

ART IN SLOVENIA AT A CULTURAL CROSSROADS

INTRODUCTION

*I do not imagine any particular excellence in my actions
which were guided by a true professional instinct;
the latter is often more important in life than any calculated plans.*

France STELE, Iz konservatorskih spominov,
Varstvo spomenikov, 10, 1965, p. 37.

In 1947, France Stele (1886–1972) – an art historian, conservator, editor, art critic, professor, academician, and, above all, a dedicated art researcher – founded the Section for Art History at the Historical Institute of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, thus establishing the central art-historical scientific research institution in Slovenia. In 1972, the section became an independent institute, while in 1975, it was renamed the France Stele Institute of Art History. Today, the Institute is an internationally renowned organisation that brings together the leading Slovenian art history scholars.

The Institute's researchers first presented themselves to the broader professional public in 2011, when a monograph with nine articles by eight authors was published (*Art History in Slovenia*, eds. Barbara Murovec and Tina Košak, Ljubljana 2011). A little more than a decade later, we are publishing a new monograph featuring twice as many researchers, as in the meantime, the number of the Institute's collaborators has increased. The diversity of research fields and topics we focus on has also expanded considerably, while in the methodological sense, distinctly interdisciplinary approaches to research are coming to the forefront. At the Institute, we approach the various topics that go hand in hand with the latest research trends in global art history in the framework of the research programme titled *Umetnost na Slovenskem v stičišču kultur* (Art in Slovenia at a Cultural Crossroads), formerly called *Slovenska umetnostna identiteta v evropskem okviru* (Slovenian Artistic Identity in the European Context). Geographically, the research covers the entire Slovenian territory but analyses the local art monuments in a broad international context. The analyses span from the Middle Ages to contemporary art, covering all art genres and touching on topics such as provenance, the history of art-historical science, and gender studies.

Methodologically, our research makes use of the approaches from the fields of art, architectural, cultural, social, political, and general history, as well as archaeology, theology, sociology of culture, and anthropology of visual art. Art monuments are analysed in the context of the broader socio-political circumstances and their impact on visual art, which also allows for their improved evaluation and represents a vital contribution to more effective art heritage protection. The group is regularly enriched by the arrivals of young researchers, which ensure an optimal generational mix of scholars – those at the beginning of their scientific careers; researchers who are gradually establishing themselves in the art-historical science; as well as the established and internationally renowned art historians. This is also reflected in the range of contributions presented in this publication.



The collective volume contains translations of fifteen original scientific papers published by the research programme members in recent years, each of which represents a step forward in its own way – whether by posing new research questions, introducing novel methodological approaches, presenting fresh comparative perspectives, or introducing new transnational and interdisciplinary dimensions to the interpretation of fine arts and architecture. Let us summarise the most important findings that the authors discuss in this monograph. Gorazd Bence analyses the memorial function of the donor tympanum in the tomb church of the Counts of Cilli, the most important noble family of the High and Late Middle Ages in the Slovenian territory. The floor plan of the medieval church, which he discovered during his research, reveals the hitherto completely overlooked fact that the Minorite Church in Celje was one of the largest medieval sacral monuments in Slovenia. Mija Oter Gorenčič focuses on the Auersperg dynasty's connection with the Chivalric Order of Saint George, founded by Pope Paul II on 1 January 1469 in Rome at the request and in the presence of Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg. By analysing the preserved artworks and archival sources, she successfully proves that the Auerspergs were present in Rome during the Order's establishment and that their art commissions contain iconography associated with this Order. Renata Komić Marn discusses a 16th century mural painting in the Church of St Ulrich in Maršiči, which – quite uniquely for Slovenia – depicts a fox dressed as a pilgrim. Based on a comparative analysis of medieval and early modern literary sources, particularly the French medieval animal epic titled *Roman de Renart*, and by understanding the contemporaneous historical context, she identifies the origins of this iconographic motif. Ana Lavrič presents a pioneering study of the major Marian confraternities, which were established in the framework of mendicant orders – the Dominicans, Carmelites, Servites, and Augustinians – and operated under their auspices, especially in Carniola. With selected examples, she outlines the characteristics of these orders' Marian types – Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of

