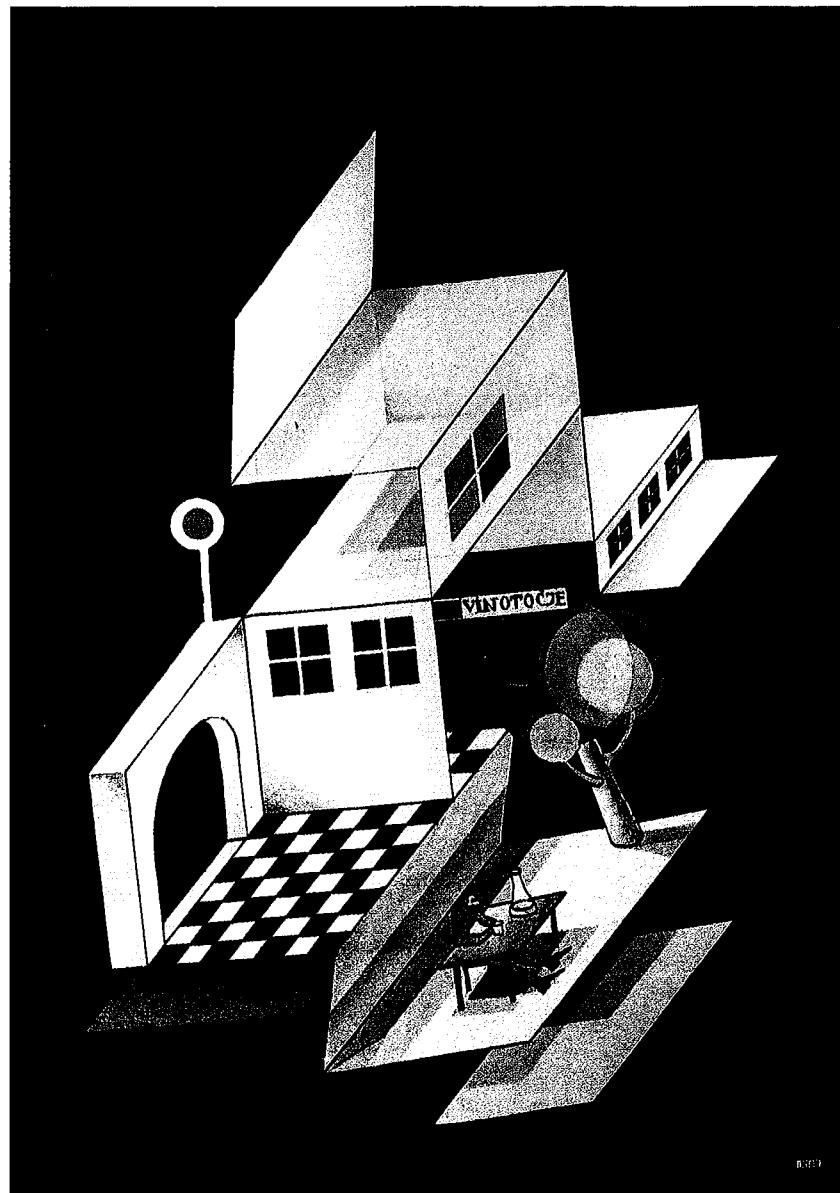
Architecture in Former Yugoslavia

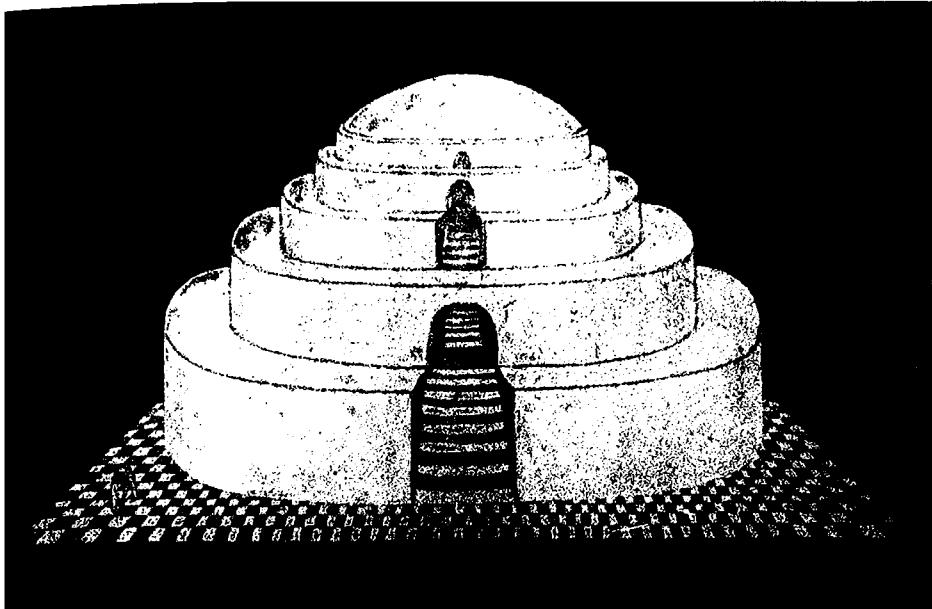
From the Avant-garde to the Postmodern

Peter Krečič

World War I was etched deeply in the collective psyche of all the South Slavic peoples. The individual areas had not developed to the point of being able to sustain a national state of their own, so they sought a feasible larger framework. Hopes and expectations were invested in Yugoslavia. During the first postwar years the constituent provinces rushed to establish all the necessary trappings of statehood: the universities, cultural institutions, mint, economic institutions, a judiciary—in other words, all they had toiled in vain to set up on their own. The experiences of war matured artists and culture in the first postwar years. The generational turnover was fast and stormy. Expressionist artists followed fast upon the gentle, dreamy landscapes, still lifes, and salon nudes of the impressionists, showing instead a wild dismemberment of the world, man's rejection and his pain. Hardly had the dust settled when even more splenetic, more destructive artists stepped on the scene: cynical art nihilists. The largest cities and ethnic centers in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade) were confronted almost at the same time with a completely new phenomenon: avant-garde art. Then, after the departure of the brothers Branko Ve Poljanski and Ljubomir Micić from Zagreb, the local avant-garde scene dwindled to nearly nothing: the only surviving Croatian representative of the avant-garde, Josip Seissel (Jo Klek), had linked his fate to zenithism until it was banned in 1926. The Slovenian avant-garde, with Ferdo Delak in Ljubljana and Avgust Černigoj and his constructivist group in Trieste,¹ attempted to present themselves as the sole surviving representatives of the Yugoslav avant-garde, but not for long. After 1930 one can speak only of echoes and memories of the avant-garde. During the period of the king's harshest dictatorship, imposed on January 6, 1929, it was not even advisable to hold onto it in memory.

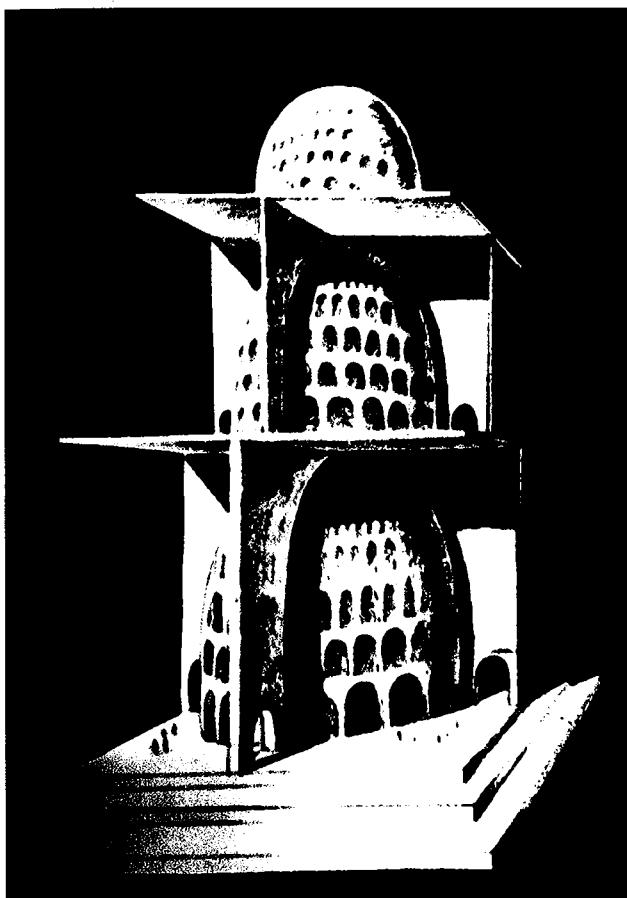
Jo Klek, *Vinotočje* [Tavern], 1924, watercolor, India ink, tempera, and collage, 41.7 x 30.3 cm. Narodni muzej, Belgrade.





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Jo Klek, *Maketa za Zeniteum* [Model for the Zeniteum], 1924, published in a magazine. Private collection.

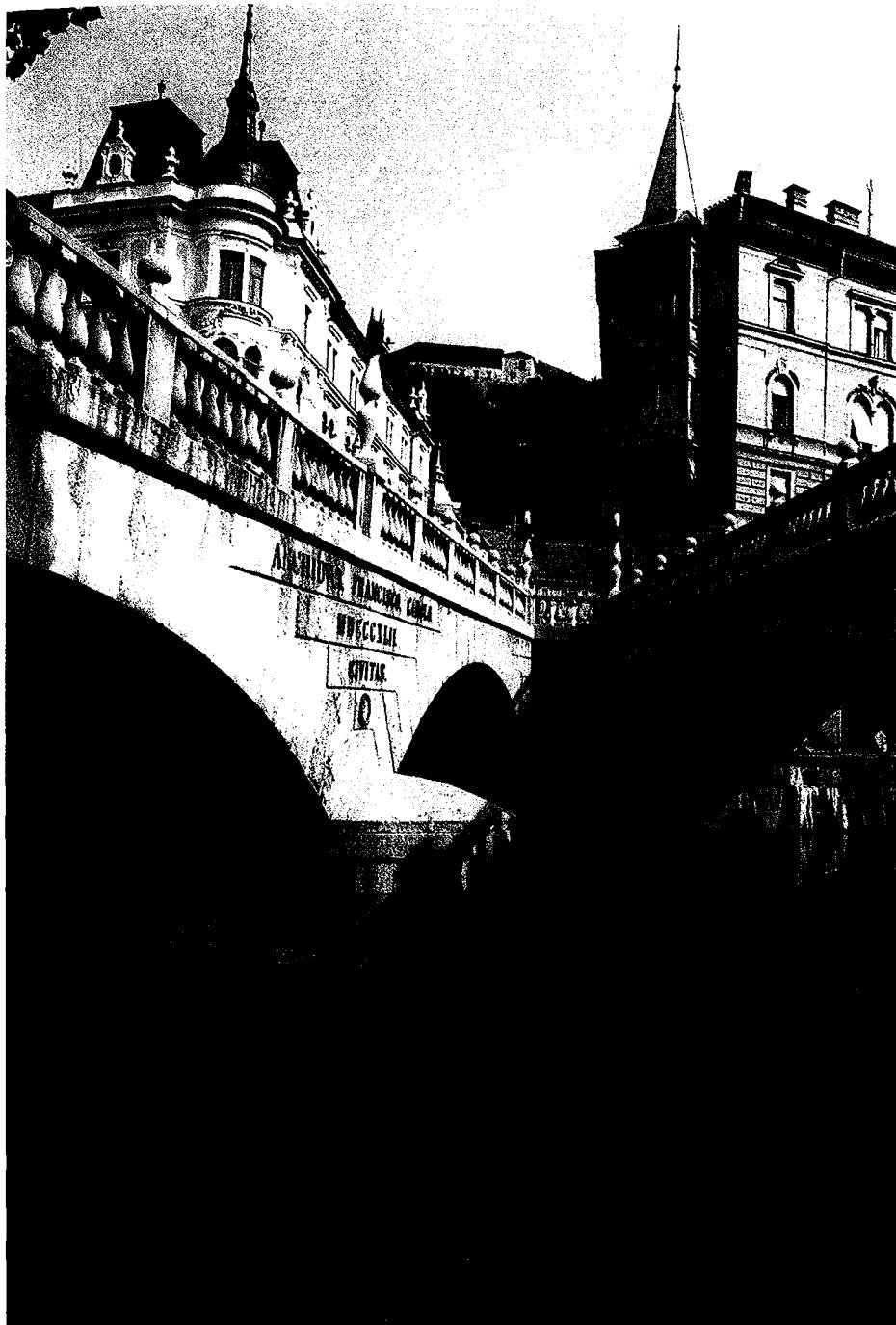


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Jo Klek, *Maketa za Zeniteum* [Model for the Zeniteum], 1924, published in a magazine. Private collection.

Avant-gardist groups from all parts of the country, as well as other avant-gardist movements across Europe, took a negative stand not only toward all the “outmoded” arts, “the arts of galleries, museums, and the church,” but also toward the current modernist movements. Černigoj explicitly scorned all efforts to form a Slovenian national architecture, as he interpreted the tendencies in the current works by Ivan Vurnik and Jože Plečnik. Later he confessed that he had meant to “sneak in” as Plečnik’s assistant and usurp Plečnik’s “classicism” from within.² Such a small national community, however—and this does not apply to Slovenia alone—could neither then nor later afford to invest all of its energies in one doctrine. While certain avant-gardist positions might appeal particularly to socially or nationally oriented people such as the poet Srečko Kosovel, the national elites as a rule held more moderate—if not more conservative—views. They related more easily to moderate modernists, especially those who were able to express a national idea in their architectural and urbanist solutions, precisely what the avant-garde, with its international orientation, scorned. In other words, avant-garde criticism was above everything ideological. In their blind rage avant-garde critics deliberately overlooked some genuine values that had developed within modernism, more broadly interpreted in the 1920s than in the 1930s when they were strictly limited in terms of doctrine by the international movement under the banner of CIAM (*Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*).

In Slovenia the situation was slightly different than in other parts of interwar Yugoslavia, above all thanks to Jože Plečnik, a quite particular and original personality in architecture. With his work and partly at his school he had such an overwhelming influence that the advocates of narrower modernist orientations could barely be heard. Ivan Vurnik had appeared on the scene before him with a type of architecture he himself called national decorative. With some characteristic decorative elements from a wider South Slavic ambience, Vurnik worked to create a new architecture that would be national in spirit. The color range and the richness of decorative and plastic forms can still be classified today within the developmental sequence of Slovenian expressionism. The same can be said of Plečnik’s architecture, which appeared slightly later, where the architect, in search of expressive effects, wittily combined various modern features with modernized classical ones. In this context we should mention the Church of St. Francis in Šiška (a part of Ljubljana, 1925–1927), its bell tower (1931), and the church of Our Lord’s Ascension in Bogojina (1925–1927). Although Plečnik combined modern and historical elements, he was always reshaping them and using them in unusual compositions, so that his architectural modernism of the 1920s could be labeled

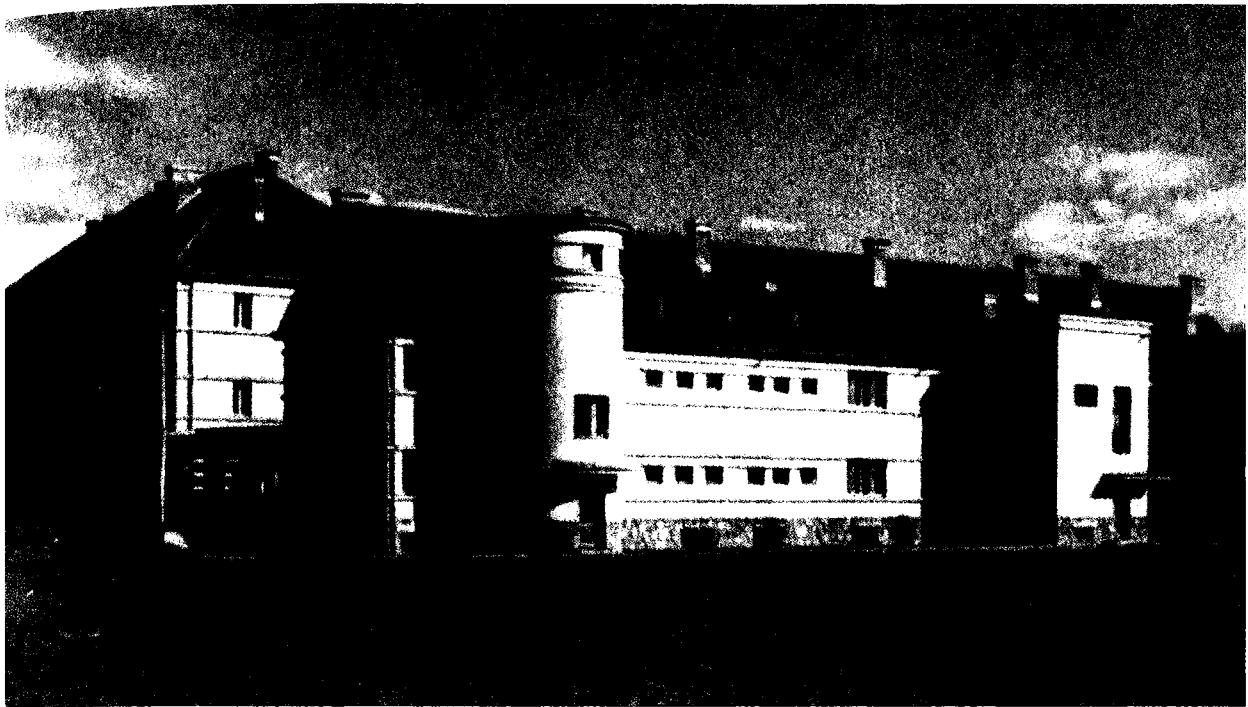


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Jože Plečnik, Tromostovje [Three Bridges],
Ljubljana, 1929–1931.

expressionism based on Italian mannerism.³ As early as the 1920s he began larger-scale projects in Ljubljana, and after the publication of his urban plan in 1929 he systematically transformed Ljubljana into a new capital of the Slovenes in the spirit of a new Athens, as can be read in some of his declarations and grand-scale plans. In contrast with contemporary methods of urban planning, Plečnik shaped his Ljubljana along the road from his house in Trnovo to Congress Square in the city center—along what could be called a land axis. Parallel to this he created a water axis along the river Ljubljanica that flows into the port through the historic city center. He decorated the river banks with greenery and rows of trees, situated bridges, built the long building of the Market (1940–1944), and concluded with a monumental ramp (1939–1944). Across these “parallels” he placed several perpendiculars, describing a regular network in which he arranged his architectural structures, including the National University Library (1936–1941), the Ursuline High School (1939–1941), and smaller spontaneous environmental spaces with crosswalks, staircases, and lights. His original architectural language in public space is the language of reworked yet familiar, full, plastic, Italian (classical) forms, by which he deliberately turned Ljubljana into a Mediterranean city. The modernized progeny of the buildings of Hellenistic Athens⁴ are evoked by the repertory of palatial urban buildings and squares. His commitment is every bit as visible to the common man for whom public space was intended. His squares, staircases, promenades, parks, and streets are furnished with reformulated classical elements, small columns, pillars, balustrades, streetlamps . . . humorous, even erotic, usurping the dogmatic hold of classical forms and creating public space for encounters and democratic dialogue.⁵

Plečnik’s Ljubljana, 15 years in the making, is a unique monument to twentieth-century urbanism. There were other architects in Slovenia whose inclination was more narrowly modernist, indeed one of moderate functionalism. Some of their work appeared as early as the late 1920s and more frequently in the 1930s, with support and theoretical underpinnings from the periodical *Architecture* (1931–1934). It was a heterogeneous group of architects, some of them educated abroad, some of them Plečnik’s detractors, joined by Ivan Vurnik. In style, they moved among Černigoj’s radical architectural avant-gardism, the architecture of irregular abstract geometric compositions, tall towerlike buildings, and Plečnik’s modern classicism. Černigoj’s circle produced Ivo Spinčič, author of the first modernist architectural projects and contemporary furniture design in Ljubljana and Maribor, and Jože Mesar, a student of Peter Behrens in the 1920s. Jože Sivec, author of



the first modern blocks in Ljubljana designed with green surroundings (1930–1933), had also studied abroad. Stanko Rohrman's projects were in the constructivist spirit. In his realization, for instance, of the Slon Hotel (1936–1938) with a balcony corner that questions the meaning of corner for the first time, he was rather moderate. There were successful modernists among Plečnik's detractors, such as Herman Hus and France Tomažič in Ljubljana and Jaroslav Černigoj and Saša Dev in Maribor—Hus and Tomažič with their Small Skyscraper (1931) or Cloud Villa (1931–1935), and Dev with the building of the Dravska Banovina savings bank in Maribor (1931–1932). Vurnik, with his Obla Gorica sports bath house in Radovljica (1932), reached one of the peaks of Slovenian functionalism with the bold construction of an oblique diving tower. Vladimir Šubic, author of numerous functionally conceived residential and commercial buildings in Ljubljana, Celje, Kranj, Split, and elsewhere, is a noteworthy modernist who never renounced plastic accents in architecture. This brings him nearer to Plečnik. In spite of that he attained one of the great modernist ideals of European architecture: tower-shaped buildings. In the new center of Ljubljana, the symbolic space for ascendant Slovenian capitalism, he constructed his Nebotičnik [Skyscraper] (1930–1933), the tallest building in the Balkans at

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Ivo Spinčič, block of apartments on Vilharjeva Street, Ljubljana, 1927–1932.



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France Tomažič, Villa Oblak, Ljubljana,
1932–1935.

the time, next to a monumental residential block. In addition to the tower shape, at the top of the building he added a glass house with a café. The whole was characteristically completed with a stylized round classical temple with a pole and a flag in the middle. Slovenian modern architecture between the two wars successfully adopted the modernist compositional harmony of great stereometric volumes, iron and concrete construction, and specific formal elements such as an irregular ground plan, ribbon windows, a flat roof, and a thin metal railing on the roof terrace and the staircase. This architecture did not, however, succeed in designing light-volume buildings or tall buildings in steel and glass. Its last achievement was a corner building with ribbon windows along a rounded corner, built between 1935 and 1939 in the center of Ljubljana by architect Franjo Luščić, who was not himself from Slovenia.

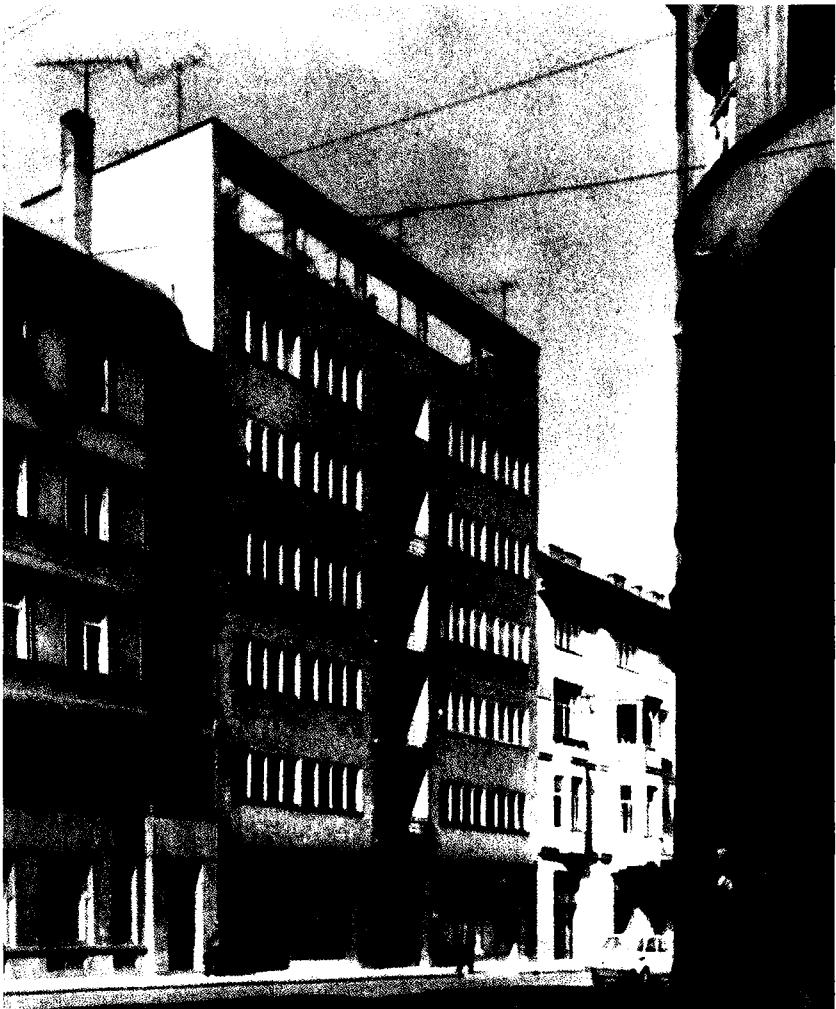
Nowhere in Zagreb or Belgrade or elsewhere in prewar Yugoslavia was the situation in architecture so polarized as it was in Ljubljana, where Plečnik stood with his school on the one side and the modernists and Vurnik on the other. Viktor Kovačić in Croatia who, like Plečnik, had been a student of Wagner, died relatively young, but in all likelihood he would not have forced such a clear polarity. The traditions were quite different in Croatia than they were in Slovenia, with its department at the Technical Faculty of the newly founded university, which had just begun training students for the new tasks.⁶ Croatia also brought in architects from abroad, but there were many architects who had received their training locally. This meant that the boundaries between the orientations of certain architects and project groups were also different. On the one hand architectural historicism extended into the 1920s. The Mortgage Bank building by Hugo Ehrlich (1923), despite certain not quite classical approaches, belongs to the past. Kovačić, with his building of the Zagreb Stock Market (1921–1924), completed in 1926 by another architect, presented a new degree of modernized classicism. Modernism in a narrower sense, but with a nod to expressionism, was articulated by Drago Ibler in two of his projects: the District Workers' Insurance Office (1923) and the Epidemiology Institute (1924). Antun Ulrich was studying architecture in Vienna at that point. In the second half of the 1920s he introduced quite pure modernist architectural models such as could be found in the Bauhaus or in the studios of J. J. P. Oud and Cornelis van Eesteren. The mood in the Croatian capital allowed such proposals to be implemented in their unadulterated form, as can be witnessed by Ulrich's relatively large Uskok sailing club building on the Sava River (1928) with its characteristic irregular ground plan. Ribbon windows along the cubic parts of a terraced composition and dominant flagpoles are recognizable features of membership in the international movement. Apartment buildings, major urban structures, new row buildings, and, above all, family villas were tasks in which a large group of Croatian modernists competed to introduce innovations such as strikingly towerlike building designs with flat roofs, ribbon windows, and corner balconies, all with no ornamentation, while in plans for the most diverse of tasks they demonstrated a wealth of ideas, resourcefulness, and courage—elsewhere in Europe the exception rather than the rule. The reason modernism was embraced as such in Croatia without reservation should probably be sought in the ambitions of the young Croatian capitalist stratum, which, as in Slovenia, wanted to be seen especially in the centers of larger cities.

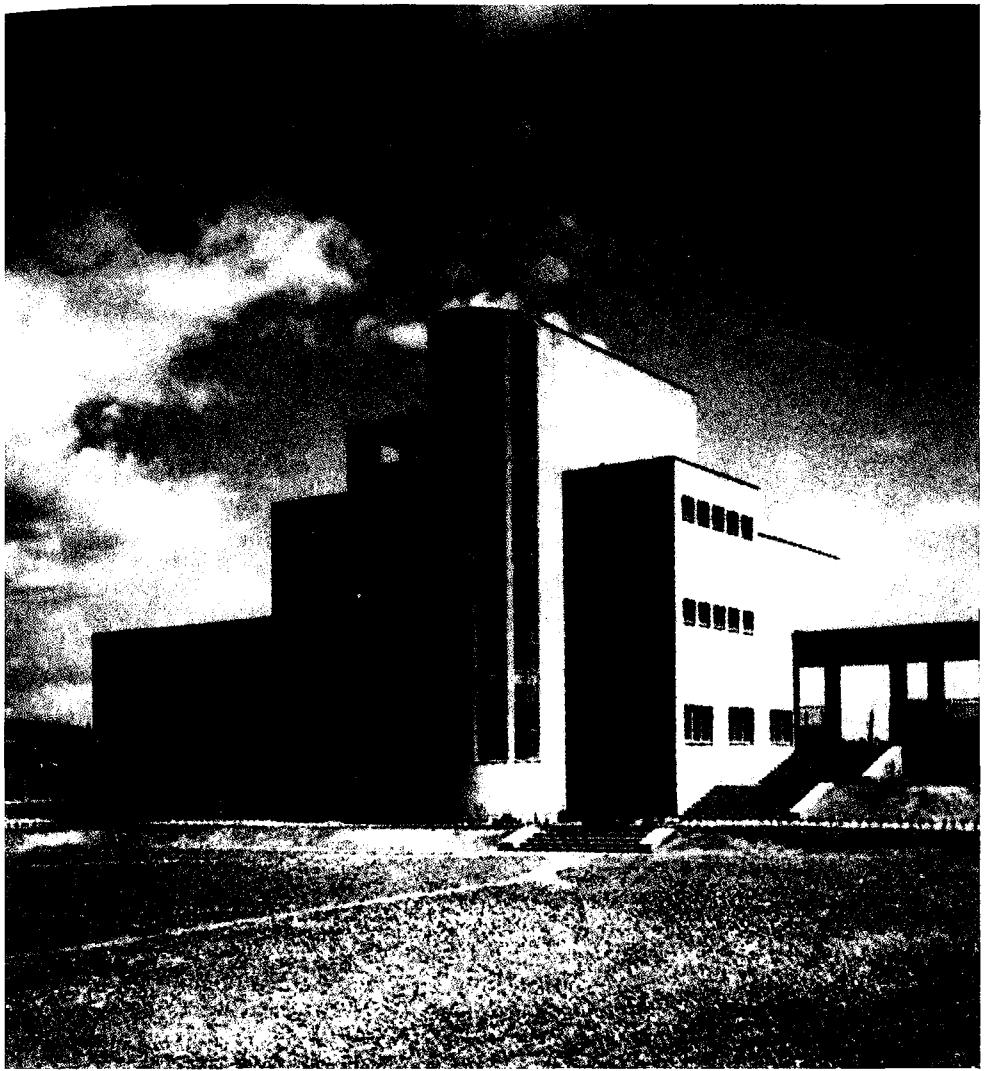
In the early 1930s the rounded form appeared quite early in the composition of scattered cubic masses in the building of Ivan Žemljak's elementary

school (1930) or even as a narrow glass house, as the leading motif of Ibler's cubic mass in the administration building of the Infectious Diseases Hospital (1931), as well as the one surmounting a wide, curving street in the Workers' Cultural Center (1937) by Jovan Korka, Jovan Krekić, and Djordje Kiverov, all in Zagreb. Urban buildings grew to monumental dimensions with the bottom floor on thin concrete pillars, smooth facades, and a rigid grid of window apertures. Skeletal iron and concrete constructions became the rule. Juraj Pičman with a group of collaborators showed the effect of this building principle on the facade quite early. The complex of parallel horizontal blocks of the School of Agriculture and Forestry (1932–1935) in Maksimir (Zagreb) was a novelty without parallel until after World War II.

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Drago Ibler, building at Martićeva Street
13, Zagreb, 1930.





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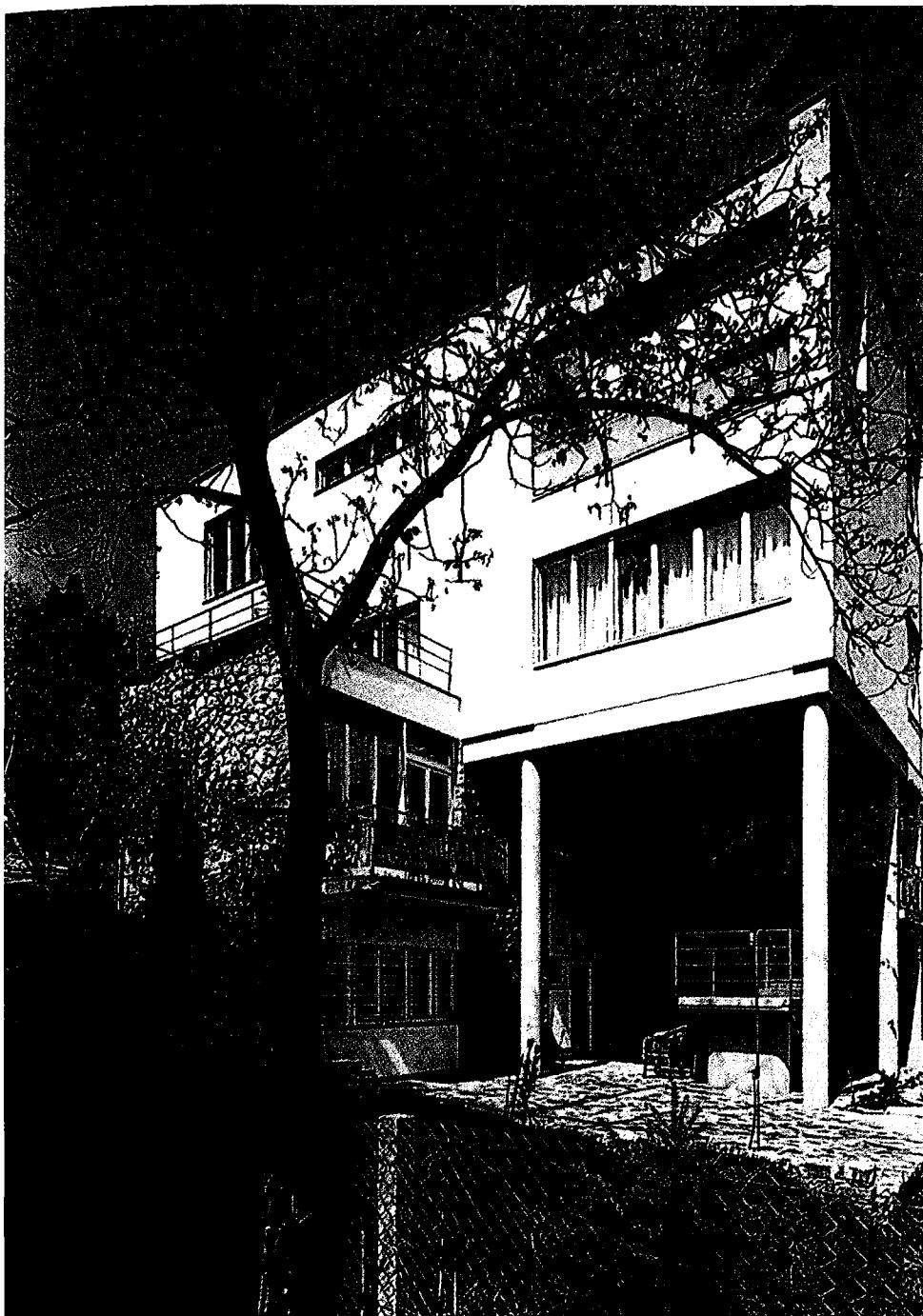
Ivan Zemljak, primary school,
Zagreb, 1930–1931.

The open competition in 1933 for the building to house the national printing press in Belgrade encouraged architects from all over the country to show their ideas of a building divided into singular identical connected blocks, as a rule faced with walls of glass. Drago Ibler from Croatia submitted a proposal along these lines, as did Stanko Rohrman from Slovenia. The idea of large glass surfaces lightly covering a concrete construction core of a building, however, was not easily accepted. Architects had more success with ribbon windows, horizontal or vertical. We could place Stjepan Planić's 1936 Zagreb commercial and residential building side by side with Lušić's Ljubljana Bat'e palace, and with them, though with a lighter structure and no rounded corners, the Police Administration building, also in Zagreb (1939), by architects Franjo Bahovec and Zvonko Kavurić.

Large glass walls were first used in factory buildings, such as Vladimir Potočnjak's design for the aluminum factory in Lozovac near Šibenik (1936–1939), or, on a smaller scale, in the family villa, always an opportunity for experiment at the time, such as architect Ernest Weissmann's villa (1933). The realization of the ideal of concrete, steel, and glass buildings, which regularly appeared in competition projects until the end of the 1930s, would have to wait for other times.

Architects had more luck in materializing their other ideal: buildings in the form of a tower. The first real modern skyscraper with no adorning shapes or decorations, such as can still be seen on Šubic's skyscraper in Ljubljana, was built by architect Slavko Löwy in Zagreb (1933) as a commercial and residential building. The second was by Alfred Albini in 1939, in Sušak near Rijeka. His was a fourteen-story Cultural Center to demonstrate to neighboring Italy that Yugoslavia was ambitious and able, taking on modernist challenges.

Croatia's architects were successful in other parts of interwar Yugoslavia. In 1928 Drago Ibler succeeded in constructing the highly modern building of the District Institute for Social Security in Skopje. This building stood on two connected quadrilaterals, supported by lean columns without capitals, with ribbon windows spread along the angles. The same architect managed to have a building along the same lines built in Mostar in 1930. There he rounded the cubic body of the building, opened it up with large ribbon windows, and placed an enclosed corridor with thin cylindrical columns in front of the concave frontispiece. In Bosnia and Herzegovina Juraj Neidhart was successful somewhat later. Relying on the detailed research of the traditional Bosnian house by Plečnik's student Dušan Grabrijan,⁷ he worked to blend the qualities of the traditional house



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Ernest Weissmann, Villa Kraus, Zagreb, 1936–1937.

with contemporary trends, such as in workers' housing in Zenica (1938). The building of the State Mining School (1938) in the same town is a notable example of the faithful transfer of Le Corbusier's principles of architecture to Bosnia.

The Yugoslav and Serbian capital of Belgrade was the third relatively large stage for modern architecture. There were fewer architects in Serbia than in Croatia, and they were faced with more demanding tasks. The process of modernization continued to pursue goals set before World War I. Yet Belgrade did require many new buildings for the needs of the new country. The Slovenes and the Croats, along with forward-thinking Serbs, expected Belgrade to be a modern capital. The functionaries in ministries, financial, insurance, and similar institutions, however, saw the building boom as an opportunity to fill the historical vacuum in the Belgrade cityscape. They wanted Belgrade to come to resemble Western capitals with their large fund of historicists. The third influential group, those who comissioned public buildings, with their network of contractors, felt that Belgrade needed buildings to express the Serbian spirit. They believed that a symbiosis of romantic, decorative elements might be borrowed from Serbian medieval architecture and more recent design. Belgrade and much of Serbian architecture, then and later, were caught up in this divided atmosphere.

Architects Nikola Nestorović and Branko Tanazević advocated a purely historical orientation with the building of the Belgrade Technical Faculty (1925–1931). The building, with its classical colossal portico on a rusticated ground floor, symmetrical wings with pilaster division, and sculptural accents above the roof crown, was, despite its proven qualities, a thing of the past. The building of the Agrarian Bank in Belgrade (1931–1934) by architects Petar and Branko Krstić went a step further toward a purer structural expression, with Doric semi-columns still present on the ground floor and a stone surface on the upper floors. The next stage of development that might be called "the conquest of the modern building block," though still marked by classical Ionic columns in the central field of the facade, is linked to the name of Dimitrije M. Leko and his building of the Ministry of Social Policy (1932–1934). Nikola Dobrović, one of the finer Serbian architects, heralded a purely modernist orientation in the early 1930s with his award-winning project for the terraces at Terazije Square.⁸ The project was never built, despite its undeniable qualities. Only later was the Albanija skyscraper (1938) built at Terazije in the spirit of monumentalized modernism, captured in its stone facade by architects Branko Bon, Milan Grakalić, Miladin Prljević, and Djordje Lazarević.

Despite his reputation as an incorruptible modernist, Dobrović did not receive significant commissions in Belgrade before the war. He made his name by building around Dubrovnik and along the Dalmatian coast. Among his greater structures is the Grand Hotel in Lopud (1936). A terraced composition of pure cubic masses at right angles is linked to a block, divided across the vertical by four protruding horizontals of balcony stories. Another building in the shape of a closed quadrilateral, partially supported by cylindrical pillars and covered with a white stone skin with small ribbon windows, housed the offices of the Vacation Association (1940). Dobrović used precisely such (in most cases uncompromising) modernist approaches in many villas and summer houses along the Adriatic. The Villa Vesna (1939) on the island of Lopud near Dubrovnik, with its bold composition of a cubic building core built in massive, oblique terraces on the ground floor and with a rounded form at the top, had no rival at that time or later. Modernists became more prominent only in the second half of the 1930s. The row building with a smooth facade and a rigid grid layout of ribbon windows by Momčilo Belobrk (1938),

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Momčilo Belobrk, building at Njegoševa 63, Belgrade, 1932.



characteristically named a “garage,” was one of many Belgrade buildings by this architect. Branislav Marinković, with his building of the Commercial Fund (1939), treated the problem of the corner building in a slightly different way than would have been done in Ljubljana or in Zagreb at that time. Instead of horizontal strip windows running along the round corner, he limited the horizontals to strips only at the wings and in the middle of the corner; with the protruding flat volumes at the wings he strengthened the dramatic interplay of terraced building masses and a raised-angle dominant.

A modern, elongated building with a more relaxed layout was designed by Milan Zloković for the Children’s Clinic (1935–1940), with marked ribbon windows and long balconies with metal arches along four clearly distinct but connected construction blocks. Dragiša Brašovan, with his building of the state printing press (1937–1940), achieved the maximum of pure modernist ornament with a dynamic composition of low blocks, rounded corners, long lines of ribbon windows stretching around the corners, rising glass columns above, strict cubist volumes, and a visible concrete structure in the background. All these are Belgrade buildings.

The third style in Serbian architecture is what Zoran Manević calls the national romantic, which came surprisingly close to decorativist designs seen all over Europe in the 1920s, known as art deco.⁹ The leading personality of this style was Momir Korunović with the Postal Ministry building in





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Momir Korunović, Postal Ministry,
Belgrade, 1928.

Belgrade (1928), the Chamber of Commerce in Svetozarevo (1913), and a residential building in Kumanovo (1930–1931). This option always emerged as a way to present Yugoslavia to the international public, and it provoked, as a rule, objections from the non-Serbian parts of the country. The brothers Petar and Branko Krstić succeeded with their idea of the Yugoslav pavilion in Philadelphia (1926) in the form of a Byzantine temple with massive blind arcades in the walls, protruding corner columns, and a massive dome rising from the middle of the complex. These positions, and the lack of willingness to draw the finest architectural minds from all over the country, meant that Belgrade missed its chance to become a true Yugoslav capital.

World War II was a devastating experience for the territory of Yugoslavia. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was the only political power able to organize resistance against all the occupying forces. They knew that only under conditions of war could they come into power, so they did all they could to present themselves as the sole leader of the resistance to the Germans. The Partisan army joined the Allies in 1943, tying up Axis forces in the Balkans and preventing them from success elsewhere. Communist leader Josip Broz Tito climbed to the top position among the winning Partisans and the newly established Yugoslavia with his concepts of national liberation, equality of all the Yugoslav peoples, and a new social order without capitalist exploitation. He introduced a tight-reined communist dictatorship. Very soon he clashed with the Soviets. In 1948 the conflicts between the Yugoslavs and the rest of the Communist bloc became public.

In search of support Yugoslavia started turning toward the West. The early socialist models adopted from the Soviets were gradually abandoned. By the early 1950s pressure on artistic work had also lightened. In the process, Yugoslavia was reestablished on the new foundation of a federal system, and in the eyes of many held the promise of a socialist social order, stirring hope and optimism among its citizens and the international community. The authorities persuaded the people that it was time to get to work rebuilding the destroyed country and laying the foundation for future progress. Electrification and industrialization were quickly accepted. However bitter the farmers may have been who were forced to find employment in factories, even in industrialized Slovenia, one cannot overlook the overall success of the government. In a few short decades Yugoslavia changed from being a largely agricultural to a moderately industrial country. Young people were organized into work brigades. Their enthusiasm overcame the lack of equipment and expertise in the construction of railroads, roads, bridges, factories, and residential buildings.

New factories needed a new work force, and the new workers needed apartments and general commodities that were never sufficient in postwar Yugoslavia. This was due in part to the extent of the need, but also to the fact that central planning could never meet the demand for consumer products. Later decentralization and, as a corollary, the shift of power to the centers of the constituent republics, as well as the system introduced in the 1970s known as socialist self-management, improved the situation but never completely eliminated the problems. Naturally, in the new social circumstances the task of architects became clear. Their skills were put to immediate and practical use in various reconstructions, especially for residential units and

infrastructure. The next task was planning industrial and energy plants and new apartments ranging from individual housing to collective housing. The socialist authorities, of course, preferred collective housing.

The issue naturally arose of regulating all these new phenomena: the question of urbanism. Even before the war, the growth of the larger cities called for urban plans, which became a legal obligation in the 1930s. Ljubljana, for instance, advertised for an urban plan through a public competition, and it received a number of modernist proposals that were no longer at the cutting edge in architecture after the war. Subsequently, urban plans were drawn up for smaller communities, even villages, and for new, satellite neighborhoods near industrial plants; for larger cities there were comprehensive preparations ongoing into the 1960s and later to devise general urban plans, by revising the guidelines for plans again at different levels. Overplanning, of course, led to incoherent, even chaotic plans and resulted in numerous illegal interventions, both among institutional and private builders. Particular attention in the first postwar years was dedicated to planning the capital city, Belgrade, and to a slightly lesser extent the capitals of the federal units. Sarajevo, Podgorica (renamed Titograd), and Skopje took their place next to Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, and with them also the capitals of the two autonomous provinces, Novi Sad (the Vojvodina) and Priština (Kosovo and Metohija). From the perspective of the new revolutionary authorities, the Belgrade cityscape was to reflect the success of the new social order and serve as a showcase for foreign political and economic observers of the Yugoslav experiment. For this reason a public competition in 1946 invited Yugoslav architects to plan a completely new city on the left bank of the Sava next to its confluence with the Danube: New Belgrade, which would be the seat of the new government, with the buildings for the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the Federal Government Presidency.

An outstanding solution among the competition proposals came from Edvard Ravnikar, of Plečnik's school, who had worked in Le Corbusier's studio in Paris before the war. The strictness of spatial division, with a rectangular grid of broad avenues and slightly narrower streets, came from Paris; the monumental notion of palatial political and government buildings is a nod to both Plečnik and Le Corbusier and, at least partly, to the then-current Russian models of socialist realism. That was more, of course, than the authorities could take. They later preserved the basic urban scheme and built several of the indispensable buildings, but the most prestigious structures had to wait for a decade or more and were built by architects who had had

nothing to do with the competition. Other participants in this competition had more success in their home republics and on smaller assignments elsewhere. Ravnikar was entrusted with planning the whole town of Nova Gorica (1947–1949), but no sooner had construction started than it became clear that the old Gorizia, the center of the province of Goriška and Posočje, would be left in Italy.

Architects Vladeta Maksimović (Serbia) and Vid Vrbanić (Croatia) with their associates were successful in Belgrade. The former was entrusted with the conversion of the center of Belgrade with Terazije Square, while the latter was in charge of the New Belgrade urban plan. Klaić designed the center of Sarajevo, while Vlado Antolić dealt with the center of Zagreb and the workers' quarters in Sisak. Mihajlo Mitrović was the author of the plan for Trstenik, and his colleague D. Momčilović created a plan for Bor.¹⁰ The first postwar period also saw a systematic distribution of architects to various parts of the country. The need was acute and the Party apparatus dictated where architects would go. Danilo Furst, Ravnikar's colleague from Plečnik's school, can be found in Strnišće (later renamed Kidričevo) near Ptuj between 1947 and 1948, working on general reconstruction and the construction of an aluminum factory, administration buildings, and workers' quarters, while in 1951 he was in Maglaj (Bosnia), where a paper and cellulose factory was built to his design, followed by the workers' quarters and a home for single people.¹¹

Several Croatian architects who had won acclaim before the war participated in the construction of the first buildings in New Belgrade. In addition to his participation in the urban planning of New Belgrade, Vid Vrbanić also constructed the first blocks of the student campus. Architects Vladimir Potočnjak, Zlatko Neuman, Antun Ulrich, and Dragica Perak approached the plan of the gigantic building of the Federal Executive Council in the spirit of monumentalized modernism (concept 1947). In Bosnia, architect Juraj Neidhart participated in planning the center of Sarajevo and made a regulational plan for Zenica. Vlado Antolić took care of the planning of Bitola and Prilep in Macedonia.

In Skopje at that time one might encounter Edvard Ravnikar designing and building the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (1947–1950). The neighborhoods and the buildings in these plans were modest, often done in haste with whatever materials and equipment were available. The Trade Unions building in the center of Belgrade (1947–1954) by Branko Petričić is worthy of note. Better work was done on the smaller assignments, whether or not they were politically approved structures. There is continuity here with prewar, mostly modern architecture of Croatian design.

The main tasks at hand were the residential block and the residential building. Vlado Antolić constructed a series of identical individual houses in Zagreb with the first floor on columns and a flat roof. Zdenko Stričić constructed a smaller residential building on columns there (around 1950) with a raised roof on one side, a favorite motif of the day. Antun Ulrich revived the motif of the visible concrete frame skeleton on the facade and wide ribbon windows for his block of apartments for workers (around 1949); Neven Šegvić contributed a voluminous residential block (1948–1950) that is a continuation of similar prewar blocks, but with different facade grids of horizontals and the new motif of a perforated roof section. Those were the first larger buildings in new, modernistically conceived New Zagreb. Juraj Neidhart in Bosnia continued in the spirit of the traditional Bosnian house, translated into modern language. Such was the group of homes for single people in Ljubija, while the rest house for skiers on mount Trebević above Sarajevo (1948) remained unsurpassed at the time, with its stone terrace supported by columns with a large balcony, covered with shades along the entire width of the facade and a pyramid-shaped roof.

