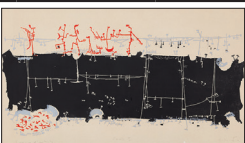
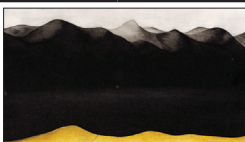
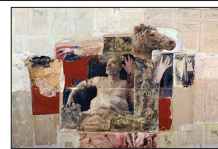


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International Scientific Symposium on Graphic Arts Livno



Perspective of Traditional Graphic Arts Practice in the Contemporary Graphic Arts Identity



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Perspective of Traditional Graphic Arts Practice
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Livno, 2024.

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Aida Abadžić Hodžić

Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics in the
Context of European Postmodernity
and its Contemporary Interpretation:
Selected Examples

Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics in the Context of European Postmodernity and its Contemporary Interpretation: Selected Examples

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Abstract:

In the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, for the first time in the modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, art directly offered a paradigmatic model of complex understanding of the historical, political, and cultural sediments of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and its traditions. In the atmosphere of the eighth decade, freed from the modernist imperative of overcoming the old with the new, Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics opened up to a postmodern sensibility and the expression of thought and understanding that allows simultaneous existence in multiplicity, with diverse ways of appropriating and interpreting history, numerous branches of thematising tradition and defining it. The confirmation of the high reach of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics at the time within the Yugoslav and European art context is also confirmed by the notable participation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphic artists at domestic and international graphic exhibitions, as well as the prestigious awards they won at them. This characteristic of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics is particularly interesting because it is about a generation of graphic artists who had to study at art academies outside their native environment until the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo (1972). The paper will discuss the significance of the generation of graphic artists of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century in contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian art and on the European art scene, as well as the general cultural conditions of the period in question, and, from a time distance of almost five decades, evaluate the contemporaneity and originality of the artistic researches by selected graphic artists and breakthroughs in individual (graphic) oeuvres that followed their pioneering appearance and postmodern research.

Key words: Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics, the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century, postmodernity, contemporaneity, originality

Introductory Notes

The 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century in the oeuvres of Bosnian-Herzegovinian artists, primarily graphic artists, were determined by the attention towards and interest in the complex questioning of the relationship between tradition and modernity, for *cultural duration and the culture of memory* (Jan Assmann)¹, which resulted in artistic movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly becoming an integral part of the postmodern sensibility that strongly defined European cultural theory and the art scene of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century. The interest of fine artists, primarily graphic artists, in their own cultural heritage was a reflection of wider social and cultural circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslavia, which enabled and encouraged very intensive publishing and exhibition activity, the launch of major cultural institutions and editions, professional magazines in the fields of fine arts, literature, theatre and film, and the organisation of scientific research projects and symposia. In order to gain a more comprehensive view and properly evaluate the achievements of the generation of graphic artists who made up the so-called Bosnian-Herzegovinian school of graphics of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century, it is necessary to observe their appearance and activity as a whole and the dynamic of these movements, which (movements) as a common denominator needed a scientific foundation and valorisation of the peculiarities of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural tradition in the Yugoslav context.

In contemplating the relationship towards cultural heritage, it was observed that “*the approach to cultural heritage expresses the degree of historical awareness of a nation*” in which traces of heritage play a special role in the oeuvres of “*modern painters, poets, urban planners, graphic artists and architects who thereby want to realise their desire for continuity*” whereby “*the desire for identity becomes equal to the desire for dignity*.”²

In an attempt of scientific validation, the specificity of the cultural tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Yugoslav community of peoples, in 1974 the Council of Culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held, along with which one of the first comprehensive research and exhibition projects entitled *Art of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1945–1974* was organised by the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.³ In one of the texts that preceded the realisation of the

¹ Assmann, 2005.

² Tahmišić, 1969, 616.

³ As the written document of the aforementioned Council the book *Culture in the FR of BiH 1945–1975* was published, NIŠP Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1976.

aforementioned Council, the “*reasons of a primarily political nature that planned and systematically covered up this heritage or disunited it, and only in exceptional and individual cases affirmed it, as much as it was necessary to support one of the nationalist theses about the belonging of something and someone to one of the leading Yugoslav nations*”⁴ were emphasised.

Within the framework of numerous gatherings, scientific-research projects and scientific debates that aimed to strengthen the conviction about the uniqueness of Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural tradition and heritage and about the validity of its scientific research and valorisation in this new light, numerous debates were initiated, among other things, about the issue of the Bosnian language, the *Bosnian spirit* in literature (M. Filipović)⁵, the history of Bosnian-Herzegovinian literature, the representation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian artists in large, collective exhibition projects.

