

Oto Bihalji Merin:
Morao sam biti prisutan

I Had to Be Present

Oto Biha

Iji-Merin:

Morao sa prisutan to Be Pre

Galerija-legat Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića • Beograd /
Gallery-Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković • Belgrade

22/11/2024 – 17/02/2025

m biti / I Had sent



Muzej savremene umetnosti • Beograd /
Museum of Contemporary Art • Belgrade

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Muzej naivne i marginalne umetnosti • Beograd /
Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art • Belgrade

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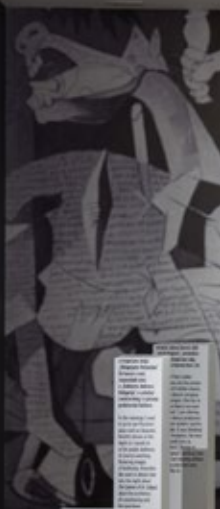
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Das Museum ist ein Ort, an dem wir uns treffen, um zu lernen, zu denken, zu fühlen, zu handeln.

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PLAKAT INFORMACIJOS POKALBIS
DAR VISO ŠIO INFORMACIJOS POKALBIS

Viešas forumas "Kultūros pavilnyje"
Plakatai, kurie yra šio forumo dalis
Tada, kai kalbama apie kultūrą, kalbama apie
Kultūrą, kalbama apie kultūrą, kalbama apie kultūrą.

Plakatai, kurie yra šio forumo dalis
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Forumas:

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Oto Bihalji-Merin – (re)vizija stvarnosti

Dr Ivana Bašičević Antić

Za tom izgubljenom čovekovom ličnošću mora se tragati na novi način, a u tom traganju umetnost ima svoje nezaobilazno mesto.
— Oto Bihalji-Merin

Kako publici u dvadeset prvom veku predstaviti delo i lik Ota Bihalji-Merina, pitanje je sa kojim se susrećem od svog prvog dolaska u njegov legat u leto 2021. godine. Obim i sadržaj arhivske građe i biblioteke nametnuli su neophodnost da se u taj poduhvat krene, iako smo svesni da ćemo mnogo jasnije, potpunije i naučno utemeljenije stavove imati verovatno tek nakon proučavanja ne samo arhiva u Otovom legatu nego i dostupnih dokumenata u drugim svetskim arhivama.

U vreme kada smo suočeni sa nizom novonastalih kriznih situacija u svetu, od katastrofalnih posledica čovekovog uništavanja okoline do novih ratova i pojačanih društvenih podela, čini se da ne može postojati važniji zadatak umetnosti od tog da na te procese ukaže i promišlja njihove posledice, kao i moguće bolje pravce kretanja društva. Upravo to je na liniji misli Ota Bihalji-Merina, književnika, kritičara, umetnika, teoretičara umetnosti, publiciste i aktivnog učesnika svoga vremena.

Složen posao skiciranja i predstavljanja javnosti činjenica Otovog života i profesionalnog delovanja podelili smo u dve celine. U okviru prve – koju čine izložba u Galeriji-legatu Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića (MSU Beograd), dokumenti iz arhivske građe, prepiska, tekstovi,

fotografije i knjige – biće prikazan materijal kroz koji publika može da stekne sliku o profilu ovog istaknutog intelektualca. Razgovori koje smo vodili sa akterima scene, Otovim prijateljima ili saradnicima i poznanicima, sa ćerkom Mirjanom, snimljeni su u okviru priprema za ovu izložbu kao doprinos pravilnom interpretiranju njegovog lika i dela. Mapiranje izdavača koji su objavljivali njegove tekstove i knjige, vizuelizacija je podatka da je bio jedini autor čija su dela objavljivana u Zapadnoj Evropi i Americi u toj meri, što je važan podatak pri definisanju značaja njegovog rada za naše prostore. Kontakti koje je Oto ostvario, a među kojima mislimo na Malroa, Kandinskog, Pikasa, Sartra, Mana, Brehta, Hemingveja i mnoge druge, ostavili su pisani trag i u prepisci koja će u određenom izboru takođe biti predstavljena publici. Drugi deo izložbe, planiran za proleće 2025. godine, ima sasvim drugačiji profil. Pokazati publici umetnost u koju je verovao kao relevantnu bio je naš prvenstveni cilj, koji je u izvedbi direktno uslovljen finansijskim mogućnostima jer su mnogi od tih autora postali vrhunske vrednosti umetnosti svetске scene dvadesetog veka, te je do tih umetničkih radova često gotovo nemoguće doći. Mislim da je to istovremeno ideja od koje ne treba odustat i da je zaista potrebno postaviti izložbu koja bi vizuelno povezala pojave koje čine Otov pojam prodora moderne misli. Težnja ka posmatranju moderne i savremene umetnosti kao svetskog fenomena u čijem su nastajanju prisutni elementi i vanevropskih kultura vidi se kod njega veoma rano. Na sastancima Komiteta svetske izložbe u Briselu 1958. godine, Oto tu ideju pokušava aktivno da sprovede u stvarnost, što ukazuje na spremnost da se aktivno zauzme za sprovođenje svoje vizije, uprkos činjenici da je na taj skup došao kao predstavnik jedne male zemlje kakva je Jugoslavija. S druge strane, na osnovu njegovog učešća u žiriju, umetnost Jugoslavije je predstavljena na toj svetskoj izložbi. Zanimljiv je podatak da je u stručnim tekstovima i publikacijama kod nas redovno navođen podatak da je Otova odluka da jedan od umetnika koji će nas predstaviti u Briselu bude i naivni slikar Ivan Generalić, njegova lična, a za domaće kolege iznenađujuća odluka. Međutim, kada se sagleda struktura te izložbe, vidi se da je Oto pratio zvaničnu definiciju strukture savremene umetnosti u tom momentu, gde naiva stoji kao jedan od pravaca (pored ekspresionizma, futurizma, nadrealizam, kubizam i dr.). Pojam „revizije umetnosti” ključan je u Otovoj teoriji i implementira mnoštvo različitih pojmova, od primitivnih ili arhajskih kultura do umetnika kibernetске i naivne umetnosti. Ova poslednja dva pojma

spajam namerno, kako to čini Oto kada kaže da je u rasponu od samo nekoliko dana objavio dve knjige: *Kraj umetnosti u doba nauke* i *Majstori naivne umetnosti*. Ovo je bilo moguće jer ih vidi kao oblasti koje se bave graničnim područjima umetničke kreacije: transhumanim i svesnim napretkom umetnosti ka poljima nauke i tehnike, i aspektima izražavanja podsvesnog našeg vremena, koje se razvija paralelno sa svešću tog istog vremena.

Pod pritiskom snažne unutrašnje potrebe da ostavi traga i aktivno učestvuje u savremenom momentu, Oto se konstantno opredeljivao za politiku, odnosno umetnost. Tako da u određenim periodima prevashodno stvara i piše, dok u drugim aktivno učestvuje u društveno-političkim događajima. Iako naizgled odvojene, ove dve vrste angažovanja zapravo su tesno povezane i omogućuju jedna drugu. Kada odlazi u Španiju da se priključi borbama u okviru Španskog građanskog rata, Oto je očitó popustio pod pritiskom da se ne može sedeti i pisati, nego se mora aktivno doprineti pobjedi ideje u koju se veruje. Ali odlazak u Španiju vremenom postaje inspiracija za njegov pogled na umetnost, inspiracija za knjigu *Španija između smrti i rađanja*,⁰¹ kao i prilika za upoznavanje i građenje bliskog saboračkog odnosa sa kasnije važnim i istaknutim pojedincima poput Malroa i Vivankosa. Najzad, to iskustvo značajno utiče na prirodu odnosa sa Pikasom. Izdaja levice, koja se pokazala već tokom rata u Španiji, nije učinila da Oto radikalno napusti samu ideju socijalizma.

Odlazak u Berlin 1924. godine i boravak u tom gradu, koji opisuje kao gotovo idealan prostor za život u ranim dvadesetim godinama dvadesetog veka, preloman je momenat. Nemački postaje njegov maternji jezik, jezik na kojem piše i u kojem postaje vrstan, te ga Tomas Man definiše kao odličnog stilistu nemačkog jezika.⁰² Berlin postaje mesto transformacije iz borbe za ideale (Oto piše i uređuje levičarski časopis

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⁰¹ Objavljeno prvo na nemačkom jeziku: Peter Merin, *Spanien zwischen Tod und Geburt*, Jean Christophe Verlag, Zürich, 1937. Na srpsko-hrvatskom jeziku objavljeno je kao: Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Španija između smrti i rađanja*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1946.

⁰² Informacija iz teksta A. Ivanjija „Lepi život u paklu”, objavljeno 8. 1. 2004, časopis *Vreme* <https://vreme.com/kultura/lepi-zivot-u-paklu>.

Linkskurve) u borbu za život, jer dolaskom nacizma počinje period konstantnog nemira, života između adresa i, najзад, života u logoru, što će se promeniti tek dolaskom u Beograd, odnosno krajem Drugog svet-skog rata. Upitan pred smrt, u momentu kada se sagledava preživljeno, da li se kaje i da li se oseća izdanim u smislu izdaje same ideologije i ide-je leveice, Oto je odgovorio da bi opet učinio sve isto. Svoj život i pored navedenih iskušenja smatra *srećnim životom u paklu*, što je i naslov auto-biografije koju je spremao.

Ilija, Dimitrije i Vojin Bašičević su decenijama bili u kontaktu sa Otom. Odrastala sam sa zanimljivim pričama o tim susretima, što u Beogra-du, u Nemanjinoj 3, što u Šidu, u Ilijinoj kući. Emotivan tekst odbrane Ilije Bosilja Oto je objavio 1971. godine u završnoj fazi famozne „Afere Bosilj”. Prepiska koja govori o saradnji Dimitrija Miće Bašičevića (Man-gelosa) i Ota, svedoči o zajedničkoj veri u ono što su drugi odbaciva-li, potcenjivali, a u osnovi ne razumevali, a Mića i Oto stručnim radom branili, i očigledno iz današnje perspektive možemo reći – odbrani-li kao visoko vredne pojave u savremenoj umetnosti. Misli se, pri tom, na umetnost naive, ali i nove medije, fotografiju, spoj nauke i umet-nosti. Mića je genezu svog prvog antiumetničkog rada u formi globu-sa prezentovao upravo u pismu upućenom Otu. O Iliji Bosilju je Oto pisao, takođe ga je i lično posećivao, što je ovom umetniku davalo znača-jan podstrek. Ostala je neobjavljena Otova knjiga o Iliji, koju Oto spre-ma u poslednjoj deceniji svog života. Smrt je prekinula mnoge započete poslove.

Posmatrajući odnos Ota i Lize, koji su više nego samo supružnici bili zapravo istinski partneri u životu i u radu, posmatrač se ne može odu-preti utisku da se radi o dva, a ne jednom istaknutom pojedincu. Liza je tokom priprema ove izložbe postala predmet zasebne pažnje struke, i analiza njenih radova, onih koje je potpisala svojim imenom i onih koje je potpisala dodajući svoje uz Otovo ime, takođe je predmet izložbe *Oto Bihalji-Merin: Morao sam biti prisutan*. Podjednako je Liza prisutna i u nastanku svih onih Otovih tekstova na kojima ne stoji njen fizički pot-pis, ali je njen ulog utkan u svakodnevnom radu na njihovoj pripremi. Moglo bi se reći da je njihov odnos omogućio umnogome da se taj život u paklu definiše kao lep, jer ga je lakše bilo preživeti udvoje. Ali isto tako, da je partnerski rad svakako bio preduslov Otovog uspeha da stvori

toliki korpus tekstova i ostvari uticaj na intelektualnu scenu sredina u kojima je delovao.

Sasvim neočekivano, kao pripadnik sledeće generacije u porodici Bašičević, pronašla sam se u situaciji da otpočnem gradnju Otovog legata i profilisanje njegove budućnosti. U tom zadatku u početku me je vodilo poštovanje prema odnosu koji je porodica imala sa Otom, ali vremenom i profesionalna odgovornost prema Otovom značaju za sredinu u kojoj je živeo od kraja Drugog svetskog rata do smrti. Započeto je sistematsko popisivanje dokumentarne i arhivske građe, popisana je biblioteka. Prema želji Otove ćerke Mirjane Bihalji-Šenberner, rekonstruisan je prostor u kojem je Oto živeo te pretvoren u legat, gde se čuva njegov radni prostor, a istovremeno je izgrađen i izlagački prostor, čiju stalnu postavku čini Otova zbirka umetničkih radova. Uveli smo instituciju povremenih izložbi, koje imaju za cilj da, prateći misao i vrednosti koje je Oto branio u umetnosti, prostor načine aktivnim i tako ga upišu u kulturnu mapu Beograda, i šire. Profesionalnom obradom arhivske građe moći će najzad da započne aktivnost legata kao istraživačkog centra, s obzirom na to da dokumenti u Otovom arhivu ne svedoče samo o njegovom životu i radu, nego o čitavoj epohi. Preveli smo tekst o Goji koji je Oto objavio u tri toma, najpre na nemački, zatim i na engleski jezik. Iako je stajao u popisu obavezne literature na fakultetu u Barseloni, nikad nije objavljen kod nas. Nadam se da ćemo i to realizovati.

U cilju postizanja što sveobuhvatnije analize delovanja Ota Bihalji-Merina, pozvali smo grupu teoretičara i istoričara umetnosti koji su se u dosadašnjem stručnom radu predstavili kao vrsni poznavaoi oblasti međuratne, odnosno posleratne umetničke scene, problematike odnosa levice i umetnosti, odnosno kulture uopšte, te su svojim analizama zasnovanim na istraživanjima građe u Salonu OBM spremni da ponude sasvim nove, a naučno utemeljene podatke i viđenja problematike shvaćanja i Otovog delovanja, kao i konteksta u kojem se ono odvijalo. Problem koji je savremenici onemogućavao da izgrade objektivni stav prema Otu, bio je njegov odnos prema ideologiji, odnos prema tumačenjima spoja ideologije i umetnosti, pogotovo se misli u tom momentu na fazu njegove intenzivne kritičke podrške soc-reizmu u posleratnoj jugoslovenskoj umetnosti. Napuštanje tog pravca je stručna sredina u Beogradu takođe dočekala oštro zamerajući i taj korak. Do izložbe *Profil*

kritičara u Salonu MSU-a, u Beogradu 1976. godine, njegov rad je ovoj sredini bio gotovo nepoznat, te nam se danas čini kako je moguće da je sredina zapravo stav gradila nemajući informacije o jednom značajnom segmentu njegovog rada.

Najzad, kustosi izložbe Senka Latinović i Miroslav Karić spojili su znanje i prethodna iskustva sa ogromnim poštovanjem koje su stekli prema Otu radeći na ovom projektu. Rezultat tog zajedničkog rada nije samo izložba pred nama, nego i izgradnja odnosa nove generacije kustosa i umetnika prema delu Ota Bihalji-Merina. ●

Pogled na izložbu kroz prozor aviona

Miroslav Karić • Senka Latinović

Posmatram svet poneki put kao da letim satelitom, onda se sažimaju oblici, sitne nevolje su nevidljive, sagledavam velika socijalna kretanja i smelu avanturu umetnosti.

— Oto Bihalji-Merin

Ove godine navršilo se sto dvadeset godina od rođenja Ota Bihalji-Merina. Tim povodom rodila se ideja o organizovanju izložbe *Oto Bihalji-Merin: Morao sam biti prisutan*, sa ciljem da se dodatno istraže i iznova sagledaju lik i delo ovog, u našem vremenu nepravedno zaboravljenog jugoslovenskog intelektualca.

Intelektualac je, možda, reč kojom ćemo najlakše obujmiti sve Bihalji-Merinove uloge i angažmane, ali ako pokušamo da je raščlanimo, otkrićemo da se iza nje kriju mnogobrojna zanimanja, interesovanja i delovanja: moler i farbar, slikar, avijatičar, predavač, književnik, novinar, ratni reporter, urednik i izdavač, aktivan član Komunističke partije Jugoslavije i Komunističke partije Nemačke, likovni kritičar, likovni teoretičar, pisac o umetnosti, umetnički direktor, osnivač i član organizacionih odbora brojnih institucija i član žirija mnogih prestižnih domaćih i svetskih manifestacija – sve je to bio Oto Bihalji-Merin. Nakon strogo taksativnog nabiranja uloga i zanimanja, postaje jasnije da je reč opšteg karaktera – *intelektualac* – tesna i neprecizna da opiše ovog vrsnog eruditu, neumornog putnika i istraživača kroz vreme, prostor, društva i kulture.

Izložba je realizovana kroz partnerstvo Muzeja naivne i marginalne umetnosti⁰¹ i Muzeja savremene umetnosti u Beogradu, imajući u vidu Bihalji-Merinovu istaknutu ulogu u promociji domaće i inostrane moderne i naivne umetnosti, novih umetničkih pojava, kao i višeznačnu saradnju sa ovim institucijama.

Jubilej je dodatno ubrzao dinamiku rada i pred nas postavio jasan zadatak i cilj – da stručnoj i široj javnosti predstavimo poznate i manje poznate aspekte ličnosti, životne i umetničke filozofije Ota Bihalji-Merina.

Da podsetimo, do sada su u Beogradu bile priređene dve izložbe koje su za temu imale život i rad Bihalji-Merina. Izložba pod nazivom *Profil kritičara* održana je 1976. godine u Salonu Muzeja savremene umetnosti, čija je kustoskinja bila dr Irina Subotić, dok je izložba *Oto Bihalji-Merin i graditelji moderne misli* organizovana 2018. godine u Kući legata, prema koncepciji istoričarke umetnosti Nine Krstić.

I pored činjenice da je kroz ove dve izložbe publika imala priliku da stekne uvide u izuzetno bogatu životnu i profesionalnu biografiju Bihalji-Merina, smatramo da i dalje postoji prostor koji otvara mogućnost za dalja proučavanja i doprinose ovoj temi. Početno polazište za naša istraživanja bio je lični arhiv Ota i Lize Bihalji-Merin, koji obuhvata period gotovo čitavog XX veka i koji do sada, zbog svoje obimnosti i raznovrsnosti materijala, nije bilo moguće sagledati u celini. Tokom istraživačkog procesa susreli smo se sa, u velikoj meri, nesortiranom, heterogenom i fragmentarnom građom, koja u trenutnom popisu i obradi legata broji više od 3000 knjiga, preko 3600 jedinica korespondencije i preko 1600 dokumenata različitog tipa. Znatno deo arhivske građe čine tekstovi pisani na stranim jezicima, prvenstveno nemačkom, kao i na francuskom,

01 Muzej naivne i marginalne umetnosti je stekao nadležnost nad legatom Ota Bihalji-Merina 2013. godine, nakon što ga je ćerka Ota i Lize Bihalji-Merin, Mirjana Bihalji-Šenberner, zaveštala Muzeju. Po njenoj želji, legat se zove Salon Oto Bihalji-Merin i deo prostora je prilagođen izlagačkoj delatnosti, pa je Muzej od oktobra 2023. godine konačno u punom obimu otvoren za javnost i započet je proces istraživanja arhive, biblioteke i zbirke umetničkih dela.

engleskom i španskom jeziku, pa je naročito rukopisna korespondencija predstavljala dodatni izazov pri istraživanju i tumačenju. U svetlu tih činjenica, duboko ući u mrežu poznanstava, prelomnih istorijskih događaja, tuđe intime, bio je istovremeno vrlo uzbudljiv, inspirativan ali i delikatan i zahtevan poduhvat.

Otud dolazi i naš osećaj velike odgovornosti – kako jezgrovito, dovoljno informativno i sadržajno predstaviti ovako dug i ispunjen život u formi izložbe?

Izložba je koncipirana u dva poglavlja, najpre u Galeriji-legatu Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića, gde je predstavljen rezultat istraživačkog rada na arhivi, a zatim, na proleće sledeće godine, u Muzeju savremene umetnosti, gde će biti prikazana dela umetnika i tematsko-problemski analizirane pojave u umetnosti koje su bile u fokusu interesovanja Bihalji-Merina.

Morao sam biti prisutan je sintagma sa kojom smo se susreli u Bihalji-Merinovim memoarskim zapisima, kojom je, pre svega, želeo da objasni suštinu svog pogleda na svet i naglasi potrebu za preuzimanjem inicijative i aktivnim učešćem u društvenim zbivanjima kojima je svedočio tokom turbulentnih decenija XX veka. U sličnom viđenju i profesor Jerko Denegri koristi izraz *delatna prisutnost* kada opisuje životni kreda i mnogostruku ličnost Bihalji-Merina, njegovu burnu egzistenciju, i kontinuiranu prezentnost u zbivanjima i direktnim susretima sa mnogim velikim imenima iz sveta politike, kulture i umetnosti svoga vremena.

Razumevajući da je istraživanje arhiva višegodišnji proces, na aktuelnoj izložbi smo izdvojili najznačajnije stanice na životnom putu Ota Bihalji-Merina, prateći kako hronološki tok događaja tako i njegova specifična nelinearna kretanja na relaciji umetnost – politika – društvo. Trudili smo se da osmišljavanju izložbe pristupimo onako kako je i on sam pristupao umetnosti: sveobuhvatno, iz perspektive letača, dovoljno širokim pogledom da obuhvati kontekst vremena u kome je umetnost o kojoj je pisao nastajala, ali je istovremeno posmatrajući kroz društveno-političke prilike vremena u kome je živio i stvarao.

Kroz nekoliko segmenta izložba *Oto Bihalji-Merin: Morao sam biti prisutan* se idejno razvija oko Bihalji-Merinovih brojnih angažmana u polju umetnosti, kulture i političkog delovanja. Ulazak na izložbu započinje minimalnom kustoskom interpretacijom. Služeći se video i audio arhivom, stavili smo akcenat na govor u prvom licu i napravili svojevrsnu izložbu u okviru izložbe. Na taj način posetioci dobijaju neposredan i sumirajući uvid u životni put Ota Bihalji-Merina. Prvi nivo izlagačkog prostora mapira ključne gradove-stanice, u kojima je živeo i delovao kao novinar, pisac, urednik levičarskih časopisa, ratni izveštač, u kojima stvara mrežu kontakata i formira većinu svojih celoživotnih stavova i interesovanja. Brojni pseudonimi i inicijali koje je koristio u ovom periodu svedoče i o opasnostima kojima se izlagao zarad ideje o boljem društvu i svetu, koje se nepokolebljivo držao do kraja života. Neki od njih su: O. Biha, Peter Merin, Pierre Merin, Peter Berger, Peter Thoene, Peter Waldschmidt, O. B., B., ü, bt, P. M., mer., tho, Thoene i th.

Okosnicu posebnog tematskog segmenta čini Bihalji-Merinov odnos sa životnom saputnicom Lizom, nezamenjivom saradnicom u gotovo svim višedecenijskim istraživačkim i izdavačkim poduhvatima. Put od Zemuna, preko Berlina, Pariza, Ciriha, do Moskve i Madrida, gradova koji su obeležili njegovu mladost, završava se ratnim godinama i Bihalji-Merinovim zarobljeničkim danima u nemačkim logorima iz kojih se u Beograd vraća 1945. godine.

Drugi nivo Galerije-legata Milice Zorić i Rodoljuba Čolakovića obuhvata period nakon Drugog svetskog rata, u kojem se Bihalji-Merin ostvaruje prvenstveno kao pisac o umetnosti, likovni kritičar, teoretičar, kustos i promoter, nezavisni kulturni diplomata Jugoslavije. Kroz mnoštvo korespondencije, knjiga, tekstova, intervju, televizijskih emisija, predložen je intenzitet njegovih razmišljanja o brojnim fenomenima koji su ga okupirali: naivna umetnost, vanevropske civilizacije, veza umetnosti i nauke i pravac kojim će se umetnost kretati u budućnosti. Iako je primaran fokus bio na arhivskoj zaostavštini koja se nalazi u Salonu Oto Bihalji-Merin, istražili smo i veliki broj spoljnih arhiva, biblioteka, instituta, kao i dragocenih ličnih kontakata. Prateći QR kodovi kojima smo se poslužili prevazilaze jezičku barijeru prevođenja i pružaju dodatne informacije posetiocima koji žele da saznaju više.

Pored kustoskog tima, оформljen je za ovu priliku i istraživačko-organizacioni kolektiv, koji je svojim znanjem i iskustvom značajno doprineo stručnom i edukativnom karakteru izložbe. Tekstove za katalog su pisali direktorka Muzeja naivne i marginalne umetnosti dr Ivana Bašičević Antić, istoričarke umetnosti i istraživačice dr Vida Knežević, dr Jelena Vesić i mr Marijana Cvetković, kao i istoričar umetnosti dr Branislav Dimitrijević, čiji će se tekst naći u katalogu druge izložbe. Dizajn postavke osmislio je dizajnersko-arhitektonski tim koji čine dr Milena Korđić i Andrej Dolinka. Veliku zahvalnost dugujemo saradnicama Nikoliji Nikolić i Danici Đorđević Janković, koje su nam svakodnevno pomagale u istraživanju i obradi arhivske građe i zajedno sa nama se probijale kroz mnoštvo podataka, imena i godina koje smo morali da povežemo, rekonstruišemo i razumemo. Takođe, veliku zahvalnost dugujemo i kolegici Senki Ristivojević za istraživanje i pisanje didaktike o izložbi *Profil kritičara*, kao i dramaturškinji Olgii Dimitrijević, koja je adaptirala Bihaljijevu dramu *Livnica* za radio-izvođenje.

