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STATECRAFT: THE ARTWORKS OF VILLA ZAGORJE IN ZAGREB*

Abstract

Villa Zagorje was built in Zagreb between 1963 and 1965 as the residence of President Josip Broz Tito. This modernist building represented an important state project that brought together prominent architects, artists and engineers. They were commissioned to work on the exterior and interior design, which would correspond not only to the requirements of modern architecture and the theory of synthesis of the arts, but also to those of state representation since, in addition to being a residence, the villa was planned to be used for the reception of numerous statesmen. Following this premise, this paper examines the complex relationships between modernist aspirations and the role of artwork in representing the state's ideological program. The works of art commissioned and purchased for the interior and exterior of Villa Zagorje during the 1960s have been analyzed and interpreted based on the preserved archival and museum material and periodical publications.

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the founding of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) in 1945, an extensive number of official buildings were built throughout the entire country for Marshal (and later President) Josip Broz Tito's domestic and international political duties and residential purposes. In a large number of cases, especially in the first years after World War II, existing mansions and villas were nationalized and transformed into official residences of the President of the Republic. Additionally, the period from the 1950s to the early 1980s saw the construction of numerous new buildings, whose architectural design and artistic furnishings were created in such a way as to unite the requirements of modern artistic production, national representation, and Josip Broz Tito's personal taste. In other words, these official residences served as a sort of ritual space where architecture, carefully selected paintings, sculptures, graphic art and the design of each segment of exterior and interior space contributed to forming the image of the new state and its ruler.

Tito's residence in the capital of what was first the People's and then the Socialist Republic of Croatia (hereafter either PRC or SRC) was built relatively late. It was originally called the residential building of the Parliamentary Executive Council of the People's Republic of Croatia, but was better known as Villa Zagorje. The villa was built from 1963 to 1965 in Zagreb according

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to design of architects Kazimir Ostrogović and Vjenceslav Richter, from the Centar 51 Architectural Studio. It was a highly important state project, which involved architects, artists and engineers with well-established and renowned careers. It was a new, high-modernist building meant to host numerous international politicians and statesmen; for this reason both its exterior and interior appearance had to correspond to the requirements of modern architecture and the then-current synthesis of the arts, but also to the goals of state representation.

The artistic furnishings of Tito's presidential buildings throughout Yugoslavia are a largely unresearched topic. Numerous buildings were repurposed, abandoned or destroyed during the 1990s and afterwards, and numerous works of art were returned to various institutions or disappeared without a trace. A significant contribution to the topic was made by Nenad Radić in the exhibition and book *Pusen i petokraka. Zbirka slika druga Predsednika* (Poussin and Five-pointed Star. Comrade President's Collection of Paintings, 2012), which analyses and interprets the artworks formerly housed in Tito's former residence at 15 Užička Street in Belgrade.¹ Ana Panić explored and interpreted the landscapes from the same collection in the exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Umetnost i vlast: pejzaži iz zbirke Josipa Broza Tita* (Art and Power: Landscapes from Josip Broz Tito's Collection, 2014), while an important contribution in the context of presidential buildings in the National Republic of Slovenia was made by Katarina Mohar in her paper on Villa Bled.² Villa Zagorje in Zagreb was researched by Vanja Brdar Mustapić and Vesna Meštrić, who showcased their findings at the exhibitions *Iz arhiva arhitekta – Vila Zagorje* (From the Architect's Archives – Villa Zagorje, 2018) and *Vila Zagorje – kratka povijest zagrebačke "bele hiže na Prekrižju"* (Villa Zagorje – A Short History of Zagreb's "White House at Prekrižje," 2021) and in texts dedicated to the relationship of the building to Vjenceslav Richter.³ The two authors thoroughly investigated the construction process and architectural designs, as well as the constructed buildings and their interior design, and interpreted

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1 Nenad Radić, *Pusen i petokraka. Zbirka slika druga Predsednika* [Poussin and Five-pointed Star. Comrade President's Collection of Paintings] (Zagreb: Galerija Matice srpske, 2012).

2 Ana Panić, *Art and Authority: Landscapes from the Collection of Josip Broz Tito* (Novi Sad: Galerija Matice srpske; Beograd: Muzej istorije Jugoslavije, 2014); Katarina Mohar, "Art Representing the State: The Villa Bled Official Residence," in *Art and Politics in the Modern Period*, eds. Dragan Damjanović, Lovorka Magaš Bilandžić, Željka Miklošević and Jeremy F. Walton (Zagreb: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia, FF-press, 2019), 83–91.

3 Vanja Brdar Mustapić, "Od plastike namještaja do interijerskih kontroverzija / Teorija i praksa dizajna i unutrašnjeg uređenja u Richterovu opusu / From the Plastics of Furniture to Controversies about Interior / Theory and Practice of Design and Interior Decoration in Richter's Opus" in *Vjenceslav Richter: Buntovnik s vizijom / Vjenceslav Richter: Rebel with a Vision*, eds. Martina Munivrana and Vesna Meštrić (Zagreb: Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, 2017), 232–267; Vesna Meštrić and Vanja Brdar Mustapić, "Vila Zagorje – kratka povijest zagrebačke 'bele hiže na Prekrižju'" [Villa Zagorje – A Brief History of Zagreb's 'White House at the Prekrižje'], *Čovjek i prostor*, no. 1–4 (2021): 16–29; Vesna Meštrić and Vanja Brdar Mustapić, *Iz arhiva arhitekta: Vila Zagorje* [From the Archive of the Architect: Villa Zagorje], exhibition, Zagreb: Zbirka Richter, December 20, 2018 – February 24, 2019; Vesna Meštrić and Vanja Brdar Mustapić, *Vila Zagorje – povijest zagrebačke „bele hiže na Prekrižju"* [Villa Zagorje – The History of Zagreb's "White House at the Prekrižje"], exhibition, Zagreb: Ured predsjednika Republike Hrvatske, April 24 – May 8, 2021.

them in the context of Vjenceslav Richter's principle of artistic synthesis. Despite previous research, the commissioning and purchase of paintings and sculptures for Tito's Zagreb-based official residence in the second half of the 1960s have remained unresearched.

In light of this lacuna in research, this chapter, explores the paintings and sculptures commissioned for Villa Zagorje's interior during the building's construction and in the second half of the 1960s. They are analyzed and interpreted based on the preserved archival documents, periodicals, exhibition catalogues, monographs, and photographs. The chapter foregrounds the originally conceived union of architecture, design, painting and sculpture, but also the compromise made with regard to the state's influence on the selection and definition of the topics and themes depicted by individual works. The aim of the research is to explore the complex relationship between modernist aspirations in interior design, the commissioners' requirements in choosing the works of art for the purpose of representing the state's ideological program, and the artistic taste of the president.

VILLA ZAGORJE – CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

The construction history of Tito's Zagreb residence began in the late 1950s with the selection of a site at Pantovčak,⁴ which had until then belonged, among other private owners, to the painter Vera Nikolić-Podrinska, the daughter of the Croatian deputy ban Baron Vladimir Nikolić and Baroness Ella Scotti.⁵ It was and still is a prominent, peaceful green residential area in Zagreb that was deemed suitable for the construction of the main building, which was to have an important political purpose, as well as the auxiliary buildings that were to be used for servicing and securing it. The Parliamentary Executive Council of the People's Republic of Croatia (after 1963 the Parliamentary Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Croatia), in the role of the investor, hired architect Drago Ibler and his associate Tomislav Petrović to design the so-called residential building of the PRC's Parliamentary Executive Council.⁶

Between 1960 and 1962, Ibler created a detailed design for a two-story building of a regular geometric form, dominantly lit from the south side and with a clear organization of space, which manifested a "division into a representative public part on the first floor, a residential private part on the

4 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, "Vila Zagorje," 17.

