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THE ECHO OF IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ'S PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL FINE ART EXHIBITION HELD IN ROME IN 1911 IN HIS HOMELAND

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Abstract

The International Exhibition of Art held in 1911 in Rome was of great importance to Ivan Meštrović. The young artist rejected the invitation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to exhibit in the pavilion of Austria or Hungary and, instead, initiated the participation of the Kingdom of Serbia. This decision was a way to publicly express his political beliefs and anti-Monarchical tendencies. Ivan Meštrović dominated the Pavilion with 77 works, mainly selected from his Kosovo cycle, in which he aspired to visualize the Vidovdan Temple. The exhibition was well-covered in the media, and the Serbian Pavilion was notable mostly because of Meštrović's works. Written correspondence with family and friends, in particular with doctor Filip Davidović Marušić, describes how Meštrović's great success was celebrated in his native region. In those years, Meštrović began to receive orders from local authorities for public monuments, showing that they considered the symbolic potential of his early work acceptable and appropriate for new public monuments. Unfortunately, however, World War I prevented their realization.

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INTRODUCTION

The first decade of the 20th century was a formative period for the young Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962), both in the field of artistic expression and in the field of national and political self-determination. The search for his own authentic artistic expression was combined with his desire to reshape the recognizable iconography of South Slavic mythology based on the myth of the Battle of Kosovo.¹

The group of sculptures that Meštrović presented at the International Exhibition in Rome in 1911 was created over a period of several years. He developed and worked on his idea for the Temple of Vidovdan mostly during his stay in Paris (1908–1909). Some of the sculptures had already been presented

¹ The Kosovo Myth originated from Serbian historical heritage and is closely linked to Serbian nationalism and Orthodoxy, but Ivan Meštrović completely reconstructed it – historically, morally and artistically. Therefore, it is not surprising that his artistic interpretations did not sit well with orthodox Serbian nationalists. For more about Ivan Meštrović's reinterpretation of Kosovo Myth see Duško Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića (1883.–1962.–2002.)* [The Life of Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962–2002)], vol. 1, (Split: Školska knjiga, 2009), 305–306.

at exhibitions in other European cities,² and provoked mixed reactions from audiences. Negative responses were mainly caused by their political connotations, while his sculptural skills mostly received positive reactions. Among these exhibitions, the most significant were two held in 1910: the 35th Art Nouveau Exhibition, which was a solo exhibition in Vienna, and the *Meštrović-Rački Exhibition* held in Zagreb. At the 35th Art Nouveau Exhibition,³ Meštrović exhibited 62 works, including 25 fragments of the Vidovdan Temple.⁴ On the basis of that exhibition, Viennese cultural circles perceived a new style developed under the influence of the Croatian folk heritage and oral literature. However, according to Irena Kraševac's observations, this exhibition was only a prelude to the extensive artistic and political program presented at the International Exhibition in Rome.⁵ The exhibition was not without scandal, as the Austrian government intended to buy the sculpture *Memory* but, due to its obvious political connotations, ultimately did not.⁶ Meanwhile, at the *Meštrović-Rački Exhibition* in Zagreb's Art Pavilion Meštrović exhibited 92 sculptures, 37 of which were related to the Vidovdan Temple.⁷

120 By the middle of 1910, preparations for the great International Exhibition in Rome had already begun. Meštrović received invitations from both Austria and Hungary to exhibit – each of the halves of dual Monarchy had their own pavilion – but he declined both of them. Instead, he sent a letter to Belgrade on his own initiative, asking openly whether the Kingdom of Serbia would have its own pavilion because Croatian artists were willing to join their Slavic brothers. At the insistence of the Hungarian Government, the Provincial Government for the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia asked Meštrović and other young artists gathered in the Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika “Medulić” (Association of Croatian Artists “Medulić”) to give up the idea of exhibiting in the Serbian Pavilion because Hungary intended to provide a hall for them, but they resolutely refused. Their decision was sealed by the exhibition, *Despite an Unheroic Age*, which was held at the end of 1910 in the Art Pavilion in Zagreb. According to Meštrović, for this exhibition “a dozen of us younger artists made over a few months an *ad hoc* cycle inspired by folk songs, with the intention of transferring it to Rome.”⁸

2 For more on this topic, see Irena Kraševac, *Ivan Meštrović i secesija: Beč–München–Prag 1900–1910* [Ivan Meštrović and Secession: Vienna–Munich–Prague 1900–1910] (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, Fundacija Ivana Meštrovića, 2002), 127–148.

