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16-25 TAMARA BJAŽIĆ KLARIN

REVIEW OF ALEKSANDER LASLO'S RESEARCH ON LATE NINETEENTH
AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE IN ZAGREB
ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARCHITECT'S DEATH

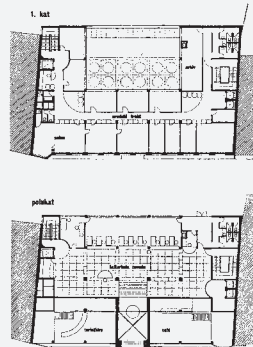
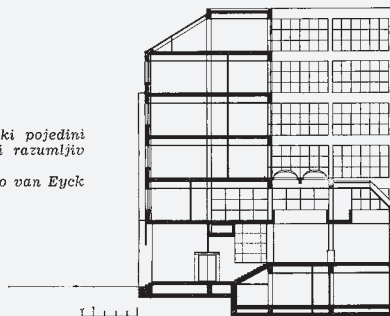
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UDC 001.89:72(497.521.2)"18/19" LASLO

STUDENTSKI PRILOG

Parabola o ugrađenoj kući
(Osiguravajući zavod, Preradovićeva 1-3, SAŠA LASLO diplomski rad u klasi prof. Dragomanovića, travanj 1976)

»Želim samo naglasiti činjenicu da svaki pojedini slučaj JEST specijalni slučaj, i može biti razumljiv jedino u vlastitim okvirima.«

Aldo van Eyck



Komentirajući projekt s distance, opisujući pristup, pobrojati ću neke poticaje koji možda nisu čitljivi s nacрта.

Koncept glasi »poštujem«, a znači istovremeno kontekst i hommage à.

Pod kontekstom podrazumijevam:

... Kad je prošlost prikupljena u sadašnjosti i kad se nakupina iskustva udomi u svijesti, sadašnjost stječe vremensku dubinu, gubi svoju poput britve oštru trenutnost...

Prošlost, sadašnjost i budućnost moraju u svijesti djelovati kao kontinuum. Ako to nisu, artefakti koje tvorimo bit će bez vremenske dubine i asocijativne perspektive... (1)

... Kad se osoba identificira s mjestom, kaže se da se nalazi (boravi) prebiva...

Biti »kod kuće« znači osjećati se potpuno povezanim s kvalitetama tog mjesta...

Svako mjesto je nešto u sebi jedinstveno...

Mjesto zna »što bi htjelo biti«... (2)

Pod hommage à podrazumijevam:

... Svaka kultura uspostavlja sa svim poseban slučaj. Spособnost/mogućnost da se cijene različiti kulturni uzori, u okvirima u kojima znače a ne u okvirima onoga kome pripadaju, najveća je nagrada što treba da se dobije školovanjem/odgojem... (3)

... Kuća bi, nadalje, htjela istražiti/naznačiti neke dvojne fenomene, na različitim strukturalnim razinama, i ne u sekvenci. Uključeni su korelati javno-privatno, monumentalno-ordinarno, (analogni) grad-(analogna) kuća (od Tree is a leaf... do Rossije-vog panela).

Kuća bi htjela naznačiti dualitet projekt/potencijalna realizacija-kolaž/imaginacija, pa neke elemente treba epigrafski očitati (a u vezi s hommage à): (4)

- »zagrebačka kuća« — Palača gradskih poduzeća Jurja Denzlera
- šalter-hala beogradske Union banke Huga Ehrlicha
- fasade Zakladnog bloka, Ulrichove zgrade na Preradoviće-vu trgu, Denzlerove Pravoslavne općine
- veliki hal Sprengel muzeja Leona Kriera

- Nagasumi filijala Fukuoka banke Arate Isozakija
 - Parlament Donje Austrije u Beču Ivana Crnkovića i Nevena Mikea
- I napokon, zahvaljujući Venturiju, svaku kuću treba promatrati kao interakciju unutarnjih i vanjskih snaga, i zid ponovo postaje mjesto gdje se događa arhitektura.

- (1) Aldo van Eyck, The interior of Time, Kaleidoscope of the Mind, 1962
- (2) Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius loci
- (3) Aldo van Eyck, op.cit.
- (4) cfr. ikonologiju A. Grumbacha za Sprengel muzej Leona Kriera

Zagreb, svibanj 1977
Saša Laslo



FIG. 1 ALEKSANDER LASLO, BUILDING OF THE INSURANCE INSTITUTE IN ZAGREB, PRERADOVIĆEVA 1-3, GRADUATION THESIS, 1976



TAMARA BJAŽIĆ KLARIN

INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY (INSTITUT ZA POVIJEST UMJETNOSTI), ULICA GRADA VUKOVARA 68, 10000 ZAGREB, CROATIA

 [HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0000-0003-2900-397X](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2900-397X)

tbjazic@ipu.hr

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REVIEW OF ALEKSANDER LASLO'S RESEARCH ON LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE IN ZAGREB ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARCHITECT'S DEATH