With the aim of launching scientific research projects that would explore and valorise cultural heritage, in the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, a number of significant museum and gallery institutions were opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time, among others: the Museum of Literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo (1961), branch of the BiH Art Gallery in Stolac (1963), Portrait Gallery in Tuzla (1964), Museum of the City of Zenica (1966), Museum of the Jews of BiH in Sarajevo (1966), Branch of the Art Gallery in Mostar (1969), Independent Museum Collection in Bijeljina (1970), Art Gallery in Banja Luka (1971), Rizah Štetić Gallery in Brčko (1975). One of the most important exhibition spaces, opened in that period, was undoubtedly the City Gallery *Collegium artisticum* in Sarajevo, where the first exhibition was held in April 1975.

In the international affirmation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian fine art, in addition to the activities of the BiH Art Gallery in Sarajevo, the launch of the Autumn Salon that was held every two years in Banja Luka (1961), the International Art Colony in Počitelj (1965) as well as the activities of the Yugoslav Portrait Gallery in Tuzla and the summer sculpture colony in Ostrošac were also significant. In 1974, the Sarajevo magazine “Odjek” published an impressive list of more than fifty permanent cultural events that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period of the seventh and eighth decades, some of which were also significant in the European cultural context.⁶

As one of the key projects for future research, scientific valorisation, and publication of material in the field of cultural heritage, was certainly the launch

⁴ Dizdar, 1969, 601.

⁵ Filipović, 1967, 3-18.

⁶ Radošević, 1974.



Figure 1 • Cover of the Cultural Heritage edition, 1963, Source: Aida Abadžić Hodžić, *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics of the 20th century*, Sarajevo, 2011.

of the Library of *Cultural Heritage of BiH* in 1963 (Fig. 1), which by 1973 had published as many as ten pioneering titles in the field fine arts. Collected works, collections of short stories, collections of poetry and novels of the leading names of modern Bosnian-Herzegovinian literature as well as some of the key literary firsts would be published in the mentioned period. It is enough to recall the year 1966 and an event that is rarely recorded even in much more developed European literary circles, namely the appearance of two exceptional literary works: the novel *Dervish and Death* by Meša Selimović and the collection of poetry by Mak Dizdar, *Stone Sleeper*. Kasim Prohić (1937–1984) wrote that these two works “made such a breakthrough in the understanding of the artistic value of the literary text, and then also in the

perception of the literature to which they originally belong, that we can name them as a boundary line from which one path leads to authentic artistic testimonies of wider cultural significance, and other either to the routinisation of the writing craft or to mere dilettantism and the unwritten nature of the literary manuscript.” “After these works”, Prohić believes, “literary creation became much more difficult, but also - more challenging.”⁷

This is the time when Bosnian-Herzegovinian authors receive significant awards, of which the Nobel Prize awarded to Ivo Andrić (Fig. 2) in 1961 is of particular importance, which symbolically marks the beginning of this brilliant period of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural rise. The launch of the *Cultural Heritage of BiH* edition, as well as the encouragement of research and publication of previously insufficiently known or unresearched works of literary and manuscript material, resulted in an exceptional number of new titles from the history of Bosnian-Herzegovinian literature and art. Those were the years when a new cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina was being written, which certainly did not emerge on the margins of regional and European cultural trends, but was, for the first

⁷ Prohić, 1998, 390.



Figure 2 • From the ceremony of awarding the Nobel prize to Ivo Andrić, Stockholm, 1961, © Museum of Literature and Theatre Arts, Sarajevo

time, an active participant in the number of authors and the high scope of their expression and provided new challenges for critical thinking.

The seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century were an extremely important period for the contemporary drama, film, and music scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Sarajevo, already in the middle of the sixth decade, on the initiative of Jurislav Korenić, a new and alternative theatre concept was devised, and in 1955 the *Malo pozorište* was opened, later renamed *Kamerni teatar 55*, which would be one of the most significant and avant-garde experimental scenes in the former Yugoslavia, and what will make the Yugoslav cultural scene in literature, theatre, and film as well as in the fine arts, with its openness and dynamic research, stand out from other countries of the so called Eastern Bloc,

while the cultural creators from Bosnia and Herzegovina will achieve an extremely notable place in these appearances.

Graphics of Late Modernism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Context

The beginning of the seventh decade of the 20th century marked a great expansion of graphic activity and the improvement of printing techniques that emphasised the experimental and innovative nature of the graphic medium. This is confirmed by the fact that some of the leading artists of abstract expressionism, informalism, pop art, optical and programmed art, which characterised European art after World War II, searched for new expressive modalities and forms of communication through graphics, recognising in the *reproducibility* (W. Benjamin) of this medium the signature of the contemporary era.

