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# ASSOCIATION OF CROATIAN ARTISTS 'MEDULIĆ' – VISIONARIES OF THEIR TIME

MUSEUM  
OF YUGOSLAVIA

THE DAY  
WORTH A  
CENTURY  
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Shortly after the promulgation of the Act on Unification and Proclamation of the Unified Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes of 1 December 1918, the newly elected chairman of the Art Society in Zagreb, Dušan Plavšić, sent a written notification to prominent Croatian artists Ivan Meštrović and Mirko Rački appointing them honorary members of the Art Society 'in recognition of [...] their immeasurable contributions to the development and success of Yugoslav thought and art through their artistic and political efforts'.<sup>1</sup> Plavšić extended his invitation for cooperation and joint 'work towards the prosperity of Yugoslav culture' and 'young Yugoslav art' to all Slovene and Serbian artists as well, sending a telegram to the Slovene painter Rihard Jakopič and the former Serbian minister of the interior Ljubomir Jovanović, who had actively participated in the proclamation of unification as a representative of the government of the Kingdom of Serbia.<sup>2</sup>

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the establishment of the Yugoslav state following the end of the Great War brought to fruition the aspirations and efforts of the members of the Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić', who had espoused the idea of South Slavic cultural and political unity even before the war. The idea of national Yugoslav art, which had been rejected and criticized by most official institutions and artistic associations

1 — \*This text is based on the author's doctoral dissertation (2014) and book *Medulić, the Association of Croatian Artists (1908-1919): Art and Politics*, published in November 2016, as well as a series of academic articles and papers that have been published in journals from the same field.

Dušan Plavšić's telegram to Ivan Meštrović and Mirko Rački, Zagreb, December 1918, Croatian State Archives, Zagreb, Fund 1979 - HDLU. 1.3. Cooperation with members and associations (henceforth: HR-HDA-1979-HDLU), 1.3.3.147.

2 — Dušan Plavšić's telegram to R. Jakopič; Dušan Plavšić's telegram to Lj. Jovanović, December 1918, HR-HDA-1979-HDLU 1.2.1. Main assembly 1883-1938. - Irregular main assembly 15 December 1918. The telegram addressed to Ljuba Jovanović read: 'Dear Sir, the newly elected board of the Croatian Art Society asks you to convey our brotherly regards to all our artists of the Serbian name in the sincere hope that we will be united in our efforts towards the prosperity of young Yugoslav art.'

in Croatia, became fully legitimized. 'Prophetic forerunners', as Vinko Kisić<sup>3</sup> described the prominent artists of the 'Medulić' Association including Ivan Meštrović, Emanuel Vidović, Mirko Rački, Tomislav Krizman, Rihard Jakopič, Matija Jama and the late Ivan Grohar and Nadežda Petrović, were appointed to high-ranking positions in the new state and received well-earned praises for their work.

During the turbulent period of the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Croatia and Slovenia were still parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, members of the 'Medulić' Association had a leading role in the promotion of the Yugoslav idea and national expression in art. In addition to their social and political activities and their mobilizing platform for popularizing the same objectives, they gained prominence through their artistic work, as well as their remarkable contribution to the progressive development of art. Particularly deserving members include the Croatian sculptor Meštrović and painter Vidović; the Slovene artist Jakopič; and the Serbian painter Petrović, all of whom gave important contributions to the improvement of artistic life by founding art societies and national art institutions and organizing key exhibitions for the development of modern art, both in their native milieus and the wider region.

## **ART ASSOCIATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF ARTISTIC LIFE IN THE EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.**

### **The Yugoslav Art Colony**

Due to the inextricable links between their artistic and political views, the ties and stronger bonds between the younger generation of Croatian, Slovene and Serbian artists and their joint efforts to promote Yugoslav culture and art began in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while they were receiving education abroad (Vienna, Munich) and participating in exhibitions of the Vienna Secession movement<sup>4</sup>, while their first formal association became the Yugoslav Art Colony. It was established in 1904, almost concurrently with the Alliance of Yugoslav Artists 'Lada', during the First Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Belgrade<sup>5</sup>, which already brought the first signs of disagreement between the older and younger generation of artists.<sup>6</sup> Along with Nadežda Petrović,

3 — 'They are the prophetic forerunners of the political movement that has led us to liberation and unification after so few years.' Vinko Kisić (V. K.), *Emanuel Vidović*, foreword to: *Izložba Vidovića* (Split: Velika realka, 1919), 7–16, 15.

4 — For more details see: Sandi Bulimbašić, „Nadežda Petrović i Ivan Meštrović: motivacije nastojanja i pristupi oblikovanju nacionalne ideje u umjetnosti početkom 20. stoljeća”, in: *Naučni skup posvećen Nadeždi Petrović (1873–1915). Zbornik radova*, ed. Jasna Jovanov (Novi Sad: Spomen-zbirka Pavla Beljanskog, 2016), 23–44, 24.

5 — The first exhibition that included various Yugoslav artists was organized to mark the centenary of the First Serbian Uprising and the crowning of King Peter I. For more details see: Dragutin Tošić, *Jugoslovenske umetničke izložbe 1904–1927* (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, Institut za istoriju umetnosti, 1983), 38–60.