ARCHITECTURE GUIDES
ART NOUVEAU
INTERWAR ARCHITECTURE
LASLO, ALEKSANDER
MODERNISM
ZAGREB

Architect Aleksander Saša Laslo (Celje, 1950 – Zagreb, 2014) was one of the leading historians of Croatian nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture, with a research scope centered on the city of Zagreb. Its aim was to investigate the processes of modernisation, tracing the evolution from high historicism and eclecticism through Art Nouveau to proto-functionalism and *New Building* (Ger. *Neues Bauen*, Cro. *novo gradenje*) – viewed through building spatial-organisation, construction, and then inevitably form. Laslo's interest, of course, extended beyond the mere physical structure of the building to wider

social, economic, and cultural context, and dynamic knowledge exchange with Central Europe during that time, within which Laslo positioned the architecture of Zagreb. Methodologically, since the very beginning in the early 1980s, Laslo relied on exhaustive research, cataloguing, and contemporary research of Central European architecture. To mark the tenth anniversary of the death of this prominent researcher of Zagreb's architectural heritage, this paper provides the first review of Laslo's work, highlighting its comprehensiveness, integrity, and scientific method.

INTRODUCTION

Architect Aleksander Laslo (Celje, 1950 – Zagreb, 2014) was one of the leading historians of Croatian nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture. Despite being a permanent employee of architectural firms Industroprojekt, INA-Projekt, and Plan since 1976, and later, from 1995, of the City Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage and the Office for Strategic Planning and Development of the City of Zagreb, over almost four decades, Laslo published around ninety professional and academic texts and two guidebooks. Almost all of them are dedicated to the architecture and architects of Zagreb. The research that began as a hobby in the early 1980s has gradually evolved into a life-long project. However, it was methodologically structured and theoretically oriented from the very beginning, possessing all the elements of a never defended doctoral thesis.¹ To mark the tenth anniversary of the death of this prominent researcher of Zagreb's architectural heritage, this paper provides the first comprehensive review of Laslo's work, highlighting its completeness, integrity, and scientific method.

RESEARCH BEGINNINGS

The 1970s and 1980s marked a crucial phase in Laslo's career, shaping him both as an architect and a scholar, coinciding with a period of notable dynamic in the architectural

landscape of Zagreb. On the path to Post-modernism in the 1980s, the field of architectural research of historicism, Art Nouveau, and the interwar period was expanded during the 1970s, drawing on the groundbreaking contributions of Lelja Dobronić on Zagreb's nineteenth century urban planning and its builders, as well as Radovan Ivančević's research on interwar architecture (Dobronić, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1971; Ivančević, 1968a-f). At the end of 1976, two significant events took place at the Zagreb City Museum – a scientific conference and an exhibition on Hermann Bollé², along with an exhibition titled *Modern Architecture of Zagreb between the Two Wars* accompanied by a thematic issue of the journal *Arhitektura* (Premerl, 1976; N.N., 1976). Željka Čorak and Ivo Maroević were researching the interwar architecture of members of the Association of Artists Zemlja (Cro. *Udruženje umjetnika Zemlja*), and pioneers of *New Building* such as Drago Ibler and Ivan Zemljak.³ The gap in understanding the architecture of Zagreb between Bollé's historicism and interwar internationalism, the work of architects who “rejected the mannerist use of academicism” (Živković, 1977: 15), was filled as early as 1977 by the Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO) with the exhibition *Secession in Croatia*.⁴ The architectural heritage of Zagreb was presented as a separate section of exhibition showcasing the main architects and builders of the Lower Town: “Lubynski, Hönigsberg and Deutsch, Fiser, Bastl, Vancaš, Sunko, Holjac, Pilar, Benedik and Baranyai, Bornstein and others” (Živković, 1977: 16). The journal *Arhitektura* heralds the shifts in professional focus during the 1970s with a series of thematic issues that explore the conservation and revitalisation of historical city areas and buildings.

Aleksander Laslo graduates against the backdrop of these events in 1976 from the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb (Fig. 2) with a design for the Insurance Institute office building at Preradovićeve Street 1-3, an interpolation into the existing urban city block at the heart of Zagreb (Fig. 1). The project draws inspiration from interwar Zagreb precedents – such as the building of the Zagreb Stock Exchange by Viktor Kovacic, the School of Public Health by Juraj Denzler and Mladen Kauzlaric, and Denzler's City Electricity, Gas and Water Administration building. The credo of Laslo's work is encapsulated in a quote by the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck: “I just want to emphasise the fact that each individual case IS a special case, and can only be understood within its own framework.” (Laslo, 1977). The research of the framework, or the understanding of the individual within the broader context, is not only the starting point of Laslo's graduation thesis but also of his entire academic work.