In the territory of the former Yugoslavia as well, graphics experienced a great expansion during the seventh and eighth decades, and precisely through graphics, especially the art scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which for the first time became significantly and actively involved in European art movements and presented a



Figure 3 • International Exhibition of Graphic Art, Modern gallery, Ljubljana, 1955, ©Archive MGLC

number of important names of then young artists.

In this context, the activities of the International Biennial of Graphics in Ljubljana (since 1955) and the Biennial of Yugoslav Graphics in Zagreb (since 1960), as well as a number of other exhibition projects where contemporary graphic production was presented, such as the Belgrade Triennial of Yugoslav Art and the October Salon, the Biennial of Yugoslav Graphics in Bitolj, the Biennial of Contemporary Croatian Graphics in Split, the Autumn Salon in Banja Luka, the Biennial of Yugoslav Portraiture in Tuzla were of particular importance. Very soon, Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphic artists of this generation began to participate in world graphic events, such as the International Biennale of Graphics in Krakow, the Biennale in Sao Paulo, the Premio Internazionale Biella, Bianco e Nero in Lugano, the British International Print Biennale in Bradford, the International Biennale of Graphics in Tokyo, Biennial in Alexandria, Internationale Graphik und Illustration in Frehen, etc. The affirmation and development of graphic activity was also supported by agile institutions, such as the Graphics Collective in Belgrade and the Graphics Cabinet in Zagreb, the Graphics Collection of the National and University Library in Zagreb, the Modern Gallery and Small Gallery in Ljubljana, the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, the Forum Gallery and Modern Gallery in Zagreb, the Youth Tribune in Novi Sad.⁸ (Fig. 3).



Figure 4 • Academy of Fine Arts, Sarajevo / Graphics Department, ©ALU Sarajevo

⁸ More details in: Abadžić Hodžić, 2011, 63-65.



Figure 5 • Dževad Hozo, *Silver Mountain*, 1965, © Author's archive



Figure 6 • Mersad Berber, *Sultan's Mosque with Lanterns*, 1961, © Author's archive

A particularly interesting phenomenon of this period in the history of modern art in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the appearance of an extremely numerous and talented generation of graphic artists who were educated outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina (because the first Academy of Fine Arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be founded in Sarajevo not until 1972) and who were recognised as a coherent group, regardless of stylistic and expressive differences, and gathered under the name “Bosnian-Herzegovinian School of Graphics” (Fig. 4). Furthermore, although there was no significant graphic tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the exception of a few names of artists who were engaged in graphics more or less sporadically in the first half of the 20th century, now quite unexpectedly a large number of artists have appeared who recognised and established their dominant expression precisely in the graphic medium and which were quickly recognised as leading names in the contemporary art scene and awarded at prestigious graphic exhibitions around the world. These were then young artists who studied at art academies in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. These academies had a specific approach to the graphic medium, visible through the use of dominant graphic techniques and forms of design, so that from the mid-sixties of the 20th century, in the Yugoslav context, they were known as the so-called *Ljubljana graphic school*, *graphic arts of the Belgrade circle*, and *Zagreb serigraphy school*.

Most of the leading graphic artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina of the seventh decade of the 20th century belonged primarily to the Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb

graphic circles, so that in the initial phase of shaping their style, the characteristic elements and influences of the aforementioned artistic environments were clearly distinguishable. Thus, in the early graphics by Dževad Hozo and Mersad Berber, from the beginning of the 1960s, the influences of their professors from the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts, above all Božidar Jakac and Rika Debenjak, were reflected, with whom there was an interesting combination of then current modernist tendencies in formal expression (informalism) with regional motifs and iconography. Hozo will also, on a series of his early *Nišans*⁹ (Fig. 5) made in the technique of relief etchings or *jetkanica*, as Hozo preferred to call them, with multi-phase processes of etching a metal matrix (etching), try to convey in a graphic medium the expressive texture of wear and tear, relief, “temporality”, characteristic of the speech of matter in informalism painting and graphics. Criticism pointed out early on that already the student and early works by Mersad Berber (for example, the etchings *Memories of Bosnia* exhibited at the Ljubljana Biennale in 1961; *Old Coach* and *Great Wedding, Races, Mosque with Lanterns* from the same year (Fig. 6); *Old Backward Town*, 1962; woodcuts in colour *Karst Caryatid I, II* from 1967 and *Summer Sonnet for Adaleta*, 1970; *Bogomil*, woodcut in colour, 1971) as well as early works by Dževad Hozo (woodcuts of the *Bosnian trilogy*: *Duel*, *Punishment*, *Marriage*) from 1961; lithographs of Kulin ban from 1963; woodcuts based on the motifs by Ivo Andrić from 1965, and especially the cycles of *Nišans* (1963-65) revealed an effort towards a “personal and regionally coloured variant of contemporary modernist tendencies.”¹⁰ Hozo’s *Nišan* cycle shows an increasingly powerful purification and reduction of elements of artistic expression and the synthesis of forms brought to the edge of abstraction, in accordance with the analytical nature of modernism, which especially came to the fore in the late 1960s, when the form approached the sign, that is, the symbol.

