



2017

## IL CAPITALE CULTURALE

*Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage*

**JOURNAL OF THE SECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism  
University of Macerata

**eum**



## Il Capitale culturale

*Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage*  
n. 16, 2017

ISSN 2039-2362 (online)

*Direttore / Editor*

Massimo Montella

*Co-Direttori / Co-Editors*

Tommy D. Andersson, Elio Borghoni,  
Rosanna Cioffi, Stefano Della Torre, Michela  
di Macco, Daniele Manacorda, Serge Noiret,  
Tonino Pencarelli, Angelo R. Pupino, Girolamo  
Sciullo

*Coordinatore editoriale / Editorial Coordinator*  
Francesca Coltrinari

*Coordinatore tecnico / Managing Coordinator*  
Pierluigi Feliciati

*Comitato editoriale / Editorial Office*

Giuseppe Capriotti, Mara Cerquetti, Francesca  
Coltrinari, Patrizia Dragoni, Pierluigi Feliciati,  
Valeria Merola, Enrico Nicosia, Francesco  
Pirani, Mauro Saracco, Emanuela Stortoni

*Comitato scientifico - Sezione di beni  
culturali / Scientific Committee - Division of  
Cultural Heritage and Tourism*

Giuseppe Capriotti, Mara Cerquetti, Francesca  
Coltrinari, Patrizia Dragoni, Pierluigi Feliciati,  
Maria Teresa Gigliozzi, Valeria Merola,  
Susanne Adina Meyer, Massimo Montella,  
Umberto Moscatelli, Sabina Pavone, Francesco  
Pirani, Mauro Saracco, Michela Scolaro,  
Emanuela Stortoni, Federico Valacchi, Carmen  
Vitale

*Comitato scientifico / Scientific Committee*

Michela Addis, Tommy D. Andersson, Alberto  
Mario Banti, Carla Barbatì, Sergio Barile,  
Nadia Barrella, Marisa Borraccini, Rossella  
Caffo, Ileana Chirassi Colombo, Rosanna  
Cioffi, Caterina Cirelli, Alan Clarke, Claudine  
Cohen, Lucia Corrain, Giuseppe Cruciani,  
Girolamo Cusimano, Fiorella Dallari, Stefano  
Della Torre, Maria del Mar Gonzalez Chacon,  
Maurizio De Vita, Michela di Macco, Fabio  
Donato, Rolando Dondarini, Andrea Emiliani,

Gaetano Maria Golinelli, Xavier Greffe, Alberto  
Grohmann, Susan Hazan, Joel Heuillon,  
Emanuele Invernizzi, Lutz Klinkhammer,  
Federico Marazzi, Fabio Mariano, Aldo M.  
Morace, Raffaella Morselli, Olena Motuzenko,  
Giuliano Pinto, Marco Pizzo, Edouard  
Pommier, Carlo Pongetti, Adriano Prosperi,  
Angelo R. Pupino, Bernardino Quattrociochi,  
Mauro Renna, Orietta Rossi Pinelli, Roberto  
Sani, Girolamo Sciullo, Mislav Simunic,  
Simonetta Stopponi, Michele Tamma, Frank  
Vermeulen, Stefano Vitali

*Web*

<http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult>

*e-mail*

[icc@unimc.it](mailto:icc@unimc.it)

*Editore / Publisher*

eum edizioni università di macerata, Centro  
direzionale, via Carducci 63/a - 62100  
Macerata

tel (39) 733 258 6081

fax (39) 733 258 6086

<http://eum.unimc.it>

[info.ceum@unimc.it](mailto:info.ceum@unimc.it)

*Layout editor*

Marzia Pelati

*Progetto grafico / Graphics*

+crocevia / studio grafico



Rivista accreditata AIDEA  
Rivista riconosciuta CUNSTA  
Rivista riconosciuta SISMED  
Rivista indicizzata WOS

---

# Il paesaggio italiano raccontato

a cura di Sara Lorenzetti e Valeria Merola

---

Altri contributi

---

Saggi

# The concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in Ivan Meštrović's oeuvre: at the intersection of art, politics, religion and self-reflection

Dalibor Prančević\*

## *Abstract*

This study examines three architectural-sculptural projects of Ivan Meštrović which clearly demonstrate the artist's understanding and application of *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a special form of artistic creation: the *Temple of Vidovdan*, the *Church of Our Lady of Angels* in Cavtat and the *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer* in Otavice. This text shows to which degree the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol was important for the interpretation of Meštrović's architectural creations. It explains and interprets how Meštrović, as almost no other modernist artist in Croatia, brought closer and united – at that time largely divided – architectural and sculptural forms into an inseparable artistic complex, subsequently immersing them in the spectre of

\* Dalibor Prančević, Assistant Professor of Art History, Department of Art History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, Croatia, Teslina, 12, 21000 Split, e-mail: dalibor@ffst.hr. Translated from Croatian by Robertina Tomić. This work has been fully supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project IP-2016-06-2112 «Manifestations of Modern Sculpture in Croatia: Sculpture on the Crossroads between Socio-political Pragmatism, Economic Possibilities and Aesthetical Contemplation».

different contextual social, political, religious or self-reflexive units. The study shows how the nature of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol changed from a building impregnated with pronounced political activism before and during World War I to a somewhat more reflexive in nature sacral-memorial spaces created after the war and during the 1920s. It is important to mention that the interpretation of the “total work of art” is abandoned as an exclusively Larpurlartist and aesthetic issue, and that different other functions are assigned in the framework of wider social, historical-political and religious contexts.

In questo intervento sono esaminati tre progetti architettonico-scultorei di Ivan Meštrović, nei quali è visibile la comprensione e l'applicazione della *Gesamtkunstwerk*, intesa come una forma particolare di partecipazione alla creazione artistica: il *Tempio di Vidovdan*, la *Chiesa di Nostra Signora degli Angeli* a Cavtat e la *Chiesa del Santissimo Redentore* a Otavice. Nell'articolo viene analizzato fino a che punto il protocollo della *Gesamtkunstwerk* sia veramente importante per l'interpretazione delle realizzazioni architettoniche di Meštrović. Inoltre, viene spiegato e dimostrato quanto Meštrović, come nessun altro artista del modernismo in Croazia, abbia riunito la progettazione architettonica e quella scultorea – fino ad allora quasi sempre scollegate – in un'unità artistica indissolubile, inserendole in seguito nello spettro di differenti e problematici contesti sociali, politici, religiosi o autoriflessivi. Nell'intervento, quindi, viene mostrato come la natura del protocollo della *Gesamtkunstwerk* cambi da un edificio impiegato per l'attivismo politico, prima e durante la prima guerra mondiale, fino ai luoghi sacrali e memoriali di natura più riflessiva, costruiti dopo la guerra e negli anni Venti. È importante rilevare come venga abbandonata l'interpretazione dell'“opera d'arte totale” come questione esclusivamente estetica, predeterminata dalla concezione dell'*art pour l'art*, e come a questa vengano aggiunte altre funzioni dell'opera nel suo più ampio contesto sociale, storico-politico e religioso.

## 1. Introduction

Examination of the artistic situation in Croatia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that the idea of the “total work of art” was not articulated to a particularly great degree. The most accomplished projects were created in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the area of the so-called Historicist *Gesamtkunstwerk* when parish churches and cathedrals were erected in the Neo-Gothic style, mostly by Croatian students of Friedrich Von Schmidt, an architect whose work and career were inherent to Vienna<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, the first project which implemented the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – of large proportions and, essentially, very expensive to construct – was conceived by Ivan Meštrović, who is one of the most prominent Croatian artists of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. The project is the *Temple of Vidovdan*, a work deeply imbued

<sup>1</sup> Damjanović 2011, pp. 7-40.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Meštrović (Vrpolje, 1883 – South Bend, 1962), the most prominent sculptor of the Croatian modern art. The artist spent the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in relevant European

by the artist's political activism. He would utilize the knowledge he gained while conceptualizing this project in some of his other artistic creations.