5 In 1964, an assessment was made of all privately-owned buildings in the area from Villa Zagorje to Villa Weiss, the expropriation of several properties, land, orchards and vineyards was completed, and a temporary contract was concluded with Vera Nikolić-Podrinski and Gabriela Lotringen von Habsburg on the amount of compensation for the buildings and land they owned. See: Komisija za nacionalizaciju pri Narodnom odboru Općine Donji grad Zagreb [Nationalization Commission at the People's Committee of the Municipality of Donji grad Zagreb], Rješenje, broj: 02-KN-1272/2-1959 [Decision, number: 02-KN-1272/2-1959], Zagreb, December 16, 1959, Box 274, Fond 280, Izvršno vijeće Sabora Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske [Parliamentary Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Croatia], Hrvatski državni arhiv u Zagrebu [Croatian State Archives in Zagreb] (hereafter cited as HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH).

6 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, "Vila Zagorje," 17.

second floor and a service area in the basement.”⁷ In 1962 the construction of the building according to Ibler’s design was suspended because, as the investor stated, it was necessary to find a more economical solution.⁸ A reason for this suspension could also be found in the strained relations between Ibler and Ivan (Stevo) Krajačić, then the vice-president of the PRC’s Parliamentary Executive Council.⁹

In November 1962, the Council launched an invited design competition whose participants included, among several architectural studios, architects Drago Ibler, Zvonimir Marohnić and Vjenceslav Richter.¹⁰ Among the competition entries, the most remarkable was Vjenceslav Richter’s, titled “White House at Prekrižje.” Richter’s proposal was a “radically modern two-story cubic structure conceived as a precisely modelled ‘three-dimensional picture.’”¹¹ Despite the high quality of most of the proposals, the committee consisting of, among others, Krajačić and architects Drago Galić and Kazimir Ostrogović did not select any submitted work. Rather, Ostrogović invited Richter to cooperate with him and his Centar 51 Architectural Studio in order to create a new design together.¹² The new design was a representative, high-modernist two-story building called “Villa Zagorje,” which was based on Ibler’s design and Richter’s “White House at Prekrižje.”¹³

The building’s regular, geometric form, the physical links between the exterior and interior spaces, and a clear organization of the interior into, on one hand, the public and representative section, and, on the other, a residential and service section, clearly show that Villa Zagorje was grounded in modernist principles.¹⁴ The architects planned for every segment of the interior to be designed and furnished with artwork, and for the building site to include the adjoining plateau, park and the surrounding landscaped area. Finally, the construction of this so-called residential building of the Parliamentary Executive Council was carried out from 1963 to 1965.¹⁵ The main contractor

7 Ibid., 17, 20.

8 Ibid., 19.

9 Ivan (Stevo) Krajačić was a prominent Croatian politician, a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia since 1933, and the first head of the Department for the Protection of the People for Croatia (1944–1946), who at the time of the construction of Villa Zagorje held the position of vice-president of the Executive Council of the Parliament of the People’s Republic of Croatia (1953–1963) and President of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia (1963–1967). He was one of Josip Broz Tito’s closest collaborators. Architect Vjenceslav Richter stated that the reason for the suspension of construction according to Ibler’s project was the influence of Krajačić. See: Nina Ožegović, “Intervju s Vjenceslavom Richterom: Vjenceslav Richter. Slikarska retrospektiva avangardnog arhitekta” [Interview with Vjenceslav Richter: Vjenceslav Richter. A Retrospective of the Paintings of an Avant-Garde Architect], *Nacional*, October 22, 2002, 41.

10 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, “Vila Zagorje,” 19.

11 Maroje Mrduljaš, “Vjenceslav Richter i arhitektura: angažiranost protiv asistencije” [Vjenceslav Richter and Architecture: Engagement Versus Assistance], in *Vjenceslav Richter: Buntovnik s vizijom*, eds. Munivrana and Meštrić, 111.

12 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, “Vila Zagorje,” 20.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Construction was completed after the death of architect Kazimir Ostrogović in 1965. Ibid., 27.

was the Tempo construction company, and although Ostrogović and Richter were cited as the creators of the detailed design, the building was a product of teamwork.¹⁶

INTERIOR DESIGN AND THE SYNTHESIS OF THE ARTS

New construction projects and the allocation of a percentage of the state budget for artwork in investment building projects in Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s led to the revival of the principle of artistic synthesis, which implied the unification of painting, sculpture, design and applied arts within a work of architecture, or, the creation of a synthesis of all art.¹⁷ The synthesis of the arts in Croatian and Yugoslav postwar art was congruent with similar ideas in the international context, and one of its ardent advocates was Vjenceslav Richter, a co-founder of the EXAT 51 group whose goal, among other things, was to “direct artistic activity towards the synthesis of all fine arts.”¹⁸ Until the mid-1960s, Richter tried to implement this principles not only in architecture, but also in the interior design of important state buildings, such as the Croatian Hall in the building of the Federal Executive Council in New Belgrade (1961).

As Vanja Brdar Mustapić and Vesna Meštrić’s research shows, Richter consistently tried to implement the synthesis principle along with his own theoretical research when designing patterns of parquet flooring, ceilings, lighting fixtures and furniture.¹⁹ The process of designing the interior of Villa Zagorje was based on a clear division of labor – Richter was in charge of the representative first floor, while architects Daša Crnković and Božica Ostrogović designed the residential sections on the second floor.²⁰ Nevertheless, by designing flooring, ceilings, lighting fixtures, entrance doors, furniture, radiator covers, wallpaper and other elements, the architects followed the synthesis principle by trying to establish a visual connection among the rooms of the first floor, second floor, basement and the exterior. For example, the first-floor rooms had a geometrically designed parquet, while the rooms on the second floor – the library, dining room and living room – had parquets that were simplified versions of the pattern on the first floor.²¹ The geometric design of the flooring is also repeated in the exterior, so when designing the

16 In addition to the two architects, the project involved numerous collaborators such as architects Milan Can-ković, Daša Crnković, Ljubo Iveta, Olga Korinek, Franjo Lavrenčić, Božica Ostrogović, Ivan Senegačnik, Maja Šah-Radović, Nebojša Weiner and others, as well as experts, engineers and architects from the field of landscape architecture such as Dragutin Kiš, Angela Rotkvić, Silvana Seissel and Pavao Ungar, along with consultant Ciril Jeglič, and engineers and experts such as Sergije Kolobov, Ratko Pečarić, Ivan Trzun, etc.

17 Patricia Počanić, “Između ideje i realizacije: prilog poznavanju umjetničkih djela u interijeru Zgrade društveno-političkih organizacija – Kockice” [Between Idea and Realisation: A Contribution to the Study of Art-works from the Interior of the Building of Socio-Political Organisations – Kockica], *Život umjetnosti*, no. 110 (2022): 106–129.

18 EXAT 51, “Manifest Exat-a 51” [Exat 51 Manifesto], in *Exat 51: 1951–1956*, Ješa Denegri, Želimir Košćević (Zagreb: Galerija Nova Centra za kulturnu djelatnost SSO Zagreb, 1979), 135.

19 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, “Vila Zagorje,” 16–29.

20 Angela Rotkvić, Silvana Seissel and Ljubo Iveta worked on the terraces of the second floor. *Ibid.*, 20.

21 *Ibid.*, 23.

southern plateau, Angela Rotkvić and Silvana Seissel created 11 types of mosaic art in the form of meanders, which were made out of different materials.²² Geometry was also the common denominator in designing ceilings in both the interior and exterior, which can be attested to by the coffered ceiling in the Great Hall on the first floor where lighting fixtures were placed in calottes within square fields, the coffered ceiling in the library on the second floor, the geometric patterns created by wooden slats on the ceiling of the dining and living room on the second floor, and the ceiling of the canopy where, according to Richter's design, graded slopes of the wooden slats formed the circumference motif.²³ Richter's aesthetics and the principle of synthesis also played an important role in the design of the double doors that were created by multiplied "multi-colored glass prisms forming a geometric composition."²⁴

The concept of synthesis was adopted in furniture design, and the preserved archival material gives insight into the process of making design decisions that corresponded simultaneously to the requirements of a representative space and to the contemporary production criteria for modern and standardized furniture. Although different fabrics and materials such as plush, silk and fur were used for the second-floor furniture in order to bring it closer to the taste of the commissioners and the occupant,²⁵ generally speaking, features such as the inlaid surfaces of the tables and chairs, which repeat the geometric shapes of the floors and ceilings, were mainly characteristic of the rational design of the 1960s.

