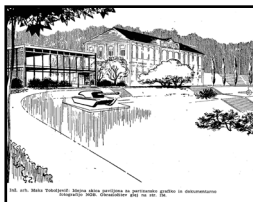


Tina Fortič Jakopič

The Fine Art Collection of the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia/ Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia and Its Exhibiting



Contemporary museology maintains that every museum is closely tied to its socio-political context and therefore cannot be neutral or apolitical. Just as a museum institution is rooted in its environment, the presentation of museum collections – the fundamental aim of a museum – is bound to the current time, tradition, history and cultural political conditions within which particular artefacts of cultural heritage are studied.¹ This article presents the collection of fine art that is now part of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia and traces its development from the museum's founding until the end of the 1970s. During this period, the museum was initially called the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia (MNO LRS, 1948–1962) and was later renamed the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia (MLRS, 1962–1994). The article focuses on the changes in the role of the art collection over time and analyses the institution's collection and exhibition policy.²

1. The Beginnings of the Museum's Fine Art Collection

Since the founding of the Liberation Front of the Slovenian Nation (OF) in April 1941, the members of the resistance movement were aware of the importance of culture for the identity and future of the nation. A group of cultural workers joined the OF, and they were also one of its four founding groups (alongside the Communist, Christian Socialist and Sokol groups). They also had a representative on the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front (IO OF), Josip Vidmar, who later became president of the entire OF.³ The cultural workers were involved

- 1 Zvezdana Antos, "Politics and the presentation of cultures in museums", in: Roxana Omar et al. (eds.), *Museums and the Idea of Historical Progress*, Iziko Museums Publications and ICOM-SA, Cape Town, 2014.
- 2 Several authors have written about the development of the museum. The development of the museum's collection policy and the acquisition of artworks have been described in more detail by Iztok Durjava, "Nastanek in ureditev likovne zbirke", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejše zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejše zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, pp. 53–58. The politics of the museum was discussed using the example of a permanent exhibition from the 1990s by Neža Mrevlje and Katarina Župavec, "Politike in političnost Muzeja novejše zgodovine Slovenije", in: Božidar Jezernik (ed.), *Med prezentacijo in manipulacijo*, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana, 2010, pp. 81–111. The former museums of the People's Revolution were researched by Andreja Rihter, "Dediščina socializma med pozabo in spominom" (doctoral dissertation), Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2015.
- 3 Bojan Godeša, *Kdor ni z nami, je proti nam: Slovenski izobraženci med okupatorji, Osvobodilno fronto in protirevolucionarnim taborom*, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana, 1995, pp. 139–141; Bojan Godeša, "Ustanovitev Osvobodilne fronte slovenskega naroda", in: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije: 1848–1992*, vol. 2, Mladinska knjiga and Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, Ljubljana, 2005. Josip Vidmar (1895–1992) was a literary and theatre critic, translator, dramaturge and politician. After the war, he held several federal and republican political offices. "Vidmar, Josip", in: Luc Menaše, *Svetovni biografski leksikon: Ljudje in dela v 27.277 geslih*, Mihelač, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 1004.

in various activities (production of visual material and texts, participation in events, etc.) and sought to encourage reflection on “the fundamental questions of Slovenian future”.⁴

After Italy’s capitulation, it became even clearer that “it will be necessary [after the war] to ensure that new directions are practically implemented and that Slovenian life is reorganised on new foundations in all areas”.⁵ Calls for a more systematic organisation of the individual professions became increasingly frequent, along with proposals for a comprehensive review of the functioning and state of the various branches of the economy and culture. At the plenum of the OF on 21 September 1943, Boris Kidrič therefore proposed that individual professional groups organise congresses in order to demonstrate “the commitment of the individual professional groups to the cause of the liberation movement and involve them as much as possible in the National Liberation Struggle”.⁶ As a result, various professional groups did indeed hold sector-specific congresses, with the scientific and cultural workers also holding their own congress in Semič on 4 and 5 January 1944. On this occasion, they outlined a strategy for the activities of the Scientific Institute (ZI), which was founded by the IO OF on 12 January 1944.⁷ Today’s National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia (MNSZS) follows in the tradition of the former ZI, as its collections also contain material gathered by the ZI.

The ZI was the first scientific organisation in the liberated territory of Yugoslavia.⁸ It addressed fundamental questions concerning the shaping of the future of the nation, with particular emphasis on two key issues: the delineation of post-war state borders and the establishment of a new social system through the organisation of various economic sectors and professional fields.⁹ According to the

4 France Škerl, “Znanstveni institut”, *Zgodovinski časopis*, vol. 19–20, 1965–1966, p. 32.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. Boris Kidrič (1912–1953) was a co-founder of the Communist Party of Slovenia and later leader of the OF. After the war, he was prime minister of Slovenia and later Yugoslav minister of economy. “Kidrič, Boris”, in: Menaše, 1994 (see no. 3), p. 490.

7 The first director of the ZI was the historian Fran Zwitter, his deputy was the sociologist Boris Zihel. Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 32, 33. M. B., “I. kongres slovenskih kulturnih delavcev na osvobojenem ozemlju”, *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 5, no. 2, 13.1.1944, pp. 7–8.

8 For more about the ZI see also: Fran Zwitter, “Narodnost in politika pri Slovencih”, *Zgodovinski časopis*, vol. 1, no. 1–4, 1947; Fran Zwitter, “Delo in pomen partizanskega Znanstvenega inštituta”, *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 10, no. 1–2, 1970. Lojze Ude, who headed the legal department together with Darko Černe at the beginning of the ZI, published numerous discussions on border issues in the post-war period. See: Lojze Ude, “Avstrija, pangermanizem in Koroška”, in: Bogo Grafenauer, Lojze Ude and Maks Veselko (eds.), *Koroški zbornik, Državna založba Slovenije*, Ljubljana, 1946, pp. 605–653. Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 34, 37.

9 A number of prominent personalities from Slovenian scientific, economic and cultural circles are said to have played a key role in this process, including Lojze

founding act, the institute's task was to collect "scientific material and scientific knowledge needed for the National Liberation Struggle in the present and for reconstruction after liberation, as well as to convey the experiences of the National Liberation Struggle to science itself by scientific means".¹⁰ In carrying out these tasks, the ZI collaborated with legal experts, doctors, engineers, military officers, the Women's Antifascist Front, the Slovene Youth Association and others – many of whom had also organised their own congresses. The institute also established sections that prepared in-depth studies and other projects in individual professional groups, the results of which were presented to the political and military leadership and also to the public.¹¹ A systematic effort was also made to document and record all materials related to the National Liberation Struggle and the crimes of the occupying forces.¹² One of the most important purposes of this collection was to prepare the material and the studies based on it for the aforementioned post-war negotiations on state borders.¹³

Dular, Lado Vavpetič, Ivo Pirkovič and Vinko Vrhunec. Zdenko Čepič, *Zamisli o gospodarski ureditvi po drugi svetovni vojni v narodnoosvobodilnem gibanju*, Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 10 and throughout. Lojze Dular (1903–2002) was a mining engineer and economist. After the war, he was deputy minister for mining in the government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. He was a member of the Yugoslav delegation at the peace conferences in London and Paris. Later he was also deputy federal secretary of industry and construction. Ibid., p. 10. Ivo Pirkovič (1909–1985) was a publicist and historian of the national liberation movement. In 1942, he was arrested by the Italian occupation authorities and, after Italy's capitulation, he became a collaborator of the ZI and a member of the Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and Their Accomplices (KUZOP). "Pirkovič, Ivo", in: Tončka Stanovnik et al. (eds.), *Osebnosti: Veliki slovenski biografski leksikon M–Ž*, Ljubljana, 2008, p. 847. Vinko Vrhunec (1895–1981) was a lawyer and economist; before the war he was director of the Trbovlje Coal Mining Company. Čepič, 1998 (see beginning of this note), p. 10. Lado Vavpetič (1902–1982) was a lawyer and politician, a member of the Supreme Plenum of the Liberation Front since 1941. After the war, he was briefly minister of trade and supply and later a professor of public administration and administrative procedure at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana. "Vavpetič, Lado", in: Luc Menaše, *Svetovni biografski leksikon: Ljudje in dela v 27.277 geslih*, Mihelač, Ljubljana, 1994, p. 997.

10 Nataša Urbanc, "50 let Muzeja", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 14.

11 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 32, 37, 39.

12 The KUZOP, founded on 20 February 1944, was primarily responsible for this. Damijan Guštin, "Tisk narodnoosvobodilnega gibanja 1944–1945 o organih za ugotavljanje vojnih zločinov", *Prispevki za novejšjo zgodovino*, vol. 33, no. 1–2, 1993, pp. 111–127. More about the initial work of the commission can be found in the publication of the commission's president Makso Šnuderl in: Makso Šnuderl, *Fašistično domobransko nasilje nad Slovenci*, Triglav, 1944.

13 Fran Zwitter, "Priprave znanstvenega inštituta za reševanje mejnih vprašanj", in: Tone Ferenc (ed.), *Osvoboditev Slovenije 1945 (referati z znanstvenega posvetovanja v Ljubljani 22. in 23. decembra 1975)*, Založba Borec, Ljubljana, 1977, p. 258.

