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**NEW SPACES, NEW IMAGES.
THE EIGHTIES THROUGH THE PRISM OF EVENTS,
EXHIBITIONS AND DISCOURSES¹**

Summary:

In the final decade of Yugoslavia, characterized by social change, economic and political crisis, new spaces of art helped shape the art discourse of the period. Due to the economic situation and social changes, artists sought alternative ways of working under new conditions and making contact with their audience as well as with potential buyers. They gathered around various spaces that became catalysts of new artistic and social phenomena and nodes of cultural and political activities. Artists and curators collaborated on the local, republican level as well as on the

1 The article was originally published in Slovenian as a chapter in the publication *Eighties: Slovenia and Yugoslavia Through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions, and Discourses (Osemdeseta: Slovenija in Jugoslavija skozi prizmo dogodkov, razstav in diskurzov*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2018) edited by Igor Španjol (translated from Slovenian to English by Antonia Todić). It was written as a synopsis of the research done for the exhibition co-curated by the authors of the article in the Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana (Moderna galerija Ljubljana). The exhibition called *New Spaces, New Images. The 1980s through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions, and Discourses – Part 1 (Novi prostori, nove podobe. Osemdeseta skozi prizmo dogodkov, razstav in diskurzov – 1. del*, 14. oktober 2016 – 1. januar 2017, Moderna galerija Ljubljana) was part of an extensive project entitled *THE EIGHTIES*, which constituted part of the five-year program *The Uses of Art – the Legacy of 1848 and 1989*, organized by the museum confederation *L'Internationale*. It was supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Culture Programme of the European Union. You can find more information on the web site: <http://www.mg-lj.si/en/exhibitions/1835/the-eighties/> We would like to thank the museum director Zdenka Badovinac, book editor Igor Španjol and Moderna galerija Ljubljana for kindly allowing us to re-publish this text in English and to use the gallery photo material.

federal level. International connections intensified and study trips abroad became more frequent. At the same time, relations between the center and the periphery grew looser. In addition to established institutions, new art spaces and institutions influenced the art discourse. New themes and approaches in artistic production, previously considered marginal, took center stage. The article *New Spaces, New Images. The Eighties through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions and Discourses* gives an insight into the vivacious 1980s art scene in Slovenia, through the cross-section of the major exhibitions, events, and art spaces of the time.

Key words:

Slovenian art, 1980's, exhibitions, art events, self-organization of artists, decentralization

“There is no dominant style, no dominant discourse, no dominant hermeneutics, we are living in the Babylon of languages and gestures, expressions and data, beliefs and convictions – such would be the impression of someone who found oneself, unprepared and with no prior knowledge, in the current system of art.” Tomaž Brejc describing his view on the art of the eighties in 1988. (Brejc 2000, 145)

A presentation of the art of a certain decade demands that something that organically traverses and evolves without regard to given time limitations is put into rigid temporal frames. It is that much harder to chronologically delimit the “babylonian” eighties – a decade of paradoxes, eclecticism, continuity, transformations, transitions and breaks – and to discuss them separately from previous and subsequent years. The decade that began with the death of President Josip Broz Tito was the decade of the disintegration of the state, the beginning of the end of the socialist idea and way of life. The eighties were the years of political and economic crisis and of social change in all spheres of life, which brought about different ways of (self)organization, youth subculture, and civil society movements.

An introduction into the new decade was the great exhibition *Slovenian Art 1945–1978* in 1979 as an all-encompassing conclusion to the previous period, which was co-organized by the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna galerija, Ljubljana) and the Architecture Museum Ljubljana. With the goal of cataloguing and with its specific selection of art from the chosen period, the exhibition provided a well-rounded insight into the art of modernism, thus symbolically paving the path for a new chapter. Its importance was further emphasised by the extensive discussions about the selection of exhibited works, which divided the professional public. What was especially controversial was the exclusion of postmodern art, figural art and most of the representatives of the younger generation.² With this exhibition, the new Rihard Jakopič Fine Art Gallery was opened.³ After this overview of post-war artistic production, the Museum of Modern Art invited young artists to participate through a public invitation. The response was huge and at the *Exhibition of Young Slovenian Artists (Born after 1945)*, which took place in 1980 at the Rihard Jakopič Fine Art Gallery, as many as one hundred and two artists participated. Due to reasons of spatial organization, the exhibition was divided into two parts: the first one was devoted to works with a more figural art background, while the second part presented non-figural and abstract tendencies. The critics labelled the state of young art *circa* 1980 as eclectic and the presented works were subjected to several harsh critical responses, especially the decision that anyone could exhibit whatever

2 Besides the discussions in Slovenian media, the controversy echoed across Yugoslavia. Some of them were translated and published in the magazine *Sinteza* 47–49 (1979/198). The same issue also published a note written by the Slovene Art History Society and the Slovenian Association of Art Critics towards the end of the exhibition.

3 At the Rihard Jakopič Fine Art Gallery, a special part of the exhibition was put up, which presented architecture, urbanism, industrial design, visual design and photography for the first time in such an ambitious scope side by side with painting, sculpture and printing.

they wanted. The polemics around the exhibition of Slovenian fine art influenced the new set-up of the permanent collection in the Museum of Modern Art in 1980, which was complemented with the works of artists born after 1945 in January 1981. (Rogina 2002, 173)

The collective Grupa 69, which had been active since 1969 and had often faced accusations of monopolism and elitism, had its last exhibition in 1980 at the Rihard Jakopič Fine Art Gallery in Ljubljana. In a last attempt for its revival, the exhibition catalogue was even published as a supplement to the weekly newspaper *Teleks*, nonetheless Grupa 69 did not live to see the new times. On the other hand, 1980 was the year when the group Laibach was founded in Trbovlje in June, while Dejan Knez and his colleagues tried to organize the exhibition *The Alternative to Slovenian Culture* in the Delavski dom Trbovlje Cultural Centre. The exhibition was never realized, as it was prohibited by the local authorities. (Mizerit 2015)

In the seventies, a plan for the cultural development of Slovenia 1976–1980 was accepted, with increased funds mostly in favour of investments. There were many investments into local cultural centres that also organized exhibitions and were supposed to bring culture closer to the people. (Čopič and Tomc 1997, 123) The construction of Cankarjev dom Cultural Centre in Ljubljana, the temple of Slovenian culture, began in 1978. It was one of the biggest state investments besides the University Medical Centre. (Repe and Kerec 2017, 13) It hosted its first events already in 1980, and in 1984, the construction work for its biggest Gallus Hall was finished as well. By 1990, it had already hosted more than 7.000 events with more than 3 million guests attending. (Erjavec and Gržinič 1991, 28) Cankarjev dom greatly influenced the appearance of culture in Slovenia, as it had an important role as the congressional centre and the central institution of established culture and art. Besides its own production, it also hosted some of the more provocative works and multimedia events, including the Video Biennial CD since 1983.