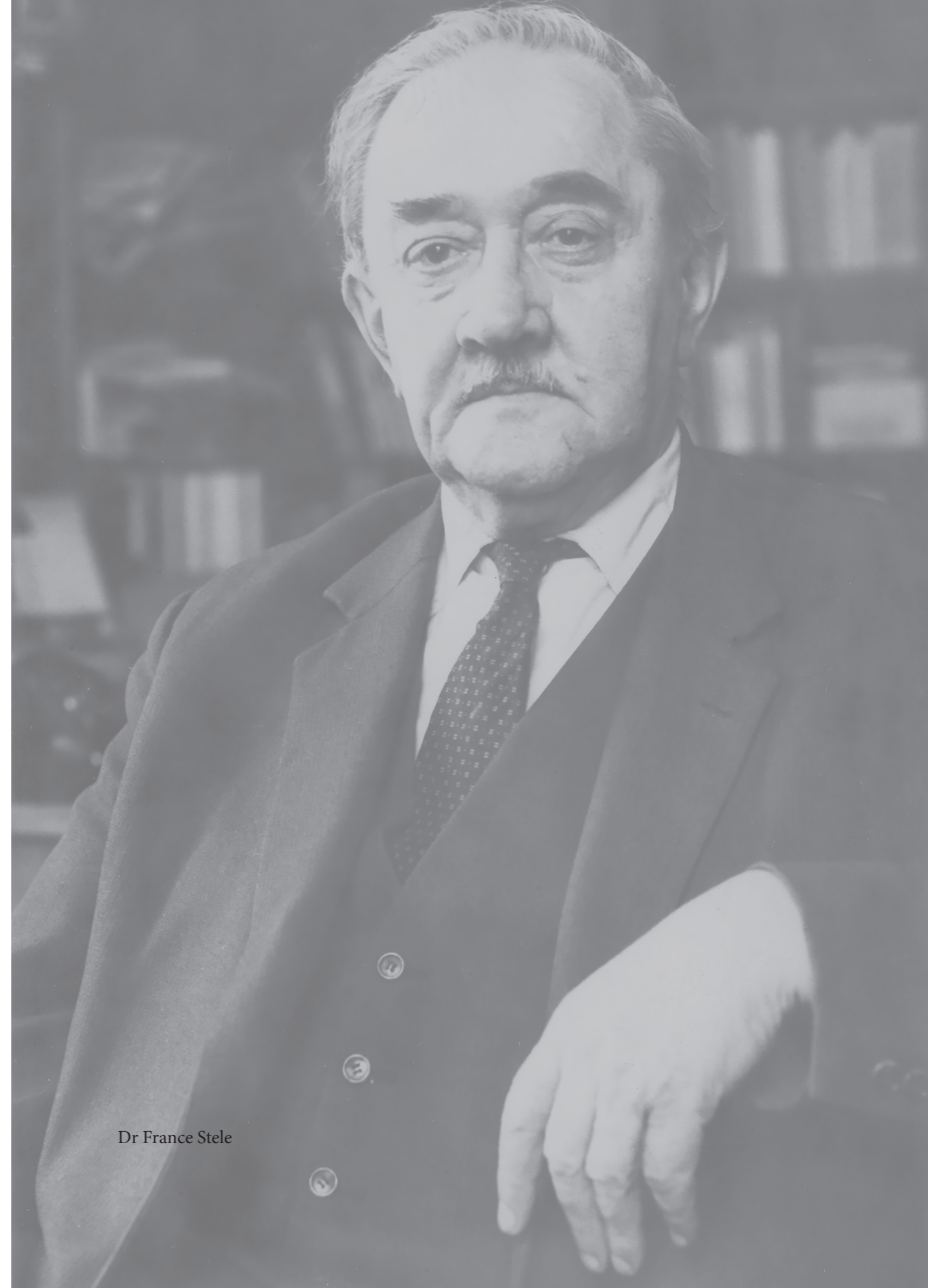
Sorrows, and Our Lady of Consolation – and highlights their iconographic peculiarities. Polona Vidmar analyses the family tree of the Auersperg dynasty from Turjak Castle, whose genealogical information is supplemented by inscriptions and depictions recounting the story of the family's origins, history, and estates. The Auersperg family tree is the earliest large-format visualisation of genealogical data by Dominik Franz Kalin von Marienberg (1624–1683), who would later compile similar family trees for the Habsburgs and the Viennese court nobility. Helena Seražin has carried out pioneering research into the overlooked altar of the Holy Spirit in the sacristy of the Church of San Giovanni Crisostomo in Venice, dating back to the last quarter of the 17th century. Based on the archival sources and careful stylistic analysis, she successfully attributes the altar to Baldassare Longhena, the most prominent Venetian architect of the time. Tina Košak explores the once extensive collection of paintings at Betnava Mansion (Schloss Windenau). By meticulously analysing the relevant archival sources and the preserved works from the Betnava collection, she has made important new discoveries about its formation and fate. Blaž Resman reveals that the former high altar in the Church of the Assumption of Mary in Dobrova was a copy of the Chair of Saint Peter, *Cathedra Petri* – the altar made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini for the apse of St Peter's Basilica in Rome between 1657 and 1666. The altar is the most ambitious Baroque monument in Carniola and unique in a much broader European territory. Simona Kostanjšek Brglez presents the life and work of the sculptor, painter, gilder, and restorer Ivan Sojč (1879–1951), little known until now. Drawing on various primary sources and the testimonies of his descendants, she thoroughly analyses his entire opus for the first time and places it in the comparative context of the contemporaneous creativity in Slovenia and beyond. Franci Lazarini's contribution provides a comprehensive analysis of the unrealised plans for the solemn cemetery of distinguished Slovenians in Ljubljana by the architect Jože Plečnik (1872–1957). Lazarini compares