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First Hall. Transitional Museology: Museums React to Social and Political Change

Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia

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ABSTRACT

The communist period for Yugoslav Croatia brought about dramatic changes in museum practice and theory between the early 1950s and late 1970s. Driven by questions concerning how to properly develop socialist museums, Croatian museum professionals sought to transform the bourgeois history museum into a truly popular institution that would make Croatia's cultural legacy accessible to the masses and allow visitors to understand their place in the socialist Yugoslav imaginary. To this end, museum professionals developed two new museum models, the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum. Revolutionary Museums were charged with memorializing the founding myths of socialist Yugoslavia, chief among them the anti-fascist, communist revolution during World War Two, and the postwar building of socialism. Native Place Museums similarly reinforced the Yugoslav state by exhibiting local history and culture within the larger trajectory of socialist Yugoslavism. Furthermore, these two models were front and center for new museological experimentation intended to create a distinctly socialist museum space that would engage the everyday working-class visitor. Analyzing contemporary museological journals and museum planning documents, I argue that these museum models were successful in implementing much of the new museological theory, but in doing so moved away from one of the fundamental principles of museum practice: the exhibition and explanation of authentic material culture to the museum visitor.

KEYWORDS

Croatia; Yugoslavia; communism; socialism; museums; museology.

Beginning in the 1950s and peaking by the late 1970s, questions concerning how to properly develop socialist museums dominated the professional museological literature in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. Museum professionals theorized how to transform the bourgeois history museum into a truly popular institution that would make Croatia's cultural legacy accessible to the masses and allow visitors to understand their place in the socialist imaginary. To this end, museum professionals developed two new museum models—the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum—and a new standard of exhibition practices meant to create a genuinely socialist museum space.[1] Revolutionary Museums were charged with memorializing the founding myths of socialist Yugoslavia, chief among them the anti-fascist, communist revolution during the Second World War and the postwar building of socialism. Native Place Museums similarly reinforced the legitimacy of the socialist state by exhibiting and narrating the local history and culture of a region within the larger trajectory of socialist Yugoslavism. Furthermore, these two models were the clearest examples of how new theoretical ideas in Croatian museology concerning the "socialization" of museums, such as object-based displays

1) I translate these museums as "Revolutionary Museum" and "Native Place Museum" based on translations by Croatian curator Dubravka Peić Čaldarović and museologist Darko Babić. Native Place Museum is a loose translation of *Zavičajni muzej* for which a direct English translation does not exist. Other common translations are "Homeland Museum" or simply "Local History Museum."

and contemporary history, were actualized in the museum space.

Croatia during this time must be understood in its broader Yugoslav context. The Socialist Republic of Croatia was a constituent state in the Yugoslav federal system that over the course of its history increasingly decentralized authority to the republics. While federal policy mattered a great deal in the realm of economics and politics, policies concerning culture, education, and science were predominately crafted at the republic level, so much so that there never existed a federal ministry for these fields (Budak 2004). This was particularly pronounced after the Constitution of 1974 that further decentralized the governance of Yugoslavia to the republic level but, even in the early decades of the socialist period, Croatian museum professionals were provided a great deal of freedom to develop museological principles at the republic level. Therefore, while Croatia was not isolated from its fellow Yugoslav republics when it came to museum practice, many of the ideas discussed in this article can be considered, at least nominally, "Croatian." There was undoubtedly a "Yugoslav spirit" present in Croatian museology as Croatian museologists were often in conversation with their fellow Yugoslav practitioners and theorists, and many of the mythological tropes developed in Croatian museums affirmed the founding myths of the socialist Yugoslav state (Palhegyi 2017). Nonetheless, Croatia often led the way in Yugoslavia in terms of its commitment to museology as an academic discipline and profession, as evidenced by the University of Zagreb establishing the first postgraduate program for museology in Yugoslavia (program in 1966; courses taught as early as 1946), the founding of the Museum Documentation Center in Zagreb (1955), and the establishment of the first museological journal in Yugoslavia, *Muzeologija* (1953). As such, Croatia was a powerful center for developing museological theory and practice, not just in Yugoslavia but throughout Eastern European museology (Lorente 2012).

In this article I therefore examine the development and implementation of socialist museological theory in Croatia from the 1950s through the late 1970s. In particular, I investigate how Revolutionary Museums and Native Place Museums were designed in tandem with Croatian museological theory that attempted to develop practices appropriate for Yugoslavia's "third way" brand of socialism. Based on an analysis of contemporary museological journals and museum planning documents, I argue that these museum models were successful in implementing much of the new museological theory, but in doing so moved away from one of the fundamental principles of museum practice: the exhibition and explanation of material culture to the museum visitor.

The 1950s: Modernization and Democratization of Museum Spaces

At the end of World War Two, Croatian museums were in disarray. During the war years, the majority of museums were neglected while the immediate postwar years were defined by chronic shortages of funding and trained staff, and a lack of public enthusiasm. By the early 1950s, however, conditions began to improve, and the first wave of modernization and professionalization began. Given Yugoslavia's "in-between-ness" during the Cold War (Kulić *et al.* 2012) and the communist party's conceptualization of a "third way" for Yugoslavia that "maneuvered between two global powers" and stressed "Yugoslavia's distinction from both the East and the West" (Zimmermann 2016: 473), this did not mean simply replicating models from fellow socialist countries. Rather, the early development of museum theory and practice in Croatia was firmly rooted in both Western European/American

and Soviet/Eastern European museology. Croatian museologists, for instance, looked to the "first museum revolution" in Western Europe "when a similarity between practical problems that almost all museums share was recognized" (Babić 2009: 238), and when museums first began to reorient themselves towards the general public, as opposed to their traditional scientific and research goals (Bauer 1975). At the same time, Croatian museologists turned to Soviet museology for examples of how to incorporate Marxist historical materialism as the main mode of processing and presenting material culture. To this end, they modeled the Soviet practice of inserting heavily "didactic text into the traditionally austere interior space of the museum" in order to frame material objects as individual parts of a complex organic whole that was comprehensible to the everyday person (Jolles 2005: 434). The modernization developments in the 1950s were therefore hybrid in nature as museum professionals attempted to harness the early democratization elements of Western museology and combine it with the text-heavy didacticism of Soviet museums in order to create a modern socialist museum space reflective of Yugoslavia's non-aligned position.

