

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATIONAL STYLE OF DRAGUTIN INKIOSTRI MEDENJAK – SECESSION OR TRADITION, DESIGN OR ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract: Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak, born in Split in 1866, was dedicated to art throughout his entire life. From his earliest years he worked as an assistant for his father, an architect, and later on, in 1892, he enrolled into a fine art school in Florence. Driven by patriotism and the Pan-Slavic ideology, he came to Belgrade in 1905. During his stay in Belgrade, Dragutin's artistic and creative oeuvre included a wide range of jobs as decorating and furnishing designs for the distinguished representatives of the intellectual elite. Inkiostri derived the inspiration for his work from national, decorative art, considering it to be a true reflection of the spirit of a people. Based on the research combined with his own inspiration, he formed the theory of national style, which he disclosed in published works such as the books *The Revival of Serbian Art* and *Our Architecture*, both published in 1907. However, very soon after his initial acceptance in Belgrade, the theoretical assumptions, and the creative work of Inkiostri, were being criticized by the founders of the Serbian national style, Andra Stevanovic and Branko Tanazevic. Their critique primarily challenges Inkiostri's understanding of architecture, that is, the interaction of decoration and construction, which also calls into question the theoretical starting points of application, but also the understanding of folk ornamentation and national style in the function of architectural creation.

The aim of this paper is to critically examine the theoretical and practical work of Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak in the light of criticism of his contemporaries. By contextualizing theoretical settings and analyzing the works that have been the subject of criticism, it will strive to illuminate and devise a more objective view of the issues of the interaction secession – national style / architecture – design. Precisely these issues of the interaction of inspiration and theoretical settings, as well as the interaction of applied art and architecture, are crucial for contextualizing and evaluating the work of Inkiostri. The formation of a national style is deeply linked to the socio-political and cultural events that have had their reflection in the formation of the desired / desirable national construct. By analyzing the wider context within the work, it will contribute to understanding the position of Inkiostri's creativity and its influences on the development of national style.

Criticized by architects during his time, for his supposed ignorance of architecture and constructive principles, and pejoratively labeled as decorator, Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak is today considered an indispensable figure in historiographical works and monographs dealing with the history of architecture and applied art of Serbia in the early twentieth century. The preserved works of Inkiostri represent the most significant interior works in Belgrade at the beginning of the twentieth century, making him worthy of an opening of a wider discussion, examining the path from inspiration to interaction.

Keywords: Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak, national style, secession, applied art, interior

The Industrial Revolution, creation of nations, abolishment of monarchies, diminished authority of the aristocracy following the development of an urban middle class, appearance of academic elites and new bourgeoisies during the lengthy nineteenth century, influenced the reinterpretation of Western European artistic style, previously confined to historical and academic canons. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a search for a new artistic expression which would match the technological advances, found its footing in sublimation of all branches of art and its interaction with science. Rationalism within science, along with development of new scientific fields, prompted by revival of the national spirit, inspired artists to create art which would represent a reflection of complete cultural heritage of a certain region. The new scientific disciplines of ethnology, archeology, geopolitics had as their goal the unveiling of fundamental value systems of nations. Socio-political change in the Balkans, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, along with formation of new states opened up novel fields of research of peoples and simultaneously the interest of Western civilization for the Orient.

It is precisely in the context of these changes, at the turn of a century, that an artistic style, now recognised as Art Nouveau was formed. A style which in some settings resembled an organised movement, like Vienna Secession or Munich Jugendstil, elsewhere being simply a result of the work of individual artists. A highly intellectual, elitist and decadent artistic style, Art Nouveau in France was removed from society, whereas in England it had a philanthropic side and connections with the community which came to the forefront of the movement. The common essence of the style in Europe was reflected in the pursuit of unity of art and total design, while contradictions persisted in all branches of the movement, that on the one hand promoted egalitarianism through the establishment of equality in art, mass production and aesthetisation of everyday objects, meanwhile on the other hand creating objects and pieces made of expensive materials, with a sophisticated design and a deep philosophical foundation.¹ The sense of individuality also influence the development of national artistic secessionist movements, spanning from Hungary over the countries of Western Balkans towards Spain and the formation of Catalan Art Nouveau, which found its theoretical basis in the 1878 writings “In the search for national architecture” (*En busca de una arquitectura nacional*) of LLouis Domenech i Montaner, a Catalan politician, physician, artist, writer and architect. Explorations of nations, the identities of peoples, along with defining an own cultural expression, gained momentum precisely during the 19th century, the period of formation of nation-states on the territory of Europe.

