
View of the East Office Tower and NLB Bank building.


V 52 Office Tower, Ljubljana, Slovenia. 1972–76.
Milan Mihelec (b. 1925). Exterior view
VI Danube Flower restaurant, Belgrade, Serbia. 1973–75.
Ivan Antić (1923–2005). Exterior view

Ivan Braus (b. 1923). Exterior view
TOWARD A CONCRETE UTOPIA: ARCHITECTURE IN YUGOSLAVIA 1948–1980

Martino Stierli
Vladimir Kulić

With a photographic portfolio by Valentin Jeck

and essays by

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Arber Sadiki
Luka Skansi
Łukasz Stanek
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>Glenn D. Lowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>NETWORKS AND CROSSROADS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AS A LABORATORY OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE COLD WAR</td>
<td>Martino Stierli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>BUILDING BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY: ARCHITECTURE AND FEDERALISM IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Vladimir Kulic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>ARCHITECTURE FOR A SELF-MANAGING SOCIALISM</td>
<td>Maroje Mrduljaš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>CITY BUILDING IN YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Jelica Jovanović and Vladimir Kulic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>UNITY IN HETEROGENEITY: BUILDING WITH A TASTE FOR STRUCTURE</td>
<td>Luka Skanski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SKOPIJE</td>
<td>Vladimir Deskov, Ana Ivanovska Deskova, and Jovan Ivanovski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>TOWARD AN AFFORDABLE ARCADIA: THE EVOLUTION OF HOTEL TYPOLOGIES IN YUGOSLAVIA, 1960–1974</td>
<td>Maroje Mrduljaš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>YUGOSLAV ARCHITECTURE ACROSS THREE WORLDS: LAGOS AND BEYOND</td>
<td>Łukasz Stanek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>HOUSING IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Tamara Bjažić Klarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>GENDER AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN POSTWAR YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Theodossis Issaias and Anna Kats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>MEMORIAL SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Sanja Horvatnić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>ARCHITECTURE, DESTRUCTION, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF YUGOSLAVIA</td>
<td>Andrew Herscher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>GENERALŠTAB, BELGRADE</td>
<td>Vladimir Kulic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>MOŠA PIJADE WORKERS’ UNIVERSITY, ZAGREB</td>
<td>Tamara Bjažić Klarin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>“ARCHITECTURE OF BOSNIA AND THE WAY TO MODERNITY”</td>
<td>Mejrema Zatrić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>YUGOSLAV PAVILION AT EXPO 58, BRUSSELS</td>
<td>Anna Kats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, BELGRADE</td>
<td>Vladimir Kulic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>PARTISAN MEMORIAL CEMETERY, MOSTAR</td>
<td>Matthew Worsnick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>REVOLUTION SQUARE, LJUBLJANA</td>
<td>Martina Malešič</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>KIOSK K67, SLOVENIA</td>
<td>Juliet Kinchin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>CULTURAL CENTER/ MACEDONIAN OPERA AND BALLET, SKOPIJE</td>
<td>Vladimir Deskov, Ana Ivanovska Deskova, and Jovan Ivanovski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>SPLIT 3: SPLIT</td>
<td>Luka Skanski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>GOCE DELČEV STUDENT DORMITORY, SKOPIJE</td>
<td>Vladimir Deskov, Ana Ivanovska Deskova, and Jovan Ivanovski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>ŠEREFUDIN WHITE MOSQUE, VISIČO</td>
<td>Mejrema Zatrić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF KOSOVO, PRISTINA</td>
<td>Arber Sadiku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>CITY STADIUM POLJUD, SPLIT</td>
<td>Matthew Worsnick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Toward A Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980 brings to the fore a body of work that has rarely been considered outside of the region for which it was originally conceived. The Museum of Modern Art embraced this exhibition as an opportunity to shine a light on a unique mid-century architecture culture at the intersection of East and West—one that, through Yugoslavia’s leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement, had repercussions on a global scale. More than merely a historical investigation into largely uncharted territory, Toward A Concrete Utopia provides a lens through which to historicize and provide context to our contemporary age of globalization. In this vein, the exhibition also builds upon and expands the tenets of MoMA’s interdisciplinary C-MAP (Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives) research program, which investigates multiple art histories beyond North America and Western Europe in an effort to arrive at a better understanding of the complex and multivalent history and legacy of modernism around the globe.

While the history of Yugoslavia ended relatively quickly after the end of the Cold War, the country, which offered a “Third Way”—an alternative to capitalist West and Communist East—enjoyed an outsize international presence for a time, thanks to its unique geopolitical situation at the intersection of a bifurcated world. MoMA’s interest in the nation’s cultural production is longstanding, as evidenced by a series of programs in the 1960s, including, most notably, the exhibition Yugoslavia: A Report from 1969, which brought to an American public forty-five contemporary prints by twenty-four Yugoslav artists, among them figures such as Ivan Picelj, whose work is amply documented in the Museum’s collection. Two film series, in 1961 and 1969, respectively, investigated the country’s rich experimental cinema of the day.