In general, there were several pragmatic issues that needed to be addressed to modernize Croatian museums in line with well-established museums in Western Europe and the United States, and to a lesser extent, with socialist models in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc. For the most part, these concerns were rather mundane—new systems to categorize and organize museum materials, collection and preservation efforts, hiring and training staff, and so forth—and therefore will not be discussed in detail here. Closely related to this, however, were concerns about the popularity and social outlook of museums. To this end, museum professionals developed various socially rooted ideas about reshaping museums into truly popular cultural institutions that would educate the masses of their socialist heritage and elevate their general cultural competency.

These concerns were valid. At the time, museums were failing to attract a working-class audience and maintained their traditional association with the cultured elite. A 1953 estimate, for example, cites permanent Zagreb residents as accounting for only 15% of the total attendance in Zagreb's museums (Bauer 1953a: 71). In fact, the majority of visitors (upwards of 60%) came from primary school children on school trips that were often chaotic, uninformative, and disorganized (Vojnović 1953: 26.) The main reason for this, according to the professional literature, was that the culture surrounding museum practice was still rooted in pre-revolutionary elitism that had effectively alienated the everyday person. For instance, many of these museums were founded during the Habsburg period when museum practice was dominated by the politics and policies of an "isolated circle of officials" who sought to maintain museums as elite cultural institutions outside the reach of those who were not highly educated (Gorenc 1953: 12). Likewise, during the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, museums were so closely tied to universities and their corresponding fields of study that their activities were guided almost entirely by research. When these museums did exhibit objects, they often did so without accompanying text so that only the most educated of citizens would have the requisite knowledge to gain anything meaningful from the displays. Thus, it was not the subject of exhibitions or the items on display that disinterested the everyday person, but rather the failure of museum professionals to create effective advertising and exhibition techniques that would appeal to the "wider public" instead of the traditional "cultured minority" (Bauer 1953a: 72).

Considering this, museum professionals were deeply concerned with democratizing the museum institution to develop a "socialist environment of a new type" that

would produce national unity and instill socialist values (Vojnović 1953: 19). Unlike previous models used by authoritarian regimes such as the Nazi era degenerate art exhibitions or the early Stalinist era "talking museums" that used denunciatory discourses in order to define the ideal self (Jaskot 2012; Jolles 2005), this new environment would enable individuals to come to their own positive definition of the proper socialist citizen by virtue of learning about their own "cultural inheritance" and "natural values" (Bauer 1953a: 71). Practically speaking, this meant orienting museums towards the general public and creating institutional transparency.

One example of this was a new advertising approach developed by Antun Bauer, one of the most influential figures in Yugoslav museology, and co-founder of the postgraduate program for museology at the University of Zagreb. According to Bauer, it was no longer enough to just inform the public of the museums' main collections and working hours. Instead, advertisements needed to appeal to working class sensibilities and excite the viewer if they were to overcome the previous decades' alienation of the wider public. For instance, even the "most beautiful statue [in] the best lighting" would appear "lifeless" if the advertisement only showed it in its resting place in the museum. Instead, Bauer continues, the advertisement should include a photo of the statue being moved by truck in order to show not only its grandeur and scale but also the impressive human labor involved in transporting the object (Bauer 1953a: 74). In doing so, the advertisement would convey more than just the value of the object on its own cultural terms; by showing the human labor needed to move the object, the advertisement would tap into the symbolic value of working class labor. In turn, this imagery would effectively position museum going within the everyday, working class experience, and break down the traditional cultural boundaries that surrounded museums.

Once the visitor was inside the museum, their experience also needed to reflect the popular nature of modern museums. According to Bauer once again, the best way to accomplish this was to make the visitors feel that they were "co-owners and beneficiaries of the cultural valuables and goods" on display (Bauer 1953b: 140). This experience of ownership would instill proper national and socialist values naturally by virtue of the visitors becoming familiar with their own cultural history that reflected the long historical drive towards socialist Yugoslavism. In order to accomplish this, museums needed to be more transparent in their workings and allow the average citizen a glimpse into their practices. For this, Bauer looked to a model already established in Paris by museums such as the *Musée de l'Homme* and the *Musée des Monuments Français:* the so-called "periodical exhibition." These exhibitions were akin to an entry hallway where the visitor could get a glimpse into the most recent workings of the museum, be that newly purchased items or texts that explained the decision-making process for various museum activities (Bauer 1953a: 101). This was intended to provide the public with a "concrete picture of museum work," effectively demystifying the professional work of museums as reserved for the educated elite and therefore outside the realm of the general public. The implication of this—made explicit in later writings—was that in becoming more transparent and focusing more on the visitor, Croatian museums were, in fact, becoming more modern. Thus, by providing this glimpse into museum work to the everyday visitor, these exhibitions would prove "that the museum in its internal life immediately keeps up with the times, that it isn't 'stuck in the past,' but rather is a domain in which the public can encounter the current issues" in museum practice (Bauer 1953a: 104).

