

## ECHOES OF MODERNITY: ART TENDENCIES DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN ART SCHOOLS

Marija Curk\*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Education, Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iD: Marija Curk

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3224-0135>

### Abstract

While modernist schools in the field of art and design developed in parallel worldwide between the two World Wars, in Serbia, political and social circumstances diverted attention to different needs. Artists were mostly educated abroad, in cities like Paris, Munich, Prague, or Budapest, often in order to return to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with the acquired experience and knowledge, bringing ideas changed through a personal prism. Avant-garde artistic ideas and styles appeared on the territory of today's Serbia between the two World Wars, but were altered under the influence of the prevailing and generally accepted traditionalism, which ruled art educational institutions as much as the society at large. The sociological and intellectual characteristics of society largely determine the dominant form of aesthetic consciousness, and the acceptance or non-acceptance of certain art forms greatly influenced the stylistic picture of the epoch. During that time, the evolution of art education was dynamic, but the same cannot be said of the development of learning programs. By tracing the historical trajectory of the creation of schools for artists, we aim to illuminate the relationship between artistic progress and society, and the underlying pedagogical theories, methodology and challenges that have influenced the education of generations of artists.

**Key words:** art, traditionalism, avant-garde, progressive schools, Yugoslavia.

## ОДЈЕЦИ МОДЕРНЕ: ТЕНДЕНЦИЈЕ У УМЕТНОСТИ ИЗМЕЂУ ДВА СВЕТСКА РАТА И УТИЦАЈ НА ПЕДАГОШКЕ ПРИСТУПЕ У ШКОЛАМА ЗА УМЕТНОСТ

### Апстракт

Док су се у свету између два светска рата паралелно развијале модернистичке школе у области уметности и дизајна, на просторима Србије су политичко друштвене околности преусмериле пажњу ка другачијим потребама. Уметни-

\* Corresponding author: Marija Curk, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Education, Belgrade, 43 Kraljice Natalije, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia, [curkmarija@gmail.com](mailto:curkmarija@gmail.com)

ци су се махом школовали у иностранству, у градовима попут Париза, Минхена, Прага или Будимпеште, да би се са стеченим искуством и знањем неретко враћали у Краљевину Југославију доносећи кроз личну призму измењене идеје. На просторима данашње Србије између два светска рата појавиле су се авангардне уметничке идеје и стилови из света, измењени под утицајем владајућег и опште-прихваћеног традиционализма, који је владао уметничким образовним институцијама исто колико је владао друштвом. Социолошке и интелектуалне карактеристике друштва умногоме одређују и владајући облик естетске свести, а прихватање и неприхватање одређених уметничких форми је умногоме утицало на стилску слику епохе. У то време, еволуција уметничког образовања била је динамична, али не толико у развоју програма обучавања. Пратећи историјску путању настанка школа за уметнике, циљ нам је да осветлимо однос између уметничког напретка и друштва, основних педагошких теорија, методологије и изазова који су утицали на образовање генерација уметника.

**Кључне речи:** уметност, традиционализам, авангарда, прогресивне школе, Југославија.

### *INTRODUCTION*

After the First World War, all the countries involved shared a common need for renewal and the improvement of social, economic and political conditions. For the region of Serbia, with its then recent history of only short periods of respite from destruction taken into consideration, this problem was even greater. After the two Balkan wars which brought liberation from the Ottoman Empires' centuries long occupation, the Balkans became a hotspot of a new war, and a much more widespread conflict. While the modernisation process began in the world, covering all social spheres, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, invested its energy in building the state apparatus and strengthening the unity of the Balkan people. The way in which each country treated the stumble of humanity and its consequences largely depended on the cultural and social perspective and the ruling political ideology, both before and after the war. All of these factors together affected the forming of the educational system, and thus the position of art in it. Every current event also reflects on the artist as a social and emotional being, who will then teach future generation. These interconnected and intertwined threads cannot be observed as isolated factors: we cannot separate the artist from the school in which he studied and whose experiences he carries on, from the epoch in which he creates that includes political, economic and social circumstances, from the society to which he belongs and, thus, from their reaction to a reality in which a certain style or 'ism' has taken shape; and neither can society be separated from the past which has certainly left traces on its current form.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, industrial development brought a need to adapt to technological progress and its speed, which also affected art tendencies. Change was followed by the emergence of ear-

