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No Feeling Is Final

The Skopje
Solidarity
Collection

ISBN 978-3-903412-07-1

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skopje
Kenzō Tange, Competition phase model for the central city area, 1965 •
COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE



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No Feeling Is Final

The Skopje
Solidarity
Collection

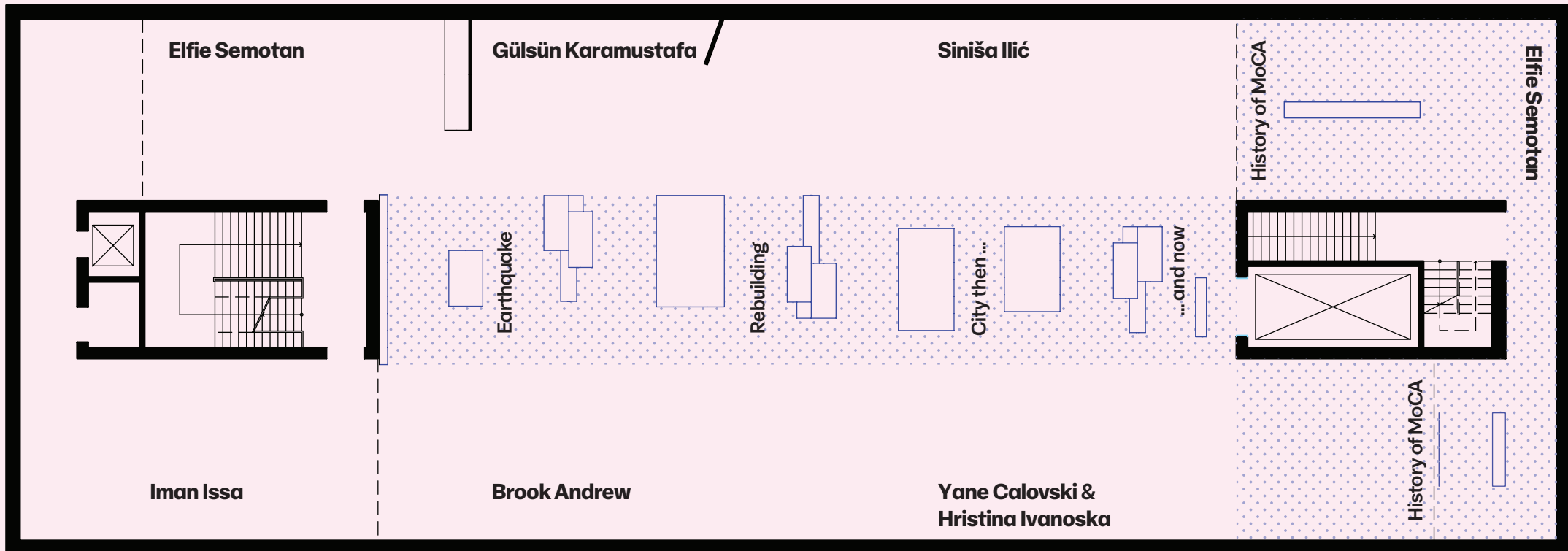
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No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection revolves around the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje's (MoCA Skopje) unusual collection of modern works, as well as the historical and political context of this extraordinary project. After the massive earthquake that hit Skopje (then Yugoslavia) in 1963, there was a huge effort to help rebuild the devastated city, as a large-scale gesture of international solidarity. The decision was made to establish a museum of contemporary art as a key cultural element of the reconstruction, and thousands of works were donated to Skopje by artists from around the world. The collection of MoCA Skopje represents both a time capsule of international art at a moment when modernism was still in its prime and a rare artistic encounter across the Cold War divide between East and West.

kunsthalle wien invited four artists and one artist duo to work with the collection. They are **Brook Andrew** (MELBOURNE), **Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska** (SKOPJE), **Siniša Ilić** (BELGRADE), **Iman Issa** (BERLIN), and **Gülsün Karamustafa** (ISTANBUL). Each has selected specific works from the collection and developed a display that puts the historical works in dialogue with their own contemporary practice. **Elfie Semotan** (VIENNA) was invited to photograph the cityscape of Skopje and the museum, and writer **Barbi Marković** (VIENNA) was commissioned to write a fictional travelogue, which you can find in the booklet. The exhibition also presents various archival materials about the earthquake, the city's rebuilding, and the history of MoCA Skopje.

No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection is an opportunity for the audience to discover old favorites in surprising combinations. It offers a present-day mirror to look at modern art through the eyes of international contemporary artists, as well as opening a window to the cultural and architectural history of a nearby neighbor. We hope the exhibition will inspire ways of thinking and talking about the art world's value systems and what solidarity, artistic freedom, and collective effort might mean today. ●

No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection



Brook Andrew

Pierre Alechinsky •
 Jasper Johns •
 Wifredo Lam •
 Oto Logo •
 Zoran Mušič •
 Pablo Picasso •
 Kumi Sugai •
 Vladimir Veličković •
 Marjan Vojska

Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska

Dushan Perchinkov •
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 Slobodan Filovski •
 Bogoljub Ivković •
 Nikola Martinoski •
 Bogoja Popovski •
 Simon Shemov •
 Dimo Todorovski •
 Tomo Vladimirovski

Earthquake

Alexander Calder •
 Enrico Baj •
 Alberto Burri

Rebuilding

Anna-Eva Bergman •
 Maria Bonomi •
 Rudolf Krivoš

City then and now

Zofia Butrymowicz •
 Meret Oppenheim

History of MoCA

Getulio Alviani •
 Georg Baselitz •
 Luis Camnitzer •
 Christo & Jeanne-Claude •
 Peter Clarke •
 Ion Grigorescu •
 Sheila Hicks •
 Alfred Hrdlicka •
 David Hockney •
 Alex Katz •
 Sol LeWitt •
 Petar Lubarda •
 Roberto Matta •
 Joan Rabascall •
 Bridget Riley •

Niki de Saint Phalle •
 Henryk Stażewski •
 Victor Vasarely

ARTISTS Brook Andrew •
Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska •
Siniša Ilić • Iman Issa • Gülsün Karamustafa •
Barbi Marković • Elfie Semotan

WITH ARTISTS FROM THE COLLECTION

Pierre Alechinsky • Getulio Alviani •
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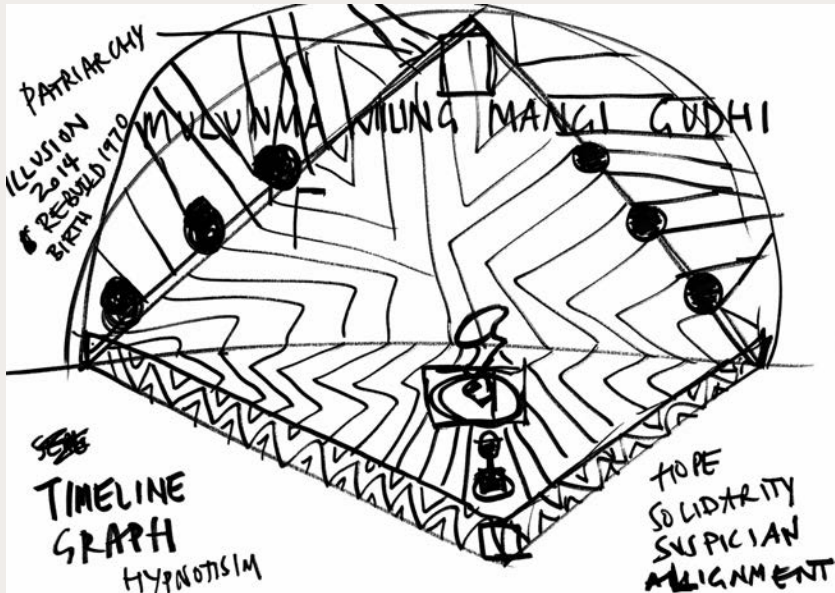
Artists

Brook Andrew

Born in 1970, lives and works in Melbourne

mulunma wiling mangi gudhi (inside the lip of a stolen song), 2023
PVC vinyl

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA, PARIS/BRUSSELS;
ROSLYN OXLEY9 GALLERY, SYDNEY; AND TOLARNO GALLERIES, MELBOURNE



Brook Andrew, mock-up drawing for the installation *mulunma wiling mangi gudhi (inside the lip of a stolen song)*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST

Artist and curator Brook Andrew challenges the limitations imposed by hegemonic power structures to make space for Indigenous systems of being and of knowing. His research as well as artistic practice are informed by his Wiradjuri and Celtic ancestry, motivating him to develop kinship between non-Western and Western cultures that share an intersectional understanding of Indigeneity. His work has often led him to intervene in museal displays and to reimagine the power of objects found in museum collections. In so doing, he uncovers links to colonialism, cultural expropriation, and violence while centering Indigenous practices as an anticolonial force able to fracture

Western ideas such as progress and linearity as well as the art historical canon and the institutions that support it.

In Brook Andrew's installation, eight works from the collection of MoCA Skopje are placed on a large-scale, strikingly patterned inflatable object and wall mural. The pattern is inspired by Wiradjuri practices of carving, including on living trees and in making shields. Akin to an optical illusion, the pattern is playful yet also points toward underlying truths, such as the many identity shifts undergone not only by the collection's modernist works—Western and non-Western alike—but also

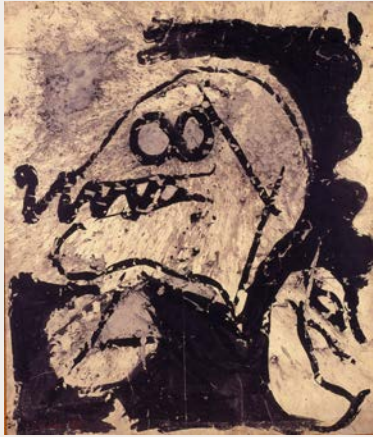


Brook Andrew, *AHY-KON-UH-KLAS-TIK*, Installation view, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2017 • COURTESY THE ARTIST

by the city of Skopje itself. The works from the collection are carefully arranged on the mural, with Pablo Picasso's at the very top. They are dated from 1963 to 1968, a period of both the devastating earthquake and the rebuilding process in Skopje. Together, they delineate a specific moment in time when these works were part of a very specific value system, one that particularly favored Western male artists—the same artists who often appropriated non-Western artworks and designs. This idea is also expressed in the title of the installation, *mulunma wiling mangi gudhi*. These Wiradjuri words translate to “inside the lip of a stolen song”, hinting at

the thin line between appropriation and theft.

Brook Andrew's work with inflatable structures utilizes the methods of enlargement to recontextualize history and make often overlooked topics appear larger-than-life. The installation spatially reconciles the many contradictory meanings of the loaded modernist discourse that informed the inception of the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje. It celebrates spaces that allowed for such moments of solidarity to materialize while also clearly addressing their many problematic aspects and continuing repercussions. ●



Last Draught, 1963

Pierre Alechinsky

Born in 1927, lives and works in Brussels and Paris

Pierre Alechinsky was born in Belgium and attended La Cambre visual arts school in Brussels. His artistic output, mainly painting and graphic works, has been linked to Tachisme and Abstract Expressionism. He was a core member of the CoBrA group—a brief yet resonant international avant-garde movement—which he joined in 1949. An avid traveler, the artist drew early inspiration from Japanese and Chinese calligraphy and art. Since 1951, he has lived and created in France.

The artist's many public commissions include his large-scale work for the Vienna State Opera—*Loin d'ici* [Far from here]—realized as part of the *Safety Curtain* project organized by museum in progress and exhibited in 2018/2019.

The painting *Last Draught* was donated by the artist in 1965/1966. It depicts the head of a whimsical zig-zag-tongued creature, made with expressive strokes of black on the off-white background. Its circular eyes are connected, like the infinity symbol. The title might refer to a last sip of water during a drought, or perhaps a last drop of alcohol or even poison. The dramatic tone evokes the idea of death, and the disarray that comes with it. ●

Jasper Johns

Born in 1930, lives and works in New York, Sharon, and Saint Martin

One of the most prominent living US-American artists, **Jasper Johns** experienced spectacular success after the influential New York gallerist **Leo Castelli** noticed him in 1958. In the age of Abstract Expressionism and Pop art, his work stood out for being neither abstract nor representational. He became famous for repeating the motifs of flags, targets, numbers, maps, and other familiar images.

Jasper Johns studied at the University of South Carolina from 1947 to 1948 and moved to New York City the following year. During the Korean War, he was stationed in Japan (1952–1953). In 1954, the artist returned to New York and met the Pop artist **Robert Rauschenberg**, with whom he began a six-year-long intimate relationship and joint exploration of the contemporary art scene.

The lithograph *Skin with O'Hara Poem*, although not an exact copy, is based on one of the artist's charcoal *Skin* drawings from 1962. An imprint of the artist's face and hands appears alongside the typed text of **Frank O'Hara's** poem "The clouds go soft". This piece entered MoCA Skopje's collection when the museum joined forces with the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts to establish a purchase prize in 1965.

Jasper Johns became its first recipient, and, after the biennale, the work was transferred to MoCA Skopje. ●



Skin with O'Hara Poem, 1963/1965

Wifredo Lam

1902–1982, lived and worked in Madrid, Paris, and Havana

Wifredo Lam was an artist of Cuban, African, and Chinese ancestry who practiced a transnational approach to life and art. As a painter, **Wifredo Lam** became known for his unique style combining Afro-Cuban aesthetics with features of European modernist movements. He traveled widely and maintained friendships with key figures of Cubism, Surrealism, and the anticolonial *Négritude* movement.

The painting *Four Hands for One Being* (1965) depicts a strange creature with an arched neck, red eyes, long and slender hands, and small horns. It is exemplary of the dreamlike, mysterious atmospheres and recurring hybrid figures composed of human, animal, and plant elements that are characteristic of his work.

When he created *Four Hands for One Being*, **Wifredo Lam** was a well-established and widely recognized artist. According to his correspondence with the art historian **Boris Petkovski**, the artist donated the piece to MoCA Skopje after its exhibition in Belgrade in 1969. ●



Four Hands for One Being, 1965



Big Anvil, 1964

Oto Logo

1931–2016, lived and worked in Belgrade

Oto Logo, a sculptor from Belgrade, created more than 1,200 works, including numerous busts and public monuments, many dedicated to the victims and heroes of the Second World War. He grew up in a working-class family and completed his studies at the Academy of Applied Arts in Belgrade in 1954.

Oto Logo's sculptures reflect the inner vitality of the motifs from which he drew inspiration and his fascination with technological advancements. The artist created both figurative statues as well as more abstracted forms.

The artist gifted the *Big Anvil* in 1966/1967. The sculpture portrays a tilted, modified version of the once essential forging tool, with simple surfaces and clear contours. Made following the 1963 Skopje earthquake, the anvil—a symbol of creation through labor and effort—can be read as a sign of the collective shaping of a new future for the city. ●

Zoran Mušič

1909–2005, lived and worked in Ljubljana, Venice, and Paris



Countrywomen from the Islands, 1956

The Slovenian artist Zoran Mušič achieved an exceptional international career and became known for an authentic, melancholic style. His life and work were marked by the horror and terror he experienced as a concentration camp survivor.

After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, Zoran Mušič visited Madrid and exhibited in Trieste and Venice. In 1944, he was arrested by Nazi forces for having antifascist affiliations and taken to Dachau concentration camp. There, Zoran Mušič made more than 100 drawings capturing unspeakable human suffering. At the end

of the Second World War, he settled in Venice, and then moved to Paris in the early 1950s. Landscapes dominate his work of this era, often presented in an idealized and abstracted form.

Zoran Mušič revered Dalmatia as the idyllic place of his youth. *Countrywomen from the Islands* is one of six artworks inspired by Dalmatian landscapes that the

artist donated to MoCA Skopje between 1963 and 1965. The horizontal lines in this black-and-white drypoint etching denote a field, and the arched shapes suggest bent women working the land. In 1956—the year this piece was made—the artist received the Grand Prize for Printmaking at the Venice Biennale. ●

Pablo Picasso

1881–1973, lived and worked in Madrid, Paris, and Mougins

Pablo Picasso, perhaps the most famous artist of the early twentieth century, personally chose *Woman's Head* to gift to MoCA Skopje as a gesture of solidarity following the 1963 earthquake. The donation was received in 1965, facilitated by Boris Petkovski, director of MoCA Skopje, and Jean Cassou, director of Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris.

Woman's Head is the most recognizable artwork in MoCA Skopje's collection and, as such, serves as a symbol of its public identity. This portrait of a woman with long hair and a bow portrays the distorted facial features characteristic of the artist's oeuvre. Female portraiture is among Pablo Picasso's most recognizable motifs, and today among the most discussed due to his notorious mistreatment of the women in his life.

The painting shows Jacqueline Roque, the artist's final companion, from multiple angles. In contrast to the sharp lines of his earlier work, the features here are more rounded. Painted in an austere palette of bluish-greens, gray, black, and white, the work showcases his disregard for the idea of linear stylistic development.

Pablo Picasso's donation encouraged other artists to contribute and support the people of Skopje after the earthquake. Shockingly, in late 1971, the painting was stolen from the permanent exhibit. However, with Interpol's help, it was found and returned the following year. ●



Woman's Head, 1963

Kumi Sugai

1919–1996, lived and worked in Paris, Kobe, and Tokyo

Kumi Sugai was a representative of postwar abstraction who first gained recognition for his paintings combining traditional Japanese calligraphy with modern Abstract Expressionist influences. While Kumi Sugai was born and died in Kobe, Japan, the most significant years of his career were spent in Europe.

Kumi Sugai moved to Paris in 1952 and became part of the *Nouvelle École de Paris* [New School of Paris], a loose group of international and French painters who lived in the city after the Second World War. He started making lithographs and developed a distinct graphic language characterized by precise lines, nonrepresentational forms, and a sense of dynamism—manifesting his fascination with speed and movement.

Black Mass exhibits a particular abstract style, inspired by modern urban living, which dominated the artist's work from the 1960s onward. A massive bulbous shape occupies most of the composition, primarily colored in

a deep, dark blue. It has three little folds on both the left and the right side, which are in a bright ultramarine blue. Behind the form are fading pinkish stripes arranged in a similar shape, almost like a shadow.

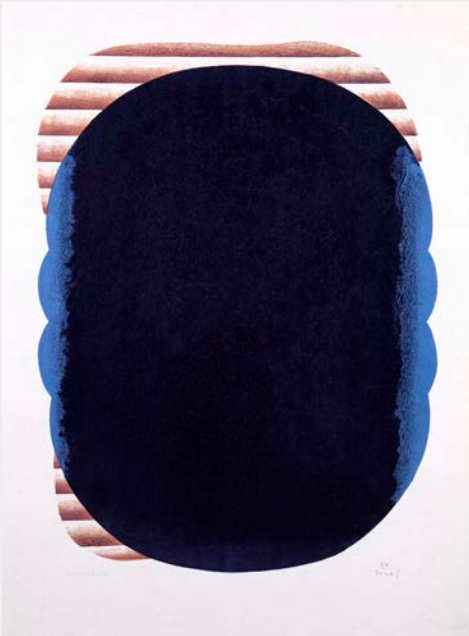
This lithograph was gifted to MoCa Skopje in 1966/1967. ●

Vladimir Veličković

1935–2019, lived and worked in Belgrade and Paris

Although considered one of the most notable contemporary artists from Serbia, Vladimir Veličković spent most of his life in Paris, where he moved in 1966. He worked in figurative painting, drawing, and graphics, developing a recognizable dramatic style of pronounced lines combined with a reduced palette.

The horrors of the Second World War, witnessed by the artist during his childhood in Yugoslavia, left a profound mark on his life and art. The artist's oeuvre is dominated by figures and body parts subjected to violence and pain, often set in nightmarish scenes and



Black Mass, 1964

accompanied by otherworldly creatures.

The morbid image in *Small Painting 4* shows a figure resembling a chubby infant on a blue background. The figure strangely floats in the air on its back, with arms and legs spread upward. Its parts are messy and hard to discern. This early work exemplifies the haunting style and subject matter typical of Vladimir Veličković's art since its beginnings.

The artwork was acquired for MoCA Skopje in 1968 as a gift from the Republic Secretariat for Education, Science and Culture, Skopje. ●

Marjan Vojska

Born in 1934, lives and works in Münster

The graphic artist, painter, and art educator Marjan Vojska grew up in Slovenia and currently lives in Münster. During the 1950s, he studied art in Ljubljana, where his mentor was Riko Debenjak, one of the leading representatives of the Ljubljana Graphic School.

In the early 1960s, while traveling to the Federal Republic of Germany, Marjan Vojska became immersed in sociocultural movements seeking to shape a new, modern cultural identity. He established a studio in Hagen, shifted his focus to printmaking and art education, and began teaching at Münster School of Design. Later, he became a professor and then dean of the Design Department at FH Münster University of Applied Sciences. Marjan Vojska is among the artists responsible for a printmaking revival in Germany in the 1980s.

Print X's geometric composition is reminiscent of a banner or flag. The elements are reduced to bold colors and a central circle surrounded by right angles. The work stems from the artist's research into optics and the interaction between color and form. ●



Small Painting 4, 1964



Print X, 1968

Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska

Yane Calovski, born in 1973, lives and works in Skopje and Berlin

Hristina Ivanoska, born in 1974, lives and works in Skopje and Berlin

All Things Flowing, 2023

Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska, *Spell Bound* (after the poem "Spell Bound" by Todor Chalovski), 2023
floor-based installation with pigment and graphite on linen, textile, and metal

Yane Calovski, *A Report on the Flood, November 1962* (from the ongoing series "The Residual Effect: The missing Archive of the former Institute of Urbanism and Architecture, Skopje), 2022
wall-based installation with metal, glass, and rubber, the book "A Report on the Master Plan," UN, 1969, and folder with colored pencil drawing "A Report on the Flood, November," 1962

Yane Calovski, *System* (inspired by *Process and Art: Competition Entry*, from Oskar Hansen's *MoMA: The Museum That Could Not Be*), 2023
floor-based installation with 17 metal elements and 3 linear actuators

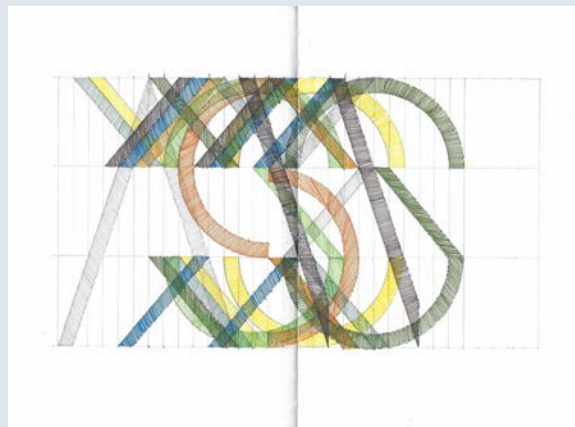
Hristina Ivanoska, *Archetype Open Form: All, All, All Things Flowing!*, 2023
mural and wall engraving with pigment and graphite

ARCHITECTURAL SKETCHING Ivan Peshevski •
MURAL LAYOUT Ilijana Petrushevska • METAL
WORKSHOP PRODUCTION Martin Krstevski

COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND ZILBERMAN
GALLERY, ISTANBUL/BERLIN

In addition to their individual projects, artists **Yane Calovski** and **Hristina Ivanoska** have worked in tandem since 2000. Their collaborative works are characterized by a dynamic use of different media, from performance, installation, text, and theory to drawing, sculpture, and wall engraving. Their work is marked by a desire to illuminate overlooked aspects of history, whether by delving into past events or recreating imagined history in the present moment. The local environment plays a vital role for **Yane Calovski** and **Hristina Ivanoska**, who try to recontextualize their workspace and open up opportunities for new interpretations and parallel readings of set beliefs. They often structure their projects as questions instead of answers, allowing viewers to become co-creators of their works' meanings.

For their spatial installation titled *All Things Flowing*, the artists propose another look at the history of Skopje's Museum of Contemporary



Hristina Ivanoska, *Archetype Open Form: All, All, All Things Flowing!*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST



Yane Calovski, *Horizontal Verticals, Fraction* (installation study), 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST

Art. In 1966, 89 architectural projects were submitted to the open call for building the new museum. Among them, one stood apart—the proposal by Polish architect **Oskar Hansen**, known for his theory of the "Open Form". The architect imagined a transformable exhibition space, able to fold entirely and then unfold in various combinations, with hexagonal elements lifted by hydraulic-powered rotating telescopes. **Oskar Hansen** imagined the gallery would rise and unfurl toward the sky whenever a new exhibition opened, and otherwise be hidden below ground. This ambitious proposal formed the initial template for **Yane Calovski's** motorized sculptural installation and **Hristina Ivanoska's** large-scale mural consisting of specially devised typography. The letters reference "Open Form" and engage in dialogue with works from the MoCA Skopje collection by two Macedonian artists: the painter **Dushan Perchinkov** and the sculptor

Aneta Svetieva. These two artists might seem like disparate choices. Yet, both of their works pointedly describe the coexisting local practices from the museum's inception until today: **Dushan Perchinkov's** paintings invoke an early modernist tradition of abstract geometric patterns, operating outside the Western canon of modern art, while **Aneta Svetieva's** unrefined and expressive terracotta sculptures speak of an almost anthropological understanding of Skopje's history. All elements in the installation recreate a landscape that has been destroyed and reborn repeatedly. Combining **Oskar Hansen's** vision of the museum with these two Macedonian artists from the collection, **Yane Calovski** and **Hristina Ivanoska** purposefully look toward a possible retelling of the local history of art, reimagining the story of the museum, and envisioning a present bursting with potential. ●

Dushan Perchinkov

Born in 1939, lives and works in Skopje

Dushan Perchinkov is widely considered one of the most important Macedonian artists of the twentieth century. While his works are highly recognizable, the artist still fascinates audiences due to his consistency, dedication, and perfectionism over almost six decades. Two years after representing Macedonia in the Yugoslav Pavilion at the 1978 Venice Biennale, he took a professorship at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Skopje, becoming one of the most respected instructors among several generations of students.

In his paintings and graphic works, Dushan Perchinkov creates an instantly recognizable visual world, in which careful observations of the environment transform into complex abstract geometric compositions.

MoCA Skopje holds several of the artist's works, in different mediums and spanning different phases. *The Sea*, made immediately after Dushan Perchinkov graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, is characterized by a radical reduction of elements on the picture plane. Already in *Blooming Island* and *Remnants from a Summer Night* a few years later, we see the artist making more elaborate compositions, clarifying his vision for a purely icon-based visual language. *Motif from a Suburb III*, part of a series of three small paintings, is representative of his sharp focus on dimension, scale, and order.

Most of Dushan Perchinkov's works in the museum's collection were acquired through purchase, including from the artist. *Motif from a Suburb III* was gifted as part of the bequest of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska. ●



The Sea, 1963



Blooming Island, 1967



Remnants from a Summer Night, 1967



Motif from a Suburb III, 1971

Aneta Svetieva

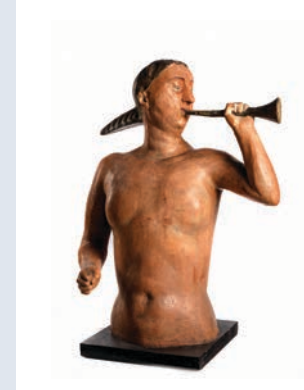
Born in 1944, lives and works in Skopje

The Macedonian sculptor and scholar Aneta Svetieva holds both a Master of Fine Arts and a Doctor of Ethnology. In the late 1960s, she began combining her interest in sculpture with her fascination for local folk rituals and Neolithic archaeological findings in the Balkan region. The artist's medium of choice is clay, since it involves quick, direct work with hands and no preparatory sketching. Aneta Svetieva focuses on portraits and nudes, achieving a vitality in her human forms through coloring and engraving. Their intentional imperfections impart a passion and optimism that springs from the mysteries of archaic folkloric rites and customs.

