

Beti Žerovc

Department of Art History, Faculty of Arts,
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

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The Exhibition of Ivana Kobilca in Zagreb in 1890

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Ključne riječi: Ivana Kobilca, žene slikarice kasnog 19. stoljeća, sustav izložbi, samostalna izložba u Zagrebu 1890., Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Iso Kršnjavi, Janez Šubic

The article discusses the solo exhibition of Slovenian painter Ivana Kobilca (Ljubljana 1861 – Ljubljana 1926)¹ 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 article discusses the exhibition of Slovenian painter Ivana Kobilca (Ljubljana 1861 – Ljubljana 1926)¹ 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



1. Ivana Kobilca, *Josip Stare*, 1890., ulje na platnu, 67 × 53 cm, Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane, 510:LJU;0016878 (Dokumentacija MGML © Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljane) / Ivana Kobilca, *Josip Stare*, 1890, oil on canvas, 67 × 53 cm, Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana, 510:LJU;0016878 (Documentation MGML © Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana)



2. Ivana Kobilca, *Portret Lovre Vidriča*, 1890., ulje na platnu, 118 × 82 cm, Samoborski muzej, Samobor, inv. br. 841 / Ivana Kobilca, *Portrait of Lovro Vidrič*, 1890, oil on canvas, 118 × 82 cm, Samobor Museum, Samobor, inv. no. 841

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 Kobilca 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."⁹

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



3. Ivana Kobilca, *Portret Jele Vidrič (Djevojčica u ružičastoj haljini)*, 1890., pastel na papiru, 60 × 50 cm, Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, NG S 558 (foto: Bojan Salaj © Narodna galerija, Ljubljana) / *Ivana Kobilca, Portrait of Jela Vidrič (Girl in a Pink Dress)*, 1890, pastel on paper, 60 × 50 cm, National Gallery of Slovenia, NG S 558 (Photograph by Bojan Salaj © National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

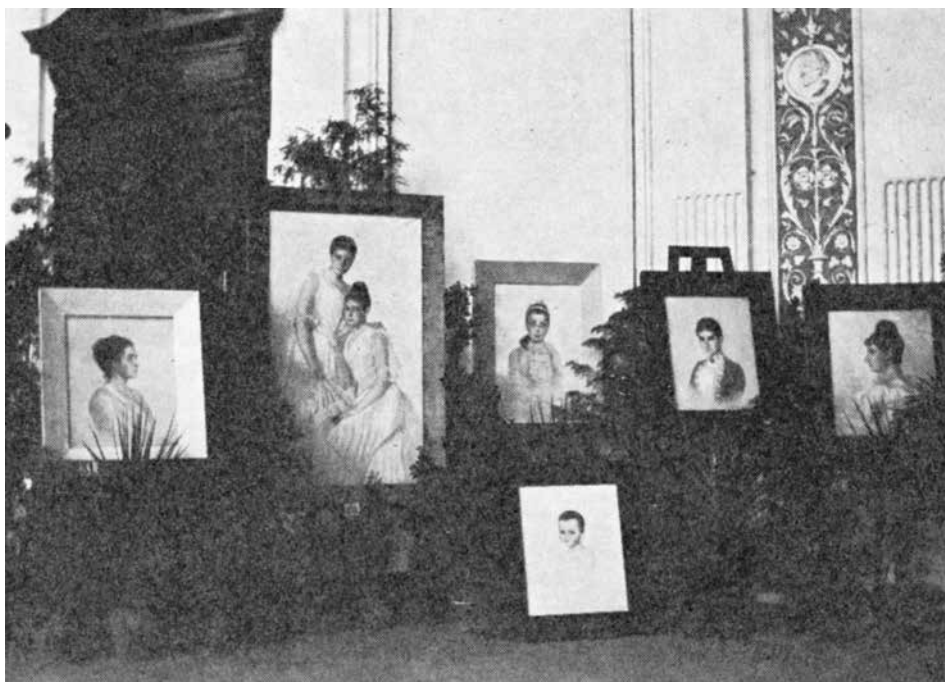
the studio of the artist, adding at the end: “It is a fine painting that Dr. Rački has intended for the Yugoslav Academy, which will have the artwork of our Ivana sooner than any local Slavic institute.”¹⁰