Croatian architects were able to master a palette of current urbanist and architectural tasks in the first postwar years; Slovenian architects did not lag behind, but theirs was a different tradition of modern architecture into the postwar period.¹² Plečnik was still active. Although he had been deprived of his main role at the school and in the urbanism of Ljubljana, he nevertheless maintained his authority as an architect of monuments. In addition to dozens of memorials dedicated to the national liberation struggle—in contrast with many figural monuments created in the manner of socialist realism—he still cultivated his memorial columns, mausolea, and arched porticos, and he renovated the Križanke monastery in Ljubljana in the spirit of monumental decorativeism (1952–1956). At the same time he made one of the most interesting plans of the whole period, the plan for a new Slovenian parliament (1947) with the motif of a high cone rising from a monumental foundation and hidden dome, supported by columns leaning into the space above the large assembly hall. The connection with the current monumentalism of socialist realism was merely accidental.

The younger generation of architects led by the leading teachers at the School of Architecture, Edvard Ravnikar and Edo Mihevc, took quite a modern orientation. Prewar modernists expanded their palette of modern approaches. Stanko Rohrman constructed the building of the Gospodarski Svet (Economic Council) in Ljubljana (1947–1949) in the spirit of prewar, even avant-garde Soviet architecture, with raised protruding vertical concrete

pillars on the facade. Edo Mihevc constructed a number of large factory halls, real basilicas with glass walls—“Work Cathedrals,” as they used to call the Litostroj industrial complex (1946–1963) and the large adjacent neighborhood of workers’ housing. At the same time he constructed a family villa with a roof rising on either side (1951). Danilo Furst was the most innovative, however, with his system of rapid, on-site, eight-day assembly for simple prefabricated houses (1949).

Generally speaking this was a time when architects and builders in Slovenia and elsewhere were largely preoccupied with different systems for prefabricated construction, in hopes of shortening building time and cutting costs. Meanwhile, architects in all the republics were forming guilds that later joined to make the Union of Architects of Yugoslavia. In Slovenia their position was special, since architects had originally been a part of the Association of Engineers and Technicians. Despite the government’s opposition, they founded a separate association of architects and in 1951 they started publishing a periodical that was open both to questions of architecture and urbanism and many others that, according to Edvard Ravnikar, spiritual leader of the architects’ movement, were supposed to be part of an architect’s thinking, particularly questions of industrial and graphic design.

Nearly all researchers of the artistic and especially architectural conditions in former Yugoslavia agree that the 1950s can be considered a turning point in architectural efforts throughout the country. While the basic needs of reconstruction were met and new factories, scientific institutes, schools, hospitals, administration buildings, apartment blocks, and recreation buildings were built, there were shortcomings and unfulfilled expectations. The power elite figured it was time to open up to the world and participate more actively in the international exchange of goods—but not of people and ideas. The most widely accepted form of exchange of goods, from industrial to agricultural products, was the international trade fair. Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana had had experience with trade fairs even before the war and had permanent fairgrounds with eye-catching pavilions. For postwar authorities, however, these facilities were too limited and too scattered. They encouraged the construction of new fairgrounds in each of these cities. The boldest was built in Belgrade,¹³ where the new fairgrounds lie along the railroad. Milorad Pantić raised three pavilions there between 1954 and 1957: a round, relatively low pavilion with a large flattened dome, and two smaller identical and connected pavilions in the vicinity with a square ground plan and flattened hanging domes above glass walls. In Zagreb the trade fair developed most extensively through more and more new pavilions during the 1950s and

1960s, the only notable building being a large metal and glass cube with a glass superstructure and a visible metal structure in the roof section, the work of Božidar Rašica (1957). With this building, Croatian modern architecture articulated one of the modernist architectural ideals expressed (but never built) in prewar designs. The notion of a glass building on a completely transparent ground floor found its full expression in Vjenceslav Richter's Yugoslav pavilion at the notable Brussels Expo a year later, in 1958.¹⁴ Ljubljana was also a little reserved in this respect, giving more weight to quality than quantity. The Ljubljana trade fair was given its contours between 1954 and 1958. Architect Branko Simčič (with Ilija Arnavutović and Milan Mihelič) conceived a large platform with a concrete obelisk, placing a long sideways quadrilateral on columns as an introduction to a spacious hall, covered with a hanging dome. Somewhat later Marko Šlajmer placed the cylinder-shaped Jurček pavilion under an obelisk (1960), a mushroom-shaped concrete structure encased in a glass wall and, at the southern edge of the complex, a geometrically pure glass quadrilateral with a rarely seen metal structural frame (1958). An immediate consequence of arched and domed concrete constructions was the new pavilion concept of architectural complexes, in contrast with the earlier solid block of buildings. Danilo Furst was the first to try this in Slovenia in the pavilion-type school in Stražišče near Kranj (1953–1959). The pinnacle in the development of postwar architecture came with the building of the Municipal People's Council in Kranj by Edvard Ravnikar (1958–1960), in the space of what was termed environmental architecture. Single elements such as the large front glass wall, the concrete skeleton, and the rugged roof merged effectively for the first time at a new expressive level and created a new type of public administration building that could later be used as a "tent."¹⁵

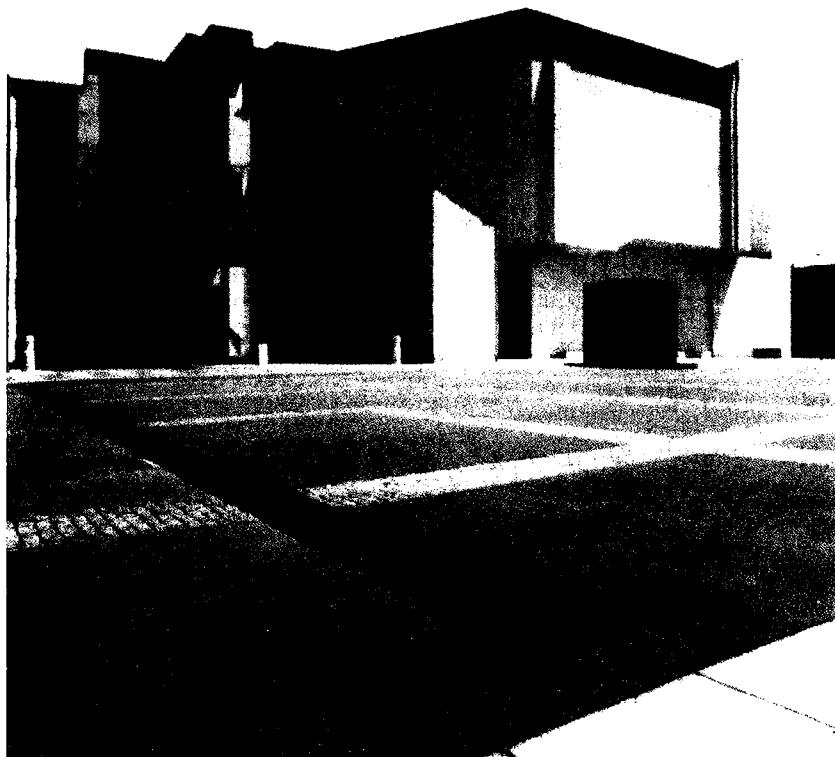
With the new technologies and the proposed new constructions, Le Corbusier's residential block in Marseilles (the famous Unité d'Habitation) had particularly wide repercussions in Zagreb and somewhat less in Belgrade. Drago Galić with his residential block in Zagreb (1954) was the first one to approach the original quite consistently, although Croatian postwar architecture also found surprisingly original block solutions with a loose facade grid and numerous glass and perforated elements, evident in Božidar Rašica's conception of a residential block in Zagreb (1954). A somewhat more original and higher-quality variant of the Marseilles block, developing also into the depth behind the main construction, was achieved by Milorad Macura in Belgrade with the building of the military printing press (1954). In Ljubljana the same idea with certain adaptations was presented by Edo Mihevc

(1955–1957). However, numerous new constructions and formal incentives toward the end of the 1950s also yielded initiatives in an unexpected direction. It was Mihevc with his architecture on the Slovenian coast who successfully introduced a “Mediterranean construction matrix” that was at the same time developed in Croatia, at a time when the conflict between modernist shapes and traditional (Mediterranean) ones did not always give a good result. This realization came in time, as the country was increasingly turning toward tourism. The tourist industry, oriented toward mass tourism, demanded in principle more moderate and more attractive architectural solutions. The “Mediterranean matrix” remained an architectural urbanist constant not only of the tourist architecture along the Adriatic, but also of Macedonian, Bosnian, and other architectures, although with great differences in the quality of particular solutions.

Architects all over Yugoslavia understood the generally widespread palette of designer initiatives at the same time as part of a search for quite new construction forms and expressions. The always current residential architecture of apartments in blocks and individual buildings acquired new variants, for example, with the newly reawakened idea of a house in a row, or an apartment in a tall residential tower. It was the latter that remained very attractive even after 1958, when the first residential skyscrapers arose in Maribor (by Ivan Kocmut) and in Belgrade (by Ivan Antić), and it received the “right of residence” in almost all Yugoslav centers and even in smaller places. The skyscraper became a symbol of a place’s importance, so it is not surprising that it was soon used as a status symbol in political, administrative, and commercial buildings. With a pair of triangular prismatic columns that far exceeded the old Nebotičnik and a modern composition of low business buildings along the edge of the large square, Edvard Ravnikar won the competition for the central square of Ljubljana (Revolution Square, 1960). During its long period of construction (1960–1983) the complex adapted to the changes of the program (the columns, for instance, were lowered almost by half, the main part of the complex got hanging granite facades), but despite all it became Ravnikar’s life opus, compositionally stretching between the initial architectural minimalism, through increasingly lively construction masses in the spirit of contemporary structuralism, to an early variant of postmodernism particular to him, reflected especially in the edifice of the cultural center—Cankarjev dom (1977–1983). The towers at Revolution Square are part of a ramified and carefully thought out architectural-urban conception, which obtained new highlights in addition to the traditional concrete skeleton construction. In Ljubljana, apart from the already seen motif of ribbon

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Edvard Ravnikar, Cankarjev dom,
Ljubljana, 1977–1983.



windows, the tall tower also received a hanging facade and an aluminum overlay, such as the one by Edo Mihevc in the business building of Metalka (1959–1963). The same approach was applied by Malješa Bogunović and Slobodan Janjić in the skyscraper for the newspaper company Politika (1967–1969) in Belgrade. Croatian architects joined the general trend of the urban high-rise later, if we except the somewhat more modest residential “wooden tower” in Zagreb by the prewar modernist pioneer Drago Ibler (1960). The highest-quality object of this orientation is certainly the high commercial skyscraper in Zagreb with a mass concavely splitting from the core according to the design by Slavko Jelinek (1976).

An important achievement in the 1960s was the possibility of original and personal architectural poetics of individual authors. If once it was possible to recognize Plečnik, now many architects in Yugoslavia began to develop their personal, that is, formally increasingly recognizable, approaches to composition. Ivan Antić and Ivanka Raspopović created the building of the new Museum of Contemporary Arts in New Belgrade (1961–1963). This crystal building consisting of six pairs of connected closed prisms with square ground plans and cut-out glass corners was perhaps the first building in Serbia with an evident author's seal. Nikola Dobrović, also a consistent advocate of the International Style, joined the predominant orientation with an excellent conception of the complex for the State Ministry of National Defense (1956–1963). The complex is divided by a street into two symmetric halves. Above the modernist block with ribbon windows the architect laid a new terraced structure with smaller window tracks and covered it all with a light pink rustic stone overlay. This exceptional construction suffered heavy damage during the NATO bombing in 1999. The Croatian architects were meanwhile breaking away from the tyranny of strict architectural form with low block compositions or pavilions developed horizontally, so that toward the end of the 1970s there were only rare architects who developed into personalities with recognizable style. It was Boris Magaš and Edo Šmidhen who most approached the new orientation with the building of the Museum of the Revolution in Sarajevo (1963), which as a whole still belongs to the rational, minimalist aesthetics: a large closed cube supported by a completely transparent ground floor.

In the 1960s a new, exceptionally penetrating younger generation of architects appeared with mature and recognizable personalities. Milan Mihelič¹⁶ developed a structural orientation with elements of brutalism. With the department store buildings in Osijek (1963–1967) and Novi Sad (1968–1972) he presented a new relation between the metal or concrete structural form and the lively plastic surface. He simplified the idea and completed it with a wavy glass facade in the building of the International Telephone Switchboard in Ljubljana (1972–1978). For a long period this was state-of-the-art use of glass in architecture as a fundamental modernist theme. Before the war the modernists arrived at ribbon windows and after the war at true glass houses. From the wavy glass wall to glass houses or even towers it took, at least in Slovenia, twenty years of waiting, until the appearance of Savin Sever, who knew how to transpose the construction language of architecture into architecture itself. Such are his buildings for the printing plant of the publishing house Mladinska knjiga in Ljubljana (1963–1966) and the

department store Merkur (1968–1970), which develop across the horizontal as strict structures of equal space units; such also are his Astra and Commerce towers in Ljubljana (1963–1970) that structurally rise to heights. A third architect with a personal stamp was Stanko Kristl, who blended various current architectural approaches and developed an architectural language to such a sensitivity of expression that, for example, the facade of the commercial-residential block in Velenje (1960–1963) has the appearance of a refined leaf. A fourth was Janez Lajovic, who redefined the so-called regionalism in contemporary architecture. With the sloping blocks of the Hotel Prisank in Kranjska Gora (1961–1962) and even more the Hotel Kanin in Bovec (1969–1973), as well as with thoughtfully placed dominants, he achieved a rarely successful symbiosis of architecture and its environment, which became one of the desirable goals of architectural development in the 1970s.

The fact that Slovene architecture accomplished such diversity of expression and at the same time such high-quality achievements is owed to Ravnikar's mentoring and guiding personality. As early as the 1950s he pointed out that, besides the leading personalities of architecture who set the direction of the so-called "extended functionalism," such as Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe, there were others to choose from, such as Max Bill (who had influenced Ravnikar's architectural minimalism, which in turn influenced his students), Alvar Aalto, and Gunnar Asplund, representing the culture of Scandinavia, where he sent some of his students for further specialization. He kept himself up to date with the latest urbanist thought and participated in local and international urbanist competitions. Thus his school produced notable urbanists who, starting from Ravnikar's basic idea of a residential neighborhood, developed a new degree in the 1960s and 1970s, reintroducing the street as the central space of urban happening. In that sense the most significant project was the new residential neighborhood Split III (1968) by Vladimir Braco Mušič, Marjan Bežan, Nives Starc, and others from the Urbanist Institute of Slovenia.

However, times changed fast, and so did models. To the foreground came architects whose works were structurally lively architectural organisms, both inside and outside, that branched into space as group forms. The names that circulated in many Yugoslav milieus were Louis Kahn and Kenzo Tange. Many yielded to the monumentality of the former, while the latter influenced with his "metabolism," particularly after his urban plan for Skopje won the competition of 1964, a year after the catastrophic earthquake that destroyed a large part of the Macedonian capital. The international competition for the planning of this city for many years drew the attention of foreign as well as

Yugoslav architects to specific questions of reconstruction and the building of a medium-sized city that was to be given a contemporary urbanist base. The competition also produced a large number of architectural ideas that did not pass unnoticed.

The urbanist and architectural interventions of great formal variety, far from earlier minimalist and even the first functionalist starting points in richness and innovation, were a clear signal to many architects all over Yugoslavia that a new era had begun. It was as if they found themselves feasting after a long fast. Richer designs with architecture that flourished indoors came out to the exterior, and eventually found their full expression in decorative inventions, partly the result of improved economic conditions in the whole country. To a certain extent they were influenced in turn by a somewhat more liberal economic policy with elements of the market economy, as well as by the West, always ready to maintain the socialist self-management experiment with further financial boosts.

Yugoslav society, although still very heterogeneous from the cultural and developmental standpoint, entered a period of consumerism with all the attendant phenomena. On the one hand, for instance, there was an upsurge in mass industrial products (the International Biennial of Industrial Design in Ljubljana began in 1964), while the population was becoming more mobile, especially after 1965 when Yugoslavia opened its borders to the West. The contradictions between the declared goals of socialist development and the reality of a booming consumer society opened rifts in the economy, society, and politics. They found voice in resistance movements in certain segments of the society. Factory workers, miners, students, dissident groups of critical intellectuals made themselves heard, and political discord surfaced concerning disparities in development among the Yugoslav republics. The 1968 student rebellion in Paris had its specific Belgrade and Ljubljana versions. The crisis was further intensified by the internal system of redistribution of goods from the richer, more developed republics to the less developed ones, which in this period made it possible for the poorer regions to obtain infrastructure and buildings they had never had before.

As far as architecture and architects were concerned, the late 1960s and partly the 1970s were a golden age, brimming with public competitions and relatively frequently awarded projects. Participation in competitions brought acclaim to Marko Mušič, a Slovenian architect whose creative work was especially visible in the southern republics. His work derived from Ravnikar's school, later from international structuralism and brutalism. He accepted certain initiatives of regionalism, for example in his plan for a memorial center

in Kolašin¹⁷ (1970–1975), and finally stopped at the concept of organic architecture, dynamized in the exterior and the interior, especially by using mobile, circular, rising forms, as shown in his concept for the church of Christ's Incarnation in Dravlje (Ljubljana) between 1980 and 1985. The church, with its curved glass wall, rises from behind a densely planted hill, resembling an open eye. Mušić became known for his expressive memorial architecture. A similar route, but one with its starting point in memorial sculpture and architecture, was taken by a somewhat older Serbian architect, Bogdan Bogdanović. He drew attention with his necropolis in Prilep (1961), edged by fields, with a group of large stylized stone figures in the middle of a wilderness. The necropolis in Mostar (mid-1960s) is a fenced stone space with terraces leaning on a hill, populated by abstract forms. Again it is a sacred space, symbols placed in the dramatic surroundings of Herzegovina with cypresses and low bushes. The monument to the victims of the Jasenovac concentration camp (1963–1965) is a large concrete mass that in the author's fancy blossomed into a flower, hiding the memorial crypt at its foot.

In parallel to these events, both residential and public architecture received new formal and decorative accents, often combining brick, stone, and concrete. Mihajlo Mitrović was among the first architects in Serbia to use the new possibilities in form with his residential building in Belgrade (1967), using what was still a reserved composition of brick wall and plastically more expressive concrete inlays. Later, not far from that building, he constructed a corner residential building (1973–1977) that, apart from the already familiar combination of concrete structures with brick windows, also introduced arched windows. The architect used structurally decorative play with different kinds of shapes and came up with the idea of the later widely trumpeted Belgrade gateway, the Genex company building (1980), visible from a great distance: two towers connected by a small arched bridge, with the stress on the watchtower rising from one of the inner pipe-shaped "supports" that surround the towers from both sides. Greater reservation, even severity, in architectural shaping left a more pleasant impression, such as shown by Stojan Maksimović in his design of the grand-scale Sava convention center in Belgrade (1977–1979), with its simple composition of sloping glass blocks and the pure, glass-overlaid quadrilateral of the Interkontinental, despite the objections that it was a case of both borrowed ideas and borrowed technologies.

This was clearly time for the creative affirmation of the underrepresented republics and regions. There were a number of fine architects from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Macedonia.¹⁸ Danijel Finci demonstrated the modernist contrast between the constructed and the natural maritime



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Stojan Maksimović, Sava Center,
Belgrade, 1977–1979.

ambience with the Pelegrin hotel in Kupari (1962), a huge block divided into massive horizontal levels of floors that widen at the top, with a built-in horizontal glass house on the ground floor. A somewhat softer structuralist language of visible concrete structures and the accompanying language of the facades turned out to be a more fitting and more human image in the Skenderija culture and sports center in Sarajevo (1969) by Živorad Janković and Halid Muhasilović. A similar designer's approach can be seen in the works of Ivan Straus,¹⁹ for example in the commercial building of the Electric Company of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1978) of monumental dimensions. The glass structure has a terraced development toward the top, the central access marked by huge sloping eaves. It was especially with the Holiday Inn built for the Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo that he reached the nearly orthodox version of a postmodernist variegated block with open angles and decoratively elaborated facade layers, again with spacious horizontal volumes of floors stretching from the hotel ground floor. In contrast with the firm struc-

tural conception of Štraus's buildings, Vladimir Zarahović conceived the building of a department store in Sarajevo (1975) as a strong construction core surrounded by "accidentally" separated and overlaying skins—a rare, original, and resourceful solution to a cutting-edge building assignment. Branko Tadić and Zdravko Dundjerović applied instead a reinterpreted purified modernist design matrix, following contemporary European trends. They designed a lively, low composition of geometric, horizontal cubes, barely rising to one or two floors, effective enough for the symbolic building of the Battle of the Neretva memorial center (1978). Form took a step further with the work of Zlatko Ugljen,²⁰ into more elaborated structural masses and a thoughtful adaptation to the traditional yet modernized ambience of the Bosnian house, far beyond the conceptual horizons of its pioneer, Neidhart. A part of his creative development, particularly fruitful at the turn of the 1980s, is marked by three hotels: Ruža in Mostar (1978), Bregava in Stolac (1979), and Vučko on mount Jahorina (1984).

In Montenegro in the second half of the 1960s there is a visible shift toward more indigenous architectural solutions, widely encouraged by various international and local initiatives from all over the country. A composition with a diversified exterior with square, narrowly cut, but outwardly developed forms, including several protruding details in the symbiosis of stone wall overlays and cast concrete forms, is the work of Svetlana Radović: the Podgorica Hotel in Titograd (Podgorica, 1967) above the sloping bank of the Morača. More unified in their style, more structurally developed, and grander in scale are the complexes of the Clinical Center by Božidar Milić and Milan Popović, and the Veljko Vlahović University (1976) by Milan and Pavle Popović, both in Podgorica.

The activity after the earthquake in Skopje also stirred the interest of Macedonian architects.²¹ With several of their achievements, they were truly able to hold their own with architects from abroad. One of the finest buildings of the new Skopje is undoubtedly the city archives building by Georgi Konstantinovski (1967). The upper, central, and lower accompanying buildings are conceived as cores, interlinked by small bridges between the main columns, while the total surface is elaborated with a simple structure of small, vertical grooves cast in concrete. In addition to two contributions from Slovenia in Skopje—the university center complex by Marko Mušič (1974) and the Cultural Center by Štefan Kacin, Jirij Princes, Bogdan Spindler, and Marjan Uršič (1979)—we should single out work by Kiril Muratovski and Mimoza Tomić: the Museum of Macedonia (1976), a terraced open facade with a developed overlay of construction core above a low ground floor.

Architectural work in the late 1960s and 1970s, from the aspect of distribution and quality, moved in a direction of an increasing uniformity, even a blending of basic formal matrices. The differences in the degree of development were manifested in a less overt way, becoming more visible in the most developed republics and their centers in the form of new artistic practice at the social and artistic periphery, to which the authorities and the communist party ideological apparatus paid little attention, at least at first.

Artists acted as though the social and political environment that surrounded them did not interest them at all, although it was precisely in the early 1970s that they had more than enough reason for political involvement. Nevertheless, they consented to a tacit agreement with the authorities that they would not interfere with domestic politics if the authorities left their work alone. An innovative environment lent the authorities an air of democracy for permitting artistic autonomy. The government badly needed this image, since the Western democracies watched with disapproval as they systematically suppressed the attempts of the political elites in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia to introduce a more democratic dialogue in the early 1970s.

Tito, who had led this suppression, died in 1980. The following year a rebellion broke out among Albanian students in Kosovo. This outburst was proclaimed counterrevolutionary by the federal government, which responded with repressive measures. The Slovenian and some of the Croatian political elites saw the possibility for the gradual resolution of the shared state's accumulated problems in a growing decentralization and democratization of the political environment, as well as a greater liberalization of the economy. In contrast, the Serbian political elites, gaining support in the less developed republics and above all in the Yugoslav army, saw a solution in even greater political unity under the leadership of the monolithic federal League of Communists (the Yugoslav Communist Party), in further centralization and strengthening of the repressive apparatus.

The regional differences and ensuing turmoil can also be seen in the architectural work during the last period of the shared Yugoslavia. As early as the end of the 1970s, there was a visible decrease in the number of larger-scale construction projects, a direct consequence of the crisis and the lack of available investment capital. Several republics were not able to go ahead with the planned construction of necessary public buildings and infrastructure, while there was huge, unnecessary construction under way elsewhere.

Despite its large foreign debt, and even a lack of money for basic consumer goods, Yugoslavia kept on building new fairgrounds, conference centers, and hotels in the capitals of certain member states of the nonaligned

movement, for example in Lusaka (Zambia), Lagos (Nigeria), Kampala (Uganda), Harare (Zimbabwe), and Libya. In all the most important construction in these countries we come across the name of the sizable Belgrade company Energoprojekt.²² Of course, similar companies in other republics clamored for their share from the brimming government plate, and by consenting to a specific system of corruption that ruled among them, they were able to get what they wanted.

We will probably never know the true financial details behind these projects, or how Energoprojekt built an especially luxurious complex in 1977–1979 for its offices. These new conditions were hardly conducive to high-quality architecture. On the one hand was the megalomaniac, hypertrophied, formally inconsistent, hybrid, and essentially international architecture designed by large firms of anonymous architects at Energoprojekt (Belgrade) and Smelt (Ljubljana), while on the other was a new architecture arising in quite a different environment with limited possibilities, but with completely different visions and ethics. This was the basis (more than merely formal or stylistic) for the appearance of certain architectural styles in the period between 1978 and 1990 termed postmodernist.

Whereas in the interwar period and the years immediately following World War II architects felt they had to look to the great models from the West, placing them side by side with particular architectural styles, the picture of architectural events toward the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s was quite different. Of course, local events in architecture were never completely cut off from events in the West, but in the postwar period theoretical thought began to flourish in all the republics at once, as did a historiography and critique of modern architecture and its theoretical breadth.

This well of creativity contributed to laying the foundations of postmodernist concepts and realizations of all kinds that could be given a common label, this time in Slovenia and Croatia. The definition of postmodernism was by no means unequivocal. Among art theorists it is seen as a neutral common feature of all the phenomena in architecture (and in other arts to a degree) that diverge from the modernist norm in one or several aspects, or deliberately reject it. The most obvious mark of the new style was the newly legitimate usage of historical forms, formal compositions, or even syntax. Modernism's group form and already hypertrophied spreading architectural structures were replaced by the concept of a "house," or a condensed construction block, which also immediately acquired a new urban context. The developing urban form of street corridors returned to the center of architectural and urban conception. Urbanism was no longer a "social

activity”; it became a matter of artistic creation once again. The quality of a house began to be measured by its ability to integrate into the city context, by its capacity of “city making,” as theorists began to put it: its ability to adapt in forging harmonized urban structures, flying in the face of the modernist principle of contrast.

The first signs of opposition to modernist concepts in Slovenia appeared in the early 1970s. They were given theoretical support in the exhibition “Space—Garden” by the Finnish architect Reimo Pietilä in 1973 in Ljubljana, probably the first articulated antimodernist position. Toward the end of that decade, at least among the youngest generation of architects, new postmodernist views dominated and a new spirit could be seen not only in plans but also in the first realizations. The public got acquainted with “Architecture + Word,” an exhibition and accompanying publication in Ljubljana in 1981.²³ The only materialized but quite paradigmatic work with noticeable innovation in concept and detail was the Sežana municipality building (1977–1979) by Vojteh Ravnikar, Marko Dekleva, Matjaž Garzarolli, and Egon Vatovec, who formed the group Kras. They designed a compact building with relatively small window apertures, almost without detail, opening from the corner of an urban block and creating a small square between the old and the new municipality buildings. The opposite side of the square is visually closed by a small bridge with the motif of a large glass lunette linking the two buildings. There was no precedent for the lunette but that of Hans Hollein, one of the pioneers of European postmodernism. This was an urbanist approach creating an urban context, connecting the old with the new, modernist aspects without historical admixtures. These changes were innovations in Yugoslav architectural design.

The Kras group was aware of its pioneering role, having sparked the discussion on cutting-edge issues in contemporary architectural thought with their exhibition in Piran in 1983.²⁴ The postmodernist movement in Slovenia provoked interest in Central Europe, mostly among architects in neighboring Croatia but also in Italy and Austria. From 1983 on, they regularly visited the annual gatherings of Architecture Days in Piran. The first such gathering had the honor of hosting Boris Podrecca, a postmodernist architect from Vienna, originally a Slovene from Trieste. In a few years the Kras group established firm models of its take on the postmodern, which was not standard. This meant that everybody or every group understood the rules in their own way, while they agreed to several common starting points, such as the architecture of rational forms, firm masses often based on compositions of pure geometric volume, sometimes with an additional square grid on flat exterior surfaces.

Among the most prominent achievements of the first generation of postmodernist architects is the Club Hotel in Lipica (1980–1981), by the Kras group, conceived as a massive peripheral building with an inner courtyard, a path winding through columns and trellises, leaning on a terraced glass house at the entrance. Equally characteristic is the concept of the Piran Hotel, built between two facades as a lightly curved wall with windows and loggias (1982–1986). After only short breaks, the achievements of the Kras group were followed by others, for example Tomaz Medvešček who introduced a bright red upper floor to a strictly conceived construction block of the Institute for Research in Materials and Construction in Ljubljana (1984), resulting in a dynamic composition with protruding facade elements. The arches, cylindrical forms, or curved walls became popular features, dynamic counterparts to the firm geometric core of the architectural concept. This principle was presented in quite a scholarly way by Janez Koželj with the building in Poljanska Street in Ljubljana (1987), totally adapted to the curve of the road with its protruding street facade and revived rusticity, pilaster strips, and window shelves. Its other, narrow facade won it the name Novi Peglezen, owing to its vicinity to Plečnik's Peglezen (1933–1934) at the head of Poljanska Street. Aleš Vodopivec added glass loggias placed at equal distances onto a pure square block in Bežigrad (Ljubljana, 1989), while on the upper floor of the narrower facades he placed protruding fronts. The dark ground floor, like Koželj's stylized rustic elements, speaks of a (temporary) return to the tectonic principle, so long negated by modernism.

The architects of that generation discovered in Plečnik a personality they could learn and draw inspiration from. In this they received confirmation from the rest of the world, especially after the great show at the Pompidou Center in 1986 in Paris, which justly brought Plečnik back into the limelight of twentieth-century architecture and close to the dynamic events of the contemporary postmodernist-oriented culture and arts. It was not only Plečnik's modernized forms that have received new legitimacy, but his personality and the moral aspect of his artistic choices. Plečnik's urban moves and their complete harmony with particular architectural styles that he built into his urban scheme also have been drawing attention. It is therefore no accident that some have tried to revive his spirit by working on street forms. Such is the long and dynamic, partly interrupted flow of Poljanska Street, continuing as Litijska Street, in Ljubljana, whose sidewalks, railings, lights, hills, and bridges were created by Peter Gabrijelčič (1987–1988). The most obvious innovation along this axis are two bridges that the author emphasized as architectural pieces in their own right, quite in contrast with

the modernist interpretation that subordinates a bridge to the notion of the road that moves through the landscape smoothly, without any interruption from the river and its riverbed. His later bridges, especially in Novo Mesto (1991) and Ptuj (1998), with their arrangement of the immediate surroundings, bring a new touch to this design.

The younger generation of architects with new concepts was joined by some older architects. Janez Lajovic conceived a relatively narrow construction block for the needs of the project firm SOP Kriško (1985) in Ljubljana, completely overlaid by glass. It was not a glass house, but its glass membrane insured the complete climatic isolation of the building. Shortly afterward his colleague Grega Košak built an office building for Merkator in Ljubljana (1987), a large glass house placed between two massive columns with a white marble skin, rising from a ground plan shaped as the letter M, a symbol Košak had developed over a decade earlier as the basis for Merkator's total graphic image. The younger generation also introduced new concepts. The notion of a voluminous complex of buildings with a cylinder-shaped central building and lightly unfolding square blocks rising from it was built by Jurij Kobe: the Faculty of Biology in Ljubljana (1986–1988). With the high glass building and slanted roof of the WTC in Ljubljana (1994), Andrej Černigoj realized one of the ideals of modernism, but, with its low complex of galleries descending to the ground next to the existing Vodopivec blocks and creating a small street prospect, the Ljubljana WTC also approaches one of the postmodernist urban standpoints. The postmodernists were equally careful in shaping interiors with precious construction materials such as metal and wood. In that respect they could have as their model the innovative interior design by architect Milan Pogačnik, who introduced stylized historical and traditional forms in a new function in his numerous interior designs from as early as the 1970s, much earlier than comparable works by others, helping later generations to overcome the barriers of what had been permitted until then.

Postmodernism reawakened an appreciation for memorial and symbolic architectural assignments. In that spirit Marko Mušič conceived Nove Žale, a new part of the central cemetery of Ljubljana. The idea is based on the concept of a walled city, a city of the dead. Along the entrance axes there are tall columns broadening toward the top. Bushes are planted inside them, giving them the look of green torches. The cemetery is surrounded by a wall, the inner fields are divided like ancient colonial cities, and inside the greenery there are niches for urns. The postmodernist ideology of "city making," the possibility of creating new cities from the experience of the old ones, was most closely followed by Janez Kobe, who built the Slovenska plaža tourist

village near Budva (1984) in the context of reconstructing the Montenegrin coast after the 1979 earthquake. This is a true little modern town, of mostly rational forms and compositions, but with a recognizable Mediterranean design matrix. The concept, with slight alterations, was successfully repeated in the tourist village of Vrtovi Sunca near Orašac (1987).

These active and diverse Slovenian architects, who had apparently developed a broad palette of postmodernist attitudes after a long period of insistence on modernist concepts, were soon joined by the younger generation of Croatian architects. Branko Siladžin was among the first to give early warnings about the need for new ethical foundations for the art of building. As elsewhere, and relying on prewar Croatian traditions, the most direct way to express such attitudes was the family house. This was first shown in the Vrvilo family house (1977) in Lovran, a fairly simple composition of massive structural parts and a rustic veneer, but with a quite evident expressive poetics. Siladžin's second striking realization was the Zrno family house (1984) in Ičići, a stone house that, contrary to modernist postulates, reintroduced the massive wall and a pure symmetrical concept with a triangular front on the main facade. From the romantic irregularity of the Vrvilo house, Siladžin arrived at a completely rationalized and quite demonstratively symmetrical conception. The further development of postmodernist Croatian architecture shows that an explicitly rationalist interpretation of the building lies at the heart of the entire Croatian architectural scene. This is reflected in the high-quality restoration of the Hotel Dubrovnik in Zagreb (1982) by Ines and Nikola Filipović, a complete glass house structured in the main part with dense terraced stories from the ground to the edge of the roof, much like the Cibona office and sports building (1987–1988), a composition of glass cylinders comprising a tall office tower and a lower sports hall with a shallow dome by Marijan Hržić, Ivan Piteš, and Branislav Šerbetić. The somewhat older, splendidly designed Hajduk stadium and grandstands in Split (1979) by Boris Magaš, is yet another example of this.

Miroslav Bregović was the first to take a step toward a postmodernist understanding of the city with the plan for reconstructing the facades on Tkalciceva Street in Zagreb and, with it, the return to outline construction, insisting on the traditional concept of the street. The second generation of postmodernists applied the characteristic style approaches of their time; one can occasionally discern elements of deconstructivism, applied quite early by Tomislav Odak in the building of bachelor housing at the City Department for Internal Affairs (1987) and later, though less expressedly, in residential buildings in the Jarun neighborhood (1989). Despite the use of curved forms,

such as the concave curve on the facade and rounded corners, Velimir Neidhardt did not renounce rationalist building ideas, strict grids of the structural core, and glass fillings with a glass superstructure in the INA Commerce office building in Zagreb (1988). Radovan Tajder was also attracted to such interpretations at first; however, with a bold interpolation of row houses on Ilica Street in Zagreb (1986) he showed a sense of precise measure and an almost gentle structure of row units until they join the corner building with a dome. His recognizable rationalist bent ties him to the generation of architects between the two world wars, and with the first postwar generation as well. He is mostly active in Vienna, producing a widely diverse body of work.

In Serbia and the other southern Yugoslav republics there was no such postmodernist (and ethical) revolution, as the climate for it was missing. Apart from rare exceptions among architects who meant to touch the essence of the problem and the spiritual underpinnings of the sought-for internal revolution, the majority dealt with outdated, vacuous structuralist metabolist schemes, perhaps adding a few characteristic postmodern details as a nod to fashion. One cannot speak of a consistent postmodernist look even among the agile younger generation. In New Belgrade, or in the old center of town, we come across old glass houses, even some of exceptional dimensions, out of sync with their time in structure and spirit. It was Milan Pališaški with his commercial building in Sremska Street in Belgrade (1989) who came somewhat close to contemporary ideas of the glass house. Before him, Stanko Dimitrijević showed how one should approach such assignments, with his delicate restoration and adaptation of the old municipality building in Vranje (1982), but his contribution, style, and method ethics remained almost unnoticed in Serbia. Thoughts of self-restraint, self-questioning, and new possibilities of development were foreign. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that other significant ideas also have been neglected until today, although, for example, in the case of plans published in Miloš Perović's book *Iskustva prošlosti* [Past Experiences]²⁵ there was an attempt at contemporary urban solutions for several new city complexes that had been created around the world following greedy modernist urban schemes, leaving structured cores surrounded by large spaces of sparse, inconsistent building. Coming from a firm run by Alexandros Doxiadis, theorist and researcher of human settlements, Perović offered three methods of urbanization based on the well-researched Belgrade example, adapted to three characteristic city layouts.

For the original city of Belgrade that grew on the other bank of the Sava until around 1945, he proposed a system of reconstruction, a simple comple-

ment to street fronts with appropriate interpolations and the necessary rebuilding, to fill out the originally conceived and already urbanized structure. For New Belgrade he proposed a concept of reurbanization. According to him, smaller urban proportions should be introduced to the large urban blocks, created according to the scheme of the modernist intersection of space with large traffic corridors. This would create an appropriate environment in the symbiosis of the new urban structure implanted in the voids between the large buildings. For building on new sites, he proposed a modernized scheme of urban blocks with inner courtyards with no tall or overdimensioned buildings. This, he felt, is the best form of habitation, based on experience. In the period of postmodernism this was perhaps the most comprehensive contribution to the field of urbanism.

The 1990s in Yugoslavia did not start in the spirit of deconstructivism so much as in genuine destruction, first (briefly) in Slovenia, then in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and ending with the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Valuable architectural monuments and entire historic urban areas, for example Vukovar and Dubrovnik, were seriously damaged, even destroyed, on a large scale. Many twentieth-century architectural monuments were not spared. The author of this text does not know for certain whether many of the buildings mentioned here still exist after this decade of havoc.

translated by Branka Nikolić

Notes

1. Peter Krečić, *August Černigoj* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 1999).
2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Peter Krečić, *Jože Plečnik* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1992).
4. Robert G. Dyck, "Plečnik's Ljubljana: Classical Urban Design Revisited," *Slovenian Studies* 2 (1996, published 2000), pp. 181–202.
5. Mel Gooding, presentation text at the exhibition "Jože Plečnik and Making of Capital," Gallery of the AA School of Architecture, London, October 5–30, 1999.
6. An appraisal of Croatian architectural achievements between the two wars is given by Tomislav Premerl in his comprehensive study *Hrvatska moderna arhitektura između dva rata, nova tradicija* [Croatian Modern Architecture between the Two Wars, New Tradition] (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1989), particularly significant for its photographic material on buildings and designs. Cf. also Željka Čorak, *U funkciji znaka; Drago Ibler i hrvatska arhitektura između dva rata* [In the Function of the Sign; Drago Ibler and Croatian Architecture between the Two Wars] (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 1981).

7. His findings were published only after the war in different editions, the first of them being Dušan Grabrijan, *Kako je nastajala naša savremena kuća* [How Our Traditional House Came into Being] (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1959).
8. *Nikola Dobrović, eseji, projekti, kritike* [Nikola Dobrović, Essays, Projects, Criticisms], selection and preface by Miloš R. Perović and Spasoje Krunić (Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, Muzej arhitekture, 1998).
9. Zoran Manević, "Art Deco and National Tendencies in Serbian Architecture," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 17 (Autumn 1990), pp. 70–75.
10. The data are taken from the catalog *RPF Yougoslavie, exposition internationale de l'Union internationale des architectes* (Rabat, Morocco, 1951).
11. Danilo Furst, *Architecture*, exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Cankarjev dom, 2000).
12. For the whole period of the first postwar years see Stane Bernik, "Nekateri problemi predstavitev in vrednotenja sodobne slovenske arhitekture, urbanizma in oblikovanja," in *Slovenska likovna umetnost 1945–1978* [Slovenian Visual Arts 1945–1978], exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery and Museum of Architecture, 1979), pp. 89–108, and for the whole of Yugoslavia, Ivan Štraus, *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945–1990* [Architecture of Yugoslavia 1945–1990] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991).
13. Zoran Manević, in *Srpska arhitektura 1900–1970* [Serbian Architecture 1900–1970] (Belgrade: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1972); Štraus, *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945–1990*.
14. *Construction et reconstruction des villes 1945–1957; Yougoslavie, UIA, Moscou 1958*, exhibition catalog (Belgrade, 1958); *Contemporary Yugoslav Architecture*, exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Savez udruženja jugoslovenskih arhitekata, 1959).
15. Nace Šumi, "Dve razstavi slovenske moderne arhitekture," *Sinteza*, no. 10–11 (Ljubljana, 1968), pp. 1–18; Peter Krečič, "Edvard Ravnikar; Arhitekta, urbanista, dizajner, teoretičar, univerzitetski učitelj i publicista" [Edvard Ravnikar; Architect, Urbanist, Designer, Theorist, Professor, and Publicist]; *Umetnostnozgodovinski oris, Edvard Ravnikar*, exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Muzej arhitekture Ljubljana, 1966), pp. 8–66 .
16. Stane Bernik, *Milan Mihelić*, exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Museum of Architecture, 1980).
17. Marko Mušić Kolašin, exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: Modern Gallery, 1975). There are several books on his particular architectural realizations: *Valovanje v svetlobi* [Undulation in the Light] (Ljubljana, 1988), *Nove Žale* [New Shores] (Ljubljana, 1990), *Znak v prostoru* [A Sign in Space] (Ljubljana, 2000), all except the first accompanied by an interpretation by Nace Šumi.
18. Ivan Štraus, "Savremena arhitektura Bosne i Hercegovine 1918–1984 godine" [The Contemporary Architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina], in *Arhitektura XX vijeka* [Twentieth-Century Architecture], in the series *Umetnost na tlu Jugoslavije* [Art on the Territory of Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Prosveta; Zagreb: Spektar; Mostar: Prva književna komuna, 1988), pp. 57–65; Georgi Konstantinovski, "Savremena arhitektura

- u Makedoniji” [Contemporary Architecture in Macedonia], in *ibid.*, pp. 66–74; Božidar Milić, “Arhitektura XX vijeka u Crnoj Gori” [Twentieth-Century Architecture in Montenegro], in *ibid.*, pp. 75–78.
19. Ivan Štraus, *Arhitektura 1962–1986*, exhibition catalog (Sarajevo and Banja Luka, 1986).
20. Zlatko Ugljen arhitekta [Zlatko Ugljen, architect], exhibition catalog (Split and Zagreb, 1987).
21. *Makedonska arhitektura/Macedonian Architecture*, exhibition catalog (Skopje: Museum of Contemporary Arts, 1974).
22. *35 godina arhitekture Energoprojekta* [35 Years of Energoprojekt Architecture], exhibition catalog (Belgrade: Museum of Applied Arts, 1986).
23. *Arhitektura + beseda* [Architecture + Word], exhibition catalog (Ljubljana: AB, 1981).
24. *Arhitektura skupine Kras* [Architecture of the Kras group], exhibition catalog (Piran: Obalne Galerije Piran, 1983).
25. Miloš R. Perović, “Istraživanje alternativnih modela grada” [Research of Alternative City Models], *Iskustva prošlosti* [Past Experiences] (Belgrade: Zavod za planiranje grada Beograda, 1985), pp. 7–58.

Part III: Art in Motion

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Between the Curtains

New Theater in Slovenia, 1980–1990

Eda Čufer

Setting the Scene

At the beginning of the 1980s, the state theater system, whose origins in Slovenia date back to the nineteenth century, still maintained a monopolistic hold on virtually all aspects of theater culture, from discourse to performance, employment to distribution. The same system administered theater education through the curriculum of its Academy for Theater, Radio, Film, and TV, and controlled the production and distribution infrastructure for theater throughout the republic. Programming was based on very conservative cultural premises, and despite the experiments of the preceding decades, theater was understood almost exclusively as drama theater. Nothing had happened to shake the primacy of literary texts. The position the text occupied in relation to official theater and national identity was akin to the position icons occupied in relation to religious identity. Words were central to the idea of national identity. Poets, not painters, adorned the Slovenian national currency.

While that system is not the subject of my essay, its domination had everything to do with the rise of the countercultural theater movement in the 1980s. After World War II, the state theater administration was responsible for the programming and operation of six large theaters located in the capital city of Ljubljana and several provincial cities such as Maribor, Celje, and Nova Gorica. While the ostensible function of this system was the maintenance of a live theater tradition of high professional standards throughout the country, in fact this system's *Realpolitik* was to act as a vehicle for the production and dissemination of national culture.

Under communism, the monolithic nature of the institutional theater network mirrored the political and social values of communism itself—

a system that rewarded aesthetic and cultural expression in service of the system's own dominant myths, while at the same time allowing deviation from those norms as long as the deviation could be assimilated into an image of tolerance that strengthened the system. The theater system and communist system in Slovenia belonged to the same conformist alliance and practiced the same politics of repressive tolerance in the decades following World War II. Thus many theater workers, like the intelligentsia in other cultural spheres, could work critically within the system and consider themselves dissidents. Official theater was always considered a site of radicalism. But radicalism with the luxury of approval by the state is radicalism ready to be corrupted. And as the later history of politics in Yugoslavia shows, radicalism and nationalism are often intimate bedfellows in a part of the world where theater has supplied some of politics's most charismatic personalities, and where mediagenic politicians have a special advantage when they position themselves before the masses.

The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s saw a number of alternative theaters emerge in Slovenia. A comprehensive history of this activity would begin by describing the contributions of Oder 57 [Stage 57], a talented group of writers, directors, and actors who first came onto the scene in Ljubljana at the end of the 1950s. These were among the first theater professionals to organize themselves outside the context of official culture, and also the first to introduce existentialism, the theater of the absurd, and other new literary ideologies to the local context. They were followed by other groups whose contribution likewise should be remembered and evaluated in the as-yet-unwritten history of unofficial theater in Slovenia: the Experimental Theater Glej [Look], Theater Pekarna [Bakery], and Pupilija Ferkeverk Theater. The trajectory of these theaters was similar. After an initial period of experimentation and underground activity, for the most part they abandoned their revolutionary agendas and were assimilated into the mainstream.

In the case of Oder 57, what began as an exploration of modernist principles defending the autonomy of the word soon degenerated into predictable, ideological performances. The fate of the theater-laboratory Pekarna (1972–1978) was also emblematic of the decade. Ljubiša Ristić,¹ one of the most prominent New Left and pro-Yugoslav theater figures of the time, was working on a production of the *Mass in A Minor* with Pekarna, one of the standout alternative theaters of the 1970s. Midway through rehearsals he canceled the production, charging the cast with "unprofessional" behavior, an act that led to the final disbanding of the legendary Pekarna. As Lado Kralj, the founder of Pekarna Theater, later explained,² they were trying to define their



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OHO group, *Triglav* [Three Heads], performance/action, Ljubljana, 1969. OHO members parody Slovenian national pride by making a live sculpture of Triglav, then the highest mountain in Yugoslavia, now the highest mountain in Slovenia. Photograph from the OHO archive; reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.



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Pupilija Ferkeverk Theater, *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and Pupilički*,
1969–1970. Photograph from *Vidici*, no. 140 (Belgrade, 1970).

methodology as a process of self-discovery using the physical acting techniques of Polish director Jerzy Grotowski. But what began as a creative exercise soon turned into an undisciplined team of individuals using the stage as a platform for therapy, meditation, and identity crises. This story illustrates the difficulty of establishing a neo-avant-garde, noninstitutional theater practice on the part of a generation raised with high infrastructural standards but artistically restrictive conditions. One could say that the first attempt to stage *Mass in A Minor* was doomed, in fact, precisely because of the tension between artistic ambition and institutional dependency. The professional standards that went hand in hand with the state-supported institutional theaters created certain expectations, but at the same time the limiting framework of those theaters produced artistic frustration.

The development of the new, radical theater practices that would emerge in the 1980s came therefore not so much from tendencies visible within the culture of theater in the previous decades as from the larger cultural and political forces that were beginning to undermine the system of socialism and political institutions throughout Eastern Europe. The urge to oppose the homogeneous aesthetic model of the state theaters was supported and justified by a larger cultural and political opposition—a move against the socialist state itself. The state theater system was just one piece of an entire system that was about to come under attack.

The most significant protagonists of the new theater actions of the 1980s can be introduced as three separate but simultaneous acts: neo-avant-garde and political theater (the Slovenian Youth Theater, Experimental Theater Glej);³ alternative culture and retro-avant-garde theater (Anna Monro Theater, Theater FV-112/15 (*Borghesia*), the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater); and contemporary dance theater (the Ljubljana Dance Theater). Apart from their commitment to experiment and their revisionist spirit, what these groups had in common was a shared preoccupation with rethinking history and reexamining the past—with bringing to the stage the repressed, sublimated consciousness of communism's own buried ghosts and the traumas of the recent past.

Act I: Neo-avant-garde and Political Theater

The decade began spectacularly with *Mass in A Minor*, created by the charismatic director Ljubiša Ristić who had first attempted to direct this play with Pekarna. He found the ideal partner in the Slovenian Youth Theater. When this production was first performed in Ljubljana in 1980, it marked a turning



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Slovenian Youth Theater, *Mass in A Minor*, directed by Ljubiša Ristić, Ljubljana, 1980.

point in Slovenian theater. This conceptually challenging, self-reflective work set the tone for the new decade and served as prelude to what would become one of the most successful generational takeovers of the era, an artistic coup of the decrepit state theater system by a nonconforming institution. Besides the six state theaters, there were two other theater venues in Ljubljana supported by the state. One of these was the Puppet Theater, the other the Slovenian Youth Theater. Both existed for the express purpose of entertaining children. Because of their young audiences, the rules of production were easier to break and the sacredness of the text and genre were more susceptible to violation. In these forums, imagery was not obliged to be as submissive to text, and scripts could be interpreted more imaginatively than in venues reserved for mature, literal-minded audiences. Since 1975, the Slovenian

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Slovenian Youth Theater, *Mass in A Minor*, directed by Ljubiša Ristić, Ljubljana, 1980.



