

**Amateur Photographers'
Club, Art Society
and the Beginnings of an
Organised Amateur
Photography Movement in
Zagreb and Croatia**



**Klub amatera
fotografa, Društvo umjetnosti
i počeci organiziranoga
fotoamaterskog pokreta u
Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj**

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SAŽETAK

U radu se—u kontekstu europske amaterske fotografije devetnaestoga stoljeća—progovara o okolnostima nastanka zagrebačkoga Kluba amatera fotografa i najranijem razdoblju njegova djelovanja (do 1898.). Posebna je pozornost pritom poklonjena preciznom utvrđivanju datuma osnutka kluba (4. rujna 1893.), za koji se dosad mislilo da je bio utemeljen godinu dana ranije. U nastavku je obrađena i organizacija kluba, njegova fotooprema i atelijeri, načini financiranja, odnos s Društvom umjetnosti te prvi organizirani nastupi na izložbama i najraniji članovi.

Klub amatera fotografa u Zagrebu utemeljen je 4. rujna 1893. Ideja za njegovo osnivanje potekla je od skupine entuzijasta, mahom članova Društva umjetnosti, na sastanku održanom na Josipovcu krajem kolovoza 1893., u vrijeme širenja fotoamaterskog pokreta po čitavoj Europi. Impuls za organiziranje zagrebačkih fotoamatera bez sumnje je bio uspjeh polučten na *Međunarodnoj izložbi umjetnina* održanoj 1891. u Zagrebu, dok je kao model mogao poslužiti bilo koji od postojećih klubova diljem Austro-Ugarske Monarhije. Ipak, glavni je uzor u organizacijskom i praktičnom smislu bez sumnje bio bečki Klub amatera fotografa (Camera Club), čijemu su članstvu pripadali i neki od zagrebačkih fotoamatera.

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ABSTRACT

In the context of European amateur photography in the nineteenth century, this paper discusses the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Zagreb Amateur Photographers' Club and the earliest period of its operation (until 1898). Special attention was paid to the precise determination of the date of the Club's founding (4th September 1893), which was hitherto thought to have been a year earlier. The paper further examines the organization of the Club, its photo equipment and studios, types of funding, relationship with the Art Society, the first organized appearances at exhibitions and its first members.

KEYWORDS

Amateur Photographers' Club, Zagreb, photography, amateur photography, Art Society

Hrvoje Gržina

Od početaka tijesno povezan s Društvom umjetnosti, Klub amatera fotografa, posredstvom Izidora Kršnjavoga, u nekoliko je navrata obilno dotirala Zemaljska vlada, čime je postavljena i solidna infrastruktura za fotografsku djelatnost. Prvi je klupski atelijer bio u prostoru jednoga od osnivača, Julija pl. Zigeunera Blumendorfskoga, da bi po njegovu odlasku iz Zagreba fotoamateri od veljače 1894. nastavili raditi u atelijeru znamenitoga fotografa Ivana Standla. Njegov je atelijer u Mesničkoj ulici ujedno zadnji prostor koji su zagrebački fotoamateri rabili tijekom 19. stoljeća, pa tako s krajem 1898. završava i prvo poglavlje organiziranoga fotoamaterizma u glavnome hrvatskom gradu.

Period koji je razmatran u članku (1891.–1898.) moguće je podijeliti na tri razdoblja: prvo (pripremno) od *Međunarodne izložbe umjetnina* 1891. do utemeljenja kluba 4. rujna 1893., drugo (samostalno) od utemeljenja kluba do njegova sjedinjenja s Društvom umjetnosti 1. siječnja 1895. te treće od početka 1895. do napuštanja Standlova atelijera 12. srpnja 1898. Kroz tih je sedam godina fotoamaterizam u Zagrebu prošao put od hobija nekolicine imućnijih građana i plemića do ozbiljne organizacije s poslanjem širenja interesa za fotografiju, a preko nje i upoznavanja širega općinstva s njezinim umjetničkim odlikama. Vrhunac organizirane fotoamaterske djelatnosti u Zagrebu svakako je bilo izlaganje članova Kluba amatera fotografa na *Hrvatskoj narodnoj umjetničkoj izložbi*, održanoj na prijelazu 1894. u 1895., da bi nedugo potom, po pripajanju kluba Društvu umjetnosti, kroz svega tri godine takva, organizirana djelatnost gotovo u potpunosti zamrla.

Kao ozbiljnija se iznimka u periodu nakon 1894. velikim brojem izložaba i osvojenih nagrada istaknuo Leo Antun pl. Vetter, jedan od prvih zagrebačkih fotoamatera, poznat još s *Međunarodne izložbe umjetnina* 1891. Njegove su snimke između 1894. i 1898. nekoliko puta objavljivane u prestižnome bečkom glasilu *Wiener Photographische Blätter*. Upravo su Vetter i Antun Stiasni ml. —čija je ozbiljnija fotografska karijera tek počinjala—svojim kontinuiranim radom pomogli prebrođivanju krize organiziranoga fotoamaterizma u periodu od sjedinjenja Kluba amatera fotografa s Društvom umjetnosti do njegova ponovnoga aktiviranja u obnovljenom društvu početkom 20. stoljeća.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

Klub amatera fotografa, Zagreb, fotografija, amaterska fotografija, Društvo umjetnosti

INTRODUCTION

European countries have been witnesses to the gathering of individuals interested in photography since the early days of that media. The first association of this kind is considered to be the French Heliographic Society (*Société héliographique*), founded by a group of artists, writers and photographers—primarily practitioners of the calotype—in early 1851 in Paris.¹ That was the same year that the collodion process was perfected, which further opened the doors of the media to a larger number of amateur photographers, and thus also to a slightly different way of looking at photography in relation to the dominant, strictly professional practice.² The founding of the Photographic Society of London in early 1853 strengthened artistic aspirations among photographers, which could already be seen at its first session. Namely, the president of the society was the amateur photographer Charles Eastlake, while a particularly important lecture entitled “Upon Photography in an Artistic View” was given by the painter William Newton.³

Discussion on photography soon began to raise numerous aesthetic and technical questions, and the results could be regularly followed by the interested public at numerous exhibitions, including those organized by the London Photographic Society. That was also the time of the early examples of photographs that are now considered as the beginning of an artistic approach to the medium, such as Gustave Le Gray's seascapes, the portraits by Julia Margaret Cameron or the combined prints by Oscar Gustave Rejlander and Henry Peach Robinson. The latter also penned an extremely influential book *Pictorial Effect in Photography*, which was published in late 1860s—a kind of manual for making “artistic” photographs.³

For the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia—and especially for *Banska Hrvatska*—an extremely important role was played by the establishment of the Photographic Society in Vienna (German: *Photographische Gesellschaft in Wien*), whose members also included many photographers active in Croatia. This oldest photographic association in German-speaking lands was founded on the 22nd March 1861 at the Vienna Academy of Sciences, and over the following decades had a huge impact on photography related events in the Monarchy and throughout Central Europe. In 1864, the Society began to publish an influential journal *Photographische Correspondenz*, a careful reading of which has revealed numerous information of great importance for the history of Croatian photography.