Messenger (Herald), one of the artist's earliest pieces, set the direction for her future explorations in the expanded field of sculpture. In later works such as *Bathing Woman* and *Bathing Woman (Pigeon)*, the artist creates complex arrangements of several sculptures.

Many of Aneta Svetieva's works refer to the relationship between humans and the natural world, which she sees as a basic condition for life and joy. *Large Upright Bathing Woman* and *Untitled* most clearly connect the figures to ancient rituals, featuring body decorations and stenciled hand shapes. The latest work held in the collection, *At the Beauty and the Beast*, presents an interpretation of the emancipation of women, through a liberating transformation of erotic forces and a resistance to customs. In 1997, Aneta Svetieva represented Macedonia at the Venice Biennale.

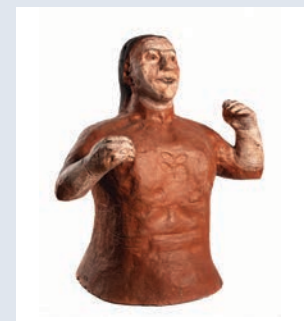
The works included in MoCA Skopje's collection cover more than two decades of the artist's career and were acquired on different occasions, including through the Republic Commission for Purchase following her solo exhibitions at the House of Culture, Ohrid, in 1987 and at MoCA Skopje in 1989. ●



Messenger (Herald), 1970



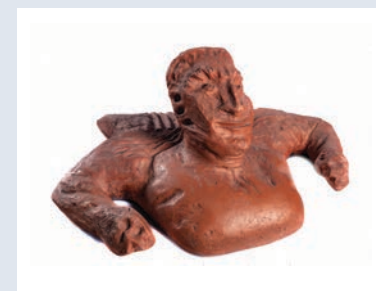
Untitled, from the series River, 1984



Bathing Woman, from the series River I, 1985



At the Beauty and the Beast, 1993



Bathing Woman (Pigeon), 1987

Siniša Ilić

Born in 1977, lives and works in Belgrade

Filigran, 2022/2023

Filigran

20 collages, 4 paper cuts, 3 water colors, 1 felt tip pen

Filigran

Videos

3', 3', 4'

CAMERA, EDITING, SOUND Luka Papić •
PERFORMERS Dušan Barbarić • Siniša Ilić •
Tijana Karaičić • Nikola Penezić •
VIDEO LINE PRODUCER Dragana Jovović •
THANKS Non canonico, Belgrade and
National Theatre Užice

Found objects in Kunsthalle Wien depot,
sofa and chairs from MoCA Skopje
designed by Slobodan Zhivkovski,
textile and platforms

COURTESY THE ARTIST

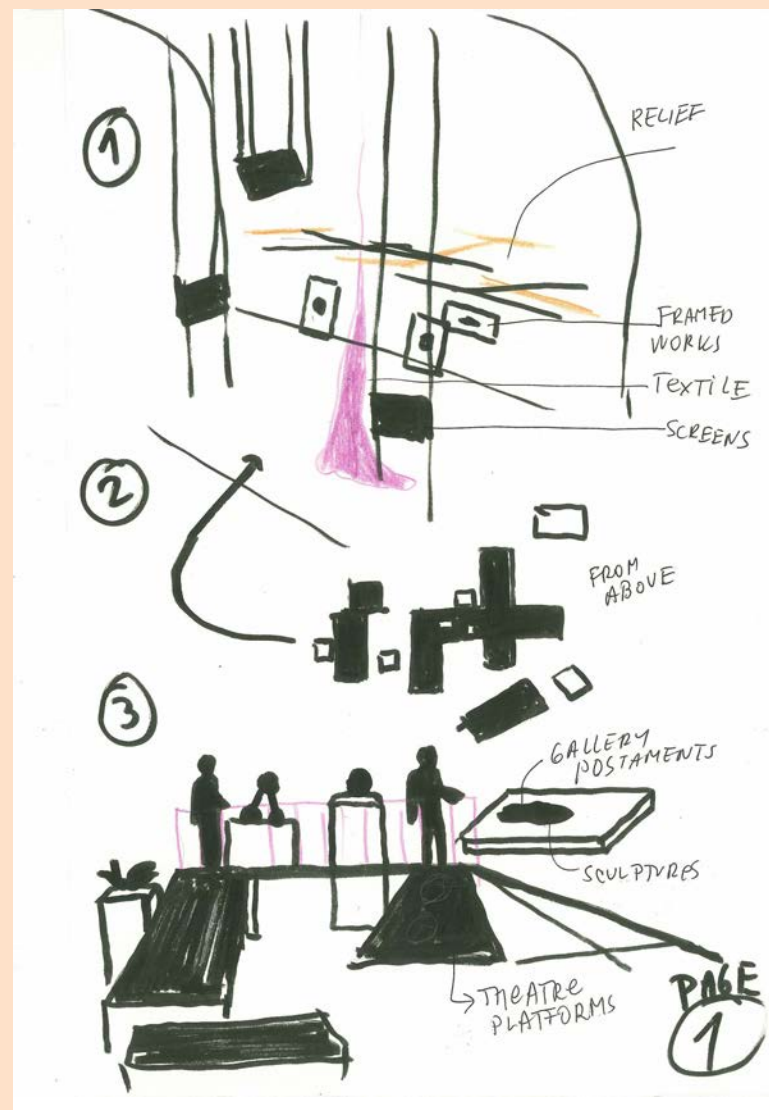


Siniša Ilić, *Filigran*, 2022/2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST

Siniša Ilić is a visual artist who combines works on paper with installation, video, and performance. His work revolves around exploring different social tensions, whether in relation to sustainability, cultural heritage, labor conditions, or migration, as well as finding ways to nurture friendship and solidarity. He frequently approaches these topics from a historical perspective, questioning the relationship between the Global South and West, especially through culminations in violence. Ex-Yugoslavia is often at the forefront of Siniša Ilić's works, both with regard to its historical significance as well as its connotations today. He is interested in how the past often finds ways to seep through the cracks and whether it can be reconciled with the present moment.

Siniša Ilić proposes a recontextualization of the city of Skopje in a spatial installation titled *Filigran*. His work connects eight abstract sculptural objects from MoCA Skopje's collection with his own drawings, collages, and moving images, placing them on platforms of varying heights. In this scenography, the audience is granted an unusually close experience of the artworks, as the viewers are invited to engage with the space and seat themselves close by. The irregularity of the platforms echoes the layers of Skopje's landscape and the different vantage points from which we can think about its history and its exceptional meandering between post-earthquake ruin and modernity. This is particularly emphasized in the only figurative

Siniša Ilić, mock-up drawing for the installation *Filigran*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST



sculpture in the selection, Dimo Todorovski's *Mother and Child – Skopje Tragedy* (1963), which shows the very literal consequences of the earthquake. Siniša Ilić's contemporary works echo Skopje's wholly different present, showing choreographies of construction and demolition, as well as reuse of materials, but also contemporary conditions of labor. One of the drawings he created from memory shows a fast-food restaurant in Skopje. It invites us to

look upon a combination of economic crisis and lethargy, speaking of a different, more symbolic earthquake. *Filigran*—whose title refers to a technique of manipulating gold or silver wire into fine ornamental tracery—references the delicate ways in which threads connect history and the present moment, forming a carefully woven pattern of visible past trauma and its resonance today. ●

Josip Demirović Devj

1939–1999, lived and worked in Zagreb

Josip Demirović Devj is a Croatian multimedia artist who has been active in Zagreb since the early 1960s. After he graduated from Zagreb's School of Applied Arts and Design, he worked as an assistant in sculptor Krsto Hegedušić's workshop. Despite this training, Josip Demirović Devj ignored the classical approach to sculpture, instead making collages and reliefs from discarded materials that touched upon contemporary themes.

The early sculpture *The Nothingness of Hiroshima* comes from the artist's series of relief works entitled *XXI art atomistica* (1961–1964). This work violates the traditional understanding of sculpting and focuses instead on building an associative-symbolic composition. The central area of dented and black patinated tin is marked with scars and red accents, eliciting associations of cuts and blood. At the top, a circular shape reminiscent of a helmet stands as a kind of protest against the destruction of war.

In May 1964, when Josip Demirović Devj was only 25, he became one of the youngest artists to donate their works to MoCA Skopje. ●

Michel Gérard

Born in 1938, lives and works in Paris and New York

The artist Michel Gérard grew up and studied in Paris, first at the École des Arts Appliqués and then the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, in the 1950s and 1960s. His early childhood was affected by the Nazi German occupation of Paris during the Second World War. Throughout his career, he has produced sculptures, installations, site-specific interventions, and monumental art projects in public spaces. In 1989, he moved to New York, where he continues to create and exhibit.

Michel Gérard's multifaceted artistic approach began with a theoretical and material examination of the notion of sculpture itself—a focus that lasted for several decades. Later, he incorporated photography, video, sound, and a vast range of other mediums.

Stratification, stems from a pivotal stage of the artist's career, when he interrogated the status of statue and considered materials' natural transformations over



The Nothingness of Hiroshima, before 1964



Stratification, 1969/1970

time. Various substances, including polyurethane and rubber, cluster together in a bundled clump reminiscent of a mineral stone or meteorite. The work's title hints at both a geological and a socioeconomic meaning. The artist gifted the piece to the museum in June 1971. ●

Olga Jančić

1929–2012, lived and worked in Belgrade

The widely known sculptor Olga Jančić spent most of her life in Belgrade, where she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and specialized in the Master Workshop of Toma Rosandić. She predominantly worked in stone and bronze, developing an authentic style based on high modernism. Many of the artist's smooth, rounded shapes express the vital aspects of nature and human life through a range of associations—from the erotic to the narrative.

The artist donated the small bronze *Fruit I* to MoCA Skopje in 1970, and it was shown at the first exhibition in the newly finished museum building that same year. This curved, seemingly soft sculpture is in fact skillfully executed in hard material. The two spherical halves surround a bulging round core, creating a form that recalls an embryo or a fruit pit, like from a plum or peach. Highly abstracted yet retaining a degree of figuration and a suggestion of sensuality, it relates to the idea of sexuality as a creative force.

Olga Jančić's aesthetics share an affinity with the anthropomorphic forms of British sculptor Henry Moore, who admired her work at the Biennale de Paris in 1959, where she received the main prize for sculpture. ●

Olga Jevrić

1922–2014, lived and worked in Belgrade

Olga Jevrić was a sculptor from Belgrade. After studying at the Music Academy and the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, she developed a sculptural language with astonishing independence from the widespread figurative style of her contemporaries. She started her practice in the war-torn city in the aftermath of the Second World War. By the mid-1950s, Olga Jevrić was among the first Yugoslav sculptors to pursue abstraction. The sculpture *Arched Form* (1964/65) consists of irregular shapes made in bronze, connected with inclined



Fruit I, 1967



Arched Form, 1964/1965

iron rods that seem to be growing out of the lower form and holding the shape above.

Olga Jevrić's materials—including iron, cement, plaster, and nails—can be described as both industrial and natural. Her art was informed by her interest in music and nature, and she often referred to her sculptures as quests to find balance between destruction and creation, growth and decay.

Arched Form was presented to MoCA Skopje by the artist in the mid-1960s. It was shown in the first exhibition held in the newly completed museum building in 1970. ●

Zoltán Kemény

1907–1965, lived and worked in Budapest and Zurich

Zoltán Kemény was a Hungarian-born, Switzerland-based artist known for his abstract metal sculptures and relief compositions, which combine the mediums of sculpture and painting.

After becoming acquainted with the work of the French artist Jean Dubuffet, the founder of the Art Brut movement, Zoltán Kemény began to work with sculpture made from crude materials. His early works of the 1950s use scrap metal, wire, nails, and springs to produce free sculptural compositions that seem to grow out of the flat surface of the picture plane.

Cut Across Vision, from 1962, is one of Zoltán Kemény's late pieces. Atop a flat metal plate, rhythmically arranged metal strips point in different directions, taking inspiration from the form of minerals and crystals. With this radiant metallic arrangement, the artist achieves a dynamic optical impression that prompts free association within the viewer.

The artist donated this work in February 1965, a few months before he died at age 58. As one of the most celebrated sculptural pieces in the collection, *Cut Across Vision* regularly appears in both temporary and permanent exhibitions of the MoCA Skopje collection. ●

Boško Kućanski

1931–2016, lived and worked in Sarajevo

Boško Kućanski, a Croatian-born sculptor and medical doctor, held several doctorates, professorships, and a patent in dentistry, and he also wrote multiple books of poetry and studied art history in Belgrade. After extensive



Cut Across Vision, 1962

international travels, he co-founded the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo in 1972 and the Faculty of Dentistry in 1975.

In *Fruit*, a sculpture made of wood and rope, Boško Kućanski explores his specific abstract approach to sculpture, characterized by biomorphic shapes, a highly energetic surrealism, and references to archaic forms and rituals. *Fruit* belongs to a series made in the late 1970s, created at the same time as his commissioned monument commemorating the Battle of Neretva of the Second World War. Located on Mount Makljen in Bosnia, the fist-like sculpture *Poet* (often referred to as *Tito's Fist*) was completed in 1978 and stood as one of Boško Kućanski's most recognized works, until it was destroyed in 2000.

MoCA Skopje purchased *Fruit* from the seventh exhibition of SDLUJ – Association of Societies of Yugoslav Visual Artists, held in Skopje in 1981, using funds from the Republic Purchase Commission. ●

Vjenceslav Richter

1917–2002, lived and worked in Zagreb

Vjenceslav Richter was a Croatian architect, urbanist, and sculptor known for his work in the fields of graphic arts, painting, and stage design. He completed his studies in 1949, at a time when Yugoslavia was in the midst of widespread social development, including in art. In the 1960s, Richter began his radically avant-garde project *Synthurbanism*, a utopian anticapitalist architecture envisioned to contribute to the development of a self-governing socialist society.

Vjenceslav Richter is also one of the founders and leading figures of two of postwar Yugoslavia's most significant artist groups: EXAT 51 [Experimental Atelier 51], (1951–1956) and its continuation as *Nove Tendencije* [New Tendencies] (1961–1973). Both groups aimed to affirm the synthesis of the arts and to emphasize that creative individuals as socially engaged beings should contribute to creating visions for a new society.

Diagonal Form is a sculpture made of small aluminum pieces that form a dynamic wavelike structure. It is an example of "systemic sculpture", a concept developed by the artist that he also applied to graphics and painting. Vjenceslav Richter was at the height of his career when, in 1973, he donated this work to MoCA Skopje, after the museum agreed to pay for the sculpture's materials. ●



Fruit, 1979



Diagonal Form, 1969

Francesco Somaini

1926–2005, lived and worked in Milan and Como

The Italian sculptor Francesco Somaini became prominent in the 1950s and gained international recognition as a regular participant at the Venice Biennale. Initially experimenting with Neo-Cubist forms, he eventually turned to abstraction, creating sculptures that transpose free forms in space. Interested in experimenting with different materials, the artist cast his works in iron, lead, and pewter and used a blowtorch and polishing tools to accentuate their expressiveness.

Composition 80 (Tale of the Dawn) is considered representative of Francesco Somaini's Informel period. Its abstract-associative composition represents a unity of opposites, pairing a geometric base with an organic form. Through a mix of dark, patinated parts and highly polished parts—increasing the contrast between the work's convex and concave surfaces—the artist attempts to deconstruct form and achieve a plastic playfulness and dynamism.

In October 1964, MoCA Skopje received *Composition 80* along with works by other Italian artists as a donation through Penelope Galleria d'Arte in Rome. The gallery had organized the exhibition *Artisti italiani per le città di Skopje* [Italian Artists for the City of Skopje] to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the 1963 Skopje earthquake. ●

François Stahly

1911–2006, lived and worked in Paris

The sculptor known for monumental public works and other commissions—François Stahly—was born in Germany as Tizian Stahly. His interest in art was encouraged from an early age by his father and grandfather, both painters. François Stahly grew up in Switzerland, where—despite an art context dominated by geometrical abstraction and the avant-garde ideas of the Bauhaus—he began to develop a sculptural style of plastic, rounded shapes, partly inspired by his lasting preoccupation

with spirituality.

In 1931, the artist relocated to Paris, where he studied at the Académie Ranson and eventually changed his



Composition 80 (Tale of the Dawn), 1961



Fish, 1959

name to François. His works in wood, metal, and stone reside on the very margins of figuration—neither representational nor entirely abstract.

Fish, donated to MoCA Skopje in 1965/1966, does not depict an image of a fish. Rather, the wood takes on a fluid shape, as if portraying a fish's path of movement in a confined body of water. The artist's manner of capturing the essential intangible reality of a fish recalls the work of Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, whom François Stahly greatly admired. ●

Dimo Todorovski

1910–1983, lived and worked in Skopje

Dimo Todorovski is among the most famous and celebrated of Macedonian sculptors.

Mother and Child – Skopje Tragedy offers a striking and literal representation of the disastrous Skopje earthquake of 1963. The tragic event inspired the artist to create a work that was documentary but also strongly dramatic in tone. The dead mother figure lies horizontally on the ground, while a small child almost hovers above her.

The child figure is a reproduction that the artist made many years later, after the original child sculpture broke. That's why the mother displays the patina of time while her child does not. The figures are also differentiated in style: while the mother is very realistic, with visible anatomical deformities, the child is extremely stylized. The two figures exist in a strange sort of oppositional unity—as symbols of dark and light, death and life—as if to overcome the feeling of tragedy.

Following Dimo Todorovski's retrospective at MoCA Skopje in 1980/1981, the museum purchased the sculpture with combined funds from the City of Skopje and the Republic Purchase Commission. It was added to the collection only a few weeks after the artist's death. ●



Mother and Child – Skopje Tragedy, 1963

Iman Issa

Born in 1979, lives and works in Vienna and Berlin

I, the Artwork, 2023

I, the Protagonist Layla

(from the series *I, the Protagonist*), 2023

3D print, paint, steel plate, book on shelf,
vinyl text, text panel under glass

I, the Artwork, 2023

four C-prints mounted on aluminum

Dancer (Study for 2014)

(from the series *Lexicon*), 2014

two framed lenticular prints, text panel
under glass

Composition (Study for 2019)

(from the series *Lexicon*), 2019

video, sound: Tyler Friedman,
text panel under glass

Untitled (Study for 2019)

(from the series *Lexicon*), 2019

video, sound, text panel under glass

Face (Study for 2019)

(from the series *Lexicon*), 2019

3D print, metal poles, paint, text panel
under glass

Car Wash 2006 / I, the Artwork 2023, 2023

video, sound

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ELISABETH
& KLAUS THOMAN, VIENNA



Iman Issa's practice is characterized by a sharp look at the power of display in relation to cultural and academic institutions. While she often approaches her work experimentally—inviting the viewer to bring their own experience and expectations to the project—her practice is also marked by a precise and clear visual language. Her interest in histories, museums, and collections translates into a method of destabilizing preconceived ideas in respect to knowledge and historical transparency or accuracy by recontextualizing and recombining object-text pairings that suggest other narratives and visions of what we think we know. Whether she is questioning the role of art texts in her *Lexicon* series (2012–2019) or the relationship between the artist and their work in *Proxies, with a Life of Their Own* (2019–ongoing), Iman Issa's work is always a nuanced contemplation of meanings below the surface of the visible.



Iman Issa, *I, the Artwork*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ELISABETH & KLAUS THOMAN, VIENNA

In a proposition titled *I, the Artwork*, Iman Issa combines her own works with eight artworks from the collection of MoCA Skopje. The common thread linking these works—a combination of sculptures and prints—is that they

all depict figures, many of their faces hidden from view. Her selection poses the question of whether the artist can take second place to their works and if an artwork can determine its own institutional and artistic context. Carefully selected and arranged, the sculptures, photographs, and video works interweave to create something akin to remakes, where original relations are removed and new ones produced. By severing these ties, the artworks can no longer be read only through the artists' biographies and instead inspire a variety of other, playful ways of understanding. Contrary to the usual hierarchies and preconceptions *I, the Artwork* invites the viewer to engage in a playful thought process with alternate meanings and new connections. For Iman Issa, this process allows "saving the works from appropriation by making the appropriation very transparent". ●



Iman Issa, *Untitled (Study for 2019)*, film still, 2019 •
THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ELISABETH & KLAUS THOMAN,
VIENNA

Bronisław Chromy

1925–2017, lived and worked in Kraków

The remarkably prolific artist **Bronisław Chromy** made countless sculptures and statuettes, monuments, medallions, paintings, and drawings over his six-decade career. In the early 1950s, he studied under the esteemed artist **Xawery Dunikowski**—the pioneer of modern sculpture in Poland. Later, in the 1970s, **Bronisław Chromy** became a professor at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków.

Often combining metal and stone, **Bronisław Chromy's** sculptures take on various themes—from historical, cosmological, musical, antiwar, and religious concepts to themes related to the animal world.

Hagia Sophia is one of the three works the artist donated to MoCA Skopje in 1968. The phallic-looking form reveals itself, on closer inspection, to be four highly abstracted and elongated heads. The largest, middle one looms over the three smaller heads below. The title suggests the interpretation of the piece as representing **Sophia**, a Christian saint and martyr, with her three daughters—Faith, Hope, and Charity—who were persecuted for defending their faith. ●

Josip Diminić

1937–2019, lived and worked in Labin, Rijeka, Zagreb, and Pula

The versatile artist **Josip Diminić**, primarily recognized for his sculptures, was also an art professor. He made a number of monuments and outdoor sculptures for sites throughout his home region of Istria and beyond. After graduating in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Zagreb in 1963, the artist moved back to Labin, his hometown. In the late 1960s, **Josip Diminić** worked mostly in painting and ceramics. Sculpture in stone, bronze, wood, and plastic became his main focus from the 1970s on. These forms appear soft, irregular, close to abstraction, and often stylized and associative, becoming more figurative after 1980. **Josip Diminić** supported and led various groups, institutions, and initiatives crucial to the advancement of arts in his local context.

The brightly colored sculpture *Touches* consists of two main upright elements in complementary red and green that interlock with one another in the lower part,



Hagia Sophia, 1964



Touches, 1973

appearing like two dense liquid masses or body parts. A small purple part underneath seems to be pressed down by the red. The piece's ambiguous shape offers a strong sensual quality, which can be interpreted as erotic. The artist donated this materialized expression of connection, togetherness, and unity to MoCA Skopje in 1976. ●

Olga Peczenko-Srzednicka

1918–1975, lived and worked in Kraków

Olga Peczenko-Srzednicka was a graphic artist from Poland who worked primarily in lithography and woodcut techniques. She was a member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers—the organization responsible for gathering a great majority of the artworks donated to Skopje from Poland and which now constitute MoCA Skopje's extensive Polish Collection.

Olga Peczenko-Srzednicka attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, after which she studied graphics at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. There, she took the lithography class of **Konrad Srzednicki**, who later became her husband.

The composition *Head III* is one of two works the artist donated to MoCA in 1965/1966. It depicts a woman's faceless head in a simplified form. The figure is turned toward the viewer, yet instead of facial features, there is a shaded surface, a void. Her dark hair and the background are depicted through expressive lines. The piece is representative of **Olga Peczenko-Srzednicka's** art in both form and content, perhaps expressing the feeling of being overlooked when working in the shadow of a more famous spouse. ●

Ivan Sabolić

1921–1986, lived and worked in Zagreb

Sculptor **Ivan Sabolić** began his career making portraits in a traditional representative manner and eventually adopted geometricized forms. He studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Zagreb, where he later attained a professorship and became the dean. His renowned commemorative public works impacted the development of sculptural art in Yugoslavia.

A focus on the human figure is essential to **Ivan Sabolić's** practice. The midsize statue *Woman from*



Head III, 1966



Woman from Pisarovina, 1957

Pisarovina, cast in bronze, consists of two parts connected at their narrowest points. It depicts an abstracted woman, with a slightly bowed head and large polygonal hat, gazing toward the ground. The face is indicated faintly, with two round dots for eyes. Some interpret the shape as an idealized feminine body, defined by its symmetrical curves and a tightly cinched waist.

Among the initial gifts to Skopje following the 1963 earthquake, the sculpture was shown in the first exhibition of artworks donated by Croatian artists, held at the Exhibition Gallery of the Workers' Hall in Skopje in October 1963. Early donations, such as this one, were crucial demonstrations of support and solidarity that inspired the establishment of MoCA Skopje in February 1964. ●

Gligor Stefanov

Born in 1956, lives and works in Windsor



Grabbing of the Space, 1985

Gligor Stefanov has been one of the most prominent Macedonian artists since the early 1980s. Already upon graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade in 1981, the artist treated sculpture as an elaborate installation of objects. By the mid-1980s, he had produced several installations and assemblages made of cotton, straw, grass, clay, and wood, both in public and gallery spaces.

Grabbing of the Space is one of the most iconic works from the artist's *Kites* series (1984–1988). Its accumulated linear elements, made of straw, represent a claw-like hand in motion. Begun after Gligor Stefanov obtained his master's degree in Belgrade in 1985, the work was first shown as part of his 1986 solo exhibition at MoCA Skopje. The exhibition's success and MoCA Skopje's support resulted in the artist being chosen as the first representative of the Pavilion of the Independent Republic of Macedonia at the 45th Venice Biennale in 1993.

MoCA Skopje purchased the work in 1986, at a time when Gligor Stefanov was quickly ascending on the Yugoslav art scene. Ever since, *Grabbing of the Space* has been regularly exhibited in group shows. ●

Beáta Széchy

Born in 1950, lives and works in Dallas and Budapest

The Hungarian-born contemporary artist **Beáta Széchy** works with various printing techniques, painting, drawing, mixed media, photography, video, and installation. She studied at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Budapest before moving to the US in the late 1980s. In 1990, **Beáta Széchy** founded the Hungarian Multi-cultural Center and, since 1995, has been directing its international Artist-in-Residence program in Budapest, where she is presently based.

These three artworks, donated to MoCA Skopje in the mid-1980s, feature new prints of old group portraits modified with drawn and sewn interventions. The faces of fifteen male protagonists, posing with their hunting dogs and gear in *Hunters*, are whited out, erasing their identities. This modification effectively defeats the intended purpose of the original photograph, likely taken for remembrance. The pieces *Family* and *Little Imerero* reference family histories through portrayals of different generations.

The themes of time passing, the elusiveness of memory, and coping with change are present throughout **Beáta Széchy's** oeuvre. ●



Family, 1981



Hunters, 1981



Little Imerero, 1983

Gülsün Karamustafa

Born in 1946, lives and works in Istanbul and Berlin

The Crime Scene, 2022/2023

Window, 1980

painting, mixed media

The Monument and the Child, 2010

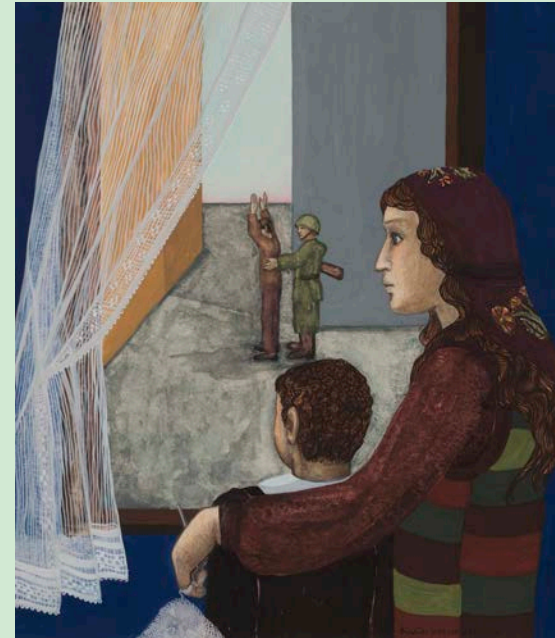
installation, 10 wooden stands with ceramic objects

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND
BÜROSARIGEDIK, ISTANBUL

Gülsün Karamustafa is a visual artist and filmmaker known for interweaving personal and historical narratives with contemporary sociopolitical issues. One of the most relevant Turkish contemporary artists, her practice already spans more than five decades. Through painting, sculpture, and film, her work often reflects on the politically turbulent

environment of her native Turkey, whether in *Prison Paintings* (1972–1978), a series of canvases created after her incarceration as a political prisoner, or in *The Monument and the Child* (2010), a collection of sculptures exploring the complex visual language of modern Turkey and its national monuments. Her works frequently combine elements of historical fact and personal experience, merging childlike impressions with harsh political realities.

