

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA BRINGS TOGETHER SOME 400 WORKS FOR THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION IN THE UNITED STATES DEDICATED TO SOCIALIST YUGOSLAV ARCHITECTURE

Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980

July 15, 2018–January 13, 2019

Floor Three, The Robert B. Menschel Galleries

#ConcreteUtopia

NEW YORK, July 10, 2018—The Museum of Modern Art presents *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*, the first major US exhibition to study the remarkable body of architectural work from Yugoslavia that sparked international interest during the 45 years of the country’s existence. On view from July 15, 2018, through January 13, 2019, the exhibition investigates architecture’s capacity to produce a shared civic space and common history in a highly diverse, multiethnic society through more than 400 drawings, models, photographs, and film reels culled from an array of municipal archives, family-held collections, and museums across the region. Tasked with constructing a socialist society based on “self-management,” modern architecture was a key instrument in the implementation of a utopian vision in a perpetual state of emergence; many of the featured visionary projects and executed buildings speak to architecture’s aspirational role in terms of both design and social impact. *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980* is organized by Martino Stierli, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, and Vladimir Kulić, Associate Professor, Florida Atlantic University, with Anna Kats, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art.

With galleries dedicated to Modernization, Global Networks, Everyday Life, and Identities, the exhibition explores themes of large-scale urbanization, technological experimentation and its application in everyday life, consumerism, monuments and memorialization, and the global reach of Yugoslav architecture. Featuring work by exceptional architects, including Bogdan Bogdanović, Juraj Neidhardt, Svetlana Kana Radević, Edvard Ravnikar, Vjenceslav Richter, and Milica Šterić, the exhibition examines the unique range of forms and modes of production in Yugoslav architecture and its distinct yet multifaceted character. In addition to architectural work, *Toward a Concrete Utopia* also includes three video installations by renowned filmmaker Mila Turajlić, newly commissioned photographs by Valentin Jeck, and contemporary artworks by Jasmina Cibic and David Maljković.

“Historically speaking, a thorough investigation of the architectural production of socialist Yugoslavia will lead to a better understanding of an important but understudied chapter of architectural history in the bifurcated world order of the Cold War,” said Martino Stierli. “From a contemporary point of view, this body of work serves as a reminder that architecture can

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only thrive when there is a broad societal understanding of architecture's power to transform and elevate society and the quality of life it offers citizens.”

Exhibition Background

Toward a Concrete Utopia focuses on the period of intense construction between Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet bloc in 1948 and the death of the country's longtime leader Josip Broz Tito in 1980, which coincided with the emergence of postmodernism in the region. Given the country's diversity, Yugoslavia's architects responded to contradictory demands and influences, developing a postwar architecture both in line with and distinct from the design approaches seen elsewhere in Europe and beyond. Situated between the capitalist West and the communist East, Yugoslavia circumvented the Cold War dichotomy, instead spearheading a “third way” through its leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement, an organization of countries formed in 1961 not formally aligned with and critical of any major power bloc. Simultaneously, the government undertook rapid modernization at home with an array of building efforts that sought to grow the economy, improve the daily lives of Yugoslav citizens, and engage with the diverse cultures in the region. The state expanded these efforts beyond its borders, advancing urbanization and building projects throughout the developing world, notably in other Non-Aligned countries in Africa and the Middle East, where Yugoslavia cultivated political connections and construction contracts. The architecture that emerged—from International Style skyscrapers to Brutalist “social condensers”—is a manifestation of the radical pluralism, hybridity, and idealism that characterized the Yugoslav state itself.

In the 1960s, MoMA presented a series of programs featuring Yugoslavia, most notably the 1969 exhibition *Yugoslavia: A Report*, which brought to an American public 45 contemporary prints by 24 Yugoslav artists. In addition, two film series, in 1961 and 1969, respectively, investigated the country's rich experimental cinema of the day. Part of MoMA's ongoing effort to reassess the history of modernism from a global perspective, *Toward a Concrete Utopia* explores how architecture was used in socialist Yugoslavia to create a common history, collective identity, and vision for community in a multi-ethnic state with opposing needs and influences.

The exhibition is organized into four main sections, each of which addresses a specific aspect of Yugoslav architecture culture as a distinct arena of design and spatial production.

Modernization

Part one, Modernization, explores the rapid transformation of the previously underdeveloped, largely rural country: the processes of urbanization, experiments with building technologies, and the new infrastructure of social life. In part because the country saw extensive fighting during World War II—Yugoslavia suffered extensive physical destruction and one of the highest population losses in Europe—cities were rebuilt or constructed anew in the immediate aftermath of war. New Belgrade, the new federal capital, was an exemplary urban project for its scale and functionalist principles. Developed on the site of former marshlands on the banks of the rivers Danube and Sava, the city was the most ambitious urban project in postwar Europe, comparable to much better-known examples of modernist planning like Brazil's new capital Brasilia and Chandigarh in India.