Over the next three decades, photographers also started to form organizations in other countries, especially after the technical breakthrough that started the so-called gelatine era of photography (“dry” glass plates and flexible film) and made this medium accessible to a significantly wider number of practitioners. Just in England alone, several hundred photo clubs had been registered by mid-1890s, while the most note-worthy events in the Austro-Hungarian onarchy were the founding of the Vienna Club of Amateur Photographers (Germ. *Club der Amateur-Photographen*) on the 31st March 1887

1 Gresh, “Société héliographique”, 1282.

2 Cf. Newhall, *History of Photography*, 73.

3 *Idem*. See also Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 4.

4 Robinson, *Pictorial Effect*.

(in 1893 it changed its name to the Wiener Camera Club), and the two years younger Prague Club of Amateur Photographers (Czech: *Klub fotografů amatérů*). Unlike the predominantly technically-oriented Photographic Society in Vienna, the aforementioned clubs—through professional journals such as the *Photographische Rundschau* or *Wiener Photographische Blätter* as well as exhibitions—continuously promoted an artistic approach to the medium.

It was precisely the *International Exhibition of Art Photographs* (Germ. *Internationalen Ausstellung Künstlerischer Photographien*), held in Vienna in May 1891 and organized by the Club of Amateur Photographers, that marked a turning point on the path to a full affirmation of photography as a branch of art. Namely, its organizers limited the exhibits only to photographs with artistic tendencies, excluding specimens of scientific or purely technical orientation.⁵ After the Vienna Exhibition, photographic organizations with exclusively artistic goals, such as the Paris Photo-Club (French *Photo-Club de Paris*), London society The Linked Ring or—a little later and founded on the other side of the Atlantic ocean—the American Photo-Secession group.

Thus, at the end of the 19th century, the idea of organized amateur photography as a movement “for the promotion and improvement of art photography and its expressive possibilities” gained a completely new dimension.⁶ The rising wave of amateur photography also led to the founding of the Amateur Photographers’ Club in Zagreb, but its early history is quite different and includes considerably more data than was previously thought and known. The following chapters will try to correct some inaccurate information that has been uncritically repeated in literature, and offer precise answers to questions on the founding date of the Club, its first members and early years (until 1898 and the closure of the Club’s first studios).

PREPARATORY PERIOD

Activities of Zagreb’s earliest amateur photographers can be traced back to the 1880s. Thus we have Leo Antun pl. Vetter, who was photographing various urban motifs as early as the second half of the decade, while August Mühlbauer could be found listed as a member of the Vienna Club of Amateur Photographers in early 1891, to which he was most likely admitted the year before.⁷ Apart from a few of their surviving photographs, we have no information on other amateur activities until the opening of the *Međunarodna izložba umjetnina* [International Art Exhibition] in mid-August of 1891. The exhibition was organized by the *Društvo za umjetnost i umjetni obrt* [Arts and Crafts Society] (hereinafter *Društvo umjetnosti* [Art Society]), in the building of the *Zemaljska obrtna škola* [National Crafts School] (today Museum of Arts and Crafts), and was held as part of the programme of the *Jubilarna gospodarsko-šumarska izložba* [Jubilee Economic and Forestry Exhibition].⁸

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Denny, “Vienna international exhibition”, 1449–1450.
6
Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 6.
7
“Ordentliche Mitglieder”, 39.
8
Cf. *Izložba Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt*, 3–6.
9
Izložba Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 21. See also Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 7–8.
10
“Umjetnička izložba”, 3.
11
“Internationale Ausstellung. III”, 3.
12
“Međunarodna umjetnička izložba”, 3.
13
“(Klub fotografah amateurah.)”, 3.
14
“(Club der Amateur-Photographen.)”, 2.
15
“Club der Amateur-Photographen in Agram”, 402.

The Zagreb International Art Exhibition marked the first time that amateur photography was properly presented to the public, as evidenced by the exhibition catalogue and several newspaper articles. We thus learn that the exhibition in hall no. 10 of the National Crafts School featured over a hundred photographs made by “photographers by trade” Wilhelm Burger from Vienna, Makso Schrecker from Osijek, Julio F. Fiedler from Zagreb and the *Photographische Gesellschaft* from Berlin, as well as by amateurs —“Lichtenstein Prince Henrick in Vienna, Wilczek Hans, Count in Vienna, Eszterházy Dragutin, Count in Bratislava, Klein in Vienna, Vetter L. A. in Zagreb, Bolberitz Henrik, knight in Kukujevcí [and] Loewy Arnold in Nagykanizsa”.⁹ In addition to the exhibitors listed in the catalogue, the exhibition also featured a “collection of original photographs from Central Africa” by a renowned explorer and travel writer Dragutin Lerman, who had already announced his participation in mid-June.¹⁰

Details on the exhibited photographs can be found in a report from the 26th September, published in the *Agramer Zeitung* newspaper:

(...) Hall no. 10 contains collections of photographs, both by professional and amateur photographers. The former include a Zagreb local J. F. Fiedler, and a Belgian royal court photographer from Osijek M. Schrecker, who are represented with great images from their studios. Furthermore, the imperial and royal court photographer Wilhelm Burger from Vienna and the “Photographische Gesellschaft” from Berlin, which exhibited a rich collection of beautiful reproductions of artworks. From the ranks of amateur photographers, L. A. Vetter from Zagreb exhibited beautiful vedute and reproductions of buildings and artistic objects from our capital. Heinrich Lichtenstein in Vienna and Count Hans Wilczek, as well as very abundantly Count Karl Esterhazy from Bratislava, the latter with impressions from Egypt that proved to be true works of art based on their artistic conception and impeccable execution. Photographs by Arnold Loewy from Nagykanizsa, especially his portraits of children, and then the extremely charming works of Heinrich Ritter v. Bolberitz from Kukujevcí, and finally—last but not least—photographs of our adventurous, courageous countryman Karl Lermann from Central Africa, an area that posed difficulties even for the annexation aspirations of a well-meaning amateur photographer.¹¹

Of the mentioned exhibitors, the press especially mentioned and praised “J. F. Fiedler in Zagreb and M. Schrecker in Vienna”, and besides them, as was briefly mentioned in the *Obzor*, “there are many amateur photographers, who are also represented with their beautiful work.”¹² The success of the International Art Exhibition undoubtedly led to a full affirmation of amateur photography in Zagreb, while the next step of its practitioners was to follow the example of amateur photographers from Vienna and Prague and establish a club.

THE CLUB'S FOUNDING

The Amateur Photographers' Club in Zagreb was founded on the 4th September 1893. Unfortunately, this important date has so far been completely unknown in literature, and all the previously available texts—starting from the *Izviješće Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt u Zagrebu za godinu 1893. i 1894.* [Report of the Arts and Crafts Society in Zagreb for 1893 and 1894]—have perpetuated the information that the Club was founded in 1892. Nevertheless, by following the information from periodicals and preserved archival material, we managed to unambiguously determine not only the date of the Club's founding, but also to reconstruct the first days of organized amateur photography in Zagreb and Croatia.

The first mention of the idea of founding a new club can be found in the *Narodne novine* [Official Gazette] from the 24th August 1893. On that occasion, the founding of an amateur photographer's club was announced with a short invitation.

Many amateur photographers living in Zagreb intend to set up a special club here. With this aim, all those who are interested in the matter are invited to come to Ehrlich's restaurant on Josipovac on the 26th of this month, at 7 pm, for deliberation. The club has plans of extending its activities to the whole of Croatia.¹³

The course of that meeting on Josipovac was covered two weeks later by the *Agramer Zeitung*, in a short text full of valuable information. Due to its importance, we quote the entire text in translation:

The newly established club of amateur photographers, which already has more than twenty members, held its constituent assembly the day before yesterday. Dr. J. Rorauer was elected president, while board members are Theodor Zloch, Sigmund Mittelbach, August Mühlbauer, Prof. J. Devidé, Arthur Beilheim and Julius v. Zigeuner, who is also the director of the Club's studio. The Club's studio is open for members from 09:00 to 13:00 and from 15:00 to 18:00 hours. Lessons for beginners are free. Ladies can also join the club.¹⁴

Shortly afterwards, a short news on the founding of the new club was also published in the official journal of the Vienna Club of Amateur Photographers, *Photographische Rundschau*, which put the Zagreb club on the photographic map of Europe:

On the 4th September, the Club of Amateur Photographers was founded in Zagreb (Croatia). The board is made up of the following gentlemen: the honorary president Count Theodor Pejacsevich, president Dr. Rorauer, director Julius von Zigeuner, Mühlbauer, Zloch, A. Beitelheim, professor J. Devidé and Ziga M. Mittelbach.¹⁵

These newspaper articles provide direct, clear and unambiguous information on when, where and how the Zagreb Club of Amateur Photographers was founded.

Next newspaper information came at the beginning of October, when the “Managing Board of the new Amateur Photographers’ Club” accepted the Vice President of the Art Society Izidor Kršnjavi as its member.¹⁶ A few weeks later, there was a notification that the “newly established club of amateur photographers” had prepared photographic portraits of Ban Károly Khuen-Héderváry and his wife Margit Teleki, taken by a Club member Julius Zigeuner Edler von Blumendorf.¹⁷ Shortly after, an invitation to the meeting of club members tells us the location of the Club studio, which was located in the yard of the house of its director, Julius von Zigeuner (“Villa Zigeuner”).¹⁸

While searching for the origin of the mistake related to the founding year of the Amateur Photographers' Club, valuable information was found in the archives of the Art Society that can shed light on the inaccuracies. The widely known and accepted information that the club was established in 1892 first appeared in the clean copy of the Report of the Arts and Crafts Society in Zagreb for the years 1893 and 1894, which was printed in 1895. It states the following: “Furthermore, I should report on the development of another permanent body, which was established within our society in 1892. It is a special club of amateur photographers”, which “based on its own regulations, arranged and elected its own board, headed by the club’ founder Dr. J. Rorauer, with another 30 or so amateurs gathered around him”.¹⁹ However, if one looks at the draft of the report, also preserved in the Society archive, we see that the original note read “Furthermore, I should report that in the year 1892/3, a special amateur club of photographers was formed within the society...”, which was crossed out, after which the text from the official report was added.²⁰ It was from this report that the history of Croatian photography got the information that 1892 was the founding year of the Amateur Photographers’ Club.

If newspaper articles unanimously tell us that the Club was founded in early September 1893, the preserved archival material of the Art Society—and especially the fact that no documents have been preserved for the Amateur Photographers' Club prior to October 1893—confirms it.²¹ This is further supported by the fact that the Club was not mentioned in the minutes of the Society's General Assembly from the 23rd October 1892, nor in the minutes of the Board meeting from the 30th December 1892.²²

Still, regardless of the wrongly noted year of foundation, the aforementioned report of the Art Society for 1893 and 1894 provides valuable details about the purpose of the Club, which was “to instruct its members in photography, so that they can take and develop photographs, especially

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“(Personalnachrichten.)”, 4.

17

“(Aus dem Amateur-Photographenclub.)”, 3.

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“(Klub amateurfotografah društva umjetnosti.)”, 2; “(Club der Amateur-Photographen.)”, 4; “Klub amateur-fotografah društva umjetnosti”, 3. The so called Villa Zigeuner was built at the end of 1890 on the basis of Kuno Waidmann's project on the southwest corner of Palmotičeva street and what was then called Nova ulica (today Pavla Hatza 16), while a little later, also according to Waidmann's project, a photo studio was built in the garden (cf. HR-DAZG-1122, ZGD, document no. 15593/IV from the 12th June 1890, with the corresponding architectural drawing— Architectural drawing for a single-story house with an additional building in Palmotičeva street for Mr. Zigeuner pl Blumenthal [sic!] in Zagreb; HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Building department, document no. 8316 from the 12th April 1892 with the corresponding drawing *The groundwork of the photographic atelier for Mr. Jul. Zigeuner pl. Blumendorf*).