Tokom istraživačkog procesa, tragali smo za sagovornicima koji će sa nama podeliti svoja sećanja na Ota Bihalji-Merina. Producirali smo i dokumentarni film koji će imati svoju premijeru sledeće godine u drugom izložbenom poglavlju, dok smo na aktuelnoj izložbi prikazali odabrane fragmente. Ovom prilikom zahvaljujemo se Mirjani Bihalji-Šenberner, Bori Ćosiću, Jerku Denegriju, Biljani Tomić, Andreju Ivanjiću, Marku Pogačniku, Goranu Đorđeviću, Dragici Vukadinović, Predragu Finciju i Branislavi Žarković Finci, na ukazanom poverenju i inspirativnim razgovorima, bez kojih ova izložba ne bi bila potpuna. U ovom poduhvatu neizmerno su nam pomogli snimatelj i montažer Vladan Obradović i snimatelj zvuka Nikola Mladenović. Segment koji govori o životu Bihalji-Merinovih u Parizu, upotpunile su za ovu priliku osmišljene vizuelne interpretacije istraživača i umetnika Sezgina Bojnika i Darinke Pop-Mitić.

Jedan od ciljeva ove izložbe je i da publiku upoznamo sa nedavno adaptiranim i za javnost ponovo dostupnim Salonom Oto Bihalji-Merin, koji se nalazi u Nemanjinoj 3 u Beogradu, mestu okupljanja i istraživanja, otvorenom za sve zainteresovane posetioce, pa se tako izložba može posmatrati i kao svojevrstan vodič kroz građu koja se u njemu nalazi.

Izložbu *Oto Bihalji-Merin: Morao sam biti prisutan* vidimo kao početak, uvodnu reč i nadamo se da će biti podsticajna za dalja otkrivanja i kontekstualizacije u mnogo čemu kompleksne Bihalji-Merinove ličnosti, slojevitosti pozicija i uloga koje je imao u predratnim i poratnim istorijskim prilikama, društveno-političkim, kulturnim i umetničkim zbivanjima, kako u lokalnim tako i međunarodnim okvirima. Njegov osobeni teorijski, spisateljski rad i pristup, koji je neretko izlazio iz akademskih okvira i kanona, često je donosio netipične i osvežavajuće transdisciplinarne uvide i poetičke iskaze o fenomenima, praksama, tendencijama u likovnoj i vizuelnoj umetnosti.

Istraživanje arhive nas je neprekidno navodilo i na razmišljanje o današnjem trenutku. U vremenu podela, nacionalizama, diktata kapitala i materijalnih vrednosti, ratova i ekološke kataklizme, važno je setiti se da je Bihalji-Merin jedan od prvih istoričara umetnosti koji je govorio o potrebi prevazilaženja evropocentričnog, zapadnjačkog pogleda na svet, bez predrasuda povezivao epohe, umetnike i umetnička dela kroz prostor i vreme u jedinstvenu i nedeljivu celinu, ujedno promišljajući aktuelni trenutak, ali i budućnost ljudske civilizacije i planete na kojoj živimo. Često ukazujući na neodvojivost vrednosnih kategorija etičkog i estetičkog, svojim primerom i ličnim integritetom pokazao je da je obaveza svakog od nas da u datim okolnostima, ma koliko teške one bile, ostavimo svet boljim mestom za generacije koje dolaze. ●

Da bismo svet menjali, potrebno je da on prethodno postoji.

— Oto Bihalji-Merin

Ne postoji raj, ali je moguć jedan bolji svet⁰¹

Međuratne stanice života i rada Ota Bihalji-Merina

Dr Vida Knežević

*U domu Revolucije žive, za mene ravnopravno, Marks i Ajnštajn,
Lenjin i Pikaso.⁰²*

Kada ga je nemački novinar, kritičar i pisac Fric J. Radac, 1988. godine, tendenciozno upitao o tome kako je biti komunista ceo život, dok se komunizam pokazao, „najblaže rečeno, kao zabluda, a još više kao užas, nasilje i silovanje”, te da se izjasni o toj „uzaludnosti političkog delovanja”, Oto Bihalji-Merin kratko je odgovorio: „Postao sam socijalista, ne preko knjiga, nego u susretu sa stvarnim životom; knjige su pomogle.”⁰³

Da bi se razumeli mnogi Bihalji-Merinovi stavovi o preklapanju umetničkog i političkog, koje je u njegovom životu i radu predstavljalo trajni

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⁰¹ Naslov poslednjeg poglavlja nezavršene autobiografije koju je Oto Bihalji-Merin pisao pred kraj života.

⁰² Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, *Treći program*, Radio Beograd, leto 1974, str. 332.

⁰³ Videti: Fric J. Radac, „Srećan život u paklu”, Intervju sa Oto Bihalji-Merinom, *Politika*, 18–21. jun 1988. (Rubrika: „Iz drugih listova: Die Zeit”).

kontinuitet, neophodno je razumeti istoriju radničkih i komunističkih pokreta 20. veka, posebno jugoslovenskih, nemačkih i sovjetskih, istoriju antifašističke borbe, te upoznati se sa brojnim međunarodnim diskusijama o smeru marksističke teorije umetnosti, u kojima je i sam Oto imao važnu ulogu i mesto. Posebno je međuratni period bio pregnantan u smislu burnih društveno-političkih zbivanja, koja su često presecala i Bihalji-Merinov život. Međutim, ono što je dodatno važno naglasiti – mnoge umetničke i kulturno-političke ideje koje je Bihalji-Merin posleratno razvijao, od ideje jedinstvenog jugoslovenskog kulturnog prostora, kritike evropocentričnog pogleda na svet umetnosti, razvoja umetnosti naive, umetnosti u vezi sa istorijom antikolonijalnih borbi i umetnosti „malih naroda” na periferiji Evrope i globalnog juga, sve su to ideje čije je klice posejao ili već duboko razradio upravo u međuratnom periodu.

Oto Bihalji-Merin bio je direktni učesnik evropskih debata koje su se vodile oko statusa i funkcije proletersko-revolucionarne književnosti i umetnosti, jedan je – uz brata Pavla Bihalija – od osnivača i urednika jugoslovenskog časopisa *Nova literatura* i kasnije izdavačke kuće Nolit, bio je predavač na radničkom univerzitetu u Berlinu, kao i jedan od govornika na Kongresu revolucionarnih pisaca sveta u Harkovu 1930. godine, gledao je svojim očima nacističko spaljivanje knjiga ispred Humboltovog univerziteta u Berlinu, u pariskom egzilu osnivač je Instituta za proučavanje fašizma, reporter iz Španskog građanskog rata, te inicijator kontraizložbe *Izopačene umetnosti* u Londonu. Sve ove aktivnosti u međuratnom periodu, kao i njihov kontinuitet sa posleratnim periodom, zahtevaju ponovno preispitivanje kako bi se osvetlili ogromni značaj i doprinos koji je Bihalji-Merin imao, ne samo za jugoslovensku umetnost i kulturu, već i evropsku i svetsku.

Oto Bihalji-Merin kao proleterski kosmopolita⁰⁴

I u samim Bihalji-Merinovim osvrtima na njegov „srećni život u paklu”,⁰⁵ često je naglašavana čvrsta veza između umetnosti i politike. Kada piše u svojim poznim godinama: „Magnetni pol mojih misli nije bilo pitanje: kuda ide umetnost, već kuda se društvo kreće”, on time sublimira sopstveno shvatanje uloge umetnosti u društvenim odnosima. „Hteo sam što delotvornije da učestvujem u pokretima bezimernih, koji su postali presudna formacija u borbi protiv vlasti, bogatstva i sile. Zaokupljao me je problem odnosa između Ja i mase, između individualnosti i kolektivnosti. Da li intelektualac, ako se zalaže za program velikog društvenog napretka u borbi proletarijata, mora svoje Ja da pretvori u Mi? Gde spadam ja sam?”⁰⁶

To pitanje o mestu intelektualca u političkim borbama, te njihovo pozicioniranje spram proletarijata i način njihovog organizovanja, isto je ono koje je postavljao i Valter Benjamin u svom tekstu „Pisac kao proizvođač”, pisanom upravo 1934. godine u pariskom egzilu – gde su njihovi životi došli u vezu. Obojica pred naletom fašizma i dolaskom Hitlera na vlast 1933. godine, poput mnogih drugih levo i komunistički opredeljenih umetnika, intelektualaca, pripadnika Komunističke partije Nemačke i nemačkog radničkog pokreta – obreli su se u Parizu, koji je, nakon Berlina, postao novi centar zapadnoevropske borbe protiv fašizma. Oto Bihalji-Merin, kao jedan od osnivača i organizatora rada Instituta za proučavanje fašizma – „najslavnijoj i najsimboličnijoj” antifašističkoj inicijativi u Francuskoj pred Drugi svetski rat⁰⁷ – Benjamin, kao jedan od predavača na Institutu.

■
⁰⁴ Preuzimam ovu sintagmu od istoričara Stefana Gužvice, koji je tim izrazom opisao jednog drugog jugoslovenskog radničkog intelektualca, Bogomira Hermana, bliskog saradnika Nolita tokom tridesetih godina 20. veka. Videti intervju sa Stefanom Gužvicom: Vida Knežević, „Radnički pokret kao put ka emancipaciji: Quo vadimus, Herman?”, <https://www.masina.rs/radnicki-pokret-kao-put-ka-emancipaciji-quo-vadimus-herman/>. Pristupljeno: 4. 10. 2024.

⁰⁵ *Moj srećni život u paklu* bio je preliminarri naziv nezavršene autobiografije koju je Oto Bihalji-Merin započeo pred kraj života.

⁰⁶ Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, nav. delo, str. 290.

⁰⁷ Citirano prema: Maria Gough, „Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde”, *October*, Vol. 101 (Summer, 2002), str. 53–83.

Marsel Prenan, Pol Lanževen, Andre Malro, Filip Supo, Luj Aragon i Elza Triole, Ilja Erenburg, Alfred Deblin, Bertold Breht, Manes Šperber, Artur Kesler, Johanes R. Beher, Ana Zegers i Egon Ervin Kiš, samo su neka od imena evropske intelektualne levice koja je sretao i sa kojima je radio u tom kratkom egzilu u Parizu, na jednoj od njegovih mnogobrojnih „stanica” burnog i bogatog života.⁰⁸

Diskusije vođene nekoliko godina ranije u Berlinu – između 1928. i 1932. godine – nastavljene su i u Parizu, sada u izmenjenom kontekstu poraza nemačke levice, razočaranja i osećaja nemoći, ali istovremeno i promene politike Kominterne usled ubrzanog jačanja fašizma – ka politici Narodnog fronta.⁰⁹ Međutim, Bihalji-Merin je od rane mladosti povezan sa radničkim i komunističkim pokretom. On u Berlin 1924. godine odlazi sa svojih dvadeset godina kao član Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, sa već određenim znanjem partijskog ilegalnog rada, budući da je KPJ u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji (tada Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca) zabranjena već 1920. godine, posle njenog ogromnog uspeha na prvim skupštinskim izborima nakon Prvog svetskog rata.

Beograd–Berlin–Beograd

Mnogim je slikarima ovih dana zamrla kičica u ruci.¹⁰

Uprkos dugom boravku u Berlinu, pa zatim i drugim evropskim gradovima, on je u stalnoj vezi sa jugoslovenskim komunistima, književnicima,

08 Sam je, u svojim autobiografskim beleškama decenijama kasnije opisao ovaj period: „Reč Institut izgleda mi danas malo preterano, kad se setim jednostavnih, gotovo praznih prostorija, skromne biblioteke i kruga saradnika biltena, koji je pokušavao da analizira i raskrinka strujanja i nijanse rasističkih i autoritarnih učenja. U maloj kuhinji Instituta pripremali smo jeftine, improvizovane obede. To beše jedina plata koju smo mogli da ponudimo saradnicima, a često i njihov jedini obrok tog dana. Trebalo je energije i moralne snage da se takav poduhvat održi bez materijalne pomoći spolja, da se potišteno raspoloženje ljudi, iz korena iščupanih, prevlada i nastavi ideološka borba kakvu smo poznavali od ranije.” Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, nav. delo, str. 307.

09 Videti: Helga Gallas, *Marksistička teorija književnosti*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1977.

10 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, Nolit, Beograd, 1955, str. 23.

umetnicima i novinarima. Teške godine Šestojanuarske diktature su, pored raspuštanja skupštine, zabrane rada političkih partija i sindikata, značile i uvođenje cenzure i zabrane političkih okupljanja, a naročito primenu brutalnih represalija nad pripadnicima i pripadnicama komunističkog pokreta i njegovim simpatizerima, što je mnoge Nolitove saradnike stajalo dugogodišnje robije, teškog prebijanja i mučenja u političkim zatvorima za komuniste.¹¹ Bihalji-Merin, koji je pod pritiskom mučnih događaja i uvučen u „slučaj Keršovani” morao da napusti Jugoslaviju,¹² o tim dešavanjima je krajem 1929. godine u berlinskoj galeriji Der Sturm Hervarta Waldena, uz pomoć jugoslovenske i nemačke Crvene pomoći, organizovao izložbu pod nazivom *Krvava diktatura u Jugoslaviji*. Brošuru s dokumentacijom o „režimu belog terora”¹³ objavio je kao potresni dokument o nasilju i diktaturi u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji. „Po zidovima na kojima sam pre nekoliko godina video dela Paula Klea, Marka Šagala i Kandinskog, sada sam sređivao optička iskustva o jednoj tragičnoj politici sile i pokušajima revolucionarnog suprotstavljanja.”¹⁴

U Berlinu je u epicentru diskusija o funkciji proletersko-revolucionarne umetnosti, sa tada najznačajnijim marksističkim teoretičarima umetnosti, kojima sam Bihalji-Merin doprinosi mnogostruko; postaje član Saveza proletersko-revolucionarnih pisaca Nemačke, organa Komunističke partije Nemačke, a ubrzo i jedan od urednika časopisa te važne književne

11 Masovna hapšenja komunista počela su već u januaru 1929. Prema podacima Crvene pomoći Jugoslavije, od januara 1929. do septembra 1932. pred Sudom za zaštitu države održana su 82 procesa protiv komunista. 18. septembra 1930. osuđena je grupa od 14 komunista, među kojima Otokar Keršovani i Edvard Kardelj, na ukupno 54 godine robije. Videti: Kolektiv autora, *Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije*, Institut za proučavanje radničkog pokreta, Beograd, 1963, str. 169–170.

12 U vezi sa „slučajem Keršovani”, uhapšen je i Pavle Bihali, koji je u Glavnjači teško mučen i zlostavljan. Oto Bihalji-Merin svedoči da je njegov brat Pavle već sledeće 1931. ponovo bio uhapšen, ali je uz intervenciju advokata i demokratskog sudijske pušten iz zatvora. Videti: Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalijskog”, u: Grupa autora: *Izdavač Pavle Bihali, Nolit*, Beograd, 1978, str. 57.

13 Kolektiv autora, „Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije”, nav. delo, str. 171.

14 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, nav. delo, str. 292.

organizacije – *Die Linkskurve* (Levi zaokret), rame uz rame sa Johanesom R. Beherom, Đerđom Lukačem, Ludvigom Renom, Anom Zegers, Vili-jemom Bredelom, Teodorom Balkom, Karlom Augustom Vitfogelom i drugima. Kao dvadesetpetogodišnjak, pod pseudonimom Otto Biha, Bihalji-Merin je već od drugog broja rukovodio redakcijom časopisa, paralelno radeći i kao lektor u izdavačkoj kući Internationaler Arbeiter-verlagu, kao vodeći književni kritičar časopisa *Die Rote Fahne*, kao glavni urednik časopisa *Illustrierte Welt* (Ilustrovani novi svet), kasnije zamenje-nog „kamufliраним” časopisom *Kultur und Kunst*.

U knjizi *Marksistička teorija književnosti* Helga Galas naglašava da je osnivanje Saveza proletersko-revolucionarnih pisaca „zaista postao događaj u povijesti radničkog pokreta”.¹⁵ Njegova ključna funkcija bila je u pokušaju da se vladajućoj teoriji književnosti suprotstavi marksistič-ka: „Tu je Savez potakao diskusiju koja je uveliko prelazila sferu Save-za i časopisa *Die Linkskurve*.”¹⁶ Konfrontacije dve teorije književnosti (posredno tek vizuelne umetnosti) – obe smatrane marksističkim, sumi-rane su bile u pozicijama Lukača, s jedne, i Brehta, s druge strane. Pole-mikama o pojmovima tendencije, te partijnosti nasuprot „čiste umetno-sti”, o društvenim i istorijskim zadacima proleterske i revolucionarne umetnosti, te ciljevima „borbene” literature (i umetnosti generalno), mla-di Bihalji-Merin oblikovao je i svoje umetničke i političke svetonazo-re marksističko-lenjinističkog tipa – pluralističke u osnovi, krećući se u širokom potezu, od tadašnjih eksperimentalnih i avangardnih umetnič-kih praksi do Lukačevog koncepta „kritičkog realizma”.

Upravo je u tom časopisu Bihalji-Merin hrabro i smelo branio Brehtov „epski teatar” onda kada to nije bilo poželjno.¹⁷ „Nisu nam bile potreb-ne direktive”, sećao se. „Smatrali smo da je neophodna, moralna dužnost promeniti ovaj svet. Kažem 'mi', pošto nas je bilo puno. Još tada sam voleo Brehta i Prusta. I nisam verovao da će proletersko-revolucionarna literatura opstati. Autore Saveza sam smatrao formacijom u političkoj

15 Helga Gallas, *Marksistička teorija književnosti*, nav. delo, str. 11.

16 Isto, str. 11–12.

17 Fric J. Radac, „Srećan život u paklu”, intervju sa Otom Bihalji-Merinom, nav. delo.

borbi, a to su oni i bili. Mnogi od njih su se kasnije borili u ilegali i pali u toj borbi.”¹⁸

Odjeci ovih debata i rasprava o mestu i ulozi umetnosti u revolucionarnoj borbi stizali su i do jugoslovenskih komunista i komunistkinja, i one su se prelamale na specifičan način kroz jugoslovenski „sukob na književnoj levlci”, koji je, kao i u svim drugim kontekstima – uvek imao i političku pozadinu.¹⁹ Uprkos činjenici da je u kasnijoj historiografiji, naročito posleratnoj, u tom „sukobu” Bihalji-Merin dominantno stavljan na stranu Harkovske linije, naročito u međuratnom periodu i u prvim godinama posle rata (do 1948. godine i razlaza sa Staljinom), nova istraživanja nam upravo pokazuju da situacija od početka nije dihotomna, te da je potrebno kontekstualno prići svakoj od njegovih životnih „stanica”. Transnacionalno povezivanje i preplitanje avangardnih umetničkih praksi pokazuje i saradnja braće Bihalji sa nadrealističkim i zenitističkim pokretom u Jugoslaviji, o kojoj Bihalji-Merin piše u svojim osvrtima na godine pripreme *Nove literature*: „Pavle i ja došli smo na možda utopističku zamisao jedne moguće sinteze dade, nadrealizma i zenitizma sa revolucionarnim radničkim pokretom i njegovim shvatanjem umetnosti.”²⁰

Već u švajcarskom egzilu, nakon „berlinske” i „pariske” stanice, Bihalji-Merin će još jedanput dati snažan doprinos nemačkoj umetnosti, ovaj put vizuelnoj. Knjigu *Savremena nemačka umetnost (Modern German Art)*, objavljenu 1938. godine u izdanju Pingvina, u Londonu, za izložbu pod nazivom *20th Century German Art* u New Burlington galeriji u Londonu iste godine, prirediće kao odgovor na nacističku izložbu *Entartete Kunst* (Izopačena umetnost), organizovanu 1937. godine u Minhenu, sačinjenu od preko šeststo dela nemačke moderne i avangardne umetnosti; deo pokradene i zaplenjene umetnosti, koju su nacisti smatrali „izopačenom” i „boljševičkom”, te kao takvu prodavali je i uništavali, dok su same umetnike

18 Isto.

19 Videti detaljnije u: Vida Knežević, *Ne čekajući inspiraciju: Jugoslovenska umetnost između dva svetska rata i revolucionarni društveni pokret*, Udruženje likovnih umetnika Srbije (ULUS) i Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe, Beograd, 2023.

20 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalija”, nav. delo, str. 39.

progonili, zatvarali, slali u koncentracione logore. Bihalji-Merin, kao jedan od članova Komiteta i kao autor ove studije, za koju je predgovor napisao Herbert Rid, bio je jedan od najzaslužnijih za organizaciju ove važne kontraizložbe. „Za jedne, one koji su uviđali opasnost koja preti od fašizma, sve što je nemačko bilo je naprosto omraženo”, približio nam je atmosferu tih godina, „a za onaj krug koji je bio spreman za klasno diferenciranje, za političku levicu, odbrana ‘modernog’ bila je sama po sebi sumnjiva”.²¹ Kada u uvodnom delu piše: „Pa ipak, današnji profesori umetničkih akademija nisu ni u kom slučaju znamenitiji od bezimenih tvoraca kritskih vaza, etrurskih sarkofaga, makedonskih ili srpskih fresaka”,²² da ne znamo, mogli bismo pomisliti da je rečenica izvučena iz jednog od njegovih mnogobrojnih posleratnih tekstova, posebno onih pisanih pedesetih godina u kojima je Bihalji-Merin definisao autentičnost jugoslovenske umetnosti u svetskim okvirima pogleda na (istoriju) umetnost(i).

Između smrti i rađanja

*Morao sam da gledam, kako bih mogao da izveštavam.*²³

Već krajem dvadesetih i početkom tridesetih godina, u vreme intenzivne saradnje sa bratom Pavlom na *Novoj literaturi* i Nolitu, Oto Bihalji-Merin detektuje i artikuliše važnost preplitanja antikolonijalne i anti-kapitalističke borbe. Pored objavljivanja knjige koja govori o proganjanju i masovnom uništenju Jermena u Turskoj, koja je u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji ubrzo zabranjena i zaplenjena, snažnim antikolonijalnim delima koje je Nolit objavio pripada i *Zemlja abonosa* Albera Londra, kako i sam Bihalji-Merin svedoči, „prva značajna knjiga koja je predočila eksploataciju i ugnjetavanje afričkih naroda”. „Negrituta tih godina bila je puna poezije: slikari i književnici Evrope divili su se magijskoj snazi afričkih maski. Fetiši takozvanih primitivnih nadahnuli su umetnike moderne. Danas nam sve to zvuči kao daleka prošlost”,²⁴ zapisao je mnogo godina

21 Videti: Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Predgovor jugoslovenskom izdanju”, u: *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, Nolit, Beograd, 1955, str. 11.

22 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, nav. delo, str. 28.

23 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, nav. delo, str. 302.

24 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalija”, nav. delo, str. 46.

kasnije. „Između onog Beograda kraljevske diktature i ovog Beograda zasedanja nesvrstanih zbio se preobražaj cele jedne epohe. I Nolitove knjige bile su priprema za taj preobražaj.”²⁵

Ipak, najsnažniju materijalističko-dijalektičku analizu, u stilu „novog revolucionarnog romana” daće u knjizi posvećenoj Španskom građanskom ratu. Svojevrsnim montažnim postupcima, vešto konstruišući i suprotstavljajući različite književne postupke, elemente reportaže i dokumentacije, sa ciljem razbijanja fikcije, smelo je preplitao ekspresivne fragmente o savremenoj borbi španskog naroda protiv Frankove fašističke diktature koju je video svojim očima, sa kolonijalnom istorijom španskih osvajača, koji su vekovima porobljavali i brutalno eksploatisali zemlje Amerike, Afrike, Azije i Okeanije. „Poređani jedni kraj drugih, leže mali leševi raskidanih udova i izrešetanih lica; nalik su na razbijene lutke, oni što su se još nedavno i sami igrali lutkama. Kroz maglu ogorčenosti i beznađa video sam uzdignute ruke pramajke Rahele, koja naričući oplakuje svoju decu. Nepoznati slikar manastirske Crkve Sv. Marka u Makedoniji je prikazuje usred proloma užasa i očajanja: još i sada odjekuje njen plač u našem srcu. Ko je naslikao užase naših dana? Ćutanje i strah dopustili su umiranje dece u gasnim komorama Osvijencima, na spaljenom tlu Vijetnama.”²⁶

Benjaminovski epistemološki istorijsko-materijalistički nelinearni pristup razvoju događaja u vremenu i prostoru, koji u osnovi uvek podrazumeva klasne odnose i borbu,²⁷ čita se na stranicama Bihalji-Merinove istine o vekovnoj borbi španskog naroda protiv domaćih i stranih porobljivača. „Pobednici su u svemu bogatiji od pobeđenih. Imaju oni hramove, spomenike i dragocene spise, na hartiji, svili ili pergamentu. Ono što na njima piše, njihova je reč, njihova istina. Potlačeni imaju druge istine. Tek sa njihovom pobedom uskršava istina ugnjetavanih. Dok su prikovani za tle, ugašeni su spomeni njihove istine, klevetaju im se dela, prikrija junaštvo. A ovo ovde, istorija je borbe gradova i, istovremeno, španskog naroda, za

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²⁵ Isto.