Finally, Bauer also conceptualized a number of spatial practices rooted in egalitarian logic that focused on the

visitor experience. Recognizing that most museums were housed in inherited buildings that were not originally designed as museums, Bauer developed some foundational principles to ensure that the value and meaning of the collections would be conveyed to the visitor instead of being lost in translation. In general, this meant redesigning the layout of museums to serve not only the staff but also the city residents who had generally been left out of consideration in these designs (Bauer 1953b: 135). As it stood, most museums lacked any sort of lobby space for visitors to meet and discuss their impressions which limited the ability of visitors to engage in critical conversation with their fellow citizens (Bauer 1953b: 141). Therefore, the average museum experience was chaotic, overwhelming, and lacking clear direction, leaving the visitor either confused or dissatisfied. Similarly, modern museums needed to provide entry halls in which the visitor could take a moment to collect their thoughts and "exhale" after coming in from the busy streets, instead of immediately "falling into a museum collection" upon entering. This entry hall would then lead into the different exhibitions and serve as a "transitory space" between exhibitions and other rooms geared towards the public such as the library, a reading room, or lecture spaces. Developing this space, according to Bauer, was necessary for creating truly publicly oriented institutions since "museum life does not unfold only in the exhibition halls," but rather in the entirety of the visitor experience (Bauer 1953b: 168).

In addition to these spatial practices, new ideas about the educational role of museums were being developed at the time. This educational role was not limited to simply educating the masses about their cultural inheritance; it was also geared towards altering the individual's core culture and values to produce "conscious citizens of a single social whole." In this sense, museums needed to function as "social institutions equally useful for the community as churches or libraries," as opposed to institutions that simply housed cultural valuables and rarities limited to the enjoyment of the educated class (Vojnović 1953: 19-20). This in turn required reorganizing museum education to establish closer ties to both primary and adult public education, assert a more direct role for museums in the cultural politics of society, and develop a modern professional network of museum theory and practice.

As previously mentioned, while museums statistically had great numbers with primary education that accounted for 50-60% of their total attendance, the actual visits were often chaotic and uninformative as the teachers lacked knowledge about the objects and topics on display, while the pupils, in numbers far too large for the small museum space, more or less ran amok. One solution suggested by the director of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb, Zdenko Vojnović, was to embrace non-traditional methods, such as thematic lectures, public readings of literature on the exhibition topic, live performances, and public access to collections. Unlike the traditional method of displaying objects on their own terms with little to no accompanying text—a practice that "for a long time lacked as an attraction, as an interesting didactic and educational structure"—these workshops would transform the passive and disinteresting learning experience into something active and multi-faceted (Vojnović 1953: 26-29). Similar principles applied to the modern, working class citizen who was disinterested in exhibitions that required "too much studying" and desired "attractive helping resources" to accompany exhibitions. None of this would work, however, without developing specialized museum workers who were trained in both the scientific elements of museum work as well as education. These so-called "pedagogues" would function as intermediaries between the museum professionals and their research and processing roles and the general public

that consumed this knowledge (Vojnović 1953: 27).

Lastly, Vojnović insisted that museums take on a more direct socio-political role and engage directly with themes of cultural and political significance that would not only garner interest but also serve to reinforce proper socialist Yugoslav values. As centers of public education, museums were key intermediaries between the state and the population that could help shape public discourse and perception about contemporary events. Given the political moment of the early 1950s, Vojnović unsurprisingly emphasized themes "that affirm the resistance of our peoples through the centuries" and the South Slavs' historical march towards socialism. At the same time, however, Vojnović made clear that museum exhibitions must avoid becoming unscientific instruments for propaganda, and that museum workers must resist any attempt to "vulgarize" the past for the sake of reinforcing the politics and values of the present. For instance, he criticized an art exhibition that, instead of basing its work on historical and art-historical practice, exhibited feudal-era portraits with accompanying texts that depicted the figures as nothing more than oppressive and "bloodthirsty" social elites (Vojnović 1953: 32).

The 1960s and 1970s: Object-Based Displays and Contemporary History

The next major development phase in Croatian museology came in the early 1960s and lasted through the late-1970s during which time museum professionals increasingly embraced Marxist historical materialism and theorized its implementation into museum spaces. Two developments in particular embodied this transition: the principles of object-based displays and contemporary history. These museological principles were conceptualized as remedies to the traditional, bourgeois museological practices that had historically marginalized the everyday person: by shifting the focus away from the rarity and grandeur of objects towards the stories that objects can tell, and by broadening the thematic focus of museum exhibitions towards the present day, these principles were touted as modern practices that would revolutionize museums as truly modern institutions oriented towards the public. One crucial consequence of these principles was that museum practices—both theoretical and applied—shifted dramatically towards the use of replicas, reprints, and audio-visual aesthetics while minimizing the role of original objects.

The concept of object-based displays was first introduced at the inaugural lecture for the postgraduate program for museology at the University of Zagreb by Antun Bauer in 1967. Having defined museology as an "independent discipline [that] treats the conceptualization, organization, and functions, as well as the social role and positions" of museums in society, Bauer drew upon an earlier principle developed by the Soviet museologist Theodor Schmidt that stipulated a distinction between subject- and object-based display methods. Subject-based display methods treat any given material object as carrying its own inherent value based upon its rarity, grandeur, particularity, or artistic merit. This approach makes no attempt to connect the object to any broader theme or subject matter, and therefore functions simply as a celebration of the object, rather than an explanation of the object, its context, or its historical meaning. Not surprisingly, Bauer saw this approach as a bourgeois hangover by "conservative museologists" who understood themselves as "treasurers" of rarities rather than agents of socio-cultural education (Bauer 1967: 10). Instead, Bauer argued, material culture needed to be exhibited in an object-based display method where physical materials

are understood as documents of the past and treated as a means by which the visitor is guided towards an understanding of a certain theme or phenomenon. As such, the actual authentic object carries little inherent meaning and generally needs to be accompanied by other materials, be that photographs or explanatory texts, that collectively function as a "complete whole" that conveys a single meaning. For instance, a piece of stone left alone offers little explanatory power but when exhibited with photographs of its various uses, or with physical examples of stone tools made from it, can provide a direct visual link to its place within the broader scope of human history (Bauer 1967: 11-12).