Under the title *Crime Scene*, Gülsün Karamustafa's painting *Window* (1980) and the sculptural installation *The Monument and the Child* (2010), consisting of ten stands bearing playful ceramic objects, are juxtaposed with a



Gülsün Karamustafa, *Window*, 1980 •
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BÜROSARIGEDIK.
PHOTO: BARIŞ ÖZÇETIN

small collection of works from MoCA Skopje. These two sculptures and nine paintings all entered the museum's collection as a private donation from the family of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska. Consisting mostly of Macedonian artists, the collection to some extent reflects the points of view and ambitions of the family who diligently collected the works. It therefore begs the question of how to include such a body of work in the wider context of a museum collection and whether the works from the private collection should be separated out at all. These questions are also highlighted by Gülsün Karamustafa's works, which—especially *Window*—seem to ask at what specific points solidarity is possible and when it is not. The artist answers by placing the works into an imagined family room, complete with pleasant wallpaper and an armchair. The works from the collection of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska and Gülsün Karamustafa's sculptures and painting begin to form a common narrative, but as each work

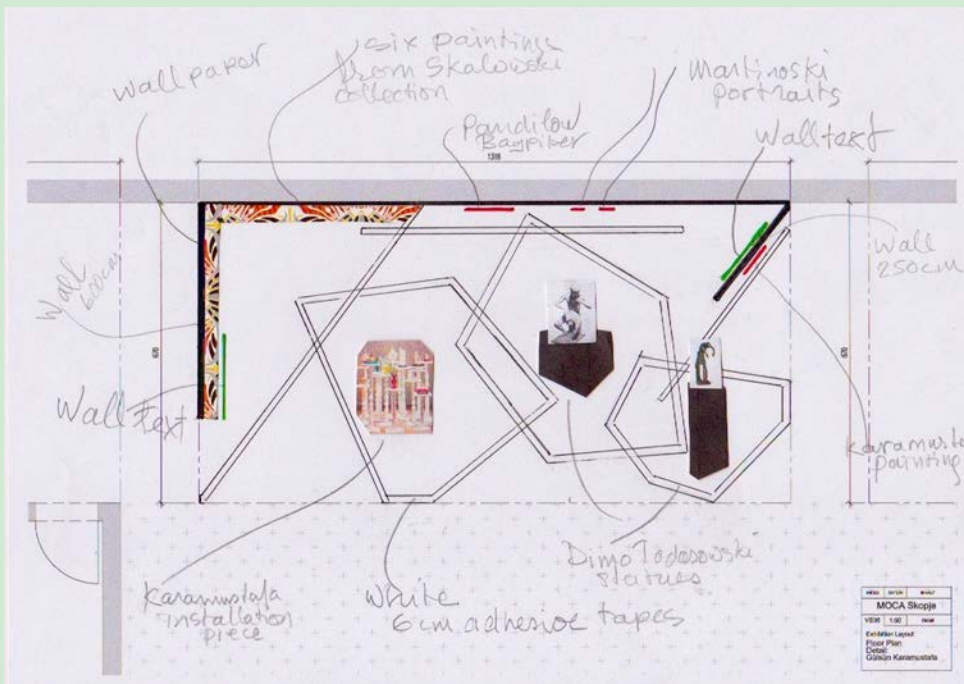


Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Queen* (detail),
The Monument and the Child, 2010 •
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BÜROSARIGEDIK.
PHOTO: BARIŞ ÖZÇETIN



Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Teapot* (detail),
The Monument and the Child, 2010 • COURTESY THE
ARTIST AND BÜROSARIGEDIK. PHOTO: BARIŞ ÖZÇETIN

starts to form a part of a whole, it also needs to be recognized individually. Using a method of the sort commonly seen in old crime movies, the artist traces the artworks with tape, reminiscent of white chalk, outlining their complex pasts while establishing their present relationships to one another. With this, the artist opens up the works and their complex relations with one another to investigation. ●



Gülsün Karamustafa, mock-up drawing for the installation *Crime Scene*, 2022 • COURTESY THE ARTIST

Dimitar Avramovski Pandilov

1898–1963, lived and worked in Sofia, Hayredin, Smilevo, Kukurečani, and Skopje

Dimitar Avramovski Pandilov is considered the first classically trained Macedonian painter to completely depart from the Byzantine painting tradition. His 1927 solo exhibition in Skopje is considered to mark the beginning of modern art in Macedonia. His lyrical style, characterized by a soft, warm palette, oscillates between poetic realism and impressionism. His paintings include scenes from traditional life, landscapes, urban panoramas, still lifes, portraits, and nudes.

Bagpiper depicts a frontal view of a male bagpiper while women in traditional Macedonian costume dance behind him. This painting belongs to the artist's early period, before he went to Paris, and so the strong influence of academic realism is clearly visible.

Dimitar Avramovski Pandilov's paintings are bursting with optimism and often celebrate country life—a subject that maintained a special place in his oeuvre. His paintings abound with traditional motifs such as village festivities, bazaars, and harvests. Dimitar Avramovski Pandilov dedicated his life to art, before tragically dying during the 1963 Skopje earthquake.

Bagpiper was acquired in 1968 from the private collection of Dr. Delcho Zografski, after being exhibited in a retrospective of the artist's work at the Art Gallery Skopje in 1966. ●

Božidar Damjanovski

Born in 1947, lives and works in Skopje and Belgrade

Božidar Damjanovski is a Macedonian painter who, since the mid-1970s, has been part of the Belgrade art scene, working with new tendencies in figurative art. In his paintings, the artist develops a specific version of Postmodern historicism, referencing and quoting from art history in unusual juxtapositions and mixing iconography from different epochs. Motifs from ancient Greek and Egyptian art and mythology are found throughout his oeuvre. The pastel and ochre palette he often works with evokes the breath of the past.

In *Angel in White*, Božidar Damjanovski references one of the most iconic representations of Byzantine art: the angel Gabriel, known as the White Angel, from



Bagpiper, 1926



Angel in White, 1983

the Mileševa Monastery frescoes, which date back to the thirteenth century. On the figure's chest appears a light-gray square on white paper—seemingly a reference to Kazimir Malevich's modernist painting *White on White* (1918). Taken together, these aspects point to the religious notions of abstraction.

The work was donated to MoCA Skopje in 2021 as part of the bequest of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska, one of the first paleoslavists in Macedonia and professor at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje. ●

Slobodan Filovski

Born in 1950, lives and works in Skopje

Slobodan Filovski is a Macedonian painter from Bitola. Graduating from the Academy of Arts in Ljubljana in 1976 and active on Skopje's art scene in the late 1970s and 1980s, he belongs to the generation of artists whose artistic style is marked by the traditions of abstraction and a renewed interest in the expressive power of color. In Slobodan Filovski's works, characterized by a lyrical abstraction and evocative titles, the flow of color emphasizes the erosion of the image and the impossibility of articulating the visual field in the same manner as a sentence in a text.

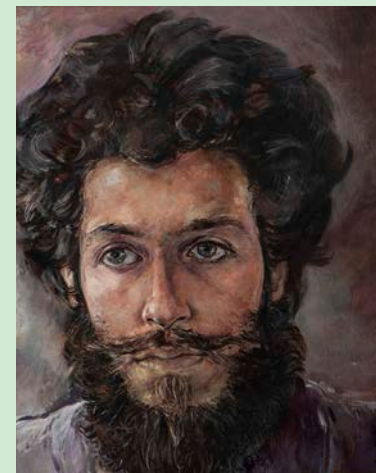
In his *Self-Portrait* painted in 1983, he deviates from abstraction and the typical coloristic approach, instead using a reduced color palette. The work emphasizes the drawing and careful registering of physiognomic details: the artist's lush curly hair and elongated face, with a melancholic look.

Slobodan Filovski's *Self-Portrait* was rarely exhibited before being gifted to MoCA Skopje in 2021 as part of the bequest of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska. ●

Bogoljub Ivković

Born in 1924, lives and works in Belgrade and Paris

The Serbian painter Bogoljub Ivković was born in Gradsko, near Veles. He graduated from the School of Applied Arts in Skopje in 1953 and specialized in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade in 1957. His paintings—characterized by Surrealist, Post-Cubist, and Expressionist traits—often depict rural settings inspired by folklore, and usually feature a curved horizon line. Bogoljub Ivković's monumental, geometricized



Self-Portrait, 1983



Painting, ca. 1966

figures express the hard lives and burdens borne by Macedonian villagers.

Painting (ca. 1966) is representative of his early Paris period. During his decade in Paris—between 1965 and 1974—he developed and honed his original, idiosyncratic artistic style, which dwells in the fantastic and the poetic. This small-format painting represents a single human figure on a black and brown background. The figure's upstretched arms are positioned diagonally, as if in mid-flight, and the entire body is simplified into basic geometric shapes.

This work by **Bogoljub Ivković** is one of the more recent donations to MoCA Skopje, gifted as part of the bequest of **Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska**. ●

Nikola Martinoski

1903–1973, lived and worked in Skopje

Nikola Martinoski, a Macedonian painter of Aromanian origin, is considered one of the founders of modern art in Macedonia. After graduating from Bucharest Academy of Fine Arts in 1927, he took an active role in the cultural life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and would go on to become one of the most important Macedonian artists of the twentieth century.

Nikola Martinoski's primary genre was portraiture, and he regularly depicted his Roma friends and neighbors. In the 1930s, he began painting portraits of prominent Skopje bohemians and anonymous middle-class citizens. **Martinoski's** painting style was influenced by the various forms of Expressionism he encountered during his time in Paris, but many of his portrait commissions were done in a realistic style.

Portrait of Rastko Purić displays the artist's characteristic stylized facial features, as well as the uneven and dense surface texture that he favored. The face of the sitter—who was a publicist and one of **Nikola Martinoski's** first collectors—is elongated, with small but accentuated eyes and lips. *Portrait of Ljubomir Bogojević*, which depicts a middleclass man, follows a more realistic approach. These two portraits are exemplary of the two poles between which **Martinoski's** portrait painting oscillated at the time.

MoCA Skopje purchased both portraits from the people they depict: from **Purić** in 1969 and from **Bogojević** in 1975. ●



Portrait of Rastko Purić, 1934



Portrait of Ljubomir Bogojević, 1935

Bogoja Popovski

1920–1989, lived and worked in Skopje and Sofia

Bogoja Popovski was a Macedonian painter born in 1920 near Ohrid, then part of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. In 1941, during the Axis occupation, he enrolled in the Sofia Academy of Fine Arts, but soon after joined the antifascist movement, working with agitprop units.

Bogoja Popovski was one of the first members of the partisan cultural and educational group **Kočo Racin**, founded in July 1944. The artist played **Adolf Hitler** in the group's one-act play *Hitler in Agony*, and also was the set designer. After the country's liberation in 1944, he continued his art studies, graduating in 1948. However, shortly afterward—in 1950—**Bogoja Popovski** was imprisoned in Goli Otok for three years on charges of publicly criticizing Yugoslav authorities.

Flowers is exemplary of **Bogoja Popovski's** work of the 1960s and 1970s, which continued to follow an academic realist style. The artist was not interested in pursuing modern tendencies in art, preferring to paint his favorite classical motifs such as still lifes and landscapes. He led a quiet life as an art teacher and never had a solo exhibition.

Flowers, alongside five more of the artist's paintings, was donated to MoCA Skopje in 2021 as part of the bequest of **Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska**. ●



Flowers, n.d.

Simon Shemov

Born in 1941, lives and works in Skopje

Simon Shemov is a Macedonian painter, graphic artist, and art pedagogue. Born to a family of artists in Kavadarci, he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade in 1964. He continues to actively participate in the city's art scene to this day. In the early 1970s, he became one of the first artists in Macedonia to explore alternative directions in art, with a commitment to expanding his practice across mediums. As a result, his oeuvre spans painting, graphic art, installation art, interventions in natural and urban space, and especially works on handmade paper. Many of **Simon Shemov's** works explore his interest in nature and natural phenomena.

The silkscreen work *A Play with Colors* depicts a grid of variously colored squares in ten rows and



A Play with Colors, 1980

twelve columns. At the bottom of the picture plane, a black-and-white hand holding a brush contrasts with the orderly color table. It is a reference to the very act of creation, and the drawing also evokes themes of childhood experience and children's games—another motif found throughout the artist's work.

This work is one of the more recent donations to MoCA Skopje, contributed as part of the bequest of Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska. ●

Dimo Todorovski

1910–1983, lived and worked in Skopje

Born in Thessaloniki in 1910, **Dimo Todorovski** was the first academy-trained Macedonian sculptor. Unfortunately, many of his pre-Second World War sculptures were destroyed. In addition to works taking up social themes, **Dimo Todorovski** realized numerous plaster and bronze sculptures as well as several public monuments throughout Macedonia.

The near life-size *Andante* portrays a seated male nude performing the action of playing a cello, an evocative gesture that lends a psychological depth and sense of duration. *On the Wire*, a late work, offers a stylistic

synthesis of two art historical tendencies: a traditional form in a slightly stylized realist style, and a more current hyperrealistic approach. The figure is a partially clothed dead woman who hangs, in a strangely bent position, over a piece of barbed wire, commemorating the atrocities and sufferings of war. This scene comes from the personal experience of the artist, who shaped the figure from memory.

MoCA Skopje purchased these two works with combined funds from the City of Skopje and the Republic Purchase Commission after **Dimo Todorovski's** last retrospective exhibition at the museum, in 1980/1981, shortly before his death in 1983. ●



On the Wire, 1979



Andante, 1956



Mythological Scene, n.d.

Tomo Vladimovski

1904–1971, lived and worked in Skopje

Tomo Vladimovski belongs to the first generation of modern Macedonian artists. He graduated from the art academy in Belgrade in 1935, next specializing in painting in Prague, where he had his first solo exhibition. In addition to his fine art practice, he worked as a stage designer at the Macedonian National Theatre in Skopje from 1939 until his retirement in 1966.

After the Second World War, **Tomo Vladimovski** was crucial to establishing various art institutions and also co-founded DLUM – Association of Artists of Macedonia in 1944. His impressionistic style—which from the mid-1950s became more expressive—is characterized by broad strokes and thick layers of paint.

The painting *Mythological Scene* departs from this characteristic style, and, according to the signature (in Serbian), it belongs to a series of undated works that took classical Greek themes as inspiration. Likely, this work was commissioned between 1939 and 1941.

In 2021, *Mythological Scene*, together with one similar painting, was donated to MoCA Skopje as part of the bequest of **Radmila Ugrinova-Skalovska**, complementing more representative paintings of **Tomo Vladimovski's** already in the collection. ●

Elfie Semotan

Born in 1941, lives and works in Vienna and Jennersdorf

Untitled (Museum of Contemporary Art), Skopje, 2022/2023

wallpaper / archival pigment print, 9 photographs

Untitled, Skopje, 2022/2023

wallpaper / archival pigment print, 20 photographs

Untitled (Still Life), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 2 photographs

Untitled (City Archive), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 3 photographs

Untitled (Meteorological Station), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 5 photographs

Untitled (The Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 5 photographs

Untitled (National Opera and Ballet), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 9 photographs

Untitled (Goce Delčev Student Dormitory), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 5 photographs

Untitled (Tange Railway Station), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 7 photographs

Untitled (Telecommunication Center), Skopje, 2022/2023

Archival pigment print, 7 photographs

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND STUDIO SEMOTAN

© ELFIE SEMOTAN



Elfie Semotan, *Untitled (Telecommunication Center), Skopje, 2022/2023* • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN

Elfie Semotan, *Untitled (National Opera and Ballet), Skopje, 2022/2023* • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN

Elfie Semotan, whose practice spans six decades and encompasses still lifes, landscapes, fashion editorials, and conceptual works, is perhaps best known for her commercial and fashion photography. Characteristic to her photographic approach, no matter the genre, is an elevation of the mundane aspects



Elfie Semotan, *Untitled (Goce Delčev Student Dormitory), Skopje, 2022/2023* • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN

of everyday life—be it models with ripped tights, plastic flowers and a garden hose on a Texan tree, or a messy sleeping corner in a celebrated artist's studio. All motifs show her fascination with and celebration of the unspectacular. **Elfie Semotan's** scenes are often nonchalantly framed, foregrounding mood and authenticity, breaking with traditional settings and drawing both from quotidian life and art history.

On the occasion of the exhibition **No Feeling is Final**, **Elfie Semotan** captured the unique character of the complex and multilayered city of Skopje in a newly commissioned photographic series. The artist set out to look at the urban landscape, an idiosyncratic pastiche created through the city's numerous re- and de-constructions, a result of its violent man-made and natural disasters throughout history. But **Elfie Semotan** also has a keen and kind eye for the details, materials, and textures of everyday life, revealing the poetry, sensuality, and charm that can be found within the messiness and chaos that also inhabit Skopje.

Her images portray Skopje's cultural diversity—from the Ottoman Old Bazaar, to the modernist rebuilding of the city after the 1963 earthquake, to the crude attempt to remake Skopje as a Classicist city it never was during the course of the Skopje 2014 project. Special focus is given to a series of iconic modernist buildings, such as the National Opera and Ballet, the railway station by **Kenzō Tange**, the Museum of the Republic of Macedonia by **Mimoza Nesterova-Tomić**, the iconic Telecommunication Center's main Counter Hall (which burned down in a suspicious fire in 2013), and, of course, the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje.

Elfie Semotan's sensitive documentation is an honest and authentic representation of a city with a particularly difficult and complex political and architectural past, yet also a testament to the beauty and richness that distinguish both the urban and cultural contexts of the city, as well as the extraordinary Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje. ●



Context section

It was important to us to ground the display of works from the Solidarity Collection in the story of Skopje's rebuilding. To these ends, we have woven archival material throughout a few sections. To tell the story of the 1963 earthquake,¹ an original photo album is on display, which Skopje City Council commissioned immediately afterwards and which was published in several languages. Two postcards from the collection of the City Museum of Skopje track all the buildings that were destroyed, traced in pen. We also have included TV clips from Austrian reports on the earthquake.

The rebuilding² of Skopje is shown through the original model of **Kenzō Tange's** Master Plan of the City Center,³ as well as through maps produced by the Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture in Skopje,⁴ which carried out extensive preparatory research for the plan. From the collection of models of modernist buildings by **Ana Ivanovska Deskova**, **Jovan Ivanovski**, and

¹ See p. 59 (in the booklet part "Read me later").

² See p. 60 ("Read me later").

³ See p. 62 ("Read me later").

⁴ See p. 61 ("Read me later").

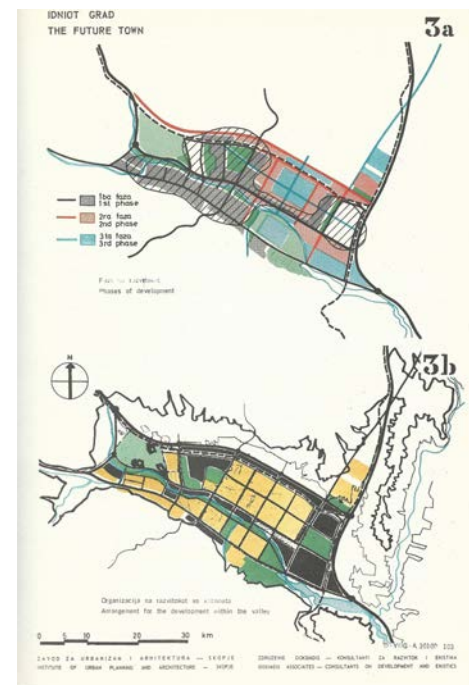
Destroyed buildings marked on a postcard, 1963 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE



Kenzō Tange, Competition phase model for the Master Plan of the City Center, 1965 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

Vladimir Deskov, we chose a few examples to represent the high quality of the city's new architecture: the Telecommunication Center; examples of the communal living structures called City Wall; the building of the Government of RN Macedonia (formerly the Central Committee of the Communist Party of SR Macedonia, Skopje); and the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje.⁵ The clips from

⁵ See p. 63 ("Read me later").



Maps from the research volumes of Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture, 1963–1965 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

Model of the Government of RN Macedonia (former Central Committee of the Communist Party of SR Macedonia, Skopje), 1970 • PHOTO: VASE AMANITO

the movie *Grad na čovekovoto prepoznavanje* [City of Human Existence] from 1971 show the city's atmosphere during the rebuilding, but also in times when the citizens were already able to enjoy the newly built infrastructure.

Much of the above-described modernist architecture was covered over by the reconstruction project Skopje 2014, which many of Skopje's citizens heavily criticized.⁶ Photos by **Maja Janevska-Ilieva** show the protests against the project, called the *Colorful Revolution*. The fate of the modernist buildings, as well as the presence of Skopje 2014 buildings, in the city today are discussed in an episode of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*,⁷ which looks into the histories but also current state of many modernist buildings throughout former Yugoslavia.

An extensive section of the exhibition is dedicated to the history of MoCA Skopje.⁸ The film *Screen for Skopje* made by **Malgorzata**



Potocka in 1988 includes contributions from various contemporary artists on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy. Moments in the museum today are captured in the photo series by **Elfie Semotan**. ●

⁶ See pp. 66–68 ("Read me later").

⁷ See p. 69 ("Read me later").

⁸ See p. 64 ("Read me later").

Getulio Alviani

1939–2018, lived and worked in Milan

The Italian artist **Getulio Alviani** is among the most important figures in the field of optical-kinetic experiments in art, known as Op art and Kinetic art. His experience working alongside architects and engineers stirred his interest in analyzing problems of functionality and form, leading him to focus on improving designs and, more generally, on structural plasticity. In 1958, **Getulio Alviani** began making several series of plastic objects using aluminum. These dynamic optical structures, which he used to study the vibration of light, comprised his first solo exhibition, held in Ljubljana in 1961.

Surface with Vibrational Layer belongs to a series of works made in the 1960s characterized by refined minimalist compositions. For this work, the artist laid 32 identical aluminum plates in four rows and eight columns on a flat surface. Each piece is positioned at a slightly different angle to produce a rhythmically even composition that, when viewed from different angles, creates dynamic light effects.

Getulio Alviani donated this work to the MoCA Skopje in 1966, at a time when he was already well known by both Yugoslav and international audiences. ●

Enrico Baj

1924–2003, lived and worked in Milan, Geneva, and Vergiate

Avant-garde artist and writer **Enrico Baj** worked in various media—from painting and printing to collage and sculpture—often combining these and using unconventional techniques. He grew up among an affluent family in Milan, where he studied law at the University of Milan and art at Brera Academy. To avoid the military draft, he left for Geneva in 1944 and returned home after the Second World War.

Enrico Baj was politically outspoken and aligned himself with anarchism. His art echoes anti-consumerist attitudes and is closely linked to the Surrealist, Dada, and CoBrA movements. Although influential, **Enrico Baj** remains lesser known than his famous collaborators, like **Piero Manzoni** and **Yves Klein**.

The painting *He Was Already There in the Mountain* depicts a massive cloud-shaped creature, consisting



Surface with Vibrational Layer, 1966



He Was Already There in the Mountain, 1965

of a simplified face and legs, that stands between two mountain peaks. The atmosphere seems childishly humorous, yet slightly nightmarish—relating to the artist's preoccupation with nuclear threat. The textured mountain recalls his *Mountains* series (1957–1959) while the monster points to the Atomic Age. The painting was donated to MoCA Skopje in 1966/1967. ●

Georg Baselitz

Born in 1938, lives and works in Salzburg

The internationally renowned artist **Georg Baselitz** is a painter, sculptor, and graphic artist. In the 1960s, he became an important figure in postwar German art with his expressive figurative paintings. His unique take on Neo-Expressionism draws from different historical sources, including Italian Mannerist art, East and Central African sculptures, Soviet-era illustration, and folk art. In 1969, **Georg Baselitz** began painting his subjects upside down as a way to challenge the function of representation and question the very medium of painting.

His etching *Eagle* depicts an upside-down eagle. This bird of prey often symbolizes power and imperial status, and the motif is found in many of the artist's works from 1971 onward. However, the artist has explicitly stated that, for him, the image has no symbolic meaning, despite how it is commonly received in postwar German society. Instead, he insists that his primary intention is to emancipate the symbol of the eagle.

In 1980, when **Georg Baselitz** was already a prominent figure in the international art world, he gifted four of his etchings to MoCA Skopje. ●

Anna-Eva Bergman

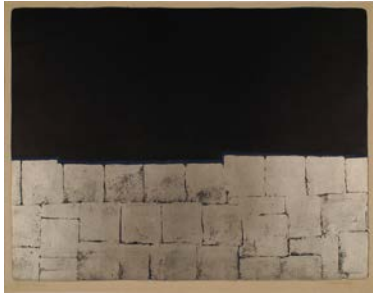
1909–1987, lived and worked in Oslo, Vienna, Menorca, Paris, and Antibes

Anna-Eva Bergman was a French painter and graphic artist of Norwegian origin known for her works featuring associative abstraction. Her paintings emerged from her surroundings and represent motifs inspired by nature, mostly forms found in her native Norway.

The color lithograph *Wall* depicts a wall structure, represented by the lower horizontal surface. The black upper part and the rhythmically arranged gray-silver blocks on the lower half are subtly divided by a dark-blue



Eagle, 1980



Wall, 1963

line. The work is exemplary of the artist's attention to the relations between rhythm, line, and light.

Together with her partner, the artist **Hans Hartung**, **Anna-Eva Bergman** was one of the first major donors to MoCA Skopje. Each artist donated dozens of works in 1965. In May 2022, the contemporary artist **Ahmet Ögüt** included *Wall* in his solo exhibition at MoCA Skopje, as part of the eponymous installation work *Jump Up!* (2022), making clear that **Anna-Eva Bergman** continues to inspire new generations of artists. ●

Maria Bonomi

Born in 1935, lives and works in São Paulo

The Italian-Brazilian artist **Maria Bonomi** is also a long-time activist and prominent scholar. The artist often works with engraving, not only to produce print works but also as a medium for experimentation in her installations and sculptures. She had her first solo exhibition in São Paulo in 1956 and later participated in the 36th Venice Biennale in 1972.

In the Yugoslav context, **Maria Bonomi's** uninterrupted participation in the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Art between 1961 and 1973 is very important. MoCA Skopje presented a solo exhibition of these and other graphic works in 2000.

The woodcut print *Conditional Freedom* features red geometric forms on a very thin, almost transparent, paper. The central structure takes the form of a big letter "X" or perhaps a construction made of steel beams. Produced after the 1964 Brazilian coup d'état and rise of the military dictatorship, the work belongs to a period when the artist was extremely engaged with social issues. While *Conditional Freedom* may metaphorize a lack of freedom, it also calls for resistance.

MoCA Skopje holds 21 graphic works by **Maria Bonomi**, most of which the artist donated after a 1966 solo exhibition in Ljubljana. ●

Alberto Burri

1915–1995, lived and worked in Rome

The Italian painter **Alberto Burri** is internationally recognized for his signature Art Informel style. His postwar paintings have been interpreted as a commentary on, or as an evocation of, the horrors of war. From the late



Conditional Freedom, 1965

1940s onward, he was particularly interested in the structure of matter, incorporating into his paintings torn remnants of soiled sacks, which he connected with threads or ropes, oftentimes with broken seams. The artist also sometimes used burned plastic materials, evoking severe wounds.

White S-64 belongs to a cycle of paintings featuring a contrasting black-and-white palette, and a burnt celloplastic on the left shows how materials respond differently to the application of heat, and evokes the dried land and experience of the desert. The artist's knowledge of medicine and chemistry was crucial to his experiments, which often transformed matter and pushed toward abstraction, representing his belief of overcoming trauma and attaining freedom.