The rapid modernization of Yugoslavia's building industry also engendered significant advances in construction technologies like reinforced concrete, which was widely used by the mid-1950s and celebrated for its pragmatic advantages and expressive, sculptural qualities. Concrete was also widely applied in elevating the quality of quotidian life; it was adopted for the material language of institutions that served the welfare state of Yugoslav socialist modernity. The facilities for these services offered ample opportunities for experimentation with architectural typologies such as contemporary art museums, kindergartens, and hospitals. Projects like the Moša Pijade Workers' University, designed by Radovan Nikšić and Ninoslav Kučan in 1955 as a higher education institution for the working class, provided the progressive social agenda with a spacious, modernist building.

Global Networks

Part two, Global Networks, investigates the architecture that developed from the country's independent foreign policy and its leadership in the post-colonial Non-Aligned Movement: architectural imports and exports, as well as the infrastructure of international tourism on the Adriatic coast. The reconstruction of the Macedonian capital of Skopje, after a 1963 earthquake leveled much of the city, triggered an efflorescence of modern architecture that brought prominent international architects into the Yugoslav context. Chief among them was the renowned Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, who won a United Nations competition to design the city's new master plan in 1964. In addition, architects from both side of the Iron Curtain designed a number of important civic buildings, transforming Skopje into something of an international architectural exposition at the height of the Cold War.

Abroad, Yugoslav architecture gained repute through the figure of Vjenceslav Richter, an artist and architect who designed many of the country's pavilions at international fairs. Richter's pavilion for the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels articulated a position of openness within the bifurcated Cold War political order, seeking to educate the international public about Yugoslavia's distinct, progressive brand of socialism with a transparent, split-level volume that was completely uninhibited by doors. In the Global South, Yugoslavia's expansive network of economic and political ties to newly independent countries throughout Africa and the Middle East translated into construction contracts for dams, roads, power plants, and cultural centers. One of the most active agents in this network was Energoprojekt, a large design and construction firm active in various Non-Aligned nations. In Nigeria, the firm conducted extensive research into vernacular housing in the Kano region, which architect Zoran Bojović applied in his design of the Lagos Trade Fair, later to be theorized by Rem Koolhaas.

Everyday Life

Part three, Everyday Life, focuses on innovative forms of mass housing and the emergence of modern design within the framework of a socialist consumer culture. Modernization in Yugoslavia was as much a matter of large-scale urban schemes as it was about the introduction of affordable furniture and appliances to the domestic interior. Beginning in the mid-1950s, regular housing exhibitions in cities such as Ljubljana and Zagreb propagated the availability and affordability of modern design to large audiences. At the scale of furniture,

Niko Kralj, working for the first in-house design department of an industrial manufacturer in Yugoslavia, designed innovative, flexible, and affordable furniture; his 1956 Rex folding chair would become ubiquitous across Yugoslavia and many parts of Europe. A generation later, Saša Mächtig launched the K-67 kiosk, a modular system of street furniture that proved highly successful due to its adaptability to a multitude of uses in public space.

The postwar housing shortage, triggered by both the destruction of existing housing stock during World War II and rapid urbanization in its aftermath, facilitated experimentation with prefabricated concrete construction technologies and floor plans. Research groups such as the Housing Center at the IMS Institute in Belgrade elaborated a great variety of sophisticated floor plans that sought to provide flexible, adaptable spaces—many with outdoor spaces—in order to allow for changing needs over time. The dense apartment blocks in New Belgrade in particular provoked research into the creation of flexible living spaces within limited square footage, featuring multi-use spaces, sweeping views through the apartment toward the outside, and spaces that could be repurposed for changing functions. Split 3, a new town built in Split, Croatia, on the Adriatic coast, provided another exceptional model for urban mass housing by successfully merging contemporary notions of the megastructure with careful attention to the street as a forum for urban life that provided a mixture of spaces for living, work, and leisure.

Identities

The exhibition concludes with part four, Identities, which addresses how architecture and architectural-scale abstract sculpture mediated between the diversity of Yugoslavia's multiethnic constituent regions and their unity, which was based on the common antifascist struggle during World War II. The universalizing push of socialist modernization was counterbalanced by the specificities of various regional schools, which sometimes sought to develop explicitly regionalist idioms. Such efforts were most pronounced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the influential architect Juraj Neidhardt, earlier an employee of Le Corbusier, saw the traditional vernacular architecture of the Ottoman period as the ideal basis for a specifically Bosnian modernism; his nearly 20 years of research with architect Dušan Grabrijan on the subject forms the basis of his 1957 magnum opus, *Architecture of Bosnia and the Path to Modernity*. Edvard Ravnikar, also a Corbusier protégé, was even more influential in Slovenia, where he built on the tectonic traditions of Central European modernism and passed them on to the many generations of architects he taught at the University of Ljubljana. Whether in his regional plans for the Adriatic coast of Montenegro, or in his celebrated 1953 Kapor Cemetery on the island of Rab, or in the Revolution Square in Ljubljana, Ravnikar's projects revealed in the complexity of design across multiple scales, employing imaginative interpretations of spatial configurations, structural systems, claddings, materials, and textures.

