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KARST LANDSCAPE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR CREATIVE OPUSES OF LOJZE SPACAL AND ZORAN MUŠIČ

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ABSTRACT

Authoress dealt with their research of artistic interpretations based on the inspiration of the landscape they belong to by birth. It is a fact that they are contemporaries by generation. Their language finds expression in modernistic art characteristics and they preferred to express themselves in the abstract rather than figural artistic language. However, either one of them individually developed their distinct artistic languages, which placed Zoran Mušič on the summit of world art of the previous century, and Lojze Spacal as the central personality in Trieste and in broader Slovenian and Italian cultural milieu of the time. The painters Lojze Spacal and Zoran Mušič are connected by generation and by their place of birth, but above all by their attachment to the landscape of Kras, which represented their creative resource for decades, and was a very important if not decisive inspiration for their artistic quests in painting, as well as in graphic art. Their work preserves Karstic landscape with all its bitterness and rock hardness. Its soil, baked and cracked by the baking sun in red, brown and ochre hues remains recognizable and widely included in the cultural heritage of the previous century.

Key words: painting, graphic art, landscape, Zoran Mušič, Lojze Spacal, Karstic landscape, Kras, modernistic art characteristics

IL PAESAGGIO CARSICO – ISPIRATORE PER LE OPERE CREATIVE DI LOJZE SPACAL E ZORAN MUŠIČ

SINTESI

L'autrice si è concentrata sulla ricerca dell'interpretazione artistica dei due pittori, basata sul paesaggio a cui appartengono per nascita. I due artisti sono coetanei e contemporanei. Il loro linguaggio trova espressione nelle caratteristiche dell'arte modernistica, preferendo l'espressione attraverso l'astratto piuttosto che tramite il linguaggio artistico figurativo. Ad ogni modo ciascuno sviluppò individualmente il proprio linguaggio artistico ben distinto, il che pone Zoran Mušič al vertice dell'arte mondiale del secolo scorso e Lojze Spacal diventa il personaggio centrale a Trieste e nell'ambiente culturale più ampio del tempo, sia italiano che sloveno. I due pittori Lojze Spacal e Zoran Mušič sono legati dall'anno e dal luogo di nascita, ma soprattutto dal loro attaccamento al paesaggio del Carso che ha rappresentato la loro fonte creativa per decenni ed è stato estremamente importante se non addirittura decisivo quale ispiratore della loro ricerca artistica nella pittura e nelle arti grafiche. Il loro lavoro preserva il paesaggio carsico con tutta la sua amarezza e la durezza della pietra. Il suo suolo è arso e spaccato dal sole che lo colora di tinte rosse, marroni e ocre e rimane riconoscibile e ampiamente incluso nel retaggio culturale del secolo passato.

Parole chiave: pittura, arti grafiche, paesaggio, Zoran Mušič, Lojze Spacal, paesaggio carsico, Carso, caratteristiche dell'arte modernistica

INTRODUCTION

The past century meant a golden age of art in Primorska, and a golden age of important formation of artists who marked their local and national environment or even managed to succeed in wider Europe or the world. In their best creative years, at the beginning of the second half of the century such a launch was successful for two artists whose roots lie at this meeting point of cultures and nations, in an area which has been inspiring for centuries due to its morphology and atmosphere, in an area which respectfully transformed the common noun of 'kras' into a proper name. Kras! Like in the work of other artists of Primorska, such as the painters Veno Pilon, Riko Debenjak, Avgust Černigoj, Vladimir Makuc, Silvester Komel, Zvest Apollonio, the sculptors Janez Lenassi, Negovan Nemec and Zmago Posega, it is possible to define Kras as a thematic and formal source of internal quests in the work of Lojze Spacal and Zoran Mušič, who created new and new messages in remade vision, expressed in their supreme artistic language of modernistic tradition. Lojze Spacal comes from Trieste by birth, and considered himself as a "kind of a lonely troubadour of Kras, who sings his Karstic songs to all who love our Kras and fine art" (Kržišnik, 1982, 34). Zoran Mušič was born in Bukovica in the area of Gorizia, but he was carrying Kras in his heart since his early childhood: "You see", they used to tell me, "Kras begins behind that hill..." Kras...I sensed and felt this magical name in my very early years" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 95).

GENERATIONAL CONTEMPORARIES

The painters Lojze Spacal and Zoran Mušič are connected by generation and by their place of birth, but above all by their attachment to the landscape of Kras, which represented their creative resource for decades, and was a very important if not decisive inspiration for their artistic quests in painting, as well as in graphic art. Their work preserves Karstic landscape with all its bitterness and rock hardness. Its soil, baked and cracked by the baking sun in red, brown and ochre hues remains recognizable and widely included in the cultural heritage of the previous century. Over decades Karstic land represented a source for Lojze Spacal to re-interpret its elements, structures, architectural elements, its rocks laid into walls, heavy window frames, worked portals but also wooden crucifixes on graveyards and St. Andrew's Crosses in fences, interesting chimney shapes called 'spahnjenca', growing from the ground against the wall. There are also roofs covered in renowned slate tiles; and the experience of colours that the painter transposed subtly onto the painting surface in an apparently austere colour range of grey rocks, reddish soil, bushes and fenced fields. Zoran Mušič begins his story with distinctive little horses in profile and en face, "run-

ning across the canvas, pink and light green, light blue, purple, as fugitive visions of creatures which are both animals and gods of light and freedom at a time, when they hurry silently on their slim, hoofless little legs" (Mušič, 1991, 13–14). In his Dalmatian landscapes he comes closest to the abstract artistic expression, loosening up his colour range the most. It remains restricted to 'earthly' tones, yet they are louder and more penetrating, so that line and drawing as his most meaningful medium fades away and opens up to colour as the medium of the painter's message. Furthermore, in his works which bear different names, Kras is found as a metaphor of suffering, transitoriness, hardness, strength and perseverance. It inspired and provoked a deeply touching, poetic remake of human pain, filled with a magnificent aesthetic charge, expressed in the artistic language which Mušič had been building throughout all his creative periods, so as to speak with it honestly to express his deepest truth. Attachment to the landscape to which both painters belong shows throughout the decades of their creative quests. To them this land represents an artistic challenge, a place of meditation and creative charge, a magical source of formal and thematic quests, a belonging to a certain cultural and national circle, and the power of landscape. We are able to sense and experience it in their work and detect it in the words that they used in different life and creative periods to confirm their attachments and their artistic basis, as well as to confirm their research of an inspiring source of their re-interpretations and meditations. This is also the source of their experiences, feelings and powerful emotions which encouraged them to create and realize imposing opuses in their long lives.