Despite the architects' obvious efforts to achieve a work of total design, they surrendered their idea of interior design to compromise, resulting in the end in a reflection of individual taste and political requirements. In 1964, when Richter and Ostrogović organized a detailed presentation of the interior design project to the Parliamentary Executive Council, Ivan Krajačić suggested the type of furniture that would be suitable for receiving ambassadors, while he remained reserved regarding the designers' idea of using modern furniture. On that occasion, he said that he could not imagine Villa Zagorje having "protruding sticks of furniture like those made by your Corbusier,"²⁶ and, instead, suggested period furniture. Respecting his decision, the architects included pieces of furniture of a more conservative style alongside the modern

22 Arhitektonski biro Centar 51 [Centar 51 Architectural Studio], Dopuna troškovnika kamenarskih radova Južnog platoa na terenu [Supplement to the Cost List of Stonework Done at the South Plateau on the Construction Site], October 22, 1964, Box 267, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

23 Richter developed the theory of a new division of the circle at 512°. See: Vesna Meštrić, "Buntovnik s vizijom / Rebel with a Vision," in *Vjenceslav Richter: Buntovnik s vizijom*, eds. Munivrana and Meštrić, 73.

24 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, "Vila Zagorje," 24. Arhitektonski biro Centar 51 [Architectural bureau Centar 51], Staklarski radovi [Glassworks], Box 279, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

25 See: Sheme pokretnog namještaja – prvi kat [Mobile Furniture Schemes – First Floor], 1964, Box 272, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

26 Zapisnik sa sjednice održane 20.II.1964. u Predsjedništvu Sabora SRH [Minutes of the Session Held on 20.II.1964. in the Presidency of the SRC Parliament], February 20, 1964, p. 7, Box, 279, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

ones. Krajačić also exerted an influence on the choice of materials and the style of the parquet flooring when he suggested Schönbrunn as a model.²⁷ However, despite Krajačić's attitude, the architects clearly emphasized the importance of a consistently implemented principle of synthesis within the sphere of modernist architecture: "The whole house is typical of 20th century houses with air conditioning, etc., but we don't know to what degree habits and representation are related to period furniture. We strive to take a step forward, into the modern, to express ourselves in a modern way, not by borrowing from history but by taking the second half of the 20th century as our frame of reference."²⁸

In addition to the aesthetic aspiration towards a complete work of art, a somewhat different "synthesis" was executed in Villa Zagorje – one that reflects the economic and socio-political power of a relatively young state. The majority of products, services and materials used for the construction of the villa were made in Yugoslavia, and only a small percentage was imported.²⁹ This was meant to show that Yugoslav industry was self-sufficient and that this representative building was the product of Yugoslav workers. However, since it was the residence of the state's ruler, this self-sufficiency was disregarded when importing luxury furniture and materials from Austria, Italy and West Germany.³⁰ The interior design of Villa Zagorje therefore represents a complex relationship between the architects' artistic concepts, the requirements of the commissioners, the occupant's taste, and the economic possibilities of a new (socialist) state.

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ARTWORK IN THE NEWLY BUILT VILLA ZAGORJE

Although concessions were made regarding the commissioners' requirements concerning the building's exterior and interior design, safety conditions and the meaning of the object, the architects mainly followed the tradition of high modernism and the principle of the synthesis of the arts. However, the situation was somewhat different when it came to the selection of artworks for the villa. It was not the architects who had the main say in choosing art, but politicians and artists who had achieved prominence in the

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 A number of domestic factories participated in the furnishing of the building, including: Drvno proizvodno poduzeće "Marko Šavrić" (Zagreb), Elektrokovina (Maribor), Exportdrvo (Zagreb, Rijeka) Interplet (Brčko), Jugokeramika (Zaprešić), Osječka ljevaonica željeza i tvornica strojeva (Osijek), Otočanka (Zadar), Sloboda (Čačak), Stol (Kamnik), Gradsko stolarsko poduzeće "Andrija Žaja" (Zagreb), Tovarna emajlirane posode Celje (Celje), Tvornica rasvjetnih tijela "Ivan Šikić" (Zagreb), Tvornica namještaja "Stjepan Sekulić" (Nova Gradiška), Tvornica stakla "Kristal" (Samobor) and others.

30 Contracts, specifications and objects from foreign companies have been preserved, such as the luxurious equipment of the lighting fixtures of the first floor purchased from the cult Viennese company E. Bakalowitz & Söhne or the famous German Tekko wallpapers. Arhitektonski biro Centar 51 [Centar 51 Architectural Studio], Specifikacija uvoznih tapeta [Specification of Imported Wallpapers], 1964, Box 262, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH; Arhitektonski biro Centar 51 [Centar 51 Architectural Studio], Obrtnički radovi. Specifikacija opreme zgrade Izvršnog Vijeća SRH u Zagrebu [Craftworks. Specification of the Equipment of the Building of the Executive Council of SRC in Zagreb], 1964, Box 266, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

initial postwar years. Therefore, the course of the commissions is crucial for understanding the artistic and ideological program of Tito's Zagreb-based residence.

The Course of Artwork Commissioning Process

Commissioning artwork for the interior of the residence was an integral part of the building's concept from the very beginning, even in Ibler's design. Different versions of Ibler's design also envisaged expenditures for paintings, sculptures, or marble, ceramic and glass mosaics, tapestries, inlays, etc. and their placement.³¹ All this shows that the original ideal of decorating the interior of this representative social building with monumental artworks was continued throughout the project.

Ibler's concept was partially taken over and extended by Ostrogović and Richter. From the minutes of the sessions of the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC held in February 1964, we learn that the two architects gave a detailed presentation, and that the participants in the sessions discussed the design of the "residential building of the Executive Council at Pantovčak in Zagreb," including artworks for the interior.³² The sessions were usually attended by Ivan Krajačić (president of the Parliament), Dr. Zvonko Petrinović (secretary of Construction, Communal Affairs and Urbanism), Vojislav Vukotić (head of the Directorate of the State Administration's Joint Departments),³¹⁰ engineer Milivoj Graf (assistant to the head of the Directorate), Stjepan Kralj (a member of the construction supervisory committee) and architects Kazimir Ostrogović and Vjenceslav Richter. The session minutes reveal that the involvement of the authorities, especially Krajačić, was crucial in certain aspects of the design.

Ostrogović and Richter envisioned monumental artworks for the interior of Villa Zagorje.³³ Respecting the principle of the synthesis of painting, sculpture and design under the umbrella of architecture, Richter conceived different "wall paintings"³⁴ for the representative space on the first floor and the residential space on the second floor. For example, in the covered area in front of the dining room, which could serve for outdoor receptions, he planned a "decorative treatment of wall surfaces" with built-in ceramics, which, according to Ostrogović's design, would be done by an artist of great experience and international recognition.³⁵ Richter also claimed that it was necessary to choose artists who had already gained experience in creating

31 RIII/6 Prekrižje. Oprema i unutarnji uređaji [RIII/6 Prekrižje. Equipment and Internal devices], 1960–1961, Box 287, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

32 Executive Council of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Zapisnik sa sjednice održane 20.II.1964. u Predsjedništvu Sabora SRH [Minutes from the Session Held on 20.II.1964. in the Presidency of the SRC Parliament], February 20, 1964, Box 279, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

33 Ibid., 4.

34 Ibid., 5.

35 Ibid., 8.

artwork on monumental wall surfaces.³⁶ In the discussion about possible artists and artwork, Richter felt that it would be “best if the paintings were created for the space.”³⁷ The architects even predicted the materials with which certain walls in the South and Great Halls would be adorned.³⁸ It follows that the artworks were conceived of as an integral part of the architecture, and that their dimensions, material, and appearance were supposed to correlate with the space in which they were to be placed.