Perhaps the most important role in the scientific foundation of the specifics of the Serbian – South Slavic national being was taken on by the geographer Jovan Cvijić who, during his academic work, was

¹ G. Fahr-Becker, *Art Nouveau*, Postdam, 2007, 21–23.

equally concerned with social and physical geography, geomorphology, ethnography, geology, anthropology and history.² In his studies of formation of anthropological types, Cvijić included social structure, endogamy and exogamy, and migration as primary factors. He particularly emphasized the effect of the geographical environment on the ethnopsychological characteristics of the population. It was Jovan Cvijić who was the patron of Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak, the founder of applied art in Serbia, who dedicated his entire career to creating a Serbian national style in art.

INKIOSTRI AND THE NEW NATIONAL STYLE

The aspiration to create a new style that combines works of applied art with architectural creation while drawing inspiration from folk artefacts was formed in Inkiostri's style under the influence of several different factors: the temporal context in which he lived, his family environment and his schooling in Florence and northern Italy.

The nineteenth century in Dalmatia, which was ruled by the Habsburg monarchy, was a politically turbulent period. The majority Croat population was divided into two groups: one striving for autonomy and the other advocating for the merging of Dalmatia to the continental part of Croatia, which was governed by Hungary. At the same time, Italy, as part of the struggle for unification, laid claim to this territory, which led to the strengthening of the Pan-Slavic idea of unification of the southern Slavs as well as national movements. Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak was born in Split in 1866 under the name Carlo Luka Ferdinando Incchiostri in a mixed marriage.

His mother comes from a prominent Sinj family of Serbian descent Midenjak, and his father is an Italian from Šibenik, whose family originated in Venice.³ Inkiostri's father Antonio was an architect by profession, with whom Dragutin developed love and knowledge of art and architecture, studying his father's rich library and assisting him in his work.⁴ After completing his high school in 1884,⁵ Inkiostri stopped his formal education when he moved to Zadar and then to Rijeka, where he started his professional career in painting and decoration.⁶ In 1892 he went to Florence to attend painting classes with Professor Filadelfo Simi.⁷ The stay in Italy was of crucial influence for further professional creative work of Inkiostri. In addition to acquiring painting skills with the eminent Professor Simi, Inkiostri had the opportunity to get acquainted with the current art scene of Florence and Milan and the protagonists of the new *Stile*

2 С. Наумовић, „Јован Цвијић“ у: Срби 1903–1914 *Историја идеја*, ур. М. Ковић, Београд, 2015, 662–748.

3 С. Вулешевић, *Драгутаин Инкиостри Медењака, пионир југословенској дизајна*, Београд, 1998, 6; МГБ Заоставштина Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака: Аутобиографија, мај, 1942.

4 *Ibid.*

5 МГБ Заоставштина Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака: Аутобиографија, мај, 1942; Сведочанство о завршеној реалци, Сплит, дупликаат, 5. 10. 1892.

6 Newspaper news and written documents have been preserved from this period, but it is not known what the artistic level and style of Inkiostri work was: МГБ Заоставштина Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака исечци из новина: Anon., *Narodni list (Zadar)*, 08. 03. 1890 and 25. 06. 1890; Anon., “Nei campi dell'arte”, *La Voce del Popolo (Rijeka)*, 29. 12. 1890.