In keeping with this history, Toward A Concrete Utopia also includes select works from contemporary architects and artists represented in the Museum’s collection that comment on modern architecture in Yugoslavia, including the stunning architectural drawings of the American visionary Lebbeus Woods and work by the Croatian artist David Maljković, whose video piece Scenes for a New Heritage (2004)—which lent its name to a group show at MoMA in 2015—addresses the legacy of some of the memorials and monuments on display in the current exhibition.

To facilitate the groundbreaking research behind Toward A Concrete Utopia, the curatorial team of Martino Stierli, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, and Vladimir Kulić (with Anna Kats, Curatorial Assistant) assembled an advisory board of locally based scholars and architects. These participants brought not only regional expertise to the project but also access to a multitude of institutions and individuals, many of whom became generous lenders to the exhibition. As the Museum moves toward exploring similarly uncharted non-Western geographies, this spirit of collaboration may serve as a model.

We are grateful to those lenders and to The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, without whose support this exhibition would not have been possible. Finally, we are thankful for the generous funding of this volume by the Jo Carole Lauder Publication Fund of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Glenn D. Lowry, Director, The Museum of Modern Art
INTRODUCTION

Martino Stierli
Vladimir Kulić

Toward a Concrete Utopia examines, by means of a large survey exhibition and the present volume, the architectural production of a country that ceased to exist more than twenty-five years ago and whose violent demise haunts the Western Balkans region to the present day. Despite, or precisely because of this trauma, we believe such a consideration of Yugoslav architecture — from the break with Stalinism in 1948 up to the death, in 1980, of Tito, the country’s long-term authoritarian leader — is both a timely and a necessary undertaking. The year 1980 also marked the beginning of an economic and political crisis, as well as the emergence of the concept of postmodernism in Yugoslav architectural discourse, which together heralded considerable changes in architectural production going forward.

During the period bracketed by these two historical turning points, Yugoslav architects produced a massive body of work that can be broadly identified as modernist for its social, aesthetic, and technological aspirations, but at the same time they added varied novel dimensions to that general category. However, as with many innovative, postwar architectural cultures in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia’s has, until quite recently and with few exceptions, received little sustained attention. Indeed, Eastern European architecture as a whole has largely been left out of the discipline’s modern canonical history, an oversight that not only underscores an ongoing Eurocentric (Western) bias, but also reflects the prolongation of the cultural logic of the Cold War long after its end.1 A Western perception of the Balkans region as Europe’s “Orient”— an exotic, “other” territory between East and West — has further hindered a serious evaluation of cultural production in the region on par with the Western canon.2 Toward a Concrete Utopia sets out to fill one of the gaps that have resulted from such a myopic perspective. To do so seems particularly timely in an age of rapid globalization and an increasing awareness — not only in academia but also in a larger cultural conversation — that the old bipolar model of center and periphery of cultural production has produced a skewed and deeply problematic outlook onto history. What is needed instead is a fundamental recharting of the world map and an investigation into the many channels of cultural—and, by extension, architectural—exchange that have intensified between cities and regions outside the traditional cultural centers, but have been active and productive all along. Such a methodological recalibration would provide, as it were, a prehistory of that age of globalization, allowing us to critically reconsider the assumptions that led to that previous, flawed model of cultural production in the first place. As a major agent in the genesis and dissemination of that canonical history, The Museum of Modern Art has a special responsibility in its revision.

The former Yugoslavia provides a particularly promising inroad into such a recharting mission. After a short alliance with the Eastern Bloc and a break with Joseph Stalin’s USSR in 1948, the socialist state went on to pursue a relatively independent brand of socialism based on workers’ self-management, becoming the torchbearer of a “Third Way” in the bifurcated world of the Cold War. Tito’s Yugoslavia deliberately defied the geopolitics of the East-West divide, pursuing friendly relations, cultural connections, and economic exchange with both rival blocs. From the early 1960s onward, as a founding nation of the Non-Aligned Movement, it also forged economic and political bonds with partner nations across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, many of them entering a process of decolonization after newly gained independence. The ensuing network of global
...relationships—many of which have only recently moved into the focus of serious research—provided manifold opportunities for the exchange of architectural knowledge outside of the Western world’s established systems of communication.

If the Non-Aligned Movement enabled the emergence of networks of knowledge and material exchange within a specifically postcolonial framework, the federal and multiethnic state provided a structure for cultivating internal multiculturalism, another distinctive feature of the postwar Yugoslav project. Comprising numerous ethnicities, some of which had been engaged in bitter conflict during World War II, the country sought to acknowledge the various identities of its constituent groups. Architecture became one of the most visible bearers of the process, taping not only into the repositories of longue durée traditions but also into the more recent lineages of local modernism, present in the region since the turn of the twentieth century. The result was a range of early and coherent regionalist cultures on par with other similar, simultaneous phenomena elsewhere.