ly British Modernism and early German Expressionism, then French Fauvism, Purism and Orphism, the Cubism of Picasso and Braque, Italian Futurism, Russian Regionalism, Constructivism and Supremacism, English Vorticism, as well as the global movement of Dadaism. Not all artists were influenced by these novelties. There were still figurative realists in America and Europe, as well as in Mexico, who created their own national art, and that proved that the time had come when one could choose one's own path. However, a much louder trace in the history of art was made by the movements that surprised the public, and which did not rely on the traditional realistic approach. In European cities, the rapid shifts of 'isms' continued between the two World Wars. Many art schools established during that time would later leave a strong influence on art education, especially on schools for design, by providing a drastically different example compared to the previous prevailing academicism.

At the same time, in Southeast Europe, the pre-war idea of Yugoslav cultural unity had not weakened yet, but interethnic conflicts emerged within the newly formed country of the united Slavic people, due to different understandings of what Yugoslavia is and what its art should be (Makuljević, 2017, p. 419). Makuljević (2017) points out that the complex cultural situation influenced the establishment of various artistic practices that acted in the service of emphasising and building the state and national identity, but were also affected by monarchist propaganda. It is exactly this struggle for the preservation of diverse national identities and the fear of possible weakening that may be the key answer to why art educational institutions remained committed to traditionalism, and why they resisted bigger stylistic changes or complete modernisation, and upheld avant-garde ideas from various parts of Europe.

As a discipline, art education serves as a conduit for nurturing creativity, honing artistic skills, and fostering a deep understanding of cultural expression. Within the context of our territory, a nation steeped in rich artistic traditions and cultural heritage, the evolution of art education has been dynamic, but the same cannot be said of the development of learning programs. By tracing the historical trajectory of the creation of schools for artists, we aim to illuminate not just the artistic progress but also the underlying pedagogical theories, methodologies, and challenges that have influenced the education of generations of artists. Understanding the interplay between societal needs, artistic movements, and pedagogical innovations of the past is pivotal in appreciating the holistic development of art education in Serbia as it is today.

*THE SPREADING OF MODERNISTIC IDEAS  
WITHIN INSTITUTIONS IN THE WORLD*

Walter Gropius' stand that architects, painters and sculptors must be artisans at the outset, that the best way to learn is through practical work, and that aesthetics can be developed only on the basis of solid craft experience was revolutionary in that time of prevailing academicism (Arnason, 1975, p. 250). Based on this view of art education, Gropius created Das Staatliche Bauhaus, a school that does not recognise art as a profession, as "there are no significant differences between an artist and a craftsman," and the artist is a "sublime craftsman" (The First Manifest of Bauhaus, according to: Arnason, 1975, p. 251). In accordance with the school's aspiration to connect the principles of mass production with an individual sense of aesthetics, students acquired craft skills by designing custom models for industry, through the courses of fine arts, architecture, interior design, graphic and industrial design, and typography. As stated by Gropius (1974), the intention of the Bauhaus was to eliminate the shortcomings of the machine, but not to sacrifice any of its advantages, which was in line with the time when machine-made products filled the market and when the 'absence of good form' invites artists and craftsmen to combine their knowledge.

Arnason (1975) considers the Bauhaus one of the most important art schools in history, not only because of the artists who taught and studied there but also because of the influence that the Bauhaus had all over the world. After six months of a Preliminary Course (Vorlehre or Vorkurs), during which the basics of techniques and materials were taught, students would choose a course to join, such as ceramics or wood sculpture, weaving, carpentry, metal workshop, printing and more. Each course had a lecturer artist and lecturer craftsman. After three years of training in crafts and design, the student would obtain their 'Master's letter' by taking the exam, and if they wanted to continue their education, he/she could start attending classes in architecture and construction, which was the highest vocation (Gropius, 1974). While lecturers at other academies taught students their own principles and passed on practical experiences, the Bauhaus paid attention to the laws of interaction of form and colour, while personal spiritual values served the designing process (Grote, 1974). Painting, graphics and scenography were taught by Kandinsky (Василий Васильевич Кандинский), Paul Klee, Lyonel Charles Feininger, Georg Muche, Oscar Schlemmer, and László Moholy-Nagy, and pottery was taught by Gerhard Marcks. With the transfer from Weimar to Dessau, several students also became teachers, like architects and designers Marcel Brauer and Herbert Bayer, and painter and designer Joseph Albers. At the heart of the overall training was a Preliminary Course, developed by the Swiss painter Johannes Itten, which intended to expand students' experiences through creative practical work and exper-

