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RECEPTION OF EXPRESSIONISM IN SLOVENE ART HISTORY: TRANSFORMATIONS 1979–2018

Summary:

The article deals with the art historical reception of expressionism in Slovenia in three canonical art history publications: *Slovensko ekspresionistično slikarstvo in grafika: Duhovno usmerjena umetnost dvajsetih let dvajsetega stoletja* (Slovene Expressionist Painting and Graphic Arts: The Spiritually-oriented Art of the 1920s) (1979) by Milček Komelj, PhD, *Ekspresionizem in nova stvarnost na Slovenskem 1920–1930* (Expressionism and Social Realism in Slovenia 1920–1930) (1986) published by the Museum of Modern Art and written by a group of Slovene researchers and *Obrazi ekspresionizma / odtisi duha* (Faces of Expressionism / Footprints of the Spirit) (2018) published by Galerija Božidar Jakac and written by an international group of researchers.

The idea, what, when, how, why, and even where, Slovene expressionism occurs, is quite diverse in the three key monographs on Slovene expressionism. The abstraction, selection and construction procedures, which are the method for the creation of each individual art historical text, turn out to be dependent on many extrinsic and intrinsic circumstances.

The article concludes that expressionism in 1979 was viewed through the researcher's personal view of the world, in 1986 it served as a subbase of national art, and in 2018 it is placed in the fragile network of international connections, which is fused on the outskirts of the centres of the world of art.

Key words:

expressionism, art history, horizontal research in art history, fine arts, painting, graphic arts, sculpture

By 1979, when Milček Komelj published *Slovensko ekspresionistično slikarstvo in grafika: Duhovno usmerjena umetnost dvajsetih let dvajsetega stoletja*, Slovenian art history had not yet embarked on a comprehensive study of expressionist art in Slovenia.¹ Even though expressionism was the first period in Slovenian art followed by professional art critics (Komelj 1979, 35), it would take four decades before the first comprehensive research into this segment of the historical avant-garde was undertaken. And yet, expressionism was the sole movement among a host of avant-garde movements, which came to the fore in Slovenia following impressionism (constructivism, futurism, etc.), to be canonised as “more than a significant episode and less than a significant chapter of impressionism.” (Šijanec 1961, 58) In the 1980s, the canonisation of expressionism continued, the movement “reaching far and wide, producing both near and far-flung echoes.” (Kržišnik 1986, 4) Komelj, the key researcher of this movement, who delved into expressionism and its authors in a number of publications and articles, wrote in 1986 that “we should [...] ask ourselves whether expressionism is nevertheless one of the big chapters in Slovenian painting [...], the source of key outlooks for 20th century art and in some places an extreme spiritual derivation of impressionism.” (Komelj 1979, 7)

It would be far-fetched to claim today that Slovene expressionism was the starting point for 20th century art; however, it remains an important chapter in art history, spurring more research than other historical avant-garde movements. This research, on the other hand, turns out to be quite diverse, both in terms of the research subject and dating, as well as the research methods, findings, and assessments. When reviewing three canonical publications, which each individually deal with Slovene expressionism,² we can detect transformations in methods, aims, and the assessment of Slovene art history. These are the already mentioned 1979 work by Komelj, a mammoth, almost 500-page *Ekspresionizem in nova stvarnost na Slovenskem 1920–1930* catalogue, published by the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the recently published and likewise extensive 235-page *Obrazi ekspresionizma / odtisi duha* catalogue, published this year by the Božidar Jakac Gallery in Kostanjevica na Krki.

The different approaches of these publications only show how historicising art is far from being neutral. The body of work of an art historian builds up a system, which influences the understanding, experience, and further research into individual art work. Their work must first and foremost begin with the understanding that access to a complete and authentic past is unattainable. The story is always created with the help of a corpus of texts³ belonging to the researched society, by following traces, which are at least partially dependent on the

1 The first examines expressionism together with social realism; the scope of expressionism is unclear, as Komelj in 1979 expands the realms of expressionism to also include works with diverse influences of expressionism, art nouveau, and symbolism. It is only the 2018 publication that explains how the works of Slovene authors includes diverse expressionistic and other influences.