The International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) was separated from the Museum of Modern Art at the end of 1986 and started operating in the renovated Tivoli Castle the following year. (Škrjanec 1993, 57–58) Zoran Kržišnik, who had left his several-years-long position as the director of Museum of Modern Art, became its director and Jure Mikuž assumed the leadership of the latter. (Rogina 2002, 175) During this time, Museum of Modern Art organized important retrospective exhibitions, including those of Emerik Bernard, Herman Gvardjančič, Bojan Gorenc and the overview exhibition of young artists *Experience of the Object*, which was curated by Zdenka Badovinac in 1989.

At the end of the decade, in 1989, there were 111 galleries and exhibition spaces in Slovenia. (Čopič and Tomc 1997, 181) Parallel to the national and municipal institutions, there were also smaller galleries, centres and exhibition halls, which provided important contributions to the cultural landscape. In the eighties in Ljubljana, besides the regular commercial galleries like Mladinska knjiga, ARS and Labirint, there were various occasional professionally or semi-professionally

led exhibition spaces: Bežigrad Gallery, ZDSLU Gallery, Lek Factory Gallery, Commerce Gallery, Krka Factory Gallery, Smelt Gallery, Ljubljanska banka Gallery, Arkade Gallery, Emonska Vrata Gallery and others. Among them, there were also galleries belonging to business companies, which played an increasingly important role on the art scene, both by investing in their own collections of art and with financial support for various cultural events. Galleries and other institutions cooperated with one another intensively, either within Slovenia or with other Yugoslav republics, in the co-organization of exhibitions, by hosting foreign or transferring their own production.

Culture and art had been opened to mass culture. They permeated various spaces, newspapers and popular media, the interiors of bars and restaurants, clubs, banks and hotels, as well as industrial sites. The medium of television also greatly characterized the period. On TV, it was possible to watch many educational and informational shows from the fields of art and culture.

These new spaces of art helped shape the art discourse of the period, leaning on various characteristics of the era. The first one is the pervasive tendency towards decentralization, which manifested as the development of cultural and exhibition centres across Slovenia. New and existing biennial and triennial events, their continuity, as well as their changed way of working, mirrored the cultural and economic climate of the new decade. Although operating in their local environments, most of them established astonishingly active cooperation with individual Yugoslav republics, or were integrated into international networks, thus contributing to the strong links of artists and curators with creatives from across the world. And finally, there was another important chapter in the eighties – the new forms of (self) organization and the work of artists, such as permanent labour communities and other alternative spaces, which functioned parallel to the established institutional models. These new spaces were what became the catalyst of new artistic and social phenomena and the nodes of cultural and political activities.

Decentralization and the Development of Regional Art Centres

An important part of the agenda of cultural politics was to balance the cultural events in the centre and on the periphery by promoting the development of regional cultural and art centres. This reflected on several levels. The Society of Slovenian Artists was transformed into the Association of Societies of Slovenian artists in 1982 and it consisted of regional societies. A more important role of the individual centres was also encouraged by new exhibition centres and biennial and triennial events, whose role had changed throughout the years. Some were established as an encouragement to the exhibitions of local artists, others as a way of connecting with artists and curators from other Yugoslav republics, but a



7th Yugoslav Biennial of Small-Scale Sculpture, Gallery of Cultural Center Miško Kranjec, Murska Sobota, 7 June – 7 August 1985. Photo: The Murska Sobota Gallery Archive

great majority connected the Slovenian art scene with the lively developments abroad, invited foreign guests to Slovenia and established networks on a global scale.

The first episode of *The Yugoslavian Biennial of Small-Scale Sculpture* took place in 1973 in Murska Sobota. Sculptors from all the republics participated, invited by the biennial's secretariat, the general secretary of which was Aleksander Bassin. Besides the sculptures, artists' drawings and the accompanying exhibitions by foreign guests were also on view. At the beginning of the eighties, the Biennial of

Small-Scale Sculpture moved to new spaces when a working unit of the Gallery of the Miško Kranjec Cultural Centre began to operate. The biennial was conceptualized ambitiously and included purchase prices, in which various companies participated, and selection was transferred to other cities in Yugoslavia (Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Novi Sad), as well as Ingolstadt in Germany. After the opening of Cankarjev dom, a selection of works was hosted in Ljubljana as well.

By continuously organizing the Biennial of Small-Scale Sculpture, and with new events and an active cultural scene, Murska Sobota was a unique and lively centre in the eighties. Among other things, a specific form of artistic collection was born there, which is at the same time a public park, the so-called *Mura Sculpture Park*. Leading companies of the Slovenian economy had been forming and expanding their own artistic collections since the sixties onwards. One of the most important was the collection of paintings and sculptures from Slovenian contemporary art, which was created through purchases and commissions by the Mura Fashion Factory in Murska Sobota from the beginning of the eighties onwards.⁴ Mura was a key motor for the economic development of the Pomurje Region, and at the same time an important sponsor of various cultural events in the region. In the early eighties, it supported the authorial project by the art historian Stane Bernik, who

4 The entire Mura collection is presented in the catalogue *Murina umetniška zbirka* (ed. Janez Balažic, Murska Sobota 1989), while the Pomurje Museum Murska Sobota published a smaller publication about the Mura Sculpture Park, *Murin park skulptur* by Janez Balažic in 2012, containing a brief history of the park and a list of the sculptures.

proposed the placement of selected works by Slovenian sculptors – Janez Boljka, Dragica Čadež Lapajne, Peter Černe, Tone Demšar, Janez Lenassi, Mojca Smerdu, Slavko Tihec, Dušan Tršar and Lujo Vodopivec – onto the new factory premises at Pleše. Nine monumental, mostly bronze sculptures were placed onto the green areas in between the factory buildings, based on careful landscape-architecture plans. They thus became, as public goods, a part of the everyday life for the factory workers.



Forma Viva International Symposium of Sculptors, Kostanjevica na Krki, 1984. Photo: Archive of Gallery Božidar Jakac, Kostanjevica na Krki

Concerning international networking, a still very important project was the *Forma Viva International Symposium of Sculptors*, which was started already at the beginning of the sixties as a working site and open-air gallery. Its initiators were Janez Lenassi and Jakob Savinšek, who attended a similar sculpting symposium in St. Margarethen in Burgenland. (Milovanović 2011) *Forma Viva* was founded as a state institution in 1961, first at two sites, in the park areas besides the former Cistercian monastery in Kostanjevica na Krki, where the working material was wood, and in Secca at Portorož, where stone was used. Later, two urban locations were added, Ravne na Koroškem with iron sculptures and Maribor with sculptures made in concrete. In the eighties, *Forma viva* was given new foundations. The younger generation of artists determined its new image, while organizational changes also influenced the selection and spatial placement of the sculptures. At the same time, the eighties saw the last echo of this locally and internationally extremely important event, which came to a halt at most sites at the end of the decade due to financial and organizational issues.

The International Biennial of Industrial Design – BIO, founded in 1964, remained a key event in the field of design in the eighties as well. Industrial and graphic design in the changing economic landscape were becoming an increasingly influential part of exhibitions. The Designers Society of Slovenia (DOS) and the Architecture Museum Ljubljana at organized exhibitions at various exhibition centres. On Igriška Street in Ljubljana, an Information and Documentation Centre for Design (IDCO) was operating, founded at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (GZS), which had its own exhibition spaces.