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HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.1, General Assembly, Assembly 1895, Society's Activity Report for 1893 and 1894, 5–7. See also *Report of the Arts and Crafts Society*, 7; “Glavna skupština društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt u Zagrebu”, 4.

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Cf. HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.1, General Assembly, Assembly 1893 [draft wrongly inserted into the archive!], *Slavna skupštino!*, 8.

21

Cf. HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3, Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography.

22

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.2, Management Board, minutes of the Society's General Assembly from the 23rd October 1892, and minutes of the Board meeting on the 30th December 1892.

23

Cf. HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.1, General assembly 1883 – 1938, Assembly 1895, Society's Action Report for 1893 and 1894, 6–7. V. and *Report of the Arts and Crafts Society*, 7–8.

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Cf. HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.1, General assemblies 1883–1938, Assembly 1895, Society's Action Report for 1893 and 1894, 6; *Report of the Arts and Crafts Society*, 8; “Društvo za umjetnost i umjetnički obrt”, 2.

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HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3, Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Bills and 1.9.2.7. Bills and various receipts.

26

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3, Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Expenses, Cost estimate done for the adaptation of the Amateur Photographers' Club of the Art Society from the 1st April 1894. Invoices and the accompanying correspondence for all three acquisitions have been preserved.

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HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3, Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Invoices, Invoice from the 9th November 1894.

28

Cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 10.

29

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3, Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Correspondence, Royal Croatian-Slavonian-Dalmatian government, Department for Religion and Education, Document no. 5037 from the 11th April 1894.

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Cf. *Izješće Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt*, 9. See also “Doris Raab”, 3.

landscapes and sceneries, as well as artistic monuments, and thus with the help of photographic reproductions to acquaint the general public with the natural and artistic beauties of their native land”, and the fact that the annual membership fee was twelve forints.²³

CLUB STUDIO,
PHOTO EQUIPMENT AND THE
FIRST EXHIBITION

Members of the new club only used the studio in the yard of Julius Zigeuner Edler von Blumendorf's house for a few months. After their “director” suddenly sold the property in early 1894 and left Zagreb, some thirty amateur photographers who were then gathered in the Club began using the studio of the famous Zagreb photographer Ivan Standl in Mesnička Street 9. The report of the Art Society thus says that the “[c]lub studio was (...) first in Mr. Zigeuner's house, after which the society used the studio of the local photographer Standl, for an agreed up compensation”.²⁴ Several receipts for the rent of Standl's studio have been preserved, and tell us that the Art Society paid sixty forints every three months of 1894 and 1895, beginning in February 1894.²⁵

At that time, the club also inventoried its photographic equipment, which is how we learned from the cost estimate that amateur photographers had at their disposal a “large 50/60 cm camera and accessories” that were purchased on the 2nd November 1893 from Sigmund Bondy, “an 18/24 cm apparatus available to beginners”, purchased on the 28th December of the same year from Ivan Deberto, and a “stereoscopic camera 13/18”, purchased on the 24th March 1894 from Ernst Herbst & Firl. from Görnitz, which could also be used “for ordinary images up to cabinet-sized”.²⁶ From the receipt of one of the Club's first members, pharmacist Sigmund Mittelbach, we know that the first 9 x 12 cm plates (glass plate negatives, author's comment) were bought on the 8th October 1893,²⁷ which together with the purchase of the first camera a month later, also speaks in support of the Club's founding in September of 1893.²⁸

The purchase of various photographic equipment and other necessities probably burdened the Club's coffers, which were primarily filled from annual membership fees, so the members—most likely through Izidor Kršnjavi—had to ask for help from the royal government in the country, specifically its Department for Religion and Education. Consequently, on the 11th April 1894, the Department awarded the Club with 1,500 forints for the purchase of cameras and other equipment, for shooting portraits of Ban Khuen-Héderváry and making their reproductions, and for the “completion of etchings based on Van Dyck”.²⁹ Those etchings of Van Dyck's painting “Young Man” from the Strossmayer Gallery were donated to all the members of the Art Society that same year, and were made by the Munich artist Doris Raab.³⁰

In late 1894, members of the Amateur Photographers' Club exhibited their works at the *Hrvatska narodna umjetnička izložba* [Croatian National Art Exhibition] in Zagreb. In the exhibition catalogue, their works are mentioned at the very end as: "Photographs exhibited by amateur photographers of the society (near the entrance)".³¹ The first organized exhibition of amateur photographers was praised in a report by the Art Society,³² while a few more details could be learnt from a newspaper review:

To complete our exhibition, it also featured the society of amateur photographers, for whom this occasion was the first time they presented themselves to the audience and achieved great success. There were ordinary photographs and platinotypes, which deserve the greatest praise, and especially the works of Mr. Prof. Šandor and Mr. Antun Betlheim. The word dilettantism does not apply here as they are, in their obvious artistic inclination, "photographers" who could go toe to toe with any craft photographer. Mr. Šandor's shots of nature and the exhibited paintings, followed by Mr. Betlheim's images (especially the platinotypes from Maximir), are in every respect exemplary works of their kind. Our amateurs would have the right and sufficient reason to show their work to the audience in a more convenient place and larger numbers. This might also attract new enthusiastic members for their society.