Generational contemporaries whose artistic language proliferated in modernistic trends, both painters expressed themselves in the abstract rather than the figural. However, each of the painters developed his own, distinct artistic language. Thus, Lojze Spacal becomes the central figure of the period in Trieste and wider in the Slovenian and Italian cultural environments, while Zoran Mušič is appreciated as one of the top artists worldwide of the previous century. The painters belonged to the same generation, but they were educated in different milieus. Also, early influences on their work came from different cultural backgrounds. Lojze Spacal was born in Trieste on 15th June 1907 to parents who originated from the Slovenian rural environment of Kras, while Zoran Mušič was born to Slovenian parents, teachers by profession, in Bukovica near Gorizia, right under the Karstic edge, on 12th February 1909.

Lojze Spacal did not decide to be a painter before the age of thirty. After spending years in exile, and after his schooling at different places in Italy, he was educated at Superior Art School in Monza and continued his education for three years at the Brera Academy in Milan in the years before World War II. He spent all his life



Fig. 1: Lojze Spacal, *Evening on the Karst*, 1951 (Badovinac Z. et al., 2000).

Sl. 1: Lojze Spacal, *Večer na Krasu*, 1951 (Badovinac Z. et al., 2000).

torn between Trieste and Kras. "I was born in Trieste", says Lojze Spacal in a talk he had with Zoran Kržišnik for his 1982 monograph, "but I can feel Kras, as my father and mother both come from Kostanjevica on Kras.... Kras is a rocky, glittering world. It is also a bitter poem with the scent of juniper, pine and limestone. Kras is a dramatisation, reminiscent of human originality.... The man from Kras is similar to Karstic nature.... In my figural phase from 1945 to 1950 I painted Karstic farm women and laundresses... Rock is a symbol of Kras, therefore I respect and admire it". Lojze Spacal was a loner by nature, not even willing to frequent artistic circles. Neither did he enjoy travelling, except for a visit to Macedonia in the mid-fifties, where he discovered the world that he was carrying in his heart, but he had not been able to awake it in him. He travelled little around Europe, reaching Sweden on the occasion of an exhibition. However, most of his travels were done around Italy and Slovenia. After the second war he settled down in his home environment, living and working in Trieste, almost in the centre, opposite Revoltello museum, with a view of the sea. He renovated an old house in Piran and in Škrbina on Kras, refurbishing ethnographically the old Karstic homestead in appreciation of the land of Kras.

To Zoran Mušič, Trieste was not an unknown city, as he was born beyond the "great hill" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 95), beyond the Karstic ridge of the Vipava Valley. He also had his first solo exhibition there right after World

War II. However, his life and artistic career led him to another town, which he had dreamed of already as a child: "Although so close, Venice was a part of another world. I kept asking myself if I was meant to see it..." (Silič Nemec, 1991, 95). During the World War I Zoran Mušič began his journey with his family to various places of Austro-Hungarian Empire and later Yugoslavia. In 1930 he enrolled in the Zagreb Academy of Fine Art and after that spent a year studying in Spain. After 1945 he lived torn between Venice and Paris, but kept a view of Kras and Karstic landscape. "You see", they would tell me, "Kras begins beyond that hill". "Kras... is a magical name which I felt already in my early years. It seemed to me that paradise was hidden beyond that hill. Back then we used to live in a little village of Bukovica near Gorizia, where my father used to teach. The village lies almost at the foot of this hill, and when we went to visit my uncles in Trieste, we ascended the hill by a local train to get to Kras. This journey among rocks and stones, dolinas and bushes which turn red and ochre with the coming autumn, raised unforgettable feelings within me" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 95). These are the words of the artist from his biography in the catalogue to the permanent exhibition of his work at the Dobrovo Castle, written in 1991. They reflect the painter's memories of his childhood years, lived in his native village of Bukovica right beside Gorizia. A long way led the painter and graphic artist Zoran Mušič to Venice, a way

leading through many places. Namely, after Bukovica, the family moved to Šentilj near Velenje, to Brda, to Völkermarkt in Carinthia. He went to school in Maribor and Zagreb, discovered Dalmatia, and went to Spain, where he spent most of his time in Madrid. In the middle of World War II he found himself in Gorizia, and visited Venice in 1943 for the first time. In September 1944 he was in Dachau, and after the war in Venice again. In 1952 he also went to Paris. Since then he lived between Paris and Venice, remembering Brda, fatefully bonded to the Karstic landscape, which left indelible traces in him, and helped form his artistic language, which places him among the great spirits which marked our time.

CREATIVE BEGINNINGS, INFLUENCES AND QUESTS FOR THEIR OWN PATHS

The painter Lojze Spacal wrote that "the artist in me was born in a lonely cell in the prison Maria Coeli in Rome. I was born as a painter and graphic artist, not as a sculptor or architect, which I could have become. This might have been a reaction to numerous generations who all worked and lived in quarries..." (Kržišnik, 1982, 28). His first dated work, namely a woodcut "Still-life" in a post-impressionist manner, goes back to the year 1935, while his second one, an oil called "Self portrait" from 1937 is associated with the childlike features of popular frescos. The woodcuts from 1939 and 1940, which he displayed almost secretly at his first individual exhibition in Trieste, were defined by the critics as fantastic, as works of 'fabulous realism'. In his first creative period, when he was deciding between oil and woodcut techniques, he leaned on the Milano circle from the late thirties and on surrealism, which he considered as "literature rather than painting..." (Kržišnik, 1982, 17). He does not follow the examples of Giorgio de Chirico nor Carlo Carra, but lent himself to the influence of Massimo Botempelli. At the beginning of his artistic career, Spacal was "a self-taught artist, strongly attached to material techniques, as is expected from a stonecutter's son" (Montenero, 2000, 7). This period was later defined by the critique as the period of magical realism. Spacal began his formal education rather late in his life, when he enrolled in the Superior Art School of Monza at the age of thirty. Among the teachers like Semeghini, De Garda and Pica, he chooses his compatriot Giuseppe Pagano – Pogačnik, an architect from Poreč, who opened Italy up to Europe and drew to him artists like Perico, Giolli, Argan and Ragghianti. Giuseppe Pagano paved the way for Spacal into the world of art, as he let him into his Milan studio, entrusted him with setting exhibitions and in this way made his education possible. During his three-year studies at the Brera Academy in Milan, Spacal was drawn to the group 'Corrente', which focused around a magazine of the same name, founded in 1938 by Francesco Treccani, but stopped already in 1940. Among the