3 A digitized exhibition catalogue is available at the Belvedere Digital Library, accessed November 18, 2021, https://digitale-bibliothek.belvedere.at/viewer/image/1415194440575/1/LOG_0000/

4 Sandi Bulimbašić, “Prilog identifikaciji djela Ivana Meštrovića na izložbama u prva dva desetljeća 20. stoljeća” [A Contribution to the Identification of Ivan Meštrović's Works at the Exhibitions in the First Two Decades of the 20th Century], *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti*, no. 39 (2015): 156.

5 Kraševac, *Ivan Meštrović i secesija*, 124.

6 Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića*, 202; Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* [Memories of Political People and Events] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1969), 16–17.

7 Bulimbašić, “Prilog identifikaciji djela Ivana Meštrovića,” 156; Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića*, 206; Kraševac, *Ivan Meštrović i secesija*, 123.

8 Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene*, 17. All translations are by the author. See also Sandi Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika “Medulić” (1908.–1919.): umjetnost i politika* [The Association of Croatian Artists “Medulić”

Fig. 1. The Serbian pavilion in Rome, 1911, postcard, Il museo del Louvre, Rome, accessed on November 24, 2021, <https://www.ilmuseodelouvre.com/prodotto/esposizione-internazionale-di-belle-arti-roma-1911-4-cartoline/>.

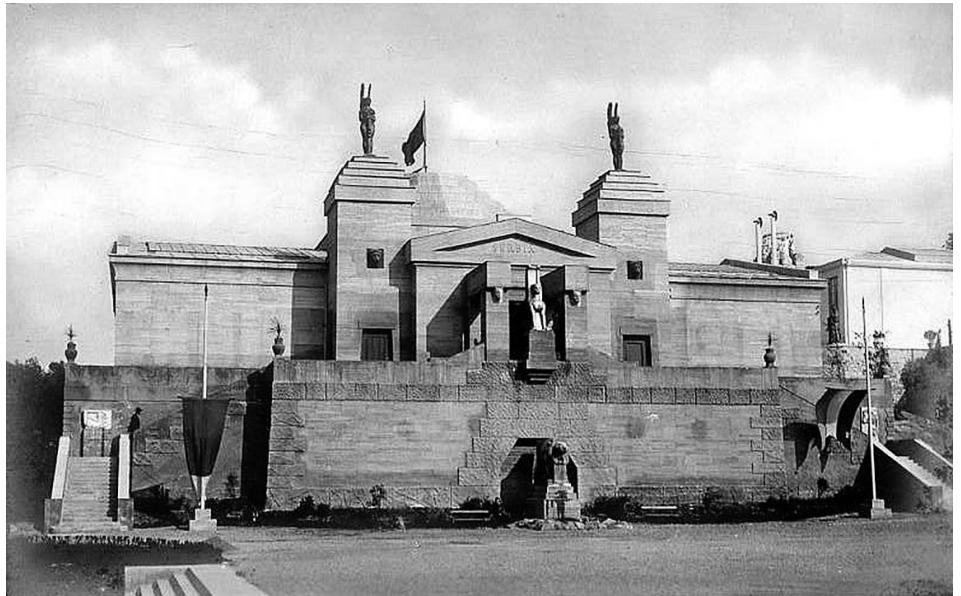
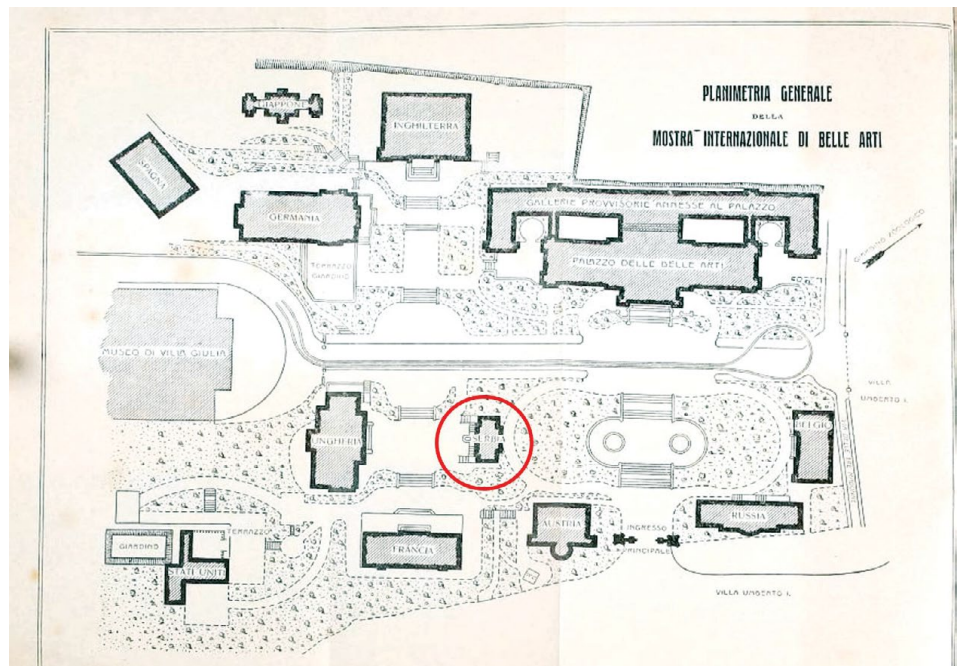