Thanks to the involvement of the National Committee for Fine Arts in Rome and the gallerist and painter **Mario Penelope**, *White S-64* was donated by the artist to MoCA Skopje in 1966. ●

Zofia Butrymowicz

1904–1987, lived and worked in Warsaw

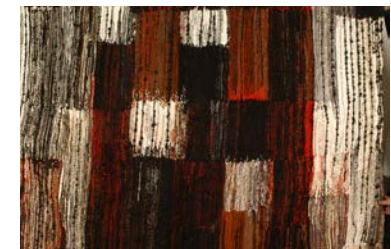
The Polish artist **Zofia Butrymowicz** gained international recognition later in her career for her innovative textile works made from wool, linen, and cotton. She graduated from Warsaw's Municipal School of Decorative Arts and Painting in 1927, but didn't become widely known until the 1960s and 1970s, after earning a diploma from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1960. In 1969, she participated in MoMA New York's first major international exhibition of contemporary textile art, entitled *Wall Hangings*, paving the way for the success of Polish textile art.

In her abstracted impressions of simple motifs like the four seasons, the night, and the phases of the sun, **Zofia Butrymowicz** often used thread she spun herself, made during textile shortages in the postwar period. *City*—one of her representative tapestries—shows an impression of a cityscape, with buildings and windows rendered in squares and rectangles made of white, black, red, orange, and brown thread.

City entered the MoCA Skopje's collection as a donation in 1966. ●



White S-64, 1964



City, 1966

Alexander Calder

1898–1976, lived and worked in New York, Roxbury, Paris, and Saché



To Skopje, 1965

The work of **Alexander Calder**, one of the most notable US-American artists of the twentieth century, transformed the medium of sculpture. His mobiles—hanging, kinetic objects that he first developed in the 1930s—broke the solidity and motionlessness of sculpture and imbued it with a sense of movement and dynamism. While **Alexander Calder** was born into a family of artists, he chose to first study mechanical engineering before pursuing an art practice. His fascination with physics, the universe, and childhood memories is detectable throughout

his body of work.

To Skopje is an expressive gouache painting dedicated to the city of Skopje, depicting blades of grass and flowers in red, yellow, blue, and black. At the bottom right, the work is inscribed in French: “to Skopje, Friendships, Sandy Calder ‘65”.

The artist, who was already widely revered at the time, donated the work in 1965. This gesture instigated donations from other artists and was therefore crucial to the success of MoCA Skopje’s collection. ●

Luis Camnitzer

Born in 1937, lives and works in Montevideo and New York

For more than six decades, **Luis Camnitzer** has worked as an artist, art educator, curator, writer, and critic. His trenchant artworks convey political and ethical stances against oppression and social injustice while criticizing authoritarianism, art education systems, and the commodification of art. His central and lasting preoccupation has been to dehierarchize professional arts roles and to merge art and learning.

Luis Camnitzer was born in Germany but left as a small child in 1939 when his family, fleeing Nazism, relocated to Uruguay. Following studies in Montevideo and Munich, the artist moved to New York in 1964, where he continues to live.

The aquatint *Landscape as an attitude* contains a reproduction of a photograph above a handwritten sentence. The horizontal close-up shows the artist in



Landscape as an attitude.

Landscape as an attitude, 1980

profile, with miniature figurines of a house, tree, and farm animals placed on his forehead and cheeks, invoking a rural landscape. Here, imagination and humor serve to communicate a personal experience of displacement: when the Uruguayan dictatorship seized power in 1973, **Camnitzer** could no longer return to his country.

The work was gifted to MoCA Skopje in 1980/1981. ●

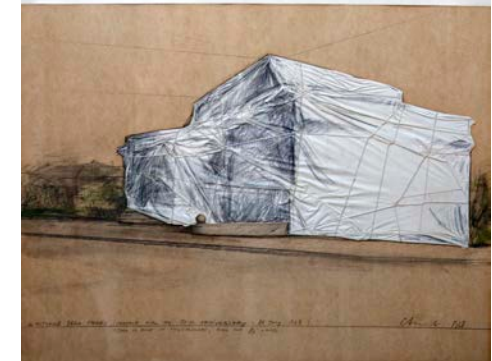
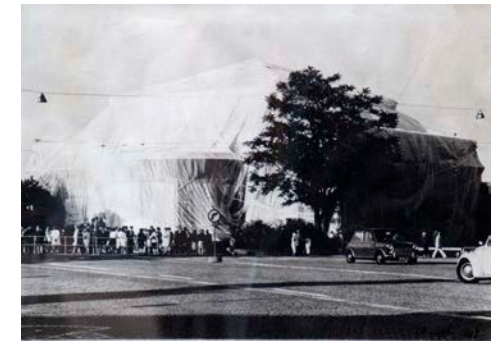
Christo & Jeanne-Claude

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff, 1935–2020, and **Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon**, 1935–2009, lived and worked in Paris (France) and New York (USA)

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and **Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon** were spouses and collaborators who shared a life, a career, and a birthday. They met in Paris in 1958 and moved to New York in 1964, where they maintained a lasting residence. Working together under the name **Christo**, the duo became renowned for their monumental wrapping projects and outdoor installations, always temporary and noncommercial. They chose their working name knowing that a singular male artist’s name would achieve more recognition; however, they later decided to retroactively author all their installation projects as **Christo and Jeanne-Claude**. The earliest artworks as well as all drawings, collages, and models remain credited to **Christo**, though.

Wrapped Kunsthalle in Bern was the artists’ first realized project of covering up an entire public building. For the institution’s fiftieth anniversary, a team hired by the artists wrapped the art gallery with more than 2,400 square meters of reinforced polyethylene and some three kilometers of nylon rope. The building was reduced to its bulkiness and essential architectural lines, causing an astonishing sight.

The artists donated the preparatory sketch and documentary photograph of the project to MoCA Skopje in 1969, which were exhibited at the newly opened museum building in 1970. ●



Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Kunsthalle*, Bern, Switzerland, 1967/68

Christo, *Kunsthalle Bern Packed* (Project for 50th Anniversary – 20 July 1968), 1968



Thorns and Sun, 1962



Birds and Constructions, 1963

Peter Clarke

1929–2014, lived and worked in Cape Town

Peter Clarke, considered one of South Africa's most important artists, worked across a broad spectrum of mediums, and was also a writer and poet. In 1947, while working at a dockyard, he began attending evening art classes at St. Philips School in Cape Town. In the mid-1950s, he found an inspirational setting in Tesselaarsdal, a little village in Caledon, where he produced a large number of works that gained international attention.

A recurrent motif in Peter Clarke's woodcuts and linocuts is the rural setting in which many Black people lived during apartheid, offering a critique of South Africa's sociopolitical history and contemporary situation.

Construction Site Fence and *Birds and Constructions* both render space two-dimensionally and feature simplified, stylized depictions of their motifs. *Thorns and Sun*, employing a red-yellow-brown palette, is divided into two parts: in the foreground we see thorny vegetation with sharp, radiating ends; above this, a white circular form—the sun—appears on the right-hand side, around which revolve several dashed lines, representing sunrays. The work is a metaphor for the difficult present and aspirations for a brighter future.

Peter Clarke participated in the Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts in 1963 and again in 1965. He donated these three featured graphic works together with three more to MoCA Skopje in May 1966. ●

Ion Grigorescu

Born in 1945, lives and works in Bucharest

Ion Grigorescu, one of the most influential and widely recognized contemporary artists in Romania, has been creating Conceptual art since the late 1960s. His practice entails photography, collage, drawing, and painting while relying heavily on time-based media—like performance and film—to produce art that is simultaneously personal and political.

This set of three black-and-white photographs with hand-drawn interventions capture the artist in natural settings, surrounded by vegetation. He is positioned centrally in each frame and shown interacting with natural elements—a rock, a branch—or simply resting

on the ground, cocooned by the surroundings. The works were donated to MoCA Skopje in August 1979.

The use of his own body is a prevalent feature of Ion Grigorescu's work. Through small actions and gestures, the artist performed resistance and expressed frustration with the oppressive political regime under which he lived. To avoid political retaliation, he worked covertly for many years and rarely showed work publicly before the fall of the communism in Romania in 1989. Around 1979, when these photographs were made, Ion Grigorescu made his works either secluded in his studio or out in the countryside—as the natural environment in these images attests. ●

Sheila Hicks

Born in 1934, lives and works in Paris and New York

Sheila Hicks is a US-American artist known for her innovative use of fiber and color in sculptures, installations, and woven works. In the 1950s, she studied painting at the Yale School of Art in Connecticut. There, Sheila Hicks found a mentor in the artist and theorist Josef Albers, whose study of color would have an abiding influence on her work. As a relentless researcher of weaving cultures and traditional textile craftsmanship, she traveled extensively and worked in Chile, Mexico, South Africa, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Europe, and the United States. In the mid-1960s, Sheila Hicks moved to Paris, where she maintains several studios.

In the spirit of transnational collaboration, MoCA Skopje opened a solo show of Sheila Hicks's artworks in 1976. After the exhibition, she donated the work *Untitled*—a blond-fiber mandala piece—to the museum. It is a simple, round installation of loosely twisted bundles of blond fibers braided together in a circular form and meeting in the center. Sheila Hicks is renowned as a pioneer of textile art, a genre that challenges Western distinctions between "fine art" and "craft", which is often relegated to the realm of "women's work". In recent years, textile art has seen a renewed prominence. ●



St. George, 1979



Untitled, 1977

Alfred Hrdlicka

1928–2009, lived and worked in Vienna



Ramon writes his last love letter and is led away to be executed, from the series *Martha Beck*, 1963

Alfred Hrdlicka was a Viennese artist best known for his political, and often controversial, sculptures and graphic works. His childhood was marked by extreme sociopolitical turmoil during the First Austrian Republic, followed by the *Anschluss* of Austria to the German Reich and the Second World War. His father was a devoted communist, prompting the young Alfred Hrdlicka to immerse himself in political issues and struggles. His art echoes his oppositional attitude toward war and fascism.

Between 1946 and 1957, the artist studied first painting, then sculpture, at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. He gained international recognition at the 1964 Venice Biennale, representing Austria. From the 1970s onward, Alfred Hrdlicka taught art at several academies in Germany and Austria.

The etching, which the artist donated to MoCA Skopje in 1965/1966, depicts the penultimate scene from the *Martha Beck* cycle, based on the story of a nurse who, obsessed with her lover, Ramon, poisoned her rivals. Upon learning about this true-crime story, the artist found it corresponded with his interest in psychological torment and extreme emotions. The work exemplifies his expressive style, focus on the human form, and concern with themes of suffering, violence, lust, and mortality. ●

David Hockney

Born in 1937, lives and works in London, Beuvron-en-Auge, and Los Angeles



Portrait, 1967

David Hockney is one of the most well-known and influential contemporary artists from Britain. His iconic images of Californian life have marked Pop art since the mid-1960s and are notable for their celebration of homosexual desire. David Hockney was born in Bradford, England, and moved to London in the late 1950s to study at the Royal College of Art. In 1964, he relocated to California, where he was charmed by Los Angeles, experiencing it as a bright place of freedom and liberalism. That same year, following the twinning of the cities of Skopje and Bradford, Hockney helped organize the exhibition *Artists from Bradford* in Skopje.

MoCA Skopje has two David Hockney works in its collection, both donated by the artist in 1967. The line

drawing *Portrait* captures a seated young man reading a book. The inscription in the bottom right reads: "Peter still reading 'Death in Venice' on the Queen Elizabeth from New York, June 1967. D.H." The image emanates a calm beauty and tenderness typical of the artist's more understated depictions of queer life.

The graphic work *Landscape*, which features simplified trees with a hint of architecture in the background, illustrates another major part of David Hockney's oeuvre. The spatial experience of landscape along with the combination of abstraction and architectural clarity are crucial aspects of his work. ●



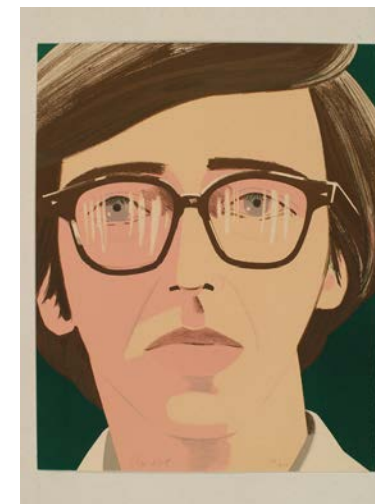
Landscape, 1966

Alex Katz

Born in 1927, lives and works in New York

The US-American painter Alex Katz is recognized for his particularly approachable style of figurative painting and use of vivid colors. He began his artistic career in the 1950s after studying at the Cooper Union art school in New York and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Throughout his more than seven-decade career, Alex Katz has continued to pursue figuration in a flat, graphic manner. His stylized depictions of people—often reminiscent of vintage twentieth-century advertisements and billboards—earned him an early association with Pop art.

The lithograph *Portrait Kenneth Koch* shows a smooth, pale, male face framed by thick brown hair, brown eyebrows, and large brown eyeglasses. The composition entirely focuses on the frontal close-up of the calmly pensive face, which gazes directly through the viewer. Although primarily known as a painter of large-format portraits and landscapes, Alex Katz also works with printmaking, sculpture, stage design, and other media. This work is a portrait of poet and playwright Kenneth Koch, for whom Alex Katz designed stage sets in the early 1960s. It was donated to MoCA Skopje in 1980/1981, soon after its creation in 1970, at a time when the artist's work was gaining public prominence. ●



Portrait Kenneth Koch, 1970

Rudolf Krivoš

1933–2020, lived and worked in Bratislava

The Slovak **Rudolf Krivoš** belongs to the generation of post-Second World War artists. He grew up in a war-torn country that later became part of the Soviet bloc. In 1956, he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava, winning an award for his diploma work.

As part of his artistic practice, **Rudolf Krivoš** investigated the potential of nontraditional techniques, such as his experiments with plaster as a base for rendering figures in relief. He also limited his painting palette to only a few dark colors.

Burden depicts two simplified figures with raised arms, meticulously painted in brown, yellow, and black tones on a gray background. Each figure carries a load of large stone blocks that covers their faces. The figures, whose bodies have been geometricized, are directly fused with their load, and together they rise from the background surface like an imposing monument. Such a motif exemplifies **Rudolf Krivoš's** sculptural sense of form.

The artist donated this work to MoCA Skopje in 1966 at the same time as dozens of artists from what was then Socialist Czechoslovakia also donated their works. ●

Sol LeWitt

1928–2007, lived and worked in New York and Spoleto

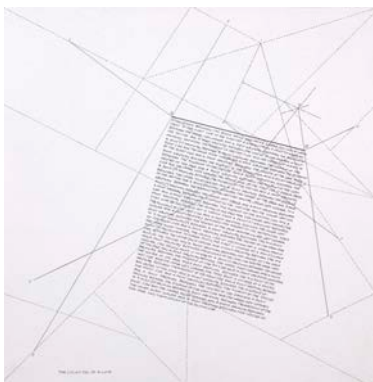
Sol LeWitt was a prolific US-American artist, an originator of Conceptual art, and an affiliate of Minimalism. In his formative writings, the artist develops the notion of Conceptual art as art where the idea is more important than its physical realization.

Sol LeWitt gained attention in the 1960s for his modular three-dimensional works—called “structures”—as well as his wall drawings. These large-scale drawings are produced collaboratively according to the artist’s detailed instructions. With his practice, the artist aimed to turn the focus away from the artwork as a pristine and commodifiable object and to instead center the immaterial idea behind it.

Seriality and the grid—key components of **Sol LeWitt's** art—are evident in the artworks he gifted to MoCA Skopje between 1981 and 1983. Three sets of etchings, two from *Lines to Specific Points* and one from *The Location of*



Burden, 1962



Lines to Specific Points (1–5) (white on black), 1975

Lines to Specific Points (1–5) (white and black on red, yellow, and blue), 1975

The Location of Lines (1–5) (black on white), 1975

Lines portfolios, are often arranged together in a grid. The works present variations in line positioning by using only the most basic elements: straight lines and primary colors. Each is accompanied by a precisely written text—prescriptions for realization on a larger scale. ●

Petar Lubarda

1907–1974, lived and worked in Belgrade

The Montenegrin painter **Petar Lubarda** studied painting in Belgrade and Paris in the interwar period, and from 1932 until his death in 1974 he lived in Belgrade. His particularly expressive figurative style—bordering on associative abstraction—earned him wide international recognition, including the International Purchase Prize at the 1953 São Paulo Biennial.

The small-format sketch *From the Camp* was made during the artist’s detainment in a German prisoner camp. It depicts three variations of the same scene, which he observed daily. While barbed wire usually defines borders and delimits movement, here **Petar Lubarda** depicts the element in an unusual way. Torn down and lying on the green and brown ground, the normally linear structure of the wire instead becomes an irregular free form, set against the blue sky—perhaps a metaphor for artist’s striving for freedom.

The artist gifted the sketch through the Fund for Reconstruction and Rebuilding of Skopje in March 1966. A few years earlier, in October 1963, **Petar Lubarda** had also donated all the works from his exhibition in Niš, later shown in Skopje, becoming a major donor to MoCA Skopje’s collection. The museum holds 40 oil paintings, two watercolors, and ten drawings spanning two and a half decades of the artist’s career. ●

Roberto Matta

1911–2002, lived and worked in Santiago, Paris, New York, and Civitavecchia

The Chilean artist **Roberto Matta** was a leading figure in the Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist art movements. He studied architecture in Santiago before moving to Paris in 1933 to work for the renowned architect **Le Corbusier**. In Paris, **Roberto Matta** also met other artists, including the Surrealists **René Magritte**, **Salvador Dalí** and **André Breton**. **Roberto Matta** moved to the United



From the Camp, 1943



Untitled, before 1981

States between 1938 and 1948, where his paintings achieved more recognition.

Often described as blending Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism, **Roberto Matta** is best known for his paintings of dreamlike landscapes containing floating fantastical figures and objects, which explore the intersection between cosmic explosion and subjective implosion.

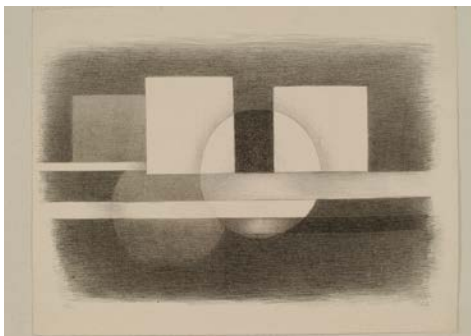
The work *Untitled* (before 1981) depicts a clash between two groups, with unarmed people on the left and armed figures on the right.

This apparent commentary on the military dictatorship in Chile is exemplary of how the artist eventually integrated social commentary into his unique fantastical style.

The artist donated *Untitled* to MoCA Skopje in July 1981. ●

Meret Oppenheim

1913–1985, lived and worked in Paris, Basel, and Bern



Monument for One Lunar Phase, 1966

Swiss artist **Meret Oppenheim** is best known for her striking Surrealist works from the 1930s, which infuse everyday objects with references to female sexuality and repressive gender norms. In 1932, she moved to Paris. Known for her uncompromising personality and self-confidence, the artist joined the antifascist Swiss collective **Gruppe 33** in reaction to the rise of Nazism.

After the war, **Meret Oppenheim** devoted herself to art conservation work and did not exhibit her works for many years. However, eventually the art scene around Kunsthalle Bern had an inspiring effect on her. In the 1960s, she began exploring new themes using a new artistic language. Her works from this period often feature motifs of clouds and celestial bodies.

In *Monument for One Lunar Phase*, which features pure geometric shapes such as circles and squares, the artist explores the intersections that define the relation between light and shadow.

In addition to being a monument to the moon, this work—which the artist donated to MoCA Skopje in 1967—is a monument to **Meret Oppenheim's** contribution to and support for the city of Skopje. ●

Joan Rabascall

Born in 1935, lives and works in Paris

Joan Rabascall is a conceptual artist focused on the critical examination of mass media and the consumerist culture it propagates. He was born in Barcelona and relocated to Paris in 1962. **Joan Rabascall's** artworks often combine found photography with images from magazines, television, and advertising to achieve ironic twists of meaning and offer social critique and political commentary.

Together with fellow artists **Antoni Miralda**, **Dorothee Selz**, and **Jaume Xifra**, **Joan Rabascall** worked in a collective inspired by the countercultural movements of the mid-twentieth century. Between 1969 and 1976, the group created a series of participatory performances and events.

Homage to Black Power is a sculptural object presenting the huge, flattened shape of a raised black fist holding delicate red flowers. As an anti-fascist white European artist, exiled to Paris from Francoist Spain, **Joan Rabascall** was expressing solidarity with the civil rights movement in the USA. Today, we might ask legitimate questions about the appropriation of this symbol by a white artist but we include it here as an image of another social and political moment in time. The first version of this piece was installed in the gardens of the American Center in Paris in 1969.

The Skopje Solidarity Collection does not include many artists of color and we have therefore also chosen to include this sculpture to bear silent witness to the lack of fair representation in the collection as a whole.

The piece was donated to MoCA Skopje in 1970/1971. ●



Homage to Black Power, 1969/1970

Bridget Riley

Born in 1931, lives and works in London, Cornwall, and the Vacluse



Untitled, 1973

Bridget Riley is an English abstract artist known for her optical style of painting. She was the first woman to win the Venice Biennale's prize for painting, in 1968.

The silkscreen print *Untitled*—a fine example of Bridget Riley's mature style—was donated to MoCA Skopje in 1980/1981. The composition consists of four horizontal stripes. Each stripe is formed from multiple shorter diagonally positioned and parallelly arranged blue lines. The diagonals of the second stripe from the top go in the opposite direction of the diagonals in the other three stripes. The blue

diagonals in the first and third stripes have a green line on the left and right edge. The edges of the lines in the second and bottom stripes are red. The relationships between these colors create a sense of movement, rhythm, and flow. The work exemplifies Bridget Riley's minimal yet playful approach to composition. Here, human perception itself functions as the artistic medium. ●

Niki de Saint Phalle

1930–2002, lived and worked in New York, Cambridge, San Diego, Deia, and Paris

Niki de Saint Phalle was a self-taught artist widely recognized for her monumental, often public, sculptures of what she called "Nanas"—voluptuous and colorful female figures, standing as expressions of feminine strength, joy, creativity, and freedom as well as the rejection of patriarchal values. She worked in sculpture, painting, illustration, performance, and film, often in collaboration with fellow artists, most notably Jean Tinguely.

Niki de Saint Phalle was born into a French aristocratic family and grew up in New York City. She started practicing art in her early 20s, after moving to France. In her art, Niki de Saint Phalle created a fantasy-like universe of personal iconography filled with recurring characters.



Dreaming Under the Cactus Tree, ca. 1980



Untitled, ca. 1980

Two lithographs, titled *Dreaming Under the Cactus Tree* and *Untitled*, donated in 1980/1981, depict desert landscapes with cacti, animals, and human figures. A small, joyful Nana appears in the background of *Untitled*; her arms and one leg extend high above her head in a fierce movement. Similar compositions featuring dancing women alongside colorful monsters, snakes, and other characters are typical of the artist's mature work. The snake is an ambivalent yet key symbol used by Niki de Saint Phalle, linked to her traumatic experience of abuse as a child. In her works, snakes simultaneously signify the creativity of life, a wild and primal force, and the dangers she saw posed by men and vices. ●

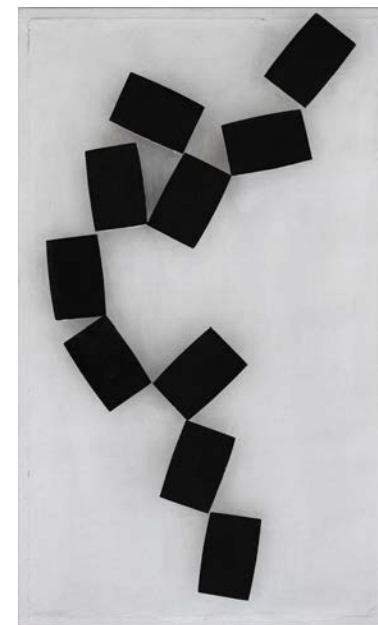
Henryk Stażewski

1894–1988, lived and worked in Warsaw

Henryk Stażewski is considered a pioneer of Polish avant-garde art of the 1920s and 1930s and one of the most important figures of twentieth-century visual art across all mediums. While he started his career with near-monochrome still lifes, he quickly moved on to pure abstraction, becoming a key representative of the Constructivist movement and a co-founder of the Geometric Abstract movement in Poland.

The artist's frequent trips to Paris brought him into contact with the Dutch modernist Piet Mondrian, and in 1929 Henryk Stażewski joined the important international group *Cercle et Carré* [Circle and Square]. In addition to Piet Mondrian, this group of Paris-based abstract artists included Jean Arp, Wassily Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, and Fernand Léger, and was later absorbed into the *Abstraction-Création* group.

Composition, donated by the artist in 1965, is a painting-object typical of Henryk Stażewski's early to mid-1960s practice. With his series of monochrome relief structures, the artist aimed to create artworks completely freed from description, striving for a universal plastic expression. On a white background, he constructs an abstract composition with ten rectangles. The black shapes are rhythmically arranged to create a sense of dynamism. ●



Composition, 1964

Victor Vasarely

1909–1997, lived and worked in Budapest and Paris

Victor Vasarely, a French artist of Hungarian origin, is recognized as one of the pioneers of Op art. Starting from observations of nature, he experimented in the field of optical-kinetic phenomena through a process of analysis and synthesis. In his works, he abandons the last traces of figuration to build a “new world” of pure geometric abstraction. Victor Vasarely also advocated for the democratization of art, challenging the idea of originality through creating multiples of artworks.

The oil-on-canvas painting *IOL* uses two yellows combined with black, which is representative of his reduced palette of the late 1950s. Capturing the dynamic unity of basic geometrical forms, multiplied and rotated in the frame, the flat canvas is imbued with a feeling of spaciousness. The title of the work refers to the artist’s understanding of art as an “intraocular lens”, or artificial lens for the human eye.

Victor Vasarely donated this work to MoCA Skopje in December 1964, becoming one of the first world-famous artists to do so. *IOL* appears on the cover of the first catalogue documenting the collection, published on the occasion of the new museum building’s opening on November 13, 1970. ●



IOL, 1958





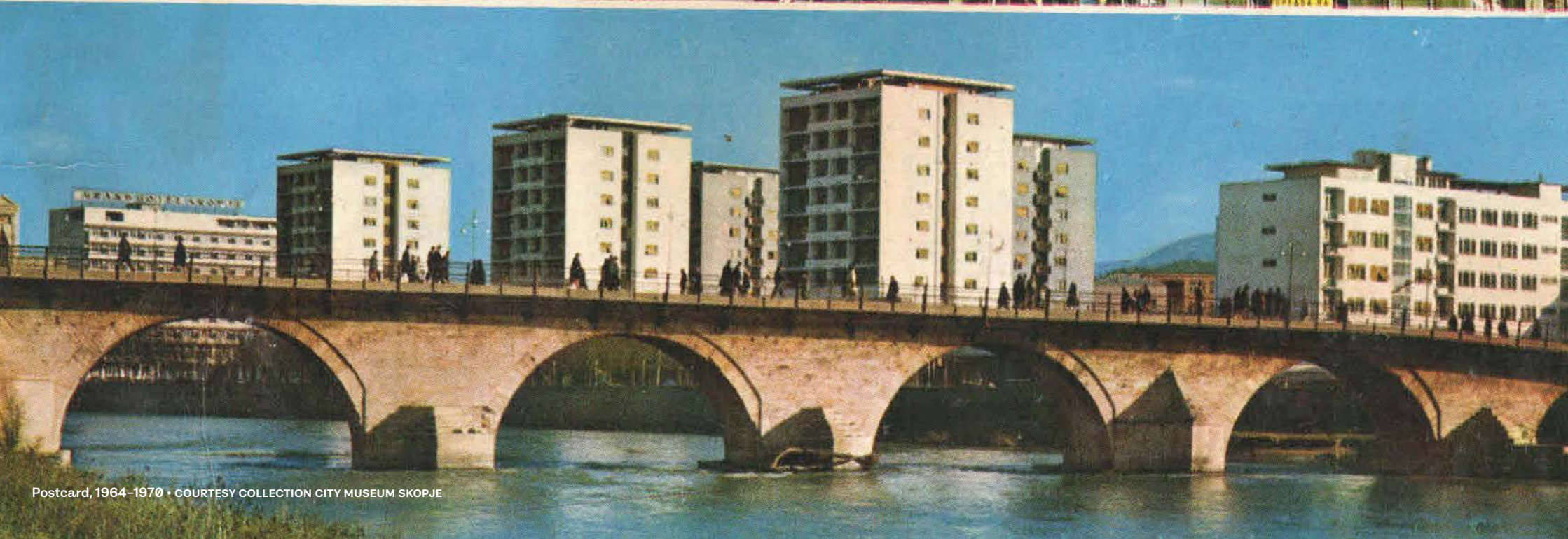
**No
Feeling
Is Final**

**The Skopje
Solidarity
Collection**



Building of MoCA Skopje interior, 1969/1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

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Postcard, 1964-1970 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE



Building of MoCA Skopje interior (first gallery space), 1969/1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

The Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje (MoCA Skopje) emerged from a great act of solidarity among the international community. On July 26, 1963, the city of Skopje suffered a devastating earthquake that caused immense loss and destruction. Thanks to the rapid global proliferation of a new phenomenon—TV news—the story of this loss of thousands lives and homes was broadcast throughout the world. The shocking images of human helplessness against the destructive forces of nature led to an unprecedented and powerful response from around the globe.