7 Filadelfo Simi (February 11, 1849 in Versilia – January 5, 1923 in Florence) was an Italian painter and sculptor. In 1883, he was nominated a Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy; he became Honorary Academic In Florence (1884), Bologna (1888) and the Brera Academy in Milan (1895). In 1886, he opened a school for artists. In 1888 he became professor of the Scuola del Nudo at the Florentine Academy: <http://www.filadelfosimi.it/>.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Floreal,⁸ whose conceptual basis was founded, in accordance with the national aspirations of a united Italy, on the creation of a new Italian style. Although creativity, primarily in the field of applied arts, at *Stile Floreal* existed for the last two decades of the nineteenth century in Florence and Milan, it gained international visibility and fame by organizing the first international exhibition of decorative arts in Turin in 1902,⁹ which, according to Alfredo Melani was “the first New Style festival”.¹⁰ (Fig.1, 2) It was the acquaintance and longstanding friendship with architect Alfredo Melani,¹¹ professor and later director of the High School of Applied Art *Scuola Superior D’Arte Appeal all’industria* in Milan, an influential critic and editor of art magazines, that shaped and directed Inkiostri to seek a new original style through the study of folk Balkan art. As a supporter of Raskin’s theory, Melani advocated the view of art as a national figure and the equality of applied and “fine” art. Already in 1890, on the occasion of organizing the first Italian architectural exhibition in Turin, Alfredo Melani gave a lecture entitled *Architectural Doctrinaire* “Architecture Doctrinare” in which he emphasized the need to reject historicism and create a new architecture of glass and steel modeled on the Eiffel Tower and the Gallery of Machines from the World exhibitions in 1889 in Paris.¹² Melani advocated for the formation of a new style through the search for sources within the national framework, thus prompting Inkiostri to study the ethnographic material of the South Slavic peoples in the formation of a new folk style, which became Inkiostri’s preoccupation in life. Upon arrival from Italy to Zagreb, Inkiostri creates in the spirit of a new style, based on folk art, which he devotedly studies. The paintings, interiors and facades created by Inkiostri during this period rely on Art Nouveau patterns, that is, the works of *Stile Floreal* interpreted through the symbolism and national motifs of the Dalmatian climate.

8 C. Meeks. “The Real Liberty of Italy: The Stile Floreal” *The Art Bulletin* 43, (New York) 1961, 113–130. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3047943>.

9 A. Koch, *L’exposition Internationale Des Arts Décoratifs Modernes * A Turin 1902.*, Darmstadt, 1902.

10 R. Etlin, “Nationalism in Modern Italian Architecture, 1900–1940.” *Studies in the History of Art* 29 (Washington), 1991, 88–109, 91. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42620260>.

11 There is no information on how and when Melani and the Inkiostri met, but there is written correspondence in the legacy of the Inkiostri as well as published reviews written by Melani: M. Alfredo, „Un artista Dalmata a Belgrado“, *L’Arte decorativa moderna*, (Torino) 1908.

12 R. Etlin, “Turin 1902: The Search for a Modern Italian Architecture”, *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 13, (Miami Beach) 1989, 94–109, 96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1504049>.

ARRIVAL IN BELGRADE AND RAPID SUCCESS

As an established painter-decorator, recognised in Italy, Dalmatia and Croatia, with over fifty realised work, Inkiostri came to Belgrade, driven by patriotism and Pan-Slavic ideas, where he took on the role of a lecturer in folklore ornamental decoration at the Beta and Rista Vukanovic's Art School,¹³ where he hoped to accomplish what Alfredo Melani did in Milan. He drew inspiration for his work from folk decorative art, for he considered it to be the true spirit of a nation. Alongside Miloje Vasić, Milutin Valtrović, Jovan Cvijić, and Andra Stevanović, Inkiostri was a part of a generation of scientists and artists who, each in their own field, dedicated themselves to a thorough study of Serbia and the region. Recording and studying folk decorative and applied art, while visiting the territories in which Serbs lived, from Macedonia, through Serbia, Montenegro, Herzegovina and Dalmatia, Bulgaria.