Unlike Richter and Ostrogović, Krajačić’s preoccupations with the “wall paintings” were more related to the issues of which artists, artworks and depicted scenes to choose, primarily in order to meet the ideological and representative criteria. For a big wall surface, Krajačić suggested the painting *Jajce* by Ismet Mujezinović, given that the theme of an artwork “must firmly connect with a historical moment.”³⁹ Despite Richter’s suggestion that such a composition would better be placed in the smaller South Hall, Krajačić’s mind was set on the Great Hall because of its historical and ideological significance, as well as the size of the painting. Nevertheless, he left the final decision to “those who know better.”⁴⁰ Krajačić left the consultation about sculptures and their final selection to Frano Kršinić and Vanja Radauš, whose role would not be exclusively that of consultants but also of artists since they would be commissioned to produce artworks for the villa.⁴¹ Krajačić also suggested that the sculptor Antun Augustinčić should consult with Richter in relation to his proposal to place sculpture in line with the main entrance.⁴² In addition to the artistic furnishings of the representative first floor, Krajačić also discussed the decoration concept of the residential second floor. He suggested having the space decorated with smaller pictures and gifts, the choice of which must be left entirely to the President of the SFRY, Josip Broz Tito.⁴³

In March 1964, the office of the President of the Republic’s Parliament was the venue of the consultative meeting on the furnishing of the Executive Council’s residential building at Pantovčak in Zagreb.⁴⁴ The aforementioned protagonists in matters of interior design were joined by newly appointed consultants – a prominent writer, Miroslav Krleža, and sculptors Antun Augustinčić and Frano Kršinić – who played a key role in the selection of representative works. The participants in the consultative meeting defined the

36 Ibid., 4.

37 Ibid., 5.

38 Ibid., 4.

39 Ibid., 4, 5.

40 Ibid., 5.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 4.

43 Ibid., 5.

44 Konzultacija o umjetničkoj opremi stambene zgrade Izvršnog vijeća na Pantovčaku u Zagrebu [Consultative Meeting on the Artistic Equipment of the Residential Building of the Executive Council on Pantovčak in Zagreb], Box 279, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH, pp. 1–12.

media and techniques of the future works and proposed oil frescoes, sgraffito, reliefs, tapestries, etc.⁴⁵ Krleža, Augustinčić and Kršinić evidently expanded the architects' idea of having artworks created specifically for this particular interior, but the thematic framework they set shows their inclination, at least in part, to Krajačić's suggestions. In March 1964, they proposed the artists from whom they would commission works, namely, Krsto Hegedušić, Ismet Mujezinović, Miljenko Stančić, Raul Goldoni, Frano Kršinić and "possibly" Vanja Radauš.⁴⁶

Since in February 1964 Krajačić mentioned the creation of the painting *Jajce*, the following month Augustinčić offered Ismet Mujezinović's first sketches to be discussed in the consultative meetings.⁴⁷ At the same meeting, Krleža decided that *Jajce* should be placed in the Yugoslav president's office, and also proposed what he called a "decorative Varaždin panel" as the theme of Stančić's work.⁴⁸ On the same occasion, Kršinić suggested that a bas-relief in silver-plated copper be realized on the eastern wall of the vestibule on the first floor, and announced that he himself would make a sketch. Krleža, on the other hand, chose the subject of the mentioned relief: a free, bucolic theme of an Arcadian, lyrical mood.⁴⁹ Kršinić suggested painter Frano Baće, who could create a small-scale composition of a maritime topic. The name of Ernest Tomašević was also mentioned during the meeting as someone who could create various works in sgraffito.⁵⁰ In addition, Krleža believed that Jean Lurçat tapestries could be purchased, due to their affordable price.⁵¹ Although today not all the information about the executed works is known, it is possible to conclude that the consultants' and commissioners' suggestions led to the commissioning of artwork from Antun Augustinčić, Krsto Hegedušić, Frano Kršinić, Miljenko Stančić and Ismet Mujezinović.

The course of the commissioning process reveals the following: 1) the role of the state, or more specifically, the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC as the body of commissioners was important in the selection of artists, artistic media, techniques and topics; 2) the commissioners took into account the opinions of experts and sought consultation with artists who in the mid-1960s enjoyed a privileged artistic and political status, and were themselves the creators of numerous works commissioned by the state; 3) Krleža (and to a lesser extent Augustinčić and Kršinić) determined the topics of the works which, according to the instructions of the Parliamentary Executive Council, were supposed, at least partly, to reflect the Yugoslav ideological program; 4)

45 Ibid., 2.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

considering the large number of submitted proposals, it is clear that the artists' advice and suggestions were taken into account, but also that the purchase and commissioning process was agreed upon in advance and that the works were not acquired through open or invited competitions; 5) the proposed artists were those who had already received numerous government commissions for public art and were, partly, included in the consultative meetings. The commissioning process makes it clear that the selected artists, artworks and topics had an ideological and representational role that went beyond the aesthetics.

Commissioned and Purchased Artwork for Villa Zagorje

While the minutes of the Parliamentary Executive Council's official and consultative meetings bearing witness to the procedure and criteria for the selection of artworks for the interior of Villa Zagorje have been well preserved, the acquired individual pieces of art have only partly been available for research. However, according to the archival material, periodicals, literature and photographs, it is possible at least to gain partial insight into their commission, acquisition and location within the building.

Two large paintings (240 × 660 cm) were placed in the Great (Ceremonial) Hall on the representative first floor – those by Krsto Hegedušić and Miljenko Stančić – which have adorned that space to this day. Miljenko Stančić's painting, *The City of Varaždin* (1966, **fig. 1**), hangs on the eastern wall of the Hall. The horizontally placed cityscape shows the stylized architecture of Varaždin (the bell tower of St. Nicholas' parish church, the Ursuline, Franciscan and Pauline churches, St. Florian, etc.), empty streets and squares with a few pedestrians, dimmed lights and a gloomy atmosphere. Although Krleža defined the theme of the composition, Varaždin cityscapes and urban motifs had been part



Fig. 1. Miljenko Stančić, *The City of Varaždin*, 1966, oil on canvas, Villa Zagorje (today Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia), Zagreb. Photograph by Patricia Počanić.

of Stančić's oeuvre for more than a decade. After completing his studies in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (1949) and a specialized course in printmaking with Tomislav Krizman, Stančić had built up his career by 1952, and his scenes of Varaždin were considered to be one of the apogees of the new post-war expression. The same year, at a joint exhibition with Josip Vaništa at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, he exhibited works in which he treated scenes of Varaždin in a surrealist manner. Stančić's individual artistic expression, dissociated from the tendencies of Socialist Realism and the first signs of postwar abstraction, continued to develop through the 1950s and 1960s, when he taught painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. In the mid-1960s, his paintings were dominated by a linear treatment of depicted motifs and a "strong painterly brushstroke with dense layers of paint,"⁵² and *The City of Varaždin* corresponded to the metaphysical and surrealist painting that characterized his style at the time. Stančić created a surreal scene of his hometown not only with painted motifs such as empty streets, few stylized figures, simplified architecture, lighting and long shadows, but also with meticulous tonal nuances for which he drew on techniques of the old masters. In this way, Stančić connected the baroque architecture of Varaždin with its artistic heritage.

As his personal and artistic background was associated with Varaždin, Stančić's use of motifs of this city can be interpreted as a logical choice.

314 However, the reasons behind Krleža's proposal for the Varaždin theme can be found in his knowledge of Stančić's works, of the personal history of Josip Broz Tito, and the name of the building project. In the same year that he proposed Miljenko Stančić as one of the artists for the villa, Krleža published an essay about him in the *NIN* magazine, and then used it as a preface to the *Reproduction Portfolio by M. Stančić* (1964). Krleža noted that Stančić was "first and foremost a Varaždin painter."⁵³ Varaždin, a city that was perceived by establishment as part of Zagorje region, was also linked to Tito's personal history. Tito was born in 1892 in Kumrovec, a village in Zagorje, and since his life had been turned into a myth, including his childhood and his native region, Zagorje was the subject of numerous paintings.⁵⁴ It was with the same goal of referring to Tito's biography as the occupant of the villa, as well as the proximity of Zagorje to Zagreb, that the building was given the name *Vila Zagorje*.