The ZI was also involved in the assessment of damage to cultural and historical monuments. Shortly before the end of the war, a Commission for the Determination of Damage to Cultural and Historical Objects was set up in cooperation with the institute. Already during the war, the ZI had planned for the post-war division of collected materials into a library, an archive, a museum and a Partisan gallery after the war, as it collected not only artefacts, but also books, archive material and works of art. The minutes of an undated meeting explicitly mention that the ZI was also to collect “documentary images” that recorded the history of the occupation and the National Liberation Struggle. Božidar Jakac, France Mihelič and Dore Klemenčič-Maj were named as the authors of these “documentary images”.¹⁴

In the first post-war years, attempts were made to reorganise the institute and divide its areas of activity into new, more specialised institutions. For example, a special Department for Border Issues was set up, which later operated as “Slovenian centre for expert work on border issues”.¹⁵ On 10 February 1948, the ZI ceased its activities completely and the Government of the People’s Republic of Slovenia established the Museum of National Liberation of the People’s Republic of Slovenia (MNO LRS) and the Institute for Ethnic Studies. The materials collected by the ZI were divided between these institutions, with the MNO LRS taking over most of the fine arts collection.¹⁶ The tasks of the newly established museum, which were set out in the Decree on the Establishment of the Museum of National Liberation in 1948, included collecting and organising materials and issuing publications, as well as the provision that the museum materials should be accessible to everyone “for scientific, popular-publicist and also artistic purposes”.¹⁷ However, what was meant by artistic purposes was not precisely defined.

A similar situation existed in other Yugoslav republics, where Museums of National Liberation Struggle were established from the mid-1940s onward. In addition, in some existing museums, both in larger and smaller towns, special departments dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle were set up.¹⁸ The local museums or departments relied on the central national museum institutions for the preparation of exhibition content and research. This created a network of similarly organised museums of national liberation, which also actively cooperated with each other. Immediately after

14 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 42, 47.

15 Zwitter, 1977 (see no. 13), pp. 258, 273.

16 Škerl, 1965–1966 (see no. 4), pp. 43, 44, 60, 61.

17 Odredba vlade LRS št. 5 – zak. 69 z dne 7. februarja 1948, *Uradni list LRS*, no. 7, 1948. For more on the establishment of the MNO LRS see: Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 15.

18 In Slovenia, such departments or smaller museums were later established in Celje, Slovenj Gradec, Maribor and Novo Mesto.

the war, many institutions turned to the ZI to prepare records of wartime events, statistical data, information on fighters, victims, cultural and historical monuments, and more. Later, the MNO LRS in Ljubljana continued to share information on historical events, personalities and documents with other museums and also loaned them its materials for exhibitions.¹⁹ This regular inter-institutional cooperation also contributed to the fact that the newly founded museums of national liberation were soon able to play an important role in creating a collective memory of the war events, and, in doing so, contributed to the legitimisation and ideological grounding of the new post-war political order.²⁰

- 19 In its early days, the MNO LRS was in contact with the city administration of Mostar, which provided the museum with information about the revolutionary uprising in Herzegovina. In 1951, the museum made arrangements for the exchange of journalistic material with the British Imperial War Museum. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “455/2, 22.12.1951”, SI AS 2200/7/16, Arhiv Republike Slovenije (hereinafter ARS); Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Vložni zapisnik”, SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.
- 20 Examples of larger, newly founded Yugoslav museums of national liberation are the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia (founded in 1945, its collection is now part of the Croatian History Museum), the Museum of National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (founded in 1945, now the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Museum of the Workers’ Movement and People’s Revolution of Vojvodina (founded in 1956, now the Museum of Vojvodina). In Belgrade, no independent museum of national liberation was originally established, but there was a department dedicated to it within the Military Museum, which became one of the most important museum institutions of National Liberation Struggle in the former country. Later, in 1959, the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities was founded in Belgrade (in 1996 it was merged with the Josip Broz Tito Memorial Centre to form the Museum of Yugoslav History, which has been called the Museum of Yugoslavia since 2016). For more information on the founding of the museums of National Liberation Struggle and the museums of the People’s Revolution and their transformation see: Rihter, 2015 (see no. 2); Dolores Ivanuša, “Djelatnost i zadaci Muzeja revolucije naroda Hrvatske u dokumentiranju povijesti klasnog radničkog pokreta, Saveza komunista Jugoslavije i socijalističke izgradnje”, *Informatica museologica*, vol. 17, no. 1–4, 1986, pp. 26–29; Mladenko Kumović, “Stalne postavke na temu NOR-a i revolucije u Vojvodini”, *Informatica museologica*, vol. 20, no. 3–4, 1989, pp. 19–22; Vanja Lozić, “(Re)Shaping History in Bosnian and Herzegovinian Museums”, *Culture Unbound*, vol. 7, 2015, pp. 307–329; Joel Palhegyi, “Revolutionary Curating, Curating the Revolution: Socialist Museology in Yugoslav Croatia”, *Martor*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2018, pp. 17–34; Milica Popović, “Exhibiting Yugoslavia”, *Družboslovne razprave*, vol. 32, no. 81, 2016, pp. 7–24; Milica Popović and Nataša Jagdhuhn, “From Revolution to Nation: Transformation of Historical Museums in (post-)Yugoslav Croatia and Serbia”, *Qualestoria*, no. 2, 2024, pp. 21–45; “Muzej revolucije”, Moni Finci, monifinci.com, 2023, URL: <https://monifinci.com/muzej-revolucije> (accessed 24.4.2025); Marija Vasiljević, Veselinka Kastratović Ristić and Momo Cvijović, “Predistorija: Osnova za razumevanje Muzeja Jugoslavije”, Muzej Jugoslavije, muzej-jugoslavije.org, URL: <https://www.muzej-jugoslavije.org/en/predistorija-osnova-za-razumevanje-muzeja-jugoslavije> (accessed 24.4.2025); Petra Štefičar, “Muzeji revolucije: Dizajn postava izložbi Đuke Kavurića u Hrvatskoj od 1964. do 1975.”, *Život umjetnosti*, vol. 112, no. 1, 2023, pp. 48–67.

In the early years following their foundation, the programmes of the Yugoslav Museums of National Liberation Struggle were based almost exclusively on material from the Second World War. In 1947, the Education Commissariat of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia also launched a nationwide campaign to encourage the collection of artefacts related to the National Liberation Struggle.²¹ From the mid-1950s, however, a gradual shift took place – one that reflected the broader political and ideological changes of the time. Over time, the memory of the Second World War faded, as did the collective enthusiasm for building a new state. It therefore became crucial to reaffirm or give new meaning to the existing political system, whose origins were based not only on the legacy of the Second World War but also on older social ideas and movements. Accordingly, the museums expanded their field of research – from the exclusive study of the period of the National Liberation Struggle to the study of the beginnings of the socialist revolution and narrating the formation of the new post-war system. During this period, most of the major museums were renamed Museums of the People's Revolution and their staff was increased. In this context, the term “revolution” referred to the long-standing endeavours for the rights and sovereignty of the working class, and the museums were one of the platforms for constructing and sustaining this narrative. Museums thus served not only to document, record and commemorate particular events but also to educate and mobilise the population to support the socialist system and thus spread socialist ideals and celebrate the achievements of the young socialist regime.²² A similar transformation took place at the museum in Ljubljana. In 1959, it became part of the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement (IZDG), which now also included the Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia.²³ Despite this institutional merger, the museum consistently sought to maintain its autonomy. In 1962, it regained its status as an independent institution and was renamed the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia (MLRS). It operated under this name until 1994, when it was renamed the National Museum of Contemporary History (later the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, MNSZS).

21 Andreja Rihter, “Cultural Heritage as Part of the Socialist Period in Slovenia”, in: Tanja Roženberger and Jože Hudales (eds.), *Collecting and Collections in Times of War or Political and Social Change*, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, Ljubljana, 2017, p. 157.

22 For this shift in the mission of the museums see references in no. 20.

23 The task of the IZDG was to “scientifically investigate the workers' movement, the activities of the Communist Party and the People's Revolution on the Slovenian territory, as well as socialist construction in the People's Republic of Slovenia”. Aleš Gabrič, “Ustanovitev Inštituta za zgodovino delavskega gibanja”, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino: Ferenčev zbornik*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1997, p. 55.

This chapter examines the changing role of the museum's art collection in the context of a historical museum, through an overview of its exhibition activities in four periods. These periods have been defined based on noticeable shifts in how the museum perceives and manages its art collection and how it presents it to the public. The years marking the boundaries of each period are approximate, and the division into four phases is solely intended to facilitate a clearer understanding of how the role and significance of artworks in the museum have evolved over time. It is worth noting that the museum was sometimes the main organiser of the exhibitions that are the subject of our interest, but in some cases, particularly in the case of exhibitions outside its own premises, it only contributed to the projects. In the latter case, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the museum only loaned works of art for exhibitions in other institutions or whether it also supported them with its own research or organisational work.

2. The First Period: 1944–1951

The first period covers the time from the beginnings of the art collection within the ZI in 1944 until 1951, when the MNO LRS, founded in 1948, was housed in the premises of the Cekin Mansion. Upon its foundation, the MNO LRS acquired the material from the ZI and continued to expand its collection in the following years by systematically collecting in the field. In 1951, it also acquired the important collection of Janko Vertin, the former head of the military department of the City Museum of Ljubljana.²⁴

From the way in which the art was collected during and after the war, and from the way in which the artworks were exhibited in the early years, it can be concluded that the art collection held primarily testimonial value for the ZI and later the MNO LRS. The focus was on collecting artworks as documentary evidence, rather than according to art-historical criteria. It should not be forgotten that both institutions also performed other tasks at the time. These included involvement in the systematic recording of the remnants of wartime events in the field and the establishment and management of sites of remembrance. As a result, the collection later came to include several design proposals for memorial monuments.²⁵ During this period, the ZI and later

24 During and after the Second World War, Janko Vertin (1897–1983) amassed a significant collection of war-related materials, including several works of art. Matija Žgajnar, "Muzejske zbirke", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, pp. 39, 41. Detailed information on how the art material entered the art collection from the time of the ZI until the end of the 1990s can be found in: Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), pp. 53–58.

