Italian Art in Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1967: An Overlooked Chronicle

Giovanni Rubino
Università degli studi di Udine, Italy, giovanni.rubino_78@libero.it

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas

Part of the Contemporary Art Commons

Recommended Citation

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the CC BY-NC-ND license.
Italian Art in Yugoslavia from 1961 to 1967: An Overlooked Chronicle

Cover Page Footnote
Great acknowledgment is given to the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art, for permission to reproduce pictures and other documents in its possession; Furthermore, a special thanks to Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Catherine Dossin, Michaelene Werth and Marco Pallotta for improving the English of this paper.

This article is available in Artl@s Bulletin: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol3/iss1/6

Giovanni Rubino*
*Rubino Giovanni received his Ph.D. from the Universities of Udine and Zagreb, with a dissertation on the relationships between Italian Kinetic Art and Croatian New tendencies. His most recent publications appeared in the art history journals www.memofonte.it (No. 9, 2012) and http://www.palinsesti.net/index.php/Palinsesti in 2013. In 2014, he curated an exhibition on Bruno Munari in Milan.

Abstract
In the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between Italy and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia improved despite the Cold War. For the Italian artists involved in the New Tendencies, this new situation provided opportunities for recognition as an alternative to Art Informel, the dominant style in the international art market. Getulio Alviani, Enzo Mari and Eugenio Carmi, are three of the key Italian artists in this period who exhibited in Yugoslavian museums and galleries. Using new archival material, this paper sheds light on a unique postwar revival of Constructivism within a peripheral artist network far from New York and Paris.

Résumé
Durante la Guerra Fredda, l'Italia e la Yugoslavia strinsero i loro scambi di natura culturale. Questa situazione permise agli astrattisti e artisti cinetici italiani, Getulio Alviani, Enzo Mari e Eugenio Carmi, di trovare in Jugoslovia una grande opportunità per esporre in spazi istituzionali (gallerie e musei). Questo studio ricostruisce questa poco conosciuta rete periferica di relazioni artistiche. Tale situazione sarà osservata considerando l’apporto degli artisti italiani nel promuovere tra il 1963 e il 1965 un ritorno al Costruttivismo lontano dai grandi centri del sistema dell’arte come Parigi e New York.
Between the late 1940s and the late 1960s, in a world divided between Eastern and Western blocs, Italy and the (former) Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia improved their economic, political and cultural relations. As I do not have sufficient space in this article to go into the problem of the Cold War, I will note that after 1954, when “Trieste’s case” was solved, the artistic environment benefited from those positive changes, which reached their peak around the year 1961. From that date, the Communist Yugoslav Government opened partially to the Western “way of life” in the words of the Communist leader Josip Broz “Tito” during the Ninth Communist Party Congress in 1969.

This new situation provided an opportunity for Italian artists to become recognized, especially in opposition to the international trend of Art Informel. Art Informel was increasingly regulated by merchandising practices and institutional interventions with a Cold War orientation and impact (the Capitalist abstract painting in contrast with the Socialist Realism). Thus European artists tired of the stale Art Informel market turned towards the emerging Yugoslav scene and so abstract kinetic tendencies, accepted and supported by new technologies industries, found in Yugoslavia an opportunity to encounter Slavic Constructivism inside institutional spaces (galleries and museums).

In this same historical period, Italian artists made works based on the prewar Constructivism collected in European museums, in a modernist gambit to join what they perceived to be an international avant-garde. Although it may sound like a paradox today, at the time it was acceptable; as Lea Vergine stated in 1983, they became the “last” avant-garde rather than the “new” one. This paradox is significant because kinetic art practices developed on the philosophical tradition of the Socialist Utopia could be compared with what Constructivism did during the 1920s. During the 1950s, however, there was also a constructive trend (represented by the French Espace group, the Italian M.A.C., and the Croatian EXITs, among many other examples) whose research was in line with the Concrete Art avant-garde (also known as the Synthesis of Arts). On the other hand, young artists in the Sixties borrowed geometrical forms and radical thoughts from De Stijl and Russian Pronunism in order to spread a new idea of democratic art throughout all of Europe.

Using documents and testimonies to reconstruct the complexity of the relation between Italy and Yugoslavia, this essay will define a little-known peripheral art network (Chart 1.) and the significant importance that Getulio Alviani, Enzo Mari and Eugenio Carmi had in improving Constructivist revival in Yugoslavia.