imentation, as well as through the study of non-Western philosophies and mystical religions (Arnason, 1975, p. 250). The Preliminary Course served to awaken an individual gift in students and to prepare them for the further education. Itten achieved that by combining his own method of artistic education with the neo-Buddhistic teaching of the rebirth of an originally pure human being (Grote, 1974). Klee and Kandinsky put in the foreground values such as composition, colour, line and shape, on the basis of which the aesthetic experience is built, and which are intertwined with Neoplatonic ideas, as well as with knowledge of mathematics and physics. (Arnason, 1975; Lerner, 2005). The orientation towards the principles of nature, less scientific in Klee than in Kandinsky, contributed to the formation of personal pedagogical principles, which Klee presented in his *Pedagogical Sketchbooks* (example: Klee, 1925). More realistic technological-formalistic ideas and functionalist principles of Moholy-Nagy and Albers, who inherited Itten's course, were expressed through rhythmic-asymmetrical compositions in space, while students would get acquainted with the boundaries of materials and the principles of shaping through experimental work and research (Grote, 1974; Stelzer, 1974; Lerner, 2005; Sarvanović, 2016). Albers resolved and altered the contradictory components of the Bauhaus, such as pedagogical activism, mystical expressionism, and excessive constructivism, by turning the didactic foundations of the school into systematic and applicable teaching material (Meštrović, 1969, p. 15). The Bauhaus was significantly influenced by Theo van Doesburg, who promoted the De Stijl ideas, by Le Corbusier's (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) principles of architecture and the renewed essence of classical antiquity, as well as the Soviet artistic trends best conveyed by Moholy-Nagy and Kandinsky (Meštrović, 1969; Grote, 1974; Arnason, 1975).

When Gropius was replaced by the architect Hannes Meyer as the school principal, the curriculum was expanded in order to create well-educated architects by adding psychology, sociology, mathematics, economics, urban planning, political science and physical education (Arnason, 1975; Sarvanović, 2016). Putting applied design at the forefront, versus the artistic individual, functionality was found to be the basic goal of teaching.

The Bauhaus combined modernist ideas of cubist and constructivist simplification of forms with the functionality of the usable object, which was opposed to a society that wanted art that would support its ideals and spread political messages. The socialist-orientated policy of the school led to a collision with the more conservative Weimar, and to a move to first Dessau, and then Berlin, until the antagonism culminated and the Nazi authorities closed the Bauhaus. About 1,870 of its members transmitted ideas and knowledge around the world, in more than thirty countries, both by teaching future artists and through their own creative

work (Grote, 1974; Arnason, 1975; Sarvanović, 2016). Moholy-Nagy transferred the ideas of the Bauhaus to Chicago, where he became the head of the New Bauhaus in 1937 (now the Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology), and thus strongly influenced the development of design in the United States. Albers was a professor at Black Mountain College, Yale University, and taught courses at many institutes. He incorporated Bauhaus experiences into America's art, which was still out of the modernist influence, and made a lasting impact on art education (Grote, 1974). The method of the Preliminary Course has also been adopted by colleges and academies in Germany, England and Japan. Bayer laid the foundations of visual communications through his personal creative practice. During that time, Brauer joined Gropius as a professor at Harvard University, and experienced world fame after 1941. By promoting cubist principles and abstraction, he influenced the development and spread of the idea of experimentation in education, especially in schools of architecture, painting and sculpture (Arnason, 1975).

Similar teaching principles were adopted by the Soviet school of Vkhutemas (Bxyremac), which sought to create teaching methods compatible with new artistic trends by forming a pedagogical system around the experimentally created avant-garde analytical methods of examining the art form (Adaskina, 1992). The curriculum and methods of work in Vkhutemas were based on the theorised principles of the avant-garde and all its contradictions, from experimentally explored forms, over synthesising organic and mechanic, to finding collective and objective knowledge in individual creations (Adaskina, 1992).