The western wall of the Great Hall, opposite Stančić's work, contained the painting *Croatian Historical Cities* (or just *Historical Cities*, 1966, **fig. 2**) by Krsto Hegedušić. This is also a large-scale oil on canvas, depicting the cities of Ostrožac, Ključ, Sokolac, Podzvizd, Brinje, Knin, Slunj, Nehaj, Otočac and

52 Mirjana Dučakijević, "Miljenko Stančić," in *Miljenko Stančić. Retrospektivna izložba. Slike / crteži / grafike / 1942. – 1977.* (Varaždin: Gradski muzej Varaždin, 1996), 13.

53 Miroslav Krleža, *Miljenko Stančić. Mapa reprodukcija* [Miljenko Stančić. *Reproduction Portfolio*] (Zagreb: Author's own edition/samizdat), 8.

54 Panić, *Art and Authority*, 35.

Fig. 2. Krsto Hegedušić, *Historical Cities*, 1966, oil on canvas, Villa Zagorje (today Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia), Zagreb. Photograph by Patricia Počanić.



Sinj, i.e. various old towns and forts immersed in the landscape. Continuing the previous development in his oeuvre, Hegedušić contrasts the rounded, modelled forms and a descriptive treatment of historical fortifications with landscapes depicted through free brushstroke, and more intensely colored areas without distinct contours. The expressive color of Hegedušić's work on the western wall forms a contrast to Stancić's composition and its color palette, bordering on the monochromatic. As in other works, Hegedušić made use of certain aspects of Flemish painting, as well as a specific naïve form of expression and surreal elements that he connected to historical topics. The selection of the canvas's topic can be viewed ideologically as a construction of the new state's historical legitimacy. In addition to the painting's theme, the choice of the artist was justifiable. At the time Villa Zagorje was constructed, Krsto Hegedušić was an established artist known for his works of critical realism, his involvement in the Zemlja Group (1929–1935), and his contribution to the so-called *Hlebine School* of naïve art. He was a member of the Mart Group, a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, a key advocate of free artistic expression in the early 1950s, the head of a master class, and a long-time member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. The reputation Hegedušić had built in the interwar period undoubtedly had an impact on the choice of the topic and the commission of his work. In the postwar years, Hegedušić was also much appreciated by Josip Broz Tito, who furnished his residences with Hegedušić's paintings, the most famous of which was *The Battle of Stubica*, which was placed in the office of Tito's residence at 15 Užička in Belgrade and which also had the role of revising and affirming the centuries-old Yugoslav history.⁵⁵ Hegedušić's composition met both artistic and political requirements, as well as Tito's affinity for his works.

⁵⁵ See: Radić, *Pusen i petokraka*, 68–73.

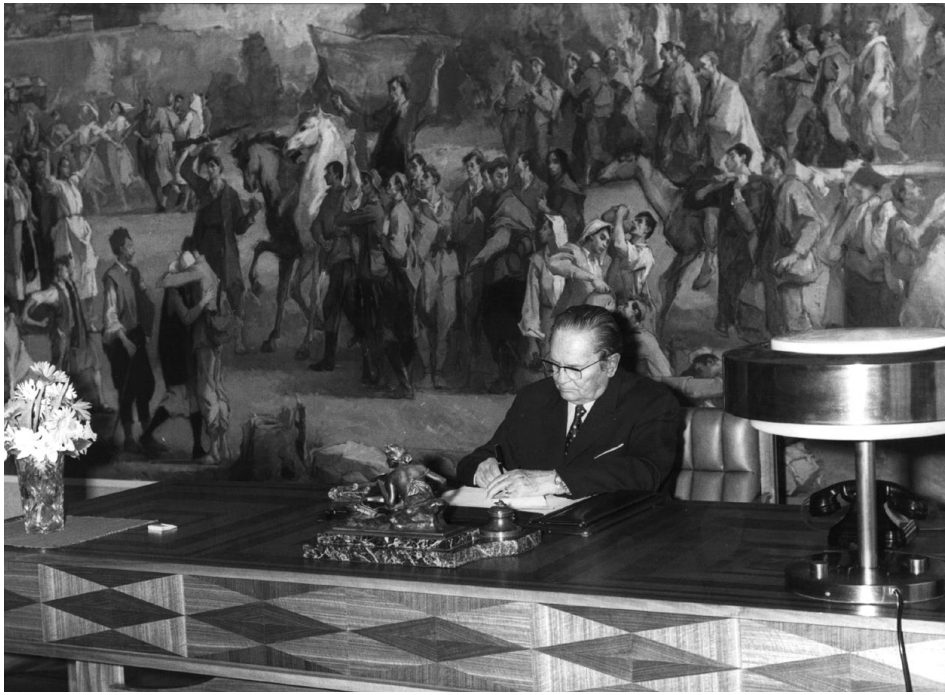


Fig. 3. Josip Broz Tito in his office, in front of the painting *The Liberation of Jajce* by Ismet Mujezinović, 1972, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb. Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

The Battle of Stubica at Tito's residence in Belgrade was certainly a source of inspiration for the theme and setting of Ismet Mujezinović's composition, *The Liberation of Jajce* (**fig. 3**), in Villa Zagorje. Although Krajačić suggested that this historical painting be placed in the Great Hall, it was placed in Tito's office, behind his desk. It is a monumental painting with "epic" scenes of the 1943 liberation of the town, which Mujezinović began painting in 1964 and completed in 1966.⁵⁶ This excellently executed monumental example of historical painting depicts the liberation of Jajce and the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia. Mujezinović constructed a national narrative and commemorated this historical moment through 120 figures,⁵⁷ symbols of the town such as walls, a waterfall, a watermill on the Pliva River, and symbols of war: the arrival of the army and the wounded, liberation and victory, people bearing gifts to the army, the happy youth, tired soldiers, the reunion of a mother and a son, a girl offering a soldier water, etc. In the painting, Mujezinović refers to Socialist Realism, but also to the great painters of historical scenes, from the Baroque masters to Delacroix.

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⁵⁶ While researching the dating of the work of Ismet Mujezinović *Oslobođenje Jajca*, realized for the office of Josip Broz Tito in Villa Zagorje, I came across different pieces of information. According to the press of the time, as well as archival sources (presented with a sketch from 1964), Mujezinović began the composition in 1964 and completed it in 1966. Also, the dimensions of the canvas (7 × 3 m) are stated in periodicals. See: Vezuz Tinjić, "Gosti našeg grada. Prilagođavanje kamena" [Guests of Our City. Customizing the Stone], *Glas*, Banja Luka, May 9, 1966. However, the work *Oslobođenje Jajca* (inv. no. 90000003865), which is today in the possession of the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia, has the dimensions 600 × 300 cm. In 2012/2013, it was presented at the exhibition *Reflections of Time 1945 – 1955* (Klovičevi dvori Gallery, Zagreb), and was minimally restored in 2012 at the Croatian Conservation Institute. In the Croatian Conservation Institute, the painting is dated around 1948, while in the catalogue of the exhibition *Reflections of Time 1945 – 1955*, it is dated in 1955.

⁵⁷ Pašaga Đurić, "U ateljeu Ismeta Mujezinovića. Majstor tema iz revolucije. Umjetnik završio svoju dosad najveću kompoziciju – Oslobođenje Jajca" [In the Studio of Ismet Mujezinović. Master of Themes from the Revolution. The Artist Completed his Biggest Composition to Date – Liberation of Jajce], *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo, December 26, 1965.

