



БИБЛИОТЕКА  
АКАДЕМИИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ УЧЕНЫХ

# EXHIBITION

2052/19

of

## JUGOSLAV SCULPTURE

## AND PAINTING

APRIL 10th—MAY 31st, 1930



Under the Auspices of

the "Jugoslav Society of Great Britain"

and

the "Friends of Great Britain in Jugoslavia."



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## FOREWORD.

In the winter of 1928-9 the Yugoslav Society of Great Britain with the active help of "British Artists' Exhibitions," organised a small exhibition of contemporary British art in Jugoslavia. It visited first Ljubljana, then Zagreb, and finally Belgrade, and everywhere aroused great interest, special lectures, concerts of British music and theatrical performances of Shakespeare and various modern British playwrights being arranged for the occasion. A large number of the British exhibits were purchased locally.

The Yugoslav Society of Great Britain was anxious to organise a return visit of Yugoslav artists to this country, and found an eager helper in the recently founded society "Friends of Great Britain in Jugoslavia" in Zagreb. Thanks to the great kindness and interest of the Director and Trustees of the National Gallery, Millbank, it has proved possible to plan it on a much larger and more representative scale than had originally been intended.

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A Special poster has been prepared for the occasion of the Exhibition, by Miss Ann Dallas, based upon her study of peasant types in Jugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia.

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Full particulars regarding the Exhibition may be obtained from the Yugoslav Society of Great Britain, 62, Chester Terrace, S.W.1, or from their representative at the Gallery.



## A SURVEY OF JUGOSLAV ART.

TO most people in Britain Yugoslav art begins and ends with Ivan Meštrović, whose exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1915 at once aroused the liveliest interest. In 1918 his work was again shown at the Grafton Gallery, together with that of another Dalmatian sculptor, Toma Rosandić and the Croatian painter Frano Rački. But the present exhibition is not merely the first collective exhibition of Yugoslav art to be held in this country, but much the largest and most representative ever held in Western Europe. It is the purpose of this preface to summarise as briefly as possible the main tendencies of contemporary Yugoslav Art and the capital rôle which it has played in the movement for national unity, especially since the early years of this century.

Though many causes, alike political and social, conspired to prevent the development of a national art till quite recent times none the less what we now know as Jugoslavia may claim to have not merely one, but several very noteworthy artistic traditions, which, now that unity has been achieved, serve as an inspiration for the future. Even before the coming of the Serbs and Croats, the Greeks and Romans had left many artistic traces in the Balkan Peninsula: to quote but a single notable instance, the Palace of Diocletian at Split (Spalato) has created a special tradition of its own (which Robert Adam applied in Adelphi Terrace and in English domestic decorative art). The Jugoslavs, who settled in their present home in the VII and VIII centuries, were from the first under the twin but rival influences of Byzantium and Rome. Under the Nemanja dynasty (XIIIth and XIVth cent.) architecture and fresco painting flourished exceedingly in Serbia (witness the wonderful churches of Dečani, Gračanica, Nagoričano, etc.), until it was harshly arrested by the Turkish conquest in 1459.

Meanwhile Italian, Byzantine and native Slav influences were blended in the ecclesiastical and domestic architecture of the Dalmatian and Istrian towns: and this lasted on into the Renaissance along the whole eastern Adriatic coast. Further north, in the XVII and XVIIIth centuries came other influences, at first from Venice, but in later times from Vienna, Graz and

Pest also. This was the period of baroque, rococo and "Biedermeier," which left its traces in the Voivodina (South Hungary), Croatia and Slovenia, no less in church decoration than in the life of the local aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Thus there remain two great traditions, the Eastern, deriving from Byzantine and Syrian ecclesiastical art, among the Serbs and Bulgars, the Western, passing from Romanesque through the Renaissance to baroque and later movements, among the Croats and Slovenes, and the Serbs of Hungary.

There have been two factors of special importance in the cultural life of the Yugoslavs in the XIXth century—the rise of a free and independent Serbia, exercising a powerful attraction upon all sections of the Yugoslav race; and the long and untiring efforts of the famous Croat Bishop Strossmayer and his helper the historian Rački, in the cause of national awakening and spiritual unity. While Serbia tended more and more to become the "Piedmont" of the political movement, Strossmayer made of Zagreb a real centre of Yugoslav culture, by his work in founding the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences, the first Croat university, the first Croat art gallery, and in gathering round him a group of scholars and artists. His own Cathedral of Djakovo is a monument both of his artistic enthusiasm and of the practical difficulties that confronted him at home.