If we turn to the presentation of the exhibition, it probably makes sense that Kobilca exhibited in the premises of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts at the Zrinjevac 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.”¹¹ The duration of the exhibition and the organization of admission were similar as in Ljubljana, 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.¹²

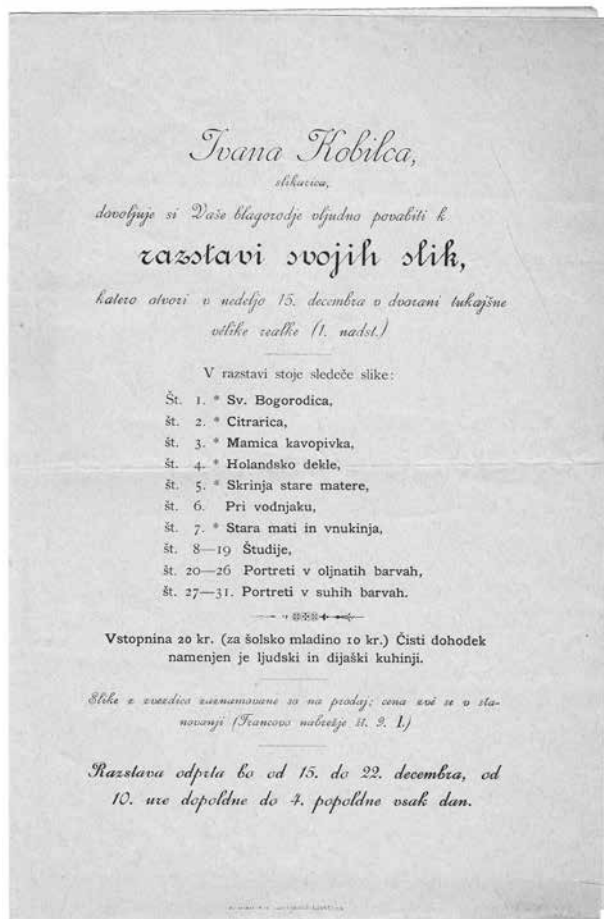
We can easily imagine what the exhibition looked like from the media responses, the accompanying material and – as already stated – the photographs of the exhibition in Ljubljana (Fig. 4, 5), held just before the one in Zagreb. In Ljubljana, 31 works were exhibited, and 29 in Zagreb, which is, however, not necessarily completely accurate. It is true to



4. Fotografija postava prve samostalne izložbe Ivane Kobilce u ljubljanskoj realki, 15.–22. prosinca 1889. (Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, Arhiv fototeke © Narodna galerija, Ljubljana) / *Photograph of the installation of the first solo exhibition of Ivana Kobilca at the “Realka” polytechnic secondary school in Ljubljana, 15–22 December 1889.* (National Gallery of Slovenia Photography Archive © National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana)



5. Fotografija postava prve samostalne izložbe Ivane Kobilce u ljubljanskoj realki, 15.–22. prosinca 1889. (izvor: *Ivana Kobilca. 1861–1926, katalog izložbe*, (ur.) Polonca Vrhunc, Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, svibanj–srpanj 1979., 49) / *Photograph of the installation of the first solo exhibition of Ivana Kobilca at the "Realka" polytechnic secondary school in Ljubljana, 15–22 December 1889* (From: *Ivana Kobilca. 1861–1926, exhibition catalogue*, (ed.) Polonca Vrhunc, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana, May–July 1979, 49)



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 Zrinskog 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*



7. Ivana Kobilca, *Citrašica* (1887.), ulje na platnu, 95,6 × 78,4 cm, privatno vlasništvo (izvor: *Ivana Kobilca. 1861–1926, katalog izložbe*, (ur.) Polonca Vrhunc, Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, svibanj–srpanj 1979., 191) / *Ivana Kobilca, The Zither Player* (1887), oil on canvas, 95.6 × 78.4 cm, private collection (From: *Ivana Kobilca. 1861–1926, exhibition catalogue*, (ed.) Polonca Vrhunc, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana, May–July 1979, 191)