6 — The program of the 'Lada' society with its four national divisions (Croatian, Slovene, Serbian and Bulgarian) and the Yugoslav Art Colony underlined the concept of unity among South Slavs and building closer ties between them in the field of art through joint Yugoslav exhibitions. The members of the Colony and many young artists from

who was the most committed to the work of the Colony, its founders were Paško Vučetić, Ferdo Vesel, Ivan Grohar, Rihard Jakopič, Ivan Meštrović and Emanuel Vidović. With the exception of Vesel, who was reluctant to renounce the Lada society, all of them participated at the Exhibition of the Yugoslav Art Colony held at the National Museum in Belgrade in early 1907<sup>7</sup> and shortly thereafter all became members of the 'Medulić' Association. The artists in the Colony shared their efforts towards the improvement of the quality of artistic production, affirmation of modernism and promotion of national art at home and abroad. Their aim was to present their works as Yugoslav, with no ethnic distinctions, and to create a new, contemporary, Yugoslav art that would be based in Belgrade. Along with the founding of the Yugoslav Art Gallery and Academy of Fine Arts, the Colony's main objective was collective painting of the Serbian countryside and documenting authentic local landscapes, people, customs and national costumes. However, despite Nadežda's best efforts, this objective never came to fruition.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Yugoslav Art Colony played a historic role in the final break with tradition, affirmation of the modern and the development of the concept of Yugoslav national art, the Colony failed to become a true mobilizing force for the shared aspirations of Yugoslav artists. Except the exhibition in Belgrade, most of its aims remained unfulfilled despite its almost decade-long existence, until the beginning of World War One. Despite Nadežda's efforts to gather the members in Belgrade, the lack of genuine support of Belgrade authorities as well as the lack of understanding and acceptance of her own art by the general public and art critics did not have the same cohesive and mobilizing power as Meštrović, who was ten years her junior, and the society he founded in 1908 in Split. Meštrović and Dalmatian artists took over the leading role in the organization of artistic life in the region, expanding the membership of the Colony and fulfilling the objectives she had set, with the exception of group painting sessions

Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia mostly refused membership in the Association, but agreed to take part in Yugoslav exhibitions, which were the first exhibitions in the region to be organized and equipped according to modern standards. However, already at the first Lada exhibition in Belgrade in 1904, disagreements arose between artists of the older and younger generation, which became more intense at the Second Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Sofia (1906); members of the Colony and the majority of younger artists did not showcase their works at the Third Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Zagreb (1908). The reason lay in their disagreement with the conservative artistic program and politically neutral stance of the Association, as well as in the intrigues of the Lada members who perceived the unquestionably talented younger generation as a rival in the art market. Artists of the older generation advocated the concept of federal unity in the Yugoslav cultural community and academic realism, while the younger generation promoted the concept of integral unity in the Yugoslav cultural and political community, affirmation of creative freedom and contemporary art movements, and the shaping of a national artistic expression. For more details on these disagreements and the generational rift see: Sandi Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919): umjetnost i politika* (Zagreb, Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2016), 47–52.

7 — For more on the Colony and the exhibition see: Katarina Ambrozić, „Prva jugoslovenska umetnička kolonija“, *Zbornik radova Narodnog muzeja 2* (1958): 261–268; Bulimbašić, „Nadežda Petrović i Ivan Meštrović“, 25–27.

8 — The Ministry of Education of Serbia failed to fulfill its promises regarding financial support for temporary residences of Colony members in Belgrade or even permanent residences in Belgrade that were to include providing suitable ateliers, and so Nadežda's efforts to make Belgrade the center of Yugoslav culture and art failed despite being in line with the concept of 'Great Serbia' in the Serbian policy of the time (Ambrozić, „Prva jugoslovenska umetnička kolonija“, 266).

in nature and documenting the life of Yugoslav nations.<sup>9</sup> Although the idea of the Yugoslav Art Colony emerged in the European cultural context, by discovering and valorizing the fundamental points of collecting memory Meštrović managed to revive it using the rhetoric of form-symbol and transform it into an artistic-political program focused on the individual as the protagonist of the concept of unity.

### **Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić' (1908-1919)**

The Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić' was founded in early December 1908 at the First Dalmatian Art Exhibition in Split as a regional association of artists from Dalmatia which, in view of the ethnicity of its exhibitors and the importance of its activities, grew to become a truly Yugoslav organization.<sup>10</sup> All 28 exhibitors became members, while the founders of the Association included Meštrović and Vidović, Rački, Krizman and Bukovac, M. C. Medović, Kamilo Tončić and Ivo Tartaglia. Vlaho Bukovac, whose status as a prominent figure in Croatian art lent legitimacy and weight to the newly founded Association, was appointed its honorary president. Along with Meštrović, Vidović also had an important organizational role and was the most deserving for naming the Association in honor of the renowned Croatian painter Andrija Medulić Schiavone. Unlike the Colony, the members of the Association did not include only visual artists but also prominent authors, mostly Dalmatian (I. Vojnović, M. Begović, A. Tresić Pavičić), politicians (N. Nardelli, J. Biankini, A. Trumbić, J. Smodlaka, P. Grisogono) and art critics (M. Marjanović, A. Milčinić, D. Mitrinović, I. Tartaglia, K. Strajnić, J. Miše), and the Association had its own statute ratified by the Dalmatian government in early 1910. In view of the historical circumstances in Dalmatia and Croatia under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the membership