The Arts in Yugoslavia: A New Scene for Foreign Artists

Before considering the artistic exchanges between Italy and Yugoslavia, we first need to look at the latter’s external and internal situation. From the political and economic point of view, both Western and Eastern countries saw Yugoslavia as a significant partner for international relations in the Adriatic area. Culturally speaking, Yugoslavia was perceived as a state with a “strong” cultural identity from the outside even though, from the inside, the country was actually divided into three different cultural identities represented by the three major ethnic groups: Slovenian, Croat and Serb. So, as claimed by the linguist Robert D. Greenberg and according to Ranko Bugarski, Yugoslavia had a “weak” internal identity, despite the attempt of the central Government in Belgrade to build a common culture. With respect to art in Yugoslavia at this time, we should recall two elements in particular. First, according to Polish

---

2 Stanislas Jeannesson, La guerre froide (Paris: Éditions La Découverte & Syros, 2002).
art historian Piotr Piotrowski, the Yugoslav Government’s tolerance towards modernist experimentation (ranging from the Art Informel to Neo-Constructivism) was political opportunism. Indeed, any overt criticism of the government was strictly prohibited.8 Second, a profound division between an institutional art system and a marginalized art scene was developing. Our attention focuses in particular on the former, since one aim of this study is to highlight and turn upside-down the institutional relations between Italian artists and the Yugoslav art system. Consequently, we should distinguish between the idea of a unified “Yugoslav art” promoted by the central government and the specific art practices developed in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. These three centres developed different artistic milieu but were at the same time connected with one another. As for the term “Yugoslav art,” Serbian-Croatian art historian Jerko Denegri (born 1936) has recently claimed:

this art space was densely interspersed with uninterrupted daily links, exchanges, and contacts among artists themselves as well as among the organizers of the art scene, heads of galleries and museum, critics and contributors of cultural columns in the media.9

Starting our analysis with the most Western Yugoslav state, Slovenia was a primarily industrial region, while Ljubljana had a significant role as main economic partner with the border regions of Italy and Austria. From the second half of the 1950s, Ljubljana was the first Eastern country to host a large number of Western European artists, in particular, during the International Biennial of Graphic Art in 1955 and the two editions of the Industrial Design Biennial in 1964 and 1966.

The connections with the cultural tradition of Central Europe transformed the Slovenian capital during those years into an important centre for the spreading of Western art in Yugoslavia. At the same time, through this channel, Yugoslav art started circulating in Europe. To underline how up-to-date Yugoslavian art was at the time, it is worth noticing that during these years the Slovenian art critic and representative of Tito’s Government Zoran Kržišnik (1920-2008) was called several times at the Venice Biennale to organise the Yugoslav Pavilion.10 During the 1950s and 1960s, Kržišnik tried to show how Yugoslav and European painters were directly connected by Informal art practices.

Meanwhile, in Croatia artists and intellectuals tried to develop their own cultural tradition, opening Zagreb up to foreign artists and putting Croatian art within the perspective of the Modernist panorama. For instance, thanks to the fact that the local cultural establishment tolerated Abstract and Art Informel painting,11 Nove tendencije, which took place in Zagreb from 1961 to 1973, became the main international exhibition, and directly involved Italian artists. Nove tendencije definitively tied Croatian art to the 1960s European new avant-garde.12

The last city to consider is Belgrade. Since it was both the capital of Serbia and the seat of the headquarters of the Yugoslav Communist Party, it had an important role as a non-aligned political centre between the countries of the West and those of the Warsaw Pact. Despite the liberal attitude towards artistic research assumed by the capital of Yugoslavia with respect to the other Communist countries, Serbian art development remained in some cases closely connected to the rules of the Communist Party.13 However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the artists as the representatives of Belgrade’s Establishment at the Venice Biennial were recognised as the example of the Modern

---

Yugoslav art throughout the world. At the same time, several solo and group exhibitions of Western art were permitted in Serbia, as was the case at the Galerija Omladine, where many Italian artists showed their works in the 1960s.

In this situation, Italian artists Getulio Alviani (Udine, 1939), Enzo Mari (Milan, 1932) and Eugenio Carmi (Genoa, 1920) took part in several successful exhibitions held in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. They were acclaimed as famous artists involved in the new technological mainstream. Owing to the fact that they used new technologies and extra-artistic materials, their art practices were named both as Arte programmata (in 1962), and Kinetic or Op art (after 1963-1964). Furthermore, the choice to invite the artists mentioned above was also determined by the fact that they were working for Italian factories. In fact, the new industrial design wanted to create connections between art, industry and society, in Yugoslavia as well as in Italy.