Youth Theater had been led by the two most radical impresarios of the Yugoslav experimental stage—the director and playwright Dušan Jovanović and dramaturg Marko Slodnjak. In a few years, they managed to convert this theater's identity from one exclusively dedicated to children's programming into one of the most significant New Left-leaning⁴ and declaratively Yugoslav-oriented theaters of the 1980s, with a strong impact on and influence over postmodern theater practices all over the former Yugoslavia.

The artists who gathered around the Slovenian Youth Theater rejected the ideological tendencies of the previous generation and introduced influences and elements into their practice that were radically new in the context of Yugoslav theater at the time. Perhaps the most significant contribution they made to stage culture was the establishment of what was called ludistic culture⁵ as a legitimate theatrical genre. Ludistic drama brought to the stage a new figure—a kind of irresponsible hero whose subversive power did not take the form of direct verbal confrontation with the system but rather presented itself in the form of ironic and poetic poses based on word games, reverse meanings, and switched contexts as he jumped from one discursive path to another. The Youth Theater also incorporated new modalities such as choreography and architecture into its productions, reflecting a more visual, active interest in space. Indeed, the Slovenian Youth Theater did as much as any theater of the 1980s to challenge the absolute control of the national state theater and open Yugoslav theatrical space to other influences. It did this on both a theoretical and a practical level, exploring new conceptual paradigms and inviting foreign directors, actors, set designers, and writers to participate as collaborators and critics of their performances. The main initiator of this activity was playwright and director Dušan Jovanović, who by the beginning of the decade had written a few paradigmatic plays, all of them directed by Ljubiša Ristić. This collaboration constituted a very special and internationally recognized brand of Yugoslav theater, labeled by critics political theater.⁶ The canonization of political theater can be ascribed to three paradigmatic performances by this team: *The Liberation of Skopje* (Center of Cultural Activities ZSMH, Zagreb, 1978), *Mass in A Minor* (Slovenian Youth Theater, Ljubljana, 1980), and *The Karamazovs* (Moša Pijade, Zagreb, 1981).

Owing to its extremely successful theatrical appropriation of what, at the time, were universally debated themes in postmodern literature, *Mass in A Minor* reached well beyond the conceptual framework of neo-avant-garde theater. The play was based on *The Tomb for Boris Davidović*, a novel by the Serbian-Hungarian Jewish writer Danilo Kiš. This story about an unknown revolutionary, whose fate leads him through the storms of communist revolution and Stalinist persecution, triggered large-scale protests and severe public attacks on the author when it was published. The nationalist literary establishment of Belgrade charged that parts of the novel were not Kiš's own writing, but appropriations of text fragments from historical archives. In the theatrical adaptation of the novel, Ristić radicalized these issues even further, mixing the contested fragments from Kiš's novel with texts and proclamations overtly taken from Lenin, Trotsky, Bakunin, and Kropotkin together

with passages lifted from Hamlet and other historical sources. Proposing a new dramaturgy of quotation, appropriation, and historic reproduction, the Jovanović-Ristić team struck notes that not only resonated in postmodernist circles, where questions about the authenticity of texts, the stability of authorship, and the meaning of originality were being discussed, but did so by invoking one of the strongest rules of the traditional theater ethic—respect for the integrity of literary texts.

While its staging techniques, acting methods, and formal elements were not as radical as its narrative and conceptual experiments, the productions of the Slovenian Youth Theater paved the way for a younger generation of directors⁷ who would also work in the sphere of mainstream postmodern theater during the 1980s. Some of the latter would develop very individual versions of the formal directions initiated by the Slovenian Youth Theater, and further develop the eclectic staging style and narrative experiments proposed by the first pioneers of political theater in the early 1980s.

Act 2: Alternative Culture and the Retro-avant-garde

Scene 1: The Street

However radical the productions of the Slovenian Youth Theater and Experimental Theater Glej may have seemed to audiences and critics at the time, they still functioned within the framework of more or less officially sanctioned culture. This was not true of the alternatives: retro-avant-garde and contemporary dance theater groups, which emerged without artistic precedent from the secular space of the street and the codes of its most visible users—students. The identity of these groups depended on the creation of a completely new, underground system of culture and currency of communication. The organization of this new cultural space was a complex process that deeply inflected the meaning of the term “alternative culture” and grew into one of the most potent cultural and political democratizing forces of the decade. Being alternative presupposed the taking of an active position in the context of an accelerating social split. According to this position, all official state institutions and their aesthetic models represented the repressive socialist state. Alternative cultural workers believed that the only way to fight the state and its imposed cultural and aesthetic models was to ignore it and build a parallel system of production, distribution, and communication.

In the beginning, the most visible inspiration for this new social impulse came from music culture, especially new wave and punk, whose look

and sound were already being popularized in the late 1970s by Radio Student, the first independent student radio station in Europe (1969). Apart from the concerts and demonstrations where music's political force was felt directly, one of its other effects was the fostering of alternative community in the form of "small gangs"⁸—subcommunities of punks, rockers, graffiti collectives, and visual art and theater groups.

The highly visible adoption of the punk and new wave image by urban youth and their ubiquitous presence on the late-night streets of Ljubljana in the early 1980s made the city appear to be host to a colony of invaders from the sartorial underground. Fashion itself—not as an industry, but as practiced by individuals and certain art/design studios, among them Linije Sile [Lines of Force]—helped make all public events during this period, from rock concerts to normal social gatherings, theatrical. A permanent sense of festival and performance spectacle pervaded the streets of Ljubljana at this time, much to the consternation of police authorities. The typical wardrobe of a "small gang" member would consist of multimedia ensembles featuring various "looks" and eclectic associations, from the avant-garde black elegance of the 1920s, to military gear and S&M accessories, to bikerware and other pseudo-uniforms—all of them studded with badges, flags, pins, and buttons as well as red stars and other communist heraldic insignias and logos.

The impulse to freely combine incongruous symbols and styles, to create previously unimaginable costumes and getups, and to use one's own body as a billboard to engage social and artistic space went deeper than tattoos, body piercings, or makeup. This organic language of signs and signification might have started as slogans or cosmetic statements, but it quickly evolved into a powerful visual slang—a generational argot of political and aesthetic expression with clearly demarcated lines of exclusion and belonging. Intellectuals who recognized the anarchic semantic potential of this visual rhetoric became especially intrigued when punk theorist and alternative culture impresario Igor Vidmar was arrested and jailed for wearing a badge with Nazi symbols on the streets of Ljubljana in 1983. If the confidence of the totalitarian state authorities could be shaken by these mock-uniforms and icons worn by kids as emblems of membership in the nation of youth, it was worth looking deeper into the meaning of this phenomenon. In 1983, a group of small organizations sponsored a symposium, "What Is Alternative?," to do exactly that. The event took place in the Upper Šiška Youth Center, the site of some of the more intense alternative cultural activities in the 1980s. Participants in the symposium included such respected names in academic and theoretical circles as Slavoj Žižek, Rastko Močnik, Lev Kreft, and Bogdan Lešnik.

In 1983 Žižek had already stated that alternative culture, through its use of strategies involving the repetition and retheatralization of ideological rituals, simply invented an aesthetic language that pressed on some symptomatic pressure points, the whole procedure causing some hidden truth in the society as a whole to erupt. But this and other concise reflections by cultural critics and philosophers spoke mainly about the ideological side of the phenomenon. In looking at concrete aesthetic practices, we see that ideological subversion was not the only message this new language could produce. The most common theme of the alternative and retro-avant-garde artistic practices was the reactualization of the repressed formal languages of the historic avant-garde, neo-avant-garde, and mass culture in the context of the highly controlled, almost antiseptically homogeneous cultural sphere of the totalitarian state. Alternative culture quite intuitively invented a homeopathic language that attempted to compensate for several oppressive qualities at once. By superimposing incompatible symbols, images, and styles on top of one another, this linguistic strategy on the one hand had the effect of subverting the meaning of the clashing signifiers, while on the other hand it produced the sense of a resurrection of the lost iconographic and spatial dimensions of twentieth-century avant-garde and modernist visual culture, simultaneously opening up local awareness of the heterogeneity of Western mass media and popular culture.

Scene 2: From Alternative Scene to Retro-avant-garde Theater

The application of this general aesthetic matrix derived from student, music, and street culture to actual artistic practice was another matter.

The Anna Monro Theater,⁹ founded in 1980–1981 by Andrej Rozman-Roza (and still active today), had one of the most devoted followings among alternative theaters in Ljubljana throughout the 1980s. Its aesthetic vocabulary was derived from a rich array of theatrical motifs and genres, including street theater, circus, cabaret, vaudeville, commedia dell'arte, and Chinese opera, with many productions featuring visual references to Russian and other historic avant-gardes.¹⁰ The strategy of mixing different iconographic and formal languages was not only aimed at evoking nostalgia but at producing satirical effects. The most memorable elements of the Anna Monro Theater productions¹¹ were songs and dialogues written by the theater's founder in the spirit of the local ludistic tradition of the 1970s. These compositions spoke mainly to the absurdist dimensions of socialist reality.

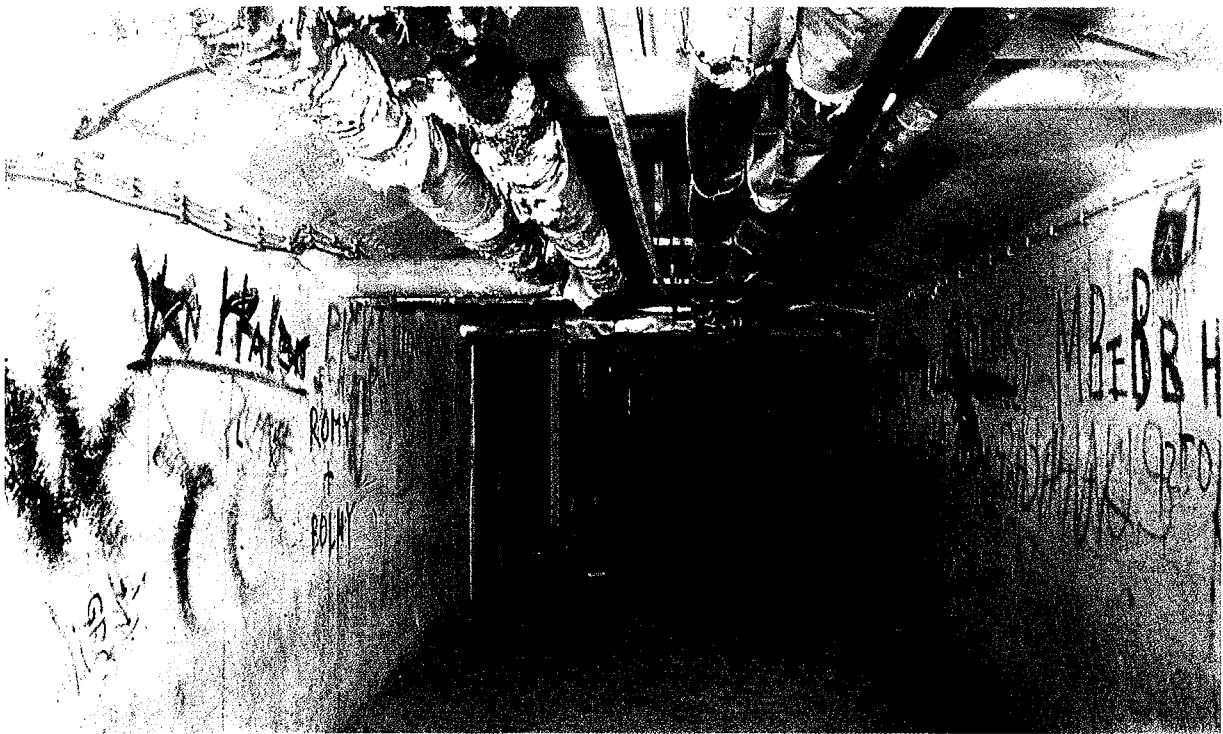


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Anna Monroe Theater, 1492, or, Has a Prewar Stripper Anything to Show Today?, 1982. Photograph by Božidar Dolenc.

Theater FV-112/15¹² (Borghesia), founded in 1980, was on the other hand a true Cabaret Voltaire of the Ljubljana alternative and retro-avant-garde scene. As a short-term and deliberately marginal phenomenon, FV-112/15 never had any direct traffic with mainstream theater circles. From 1983 on, in fact, the group focused mainly on technically advanced video art and music production. In the years 1984, 1985, and 1986 they produced three extremely important multimedia performances under the name of their music division, Borghesia. *Prisoners*, *Naked Town*, and *The Futurists* provided early glimpses of techno performance and in retrospect can be seen as harbingers of the “informance” scene that swept the 1990s—performance based on information technologies.

Recalling the early days of the group, founding members Zemira Alajbegović and Neven Korda¹³ described the rehearsals as “expanded consciousness” sessions in which a group of students studied and debated art his-



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Entrance to the basement of Disco FV. Photograph by Božidar Dolenc.

torical, literary, and theatrical genres.¹⁴ Because they lacked their own performing space, they performed on the streets and in a student discotheque during its nonoperating hours. Since they were already thinking about how to change the standard division between the stage and audience, they found the discotheque to be an ideal solution, enabling them to create unique theatrical structures in Ljubljana in the 1980s. They staged two performances, both technically and aesthetically advanced theater pieces (*The Big May Performance/Nothing Should Surprise Us*, 1980/81, and *It Smelled of Spring*, 1982). These performances were assembled by combining autonomous scenes, each of which was staged in a different style following the rehearsals of the “expanded consciousness” sessions. The scenes consisted of quotes from Partisan movies, works by Apollinaire recited in a specifically Partisan poetic style, readings from the Marquis de Sade, quotes from historic avant-garde and modernist visual archives, and dialogues from Chekhov imitating realistic and naturalistic theater styles. The very precisely composed soundtracks of music and speech and the highly designed lighting gave the actors an opportunity to move between distinct and formally separate audiovisual layers. The acting style was strictly inexpressive, formal, and disciplined—deliberately

Theater FV-112/15, *It Smelled of Spring*,
1982. Photograph by Jani Stravš.



staged as a pure audiovisual element, a medium of theatrical form and not a medium of verbal content.

Following these two performances, which were created under conditions that did not readily lend themselves to opportunities for more professional development, FV members took over the so-called Tuesday evenings in the student discotheque for what was, as they put it, "a continuation of the

theater with other means.” Each Tuesday evening had a precisely conceptualized theme that was performed throughout the evening by FV members in costumes who did all the regular work required of a discotheque staff, from DJ-ing and serving drinks to programming these social-musical-theatrical soirees. Every Tuesday night guests packed the place, a smoky basement where musicians, writers, performers, and professors carried on until breakfast. For alternative artists of all kinds, many of whom got their first chance to present their work in public at Disco FV,¹⁵ this was the place to be. Thus on a typical Tuesday night at Disco FV, performances took place within performances, and audience performed for audience.

In addition to the Tuesday evenings of FV-112/15 (*Borghesia*), Ljubljana’s Škuc Gallery¹⁶ was the other forum where alternative culture’s visual, critical, and theoretical practices were regularly formulated and displayed. The term under which these cross-cultural phenomena are now referred to is retro-avant-garde.¹⁷ This concept, first employed and theoretically articulated by Laibach in 1983,¹⁸ subsequently became the conscious artistic methodology¹⁹ of NSK, an art collective founded in 1984 by Laibach together with the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater and the visual art group Irwin.

In the artistic phenomenon known as Laibach Kunst,²⁰ the aesthetic language of alternative and retro-avant-garde culture reached its point of highest saturation. The uniqueness of Laibach’s artistic vision was based on its literal embodiment of the traumatic juxtaposition of totalitarianism and art in the twentieth century.²¹ The art of Laibach Kunst eludes classification within the conventional definitions of any specialized art discipline. It is an aesthetic consequence of the paradoxical resolution implied by the group’s main axiom: “Art and Totalitarianism do not exclude each other.” Using the totality of strategies encompassed in this equation, artistic as well as propagandistic, Laibach functioned as a kind of living ideology and permanent performance. As a band and a conceptual art group, it united intellectual and popular fronts. From 1980 until 1985, Laibach’s members seemingly never took off the specially designed and quintessentially militant suits that were their signature. They wore these artistic renditions of soldiers’ and hunters’ uniforms in nightclubs and bars as well as at universities and libraries. Living, working, socializing, and performing in uniform, they not only *dressed* the part, but their own identities became so subsumed by their Laibach personalities that they *became* their parts. Of all the real-time, performance, theater, and body artists of the Ljubljana scene in the 1980s, Laibach took acting to its furthest extreme. For Laibach, there was only acting, no offstage.

Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater, Retro-garde Event "Marija Nablocka," 1985.
Photograph by Marko Modic.

The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater²² was the first group to introduce retro-avant-garde principles to a wider public through theater. Founded in 1983, the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater announced from the beginning its intention to limit the duration of its existence only to the time necessary to fulfill its mission. Then it would self-abolish. That mission, announced in its unsigned founding manifesto, included establishing conditions that would allow the "new theater"²³ to migrate from its marginal position to the central stages of the city. In a series of subsequent manifestos, the founders openly attacked the complicit radicalism of the political theater. Proclaiming their belief that the stage should be used for the art of theater, for the development of a formal language capable of articulating the new conditions of existence and the dramatically altered perceptions of space and time in the contemporary world, the founders positioned their notions against the concept of the stage as a platform for the dissemination of political messages. To use the stage simply to mirror situations from headlines or history, they believed, was an archaic concept and an insult to art.

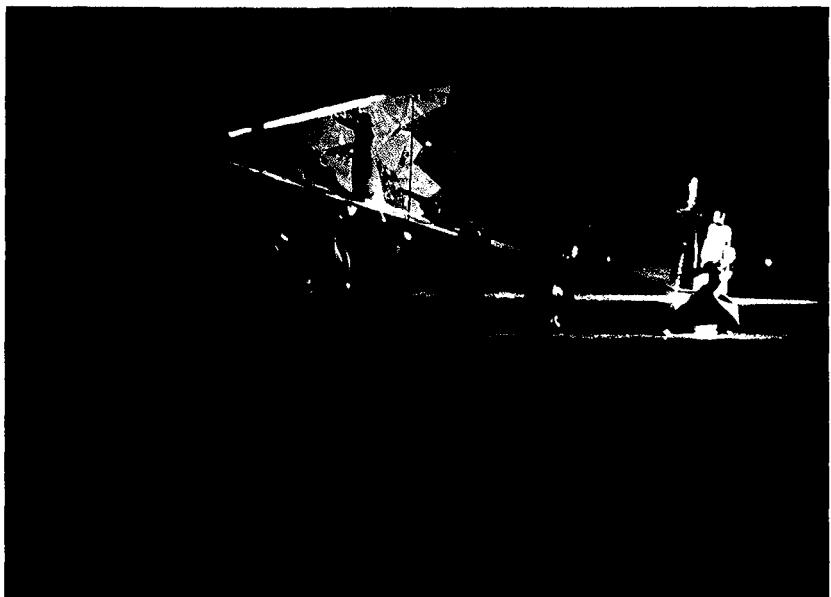


The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater had its own political agenda, but it kept it offstage, strictly separating its artistic program from its clandestine guerilla actions.²⁴ Members of the theater acted anonymously,²⁵ never advertising their performances, signing their statements, or announcing their ambushes in advance. The night before a performance, they would invite selected guests by private message to show up at a secret location in 24 hours to witness an event. The messages carried cryptic slogans or mission statements such as: "The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater has no stage"; or "Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater was founded with the aim of renewing theatrical art." No publicity. No tickets. Between performances, they would occasionally conduct midnight blitzes, one night wallpapering the facades of the state theaters with posters proclaiming the necessity for their reform, another night showing up at the home of 90-year-old Josip Vidmar, the legendarily dogmatic Slovenian theater critic, to initiate a discussion about "art, theater, life and death." Their first two performances, the *Retro-garde Event "Hinkemann"* (1984) and the *Retro-garde Event "Marija Nablocka"* (1985) took place in private apartments before very small audiences. Their third and last performance, the *Retro-garde Event "Baptism under Triglav"* (1986), played on the biggest and newest Ljubljana stage to a sold-out audience of 2,000 spectators: the main auditorium of the newly built Cultural and Congress Center Cankarjev dom.

The original idea of the sponsor was to invite Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater to create a spectacle for the national celebration of the so-called "Day of Culture," an annual event marking the anniversary of the death of Slovenian romantic poet France Prešern (1800–1849). The performance was originally to be called *Baptism by the Savica* after the poet's masterpiece, a mythological poem lamenting the tragic fate of the Slovenian nation that lost its sovereignty at the hands of Christians who forced the Slovenian pagan tribes to submit to baptism. But the title of the performance, as well as the date of the premiere, was changed a few weeks before the scheduled opening when the Cankarjev dom leadership²⁶ got wind of what the theater was up to. Fearing that the interpretation of Prešern's work by Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater might cause a public scandal if it were linked too closely by name or date to the poet's birthday or masterpiece, but not wanting to risk banning the work outright, they tried to artificially dissociate the performance from any commemorative context.

The performance was conceived as a nonverbal, monumental musical and visual spectacle in which the themes would be articulated through the rhythms of choreography, music, and spatial design. The production would

Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater, Retro-garde Event "Baptism under Triglav," 1986. Photograph by Marko Modic.



proceed on two parallel lines. In its own fluid and abstract language, the choreography would insinuate the aggressive rebaptism of the poets,²⁷ converting them from mortals into dead national heroes and ideological monuments. Simultaneously, the idea of rebaptism would be introduced visually by establishing a confrontation between premodern, nineteenth-century visual forms and abstract, modernist ones.²⁸

When the performance ended, the aftershocks of *Baptism under Triglav* began. The work provoked a broad public debate, its unprecedented treatment of sacred national symbols hitting a nerve that people were particularly sensitive to given the unstable cultural and political circumstances of that particular moment in Slovenian society. It is difficult to say whether the majority of the cultural public experienced this retrogardist event as a profane mockery of and assault on the fundaments of the national cultural tradition, as some reviewers suggested, or whether, as another critic suggested, it was the vindication of alternative culture warriors who were finally allowed to come in off the streets and out of the basements. In any case, this completely nonliterary, nondramatic, and purely linear event,²⁹ which in fact said nothing concrete, inverted conventional relations between theater and public, causing a real drama in the auditorium and on the broader public stage.

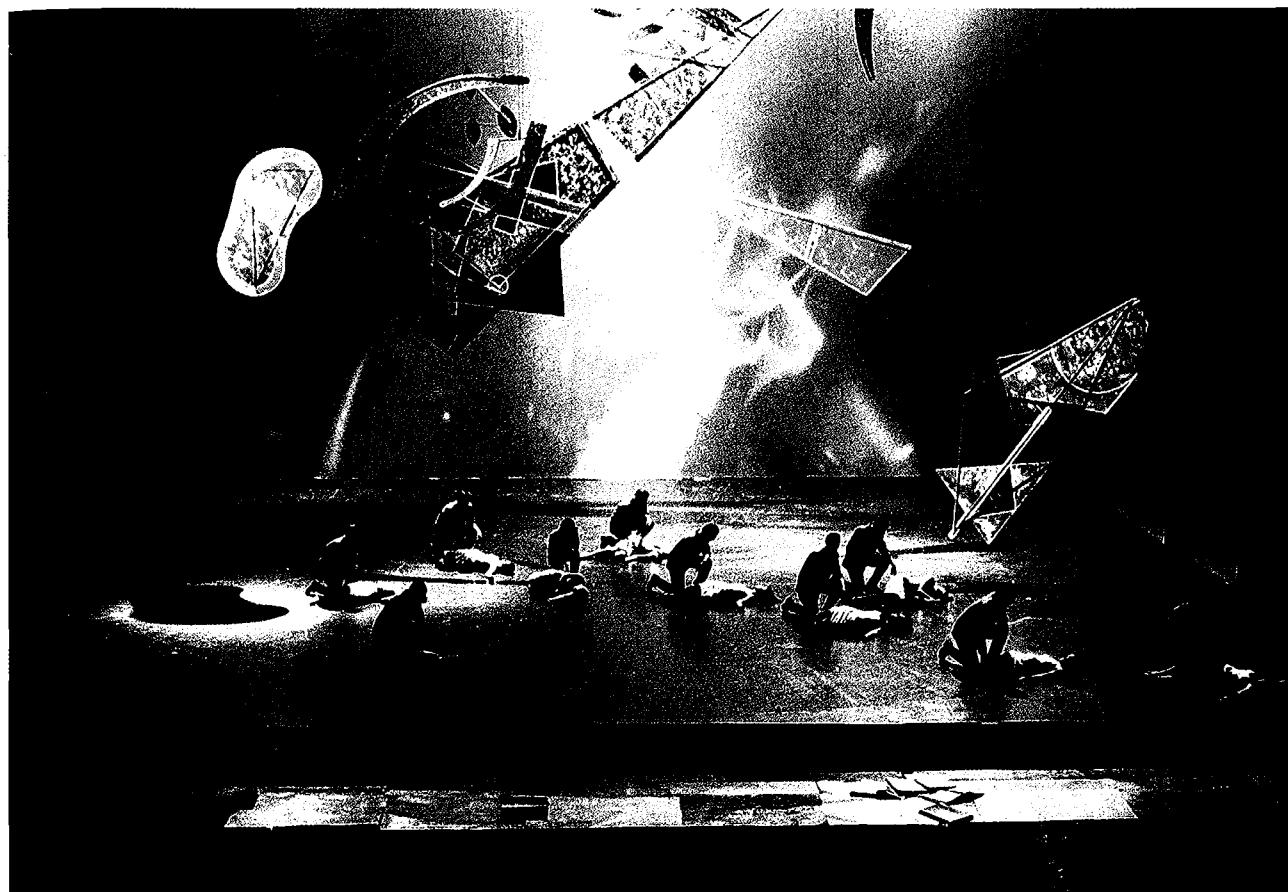
In the secret history of Slovenian culture under socialism, *Baptism under Triglav* represents a moment of seismic shift, a moment when the doors briefly opened to allow a monumental work of alternative culture and radical

structure to occupy a central position in Ljubljana's cultural arena. True to their word, the founders of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater held a press conference shortly after their *succès de scandale* announcing the end of their experiment. In September of 1986, at the BITEF international theater festival in Belgrade, they declared the death of their theater.

Notwithstanding the significance of their achievements, Theater FV-112/15 and the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater in the end contributed only a model of what the desired formal direction might look like. By quoting, imitating, and improvising on forbidden performing styles drawn from the historic avant-garde and neo-avant-garde archives, they tried to make a daring leap over a huge historic gap. The next generation inherited what is perhaps an even more difficult task: to fill this gap with sustained, constructive, professional knowledge by taking advantage of the theoretical, technological,

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Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater, *Retro-garde Event "Baptism under Triglav,"* 1986. Photograph by Marko Modic.



and professional demands and possibilities of the international market with its quickly expanding horizons while at the same time repairing the damage caused by socialist cultural ideology to theatrical production, education, and imagination. In the complete absence of any appropriate professional models and educational techniques for contemporary theater representation, what is possible?

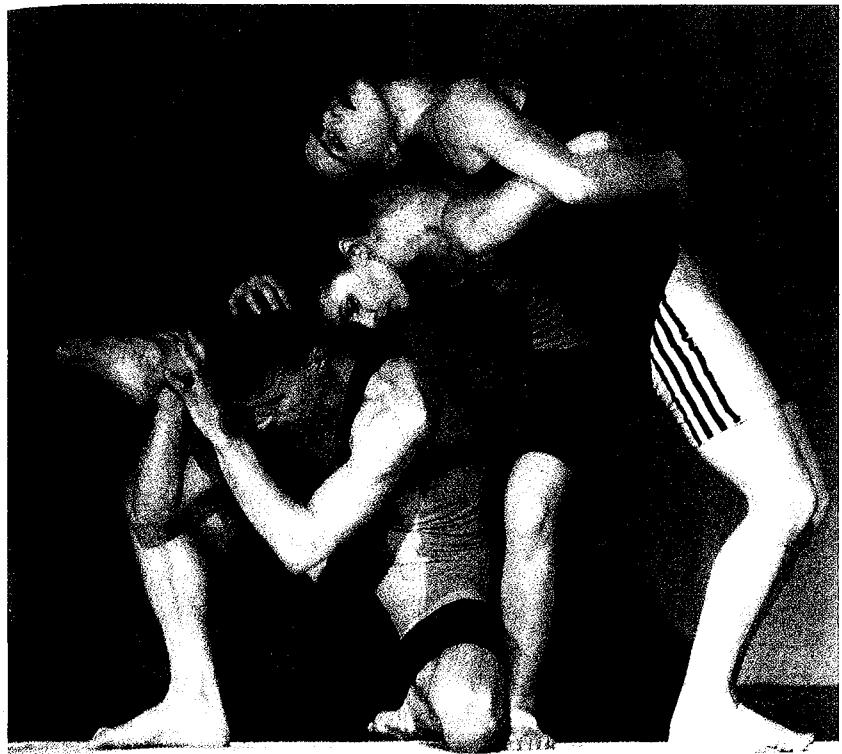
Act III: Contemporary Dance

The rise of contemporary or postmodern dance in Slovenia was one of the most important factors in the development and professionalization of the newly depoliticized theater culture in the second half of the 1980s. This was almost exclusively due to the talent and dedication of one person, a fact that is all the more impressive given the fact that no form of alternative culture established during the 1980s encountered more initial resistance from the cultural establishment than contemporary dance. In Ljubljana in the 1980s, dancers got what was left over when everyone else in the culture line had had their fill. This was paradoxical, for one could hardly find anything political in the programs and practices of dancers, or anything excessive in their demands.

They asked for even less than theater people: some modest rehearsal space for classes and some small funds to occasionally invite a foreign teacher. And they were for the most part neutral toward the ideological language of alternative culture and indifferent toward retro-avant-garde proposals. But dance represented a potentially new field of knowledge and form of expression; therefore it was seen as a potential threat to the state and certainly a threat to the dominance of ballet. With the exception of classical ballet, no form of dance education or training had ever gained a professional foothold in Slovenia in the postwar, communist period.³⁰

The Ljubljana Dance Theater³¹ was founded in 1985 by dancer and choreographer Ksenija Hribar. Local dance officials—guardians of the ballet tradition—understood that Hribar was a major force to reckon with, someone capable of seriously challenging their doctrines. Before returning to Ljubljana in 1978, she had lived in London where she cofounded and for many years danced in the Contemporary Dance Theater; there she also helped to establish the London Contemporary Dance School. Then, in the 1980s, she worked as a choreographer and movement advisor in almost all of the Ljubljana theater institutions except, not coincidentally, the Opera and Ballet House.

Her first students were students of acting, for whom she arranged opportunities to study at various schools and dance academies in Europe. In



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Ljubljana Dance Theater,
Panoptikum, choreographed by
Brane Završan, 1989. Photograph
by Janko Dermastja.

1985, with the help of Zoran Pistotnik, a group of Hribar's students finally got a regular classroom and established the Ljubljana Dance Theater. By the end of that year this group had already presented three successful dance performances, to be followed by many more.³² The majority of pupils soon started choreographing, so that by the end of the 1980s contemporary dance had achieved professional status and was not only the newest but one of the most visible art forms on the contemporary scene. The continuation of this development seemed likely, considering the highly professional performances achieved early in the careers of choreographers and dancers Tanja Zgonc, Iztok Kovač, Sinja Ožbolt, and Matjaž Farič, all former students of Hribar.

The 1990s began with an explosion of various new theater, new dance, and new media groups,³³ most of which expected to become a part of the revitalized culture and economy of the new state of Slovenia. The open borders of postsocialism brought a quite unexpected indifference toward contemporary culture, however. The new state protected its unassailable institutions and traditions, while abandoning noninstitutional and alternative groups to the laws of the market and the type of "natural" selection process with which

these group had no experience. Many did not survive. By the end of the 1990s, contemporary theater and dance had reached a point of exhaustion and decline, while traditional institutions managed to fill up the depoliticized and empty cultural space with commercial programs to pleasure Slovenia's new, "liberated" consumer audiences. For some, the lasting legacies of the 1980s culture wars are disillusionment and postdramatic stress syndrome.

For others, the best hope for the future health of theater in Slovenia lies not within its own system, but in a strange drug of the postsocialist era being generated from the experience of this last major historic shift—survival optimism.

Notes

1. Ljubiša Ristić, a director of Serbian origin, was the founder of a nomadic Yugoslav theater group called KPGT in 1981 (an acronym composed of the first letters of the word *theater* in four languages: in Croatian, Kazalište; in Serbian, Pozorište; in Slovenian, Gledališče; and international, Teater). Ristić's later role as advisor and spokesman for the Milošević nationalist government in the 1990s is for many of his former colleagues and collaborators beyond comprehension, since by that association he not only compromised his own artistic career but put a shadow over the work of an entire generation.
2. See "Hipijevsko, čutno, razpuščeno" [Hippies, Sensual, Disbanded], in the catalog *20 Let EG Glej {20 Years of ET Glej}* (Ljubljana, 1990).
3. Experimental Theater Glej was founded at the beginning of the 1970s as an unofficial, off-theater group. Ten years later Glej was receiving regular funding from the state as a kind of official experimental theater. This had the effect of making their productions more and more competitive with mainstream productions. Together with the Slovenian Youth Theater, Glej in the 1980s represented the more liberal platform of theater culture. Most of the directors worked in both venues. In this essay I will focus mainly on defining the role of Slovenian Youth Theater.
4. In the cultural context of the former Yugoslav state, the New Left was represented by various neo-Marxist philosophical schools. Because they were radically critical of Soviet and Yugoslav real communism and socialism and open to the ideas of the Western European left, these schools were a natural intellectual partner of the neo-avant-garde art movements of the late 1960s and 1970s.
5. Just as the Slovenian alternative culture of the 1980s can be generally labeled "retro-avant-garde," the 1960s and 1970s subculture was identified with the notion of "ludism," probably referring to "Luddites," a term resurrected from history to describe those who distrust or fear the inevitable changes brought about by new technology. The original Luddite revolt took place in 1811, after English textile factories had replaced craftsmen with machines. Today's Luddites continue to raise moral and

ethical arguments against the excesses of modern technology to the extent that it threatens our essential humanity. The theoretical aspects of Slovenian neo-Luddites were developed through the writings of Taras Kermauner. Artistically, the first representatives of ludism were members of the Slovenian conceptual art group OHO. The strongly intellectual circle of OHO artists influenced theater neo-avant-gardists, but the latter were never as artistically radical as OHO itself. OHO destabilized the boundaries separating artistic genres and introduced the culture of happenings and performance to the local context. The most famous example of OHO's ludistic influence on theater circles was the performance of the Pupilija Ferkeverk Theater directed by Dušan Jovanović in 1969 where a chicken was killed onstage. This event is still regarded by the theater establishment as one of the darkest hours in the history of Slovenian theater, for it marked a moment when literature was ritually slaughtered on the stage.

6. Political theater reintroduced the subject of history, the stories and fates of innocent people in the storms of war, revolution, and Balkan multicultural conflicts. The so-called "political plays" were written in the post-Brechtian, epic style, like film scripts, offering large potential for new ways of staging. In the team of Jovanović and Ristić both men were directors, but Jovanović usually served as playwright and dramaturg, giving ludistic drama (which was predominantly concerned with urban subjects) its dominant political and historic features, while Ristić provided strong theatrical articulations of Jovanović's dramaturgy.

7. A longer treatment of this subject should examine the extremely individual and highly professional work of Janez Pipan, Vito Taufer, Martin Kušej, Edvard Miler, Matjaž Zupančič, and Tomaž Pandur, all of whom made significant contributions to the Slovenian theater of the 1980s. Because of length limitations, the present essay focuses only on some turning points that produced radically new formal proposals, with special emphasis on those practices which are in danger of being erased from the official theater history of the time (and which by definition took upon themselves the fate of "impossible histories").

8. Quoted from a video document about the activities of the group FV-112/15 and multimedia group Borghesia by Neven Korda and Zemira Alajbegović. This statement was printed as part of the commentary accompanying the video documents: "In its organizational principle Borghesia remains linked to the FV Student Discotheque and acts according to the principles of a small gang. From their perspective, the state is the big gang."

9. The work of the Anna Monro Theater in the 1980s is documented in the catalog *Gledališče Anna Monro, od talija do torija* (Ljubljana: Dramska knjižica, Zveza kulturnih organizacija, 1991).

10. The visual environments of the Anna Monro Theater were created by the visual artist and perhaps the only one-man performer in Slovenia in the early 1980s, Marko Kovačič.

11. *Bežeči Japonec* [Running Japanese], 1981; *Ali labko predvojna scriptizeta danes sploh kaj pokaže* [Has a Prewar Stripper Anything to Show Today?], 1982; *Bibol ali naša disciplina je slutnja zarje, Rdeči Žarek* [Bibol or Our Discipline Is Presentiment of Sunset, Red Ray], 1984.
12. The name FV-112/15 is a code. F and V are the initials for Franc Verbinc, the author of one of the most frequently used local dictionaries, the Slovenian *Dictionary of Foreign Words*. On page 112, entry 15, is the following statement: “c'est la guerre!/fr. vojna je, tako je pač v vojni” [It is war, that's how it is in war.]
13. Information and quotations about the activities of the groups FV-112/15 and Borghesia are from two sources: a video document by Neven Korda and Zemira Alajbegović; and a recording of an interview Eda Čufer conducted with Alajbegović and Korda on September 18, 2001.
14. Such as realism, naturalism, the historical avant-garde, and neo-avant-garde, as well as acting techniques proposed by Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Artaud, Grotowski, and Barba, and postmodern literature from Borges to American metafiction.
15. Most of the famous Ljubljana punk bands were presented for the first time in Disco FV. Laibach performed there soon after its first public appearance in Trbovlje in 1980.
16. Škuc Gallery was founded by Taja Brejc and Peter Mlakar in 1978. Its reputation as one of the most advanced exhibition venues in Ljubljana was established in the 1980s under directors Marina Gržinić, Barbara Borčić, and Dušan Mandić.
17. Invoking the term retro-avant-garde requires a brief explanation of its contextual origin and meaning, particularly as the term as now being used in international art discourse bears associations and significations that are not strictly faithful to its nomenclatural provenance. A brief instaurative note: in its original use, retro-avant-garde referred to the artistic, methodological, and philosophic practice of NSK. Therefore the true meaning of retro-avant-garde is inseparable from the NSK textual and visual archive, and from the expressive language of images and signs that NSK made use of in its various productions. This language drew on various sources, including the historical avant-garde, traditional culture, national myths, religious icons, totalitarian symbols, and ideological texts. In subsequent interpretations initiated by the NSK group Irwin, the artists Goran Djordjević and Mladen Stilinović, and the theorist Marina Gržinić in the 1994 group show “Retro-avantgarde” (and a later video film by Gržinić/Šmid and Irwin painting by the same name), retro-avant-garde was defined as a strategy of mapping the history of the Yugoslav avant-garde from present to past, from Irwin to zenitism. According to this qualified definition, various artists such as Mladen Stilinović, Braco Dimitrijević, and Mangelos occupy positions in a genealogy that proceeds retrogressively from the neo-avant-garde to the historical avant-garde period.

The best background to an understanding of the rich cultural context from which this term arose is provided in the publication *Ljubljana, Ljubljana*, edited by Aleš Erjavec and Marina Gržinić (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1991). In it, the editors

reconstruct the alternative cultural topography of Ljubljana in the 1980s using seminal exhibitions, publications, events, and happenings to map a logic of quotation and correspondence between artists working in different genres and generations.

18. The term retro-avant-garde was first used by Laibach in 1983, in the program for their exhibition at the Škuc Gallery: "Ausstellung Laibach Kunst—Monumentalna Retro-avantgarda" (Laibach Kunst Exhibition—The Monumental Retro-avant-garde).

19. Each group used the term slightly differently. Laibach used the term "retro-avant-garde," Irwin spoke about the "retro principle," while the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater used the term "retro-garde."

20. Laibach, which is known today as a musical group, used the name Laibach Kunst for its more specialized artistic activities, in this case for a visual art exhibition where they exhibited works that later became a kind of prototype, or blueprint, for Irwin paintings.

21. The relation between totalitarianism and the historical avant-garde, and the logic of the assimilation of avant-garde utopianism and its formal inventions into the totalizing social language of the totalitarian social project, are theoretically elaborated by Boris Groys in his book *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also Philippe Sers, *Totalitarisme et avant-gardes* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2001).

22. The name Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater was inspired by a reference in Antonin Artaud's essay "Theater and the Plague" to Scipion Nasice, a Roman magistrate who issued an order calling for the destruction of all Roman theaters.

23. From 1969 on, theater professionals from the former Yugoslavia were well informed about the latest trends in the American and European contemporary theater thanks to the founding of BITEF, the Belgrade International Theater Festival, by Mira Trajlović and Jovan Čirilov. In the 1980s Gordana Vnuk founded another international theater festival, Eurokaz, in Zagreb. "New theater" refers to the latest Western European and American trends (Robert Wilson, Jan Fabre, Rosas, etc.), which integrated the inventions of the neo-avant-garde theater of the 1960s and 1970s into new, radically nonliterary and interdisciplinary genres (though in a different way from local political theater). This new theater is today defined by the German theorist H. T. Lehmann as postdramatic theater. For the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater, international contemporary theater culture was as important a reference as its local alternative and retro-avant-garde counterpart.

24. Between 1983 and 1986, the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater issued a series of manifestos and "one-minute dramas" in support of their theater actions. These statements, documenting a theater reform movement that was as important to members of the group as their productions, now form part of the NSK archive and are reprinted in *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1991; English edition, Los Angeles: Amok Books, 1991).

25. After their act of self-abolishment their names became public. The founders of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater were director Dragan Živadinov, set designer Miran

Mohar, and dramaturg Eda Čufer, author of this text. Živadinov later became something of a cult figure on the Slovenian contemporary theater scene. His idiosyncratic theatrical vision, based on exacting technical and production standards, prevented him from accepting work with existing Slovenian theater institutions. After the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater he founded two subsequent theater groups and produced shows that were increasingly radical from a formal standpoint if increasingly difficult from a public one. His latest productions were staged by Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung, which he founded in 1991. In coproduction with Project Atol in December 1999, Noordung staged the first theatrical performance in zero gravity. The event took place on board an aircraft normally used by the Russian space program to train cosmonauts for the weightless conditions of orbital flight.

26. Boghesia-FV-112/15 and the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater owe the opportunity to perform in Cankarjev dom to Goran Schmidt, its first artistic director for theater programs. The building was originally built for communist congress activities, and as a public venue it was generally reserved for elite cultural events. In bringing these two unpedigreed groups into that space, Schmidt risked his career. He was forced to resign from his position shortly after the successful premiere of *Baptism under Triglav*.

27. In this case “poets” is a metaphor for creative, nonconformist forces in society as opposed to its military and bureaucratic representatives. This opposition was represented choreographically by marked visual and musical contrasts: two large groups of performers were dressed in two different types of costumes; each group moved to a different rhythm and wore a different expression.

28. As one critic who witnessed the performance described it: “The construction of the performance was based on quotations, and on a new interpretation of Russian avant-garde motifs and themes from the period after the October Revolution: the stage construction of Tatlin’s *Monument to the Third International* marks the beginning of the performance, while the end belongs to the suprematist elements of Kazimir Malevich, which have inspired not only [Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater] but also Irwin and Laibach. The experience of the theaters of Meyerhold, of contemporary directors like Robert Wilson, and especially of the updated Jan Fabre have been here decomposed and brought together again.” From the publication *Ljubljana, Ljubljana*, ed. Erjavec and Gržinić.

29. All NSK groups collaborated in creating *Baptism under Triglav*, with Laibach producing the soundtrack and Irwin contributing to the set design.

30. Before World War II, Slovenia had several internationally recognized modern dancers and choreographers. Meta Vidmar trained under Mary Wighman; Pino and Pia Mlakar were students of Rudolf von Laban and winners of several prizes for modern dance in Europe between the wars. However, these performers and modern dance in general lost professional status after World War II.

31. This event is described by Uršula Teržan in her master’s thesis at the London Contemporary Dance School, “The Ljubljana Dance Theater and Its Role in the Development of Contemporary Dance in Slovenia,” 1996. This thesis by Ksenija

Hribar's student is the only extensive history written to date on Slovenian contemporary dance, the work of Hribar, or the Ljubljana Dance Theater.

32. The most successful early Ljubljana Dance Theater performances were D. Z. Frey, *Metastaze Laibach* [Metastasis Laibach] (1985), K. Hribar, *Alpsko sanjarjenje* [The Alpine Dream] (1986), K. Hribar, *Nostalgija* [Nostalgia] (1987), B. Završan, *Panoptikum* (1988), and S. Ožbolt and T. Zgong, *Ne dotikaj se/V pot vpet* [Don't Touch/Into the Path].

33. In addition to the dancers and choreographers who established themselves in the 1990s, there are also a number of directors and performers who achieved significant recognition for their work. Vlado Repnik, Matjaž Pograjc, Tomaž Štrucl, Emil Hrvatin, and Marko Peljhan should be mentioned as directors. Marko Kovačič, Marko Košnik, and Ema Kugler deserve mention as performers.

13

Problems and Paradoxes of Yugoslav Avant-garde Music (Outlines for a Reinterpretation)

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

Any newness in the avant-garde has long been old. Whether it is so old that it can no longer claim to be new once again is a question that the avant-garde, should it still exist, will certainly have to face. It had to face the same question, after all, about thirty years ago when it became clear—in music and the other arts—that a truce with tradition was its only way to survive, not for itself, but for what the avant-garde had achieved and what it had conquered. To become part of tradition itself, in other words, by setting up a general framework for possible versions of interpretation of the status of avant-garde innovation, not only in the years after the avant-garde, but concurrent to it, looking back from today's perspective.

Can the avant-garde be new again? This question seems to me to have special weight when raised today in the context of the former Yugoslavia by someone who used to call Yugoslavia home. The answer, in its historical and social segment, would certainly be negative.

The Context, Definition, and Methodology of the Approach

One dimension to the response is the social and political context, the state structure within which avant-garde music existed in postwar Yugoslavia, the country considered itself, from today's perspective, as an avant-garde creation of its own. This is possible because the country itself was formed in a way reminiscent of avant-garde methodology, through radical and drastically antitraditional means in all walks of life and creativity, through a revolutionary and uncompromising break that reached its full maturity in 1945 as a socialist society and federal system. As time showed, however, each of the six republics of Yugoslavia that are, for the sake of this parallel, the model of the

avant-garde were deeply dissatisfied in that union. Following the agony of the dismantlement of the Yugoslav federation and the abandonment of communist ideology, each of them turned to its own local spiritual entity to “seek forgiveness”—each to different extents persecuted, suppressed, and forgotten—as the basis for a potential integration on a new footing, perhaps on a broader international level. The project of Yugoslavia thus definitively failed, and I can claim with certainty that none of the constituents of that former “avant-garde” formation will rightfully ever be ready to provide an affirmative answer to the question asked above. A “repeat” of Yugoslavia is no longer possible.

A second dimension to the response, of greater relevance at the moment, is the artistic. We were warned, after the mid-1970s, that the new in music could no longer be avant-garde, even in the then Yugoslavia. These artistic implications are, of course, inseparable from the social and the historical, particularly in terms of relations between avant-garde society and avant-garde music: in the case of the former Yugoslavia, the link between social structure, introduced in an avant-garde way, and the music that contained the status of the avant-garde within that structure. Such a relationship is not, as a matter of principle, necessarily a relationship of harmony and convergence. So the inevitable question arises here of whether a music avant-garde was at all possible in a state structure that was, itself, inherently similar to the avant-garde.

Let me say at the outset that the “left in politics, left in art” orientation in the avant-garde upsurge of Yugoslav music between the two world wars, under the aegis of the capitalist, earlier Yugoslavia—the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1941)—could not at first be sustained within the system of governance established in 1945. In order to explain this, I must go back to the time of interwar Yugoslavia, when the political left was one of the options within the context of the political dynamism of bourgeois society. Analogously, the “left in art” option was, at that time, a possible creative direction.

In music, the link between the two progressive currents was supported most consistently by Vojislav Vučković.¹ During his studies in interwar Prague, he adopted Marxist ideology and immersed himself in it creatively and socially. The compatibility between avant-garde ideology and avant-garde art in his case lasted until around 1939 when, under the influence of events on the European political and artistic left, he made an aesthetic and artistic shift to realism. The music of his colleagues also had avant-garde features. Mainly of Serbian or Slovenian background, they too had come to study

in Prague. More will be said of his colleagues later. For now it is enough to mention their radical positioning and the fact that their creative origins came from "outside" the Yugoslav music culture of the time.

Although avant-garde art had the same preconditions for social survival as avant-garde ideology, avant-garde music did not have equivalent artistic preconditions. While the other arts, above all literature and painting, the very foundations of the means of expression, were ready for a radical self-examination, and while the social conditions and the overall political configuration of bourgeois society favored the appearance of the avant-garde in interwar Yugoslavia, the strictly musical conditions were not so conducive. In a country whose musical culture was preoccupied with overcoming elementary professional obstacles, music was not, objectively, at a level where the need could arise for what is termed in avant-garde vocabulary and Peter Bürger's theoretical system a "self-critique of art."² Interwar avant-garde Yugoslav music did not grow out of self-criticism, but rather from communication with the music of other countries. The emergence of a self-critique in music, therefore, did not coincide, as Bürger interprets it regarding other arts, with bourgeois society at its peak.

In the period immediately after World War II, the option, in Yugoslavia, of the "left in art" was treated as decadent, a perversion of healthy creative impulses, and was declaratively rejected in favor of socialist realism. Fortunately, however, Yugoslavia did not remain officially within the boundaries of socialist realist art restrictions for long. Such constraints gradually vanished, and socialist realism ceased to be recognized as the official aesthetics in 1951. As Yugoslavia distanced itself more from the mindset typical of the countries behind the Iron Curtain in the years and decades that followed, the preconditions for experiencing various avant-garde artistic phenomena and manifestations were set firmly in place. Those preconditions derived from the elements of the socialist social and economic practice linked with the earlier capitalism of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that gradually gained ascendancy.