2 The word “text” is used to denote not only written work, but also visual and other sources.

3 Later also in *Oris*. See: Stele 1966.

complex and subtle process of preservation and destruction. And even these traces, according to American literary theorist Louis A. Montrose, succumb to future interpretations, when used as documents on which historians base their texts, which we call histories and which by their very nature, but always in an incomplete way, make up the History they grant access to through their narratives and rhetorical forms. (Montrose 1989, 20)

Historicisation is the individual act of an expert, which involves the process of searching, gathering, sorting, and interpreting artwork with the help of historical, biographical, reception, technical and other data or theories. Igor Zabel writes the following on the historicisation of artistic movements:

“These kinds of selection and codification processes are naturally far from random. The process of establishing and ‘disciplining’ knowledge is a highly-specialised process. [...] However, this in no way implies that historicisation is also ‘objective’. Art history can only be established indirectly, through a network of concepts, terms, and links between them. This network, of course, cannot be a perfect reflection of things as they ‘really’ happened; rather, it is based, as we’ve already said, on the processes of abstracting, selection, and construction.” (Zabel 2003, 315)

Reception of Slovene Expressionism up to 1979

The first Nestor of Slovene art history, Izidor Cankar, drew attention to the work of Fran Tratnik as early as 1914, but was generally opposed to expressionism and contemporary art. How could he have been otherwise, when it was based on the exotic? In his article *Kaj je umetnostno pomembno? Eno metodično vprašanje* (What is Artistically Significant? One Methodical Question), he wrote the following: “Michelangelo is clearly a more important artist than a black negro.” (Cankar 1922, 38) At the same time and in the same publication, another doyen, France Stele, also wrote art criticism, preferring the art of the Kralj brothers and later Malešev and coining the term “lyrical expressionism” to describe the work of Jakac. Stele supported expressionism, especially the kind with ties to the Church. (Čopič 1986, 99) For him, expressionism was still the lyrical opposite of impressionism, now showing its internal content, while Fran Šijanec, as already stated, later in 1966 saw it as a noteworthy episode. In addition to him, the movement would get occasional critical support from Anton Vodnik, Rajko Ložar, and France Mesesnel, who especially valued Pilon, as well as from a few others. Above all, the pre-war period and the first wave of art criticism “approved of the freedom of artistic expression; however, it was unable to follow exploration, which ventured too far from traditional forms.” (Čopič 1986, 100)

Špelca Čopić also points out that Slovene writers on expressionism never or only rarely went into formal analyses, which applies to the two publications from 1979 and 1986. “Perhaps it was easier for the critics and theorists; in any case, it seemed more principled talking about spirituality as being too materialistic for Slovene expressionism.” (Čopić 1986, 99)

In 1951, the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana prepared a 70th anniversary retrospective exhibition on Fran Tratnik, but there was hardly anything written about his expressionist work created during his time in Germany. In 1970, Tomaž Brejc wrote a graduate thesis *O ekspresionizmu v upodabljajoči umetnosti v knjigi Hermanna Bahrja* (On Expressionism in the Visual Arts in Hermann Bahr’s Book) and Vesna Perko wrote hers on Nande and Drago Vidmar and that’s where the topic stayed, even though in the 1960s and 70s, expressionism was the subject of research in music and literature.

Expressionism in 1979: the Spiritual Art of the 1920s

In 1979, Slovenians finally got an overview of expressionism in the fine arts, even though it encompassed only painting and the graphic arts. The main aim pursued by Komelj in the paper was: “not so much looking for Slovene expressionism’s formal bases or solving concrete problems, but rather establishing its key and common features.” (Komelj 1979, 6) Komelj was therefore mainly interested in what sets Slovene expressionism apart. He wrote that it has its own, Slovene characteristics and “can be interpreted as an internally well-founded, independent, and complete phenomenon stemming from Slovene spiritual life after World War I, regardless of foreign influences.” (Komelj 1979, 6) He found it significant to point out how expressionism “is not an epigonic phenomenon, but rather a product of its own possibilities and spiritual foundations.” (Komelj 1979, 16).