That many of the local modernists involved in this process were already allied with leftist politics prior to World War II was certainly beneficial to the socialist project. When socialism finally arrived, they and their disciples thus invested a great deal of effort in adapting the existing manifestations of modern architecture to the specificities of the new Yugoslav society. Affordable mass housing, new civic and social institutions, public spaces for interaction and participation, tourism facilities, and even commemorative structures all became grounds for experimentation, giving rise to some extraordinary, internationally relevant results.

Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, many of the buildings and projects featured in this selection have fallen into disrepair. The commons—from urban public spaces to the various civic, educational, and cultural facilities—have been subject to shady privatization schemes, reduced to mere real estate. Many of the monuments commemorating the victims of fascism and the anticlasstruggle of World War II have been vandalized or completely destroyed, now discredited as “Communist.” Though the vast majority of buildings and structures continue to be used and inhabited, they—as with postwar brutalist architecture in other parts of the world—have suffered from neglect due to a general lack of appreciation of the architectural propositions and concerns of that period. One objective of our exhibition and catalogue is to bring attention to the outstanding architectural and spatial qualities of many of these buildings and the ensuing need for their long-term preservation and care. This concern is expressed—explicitly and implicitly—in the portfolio of photographs by the Swiss photographer Valentin Jeck that preludes the catalogue, as well as in select contemporary photography throughout the book. Jeck’s photographs capture a sense of the temporality of works of architecture, an aspect that is all too often forgotten when we talk about architecture’s capacity to transform society.

Postwar Yugoslavia legitimized itself by claiming to pursue emancipation along intersecting axes: internally, from class oppression and ethnic rivalry, and externally, by supporting anticolonialism. It is due to such wide-reaching ambitions that we may consider the country, for better or worse, a paradigm of a utopian project, one geared toward the creation of a pluralistic, secular, and idealistic society. Hence the title of our exhibition and book, which echoes German philosopher Ernst Bloch’s theorization of a pluralistic, secular, and idealistic society. Hence the title of our exhibition and book, which echoes German philosopher Ernst Bloch’s theorization of a pluralistic, secular, and idealistic society. Hence the title of our exhibition and book, which echoes German philosopher Ernst Bloch’s theorization of a pluralistic, secular, and idealistic society.

One major noteworthy exception in the early Western reception of Eastern European architecture is Udo Kultermann, Zeitspiegel der Architektur in Omonopha: [Contemporary Architectures in Eastern Europe] (Cologne: DuMont, 1985).


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Viewed through a contemporary Western lens, the Balkans region, and the former Yugoslavia more specifically, is hardly considered a hotspot of cultural or architectural innovation. Despite the worldwide resonance of artists such as Belgrade-born Marina Abramović or several young Slovenian and Croatian architects, little has changed the notion that Yugoslavia and its successor states have been peripheral to the cultural mainstream; the region is still mainly associated with the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and the ensuing, violent wars of separation along lines of ethno-national divisions. Indeed, as historian Maria Todorova asserts in her groundbreaking study, a view of the Balkans as only peripherally associated with the project of Enlightenment in the Western world — as Europe’s internal “other” — dominates the history of the region’s representation in Western art, literature, and culture.1

However, if one carefully considers Yugoslav architects’ production and networks of exchange between the years 1948 and 1980, a very different picture emerges. Rather than being a backwater of the modern world, Yugoslavia was instead at the forefront of international architectural discourse during that period, due in large part to the country’s diverse associations with architects on both sides of the Iron Curtain as well as in Africa and the Middle East. While the political, economic, and cultural processes of globalization accelerated rapidly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989, Yugoslavia’s leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement provided local architects (and engineers) a broad stage on which to exchange architectural knowledge and ideas across ideological divisions, political borders, and cultural gaps — a unique position that anticipated the current age of globalism. A climate of relative ideological openness allowed these architects — as well as artists more broadly — to look for inspiration in East and West, and to apply notions of modernism to specific local conditions, both topographically and culturally. Situated at the crossroads of geopolitical poles, Yugoslav architects had a double agency in the postwar project of global modernity: as absorbers of the prewar legacy of Western and Central European modernism, on the one hand, and on the other, as carriers and promoters of notions of modernity in many newly independent postcolonial nations.

Despite the Western misconception that Yugoslavia’s postwar architecture culture operated largely in the orbit of the Soviet Union — and its massive quest for standardization and prefabrication — Yugoslav architects maintained strong bonds to centers of architectural discourse in Western Europe and North America. The Yugoslav regime had in fact broken with Stalinism