Meanwhile, at Ljubljana (Laibach) also, during the second half of the XIXth century, there was a revival of Slovene national feeling: in art romanticism found its first adherents in M. Langus, Janez Wolf and above all, in the painter Juraj Šubić (No. 23). But even as late as the nineties not merely Ljubljana, but Zagreb and Belgrade also were still without any regular school of art, and the younger generation, in search of artistic training, found it necessary to go to Vienna, Budapest and Venice, and further afield to Munich, Paris and even Russia. Thus at this stage in the evolution of Jugosal Art there could be neither homogeneity nor discipline: and indeed this was rendered all the more difficult by the differences of mentality due to the various political systems under which the nation still lived, and the ferment and confusion resulting from this fact. The applied arts were still in their infancy.

Thus at the turn of the century the Yugoslavs as yet lacked continuity of artistic tradition: they possessed no native school of art or society, or indeed any centre which could compete with the great art centres of the west. It was inevitable that art should develop on individualistic lines.



In Belgrade during the last decade of the XIXth century the most eminent painters were George Krstić (Nos. 103, 105) and Djura Jakšić (No. 102), who, like so many other Serbs of the Voivodina, found freer scope for their activities in Serbia than under the Magyar regime. In passing, it is important to stress the great part played in the reconstruction of Serbia, by the descendants of those who fled to Hungary to escape from the Turkish yoke. These men and their pupils—Paja Jovanović, Uroš Predić (Nos. 159, 166, 195) and Steva Todorović—all studied either at Vienna or Munich. In Zagreb the Dalmatian Vlaho Bukovac (No. 223), who had studied in Paris, introduced for the first time impressionist tendencies in Yugoslav art: before him had worked in Zagreb the *genre* painter Nikola Mašić (No. 219), Karas (No. 106), and Quiquerez (Nos. 202, 206). At the same time the Slovene artist Ažbe was working at Munich and became the teacher of many of the next generation of his compatriots in the narrower sense. Mention should also be made of the work of Emanuel Vidović (Nos. 76, 144, 145, 155, 163, 165), who after studying in Venice, formed an interesting little group at Split (Spalato).

In modern Yugoslav art painting took precedence until towards the close of the first decade of our own century sculpture wrests to itself the first place, in the person of a young Dalmatian, Ivan Meštrović, who soon attracted the attention of the outside world. His work coincided with a period of intensive political activity among all sections of the Yugoslavs: for the year 1903 saw the accession of King Peter Karagjorgjević in Serbia, the fall of the Khuen regime in Croatia, the end of the Kállay system in Bosnia, the failure of the Macedonian insurrection. The movement for national unity grew apace, and in it the artists figured prominently. The First Yugoslav Exhibition, held at Belgrade in 1904, became a demonstration for unity, and was attended by all the more ardent spirits in art, literature and academic life. Meštrović was one of the pioneers and brought with him a small group of young enthusiasts—Toma Rosandić, Mirko Rački, Krizman (Nos. 250, 269, 273), Kljaković (Nos. 91, 124, 234), who has acquired a high reputation since the war by his frescoes in the church of St. Mark, Zagreb. From Slovenia came Ažbe's pupils, Jakopić (Nos. 127, 132, 138, 174, 216), Grohar, Jama, full of enthusiasm for colour and *plein air*, and that interesting student of national life and ancient monuments, Ferdo Veselj (Nos. 75, 156, 173). In Belgrade they found a young group of Serbian painters, Nadežda Petrović (Nos. 117, 118, 130), Vukanović (No. 233),

Murat, Stevanović (Nos. 177, 181), Ivanović (Nos. 287, 291, 294), Glišić (No. 244).