Fig. 2. Planimetria Generale della Mostra Internazionale di belle arti [General plan of the International Fine Arts Exhibition], 1911, in: *Catalogo della Mostra di Belle Arti* (Roma, 1911), accessed on November 24, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/catalogodellamo-s00inte/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater>. The Serbian Pavilion is marked in red by the author.



The Kingdom of Serbia received an invitation to participate in the exhibition in 1908, but Meštrović's proposal to join was a key incentive for them to decide to participate. The pavilion was designed by the Serbian architect Petar S. Bajalović with a large share of Meštrović's ideas, since the architectural and artistic concept was supposed to present the appearance of the future Vidovdan Temple (**fig. 1**). The Serbian pavilion was officially opened on April 10, 1911, and out of a total of 222 exhibited works, 77 were Meštrović's, while out of six halls, four featured Meštrović's works. It is an interesting coincidence that

(1908–1919): Art and Politics] (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2016), 163–225; Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića*, 210–211; Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene*, 16–17; Petar Prelog, *Hrvatska moderna umjetnost i nacionalni identitet* [Croatian Modern Art and National Identity] (Zagreb: Institut za povijest umjetnosti, 2018), 94–97.

the pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia was located in the immediate vicinity of Austrian and Hungarian pavilions, which probably provoked even more political interpretations and emphasized the revolt of Croatian artists (fig. 2). Although neither the name of the pavilion nor the catalogue allowed the term “Croatian” to be mentioned, the great success of Croatian artists resonated in the media, and Meštrović himself won the first prize for sculpture.⁹

LOCAL REACTIONS TO MEŠTROVIĆ’S ROMAN TRIUMPH

It is interesting to see how Meštrović’s success in Rome was accepted in his hometown in as much as the artist, who came from a small provincial village, had achieved world-class renown. The Dalmatian press of the time dedicated numerous articles to him, which have been elaborated in detail by Sandi Bulimbašić and Duško Kečkemet. Valuable personal impressions are preserved by private letters that Meštrović received from his homeland.

