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Botica, Dubravka

Source / Izvornik: **Journal of Art historiography, 2016, 15: Dec16**

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:131:409284>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-07-24**



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Baroque in Croatia. Presentation of baroque culture in Croatia in the socialist period

Dubravka Botica

Introduction

In the Croatian art historiography of the Cold-War period, Baroque art stands out as a particular subject of interest. Defined in simplified terms as the art of Counter-Reformation and of Absolute Monarchy, that is to say the art of the Church and the nobility, Baroque art posed a stark contrast to the dominant ideology of communism, with its emphasis on the culture of the peasantry and the workers. One might expect that for art historians this was not likely to offer the best possible conditions for researching local Baroque heritage. However, no comprehensive account of art historiography in Croatia in the twentieth century has yet been written – nor has the subject even attracted much interest among the research community as yet. Over the past decade a growing number of texts have appeared dealing with the beginnings of art history on Croatian territory¹ or with a number of individual influential scholars who have blazed the trail in promoting art history as a professional practice in the first half of the twentieth century.² However, the development of academic discourse in the post-war period on art history has only been touched upon in passing by researchers concentrating on broader topics, such as the analysis of culture and art of particular historical periods.³ Therefore, due to the lack of any comprehensive overview of the development of academic discourse on the subject in Croatia, the interpretation of Baroque art in the Croatian art historiography of the second half of the twentieth century remains fragmentary. Using the examples of the 1958 *Hrvatska u XVII stoljeću* (Croatia in the Seventeenth Century) exhibition and articles by Anđela Horvat providing a series of overviews on art heritage, published in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the journal *Kaj*, this essay seeks to analyse the dominant interpretive models of Baroque art in socialist Croatia as reflected in presentations on the subject designed for broader audiences. In the awareness that any comparison can inevitably only be partial, as the two

¹ See, for example, Jasna Galjer, *Likovna kritika u Hrvatskoj 1868–1951*, Zagreb: Meandar media, 2000, and Ivana Mance, *Zèrcalo naroda. Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski: povijest umjetnosti i politika*, Zagreb: Institute of Art History, 2012.

² A particular stress should be put on the series of annual symposiums Hrvatski povjesničari umjetnosti (Croatian Art Historians), organized by the Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske (Association of Croatian Art Historians) in Zagreb: 'Anđela Horvat (1911–1985), Znanstveni skup posvećen stotoj obljetnici rođenja', Zagreb, November 2011. The proceedings were published in *Peristil. Zbornik radova za povijest umjetnosti*, 54, 2011; 'Iso Kršnjavi – Veliki utemeljitelj', November 2012; 'Arthur Schneider (1879–1946)', November 2013; 'Gjuro Szabo (1875–1943)', October 2015.

³ Jasna Galjer, *Dizajn pedesetih u Hrvatskoj: od utopije do stvarnosti*, Zagreb: Horetzky, 2004.

presentations employ entirely different discursive media – an exhibition on the one hand and a series of texts on the other – the analysis focuses primarily on the ideological framework that characterised their respective periods and how that framework was reflected in the examples. This essay's diachronic comparison will give an initial idea of the shifts in interpretation that occurred from the 1950s through to the 1980s, as the ideologically determined emphases and dominant aesthetic theories of the time, for instance, are far less present in the newer texts than they were in the earlier exhibition, which was organised in a decade crucial to the shaping of socialist Yugoslavia's cultural and visual identity.

Researching Baroque art in the socialist period

Between 1945 and 1991, while Croatia still remained part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: Yugoslavia), Baroque art was positioned outside the main focus of art historical research. Scholars directed their efforts mainly in the direction of medieval art along the Adriatic coast and hinterland, explored issues relating to the origin and characteristics of 'national' art, and endeavoured to distinguish works by the local masters (with Slavic names) from those by foreign masters (with foreign sounding – mainly Italian – names).⁴ Another focus lay on post-war twentieth century art, in which the ideological framing of the time was much more evident than in research that focused on older periods.

These tendencies were particularly prominent in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, the decade that played a key role in creating the standard assessment of the role of art in the new socialist regime. Views and criteria first established in the 1950s were to persevere right up until the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991/1992, albeit becoming decreasingly binding as time progressed. The choice of abstract non-figurative art as the style of a modern society in which cultural policies were clearly moving away from Socialist Realism was a particularly important decision in the period immediately after the split with the Soviet Union in 1948. However, discussions of the 1950s put more emphasis the new notion and definition of the role of art and the new position of artists and culture workers in society. Discussions on the topic in magazines like *Republika* or *Pogledi*⁵ clearly betray the ideologically biased views of the leading scholars and provide evidence for the conclusion that culture and art were both understood as an extension of politics, although that phenomenon was not as explicit as it was in Eastern Bloc

⁴ See for instance the works by Cvito Fisković, 'Dokumenti o radu naših graditelja i klesara XV–XVI. stoljeća u Dubrovniku' *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji*, 3, 1947, 3–26; *Naši graditelji i kipari XV. i XVI. u Dubrovniku*, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska 1947; *Prvi poznati dubrovački graditelji*, Dubrovnik: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti 1955. Ljubo Karaman also significantly contributed to research on the 'local environment' with his *O djelovanju domaće sredine u umjetnosti hrvatskih krajeva*, Zagreb: Društvo historičara umjetnosti NRH, 1963.