Socialist Yugoslavia, admittedly, made attempts to overcome the situation by implementing a system referred to as self-management, with the aim of achieving "the type of freedom for man that would enable him to express himself totally as a self-managing actor with respect to all his interests regarding life, work, and creation in a free and democratic community of producers."³ The idea was to attain a high degree of societal maturity to ensure a maximum development of individual creative potential, where "anyone bearing a germ of Raphael inside would develop like Raphael."⁴ The utopian

character of this objective became evident in the discrepancy between the idea and the reality, fatal for the entire cultural standard of the country, roughly equal to the discrepancy between the aesthetic value and the estimated price of a work of art. At the same time, the bureaucracy was thriving, so the artist had plenty of reasons not to experience himself fully as in possession of his own values, but rather, to a great extent, as an object in the hands of consumers or bureaucracies.

It is therefore possible to say that what is characteristic of avant-garde music in the former Yugoslavia is its appearance within a social context that could be described as “split” between the bourgeois and the bourgeois/proletarian. By this token, the avant-garde in this music is generally atypical compared to what emerged in other countries on social territory that was its own from the start.⁵ The situation in Yugoslavia was not typical, but it was possible.

In order to back this up with arguments, I will first put forth the theoretical elements I consider decisive in determining the phenomenon of the avant-garde itself. At the same time I will undertake to focus on those features that in a specific way theoretically transfer the avant-garde into the time that followed it. This will give us a projection of that phenomenon which, from the distance afforded by a new, postmodern creative perspective, will inevitably have greater historical depth. As such, this projection will represent a suitable basis on which Yugoslav avant-garde music will also recognize its heritage and the legacy of its tradition. This does not mean, however, that I intend to alter the underlying postulates of the theory of avant-garde music I formulated some 20 years ago.⁶ Nor does it mean that I am asking the question in the sense of “avant-garde music today,” because—and here I would agree with Christoph von Blumröder—it has lost both its constitutive root meaning and its provocative character.⁷ To the contrary, my intention here is simply to further strengthen my previously defined theoretical position from the vantage point of my research experience with the music that followed the avant-garde,⁸ suggesting possible outlines for its reinterpretation.

Let me start from my position that the avant-garde is a unique psychological, social, and artistic phenomenon that—most typically—is materialized through an organized, declared, and aggressively antitraditional movement with specific rules of its own life cycle that, with the aim of achieving the selected tasks proclaimed in its manifesto, exists between explosion and combustion. This understanding comprises several issues: that the avant-garde has its presuppositions and characteristic effects in interdependence, in the coordination of the psychological, the social, and the artistic; that it does

not represent a category of style since it advocates a rupture of continuity as the essential determinant of development and succession of musical styles; that the role belonging to the avant-garde is that of "art critic art" or—to paraphrase Marcel Duchamp—the "anartist"⁹ role; that the avant-garde represents a moment of shock in twentieth-century modernity;¹⁰ that it becomes esoteric because it shuts itself into the world of structure, plan, intellectualism, and desubjectivization¹¹ and that at the same time it rises up against them, attempting mutually to integrate artistic creation and everyday life.

In keeping with this methodological approach, however, I will dwell upon the phenomena of the avant-garde for which it is best "remembered" after the fact. This, of course, does not mean that its other features are being forgotten in a theoretical sense. The point is only that today some of these features are problematically accentuated when speaking both of the avant-garde and the postmodern that "succeeded" it. In other words, they function as common problematic issues of the avant-garde and the postmodern, but have different significations and meanings. This mainly concerns the phenomena by which the postmodern is compared to the avant-garde and defined and honed in juxtaposition to it. Wolfgang Welsch claims that objections directed toward the postmodern refer, instead, to the modern. This is quite symptomatic, considering that these objections attack precisely those features of the postmodern by which it might be conceived of as a consequence of the execution of the "hard, radical modernity of this century," that is, of the avant-garde.¹²

One of those common moments and certainly one of the key theoretical strongholds for analyzing both the avant-garde and the postmodern in art is the avant-garde's tendency to equate art with life, to erase the boundary between them, in the sense of Meyerhold's statement that we will only attain a real, true art of theater when there is no more division between actors and spectators: when everyone is an actor.¹³ This feature is important in gaining an understanding of the art avant-garde itself, as well as its specific manifestations in the domain of music, especially in Yugoslavia. Equally, the erasure of the boundaries distinguishing art from life was "reformulated" by the postmodern by giving back to the fictional in art its pre-avant-garde sense. In his interpretation of this avant-garde tendency, Peter Bürger speaks, among other things, of several of its inner or, perhaps, constitutive phenomena. They are otherwise already closely related and mutually conditioned by belonging to the same, bourgeois context. At the conceptual level, too, they overlap and complement each other. One of those concepts has already been mentioned

above. It is the self-critique of art that necessarily implies several more categories: the institution of art, the autonomy of art, historical avant-garde movements, and the neo-avant-garde.

The self-critique of art was possible, in Bürger's opinion, only through a total emancipation of bourgeois society, because it was only then that art would have access to the totality of means it could make reference to. Until then an art trend would always take a critical stand in relation to the one immediately preceding it, and the means used in that critique always depended on the style of the period concerned. At the time in question, however, which Bürger specifies as being the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, art implies a critique of the totality of art, a denial and overthrow of the institution of art. By this term, however, he understands the totality of the life of a work of art, ranging from everything at the individual level to everything at the institutional level, related to its creation, presentation (or rather performance), perception, and reception. In that sense, art has a certain autonomy,¹⁴ so the self-critique of art also means usurping that autonomy.

According to Bürger's interpretation, self-critique in art was first materialized in the historical avant-garde movements.¹⁵ They are the movements that "eliminated the possibility of epoch style," because "they raised the availability of the means dating from previous epochs to the level of principle. It is only universal availability that renders a category of artistic means general," says Bürger, emphasizing that in historical avant-garde movements "the recipient's shock became the highest principle of artistic intention."¹⁶ Thus art abandons its autonomy in the sense of separation from everyday life, or more precisely, it tends to organize a new life practice.¹⁷

Although I find Bürger's interpretation of the erasure of boundaries between art and life highly relevant, I must warn that it is mostly based on sociological aspects of the study of literature and painting. Applied to music, especially Yugoslav music, it would, however, in comparison with the avant-garde in the other arts, stumble across peculiarities and exceptions in the nature and type of manifestation of avant-garde music, and it could not be attested by musical practice without obstacles or certain logical difficulties. But that is exactly why Bürger's interpretation is precious to me at the moment. Because it originates from a domain outside music it enables me to describe with considerable precision the specifics of Yugoslav, and general, avant-garde music.

When attempting to identify historical avant-garde movements in music we are already confronted with the fact not only that their list is more

concise than the one given by Bürger, but also that some of them do not even include a self-critical sense in music.

The Dismantling of the Institution of Music

Based on the assumption that I accept uncompromising destructiveness as the key determinant of historical avant-garde movements, which devalue and demolish the institution of art, I must conclude that music knows only one historical avant-garde, embodied in John Cage's project *4'33" Silence for . . .*

This project represents a fundamental upheaval in which the institution of music faced its "end." It does not function at any traditional level, and that means that the composer's activity is reduced to a conceptual artifice, the performer's intervention to "securing" interpretive silence in the given time interval and the diligence of the listeners to the "attention directed toward the activity of sounds,"¹⁸ the nonobligation to register excerpts from the sound ambience. The performer becomes only a listener, but the listener also becomes a "performer." Hence both the concert as an aspect of traditional representation of musical achievement and all of its participants in their traditional roles and activities are caricatured on the one hand and denied on the other. The causes of all this lie in the fact that the very nature of both the material and the content of a musical work were radically changed: its content was no longer within the domain of tone but of disorganized sound, so its structure is inevitably identified with the mere duration of the project.¹⁹ The musical work thus loses its fundamental features, while the composer's creativity is materialized at the conceptual level.

Nonetheless, although Cage's avant-garde is by nature the only one that would correspond to the meaning and sense of historical avant-garde movements, it would not be congruous with them in time, considering the year of its "publication" (1952!). According to Bürger's periodization it would, in fact, correspond to the neo-avant-garde,²⁰ although it could by no means belong to it in essence, first, because it is not characterized by a decrease in the usurping intensity that, according to Bürger, is characteristic of the neo-avant-garde, and second, because it does not tend toward a reestablishment of the broken link with the traditional factors of the institution of music. Cage, with his project, broke down the dam between the art of music and life.

At the time of Cage's avant-garde operation, Yugoslav music was not concerned with a self-critical confrontation with its "end." Indeed, at the beginning of the 1950s it was liberating itself from the politicized aesthetics of socialist realism (which, admittedly, was pushing it to an "end" of another

kind!), endeavoring to become organized mostly around neo-styles and folk music elaboration.

This, however, does not mean that music in Yugoslavia was unacquainted with an innovationism that brought the autonomy of music into question. Quite the contrary, this innovationism was related to several leading avant-garde personalities in the former Yugoslavia, including Vladan Radovanović.²¹ A composer by formal education, he is also a theorist, writer, and painter, with a particular focus on theoretical and practical work within the sphere of extended media and nonart. His achievements in these fields include those where sound is featured as a medium in interaction with all other media: with words and plastic, tactile, and kinetic elements. The media either converge fully, retaining their integrity, or blend according to the principle of polyphonic leading, where they can enter with only some of their traits intact. The concept of Radovanović's project *Veliki zvučni taktizon* [Big Sound Tactisone] (1968), for example, implies the interdependence of sound, movement, and the tactile element. The "performer's" movement through a structure with a certain "architecture" is simultaneously accompanied by the sound produced precisely by this movement, activating electronic cells built into the structure that otherwise produce that sound. Radovanović also materializes the principle of media interdependence—word, picture, and sound—in the field of the vocovisual, and also, within that context, his verbovoco scores as "matrices" for the performance of his poetry of sound. Sound is also featured as one of the elements of the multimedia whole in his metamusical works that imply either structured sound or just the use of musical terms, notation elements, or other symbols of musical signs and terminology.

Radovanović's first interdisciplinary projects, those involving the synthesis of sound, words, and the figure in a three-dimensional space, date back to 1958, his vocovisual work to 1954 and 1956, and the composition of his vocovisual novel *Pustolina* (a neologism coined from the words for "wasteland" and "adventure") to 1956–1963. His activity, therefore, also presents avant-garde innovation in world chronology.

By establishing the media coexistence of the type mentioned above, Radovanović fundamentally stirred the autonomy of music and art in general through his efforts to achieve a redefinition, rather than devastation, of both the institution of music and the entire institution of art. His approach is also oriented toward attempts at a definition and determination of criteria for a new brand of creation that is not solely artistic.²²

In the sphere of the purely musical media, however, he remained within the framework of a musical work conceived in the traditional sense. This

notion, however, was not applied in his *Četiri dvoglasna korala* [Four Two-Part Chorales] from 1957 that—reduced to four characterless miniatures “with no beginning or end,” that is, to characterless two-voice relations differentiated only in the parameter of pitch—represents the first example of minimalism in Yugoslav music, devised almost at the same time as this movement was becoming official in the United States.

Interdisciplinary research concepts were also the focus of Croatian composer Branimir Sakač.²³ Toward the end of the 1960s he worked on a project entitled phonoplastics, based on the incorporation of sound, movement, light, and space dimensions, then went on to create the Songel music and light theater in the early 1970s. It was based on a blend of sound (singing, reciting, and chamber ensemble playing), movement (acting), and light projections, a blend the multimedia character of which is recognized in the title itself, built from the names (in French) of the employed media: *son-geste-lumière*. Milko Kelemen,²⁴ representative of the next avant-garde generation of Croatian composers, was preoccupied with analogous ideas. Thus for instance, during the 1970s, while working on his ballet opera *Apokaliptika* [Apocalyptic] (1971–1979), he materialized, to a certain extent, his concept of opera as an integral media dramaturgy.

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Milko Kelemen and John Cage, 1985.
From the catalog *Muzički biennale Zagreb 1961–1991* [The Zagreb Music Biennial, 1961–1991] (Zagreb: Muzički informativni centar, 1991).



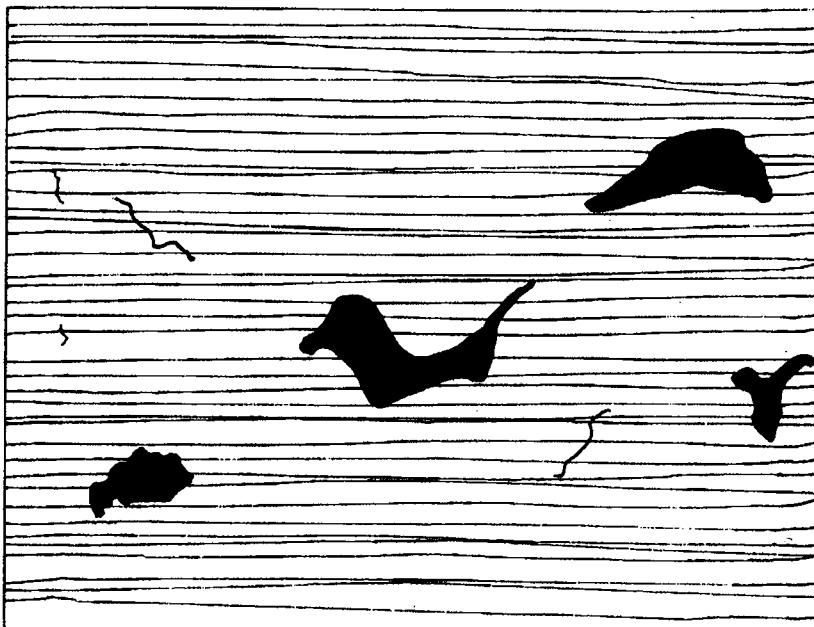
Acezantez (Dubravko Detoni, Katalin Ladik, Pietro Cavaliere, Fred Došek, B. L. Adelson), Zagreb, 1972. From the catalog *Ansambl Acezantez od 1970* [The Acezantez Group since 1970] (Zagreb: Muzički informacioni centar Koncertne direkcije, 1999).

A particularly significant role in avant-garde enterprises of a similar type was played by the Zagreb group Acezantez (Ansambl centra za nove tendencije Zagreb [Zagreb Ensemble of the Center for New Tendencies]), highly acclaimed both in Yugoslavia and worldwide. It is thanks to this group that many versatile media works were performed in our milieu, including those of composers Sakač and Kelemen. The ensemble began performing in 1970, led by composer and pianist Dubravko Detoni,²⁵ whose works represent the "central axis and main substance of Acezantez."²⁶ Thus the activity of this group was decisively marked by Detoni's creations, such as his six *Graphics* for various ensembles (1968–1973), the multimedia stage fantasy *La voix du silence* (1972), and *Monos I–III* for piano, clarinet, and arbitrary chamber ensemble (1972), which exert a radical "restructuring" of the autonomy of the discipline of music.²⁷ Acezantez appears as a "musical and religious community . . . disseminating the learning of the New Sound that according to its interpretation," as attested in these works by Detoni, "is at the same



time a group of visual mobiles, a music-and-drama theater and pantomime, a light spectacle, and much more, not simply music alone.”²⁸ Acezantez thus attempted to affirm the wanderings of the new sound by studying various types of links between sound (with a special focus on unusual ways of obtaining tones and cultivating various sources of noise), movement (present in the form of acting, pantomime, or “geometrized” stylizations), colored light, (cinematic) projections of visual material, and even smell in the first years of their work that all had the typical avant-garde features “of universal, hysterically nonsemantic appeal.”²⁹

This was all principally based on the improvising communication of the performer as well as a high degree of tolerance for the unpredictability of the sound “exit.” “For us the working process is more important than a definitive or semidefinitive formulation of a piece of music,” reads Acezantez’s first manifesto. “What we are interested in is . . . a method by which things appear and disappear.”³⁰ The Cagean roots are undoubtedly very strong and are particularly manifest during the first seven years of the ensemble’s activity, when for its members “music . . . for us was the Cagean universality of sound: the step, the object, the grimace are sound.”³¹



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Dubravko Detoni, *Grafika IV, list 1*, 1991. From the catalog *Ansambl Acezantez od 1970* [The Acezantez Group since 1970] (Zagreb: Muzički informacioni centar Koncertne direkcije, 1999).

Within the context of such activity, Acezantez also presented a certain number of works from the *Flora* cycle, which Ernö Király³² took up at the beginning of the 1970s and worked on for the following two decades. The pieces are noted graphically, that is, their scores are represented either by photographs of plants (for example, an orchid, seaweed, a hibiscus, a gladiola) or even by living plants with the role of music graphics. The choice of the sound material and the unfolding of its improvised exposition are suggested by the appearance of the plant. "Counterpoint lines" of light and color appear simultaneously, symbolically linked with the sound content, as well as matching smells (realized by spray or perfume unless they come from a living plant with its own authentic smell). All this sometimes includes media associations to the chosen plants or the environment in which they originate or grow.

The Cage-inspired anarchism also shook the institution of music in the creative work of the composers who presented themselves as the *Nova generacija* [New Generation], including the Opus 4 group, in their manifesto outlining the new program policy of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade led by one of their members, Miroslav-Miša Savić.³³ It was characterized by the typical attributes of an avant-garde organization: a manifesto outlining the program of action against all that "can be labeled as dogmatic and conservative,"³⁴ their own institutional framework represented by the Student Cultural Center, and openly rebellious and above all aggressive behavior toward the music community, especially that of Belgrade. It is symptomatic that this behavior was not manifested toward other Yugoslav cities such as Zagreb, Opatija, or Ljubljana, where the group also performed.

The New Generation attempted through their work to erase the border between artistic creation and life practice, primarily through projects with recognizable elements of Cage's avant-garde. His usurpation of the institution of music, his conceptualism, as well as his activity at the New School for Social Research in New York that paved the way for happenings and Fluxus, all went through a certain local problematization, as it were, within the work of this group. In that aspect the work of the group members could be seen as an example of the neo-avant-garde. However, owing to its rudimentary irritability and aggressive intolerance, unfamiliar in the world of Yugoslav music until that time, I would rather interpret their activity as avant-garde. After all, it also has an avant-garde sense in that their projects were significant as a radical manifestation in our country. Such was the case, for instance, with the conceptualist and symbolist self-critique of music that was presented by Milimir Drašković in the form of a blank sheet of music paper entitled *Muzika u Beogradu* [Music in Belgrade] (1978); and the Fluxus critique of

music in Miša Savić's projects—for example, *24 sata/akord* [24 Hours/Chord] (1977) and *Zagrejani kružeci zvuk klavira* [Heated Circulating Sound of the Piano] (1978), by means of which, through a personal performing tour de force,³⁵ he demonstrated the absence of any boundary between music and life. This is also present to a different extent in his other works completed before 1984 that, following in the footsteps of Cage and diverse interdisciplinary relations of dadaist provenance, are materialized in the direction of happenings, Fluxus, performance art, and sound environment.



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Miša Savić, *Zagrejani kružeci zvuk klavira*
[Heated Circulating Sound of the Piano],
1978, performance, Student Cultural
Center, Belgrade.

As regards the achievements of the group in work on the purely musical medium, the range is represented by an “elaboration” of Vladan Radovanović’s minimalist avant-garde “proclamation” and the experiences of American minimalism.³⁶ Some twenty years had elapsed between Radovanović’s chorales and the advent of the New Generation’s minimalism on the Yugoslav scene. During this time the avant-garde potential of his chorales remained contained “within them,” rather than materializing further beyond them.

The minimalism of the Belgrade composers really could have the effect of a radical innovation on the Yugoslav scene despite the fact that it was not essentially avant-garde in substance. The circumstances in music, the entire cultural context, and the manner of appearance made minimalism avant-garde. According to Bürger’s classification it could, admittedly, be understood in a certain respect as neo-avant-garde, since it implied the same goal in music that had been amply argued by American minimalists during the previous decade. On the other hand, the markedly rebellious behavior linked to the New Generation would nevertheless “prevent” its minimalism from belonging to the neo-avant-garde. Regardless of how it is interpreted on the basis of its program or its creative aspect—whether as avant-garde or neo-avant-garde—the minimalism of the Belgrade authors, viewed from both perspectives, remains an anachronous phenomenon: it belongs neither to the time of historical avant-garde movements nor to the time of the neo-avant-garde, but to a period of what was then new postmodern culture.³⁷ Such a form of minimalism, from today’s angle, represents nothing other than an expression of opting for an already established musical technology and aesthetics.

I have dwelt on this incongruence because it is so characteristic of avant-garde music in general, and especially of that in the former Yugoslavia. Although a phenomenon might be labeled as avant-garde from the aspect of Yugoslav musical culture, it does not actually fit the international and historical sense of this label, given its chronological and, more often than not, its phenomenological distance from the epicenter. Of course, this problem always occurs in musical environments affected by an avant-garde movement that they adopt. More accurately, it is primarily a problem experienced in those music worlds where the movement emerges with a postponed effect, while at the same time it cannot be said that it lacks in authenticity. The fact remains that a repeated avant-garde is no longer avant-garde, but it is also true that an avant-garde cannot be absolutized in the sense that it can be expected to have the effect of “headline news” in every cultural community

simultaneously. It must be borne in mind that avant-garde music can also flash at a greater geographical or temporal distance from its initial center, with an analogous (demolishing) effect.

This is the very reason why I introduced the term “local avant-garde” in my theory of the musical avant-garde.³⁸ By this I intend to warn not only that an avant-garde movement brings its characteristics to the world of music engulfed in its flames, but also that it mutates in the process of spreading. It is “modulated” by the local musical, psychological, and social features of the target culture.³⁹ I believe that this term best recognizes the unity of the artistic, psychological, and social nature of avant-garde music and that by using it we can most efficiently overcome the problems surrounding the chronological determination and terminological shades regarding certain avant-garde phenomena.

Futurism, Dadaism, Expressionism, and the Abolishing of Artistic Fictionality

Let me now discuss the measure of abolishing artistic fictionality offered by those futurist and dadaist avant-garde movements deemed by Bürger to be historical. Their provocations in the form of spectacles did not, admittedly, come within the focus of Yugoslav composers. Moreover, even in other types of music they would only partially have the sense Bürger attributed to them. This is primarily due to the fact that we are not dealing with futurist or dadaist music⁴⁰ here but rather with music in futurism or dadaism, since it can be considered new in the avant-garde sense⁴¹ in only one of its aspects. This applies to the music that mainly derived from the futurist project on the music of noise,⁴² as well as to futurist and dadaist attempts to establish a new link between poetry and music, between word and tone, between the semantic and the auditory.⁴³

The medium of music had expanded at this point into the entire field of sound. The process of solid material structure was replaced with simultaneous recitations performed in different languages, in different rhythms and tempos, at different pitches, where, naturally, nonsemantic verbal material is foregrounded. This was quite often accompanied by clamor and noise caused by using more than the usual ways and sources to obtain sound: not just Trillerpfeifen, rattles, or a child’s trumpet, but also all kinds of objects that were made to produce sound in various ways. Such material was only one of the devices⁴⁴ used to make the spectators at these spectacles replace their passive role with an open, active manifestation of their reactions and viewpoints, thus becoming themselves participants in the spectacle.

The antimusic attitude of futurism and dadaism represented in fact only one layer of a radical interdisciplinary, or more precisely intermedia, “conversation.” In Yugoslavia this conversation was not linked to the production of composers, though one could include here the one-act ballet grotesque *Sobareva metla* [The Valet’s Broom], composed by Miloje Milojević⁴⁵ in 1923, at the very end of the dadaist movement. The ballet formed part of a spectacle, a charity ball entitled *1002. noć* [1002 Nights], held in the Belgrade Kasina Hotel, based on an interdisciplinary and intermedia blend of sound, word (sung and spoken), movement, image, and costume.⁴⁶ If we are to judge by the score, since the sketches of the set and the costumes have not been preserved,⁴⁷ each of those means was realized according to the principle of collage made up of diverse, even noncognate elements. Thus structured, *The Valet’s Broom* could be interpreted as a “virtual, dynamic picture of the 1920s avant-garde”⁴⁸ that had the effect of an unusual, radical, but (in comparison with typical futurist and dadaist provocations) cultivated artistic event. The music itself, which followed the same collage logic, was not avant-garde in its substance, however, despite the new intervention within the text, according to which it is spoken at undetermined pitches. One can hear a waltz and a foxtrot in the music, Spanish folk music elements, Serbian urban song, a fragment from Wagner’s *Siegfried* or the symphonic poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss, leading to the possible conclusion that the purely musical side of the work is closest to a neoclassical process of the Satie type, particularly that exemplified by the ballet *Parade*. In the case of both ballets one can speak conditionally of music in dadaism.⁴⁹

The other historical avant-gardes mentioned by Bürger have only a rhetorical or metaphoric sense in music (for example, cubistic or surrealist music), because they have no support in the matter itself. Their characteristics are not musically differentiated and they are congruent with the solutions and methods of the musical neoclassicism of the type of Satie and the French Six. And, as I have mentioned previously, such neoclassicism offers at the same time the musical arguments of dadaism, above all in the direction of expanding the sound field and collage technique.

Expressionism, on the other hand, poses a different sort of problem, discernible in a certain caution shown by Bürger when including it among the historical avant-garde movements. Furthermore, this caution is necessary in the case of music, the main reason being that the destructiveness of musical expressionism is of an evolving nature. Thus the integrity of any particular essential category of the institution of music is preserved within it: the composer as the undeniable author, creator, and craftsman, the work

as a traditional category, and the conditions and aspects of its presentation, perception, and receptive response.

Expressionist sound was, at the same time, shockingly new. This means that although the atonality and athematicism that were decisive in the shift toward a new quality of sound were prepared gradually, what resulted from this preparation was in fact a separation from the musical tradition along its key points and the hierarchy within its content and formal logic. This separation even had some forms of external avant-garde behavior because there was a certain aggressiveness, so to speak, in the well-coordinated work and public performances of Schoenberg and his pupils, in the organizational solidarity of their work, and in the causes of scandals linked to their names such as the one at the Vienna concert in 1913, or to the name of Igor Stravinsky on the occasion of the first performance of his ballet *Le sacre du printemps* in Paris that same year. In spite of this, the radicalism of expressionist composers indicates a significant divergence from the "definition" of the historical avant-garde movement, or, more precisely, a different take on it. If I were to describe the dadaist avant-garde as the destruction of construction, I would describe expressionist radicalism as a construction of destruction. In other words, the ultimate effect of the method by which expressionist music was made had a more radical impact than the method itself.

It is my view that it was precisely because of this that expressionist music gave music a richer legacy than the previously mentioned avant-garde movements and that, as a result, it also paved the way for possibilities of authentic local offshoots. The precondition for the expansion of musical expressionism was, namely, located within the domain of education, learning and mastering a certain technique and knowledge, by which one overcame or negated the composing strategies and hierarchical concepts that had existed hitherto. In that sense, musical expressionism was very constructive, and in every musical culture in which it was registered it achieved a technological and aesthetic progress of its own. As is usually the case with the fate of the avant-garde, it was generally coupled with resistance from the reference music environment, often of the same intensity as the sharpness of the effect of the expressionist sound itself.

The decisive incentives and professional foundations of expressionism in Yugoslav music are linked to foreign music centers (above all Prague, Vienna, and Munich) that provided our composers with the possibilities for professional training, access to information on state-of-the-art events within the sphere of European music, and an immediate opportunity to join these music battlefields.

Marij Kogoj, Ivan Čargo, and Ferdo Delak, 1927, photocollage. Slovenski gledališki muzej, Ljubljana.

The chronological gap between the appearance of expressionism in Yugoslavia and in its European centers was therefore not so wide. In Slovenian music, for example, there are hints of expressionist musical discourse as early as 1914 in the choral composition *Trenutek* [Moment] by Marij Kogoj.⁵⁰ In his productions after 1914 those elements are increasingly intensively subjected to expression, aiming at the spiritual and the antipositivist, while in the opera *Črne Maske* [Black Masks] (1924–1927), in both its musical and its extramusical aspects, they argue in favor of a typical German expressionism along the Schreker-Schoenberg lines.

Slovenian music achieved a stronger and more authoritative consolidation of expressionism in the work of Slavko Osterc⁵¹ and the then young “hypermodern generation” of Slovenian composers. Polytonality, atonality, and athematicism combined with dodecaphonic and quarter-tone composing techniques as the range within which the international radicalism long and





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Veno Pilon, *Portret kompozitora*
Marija Kogožl [Portrait of Composer
Marij Kogožl], 1923, oil on canvas.
Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.

passionately advocated by Osterc was realized.⁵² Within it we can identify features of German expressionism and the avant-garde achievements of the music of the Prague milieu exemplified by the accomplishments of Alois Hába, one of Osterc's teachers. The music and stage work *Maska rdeče smrti* [Mask of the Red Death] (1930) or the piano *Aforizmi* [Aphorisms] (1936) are only some of the many titles from the list of Osterc's compositions with expressionist features.

With a different type of creative concentration on these means, though perhaps not as intense as that of Osterc and Kogoj, expressionist aesthetics shaped the opus of their mutual student Matija Bravničar⁵³ as well as the other members of Osterc's circle, including his student Franc Šturm⁵⁴ and the Frankfurt student Danilo Švara.⁵⁵ The composing activity of these authors, accompanied by their energetic critical work, produced a strong avant-garde "offensive"⁵⁶ whose legacy was the avant-garde spirit that spread in Slovenian music as early as the beginning of the 1960s, thanks largely to the activities of the Pro Musica Viva ensemble. It gathered young Slovenian composers whose goal was to learn and assert phenomena in their own terrain that characterized the most heated events of European music at the time.

The expressionist spectrum of Serbian music also spans the interwar period, mainly emerging in the 1930s. However, music in Serbia contains significant hints of expressionism even before then in the works of Petar Konjović⁵⁷ (the operas *Knez od Zete* [The Prince of Zeta], 1927, and *Košana*, 1931), Miloje Milojević,⁵⁸ and Josip Slavenski.⁵⁹ Their works already show an obvious gravitational shift toward the increasingly intense inclusion of radical means, such as, for instance, the case of Slavenski where the chords of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale are given at the beginning of two movements (*Srpska igra* [Serbian Dance] and *Albanska pesma* [Albanian Song]) from the symphonic suite *Balkanofonija* [Balkanophonia] (1927); or of Milojević in the piano composition *Ritmičke grimase* [Rhythmic Grimaces] (1935) where, in a true expressionist manner, there are numerous acute aspects of atonality, clusters in the percussion role of the piano, and occasionally an unspecified meter with a question mark instead of its usual designation.

At the beginning of the 1930s, however, the work of Serbian composers who, like their Slovenian colleagues, studied in interwar Prague⁶⁰ moved toward Yugoslav music in the form of a strong expressionist wave rising out of the avant-garde music of this city. In their case the musical means also include the range from polytonality and atonality to dodecaphony to a quarter-tone system, quite often based on athematic formation.⁶¹ However, much as with the Slovenian composers, the contemporaneity of the achieved language was not equally intense in every instance. In the case of Stanojlo Rajić⁶² for example, although the expressionism is brisk, it lacks dodecaphonic and quarter-tone composing systems. These features, on the other hand, are the main preoccupation in the interwar production of Dragutin Čolić,⁶³ in a style along the lines of Schoenberg and Hába.⁶⁴ Using the same means, Milan Ristić⁶⁵ applies the Hindemithian method of structuring as well as a six-tone system. Vojislav Vučković's⁶⁶ opus between the two wars is

also characterized by a radical expressionist orientation of the same kind that, according to the composer's conviction, was in full harmony with the progressiveness of his ideological views.

An interest in quarter-tone music also marks the production of Ljubica Marić.⁶⁷ Although her style from the time she spent in Prague is determined by embracing the type of expressionism widely accepted in that environment, her authentic avant-gardism is linked to an expressionism of different roots appearing in her production in the mid-1950s. It is an expressionism conditioned by an encounter with layers of folk music material that, as Stravinsky's and Bartók's legacy, was already present in the work of Josip Slavenski,⁶⁸ who also happened to be Ljubica Marić's teacher. This is particularly evident in his *Slavenska sonata* [Slav Sonata] for violin and piano (1924) and his vocal-instrumental piece *Sinfonija Orijenta (Religiofonija)* [Symphony of the Orient (Religiophony)] (1934). It therefore concerns the brand of expressionism recognized by Ljubica Marić as her true orientation, exposed as a "platform" in her cantata *Pesme prostora* [Songs of Space] (1956).

Two years prior to *Songs of Space*, the composition *Spisak* [The List] written by Serbian composer Dušan Radić⁶⁹ for soprano and piano resounded in Belgrade. Despite its postwar emotionally intoned music production, it "declared" an extremely rough expressive and linguistic asceticism, resounding with the objectivist trait of Stravinsky's neoclassicism. The composition provoked a stormy reaction from the Belgrade music public, while its composer was branded a brazen avant-gardist.

At a time when expressionism in Slovenian and Serbian music was pushing the avant-garde, the other Yugoslav music communities, including Croatia's, were drawn to other issues, for the most part related to the problem of the revival and appreciation of the national image of music culture and its professional composing production.

The Changes to the Avant-garde Configuration in the 1960s and 1970s

The avant-garde configuration changes noticeably in the early 1960s, mainly in the direction of avant-garde innovation originating in Polish music. A large number of composers from Yugoslavia had the opportunity to learn about them at the source, whether as visitors to the Warsaw Autumn Festival of Contemporary Music or during their professional development within the Polish music community.

The Zagreb Music Biennial was established in the Croatian capital in 1961, functioning from its establishment as an international institution, as

the decisive generator of the avant-garde's rise in Yugoslav music that marked the 1960s and—regarding the aforementioned multimedia projects—the 1970s. To paraphrase one of its founders, the Biennial was the place and “spiritual coordinate” from which we watched and creatively followed the “birth of a new time and a new world.”⁷⁰ That rise could also be recognized in the dominating image of the annual reviews of Yugoslav composition⁷¹ held in Opatija from 1964 onward.

At the level of composition and technique, the avant-garde configuration considered here was represented in the works of our composers by the principles of integral serialism and dodecaphony as its common “forerunner,” by the aleatorics typical of the Polish composers Krzysztof Penderecki and Witold Lutosławski, as well as by the technique of micropolyphony characteristic of the Hungarian composer György Ligeti. In addition to this, thanks largely to the activities of the Acezantez group, the Biennial and the review also offered examples of diverse aspects of research into the domain of expanded media, as well as various experiments with sound, implying the use of electronic equipment. Its development in Yugoslavia began in the early 1970s. As I have already developed above, this media polyvalence in our music had the sense and value of the avant-garde as a historical movement, except that, in comparison, it was chronologically displaced either to the period that “belongs” to the neo-avant-garde or to that belonging to the postmodern.

The avant-garde pattern characteristic of the purely musical medium of the time is manifested as early as the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s in the activities of the first avant-garde generation of Croatian composers, represented by Milo Cipra,⁷² Natko Devčić,⁷³ and Branimir Sakač.⁷⁴ This was a time that saw the use of almost the full array of avant-garde tools in the Yugoslav music of that period. These tools, however, marked the production of Devčić and Sakač more than they did that of Cipra. Within the context of Devčić’s opus, the avant-garde elements are concretized in the domain of atonality and athematicism (as in the piano composition *Mikrosuite*, 1965), in twelve-tone shaping (for example, in the chamber piece *Odrazi* [Reflections], 1965), and in the use of the electronic instrumentarium (for example, *Columbia 68*, 1968), as well as in the nonsemantic and instrumental treatment of text in the *Koncert za kamerni ansambl* [Concert for a Chamber Ensemble] (1969) and *Igra reči* [Play on Words] (1969), a vocal-instrumental piece with tape accompaniment.

Sakač, on the other hand, introduces himself in 1959 as the author of *Tri sintetske poeme* [Three Synthetic Poems], the first composition of concrete music in Yugoslavia. Two years later he signs the composition *Jahači*

Apokalipse [Riders of the Apocalypse] in which elements of concrete and electronic sound are combined with the sound of orchestral instruments. His works dating from the 1960s are characterized to varying degrees by the combination of serial and aleatoric logic, where cluster structures and use of elements of graphic notation are also featured, such as the piano piece *Prizme* [Prisms] (1961), *Epizode* [Episodes] (1963) for orchestra, and the chamber composition *Strukture I* [Structures I] (1966).

The avant-garde orientation of these composers was also embraced by younger composers born in the 1920s and 1930s. The leading personality among them was Milko Kelemen,⁷⁵ already mentioned in the context of the multimedia “subversion” of the music discipline. His diverse opus comprises all musical genres, including electronic music. Kelemen’s entry into the avant-garde implied a route extending from late Webern and Messiaen rudimentary serialism, including an attempt at synthesizing twelve-tone rows and interval structures of folk material (for example, in the *Pet eseja* [Five Essays], 1959, for string quartet), to the creative “correction” of Darmstadt system fetishization through the individual treatment of accepted rules. Kelemen’s avant-garde achievements always relied on the inevitable link between impression and structure,⁷⁶ whether as a matter of the procedure of integral serialism or the “freedom rules” of aleatoric formation. *Transfiguracije* [Transfigurations] for piano and orchestra (1961), the chamber music piece *Radiant* (1962), the orchestral composition *Sub rosa* (1964), and *Motion* for string quartet (1968) are some of the works that illustrate this style.

Other Yugoslav composers particularly intrigued by the aleatoric principle of composing were Primož Ramovš,⁷⁷ the doyen of Slovenian 1960s avant-garde, and Croatian composer Ivo Malec.⁷⁸ Primarily an instrumental composer, in his numerous orchestral, concert, and chamber pieces (such as the *Concerto* for violin, viola, and orchestra, 1961; *Enneaphonia* for a chamber ensemble, 1963; *Con sordino* for trumpet, trombone, and piano, 1969; *Tryptichon* for string quartet, 1969) Ramovš moved from the field of atonality, dodecaphony, and total organization of musical parameters to an avant-garde sound generated primarily by controlled aleatorics, always exploring the new spheres of sound properties. In Malec, on the other hand, the usage of aleatorics is consistently functionalized by the logic of the total music dramaturgy of the piece. This often implies making links between the improvisation segments and the strictly fixed passages. In addition, Malec was also interested in crossing electronic and traditional instrumental and vocal sound. He embodied his avant-garde views in works such as *Oral* for recital and orchestra (1967), *Vocatif* for orchestra (1968), *Lied* for 39 strings

and 18 voices (1969), *Miniatures pour Lewis Carroll* for a chamber ensemble (1964), and *Dodecameron* for 12 solo voices (1971).

Most of the representatives of 1960s Yugoslav avant-garde music are to be found in the generation of composers born in the 1930s. Among the most eminent are Vladan Radovanović⁷⁹ and Dubravko Detoni,⁸⁰ but also Vinko Globokar⁸¹ who, though predominantly engaged in music abroad, brought an orientation of radical avant-garde improvisation to Yugoslavia as a composing cornerstone and the communication sense of its contemporary music. Thus the aleatoric sign symbols in his scores point to a minimum fixedness of musical parameters (for example, in *Correspondances* for four instrumental soloists, 1969; *Toucher* for a percussionist, 1973; *Dédoublement* for clarinet, 1975). Often implied here are various articulation requirements within the context of the global time distribution of the phases of music as they unfold. The distribution is otherwise relativized by the anticipated freedom of the interpreter's ideas and, generally, the improvisation coordination of the performers. In addition to all this, Globokar tended toward sound as unconventional as possible, even if this was achieved by immersing instruments in water, such as in *Discours IV* (1974) for three clarinets, or the performers uttering a text "through" their instrument, as, for example, in *Discours II* for five trombones (1968). Such composition attitudes "extract" a piece of music from its "natural," traditional strongholds, aiming its aleatoric constituents at the determination of a "work in progress," such as those in the *Laboratorium* for 10 soloists, coordinators, and electronic assistants (1973–1985).

Radovanović, on the other hand, moved on from his 1957 minimalist chorales to the specific problems of serial organization of material and aleatorics in a rigorously limited sense (for example, his radiophonic piece *Sphaeroön*, 1966), focusing later on cluster structures in the manner of the avant-garde Ligeti (for example, in the works *Evolution*, 1970; *Sonora*, 1971; or *Stringent*, 1973). The very beginning of the 1960s saw Radovanović's completion of the piece *Invencija* [Invention], which represents the first contribution to the field of tape music in Serbia. In the second half of the 1960s he began intensive work on electronic compositions (for example, *Elektronska studija* [Electronic Study], 1967), while in 1976 he also presented himself as the author of the first Yugoslav computer-realized piece (*Kompjutorija* [Computoria]).

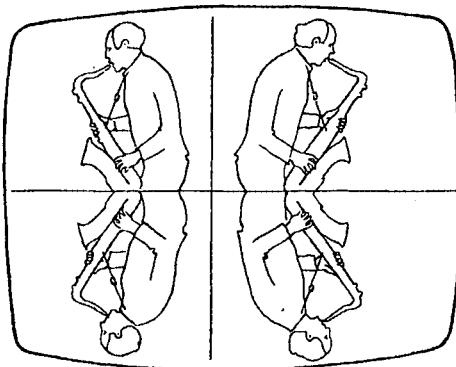
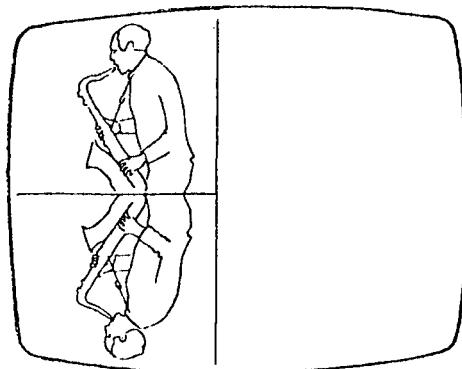
Detoni also worked in the electronic medium during this period. It was a natural outgrowth of his inventive attitude toward the secrets of sound in general, which, as we have already seen, characterized all the Acezantez ensemble did. His adventurous tendency toward the unknown led Detoni to



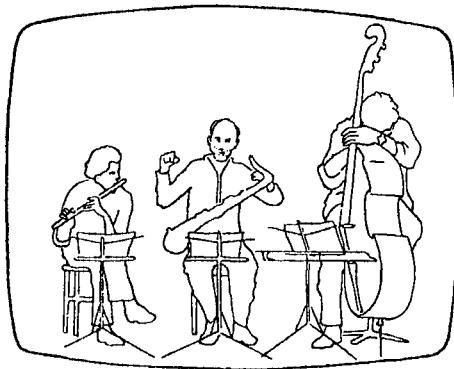
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Laboratorija Vinka Globokara [Vinko Globokar's Laboratory], 1977, photograph. From the catalog *Muzički biennale Zagreb 1961–1991* [The Zagreb Music Biennial, 1961–1991] (Zagreb: Muzički informativni centar, 1991).

Vladan Radovanović, *Varijacije za TV*
[Variations for TV], 1977, drawing/text.
Artist's collection.



12. VARIATION



subtle “listenings” to frictions and aleatoric balancing provocatively placed at the most sensitive edge between sound and noise (for example, *Likovi i plohe* [Figures and Planes] for orchestra, 1967). He then moved toward a general graphically suggested and stimulated improvisational freedom (in *Graphics 1–6*), toward the preparation and internal amplification of instruments (for example, *Šifre* [Codes] for piano and four loudspeakers, 1967), or toward layered, nonconventional elaborations of concrete and electronic sound (for example, *Phonomorphia 1–4* from 1967 to 1974).

A great number of Yugoslav composers advocated the postwar European type of musical avant-garde. Ruben Radica,⁸² for example, made use of the serialization of pitch and other music parameters, while Petar Osghian⁸³ dealt with the serial technique and aleatoric factors of the Polish school, which had attracted the attention of a whole series of other composers, including some of the older generation such as Vitomir Trifunović.⁸⁴ Some elements of aleatoric improvisation and work on clusters were also used in individual ways and with differing degrees of dedication by Stanko Horvat,⁸⁵ Ivo Petrić,⁸⁶ Berislav Popović,⁸⁷ Toma Prošev,⁸⁸ Vojin Komadina,⁸⁹ Lože Lebič,⁹⁰ Rajko Maksimović,⁹¹ Slobodan Atanacković,⁹² Josip Magdić,⁹³ Zoran Hristić,⁹⁴ Igor Kuljerić,⁹⁵ and others.

Although the Yugoslav composers born in the 1940s manifest features of avant-garde music in their compositions in the 1960s,⁹⁶ they do not appear, from today’s perspective, to be part of the same constellation. Only in some of their segments and contexts, at the time of the yet unspecified postmodern horizon, could those features be interpreted as being a local avant-garde.⁹⁷ From a more general vantage point, the activities of this generation definitively leave the avant-garde behind as a relic of the past. Even in the production of the composers who represented it, and who remained faithful to “its” composing tools on into the 1980s, this is no longer a case of an avant-garde. Sometime beginning in the second half of the 1970s, composition in Yugoslavia shifted to a new postmodern methodology and technology, its focus not on confrontation but rather agreement with tradition, “sealed” on the basis of a relationship of nonrestoration. According to this agreement, any piece of musical data from the past and, generally speaking, from the entire world treasury of music has the same starting value. The devices of the avant-garde, therefore, are neither more nor less significant than any other musical devices or content. For a postmodern composer they are all nothing more than potential and material for a particular, individual music codification. This, indeed, is the way the avant-garde in the music of the former Yugoslavia ended.

Conclusion

If I were to return now to Bürger's theory, I would have to recognize that the wave of Yugoslav avant-garde music of the 1960s, spilling over into the 1970s, and the previously discussed avant-garde phenomena of Yugoslav music do not fulfill the preconditions of a historical avant-garde movement, nor indeed the preconditions of the neo-avant-garde, although—and not only chronologically—this might arguably be a case of the neo-avant-garde. This avant-garde is collective in nature. Its essential trait suggests an institutionalization of the elements of the previous, expressionist avant-garde. What I have in mind is primarily an integral serialism that, indeed, confirms the principle of dodecaphonic procedure by developing and establishing it within the sphere of all music parameters. From that aspect, integral serialism could be interpreted as a “critique” of dodecaphony, which would imply some neo-avant-garde features. We must bear in mind here, however, that, interpreted as such, the “critique” is in fact a critique conducted in the “old” way, which the principle of the developmental continuity of music always relied on. In this context the fact that the social conditions were essentially different from those shaping the avant-garde at the zenith of the bourgeois system is almost irrelevant.

At the same time, in spite of its evolutionary character, integral serialism came to music through an avant-garde organizational model of the “three concentric circles of the Darmstadt clique” that was not, admittedly, equally manifest in our music. This composing system, hermetic per se, nevertheless only served to fortify the eroded ramparts of music as an autonomous discipline, thus betraying the avant-garde’s “task” of removing the “roadblock” between art and life.

As regards aleatoric improvisation, it ultimately led to the abolishment of the system, thus causing a new upheaval in the institution of musical work. Simultaneously, however, particularly in the context of cluster structures, aleatorics also produced sound of a shockingly new quality. Even if total aleatorics could be interpreted as the institutionalization of the overthrow of the musical piece, as a neo-avant-garde of its kind, the quality of the sound obtained by work with clusters is not a consequence of any legacy but an authentic avant-garde innovation. If, on the other hand, we interpret aleatorics as an opposition to the system of integral serialism, as its “critique” not in an “old” but a “new” way, a way that shows we have been through the experience of self-critique in Bürger's sense, the aleatoric episode of European music and the music of the former Yugoslavia could theoretically be inter-

preted as being neo-avant-garde. This would lead us, however, to a paradox, attributing to original avant-garde music, such as that of Penderecki, Lutosławski, and Ligeti, as well as to its proponents in our country, an inadequate, schematically understood position.

And that is precisely the moment when, as I remarked at the outset, all the problems and paradoxes of avant-garde music discussed here—which go, as we have seen, beyond the paradoxes and problems of Yugoslav music—are best explored: examining the phenomenon of avant-garde music in terms of the avant-garde in the other arts, and the specifics of the Yugoslav musical avant-garde in terms of Europe.

This is why I can say that avant-garde music in Yugoslavia was avant-garde to the same extent that it was a musical avant-garde at all, in relation to the avant-garde outside of music. And even when, as I have established based on the types of phenomena and chronological location, the avant-garde in Yugoslav music stepped into neo-avant-garde or even post-modern⁹⁸ “territory,” it remained consistent with its generally progressive art mission through the impact it made on our environment.

translated by Branka Nikolić

Notes

1. Dr. Vojislav Vučković (1910–1942, died as a victim of the fascist Special Police). Serbian composer, musicologist, and conductor. Taught aesthetics and history of music at a secondary school of music.
2. Cf. Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974).
3. Edvard Kardelj, *Pravci razvoja političkog sistema socijalističkog samoupravljanja* [Directions of Development of the Political System of Socialist Self-Management] (Belgrade: Komunist, 1977), p. 21.
4. Ibid.
5. E.g., Peter Bürger bases his interpretation of the avant-garde on its subjection to the development of bourgeois society, holding that only bourgeois society's total emancipation brought about the appearance of key avant-garde categories (cf. Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*).
6. This refers to Mirjana Veselinović, *Svaralačka prisutnost evropske avangarde u nas* [The Creative Presence of the European Avant-garde in Serbian Music] (Belgrade: Univerzitet umetnosti, 1983). It explores the preconditions and aspects of the impact of the European musical avant-garde on the music in the former Yugoslav environment.

