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Abstract

Vladimir Kulić and Maroje Mrduljaš co-edited two invaluable books in 2012: *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism* and *Modernism In-Between. The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*. These complementary books deal with modernism in architecture and urbanism in the territories of former Yugoslavia from its post-WWII period until its phased dissolution in the 1990s. The authors are trained as architects with distinctive background in the field. Kulić and Mrduljaš obtained their professional degrees in architecture in the former Yugoslavia, at the University of Belgrade and the University of Zagreb, respectively. Kulić further specialized in modernism in 1950s and 1960s socialist Yugoslavia, which is also a focus of his forthcoming book based on his doctoral dissertation in architectural history from the University of Texas in Austin (2009). He currently teaches architectural history and design at Florida Atlantic University in the United States. Mrduljaš, who currently works at the University of Zagreb, is an architectural critic and editor of the journal *Oris*. Among his numerous projects, are studies about architecture of hotels along the Adriatic Littoral and about the role of Team X on the architecture in the region of Southeastern Europe. These two substantial books result from their expertise in architecture and, in particular, from their professional collaboration on an international research project sponsored by the European Commission Culture Programme (2010-12) concerning architecture and urban planning in socialist Yugoslavia and the successor states.

Disciplines

Architectural History and Criticism | Slavic Languages and Societies

Comments

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Book Reviews

Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*. In English. Zagreb: Udruženje hrvatskih arhitekata / Croatian Architects' Association, 2012. Cloth. Pp. 472; 702 black-and-white figures and line drawings; timeline with 77 thumbnail images; biographies; image credits; project's and publication's details.

Vladimir Kulić and Maroje Mrduljaš, photographs Wolfgang Thaler, *Modernism In-Between. The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*. In English. Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2012. Cloth. Pp. 272; 178 color and 108 black-and-white figures; selected bibliography; index; image credits; biographies; imprint.

Vladimir Kulić and Maroje Mrduljaš co-edited two invaluable books in 2012: *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism* and *Modernism In-Between. The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*. These complementary books deal with modernism in architecture and urbanism in the territories of former Yugoslavia from its post-WWII period until its phased dissolution in the 1990s. The authors are trained as architects with distinctive background in the field. Kulić and Mrduljaš obtained their professional degrees in architecture in the former Yugoslavia, at the University of Belgrade and the University of Zagreb, respectively. Kulić further specialized in modernism in 1950s and 1960s socialist Yugoslavia, which is also a focus of his forthcoming book based on his doctoral dissertation in architectural history from the University of Texas in Austin (2009). He currently teaches architectural history and design at Florida Atlantic University in the United States. Mrduljaš, who currently works at the University of Zagreb, is an architectural critic and editor of the journal *Oris*. Among his numerous projects, are studies about architecture of hotels along the Adriatic Littoral and about the role of Team X on the architecture in the region of Southeastern Europe. These two substantial books result from their expertise in architecture and, in particular, from their professional collaboration on an international research project sponsored by the European Commission Culture Programme (2010-12) concerning architecture and urban planning in socialist Yugoslavia and the successor states.

The book *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism* examines various relationships between architecture, urban planning, society and politics in the former Yugoslavia. Following a laudatory preface by the reputable architectural historian and critic Dietmar Steiner (p.5), Mrduljaš and Kulić utilize the introduction (pp. 6-13) to explain their focus on modernizations as “multiple and fragmented processes” that “showed a certain degree of independence or divergence from how they played out in international centers of modernity, which was essentially affected by the ‘between’ position: between socialist East and capitalist West, the economically developed North and the underdeveloped South, progressive cultural experiments and re-traditionalisation, between innovative political conceptions and repressive mechanisms of ideological control” (p. 6). Therefore, they examine architectural and urban planning practices as channels of modernizations, between architectural and political practices examined on regional and global levels, between utopia and pragmatism in architecture and society. These modernizations were almost never finished and fully articulated practices in the context of the short-lived socialist Yugoslavia, but according to the authors, they were also almost never dystopian (p. 7). Dejan Jović, a critical international voice on the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, provides a condensed historiographical overview of “Yugoslavia as Project and Experiment” (pp. 14-21). The substantial timeline of 1945-1991 further highlights historical events and major con-current architectural accomplishments thus creating an

informative and complementary overview of the entire volume (pp. 22-33). The book is then divided into five thematic sections, each with several contributions on the topic. Forty scholars originally from all parts of the former Yugoslavia -- trained in various centers as architects, urban planners, designers, architectural historians, theoreticians and critics -- are assembled together for the first time after the dissolution of Yugoslavia to provide their critical voice on its diverse and remarkable architecture. They have contributed thirty essays grouped in the following sections: "Spaces of Representation" (pp. 34-119); "Spaces of Global Exchange" (pp. 120-153); "Politics of Urban Space" (pp. 154-291); "Design of Spatial Practices" (pp. 292-369); and "Yugoslav Architectural Space" (pp. 370-463). The sections with authors' short biographies, image and project's details, close the entire manuscript (pp. 464-472).