He mentions the Kralj brothers, Veno Pilon, and Božidar Jakac as being the key figures of the movement, while others – the Vidmar brothers, Špacapan, Čargo, Maleš, Stiplovšek and Gorjup – are only partially expressionists. Elsewhere, he also cites Fran Tratnik, the last works by Grohar, and Jakopič’s colour expressionism. However, despite focusing his attention mainly on the Kralj brothers, Pilon, and Jakac, he was aware that research into expressionism was far from over: “We would likewise do well to more clearly define the role of other painters, which will only be possible once the work of these painters has been reviewed in equal measure, and round off the overall picture by including contemporary sculpture.” (Komelj 1979, 131)

Komelj provides clear dates for expressionism, dividing it into separate periods. The first artwork was created between 1919 and 1920; the Kralj

brothers continue working in the vein of the movement the longest, while other artists quickly segue into realism. Expressionism ends in 1928, the most prolific period being between 1919 and 1925. He goes on to divide this period into early expressionism (1919–1921), notable for the *fin de siècle* elements in the work by the brothers Kralj and the influence of German expressionism in the case of Pilon and the Vidmar brothers. The most representative work is created between 1922 and 1923, while between 1924 and 1928, expressionism starts to transition into social realism. During this period, Tone Kralj concentrates on ecclesiastic art.

While Komelj does raise the question of intertwined art genres in expressionism, he only goes as far as to link it to literature. He writes about the “intellectual approach” to artistic expression, most probably meaning the narrative tendencies of expressionist art in Slovenia. He goes on to identify the following fundamental features of expressionism:

- a lyrical component, e.g. “lyricism as a typically Slovene emotional state” (Komelj 1979, 15);
- poor opportunities for development;
- form giving way to content.

However, he goes on to stress the following:

- lyricism and intellectualism possess a heterogeneous eclectic form, “since [expressionism] has its roots in communicating ideas and relies heterogeneous influences” (Komelj 1979, 128);
- a diverse collection of styles, and
- both religious and social motifs.

True to his word, he only fleetingly talks about the relationship between Slovene expressionism and the wider world. He naturally mentions Prague as the place artists spend their formative years, as well as the influence Munch’s exhibitions had on Jakac and the importance of German influences on Pilon’s work, but quickly goes back to underlying the independent origins of the style. He writes: “Slovene expressionism is not a style, but rather a creative principle focused on expressing spiritual and intellectual, as well as emotional, content.” (Komelj 1979, 126)

For Komelj, the heart of expressionism lies solely in Central Slovenia, which is why he consistently relegates the Vidmar brothers and a few other artists to the sidelines and claims the Littoral authors “have little to no influence in Central Slovenia.” (Komelj 1979, 9) He views expressionism as all the “spiritually oriented art of the 1920s,” regardless of the formal characteristics of the artwork. (Komelj 1979, 10) This allows him to expand expressionism to include symbolist, art nouveau, and social realist work, since his criteria include “the innate spiritual pursuits of its creators.” (Komelj 1979, 13) Furthermore, he is only interested in expressionism from the point of view of content.

Expressionism in 1986: the Foundation of National Art

Researching expressionism was a popular endeavour on the Slovene academic scene of the 1980s. In 1983, the Faculty of Arts hosted a symposium called *The Period of Expressionism in the Slovene Language, Literature, and Culture* and the Kostanjevica Monastery opened a permanent exhibition showcasing work by France Kralj. In 1986, literary historian Lado Kralj published a scientific publication titled *Ekspresionizem*, while the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana simultaneously put together a detailed exhibition on expressionism, publishing fundamental research on the style as part of an extensive catalogue. The project, which took the form of a short-lived exhibition (from 10 October to 21 December 1986), was prepared by a number of experts.⁴

As Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts, Komelj published the first article in the *Ekspresionizem in nova stvarnost na Slovenskem* catalogue under the title *Slovensko ekspresionistično slikarstvo, risba in grafika* (Slovene Expressionist Painting, Drawing, and Graphic Arts) where he substantially revised his 1979 opinions. The foundations of Slovene expressionism now included:

- Internalising the vastness of life;
- New dimensions of form;
- Expressive colours,

while the artwork is centred around the artist's disillusionment with civilisation and conceptual, Christian, and social engagement (Komelj 1986, 7–8). This time around, Komelj expanded the relevant scope of the movement, including the erstwhile often overlooked question of form, as well as an interest in expressionist colour, something he already predicted in 1979.

He also changed the historical time-frame:

- up to 1921, when expressionism “originates” in art nouveau and symbolism;
- 1922–1923, its heyday;
- 1924–1930, when it starts flowing into social realism and losing influence (Komelj 1986, 9).

