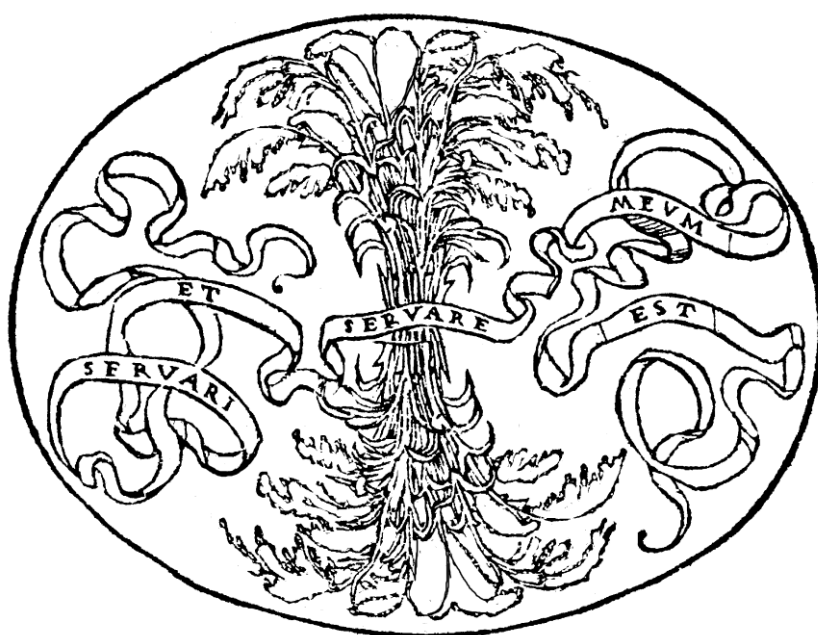


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## JEWISH-OWNED ART COLLECTIONS IN ZAGREB: THE DESTINY OF THE ROBERT DEUTSCH MACELJSKI COLLECTION

Among the Zagreb economic elite active at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were many Jewish families. During that period, the Zagreb art scene and art market were slowly growing, and artistic life generally was developing. A crucial moment in the development of the Zagreb art market was the foundation of the first private art gallery, Salon Ullrich<sup>1</sup>, opened by Antun Ullrich<sup>2</sup> in 1909, where numerous domestic and foreign solo and group exhibitions were held. The exhibitions were commercial and the gallery also sold art on commission. The new economic elite – bankers, lawyers, and industrialists – supported young artists by buying their art works and by ordering family portraits from them. Within this economic elite, we find a large number of art collectors, from those who bought both Old Masters and applied arts at European markets (mostly in Vienna) to those who collected young contemporary artists. Among the famous Jewish art collectors of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were the members of the Deutsch Maceljiski family: Robert Deutsch Maceljiski and his uncle Albert Deutsch Maceljiski.

### *The Deutsch Maceljiski Family History*

Engineer Robert Deutsch Maceljiski (1884-1943) was a descendent of a very prominent and old Zagreb Jewish family. In 1860, Robert's grandfather Filip Deutsch (1828-1919) opened a small woodshop in the center of Zagreb (Vlaška street) out of which, over the years, a large company developed. Filip Deutsch had three sons, Vilim, Benko and Albert; the eldest one - Vilim (1855-1926) - was Robert's father. The Deutsch brothers developed a successful timber company first named *Filip Deutsch i sinovi* (Filip Deutsch and sons); when their father retired in 1894 it changed its name to *Filipa Deutsch sinovi* (Filip Deutsch sons). From 1884, the company specialised in oak timber and made use of several woods around Zagreb (Hrvatsko Zagorje, around Bjelovar). In 1908, the company bought a large wood Turopolje close to the railway Zagreb-Sisak and in 1911 they founded a great steam sawmill. The business grew and developed even outside the borders of the state. In 1910, the family was granted nobility and was named Maceljiski, from Macelj, the place where they owned a large wood<sup>3</sup>. Vilim Deutsch had three sons, Gustav, Vladimir (Vlatko) and the youngest Robert, and a daughter, Jelka. Gustav, the eldest son, was the one that had been mostly involved in the family business and had led the company together with his uncle Albert; however, all the sons were members of the company, and Robert was the procurator. The family business was very successful due to good family tradition which has started with Robert's grandfather and was harmoniously continued by next three generations. The Deutsch Maceljiski family built and owned dozens of houses in Zagreb, and they were also known for their philanthropy and charity activities<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dizbi.hazu.hr/ullrich/>, <May, 2018>.

