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**EXAT AND New Tendencies CD-ROM
Avant-garde and International Events in Croatian Art in the 1950s and
1960s**

Summary

The innovations that took place in Croatian visual art in the nineteen fifties and sixties profoundly influenced the whole of the country's cultural life, and even attracted international attention – the movement grew out of the work of a group of artists who called themselves Exat 51. The ideas they introduced inspired young artists of the Avantgarde in many different fields and brought about changes in art, architecture, design, experimental film, video-art, animated film and music – it is these innovations, and the varied areas of cultural life they influenced that we wish to present with this CD.

CD was awarded with Silver Medal at AVICOM Festival, Sao Paolo 2002.

Today's Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb was founded in 1954 as the Gallery of Contemporary Art. Right from the start the Gallery began, alongside its exhibition activities, to collect museum material and in the last fifty years it collected 6,000 artworks by contemporary artists from Croatia and abroad, mostly created between 1950 and the present. Despite its rich holdings and world distinction, the Gallery was not renamed into a Museum until 1998, and it has still not obtained premises in which to adequately organise the permanent Museum exhibition. Thus it regularly exhibited sections from its holdings, and in 1986 a large part of its holdings at that time was exhibited in the Museum Halls in the Upper Town on 3,000 square metres. The exhibition was called *Moving Towards a Museum of Contemporary Art*.

Like at the very beginning of its work, the Museum is still located in two flats of only 800 square metres in the Upper Town, and the holdings are stored in several locations in the city. However, the solution to our problems of space is in view. The construction of a new Museum building began at the end of 2003, and its opening is planned for 2007.

The 1950s and the 1960s were an extremely important period both for Croatian contemporary art and for the work of the Museum. In the fifties the post-war generation of artists emerged on the Croatian art scene, breaking off

ties with socialist realism and blazing new trails for the visual arts. Despite public polemics, abstraction increasingly made itself felt in Zagreb exhibition areas, and new names such as Murtić, Bakić, and Džamonja appeared on the scene. These developments were also greatly the merit of the EXAT 51 Group, a group of artists and architects whose proclamation and work established freedom of expression and abstract art. In the sixties Zagreb and the Gallery of Contemporary Art became a venue of international events. This was when the New Tendencies movement was born, which included exhibitions and theoretic activities in Constructivism and Kinetic Art. Important world artists such as Vasarely, Soto, and Morellet came to Zagreb, and the Croatian artists Richter, Picelj, Srnec, Dobrović, Knifer, and Šutej exhibited parallel with them.

Thus it is not surprising that our CD-ROM, which I am presenting to you today, is devoted to these two decades.

How and why did we make this CD-ROM?

As I said in the introduction, we had valuable material in our holdings, hundreds of works of Constructive and Kinetic Art (paintings, sculptures, prints, reliefs, luminoplastics) which we wanted to show to the public at occasional exhibitions. We therefore made use of an excellent opportunity to present this collection in Portugal at the Centro Cultural de Cascais in 2001, in lovely and newly arranged exhibition halls of 1500 square metres in a former monastery. For a long time the Museum counsellor and curator Marijan Susovski, MA, studiously prepared this exhibition, and the exhibition itself won only the best reviews. As its closing approached, aware that we will again have to place all these amazing works into storage for an unlimited time, the idea was born to make a CD-ROM of the exhibition. However, Mr Susovski had already incorporated several video recordings in the exhibition showing parallel events in Zagreb at that time, which introduced the Zagreb Music Biennale, Zagreb School of Animated Film, and Experimental Film and Video. Realising the art value and importance of the development of new media, in the seventies the Museum founded the Photography, Film and Television Centre, and the Museum audiovisual centre has to date collected extensive documentary material about all the Museum exhibitions, lectures held by artists and art critics who visited Zagreb, and the like.

Thinking about the CD-ROM, the next logical step was to include in it the existing video materials.

The ATANOR Company headed by Mr Feđa Fatičić, himself an expert on the sixties and a friend of the main figures on the art scene at that time, produced the CD-ROM. Mr Fatičić is co-author of the conception (with Mr Susovski) and the art director of the CD-ROM. Feđa Fatičić and Marijan Susovski were throughout work on this project joined, as project consultants, by Mr Ivan Picelj, artist and designer, one of the founders of the New Tendencies movement, and Mr Nikša Gligo, musicologist. It was because of this team

work that the idea about a modest CD-ROM soon grew into the idea to create a real „encyclopaedia“ about the cultural life in Zagreb at that time. After great efforts to make the CD, additional gathering of material, translation and synchronisation, we finally got a „product“ that won the Silver Medal at the Festival of Audiovisual Media in Museums in Sao Paolo in 2002.

What does the CD-ROM contain and how is it structured?

The starting idea about the CD-ROM as the document of an exhibition was extended to a complex presentation of an entire historical period which deeply impacted the fields of the fine arts, music, graphic and product design, film and video, and animated film. Additional documentary, film, music and video materials were obtained from Croatian Radio-Television, the archives of the Zagreb Music Biennale, Zagreb-film and Mr Vladimir Petek.

The CD-ROM includes texts by experts about the EXAT Group and the New Tendencies movement, the Zagreb School of Animated Film, Experimental Film and Video, Croatian Graphic and Product Design, and the Music Biennale. It also contains a virtual tour of the exhibition in the Centro Cultural in Cascais, reproductions of and data about all the works exhibited there, biographies of all the artists, video and audio clips, excerpts from animated films (including the only Croatian Oscar winner), interviews made during the Music Biennale, inserts from experimental films and the first Croatian video works, and data about the participation of artists at New Tendencies exhibitions. A booklet with all the texts was printed alongside the CD.

The aesthetic side of the project merited special attention. We wanted its design to reflect the achievements of the sixties, but adapted to the new medium, for the CD to be readable and easy to view on a computer screen. Navigation within the separate parts is very simple and adapted to the broadest circle of users. In some situations the speaker additionally makes understanding easier (which is, for example, very important in pronouncing the names of Croatian and foreign artists, which is often confusing for less well-informed users).

Let us finally say that the project is primarily intended for the expert audience only – for researchers and museum archives, not for the public at large, because we did not obtain (nor request) copyright for use of this kind.

This extensive project is unique in Croatian museum practice, and it is our wish to continue making projects of this kind in the future to present similar challenging subjects.