8. Ivana Kobilca, *Žena pije kavu* (*Kofetarica*) (1888.), ulje na platnu, 100 × 70 cm, privatno vlasništvo (foto: Bojan Salaj © Narodna galerija, Ljubljana) / *Ivana Kobilca, Woman Drinking Coffee (The Coffee Drinker)* (1888), oil on canvas, 100 × 70 cm, private collection (Photograph by Bojan Salaj © National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

4. Grandmother's Chest.
5. At the Well (*en plein air*).
6. Dutch Girl.
7. Grandmother and Granddaughter.
8. Špela, A Girl from Carniola.
9. Beggar.
10. Miss Pfefinger (portrait).
11. Mrs Schilling (portrait).
12. Dr. Vidrić (portrait).
13. Grandfather (portrait).
14. Mr. Jakov Kobilca (portrait).
15. Mrs. Marija Kobilca (portrait).
16. Miss Franjica Kobilca (portrait).
17. – 28. Studies.
29. Jela Vidrić as a Child, portrait in pastel.

Numbers 1 – 4, 6 and 7 are available for purchase.²¹³

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 Erdtelt 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



9. Ivana Kobilca, *Bogorodica s Djetetom* (1889.), ulje na platnu, 100 × 70 cm, privatno vlasništvo (Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, Arhiv fototeke (foto NG št. 3456) © Narodna galerija, Ljubljana) / *Ivana Kobilca, Madonna and Child* (1889), oil on canvas, 100 × 70 cm, private collection (National Gallery of Slovenia Photography Archive (foto NG 3456) © National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

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



10. Ivana Kobilca, *Portret sestre Fani* (1889.), ulje na platnu, 156,5 × 62,5 cm, privatno vlasništvo (foto: Bojan Salaj © Narodna galerija, Ljubljana) / *Ivana Kobilca, Portrait of Sister Fani* (1889), oil on canvas, 156.5 × 62.5 cm, private collection (Photograph by Bojan Salaj © National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana)

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.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 Erdtel'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).¹⁷ Kobilca'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 to not incur damage.¹⁸ Kobilca'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.¹⁹

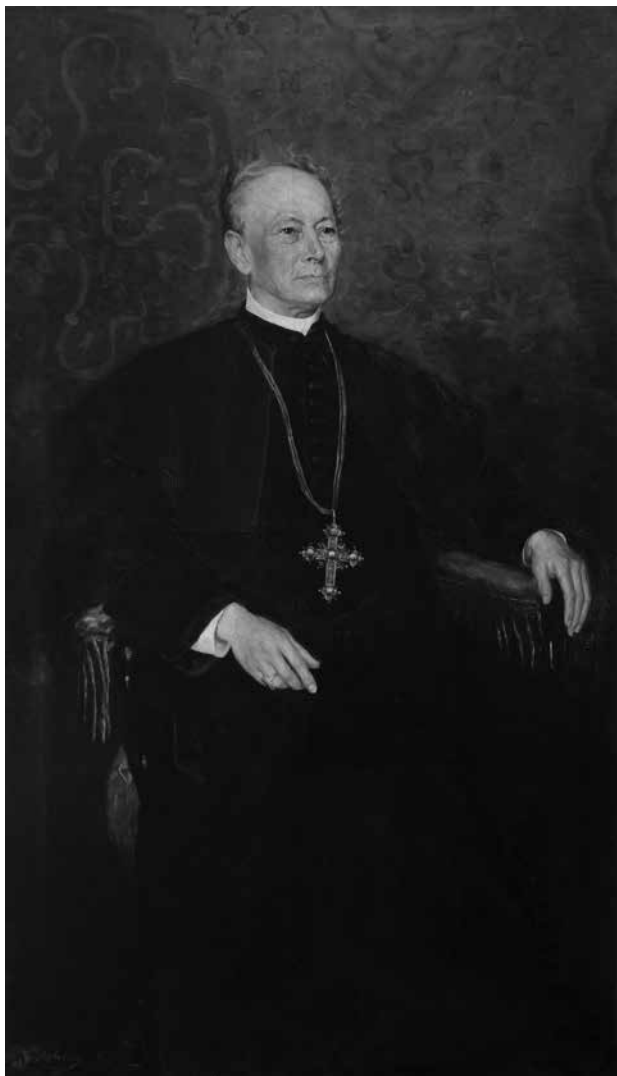
The world of Zagreb media and art criticism responded well to Kobilca's exhibition, she was the subject of several forthcoming short reports as well as a few longer articles which tried to bring the show closer to the reader, mainly by carefully enumerating and describing the pieces, and less so through 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 Kobilca'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.²⁰