The selection of this particular artist and topic, which was proposed by Krajačić in 1964, was not unexpected. Mujezinović was a prominent artist from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a student of the Zagreb Academy (until 1929), one of the founders of the School of Fine Arts in Sarajevo, a regular member of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Academy of Sciences and Arts and a corresponding member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. Tito respected Mujezinović's work, as evidenced by his several visits to the artist's studio.⁵⁸ However, the painting *Liberation of Jajce* also had an important role in the personal history and oeuvre of the artist, as well as for the national construction of history and identity that would form a common ground for all the Yugoslav ethnic groups. Although Mujezinović joined the National Liberation Struggle in 1941, he was not present in Jajce during the war, but his view of the events that took place there was formed in the years after the liberation when he arrived in the town.⁵⁹ The painting represents a historical construct, an idealized and mythologized event.⁶⁰ In the political context of Yugoslav history, Jajce was the place where the Second Yugoslavia was founded, where Tito's authority was firmly established and where the 2nd session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia took place in 1943. Therefore, it is not surprising that this theme was extremely popular in painting and applied arts, as evidenced by numerous artifacts given as gifts to and by Tito that were specifically dedicated to Jajce.⁶¹

Želimir Janeš created an engraved and polychrome relief entitled *A Pastoral* (or *Hunting Pastoral*, 1965–1966) on the villa's first floor (fig. 4).⁶² It was an



Fig. 4. A conversation with a socio-political asset in front of the relief *A Pastoral* by Želimir Janeš, 1972, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb. Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

58 [N.N.], "Ismetovi portreti druga Tita" [Ismet's Portraits of Comrade Tito], *Front slobode*, Tuzla, May 24, 1972.

59 Stanislav Kovačević, "Revolucija u djelima Ismeta Mujezinovića" [Revolution in the Works of Ismet Mujezinović], *Male novine*, Sarajevo, December 28, 1970.

60 Mujezinović tried his hand at painting this theme several times, and another large-scale *Liberation of Jajce* was realized and installed in the Dom Armije (Army Hall) in Sarajevo. The popularity of the painting is also evidenced by the sale of reproductions of this painting during the 1970s. See: [Š. G.], "Reprodukcija 'Oslobođenje Jajca' – u prodaji" [Reproduction of 'Oslobođenje Jajca' – On Sale], *Večernje novine*, Sarajevo, August 29, 1974.

61 Panić, *Art and Authority*, 39.

62 Direkcija zajedničkih službi [Directorate of the State Administration's Joint Departments], Isplata autorskog honorara [Payment of Royalties], Zagreb, April 26, 1966, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH. Direkcija zajedničkih službi [Directorate of the State Administration's Joint Departments], Ugovor o izradi reljefa "Pastoral" [Contract for the Creation of the "Pastoral" Relief], July 31, 1965, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

“engraved drawing” executed on the stone surface of the dining room wall.⁶³ Frano Kršinić acted as a consultant during the work’s execution.⁶⁴ The relief depicts a range of hunting motifs – hunters, birds, forest, a hunter on horseback hunting boars and roe deer with dogs, a hunting dog chasing a grouse, pheasants, etc. This narrative scene and its protagonists were treated figuratively, with stylized depictions of hunters, nature and animals, which, in addition to Janeš’s individual artistic signature, was also influenced by an unusual technique. Archival documents state that the piece was an engraved and polychrome relief, which is also depicted in the photographs of various meetings in Villa Zagorje.⁶⁵ Several times during the 1960s, Janeš reapplied color and used different approaches to treating the materials on his reliefs and sculptures to enhance their expressive features.⁶⁶

Unlike the technique, the choice of Želimir Janeš for this art piece was not unusual. In 1945, Janeš started attending Antun Augustinčić’s specialized course and Frano Kršinić’s master class, and from 1961 he himself taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb.⁶⁷ Although Janeš established himself in the art world with his medallions and small sculptures, it was in the mid-1960s that he created several works commissioned for the interiors of banks and ships. Also, the theme of the relief was expected, especially in the context of Tito’s residences. We can learn from the minutes of the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC that Krleža indicated that one of the works should be of an Arcadian or pastoral topic, and that Ostrogović proposed the arrangement of a room for an exhibition of weapons, having been aware of Tito’s interest in hunting and the fact that many of Tito’s residences had armories or artworks with hunting motifs. Janeš’s *Pastoral* thus fit into the countryside character of the building, the personal affinities of the occupant and the construction of the image of the ruler.

In addition to being involved in the process of commissioning Janeš’s work and acting as a consultant, Frano Kršinić – a prominent Croatian sculptor who taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (from 1924), headed his own master class (from 1947) and was member of the Zemlja Group – created two artworks that were purchased for Villa Zagorje: *Braid my Hair, Mommy* (1946/1950) and *Inhibited* (1955/1957). The sculpture *Braid my Hair, Mommy* (**fig. 5**) was placed in the villa in alignment with the main entrance on the east side of the building, where it still stands today as an illustration of adherence

63 The contract states that it is a stone surface measuring 2232 × 116 cm. Direkcija zajedničkih službi [Directorate of the State Administration’s Joint Departments], Ugovor o izradi reljefa “Pastorala” [Contract for the Creation of the “Pastoral” Relief], July 31, 1965, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Josip Bratulić, *Želimir Janeš* (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, Nacionalna i sveučilišna i biblioteka Zagreb, 1992), 98.

67 Ibid., 14.

Fig. 5. Frano Kršinić, *Braid my Hair, Mommy*, 1946/1950, Seget stone, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb; photograph, Croatian State Archives, Zagreb.



to Richter's original idea.⁶⁸ Kršinić first made a plaster version in 1946, but carved a larger stone sculpture in 1950 in honor of Yugoslavia's first postwar participation in the Venice Biennale.⁶⁹ In the sculpture, which depicts a mother combing her daughter's hair, the artist "successfully synthesizes his carving skill with the need to most subtly establish a very precise unity of matter, form, space and content."⁷⁰ Although Kršinić often explored motherhood as a motif in the 1940s, his work *Braid my Hair, Mommy* in fact depicts an intimate scene typical of periods of war – a mother combing her daughter's hair to remove lice.⁷¹ Both figures are dressed in simple folk clothing and topically corresponded not only to the need to represent Yugoslavia as a socialist country at the Venice Biennale, but also to the construction of the socialist narrative that the sculpture, when placed at the main entrance of the villa, should present to guests. In the mid-1960s, the villa also housed Kršinić's stone sculpture *Inhibited*, which depicted a female figure and was also made according to a smaller model and placed on the lawn near the building, where it still stands today.⁷² In addition to the aforementioned circumstances of the commission, Kršinić's status and the topic of the sculptures, it is important to note that the selection of Kršinić's works for the building was not surprising. His works had enjoyed Tito's attention

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68 Arhitektonski biro Centar 51 [Centar 51 Architectural Studio], *Nacrti – Pantovčak, ulazni dio* [Plans – Pantovčak, Entrance Part], Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

69 This was the first postwar participation of Yugoslavia at the Venice Biennale. That year, the selector was Petar Šegedin and the participants were Gojmir Anton Kos, Petar Lubarda, Božo Ilić, Ismet Mujezinović, Antun Augustinčić, Frano Kršinić, Vanja Radauš, Vojin Bakić, Kosta Angeli Radovani, and Zoran Mušič. See: Želimir Košćević, *Venecijanski Biennale i jugoslavenska moderna umjetnost 1895–1988*. [The Venice Biennale and Yugoslav Modern Art, 1895–1988.], eds. Marijan Susovski, Milan Zinaić and Želimir Košćević (Zagreb: Galerije grada Zagreba, Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1988), 189.