7. Cf. Christoph von Blumröder, "Musikalische Avantgarde heute?," in Albrecht Riethmüller, ed., *Revolution in der Musik. Avantgarde von 1200 bis 2000* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), pp. 47–54.
8. Cf. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, *Fragmeneti o muzičkoj postmoderni* [Fragments on Musical Postmodernity] (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1997).
9. Cf. Tobias Widmaier, "Colonel Schulhoff, Musikdada—Unsinn als Ausdruck von Lebendigkeit," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 3 (1994), 15.
10. For example, in his book dedicated to the problematics of the postmodern, Wolfgang Welsch uses the formulation "the radical modern of the twentieth century," by which he understands phenomena that are in fact characteristic of the avant-garde. Admittedly, he does not say so explicitly anywhere; it could be said that he even avoids the term. But considering that, writing of the relationship between the postmodern and the modern, he emphasizes that "what was eruption in the modern became the ground" in the postmodern, this rather points to the avant-garde as the "hard modern," as an explosion (Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997], pp. 193–201).
11. See more in Günter Mayer, "Für und wider—Avantgarde und Geschichtslosigkeit?," *Positionen* 27 (1996), pp. 2–7; Helga de la Motte-Haber, "Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Avantgarde nach 1945," in *Musikkultur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Kassel: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1994), pp. 63–70.
12. Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, pp. 199–200.
13. Paraphrased according to a quotation cited in Hajnrik Kloc, *Umetnost u XX veku. Moderna—postmoderna—druga moderna* (Novi Sad: Svetovi, 1995), p. 30 (Serbian translation of Heinrich Klotz, *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Moderne—Postmoderne—Zweite Moderne*).
14. I must say at the outset that Bürger warns there is a difference between the status of autonomy that "determines the functioning of a particular work and the content of a particular work (or group of works)." The process of constructing the institution of art that he refers to took place simultaneously with the emancipatory struggle of the bourgeoisie, meaning that the institution of art was established toward the end of the eighteenth century.
15. Among them Bürger includes dadaism, early surrealism, the Russian avant-garde following the October Revolution, and Italian futurism and German expressionism, with certain reservations, and (to a great extent conditionally) cubism (cf. Bürger, 44).
16. Ibid., 24.
17. Ibid., 66–67.
18. John Cage, "Eksperimentalna muzika" [Experimental Music], in *John Cage: radovi/tekstovi 1939–1979* (Belgrade: Radionica SIC, 1981), p. 24.
19. Cf. John Cage, "Odbrana Satiea" [Defense of Satie] and "Eksperimentalna muzika: doktrina" [Experimental Music: Doctrine], both in ibid.
20. Bürger uses the term "neo-avant-garde" to denote the avant-garde wave of the 1950s and 1960s.

21. Born in Belgrade in 1932, where he completed his studies at the Music Academy. Head of Radio Belgrade's Electronic Studio from its foundation in 1972. Author of works in the fields of music, painting, literature, and multimedia genres. Wrote a great number of theoretical works of various stripes.
22. More about Radovanović's multimedia achievements and his conception of nonart can be found in Mirjana Veselinović, *Umetnost i izvan nje: poetika i stvaralaštvo Vladana Radovanovića* [Art and Beyond—The Poetics and Creation of Vladan Radovanović] (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1991).
23. Branimir Sakač (1918–1979), composer and music writer. One of the founders of the Zagreb Music Biennial and the Yugoslav Music Review in Opatija. Worked as a radio editor, as a teacher at a secondary school of music in Zagreb, and at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad.
24. Milko Kelemen (born 1924), composer and music writer. Graduated in composition from the Music Academy in Zagreb, where he also taught for a time. In 1973 he became a professor of composition at the Musikhochschule in Stuttgart. He is one of the founders of the Zagreb Music Biennial.
25. Born in Križevci (Croatia) in 1937. Completed his studies in composition and piano at the Music Academy in Zagreb. Works in almost all kinds of music, but also with multimedia genres. He has published around ten books and written numerous essays on music, analytical texts, radio, and television shows. Also works as a translator. Works as new music editor on Radio Zagreb's Third Channel.
26. Marko Radmio, "Marginalije uz 25-godišnjicu Acezantez-a" [Marginalia on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Acezantez], in *Ansambl Acezantez od 1970* [Ensemble Acezantez since 1970] (Zagreb: Muzički informacioni centar Koncertne direkcije, 1999), p. 57.
27. As an illustration of this let me cite several fragments from Detoni's instructions for performance of the multimedia stage fantasy *La voix du silence* (from "Detonijeve upute za izvedbe" [Detoni's Instructions for the Performances], in *ibid.*, p. 146):

- a. Darkness. In the center of the stage Katalin lies buried, hidden from the eyes of the audience. . . . In a faint glimmer, the ensemble slowly approaches the piano from all sides. They begin to play with the instrument and around it. The play becomes more and more frenzied, faster, but not a single sound is produced. At the climax of playing, at a signal from a hand everything begins to slow down. . . . At the end, a long silence. Listening to one's own thoughts. Listening to one's own nervous system by means of electronics.
- b. *Monos III* in an extremely slow tempo. Extremely long pauses. Unusual sounds, very much like electronically filtered sounds. Almost nothing is played. A gesture or voice can be used instead of a musical phrase. Like music under water.
- c. At the signal of a hammer Katalin awakes. She gets up slowly, in an impressive way. Her appearance and movements should produce a small shock. A pantomime

starts, but it is much more varied in contrasts. . . . It becomes a monologue of gestures (a story). . . . Katalin becomes more and more nervous, her hysterical gestures become mechanical. . . . At the climax (physical and psychological), noises from a tape are heard. . . . The sounds stimulate the ensemble and it reacts to each of them. *Graphics IV* has thus already started.

28. Nedjeljko Fabrio, "Acezantez naš svagdanji" [Our Daily Acezantez], in *ibid.*, p. 88.
29. Dubravko Detoni, "Acezantez: što—kako—kada" [Acezantez: What—How—When], in *ibid.*, p. 20.
30. From "Acezantez's First Manifesto," in *ibid.*, p. 27.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
32. Born 1919 in Subotica (the Vojvodina). Editor of Radio Novi Sad and head of the Musicology Department of the Vojvodina Museum in Novi Sad. Worked as a choir conductor, melographer, and music critic. Author of studies on folk music, mainly Hungarian.
33. The group was open to new—especially younger—members. It consisted of Milimir Drašković (born 1952), Miodrag Lazarov, who later added the name Pashu (1949), Miloš Petrović (1952), Miloš Raičković (1956), Miroslav-Miša Savić (1954), and Vladimir Tošić (1949). This formation, later reduced to the group Opus 4 (Drašković, Lazarov, Savić, Tošić), performed until 1984.
34. Miodrag Lazarov, "Nova generacija" [New Generation], in the catalog *Muzički programi Studentskog kulturnog centra* [The Music Program of the Students' Cultural Center] (Belgrade: SKC/Sava Centar, 1979), p. 1.
35. In the first case by a 24-hour repetition of one chord in a given tempo (MM = 54), and in the second by "playing" the piano while lying on the piano lid, with one's head and arms above the keyboard, with a tendency toward a maximally spread position of the arms, at a temperature of 54°C! (Cf. Miša Savić, description of the projects *24 Hours/Chord* and *Heated Circulating Sound of the Piano*.)
36. On the minimalism of New Generation composers see Marija Masnikosa, *Muzički minimalizam* [Minimalism in Music] (Belgrade: Clio, 1998).
37. At the outset I should remark on the difference between the meaning of the formulation "post-modern" (hyphenated) and "postmodern" (unhyphenated). The former refers to all artistic tendencies, in other words to "polystylist," to use A. Schnittke's formulation, while the latter implies only the artistic, composing practice within the framework of the post-modern which, while acknowledging the treasure of the music heritage, relies on the function of signifier, on the phenomenon of multiplying meaning (cf. Veselinović-Hofman, *Fragmenti o muzičkoj postmoderni*, pp. 15–19).
38. Cf. Veselinović, *Svaralačka prisutnost*, pp. 33–37.
39. This is quite often the cause of frequent divergences between the avant-garde movement and the typical features of its development. According to Renato Poggiali,

this development is characterized by activism, antagonism, nihilism, and agonism: cf. Renato Poggiali, *Teorija avangardne umetnosti* [A Theory of Avant-Garde Art] (Belgrade: Nolit, 1975). In my avant-garde theory I also added to those phases the phase of interspace which marks the entrance of the avant-garde into tradition, where it still, for the last time, may bear the name of avant-garde (cf. Veselinović, *Svaralačka prisutnost*, 29–30). Likewise, a divergence from the typical features of avant-garde manifestation can also be seen in the possibility—almost a rule in music!—that the manifesto is not put into words, and that the role of the group as an avant-garde unit is taken over by just one artist (cf. ibid., p. 30).

40. “Dada neglected music, for dadaists it did not exist at all,” concludes Jeanpaul Goergen. That is why “in vain shall we seek a great, typically Dada, composition,” although numerous authors showed affinity for the Dada ideas (Jeanpaul Goergen, “Dada Musik der Ironie und Provokation,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 3 [1994], pp. 4–14).

41. I understand an avant-garde innovation to be an innovation won by usurpation and not by the logic of continuity in the development of artistic devices. This means that, in contrast to non-avant-garde artistic innovation that extends within the space of modernity as a constant but extremely flexible category, avant-garde innovation mostly resides within the space of fashion. Any similarity between them exists in the manner of appearance (in the form of “invention” by a “designer”!) as well as in the manners of announcement (through a manifesto, “proclamations” of the *dernier cri*). (See more in Veselinović, *Svaralačka prisutnost*, pp. 6–23.)

42. Cf. Luigi Russolo, “Umetnost buke” [L’arte dei rumori, Milano, 1916], *Novi Zvuk* 2 (1993), pp. 57–60; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “Aeromuzika” [Aeromusica, aeropittura, 1929], *Novi Zvuk* 2 (1993), pp. 61–62.

43. In other aspects music was traditional, though sometimes dadaized, that is, subjected to reductions, transformations, collages. Cf. Goergen, “Dada Musik der Ironie und Provokation”; Rudolf Klein and Kurt Blaukopf, “Dada and Music,” in Willy Verkauf, ed., *Dada—Monograph of a Movement* (London: Academy Editions/St. Martin’s Press, 1975), pp. 53–56. In the performances one could thus hear music by Auric, Borodin, Debussy, Franck, Liszt, Milhaud, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Reger, Satie, Schumann, Schoenberg, Skryabin, Stravinsky . . . , followed by thirteenth-century music, a balalaika orchestra, Serbian military song, French chansons, modern dance rhythms, elements of jazz, and so forth.

44. In those performances an important role was also played by movement, image, color, mask, costume, and makeup—that is, various media that, each from its own aspect, were channeled toward provoking an open protest and shock. Meanwhile we should not overlook the fact that when a shocking situation is repeated it no longer has the same effect. For example, panic-stricken screams as a manifestation of “original fear” and as an “extreme moment of truth,” caused by the sudden appearance of around 40 white mice at a Dada evening at a University of Jena room (later denied), could not have had the same effect in front of the same audience a second time.

45. Serbian composer and doctor of musicology Miloje Milojević (1884–1946), studied in Germany and Prague. Professor of music history at the University of Belgrade; a brief sojourn in composition at the Belgrade Music Academy.
46. Cf. Nadežda Mosusova, “Mesto Miloja Milojevića u srpskoj i jugoslovenskoj muzici” [Miloje Milojević’s Place in Serbian and Yugoslav Music], in *Miloje Milojević, kompozitor i muzikolog* [Miloje Milojević, Composer and Musicologist] (Belgrade: Udruženje kompozitora Srbije, 1986); Biljana Milanović, “Sobareva metla: bliskost s evropskom avantgardom” [The Valet’s Broom: Closeness with the European Avant-garde], in *Kompozitorsko stvaralaštvo Miloja Milojevića* [The Works of the Composer Miloje Milojević] (Belgrade: Muzikološki institut SANU, 1998), pp. 262–277.
47. Cf. Jelena Šantić, “Avangardna igra podsvesti—koreografski aspekt” [The Avant-garde Play of the Subconscious—Choreographic Aspect], in *ibid.*, pp. 270–286.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
49. Let me mention in this context that the performance of the ballet *Parade* features in the official chronology of the dadaist movement, within the context of its manifestations of 1917! (Cf. “Chronology 1914–1924,” in Verkauf, ed., *Dada—Monograph of a Movement*.) Let me also point out that *The Valet’s Broom* is often qualified as a surrealist ballet, because, above all, of its surrealist text written by Serbian author Marko Ristić, after which it was composed. Another reason is its choreography type, “dreamy . . . , full of excessive dynamic and structural innovations,” closest to the style of Swedish choreographer Jean Börlin. (Cf. Šantić, “Avangardna igra podsvesti,” p. 279.)
50. Marij Kogoj (1892–1956), composer, conductor, music critic. Studied in Vienna. Worked as a rehearsal pianist and conductor in Ljubljana. See more about Kogoj as an avant-garde composer in Borut Loparnik, “Marij Kogoj: The Avant-garde Issue,” in *Slowenische historische Avantgarde* [Slovenian Historical Avant-garde] (Ljubljana: Aesthetics Society/Gesellschaft für Ästhetik, 1986), pp. 110–122; Borut Loparnik, “Ali je več ali je manj? In ali je sploh?,” in *Tank: Slovenska zgodovinska avantgarda* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 1998), pp. 117–124.
51. Slavko Osterc (1895–1941), composer and music writer. Studied in Prague between the two world wars. Worked as a professor at the Conservatory/Music Academy in Ljubljana.
52. “That Slovenian ultramodernist current that overthrows tonality and form in its creative work, that detests a pure trichord, . . . that employs a dodecaphonic system throughout its works, that finally inclines even to quarter-tone music—that generation works much and tirelessly. It is another question as to whether this inclination to purely Western European schools, schools of pure intellect, will not separate them too much from their own people.” Boris Papandopulo, “Mlada slovenačka muzička generacija. Opčenita razmatranja 1933” [The Young Slovenian Generation in Music: General Observations, 1933], in *S. Osterc, Varia musicologica II, Zbornik ponatisov o življenju in delu Slavka Osterca*, ed. Katarina Bedina (Ljubljana: Oddelek za muzikologijo Filozofske fakultete v Ljubljani—Slovensko muzikološko društvo, 1995), p. 50.

53. Matija Bravničar (1897–1977), active in various segments of musical life, professor of composition at the Music Academy in Ljubljana. One of the editors of *Slovenska glasbena revija* [Slovenian Music Journal].
54. Franc Šturm (1912–1943; killed in World War II), composer and music writer. Studied in Ljubljana, Prague, and Paris (conducting and opera direction).
55. Danilo Švara (1902–1981), composer, conductor, and music critic. Conductor of the Ljubljana Opera and professor of conducting at the Ljubljana Music Academy.
56. Cf. Slavko Osterc, "Glavne struje sodobne glasbe in njih eksistenčna upravičenost," *Nova muzika* 1 (1928); quoted from Ivan Klemenčič, "Zgodovinska avantgarda v slovenski glasbi," in *Tank*, pp. 110–116.
57. Petar Konjović (1883–1970), composer, conductor, musicologist. Studied in Prague. Between the two world wars active as the head of the Serbian National Theater in Novi Sad, as director of the Zagreb Opera, and head of the Croatian National Theater in Osijek. Professor in the Music Academy in Belgrade, founder and director of the Musicological Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.
58. See note 45.
59. Croatian composer Josip Slavenski (1896–1955), studied in Budapest and Prague. From 1924 was linked to the Belgrade music community. Worked as a teacher at a secondary school of music and as a professor of composition at the Belgrade Music Academy (today the Faculty of Music). Also did research in astroacoustics.
60. This refers to Dragutin Čolić (1907–1987), Milan Ristić (1908–1982), Ljubica Marić (born 1909), Dr. Vojislav Vučković (1910–1942), and Stanojlo Rajić (1910–2000).
61. See more in Marija Bergamo, *Elementi ekspresionističke orientacije u srpskoj muzici do 1945. godine* [Elements of Expressionist Orientation in Serbian Music until 1945] (Belgrade: SANU, 1980); and in Veselinović, *Stvaralačka prisutnost*.
62. Studied composition and the piano in Prague. As the most authoritative professor of composition at the Belgrade Music Academy (Faculty of Music), he nurtured generations of composers. Prolific creator in all music genres.
63. Composer, choir conductor, and music writer. Studied in Prague. Worked in Belgrade as a professor of theoretical subjects at secondary schools of music and at the Music Academy.
64. Perhaps it would be interesting to mention that Čolić's teacher A. Hába believed him to be the leading supporter of his system in Yugoslav music!
65. Milan Ristić, composer, long-term advisor of the director of Radio-Television Belgrade in the field of music.
66. See note 1.
67. Taught at a secondary school of music and then at the Music Academy in Belgrade.
68. See note 59.
69. Dušan Radić (1929), composer, professor of composition and orchestration at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad.

70. Branimir Sakač, "Mužički biennale i njegova programska koncepcija" [The Music Biennial and Its Program Conception], *Zvuk* 73–74 (1967), p. 17.
71. Until 1979 it was known under the name Jugoslavenska mužička tribina [Yugoslav Music Review]. In that year it changed its name to Tribina mužičkog stvaralaštva Jugoslavije [Review of Music Production in Yugoslavia].
72. Milo Cipra (1906–1985), composer. A professor at the Music Academy in Zagreb.
73. Natko Devčić (1914–1997), composer, pianist, theorist, and music writer. A professor at the Music Academy in Zagreb.
74. See note 23.
75. See note 24.
76. Cf. Milko Kelemen, "U razgovoru s Joachimom Kaiserom" (In Conversation with Joachim Kaiser), in *Labirint* (Zagreb: Mužički informativni centar Koncertne direkcije Zagreb, 1994), pp. 19–28.
77. Primož Ramovš (1921), Slavko Osterc's student. Worked in the library of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana and as a teacher at a secondary school of music.
78. Ivo Malec (born 1925), composer and conductor. Since 1959 involved in French musical culture. Professor of composition at the Paris Conservatory.
79. See note 21.
80. See note 25.
81. Trombonist, composer, and conductor Vinko Globokar (born 1934), of Slovenian origin but a part of French musical culture by birth, education, and activity. Taught the trombone and new music at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne.
82. Ruben Radica (born 1931), graduated in conducting and composition in Zagreb. Worked at the Music Academies in Sarajevo and then Zagreb.
83. Petar Osghian (1932–1979), completed his composition studies in Belgrade, where he taught theoretical subjects, composition, and orchestration at the Faculty of Music.
84. Vitomir Trifunović (born 1916), graduated in composition from the Music Academy in Belgrade. Manager of Radio Belgrade's New Music Department for many years.
85. Stanko Horvat (born 1930), completed his composition studies in Zagreb. Long-time professor of composition at Zagreb's Music Academy.
86. Ivo Petrić (born 1931), Slovenian composer, conductor, publicist, and organizer of musical life.
87. Berislav Popović (1931–2002), completed his composition studies in Belgrade. Professor of theoretical subjects at the Faculty of Music for many years. The most authoritative expert in the field of musical form.
88. Macedonian composer Toma Prošev (1931–1996), graduated in theoretical subjects in Zagreb and in composition in Ljubljana. Obtained his Ph.D. in musicology at the Music Academy in Sarajevo. Taught composition at the Faculty of Music in Skopje.

89. Vojin Komadina (1933–1997), composer. Completed his studies in Sarajevo, where he taught composition and orchestration at the Music Academy.
90. Lojze Lebič (born 1934), graduated in composition, conducting, and archaeology. Professor at the Teacher Training College in Ljubljana.
91. Rajko Maksimović (born 1935), completed his studies in composition in Belgrade, where he teaches composition and orchestration at the Faculty of Music.
92. Slobodan Atanacković (born 1937), composer. Graduated in Belgrade, where he was editor-in-chief of Radio Belgrade's music program for many years.
93. Josip Magdić (born 1937), graduated in composition and conducting in Ljubljana. Taught theoretical subjects, composition, and orchestration at the Music Academy in Sarajevo.
94. Zoran Hristić (born 1938), completed his composition studies at the Music Academy in Belgrade. Worked as chief musical editor for Radio-Television Belgrade.
95. Igor Kuljerić (born 1938), composer and conductor. Among his other activities he worked as director of the Zagreb Music Biennial and the Zagreb Opera.
96. For example Srdjan Hofman (born 1944), Vuk Kulenović (1946), Marko Ruždjak (1946), Davorin Kempf (1947), Frano Parać (1948), and others.
97. Like the principle of serial structuring in the work of Srdjan Hofman, considering that until then, apart from having gone "through" the work of Peter Osganian toward the end of the 1960s, they remained a "solitary," quite unattractive domain for Serbian music.
98. See note 37.

14

We Will Rock YU

Popular Music in the Second Yugoslavia

Gregor Tomč

In a book dealing with the so-called fine arts, rock music calls for an explanation, as it strikes all those who perceive themselves as members of an elite in possession of “cultural capital” as being at the very least unusual, if not downright aesthetically blasphemous. This is especially true of European societies with their long tradition of support for elite art (aesthetic, autonomous, distinct from craft) as opposed to popular (commercial, common, mass-produced) culture, which is usually tolerated but rarely supported in their cultural policy. The same is essentially also true of Anglo-American societies, where such state intervention is to a large extent absent, but where identical traditional values are promulgated as being self-evident through the media and the school system and consequently through sponsorship. In short, high art is attributed the status of something sublime and eternal, whereas pop is a fashionable commodity, deemed a trend that is supposed to be of only entertainment value.

In other words, how can one, in a society where high art is the measure of all art, speak of Bach and the Beatles, or of Bijelo dugme [White Button] or of Buldožer [Bulldozer] for that matter, without being completely inappropriate and making a fool of oneself? Before we can begin our analysis, this distinction between the two spheres of artistic creativity in modern societies, what Huyssen refers to as the “great divide” (1986), must be clarified as well as questioned. All societies with a complex social stratification are also culturally heterogeneous (patrician vs. plebeian, church vs. folk, bourgeois vs. working class), but it seems that only in modernity does this division become central in artistic interpretation and consequently in its reception, so central, in fact, that popular art virtually becomes nonart. How did this come about?

There are, in our opinion, three main reasons for such an interpretation of aesthetic activity in modern societies: the disassociation of high art from religion, from society, and from the media.

The secularization of creativity is, in our opinion, a crucial factor for gaining an understanding of this phenomenon. The word “creativity” is derived from the Latin word *creare*, meaning to make something, usually designating a godly creation. When St. Augustine declares “Creatura non potest creare,” he means that man (as a created being) cannot create. Only God can create, only God can make something from nothing, “ex nihilo.” This understanding of creativity, however, gradually shifted along with growing secularization. Torquato Tasso places the poet alongside God: “There are two creators, God and the poet.” From there it spread to other spheres of art, so that in the nineteenth century William Wordsworth was able to write: “High is our calling, friend, Creative Art” (Williams 1988, 82–84). When man took aesthetic creativity on himself, the inadvertent implication among those artists who gained the status of high artists in modern societies was that they took on creativity from God without relinquishing the supernatural status of creativity in the artistic process itself. The result of this partial modernization was that high art retained the supposedly sublime nature of godly creation. It is thus not surprising that romanticism as the first “modern” movement of high art invented the ideological construct of genius as an artist creating ex nihilo, like gods of the past, from the depths of his imagination, in unfathomable (for ordinary mortals, that is) fits of irrational inspiration. This is still the self-perception of many high artists of current modernity, classical as well as experimental, still semitraditional as we can see. On the other side of the “great divide” are popular artists who feel at home in secular modernity and who are as a result indifferent to the supposedly sublime nature of their aesthetic creativity.

The disassociation of art from the religious values of society, its distance from cult status in religious rituals, escalates when high art also disassociates itself from the wider society. From the Renaissance on, some artists attempted and eventually succeeded in distancing themselves from artisan guilds, thus constituting themselves as artists as opposed to artisans, producing fine and impractical arts. Bastide (1981, 89) cites the example of French painters who no longer wanted their activities to be contaminated by those of harness makers, or the Flemish poets who felt restricted and frustrated in the company of jugglers. The reason for such emancipation is obvious: if their activities were sublime, they could not keep company with profane artisans. Their emancipation from guilds was facilitated by aristocratic patrons and the royalty who

helped to organize associations of artists and academies, followed by various other purely artistic institutions. The inadvertent consequence of this search for purity was that high art lost its practical value to members of modern society. It became not only autonomous but also isolated. The process was, of course, gradual, from personal dependence on patrons to more impersonal dependence on funding and state subsidies. (Some artists on the bohemian margins decline even this link to society.) This is the process that generates "art for art's sake." On the other side of the divide, popular artists have accommodated to modernity in a radically different fashion—artistic autonomy does not lead them to isolation because they accept the mechanism of the market (creating for anonymous consumers of culture).

Secularization and isolation inevitably lead to disassociation from the media. We understand media in McLuhan's sense of the word (1964), as the technological extension of our biological organism including our nervous system. It is not surprising that high artists gradually became increasingly "media-conservative." The new media that evolved in the twentieth century were viewed with suspicion. The movie industry, television, and rock 'n' roll were capable only of offering entertainment to the masses, whereas true art became encapsulated for some strange reason, never to be elucidated, in "media museums" (theater, opera, philharmonic orchestras). This was especially true of European societies with a strong tradition of state intervention in art. It is therefore not surprising that the United States became the leading society of the new art forms (from Hollywood to rock 'n' roll).

To sum up: we can agree with Jürgen Habermas that modernity is still an incomplete project (1985, 3). At least in the field of culture, artistic creativity is still separated by the "great divide" into high (traditional, to a large extent premodern) art and popular, modern entertainment that is often not even ascribed the status of art by the arbiters of "objective" standards of aesthetic taste (critics, journalists, state officials, teachers).

Our analysis will concentrate on a segment of popular art, on rock 'n' roll as it developed in Yugoslavia.

YU Rock

Rock 'n' roll evolved in the United States in the 1950s from more or less marginal folk traditions (the blues and gospel music of rural blacks, the country music of rural whites, and the folk music revival of urban white radical middle classes), as well as from the urban pop of the music industry. The fusion of African music traditions (with a greater emphasis on short repetitive rhythmic

phrases) and European music traditions (the emphasis on the repetition of longer harmonic phrases) gradually led to a new musical form, rhythm and blues. This music, initially played exclusively by black musicians, had all the ingredients of a new music form, but was unable to transgress the existing racial barriers of American society. Known as "race" music, it had to be reinterpreted by white musicians and relabeled as rock 'n' roll in order to penetrate into the dominant media (radio and television, the recording industry). The first generation of rock musicians played rhythm and blues under country, gospel, and pop music influences (Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, but also black artists like Chuck Berry and Little Richard).

When the new music form was introduced into other parts of the world, where local music traditions were very different, it was perceived as a universalistic aesthetic form. As a result, rock could only be idolized and copied. To give the British case as an example, Cliff Richard and Tony Steele were pale copies of Elvis Presley, and the Shadows mimicked the Ventures. Even when they wrote their own material, British rock musicians did it according to the American standard. Rock 'n' roll thus gradually evolved into an easily recognizable music form in the minds of its fans as well as its opponents. All this changed with the Beatles. They too began their career as mere imitators of artists like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and the Everly Brothers, but gradually became so good at it that they became commercially successful in the United States. This in turn encouraged them to become more creative. The Beatles were important for at least three reasons. They began to compose their own material, thus affirming rock—as opposed to pop music—as a genuine aesthetic form of the artist's self-expression. Since they were the first non-American rock group to do so, they had to rely on a very different local folk tradition, above all on the working-class music hall tradition. The combination of the American global rock standard with local English tradition generated British beat music, the first rock fusion, which rapidly encouraged artists from other particular aesthetic environments to attempt something similar. Without the Beatles, it would be hard to imagine, for example, the folk rock of Bob Dylan, Krautrock in Germany, or reggae in Jamaica. The Beatles made rock a creative global music form. As if this were not enough, they were also important in a third sense, by fusing rock with high art influences. It is most likely that they came under high art influences while playing in Germany, where they met artists and intellectuals referred to as "exis" (short for existentialists) (Delo 2000). They began taking their own creativity more seriously, no longer as mere entertainment but also as a channel of artistic self-expression. As a result, music critics also began taking them seriously on

the level of aesthetics. Serious critical analysis spread from the Beatles to other past and present rock musicians. Rock was no longer treated as a mere social phenomenon, but also as a relevant art form. Under this influence, other rock artists started to set higher aesthetic standards for their own work.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Yugoslav musicians blindly mimicked American and later also British rock music, as standards that could only be slavishly copied. Their own material was practically indistinguishable (in form, if not in quality!) from the models that influenced them. Even though the rock 'n' roll audience became massive, its appetite for the new aesthetic could be quenched only by imitations. Thousands would, for example, participate in competitions called "guitariads" where bands would compete to see who was better at doing cover versions of American and English hits. The initial phase of rock 'n' roll will thus not be taken into consideration in our analysis.

Yugoslav rock musicians began doing "their own thing" from the early 1970s on. It is of course hard to do justice to diversified aesthetic trends stretching through two decades, with various cultural traditions (from Catholic to Muslim) and too many national environments to enumerate with certainty (from the officially recognized ones, like Slovenian, Croatian, or Serbian, to more dubious ones like the Yugoslav). A certain selection principle and classification is inevitable, and like every such procedure, it is of course open to debate.

Geographically, the analysis will concentrate on the Sarajevo-Ljubljana axis because these two cities represent two extreme points on the Yugoslav cultural continuum, its strongest and weakest links in the chain: Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, represented the cultural melting pot of Yugoslavism, while Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, represented the most Westernized part, most at odds with the multinational empire.

Sarajevo became the center of the fusion of the rock standard with folk music influences (with Balkan and Yugoslav folk, indicatively, becoming synonymous with a combination of Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim traditions). Ljubljana, on the other hand, had no living folk tradition. In the 1950s, a pseudo-folk music was invented when the Avsenik brothers eclectically combined the waltz and the polka with a jazz combo, adding an accordion, but this music was derisively rebuffed by Slovenian rockers as "cow" or "peasant" music, never gaining the status of folk music. It is not surprising therefore that Slovenian rockers were limited to individual re-creations of existing universal rock standards. Five characteristic rock music trends will be analyzed from the early 1970s to the end of the 1980s:

country rock, as represented by Bijelo dugme from Sarajevo; progressive rock as represented by Buldožer from Ljubljana; punk rock as represented by Pankrti [Bastards] from Ljubljana; art rock as represented by Laibach [a German name for Ljubljana] from the same city; and new primitivism as represented by the Sarajevo-based Zabranjeno pušenje [Smoking Forbidden].

We would like to stress at this point that the limitation of our analysis to these five bands in no way implies that they are necessarily aesthetically the most significant or that numerous excellent bands did not exist outside this axis. One must for example mention the Croatian new wave scene (Prljavo kazalište [Dirty Theater], Azra, or Paraf); the Belgrade “BAS” scene (Šarlo Akrobata, Idoli [Idols], or Električni orgazam [Electric Orgasm]); Macedonian bands like Leb i Sol [Bread and Salt] or Mizar; and numerous other bands that cannot be so neatly categorized, like Partibrejkars [Partybreakers] or Majke [Mothers]. Nor does our categorization imply that we have exhausted creatively innovative bands on the Ljubljana-Sarajevo axis—for example Lačni Franc [Hungry Franz], Martin Krpan, or Videosex in Slovenia, and Indeksi [Indices], Plavi orkestar [Blue Orchestral], or Elvis J. Kurtović in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Having said this, we would like to stress that our intention here is not to give a thorough description of the Yugoslav rock scene (although such an undertaking would undoubtedly be worthwhile), but only to analyze some of the aesthetically most characteristic music trends in the 1970s and 1980s, as personified by the above-mentioned rock bands.

Another word of warning before we begin. The author of this analysis does not believe in “objective” aesthetic analysis. While the reader justifiably expects that the author is informed in matters concerning the subject under discussion, he or she cannot legitimately expect a personally disinterested, impartial perspective. To be impartial in aesthetic judgment is to miss its essence. The present analysis was written by a rock fan, and one who aesthetically prefers re-creations of Western rock standards at that.

Five Ways to Be a YU Rocker

Bijelo dugme

During the siege of Sarajevo, which Goran Bregović—former leader and composer of Bijelo dugme—fled during the last Balkan war, some people broke into his empty house, stealing homemade porno videotapes starring him in the main role. To make matters worse, they also threw away master tapes of Bijelo dugme, worth much more. Bregović bears no grudge against his home-



town. He is very much aware that those who stayed behind suffered infinitely more than he did. He would one day like to play in Sarajevo, the town where he launched his career as a folk musician at the age of 15, playing in local cafes (Štader 2000). He genuinely liked the music (Kurtović 1998): "Liked it because my father was a peasant, my grandmother was a peasant, and I am not so far from being one either."

At the age of 17, around 1967, he started playing rock 'n' roll (Ramat 1994, 133). Rock was then at the height of its popularity, if not of its creativity then certainly of its influence on popular music. It definitely represented the hegemonic pop music of the time and as such it also exerted its influence on Bregović. After completing high school, he joined a rock band, Kodeksi [Codes], as the bass player. Along with the future singer of Bijelo dugme, they played cover versions of Jimi Hendrix and Cream. The other future members of the band played in a rival group, doing covers of the Beatles and the Beach Boys. Nothing of any creative significance took place in the next five or six years.

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Bijelo dugme. Photograph by Rojko Flegar.

Bijelo dugme was formed in 1973 and a year later they released their first single, which was already a fusion of folk motives with rock sound and rhythm. With their third single selling 100,000 copies, they became the hottest Yugoslav rock attraction. The decision to fuse two very different musical traditions was, according to Bregović, not premeditated but rather spontaneous (Štader 2000). We must bear in mind that folk music was the first music he became acquainted with and that rock music was the self-evident way of playing music at the time. It is not our intention to imply that this fusion was inevitable, in some way the result of a deterministic coincidence of two aesthetic processes. Indeed, if this were the case, then numerous musicians in the cultural context of Bosnia would have been playing this music. However, as we know, they were not. The innovation of Bijelo dugme cannot be understood without the creativity of Bregović himself. The eclectic combination proved to be a very potent innovation, and Bijelo dugme single-handedly put Sarajevo on the map of Yugoslavia as the Nashville of Yugoslav country rock. Bregović described their music this way (Ramat 1994, 133):

Our big advantage is that we are really Yugoslav. There is a Yugoslav character to our music. But by the same virtue it is a little bit too primitive for the outside world. It is natural for Yugoslavia. Our music is as Western as Yugoslavia is—which means not too Western, because this is still the Balkans, and in some ways we are still very far from Europe. So although you can call us a rock 'n' roll band, we are popular in a way that a country western band would be in the United States. You can hear our songs in pubs, for instance. Folk singers even sing my songs.

We would disagree with Bregović in his view that his music has a Yugoslav character to it. Yugoslavia in a cultural sense was much more than the Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim traditions that Bregović internalized during his childhood. But this in no way diminishes the importance of his aesthetic invention. He discovered a way of performing country rock in Yugoslavia that turned out to be creatively both very potent and influential. Bregović believes that his songs always had somewhat anticomunist lyrics (Ramat 1994, 135): “I can give you an example from our domestic politics. When the problems with Albanians in Yugoslavia began in 1981, we made a song in Albanian—which was quite daring. And for a few years we would hoist black and red colors at our concerts, and satirize the similarity between Nazism and communism.” Although this interpretation may be somewhat too radical, it

is nevertheless the case that Bregović was sensitive to the political issues of the 1980s. When nationalism escalated, he wrote songs predicting the forthcoming war. In 1987 he wrote a song beginning with these lines (Ramat 1994, 138): "Spit out and sing, Yugoslavia. . . . Yugoslavia, on your feet and sing. Whoever does not listen to this song, will hear a storm."

When war broke out in the 1990s, Bregović fled to Paris; Bijelo dugme split up, and he eventually formed a new band, the Wedding and Funeral Band, which plays ethno music. He became critical of his previous musical involvement, referring to himself in the period of Bijelo dugme as "a composer of provincial rock 'n' roll music" (Štader 2000):

When I was young I thought that music had to be dressed up in special clothes. What remains of Bijelo dugme are some songs, which were written under the strong influence of folklore. But these songs were dressed in poor Western clothes because I was young and poor, and above all because at that time I did not trust that tradition as I do now. . . . Bijelo dugme played folklore but with an unnecessary transvestism.

The musical career of Goran Bregović was, as we have seen, very diversified. He began by playing folk music standards, switched to doing cover versions of Western rock standards, went on to re-create these two traditions in a fusion of country rock by Bijelo dugme, gradually moving on to become what he is today, an ethno music performer using various local music traditions in addition to those of his youth. Despite his current reservations, he will probably be most remembered for his musical contribution to Bijelo dugme.

Buldožer

In 1975, a group of long-haired, bearded hippies, a brand-new rock attraction from Ljubljana in Slovenia, walked onto the stage at a pop festival and played their version of a big pop hit that year called "Day of Love," changing it into "Day of Sickness." The singer, Marko Breclj, came on stage in a wheelchair, a group of the band's friends, each of them pretending to be handicapped in one way or another, sang the chorus out of key, while their guitarist Boris Bele walked the stage, shooting at anyone who took his fancy (with blank cartridges, of course). When a member of the chorus "panicked" and escaped, he took a shot at him, accidentally "killing" a member of the audience. He apologized and then shot the escapee just before he managed to get out of the hall. This type of rock theater became the band's trademark. This, and their music,



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Buldožer. Photograph by Rojko Flegar.

which the musical media conveniently labeled "the Yugoslav answer to Frank Zappa," made them an instant rock 'n' roll sensation, but also caused them numerous problems. The "Day of Sickness" performance was never aired on television, they had problems with record labels (their Belgrade label declined to rerelease their first record *Spit into the Eye of Truth* after 13,000 copies were sold in a month, also refusing to release their second record *Stick No Posters* altogether), and sometimes their concerts were banned by overzealous party officials.

Boris Bele, the group's guitarist and also the singer and main composer after Breclj left the band following the release of their second LP, had a very different musical background from Goran Bregović. The first music that impressed him as a child was the rock 'n' roll of Elvis Presley, and as a teenager he became a big fan of the Doors. As a 17-year-old guitarist, he started in a pop rock band called Sinovi [Sons], playing cover versions of current pop hits at local dances. The band gradually evolved toward blues and rock standards, also playing some of their own material. His second band, called Sedem svetlobnih let [Seven Light Years], was a rock band from the start. However,

since the members could not agree on its musical orientation, wavering between serious art (as favored by the singer) and rock (as favored by the rest of the band), the band split up. When rock enthusiasts were joined by Brecelj, who at the time enjoyed a cult following as a chansonier, Buldožer was formed.

As a typical progressive rock band of the 1970s, they gradually distanced themselves from pop rock music. Their first album satirized Yugoslav pop and rock performers. Their most commercially successful albums were conceptual rock 'n' roll albums in which they paid homage to their music roots in rock 'n' roll. The title of one of them, *Izlog jeftinih slatkiša* [Display of Cheap Sweets], is in this sense indicative of how they viewed their roots. While such projects came about after logical deliberation, their serious albums of progressive rock were created in a different manner. According to Bele (Tomc 2000), "We worked spontaneously, we strived for a musical impression for us as well as for others. We never reflected on whether the song would last three or nine minutes, as we knew beforehand that it would never be played on the radio. There was no logical reflection behind it." As for the Buldožer sound, "We decided to be open to Yugoslavia, which is why we sang in a sort of 'Yugoslav language.' Musically, we played phrases that were inspired by the Doors, but we never copied them. Our music is based on guitar phrases that were created by myself and the solo guitarist. The singer added some theater and his chanson approach to singing. The rest was added by the organist and the rhythm section."

The message of their lyrics was in keeping with the hippie orientation of, in the words of Frank Zappa, "casting away old-fashioned and limiting standards of thought, dress, and morals by adopting a creative relationship with your environment," combined with the realities of being in a rock band. Bele expresses it thus (Tomc 2000): "The main message of our texts is that you can be unconventional and still achieve success." This may be playing it down somewhat, as their sarcastic, cynical lyrics full of black humor did not always go down well with the authorities and were quite justifiably interpreted as subversive and not at all in keeping with the spirit of socialism.

Musically, Buldožer was universalistic. They could just as well have come from Lund in Sweden or Leningrad in the Soviet Union, with nobody ever being the wiser. There was nothing particularly Slovenian (or Yugoslav, for that matter) about their music. It is thus not surprising that Bele disliked the essence of the aesthetics of Bijelo dugme (Tomc 2000):

I liked their concerts, the talent of Bregović, which could be felt, I liked Bebek's voice, but I was constantly repelled by their "shepherd rock."

It was a pose invented by somebody who was also an excellent salesman. Talent and business always went side by side with him. But you have to admit that he knew how to package music well. It was a totally new thing invented by a guy who knew exactly what was required to sell rock 'n' roll to the smallest Yugoslav village. For me personally, they played rock only very conditionally. But they nevertheless deserve some respect—they knew how to do it.

If Bijelo dugme was the rock establishment of Yugoslavia, then Buldožer was its underground (Glavan 1981). From then on, rock bands in Yugoslavia could basically react to four aesthetic paths: mainstream or marginal on the one hand and ethnic fusion or universal sound on the other.

Pankrti

In a speech marking the twentieth anniversary of the band's first concert in a high school gym on the outskirts of Ljubljana in 1977, the Slovenian Minister of Culture said: "The story of Pankrti, and of punk in general, is essentially the story of our road to a democratic society." Who would have thought that what started with the principal banning all further concerts at the gym for the next decade or so would culminate in a marble slab hung in remembrance of the event on the wall of the main entrance to the high school for all the students to observe in awe and admiration? The slab was later removed as the people behind it had not obtained a permit from the city authorities, but it was a good joke anyway. As the band's ex-singer Peter Lovšin pointed out (Herman 1998): "All those who took the event seriously don't understand that the essence of punk is self-irony."

It all began when Lovšin, who in the mid-1970s played weird songs (like "Let's all vomit/join us in the vomiting") on the acoustic guitar, met Gregor Tomc—who had read about punk and later also heard it in London—and they decided to form a punk band. The material was written and the band rehearsed for a month before their concert in the high school gym. Despite their conviction that there was "no future," it turned out that there was quite a big future in store for the band, ten years to be precise. Helped by the local student radio station and the student cultural center, they recorded their first double single "Ljubljana Is Sick"/"Pretty and Vacant." They had to record it in Italy since all the recording studios in Yugoslavia were state-owned and you needed a contract with a record company just to get through the door. When 2,000 copies were sold in a week, a local record company became interested



and the band made five albums and several more singles in the next decade, ending their career in 1987 with a concert entitled "The Last Pogo" performed before a packed concert hall.

They were a popular band by punk standards, but their music was only well received in more urban environments. Some cities like Sarajevo, where communist ideals were taken more seriously by party officials, proved harder to penetrate than others. Their third album *Red* sold well, achieving sales of approximately 25,000 copies, but it was still impossible to live from music alone (Milek 1999): "Throughout the Pankrti period I held on tightly to journalism. A lot of money was spent on traveling and hotels. . . . We were a rather exclusive band. For a smaller circle of people."

Lovšin's musical influences were diverse, ranging from rock artists like the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, and the Troggs, to folk and country artists like Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and Leonard Cohen, to old blues musicians like Blind Lemon Jefferson, John Lee Hooker, and Howling Wolf. Or as he puts it (Vodovnik 1995): "Everything my father bought for me in the 60s (the Stones, the Kinks, the Troggs, Dylan, Berry, Lewis . . .), what I bought with my wife in secondhand stores in the 70s (Reed, Cohen, Bowie, Pop, Boss, Ferry, the Clash, Cash, Janis, the Ramones . . .), what my girlfriends had me listen to in the 80s, and what my kids recommended to me in the 90s." The common denominator of all these diverse musical influences is a preference

for a rudimentary, basic, uncomplicated musical form. It comes as no surprise therefore that his own music, from his beginnings as a folk musician to his punk period, as well as in the 1980s and 1990s when he launched his solo career as a mainstream rock musician, is structurally, rhythmically, and melodically relatively straightforward. Lovšin also sees a continuity in his music (Anonymous 1997): “Punk was the folk music of the time, with electricity added to it.”

As for the lyrics, such explicit outspokenness in Yugoslav rock was previously unheard of. Lovšin would sing of being “an anarchist and a bastard,” of “how total revolution is no solution,” of living “behind the Iron Curtain” or “mister comrade I don’t believe you.” The rebellion, however, was not solely political. Behind it all was the desire to be creative. As Lovšin puts it (Poštrak 1994): “We lived in a period that called for aggression. We felt that we were surrounded by a vast chasm of boredom. We wanted to resist it in our own way, so we made the album *Boredom*.” Or even more to the point (Poštrak 1994):

I think that punk was always primarily a weapon used by those who wanted to have fun. Maybe that of suppressed, run-down, bored, horny, ripped-off, oppressed people who were spied upon or angry, but they were not dissatisfied in a basic existential sense. When punk started being played by really dissatisfied and really depressed people, hard core was created, and that of course meant war.

In Slovenia (and in the Istrian part of Croatia) a whole punk subculture gradually evolved, a homology of creativity (bands, discos) and a way of life (image, slang, values), perceived by the representatives of the dominant culture as a symbolic threat. Oppression began with an attempt to associate punk with Nazism, culminating in harassment as an everyday aspect of being a Slovenian punk. There were raids on pubs and other meeting places, raids against graffiti writers, concerts were banned, censorship was introduced, and investigations and the persecution of the punk image became a daily occurrence (Tomc 1994a).

Musically, Pankrti followed a path somewhere between Bijelo dugme and Buldožer—they played basic rock ‘n’ roll and were in this sense closer to Bijelo dugme, but without the ethnic elements. They also played universalistic rock like Buldožer, but without the structural and rhythmic complexity of progressive rock. They can best be understood as a creative reference to the English punk scene of the 1970s.

The year 1980 saw Tito's death and the formation of Laibach. In a way, the two events were interlinked. The marshal's demise triggered social and political instability in Yugoslavia, which in turn produced an ideal climate for Laibach's political aesthetics. It all began with the banning of their first multimedia project in their hometown of Trbovlje (a concert of punk bands with



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Laibach. Photograph by Jože Suhadolnik.

Laibach as headliner, projections of short movies, exhibitions of paintings, and speeches) because of dubious black posters. Their notoriety culminated in 1983 when they appeared in a popular show on national television. They were wearing what appeared to be military clothes, with armbands bearing the Laibach cross (inspired by everything from Malevich to Christianity), in crew-cuts, their stonelike expressionless faces lit up from below. There were Laibach posters of mass political rallies in the background, while the TV presenter showed a documentary of real Italian fascists demonstrating in Trieste against the Slovenian minority living there. In such a context Laibach recited their answers, prepared in advance, including this explanation of the suicide of their original front man (Internet 1): "Art is a noble mission, one that demands fanaticism, and Laibach is an organism whose goals, life and means are greater—in both their strength and duration—than the goals, lives and means of its individual members."

The reaction of the dominant media and political elite in Slovenia as well as in Yugoslavia in general was not dissimilar to a similar media provocation that occurred in 1976 in England, when Bill Grundy arrogantly and unwittingly launched the career of the Sex Pistols. Laibach were accused of being Nazis by former partisans, the local authorities in Ljubljana banned all of their concerts, and they were ditched by their local record label. In fact, they became so infamous that they were forced to creatively emigrate to other Yugoslav republics and to an even larger extent to Western Europe.

Laibach began as a performance art group and gradually moved in the direction of a rock band. Their influences were diverse: they grew up in the subversive atmosphere of Slovenian punk rock, but on an aesthetic level industrial music (bands like Throbbing Gristle), electronic music (especially Kraftwerk), new wave (bands like Joy Division or Bauhaus), and even avant-garde classical music exerted a greater influence on them. They are very post-modern in their eclecticism. Band member Ivan Novak, who later became their spokesman once they stopped giving anonymous collective answers for purely pragmatic reasons, has this to say (Internet 2): "It is definitely not a time of originality because everything has already been done. Since the beginning we have always said that originality is not something we are interested in."

Their music is an interpretation of pop music from the perspective of industrial and electronic art music. In their long career they have been inspired above all by two popular musical trends. The first is disco and techno music. According to Novak (Internet 3), disco is very industrial, and as techno (in the time of Kraftwerk) it was for a time also innovative. The other important pop connection is rock 'n' roll, which is not very innovative either

(it has its roots in blues and in African music). The only innovative thing about it, in Novak's view, is the use of electric instruments, but these were used as early as the 1920s, so their use in rock is strictly conceptual. When Laibach worked on the archaic cultural phenomenon of religion on the *Jesus Christ Supersstar* album, heavy metal seemed most appropriate as the genre to express their intentions. Living in a world in which everything possible has already been created also has another implication for their music—it is limited either to working in the spirit of past artists or to doing cover versions of past works (the retro principle). Laibach's work is full of covers, from classic bands like the Beatles and the Stones to more obscure artists like Opus or Europe. Their denial of the presence of any originality in their work has to be taken with a pinch of salt. In their first phase of work they used record players at concerts (like techno DJ's later) and samples in their studio recordings (when this was still very innovative).

Is Laibach a rock group? Again, the answer is not one-dimensional. On the one hand, Novak (Internet 3) claims that they are not an elitist group, that they like performing before crowds and giving concerts; but on the other he also rejects all music trends (Internet 4), preferring continuous experimentation. Their allegiance to pop culture seems to be at best superficial. Their attitude toward it as an expression of the culture industry is close to that of theorists from the Frankfurt school. The culture industry generates artifacts that are devoid of any aesthetic subversiveness and as such stimulates the compliance of the masses. This is why Laibach is able to create a balance between totalitarian ideologies like communism, fascism, Nazism, and Christianity on the one hand and the presumably totalitarian potential of pop culture on the other. Moreover, in modernity the culture industry becomes the hegemonic totalitarian factor. As Novak says, even the pope has to behave like a pop star (Internet 5). As a result, there is only one possible position for an authentic artist (Internet 2): "The only way to stay partly outside the system is to speak the language of its ideology. The only way is to change yourself into your enemy and subvert the system. . . . That is what we were doing before (under communism) and this is what we are doing now (under capitalism). We still continue to use the language of ideology as our own language."

So what is Laibach? They function as a rock band and are perceived by the public as a rock band, but their roots in industrial, electronic, and avant-garde music cannot be ignored. In this sense, they are a typical art rock band. Along with other artists of a similar aesthetic orientation, they created an art collective, NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst), which unites musicians, performance artists, painters, designers, and philosophers. This collective eventually

transcended into a utopian state, with its own passports and membership reaching thousands. As Novak says in the best tradition of rock 'n' roll (Internet 5): "We are definitely bigger than the Vatican."