A valid question here is: where did Meštrović generate his knowledge about the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept? We could certainly mention some examples from the past which became part of Meštrović's visual experience from the time he visited the city of Šibenik as a child or when he spent time in Split in his earliest youth. Many examples of architectural heritage in those cities could have served Meštrović as models of excellent collaboration between different artistic mediums such as, for instance, architecture and sculpture, but also as harmonious meeting points of divergent historical and stylistic periods. Be that as it may, the key factor after all was the foundational academic education he received in Vienna. As a matter of fact, implementation of the idea for the *Temple of Vidovdan* was not an accident because Meštrović acquired his formal artistic education at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts (from 1901 to 1906), first attending a three-year course in sculpture and subsequently a two-year course in architecture<sup>3</sup>. In Vienna Ivan Meštrović also acquired the knowledge of an extremely important issue of artistic work. Namely, the concept of the exhibition practice, i.e. ways to exhibit an artwork and imbue it with layers of meaning through the act of displaying. Indeed, in subsequent periods, the sculptor will pay a lot of attention to the exhibition as a form of representing his artistic achievements but also for – this is very important to emphasise – its “propagandist” power and capacity<sup>4</sup>.

cultural centres, such as Vienna, Paris, Rome, London, Genève, Cannes, ecc. His work captivated both the public and art critics and he soon became one of the most renowned sculptors of the time. In the interwar period he mostly resided in Zagreb and Split where he intensely pursued his artistic career. After World War II he became a professor and taught sculpture at US universities (Syracuse, NY and Notre Dame, IN). The 1952 *Deed of Donation* concluded with the Government of the People's Republic of Croatia stipulated that Ivan Meštrović was to leave all his assets in Split, Zagreb and Otavice, along with all the artworks recorded in special lists, to the people of Croatia. Thus, Meštrović officially laid the foundations for his future museums (the Ivan Meštrović Gallery in Split, the Meštrović Atelier in Zagreb) as well as the opening of the sacral and memorial complexes (Kaštilac-Crikvine in Split, Church of the Most Holy Redeemer – the tomb of the Meštrović family in Otavice). Ivan Meštrović's artworks are exhibited in numerous museums worldwide. A comprehensive bibliography published in 1993 lists an impressive number of different publications about the life and art of Ivan Meštrović, which confirmed his importance in the Croatian art and culture. See: Ivančić, Kreković-Štefanović 1993. This bibliography will be supplemented extensively with new material compiled by Duško Kečkemet in the new book, which is prepared for publication. See: Kečkemet 2017. A more extensive bibliography on Meštrović's works analysed in this text can be found in these afore mentioned publications.

<sup>3</sup> Kraševac 2002. In this book the author analysed and systematized the first decade of Ivan Meštrović's artistic activity, which was to a large extent related to his education and stay in Vienna, i.e. she expounded on the importance of the Vienna cultural milieu in shaping his artistic worldview. This study undoubtedly positioned the sculptor in the Central European cultural environment and made the examination of his works precisely in that context possible. Art historian Elizabeth Clegg wrote a broader study about that environment, which is specific both in its geography and political events, and in which she referred to the appearance and importance of Ivan Meštrović's artworks. See: Clegg 2006, pp. 177-180.

<sup>4</sup> Prančević 2012b.

Furthermore, David Roberts established an important theoretical basis for the study of the phenomenon of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in modern art in general. In his seminal book *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* the author dealt with different concepts of “totality” in the area of European cultural activity, paying special attention to the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century up to and including the 1930s<sup>5</sup>. Roberts emphasised the necessity to analyse and interpret the meetings and interferences between art, religion and politics; he studied the interface between art and politics and art and religion. The author abandoned the monolithic aesthetic nerve used to describe the nature of modern art and its autonomy and emphasised the importance of considering the multifaceted sides of modernism which were often contrasted, and equally affirmed the secularisation of Enlightenment as well as Romantic mysticism. The comprehensive concepts of modernism – as well as *Gesamtkunstwerk* – experienced its real repercussions and consequences in other contextual fronts and not only in the setting of pure Larpurlartism.

It is possible to examine Ivan Meštrović’s activity precisely within this discursive platform. The artist would use the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol for different narratives in social, political and religious contexts, and would articulate its specific stratigraphy in: the synthesis of art and political activity; the synthesis of art, Christian iconography and personal crypto-narrative.

This paper will present three architectural-sculptural projects of Ivan Meštrović – *Temple of Vidovdan*, *Church of Our Lady of Angels*, *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer* – which clearly show an inversion: from an extreme political activism of the first building to the highly contemplative quality of the other two, which combined the usual programme of Christian iconography with the self-reflective crypto-narratives influenced by events from the artist’s life.

It is important to mention that the artist used the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol – «total work of art» – to create an effect of complete “immersion” of the visitor. In this manner, it was easier for the artist to direct the observer’s attention to a precisely defined aspect of artistic “totality”: the propulsive activism or the sacral-memorial contemplation. Without the synthesis of sculpture and the architectural setting it would have been difficult to accomplish a higher degree of immersion of the observer, which the artist was completely aware of.

## 2. *Synthesis of architecture and sculpture as the conceptual basis of Gesamtkunstwerk: Vienna, Meštrović, contemplation of social deprivation et al.*

It is well known that the Vienna cultural milieu exerted great influence on Ivan Meštrović’s worldview, artistic profile and manner of creation<sup>6</sup>. After he arrived

<sup>5</sup> Roberts 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Prančević 2012b; Kraševac 2002; Kečkemet 2009.

in Vienna, Meštrović started following the exhibitions of the Association of Visual Artists of Austria – Secession (Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs), who were by then already profiled as points of reference for the articulation of new anti-traditionalist attitudes, and in which Meštrović actively participated from 1903 onwards. He became a regular member of the Vienna Secession in 1906. It should be emphasised that construction of the House of the Vienna Secession created a new space for introduction of new artistic ideas. Special attention was given to the aesthetics of the exhibition design. In fact, the Secession artists approached the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal in which they unified examples of “high” and “applied” arts simultaneously transforming the exhibition into an educational focal point as well as a popular meeting place of the Viennese society. In this context, the 14<sup>th</sup> *Exhibition of the Vienna Secession*, held in 1902, should be singled out. It was entirely dedicated to the musical genius of Ludwig van Beethoven. The exhibition design itself, conceived by Josef Hoffmann, mirrored the compliance of all the areas of creative expression. It is significant that this exhibition anticipated the high-quality examples of *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the Viennese architects, such as the Viennese *Kirche am Steinhof* (1903-1907) by Otto Wagner or Hoffmann's *Palais Stocklet* (1906-1911) in Brussels.

However, the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the area of musical performance was discussed as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. there were discussions about the inter-medial cooperation between different forms of creative activity, conducted by a single artist. Namely, the work of composer Richard Wagner showed an artist willing to exert sole control over the concept of his own work and its realization, which would soon be identified as one of *Gesamtkunstwerk*'s fundamental principles. “Immersing” the viewer in coordinates of the artwork and saturating his attention with visual and other content provided or provoked by the artwork is another fundamental principle of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This was clearly manifested in the practice of Otto Wagner or Josef Hoffmann and adopted by the sculptor Ivan Meštrović.

Despite the fact that Meštrović's first work which could be described as *Gesamtkunstwerk* was motivated by the political narrative, it is important to mention a significant component of his early works and his previous artistic experience. Namely, the majority of sculptures created by Meštrović in Vienna were not inspired by political or national ideologies. They did not enter the sphere of historical narratives. The themes they explored were mostly related to the body, i.e. its transience and dissolution<sup>7</sup>. These were the themes that Gustav Klimt was developing in Vienna, and he became a role model for the young Meštrović. Reverberations of Gustav Klimt's works can be seen in Meštrović's early sculptural production<sup>8</sup>. An important characteristic of Klimt's

<sup>7</sup> For more on this theme, see: Prančević 2016a, pp. 1-50.

<sup>8</sup> Prančević 2012b, pp. 9-12; Kraševac 2017, pp. 175-193.

compositions was the de-historicizing of representation<sup>9</sup>. Ahistorical quality of natural processes was manifested in the repetition of the cycle of life, with only visible constants of birth, struggle and death. There was no optimistic scrutiny of the progress, only the inevitability of the natural process. Many early works of Ivan Meštrović dealt with this issue.