This idea of object-based displays was continually discussed in the professional literature well into the 1970s, which suggests that this theoretical model was indeed making its way into the actual museum space. In a 1975 report on curating the workers' movement, Branka Milošević directly cited Bauer and Težak's 1967 inaugural lectures as she elaborated their ideas and suggested how to practically implement them. For example, in confirming the point that it wasn't enough to simply exhibit objects on their own terms, Milošević went as far as to warn her fellow curators about the "charm and danger" of original objects, and "the distant past" they represent. The danger Milošević references, it seems, was the tendency to revert to traditional subject-based exhibitions that fail to grasp the totality of human history and instead focus on the isolated significance of individual items. Thus, she concluded that all objects, recent or ancient, must be employed as "artifact[s] of the future" that illuminate the course of history to the present moment of Yugoslav socialism (Milošević 1975: 81).

At the practical level, this meant dealing with fundamentally different types of objects—often more mundane in nature—that brought forth a whole new set of issues about how to keep visitors engaged and entertained. Unlike traditional exhibitions where items of great rarity or beauty could keep the visitor entertained simply by their grandiose nature, museums dealing with contemporary history needed to make objects such as party documents and political pamphlets appealing to the everyday citizen. According to Milošević, the tendency to use quantity over quality and display an array of these items without any aesthetic criteria amounted to a "disease" of modern museums that ultimately undermined their socio-educational goals. In order to address this, Milošević instructed curators to rely heavily on accompanying texts and legends that tied the items to the "thematic whole" of the exhibition (Milošević 1975: 75). The logic of Milošević's solution to this problem is particularly important as it highlights the theoretical grounding of socialist museology at the time. As the shift towards Marxist historical materialism dictated a teleological explanation of all human history, museums ironically became less concerned with material authenticity, since what was actually important was the ways in which items—original or not—demonstrated the ascendency of socialism in the contemporary moment. Simply put, these new museological principles shifted the focus of historical museums away from the objects themselves and towards the stories they told.

Following a similar rationale, Croatian museologists began to emphasize contemporary history as a means to further the social goals of modern museums and museology. Contemporary history as a museological principle entailed two separate but closely related functions. Temporally speaking, contemporary history meant collecting, processing, and exhibiting the most recent history, namely the 19th and 20th century workers' movement, the events during and after World War Two, and the postwar experience of building a socialist state. Thematically speaking, contemporary history meant analyzing all material culture through a Marxist framework such that the present socialist state represented the

culmination humanity's long historical drive towards socialism. Museum professionals therefore understood the function of contemporary history in museum work in primarily three ways: first, as a way to narrate the current socialist Yugoslav state and the contemporary "building of socialism" (*socialistička izgradnja*) as the final stage in the trajectory of human history; second, as a means to eternalize the *Partizan* resistance and socialist revolution for a new generation of Yugoslav youth, and to exhibit the progressive nature and legitimacy of the socialist Yugoslav project; and third, as a way to further connect with the general public by exhibiting events and phenomena that pertain to their daily lives, such as the development of modern urban life and changes in the rural landscape.

Part of this logic stemmed from a debate over "historical distance" that was a by-product of the larger shift towards historical materialism. Those in favor of historical distance believed the study of history to be first and foremost the study of the past, and that it was therefore not required to connect the past to the present moment. Accordingly, historians needed proper distance of at least thirty to fifty years before they could properly analyze the past without bias (Hasaganić 1975: 20). Those on the other side of the debate, such as Slobodan Pešić, argued that these concerns were rooted in remnant bourgeois logic that was still pervasive throughout Yugoslavia. This "bourgeois historiography," according to Pešić, was deliberately developed by the pre-revolutionary elites to silence the history of the workers' movement and other socialist developments. Expanding the content of contemporary history in museums was thus understood as a way to cleanse museum practice of these latent conservative and nationalist elements by presenting the progressive reality of the present day (Pešić 1975: 7).

By the mid-1970s, it appears that, at least in the realm of museology, the debate had been settled and the conservative "crystallized attitudes of historiography" had been silenced (Milošević 1975: 13). To a degree, this was a political affair. As Pešić admits, the study of contemporary history in socialist societies was rooted in certain political objectives of the state. Nonetheless, what the study of contemporary history had provided since its initial political inception was a way for museums to better fulfill their cultural-educational roles by meeting the social demands of the public and their interests in contemporary events and phenomena. Due to rapid industrialization, urban growth, and fundamental changes in the social realities and agricultural production of the rural countryside, the average Croatian citizen was greatly interested in these dramatic changes to everyday life. To ignore this interest simply because of a conservative notion of "historical distance" would be to ignore the socio-educational needs of those to whom museums rightfully belonged (Pešić 1975).

In practical terms, this meant rethinking traditional academic methodology to better represent the historical realities of the everyday man. Most obviously, this meant moving beyond the traditional approach of studying the material remains and political history of the elites. Unfortunately, this was easier said than done. According to one professional at the Croatian Historical Museum in Zagreb, even by the mid-1970s there was still a general ignorance about the material conditions and everyday lives of the Croatian peasant during the middle ages. Instead, the museum focused mostly on the socio-political lives of the aristocracy and the growing bourgeoisie from the 18th century on; any items collected from earlier ages were done so merely by chance (Dobronić 1975: 128).

Nonetheless, from the mid-1970s onward, there was a push within the museological community to work more closely with archaeological and ethnographic professionals in order to fill this gap, such as the Program for Researching

the Material Culture of Feudalism. This program, created by the Croatian Historical Museum in Zagreb, sought to combine contemporary methodologies in social history with archaeological digs and later publish both academic and popular accounts. Similar efforts were taking place in the ethnographic work of museums. In a report on the development of ethnographic collections in Slavonia, Zdenka Lechner argued that museums were uniquely positioned to treat ethnographic objects as "thematic wholes" that illuminate some aspect of human history, as opposed to other cultural institutions that study folk lore and national culture in isolation of broader phenomena. A certain folk dress from group of villages, for example, was surely valuable on its own ethnographic terms but nowhere near as informative as when museums historicized the dress amongst an array of others to highlight the broader social, cultural, and "surely economic conditions" that led to their creation (Lechner 1975: 85).