Besides his studies, during his stay in Belgrade, Dragutin's artistic and creative oeuvre included a wide range of achievements, spanning from interior decoration and furniture design for distinguished representatives of the intellectual elite, such as Jovan Cvijić, Senator Dragoslav Djordjević and politician Djordje Genić, along with interiors of public and state buildings: National Theater, three rooms in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, grand halls of the National Bank and Third Belgrade Grammar School and Serbian Pavilion at the Balkan Exhibition in London, right up to the decoration of Kolarac Pub and Dardaneli Tavern.¹⁴ Inkiostri saw himself as the founder or institutor of a new style, a new artistic order based on the interpretation of the "national spirit", and therefore a member of that new Art Nouveau movement. For, development and establishment of a theoretical foundation of one's own creative work in the domain of applied art which was in close connection with architecture, fit into the temporal context and the tendency towards total design, which made up the foundation of secession. In his pre-World War I writings, Inkiostri saw Art Nouveau as an artist's response to the need for a creation of a novel style, which was brought into being by individual artists or national movements with more or less success. Serbian historiography notes that his creative work contradicted his theoretical point of view, for, in his writings he argued against secession or "curved drawing", meanwhile using it in his designs.¹⁵

In fact, Inkiostri states that the pursuit of the new and different in some artists has led to the extreme use of a curved whip-like line, which has become its own purpose, thus losing its geometry and shape, but he does not reject secession as a style and actually seeing himself as an artist of the new art.¹⁶ During the first couple of years spent in Belgrade, Inkiostri, in addition to designing a large number of interiors,

13 Л. Трифуновић, *Српска црпљачко-сликарска и уметничко занатска школа у Београду (1895–1914)*, Београд, 1978, 190–214.

14 S. Bogunović, *Arhitektonska enciklopedija Beograda 19. i 20. veka: Arhitekti*, t. II, Beograd, 2005; С. Вулешевић, Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак, пионир југословенског дизајна, Београд, 1998, 19–28; МГБ Заоставштина Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака, 1905–1912; В. Краут, „Сценографи Народног позоришта у Београду”, *Годишњак Музеја града Београда* 14, (Београд) 1967, 322.

15 П. Васић, „Сецесија у примењеној уметности у Србији“, *Зборник радова Народној музеја* 12, (Београд) 1985, 73–82.

16 Although over time due to overall negative attitude towards secession, reduced his enthusiasm for the new style, he remained committed to it till the end of his life – compare: Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Прејорођај српске уметности. Белешке из теорије уметности; из предавања у Уметничко-занајтској школи у Београду*, Београд, 1907; Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Наша архитектура*, Београд, 1907; Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Нови српски стил*, Београд, 1910; Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Моја теорија. О новој декоративној српској уметности и њеној примени*. Београд, 1925; МГБ Заоставштина Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака, Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак, *Народна уметност и њена примена*, необјављен рукопис, 1942.

received a great deal of praise and positive reviews in the newspapers and won a gold medal at the 1906 Brussels Exhibition entitled "Art in the Home."¹⁷

OVERTURN

Very soon after the initial acceptance and great appraisal that Inkiostri received in Belgrade, there was a sudden turning point in 1907. The reason for the change in public opinion was Inkiostri's aspiration for the interaction of architecture and decoration, which was reflected in three things: the proposal of decoration for the facade of the Ministry of Education building in its own new style and two published theoretical pieces "The Revival of Serbian Art"¹⁸ and "Our Architecture".¹⁹ The cause of the change in the attitude of the architectural expert public towards the work of Dragutin Inkiostri Medenjak was found in the fragility of the architectural profession and in the presentation of views that were contrary to the ideological perception of the national style.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the status of applied art and its creators in Serbia was very low. It should be noted that applied art in Serbia during this period was called decoration and that it was a second-class branch of art seen as similar to crafts and intended for women's entertainment and leisure.²⁰ The founding of the Beta and Rista Vukanović Arts and Crafts School was a pioneering attempt, with an unhappy epilogue, that is taking over, the strife and the closing of the school, so the work in the sphere of applied art in Serbia did not receive a professional acknowledgement – a diploma of an artist.²¹ Simultaneously, Inkiostri's lack of formal education and a final diploma, was a main argument for the devaluation of his work.²²