For this reason, Yugoslavia became a possible new exhibition context and market for Italian artists who lacked a steady position in the international art world. They were supported in particular by Yugoslav museums, which bought and exhibited Western art works for the first time since the Second World War.

Getulio Alviani: How a Young Italian Artist Became Famous in Yugoslavia

Getulio Alviani's scratched mechanical geometrical forms into aluminium surfaces, creating myriad optical and ambiguous visual effects (Fig.1). Critics deemed those works the best examples of Arte programmata, and for that reason Alviani was involved in the 1963, 1965 and 1969 Nove tendencije exhibitions. About his career we recall that in the early 1960s he was living between Udine and Milan. The art critic Zoran Kržišnik, the Mala Galerija’s director, organized the first one-man show of Alviani in September 1961 in Ljubljana. Kržišnik referred to Alviani's art works as objects mirroring [from the original French text]

[...] le problème de l’homme conscient de nos jours, écartelé entre les rêves sur l’univers et le fait de la matière brisée, décomposée, dans laquelle s’insère son propre avenir. [...] Et pour l’artiste c’est un honneur de la découvrir progressivement dans toutes ses possibilités: à la plaque à deux dimensions il arrache ses trois dimensions potentielles, exploitant une autre grande donnée du monde visible, le catalyser de la lumière. [...] Alviani est au début même de la nouvelle conception – et de la découverte de nouvelles possibilités plastiques surprenantes.
The latter more rational than the former. He created them at the same time that he made the acquaintance of Brazilian painter Almir Mavignier (born 1925) and Italian Enrico Castellani (born 1930) and Piero Manzoni (1933-1963) in Milan. It was thanks to these friendships that Alviani met the French group Motus (then GRAV, whose artists were close to the French Espace group and the Denise René Gallery) and the Italian N group, probably by the end of summer 1960.

Those earlier relations were significant because in the summer of 1960 Mavignier met Croatian art critics Radoslav Putar (1929-1994) and Matko Meštrović (born 1933). With their help in Zagreb during August 1961, Mavignier mounted the first edition of Nove tendenčije at the Galerija Suvremena Umjetnosti, for which he invited Manzoni, Castellani, N group, Piero Dorazio (1927-2005), French GRAV and several German painters including Zero group. That exhibition aimed at showing new artistic research developed after Tachisme that was at the same an emergent revival of Constructivism. The latter was significantly different from the 1950s Constructive trend since it used not only geometrical forms, but also borrowed radical thoughts from De Stijl and Russian Prounism, with the aim of spreading a more democratic idea of art.

On September 1961, Alviani’s exhibition was opened in Ljubljana, and the Croatian art critic Boris Kelemen (1930-1983) reviewed Nove tendenčije in the Croatian newspaper Telegram. On this occasion, Kelemen claimed that Alviani’s artworks could be displayed in Zagreb. A few months later, as recognition of his success, Alvani exhibited his works in two other shows. The first one took place in December 1961, in Novi Sad, in the Salon tribine mladih (Youth Centre – Art Gallery), the second on February 1962 in Rijeka/Fiume at the Moderna Galerija, which was directed by the art historian Boris Vižintin (1921-2001). The latter Gallery was a significant art centre for Croatian artists. Its exhibitions named Salon hosted the main Yugoslav protagonists of Nove tendenčije: Ivan Picelj (1924-2011) in 1956, Alexander Srnec (1924-2010) in 1959, Vlado Kristl (1923-2004) and Julije Knifer (1924-2004) in 1961.

To spread Alviani’s fame in Croatia, the head of Zagreb Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti, Božo Bek (1926-2000), supported by Kržišnik, Mavignier and Picelj, hired the art historian Vera Horvat Pintarić (1926) to make a show of Alviani’s works. In May 1962, Alviani’s exhibit was mounted in Zagreb. Pintarić, through a significant article in the Telegram, affirmed Alviani’s artworks’ decisive originality. As she put it, the exhibit was crucial to showing a new methodology to investigate the relationship between industrial metal surfaces, light and space. As an immediate result of the show, the Zagreb Gallery bought Alviani’s Linee-Luce FM 113 (1961). Finally, when N group, T group, Bruno Munari (1907-1998), Enzo Mari and GRAV took part in the second Arte programmata exhibition that was mounted in Venice in September 1962, Alviani was also included.