9 — Unlike Meštrović, who was enthusiastic, and Vidović, who refused to join Nadežda's art colony near Sićevo in the summer of 1905, along with her, Jakopič, Grohar and Vesel were the most disappointed by the fact that it did not take place (Ambrozić, „Prva jugoslovenska umetnička kolonija”, 264). In the years of establishing the Colony as well as later, Nadežda's activities corresponded with the Colony's ideas and program: in Resnik, Sićevo and other locations in Serbia, she painted national landscapes and places of importance in national memory, portraits of ordinary people, the everyday life of the peasantry and people in national costumes, thereby contributing to the national expression in art (For more details see: Lidija Merenić, *Nadežda Petrović: projekat i sudbina* (Beograd: TOPY, 2006), 40-42; 48-52; 53-58); Simona Čupić, „Ideja nacionalnog u delu Nadežde Petrović i njenih savremenika”; Milanka Todić, „Voz, novooslobođeni krajevi i umetnički projekat Nadežde Petrović”, in: *Naučni skup posvećen Nadeždi Petrović (1873-1915). Zbornik radova*, ed. Jasna Jovanov (Novi Sad: Spomen-zbirka Pavla Beljanskog, 2016), 45-55; 86-98. A similar poetics, but without a strong ideological angle, was nurtured by Slovene painters who created their own version of impressionism permeated by the idea of national identity, symbolism and intimism. Their depictions of rural life and landscapes of Slovene provinces remained in the domain of intimate symbolic subjects shown with a degree of melancholy and in time acquired an air of national patriotism, although the painters had not intended this.

10 — In addition to cooperation with regional progressive art associations, the 'Sava' Club, the Yugoslav Art Colony and the Serbian Art Association, whose members fluctuated and were at the same time members of the 'Medulić' Association, owing to Meštrović and Bukovac it established international contacts with similar societies in Central Europe (the Czech Mánes Association of Fine Artists; the Association of Moravian Artists headed by Joža Uprka). For more details see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić” (1908-1919)*, 355-357.



HRVATSKO  
UMJETNIČKO  
DRUŠTVO ☐  
=MEDULIĆ=

P. N. *Maurice Frane Bulić*

*Split*

Kako se razabire iz priloženih statuta, društvu je „Medulića“ zadaća, da na umjetničkom polju sudjeluje kulturnom podizanju naše domovine.

U svom radu pokretački odbor računa na sve one prosvjetlijenije elemente, koji teže za napretkom, te reflektira na njihovu potporu. ☐

Ovim uvjerenjem šalju Vam se statuti s preporukom i molbom, da se izvolite upisati među društvene članove i time unapredite i učvrstite djelovanje ove narodne institucije. ☐

SPLIT, 15. Februara 1910.

ZA POKRETAČKI ODBOR:

VLAHO BUKOVAC - TOMISLAV KRIZMAN - CELESTIN MEDOVIĆ  
IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ - MIRKO RAČKI - IVAN RENDIĆ - DR. IVO TARTAGLIA  
IVAN TIŠOV - ING. KAMIL TONČIĆ - EMANUEL VIDOVIĆ

and activities of the Association were not bereft of political connotations and its members mostly included the Progressives or their supporters who advocated the political course of Serbophile Yugoslavism. The Association's activities and particularly its ambitious exhibition plans were facilitated by membership fees and donations of prominent and renowned members, especially Dalmatian politicians. Reflecting political shifts, the Association changed its name on two occasions: to the Association of Serbo-Croat Artists 'Medulić' (1912) and to the Association of Yugoslav Artists 'Medulić' (1919)<sup>11</sup>.

In the protection of class interests, affirmation of artistic freedom and modern visual formulations, as well as the development of artistic life through high artistic standards and the affirmation of national art at home and abroad, and the formation of national art institutions (School of Crafts, Ethnographic Museum, Art Gallery in Split)<sup>12</sup>, the Association 'Medulić', with its unquestionable appeal lent by Meštrović's involvement, achieved an important advance compared to similar associations that had been active earlier or at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

### **The national program and mobilizing role of the 'Medulić' Association in the development of Yugoslav cultural and political cooperation**

The largest contribution of the 'Medulić' Association to the promotion and presentation of national art at home and abroad came in the form of its exhibitions. The eight realized exhibitions of the Association introduced new standards of exhibition practice.<sup>14</sup> The lively exhibition activity of the 'Medulić' Association is attested by the fact that between 1912 and 1915 the Association planned several exhibitions that never came to fruition despite advanced preparations in some cases.<sup>15</sup> The mobilizing 'national' program of the Association is discussed here primarily through the creative and political activities of Ivan Meštrović. In the period leading up to the Great War, his engaged political activities, work on the Vidovdan Fragments and the Cycle of Prince Marko (Kraljević Marko) and the idea to build the Vidovdan Temple as a symbol of national

11 — For more on the formation and history of the 'Medulić' Association see: Sandi Bulimbašić, „Prilog poznavanju povijesti Društva hrvatskih umjetnika 'Medulić' 1908–1919“, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 33 (2009): 251–260; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 47–97.