Other graphic artists from this generation also showed similar tendencies towards synthetic expression and the reduction of non-artistic content, and this was especially true for graphic artists who were educated in the Belgrade circle, as was noticeable in the early works by Halil Tikveša (*Hutovo II*, 1964; *Gojanovići*, 1964; *Hills in the Homeland*, 1966); (Fig. 7) *Subteranean River*, 1966; by Kemal Širbegović (*Spring Waters*, 1969), by Menmuna Vila (*Earth’s Seed*, 1967). Other elements of the art of Late Modernism were also present in the researches of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphic artists at the time, from the removal towards the fantastic and surreal (Nevjestić, Obralić, Dragulj), pop-art research (especially in the serigraphy technique) and hyperrealism (Kragulj) all the way to rare

⁹ Translator’s note: The term *nišan* describes a tombstone erected for the members of the Islamic faith.

¹⁰ Sedej, 1986, 55.



Figure 7 • Halil Tikveša, *Hills in the Homeland*, 1965, Source: Aida Abadžić Hodžić, *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics of the 20th century*, Sarajevo, 2011.

breakthroughs in op-art (Dugonjić) and conceptual reflection of the limits and scope of the graphic medium (Aleksić) (Fig. 8).

Considering that the graphic artists of the seventh decade from Bosnia and Herzegovina studied outside their homeland and for a number of years actively exhibited and participated in the art life of Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade, and that a certain number of them continued to live and work outside of former Yugoslavia, in the art centres of Western Europe, the question of criteria was imposed on the basis of which, apart from a common place of origin, it was possible to talk about a specific and clearly recognisable phenomenon within Yugoslav graphics in the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, within one generation of graphic artists with strong stylistic individualities.¹¹

A breakthrough in this context was the *Exhibition of Young Painters, Sculptors and Graphic Artists* in the Art Gallery in Sarajevo in 1967 (Fig. 9), which highlighted the importance of this exhibition as the first, organised, post-war presentation of young artists, but also as a gathering of a significant number authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina who, regardless of activities outside their native environment, “never lost that spiritual component, that thread of thought that binds them to their native soil...”¹² After the first exhibitions under the title *Nine Young Artists* (Mostar, 1965) and *Exhibition of Young Painters, Sculptors and Graphic Artists* (Sarajevo, 1967), there followed the exhibitions *Ten Young Artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Brussels, 1969; Alexandria, 1971), *Exhibition of Artists from of Bosnia and Herzegovina* in Dijon and Prague at the beginning of the eighth decade, then the exhibition of *Contemporary Graphics of BiH*, which travelled through European

¹¹ Abadžić Hodžić, 2011, 66.

¹² Karamehmedović, 1967, 5.



Figure 8 • Borislav Aleksić, *Road to Nothing*, 1972,
Source: Aida Abadžić Hodžić, *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics of
the 20th century*, Sarajevo, 2011.

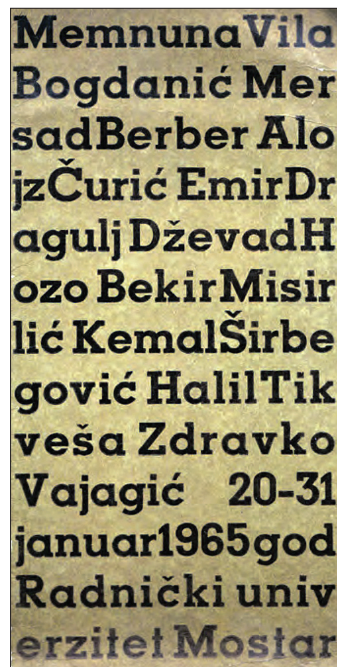


Figure 9 • Exhibition of
Youth from BiH, Mostar
1965/ Sarajevo 1967,
(catalogue covers)
© Archive UGBiH, Sarajevo

countries and North and South America (1978–1981). These exhibitions, which were dominated by graphic artists, confirmed the high reach of the then contemporary art scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina and directly included Bosnia and Herzegovina in the international art scene. Along with the exhibition *Ten Young Artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina* in Brussels in 1969, a Belgian critic pointed out that Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics “*transcends not only regional but also national boundaries.*”¹³