Sixty years ago, the United Nations appealed for donations to aid Skopje in its recovery. The specific impetus for the highly ambitious project of a new Museum of Contemporary Art was the plethora of valuable gifts sent from the most celebrated international artists of the day. As a result, the museum's international art collection, developed rather spontaneously, possesses distinctive features. A wide array of important figures from the history of art, hailing from Belarus to South Africa, from Chile to New Zealand, have donated their works to this collection in an act of solidarity. Geographically, the collection covers a wide area, representing artists from the West, the East, and the Global South.

The collection was created in contradiction to the need for capital for its formation, and in contradiction to the market relations operating in the sphere of culture, since the authors themselves were the donors. MoCA Skopje's collection shows that we can and must think about global social relations in a different way, by making space for solidarity—a mode of being that has been declared a twenty-first-century value by the UN.

Practicing solidarity means belonging to a community and sharing in its history of losses. Consequently, we felt that we should incorporate honesty and openness into this exhibition project, as a way to once again build an intimate and cooperative relationship with artists, and to reintroduce solidarity as a social value, harking back to and taking inspiration from its success in those pioneering years.

In that sense, we dedicate ourselves to continually rereading and reinterpreting the notion of solidarity in the contemporary social context and through the works of contemporary artists. These are the very same works that we have brought to Vienna as a gesture of friendship and in the spirit of fostering new connections with our colleagues at Kunsthal Wien.

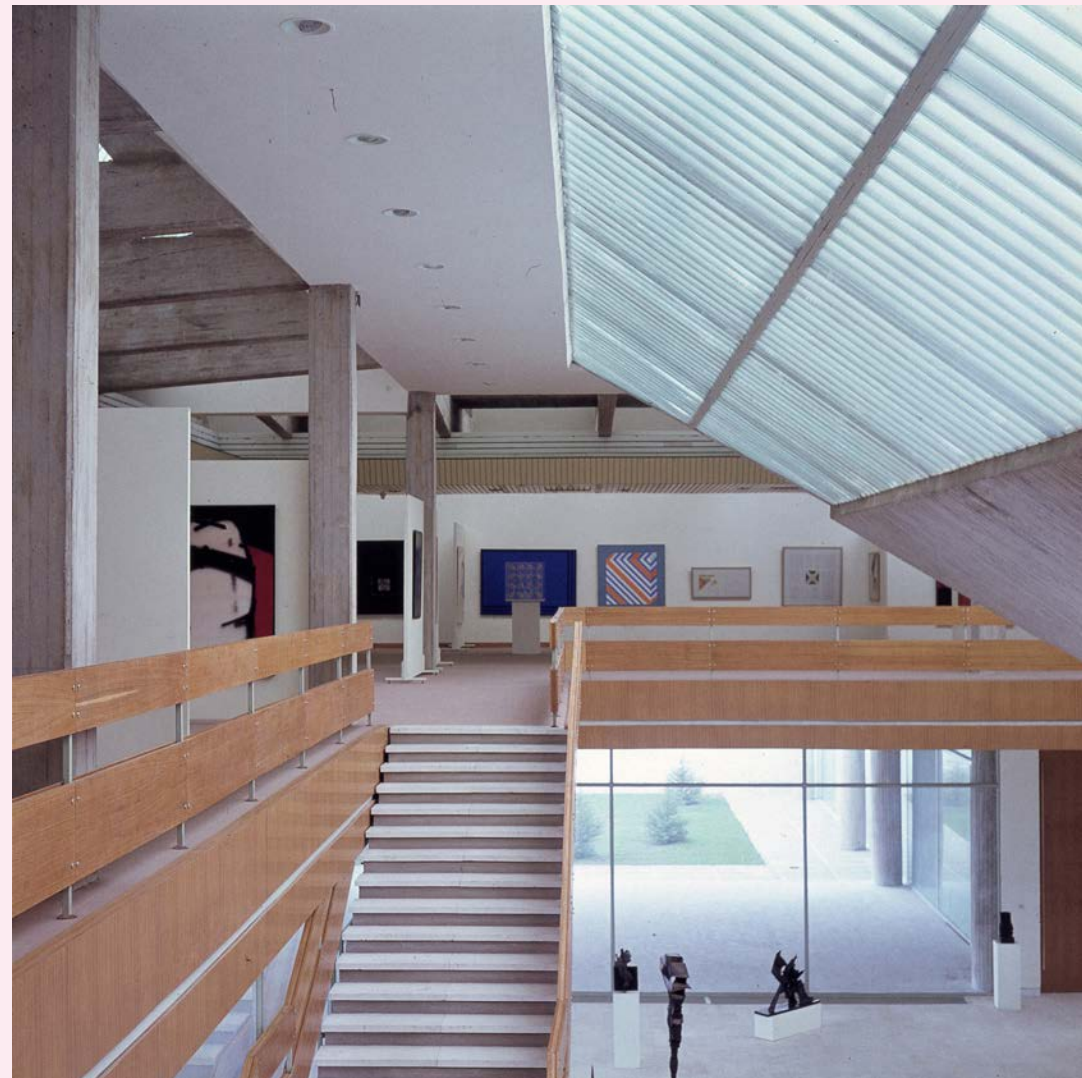
And we want to thank them all for their great and invaluable support. ●

— Mira Gakjina • DIRECTOR MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SKOPJE

The exhibition **No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection** is possible only because of an action of international solidarity that followed a terrible disaster. As Europeans struggle today against a background of war in Ukraine and devastation from recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in February 2023, it is perhaps particularly timely to look at previous responses to the aftermath of destruction. In 1963, the major earthquake in Skopje prompted a broad wave of support, coming from everyone from local citizens to national governments to international artists. The artists, including many Austrians, donated works to help the city compile a significant collection of progressive art as it rebuilt itself from out of the rubble. Parts of that collection and its subsequent acquisitions are now on display in Vienna, at a time when international solidarity is again an issue in the media and a source of debate between political camps. For us—the curators of this exhibition, who come from the Balkans—Skopje offers a lasting example of strength, resilience, and recovery that can continue to inspire the global community. We are convinced that by looking at the North Macedonian capital today and experiencing its Solidarity Collection in new surroundings, we might begin a new debate about how artists and the cultural world at large might come together to respond to disasters today.

In the two years of preparation for the exhibition, we were privileged to spend time in Skopje and to get to know the city through many encounters and discussions with colleagues from the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje (MoCA Skopje) and the City Museum of Skopje, as well as artists, activists, and many other cultural workers. This project simply would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support and dynamic leadership of MoCA Skopje's creative team. They generously introduced us to both the official and unofficial histories of the works in the collection and worked relentlessly with our team to realize the exhibition during these difficult pandemic years. We are immensely thankful for their trust in us and their willingness to explore the collection anew, together. We are equally impressed by the inspiring new ways in which MoCA Skopje's team is continuing the remarkable history of the museum and reviving the cultural solidarity that is at the heart of the collection.

We are also thrilled that the National Gallery Prague (NGP) has invited the exhibition to tour there in the spring of 2024. This iteration will be undertaken in close collaboration with the NGP's curator, **Rado Ištok**. Prague is an especially significant place to show the Solidarity Collection, since Czechoslovakia gifted more than



Installation view of the first permanent exhibition of MoCA Skopje, 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

250 works, including some remarkable early twentieth-century works that the NGP donated during a period of turmoil in its own national history, the Prague Spring. We think it is precious that the Czech public will be reminded of this history and have the chance to discover this unique collection, before the exhibition travels a final time to the galleries of MoCA Skopje on its return to its home city at the end of 2024. There, the citizens of Skopje will be able to view their collection through the eyes of contemporary artists and their interventions in the final iteration of the show. ●

No Feeling Is Final.

The Skopje Solidarity Collection

WHW

Vienna, Skopje, and Zagreb— Then and Now

In the annals of Viennese imperialism and contemporary Austrian politics, Skopje does not appear all that often. Therefore, to hear that an art exhibition is coming from Skopje to Vienna might seem a little unexpected, while hopefully also raising some curiosity about the culture of a nearby neighbor. Although a largely unknown history, the Viennese have in fact played an important role in the history of the Macedonian capital. In 1689, the noble-born Austrian General Enea Silvio Piccolomini was rampaging through the territory of today's North Macedonia when he came across an attractive and dynamic Ottoman city called, depending on the first language of its citizens, Üsküb, Shküp, or Skopje. This multinational urban center of about 60,000 people was one of the largest cities in the Balkans at the time. Fearing that the Imperial Army could not hold the city, Piccolomini determined he should burn it to the ground, reducing Skopje, in just three days, to little more than charred remains. The success of his action can be measured by the fact that the city's population was estimated at only 10,000 in 1836, almost 150 years later. It would take two centuries, many wars, and an earthquake to bring the two cities together again. With the exhibition **No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection**, we hope to renew Austrian interest in Skopje, perhaps triggering a modern-day assessment similar to Piccolomini's historical observations of the city, which noted Skopje's admirable qualities—its culture, art, and architecture—before he burned it all down.

While growing up in Yugoslavia, Skopje was personally familiar and close to us. It featured in the histories that were part of our schooldays and textbooks. Skopje was always mentioned in terms that echoed with the sadness of the 1963 earthquake and the loss of life it caused, but equally with pride in the joint efforts that the international community

mounted to achieve the city's successful rebuilding. Despite this unique status among the republics' capitals, it took adulthood and an interest in arts and culture for us to actually visit the city—and even then only a few years ago. When we arrived, we were warned not to expect to see much of the famous modernist rebuilding. A lot of that architecture was covered over during a corrupt nationalist reconstruction project called Skopje 2014: Neoclassical facades were added to many buildings, and public spaces became stuffed with oversized patriarchal figures from a fictional Macedonian past.¹ Despite this, we were able to look more closely to sense—beyond this strange film set—what Skopje once was, or perhaps could have been. While considered a beacon of post-1945 architectural thinking, Skopje nevertheless has that feeling of “unfinished modernization”, as proposed by a research project looking at architecture and urban planning in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states.² Many such urban developments in Yugoslavia were conceptually ambitious and aimed to promote social well-being; however, they were realized with a blend of unrealistic hope and pragmatism that often stopped short of actualizing their modernist visions. The task in Skopje was, given the earthquake damage, particularly onerous for the Yugoslav state, and the reconstruction slowed down after 1980, first due to the economic and technical limitations of the socialist system, and then under the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s.

¹ You can find further information on the Skopje 2014 project beginning on page 66. The complexity of Skopje 2014's ideology has inspired its exploration through many artistic and curatorial projects.

² The collaborative project *Unfinished Modernisations – Between Utopia and Pragmatism* was curated by Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, with support from Matevž Čelik, Antun Sevšek, and Simona Vidmar. An extensive book on the project was published in 2012 by the Association of Croatian Architects.

We shared our trips to Skopje with Viennese photographer **Elfie Semotan**,³ and together we looked through the various layers of the city and the life of its buildings. One of the many reasons we invited **Semotan** to join us was her ability to reflect the strength and vividness of Skopje for Viennese audiences through her unique form of photographic storytelling. We were not disappointed. Her precise and sensitive perspective both introduces the city and focuses on particularly remarkable modernist buildings. Her photographs weave through the exhibition from beginning to end, forming a link that grounds the exhibition in Skopje at every turn.

The core of the exhibition is the Solidarity Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje (MoCA Skopje), donated after the 1963 earthquake. Unlike most modernist art collections based on private tastes or national representation, this collection emerged from the history of the city and the ambition to rebuild it for a new, socialist society. That modern art was so powerfully integrated into the new city plan is a mark of the progressiveness of Yugoslav cultural policy at the time, and it allows us to more clearly understand the political function of modern art from today's perspective. Therefore, the exhibition—though it includes many well-known names—is not presented as a retelling of the familiar story of modern art. Nor is it meant to stand as evidence of the superiority of a free art market or Western liberalism. Rather, the exhibition illustrates an expression of international solidarity through the means of art. How this sociopolitical background affects potential readings of individual works is what unfolds throughout the exhibition—first as reactions from the invited artists, and later as the exhibition's visitors respond to what they see and encounter.

³ More information on Semotan's series can be found on pages 42/43 (in the booklet part "Use me in the exhibition"). Read about the artist's experience of visiting Skopje on pages 44/45.

A City Dying on Its Feet

The 6.1 magnitude earthquake that changed the history of Skopje hit at 5:17 in the morning on July 26, 1963. In the seconds that followed, it destroyed 80 percent of the city. Over 16,000 homes collapsed, and many more were damaged. There were over 1,000 dead and more than 150,000 people made homeless in a city of 200,000 inhabitants. Word of the disaster quickly spread throughout Yugoslavia and then far beyond. Television—by now more common in private homes—had an unexpected impact on the initial spread of the shocking news and magnified the response to it. But the event was also extensively documented through the written word and photographs, and many books and albums were published—some still displayed with pride on antique bookstands around the city.

One of the most prominent journalistic voices was **Jovan Popovski**, who first reported the news in the Belgrade daily *Politika*, just a couple of hours after the earthquake hit.

It was a hot morning in July, Friday. One of those fine, sunny days when people get up early to go to work. The town had a population of 200,000 at the time, but not everyone was in town that morning. Lots of children and their families were vacationing on the coast and in the mountains. At 5:17 am, after an extremely humid night, the earth underneath Skopje suddenly began trembling violently, and a terrible roar bellowed forth. The earthquake lasted only about a dozen seconds, but that was enough to wreak havoc. Buildings collapsed like houses of cards, while others swayed like trees in a strong wind, their floors, roofs, corners, doorways dropping off. [...] The city died in just a dozen seconds and it died on its feet!⁴

⁴ One of Popovski's books is a touching monograph published on the twentieth anniversary of the earthquake, called *Skopje 63 83*. It includes his reportage in the days following



Postcard, 1911–1913 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

“The town of Skoplje is, so to speak, as large as Prague, but without walls and moats, and it is well supplied with food. The few people left in town pass down the streets pale, full of fear and horror ... Before we came, there were 60,000 inhabitants. I decided, although not easily, to turn the town into ashes. I was sorry about the buildings which are such as I have not seen in this war. The mosques, made of the finest marble and porphyry, with thousands of lights, are decorated with glided Korans, and they would catch one's eye even in Rome; the fine old buildings, the gardens and places of entertainment to suit the barbarians' taste, the large stocks of food—I had to deliver all of that to the flames. I set out to complete this job so as not to leave the enemy anything he could preserve, so as to sow fear among the barbarian people and so as to make my lord's weapon strike fear in even the most remote regions.

“People with torches were posted at every corner in town. At the given signal—three roars of the canon—the flames exploded. On the twenty-sixth of October, the smoke screened the Sun. The next day was the same. We just stood on a high hill and, to the sound of military instruments, watched the fire devour this lovely place, truly without sadness or sorrow, as my thoughts turned to Vienna, whose outskirts had had to suffer the same fate.”

A letter written by Austrian General Enea Silvio Piccolomini to Emperor Leopold I in 1689 after setting the city of Skopje aflame. The official reason was to prevent an outbreak of cholera, but even at the time it was considered an act of retaliation for the Siege of Vienna, carried out by the Ottoman Empire in 1683.

Quoted in Jovan Popovski, *Skopje 63 83* (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga; Beograd: OOUR Izdavačko publicistička delatnost, 1983), 51.



Postcard, 1964–1970 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

Popovski recorded firsthand accounts from people who had lost everything as he monitored the intensive efforts to find people buried under the ruins in those first critical days. His reports also describe the changed sound of the city on the first night—the silence broken only by crying and the noise of machines digging through the ruins.

The international support and solidarity that quickly followed was rooted in the political position of socialist Yugoslavia, between East and West.⁵ The United Nations soon took

over the coordination of the city's rebuilding, based on the vision of Kenzō Tange, the renowned Japanese architect. Tange was one of the initiators of the Metabolism movement in architecture, which focused on modular structures that could be adapted over time, like the metabolism of a living organism. Tange's design was selected through a UN-initiated bidding contest, sharing the first prize with two Croatian colleagues.⁶ The exhibition's context section gathers archival materials to provide a background for understanding the roots of the MoCA Skopje collection, and we are especially pleased that we were able to borrow Tange's model of the Master Plan of the City Center, on loan from the City Museum of Skopje. This model stands

⁶ More information on the international competition for Skopje's new Master Plan and Tange's winning proposal can be found on page 62.

the earthquake, a proud history of Skopje, and the story of the city's reconstruction. The book was jointly published in 1983 by Partizanska knjiga Ljubljana and OOUR Izdavačko publicistička delatnost Beograd.

⁵ See Ljubica Spaskovska's detailed analysis of the geopolitical context of Skopje's reconstruction, starting on page 46.

alongside a variety of maps from the Institute for Town Planning and Reconstruction Skopje, which demonstrate the research and analysis done locally in rethinking what the new city could be. To highlight the quality of the structures actually built, we loaned models from a Skopje-based architectural team consisting of Jovan Ivanovski, Ana Ivanovska Deskova, and Vladimir Deskov.⁷ Among these completed buildings, a particular ambition for Skopje's rebuilding was to establish a new contemporary art museum—the building that would later become MoCA Skopje.

A Museum with Solidarity in Its Foundations

The idea of initiating a museum of contemporary art happened very early on in the planning process. The first letters asking artists to donate artworks were sent out weeks after the earthquake. Already in October 1963, just a few months later, an exhibition opened featuring more than 100 donated works. That same month, the UN-affiliated International Association of Art shared the call for donations worldwide. In early 1964, the museum was officially established and art historian Boris Petkovski had come on board as its first director. Petkovski was very active in pursuing further donations, personally contacting and traveling to meet with artists. In his memoirs, he describes the reasons for establishing the museum: "The desire is to create a museum of contemporary art, as a monument to the great solidarity of artists from all over the world; but also as an active actor in all new artistic aspirations and as a museum that rises above all divisions: aesthetic, political, religious and racial."⁸ This exhibition is an opportunity to judge, nearly 60 years later,

⁷ More information on the completed buildings and the remarkable model collection of Ivanovski, Ivanovska Deskova, and Deskov can be found on page 63 of this booklet.

⁸ Dr. Boris Petkovski, *Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje, 1964–1976* (Skopje: Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje, 2001), 58.

how well those ambitions have been fulfilled, particularly regarding MoCA Skopje's rare capacity to bring East and West together. Indeed, the Solidarity Collection itself—with donations from countries spanning all the various political alliances—is evidence of how, in certain circumstances, a politically divided world could act together. We feel in its internationalism, eclecticism, and focus on individual works, the collection does indeed allow art to rise above the political, national, ethnic, and aesthetic divisions that were so heightened during the Cold War, and that continue to determine much of the value attributed to art to this day.

In 1965, the Polish Aid for Skopje Program was devised, with Poland in general very invested in helping Skopje through sharing its own experience of rebuilding after the Second World War. MoCA Skopje's permanent home was chosen as one of the buildings to be financed by Poland's program. The winning proposal came from a well-known group of three Polish architects: Wacław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński, and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki, known collectively as the Tygrysy [Tigers]. The new building opened in November 1970, with a permanent collection of over 2,000 artworks by over 1,000 artists from 40 countries. Among them are the Austrian artists Robert Doxat, Emmy Hiesleitner-Singer, Adi Holzer, and Alfred Hrdlicka. One of the most famous rejected proposals for the building was by another Polish architect, Oskar Hansen, who based the design on his "Open Form" theory: it imagines a transformable exhibition space, with hexagonal elements on hydraulic lifts. Hansen's proposal still resonates today for its radical use of space and the way the museum galleries would sink underground when not in use.

As one of Elfie Semotan's captivating photographs shows, the walk to the top of Kale Hill—the location selected for the museum—is an impressive one. The path wends its way past a historical fortress, which was a military

headquarters in Roman and Ottoman times, and through modest residential streets, heading up and away from the rush of the city. On one's way up, it's hard not to think about all the optimism and solidarity that the museum contained in its foundations. Seeing it emerge as you crest the hill makes it easier to understand how the building was able to both represent a new horizon and embody the already realized achievements of international solidarity. Equally, it is hard not to see aspects of that vision that remain unfulfilled today.

The exhibition's title—**No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection**—is strongly connected to this spatial and conceptual encounter with the museum and its collection. The first part comes from a Rainer Maria Rilke poem: the line "No feeling is final" emphasizes the dynamics of emotions and their relation to time and context.⁹ With the exhibition, we aim to evoke the hope that feelings such as solidarity can be renewed and empowered even after a long time. The title also provokes a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty, as well as a question of what solidarity means in our contemporary world. Art accesses feeling more effectively than many other phenomena, and in pointing to the ever-changing nature and mutable intensity of artworks, we hope the title emboldens visitors to approach both known and unknown artists with a fresh eye.

Artists with Artists

To emphasize the mutability of art, we invited seven contemporary artists to respond to the city and its collection. We have already mentioned Elfie Semotan (Vienna) and her captivating images of Skopje. She is joined

⁹ We ran into this quote from a Rilke poem from the cycle *The Book of Hours* (1905) on a poetry account on Instagram. It was interesting to see how many more likes it received compared to all the other posts. We find it can also be read as an anchor for many of the difficult feelings we are facing while living in the slow collapse of the capitalist-extractive system and its uncertain consequences.

by artists Brook Andrew (Melbourne), Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska (Skopje), Siniša Ilić (Belgrade), Iman Issa (Berlin), and Gülsün Karamustafa (Istanbul). We invited each to select works from the collection to put on display and encouraged the artists to add their own contemporary works to the mix, bringing their vision of Skopje's Solidarity Collection into intimate relation with their respective artistic practices. We envisioned this invitation as a potential to create new alignments with the values of solidarity that the original donations expressed, but we left the artists free to interpret the history and content of the collection for themselves.¹⁰

What all the artists have in common is a particular approach to rereading and reworking histories of art and society. Brook Andrew's practice often engages with colonial archives and collections, specifically addressing historical blind spots in relation to Indigenous cultures. Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska have, for many years, been pursuing a speculative reenactment of Oskar Hansen's unrealized "Open Form" idiom and its particular use in his proposal for the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje. Siniša Ilić's work is influenced by performance environment, linking our current disruptive and uncertain times to echoes of historical moments and their later representations, sometimes including elements from museum collections in his installations. Iman Issa's practice often questions norms within art history and deconstructs the established way that the white Western gaze understands artworks, also questioning institutional and curatorial roles in creating this reading. Gülsün Karamustafa departs from personal and historical narratives around her hometown of Istanbul and its dense history as, previously, Byzantium and Constantinople. She draws

¹⁰ More information on the invited artists can be found on pages 8/9, 16/17, 20/21, 28/29, 34/35, 42/43 (in the booklet part "Use me in the exhibition"). Their own thoughts on the process begin on page 32.

"Radio Skopje, frequency 370.8. You are listening to the news.

"Since yesterday, in the sky above Skopje, we watch airplanes from everywhere coming to help the badly damaged city. Together with military planes and helicopters that bring medical supplies and transport the wounded, day and night planes deliver medical supplies, blood plasma, surgical teams. Across our country, in villages and towns, and throughout the whole world, unselfish actions have been launched to help the people of Skopje.

"Among the first to join were the President of France, General Charles de Gaulle, and Pope Paul VI. [US] President Kennedy ordered units in West Germany to move towards Skopje. The President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev, sent a special military engineering unit to Skopje. Here in Skopje, Soviet and American military units combine their efforts in their first encounter since the banks of the Elbe river at the end of World War II.

"Aid comes from the International Red Cross, Chinese Red Cross, Turkish Red Crescent, the Greek and Albanian governments. Bulgarian planes; Soviet Ilyushins; American Boeings land. Shipments from Italy, Czechoslovakia, Norway, both Germanies and Denmark are unloaded. Planes fly from France, Sweden, India, Morocco, Poland and Belgium, Great Britain, Ghana and Burma. Deliveries come by road and rail from our country, Austria, Romania, Hungary. Across all five continents help for Skopje constantly arrives.

"Today, Skopje is an example of the brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav people and a manifestation of solidarity and humanism between all peoples of the world."



Elfie Semotan, *Untitled (Museum of Contemporary Art)*, Skopje, 2022/2023 • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN

on times of political and aesthetic conflict to reveal the erasures and ellipses hidden within them. We also asked the writer **Barbi Marković** (Vienna)—known for her sharp mix of fiction and social reality—to write a travelogue of her experience of encountering Skopje’s complex and layered histories. You can find her contribution in this booklet (p. 22) and experience Skopje, the museum, and its stories through her eyes, linked to her memories of a family trip to the city.

Many of the contributing artists were interested in engaging with lesser-known artists and works in the collection, especially those from Macedonia and Yugoslavia. We also wanted to show some of the collection’s more familiar and classically established modern artists in Vienna, as a way to highlight the wide scope of works that arrived to Skopje in response to the call for donations. Therefore, as curators of the exhibition, we have spread such works from the collection throughout the show, in and among the contextual materials that present

the story of the city and its rebuilding. Through the development of this curatorial framing, we had the opportunity to engage in an inspiring dialogue with the architect **Gerhard Flora**, who created a simple and evocative exhibition design using common prefabricated building materials. This choice helps to recreate some of the city’s atmosphere while also stressing how much both Skopje and the life of this collection still feel like being in the midst of a process of change and construction.

Rewriting Histories

One of the intentions of this exhibition is to shift perspective on what has become a well-rehearsed history of modern art in Western capitals, including Vienna. The Solidarity Collection includes many artworks by predominantly white and male figures who will be recognizable to an art-loving Viennese public. These include figures such as **Pierre Alechinsky, Alexander Calder, Georg Baselitz, David Hockney, Jasper Johns, Alex Katz, Sol LeWitt** and **Pablo Picasso** as well as **Christo**

& **Jeanne-Claude, Meret Oppenheim, Bridget Riley, and Niki de Saint Phalle**. In more recent times, modern artists from the East and South who contributed some of the original donations have started to gain more attention, such as **Ion Grigorescu, Wifredo Lam, and Henryk Stażewski**—all of whom, at the time of the collection’s building, were invisible to the old Western art canon. The collection also goes beyond the established canon of modernism and incorporates often fascinating works by artists who hail from the former

Eastern bloc, including Macedonia, as well as from the Global South, such as **Maria Bonomi, Luis Camnitzer, Roberto Matta, and Jesús Rafael Soto**. All this is illustrative of the fact that MoCA Skopje’s collection has a unique provenance. It was acquired neither to represent an art historical canon nor to focus on a particular geography. It does not concentrate on a medium, nor has it been shaped by an acquisitions committee or the vision of an artistic director. The backbone of the collection escapes museological categorizations



Setting up the first permanent exhibition in MoCA Skopje. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Ljubica Damjanovska, Sonja Abadziewa, Nevenka Lazeska, 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE



Opening night
of MoCA Skopje,
13/11 1970 •
COURTESY MOCA
SKOPJE. PHOTO: K.
GEORGIEVSKI

and modernist narratives, and it could be said to have formed out of the strength of the gesture of solidarity alone. The uniqueness of the collection is what prompted us to go back to its roots and approach it as a “true artists’ collection”, including giving a central role to contemporary artists in creating the displays. We believe this approach opens up the collection to new questions about the past and creates closer dialogues with the present.

