The article discusses the solo exhibition of Slovenian painter Ivana Kobilca (Ljubljana 1861 – Ljubljana 1926) held in Zagreb in early 1890. It aims towards a better understanding of how artworks were exhibited in Zagreb in the last quarter of the 19th century and to a greater appreciation of Kobilca, not only as an artist but as an ambitious and successful exhibiting artist as well. The introduction offers a brief overview of the broader context of the migration of artists working in Ljubljana and in Carniola towards Zagreb and Croatia, and goes on to present as concretely as possible the exhibition itself, the reasons behind it, and the responses to it.

The geographical proximity of the two cities and the fact that they belonged to the same empire were probably important reasons for the obvious exchange of artistic strengths between Ljubljana and Zagreb in the 19th century. The continuation of an established exchange between the two arenas is perceptible in the first half of the century in which patrons were not particularly concerned with a sense of loyalty to their local painters, instead offering their commissions to the best artist in terms of quality and price. During this time, many artists from both regions as well as elsewhere organised their *modus vivendi* in such a way that they were active in Ljubljana as well as in Zagreb and their surroundings. The most famous representative of such an artistic migrant lifestyle in the second quarter of the 19th century was the famous painter of bourgeois portraits, Mihael Stroj (1803–1871). He worked in Ljubljana, interspersed with more than ten active years of actually residing in Zagreb. His works can therefore be found throughout Slovenia and Croatia, and he had left both the Croats and Slovenians many key depictions of prominent personalities of the time. Frequently artists also moved from city to city until they settled down somewhere for one reason or another. German painter Johann Andreas Herrlein (ca. 1739–1817), for instance, arrived from Croatia to Ljubljana, where he was certainly a figure to be reckoned with at the turn of the 18th into the 19th century. It seems that a new stable possibility of survival for artists in smaller cities of
the Monarchy – a regular wage as a professor of drawing – kept him in Ljubljana.2 Drawing professors became regular members of teaching staff in the late 18th century within the fast-growing Austrian education system, and the need for them was an additional incentive for the migration of artists, eager for the rare privilege of permanent employment within the Monarchy.3

The second half of the 19th century – marked by rapid population growth and strengthening of the wealthy middle-class in both Ljubljana and Zagreb – brought along some visible changes in the cross-regional artistic exchange. On the one hand, these can to a large extent be attributed to general changes in art training and activity, especially the growing institutionalization of art and the establishment of exhibitions as a means of presenting visual arts to the public. On the other hand, they can be linked to increasingly more pronounced national aspirations. Among other things, the latter led to dualism within the Habsburg Monarchy, which brought along a formal split of the regions in question, so that they became parts of two different political units. At the same time, however, it also brought about a marked intensification and formalization of transnational cooperation between the Slovenians and the Croats, since they increasingly recognized themselves as members of brotherly nations. In the spirit of strengthened national consciousness in the second half of the 19th century, the Croats made some exceptional moves in the field of culture and fine arts, about which the Slovenians reported enthusiastically in the media, as well as through personal correspondence. The Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Strossmayer Gallery, the university with its department of art history and archaeology established as early as 1878, and increasingly wider educational options within the arts or at least the crafts were an inspiration and an example to the Slovenians which, nevertheless, remained inaccessible. The Slovenians were also fascinated by outstanding Croatian personalities who were the driving force behind the boom, in the first instance the famous bishop, politician and patron Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905), whose presence was strongly felt in the Slovenian lands as well through his actions and patronage.