²⁶ Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, nav. delo, str. 302.

²⁷ Videti: Walter Benjamin, „O shvatanju istorije”, <https://anarhisticka-biblioteka.net/library/walter-benjamin-o-shvatanju-istorije>. Pristupljeno: 3. 10. 2024.

vlade onog Karla V, u čijoj državi sunce za siromahe nije nikad izlazilo.”²⁸ Jukstapozicionirajući fantastične karikature iz Gojinih *Kapričosa* (*Los Caprichos*), te „sujetne, svirepe i slaboumne tirane”,²⁹ sa fotografijom Franciska Franka u fašističkoj uniformi, koji zadubljen sedi iznad geografske mape, Bihalji-Merin nam, u svojoj bogatoj reportaži, ne samo montažnim postupkom teksta, već i „slike”, tumači istoriju klasne borbe koja traje.

Uputi za savremeno čitanje Bihalji-Merinovog umetničkog i političkog nasleđa

Antikomunistički narativi naročito dominantni od osamdesetih godina 20. veka, a potvrđeni i dalje institucionalizovani kroz istorijski revizionizam, učinili su da se oko mnogih jugoslovenskih intelektualaca i umetnika koji su bili bliski radničkom i komunističkom pokretu kreiraju mitovi o njihovim ulogama u društvenim borbama, te narativi o njihovim „sumnjivim” aktivnostima, slike o dvostrukim špijunima, agentima svetskih zavera. Tome su doprinele i liberalne teorije o dva totalitarizma koje su se transversalno širile i ulazile u mnoge teorijske i naučne discipline, preplićući se sa tačerizmima i reganizmima o (neoliberalnoj) bezalternativnosti.

Tome su doprinosili kako međunarodni tako i jugoslovenski (modernistički) istoričari i teoretičari umetnosti. Samo poslednji u nizu bio je primer britanskog istoričara umetnosti i kustosa Dejvida Eliota, koji je u zaključnom paragrafu svog teksta iz 2018. godine o Bihalji-Merinovoj knjizi *Moderna nemačka umetnost* zapisao sledeće: „Uz nedostatak potkrepljenja, nedostatak informacija, manipulacija i nedoslednosti, činjenice o životu Ota Bihalji-Merina predstavljaju enigm. Da li je on čovek čvrstih, humanih, slobodarskih principa koji se suočava i reaguje na burna vremena, ili je bio agent svetske revolucije tajno radeći za SSSR?”³⁰ Nekoliko

28 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Španija između smrti i rađanja*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1946, str. 79.

29 Isto, str. 94.

30 David Elliott, „Modern German Art 1938: The Book”, u: Lucy Wasenstainer, Martin Faass (ured.), *London 1938 : defending ‘degenerate’ art*, The Wiener Library, London, 2018, 153–160. Dejvid Eliot nije nepoznat ovdašnjoj javnosti. Našu umetničku scenu posećivao je još od sedamdesetih godina, a poslednji put je bio prisutan kao kustos 56. Oktobarskog salona sa naslovom *Ljubavni zanos: prolazna emocija u savremenoj umetnosti*, gde je ponovio svoje

godina ranije i sam Jerko Denegri, jedan od najprominentnijih jugoslovenskih modernističkih istoričara umetnosti i likovnih kritičara, piše o Bihalji-Merinovoj „kontroverzi pozicije”, koja se odnosi na rani posleratni period. On se pita: „Kako je, naime, bilo moguće da kritičar sa tako bogatim iskustvom i naprednim poimanjem moderne umetnosti postane jedan od vodećih zagovornika vladajuće ideologije socijalističkog realizma u tadašnjim domaćim kulturnim prilikama, u prilog koje, između 1945. i 1947, piše niz programskih i militantnih tekstova?”³¹ Ovako izrečene teze, uprkos tome što i sam Denegri navodi Bihalji-Merinov ključan doprinos u otkrivanju i isticanju značaja evropske (specifično nemačke) avangardne moderne umetnosti, kojima dokazuje svoje „ne-dogmatske” i heterogene pozicije po pitanju uloge umetnosti u revolucionarnim borbama, „i to u vreme kada to uopšte nije bilo popularno” govore isključivo u prilog tome da se Bihalji-Merinovi stavovi o umetnosti mogu čitati samo kao kontinuitet njegovih teza koje već uveliko artikuliše u međuratnom periodu, a nastavlja ih u posleratnom – a nikako kao diskontinuitet.

Konačno, o Otu Bihalji-Merinu radije bismo mogli misliti kao o „proleterskom kosmopoliti”, kao jednom od mnogih tadašnjih radničkih intelektualaca koji su poticali sa (evropske) periferije, ali koji su kroz povezanost sa međunarodnim radničkim pokretom, učestvujući u antikapitalističkim i antifašističkim, a često i antikolonijalnim borbama, svoje intelektualne horizonte dalje širili.³² „Ja sam svesni socijalista i branim svoj pokušaj da ne odem, nego da ostanem ovde i pokušam da stvarni sadržaj učinim vidljivim”,³³ odsečno je odgovorio nemačkom novinaru s početka teksta, koji je, te 1988. godine, uporno pokušavao vremešnom Bihalji-Merinu da spočita „uzaludnost” njegovog umetničko-političkog delovanja. ●

liberalne teze o autonomiji umetnosti, te vladajuću dogmu o (političkoj) bezalternativnosti.

³¹ Ješa Denegri, „Preobražaji kritičkih pozicija Ota Bihalji-Merina: od socijalističkog realizma, preko naivne umetnosti do internacionalnog modernizma”, *Srpska umetnost 1950–2000: Pedesete*, Orion Art, Beograd, 2013, str. 57–65.

³² Vida Knežević, „Radnički pokret kao put ka emancipaciji: Quo vadimus, Herman?”, nav. delo.

³³ Fric J. Radac, „Srećan život u paklu”, intervju sa Otom Bihalji-Merinom, nav. delo.

Socijalističke prefiguracije srednjovekovne umetnosti: Oto Bihalji-Merin, Miroslav Krleža, časopis *Jugoslavija*

Dr Jelena Vesić

U prostoru binarnog mišljenja, često evociranog u kulturnim reprezentacijama iz vremena Hladnog rata, srednjovekovna religijska umetnost ne bi bila omiljena tema komunističkih istoričara umetnosti, može se reći – nije bila u programu. Nisu li revolucionarne mase uništavale crkve, simbole religije kao „opijuma za narod”?

Takvo binarno mišljenje bilo je upravo ono čemu su se jugoslovenska kulturna politika i njeni protagonisti, među kojima je Oto Bihalji-Merin jedna od centralnih figura, suprotstavili u hladnoratovskim okolnostima. Teza ovog teksta je da je jugoslovenski politički diskurs nesvrstanog, trećeputaškog pozicioniranja, njegova retorika i artikulacija, avangardistički oblikovana kroz umetnost i kulturnu politiku u prvim posleratnim godinama.

Misaoni naponi umetničkih kritičara i pisaca pedesetih godina xx veka bili su usmereni na artikulaciju istorije i savremenosti jugoslovenskog umetničkog prostora kao izuzet(n)og, autonomnog i zajedničkog malim južnoslovenskim nacijama, često nazivanim narodima (narodno-oslobodilačka borba kao konstitutivni činilac pojma naroda Jugoslavije). Jugoslovenska kultura bila je uokvirena narativom o herojskoj borbi

potlačenih naroda suprotstavljenih moćnom neprijatelju. Reference iz srednjovekovne i narodne umetnosti isprepletene s apstraktnim modernističkim umetničkim formama bile su omiljene u krugu uticajnih intelektualaca kojem je pripadao i Oto-Bihalji Merin. Njegov tekst „Tradicije i perspektive”⁰¹ razrađuje takvo pozicioniranje i preuokvirava srednjovekovnu umetnost kao moderni fenomen.

Oto Bihalji-Merin, od 1949. do 1959. godine, uređuje ekskluzivno ilustrirani časopis *Jugoslavija*, koji je, uz brojne slikarske i fotografske priloge, služio kreiranju imidža Jugoslavije – iznutra i spolja – i bio izdavan na nekoliko svetskih jezika, u velikom tiražu. Izdanja su bila namenjena različitim kontekstima: kapitalističkim zemljama, socijalističkim zemljama, kolonijalizovanim nacijama i narodnooslobodilačkim pokretima. Srđan Radović u svojoj studiji časopisa *Jugoslavija*⁰² ističe njegovu centralnu ulogu u „kulturnoj diplomatiji” na vrhuncu Hladnog rata i političkog prestrojavanja Jugoslavije u međunarodnim odnosima – u vremenu u kojem je upravo kulturna propaganda bila najmoćnije sredstvo političkog izraza. Časopis je po Radoviću predstavljao „kulturni prozor u spoljni svet” i služio promociji „koncepta specifične jugoslovenske modernosti, etničke i nacionalne raznolikosti i treće pozicije na globalnoj političkoj i kulturnoj mapi 1950-ih”.⁰³

Časopis je prikazivao zemlju u poželjnom maniru, formulišući njenu nezavisnu i nesvrstanu poziciju, bratstvo i jedinstvo naroda i narodnosti, socijalističku modernost i jedinstvo različitosti. Slike jadranske obale i prirodnih lepota zemlje, folklorne kulture, tradicije i srednjovekovne umetnosti kombinovane su sa slikama modernizacije, moderne umetnosti, razvoja gradova, industrijalizacije, demokratizacije turizma i dobrog života. Dominantne su bile predstave moderne umetnosti⁰⁴ i predstave jugoslovenskih

01 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Tradicije i perspektive”, časopis *Jugoslavija*, Beograd, 1957.

02 Srđan Radović, „Channeling the Country’s Image”, *AM Journal*, No. 13, 2017, str. 17–30.

03 *Ibid*, str. 17.

04 Čitava izdanja časopisa *Jugoslavija* su bila posvećena umetnosti: „Jugoslovenska skulptura XX veka” (1955, broj 10); „Savremeno jugoslovensko slikarstvo” (1957, broj 14); „Naivna umetnost” (1959, broj 17).

naroda, odnosno nacija,^{o5} koje su zagovarale jugoslovensku socijalističku modernost, ali i jugoslovenski etnički diverzitet, folklor i nacionalne specifičnosti. Narativ o autonomnom i nepokorivom duhu Južnih Slovena, njihovih istorijskih borbi protiv velikih, imperijalnih kultura koje su ih okruživale, njihovoj autonomnoj umetnosti i sopstvenom putu u modernost i socijalizam, provlačio se kroz različita izdanja časopisa *Jugoslavija*.

Građenje jugoslovenske socijalističke modernosti kao distinktivnog dijalekta u međunarodnom jeziku moderne umetnosti – jeziku internacionalnog modernizma – služilo je učvršćivanju vizije o kulturnoj specifičnosti i političkoj nezavisnosti južnoslovenskih naroda (jedinstva kroz diferencijaciju), što je bilo važno i za međunarodne odnose i za unutrašnji politički plan.

Primer na kojem se može precizno čitati odnos socijalizma i srednjovekovlja u jugoslovenskom kontekstu (a kroz koji se reflektuju i ideje časopisa *Jugoslavija*) jeste publikacija posvećena prizrenskoj Crkvi Bogorodica Ljeviška, sa tekstom Ota Bihalji-Merina, čiji je izdavač Zavod Jugoslavija.^{o6} U pitanju je dokument specifičnog uokvirivanja srednjovekovne umetnosti u narativ jugoslovenstva i jugoslovenske modernosti putem apstrakcije, fragmentacije i primenjenog čitanja.

Bihalji-Merinovo posmatranje fresaka Bogorodice Ljeviške, njegov formalno-estetski pristup i široki interpretativni potezi, sredstva su putem kojih ovaj značajni pisac preobražava hrišćansko-religiozni narativ u nešto drugo, u nešto za pogled „čoveka novog doba” univerzalnije i šire. Takav pogled temelji se na ujedinjujućim idejama posleratne moderne u kojoj je umetnost uvek dovođena u vezu sa nekim tлом, borbom i istorijom, kako bi sublimirala prošlost, dalju i bližu, prema večnom miru i boljoj budućnosti. Tlo, borba i istorija malih naroda vezuju se za

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^{o5} Jedinstvo jugoslovenskih naroda u socijalističkoj modernosti, ali i njihove etničke i nacionalne specifičnosti, prezentovane su kroz tematska izdanja posvećena različitim jugoslovenskim republikama: Slovenija (1950, broj 3), Makedonija (1952, broj 5), Bosna i Hercegovina (1953, broj 7), Crna Gora (1954, broj 8), Hrvatska (1955, broj 11) i Srbija (1957, broj 13).

^{o6} Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Bogorodica Ljeviška – čovek, priroda i predmeti na freskama*, Publicističko-izdavački zavod Jugoslavija, Beograd, 1963.

politike NOB-a, u umetnosti razvijane kroz teme herojske borbe protiv nadmoćnijeg neprijatelja u kojoj se ostvaruje istorijska pravda. Ta tema je široko prisutna u modernoj umetnosti pedesetih koja se često koristi metodom prefiguracije folklornih motiva i umetnosti prošlosti kako bi izrazila sopstvenu autentičnost i lokalnu specifičnost.

Pojam prefiguracije se koristi u istoričarsko-umetničkoj analizi da označi alegorijski govor slika koje se bave istorijskim temama i velikim narativima. U većini slučajeva odnosi se na upotrebu scena iz „Starog zaveta” ili grčkih i rimskih mitova za propovedanje istina hrišćanstva. Prefiguracija je znak nečega što sledi i podrazumeva anticipaciju, najavu i nagoveštaj budućeg događaja – u ovom tekstu označava operativni postupak umetničkih kritičara i intelektualaca pedesetih godina XX veka u primeni srednjovekovne umetnosti u narativ jugoslovenske modernosti, samosvojnosti i autentičnosti jugoslovenskog socijalističkog puta.

Bogorodica Ljeviška – u srednjem veku, katedralna crkva, sedište vizantijskih, kasnije i srpskih episkopa u Prizrenu, a potom i džamija nakon osmanskog osvajanja Balkana – od 1953. godine postaje spomenik kulture i muzej. Iz narativa religije i nacije, oličene u instituciji bogomolje (crkve ili džamije), prelazi u narativ znanja i umetnosti oličen u modernoj i sekularnoj instituciji spomenika kulture. Publikacija sa tekstom Bihalji-Merina štampana je povodom ovog novog otvaranja, nakon restauracije srednjovekovnih fresaka koju je izveo slikarski par Zdenka i Branislav Živković i skidanja sloja maltera nanesenog preko slika (u skladu s verskim ikonoklazmom islama), dok je građevina delovala kao džamija. Zdenka i Branislav Živković su u periodu restauracije izveli i kopije 150 detalja fresaka,⁰⁷ koje su izlagane širom sveta. Izložba pod nazivom *Čovek, priroda i predmeti na freskama* – kako glasi i naziv Bihalji-Merinovog teksta – prikazana je u Umetničkom paviljonu „Cvijeta Zuzorić” u Beogradu (1954), čemu je usledio veliki broj izlaganja: dvogodišnje turiranje postavke po gradovima Francuske (1954–55), Finske, Danske, Kanade i SAD (1956), Indije (1957), Japana (1958), Poljske i Norveške (1961), Švajcarske i Čehoslovačke (1962). Godine 1953. se takođe osniva i Galerija fresaka u Beogradu kao prva velika muzejska postavka

⁰⁷ Na brošuri je istaknuto da je publikacija objavljena zahvaljujući kopijama fresaka koje su naslikali Zdenka i Branislav Živković između 1950. i 1953. godine.

slovensko-vizantijske umetnosti, koja uključuje veliki broj kopija srednjovekovnih slika i arhitektonske plastike.⁰⁸

Kroz prostorno-arhitektonska i semantička re-kadriranja srednjovekovnih objekata Bihalji-Merin zaobilazi uobičajeni narativ o autentičnosti originala i izvornom kontekstu, jednako se diveći kopijama i implicirajući da je novi format galerijske postavke prikladniji za umetničko i naučno razmatranje. Horizontalna galerijska postavka prilagođava se nivou pogleda posmatrača i otvara prostor za kontemplaciju pojedinačnih slika i detalja uokvirenih belinom zida.⁰⁹ Takav način posmatranja sugerise vrstu analize koja možda nije karakteristična za originalne slike, utkane u arhitekturu crkve i podređene drugačijoj funkcionalnosti koja nije prvenstveno posmatračka.

Bihalji-Merin gotovo naučnički uveličava detalje i fragmente, izvlačeći forme iz narativnih serija biblijskih priča, života svetaca i srednjovekovnih kraljeva, i povezujući ih u novi narativ „Čovek, priroda i predmeti na freskama”. Pre no što će se zagledati u površine svetiteljskih odora, u umetničke i formalne kvalitete slikanja na način na koji to moderni kritičari čine pred apstraktnim slikama, Bihalji-Merin podvlači da „umetnici vizantijske tradicije ne slikaju spoljašnju pojavnost sveta, već sam koncept sveta”.¹⁰

Bihalji-Merin pokušava da vidi u freskama Bogorodice Ljeviške nešto univerzalno, što se opire kulturnim i nacionalnim razlikama, što radije ujedinjuje nego što deli i izoluje. Tako se u scenama koje ilustruju Hristova čuda koncentriše na ruke koje daju i primaju hranu, na samo deljenje

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⁰⁸ Prva ideja o osnivanju Galerije fresaka došla je od strane Komiteta za kulturu i umetnost Vlade FNRJ 1947. godine. Nakon izložbe u palati Chaillot, 1. februara 1953. godine, otvorena je Galerija fresaka u Beogradu. Galerija danas broji preko 1000 kopija fresaka spomenika (nastalih u periodu 11–15. veka), kopije ikona i oko 300 odlivaka srednjovekovne monumentalne skulpture.

⁰⁹ O značenju i ideološkom okviru beline zida, bele kocke galerijskog prostora kao konteksta, atmosfere i načina posmatranja pisao je Brajan O'Doerti. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside The White Cube*, The Lapis Press, San Francisco, 1986.

¹⁰ O. Bihalji-Merin, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, str. 8.

hrane kao čin koji je iznad i izvan kapitalističke ekonomije i koncepta potrošnje. U ciklusu scena iz života Sv. Nikole, pronalazi refleksiju „naivno bezvremene i dirljive želje za znanjem”¹¹ – čitanje koje svakako ima veze sa tada proklamovanom idejom obrazovanja za sve i emancipacije putem edukacije. Ponovni Hristov dolazak čita kao sliku jedinstva i saglasja čoveka i prirode – golubovi, rode, pelikani, divlji medvedi, predstave biljnog života i divljih zveri. Tekst završava posmatranjem slike Bogorođice kojoj je crkva posvećena, posmatranjem njenog pogleda – Ljeviška (od Ljeviša) je srbijanizovana verzija grčke reči *eleusa (milosrdna)* – „ona nas gleda umilno i toplo [...] bliska u svojoj spremnosti da pati i živi”.¹²

Prve artikulacije specifičnog jugoslovenskog pozicioniranja u hladnoratovskim okolnostima nakon Titovog razlaza sa Staljinom i izbacivanja Jugoslavije iz Kominforma 1948. ostvaruje se kroz umetnost i putem umetnosti. Izložba jugoslovenske srednjovekovne umetnosti (*L'art medieval yougoslave*) u Palais de Chaillot u Parizu 1950¹³ – čiji je, rečeno savremenim jezikom, kustos bio Miroslav Krleža – predstavljala je novi jugoslovenski politički identitet kroz slike prošlosti kao prefiguracije savremenosti. Prikaz srednjovekovne umetnosti južnoslovenskih naroda objedinjavao je na ovoj izložbi varijete hrvatske romaničke skulpture, srpskih srednjovekovnih fresaka i bosansko-bogumilskih nadgrobničkih spomenika. Za potrebe

11 *Ibid*, str. 9.

12 *Ibid*, str. 12.

13 *L'art medieval yougoslave* prikazana je u Palais de Chaillot, 9. mart – 22. maj 1950, i u Zagrebu, Umjetnički paviljon, 11. mart – 30. april, 1951. „Krleža je nadzirao pripremne radove, a bio je i član Počasnog odbora u kojem su bili predstavnici znanstvenih i kulturnih ustanova: A. Štampar, A. Belić, F. Ramovš (predsjednici JAZU, SANU, SAZU), M. Detoni, S. Stojanović, A. G. Kos (rektori akademija likovnih umjetnosti iz Zagreba, Beograda i Ljubljane), D. Koco (prof. Univerziteta u Skoplju), S. Stanković (predsjednik Savjeta akademija), B. Jakac (predsjednik Saveza likovnih umjetnika) i I. Andrić (predsjednik Saveza književnika). Izložbu je postavio i umjetnički opremio slikar Lj. Babić, a u pripremnim radovima sudjelovalo je više od stotinu likovnih stručnjaka.” Izložba srednjovekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije. *Krležijana* (1993–99), mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod „Miroslav Krleža”, 2024. <<https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak/1217>> Pristupljeno 16. 10. 2024.

izložbe upriličeno je 105 gipsanih odlivaka skulpture i 160 kopija fresaka koje su predstavljale bazu za osnivanje Galerije fresaka u Beogradu.

Izložbu je pratio katalog sa Krležinim predgovorom, a tekst je iste godine objavljen u *Republici*, časopisu *Umetnost* (1950, 2) i u časopisu *Jugoslavija* u dve različite varijante – zima 1950 i jesen 1950; takođe je objavljen u katalogu izložbe *Srednjovekovne umjetnosti naroda Jugoslavije* održane u Umjetničkom paviljonu u Zagrebu 1951. Kroz ovu postavku Krleža čini korak unatrag da bi napravio korak unapred. Umesto izlaganja savremene umetnosti uz jasno opredeljenje prema zapadnom ili sovjetskom modelu, on prikazuje umetnost srednjeg veka koristeći se kulturno-političkom retorikom koju i sam naziva *Plaidoyer pro domo* (*Pred kim? Pred zapadnom Evropom*). Uvodna ilustracija teksta u časopisu *Jugoslavija* (zima 1950) je ekskluzivna kolor reprodukcija manjeg formata scene *Izgnanje iz raja*, freske manastira Pečka patrijaršija iz XVI veka. Izdvajanje ove slike, u skladu sa tonom Krležinog teksta, može se shvatiti i kao aluzija na isključenje Jugoslavije iz Kominforma i naznaka njenog konfrontacijskog stava spram istočne Evrope i staljinizma.

Krleža koristi bogumile kao prefiguraciju jugoslovenstva, ističući autonomiju ove srednjovekovne sekte „koja nije želela da se prikloni ni Rimu ni Konstantinopolju” kao anticipaciju jugoslovenskog odbijanja da se prikloni i Moskvi i Vašingtonu. Na stranicama časopisa *Jugoslavija* tekst je bogato ilustrovan fotografijama detalja na kojima se mogu pratiti umetnički kvaliteti ekspresije i simbolizacije, što odgovara uspostavljanju umetničkog okvira nad religioznim sadržajem i primenjivanju govora prošlosti u savremenoj političkoj areni. Odmah nakon Krležinog priloга o srednjovekovlju u časopisu *Jugoslavija* (zima 1950) slede stranice sa ilustrovanim kolorističkim printom poeme *Jama* Ivana Gorana Kovačića, uz uvodnu reč Marka Ristića. U jesenjoj varijanti tekstu prethodi slika Radovanovog portala u Trogiru Ljube Babića, a sledi mu prilog Lea Matesa *Doprinos Jugoslavije ujedinjenim narodima*. Urednički rad Ota Bihalji-Merina u časopisu *Jugoslavija* baca dodatno svetlo na njegove teze o srednjovekovnoj umetnosti i ukazuje na jedan širi kulturno-politički program praćen istupima značajnih intelektualaca na deljenoj platformi.