Laslo belonged to the community of architects gathered at the Faculty of Architecture and the Croatian Architects' Association.⁵ During the years 1980 to 1988, he served as an assistant under Mladen Vodička and Neven Šegvić, professor of *Yugoslav Architecture* and *Modern Architecture* (Štulhofer and Tadej, 2000; Fig. 3). In 1985, together with the young editorial team of *Arhitektura*, of which Laslo was a member, Šegvić worked on a retrospective of four decades of Croatian architecture from 1945 to 1985, presented in Zagreb and Ljubljana, and later compiled into a thematic issue of the journal (Uchytíl and Barišić, 2000; Šegvić, 1986). The Croatian Architects' Association annually and triennially produced several exhibitions, awarded professional prizes, and published journals – *Arhitektura* and *Čovjek i prostor* (ČIP) – which had been Laslo's most significant publishing platforms since 1982.⁶ His writing style is very concise, focused, and the text is extremely logically structured. Every word was carefully chosen and weighed. The discourse would vary from chronicle-like, reminiscent of Gjuro Szabo, to meticulous about citing sources (Laslo, 1998a). Laslo reported on exhibitions, wrote reviews of seminal books such as *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* by Kenneth Frampton, and domestic architectural production (Laslo, 1983b,d,e, 1983/1984b, 1986a). At the same time he presented the first results of research conducted with colleague Neven Mikac – a series of three texts titled “Zagreb Studies” (Laslo and Mikac, 1982a-d), in which he outlined the scope of future research, its methodology, and ultimate goal – the ongoing revitalisation of Zagreb's urbanity.

Laslo's fundamental theoretical premise was the continuity of modernisation processes, the evolution from high historicism through Art Nouveau to proto-functionalism and *New Building* – viewed through building's spatial-organisation, construction, and then inevitably form, thereby surpassing then-established approach of art historians. Laslo's interest, of course, extended beyond the mere physical structure of the building to encompass the social, economic, and cultural atmosphere of Zagreb, which became a propulsive centre of dynamic knowledge exchange with Central Europe, of which it is an integral part. The Art Nouveau movement in Zagreb was almost simultaneous with that of Vienna, and proto-functionalism emerges in the early twentieth century with Kovačić, a Vienna-trained student of Otto Wagner and acquaintance of Adolf Loos. At that time, foreign practices served as a basis for the development of *adaptive architecture*, authentic architectural and urban planning practices anchored *between avant-gardism and pragma-*

tism.⁷ At the turn of the 1920s to the 1930s, thanks to the newly established Polytechnic with a Department of Architecture, Zagreb had a burgeoning professional scene and tried to adopt the most advanced design, technological, and urban planning practices through international design competitions. Transitioning from being a place of import from the architectural centres of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it would ascend to a position of their dissemination in the territory of the new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia. The late 1930s were also a period in which Croatian architectural production achieved full recognition in the Kingdom, reaching its peak in socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s.

The cornerstone of the thesis lied in *data mining*, conducting meticulous research of Zagreb's architectural stock and the body of work of key protagonists – architects and builders from the late 1890s to the early 1940s. Additionally, delving into the architectural landscape of Central Europe was crucial, as it served as a foundational prerequisite for appreciating the accomplishments of Croatian architects. Methodologically, Laslo relied on the in-depth research of archival materials, publications, fieldwork, and interviews with contemporaries. He systematically archived and catalogued the collected data by addresses and authors/architects. This was a time when archival funds were mostly unorganised, and the establishment of specialised architectural collections and museums was still pending. As an independent researcher with a full-time job, Laslo had limited time for his hobby – meticulous research work. He needed his own specialised library equipped with domestic professional periodicals, contemporary literature from the field of his research interest, as well as rare original publications, because – as he himself stated, “an entire alternative Zagreb can only be understood indirectly – through newspaper reports on architectural competitions, exhibition catalogues, and the like (...)” (Laslo, 1989a: 10). Laslo was a passionate collector of personal documents, photographs, postcards, telephone directories, and brochures through contacts with protagonists, their descendants, and colleagues, as well as through regular visits to antiquarian bookshops.

ARCHITECTURE GUIDES OF ZAGREB

In 1982, Laslo and Mikac published the first results of archival and field research, the beginning of cataloguing the Lower Town's architectural inventory from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as an appendix to the first of the three mentioned texts titled “Za-



FIG. 2 ALEKSANDER LASLO ON A STUDENT TRIP IN THE 1970S



FIG. 3 JELENA (?), DRAŽEN JURAČIĆ, MLADEN VODIČKA, JADRANKA ALIĆ, DAMIR KVOCIĆ, AND ALEKSANDER LASLO, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, IN THE 1980S

¹ In 1983, Laslo enrolled in a postgraduate program at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. Under Ranko Radović's mentorship, he wrote seminar papers *Urbani modernizam i kulturni ideal* and/or *Novi urbani program: izgradnja Zagreba 1880.-1914.* (Archive of Aleksander Laslo, Institute of Art History, Zagreb, hereinafter AAL-IPU).

² The conference papers were published in *Život umjetnosti* no. 26/27 (1978) edited by Željka Čorak.

³ Žarko Domljan published a monograph on H. Ehrlich in 1979 (Čorak, 1971, 1975; Maroević, 1969, 1974; Domljan, 1979).

⁴ According to Marina Bagarić, Laslo mentioned that he visited the exhibition several times and sketched the exhibition panels.

⁵ Laslo designed industrial facilities and residential buildings.