What stands out in this regard is the text written by Iso Kršnjavi published in the *Agramer Zeitung*, which can actually be classified as art criticism.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, but actually gives an opinion about the displayed material. He recognizes skill and talent in the artist, but is also very critical of her, especially in two respects: he considers that it is too much of a textbook exhibition since the artist presents a lack of autonomous strokes, and that the artist is too concerned – typically Munich-like – with the question of how to paint and not what the subject matter is, therefore, that she ignores content at the expense of technique. Despite this, the critique concludes with an optimistic ending, in the form of a prediction that the artist, who is just about to go to Paris, is likely to be successful in the future. The text is difficult to evaluate from today's standpoint, but given its brevity and negative focus, I would say that its effect is too harsh. It is certainly debatable whether the exhibition was

somewhat too “textbook-like” and whether it in some parts lacked the artist's individual input; nevertheless the level of Kršnjavi's critical stance is certainly too lofty. To a certain extent it definitely stems from the fact that the famous connoisseur was disinclined to the actual method of working and the modern conception of some of the images, which has already been highlighted in his indignation towards the *Madonna and Child*. It is also perhaps worth noting that in Zagreb Kobilca moved in a circle of people to whom Kršnjavi used to be very close, but was in dispute at the time.

Kršnjavi's critique was reprinted almost in its entirety – precisely the paragraph on the impropriety of Kobilca's painting of the Madonna was omitted – in Ljubljana by the *Laibacher Zeitung*,²² which must have caused considerable upset to the artist who was very sensitive to negative criticism and media responses. Kršnjavi wrote a harsh review on the Slovenian artists with their group exhibition once again in 1901, on the occasion of the slightly reduced transfer of the first Slovenian Art Exhibition in Zagreb.²³ Among other things, he again criticized Ivana Kobilca quite sharply. The painter wrote to her sister on this occasion and it can be sensed from her heated response that she took his writing very much to heart, and also probably still resented the critique from 1890. This is what she says of his writing in *Narodne novine*: “There you go, that was really interesting, written by Kršnjavi (that distinguished, well-known Kršnjavi). He praised only Ažbe and Henrika Šantel – Kršnjavi is a friend of the old masters, whom he does not understand well, only the ‘patina’ (which comes with age), and this he caught so badly when he wanted to become an artist himself that his eyes are still smeared today, and I think that he will not be rid of it either. He had quite a go at Jakopič and Vesel and particularly criticized the Slovenian jury.”²⁴

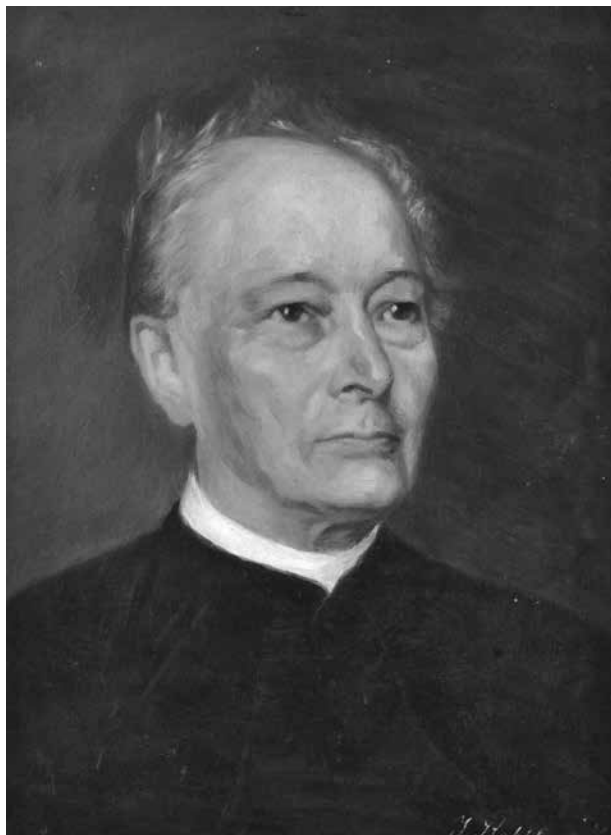
One can imagine that – apart from this critique – Ivana Kobilca must have been quite happy with the Zagreb experience. She presented herself to a new audience, made some new acquaintances, earned some money through the sale of her portraits (although some may have been made for free) – and left in order to pursue new challenges.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 Kobilca 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.