in 1948, only three years after the end of World War II and the foundation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Thus, architects were freed from the eclecticism, historical mandate of socialist realism—even as it was concurrently installed in East Berlin and Warsaw as the singular architectural style of socialist society. Instead, Yugoslav architects looked to the modernist legacy of the interwar period. Architectural magazines played a particularly significant role in the internationalization of the country’s design discourse after its geopolitical recalibration. The editorial policies of *Arhitektura*, the leading Zagreb-based architectural journal, exemplify the rapid response to this ideologically about-face. Starting with its first issue in 1947, the journal published a table of contents and captions in both French and Russian as well as in the native Serbo-Croatian. Russian was dropped in the last issue of 1949, coinciding with the publication of a feature on Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles. This multinational building typology conveyed easily with notions of communal living in the flâneur socialist state. The prominence granted to Le Corbusier’s work also underscored the westward recalibration of the country’s political outlook, while anticipating a veritable Corbusier fever, which ultimately produced a number of prominent buildings in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana directly inspired by the Unité paradigm. *Arhitektura* continued to include translated feature texts from foreign journals, and from mid-1951 onward, the magazine adopted English as its second foreign language, signaling a decisive turn of the regime’s political compass needle to the West.

Education proved an even more decisive arena for facilitating a continuous dialogue with Western modernism. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many Yugoslav architects who would become leading figures in the postwar period studied or worked in offices abroad. Given the long-standing political and economic ties of the northern parts of the country to Central Europe, it is not surprising that various prominent Yugoslav architects trained in Vienna or other major cities of the former Austro-Hungarian empire. Nikola Dobrović (1897–1967), for example, often regarded as one of the most influential Serbian modernist architects (and Bogdan Bogdanović’s [1922–2010] teacher at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade), undertook his training in Budapest and at the Technical University in Prague before coming to Yugoslavia in the 1930s. Muhamed (1906–1983) and Redžić (1908–1974), who would advance to become the defining figures of Yugoslav modern architecture in the postwar period. Neidhardt had been initiated into the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts under Peter Behrens, whose Berlin office he joined for another eighteen months in 1930. In Le Corbusier’s studio later that decade, he worked mainly on urbanist projects such as La Ville Radieuse and the plan for Algiers. After Neidhardt returned to Yugoslavia, a steel company in the Bosnian town of Zenica hired him in 1939 to design housing stock for its workers; he made his home in Sarajevo and taught at the Faculty of Architecture there.4 He would go on to become the most important Bosnian architect of the postwar period. Though few of his projects were executed—among them the seat of Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina and two apartment blocks on Sarajevo’s Dure Bakosća Street (fig. 2), both of which interpreted Le Corbusier’s Five Points for a New Architecture in a regionalist, texture-rich register—Neidhardt’s most seminal contributions were theoretical. His book *Architecture of Bosnia and the Way to Modernity*, published in 1937 and written during the emergence of a modernist “regionalism” in the 1930s, is considered the apogee of Neidhardt’s architectural thinking. It was co-authored by the Slovene architect Dušan Grabrijan (1889–1952), another Plečnik disciple gone modernist during a yearlong stint in Paris, though he did not work for Le Corbusier. Based on a thorough ethnographic analysis of the legacy of Ottoman building typologies and notions of urbanism in the region, Neidhardt and Grabrijan articulated what they saw as proto-modernist features in traditional Ottoman houses, underscoring the abstract cubic volumes, large horizontal windows, whitewashed walls, and, perhaps
decisively, the interaction between exterior and inte-
rior spaces in traditional features such as the divanhana,
an open porch wrapping around the core of the house (fig. 3). Despite being published bilingually in Serbo-
Croatian and English, however, the book was largely
ignored outside of Bosnia and has only recently been
reconsidered as an important source text of Yugoslav
modern architecture.

Ravnikar, too, became one of the leading dramatis
personae in Yugoslav architecture culture and one of the
most prolific and innovative architects of his generation.
Much like his Swiss mentor, Ravnikar produced a great
many projects and was also an avid writer and theorist.1
Though Ravnikar’s employment in Le Corbusier’s stu-
dio lasted only a few months in 1939, it would prove to
be a transformative experience for the young Slovene.
During his tenure at the studio, Ravnikar worked on an
unexecuted high-rise for Algiers, for which he produced
a number of drawings, among them a spectacular large-
scale rendering of the elegant structure indicative of his
artistic capacity (fig. 4).

Many of Ravnikar’s projects display an idiosyncratic
ambiguity between an allegiance to Plečnik’s pre-
dilection for classicist elements and exploration of
material textures, on the one hand, and a reference to
Le Corbusier’s abstract and sculptural thinking on
the other. This unique synthesis of competing archi-
tectural aesthetics was already evident in Ravnikar’s
Modern Gallery in Ljubljana (1936–51) (fig. 5). The
building’s literal interpretation of the classical lan-
guage of architecture, the texturally rich handling of the
facades, and the organization of the spaces all clearly
reference Plečnik’s precedent. However, the ceremonial
canopy framing the main entrance, reminiscent of Le
Corbusier’s white villas of the 1920s, clearly speaks a
different language. If Corbusian thinking here appears
to be little more than an afterthought, his principles had
clearly registered fully by the time Ravnikar started to
work on the regulatory plan for the new city of Nova
Gorica in 1948 (p. 60, fig. 4), an urban plan he modeled
after the Athens Charter, with a clear division of dif-
fering functions (working, dwelling, leisure, circula-
tion), a civic center with ample public spaces, and an
open, parklike landscape into which high-rise slabs are
loosely placed following an underlying orthogonal
grid. Similarly, at the Memorial Complex at Kampor
(1953) (p. 108, figs. 6 and 7), which commemorates the
victims of the Croatian island’s former Italian Fascist
concentration camp, Ravnikar synthesized Corbusian
principles (such as the organization of the complex
into a ritualized sequence according to the notion of the
promenade architecturale) with Plečnik’s sensibil-
itvity for materiality and texture, taking its cue from emi-
nent German architect and theoretist Gottfried Semper’s
widely influential Stoffwechseltheorie (theory of mate-
rial transformation).2 The dialectic allegiance to both a
Germanic understanding of architecture as an aetonic
art of dressing and the constructive rationalism in the
French tradition would become a hallmark of much of
Ravnikar’s later work and is the core of his unique and
idiosyncratic oeuvre.1