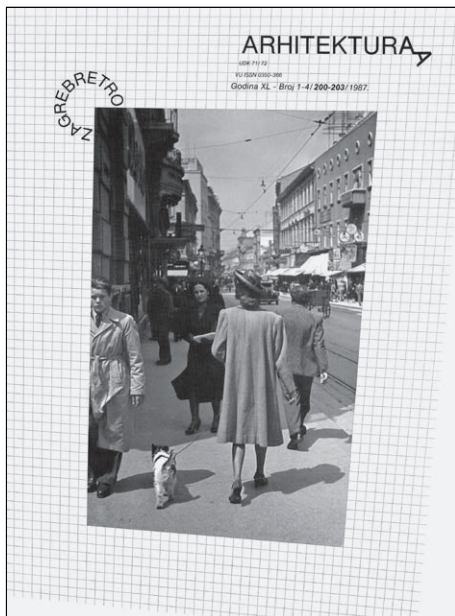
⁶ ČIP was edited by Tomislav Premerl and Branko Siladin, and *Arhitektura* by Slavko Dakić and Marijan Hrzić.

⁷ Same thesis was elaborated in the *Project Zagreb* (Blau and Rupnik, 2007).



FIG. 4 ZLATKO REBERNJAK, ALEKSANDER LASLO, ANTE MARINOVIC UZELAC, MARIJAN HRZIC, AND VLADIMIR BEDENKO, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, AT THE PROMOTION OF THE THEMATIC ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL *ARHITEKTURA* DEDICATED TO CIAM, CROATIAN ARCHITECTS' ASSOCIATION IN ZAGREB, 1986

FIG. 5 THEMATIC ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL *ARHITEKTURA* "ZAGREB RETRO", EDITED BY ALEKSANDER LASLO, 1987



greb: 1850-1914: Faces of Modernity": "The dormant urban culture cannot be revived by a direct repetition of fragments AD ABSURDUM, much less by designing what has already been designed. For urban culture elements to become operational at all, they must first be deciphered from Zagreb's ARCHITECTURE PARLANTE, and in that spirit, also the GUIDE TO THE LOWER TOWN ARCHITECTURE OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES in this issue." (Laslo, 1982).

After mapping the building substance of the Lower Town, enabling its first comprehensive understanding, Laslo focused on the analysis of architectural types: public buildings, individual housing, and industrial facilities presented in the form of smaller thematic guides (Laslo, 1983a,c, 1983/1984c). Laslo's aim was to continually revise all guides as the research was extensive and surpasses the capacity of individual work. Aware of his own research capacity, he invited readers/walkers to share data and any potential corrections (Laslo, 1987a: 97). In light of the fact that the guides represent "architecture literature that did not exist in our local context" (Laslo, 1983/1984c: 120), Laslo studied the available architecture guides of Vienna, Prague, Budapest, and other cities, their structure, content of individual units/displays, format and design, with a clear vision to publish precisely such a publication – an architecture guide of Zagreb – which he will ultimately accomplish.

The housing stock, consisting of two dominant types – family houses and rental apartment buildings, was to be explored by Laslo through the works of two architects, leading representatives of the Croatian Art Nouveau Modernism – Aladár Baranyai and Rudolf Lubynski. Baranyai served as the focal point for the study on the topic of individual housing, the ideal family home, inspired by the Gesamtkunstwerk Viennese models. Analyzing Lubynski's work, as well as comparative examples of his contemporaries and the genesis of incorporated rental residential buildings in a broader European context, Laslo established a thesis on the development of the "Zagreb [apartment] floor plan", which originated in the last quarter of the 19th century and underwent further refinement until the onset of World War II. These texts, published in the thematic issues of the journal *Arhitektura* on individual housing and the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), represented a hybrid of sorts (Fig. 4).⁸ They were an amalgam of monographs, guides/catalogues of constructed buildings, and problem-oriented text in which achievements were analysed through the reception of imported architectural practices but also their co-modification into authentic, pro-

prietary ones. Laslo's enduring focus became precisely the exchange of knowledge, architectural styles, and theoretical discourse, and its roles in constituting the modernism of the Zagreb School of Architecture during the period from 1900 to 1940, and, of course, its main actors: Viktor Kovačić, Vjekoslav Bastl, Zlatko Neumann, Ernest Weissmann, Croatian students and collaborators of Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, and Le Corbusier in Vienna and Paris.

A comprehensive architecture guide from the 1930s and an overview of works from the most important interwar competition – for the General Regulation Plan of Zagreb held in 1930/1931, were also part of the series (Laslo, 1984a). The exhaustive presentation of residential and public architecture from the 1930s, with 188 catalogue entries, served as the impetus for Laslo's ambitious and significant publishing project. Laslo edited a thematic issue of journal *Arhitektura* – "Zagreb Retro," which has been inadequately valued to date (Fig. 5).⁹ The scope of the "Zagreb School of Architecture" was provided by selected constructed buildings, excerpts from "fundamental texts," and a review of the work of institutions and architects of the Association of Artists Zemlja.¹⁰ The selected buildings were presented through photographs captured mostly by Tošo Dabac from that period and a selection of "exceptions", buildings that deviate from the usual perception of the International Style and testify to a high level of innovation and craftwork (Košćević, 1987b). A separate topic was "Yugoslavs at the Bauhaus"; of the five, three were directly connected to Zagreb, indicating the presence of domestic artists and architects in the most important European educational, artistic, and architectural experiment of the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹

In "Zagreb Retro," Laslo also presented a "preliminary report," the first results of research on the life and work of Neumann and Weissmann directly referencing the recently published book *Raumplan versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919-1930* (Laslo, 1987d; Risselada, 1987). Notably, Weissmann engagement in Paris should be credited to Neumann, Loos's personal assistant. Upon Loos's recommendation Weissmann later went on to work for Le Corbusier from 1927 to 1930. Through Neumann's and Weissmann's designs and constructed buildings, Laslo explored the application of *Raumplan*, Loos's method of compressing all house spaces into minimal volume, and Le Corbusier's *free plan* based on the construction of columns and floor slabs, as well as flexible partition and façade walls. Both systems function to optimise living space and construction. The new approach to studying

architecture required a detailed analysis of floor plans, sections, and axonometric views, which Laslo had diligently redrawn and created, elevating the preparation of scientific and professional papers to a new level.