12 — Unlike Meštrović's enchantment with the Vidovdan utopia and the construction of a temple dedicated to this idea, the efforts of the Split circle of Medulić members, led by Vidović, Tončić and Tartaglia were more practical and far-reaching. They are to be credited with the establishment of the abovementioned institutions.

13 — For more on the contribution of Medulić members to the organization of artistic life, see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 318–329.

14 — Owing to Ivan Meštrović and the experience he gained by participating at exhibitions of the Vienna Secession movement, the Medulić exhibitions introduced lofty standards in organization, concept, and design of exhibition posters, invitations and catalogs. For more details see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 322–327.

15 — Charity exhibition for the children of soldiers killed in the Balkan War in Split in 1912; Exhibition of the Medulić and Marjan Associations; Posthumous Retrospective Exhibition of Ivan Grohar in Split 1913; Exhibition of Ivan Meštrović in Split in 1914; Exhibition of the Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić' in Zagreb in 1915, which was to have a national character, and the exhibition entitled *In Spite of Non-Heroic Times*. Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 85–93.



liberation had a mobilizing effect on an entire generation of artists and art critics in Croatia and in the territory of former Yugoslavia. A selection of artworks exhibited by Meštrović at the Association's exhibitions allows us to trace his growing use of art in the service of the political idea of the unification of South Slavic peoples and the formulation of a national expression in art, as well as the acknowledgement of this idea in art criticism – it was in the texts penned by Meštrović's most fervent supporters, Milan Marjanović and Dimitrije Mitrović, that the terms 'national expression' and 'national' art were coined. By offering monumental works of supra-individual expression, the importance of Ivan Meštrović and his art achieved wide artistic and conceptual recognition.

### The First Dalmatian Art Exhibition

At the First Dalmatian Art Exhibition in Split (30 September – 15 December 1908) the idea of national art had yet to emerge, although some art critics saw 'national feelings' in Meštrović's works. It was primarily a regional exhibition by Dalmatian artists, both anti-Italian and anti-autonomist, which sought to present new artworks created abroad.<sup>16</sup> The exhibition also marked the affirmation of new art trends and was a major cultural event for Split and Dalmatia. However, in several places throughout the unsigned preface to the catalog, as one of the aims of the exhibition Ivo Tartaglia underlined 'joining the artistic forces of not only Dalmatia, but the Croatian and Serbian people in general'<sup>17</sup>, clearly indicating the political orientation and future actions of Medulić members. During the exhibition Meštrović was in Paris, and after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he began working on the sculptures of the Vidovdan Cycle, completing them by 1912. He sent a few sculptures from this new cycle to be displayed at the exhibition in Split, where he showcased a total of fifteen works.<sup>18</sup>

### The Exhibition of the Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić' in Ljubljana

The exhibition entitled the Second Art Exhibition at the Pavilion of R. Jakopič. Croatian Art Association 'Medulić' [II. Umetniška razstava v Paviljonu R. Jakopiča. Hrv. um. Društvo „Medulić“] (3 November 1909 – 15 January 1910) was held at the Jakopič pavilion at the invitation and encouragement of Jakopič

16 – For more details see: Iris Slade, *Prva dalmatinska umjetnička izložba*, preface in: *Prva dalmatinska umjetnička izložba*, (Split: Galerija umjetnina, 2011), 21–80; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 99–133.

17 – *Prva dalmatinska umjetnička izložba*, exhibition catalog, (Split: Splitska društvena tiskara, 1908), 7.

18 – The Vidovdan Fragments included *Banović Strahinja*, *Vječni idol (Mali torzo/Studija za Miloša)* [*Eternal Idol – Small Torso/Study for Miloš*] and *Slijepi guslar (Blind Bard)*, the sculpture that had appeared on the poster for the Exhibition of the Yugoslav Art Colony in 1907. On the identification of Meštrović's works at the exhibition, see: Sandi Bulimbašić, *„Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika 'Medulić' (1908–1919)“* (PhD diss., Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2014), 138–143; Sandi Bulimbašić, „Prilog identifikaciji djela Ivana Meštrovića na izložbama u prva dva desetljeća 20. stoljeća“, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 33 (2009): 149–162, 150–153; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 131–132.



himself.<sup>19</sup> It was organized similarly to the one in Split: there was obvious formulation of national art and no consistency in the exhibition concept, and the content and quality of displayed artworks was varied and inconsistent. In its historical context, it meant the confirmation of Yugoslav unification and affirmation of modernism. Preoccupied with his exhibition at the Salon d'Automne in Paris, Meštrović was too busy to commit to the organization of the exhibition in Ljubljana, and so it was completely taken over by Vidović, who was solely responsible for the selection of displayed artworks. Meštrović exhibited eleven sculptures in Ljubljana, including four Vidovdan Fragments: *Sjećanje* [Memories], *Studija za karijativu* [Study for a Caryatid], *Slijepi guslar* [The Blind Bard] and *Banović Strahinja*, with the last replacing *Miloš Obilić* which appears in the catalog.<sup>20</sup>