artists of the group, Spacal found a friend in Arnaldo Baudodi, who excelled in expressionist inspiration and in the use of intense colours. On his return to Trieste, Spacal began to look upon the Karstic environment in Trieste surroundings, although he was born within Trieste in Rosetti Street and grew up in St. Andrew's quarter. Without really looking for comparisons and influences in his own environment, he began introducing different motifs into his work. Village scenes were joined by pulsating views of the city by the sea in the rhythm of light and of new urban spaces, anticipating the springing consumerism. Spacal's growth rose from his comprehension and his discoveries in the world of art, and most of all from his own, intimate interests. He began expressing himself in the ways that he had based in poetic symbolism of his beginnings, when he used to escape the dark reality to find protection in the magical dreams of imaginary world. Still, he continued discovering new technological, technical, thematic and formal possibilities. Considering all the trends that ruled the art of modernism, he did not count himself among those who would follow them or consciously opt for them. Therefore he looks mostly into himself. Lojze Spacal discovered the motif of landscapes and veduttas of his native village, which he did not analyse, as he had done before, but began dealing with its typical monumentality. He discovered Karstic dwellings and took up analysing the most characteristic features of Karstic architecture, emphasising mainly its monumentality, but at the same time carefully observing the order that rules its specifically archaic forms (Bassin, 1967, 6). From his woodcut "City in the Mirror" of 1945, Spacal's artistic career turned to universal reality. In the woodcut in question the pattern of tiny geometrical elements aspired to perfect harmony, not only subjectively, but was also objectively discovered already by Paul Klee. Although Spacal was not taken by surprise at the wave of the informal, brought about by existentialism, he took up discovering modular empty spaces following the austerity of Piet Mondrian or even Charles-Eduard Jeanneret Le Corbusier. When he was in Macedonia by Lake Ohrid, these empty spaces reminded him of his Karstic home environment. There, like years before in South Italy, he was able to experience the universal magic of wood, the warmth provided by the eternal life of trees, its symbolic meanings, as well as its concrete usefulness (Pregl Kobe, 1998, 17). "Here I became enthusiastic with wood, which accompanies us from birth to death, from cradle to coffin. I found Kras in Macedonia...Yes, it was a late discovery...Since then Kras has been with me, inspiring me. I have gained a lot from Karstic world. It is said to be hard and austere by nature. But this holds only for those who do not know how to penetrate its mysteries. I am drawn to the Karstic rural architecture, to colours..." (Silič Nemec, 1997, 122–133). Spacal had a feeling for wood already in his first artistic attempts in prison. This

led him to discover the woodcut technique which he developed in his own original way. In contrast, he never tried to work in rock, as it touched his soul too deeply: "Rock is the symbol of Kras, therefore I respect and admire it. But I have never tried to cut it. I love it too much – so much that I fear to profane it" (Kržišnik, 1982, 34).

In Zoran Mušič's career the turn of the forties into the fifties could be marked by his first cycle of 'horses', "sky blue, pink, but also orange and ochre accents within the barren vastness of his newly discovered, meaningful and aesthetically satisfying world" (Kržišnik, 1967, 5). This cycle made Mušič more and more recognizable, understood and accepted after the year 1945 in Venice where he had moved at the time, and also in Paris after 1952, where he had his first solo exhibition in Galerie de France. These two environments responded differently to Mušič in his mature creative years but they meant the beginning of his international recognition. They accepted him along with his rich experience of totally different times, cultures and places where he had studied. In the early twentieth century Zoran Mušič used to discover and learn about artistic situations in Vienna and Prague. In Vienna he became familiar with secession, which introduced the art of fin de siècle into Austria. Among its protagonists Mušič gets to know the work of Gustav Klimt, who founded the movement in 1887 together with his followers. Klimt, who interpreted sophisticated femininity and luxuriant sensuousness, was not the only one. There were also Egon Schiele, Koloman Moser and Oscar Kokoscha, and other young artists from artistic and theatrical circles that Mušič used to frequent. He read Kafka and Musil. In Prague he was able to experience French impressionists and impressionism, which was not introduced into the Slovenian artistic environment until 1902 by the Slovenian impressionists Grohar, Sternen, Jakopič and Jama. The year 1930 represents the first break in Mušič's life. At the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts the painter Ljubo Babič becomes his most important professor, a Von Stuck's student in Munich, who encourages his students in the freedom of expression. He leads Mušič onto the path which forms him as an independent researcher, interpreting his own landscapes. At the time the academy of Zagreb became the art institution which educated a series of Slovenian artists who founded the group called The Independent after returning to Ljubljana. The group introduced new, western trends into the Slovenian artistic environment. Ljubo Babič helped Mušič to discover the French painting of lyrical or poetical realism, so Mušič focused on artistic order, classical themes and a rural response to landscape. He decided to study nature directly, finding out that he is interested neither in avant-garde nor in abstraction. The renowned Croatian painter Ljubo Babič, who was invited to the Venice Biennial, was not only a teacher to Mušič. He was the one to reveal Dalmatia and the Mediterranean to him, led him to Spain to study

Goya and presented him to the painter Guido Cadorin, who later made it possible for Mušič to stay in Venice, paving his way to the art circles and the environment of Venice. His daughter Ida Barbarigo, who later became a renowned and exceptional painter, soon became Mušič's friend, spouse, and muse throughout his career. However, his first step and his greatest experience was Spain: "Spain, Velasquez, Goya, I was totally overwhelmed. Besides, I was under the influence of Ljubo Babič who always spoke and wrote about this. These are the things that stay in one's mind for ever. If I only think back, I was influenced the most – not directly – by Goya's black paintings and Velasquez's portraits!" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 97). Throughout his stay in Madrid, Mušič used to visit the Prado, copying Goya and El Greco. It is Goya that touches him the most, so that his influence is included in Mušič's artistic quests more than anyone else's, more than Monet, Manet or Cezanne, whom he appreciated and studied. The tradition of the artistic expression felt and seen locally becomes a guideline to his research.

