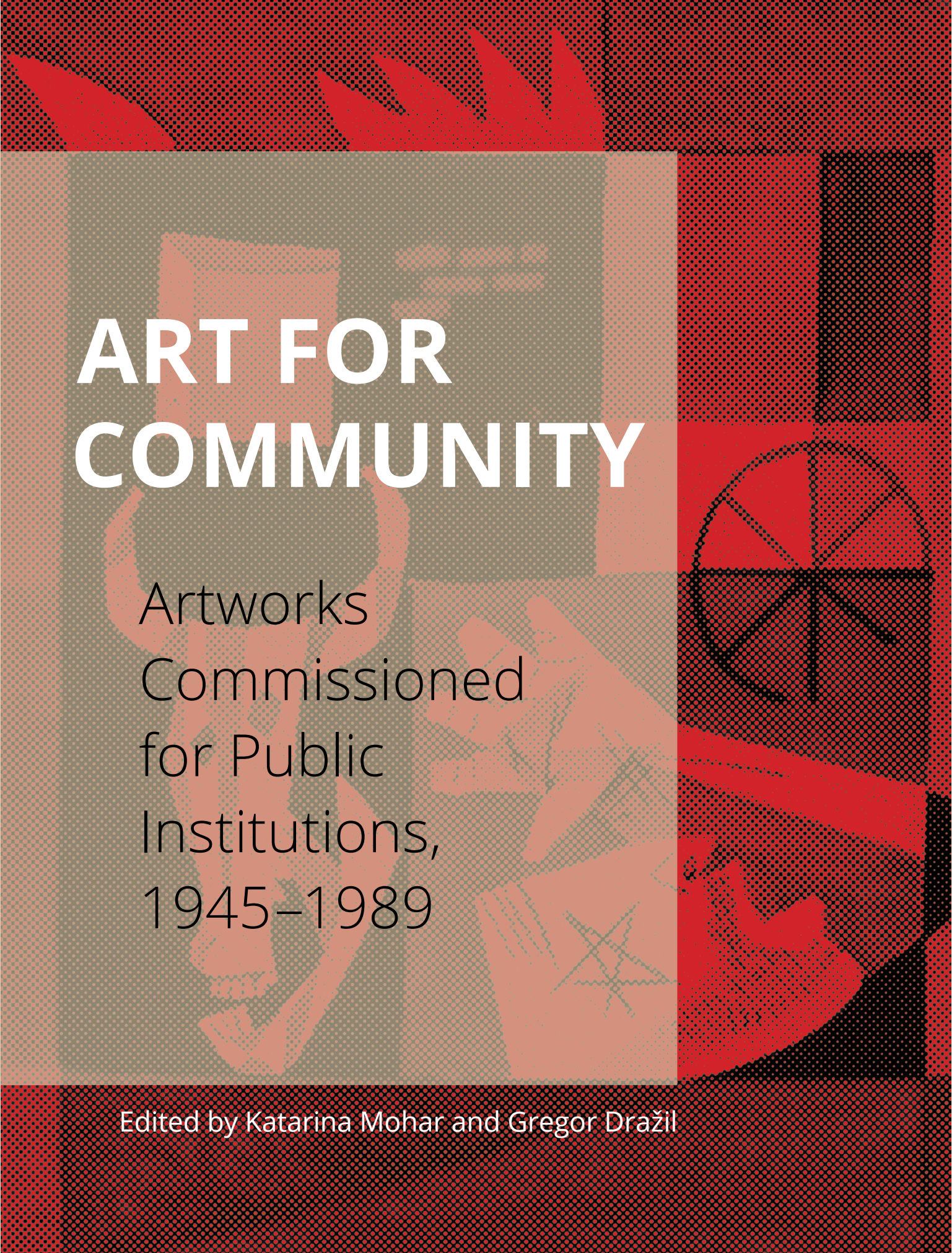




ART FOR COMMUNITY

Artworks
Commissioned
for Public
Institutions,
1945–1989

Edited by Katarina Mohar and Gregor Dražil



Založba ZRC



ART FOR COMMUNITY

Artworks
Commissioned
for Public
Institutions,
1945–1989

Edited by Katarina Mohar and Gregor Dražil

Ljubljana, 2026

Opera Instituti Artis Historiae

Art for Community

Artworks Commissioned for Public Institutions, 1945–1989

Edited by Katarina Mohar and Gregor Dražil

English proofreading: Ana Čavić, Donald Francis Reindl

Slovene proofreading: Darja Gabrovšek Homšak

Reviewers: Marjeta Ciglencički, Jessica Jenkins

Design, layout and photo editing: Andrej Furlan

Issued by ZRC SAZU, France Stele Institute of Art History

Represented by Mija Oter Gorenčič

Publisher: Založba ZRC

Represented by Oto Luthar

Založba ZRC general manager and editor-in-chief: Aleš Pogačnik

Print: Present, d. o. o., Ljubljana

350 copies

First edition, first print run / First e-edition

Ljubljana 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3986/9789610511748>



The book is a result of the research programme Art in Slovenia at a Cultural Crossroads (P6-0061) and research project Art for Community: Registration and Assessment of Artworks Commissioned for Public Institutions in Slovenia, 1945–1991 (J6-50206), both funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.



Unless otherwise stated, the text of this volume is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0). The licence does not apply to the illustrations. Permission for their reuse must be obtained separately from the relevant rights holder(s). Creators and sources are identified in the captions where known.

Cover image: Ivo Šubic, unrealised sketch for the mosaic in the building of the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia.
Photo: Andreja Rakovec, ZRC SAZU.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

009 013	Katarina Mohar, Gregor Dražil INTRODUCTION Uvod
018 039	Oscar Svanelid, Marta Edling THE GOVERNMENT OF ART: DEMOCRACY AND STATE PUBLIC ART IN SWEDEN 1937–2027 Vladanje z umetnostjo: demokracija in javna umetnost v državnih naročilih na Švedskem v letih 1937–2027
042 067	Barbara Vodopivec “PERCENT FOR ART” SCHEMES: ARTISTIC AGENCY, CULTURAL POLICY, AND PUBLIC ART IN EUROPE AND POSTWAR SLOVENIA/YUGOSLAVIA Shema »odstotek za umetnost«: vloga umetnikov, kulturna politika in javna umetnost v Evropi ter v povojni Sloveniji/Jugoslaviji
070 097	Annette Tietenberg ED AND NANCY KIENHOLZ’S PROPOSAL FOR <i>THE BERLIN FOUNTAIN</i> (1981/83): AN IRONIC COMMENTARY ON THE FUNCTION OF ART IN PUBLIC SPACES IN EAST AND WEST BERLIN DURING THE COLD WAR Predlog Eda in Nancy Kienholz za <i>Berlinsko fontano</i> (<i>The Berlin Fountain</i> ; 1981/83): ironični komentar o funkciji umetnosti v javnem prostoru Vzhodnega in Zahodnega Berlina v času hladne vojne
100 129	Burcu Selcen Coşkun THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ART AND ARCHITECTURE DURING THE POSTWAR PERIOD IN TURKEY: CASES FROM ISTANBUL Dialog med umetnostjo in arhitekturo v povojnem obdobju v Turčiji: primeri iz Istanbula

132

Gregor Dražil

**THE MURALS OF IVAN SELJAK ČOPIČ IN THE 1950S AND
EARLY 1960S: BETWEEN REALISM AND ABSTRACTION**

154

Stenske poslikave Ivana Seljaka Čopiča iz petdesetih in zgodnjih
šestdesetih let 20. stoletja: med realizmom in abstrakcijo