The book *Modernism In-Between. The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* sets an ambitious goal to re-chart post-World War II European architecture by employing postmodernist methodologies in studies of modernist architecture and its pluralist manifestations locally in the context of Socialist Yugoslavia; regionally and trans-nationally within (Eastern) European and world contexts; or within the same architectural types such as residential, civic, governmental, educational, recreational, commercial, industrial, or memorial, to name but a few. Here, Kulić and Mrduljaš embrace Zygmunt Bauman's theoretical platform of the so-called "liquid modernity" (that other scholars also called "postmodernity," "late modernity," "second modernity" or "hyper modernity") to investigate the mediatory role of architecture and social space in which architects "transcended their 'floating periphery' and become their own centers" (p. 17). In this manner, the authors consider various sets of opposites of production of architecture in socialist society and new societal and architectural qualities that resulted from such interactions.

The book opens with the preface "Reassembling Yugoslav Architecture" by internationally renowned architectural theorist, Ákos Moravánszky, who supports Kulić's and Mrduljaš's thesis that challenges the notions of "provincialism" of modernist architecture in the region. Following the introduction (pp. 16-19), Kulić and Mrduljaš then focus on the various notions of "architecture in betweenness." The first chapter "A History of Betweenness" (pp. 20-29) posits that the architectural profession has an elitist cultural status in the changing and hybrid economy of the former Yugoslavia. The chapter "Between Worlds" (pp. 30-73) examines the position of Yugoslav architectural production in-between Soviet, Western, and the so-called "Third World" architectural markets. The chapter "Between Identities" (pp. 74-117) combines the issues of national identities in modernist architecture as rooted in its vernacular sources with concept of regional modernisms as defined by architect and architectural historian Kenneth Frampton. Chapter "Between Continuity and Tabula Rasa" (pp. 118-163) highlights major city reconstructions and innovative urban designs following physical destructions after WWII by focusing on examples of selected cities: (New) Belgrade, (New) Zagreb, the entirely new city Nova Gorica; on reconstruction projects for Zadar, Sarajevo, and Split; and on Kenzo Tange's winning project for the reconstruction of Skopje after the disastrous earthquake of 1963. The chapter "Between Individual and Collective" (pp. 164-213) re-assesses collective well-being and individual freedom through architectural projects for "socialist consumerism" embodied in residential, educational, medical, and recreational facilities. The final chapter "Between Past and Future" (pp. 214-267) highlights as examples the anti-historical projects by Vjenceslav Richter and Bogdan Bogdanović. In particular, Richter's visionary "synthurbanism" that shared ideas of mobility, technology and mega-architecture as concurrently examined by Japanese Metabolists and Archigram are discussed. Bogdanović's memorials, that captured international scholarly attention due to their mythical, surreal, and monumental artistic qualities, internally promoted the official history of socialist Yugoslavia by mythologizing World War II and by downplaying the facts that the war was fought not only against Nazi occupiers, but also that it was simultaneously a brutal civil war. The book is lavishly illustrated by high-quality

professional photographs done by Wolfgang Thaler that strongly complement Kulić's and Mrduljaš's plea for appropriate recognition of architectural values of the studied projects. This book also has a much desired bibliography of critical works in regionalist modernist architecture, including earlier publications about modernist architecture in the former Yugoslavia and the successor states, such as the seminal books: *Arhitektura Jugoslavije 1945-1990* (1991) and *The Architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1945-1995* (1998) by Academician Ivan Štraus; and bilingual *Srpska arhitektura XX veka / Serbian 20th Century Architecture* by Professor Miloš R. Perović (2003) and *Slovenska arhitektura dvajstega stoletje / Slovene Architecture of the Twentieth Century* by Professor Stane Bernik (2004).