### Exhibition Meštrović–Rački

The Exhibition Meštrović–Rački (30 April – 30 June 1910) at the Art Pavilion in Zagreb marked the beginning of Meštrović's increasingly intense political activity and an important starting point in the context of the development of the idea of national art in the program of the 'Medulić' Association. This was the first display of a larger number of Vidovdan Fragments in his homeland<sup>21</sup> and was supported by the scenic exhibit in six exhibition rooms; it also enjoyed the support of pro-Yugoslav art critics who recognized the symbolism and political meaning of Meštrović's sculptures. Another noteworthy feature was Ivo Vojnović's introduction in the exhibition catalog, which glorified Vidovdan and its protagonists in a romantic gesture of heroism. The critics and the public recognized the Vidovdan Temple as an important rallying cry in the development and encouragement of the idea of South Slavic liberation and unification.<sup>22</sup>

### Exhibition In Spite of Non-heroic Times

The exhibition *In Spite of Non-heroic Times* (Nejunačkom vremenu u prkos, 31 October 1910 – 1 January 1911) at the Art Pavilion in Zagreb was the Association's central and programmatic exhibition with a marked political and


19 — Initially Jakopič tried with N. Petrović and Meštrović to organize the Second Exhibition of the Yugoslav Art Colony at the pavilion, which was meant to include Dalmatian, Serbian and Bulgarian artists, as well as members. See: Ambrozić, „Prva jugoslovenska umetnička kolonija”, 279–280; Vesna Novak Oštrić, preface in: *Nejunačkom vremenu u prkos. Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić” 1908–1916*, 8. *historijska retrospektivna izložba Moderne galerije Zagreb* (Zagreb: Moderna galerija, 1962), 7. The exhibition was probably postponed due to the tense relations between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Jakopič was reluctant to take the risk of including Serbian artists and having the exhibition interpreted in a political context. See: Bulimbašić, „Nadežda Petrović i Ivan Meštrović”, 31–32.

20 — On the identification of Meštrović's works at the exhibition, see: Bulimbašić, „Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika 'Medulić'” (PhD diss.), 189–196; Bulimbašić, „Prilog identifikaciji djela”, 153–156. For more on the exhibition in Ljubljana see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić” (1908–1919)*, 135–161.

21 — 80 exhibits in total including 36 Vidovdan Fragments.

22 — For more on this exhibition see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić” (1908–1919)*, 163–183.



*Serbische Ausstellung  
in Rom 1911* 

IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ  
MARKO KRALJEVIĆ

national character, as suggested in its very title, Ivo Vojnović's motto. It was this exhibition that rendered the most faithful presentation of the Association's conceptual and artistic aims: South Slavic unity and national art thematically rooted in heroic folk poetry. Unlike its predecessors, with its 40 exhibitors of different ethnicities, this exhibition was truly South Slavic in nature: along with Croatian, Serbian, Slovene and Bulgarian artists, its contributors included the Czech Joža Uprka. The cycle of Prince Marko, as the thematic lynchpin of the exhibition conceived by Meštrović, was used to symbolize the suffering of the people and the situation in the country, as well as efforts to create Serbo-Croatian and South Slavic unity. Besides Meštrović, contributors to the cycle included the sculptor Rosandić and painters Rački, Krizman and Ljubo Babić. The central spot at the exhibition was given to Meštrović's equestrian statue of an angry Prince Marko, around five meters tall and placed under the dome in the central part of the pavilion. And while the painted part of the cycle, displayed in a different hall, quite literally illustrated Marko's life as described in national poetry, the sculptural part of the cycle was free from illustration elements and raised to the symbolical level as an embodiment of a universal idea: suffering, struggle, sacrifice and strength of the people that will lead them to victory and liberation. With its clearly formulated political idea, this exhibition was a reflection of professional and political freedom and the risks consciously undertaken by Meštrović and his close circle of associates.<sup>23</sup>

### International Exhibition in Rome

At the International Exhibition in Rome (27 March – 7 December 1911), having refused to display their works at the Austrian and Hungarian pavilion without a separate national section, Meštrović and Medulić members showcased their artworks at the pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia together with Serbian, Montenegrin and Bosnian artists, demonstrating their opposition to the Austro-Hungarian state apparatus and underlining South Slavic cultural unity and the impending political unification.<sup>24</sup> In Croatia, preparations for the exhibition were marked by political scandals.<sup>25</sup> The exhibition at the pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia, which was built largely because of Meštrović's decision to display his works together with Serbian artists<sup>26</sup>, was organized so as to prioritize Meštrović's sculptures, which were very well-received at the exhibition and earned him the first prize for sculpture. The political context of the activities of Medulić members reached its peak in Rome and their art expressed political

23 — For more on this exhibition see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 185–225.

24 — Slovene members of the Medulić Association did not exhibit their works in Rome. Unlike Meštrović and Nadežda Petrović, who were the most committed to social and political activities, despite their aspirations for liberation from Austrian domination Slovene artists were always politically unpredictable in their affirmation of Yugoslav political unity and, fearing potential repercussions, tended to avoid organizing similar exhibitions or taking part in them.

25 — Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 234–238.