On 25th November 1906, Inkiostri completed an exceptionally prestigious job, the decoration of the building of the Ministry of Education in number two Kralja Milana Street.²³ His work in the Ministry included, apart from crafts and repainting of the walls, painting and decorating works that he performed with Petar Ubavkić in the premises of the main entrance, hall and the "minister's room". (Fig.3) Inkiostri was asked to design the interior and he provided designs for furniture for the cabinet of the Minister of Education in a "Serbian style", "all in woodwork upholstered with leather", which was made by the Carpenter stock society. This garniture, with some other works by Inkiostri, was chosen for a Balkan exhibi-

17 С. Вулешевић, *Драѓуџин Инкиостри Меденјак, иџонир југословенској дизајна*, Београд, 1998, 22; Анон., „Послати на изложбу”, *Мали журнал* (Београд), 16. 09. 1906; Анон., „Разно”, *Нова Искра*, (Београд) 1906, 318; Анон., „Наша декоративна уметност у Брислу”, *Трџовински гласник* (Београд), 1. 11. 1906.

18 Д. Инкиостри-Меденјак, *Прејорођај српске уметности. Белешке из теорије уметности; из пре-давања у Уметничко-занатској школи у Београду*, Београд, 1907.

19 Д. Инкиостри-Меденјак, *Наша архитектура*, Београд, 1907.

20 В. Роровић, *Примењена уметност у Београду 1918–1941*, Београд, 2011, 11–21.

21 Л. Трифуновић, *Српска црпачко-сликарска и уметничко занатска школа у Београду (1895–1914)*, Београд, 1978.

22 There is no diploma in the legacy of Inkiostri to confirm that he formally finished Art Academy, and even when he was hired as a lecturer, he was asked for certificates, which he did not provide. There is only the testimony of the painter professor F. Simi in which he confirms that Inkiostri stayed with him briefly and "showed special talent for art": МГБ Заоставштина Драѓутина Инкиострија Меденјака, Сведочанство професора Филаделфа Симија, Фиренца, 31. 05. 1893.

23 Анон., „Народни стил”, *Полиџика*, 26. 11. 1906.