⁵ *Časopis Republika*, published by Društvo hrvatskih književnika (Croatian Writers' Association) from 1945 on. *Pogledi: časopis za teoriju društvenih i prirodnih nauka*, published from 1952 to 1955 by Društvo sveučilišnih nastavnika (University Professors' Association), Zagreb.

countries, since contacts and communications with the western arts scene were never interrupted throughout the period.

Even though the key participants in these discussions, Grgo Gamulin (1910–1997), professor of art history at Zagreb University. and Krsto Hegedušić (1901–1975), professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and President of Fine Arts Department of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences, refrained from overtly expressing their own political views, their style of discussion nevertheless bore a clear ideological stamp. Krsto Hegedušić, for instance, rejects the socialist-realist art of the Eastern Bloc, but also western art, and advocates instead a path halfway between East and West:

Criticism influences our views and creativity considerably, and this will remain the case in the future as well. After the speech by comrade Kardelj in Ljubljana on December 12, 1949, that decision and resolution of the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Yugoslavia held at the beginning of January 1950 seemed to have also imposed upon us artists the task of resolving our artistic problems in relation to the monopolistic, petit-bourgeois and racist ideas of the East on the one hand and the reactionary and decadent notions of the West on the other. In order to achieve this goal, we must develop criticism and self-criticism as a weapon in the informed battle for better relations among us in the social sense and better results in the artistic sense with regard to socialist ideas and quality.⁶

In contemporary research into the art historiography of the 1950s and the formation of cultural policy, the accent is placed on the professional views of the participants, disregarding any need to analyse the impact of the dominant political discourse. According to Ljiljana Kolečnik, taking 'into consideration the view (which was valid at least at the beginning of the 1950s) that political criteria directly regulated all theoretical issues in culture and the arts, we can only assume what the consequences could have been when such criteria were introduced into polemics on artistic matters.'⁷ It is precisely this aspect of the matter – the influence of ideological criteria on the arts – that needs to be included in the interpretation of the development of art history in Croatia and the reflection of that influence in the approach taken to research into and interpretation of Baroque art.

Research into Baroque period art and culture, a phenomenon that developed most extensively in north-western Croatia,⁸ has received more attention in both

⁶ Krsto Hegedušić, 'A Word on Criticism and the Organisation of Criticism' (1950), cited after Ljiljana Kolečnik, *Art Criticism and Polemics in Croatia during the Nineteen-Fifties*, in Ljiljana Kolečnik, ed., *Hrvatska likovna kritika 50ih. Croatian Art Criticism of the 1950s – Selected Essays*, Zagreb: Association of Croatian Art Historians, 1999, here 356–357.

⁷ Kolečnik, *Art Criticism and Polemics*, 280.

⁸ In the extreme northwest regions in continental Croatia, around the cities of Zagreb and Varaždin, a continuity in property and land ownership was maintained even during the wars with the Ottoman Empire, and the material conditions necessary for the development

academic circles and among the broader public since the 1970s, particularly after the publication of a study by Vladimir Marković on the castles of Hrvatsko Zagorje (1975)⁹ and of Anđela Horvat's book *Između gotike i baroka* (Between Gothics and the Baroque, 1975).¹⁰ The first book shows similarities with the research into Baroque art in other socialist countries, as analysed at the symposium 'Asymmetrical art history? Research and mediation of 'precarious' monuments during the Cold War', held at Humboldt-Universität of Berlin in April 2014,¹¹ a style of research which was marked by an 'abstraction of concrete historical, cultural, social and political contexts and a focus on the pure phenomenon of style and form'.¹² These tendencies are clearly evident in the works of the leading art historians who have to a very large extent shaped art historical methodological approaches in Croatia. These include, for instance, a monograph by Vera Horvat Pintarić on sculptor Francesco Robba, which concentrated on that artist's work's expression and on providing formal analysis (1961),¹³ or Vladimir Marković's above-mentioned book on Baroque castles, which focussed on the typology of ground plan layouts. Both books show a significant relative neglect of the context in which the relevant artworks were commissioned and the role of the client in their production. Formal and typological analysis was given preference to an approach that dealt with Baroque art as the art of the Church and of the feudal landowners – who in the socialist era were considered 'enemies of the people'. This preference was the result of a kind of self-censorship, akin to similar phenomena that were evident in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. A vivid example of the ideological orientation of research at the time is given by a text on the Church of Mary Magdalene at Sela near Sisak. This masterpiece of Baroque architecture and rococo decoration, an oval church with a monumental façade and two belfries, erected between 1759 and 1765, stands out from the array of standard products of the period. In her research on the subject, Đurđica Cvitanović stressed the role of the local parish priest, and the church was depicted as a joint effort of the local community, an approach clearly deemed more acceptable than analysing the monument as a church commissioned by a bishop and

of Baroque art and culture were in place. Such conditions were not present in eastern Croatia, which was under the Ottoman jurisdiction until the war of 1683–1699.

⁹ Vladimir Marković, *Barokni dvorci Hrvatskog zagorja*, Zagreb: Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka, 1995.

¹⁰ Anđela Horvat, *Između gotike i baroka, Umjetnost kontinentalnog dijela Hrvatske od oko 1500 do oko 1700*, Zagreb: Društvo historičara umjetnosti NRH, 1975.

¹¹ Asymmetrische Kunstgeschichte? Erforschung und Vermittlung 'prekärer' Denkmälerbestände im Kalten Krieg, accessed 22 December 2015 <http://www.kunstgeschichte.hu-berlin.de/forschung/laufende-forschungsprojekte/asymmetrische-kunstgeschichte/symposium/>.