EXHIBITING ZAGREB IN VIENNA AND ZAGREB-BASED EXHIBITION PROJECTS

Laslo's research into connections between Zagreb and Central European based architects, was further prompted and guided by Vladimir Šlapeta and Ákos Moravánszky. His peers, then young architects and architecture historians dedicated to researching the architecture of the same period in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, visited the Zagreb Architects' Association (DAZ) in 1986. The occasion for Šlapeta's lecture on the "architects of Czech modernism" was Kamil Roškot's exhibition held in Ljubljana, Belgrade, and Zagreb. Moravánszky's lecture on *Architecture in Hungary at the Turn of the Century* reinforced for Laslo the significance of positioning Zagreb's architecture within the broader historical and cultural context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: "Certainly, the lecturer's introductory thesis was most instructive, stating that the study of one's own architecture is incomplete without an understanding of contemporary developments, at least in the nearest vicinity. Indeed, it is high time for Zagreb's architecture, especially the architecture around 1900, to be systematically evaluated within the context of contemporary Central European architecture, to which it truly belongs. (...) The examples from Prague, Budapest, and finally Ljubljana should serve as a lesson."¹² (László, 1986).

Laslo himself reported on both lectures in ČIP, using the opportunity to announce further collaboration – the hosting of another exhibition by Šlapeta, *Adolf Loos and Czech Architecture*, in Zagreb.¹³ The interest of Czech and Hungarian colleagues in the architecture of Zagreb, as well as its limited recog-

nition beyond the country's borders, was likely a *spiritus movens* for the bilingual Croatian-English edition of *Arhitektura – "Zagreb Retro"*. Laslo recognised a unique opportunity to introduce the "Zagreb School of Architecture" to the international audience, thus contributing to current research on Central European architecture.

"Zagreb Retro" is Laslo's reference point for entering the circle of researchers of Central European architecture and urban planning of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the first participation in an international project – the retrospective exhibition *Adolf Loos* at the Albertina in Vienna in 1989 and 1990. Curated by Burkhardt Rukschcio, the exhibition provided a review of Loos's entire body of work in architecture, theory, journalism, and education (Rukschcio, 1989). Laslo's section "Loos's School in Croatia" explored all of Loos's connections with Zagreb – contacts and influences on Kovacic, Neumann and Weissmann, Hugo Ehrlich, Bela Auer, as well as Loos's competition entry for the Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb (Laslo, 1989b). The text about Loos is Laslo's first text in which he brought forth the genesis of architectural modernism in Zagreb before the World War II, tracing it through the work of its two key promoters – Kovacic and Neumann. Its starting point were the thematic issue of the Ljubljana journal *Arhitektura* published in 1933 on the occasion of Loos's death and Neumann's obituary by Boro Pavlovic in the issue of Zagreb journal *Arhitektura* from 1969 (Pavlovic, 1969). Loos's contemporaries in Croatia, Ehrlich, Ljubo Babic, Weissmann, and, of course, Neumann, were aware as early as in 1933 of his undeniable influence and importance for Croatian architecture. The Slovenian-English version of Laslo's text was also published in the *Arhitektov bilten* in 1991¹⁴, which he then supplemented in the text "Architecture of Modern Bourgeois Zagreb" in *Život umjetnosti* (ŽU) in 1995, encompassing all the significant aspects and themes of interwar architecture. As he himself notes, "Croatian modern architecture has opened (...), most of the important issues on planning, spatial-organisation, construction, and form, which will be addressed by the architecture of the International Style." (Laslo, 1995.a: 63)

The text in *Život umjetnosti* (ŽU) also laid the groundwork for the review of Zagreb Art Nouveau and interwar architecture, synthesised and presented to international audiences as part of Laslo's second major international exhibition project – *Shaping the Great City: Modern Architecture in Central Europe 1890-1937*. The exhibition was staged in Prague, Montreal, Los Angeles, and Vienna in 1999

and 2000 (Blau and Platzer, 1999). Zagreb was featured alongside Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Krakow, Lviv, Ljubljana, Brno, and Timișoara as one of the cities examined. Working on the exhibition with original drawings, and photographs brought Laslo great satisfaction, as did participating in the publication of the exhibition catalogue in English, German, and French. With his rich knowledge obtained over two decades, Laslo contributed to the catalogue with two papers – one discussing Zagreb's architectural production before and after World War I, from 1880 to 1918 and from 1918 to 1937. These texts are complemented by biographies of selected architects. Simultaneously, Laslo, along with Vladimir Bedenko, Tomislav Odak, and Branko Siladin, is one of the authors of the thematic issue "Zagreb – Agram" of the Swiss magazine *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen* from 2001, entirely dedicated to Zagreb (Laslo, 2001a).