Although in May the first Arte programmata had been mounted in Milan, the second edition in Venice was more important than the former. It became an international exhibition, similar to Nove tendenčije, thanks to the participation of Parisian GRAV and Alviani. Reviewing the Venice edition in Zagreb art on the Zagreb magazine Čovjek i prostor, Radoslav Putar described the artists involved as the forerunners of New Tendencies. This probably contributed to increase the influence of the Constructivist revival among the organizers of Nove tendenčije. It seemed that the most important objective for these artists was to cultivate their own aesthetic specificity based on mechanical structures, geometries and lighting.

22 A folder devoted to Alviani holds several pictures of some his artworks and a page removed from the catalogue on which there is a handwritten draft of a price list of works that vary from 45,000 to 140,000 dinars or Italian liras. The works are: Linee Luce D 802 (100x100 cm, 1961), Linee Luce 807 (100x100 cm, 1961), Linee Luce uno (125x78 cm, 1962), Linee Luce 14 (25x25 cm, 1962), Linee Luce 7L4 (50x50 cm, 1962). Bozo Bek Foundation, Folder Alviani, MSU Archive, Zagreb.
while the artists following the Tachisme trend were being absorbed by the market.

It was in these terms that we can assume that the Arte programmata exhibit became a model on which the second edition of Nove tendencije was based in 1963.24 At the same time, Alviani participated in 1963 Mednarodna grafična razstava (International Biennial of Graphic Art) held in Ljubljana, and was subsequently involved in Nove tendencije 2.

As he lived in Udine on the border between Italy and Yugoslavia, Alviani was also responsible for the transportation of his art works and those of his colleagues from Italy to Zagreb across the border and vice versa, a situation that reveals a paradoxical situation. The original idea of New Tendencies—the refusal of the market—was evolving towards a partial acceptance of the art system (in which works of art were often borrowed from private galleries). For instance, the art works of another participant to Nove tendencije, Jan Schoonhoven (1914-1997), were borrowed from the private Gallery La Cavana in Trieste and were transported by Alviani to Zagreb. Furthermore, the Croatian organisers of Nove tendencije were glad to send a copy of the exhibition catalogue to the prestigious Martha Jackson Gallery in New York.25

Such a change was made clear during the 1964 Venice Biennial, in which many New Tendencies artists exhibited their works. In the Italian Pavilion, one whole room was devoted to Alviani, N and T Groups and other artists of the avant-garde. In spite of the fact that the First Prize was won by Robert Rauschenberg in his guise as a representative of American Pop Art, the artists of Arte Programmata had the opportunity to gain international recognition and to find a new market of collectors ready to buy their works. Alviani made quite a name for himself on an international level and in 1965 he moved to New York.

Subsequently, in April 1966, at the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art, a large exhibition dedicated to Contemporary Italian Art was organized and opened by the Autonomous Body La Biennale di Venezia.26 This was done on the written request of the Yugoslav Government, because the works had to pass through the Yugoslav border from Bucarest, where the show had been previously mounted:

La nostra Ambasciata a Belgrado ha inviato alla Biennale, che ha organizzato a Bucarest per incarico di codesto onorevole Ministero [Degli Affari Esteri] la Mostra "Artisti Italiani d’oggi", il seguente telegramma [del 25 febbraio 1966]: "prego far conoscere telegraficamente che nulla osti da parte della Biennale che quest’Ambasciata cerchi organizzare esposizione "artisti italiani di oggi" presso Museo di Arte Contemporanea Belgrado approfittando fatto che opere attualmente esposte a Bucarest dovranno transitare per Jugoslavia diretta Italia ogni spesa che comporterà tale sosta verrà sostenuta in loco prego in caso affermati vo comunicare quanto tempo quadri potrebbero sostare Belgrado – Incarica d’Affari De Benedictis". In relazione ad esso mi pregio comunicare che questo ente, non ha per parte sua, nulla in contrario al progettato temporaneo trasferimento a Belgrado delle opere degli artisti italiani oggi esposte a Bucarest.27