In sum, the two most notable museological developments during the 1960s and 1970s were the implementation of object-based display methods and the use of contemporary history as both a chronological and thematic framework. Both of these trends were rooted in the logic of Marxist historical materialism that stipulated all of human history was guided by material-economic factors. For object-based displays, this took the form of emphasizing meaning over authenticity such that original objects came second to accompanying materials such as legends, replicas, artistic renditions, and so forth. While this meaning was inherently ideological and based upon the assumption of historical materialism as a demonstrable science, it shouldn't be assumed that it was purely the result of state-led propaganda. Rather, this practice was fit within a larger trend in international museology—particularly so in Western Europe after the crisis of 1968—to create more comprehensible and accessible museum spaces for the everyday visitor (Van Mensch 1992). The same can be said of contemporary history. Insofar as contemporary history as a thematic category had similar issues of objectivity, it also encouraged museum professionals to focus on new topics of Croatian history, such as the everyday life and experiences of the Croatian peasant. And while most of the collections and exhibitions concerning the People's Liberation Struggle during World War Two are now rarely used, they are nevertheless impressive in their depth and may well provide the material basis for a critical reassessment of the socialist Yugoslav period in the future.

New Models: Revolutionary and Native Place Museums

Two different museum models developed in Yugoslavia between the late 1950s and early 1970s, the Revolutionary Museum and the Native Place Museum, clearly reflected the new museological principles being developed at the time. While both these models were pan-Yugoslav phenomena, the University of Zagreb and its associated professional journal, *Muzeologija*, were crucial to their development, both within and outside of Croatia.[2] While most museums in Croatia integrated, to varying degrees, the modern museological ideas discussed previously, nowhere was it clearer than in these two museum types. The foundational logic of these museums was rooted in the social and educational goals of modern museology that stressed social engagement with the community, the importance of contemporary history, and object-based display methods. These museums were also explicitly geared towards engaging with populations that were historically underrepresented as museum visitors, namely the urban working class and those in the rural countryside. As such, they were envisioned

2) It should be noted that Revolutionary Museums, more so than any other type of museum, were given "unconditional financial support" and political backing by various state institutions. This is not surprising considering their public educational role, as defined in 1945, to develop and bring attention to the "cult of national victims and sufferers, casualties and heroes of the peoples-liberation war" (Čaldarović 2008: 106).

as a cure to the ills of bourgeois museum practice in decades past and "appeared far more interesting and more important than a 'conservative' national one" in the early decades of socialist Yugoslavia (Čaldarović 2008: 106).

Revolutionary Museums were concerned first and foremost with collecting, processing, and exhibiting the material remains of the communist resistance, commonly referred to as the People's Liberation Struggle (NOB), during World War Two. Unlike most Eastern European states where communism was mostly an external development imposed by the USSR in the immediate postwar years, socialist Yugoslavia was formed by an indigenous resistance led by the communist *Partizan* forces. As Đorđe Tomić notes, this meant that the legacy of the NOB was particularly important as "one of the main pillars of legitimization of the new state" (Tomić 2014, 276). Thus, the early conceptualization of Revolutionary Museums concerned solely the *Partizan* resistance and socialist revolution with a heavy emphasis on military and political history. By the early 1960s, however, the Revolutionary Museums expanded their focus to cover other aspects of contemporary history such as the building of socialism, women's participation in the war effort and in modern society, and topics related to everyday life under socialism. The first Revolutionary Museum in Croatia opened in 1953 under the title "The Museum of the Peoples Liberation Struggle" in Zagreb and was later renamed "The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia" in 1960 as it expanded its topical focus. Following the Zagreb model, a network of Revolutionary Museums developed thereafter in Croatia between the 1960s and early 1980s with museums opening in in places like Split, Rijeka, Makarska, Pula, and Slavonski Brod.

In parallel with Revolutionary Museums, museum professionals developed the so-called Native Place Museum *(Zavičajni Muzej)*. As a "complex type" museum meant to embody modern museology, Native Place Museums were much broader in scope than Revolutionary Museums, dealing with anything from archeology and ethnography to local and natural history. Often located in smaller rural municipalities, Native Place Museums were designed to serve first and foremost the local community, and, to a lesser extent, tourists. As such, their exhibition activities had a strong local flavor that, at times, only loosely related to the larger socialist Yugoslav paradigm. At the same time, however, Native Place Museums were envisioned as embodying the principles of Marxist historical materialism by taking everything that was local—history, geography, ethnography, and so forth—and positioning it within the historical progression towards socialist Yugoslavism.[3] There was no universal structure for these museums to follow in terms of what collections they developed or what subject departments they emphasized. Instead, their collections would develop in accordance to the historical legacy of the region, although each museum was required to have a separate department for contemporary history (Horvat 1975).

Thematically speaking, both museum types developed in conjunction with the growing predominance of historical materialism and contemporary history. Revolutionary Museums were not only contemporary in the sense that they covered the most recent past, but also because they engaged with contemporary history as a historical framework. As Babić and Durbešić explained in a 1975 report, the educational-pedagogical goal of these museums was "to document and show that our contemporary development is a necessary and logical extension of the People's Liberation Struggle, that is to say, an organic connection of the past to the present." As such, they could not function "at the level of scientific neutrality that avoids conflict and confrontation but rather must have an adequate interpretation of

3) It is difficult to make any substantial claims about *all* Native Place Museums due to their heavily decentralized nature. Many smaller regional museums were administered at an entirely local (and often amateur) basis, and as such incorporated socialist Yugoslavism into their exhibitions sparingly. Others, however, were directly linked to republic-level cultural institutions and heavily reinforced socialist Yugoslavism in their exhibitions, such as the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings in Gornja Stubica.

class and ideology, as well as Marxist, Leninist, and class approaches to the problems of history and the socialist present" (Babić and Durbešić 1975: 52).