Le Corbusier’s studio not only established a sense of
continuity with the “heroic” period of prewar modern
architecture, but his work also became a very direct
source of reference for architectural modernism in and
for the fledgling socialist state in the postwar period.
A traveling exhibition on the work of the Swiss mas-
ter—the very first international architectural exhibition
to come to Yugoslavia after the end of World War II and
the country’s break with Stalin in 1948—provided an
opportunity for direct contact and learning (fig. 6). The
political significance of this embrace of Le Corbusier’s
ideas in the context of shifting tectonics in the Cold
War landscape should not be underestimated. While his
architecture was deemed “bourgeois” and unfit to serve
as a model for the construction of a new socialist society
during the short years of Yugoslavia’s alignment with
the Soviet Union, its championing in the early 1950s
underscored Yugoslavia’s political realignment and
commitment to modernism as opposed to the dictums
of socialist realism. (Except for a few important govern-
ment competitions for administrative buildings in New
Belgrade—none of which were built—socialist realism
never took hold in Yugoslavia.) Originally organized
by the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art in 1948,
the exhibition traveled to several venues in North and
South America before arriving in Europe in the fall of
1952.3 There it was shown only in the divided city of
Berlin and in Yugoslavia (at the request of the country’s
Committee for Science and Culture). The symbolism
inherent in the exhibition’s appearance in two highly
contested territories in the early Cold War context can-
not go unnoticed. In Yugoslavia, notably, the exhibition
received wide exposure, with stops in Belgrade, Skopje,
Sarajevo, Split, Ljubljana, and Zagreb between Decem-
ber 1952 and May 1953, drawing large audiences and
multiple reviews in the professional and general press.

The country’s architects showed particular interest in
Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation mass-housing typol-
ogy, which had only just been completed in Marseille,
hauling it as a model for communal living that combined
a strong modernist assertion with an adaptability to the
social standards of the newly emerging socialist state.
Within a few years, the major urban centers of Belgrade,
Zagreb, and Ljubljana all received their own simplified
versions of the Unité, many of which were located at key urban nodes. Among these, two apart-
ment buildings in Zagreb by the architect Drago Galic
(1907–1992) stand out (fig. 7, p. 93, fig. 6). Against this backdrop, the tenth (and final) conference of the International Congresses for Modern Architecture
The latter one of the leaders of Team 10, whose think-studio of Johannes van den Broek and Jacob Bakema, participated in the conference. The meeting became a swan song to the first generation of modern architects and produced little lasting effect on Yugoslavia’s contemporary and thriving architecture culture. Under the rubric of Team 10, whose thinking would greatly inform architectural production in Yugoslavia in the following years, the young guard was in the process of taking over the discursive leadership. That same year, in 1956, the young Croatian architect Radovan Nikšić (1920–1987) spent half a year studying and working in the Netherlands through a program of technical aid to Yugoslavia. There, he was employed in the Rotterdam studio of Johannes van den Broek and Jacob Bakema, the latter one of the leaders of Team 10, whose thinking would greatly inform architectural production in Yugoslavia in the following years—evidenced most prominently in the Mela Piša Workers’ University in Zagreb (see Kulić, pp. 124–27) that Nikšić designed together with Ninoslav Kačan (1927–1994) upon his return home.

**YUGOSLAV ARCHITECTURE IN COLD WAR POLITICS**

The break with Stalin in 1948 had left the fledgling socialist Yugoslavia with uncertain prospects and without any ideological or financial support to construct a socialist society. However, this crisis also paved the way for the disproportionately large role that the small country was to assume in the Cold War. Under Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, the United States generously supported Yugoslavia in securing international support, the Yugoslav government increasingly used modernist architecture and urban planning with Russia is, shrewdly eschewed the over-life-size bronze of Tito—which dominated the Yugoslav pavilion in the Venice international show three years ago. Here all the eggs were put into the modern basket—the work of Petar Lubarda. It was perfectly clear that these semiautarky, expressionist works indicated a freedom of expression and a modern idiom, which … would not have been acceptable in the Soviet Union.