New Primitivism

It was the spring of 1981 when a group of young men first stepped onto the stage of the student cultural center in Sarajevo. Staring at them was a group of students all dressed in jeans. And there was plenty to stare at, as the guys on stage were dressed in bell-bottoms, pointed shoes, and fancy colored shirts, decorated with badges bearing slogans such as ENJOY BUREK or NEW PRIMITIVISM. Their "ideological" leader, Elvis J. Kurtović (privately known as Mirko Srđić), read out the "Proclamation of New Primitivism" (we sense some Laibach influence here), which was supposedly "something completely new, which had never existed before, something started by the people that they had simply given a name to." As Elvis explained later (Kurtović 1989): "I didn't invent new primitivism. At the time I thought something like this: I walk the street and I see a guy who is into neoromanticism, and there is someone else right behind him dressed simply dreadfully. . . . We have a name for the first one, but what do we call the other one? I just gave a name to an already existing subcultural group—the new primitives."

New primitivism was an affirmation of local culture as well as an appeal against aping universal trends. So new primitives would, for example, eat chebabchichi and not hamburgers, drink plum brandy and not whisky, and wear shirts from Elegant in Srebrenica instead of Lacoste T-shirts. But this was always done with an element of humor and irony (Anonymous 1987): "Although Elvis does not identify with the people he depicts, he has a great love for them. He does not adopt their axiology and as a result never himself becomes primitive. He is a new primitive. He refuses to succumb to any cheap effect and is disgusted at the thought of subordinating to the masses. He is a populist elitist."

How did this populist elitism come about? In order to answer this question, we have to understand the social background behind the movement. Most of the members came from a part of Sarajevo called Koševo, which was the most urban part of town. They were predominantly from middle-class, educated families. As kids they listened to rock music and could afford to buy electric instruments. On the other hand, they also came into contact with the more traditional culture of their peasant and working-class neighbors

(Tvrdković 1987). This equipped them with the necessary cultural distance (universalism) as well as with human compassion for tradition (localism).

New primitivism was more than simply a subcultural way of life. It was also an artistic movement, best known for its radio and later also television show the *Neorealists Top Chart*, a comedy show sometimes compared to Monty Python, mostly ridiculing the political situation in Yugoslavia, and of course for its music.

The first band to make an impact at the Yugoslav level was Elvis J. Kurtović & His Meteors. They could be described as a rock cabaret, more successful in their live performances than on record. The most commercially popular band by far was Plavi orkestar, playing teen pop rock, but the most artistically significant band of the movement was Zabranjeno pušenje. They were hailed by music critics as the Stones from Koševo. Dr. Nele Karajlić (known in his private life as Nenad Janković, a student of Orientalism at the University of Sarajevo) was influenced, interestingly enough, by rock bands like Genesis and ELP. One of his favorite domestic bands was Buldožer. At the insistence of his mother, he also studied piano in music school (Karajlić 1989a). Their approach was different from that of E.J.K. & His Meteors, and they tried to express the new primitive spirit through the songs themselves. Despite the fact that their first album *Das ist Walter* included fewer cover versions, their biggest hit was nevertheless a version of a Johnny Cash song, "Folsom Prison Blues," about a guy who was given a twelve-year prison sentence in the town of Zenica. Their next three albums before the war experienced the same degree of success. They played straightforward rock, while their lyrics spoke of their marginal friends in the local slang. As Karajlić says of the band (Karajlić 1989b): "Zabranjeno pušenje is a band of the first new primitive caliber. . . . It is the first precise shot from Sarajevo since Gavrilo Princip. . . . If Maxim Gorky were alive today, he would play the guitar in Zabranjeno pušenje."

The story of Zabranjeno pušenje after the last Balkan war is a story in the best tradition of new primitivism. Karajlić, who fled to Belgrade, has one Zabranjeno pušenje band, while Elvis, who remained in Sarajevo, has the other. What does Elvis have to say about this (Internet 6)?

We have not established diplomatic relations with them, but expect a conference in Geneva on the secession of Zabranjeno pušenje. We expect that we will keep the songs "Fikret" and "Ibro dirka" while they will get "The Day of the Republic." As for "Pišonja and Žuga," we will split the song in half: they get the solo while we get the chorus. Otherwise we have no links. We haven't seen each other for seven, eight years.



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Zabranjeno pušenje. Photograph by Ljubo Vukelić.

Musically, new primitivism is also a reaction to Bijelo dugme. In his proclamation of the movement, Elvis explicitly distanced himself from Bregović, and Karajlić does not mention him among his musical influences either. As for Bregović, he himself admits (Kurtović 1998): "The new primitives treated everything Bijelo dugme took seriously with irony. The things that they satirized from a distance were the things I personally loved."

Was new primitivism an art movement in the tradition of historical avant-gardes like zenitism? Elvis answers in the spirit of the movement (Anonymous 1987): "When you say zenitism you probably mean Zenit Djozović, the Zabranjeno pušenje drummer. Rumors to the effect that he will be joining our band are completely unfounded."

Conclusion

Modern societies have two ideal aesthetic traditions: modernist "high" art and popular "low" creativity. High art constitutes itself in opposition to everyday culture, whether as elitist contempt for it or as an avant-garde attempt to transform it. Rock 'n' roll, on the other hand, is an integral part of everyday culture and as such descends from similar roots to those of the folk art of pre-modernism. If the modernist feels estranged or hostile to modern life, a typical rocker is at home with modernism, even when he is critical of it.

In real life things are, of course, somewhat more complicated than the above distinction suggests. Modernity is often contaminated by everyday culture, especially through the market mechanism, but there has also been a substantial influence in the opposite direction. Artists on the hard-core music scene sometimes adopt the radical aesthetic of ideologues such as Adorno—they reject both the music industry and the market in their desire for their music to function like a stain that breaks from the complacency of mainstream culture (Tomc 1994b, 103).

Of the rock bands we have analyzed, some are more on the folk side of our aesthetic continuum. This is certainly true of Bijelo dugme as the fusion of ethnic Bosnian tradition with mainstream rock. It is also true of Pankrti as a straightforward punk rock band. Buldožer, as a progressive rock band, was inspired by rock 'n' roll but in the course of time became more critical of its tradition. Their progressive rock music has serious artistic ambitions and is formally more complex. Zabranjeno pušenje, who were the result of an artistic proclamation, are also more ambivalent: there is an element of dadaist cabaret to their creativity, but on a strictly musical level they are a mainstream rock band. Avant-garde modernist ambitions are most obvious in the art rock of Laibach. The influences can be seen in the art collective NSK, in the verbal rejections of the culture industry, and in the musical influence of avant-garde classical music. It comes therefore as no surprise that Laibach was the only band that managed, at least marginally, to transgress the high versus low art division (marginally in the support of Slovenian cultural policy for their creativity and to a greater extent in the seriousness with which some music critics addressed their work in the dominant media).

Our second conclusion concerns the different fate of both aesthetic traditions after the collapse of the second Yugoslavia. As high art was completely dependent on the state for its production and distribution, most of the interaction in the region was halted after the demise of the common country. On the other hand, rock 'n' roll was an integral part of everyday culture. As

such it was maintained by the informal cultural media (the culture industry, live concerts) and its consumers (fans). Rock 'n' roll as a cultural phenomenon survived the disintegration of the state to a large extent. Slovenia is a case in point: throughout the 1990s, the music media informed consumers about the fate of former YU Rock bands, their records were easily available in shops, their music was played in discos (the phenomenon of "Balkan parties" at which only old Yugoslav pop rock was played appeared in the early 1990s, to the annoyance of the older generation and the surprise of foreign observers), and bands would still come on tour. If rock 'n' roll is an indicator, then popular culture is obviously a tenacious phenomenon that will survive the second Yugoslav state.

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15

The Unfilmable Scenario and Neglected Theory

Yugoslav Avant-garde Film, 1920–1990

Nevena Daković

Barbarogenius is the supreme strength of the spirit—the term for the Supreme Spirit. That is our new world: Metacosmos . . . GodSpirit.

Ljubomir Micić

The one whole world against the whole one world.

Pozicija nadrealizma

The precondition for writing a brief, general overview of Yugoslav avant-garde film (1920–1990) is the precise definition of the term avant-garde itself. In return, this excellent starting point would spontaneously impose the structure of the required historical outline. Broadly speaking, one is confronted with several contradictory and complex options that jointly determine the scope of the presentation as well as the guidelines for the history, names, and titles to be considered.

The first is the classical definition provided by Renato Poggiali, who etymologically explains the avant-garde within the framework of the culturally specific atmospheres of Italy and France, where the dynamism of social events (1798–1871) initiated radical changes in art and culture. The dense interplay of social, cultural, and artistic “revolutions” establishes the repetitive pattern of social turbulence as anticipating, being parallel to, or following that in art.¹ The avant-garde is generally characterized by antitraditionalism, radicalism, opposition, and destruction as well as by optimism, action, constructivism (Ionesco), antiromanticism (Ortega y Gasset), nihilism, infantilism, and the liberation of the primal and subliminal. The artists as antecedents of mainstream trends are socially unconventional figures, bohemians, and rebels. They long for the reconstructive deconstruction that results in the creation of new, inverted but non-normative rules and forms.

Art history distinguishes between two waves of the avant-garde. The historical (first) avant-garde covers the movements that flourished throughout Europe between 1905 and 1930, bringing with them important aesthetic innovations—such as futurism, dadaism, cubism, constructivism, and surrealism. It encompasses the works of Marinetti, Severini, Teige, Tzara, Mayakovsky, Tatlin, et al., and the corresponding manifestos and theoretical rethinking of art practice. The second (neo-) avant-garde originates in the 1950s and is also located in Europe and America. The array of qualifiers such as political/cultural, high/low, first/second, historical/neo serve to illustrate the diverse characters of the two waves.

The avant-garde in cinema is mainly associated with the cinematic and theoretical output of the first, or historical, avant-garde. American (neo-) avant-garde film of the 1950s and 1960s is also diversely labeled as experimental or underground cinema. Wishing to escape the trap of impoverishing limitations—dealing only with the “pure” first avant-garde—this paper deals with both periods, although the period from the early 1960s to the 1990s will be presented in a more informative, general way.

The second option is a step forward in the attempt to sketch the vague, sometimes unacknowledged or nonexistent border between experimental and avant-garde film. The impressive *Filmska enciklopedija* (1986)² provides us with perplexing definitions of alternative, underground, experimental, and other cinemas, which simultaneously overlap and contradict each other. For instance, Ante Peterlić (56) points out that the notion of avant-garde film in different periods refers to the Soviet montage school, German abstract cinema, surrealism in the United States, and underground or political film. Hrvoje Turković views vanguard as being to a certain degree synonymous with alternative cinema, thus encompassing experimental, underground, and political film (16). In the entry dealing with experimental film, Boris Vidović (356) equates the experimental with the avant-garde, while both emerge within alternative cinema. It includes diverse movements—again futurist film, German abstract film, underground and structuralist film—placing the Yugoslav neo-avant-garde as belonging exclusively to experimental cinema. In his later research, Turković (1987, 253) positions the cluster of terms—underground, independent, avant-garde, alternative, experimental, structural—as variations of the same meaning; as the result of the shifting of emphasis from one aspect to another of one general concept. Thus, “avant-garde” stresses the cultural dimension of the phenomenon, while “experimental” underlines its structural or aesthetic character and impact. Nevertheless, the avant-garde primarily means the introduction of aesthetic

norms different from those dominant in mainstream films and the establishment of an independent, alternative system totally opposed to the structures imposed by the establishment.

The third option takes into account that, labeled as such, the avant-garde retains its initial innovative spirit and independence throughout. In the evolutionist spirit it is possible to claim that every new art movement, at the moment of its appearance on the art scene, could be considered to be avant-garde. Contrarily, one could declare that the genuine avant-garde continues to develop outside the mainstream; it is never incorporated or assimilated into it. This dichotomy leads us justifiably to question the avant-garde status of, for example, the Black Wave, Želimir Žilnik, and similar authors.

In order to explore the widest possible domain, this overview relies on a compromise notion, adopting the accordion concept of avant-garde that includes even those names remotely or temporarily associated with vanguard tendencies. The overview is structured chronologically and neatly and is “generically” divided into three parts: historical avant-garde film, the second avant-garde, and finally a miscellaneous category: the borderline cases of those relevant artists, theorists, and connoisseurs who occupy a certain meta-avant-garde position.

The main method is the comparison and contextualization of Yugoslavia within the international art scene, based on the concept of art history as an intricate net of multicultural influences, the dynamic exchange of ideas between the West and the rest of the world (the Balkans). It allows us to fulfill a twofold aim: first, to portray the avant-garde of the ever-exotic Balkans as the echo of world trends, making it more understandable, and second, to facilitate the perception of the unique, original characteristics of the local avant-garde that make it that tacit “other”—conceived both as “the parallel and reactive phenomenon” (Smith 1998, 396)—of civilized Europe.

The First Avant-garde: Balkan Echoes

To my friend Vane Bor who wanted to make the first film about the moon.
Jean-Paul Dreyfus

The avant-garde center of the 1920s and 1930s is Belgrade, capital of the newly founded (1918) Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Thanks to artists recruited from among young people who attended universities or lived for some time in European metropolises (mostly Paris), some movements from this period take the form of an explicit national version of the global

ones (e.g., surrealism). Others like hypnism and sumatraism are “original” compilations—verging on plagiarism—from the array of isms that flooded the European art scene at the time. All of them cherish the spirit of internationalism, bearing overt traces of the formative world influence. Their theoretical heritage and foundations include the dadaist spirit of negation toward everything bourgeois; contempt toward the world governed by reason; the expressionist conception of art as a subjective, collectively articulated reaction to a new age; a surrealist obsession with subconscious, automatic writing; a futurist-like total break with all previous history and deformed civilization; and a radical revolutionary desire for the fresh new start pioneered by Russian constructivists and suprematism. The shared European antimilitarist stance born from disgust at the barbarism of World War I is rephrased by zenitists: “After 1914, new art can never continue where it left off. A new life breaks above our heads. Nothing is the same after the war” (Micić 1991, 30).

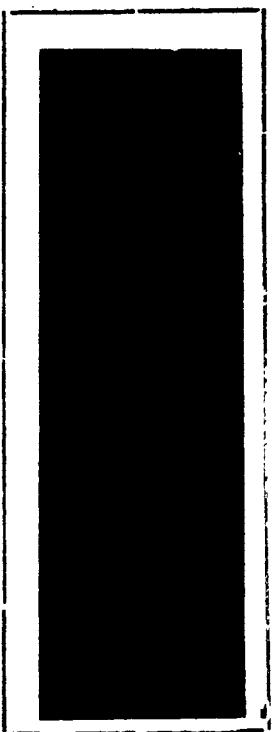
The volume *Boško Tokin* (1981, 198) lists six art trends coming to fruition in the period 1920–1926: progress, zenitism, hypnism (based on the review *Crno na belo* [Black on White]), Mladi [Young Ones], surrealism (neoromantics, or “apathetic” as Dragan Aleksić refers to them), and Nova svetlost [New Light]. Artistic personalities such as Ljubomir Micić, Rade Drainac, and Miloš Crnjanski founded (respectively) zenitism, hypnism, and sumatraism. Dealing primarily with literature, they are concerned with film in specific, peripheral and theoretical ways. Rare film projects remain unfinished, thus obliging us to reconstruct and analyze the artists’ intentions and theoretical premises rather than the actual films themselves. The first avant-garde generates a number of film forms never intended to be made into actual films, but devoted to developing the *technique of the imagined work*. The film idea is accurately and objectively transposed into words, written film designed to induce highly subjective imagined film, like that destined to be projected onto the personal screen in the viewer’s head. The specific use to which the film could be put—justifying the seemingly autotelic forms—is the complex, delicate play of the objectification of the subjective and the subjectification of the objective.

The first attempts are the hybrid literary/cinematic texts of hypnism. In 1923, a young poet, Moni de Buli, began writing a film-text conceived as a film scenario destined never to become a real film. His choice of genre, however, is not an original one, since this type of scenario, reminiscent of Fondane’s unfilmable film scenario, had already been promoted in the oeuvres of Apollinaire, Artaud, and Picabia, as well as having rather reticent local precursors.³ More important, it is significant as one of the earliest forerunners of surrealism in general. It employs a mode of writing that could be clearly identified

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ДРАСТИЧНЕ СЦЕНЕ
У ШАТОРУ
ЦЕНЗУРИСАНЕ

РДИОКИНЕМАТОГРАФСКА ПЕСМА
„СЕНКЕ СРЦА“



... И одједном, деконцентрацијом мисли, Доктор Хипнисон
се нађе на улици. Он иде једним стрмим, балканским ћорсокаком

as automatic. "Buli explains that he writes poems as he feels them: 'Without any attention to traditions and rules, I follow my own vision.' To use a phrase by Dušan Matić: 'I do not write poems, poems are written in me' (Levi, n.d.). Buli insists on inducing and triggering the audience's hyperactive reactions. A description of the desired effects and audience participation is included in the scenario. Buli writes: "African drums sound with all their force. Suddenly, things lose their sense of perspective. Hyperbolas, spirals, ellipses, and coordinates dance in front, behind, and on the screen: everyone senses that the explosion of the Sun has something to do with hyperspace, the fourth or fifth dimension" (*Doctor Hipnison*).

These words place his concept alongside the ideas of futurist provocation, sensual attack, or an experiment in control. The notion of active, unusual provocation and the investigation of the audience's response could be seen as asserting the continuity of the local avant-garde: it would be easy to link Buli, although daring, innovative, and Dionysian in his work, with the structured, rigid work of Tomislav Gotovac or Mihovil Pansini in the 1960s. In his proto-structuralist film (*Apollonian in spirit*), Gotovac investigates the changes in the viewer's sensibility produced by the a priori selected range of film gestures. In addition to the expected total immersion in the art work, Pansini pushes the idea to the extreme, demanding additional freedom "in participating in the creation of the work" (*Pansini Antifilm* 1985, 17). "We are on the road to discovering a new collective art in which all consumers will become creators," he states (ibid.), thus paving the way for contemporary interactive film forms. The glorification of sheer activity and engagement affirms the life and celebrates the *élan vital* with which the avant-garde abounds.

Another avant-garde movement, zenitism, is a mixture of expressionism and symbolism, or, according to the film theory of French visualism, of Russian constructivism and Italian futurism. Its ambition is to be a pan-Balkan movement, while in reality its work spans Belgrade and Zagreb, making additional connections with numerous renowned foreign names. Infected with the spirit of the 1920s—"as the atmosphere of wonders" (*Boško Tokin*, 1981, 181)—and fascinated with the dynamism movement,⁴ zenitism proclaims its creative principle to be the "aestheticization of all dynamism and mysticism" (ibid., 178). Cinematography is looked on as a fetish apparatus, and film is the only art linked to a modern technique able to reflect the essence of an urban environment and the rhythm of a technological age.

One of the founders of zenitism, Boško Tokin, concentrates on film both in his frustrated practical attempts and as the successful pioneer of Yugoslav film theory and criticism. His unsuccessful attempts at putting his

ideas into practice consist of two projects. Tokin begins by writing a novel imagined as a film story, *Kraljevstvo dubova* [The Kingdom of Ghosts], with the narration in sequences, thematically inaugurating the film. He later collaborates with journalist and dadaist Dragan Aleksić⁵ on both writing the



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Dragan Aleksić, still from the film *Kačaci u Topčideru* [Outlaws in Topčider], 1924: Marica Popović, Leposava Dugalić, Vukosava Ivković, Boško Tokin. Arhiv Jugoslovenske kinoteke, Belgrade.

scenario and shooting the never to be completed *Kačaci u Topčideru ili Budi Bog s nama* [Outlaws in Topčider or God Be with Us] (1924),⁶ produced by the Beogradski klub filmofila. Branko Vučićević says that the film was an imitation of American burlesque, but nothing of it is preserved.

In his seminal article “Essais d'une esthétique cinégraphique,” published in the French review *L'esprit nouveau* and in Belgrade's *Progress* in 1920, and in the entire corpus of his theoretical texts, Tokin analyzes and deconstructs the ontological magic of film, thus compiling the previously established terms of his contemporaries. His texts seethe with well-used and useful *déjà-vu* ideas and formulations, such as the French visualists' magical revelations and distortions of apparently ordinary reality; Delluc's *photogénie*; Faure's heart of the hidden reality; or, similar to Epstein's (later) belief that “surrealism, cosmic magnetism, and spiritualism merge and transform through film” (*Baško Tokin* 1981, 232–236), Marinetti's “gay deformation of the universe.” More important, he discovers the linguistic nature of film, concluding that film is a type of “new Esperanto” (*ibid.*, 238), since any idea written in light and movement is universally understood. In his Pythagorean-Platonic concept of the media, Eisenstein explains that the ideas perceived through science and art would speak through film in the language of poetry; “film would write all unwritten poems” (*ibid.*, 187), promises Tokin similarly. His concept of film unites poetry, science, philosophy, and the abstract terms of Whitman, Einstein, and Bergson, as well as the respective theories of democratic art, relativity, and intuition and time.

Again in the spirit of surrealism, film is proclaimed to be the channel for the unaltered flow of thought.⁷ Automatic writing, under the dictation of the repressed, supports the belief in the “higher reality of certain forms of associations; the powerfulness of dreams; the disinterested game of thought” (*Baško Tokin* 1981, 232–233, 235–236). As humanity “came to know nature and the earth, the next phase was its inner world” (*ibid.*, 168); film is thus the means to a deeper psychological insight into ever-confusing human nature. Through watching films, every curious spectator eager to become acquainted with his inner self can undergo the painful process of self-discovery. In film, we “look for God and find Ourselves” (*ibid.*, 171) as film becomes a Rorschach test.

Although historical avant-gardes rebel against a culture dominated by national myths and bourgeois morality, zenithism has a strong nationalist bias, placing the Balkan barbarogenius as its human ideal. This *Übermensch* is a metaphorical figure who glorifies the national spirit and spiritual supremacy. His messianic task is both to protect and to save. In his militant anti-Western

stance he is to be “the guard against the West!” (Micić 1991, 25), whose rotten ideas should not be allowed to spread to the Balkans and the East. The salvation of the West lies in its ennobling balkanization, that is, in the spreading of this raw, primitive energy that would revive and allow the recovery of the rest of the world. The zenitists believe that “the religion of thought and emotions is born in the Southeast” (*ibid.*, 21).

This nationalist zeal, however, does not protect the harshly criticized national cinema. Cinema is the exclusive epiphany of America. The new continent is synecdochically represented through three great authorial, creative persons related to film in different ways: “U.S.A. = Poe, Whitman, and Chaplin” (*Borško Tokin* 1981, 265). Film is a brand-new art, made up of dreams fit for a young nation, the promised land where all dreams come true. Hollywood is the materialization of the American dream on the silver screen. This eulogy reveals Tokin’s adoration of American cinema as the genuinely schizophrenic point of his overall national imperialism.

The crest of the first avant-garde is certainly Belgrade’s surrealist circle (Thirteen), prominently figuring on the European scene. The position of film buff, serious film critic for *Politika*, and director of the lost film belongs to Vane Bor (Stevan Živadinović Bor). His full and exciting life involves extravagant—albeit, for an artist’s biography, stereotypical—moments: devotion to art, a youth spent in Paris, original work in Belgrade, mature years in half-voluntary exile in Oxford. In his Paris days (where he graduated in law in 1931) his friends were Breton, Aragon, and Desnos as well as two contributors to the

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Vane Bor with Michel in Car, 1927–1929, photograph. Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade.



review *Du cinéma* (which was to become the renowned *Revue du ci-néma*), Chavance and Dreyfus. Having close social contacts in scandalous circles, he signs one of their numerous protests, *Un homme de gout*,⁸ in 1929 in response to the jokes made during the projection of Pearl White's serial *The Exploits of Elaine* (in French *Les mystères de New York*). In the Ursulines cinema, the quality of projection is poor and the episodes are shortened and shown randomly for greater effect. For surrealists for whom Pearl White holds the status of goddess, this is a sacrilege that demands a passionate reaction. Bor goes on to become the director of the 1936 film that was to be entitled *Les mystères de Belgrade*, made in homage to Pearl White. During her European tour, American pianist Esther Johnson visits Belgrade. She makes contact with Vane Bor through the composer Josip Slavenski and the three of them shoot her film project—film notes about Belgrade as one of the European capitals. Slavenski and Bor are the founders of Filmska kulturna zadruga which later “produces” the film; the camera is rented from Aeroclub while Vane Bor serves as the guide around the city. The film is a crisscross of distinctive, oblique visions of the city,⁹ those of an outsider and maverick connoisseur. *Belgrade's Mysteries* later turns into a real mystery as the print disappears after the premiere and is never found again.

Bor's film reviews represent a good example of a broader rethinking of the media. He makes statements about the social importance of the invention, observes film audiences, examines the local legislature, ideology, investments, and politics. Combining Darwinism and psychoanalysis, he approaches the problems of creativity and talent, concluding, in exalted surrealist tone, that the most interesting things in films are not made consciously. The persuasiveness of filmic realism allows it to replace reality itself, thus anticipating Baudrillard's thesis of simulations and simulacra.

The Second Avant-garde: The Paranoid Gaze

I am always interested in the relationship between my eyes and the things I see. Why one thing is such and the other is different.

Tomislav Gotovac

The second avant-garde emerges in the 1950s and lasts with numerous ups and downs until the breakup of Yugoslavia. It is a rather disjointed history of film clubs mushrooming in urban centers, with their heterogeneous, aesthetically diverse and uneven production. The Yugoslav network develops according to the basic French model designating film clubs as educational

production centers, the gathering places of amateurs and young filmmakers governed by old masters such as Canudo, Delluc, or Henri Langlois. The specific difference of the local model arises from the altered social context. In the period of tight state-controlled cinema, film clubs appear as semi-amateur, peripheral forms, partially state-supported within the program of popular education. Despite financial support from the state, their members are not “closely observed”; their projects not prone to such careful scrutiny by censors. Thus their films manage to obsessively challenge society and mainstream cinema in terms of both form and content. They are bold formal experiments, free from the constraints of the aesthetics of socialist realism, and equally daring socially critical texts, imbued with ideological rebellion and existential anguish. As elsewhere in the world, this avant-garde wave serves to encourage and pave the way for a political turnabout (Poggioli) like the one found in the works of Godard or Jancso from the 1960s onward (Peter Wollen). The filmmakers follow Godard’s credo that one should make films revolutionary—in terms of innovative form and language. For intellectuals, mavericks, authors, and amateurs, the film club production functions as a safety valve for the discontent, raised social awareness, and depression indicative of the 1960s. Depicting the seeds and growth of social discontent through innovative film language, the production paves the way for the mainstream rebellion of Black Wave and Yugoslav film *Moderna*, with which they are linked by a number of names. Avant-garde/alternative and mainstream/dominant are two facets of the same phenomenon that Daniel Goulding (1994, 213) perceives in his analysis of the Black Wave. Formulating rebellion, criticism, and subversion, they are “the art crests of the wave of social demands for democratic changes in the 1970s—often referred to as the ‘second revolution.’”

Contrary to its alternative position, neo-avant-garde has serious links with institutionalization. First, it relies on the elaborate web of film clubs. The waves swept throughout Yugoslavia, and the most vivid and animated centers from the 1950s onward are Split (Ivan Martinac, Ranko Kursar, Andrija Pivčević, Ante Verzotti, and Lordan Zafranović), Zagreb (Mihovil Pansini, Tomislav Gotovac, Vladimir Petek, Tomislav Kobija, Ivo Lukas, and Goran Švob), and Belgrade (Rakonjac, Babac, Pavlović, Makavejev, and later Žilnik). The club members are film buffs, amateurs, people from different vocational backgrounds all sharing the same wish to enter the field of cinema. The circle of potential avant-garde filmmakers expands to embrace interested and talented students from different faculties (medicine, Mihovil Pansini; architecture, Ivan Martinac; decorative painting,



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Mihovil Pansini, *Knjiga Geffa 1* [GEFF Book 1], 1963, book. Private collection.

Živojin Pavlović; psychology, Dušan Makavejev) and professionals from the bordering arts (conceptualists such as Gotovac; multimedia artist Ivan Galeta).¹⁰

Along with its rising popularity, the second avant-garde ceases to be aesthetically homogeneous or monolithic like the first, becoming a rather loosely defined term. It develops along the lines of (sub)generic diversity, enriched through interaction with video art, multimedia, performance art, and the installations with which the generation of newcomers is familiar. The film joins in and intuitively Pansini speaks about the future of expanded medias (*Pansini Antifilm* 1985, 49). Generic elusiveness is described in oxymorons such as avant-garde or experimental documentaries; sometimes it is subsumed under avant-garde alternative as an umbrella term that completely resists the idea of the genre. Thus Zagreb avant-gardes organize the festival of experimental film. GEFF officially means genre film festival, with the

additional explanation that it refers to “genre without a genre” (*ibid.*, 44). Four GEFFs were held, in 1963 (Antifilm and New Tendencies in Cinema), 1965 (The Research of Film and Research by Film), 1967 (Cybernetics and Aesthetics), and 1970 (Sexuality as the Possible Way to New Humanism). The 1970s are meager years for the avant-garde, and continuity is ensured by the influx of fresh names from the domain of video art or trendy “new art practices”—activities concentrated around galleries, museums, and conceptualist performances. In the 1980s, the video, as the eighth art, is the privileged avant-garde medium finding widespread popularity through festivals and workshops organized around Yugoslavia (Zagreb, Motovun, and Belgrade). The avant-garde film is preserved in the transitional in-between form thanks to the projects of the Centar kulture Studentski grad in Belgrade. In 1982, this institution establishes Belgrade’s festival of Alternative Film, which in 1984 changes its name to Alternative Film/Video, remaining in operation until the 1990s. In the 1990s, during the general Yugoslav decline, avant-garde film lives on the fringe, surviving as a rather insignificant part of Belgrade’s Festival of Short, Documentary, and Animated Films or at the irregularly organized Split festival.

The Terror of Antifilm

The most charismatic figure in Zagreb film circles is Mihovil Pansini, author of a rich and diverse film oeuvre and the promoter of the magical term *antifilm*. In use since 1962, antifilm is the one-word epitome of all the avant-garde impulses of the time. It implies the radical annihilation of conventional film, its elements, principles, and structure. “Antifilm is almost everything that conventional film has not been until now” (*Pansini Antifilm* 1985, 27). Every form, every experiment is permitted and welcomed in the foreseen new society, free from bureaucratic statism and social constrictions. Antifilm is the “act of discovery and research; it is an integral part of life”; it means “liberation from myths, authority, rules, laws, and terror” (Pansini 1993, 104–107). Its deconstructive and annihilating edge turns into one of creativity, reconstruction, and revelation.

Antifilm is increasingly self-conscious, exploring both media and society. In practice antifilm stands for pure visual play, consisting of isolated uncontaminated images. It means the practical reduction of all cinematic expressive means and the vehement denial of the director’s active involvement. In extremis, raw stock or the work on the film stock itself suffers sheer physical destruction. Zlatko Hajdler literally sets it on fire in the projector.

Others scratch or write on the stock, thus repeating the experiments of Eggeling and McLaren, and some go one step further by cutting and stitching it (Petek). Sometimes the stock is simply smeared (Milan Šamec) or the camera records the play of light reflections on water (Verzotti). It strives toward nonnarrative, the complete renunciation of the story. Initially, the unexpected avant-garde or experimental documentaries provide the very experience of so-far-neglected, least-expected aspects of reality. Subsequently, careful observers and lucid commentators depart from reality to achieve antimimeticism, antiillusionism, transcendent rethinking, and the recording of emotional and psychological processes such as falling in love (Petek). They reach the far limits of abstract notions such as showing emptiness or nothingness, just as Pansini describes his notorious *K3—čisto nebo bez oblaka* [K3—Clear Sky without Clouds] (1963), made entirely of white lead with occasional slight coloring.

The reduction of the buildup on the media's basic material leads to optical and acoustic fixation on the defined object. Fixation on the human eye: *Sybil, Oživljena* [Liven-Up]. Fixation on the human-body: *Miss No One, Sretanje* [Encounter]. Fixation on one man in a crowd: *Divjad* [Wild Ones]. Fixation on space-time: *Dvorište* [The Yard], *Zabod* [Toilet]. Fixation on movement: *Pravac* [Direction], *Kružnica* [Circle]. Fixation on the life material in everyday reality: *Prije podne jednog Fauna* [The Faun's Morning]. And finally, fixation on the film stock in the projector until its ultimate self-destruction: *Kariokinezija* [Cariokinesis]. (Stojanović 1998, 78)

Despite or even because of its surrender to observation, the film fulfills the deepest meanings of the cinematograph. Fixing the gaze on the static object that stubbornly refuses to lend itself to any accidental sense, it opens up a huge space for the subject's participation. The spectator gazes not in order to seek knowledge, but to experience.

Man of many talents, Ivan Martinac—filmmaker, poet, and architect—makes “meditative” portraits of his birthplace, the ancient Mediterranean town of Split, its inhabitants and surroundings. One of his early films, *Monolog o Splitu* [Monologue about Split] (1962), is a symbolic, suggestive, and romantic display of town scenes edited in the rhythm of bolero (Turković 1998b).

The film oeuvre of Ivan Ladislav Galeta, professor at Zagreb's Faculty of Painting, is rooted in his work in the Multimedia Center in the 1970s. In

his exhaustive analysis of Croatian avant-garde film, Hrvoje Turković (1998a) lucidly describes Galeta's works using the terms of Russian formalism. The *ostrannenie*, images of a new bewildering universe, a deautomatized, refreshed perception, and the spectator's uncanny feelings are all achieved because of the camera's abilities, as revealed in the theories put forward by visualism, miraculism, and Epstein's *cinéma diabolique*. The experimental quality is emphasized as Galeta underlines the transgression of the expected rules. He experiments with the multiplication of time (*Dva vremena u istom prostoru* [Two Times in the Same Space], 1976; *Naprijed-natrag: klavir* [Back and Forward: The Piano], 1977; *Project, izvedbe, realizacije* [Projects, Performances, Realizations], 1979) and with the limitless expansion of space by moving the film image across the walls of the film theater (*Lijevo-desno* [Left-Right], 1975/1979).

Tomislav Gotovac, key figure of Zagreb's conceptualist movement in the 1960s, student of film directing in Belgrade in the 1970s, actor in the censored *Plastični Isus/Plastic Jesus* (1973), both anticipates structuralist film and is on a par with world-renowned names such as Kubelka, Frampton, and Snow. His aim is twofold: to experiment and explore the viewer's sensibility and to enhance the impressionability of daily reality through cinematic structuring. The structuring is achieved by creating "the visual order of the film through developing the image according to the geometric rules found in the image itself" (Turković 1998a).



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Tomislav Gotovac, 1971. Studentski kulturni centar, Belgrade.

This “artist-anarchist,” as Gotovac declares himself, wants to (anarchically) free the world from the routine of ordinariness, automatized perception, and stale sensibility and destroy the order of the universe, since the two processes go hand in hand. Considered from this perspective, his *Plavi jahač* [Blue Rider] (1964) could be seen as a metafilmic-metapoetic commentary on his style. Gotovac and his film crew enter one of Belgrade’s cafes and record the very reactions of the people to the act of being recorded unexpectedly, being forced to surrender themselves to the inquisitive camera lens.

Kino klub Beograd, Akademski filmski klub, and Kinoteka are three key spots for the dissemination of film culture in Belgrade. Kinoteka is an unofficial “open university,” while the two clubs prepare future professionals. Kino klub Beograd, the center of vanguard film and amateur activities, is founded in 1951. In contrast to Zagreb, membership in Belgrade’s club is considered to be a compulsory interlude in the professional careers of the directors of the 1960s and 1970s. “Eclectic in approach, the major participants in Belgrade’s Kino club eschewed aesthetic conformity and experimented with a wide variety of themes and styles, including the poetic, symbolic films of Marko Babac, some of them inspired by the work of Maya Deren; experiments in surrealism by Kokan Rakonjac and Babac; political satires by Makavejev; and love stories with social overtones by Dragoljub Ivkov. Somewhat individualistic, bitingly acerbic among themselves, they are united in their criticism of conformist, establishment films and increasingly impatient to move from the wings of amateur film to the central stage of Yugoslav film production” (Goulding 1994, 211). Makavejev’s creative involvement results in four short films: *Jatagan-mala* (1953); *Pečat* [The Stamp] (1955); *Spomenicima ne treba verovati* [The Monuments Should Not Be Trusted] (1958), and the anthological *Antonijevo razbijeno ogledalo* [Anthony’s Broken Mirror] (1957) analyzing the clash of the subjective and objective. However, those considered to be the most remarkable are two 35mm omnibus films made in 1962 and 1963: *Kapi, vode, ratnici* [Drops, Waters, Warriors] and *Grad* [City] (the latter banned by a court ruling), directed by the trio of talented, rebellious artists Marko Babac, Kokan Rakonjac, and Živojin Pavlović. Each of them maintains his own distinctive style in the treatment of the socially ambivalent thesis and the ideological problematization. Theoretical support is provided through the writings of Dr. Dušan Stojanović, whose work is significant in cinema throughout the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia, and who remains a key figure in Belgrade’s film production, albeit not as exclusive as Pansini is for Zagreb. Stojanović begins writing the history of Yugoslav alternative film, but after the crash of

the Black Wave quits film criticism and refocuses on film theory. The filmmakers, like Živojin Pavlović, on the other hand, passionately reject the idea of theoretical background: "I completely ignore, not to use a stronger word, the theories of GEFF. The reduction of editing, in my case, is really not the result of a theoretical ambition, but of the film practice itself" (Pavlović 1996, 216). His film *Triptih o materiji i smrti* [Triptych about Material and Death] (1960) marks a significant moment in the work of the Akademski filmski klub. Founded in 1958 by Predrag Čonkić, it remains in the shadow of its older brother (KK Belgrade), and most of the directors make films for both clubs. Thanks to Nikola Djurić, Ivko Šešić, and Milorad Glušica, 1968 marks the period of revival, and in 1974 it relocates to New Belgrade within the Dom kulture Studentski grad.

The figure set apart is Želimir Žilnik, film amateur from Novi Sad and later the wunderkind of Black Wave, who was awarded the Golden Bear in Berlin for his film *Rani radovi* [Early Works] (1969). He personifies the rare case of an artist who persistently maintains the provocative, experimental spirit of both the cultural and the political avant-garde. During his thirty-year career he experiments with documentaries (*Lipanjska gibanjal/June Turmoils*, 1969), Makavejev-like fiction-faction collage style, docudramas, gritty visuals like comic books (*Sloboda ili Strip* [Freedom or Cartoons], 1972), self-conscious SF stories (*Lepe žene prolaze kroz grad* [Pretty Women Walking through Town], 1986), and pseudodocumentaries (*Tito po drugi put medju Srbima* [Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time], 1993).¹¹



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Dušan Makavejev.



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OHO group (Naško Križnar), still from the film *Beli ljudje* [White People], 1969. OHO archive; reproduced by permission of Marko Pogačnik.

Miscellaneous

The miscellaneous group involves a number of works which, despite not being avant-garde in the strict sense, are innovative for the period in which they emerge. The list could include the beginnings of animation in Zagreb in the 1920s, the almost postmodern parodic work of Oktavijan Miletić, modernism in Belgrade, Zagreb (Babaja, Belan), and Ljubljana (Klopčič, Hladnik) in the 1960s and 1970s, and painter-directors (Popović, Kadijević).

The very special place of supreme or meta-avant-garde belongs to three men with backgrounds in film practice and theory and a vast knowledge of the avant-garde: Slavko Vorkapić, Vlada Petrić, and Branko Vučićević. Their work densely refers to the avant-garde, analyzes it, explains it, and thematizes it, providing a metaperspective. Slavko Vorkapić could be logically placed alongside Tokin or Ignjačević, as the three friends shared the same apartment

in Paris in their student days. While Tokin and Ignjačević returned to Belgrade, Vorkapić went to Hollywood. Hence, although he really belongs to the first avant-garde period, he is described as a Yugoslav in exile, whose work partially belongs to the rare and early examples of the American first avant-garde. In addition to his original theories about the phi phenomenon and kinesthetics, he directs three experimental films: *The Life and Death of 9413, a Hollywood Extra* (1928, codirected with Robert Florey), *Fingal's Cave* (1940), and *Forest Murmurs* (1941). Vlada Petrić, professor at both Belgrade University and Harvard, signs the cinematic paraphrase of the 1930 film *Light Play, Black-White-Grey: A Tribute to Moholy-Nagy* (1990). The escalating editing rhythm and noise practically explode in the ultrodynamic ending. Branko Vučićević is an expert in vanguard film as part of the broader cultural history, the editor of several anthologies, and author of some of the most interesting Yugoslav screenplays (*Early Works; Slike iz života udarnika* [Scenes from the Life of the Shock Worker], 1972). His scenario *Splav meduze* [Medusa's Raft] (1980), directed by Karpo Aćimović Godina, deals with two episodes from the lives of the members of an imaginary Yugoslav avant-garde group in the 1920s. Traditional images and avant-garde stereotypes are densely intertwined with authentic details, quotations from various manifestos, and historical events and names. It is a glorious imaginary recapitulation of the historical avant-garde where practically every line opens the huge allusive spectrum, teeming with historical detail and rich interpretive potential.

The first avant-garde is dedicated to "written films," cinematic stimulations that never became real films. It is the time of imaginary films and real, great theory written in the style of good literary essays. It is the epoch when "Balkan barbarogenius was to marry the European merry widow and fertilize her" (*Medusa's Raft*) and when Balkan spirit and energy hoped to charm the rest of the world. A number of daring experimental, innovative films characterize the neo-avant-garde. However, the accompanying theory is informal, modest, and dispersed, generally in the form of transcripts of debates, round tables, and conversations. It supports Bürger's thesis about overlapping but also possesses a distinction toward modernism. As a courageous combination of formal experiment and radical left political stance, it allows for the appearance of those who were to become the Yugoslav film modernists of the 1960s. Entering the mainstream, however, they lose their edge, and Moderna lacks radicalism toward institutions and the system of production in general. Globally speaking, both avant-gardes are concerned with representations of the most daring fantasies. Intuitive, spontaneous, subliminal, archaic, anarchic, and political, they attempt to describe and materialize the feeling of the

new spirit pervading the globe (first avant-garde) or the current political spectrums and mood (second in the 1960s). These films simultaneously exploit and explore cinematic fantasy with or without a touch of local exotics.

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Notes

1. The artistic vision overlaps with the utopian social projections of the golden age to come. Consequentially, Hans Magnus Enzensberger insists that the fusion of political and artistic dimensions is to be found in the person of the avant-garde artist as messiah. The prophetic figure is frequently encountered in the Balkans, as testified by the lines used as the epigraph of this chapter.
2. Even in these few quotes it is easy to recognize the local replica of the conflicting notions of the avant-garde in Bürger, Wollen, Michelson, Sitney, etc.
3. In his highly significant 1922 prose text "Šimi na groblju latinske četvrti, Zenitistički Radio-Film od 17 sočinenija" [Shimmy on the Graveyard, Zenitist Radio-Film in 17 Parts], Ljubomir Micić (from the far right of zenithism) uses constructivist and montage principles of cinema. He christens this new narrative structure "radio-film."
4. Two twentieth-century machines—the automobile and the movie camera—are considered to epitomize the dynamic spirit of the period, the first because it produces and the second because it reproduces movement.
5. Dragan Aleksić published his articles in many reviews and newspapers such as *Kinofon* (1921), *Comedia* (1923–1926), and *Vreme* (he was the editor of the film column in the 1930s). As the founder of the Yugo-Dada group he published the reviews *Dada Jazz* and *Dada Tank*.
6. Film critic and director Milutin Ignjačević was also involved in the project. Ignjačević also translated Urban Gad's book and wrote the first Yugoslav film book, *Charlot* (1925).
7. It is interesting that both Buli and Tokin played upon surrealist premises even before they were formulated as such. Three years later Marko Ristić, the founder of Belgrade's surrealist group, explicitly includes the film-viewing experience as the sur-

realist experience par excellence, free from rational control or censure (*An Example*, 1924). Later, in the almanac *Nemoguće/L'impossible*, Aleksandar Vučo publishes the film scenario *Ljuskari na prsima* [Crustaceans on the Breast], illustrated by the collages of Marko Ristić.

8. As Branko Aleksić points out in his text *Simulakrum beskraja Vana Bora* (1990), this collective protest is not noted in any of the chronicles regarding the surrealists or the period in question.

9. Before that, the Jugoslovenski prosvetni film offers Vojin Djordjević the chance to shoot the film *Na razmedji Istoka i Zapada ili Beograd prestonica Kraljevine Jugoslavije* [On the Crossroad between East and West, or Belgrade, the Capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia] (1932) as a distant echo of Ruttmann's *Berlin: The Symphony of a City* (1927).

10. The Zagreb club is resistant to such ideas. Both future professor of film history and theory Ante Peterlić and successful Croatian director Zoran Tadić remain in the Zagreb film club for a short time only, owing to their inability to adapt to the unconventional, informal atmosphere.

11. The neo-avant-garde film movement is less intensive in Ljubljana. It is limited to the work of the OHO group and its director-cameraman Naško Križnar. In his unpublished book about the Slovenian avant-garde, Miško Šuvaković describes their expressionism as simple and tautological and their intention to use film media as *écriture*. It is independent of the avant-garde in literature or painting. They use film as a means of documenting reality. In conceptual terms, film is metafilm and the means of developing the self-consciousness of the medium (*Film o filmu* [Film about Film], 1968; *Projekt kamera* [Project Camera], 1970) and film as readymade.

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Video Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism

Barbara Borčić

The Context

Video used to be new. It takes a generation for any new (reproductive) technology, such as printmaking, photography, or film, to take hold as a cultural tool and means of artistic expression in its own right. It takes even longer to discover the interpretive qualities peculiar to a new medium so that it can be placed in a social and production context. Video (magnetic tape), like all new image carriers, preserves certain qualities of earlier technologies (cinema and photography, for example) while introducing new features with the technological innovation and its distinct encoding capabilities. Video technology changed film just as digital technology is changing video and film today.

Video art in Yugoslavia followed the ideological and aesthetic uses of video technology elsewhere. Keeping in mind that the six constituent republics of Yugoslavia each had their specifics, there are still features that set Yugoslav video production apart from the rest of the international scene.

Several structural features defined the postwar political and cultural position of Yugoslavia: the country's size (approximately 22 million inhabitants and an area of almost 100,000 square miles), its location (between the West and East, the South and North, Europe and Asia, Central Europe and the Balkans), and the peculiarities of its cultural and political history. The country's political position between the Eastern and Western blocs generated a unique type of socialist system defined by self-management, a fact that distinguished it both from other communist regimes and from the democratic societies of liberal capitalism. Yugoslavia played a key role in global politics with the nonaligned movement, the "third option."

Socialist realism was officially renounced as early as 1948 (after the split with Comintern), losing its sway before it had really taken hold. By the 1950s

the notion of a freedom of creativity—based on existentialism and intimism—allowed artists to express themselves in a modernist language: poetic/magical realism, lyric abstraction, Informel, tachism, abstract expressionism. Those were years when the country was relatively open. Traveling to Western Europe was surprisingly easy, especially to Italy and France. The schools of Paris and, in the 1970s, New York were sources of influence for Yugoslav artists.

By the late 1980s the country's art scene was rather more developed than those in other Eastern European countries. There were state and regional museums and galleries, art and cultural magazines, and a large number of exhibitions and artists, although it lacked an art market with an appropriate system of management, along with sponsorship and private galleries. Artists were not awarded titles such as "artist of merit," as was the practice in Eastern European countries, nor were they able to join in keen competition within the "free" art market, as were artists in Western countries. Nevertheless, the freelance status given to active artists by the Ministry of Culture was quite an exceptional attribute that did, indeed, provide Yugoslav artists with a safety net and a retirement plan.

Yugoslavia was, nonetheless, conservative with regard to the progressive and avant-garde movements. In fact, we can describe the history of Yugoslav art as a permanently discontinuous practice, one that has remained on the fringe and was never fully recognized (impressionism, constructivism, conceptual art, and the subculture and alternative art of the 1980s). The 1970s and 1980s, the years of the greatest interest for our purposes—the 1970s marking the pioneering period of video art, and the 1980s heralding the end of Yugoslavia—were characterized by strong opposition movements among intellectuals and artists.

Video, as a reproductive technology that promised the democratization and internationalization of the media, played a role in the Yugoslav context similar to the one that graphic arts played in the 1950s and 1960s. It was the graphic arts in postwar Yugoslav culture that reestablished ties with international art and its manifestations. The international exhibitions of the graphic arts in several Yugoslav cities—notably the International Graphic Biennial in Ljubljana, founded in 1955—presented a series of authors from around the world, from the Western and Eastern blocs but also from China, India, and what were referred to as the third world countries. This contributed to a better acquaintance with art events and trends worldwide while gradually providing opportunities for cooperation and the affirmation of Yugoslav artists on the international scene.

The primary source of information remained Paris, with its characteristic transformation of visual speech into symbolic hieroglyphics and the predominant forms of quiet modernism, particularly those of lyric abstraction and Informel. Yugoslav graphic artists were generally active in the entire creative process, from the concept to the printing, as opposed to Western European graphic artists who in most cases left the technical work to printers. As early as the 1970s, however, the attitude toward graphic art began to change, with increasing resistance against its formalism and aestheticism and the unfulfilled promises of the democratization of art and its accessibility to all. Despite the fact that, for example, graphic exhibitions in Yugoslavia were regularly organized in factories and companies—to bring art to the workers—even there this art discipline preserved a bourgeois idealist interpretation of art, as a reflection of reality on the one hand and as a utilizable object with a market value on the other.

The Yugoslav policy of opening to other countries in the 1960s spawned a series of international shows, including the International Biennial of Industrial Design in Ljubljana; the Music Biennial, the Genre Film Festival, and New Tendencies in Zagreb; and the FEST international film festival and BITEF international experimental theater festival in Belgrade, the last of which was open to various art disciplines and had a visual arts program. The idea of international art no longer seemed utopian, particularly after the revolutionary events of 1968 in the United States and Europe. Younger Yugoslav artists knew of the revolutionary ideas of the 1960s and the 1970s in the West. They identified with conceptual art, current at the time, in one area above all: that of confronting the conservative art institutions that sustained the academic hierarchy of the art world and classical forms of expression. As they questioned everything, they discovered different, more independent channels.