The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, for instance, exhibited topics that ranged from military activities to various aspects of the new socialist Yugoslav state like the growth of industry and urban centers, and even gender equality. One of its earliest exhibitions, "From Partisan Units to the Yugoslav Army" in 1957, exemplified how the museum narrated the Croatian experience during World War Two as truly Yugoslav in nature. Focusing on how the early Croatian paramilitaries merged with the Yugoslav *Partizan* army, the exhibition argued these paramilitaries embodied "the contribution of the people of Croatia in the general struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia in national revolution" (Ščukanec 1957: 3). Likewise, the 1970 exhibition, "A Quarter Century of Our Development," lauded the current socialist state as the culmination of the workers' movement while emphasizing the rapid economic development of Croatia after World War Two and the great strides made in social justice (Dešković and Ivanuša 1970). Finally, the 1985 exhibition, "The Women of Croatia in the Revolution," presented the role of women in both the revolution and modern society in order to demonstrate just how revolutionary the contemporary state was. The exhibition began by demonstrating women's role during World War Two as combatants and nurses before praising the place of women in modern Croatian society that gave them "the same opportunities as men" as "scientists and highly educated experts." The exhibition concluded that while women need to be credited with having achieved this success themselves, it was a feat only made possible by the revolutionary nature of the Yugoslav state and "its vanguard—the Communist Party of Yugoslavia" (Purtić n.d.: 51).

For Native Place Museums, the thematic approach to contemporary history meant addressing the entirety of the locale's history as simultaneously local and national, Croatian and Yugoslav, and most importantly, as evidence of the historical drive towards socialism. One of the clearest examples of integrating the more distant past and local legacies into a Marxist historical framework is the Museum of Peasant Uprisings in Gornja Stubica, just north of the Zagreb county. Opened in 1973 on the 400-year anniversary of the 1573 Peasant Uprising, the Museum of Peasant Uprisings was developed as a Native Place Museum with departments for traditional history, ethnography, archeology, art, and contemporary history. The 1573 peasant rebellion on which the museum focused has been the subject of various historical and ideological interpretations, and the particular Marxist-Yugoslav interpretation presented in this museum bares particular significance.

The event itself is rather straightforward: on January 29th, 1573, peasants in the Croatian Zagorje region revolted against their feudal lord, Franjo Tahy, and spread the rebellion as far as north as Varaždin and southern Slovenia. After a number of noblemen were killed and their manors captured, the Ban of Croatia, Juraj Draškovic, sent an imperial army against the peasant army and swiftly defeated them. A large portion of the 10,000-strong peasant army was killed, the leaders of the revolt, including the now legendary Matija Gubec, were publicly executed, and the imperial army was given free rein to plunder the countryside as a punishment and warning to future rebellions (Pavlaković 2004).

As Pavlaković points out, the legacy of 1573 has long been subjected to various ideological interpretations that have attempted to assign ideological motive to the peasants, and in particular, the leadership of Matija Gubec (Pavlakavić 2004). During the 19th century, for instance, the 1573 uprising and Matija Gubec were the subjects of romantic-nationalist historiography and touted as examples of

the undying spirit of Croatian, Slovenian, and/or Yugoslav nationalism. Likewise, in the interwar period, the events were subjected to conservative-populist, far-right, and far-left interpretations. The Croatian Peasant Party, for instance, focused on Gubec as the ideal Croatian peasant who fought feudalist exploitation while also maintaining a conservative and non-revolutionary socio-political program that sought to restore the "old rights" and "social order, which existed during the old Croatian kingdom" (Pavlakavić 2004: 731). The fascist Ustaše party, meanwhile, used 1573 and Gubec as examples of the undying Croatian national spirit and the centuries-long struggle for national independence. Finally, the communist interpretation—first developed in the 1930s but employed far more dramatically during World War Two as a means of inspiring peasants to rise up in socialist revolution—was deeply rooted in both Marxist historical materialism and populist peasant folklore. For example, in the tradition of Engel's *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), early socialist historians rejected previous interpretations that looked at religious or political reasons and instead understood the revolt as the inevitable result of class conflict over changes in the socio-economic landscape of Central Europe. At the same time, the communist interpretation tapped into popular myths and legends about peasant rebels against foreign oppressors and aristocratic exploitation to inspire the largely peasant population of Croatia in World War Two to rise up against Italian and German occupiers (Pavlakavić 2004: 737).

The Museum of Peasant Uprisings, under the guidance of Professor Josip Adamček, adopted and expanded upon this interpretation to fulfill the new museological principle of contemporary history. It is worth noting here that of all Croatian historians working on the medieval and premodern eras during the socialist period, Josip Adamček was the most ardently Marxist, "whose ideological background can be recognized not only in the economic determination of his explanations, but also in the terminology he used (e.g. 'exploitation')" (Budak 2004: 130). The entirety of the permanent exhibition was therefore informed by a Marxist historical interpretation of class struggle that also drew a parallel between the peasant uprisings of the 16th century and the contemporary socialist state. Five of the seven exhibition rooms, for instance, were dedicated to the historical circumstances that led to the rebellion, the events of the rebellion, and its gruesome suppression. The narrative told in these rooms heavily emphasized the socio-economic conditions of the peasantry *vis-à-vis* their feudal lords and connected this individual event to the broader phenomenon of peasant rebellions and class struggle in Central Europe in the 16th century (Adamček 1971). As Adamček explained in his guide to the museum, the immediate cause of the rebellion was the "restoration of a feudal monopoly in the commerce of agricultural products" that resulted from feudal lords suppressing proto-capitalism amongst the peasantry (Adamček 1973). The harsh treatment of Franjo Tahy—considered today by many historians to be an extreme case and the immediate cause of the rebellion (Pavlaković 2004; Budak 2007)—was explained more so as typical than exceptional and framed within the larger "brutality and cruelty of the Croatian feudal lords" (Adamček 1971: 4). Further explaining that this was a product of the broader class struggle between the serfs and nobility, Adamček concluded that the peasant leadership sought to abolish the entire feudal system once "part of the rebels realized that their goals could not be achieved in a struggle against an individual feudal lord, and that it was necessary to take the struggle against the entire feudal class and to oust them from power" (Adamček 1973: 8). In doing so, Adamček retroactively infused the rebellion with a revolutionary, class-based ideology, that in reality was

likely limited in scope and—in terms of its scale and intensity—immediately caused by Tahy's treatment of the peasantry (Budak 2007: 149). Likewise, Adamček interpreted the dual Slovenian and Croatian nature of the rebellion as a precursor to socialist Yugoslavia since these two peoples were united by a "common class interest" and revolutionary ideology (Adamček 1973: 9).