New understanding of art in the context of national tendencies triggered a sort of a double effect in the exchange between the two regions. Suddenly it became essential to support artists of one’s own nationality, which meant – at least hypothetically – that for the Slovenians the market with the Croats was hindered, while on the other hand this opened up the path to the Zagreb scene in a new way, since aspirations for a declarative cultural exchange between the brotherly nations were intensified. The result of these aspirations was, for example, increased exhibition activity and positive acceptance of Slovenian artists in Zagreb, which is particularly evident after 1900, when artistic associations of Slovenian and Croatian artists established close connections and even organized several large-scale group presentations in the sister cities. In such a way the Slovenians presented themselves with a large exhibition in the Zagreb Art Pavilion as early as 1901.4 However, during the second half of the 19th century, prior to the establishment of the aforementioned connections and while the infrastructure for exhibiting was still quite undeveloped in Zagreb, Slovenian artists exhibited there fairly infrequently. Slovenian painters at this time were primarily oriented towards the West, while they found themselves in Zagreb only sporadically to attend an exhibition or came for a shorter period of time. It seems that they did so primarily when they were personally invited or received a commission, or were supported by friends or at least acquaintances, and with the desire to make a name for themselves and expand their clientele with their neighbours.5

More than a decade before Kobilca’s exhibition such desires can be detected in the tenderly young Janez Šubic, who placed high hopes into one of his first serious commissions to arrive from Croatia. Šubic studied in Venice in early 1870s and was friends with a circle of Croatian artists who were key figures for later Croatian artistic resurgence, including Ferdo Quiquerez and Iso Kršnjavi. It is very likely that he received the commission for the altarpiece of The Adoration of the Magi for the Church of St. Nicholas in Jasenovac through their intercession. He then also exhibited the painting in the circle of these artists at one of the first serious exhibitions of contemporary art in Croatia, held in Zagreb in the autumn of 1874.6

Janez’s work on the painting and its exhibiting in Zagreb can be traced through the extensive correspondence of the large and close-knit Šubic family. The aspirations of the young painter are clearly discernable from the letters: “I will be working on one painting for an altar in Croatia, The Adoration of the Magi. I have been assigned the work by a young man from Zagreb with whom I have struck up an acquaintance here 2 months ago. I will try to do well in order to make a name for myself in Croatia ...”7 That the media reported very positively about Šubic’s appearance at the show can also be learnt from the family correspondence, as the Šubic family, which included several art professionals, discussed all things tied to business regularly and in great depth. Unfortunately, however, the exhibition did not yield the desired lucrative effects, since Janez Šubic was not commissioned to work much in Croatia or for Croatian patrons thereafter. Towards the end of his life he painted frescoes in the church in the coastal town of Bakar, but this commission was connected with the activities of the workshop of his father, Štefan Šubic. Janez took it on as a favour to his father, who was taken ill and was unable to complete the commission on his own.8

The decision of Ivana Kobilca to have a solo exhibition in Zagreb is more unusual, and I would argue that it would
probably have not taken place had it not been (about four-fifths of it) a transfer of the solo exhibition that Kobilca had previously successfully prepared in Ljubljana. Since the Zagreb exhibition also reiterated the mode of organization, the design of the invitations and similar, it makes sense to draw a comparison between the two shows. Since photographs of the Zagreb exhibition remain unknown, the photographs of the painter’s preceding exhibition in Ljubljana may well serve as vague information about its appearance.

In Kobilca’s case, one can also talk about the support of friends as probably the essential incentive for the artist’s decision to exhibit in Zagreb. Her friendship with the Zagreb-residing Slovenian family of Josip Stare (1842–1907), historian, writer and professor, and later headmaster of a polytechnic secondary school in Zagreb, played a key role. Silva Trdina, who wrote about Ivana Kobilica before the Second World War in close contact with the painter’s niece Mira Pintar, presented the Zagreb episode as follows: “The following year Kobilca set off to Zagreb for three months. There she was kindly welcomed into the family of historian and writer Josip Stare. The Stare family procured her a suitable studio, recommended her to some influential people, including J. J. Strossmayer, and assisted in the organization of the exhibition in the palace of the Yugoslav Academy at Zrinjevac.”