On the outburst of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 Zoran Mušič returned home and spent a great deal of his time in Dalmatia, mostly on the island of Korčula, which intrigued him with its bitter, desolate and rocky environment that he remembered from his childhood. Karstic landscape became decisive in his artistic growth: "Barren land, almost a desert. Petrified, we could say. Peering out amongst low stonewalls, there is only a tiny oasis here and there, consisting of red soil, a vineyard and purple tufts of grass" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 98). Still trapped in the ways of poetical colour realism in Dalmatia in 1937, Mušič begins painting women's world, little donkeys, and women in a landscape. He proliferates in the tradition of what is seen, following the dramatic way of expression that he sensed in Goya's "black paintings". Yet he was looking for his own expression. In his Cezanne-like vision, personalized with his own searches of his own world between reality and contemplation, he created "Dalmatian Women", tempera on paper, 1938, "Women with Little Donkeys", mixed technique on cardboard, 1939, which invite the search of such colour function that was seen already by fauvists. It is only that Mušič gradually and daringly introduced a more lyrical, dreamy and at times more melancholic expression. The second war represents a great test to Zoran Mušič. In the first war years he still exhibits his work, and paints the interior of churches with the painter August Černigoj. In 1943 he travels to Venice for the first time, has an exhibition in Trieste for the first time, and finally meets Guido Cadorin, who his friend and teacher Ljubo Babič had told him so much about. This is also the year when he has his first exhibition in Venice in Robert Nonveiller's Piccola Galleria. In the city of his childhood dreams he presents his cycle of Dalmatian little donkeys. The renowned painter Filippo de Pisis

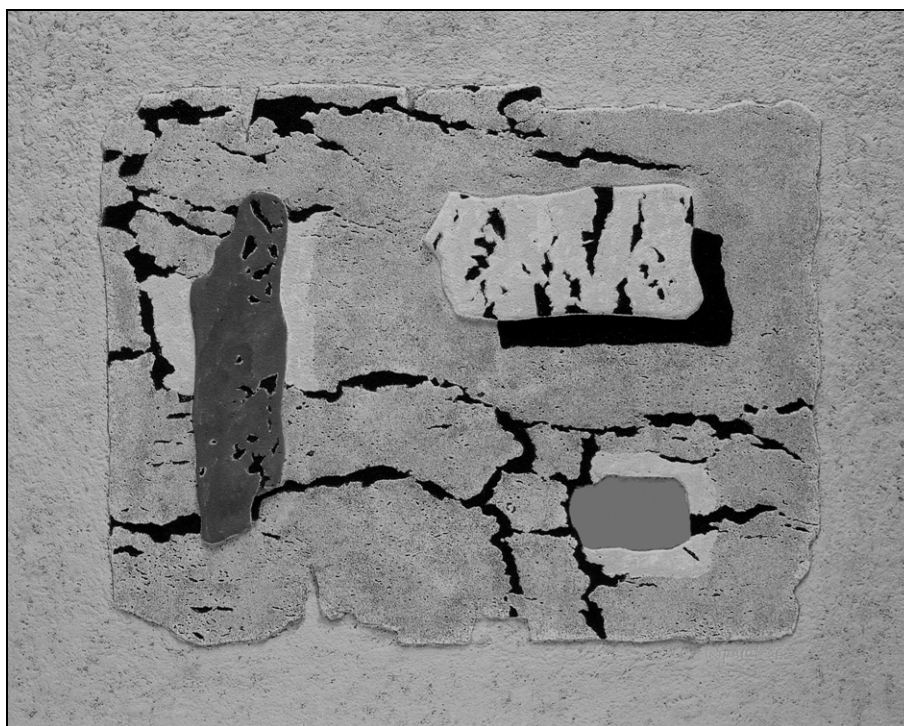


Fig. 2: Lojze Spacal, *Karst Landscape*, 1984 (Badovinac Z. et al., 2000).

Sl. 2: Lojze Spacal, *Kraški svet*, 1984 (Badovinac Z. et al., 2000).

recognised a gift in his work, detected his light stroke and wrote in the introductory text to the exhibition catalogue: "È un pittore, un pittore vivo, cosa che, come sia sa, non è commune. Una certa finezza orientale, che gli viene forse da misteriose e lontane influenze di razza, si spoa, in lui, ad una foga un poco Barbara e alla divina gioia del creare" (Dalla Noce, 1987, 13). Yet, the World War II still ravages. Like many others, Zoran Mušič is arrested by the Gestapo and transported via Trieste to the German concentration camp Dachau. The horrible experience remains deeply cut in his conscience. This was an experience that slowly entered his painting and began generating new works of art, increasingly seeking more spiritual sensations in the memories, reminiscing Karstic landscape. With his Dalmatian motifs he did not attract much attention in Venetian cultural circles at first, as they were different from the painting that was gaining importance and value in the post-war years. His artistic quests did not follow the trends established by post-cubists, nor did they follow the vehement stroke of Emilio Vedova's abstract expressionism, or the existentialist fever of De Pisis, although these were the painters the Venetian cultural environment was fascinated by. Mušič's quests looked into the treasurechest of the emotions that he was carrying inside him, but his record was softened by the experience of the glamorous cultural heritage of Venice with a touch of Byzantine tradition: "In this magnificent light I in-

stantly discovered St Mark's gold. I have a feeling that it is trying to unveil something that was buried deep in my memory. An echo of the forgotten childhood, icons, and gold-plated figures covered with pearls..." (Silič Nemec, 1991, 99). The years 1951 and 1952 paved his way to Paris, which lived in the abstract. And if he was supposed to pave his way against the vehement power of Emilio Vedova's painting in Venice, it was in Paris that he faced many renowned and established artists who created a lively artistic atmosphere: Jean René Bazaine, Alfred Manessier, Hans Hartung, Wols, Jean Fautrier, Jean-Paul Riopelle... Whatever, Mušič's path was defined: he prepared new and new exhibitions and received more and more prestigious awards.