26 — For a chronology of exhibiting artworks based on archival material, see: Dragutin Tošić, „Učešće Srbije na izložbi u Rimu 1911. u izveštaju arhivske građe“, *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti* 16 (1980): 341–385.

ideas.<sup>27</sup> Vidovdan Fragments and the Cycle of Prince Marko made up more than a half of Meštrović's exhibits, with 40 out of 68 displayed artworks. Aside from these two thematically distinct cycles, other notable works include two classical portrait busts of Serbian ministers Nikola Pašić and Milovan Milovanović, who had been most vocal in promoting Meštrović to the Serbian government.<sup>28</sup> The inclusion of these busts at the exhibition was clearly Meštrović's way of expressing his gratitude to the depicted individuals and the Serbian government for the opportunity to display his works in Rome and the privileges accorded to him. After the success of Rome, the moral and material support of the Serbian cultural and political public became increasingly important to him and it was in this direction that his future activities at the 'Medulić' Association would be aimed.

### The Fourth Yugoslav Art Exhibition

The Fourth Yugoslav Art Exhibition in Belgrade (27 May – 26 July 1912) was the first joint exhibition of the members of the Colony and the 'Medulić' Association with the 'Lada' Society and came to fruition only after Meštrović personally received an invitation to display his works.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, it marked the end of the domination of 'Lada' in the organization of Yugoslav exhibitions. Due to their frequent debacles, 'Lada' was forced to abandon its established organizational rules for Yugoslav exhibitions and allow other artistic associations and non-affiliated artists to display their works. As the most influential among them, the 'Medulić' Association became an equal partner in the organization and refereeing of the exhibition<sup>30</sup>, and was invited to raise its reputation and quality. In the compromise talks he had with 'Lada', in a bid to secure the needed conditions for exhibiting and expand the influence of 'Medulić' in Belgrade and Serbia, Meštrović changed the name of his society to the Association of Serbo-Croat Artists 'Medulić',<sup>31</sup> with Belgrade becoming another seat of the Association along with Split.<sup>32</sup>

27 — For more on the exhibition see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 227–259. Unlike other Medulić exhibitions, the one in Rome was the most widely discussed in the contemporary Croatian and Serbian press and later in academic literature. For a bibliography see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 229 (note 565).

28 — These busts were made in 1911, shortly before the exhibition in Rome and during Meštrović's stay in Belgrade and ongoing discussions about exhibiting his works in the Serbian pavilion. For Meštrović's reminiscences about Pašić and Milovanović during his work on their busts, see: Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1993), 22–23, 25. The first edition was published in 1969.

29 — Uroš Predić's letter to Meštrović, Belgrade, 23 January 1912, marked 709 A1; 12 February 1912, marked 709 A2, Fond pisama – Atelijer Meštrović, Zagreb.

30 — *Pravilnik za Četvrtu jugoslovensku umetničku izložbu*, Map J 1844 10s, no. 16, Jakopič's legacy, Mestni muzej Ljubljana.

31 — *Četvrta jugoslovenska umetnička izložba*, exhibition catalog (Beograd: Druga beogradska gimnazija, 1912), 24.

32 — For this decision Meštrović had the support of Ivo Tartaglia, but not Vidović i Katunarić, who believed that Split should remain the seat of the Association and that it was unfair to exclude Zagreb. On the talks and the name change see: Bulimbašić, „Prilog poznavanju povijesti“, 254–255; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 82–85; Sandi Bulimbašić, „Ivo Tartaglia i Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika 'Medulić'“, in: *Ivo Tartaglia: političar i intelektualac, Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa „Ivo Tartaglia i njegovo doba“*, edd. Aleksandar Jakir, Marijan Buljan (Split: Književni krug Split, 2016), 225–248, 240–242. On the exhibition see: Katarina Ambrozić, *Nadežda Petrović 1873–1915* (Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, Jugoslavija publik, 1978), 363–375; Tošić, *Jugoslovenske umetničke izložbe*, 96–121; Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 261–285.

The appearance of 'Medulić' in Belgrade was not rooted in a national program as it had been at the exhibitions on Zagreb and Rome. Although the Association was represented with the largest number of artists (46) and works (296), Meštrović displayed only eight of his works. His selection was partly personal and intimate (*The Hand* mixing clay; portraits of his father, mother and sister which are associated with the symbolism of home/homeland) and partly meant to underline the importance of the role of Serbia in the future Serbo-Croat and South Slavic community (portraits of Pašić and Milovanović; medallions with the image of Dositej Obradović for a monument he planned to erect on Vidovdan 1912 in Dalmatian Kosovo). The only displayed Vidovdan fragment was *Sjećanje* [Memories] bought from the Serbian government in early 1912. This exhibition concept was clearly conceived and adapted to Meštrović's abovementioned wish to expand the influence of the 'Medulić' Association and consolidate his own influence in Serbia and for work on a shared Yugoslav culture to begin in free Belgrade. To this end, Croatian, Serbian and Slovene artists established the Committee for the Organization of Art Affairs of Serbia and Yugoslavia in Belgrade in 1913.<sup>33</sup> The notion of an integral Yugoslav community was the fundamental idea behind the exhibition.<sup>34</sup> Yugoslavism and Yugoslav cultural unity achieved at this exhibition truly did represent another step forward on the road to political unification and a view of the future of the nations in the region that would come to fruition a few years later, after the Great War.