In early 1895, the exhibition was visited by Ban Karoly Khuen-Héderváry who, according to the newspaper, paid special attention to the "photographic part of the exhibition, where he especially liked the platinotypes of two parties from the Maksimir fish ponds (by Mr. Betlheim), and the reproductions of Tišov's painting "'Bogoštolvlje' [Worship] and Frangēs' relief 'Theologia' (by prof. Šandor)".³⁴ It was Betlheim's shots from Maksimir and Šandor's reproduction of *Bogoštolvlje*—in a 50 × 60 cm format inserted together in a map—that were one of the four gifts distributed to members of the Art Society in 1895.³⁵

At the time when those exhibition reviews were written, their authors apparently did not know that the fate of the Amateur Photographers' Club had already been determined. Namely, at the assembly of the Art Society on the 29th November, the Management Board made a decision that, as of the new 1895 year, "the club would cease to exist as an independent body, and should be fully incorporated into this society."³⁶ As the main reason for that decision, it was pointed out that the Art Society, "by procuring expensive equipment for the amateurs, has reserved the right of ownership and only allows the club to use it, and also that club members, despite their high membership fees, do not have the benefits of other Art Society members, and finally that the apparatus of an additional administration for a small club would be superfluous". Following this decision, "the special membership for the amateur club has been terminated", and the entire inventory of the Club, worth approximately 3,000 forints, was transferred to the ownership of the Art Society.³⁷

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Katalog Hrvatske narodne umjetničke izložbe u Zagrebu, 4.

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Izješće društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 10.

33

r., "Umjetnička izložba u Zagrebu. II", 5.

34

"(Preuzvišeni gosp. ban Dragutin grof Khuen-Hederváry)", 3.

35

Cf. "Društvo za umjetnost i umjetni obrt u Zagrebu", 3.

36

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3. Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Club's integration with the Society, document no. 1/95 from the 2nd January 1895.

37

Izješće društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 8.

38

Idem, 8–9.

39

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3. Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Club's integration with the Society, document on the 20th February 1895 (Amateur Photographers' Club submits the inventory, invoices and cash for 105.–).

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See footnote 17.

41

Izješće društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 19–21.

42

For more on Rorauer's life and work, see the note "Rorauer, Julije". See also Tonković, "The History of Photography in Croatia", 118–119; Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 22–23.

43

Izješće društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 17. See also

"(Društvo za umjetnost i umjetni obrt u Zagrebu)", 2.

44

HR-HDA-79, UOZV, vol. 13–4, *Art Society in Zagreb. List of members and paid membership fees for the year 1898*, no. 80. The list is part of document no. 45376/1896 that was inserted in the government act no. 33039 from the 30th June 1896.

45

Cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 21. Photographs in the Zagreb City Museum (inv. no. MGZ-fot-1415, MGZ-fot-2013, MGZ-fot-5643, MGZ-fot-6929, MGZ-fot-3088, MGZ-fot-15831).

46

"(Club der Amateur-Photographen.)", 948.

The report of the Art Society further shows that the previously purchased photographic equipment was since supplemented by “the best English camera for snapshots, the ‘Kodak No. V’, which can make 54 continuous shots”, and that the Society could also use a “camera of the royal government’s craft school for reproducing maps and blueprints”, as well as a smaller salon camera and one “for activities outside the studio”. In addition to the cameras, the Society also had at their disposal materials “for making platinotypes and the pigment processes”.³⁸ After the inventory, invoices and 105 forints of cash from the Club’s treasury were handed over to the Art Society on the 20th February 1895,³⁹ the first chapter of organized amateur photography in Zagreb and Croatia was officially closed.

FIRST MEMBERS OF THE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS' CLUB

Following the news of the founding of the Amateur Photographers’ Club, it is possible to reconstruct its earliest membership that, as we read in the newspaper, included some twenty members. Seven of them—not counting the honorary president Teodor Pejačević—are mentioned by name in a short report on the Club’s founding from the 4th September 1895. The only other member that we can be certain about is Izidor Kršnjavi, who we know was admitted in early October of the same year.⁴⁰ With the exception of Julius Zigeuner Edler von Blumendorf, all of them were members of the Art Society.⁴¹

The first president of the Amateur Photographers’ Club was a “royal government clerk”, writer and translator Julije Rorauer (Senj, 12th April 1859–Vienna, 4th December 1912).⁴² Although there is no information on his photographic activities and no preserved photographs, he undoubtedly played an important role in the first days of organized amateur photography in Zagreb and Croatia. After the Club’s merger with the Art Society in early 1895, Rorauer was its representative on the Management Board of the Society.⁴³ He later became a member of the Društvo hrvatskih umjetnika [Croatian Association of Artists], but resigned at the beginning of 1898.⁴⁴

At the time of the founding of the Zagreb Club, August Mühlbauer was already a member of the Amateur Photographers’ Club in Vienna. His earliest surviving photographs date from the late 1880s, and show that Mühlbauer was an amateur photographer with a solid technical background. Among other things, he photographed the Jubilee Economic and Forestry Exhibition, as well as various Zagreb motifs such as Maksimir, Savski most [Sava Bridge], Novi kolodvor [New Railway Station] and Donji grad [Lower Town], as well as the city ice rink.⁴⁵ From Zagreb, he probably moved to Ljubljana, where in 1898 we find him on the list of founders of the local Amateur Photographers’ Club.⁴⁶

Julius Zigeuner Edler von Blumendorf (Vienna, 5th June 1852–Vienna, 19th January 1927) was among the first members of the Amateur Photographers’ Club, a member of the

general assembly and the first manager of the Club studio.⁴⁷ At the end of February 1892, he opened a photographic business in Zagreb,⁴⁸ and a few months later he built a photographic studio in the yard of his own house, designed by the famous architect Kuno Waidmann.⁴⁹ His business did not last long (he closed it on the 20th November 1892),⁵⁰ which is how the first Zagreb amateur photographers began to use his studio the following year.

Zigeuner achieved his first success as a Club member by photographing Ban Karoly Khuen-Héderváry and his wife Margit, whose portraits—platinum prints—he exhibited in October 1893 in the furniture store of his business partner Wilhelm Libkowitz at 30 Ilica Street,⁵¹ where a few days later he also exhibited group portraits of singers of the typographic society “Sloga”, which were especially commended.⁵² In December of the same year, during the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Khuen-Héderváry's inauguration, Zigeuner hosted high-ranking guests in the Club's studio, at which time he took four very successful photographs, two of which—again platinum prints—were also on display at Libkowitz's storefront.⁵³ He was a member of the Photographic Society in Vienna,⁵⁴ and was included on the list of members of the Vienna Camera Club since early 1894.⁵⁵