¹² 'Abstraktion von konkreten historischen, kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Kontexten und die Konzentration auf das reine Form- und Stilphänomen'; quoted from Eva Pluhařová-Grigienė: 'Asymmetrische Kunstgeschichte?', Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 24.–25.04.2014' [review], in *H-ArtHist*, 01 July 2014, accessed 22 December 2015 <http://arthist.net/reviews/8119>.

¹³ Vera Horvat Pintarić, *Francesco Robba*, Zagreb: Društvo historičara umjetnosti NRH, 1961.

erected on the land owned by the Zagreb Archdiocese.¹⁴ Thus the Baroque church was interpreted as a reflection of the people's aspirations and efforts, a more acceptable vision in a system that advocated the idea of classless society and collective living.

A change in the approach and methodology of research, particularly in terms of its subject matter and the body of work included in analysis, with a focus on the entire context in which a work of art came about, including considerations on the role of the client, arrived on the scene with Anđela Horvat (1911–1985), and especially with her book, *Between Gothics and Baroque* (1975).¹⁵ Horvat's background was in conservation and restoration and thus her study was much less influenced by the dominant theoretical discourse, whose ideologically burden she was able to escape. She focused on the continental part of Croatia and on the periods that left behind the greatest number of monuments – primarily the Baroque period – and managed to broach new topics in Croatian art history. In matters of methodology in an environment with a long-standing tradition of style-centred art history, she first introduced the idea of a pluralism of styles as a method.¹⁶ Furthermore, her synthesis 'Barok u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj' (the Baroque in Continental Croatia) in her monumental monograph *Barok u Hrvatskoj* (the Baroque in Croatia, 1982)¹⁷ helped to put research into the Baroque in Croatia into full swing. The 1980s saw a rise in broader public interest in this period, which was facilitated among other things by a weakening of the ideological influence of the Communist Party in cultural politics that allowed leading museums to adopt new cultural policies, as well as by the new political circumstances after President Tito's death in 1980. Only from then on, therefore, is it possible to speak of presentations introducing the Baroque to broader audiences and on a larger scale – for example in the form of large exhibition projects in the 1980s and 1990s and displays of the art heritage possessed by the Pauline Fathers,¹⁸ the Jesuits¹⁹ and the Zagreb Archbishopric.²⁰

¹⁴ Đurđica Cvitanović, 'The Parish Church of Mary Magdalene and the Parish Manor in Sela near Sisak', *Peristil* 10/11, 1967/68, 133–154.

¹⁵ Anđela Horvat, *Između gotike i baroka, Umjetnost kontinentalnog dijela Hrvatske od oko 1500 do oko 1700*, Zagreb: Društvo historičara umjetnosti NRH, 1975.

¹⁶ By distinguishing several parallel phenomena in terms of style, Horvat introduced an approach free of the period paradigm and thus enabled research on an important body of artworks that had not so far 'fitted in' in terms of style. See Dubravka Botica, 'Današnje čitanje teza Anđele Horvat. Arhitektura XVII stoljeća u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj "Između gotike i baroka"', *Peristil*, 54, 2011, 143–150.

¹⁷ Anđela Horvat, 'Barok u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj', in Anđela Horvat, Radmila Matejčić and Kruno Prijatelj, *Barok u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1982, 3–381.

¹⁸ Vladimir Maleković, Đurđica Cvitanović and Jadranka Petričević, eds, *Kultura pavlina u Hrvatskoj 1244–1786: slikarstvo, kiparstvo, arhitektura, umjetnički obrt, književnost, glazba, prosvjeta, ljekarstvo, gospodarstvo*, (exhib. cat.), Zagreb: Muzej za umjetnost i obrt, 1989.

¹⁹ Biserka Rautar Plančić, ed., *Isusovačka bastina u Hrvata: u povodu 450-te obljetnice osnutka Družbe Isusove i 500-te obljetnice rođenja Ignacija Loyole*, (exhib. cat.), Zagreb: Muzejsko-galerijski centar, 1993.

²⁰ Željka Čorak et al., eds, *Sveti trag: Devetsto godina umjetnosti Zagrebačke nadbiskupije, 1094–1994*, (exhib. cat.), Zagreb: Mimara Museum, MGC, 1994.

However, these exhibitions covered only religious art, while profane art, and the culture of daily life in the Baroque in particular, were entirely neglected. With the exception of Josip Matasović's iconic study of the 'gallant century'²¹ in 1921, and the *Od svagdana do blagdana, Barok u Hrvatskoj* (From the everyday to the holy day. The Baroque in Croatia) exhibition held in the year 1993, which had been designated Year of the Central European Baroque and its catalogue,²² secular art and culture was left almost entirely unaddressed, nor was there much focus put on it in the years to come. During the socialist period one of the reasons for such treatment was the ideologically problematic aspect of the period, along with the accompanying issues of how to adapt Baroque culture and daily life to the scope of current social ideologies, as we will see in the examples analysed below.

The Croatia in the Seventeenth Century exhibition – contemporary aesthetic in representations of historical subjects



Figure 1 Invitation to the *Croatia in the Seventeenth Century* exhibition, Karlovac Civic Museum, 1958, City of Zagreb Museum photo-archive.

The *Croatia in the Seventeenth Century* exhibition was organised jointly by the Croatian History Museum, the Museum of Serbs in Croatia and the City of Zagreb Museum, and was on view from 9 to 17 June 1958 at the City of Zagreb Museum.²³ It was then sent on to Sisak to accompany the *Sixth Brotherhood and Unity Athletic*

²¹ Josip Matasović, *Iz galantnog stoljeća – kulturnohistorijski fragmenti*, Zagreb: Nakl. St. Kugli, 1921; a reprint edited by Teodora Shek Brnardić was published in Zagreb in 2008 (Dora Krupićeva).