Beyond the historical events of the 16th century, the museum exhibited contemporary historical events related to the peasant rebellion. For instance, the final two rooms of the permanent exhibition were dedicated to the historical legacy of 1573 in popular culture, art, and politics. Room six in particular was dedicated to presenting how the revolutionary spirit of the time inspired modern socialist heroes, such as "our revolutionaries [who] renewed the tradition of the peasant uprising in the Great October Revolution," the Spanish Civil War, and most importantly, the People's Liberation Struggle (Adamček 1973: 16). By narrating the events of 1573 through the lenses of class struggle and socio-economic exploitation, and then connecting the revolutionary spirit of the peasant actors to contemporary revolutionary events, the Museum of the Peasant Uprisings effectively demonstrated the museological idea of contemporary history. This emphasis on the contemporary—both in terms of narrating the past according to Marxist teleology, and in terms of narrating contemporary events thematically related to the peasant uprising—was not just pervasive but an actual structural foundation for many Native Place Museums, much the same as in Revolutionary Museums.

In addition to the emphasis on contemporary history, Revolutionary Museums and Native Place Museums both implemented the most current ideas about the value of original objects in exhibitions versus the use of replicas, accompanying text, and audio-visual techniques. As discussed in the previous section, this logic was rooted in object-based displays methods that emphasized "thematic wholes" and ideologically driven conclusions about the course of human history, while also minimizing "bourgeois" museum practices that were more concerned with rarity and grandeur than historical analysis and everyday life. Accordingly, the permanent and temporary exhibitions in all the Croatian Revolutionary Museums relied extremely upon written text, photographs, and replicas, while displaying only a select few original objects. Of the original objects displayed, most tented to be text-based, such as original copies of party documents, flyers, or letters.

In a 1978 exhibition in Rijeka on the role of women in the wartime resistance, for instance, only two out of ninety objects on display were original, non-documentation related objects: a red star dedicated to a certain Ivana Blašković, and a hankerchief given as a gift to a female soldier. The rest consisted of either photographs or reprints of the wartime events, battle maps, newspapers, fliers, party documents, and so forth (Giron 1978). Likewise, the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia in Zagreb—designed in 1962 with only minor alterations until its closure in 1990—was dominated by replicas, maps, photos, documents, and thematic displays, while only a handful of original military artifacts were presented on the exhibition floor (see fig. 1-3). The 1970 exhibition, *A Quarter Century of Our Growth and Development*, on the other hand contained a fair number of original objects (although still nowhere near the majority), such as badges, paper records of regional funding for reconstruction and industrialization, brochures and political pamphlets, and awards like "outstanding worker" cards (*udarnička karta*) (Ivanuša 1969). The choice of these items, however, is telling about the museological logic that determined which original objects to include: as heavily text-driven, paper documents, these objects had virtually the same function as accompanying texts and

legends since there was nothing ambiguous about their meaning and therefore could hardly be misinterpreted.

For Native Place Museums, original objects were more common but almost universally accompanied by helping materials such as explanatory texts, photographs, replicas, and artist renditions of the distant past that supplemented the display of authentic objects. In part, this was due to the fact that many of the objects were mundane in nature that lacked much individual meaning, but that when organized as a collective whole, could embody the history and culture of the region. This meant organizing all collections and exhibitions on a thematic basis so that the objects themselves would function to illuminate some broader historical phenomenon, such as the development of proto-industry through village-level textile production or the early roots of the worker's movement.

Once again looking at the Museum of Peasant Uprisings, the planning document for the permanent exhibition in 1973 suggests that among the many concerns of museum professionals, physical authenticity was a relatively low priority. As Adamček explains in the document, there was not a great deal of physical evidence or contemporary accounts from the events of 1573. Accordingly, he and his colleagues needed to rely on later depictions and "modern artistic interventions" in the form of maps, illustrations, graphics, and so forth in order to present a clear picture of the conditions of the peasantry in the 16th century. Therefore, the majority of the exhibition "would consist of free standing and hanging panels, drawings based on original engravings, glass cases, photocopies of documents and enhanced photography, original ethnographic examples […] of tools and weapons, written text translations, and fixed legends" (Adamček 1971: 33). Perhaps the most egregious example of this was the fifth room of the exhibition designed to capture the essence of the "feudal terror" that followed the defeat of the uprising. The room was painted completely black and only sparse lit, while copies of "old graphics of peasant torture" were projected via overhead projector on the wall. Multiple dimly lit panels described contemporary torture and interrogation techniques in detail and were accompanied by a modern painting of Matija Gubec being tortured by a red-hot iron crown titled, "The Coronation of Gubec." Even more striking, an audio reenactment of the rebel leaders' interrogation was played on loop to demonstrate "the actual course of the interrogation," even though Adamček admits that they had to reconstruct most of these questions based on a few sparse descriptions of the interrogations (Adamček 1973: 10). It seems clear, therefore, that Adamček was less concerned with direct empiricism backed by authentic material objects than he was with constructing a narrative of class struggle in line with the Yugoslav brand of Marxist historical materialism.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how key developments in Croatian museology—Revolutionary and Native Place Museum models, contemporary history, and object-based displays—were rooted in the Yugoslav notion of a "third way" of socialist practice. First and foremost, early Croatian museologists such as Antun Bauer sought to transform museums into truly public institutions that would serve the cultural-educational needs of a new socialist society. To this end, they theorized practices to democratize museum spaces by increasing their accessibility and presenting their collections in easily comprehensible ways. In the process of creating more comprehensible exhibitions, Croatian museologists increasingly promoted Marxist historical materialism as the main