From the Vienna milieu Meštrović also inherited the “debate on the ugly”, so he naturally directed his early works towards this specific visual discourse<sup>10</sup>. Insight into the scandal caused by Gustav Klimt’s allegories commissioned for the Vienna University must have exerted a substantial influence on young Meštrović<sup>11</sup>. Franz Wickhoff, an esteemed art historian, was an ardent supporter of Klimt’s work. Wickhoff was adamant in defence of the new art, pointing out the complexity embedded in the issue of the “ugly.” His interpretation of the problem permeating Gustav Klimt’s work boiled down to the incapability of time, constrained by the prescriptive aesthetics of the past, to accept new artistic tendencies and ideas. Thus Meštrović, in his first texts dealing with the nature of art, contemplated beauty and demonstrated absolute awareness that this «broad notion indeed deserves a truly broad horizon»<sup>12</sup>. Although all these works were characterized by the awareness of inevitability of the natural process and although they mostly dealt with the theme of the nude, it was no coincidence that young Meštrović chose this type of artwork to lean towards a commentary on the oppressive society and its conventions. This was particularly applicable to the female person whose *sexus* was generally publicly not discussed, or the theme usually elicited “aversion.” Meštrović’s female nudes – at least a great number of them – were burdened by a certain discomfort and occasionally even showed animal characteristics. We can deduce from this a wider social context in which the artist worked because they definitely did not represent an innocent contemplation of the female body. These were not mere aesthetic facts of European modernism but social commentary. For example, it should be said that this was the time Ivan Meštrović lived in an extramarital union with Ruža Klein, his future wife, which was not in conformity with current “social norms”, especially not in the region the artist originated from. Meštrović probably felt personally judged by such an oppressive society. It is necessary to repeat once again that Meštrović’s nudes were not socially “disinterested” but were the result of the artist’s direct observation of the wider social condition which was particularly cruel and unjust towards the female person. It should also be mentioned that these sort of debates occurred mostly in contexts of the European exhibition and bourgeois salons, less in public urban settings or other forms of articulated “public sphere”.

<sup>9</sup> Prančević 2012a, pp. 114-157.

<sup>10</sup> Prančević 2012a, pp. 9-12; Prančević 2016, pp. 1-50.

<sup>11</sup> Prančević 2012a, pp. 114-157; Kraševac 2017, pp. 175-193.

<sup>12</sup> Meštrović 1904, p. 4.

However, there is a deficiency in Croatian art historiography of texts that critically examined the character of sculpture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, an important essay written by Božidar Gagro entitled *The Croatian Sculpture of the Bourgeois Period* emphasised, inter alia, the need to scrutinise the altered nature of sculpture which was created as a consequence of the dissolution of morphological and functional unity between sculpture and architecture<sup>13</sup>. The majority of Ivan Meštrović's early work was indeed intimate in character.

This dissolution of unity with architecture should not be viewed only in the narrow sense, i.e. in terms of their integration in the same buildings: sculpture also abandoned and broadened the urban setting, it moved to the salons and exhibition halls, only to eventually revert or attempt to revert back to its original function. Indeed, in the way Rodin's sculpture communicated and expressed its aesthetic and social functions, as well as that of Hildebrandt, which tried to correct it, was more suited to the salon than to 'bourgeois' squares. Thus, in the most representative examples of sculpture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as modern sculpture in general, the sculptural work opened itself up to absolute meaning, searching, developing and emphasising the logic of its own fragmentation, its autonomous and self-sufficient expression. Regardless of its shape, format and true range, the sculptural work in modern art tried to be a world unto itself; a simple fragment and a multifaceted cosmogonical metaphor – like Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* – whose meaning had opened towards a vision of the absolute and individualised world. The sculpture does best without background and context unless it is accompanied by similar works in appropriate exhibition and museum settings<sup>14</sup>.

Nevertheless, immediately after his "Vienna period", Ivan Meštrović started to develop an architectural-sculptural project with a clear political input (the *Temple of Vidovdan*), which completely changed the direction of the history of sculpture in Croatia. This project showed Meštrović's willingness to implement an entirely different intervention both in the political arena and in the public space where the monument was to be erected. It should be emphasised that public reception of this programme, which included the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, was extremely important for the artist and the ideology he represented. We should underline, in this context, that Ivan Meštrović occupied an extremely important position in the general overview of the history of sculpture in Croatia. Meštrović simply redefined the previous position and role of the artist in the political and general social context. According to Božidar Gagro, the appearance of Meštrović afforded the sculpture

a previously unknown social importance, particularly in terms of the sculptor's initiative as a subject. If we were ever able to separate ideological implications from the narrow artistic issues in Meštrović's work, we would still not be able to extricate his development from the social, psychological and political determinants that influenced him in the crucial moments of his life<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Gagro 1975, pp. 33-41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> *Ivi*, p. 39.

Indeed, Ivan Meštrović achieved incredible international visibility and affirmation, particularly in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and later. The press extensively reported about his exhibition successes in many European cities: Vienna (1910), Zagreb (1910), Rome (1911) and Venice (1914). His solo exhibition in the Victoria and Albert Museum (1915) affirmed his prominent position in the art world<sup>16</sup>. Frank Rutter, a British art critic and curator, called Ivan Meštrović a genuine «European celebrity»<sup>17</sup>. This term most accurately described the vertiginous rise to fame and public accolades bestowed upon this relatively young artist.

### 3. *The Kosovo Programme and the Gesamtkunstwerk of Eschatology*

Ivan Meštrović achieved a prominent public status primarily thanks to his *Kosovo Cycle*. When we talk about this example of Meštrović's *Gesamtkunstwerk* it is extremely important to point out the principle of "engagement," in both social and political contexts<sup>18</sup>. In the end, the rich scenography of the Kosovo programme proved to be a rather expensive investment so the sculptural fragments and the wooden model of the temple were conserved and rendered to the space of historicity and the museum constructed narrative. At the time they were exhibited, these fragments possessed a striking political activist input and were an expression of protest and disagreement with the wider socio-political situation (hegemony of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908)<sup>19</sup>. These sculptures provoked the audience with their corporeal strength and provided them with associative fields of the "barbaric", i.e. pure energy from the Balkans which was supposed to redefine the unfavourable situation on the European geo-political scene<sup>20</sup>. It was

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Clegg wrote extensively about this exhibition, she described and analysed the concept and organisation of the exhibition, and she especially referred to the political motives and background of this undoubtedly important exhibition event. See: Clegg 2002, pp. 740-751. On the fate of some of Ivan Meštrović's artworks that were exhibited and created for this occasion, as well as their wider reception in the framework of the contemporary British society, see: Clegg 2004, pp. 823-827; Prančević 2007, pp. 395-403; Prančević 2016b, pp. 177-192.

<sup>17</sup> Rutter 1915.

<sup>18</sup> On the meaning of the political framework in Ivan Meštrović's artistic activity, see: Prančević 2012b, pp. 174-179.

<sup>19</sup> On cultural policy and the political situation in general, but also other historical narratives in which works of Ivan Meštrović configure, see: Horvat 1989; Baruch Wachtel 1998; Baruch Wachtel 2003; Djokić 2003; Baruch Wachtel 2008; Djokić 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Aleksandar Ignjatović, in his text *Images of the Nation Foreseen: Ivan Meštrović's Vidovdan Temple and Primordial Yugoslavism*, provided a more recent contribution to the interpretation of this project by Ivan Meštrović. The author described the architectural and sculptural qualities of the Temple of Vidovdan, but he also wrote about its public reception and widespread visibility mediated by numerous exhibitions at which it was shown during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>

precisely this oppositional attitude that drew Meštrović closest to the militant attitudes of the avant-garde art even though, with his *habitus*, he never really belonged there. We should ask what was the actual genesis, and repercussions, of such an activist engagement by Ivan Meštrović?

Be that as it may, when he left for Paris in 1908, Meštrović intensified the creation of sculptures with an ideological premise. They were incorporated into the so-called *Kosovo Cycle* (figs. 1-2). Majority of these works were created by 1912, when the artist completed the wooden model of the *Temple of Vidovdan* intended to accommodate this peculiar iconographic programme (figs. 3-4). He had shown the wooden model at prestigious exhibitions such as the "Venice Biennial" (1914) as well as the important solo exhibition in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (1915). The cycle comprised a large number of sculptures conceived as the *Kosovo* or *Vidovdan fragments*, and the *Cycle of Prince Marko*. We do not know their exact number, but the decision of the Ministerial Council of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, dated 16 March 1919, to accept Meštrović's offer and buy the foundations and fragments of the *Kosovo Temple*, states that there were 43 artworks<sup>21</sup>. The total number of artworks inspired by the theme of the Battle of Kosovo is much higher but still remains undetermined<sup>22</sup>.