²² Vladimir Maleković, ed., *Od svagdana do blagdana, Barok u Hrvatskoj: kultura življenja u 17. i 18. stoljeću u Hrvatskoj*, (exhib. cat.) Zagreb: Muzej za umjetnost i obrt, Zagreb, 1993.

²³ Branko Sučević, 'Hrvatska u 17. stoljeću', accessed 22 December 2015 <<http://www.mgz.hr/hr/izlozbe/hrvatska-u-17-stoljecu,434.html>>.

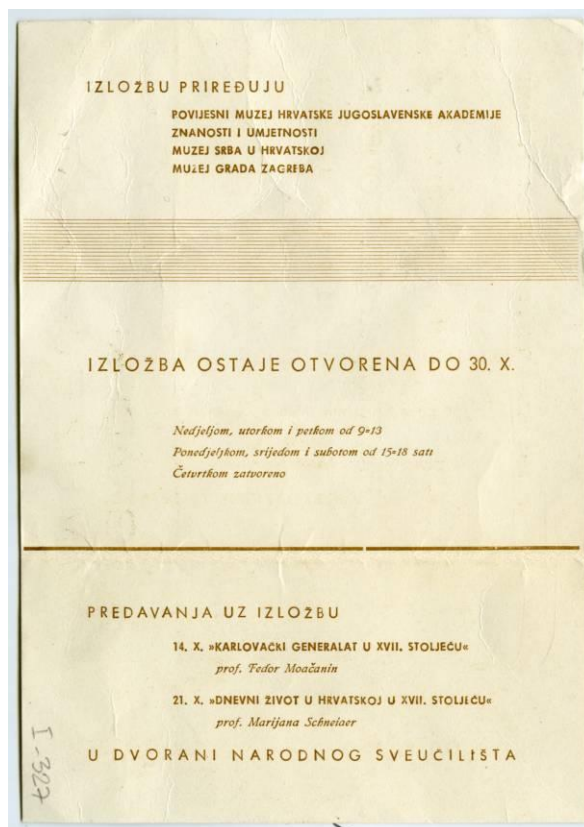
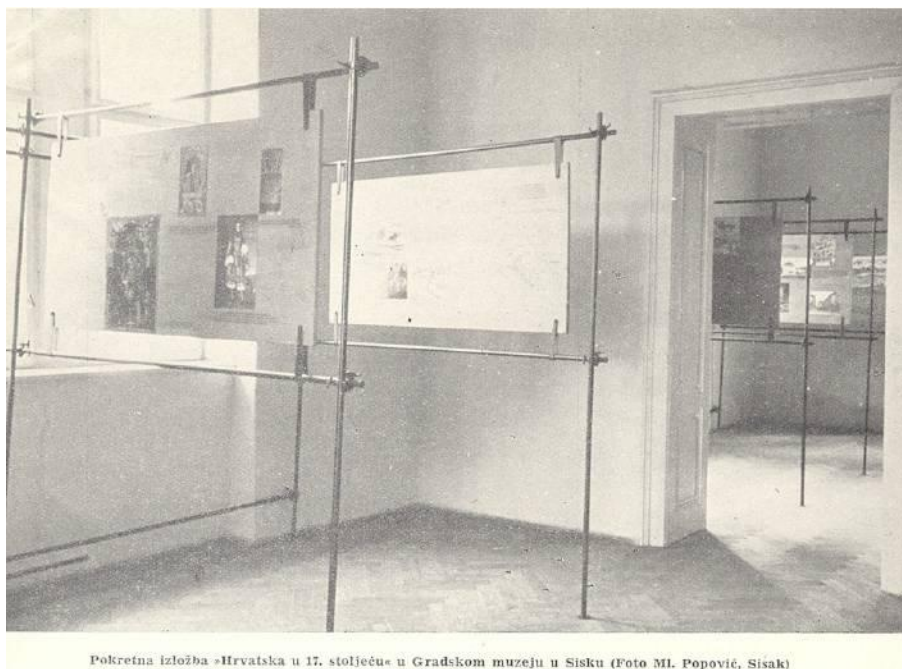


Figure 2 Invitation to the *Croatia in the Seventeenth Century* exhibition, verso, Karlovac Civic Museum, 1958, with a list of organisers and accompanying speeches, City of Zagreb Museum photo-archive.

Meeting being held there at the time.²⁴ Subsequently, the exhibition was mounted at a number of construction sites for the future *Brotherhood and Unity Motorway* (from Zagreb and Belgrade), followed by showings in the towns of Karlovac and Samobor. It was also put on display at the Congress of Yugoslav Historians in Zagreb in the same year (Figures 1 and 2). This exhibition has not yet been made a topic of academic inquiry, nor have any of the materials associated with the show been preserved in Museum holdings. However, newspaper articles covering the exhibition, along with photographs of how it was set up,²⁵ can help us to analyse the most important strategies followed in preparing these events. The choice of theme was exceptional for the post-war socialist period, when either contemporary art or artistic interpretations of the 1939–1945 war were the dominant themes. In addition, the exhibition is particularly interesting in that it can be regarded as a reflection of a new approach to the presentation, organization, and function of exhibitions that was to leave an indelible trace on the entire decade. The exhibition set-up, designed by architect Zvonimir Marohnić and academic painter Boris Dogan, is especially

²⁴ The *Slet bratstva i jedinstva* was a major athletic meeting involving a large number of participants, organized in honour of Josip Broz Tito. Such largescale events had an important role in promoting the idea of brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav nations as well as in spreading Marxist Leninist ideology.