156

Irina Cărăbaș

**JULES PERAHIM'S MURALS AND THE POLITICS
OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN ROMANIA
IN THE POST-STALINIST PERIOD**

179

Stenske poslikave Julesa Perahima in politika grajenega okolja v
Romuniji v poststalinističnem obdobju

182

Andreja Rakovec

**NEW INSIGHTS INTO IVE ŠUBIC'S MOSAIC
IN THE SLOVENIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

209

Nova odkritja o mozaiku Iveta Šubica
v Državnem zboru Republike Slovenije

212

Nadja Zgonik

**TAPESTRIES AS PUBLIC ART IN ELITE SPACES OF SOCIALIST
YUGOSLAVIA: THE CASE OF MARIJ PREGELJ'S TAPESTRIES
FOR THE KOTEKS TOBUS BOUTIQUE**

239

Tapiserija kot javna umetnost za elitni prostor v socialistični
Jugoslaviji: primer tapiserij Marija Preglja za butik Koteks Tobus

242

Nataša Ivanović

**ARTISTIC DECORATION OF SHIPS IN POSTWAR ITALY:
ZORAN MUŠIČ'S EMBROIDERY *STORIA DI MARCO POLO***

260

Likovna oprema ladij po drugi svetovni vojni v Italiji:
vezenina Zorana Mušiča *Zgodba o Marku Polu*

262

Patricia Počanić

**ART FOR LEISURE ARCHITECTURE: ARTWORKS
COMMISSIONED FOR HOTELS IN ISTRIA AND
THE KVARNER GULF IN THE 1960S**

297

Umetnost za turistično arhitekturo: umetniška dela, naročena za
hotele v Istri in Kvarnerju v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja

300

Blaž Šeme

**CONDITION AND RISK ASSESSMENT
OF SOCIALIST-ERA MOSAICS IN SLOVENIA**

324

Ocena stanja in ogroženosti mozaikov
iz obdobja socialistične Slovenije

326

Begoña Farré Torras

**PROMETHEUS'S TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS:
A CASE STUDY OF HERITAGE CHALLENGES POSED
BY MURALS FROM THE TIME OF PORTUGAL'S *ESTADO NOVO*
DICTATORSHIP (1933–1974)**

345

Prometejeve preizkušnje in tegobe: študija primera izzivov
dediščinskega varstva, ki jih odpirajo stenske poslikave iz obdobja
portugalske diktature *Estado Novo* (1933–1974)



ARTISTIC DECORATION OF SHIPS IN POSTWAR ITALY: ZORAN MUŠIČ'S EMBROIDERY *STORIA DI MARCO POLO*

Nataša Ivanović

Muzej Lah

This article presents the monumental embroidery *Storia di Marco Polo* (The Tale of Marco Polo) [Figure 1], created in 1951 by the painter, draughtsman, and printmaker Zoran Mušič (1909–2005) for the first-class lounge of the Italian ocean liner *Augustus*. Although Mušič rarely accepted commissions – his opus contains three more, including one from the Dornacher sisters in 1950 for the painting *La Stanza di Zurigo* (The Zurich Room), which adorned the former villa in Zollikon, and a commission for the huge abstract mosaic *Paesaggio dalmata* (Dalmatian Landscape) [Figure 2] for the entrance hall of Munich's Hilton Hotel from 1972 – this particular embroidery is one of the two artworks with which Italy promoted its reputation around the world.¹

The contemporary perception of the embroidery is in complete contrast to the purpose for which it was created. It is currently displayed at Monfalcone's Shipyard Museum as part of the permanent exhibition on the development of shipbuilding in the Gulf of Trieste. Still state-owned, the embroidery was purchased when the ship was withdrawn in 1975 and handed over to the newly established Ministry of Culture and Cultural Heritage, which transferred it in 1983 to the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome for safekeeping and permanent ownership.² The embroidery was first publicly presented in 2016 as part of the exhibition *Immaginario di viaggio: Zoran Mušič e Tranquillo Marangoni sulle motonavi Augustus e Giulio Cesare* (Visions of Voyages: Zoran Mušič and Tranquillo Marangoni on the Ocean Liners *Augustus* and *Giulio Cesare*) hosted by the Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art in Monfalcone, for which the artwork had been restored. Apart from presenting the restoration process and content analysis in minute detail, the exhibition catalogue also placed the work in a wider context and within the overall artistic excellence of the vessel.³ The embroidery's growing appeal for the Italian public is reflected in the interdisciplinary exhibition *I mondi di Marco Polo: Il viaggio di un mercante veneziano del Duecento* (The Worlds of Marco Polo: The Journey of a Thirteenth-Century Venetian Merchant) hosted by the Doge's Palace in Venice in 2024, which highlighted the life and accomplishments of the Venetian merchant and explorer.⁴ Mušič's

embroidery figured not only as a unique contemporary art presentation of the subject matter addressed by the exhibition but also as a reminder that the twentieth century gave rise to a multitude of understandings of the story about Marco Polo. These ranged from the Fascist revival of his figure as a mythological embodiment of Italy's might and spirit of discovery to ambiguous deviations from reality in Polo's journeys to China and a "fictitious" text dictated to his fellow prisoner in Genoa, titled *Il Milione* (The Travels of Marco Polo). In any case, during the mid-1950s, there was no better way to relate the story about Marco Polo's travels than on board an ocean liner to passengers making their voyage knowing that they were retracing important moments in history.⁵

Over the last decade, only a few brief articles were published on Mušič's embroidery, largely summarising the discoveries made in 2016.⁶ Nor were any fresh insights provided by the exhibition *La Stanza di Zurigo. Omaggio a Zoran Music* (The Zurich Room: A Tribute to Zoran Music) held at the Fortuny Palace in Venice in 2018, which showcased sketches, drawings, and photos on the creation of the embroidery, merely describing them as silent witnesses to the artist's legacy to the city.⁷ Further mentions of the embroidery can be found in biographical records on the artist,⁸ and concise or more detailed presentation articles can be encountered in the Italian daily press as well as the architecture, art, and design magazine *Domus*.⁹ All newspaper texts were published in the early 1950s, around the time when the embroidery was created.

The question that remains to be answered is why the artwork was commissioned and who proposed the topic ultimately depicted by Mušič. The classical iconological question was to some extent unknowingly answered by Francesca Nodari, the curator of the exhibition, when at the end of 2017, barely a year after the first public presentation of the artwork, the same gallery in Monfalcone held a historical survey of the development of interior design and artistic decoration of Italian ships built between 1949 and 1967.¹⁰ In her presentation of the construction, interior architecture, and design of the ocean liner *Augustus*, Nodari also mentioned a few art commissions, including Mušič's embroidery and the proposal by the Trieste architects Aldo Cervi (1901–1972) and Umberto Nordio (1891–1971)¹¹ to cover the first-class lounge wall with it. Her briefly mentioned but well-illustrated source is further explored in this research.

The commission appears to have been assigned to Mušič in 1950, especially considering that the initiative and the first plans for the ship were already proposed in August 1949. The Trieste State Archives hold the



Figure 1. Zoran Mušič, *Storia di Marco Polo* (*The Tale of Marco Polo*), tapestry (embroidery), 1951, 206 × 856 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, inv. no. 16129. Source: Krekic, Nodari and Bristot, *Immaginario di viaggio*.