LANDSCAPE AS A CREATIVE CHALLENGE

In the years after the terrible war when the thought of Th. W. Adorno's was often mentioned that "writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Jay, 1991, 5), Western Europe was striving to create a new cultural identity. The states to the west of the iron curtain were trying to get away from the suffocating socialist realism of the Soviet Union, while North America successfully continued its breakthrough and dominated art from the forties to the seventies of 20th century (Lynton, 1994, 257, 226). Numerous leading artists of the heroic era of modernism were still alive, among them Arp, Braque, Léger, Ma-

tisse, Miró and Picasso. Their untiring activity kept watch over the work of younger generations. Experts and media increasingly analysed modernism, which still flourished at the time. They wrote about it, published books about it spreading information about the Paris art life to other, namely German, Italian, Dutch and Russian circles. The phenomenon of 'national schools' did nothing but increase interest in the milieus in question. Besides New York, Paris remained an important art centre, and still the most influential in the first decade. Although art was focused on the theme of survival, often impregnated by the feeling of anxiety, art quests turned much more towards the abstract. However, besides this, there were also establishing artists, developing their art on surrealistic quests and figural expressions. The trend that prevailed in the west was an informal type of abstraction, although it seemed that elementaristic and constructivistic art would become the leading trends in Paris. The Galerie Denise René and Salon des Réalités Nouvelles specialised in various sorts of formal abstraction. Paris remained the centre of this kind of art in the fifties and sixties, so it still attracted a great number of artists from different countries, mostly from South America. Since 1953 Zoran Mušič was one of them, making Paris his second home beside Venice. Paris became the city where his artistic language became gradually more distinct and accepted. On the other hand, Lojze Spacal stayed in his local environment, in Trieste, and had a solo exhibition of his work in Paris only once. It was in 1957 at the Galerie Rive Gauche. In 1968 he also participated in a group exhibition, presenting the artists who won first prizes at the Venice Biennials of 1948 and 1966. Both Lojze Spacal and Zoran Mušič created their considerable artistic opuses in their studios, disregarding the fever of new establishing concepts and modern trends. They both finished their life opuses in the ripe old age, Lojze Spacal in 2000 aged 93, and Zoran Mušič in 2005 aged 96. They both expressed their attachment to their native land with donations. Namely, Lojze Spacal made his in the seventies to the "Goriški" Museum in Nova Gorica, and in the late eighties for the gallery carrying his name at the Štanjel Castle. Zoran Mušič made his donation in the late eighties for the gallery named after him at the Dobrovo Castle in Brda. However, their native environment accepted the two painters with reserve. The fact is that although they did not live in their homeland, they were able, on the one hand, to go beyond the means and possibilities that Slovenian artists have, but on the other hand they did not belong to the circle of the so-called 'Ljubljana school of graphic art', nor were they members of the most piercing art group after the second war, the so-called Group 69. In spite of this, the leading institution in Slovenia, which is the Modern Gallery of Art in Ljubljana, included Spacal and Mušič into their programmes. Zoran Mušič was the internationally better

known artist of the two, as he received a lot of professional attention after 1970 by both Paris and Venice. Lojze Spacal was appreciated mostly by Trieste and Ljubljana. However, the works of both painters can be found in numerous private and public collections all over the world. In this way they have assured a long memory of the landscape that they devoted most of their opuses to.

It is a fact that the world of Kras represented the artistic challenge to both painters: "Experts agree with the idea that the main inspiration for Mušič's images is Karstic world, austere, rocky land with hardly any greenery, sunk into common greyish-brown or brown-red accords. It is obvious that our painter was the first to discover this landscape, adopting it as his own, intertwining it into his painted visions and into his memory, as one of his numerous critics and admirers once said. He took this vision into the world, and identified himself with it as its solitary resident," wrote Prof. Dr. Nace Šumi in the catalogue to the opening of Mušič's permanent collection in 1991. Šumi also found the origin of Spacal's creativity in Kras: "Among the artists depicting the landscape by the sea and Kras there is also Lojze Spacal of Trieste, who grew along with Mušič. Especially with his graphic art work after the war, he became a great interpreter of the Slovenian Kras, in which he found symbols that he kept rearranging into compositions with a monumental effect" (Šumi, 1991, 10–11).

According to the fact that both painters found the source of their inspiration in landscape, the Slovenian historian of art Prof. Dr. Nace Šumi included them in the trend of Slovenian modern art which deals with landscape painting. He placed both Lojze Spacal and Zoran Mušič on "the time line and the geographical mosaic of Slovenian provinces in Slovenian art", pointing out some characteristics that go back to the first half of 19th century. Namely, Slovenian landscape painting is first marked by romantic content with pronounced mythological elements, with mountain ranges, romantic lakes and Karstic phenomena. These are painted in a realistic manner, but the main accents are made by colour (Marko Pernhart); realists established the painting in the open air and thus became direct predecessors of the impressionists (Jurij Šubic), who are "the real pioneers of modern landscape painting" (Šumi, 1991, 10–11) in Slovenia. They found their sources in the world by the Alps, creating the atmosphere which became the basic theme in the landscapes painted by Slovenian impressionists (Sternen, Grohar, Jakopič, Jama). The period of expressionism in the twenties of the previous century brought a change and the first views of the landscape of Primorska. Nace Šumi attributes the discovery of another type of landscape to the group 'The Independent', whose members knew how to listen to different province characters (France Mihelič). As a member of this group, Zoran Mušič exposed his native environment, his Kras. As "a



Fig. 3: Zoran Mušič, *Motive from Dalmatia*, 1955 (Regional Museum "Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica").
Sl. 3: Zoran Mušič, *Dalmatinski motiv*, 1955 (Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica).

great poet of Karstic world" (Šumi, 1991, 11) he became "a giant in the most desolate, modest, almost monochromatic region that Slovenia with its neighbouring regions has" (Šumi, 1991, 11). In the Slovenian post-war art we can find more and more artists who transposed the world of Kras into their art (Debenjak, Makuc, Komel).