Where before Komelj championed the idea of a single central location in Central Slovenia, he now identified two nuclei, a Central Slovenian and Littoral one. While still insisting that the central authors were Kralj, Pilon, and Jakac, he nevertheless expands the list of other artists. He added Ivan Kos, a resident of Maribor who studied in Prague between 1919 and 1924, and Stane Cuderman,

⁴ Janez Bernik, Tomaž Brejc, Špelca Čopič, Iztok Durjava, Maja Finžgar, Meta Gabršek Prosenč, Jana Intihar Ferjan, Alenka Klemenc, Franc Kokalj, Milček Komelj, Igor Kranjc, Zoran Kržišnik, Jure Mikuž, Ivan Sedej, Melita Stele Možina and Marko Vuk.

who likewise studied in Prague. He also included France Zupan and even Avgust Černigoj, probably because of the 1925 exhibition at the Jakopič Pavilion where he revealed the individual phases that would lead him to constructivism.

In addition to literature, a fundamental mode of expression he in 1979 likened to painting, the graphic arts, and drawing, Komelj this time also drew parallels with music, the theatre, and film music, which finally lent credence to the notion that expressionism was a movement bringing together and mixing various artistic genres, not just painting and literature, although this pairing has special significance in Slovenia.

In the article, Komelj gives only a brief outline of the contacts between Slovenia and other countries, but draws clear conclusions about the moderation and heterogeneity of expressionism and its ties to tradition. And yet he continues to list the elements of Slovene expressionism: melancholy, poetics, reflection, and mild emotions, which he assumes apply to the entire movement. This, however, cannot be true, since we need only look at the opus of the Vidmar brothers, Čargo, and Pilon. He concludes by saying that Slovene expressionism is closely linked to tradition and “its humanistic vision, its spiritual renewal of man, its emphasised content. In this regard, Slovene expressionism is the radicalization and rebirth of older tendencies, most notably the fulfilment of the romantic era and the continuation of symbolism.” (Komelj 1986, 36)

The next chapter in the catalogue is by Brejc. In the article, he convincingly classifies Jakopič's late work as expressionist and explains the unfavourable opinions expressed by Jama and Sternén. The article by Mark Vuk, who dedicated his entire life to studying the art of the Littoral, highlights the region Komelj identifies as the second centre of Slovene expressionism. He describes the historical and artistic context and comes to the conclusion that “there was hardly a conscious decision to go in the direction of expressionism, the kind expressed, for example, by the members of the Youth Club,” the first traces going back to before World War I. (Vuk 1986 14) The article contributes another important finding, namely the importance of Gorica for expressionism, wholly different from Slovene constructivism and its ties to Trieste.

Ivan Sedej explores ties between Slovene folk art and expressionism. He concludes that interest in assessing folk art was on the rise in the 1920s and 30s, helped in part by policies aimed at encouraging themes exploring ties to land and celebrating farming as the mythic basis for what it means to be Slovene, a calculated effort to counter the growing numbers of the proletariat. Sedej talks about “the intuitive discovery of new urban folklore” (Sedej 1986, 61) in works by the brothers Kralj, Čargo, and Pilon. The paper contributed by Iztok Durjava, which centres on social realism, mentions expressionism only indirectly, but notes the relief felt by the critics once the art world once again established “an artistic compromise with bourgeois society in one of the phases of its development.” (Durjava 1986, 64) Špelca Čopić agrees: “Even these slight changes required significant effort on the

part of artists and their audiences, which is why there was a kind of elation in the air once the tide of expressionism started to subside.” (Čopič 1986, 100)

Čopič expanded research done into expressionism in 1986 by also including sculptors: Ivan Napotnik, Lojze Dolinar, Tine Kos, the Kralj brothers, and – to a lesser degree – Nikolaj Pirnat, Peter Loboda, France Gorše and Karla Bulovec Mrak. Once the canon was expanded to finally include a woman, it is worth asking ourselves about the nature of the relationship between women’s rights and expressionism. This is a topic, which the experts refuse to touch to this very day, since the third examined work, *Obrazi ekspresionizma / odtisi duha*, does not even attempt to broach the subject of the role of women in expressionism. In fact, the artwork by the only female sculptor was not even included in the exhibition. A quick search through the COBISS library database using the keyword “expressionism” reveals 461 hits in Slovene. Among these, only one deals with women and even that one is mainly an analysis of female representations.⁵ There have been a couple of well-researched writings on Bulovec Mrak in the last couple of years. It is therefore an even greater shame that the 2018 exhibition failed to present her in the contextual framework of expressionism.