The material presented in these two books, written some 20 years after the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, is dense and intriguing. Because there is certainly not enough space to mention all relevant issues that the authors bring to scholarly discussions, let me highlight just a few topical architectural themes. The strongest part of both books, in my opinion, is within the investigations of the urban planning of new (socialist) cities such as New Belgrade, New Zagreb, and entirely new cities in Slovenia by the 1960s. Particularly refreshing is the text on New Belgrade, which critically examines the urban transformations of New Belgrade from planned to unplanned city. The authors, Ivan Kucina and Milica Topalović successfully highlight the importance of human scale in the transitional functionalist city of New Belgrade as originally promoted by Miloš Perović, a student of the famous Doxiadis, who championed eco-geographical ekistics. Without any pathos they argue for the return of the active role of architects and urban planners within the socio-political reality of post-socialist, post-Yugoslavian New Belgrade today. Texts about multi-cultural socialist Sarajevo, Japanese-Yugoslavian collaboration within the competing visions of modernity for the reconstruction of Skopje, or the blurring lines between architectural and urban scales in Split 3, embraced by American-Canadian activist for urban space Jane Jacobs, are potentially of great interest to international audience as well.

Kulić's and Mrduljaš's promotion of mass housing in socialist Yugoslavia as the most coherent and integrative mediatory process of architects, residential design and the state, nicely complements the recent book by Kimberly Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* (2011), who examines these questions in other parts of Eastern Europe. The themes of the architectural profession in the socialist construct are successfully opened in texts that discuss Vjenceslav Richter, Vladimir Turina, Nikola Dobrović, Milan Zloković, Zlatko Ugljen, Milorad Pantović, Jurij Nedihardt, and their connections with acclaimed figures of modernism such as Le Corbusier and Jože Plečnik. By touching upon the leading role of female architects, such as Milica Šterić of Energoprojekt, who designed its official headquarters in Belgrade in 1958 and played a critical role in the affirmation of architecture and urban design, that are not subordinated to structural engineering, Kulić and Mrduljaš and their collaborators instigate further research on the architectural profession and the female architects in the post-World War II period. It is also worth mentioning that in both volumes Kulić and Mrduljaš highlight a very distinct version of regionalism within modernist religious architecture, on the example of Šerefudin White Mosque designed by architect Zlatko Ugljen and built in Visoko, near Sarajevo (1969-79). This internationally acclaimed, small-scale master-piece, won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1983. The relevance of this particular project is not only in religious architecture and modernism, but also in the revived interest in religious architecture and sustainability in postmodern contexts.

One contributor, Dubravka Sekulić also makes an excellent case for spaces of global exchange of architecture and architectural practices by focusing on a paradoxical construct of "socialist corporation," the legendary "Energoprojekt," based in Belgrade and still active. Founded in the

1950s and strongly supported by Tito's critical involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement, the company eventually outgrew its political framework. Because of its efficient and integrative building processes that incorporated local labor, sensitive integration of international with tropical and other regional modernisms that respected local contexts, full completion of projects within short-deadlines, Energoprojekt became a major international corporation that successfully integrated land survey, urban design, architecture, engineering, construction, project management and supervision in numerous projects locally in the former Yugoslavia, globally in more than 70 states, and previously unrecognized and untapped markets in the Middle East, the former Soviet Union, China, South Asia, Latin America, and the decolonized countries of Africa.

With these two significant and timely book projects, which are published in English to ensure access to both scholarly and popular audiences, Kulić and Mrduljaš established themselves as major voices in the field of modernist architecture and politics in the former Yugoslavia. At a time when much of archival and historical research about Yugoslavia is still in progress, their work is extremely important as they efficiently emphasize that modernist architecture has to be studied from pluralist perspectives. The promotion of socialist values in modernist architecture in the former Yugoslavia during the so-called Cold War period and other controversial questions about the production and reception of modernist architecture, that Kulić and Mrduljaš raise in their books, will certainly stir discussions in the academic circles searching for re-definitions of modernism, modernity, and related inclusive processes of modernizations in architecture and society across different territories, cultures, and socio-political systems. The impressively generous visual material on the topic they have presented, with more than 800 images, offer seemingly endless possibilities for further investigations and comparative studies of modernist architecture and its afterlife. In particular, these two books provide great potential for further research and better understanding of built-architectural capital within the re-emerging studies of globalization. Indeed, *Unfinished Modernisations* and *Modernism In-Between* are inspiring books of great interest to architectural historians and theoreticians, scholars in modernist and regional studies, and everyone interested in modern architecture and its variants.

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