As a spiritual extension of the Bauhaus, the Ulm School of Design (Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm) moved towards the idea of the necessity of craft knowledge and skills in the 'most avant-garde' way, by approaching design from a scientific basis, while recognising the need to strengthen historical-critical awareness which embodies both an ideological and political dimension (Meštrović, 1969, p. 5). By gathering the most progressive experts and pedagogues from all over the world, the school intended to lead the post-war world of poverty along industrial paths, and, like the Bauhaus, to combine fine and applied arts. The pursuit to reach the future evoked the aggressive suspicion of all those who were attacking the Bauhaus between the two wars, and who did not accept anything that transcended the narrow horizons of the national tradition (Meštrović, 1969, p. 6).

Paris regained its place as the world capital of art between the two wars, but no significant progress occurred within the institutions. With the gathering of a large number of artists from all over the world, Paris became a place of stylistic and creative abundance. In the 1920s and 1930s, surrealism began to spread from France, through Spain, Russia and America, and reached Yugoslavia. Surrealism experienced a wider response through its

altered forms: Naturalism, Neoplasticism and Magical Realism. In parallel to the Surrealists, the group Abstraction-Création was founded, along with a magazine of the same name, which promoted the ideas of Suprematism, Constructivism, De Stijl and other abstract movements, making the artistic society even more diverse (Arnason, 1975).

European artists were slowly incorporating their ideas into the 'provincialism of American art,' encountering strong resistance from traditional, social and regional Realism and Impressionism established in all art institutions. This makes the art scene of the USA similar to Yugoslavia at that time, although with different social and political foundations.

On the eve of the Second World War, in Germany, the pressure on artists increased when the Bauhaus was closed. 'Non-Aryan' art was marked as degenerative, Bolshevik and decadent, and was ridiculed and massively destroyed. In Italy, the Fascist government was more tolerant of Futurists, Abstract painters and Expressionists, but they singled out the politically desirable by giving awards and organising exhibitions (Borovac, 2006). At the same time, in Soviet Russia, the goal of creating art that was "revolutionary in its form and socialistic in its content" was glorifying the conservative Realism of the previous century and, as consequence, the number of scenes with satisfied workers and farmers and proud members of the Red Army increased (Borovac, 2006).

#### *ARTISTIC TRENDS FACING THE WEST*

The attitude that the conservative German society had towards Bauhaus was the same as the one that the French society had towards the first Impressionists in the previous century, and similar to the way Italy reacted to the Fauvists who triggered all subsequent 'overturns' on the art scene in 1905. The prudence towards something different, towards advanced and still 'uncontrolled' is at the core of society, which, formed on certain principles and guided by them, can pressure individuals to continually contribute within the already accepted framework. Such was the society of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which from the very beginning had many problems that needed to be solved, like social issues, illiteracy, and the problem of consolidating its international status and defining borders (Petrović, 2008; Perović, 2017). These needs occupied all the attention of the authorities: the goals of education were redirected to illiteracy, which is why art education did not develop more advanced forms. Since 1937, and the government of Milan Stojadinović, the systems of supervision and control of culture, education and science were strengthened in fear of the disintegration of folk traditional values (Petrović, 2008).

When it comes to Serbian art and artists, Protić (1970) notes that, unlike the 19th century when Serbian art leaned towards Vienna and Mu-