Expressionism in 2018: a Vertical Research Model

Obrazi ekspresionizma / odtisi duha is comprehensive catalogue. It was published this year by the Božidar Jakac Gallery in Kostanjevica and edited by Robert Simonišek. In the foreword, the gallery’s director, Goran Milovanović, explains that one of the reasons why the exhibition has its origins in the Kostanjevica Gallery is because it houses the donations of Božidar Jakac and Tone Kralj, as well as the legacy of Jože Gorjup and (since 1983) France Kralj. The latter’s opus recently expanded significantly when the artist’s son, Zlat Kralj, donated 50 artworks (30 paintings, 20 reliefs, and 10 sculptures) from his father’s various creative periods to the Gallery.

The exhibition showcases works by Czech and German authors along Slovene ones. The selection of Czech and German artists depended on the collections housed by the two participating institutions – GASK from Kutná Hora and the IFA (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations), as did partially the selection of Slovene ones. Some works were given on loan by institutions in Dresden, Regensburg, and Zagreb (Milovanović 2018, 6). The exhibition, however, had less luck with obtaining works by Austrian authors, especially Oskar Kokoschka, and Edvard Munch, which had a profound impact on Prague expressionism and

5 Namely the graduate thesis of Marija Vogrič, *Podoba ženske v slikah in grafikah slovenskega ekspresionizma* (The Image of the Woman in Paintings and Prints Under Slovene Expressionism) (Filozofska fakulteta, 1990). Nace Šumi was the thesis advisor.

consequently on the Slovene movement, since both Kralj brothers, Pilon, and Jakac all studied in the Czech capital at the start of the 1920s. In 1924 and 1927, Ljubljana also hosted exhibitions of works by Czech artists, while Slovene contemporary art was exhibited in Prague in 1926 (Drury 2018, 10).

Both forewords clearly show a different approach to research, one nicely summed up by Mária Rakušanová in her article *Ekspresionizem kot transkulturni fenomen srednje Evrope* (Expressionism as the Transcultural Phenomenon of Central Europe), while Robert Simonišek provides a similar overview for Slovenia in his article. Rakušanová presents the methodology she uses as her model, one created at the initiative of art historian Piotr Piotrowski: transnational horizontal research, which is not always done in relation to the centre. This clearly contrasts with the vertical model most often favoured by traditional art history for researching national art history. Whenever it conducted transnational research, it most often did so on the basis of a relationship between the influential centre and the influenced periphery – and not, for example, on the basis of a relationship between diverse Central European peripheries. This, however, is the only reasonable approach when faced with an exceptionally international transit hub like Prague was in the past. The model is also useful in the Slovene context, since the previous two analyses involved research conducted almost exclusively within national borders, the links with other countries being mainly ignored.

An outside scientific look at Slovene expressionist authors is especially interesting, because Slovenes in the 1920s supposedly “knew how to take advantage of the support the emperor provided for individual national cultures and understood the advantages in forming a political union with the Cisleithanian part of Austria-Hungary, as opposed to other Balkan countries.”⁶ (Mansbach 1998, 205) The analysis of Czech expressionism brings us back to 1919, the year Pilon, the Kralj brothers, and Jakac left to study in Prague. Jakac studied with August Brömse, who cultivated a “specific, anachronistically articulated expressiveness.” (Simonišek 2018, 68) His most important students at the graphic arts school banded together and formed the Pilgrims, a group which, for Jakac, played the “role of natural intermediaries for incentives coming from German lands.” (Simonišek 2018, 70) The author likewise points to a paper by Simonišek in which he describes how coming face to face with works by Edvard Munch in Prague was probably an even more important determining factor.

As part of this research project, Simonišek, who also edited the catalogue, provides a fundamental analysis of Slovene lands. The exhibition examines the work of Jakac, the Kralj brothers, the Vidmar brothers, Maleš, Pilon, Stiplovšek, Tratnik and a few others – here, we must once again point out the neglect in not mentioning any female authors.