Doctor Filip Davidović Marušić (1874–1944) was the main link between Meštrović and his family in Otavice in the pre-war period. In March 1911, he wrote to Meštrović to say that they were reassured by his letter from Rome because his father was very upset by the news of the great damage to the sculptures intended for exhibitions in Rome that happened during transport to Belgrade.¹⁰ At the time of writing, the works were almost ready for the exhibition, as the opening took place on April 11. In the letter, he also mentioned a fountain, which had been a topic in their correspondence since 1909, and will be discussed in more detail later in the text. In May, Marušić wrote a long letter congratulating Meštrović on his great success at the international exhibition, stressing that all “our and Serbian newspapers” were full of news about him, and describing the celebration in Otavice:

Secondly, 15 days ago, the ‘Sokol’ club from Drniš together with the brass band went to Otavice to greet your parents and your family home, and the mayor as *starosta*,¹¹ and I as *podstarosta* (*substarosta*) accompanied the troop. Your father greeted us with Slavic hospitality by offering us bread and salt at the entrance. Your old man was overjoyed and blissful. Half of the citizens of Drniš and many villagers gathered in Otavice. Several photos

9 Katarina Ambrozić, “Paviljon Srbije na Međunarodnoj izložbi u Rimu 1911. godine” [Pavilion of Serbia at the International Exhibition in Rome in 1911], in *Zbornik radova Narodnog muzeja*, III, ed. Draga Garašanin et. al. (Beograd: Narodni muzej, 1960–1961), 238–239; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika “Medulić”*, 227–242; Zvezdana Elezović, “Kosovske teme paviliona Kraljevine Srbije na međunarodnoj izložbi” [Kosovo Themes of the Pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia at the International Exhibition], *БАШТИНА*, no. 27 (2009): 261–267; Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića*, 222–240; Vesna Barbić, “Meštrović i arhitekti” [Meštrović and Architects], in *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, book 423, Class of Fine Arts Book XIII, ed. Andre Mohorovičić (Zagreb: JAZU, 1986), 152–154.

10 Filip D. Marušić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], March 23, 1911, Ident. No. 550 A3. Owned by Mate Meštrović, Letters in Storage of Atelijer Meštrović, Zagreb (hereafter cited as AM).

11 Chairman of “Sokol”, from Czech.

12 Filip D. Marušić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], May 18, 1911, Ident. No. 550 A4. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.



Fig. 3. Ivan Meštrović, *St. Rochus*, 1911, bronze, Drniš City Museum (The relief disappeared during the Homeland War).

were taken by our humble amateurs; I am sending you only two, and I will send the rest of them when they are done.¹²

Ivan Meštrović also received a congratulatory message from the Municipality of Vrlika while in Rome. Mayor Joso Kulišić began the letter with words: “Asan-Aginica conquered and touched Fortis, Goethe, Grimm and Miller and your Marko with other heroes conquered modern Europe and the world.”¹³ Congratulations were also published in the Šibenik political newspaper *Naprednjak*, which salute the “embodiment of our hopes and our aspirations” in Meštrović’s success.¹⁴ Most of the negative criticism was due to the concealment of Meštrović’s Croatian name,¹⁵ but it should be noted that Meštrović’s attitude towards the nation and Yugoslavism was partly conditioned by the fact that he grew up in an environment in which Serbs and Croats lived in harmonious coexistence.

The success Meštrović achieved at the exhibition in Rome certainly contributed to local orders and commissions. In the summer of 1911, he stayed in his native Otavice, during which time he made

a relief for the Municipality of Drniš depicting *Sveti Rok* (St. Rochus) as the Municipal Coat of Arms (**fig. 3**). The political periodical *Naprednjak* reported on the installation of the work on the Municipal building: “A few days ago, the sculptor Meštrović left us. During his stay he made the municipal coat of arms, which now adorns the façade of the municipal building. This coat of arms depicts St. Rochus, as he is usually portrayed with a dog and in pain. The work is artistic and perfect, and cost the municipality 2,000 crowns.”¹⁶ The article also mentions that Meštrović would build a well for the city the following year.