In particular, there are three questions the exhibition seeks to address. The first circles around the legacy of the old Cold War divide that was so keenly felt in Vienna. The collection represents one of the earliest meetings of modern art as it was separately defined in the East and in the West—an in-between condition reflective of the political position of Yugoslavia itself. While crossing the twentieth-century ideological divide is a little more common in major European museums today, it remains quite rare. Can we perceive, through the fog of history, what such a collection as Skopje’s might have meant at the time, including as a potential model for what museums and their collections could have looked like?

Secondly, given their origin, the works in this collection represent a rather different way of thinking about art and cultural value. They are not treasures donated by wealthy patrons or purchases by a state seeking to compete on the international cultural stage. Instead, they emerged from an initiative led by artists and cultural workers who felt an urge to show they cared for Skopje, and who felt keen empathy for the catastrophe it had suffered. The question the exhibition asks here is whether that idea of solidarity survives in some way in the works themselves or in the story of the collection and its retelling. Perhaps most crucially for today, we ask: Does this type of solidarity still exist in the art world and, if not, is there any desire or need to revive it?

Finally, the exhibition is grounded in both Skopje’s history and its contemporary reality. Whereas modern art exhibitions are often presented in an anonymous, universalist “white cube” gallery setting, this exhibition aims to connect the artworks from the collection to the place where they are housed and cared for. Therefore, the history of the city of Skopje, the 1963 earthquake, and the rebuilding, but also Skopje 2014, are part of the exhibition’s story. The incomplete attempts to present the



Installation view, first permanent exhibition of MoCA Skopje, 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

urban narrative of Skopje point to the role of architecture, art, and the urban environment in shaping citizenship and identity. In doing so, the exhibition might be an opportunity for the local Viennese public to reflect on the way the much more definitive cultural identity of post-1945 Vienna limits how this

city relates to contemporary society. However, **No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection** remains, above all, an invitation to feel and reimagine solidarity with neighbors at a time when instability across Europe is tangibly present. ●

Back, back to positive things

A reportage

Barbi Marković

When we started school in Belgrade in 1987, one of the most popular jokes was to ask: "Did you cry when Tito died?" Everyone had seen the footage on TV: when Tito died, millions of people felt real grief or felt at least infected by some human emotion. But seven years had passed since then, and since Yugoslavia was just about to disintegrate, this question had political significance for the adults, but for us, cynical schoolchildren who were born in the year of Tito's death, the very same question meant simply whether we were born before or after the date of his death—as babies, we would have totally cried.

Hello from the present 2022. My name is Barbi Marković and I was invited to write about the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje on request of the Kunsthalle Wien. In particular I am supposed to write about this act of solidarity that is rare in the world anyway and especially in the art scene. I am flying to Skopje for this purpose. I am excited about the assignment and I listen to Macedonian songs on the plane. Actually, I try to memorize the lyrics of "Nazad, nazad, Kalino mome" [Back, back, Kalina girl]. This song is creepy and I know a few dark Macedonian songs, but this song could be turned straight into a movie. In the song a man says: Back, back, Kalina girl, don't you come for me. There are high mountains near us, you can't get over them. She says, I will turn into a hawk and fly over the mountain, come to you and be yours forever. He replies: Don't come and get me, there is a deep river near us, you won't get across it. She says: I will turn into a barbel and swim to the other bank, come to you and be yours forever. And yet he says: Back, back, Kalina girl, don't come for me, there is a beautiful woman and two little children here. And she says: I will turn into the black plague and come anyway, I will kill your wife and look after your children, forever I will be yours.

In July 1963, it was the summer slump's big time, and the tensions between Russia and the USA were not really the main topic on

the news. Many people thought back then that Yugoslavia was totally okay. The TV moderator wished the citizens all the best and goodbye until tomorrow and expected another similar summer's day. Instead, a strong earthquake hit in the morning and knocked the city down. About 1,000 people died and thousands more were injured. Around 150,000 had lost their flats and houses. Skopje was gone. In other parts of the world, people were sitting at home watching TV. They were eating popcorn. Suddenly they realized that such things could happen to them too, anytime, and this idea scared them. They stopped eating their popcorn and put down their bowl for a moment. They saw how the disaster had come out of nowhere and how the people who were affected by the tragedy were not to blame at all. In the days that followed the TV audience saw Khrushchev and Tito getting off the plane. First Khrushchev, who was walking in a funny way. Khrushchev took a few steps and turned around to see if Tito was coming too. Tito jumped over the last stair with ease and then Tito and Khrushchev walked together to shake hands with the members of the reception committee.

The people watched on TV how the fancy presidential limousines were driving through the devastated city. On one side there were the fresh ruins, on the other side the people, clapping and screaming. Many people around the world saw on TV what the two heads of state got to see in real life through their sunglasses: something terrible. Khrushchev allegedly kept repeating: terrible, terrible! But the TV spectators also saw something else: Thousands of people with their sleeves rolled up, passing stones to each other, clearing ruins, looking for survivors. They saw how people "were doing something", as opposed to them eating their popcorn and "doing nothing". Thanks to this TV feature, an emotion had spread all over the TV planet and so the TV viewers found out about themselves that they did not just want to watch the TV news, but that they needed to help. Apart from that, the

UN was happy to take on the reconstruction of Skopje as its first mission of this kind since the Second World War. And so, both individuals and institutions, both East and West, started to participate in the reconstruction of Skopje. Some contemporary witnesses even mentioned a competition of solidarity.

"Skopje looks quite normal", I think in the present 2022, as I take a taxi from the airport straight to the museum. Later I will take that thought back. The taxi driver cannot unlock his mobile phone because he is driving, and so he asks me to do that for him, so that he can play a migrant worker song on YouTube which matches my visit to Skopje. The song is called "Južna Pruga" [Southern Railway], and the refrain goes like this:

*Skopje, Belgrade, Vienna
and on to the West,
wherever fate will take us.
This is the southern railway.
No love, no friends,
no fixed address.*

The museum is located on the hill above the city center. It is a mixture of a 70s architect's weekend house and a Yugoslavian administration building. When the project tender had been published, one of the design proposals was completely crazy, as according to it the building should have been floating and be able to open up like a lotus flower whenever there was an exhibition to be seen, so that the people in the city would always know immediately whether it was worth climbing up the hill. Such a museum building would be even better than the building that was actually built, but floating houses are hard to construct, even today. I look around the museum and conduct a couple of interviews. Of course, the staff tell me their best stories only after I have stopped taking notes. For example, about the theft of the Picasso work and how in the 2000s, with the nationalist government, management positions were entrusted to people who had nothing to do with

contemporary art whatsoever, and in some cases even nothing to do with art at all. So the curators secretly organized underground exhibitions in their small offices on the first floor, in parallel to the official program that did not satisfy their aesthetic needs.

Jean-Paul Sartre donated a phrase to the devastated city shortly after the earthquake. "Skopje is not a film. It is not a thriller in which we can guess the main event. It is a condensation of the human struggle for freedom, and its outcome will inspire further struggles and our refusal to accept defeat." Sartre was obviously watching the earthquake on television, moreover, today we can guess from his statement that humanity back then saw itself as being at war with nature. The famous Japanese architect Kenzō Tange turned the city axis by 90 degrees and provided the new city of Skopje with funny circular highways. The Serbian folk singers Bajić brothers wrote a song for Skopje and performed it at the solidarity concert a few days after the disaster: "On a sad morning the earth shook and carried the child Skopje away from its mother's womb ... Do not cry, sister Serbia and you other sisters—Macedonia is still alive, and it will give birth to a new Skopje." What an interesting idea that it is actually republics who give birth to their capital towns, which means that it is the larger geopolitical units which produce the smaller ones. And what happens when the mother is no longer sister to other republics and the grandmother is dead and the mother changes her name? Probably the mother will then have to rebirth the child in some way. Make it a little different so that it fits the new narrative ... In addition, many artists from Brazil who were unknown at the time as well as well-known artists from Italy and half-known artists from the Czech Republic donated their paintings to Skopje. People from all over Yugoslavia lent a hand. Alberto Moravia contributed a sentence, he was apparently more of a newspaper reader: "Skopje must not remain simply a newspaper report about the initial suffering, but it should become the

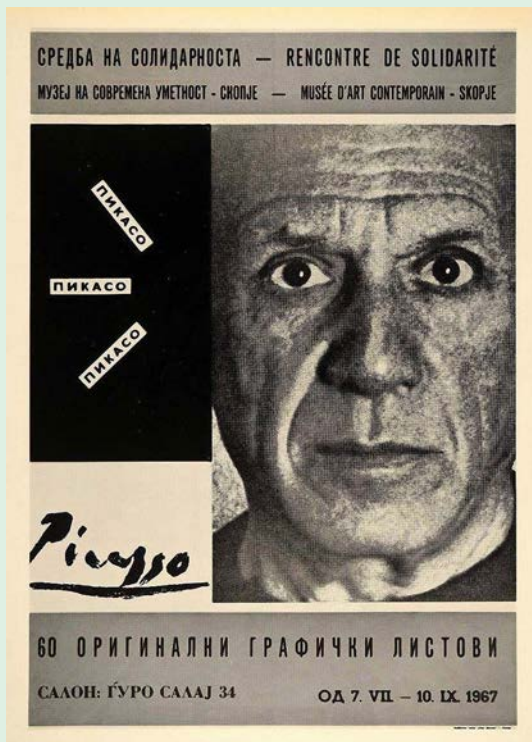


Exhibition of contemporary Macedonian visual artists, Moderna Gallery, Ljubljana, 1979 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE



25-year anniversary of MoCA opening, 1989 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

Dragutin Avramovski Gute, exhibition poster for Pablo Picasso at MoCA Skopje, 1967 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE



Picasso returned by Interpol, 1972 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE



responsibility of all of us, of people who today or tomorrow, if hit by a similar catastrophe, could become Skopjians." Calder delivered a red sculpture. Lubarda donated a painting. J. Mokrzyński, E. Wierzbicki and W. Kłyszewski built the museum building.

It was in the late 80s when my father Slobodan Marković packed me into the car and we drove as a nuclear family to Skopje, where we Markovičs are supposed to come from. I don't know if we Markovičs are from there, I guess nobody would lie about that, and anyway, I liked Macedonia and would have liked it also without knowing that we are supposedly coming from there. My parents were delighted to see how beautiful Skopje had become again. How everything had been reconstructed after the earthquake. But I was nine years old and they didn't tell me the details, and so the word earthquake remained rather abstract for me. They said: These are chickpeas, they are better than peanuts. My Macedonian relatives were disappointed when they first met me. I had coughed during the entire trip, I had squeezed my soul and lust for life out of my irritated child lungs into the polluted winter air, and when I arrived I just hung there, I didn't want to eat at all and I was even crying. Later, one of the Macedonian Markovičs saw me laughing and told the rest of the family that I was all right after all and that I even had a beautiful smile. But what does beautiful mean anyway.

Two years after the earthquake, Pablo Picasso took a look around his studio. He was wearing an orange cape, he spread out his hands and made three circles around his own axis. There were bright, dynamic paintings to choose from: for example, the painting with an onion or several canvasses showing a painter with his model, and also, there was a dark painting depicting a woman's face that was deformed like a mask. Picasso took the latter from the corner on the left, wrote a short greeting on a postcard and sent the whole package to 1000 Skopje, Yugoslavia. There was great joy when the painting arrived. But such a present

is also a burden for the recipient. Picasso, suddenly—where to put him, what to do next. Some people in local art circles still call the painting "The Ugly Picasso". But what does ugly mean, actually? There have certainly been uglier and more disliked Picassos over the years.

5 UGLY/DISLIKED PICASSOS

- 1) *Syrenka*, 1948
- 2) *Weeping Woman*, 1937
- 3) *Head (self-portrait)*, 1972
- 4) *Portrait of Lee Miller in Arlésienne*, 1937
- 5) *Bather, opening a beach hut*, 1928

In 1971, *Woman's Head* hung on the wall of the museum. Many people walked past it, including the thief (possibly he didn't know he was a thief back then, I like to imagine that at the age of 26 he was pursuing several career options and also wanted to be an artist, and was a bit annoyed and jealous because due to the presence of a great international collection the local art scene had become second class art, and when confronted with a perfect opportunity, he just grabbed it). So he pulled the ledge on which the picture was stretched out of the picture frame, cut the threads and took the picture down. He rolled up *Woman's Head* (damaging it in the process) and threw it out the window. The only guard was not in the room at that time and so he didn't see anything. For a while the picture was just lying around on the ground. Then the thief walked out of the museum like a normal visitor, picked up the ugly Picasso, pocketed it casually and walked down to the city. The Yugoslav police could not find the stolen artwork, the thief had disappeared. They wrote to Pablo Picasso, but Pablo Picasso never replied. The thief did not know exactly what to do with the painting either. Eventually, he was caught by Interpol in Frankfurt trying to sell it, was sentenced to six years in prison and was given the appropriate nickname in prison. Today Picasso, the thief of Pablo Picasso's "Ugly Picasso", is an entrepreneur. And that was actually the history of Yugoslavia in a nutshell.



Children's drawing exhibition, parking lot of MoCA Skopje, 1974 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

In the meantime, I have my doubts. The idea for the exhibition is so beautiful and so positive. And the question of how to reproduce such productive moments of collective history is definitely very important. The very fact that the question was formulated gives me hope. But don't these people who commissioned me know who they are dealing with? I'm only good at questioning everything. My inner Kalina girl is moving towards the last verse. Damn: Back, back, Barbi Marković, don't think this thing through to the very end.

In the present 2022, I say goodbye to the museum staff in Skopje. The two dogs that were lying peacefully in front of the entrance door when I had walked into the building suddenly straighten up and bark violently at me. I say: "Oh, you are so cute", because

I think that actually they are just disturbed individuals full of fear and struggling with severe identity problems. In Skopje, the sun is a bit more serious about people's heads in spring than it is in Vienna, which is why I always look a bit to the ground while walking towards the city center. Besides, I have to put on my sunglasses if I want to see anything at all. And then: WTF. I take it all back. Skopje definitely doesn't look normal.

All over the place, there are sculptures portraying men. The giant horse rider in the center of the main square is supposed to be Alexander the Great (Aleksandar Makedonski). However, you are not allowed to call him that because the people whose dream came true here were brave enough to claim that Alexander the Great came from Northern Macedonia by erecting

this huge chess figure, but then, they were not brave enough to settle any issues with Greece that could possibly arise, so they just called the sculpture "The Horse Rider". In the square opposite, the other huge man, Alexander's father, Philip II of Macedon, officially just anyone, is waving. Among the large statues on the poorly proportioned pedestals there are also other creatures: Horses, lions, women. There are hundreds of figures, among them the young-dead singer Toše Proeski, made of copper, who is holding a microphone in his hand. Sculptures on the buildings, sculptures in the water. Some houses in the city center have been rebuilt in a cheap classicist style. That is to say, instant splendor around the existing houses, but at second glance you can see that behind the large white walls, for example, there is a typical 90s house with a glass façade, and the added elements (domes, ornamented columns) are made of material that is too thin, so the whole building is just like a film set. Some of the bridges have also been covered, and when you approach the walls of white stone, you see that the white has already been affected by the rain and is beginning to flake like old wallpaper.

During the visit of the Marković family to Skopje at the end of the 80s, I had been sitting in a room with my father, and first the news about the war in Afghanistan came on, and then they played a song by Đorđe Balašević, a singer-songwriter who was called the Bob Dylan of Yugoslavia after his death. The song was called "Samo da rata ne bude" [Just let there be no war], and my father had said, "War is the worst thing indeed, thank God, we don't have any wars in Yugoslavia, that's the most important thing." Well, there you go.

"Cute", I say to one of the guards at the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle in 2022, when he catches me laughing at the waxwork exhibition of the important and partly historically controversial moments of individual Macedonian national history. I use the same strategy as with barking dogs, and this time it works again, the

guard even lets me take pictures. This other museum, deliberately poorly lit, belongs to the same inner conflict as the sculptures in the city center. I am laughing, but there is nothing funny about the sentiment from which this other museum arises. If you give free reign to such ideas, there can only be war. Later I talk about it with a vendor of old books. He sells me a moldy thousand-page book on the "City of Solidarity" for far too much and says: "I would trade what I have left of my life for just one more week in Yugoslavia, anytime." A tough statement too, I think, and I don't believe him. So down here, a dark, angry museum full of men with guns with waxwork scenes of riots and torture (by their respective enemies) against old women, with taxidermied dead dogs and sheep for the atmosphere, and with a depiction of Yugoslavia reduced to the images of the island for political prisoners Goli Otok. And at the top of the hill there is still the solidarity-based international collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, a pearl born from dust, now a bit dusty itself. How will we get out of this story? Nothing is quite clean, but some things are quite dirty. I don't know, I wish the world well, and I wish we'd get excited about positive things. <3 ●

VIENNA, AUGUST 2022



Interviews

Brook Andrew

Born in 1970, lives and works in Melbourne

1. What were your impressions of Skopje and the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje? What did you find interesting about the collection?

Skopje is a place of contrast and beauty. From the visible effects of the earthquake to the call to prayer and hymns I experienced at the Macedonian Orthodox Church—Archdiocese of Ohrid, to the warmth of the people, to the striking design of MoCA, Skopje is inspiring. I really enjoyed walking around and exploring the diversity of cultures and languages. The museum's collection is overwhelming in many ways—from the history of the collection to the way in which it has inspired presentations of it. It is important that the collection is presented and also on display to show the local cultural ways of doing things and communicating to a broader art and cultural audience, in both Skopje and around the world.

2. How do you relate the works you chose from the collection to your own practice?

The works are not so close to my own practice, though they are chosen as devices to express a timeline of hegemony and constructed worldviews on what, at the time, was popular art and movements and demonstrated a Euro-American art world that is predominantly male. I reflect on the generosity of artists, but also the reality of how this is performed today. It is important to note the struggle between the former Yugoslavian artists and the Euro-American artists, which I have highlighted in my work. The title of my work, *mulunma wiling mangi gudhi* (inside the lip of a stolen song), attempts

to highlight these complex relationships. This title is in Wiradjuri, my mother's Indigenous language from Wiradjuri country in Australia. My Indigenous heritage has always found commonalities, solidarities, and complex connections with places abroad.

3. What is your view on solidarity in the art world today? Do you think something similar to the MoCA Skopje donations can happen?

Solidarity is, for me, in many ways a fragmented and person-, community-, group-, or kinship-specific alliance. I do not think it is fixed—it shifts and changes, and if it is not malleable, it will break, and then things and people and solidarity all break down. This is why I highlight the complex situation of international artists donating important works but also being part of the problem of the art world. From an Indigenous perspective, we are still trying to insert our own values of solidarity, or at least share them in an international context. This project has been inspiring and required careful thought, as it walks many tightropes of solidarity. ●

Brook Andrew, Pablo Picasso's *Woman's Head*, 1963, at MoCA's art storage, 2022 • COURTESY THE ARTIST



Yane Calovski & Hristina Ivanoska

Yane Calovski: Born in 1973, lives and works in Skopje and Berlin

Hristina Ivanoska: Born in 1974, lives and works in Skopje and Berlin

1. What were your impressions of Skopje and the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje? What did you find interesting about the collection?

HRISTINA IVANOSKA: Built on tectonic ground, Skopje is never stable, permanent, and peaceful. The mixture of cultures, histories, and discourses is visible on its surface in constant rivalry with each other and themselves, creating constant tension.

As a student at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, the museum's collection had little effect on my early development as an artist. At that time, MoCA Skopje still had an elitist aura around it, as a space you needed "to deserve" to have access to. Today, I experience the museum as a more democratic space. For the first time, I had the opportunity to devote myself to the collection and have the chance to visit the museum's collection depot and experience the works with a different kind of immediacy and intimacy.

YANE CALOVSKI: The city of Skopje, for me, represents a work in progress, often abused and misdiagnosed by those in power for political and economic gain, regardless of the needs of the citizens. Nevertheless, Skopje is resilient, continuously unfolding and reconsidering its potential to surprise. For me, the collection

of MoCA Skopje has always been an active exploratory organism, unsettlingly growing and evolving since its inception following the devastating earthquake in 1963.

2. How do you relate the works you chose from the collection to your practice?

YANE CALOVSKI: From the vastness of the collection, we selected the works of two active Macedonian artists, Aneta Svetieva and Dushan Perchinkov. Both engage in rediscovering the essential, personified meaning of modernity and tradition. I usually examine the discursive traces in concepts in my sculptural work, playing with rhizomatic overlaps and embracing the residue that embodies elusive ideas about concrete subjects. During the research period at MoCA Skopje, we studied and read the available publications, exhibition catalogues, video interviews, and written interviews and reviews.

HRISTINA IVANOSKA: I have always been amazed by Svetieva's and Perchinkov's artworks, but I felt they remain "trapped" in the local context.

Yane Calovski and Hristina Ivanoska at MoCA's art storage, 2022 • COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND MOCA SKOPJE. PHOTO: BLAGOJA VAROSHANEC



This project is an opportunity to excavate their work out of the depot, contextualize it, and share it with audiences. Although at first glance very different—Perchinkov is geometric, strict, and analytical in his approach, and Svetieva is impulsive, fast, and unrefined—both share a poetic tenderness toward the landscape in which they grew up, and in which primitive culture and civilization cohabit in this symbiosis of contradictions. It is precisely that duality of opposites that I recognize in my work as well.

3. What is your view on solidarity in the art world today? Do you think something similar to the MoCA Skopje donations can happen?

HRISTINA IVANOSKA: The 1960s, when the call for creating a collection based on solidarity took place, was a time when the tension between the two blocs declined and when it became possible to imagine a collaboration between the East and the West. However, institutions today are selective and careful and under immense pressure, and I am still determining the collection as a collective achievement that continues to resonate today.

YANE CALOVSKI: The concept of solidarity is political and progressive. However, it has been commodified many times and used as a cover-up to real problems facing the Western-centric art world today. There has always been, and always will be, a significant power imbalance regarding representation, wealth distribution, and the manifestation of knowledge. In such a specific (post-earthquake) period of intensified sociocultural, political, and economic rebuilding of the city, one can argue that the collection was, and still is, a significant “rebuilding” tool. In that regard, its significance is historical and cultural—a case of heritage gaining political power when seen as a sign of its time. Today, while we cannot expect such an outpouring of solidarity in terms of donations of actual artworks, it is still unbelievable that we, as artists, recognize the social importance of contributing,

Hristina Ivanoska,
Document Missing: Performance no.9 (Attributes of Imagination), 2020 • COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO: YANE CALOVSKI

Yane Calovski,
Mulichkoski Bench, Divided (Prototype), 2018/2019 • COURTESY THE ARTIST, ZILBERMAN GALLERY AND MOCA SKOPJE. PHOTO: VASE AMANITO



donating, archiving, and sharing our practices through the mechanisms of institutional collections. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje continues to inspire this logic of camaraderie. ●

Siniša Ilić

Born in 1977, lives and works in Belgrade



Siniša Ilić, *Filigran*, 2022/2023 •
COURTESY THE ARTIST

Siniša Ilić, *Filigran*, 2022/2023 •
COURTESY THE ARTIST



1. What were your impressions of Skopje and the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje? What did you find interesting about the collection?

Layers. The collection feels like a structure that is in constant reshaping as time passes. It feels like it “curates” itself, since it is based on donations and gifts, and so it has an economy and rhythm that stays public—belonging at the same time to the institutions, donors, audiences, and others. This is exciting. It’s similar to my impression of Skopje: that it is a surface with many craters, outcroppings, and threads drawing a delicate landscape.

2. How do you relate the works you chose from the collection to your own practice?

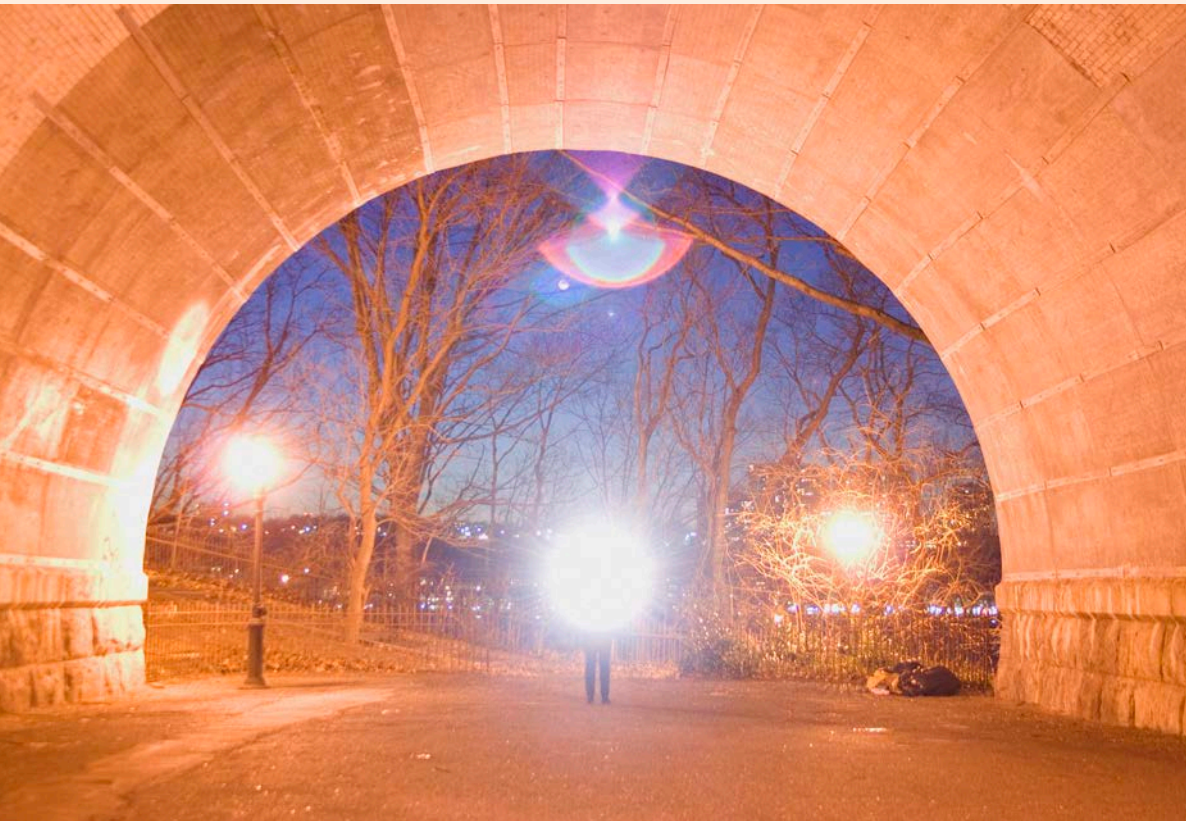
Filigran shows sculptures from the collection, going from abstract to figurative forms and back. Sculptures are complementary with my works on paper and on screens. I wanted to stage tensions between the layers and stories that the collection, the current moment, the artistic forms, and the earthquake bring. I suggest a zigzag path through *Filigran* and propose a coexistence with art, rather than following only one storyline or statement.

3. What is your view on solidarity in the art world today? Do you think something similar to the MoCA Skopje donations can happen?