25 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Cenjenemu odboru OF v Kočevju", SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS. The report on the work of the MNO LRS for the first months of 1952 states that the museum contacted artists to donate casts of their sculptures

the MNO LRS also worked closely with artists, who not only contributed as authors of memorials, but also helped with the recording of material and the creation of topographies. Vladimir Lamut, for example, documented and sketched the Partisan outposts in the field for the ZI,²⁶ which in turn planned to acquire his artworks. This was not an isolated case, as the ZI was already buying works of art in this first period and also commissioning them from artists for its collection.²⁷

2.1 Exhibitions of the First Period

Today's MNSZS still considers its first exhibitions those organised by the ZI in the liberated territories starting in 1944.²⁸ The first was an exhibition of works by Božidar Jakac in Semič, followed by various exhibitions of graphic works, prints, photographs and works created in military workshops.²⁹ The ZI collected much of the material from these exhibitions, which formed the basis for the organisation of further exhibitions during and after the war.³⁰ After the war, it organised exhibitions at various locations.

Among the post-war exhibitions that were organised in collaboration with the ZI, the large exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* (*Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni*), which also appears in the sources under the name *Partisan Exhibition* (*Partizanska*

on the theme of the National Liberation Struggle to the museum collection. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Svetu za prosveto in kulturo LRS, 15.4.1952", SI AS 2200/7/17, ARS.

26 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Predlog potreb za oktober, Računovodstvo pri predsedstvu vlade LRS, 12.9.1947", SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.

27 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "4.8.1947", SI AS 2200/3/7, ARS.

28 Ljudmila Osjak, "Razstave 1944–1998", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejšje zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik*, Muzej novejšje zgodovine, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 71. The cited list of exhibitions served primarily as a starting point for further investigations and research. It contains inaccuracies with regard to dates and titles of the exhibitions and sometimes cooperations with institutions are mentioned only briefly or not at all (see, e.g. no. 31).

29 *Works of Art by Božidar Jakac* (*Likovna dela Božidarja Jakca*, 4 January 1944, Semič); *Partisan Printing, Prints and Linocuts* (*Partizanski tisk, grafična dela in linorezi*, May 1944, Metlika); *Partisan Printing in the Novo Mesto District* (*Partizanski tisk novomeškega okrožja*, August 1944, Dolenjske Toplice); *Photographs of the Battles of the XIV Division* (*Fotografije iz borb XIV. divizije*, September 1944, Gornji Grad); *Partisan Printing and Photographs in the Territory of the IX Corps* (*Partizanski tisk in fotografije s področja IX. korpusa*, November 1944, Ajdovščina); *Partisan Prints* (*Partizanska grafika*, 13 January 1945, Črnomelj); *Partisan Printing in Gorenjska* (*Gorenjski partizanski tisk*, February 1945, Cerklje); *Works from the Military Workshops of the VII Corps* (*Izdelki vojaških delavnic VII. korpusa*, 4 March 1945). Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), pp. 71–83. Judging by the photos, the exhibitions took place in various temporary spaces: Thematic box *Dogodki v MLRS*, Photo Library of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

30 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. See also: Milan Bevc, "O delu in razvoju Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS od ustanovitve do danes", in: Milan Bevc (ed.) *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 1, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, Ljubljana, 1957, p. 154.

razstava), deserves special mention.³¹ It was opened on the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front, on 26 April 1946, in three locations: the National Gallery, the Jakopič Pavilion and the not-yet-completed Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (figs. 77–85). The National Gallery presented “the evolution of the people’s government from the creation of the liberated territories to the establishment of the government by the people on the entire territory of Slovenia”.³² This part of the exhibition thus presented a variety of materials, from a presentation of the establishment of the Liberation Front and its founders (Edvard Kardelj, Boris Kidrič and Josip Vidmar) to the economic and cultural situation in the Julian March, the development of the liberation struggle, the crimes of the occupying forces in Carinthia and the history of the Slovenes in the Raba River Valley.³³ The Jakopič Pavilion presented 42 Slovenian artists with works that were created after the liberation and whose motifs are linked to “the Partisan struggle, the reconstruction and the new pulse of the Slovenian working people”.³⁴ The exhibition included paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures.³⁵

Today’s MNSZS has preserved enough photographic material from the part of the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana to reconstruct its appearance with considerable accuracy. Combined with numerous media reactions, it is also possible to get a fairly good grasp of the concept of this ambitious exposition.³⁶ It was thematically divided into different areas of Partisan life and struggle, e.g. Partisan printing works and workshops, medical supplies, Partisan equipment, Liberation Front radio, telegraph activities and weapons. The presentation also included several reconstructions of rooms, e.g. a reconstruction of the interior of a Partisan hospital. Above the numerous historical artefacts, which were placed close together on various stands at different heights, there were also long and wide friezes on the walls with scenes of battles, the transport of the wounded, displacement, shooting hostages, i.e. images that were increasingly regarded as typical Partisan motifs. We assume that these strips with

31 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. Osjak refers to the exhibition only as *Partisan Exhibition* and names only the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana and the Jakopič Pavilion as exhibition venues.

32 Anonymous, “Otvoritev razstave ‘Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni’”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 100, 30.4.1946, p. 4.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Anonymous, “Razstava slovenske upodabljajoče umetnosti”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 110, 14.5.1946, p. 6.

36 Anonymous, “Gospodarski del razstave ‘Osvobodilne fronte’ v domovinski vojni”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 108, 11.5.1946, p. 8; Anonymous, “Otvoritev razstave ‘Osvobodilna fronta v domovinski vojni’”, *Ljudska pravica*, vol. 7, no. 100, 30.4.1946, p. 4; Anonymous, “Otvoritev razstave ...”, (see no. 32), p. 4.

monumental scenes were painted exclusively for the exhibition. Placed next to them were also several other works of art and various inscriptions. Together with other exhibited objects and scenic materials – models, maps, vegetation intended to evoke a forest setting – the artworks in this part of the exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana created an ambitious environment, a well-thought-out mise-en-scène that – especially immediately after the war – probably made a strong impression on the visitor. We can assume that the staging approach of combining newly made objects, large paintings and artefacts recently used in the war was an attempt to make the visitor's experience as intense as possible and thus awaken their identification with the ideas of the National Liberation Struggle.

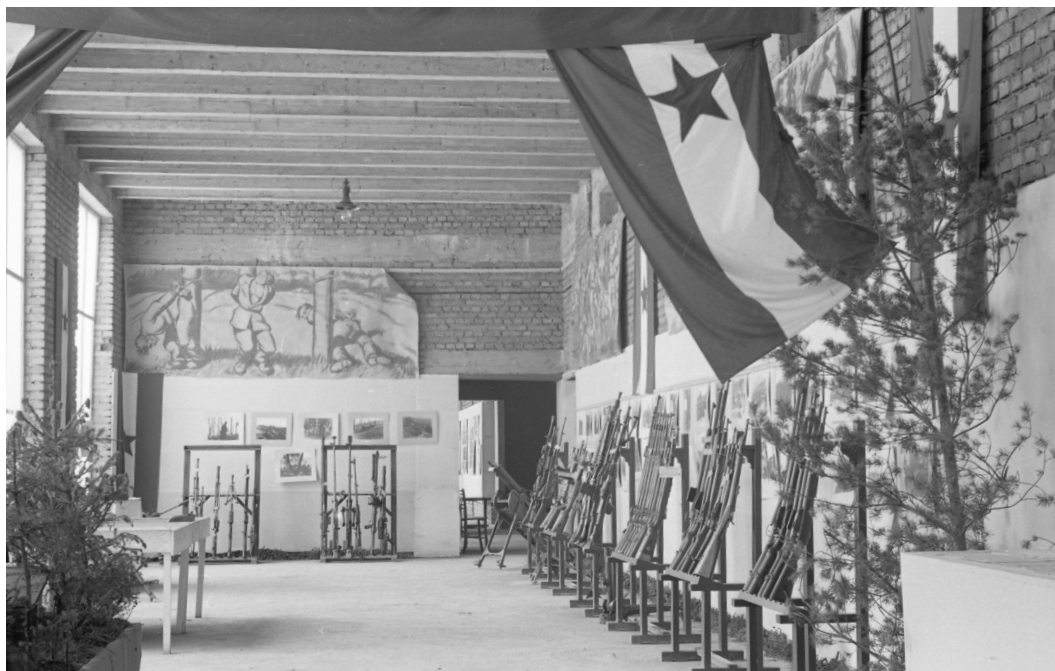
In view of all this, the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* was one of the most important projects of Slovenian cultural policy immediately after the war. Its scope and complexity required the participation of a large number of people, and the opening ceremony was attended by the political leadership of the time.

Another important exhibition co-organised by the ZI in the first period was the large exhibition *The National Liberation Struggle in Yugoslavia (La lutte des peuples yougoslaves pour la liberté)*, which was organised in Paris shortly before the Paris Peace Conference, i.e. immediately after the above-mentioned exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War*.³⁷ The Paris exhibition was organised on the initiative of the Yugoslav Embassy in France together with the Association France-Yougoslavie and with the active support and also under the official auspices of numerous key figures of the French post-war intellectual and political elite.³⁸

The ZI provided important and varied material from its collections for this exhibition. Despite the scarcity of information about it, we assume that it was very ambitious and well-thought-out in view of the negotiations at the time about the country's new post-war

37 The exhibition poster indicates the date, 19 June to 15 July, and the location of the exhibition: Les Ambassadeurs, 3, Avenue Gabriel, Place de la Concorde. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71. We assume that Les Ambassadeurs refers to the concert hall where the famous cabaret Café des Ambassadeurs operated until 1929. Nathalie Coutelet, "L'expérience partagée au café-concert du XIXe siècle", *Études littéraires*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2023, pp. 97–110.