BIO, however, still represented the most influential event, which was hosted in new exhibition spaces at the beginning of the eighties, first at the Rihard Jakopič Fine Art Gallery, and from 1984 onwards in the foyer and reception hall of Cankarjev dom as well. Despite its apparent success, the new working conditions, which were determined by the increasingly difficult organizational and financial complications, can be seen in both the selection and the set-ups. (Bernik 1984, 99–110) The catalogues of the biennial point to another characteristic of the decade. The changed economic conditions and consequently financial issues of the biennial required more complex policies of advertising, as well as further market expansion. The need for a different functioning on the market directed the industry towards the use of design in various ways, such as investing in the re-design of products and in a more complex development of their own trademarks. The leading companies encouraged constantly new forms of products, as well as a refreshed visual design and expanded advertising techniques, which included TV ads besides the innovatively conceptualized printed media, or small promotional materials, such as badges, stickers and puzzles. These techniques can be seen primarily in the textile and clothing industry (Almira Knitting Industry, Vrhnika Leather Industry), headed by Mura and its action the “Muralists” in cooperation with Studio marketing Delo; in the furniture industry (Stol Kamnik and Meblo from Nova Gorica), at the companies Elan, Steklarna Rogaška or Paloma. (Repe and Kerec 2017, 109) All this was usually strongly represented at the biennials and often awarded.

Similar mechanisms were used by other social organizations, both cultural institutions and important political events, with comprehensive advertising in the public space. Larger events, such as Party Congresses, generally had their own comprehensive visual identities already from the mid-seventies onwards, which was usually publicly affirmed by the selection of materials in design exhibitions. (Požar 2015, 146–153) Industrial and graphic design was reinforced towards the end of the eighties by new generations of designers. The generation of extremely active designers, who mostly came from the Ljubljana School of Architecture, such as Peter Skalar, Janez Suhadolc, Judita Skalar, Miljenko Licul, Ranko Novak, Evita Lukež, Matjaž Vipotnik, Jani Bavčer, Nino Kovačević, Janez Koželj and others, were joined in the second half of the decade by the first graduates of the new study course for design. The Department of Design was established in 1984 at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts.

The Art Pavilion in Slovenj Gradec initiated the *Carinthian Art Biennial* in 1985. Members of the Slovenian Fine Artists Society who lived or worked in the Koroška region, or were in any way connected to it, were invited to participate. Participation was also possible through a public tender, in which an expert jury selected the works. The second biennial in 1987 was dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Art Pavilion Slovenj Gradec.

In 1980, the *Yugoslav Triennial Ecology and Art – EKO* was established, which tried to examine innovatively how artists think about the relation of society towards the environment. The beginning of the triennial coincided with the establishment

of a new exhibition space in Maribor, the Rotovž Exhibition Salon, where the triennial took place. With the help of art critics from across Yugoslavia, Rotovž established a triennial inter-republican event on the topic of ecology, which was becoming a more and more current issue. The triennial's aim was thus to "express ecological issues in an artistically immanent way as much possible, as well as the issue of the culture of human existence in the broadest material and spiritual way." (Gabršek-Prošenc 1989, 35) The first two EKO's were not limited content-wise, but due to the wish to achieve unity, the central topic of the third triennial in 1988 was water. The third EKO was also expanded spatially, onto the ground floor of the Maribor Art Gallery. Works of different art genres were exhibited at the events, as well as works by established names in art, dealing with the relationship between humans and nature through paintings and graphics, photographs, sculptures, videos, performances or architectural plans.

Despite both the scruples regarding the misconception of the relationship between art and ecology, and the conceptual vagueness, about which one can read in the reports from the time, the event was successful and attended well, both by the artists and by the broader public. (Gabršek-Prošenc 1989, 35; Subotić 1984, 183–187) It provided a new experimental form of exhibiting and with the choice of a current topic it actively entered the field of current social issues.

New biennial events were represented well in the Piran Coastal Galleries, where the international painting event *Ex-tempore* and the International Biennial of Combined Photography Koštabona had old traditions already. In a few years, the Coastal Galleries founded even more events with a continuous character: in 1979, the International Biennial of Tapestry, in 1980, the International Ceramics Biennial and in 1983, the international seminar Piran Days of Architecture. *The International Tapestry Biennial* focused on a medium that saw a revival in the eighties. In the 1960s, various weaving factories across Yugoslavia increasingly produced unique decorative textiles, which were mostly based on the works of painters and graphic designs, and were used to adorn large public, business and representational spaces. In the eighties, the tapestry gained a new momentum in the form of furnishings in hotels and banks, as well as in newly established cultural institutions. For the opening of Cankarjev dom, its great reception hall was covered in tapestry; it was created by the company Dekorativna based on the designs by Slovenian painters Janez Bernik, Lojze Spacal, Valentin Oman, Jože Ciuha and Vladimir Makuc. With the wish for federal connections, artists from other Yugoslav republics were also invited, such as Jagoda Buić, Etelko Tobolko, Mersad Berber, Milutin Kosić and Dimče Nikolov.

In the eighties, the tapestry experienced a radical transformation with the use of new materials and experiments – it came off the walls and became an autonomous plastic body in space. The Piran Biennial followed this development as well. Classical wall tapestries from the first biennial were soon joined by spatial experiments, in such great numbers, even, that only authors of spatial tapestries were invited to the third biennial. As a novelty, the organizers wanted to separate them from the classical two-dimensional



Eta Sadar Breznik, Spatial tapestry, 1981, cotton/viscose, originally exhibited in the 3rd International Biennial of Tapestry, Coastal Galleries Piran, July – August 1983 and recently included in the exhibition *New Spaces, New Images. The 1980s through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions, and Discourses – Part 1* (Museum of Modern Art 14 October 2016 – 1 January 2017, curators Asta Vrečko, Martina Malesič) Photo: Dejan Habicht, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana

tapestry. The leading experimental group, usually called simply “the Slavic current”, was comprised mostly of Yugoslav and Polish artists, among them Magdalena Abakanowicz and the already mentioned Jagoda Buić, while a well-known Slovenian representative was Eta Sadar-Breznik with her woven spatial objects, made of in situ woven belts and aluminium carriers. (Gabršek-Prošenc 1984, 164) The biennial of tapestry was extremely successful and well-visited event that followed the development of a medium and hosted the most renowned artists, which was noticed by established art critics as well. (Medved 1981, 11)

The Rise of New Art

In Slovenian painting, the transition from the seventies to the eighties was a time of fresh impetus, and Slovenian art underwent a similar turn to that of European and American of the period, where the new artistic current, the so-called New Painting (Nuova Immagine, Neoexpressionism, Neue Wilde, Bad Painting, New Image Painting) had arisen. This new artistic direction meant the prevalence of figural art and a certain break with the previous currents in art.