Among the invited artists there was also Alviani as a representative of Op art, a choice in line with the new trend that had been supported by worldwide galleries and which was emergent in Yugoslav art as well as in art world. He became such a distinguished artist that in Belgrade in May 1967 art critic Jerko Denegri set up a solo show—a noteworthy recognition of Alviani’s work—at the Galerija Doma Omladine.28 Although the exhibit was in Serbia, Denegri through an article published in Zagreb Čovjek i prostor, affirmed that Alviani was an important artist both in Italy and in

Yugoslavia, because he had depicted new ways of making art in his own country and abroad.29

**Enzo Mari: A New Operative Practice for Nove tendencije**

In October 1962, a solo exhibit of Enzo Mari’s work was mounted at the Zagreb Muzej za umjetnost i obrt (Museum for Arts and Crafts, an institution joined with the local Industrial Design Institute).30 Mari, coming from the Italian M.A.C., displayed several objects of industrial design that he had produced via the Milan Bruno Danese factory. The catalogue was designed by Ivan Picelj, who had also produced the *Nove tendencije*’s advertising campaign. The catalogue text was by Matko Meštrović, who claimed that Mari’s artworks were integrated with industrial production and their shapes were built by a technical programme, which occurred in *Struttura 386* (1957; Fig. 2).

In another statement, published in the Croatian newspaper *Vjesnik*, Croatian art critic Josip Depolo (1919-2000) stated that Mari’s modular structures and design objects were a main example of Bauhaus’s tradition, as it appears to be in *Serie camicia – vaso per fiori* (1960).31 We could suppose that this exhibition, joining with Alviani’s previous one, was a significant step toward the Constructivist revival of the *Nove tendencije 2* exhibition.

As a result, for the second *Nove tendencije*– which by then had become a sort of Biennial– among the organizers Božo Bek, by a letter on May 25th 1963, directly invited Mari, N group, T group, GRAV, Castellani and Dada Maino. Among the Croatian artists, there were Picelj, Kristl and the architect Vjenceslav Richter,32 who had previously taken part in some exhibitions in the late 1950s in Paris and in London as representatives of the EXAT51 constructivist group, and now included in the ranks of new constructivists. The latter believed that socialist ideology could change Western social behaviour and considered industrial design as a way to improve contemporary society.

---


---

**Figure 2**

The will to cut out the division between art system and industrial design production was made clear by Mari, Alviani, Picelj, GRAV, N and T groups with Mestrovic and Putar when they signed a manifesto titled “Nouvelle tendance – Recherche continuelle,” declaring that their main aim was to confront the art market by making common artistic researches through geometrical and optical anonymous art works.\(^{33}\)

That, without a doubt, led to internal disagreements, and, in an immediate outcome, several unorthodox artists were expelled from Nove tendencije and French \textit{Nouvelle tendance}. Then an expression borrowed from a previous GRAV’s manifesto published in 1962\(^{34}\) became the new brand for Nove tendencije, which was understood as a renewed avant-garde movement. Thereafter it would be referred to as the “New Tendency.” In spite of these developments, Nove tendencije achieved international success and so the Committee decided to turn that show into an itinerant exhibition from Zagreb to Venice and then to Paris. On December 1963 in Venice, Giuseppe Mazzariol, director of the Querini Stampalia Foundation, opted to mount the Italian edition.\(^{35}\) In the museum space of Querini Stampalia Building, \textit{Nuova tendenza 2} was installed. For the first time the exhibited art works were closely connected to industrial design objects, owing to the participation of the Italian School for Industrial Design.\(^{36}\) It seemed that New Tendencies had definitively reached its own artistic identity that, beyond the Constructivist revival, was based on a straightforward engagement with technological and industrial society.

At that point, the artists of New Tendencies had to choose between jobs as industrial designers or artists in the art system. Unfortunately, the majority of them did not choose and maintained an ambiguous attitude. Such an attitude manifested itself in two occasions, in Paris, at the exhibition \textit{Nouvelle tendance – Propositions visuelles du mouvement international} and in New York, at the exhibition \textit{The Responsive eye}. In Paris in April 1964, \textit{Nouvelle tendance – Propositions visuelles du mouvement international} was held at the Pavillon de Marsan at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.\(^{37}\) This exhibition was the third stage of \textit{Nove tendencije 2} out of Yugoslavia after Venice (December 1963) and Leverkusen (March 1964). Among the artists, there were the French GRAV, the Italian N and T groups, Mari, Alviani, Croatian Richter and Picelj. The exhibited artworks were made with materials provided by several French factories such as Altulor Altuglas, Aluminium Français and Rivinox. Although New Tendencies was opposed to the commercialisation of art, the participation to the exhibition in Paris represented the last step for the art of New Tendencies before its leap into the worldwide art market.