The idea for this project was not created on an *ad hoc* basis. It was the consequence of a long observation and consideration by the artist of the current conditions of politics and power in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Besides, the sculptor himself reflected on the motive for the genesis of this complex architectural and sculptural monument and programme, which should have resulted in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. And he wrote, as follows:

I conceived the idea of the Temple of Kosovo almost immediately after I left school, but at that time I did not feel strong enough to start its execution in broad terms. Only on the occasion of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, when our national catastrophe seemed to be complete and the fate of our race sealed; at the climax of our national sorrow and during the fever in which we all shivered, I dared to begin to work on some fragments, and it was this year and the years which followed, that I executed the existing works<sup>23</sup>.

century. The author examined this project by Meštrović as a complex work of visual culture and found that a cross-disciplinary reading of its visual quality was required for its interpretation and analysis. The architectural and sculptural identity of the Temple of Vidovdan was, as the author said, crucial for «cultural imagination and political instrumentalization of the primordialist variant of Yugoslavism». For more on the genesis of primordial Yugoslavism and its repercussions and analytical application to the artistic activity of Ivan Meštrović, see: Ignjatović 2014, pp. 828-858.

<sup>21</sup> Ivan Meštrović offered his works for acquisition in order to keep the cycle together and as exclusive property of the newly constituted Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Namely, in the course of Meštrović's many exhibitions in European cultural centres the interest for the acquisition of individual artworks emerged. These works are today considered as particularly valuable sculptural achievements.

<sup>22</sup> Despite the artist's concepts the building was never executed, while the artworks included in the State acquisition are today exhibited at the National Museum in Belgrade.

<sup>23</sup> Bone *et al.* 1919, p. 81.

The conclusion of Ivan Meštrović's study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 1906 coincided with the Belgrade premiere of Ivo Vojnović's<sup>24</sup> play – *The Death of Mother of the Jugovići*<sup>25</sup>. The play adopted the theme of the Serbian national epic poem and announced the preoccupation of writers and artists with the idea of unification of the South Slavs even before the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. We may also find a resonance of Vojnović's drama in works of other visual artists, as well as Ivan Meštrović. Moreover, in Paris he created an unusual sculpture called *Mother of the Jugovići* (1908) (fig. 5), which referenced a segment of the myth and depicted a mother of nine sons, killed in the Battle of Kosovo, who suffered heartbreak upon receiving the hand of her youngest son brought to her by two ravens from the Kosovo Field. This sculpture possesses a certain *terribilità*, which is expressed in the almost "surreal" image of an old woman holding the severed hand of her son in her arms. The artist used an expressive strength of this unusual scene in order to make the observer search for the narrative source saturating this work, i.e. an epic tale of heroism.

It is important to mention here that the execution of the wooden model of the *Temple*, envisaged to accommodate these sculptural works in a homogenous iconographic programme, was anticipated in exhibitions which had already articulated the artist's demand to coordinate the movement of the observer and guide his attention. This is best illustrated in photographs from his solo exhibition in Vienna in 1910<sup>26</sup> (fig. 6). The effects of scenography were similar to the exhibitions of the Secession artists. Moreover, with the introduction of sculptural fragments at prominent exhibitions in European cultural capitals, Meštrović insisted on the implementation of the "mass impression" exhibition strategy which was motivated by the ideology of the Yugoslav unity. Essentially, with the creation of this cycle Meštrović discussed the question of national identity, i.e. the pursuit of liberation of the Croatian territory from the Austro-Hungarian hegemony<sup>27</sup>. In Meštrović's biographical and autobiographical writings the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (which occurred in 1908) was often said to be the main reason that the artist left Vienna. His departure

<sup>24</sup> Ivo Vojnović (Dubrovnik, 1857 – Belgrade, 1929), a distinguished author and playwright of the Croatian Modernism. Although he is famous mostly for his plays whose themes explored episodes from daily life in Dubrovnik (*The Dubrovnik Trilogy*, *The Equinox*, etc.), he also wrote plays that grew directly out of traditional folktales, among which *The Death of Mother of the Jugovići* is considered especially relevant. Under his aegis, the exhibition of works of Ivan Meštrović and members of the *Medulić Society of Croatian Artists* (1908-1919), titled *Despite Unheroic Times*, was held in Zagreb in 1910, with the clear goal of cultural and political unification of the South Slavs. The basic textual premise of most of the artists in the exhibition was national lore, i.e. heroic epic tales.

<sup>25</sup> On the genesis of this work by Ivan Meštrović and its analysis, see: Prančević 2012b, pp. 174-179.

<sup>26</sup> Prančević 2012b, pp. 174-179.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

for Paris may have been a somewhat demonstrative act. Still, Ivan Meštrović did not sever ties with Austria. He kept his studio in Vienna and participated in the Vienna *Secession* exhibitions<sup>28</sup>.

The question of the Kosovo Myth is extremely complex and entwined with different national problems throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>. However, when discussing Meštrović's work we often contemplate only the component of the "Yugoslav Kosovo Myth," while Meštrović's visual construction of the narrative was abundantly used for propaganda purposes.

The basic idea guiding the artist was in fact the constitution of the supranational state of the South Slavs<sup>30</sup>. In that sense the best theoretical foundation could be found in ideas from literary history and criticism. As explained by the Croatian literary theorist Zoran Kravar, this kind of the constitutional construct «was not perceived by the Croatian supporters of the Yugoslav concept as a political project inasmuch as an eschatological one»<sup>31</sup>. Namely, contemplating this aesthetic and ideological campaign, Kravar deemed essential to differentiate between two types of nationalisms: territorial nationalism, which emerged from territorial determination and promoted re-evaluation of the historical process characterized by the territory itself (which was not affirmed by the supporters of the Yugoslav concept and thus was to be criticized by some critics) and ethnic nationalism based on racial, biological, bio-psychological and bioethical prerequisites<sup>32</sup>.

Furthermore, the narrative source for the cycle was found in the Battle of Kosovo fought between the Christian and Ottoman forces on the Kosovo Field in 1389. Both sides suffered grave losses, and both the Ottoman Sultan Murat and the Serbian King Lazar died. The courageous stand of the Christian forces, despite being vastly outnumbered by the Ottoman army, served as an archetype of resistance transposed to modernity. This coalition of forces may have inspired the Yugoslav nationalists to organize a resistance against much stronger adversaries. The emphasis on the "defeat" was central to the Kosovo Myth. Hope and faith in the resurrection seemed to be well suited to the propagandist political campaign dominating the period of World War I.

However, it is possible to trace the genesis of this theme to Ivan Meštrović's childhood<sup>33</sup>. The artist spent his childhood in Otavice, a village in the Dalmatian hinterland which was extremely poor. The tradition of folktales was prevalent

<sup>28</sup> See: Prančević 2012b, pp. 174-179.

<sup>29</sup> Dejan Djokić, who reviewed the entire contingent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, provided an interesting analysis of this theme. See: Djokić 2009.

<sup>30</sup> On the political engagement and work of Ivan Meštrović in the Yugoslav Committee, the political body which worked on the unification of South Slav countries during World War I, and which greatly influenced his artistic activity, see: Machiedo Mladinić 2007; Machiedo Mladinić 2009; Hammer Tomić 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Kravar 2001, p. 216.

<sup>32</sup> Kravar 2005, pp. 43-62.

<sup>33</sup> Prančević 2012b, pp. 176-177.

in the entire region of the Dalmatian hinterland. The medium of oral storytelling was crucial for the dissemination of themes which exerted considerable influence on Meštrović's artistic production (amongst which was the Battle of Kosovo). The level of education in the environment where the artist grew up was extremely low, thus in some of the more secluded areas it was common to find only one or two persons who were not analphabetic<sup>34</sup>. The traditional folktales were transmitted to younger generations in almost ritualistic village gatherings. Meštrović dedicated one of his earlier works to this "national lore", namely the *Artist of My People* (Vienna, 1906). This work showed an old *gusle* (a single-string musical instrument) player leaning on his *gusle* and a boy, two of the basic premises of the continuity of tradition and lore. Nevertheless, the predominant repertoire of national lore which circulated in Meštrović's region comprised the epic segments excerpted from Andrija Kačić Miošić<sup>35</sup>, i.e. from his work *Pleasant Conversation of the Slavonic People* (*Razgovori ugodni naroda slovinskoga*), colloquially renamed *Book of Poems* (*Pismarica*). Theoreticians emphasised that

this literary work was dealing with themes from the national pseudo-history and the more recent history of anti-Turkish warfare of the Slavic people who lived in South Eastern Europe. It was primarily written for "wider masses," i.e. almost completely illiterate Catholic and Orthodox inhabitants who lived under the Venetian and Turkish authority in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>36</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that Ivan Meštrović created a figure of this renowned Franciscan, later in life when he was a mature artist (1953). However, as a young man (1899) he dedicated to him a poem in hexameter called *My Fairy, Help Me Sing* (*Vilo moja, privat mi pomaži*)<sup>37</sup>.