I think it can happen and it is happening all the time. The visibility of solidarity and its impact varies depending on the scale of a social crisis. The distribution of wealth and information feels like an obstacle that reminds us that we are not in the same social, class, or personal position in any given moment, and so our reactions resonate differently, which can keep us frustrated, feeling bad or powerless. In that context, if we understand solidarity as a gesture against poverty or scarcity or misfortune, then we as artists and people active in the field of culture can try to share our knowledge, skills, or imagination. ●

Iman Issa

Born in 1979, lives and works in Vienna and Berlin



Iman Issa, *I, the Artwork*, 2023 • COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ELISABETH & KLAUS THOMAN, VIENNA

Thinking about the artworks in the Solidarity Collection at MoCA Skopje that I have seen, and what they might mean today, and how they can and do relate to concerns I have and works I make, has left me with a combination of words that, over the past months, I have been trying to make sense of. I have been doing that through further reading, writing, and making of work, but mainly through the planning of the constellation of elements I will present at the Kunsthalle Wien in the context of this exhibition. These words, triggered by the collection, came to me in the first-person, encompassed by the phrase *I, the Artwork*.

It is common to think of artworks as victims to their environments, needing to be rescued by the obsessive artist or conscientious curator or dedicated institution who can furnish them with the right context. Yet, rare as it is, one has also encountered and knows of a different kind of artwork: an artwork which is interested neither in being viewed as a victim to its context nor in following the intentions of its maker. An artwork which hides or reveals itself at will, frequently changing its date and place of conception. An artwork which, when relegated to history, brings that whole history into doubt and, when attributed to the identity, likes, or dislikes of its maker, decides to attribute itself to a different maker, one which may have been invented by itself or who lived in a different time more suited to its current outlook. An artwork which may even take it upon itself to keep its maker's name but reshape their identity, linking it to other views and attributes more suited to itself—a self situated in a particular time and place but which reserves the right to change along with the change of that time and/or space. An artwork which attributes itself to a lawyer, historian, craftsman, or any such figure, knowing full well that it is and can only ever be made by an artist. An artwork which reshapes the institution into which it is housed: one day exonerating it, standing proudly behind its mission statement, another day embarrassing it out of its wits, loudly disavowing it, making it impossible for it



Iman Issa, *Face (Study for 2019)* (from the series *Lexicon*), 2019 • COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALERIE ELISABETH & KLAUS THOMAN, VIENNA. PHOTO: JOE CLARK

to follow what it had previously been engaged in. An artwork which reserves the right to occasionally participate in ongoing current debates, affirming a curator's line of thought, at other times remaining mute despite all efforts directed at making it speak. An artwork which, when called an artwork, eschews the name in favor of something else, insisting on being called a document, an artifact, an object, a film, a story, or a news item. An artwork which can exist in any kind of venue, be it an ethnographic, city, folk, modern, or contemporary art museum, or something else entirely. An artwork which can assume any look, sound, feel, material, or immaterial presence and which only upon eclipsing every condition of its display, interpretation, classification, and reception can, proudly and without hesitation, proclaim itself an "artwork." A proclamation which the artwork's discerning maker may now sense an urgent need to adopt for themselves as well, and may indeed choose to do so, warily seizing the name *I, the Artwork*, pausing shortly before adding *an artist showing (myself) sometime in the year 2023*. ●

Gülsün Karamustafa

Born in 1946, lives and works in Istanbul and Berlin

1. What were your impressions of Skopje and the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje? What did you find interesting about the collection?

I believe what happened in Skopje after the earthquake in 1963 is unique and very touching. People were more concerned about each other's problems in those days, and that makes me think that this kind of solidarity will never happen again. Destructive wars are continuing around us. Though we claim that people are in close contact, and we know more than ever about what is happening in the world through technological possibilities, we have never been more ignorant about each other's grievances.

2. How do you relate the works you chose from the collection to your own practice?

My choices from the MoCA Skopje collection are more about the sculptures and paintings by Macedonian artists as they relate to daily life. Therefore, I wanted to complement them with one painting with a political context and one cheerful sculptural work from my own practice. My wish is to create a peculiar but interesting conversation between those works that may never come together again in the future.

3. What is your view on solidarity in the art world today? Do you think something similar to the MoCA Skopje donations can happen?

Unfortunately, relationships in the art world are more based on profit and self-interest nowadays. Of course, there are attempts by artists and some institutions to break this understanding, by giving more opportunities for collective activities and mutual productions and by creating cross-overs between artists and institutions. But the power of capital always finds ways to break through the solidarity. ●



Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Queen* (detail), *The Monument and the Child*, 2010

Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Pincushion* (detail), *The Monument and the Child*, 2010

Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Teapot* (detail), *The Monument and the Child*, 2010

Gülsün Karamustafa, *The Horse* (detail), *The Monument and the Child*, 2010

Gülsün Karamustafa, *Salt Shakers* (detail), *The Monument and the Child*, 2010

ALL: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BÜROSARIGEDİK.
PHOTOS: BARIŞ ÖZÇETİN



Elfie Semotan

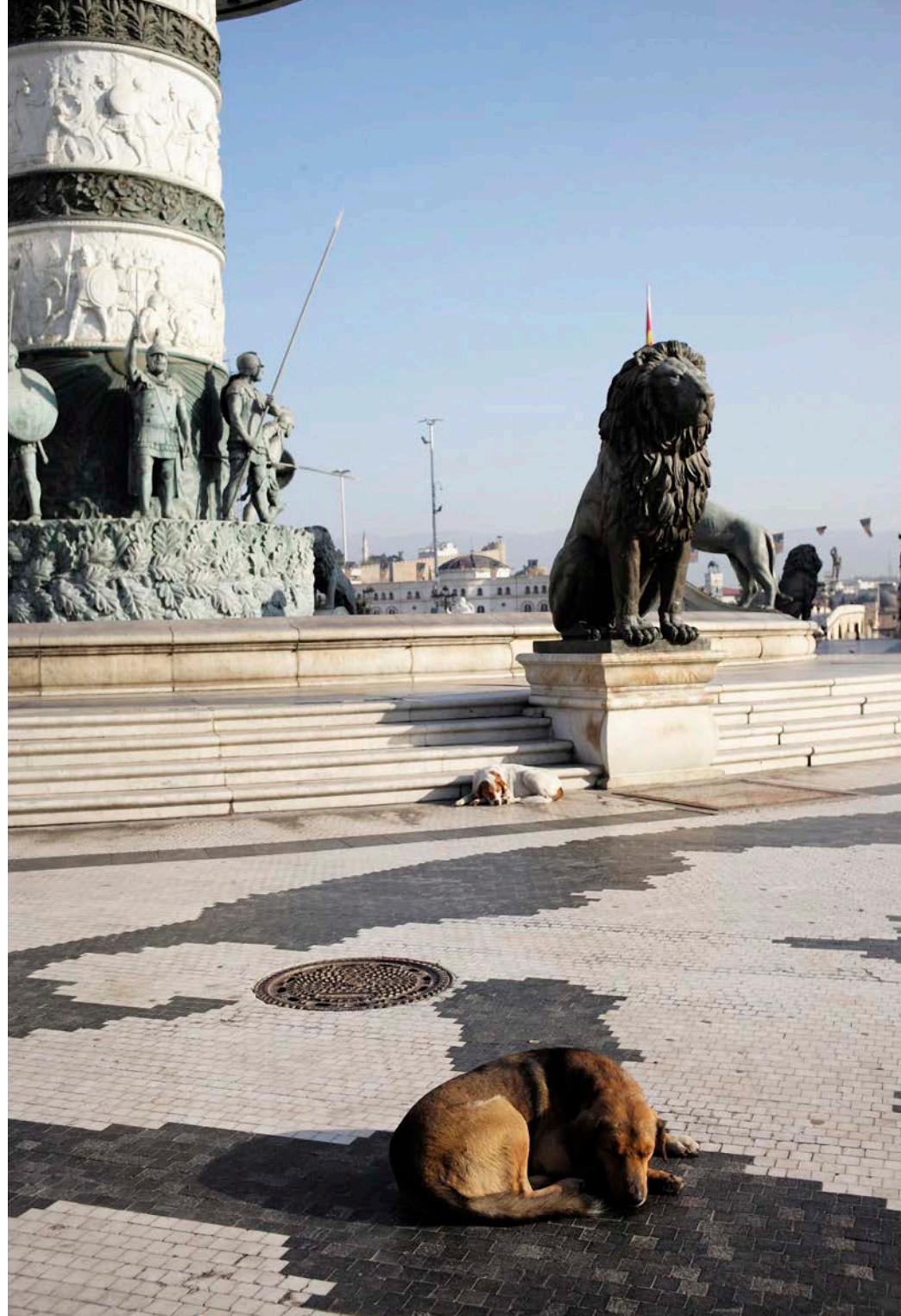
Born 1941, lives and works in Vienna and Jennersdorf

1. What were your impressions of Skopje and the Solidarity Collection of MoCA Skopje? What did you find interesting about the collection?

After I read about the history of Skopje, I looked at the city with a more discerning eye and with a certain mindset and disposition, which is a good thing to do with any city. In the case of Skopje, however, I found such an awareness particularly useful—otherwise it



Elfie Semotan, *Untitled, Skopje*, 2022/2023 • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN



is hard to find an explanation for the different faces of the cityscape. I was very curious to visit the city and wanted to discover the traces of the 1960s and 1970s architecture, the historical structures like the city wall, and the later new buildings, too. But also all the disguises and retouching. That makes Skopje incredibly exciting.

The list of donations to the MoCA is impressive. I know Picasso also sent something. When I went to the museum for the first time, I saw a wonderful Calder mobile with red metal elements hanging around all by itself. Fantastic!

2. How do you relate the works you chose from the collection to your own practice?

Skopje is really an exception. Usually, cities are not so diverse. Extremes are, of course, always fascinating, and Skopje has a lot of them to offer—so much that originated at different times and with different intentions stands one next to the other. We walked around for many hours, but Skopje did not tire me. Sometimes I found it grandiose and sometimes downright funny. It is beautiful, it is picturesque, it is absurd. A wonderful terrain for a photographer.

3. What is your view on solidarity in the art world today? Do you think something similar to the MoCA Skopje donations can happen?

I believe that despite all the lack of solidarity in the art world, despite all the craving for prestige and money, there is a sense of belonging to the art world, a solidarity between those who love art, make art, and simply feel comfortable in this world.

I am a very positive person, and I can imagine that something like this can succeed again. Right now, we are learning the lesson once again that we must show solidarity and pay attention to the rest of the world. ●

The “City of international Solidarity”: Skopje, the United Nations, and the Search for a Modernist Utopia

Ljubica Spaskovska

When the Neoclassical, faux-Baroque redesign of the North Macedonian capital was introduced back in 2010,¹ “many assumed it was some sort of joke”, as an article in the *Economist* noted.² However, as new museums, administrative buildings, monuments, statues, fountains, glittery bridge fences, and street-name plaques sprung up simultaneously, the urban core of Skopje was, in all seriousness, being changed beyond recognition. The city progressively lost its green spaces and, in particular, its modernist architectural identity. Modernist Skopje had been the product of “the first major international collaborative exercise of such magnitude” in post-disaster reconstruction and urban planning, led by the United Nations and a multitude of international teams and experts, not least of all Japanese architect **Kenzō Tange**.

The earthquake that struck the city on July 26, 1963, destroyed 80 percent of all public buildings, including hospitals, schools, theaters, and the city’s railway station. Around 1,000 people were killed and 3,500 injured, and the majority of the city’s population was left homeless.³ Less than one-fifth of

dwelling escaped damage. A cable from UN Secretary-General **U Thant** to Yugoslav President **Josip Broz Tito** stressed that the United Nations was ready to offer every assistance within its resources and that he had already requested organizations within the UN system to urgently consider what assistance might be provided. A surprisingly large number of governments responded to these appeals from the United Nations and the Yugoslav government for aid and assistance to a city whose sudden, almost complete destruction was reminiscent of aerial images of urban bombardment and devastation during the Second World War—still fresh in many minds at the time. Parallels were drawn with the Coventry Blitz, and it was noted that in five seconds “nature almost matched in Skopje the degree of physical havoc that it had taken all the military might of Nazi Germany five long years to wreak on Warsaw”.⁴ Some of the most prominent initial acts of solidarity in the aftermath of the earthquake included a 120-bed hospital dispatched in 24 US Air Force planes the day after the earthquake; a battalion of Soviet military engineers; various groups of British, Polish, and Japanese experts in urban planning and reconstruction; and one of the richest collections of contemporary art in Southern Europe. Both the collection and the soon-to-be-established Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje were products of an unrivaled exercise in UN-coordinated relief and trans-bloc international collaboration. While most of the collection was Western European and American art, including works by **Pablo Picasso**, **Victor Vasarely**, and **Alexander Calder**, the building was a gift from the Polish government, designed by the **Tygrysy** [Tigers], a well-known group of Polish architects.

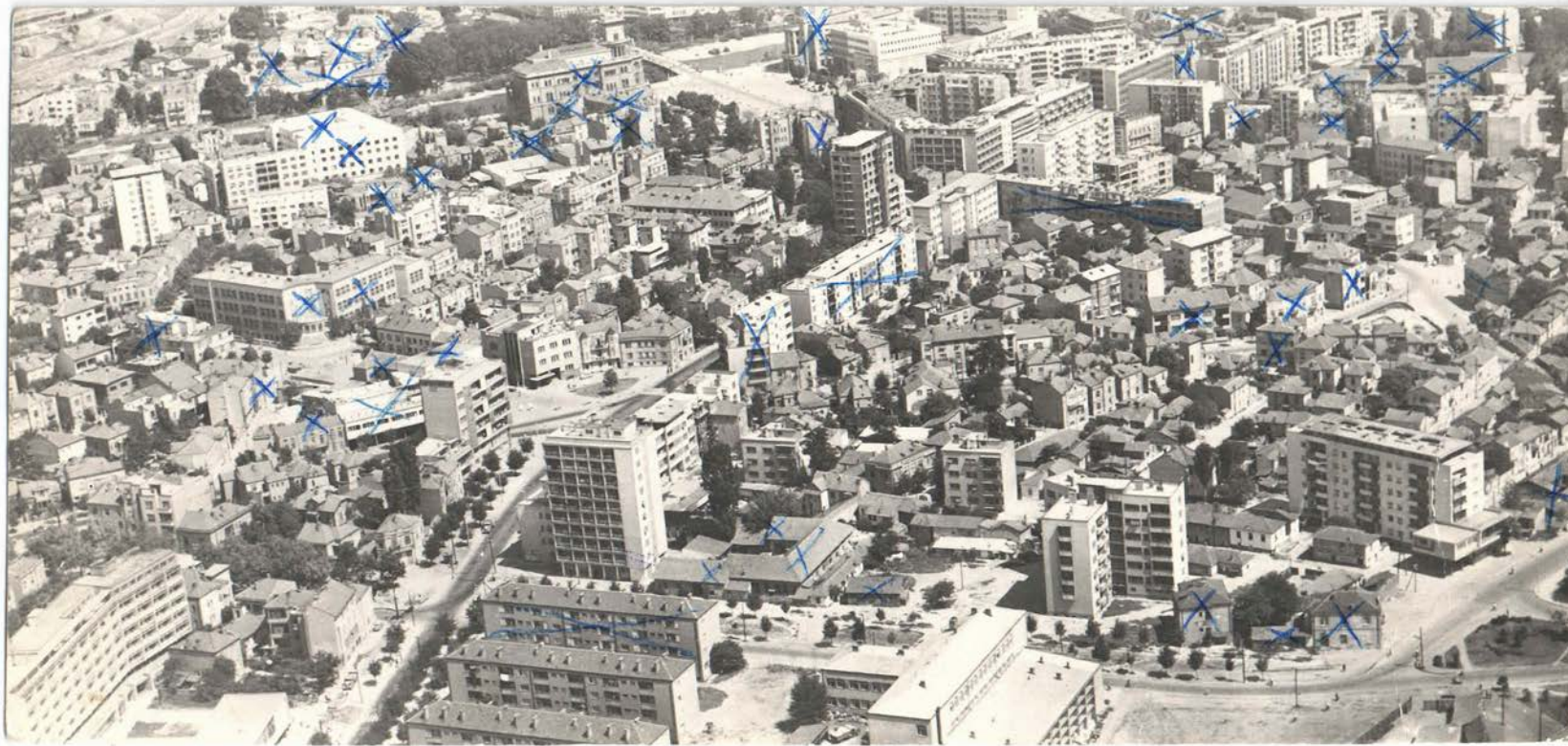
¹ In the context of the name dispute with Greece and under the pretext of reclaiming an ancient past and reinventing Macedonian national identity, the right-wing government of **Nikola Gruevski** (2006–2017) launched the Skopje 2014 project. The plan’s first phase of redefining central public space was focused on construction, and the second phase envisioned the makeover of already existing buildings, which were to receive new faux-Baroque facades. It’s this second stage that unleashed the revolt of the citizens. Later investigations exposed gross mismanagement of public finances.

² “Stones of Contention”, *Economist*, January 5, 2013, <https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2013/01/05/stones-of-contention>.

³ Archive of the City of Skopje, 6.79 Фонд за помагаче и обнова на град Скопје (1963–1977) [Fund for the help and reconstruction of Skopje (1963–1977)], box 2, “Izveštaj o

zemljotresu u Skoplju i preduzetim merama za ublažavanje posledica, Beograd, Savezno Izvršno Veće, 31 avgusta 1963. godine”, 3.

⁴ Skopje Resurgent: *The Story of a United Nations Special Fund Town Planning Project* (New York: United Nations, 1970), 37.



Destroyed buildings marked on a postcard, 1963 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

The enthusiastic and unprecedented response from the international community was directly related to Yugoslavia's increasing visibility on the global stage as a European nation outside the two military blocs. The country held a special appeal in the eyes of the Western left: it had a system of industrial democracy; it supported workers' self-management, which was becoming an object of interest and study in the West; and it gained antifascist credentials in the "long Second World War", from the Spanish conflict until the defeat of Nazism. Moreover, in the aftermath of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which had brought the world to the brink of nuclear disaster, the calls for nuclear disarmament coming from the Non-Aligned Movement—of which Yugoslavia was a key member—struck a chord and seemed to offer a viable alternative to continued tensions.

It is safe to conclude that the international political capital Yugoslavia had accrued from the early 1950s onward influenced the geopolitical prestige and positive publicity it enjoyed around the time of the earthquake and in the following two decades. Yugoslavia was a founding member of the United Nations, and the centrality of that international body for the Yugoslav elites and its role in shaping their worldviews and policies at home cannot be overstated, not least because a commitment to the principles of the UN Charter was spelled out in the Yugoslav Federal Constitution of 1974. Driven to transform the United Nations "from a Euro-American into a universal organization", Yugoslavia and other neutral European partners (not least the Scandinavian countries) managed to increase the visibility of the Global South across the UN system through the Non-Aligned Movement

and the Group of 77 (G77). Indeed, "lecturing the superpowers on the conduct of international relations was a powerful sign that the Third World was coming of age".⁵ Yugoslavia's exceptional visibility and active engagement on the international stage throughout the 1950s and 1960s was the critical context for the United Nations' response to Skopje's earthquake, as well as the response of individual countries. In addition to the official, state-level diplomatic engagement, Skopje was assisted by independent experts such as architect Ernest Weissmann, head of the UN Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, who was appointed chairman of

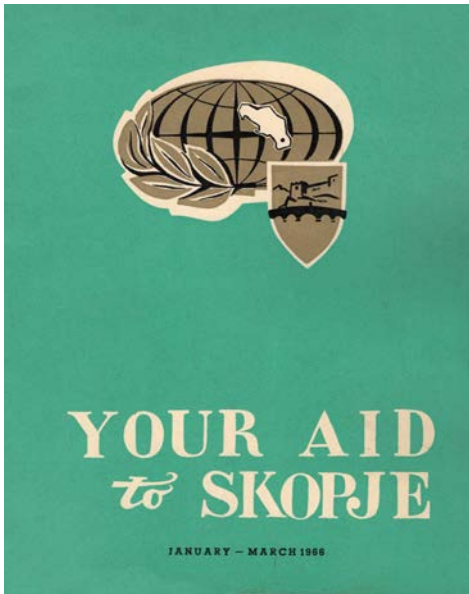
⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107.

the International Board of Consultants for the reconstruction of Skopje.⁶ Weissmann's Yugoslav citizenship helped facilitate the inclusion of planners from both sides of the Iron Curtain in UN planning missions, and it also helped lift suspicions among elites in the Global South that UN planners were instruments of one of the two blocs.

With Warsaw's chief architect Adolf Ciborowski at the helm as project manager of the Skopje Urban Plan Project, it was unlike any other operation undertaken by the UN Special Fund (later the UN Development Programme). The choice of experts—from the capitalist West, the socialist East, and Japan—mirrored Yugoslavia's and many of its fellow Non-Aligned allies' visions of a hybrid modernity, where Western concepts and idioms of technological achievement, planning, and construction could be translated to local contexts and fed into a form of postcolonial, postrevolutionary nationalism. The project of planning and reconstructing the city of Skopje represents a powerful embodiment of developmental modernism, produced and managed by Western experts in alliance with local political and planning elites.⁷ While it could be said that Skopje was also the product of a postwar golden age of new towns, at the same time, it embodied (like Plymouth, for instance) a bold and optimistic vision of the postwar welfare state. Skopje was unique in that its planning and construction

⁶ Ernest Weissmann (1903–1985) received a degree in architecture in 1926 from the University of Zagreb. He was affiliated with the International Congress of Modern Architecture and was among the co-signers of the Athens Charter (1934). He collaborated with architects Adolf Loos (in 1926/1927) and Le Corbusier (in 1927/1928), and after the Second World War had a long career at the United Nations, initially as director of the Industrial Rehabilitation Division at the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

⁷ Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).



Cover of *Your Aid to Skopje* (Skopje: Gradsko sobranie [Skopje City Council], 1965).

in the modernist idiom were implemented and endorsed by the United Nations. Other new cities like, for example, Brasilia and Chandigarh, which were the bold modernist visions of Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier, respectively—arose through the personal engagement of national leaders. In the case of Chandigarh, Indian Prime Minister Nehru personally drove the initiative to construct a new city in Punjab after the Partition of India in 1947, which was to embody his particular vision of “Indian modernity”. Skopje’s reconstruction, by contrast, was an exercise in developmental multilateralism. Different national traditions in construction, design, and urban planning came into conversation under the auspices of the United Nations. At the project’s core were shared ideas about the importance of international solidarity beyond ideological divides, a belief in the benefits of investing in long-term development and technological progress for the benefit of all, and a commitment to a “welfare-state modernism”.⁸ Unlike

⁸ Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*:

any other reconstruction effort by virtue of its sheer magnitude and long-term development, as well as the involvement of multiple local and international actors from both sides of the Cold War divide, the case of Skopje is a testament to the postwar convergence of liberal and socialist internationalisms—one that engendered a temporary global consensus around the primacy of modernism, welfare, solidarity, and development.

According to Sudhir Sen, the resident representative of the UN Technical Assistance Board and director of the Special Fund programs in Yugoslavia, the Skopje city plan was to be based on “the most modern scientific achievements in the field of seismology”.⁹ On Sen’s suggestion, Ernest Weissmann visited Skopje in August 1963 and prepared a report that recommended, firstly, an emergency relief program and, secondly, long-term reconstruction and development. According to Weissmann, who was a student of the modernist architect Le Corbusier, the “obvious aim of planning [is] to control man’s environment for the benefit of the people. And when I say the people—I mean the people, not the planners. And when I say benefit, I mean the achievement of a better life for the many”.¹⁰ Weissmann was in support of an international team of experts and recommended to Sen that “the Yugoslavs should have the benefit of wider advice in the planning of the city than is possible from one

Modernization Theory in Cold War America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 17.

⁹ United Nations Archive, UN Registry (1954–1983)/Technical Assistance, S-0175-2221-04, 322/1 YUGO (240-3), “International solidarity is also reflected in concrete and considerable assistance; Interview with Mr. Sudhir Sen, Representative of TAB and Director of Special Fund programmes in Yugoslavia.”

¹⁰ Ernest Weissmann, quoted in Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 144.



Postcard, 1964–1970 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

firm of consultants”.¹¹ As mentioned above, Weissmann was also the chair of the International Board of Consultants on Skopje, that in March 1964 recommended establishing an Institute for Engineering Seismology and Urban Planning and the preparation of a physical plan of the wider region as a multipurpose project (irrigation, electric power, and water supply). This resonated with the commitment to long-term development that the United Nations, the Special Fund, and the Yugoslav state shared in terms of vision and priority. The consultant board also recommended an international town planning and architecture competition for the city center, to be organized with the help of the United Nations and under the supervision of the board and the Yugoslav

¹¹ United Nations Archive, UN Registry (1954–1983)/Technical Assistance, S-0175-2221-04, 322/1 YUGO (240-3), “Ernest Weissmann to Mr. A. Goldschmidt, Director for Special Fund Activities, 26 October 1963,” 2.

Association of Architects and Urbanists. The whole project was deemed “a lesson in the application of modern science, engineering and physical planning”.¹² More importantly, however, Skopje was to provide a blueprint for other parts of the globe with high seismicity, especially in the Global South, so that the lessons learned there could be applied elsewhere.¹³

One crucial aspect in particular relates to the type of aid and assistance offered to Skopje by both socialist and capitalist donor countries. Skopje’s predicament revealed an existing international *social* consensus—a shared set of values that transcended Cold War divides and prioritized institutions that embodied social justice and the welfare state,

¹² United Nations Archive, “Ernest Weissmann to Mr. A. Goldschmidt.”

¹³ United Nations Archive, “Ernest Weissmann to Mr. A. Goldschmidt.”

testifying to a sort of postwar consensus around “welfare-state modernism”.¹⁴ Evidence of this consensus includes the construction of two high schools (one of which was for students of Albanian origin) by the US and UK governments; a primary school named Heinrich Pestalozzi, designed by Alfred Roth, from the Swiss government; a state-of-the-art chemistry-focused high school, named for Maria Skłodowska Curie, from Poland; a modernist maternity hospital by the Czechoslovak trade union federation; a children’s pulmonary hospital from the Norwegian government and Swedish Red Cross; and a clinic, called Bucharest, from the Romanian government. Additionally, theaters, concert halls, and whole residential areas—such as the Dexion neighborhood, named after the British company that provided the framing materials, and the Taftalidze settlement, consisting of prefabs from Finland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, France, Mexico, Italy, Poland, and Switzerland—were financially supported by governments across the Cold War divide. These collaborative projects came to embody “the spirit of international solidarity” referred to in one of the UN resolutions calling for assistance to the Yugoslav government.¹⁵

For Yugoslav officials, the most pressing issue was the shortage of experts in seismological engineering. The International Institute for Seismology in Tokyo was suggested, in the earthquake’s immediate aftermath, to be the best institution to train domestic experts. However, the Yugoslav officials wanted to prioritize establishing a domestic Seismological Institute, which would have a local, but also regional Mediterranean, character and scope. Their reasoning was in line with the concept of “(collective) self-reliance”, which became

¹⁴ Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 17.

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, “Measures in Connection with the Earthquake at Skopje, Yugoslavia,” October 14, 1963, A/RES/1882, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f04b10.html>.

one of the core developmental principles of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77. The international consultative board that the United Nations and Yugoslav government had jointly appointed to support national and international reconstruction efforts also recommended the establishment of the Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology at the University of Skopje. It was founded in 1965 with the assistance of both the UN Development Program and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The institute’s first postgraduate program began that same year, becoming one of the first comprehensive courses in earthquake engineering in Europe. The visiting lecturers, who hailed from all over the world—Japan, the US, the USSR, the UK, India, Czechoslovakia, Romania, New Zealand, Canada, and Denmark—mirrored the country’s self-imposed imperative to appear neutral and true to its Non-Aligned identity.

At a ceremony in September 1965, the mayor of Skopje was presented with the Basic Urban Plan—the product of the work of over 150 experts, most from Poland’s Polservis, responsible for the social survey and the regional and general plans, and from Greece’s Doxiadis Associates, who worked on housing, transport, and infrastructure in collaboration with the domestic Yugoslav teams. Titled *The Citizen’s Voice*, the social survey involved the unprecedented task of interviewing around 4,000 families on their attitudes toward their existing living conditions and their needs and aspirations for new housing under the Master Plan. Adolf Ciborowski, Warsaw’s head architect between 1954 and 1964, was the public face of the international prestige of Polish urban planning that stemmed from the country’s reconstruction after the Second World War. Constantinos Doxiadis, for his part, was likewise well known among American and international development circles, not least as the administrator of the US’s aid to Greece delivered through the Marshall Plan.