Meštrović’s close friend, doctor Filip Davidović Marušić, wrote to him about the enthusiasm of local people: “The day before yesterday, they put your coat of arms on the Municipality, everyone likes it, you can constantly see a group of people watching and stopping in front of it.”¹⁷ If Marušić was

13 Joso Kulišić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], [the date of the letter is not recorded], 1911, Ident. No. 625 A3. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM. Asan-Aginica (Hasanaginica) is a folk ballad that was composed between 1646 and 1649. It was transmitted in oral form for generations, until it was written down in 1774 by the Italian travel writer and ethnographer Alberto Fortis.

14 “Bilješke. Živio Meštrović” [Notes. Long live Meštrović], *Naprednjak*, November 24, 1911, 2.

15 For more on such negative reviews, see Norka Machiedo Mladinić, “Političko opredjeljivanje mladog Meštrovića” [The Political Orientation of the Young Meštrović], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, no. 1 (2009): 153–161.

16 Kruno, “Drniš” [Drniš], *Naprednjak*, November 21, 1911, 2.

17 Filip D. Marušić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], November 9, 1911, Ident. No. 550 A5. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.

precise in recalling the day of the installation, the relief was installed on the November 7, 1911 (fig. 4). The plaster model according to which it was cast has not been preserved, but from written correspondence with the foundryman Srpek from Vienna, it is known that the cost of its casting was 300 crowns. The model for the figure of the saint was one Božo Čulina from Drniš.¹⁸

The fountain or well mentioned in article was an earlier idea of Meštrović's, and he tried to use the fame he gained at the exhibition in Rome to ensure its realization in Drniš. In 1909, Dr. Marušić wrote that Poljana Square would be a good location for the fountain, specifically on the site of the demolished Manojlović (Malivuk) house.¹⁹ In the previously mentioned letter from March 1911, Marušić writes that he will go to the Municipality again to negotiate the fountain, which implies that the commission had not been precisely defined before. This is confirmed

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by Roko Stojanov's letter from January 1911 informing Meštrović that Mayor Ivan Skelin and Secretary Josip Regner claim that there is no agreement between the Municipality of Drniš and the artist. The Council had not approved the project and the Municipality's finances were too modest to indulge in it.²⁰ However, after the big celebration in Otavice on the occasion of Meštrović's first prize for sculpture in Rome, Dr. Marušić wrote to Meštrović that Mayor Skelin promised to include a fountain in the Municipality's budget for the following year, 1912. The poor financial situation of the Municipality of Drniš was constant, but in the celebratory euphoria over the artist's success, Skelin made a promise that he would not be able to fulfil. In his letters, Marušić also mentions to Meštrović that he might commission a project for a family villa, but for an unknown reason, this project also remained unrealized.

Meštrović's Roman success also led to an attempt to realize another monument – the monument to Dositej Obradović (1739–1811) in the village of