The First World War interrupted the activities of the 'Medulić' Association and the cooperation of Yugoslav artists. While abroad, Meštrović participated in the establishment and work of the Yugoslav Committee. Having deeply felt the sufferings and violence of war, ever since the Balkan Wars he drew on Christian motifs in his expressionist reliefs, but the Vidovdan Fragments, in line with his propaganda aims, were still the central artworks at his exhibitions. However, from the Great War onwards, the national art program of the 'Medulić' Association – the esthetic of Secessionist stylization and heroic monumentalism thematically rooted in heroic national poetry – lost its common ideational denominator in Croatian art. Starting from 1916 new stylistic trends emerged at the exhibitions of the newly formed Spring Salon, which was founded owing to the efforts of some Medulić members who continued to exhibit their works at the Salon's exhibitions. After the war, in the new state, the national style began to seek different, more modern approaches and artistic outlooks.<sup>35</sup>

33 — Ivan Meštrović was a prominent member of the honorary presidency, while Medulić members V. Becić, R. Jakopić, T. Krizman, M. Rački, T. Rosandić, M. Murat, N. Petrović and K. Strajnić were appointed to its working bodies. One of the objectives proclaimed in the program was the construction of Meštrović's Vidovdan Temple. On the Committee see: Dejan Medaković, „Principi i program 'Odbora za organizaciju umetničkih poslova Srbije i jugoslavenstva' iz 1913. godine”, *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta* 11/1 (1970): 671–682.

34 — The exhibition catalog was dedicated to the 'Cultural community of South Slavs'.

35 — For more details see: Ana M. Bogdanović, „Umetničke veze između Beograda i Zagreba na primeru saradnje između Grupe umetnika i Proljetnog salona (1919–1921)”, *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja u Beogradu* XXI – 2 (2014): 281–293.

## The Exhibition of Yugoslav Artists from Dalmatia

The Exhibition of Yugoslav Artists from Dalmatia (27 March – 15 May 1919) was the last joint exhibition of the members of the 'Medulić' Association, which formally stopped being active that year.<sup>36</sup> It was organized in the new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, under its new name – the Association of Yugoslav Artists 'Medulić'. It was notably political and national in character. On the eve of the Paris Peace Conference, which was to decide if Dalmatia would become part of Italy or Yugoslavia, it was meant to prevent the Italian occupation of Dalmatia and familiarize the world and the Allies with its rich cultural and artistic tradition. The exhibition was conceived by Ivan Meštrović, who was appointed the chairman of the 'Medulić' Association around that time. As he was preoccupied with organizing the politically even more relevant Exhibition of Yugoslav Artists in Paris, the organization of the exhibition in Split was taken over by Ivo Tartaglia, the Association's secretary and the mayor of Split.<sup>37</sup> Although the exhibition introduced the younger generation of artists that had matured under the patronage of older 'Medulić' members (Vinko Foretić, Jerolim Miše, Marino Tartaglia...) and suggested new stylistic trends: indications of futurism, expressionism and metaphysical painting; in line with its national and political aim, like at the Paris exhibition, priority was given to the Vidovdan Fragments and the Cycle of Prince Marko, embodying the idea of national Yugoslav art.<sup>38</sup>

The aims of the exhibition, which was organized in haste and without extensive preparations, are explained in Tartaglia's preface to the catalog published in Croatian and French, as well as his opening speech. In the preface Tartaglia writes about the rich artistic tradition of Dalmatia and its place in national Yugoslav art<sup>39</sup>, while his speech openly underlines the national as well as artistic aim of the exhibition, stating that the idea of a Yugoslav community, promoted by the circle of artists around Meštrović at their exhibitions, has finally come to fruition. For Tartaglia, if the national aim of the Split exhibition came to be realized and Dalmatia became a part of Yugoslavia, 'the Medulić Association would have fulfilled its national duty and paid its dues to its founder Ivan Meštrović, who embodied the artistic aims as well as the tendencies, strength and will of the entire Yugoslav nation, which still believes in the "Ghost of Marko's fury"'.<sup>40</sup>

36 — In the summer of the same year, the Association organized a solo exhibition for Emanuel Vidović, which was in fact the last trace of the Association's activities.

37 — Tartaglia served as the mayor of Split from 1918 to 1928. The city experienced a period of intense urban and educational growth; along with the introduction of electrification, a railway route to Zagreb was constructed, making it the largest port in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia.

38 — For more on the exhibition see: Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 287–313.

39 — 'This is a noble cause! Today, when a part of Europe denies Dalmatia's Yugoslavism and when our people on these Adriatic shores are being accused of having no culture, spiritual capacity or any lofty endeavor, while hosting representatives of the most cultured nations in the world in our city, it was our intention to offer at least a little evidence of what we have and what our people can do in the fields of culture and art. We wanted to show that our people have a well-developed appreciation of beauty and the beauty of the people's soul.' Ivo Tartaglia, preface in: *Jugoslav. Društvo "Medulić". Split 1919. Izložba jugoslavenskih umjetnika iz Dalmacije* (Split: Velika realka, 1919), 7–10, 9.