At this point it is necessary to emphasise the rôle of Meštrović, who was born in 1883 as a poor shepherd boy in the Dalmatian uplands, and drew his first inspiration from the magnificent ballad poetry of the Serbo-Croat peasantry. Trained at the Academy of Art in Vienna, he first won an international position at the Roman Exhibition of 1911, where the model of his "Temple of Kosovo" the caryatid figures intended for its entrance hall, and the statues of such legendary heroes as Marko Kraljević and Miloš Obilić created no small sensation. These, "The Widows of Kosovo" and other works were first shown in London in 1915 and revealed him as one of the chief spiritual protagonists of the Yugoslav idea, and as a genius at once prolific and ranging over the whole gamut of human passion. In 1918 and 1923 specimens of his religious art—the vast wooden crucifix, in Byzantine style, and a series of reliefs in plaster and wood—were shown at the Grafton Gallery and the Fine Art Society. Further examples will be found in his kneeling "St. Francis" (No. 58), "The Woman of Samaria" (No. 53), and an entirely new treatment of "The Annunciation" (No. 56). Some idea of his width of range may be gathered from a comparison of his national and religious works with the colossal bronze "Red Indian Horsemen," erected last year on the Lake Front at Chicago, the memorial to King Peter at Dubrovnik (Ragusa), the wonderful Memorial Chapel of the Račić family at Cavtat (Dalmatia), and the colossal figure of Bishop Gregory of Nin in the peristyle of Diocletian's palace at Split. It should be added that Meštrović is director of the art school at Zagreb and is steadily winning for it international recognition.

Closely allied with Meštrović is another remarkable Dalmatian sculptor, Toma Rosandić, whose work was seen and appreciated in London during the war, and who is represented here by a number of works from private collections, and also from a special exhibition recently organised in Holland by his admirers. Rosandić was born at Split in 1878, and after studying for some years in Rome and Venice, worked at home in close collaboration with Meštrović. Since the war he has made his headquarters at Belgrade. Much of his work is in wood: and specially notable examples are "The Only Son" (No. 48) and "The Vestal Virgin" (No. 50). Special mention must be made of the memorial chapel which he has built for the Petrinović family in the island of Brač, opposite Split.



Simultaneously with the rise of these two sculptors, there arose in Zagreb a school of impressionist landscape painters, who in their turn were held in check by such painters as Račić (Nos. 104, 227), and Kraljević (Nos. 82, 119, 126, 160), who stood more under the influence of French colour values. Their tradition is still maintained by Vladimir Becić, like them, a pupil of Habermann in Munich (Nos. 79, 93, 109, 115, 125), and Ljubo Babić (Nos. 100, 123, 162, 194), who worked under Stuck. At the same time the influence of the Viennese "Sezession" was strongly noticeable in the case of Mirko Rački, Krizman, and others.

A second group, more colourist in tendency, belongs rather to the school of Cézanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh: its leaders are Branko Popović (Nos. 73, 77, 200, 217, 247), Dobrović (Nos. 85, 95, 113, 134), and Bijelić (Nos. 148, 152, 196, 218). Among its younger members are the gifted Dalmatian Marin Tartalja (whose portrait (No. 107) obtained a prize at the Barcelona Exhibition), Veljko Stanojević (Nos. 179, 229, 230), and Radović (Nos. 78, 205). It may indeed be said that Yugoslav art to-day reflects almost every contemporary European current, while at the same time striving to impart a certain national character to its work. Among the Slovenes, Sternin (Nos. 87, 142, 237, 277), and Tratnik (Nos. 290, 293, 297), continued in the steps of Jakopić, while a younger group, led by France and Tone Kralj (Nos. 222, 224, 225), leans towards expressionism.

The youngest group of Zagreb artists, under the name of "Zemlja," has, it is true, devoted itself to a close study of French art, but aims at shaking off excessive foreign influences and reaching definitely national means of expression. In contrast to those who follow the motto 'art for art's sake,' this group lays great weight on the subjects to be treated and strives after clear primitive line and strong colour. Perhaps the most typical is Hegedušić (Nos. 86, 96, 186, 286).

Lastly mention may be made of another group of gifted young Yugoslav artists who are at present working in Paris—Šumanović, Plančić, Milunović, Aralica, Čelabonović, Konjović Room xxxiii).

Not the least interesting feature of the present exhibition is that Meštrović and Rosandić are no longer alone in sculpture, but have brought with them a whole group of promising pupils notably the Dalmatians Kršinić (Nos. 4, 26, 31, 34), and Palavičini (Nos. 28, 29, 30, 33, 35), Augustinčić (Nos. 14, 15, 16, 44), from Zagreb, the Slovene Loboda (No. 18), and Sreten Stojanović from Belgrade (Nos. 36, 60, 62).