

Anja Bogojević

Cultural Studies, Doctoral school Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek

Socially Engaged Art in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Period between the Two World Wars (1918-1941)

In the period between the Two World Wars (1918-1941), in the revolutionary left-oriented processes art has been assigned a very important role – to act as the factor of transformation of society. Although a dissolution of the relationship between art and social revolution never actually occurred, this aporia had fundamental repercussions on the production and perception of art in the interwar period in former Yugoslavia.¹

This means that in order to understand the socially engaged practices in former Yugoslav art, their polemics, internal conflicts and contradictions, it is necessary to consider the specific socio-political, economic and cultural constellations that preceded and (or) directly caused this kind of art activity and strategies of resistance through art.

PhD project “Socially Engaged Art in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Period between the Two World Wars (1918-1941)” examines the forms of the engaged art practices in literature, theatre and visual arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)² in the interwar period. The work of BiH artists in particular - Hasan Kikić, Zijo Dizdarević, Skender Kulenović, (literature), Vojo Dimitrijević, Daniel Ozmo, Roman Petrović, Mica Todorović (visual arts) and *Collegium Artisticum* (synthetic theatre), is interpreted with regard to the influence of (major) Yugoslav cultural centres, groups and magazines as well as related phenomena and tendencies on the international art scene. Through the interpretation of complex socio-political and cultural-artistic situation in BiH during the given period, the analysis is focused on the forms and contents of the engaged arts and the relationship to the avant-garde art expressions.

¹In the Yugoslav socio-political sphere, the controversy about the ideological conditions and the function of artwork turned into a *conflict on the literary Left* (1928-1952). This conflict involved on the one side the advocates of engaged but independent art, and on the other supporters of the Communist Party’s dictated dogmatism - art in the service of ideology. More precisely, controversy was largely evolving around the relation between personal artistic freedom and collective revolutionary engagement.

² The term used in the paper is “Art in Bosnia and Herzegovina” since the current territory of BiH in the period between the Two World Wars (1918-1941) was a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929) or Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941).

The methodological framework of this interdisciplinary research is based on historical-descriptive and comparative scientific methods. The research is conducted on examination of works of art, documentation and archival material as well as through comparative analysis of the regional and international artistic tendencies of the time. The research is based on the use of relevant literature on the theory and history of art, literature, philosophy, political science and cultural studies. The intention here is to show the extent to which BiH artist's engaged action was timely and topical artistic reaction that corresponded with the dominant international trends in art, and whether it is due to this reaction that the BiH art officially became part of the European cultural and artistic 'family'.

The research is focused on the issue of whether and to what extent a work of art or performance gets the attribute of *engaged* (work) through the selection of themes and content? Whether and to what extent the historical context (political, economic, social and cultural) affected the thematic and content attributes of socially engaged practices? Namely, how and in what cases was there a synthesis of formal and substantive research, which then resulted in the breakthrough towards the avant-garde art forms in the works of individual authors? Moreover, whether and to what extent socially engaged art practices were the carriers of an emancipatory potential in the construction of transnational society in the interwar period in former Yugoslavia.