We can assume that the exhibition was part of a wider project that included the painter’s several months-long residence and portrait-painting in Zagreb, which was already from the outset meant to be short and transient – already at the time, announcements of her impending travels towards the West and particularly towards Paris can be traced in both correspondence and in the media. One can also assume that the Stare family promised her help in acquiring commissions prior to her arrival, since she did not only paint both Mr. Stare (Fig. 1) and Mrs. Stare at this time, but also their friends from the circle of intellectuals around Bishop Strossmayer and the National Party. Kobilca portrayed the lawyer, legal expert and politician of Slovenian descent, Lovro Vidrič (1838–1900) and his daughter Jela (Fig. 2, 3), as well as the Croatian ecclesiastical dignitary, historian and politician Franjo Rački (1828–1896). Obzor published a short article entitled About the Artist, Miss Ivana Kobilca, about Rački’s portrait as well as his and Strossmayer’s enthusiastic visit to
the studio of the artist, adding at the end: “It is a fine pain-
ing that Dr. Rački has intended for the Yugoslav Academy,
which will have the artwork of our Ivana sooner than any
local Slavic institute.”

If we turn to the presentation of the exhibition, it prob-
ably makes sense that Kobilca exhibited in the premises of
the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts at the Zrinje-
vac Square, in the Strossmayer Gallery, given the circle of
people into which she was introduced. The yearbook of the
Academy also mentions the exhibition: “The president of
the board informs that he has, with subsequent permission
of the board and at the request of eminent patriots, given
permission to Ivana Kobilca to show her paintings in the
hall of drawings free of charge provided that it is cleaned
afterwards. The decision was that much easier since the artist
dedicated all the money gained from the admission fees to
the local medical school.”

The duration of the exhibition
and the organization of admission were similar as in Lju-
bljana, where the artist also decided to charge an admission
fee in order to cover her costs, giving anything beyond that
to the soup kitchen and the student kitchen.

We can easily imagine what the exhibition looked like
from the media responses, the accompanying material and
– as already stated – the photographs of the exhibition in
Ljubljana (Fig. 4, 5), held just before the one in Zagreb. In
Ljubljana, 31 works were exhibited, and 29 in Zagreb, which
is, however, not necessarily completely accurate. It is true to
say that these numbers are cited in the exhibition catalogues, but when the works in the photographs of the Ljubljana exhibition are counted, it becomes apparent that there are more pieces on display than indicated by the catalogue (Fig. 6). It is possible that the artist added some small pieces to the show subsequently.

I quote the entire catalogue of the Zagreb exhibition – a sheet of paper, which is also an invitation – from the transcript in the article by Silva Trdina, and an original catalogue of the show in Zagreb, torn in its upper half and preserved by Kobilca’s relatives:

“It is the honour of Ivana Kobilca to hereby invite You, Ladies and Gentlemen, to the exhibition of her paintings in the Palace of the Yugoslav Academy at Trg Zrinski from 23 February to 4 March of this year, every day from 10 am to 4 pm.

All net income is dedicated to the foundation for the establishment of the Medical Faculty in Zagreb.

List of paintings.
1. Madonna and Child.
2. Woman Drinking Coffee.
3. The Zither Player.

6. Poziv na prvu samostalnu izložbu Ivane Kobilce u Ljubljani 1889., privatno vlasništvo / Invitation for the first solo exhibition of Ivana Kobilca in Ljubljana in 1889, private collection
5. At the Well (en plein air).
7. Grandmother and Granddaughter.
8. Špela, A Girl from Carniola.
10. Miss Pfefinger (portrait).
11. Mrs Schilling (portrait).
12. Dr. Vidrić (portrait).
14. Mr. Jakov Kobilca (portrait).
15. Mrs. Marija Kobilca (portrait).
16. Miss Franjica Kobilca (portrait).

Numbers 1 – 4, 6 and 7 are available for purchase.¹³

A few pieces less were exhibited in Zagreb than in Ljubljana, but a few new works were added, like for example a completely fresh portrait of Lovro Vidrić and his daughter, which the painter completed just before the show. The majority of the exhibition, particularly the key works, was the same in both instances: the artist presented a selection of portraits, genre scenes and studies, as well as one religious image. The works were produced in oil on canvas technique as well as pastel. The religious image and most genre scenes were for sale, the portraits probably already had their owners, whereas the artist did not intend – at least declaratively – to sell the studies. Neither were these listed individually or by title in the catalogue.