It is evident that national lore was deeply encoded in Ivan Meštrović's inherited worldview as well as his artistic engagement. In his sculptures, the artist translated an intangible heritage into a tangible code, which is especially visible in the project of the *Temple of Vidovdan*. However, the artist did not shroud his heroes in historical (descriptive) garb, but he left them naked (ahistorical, romanticised).

Nevertheless, when he referred to this work of sculptural-architectural provenance – and emphasised a moment of memory and a cult of victimized nations, i.e. "the religion of sacrifice" – the artist wrote as follows:

It would be difficult to explain in a short and concise form the idea of the Kosovo Temple. What I had in mind was to attempt to give a synthesis of popular national ideals and their

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> Andrija Kačić Miošić (Brist, 1704 – Zaoštrog, 1760), a Croatian folk poet and Franciscan priest. His book of poems and prose entitled *Pleasant Conversation of the Slavonic People*, published in Venice in 1756, earned him a prominent position in the Croatian literary corpus.

<sup>36</sup> Mrdeža Antonina 2007, pp. 122-123.

<sup>37</sup> Jurišić 1984.

development, to express in stone and building how deeply rooted in every one of us is the memory of the greatest moment and the most characteristic phase of our history – and to simultaneously create a central place for hope for the future, amidst nature and the free sky. [...] The Temple would not be dedicated to any singular confession or sect, but to all of them, to all those who are religious and not bigoted, and who think that all those who are just and honest are “true believers”, whichever faith they subscribed to<sup>38</sup>.

Anyhow, the Battle of Kosovo is a multi-centenarian narrative and not much is known about the battle itself, apart from the fact that it had taken place on the Kosovo Field (or the Field of the Black Birds) near Priština on 28 June 1389 (28 June is commonly known as St. Vitus Day or Vidovdan, in Croatian). With regards to its artistic and architectural qualities, Meštrović's Kosovo project can be examined thanks to the preserved sketches and the wooden model, and individual sculptural works. Some of them are today considered to be masterpieces in the entire Meštrović's oeuvre (e.g. *The Remembrance*, 1908; *The Bust of Banović Strahinja*, 1908; *Miloš Obilić*, 1908). The *Temple* building exemplified the synthesis of longitudinal and central ground plans. Its robust entrance, decorated with animal figures, led to the longitudinal atrium containing a corridor with monumental caryatids, whose «stern, priestess-like character symbolizes the nation's fate»<sup>39</sup>. Many reliefs depicting the battle were supposed to be erected along the lateral sides of the atrium. Meštrović wanted to finish the caryatids' corridor with the Great Sphinx «symbolizing the riddle of destiny»<sup>40</sup>. At the very end of the corridor there was a huge “tower of the sacrificed”, its exterior sides decorated with rows of winged figures resembling angels. The *Temple's* exterior is cloaked in decorative animal figures such as lions, horses and falcons, which were commonly found as symbolic repositories in heroic poems. The central octagonal structure, topped by a dome, was supplemented with smaller square apses, which were also topped by octagonal domes. The heroic sculptures of *Prince Marko on Horseback* (1910), *Banović Strahinja* (1908), *Miloš Obilić* (1908), etc. were supposed to be placed into these niches, together with many nameless widows who symbolized «the sorrow and lament for sacrificed heroes»<sup>41</sup>.

However, the execution of this monumental project demanded substantial financial resources, which is the reason why the *Temple of Vidovdan* remained Ivan Meštrović's unrealized dream. There is an interesting observation – which was actually a paraphrase of Meštrović himself, as will become evident further in the text – by the Italian art historian Mario de Micheli who noted that this building was supposed to be constructed, like a medieval cathedral, under the patronage of a unified nation, amassing a large amount of labour, craftsmen

<sup>38</sup> Bone *et al.* 1919, pp. 81-82.

<sup>39</sup> Schmeckeber 1959, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*

and artists<sup>42</sup>. We should definitely add the creative vision of the artist – Ivan Meštrović – who conceived of it all, and who was supposed to moderate and make corrections in the course of the project’s execution. Meštrović wrote about being inspired by historical architectural projects, which generated a somewhat eclectic and archaic component of the project, and said that

this building would be constructed slowly, over the course of several generations, in the manner of collective artistic work executed according to one vision, similar to the way cathedrals were built in the past. The state, or nation, would provide material resources and artists would be compensated for their work so that they could live a decent life like the other citizens. This compensation would be equal for all, albeit with slight nuances for years of service. This would be a kind of workshop-school instead of an art school in the usual sense of the term. The artist, or artists, who executed the main works, would also be teachers, and the younger generations would be assistants, i.e. pupils-apprentices, who would be provided with an opportunity to learn, and would be given food and lodgings for the duration of their study and until they were able to contribute creatively themselves<sup>43</sup>.

We should be mindful of the collaborative character of this project, as well as the idea of transference of the artistic craft, which provided the entire enterprise and creative process with an educational connotation.

The project continued to garner attention from the experts and the public in general. Indeed, many studies were written about this important project of Meštrović. Matko Peić, one of Croatian art historians, wrote about a high degree of hybridization of Meštrović’s sculptural method.

When one contemplates Meštrović’s Kosovo Cycle, it appears that the sculptor actually used the motive of death as a tool to underscore the monumentality of his sense of life. To emphasise that he modelled from the most animalistic core of his being, to demonstrate that the power of instinct and elemental sexuality were his fundamental creative forces; and as a symbol of his sculptural conviction he placed the sculpture of the Sphinx among the Temple of Vidovdan’s caryatids (1909). This kneeling woman-animal, who is holding itself off the ground on her front paws, was not only at the centre of the structure nor did it only conclude two rows of girls, but in the construction of its body it was also the central figure of Meštrović’s sculptural method<sup>44</sup>.

Perhaps, Ivan Meštrović achieved the highest degree of eclectic hybridization in the *Sphinx*. Meštrović’s *Sphinx* (1909) was the true benchmark of his manner of “hybridization” of composition that could also be seen in the *Temple*’s architectural work. Meštrović probably studied historical decorative patterns in European museums, especially in the Louvre, where he was exposed to works of Greek or Persian art. All animal figures and caryatides shown in front of this – hypertrophic – project displayed similar characteristics<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, Ivan

<sup>42</sup> De Micheli 1987, pp. 3-7.

<sup>43</sup> Meštrović 1969, pp. 22-23.

<sup>44</sup> Peić 1983, p. 76.

<sup>45</sup> Prančević 2012b, p. 178.

Meštrović here applied the same hybrid architectural procedure with different architectural patterns coming together in the composition of the *Temple*. The artist drew visual templates from sources in artistic historiography, which he saw in European museums and its collections of the ancient world; however, he drew direct inspiration from the Late Antique architectural inventory of the Diocletian's Palace in Split and its other subsequent stylistic epochs. It is therefore possible to conclude that the artist used the hybrid manner of composition in the concept of his *Gesamtkunstwerk* and that he borrowed visual solutions from the past, in order to achieve an impression of an "omni-historical" or "ahistorical" dimension. However, the building was functionally supposed to be somewhere at the intersection of the sacral-temple and commemorative-museum object. It seems that it was its ultimate function (with the already mentioned processing character of the generational construction and transference of arts and crafts creative skills). Furthermore, its public character and symbolic thread are also definitely very important.

Having said that, the fate of the entire project is compelling. Namely, after the end of World War I and the geo-political reconfiguration of the European continent, the need to complete the project in its original form dissipated – the dynamic activist component was extinguished – and fragments were stored in museums, never really being used for its intended purpose. As such – i.e. as museum exhibits – they became exceptionally interesting morphologically. Freed from their political prerogative these works focused the observer's attention on the aesthetic analysis and excellence of the sculptural *métier* more than the political history and context of their creation.