Za potrebe reprezentativne izložbe jugoslovenske umetnosti u Parizu, Krleža izmišlja termin „jugoslovenska srednjovekovna civilizacija”¹⁴ kao glavni agens dekontekstualizacije i rekontekstualizacije srednjovekovnog istorijskog narativa. U okolnostima Hladnog rata i binarno iscrtanog opredeljenja između socijalističkog realizma i moderne apstraktne umetnosti Krleža ustanovljava „niti-niti” jezik jugoslovenske nesvrstanosti i naglašava kako je „jugoslovenska civilizacija nastala na antitezi Vizantije i Rima”.¹⁵ Jugoslovenstvo kao „treću komponentu”¹⁶ pronalazi u političkoj genezi srednjovekovnih suvereniteta i nezavisnosti i istorijskom otporu vladajućim porecima u (impliciranom) pravcu samosvojnog socijalističkog puta.

*FNRI je kao jugoslovenska socijalistička federacija revolucionaran i historijski fait-accompli, koji s jedne strane prevladava naš Srednji vijek, a s druge čitavim nizom svojih moralno-političkih i kulturnih elemenata anticipira razvoj naših budućih stoljeća.*¹⁷

Specifičnost likovnog stila „jugoslovenskih naroda srednjeg veka” Krleža sagledava kroz trop borbe za oslobođenje koja se manifestuje u upotrebi narodnog jezika u crkvenim propovedima.¹⁸ Insistira na jugoslovenskoj autentičnosti i singularnosti, prikazujući jugoslovensku kulturu kao samostalnu, a ne sporednu, kao pionirsku, a ne kao derivat. Srednjovekovna umetnost jugoslovenskih naroda „gotovo nema varijacije zapadnoevropskog, mediteranskog ili vizantskog arhitektonskog ili slikarskog stila”; „Naši arhitekti, slikari i vajari savladavali su umetnička pitanja svoga vremena ne samo na epigonski ili eklektički način, već na kreativan i individualan način.”¹⁹

Krležin tekst koji danas može biti čitan i kao kulturno-politički manifest epohe, podrazumeva konstrukciju autonomnog prostora na istorijskim periferijama, tako što se sučeljava sa okosnicom odnosa centra i

14 Miroslav Krleža, „Izložba jugoslavenskog srednjovekovnog slikarstva i plastike”, *Jugoslavija*, Beograd, jesen 1950, str. 55.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, str. 54.

18 *Ibid.*, str. 61.

19 *Ibid.*, str. 54.

periferije unutar kojeg se „male kulture” vide kao zakasneli odrazi „velikih kultura”. Ivana Bago, u svojoj analizi jugoslovenskih izlazaka iz Hladnog rata putem umetnosti, odnosno potrage za autonomnom, socijalističkom jugoslovenskom umetnošću, povezuje Krležin istup u Palais de Chaillot sa njegovim pozicioniranjem u sukobu na levisi tridesetih godina, i čita ga kao akt „dvostrukog odbijanja – i evropske hegemonije i lokalnog esencijalizma” (koji sa sobom nosi i kritički stav spram pojma nacionalne umetnosti).²⁰ Poredi ga sa Frantz Fanonovim dvostrukim odbacivanjem – i evropskih kulturnih modela i lokalnih, plemenskih običaja i mitova, u tezi *O nacionalnoj kulturi* prezentovanoj na Drugom kongresu crnačkih pisca i umetnika u Rimu 1959. godine.²¹ Ta Krležijanska (ili Fanonska) pozicija formira se u odnosu na dva makronarativa „zapadna civilizacija” i „moderni svet”. U svom kretanju između tradicije i modernosti, između „civilizovanog” i „primitivnog”, ona se manifestuje, kako ističe Ivana Bago, kao „realizam potčinjenog i pobunjenog naroda”.²²

Krležin opis bogumilskog razumevanja sveta evocira slike pobunjenog naroda i partizanskog heroizma na način na koji je vizualno i afektivno profilisan u monumentalnoj skulpturi NOB-a. Pojedina čitanja bogumilskih skulptura skoro da brišu granice između nadgrobnih stećaka i partizanskih spomenika.

*Ta skulptura je tendenciozna i propagandistička ... U bogumilskom stilu ona materijalistički negira zaglupljujuću misao o smrti na koljenima ... Među hiljadama ljudskih ruku na ovim monolitima nijedne nisu sklopljene u predsmrtnoj molitvi.*²³

20 Ivana Bago, „Yugoslav Fanonism and a Failed Exit from the (Cultural) Cold War”, u Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara, Antonia Majača (ur.), *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2021, str. 285–293.

21 Ivana Bago naglašava Fanonovo (i Krležino) postavljanje u registru kolonijalne razlike (Walter Mignolo) u odnosu na dva makronarativa „zapadna civilizacija” i „moderni svet”. Bago, *Ibid.*

22 Ivana Bago, „Krleža/Meštrović: jugoslavenski primitivizam drugim sredstvima”, konferencija AICA Srbija *Umetnička Kritika druge polovine 20. Veka u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji: Stanovišta, koncepti, rasprave* (ur. Jelena Vesić), Muzej Jugoslavije, 2023, <https://aicaserbia.org/konferencija-2023-program/#BAGO>

23 *Ibid.*, str. 58.

Prihvatanje smrti u ime borbe za slobodu je ikonički predstavljeno na partizanskom spomeniku Stjepanu Filipoviću ili Borcima revolucije u Valjevu, koji je osmislio Vojin Bakić 1960.

Krležin *Plaidoyer pro domo* postao je nacrt za formiranje estetike umetnosti pedesetih, uključujući i estetiku partizanskih spomenika, koju Branislav Dimitrijević naziva „estetikom prkosa i patnje” i njen zajednički vizuelni imenitelj definiše kao „sintezu soc-realističkog figuralno-ekspresivnog simbolizma, modernističkog apstraktnog simbolizma i arhetipskog simbolizma „našeg tla” („našeg” pejzaža i „naše” tradicije)”.²⁴ Estetizaciju patnje i prkosa Dimitrijević smatra „odlučujućom za poimanje kulturnog identiteta” i povezuje je sa „motivom širom podignutih ruku sa šakama stisnutim u pesnicu, koji svoje poreklo vuče još od čuvene Gojine slike *Treći maj 1808* (1814)”.²⁵

Ako je avangardizam modernizma počivao na apstrakciji, na formalnim i tehničko-medijskim istraživanjima (a koja će dobiti novi zamah u jugoslovenskoj umetnosti i kritici tokom šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina prošlog veka, sa Novim tendencijama i sličnim pojavama), Krleža i Biha-lji-Merin negovali su naklonost figuraciji. Prisutnost figure u modernističko-apstraktnoj naraciji videli su kao znak društvenog angažmana – „angažovane figurativne umetnosti”²⁶ – što je termin kojim su mlađe generacije kritičara, poput Ješe Denegrija, opisivale kanonsku i široko prihvaćenu definiciju izraza društvenog angažmana u umetnosti, ustanovljenu upravo tokom pedesetih godina. U najekstremnijim Krležinim govorima, poput referata na Kongresu pisaca u Beogradu 1954, apstrakcija se izjednačavala s formalizmom larpulartističkog tipa, sa provincijalizujućim slepim prihvatanjem zapadnjačkih moda.²⁷

²⁴ Branislav Dimitrijević, *Utopijski konzumerizam. Nastanak i protivrečnosti potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji (1950–1970)*, Doktorska disertacija, Univerzitet umetnosti, Beograd, 2012, str. 236.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Branislav Dimitrijević i Jelena Vesić, *Yugoslav Art Space: Ješa Denegri in the First Person*, JRP Ringer, 2024 (diskusija „Figurative Art, Engaged Art and Domestic Traditions”, str. 41–57).

²⁷ „Klauni u likovnom cirkusu apstraktne umjetnosti vade pred nama iz svojih

Oto Bihalji-Merin je (kao i Krleža na svoj način) preferirao alternative i vidljive distinkcije u odnosu na pojam „umetnost Zapada“, opredelivši se za afirmaciju primitivne i narodne umetnosti kao savremenosti sa one strane razuma i tehnologije koja obećava „povratak u pradomovinu svojga predložičnog bića”.²⁸ Bihalji-Merin je te ideje razrađivao tokom čitavog života, objavljujući brojne tekstove i knjige poput reprezentativnih monografija o Bogumilima²⁹ i Modernim primitivcima (naivnom slikarstvu od 17. veka do danas)³⁰ pisanih za izdavačku kuću Thames&Hudson ili raskošno opremljene knjige *Naivni umetnici sveta*³¹ posvećene fenomenima primitivne umetnosti, dečje umetnosti, autsajderske umetnosti, umetnosti duševnih bolesnika, narodne i seljačke umetnosti. Za Ota Bihalji-Merina srednjovekovna umetnost je, kao predmoderna pojava, takođe bila izvor primitivnog, iskonskog i suprotnog tehno-civilizacijskom zlu rata – što je jedna od tipičnih pozicija unutar globalne dinamike moderne umetnosti nakon Drugog svetskog rata i njenih ambivalentnih stavova spram ideje tehnološkog napretka.

*Možda kanon vizantijske umetnosti u obliku makedonskih i srpskih tekovina, transponovan i izmenjen novim aspektima, živi i dalje u savremenosti jugoslovenskog slikarstva [...] oslobođen svoje religiozne funkcije; To više nije umetnost za boga već za čoveka koji, u stvarnosti tehničkih i psihičkih kataklizmi umesto spoljne vidljive istine traži unutrašnju bit stvari.*³²

cilindara krepane kanarinice i peku apstraktnu kajganu svojih inspiracija ... Ova 'revolucija forme' više je nalik na modu palanačkih gospodica koje kokodaču oko Diorovih krojeva do kojih je dopro poslednji krik mode sa zakašnjenjem od nekoliko neukusnih pokolenja.” Iz Krležinog govora na Plenumu udruženja pisaca, Beograd 10–13. XI 1954. <http://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=1773>

²⁸ Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Tradicije i perspektive”, str. 3.

²⁹ Oto Bihalji-Merin, *The Bogomils*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1962.

³⁰ Oto Bihalji-Merin, *MODERN PRIMITIVES. Naive Painting From The Late Seventeenth Century Until The Present Day*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1971.

³¹ Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Naivni umetnici sveta*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1972.

³² O. Bihalji-Merin, „Tradicije i perspektive”, str. 5.

Bihalji-Merinov tekst „Tradicije i perspektive” nosio je određene smernice za savremene umetnike toga vremena, navodeći kako su potragu za izvornom naivnom i narodnom umetnošću sprovodili brojni moderni umetnici: od Džejmsa Ensora, preko Edvarda Munka, od Pikasa i Šagala, do Dijega Rivere, i pitajući se na istom tragu da li je takvo distanciranje od „zapadne apstraktne umetnosti” uopšte moguće bez posredovanja Pariza. U modernom jugoslovenskom slikarstvu pedesetih godina prošlog veka, slične tendencije pronalazi u „epskom slikarstvu koje legendu o ustanku i žrtvovanju formuliše novim jezikom našeg vremena”,³³ poput umetnosti Đorđa Andrejevića Kuna i murala Borka Lazeskog (1953–1956) na Železničkoj stanici u Skoplju. Istovremeno favorizuje ekspresivno-apstraktni stil jugoslovenskih umetnika koji su razvili jezik koji opisuje kao „i socijalan i moderan, ukorenjen u vlastitom tlu i kosmopolitski”, i kao primere navodi umetnike poput Krsta Hegedušića, Lazara Vujaklije, Mila Milunovića, Petra Lubarde, Marka Čelebonovića, Gabriela Stupice i Marija Pregelja.³⁴

Opipljiv umetnički primer misaonog pravca koji je razvio Bihalji-Merin bio bi Petar Lubarda, sa kojim je bio blizak i o kome je često pisao, takođe i u ediciji *Jugoslavija*.³⁵ Njegov proslavljeni slikarski ciklus *Boj na Kosovu* (1953) često je prikazivan u međunarodnom kontekstu i nagrađen na Bijenalu u Sao Paulu 1953, iste godine kada je Crkva Bogorodice Ljeviške ponovno otvorena kao muzej. Lubarda bira nacionalnu temu (srpski nacionalni mit iz XIX veka), ali istovremeno, upravo putem apstraktne umetnosti zamenjuje nacionalni narativ prikazom univerzalnog otpora, koji se lako može povezati s otporom fašizmu jugoslovenskih partizana. Prikaz socijalističke industrijalizacije i modernizacije kao srednjovekovne bitke tema je Lubardine monumentalne slike *Industrijalizacija*, izložene u pozadini konferencijskog skupa Samita nesvrstanih u Beogradu (1961).³⁶ U oba

33 O. Bihalji-Merin, „Tradicije i perspektive”, str. 7.

34 *Ibid*, str. 8.

35 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Lubarda, Kosovski boj*, Izdavački zavod Jugoslavija, Beograd, 1956.

36 Posleratne kolektivne dobrovoljne radne akcije za (ponovnu) izgradnju infrastrukture i ispunjavanje petogodišnjih planova temeljile su se na ideji herojskog rada (udarnog rada) viđenog kao nastavak bitaka „Velikog rata” drugim sredstvima.

ciklusa umetnik pozajmljuje inspiraciju iz vizantijskog srednjovekovnog fresko-slikarstva, njegovih grubih površina i izbledele boje.

U svojim napisima o srednjovekovnoj umetnosti doajeni kulture jugoslovenskog socijalizma poput Miroslava Krleže ili Ota Bihalji-Merina, nisu prilazili samom objektu posmatranja kroz rekonstrukciju i evokaciju duha epohe, već su se radije bavili projekcijom savremenog trenutka unatrag, u istorijsku prošlost i posmatranjem budućnosti kroz slojeve prošlih epoha. Po njima je to budućnost koju će omogućiti novo socijalističko i modernističko, a istovremeno i narodno uokviravanje politike i umetnosti Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije (FNRJ). Pozicije ova dva uticajna intelektualca nisu istovetne, ali su, svaka na svoj način, povezane sa predratnom aktivnošću oba autora u okviru komunističkog pokreta i njihovim posledično velikim uticajem u javnom umetničkom životu socijalističke Jugoslavije kroz vođenje kulturnih infrastrukture kao što su Leksikografski zavod Jugoslavije (Krleža) ili izdavačka kuća Jugoslavija (Bihalji-Merin). Njihova čitanja srednjovekovne umetnosti su i univerzalno-apstraktna (uopšteno humanistička u intelektualnom tonu posleratnih pisaca) i konkretna u kulturno-političkom smislu.

Drugačiji su profesionalistički pogledi i naučni pristupi srednjovekovnoj umetnosti Odeljenja za istoriju umetnosti u Beogradu ili Instituta za vizantološke studije, koji se bave rekonstrukcijom značenja i okvira posmatranja srednjovekovne epohe. Sveobuhvatnu monografiju o slikarstvu Bogorodice Ljeviška napisala je Gordana Babić u saradnji sa Dragom Panić, koja se bavila arhitekturom.³⁷ Za razliku od Bihalji-Merino-ve zainteresovanosti za kvalitet slikarstva i ljudsku dramu, njena analiza je zasnovana na egzegezi biblijskih narativa, srednjovekovnoj crkvenoj politici i vladarskoj ideologiji osnivača crkve. Savremeni medievalisti ne posvećuju pažnju formalnim kvalitetima umetničkog dela koje su socijalistički pisci postavljali u svoj fokus. Njihov interes za formu svakako je i izraz praznjenja od ideoloških sadržaja prethodnih epoha, pre svega onih koje su vezane za nacionalizam i nacionalnu kulturu, kako bi se obezbedila mogućnost upisivanja sadašnjosti u prošlost, pa zatim i prošlosti u sadašnjost. Žanrovi naučnih tekstova stručnjaka za vizantologiju

37 Gordana Babić, Draga Panić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 1975.

nisu uporedivi sa Bihalji-Merinovim ili Krležinim napisima o umetnosti srednjeg veka, zasnovanim na kulturnoj diplomatiji i širokim okvirima posmatranja, na istorijama dugog trajanja, evokacijama i prefiguracijama.

Kada su okviri posmatranja u pitanju, u ovom kontekstu nije neuputno pomenuti da je reizdanje iz 2007. monografije *Bogorodica Ljeviška* Gordane Babić i Drage Panić (1975) uokvireno uvodnim tekstom raško-prizrenskog i kosovsko-metohijskog vladike Artemija, koji ističe umetnički i simbolički značaj ove crkve za srpski narod, uz pogovor Dragana Vojvodića – izdanje koje ponovo uokviruje nekadašnji spomenik kulture u nacionalno-religijski narativ.

Odnos socijalizma prema srednjovekovlju kroz prizmu tradicije i modernosti svakako je podrazumevao i regulaciju nacionalnih i verskih pitanja. O tome je direktno pisao uticajni nadrealista Dušan Matić, na poetičan način, takođe u časopisu *Jugoslavija*, govoreći o prizrenskim crkvama i džamijama, te kako obrazovanje i svetovni život otvaraju prostor boljoj budućnosti.

Monotoniju dugih, slepih, oniskih zidova, iza kojih se kriju kuće s prozorima okrenutim k dvorištu prekidaju nove građevine na sprat i koji sprat više, čiji prozori otvoreno gledaju na ulicu. Izgladneli psi ne vuku se više mahalama. Škole su prepune... Kad sam izlazio iz „Ljeviške”, radnici su došli da prenesu grede od skela u džamiju u centru grada, koja se pretvara u muzej. I to je bio simbol novog vremena. „Ljeviška” i glavna džamija da postanu muzej, da u muzejskoj tišini, pomirene, budu ne više simbol krvavih razmirica kao nekada, već simbol sporazumevanja, radi jednog trpeljivijeg ljudskog sna.³⁸

Specijalno izdanje časopisa *Jugoslavija* u kojem je objavljen Matićev tekst o Prizrenu otvara i njegov uvodnik koji govori o subjektu putovanja koji zaboravlja sebe da bi se ponovo otkrio i velikim slovima podvlači reči OPŠTELJUDSKO, RAZLIKE, SAMO MALO DALJE, I JOŠ DALJE... ●

38 Dušan Matić, „Koreni prošlosti i seme budućnosti”, *Jugoslavija* br. 12, str. 105–108.

Oto Bihalji-Merin: Umetnosti i politika, dva toka jednog životnog puta

Mr Marijana Cvetković

Oto Bihalji-Merin bio je jedna od onih figura kulturnog i javnog života koja je u posleratnoj socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji predstavljala autoritet zasnovan na više decenija dugom predanom radu u vidu pisane reči i dela koja su stajala uz nju: knjige, izložbe, članci, stručni komentari o pitanjima umetnosti i kulture u promenljivim društvenim okolnostima, sa horizontom ka kom se uporno kretao. Uz to, blistavo je stajao njegov neumorni politički rad u godinama do Drugog svetskog rata, u Beogradu, Berlinu, Parizu, Španiji, Cirihi i drugim mestima na kojima je izgradio mrežu prijatelja i saradnika i svoj međunarodni ugled.

Dolazeći iz umetničkog i humanističkog obrazovanja, Bihalji-Merin je svoje političke stavove i angažmane od početka tesno vezivao za znanja i interesovanja o umetnosti. To preplitanje umetničkog i političkog neprekidno prati njegov rad od samog početka, otevljujući princip aktivnosti koji se može čitati kao političko delovanje i posmatranje sveta iz perspektive društveno angažovanog i posvećenog intelektualca.

Rano sam počeo da pišem, a ipak sam naslućivao da je bolje živeti nego pisati! I najteži gorki doživljaj bolji je od potpune praznine. Hteo

*sam da upoznam strane gradove, nepoznate predele, da steknem mnogo prijateljstva i ljubavi. Da budem prisutan... Za mene nije bilo alternative: morao sam biti prisutan: najpre u sitnim akcijama đačkog doba, docnije u krupnijim u radničkom pokretu, a zatim u akcijama međunarodne solidarnosti.*⁰¹

Ovaj princip prisutnosti kroz delovanje rečju, mišlju, razgovorom, pisanjem uvek u odnosu na ono što se dešavalo oko njega, obeležio je njegov život u svetu umetnosti i kulture u varljivim okvirima „društva u stalnom preobražaju” u kojem se nalazio: društava Jugoslavije i zapadne Evrope i pre, i za vreme, i nakon Drugog svetskog rata.

Promišljanje sopstvenog primarnog polja rada, umetnosti, kroz princip aktiviteta vodilo ga je ka shvatanju da je umetnost neizostavni deo života svakog čoveka, da je ona izraz ljudskosti i da suodnos sa njom ne sme biti zavistan od društvenog i klasnog položaja. Ono što se pojavljuje kao prepreka takvom nužnom odnosu jesu buržoaske prakse organizovanja kulture i nametanja kodova kulture koji sprečavaju da umetnost ostane deo života, otuđenje od stvaralačkog kapaciteta koji se nalazi u svakom od nas. Još važnije je da je Bihalji-Merin umetnost posmatrao u kontekstu naučnog i tehnološkog razvoja kao, takođe, osnovu društvenog života. „Usmeravanje umetnosti ka širokim slojevima uslovljava dijalektičko poniranje u savremena otkrića nauke i tehnike i uključivanje ponekad teško razumljivih eksperimenata savremenih stvaralaca.”⁰²

Ovi ključni koncepti koje je Bihalji-Merin dosledno ugrađivao u svoje pisanje i delovanje nužno su i osnove za razumevanje njegovog direktnog i indirektnog bavljenja kulturnom politikom i kulturnom diplomatijom Jugoslavije. Na to su uticala i predratna iskustva međunarodnog umrežavanja kroz politički rad tokom formativnih godina pre Drugog svetskog rata.

Tokom svog boravka u Parizu, između 1933. i 1936. godine, u kome su se dešavali politički lomovi i mobilizacija antifašističkih snaga,

01 Oto Bihalji-Merin, „Put kroz život”, *Treći program*, Radio Beograd, leto 1974, str. 283.

02 Lise Bihalji-Merin, Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Bio-bibliografija*, Nolit, Beograd, 1976.

Bihalji-Merin je sarađivao i družio se sa mnogobrojnim intelektualcima, umetnicima i političkim aktivistima koji su tamo živeli ili su se tu sklanjali od progona. U to vreme, u Parizu su se intenzivno okupljale leve političke snage (kao rezultat izrazito nasilnih fašističkih istupa poput onog 6. februara 1934), što je kulminiralo stvaranjem koalicije Narodni front (*Front populaire*) 1935. godine uoči izbora koji su održani 1936. godine i na kojima je Narodni front pobedio. Nova vlada je prvi put u okviru Ministarstva prosvete uvela i oblast kulture.⁰³ To je posledica pojavljivanja novog vokabulara u političkom i intelektualnom govoru tridesetih godina u Francuskoj, poput sintagmi „kulturni život”, „kulturene delatnosti”, „kulturna politika” i slično.⁰⁴

Bihalji-Merin je sasvim izvesno učestvovao u takvim debatama, čitao članke i posredno učestvovao u naporima nove političke koalicije. U pismu Žaka Omnesa koje se nalazi u njegovoj zaostavštini, on navodi kako ga njegovi saradnici iz Instituta za studije o fašizmu (INFA – Institut pour l'étude du fascisme), Kestler i Šperber opisuju kao „ranog zagovornika politika Narodnog fronta, koje će se materijalizovati tek krajem 1934”. To dokazuje Bihalji-Merinov intenzivni politički, ali i kulturni rad u Parizu na mestu direktora INFA, verovatno i promišljanje kulturne politike koja bi omogućila praktična rešenja za pravo mesto umetnosti i kulture u mehanizmima društvenog razvoja. Sam Institut je, pored objavljivanja knjiga, brošura i biltena, organizovao biblioteku, kao i jednu međunarodnu izložbu o fašizmu u Parizu početkom 1934. godine.

03 Ministar Žan Ze je za 44 meseca te vlade izvršio značajne reforme obrazovnog sistema, ali i nauke, uveo sport u škole, a u to vreme osnovani su Muzej narodne umetnosti i narodnih tradicija, Muzej moderne umetnosti, Unija narodnih lirskih pozorišta i Filmski festival u Kanu (koji je nastao 1938. godine kao reakcija na prekranje odluke žirija Venecijanskog festivala kako bi se Leni Rifenštal i Gofredu Alesandriniju dala glavna nagrada „Kup Musolini” za propagandističke filmove *Olimpija* i *Lučano Sera*, pilot).

04 U jednom levičarskom časopisu tih meseci na naslovnoj strani pojavio se naslov *Pour un ministère de la Culture* (Za ministarstvo kulture), izvor: Pascal Ory, *La belle illusion, Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire* (1935–1938), Paris: CNRS Editions 2016.

Nakon povratka u Jugoslaviju posle oslobođenja, njegovo iskustvo i ideje možemo prepoznati kroz nekoliko aspekata kulturne politike.

Najpre, ideje o socijalističkom društvu u kome je omogućeno slobodno stvaralaštvo, gde je svako potencijalni umetnik i gde je umetnost dostupna svim članovima društva ogledaju se u njegovom zalaganju za slobodno prostiranje i širenje umetničke prakse u svim njenim formama po svim linijama društva, vertikalno i horizontalno. „Kredo našeg razvoja i politika su socijalistička svest i sloboda stvaralaštva.”