²⁵ U.V., 'Izložba "Hrvatska u XVII. stoljeću"', *Narodni list*, 24 June 1958, 4.



Pokretna izložba »Hrvatska u 17. stoljeću« u Gradskom muzeju u Sisku (Foto Ml. Popović, Sisak)

Figure 3 Branko Sučević, "The 'Croatia in the Seventeenth Century' travelling exhibition", *Vijesti Društva muzejsko-konzervatorskih radnika NR Hrvatske*, 7, 4, 1958, 97.

striking. In addition to six glass showcases, exhibits were displayed on boards hung on a steel structure that could be accessed from both sides. As the photographs show, each museum hosting the exhibition added exhibits from its own local collections (Figure 3).²⁶ Exhibition texts and photographs of this design, which was considered cutting-edge for its time, indicate the use of a new aesthetic that was more usually adopted when showing contemporary exhibits, especially objects of industrial design, but that was used much less commonly in exhibitions whose focus was more historical. In the 1950s ideas on the new concept and purpose of exhibitions was an extremely important subject, as the medium was recognized as a useful tool for reaching wide audiences. In order to consider *Croatia in the Seventeenth Century* in a broader context, the leading tendencies of these discussions are briefly explained in the paragraphs to follow.

The new aesthetics adopted and promoted during the 1950s owed much to the doctrine of functionalism and to non-figurative art, and put a special focus on the application of such ideas in daily life – that is in the applied arts, and in interior and furniture design. In particular, the exhibitions of the work of painter Antun Motika in 1952, and of the geometrical abstract painting created by the EXAT 51 group in 1953 together with their manifesto, were two important events in this development.²⁷ The same aesthetic canon was also promoted by the famed Yugoslavian pavilion at Brussels World's Fair EXPO 58, designed by Vjenceslav

²⁶ See the illustrations of the exhibition at Sisak City Museum in Branko Sučević, 'Pokretna izložba "Hrvatska u XVII. stoljeću"', *Vijesti Društva muzejsko-konzervatorskih radnika NR Hrvatske* 7: 4, 1958, 96–98.

²⁷ Manifesto of 1951, in Kolečnik, *Art Criticism and Polemics*, 385–386, The manifesto of the Krist-Picelj-Rašica-Srnc Exhibition: Kolečnik, *Art Criticism and Polemics*, 387–388.

Richter,²⁸ whose success was extremely important for Yugoslavia's positioning on the international scene. The new social order was presented through a selection of modernist solutions devoid of any socialist-realist iconography, visually expressing official policy, according to which the country was to be positioned between the political East and West.²⁹ The key characteristics of the pavilion and of its layout were its transparency and openness, while a key feature of the exhibition were its innovative display boards,³⁰ which were later widely adopted in exhibition practices all over Croatia.



Figure 4 Cover of *15 dana* magazine, 10, 1961.

The adoption of a Modernist style devoid of an historical references suited the needs of a brand new society and was used very widely – and not just in the context of art or of museums and galleries. The magazine *15 dana* (Figure 4)³¹ contributed to the dissemination of these new aesthetic ideas through its broad coverage of the application of those ideas in industrial design, furniture, interior design, lifestyle culture,³² but also in stage and costume design.³³ It also gave readers

²⁸ Jasna Galjer, *Expo 58 i jugoslavenski paviljon Vjenceslava Richtera*, Zagreb: Horetzky, 2009.

²⁹ The Yugoslavian pavilion followed the ideas that Richter had already championed in his Exat exhibition set-ups. He would continue to divulgate them as the editor of *Man and Space* magazine between 1958 and 1961, see Galjer, *Expo 58 i jugoslavenski paviljon*, 314.

³⁰ Galjer, *Expo 58 i jugoslavenski paviljon*, 366.

³¹ The magazine was published by the Workers University from 1957 on and was one of the most influential cultural magazines in Croatia. It covered a wide range of topics in the arts and literature. Since 1991 it has been published by the Zagreb Public Open University.

³² *15 dana*, 10, 1955, 15.

tips and practical instructions on how to furnish their home or hang pictures on the wall. The pinnacle of the takeover of this new aesthetics was reached in the form of the new building for the Moša Pijade People's University in Zagreb (which was later to become the Moša Pijade Workers' University and is today named the Public Open University – Zagreb) completed in 1961, which was designed by Ninoslav Kučan and Radovan Nikšić, integrating the furniture of Bernardo Bernardi. The building, which was subjected to very detailed analysis, became perhaps the most famous example of the modernist style that dominated Croatia during the socialist period.³⁴ All the above points to how all-encompassing this new aesthetic was and to the significance ascribed to it in shaping the new society. A second, connected objective was that of reaching out to the broadest possible public. In this regard, travelling exhibitions had an important role to play.