Kobilca came to exhibit in Zagreb when she was 28 years old; after completing her education in the private school of Alois Erdelt in Munich she worked as an independent painter there for three years until her exhibition in Zagreb.¹⁴ The Zagreb exhibition did not yet include the works today defined as her key pieces, such as Summer and Women Ironing (Ironers), although it is very likely that the painter was already working on Summer during this period. The exhibition was therefore focused on her older genre scenes, such as The Zither Player and Woman Drinking Coffee (Fig. 7, 8), that had already been successfully exhibited in Central Europe before Zagreb.¹⁵ Out of the more ambitious recent works of the time, Madonna and Child and a full-figure
portrait of her sister Fani (Fig. 9, 10) should be mentioned. Already noticeable in these is Kobilca’s new interest for the type of painting that was being successfully established in big painting exhibitions in Munich, whose representatives were among others Fritz von Uhde and Jules Bastien-Lepage, whom she knew well. The paintings are very light and are distinguished by a kind of unwavering realism. This particularly disturbed Iso Kršnjavi, who wrote a profuse critique on the fact that such “earthly” painting of the Holy Mother was highly inappropriate. Madonna and Child really resemble everyday people from the time in which the painting was produced – possibly as a result of the influence of von Uhde, who was subject to strong criticism because of his placing religious figures into a contemporary Bavarian setting – the Mother of God has a teenage air about her and a somewhat anaemic appearance. The painter depicted her sister Fani in a life-size portrait, with the format of the painting being obviously vertical. The image is subdued and considered in terms of colour and composition, whereas the face of the depicted person is unusually lively, especially the gaze. One of the more prominent pieces in the exhibition was certainly the already mentioned large-scale portrait of lawyer and politician Lovro Vidrič (Fig. 2), who was well-known in Zagreb, whose depiction is, however, rather restrained and
conservative, perhaps because it was produced as a pair to a slightly older portrait of the wife of the depicted, Betika Vidrič, painted by Ivan Franke.\textsuperscript{16} Otherwise the exhibition encompassed more or less successful smaller images, including many excellent studies of interesting physiognomies and human types. Such work could be described as typical for Munich at the time; some of the paintings were actually produced during the artist’s schooling in Erdelt’s school and show how painting was nurtured there. It is almost certain that the remarkable, elegant children’s and women's pastel portraits were not exhibited in Zagreb, which the painter had shown in Ljubljana (Fig. 5), as the only pastel to be cited in the Zagreb catalogue – and also in various pieces of writing about the exhibition – is the portrait of little Jela Vidrič (Fig. 3).\textsuperscript{17} Kobilač’s pastel portraits in Ljubljana were held in very high esteem and the painter also deemed them to be successful. It is likely that the fragile artworks were not transferred so as not to incur damage.\textsuperscript{18} Kobilač’s pastels are also an expression of the tendencies which were very fashionable in Bavaria at that time and whose most exposed representative at the time was Franz von Lenbach.\textsuperscript{19}

The world of Zagreb media and art criticism responded well to Kobilač’s exhibition, she was the subject of several forthcoming short reports as well as a few longer articles which tried to bring the show closer to the reader, mainly by carefully enumerating and describing the pieces, and less so through any critical evaluation. Longer articles about the exhibition were published in Vienac, which also featured a reproduction of The Zither Player, and in Obzor, where the show was extensively covered by Kobilač’s friend and host in Zagreb, Josip Stare. Media responses were pretty much the same: they were only slightly fewer and less enthusiastic, which is understandable, since this was not a local artist.\textsuperscript{20}

What stands out in this regard is the text written by Isto Kršnjavi published in the Agrarner Zeitung, which can actually be classified as art criticism.\textsuperscript{21} It is a very concise assessment consisting of a few paragraphs, in which the writer wastes no time in listing and describing the works, and less so through any critical evaluation. Longer articles about the exhibition were published in Vienac, which also featured a reproduction of The Zither Player, and in Obzor, where the show was extensively covered by Kobilač’s friend and host in Zagreb, Josip Stare. Media responses were pretty much similar to those released a few months earlier in Ljubljana, they were only slightly fewer and less enthusiastic, which is understandable, since this was not a local artist.\textsuperscript{20}