Uprkos brojnim optužbama za dogmatizam, on se zalagao za otvaranje prostora za različite i nove umetničke prakse koje se odupiru dogmama. „... Neka se umetnost kreće u slobodi. To slobodno stvaranje je najvažnije. U svom razvoju izdvojiće se stvaralačko i lično od pomodnog i eklektičnog. Glavno je da je ona učmalost koja je još pre nekoliko godina plavila izložbe i dosađivala svojim površinskim i površnim radovima prevaziđena, da postoji izvestan grozničavi, nervozni fluid koji sada ispunjava stvaranje.”^{os}

Drugi aspekt odnosi se na temeljno pitanje oko toga ko ima pravo da proizvodi umetnost. Verujući da je naivna umetnost izraz autentičnog umetničkog potencijala čoveka, on se zalagao za afirmaciju i integrisanje naivne umetnosti i umetnosti anonimnih umetnika iz prošlosti (na primer, umetnika koji su stvarali stećke) u svet umetnosti u kome nema hijerarhije uspostavljene buržoaskim institucijama kulture (akademije, muzeji, kritika...). On ovako vidi ulogu umetnosti u društvu dok govori o naivnoj umetnosti: „Umetničko delo, kao potrebni svagdašnji rad, kao društveno noseća snaga, oblikovanje koje utiče na ljudski razvoj, postepeno počinje da gubi svoj elitistički karakter i obraća se sve širim slojevima naroda. Rascvat naivne umetnosti... svedoči o potrebi prevazilaženja međa između umetnosti i društva. Naiva je moguća u sferi razvoja industrijske civilizacije. Ona zato nije u suprotnosti sa modernom, jer

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^{os} Ljubiša Jocić, „Razgovor sa O. Bihalji Merinom. O novim pojavama u umetnosti kod nas”, *Umetnost i kritika*, broj 3, 1. januar 1954, Beograd

nastaje kao izraz raznih i poznih oblika – arhetipskog i naučnog, instinkta i tehnika.”^{o6}

Nadovezujući se na modernističko „otkriće” ne-evropskih umetničkih jezika i tradicija, Bihalji-Merin insistira na antievropocentričnom svetu umetnosti i na novoj evaluaciji globalnog sveta umetnosti u koji, na sofisticiran način, umeće kulturno nasleđe sa prostora Jugoslavije, a posebno takozvanu naivnu umetnost kao jedinstven umetnički izraz narodne kulture (kroz časopis *Jugoslavija*, izložbu srednjovekovne umetnosti Jugoslavije u Parizu, izložbe naivne umetnosti, knjige i tekstove na našim i stranim jezicima, pozivanje na konvencije UNESCO-a itd.).

Bihalji-Merin se na međunarodnoj kulturnoj i intelektualnoj sceni upravo istakao u afirmisanju naivne i umetnosti naroda sveta čiji su, uglavnom anonimni umetnici proizveli dela umetnosti i kulture bez kojih se ne može ni misliti istorija umetnosti, dela koja su svojim univerzalnim jezikom ugrađena i u temelje onoga što smatramo savremenom umetnošću. Tim stavovima i teorijskim razmatranjima njegov rad je utemeljio ono što bi se moglo nazvati i kulturnom politikom nesvrstanih, posebno u obraćanju evropskim kulturama i evropocentričnim politikama u okviru kojih je Bihalji-Merin delovao kroz izložbe koje je organizovao ili u čijem je koncipiranju učestvovao. Primer je izložba *Svetske kulture i moderna umetnost*, održana 1972. godine u Minhenu, za čiji je katalog napisao predgovor. To je bila prva velika izložba koja je o modernoj umetnosti progovorila iz drugačije perspektive: vizuelno je suprotstavila značajnije eksponate iz Afrike, Okeanije, pretkolumbovskog doba i Dalekog istoka sa velikim umetničkim delima Evrope, ukazujući na uticaj ovih umetnosti u razvoju savremene umetnosti.^{o7}

Ako je politika nesvrstavanja nužan i aktivan instrument antiimperialističke borbe, koji posebno nerazvijeni deo sveta oslobađa od

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^{o6} Rajko Đurić, „Estetika. 'Žrtva' kapitala”, Intervju sa Otom Bihalji-Merinom, časopis *NIN*, br. 1271, 18. 5. 1975. str. 26.

^{o7} Najčešće se kao rani primer razmatranja ovih odnosa u formi izložbe navodi izložba *Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* u MoMA u Njujorku 1984. godine, koju je koncipirao i realizovao Vilijam Rubin u saradnji sa Kirkom Varnedoeom.

diskriminacije, onda je duhovna nadgradnja te borbe revizija kulturno-estetskog hegemonizma zapadne kulture. Zemlje, zaostale i ekonomski eksploatisane, upravo su u polju umetnosti često imale jak uticaj na razvoj evropske umetnosti 19. i 20. stoleća.

Treći aspekt pripada kulturnoj diplomatiji koja je bila veoma važno polje jugoslovenske spoljne politike (kao, uostalom, i zapadnog sveta u vremenu Hladnog rata). Časopis *Jugoslavija* (izlazio između 1949. i 1959), čiji je glavni i odgovorni urednik bio, predstavljao je promišljeni i razrađeni kanal komunikacije prema svetu koji je, na izuzetno vešt način promovisao tu novu socijalističku jugoslovensku koncepciju kulture kao demokratske i sveprožimajuće aktivne društvene prakse (naivna umetnost, umetnost pobune iz NOB-a, umetnost neznanih srednjovekovnih umetnika, stećci, romanička, gotička i renesansna umetnost jadranskih gradova, ali i savremena umetnost). Svojim uredničkim intervencijama kroz tekstove i izbor ilustracija Bihalji-Merin je podvlačio internacionalizam i transkulturne veze (koncept pod uticajem Abija Varburga i Andrea Malroa) manifestovane kroz istorijske prakse jugoslovenskih kultura. On je to direktno povezivao sa temama društvenog preobražaja, samoupravljanja, industrijalizacije, novih obrazovnih politika, naučnih i tehnoloških dostignuća, urbanističkih i arhitektonskih podviga mlade države koja treba da pokaže da je njen blistavi uspeh u borbi protiv fašizma nastavio da se širi kroz izgradnju tog novog društva. Ta kulturna diplomatija imala je i ulogu najave međunarodne ofanzive Jugoslavije kroz Pokret nesvrstanih, što je Oto Bihalji-Merin vrlo svesno ugrađivao u svoj urednički koncept *Jugoslavije*: „Pojam savremene umetnosti pretpostavlja zajednički sistem odnosa među narodima.”

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Kroz refleksije o različitim umetničkim idejama, epohama, materijalnim ostacima kultura i njihovim međusobnim uticajima i prepletanjima, Bihalji-Merin je konzistentno, ali i diskretno gradio ideju kulturne politike jednog socijalističkog društva kakvo je bilo jugoslovensko. Ističući raznolikost kulturnog nasleđa na teritoriji Jugoslavije, raznolikost po vremenu nastanka kultura, idejnim, duhovnim i materijalnim okvirima dugog trajanja ovdašnjih kultura, on je na indirektan način doprinio stvaranju jedinstvene kulturne politike koja je bila zasnovana na

principima povezanosti i međusobnog dijaloga, jedinstva, jednakosti i idejama o zajedničkoj budućnosti različitih naroda koji su činili Jugoslaviju. Za njega je raznolikost umetničkih tradicija, kao i uticaja, bila samo dokaz kulturnih veza koje se očituju u formalnim ispoljavanjima duha anonimnih umetnika, izniklih među narodom, probijajući se do istorijskog trenutka u kome se prepoznaju kroz jedinstvo jugoslovenskog socijalističkog društvenog projekta i, još dalje, kroz internacionalu nesvrstanih zemalja i naroda i njihovih sasvim posebnih kultura. Jugoslovenska kultura za njega je bila slika sveta u jedinstvu, što je i osnovna ideja kulturne politike Ota Bihalji-Merina.

Nastojanja da definiše specifični umetnički i kulturni izraz novog društva, da afirmiše naivnu umetnost kroz dubinske analize i povezivanje sa savremenim umetničkim stvaralaštvom, pokazuju se u ovom istraživanju kao celoživotni napor jednog intelektualca: on sve svoje znanje, iskustvo i intelektualni kapital izražen u svom međunarodnom ugledu i delovanju, angažuje u polju kulturnih politika, na direktan i indirektan način, tako da se doprinese onom što se i danas, nakon nestanka Jugoslavije, naziva „jugoslovenskim kulturnim prostorom”. Svoja iskustva borbe protiv fašizma i intelektualnog angažmana u različitim bitkama te borbe (časopisi u Berlinu, Institut za proučavanje fašizma u Parizu, Španski građanski rat, borba protiv diktature u Jugoslaviji, umetnost nastala u logorima, za šta je i o čemu je neumorno pisao) on ugrađuje u ideje o kulturnoj politici socijalističke zemlje koja treba da bude vidljiva u svetu i gde je uloga progresivnog, međunarodno umreženog, a nezavisnog mislioca od ogromnog značaja.

Koliko je dubinski i pažljivo pratio globalne tokove umetnosti pokazuju fokusirani zapisi o novim pojavama u umetnosti i kulturi i njihova pažljiva analiza iz pozicije leve teorijske misli: on prepoznaje nadiranje koncepata kulturnih industrija, umetničkog tržišta, preovladavanje tržišnih nad umetničkim kriterijumima, rast „potrošačke privrede”, pojavu novih medija (TV, video, film, kibernetička umetnost...) i njihov uticaj na promenjenu društvenu ulogu umetnosti i kulture. Markiranje nadolazećih trendova merkantilizacije kulture pratilo je Bihalji-Merinovo jasno pozicioniranje protiv takve manipulacije stvaralaštvom i sistemom koji bi trebalo da podrži delotvornost umetnosti i kulture u društvu.

Njegovi neprekinuti angažmani u izdavaštvu (izdavačka kuća Nolit, brojni časopisi koje je pokretao ili uređivao u Beogradu, Berlinu, Parizu), vizuelnim umetnostima i izložbenoj delatnosti, publicistici dokazi su da su „umetnost i politika dva toka koja prate moj životni put” i koja su vodila ka stvaranju diskursa o „umetnosti kao dinamičkom životnom postupku”: to je za njega bio osnov javnih kulturnih politika socijalističkog i multikulturalnog društva kakvo je bilo jugoslovensko, ali koje je zagovarao diskretno, više kao intelektualac nego kao politički akter. Umetnost je neizostavni deo društvenog života i u njoj se nalaze ključevi za mnoge društvene sukobe.

Šta je danas uloga umetnosti i kulture i kulturnih stvaralaca i intelektualaca u društvenoj izgradnji i razgradnji? Kulturna politika definiše tu ulogu: „Može li se ovaj, u svojim temeljima uzdrmani, u svojim horizontima beskrajno prošireni svet naših dana savladati sredstvima umetnosti?”^{o8} Ideje Ota Bihalji-Merina o kulturi i umetnosti kao nužnom faktoru društvenog preobražaja bile su neraskidivo povezane sa njegovom verom u mogućnost boljeg sveta. Nada je bila vodilja, kao što je i sada. Ali, današnje iščitavanje svih ovih promišljanja i pitanja, sve-dočanstava o radu u kulturi koja je tako široko, sveobuhvatno i suštinski sagledavana i ispitivana, treba da postavi ponovo pitanja o marginalizovanoj poziciji kulture. Šta nam je činiti? ●



o8 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Jedinstvo sveta u viziji umetnosti*, Nolit, Beograd, 1974, str. 133.









Revolucionarna
umetnost je sinteza
svesti i estetike.

Revolutionary art
is a synthesis
of consciousness
and aesthetics.



Oto Bihalji-Merin – (re)vision of reality

Ivana Bašičević Antić, PhD

*For that lost human personality, one must search in a new way,
and in that search, art has its indispensable place.*

— Oto Bihalji-Merin

How to present the work and personality of Oto Bihalji-Merin to the audience in the twenty-first century is a question I have been facing since my first visit to his legacy in the summer of 2021. The volume and content of the archival material and the library imposed the necessity to embark on the venture, although being aware that we will probably have much clearer, more complete and scientifically grounded views, probably only after studying not only the archives in Oto's legacy, but also the available documents in other archives around the world.

At a time when we are faced with a series of emerging crisis situations in the world, from the catastrophic consequences of man's destruction of the environment to new wars and increased social divisions, it seems that there cannot be a more important task of art than to point out these processes and reflect on their consequences, as well as possible better directions for a society. This is precisely the line of thought of Oto Bihalji-Merin, writer, critic, artist, art theorist, publicist and active participant of his time.

We divided the complex job of sketching and presenting to the audience the facts of Oto's life and professional activities into two entities. Within the first one at the Gallery-legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub

Čolaković (MoCA Belgrade) is the exhibition of documents from archives, correspondence, texts, photographs and books—the materials through which the audience can gain an image of the profile of this prominent intellectual. The conversations we had with the figures from the scene, Oto's friends or associates and acquaintances, his daughter Mirjana were recorded during the preparations for the exhibition, as a contribution to the proper interpretation of his personality and work. Mapping the publishers who printed his texts and books is a visualization of the fact that he was the only author whose works were published in Western Europe and America to that extent, which is important information when defining the significance of his work for our region. The contacts that Oto made, among which we think of Malraux, Kandinsky, Picasso, Sartre, Mann, Brecht, Hemingway among many others, left a written trace in correspondence, a selection of which will also be presented to the public. The second part of the exhibition, planned for the spring of 2025, has a completely different outline. To show the audience the art that he believed to be relevant was our primary goal, whose realization is directly conditioned by financial possibilities, because many of those authors meanwhile acquired the highest values on the twentieth century world scene, thereby making their works of art often almost impossible to acquire. At the same time, I believe this is an idea that should not be abandoned, and that it is really necessary to organize an exhibition that would visually connect the phenomena that comprise Oto's notion of the breakthrough of modern thought. The tendency to observe modern and contemporary art as a world phenomenon, in whose creation the elements of non-European cultures also participated, was present in his mind very early. At the meetings of the World Exhibition Committee in Brussels in 1958, Oto actively tried to implement this idea into reality, which indicates his willingness to take an active role in putting his vision in effect, despite the fact that he came to that meeting as a representative of a small country such as Yugoslavia. On the other hand, based on his participation in the jury, the art of Yugoslavia was included in that world exhibition. It is interesting to note that professional texts and publications in our country regularly stated the fact that it was Oto's own decision to select the naïve painter Ivan Generalić among the artists who would represent us in Brussels, which was surprising for his local colleagues. However, when the composition of that exhibition is considered, it can be realized that Oto followed the official definition of the structure of contemporary art at that moment,

where naïve art stood as one of the movements (alongside Expressionism, Futurism, Surrealism, Cubism, etc.). The notion of 'revision of art' was crucial to Oto's theory and implemented a multitude of different concepts from primitive or archaic cultures to artists of cybernetic and naïve art. I intentionally connect these last two concepts, as Oto did when he said that he had published two books in the span of just a few days: *The End of Art in the Age of Science* and *The Masters of Naïve Art*. This was possible because he saw them as fields dealing with the borderlands of artistic creation: the first, by the transhuman and conscious progress of art towards the fields of science and technology, and the second, by aspects of expression of the subconscious in our time, which developed in parallel with the consciousness of the same time.

Under the pressure of a strong inner need to leave a mark and actively participate in the contemporary moment, Oto constantly opted for politics and art. So that in certain periods he primarily created and wrote, while in others he actively participated in social and political events. Although seemingly separate, these two types of engagement were actually closely related and enabled each other. When he went to Spain to join the conflict in the Spanish Civil War, Oto clearly gave in to the pressure of the idea that one could not sit and write, but had to actively contribute to the victory of the idea in which he believed. But going to Spain over time became an inspiration for his view of art, inspiration for the book *Spain between Death and Birth*,⁰¹ as well as an opportunity to meet and build a close comradeship relationship with later important and prominent individuals such as Malraux, Vivancos. Finally, that experience had significant effect on the nature of the relationship with Picasso. The treachery of the left, which was already shown during the war in Spain, did not affect Oto in a way that would lead to a radical abandonment of the very idea of socialism.

Going to Berlin in 1924 and stay in that city, which he described as an almost ideal place to live in the early twenties of the twentieth century, was a turning point. German became his mother tongue, the language in which he wrote and in which he became proficient, prompting

01 Published first in German: Peter Merin, *Spanien zwischen Tod und Geburt*, Jean Christophe Verlag, Zürich, 1937. In Serbo-Croatian language published as: Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Španija između smrti i rađanja*, Prosveta, Belgrade, 1946.

Thomas Mann to define him as an excellent stylist of the German language.⁰² Berlin became a place of transformation from a struggle for ideals (Oto wrote and edited the left-wing magazine *Linkskurve*) to a fight for life, since with the arrival of Nazism, a period of constant unrest, life between addresses and finally life in a concentration camp began, which would change only after arriving in Belgrade, i.e. at the end of the Second World War. Asked before his death, at the moment when he looked back on what he had survived, whether he regretted it and felt betrayed in the sense of deliberate disloyalty of the very ideology and idea of the left, Oto replied that he would do it all over again. In spite of the mentioned temptations, he considered his life to be a *blissful life in hell*, which was also the title of the autobiography he was preparing.

Ilija, Dimitrije and Vojin Bašičević were in decades-long contact with Oto. I grew up with interesting stories related to meetings with Oto, either in Belgrade at 3 Nemanjina St., or in Šid, at Ilija's house. The emotional text of Ilija Bosilj's defence was published by Oto in 1971 at the final stage of the famous *Bosilj Affair*. The correspondence that speaks about the cooperation between Dimitrije Mića Bašičević (Mangelos) and Oto, bears witness to a common belief in what others rejected, underestimated and fundamentally did not understand, and Mića and Oto defended by their professional work, and obviously from today's perspective we can say—managed to defend as highly valuable phenomena in contemporary art. This refers to naïve art, but also to new media, photography, the combination of science and art. Mića presented the genesis of his first anti-art work in the form of a globe precisely in a letter addressed to Oto. Oto wrote about Ilija Bosilj; he also visited him personally, which gave this artist a significant boost. Oto's book about Ilija, which Oto prepared in the last decade of his life, remained unpublished. Death interrupted many works that had been started.

Observing the relationship between Oto and Lisa, who were more than spouses only, but actually true partners in life and work, the observer cannot resist the impression that there were two and not one prominent individual. During the preparation of this exhibition, Lisa became the

02 Information from the text of A. Ivanji: "Lepi život u paklu", published on 8 January 2004, *Vreme* magazine <https://vreme.com/kultura/lepi-zivot-u-paklu/>

subject of special professional attention, and the analysis of her works, those she signed with her name and those she signed adding her own to Oto's name, also became the subject of the exhibition *Oto Bihalji-Merin: I had to be present*. Liza was equally present in the creation of all those texts by Oto that did not bear her physical signature, but her contribution was woven into the daily work on their preparation. It could be said that their relationship largely allowed that life in hell to be defined as beautiful, because it was easier to survive as a couple. But also, this partnership work was certainly a prerequisite for Oto's success in creating such a body of texts, and exerting influence on the intellectual scene of the environments in which he worked.

Quite unexpectedly, as a member of the next generation in the Bašičević family, I found myself in the situation of starting the construction of Oto's legacy and profiling its future. In this task, I was initially guided by respect for the relationship that the family had with Oto, but over time it was also professional responsibility for Oto's importance for the environment in which he lived from the end of World War II until his death. A systematic inventory of documentary and archival material started, the library was inventoried. According to the wishes of Oto's daughter Mirjana Bihalji-Schönberner, the space where Oto lived was reconstructed and turned into a legacy that preserved his work space, while at the same time, an exhibition space was built with the permanent display of Oto's collection of works of art. We have introduced the institution of occasional exhibitions, which aim to, following the thought and values he defended in art, make the space active and thus inscribe it on the cultural map of Belgrade and beyond. With the professional processing of archival material, the legacy will finally be able to start its activity as a research centre, given that the documents in Oto's archive bear witness not only to his life and work, but to the entire era. We translated the text about Goya that Oto published in three volumes, first in German and then in English. Although it was on the list of required literature at the University in Barcelona, it was never published in our country. I hope we will realize that too.

In order to achieve the most comprehensive analysis of the activities of Oto Bihalji-Merin, we invited a group of theorists and art historians who, in their professional work so far have proved to be excellent experts in the field of the inter-war and post-war art scene, the problems

of the relationship between the left-wing and art, i.e. culture in general, and based on their analyses on the research of materials in the Salon OBM are ready to offer completely new, but scientifically grounded data and views on the problem of understanding both Oto's actions, and the context in which they took place. The problem that made it impossible for contemporaries to take an impartial attitude towards Oto was his view on ideology, the view on interpretations of the combination of ideology and art, and especially referring to his intense critical support for social realism in post-war Yugoslav art at the time. Abandoning that course was the step strongly resented by the professional environment in Belgrade as well. Until the *Profile of a Critic* exhibition at the MoCAB Salon in Belgrade in 1976, his work was almost unknown to this milieu, so today it seems possible that the community was actually taking an attitude without having information on a significant segment of his work.

Finally, the curators of the exhibition, Senka Latinović and Miroslav Karić, combined knowledge and previous experiences with the enormous respect they gained for Oto while working on this project. The result of that joint work is not only the exhibition before us, but also the building of the relationship of the new generation of curators and artists towards the work of Oto Bihalji-Merin. ●

A view of the exhibition through an airplane window

Miroslav Karić • Senka Latinović

*I sometimes perceive the world as if I were flying the satellite;
then the forms are contracted, small troubles are invisible,
I recognize big social movements and the daring adventure of art.*
— Oto Bihalji-Merin

This year marks one hundred and twenty years since the birth of Oto Bihalji-Merin. On that occasion, the idea of organizing the exhibition *Oto Bihalji-Merin: I Had to Be Present* was born, with the aim to further research and become aware again of the character and work of this, nowadays unfairly forgotten Yugoslav intellectual.

Intellectual is perhaps the word that will most easily cover all Bihalji-Merin's roles and engagements, but if we try to analyze it, we will discover numerous occupations, interests and activities hidden behind: house-painter and decorator, artist, aviator, lecturer, writer, journalist, war reporter, editor and publisher, active member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Germany, art critic, art theorist, writer on art, art director, founder and member of the organizing boards of numerous institutions, member of the jury at many prestigious national and international events—Oto Bihalji-Merin was all of this. After a strictly descriptive enumeration of roles and occupations, it becomes clearer that the general word—*intellectual*—is too limited and imprecise to describe this excellent erudite, tireless traveller and researcher through time, space, societies and cultures.

The exhibition was realized in the partnership between the Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art⁰¹ and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, considering Bihalji-Merin's prominent role in the promotion of domestic and foreign modern and naïve art, new artistic phenomena, as well as multi-faceted cooperation with these institutions.

The jubilee further accelerated the work dynamics, and set a clear task and goal before us—to acquaint the experts and the general public with the well-known and lesser-known aspects of Oto Bihalji-Merin's personality, life and artistic philosophy.

As a reminder, two exhibitions focusing on the life and work of Bihalji-Merin have been organized in Belgrade to date. The exhibition entitled *Profile of a Critic* was held at the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1976, curated by Irina Subotić, PhD, while the exhibition *Oto Bihalji-Merin and the Builders of Modern Thought* was organized in the House of Legates in 2018, according to the concept of art historian Nina Krstić.

Despite the fact that these two exhibitions provided the audience with the opportunity to gain insights into the extremely rich life and professional biography of Bihalji-Merin, we believe that there is still room that opens the possibility for further studies and contributions to the topic. The initial starting point for our research was the personal archive of Oto and Liza Bihalji-Merin, which encompasses almost the entire twentieth century and which, due to its volume and variety of material, has not been possible to view in its entirety until now. During the research process, we were faced with mainly unsorted, heterogeneous and fragmentary materials, which in the current inventory and processing of the legacy comprises more than 3000 books, over 3600 units

01 The Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art acquired jurisdiction over the legacy of Oto Bihalji-Merin in 2013, after the daughter of Oto and Lisa Bihalji-Merin, Mirjana Bihalji-Schönberner, bequeathed it to the Museum. According to her wish, the bequest is called Salon Oto Bihalji-Merin and part of the space has been adapted for exhibition activities, so the Museum has finally been fully opened to the public since October 2023 and the process of researching the archives, library and collection of works of art has begun.

of correspondence and over 1600 documents of various types. A significant part of the archival material consists of texts written in foreign languages, primarily German, as well as in French, English and Spanish, therefore the handwritten correspondence particularly represented an additional challenge during research and interpretation. In the light of these facts, delving deeply into the network of acquaintances, crucial historical events, other people's intimacy, was at the same time very exciting, inspiring, but also a delicate and demanding venture.