CHARACTERISTICS AND PARTICULARITIES OF THEIR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Lojze Spacal's decision to be true to his roots might have defined him as an artist who is too much locally marked. His artistic ventures did not reflect the trendiest art ideas, experimental quests in the formal and thematic sense, spreading from the two most important art centres, which were Paris and New York. However, Spacal did experiment, too, searching distinction in content and form. He marked the European cultural activity of the fifties and the sixties mostly with his typical structure, going towards lyrical abstraction. He studied new technological ways and procedures, which encouraged new possibilities of technique combinations. From the forties of his century on, he worked on painting, monotypy, graphic art and a little less on drawing and sculpture, by separating techniques due to his academic comprehension of procedures. But then, in the fifties, he changed his convictions and turned to new options. He had been overwhelmed by wood long before adopting it as a graphic matrix. He said, showing the direction of his research: "...I can see a magnificent walnut tree, how it was cut down, made into boards, and boards into a

chest. It was with great love that an intarsia design of carnations was first laid in the chest in maple or beech wood, then waxed in order to make it shine..." (Kržišnik, 1982, 24). Giving up painting as an independent art, Spacal devoted himself completely to graphic art. But, he opted for woodcut, although the current trends were more into new possibilities offered by copper engraving procedures, perfected in New York and Paris. He developed and perfected the technique of wood engraving in his own original way, as a holistic procedure, where each phase counted, from matrix preparation to printing. Moreover, he always did the printing himself (Vecchiet, 2000, 14). But a few years later, the matrixes awoke new quests in him. As they consisted of different kinds of wood, and other materials, they were reused to be transformed into 'paintings'. In this way the painter made an original synthesis of graphic work and painting. The love of those materials comes from his love of the environment from which he got them, where he experienced their aesthetics, which was gradually becoming more and more his own. "I remember the scene I witnessed when I was young. I watched how the people of Kras prepared the material to mortar their houses. They swept the road, sieved this compressed mixture of red soil and crumbled limestone, added slacked lime and water, mixed everything up and roughly mortared the house with this mixture. After the mortar had dried up under the baking sun after a few days, I couldn't believe my eyes. The result was a delicate orange hue with a slightly uneven vibration due to the wavy movement of the rough walls..." (Kržišnik, 1982, 32). Thus, in the



Fig. 4: Zoran Mušič, *Small horses*, 1949 (Regional Museum "Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica").
Sl. 4: Zoran Mušič, *Konjički*, 1949 (Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica).

years after 1950 the painter combined painting and graphic procedures into his new painting technique. He went beyond the classical separation of techniques, upgrading it into a new artistic creation by combining a wooden matrix as one phase in the process with other materials, such as ground Karstic limestone added to oil paints, as well as with sand and wood. Nevertheless, Spacal remains a great master of wood engraving at a time when most Slovenian artists of the so-called 'Ljubljana school of graphic art' followed masters from Paris. He opted for wood engraving technique which came to Trieste from Central Europe. One of the artists who brought the technique to Slovenia was also the avant-gardist August Černigoj. Spacal tried different art techniques, such as wall painting, mosaic, three-dimensional art objects, painted 'sculptures' which are in fact paintings rather than sculptures, but the greatest part of his opus consists of woodcuts. In spite of such rich range of the techniques he expressed himself in, Lojze Spacal remains known as a graphic artist adding haptic effects to his visual creations.

It seems that his choice of wood engraving also meant that he was into landscape, which by abstraction basically defined the development of his artistic expression. It became clearer. Human and animal figure were almost completely driven out of the graphic base. Spacal is conditioned by artistic language of poetic symbols, pure aestheticized forms and compositions. He is a

landscape painter who conceives with his inner eyes his native landscape which surrounds him with traces of man and his hands. The painter opens up a view into his sublime experience of nature and landscape, applying a harmony of minimal number of colours, and simplified and purified forms composed into an ascetically purified, associative abstraction. Nature and landscape experience is, like August Berque said, "always a space which contains a great cultural charge. It can only be experienced as wilderness by a stranger, a city dweller in the countryside...But a landscape always becomes a defined value, normative and repetitive, including reminiscences, phantoms and literary or artistic allusions..." (Berque, 1995). A viewer can detect a typically symbolic understanding of Karstic motifs in Spacal's landscape. With one single line or accent the painter is able to express the essence, or make an organic form appear in the landscape or in architectural forms. He finds elements for this in Kras, which is packed with various forms and colours. The play of light and shade spills across the walls of old Karstic houses, across the reddish soil of the Karstic dolinas, over the leaves of Karstic vine, of sumack in autumn, of pine and juniper, providing a whole palette of grey and red hues. Spacal applied all this to his art from the moment when he was able to express himself through this enriching theme, firmly set in the environment, and by reducing descriptive and mimetic artistic elements first to symbols and gradually to

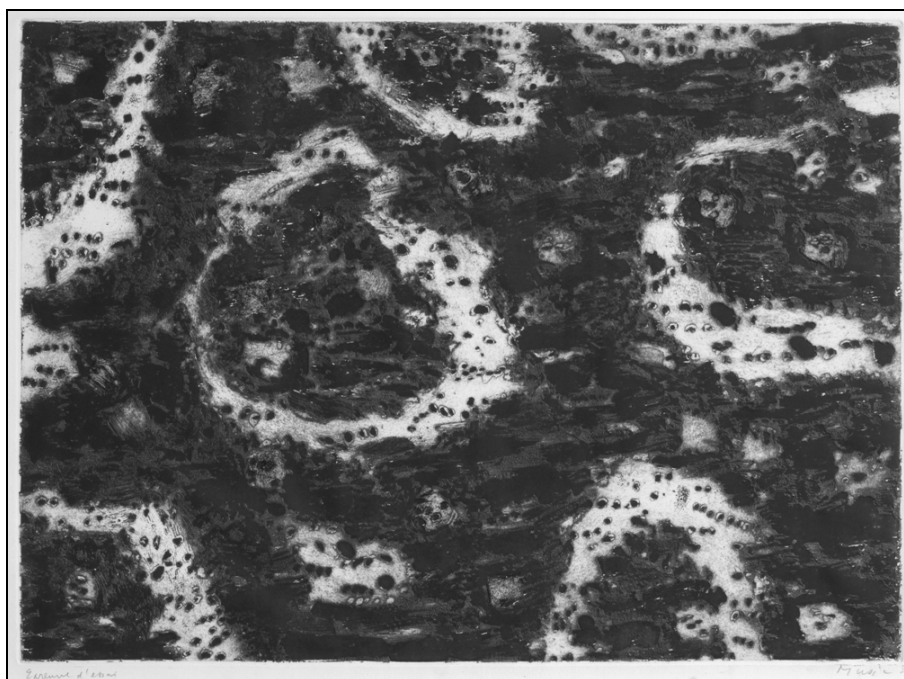


Fig. 5: Zoran Mušič, *Motive from Dalmatia*, 1959 (Regional Museum "Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica").
Sl. 5: Zoran Mušič, *Dalmatinski motiv*, 1959 (Goriški muzej Kromberk – Nova Gorica).

pure abstract surfaces. Visible forms gradually turned to associative symbols in a more constructivistic or more lyrical poetic expression of Karstic landscape, to which the painter sometimes added more involved motifs. The titles of his works, gathered into a cycle only by accident when a graphic portfolio was to be issued, encourage us to make associations and deep experiences.