38 Katarina Todić, "A traditional friendship? France and Yugoslavia in the cold war world, 1944–1969" (doctoral dissertation), McMaster University, Hamilton, 2015, pp. 77–78. A publication with the same title as the exhibition had already been published in 1945: *La lutte des peuples yougoslaves pour la liberté*, France-Yougoslavie, Paris, 1945. As it was published by the same association, France-Yougoslavie, and René Cassin, who also spoke at the opening, contributed the foreword, we can assume that these were related projects. It is very likely that Yugoslavia prepared two similar exhibitions in Paris, one in 1945 and one in 1946. Anonymous, "Jugoslovenska izložba u Parizu", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, vol. 3, no. 167, 10.6.1945, p. 3.









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Installation views of a section of the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War*, held in the unfinished premises of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana in 1946.



borders.³⁹ The ZI is also said to have sent 14 artworks to this exhibition, including *The Partisan*, a sculpture by Zdenko Kalin, which was one of the focal points of the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.⁴⁰

Even in the first period, both the ZI and the MNO LRS loaned materials to other exhibitions. For example, when the Inter-Allied Boundary Commission arrived in 1946 to determine the national affiliation of the population in the Littoral, the ZI made its material available for an exhibition of Partisan printing in Trieste.⁴¹

3. The Second Period: 1952–1958

In contrast to the first period, in which the newly founded MNO LRS operated very similarly to the ZI and focused primarily on building up the institution itself and the collection and documentation of material, the second period was characterised by a more structured organisation of the art collection and a clearer acquisition policy. In 1952, the museum also began to inventory the art collection.⁴² The number of works grew rapidly and the art collection made up a large part of the museum's total collection.⁴³ The museum also established itself as an important museum institution in the larger network of Yugoslav museums of the National Liberation Struggle, which also led to an increase in exhibitions in other locations and loans to other institutions.⁴⁴

The way the art collection was managed in the second period suggests that the museum began to assign a particular importance

39 Matija Žgajnar explains that Yugoslavia, with Edvard Kardelj at the forefront, “fought for its new borders at the Paris Peace Conference, especially for the Littoral Region. To win over the French public, the Yugoslav army choir Srečko Kosovel also travelled there.” The same text states that “the French were even more impressed by the exhibition on the Yugoslav Partisan struggle”. For the exhibition, the ZI loaned battle flags from Slovenian battalions, brigades and divisions, radio receivers used in the underground battles, a Partisan cannon, a hand mimeograph, products from Partisan workshops, medical material and the like. Žgajnar, 1998 (see no. 24), pp. 39, 40.

40 The list of objects that the ZI allegedly sent to Paris includes works by Tone Kralj, Maksim Sedej, Božidar Jakac, Dore Klemenčič-Maj, Drago Vidmar, France Mihelič, Nikolaj Pirnat and the aforementioned Kalin. Kalin's *The Partisan* is identical to the statue on the Victory Monument in Murska Sobota, which was unveiled in 1945. At the exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* in Ljubljana in 1946, either a different cast of the statue or its patinated maquette was exhibited. Our research did not reveal any information about whether *The Partisan* was actually sent to Paris and where it is located today. Folder Razstava Pariz 1946, “Predmeti izložbe N. O. V. v Parizu od 19.VI.1946 do 15.VII.1946”, Loan Archive of the MNSZS.

41 Žgajnar, 1998 (see no. 24), p. 40.

42 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 53.

43 In 1957, the museum housed seven thousand artefacts, including 1,500 works of art. Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 17.

44 Milan Bevc, “Delo Muzeja narodne osvoboditve v 1958. letu”, in: Milan Bevc (ed.), *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 2, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, Ljubljana, 1958, p. 259.

to it. Unlike in the previous period, the artworks were increasingly treated separately from other museum artefacts and presented accordingly. The museum even considered constructing special buildings for the art collection and for permanent exhibitions of artworks. In 1952, a memorial with portrait sculptures, the Alley of National Heroes, was planned next to the museum.⁴⁵ The following year, perhaps modelled on the Zagreb Gipsoteka (today the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), there were plans to “set up a gypsothèque, i.e. plaster cast sculptures”.⁴⁶ Building an art pavilion, where both Partisan prints and documentary photography would be exhibited, was also under consideration. The main purpose of this pavilion was to popularise the art collection and bring together all the Partisan artworks “in one place”.⁴⁷ It was to be located on the eastern side of the museum complex and divided into exhibition and working spaces.

There would be two exhibition spaces. The first would be for occasional exhibitions with a capacity of up to 150 prints or up to five hundred photographs, the second would be a permanent exhibition space for a maximum of two hundred prints. The gallery would also have its own hall with a cloakroom, a doorman’s room and a toilet. The working spaces would include a photo lab, a depot for prints, oil paintings and photographs as well as an office for the pavilion’s curator. The film material would be stored in an air-conditioned ‘bunker’ in the basement.⁴⁸

A Heroes’ Park was planned around the pavilion, likely a revival of the idea from 1952, when a similar commemorative installation was considered for the space in front of the museum. A concept drawing, by architect Maks Toboljevič, for the new pavilion was also made and published; however, the pavilion was never realised (fig. 86).⁴⁹

In 1956, however, the museum succeeded in reconstructing seven Partisan printshops at the foot of the wooded hill behind the

45 A competition was planned for this project, but no information could be found as to whether it actually took place. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Urad za urbanizem pri MLO, 436/3, 19.12.1952”, SI AS 2200/7/16, ARS.

46 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Obrazložitev k predlogu proračuna za leto 1953”, SI AS 2200/7/17, ARS. The proposal names Francišek Smerdu, Božo Pengov, Tine Kos, Ivan Zajec and Boris Kalin as possible authors of the sculptures.

47 Bevc, 1957 (see no. 30), p. 158.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., pp. 158, 160. The planning of the art pavilion took place before the founding of today’s International Centre of Graphic Arts. Although we have found no actual connection with the creation of this exhibition space, it is a similar idea to the exhibition space for graphic arts in Tivoli Park.

museum (fig. 87).⁵⁰ When they were opened, a temporary exhibition of Partisan illustrations was also opened in the museum building.⁵¹ Originally, life-size wooden buildings were erected and surrounded by wire, which stood on the border between Italy and Germany during the war.⁵² Judging by the photos, the interior of the buildings was later reconstructed or rebuilt. This permanent exhibition thus directly showed the harsh conditions in which these printshops operated and underscored their significance to the resistance movement.⁵³ It is worth noting that by displaying materials from the collections in these buildings, the museum also addressed the problem of the lack of exhibition space.⁵⁴ There were also plans to reconstruct concentration camp watchtowers, but the plans were never realised.⁵⁵

In the second period, it became increasingly important for the museum to visually emphasise the memory of the Second World War and thus also to commemorate important events or people through art. The museum recognised the communicative power of works of art and often commissioned works with motifs of war events when preparing individual exhibitions. One such example was the museum's first exhibition after moving to the Cekin Mansion in 1952 entitled *Ljubljana in the National Liberation Struggle (Ljubljana v narodno-osvobodilni borbi)*. Archival records mention several unnamed paintings commissioned specifically for this exhibition. Based on the photographs, the subject, the date of creation and the date of inclusion in the museum, we assume that one of the commissioned works was *The Shooting of Hostages, 13 October 1942*, painted by Tone Kralj.⁵⁶

50 The intention was "to bring to the small forest behind the Cekin Mansion the atmosphere that was so characteristic of the war period, be it in Lower Slovenia, Styria, the Littoral or Upper Carniola". Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn v Ljubljano", *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 6, no. 132, 6.6.1956, p. 3.

51 Anonymous, "Spomenik partizanski tiskani besedi", *Slovenski poročevalec*, vol. 17, no. 171, 22.7.1956, p. 2. The setting up of the printing works was reported in the newspapers of the time. A special edition of *Ljudska pravica* was also published on the occasion of the opening, which was dedicated to the topic of Partisan printing works and the Partisan press. See: *Ljudska pravica: Spominska izdaja ob otvoritvi rekonstrukcij partizanskih tiskarn pri Muzeju narodne osvoboditve LRS*, vol. 22, no. a, 21.7.1956.

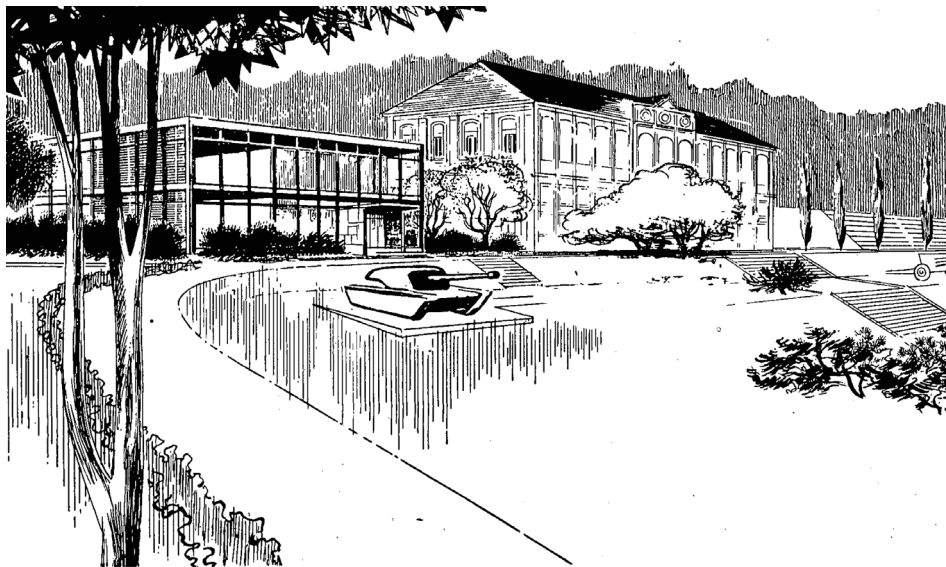
52 Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn ...", (see no. 50), p. 3.