Figure 2. Zoran Mušič, *Paesaggio dalmata* (*Dalmatian Landscape*), mosaic, 1972, 640 × 540 cm, Hilton Hotel, Munich. Executed by mosaicists Carlo Signorini and Verdiano Marzi. Source: Muzej Lah, *Zoran Mušič Documentation*, CR 4016.

sketches by Aldo Cervi, one of the four architects who designed the ship. Others were Romano Boico (1910–1985) and Vittorio Frandoli (1902–1978) and the aforementioned Nordio. As the designs for the lounges, bars, and walls of the ship's first-class interiors reveal, the placement of the embroidery was precisely determined on 14 October 1950.¹² Two months later, on 24 December 1950,

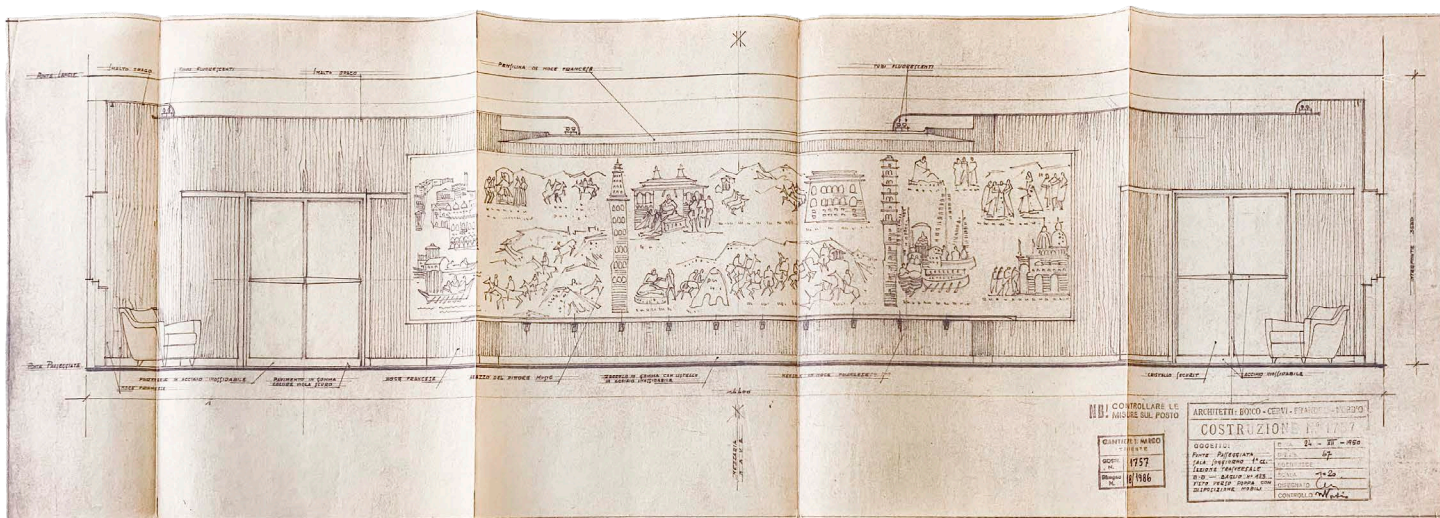


Figure 3. Aldo Cervi and Umberto Nordio, draft of the wall with Zoran Mušič's *Storia di Marco Polo (The Tale of Marco Polo)*, 1950. Source: Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Archivio dell'architetto Aldo Cervi, box 19, folder B2, construction plan no. 1757, 24 December 1950.

the thematic and compositional sketches of the embroidery were drawn, along with its rather unusual placement on the envisaged wall [Figure 3].¹³

The selection of Mušič to create the monumental embroidery did not come as a surprise, considering that he was already among the most popular contemporary artists in Italy at the time. Following his liberation from the Dachau concentration camp in 1945 and a few sojourns in Gorizia, Mušič soon returned to Venice, where he had already lived before his arrest. Together with his wife Ida Cadorin Barbarigo and her father, a fellow painter and prominent professor at the Venetian Academy of Fine Arts, Guido Cadorin (1892–1976), he took part in minor solo and group exhibitions across Italy and Switzerland.¹⁴ It was certainly of pivotal importance for him to participate in the 24th Venice Biennale in 1948, the first held after the war, at which he presented himself side by side with his Italian contemporaries. Some of them also provided ocean liners with art furnishings. At the biennale, Mušič exhibited three paintings from the cycle *Cavallini* (Little Horses), which brought him recognition during the 1950s. He used the same theme in embroidery. At the 25th Venice Biennale in 1950, he presented the Dalmatian horses again, along with *Paesaggio umbro* (Umbrian Landscape), for which he received a monetary prize of 200,000 Italian lire, named after its sponsor, the magnate Riccardo Gualino.¹⁵ Mušič's presence at the most prestigious Italian and international art events, coupled with the invitation to prepare what are now lost prints to decorate the vestibules and lounges of the ocean liner *Conte Biancamano*, restored in 1949,¹⁶ testifies to his success and the interest that the four architects showed in his work. Not least, it was they,

alongside the architect and designer Gio Ponti (1891–1979), that decided who would create the art furnishing for the *Conte Biancamano*, whereas the decisions regarding the new ocean liner *Augustus* lay squarely with the Trieste architects.

The initiative to rejuvenate the most important shipyards in Trieste and Monfalcone as well as build new passenger liners and restore old ones that had suffered severe damage during the Second World War was given by the Allied military government and the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction. The state intervention also led to important commissions made to architects, craftsmen, engineers, designers, and artists. Marking the revival of Italy's merchant navy, the early 1950s were a period of intense activity for the four Trieste architects, whom the successful restoration of the *Conte Biancamano* (1949) and the designs for the twin vessels *Australia* (1951) and *Neptunia* (1951) earned the commission to prepare the designs for a sizeable group of first-class interiors for the second ocean liner *Augustus*, which was built and furnished at Trieste's San Marco Shipyard. In addition, they were entrusted with designing the most prominent first-class interiors – specifically, the foyer with a staircase, ballroom, chapel, lounge with a bar, salon, casino, and swimming pool.

The ocean liner *Augustus* was built and furnished under the supervision of the engineer Nicolò Costanzi (1893–1967). The rudder was attached on 1 June 1949, and the ship was launched on 19 November 1950. It was christened in Trieste by the wife of Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi.¹⁷ The ship was passed to the Italian shipbuilder Società di Navigazione Italia with its seat in Genoa on 20 February 1952, from where it set out on its first voyage toward Rio de Janeiro on 4 March 1952. It was intended to operate Latin American routes and became the longest-serving trans-Atlantic ship of the great Italian navy; it was dismantled no earlier than 2012 in Alang, India.¹⁸

Functionality, rationality, and refined elegance were key considerations in decorating the *Augustus*. In the prestigious first-class interiors, the architects designed an architectural space and combined individual art pieces into an integral artwork showcasing Italy's history and contemporary cultural achievements. In 1966, Boico noted that this created a fortunate circumstance that allowed the international liner to become a very effective cultural and educational platform for art.¹⁹

Boico, Cervi, Frandoli, and Nordio adhered to the principles of ship design that Gio Ponti already set during the interwar period. They furnished the *Conte Biancamano* and continued to improve their understanding of