Mušič's artistic career oscillates between the figural and the abstract. It reveals his great creative spirit and his deep power of expression, which is outstanding in his sublime understanding of landscape. He is a painter and graphic artist who found his creative source, according to his friend and painter Massimo Campiglio, who visited him in his Venice studio in 1948. "When Campiglio saw my first works with little horses and Sienna hills, he cried out with surprise: "You have found your source, you are well heeled for life!" He spoke little, but his eyes reflected sympathy and affection. His statement was of great help to me" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 100). In his ripe creative years Zoran Mušič found his landscape. His inner landscape reflected the one which he had so deeply felt and admired as a child, that it remained impressed in him. It revealed and strengthened the subconscious inner quest which resulted in some unforgettable cycles in both graphic technique and in painting. These two techniques are equally present throughout the painter's career, conveying his messages in equally intense ways. Although Zoran Mušič is figural, figurative, and 'figurable' according to Gilles Deleuze, he painted landscapes in the formless and ab-

stract way. His landscapes feel abstract in the purest, sublime sense. His images are both figural and abstract at the same time. He paints them in the same way as he does the 'body mixture' in the cycle "We Are Not the Last Ones" (Medved, Fer, Nancy, 2004, 8). Of course he did not seek encouragement for his artistic growth only in the land where oak and pine trees, as well as men are self-made, self-confident and straight, regardless of how much the land may be exposed to cruel winds, but he also looked into Serbian and other monasteries and into the characteristics of icon painting. He researched Spanish painting, perhaps also the Italian trecento, as well as the Egyptian painting of the Fayumic period and the pre-historic cave painting. However, the hilly landscape of his youth, which was Kras, "obviously suited him most" (Šumi, 1991, 11). It helped him develop his own attitude to the world and to himself in it, so as to "soften both, the austerity of Roman discipline and the ceremonial stiffness of the Orient. Mušič was able to achieve this by means of his poetic reverie, creating thus a synthesis at the same time more familiar and stranger to them both, but certainly original" (Kržišnik, 1991, 13). "How difficult it is not to drown in this ocean of abstract art. I feel so small and weak, as without energy, surrounded by the greatest names in painting and pompous critics who set trends. When I arrived in Paris with little Dalmatian horses as my humble luggage, I felt redundant, and almost ashamed to show the little horses in movement at the Salon de mai, as they were against any modern trend" (Silič Nemec, 1991, 101). As he was a

born drawer, he saw in lines and dreamt in colours. Yet one and only colour dominated his whole opus in its numerous hues. Mušič's opus is divided into distinct cycles, which can be listed according to how much we can be sensitive, reflective or intuitive while dealing with his numerous completed works. Bibliography most frequently lists ten cycles or more. All the cycles were created in painting and in graphic art, very often also in aquarelle and drawing as independent sorts of art. But all the time he used a special technique of painting oils on canvas, which suited his search of 'memories', his 'regressions' into the depths of his soul. He preserves canvas as it is originally, except for a little grounding, which he prepares by application of thin, but transparent layers of glue on which he applies paint with an almost dry brush. As if he was dry painting, as if with a gentle touch of a brush he wished to wheedle light out of the inside of the painting, to mould and colour its mystic beauty. After the war he created frescos again, while he was helping Guido Cadorin realize some paintings in the fresco technique, as he was already familiar with the method, having used it while painting in churches of Primorska during World War II. He worked in aquarelle, because it enabled him to entice swiftly drawn lines and soft colour hues with a fleeting touch of the brush, as well as to draw in pencil, felt-tip pen, and pastel. As far as graphic art is concerned, for decades he was attached to the techniques of drypoint, colour lithography and aquatint, which he used according to the inner urge that he felt and which defined also the thematic and formal expression of the project he had in mind. The same urge conditioned also his attitude to paper on which he transposed the records of his impressions. With the same sensitivity he created these, bitter at one time or lyrical at another, on graphic prints and on painting canvas rounding them up into cycles. These followed one another from 1945 on, when he was actually reborn, although in himself he continued to relive in depth the experience which makes Th.W Adorno wonder "is it still possible to live after Auschwitz, particularly, can this be done by someone who got out by accident but who was actually supposed to be exterminated. His survival already needs the cold-bloodiness which is the basic principle of civic subjectivity, without which Auschwitz could never have happened: this is the drastic guilt of the man who was spared" (Jay, 1991, 9). Mušič's first cycle goes back to the year 1945, when he presented himself in Venice with his "Little horses" in movement, when his artistic language was becoming well-measured and thought out, and when he started to express himself in different techniques. These were mostly aquarelles and oils as special techniques that he had been developing over decades. In 1948 he worked with lithography and a year later with drypoint. The second cycle, created from 1949 on, contains motifs from the surroundings of Siena, whose hilly landscape attracted the painter

on his journeys to Rome. The views out of a train window brought back memories of the desolate Karstic land, but also of the totally different, threatening rolling hills, which were in fact heaps of skeletons gathered to form hills. He could never chase these away from him, as he was carrying them deep inside him without wanting it: "I have a feeling that I am observing a parade of, so to say, eternal landscape passing by; the country which did not know how to resist either the course of time or the history which never changes and whose structure is impossible to discover; as if this meant that all that is essential, lies under the skin" (Music, 1986, 28). In 1948 Mušič began creating the cycle on Venice, as well as the first portraits of his wife Ida. These two views set the base for his future motifs. Since then his opus intertwines the views of landscape and figure, culminating magnificently into an unrepeatable synthesis in his most famous cycle 'We Are Not the Last Ones'. The hills of Siena and Umbria were created in 1960 and 1961, although he had been attracted by the views of the coastal town of Chioggia in 1954, which he experienced as a synthesis of colour patches against a uniformly diffused background. In the second half of the fifties the landscape is increasingly opening up as a kind of undulating roundness while the real world is changing into a sign, or a group of signs. The motif of roundness becomes repetitive while the painter gradually comes closer to abstraction, also with his landscapes of Siena. This abstraction is awoken in him as a result of his memory of the parched and undulating Dalmatian landscape. This is the time when Mušič brings graphic techniques to perfection, when his mastery is awarded with numerous international prizes. The cycle "Fishing nets" (1956) is followed by the cycle "Dalmatian land" on which he worked for quite a few years after 1955. It encouraged him to return to Dalmatia in 1961 for the first time after the war. Here, new records of the "Terra Dalmata" are created, namely a cycle of aquatints and etchings, a cycle of oils on canvas, where the thematic element is reduced to a few stains and perhaps a few dark patches against lighter background. The years 1961 and 1962 are the time of his 'most abstract' period, and the time of the cycle called "Burnt-out Land". This is also the time that the painter documents in numerous photographs showing the artist in the foreground, against limestone hills or mountains overgrown by rare tufts of darker bushes, baking rocks, vertical shadows, red-soil fields fenced up by stone walls. The impact of deeply experienced Karstic landscape is transposed into his landscape motifs, which the painter perceives and feels as simplified touches of colour patches, colour spaces, and lights. The colours that he uses are getting richer and more varied, although he remains within the range of 'arthly tones' within the wide spectre brown colour. Also this time nature is processed, the emotional expression is conscious, experienced, which results in an en-