#### 4. *Mortuary Chapels and Individual Mythologies*

General characteristics of the *Temple of Vidovdan*, especially its sepulchral atmosphere and the presence of death, are key factors for examination of the future architectural-sculptural complexes of Meštrović. Namely, Ivan Meštrović was going to utilize the experience accumulated by working on the concept of the monumental "Kosovo Memorial" and apply it, in the 1920s, to his more intimate edifices typical of the Art Déco, such as the *Church of Our Lady of Angels* in Cavtat (colloquially known as the Račić Family Mausoleum) and the *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer* in Otavice (colloquially known as the Meštrović Family Mausoleum). Both buildings, in their totality, were conceived, erected and furnished according to the idea of Ivan Meštrović. What is immediately evident is that the militant and "corporal" aspect dominating the Kosovo Project was superseded by the contemplative, spiritual approach. Nevertheless, these buildings are intended for a distinctly public purpose because they are, apart from being their owners' tombs, also consecrated churches accommodating Eucharist celebrations.

It should be emphasised that the *Church of Our Lady of Angels* (1920-1922) (figs. 7-8) was the first sacral building completed by Ivan Meštrović. It amalgamated a two-fold function: the Christian liturgy and the sepulchre of private investor<sup>46</sup>. The investor was the Račić family of wealthy shipowners from Cavtat, i.e. Marija Račić whose husband (Ivo Račić) and two children (Marija Banac and Edi) died as victims of the Spanish fever<sup>47</sup>. This combination of functional prefixes also determined the inner arrangement of single special units, as well as the decoding of architecture in relation to the predetermined canons of evangelical liturgy and personal experiences of the artist. This building somehow synthesised the life and art of Ivan Meštrović in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and may represent the most integral answer in terms of the articulation of decorative tendencies within his oeuvre. The utilization of creative solutions transposed from past epochs was overtly incorporated, while the artist's approach was modern throughout. The colourful accents of the floor were in compliance with the decorative taste of the times, as well as the ornamental parts of other architectural decorations. In this modernized type of "historical" mausoleum, the sculptor inserted contemporary physiognomies of tragically deceased persons, thus suggesting a peculiar and surprising hybrid of his artistic creation so immanent of Art Déco.

This chapel of Ivan Meštrović was much discussed immediately upon its completion<sup>48</sup>. On the occasion of the exhibition of Ivan Meštrović's sculptures at the Fine Art Society in London in 1924, Kineton Parkes published a text which mostly talked about the sculptor's newly erected chapel inspired by the religious sentiment<sup>49</sup>. Already in the title of the text, *Ivan Meštrović: Architect – Sculptor*, Parkes emphasised the duality of Meštrović's role in the realization of this work by clearly demonstrating his inclination towards *Gesamtkunstwerk* or *total-design*<sup>50</sup>. In his second text dedicated to the *Church of Our Lady of Angels*, Parkes stated that the entire work represented a "harmony of design" and was, as such, one of the best examples of successful integration of architecture and sculpture in modern times<sup>51</sup>. This building was publicly

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the *Church of Our Lady of Angels*, see: Prančević 2012b, pp. 190-199.

<sup>47</sup> On reconstruction of the event and building, see: Čerina 2008, pp. 28-55.

<sup>48</sup> Namely, immediately after it was constructed this architectural-sculptural project became widely visible to the public, and was consequently written about in relevant books by authors such as William Aumonier, and accompanied by rich illustrations. See: Aumonier 1930. It should be pointed out that Josef Strzygowski, an important protagonist of the Vienna School of Art History, also wrote about it, and that he showed great interest in Ivan Meštrović's work and its interpretation ever since 1910. For example, see his text about the Cavtat funeral chapel which was originally published in the magazine «Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration» (Darmstadt, 1923), and subsequently somewhat changed and supplemented: Strzygowski 1937. On the reception of this architectural-sculptural project, see: Prančević 2012b, pp. 198-199.

<sup>49</sup> Parkes 1924a.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> Parkes 1924b.

recognised at an important “Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes” held in Paris in 1925; an exhibition which became a relevant place of articulation, visibility and possibilities for collaborative processes in terms of decorative arts and modern industries. It also became the point of origin of terminology for current tendencies in architecture, design and art in general. This building of Ivan Meštrović was awarded the *Grand Prix*.

The iconographic reading of the sculptural programme that Ivan Meštrović introduced in this building is extremely interesting. An important source material was found in the romantic biography *Fire and Burns (Vatra i Opekline)* that was written by Meštrović in the 1950s and which was not published until 1998<sup>52</sup>. It explained the complex relationships between the artist and three women in the pre-war period, during World War I and its immediate aftermath: namely, his wife Ruža Meštrović, the Futurist painter Ružena Zátkova and Marija Banac. He kept the standardized iconographic framework of the interior church design; however, Meštrović incorporated his own experience and deep involvement, so, for example, Ružena's face is discernible in the faces of Seraphim in the dome, and his own self-portrait and childhood tales can be seen in the image of St. Rocco<sup>53</sup>. It should be said that the marriage between Ivan and Ruža Meštrović was disintegrating during the time this building was constructed, and the situation would finally result in their divorce in 1925. The text integrated in the church bell, i.e. not available to the general public (almost like a cryptogram), is very indicative. It reads as follows: FIND OUT THE SECRET OF LOVE / YOU WILL SOLVE THE SECRET OF DEATH/ AND BELIEVE THAT LIFE IS ETERNAL. The text is accompanied, in the same order, by images of the *Annunciation*, *Lamentation* and *Resurrection*. These are definitely key moments in Christian iconography; however, in the profane sphere this text and its accompanying images could be read as the cyclical repetition of life (which follows the circular shape of the bell) and the cyclical – and unpredictable – course of love.

Having said that, the figurative sculpture on this building was not completely devoid of political implications and an ideological premise. Namely, the church doors display images of protagonists from Christian history: SS. Cyril and Methodius, Gregory of Nin and St. Sava. Such a programme was surely partly

<sup>52</sup> Meštrović 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Thanks to the artist's younger son Mate Meštrović and his opinion that the romantic biography *Fire and Burns* was extremely important for the interpretation of the iconographic programme of the building, the book was published. In the text written by Branko Donat analysing Meštrović's book, the following quote is by Mate Meštrović: «Meštrović is present in the image of St. Rocco, next to whom sits a dog with a highly raised head. This dog is not some random animal, this was Meštrović's dog from his childhood, which he shot with a rifle because the dog was ill, and the parents were worried it would infect the children. My father told me that he thought the dog understood everything. Father said that throughout his life he saw the eyes of this dog looking at him. We could say that Meštrović returned the favour in the Cavtat mausoleum. The petrified image of the dog is looking at Meštrović for all eternity»: Meštrović 1998, p. 238.

ecumenical as an attempt at reconciling Christian churches, which was in the spirit of the creation and consolidation of the new “Yugoslav culture”<sup>54</sup>, as was already written about at the time the building was inaugurated. This programme was explicitly located at the very front of the complex – i.e. the church entrance – and represents a true storytelling station with figurative images.

As we can see, this building and its sculptures represent an arena with primarily commemorative content, private legends and reflections of current socio-political constellations.

It bears repeating that the *Church of Our Lady of Angels* was constructed during the time when Meštrović’s marriage to his first wife Ruža was disintegrating and when he met his second wife Olga Kesterčanek in Dubrovnik. After divorcing Ruža, he had a family with Olga, which was probably what motivated the construction of the family tomb in Otavice several years later. This was the *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer*, which also united functions of the sacred space for Eucharist celebrations and a sepulchral place for the Meštrović family (figs. 9-10). It was colloquially renamed the *Meštrović Mausoleum*, a nickname the artist objected to and insisted that he commissioned its construction in order to build a “monument” to his native place while the family sepulchre was only its supplemental function. This is evident from the letter which the artist wrote sometime later to Josip Smrkinić, director of the Meštrović Gallery in Split<sup>55</sup>. Its construction started in 1926 and ended in 1930, while the interior modelling lasted throughout the 1930s.

If we compare the *Church of Our Lady of Angels* and the *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer*, we can see the extent to which the latter was liberated of figural sculptures, thus accentuating the empty surfaces and flat edges of its architectural segments<sup>56</sup>. The figuration completely disappeared from the external stone envelope contributing to the decrease of its narrative dimension and focusing on the relations of clean and geometrically clearly differentiated volumes. The only figural depictions can be found around the door with doorframes containing bronze cassettes with portraits of the artist’s family. Actually, the political narrative is absent from the figures in this building, that are completely focused on Christian iconography. We can see portraits of family members at the entrance of the building, even Meštrović’s first wife Ruža (even though she was never buried in the tomb).