nich, artists turned mostly to Paris in the new century, and art slowly acquired a more general character, but it was only in the 1950s that it gradually separated from the 'illusion of administrative socialism.' Due to the fact that the impressionism of the previous century "remained in modest, Serbian, Belgrade and, in a way, patriarchal proportions" (Protić, 1970, p. 76), the society of later years did not have the same basis for the full modernist upheaval that the rest of the world experienced. Our painters were educated in European cities, and then returned home with progressive ideas and a desire to contribute to national art, but they often encountered resistance from the collective which upheld traditional values. Copying classical works from renowned world museums contributes to the development of skills, while encounters with the works of famous contemporary artists at current exhibitions will guide our artists towards modern artistic concepts (Trifunović, 2005). Or, during their stay in Europe, they were "too fascinated by the tangible evidence of the longingly desired European past to notice that *spectacular city*," which was an escape into "idealized landscapes of the past" (Čupić, 2017, pp. 61-62). There were efforts in society against the avant-garde and stylistic diversity of modern society, whose individuality would be a danger to traditional values, like Futurists who were marked as 'fantastic and pathological dilltantes' from the very beginning (Protić, 1970, according to the article: „*Футуристу“ у сликарству – 'Futurists' in painting*, by Miloslav Stojadinović). Therefore, Protić (1970, p. 79) emphasises that at the beginning of the century, artistic activity was valued more than the work itself, especially if that art could be a 'subtle instrument of politics.' In addition, if we look at the aspirations of the interwar society, it is noticeable that the need to get closer to the more advanced West and be accepted in the world has led to the glorification of the value of everything imported. Thus, studying abroad also meant a general advantage. Europe was a synonym for progress and well-being, a certain ideal to strive for, and Serbian art was in some way compared, interpreted and determined in relation to European art (Čupić, 2017, p. 13). Nevertheless, the beginning of the twentieth century was already marked by "an emphatic insistence on a dual identity" (Čupić, 2017, p. 22) at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900, but also at later exhibitions of the international type in European capitals, where art was used as a witness of national identity and historical continuity. The Serbian pavilion was filled with characteristic elements and symbols of the Serbian tradition, from paintings and sculptures with a historical narrative, to applied art, objects from everyday life and products. The conservatism of Yugoslav critics and audiences is also evident in the negative reactions to the Fifth Yugoslav Exhibition, which showed the development of domestic art from the beginning of the century to the beginning of the third decade of the 20th century, wherein the negative comments were aimed especially at young artists, and cubist and



futuristic tendencies (Trajkov, 2021). This contradiction between the intention to underline the Serbian-European tradition with the selected compositions presented at the World Exhibition in Paris (where paintings such as *The Coronation of Emperor Dušan* by Paja Jovanović, *The Fall of Stalać* by Đorđe Krstić and others were exhibited), to somehow leave out the heritage from the time of Ottoman rule, the aspiration to complete the image of a unique identity and the simultaneous reserve towards more radical creative expressions was the basic feature of the entire art scene in the following decades.

After the First World War, there was a desire for art to be freer from academism, but the process of Europeanisation in art was slow, as in all spheres of society. While Purism, Constructivism and Neoplasticism were already developing in the world, and Dadaism was still attempting to destroy art, the first Cézanneists appeared (for example, only in 1929 was opened the Art Pavilion of Cvijeta Zuzorić with the Autumn Exhibition of Belgrade Painters) in the Yugoslav countries, where there were no permanent galleries and thus no audience. Yugoslav painters mostly followed the legacy of Nadežda Petrović, who opened the world of Impressionism for the Serbian audience, which is why the first avant-garde styles from abroad arrived years later, in the form of post-Cubism, Lhote's (André Lhote) softened cubism in Traditionalism and Neoclassicism, and Expressionism which Protić (1970, p. 87) explains as marked by Christian socialism. Dadaism found its followers belatedly, and entailed the formation of Zenitism, based on the name of the magazine *Zenit* of Ljubomir Micic, who did not want the "Europeanization of the Balkans, but the Balkanization of Europe," which thus spread ideas contrary to the Modernism (Protić, 1970, p. 96). Preoccupied with the desire to create national art, Yugoslavia constantly returned to the study of Slavic and Serbian folk traditions, as did the art group Zograf (1927-1940), with sharp protests against 'foreign art that arose in completely different historical circumstances.' Therefore, Protić (1970, p. 103) argues that the Serbian Yugoslav art scene could be divided only into echoes of Cézanneism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism and Traditionalism, but without a clear typology, and that the entire third decade was in 'search for form and structure.' There was a certain heterogeneity in all spheres of society in the first half of the twentieth century, united under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, such as differences in language, traditions, customs, mentality, and commitment to culture and its development, which in a way prevented the unity of culture and the creation of a general image of art (Čupić, 2017, p. 18).