Several interrelated factors played a role in the establishment of the new artistic language. Slovenian artists were relatively well-informed about the developments around the world. An important factor as also the role of artists’ study visits abroad, especially in the United States of America. In 1980, Matjaž Počivavšek and Jože Slak departed to New York, just as Lujo Vodopivec and Tugo Šušnik returned from there. Besides the study visits abroad, exhibitions taking place nearby were also important. The travelling exhibition on American art and culture of the seventies, which was on view in Belgrade and Zagreb, came to the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in the autumn of 1979, but in a smaller presentation

entitled *American painting of the seventies*. It showed the works from the collection of the New Museum in New York, and the co-author of the exhibition was the important curator and critic Marcia Tucker. In general, the exhibition was well received, although a segment of the critics believed that the information Slovenians received about the lively developments in contemporary American painting was imperfect. (Brejc 1979, 13) In the opinion of Igor Zabel, it was possible to see certain examples of the new image. (Zabel 2003, 22) What was crucial for Slovenian painters in 1980 was the section at the Venice biennial *Aperto '80*, which had been organized by the Italian art critic, curator and the founder of the Transavantgarde Achille Bonito Oliva.

The first works that may be classified as Transavantgarde or New Image Painting appeared in 1980. (Brejc 200, 278) An important contribution to the establishment of new art in Yugoslavia was that of the *Piran Coastal Galleries* (Piran City Gallery, Loža Gallery, Meduza Gallery), thanks to their exhibition programme and their artistic leader, curator and art critic Andrej Medved, who received a scholarship in 1980 to study contemporary painting in Rome, where he met Bonito Oliva. On Medved's initiative, they prepared the exhibition *Podobe – Immagini, New Italian and Yugoslavian painting* in the Meduza Gallery in Koper at the end of 1981. There were fifteen artists at the exhibition, the second generation of Italian Transavantgarde was presented, as well as the first Yugoslavian Transavantgarde, which had, in Medved's opinion, "grown in the genesis of its own tradition and is now seeking contact with the European and American new painting." (Medved 1981)⁵ Accompanying the exhibition, there was a lecture by Achille Bonito Oliva explaining the works of the first Italian painters of the new current, while members of the younger generation were represented at the exhibition in Koper. At the same time, there was an exhibition in the Loža Gallery, *New Painting: The Eighties. Examples from Contemporary Croatian Painting*, where there were thirteen artists, selected by Zvonko Maković, and in the Piran City Gallery, there was Tomaž Brejc's exhibition *Young Slovenian Artists of the New Generation*. The exhibition *Podobe – Immagini* was also hosted at the Likovni salon Gallery in Celje, while a selection from all three exhibitions was on view at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery in Ljubljana in 1982.

A few months before the exhibitions on the Coast, Tomaž Brejc prepared the exhibition *Young Slovenian artists* at the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. When he was invited to move the exhibition to the Coastal Galleries, he published a letter in the catalogue, in which he wrote that the exhibition as it was in Belgrade is no longer possible, and that during the Belgrade exhibition he realised that it was "very hard for a single critic to occupy such an extraordinary position in relation to the artists, that there are different causes that render such a position quite difficult."⁶ Brejc otherwise supported the "progressive

5 The Yugoslavian artists at the exhibition were: Nina Ivančić, Metka Krašovec, Živko Marušič, Jože Slak, Andraž Šalamun, Joso Vrkić.

6 The artists participating in the exhibition *Young Slovenian Artists of the New Generation* were: Emerik Bernard, Lojze Čemažar, Milan Erič, Bojan Gorenc, France Gruden, Metka Krašovec,

gallery policies on the Coast” and invited fourteen artists to participate in the exhibition, although he left the decision about what they would exhibit in their own hands completely.

The Coastal Galleries with Medved and Tomaž Brejc’s Belgrade exhibition were the first to highlight the appearance of New Painting in Slovenian art. The two crucial New Painting theorists, however, did not share quite the same views on this artistic phenomenon. To Medved, the new painting meant a radical break with the art of the seventies, (Medved 2003, 66–71) while the starting point of Brejc was that modernism remained a part of the artists’ consciousness, but with their focus on the future. (Zabel 2004, 10–11) In the catalogue for the Belgrade exhibition (the text was reprinted for the catalogue of the exhibition in Piran), Tomaž Brejc provided a chronology of the events from the beginning of the seventies onwards that had influenced his selection.

These exhibitions were followed by a multitude of group and individual exhibitions across Slovenia, which consolidated the triumphant march of the New Image across the galleries in the early eighties. The Coastal Galleries established themselves as one of the most profiled regional galleries in Yugoslavia, which carried out publishing activities beside their extensive exhibition work. Their success was also the consequence of personal contacts that Medved nurtured with leading art critics, artists and gallerists from Rome, Modena, New York, Vienna, Cologne, Zürich and elsewhere. Through them, he wanted to promote Slovenian authors abroad, and he managed to bring key artists of the new wave to the Coast. An example of this was the exhibition *European and American Drawing* in 1982, where as many as seventy painters participated.

The new painting quickly spread to other institutions as well, for example the Mala galerija Gallery in Ljubljana, which was managed by the Museum of Modern Art. The latter simultaneously complemented its permanent collection with works of the new art, which it purchased from artists or directly at exhibitions. (Pogačnik-Grobelšek 1987) Artists of the New Image were also the members of TDS Equrna, where they exhibited their works regularly. In 1985, Ješa Denegri organized an important exhibition at the Equrna Gallery with the title *A Painting is a Ruin being Built*. In his opinion, the two common explanations of this turn in the art of the eighties – understood either as a “return to the painting” and an influence of the international markets, or as a consequence of criticism – are both inadequate, as they do not consider the problem-oriented questions that were posed by the new artists, and parallelly by those artists who had previous experience. (Denegri 1985)

The New Image was received with an interest and the media followed the developments without restraint. As Brejc wrote, the worst critics were actually the artists themselves. (Brejc 1983) The key Yugoslavian artists of this current were representatives at the biennial in Paris, the Venice Biennial and other international

Dušan Mandič, Živko Marušič, Matjaž Počivavšek, Duba Sambolec, Jože Slak, Andraž Šalamun, Tugo Šušnik, Andrej Trobentar, Savo Valentinčič and Lujo Vodopivec. (Brejc 1981)

events. Medved was the selector of the Yugoslav Pavilion at the Venice Biennial in 1986, where he introduced Emerik Bernard, Zvezdana Fia, Nina Ivančič, Mile Prodanović and Lujo Vodopivec. (Koščević 1988, 189) A day after the opening, Achille Bonito Oliva held a lecture as well. In the mid-eighties, the Coastal Galleries also presented the idea for the collection Contemporary Slovenian Art After 1976. The collection did not come to life without diatribes and reproach, which referred mainly to its national character and the lack of connection with the art of the Coastal region, as well as its narrow time scope, but in the end, it was to become one of the key collections of the new art. Medved, who provided the initiative, argued that the selection of the time scope was due to the milestone exhibition by Tomaž Brejc, *Tomo Podgornik, Andraž Šalamun, Tugo Šušnik* in 1976 at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana. This was the exhibition that had pointed to the appearance of a new generation of artists.