Belonging to a common graphic circle of a large group of young artists who were educated and worked in different environments, confirmed the fact that the question of the artist’s origin was much more than a mere geographical fact and that it essentially relied on the complex structure of the common historical heritage and cultural ambience, and precisely what in Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics of the seventh and eighth decades, prevented the reduced and unequivocal interpretations of the concept and influence of traditional contents. It was in this generation of young artists that graphic artists dominated in number and quality of their expression, and graphics will be the medium that will internationalise the Bosnian-Herzegovinian art scene and open the door to postmodern sensibility.

¹³ Cimaïse, 1969.

Postmodern Poetics in Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics

The sixties and seventies of the 20th century were the period in which, for the first time in the modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, art directly offered a paradigmatic model of the complex structure of understanding the historical, political, and cultural sediments of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and its traditions. Contrary to the “blank slate of modernism” and the modernisation blindly facing the future, which the historical avant-garde of the beginning of the century strove for, memory and awareness of continuity were affirmed in art.¹⁴ Instead of an exclusive and closed language of artistic forms, shackled by the modernist dogma of overcoming the old with the new, an expression of thought and understanding that allows simultaneous existence in multiplicity was sought, and which reflected the centuries-old tradition of the plurality of cultures and traditions in the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the best way. In the last decades of the 20th century, at a time when both European thought and art were forced to question the foundations of their polyphonic structure in the wake of a new interpretation of cultural history, the idea of a plural subject built on the meeting of different traditions and cultures found its lavish thematization in graphics, architecture, novels and poetry of artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina: *“In this sense, Bosnia was a homeland in Europe: (...) a community of self-conscious individualities of certain cultures, which were in dialogue before the concept of dialogue arrived on the stage, the historical, political, propaganda (...) on the other side of the Machiavellian truth and the orgy of the rights of the stronger.”*¹⁵

The postmodern artist wanted to act towards the public, which was completely neglected in the aestheticism and hermeticism of modernism. In art, and especially in postmodern architecture, the *memory of the place* cocommunicates and the shift from the aesthetics of functionalism to the understanding of architecture as a place of encounter, sensation, memory, and experience is emphasised. The fundamental definition of postmodernism in architecture, in the words of the German theoretician Heinrich Klotz, is: *“not only function, but also fiction.”*¹⁶ In the graphics of the eighth decade of the 20th century, as well as in painting, there was a renewal of narrative, fiction and representation, and in this a significant number of art theorists and critics recognised a certain reaction of creative liberation from the empty image of primary/analytical painting and the ultimate reduction of expressive elements in minimalism, poor art or land art.

In contrast to the verbalisation of reality that until then was dominantly offered by the conceptual, the “revitalisation of figurative idioms”, “métier nostalgia”,

¹⁴ Abadžić Hodžić, 2011, 145.

¹⁵ Šarčević, 301.

¹⁶ Klotz, 1984.

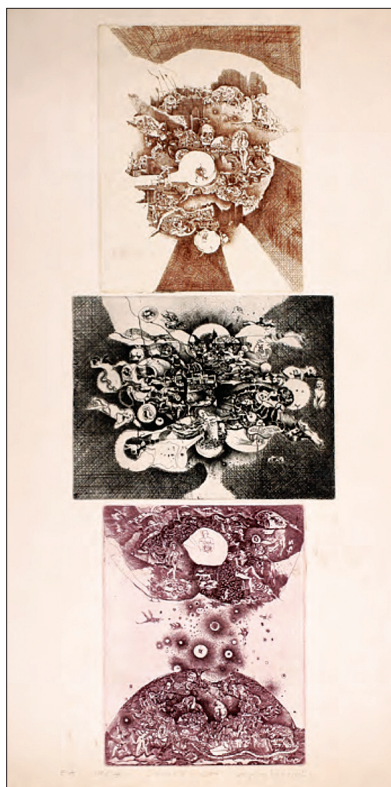


Figure 10 • Virgilije Nevjestić, *Creation of the World*, 1967. Love, 1969, Source: Aida Abadžić Hodžić, *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics of the 20th century*, Sarajevo, 2011.