About the exhibition \textit{The Responsive Eye} held in New York, \(^{38}\) Mari, N group, Alviani, GRAV and Picelj accepted the invitation to participate at this large-scale exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. American art critic William C. Seitz organized this international show, which was opened in February 1965, with the aim of comparing American and European abstract painters. Seitz involved the most important American and European art galleries, which promoted many artists from New Tendencies, such as Mari, Alviani, N Group and Picelj. After Paris, it seemed like a second triumph, but it actually was evidence of a misunderstanding between the original statements of New Tendencies and its engagement in the International art scene as Op Art.

Moreover, Enzo Mari had an ambiguous role in such a misunderstanding that produced divisions and arguments in the network of New Tendencies. On the one hand, there were those who wanted to make art works following the industrial system of production; on the other hand, others preferred


For those of the artists who would take part in *Nova tendencija* 3, Mari published an announcement in the art, architecture and design magazine *Domus* to inform the artists about the main aim of the exhibition. Writing as a theoretician of the movement, he pointed to the connection between artists and art trade to suggest that an artist as well as an industrial designer would have to work by means of new technologies to make a series of economical and useful art objects.

In August 1965, at the same time *Nova tendencija* 3 was opening, there was an international symposium of artists, philosophers and scientists in Brezovica, a small village close to Zagreb.

Connecting art and science, the main purpose of the symposium was to realise the practices of New Tendencies from the art market. However, both the show and the symposium demonstrated that the massive deployment of theories did not correspond with the real achievements of exhibited works, which were as displayed as in New York. There was a gap between ideas and practices, on which Mari commented that confused theories, superficial and pedantic scientific knowledge led to the end of the New Tendencies.

These events led to an estrangement between Mari and New Tendencies progressively. Despite that, Umbro Apollonio published "Nova tendencija u Italiji" (New Tendency in Italy) in the July 1967 issue of the Belgrade art magazine *Umetnost* (Art) that offered a late recognition of New Tendencies, and he pointed up Enzo Mari as a dominant figure in the movement.

Mari and other artists believed in their freedom to make art in a Socialist country, but this proved to be a utopia. They realized that they could not exhibit both in New York and in Zagreb without losing their "quality." On the one hand, in the States, thanks to Seitz, New Tendencies were merely understood as Op art, in opposition to Pop art trend. On the other hand, according to Piotr Piotrowsky, in Yugoslavia *Nove tendencije* were permitted to show in Western Countries how as proof of the “liberal” tolerance of the Belgrade Government.

**Eugenio Carmi: Industrial Landscape**

Eugenio Carmi used his art practice to achieve a particular way of connecting art and industry. Even if he did not directly take part in the *Nove tendencije* exhibitions, he was a significant protagonist of this period because he was close to Getulio Alviani, Vera Horvat Pintarić and Umbro Apollonio. Carmi produced both kinetic artworks and design objects, and he made a net of
exchanges with his Italian and foreign colleagues. In Yugoslavia his work was considered an example of the new 1960s industrial landscape.

Such an interesting idea in Carmi’s works could be especially understood through a larger attention for Industrial Design, the Italian one particularly. It had been increasing in Yugoslavia as well as in the other Easter Socialist countries since the 1950s. During the Cold War period, Socialist ideology faced Western capitalism considering industrial design as a means to change daily social behaviours.

In Croatia and Zagreb, the architect Vjenceslav Richter mounted the Second Zagreb Triennial of Industrial Design in 1959, in celebration of the Fortieth Communist Party anniversary. From an ideological point of view, Richter claimed that Yugoslav Industrial Design as well as Fine Arts would embody the democratic self-management developed in the Yugoslav Communist system.