40 — „Otvor umjetničke izložbe u Splitu“, *Novo doba*, Split, 27 March 1919, 2–3. Bulimbašić, *Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika „Medulić“ (1908–1919)*, 296–297.



## Members of the 'Medulić' Association in the New State

Having seen its political objectives come to fruition with the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as the joint state, the members of the Association of Croatian Artists 'Medulić', which ended its activities in 1919, could apply themselves to the primary tasks of their profession: creative production.

Meštrović's reputation continued to grow. Owing to his works of classical clarity, unique voluminosity and stimulating symbolical endurance, he became a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb (1922) and, shortly thereafter, its rector (1923). In February 1919 Meštrović offered the Serbian government the design for the construction of the monumental Vidovdan Temple and granite sculptures, as well as the option to purchase the Vidovdan Fragments and his model of the temple. However, in 1923 a cultural scandal concerning the purchase of the Vidovdan Fragments broke out; construction plans for the temple were abandoned; and Meštrović suffered heavy moral, material and artistic accusations.<sup>41</sup> Although disappointed by the failure to erect the Vidovdan Temple as the symbol of the struggle for the liberation of the Croatian people and Yugoslav unification, over the following ten years he remained the leading state-endorsed sculptor and received commissions for large public monuments which continued to embody his original views and efforts.<sup>42</sup>

## CONCLUSION

By its promotion and protection of class interests, demands for the introduction of high professional standards and freedom of artistic expression, the 'Medulić' Association enhanced the artistic life of Croatia and the region, improving its scope, diversity and quality. This impetus was apparent at the exhibitions of the 'Medulić' Association, which became increasingly frequent and appealing, offering depictions of distinctive regional landscapes, national customs and local traditions, with their spontaneous approach and fresh language alleviating the differences between major cultural centers and the periphery.

The affirmation of national contributions in the region and abroad achieved by the 'Medulić' Association marked an important step forward, with the example and role of Ivan Meštrović being the most deserving for their

41 — For the purchase scandal, see: Duško Kečkemet, *Život Ivana Meštrovića (1883–1962–2002)*, 1. svezak 1883–1932 (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2009), 428. For the purchased sculptures Meštrović was to receive a lifelong annual remuneration of 36,000 francs or 3,000 francs per month; in the case of his death, the same sum was to be paid to his legatees until 1950. However, various disagreements and controversies arose concerning the contract he had signed with the Serbian government and the sum seems never to have been paid in full.

42 — Notable monuments in Belgrade include: *Pobjednik* (The Victor, 1928), *Spomenik zahvalnosti Francuskoj* (Monument de la reconnaissance à la France, 1930), *Spomenik neznanom junaku in Avala* (Monument to the Unknown Hero, 1938). For more details see: Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904–1941* (Beograd, Građevinska knjiga, 2007); Olga Manojlović Pintar, *Arheologija sećanja. Spomenici i identiteti u Srbiji 1918–1989* (Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2014).

achievements. The self-awareness of Meštrović's sculptural style, heroic emanation and tectonic condensation of form still impress us with their masterful effects, along with the contributions of painters Emanuel Vidović, Tomislav Krizman, and Mirko Rački; Slovene impressionists Rihard Jakopič and Ivan Grohar; and particularly, during the Great War and before her untimely death, the Serbian painter Nadežda Petrović, all of whom affirmed themselves as the restorers of visual expression. Their enthusiasm, motivational, intellectual and artistic maturity, inclusivity and acceptance of the new spirit and its patterns, secured the status of an important cultural project for the 'Medulić' Association as a step forward and legacy to future generations.

## THE SYMBOLICAL DYNAMISM OF IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ

Aside from the chronological context of the topic and monograph *Medulić, the Association of Croatian Artists (1908-1919): Art and Politics*, I would like to supplement my contribution to the exhibition catalog with a short overview of Meštrović's work and activities after the Medulić period on the artistic, educational and constructional level, which make him a central figure in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. 'On the whole Meštrović was one of the major figures on the historical stage of Yugoslav peoples in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and hence he was not spared the controversies of his time. However, Meštrović was unquestionably the leading Yugoslav sculptor of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and one of the few local artists whose works received international recognition. [...] Owing to the primeval power of his talent, his skillful shaping of material and remarkable endurance that allowed him to produce almost a thousand sculptures, Meštrović ranks among the most renowned visual artists in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> Notable *points of memory* and *signs in space* include: architectural monuments – Račić Family Mausoleum in Cavtat (1920–1923); Meštrović Family Mausoleum in Otavice (1926–1932); Monument to the Unknown Hero in Avala, Belgrade (1938); Home of Croatian Artists in Zagreb (1934–1938); public monuments at home and abroad – *Well of Life* in Zagreb (1905); *Marko Marulić* in Split (1925), *Josip Juraj Štrosmajer* in Zagreb (1926), *The Bowman* and *The Spearman* (also known collectively as *Equestrian Indians*) in Chicago (1928); *Gregory of Nin* in Split (1929); *Monument of Gratitude to France* in Belgrade (1930).

43 – Božidar Gagro, „Meštrović, Ivan“, in: *Likovna enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 2, ed. Žarko Domljan (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod „Miroslav Krleža“, 1987), 315–317, 316.

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