“iconographic homage” appeared during the seventies: *the new for the first time belonged to the tradition, and the tradition to the new* (Zidić)¹⁷. The exhibition *Art in Yugoslavia 1970-1978*, which was held in the Collegium artisticum gallery in the summer of 1978 in Sarajevo, offered the framework for such new thinking within ex-Yugoslav art. With the postmodern sensibility came a moment in which the *new* no longer necessarily had to be confirmed as such, and innovation, as a mark of quality and a signature of modernism, lost its relevance. Emphasised agreement with this understanding of the art concept and design happened in the art of Bosnia and Herzegovina precisely in the medium of artistic graphics. Even in the period of late modernism, when the first works of Hozo, Berber, Tikveša, Dragulj, Nevjestić, Širbegović appeared in the mid-sixties, in which they show a strong connection with motifs and contents from the cultural tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, interpreted in the artistic language characteristic of the period in question. Postmodern sensibility will give this approach an even more pronounced expressiveness, narrativity, media layering and opulence.

As a special entity in painting and graphics in the seventies and eighties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the so-called “painters of memory” stood out, who belonged to the renewal of figuration characteristic of the eighth decade of the 20th century. These were authors who turned to the past in a very direct way (Hozo), to great stylistic epochs and masters (Berber), to content from folk beliefs, legends, subjective interpretations of the past (Nevjestić) (Fig. 10). These are examples of the so-called transversal mind that, instead of the poetics of break and discontinuity, establish conversations with personalities and styles of distant eras. This is the “*shaping and presenting of fundamental experiences based on the fact that the horizon of the present, which is always in progress, includes images and stories of some other time*”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Zidić, 1978.

¹⁸ Assmann, 2005, 19.



Figure 11 • Dževad Hozo, *From Mak's Portfolio*, 1972,
© Author's archive

The world of Ancient Antiquity, Byzantium, Islam, medieval art, Renaissance and Baroque, everything that is written in the history of art and culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina was awakened on the graphic sheets of Mersad Berber, and the possibility of a new writing of the cultural history of these areas emerged, founded on the idea of plurality of cultural traditions. During the same years when Berber makes our spiritual contemporaries the Quattrocento, the time of Velasquez, the Sarajevo of Bašeski's time; in the years in which Dževad Hozo revives the magical world of the Bosnian Middle Ages and inscribes the drama of modern man into it; when Virgilije Nevjestić in the fantastic stories and legends of the Herzegovinian region evokes the entangled threads of his identity, and great European artists such as Guttuso, Penck, Rainer, Immendorf, Lüpertz, Palladino, Kiefer and artists of the Italian trans-avant-garde incorporate historical memory and retrospection as an integral part of the process of creating artwork.

In such highly personal, *imaginative reconstructions of the past* (Hutcheon)¹⁹, it was often a matter of double coding in the realisation of compositions: they partly relied on document/factography (chronicles, letters, photographs, postcards, applications of original objects, quotations from the works of great masters of earlier epochs, archaeological and ethnological sources), and were partly immersed in the world of fantasy, fiction, allegory and symbols. The graphic cycles of Dževad Hozo and Mersad Berber during the 1960s and 1970s provide the most expressive examples of this concept. An explorative, open, plural approach to history, resulted in an experimental-analytical approach to the graphic medium. Thus, in his

¹⁹ Hutcheon, 2000.



Figure 12 • Mersad Berber, *The Caryatid of Krajiška, In the Honour of the Sarajevo Haggadah*, 1973, © Author's archive

major cycle *From Mak's Portfolio* (1972–1973), Hozo also introduces significant innovations in the technical sense (Fig. 11). History, in this case for Hozo and Mehmedalija Mak Dizdar, the medieval history of Bosnia, is like fiction (folk tales, legends, traditions) and it represents only one of the possible discourses, systems of meaning by which we build a sense of history. Hence, in the mentioned cycle, Hozo for the first time used the process of photomechanical transposition of motifs from the *stećak* tombstones and combined them with manual, relief etching of the plate. Therefore, after the relief etchings (*jetkanica*) from the *Nišan* cycle, Hozo, through research and enrichment of graphic techniques, arrived at relief photo-etchings (*From Mak's portfolio*). Each subsequent Hozo's cycle (*Return*, *Confrontations*, *Scarecrows*) was a step further in research and experiment, and with that, graphics increasingly

conquered exhibition spaces and confirmed its artistic dignity and expressive possibilities. Through the *Scarecrow* cycle, both in terms of form and content, but also by dissolving the process of creation/disappearance of the sheet, Hozo has wonderfully synthesised the fundamental nature of the graphic medium as an imprint, a trace. The emphasised connection between intimate and professional moments in this cycle is also summed up in the frequently repeated motif of the author's palm, printed like a "natural matrix", as the most elementary graphic gesture of recording presence (*Tied Hands*, 1976; *Stomach-ache*, 1979).

