

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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YUGOSLAVIA: A REPORT Wall Label

Artistic developments more or less isolated from contemporary Western European and American influences have been a chief attraction of Eastern European and Slavic exhibitions during the past two decades. However, the Yugoslav artists represented here are not only cognizant of the West, but many have studied and lived in England, France, and West Germany. The present Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia -- which incorporates Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia -- is only twenty-five years old. Perhaps no other country its size, however, contains as many government-sponsored galleries and museums devoted to modern art. Biennially the most current movements and technical innovations are shown in the world's largest international print exhibition in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Inevitably Yugoslav artists are influenced by the opportunity to participate in this distinguished arena.

This Report consists of a group of prints made between 1965 and 1969 by artists working in or near the three creative centers: Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade. Three of the printmakers work abroad but continue to show their work in national exhibitions. Not only have the traditional processes of etching, serigraph, and woodcut been used, but prints have also been made from celluloid sheets and movable plates. An emphasis on independence and individuality induces most artists to work at their own presses; very few lithographs are produced because that would necessitate participation in a workshop. The resulting prints are of technical brilliance and considerable diversity in both composition and subject matter. Sophisticated renderings of folk and Byzantine elements stand side by side with styles representative of international currents.

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The earliest work in the exhibition, a wood-engraved Self-Portrait, is by the oldest artist, Bozidar Jakac who was born in 1899. He is considered the father of printmaking in Slovenia, having taught Riko Debenjak, one of the first Yugoslav printmakers to gain international recognition. Between them, they have taught most of the other artists from the Ljubljana area. One of these students, Janez Bernik, received the Grand Prize in Ljubljana in 1969. While most of the Slovenian artists work with traditional images, the prints from Belgrade, capital of Serbia and Yugoslavia, have a quite different character. In the work of Celic, Miljus, and Nagorni a preoccupation with static order seems to exist. Only the young Zivko Djak tries to represent today's less conforming ways. Zagreb, cultural center of Yugoslavia and capital of Croatia, is the crossroad of international art trends. There Action Painting, Op Art, and Hard Edge styles find current acceptance. Near Zagreb, Miroslav Sutej works on colorful movable sculpture and prints. His serigraphs are innovative and contribute a new dimension to printmaking.

Yugoslavia's artists have such freedom of expression and are so encouraged to create that it is superfluous to compare them to artists in even the most progressive Eastern European countries. The prints shown here demonstrate that wherever individuality is held in esteem, the resulting art is endowed with a refreshing and inimitable personality.

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