One can imagine that – apart from this critique – Ivana Kobilač must have been quite happy with the Zagreb experience. She presented herself to a new audience, made some new acquaintances, earned some money through the sale of her portraits (although some may have been made for free) – and left in order to pursue new challenges.\textsuperscript{25} In Zagreb, she also established a link that would come in useful on several subsequent occasions later. She got on well with Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, whose favour accompanied her until his death. Since Ivan Hribar, Mayor of Ljubljana, was also well-disposed towards her, it was precisely Kobilač that painted a portrait of the bishop for the Municipality of Ljubljana (Fig. 11) a few years later, and also went on to produce the large allegorical painting Slovenia Bows to Ljubljana for the Municipality, which was financed by the bishop. By demonstrating his obvious support for the young artist, the bishop probably also contributed to her becoming established within the ecclesiastical circles, for which she executed several prestigious commissions, especially during her stay in Sarajevo between 1897 and 1905.
The correspondence between Kobilca and the bishop is heartfelt, and the painter still spoke of the patron with a lot of sympathy in her old age. Among other things, she remembered the difficulties that she experienced as she made his portrait: “The bishop was already about 85 years old at the time and in no way wanted to sit for me, saying that he was too old for it and getting annoyed that I had not come forty years ago to do his portrait. Nothing helped. I had to photograph him and then paint from the photograph; but because this did not suffice, I spied on him and lied in wait for him from all angles, in order to catch his features.”

Despite the painter’s difficulties, the portrait came out well and the old dignitary was impressed with it. “My dear Miss! I have received your painting of me. I am happy with it. Not only does it catch my outside, the physical form, it also matches my inside, my character. Thank you very much! The image will be sent to Ljubljana one of these days. I am also sending you a prize of 600 f.”

Strossmayer also gave a number of recommendations to the painter at the time of her Zagreb stay, to be presented to his Parisian acquaintances, including the director of the Louvre, which was even reported in the media. His recommendations were apparently not of much help to her; when she attempted to use one, this became the source of an amusing anecdote: “Once, I was in the mood and I went to visit Pasteur, for whom Bishop Strossmayer had given me a letter of recommendation. Dr. Pasteur had his own hospital outside Paris, and was already so intensely old at the time that he had completely forgotten, among other things, that he was also President of some kind of society for the protection of Yugoslavs in Paris, and could not even remember Strossmayer anymore. As I denied that I had
been bitten by a rabid dog upon being questioned about it, he begrudgingly regretted that he could not help me in any way. I still have to laugh when I think of it to this very day.290

Shortly after the Zagreb exhibition followed the most successful year in the painter’s professional and exhibiting career. Her successful exhibiting around Central Europe continued in 1891 when her work was accepted at the salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, at which she was also awarded. Since today not much attention is brought to Kobilca’s more ambitious public works and exhibiting successes, the aim of the article is – in addition to elucidating one of her residencies abroad, which have so far not been systematically studied – to highlight Kobilca as an exhibiting artist with exceptional energy, who had a profound understanding of the logic of international exhibiting of the time and managed to successfully respond to its complex challenges. The painter was capable of first acquiring a sound art education and then finding inspiring, progressive artistic references before applying them to bring to fruition a demanding art production. At the same time she managed to establish her work internationally, making proposals for it to be exhibited in the right places. She understood that the executed images in this special economy were just a kind of beginning, which is why she made an active effort to show them to the widest possible audience. About ten years of extraordinary exhibiting ambition can be noted in Kobilca’s career, which was – in strong contradiction with the established Slovenian mythology of the necessarily misunderstood genius – also followed by actual success. This makes Kobilca a remarkable figure in the Slovenian arena, besides also being in many respects a pioneer of exhibiting contemporary art. Additionally, her exhibition in Zagreb also makes her one of the first Slovenian artists to have a solo show beyond the borders of Slovenia.