Another New York Times article, published in 1957, specifically addressed the architecture of New Belgrade and again underscored the allegiance of Yugoslav cultural politics to a Western corollary. Its author, Harrison Salisbury, drew clear lines between what he saw there and what was favored in the USSR in terms of architecture: To a visitor from eastern Europe a stroll in Belgrade is like walking out of a grim barrack of ferro-concrete into a light and imaginative world of pastel buildings, “flying saucers,” and Italianate patios. Nowhere is Yugoslavia’s break with the drab monotony and tasteless gingerbread of “Socialist Realism” more dramatic than in the graceful office buildings, apartment houses and public structures that have replaced the rubble of World War II. Simplicity, airiness, pastel pinks, blues, and yellows are the hallmark of the new Belgrade world of pastel buildings, “flying saucers,” and Italianate patios. Moreover, the country’s new prominence on the world stage, the Yugoslav section won two awards at the Biennial do São Paulo. In reviewing the exhibition, New York Times critic Aline Louchheim explicitly referenced the political context in her assessment of the work of prize-winning Montenegrin painter Petar Lubarda:

**One country in particular realized how emphatically art can make a point. Yugoslavia, keenly aware that the Western World queries how philosophically deep the break with Russia is, strenuously eschewed the over-life-size bronze of Tito … which dominated the Yugoslav pavilion in the Venice international show three years ago. Here all the eggs were put into the modern basket—the work of Petar Lubarda. It was perfectly clear that these semiautarky, expressionist works indicated a freedom of expression and a modern idiom, which … would not have been acceptable in the Soviet Union.**

**Le Corbusier retrospective was a prominent first example. Demonstrating the country’s new prominence on the world stage, the Yugoslav section won two awards at the Biennial do São Paulo. In reviewing the exhibition, New York Times critic Aline Louchheim explicitly referenced the political context in her assessment of the work of prize-winning Montenegrin painter Petar Lubarda (fig. 8):**

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**Recognizing how instrumental such statements were in securing international support, the Yugoslav government increasingly used modernist architecture and progressive cultural politics for its own aims. Croatian**
Throughout the 1950s, the United States forcefully spread the blessings of Western culture—both high and low—in Yugoslavia. The Museum of Modern Art and its international program played an important part in this undertaking. At the invitation of the Yugoslav Committee on Foreign Cultural Relations and in cooperation with the American Embassy, the traveling exhibition Modern Art in the United States presented a selection of works from MoMA’s permanent collection to audiences in various European cities, including Belgrade in the summer of 1956 (figs. 11 and 12). The exhibition featured an architecture section with sixteen buildings. Shown at the local Fresco Museum, the checklist included works by, among others, Mies van der Rohe; Philip Johnson; Frank Lloyd Wright; Eero Saarinen; Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill; and Harrison & Abramovitz. The exhibition catalogue was translated into Serbo-Croatian, but the exhibition traveled to Zagreb and Belgrade. As before, a catalogue MoMA-produced architectural exhibition from 1960—traveled to Zagreb and Belgrade. As before, a catalogue produced in Serbo-Croatian, but the exhibition reviews were not unequivocally positive.

The extent of American cultural investment in Yugoslavia via the Museum of Modern American architecture culture, reviewed the architectural and cultural aesthetics and a taste for “American facades.” In 1963, Visionary Architecture—another highly popular, MoMA-produced architectural exhibition from 1960—traveled to Zagreb and Belgrade. As before, a catalogue was produced in Serbo-Croatian, but the exhibition reviews were not unequivocally positive. The cooperation of Yugoslavia in the art activities of UNESCO, her participation in international exhibitions around the world, and the lively program of exhibitions brought from other countries through the enterprise of the Yugoslav Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries all testify to her conviction that artistic exchange is one of the most potent instruments for fostering understanding among the peoples of the world.

With over 24,000 visitors in only one month, Modern Art in the United States was the most popular art exhibition in Belgrade since the war, and was received very positively in the press. Bogdan Bogdanović, who would emerge as one of the defining figures of postwar Yugoslav architecture culture, reviewed the architectural section for Politika. Bogdanović described the show as mainly focused on functionalist architecture and lamented what he viewed as an underrepresentation of Frank Lloyd Wright, even though two of the sixteen projects were by him (the Johnson Wax Laboratory and Office and the V.C. Morris store) and another one by his son Lloyd (the Wayfarers’ Chapel). The 1956 exhibition also marked the end of the Corbusier fever that raged in Yugoslavia a few years earlier, only to be replaced by a preference for American postwar modernism and its attributes of transparency, slab buildings, and curve walls.

MoMA’s aforementioned exhibition Built in the USA arrived in its entirety in Yugoslavia in 1958 and toured, through the efforts of the Yugoslav Association of Architects, to Niš and Subotica in Serbia, Skopje in Macedonia, and Titograd in Montenegro. This dissemination of postwar American modernism to audiences in regional centers further sustained a shift in architectural aesthetics and a taste for “American facades.” In 1963, Visionary Architecture—a highly popular, MoMA-produced architectural exhibition from 1960—traveled to Zagreb and Belgrade. As before, a catalogue was produced in Serbo-Croatian, but the exhibition reviews were not unequivocally positive.