<sup>2</sup> Antun Ullrich (1872 -1937) in 1898 he opened a glazier's and framing workshop in Ilica 54 and in 1909 together with his old business he opened a gallery. His son Edo Ullrich (1897-1952) opened a gallery in Ilica 40 in 1926 and soon took over his father's business since Antun closed his gallery in 1927.

<sup>3</sup> KOLAR DIMITRIJEVIĆ 1993, pp. 343-344.

<sup>4</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2005, pp. 269-270.

*Robert Deutsch Maceljski as an Art Collector*

Robert could have inherited his passion for art and art collecting from his uncle Albert who had a large art collection himself, which during the period of the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945) had a destiny similar to that of Robert. Until 1923, when Robert and his brother Vlatko built their own house, they lived in the same house as their uncle in the city center (Jurišićeva street 24), a house which had been built by their father Vilim and their uncle Albert in 1902, and redesigned in 1924<sup>5</sup>.

Thanks to the archives of the art gallery Salon Ullrich, and handwritten invoice and inventory books preserved at the Fine Arts Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts<sup>6</sup>, it is possible to attain an insight into the Zagreb art market from 1910, when the gallery began its activity, until 1948, when the gallery was nationalized. The buyers were descendants of the new elite – industrialists, bankers and lawyers. Since its beginning, among the buyers at the gallery there was Robert Deutsch Maceljski<sup>7</sup>: he was buying both from the exhibitions and directly from Salon Ullrich. Over 30 years Robert bought more than eighty artworks at Salon Ullrich – from the first entry in 1911, at the exhibition of the Croatian painter Menci Clement Crnčić, until 1939, when the last record of his name is found at the exhibition of the Serbian painter Bora Baruh. The destiny of all of these artworks today is unknown. In addition to his collection of contemporary art works, Robert Deutsch Maceljski owned a large collection of Old Masters and icons, but also sculpture and applied arts, as is seen on the photo taken at his apartment (Fig. 1). Today part of the old masters collection and icons are in the collection of the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

*The Artist and his Patron: Milivoj Uzelac - Robert Deutsch Maceljski*

When painter Milivoj Uzelac<sup>8</sup> arrived in Zagreb from Paris in 1919, he didn't have a studio to work in. Before he got his own studio from the Society of Artists (*Društvo umjetnika*), Deutsch Maceljski ceded him a company warehouse in the center of the city to use as a place of work. Soon after that, in 1920, Uzelac painted two large oil portraits of Robert's mother and father, Charlotte (Šarlota) and Vilim Deutsch Maceljski, which were probably ordered by Robert himself. Both paintings are held today at the Modern Gallery in Zagreb<sup>9</sup>.

In 1923, the brothers Vlatko (Vladimir) and Robert built their new three-story house at Square N no. 2 (today Trg žrtava fašizma) which was designed by architect Aladar Baranyai<sup>10</sup>. They lived there with their families until the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941. Robert's newly-built and decorated apartment was presented in the contemporary press with the title *Pictures from Noble Zagreb* in the magazine «Hrvatska metropola» on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1925<sup>11</sup>. There we see photos of the luxurious salon of Robert's apartment with two large Uzelac paintings, *Allegory of Work* and *Allegory of Beauty* (Fig. 2). Along with these, Uzelac made

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<sup>5</sup> ALADAR VLADIMIR BARANYAI 1999, p. 12. The house was built by famous Zagreb architects Hönigsberg and Deutsch, and in 1924 it was redesigned by Aladar Baranyai.

<sup>6</sup> Salon Ullrich Archives.

<sup>7</sup> VUJIĆ 2010, pp. 78-80.

<sup>8</sup> Milivoj Uzelac (1897-1977), Croatian painter and graphic artist; he attended Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts. He lived in Paris 1923-1963. His artworks are expressionistic but also under the influence of P. Cézanne and A. Lhote.

<sup>9</sup> VRANČIĆ 1991, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> ALADAR VLADIMIR BARANYAI 1999, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> IZ OTMJENOG ZAGREBA 1925.

two smaller paintings *Allegory of Music* and *Allegory of Echo*, so in the salon there were four paintings in total.