Berber's early works from the 1960s reveal an interest in dissolving the rich layers of Bosnian history (the engraving *Royal Portal in Jajce*, 1964; colour woodcuts *Memory of Počitelj*, *The Spread of Vrbas*, 1968; *Krajiška caryatid I, II*, 1967) (Fig. 12), and in the first half of the seventies, Berber develops a series of cycles in which he "talks" with great artists and courtiers of the Italian Renaissance, Spanish Baroque and Viennese Art Nouveau (*Diptych on Vélasquez*, 1973; *In honour of Ottocento*, 1974; *Infant Marguerita*, 1973; *Prince Baltazar I* - from the cycle *In*

honour of Vélásquez, 1973; *In honour of Gustav Klimt*, 1975).²⁰ The open, polyphonic visitation of history in the mixing of discourses and genres is also reflected in the free manner of building the composition: the figures almost float in space, twisted in different positions, in a series of collage-interpolated fragments. It is a history written on the margins of large history textbooks, in which fragments of faces, old manuscripts and photographs appear as fragments of memory (*Marguerita V*, 1973; *Prince Baltazar* and *Infant M.*, 1974).

A special place in Berber's oeuvre belongs to the *Chronicles of Sarajevo* cycle, which indicates a completely mature and original reflection on the graphic medium. Searching for his own identity, Berber, like a demiurge, dissolved the "historical mise-en-scene" of Ottoman Sarajevo from fragments of Bašeski's *Chronicles* from the 18th century and through the chronicle of "people from the margins" listened to the eternal secret of human existence, offering a more humane, more personal, a more layered interpretation of historical facts. In an effort to decipher as faithfully as possible the core of the bazaar mentality and revive the sounds, colours, smells of old Sarajevo, the stories of hamals, calligraphers, poets, Roma, merchants from market days, to dive as deeply as possible into the unknowable spaces of human destiny, the way Meša Selimović did in his novels. Berber, in the above-mentioned *Chronicles of Sarajevo* cycle (1975-1979), strengthened the verism of the manuscript: he emphasised the documentarian thread as well as the expressiveness of the organisation of the elements of the graphic sheet. On huge formats prepared on Maglaj natron, Berber combined complex graphic processes (offset printing, letterpress, multi-colour printing...) and later even collaged several sheets into one whole.²¹ (Fig. 13)

A similar principle of building a composition, freed from strict spatial-perspective rules and relationships of size, in which motifs appear seemingly freely scattered, is also present in the early drawings and graphics of both Emir Dragulj and Safet Zec (aquatints in colour *Letter; Flying Carriage*, 1973; drawing *Peasant*, 1973), which indicate the principle of double coding, i.e. the constant interweaving of the real and the fantastic... And on the sheets by Halil Tikveša from the seventies, with motifs from his native region of Herzegovina (*Mlinice, Hutovo, Interior from Šurmanac, Neretva near Komin, Subterranean River, Hearth...*) in which the face of an old stone house, dilapidated barge, and a traveling woman merge into a unique hymn to life, work and duration. Entirely close and enlarged, they are a dignified homage to the ordinary, Herzegovinian man and the beauty of his native land, the origin from which the past can be heard, and which does

²⁰ Abadžić Hodžić, 2011, 187.

²¹ Ibid. 209-210.



Figure 13 • Mersad Berber, *Sarajevo Variations / Dead Roma*, 1976,
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Figure 14 • Halil Tikveša, *Summer XIII*, 1970,
Source: Aida Abadžić Hodžić, *Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphics of the 20th century*, Sarajevo, 2011.

not have to be told exclusively through big dates and names (Fig. 14). During the same years, Virgilije Nevjestić also created a cycle of graphic sheets dedicated to his homeland (*In honour of my Bosnia*, 1976/78; *Once there was my village*, 1978).

The simultaneous coincidence of postmodern themes and motifs in Bosnian-Herzegovinian architecture, literature, music and film of the same period testifies to an extremely important and fruitful period of contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian cultural and social history. In post-war European art, graphics were an almost paradigmatic medium through which some of the essential issues of contemporary art were manifested in the changed socio-economic and cultural frameworks. The graphics of the post-informalism period raised the question of the communicative action of graphics, the relationship between art and new technologies, the redefinition of the character of uniqueness of a work of art and the role of the “art system”.