After *Shaping the Great City*, a masterful "framework sketch," Laslo, as the most authoritative local expert, provided detailed scholarly expertise on the architecture of Art Nouveau and interwar period in Zagreb considering all its complexity. Once again, the direct incentive came from exhibition projects, this time local – *Art Nouveau in Croatia* (2003) and *Art Déco and Art in Croatia between the Two Wars* (2011) at the Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO; Laslo, 2003, 2011b). Laslo demonstrated extensive expertise in these texts, drawing upon the socio-political context to address a wide range of topics. These were architectural types, public and residential buildings, new constructions, building technologies and materials, experiments in the field of form, urban equipment, architects and investors, dissemination within national borders, and presentation abroad. Although both texts are similarly structured, covering the same range of topics, they differ significantly in style. *Art Nouveau* is a comprehensive, scientific work, while *Art Déco*, much like the 1920s themselves, is considerably more relaxed and unpredictable in expression.

CONTRIBUTION OF JEWISH ARCHITECTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF ZAGREB

Collaboration on the Adolf Loos exhibition in Vienna served as an impetus for a solo exhibition about Zlatko Neumann titled *Seven Lamps of the New Building* at the Modulor Gallery in Zagreb in 1990. The latter marked the beginning of Laslo's second lifelong project – research of the contributions made by Jewish architects and builders to the construction of Zagreb. The contributions of Leo Höningsberg, Julius Deutsch, Rudolf Lubynski, Hugo Ehrlich,

8 Laslo's works still to this day serve as the foundation for unwritten monographs on Lubynski and Baranyai (Laslo, 1983/1984a, 1984/1985).

9 Laslo briefly took over the role of editor of *Arhitektura* from M. Hrzić during his study visit to the USA.

10 Excerpts from the texts of Petar Knoll, Viktor Kovacic, Drago Ibler, Stjepan Planic, Ernest Weissmann, Iso Kršnjavi, and Miroslav Krleza were published (Vrkljan, 1987; Segvic, 1987; Ćorak, 1987).

11 They were Otti Berger, Ivana Tomljenovic, and Gustav Bohutinsky (Košević, 1987a).

12 The report was signed with a Magyarised version of his name.

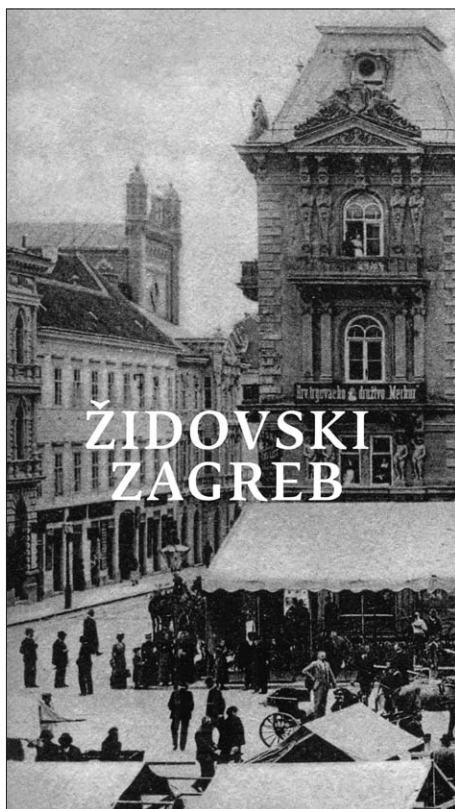
13 The visiting exhibition was not realised (Laslo, 1986b; S.R., 1986).

14 The article was supplemented with additional illustrations (Laslo, 1991a).



FIG. 6 EXHIBITION "INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR THE JEWISH HOSPITAL IN ZAGREB ZAGREB 1930/31", ALEKSANDER LASLO AND TAMARA BJAŽIĆ KLARIN, CASA GLYPTOTHEQUE, ZAGREB, 2005