The third time Uzelac and Deutsch Maceljski met was in 1935, while Uzelac was spending some time in Zagreb. That time Robert ordered a series of portraits<sup>12</sup> of his twelve-year-old daughter Vanja: 18 drawings made using different techniques, showing the girl as a ballet dancer, while reading a book, etc.<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 3). Meanwhile, Uzelac made a portrait of the girl, a large oil painting, which is now held, along with other drawings and all the other Uzelac works from the Deutsch Maceljski art collection, at the Modern Gallery in Zagreb<sup>14</sup>.

It is difficult to reconstruct the story of how all of Uzelac's art works entered the Modern Gallery collection, because there is no written evidence of their movements. We find data about Robert Deutsch Maceljski in Josip Vrančić's monograph on Milivoj Uzelac, based on his dissertation from 1973. Vrančić had the opportunity to talk to Milivoj Uzelac in person, and to Robert's nephew Velimir who survived the Holocaust in Zagreb, and their version of the events was that Deutsch Maceljski and his wife Hilda foresaw the danger and decided to store part of their collection at the Modern Gallery<sup>15</sup>.

We find a few sentences about the Deutsch Maceljski collection of Milivoj Uzelac paintings in Igor Zidić's book *Croatian Modernist Painting 1880-1945 in Private Collections*<sup>16</sup>. Zidić believes that there was probably a gentlemen's agreement between Robert Deutsch Maceljski and Ivo Šrepel, the director of Modern Gallery during the period of Independent State of Croatia<sup>17</sup>. As these paintings were the most intimate part of Robert's collection, he is likely to have tried to keep them until the end, before eventually deciding to store them at the Modern Gallery. The rest of the Deutsch Maceljski collection was subjected to the *Provision on the prohibition of removal and exporting ancient artistic, cultural, historical and natural monuments from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia*, and was deposited mostly in the Museum of Arts and Crafts and its repositories in Zagreb.

### *Independent State of Croatia, 1941-1945*

Immediately after the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1941, antisemitic measures were implemented in Zagreb. The next day the Gestapo occupied the building of the Jewish Community (Palmotičeva street 16) and the cash register was sealed and the archives looted<sup>18</sup>. The new regime very soon began implementing antisemitic legislation, which began with the *Statutory provision regarding compulsory reporting of Jewish property and enterprises* (Zakonska odredba o obveznoj prijavi imetka Židova i židovskih poduzeća) of June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941. And then a series of laws were implemented that created a legal framework for the confiscation of Jewish property in the name of the state, so that it legally became the «property of the state».

The Deutsch Maceljski brothers Gustav, Vlatko and Robert were among the fifty eminent Zagreb Jews arrested by the Gestapo and brought to Graz, where the Einsatzgruppe for Yugoslavia was located, for interrogation about the Jewish Community in the territory of

<sup>12</sup> IZLOŽBE IZ FUNDUSA GALERIJE - MILIVOJ UZELAC 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Modern Gallery, Zagreb, inv no. MG-1022 - MG-1039. VRANČIĆ 1991, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> *Ivi*, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> ZIDIĆ 2006, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> In 1941 the Modern Gallery was moved to another building at Draškovićeva 23 because the building has been given to the Italian embassy. It consisted of only two rooms and one large hall, so the whole collection was deposited in different warehouses during the whole Second World War period. After the war, the Gallery moved back to its present pre-war address, Hebrangova 1.

<sup>18</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, p. 106.



NDH<sup>19</sup>. Most of these people were released, but did not avoid the same destiny as the other Jews in Zagreb.

During the NDH period 1941-1945, due to the dangers of the war, a series of legal acts on the conservation and preservation of the monuments were passed by the Ministry of Religion and Education and the Conservation Institute in Zagreb. The first of these was the *Provision on the prohibition of removal and exporting ancient artistic, cultural, historical and natural monuments from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia* (statutory no. LXXVII-135 Z.p./1941)<sup>20</sup> which made the legal framework for moving the private collections to the museum. Except for the legal ban of exporting the art objects, institutions and private owners that couldn't take proper care of their art collections were obliged to give them to the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts<sup>21</sup>, and the museum provided them with a written receipt. The Conservation Institute issued a *Warning for the owners of the valuable art objects*, a sort of appeal to private owners of cultural and artistic objects to declare them to the Conservation Institute in Zagreb<sup>22</sup>. After these declarations the employees of the Conservation Institute went to private apartments and houses to list the art objects. However, this listing didn't mean the same thing for Jews and non-Jews, if we take into consideration the *Statutory provision regarding compulsory reporting of Jewish property and enterprises*. Under the cover of protection, the art objects were taken from Jewish families forever.