11. Ivana Kobilca, *Portret Josipa Jurja Strossmayera* (1899.), ulje na platnu, 178 × 100 cm, Bogoslovno semenišče Ljubljana (foto: Marjan Smerke © Bogoslovno semenišče Ljubljana) / *Ivana Kobilca, Portrait of Josip Juraj Strossmayer* (1899), oil on canvas, 178 × 100 cm, Bogoslovno semenišče Ljubljana (Photograph by Marjan Smerke © Bogoslovno semenišče Ljubljana)

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.”²⁶

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



12. Ivana Kobilca, *Portret Josipa Jurja Strossmayera* (1898.–1899.), ulje na platnu, 22 × 16 cm, Muzej Slavonije, Osijek MSO – 206075 (foto: Marin Topić © Muzej Slavonije MSO, Osijek) / *Ivana Kobilca, Portrait of Josip Juraj Strossmayer, (1898–99), oil on canvas, 22 × 16 cm, Muzej Slavonije, Osijek MSO – 206075 (Photograph by Marin Topić © Muzej Slavonije MSO, Osijek)*

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.”²⁷ Kobilca’s smaller portrait of Bishop Strossmayer was probably also painted during this time, and is now kept in the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek (Fig. 12).²⁸

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.²⁹ 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.”³⁰

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 aspects 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 Šakti Kralj Szomi

NOTES

1 It should be noted that Ivana Kobilca has not been studied extensively. The lack of research on her life outside Slovenia, where the painter spent more than thirty of her most active years, also represents a particular problem. Writing about her is therefore based predominantly on press reports and other sources, as well as on her artistic production located in Slovenia, her recollections in old age, and in particular her copious legacy preserved in private collections. The most comprehensive and informative publication on the painter remains the catalogue from the 1970s edited by Polonca Vrhunc: *Ivana Kobilca. 1861–1926*, exhibition catalogue, (ed.) Polonca Vrhunc, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana, May–July 1979. There is much talk in the article of Kobilca's memories, which were published in 1923 by Stanko Vurnik; however, it needs to be pointed out that these memories should only be taken provisionally since they contain many errors. For instance, they do not correspond to the details sent home by Ivana Kobilca in her letters when she was young, which are certainly more accurate. Among other things, please refer to the undated letter from Ivana to her sister Fani Kobilca, private holdings.

STANKO VURNIK, *Ivana Kobilca: spomini*, Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino (hereinafter: ZUZ), III/3–4 (1923), 100–112.

2 *Izzvenjevanje nekega obdobja. Oris poznobaročnega slikarstva na Kranjskem*, (ed.) Ferdinand Šerbelj, National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana, 2011, 22, 158–159.

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 KRAŠEVAC, *Kulturnopovijesni okvir 19. stoljeća i počeci umjetničkog školovanja u Hrvatskoj*, in: Zagreb – München: hrvatsko slikarstvo i Akademija likovnih umjetnosti u Münchenu, (ed.) Irena Kraševac, 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 Šantel 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 Borčič, Jure Mikuž, 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.