Zigeuner von Blumendorf unfortunately did not stay in Zagreb long after the founding of the Amateur Photographers' Club. In January 1894 he gave the photographic equipment from his studio to the Art Society for 500 forints (the equipment was signed for by J. Rorauer and F. Šandor on behalf of the Amateur Photographers' Club),⁵⁶ and shortly after he sold the property and moved to Vienna. There, in November 1894, he took part in the exhibition of the Camera Club, where he was criticized for his overly visible retouching of portraits.⁵⁷

Mining surveyor and supervisor of the Royal State Railways Teodor Zloch (Mašov, 28th September 1843–Zagreb, 24th August 1904) was the Club's board member at the time of its founding. Same as for Rorauer, we did not find any information on his photographic activities. The same is true of the businessman Josip Ferdinand Devidé (Prague, 1826–Zagreb, 7th January 1897), director of the General Zagreb Savings Bank and president of the Humanitarian Society.⁵⁸

Famous Croatian pedologist and university professor Franjo Šandor (Zemun, 13th March 1868–Zagreb, 20th May 1922) was an active amateur photographer in his youth.⁵⁹ Before his academic career took off, he participated in exhibitions and served as treasurer of the Amateur Photographers' Club, and later—together with Rorauer—was also its representative on the Management Board of the Society.⁶⁰ His photographs from the Croatian National Art Exhibition 1894/95—especially the “reproductions of Tišov's painting ‘Worship’ and Frangeš relief

47

“(Club der Amateur-Photographen.)”, 2.

48

HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Crafts department, Knjiga E. Ini obrti 1886. – 1919., no. 5/1892. See also document no. 5102/IV from the 27th February 1892.

49

HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Building department, Building blueprints (Osnova fotografskog ateliera za gosp. Jul. Zigeunera pl. Blumendorf, Palmotičeva ulica u Zagrebu) inserted in the document no. 8316/I from the 3rd April 1892.

50

HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Crafts department, Minutes no. 29521/IV from the 21st November 1892 inserted in the document no. 5102/IV from the 27th February 1892.

51

“(Aus dem Amateur-Photographenclub.)”, 3; “(Iz kluba amateurah fotografah.)”, 2.

52

“(Vom Amateurphotographen-Club.)”, 3–4. Reproduction of a group portrait of singers was published in the newspaper Prosvjeta (cf. “Gospojinski sbor ‘Sloge’, 701).

53

“Das Jubiläum des Banus”, 2.

54

“Photographische Gesellschaft in Wien”, 590–591.

55

“Club-Mittheilungen”, 17.

56

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3. Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Invoices, Letter to Julius Zigeuner Elder von Blumendorf from the 23rd January 1894 with the accompanying inventory.

57

“Bresprechung der Maidenausstellung vom 3. und 10. November”, 253.

58

More on Devidé's life and work in Despot, Szabo, “Devidé, Josip Ferdinand”, 353.

59

More on the life and work of Franjo Šandor in the note “Šandor, Franjo”. See also Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 23.

60

Izviješće Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt, 17.

61

Cf. r., “Umjetnička izložba u Zagrebu. II”, 5; “(Preuzvišeni gosp. ban Dragutin grof Khuen-Hederváry)”, 3.

62

“Predstava Gundulićeve ‘Dubravke’ u Dubrovniku”, 12; “Gundulićevo zamišljanje ‘Osmana’”, 13; “Vlaho Bukovac”, 153.

63

HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Political department, *Imenik zavičajnika* 1, no. 1–10000, no. 6082.

64

HR-HDA-1979, HDLU, 1.2.3. Society's working groups, Department for Amateur Photography, Invoices, Invoice from the 9th November 1894. For examples of advertisements, see “Wichtig für Fach- und Amateur-Photographen!”, 4; “Wichtig für Fach- u. Amateur Photographen!”, 8.

65

“Als ordentliche Mitglieder”, 43.

66

r., “Umjetnička izložba u Zagrebu. II”, 5; “(Preuzvišeni gosp. ban Dragutin grof Khuen-Hederváry)”, 3.

67

Cf. Maruševski and Flego, “Kršnjavi, Iso (Isidor, Izidor)”, 256–257. See also Mance, Matijević, *Iso Kršnjavi—veliki utemeljitelj*.

68

Cf. Tonković, “Izidor Kršnjavi i fotografija”, 480–481.

69

Izviješće Društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt u Zagrebu za godinu 1893. i 1894., 8. See also Tonković, “Izidor Kršnjavi i fotografija”, 481–482; Tonković, “The Beginnings and Development”, 387.

70

Cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, p. 24.

71

HR-HDA-79, UOZV, vol. 13–4, *Društvo umjetnosti u Zagrebu. Popis članova te uplate članarine za godinu 1898.*, no. 42. The list is part of the document no. 45376/1896 that was inserted in the government act no. 33039 from the 30th June 1896.

'Theologia' — were praised several times by the press as very worthy.⁶¹ In early 1895, several reproductions of Bukovac's paintings based on his photographs were published in the *Vienac* magazine.⁶²

Pharmacist Sigmund Mittelbach was born in 1830.⁶³ For several decades, he ran the pharmacy "K Salvatoreu" [At Salvatore's] in Duga ulica 3, where from mid-1893 the citizens of Zagreb could buy—among other things—various photographic supplies. According to an invoice issued to the Amateur Photographers' Club and a series of newspaper ads, the pharmacy offered glass plates of all sizes, albumen, collodion and platinum photo papers and various chemicals.⁶⁴

Another member of the Art Society and the Amateur Photographers' Club, as well as the Viennese Camera Club (from 1893),⁶⁵ was a Zagreb landlord Artur Betlheim (in periodicals also referred to as Bettelheim or Bettleheim). The only mention of Betlheim's photographic activity can be found in relation to the Croatian National Art Exhibition in Zagreb in 1894/95, when his platinotypes with motifs from Maksimir were especially praised by the press.⁶⁶

Versatile politician and cultural worker Izidor Kršnjavi (Našice, 22nd April 1845–Zagreb, 3rd February 1927) made countless marks on the cultural life of Croatia in the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, which were covered in many books and papers.⁶⁷ So it is not surprising that his many interests included photography, for the affirmation of which within the Art Society he undoubtedly bears the greatest credit. He developed an interest in photography relatively early, as we know that he began collecting photographs of Italian architectural and artistic monuments as early as the 1870s, and considered establishing an institute for reproduction.⁶⁸ He served as the secretary of the Art Society after it became active in 1879, founded the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb in 1880, and two years later, together with the architect Herman Bollé, also established the Royal National School of Crafts.

