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Introduction

Migrations in Visual Art is an edited collection of essays from different fields of humanities and social sciences that addresses the issue of the power and meaning of images and the visual in general in the context of migrations of people, ideas, knowledge, artifacts, art works and symbols through the prism of postcolonial and cultural translation theories, from antiquity to the present. The complex question of migrations in visual art involves far more than just art, all the more so because many fields in the humanities and social sciences have in recent times taken the “pictorial turn”. Moreover, and especially at this point in history, any discussion of the power of images and their role in migrations in visual culture is unavoidably also positioned in the context of current changes in global relations as well as in the growing impact of social media. This issue also opens the question of the de-territorialization of images and how, as Walter Benjamin had already indicated, technical reproduction has moved the artwork from its original context. The topics opened for interdisciplinary discussions at the conference and printed in this volume include the following: West Balkans - Migration and Cultural transfer, Migration as Cross-cultural Communication, Migration of Ideas and Concepts, Migration of Works of Art, and Migration of Symbols.

The circulation of images is, of course, as old as civilization itself. It is crucial in the creation of multiple ways in which images impact society, both the individual and the collective habitus, as well as in cross-cultural communication. Likewise, the narratives, imagery and iconography of migration(s) have been present in visual art from antiquity to the present, most recognizably sublimated in the figures of ancient epic protagonists like Odysseus and Aeneas or biblical patriarchs like Abraham and Moses. The collective and/or individual migrations are even more intense in modern era and at the very moment we are confronted with grand scale migrations of thousands of people from the Middle East and Africa to Europe. The consequences, their complexity and dimensions in social and cultural sphere are yet to be seen in the future years and decades.

The idea of the present volume originates in the International Conference of Doctoral Students and Recent Doctoral Graduates held at the Faculty of

Philosophy, University of Belgrade, in September 2016, consecrated to different issues related to migrations in visual art and culture. The book clearly demonstrates how in the global era, the connection between (visual) culture and migration has become all-encompassing, influencing politics, economics and social practices. Any aspect of the visual is never simply an expression of one culture but rather part of a process of constructing meaning in a field characterized by similarities as much as by differences.