After the worldwide economic crisis of 1929, there was a wider echo of coloristic Expressionism among local artists, most of whom studied at Central European academies: Petar Dobrović, Zora Petrović and

Ivan Tabaković in the Budapest academy influenced by Munich, Jovan Bijelić in Kraków and Prague, and Milan Konjović in Prague and Vienna. During the first years of the 1930s, Surrealism, which arrived in Yugoslavia through Marko Ristic from Paris, was also influential. The almanac *Немогуће - L'impossible* (Eng. Impossible) was published, followed by the magazine *Надреализам данас и овде* (Eng. Surrealism Today and Here) and numerous other publications (Protić, 1970). In the same period, Intimism and Poetic Realism were developed, which implied returning to the representation of the real and seen, as well as observing the inner state. What painters of these styles have in common is that after schooling in various cities outside Yugoslavia, they became professors within its borders. For example, the Intimist Ivan Radović was a professor at the Belgrade Art School, Jefta Perić was a professor at the Academy of Applied Arts in Belgrade, Kosta Hakman was a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, and Jovan Bijelić, after teaching at a high school in Bihać, founded a private school in Belgrade, from which a whole series of painters emerged (Protić, 1970). With them, of course, a slightly freer and brighter Impressionistic colouring was brought to art education.

The first half of the 20th century was marked as a transformative era for art education in Serbia. Despite the challenges posed by political unrest, economic fluctuations, and shifting cultural paradigms, several notable art schools were established.

The centre of art education in the country was the Royal Art School in Belgrade (Kraljevska umetnička škola, 1919-1937), which clearly outlined the stylistic and organisational influence of the Munich and Paris schools of the previous century. Yugoslav artists Milan Milonović, Rista and Beta Vukanović, Ljuba Ivanović, Petar Dobrović, Nikola Bešević, Vasa Pomorišac and Ivan Radović, who taught at the Royal School, brought their own Coloristic and Impressionistic orientations. They tutored a large number of artists on the traditional grounds of landscape, still life, and drawing and painting by model (Jovičić, 2013). The methodological basis revolved around classical art training, and this approach aimed to provide students with a strong technical foundation, enabling them to master the fundamental skills of fine arts. The thematic narrowness in artistic work within the school was equally characteristic for the entire interwar period (Protić, 1973; Jovičić, 2013).

In 1937, at the same time the Bauhaus ideas started to spread in America, the Academy of Fine Arts (now the Faculty of Fine Arts) developed from the Belgrade's Art School, and it continued the tradition of its predecessor, by which a professor is equal to a program, and the base of learning is individual activity of research through visual media. Students were encouraged to explore diverse mediums and techniques, fostering a broader understanding of artistic expression. The intention was for students to be carefully trained in drawing, painting, sculpting and other tra-

ditional media, cultivating technical expertise as a prerequisite for the pursuit of unique self-expression. The Academy aimed to establish a balance between the preservation of traditional artistic values and trends in modern art. In 1973, the Academy joined the University of Arts in Belgrade, becoming the Faculty of Fine Arts, but the curriculum and approaches did not change. The current Dean of the Faculty, Dimitrije Pecić, states: "The responsibility of the generation of teachers currently employed at the Faculty is to achieve the continuity of the teaching programs, to review and preserve their confirmed 'traditional' values and harmonize them with the needs of modern times and new generations of students." The availability of modern materials can only be counted among those needs of the modern age, while the curriculum relies on 'proven' methods.

The Serbian School of Drawing and Painting (Srpska crtačka i slikarska škola), founded in 1895 by Kiril Kutlik, changed its name to the Serbian School of Painting (Srpska slikarska škola) after the death of Kutlik and under the leadership of Rista and Beta Vukanović. The school was moved to their studio and there were changes in the curriculum – in addition to practical subjects, theoretical classes were introduced as part of the daily course (Trifunović, 1978; Paštrnakova, 2005). Plastic anatomy was taught by Vojislav Đorđević, perspective and styles by Svetozar Zorić, and the basics of aesthetics by Branislav Petronijević. At the same time that the Academy of Fine Arts was established, the idea of founding a high school for applied arts arose (named School of Arts and Crafts – Umetničko-zanatska škola). It was opened very quickly, as early as the following year. After the war, it continued working as the Academy of Applied Arts. In the School of Arts and Crafts, the subject of decorative art was taught by Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak, who introduced detailed treatment of folk art and ornamentation, as well as foreign aesthetics of industrial production into the course content. He directed students towards the application of theory in craft and industrial processes, and with a vision to restore and theoretically formulate the national style, he relied on elements of folklore in his teaching (Vulešević, 1998). Methodologically, the focus was on applied arts, with an emphasis on practical learning and skills. Until the opening of this school, applied arts could be found in craft schools, while the School for the Application of Decorative Arts, which was founded by Margita Nušić Predić (1926/1927 to around 1935), was a place where the wealthy women of Belgrade studied, created and exhibited decorative objects (Popović, 2011). Limited resources, societal expectations, and evolving artistic paradigms posed significant hurdles for the continuation of the functioning of all schools in this period. Thus, the Academy also encountered numerous challenges, such as being located in the old building of the former Arts and Crafts School from the beginning of the 20th century, which fell into disrepair due to time and