Opening night of MoCA Skopje, 13/11 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE. PHOTO: ALEKSANDAR BASSIN

The Skopje Master Plan was celebrated as the visionary product of a collective international effort, embodying the best of scientific and technological progress and transnational solidarity. In the words of Skopje’s Mayor Blagoj Popov, “Drawn up in excellent cooperation with the United Nations and several organizations—the Plan represents the product of one of the most outstanding examples of international solidarity”.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, however, the intense collaboration process among multinational teams produced a number of challenges, not least the conflicting assessments stemming from the experts’ diverse professional traditions and training. Moreover, the entire project—in all its complexity—had to fit the specific and complex legal and political structures of socialist Macedonia and Yugoslavia.

A separate international competition was launched for the design of the city center.

¹⁶ Ivan Toševski, ed., *Your Aid to Skopje* (Skopje: Skopje City Assembly, 1965).

An international jury, headed by Weissmann, awarded the project of renowned Japanese architect Kenzō Tange and the project of two Yugoslav Croatian planners, Radovan Mišćević and Fedor Wenzler. These two designs were singled out, but ultimately aspects and recommendations from all eight submissions were incorporated in the plan. The city’s Master Plan and urban development over the next two decades became a testament to the developmental modernism and internationalist modernist paradigm of urban design championed by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), not least because key figures of the Skopje project—including Weissmann, Tange, Doxiadis, Martin Meyerson, and Jaap Bakema—were associated, at various stages in their careers, with CIAM, founded in Switzerland in 1928 with a mandate to advance modernism and internationalism in architecture. The plan for the city center took as its basis the proposal by Tange, who, by the early 1960s, had achieved international acclaim for combining traditional Japanese motifs and modernist elements and wielded significant



Elfie Semotan, *Untitled (Alexander the Great)*, Skopje, 2022/2023 • COURTESY STUDIO SEMOTAN

influence over the young Metabolism movement. His 1960 proposal for Tokyo Bay had gained international attention and triggered widespread discussion on city planning, but it was also criticized for its monumentality and technological determinism—something that would also be held against him by critics of Skopje's overly brutalist architectural heritage.¹⁷ Tange saw Yugoslavia's socialist political system as an advantage to architectural planning, and he also thought that public land ownership would be beneficial to carrying out his design.¹⁸

International cooperation and assistance transcended the realm of urban planning. The International Association of Art resolved to invite its members to donate their artworks to a new future museum in Skopje. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and by the beginning of the 1970s, the museum had a collection of around 2,000 works, with Pablo Picasso's *Woman's Head* (1963) being the most prominent and most valuable donation. Although the new building—designed by the Polish Tigers and Warsaw's General Construction Design Bureau—was not finished until 1970, the first exhibition of donated works took place in 1965, titled the *Rencontre de solidarité* [Solidarity meeting]. The fact that the catalogue was produced in three languages (Macedonian, English, and Russian) offered yet another manifestation of the neutrality underpinning Yugoslav Non-Aligned internationalism. Writing in 1970, British artist, critic, and art historian Kenneth Coutts-Smith underlined the aspects of "solidarity" and "cultural aid" visible in the project as a whole, locating in the museum

¹⁷ Kevin Nute, *Place, Time, and Being in Japanese Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2004); Rozita Dimova, "Elusive Centres of a Balkan City: Skopje between Undesirable and Reluctant Heritage", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 9 (2019): 958–973.

¹⁸ Zhongjie Lin, *Kenzo Tange and the Metabolist Movement: Urban Utopias of Modern Japan* (London: Routledge, 2010), 193.

a "cultural nexus" that transcended political and cultural boundaries:

One interesting way in which this "solidarity" has operated in the art world can be seen in Skopje, Yugoslavia. After the disastrous earthquake of 1963 people throughout the world responded with medical and material aid. The international art world also reacted, denoting "cultural aid" and painters and sculptors from many different countries gave works of art to rebuild the museum. The result of this is that Skopje now possesses one of the best collections of modern art in South Europe. The remarkable thing is that a certain "spirit of solidarity" has been kept alive largely due to the efforts of the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Boris Petkovski, whereby this museum has acted as a cultural nexus transcending political and cultural barriers and permitting art to operate genuinely outside of the national and promotional complex.¹⁹

Local institutional precedent was as fundamental to the existence of that cultural nexus as the Non-Aligned framework. Socialist Yugoslavia had invested in a large number of galleries and museums of modern art, and many of its architects, curators, and artists took state-funded study visits abroad, mostly in Western Europe and the US. The first director of the museum, Boris Petkovski, had spent a year in France, and he pointed to the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin—which opened in 1968 and was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—as inspiration for the new Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje.²⁰ As early as 1952, the National Gallery in Skopje, which was the new museum's predecessor, hosted an exhibition of French modern art, followed by exhibitions of historical and modern Dutch

¹⁹ Kenneth Coutts-Smith, *The Dream of Icarus* (London: Hutchinson, 1970).

²⁰ Boris Petkovski, *Museum of Contemporary Art—Skopje, 1964–1976* (Skopje: Dossier MoCA, 2001).



Tito visits MoCA Skopje, December 1972 • FROM LEFT TO RIGHT Dragoljub Stavrev (mayor of Skopje), Jovanka Broz, Josip Broz Tito and Boris Petkovski (the first director of MoCA) • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

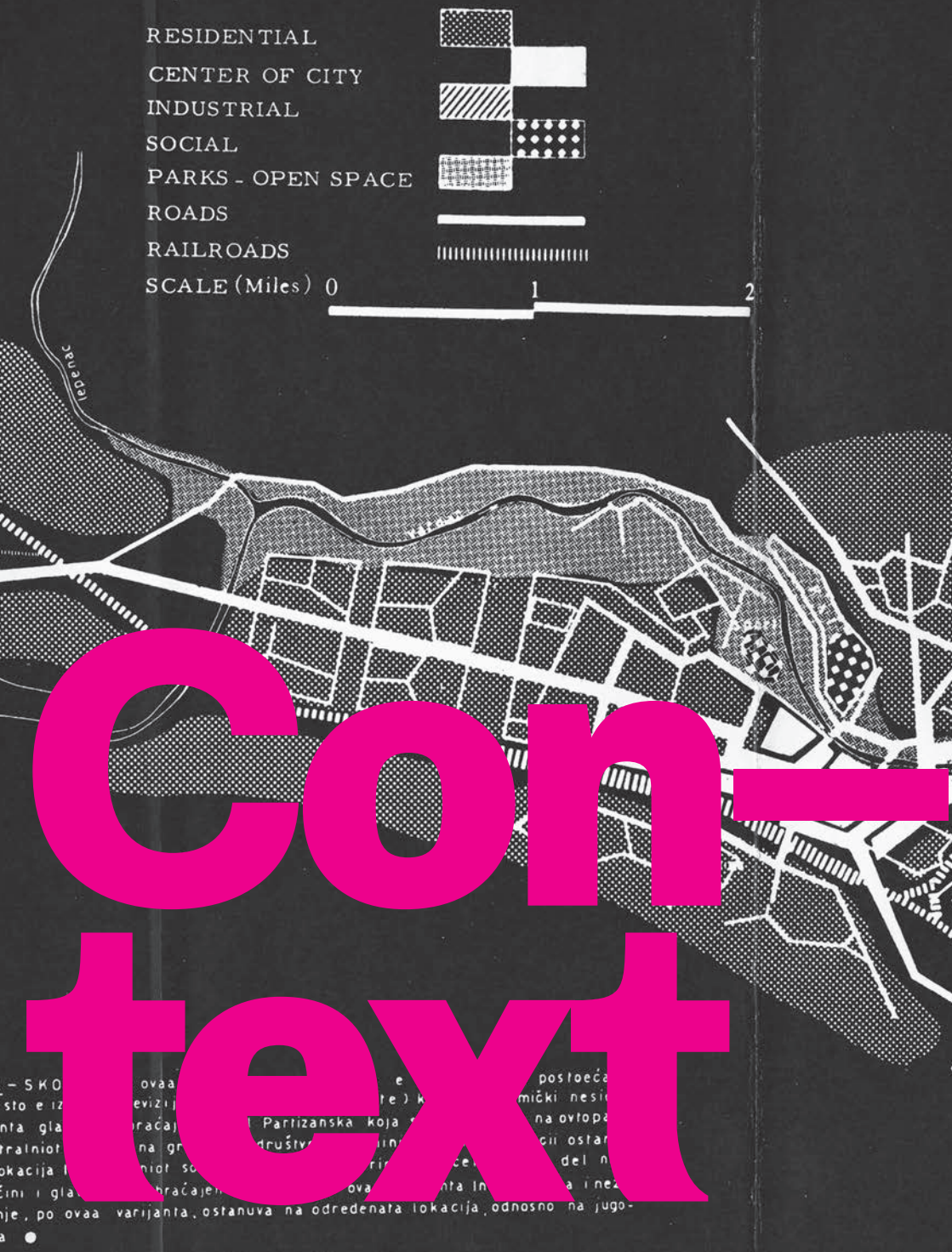
painting (1953), sculptures by Henry Moore (1955), modern Italian art (1956), modern Polish art (1957), and modern American art (1961), the latter in collaboration with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.²¹

The Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje, perched on a hill overlooking the city, managed to evade, in 2010, the catastrophic Neoclassical redesign of the city and the deliberate erasure of its modernist heritage and Yugoslav past. The redesign's contrast with the 1960s period could not be starker. Only half a century earlier, visions of urban development rooted in (high) modernism and an endorsement

²¹ Želimir Koščević, "Henry Moore's Exhibition in Yugoslavia, 1955", *British Art Studies*, no. 3 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-03/zkoscev>.

of Non-Alignment as a model of trans-bloc cooperation allowed for the convergence of artists, architects, city planners, and state officials across the Cold War divide. Although unique by virtue of the scope of international involvement, the rebuilding of Skopje was really a product of its age—one of several postwar examples of cities of the welfare state that embodied a particular, optimistic vision for a new world where progress was a given: with "streets open to everybody [...] its buildings communal and its plan ordered [...] designed for an equally ordered society which had been given the opportunity to devote itself to education, work and culture".²² ●

²² Jeremy Gould, *Plymouth: Vision of a Modern City* (Swindon, UK: English Heritage, 2010), 63.



Earthquake



Postcard, 1963–1970 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

At 5:17 am on July 26, 1963, Skopje was hit by a major earthquake—6.1 on the Richter scale—destroying 80 percent of the city. Over 16,000 homes collapsed, and many more sustained damaged. There were over 1,000 dead and more than 150,000 made homeless. The citizens of Skopje were joined by soldiers, miners, and workers from across Yugoslavia in a desperate search for those missing in the rubble. Around 6,000 people were saved in the first crucial hours. The next day, President Josip Broz Tito arrived in Skopje and proclaimed the reconstruction a symbol of the brotherhood and unity of the people of Yugoslavia. As a socialist country outside the Warsaw Pact and an initiator of the Non-Aligned Movement, which brought together countries wishing to remain independent from any major power bloc, Yugoslavia could call on both

sides of the Iron Curtain to show solidarity with Skopje. The United Nations launched a global humanitarian and reconstruction campaign, claiming: "Skopje shall be the monument of human solidarity. The record of man for man. The monument of international understanding." Tito's speech at the UN General Assembly emphasized that the response to the disaster "reflected the desire of the overwhelming majority of the people throughout the world to prevent the far greater catastrophe which a nuclear war would bring upon mankind". Relief—in the form of money and medical, engineering, and construction teams—was offered by 78 countries. Within three months, 14,180 flats were constructed in the suburbs alongside other buildings, and the international support lasted for many years. ●



Cover of *Paris Match*, August 1963 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM

Rebuilding Skopje,
1971 • COURTESY
COLLECTION CITY
MUSEUM SKOPJE



Planning the Rebuilding

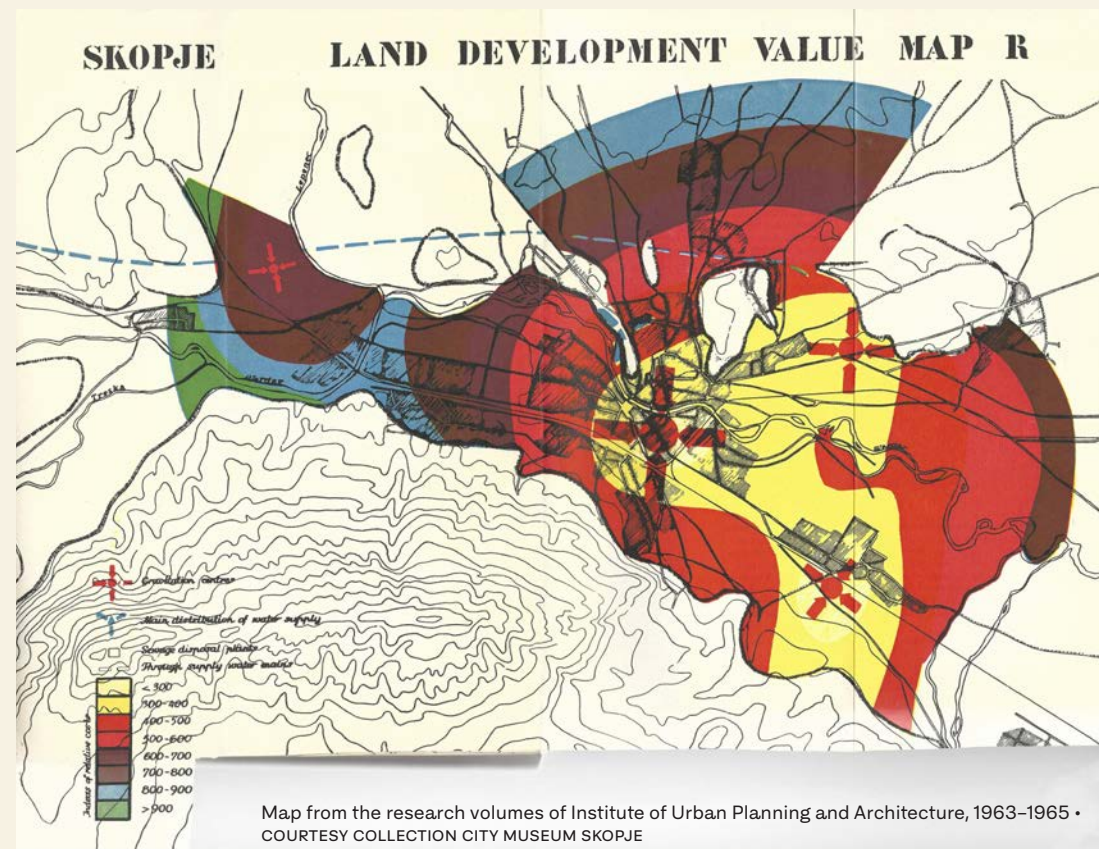
The United Nations took over the process of rebuilding Skopje following the 1963 earthquake, an effort made possible through the cooperation of a divided world. It oversaw the founding of a Board of Consultants, in which 25 countries participated. Yugoslavia immediately established the Institute for Town Planning and Reconstruction (ITPA) and the Department for City Planning in Skopje, which were put in charge of the process locally. The United Nations appointed the Croatian architect Ernest Weissmann, the president of the International Consultative Board for Repair and Reconstruction of Skopje, to advise on planning the rebuilding. The reconstruction itself was led by Polish architect Adolf Ciborowski, who had participated in the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw, and Doxiadis Associates, based in Athens. The majority

of the technical work was done locally, by the newly established ITPA. It worked with the Polish team and Doxiadis in preparing data for the Master Plan of the City Center competition, to be implemented over 20 years and prioritizing the ruined city center. An international competition in 1965 invited teams from Belgrade, Ljubljana, New York, Rotterdam, Rome, Tokyo, Skopje, and Zagreb to submit plans. The Tokyo team, under Kenzō Tange, and the Zagreb team, under Radovan Mišćević and Fedor Wenzler, were declared joint winners. The jury found all proposals valuable and so decided to combine them, incorporating various successful elements into Tange's winning proposal. The Master Plan was presented to the public in October 1965 and created a stir: around 40,000 people viewed it over one month. ●

Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture Skopje

Immediately after the earthquake in 1963, the Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture in Skopje was established by the state. They did remarkable work in dialogue with the United Nations, the Polish urban planners Polservices (experienced in rebuilding Warsaw), and the Greek architectural firm Doxiadis Associates. Over the next four years, they published more than 20 volumes of extensive studies for Skopje's Master Plan of the City Center on topics like future traffic, water systems, industrial zones, and the reconstruction of the Old Bazar and Kale fortress. Among the sizable team of architects, architectural

conservationists, consultants, and engineers that worked in the institute were many remarkable women, such as Marija Mitrevska, Ljiljana Mukaetova, Mirjana Pencik, Vera Savin, Nada Savevska, and Mimoza Tomik. The exhibition includes a few of the maps from the published volumes. ●





Master Plan of the City Center: Kenzō Tange's Proposal

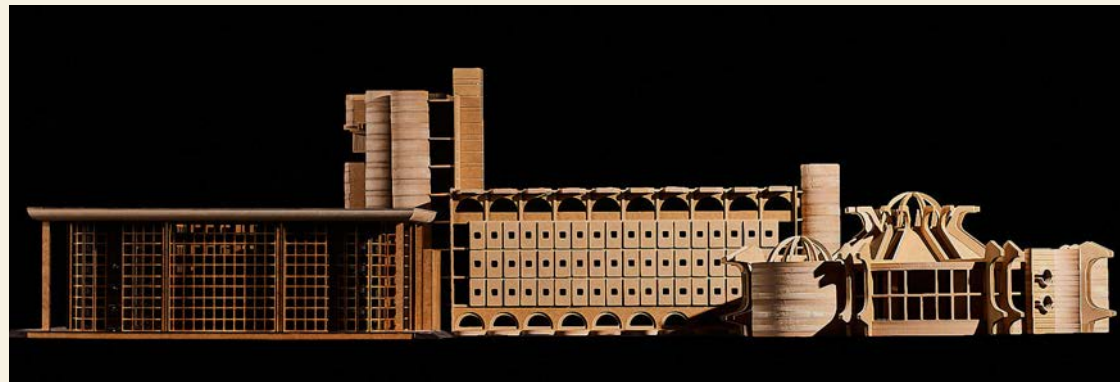
Kenzō Tange's proposal for Skopje's reconstruction started by adding a new axis to the city. The historical (north–south) axis connected the 1873 railway station to the main Ottoman bazaar, running through the central nineteenth-century city square. The new (east–west) axis included a city gate that linked together all the city's transport systems. The city gate would connect to the main square to create a new axis parallel to the Vardar river, prioritizing politics, education, culture, and trade. Around that public core, Tange planned residential areas for 30,000 people, called "City Wall". These were crescent-shaped units for collective living designed to reflect the form of the historical fortress at the top of Kale Hill. The architect's attention to local conditions extended to a close analysis of climate, winds, and the river's behavior throughout the year. Because of time and money pressures, many of Tange's concepts were compromised and



Kenzō Tange, Competition phase model for the central city area, 1965 • COURTESY COLLECTION CITY MUSEUM SKOPJE

much of the plan left unrealized. This Master Plan did, however, go on to serve as the basis for ambitious modernist architecture over the ensuing decades. ●

Architectural Model Collection: The Buildings of Skopje's Post-earthquake Renewal



For over a decade, the research team of Skopje-based architects Ana Ivanovska Deskova, Jovan Ivanovski, and Vladimir Deskov have conducted a critical examination of many buildings of the post-earthquake renewal of Skopje. One particularly important step in their research is the (re)creation of significant buildings as physical architectural models: a tool for exploring, developing critical understanding, and presenting the qualities of architecture and the experience of space. Through the process of (re)constructing the buildings in reduced scale, material, and technique, and by using the method of analytical abstraction, the team found that the architectural models brought the researched material closer to the understanding of audiences. What started as an innocent act of model-making of the few most significant buildings evolved into the dedicated engagement of a growing group of enthusiasts, who to date have created a collection of over 80 models. For their makers, this collection is more than an accumulation of material artifacts—it is a treasure-trove of architectural concepts and ideas that are still relevant and can spark novel discussions about architecture and its meaning. ●

Model of the Telecommunication Center, Skopje, 1972/1989 • PHOTO: VASE AMANITO



Model of the City Wall, Residential Tower type B, Skopje, 1966–ongoing • PHOTO: VASE AMANITO

Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje

Soon after the earthquake in July 1963, an appeal went out to artists to donate artworks for Skopje. More than 100 donated works were shown in a first exhibition, organized as early as October 1963. The International Association of Art—associated with the United Nations, which was coordinating the city's reconstruction—issued another international call for support at its convention, held in October 1963 in New York. Simultaneously, an Initiative Board was formed in Skopje to establish a Gallery of Modern Art (later renamed the Museum of Contemporary Art) and to care for the rapidly growing collection until the new museum was built to permanently house the works. The new institution immediately started organizing exhibition programs in various temporary spaces.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje (MoCA Skopje) was founded on February 11, 1964, with art historian Boris Petkovski as its first director. The Polish government provided



Installation view of the first permanent exhibition of MoCA Skopje, 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

support to Skopje by funding the construction of the new museum. In cooperation with the City Assembly of Skopje, the Polish Association of Architects and Draftsmen in Warsaw launched a competition for the design of the new building. In May 1966, the winning proposal—chosen from among 89 projects—was announced: that of the *Tygrysy* [Tigers], a group of three Polish architects: Wacław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński, and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki. Construction began in April 1969, and the new building opened to the public on November 13, 1970. By that point, MoCA Skopje's permanent collection included over 2,000 works of art by over 1,000 artists from 40 countries. ●



Installation view of the first permanent exhibition of MoCA Skopje, 1970 • COURTESY MOCA SKOPJE

Małgorzata Potocka: Screen for Skopje

Małgorzata Potocka

Screen for Skopje

1988, 28'50"

produced by Education Film Studio (Poland) und Studio Vardar Film (Macedonia)

In the mid-1970s, actress and film director **Małgorzata Potocka** lived in Skopje. In the 1980s, together with her husband artist **Józef Robakowski**, she founded an independent gallery in Łódź in their private flat called *Galeria Wymiany* [Exchange Gallery]. The gallery's remarkable avant-garde collection and activities were based on exchanges between Polish and international artists. During the twentieth anniversary of the Skopje earthquake, Potocka was inspired by Poland's involvement in rebuilding Skopje and building the Museum of Contemporary Art. Using her connections, she decided to make a gift to the museum, following the principles of the Exchange Gallery. She directed the film *Screen for Skopje* for the museum. This is a compilation of contributions (performances, interventions, or short films) by contemporary artists including **Sanja Iveković** and **Dalibor Martinis**, **Józef Robakowski**, **Tomislav Gotovac**, **Christo & Jeanne-Claude**, **Edward Krasiński**, **Joan Jonas** ... ●



Sanja Iveković & Dalibor Martinis



Igor Mitrićki



Edward Krasiński

all: Małgorzata Potocka,
Screen for Skopje,
film stills, 1988

Skopje 2014

Skopje 2014 was a project financed by Macedonia's nationalist government, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The project seems to have had many contradictory aims, but one was to give Skopje's central district a more historical feel, opposed to the modernism Tange and other post-earthquake architects had introduced in the mid-1960s. Announced in 2010, the plan consisted of constructing new buildings and renovating old ones, as well as installing sculptures, bridges, fountains, and monuments. All took on a unique style somewhere between Neo-Antiquity and Neo-Baroque. Often, new Classical facades were simply attached to the front of modernist structures, largely ignoring the original building's function.



The participants of the Colorful Revolution try to tear down the monument to Prometheus, 2016 • PHOTO: MAJA JANEVSKA-ILIEVA

Skopje 2014 immediately polarized public opinion. Many saw it as destroying the modernist city and producing an incoherent, kitsch version of Classical architecture. Criticism also targeted the artists chosen to participate, the allocation of resources to political friends, and the cultural fantasies behind the plans. Huge statues of the ancient king Philip II of Macedon and his wife, as well as a central Rider on a Horse (a clear reference to Alexander the Great), were obvious attempts to claim the legacy of ancient Macedonia and proclaim ethnic Macedonians as the rightful rulers of the country. The claim to "ancient Macedonia" also erased the history of the city's large Albanian minority, part of Skopje for centuries. This rewriting of history was in part driven by the ongoing naming dispute with Greece, revolving around the fact that "Macedonia" is connected to territorial claims and identity questions for both countries. Greece blocked Macedonia's participation in international associations for many years over this issue. Only in 2018 was the dispute finally resolved, when Macedonia's new government agreed to rename the country "North Macedonia".

By 2013, the Skopje 2014 project had been expanded from 40 to 130 structures and the cost had shot up from 80 to 560 million euros. A wire-tapping scandal in 2015 revealed that the government had temporarily revoked cultural heritage status on some of the buildings in order to push the plans through. In the opposition media, the project was associated with corruption and money laundering. During the so-called Colorful Revolution, Skopje's citizens (as shown in photographs by Maja Janevska-Ilieva) protested by throwing paint on the new buildings, facades, and monuments. They also managed to block some of the "renovations",

A lion sculpture painted by the Colorful Revolution, 2016 • PHOTO: MAJA JANEVSKA-ILIEVA



such as the reconfiguration of the popular modernist shopping mall in the city center. After 2017, a new federal coalition, led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, pledged to start removing some statues—but it proved costly and politically complicated. As a result, Skopje 2014 still dominates the center of the city, though many of the structures—poorly constructed—are already crumbling away. ●



Participants of the Colourful Revolution throw paint on the building of the Parliament, 2016
• PHOTO: MAJA JANEVSKA-ILIEVA



Demonstrators, participants of the Colorful Revolution, gather in front of the Triumphal Arch, part of the Skopje 2014 project, 2016
• PHOTO: MAJA JANEVSKA-ILIEVA

“By rewriting history and by expelling and erasing all marginal elements that do not fit with its vision and might resist its enterprise, the Macedonian government uses national imagery to construct a new image for its capital city—as the prime showcase of the country—and achieve international recognition. From an Ottoman and socialist city, Skopje is being turned into an antique, European, Christian and bourgeois city that it has never been, but which could help it find its place in the European market.”

—Ophélie Véron, “Challenging Neoliberal Nationalism in Urban Space: Transgressive Practices and Spaces in Skopje,” in *Identity, Justice and Resistance in the Neoliberal City*, ed. Gülçin Erdi and Yıldırım Şentürk (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 125.

The City That Was Too Modern

2018, 52'
from the *Slumbering Concrete*
docuseries, 2016–ongoing
Produced by Hulahop for HRT



The documentary series *Slumbering Concrete* builds its story around the architecture of the socialist modernist period in former Yugoslavia. In each episode, the architecture critic Maroje Mrduljaš and his team visit modernist buildings meant to serve the ordinary citizen and provide a place to work, a place to live, and a place to enjoy culture and holidays. Although many of the buildings are considered cultural heritage, because of governmental negligence, they are mostly in ruins and can no longer fulfill their primary purpose. In the exhibition, you can view the episode “The City That Was Too Modern”, which focuses on Skopje, its glorious architectural past, and also its architectural present, as shaped by the Skopje 2014 project. ●



The City That Was Too Modern, film stills, 2018



М. РАБОТНИКИ

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The Skopje Solidarity Collection:

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urbanizam i arhitektura - Skopje, izaboren od
tivot - arhitekti urbanisti

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diplomirani ing arch POTA LJUBA

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teh, arch MILA JEREMIĆ
diplomirani ing arch VLČEVSKI RARAJL

so tehnička pomoć od UNTA eksped
planer MOURICE ROTIVAL, AIP I SEU

direktor,
diplomirani ing arch
GALIĆ RISTO

Belgrad