This is where our sense of great responsibility comes from—how to present such a long and contended life concisely, informatively and meaningfully, in the form of an exhibition?

The exhibition is structured into two chapters: first, at the Gallery-Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković, where the results of research conducted on the archive will be presented, and then, in the spring of next year, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, where artworks will be displayed, and the artistic phenomena that were the focus of Bihalji-Merin's interest will be analyzed through a thematic and problem-oriented approach.

I Had to Be Present is a phrase that we encountered in Bihalji-Merin's memoirs, by which he primarily wanted to explain the essence of his view of the world and emphasize the need to take the initiative and actively participate in the social events that he witnessed during the turbulent decades of the twentieth century. In a similar way, Professor Jerko Denegri uses the term *active presence* to describe the life credo and the multifaceted personality of Bihalji-Merin, his tempestuous existence, and his continuous presence in events and direct meetings with many big names from the world of politics, culture and art of his time.

Understanding that archive research is a multi-year process, at the current exhibition we have spotlighted the most significant stations on Oto Bihalji-Merin's life path, following both the chronological course of events and Bihalji's specific non-linear movements in the relationship between art, politics and society. We strived to approach the conceptualization of the exhibition the same way he approached art: comprehensively, from the perspective of an aviator, with a sufficiently broad view

to encompass the context of the time in which the art he wrote about was created, while also observing it through the socio-political circumstances of the era in which he lived and worked.

Through several segments, the exhibition *Oto Bihalji-Merin: I Had to Be Present* conceptually develops around Bihalji-Merin's numerous engagements in the field of art, culture and political activity. The exhibition begins with a minimal curatorial interpretation. Using video and audio archives, we emphasized first person narration and created a kind of exhibition within the exhibition. In this way, visitors get an immediate and summarizing insight into the life journey of Oto Bihalji-Merin. The first level of the exhibition space maps key cities—stations, where he lived and worked as a journalist, writer, editor of left-wing magazines, war correspondent, where he created a network of contacts and formed most of his lifelong attitudes and interests. The numerous pseudonyms and initials he used in this period bear witness to the dangers he exposed himself to, for the sake of the idea of a better society and world, which he unwaveringly adhered to for the rest of his life. Some of them are: O. Biha, Peter Merin, Pierre Merin, Peter Berger, Peter Thoene, Peter Waldschmidt, O.B., B., ü, bt, P.M., mer., tho, Thoene, th.

The core of the special thematic segment is Bihalji-Merin's relationship with his lifelong companion Liza, an irreplaceable associate in nearly all of his decades-long research and publishing endeavours. The journey from Zemun, through Berlin, Paris, Zurich, to Moscow and Madrid, the cities that marked his youth, ends with the war years and Bihalji-Merin's days as a prisoner in the German camps, from which he returned to Belgrade in 1945.

The second floor of the Gallery-Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković includes the period after the Second World War, when Bihalji-Merin realized himself primarily as a writer on art, an art critic, theoretician, curator and promoter, an independent cultural diplomat of Yugoslavia. Voluminous correspondence, books, texts, interviews, television shows illustrate the intensity of his thoughts on numerous phenomena that occupied him: naïve art, non-European civilizations, the connection between art and science and the direction of future progress of art. Although the primary focus was on the archival heritage in the Salon Oto Bihalji-Merin, we also explored a large number of external archives,

libraries, institutes, as well as valuable personal contacts. The accompanying QR codes were used to overcome the language barrier of translation and provide additional information to visitors who want to learn more.

In addition to the curatorial team, a research and organizational team was established for this occasion, to significantly contribute with their knowledge and experience to the professional and educational character of the exhibition. The texts for the catalogue were written by the director of the Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art. Ivana Bašičević Antić, PhD, art historians and researchers Vida Knežević, PhD, Jelena Vesić PhD and Marijana Cvetković MA, as well as art historian Branislav Dimitrijević, PhD, whose text will be featured in the catalogue of the second exhibition. The design of the installation was conceived by the design-architecture team consisting of Milena Kordić, PhD, and Andrej Dolinka. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our associates Nikolija Nikolić and Danica Đorđević Janković, who assisted us daily in researching and processing of archival materials, thus jointly navigating through the multitude of data, names and years we had to connect, reconstruct and understand. We also owe tremendous gratitude to our colleague Senka Ristivojević for her research and writing of the didactics about the exhibition *Profile of a Critic* and to dramaturge Olga Dimitrijević, who adapted Bihalji's play *The Foundry* for a radio performance.

During the research process, we were searching for collocutors who would share with us their memories of Oto Bihalji-Merin. We also produced a documentary that will have its premiere next year in the second phase of the exhibition, while at the current exhibition we are presenting the selected fragments only. On this occasion, we would like to thank Mirjana Schönberner, Bora Ćosić, Jerko Denegri, Biljana Tomić, Andrej Ivanji, Marko Pogačnik, Goran Đorđević, Dragica Vukadinović, Predrag Finci and Branislava Žarković Finci, for their trust and inspirational conversations, without which this exhibition would not be complete. Filmmaker and editor Vladan Obradović and sound engineer Nikola Mladenović helped us immensely in this venture. The segment about the life of the Bihalji-Merin family in Paris was enriched with visual interpretations specifically created for this occasion by researchers and artists Sezgin Bojnik and Darinka Pop-Mitić.

One of the goals of this exhibition is to introduce the audience to the recently adapted and reopened to the public Salon Oto Bihalji-Merin, located at Nemanjina 3 in Belgrade, a place of gathering and research, open to all interested visitors. In this sense, the exhibition can be considered a kind of guide through the materials housed there.

We see the exhibition *Oto Bihalji-Merin: I Had to Be Present* as the beginning, an introduction, and we hope that it will be a stimulus for further discoveries and contextualization of Bihalji-Merin's complex personality in many aspects, the multifaceted positions and roles he played in pre-war and post-war historical events, sociopolitical, cultural and artistic events, both locally and internationally. His unique theoretical and literary work and approach, which often exceeded academic frameworks and canons, repeatedly brought atypical and refreshing transdisciplinary insights and poetic statements about phenomena, practices, tendencies in fine and visual arts.

The research of the archive continuously inspired us to think about today's moment. In the time of divisions, nationalisms, dictates of financial and material values, wars and ecological cataclysm, it is important to remember that Bihalji-Merin was one of the first art historians who spoke about the need to overcome the Eurocentric, Western worldview. Without prejudice, he connected epochs, artists and artworks through space and time to a unique and indivisible whole, simultaneously reflecting on the current moment, but also the future of human civilization and the planet we live on. Often indicating the inseparability of ethical and aesthetic value categories, he demonstrated by his example and personal integrity that it is a duty of each of us in given circumstances, no matter how hard they may be, to leave the world better place for generations to come. ●

In order to change the world, it needs to exist first.

— Oto Bihalji-Merin

There is no heaven, but a better world is possible⁰¹

Interwar stations of the life and work of Oto Bihalji-Merin

Vida Knežević, PhD

*For me, Marx and Einstein, Lenin and Picasso live equally
in the home of the Revolution.*⁰²

When in 1988 the German journalist, critic and writer, Fritz J. Radac, tendentiously wanted to know what it was like to be a communist for whole life, while communism proved “to put it mildly, as a delusion, and even more as horror, violence and rape”, and to declare about the “futility of political activity”, Oto Bihalji-Merin answered briefly: “I became a socialist, not through books, but in meeting real life; the books helped.”⁰³



- 01** The title of the last chapter of an unfinished autobiography which Oto Bihalji-Merin was writing near the end of his life.
- 02** Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Put kroz život”, *Third program*, Radio Belgrade, summer 1974, p. 332.
- 03** See: Fritz J. Radac, “Srećan život u paklu”, Interview with Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Politika*, 18–21 June 1988 (Column: “From other papers: Die Zeit”).

In order to understand many of Bihalji-Merin's views on the overlapping of the artistic and the political, which in his life and work showed a permanent continuity, it is necessary to understand the history of the labour and communist movements of the twentieth century, especially the Yugoslav, German and Soviet, the history of the anti-fascist struggle, and get acquainted with numerous international discussions about the direction of Marxist theory of art, in which Oto himself had an important role and place. The interwar period was especially significant in terms of turbulent socio-political events, which often interrupted Bihalji-Merin's life as well. However, it is also important to emphasize that many artistic and cultural-political ideas that Bihalji-Merin developed after the war, beginning with the idea of a unique Yugoslav cultural space, criticism of the Eurocentric view of the world of art, the development of naïve art, the art related to the history of anti-colonial struggle and the art of "small peoples" on the periphery of Europe and the Global South, all had seeds sown or already deeply elaborated precisely during the interwar period.

Oto Bihalji-Merin was an immediate participant in European debates about the status and function of proletarian-revolutionary literature and art; together with his brother Pavle Bihali he was one of the founders and editors of the Yugoslav magazine *Nova literatura* (The New Literature) and later of the publishing house Nolit; he was a lecturer at the Workers' University in Berlin, as well as one of the speakers at the Congress of World Revolutionary Writers in Kharkiv in 1930; he watched with his own eyes the Nazi burning of books in front of the Humboldt University in Berlin, in exile in Paris he was the founder of the Institute for the Study of Fascism; he was a reporter from the Spanish Civil war, and the initiator of the counter-exhibition *Degenerate Art* in London; all these activities in the interwar period, as well as their continuity with the post-war period, require a re-examination in order to illuminate the enormous importance and contribution that Bihalji-Merin had not only for Yugoslav, but also European and world art and culture.

Oto Bihalji-Merin as a proletarian cosmopolitan^{o4}

Even in Bihalji's own reflections on his "blissful life in hell,"^{o5} the strong connection between art and politics was often emphasized. When in his late years he wrote: "The magnetic pole of my thoughts was not the question where art is going, but where society is moving," he thereby sublimated his own understanding of the role of art in social relations. "I wanted to participate as effectively as possible in the movements of the nameless, who have become a decisive formation in the fight against authorities, richness and force. I was preoccupied with the problem of the relationship between the Self and the mass, between individuality and the collective. Does the intellectual, if he advocates for a programme of great social progress in the struggle of the proletariat have to transform his I into We? Where do I myself belong?"^{o6}

The question about the place of intellectuals in political struggles, and their positioning vis-à-vis the proletariat and the way of their organization is the same one that was posed by Walter Benjamin in his text "The Author as Producer", written in exile in Paris, where their lives became intertwined in 1934. Before the onslaught of fascism and Hitler's coming to power in 1933, both of them, like many other left-wing and communist-oriented artists, intellectuals, members of the Communist Party of Germany and the German labour movement, gathered in Paris, which, after Berlin, became the new centre of the Western European struggle against fascism. Oto Bihalji-Merin as one of the founders and organizers of the work of the Institute for the Study of Fascism—the "most

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^{o4} I take this phrase from the historian Stefan Gužvica, who used this expression to describe another Yugoslav labour intellectual, Bogomir Herman, a close associate of Nolit during the 1930s. See the interview with Stefan Gužvica: Vida Knežević, "Radnički pokret kao put ka emancipaciji: Quo vadimus, Herman?", <https://www.masina.rs/radnicki-pokret-kao-put-ka-emancipaciji-quo-vadimus-herman/>. Accessed on 4 October 2024.

^{o5} *Ein glückliches Leben in der Hölle* was the preliminary title of the unfinished autobiography that Oto Bihalji-Merin began writing near the end of his life.

^{o6} Oto Bihalji-Merin, "Put kroz život", quoted work, p. 290.

famous and symbolic” anti-fascist initiative in France before the Second World War⁰⁷ — and Benjamin, as one of the lecturers at the Institute.

Marcel Prenant, Paul Langevin, André Malraux, Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet, Ilya Ehrenburg, Alfred Döblin, Bertolt Brecht, Manès Sperber, Arthur Koestler, Johannes R. Becher, Anna Seghers and Egon Erwin Kisch, to name but a few of the European left-wing intellectuals whom he met and worked with in that short exile in Paris, at one of many “stations” during his turbulent and rich life.⁰⁸

The discussions conducted a few years earlier in Berlin — between 1928 and 1932 — continued in Paris as well, now in the changed context of the defeat of the German left wing, disappointment and feeling of weakness, but at the same time the change in Comintern strategy towards the policy of the National Front,⁰⁹ due to the accelerated strengthening of fascism. However, Bihalji-Merin was associated with the labour and communist movement from his early age. In 1924, he went to Berlin at the age of twenty as a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, with already certain knowledge of the party’s illegal work, bearing in mind that the CPY was already banned in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) in 1920, after its huge success at the first parliamentary elections after the First World War.

⁰⁷ Quoted according to: Maria Gough, “Paris, Capital of the Soviet Avant-Garde”, *October*, Vol. 101 (Summer, 2002), pp. 53–83.

⁰⁸ In his autobiographical notes, decades later, he personally described this period: “The word Institute seems a little excessive to me today, when I remember the simple, almost empty rooms, the modest library and the circle of collaborators of the newsletter, who tried to analyze and uncover the tendencies and nuances of racist and authoritarian teachings. In the Institute’s small kitchen, we prepared cheap, improvised meals. It was the only salary we could offer to the associates, and often their only meal that day. It took energy and moral strength to maintain such an undertaking without material help from the outside, to overcome the depressed mood of the people, uprooted, and to continue the ideological struggle as we knew before.” Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Put kroz život”, quoted work.

⁰⁹ See: Helga Gallas, *Marksistička teorija književnosti*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1977.

Belgrade–Berlin–Belgrade

*For many painters these days, the brush in their hand has died.*¹⁰

Despite his long stay in Berlin, and then in other European cities, he was in permanent contact with Yugoslav communists, writers, artists and journalists. The difficult years of the Sixth-January Dictatorship, besides the dissolution of the Assembly, the banning of political parties and trade unions, also meant the introduction of censorship, banning of political gatherings, and especially the implementation of brutal reprisals against members of the communist movement and its supporters, which resulted in many-year-long imprisonment of numerous Nolit's associates, their severe beatings and torture in political prisons for communists.¹¹ Bihalji-Merin, who was forced to leave Yugoslavia¹² under the pressure of painful events and involvement in the “Keršovani case”, organized an exhibition related to those events entitled *Bloody Dictatorship in Yugoslavia* with the help of the Yugoslav and German Red Aid, at Herwarth Walden's Berlin gallery Der Sturm, at the end of 1929. He published a brochure with documentation about the “regime of white terror”¹³ as a shocking document about violence and dictatorship in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. “On the walls, where a few years ago I saw the

10 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1955, p. 23.

11 Mass arrests of communists began already in January 1929. According to the data of the Red Aid of Yugoslavia, from January 1929 to September 1932, 82 trials against communists were held before the Court for the Protection of the State. On 18 September 1930, a group of 14 communists, including Otokar Keršovani and Edvard Kardelj, was sentenced to a total of 54 years in prison. See: Group of authors, *Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije*, Institute for the Study of the Labour Movement, Belgrade, 1963, pp. 169–170.

12 In connection with the “Keršovani case”, Pavle Bihali was also arrested and was severely tortured and abused in Glavnjača. Oto Bihalji-Merin testified that his brother Pavle was arrested again in 1931, but with the intervention of a lawyer and a democratic judge, he was released from prison. See: Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalića”, in: Group of authors, *Izdavač Pavle Bihali*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1978, p. 57.

13 Group of authors, “Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije”, quoted work, p. 171.

works of Paul Klee, Marc Chagall and Kandinsky, I now arranged optical experiences about a tragic policy of force and attempts of revolutionary opposition.”¹⁴

In Berlin, the discussion about the function of proletarian-revolutionary art with the most important Marxist art theorists at the time was at the epicentre, to whom Bihalji-Merin himself contributed in many ways; he became a member of the Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Authors of Germany, an organ of the Communist Party of Germany, and soon one of the editors of the magazine of that important literary organization — *Die Linkskurve* (The Left Turn), side by side with Johannes R. Becher, György Lukács, Ludwig Renn, Anna Seghers, Willi Bredel, Theodor Balk, Karl August Wittfogel and others. As a twenty-five-year-old, under the pseudonym Otto Biha, Bihalji-Merin managed the editorial office of the magazine from the second issue, while simultaneously working as a proofreader at the publishing house Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag, a leading literary critic at the magazine *Die Rote Fahne*, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Illustrierte Welt* (Illustrated World), later replaced by the “camouflaged” magazine *Kultur und Kunst*.

In the book *Marxist Theory of Literature*, Helga Gallas emphasizes that the foundation of the Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Authors “really became an event in the history of the labour movement”.¹⁵ Its key function was in an attempt to oppose Marxist to the ruling theory of literature: “There, the Association encouraged a discussion that greatly exceeded the sphere of the Association and the journal *Die Linkskurve*.”¹⁶ The confrontation between two theories of literature (indirectly of visual art), both considered Marxist, were summed up in the positions of Lukács, on the one hand, and Brecht, on the other. With polemic about the notions of tendency, and party affiliation versus “pure art”, about the social and historical tasks of proletarian and revolutionary art, and the goals of “combat” literature (and art in general), the young Bihalji-Merin shaped his artistic and political views of the Marxist-Leninist type,

14 Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Put kroz život”, quoted work, p. 292.

15 Helga Gallas, *Marksistička teorija književnosti*, quoted work, p. 11.

16 *Ibid*, pp. 11–12.

basically pluralistic, moving in a broad direction, from the experimental and avant-garde artistic practices of the time to Lukács' concept of "critical realism".

It was in that magazine that Bihalji-Merin bravely and boldly defended Brecht's "epic theatre" when it was not desirable.¹⁷ "We did not need directives," he recalled. We considered it necessary, a moral duty to change this world. I say 'we', because there were a lot of us. Even then I liked Brecht and Proust. And I did not believe that proletarian-revolutionary literature would survive. I considered the authors of the Association to be a formation in the political struggle, and that is what they were. Many of them fought illegally and fell in that fight later."¹⁸

The echoes of these debates and discussions about the place and role of art in the revolutionary struggle also reached the Yugoslav communists, and were specifically reflected through Yugoslav "conflict on the literary left" which, like in all other contexts, always had a political background.¹⁹ Despite the fact that in later historiography, especially post-war, Bihalji-Merin was dominantly considered to support the Kharkiv group in that "conflict", especially in the interwar period and in the first years after the war (until the split with Stalin in 1948); new research shows that the situation was not dichotomous from the beginning, and that it is necessary to approach each of his life "stations" contextually. The transnational connection and intertwining of avant-garde artistic practices were also shown in the cooperation of the Bihali brothers with the Surrealist and Zenitist movements in Yugoslavia, about which Bihalji-Merin wrote in his reviews of the years of preparation of *New Literature*: "Pavle and I came up with a perhaps utopian idea of a possible synthesis of Dada,

17 Fritz J. Radac, "Srećan život u paklu", Interview with Oto Bihalji-Merin, quoted work.

18 *Ibid.*

19 See more detailed in: Vida Knežević, *Ne čekajući inspiraciju: Jugoslovenska umetnost između dva svetska rata i revolucionarni društveni pokret*, Udruženje likovnih umetnika Srbije (ULUS) and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe, Beograd, 2023.

Surrealism and Zenitism with the revolutionary labour movement and its understanding of art”.²⁰

Already in Swiss exile, after the “Berlin” and “Paris” stations, Bihalji-Merin would once again make a strong contribution to German art, this time visual. The book *Modern German Art*, was published by Penguin in London in 1938 for the exhibition entitled *20th Century German Art*, which he prepared in the same year at the New Burlington Gallery in London in response to the Nazi exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art), organized in Munich in 1937, with over six hundred works of German modern and avant-garde art. Part of the stolen and confiscated artworks, which the Nazis considered “perverted” and “Bolshevik”, was sold and destroyed as such, while the artists themselves were persecuted, imprisoned, sent to concentration camps. Bihalji-Merin, as one of the committee members and the author of this study, for which Herbert Read wrote the foreword, was one of the most responsible for the organization of this important counter-exhibition. “For some, those who saw the danger posed by fascism, everything German was simply hated,” he brought us closer to the atmosphere of those years, “and for the other circle that was ready for class differentiation, for the political left, the defence of ‘modern’ was by itself questionable.”²¹ When he wrote in the introductory part: “However, today’s professors at art academies are in no way more famous than the nameless creators of Cretan vases, Etruscan sarcophagi, Macedonian or Serbian frescoes”,²² if we did not know, we could think that the sentence was taken from one of his numerous post-war texts, especially those written in the 1950s, in which Bihalji-Merin defined the authenticity of Yugoslav art in the world framework of views on (history of) art/s.

20 Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalija”, quoted work, p. 39.

21 See: Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Predgovor jugoslovenskom izdanju”, *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1955, p. 11.

22 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Savremena nemačka umetnost*, Nolit, quoted work, p. 28.

Between death and birth

*I had to watch so that I could report.*²³

By the late twenties and early thirties, during the intensive collaboration with his brother Pavle on *New Literature* and *Nolit*, Oto Bihalji-Merin identified and articulated the importance of intertwining the anti-colonial with anti-capitalist struggle. In addition to the publication of a book that spoke about the persecution and mass destruction of Armenians in Turkey, which was soon banned and confiscated in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the powerful anti-colonial works published by *Nolit* also included *Terre d'ébène* (Ebony Land) by Albert Londres, as Bihalji-Merin himself bore witness, "the first significant book that depicted the exploitation and oppression of African peoples". "The Negritude was full of poetry in those years: European painters and writers admired the magical power of African masks. The fetishes of the so-called primitives inspired modernist artists. Today, it all sounds like a distant past,"²⁴ he wrote many years later. "Between that Belgrade of the royal dictatorship and this Belgrade of the non-aligned session, the transformation of an entire era took place. And *Nolit's* books were a preparation for that transformation."²⁵

However, he offers the most potent analysis anchored in dialectical materialism, in the style of a new "revolutionary" novel, in a book dedicated to the Spanish Civil War. With an idiosyncratic montage procedure, skilfully constructing and juxtaposing different literary forms, elements of reportage and documentation to break fiction, he boldly intertwined expressive fragments of the contemporary struggle of the Spanish people against Franco's fascist dictatorship, which he saw with his own eyes, with the colonial history of the Spanish conquerors, who enslaved and brutally exploited the countries of America, Africa, Asia and Oceania for centuries. "Lined up next to each other lie small corpses

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²³ Oto Bihalji-Merin, "Put kroz život", quoted work, p. 302.

²⁴ Oto Bihalji-Merin, "Skica za portret mog brata Pavla Bihalija", quoted work, Belgrade, p. 46.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

with torn limbs and shot faces; they are like broken dolls, those who were recently playing with dolls by themselves. Through the fog of indignation and hopelessness, I saw the raised hands of the foremother Rachel, who mourned her children, wailing. An unknown painter of the monastery church of St. Mark in Macedonia shows her in the midst of an outbreak of terror and despair: her cry still echoes in our hearts. Who painted the horrors of our day? Silence and fear allowed children to die in the gas chambers of Oświęcim, on the scorched soil of Vietnam.”²⁶

Benjamin's epistemological historical-materialist non-linear approach to the development of events in time and space, which basically always implied class relations and struggle,²⁷ can be read on the pages of Bihalji-Merin's truth about the hundreds of years old struggle of the Spanish people against their colonial enslavers. “The winners are richer than the defeated in everything. They have temples, monuments and precious writings on paper, silk or parchment. What is written on them is their word, their truth. The oppressed have other truths. Only with their victory, the truth of the oppressed is resurrected. While they are pinned to the ground, the memory of their truth is extinguished, their deeds are slandered, their heroism is covered up. And this here is the history of the struggle of the cities and, at the same time, of the Spanish people, during the rule of that Carlo V, in whose state the sun never rose for the poor.”²⁸ Juxtaposing the fantastic caricatures from Goya's *Los Caprichos*, depicting “vain, ferocious, and feeble-minded tyrants,” with a photograph of Francisco Franco in fascist uniform, sitting absorbed above a geographical map, Bihalji-Merin interprets the history of the ongoing class struggle not only through the montage technique of the text but also by montaging the “image” in his rich reportage.

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²⁶ Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Put kroz život”, quoted work, p. 302.

²⁷ See: Walter Benjamin, “O shvatanju istorije”, <https://anarhisticka-biblioteka.net/library/walter-benjamin-o-shwatanju-istorije>. Accessed on 3 October 2024.

²⁸ Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Španija između smrti i radanja*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1946, p. 79.

Guidelines for a contemporary reading of Bihalji-Merin's artistic and political legacy

Anti-communist narratives particularly dominant since the 1980s, and confirmed and further institutionalized through historical revisionism, led to the creation of myths about the roles in social struggles around many Yugoslav intellectuals and artists, who were close to the labour and communist movements, as well as narratives about their "suspicious" activities, pictures of double spies, agents of world conspiracies. This was also contributed by liberal theories about two totalitarianisms that transversely spread and entered many theoretical and scientific disciplines, intertwining with Thatcherism and Reaganomics about (neo-liberal) non-alternativeness.