Countless texts and seminars³⁵ emphasised the importance of bringing art closer to the ordinary man, and especially to the working class as the torch-bearer of the socialist society, a concept promoted in particular through the activities of Workers' University. Such ideas were strongly expressed in Radovan Ivančević's book *Likovna kultura 'običnog' čovjeka* (the Visual culture of the 'ordinary' man, 1961).³⁶ He underlined three fields of activity: 'lecturing, writing aimed at readers at a certain level and organising travelling educational exhibitions around the workplace'.³⁷ Ivančević recalls his own experiences while lecturing at a variety of workplaces before an audience of people who generally whose education had not exceed a lower level degree and who up to his visit had only had a chance to hear talks on technical or political issues, and were unaccustomed to hearing talks on cultural matters.³⁸ He also stresses the importance of exhibition programmes, which should aim to familiarise a non-museum-going audience with the subject matter, as well as the need for exhibitions to be analysed: 'The best contribution to the solution of this problem will be what are referred to as "in-house exhibitions", including travelling educational exhibitions organised by the Cultural Centre around the workplace, which efforts will include an equally complex and organised activity: producing educational texts, accompanying lectures, conducting discussions, sale of reproductions, opinion surveys and checks of conditions for such activities and their ultimate results.'³⁹ The role seen for art in the new society during the 1950s is clearly evidenced by the practice of setting up travelling educational exhibitions as a means of addressing the public in general, and factory workers in particular. This practice

³³ N. Turkalj, 'Klasična opera na suvremenoj sceni Božidara Rašice: Scena za operu Carmen', *15 dana*, 11, 1959, 17.

³⁴ *15 dana*, 9, 1961, 1–5.

³⁵ Art seminars took place at the Workers University and often in factories – e.g. at the Pobjeda factory, see *15 dana*, 2: 10, 1961, 24–25.

³⁶ Radovan Ivančević, *Likovna kultura 'običnog' čovjeka*, Zagreb: Moša Pijade Workers University, 1961.

³⁷ Ivančević, *Likovna kultura*, 12–13.

³⁸ Ivančević, *Likovna kultura*, 22.

³⁹ Ivančević, *Likovna kultura*, 51–52.

was also often inspired by poor visitor figures in galleries.⁴⁰ Aside from the careful choice of subjects, the very aesthetics of exhibition presentation itself promoted the new style, which also recommended itself to contemporary interior design. For example, even a simple cast-iron picture frame is praised for its 'simplicity, purity of form, practicality [...] and low price' (Figure 5).⁴¹

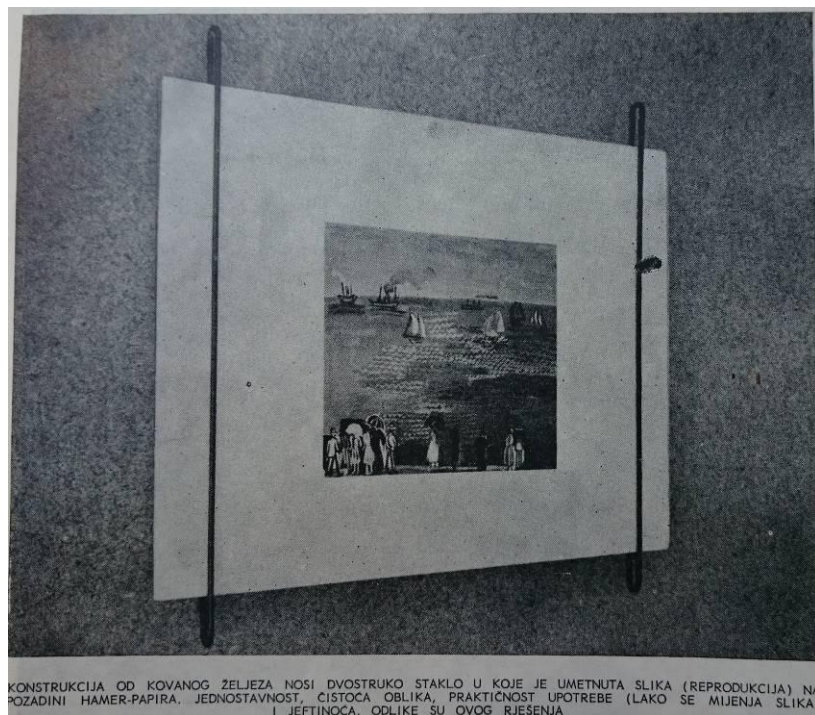


Figure 5 The picture in our home. Choosing picture frames, *15 dana*, 10, 1961, 24.

One can see that the requirements demanded of any contemporary presentation of modern art in the new socialist society also applied to historic subjects; and that this was indeed the case for the *Croatia in the Seventeenth Century* exhibition. Apart from the cutting-edge design used in its presentation, this travelling show designed for educational purposes was accompanied by a series of lectures designed in conformity with the contemporary expectation that cultural experts should make efforts to reach all the layers of society.⁴² However, the audience addressed by such lectures was a very specific one, and one that was particularly important in Yugoslavia. The exhibition initially provided an accompaniment to the *Sixth Brotherhood and Unity Rally* in Sisak and was later set up on the construction site of the *Brotherhood and Unity Highway*, and was thus primarily speaking to the youth of the country: that is, to those members of society

⁴⁰ This is hinted in a text on an exhibition at the Split Cultural Centre and Art Gallery: 'Od Vlahe Bukovca do Ljube Ivančića', *15 dana*, 9: 1, 1960, 14–15.

⁴¹ 'Slika u našem stanu. Izbor okvira slike' (The picture in our home. Choosing picture frames), *15 dana*, 10: 14, 1961, 24–25.

⁴² 'The exhibition organisers' basic intention was to introduce all the strata of society, even those living in smaller towns and villages, to the results of academic work.': U.V., 'Izložba "Hrvatska u XVII. stoljeću"', 4.

who it was expected would be shaped and raised in the new spirit of socialist ideology, in the interests of promoting the pivotal ideas claimed for Yugoslavia: the unity of nations and of nationalities.