Ponti's philosophy while collaborating on the *Giulio Cesare*, the twin ship of the Trieste-built *Augustus*.²⁰ According to Ponti, a ship's interiors should follow a uniform concept that harmonises the use of materials and sets limits on the imagination of an individual designer while ensuring freedom for innovation in general stylistic coordination, which does not necessarily completely dominate the entire ship but also does not shy away from repetition. During the 1950s, consistency was of crucial importance for ocean liners; it was championed over the incessant search for novelties, which combined too many artistic styles. The work was to be done by a single group of designers. The ideal result, a stylistically designed ship, was only attainable once all classes of accommodation and all interiors served as an expression of a uniform vision, a guiding hand that held the rein over the complete design.²¹ Ponti viewed this as striving for lightness through extensive use of certain materials, particularly gold or silver anodised aluminium and light wooden materials with a natural feel, such as ash, walnut, white oak, birch, and cherry. Due to the technology and immense size of transatlantic ocean liners, the architects were advised to refrain from using solid wood and instead opt for laminated wood, plywood panels, coverings, and light frame constructions to enhance and highlight the sense of lightness. The aim was to move away from heavy objects to light ones, from thick to thin ones, from opaque to transparent ones, from dark to light ones, from colourless to colourful ones, from diversity to uniformity, and from complexity to simplicity and linearity.²²

The preconditions for designing a ship's interior according to Ponti were as follows: from the technical point of view, a ship was to be fully operable as a mode of transport, whereas the degree of passenger comfort had to reflect that the ship also provided a living environment while mid-voyage; the main idea was for a ship to combine the reality of a sea voyage with the comfort expected to be experienced on land; and, finally, a ship had to be inviting. Passengers decided on their vessel of choice based on its comfort and aesthetic appeal. Therefore, designers also had to bear in mind that a ship's interior served as an expression of the state's relationship with its public.²³

According to Ponti, the interior had to be dedicated to Italy and glorify it in one of two ways. First, it had to do so in a figurative manner, with the use of decorations, paintings, and ornaments that acquainted foreigners with Italian legends, Italy's distinct architecture, famous historical gardens, recurring festivals and saints' days (the Redeemer's Festival in Venice or the Festival of the Candles in Gubbio), its poetic lovers (Romeo and Juliet, Paolo and Francesca), famous landscapes, masks, theatre, notable



Figure 4. Presentation brochure for the ocean liner *Augustus*, 1952. Source: Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič Documentation.

personalities, traditions, beautiful women, music and song, artists and craftsmen, enchanting ceramics, exquisite glass, famous enamels, and beautiful textiles. Second, he also deemed it important to view ships not only as means of transport moving passengers from point A to point B, but also as a way of building Italy's reputation.²⁴ It was essential that a ship be part of Italy wherever it travelled, and it had to embody the most prestigious and state-of-the-art aspects of Italian style, culture, and art.

The ocean liner *Augustus* [Figure 4] was built in its entirety using high-quality wood, steel, and rubber, along with exquisite textiles, crystals, and fluorescent lights. Great emphasis was placed on the sculpture decoration of interiors, such as the ballroom, the chapel, and the staircase with a railing made of large, hardened steel plates, supported by small copper-plated pillars, and decorated with a bronze acanthus-leaf frieze by Marcello Mascherini (1906–1983). The

staircase was closed off by walls of polished oak beams whose colour corresponded to Mascherini's bronze tones, and the dark violet rubber flooring served as a connecting element of all the interiors and a chromatic counterpoint. Indeed, the colour palette of the luxurious first-class ballroom built on the dark violet of the flooring and the satin-like yellow-gold walls, which matched silk drapes, suede sofas, and the gilded bronze tone of shell-shaped wall lamps, likewise designed by Mascherini. The main wall featured the monumental bronze sculpture composition *// Mare* (The Sea). The door leading to the chapel was built by Carlo and Mirella Sbisà. Carlo Sbisà (1899–1964) and his wife Mirella (1921–2015) produced a series of multicolour glazed ceramics in abstract shapes of corals and shells. These were in stark contrast to the blackness of the side of the counter and the wall behind the bar. Lit within, they created a play of light shafts and shimmering pearly reflections. The maritime theme also prevailed in the first-class dining room, the only space that was designed by Gustavo Pulitzer Finali, who collaborated with Dino Predonzani (1914–1994) again on the *Giulio Cesare*. The walls were dominated by Predonzani's imposing tempera paintings depicting the sea bottom with vases, fragments of ancient pillars, and statues among fishnets, rocks, and algae. Predonzani designed the decorative mosaic for the first-class



Figure 5. E. Mioni, view of Zoran Mušič's *Storia di Marco Polo* (The Tale of Marco Polo) and the day salon aboard the *Augustus*. Source: Archivio di Stato di Trieste, Archivio dell'architetto Aldo Cervi, box 19, folder B2, no. 2206.

swimming pool and veranda created by the Venice-based mosaic cooperative Arte del Mosaico. The sculptor Ugo Carà (1908–2004) designed four luxury apartments and cabins; the gilded niche in the smoking room featured his wooden female nude playing a zither. The huge composition by Tranquillo Marangoni (1912–1992), titled *Serra* (Greenhouse), was last housed in the atrium of the large staircase. It depicted a significant number of exotic plants in vases, cacti, wildflowers, and water lilies. Most of the interior furniture with lighting was designed by Gio Ponti.

The analogy of themes depicted on Italian ocean liners adheres to Ponti's principles of Italy's recognisability. Thus, a passenger could observe Massimo Campiglli's monumental depiction of *Le suonatrici* (The Women Players) in the first-class ballroom of the *Giulio Cesare*, Salvatore Fiume's painting *Italia mitica* (Mythic Italy) in the first-class day salon, or Mušič's embroidery *Storia di Marco Polo* [Figure 5] in the day salon on the *Augustus*. Ponti's approach to ship design reveals how the architect – or, rather, interior designer – also defined individual elements of art decoration; often, he even submitted a draft demonstrating what a finished artwork would look like in terms of its form and content. One such example was his draft for the painting by Edina Altara, which graced the passage to the dining room on the ocean liner *Conte Grande*, or the architect's sketch *Arlecchino* (Harlequin) produced by Paolo De Poli for the *Conte Biancamano*.

Figure 6. Zoran Mušič, draft not included in the final version of *Storia di Marco Polo* (*The Tale of Marco Polo*), 1951. Source: Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič Documentation, CR 4018.



Some artworks, among them Ponti's painting *Allegoria della partenza* (*Allegory of Goodbye*), which adorned the second-class dining room on the *Conte Biancamano*, were ultimately finished by the architects themselves.

The content of the embroidery was determined by the group of four mentioned above: its aim was to show the passengers the great voyage that the Venetian merchant Marco Polo made from Venice to China. Cervi's plan, dated 24 December 1950, in some of its contours even slightly resembling Ambrogio Lorenzetti's depiction of the *Effetti del Buon Governo in Città* (*Effects of Good Government in the City*) from 1338, points to a tripartite composition of space with several scenes depicted in individual fields. Mušič then divided the completed embroidery into five segments, the central one featuring a single theme, and the other four subdivided into two horizontal halves, each presenting its respective imagery. In both the draft and the finalised embroidery, the composition is divided by two high Oriental towers, and the stories in both unfold from left to right. Before delivering the final version, Mušič created several watercolour, pastel, and pencil drawings. He even embroidered a few depictions, which were not included in the final composition. One of these embroideries is now kept by the National Gallery of Slovenia in Ljubljana.²⁵ There are also photos of others, the current whereabouts of which are not known [Figure 6]. The embroidery in Ljubljana dates to the period of preparatory sketches; its composition closely imitates the arrangement of the galloping horses



Figure 7. Ida Cadorin Barbarigo and her mother, Livia Tivoli Cadorin, embroidering, 1951. Source: Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič Documentation, CR 4016.

in the central field in Cervi's draft, and the little horses in the photo were positioned in Mušič's characteristic composition of three or four overlapping two-dimensional horses suspended above the rolling hills of Umbria or Siena.²⁶