This was contributed by both international and Yugoslav (Modernist) art historians and theorists. Only the last in the series was the example of the British art historian and curator David Elliott, who wrote the following in the concluding paragraph of his 2018 text on Bihalji's book *Modern German Art*: "With a lack of substantiation, a lack of information, manipulation and inconsistencies, the facts about the life of Oto Bihalji-Merin are an enigma. Was he a man of firm, humane, libertarian principles who faced and reacted to turbulent times, or an agent of the world revolution secretly working for the USSR?"²⁹ A few years earlier, Jerko Denegri, one of the most prominent Yugoslav modernist art historians and art critics, wrote about Bihalji-Merin's "controversy of position" that referred to the early post-war period. He wondered, "namely, how was it possible for a critic with such rich experience and an advanced understanding of modern art to become one of the leading proponents of the ruling ideology of socialist realism in the domestic

29 David Elliott, "Modern German Art 1938: The Book", in: Lucy Wasensteiner, Martin Faass (ed.), *London 1938: defending 'degenerate' art*, The Wiener Library, London, 2018, 153–160. David Elliott is not unknown to the local audience. He has been visiting our art scene since the 1970s, and the last time he was present as a curator of the 56th October Salon entitled *The Pleasure of Love: Transient Emotion in Contemporary Art*, in which he repeated his liberal theses on the autonomy of art, and the ruling dogma of (political) lack of alternatives.

cultural circumstances of the time, in support of which he wrote a series of programmatic articles and militant texts between 1945 and 1947?”³⁰ Despite the fact that Denegri himself cited Bihalji-Merin’s key contribution in discovering and highlighting the importance of European (specifically German) avant-garde modern art, with which he proved his “non-dogmatic” and heterogeneous positions regarding the role of art in revolutionary struggles, “especially at a time when it was not popular at all”, the theses, as formulated, speak exclusively in favour of the fact that Bihalji-Merin’s views on art could only be read as a continuation of his theses, which he considerably defined extensively in the inter-war period, continuing them in the post-war times—and by no means as a discontinuity.

Finally, we could rather think of Oto Bihalji-Merin as a “proletarian cosmopolitan”, as one of the many working-class intellectuals of the time who originated from the (European) periphery, but who, through their association with the international labour movement, participating in anti-capitalist and anti-fascist, and often in anti-colonial struggles, further expanded their intellectual horizons.³¹ “I am a conscious socialist and I defend my attempt not to leave, but to stay here and try to make the real content visible,”³² he sharply replied to the German journalist from the beginning of the text, who, in 1988, persistently tried to attribute to the elderly Bihalji-Merin the “futility” of his artistic and political activity. ●

30 Ješa Denegri, “Preobražaji kritičkih pozicija Ota Bihalji-Merina: od socijalističkog realizma preko naivne umetnosti do internacionalnog modernizma”, *Srpska umetnost 1950–2000: Pedesete*, Orion Art, Belgrade, 2013, pp. 57–65.

31 Vida Knežević, “Radnički pokret kao put ka emancipaciji: Quo vadimus, Herman?”, quoted work.

32 Fritz J. Radac, “Srećan život u paklu”, Interview with Oto Bihalji-Merin, quoted work.

Socialist prefigurations of medieval art: Oto Bihalji- -Merin, Miroslav Krleža, magazine *Jugoslavija*

Jelena Vesić, PhD

In the space of binary thinking, often evoked in cultural depiction of the Cold War era, medieval religious art would not have been a favourite topic of communist art historians—it could be said—it was not on the agenda. Did the revolutionary masses not destroy the churches, as symbols of religion as “the opium of the people”?

Such a binary thinking was exactly what Yugoslav cultural policy and its protagonists, among whom Oto Bihalji-Merin was one of the central figures, stood against in the Cold War circumstances. The thesis of this text is that the Yugoslav political discourse of non-aligned, third-way positioning, its rhetoric and articulation, was shaped in avant-garde manner through the art and cultural policy in the first post-war years.

The intellectual efforts of art critics and writers in the fifties of the twentieth century were focused on the articulation of the history and modernity of the Yugoslav artistic space as an exceptional, autonomous and common to small South Slavic (Yugoslav) nations, often called peoples (e.g. the Peoples' Liberation Struggle as a constitutive factor of the concept of the peoples of Yugoslavia). Yugoslav culture was framed by a narrative about the heroic struggle of oppressed people against a powerful enemy. References

from medieval and folk art intertwined with abstract modernist art forms were favoured by the circle of influential intellectuals to which Oto-Bihalji Merin belonged. His text “Traditions and Perspectives”⁰¹ elaborated such positioning and reframed medieval art as a modern phenomenon.

From 1949 to 1959, Oto Bihalji-Merin edited the exclusively illustrated magazine *Jugoslavija* (Yugoslavia), which, along with numerous paintings and photographs, served to create the image of Yugoslavia—inside and out—and was published in several world languages, in a large circulation. The editions were intended for different contexts: capitalist countries, socialist countries, colonialized nations and national liberation movements. Srđan Radović, in his study of the magazine *Jugoslavija*,⁰² emphasizes its central role in “cultural diplomacy” at the climax of the Cold War and the political realignment of Yugoslavia in international relations, at the time when cultural propaganda was precisely the most powerful means of political expression. According to Radović, the magazine meant a “cultural window to the outside world” and served to promote “the concept of specific Yugoslav modernity, ethnic and national diversity and the third position on the global political and cultural map of the 1950s.”⁰³

The magazine portrayed the country in a desirable manner, formulating its independent and non-aligned position, brotherhood and unity of peoples and nationalities, socialist modernity and unity of diversity. Images of the Adriatic coast and the country’s natural beauty, folklore culture, tradition and medieval art were combined with images of modernization, modern art, urban development, industrialization, democratization of tourism and the good life. Dominant were the presentations of modern art⁰⁴ and the depictions of the Yugoslav peoples, that

01 Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Tradicije i perspektive” [Traditions and Perspectives], magazine *Jugoslavija*, Belgrade, 1957.

02 Srđan Radović, “Channelling the Country’s Image”, *AM Journal*, № 13, 2017, pp. 17–30.

03 *Ibid*, p. 17.

04 Entire editions in the magazine *Jugoslavija* were dedicated to art: “Jugoslovenska skulptura XX veka” (1955, number 10); “Savremeno jugoslovensko slikarstvo” (1957, number 14); “Naivna umetnost” (1959, number 17).

is, the nations^{o5}—who advocated for Yugoslav socialist modernity, but also Yugoslav ethnic diversity, folklore and national specificities. The narrative about the autonomous and indomitable spirit of the southern Slavs, their historical struggles against the great, imperial cultures that surrounded them, their autonomous art and their own path to modernity and socialism were incorporated in various editions of the magazine *Jugoslavija*.

The construction of Yugoslav socialist modernity as a distinctive dialect in the international language of modern art—the language of international modernism—served to strengthen the vision of the cultural specificity and political independence of the Yugoslav peoples (unity through differentiation), which was important for both international relations and the internal political plan.

An example on which the relationship between socialism and the Middle Ages in the Yugoslav context can be accurately read (and through which the ideas of the magazine *Jugoslavija* were also manifested) is the book about the Church of Our Lady of Ljeviša in Prizren, with the text of Oto Bihalji-Merin, published by Zavod Jugoslavija, in 1963.^{o6} It is a document of a specific framing of medieval art in the narrative of Yugoslavism and Yugoslav modernity, whose method was based on abstraction, fragmentation and applied reading.

Bihalji-Merin's observation of the frescoes in Our Lady of Ljeviša, his formal-aesthetic approach and large interpretative strokes were the means by which this important writer transformed the Christian-religious narrative into something else, something more universal and broader for the view of the "man of the new age". Such a view was based on the unifying ideas of post-war modernism, in which art was always

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^{o5} The unity of Yugoslav peoples in socialist modernism and also their ethnic and national specificities were presented through thematic editions dedicated to different Yugoslav republics: Slovenia (1950, number 3), Macedonia (1952, number 5), Bosnia i Hercegovina (1953, number 7), Montenegro (1954, number 8), Croatia (1955, number 11) and Serbia (1957, number 13).

^{o6} Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Bogorodica Ljeviška – čovek, priroda i predmeti na freskama*, Publicističko-izdavački zavod Jugoslavija, Belgrade, 1963.

tied to some land, struggle and history, in order to sublimate the past, more distant and nearer, towards eternal peace and a better future. The land, the struggle and the history of small nations stemmed from the National Liberation politics, developed in art through the themes of heroic struggle against a superior enemy in which historical justice was achieved. That theme was widely present in the modern art of the 1950s, which often used the method of prefiguring folklore motifs and art of the past, in order to express its own authenticity and local specificity.

The term prefiguration is used in art historical analysis to denote the allegorical speech of paintings dealing with historical themes and grand narratives. In most cases it refers to the use of scenes from the “Old Testament” or Greek and Roman myths to preach the truths of Christianity. Prefiguration is a sign of something to come and implies anticipation, announcement and hint of a future event—in this text it refers to the operational procedure of art critics and intellectuals in the 1950s of the twentieth century and the application of medieval art in the narrative of Yugoslav modernity and independence of Yugoslav socialist path.

Our Lady of Ljeviša—in the Middle Ages, a cathedral church, the seat of Byzantine and later Serbian bishops in Prizren, and then a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans—becomes a cultural monument and museum in 1953. From the narrative of religion and nation, embodied in the institution of the place of worship (church or mosque), it passed into the narrative of knowledge and art, embodied in the modern and secular institution of cultural monuments. The book with Bihalji-Merin’s text was initially published on the occasion of this new opening, after the restoration of the medieval frescoes by painters Zdenka i Branislav Živković and the removal of the layer of plaster applied over the paintings, in accordance with the religious iconoclasm of Islam, during the time the building acted as a mosque. During the restoration period, Zdenka and Branislav Živković made copies of 150 details of the frescoes,⁹⁷ which were exhibited around the world. The exhibition entitled *Man, Nature and Objects on the Frescoes*—as the

⁹⁷ In the brochure it was pointed out that the booklet was published on the occasion of making copies of the frescoes painted by Zdenka and Branislav Živković between 1950 and 1953.

title of Bihalji-Merin's text reads—was shown in the Art Pavilion “Cvijeta Zuzorić” in Belgrade (1954), which was followed by a large number of exhibitions: a two-year tour of the exhibition in the cities of France (1954–55), Finland, Denmark, Canada and the USA (1956), India (1957), Japan (1958), Poland and Norway (1961), of Switzerland and Czechoslovakia (1962). In 1953, the Gallery of Frescoes was also founded in Belgrade as the first major museum display of Slavic-Byzantine art, which includes a large number of copies of medieval paintings and architectural sculptures.⁰⁸

In this spatial-architectural and semantic re-framing, Bihalji-Merin avoided the usual narrative of the authenticity of the original, equally admiring the copies and implying that the new format of the gallery display, the exhibition of copies, was more suitable for artistic and scientific consideration. The horizontal gallery display conforms to the observer's view and opens up space for the contemplation of individual paintings and details framed by the whiteness of the wall.⁰⁹ Such a way of observation suggests a type of analysis that might not be characteristic of the original paintings, woven into the architecture of the church and subordinated to a different functionality that was not primarily observational.

Bihalji-Merin almost scientifically magnifies details and fragments, extracting forms from the narrative series of Biblical stories, the lives of saints and medieval kings, and connecting them into a new narrative *Man, Nature and Objects on the Frescoes*. Before looking at the surfaces of the saint's vestments, at the artistic and formal qualities of painting in the way that modern critics do before abstract paintings, Bihalji-Merin

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⁰⁸ The first idea to establish the Gallery of Frescoes came from the Committee for Culture and Art of the Government of FNRJ in 1947. After the exhibition in the Chaillot Palace, on February 1, 1953, the Gallery of Frescoes was opened in Belgrade. Today, the gallery has over 1,000 copies of monument frescoes (created in the 11th–15th centuries), copies of icons and about 300 casts of medieval monumental sculptures.

⁰⁹ Brian O'Doherty wrote about the meaning and ideological framework of the whiteness of the wall, the white cube of the gallery space as a context, atmosphere and way of observation. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, The Lapis Press, San Francisco, 1986.

underlines that “artists of the Byzantine tradition do not paint the external appearance of the world, but the very concept of the world”.¹⁰

In the frescoes of Our Lady of Ljeviša, Bihalji-Merin tries to see something universal, which resists cultural and national differences, which unites rather than divides and isolates. Thus, in the scenes illustrating Miracles of Jesus, he concentrates on the hands giving and receiving food, on the very sharing of food as an act above and beyond the capitalist economy and the concept of consumption. In the cycle of scenes from the life of St. Nicolas, he finds reflection of a “naively timeless and poignant desire for knowledge”¹¹—a reading that certainly had something to do with then-proclaimed idea of education for all, and emancipation through education. He interprets The Return of Christ (Second Coming) as an image of the unity and harmony between man and nature—doves, storks, pelicans, wild bears, representations of plant life and wild animals. The text ends with an observation of the image of the Holy Virgin to whom the church was dedicated, an observation of her gaze—Ljeviša is a Serbian version of the Greek word *eleusa* (merciful)—“she looks at us lovingly and warmly [...] close in her willingness to suffer and live”.¹²

The first articulations of the specific Yugoslav socialist determination in the Cold War circumstances, after Tito’s split with Stalin and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948, were realized *through* and *by* art. The exhibition of Yugoslav Medieval Art (*L’art medieval Yugoslave*) at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris in 1950¹³—which, said in con-

10 O. Bihalji-Merin, *Our Lady of Ljeviša*, p. 9.

11 *Ibid*, p. 10.

12 *Ibid*, p. 13.

13 *L’art medieval* was exhibited at Palais de Chaillot, 9 March – 22 May 1950, as well as in Zagreb, Art Pavilion, 11 March – 30 April 1951. “Krlježa supervised preparation works, and was a member of Honorary Board along with the representatives of scientific and cultural institutions: A. Štampar, A. Belić, F. Ramovš (Presidents of JAZU, SANU, SAZU), M. Detoni, S. Stojanović, A. G. Kos (Rectors of Academies of Fine Art from Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana), D. Koco (Prof. at University in Skopje), S. Stanković (President of Councils of Academies), B. Jakac (President of the Association of Fine

temporary terms, was curated by Miroslav Krleža—presented the new Yugoslav political identity through the images of past as prefiguration of contemporaneity. The presentation of the medieval art of the South Slavic / Yugoslav peoples united the varieties of Croatian Romanesque sculpture, Serbian medieval frescoes and Bosnian-Bogomil tombstones. For the purposes of the exhibition, 105 plaster casts of sculptures and 160 replicas of frescoes were prepared, which were the basis for the later founding of the Gallery of Frescoes in Belgrade.

The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue with a foreword by Krleža, republished the same year in *Republica*, in magazine *Umetnost* and in the magazine *Jugoslavija* in two different versions—winter 1950 and autumn 1950; the text was also published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Sred-njevjekovna umjetnost naroda Jugoslavije*, displayed in Umjetnički pavil-jon, Zagreb, in 1951. In the exhibition *Yugoslav Medieval Art*, Krleža took a step back to take a step forward. Instead of exhibiting contemporary art with a clear commitment to the Western or Soviet model, he showed the art of the Middle Ages using a cultural-political rhetoric that he himself called *Plaidoyer Pro Domo* (Before whom? Before Western Europe). The introductory illustration of the text in the magazine *Jugoslavija* (Win-ter 1950) is a unique smaller sized colour reproduction of the scene of the *Exile from Paradise*, a fresco in the monastery of the Patriarchate of Peć from the sixteenth century. The selection of this image, in accordance with the tone of Krleža's text, can be understood as a kind of prefigura-tion of Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, that is, a confronta-tional attitude towards Eastern Europe and Stalinism.

Krleža used Bogomils as a prefiguration of Yugoslavism, emphasizing the autonomy of this medieval sect that did not want to conform to either Rome or Constantinople, certainly as an allusion to Yugoslavia's refusal to conform to Moscow and Washington. On the pages of the magazine

Artists) and I. Andrić (President of Association of Writers). The exhibi-tion was set and artistically furnished by Lj. Babić, painter, and more than a hundred of art experts participated in preparatory activities." Exhibition of medieval art of the peoples of Yugoslavia, *Krležijana* (1993–99), *mrežno izda-nje*, Leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža", 2024. <<https://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak/1217>> Accessed on 16 October 2024.

Jugoslavija, Krleža's essay was richly illustrated with photographs of details on which the artistic qualities of expression and symbolization can be traced, which corresponded to the establishment of an artistic framework over religious content and the use of the voice of the past in contemporary political arena. Immediately after Krleža's article on the Middle Ages in the magazine *Jugoslavija* (winter 1950) there are pages with an illustrated colour print of Ivan Goran Kovačić's poem *Jama* [The Pit], with an introduction by Marko Ristić. In the autumn version, the text is preceded by a picture of Radovan's portal in Trogir by Ljuba Babić, followed by Leo Mates' text entitled *Yugoslavia's contribution to the united nations*. The editorial work of Oto Bihalji-Merin in the magazine *Jugoslavija* sheds additional light on his theses on medieval art and points to a wider cultural and political programme, followed by the appearance of important intellectuals on a shared platform.

For the purposes of the representative exhibition of Yugoslav art in Paris, Krleža invents the term "Yugoslav Medieval Civilization"¹⁴ as the main agent of decontextualization and recontextualization of the medieval historical narrative. In the circumstances of the Cold War and binary determination between socialist realism and modern abstract art Krleža is instituting the "neither-nor" language of Yugoslav non-alignment and underlines the how "Yugoslav civilization was created on the antithesis of Byzantium and Rome".¹⁵ He defines Yugoslavism as the third component",¹⁶ which he articulates through the political genesis of medieval sovereignties and independence, emphasizing the historical resistance to the ruling orders in the (implied) direction of the independent socialist path.

*As a Yugoslav socialist federation, the FPRY is a revolutionary and historical fait accompli, which on the one hand dominates our Middle Ages, and on the other hand anticipates the development of our future centuries with a whole series of its moral-political and cultural elements.*¹⁷

14 M. Krleža, "Izložba jugoslavenkog srednjovekovnog slikarstva i plastike", *Jugoslavija*, Beograd, jesen 1950, p. 55.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The specificity of the artistic style of the “Yugoslav peoples of the Middle Ages” Krleža sees through the trope of the struggle for liberation, which is manifested in the use of the vernacular language in church sermons.¹⁸ He insists on Yugoslav authenticity and singularity, portraying Yugoslav culture as independent and not secondary, as pioneering and not as a derivative. The medieval art of the Yugoslav peoples “has almost no variation of Western European, Mediterranean or Byzantine architectural or painting style”; “Our architects, painters and sculptors mastered the artistic issues of their time not only in an epigonic or eclectic way, but in a creative and individual way”.¹⁹

Krleža’s text, which can also be read today as a cultural and political manifesto of the epoch, implies the construction of an autonomous space on the historical peripheries, by confronting the framework of the relationship between the centre and the periphery, within which “small cultures” are seen as belated reflections of “great cultures”. Ivana Bago, in her analysis of Yugoslav exits from the Cold War, the search for an autonomous, socialist Yugoslav art, connects Krleža’s appearance at the Palais de Chaillot with his positioning in the conflict on the left in the 1930s, and reads it as an act of “double rejection of European hegemony and local essentialism” (which carries with it a critical attitude towards the concept of national art).²⁰ She compares it with Frantz Fanon’s double rejection of both European cultural models and local, tribal customs and myths, in his thesis *On National Culture* presented at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome in 1959.²¹ That Krležian (or Fanonist) position is formed in relation to the macronarratives of “Western civilization” and “the modern world”. In its movement between tradition and modernity, between ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’, it manifests

18 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

20 Ivana Bago, “Yugoslav Fanonism and a Failed Exit from the (Cultural) Cold War”, in Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara, Antonia Majaca (eds.), *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, Sternberg Press, Berlin 2021, pp. 285–293.

21 Ivana Bago emphasizes Fanon’s (and Krleža’s) positioning within the register of *colonial difference* (Walter Dignolo) in relation to the two macro-narratives of “Western civilization” and the “modern world.” Bago, *Ibid.*

itself, as Ivana Bago points out, as “the realism of a subjugated and rebellious people”.²²

Krleža's description of Bogomils' understanding of the world evokes images of rebellious people and Partisan heroism in the way it was visually and affectively profiled in the monumental sculpture of Peoples' Liberation Struggle, stylistically formed later in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of his descriptions of Bogomil sculptures almost blur the boundaries between Stećak tombstones and Partisan monuments.

*That sculpture is tendentious and propagandist... In Bogomil style, it materialistically denies the stultifying thought of death on the knees[...] Among the thousands of human hands on these monoliths, not a single one is folded in a premortal prayer.*²³

Acceptance of death in the name of the fight for freedom is iconically represented on the Partisan monument to Stjepan Filipović or Fighters of the Revolution in Valjevo, designed by Vojin Bakić in 1960.

Plaidoyer pro domo became a blueprint for the creation of the aesthetics of the art of the 1950s, as well as the aesthetics of Partisan monuments, which Branislav Dimitrijević calls “the aesthetics of defiance and suffering”, and whose visual denominator sees as “a synthesis of realist figural-expressive symbolism, modernist abstract symbolism and archetypal symbolism of ‘our land’ (‘our’ landscape and ‘our’ tradition)”.²⁴ Dimitrijević considers the aestheticization of suffering and defiance “decisive for the understanding of cultural identity” and connects it with

22 Ivana Bago, “Krleža/Meštrović: jugoslavenski primitivizam drugim sredstvima”, AICA Serbia symposium *Umetnička Kritika druge polovine 20. veka u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji: Stanovišta, koncepti, rasprave* (ed. Jelena Vesić), Muzej Jugoslavije, 2023, <https://aicaserbia.org/konferencija-2023-program/#BAGO>.

23 *Ibid*, p. 58.

24 Branislav Dimitrijević, *Utopijski konzumerizam. Nastanak i protivrečnosti potrošačke kulture u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji 1950–1970*, Doctoral dissertation, Univerzitet umetnosti, Beograd, 2012, p. 236.

“the motif of widely raised hands with clenched fists, which traces its origins back to Goya’s famous painting *The Third of May 1808* (1814).”²⁵

They saw the presence of the figure in the modernist-abstract narrative as a sign of social engagement—the chapter of art production that the younger generations of critics, such as Ješa Denegri describe by the term “engaged figurative art”²⁶ that signifies canonical and widely accepted definition of the expression of social engagement in art, established precisely during the 1950s. In Krleža’s most extreme speeches, such as at the Congress of Writers in Belgrade in 1954, abstraction was equated with formalism of the *l’art pour l’art* type, with self-provincializing blind acceptance of Western fashions.²⁷

Oto Bihalji-Merin (like Krleža in his own way) preferred alternatives and visible distinctions in relation to the term “art of the West”, opting for the affirmation of primitive and folk art as modernity on the other side of reason and technology that enables “a return to its ancestral homeland pre-logical being”.²⁸ Bihalji-Merin developed these ideas throughout his life, publishing numerous texts and books such as representative monographs on Bogumils²⁹ and Modern Primitives (naive painting from the 17th century to the present day)³⁰ written for the publishing

25 B. Dimitrijević, *ibid.*

26 Branislav Dimitrijević and Jelena Vesić, *Yugoslav Art Space: Ješa Denegri in the First Person*, JRP Ringer, 2024 (discussion “Figurative Art, Engaged Art and Domestic Traditions”, pp. 41–57)

27 “Clowns in the art circus of abstract art take out in front of us dead canaries from their cylinders and bake an abstract scrambled egg of their inspirations... This ‘revolution of form’ is more like the fashion of the petty bourgeois ladies who cackle about Dior styling, to which the last cry of fashion reached with a delay of a few tasteless generations.” From Krleža’s speech on plenary session of the Association of Writers Belgrade 10–13. XI. 1954.
<http://krlezijana.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=1773>

28 O. Bihalji-Merin, “Tradicije i perspektive”, p. 3.

29 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *The Bogomils*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1962.

30 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *MODERN PRIMITIVES. Naive Painting From The Late Seventeenth Century Until The Present Day*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1971.

house Thames&Hudson or the lavishly furnished book *Naïve Artists of the World*,³¹ dedicated to the phenomena of primitive art, children's art, outsider art, artworks of the mentally ill, folk and peasant art. For Oto Bihalji-Merin, medieval art was a source of primitive, primordial and opposite to the techno-civilizational evil of war—which was one of the typical positions within the global dynamics of modern art after the Second World War, and its ambivalent attitudes towards the idea of technological progress.