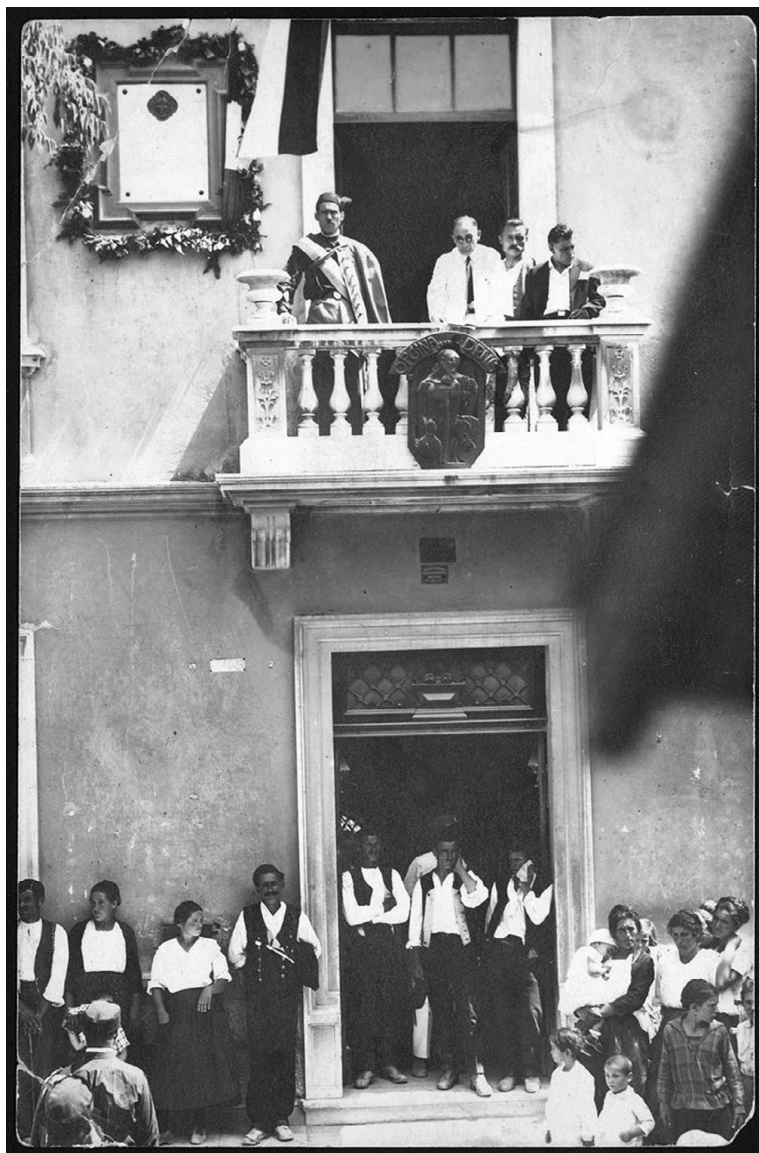


Fig. 4. The Municipal Building in Drniš, August 16, 1928, Drniš City Museum.

18 Vesna Barbić, *Meštrović: Drniš–Otavice* (Drniš, Zagreb: Centar za kulturu, obrazovanje i informacije, 1983), 7.

19 Filip D. Marušić, *Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću* [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], August 24, 1909, Ident. No. 550 A1. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.

20 Roko Stojanov, *Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću* [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], January 28, 1911, Ident. No. 815 A1. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.



Fig. 5. Ivan Meštrović, *Dositej Obradović, av. Dositej Obradović srpskohrvatski prosvjetitelj (Dositej Obradović Serbo-Croatian enlightener)*, 1911, bronze medal, Drniš City Museum. Photograph by Antonia Tomić.

Fig. 6. Ivan Meštrović, *Dositej Obradović, rv. Članu utemeljitelju Dositejeva spomenika na dalmatinskom Kosovu (To the Founding Member of Dositej's Monument in Dalmatian Kosovo)*, 1911, bronze medal, Drniš City Museum. Photograph by Antonia Tomić.

Kosovo near Knin, in particular because 1911 was the 100th anniversary of the death of this Serbian revivalist. In Knin, the idea of building a house of culture dedicated to Obradović accompanied by a monument made by Meštrović developed. Since the elections for the Imperial Council were held in June 1911, just before the feast of St. Vitus (sveti Vid), an important Serbian holiday,²¹ a group of politicians including Josip Smodlaka, Juraj Biankini, Melko Čingrija and Drniš Mayor Ivan Skelin gathered in Dalmatian Kosovo to celebrate Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day). Meštrović and Dr. Filip D. Marušić joined them.²² This was an opportunity for the two of them to share more casual conversations and to improve their acquaintance, which facilitated their later communication.

A Central Committee consisting of Serbs and Croats from Drniš, Knin and Vrlika was formed to organize fundraising for the monument and oversee its implementation. The president was Vladimir Jović, and the other members were Dr. Hugo Monti, Sava Đ. Omčikus, Petar Požar, Đordje Jovičić, Dr. Filip Marušić, Dušan Miović, Petar Drezga, Ivo Miović, Simo Manojlović, Krsto Kulišić, Stjepan Roca, Josip Perković, and Simo Korolija.²³ To raise funds for the monument, Meštrović made a medallion, 2,000 copies of which were cast in bronze and sold at a price of ten crowns apiece, while 100 copies in silver were priced at 100 crowns apiece (**fig. 5, fig. 6**). A memorial document was offered in exchange for donations of one crown. All donors and founders were to be inscribed on a parchment to be included on the pedestal.²⁴ Despite

21 According to the Julian calendar the feast is celebrated on June 15, while according to the Gregorian calendar it is on June 28.