53 The reconstructions included: workshop Cankar, the printing house Trilof, the power station (energy system), the engine and cliché workshop rooms of the Partisan printing works Triglav - 11a, the caseroom of the printing house Slovenia and the studio of the printing house Ladopunkt. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 71.

54 Bevc, 1957 (see no. 30), p. 154.

55 Anonymous, "Selitev partizanskih tiskarn ...", (see no. 50), p. 3. There is no further information about this project, except for the indication that in 1956 there were plans to reconstruct them in the future.

56 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Svet za prosveto in kulturo LRS (računovodstvo), 283/2, 1.9.1952", SI AS 2200/7/16, ARS.



Inž. arh. Maks Toboljevič: Idejna skica paviljona za partizansko grafiko in dokumentarno fotografijo NOB. Obrazložitev glej na str. 158.



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Conceptual sketch for a pavilion dedicated to Partisan graphics and documentary photography next to the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia, designed by Maks Toboljevič (reproduced in *Letopis Muzeja narodne osvoboditve LRS*, 1957).

87

Reconstructed Partisan printshops in the forest near the Museum of National Liberation of the People's Republic of Slovenia in 1956.

By commissioning and presenting artworks in this way, the museum was able to play an important role in establishing and promoting typical iconographic motifs associated with the National Liberation Struggle. These images not only documented and illustrated past war events but also conveyed the values and symbolism of the National Liberation Struggle as the foundation of the post-war socialist society. Examples of these motifs include Partisans travelling in the snow, carrying a wounded comrade or shackled hostages – motifs that were regularly exhibited, reproduced and also published (fig. 88).⁵⁷ It was precisely through exhibitions that the museum quickly consolidated its role as a centre for the dissemination of these images. In a way, it became – albeit unofficially – responsible for them. By consistently emphasising certain themes, the museum also encouraged the creation of new works inspired by the same subject matter. The simultaneous increased cooperation with other museums at this time was probably due not only to the lack of exhibition space in the museum building or the desire for cooperation but also from a deliberate ambition to actively disseminate these images and consolidate them in the public consciousness.

The latter is perhaps particularly evident in the exhibitions of Partisan prints, which had become a kind of permanent feature of the museum's exhibition programme. The museum increasingly recognised the collection of Partisan prints as a significant and attractive part of its collection.⁵⁸ Regularly organised exhibitions emphasised the phenomenon of the creation of the collection during the war itself and aimed to show “the broad mass of people and especially foreigners the conditions under which the Slovenian people created so many high-quality prints and the role these prints played in the National Liberation Struggle, which was a unique example in the worldwide anti-fascist struggle”.⁵⁹ In this respect, Partisan art had not only an aesthetic, motivational or documentary function but also a clear political one, reinforcing national identification with the Partisan cause even after the war. The increasing frequency of these exhibitions is

57 The authors of these images were, for example, Nikolaj Pirnat, Drago and Nande Vidmar, France Mihelič, Ive Šubic, Dore Klemenčič-Maj, Božidar Jakac, Vladimir Lamut and Alenka Gerlovič.

58 The term Partisan print was used to describe and exhibit different types of material: prints, drawings, illustrations, posters, leaflets, etc. from the period of the National Liberation Struggle. Iztok Durjava wrote that the prints produced during the war “superseded the socially critical prints of the pre-war period”, as they “retained their humanist message and also displayed a new fighting spirit. They represented the artists’ intimate relationship with the struggle and the revolution and at the same time became part of an artistic language that was understandable and convincing.” Iztok Durjava, *Zbirka likovnih del Muzeja ljudske revolucije Slovenije*, Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1984, pp. 3, 5.

59 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “MNO ima na svojem programu v letu 1953 naslednje razstave”, SI AS 2200/7/16, ARS.



Article on Partisan prints, "Partisan Graphics: The Purest Modern Folk Art", from the magazine *Tovariš* in 1952.

thus understandable, particularly as they were relatively inexpensive to produce and required only minimal organisational resources.

3.1 Exhibitions of the Second Period

In the second period, artworks were mainly presented in the context of historical exhibitions, the aforementioned exhibitions of Partisan prints and independent art exhibitions. Historical exhibitions included the art collection either as a separate part of the exhibition or integrated artworks into the broader exhibition installation. However, the holistic and theatrical approach of enriching the exhibition with monumental paintings and scenographic elements was no longer favoured in this period, as was the case, for example, with the large exhibition *The Liberation Front in the Patriotic War* in the first period.

Permanent exhibitions generally present the most important materials of a museum and reflect the fundamental orientation of an institution. The selection of displayed items thus provides an insight into the hierarchy of value attached to the museum's artefacts and shows what content the institution most identifies with and what narratives it aims to communicate to its visitors. In 1955, the renovation of the Cekin Mansion was completed and the museum prepared its first permanent exhibition on the military and political development of the National Liberation Struggle in Slovenia during the Second World War.⁶⁰ Seventy-two works of art were exhibited alongside other material (including weapons, flags, maps, medical material and photographs).⁶¹ In the foyer stood the statue of Tito by Antun Augustinčič, while the entrance hall on the first floor was dedicated to national heroes, with busts of Franc Rozman - Stane (1911–1944) and the recently deceased Boris Kidrič (1912–1953).⁶² The artworks were scattered throughout the building but were mainly concentrated in the central

60 As Kaja Širok notes, the exhibition was well attended, but it was also criticised for focusing too much on "individual heroic narratives, glorifying selected stories and ignoring the collective history of resistance and sacrifice." Kaja Širok, "Reinterpreting and Transforming 'Red' Museums in Yugoslavia", *Museum International*, vol. 70, no. 3–4, 2018, pp. 26–37, 31.

61 The museum acquired the statue of Josip Broz - Tito from Antun Augustinčič with the intention of placing it in a new permanent exhibition. Negotiations began in 1953. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Letter of Antun Augustinčič to the MNO LRS, 16.12.1953", SI AS 2200/8/18, ARS. The statue is a version of the famous Tito statue, which was first unveiled in Kumrovec in 1948 and of which several casts were later erected in other Yugoslav cities. In 1958, the statue was moved from the permanent exhibition of the MNO LRS to the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre for the 7th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In 1961, it was moved to the platform in front of the museum, where it remained until the early 1990s, when it was deposited. Ivan Smiljanič, "Spomenik za življenje: Zgodovina koncepta na Slovenskem", *Retrospektive*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2022, p. 39.

62 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Muzej narodne osvoboditve LRS, p. 3", SI AS 2200/8/18, ARS.

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89–90

Artworks on permanent display in the Knight's Hall and a permanent sculpture installation in the museum lobby in 1955. The lobby also hosted rotating temporary exhibitions.



Installation view of the exhibition *Partisan Illustrations* in the museum lobby in 1956.

frescoed hall on the first floor, the so-called Knight's Hall, where a large selection of “the best examples of Partisan art” was exhibited (figs. 89–90).⁶³ With its first permanent exhibition, the museum determined to a certain extent how it wanted to incorporate works of art into its historical exhibitions.⁶⁴ A trend towards inclusion of a significant number of artworks can be discerned, even if only a few of them occupied prominent positions in the exhibitions. They usually complemented other exhibits thematically or formed smaller, comprehensively highlighted sections, as in the 1958 exhibition *Courier Connections in the National Liberation Struggle: An Exhibition in Honour of the Day of the Republic* (*Kurirske zveze v NOB: Razstava v počastitev Dneva republike*), in which works by Partisan artists were presented in a separate room.⁶⁵ Judging by the photos, there was a similar

63 Anonymous, “Pred otvoritvijo Muzeja narodne osvoboditve”, *Ljubljanski dnevnik*, vol. 5, no. 92, 19.4.1955, p. 4; Urbanc, 1998 (see no. 10), p. 17.

64 A short guide to the exhibition with numerous photos of the installation has also been published. *Muzej narodne osvoboditve LR Slovenije*, Muzej narodne osvoboditve LR Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1956.

65 *Kurirske zveze v NOB: Razstava v počastitev Dneva republike* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1958; Bevc, 1958 (see no. 44), p. 259.

arrangement of artworks in the 1958 exhibition *Underground Printing in Occupied Ljubljana (Illegalni tisk v okupirani Ljubljani)*.⁶⁶

During the second period, the museum also organised special art exhibitions, although these were relatively infrequent. Particularly noteworthy is the aforementioned *Partisan Illustrations* exhibition from 1956, in which the artworks – according to exhibition photographs – were grouped thematically into, for example, illustrations and drawings from the occupying forces' concentration camps, poster illustrations and depictions of hostages (fig. 91).⁶⁷ In the same year, the museum prepared another important specialised art exhibition in Mala Galerija, dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the death of the artist and Partisan Vito Globočnik, whose works were held in large numbers in the museum's collection.⁶⁸

4. The Third Period: 1959–1971

In the late 1950s, the generation for whom the war was only part of their childhood memories were already entering social and political life. They focused on the future and became less and less attached to the heroic narrative of the struggle and victory of the National Liberation Struggle. The state therefore tried to keep the memory alive by various means, to ground it meaningfully in related pre-war events and, at the same time, to convey it to the younger generations in a modern way. In conjunction with the theoretical justification of the socialist self-management system, the museum focused on the narrative of the socialist revolution, presenting it as a still ongoing struggle for a better and fairer world. In line with this ideological shift, the Yugoslav Museums of National Liberation Struggle, as already noted, were gradually renamed Museums of the People's Revolution, thus changing their mission. Subsequently, the Museum of the People's Revolution of Slovenia focused on themes related to the pre-war workers' movement, the National Liberation Struggle or People's Revolution during the war and post-war socialist construction. This thematic and chronological structuring of the museum's contents remained in place until the late 1980s.⁶⁹

The change in the museum's mission also affected its art collection. In practice, this meant that the museum began to collect art from both before and after the Second World War. At the same time, it continued to collect art from the National Liberation Struggle, and studied it in relation to the other two periods. In this context, the

66 *Illegalni tisk v okupirani Ljubljani: Razstava v počastitev VII. kongresa ZKJ in partizanskega pohoda ob žici* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1958; Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

67 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72; Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

68 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72.