Postmodernism in Architecture and Plečnik's Exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in Paris

For Slovenian architecture, the most important, most characteristic event and the one with the largest response was the great exhibition about the architect Jože Plečnik at the Centre de Création Industrielle in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris from March 12 to May 26, 1986. This event was the pinnacle of the renewed interest in Plečnik, the rediscovery of the “forgotten” Plečnik in the eighties, which coincided with the appearance of postmodernism in Slovenian architecture. The postmodernist tendencies were becoming clearly pronounced at the end of the seventies, more so in the developing theory particularly of younger artists than in the postmodernist aesthetics of their works. As



Photos from the exhibition of Jože Plečnik, originally in Centre Pompidou in Paris, 1986, transferred to Ljubljana, hall A of the Exhibition and Convention Centre, 1986. Photo: Damjan Gale, Damjan Gale Archive

Nataša Koselj has already stated, the most important contributions of this generation were not in the architecture that was built, but in their theoretical and philosophical foundations. (Koselj 2003, 217) Most of the theory was hosted at the numerous activities of the working group from the circle around the *Architects' Bulletin – ab* magazine, the magazine of the Slovenian Architects' Society, in their writing, exhibitions and the events and discussions they organized. Skimming through the pages of the magazine, the key fields of interest of the period can be discerned, related to ideas such as tradition, continuity, identity, heritage, origin. There were not many presentations of contemporary production, most of the space was devoted to studies of older architects, local architecture, urban architecture, the original elements of architecture. One of the more active writers of the generation, Aleš Vodopivec, wrote in the following note the key postulates of the new architectural thought: "Right now, we are standing at the other end; that of today. In the belief that the essence of architecture is primarily within the historical development of the architectural profession itself. [...] It is about the search for the architectural within architecture. The original. To return to the origins of architecture, however, means to (re)think architecture from the standpoint of the city-form, or better – to ask in what way architecture can once again become the thought within the city's narrative." (Vodopivec 1980, 3)

Similar shifts in the fields of interests could be seen at the international seminar *Piran Days of Architecture*, an event that took place from 1983 onwards, organized by the Piran Coastal Galleries and the Architects' Society Ljubljana, which was of great importance as a means of connecting Slovenian architects with those from abroad. Each year, the Piran Days were focused on a specific topic that echoed the prevailing theoretical constant. The titles of the first meetings were "Architecture in Context", "Continuity in Architecture" and "Identity in Architecture", which were very meaningful exactly in their reference to postmodernist theory. (Koselj 2003, 226) The shifts in architectural thought, which questioned the postulates of modernism and aimed to renew the foundations of architecture, also encouraged an increased interest in the contemporaries of modernism, who had not renounced the traditional architectural forms and principles, but instead used them in their architectural work by means of reinterpretation. It is in this context that the revived interest in Plečnik should be understood, amongst both Slovenian and foreign architects at the beginning of the eighties. Contrary to the Slovenian architectural public, where Plečnik had been present more or less constantly, for Austrian and German, as well as English researchers, he presented quite a revelation. With the help of Luciano Semerani, Plečnik was also discovered by Venetian architectural circles (*Il ritorno del mito*, 1983). In Ljubljana in July 1983, there was an international symposium in Cankarjev dom, "Plečnik's Days", which was attended by several Slovenian and foreign experts.⁷ However, Plečnik was not a welcome topic merely

7 The contributions from the symposium were collected in journal *Sinteza*, 65–68, in 1985, edited by Stane Bernik.

for studying, but also for the most diverse interpretations. At the same time, in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Venice, there was a photographic exhibition *Columns of Plečnik* by Damjan Gale, one of the most active architectural photographers of the time and the main documentarian of contemporary architectural production.

The increased interest in Plečnik at home as well as abroad reached a peak with the great Parisian exhibition. The author of the exhibition was architect Boris Podrecca,⁸ the commissariat was comprised of the then director of CCI François Burkhardt, otherwise a connoisseur of Plečnik's work, and the art historians Damjan Prelovšek and Lojze Gostiša, while Peter Krečič (Architecture Museum Ljubljana) also participated in the execution of the exhibition. The exhibition was not simply a classical presentation of the architect's work. As the author of the set-up, Podrecca in fact had a very difficult job indeed – he had to place Plečnik's classicism into the industrial interior of the Centre. He created a space within the space. He framed the exhibition grounds with the replicas of the Triple Bridge and the Gregorčič Monument made of wood at a scale of 1: 1. With this scale and the materials, he imbued the space with a different character, which only then enabled the visitor to enter the visual world of Plečnik's architecture and experience the real dimensions of his micro-urbanist interventions. Only when the space had been directed in this way, he placed walls with presentation panels, chairs and models inside. The successful, resounding exhibition with high attendance travelled to all larger European and American cities. The Slovenian public saw it in Ljubljana, in Hall A at the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre at the end of 1986 (20 November 1986–4 January 1987). Janez Suhadolc and Evita Lukež designed the visual identity of the exhibition, from posters to postcards. In the nineties, the Parisian exhibition (in a reduced form) became the permanent Plečnik exhibition in the new spaces of the Architecture Museum Ljubljana at Fužine Castle.

The Social Status of Artists and New Forms of Organizing

When researching the social status of artists, cultural workers and institutions, reports of their unresolved status and inadequate financing are bound to arise. The share of funds intended for culture and social activities, though, was increasing constantly in the period from 1978 to 1989 (from 4,1 to 6,1 percent), and at the same time, the number of art students was also rising – it tripled from 1979 to 1989. (Čopič 1997, 67, 78) At the beginning of the eighties, most of the artists from all fields were employed in various organizations, where they performed artistic or

8 The architect Boris Podrecca is one of those authors that had substantially marked some the key interiors of the eighties, which still represent the most successful examples of postmodernism in Slovenia: the bar and bistro Platana and the Dessa Gallery in Ljubljana, as well as the St. Donatus Gallery in Piran.

some other kind of work related to their profession (e.g. teachers in schools and at the academy etc.), while their creative work took place during their “free” time. The reasons for this were different. The aforementioned organizations required their specific knowledge, some individuals refused to subject themselves to the artistic profession alone, or their work in art did not meet their existential needs. “The Analysis of Certain Elements of the Socioeconomic Status of Independent Artists in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia”, which was conducted by the Republican Committee for Culture and Science in Ljubljana in 1981, reported that there were around 400 artists, who were not employed and survived solely on artistic work, in all fields of art at the beginning of the eighties. The far and away largest share of the self-employed worked in art (a full half) – in 1984, there were 405 persons registered as self-employed (both those who paid their own social security contributions and those who had them covered by the state), and 1169 in 1989. Between the years 1975 and 1989, the number of students studying for artistic professions also rose by thirty percent. (Čopič and Tomc 1997, 234–235) At that time, fine artists concluded that in no other form of art the artistic result is regarded an object and commodity to such a high degree as in the case of fine arts. Most of them were members of professional societies, through which they were able to exert their rights, and of the trade union of autonomous workers in the field of culture. Thus, the Association of Fine Artists regularly called attention to the alarming conditions of work of the independent artists. A permanent point on the daily agenda was the fight for studios; although their number had been increasing in Ljubljana, at least, there were also issues beyond their lack, namely organizational issues concerning their allocation. The position of young artists was especially difficult. Young artists, who usually had to perform labour that was not central to their work, therefore had less time for art, and at the same time, they often worked in inappropriate conditions, which could also affect the quality of their work. Artists sustained themselves by selling their works, and occasionally participated in designing the artistic equipment for public buildings. At the beginning of 1980, the Republican Committee for Culture launched an initiative for the introduction of a law that would legally bind investors of public buildings to assign a part of the investment funds for artistic equipment, but because there was no appropriate legal basis for the solution to this issue, they decided to try and resolve it by means of a social agreement.