In May 1941, as we see in the official approval of the lists<sup>23</sup> of the rare art objects of the Conservation Institute in Zagreb<sup>24</sup>, their committee of experts, responsible for the listing of art objects, had already been in Robert Deutsch Maceljski's apartment at Square N no. 2 (Fig. 1).

From the next official letter<sup>25</sup> regarding Robert Deutsch Maceljski's collection, we find that the art objects were being packed and prepared to be brought to the basement so they would be safe in the case of air attacks. One month later, in June, the committee was still at Deutsch's apartment. In a letter of June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941<sup>26</sup>, the committee evaluated which art objects exceeded the value of 5,000 Dinars and determined the financial value of the whole collection. The monetary value of the collection was also important for the obligation of the *Statutory provision regarding compulsory reporting of Jewish property and enterprises*.

As stated in a letter no. 795-1942., sent on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1942<sup>27</sup>, from the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts to the Ministry of Education, on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942, the Ministry of Education had ordered the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts to take all of the art objects and the objects of cultural and historical value from the Robert Deutsch Maceljski collection into the museum. That letter gives details about the commission present

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<sup>19</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, p. 108.

<sup>20</sup> *Provision on the prohibition of removal and exporting ancient artistic, cultural, historical and natural monuments from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia* was passed at the suggestion of the Minister of Religion and Education on May, 12<sup>th</sup> 1941.

<sup>21</sup> During the period of the Independent State of Croatia the name of the Museum of Arts and Crafts changed to Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts. After 1945 the old name was returned.

<sup>22</sup> JURANOVIĆ TONEJĆ 2009-2010, pp. 15-18.

<sup>23</sup> Approval of the lists of art objects no. 42 -1941 dated May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1941, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia - Documentation of the Conservation Institute 1941, 1-300 (Ministarstvo kulture, dokumentacijska građa Konzervatorskog ureda).

<sup>24</sup> The list was approved by Gjuro Szabo, director of the Conservation Institute, and Vladimir Tkalčić, director of the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts.

<sup>25</sup> Approval of the list of the art objects no. 115 -1941 dated June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1941, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia - Documentation of the Conservation Institute 1941, 1-300.

<sup>26</sup> Approval of the list of the art objects no. 113 -1941 dated June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia - Documentation of the Conservation Institute 1941, 1-300.

<sup>27</sup> The Croatian State Archives (further: HDA), Ministry of National Education of NDH (Ministarstvo narodne prosvjete NDH) - HR-HDA- 216, box 1454.



at the takeover and the whole procedure, describing how the owner was cooperative and handed over almost all the art objects, even the ones that were not on the list. The order for the takeover of the collection was addressed to the director of the museum himself, from Dr. Josip Balen, the chief mayor of the District (*poglavni župan*), and that order was based on the *Provision on the prohibition of removal and exporting ancient artistic, cultural, historical and natural monuments from the territory of the Independent State of Croatia*. After that order all the art objects were taken from Robert's sealed apartment on the second floor in Solovljeva street 10 and moved to the museum, at the cost of the museum itself. The reason for Robert moving to another address has been explained by his niece Vlasta: her father Vlatko and Robert had to move from their house at Square N no. 2, as they had to empty their apartments within 24 hours, so that the officers of the government of the Independent State of Croatia could move in as their apartment was confiscated<sup>28</sup>.

Only one week after the takeover of the collection, in September 1942, Robert Deutsch Maceljski wrote a letter to the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts, a copy of which was forwarded to the department for High Education and Scientific Institutes of the Ministry of Education<sup>29</sup>. In that letter he said that his collection had been overtaken, as proven in takeover report no. 795-1942, dated September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1942, and he offered to help the museum which stored most of his collection:

[...] I am prepared to provide the museum with all the information for all the art objects and pictures of my collection about their place of purchase, as well as all the information available to me that can serve the work of the museum and the art history in general. Because in my collection with small exceptions are the artworks of local old craftsmen from various parts of our homeland, especially Dalmatia, Zagorje and others - I believe that all the facts and my knowledge would be important for the scientific classification of the said artworks [...]<sup>30</sup>.