69 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 54.

post-war art that the museum promoted and collected was seen as a kind of logical extension of the art of the National Liberation Struggle.

The number of works of art in the collection grew rapidly during this period. Most of the works were donated to the museum mainly due to the “great desire and willingness of the donors to keep the valuable works safely in an institution that would study them and also make them accessible to the public”.⁷⁰ After 1960, the museum obtained an extensive collection of artefacts, including works of art, through organised acquisitions from various socio-political organisations.⁷¹ It also began acquiring works more systematically through purchases, buying both older and contemporary artistic production.⁷² This was particularly intensified when the museum established the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art (also known as the Commission for the Valuation of Works of Art), which will be discussed in more detail below.

In the third period, the museum established itself in the Slovenian context as an institution that could not be overlooked in the preparation of exhibitions on the art of the National Liberation Struggle. We infer this from the increased number of art exhibitions and, above all, from the numerous collaborations with other institutions in this field. During this period, the museum also showed a clear intent to professionalise the management of the art collection by hiring curators who were trained art historians, which was first done in 1958.⁷³

In the third period, the art collection was cared for by several people, both art historians and other experts. Between 1959 and 1966,

70 Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 3.

71 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), p. 54. An example of such an acquisition are the works of France Mihelič, who donated all his works created during the National Liberation Struggle to the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, which then gave them to the MNO LRS. Vera Visočnik, “O zbirki risb in grafik v Muzeju narodne osvoboditve”, *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1960, p. 353.

72 The report of the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art shows that in 1959 the museum owned over three thousand works by a total of 50 authors. Most of the works in the collection were by Ive Šubic, but Vito Globočnik, Nikolaj Pirnat, Vladimir Lamut, Nande Vidmar, Drago Vidmar, Lojze Lavrič and Alenka Gerlovič were also represented with a large number of works. The report states that the acquisition of works by Božidar Jakac, who is said to have had around 1,200 works, and works by Dore Klemenčič-Maj was also planned. It also states that France Mihelič handed over around seven hundred works to Lojze Gostiša, who was preparing a study of his art to be included in the collection after the exhibition. The report shows that almost all of the works still relate to the war period in terms of content, with only a few dating from the pre-war period and a somewhat larger number from the post-war period. The works from the pre-war period were only to be documented, not acquired. In the following years, however, we can trace a whole series of acquisitions of works of art from the pre-war period, including purchases. Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 3; Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, “Zapisnik o seji sestanka likovnega referata, 16.11.1959”, SI AS 2200/13/31, ARS.

73 Durjava, 1998 (see no. 2), pp. 54, 58.

Vera Visočnik was responsible for the art collection, while the art exhibitions were also prepared by the curator Jože Kori.⁷⁴ Alongside them, it is worth highlighting Lojze Gostiša (1923–2019), who was invited to the museum not only to oversee the art collection but also to reconceptualise the role of the museum.⁷⁵ He clearly had strong political backing and his work focused primarily on the effective implementation of current socialist doctrine. Gostiša was a unique combination of a connoisseur of both contemporary and older art, a skilful exhibition organiser and a mediator between official and unwritten political demands and important institutional and other artistic and cultural projects. In practice, his role encompassed that of both cultural organiser and content developer, ensuring that activities aligned with the leading ideological narrative.⁷⁶ After finishing his work at the museum in Ljubljana, he continued with similarly intensive and elusive work at the Gorenjska Museum in Kranj.⁷⁷

Gostiša's position at the museum in Ljubljana is difficult to explain, as he was formally only an external collaborator, while the

74 The curators mentioned above were certainly not the only ones responsible for the artworks. The lack of data on all the people who managed the art collection was a considerable disadvantage for our research. Nataša Jenko, "Seznam redno zaposlenih 1948–1998", in: Nataša Urbanc (ed.), *Muzej novejše zgodovine: 1948–98: Zbornik, Muzej novejše zgodovine*, Ljubljana, 1998, p. 106.

75 Compare: entry Kranj in *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979*, razstavljanjevsloveniji.si, 2025, URL: <https://razstavljanjevsloveniji.si> (accessed 21.11.2025).

76 As an art historian, Gostiša researched and promoted various art periods and genres of fine art. He worked into old age. On the occasion of awarding him the Izidor Cankar Award in 2009, the Slovene Art History Society wrote that Gostiša "combined an incredible talent for organisation and a deep insight into the works of important Slovenian artists and other personalities. He presented them to the public in publications, which he also organised, secured funding for, designed and often provided with professional texts. He was the initiator, conceptual leader, organiser and implementer of numerous museum and gallery projects, book editions, mediations in acquisitions, visual designs, memorials etc." Gostiša has written about Slovenian woodcuts from the 16th century to the present, post-war art (France Mihelič, Albin Rogelj, etc.) and cultural and historical monuments. He also organised exhibitions on socially critical art and the art of the National Liberation Struggle. He researched the legacy of Jože Plečnik and prepared an exhibition about him at the National Gallery in Ljubljana in 1968 and took part in the Plečnik exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1986. He also did important work in researching the work of Janez Vajkard Valvasor and was involved in the publication of a facsimile print of 17 volumes of Valvasor's collection of prints and drawings in 2009 as part of the Janez Vajkard Valvasor Foundation at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He was closely associated with Izidor Cankar and later took care of his estate. Anonymous, "Obrazložilo ob podelitvi nagrade Izidorja Cankarja dr. Lojzetu Gostiši", *Slovensko umetnostnozgodovinsko društvo*, suzd.si, URL: http://www.suzd.si/images/stories/Nagrade/2009_Gostisa.pdf (accessed 20.1.2025); Milčec Komelj, *Enigma Lojze Gostiša: Spomini na srečanja*, Slovenska matica, Ljubljana, 2021.

77 See entry Kranj in *Exhibiting in Slovenia 1947–1979* (see no. 75).

statements of former curators and archival documents indicate that in practice he was in fact the one who determined the acquisition and exhibition policies of the museum's art collection at the time.⁷⁸ Archival records, for example, already list him in 1958 as the "chief coordinator of the art collection";⁷⁹ although that same year the museum hired a curator who was an art historian. It should be noted that Gostiša's activities were not limited to the art collection, but that he was involved in most of the museum's exhibition projects.

We assume that it was also thanks to Gostiša's efforts that the museum acquired such a large number of artworks and attracted several inter-institutional exhibition projects during this period. It is likely that he was also involved in the expansion of the museum staff in 1959 by setting up the Commission for the Acquisition of Works of Art. Several times a year, this commission proposed which works of art should be purchased, evaluated them and also justified their significance for the art collection. Originally, the commission consisted of the sculptor Boris Kalin, the painter Fran Zupan, the art historians Špelca Čopič and Vera Visočnik, the museum director Milan Bevc and Gostiša himself. The commission invited artists to donate works to the museum or offer them for purchase. According to the 1959 annual report, the works selected for purchase were primarily those by artists who, as participants in the National Liberation Struggle, had succeeded in "artistically preserving from oblivion portraits of leaders, scenes of battles and other important events, Partisan hospitals and printing workshops, scenes from Partisan life etc., as well as life in the occupying forces' concentration camps and in the underground, using the most suitable form of artistic expression – primarily drawing and printmaking".⁸⁰ The report also states that "the indispensable work of artists in the field of propaganda should not be overlooked: illustrations for Partisan prints, linocut folders (Pirnat, Mihelič, Klemenčič, Globočnik), leaflets against the occupiers and local traitors (especially Pirnat and Mihelič), posters, designs for Partisan money, people's loan bonds, covers of brochures etc."⁸¹ With a clear collection policy and regular purchases of works, the museum was evidently also seeking to encourage artists to take up or remain committed to the motifs of the National Liberation Struggle and the Revolution.

78 Jenko, 1998 (see no. 74), pp. 105–106; *Vera Visočnik*, informal conversation, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, June 2022; *Iztok Durjava*, informal conversation, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, July 2023.

79 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Zapisnik o seji sestanka likovnega referata, 16.11.1959", SI AS 2200/13/3, ARS.

80 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Poročilo o delu v letu 1959 v Muzeju NO", p. 5, SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

81 Ibid.

4.1 The Exhibitions of the Third Period

In the third period, certain characteristics of the previous period's exhibitions continued, but the museum notably increased the number of independent fine art exhibitions and exhibitions of Partisan prints, while also paying greater attention to the integration of artworks into various historical exhibitions. During this period, the MLRS also loaned works to other institutions, both within Yugoslavia and abroad, which indicates its active role in the institutional museum network of the time.

At this time, the construction of additional pavilions next to the museum was once again being considered. While the Cekin Mansion itself would contain material from the National Liberation Struggle, one pavilion was to house pre-war material and a second would display post-war material. There were also plans to erect monuments to the Spanish Civil War fighters and the fighters for National Liberation Struggle in the museum park.⁸² Sources also indicate that the construction of a gallery for prints from the National Liberation Struggle was also planned.⁸³ The pavilions, the additional building and the monuments were never erected. Nevertheless, the museum prepared two new permanent exhibitions, which did not differ significantly in their approach to the art collection from the museum's first permanent exhibition in 1955. The second permanent exhibition was opened in 1961 and the third in 1965, which was slightly rearranged in 1971.⁸⁴ According to Iztok Durjava, the 1971 permanent exhibition displayed only a "fragment" of the art collection, but at the same time vividly demonstrated "the great expressive power and humanistic message of the rich artistic heritage".⁸⁵ The exhibition featured more than 60 works of art, including designs and copies of monuments to the National Liberation Struggle and the Revolution. The artworks were placed in all the exhibition rooms and in the museum foyer, addressing the visitors throughout the exhibition.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the majority of them were once again concentrated in the Knight's Hall and – judging by surviving photographs – they were not a thematic focal point during this period either.⁸⁷

In the third period, the standards of exhibition preparation changed considerably. Historical exhibitions often had a designated

82 T. P., "Proširenje Muzeja narodnog oslobođenja u Ljubljani", *Vjesnik Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Hrvatske*, vol. 20, no. 4454, 7.4.1959, p. 5.