warfare, and coping with the search for teaching staff. Belgrade artists with or without teaching experience were employed, but with effort, the Academy slowly made its way through artistic circles, and its influence in the field of applied arts and design was recognised during the Yugoslav period, until it was elevated to the status of a Faculty in 1973.

The traditional teaching practices present in all art institutions of that era were primarily intended to encourage creative activity, but also critical thinking and analytical skills. Students were challenged to engage deeply with art history, theory, and critique. This intellectual rigor fostered a reflective approach to creativity, enabling artists to contextualise their work within broader artistic movements and societal narratives. The ability to critically assess their own creative output became a valuable asset in their artistic journey.

Traditionalism and conservatism were incorporated in the educational foundations of art schools, from the Art School in Belgrade to the Academies of Fine and Applied Arts, but a large number of artists influenced Serbian art by bringing home Western progressive ideas after studying abroad. Although these ideas arrived in their altered and softened form, solid foundations were laid for the further development of art.

### *CONCLUSION*

Busy with its border instability and the preservation of unity within the expanded Yugoslav perspective, more of the state's attention was paid to the artist as a 'finished product' and to studying abroad as a matter of prestige. The state's goal to form an image of a progressive and prosperous united country, but also the desire to be accepted in the world, led to the glorification of everything that was imported, as opposed to what was created within its own framework. At the same time, the idea of Yugoslav unity and the pursuit of creating a national art led to an emphasis on traditional medieval values and attempts to stop the process of the Europeanization of art style. The art scene did consist of artists who studied abroad, mostly in Paris, but afterwards they adapted those experiences to the taste of their domestic environment. Protić (1970, p. 112) finds the explanation for the non-existence of pure cubism or pure abstraction in our region in the sociological factors of society, where "our environment could not receive either intellectually or materially" what existed in the world, and "the autonomy of the image was allowed as a freer way of representation, but not as an attempt to abolish representation itself." The same reason can be an answer to the question of the non-existence of art education schools with more advanced curricula, principles and ideas. Due to the frequent major changes on the political scene, the country's need to preserve its cultural heritage and artistic tradition played a significant role. Traditional methods provided a strong technical foundation, ensuring that

students could proficiently execute their artistic visions. The human need for continuity and for the preservation of a war-shaken identity are other important reasons (Protić, 1970, p. 112). The demand for figurative art and classical techniques persisted, shaping the curriculum to align with the prevailing tastes and preferences of both the audience and aspiring artists. Additionally, the continuity of traditional methods served as a bridge between generations of artists, preserving a sense of artistic lineage and cultural identity. This connection to the past was supposed to allow the transmission of artistic knowledge and skills from experienced artists to emerging talents, ensuring the preservation of artistic techniques that were valued within the community. Students were encouraged to appreciate balance and harmony, the focus was on aesthetics and cultivating sensibility, enabling artists to create visually compelling and emotionally resonant works of art. Through the traditional approach to teaching, the aim was to nurture exceptional aesthetic values. The positive side of this approach was also an attempt to instil in the students the awareness of the importance of the permanence of creativity, which would very soon be shaken by the influx of new commercial products that promised a faster arrival to a creative solution, or the embodiment of the most extravagant ideas of artists.

However, it is not a matter of the response to European movements in our region, nor of the changed form in which they arrived, but rather the underdeveloped art education in Yugoslav Serbia that redirected a large number of talents, important figures today, to study in other countries, in Paris, Munich, Vienna, Prague, and Weimar. It is precisely the matter of this 'large number,' and not only of individuals, which indicates the awareness of the insufficiency of the Serbian art education of that period for greater personal growth.