22 The newspapers *Narodni list* and *Sloboda* reported on political elections and on the celebration of Vidovdan, see *Narodni list*, June 21, June 24, June 28, July 1, and July 5, 1911; see *Sloboda*, June 17, June 28, and July 1, 1911.

23 “Domaće vijesti” [Local News], *Narodni list*, December 15, 1911, 3.

24 “Meštrović i Dositeje Obradović,” *Dubrovnik*, November 11, 1911, 2; Karlo Kosor, “Drniš u ogledalu tiska za hrvatskog narodnog preporoda u Dalmaciji: 1860.–1921.” [Drniš in the Mirror of the Press for the Croatian National Revival in Dalmatia: 1860–1921], in *Povijest Drniške krajine*, ed. fra Ante Čavka (Split: self-published,



Fig. 7. The Meštrović Family Home in Otavice shortly after construction, FGM-453, Meštrović Gallery, Split.

initial enthusiasm, the fundraiser did not go as well as hoped. In January 1912, Dr. Marušić wrote to Meštrović that 1,500 crowns had been raised at a lunch for St. Sava; he also mentioned the total figure of 10,000 crowns, and noted that more sketches of the monument should be sent to make it easier to raise funds.²⁵ It became clear that the monument would not be completed until Vidovdan in 1912, and in June the Committee issued an official statement that the realization of the monument would be prolonged.²⁶ Unfortunately, World War I broke out, and the idea of a monument fell completely into oblivion.

Not all of Meštrović's projects in and around Drniš had such a bad fate. The largest project realized before World War I was of a private nature: the design and construction of a new family house in Otavice. Since the success of the exhibition in Rome was accompanied by a cash prize, Meštrović was able to embark on the realization of his first architectural work. The artist's daughter Marija states that the project was conceived a few days after he received the award in Rome, and the construction of the house was supervised by engineer Viktor Procunkijević.²⁷ However, a postcard dating

from 1910 that is preserved in the Archives of the Meštrović Atelier includes a sketch very similar to the later family house,²⁸ suggesting that Meštrović planned to build a new family home even before he won the award, and that he was merely waiting for the right opportunity (fig. 7). Construction work lasted until the end of 1912, a fact that is confirmed by a letter from Dr. Marušić from

1995), 388; Vojin D. Kalinić, "Kulturni preporod Srba u sjevernoj Dalmaciji od 1848. do 1914. godine" [Cultural Revival of Serbs in Northern Dalmatia 1848–1914] (PhD diss., University of Belgrade, 2014), 156–158.

25 It is not clear whether 10,000 crowns were collected or whether this is the amount that was still missing because the letter is damaged in the middle of the paper. See Filip D. Marušić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], January 29, 1912, Ident. No. 550 A7. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.

26 Kalinić, "Kulturni preporod Srba," 158.

27 Barbić, "Meštrović i arhitekti," 156; Zorana Jurić Šabić, *U Meštrovićeovom rodnom kraju* [In the Native Land of Ivan Meštrović] (Split: Muzeji Ivana Meštrovića, 2010), 21; Zorana Jurić Šabić, *Crkva Presvetog Otkupitelja* [The Church of the Most Holy Redeemer] (Split: Muzeji Ivana Meštrovića, 2020), 47; Marija Meštrović, *Život i djelo Ivana Meštrovića* [Life and Work of Ivan Meštrović] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2011), 73, [first edition: Maria Meštrović, *Ivan Meštrović – The making of a Master* (London: Stacey International, 2008)].

28 Ana Deanović, "Meštrovićeovi prostori" [The Architecture of Ivan Meštrović], in *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, book 423, Class of Fine Arts Book XIII, ed. Andre Mohorovičić (Zagreb: JAZU, 1986) 21, 106–107.