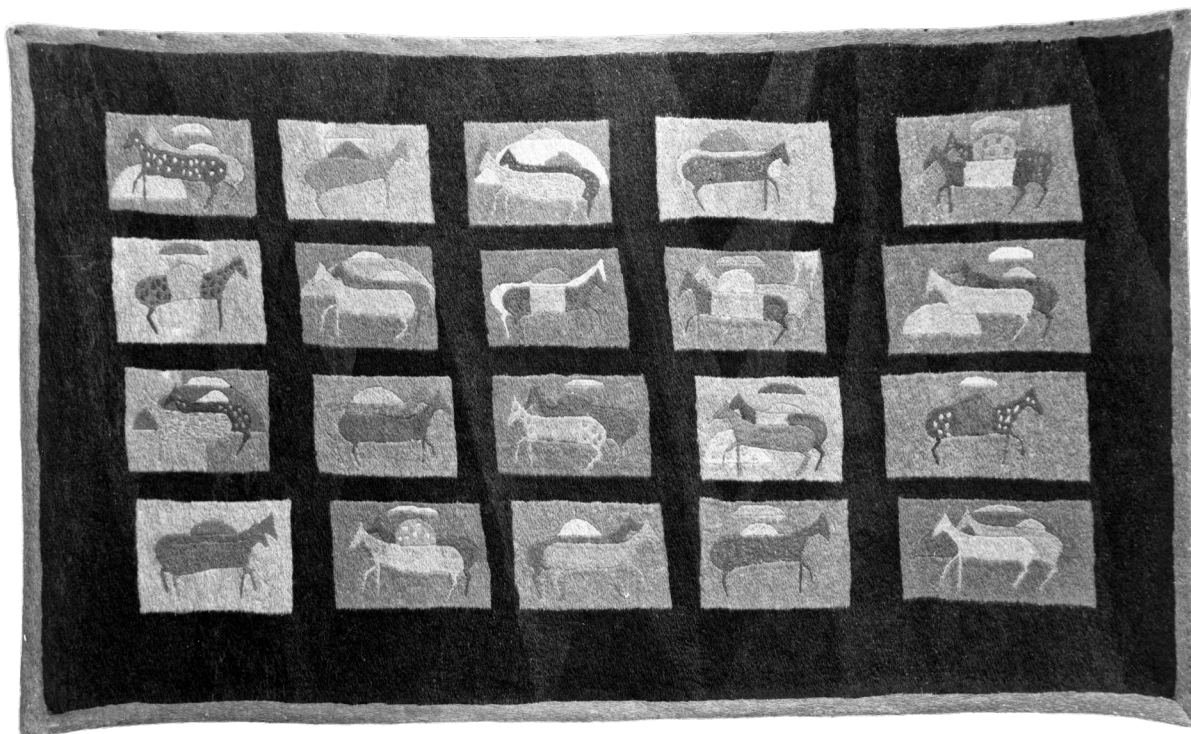
Following extensive preparations and explorations, Mušič completed the embroidery in earthy tones, with his distinct visual language of playful horses, the depiction of reclining female nudes, a hilly landscape, and the contours of variably recognisable panoramas of Venice. Due to the sheer scale of the work and the artist's exhibition engagements in 1951, he was assisted by Livia Tivoli Cadorin, his mother-in-law, and Ida, his wife and fellow painter, which was also confirmed by the Trieste journalist Aurelia Gruber Benco (1952)²⁷ and documentary photos published by Gio Ponti in *Domus* in 1952 [Figure 7], showing both artists presenting a detailed explanation of the embroidery.²⁸

Unfolding from left to right, the narrative extends over five fields and is accompanied by citations from *Storia di Marco Polo* in the fields above and below. The first scene in the upper left corner offers a view of poetic and charming Venice, with the recognisable Doge's Palace and the profile of St. Mark's domes, together with the belltower and two gondolas. It is the presentation of the place from which Marco Polo embarked on his voyage: "Here begins the journey of Mister Marco Polo from Venice, which brings forth many a novelty from Tartary and a multitude of other lands."²⁹ At the bottom, the galloping horses are depicted surrounded by rolling hills, just as Mušič had painted them since 1946; however, the scene is far from a faithful representation of the hostile welcome that Marco Polo received: "When they arrived in Layas, Bondoc Daire, the sultan of Babylon, descended upon the land with his formidable army and unleashed a great war."³⁰ The second field is set apart from the first one by a high Oriental tower that repeats in a smaller scale as a division between the fourth and fifth fields of the tapestry. At the top of the second field, another group of little horses is seen galloping, some as figures resembling Mušič's creation of *Motivo dalmata* (Dalmatian Theme) – women with parasols on horseback, appearing here as the messengers of the great Kublai Khan: "When the Great Khan learned that the two brothers and Marco were



Figure 8. Draft for an embroidery in Zoran Mušič's studio in Venice, 1951. Photo: Foto Giacomelli. Source: Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič Documentation, CR 4017.

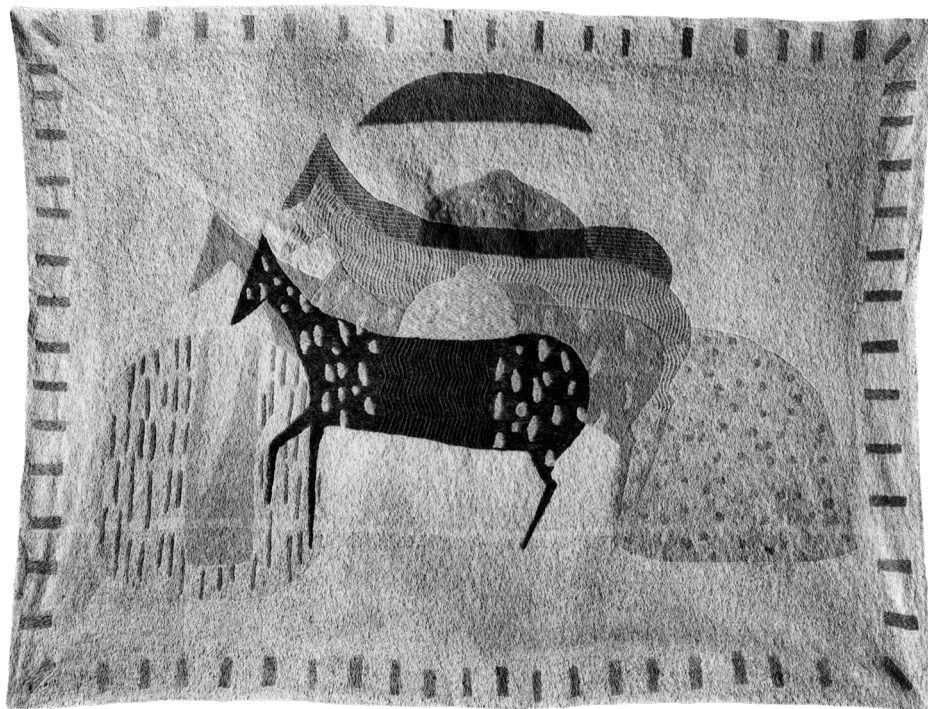
coming, he sent an envoy to greet them."³¹ In the lower field, the artist depicted Kublai Khan reclining in his palace with three cone-shaped domes, and his four wives portrayed in respective window niches: "Kublai Khan still has four wives, whom he considers his legal spouses. They call themselves empresses."³² Mušič's imaginative compositional arrangement repeats in the lower part of the fourth field in the mirrored image of a woman reclining on a divan as a counterpoint to Kublai Khan: "He also has many concubines – I tell you, they are carefully selected and the most beautiful girls that the world has ever seen."³³ Both compositions resemble Mušič's reclining female nudes from between 1946 and 1948. It can certainly be said that the Great Khan in the first scene was a formalistically reproduced female nude by Mušič, just as the female nude in the second scene is positioned in the interior arches of an Oriental-style building, the palace that the painter depicted in the first scene. Especially in the latter case, the preserved photographs allow one to follow Mušič's creative process of making the embroidery, with the draft revealing his intention to depict himself together with his wife in one of the window niches [Figure 8]. From the Renaissance onward, artists liked including their self-depictions in important monumental works to affirm not only their authorship and their personal connection with the artwork, but also their equal footing with the figures they depicted. He ultimately abandoned the idea of incorporating his self-portrait into the final embroidery.