In terms of creative language and architectural composition Ivan Meštrović reached after idioms of the ancient world. Although it does not deal with specific socio-political themes, his artistic taste and affinity for eclecticism – but also

<sup>54</sup> Katić 1922, p. 202.

<sup>55</sup> Letter written by Ivan Meštrović (University of Notre Dame, College of Arts & Letters, Notre Dame, Indiana) to Josip Smrkinić, Director of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1955. Cfr. Split, The Archive of the Meštrović Gallery, Letters: 1955-1961, Letters of Ivan Meštrović to the Meštrović Gallery (no. 1-20), no. 4.

<sup>56</sup> For more on the analysis of the complex, see: Prančević 2012b, pp. 244-249.

his attitude towards the religious worldview and his commitment to interfaith dialogue – are evident in this building. The iconographic programme that the artist planned for the decoration of the dome is particularly interesting, however it remained incomplete. In it we can read a syncretistic approach to religion. Namely, the lower zone depicts founders of great world religions (Iran, Egypt, India, China, Africa) with three levels of planets above and rows of angels with arms raised towards the body of the universe<sup>57</sup>. Inside this universe there is the image of the Redeemer himself<sup>58</sup>.

Nevertheless, both churches are indeed fine examples of Meštrović's "total work of art" because the artist himself conceived each segment. Two entirely different orientations by Ivan Meštrović towards Art Déco can be deciphered there. One building incorporates the quality of a somewhat organic growth of decoration and figurative repertoire and its iconographic programme, overtaking flat architectural surfaces; while the other building retains certain purity and a clear commitment to geometric form of distinctly emphasised flat lines and "empty" surfaces. Both churches are sacral objects intended for the celebration of mass, but they are also spaces for private contemplation because remains of two families were buried there. All activist signals of Meštrović's first *Gesamtkunstwerk* are completely absent and are instead transformed into contemplative architectural-sculptural portrayal saturated with a deep subjective note.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that in these three buildings the artist created a certain "totality," a consistent "unit" with its functional value, but also evident was his desire to exert strong influence on observers. Generally speaking, Meštrović's building imposes itself upon persons entering it which was its undisguised ambition. Ivan Meštrović achieved this effect by using the *Gesamtkunstwerk* protocol. The artist modified it, ranging from the ideological plan of the Kosovo architectural-sculptural programme to the creation of "individual mythologies" in sacral and sepulchral edifices. On the one hand, with the potent ideological drive of the Kosovo project the artist opened and supported the discourse on the Yugoslav unification, which would generate as its final consequence concrete geopolitical reconfigurations after World War I, and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. However, this "total work of art" was never realized. It was "constructed" and "reconstructed" in many exhibitions, the most important of which took place in the second decade

<sup>57</sup> Rice *et al.* 1948, pp. 18-19.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem.*

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This artwork exists today merely as a political and artistic narrative by virtue of sculptural fragments and the *Temple's* wooden model, exclusively in the artificial setting of museums' historicalisations. They represent the anesthetized emblems of the once current ideological programme, but also the living and intriguing artistic value. On the other hand, Meštrović's chapels continue to live as memorial-sacral objects, at the intersection of museum and functional reality. They are still successful to this day at impressing the observer with the totality of its architectural and sculptural value, and the specific iconographic programme which follows the guidelines of the western Christian tradition, albeit filtrated through the modernist optics of Ivan Meštrović.

### *References / Riferimenti bibliografici*

- Aumonier W. (1930), *Modern Architectural Sculpture*, London: The architectural press.
- Baruch Wachtel A. (1998), *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Baruch Wachtel A. (2003), *Ivan Meštrović, Ivo Andrić, and the Synthetic Yugoslav Culture of the Inter-War Period*, in *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea 1918-1992*, edited by D. Djokić, London: Hurst and Company, pp. 238-251.
- Baruch Wachtel A. (2008), *The Balkans in World History*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bone J., Collings E.H.R., Čurčin M., Popović B., Seton Watson R.W., Vojnović I. (1919), *Ivan Meštrović. A Monograph*, London: Williams and Norgate.
- Clegg E. (2002), *Meštrović, England and the Great War*, «The Burlington Magazine», 144, pp. 740-751.
- Clegg E. (2004), 'A Warrior fallen in a just cause': a Rediscovered Mestrovic 'Descent from the Cross', «The Burlington Magazine», 146, pp. 823-827.
- Clegg E. (2006), *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe 1890-1920*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press.
- Čerina L. (2008), *Saznaj tajnu ljubavi, riješit ćeš tajnu smrti i vjerovat da je život vječan*, in *Ivan Meštrović: Gospa od Anđela – mauzolej obitelji Račić, Cavtat 1920-1922*, exhibition catalogue (Zagreb, Croatian Academy of Science and Arts – Glyptothèque, October-November 2008), Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Science and Arts – Glyptothèque.
- Damjanović D. (2011), *Bečka Akademija likovnih umjetnosti i hrvatska arhitektura historicizma. Hrvatski učenici Friedricha von Schmidta / Croatian Architecture of the Historicist Period and the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Croatian Students of the Architect Friedrich von Schimidt*, exhibition catalogue (Zagreb, Croatian Academy of Science and Arts – Glyptothèque,

- December 2011 – January 2012), Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Science and Arts – Glyptotheque.
- De Micheli M. (1987), *Un sogno di pietra*, in *Ivan Meštrović*, edited by M. Susovski, Milano: Vangelista, pp. 3-7.
- Djokić D., ed. (2003), *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea 1918-1992*, London: Hurst and Company.
- Djokić D. (2009), *Whose Myth? Which Nation? The Serbian Kosovo Myth Revisited*, in *Uses and Abuses of the Middle Ages: 19th-21st Century*, edited by J.M. Bak, J. Jarnut, P. Monnet, B. Schneidmueller, Munich: Wilhelm Fink, pp. 215-234.
- Gagro B. (1975), *Hrvatska skulptura građanskog perioda*, in *Jugoslovenska skulptura 1870/1950*, edited by M.B. Protić, Beograd: Muzej savremene umetnosti, pp. 33-41.
- Hammer Tomić D. (2011), *Jugoslavenstvo Ivana Meštrovića*, Zagreb: Srednja Europa.
- Horvat J. (1989), *Politička povijest Hrvatske 2*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Zagreb: August Cesarec.
- Ignjatović A. (2014), *Images of the Nation Foreseen: Ivan Meštrović's Vidovdan Temple and Primordial Yugoslavism*, «Slavic Review», 73, n. 4, pp. 828-858.
- Ivančić J., Kreković-Štefanović S., eds. (1993), *Grada za bibliografiju Ivana Meštrovića od 1899. do 1993.*, Zagreb: Ivan Meštrović Foundation, National and University Library.
- Jurišić K. (1984), *Meštrovićeve pjesma i spomenik Kačiću*, in *Zbornik Kačić*, Split: Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer, pp. 287-345.
- Katić E. (1922), *Meštrovićev mauzolej u Cavtatu*, «Nova Evropa», 1 January, pp. 201-206.
- Kečkemet, D. (2009), *Život Ivana Meštrovića (1883-1962-2002) I, II*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Kečkemet D. (2017), *Bibliografija – Ivan Meštrović, 1899.-2002.*, Split: Duško Kečkemet, Brevijar, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split (prepared for publication).
- Kraševac I. (2002), *Ivan Meštrović i Secesija, Beč-München-Prag 1900-1910*, Zagreb: Institute of Art History and Ivan Meštrović Foundation.
- Kraševac I. (2017), *'Umjetnosti njezina sloboda': Gustav Klimt i Ivan Meštrović, slikarski i kiparski odgovor na secesiju*, in *Izazov moderne: Zagreb-Beč oko 1900, slikarstvo, kiparstvo i arhitektura zagrebačke i bečke secesije*, edited by I. Kraševac, P. Vugrinec, Zagreb: Klovićevi dvori Gallery, pp. 175-193.
- Kravar Z. (2001), *Ovostrana eshatologija*, in *Književni protusvjetovi*, edited by J. Hekman, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, pp. 205-220.
- Kravar Z. (2005), *Vidovdanski protusvjetovi i Matoševi protutekstovi*, in *Svjetonazorski separei, antimodernističke tendencije u hrvatskoj književnosti ranoga 20. stoljeća*, edited by N. Polgar, Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, pp. 43-62.