6 The author herself, who nonetheless quotes the text and considers it to be a good description of events, draws attention to its overgeneralizations.

Simonišek supplements the present research, which finally takes a comparative approach and looks beyond the Slovene border, with a paper called *Slovenci v srednjeevropski zgodbi o ekspresionizmu* (*Slovenes and Their Role in the Central European Story of Expressionism*). He first transports us to Prague, back to the first quarter of the 20th century when the Czech capital was still the central study destination for Slovene artists. He then wastes no time in reminding us that expressionism is an international phenomenon, “even if a number of critics and art historians concentrated on finding the national characteristics of individual artists.” (Simonišek 2018, 26) The view insisting that Slovene expressionism was a backyard phenomenon have finally been put to rest. It is horizontal research that, for example, shows how many of the characteristics of Slovene expressionism, attributed to the movement as late as 1979 and 1986, are not indigenous to Slovenia, but rather shared among a number of peripheries that came into contact with expressionism in one way or another.

Simonišek provides a new time-line for Slovene expressionism, putting the extreme reach of the movement to 1925 and separating it from social realism, art nouveau, and even symbolism at the other end of the scale in 1919. He agrees with Komelj’s thesis on the close ties between fine art and literature in Slovene expressionism, which was mainly based on personal contacts and the exchange of ideas (Simonišek 2018, 26). In the following few paragraphs, he goes on to describe certain complex exchanges between Slovene expressionists, Vienna, Prague, and Germany. He then pivots to providing arguments for fundamental expressionist themes used by Slovene artists:

- The traumatic consequences of defeated idealism following World War I;
- Local folk art instead of the exotic (the only venture into the exotic was done by Jakac when he visited Tunisia) (Simonišek 2018, 34);
- The city is mainly present during the Prague period, while locally, it is only ever depicted as the residence of the working class;
- Radical deviations in the local environment are swiftly punished, expressionism is moderate.

Simonišek comes to the conclusion that Slovene expressionists internalized various expressionist currents, especially the ones developed by the Most Group.⁷ These impulses were “indirect and focused on the Central European space. Scattered and torn between home and the conservative gallery environment, Slovene artists identified with elements inherent to expressionism; when they came home, they more or less critically adapted them to the milieu and their own subjective ideas.” (Simonišek 2018, 44).

7 One of the chapters in the publication, written by Janina Dahlmanns, analyses the Group.

1979–2018 Transformations

The idea of what, when, how, why, and even when things happened to Slovene expressionists takes on quite varying natures in the three key canonical publications on Slovene expressionism. It turns out that when it comes to “abstracting, selection, and construction procedures” (Zabel 2003, 315), they depend on a number of extrinsic and intrinsic circumstances in which the work of art history was completed.

The 1979 publication, which started out as a master’s thesis, the main research subject is the “spiritually oriented art of the 1920s.” The exhibition catalogue from 1986, prepared by a research team as part of a central national institution, revises this subject and separates expressionism from social realism, the aim of the exhibition being to turn expressionism into a major chapter in Slovene art history. In 2018, the subject itself is not clearly defined, as if the meaning of expressionism were self-evident, and the aim of the project changes to conducting research outside national borders, relying on a horizontal model of connections between places and participants in the art world.

The research method did not change significantly. It still involves collecting, selecting, constructing, and abstracting sources and creating narratives; only the resource database is slightly different each time. The 1986 research project is based on the one from 1979, which was dedicated to expressionist painting and graphic arts. It was expanded by adding research into expressionist sculpture, expressionism in the Littoral Region, and the traces of ethnology in Slovene expressionism and expressionism in architecture. The latest research project is based on both. It takes the core set of questions about Slovene expressionism and filters out all the national characteristics, instead also focusing on data that allows it to begin establishing the history of Slovene expressionist art on the premise that it is a part of a Central European network of expressionist art. It delves into painting, drawing, graphic arts and sculpture.

Interpretations of expressionism, answers to the question: “Why is something they way it is?”, are fundamentally different depending on the research aims. In 1979, Slovene expressionism seems like one big lyrical, poetical ball of spirituality. Forward to 1986 and it becomes the foundation for 20th century Slovene art. In 2018, it becomes part of international networks, not unlike Slovenia and its membership in the EU.