The management of the museum, led by Vladimir Tkalčić, accepted this offer in a letter dated September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942<sup>31</sup>, with the explanation that this offer was to be accepted as it was an «urgent museum need» to have an «accurate and credible classification of the museum materials»<sup>32</sup>.

The destiny of the members of the Deutsch Maceljski family, despite being a part of one of the richest Jewish families in Zagreb, was very much like that of other Jewish families: part of the family survived, and part of the family was taken to the concentration camps. Archival documents do not show any requests by the family for the granting of Aryan rights or for permission to not carry a Jewish sign<sup>33</sup>. Robert Deutsch Maceljski was baptized in July 1941, but that didn't save him from a tragic end. He was deported together with his wife Hilda to Auschwitz in May 1943<sup>34</sup>. Only their daughter Vanja, born in 1923, survived the war. She did so by escaping to Italy and then to Israel. Afterwards she moved to Switzerland, and then to the United States, where she died in 1996.

His brother Vlatko was taken to the concentration camp Jasenovac one year before Robert, together with his wife Marga. Both of their children Velimir and Vlasta were saved and survived. The only one of Robert's siblings to survive the war was Robert's eldest brother

<sup>28</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> Letter dated September, 17, 1942 -The Croatian State Archives, Ministry of National Education of NDH, HR-HDA- 216, box 1454.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> Letter dated September, 19, 1942 - 811 -1942, The Croatian State Archives, Ministry of National Education of NDH, HR-HDA- 216, box 1454.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, pp. 138, 140.

<sup>34</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, p. 190.

Gustav, who was baptized and married to an Aryan woman - Marija, which probably saved his life. Robert's sister Jelka Deutsch Maceljiski (married name Benedik) also ended tragically; soon after the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 she committed suicide<sup>35</sup>.

*After the war – The transfer of Old Masters to Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters of Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts*

As we read in the proceedings<sup>36</sup> kept at the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, it is possible to reconstruct the postwar destiny of some parts of the collection of the late Robert Deutsch Maceljiski. In the proceedings we find information about a handover of cultural and historical objects which took place on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1947, between the Commission for Collection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Antiquities of the Ministry of Education – Department of Culture and Arts in Zagreb (KOMZA), the Museum of Arts and Crafts and the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. At that time the objects were held at the warehouse of KOMZA (Basaričekova 24, Harambašićeva elementary school etc). The Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts claimed 60 various objects with artistic value to be delivered from KOMZA depots and the claim was approved by the Ministry of Education. Ordinal numbers from 1 to 15 on that list were the objects that had once belonged to Robert Deutsch Maceljiski and in the remarks it is explained that these objects were deposited at the Museum of Arts and Crafts during the war.

These were the paintings that today are still held at the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters. Today there are 27 paintings that once were part of Robert Deutsch Maceljiski's collection. Some of them are easy to detect: on the back side of the paintings they have the stamp of the Conservation Institute of the Independent State of Croatia, and the initials «RD» written in red and accompanied by the ordinal numbers which were probably assigned during the listing in 1941 (Figs. 4-5). These paintings range from unknown Italian masters from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to German painters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to paintings of saints and the Virgin by Dalmatian and Italo-Cretan masters.

As there are no more than 27 paintings from the Deutsch Maceljiski Collection at the Strossmayer Gallery, it is likely that the rest of the collection remained at the Museum of Arts and Crafts, or was lost or stolen. Evidence that parts of Robert Deutsch Maceljiski's and his family belongings and art works are still at the Museum of Arts and Crafts is to be found even on the online platform Athena Plus. Here, by searching the name 'Deutsch Maceljiski', it is possible to find objects that not only have that name in their titles, but also in their metadata. However, some artworks could have belonged to Albert or Gustav Deutsch Maceljiski. In this collection there are photos, the family coat of arms and ceramic art objects<sup>37</sup>. Unfortunately, the list of the Robert Maceljiski collection made in 1941 at his apartment is still yet to be found.

*Inheritance and reclaim trial*

In 1958, Vanja Bird, born Vanja Deutsch Maceljiski, Robert's only child, tried to recover her family properties, as we see in a document kept at the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters

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<sup>35</sup> GOLDSTEIN 2001, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> Proceedings no. 762/1947 dated September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1947 - The Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Arhiv HAZU - Pismohrana).

<sup>37</sup> <http://athena.muio.hr/?object=list&find=deutsch+maceljiski>, <May, 2018>.