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the museum's architecture—six interconnected volumes rotated by 45 degrees on an underlying structural grid—seems not to be directly informed by any contemporary Western museum buildings (although the diagonal as well as the brutalist handling of surface materials in the original conception may relate to Louis Kahn's contemporary work), the institution's organization was explicitly modeled after The Museum of Modern Art. The Belgrade museum was founded by the local artist, critic, and curator Modrag Protic, who had spent two months in New York in 1962 on a Ford Foundation grant and was keenly interested in MoMA director Alfred Barr's vision of how to showcase contemporary art in a museum setting. Protic sought to translate MoMA's curatorial mission for the specific Yugoslav context. In a first for a Yugoslav museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art instituted permanent departments for education, public programs, international exchange, and so forth, an organization clearly informed by what he had seen and learned in New York. The building's successful completion in 1965 did not go unnoticed. MoMA architecture curator Ludwig Glaser considered including the building in his Architecture of Exhibitions exhibition in 1968 but eventually decided against it.31 The opening made it to the international news, however, with Newsweek magazine once again underscoring the significance of the achievement in terms of Cold War cultural politics, calling the structure "an ultramodern monument to artistic freedom" and even—rather imprisegy—a "modern and joyful tombstone to socialist realism."32

While such international recognition culminated in the late 1950s, Western and American interest quickly waned in the following years, and articles in the press became increasingly scant. The USSR's readjustment of cultural politics in the wake of de-Stalinization had severe consequences for Yugoslavia, which was faced with the loss of its special status and strategic role as a "wedge" into the Eastern Bloc. Looking for new geopolitical alliances, in 1956 Tito, together with the leaders of India and Egypt (Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdul Nasser, respectively) signed the Brioni Declaration, which is generally seen as the founding document of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (fig. 14). The NAM, an alliance that sought to establish a third way between the two dominant opposing blocs of the Cold War, was formalized in the first conference of the Non-Aligned countries in Belgrade in 1961. The loose association of nations, predominantly from Africa and the Middle East (many of which had just recently won independence and embarked on decolonization processes), provided Yugoslavia with a powerful platform for securing economic independence from both East and West while also opening up a multitude of opportunities for exporting its modernist architecture and engineering expertise overseas.

ENTER THE UN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Socialist Yugoslavia's engagement on the world stage is exemplified in the figure of Croatian-born architect Ernest Weissmann. Weissmann had worked in Le Corbusier's atelier in the late 1920s and later became a founding member of the Croatian CIAM group.33 After the end of World War II, he took a job in the newly founded UN Secretariat's Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a position that would prove pivotal in directing attention and resources to his homeland in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck the Macedonian capital of Skopje in 1963. In the wake of the earthquake, the international community committed to an ambitious reconstruction initiative, with many countries in both East and West actively involved in the project. Weissmann became Chair of the International Consulting Team in charge of the reconstruction and in 1965 helped facilitate an international competition, jointly organized by the UN and the Yugoslav government, for the rebuilding of Skopje's city center (fig. 15).34 Of the eight invited teams, the somewhat unlikely winner was the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange. The first major commission for a Japanese architect outside of Japan, Tange's Skopje project, if fully executed, would also have been one of the prime examples of Japanese Metabolism on an urban scale (see Deskov et al., pp. 72–77).35 The list of Tange's collaborators in the Skopje competition reads like a who's who of Japanese architecture of the late twentieth century, including, among others, the young Arata Isozaki as well as Yoshio Taniguchi, who would, many years later, design MoMA's 2004 expansion project.

Even though Tange's winning scheme was only partially implemented, Skopje's reconstruction did produce a significant number of buildings and projects by major international architects from both sides of the Iron Curtain, making the city an "international architectural exhibition of sorts."36 The Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi Elementary School, funded by the Swiss government and designed by Alfred Roth,37 was a particularly successful project (fig. 16). And once again, the opportunity for young architects to study abroad introduced fundamental changes to the local profession. Instead of funding specific buildings, the US sponsored a program that allowed seven young Macedonian architects to pursue graduate studies in leading American universities, all of whom became involved in the reconstruction upon returning home. Among them, Georgi Konstantinovski (b. 1950) deserves to be singled out for both the number of buildings and quality of his work. Konstantinovski studied with Paul Rudolph at Yale University and then interned in the New York office of I.M. Pei. The Macedonian architect's buildings for Skopje clearly reference the aesthetic predilection for exposed concrete
of his American brutalist masters while at the same time adapting to the local construction technologies and particular spatial programs of a socialist society. This is most evident in Konstantinović’s celebrated Goce Delčev Student Dormitory (1969–77) as well as his building for the City Archive of Skopje, both of which feature the corrugated concrete facades first introduced into the vocabulary of modern architecture in Rudolph’s Yale Art and Architecture Building. (Konstantinović received his degree at Yale only shortly after the building’s completion in 1963.) (See Deskov et al., pp. 160–63.) The reconstruction of Skopje thus amounted to a unique synthesis of Japanese Metabolism with Western (mainly US) brutalism, which became a blueprint for subsequent architecture in all of Yugoslavia, as evidenced for example in the work of Belgrade-based Mihajo Mitrović (b. 1925) or the Croatian Boris Krstulović (1932–2014) (see Kansi, pp. 64–71).