83 L. J., "Zgrada za galeriju grafike", *Vjesnik Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Hrvatske*, vol. 20, no. 4412, 17.2.1959, p. 4.

84 Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Odgovori na pitanja o Muzeju revolucije v Ljubljani, p. 3", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

85 Durjava, 1984 (see no. 58), p. 18.

86 Ibid., p. 24.

87 Thematic box ... (see no. 29).

curator who was exclusively responsible for the selection of artworks.⁸⁸ An example of this is the overview historical exhibition *Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Occupying Forces (Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča)* from 1960, curated by Vera Visočnik.⁸⁹ Her research for this exhibition later served as the basis for a published study on art produced in the concentration camps.⁹⁰

In addition to the numerous exhibitions of Partisan prints, which were typical of the two previous periods and still occupied a prominent place in promoting the content of the National Liberation Struggle, the museum also organised various thematic exhibitions of the art collection. These were often accompanied by short catalogues or brochures. In the third period, the number of exhibitions focusing exclusively on art increased significantly, even though the insistence on popularising the content of the National Liberation Struggle persisted. This was in line with simultaneous exhibitions of the art of the National Liberation Struggle in other venues in Ljubljana, such as the gallery of the Cultural Centre of the Yugoslav People's Army,⁹¹ the City Art Gallery or the Mala Galerija. The MLRS also cooperated with other exhibition venues, e.g. with the Mala Galerija for an exhibition of Partisan prints in 1961⁹² and with the City Art Gallery for the exhibition *Art on the Theme of the National Liberation Struggle (1941–1963) (Likovna umetnost z NOB tematiko (1941–1963))*.⁹³ During this period, the MLRS also strengthened its connections with artists and the contemporary art scene through cooperation with the Slovenian Fine Artists'

88 Among the exhibitions, it is worth mentioning the *Women in the National Liberation Struggle* exhibition from 1958, the artistic part of which was prepared by Milan Brezovar. Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Pritožba Milana Brezovarja, 27.5.1959", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

89 *Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej narodne osvoboditve, Ljubljana, 1960. The exhibition featured 116 works by professional and self-taught artists. Miroslav Luštek, "Občasna razstava 'Okupatorjevi zapori in taborišča' v Muzeju narodne osvoboditve", *Prispevki za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1960, p. 359.

90 Vera Visočnik, informal conversation, (see no. 78); *Revolucija in umetnost: risbe iz zaporov in taborišč*, Aleksander Bassin, Vladimir Lakovič and Vera Visočnik (eds.), Soča, Nova Gorica, 1969. After leaving the museum in 1966, Vera Visočnik worked closely with the magazine *Borec*, which frequently published articles on artworks and artists related to the museum's collection.

91 For exhibitions in the Yugoslav People's Army cultural centres see also article by Ivan Smiljanič, *Revolution in Frames: Artistic Creation and Exhibiting in the Yugoslav People's Army* in this book, pp. 293–323.

92 Anonymous, "Razstava partizanske grafike", *Delo*, vol. 3, no. 343, 16.12.1961, p. 1.

93 Anonymous, "22 let odzivov na veliko temo", *Delo*, vol. 5, no. 301, 3.11.1963, p. 5; "Razstave 1962–2012", in: Mateja Podlesnik (ed.), *Razstava: 50 let Mestne galerije v Ljubljani*, Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane, Ljubljana, 2013, p. 83; Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 72. Osjak mentions this exhibition under the title *Slovenian Painting on the Theme of the National Liberation Struggle (Slovensko slikarstvo na temo narodnoosvobodilnega boja)*.



Part of the *National Liberation Struggle Sculpture Exhibition* in the garden of Križanke in Ljubljana in July 1965.

Society (DSLU). One such collaboration was the large *National Liberation Struggle Sculpture Exhibition* (*Razstava plastik NOB* also known as *Razstava plastik s tematiko narodnoosvobodilnega boja*), held in Križanke as part of the *13th Summer Cultural Events* festival in Ljubljana and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the liberation (fig. 92).⁹⁴

In addition to the overview exhibitions of fine arts, the museum also staged solo exhibitions of individual artists during this period.⁹⁵ Some of them were also presented at other exhibition venues and occasionally toured other Yugoslav cities.⁹⁶

In the 1960s, the MLRS strengthened its ties with other similar Yugoslav and foreign museums and art institutions. As already mentioned, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the MLRS only loaned works of art for exhibitions in other institutions, or whether it also contributed research or organisational input, or even acted as a

94 *Razstava plastik NOB* (leaflet), XIII. Poletne kulturne prireditve, Ljubljana, 1965.

95 For example: *Stane Kumar: Železničarski motivi* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1970; *Janez Boljka: Plastika, grafika* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1970; *Ivan Seljak-Čopič: Ilustracije* (leaflet), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1972.

96 According to Osjak, Stane Kumar's exhibition (see no. 95) travelled to Pančevo and Niš. Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 73.

co-organiser. In order to better understand this significant development and its characteristics, we will proceed by presenting a selection of the most prominent projects.

In 1961, the Museum of the People's Revolution of Croatia organised the exhibition *Posters of the Yugoslav Revolutionary Workers' Movement* (*Izložba plakata Jugoslavenskog revolucionarnog radničkog pokreta*), for which the museum in Ljubljana loaned works by Nikolaj Pirnat, Ive Šubic, Alenka Gerlovič, Vito Globočnik and others.⁹⁷ In 1963, part of the collection of Partisan prints was shown in the exhibition *Drawings and Prints from the National Liberation War* (*Crteži i grafike iz narodnooslobodilačkog rata*) at the Military Museum in Belgrade.⁹⁸ In 1965, the museum took part in the exhibition *Yugoslav Fine Arts in the National Liberation War 1941–1945* (*Jugoslovenska likovna umetnost u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945*), organised by the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and shown at home and abroad.⁹⁹ In the same year, the museum sent several works by Nikolaj Pirnat to the major Italian exhibition of politically engaged art *Art and Resistance in Europe* (*Arte e Resistenza in Europa*).¹⁰⁰ In 1967, the museum loaned several works by artists such as Ante Trstenjak, Nikolaj Pirnat, Stane Kumar, Maksim Sedej and Nande and Drago Vidmar for the exhibition *For Bread and Freedom: Engaged Art in the Yugoslav Regions until 1941* (*Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine*) in Osijek. Organised to mark the 100th anniversary of the organised workers' movement in Osijek, it offered a comprehensive professional survey of pre-war Yugoslav socially critical art.¹⁰¹ In 1969, the museum also contributed several works for the exhibition *1929–1950: Surrealism, Post-Surrealism, Social Art, Art of the National*

97 *Izložba plakata jugoslavenskog revolucionarnog radničkog pokreta* (exhibition catalogue), Smiljka Mateljan (ed.), Muzej revolucije naroda Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1961.

98 *Crteži i grafike iz narodnooslobodilačkog rata* (exhibition catalogue), Vojni muzej Beograd, Beogradski grafički zavod, Belgrade, 1963.

99 Several catalogues of this exhibition in various languages are preserved in the MNSZS library, but the institutions in which it was shown are not listed: *Jugoslavskoe izobrazitel'noe tvorchestvo v natsional'no-osvoboditel'noy voyne 1941–1945 g.* (exhibition catalogue), S. Zemcov (ed.), Komissiya po kulturnoi svyazi s inostranstvom SFR Yugoslavii, Belgrade, 1965; *Jugoslavskoe izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo v gody natsional'no-osvoboditel'noy voyny 1941–1945 g.: Katalog grafika* (exhibition catalogue), S. Zemcov (ed.), Sovetsky khudozhnik, Moscow, 1965; *Jugoslavsko izobrazitelno izkustvo prez godinite na NOB, 1941–1945* (exhibition catalogue), Ilija Pavlov (ed.), Bolgarski khudozhnik, Sofia, 1966.

100 *Arte e Resistenza in Europa* (exhibition catalogue), Museo civico Bologna, Galleria civica d'arte moderna Torino, Arti grafiche Tamari, Bologna, 1965.

101 *Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine* (exhibition catalogue), Galerija likovnih umjetnosti Osijek, Osijek, 1967; Tomislav Hruškovec, "Za kruh i slobodu: Angažirana umjetnost u zemljama Jugoslavije do 1941. godine", *Telegram*, vol. 8, no. 392, 3.11.1967, pp. 6, 7.

Liberation War, Socialist Realism (1929–1950: Nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam), which was one of the most prestigious overviews of Yugoslav art of the 20th century prepared by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade.¹⁰²

With regard to the MLRS's cooperation with other institutions, it should be mentioned that it also acted in an advisory capacity in the establishment of the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities in Belgrade.¹⁰³ For this purpose, the Ljubljana museum prepared recommendations and descriptions of the functioning of its departments.¹⁰⁴ The aim of this cooperation was also to ensure that "the history of the Slovenian workers movement, including the national liberation struggle, is accurately presented within the framework of this museum [in Belgrade]".¹⁰⁵

5. The Fourth Period: 1972–1979

We have placed the beginning of the fourth period in 1972, when a new generation of curators took over the management of the MLRS's art collection. They took an even more professional and thorough approach to the collection and, in contrast to the previous periods, the museum was also somewhat relieved of the task of constantly popularising the art of the National Liberation Struggle and allowed itself more room – or even freedom – to address a wider range of artistic phenomena. In the third period, the museum's acquisition policy was expanded to embrace a wider historical horizon; in the fourth, attention turned to studying artistic activity itself across a longer span of time. The collection was overseen by several curators-art historians, including Jure Mikuž, who joined the museum in 1972. He was succeeded in 1974 by Iztok Durjava, who on the one hand continued the tradition of exhibiting artworks from the National Liberation Struggle, and on the other expanded the exhibiting of other artistic content. He focused in particular on pre-war socially critical art and also organised exhibitions of post-war works of Socialist Realism.¹⁰⁶

102 *1929–1950: Nadrealizam, postnadrealizam, socijalna umetnost, umetnost NOR-a, socijalistički realizam* (exhibition catalogue), Miodrag B. Protić et al. (eds.), Muzej savremene umetnosti, Belgrade, 1969.