Archives<sup>38</sup>. The Institute of Fine Arts of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts received a letter from the Public Attorney's office of the People's Republic of Croatia (letter IV-R-577/58 dated September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1958) with the notification that Vanja Bird, the only heir, had filed a claim to recover artworks that once belonged to her late father, that were stored at the Museum of Arts and Crafts during the war and afterwards partly delivered to the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters.

The director of the Institute of Fine Arts of JAZU, Zlatko Herkov, asked the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters their opinion on the case, with the list of artworks from Robert's collection that entered the museum inventory. As some of the artworks had become part of the permanent exhibition and were of great value, they were hoping to protect them with the law of *Protection of the cultural monuments and natural rarities of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (Zakon o zaštiti spomenika kulture i prirodnih rijetkosti Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije)* of October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Other than that, the claim referred to other art objects, such as carpets and furniture from Robert Deutsch Maceljski's inheritance, so an internal revision had to be made at the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in order to detect whether further objects were to be found at the Academy.

At the request of the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the case of Vanja Bird was also discussed at the Council for Culture and Science of People's Republic of Croatia. The Council sent a letter to the State Secretariat for Judicial Administration dated March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1958<sup>39</sup>, in which it introduced both the issue of the storage of museum objects abandoned during the war and the specific case of Robert Deutsch Maceljski's property. In another document dated January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1958<sup>40</sup>, addressed to the Council for Culture and Science we find more detailed legal discussion of the specific case of Robert Deutsch Maceljski. In 1946 there were probate proceedings, and the result was that the only heir was his daughter Vanja Deutsch Maceljski, married name Bird, as it was stated in the judicial conclusion dated December, 10<sup>th</sup> 1947. In 1947 she was in Tel Aviv but still had Yugoslav citizenship and was registered with the Yugoslav diplomatic representative. In 1958 she still had Yugoslav citizenship although at that time was married and lived in Switzerland. Therefore, as it is explained in the document, although the court had put a ban on her property rights, especially on the collection of paintings, the ban wasn't applicable, because the *Law for the shift of enemy property under state administration to state ownership over the property of absent persons and the sequestration of property forcibly removed by occupying authorities* could be applied only to people who no longer had Yugoslav citizenship. In 1946 the court had ordered the listing and exstimation of the art objects once belonged to Robert Deutsch Maceljski, but this wasn't carried out because the art objects were still packed and stored in the warehouses. The order was repeated in 1958 but postponed again for the same reasons.

The issue raised by the Museum of Arts and Crafts to the State Secretariat for Judicial Administration was whether there was a legal framework for art works from the Robert Deutsch Maceljski collection to be part of the museum collection and become «public property». The answer was that the art objects could be kept by the museums on the basis of the general law of *Protection of the cultural monuments and natural rarities of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia* of October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946, and according to the decision of the Institute for the Conservation and Protection of Cultural Heritage. This law had put all the cultural monuments and art works under protection of the State with no regard to their ownership<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Letter no. 14/13 1958, October, 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958 – Zlatko Herkov to the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters – Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Croatian State Archives, Council of Culture and Education (Savjet za prosvjetu, nauku i kulturu Narodne Republike Hrvatske) HR-HDA-1599, box 97.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> DERANJA CRNOKIĆ 2013-2014, p. 27.

In such cases the owner didn't have the rights to the art works or the right to take them outside the country because all the monuments were under the protection of the State. In some cases the owner was entitled to compensation equivalent to the value of the expropriated items.

The last document<sup>42</sup> concerning the Vanja Bird case found in the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences is the Judicial settlement from the Municipal Court in Zagreb dated January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1967, which shows that Vanja Bird's claim for the return of her father's art collection from the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Modern Gallery, and the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters was resubmitted. This time the court rejected her claim because she had American citizenship and thus she had no more right to repossession of her properties<sup>43</sup>. Since 1941, Jewish families had lost the right to their properties in the Independent State of Croatia. In the new political regime, the Yugoslav legal system created a framework to nationalize Jewish property as well. Once their collections had entered the museums, they were subjected to several protection laws, such as the law of *Protection of the cultural monuments and natural rarities of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia* of 1946, thus becoming public property. Today parts of Deutsch Maceljiski art collection are kept in three different institutions in Zagreb: the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Modern Gallery, but it is very difficult to reconstruct the whole collection.