tirely personal, distinctive interpretation. In fact, the memory of this nature is included in thousands of records and carried on to the following decades and to the next artistic interpretations. The painter is able to maintain the records of its colour, its morphology and the sensations that it provides up until his late creative years: "I need this loneliness, this silence, this stillness in nature, surrounded by the infinite horizon. I feel the urge and I cannot resist going to Kras or to the mountains to experience the feeling that I am one with the landscape" (Music, 1986, 33). Zoran Mušič found his landscape, he

found the image carrying deep messages, unforgettably touching and scarily warning. Barren and austere in expressivity it is chilling to the bone. At all times Mušič impressed in it a distinct echo of his soul, his feelings and his memory of the austere and barren land which had fascinated him since childhood. In solitude and silence he was able to transpose these feelings into an unforgettable, poetic art, into a subtle, aesthetic and artistic experience, where life and death are its constants, intertwining and looking for common artistic rules.

KRAŠKA POKRAJINA KOT INSPIRACIJA ZA USTVARJALNA OPUSA LOJZETA SPACALA IN ZORANA MUŠIČA

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POVZETEK

V slovenski umetnosti devetnajstega in dvajsetega stoletja je krajina odigrala izjemno pomembno vlogo, saj je ob pomanjkanju nacionalnih motivov in zgodovinskih epizod, ki bi bile dovolj razločne ob tradicijah velikih evropskih narodov, prav krajina navdahnila slikarje, da so ustvarili vrsto podob, ki so postale ikone slovenske nacionalne identifikacije. Pokrajina kot ustvarjalni vir, kot inspiracija likovnim rešitvam, kot spodbuda k iskanjem v motiviki, ki so jo v zgodovini umetnosti ujeli v pejzaž, v krajinski motiv številni ustvarjalci, je pomembno označila tudi ustvarjalno pot slikarjev primorske provenience, Lojzeta Spacala in Zorana Mušiča.

Bila sta povezana tako generacijsko kot po kraju rojstva, predvsem pa po navezanosti na kraško pokrajino, ki jima je bila skozi desetletja ustvarjalni vir, pa tudi pomemben ali celo odločujoč navdih njunim likovnim iskanjem tako v slikarstvu kot v grafiki. Lojzetu Spacalu za preinterpretacijo njenih elementov, struktur, arhitekturnih elementov; v zidove zloženih kamnov, težkih okvirjev oken, obdelanih portalov, pa tudi lesenih križev na pokopališčih in andrejevih križev v plotovih, zanimivih oblik dimnikov, ki jih na Krasu imenujejo spahnjenice in rastejo iz tal ob zidu, strešnih kritin z znamenitimi skrlami; pa tudi za podoživetje barv, ki jih je v navidezni skromni barvitosti sivih kamnov, rdečkaste zemlje, grmičevja in ograjenih njiv sugestibilno prenesel na slikovno podlago. Zoranu Mušiču vse od prvih prepoznavnih rožnatih, svetlozelenih, svetlomodrih konjičkov v profilu in an face, ki na dolgih nogicah bežijo po platnu, preko njegovih dalmatinskih pejzažev, ko se je najbolj približal abstraktnemu likovnemu izrazu in najbolj sprostil barvno paleto, še vedno omejeno na 'zemeljske' odtenke, pa vendar barvno vpadljivejšo in prodornejšo, da črta, risba kot njegovo najzgovornejše sredstvo zbledi in odpre poti barvi kot nosilki njegovega sporočila; do tistih del z drugačnimi naslovi, ki jih je Kras kot metafora trpljenja, minljivosti, trdosti, žilavosti in vztrajnosti navdahnil in spodbudil v pretresljivo prepesnitev človeške bolečine z veličastnim estetskim nabojem in v likovni govorici, ki jo je gradil skozi vsa ustvarjalna obdobja, da bi z njo lahko povsem odkrito spregovoril in izpovedal svojo najglobljo resnico.

Čeprav razpeta med več narodi in med različne kraje bivanja in ustvarjanja, kjer sta opazno pustila svoje sledove, sta poseben pečat vtisnila tudi slovenski likovni ustvarjalnosti: s svojimi podoživetji kraške zemlje sta se zapisala kot samosvoja in prepoznavna krajinarja v času modernističnih iskanj v jeziku, ki je bil sodoben, aktualen in globoko sporočilen ter v zelo osebno izoblikovani estetiki, ki ju definira kot rafinirana interpreta notranjih iskanj, iskanj svoje notranje podobe, svoje notranje pokrajine. Vsak v svoji likovni govorici, v prepoznavnem rokopisu, na način, ki je bil izrazito osebni, sta ovrednotila krajino kot motiv, ki tudi v modernističnem jeziku ostaja likovno zanimiv in sporočilen.

Z njunimi deli ostaja kraška pokrajina s svojo trpkostjo, kamnitostjo, trdoto, od sonca ožgano in razpokano zemlja rdečih, rjavih in rumenorjavih odtenkov zgovorno prepoznavna in širše zapisana v kulturno dediščino preteklega stoletja.

Ključne besede: slikarstvo, grafika, krajina, Zoran Mušič, Lojze Spacal, kraška pokrajina, Kras, značilnosti modernistične umetnosti

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