70 Božena Kličinović, *Frano Kršinić* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1998), 29.

71 According to Maro Grbić, Kršinić's grandson and one of the artist's heirs.

72 *Ibid.*



Fig. 6. Antun Augustinčić, *A Monument to Marin Držić*, 1963, bronze. In: Ante Gavranović (ed.), *Augustinčić* (Zagreb: Privredni vjesnik, 1976), 124. Photograph by Tošo Dabac.

for many years. Many of them were bought for Tito's residences all over Yugoslavia, as well as for numerous public buildings such as that of the Federal Executive Council in Belgrade, and Kršinić's sculptures also ended up in different parts of the world as presidential gifts.⁷³ Kršinić himself claimed that Tito was one of the rare people who was passionate about sculpture, and that when he visited his studio, he would stop in front of each work, paying careful attention to them, especially small-scale relief sculptures.⁷⁴

In addition to Kršinić's contributions, the acquired sculptures for the villa included several works by Antun Augustinčić, yet another consultant, who was also a prominent sculptor and member of the Zemlja Group who taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, headed his own master class and served as a member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. Until the mid-1960s, this artist was commissioned to execute numerous monumental sculptures, including the most famous portraits and monuments honoring President Tito, and his works were placed in the park and interior spaces at Tito's Belgrade residence.⁷⁵ Augustinčić's work *A Monument to Marin Držić* (fig. 6) depicts this famous Dubrovnik poet, playwright, and author of political texts as an actor in "commedia dell' arte; wearing a

short gown with wide sleeves, his arms outstretched in a theatrical pose, and standing on a plinth in the shape of a Ionic capital."⁷⁶ The work was executed in 1963 and was soon after purchased and installed in Villa Zagorje's park.⁷⁷ The selection of this monument was also guided by political goals based on the state's ideological program. Not only did Držić represent the leading figure of Croatian and Dubrovnik literature, but he was also construed as a socialist utopian. As stated by Dr. Franjo Ševelec in the mid-1960s: "As far as we know today, Držić began his career as a cleric and manager of two churches only to end up as a conspirator against the Dubrovnik feudal regime."⁷⁸

73 Zorica Mutavdžić, *Tito i umetnici* [Tito and Artists], second edition (Beograd: "Vuk Karadžić," 1977), 88.

74 *Ibid.*, 87.

75 Augustinčić's bronze *Victory* was in the garden of Tito's residence at Užička Street in Belgrade, as was the white female torso. *Ibid.*, 6.

76 Galerija Antuna Augustinčića, "Spomenik Marinu Držiću" [Monument to Marin Držić], accessed March 13, 2023, <http://www.gaa.mhz.hr/fundus-s69/1202>.

77 The sculpture was cast again in 1989 for the patio of the Antun Augustinčić Gallery in Kumrovec and in 2008 for the Babin Kuk Hotel in Dubrovnik.

78 Franjo Ševelec, "Uvijek živi Držić. U povodu 400-godišnjice smrti velikog dubrovačkog komediografa" [Držić Always Lives. On the Occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the Death of the Great Dubrovnik Comedy Writer] *Narodni list*, Zadar, May 26, 1967, 5.

Fig 7. Antun Augustinčić, *Josip Broz Tito*, 1963, marble, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb; photograph, Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

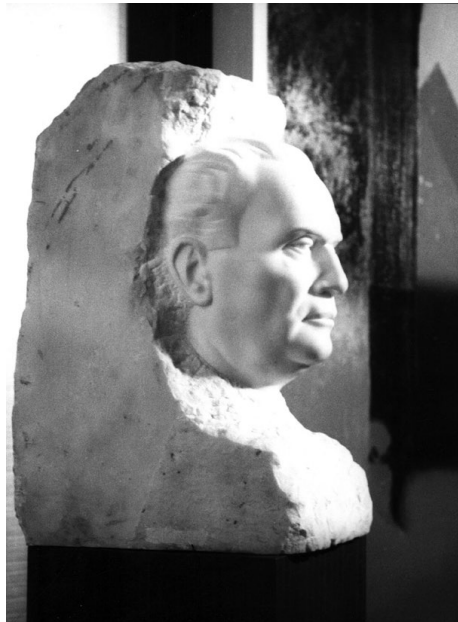
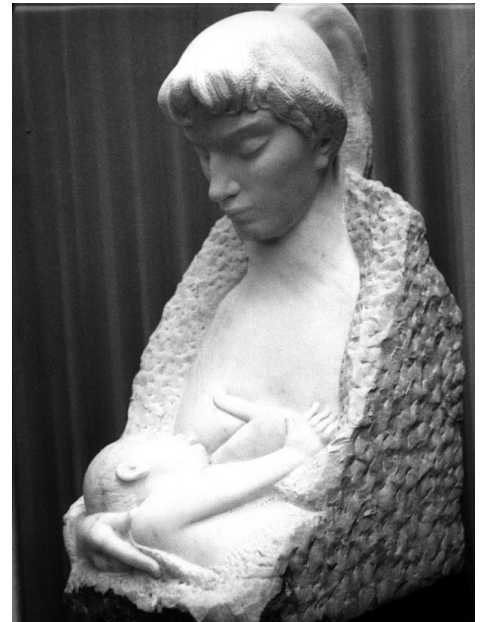


Fig. 8. Grga Antunac, *Breastfeeding*, marble, 1959/1967, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb; photograph, Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.



The interior of the Great Hall was also decorated with two Augustinčić sculptures. The first, a model for the monument *Carrying the Wounded*, shows the merged barefoot figures of two partisans carrying a third. The first sketch for this well-known monument to those who died in the anti-fascist struggle was created in 1946, and from the 1950s to the 1980s it was cast several times and placed in public spaces. The second sculpture was a realistic relief bust of Josip Broz Tito (1963, **fig. 7**), which was placed in the Great Hall at the end of 1960s, and whose removal in the 21st century caused numerous debates.⁷⁹

In addition to these two sculptures, several more were placed both in the interior and exterior spaces of the villa in the second half of the 1960s and in the early 1970s. The sculpture *Breastfeeding* (**fig. 8**) by Šibenik sculptor Grga Antunac was first executed in bronze in 1959, but a marble version of the sculpture was purchased for Villa Zagorje and installed in the interior.⁸⁰ It is a life-size relief depicting the artist's daughter and first grandson. The relief represents an intimate and contemplative moment with harmoniously treated sculptural elements, a relatively closed form and fine finishing of the marble surface. Considering the profile of consultants for artistic furnishings of the villa, the choice of Antunac's work is logical. Antunac enrolled in the sculpture department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 1926, and during the next two years attended Ivan Meštrović's specialized course. In the interwar period, he collaborated with Frano Kršinić and Antun Augustinčić on the

⁷⁹ The bust was removed during the term of office of President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (2015–2020), which caused a public debate.

⁸⁰ The sculpture was certainly placed in Villa Zagorje before 1972, since it appears in the photo documentation of the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. Also, in the catalogue of the Grga Antunac exhibition (Zadar National Museum) published in 1974, it was stated that the marble sculpture had already been purchased for Villa Zagorje. See: Vesna Barbić, *Grga Antunac. Skulpture, crteži. U čast 30. godišnjice oslobođenja Zadra* [Grga Antunac. Sculptures, Drawings. In Honor of the 30th Anniversary of the Liberation of Zadar] (Zadar: Galerija umjetnina Narodnog muzeja Zadar, 1974), s. p.



Fig. 9. Boris Kalin, *Morning*, 1943, marble, Villa Zagorje, Zagreb; photograph, Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

creation of Meštrović's monument *Gratitude to France* (1930).⁸¹ In addition to being a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb since 1946, Antunac collaborated with Augustinčić several times in the prewar and postwar periods, so it is not surprising that this sculptor's work was also among the purchased art.⁸² The topic is not ideologically defined, but shares the contemplative sentiment with numerous artworks in Tito's different residences.

During the second half of the 1960s, the work *Morning* (1943, **fig. 9**) created by Slovenian sculptor Boris Kalin, another prominent and established sculptor, was installed in the villa's park. The sculptural group consists of two female nudes, skillfully and smoothly modelled, which in a somewhat classicizing, idealized and poetic treatment present not only realistic anatomy, but represent an allegory of Morning. Kalin was also a student of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, where he worked with Kršinić, and attended Ivan Meštrović's specialized course (until 1929). From 1945, he taught at the newly founded Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts, headed his own master class (from 1947) and was a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (from 1953).⁸³

All of the mentioned works thus far were not the only ones that were commissioned, bought or donated for Villa Zagorje. Archival photographic material from the 1960s and 1970s testifies to the fact that there was a far larger number of works whose attribution and dating demands further research. From the photos, we learn that a bronze cast of Ivan Meštrović's sculpture

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Martin Jevnikar, "Boris Kalin," in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, accessed March 15, 2023, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1013530/>

Sketch for Job's Son from 1970 was placed on the first floor.⁸⁴ In 1975, Dušan Džamonja donated his model for the sculpture *Monument to the Revolution of the People of Moslavina*. Several other sculptures, including Vanja Radauš's *The Builder* (1962), Kosta Angela Radovani's *Dunja XVI* (1974) and Vladimir Gašparić-Gapa's work *A Resting Warrior* (1980–1985), were installed in the park during the 1970s and 1980s.