January 1913 which states: “Your house with a roof now looks great, and in every way the house has succeeded perfectly.”²⁹ During 1912, Meštrović wrote to Šime Grubišić that the work would take longer than he had expected. In letters written during October and December, Meštrović cites Drniš as the place of composition, which means that he himself supervised the work at the time. In April 1913, while in Rome, he commissioned Grubišić to make two wooden beds with the same carpenter who made wooden windows.³⁰

The house consists of several combined architectural segments: one part is a two-storey building with a porch on the ground floor and a terrace on the first floor, covered with a gabled roof, while the other part has three floors, two in a simple rectangular shape and the third on an octagonal plan with a tent roof. The house, with its recognizably Art Nouveau characteristics, was completed before World War I, and today stands out among local family houses due to its proportions, its construction from hewn stone and generally because of its modular architectural form. With money from the Rome prize and from the sale of the sculptures he presented there, Meštrović raised enough funds to provide his parents with a magnificent home that, compared to their old house, looked like a manor house.

CONCLUSION

The International Fine Arts Exhibition in Rome was a major art event, but also a testing ground for political views and positioning on the global political map. The aim of Serbian Pavilion was to represent a newly-created Yugoslav national artistic style and to reflect the Yugoslav national idea. These intentions were evident in the selection of artists and their works. Ivan Meštrović imposed himself as a key artistic figure during planning the Serbian performance at the exhibition. The fact that he played a large part in the design of the pavilion and that he was also a member of the jury that selected the other exhibitors suggests that he was consciously aware that the Roman exhibition would be a suitable platform for establishing himself as an artist on the international stage.

His courageous appearance came at a politically opportune time, when other European states wanted to weaken the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and art served as one of the available weapons. However, it would be wrong to claim that Meštrović’s work was exclusively a means to a political end. He managed to stand out at the Roman exhibition through his artistic expression, which was much bolder and more eclectic than the critics of the time were accustomed to. With the works from *Vidovdanski ciklus* (the Vidovdan cycle), he won the first prize for sculpture, which secured him a place on the world art scene. Great international success, as expected, was celebrated in his local community.

29 Filip D. Marušić, Pismo Ivanu Meštroviću [Letter to Ivan Meštrović], January 22, 1913, Ident. No. 550 A10. Owned by Mate Meštrović, AM.

30 Ivan Meštrović, Letters to Šime Grubišić, 1912–1913, Vice Iljadica Personal Fund (1869–1953), HR-DAŠI-181, Državni arhiv u Šibeniku [State Archive in Šibenik].

The echoes of the Roman exhibition, according to the available documentation, can be viewed in two ways – from the position of local authorities and from the position of the artist himself. The press was full of praise for Meštrović, and the common people identified with an uneducated young man from Otavice who, due to his work, found himself among the leading names in the European art scene. But at the same time, he was expected to make some kind of contribution to his homeland. This is evident in the attempt to erect a monument to Dositej Obradović in Dalmatian Kosovo, because the media reported that Meštrović would make the statue almost for free. Simultaneously, the Meštrović tried to obtain orders from local authorities on the basis of his newly acquired fame. Years before the Roman exhibition, he attempted to persuade the mayor of Drniš to commission a fountain for the town. Although the mayor initially opposed such an idea, in the euphoria over the award in Rome, he promised to provide funds for the fountain. Unfortunately, after the celebrations subsided, local authorities became aware of the modest state of the city treasury, while the city government also changed hands in the meantime – the city was taken over by the Stranka prava (Party of Rights), which was not predisposed to Meštrović's Yugoslav ideas.

However, one public sculpture was realized for the town of Drniš: the relief depicting St. Rochus, which constitutes the coat of arms of the Municipality of Drniš. Apart from being Meštrović's first work made for public display in the city, it is also a symbolic reminder of his great success in Rome. The same symbolism is borne by another "first" work by Meštrović – a family house in Otavice, which represents the first architectural project of the artist. Although the Roman Award was not followed by the construction of a magnificent public monument, Meštrović still achieved satisfaction on a private level.