*Perhaps the canon of Byzantine art in the form of Macedonian and Serbian heritage, transposed and modified by new aspects, lives on in contemporary Yugoslav painting [...] (It is) freed from its religious function; It is no longer art for God but for man who, in the reality of technical and psychological cataclysms, instead of external visible truth, seeks the inner essence of things.*³²

Bihalji-Merin's text "Traditions and Perspectives" carried certain guidelines for contemporary artists of the time, stating how the search for original naive and folk art was carried out by numerous modern artists: from James Ensor, through Edvard Munch, from Picasso and Chagall, to Diego Rivera, and wondering on the same track whether such distancing from "Western abstract art" is even possible without the mediation of Paris. Bihalji-Merin found similar positions in modern Yugoslav painting in the fifties of the last century, in "epic painting that formulates the legend of uprising and sacrifice in the new language of our time,"³³ such as the art of Đorđe Andrejević Kun and the murals of Borko Lazeski at the railway station in Skopje (1953–1956). At the same time, he favoured the expressive-abstract, but also realist and epic style of Yugoslav artists who developed a language that he described as "both social and modern, simultaneously cosmopolitan and rooted in its soil" such as Krsto Hegedušić, Lazar Vujaklija, Milo Milunović, Petar Lubarda, Marko Čelebonović, Gabriel Stupica and Marij Pregelj.³⁴

31 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Naivni umetnici svijeta*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 1972.

32 O. Bihalji-Merin, "Tradicije i perspektive", p. 5.

33 *Ibid*, p. 7.

34 *Ibid*, p. 8

A tangible artistic example of the line of thought developed by Bihalji-Merin would be Petar Lubarda, with whom Merin was close and about whom he wrote, also in the context of the publishing house of *Jugoslavija*.³⁵ Lubarda's celebrated painting cycle *Battle of Kosovo* (1953) was frequently shown in an international context and was awarded at the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1953, the same year when Church of Our Lady of Ljeviša was reopened as a museum. Lubarda chose a national theme (the nineteenth-century Serbian national myth), but at the same time, precisely through abstract art, he replaced the national narrative with a representation of universal resistance, which can easily be connected to the resistance to fascism of the Yugoslav Partisans. The depiction of socialist industrialization and modernization as a medieval battle was the theme of Lubarda's monumental painting *Industrialization*, exhibited in the background of the conference of the Non-Aligned Summit in Belgrade (1961).³⁶ In both cycles of paintings the artist borrows inspiration from Byzantine medieval fresco painting, with its rough surfaces and faded colours.

In their writings on medieval art, the doyens of the culture of Yugoslav socialism, such as Miroslav Krleža or Oto Bihalji-Merin, did not approach the object of observation through the reconstruction and evocation of the spirit of the epoch, but rather dealt with the projection of the contemporary moment backwards, into the historical past, and observing the projected future through layers of past time periods. For them, it is the future that would be made possible by the new socialist and modernist, and at the same time, national political framing of politics and art of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). The positions of these two influential intellectuals are not identical, but they are both connected in their own way with the pre-war activity of the two authors within the communist movement, and also with their

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³⁵ Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Lubarda, Kosovski boj*, Izdavački zavod Jugoslavija, Beograd, 1956.

³⁶ The post-war collective voluntary labour actions for (re)building infrastructure and realization of five-year plans were based on the idea of heroic work (super productive work) seen as a continuation of the battles of the "Great War" by other means.

consequent great influence in the public artistic life of socialist Yugoslavia by managing cultural infrastructures such as the Lexicographic Institute of Yugoslavia (Krlježa) or the Publishing House Yugoslavia (Bihalji-Merin). Their readings of medieval art were both universally abstract (generally humanistic in the intellectual tone of post-war writers) and concrete in a cultural-political sense.

The professional views and scientific approaches to medieval art at the Department of Art History in Belgrade or the Institute for Byzantine Studies, which deal with the reconstruction of the meaning, and framework of observation of the medieval era are different. A comprehensive monograph on the painting of the Our Lady of Ljeviša was written by Gordana Babić in collaboration with Draga Panić, who worked on architecture.³⁷ In contrast to Bihalji-Merin's interest in the quality of painting and the human drama, her analysis is based on the exegesis of biblical narratives, medieval church politics, and the ruling ideology of the founder of the church. Contemporary medievalists do not pay attention to the formal qualities of the work of art that socialist writers focused on. Their interest in form is certainly an expression of the emptying of the ideological content of previous epochs, primarily those related to nationalism and national culture, in order to ensure the possibility of writing the present into the past, and then the past into the present. The genres of scholarly texts by experts in Byzantology are not comparable to Bihalji-Merin's or Krlježa's writings on the art of the Middle Ages, which was based on cultural diplomacy and broad frames of observation, on histories of long duration, on evocations and prefigurations.

When it comes to observational frameworks, it is not out of place to mention that the 2007 reissue of the monograph *Our Lady of Ljeviša* by Gordana Babić and Draga Panić (1975) was framed by the introductory text of Bishop Artemije of Raška-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija, who highlighted the artistic and symbolic importance of this church for the Serbian people, with an afterword by Dragan Vojvodić – an edition that reframed the former cultural monument in a national-religious narrative.

37 Gordana Babić, Draga Panić, *Bogorodica Ljeviška*, Belgrade, 1975.

The relationship of socialism to the Middle Ages through the prism of tradition and modernity certainly implied the regulation of national and religious issues. The influential surrealist Dušan Matić wrote about it directly, in a poetic way, also in the magazine *Jugoslavija*, talking about Prizren's churches and mosques, and how education and secular life opened up space for a better future.

*The monotony of long, blind, low walls - behind which the houses with courtyard-facing windows are hidden - is interrupted by the new buildings one or several floors - with windows openly facing the street. Hungry dogs no longer roam around the mahallahs. The schools are full ... When I was leaving Our Lady of Ljeviša", the workers came to carry the scaffold boards to the mosque in the city centre, which is also being turned into a museum. It is a symbol of this new era when 'Our Lady of Ljeviša' and the main mosque are becoming museums. Silenced and reconciled in this museum, they will no longer be a symbol of bloody quarrels as before, but a symbol of understanding, for the sake of one more patient human dream.*³⁸

The special edition of the magazine *Jugoslavija*, in which Matić's text about Prizren was published was dedicated to traveling destinations and artistic and natural beauties of Yugoslavia. The magazine opens with the preface also written by Matić, which talks about the subject of the journey who forget themselves in order to rediscover themselves anew. Some words are capitalized and repeated in the text:

COMMON, DIFFERENCES, JUST A LITTLE FURTHER, AND FURTHER... ●

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³⁸ Dušan Matić, "Koreni prošlosti i seme budućnosti", *Jugoslavija* № 12, pp. 105–108.

Oto Bihalji-Merin: Arts and politics, two streams of one life path

Marijana Cvetković, Mag.

Oto Bihalji-Merin was one of those figures of cultural and public life in post-war socialist Yugoslavia who represented the authority based on decades of dedicated work in the form of the written word, and the works that stood alongside it: books, exhibitions, articles, expert commentaries on issues of art and culture in changing social circumstances, with a horizon towards which he was persistently moving. In addition, his tireless political work was radiantly positioned in the years preceding the Second World War, in Belgrade, Berlin, Paris, Spain, Zurich and other places, where he was building a network of friends and associates and his international reputation.

Receiving artistic and humanistic education, Bihalji-Merin closely connected his political views and engagements to his knowledge and interests in art from the beginning. This interweaving of the artistic and the political continuously accompanied his work from the very beginning, embodying the principle of activeness (*aktivitet*) that could be read as political action and observation of the world from the perspective of a socially engaged and dedicated intellectual.

I started writing early, and yet I anticipated that it was better to live than to write! Even the hardest bitter experience is better than complete emptiness. I wanted to get to know foreign cities, unknown

*regions, to gain many friendships and loves. To be present... For me, there was no alternative: I had to be present: first in the small actions of the school age, later in the larger ones in the labour movement, and then in the actions of international solidarity.*⁰¹

This principle of presence by words, thoughts, conversations, writing, always in relation to what was happening around him, marked his life in the world of art and culture in the deceptive framework of the “society in constant transformation”, in which he found himself: the societies of Yugoslavia and the Western Europe before, during and after the Second World War.

Contemplating his own primary field of occupation, art, through the principle of activeness (*aktivitet*) led him to the realization that art was an indispensable part of every human’s life; it was an expression of humanity and the relation with it must not be dependent on social and class status. What appeared as an obstacle to such a necessary relationship was the bourgeois practice of organization of culture and imposing cultural codes that prevented art from being a part of life, alienation from the creative capacity embodied in each of us. More importantly, Bihalji-Merin considered art in the context of scientific and technological development as the basis of social life as well. “Directing art to masses of people requires a dialectical immersion in modern discoveries of science and technology and the inclusion of sometimes hardly comprehensible experiments of contemporary artists.”

These key concepts that Bihalji-Merin consistently incorporated into his writing and actions were the necessary basis for understanding his direct and indirect involvement in the cultural policy and cultural diplomacy of Yugoslavia. It was also influenced by the pre-war experiences of international networking through political work during the formative years before the Second World War.

During his stay in Paris, between 1933 and 1936, when political clashes and the mobilization of anti-fascist forces took place, Bihalji-Merin collaborated and associated with numerous intellectuals, artists and

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⁰¹ Oto Bihalji-Merin, “Put kroz život”, *Third program*, Radio Belgrade, summer 1974, p. 283.

political activists who lived there or were hiding from persecution. At that time, left-wing political forces were intensively gathering in Paris (as a result of extremely violent fascist demonstrations, such as the one on 6 February 1934), which culminated in the formation of the Popular Front (*Front populaire*) coalition in 1935, ahead of the 1936 elections when the Popular Front won. For the first time, the new government introduced culture within the framework of the Ministry of Education.⁰² This was a consequence of the emergence of a new vocabulary in the political and intellectual discourse of the 1930s in France, such as the phrases “cultural life”, “cultural activities”, “cultural policy” and the like.⁰³

Bihalji-Merin certainly participated in such debates, read articles and indirectly took part in the efforts of the new political coalition. In a letter from Jacques Omnes, found in his archives, he stated that his colleagues at the Institute for the Study of Fascism (INFA — Institut pour l'étude du fascisme), Koestler and Sperber described him as “an early promoter of the Popular Front policies, which would materialize only at the end of 1934”. This is proved by Bihalji-Merin's intense political and cultural work in Paris as a director of INFA, probably also the consideration of cultural policy that would enable practical solutions for the right place of art and culture in the mechanisms of social development. The Institute itself, in addition to publishing books, brochures and newsletters, organized a library, as well as an international exhibition on fascism in Paris at the beginning of 1934.

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⁰² During the 44 months of that government, Minister Jean Zay carried out significant reforms of the education system, but also of science, introduced sports to schools, and at the time the Museum of Folk Art and Folk Traditions, the Museum of Modern Art, the Union of Folk Lyrical Theatres and the Cannes Film Festival were founded (the Festival was established in 1938 as a reaction to the revision of the decision of the jury at the Venice Festival in order to award Leni Riefenstahl and Goffredo Alessandrini the main prize “Mussolini Cup” for the propagandistic films *Olympia* and *Luciano Serra, the pilot*).

⁰³ In a left-wing magazine in those months, the title appeared on the front page *Pour un ministère de la Culture* (For the Ministry of Culture), Source: Pascal Ory, *La belle illusion, Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire (1935–1938)*, Paris: CNRS Editions 2016.

Upon his return to Yugoslavia after liberation, his experience and ideas could be recognized from several aspects of cultural policy.

First and foremost, ideas about a socialist society in which free creative-ness is enabled, where everyone is a potential artist and where art is accessible to all members of society, are recognized by his advocacy for the free spreading and expansion of artistic practice in all its forms along all lines of society, vertically and horizontally. "The credo of our development and policy is socialist consciousness and freedom of creativity."⁰⁴

Despite numerous accusations of dogmatism, he advocated opening up space for different and new artistic practices that resisted dogma. "... Let art move freely. The most important is the free creation. In its development, the creative and personal will stand out from the fashionable and eclectic. The main thing is that the lethargy, which flooded exhibitions and bored with its superficial and outward works only a few years ago, has been overcome now, and that there is certain feverish, nervous fluid that fulfils creation."⁰⁵

The second aspect relates to the fundamental question of who has the right to produce art. Believing that naïve art is an expression of the authentic artistic potential of man, he advocated for the affirmation and integration of naïve art and the art of anonymous artists of the past (for example, artists who created tombstones called *stećak*) into the art world, without hierarchy of bourgeois institutions (academies, museums, criticism...). This is how he saw the role of art in society while talking of naïve art: "A work of art, as a necessary everyday work, as a socially supporting force and shaping that affects human development, gradually begins to lose its elitist character and appeals to increasing masses of people. The flourishing of naïve art... bears witness to the need to overcome the boundaries between art and society. Naïve art is possible in the sphere of development of industrial civilization. That is why it is not in contradiction with the modernism, because it arises as an

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- ⁰⁴ Lise Bihalji-Merin, Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Bio-bibliografija*, Nolit, Beograd, 1976.
- ⁰⁵ Ljubiša Jocić, "Razgovor sa O. Bihalji-Merinom. O novim pojavama u umetnosti kod nas", *Umetnost i kritika*, № 3, 1 January 1954, Belgrade.

expression of various and late forms—archetypal and scientific, instinct and techniques.”⁰⁶

Pursuing the modernist “discovery” of non-European artistic languages and traditions, Bihalji-Merin insisted on an anti-Eurocentric art world, and on a new evaluation of the global art world in which, in a sophisticated way, he inserted the cultural heritage from Yugoslavia, especially the so-called naïve art as a unique expression of national culture (through the magazine *Jugoslavija*, the exhibition of medieval art from Yugoslavia in Paris, exhibitions of naïve art, books and texts in our and foreign languages, referring to the UNESCO conventions etc.).

Bihalji-Merin stood out on the international cultural and intellectual scene precisely in affirmation of the naïve and art of the peoples around the world, whose mostly anonymous artists produced the artworks and culture without which the history of art could not even be thought of, the artworks which, with their universal language, were embedded in the foundations of what we consider contemporary art. With those attitudes and theoretical considerations, his work established what could be called the cultural policy of the Non-Aligned, especially in addressing European cultures and Eurocentric policies, in which Bihalji-Merin participated with the exhibitions he organized or in whose conception he was engaged. An example is the exhibition *World Cultures and Modern Art*, held in Munich in 1972, for which he wrote the catalogue foreword. It was the first major exhibition that spoke about modern art from a different perspective: it visually contrasted significant exhibits from Africa, Oceania, the pre-Columbian era and the Far East with great works of art from Europe, thus indicating the influence of these cultures in the development of contemporary art.⁰⁷

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⁰⁶ Rajko Đurić, “Estetika. ‘Žrtva’ kapitala”, Interview with Oto Bihalji-Merin, *NIN* magazine, № 1271, 18. 5. 1975. p. 26.

⁰⁷ Most often, the exhibition that is cited as an early example of considering these relationships in the form of an exhibition is *Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* at the MoMA in New York in 1984, which he conceived and realized with William Rubin in cooperation with Kirk Varnedoe.

If the policy of non-alignment is a necessary and active instrument of the anti-imperialist struggle, which especially frees the underdeveloped part of the world from discrimination, then the spiritual superstructure of that struggle is the revision of the cultural-aesthetic hegemony of Western culture. Countries, backward and economically exploited, often had a strong cultural influence on the development of European art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The third aspect belongs to cultural diplomacy, which was a very important field of Yugoslav foreign policy (as, after all, of the Western world during the Cold War). The magazine *Jugoslavija* (published between 1949 and 1959), whose editor-in-chief was Bihalji-Merin, represented a well-deliberated and elaborated channel of communication with international community that, in an extremely skilful way, promoted the new socialist Yugoslav concepts of culture as a democratic and all-pervading active social practice (naïve art, rebellious art from National Liberation Struggle, art of unknown medieval artists, *stećci* (tombstones), Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance art of the Adriatic cities, but also contemporary art). With his editorial interventions in the texts and the selection of illustrations, Bihalji-Merin underlined internationalism and trans-cultural connections (a concept influenced by Abi Warburg and André Malraux), manifested through the historical practices of Yugoslav cultures. He directly related it to the themes of social transformation, self-management, industrialization, new educational policies, scientific and technological achievements, urban and architectural feats of the young state, which should show that its brilliant success in the fight against fascism continued to expand through the construction of the new society. That cultural diplomacy also had the role of announcing Yugoslavia's international offensive through the Non-Aligned Movement, which Oto Bihalji-Merin very consciously incorporated into his editorial concept of *Jugoslavija*: "The concept of contemporary art presupposes a common system of relations between nations."

* * *

Through reflections on different artistic ideas, eras, material remains of cultures and their mutual influences and interweaving, Bihalji-Merin consistently, but also discreetly built the idea of cultural policy of a

socialist society like the Yugoslav one. Emphasizing the diversity of the cultural heritage on the territory of Yugoslavia, the diversity in terms of the time of creation of cultures, the ideological, spiritual and material frameworks of the long-lasting local cultures, he indirectly contributed to the creation of a unique cultural policy that was based on the principles of connection and mutual dialogue, unity, equality and ideas about the common future of the different nations that made up Yugoslavia. For him, the variety of artistic traditions, as well as influences, was only a proof of the cultural connections that were visible in the formal manifestations of the spirit of anonymous artists, emerged from the ordinary people, making their way to the historical moment in which they would be recognized as the unity of the Yugoslav socialist project of society and, even further, through the International of non-aligned countries and peoples and their very special cultures. For him, Yugoslav culture was an image of the world in unity, which was also the basic idea of Oto Bihalji-Merin's cultural policy.

Efforts to define the specific artistic and cultural expression of the new society, to affirm naïve art through deep analyses and connection with contemporary artistic creativity, are revealed in this research as the life-long effort of an intellectual: he expressed all his knowledge, experience and intellectual capital in his international reputation and action, engaged in the field of cultural policies, in a direct and indirect way, so that it contributed to what is today, after the disappearance of Yugoslavia, still called the "Yugoslav cultural space". He incorporated his experience in the fight against fascism and intellectual involvement in the various battles of that fight (magazines in Berlin, the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, the Spanish Civil War, the fight against the dictatorship in Yugoslavia, the art created in the camps, for which and about which he tirelessly wrote), in the ideas of the cultural policy in a socialist country that should be visible to the world, and where the role of a progressive, internationally networked and independent thinker was of enormous importance.

How profoundly and carefully he followed global trends in art is shown by the focused records on new phenomena in art and culture and their careful analysis from the leftist theoretical thought: he recognized the encroachment of the concepts of cultural industries, the art market,

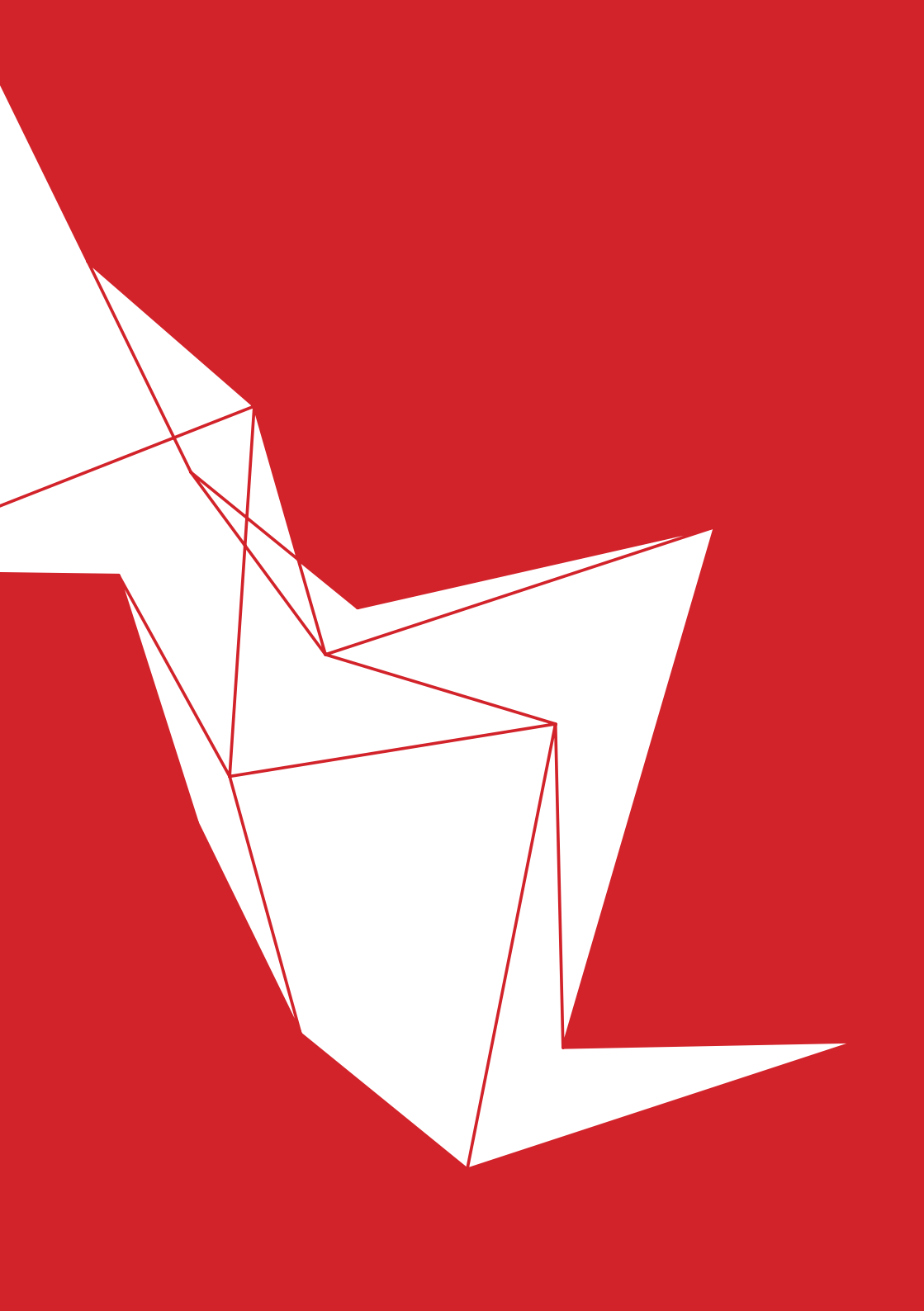
the predominance of market criteria over artistic criteria, the growth of the “consumer economy”, the emergence of new media (TV, video, film, cybernetic art...) and their impact on the changed social role of art and culture. Marking the upcoming trends of profitable trading in culture was followed by Bihalji-Merin’s clear positioning against such manipulation of creativity and the system that should support the effectiveness of art and culture in a society.

His continuous engagements in publishing (publishing house NOLIT, numerous magazines that he started or edited in Belgrade, Berlin, Paris), visual arts and exhibition activities and journalism served as evidence that “art and politics are two streams that follow my life path”, which led to the creation of a discourse on “art as a dynamic life process”: for him, this was the basis of public cultural policies of a socialist and multicultural society such as Yugoslav, but which he advocated discreetly, more as an intellectual than as a political activist. Art was an indispensable part of social life and it held the keys to many social conflicts.

What is the role of art and culture and cultural workers and intellectuals in social construction and decomposition today? Cultural policy defined that role: “Can this world of our days, shaken in its foundations, and infinitely expanded in its horizons, be overcome by means of art?”^{o8} Oto Bihalji-Merin’s ideas about culture and art as a necessary factor of social transformation were inextricably linked to his belief in the possibility of a better world. Hope was the guide, as it is now. But today’s reading of all these reflections and questions, testimonies about the work in culture that were so broadly, comprehensively and essentially viewed and examined, should ask questions again about the marginalized position of culture. What should we do? ●

■

o8 Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Jedinstvo sveta u viziji umetnosti*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1974, p. 133.







Nikad se nisam okretao za dobrim
stariim vremenima: svako jutro
kad se probudim, interesuje me
zagonetka novog dana.

I never looked back on
old days: every morning
when I wake up, I'm int
by the mystery of a new





Oto Bihalji Merin: Morao sam biti prisutan I Had to Be Present

IZDAVAČ/PUBLISHER

Muzej savremene umetnosti

Museum of Contemporary Art

Ušće 10 • Blok 15 • 11070 Novi Beograd • Serbia

www.msub.org.rs

ZA IZDAVAČA / ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLISHER

Marijana Kolarić • direktorka/director

UREDNICI/EDITORS

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AUTORI TEKSTOVA / TEXTS BY

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PROOFREADING AND TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

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FOTOGRAFIJE/PHOTOGRAPHS

Bojana Janjić (MSUB/MOCAB)

DIZAJN/DESIGN

Andrej Dolinka

ŠTAMPA / PRINTED BY

Birograf • Beograd

Beograd • 2024.

TIRAŽ / PRINT RUN 450

ISBN 978-86-7101-413-7



Република Србија
Министарство културе



ORGANIZACIJA IZLOŽBE / EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

Muzej savremene umetnosti u Beogradu • Muzej naivne i marginalne umetnosti
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REALIZACIJU IZLOŽBE SU POMOGLI / EXHIBITION WAS SUPPORTED BY

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