Prijevod sa slovenskog na engleski:
Arven Sakti Kralj Šzomi


3 The establishment of drawing classes and the profession of a drawing professor within the Slovenian education system has not been researched. The conditions were partly similar to those in Croatia, see IRENA KRAŠEVEC, Kulturnopovjesni okvir 19. stoljeća i počeci umjetničkog školovanja u Hrvatskoj, in: Zagreb – München: hrvatsko slikarstvo i Akademija likovnih umjetnosti u Münchenu, (ed.) Irena Krašvec, Petar Prelog, Institut za povijest umjetnosti (hereinafter: IPU), Zagreb, 2011, 29–31. Paid positions for art teachers prompted some Slovenians to focus on working in the Croatian lands, where several well-known Slovenian artists can be located in the years before the First World War. For example, Saša Santel taught in Pazin, whereas sculptors Alojz Gangl and Svitoslav Peruzzi found employment in Split one after the other.

4 For more on this, see: BETI ŽEROVC, Rihard Jakopič – umetnik in strateg, Založba /cf., Ljubljana, 2002, 95–106 et passim. As early as 1903, the Vesna art society that included a mix of Croatian and Slovenian students was founded in Vienna, see BETI ŽEROVC, Vesna ob izviru umetnosti, in: Potlačena umetnost, (ed.) Barbara Bočič, Jure Mikuz, Open Society Institute, Ljubljana, 1999, 53–58.

5 I will present just the two most visible cases of Slovenian artists exhibiting in Zagreb dating from the second half of the 19th century which, however, does not preclude that these were isolated instances of Slovenian artists visiting during this time.

6 VLADIMIRA TARTAGLIA-KELEMEN, Izložba 1874. u Narodnom domu (prilog proučavanju prvih umjetničkih izložb u Hrvatskoj), Zbornik za umjetnost, III/3–4 (1923), 100–112.

7 Letter by Janez Šubic to his parents, Venice, 25 June 1874 (Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: AS), AS 822, Rodbina Šubic, no. 1, cited from: MARUŠA GANTAR, Janez Šubic in njegova cerkvena dela, degree thesis, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, 2012, 35). This painting is also mentioned in a letter written by Janez to his parents a month later requesting them to send him canvas: “I have some work in Croatia, namely a painting of The Adoration of the Magi commissioned by a friend from Zagreb.” Letter by Janez Šubic to his parents, Venice, 24 July 1874 (AS 822, Rodbina Šubic, no. 1, cited from: MARUŠA GANTAR (fn. 7), 35.

8 Zagreb and Bakar events are presented in more detail in: MARUŠA GANTAR (fn. 7), 35–37, 67–73.

9 SILVA TRDINA, Ivana Kobilca, ZUZ, n. v. II (1952), 98.

10 – O umjetnici gledn. Ivani Kobilci, Obzor, XXXII/109 (7 December 1890), 2. Cited from: INDIRA ŠAMEC FLASCHAR, Akademika galeri-
ja slikah. Bibliografija priloga o Strossmayerovoj galeriji starih majstora HAZU 1842–1946, Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti (hereinafter: HAZU), Zagreb, 2011, 158. During this time, Antun Bauer mentions an exhibition of a painting by Kobilca in Zagreb. ANTÜN BAUER, Izažište u Zagrebu 1842–1931, typescript, Zagreb, 1956, 32, no. 119. (Kobilca’s exhibition discussed in the article is listed under number 120.) I have not been able to find any information which would confirm that Kobilca held two exhibitions in Zagreb almost simultaneously. It may also be possible that Bauer interpreted the cited article as an exhibition. There is also the possibility that the portrait of Rački could be viewed in the artist’s studio, since Kobilca did not exhibit the painting in her show two months later. Neither can it be found in the catalogue, nor is it mentioned in any media responses. As an old lady, Kobilca recalls: “At the end of winter, I travelled to Zagreb, where I painted Bishop Dr. Rački and exhibited 29 paintings in the palace of the Yugoslav Academy at Trg Zrinjskog 29. I stayed there for three months, during which I had the chance to make the acquaintance of Dr. Vidrič and Bishop Strossmayer, who both, especially the bishop, helped me greatly later. When I completed the painting of Dr. Rački, which was intended for the Yugoslav Academy, the old bishop also came to see it together with Rački, and immediately promised me a whole pile of recommendation letters, when he learned that I wanted to go to Paris. STANKO VURNIK (fn. 1), 104. I did not find Kobilca’s portrait of Franjo Rački.