- Machiedo Mladinić N. (2007), *Prilog proučavanja djelovanja Ivana Meštrovića u Jugoslavenskom odboru*, «Časopis za suvremenu povijest», n. 1, pp. 133-156.
- Machiedo Mladinić N. (2009), *Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića*, «Časopis za suvremenu povijest», n. 1, pp. 143-170.
- Meštrović I. (1904), *O umjetnosti*, «Pokret», 23 October, p. 4.
- Meštrović I. (1969), *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje*, Zagreb: Matica hrvatska.
- Meštrović I. (1998), *Vatra i opeklina*, Zagreb: Dora Krupićeva.
- Mrdeža Antonina D. (2007), *Nacionalni prostor u Razgovoru ugodnom naroda slovinskog Andrije Kačića Miošića*, in *Fra Andrija Kačić Miošić i kultura njegova doba: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa Fra Andrija Kačić Miošić i kultura njegova doba*, edited by D. Fališevac, Zagreb: Intergrafika, pp. 121-142.
- Parkes K. (1924a), *Ivan Mestrovic: Architect-Sculptor*, «The Architects' Journal», 2 July, pp. 9-11.
- Parkes K. (1924b), *A Mortuary Chapel by Ivan Mestrovic*, «The Builder», 27 June, pp. 1018-1019.
- Peić M. (1983), *Ivan Meštrović*, «Iseljenički kalendar», XXIX, pp. 73-78.
- Prančević D. (2007), *Odjek Ivana Meštrovića u Velikoj Britaniji nakon izložbe u Victoria & Albert Museum*, in *Zbornik II. Kongresa hrvatskih povjesničara umjetnosti*, conference proceedings (Zagreb, 27-29 April 2006), edited by I. Kraševac, Zagreb: Institute of Art History, pp. 395-403.
- Prančević D. (2012a), *Suprotstavljanja i imperative Ivana Meštrovića – fragmentaran pogled na kiparstvo prve polovice dvadesetog stoljeća u Hrvatskoj*, in *Moderna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj 1898-1975*, edited by Lj. Kolešnik, P. Prelog, Zagreb: Institute of Art History, pp. 114-157.
- Prančević D. (2012b), *Ivan Meštrović u kontekstu ekspresionizma i art décoa*, doctoral dissertation, Zagreb: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.
- Prančević D. (2016a), *Uneasiness in the Body (Tensions in Representation: Old Age, Eroticised Pathos, Different Sexuality, Immediate Sensuality)*, in: *Sculpture and Nakedness: Corporeality and Eroticism in the Works of Ivan Meštrović*, edited by D. Prančević, Split: Museums of Ivan Meštrović, pp. 1-50.
- Prančević D. (2016b), *Sculpture by Ivan Meštrović at the Grafton Galleries in 1917: Critical and Social Contexts*, «Sculpture Journal», 25, n. 2, pp. 177-192.
- Rice N.L., Hilberry H.H., Hilberry E.S. (1948), *The Sculpture of Ivan Meštrović*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Roberts D. (2011), *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library.
- Rutter F. (1915), *A Serbian Sculptor. The Mestrovic Exhibition at South Kensington*, «Sunday Times», 27 June.

- Schmeckeber L. (1959), *Ivan Meštrović. Sculptor and Patriot*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Strzygowski J. (1937), *Eine Grabkirche von Ivan Meštrović/A Memorial Church by Ivan Meštrović*, in *Ivan Meštrović: Gospa od Anđelâ – Zadužbina porodice Račić, Cavtat*, edited by M. Ćurčin, I. Meštrović, Zagreb: Nova Evropa, pp. 35-43.

*Appendix*

Fig. 1. Ivan Meštrović, *Memories*, 1908, Paris (Foto E. Druet, property of the Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-2192)



Fig. 2. Ivan Meštrović, *Miloš Obilić*, 1908, Paris (Foto Z. Alajbeg, property of the Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-3741)

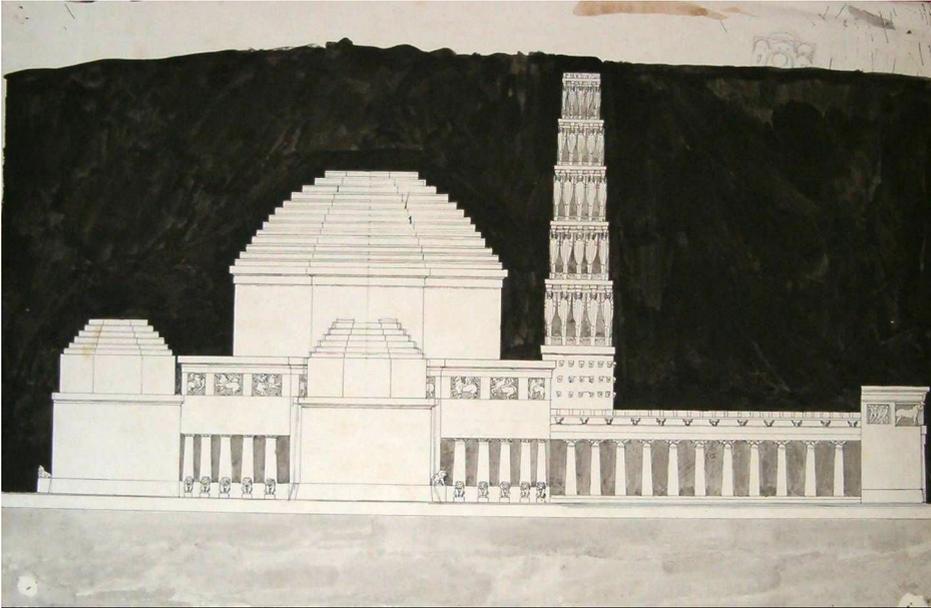


Fig. 3. Ivan Meštrović, *Sketch for the Temple of Vidovdan*, 1912, property of the Meštrović Gallery in Split (Foto D. Prančević)



Fig. 4. Ivan Meštrović, *Model for the Temple of Vidovdan*, 1912 (Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-33)



Fig. 5. Ivan Meštrović, *The Mother of the Jugovići*, 1908, Paris (Foto Z. Alajbeg, property of the Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-3077)



Fig. 6. The 35<sup>th</sup> Exhibition of the Viennese Secession (Ivan Meštrović's solo exhibition), 1910, Vienna (Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-3992)



Fig. 7. Ivan Meštrović, *Church of Our Lady of the Angels* (exterior) in Cavtat, 1920-1922 (Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-153)



Fig. 8. Ivan Meštrović, *Church of Our Lady of the Angels* (interior) in Cavtat, 1920-1922 (Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-140)



Fig. 9. Ivan Meštrović, *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer* (exterior) in Otavice, 1926-1930 (Foto Z. Alajbeg, property of the Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-2817)



Fig. 10. Ivan Meštrović, *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer* (interior) in Otavice, 1926-1930 (Foto Z. Alajbeg, property of the Photo archive of the Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia, FGM-2823)

## **JOURNAL OF THE SECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism  
University of Macerata

### **Direttore / Editor**

Massimo Montella

### **Co-Direttori / Co-Editors**

Tommy D. Andersson, University of Gothenburg, Svezia

Elio Borgonovi, Università Bocconi di Milano

Rosanna Cioffi, Seconda Università di Napoli

Stefano Della Torre, Politecnico di Milano

Michela di Macco, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"

Daniele Manacorda, Università degli Studi di Roma Tre

Serge Noiret, European University Institute

Tonino Pencarelli, Università di Urbino "Carlo Bo"

Angelo R. Pupino, Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale

Girolamo Scullo, Università di Bologna

### *Texts by*

Caterina Barilaro, Cristiano Bedin, Matteo Bertelé, Valentina Bucci,

Francesco Clementi, Delio Colangelo, Annalisa Colecchia, Gabriele Costa,

Serena D'Orazio, Daniela De Liso, Carlo Dionisotti, Patrizia Dragoni,

Francesca Favaro, Concetta Ferrara, Maria Teresa Gigliozzi, Rita Ladogana,

Stefano Lenci, Sara Lorenzetti, Agnese Marasca, Valeria Merola,

Pardo Antonio Mezzapelle, Nora Moll, Massimo Montella,

Francesco Montuori, Antonella Negri, Paola Nigro, Antonella Nonnis,

Pietro Petrarola, Dalibor Prančević, Francesca Pulcini,

Federia Maria Chiara Santagati, Mauro Sarnelli, Carlo Serafini, Valentina Valerio

<http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/index>