The case of the Robert Deutsch Maceljiski art collection emphasizes the complexities of the destiny of Jewish property during the period of the Independent State of Croatia and afterwards in Yugoslavia, but also all the problems and difficulties of this kind of provenance research. The destiny of the collection at issue has been partially reconstructed here thanks to the documents held at three different institutions: the Strossmayer Gallery of the Old Masters, the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Croatian State Archives. Some crucial documents are still missing and it's still impossible to reconstruct the collection itself. In Croatia provenance research is still in its early stages, and museums and institutions have still to acknowledge the need for such studies. Although it's sometimes rather complicated and impossible to completely reconstruct private Jewish collections and to identify all the art and cultural artifacts now in the museum collections, it would be correct to search out their provenance and, when possible, make this kind of information immediately available.

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<sup>42</sup> Judicial settlement dated January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1967 – Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

<sup>43</sup> BRANDL 2016, p. 117.





Fig 1: Part of Robert Deutsch Maceljski's collection in his apartment, inv.no. 1709. Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia – Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Zagreb, photo: Rudolf Firšt



Fig. 2: Robert Deutsch Maceljiski's apartment at Square N n. 2 (today Trg žrtava fašizma) with Milivoj Uzelac paintings - *Allegory of Work* (left) and *Allegory of Beauty* (right), 1925. Fine Arts Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb





Fig 3: Milivoj Uzelac, *Vanja Deutsch Maceljiski*, gouache on paper, 1935. Modern Gallery Zagreb (inv. no. MG-1032), photo: Goran Vranić





Fig 4: Unknown master, *Virgin and the Child* (Virgin with Eight Saints), oil on wood. Strossmayer Gallery of the Old Masters of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb (inv. no. SG-400)



Fig 5: Stamp of the Conservation Institute of NDH and ordinal number with Robert Deutsch initials on back side of Unknown Master, *Virgin and the Child* (Virgin with Eight Saints), oil on wood. Strossmayer Gallery of the Old Masters of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb (inv. no. SG-400)

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## ABSTRACT

Among the Zagreb economic elite at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were many Jewish families. Within this economic elite we find a large number of art collectors – one of them was the engineer Robert Deutsch Maceljski (1884-1943). He is remembered as a patron of the Croatian painter Milivoj Uzelac and we find him among the buyers at the gallery Salon Ullrich since its beginning in 1910 until 1939. In addition to his collection of contemporary art works, Robert Deutsch Maceljski owned a large collection of Old Masters and icons, but also sculptures and objects of applied arts. During the period of the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), due to the risk of war damages, a series of legal acts on the conservation and preservation of the monuments were passed by the Ministry of Religion and Education and the Conservation Institute in Zagreb. Art objects of private houses were listed and, within a legal framework, removed – for Jewish families it meant forever. Robert Deutsch Maceljski collection was transferred to the Croatian National Museum of Arts and Crafts and after the war, in 1947, parts of his collection were moved to the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters. Robert and his wife Hilda were deported and killed in Auschwitz in 1943; only their daughter Vanja (1923-1996) survived by escaping from the country. After the war she twice tried to recover her family property from the museums: in 1958 and 1966, but unsuccessfully. Today the art objects of the Robert Deutsch Maceljski's collection are part of the collections of three museums of Zagreb: the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters and the Modern Gallery.

Nella Zagabria di fine secolo, molte delle famiglie ebraiche parte dell'élite economica cittadina vantavano la presenza di importanti collezionisti. Tra questi, Robert Deutsch Maceljski (1884-1943) era noto per essere stato il committente del pittore croato Milivoj Uzelac e tra i clienti della galleria Salon Ullrich tra il 1910 e il 1939. La vasta collezione di Maceljski, che comprendeva non solo importanti dipinti, ma anche icone, sculture ed esempi di arti decorative, fu oggetto dei provvedimenti di confisca emanati dal governo dello Stato Indipendente di Croazia (1941-1945) e trasferita al Museo nazionale croato delle arti e dei mestieri. Nel 1947 parte della collezione veniva poi trasferita nella Galleria Strossmayer. La figlia di Robert e Hilda Maceljski, deportati e infine uccisi ad Auschwitz nel 1943, tentò più volte di ottenere la restituzione della collezione di famiglia, nel 1958 e poi nel 1966, senza successo. Gli oggetti sono ora conservati in tre diversi istituti della città: il Museo delle arti e dei mestieri, la Galleria Strossmeyer e la Galleria di arte moderna.