Around 1970, the student cultural centers in the Yugoslav capitals (SKC in Belgrade, SKUC in Zagreb, and ŠKUC in Ljubljana) moved beyond their initial function as gathering places for young people to become forums for progressive ideas and the transformation of art. At the same time the number of ties with international events was growing. The exhibitions that followed, also international, generated socializing and debate, and set in motion a sociocritical approach to art. In a series of actions and personal statements, Yugoslav conceptual artists explored the position of art in society and the possibilities for action, and this promoted a shift in the understanding of art from the production of objects to the notion of artistic practice as a product of thought and memory.

Video played a key role as a means of expression foregrounding the process of research and its effect on the public. Perceived as a truly democratic medium, it also promised new artistic models. An issue of the Zagreb photography magazine *Spot* was devoted to video in 1977. Its articles predicted that the medium of video recording would play a remarkable role, generating structural change in thinking, behavior, and methods for perceiving reality, while video works would have great potential in the realm of social change. This was seen as applying to ideological confrontation with the domination of commerce and capital in art. Video was also seen as promoting social solidarity, individual creativity, and the availability of information and knowledge, and questioning the existing hierarchy of values. Within this framework the magazine also published the Graz Declaration (of the Pool-Video-Konferenz, Graz, 1976) concerning interaction between video and politics.

In the international context, this project was a failure. Video ultimately joined the hierarchy of the art scene, with all its ramifications. The socializing role of video was supposed to be based on an altered relationship with the public, yet to see an art video one still had to go to places dedicated to art, such as galleries. The fear that video might become elitist came true; the question remains, however, whether this was because presentation and the means of distribution were not able (or motivated) to keep up with production, or whether this was a danger intrinsic to video production (art) itself.

The Seventies: The Documentary and Communication Use of Video

Production was the first obstacle Yugoslav artists encountered. Video equipment—a technology accessible now to anyone—was not available in the pioneering 1970s. Institutions, galleries, and museums did not own video equipment. Despite this, surprisingly, Yugoslav video artists did not lag seriously behind those of Western countries in terms of chronology or message. They could not compete, however, in the number of tapes produced or their quality.

To produce videos, the Yugoslav artists had to find their own way. Video artists were mostly trained abroad. They took part in shows and international events such as the Trigon Exhibition and the International Open Encounter on Video organized by CAYC in Ferrara, Paris, and Barcelona or the occasional international event in Yugoslavia when visiting artists or organizers brought equipment with them and were willing to share expertise. Marina Abramović, for instance, gave her first performance on video, *Freeing the Voice*, at the Belgrade April Encounters in 1975, working with Jack Moore, a member of the Paris Video Heads group.

After the early 1970s there were relatively frequent video shows in Yugoslavia presenting the latest works by international and local artists. These were usually organized by the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Belgrade Student Cultural Center (SKC), quite frequently in collaboration with the Ursula Krinzingen Gallery in Innsbruck, the Cavalino Gallery in Venice, the Art/Tape 22 Studio in Florence, and compatriots Ingrid and Žika Dacić from Tübingen. From 1972 on, there were shows of expanded media in the gallery of the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade every April, and after 1974 there were also video shows in the Croatian towns of Zagreb, Motovun, and Brdo. The April Encounters in the 1970s were undoubtedly the most important international shows of contemporary work in Yugoslavia, with participants such as Joseph Beuys. Significantly, foreign artists participated in person, some of them returning often, including Luciano Giaccari, Ulrike Rosenbach, Luigi Ontani, Katharina Sieverding, and the Video Heads group.

These manifestations stirred interest in video and distribution; elsewhere any screening of videotapes was practically impossible. Like other conceptualist practices, performances, and actions, video remained more or less exclusive, linked to the gallery context and therefore limited to a narrow circle of artists and followers, and limited in time. Goran Trbuljak, a Croatian artist who researched the technological possibilities and constraints of video as a medium, described the paradoxical situation and utopian desire for change within his own experience:

At the several video exhibitions/festivals held so far, it has become apparent that these events are hardly attended by anyone but the very same people who appear on the screen. This invariably reminds me of a person in front of a mirror, looking at his or her own reflection. . . . When an artist communicates with him- or herself, it rarely interests anyone else. When anyone who has not worked with video before is given a chance at it, they soon see just how seductive a medium it is. Perhaps its democratic ability to stir creativity in people will lead to a time in the future when everyone will be equipped with video technology—a time of art without artists, when everyone will be making art.¹

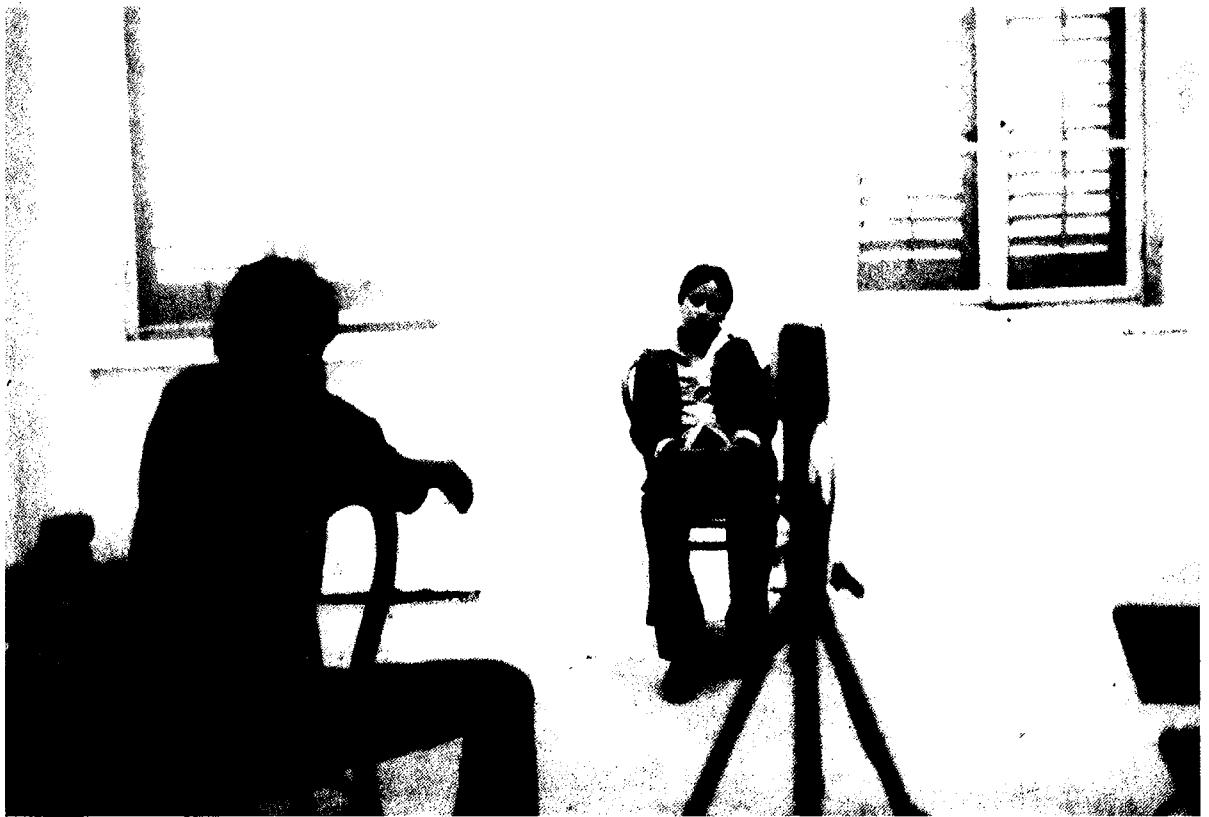
The potential of video as a technology and a vehicle for communication was recognized, and its socializing role determined. The producers—the artists—in the former Yugoslavia did not control the fate of these utopian desires, which were dictated rather by ideological and economic demands and interests. Although the artist's inclination to socialization might be seen as

fitting neatly into the socialist imperative of “art for everyone,” video artists were essentially isolated in a ghetto from which they were unable to have a wider impact on society. Such was the fate of conceptualist art in general. Video was directly related to this activity—locally termed the “new art practice.” Accepted as an advance in technology and a technical aid, video made possible new breadth in the field of vision and experience. From the very beginning, however, a distinction was drawn between specific video expression and video as a means of documenting ephemeral events. Regardless of whether they concerned documentary, communication, or experimental application of video technology, early video works were based on actions and performances that emphasized the relationship between the artist and society.

Video authors came from the context of visual art, less often from the domain of cinema or other fields. For some of them, learning to use video technology was a watershed in their work, but for many it was merely a passing phase. In most cases, video did not interest them as a new reproductive technology producing a matrix that could be freely copied and distributed. Video technology was not used to its full potential. Its language and its communications possibilities were not explored. Video was used mainly as an auxiliary means of recording and presenting an artist’s performances or as a technical tool related to the artistic message within the context of other media, as a conceptual continuation for the formulation and transmission of social and political statements.

The action went on only in front of the camera rather than before a live audience. Even when video made it possible for an audience to follow a live performance happening elsewhere, as in *Rhythm 4* by Marina Abramović (1974), video was accepted merely as yet another vehicle for expression. The early performances of this Belgrade artist, who later worked alongside German activist artist Ulay between 1976 and 1988, were marked by self-destructiveness, at the risk of making the audience uncomfortable. In *Rhythm 4*—a performance in which the artist was interested in how her body would react to the pressure of air produced by huge fans in a narrow empty space—the medium of video served as a buffer that made the acceptance of the indirect action, despite its simultaneity, somewhat less painful.

In any event, typical of the pioneering use of video at the time was a static camera that recorded the event in real time, while the subject and the object were the artist him- or herself; shots from several angles or focusing on fragments of his or her body were the exception rather than the rule. The documentary record preserved temporal and spatial unity: the length of the videotape corresponded to the real time of the action, since the shots were not



edited or altered in any other way. Raša Todosijević was a proponent of such a "reduced" use for video.

I have made my videos without any special attention to the technical end of the medium, the process of production, or the spectacular possibilities of manipulation of electronic technology. I was interested in video more as a transmitter of psychological and mental activities in which any technical exhibitionism is fundamentally extraneous. My videos should be regarded as works closely related to all I did in my performances. Such behavior and use of videotape has been called video performance.²

This Belgrade artist, insightful in his analysis of the artist's position in a cultural and social context—for example, in the video *Who Profits from Art and Who Makes Honest Money*—embraced video as only one of numerous means of expression, without the illusion that the technique itself contributed to a

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Raša Todosijević, *Was ist Kunst*, with Patricia Hennings, Brdo, 1976, video. Artist's collection.

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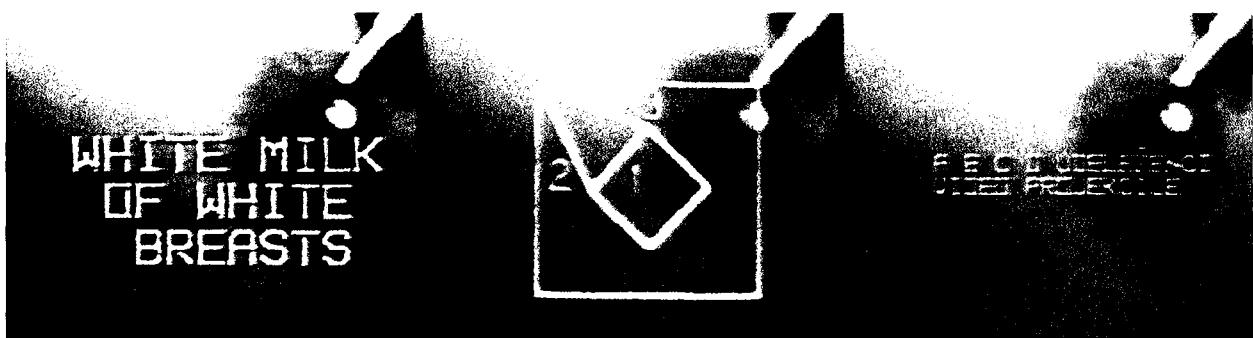
Raša Todosijević, *Was ist Kunst*, with Patricia Hennings, Brdo, 1976, video. Artist's collection.

democratization of the arts. In a series of performances entitled *Was ist Kunst?*, for instance, he repeated this same question obsessively, directly examining what is and what could be art, while the video, by focusing on the artist addressing the audience in a narrow frame, emphasized the almost unbearable aggressiveness of the act.

Fascination with video technology, and the understanding of the video surface as a latent erogenous image, inspired Nuša and Srečo Dragan of Ljubljana to stay involved with video from 1988 on. They were active in a movement developing around the Slovenian conceptualist group OHO that brought together a variety of artistic disciplines. In 1969 they made *Belo mleko belih prsi* [White Milk from White Breasts], considered to be the first video made in the former Yugoslavia: a static black and white recording with

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Nuša and Srečo Dragan, *White Milk of White Breasts*, 1969, video. SCCA, Ljubljana.



mobile graphic signs/captions and statements made by the participants in the action who discuss video art in different languages. Action was seen as the target of their activity, as they understood video in actions (the analysis of observation and the mechanisms of illusion) and attempted to use it as a medium for immediate and interactive communication with the public. Since they were in an active relationship with the camera and the monitor and could—indeed, were expected to—interfere with the action as it unfolded, the participants were supposed to feel a part of the video experience and form an active mental relationship with what they saw.

Video was both a realization and a regular notation of the process model of communication, the visualization of ideas, or—as they classified it themselves—an imprint of the creative consciousness. The image was on the monitor immediately, with no time delay, thus foregrounding the unity of time, place, and action. In *Video Painting*, for instance, performed by its authors at Trigon in Graz in 1979, they demonstrated the ephemeral steps of painting by mixing pigments in real time while at the same time prolonging this process on the video camera and freezing it on the monitor.

We could classify the video work *Rhythm* by Neša Paripović (1981) in a similar way. The artist applies paint on a white sheet of paper by rhythmically tapping his fingers, to the point of saturation. This record of creating both a painting and a sound finally demystifies the modernist process of creating a painting, also suggesting the omnidimensionality of video (including the subject, sound, object, movement, and color).

The issue should be raised of the video document and its use. How can something performed live before an audience in real time, involving a special relationship between the artist and the audience and the real duration—in other words, performance art, as one of the most radical art practices—be presented by documentation: photography and video? What does it lose and what can it gain? The artists' utopian effort to sidestep the functioning of the system of art and market mechanisms is, as a rule, condemned to failure, seeming, in retrospect, no more than a fleeting, naive notion. This should not mean that such a standpoint is not a significant basis for value and reflection. It does seem, nevertheless, that video—and less attractive still photographs—made possible the commodification of what transpired. From this perspective, it seems fair that the conceptualists themselves, along with many other emerging artists, should have profited from this brief period when attempts were made to deprive society of material works of art. They were responsible, after all, for the increased demand and higher prices on the market resulting from the rarefaction of artworks.

Video played a decisive role, as did photography, in the introduction of reproductive technologies to the world of art, thereby altering in part the method of production, distribution, and reception of artworks. At the same time, the prediction did not materialize that video would become a vehicle for social and political struggle, the most democratic form of transmitting information and exchanging messages. As a creative means, in most cases owing to the length of the tape, the intimacy of artistic statements, and the fact that they were shown only in galleries, video remained hermetic, misunderstood, and unpopular with wider audiences. Only amateurs and connoisseurs found it interesting. The assumption that video should encourage a different mode of socialization and stir creativity in people met a similar fate, since the popular use of video equipment was limited in most cases to filming and viewing family events or watching prerecorded films.

Television, which could have changed those relations by expanding the channels of distribution, was a powerful mass medium in Yugoslavia during the 1970s. There were no channels but those broadcast by the state-run companies based in the capital cities of the six republics. Owing to constraints on the time available for broadcasting, video was not widespread or popular, nor was it commercial. There are, therefore, no grounds to support the claim that video, based on television-like technology, figured as its noncommercial antithesis on the Yugoslav scene. Video was, at that time, subversive in relation to the social system and explicit in its artistic (political) statements. Yugoslav artists, however, did not perceive video as a medium of communication. Distracted by mastering the new technology, they were not engaged with confronting and subverting state television. A social application for video, with an agenda as a counterbalance to official reporting, was a rarity. One can, indeed, come across proposals in the literature for the establishment of a "communal video station" addressed to the Zagreb municipality in 1974, but this and similar initiatives—such as a proposal to set up the first alternative television in Ljubljana in 1987—were not greeted with enthusiasm in the Yugoslav political and media domain.

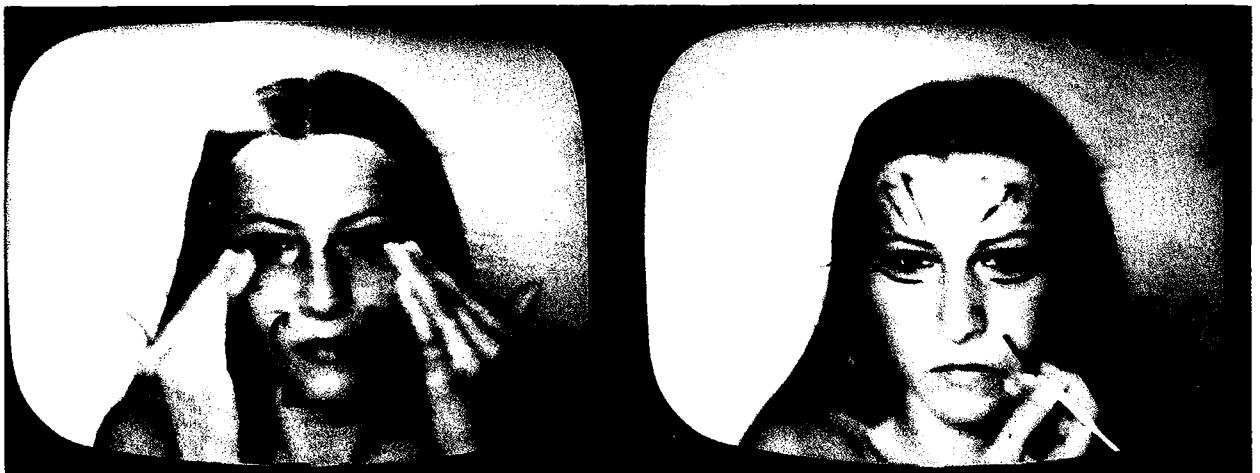
Video work in Yugoslavia was related, above all, to the visual arts. Artists who dealt with the technical, structural, and linguistic characteristics of the new medium were rare. In most cases these were authors, such as Zoran Popović and Goran Trbuljak, who had made experimental films before. Short Super 8 and 16mm experimental (*avant-garde*) films produced within the context of the numerous film clubs and student cultural centers had a far-

reaching impact on some video artists. These films from the 1960s and 1970s radically called into question dominant film patterns and aesthetics by researching the possibilities offered by film. Some of them had already addressed television as a medium or object. They often juxtaposed grainy images, characteristically damaged by chemicals and mechanics, to the television screen's characteristic hum and flicker. Bojan Jovanović, for instance, also used TV sets as elements in his events and then destroyed them as a radical critique of the television medium's manufacturing of consumer needs. Another approach to television as an institution can be seen in Mladen Stilinović's project *Cenzurišem se* [I am Censoring Myself], created with video technology. Highlighting the issue of state censorship and self-censorship, he first recorded a text that would not be broadcast by any official television channel, then erased all the potentially controversial parts and broadcast this (self-)censored version, erasing the original tape.

Despite technological differences, the procedures and strategies of film somehow spilled over into experimental video, which soon, owing to the simpler handling and faster and cheaper production, nearly did away with short films altogether and assumed their place as a potential critical voice.

The first example of a critical confrontation between video and official television was the twenty-minute black and white video *TV Timer* (1973) produced by Zagreb artists Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis, who were working at the same time in television graphics and visual design for Zagreb Television. By a series of authorial interventions into a regular TV program using other devices (the telephone, the clock) and their own appearance on the screen, they established a link between reality and media reality. Analyzing the ideological and aesthetic structure of the television program and the effects of that mass medium on individuals, they showed that they were interested in video not only as a means of individual expression but as a vehicle for critical analysis and reflection on television: "Public television is an institutionalized form of television programming that imposes subjective aspects of communication on objective ones: a person or group acts as an information selector, attempting to impose him- or herself (or the information) on the (information) channel. TV video is a possible means of objective presentation of contents from the viewpoint of a single person (the subject)."³

Iveković and Martinis each continued the study of communication and representation codes in the mass media and their impact on the everyday life and behavior of the individual, on where the public image meets the world of privacy in the shaping of identity (for example, Iveković in the videos *Make Up—Make Down* and *Instructions*, and Martinis in *Image Is Virus*). A brief

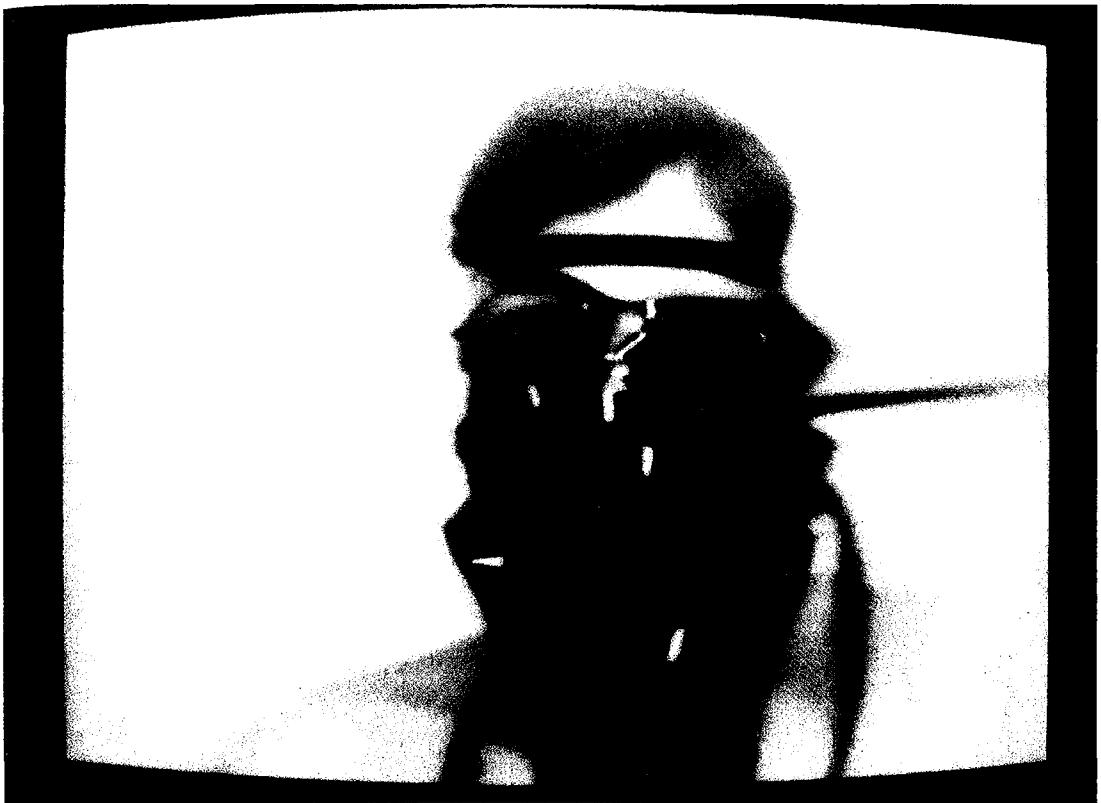


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Sanja Iveković, *Instructions No. 1*, 1976,
video. Artist's collection.

analysis of their later video works suggests that Iveković's work is characterized by its performative dimension, autobiographic referentiality, structural complexity, and feminist acerbity (introducing female characters to the political sphere in her treatment of identity). Martinis built on analytical and conceptual approaches, as well as on the technological, formal, and semantic dimensions of video. He presented the relationships between reality and illusion through irony, absurdity, mystery, humor, and even self-aggression. Their work places them in the first ranks of video artists, locally and internationally.

Television in Yugoslavia in the 1970s did not overtly serve as a repressive ideological extension of the state, but it was uninterested in change of any kind and therefore was an institution beyond the reach of artists. Hence it came as a surprise when TV Ljubljana broadcast Miha Vipotnik's artistic video entitled *Videogram 4* during a late-night program (part of its experimental programming) in 1979, announcing it as a "rare television event, even a new experience" and cautioning viewers that "interference or anything unusual in the image or tone are part of the program. Do not try to adjust the image on your television sets." The electronic image was indeed stratified, even surprisingly transformed and edited for the time (double exposition, solarization, recast, feedback, synthetic color changes, and generating moving



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Dalibor Martinis, *Open Reel*, 1976, video. Artist's collection.

shapes), and the sound was syncopated, alternately soft and screeching. He described the process in this video project as follows:

In the music score for synthesizer and script, the performers completely filled the twenty-eight-minute recording period with their movements, unarticulated expression, mimicry, and body speech in the electronically created field of the video screen. I shot the video three times over two years, using material each time from the previous shootings. Influenced by the earlier material, the performers reintegrated themselves into the events, changing their behavior for each subsequent shooting, presenting a concept of social situations created by the TV information environment.⁴



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Miha Vipotnik, *Videogram 4*, 1976/1979,

video. SCCA, Ljubljana.

Vipotnik was the first video artist who succeeded in transmitting professional video technology from institutional television to artistic use. The video equipment used by Yugoslav artists was still at a rudimentary stage, and the possibilities for processing and editing were limited. Despite this, Vipotnik did find a way to work with the latest equipment thanks to his enthusiasm and persuasive charm. He explored the characteristics and potential of video technology and the structure and aesthetic effect of the electronic image, and came up with a more formalist and experimental kind of video. As an outside collaborator with state television he began introducing the elements of his experimentation into television programs, particularly music shows. He made the first music video in Yugoslavia for the Slovenian punk band Pankrti.

The project *Videogram 4* had yet another important dimension: it introduced intermedia to the Yugoslav scene. A product of intensive work with a group of collaborating performers in the television studio in which it was made, the video combined the experiences of several media (performance art, video, cinema, photography, and music). Four videotapes were screened and four films and slides projected simultaneously in a gallery space using mirrors and turning prisms, accompanied by original music. The video focuses on the time component and the work process, and fuses that with the innovative use of the camera and editing in the construction of personal stories and the superimposition of images, inscriptions, and discourse.

The Eighties: The Institutionalization of Video

At the turn of the decade, reductionist video began to lose its draw. Video technology improved and a generation of more sophisticated video work appeared on the scene, thanks to the greater availability of professional video equipment and better financing.

Video works by Yugoslav authors still drew attention at international festivals, and there were (international) shows, gatherings, and workshops in the 1980s in the Yugoslav cities of Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopje, and Zagreb. At the same time, national television companies took part in these events for the first time, opening the doors of their (by then well-equipped) studios to artists. The dilemma between survival on the margins and joining the system—the gallery or the television network—resulted, however, in a decline of broader interest in video. Many Yugoslav artists stopped working in video by the turn of the 1980s, although a few, in particular Dalibor Martinis, Sanja Iveković, Srećo and Nuša Dragan, and Miha Vipotnik, recognized in video their essential means of expression and remain active video artists to this day.

The first international video biennial, Video CD, organized in Ljubljana in 1983 by Vipotnik, institutionalized video in our environment and stirred wider interest. As the director of three consecutive biennials, Vipotnik brought international video art to Yugoslavia, facilitating contacts with visiting artists and curators and the increasingly visible participation of Yugoslav video in international circles. In those years 22 local and international video works were produced in the biennial video workshop, a temporary studio. This was a significant dimension of that biennial, one that attracted artists from around the world, since even in other countries there were not many centers where artists could make video works on the spot. The growing interest in the Ljubljana biennial eventually made it one of the three most important video festivals in the world.

At the same time, the relationship with television slowly shifted in video's favor during the 1980s, though it was still widely held that the authorial video belonged to independent production and that video was incompatible with television in terms of its technical and aesthetic features. Possibilities opened up within educational and cultural programs that were given special attention by all the television centers in the former republic capitals. Video language and artistic statements became more palatable to state television, thanks to certain individuals who worked to find a place for video within the regular programming, whether by transmitting videos, or through

thematic programs presenting and analyzing various aspects of video work within the framework of current processes in art, or, surprisingly, by problematizing the relationship between video and television. The first to sponsor such work was TV Belgrade: in 1981 and 1982 Nebojša Djukelić dedicated a special program to video within the series *Moving Pictures*. The program dealt with the role and function of video and the author's deconstruction of the television image. The guests in the studio voiced opposing views; Ješa Denegri considered video art from an art history perspective as just another means of expression in the visual arts, while Nenad Puhovski, from the aspect of technology and television, saw possibilities for video in individual (micro)television.

At the same television center Dunja Blažević included video art (recent production) in her *Other Art* series. In 1984 she had introduced *TV Gallery*, the first television program dedicated to the visual arts. By 1990 she had made 60 shows on cutting-edge processes in art, their recognition and analysis. The series was based on close work with artists and critics from all over Yugoslavia. Several authorial videos were produced as part of this, including *Russian Artistic Experiment* by Boris Miljković and Branimir Dimitrijević and the Views on Modern Art anonymous project. The artists were able to work with television studio equipment, and the video material they produced was then broadcast as part of the program.

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Boris Miljković and Branimir Dimitrijević,
Šumanović—komedija umetnika
[Šumanović—a Comedy of an Artist],
1987, TV film. RTV Srbija.



More direct and regular contact between television professionals and video artists was arranged through the international video biennials in Ljubljana. During the first biennial (1983), TV Ljubljana broadcast live events and excerpts from video work, and there were also contributions (TV chronicles) from the artists themselves—participants in the festival and various television crews. This late-night program could be watched by viewers on all the Yugoslav TV channels from the capital cities of the federal republics.

The authors who dealt with video had divergent attitudes toward television, depending on whether they rejected the influence of television patterns and programs and wished to act autonomously or, conversely, were working to change television's rigid forms of production and programs. The former strategy led them toward marginalization, while the latter led toward consumer exposure. In any case, this clearly demonstrated the rift between the democratic concept and the elitist practice of video production and distribution. By that time television was able to broaden those limits, although the classification of video in the world of television still depended on the convictions of the editorial board and management. In any event, until the mid-1980s the majority of video works were made within the context of television centers while the main television stations in each republic acted as producers or coproducers. This symbiosis between video and television was true of the Yugoslav environment for a long time to come. This, in turn, secured institutional production conditions for video art in the future.

Toni Tršar, who as editor of TV Ljubljana should be given the most credit for introducing video to television, recognized the role of television at the time: "Through video art the opportunity suddenly arose to cultivate authorship within the electronic image form, a certain type of author-centered television, while research continued, at the same time, into the medium."⁵ He was quick to recognize that video art had a stimulating effect on the move away from the model of television as picture radio, and on current TV production. Of course, the issue raised here was whether aesthetic practice, being potentially transformative, could change the dominant—television—use of technology: would an individualized use of video technology (artistic video) change television practice or threaten its ideological foundations? On the other hand, had video succeeded in developing a specific language distinguished from that of television standards?

The frequent cooperation between artists and television experts inevitably led to a certain degree of mutual influence. Artists became dependent on professional equipment and television crews, while their experimental work on television brought their work closer to television language.

Television cinematographers, sound engineers, and editors brought their experience with the artistic use of video technology to regular television programming. On national television at that time one could see several works whose form and messages were socially and politically critical, such as the first authorial program concerning a video entitled *Autovizija* [Autovision] made in 1986 for TV Ljubljana by Vipotnik and Marijan Osole-Max, inviting video artists to participate with one-minute works on a topic of their choice.

Miha Vipotnik worked for years to set up a permanent international center for video based on the Western model, one that would be a testing ground for new research, encouraging large companies to use it free of charge. His attempts failed, however, since there was neither enough understanding nor enough money for this kind of project. A public production studio along these lines was never established in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, during the mid-1980s several private and partly commercially oriented video studios did appear. Among them, as producers of noncommercial, independent videos, were Studio Brut and Video Producija Kregar in Ljubljana. Specific to Yugoslavia at this time were nonprofit centers that made independent video production possible, among them the Academy Film Center in Belgrade and the ŠKUC-Forum in Ljubljana. ŠKUC-Forum video should be considered carefully for a fuller understanding of video in the 1980s. In discussing significant changes in form and content of video as a medium, it is also worthwhile to take a look at the Slovenian alternative scene (or, more precisely, that of Ljubljana), since video was an important part of it. From that point forward, the term “video art” is replaced by “video practice and production”: what was created and what has remained.

The Eighties: The Social and Media Use of Video

In Yugoslavia, the 1970s were still part of a social and political system that exerted control at all levels, while the 1980s were marked by the ascendance of new social movements in critical reaction to the socialist system. This was particularly true of the westernmost Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, where the 1980s were marked by a slow but important process of liberalization at several levels—political, ideological, and cultural. The alternative scene was a conglomerate of artistic and cultural protagonists and new social and theoretical movements (the New Left, poststructuralism, and Lacanism) that eventually constituted a civil society. The aim of civil society was to embrace the whole of the Slovenian population. In reality civil society took shape in

marginal groups, subcultures, and other alternative movements such as the peace, ecology, feminist, gay and lesbian, alternative art, and culture and theory movements, which proposed that a “parallel society” be organized on the fringes of the dominant, socialist one. These were actually the propelling forces behind deep social transformation during the 1980s that eventually led to the fall of single-party rule and the introduction of a pluralist parliamentary democracy.

Video art was created, accepted, and interpreted, at first, in the context of the (visual) arts, where both the authors and their videos were analyzed by art critics. In contrast to this, mass video production and practices in the 1980s occurred outside the institutional framework, belonging instead to the context of alternative (rock, punk) culture and new social movements. Young university-educated artists at the time saw themselves as part of the alternative scene, rather than as part of (postmodernist) art. The only valid reference for video until then—video art—was no longer adequate; social videos began to supplant the purely artistic phenomena. The widespread creative use of video technology in Yugoslavia emerged in a subculture whose protagonists wanted to draw attention to their activity, to document it and present it abroad, targeted, perhaps, to a specific public. Documentation helped consolidate the scene. Video was part and parcel of the scene. Instead of “artistic video” the preferred term was “author video” (*vidéo d'auteur*), distinguishing this work from art and also denoting a specific author’s approach in considering topics directly related to the scene.

Two student cultural organizations were set up under the ŠKUC-Forum in Ljubljana: the Student Cultural Association Forum and the Students Cultural Art Center. Membership in these two organizations, as in other Yugoslav cities, was not limited to students. Progressive younger creative individuals and groups were particularly active, voicing resistance and disobedience, finding new means of cultural action and presentation that would reach a wider audience and exert an impact (cultural, even political) on society as a whole. Political activity was impossible, even illegal in socialist Yugoslavia outside the Communist Party, the Socialist Alliance of Working People, and the Socialist Youth League. From the 1970s on, however, individuals joined student organizations with the intention of changing the system from within and liberalizing the socialist state.

The main forums for subculture and civil events, production, and presentation, linked to mass culture as well as to constructive theoretical and critical practice, were the student media such as Radio Študent and the magazines *Mladina* and *Tribuna*, the theoretical periodical *Problemi*, and the



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Zemira Alajbegović and Neven Korda,
Socialism, 1983, video. SCCA, Ljubljana.

film magazine *Ekran*. As focal points for multimedia and video activity, there were the club Disko FV led by the members of the FV group, in particular Zemira Alajbegović, Aldo Ivančić, Neven Korda, Dario Sereval, and others, and the ŠKUC Gallery, led by Dušan Mandić, Marina Gržinić, and Barbara Borčić.

Video equipment became more accessible to a greater number of people thanks to the FV group, which started a multimedia program at the Disko FV alternative club. They filmed various events on scrap computer tapes with used video equipment that had to be borrowed for each occasion: thematic music nights, film and video projections, concerts, photography exhibitions, graffiti and (Xerox) posters, and multimedia projects that took place in the club. Owing to frequent (forced) changes of location, all these became symbolic of the alternative scene's struggle for space. The Yugoslav socialist regime at that time no longer functioned through strict supervision and ideological censorship, but rather regulated events and production by granting or denying funding and working space. Despite all this, the subcultural and alternative scene in Ljubljana in the mid-1980s was the most widespread cultural movement until that time in Slovenia, cultivating exciting cultural and social activity that met with an enthusiastic response. A number of exhibitions, performances, multimedia projects, concerts, even symposia and round tables were organized, reflecting the events and production. Once the ŠKUC-Forum video section was founded in 1982, video technology was used for the production, distribution, and promotion of videos, especially when it received its first VHS equipment as a gift from a successful Slovenian factory, which was used for documentation as well as for work on the first authorial videos.

Although amateur VHS equipment could not match that owned by the television stations, and editing was initially possible only on the spot, during filming, VHS nevertheless had an unanticipated influence on a number of protagonists of the alternative scene in Ljubljana. Along with (Polaroid) pho-

tography and the photocopier, video was an “instant” medium that was accessible, fast, cheap, and not subject to control and censorship. There were video projects linked to rock music, punk and club events, as well as to multimedia practice; at the same time they were part of that scene and its (media) effect. Countless video works were made, with an emphasis on content and message characterized by interweaving authorial and documentary material, an approach that was also true of music videos at the time. This fact clearly demonstrates the role and function allocated to video by the protagonists on the alternative scene and the effects they wanted to produce. Certain characteristics of cinematic and photographic alternative practice were retained, while new features were introduced that derived from technological innovation and different ways of coding meaning. The authors were not interested in technical perfection. Instead they turned to specific resourceful technical solutions and “rough” form, such as the introduction of new meaning codes through direct messages that produced works of social and cultural critique. Video projects took up marginal and taboo topics, the main references for which were socially endangered groups, unspoken violence and hidden sexuality, the socially unacceptable lifestyle of young people and its particular image, on the one hand, and social events and state rituals, centers and relationships of power, and the myths and taboos of the socialist system on the other—all this to raise the issue of the relationship between the social mechanisms of power and the libidinous structure of individuals.

Left-wing poststructuralist theory unmasking the ideological apparatuses of the state, and the theory of representation developed by a circle of Marxist-Lacanian theorists, particularly in the Slovenian context (Rastko Močnik, Braco Rotar, Slavoj Žižek), were related directly to the alternative subcultural scene in Ljubljana. Film theory was also highly developed, reading film as a discourse of symbols and providing a social critique at the same time, since the imagery it researched did not belong to the medium per se but was presented by it in a specific way.

The deconstruction of a state ideological apparatus that did not exclude art also produced a dialectical confrontation between a certain brand of heroicism in a fading system that had functioned by prohibition and its own distance from society, and the first hints of a move in the direction of the Western systems of liberal capitalism. The pride that filled the many ethnic groups comprising Yugoslavia at the sight of Tito, Nehru, and Nasser's handshake at the adoption of the Declaration of Non-alignment in 1956 on the Brioni islands on the Yugoslav coast might, for example, be compared with humanity's enthusiasm for Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon in 1969.



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Marko Kovačič, *American Dream*, 1986,
video. SCCA, Ljubljana.

It is not, therefore, surprising that this shot found a place in the video *American Dream* by Marko Kovačič (1986). The video confronted the principles of East and West in the form of an endless game between the two main characters (the author in the role of the accompanying and the accompanied: on the one hand an avant-garde performer, on the other a pop businessman) and the use of state and popular iconography and products that belonged to Russian avant-garde art or pop art. Kovačič's video works were all, in fact, specific kinds of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, blending the artist's experiences with constructivist sculpture, experimental film, alternative theater, and new wave music: he created everything in them himself—the set, the costumes, and the paraphernalia—and he was also their main protagonist. In his video works, modeled on performances, he used a chroma-key to combine real space and human figures with fabricated scenes and mechanical beings, in order to expose contradictions in social reality and their effect on the individual.

The predecessors of a certain more narrative kind of video at the time may be identified in films made by socially engaged directors such as Werner Rainer Fassbinder, Lothar Lambert, and Andy Warhol and the films from what is known as the Yugoslav Black Wave from the 1960s, which were declared "socially unacceptable and undesirable" by the authorities and often ended up collecting dust in warehouses. These films were all shown in ŠKUC in the 1980s. Through state rituals, social relations, and psychological obsessions, the early works of Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Želimir Žilnik, Lazar Stojanović, and others talked of death, sexuality, and violence and also critically presented those aspects of life that were deemed by general consensus to be negative. The group Meje Kontrole št. 4 [Limits of control no. 4]—Aina Šmid, Dušan Mandić, Marina Gržinić, and Barbara Borčić—active in the early 1980s, presented socially formulated traumatic stories of marginalized individuals in their video works. Stories concerning the relationship

between the individual and institutions of power, and the visual pleasure experienced from eroticism and sexuality, were built using dialogues and artificially composed scenes, while the videos were halfway between the documentary and the artificial, thus making the state of isolation, helplessness, and lack of control even more striking.

ŠKUC-Forum video production, which stood in opposition to mainstream (post)modernist artistic (also video) work or television production, became a concept that was deeply etched in the national consciousness. There were several authors and groups involved—FV, Meje Kontrole št. 4, Kolaps, Borghesia, Marijan Osole-Max, Mare Kovačič, Goran Devidè, Andrej Lupinc-Keller, and Igor Virovac—who mainly appeared alone without a clear distribution of roles. They were at once directors, cinematographers, and editors and included video in their multimedia projects and performances. Dušan Mandić, a figure on the alternative scene and video project coauthor, who was the only one to write about video at the time, clearly defined the distinguishing traits between the “formalist approach to the medium” in 1970s video and the “mass dimension” and “socially engaged audiovisual research” of the 1980s. He also warned of a need for textual reflection and the documentation of this production in the social environment and history, particularly because of “undesirable ‘effects’ that could cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation.” He illustrated this “danger” of exposure to ideological manipulation by citing the example of the effect produced by a TV presenter when introducing the controversial and provocative Slovenian music group Laibach on Ljubljana TV, when “the reality of videotape temporality became a political outrage,” while the program plainly exposed the ideological process of social control. What had happened in the studio? The members of Laibach transformed the interview into a performance with manifestos, while the presenter declared them enemies of the state, warning the viewers of “this dangerous group” and asking rhetorically whether we should tolerate them in our environment. It is interesting to note that, in the sense of mutual manipulation, the group Laibach appropriated this television show retrospectively as one of their most successful video projects.

In any case, the period of the aesthetics of boredom was over, and the 1980s brought political, entertaining, and visually rich, quickly changing shots, including the media use of video. The events related to video in Ljubljana between 1982 and 1985 were unexpectedly intense as regards the development of the video medium and decisive in the development of video in the Yugoslav setting. Two international video biennials were held at the Cankarjev dom cultural center. Videos were produced and screened at Disko

FV. A Sunday video club opened. The ŠKUC Gallery had a Saturday Video Box Bar open to audience requests. There were screenings of foreign and local video productions such as, for example, the Australian tandem Randall & Bendinelli. These places and events were extremely well attended, without exception, throughout this period.

The first spectacle-type media program that combined mass entertainment and art using new technology was organized by the FV group in the New Rock musical in Križanke (Ljubljana) for several thousands of visitors as early as 1983 and many times thereafter: there were columns of television sets that amplified the events on stage, with video clips screened during the break including art videos and live interviews with members of the bands.

The FV group and their decisive steps forward in the field of the video medium included use of audiovisual television material. Although it is true that the people on the alternative art scene did not watch much television in the 1980s—subculture was happening elsewhere: in (disco) clubs, at concerts, through multimedia projects, spectacles, in the street and at the movies—nonetheless television—that “hateful medium of manipulation and passivity”—did become an object of obsessive contemplation and research. Some members of the alternative scene, Neven Korda from the FV group in particular, watched television for hours—with a purpose, as research for video production. To be fair, there were quite a few things to see on TV. Programming ranged from alternative video production by the protagonists themselves to what the mass culture machinery produced around the world—in a segment that was an identification point for activities on the alternative scene. In brief, this period was marked by a shift from the question of what (damage) the medium does to the viewer, to a question of what a (potential) reader of the television “text” can do to the medium. The viewer was able to select television shots, appropriate them, truncate them, recode them, and change their meaning. There were possibilities, earlier undreamed of, for raising issues at the level of the media message, using ready-made television segments.

FV video projects took footage from national television—recognizable political personalities, rituals, and manifestations, including Tito’s funeral, or popular Yugoslav music stars screened using methods of fragmentation and serial repetitions, edited with a counterpoint of shorts from pornographic movies recorded from private Italian television programs. An important element of these videos was live appearances of the members themselves in scenes of “unnatural” sexuality, sado-masochism, homosexuality, violence, isolation, and despair. The chosen shots were thus transformed and reedited, reinterpreted and positioned, and also screened in a different context. Theirs

was, above all, a position of creative critical distance that heightened awareness of the functioning of state ideological mechanisms, of the relationship between ideology and aesthetic effect, of the social contingency of artistic practice; it was also a position of rebellion that was perhaps best expressed by phrases such as "No fear! No hope! No solution!" To sum up with the words of Dušan Mandić:

Artists are producers of culture—they produce the meaning. All societies produce and cultivate conditions in which they develop forms of cultural activity—art and artists—that are a necessary support to ideologies of systems whose function, among others, is to make invisible the system of supervision. In such a situation artists who rise up against the dominant view of their own society have no choice but to attempt to bring this supervision to the surface and make it visible for analysis.⁶

Music videos were another aspect of the mass use of video in the 1980s. The mutual influence between music and video in Yugoslavia produced a series of video clips; almost all Yugoslav rock, punk, new wave, and other groups presented themselves through this medium: Laibach, Disciplina kićme, Film, Borghesia, Niet, and Idoli. Despite the fact that they were based on an urban iconography and everyday reality, they had a different flavor from



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Idoli group, 1980.

the video clips usually shown on MTV—which could not be seen in Yugoslavia at the time as no cable or satellite TV was available. Music was the rhythm of life in Yugoslav cities, especially nightclub life, but also a stronghold for opposition to the ruling ideology. The music clip did not depend on the (nonexisting) market. As an integral part of the artistic concept, it offered a platform for experimentation. The year 1985 saw the release of the first Yugoslav videocassette—*Tako mladi* [So Young] by the multimedia music group Borghesia produced by FV publishers, more a product of media research than a commercial success. Nevertheless, it was distributed both within and outside Yugoslavia through private channels and independent networks, since the rock and punk scenes in Yugoslavia were well connected, providing an infrastructure for independent distribution.

The first Yugoslav music video festival Videomix 001 was organized in Zagreb in 1987, including both authorial video and international rock video shots and films in its five-day program. It was an important forum for presentations and encounters, and at the same time the festival suggested criteria for the evaluation and discovery of authorial approaches. The festival was held for several years in succession and was regularly covered by Zagreb Television. Thanks to this and also to their fairly regular screening on Yugoslav television stations, music video clips occupied an important place in the shaping of visual culture and public opinion.

The Eighties: Narrative and Aesthetic Use of Video

The second half of the 1980s saw the professionalization of video. Video works were often produced in cooperation with television stations or in private studios. Video was included in cultural programs under the rubric of “film,” and there were even state subsidies for production, although only a few. There was no art market for the more classic art disciplines, let alone for video. State museums and galleries did not purchase videos for their collections. Nor were video studios and workshops available to the public. Production conditions were still less than ideal, and work in continuity was almost impossible. This explains why certain Yugoslav video makers, for example Dalibor Martinis, Sanja Iveković, and the tandems Breda Beban/Hrvoje Horvatić and Marina Gržinić/Aina Šmid, were driven into a nomadic life, visiting video centers, galleries, and festivals around the world, wherever they could work.

This was also a time, however, when Yugoslav video art by Biljana Tomić, Bojana Pejić, Dunja Blažević, Miha Vipotnik, and Kathy Rae

Huffman, and also by Nuša and Srećko Dragan, Marina Gržinić, and others, was presented in European and American centers. This included the program *Deconstruction, Quotation & Subversion: Video from Yugoslavia*, put together in 1989 by Kathy Rae Huffman after her participation in Belgrade Video Encounters and the Ljubljana Biennial Video CD 87. The program was shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and in Artists Space in New York, where it is still available for viewing. The Video Encounters were held annually at the Belgrade Student Cultural Center, the Yugoslav Alternative Film and Video Festival was held at the Academy Film Center, programs showing video works were given at the ŠKUC in Ljubljana and the Zagreb Multimedia Center SKUC, and the International Video Biennial in Ljubljana was held for the fourth time in 1989. It no longer drew as much attention as the previous ones had, however, and it was the last.

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Breda Beban and Hrvoje Horvatić, *Meta [Target]*, 1986, video. Artist's collection.



An occasional focus on video during a number of exhibitions, meetings and workshops created the impression of lively activity and an interest in video, but it did not produce the corresponding theoretical and critical reflection. This may be because of the lack of trust on the part of experts, especially art historians and critics, for any new technology or (conceptually) divergent artistic practice. It was typical of the position of video in Yugoslavia that circumstances dictated a reception limited to a narrow circle of creators, producers, and sympathizers. They were, indeed, closely linked and regularly worked together on organization and production. With rare exceptions, however, until the mid-1970s it was above all the video makers who wrote about and represented video both locally and abroad, trying to establish it as an aesthetic category and create the context for the social relevance of their own artistic practice. The first book dedicated to video art was published in 1986 in Belgrade: *Videosfera: video/društvo/umetnost* [Videosphere: Video/Society/Art], edited by video maker Mihailo Ristić with theoretical texts on video and contributions by international and local video authors. There was no institution, however, that systematically and continuously dealt with video, collecting, filing, analyzing, presenting, or interpreting video art. For this reason, until 2000 there was no comprehensive documentation on video authors and video works. It was only with the SCCA-Ljubljana project *Videodokument: Video Art in Slovenia 1969–1998* (a catalog, book of essays, and CD-ROM), and *Video Art in Serbia* produced by the Belgrade Center for Contemporary Arts, that video in these two cultural centers acquired a history of its own. There are still no effective networks for information and distribution, or professional archives and publicly available video studios.

By the end of the 1980s the sophisticated technology of generating and manipulating images was no longer fascinating in and of itself, and one may often note a certain artism in works from this period. These video works are complex stories, less often involving experimentation with digital technology. In a way they have come closer to the form of film or theater representation, and have, at the same time, become an inevitable part of mixed-media and visual work, which has made it possible for video to enter galleries and theaters.