The unity of postwar Yugoslavia was based on cross-ethnic collaboration in the antifascist Partisan movement, which fought not only against the occupation by the Axis forces, but also against the various local nationalist factions. The commemoration of the wartime experience thus acquired enormous ideological significance, which was compounded by the need to grieve some one million victims. As a result, memorials were built in huge numbers all over

Yugoslavia, from the centers of major cities to remote, uninhabited landscapes, funded by a variety of agents, from small local communities to the federal state. Often abstract, these aesthetically diverse sculptures—among them Dušan Džamonja's 1972 Monument to the Revolution at Mt. Kozara and Vojin Bakić's 1979 Monument to the Uprising of the People of Kordun and Banija on Petrova Gora—dotted and demarcated Yugoslav territory, with special attention paid to the integration of monument with landscape. A prominent architect of Yugoslav memorial culture, as well as an educator, writer, and one-time mayor of Belgrade, Bogdan Bogdanović espoused a surrealist formal idiom to commemorate wartime trauma, notably in the Jasenovac Memorial Site at a former concentration camp, and in the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar.

SPONSORSHIP:

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Support for the publication is provided by the Jo Carole Lauder Publications Fund of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

PUBLICATIONS:

The exhibition is accompanied by a groundbreaking and richly illustrated catalogue, featuring new scholarship, unpublished archival materials, and a portfolio of contemporary photographs by Valentin Jeck. Edited by Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić, the publication sheds light on key concepts of Yugoslav architecture, urbanism, and society by delving into the exceptional projects and key figures of the era, and provides a broader understanding of postwar modernism on a global scale. 228 pages, 150 color and 85 black-and-white images. Hardcover, \$65. ISBN: 978-1-63345-051-6. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Available at MoMA stores and online at store.moma.org. Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

In concert with the exhibition, a series of public programs are being organized and will be announced at a later date.

MoMA CLASS:

Evening Classes: What Is Modern Architecture?

Wednesday, June 27 and July 11, 18, 6:00–7:50 p.m.

What is modern architecture? Many answers to this question involve “abstract design vocabularies” and modern materials such as concrete, glass, and steel, but what most defines modern architecture is a commitment to social and spatial justice. Modern architects were idealists who wanted to improve the world through the design of buildings and cities. This utopian impulse took many forms, from the design of affordable housing to infrastructure and environmental planning. In this course we teach students about key modern architects and

movements, including the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Frank Lloyd Wright, and how they aimed to advance social and political ideals through architecture. The format consists of group discussions; walking tours of iconic buildings in New York; a gallery visit to the upcoming exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*; and a visit to the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives at Avery Library, Columbia University.

Price: Nonmember \$355, Member \$325, Student/Educator/Other Museum Staff \$250. Register online at [MoMA.org/classes](https://www.moma.org/classes).

FILM SERIES:

Karpo Godina Retrospective

October 19–25, 2018

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Making a rare appearance at MoMA, Karpo Godina presents his first career-spanning retrospective in the United States. An essential figure of Yugoslav cinema, Godina infused the radical “Black Wave” of the 1960s with an irrepressible expressive freedom—squarely targeting all forms of repression—and thrived long after the end of Titoism and the breakup of the nation in civil war. For more than 30 years, the half-Slovenian, half-Macedonian filmmaker has brought a playfully anarchical spirit to the poetics and politics of film, moving breathlessly between fiction and nonfiction in his avant-garde shorts of the 1960s and ’70s and in his feature films of the 1980s and ’90s. Godina was a frequent collaborator of Bahrudin “Bato” Čengić, Želimir Žilnik, Lordan Zafranović, and other pioneering members of the Black Wave, and he has since worked comfortably in the former Yugoslavian republic as a director, screenwriter, cinematographer, and editor. Organized by Jurij Meden, Curator, Austrian Filmmuseum; Joshua Siegel, Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art; and Ana Janevski, Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art, The Museum of Modern Art.

Complete screening schedule and ticket details will be updated at [moma.org/film](https://www.moma.org/film).

Press Contacts: Olivia Oramas, (212) 408-6400 or olivia_oramas@moma.org
Sara Beth Walsh, (212) 708-9747 or sarabeth_walsh@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, visit [moma.org/press](https://www.moma.org/press).

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Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [moma.org](https://www.moma.org). Hours: Daily, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00–8:00 p.m. No service charge for tickets ordered on [moma.org](https://www.moma.org). Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current ID. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA membership within 30 days.