The choice of subject – i.e. Croatia in the seventeenth century – might seem a surprising one in pursuit of this purpose. All the more so since there were plenty of more ideologically suitable subjects on hand, such as the legacy of National Liberation Front, the achievements to date of the new society, or the history of the Communist Party. Historical subjects, if they ever were the focus of an exhibition, tended to be treated in the form of peasant rebellions and struggles against feudalism, events all styled as forerunners to the twentieth-century communist movement.⁴³

The exhibition was thematically centred on the daily life of people in a period marked by a number of historically crucial events, from the signing of the Peace treaty of Zsitvatorok in 1606 to the Peace of Srijemski Karlovci in 1699, which put a formal end to the Ottoman Wars on Croatian territory. The aim of the exhibition was, as we read in the accompanying texts, to 'explain the foundations of brotherhood and unity in our republic',⁴⁴ clearly referring to the unity between Croats and Serbs on the territory of the former Military Frontier on the border between Habsburg Monarchy and Ottoman Empire. The leading ideology upon which the Yugoslav union of nations was based was thus projected onto the past, and analyses of historical events were conducted in such a way as to confirm it. Following ideas of a classless society, with workers and peasants in the leading role and feudalist landowners portrayed as enemies of the people, the material culture and legacy of the Baroque aristocracy was given equal importance in the exhibition presentation as the life of soldiers or peasants. Only local nobility was chosen for exhibition, and in particular only such members of aristocracy whose deeds chimed with the general ideological narrative. Thus one learns of the noble Zrinjski and Frankopan families, whose rebellion against the Habsburg dynasty was portrayed as a struggle against foreign power and a kind of forerunner of the twentieth-century revolutions.

This selective image of the Baroque and its culture was adapted to socialist ideas of how to educate youth. The topic hardly fits in with the dominant scope of presentations on national culture, which found its strongpoint in abstract art as a mirror image of modern society. Historical subjects, on the other hand, were chosen in accordance with their compatibility to the Marxist-Leninist view of the progress of history, a fact that surely makes this exhibition an isolated case. Although the exhibition presentation itself was to adhere to the new aesthetic and practice in exhibiting cultural assets, its subject was far less suited for educational objectives of the period, so it follows that there must have been some significant ideological reason to explain why it remained one of the rare examples of displays of the Baroque during the socialist period.

⁴³ The most famous example is undoubtedly provided by the Peasant Revolt and Matija Gubec, both of which hold an important place in the iconography of socialist Croatia – colossal monuments, showing the cruelty of the ruling class juxtaposed against the oppressed peasant population.

⁴⁴ Sučević, *Pokretna izložba*, 96.

Andela Horvat's topographic overviews

A couple of decades later, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the academic discourse on Baroque topics had changed direction, a change of direction that in turn also had an impact on the presentation of Baroque art to the broader public. A key role in this progression was played by the above-mentioned Anđela Horvat, whose work, thanks to her direct contact with artefacts she had during her long-time practice in conservation and restoration, is characterised by a methodological detachment from the leading theoretical approaches of the time, influenced as they were by dominant Marxism-Leninism. Her work was guided by her desire to raise awareness both among the professional community and the general public of the artistic heritage of northwest Croatia. Despite the fact that it was in this region that the Baroque had evolved most fully as an artistic style, there was a distinct lack of interest in the topic from art historians, partly due to a more dominant interest in the cultural heritage of the Adriatic zone, but also due to the aforementioned ideological reasons.

Her specific contribution to the popularisation of Baroque art and to bringing it closer to the broader public were articles for *Kaj*, a journal that covered a variety of different aspects of the culture and art in northwest Croatia.⁴⁵ Her texts published between 1979 and 1985 consist of overviews of the heritage in the municipalities of Zabok, Klanjec, Pregrada and Krapina,⁴⁶ in the far west of the region, near the border with Styria region of Slovenia. These overviews were pivotal to the analysis of the Baroque art and culture of the region, which contains the largest amount of significant Baroque architecture in Croatia. The churches and castles of the region are among the most highly valued Baroque monuments in Croatia. Anđela Horvat's texts gave interested readers – and especially the local community – an insight into the scale and the current condition of this heritage in its entirety. Besides this, her detailed lists of monuments and inventories also served as a kind of supplement to existing artistic topographies,⁴⁷ since the project responsible creating such topographies, managed by the Zagreb Institute of Art History, was

⁴⁵ *Kaj*, which specialized in literature, art, and culture, had been published since 1968 by Kajkavsko spravišće, Zagreb.

⁴⁶ Anđela Horvat, *Spomenici arhitekture i likovnih umjetnosti u Međimurju*, Zagreb: Konzervatorski zavod, 1956; Anđela Horvat, 'Pregled spomenika kulture s područja općine Klanjec', *Kaj*, 3, 1979, 15–70; Anđela Horvat, 'Pregled spomenika kulture područja općine Zabok', *Kaj*, 1, 1980, 67–125; Anđela Horvat, 'Pregled spomenika culture općine Pregarda', *Kaj*, 2–3, 1985, 167–208; Anđela Horvat, 'O spomenicima culture općine Krapina', *Kaj*, 1: 13, 1982, 87–142.