*Figure 9. Zoran Mušič,
Motivo dalmata
(Dalmatian Theme),
embroidery, 1950,
148 × 205 cm, location
unknown. Source:
Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič
Documentation,
CR 4020.*

The central scene is large, taking up one-fifth of the tapestry; the figures of horses are larger and more playful, and they are set in Mušič's characteristic hilly landscape, despite being part of a fierce battle, as the embroidered narrative goes: "The battle that the Great Khan fought against Nayam, let it be known that it was very ferocious, marred by betrayal, and by all accounts the most devastating warfare of our time. Horses were mowed down, and human losses on both sides were inconceivable. The clamour was such that it would drown out the sound of thunder."³⁴ The fourth field mirrors the second one, with the reclining female nude at the bottom and Mušič's little horses and hills at the top, with further addition of birds and a leopard charging an antelope: "The Great Khan has many leopards, all of them superb predators and hunters of beasts."³⁵ The sketches preserved from Mušič's estate reveal that the artist invested much effort not only in selecting themes from the literary text, as may be gathered from several small sketches bearing captions, but also in painting exotic animals, which he had never done before. In one of the sketches, he drew himself and his wife in place of leopards' heads. Mušič's desire to depict himself in the sketches as a silent witness looking out his window or a personified leopard is rather unusual; although he abandoned the idea in the embroidery, it often recurs in his sketches. When

Figure 10. Zoran Mušič, *Cavallini (Little Horses)*, embroidery, 1950–1951, 115 × 195 cm, location unknown. Source: Muzej Lah, Zoran Mušič Documentation, CR 4019.



devising a premise for the embroidery, he was extremely personal; as he had stressed in many interviews, he only depicted people that he knew well but nonetheless ultimately decided on a more neutral approach. The upper section of the last, fifth field, set apart by a tower, presents the palace of the Great Khan with three gondolas of the Polo family ready to set sail: “Misters Nicolao, Matteo, and Marco asked to bid farewell and the Great Khan granted their wish with a heavy heart, for he loved them very much. They set out for Trebizond, then Constantinople, and from there to Negroponte, and finally to Venice – that was in 1295.”³⁶ The scene at the bottom repeats the theme of little horses, now set in an Oriental landscape with Mušič’s hills and a yurt pointing to the Polo family expedition.

It seems safe to note that the artist’s formalist language prevailed in the embroidery, adapted to selected segments of the literary basis. Although Cervi’s draft was saturated with scenes, Mušič aimed to make the narrative more illustrative for the viewer by refining the totality in the modernist language of minimalised scenes and defining the symmetric composition with the use of mirrored fields converging into the central depiction. In adherence to Ponti’s philosophy of interior design and bringing art aboard the *Augustus* closer to its passengers, he simplified the rather

complex literary basis with the use of figurative language, linearity, and two-dimensionality. Although postwar European art already aspired toward abstraction, this particular style was not the preferred choice for presenting historical, literary, and social innovations of postwar Italy. After the Second World War, many European artists turned toward abstraction to express the trauma and uncertainty of the time. However, in postwar Italy, abstract art was often not preferred because artists and filmmakers wanted to portray real social, political, and historical issues more directly. As a result, realist styles became more important for representing everyday life and the changes occurring in Italian society.

The embroidery constitutes one of the most monumental works in Mušič's opus, even though it is not the only embroidery that he had completed. Two photographs have been preserved of two smaller embroideries at unknown locations, *Motivo dalmata* (Dalmatian Theme) [Figure 9] and *Cavallini* (Little Horses) [Figure 10], both dated between 1950 and 1951.³⁷ Likewise unknown is the current location of the tapestry *Primavera* (Spring), which graced the ocean liner *Asia*. Mušič's commission not only testified to the great reception that his art was given in the 1950s but was also a reflection of Italian culture and technological advances, recognised even by the Italian authorities as the state's strongest means of presentation in the international arena.

Endnotes

- 1 In the extensive literature on Mušič's life and work, one can also encounter a note concerning his commission for the ocean liner Asia, launched in March 1953. He created the smaller embroidery *Primavera* (Spring) for the bar and repeated the theme of playful horses in a hilly landscape with unusual Oriental trees, purposely depicted to reflect the ship's set course (from Italy to Pakistan and India). The sole photo of the embroidery is published in Francesca Nodari, *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio: Interni navali tra arte e design 1949–1967* (Monfalcone: Comune di Monfalcone, 2018), 31.
- 2 Alessandra Lanzoni, "Arredi navali," in *Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna & MAXXI: Le collezioni 1958–2008*, vol. 2, ed. Stefania Frezzotti, Carolina Italiano, and Angelandreina Rorro (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2009), 761.
- 3 Anna Krekic, Francesca Nodari, and Paola Bristot, eds., *Immaginario di viaggio: Zoran Mušič e Tranquillo Marangoni sulle motonavi Augustus e Giulio Cesare = Visions of Voyages: Zoran Mušič and Tranquillo Marangoni on the Ocean Liners Augustus and Giulio Cesare* (Monfalcone: Comune di Monfalcone, 2016).
- 4 Giovanni Curatola and Chiara Squarcina, eds., *I mondi di Marco Polo: Il viaggio di un mercante veneziano del Duecento* (Arezzo: Magonza, 2024).
- 5 Stefano Causa, "Le radici nel cuore, i rami nell'altrove. Usi e abusi del Milione nel mainstream," in *I mondi di Marco Polo: Il viaggio di un mercante veneziano del Duecento*, ed. Giovanni Curatola and Chiara Squarcina (Arezzo: Magonza, 2024), 157.
- 6 Anna Maria Cisint, "Sguardi transfrontalieri," in *Zoran Music: Il viaggio della vita: Sguardi transfrontalieri: Avanguardie di modernità nell'arte e nell'architettura dell'Europa ritrovata*, ed. Daniele D'Anza, Isabella Reale, and Maurizio Zanei (Monfalcone: Ponti d'Europa, 2022), 11–12; Chiara Mistelli, "Il viaggio di Marco Polo al Museo della Cantieristica," in *Zoran Music: Il viaggio della vita: Sguardi transfrontalieri: Avanguardie di modernità nell'arte e nell'architettura dell'Europa ritrovata*, ed. Daniele D'Anza, Isabella Reale, and Maurizio Zanei (Monfalcone: Ponti d'Europa, 2022), 85–89.
- 7 Daniela Ferretti, *La Stanza di Zurigo: Omaggio a Zoran Music / The Zurich Room: A Tribute to Zoran Music* (Venice: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, 2018).
- 8 For example, Gojko Zupan, "Zoran Mušič, popotnik 20. stoletja," in *Zoran Mušič (1909–2005): Iz umetniške zbirke Ljubana, Milade in Vande Mušič: Narodni galeriji podarjena in posojena dela*, ed. Mateja Krapež (Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2016), 29–68; Gojko Zupan, *A Spanish Vision: A Documentary Exhibition on the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Zoran Mušič* (Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2009).
- 9 "Opere d'arte sull'Augustus," *Domus* 272 (July–August 1952): 25–33.
- 10 Nodari, *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio*.
- 11 Nodari, *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio*, 26.
- 12 State Archives of Trieste (AS Trieste), Archivio dell'architetto Aldo Cervi, box 28, folder B38, construction plan no. 1757, 14 October 1950.
- 13 AS Trieste, Archivio dell'architetto Aldo Cervi, box 19, folder B2, construction plan no. 1757, 24 December 1950.
- 14 For example, the exhibition *Zoran Music e Cadorina*, Galleria d'Arte Trieste, November 1946.
- 15 La Biennale di Venezia, ASAC, Arti visive, Esposizioni biennali, mostre storiche e speciali, retrospettive e personali, box 30, Premi assegnati alla XXV Biennale, corrispondenza con i commissari e con gli artisti, Zoran Antonio Mušič. See also "Premiati alla Biennale," *Omnibus: Settimanale d'attualità e di cultura* 5, no. 13 (25 June 1950): 29.
- 16 "Informazione su alcuni ambienti del 'Conte Biancamano,'" *Domus* 245 (April 1950): 4, and Massimo De Grassi, "Il mare in una stanza: arte e cantieristica navale," in *Civiltà del mare e navigazioni interculturali*:

sponde d'Europa e l'isola" Trieste, ed. Cinzia Ferrini, Roberta Gefter Wondrich, Paolo Quazzolo, and Anna Zoppellari (Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2012), 47.

- 17 Ugosar, "L'Augustus è scesa in mare," *Giornale di Trieste*, 21 November 1950, 4.
- 18 In 1976, it was sold to Great Shipping Investments Ltd. from Hong Kong, which renamed it Great Sea. Following its restoration in Hong Kong, the ship underwent several changes in ownership and name, and it was also used by the president of the Philippines as his private ship named *President* (1985–1987) and as a hotel and restaurant under the name *Philippines* (1999). In 2001, it remained docked in the port of Manila until it was dismantled. Nodari, *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio*, 26.
- 19 Nodari, *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio*, 20.
- 20 On 15 November 1949, the four architects submitted the project, with which they also presented their proposal for a logical division and lyrical articulation of spaces, comfort, and perspective effects, the unity of the concept, and the diversity of decorative ideas. AS Trieste, Archivio dell'architetto Aldo Cervi, box 19.
- 21 Gio Ponti, "Sulle nostre navi, gli stranieri devono conoscere l'Italia," *Corriere della Sera*, 21 March 1950, 3.
- 22 Paolo Piccione, *Gio Ponti: Le navi: Il progetto degli interni navali 1948–1953* (Viareggio: Idea Books, 2007), 199.
- 23 Ponti, "Sulle nostre navi," 3.
- 24 Gio Ponti, "Interni delle nuove navi italiane," *Domus* 263 (November 1951): 27.
- 25 Mateja Krapež, ed., *Zoran Mušič (1909–2005): Iz umetniške zbirke Ljubana, Milade in Vande Mušič: Narodni galeriji podarjena in posojena dela* (Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2016), 106.
- 26 For the preparatory sketches, see Muzej Lah, *Raziskovalni center*, digital catalogue raisonné of Zoran Mušič, CR 3697 and CR 3701.
- 27 Krekic, Nodari, and Bristot, *Immaginario di viaggio*, 43.
- 28 "Opere d'arte sull'Augustus," 33.
- 29 "Qui comincia il viaggio di Messer Marco Polo de Vinegia il quale racconta molte novità della Tartaria e altri paesi assai."
- 30 "Come vennoro a Layas Bondoc Daire, Soldano di Bambellonia venne con grande oste sopra quello contrada facciendo grande guerra."
- 31 "Quando il Gran Cane seppe che gli due fratelli e Marco venivano mandò loro messo incontro."
- 32 "Coblai Cane hae tuttavia quattro femmine le quali tiene per sue diritte mogli, Elle sono chiamate imperadricie."
- 33 "Egli tiene ancora molte amicie diròvi che sono iscelte e le più belle donzelle che vi sieno."
- 34 "La battaglia che il Gran Cane fece con Najam e sappiate che fu molto crudele e fellonesca e la più paurosa che fosse mai al nostro tempo e li cavagli cadevano e vi morirono tanta gente dall una parte e dal altra che farebbe maraviglia a credere ed eran tale lo romore che gli tuoni non si sarebbero uditi."
- 35 "Lo Gran Cane bene leopardi assai e che tutti sono buoni da cacciare e da prendere bestie."
- 36 "Messer Nicolao e Matteo e Marco vollero lo commiato e lo Gran Cane fece loro la grazia a gran pena tanto gli amava. Se ne vennero a Tripisonde e poi a Costantinopoli e poi a Negro ponte e poi Vinegia e questo fu negli anno MCCXCV."
- 37 Muzej Lah, *Raziskovalni center*, digital catalogue raisonné of Zoran Mušič, CR 4019 and CR 4020.

Bibliography

Causa, Stefano. "Le radici nel cuore, i rami nell'altrove. Usi e abusi del Milione nel mainstream." In *I mondi di Marco Polo: Il viaggio di un mercante veneziano del Duecento*, edited by Giovanni Curatola and Chiara Squarcina. Arezzo: Magonza, 2024.

Cisint, Anna Maria. "Sguardi transfrontalieri." In *Zoran Music: Il viaggio della vita: Sguardi transfrontalieri: Avanguardie di modernità nell'arte e nell'architettura dell'Europa ritrovata*, edited by Daniele D'Anza, Isabella Reale, and Maurizio Zanei. Monfalcone: Ponti d'Europa, 2022.

Curatola, Giovanni, and Chiara Squarcina, eds. *I mondi di Marco Polo: Il viaggio di un mercante veneziano del Duecento*. Arezzo: Magonza, 2024.

De Grassi, Massimo. "Il mare in una stanza: arte e cantieristica navale." In *Civiltà del mare e navigazioni interculturali: sponde d'Europa e l'isola Trieste*, edited by Cinzia Ferrini, Roberta Geffer Wondrich, Paolo Quazzolo, and Anna Zoppellari. Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2012.

Ferretti, Daniela. *La Stanza di Zurigo: Omaggio a Zoran Music / The Zurich Room: A Tribute to Zoran Music*. Venice: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, 2018.

"Informazione su alcuni ambienti del 'Conte Biancamano.'" *Domus* 245 (April 1950): 3–19.

Krapež, Mateja, ed. *Zoran Mušič (1909–2005): Iz umetniške zbirke Ljubana, Milade in Vande Mušič: Narodni galeriji podarjena in posojena dela*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2016.

Krekic, Anna, Francesca Nodari, and Paola Bristot, eds. *Immaginario di viaggio: Zoran Mušič e Tranquillo Marangoni sulle motonavi Augustus e Giulio Cesare = Visions of Voyages: Zoran Mušič and Tranquillo Marangoni on the Ocean Liners Augustus and Giulio Cesare*. Monfalcone: Comune di Monfalcone, 2016.

Lanzoni, Alessandra. "Arredi navali." In *Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna & MAXXI: Le collezioni 1958–2008*, vol. 2, edited by Stefania Frezzotti, Carolina Italiano, and Angelandreina Rorro. Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2009.