At first, there aren’t all that many Slovene expressionists. In 1986, the list gets considerably longer (for the first time, sculpture and architecture are also taken into account, while the number of painters and graphic artists also goes up). In 2018, the selection depends on concrete circumstances (the artwork housed by the Božidar Jakac Gallery) and opts for authors already considered canon, which are showcased side by side with German and Czech works of art, leaving the periphery behind.

Each of the research projects gives a different time-line for expressionism. In 1979, it is defined as the period between 1919 and 1928, while in 1986, it becomes the period between 1919 and 1930. 2018 decides to place it between 1919 and 1925. Once again, the final result depends on whether we define expressionism as art with spiritual dimensions, the creator of a whole canon in Slovene art, or as being part of a transnational network of artists according to the Piotrowski method.

Where can we place Slovene expressionism? The 1979 study concluded its only home is Central Slovenia, Novo mesto, and Ljubljana; everything else was deemed irrelevant. It mentions that the artists studied abroad, yet the fact is largely ignored, as are any international connections. In 1986, Slovene expressionism expanded to include two centres: Central Slovenia and the Littoral Region. While links to abroad were recognised, they were not given much attention. The 2018 makes no mention of a national, geographically-defined centre; it does, however, draw attention to the Slovene artists who spent time abroad, as well as to the rare individuals bringing expressionist ideas to Slovenia from other countries when visiting Ljubljana to exhibit their work.

What can we conclude about expressionism in Slovenia based on these different research findings? Despite the fact that we no longer search for national spirit, instead realising it is always just an image, and despite understanding that expressionism cannot simply be defined as a creative principle oriented toward spirituality, the 2018 study would still have been impossible without the two studies from 1979 and 1986. And yet it seems like research into expressionism in Slovenia is far from over, since the opuses of some of the representatives of the movement have yet to be analysed. Each of the analysed publications added a new layer of meaning to Slovene expressionism, shining a light from another angle, even though none of them could be said to have avoided the traps and pitfalls of their time, including those in 2018 when they mainly involve project work done by galleries and museums, their international collaboration, and the requirement to exit national borders, which can be traced to research funding schemes. If expressionism in 1979 was seen as altogether separate from the rest of the world, later becoming the foundation for a whole new national art in 1986, 2018 gives it a whole new international dimension, describing it as part of a fragile network of ties made in a distant time, on the edge of the art world centres.

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RECEPCIJA EKSPRESIONIZMA U SLOVENAČKOJ ISTORIJI UMETNOSTI: TRANSFORMACIJE 1979–2018

Apstrakt:

Tekst se bavi umetničko-istorijskom recepcijom ekspresionizma u Sloveniji razmatrajući tri kanonske publikacije: *Slovensko ekspresionistično slikarstvo in grafika: Duhovno usmerjena umetnost dvajsetih let dvajsetega stoletja* (Slovenačko ekspresionističko slikarstvo i grafika: duhovno usmerena umetnost dvadesetih godina dvadesetog veka, 1979) autora dr Milčeka Komelja, *Ekspresionizam in nova stvarnost na Slovenskem 1920–1930* (Ekspresionizam i socijalni realizam u Sloveniji 1920–1930, 1986) koju je izdala Moderna galerija u Ljubljani, a priredila grupa slovenačkih istraživača i *Obrazi ekspresionizma / odtisi duha* (Lica ekspresionizma / otisci duha, 2018) koju je objavila Galerija Božidar Jakac, a koju je napisala grupa internacionalnih istraživača.

Ideja o tome kada, kako, zbog čega i gde se slovenački ekspresionizam javio je veoma različito predstavljena u tri ključne monografije o ovom fenomenu. Apstrakcija, izbor i konstrukcija procedura, koje su metod za stvaranje pojedinačnih istorijsko-umetničkih tekstova, ispostavljaju se zavisnim od više unutrašnjih i spoljnih okolnosti.

Tekst zaključuje da je ekspresionizam 1979. godine posmatran iz lične perspektive istraživača, da je 1986. godine služio kao temelj za stvaranje nacionalne umetnosti, te da je 2018. godine postavljen unutar krhke mreže međunarodnih veza i fokusira se na periferije umetničkih centara.

Ključne reči:

ekspresionizam, istorija umetnosti, horizontalno istraživanje u istoriji umetnosti, vizuelna umetnost, slikarstvo, grafika, skulptura

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