The School of Crafts was equipped with a photographic laboratory for which the Kršnjavi-Bollé duo in 1891 acquired a large 50 × 60 cm camera for the reproduction of maps and drawings, which could also be used by members of the Amateur Photographers' Club.⁶⁹ In the first years of the Club, Kršnjavi also played an important role by awarding it—as the head of the Department of Religion and Education in the provincial government (1891-1895)—generous financial resources that were much needed for its work and the procurement of valuable equipment.⁷⁰ Kršnjavi was also a member of Croatian Association of Artists.⁷¹

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LEO ANTUN PL. VETTER AND
ANTUN STIASNI JR.

Approximately at the time of the merger of the Amateur Photographers' Club with the Art Society, and the Croatian National Art Exhibition in Zagreb that was held at the turn of 1894 to 1895, the person who stood out among Zagreb's amateur photographers as the most active participant in international exhibitions was Leo Antun von Vetter (Andrijevci, 4th June 1866)—a name that had been known since the International Art Exhibition of 1891.⁷² As an already established amateur photographer whose photographs were used to illustrate Adolf Hudovski's 1892 guide *Zagreb i okolica* [Zagreb and its surroundings],⁷³ Vetter was almost certainly among the first twenty members of the Club, although he did not hold any functions. His exhibition successes were mostly covered by the *Wiener Photographische Blätter*, a journal of the Vienna Camera Club, whose member Vetter became in early 1894.⁷⁴ Since then, he regularly took part in the Club's exhibitions and received several awards.

At an exhibition held at the end of 1894, Vetter won one of the three second prizes for his photograph *Bauernhof*, which was also reproduced in the journal. On that occasion, it was pointed out that the author "undoubtedly strives to create atmospheric images" and that his photographs are characterized by "simple, but measured shots".⁷⁵ That monthly also tells us that Vetter had a darkroom in the Pongratz Palace on Jelačić Square no. 3.⁷⁶

In November 1895, another of Vetter's images appeared on the pages of the Club's monthly. The photo *Unterwegs* was reproduced as part of Franz Schiffner's article "Beiträge zur photographischen Perspektive" (Contributions to the Photographic Perspective).⁷⁷ A month later, at the *Die Pigmentbilder Ausstellung* [Pigment Print Exhibition] (7th–14th December), Vetter exhibited a portrait photograph, whose "well-modelled face" was highlighted as "extraordinary".⁷⁸ At the exhibition in late 1896, Vetter's photographs were not awarded, but we know that he participated with, among other images, a portrait of a child that managed to "reproduce the charm of a child's lovely face and fill it with grace and kindness".⁷⁹

We do not have a confirmation of Vetter's exhibition activity for the year 1897, but his photograph was published on the cover of the May issue of the *Wiener Photographische Blätter*.⁸⁰ In December 1898, he again won second prize at the Camera Club exhibition in Vienna for the photograph entitled *Mondnacht*.⁸¹ That photo was already singled out as an "extraordinary achievement" upon its submission.⁸²

In 1899, three of Vetter's photographs were donated to the members of the Art Society as an annual award,⁸³ while a few years later his photographs—printed for that occasion at Rudolf Mosinger's *Svjatoslikarski zavod* [Photographic institute] in Zagreb—were used to illustrate a

72

See notes 10 and 12. The most detailed analysis of Vetter's photographic work was made by Mladen Grčević (cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 18–20).

73

Hudovski, *Zagreb i okolica*, s. p.

74

"Als ordentliche Mitglieder", 43.

75

"Die Maidenausstellung vom 17. November 1894.", 12–14.

Photo reproduction is on page 14.

76

"Die Benützung der Dunkelkammer", 147.

77

"Unterwegs. Leo A. v. Vetter", 212.

78

"Die Pigmentbilder Ausstellung", 14.

79

Buschbeck, "Rundgang durch unsere Ausstellung künstlerischer Photographien", 78.

80

"Leo A. v. Vetter", 113.

81

Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 19.

82

"Ausstellungen", 268.

83

"Družtvo umjetnosti", 3.

84

Slob. i kr. zem. glavni grad Zagreb, s. p.

85

On the first years of Stiasni's work, see Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 28. For his later photographic efforts, see *idem*, 51–53.

86

HR-HDA-1448, ZB MK, ZM-34C/1203, Zagreb, Sv. Marko, MKV 1890.–1898, p. 228, no. 237. See also HR-DAZG-4, GPZ, Political department, Imenik zavičajnika 1, no. 1–10000, no. 7856.

87

Cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 25.

88

"(Razpis nagradâ društva umjetnosti)", 2; "Preisauusschreibung des Kunstvereines", 3; "Razpis nagrada društva umjetnosti", 2–3.

89

"(Natječaj društva umjetnosti.)", 3; "Natječaj društva umjetnosti", 3.

90

"Concursausschreibung des Kunstvereines", 2–3.

91

"Natječaj društva umjetnosti", 3.

92

Cf. "Glavna skupština društva za umjetnost i umjetni obrt", 3.

93

HR-DAZG-1122, ZGD, Mesnička 7, 1836, Layout no. 10899/IV from 19th March 1897 and construction plan no. 10899/IV from the 24th March 1897 (*Načrt za premještaj fotografičkog atelija iz dvorišta kbr. 9 u dvorište kbr. 7 u Mesničkoj ulici za g. Würth u Zagrebu*).

94

"(Za ljubitelje fotografije)", 3.

commemorative document marking Adolf pl. Mošinski's tenth year as the mayor ("Photographs were taken by the amateur Mr. Leo pl. Vetter in Zagreb").⁸⁴

Besides Vetter, the second most important name in early Croatian amateur photography was Antun Stiasni Jr. (Vienna, 25th May 1871–Zagreb, 31st December 1943). Regardless of the fact that he would only achieve full artistic affirmation in the 20th century, his photographic beginnings from mid-1890s were related to the Art Society, which is why they should be mentioned here.⁸⁵ This bank clerk was born to a family of the famous Zagreb merchant Antun Stiasni and his wife Julija, née Lukač.⁸⁶ He probably started taking photographs during his stay in Trieste in early 1890s⁸⁷, and his earliest surviving photographs were taken during the first half of that decade.