Matko Meštrović was in touch with the famous Hochschule für Gestaltung, which had been opened in Ulm, Germany in 1953. Swiss painter Max Bill (1908-1994) was the head of this school until 1957. After his resignation, the Argentine artist Tomás Maldonado (born 1922) took over the running of the school from 1958 to 1966. The former planned courses based on the Bauhaus’s functionalist tradition while the latter preferred to focus on the discussion of semiotic and system thinking. Both of them, from different points of view, believed in democratisation of applied art and Fine Arts. Their teachings were the background to the visual research of Almir Mavignier who, before he was found in Nove tendencije, was a student there. Furthermore, in the early Sixties Getulio Alviani also spent a little time in Ulm thanks to the hospitality offered by Italian designer Pio Manzù (1939-1969). Like Mavignier and Alviani, Meštrović as a scholar design while he was planning the first Nove tendencije had been also in Ulm School, whose influence on him was very strong. We could assume that the Ulm School’s courses contributed to a new idea of the relationship between design and art throughout Europe.

La Triennale di Milano organized an Italian Design show, between January and March 1963, first in Belgrade and then in Zagreb and Ljubljana. Italijanski industrijski dizajn was mounted by Vjenceslav Richter, as a representative of SLUPUJ (Savez likovnih umetnika primjenjenih umetnosti Jugoslavije/Association of Artists for Applied Art in Yugoslavia). Yugoslav observers could look at the famous Bruno Munari’s ashtrays. These exemplified how artistic skills had been utilized to create “good design.” Munari was also a pioneer of the Arte programmata and, as Radoslav Putar stated, a pioneer of New Tendencies too. It seemed consequently that a concrete and linguistic affinity kept moving toward a narrow dialogue between industrial design and the New Tendencies. Munari with Mari and Picejl as industrial and graphic designer would be also involved in the first edition of Bienale industrijskega oblikovanja - BIO (Industrial Design Biennial) held in Ljubljana in 1964. The main aim of BIO was to join capitalist trade and socialist design to show an idea of democratic industrial production, as New Tendencies were doing in the field of visual art.

Carmi developed his research along two paths. Firstly, in Genoa in November 1963 Carmi founded both the Boccadasse Co-operative Society in order to produce serial art objects and the Deposito Gallery to show them. These objects and silkscreens made by Italian and foreign artists figured as products of a self-managed mode of art-making, and were similar to what was happening in Zagreb. So Carmi involved in his Co-operative some Italian and Croatian art scholars close to the New Tendencies.

Second, the connection between Genoa and Zagreb could have begun in summer 1963, when Carmi visited the Nove tendencije 2 exhibition. Thanks to

---


48 Eugenio Carmi, letters to Umbro Apollonio, November 14, and 23 1963. Correspondence between Umbro Apollonio and Eugenio Carmi, July 15 to September 8 1964. Folder Umbro Apollonio, Unit 4, Fondo Notorio, ASAC, Venice.

his Italian colleagues, he met Vera Horvat Pintarić and her husband Brano Horvat. The latter was a famous silkscreen printer in Zagreb who he worked for Yugoslavian and Italian artists like Picelj, Alviani and N group.

The Boccadasse Co-operative Society, furthermore, printed and sent a proper monthly bulletin regularly to Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti in Zagreb (Fig.3). It was a significant channel for sharing news and for information of its customers. Through this bulletin, for instance, we can see that in February 1964 Horvat joined the Boccadasse Co-operative Society with Horvat Pintarić, who at the same time, maintained steady contact with the Genoa factory, mounting the solo show of the Croatian constructivist painter Miroslav Šutej at the Deposito Gallery.

As a consequence, these reciprocal exchanges led Carmi to Yugoslavia not only as an observer but also as an exhibitor. In October 1964, Horvat Pintarić set up a solo Carmi show at the Galerija in Zagreb.50 Carmi exhibited a series of silk printing on canvas, aided by Horvat. On the catalogue, Horvat Pintarić told about Carmi’s artworks as an example of typical Italian paintings of a new industrial landscape, across Pop and Optical Art. Since Carmi achieved great success, some of his artwork – for instance Rosso e nero e 4 cerchi (1963) - became part of the Galerija collections. As a result, Carmi as well as Alviani had his work collected by a Croatian institution. Certainly, his success was recognized and resonated in the larger Yugoslav cultural environment.