Studying and working in the West continued to be a defining feature in the education of many Yugoslav architects. Montenegrin Svetlana Kana Radević’s (1937–2000) project for the Podgorica Hotel (1964–67) betrays a debt to the Structuralist thinking of her former mentor Louis Kahn and achieves a haptic quality on the facade through the application of local pebbles (see Portfolio, xxxv). It is interesting to note that Kana Radević had also worked for Kisho Kurokawa for some time after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, underscoring the far-reaching global connections of Yugoslav architecture. Mimoza Nestorović-Tomić (b. 1929), another prominent female figure in Yugoslav architecture and the designer of the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje (1970), had traveled extensively throughout Western Europe in the early 1960s before receiving a stipend to study at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964 (see Issaia and Katz, pp. 96–103). 39 Marta (1920–2009) and France Ivanšek (1922–2007), the architects of the Murgle settlement in Ljubljana, were two of the most prominent female figures in Yugoslav architecture. Marta travelled extensively throughout Western Europe in the early 1960s before receiving a stipend to study at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964 (see Issaia and Katz, pp. 96–103). 39 Marta (1920–2009) and France Ivanšek (1922–2007), the architects of the Murgle settlement in Ljubljana, were two of the most prominent female figures in Yugoslav architecture. Marta travelled extensively throughout Western Europe in the early 1960s before receiving a stipend to study at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964 (see Issaia and Katz, pp. 96–103).

Though the NAM and the various economic, political, social, and cultural networks and exchanges it generated may be seen as an early instance of contemporary globalization, there were other consequential processes afoot. The NAM’s foundation should equally be considered within, and as a direct consequence of, the decolonization of Africa, which reached its peak in 1960, the year in which seventeen nations declared their independence. This situation not only created the need for new alliances but also an enormous opportunity for economic investment. Yugoslavia would appear to be something of an exotic outlier in this group of newly independent nations. However, as Tito declared in a visit to Guinea in 1961 (one of many journeys that the Yugoslav leader undertook in this period with the aim to bond politically and facilitate economic investment), his country could be seen as “an example of how a country, enslaved and underdeveloped in the past, is able to rise to such a level Yugoslavia has attained nowadays.”

In comparing Yugoslavia’s independence after World War II to the postcolonial situation, Tito suggested that the newly independent nations could learn historically from his country’s experience and further advocated contemporary socialist Yugoslavia as a model for these countries to emulate.
I am indebted to Vladimir Kulić, whose scholarship has greatly inspired my work. His analysis of the cultural and political context of Yugoslavia's architecture has been invaluable. His research has contributed significantly to the understanding of the country's architectural avant-garde. Without his insights, my work on the subject would not be possible. I am also grateful to the Advisory Board, whose contributions have greatly enriched the research and the final outcome of the book. Their support and encouragement have helped fulfill the promise of the project. My thanks to the editors at De Gruyter who have consistently provided excellent guidance throughout the process. My sincere appreciation is also extended to the reviewers whose critical comments have improved the quality of the research. My gratitude to all those who have contributed to this work, including my family and friends, who have shown unwavering support. Their encouragement has been a constant source of inspiration. Additionally, I would like to thank the editors of this journal for their patience and support throughout the publication process. Their dedication to the academic community has been commendable.

In this context, it is his hardly coincidental that the first summit of NAM leaders was held in Belgrade in 1961. New Belgrade, then the largest active construction site in Europe, was effectively used as an advertisement for the local construction sector.56 The message was received everywhere, and several Yugoslav companies were hired to execute ambitious infrastructure projects, including dams, railways, and roads across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This newfound firm of engineering projects was, for Yugoslavia, the most prominent example.57, 58

Meanwhile, Yugoslav architectural exports were by no means limited to Western Africa. The Kano master plan in turn served as a blueprint for the ambitious Lagos Trade Fair Complex project, whose layout was influenced directly by traditional settlement typologies in Kano. As the centerpiece of the fair, the Kano National Museum has served as a model for several urban projects in Nigeria and elsewhere.59

The aforementioned relationships with Western architectural discourse are only one of the many factors that have helped gather information that went into the research. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Department of Architecture and Design, to Porter Press, have contributed significantly to this endeavor. Numerous interviews and discussions with experts, including architects, historians, and curators, have provided valuable insights and perspectives. The collaboration with these institutions has been a crucial aspect of the research.

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