Bosnian-Herzegovinian Graphic Artists of the Seventh and Eighth Decades of the 20th Century and Contemporary Topics

The later cycles of authors of this generation also, such as the cycles *Tempo secondo*, *Paintings and Drawings of Dubrovnik*, *The Raft of the Medusa* and *Comments*, on which Berber worked from the end of the eighties, continued the principle of “conversation” with great names from the history of European painting,



Figure 15 • Mersad Berber, *The Great Allegory of Srebrenica*,
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but also South Slavic artists. However, only with the cycle dedicated to the tragedy of Srebrenica, which was, in Berber's words: "*one great, ancient, hymnic and sacred theme*", a new expressiveness, strength, and gesture appeared in his handwriting, as revealed by the sumptuous cycles by Safet Zec dedicated to this same theme, to which these two great artists returned to for years. Berber also studiously prepared for his *Great Allegory of Srebrenica* (Fig. 15): through newspaper photos, documents, forensic reports, videos, books, visits to Srebrenica and Potočari, working on this cycle for over ten years (1998–2009). On a palimpsest-like substrate, Berber built the rich textures of his compositions in layers and collages, collaging photographs of the faces and parts of the victims' found clothing, clippings from newspaper records, identification numbers, fragments of photographs from family albums, fragments from the lapidary of the National Museum in Sarajevo, fragments of soil or dry sprigs of fragrant herbs and strawberries, parts of old manuscripts, quotes and motifs from earlier compositions. In this allegorical telling that separates forms from the context of life and transforms them into magical and wondrous ones, the faces of Srebrenica mothers, fragments of old photographs, the Roma Beriš from an earlier cycle, horse heads with staring eyes, animal and human skulls, parts of clothes and trampled shoes from forensic archives, drawings of Srebrenica miners, refugees on the road to death towards Tuzla, faces of anthropologists and forensic scientists, Roman map of *Argentaria* – a silver mine, old maps of the Balkans, burned Srebrenica chardaks, war postcards of desolate Srebrenica in the snow, the

kingdom of Ariadne and sculptures by Phidias meet, as if in a dream.²²

In Berber's studio in Sarajevo, in the whirlwind of war, the large composition *The Raft of the Medusa* (320 x 480 cm) was captured, an *homage* to Géricault's painting of the same name, a large canvas on which Géricault painted the drama of the suffering and extreme agony of several shipwrecked survivors of the famous but shamefully abandoned Napoleonic regatta. The memory of Géricault's inimitable incarnations of the human body in a state of disintegration will appear precisely in this cycle dedicated to the Bosnian martyrs and victims of the genocide in the Srebrenica region. In the same painting, Berber also reveals his experience of collaborating with film, in the way he frames and edits fragments of the picture.



Figure 16 • Dževad Hozo, *Day 113, Day 149*,
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The great names of the generation of graphic artists of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century confirmed in the following decades their extraordinarily lively and layered artistic handwriting, which was, through the primary experience in the graphic medium, opened to later, multimedia research: numerous bibliophile editions (Virgilije Nevjestić, Mersad Berber, Dževad Hozo), through collaboration with textile design and scenography (Radovan Kragulj), the emergence of graphics into space and its connection with film and digital media (Dževad Hozo), graphic assemblages and installations in combined media (Halil Tikveša), all the way to masterful wall paintings in sacred premises by Safet Zec.

The authenticity and high quality of the later oeuvres of artists from this unique generation of graphic artists of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century, and the original breakthroughs they later achieved in other artistic techniques, which often represent significant breakthroughs in their oeuvres, are confirmation of the exceptional quality of the mentioned generation, as well as the inexhaustible, creative possibilities of graphics in the encounter with other media, but also with new techniques and technologies (Fig. 16).

²² Abadžić Hodžić, 2015.

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Bosnian Graphics in the Context of European Postmodernity and its Contemporary Interpretation: Selected Examples

Summary:

Key words: *Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics, seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century, postmodernity, contemporaneity, originality*

In the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, for the first time in the modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, art directly offered a paradigmatic model of a complex understanding of the historical, political, and cultural sediments of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and its traditions. In the atmosphere of the eighth decade, freed from the modernist imperative of overcoming the old with the new, Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphic artists opened up to a postmodern sensibility and the expression of thought and understanding that allows simultaneous existence in multiplicity, with diverse ways of appropriating and interpreting history, numerous branches of thematising tradition and defining it. The confirmation of the high reach of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics at that time within the Yugoslav and European art context is also confirmed by the notable participation of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphic artists at domestic and international graphic exhibitions, as well as the prestigious awards they won at them. This characteristic of Bosnian-Herzegovinian graphics is particularly interesting because it is about a generation of graphic artists who had to study at art academies outside their native environment until the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo (1972). The paper will discuss the significance of the generation of graphic artists of the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century in contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian art and on the European art scene, as well as the general cultural conditions of the period in question, and, from a time distance of almost five decades, evaluate the contemporaneity and originality of the artistic researches by selected graphic artists and breakthroughs in individual (graphic) oeuvres that followed their pioneering appearance and postmodern research.

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