In addition to paintings and sculptures, the commissioned art for the villa's interior also included works of applied art whose selection was made with the participation of the commissioners. In 1967, the Directorate of the State Administration's Joint Departments commissioned 20 copper bowls with matching plates that would serve to hold flower arrangements from Gorica-based artist Josip Pukanić.⁸⁵ The dimensions of the bowls were defined by the architect Nada Marić-Vitić, an expert advisor to the commissioners, who had a final say in their selection.⁸⁶ Pukanić built his career in the interwar period by producing objects from precious metals, and in the postwar period he made art objects for the interiors of numerous public institutions.

The selected artists and artworks were significant on several levels. The character and purpose of the building directly influenced the choice of artists, artworks and their subject matter. The President of the Parliament, Ivan (Stevo) Krajačić, and the consultants Miroslav Krleža, Antun Augustinčić and Frano Kršinić played an important role in the selection of works. The choice of artists was certainly conditioned by their artistic and sociopolitical status, or more precisely, selection was made of those artists who had gained experience in numerous state commissions and who, in the mid-1960s, were prominent lecturers at art academies, headed their own master classes and served as members of various associations. In addition, all those selected were "approved" artists, that is, their art was proved to have enjoyed Tito's attention, which clearly shows that the decisions of both the commissioners and the consultants were made to conform to Tito's taste. The topics of the artworks were also proposed and selected according to the same principle. In addition to aesthetic quality, it was important for the artworks either to fit into the ideological theme used for building the national narrative or to satisfy the president's taste. It is interesting to note that in the mid-1960s, abstract works were not envisioned to be placed in the villa's interior (they arrived as gifts somewhat later). Since abstraction had already been widely acknowledged in the mid-1960s it seems surprising that it was excluded, but it should be remembered that Tito's animosity towards abstraction was a publicly known

84 The cast resembles *Sketch III* (1935–1937). Duško Kečkemet, *Umjetnost Ivana Meštrovića* [The Art of Ivan Meštrović] (Split: Filozofski fakultet, 2017), 319.

85 Direkcija zajedničkih službi [Directorate of the State Administration's Joint Departments], Ugovor [Contract], January 1967, Box 279, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

86 Ibid.

fact, especially after 1963.⁸⁷ Although abstraction would correspond to Richter's notion of synthesis, it seems that the commissioners and the taste of the villa's occupant were decisive for reaching the decisions. Finally, it is interesting that in addition to Croatian artists, one Bosnian painter and one Slovenian sculptor, both educated in Zagreb, were part of the selected group of artists, a fact that reflects the idea of the brotherhood of Yugoslav nations.

VILLA ZAGORJE: AFTERMATH

The construction and the interior design of Villa Zagorje, the Zagreb residence of Josip Broz Tito, represents the complex relations between art and the state in the 1960s. From the first designs created by architect Drago Ibler to the final design by Kazimir Ostrogović and Vjenceslav Richter, i.e. the Centar 51 Architectural Studio, the project of the villa demonstrates efforts to construct it as a high-modernist building in Zagreb's Pantovčak district, which, in addition to a high architectural quality, would to be the home of equally excellent contemporary artworks. At the same time, the architects agreed on numerous compromises in order to satisfy the needs of the Parliamentary Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Croatia as the building's commissioners and Josip Broz Tito as its occupant. The concessions of the designers and the influence of the state were particularly visible in the design and furnishings of the interior – from the selection of furniture that tended to be more conservative in style to the suggestions of artists and the topics of their artworks. A key role in the selection of artwork was played by the President of the Parliament of the SRC, Ivo (Stevo) Krajačić, writer Miroslav Krleža, and sculptors Antun Augustinčić and Frano Kršinić. Through consultations, they chose which works would be best for the furnishing of the villa. In addition to creating their own art for the building, they selected the works of Krsto Hegedušić, Ismet Mujezinović, Miljenko Stančić, Želimir Janeš, and the art of their associates Grga Antunac and Boris Kalin, all of whom were established artists. Their works depicted figurative scenes that supported the construction of a history of the Yugoslav people and visually enhanced the political image of a relatively new state. They also spoke of the personal history and mythology of the President of the SFRY, and of the artistic achievements of their creators.

Villa Zagorje retained its function as the presidential residence until Tito's death in 1980, although the interior space and everything in it underwent significant changes in 1975.⁸⁸ According to archival data, in addition to various gifts given to President Tito by artists, statesmen and others, during the 1970s the interior of the building was furnished with works from the Modern Gallery

87 Patricia Počanić, "Narudžbe i otkupi umjetničkih djela za interijere javnih institucija u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih" [Commissions and Buyouts of Artwork for the Interiors of Public Institutions in Croatia during the 1950s and 1960s], *Peristil: zbornik radova za povijest umjetnosti*, no. 62 (2019): 194.

88 Meštrić, Brdar Mustapić, "Vila Zagorje," 27.

in Zagreb.⁸⁹ The death of Josip Broz Tito marked the beginning of the building's conversion, with numerous proposals to use it, for example, for commercial purposes; to use it to house the "Art Collection of Ante and Wiltrud Topić Mimara;" or to turn it into a Museum of Contemporary Art and Sculpture Park.⁹⁰ Although the proposed cultural purposes were never realized, the space of the former Villa Zagorje still reflects the connection between art and the state. After the establishment of the independent Republic of Croatia, its political and residential function was restored, and since 1992 it has accommodated the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia.⁹¹ In the period from the 1990s to the present, the artistic furnishings and furniture in the building have served an important cultural, ideological and representational role, just as did at the time of their execution, and have therefore aroused public interest and, occasionally, criticism of the villa's residents. Because of this, since 1992, different administrations have invited curators to artistically conceptualize the interior, which demonstrates that Villa Zagorje has from its very inception been used as a space for artistic interventions for the purpose of national representation.

89 See: Posudbeni ugovor između Moderne galerije, Zagreb i Izvršnog vijeće sabora SRH – Republički protokol, Zagreb [Loan Agreement between the Modern Gallery, Zagreb, and the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC – Republic Protocol, Zagreb], July 11, 1979, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH. Posudbeni ugovor između Moderne galerije, Zagreb i Izvršnog vijeće sabora SRH – Republički protokol, Zagreb [Loan Agreement between the Modern Gallery, Zagreb and the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC – Republic Protocol, Zagreb], July 2, 1980, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH. Posudbeni ugovor između Moderne galerije, Zagreb i Izvršnog vijeće sabora SRH – Republički protokol, Zagreb [Loan Agreement between the Modern Gallery, Zagreb and the Parliamentary Executive Council of the SRC – Republic Protocol, Zagreb], June 9, 1981, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH.

90 Dopis Nede Milunovića iz Republičkog protokola Predsjedniku Sabora SR Hrvatske Juri Biliću, 02-1599/1-1981. [Letter from Nedo Milunović from the Republic Protocol to the President of the Parliament of the SRC, 02-1599/1-1981], 1981, Box 282, HR-HDA-280 IVS SRH. Elena Cvetkova, "Umjetnine sele u 'Zagorje'?" [Artworks Moving to 'Zagorje'?], *Večernji list*, Zagreb, February 3, 1990, 13.

91 The office was moved to today's location because its previous location, Banski dvori, was bombed on October 7, 1991. During the 1990s, the building underwent another change, when in 1994 and 1995 the so-called Stone Hall was remodelled into the so-called People's Hall according to the design of Andrija Rusan, and the former dining room was converted into a library.