The beginning of the eighties brought changes in the legal area as well. Since 1974, legal regulation had managed the field of culture in such a way that cultural activities were declared activities of particular social importance and were regulated by special laws for individual areas (e.g. for cultural-artistic activities). Municipal cultural societies and the Cultural Community of Slovenia usually carried out the redistribution of public funds, while a part was directed through the Students Association and the League of Communist Youth of Slovenia. (Praznik 2016, 109, 111) In 1978, a proposal for the Law on Independent Artists came out. It triggered a widespread debate among all those concerned and was in harmonization for two years. Under the name The Law on Independent Cultural

Workers it was published in the *Official Gazette* on 12 March 1982. It was supposed to regulate the equalization of the socio-economic position of independent artists from the perspective of equal participation in self-managing interest groups. The connection between artists and cultural associations was supposed to protect them from the exploitation of their work, to link them with workers in organizations and render them equal. It was supposed to consolidate the social security of independent artists, at the same time providing basic conditions for their creative work and the development of their activities. With this law, cultural communities were supposed to become much more a social space to manage the socio-economic status of independent cultural workers and enable them the direct and equal assertion of their interests. The Law on independent cultural workers included not only the so-called artistic professions, but also determined which other cultural activities can be performed independently as well.

A significant novelty was the definition 35 of a legal institute of temporary and permanent labour communities (Trajna delovna skupnost abbreviated in Slovene as TDS), which could be founded by independent cultural workers, allowing them to “ensure the conditions for their artistic or cultural work, organize this work or ensure the accessibility of their works and services to users.” This was a novelty in Yugoslavia, as the legislation of other republics did not enable independent artists such a way of organizing. In the first four years of the law’s existence, ten permanent labour communities were established for various activities, and only one of them ceased to work in that period. (Jagec 1986, 75)

In November 1980, about 40 artists met for the first time, among whom almost none were employed, with the wish to establish a cooperative of visual artists. They believed it would be easier for them to solve their existential issues together. As two key problems, they stressed the lack of suitable spaces for exhibiting the current production of the younger and middle generations of fine artists, and the lack of opportunities to sell their works. In Ljubljana, there were two commercial galleries, ARS and Labirint, where smaller exhibitions were organized, but the artists did not consider them appropriate for the sale of their works, especially those of a larger format. In the ARS Gallery, which had two units in Ljubljana, antiques, books, art supplies and decorative products were also on sale. In the Labirint Gallery, which specialised in art only, the space was reduced due to the construction of Cankarjev dom, so that it focused on the sale of smaller-format paintings and prints. To solve these issues, artists often organized exhibitions in their own studios. Lujo Vodopivec even arranged the Tivoli Gallery in his studio in 1980, where he hosted various exhibitions of young artists. The artists founding the cooperative got in touch with art historians and gallerists Marjeta Marinčič and Taja Vidmar-Brejc, who had already worked together in the Labirint Gallery, while the latter was also the artistic leader of ŠKUC and, among other things, had helped in obtaining its new space at Stari trg.

However, between the first meeting and the official registration, there were many complications. The registration of the cooperative was unsuccessful, as the legal form was not appropriate for creative artists. At the same time, the Law on Independent Cultural Workers was adopted, defining the possibility of founding

labour communities. *The Permanent Labour Community of Independent Cultural Workers Ljubljana* (TDS) was instituted at the founding meeting on 20 September 1982. At the beginning, it counted 46 members, independent cultural workers, who “joined their work or works and funds within it, in order to ensure the conditions for their artistic and cultural work, organize that work and ensure the accessibility of their works and services to the users.” The founding members were:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Todorče Atanasov | 17. Dušan Kirbiš | 33. Darko Slavec |
| 2. Emerik Bernard | 18. Metka Krašovec | 34. Andraž Šalamun |
| 3. Jiri Bezljaj | 19. Igor Kregar | 35. Iztok Šmajš |
| 4. Milena Braniselj | 20. Tone Lapajne | 36. Tugo Šušnik |
| 5. Jakov Brdar | 21. Lojze Logar | 37. Velo Tašovski |
| 6. Bojan Breclj | 22. Janoš Miklavc | 38. Andrej Trobentar |
| 7. Dragica Čadež | 23. Živko Marušič | 39. Pavle Učakar |
| 8. Lojze Čemažar | 24. Iztok Osojnik | 40. Janko Testen |
| 9. Zvonko Čoh | 25. Dušan Pirih-Hup | 41. Miha Vipotnik |
| 10. Milan Erič | 26. Matjaž Počivavšek | 42. Jernej Vilfan |
| 11. Tomaž Gorjup | 27. Tomo Podgornik | 43. Lujo Vodopivec |
| 12. Fred Gruden | 28. Marko Pogačnik | 44. Alenka Vogelnek |
| 13. Herman Gvardjančič | 29. Marija Rus | 45. Žare Vrezec |
| 14. Zdenko Huzjan | 30. Eta Sadar-Breznik | 46. Cveto Zlate |
| 15. Lado Jakša | 31. Dubravka Sambolec | |
| 16. Sergej Kapus | 32. Jože Slak | |



Opening the new gallery space Eburna, The Permanent Labour Community of Independent Cultural Workers Ljubljana, 27 November 1984. Photo: The Eburna Gallery Archive

The statute also defined the Eburna Gallery unit, which was the established name for the permanent labour community. The reason that the TDS was officially named Ljubljana were difficulties during the registration, when the word Eburna could not be used because the letter Q is not part of the Slovenian alphabet. The programme of the TDS Eburna had been conceived ambitiously from the very beginning. Besides preparing exhibitions, its activities

also included the organization of lectures, seminars, art colonies and study trips, the execution of art projects and multimedia actions and other forms of conveying art to the broadest circle of people. An important part of its activities, defined already in the Founding Act, was advising and selling the artwork and services by its members, as well as the sale and lending of art products, video production and other materials from the field of art.