the plans with the actual interventions carried out on the site of the envisioned construction of the Slovenian Pantheon since its conception in the 1930s until the post-World War II period. Anja Iskra's article is the first systematic overview of the organisation of artistic life in Maribor during the German occupation. By placing the events in the context of the German occupation policy in Lower Styria, the article adds significantly to our understanding of the circumstances in which visual artists and institutions operated during that period. Katarina Mohar's article focuses on the previously unexplored topic of the Nazi looting of art heritage in Upper Carniola during World War II. The process is illustrated with the example of the inventory from the Church of St Lucia in the village of Dražgoše, whose furnishings – some of which are still missing – were removed by the German occupiers in 1942. Barbara Vodopivec discusses the restitution of artworks after World War II in a case study of Austria – Slovenia/Yugoslavia. Based on an analysis of archival materials, her novel contribution identifies the key protagonists and institutions, involved in the process, and thus establishes a framework for further research into the fate of artworks that have been or should have been subject to restitution. Andreja Rakovec explores the topic that has never

been comprehensively discussed before: the monuments to famous personalities, created in the public spaces of the city of Maribor from the 1950s to date. She adds a stylistic analysis of the selected examples and discusses their impact on the city's image. With her pioneering research, Marjeta Ciglencečki concisely highlights the international sculpture symposia and the creation of the Forma viva Maribor sculpture collection (1967–1986). The contribution systematically presents the artists who participated in these symposia and evaluates the concrete sculptures they created from the artistic and urban planning perspectives.



This publication is dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the independent institute now called the France Stele Institute of Art History of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Mija Oter Gorenčič, Barbara Vodopivec



Dr France Stele