11 Listopis jugoslovenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti za godinu 1890, vol. V, Jugoslovenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb, 1890, 56.

12 Kobilca’s relatives keep a detailed account of the costs and calculation of income from the exhibition in Ljubljana, which was prepared on 24 December 1889 by the painter’s brother, Josip Kobilca.


14 Bogorodica.

15. N. Na zdencu (pleinair).


17. Na zdencu (pleinair).

18. Na zdencu (pleinair).

19. Prosjak.

20. Špela, kranjska djevojka.


23. Špela, kranjska djevojka.

24. Babičina škrinja.

25. Babica i unuka.


27. Špela, kranjska djevojka.


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Sažetak

Beti Žerovc

Samostalna izložba Ivane Kobilce u Zagrebu 1890. godine

Članak govori o samostalnoj izložbi slovenske slikarice Ivane Kobilce održanoj u Zagrebu početkom 1890. u Strossmayerovoj galeriji Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti. Uvod je kratak pregled šireg konteksta migracija umjetnika koji rade u Ljubljani i u Kranjskoj prema Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj, a u nastavku se nastoji što vjernije predstaviti samu izložbu te razloge i odazive na nju. Odluka Ivane Kobilce za samostalnu izložbu u Zagrebu jest neobična; do te odluke vjerojatno ne bi došlo da nije bila riječ (u oko četiri petine radova) o prijenosu samostalne izložbe koju je Kobilca godinu prije uspješno pripremila u Ljubljani. Također možemo pretpostaviti da je izložba bila dio svojevrsnoga šireg projekta tijekom kojeg je slikarica nekoliko mjeseci živjela i portretirala u Zagrebu, što je od samog početka bilo zamišljeno kao kratko i prolazno. Ključnu je ulogu u tome igralo slikaričino prijateljstvo sa slovenskom obitelji Stare koja je živjela u Zagrebu; Josip Stare bio je povjesničar, pisac i profesor. Obitelj je slikarici možda već unaprijed obećala posredništvo kod narudžbi jer u to vrijeme nije portretirala samo supružnike Stare nego i njihove prijatelje iz kruga intelektualaca oko biskupa Strossmayera i Narodne stranke – Lovru Vidriča i njegovu kćer Jelu, te Franju Račkog.

Slikarica je predstavljena hrvatskoj publici izborom portreta, žanrovnih slika i studija te jednom slikom sakralnog sadržaja. Na izložbi u Zagrebu još nisu bili izloženi radovi koji se danas definiraju kao ključni u njezinu opusu, primjerice Ljeto i Peglačice. Fokus je bio na njezinim starijim slikama žanrtića, kao što su Citrašica i Žena pije kavu (Kofetarica). Od slikaričinih ambicioznijih, tada novijih radova spomenimo Bogorodicu s Djetetom i portret sestre Fani u punoj figurii. Na njima je već primijetan Kobilčin nov interes za slikarstvo koje se tada uspješno afirmiralo na münchenskim velikim slikarskim izložbama i čiji su predstavnici, između ostalog, bili njoj dobro poznati Fritz von Uhde i Jules Bastien-Lepage. Slike su vrlo svijetle i odlikuju se nekom vrstom izravnog realizma.

Ovo je iznimno zasmetalo Isu Kršnjavog koji je u svojoj prilično oštroj ocjeni izložbe pisao da takvo »zemaljsko« slikanje Svete Majke ni na koji način nije primjereno. Inače su se zagrebački mediji na Kobilčinu izložbu odazivali dobro, a uspostavila je i korisnu vezu s biskupom Josipom Jurjem Strossmayerom. Nekoliko godina poslije portretirala ga je za ljubljansku općinu, a potom je za općinu i Strossmayera kao naručitelja izradila i veliku alegorijsku sliku Slovenija se klanja Ljubljani.