Some workshop-type of exchanges still existed, and personal, non-professional reasons occasionally also played a role. In this context, it is perhaps worth noting that Matija Jama completed high school in Zagreb and kept returning there after the beginning of his art studies in Munich. This is where he enrolled at the school of Hungarian Simon Hollósy in the early nineties, which Slovenians did not usually attend. Later he transferred to Anton Ažbe's school, which can also be marked as an important connection point between Slovenian and Croatian artists. Jama was returning to Zagreb at the end of the century, because he was expecting better sales of works there than in Ljubljana. His view of the Zagreb scene of the time is documented in his letters to Rihard Jakopič. Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana (hereinafter: MG), different letters of Matija Jama to Rihard Jakopič around 1900 (the correspondence of Rihard Jakopič was edited by Josip Ilc). In search of ideal landscape motifs, Jama travelled across the regions of the Danube tributaries for practically his entire life. Among other things, he also painted in Croatia for several years.

Croatian painter Marko Rašica lived, worked and exhibited several times in Ljubljana at the beginning of the 20th century. SANJA ŽAJA VRBICA, *Slikar Marko Rašica u Ljubljani na početku 20. stoljeća*, ZUZ, n. v. XLVII (2011), 262–279.

6 VLADIMIRA TARTAGLIA-KELEMEN, *Izložba 1874. u Narodnom domu (prilog proučavanju prvih umjetničkih izložaba u Hrvatskoj)*, Zbornik Historijskog instituta Jugoslavenske akademije, V/March (1963), 377–385.

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 gdñi. Ivani Kobilci*, Obzor, XXXI/109 (7 December 1890), 2. Cited from: INDIRA ŠAMEC FLASCHAR, *Akademicka 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. ANTUN BAUER, *Izložbe 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 Zrinskog 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 *Ljetopis Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti za godinu 1890*, vol. V, Jugoslavenska 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.

13 SILVA TRDINA (fn. 9), 98.

"Ivana Kobilca časti se ovime pozvati p. n. Vaše gospodstvo na izložbu svojih slika u palači jugoslavenske akademije na Zrinskom trgu od dne 23. veljače do uključivo 4. ožujka t. g. svaki dan od 10 sati prije podne do 4 sata poslije podne.

Čisti prihod namijenjen je zakladi za ustrojenje medicinskoga fakulteta u Zagrebu.

Popis slika.

1. Bogorodica.
2. Mamica kavopivka.
3. Citrarica.
4. Babičina škrinja.
5. Na zdencu (pleinair).
6. Holandska djevojka.
7. Babica i unuka.
8. Špela, kranjska djevojka.
9. Prosjak.
10. Gospodična Pfefinger (portret).
11. Gospodja Schilling (portret).
12. Gosp. dr. Vidrić (portret).
13. Died (portret).
14. Gosp. Jakov Kobilca (portret).
15. Gospodja Marija Kobilca (portret).
16. Gospodična Franjica Kobilca (portret).
17. – 28. Studije.
29. Jela Vidrić diete, portret u pastellu.

Brojevi 1 – 4 te 6 i 7 prodaju se."

14 This is what it says for instance in the article *Ivana Kobilca*, Vienac (Zagreb), XXII/8 (22 February 1890), 127, subheading "Listak".

15 Kobilca's early exhibiting has not been studied at all. For instance, the article from Vienac cited in footnote 14 reports that the painter exhibited in Munich, Berlin, Prague and Vienna, as well as in some southern German cities, before Zagreb. On the occasion of the exhibition in Ljubljana, local critiques also mention Basel and Luzern. VATROSLAV HOLZ, *Ivana Kobilca in nje slike*, Ljubljanski zvon, X/1 (1890), 55–56. Some references on Kobilca's early exhibiting can also be found in her letters to the family, which are privately owned. The legacy also includes various confirmations relating to her exhibitions, like for example a note

from the Königlische Akademie der Künste in Berlin dated 27 August 1889, confirming the safe arrival of *The Zither Player*.