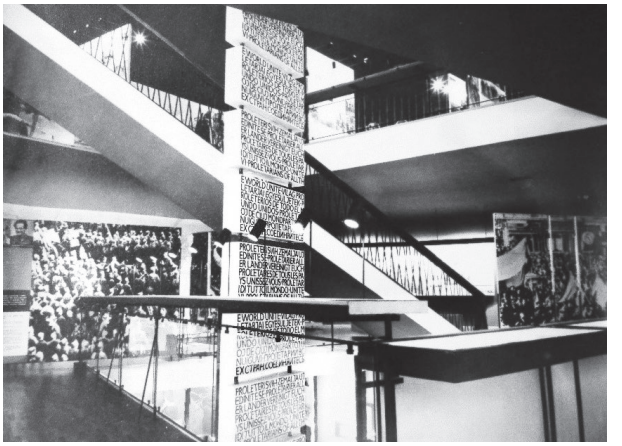

Fig. 1: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. The pillar in the middle contained the phrase "workers of the world unite" in various languages. The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

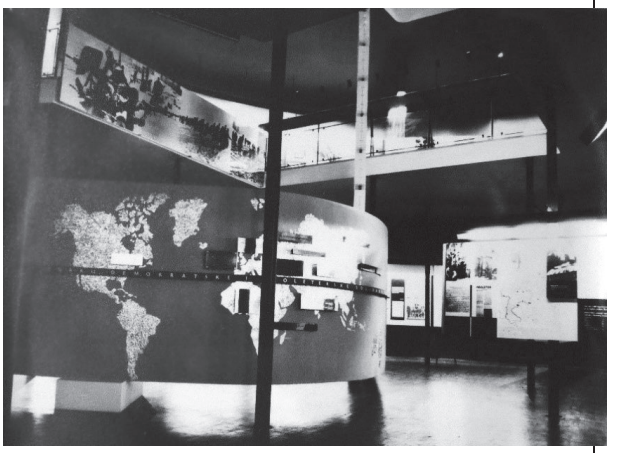

Fig. 2: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. A display of international "democratic and proletariat solidarity." The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

methodology for processing and presenting material culture. Precisely because this methodology allowed for even the most mundane objects to fit within a much larger historical trajectory—a trajectory that reinforced the socialist state, no less—it was particularly suited for presenting the historical lessons the Yugoslav state sought to promote. While these museological developments were certainly rooted in the ideological goals of the socialist state, they should not be considered solely a political endeavor. Rather, these developments reflect the ways in which political goals and cultural-educational endeavors often intersect, and how the political interest of a state can provide the structural support for cultural-educational institutions without fully dictating their form or practice, particularly so in the decentralized Yugoslav federal system.

In their attempts to make museums more accessible to the masses, however, Croatian museologists ultimately devalued the material objects themselves. Ironically, the more that Croatian museologists embraced Marxist historical materialism—a historical methodology that placed enormous explanatory value on the authentic material conditions of everyday life—the more they relied on inauthentic didactic objects like texts, graphics, and replicas to craft exhibitions akin to "a book on the wall."[4] Rather than letting the objects speak for themselves in exhibitions—a remnant of bourgeois practice—Croatian museologists saw the museum space as an educational mediator between the often-inaccessible historical truths of mundane objects and the everyday museum visitor. The Museum of the Peasant Uprisings in particular reflected this practice: having little physical remains of the events of 1573 at their disposal, Josip Adamček and his fellow curators crafted a permant exhibition that subjugated authentic material remains to the primacy of inauthentic didactic materials and the story they were designed to tell. Similar practices dominated Revolutionary Museums, as seen in the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia whose permanent exhibition consisted primarily of two-dimensional graphics and panels. While many graphics contained copies of original paper documents, they were so heavily framed by broader stock phrases like "workers of the world unite" and "democratic and proletariat solidarity" that the original meaning and context of the objects were secondary to the larger story of socialist revolution (fig. 1-2). Likewise, the few original objects on display, such as arms used by the *Partizan* forces, were dominated by their surrounding panels and graphics,

4) I borrow this phrase from the current director of the museum, Vlatka Filipčić Maligec, who criticized the heavy use of text in the original exhibition as "a book on the wall" (Maligec 2013: 86).

Fig. 3: Permanent exhibition of The Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia, circa 1962. Some of the few original wartime artifacts on display. The image is property of Croatian History Museum.

effectively suffocating the relevance of their authenticity (fig. 3).

This article has solely explored historical museums in Croatia. In other traditional museum types such as archeology and ethnography, original objects were indeed more prominent, and the degree to which these museums employed Marxist historical materialism, object-based displays, and contemporary history is a subject for further research. Certainly, in the historical museums investigated here, however, the importance of authentic material culture greatly decreased in favor of text- and image-based exhibition practices that sought to eliminate interpretive ambiguity and elevate Party-line historical interpretations. Perhaps for this reason more than any other, the legacy of Revolutionary Museums has been essentially erased, as every Revolutionary Museum in Croatia has either closed its doors or transitioned into a local-city museum. Likewise, collections related to the socialist period in Native Place Museums throughout Croatia have been used only sparingly, and often with a clear inversion of the legacy of socialism.

Nevertheless, these museums and museological principles tell us a great deal about how cultural-educational institutions functioned under Yugoslav style socialism. On the one hand, museums as public educational sites were rarely locations where official state culture was challenged or subverted, as evidenced by the heavy-handed didactic exhibition practices developed during this time. On the other hand, museology as an academic discipline functioned quite freely from state ministries and was thoroughly engaged with practices from both East and West. As such, the legacy of Croatian socialist museology matters to this day not only as evidence of real, lived socialist practice, but also as a unique contribution to the field of modern museology that successfully traversed the ideological borders of the Cold War.

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