At the same time, considering the social, economic and ideological problems of the Kingdom, it can be concluded that there was no opportunity for attempts towards more radical changes in art education and the establishment of more progressive schools of art. It must be borne in mind that Yugoslavia was a heterogeneous state, in the historical, political, economic, social, linguistic, cultural and religious sense. It was a society that had just emerged from a centuries-old vacuum under occupation, which fought year after year for its sovereignty, and then found itself again in the midst of war. The only problem that the Kingdom may have avoided was a war with institutionalised progressive ideas and 'advanced cultures,' like the struggles that German society waged against the Bauhaus. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, changes in creative work as products of the 'accomplished artist' were more gradual, and could only meet with approval or disapproval from the audience.

Traditional teaching practices focus on timeless skills that have been passed down through generations. These skills, such as drawing,

anatomy, and composition, remain relevant regardless of technological advancements. Contemporary art pedagogy should continue to balance technical proficiency with intellectual inquiry, nurturing well-rounded artists capable of critically engaging with societal issues. This is what is missing in today's time, in which there is a noticeable decline in self-criticism, as well as intellectual support for artistic extravagance. Today, in artistic educational institutions, creative expression is placed before all other teaching subjects in which the requirements and criteria are being lowered. Future art education methodologies should maintain a balanced curriculum encompassing traditional skills, contemporary techniques, and critical theory. A well-rounded education equips students to adapt to evolving artistic landscapes. Art education should instil a passion for life-long learning and intellectual growth, and artists must constantly adapt to new technologies and social changes.

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## ОДЈЕЦИ МОДЕРНЕ: ТЕНДЕНЦИЈЕ У УМЕТНОСТИ ИЗМЕЂУ ДВА СВЕТСКА РАТА И УТИЦАЈ НА ПЕДАГОШКЕ ПРИСТУПЕ У ШКОЛАМА ЗА УМЕТНОСТ

Марија Цурк

Универзитет у Београду, Учитељски факултет, Београд, Србија

### Резиме

Потреба за опоравком и обновом је била заједничка за све земље које су биле укључене у Први светски рат, али начини на које су отклањане ратне последице зависили су од свеукупног стања друштва пре и након рата. Осим на свеукупну слику уметности коју чини стваралаштво друштвено ангажованог бића, културна и социјална перспектива, развој индустрије и машине и владајућа политичка идеологија утичу на изградњу образовног система, а додатно, претходно стање и новонастале тежње на уметничкој сцени утичу на уметничко образовање. Не треба

раздвајати везе уметника од школе у којој су његова личност и специфичан ликовни израз обликовани, уметника од политичке, економске и социјалне ситуације у којој живи, као ни целокупно друштво коме уметник и школа припадају од проживљене прошлости која их је обликовала.

Док су се у многим Европским градовима отварале школе за уметност са прогресивним идејама, попут Баухауса, Високе школе за индустријско образовање у Улму или Вхутемаса, у југословенским земљама се комплексна друштвена и културна ситуација одразила и на уметничке образовне институције које су остале привржене традиционализму. Авангардне уметничке идеје Запада стигле су на наше просторе посредством великог броја уметника који су се школовали у иностранству, али у измењеном и ублаженом облику под утицајем владајућег традиционализма. Осим што је процес европеизације у уметности текао веома споро, постајала су и залагања против авангарде и стилске разноврсности модерног друштва чија би индивидуалност била опасност за традиционалне вредности. Иностранци уметнички покрети стигли су са закашњењем у облику посткубизма ублаженог у традиционализму, сезанизму и неокласицизму, и експресионизма обележеног социјалистичким тежњама, док је дадаизам нашао своје активне бунтовне следбенике, али истовремено подстакао настанак зенитизма и групе Зограф који су ширили идеје супротне модернизму и који су били преокупирани жељом да створе балканску, националну уметност. Иста се ситуација читавала и у уметничком образовању, које је било под утицајем минхенске и париске школе претходног века, те њихових колористичких и импресионистичких традиционалних тема пејзажа, мртве природе и цртања и сликања према моделу.

Овај рад се бави разматрањем паралелних дешавања у уметности у Европи, Америци и Русији наспрам Југославије у међуратном периоду, и разлозима због којих се прогресивне идеје у уметничком образовању нису појавиле у школама за визуелне и примењене уметности у Краљевини Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца, касније Краљевини Југославији, а какав се приступ настави задржао и до данас у српским школама уметности.