Equrna began its commercial exhibition activities in the summer of 1981, and until it attained its own spaces, it was hosted by various venues. For example, its members were presented in the atrium of the Ljubljana Magistrate, they organized commercial exhibitions by their members in the Slon Hotel, and they organized larger exhibitions in Murska Sobota and the Ljubljana City Gallery in 1983. The search for an appropriate space for their activities had begun quite a while before the official registration, but it took a lot of time, requests, inventiveness and lobbying before they were given their own gallery. They had previously expressed interest in various locations, both at the Trg francoske revolucije (French Revolution Square) and on the Stari trg (Old Square). They had no success in obtaining them, so at the end they registered in the apartment building on Dvorčak Street where



Recording of the TV show from the exhibition *Genius Loci, Trije slikarji iz Kopra* (Three Painters from Koper), Equrna Gallery, 18 September – 8 October 1986. Photo: The Equrna Gallery Archive



Art works, originally exhibited in different exhibitions in Equrna gallery and later included in the exhibition called *New Spaces, New Images. The 1980s through the Prism of Events, Exhibitions, and Discourses – Part 1* (Museum of Modern Art 14 October 2016 – 1 January 2017, curators Asta Vrečko, Martina Malešič) Photo: Dejan Habicht, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana

Taja Vidmar-Brejc was living. In 1984, they managed to obtain exhibition space on Gregorčičeva 3, which were previously used as a storehouse and needed extensive renovation. For several months, the members of the TDS Equrna, together with the gallerists, renovated and arranged them. They were helped through sponsorships by the companies Helios, JUB, Iskra, Lesnina, Slovenijales. In exchange for paints and other material necessities, the members of TDS Equrna often gave sponsors works of art, sometimes they were even paying workers with paintings. New exhibition space opened on 27 November 1984 with a group exhibition.

An important aspect of the functioning of TDS Equrna was consulting private collectors about purchasing works and companies about furnishing their business spaces, hotels and restaurants. For their functioning, the cooperation with companies was crucial, as they not only purchased works but also sponsored the activities of the gallery. The most intensive cooperation was that with the company Iskra Delta, Production of computer systems and engineering, which supported the work of TDS Equrna as a sponsor from the very beginning. At the specialised computer event Informatika-Interbiro in the context of the Zagreb Fair, Iskra Delta included in their presentation an exhibition, where painters Žarko Vrezec (1982) and Darko Slavec (1983) were presented. As a result of long-term cooperation, they also signed a self-managing agreement with the Iskra company.

In less than a decade, the TDS Equrna managed to organize around one hundred exhibitions and to present themselves at important art fairs in Basel and Los Angeles. Members of Equrna exhibited at the largest events, such as the Venice

Biennial, the Biennial of Youth in Paris, the Biennial in Sao Paulo, Intart, the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, the Young Artists Biennial in Rijeka and others.

The fruitful cooperation with art critics and theorists and the skilful managing of the gallery contributed to the fact that its activities introduced new discourses about art and new approaches to the popularisation of works of art on the Slovenian art scene.

Architects and designers faced similar problems to those of the fine artists. *DESSA* was founded



Exhibition The 100th issue of AB magazine, Dessa Gallery, September 1989. Photo: Damjan Gale, DESSA Archive

as a *Permanent Labour Community of Independent Cultural Workers – Architects* in 1982, to provide its members, independent architects, a social status and facilitate their operations with a shared administration. Until then, as members of the Society of Architects Slovenia (DAS) they could work as independent artists, but they were not authorized to sign plans, which meant that they could only project smaller things that were not conditioned by building permits. At the same time, there were not many state jobs for young architects due to the economic crisis. The solution in the form of permanent labour communities was therefore more than welcome. (ed. Cajnko and Hrausky 2014, 12–19) The labour community of independent architects, shortened as DESSA, was founded on 10 June 1982. From the very beginning, the representative of the council of the working community was Andrej Hrausky, who also led their exhibition activities together with Majda Cajnko.

The founding members of DESSA were:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ivan Šraj | 15. Maja Štembal | 28. Dušan Kramberger |
| 2. Borut Delak | 16. Dubravka Savič | 29. Bogomir Motoh |
| 3. Dušan Kajzer | 17. Borut Malnar | 30. Darinka Motoh-Černila |
| 4. Majda Cajnko | 18. Andrej Goršič | 31. Vinko Torkar |
| 5. Milena Škrl | 19. Marko Rener | 32. Goran Arh |
| 6. Marinka Škrilec | 20. Jana Gojanovič-Purger | 33. Vanda Mikluž |
| 7. Andrej Hrausky | 21. Ivan Bergant | 34. Damjan Gale |
| 8. Edi Berk | 22. Izidor Simčič | 35. Anina Logar |
| 9. Miro Benulič | 23. Stanislava Pustoslemšek | 36. Katarina Pirkmajer Dešman |
| 10. Mojca Švigelj Černigoj | 24. Jasna Lempl | 37. Andrej Nolda |
| 11. Irena Černič | 25. Štefan Šček | 38. Iztok Rus |
| 12. Irena Jesse | 26. Alenka Sfiligoj | |
| 13. Mika Berlič | 27. Dalija Tanšek | |
| 14. Sonja Kolar | | |

In the beginning, DESSA did not have its own gallery and organized its first overview exhibition of the works of its members in the sister organization Equrna. Among the first exhibitions, there were also the photograph exhibitions of Damjan Gale *The Photography of Architecture* in 1986 at the Arkade exhibition spaces in Ljubljana and *Columns of Plečnik*, co-organized with AML in 1982, which travelled across Europe. DESSA obtained its own architectural gallery only in 1989.

At first, the gallery was intended for the education of Slovenian architects through lectures, excursions and exhibitions about what was being built abroad. An important role in this was that of the international seminar Piran Days of Architecture. Besides the educational purposes, the wish for their own gallery space had grown out of the circumstances, which did not enable young architects to exhibit their work, despite the fact that this was an important part in keeping

their status of independent cultural workers. Architectural exhibitions were linked primarily to two institutions, the Architects' Society Slovenia and the Architecture Museum Ljubljana. The latter had been operating in Plečnik's House on Karunova Street in Ljubljana since its founding in 1972. Their exhibitions were hosted at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery and in the City Museum, Cankarjev dom, the galleries Arkade, IDCO and Emonska vrata in Ljubljana, as well as elsewhere in Slovenia. The Architecture Museum Ljubljana organized historical exhibitions, however, of contemporary production, it presented mostly the already established personas in architecture. One of the most important exhibitions was the exhibition of the architect Milan Mihelič in 1980 at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery, which was done in cooperation with Stane Bernik and attained a huge success. It travelled all the way from Sarajevo and Belgrade to Wrocław and Ciudad de Mexico. The museum was also active in promoting contemporary design within BIO and with exhibitions of individual designers, such as the designer from Stol company, Branko Uršič, in 1982 at the Likovni salon Gallery Celje.