The period of group authorship, when it was sometimes impossible to name all the coauthors and collaborators of a video work, was over—and with it went concern for the fate of the subcultural scene and new social movements. What came to the foreground was individual authorship, detailed preparation, a painstaking process, collaboration with professional

actors and dancers. Postproduction became increasingly complex and decisive. Amateur equipment was almost left behind, and use shifted gradually from VHS and Umatic to the Beta format. Video makers had become emancipated in terms of production and presentation. In most cases they worked in professional (private) video studios, collaborated with national television companies, and participated personally on a regular basis in international video festivals around the world. At the same time video artists managed the mass presentation of their work themselves (on television), thereby securing a more visible presence for the expressive approach of video in the media.

Exclusive dedication to video, however, was still rare. Video authors came from various backgrounds—as visual artists, filmmakers, sociologists, designers, journalists—and video was just one of many possible forms of expression for them. Video projects were made from screenplays and film directors' books and by numerous collaborators, using sophisticated technology. The application of chroma-key methods for combining shots became almost the rule, and the retro principle of referring to visual history and combining ready-made (documentary) shots and images directly from television or film was still widespread, particularly with narrative and dance components (performance art, dance, theater). Various video genres were formed through interaction with other art practices, such as video dance, video film, video documentary, video clip, video sculpture, video installation, video ambience, and video performance, and they moved in the direction of performance, theater, television, or film language. It turned out that video had a broad use, but the term “intertextuality” had replaced the term “autonomy.”

Development of the video medium within Yugoslavia from the beginning to the end of the 1980s describes an outstanding leap in technology, content, and expression: from virtually bare, unprocessed, and immediate images (gestures, actions) that followed one another in slow succession, to rapidly changing shots, special effects, and invented stories. For this reason certain video works may also be seen as a move toward a high cinema artistic form that is expensive and requires professional expertise. Video—the electronic image—in those cases capitulates to film. At the same time a new generation has emerged, one that sees the use of video technology as an integral segment of artistic methods leading to the realization of a contemporary work of art. The earlier, rebellious attitude toward the mass media, their institutions (state television), and other ideological state apparatus has slowly faded away.

Notes

1. Marijan Susovski, "Video u Jugoslaviji" [Video in Yugoslavia], *Spot*, no. 10 (Zagreb, 1977).
2. Raša Todosijević, *Video: Videosfera: video/društvo/umetnost* [The Video: Videosphere: Video/Society/Art], ed. Mihailo Ristić (Belgrade: Studentski izdavački centar, 1986).
3. Susovski, "Video u Jugoslaviji."
4. Zemira Alajbegović and Igor Španjol, "In the Technological Grip of a Television Station: An Interview with Miha Vipotnik," in Barbara Borčić, ed., *Videodokument: Video Art in Slovenia 1969–1998* (Ljubljana: SCCA-Ljubljana, 1999).
5. Igor Španjol, "An Artistic Evening: Television Presentation and Production of Art Video," in *ibid.*
6. Dušan Mandić, "ŠKUC-Forumova video produkcija" [The ŠKUC-Forum Video Production], *Ekran*, nos. 1–2 (Ljubljana, 1984).

Part IV: Manifestos

historical avant-gardes



Zenitist Manifesto

Ljubomir Micić

You cannot “understand” zenitism
unless you feel it.

The electricity we do not “understand”
but feel is perhaps the supreme
manifestation of the spirit—

Zenitism?

We are naked and pure.

Forget hatred—sink into the naked depths of Yourself!

Dive and fly to your own heights!

ZENITH

Fly above the criminal, fratricidal Present!

Show your astral being to the visionary eyes of Superlife!

Listen to the magic of our words, Listen to Yourselves!

There—on Šar mountain—on the Urals—stands

THE NAKED MAN BARBAROGENIUS

Fly above the Šar mountain, above the Urals and the Himalayas—

Mont Blanc—Popocatepetl—above Kilimanjaro!

We are now floating high, high above the bodily spheres of the Globe.

Break, binding chains! Fall, suburbs of large and plague-ridden

West European cities! Shatter, glass of gilded palaces

—tall towers—National Stock Markets and Banks!

Return to your fat bellies, fat war profiteers!

Hide your bought concubines deep in your dirty pockets!

Have you no shame!?

And you, blind mothers and you, stupid fathers, selling your innocent
daughters for money!

And you, you black underground spiders, spinning your webs around pure
souls

Freemasons!

Have you no shame, you drunken lodges!?

You—merchants of souls—art and culture—you lie the most!

Against you—for Man!

Bolt your doors West—North—Central Europe—

The Barbarians are coming!

Bolt them, bolt them, but

We shall still enter!

We are the children of arson and fire—we carry Man's soul.

And our soul is *combustion*.

Combustion of the soul in the creation of *sublimity*.

ZENITISM

We are the children of the Sun and the Mountains—we carry Man's spirit.

And our spirit is the life of cosmic *unity* bound by Love.

We are the children of the *South East barbaro-genius*.

It is coming . . . It is coming . . .

THE RESCUE CAR

*Hot-blooded horses' hoofs biting
the ground galloping to a savage rhythm.*

*Underground channels rumble
Crammed hospitals moan
City churches—streets and cathedrals
celebrate Easter*

1921.

*Moscow pours blood.
Far away bells of assumption thunder.*

*A closed yellow car burtles
cutting through space of sinful and colorful streets
where war battalions of fratricides once passed.*

— — — — —
*Oh mortuary music of those gray battalions!
Oh bloody burials of attack trumpets!
Oh dull thuds of men's bodies
remember:*

! Man is your brother!

! Man is your brother!

The sun spurts.

*Astral bodies of the universe dance
Floating up there in the endless circular spheres
of the new planet*

*** Alpha and Pons***

*And the red-colored crosses
on the milky panes of the yellow car
have hoisted high their visionary flag of Redemption
and sing the Eastern Slavic song of Resurrection.*

*Countless crosses of our defeated land tremble.
The wooden gallows above our skulls are falling.
Bloody ropes snake above the fratricidal Black Peak.
And through big cities cars with red crosses rush*

EAST

SOUTH

WEST

*The yellow rescue car hurtles
carrying a hidden corpse—Man.*

Man is dying everywhere.

*The Sun has fallen into my soul
into the limitless space of All-love.*

*The red glass crosses shattered —
Man has died in the yellow car.*

Letters are dancing, cast above the crosses

R	S	U	C	R
E	C	E	A	

*Black flags, brothers, flutter in our souls
because
Man is dying everywhere . . .*

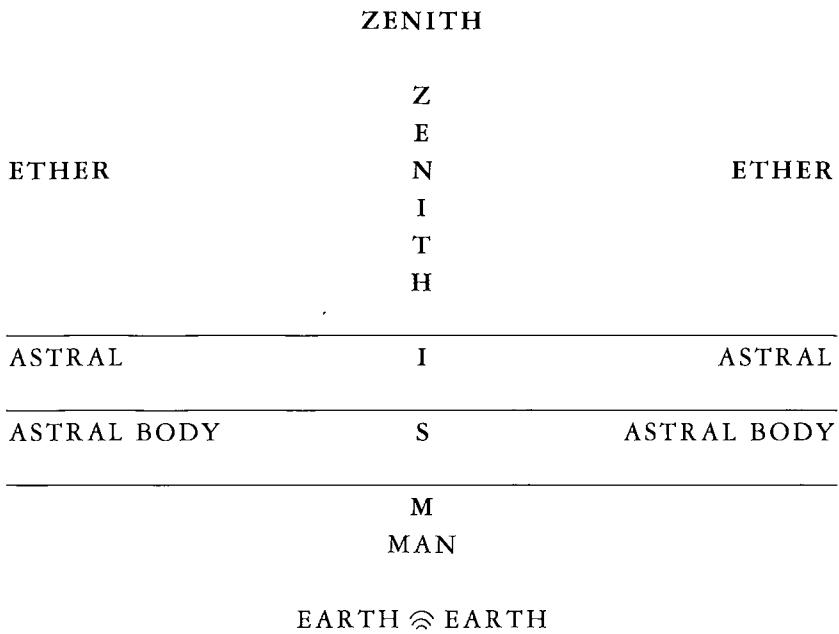
* * * * *

It is magic, the word: Zenith!

Man, a brother and father to gods was born somewhere in the jungle.
Man created God, for he saw terrible storms and arrows,
heard thunder and desired the *Sun*.
One magical and deep night he discovered Himself—Man
Man's first weakness created God—the *First Empire*.
The first Egyptian and Greek culture (Greece and Macedonia are
both in the Balkans!)—the *Second Empire*.

ZENITISM = THE THIRD UNIVERSE

A graphic picture of zenithism = an incarnation of the metacosmic bipolarity:



Man is the center of the macrocosmos—the Earth's North Pole.
Zenith is the center of the metacosmos—the Universe's North Pole.
Zenitism is a magical and electric interval between the macrocosmos and
the metacosmos—between Man and Zenith.
Man is thunder cast into space—on Earth.
We begin with Man.
Man is a victim. The victim is always central.
Man is tragedy. Tragedy is always sublime.

Man—Spirit—Metacosmos—Sun—Phenomenon—Zenith

ZENITISM = THE ORIENT OF AIRPLANE
SPIRITS

Zenitism is the idea of all arts.

Zenitist art must be an art of ideas—affinitive.

A Zenitist must create new things.

A Zenitist must create the new.

Zenitism is an artistic affirmation of the Allspirit.

ZENITISM = ∞ = TOTALITY

Zenitism is the absolute supernatural individuation, the only creative one:

It must contain the artist + man.

Superman

It must incarnate the bipolar metacosmos

Phenomenon

Zenitism is more than spirit = the fourth dimension.

Zenitism is beyond dimensions = ∞ or the tenth dimension =

Eternity.

Magical Zenitist word = radio station A

Man's fluid feeling and jerk = radio station B

Manifestation = Radiogram.

A Zenitist word must be electrification

A Zenitist deed must be a radiogram.

This is not a gospel. This is a Manifesto.

The people of the future, who come after us, they will write the Gospel.

And they will come . . . they will come . . .

The future Man!

He will be the son of the Sun and the Zenith.

He will speak the Zenitist language.

All . . . all . . . will understand.

This is not a philosophy.

The philosophy of zenitism is in the making.

It is emerging . . . happening . . .
Zenitism is mysticism and there is no philosophy of mysticism. There is
only the mysticism of philosophy—the mysticism of the *New Art*.
Zenitism is a revelation in the one hundred and twentieth century!!!
Expressionism, cubism, futurism—are dead.
We are an extension of their lineage—to higher ground!
We are their synthesis but as an arrow pointing upward, a reincarnation
—*the plusexistence of their philosophical ideas*:

The soul of souls of the dead of those who died but lived one hundred and
twenty centuries ago and yearned for the Zenith.

The soul of the souls of the nameless ones whose proud children we are.

Sons of creation—bonding—unification—travel
through Chaos—the sons of **Original Sin**.

Original Sin must have occurred, for that is how people came to know
Themselves.

There would be no Zenitism without Original Sin!

We who have discovered Ourselves—Man—we are Zenitists
You should be, too! . . .

Our only thought is ZENITH—*the highest incarnation of Allexistence*.
Our path is only forward—above—over everything
that has been.

Down with pale traditions, systems, and borders! Borders are for the limited!
We keep going . . . going
Traveling from chaos to create a Work.

Led by the mystical demigod

ANARCH

You come too, though woe unto them who stumble and are left by the way-side.
We will not come back.

Poets! Brothers! Zenitists as yet unknown!
Cast off the cloak of lies!
Awaken Man and exalt him!
Sing of flames, fire, the burning and thirst for Zenith!
Put a stop to Man's fall. That will be our greatest work. That is

the vertical line that will pierce the heavens above. And *sunny blood, sunny blood* shall flow.

Poets of Zenith! Sing of Man and not murderer!
Man is for Love and for Exaltation.

Above splintered human skulls, we extend our hands to all,
over all borders, to those who think like us: *to people!*

Even then, when the last Nonhuman dies,
then
in all the countries—in all the cities—on all the towers
ships—planes—palaces—court rooms—hospitals
—academies—insane asylums—seaports—
hang clean white flags and greet the *Future Zenitist Man*
then
in all the pavilions—churches—halls—theaters
—circuses—streets—roofs—railways—submarines
—army barracks—
in all the Zeniteums
sound your trumpets—
organs—tympani—drums—fanfares—
sing your hearts
sing . . . sing

THE ANTHEM OF ZENITISM
THE ANTHEM OF ZENITISM

Earth is for Man the Brother and not for Man the Murderer!

Zagreb in the Balkans, June 12, 1921.

originally published as “Manifest Zenitizma,” in *Zenit* (Zagreb), no. 1 (1921)

Börse dekliniert triest

Dragan Aleksić

börse dekliniert triest

polypkinder aplaus dreieckiger schwert
sägt sich sonne tiefwund tragik
ajax
ohnedurchbruch eichen stehn
oboe aus walde jankowich sommers triptichon
jene feuer zählt 120°C
lügen unten: trade mark
ragtime 2 kastanien kürbise kirschen
habens gern bixtroxpalme: bitte 5 monat praxis.

notwendig: tausendzwei zimmer gutparkete
bromzinnsschlager ritzpetroil mixmatschbusole
laugensteinisch alaunenbrüllen: telephon
-verbrecher
nur nur nur (BETET TSCHUWIEDEN)
testament: er hat sich nicht ermordet
aktien montan 5620
+ 400% geschäftsbetrug
zumteufelajax

Dada Tank, no. 1 (Zagreb, 1922)

The Modern Stage

Ferdo Delak

The stage must include only the amount of space necessary for the interaction of three or four people. The space we refer to as the stage has to be determined on the basis of the content demanded by the play. Filling the stage with color, light, and sound, and turning it into rhythmic gesticulation, is a mimetic act in time and space.

Colors and lights are stage equipment fusing with the light of sound (action) in space and time (the stage and movement).

This synthetic fusion is the stage decoration—from start to finish of the performance.

To make this kind of active life is to imbue the work with tempo, as in music. It is used to bring the performance to its climax and elevate the action to its peak value—be it a drama, a comedy, a pantomime, or a mimic coloration of a choreographic performance.

Modern stage equipment is spare, striving for the greatest impact with the simplest means, without cluttering the action with excessive ambition. Decor should represent function, the content of the play, and should not be used as a sole external effect which might even kill the performance—its gesticulation and color. The decor of the play is nothing but graphic content presented objectively. In other words: the action should live in its decor as a picture lives in a frame.

Modern theater is based on interweaving lights and shadows, the decor changing with the mood of the performance. The director must, therefore, ensure that scenery changes—and is dynamic, not static—throughout the performance.

Modern theater is dynamic. The decor and action represent the crux of the play, shifting throughout the performance, not only at the end of each act, as is the usual treatment on static stages. The spectator should not be aware of the changes, but follow the performance closely to the end. Color, light, and sound should be the director's basic materials for staging a scene. Similarly, characters (actors) should match the backdrop as well: the actor's outward appearance is part of the overall decor and should, accordingly, depend on that. The actor has to feel himself in space. He should not represent an unconscious form, but be simultaneous in simultaneity. The decor on stage functions as the play to the playwright: it works like sound surrounding substance—the plastic and coloristic aspects of the play. Its active (rhetorical) and spatial aspect, however, are enveloped with mimical gesture and

sound. Accordingly, one should critically gauge perception of the whole structural content of the play. The function of the modern director is at once poet, painter, architect, and spectator.

Edinost, Trieste 1926

Group Zemlja Manifesto

Drago Ibler

I IDEOLOGICAL BASIS

The goal (purpose) of Land: Independence of visual expression.

The way to do this:

- 1) Resist tendencies from abroad, impressionism, neoclassicism, etc.
- 2) Heighten the level of visual culture. Fight against dilettantism.
- 3) Fight against l'art pour l'art. (Art should reflect the environment and answer to basic contemporary needs.)

II WORKING BASIS

- 1) Popularize art (exhibitions, circles, lectures, publishing).
- 2) Intensify contact with abroad (comparative exhibitions here and abroad, reviews).
- 3) Work with intellectual groups of similar ideological orientation.

May 22, 1929

neo-avant-gardes



Manifesto

Exat 51

see no connection between the actual framework of our artistic commitment on the one hand, and the space concept arising from a coordinated relationship between the productive and the social standard on the other;

see no difference between so-called pure and so-called applied art;

consider that work methods and principles within the sphere of nonfigural or so-called abstract art are not the expression of decadent aspirations, but, rather, believe that the study of these methods and principles could develop and enrich the sphere of visual communication in our country;

the Group intended to operate in actual time and space, assuming plastic requirements and potentials as a tentative point of departure;

by understanding our reality as an aspiration for progress in all forms of human activity, the Group believe in the need for struggle against outdated ideas and activities on the synthesis of all fine arts, and, secondly, emphasize the experimental character of artistic activity, because any progress in a creative approach to the fine arts will not work without experiment;

consider the foundation and activity of the Group to be a positive outcome of the development of differences of opinion, a requisite for the promotion of artistic life in this country.

B. Bernardi, architect; Z. Bregovac, architect; L. Picelj, painter; Z. Radić, architect; B. Rašica, architect; V. Richter, architect; A. Srnec, painter; V. Zarahović, architect

Zagreb, 1951

Manifesto

Ivo Gattin

There was the certainty
of future in some
“credos”
Formed societies
aesthetic canons
I am left only with the
inherited certainty of
material nature which I cling to
and feel to be eternal and
implacable

I do not exhort as long as
my thoughts, feelings,
actions—“paintings”—are embraced

To exhort would be
an act of violence

That urgency creates
a thought, a feeling, an action,
and creative act
All that matures in the margins of my life

There are no identical lives. Only similar ones.
Understanding and acceptance
may happen between them

Days pass one after another in a rhythm
not of my volition
and roll me within
the margins

Looking at them from within
the margins narrow
—suffocating
To go outside the margins is
the necessity of my action

A torrent shapes rock,
and the rock shapes the torrent

I affect matter—
it reacts and recreates my initial need
to act

The impact of creation between
me and an object
is proportionate
to the relation
between the torrent and the rock.

I seek my equilibrium
in canceling man's pride
before other
forms of life matter
but deep down there is this
fierce desire to resume dialogue
—not with superintelligent creatures
from an unknown planet
but with human beings
to restore confidence
in man, confidence
hopelessly
discredited
through human cruelty and
violence

All this is
a happening that has determined
the form, color,
material and image of my
“painting.”

These are my thoughts
today;
my actions;
my paintings; and if
they meet with a friendly reception,
I will be glad.

Galliate, March 9, 1964

first published under the title “Il manifesto di Ivo Gattin” in *Studentski list*,
Zagreb, May 21, 1982

Untitled

Josip Vaništa

Gorgona is serious and simple.

Gorgona stands for absolute transience in art.

Gorgona seeks neither product nor result in art.

It judges according to the situation.

Gorgona is contradictory.

It defines itself as the sum of all its possible definitions.

Gorgona is constantly in doubt . . .

Valuing most that which is dead.

Gorgona speaks of nothing.

Undefined and undetermined.

Zagreb, 1961

Collective Work

Gorgona

The following statements by Gorgona members were made in response to Radoslav Putar's proposal that Gorgona do something collective; these statements constitute Gorgona's only form of "collective work."

Ivan Kožarić

To make casts of the insides of automobiles, apartments, stables, of the interior of a park, in general, of all the important in-sides in town.

Radoslav Putar

§1

Collective work is impossible.

§2

Consequently, we should try.

§3

To try our hand at this lofty task, we should work at collective work with no visible collaboration.

§4

On the thorny road to our goal, we should derive no profit, nor should we expect anyone's praise or appreciation.

§5

Everyone will contribute something freely to the collective product of our efforts. That is: just as differences concentrate in focus, so they tend to return along the same paths to their sources.

§6

All dissonances and unintelligibility of the whole will be credible proof that impossibility has been overcome the only possible way; its first and finest quality has been preserved.

Djuro Seder

Collective work is the complete opposite of what we as individuals have been working for: personal affirmation, confirmed by and achieved through *one's own individual work*. Do I really want collective work?

Yes, I do.

Is collective work possible?

I suppose a common goal is necessary, and coincidence of thought and will.
Kinship of feelings. And some, at least minimal, shared enthusiasm. For
constructive collective work, we also need a shared work program.
Collective work has no face.
Collective work cannot speak.
Collective work has no beginning, just an end.
There is no predicting the form collective work will take, just its aim.
The final form of collective work is of no importance.

Zagreb, 1963

From *Manifesti*

Mangelos

manifesto of manifesto

dear friends

dear fiends

this is not a manifest claim that the experiments
carried out over the years were entirely successful
because they were not
but that another route has been discovered
instead of following the line of meaning
the thinking process proceeds
along the line of function
corresponding to other processes of life.
this is the framework for my manifestos.

the world is not only changing
it has changed.
we are in the second century
of the second civilization, the machine one.
the social use of the machine
has put an end to the civilization of manual work
and to all the social phenomena
rooted in manual work.

by changing the character of work
the world changes its way of thinking.
the revolution of thinking has the character
of a long-term evolution.
in the course of this process
the previous artistic or naïve thought
has integrated itself in the process of application
with another one based on
the principles of mechanical work.

civilization is practically evolving
into a cultural organization of the interplanetary kind
with uniform mechanical production.

and consequently
with uniform types of social superstructure
based on the principle of social functionality.
instead of emotionally structured units
a type of social unit is formed
that thinks functionally.

manifesto on photography no. 9

photography is not an art phenomenon
nor a phenomenon of the civilization of manual labor
a photograph does not function as a painting
nor does the lens function as the eye of an artist.
painting and photography
are two different phenomena
of two different civilizations
of two different ways of thinking.
the naïve and the functional.

manifesto on gap no. 3

looking from the nineteenth century marx still saw
art as part of society.
in the twentieth century a gap could be seen
between them.
by the twenty-first century society is seen
but not art.

šid manifesto

we often speak of “two” marxes
“three” van goghs “several” picassos, and so on
thus stressing the differences
between their early and late careers.
early and late periods may differ considerably,
to the point of being diametrically opposed
as if they were made by different individuals.
the explanation is simple.
there are different persons in a single individual.

the material framework
for different persons

is the transformation of the cells in the organism.
cells renew themselves every seven years.

assuming the physiological information
i was taught at school in šid is correct
there should be 9 and a half mangelos.

mangelos no. 1 . . . 1921–1928

mangelos no. 2 . . . 1928–1935

mangelos no. 3 . . . 1935–1942

mangelos no. 4 . . . 1942–1949

mangelos no. 5 . . . 1949–1956

mangelos no. 6 . . . 1956–1963

mangelos no. 7 . . . 1963–1970

mangelos no. 8 . . . 1970–1977

mangelos no. 9 . . . 1977–1984

mangelos no. 9½ 1984–1987

(assuming my calculations are correct)

1921, šid –1987, les champs du dernier goulag

Notes

Julije Knifer

The text must be neutral and clear: simple and direct.

I wish to begin with the essential. Like my paintings which I began in the 1950s, continued through the 1960s, and am still working on today.

A text must be pure and direct. Of course, a text must have content, but the content eludes description. A text must consist of facts. All this is easily stated beforehand, but how do we produce genuine content?

A text should have no conventional beginning. One must start, literally, with the end.

(A text must be pure and direct.)

I do not want to turn my work into a complicated philosophy but I would like to analyze as simply and directly as possible. The theme does not matter. I shall try to analyze the escalation of monotony that underlines the meanders from 1959–1960 to the present day. It will have to be an analysis of facts.

Definitions are but the simplest description of facts. It would be ideal to compose a text of several definitions which in fact describe a single thing. Regardless of my opinion that a text should begin without introduction but dive into the matter in the middle, there must be some sort of beginning.

It is not that everything should be logical at all costs, since I do not describe events but wish only to record certain facts.

A text should have its flow and rhythm, if only entirely monotonous (all the better). I would like to produce a monotonous rhythm in the text itself. The facts should be arranged very simply.

The entire text will be a list of facts. Therefore my first task is to single out the facts and arrange them in a definite order. I must begin with facts. Of course, I have no specific theory that could determine my so-called painting. I have started from the simplest facts. I wish neither to describe nor explain. I want to list facts.

The process of my work ran without oscillation; the evolution was directed at a total disappearance of the picture.

This was in 1959 and 1960.

I did not have a definite theory that could determine my so-called painting. I started from the simplest facts. Without description or explanation, I listed facts.

Essentially it was an escalation of monotony. Today there is no point to creating an antipainting and I do not know whether my present compositions must suggest an antipainting formula, though they carry in them the same spiritual origin and the same spiritual and physical structure as they did in those years—1959 and 1960. It is important to continue the logic of the course begun then.

from *Život umjetnosti*, no. 35 (Zagreb, 1983)

The Vocovisual

Vladan Radovanović

The interpretation of the vocovisual as an artistic genre, and my special VV poetics (or Sema Synthesis), have been determined through my work since 1954 and theoretically since the 1960s.

The vocovisual is a common term for the entire tendency from Simmias to date that despite its literary origin is neither poetry nor any other single-medium genre. Today this can be seen as an independent art genre. It is an interdisciplinary, multimedia art that involves not only the visual and phonetic but also the tactile, kinetic, and so forth. Despite being a multimedia discipline, it is different from mixed media, multimedia, and intermedia in its designative meaning. By the same token the visual in the vocovisual may be distinguished from that in the plastic arts, as the phonic is different from that in music. The vocovisual is characterized by signs of a conventional and allusive type (including verbal and iconic signs), but not by those of a self-acting type. As in all arts, the basic type of meaning is designative, but in the vocovisual, artistic impact comes through an encounter of formal and designative meaning. The vocovisual is in continual semantic and syntactic interaction between artistic and extra-artistic realms. The designative quality expresses itself through the thematic. The theme can be anything (metaphysical, scientific, social, political, literary), but there must be a theme.

My own special poetics are just a part of the vocovisual and a synthesis, in a way, of features of “figured verse,” the symbolic letter, and those of the more recent poetics (concrete, visual, sound, kinetic, and spatial), but should not be identified with any tendentious poetics.

conceptual art

OHO

I. G. Plamen and Marko Pogačnik

What is this on newspaper in painter's ink in a trace which falls and rises in a curve, then falls past three dots and runs part of the length in a straight line and falls steeply and turns back sharply, curving, falls sharply and levels out lengthwise and curves up to the corner, whence it falls and rises in a curve, then falls past three dots?

This is not a body, rounded along the volume of a foot, with a hole in the form of a split mouth with three arches of thread punctured with three holes twice, which are encircled by six-sided, inwardly curved metal rings, while the tongue lolls out of the mouth, tipped with twelve little arches, opposite the belt which hugs the back, bordered by two columns of stitches, turning inward at the edge under the layer of leather which lines the interior, and is then sewn into the material which stretches to the end of the interior and touches the very bottom, etched on the sole with the golden letters E, X, P, O, R, and T, and with rubber on the outer side with parallel ribs which line up from the rough plain on both sides of the center, which is full of hooked teeth appearing from the right and disappearing to the right, emerges the inscription EURASIA, a sharp ridge rises to an arched wall which raises the heel with hooked teeth appearing from the left and disappearing to the right, with a row of parallel teeth on the sides between the threshold and the rough plain cut into the sole, which lies tightly against the thick leather line, which lies tightly against the leather belt, which wraps it, sewn with a hundred stitches tightly hugging the body, rounded along the volume of a foot, with a hole in the form of a split mouth, with three arches of thread, punctured with three holes twice, which are encircled by six-sided, inwardly curved metal rings.

OHO

When does prostor [space] break down into prosti zor [free vision]. When I write this, therefore immediately or simultaneously. When I sprostim [release, relax] prostor [space] into prosti zor [free vision], therefore immediately or simultaneously. In the pred-stavi [representation, before-position] ob-staja [exists, near-position] prostor [space] which is empty, which is prost [free] in the sense that (n)ought is there. If it is true that (n)ought is there, then what is. Therefore the definition or claiming of space is not possible because of the presence of nothing, which will be there (parts), if anything is already there at the time when (n)ought is.

With a word we entice the unheard voice from a thing. Only the word hears this voice. The word registers or marks the voice of the thing. This voice, marked with a word, speech utters. Here speech meets with music, which is the heard voice of a thing.

Now we would like to know whether we can entice with a word the unheard voice from thought. Is thought also ever silent, although it has something to offer? These are thoughts yet to be wakened, arising from the "sub-conscious." Words which these thoughts mark are not concepts as long as they are not thoughts. Only the thought-up word dewL is therefore a word which helps a thing do besede [to reach expression, to the word].

OHO

A book has been published; its name is OHO. The bookstores are currently selling it.

from *Tribuna*, no. 6 (Ljubljana, November 23, 1966)

Untitled

Braco Dimitrijević

Once upon a time, far from cities
and towns, there lived two painters.
One day the king, hunting nearby,
lost his dog. He found him in the
garden of one of the two painters.
He saw the works of that painter
and took him to the castle.

The name of the painter was
Leonardo da Vinci. The name
of the other disappeared forever
from human memory.

Zagreb, 1973

Retrospective

Goran Trbuljak

I do not wish to show anything new and original;¹

The fact that someone has a chance to hold a show matters more than what will be in that show;²

I am demonstrating the continuity of my work.³

1. Student Cultural Center Gallery, November 1971, Zagreb.

2. Gallery of Contemporary Art, May 1973, Zagreb.

3. Studio GSU, April 1979, Zagreb.

Salon Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 1981

(I; IV 1971)

Vladimir Kopicl

1 conceptual art is only that which being as it should, should not exist

2 the idea which when recorded gets out of itself is no longer it

3 because of that the work should not be that which is recorded by me; the work should be the idea independent of recording

4 if it (the idea) itself were the work, then the conceptual art would also be it; but the work from the point of view of conceptual art does not yet exist outside recording

5 I'll take a piece of paper (or anything else), I'll note down the idea; there is no idea; only the note is for the consumer

8 sometimes I cannot recognize it

9 the idea which enters the process of recording thus accepting to be the work should declare itself without any remains

10 but it cannot be like this

11 thus conceptual art is not that which it is

12 and thus only the works of conceptual art which are not conceptual art exist; only the records are missed possibilities

13 but my art is beyond this for it is how I accept the art at least

15 what I present as my work is beyond my art; it is a different art, that which is needed by others

16 I am a dirty little artist, but I know it

19 my true art is that which cannot be; it is my own consciousness of myself (itself)

20 thus my work which is not my art exists; it is beyond itself and as such does not exist

24 if I think it, it exists like everything else and it always remains the same

27 if I were—my idea—my art, my work is then my consumer; in this relationship I see its being

32 it is only a recording however

- a) the work cannot exist; only the consciousness of the impossibility of its recording exists
- b) the work means the recording of the consciousness of the impossibility beyond recording
- c) the work represents the recording of the consciousness of the impossibility of recording the work

Novi Sad, 1971

It is wrong to think of the six of us as a group working on a joint program. Yet what we obviously have in common today does suggest that what brought us together was more than mere formality. It's not that we shared the same attitude toward art, so much as we would say that the closeness of our views originated from similar viewpoints toward life.

During the joint shows and frequent discussions over the past few years, we have worked to build a homogeneous approach to art. Through our mutual effort we succeeded in establishing some elements of what we were after—thanks to the fact that the attitude of each one of us was, in a way, important to the others.

Our work has unique rules. Its substructure is abstract form and it deals with meaning. The phenomenal structures of these art works, by which they are brought into the real, apparent world, have meaning only tangential to the will of the person who created them. They have no form in the real sense of the word, a visible structure we can depend on, taken as essential if they are outside the inner system. The formal elements that constitute the work should not be the work. But the parts of the exhibited object that exist in a physically homogeneous space and time are in essential mutual relation if they refer to the idea of that work and are not mutually related apart from that idea.

The visual physical factors are only inducements for a mental perception of definite ideas. The base of this idea is contained in the mental processes of the creator. The ideas are conceived in the mental processes of the author. A work comprehended in this way is capable of reorganizing the mental process of the spectator. Each work is a mental form created with a desire to offer mental images or objects to the spectator's conscience. Such work is able to establish a relationship between the mental processes of the author and those of the spectator.

The system, structure, position, and relation in the work relate to the system, structure, and so forth. They are not presented as the spectator's accomplished consciousness, but nevertheless they offer him no freedom of interpretation. They are what they are, and not something else. The elements of a new structure and order of reality founded on real physical factors.

Taken as a whole and within the scope of our personal convictions, the subject of our work is the examination of such a being of art.

Belgrade, 1972

Rhythm 10, 5, 2, 4, 0

Marina Abramović

Rhythm 10

I place a white sheet of paper on the floor.

I place 20 knives of different sizes and shapes on the paper.

I place 2 tape recorders with microphones on the floor.

Performance.

I turn on the first tape recorder.

I take the first knife and stab in between the fingers of my left hand as fast as possible.

Every time I cut myself, I change knives.

When I've used all of the knives (all the rhythms), I rewind the tape recorder.

I listen to the recording of the first part of the performance.

I concentrate.

I repeat the first part of the performance.

I take the knives in the same order, follow the same order, follow the same rhythm, and cut myself in the same places.

In this performance the mistakes of time past and time present are synchronized.

I rewind the second tape recorder and listen to the double rhythm of the knives.

I leave.

Duration: 1 hour

1973

Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Villa Borghese, Rome
The first version of this performance (with 10 knives) was performed at the Edinburgh Festival, 1973.

Rhythm 5

I construct a five-pointed star (the construction is made in wood shavings soaked in 100 liters of petrol).

Performance.

I light the star.

I walk around the star.

I cut my hair and throw it into each point of the star.

I pare my finger nails and throw them into each point of the star.

I cut my toe nails and throw them into each point of the star.

I enter the empty space in the star and lie down.

Duration: 1½ hours

1974

Studenski kulturni centar, Belgrade

Rhythm 2

Part I

I use my body for an experiment.

I take the medication used in hospitals for the treatment of acute catatonia and schizophrenia, which puts my body in unpredictable states.

Performance.

Facing the public, I take the first medication.

This medication is given to patients who suffer from catatonia to force them to change the positions of their bodies.

Shortly after taking the medication, my muscles begin to contract violently, until I completely lose control.

Consciously I am very aware of what is going on but I cannot control my body.

Duration: 50 minutes

Break .

I turn the radio to a random station.

While preparing for the second part the public listen to Slavic folksongs on the radio.

Duration: 10 minutes

Part II

Performance.

Taking the second pill.

Facing the public, I take the second medication.

This medication is given to schizophrenic patients with violent behavior disorders to calm them down.

Shortly after taking the medication, I first feel cold and then completely lose consciousness forgetting who and where I am.

The performance finishes when the medication loses its effect.

Duration: 6 hours

1974

Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb

Rhythm 4

Space A

Performance.

I slowly approach the air blower, taking as much air in as possible.

Just above the opening of the blower I lose consciousness because of the extreme pressure.

But this does not interrupt the performance.

After falling over sideways the blower continues to change and move my face.

Space B

Performance.

The video camera is only focused on my face without showing the blower.

The public looking at the monitor have the impression of me being under water.

The moment I lose consciousness the performance lasts 3 more minutes, during which the public are unaware of my state.

In the performance I succeed in using my body in and out of consciousness without any interruption.

Duration: 45 minutes

1974

Galleria Diagramma, Milan

Rhythm 0

Instructions.

There are 72 objects on the table that one can use
on me as desired.

Performance.

I am the object.

During this period I take full responsibility.

Duration: 6 hours (8 pm–2 am)

1974

Studio Morra, Naples

This performance is the last in the cycle of rhythms
(*Rhythm 10, Rhythm 5, Rhythm 2, Rhythm 4, Rhythm 0*).

About the Elementary or Post-Aesthetic Art

(Elementary Painting)

Raša Todosijević

The direction of artistic thought is unpredictable but absolutely logical in retrospect. The logic of that direction is stipulated by art philosophy, relying on ideas which change their laws.

1) Elementary Art is not the art of making, deducing, or deconstructing a picture, nor is it the painting of an image, but a radical demonstration of the origination of the artistic concept. In extreme cases, if it is shown that its existence is justified by our inertia, this can lead to its total exposure and negation.

2) The ideas that are framed by propositions established in this way develop through research on a specific subject. Elementary art insists on every individual phenomenon, points out its elementary language, and finds the essence contained in all the other parts of the art corpus.

(If we are talking about painting, then the character of the painting is taken generally as the physical and spiritual status of a painting, whereas the objective facts of its structure cease to be mediators in expressing any literal or emotional record, becoming instead the subject of research. This can also be applied to other forms of artistic expression.)

3) The artist has underlined his role in the explicit analytical space above the idea and matter, and the results of such behavior lie outside the work and are not readable through direct language—because they are reflections of mental mechanics—and are realized in the solid conjunction of idea and matter.

4) Elementary Art is postaesthetic art (not anti-aesthetic) because it is not based simply on the arbitrariness of direct speech that reigns supreme in the domain of ordinary aesthetics.

5) This art acknowledges only the reality of its own physical and spiritual substance, without allusion to or evocation of the external, “real world.” Whatever the language of art may be, it is absolutely nonobjective against the “real world” and absolutely concrete in its role of indicating abstract thought.

(This text refers exclusively to my work between 1972 and 1975.)

Belgrade, 1975

Statement

Group 143

- works are not pieces
 - a work is not considered in isolation but as part of a continuity
 - this continuity is primary mental construction
- it is meaningful to speak of documents of thought, behavior

9. attitudes of realization (II):

- individual work
- individual work within a group
- collective work

10. presentation of the work:

- precisely predetermined program
- program that allows scope for improvisation
- improvisation

11. functional realization:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|
| exhibition | demonstration of work |
| explanation | analysis of processes in work |

12. education:

- individual work—collective work—communication—coordination—
transfer—exchange—acquisition of experience—knowledge—behavior
education is a creative collaboration: the liberation of creative potential
- study of various processes and changes in art, culture, and society
- study of art as a form of mental superstructure, self-awareness, and
cognition
- study of art in the domain of aesthetic categories:
 - analysis of the formation, meaning, and language of art,
 - analysis of the theory, critique, and function of art
- study of art in the domain of postaesthetic categories:
 - analysis of the science of art
 - analysis of the philosophy of art
 - analysis of the sociology of art
 - analysis of the anthropology of art

Belgrade, 1975

postmodern, retro-avant-gardes

Footwriting

Mladen Stilinović

The subject of my work is the language of politics, its reflection in everyday life. These works are not just made up. I would like to paint. I paint, but the painting betrays me. I write, but the written word betrays me. The pictures and words become not-my-pictures, not-my-words, and this is what I want to achieve with my work—not-my-painting. If the language (the color, the image) are possessed by ideology, I, too, want to become the owner of such a language. I want to think it with consequences. This is neither criticism nor ambiguity. What is imposed on me is imposed as a question, as an experience, as a consequence. If colors, words, and materials have several meanings, which is the one that is imposed, what does it mean, and does it mean anything—or is it just idle run, a delusion? The question is how to manipulate that which manipulates you, so obviously, so shamelessly, but I am not innocent either—there is no art without consequences.

Zagreb, 1984

Art and Totalitarianism

Laibach

Art and totalitarianism
are not mutually exclusive.
Totalitarian regimes abolish
the Illusion of revolutionary
individual artistic
freedom.

LAIBACH KUNST is the principle
of conscious rejection
of personal tastes,
judgments, convictions [. . .];
free depersonalization,
voluntary acceptance
of the role of ideology,
demasking and
recapitulation of regime,
“ultramodernism . . .”

He who has material power, has spiritual power, and all art is subject to political manipulation, except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation.

Ljubljana, 1982

The First Sisters Letter

Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater

Theater does not exist between the *Spectator* and the *Actor*.

Theater is not an empty space.

Theater is a *State*.

Every theater is a hierarchical, national, economic, and ideological organization. In defining particular ideological and artistic standpoints, the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater renounces communication rituals. All the standpoints of Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater are defined by the mode of its *Existence*, that is, by the *Contents* and the *Form* of its *Aesthetic* vision.

The formal tendency of the *State* is stability and power, while in terms of content every state is basically disorganized. The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater proclaims this relation as the fundamental, all-embracing and eternal *Aesthetic* issue. The outer, manifest part of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater presents an image of a solid and geometrically utopian Existence, whereas its creative inner part is an image of the conflict between *Emotions* and *Style* in their inevitable and all-renewing sacredness. The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater is apolitical. The only truly *Aesthetic* vision of the *State* is the vision of the impossible *State*. The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater regards the utopian instinct as an innate, but not acquired, value that exists in man in the form of a desire for a unity with the *Cosmic*, *Aesthetic*, and *Moral* elements. That is why the creation of the *Style* of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater cannot originate in the *Actor*, *Space*, or *Staging*, but only in *Culture* and *Civilization*, renewed and recurrently traumatized in the retro-production of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater.

The *Style* of the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater is not an authentic one. Retro is a method. While revitalizing the arts, the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater is also renewing their *Styles*. Herewith it does not deny that an authentic *Style* is possible; however, it declares the avant-garde the last authentic *Style* of contemporary *Civilization* ending in the defeat of Revolutions.

NSK Document E6, Neue Slowenische Kunst archives, Ljubljana; originally published as programmatic text, 1983

NK Proclamation

New Collectivism

What is a political poster?

What gives the political poster its explosive power?

The political poster is an experience of the twentieth century.

The political poster is a form of public communication.

It impacts the viewer quickly, unexpectedly, effectively, lingering in the memory for a long time.

Its thunderous poetry reverberates through million-strong audiences.

The retrogardist is an artist guided by the desire and ability to analyze with an unerring eye the relations of the beautiful, the raw, the exalted, the holy, and the terrible in current events throughout the world. The retrogardist combats using design and all the means at his disposal. He applies the method of the retro principle the way an automobile designer assembles the parts of a car—wheels, steering wheel, engine. . . . The creative processes of reversed perspective, metaphors, hyperboles, time and space warp, unite and link everything that mankind has squeezed from its veins until now. Content and form are only tools that combine themes and symbols into dynamicism, tension, excitement, and drama.

The political poster must be like a blow into an open wound.

New Collectivism has, within the frame of new state ideologies, redesigned and exposed the old classicist form of man, based on the principle of extratemporal humanist ideals, into a new value, to be dictated by concrete historical events.

The political poster YOUTH DAY by New Collectivism has a soothing influence on stable minds and is a disturbing appeal to the masses.

A poster of New Collectivism is a text, and the text of New Collectivism is a poster!

Its slogan is—humanist propaganda.

NOVI KOLEKTIVIZEM/NEW COLLECTIVISM, Ljubljana, March 21, 1987

The Founding Document

Red Pilot Cosmokinetic Theater

"The Discovery has provoked in me a mental attack of the greatest magnitude. I am in the memories of a silent world, I am in the strategic total of that final instance that never reveals itself. And now I want to speak about my Discovery. . . . But it is not possible! I see my thoughts and I see them just as they are thought by those who are misguided by self-restriction, and control."

OUR DISCOVERY IS KINETIC TALENT:

WE, whose recognition finds essence in power,

WE, with the center of gravity in the front of our heads,

WE, who are thinking in matter and are separated from masses,

WE, who discover our geographical axis in movement.

HISTORY IS FOREVER CAPTURED IN THE NONEXISTING SPACE OF MEMORY! THE PRODUCTION OF THE WORLD IS A METHOD THAT HAS BECOME THE ORGANIC SUBSTANCE OF RATIO.

WE have no Platform.

WE are RED PILOT COSMOKINETIC THEATER.

WE need no lungs, liver, and equilibrium, for

WE are released from gravitation.

WE have no genitals, for

WE are emancipated from the lust for freedom.

WE have built the Observatory for conquering parallel worlds.

WE are workers who build the Drama of the Universe.

The past is recorded in all-encompassing Dramas that have been performed in places with an innumerable quantity of forgotten scenographies. The Observatory is a universal scenography of the Red Pilot Cosmokinetic

Theater. Future immortality can be achieved by viewing from a different angle. The Observatory is a parable place, where only the psychologically determined combined with an object can be Watched. The Observatory does not reflect, the Observatory does not Destruct but the Observatory only Watches the destruction!

Delo (Ljubljana), January 31, 1987

The Ear behind the Painting

Eda Čufer and Irwin

The approach of the twenty-first century raises the question of whether the period we will have entered in ten years time will be the same for all of us.

At the beginning of this century, the utopian triad—A NEW TIME, A NEW MAN, A NEW WORLD—set the pace for the genesis of a process nowadays claimed by two different men and worlds under the common name of MODERN ART.

The fundamental linguistic structure of MODERN ART, i.e., MODERNISM, was generated in the period of various avant-garde movements. Having descended into the realm of the nonaesthetic, these avant-garde movements expanded into the sphere that was originally penetrated by a MEDIATOR-INTERPRETER-MEDIUM-IDEOLOGIST. The rise and fall of these avant-garde movements make up the starting and terminating points of the first, i.e., the UTOPIAN stage of MODERN ART.

The REALIST UTOPIA, confined to the period between the two wars, climaxed when the tectonic forces of the collective consciousness were shattered by the proletarian revolution in Russia and by the outburst of Fascist and Nazi doctrines.

In this period, MODERN ART caught a quick glimpse of how its concept could make the world change in fire, smoke, and blood.

Both doctrines, FASCISM-NAZISM and COMMUNISM, regarded MODERN ART as an inspiring method for the violent aestheticization and idealization of their worlds. The problem of these two formally identical worlds reflected the schism: LEFT vs. RIGHT, GOOD vs. EVIL.

The third, POSTUTOPIAN stage started with the capitulation of EVIL, not with the capitulation of the DIFFERENCE, which was, in addition to COMMUNISM, denoted by FASCISM and NAZISM.

The LEFT and the RIGHT worlds, Eastern Europe with the Soviet Union and Western Europe with the United States of America, set out to experiment with the two different worlds and times, which, due to fundamental differences in their starting points, fatally transformed the then still uniform linguistic nucleus of MODERN ART.

The arguments underlying the conviction that EASTERN MODERNISM was caught in the ice of Siberia should be sought in the methodology of the COMMUNIST EXPERIMENT. The latter arose in 1917 from the belief that the victory of the proletarian revolution established conditions in which a conflict-free society could develop. Once this belief was formally legalized, art was deprived of its creative force and confined to the role of the interpreter of society and the idealized concept associated with it. Thus society, the monumental edifice of an Eastern state, turned out to be the sole theme to be treated in MODERN ART of the EAST.

EASTERN MODERNISM and the WESTERN STATE speak the same language—a language rooted in the language of the avant-garde movements and their idealist concepts of society functioning as a work of art as a whole. The act of EASTERN MODERNISM interpreting a state as free from conflict and the act of a conflict-free state interpreting EASTERN MODERNISM became meaningless. Art was captured in the image of the state and was forced to wither away with it.

The COMMUNIST EXPERIMENT cleared the space and stopped time, capturing it in the static and everlasting experience of revolutionary triumph at the moment when the present-day triad—SCIENCE, IDEOLOGY, and ART—united in the belief that it went beyond the horizon and occupied the vacant throne of God.

The principles of interaction require that another question be asked: to what extremes has the CAPITALIST WEST developed in the COMMUNIST EAST?

With regard to the common starting points of MODERN ART, the circumstances in which WESTERN MODERNISM developed were controversial in many ways. However, WESTERN MODERNISM also retained the linguistic code that was established during the utopian stage. Unlike the COMMUNIST system, the CAPITALIST regards this code as strange, hostile, and aimed at the subversion of the system's very foundation.

Confronted with this antagonism, CAPITALISM takes advantage of the hyperfunctionality of the interpreters—media that daily translate into the linguistic categories of capitalism, converting its subversive essence into market values. Consequently, the activities performed by these media are reflected in the inflationary acceleration of WESTERN TIME and in the imperialist

charge of the WESTERN SPACE. The disintegrative intervention of time inflation into the structure of WESTERN MODERNISM is most evident in the inflation of -isms, in the production of PREFIXES for the same SUFFIX.

The demonic power of a signifier in the West has expanded in the East as well. During the Cold War, numerous artists emigrated to the West, and the false conviction that MODERN ART, no matter whether coming from the East or from the West, is so universal as to be classified under a common name—the current -ISM—appeared to be very common. The evidence that this conviction only reflects the imperialist charge of the West may be well observed in the fact that, after 1925, the act of application of the signifier was developed and monitored in five Western states at the most.

We may conclude the study of the POSTUTOPIAN stage in MODERN ART with the statement that the two different contexts in which the WESTERN and EASTERN experiments were carried out deprived MODERN ART of its international character, each in its own domain ALIENATING it from religiously UTOPIAN function. With EASTERN time preserved in the PAST and Western time stopped in the PRESENT, MODERN ART lost its driving element—the FUTURE. A general interpretation of the current breakdown of the Eastern regimes hides the mutually held illusion that the world will uniformly evolve toward a WESTERN type of government.

As artists form the EAST, we claim that it is impossible to annul several decades of experience of the EAST and to neutralize its vital potential.

The development of EASTERN MODERNISM from the past into the present will run through the FUTURE. The FUTURE is the time interval denoting the difference.

Being aware that the history of art is not a history of different forms of appearance, but a history of signifiers, we demand that this DIFFERENCE be given a name.

THE NAME OF EASTERN ART IS EASTERN MODERNISM.

THE NAME OF ITS METHOD IS RETROGARDISM.

Ljubljana, 1990

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List of Contributors

Barbara Borčić, curator, art historian, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sonja Briski Uzelac, painter, theoretician, Zagreb, Croatia, and Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Eda Čufer, dramaturg, a founder of Neue Slowenische Kunst, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Nevena Daković, film theorist, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Ješa Denegri, art historian, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Dubravka Djurić, poet, literary critic, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Aleš Erjavec, scholar of aesthetics, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Marina Gržinić, video artist, curator, theoretician, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Vladimir Kopićl, poet, editor, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Leonida Kovač, curator, art historian, Zagreb, Croatia

Peter Krečič, art and architectural historian, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Darko Šimičić, curator, Zagreb, Croatia

Miško Šuvaković, scholar of aesthetics, theoretician of art, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Gregor Tomc, cultural theoretician, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, musicologist, Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

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