⁴⁷ Horvat relied on reports of the Commission for Heritage Protection, which had responsibility for Gjuro Szabo's monuments build in 1914 and 1919, which were unavailable to the broader public: Gjuro Szabo, 'Spomenici kotara Ivanec', *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, 14: 1, 1919, 22–97; Gjuro Szabo, 'Spomenici kotara Krapina i Zlatar', *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, 13: 1, 1914, 103–204.

progressing very slowly – the Artistic Topography of Krapina-Zagorje County, to give an extreme example, was only published as late as in 2008.⁴⁸

In the context of this article, it is particularly interesting to examine how this approach to the presentation of Baroque culture and art had changed in relation to the approaches taken in the exhibition of 1958. And, while the selection of topics and works of art chosen for that exhibition was, as shown, significantly coloured by ideology (with the emphasis on the common people and workers, on the putative brotherhood between Serbs and Croats, on the peasant rebellions and on everyday life), in more recent overviews, that ideological colouring was much less present. A neutral chronological framework tends to be chosen, and the proportion of text covering Baroque art is in good balance with the actual presence of Baroque artistic heritage. It is particularly important to stress the fact that Horvat stepped away from the usual art-historical discourse bound by formal analysis and by issues of style; instead, she explored her chosen heritage sites in a broader context, and introduced a topic of great importance to the Baroque period – the question of commissions and clients. For the first time in post-war socialist Croatia, a significant portion of text focused on the role of nobility in the cultural and artistic context, portraying them not as enemies of the people and as foreign rulers, but as clients and commissioners of works of art, owners and residents of the region's Baroque castles, and protagonists in the cultural life in the region. However, she was inevitably forced to touch on a very sore spot, which remains controversial even today: namely the neglected state in which many Baroque castles had been left and the fate of both their owners and their contents. As early as 1939, Gjuro Szabo had already warned of the state of disrepair of historic buildings, and of the disappearance of their owners and their inappropriate conversion as a consequence of the agrarian reform going on at the time.⁴⁹ But the period following the 1939–1945 war was in this respect even more difficult. Property was confiscated from previous owners and alienated from its previous uses. This process of nationalisation was the starting signal for the subsequent systematic destruction of such buildings or their conversion for inappropriate uses – turning them into everything from orphanages to hospitals. Horvat warned of the dereliction of Baroque castles, albeit subtly, in writings for the broader readership. However, her official reports, which are archived at the Ministry of Culture, are much harsher.⁵⁰

It is interesting to see how Horvat to some extent adapted her views to the dominant ideology, which was still making itself felt, albeit much less than it had done in the 1950s. Even though the monuments in all of her texts were analysed chronologically, at the beginning of each work, she always included a list of

⁴⁸ Ivanka Reberski (ed.) *Umjetnička topografija Hrvatske – Krapinsko-zagorska županija*, Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Školska knjiga, 2008.

⁴⁹ Gjuro Szabo, *Kroz Hrvatsko Zagorje*, Zagreb: Knjižara Vasić, 1939, reprint 1974.

In Kingdom of Yugoslavia, after the 1914–1918 war, due to new tax regulations for owners of large estates, most former landowners were forced to sell their properties.

⁵⁰ Anđela Horvat, reports in an unpublished manuscript *Dvorci i kurije sjeverne Hrvatske: stanje i mogućnosti njihova uključivanja u savremeni život*, Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, Zagreb, 1970, on the Baroque castles in Northern Croatia, Ministry of Culture Archive, Zagreb, inv. number 6152, 6153, 6154.

National Liberation heritage sites, far more space was given over to analysis of Baroque monuments, and to those responsible for commissioning them, and the latter were no longer portrayed as enemies of the state, but as movers and shakers on the Baroque cultural and artistic scene.

As has already been pointed out, similar changes and tendencies are can be traced in the more general academic discourse on art history in Croatia as well. However, art history as it was practiced after the 1939–1945 war has still been insufficiently examined from this point of view. The question of ideological influence on the art historical discourse in Yugoslavia has not yet been examined seriously.⁵¹ In the 1990s, after the fall of communism, these issues were not revisited. The main reason for this omission was the period of war that followed, in which art history was forced to deal primarily with the issues of the destruction of heritage sites in war-torn areas.⁵² However, some of the reasons for not addressing these matters lie in an understanding of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a non-aligned country, located in a middle zone between the East and the West, that did not attempt to exert as strong an ideological influence on the direction of science and art as other countries in the Eastern Bloc. On the basis of the few selected examples analysed in this paper, it seems that quite the contrary is the case. And these questions need to be addressed in order to be in a position to write a non-biased history of art in Croatia.

Dubravka Botica is an associate professor at the Department of Art History of the University of Zagreb. Her field of research is the architecture and art of the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Her most important publications include *Barokne četverolisne crkve u Hrvatskoj* (Školska knjiga 2015) and the exhibition catalogue *Arhitektura i performans: grafike iz Kraljevskog kabineta Luja XIV. u fundusu MUO* (Museum of Arts and Crafts Zagreb 2015).

dbotica@ffzg.hr



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⁵¹ See Kolečnik, *Art Criticism and Polemics*, 280.

⁵² The Institute of Art History focused on these issues in 1993 and 1996: Radovi IPU, 17: 1, 1993 (Spomenici u ratu), accessed 22 December 2015 <http://www.ipu.hr/izdanja/radovi-instituta/85/radovi-instituta-za-povijest-umjetnosti>, Radovi IPU, 20, 1996 (Obnova spomenika kulture), accessed 22 December 2015 <http://www.ipu.hr/izdanja/radovi-instituta/29/radovi-ipu>.