For instance, in April 1965, Carmi took part both in 1965 Mednarodna grafična razstava (International Biennial of Graphic art) and in a one-man show at the Mala Galerija in Ljubljana. Concerning the latter, the text on catalogue was written by Italian art critic Gillo Dorfles and he stated as follows [from the original French text]:

En effet, Carmi qui n’a jamais perdu de vue l’aspect technique de l’art et ses rapports avec la civilisation moderne industrialisée (il est, entre autre, aussi directeur artistique d’une grande entreprise sidérurgique) a cherché, déjà depuis quelques années, à mettre en évidence les qualités artistiques de certains éléments standardisés pris au panorama industriel, en les introduisant dans un nouveau contenu visuel. [...] où se dessine clairement la dissolution d’un langage traditionnel désormais usé et orienté vers la recherche d’une nouvelle dimension communicative, ou bien l’effritement d’une société mécanisée qui trop souvent oublie d’abattre ses fétiches et de renouveler ses structures cristallisées.51

This meant he approached the relation between art and industry from a new point of view. Carmi balanced Constructivist forms with a singular attention for their communicational tasks to enhance the social ends of art. And it was for this

---

reason that Carmi as a graphic designer for the Ital sider industry of Genoa was also invited to the second edition of Bienale industrijskega oblikovanja - BIO (Industrial Design Biennale) in Ljubljana at the Moderna Galerija.52 This exhibit was held from June to September 1966 and some advertising posters devoted to Ital sider by Carmi were exhibited in a part dedicated to the advertisements for industries. This connection between art and industrial production was also developed through the art works. Carmi in fact invented a combining and printing machine to produce silkscreens. The mechanical artwork Struttura policiclica a controllo elettronico was displayed in the 1966 Venice Biennial and its success brought him major recognition in Italy and abroad. In Yugoslavia, in fact, in fall 1966 on the Čovjek i prostor magazine, the art critic Jerko Denegri gave a high opinion of the Carmi’s art piece (Fig. 4).53 Denegri stated that it was a good example of Italian Arte programmata.

In recognition of the activities of Carmi, thanks to Denegri, in Belgrade in December 1966, an exhibition devoted to Carmi’s Deposito Gallery was mounted in the Galerija Doma Omladine. This exhibit was a part of a large project showing in Belgrade the most advanced European art practices. Printed by Bruno Horvat, furthermore, several silkscreens by Carmi, Alviani and Šutej illustrated the main activity of the Boccadasse Society. In the catalogue Denegri focused on the fact that Vera Horvat Pintarić had had a leading role to support Carmi’s Gallery and Boccadasse Society. The latter could be recognized as the most important factory to popularize and spread the new visual art research throughout the Europe,54 though Carmi never exhibited in Nove tendencije.

Conclusion

Let us now sum up on the artistic and economical relationship between Italy and Yugoslavia, with regard to the roles of the artists of New Tendencies. The latter disagreed with the rhetoric of irrational and unconscious action in Action Painting and European Art Informel (or Tachisme); instead they preferred a technical, logical and serial production method. With regards to the fact that the art works of Getulio Alviani represented a new way for realizing the relationship between art and new technologies, this may mean the borders between art and industrial design disappeared.

Bearing in mind that Enzo Mari has turned the traditional artist’s identity into the role of aesthetic operator, it may be postulated that the professionalization of the artist in the art world has been joined to a socialist idea of democracy in the European society. Finally, Eugenio Carmi and his activities had been fundamental to drawing a parallel with the main efforts of New Tendencies. Through the Boccadasse Co-operative Society and the Deposito Gallery, the author attempted an autonomous way of producing art works without being engaged with the art market.

Footnotes:
On the other hand, the three cases above mentioned have illustrated how the Yugoslav trajectories of the three Italian artists were a way for them to penetrate the international art scene through the peripheries. This peripheral scene constituted a real exhibition context and artistic community (equal parts, social hope and concrete association with industry), but also a means to join the Paris and New York art market and international institutions.

As a result, these factors reveal a particular mechanism in the art world based on relationships between Western and Eastern areas. In the art market, the collaboration among peripheries such as Venice, Milan and Genoa and Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade happened in two stages. In the early Sixties on the one hand this collaboration was due to the lack of interest in New Tendencies by Italian institutions, on the other hand it was developed through the lack of private galleries in Yugoslavia.

However, since 1964 the international centers like Paris and New York found a new area of interest in the collectors of the art works of New Tendencies. From this second moment onwards, were rejected any radical proposals from New Tendencies and their Op works were purchased by the well-known museums like New York MoMA or Rome National Gallery of Modern art. As a result, once again the Italian and Yugoslav peripheral art network ended in the shadow of the major art centers.

In conclusion, Italian artists found a fruitful partnership with Croatian colleagues and scholars to develop an alternative network to the art system, but it could only maintain it during a brief period between 1963 and 1965.