Unfortunately, for this early period of Stiasni's work we have no information on any potential exhibition activities. Stiasni reached his first peak only at the *1. međunarodna fotografska izložba Hrvatskoga društva umjetnosti* [1st International Photographic Exhibition of the Croatian Art Society] in 1910, where he and Vetter were the only members of the early Zagreb amateur photographers to exhibit their photographs.

ACTIVITIES OF ZAGREB'S AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS AFTER THE CLUB'S MERGER WITH THE ART SOCIETY

Unlike the very active amateur photography scene in Vienna, the next mention of the local amateur photographers after the 1894/95 Croatian National Art Exhibition can only be found in the call for best artworks that was announced by the Art Society for its members on the 13th April 1897. The call announcement, items 7 and 8, promises awards of one hundred crowns for best photographs in the "portrait section" and for the "best scenery image".⁸⁸ The results of the competition were announced to the public half a year later.⁸⁹ As expected, the award for the best landscape photograph went to Leo Antun Vetter, with a note that his landscapes would "undoubtedly win the first prize at every photo exhibition", while the winner in the portrait category—"for his painting arrangement and artistic concept"—was Pavao Steiner, who took first place after his most serious opponent withdrew.⁹⁰ The winning photographs were displayed at the Kugli and Deutsch bookstore in Ilica on the 10th October 1897 where, according to the newspaper, they garnered much interest.⁹¹

At that time, members of the Art Society continued to use Ivan Standl's photo studio,⁹² which in the meantime moved from the courtyard at Mesnička 9 deeper into the courtyard at Mesnička 7, based on a project by Hönigsberg and Deutsch.⁹³ The studio housed all of Society's photographic equipment listed earlier, and all members could receive "free photography instruction" and were entitled to "four free lessons".⁹⁴ After Standl passed away on the 30th August

1897, his widow Klementina continued to run the business for almost a year, so that Zagreb's amateur photographers had a place to work for some time longer. However, this came to an end on the 12th July 1898, when—knowing that Klementina Standl was leaving the photographic business on the 1st August—the Art Society moved its photographic equipment to Teodor Zloch's property on Josipovac, which ended the story of the Club's studio for a while.⁹⁵

With no space to work and “unhappily incorporated into inappropriate organizational forms”,⁹⁶ in late 1898, Zagreb's amateur photographers found themselves isolated within the Art Society—from which many artists, led by Vlaho Bukovac, had withdrawn a year earlier—and with no possibility for more serious work. New photographic equipment was not procured and exhibition activities ceased, thus weakening the public's interest in amateur photography for a while. New impulses in amateur photography would reappear only ten years later and culminate in two international photographic exhibitions in 1910 and 1913.⁹⁷

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Amateur Photographers' Club in Zagreb was founded on the 4th September 1893. The idea for its founding came from a group of enthusiasts, mostly members of the Art Society, at a meeting held on Josipovac in late August 1893, at a time when the amateur photography movement was spreading across Europe. The impetus for organizing Zagreb's amateur photographers was undoubtedly the success of the International Art Exhibition held in 1891 in Zagreb, while the role-model could have been any of the clubs that existed throughout the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Nevertheless, the main role model in the organizational and practical sense was undoubtedly the Vienna Camera Club, whose membership also included some of Zagreb's amateur photographers.

From the start closely connected with the Art Society, the Amateur Photographers' Club—through Izidor Kršnjavi—was on several occasions abundantly subsidized by the provincial government, which set a solid infrastructure for its photographic activities. The first Club studio was set up on the property of one of its founders, Julius Zigeuner Edler von Blumendorf. Following his departure from Zagreb, amateur photographers started using the studio of a famous photographer Ivan Standl in February 1894. His studio in Mesnička Street was also the last location used by Zagreb's photographers in the 19th century, as the first chapter of organized amateur photography in the Croatian capital ended in late 1898.

The time frame under consideration (1891–1898) can thus be divided into three periods: the first (preparatory) period, from the International Art Exhibition in 1891 to the founding of the Club on the 4th September 1893; the second

95

Cf. Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 183, f. 29.

96

Idem, 30–31.

97

For more details on this period, see Grčević, *Umjetnička fotografija*, 32–51.

98

Idem, 28–29.

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Ovaj je rad financirala Hrvatska zaklada za znanost projektom IP-2019-04-1772. / This work has been fully supported by Croatian Science Foundation under the project IP-2019-04-1772.

(independent) period from the Club's founding to its merger with the Art Society on the 1st January 1895; and the third period from the beginning of 1895 until the Club stopped using Standl's studio on the 12th July 1898. During those seven years, amateur photography in Zagreb went from being a hobby of a few wealthy citizens and nobles to a serious organization with a mission of spreading interest in photography and thus also acquainting the wider audience with its artistic features. The pinnacle of organized amateur photography in Zagreb was certainly the participation of the members of the Amateur Photographers' Club in the Croatian National Art Exhibition, held at the turn of 1895, while only shortly after, in the course of three years following the Club's merger with the Art Society, such organized activity almost completely died out.

A serious exception to the post-1894 trends was the work of Leo Antun von Vetter, one of Zagreb's first amateur photographers whose name had been known since the 1891 International Art Exhibition. Between 1894 and 1898, his photographs were published several times in the prestigious Viennese journal *Wiener Photographische Blätter*. It was Vetter and Antun Stiasni Jr., whose serious photographic career was just getting started, who helped to overcome the crisis of organized amateur photography brought on by the merger of the Amateur Photographers' Club with the Art Society, and its reactivation in a re-established society in the early 20th century.

A relatively small number of preserved images unfortunately still prevents us from creating a complete picture of the work of Zagreb's earliest amateur photographers, especially in terms of photographs that were shown at exhibitions. For this reason, Mladen Grčević's conclusion that the basic determinant of the work of our first amateur photographers was a "clear and sharp photographic image, for which the artistic part of the task consisted of choosing the motif, and setting the lighting and the most favourable camera angle" cannot be challenged in any way.⁹⁸ We are thus left with a hope that some of those photographs still lie hidden in some unresearched public or private collection, and that future research into early amateur photography will result in a more detailed analysis of these images that form the foundation of the earliest history of organized Croatian amateur photography.*

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