FIG. 7 JEWISH ZAGREB: CULTURAL HISTORICAL GUIDE, ALEKSANDER LASLO AND SNJEŠKA KNEŽEVIĆ, 2011



Slavko Benedik, Otto Goldscheider, Ignjat Fischer, Alfred Albini, Slavko Löwy, Ernest Weissmann, and, of course, Neumann was comprehensively presented for the first time in the text "Croquis for a Conspiracy of Memories: Exploring the Architecture of Modernism in Zagreb". Laslo was, of course, also interested in Jewish investors and construction entrepreneurs who deserved "separate treatment" (Laslo, 1989a: 10). His engagement with Jewish Zagreb continued through ongoing collaboration with the Jewish Community and the Cultural Society "Miroslav Šalom Freiburger". The society brought together experts who are not members of the community "but have an interest in studying the science, history, and culture of Jews, thereby contributing to the overall cultural and scientific life".¹⁵ In 1997, the society launched the online edition of the Jewish Biographical Lexicon (*Cro. Židovski biografski leksikon*)¹⁶ and published the magazine *Novi Omanut*, to which Laslo contributed several biographical entries about architects and builders, as well as research on the history of the community building in 16, Palmotičeva Street designed and constructed by Hönigsberg and Deutsch on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its construction (Laslo, 1998b). The research also covered the genesis of the micro-location – Palmotičeva and Petrinjska streets, where the first synagogue in Zagreb was located (Laslo, 1998a,b). While doing research in the Hönigsberg and Deutsch archive, Laslo discovered plans for the reconstruction of the Zagreb synagogue built in today's Praška Street in 1867, and demolished by the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941/1942.¹⁷ This discovery led to the exhibition *Synagogue and Zagreb* at the Archaeological Museum in 2001, in collaboration with Snješka Knežević, Mario Beusan, and Mira Wolf (Laslo, 2001b). The theme of the next exhibition was the international design competition for the Jewish Hospital in Zagreb in 1930/1931, held at the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 2005, with the author of this text also taking part (Laslo and Bjažić Klarin, 2005; Fig. 6). The competition was unique in the history of Croatian architecture in terms of the number of submissions, with a total of 225 entries. The construction of their own hospital, open to all citizens, represented the pinnacle of the power of Zagreb's Jewish community. Meanwhile, the pinnacle of Laslo's research into the history of Zagreb's Jews is *Jewish Zagreb: A Cultural-Historical Guide* (Laslo and Knežević, 2011; Fig. 7). Published in 2010 with Snješka Knežević, the guide is a testament to the breadth of Laslo's intellect, diverse interests, and extensive knowledge of the city's political, economic, social, and cultural life, viewed through the lens of Zagreb's Jewish communi-

ty, which experienced its heyday right in the period of his research interest.

ČOVJEK I PROSTOR DURING WARTIME – YEARS OF FULL RECOGNITION

Following the international acclaim, marking perhaps the first participation of a Croatian historian of nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture in a project like the Adolf Loos exhibition at the Albertina in Vienna, there ensued a *downturn* – a period characterised by considerable professional turbulence and undertaking of the responsible task of editing the journal *Čovjek i prostor* (ČIP) during the war years, from 1992 to 1995 (Fig. 8). Under Laslo's editorship, ČIP continued to be published at a slower pace with an established editorial concept, regular columns – on current events (exhibitions, books, conferences, lectures, etc.), constructed buildings, conceptual designs, heritage, interviews, *in memoriams*. The novelties include the column *Profil*, which provides an overview of the work of contemporaries, and the role of guest editors.¹⁸ During the war years of 1991 and 1992, the Croatian Architects' Association (UHA) also published a series of special bilingual editions of the ČIP journal, featuring reviews of architecture and urban planning in besieged Croatian cities and photographs of their destruction. These editions form part of the "war series," reflecting the protest of Croatian architects against the war in Croatia, "... and the unequivocal demonstration of solidarity by the international professional community during the most severe aggression against our country, on the eve of its full international recognition" (Laslo, 1992). The thematic issues of ČIP focusing on Vukovar, Dubrovnik, and Osijek, urban and architectural heritage which is one of the elements in shaping national identity, also look towards the future, the upcoming reconstruction. The wartime destruction led Laslo to increasingly ponder the issues of conservation and reconstruction of modern architectural heritage. With great enthusiasm in 1993, he founded the Croatian working group of the Docomomo organisation, an "autonomous nonprofit section" of the Croatian Architects' Association tasked with creating a national register of Croatian interwar architecture, serving as the basis for the development of the organisation's international registry.¹⁹

In 1990's Laslo published in ČIP a guide of the Upper Town's classicist architecture and biographical "guides" – reviews of the architectural works of Bastl, Kovacic, and Zemljak, continuing fundamental monographic research on the major protagonists of Zagreb's modernism.²⁰ At the same time, for the Encyclopedia of Croatian Art (*Cro. Enciklopedija hrvatske um-*

jetnosti), a publishing project of the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, he wrote encyclopedic entries about architects Stjepan Podhorsky and Dionis Sunko, Neumann, Bogdan Petrović, Löwy, Miro Marasović, and Ivan Kozjak.²¹ The first major exhibition in Zagreb also had a monographic character – a retrospective of architect and sculptor Frane Cota at the Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which he realised with Lidia Roje-Depolo in 1995, accompanied by a catalogue (Fig. 9; Laslo, 1995.b).

The results of two decades of scientific and editorial work, along with the presentation of Zagreb's architecture and city building at the exhibition *Shaping the Great City*, earned Laslo the “*Neven Šegvić*” award from the Croatian Architects' Association (UHA) in 2000, for *outstanding journalistic, critical, scientific-research, and theoretical work in the field of architecture*. After the aforementioned large-scale exhibition projects at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, Laslo finally published the long-awaited *Zagreb: Architecture Guide 1898-2010*, available, of course, in both Croatian and English editions. He authored both, the guide's concept and 95 catalogue entries encompassing buildings and housing developments from the period of his narrower expertise, 1898 to 1941 (Fig. 10).²² Their floor plans and photographs, represent the guide's significant contribution, and reference for architecture historians and practicing architects. Laslo chose the façade of the National Bank residential complex at the corner of Laginjina and Vojnoviceva Street by Ivan Vitić for the cover of the guidebook. Following that, he also wrote a text titled “Solo Architect in a Collectivist Environment” for the monographic is-

15 Kulturno društvo “Miroslav Šalom Freiberger” (Refer to: <https://www.zoz.hr/hr/kulturno-drustvo-miroslav-salom-freiberger/>).