Architect Boris Podrecca designed the project of the adaptation of ground-floor spaces on Židovska Street 4 in Ljubljana into a gallery and Matej Vozlič drew the plans. They renovated the gallery, as in the case of Equrna, mostly on their own, as much as they could. It opened its doors in April 1989. The first visual identity of DESSA was designed by Ranko Novak, who also designed invitations, posters and catalogues for most of the exhibitions in their early years. In the DESSA Gallery, especially in the eighties, the exhibitions of foreign architects were key; Slovenians' exhibitions were rare, as exhibiting contemporary architecture was not an existing practice, but also because there were little architectural realizations due to the economic situation. However, they wrote and discussed extensively during the time about the ontological issues in architecture, especially in the circle of the magazine *The Architect's Bulletin (ab)*. It was the group of architects, joined around the *ab* magazine, which directed the architectural discourse in Slovenian space with its strongest activities in the field of theory, writings, exhibitions and organization of discussions. It is therefore not surprising that the exhibitions that emphasised theory were more frequent at the time. One of the largest exhibitions in DESSA was thus not an exhibition of architectural production, but the exhibition *The 100th Issue of ab Magazine* in 1989, in which various activities, organized by the editorial board, were presented alongside the magazine covers. Among the more important and very characteristic of the time of its formation was the exhibition *architecture + word* at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery in 1981, which juxtaposed the architectural drawing and plan with the writings on architecture and thus exhibited them as equally important.⁹

The Student Cultural and Art Centre – ŠKUC was founded at the beginning of the seventies, and it was comprised of various redactions or sections (such as art, theatre, film, music, dance). In June 1978, ŠKUC obtained its own spaces on Stari trg 21 in Ljubljana, which meant a decisive turn in its activities. Art institutions had been

9 The catalogue of the exhibition that travelled to larger Yugoslavian cities, was published as a special issue of the *ab* journal in June 1981.

inaccessible to younger generations and the new space meant a welcome contribution to the diversity of artistic life. (Gržinić 1988, 2) Taja Vidmar-Brejc became the redactor of the ŠKUC art section, succeeded by Dušan Mandič in 1980. In 1982, the position of redactor was filled by Marina Gržinić and Barbara Borčič. The change in leadership also meant a change in the exhibition policy of the gallery. In its initial period, most of the names of the new image painting were presented in ŠKUC, some of whom later relocated to Equurna, but remained connected to ŠKUC.

After the other redactions of ŠKUC to Kersnikova Street in Ljubljana in 1983 and 1984, the spaces on Stari trg were intended mainly for the art redaction, which came to life as the ŠKUC Gallery. The ŠKUC Society often had spatial and financial issues, and the art redaction also worked on limited funds, but this did not stop the creative élan and the enthusiasm of its co-workers. In this period, ŠKUC Gallery was the central cultural and alternative exhibition space in Ljubljana. Artists from Slovenia, from other republics of Yugoslavia and from abroad organized monographic and group exhibitions and projects in the gallery. With this, it became the hub for young artists and theorists and the venue for alternative and subcultural production. In the ŠKUC Gallery, unconventional exhibitions found their place, as did opposition to the institutional culture, the new understanding of fine art, new media and art practices (e.g. graffiti painting), as well as multimedia projects, not just in fine art, but also in the fields of fashion, architecture and photography. The gallery's activities were complemented by the publishing of posters, publications, music and video cassettes, both independently and within the production of the ŠKUC Gallery Izdaja Publishing from 1981 onwards. They published the multipurpose catalogue *VIKS* – the independent newsletter of the ŠKUC-Forum. Marina Gržinić, with the support of Stane Bernik, published in 1987 – as a special publication of the journal *Sinteze* – the catalogue *ŠKUC Gallery Ljubljana 1978–1987*, in which she presented chronologically the contents and the activities of the gallery. Along with the catalogue, a 120-minute cassette *Artistic Video Bank: projects of the ŠKUC Gallery* was published, which was prepared by Marina Gržinić and Božo Zadavec and shows the 44 projects between the years 1983 and 1988.¹⁰

In 1985, there were several different projects and texts that discussed the phenomena of new art of the eighties. One of those was *New Tendencies in Art and Mass Culture '80*. It was organized by ŠKUC and included an exhibition, video-projections, lectures by Rastko Močnik, Tine Hribar, Dimitrij Rupel and Niko Grafenauer, and the third number of the *VIKS* newsletter was devoted to it. In the opinion of Igor Zabel, in the mid-eighties, the possibility arose to understand alternative and so-called high culture as one single field; he considered as one of those attempts the exhibition by Tomislav Vignjevič, who was still a student of art history at the time, which he organized within the aforementioned project in ŠKUC. (Zabel 2004, 19) At the exhibition *New Tendencies in Art and Mass Culture*, artists from different generations and currents appeared: Janez Bernik, who was

10 *Video banka: Galerija ŠKUC: 1983–1988*. Authors: Marina Gržinić, Božo Zadavec, animation: Milan Erič, Zvonko Čoh, production: Galerija ŠKUC, sponsor: Sreten Živojinović, Video Studio Trippo.

considered one of the most established artists, representatives of new painting and sculpture – Emerik Bernard, Metka Krašovec, Tugo Šušnik, Andraž Šalamun, Duba Sambolec and Jože Slak –, as well as the collectives IRWIN and Laibach.

Towards the end of the eighties, the social and political situation had already changed considerably. The relations within the system of art also changed considerably. Many novelties from the beginning of the decade faded away, the alternative at the end of the eighties had become intertwined with the prevailing discourses of culture and art, and this intertwining created a plural art scene in the last decade of socialist Yugoslavia.

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**NOVI PROSTORI, NOVE SLIKE.
OSAMDESETE KROZ PRIZMU DOGAĐAJA,
IZLOŽBI I DISKURSA**

Apstrakt:

Tokom poslednje decenije postojanja Jugoslavije, koju su odlikovale društvene promene, ekonomska i politička kriza, novi umetnički prostori su doprineli oblikovanju diskursa umetnosti ovog perioda. Zbog ekonomske situacije i socijalnih transformacija, umetnici su tražili alternativne načine rada u novim uslovima, ostvarujući kontakt sa publikom, kao i sa potencijalnim kupcima. Oni su se okupljali oko različitih prostora koji su postali katalizatori novih umetničkih i društvenih fenomena i čvorišta kulturnih i političkih aktivnosti. Umetnici i kustosi su saradivali na lokalnom i republičkom nivou, kao i na federalnom nivou. Međunarodne veze su intenzivirane, a studijski boravci u inostranstvu su postali sve češća praksa. U isto vreme su odnosi između centra i periferije postajali slabiji. Uz etablirane institucije, novi umetnički prostori i institucije su uticali na diskurs umetnosti. Nove teme i pristupi umetničkoj produkciji, koji su prethodno smatrani marginalnim, zauzeli su centralno mesto. Ovaj prilog daje uvid u dinamičnu umetničku scenu osamdesetih godina dvadesetog veka u Sloveniji iz perspektive velikih izložbi, događaja i umetničkih prostora ovog perioda.

Ključne reči:

umetnost u Sloveniji, osamdeset godina dvadesetog veka, izložbe, umetnički događaji, samoorganizacija umetnika, decentralizacija