103 *Tekstovi, nacrti, fotografije projekta Muzeja revolucije naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije* (exhibition catalogue), Danica Abramović (ed.), Muzej revolucije naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije, Belgrade, n. d.

104 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Odgovori na pitanja o Muzeju revolucije v Ljubljani, p. 5", SI AS 2200/13/30, ARS.

105 Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije, 1944–2000, "Upravniku muzeja in načelnikom zgodovinskega oddelka, arhiva in knjižnice, 8.9.1961, p. 1", SI AS 2200/15/36, ARS.

106 Iztok Durjava later also worked outside the museum as an author and contributed texts to exhibition catalogues of other institutions, including *Ekspresionizem in nova*

Although the museum became somewhat less prominent in the public consciousness in the 1970s due to declining interest and even the public's negative attitude towards the general content, it was still able to convey a deep understanding of the collection and also to update it during this period.

5.1 Exhibitions of the Fourth Period

Art exhibitions in the fourth period largely followed the practice of the preceding, third period, when exhibition activity was particularly intense. Although the number of exhibitions did not change significantly, some of them deepened both the art-historical interpretation of the phenomena under consideration and their broader contextualisation.¹⁰⁷

The museum still displayed the permanent exhibition from the previous period, which Jure Mikuž supplemented in 1973 with major artworks on the theme of the Second World War from its collection. The works of 12 painters and 3 sculptors found a place in "one of the side rooms", where "a selection of the best works kept by the museum in its depots" was presented.¹⁰⁸

In the fourth period, too, the exhibitions frequently travelled to other cities in Yugoslavia and abroad, with the exhibitions of Partisan prints still being the most frequently sent on tour. An example of this was the large exhibition *Partisan Prints and Drawings (Partizanska grafika in risba)* from 1975,¹⁰⁹ curated by Jure Mikuž and Iztok Durjava, which travelled to East Berlin, Opicina near Trieste, Bucharest, Amsterdam, Beilen, Rotterdam, Amersfoort, Utrecht, Groningen, Almelo, Orvelte, Herning, Copenhagen, Kragujevac and Minsk after its presentation at the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana.¹¹⁰

stvarnost na Slovenskem 1920–1930 (exhibition catalogue), Milček Komelj and Igor Kranjc (eds.), Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1986. During a period not covered in this article, he also took over the management of the museum in 1995. The art historian Marjeta Mikuž also played an important role in the exhibitions of the art collection. She had been the museum's curator since 1979 and took over as director in 2000.

107 Within the permanent exhibition, however, the focus remained on the art of the National Liberation Struggle, as can be seen from the exhibition guide published by the museum in 1980. The largest part of the exhibition was dedicated to the historical description of events that took place on the Slovenian territory since the beginnings of the workers' movement. The greatest emphasis was on the period of the Second World War, where the fine arts were also briefly mentioned. Matija Žgajnar, *Vodnik po Muzeju ljudske revolucije Slovenije*, Ljubljana, 1980.

108 Janez Mesesnel, "Podoba velikega časa", *Delo*, vol. 15, no. 137, 22.5.1973, p. 8.

109 *Partizanska grafika in risba* (exhibition catalogue), Iztok Durjava and Jure Mikuž (eds.), Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 1975.

110 Osjak, 1998 (see no. 28), p. 74; *Iztok Durjava*, informal conversation (see no. 78). The exhibition was on display at the Museum of Modern Art for less than three weeks and was then moved to the City Art Gallery due to the organisation of the Biennale of Graphic Arts. As reported in the press at the time, "with additional presentations of all the quality that this work [Slovenian Partisan prints] offers us, the exhibition

In the fourth period, the museum continued its cooperation or even partnership with other Yugoslav or foreign institutions in the organisation of exhibitions. Some of these exhibitions were also fine arts exhibitions, such as the exhibition *Yugoslav Art in the National Liberation Struggle 1941–1945* (*Jugoslovenska umetnost u narodno-oslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945*), which was presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade in 1975.¹¹¹ In 1977, the museum cooperated with the Museum of the People's Revolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo to prepare an exhibition entitled *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Painters-Partisans* (*Bosansko hercegovski slikarji partizani*).¹¹² An even larger exhibition followed a year later, when the museum, in cooperation with the Historical Museum of National Liberation in Skopje, the Belgrade Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities and the Association of Fighters of the National Liberation Struggle of Yugoslavia, prepared a travelling exhibition entitled *Antifascist Struggle of Yugoslavs in Former Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Second World War in Works by Fine Artists* (*Protifašistični boj Jugoslovanov v bivših zaporih in koncentracijskih taboriščih med drugo svetovno vojno v delih likovnih umetnikov*), which was shown at the City Art Gallery in Ljubljana.¹¹³

The fourth period also saw the organisation of two overview exhibitions dedicated to fine arts and cultural history. In 1974, Jure Mikuž prepared the exhibition *Culture in the National Liberation War* (*Kultura v narodnoosvobodilnem boju*), which laid the groundwork for a broader research concept into cultural production during the war.¹¹⁴ In 1976, Durjava prepared the exhibition *Socially Critical Art*,

pursues a further purpose: to promote the recently renewed initiative for a comprehensive, study-based treatment and exhibition of the entire interwar work of Slovenian artists and autodidacts, which would present the first real overview of this material at the broadest level." J.[anez] M.[esesnel], "Podobe nastale v partizanih", *Delo*, vol. 17, no. 97, 25.4.1975, p. 8.

111 *Jugoslovenska umetnost u narodnooslobodilačkom ratu 1941–1945* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej savremene umetnosti Beograd, Belgrade, 1975.

112 *Bosansko hercegovski slikarji partizani* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1977; Janez Mesesnel, "Brez dvoumljenja", *Delo*, vol. 20, no. 81, 7.4.1977, p. 7; *Iztok Durjava*, e-mail communication, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, 10.6.2025.

113 *Antifašističkata borba na Jugoslovenite vo bivšite zatvori i konclogori za vreme na II svetska vojna vo delata na likovnite umetnici* (exhibition catalogue), Sojuz na združenijata na borbite od NOB na SRM, Skopje, 1977; "Razstave 1962–2012", (see no. 93), p. 95. From 1977 onwards, the exhibition travelled from Skopje to Pristina, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Titograd. The author of the exhibition layout in Ljubljana was Izток Durjava, who not only conceived the exhibition but also made a selection of works by Slovenian artists and participated as a member of the travelling exhibition's expert committee. *Iztok Durjava*, e-mail communication, conducted by Tina Fortič Jakopič, 10.6.2025.

114 The exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Cultural Community of Slovenia. *Kultura v narodnoosvobodilnem boju: Ob tridesetletnici I. kongresa kulturnih*

Prints and Drawings (Socialnokritična umetnost, grafika in risba), in which most of the works of socially critical art owned by the museum were displayed.¹¹⁵ This focus was maintained also in the following years. It is noticeable, however, that during this period the museum concentrated more on the ambitious exploration of certain complex artistic themes than on the preparation of art exhibitions, which served as the basis for important exhibition projects realised only after the end of the 1970s. Since this monograph ends in 1979 these later projects are mentioned here only in passing. In the 1980s, the museum organised the exhibitions *Underground Ljubljana: Art Echoes (Ljubljana v ilegali: Likovni odmevi, 1981)* and *Partisan Posters 1941–1948 (Partizanski plakat 1941–1948, 1982)*¹¹⁶ at the City Art Gallery and the exhibition *Socialist Realism in Slovenian Painting (Socialistični realizem v slovenskem slikarstvu, 1986)* at the Rihard Jakopič Art Gallery.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Looking back at the exhibition activities of the MLRS, we can see that the role and significance of the art collection within the museum changed significantly over the years. While in the early days the MNO LRS and its art collection acted primarily as a guardian of the shared visual memory of the recent wartime past, in later periods, however, the significance and scope of the museum's art holdings expanded considerably. The collection grew steadily, and with the systematisation of the museum's operations it became better organised and professionally managed. In the permanent and historical exhibitions, the works of art generally played a subordinate role to the main messages of the exhibition, i.e. the interpretation of the history of the Second World War and the justification or consolidation of the post-war socialist society. However, this was often not the case with art exhibitions, or rather, it was true to a lesser extent, as we can observe significant changes in the treatment of artworks in the different periods. Among other things, we notice a constant endeavour to apply artistic criteria and to maintain the best possible contact with the contemporary art scene, artists and professional associations.

delavcev v partizanih in ustanovitve Slovenskega umetniškega kluba: Semič 1944–1974 (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1974.

115 *Socialnokritična umetnost: Grafika in risba* (exhibition catalogue), Iztok Durjava (ed.), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1976.

116 Iztok Durjava, "Predgovor", in: Božena Plevnik (ed.), *Ljubljana v ilegali – likovni odmevi* (exhibition catalogue), Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1981; *Partizanski plakat: 1941–1948* (exhibition catalogue), Božena Plevnik (ed.), Mestna galerija, Ljubljana, 1982.

117 *Socialistični realizem v slovenskem slikarstvu* (exhibition catalogue), Muzej ljudske revolucije Slovenije, Ljubljana, 1986.