16 Edited by Ivo Goldstein (Refer to: <https://zbl.lzmk.hr/>).

17 The Archive is located at the Documentation Collection of the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia in Zagreb.

18 The guest editors were Feda Vukic, Vladimir Mattoni, Đivo Dražić, and Snješka Knežević.

19 An overview of the 1930s Croatian Architecture was presented by Darja Radović Mahečić (A.L., 1993; Radović Mahečić, 2007).

20 In 1994, he presented a paper on Kovačić at a scientific conference in the Croatian Museum of Architecture of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Laslo, 1991b, 1993, 1995h; Laslo and Knežević, 1991; Laslo and Radović Mahečić, 1997).

21 In 1987, he wrote entries on Lubyński and Neumann for the Yugoslav Encyclopedia of Fine Arts (Cro. *Likovna enciklopedija Jugoslavije*) (Laslo, 1987b,c; Laslo, 1995c-g,i-k).

22 Laslo also writes some of the entries about buildings constructed after 1945.



FIG. 8 NEVEN ŠEGVIĆ, ZVONIMIR KRZNAŘIĆ AND ALEKSANDER LASLO (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) IN ZAGREB, IN THE EARLY 1990S

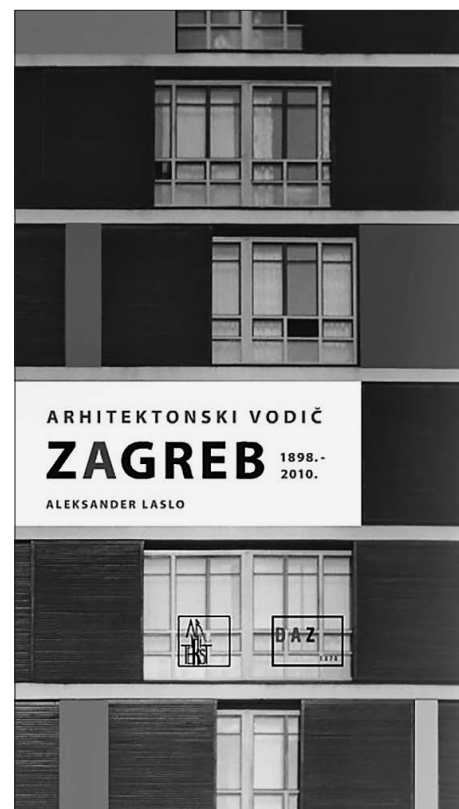
sue of *Arhitektura* dedicated exclusively to that architect (Laslo, 2006).

After 2011, Laslo's publishing activity came to a standstill. To the great detriment of the historians of Croatian architecture, he failed to pass on or document much of his knowledge. Thanks to his pioneering international engagements, he integrated Croatian architecture into the history of Central European architecture. He enriched the history of Croatian architecture with interpretations of architectural achievements through the transmission of knowledge within the Central European architectural circle on the one hand, and by exploring the causal-consequential connection between spatial organisation, construction, materials and, ultimately, form, on the other. The pinnacle of Laslo's work are the synthesis texts published in the catalogues of the Museum of Arts and Crafts (MUO), which, due to their comprehensiveness and exhaustive data, serve as an indispensable starting point for all further research on the architecture and architects of Zagreb from 1880 to 1941. Laslo also left behind an extensive documentation fund, journals, books, photographs and drawings, that is, a plethora of collected and just barely *scraped* topics awaiting new researchers. The archival documentation of Alexander Laslo, a bequest now stored at the Institute of Art History, will inspire and assist them to piece together further the complex mosaic of Zagreb's architectural heritage to which Laslo dedicated a full three decades of his life and work.



FIG. 9 EXHIBITION “FRANE COTA”, ALEKSANDER LASLO AND LIDIA ROJE-DEPOLO, CASA GLYPTOTHEQUE, ZAGREB, 1995

FIG. 10 “ZAGREB: ARCHITECTURE GUIDE”, ALEKSANDER LASLO, 2011



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ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

- FIG. 1 LASLO, 1977
- FIG. 2-3, 6, 8 Laslo Family, Zagreb
- FIG. 4 Croatian Architects' Association, Zagreb, photo Miljenko Bernfest
- FIG. 5 Author's archive
- FIG. 7 LASLO AND KNEŽEVIĆ, 2011
- FIG. 9 Exhibition poster, CASA Glyptothèque
- FIG. 10 LASLO, 2011a

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

TAMARA BJAŽIĆ KLARIN, Ph.D., architect, Senior Research Advisor at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb. Her research focus is 19th and 20th-century architecture. She authored awarded books, *Ernest Weissmann. Socially Engaged Architecture, 1926-39* and *“For Zagreb, Grand and More Beautiful!” – Architecture and Urban Planning Competitions of Interwar Zagreb, 1918-41*, and contributed to the MOMA exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia. Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948-1980*. She was an academic guest at GTA ETH in Zürich and a French Government Fellow.

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