16 Both paintings are now kept in the Samobor Museum.

17 The Archives of the Republic of Slovenia hold a photograph of Jela Vidrič, which the painter probably used as an aid for her drawing. It is accompanied by a photograph of a "double" of the *Portrait of Jela Vidrič* from the National Gallery of Slovenia. It is obvious from the somewhat different details that this is not the same depiction of the girl as in the National Gallery, it is possibly also not executed in pastel. AS 1201 / folder 115.

18 We can read about this in [JOSIP STARE], *Izložba slika I. Kobilce*, *Obzor* (Zagreb), 48 (27 February 1890), subheading "Prosvjeta".

19 For more on Kobilca's artistic orientation, see: BETI ŽEROVC, *Ivana Kobilca and Her Painting for the Ljubljana Town Hall, "Slovenia Bows to Ljubljana", in the Context of Women's Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti, XXXVII (2013), 167–178; BETI ŽEROVC, *Ivana Kobilca – a Career in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Women's Painting*, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, LXXVI/3 (2014), 509–534. The articles also present a more detailed presentation of the painter as an exhibiting artist.

20 –, *Ivana Kobilca*, Vienac (Zagreb), XXII/8 (22 February 1890), 126–127, 125 (repr.), subheading "Listak"; [JOSIP STARE] (fn. 18). The painter may have made suggestions to some writers of articles about her exhibitions regarding her estimations of the exhibited works and highlights of what was particularly good about them, for instance to Stare in Zagreb or Vatroslav Holz in Ljubljana.

21 K. [ISO KRŠNJAVI], *Gemalde Ausstellung*, *Agramer Zeitung*, XLV/44 (22 February 1890), subheading "Kunst, Literatur".

22 –, *Heimische Kunst*, *Laibacher Zeitung*, CIX/45 (24 February 1890), 354, subheading "Local und Provinzial – Nachrichten".

23 Kršnjavi [ISO KRŠNJAVI], *Druga izložba društva hrv. umjetnika: I. Slovenski slikari*, *Narodne novine*, LXVI/299 (31 December 1900), 2.

24 SILVA TRDINA (fn. 9), 105. It seems possible that Stare's article in *Obzor* could have been, among other things, meant as a response to that of Kršnjavi.

25 There is some sparse correspondence with Croatian acquaintances in Kobilca's legacy, whom she also mentioned in her letters and recollections (e.g. Vlaho Bukovac, Franjo Rački). Later in Sarajevo Kobilca also collaborated with the Croatian architect Josip Vančaš.

26 STANKO VURNIK (fn. 1), 110. Already the call from Đakovo, in which Kobilca is asked to take on the portrait of Strossmayer for the Municipality of Ljubljana, requested her to produce it following the bishop's photograph, "... since he can no longer sit." Letter from Dr. A. Voršak to Ivana Kobilca dated 24 June 1898, private collection.

27 Letter from Josip Juraj Strossmayer to Ivana Kobilca dated 27 June 1899, private collection. Also cited in: SILVA TRDINA (fn. 9), 103.

28 The portrait was recently published in: BORIVOJ POPOVČAK, *Portreti Josipa Jurja Strossmayera, IX. Strossmayerovi dani*, Đakovo, 2011, 23, repr. / cat. no. 15.

Dr. Ljerka Dulibić kindly brought the portrait to my attention and has provided generous help on several occasions with this article. I extend my thanks to her for her effort and care.

29 –, *Naša domača umetnica gospodična Kobilčeva ...*, *Slovenski narod*, XXIV/49 (2 March 1891), subheading "Domače stvari". "Our local artist, Miss Kobilca set foot for Paris these days, where she was most warmly recommended to her friends and acquaintances by Bishop Strossmayer. We wish our compatriot burning for ideal, beautiful art the best of success in the Eldorado of the artists of our time."

The painter also got in touch with Strossmayer from Paris. In a letter dated 17 March 1891 she writes, among other things, that she had sent her paintings to an exhibition at the so-called "new salon" [Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts] since she had not been able to finish her paintings for the old salon early enough. Archive HAZU, XI A / Kob. I. 1.

30 STANKO VURNIK (fn. 1), 106–107.

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, žanrovskih 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 žanr-tematike, 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 figuri. Na njima je već primjetan 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 odazvali 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.