Mistelli, Chiara. "Il viaggio di Marco Polo al Museo della Cantieristica." In *Zoran Music: Il viaggio della vita: Sguardi transfrontalieri: Avanguardie di modernità nell'arte e nell'architettura dell'Europa ritrovata*, edited by Daniele D'Anza, Isabella Reale, and Maurizio Zanei. Monfalcone: Ponti d'Europa, 2022.

Nodari, Francesca. *Boico/Cervi/Frandoli/Nordio: Interni navali tra arte e design 1949–1967*. Monfalcone: Comune di Monfalcone, 2018.

"Opere d'arte sull'Augustus." *Domus* 272 (July–August 1952): 25–33.

Piccione, Paolo. *Gio Ponti: Le navi: Il progetto degli interni navali 1948–1953*. Viareggio: Idea Books, 2007.

Ponti, Gio. "Interni delle nuove navi italiane." *Domus* 263 (November 1951): 20–27.

Ponti, Gio. "Sulle nostre navi, gli stranieri devono conoscere l'Italia." *Corriere della Sera*, 21 March 1950, 3.

"Premiati alla Biennale." *Omnibus: Settimanale d'attualità e di cultura* 5, no. 13 (25 June 1950): 29.

Ugosar. "L'Augustus è scesa in mare." *Giornale di Trieste*, 21 November 1950, 4.

Zupan, Gojko. *A Spanish Vision: A Documentary Exhibition on the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Zoran Mušič*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2009.

Zupan, Gojko. "Zoran Mušič, popotnik 20. stoletja." In *Zoran Mušič (1909–2005): Iz umetniške zbirke Ljubana, Milade in Vande Mušič: Narodni galeriji podarjena in posojena dela*, edited by Mateja Krapež. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2016.

Likovna oprema ladij po drugi svetovni vojni v Italiji: vezenina Zorana Mušiča *Zgodba o Marku Polu*

Povzetek

V prispevku je predstavljeno monumentalno delo, vezenina slikarja, risarja in grafika Zorana Mušiča *Zgodba o Marku Polu*, ki jo je leta 1951 ustvaril za salon prvega razreda italijanske potniške čezoceanske ladje Avgust. Čeprav je Mušič malokrat ustvarjal po naročilu, prav vezenina priča o enem izmed dveh državnih naročil, ki ga je Mušič prejel in s katerim je Italija širila svojo prepoznavnost v svetu. Sodobna recepcija vezenine se povsem razlikuje od namena njenega nastanka. Javnost je bila z umetnino prvič seznanjena leta 2016 na razstavi v Občinski galeriji sodobne umetnosti v Trzinu. Prav tako je bila Mušičeva vezenina edinstvena sodobna likovna predstavitev na beneški razstavi leta 2024, saj so z njeno prisotnostjo opozorili na različna razumevanja zgodbe o Marku Polu v 20. stoletju: od obujanja lika Marka Pola med fašizmom, ki je seglo v višave mitologizirane osebe, edinstvene za prikaz italijanske moči in odkritij, do dvomnih odstopanj od resničnosti v Polovih potovanjih do Kitajske in »domišljjskega« besedila po nareku sojetniku v Genovi *Potovanja Marka Pola*. Vsekakor pa sredi petdesetih let 20. stoletja ni bilo boljšega pripovedovanja o potovanju Marka Pola kot na samem plovilu, medtem ko so turisti pravzaprav potovali, zavedajoč se, da stopajo po sledih pomembne preteklosti.

Vse do danes je ostalo nerazrešeno vprašanje, kdo je naročil vezenino in kdo je bil iniciator teme, ki jo je nenazadnje upodobil Mušič. Na klasično ikonološko vprašanje je nezavedno delno odgovorila avtorica razstave o razvoju tržaškega ladjedelništva po drugi svetovni vojni Francesca Nodari. Pri predstavitvi arhitekturne zasnove potniške ladje Avgust, oblikovanja prostorov in notranje opreme je omenila tudi nekaj umetniških naročil, med drugimi Mušičevo vezenino in ob njej načrt stene salona prvega razreda tržaških arhitektov Alda Cervija in Umberta Nordia, za katero je bila določena vezenina. Njen bežno omenjeni, sicer tudi slikovno predstavljeni vir, je podrobneje predstavljen v pričujoči raziskavi. Najverjetneje je Mušič dobil naročilo leta 1950, saj so se pobuda in prvi načrti za ladjo začeli avgusta 1949. Iz ohranjenih načrtov salonov, barov in sten prostorov prvega razreda ladje lahko razberemo, da je bila pozicija vezenine že oktobra 1950 točno določena. Dva meseca pozneje pa sta bili celo definirani vsebinska in kompozicijska skica tapisrije ter njena nenavadna umestitev na predvideno steno.

Pobudo za pomladitev pomembnih ladjedelnic v Trstu in Tržiču ter obnovo in novogradnjo potniških ladij, ki so bile med drugo svetovno vojno močno uničene, sta začela zavezniška vojaška vlada Italije in Inštitut za obnovo industrije. Tako je ta intervencija italijanske države pritegnila tudi pomembna naročila arhitektov, obrtnikov, inženirjev, oblikovalcev in umetnikov. Čezoceanska ladja Avgust je bila zgrajena in opremljena pod vodstvom inženirja Nicòle Costanzija, kobilica je bila položena 1. junija 1949, ladjo pa so splavili 19. novembra 1950. Takrat jo je v Trstu krstila žena italijanskega premierja Francesca De Gasperi. Arhitekta Cervi in Nordio sta se držala načel, ki jih je pri oblikovanju ladij poudaril že znani italijanski arhitekt in oblikovalec Gio Ponti v času med obema vojnama. Po Pontiju je morala biti notranjščina posvečena Italiji in je morala častiti državo na dva načina: prvič, figurativno, z uporabo dekoracije, slik in okrasja, da so bili tujci seznanjeni z italijanskimi legendami, znano italijansko arhitekturo, znamenitimi zgodovinskimi vrtovi; in drugič, z razmišljanjem o ladjah ne le kot o sredstvih za prevoz od ene točke do druge, temveč kot o načinu, kako Italijo narediti znano. Ladja je bila več kot sredstvo za prevoz, morala je biti del Italije, kamor koli je šla, in morala je predstavljati najnaprednejše in prestižne vidike italijanskega sloga, kulture in umetnosti.

Tako Mušičeva vezanina o Marku Polu ponazarja vsa Pontijeva načela o prepoznavnosti italijanskih tem, je izjema v njegovem opusu tako glede tehnike kakor monumentalnosti in ne govori samo o sprejetosti njegovega likovnega dela v petdesetih letih 20. stoletja, ampak hkrati odraža tudi razmislek o italijanski tehnologiji in kulturi, ki so ju celo državni predstavniki prepoznavali kot najmočnejši predstavitveni potencial države v mednarodnem prostoru.

A substantial body of postwar art created for institutional environments remains hidden in plain sight: in schools, hospitals, municipal offices, factories, hotels, shops, and other spaces of everyday life. Some works remain intact, others survive in altered interiors or as partial material remains, and still others are known only through scattered archival records, photographs, and uncertain

memories. Many have been covered, relocated, destroyed or forgotten, even though they formed an important part of postwar public space and visual culture.

This volume contributes to the transnational study of art

commissioned for public institutions, a field that remains unevenly researched across national contexts. The chapters show how institutions used art to shape their environments and how later changes in use or ownership affected the works' meanings and prospects for preservation.