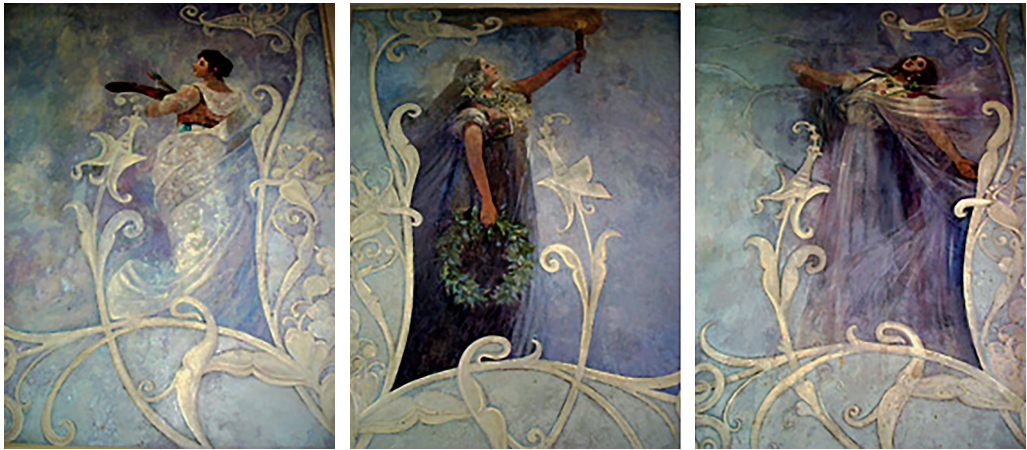


Fig. 3

tion in London in the year 1907.²⁴ Inkiostri's work that he prepared for this exhibition attracted significant attention in Serbian and received praise in London.²⁵ Thus, encouraged by this extensive work that he performed in the interior of the Ministry, excellent reception by the press, and compliments he received from Minister Andra Nikolić, Inkiostri submitted to the Minister a plan and an invoice for a new decorative solution to the existing facade of the building. As the original sketch has not been preserved, based on descriptions and the invoice, it is assumed that the facade was designed in a secessionist style, for it was stated that cement ornamentation would be covering the entirety of the facade with high and low relief, then that the individual ornaments would be of porcelain in gilded fields, that there would be a gate and nine windows made out of Oakwood with woodwork, and finally it was suggested that all non-decorated spaces be lined with porcelain tiles that would mimic the masonry of the old Orthodox churches.²⁶ Following the protocol, the Minister of Education sent a sketch with a pro forma invoice to the rector of the university, Jovan Cvijić, who forwarded it to the dean of the Faculty of Engineering, who submitted it to Andra Stevanović, head of the architectural department, who refused with extensive explanation. Andra Stevanović's opinion, submitted to the Minister of Education follows his established pattern in rejecting a project which starts by explicating the topic – a modern style, followed by a list of all that was wrong with the sketches, while degrading the author and emphasizing his ignorance or lack of talent. It is interesting that he also noted that the motifs used by Inkiostri were not all Serbian “that the otherwise meaningless composition can be there considered even less Serbian”²⁷ and that in the concluding paragraph he offers the Architectural section of Faculty to provide two new sketches by which the facade could be realised in a Serbian-Byzantine style according to the designs of architects Milorad Ruvidić and Branko Tanazević.

“At the request of the Minister, the department tried to come up with a solution for a facade design in a style that is not true Serbian, but can be called Serbian Byzantine in that the motifs were applied from

24 М. Гордић, *Зграда Министарства просвете*, Београд, 1996, 30; Х. Лисичић, „Драгутин Инкиостри – Медењак“, *Зборник за ликовне уметности* 1, (Нови Сад) 1965, 346.

25 Анон., „Једна похвална критика“, *Samoprava* (Београд), 12. 05. 1907.

26 ЗЗСКГБ, досије зграде Министарства просвете, Краља Милана бр. 2.

27 АС, Ф Мпс, 1907, 10–101, Писмо Андре Стевановића Министру просвете и црквених послова, Београд, 15. 06. 1907.

the Middle Ages Serbian church buildings dating back to the time of Prince Lazar. The truth is, we have no motives for profane buildings of that era, and in the absence of these, the department found that an attempt could be made to successfully apply motives from sacral architecture to profane buildings and thus create an albeit new style in the modern direction as Free style. And what a style for profane buildings that will carry a mark of the Serbian Byzantine character.”²⁸

The reasoning provided with the sketch reflects great contradiction both within the very idea of the Serbian Byzantine style and with regard to the reasons for rejecting Inkiostri’s sketch. At the same time, it represents the struggle of two notions, a new one, striving towards modern unrestricted expression, based on individual perception of the national and patriotic without a state-forming political background and the old ideas, which were archaic and turned towards historical canons, embedded in an ideological national vision.²⁹

This example also reflects the offensiveness of professional authority where someone who was a decorator dared to design the facade of the Ministry of Education. For Andra Stevanović, demeaning a design or the author and then making new sketches was not a single case but a common practice, whenever a design would contradict his personal beliefs.³⁰ Andra Stevanović, an undisputed authority and founder of the national style, as a German student advocated the Bismarckian doctrine that national architecture should represent the style of a nation’s golden age – that is, medieval Serbia.³¹ In recent Serbian historiography, by considering not only the content but also the semiotic meanings of the Serbian-Byzantine style, a discourse on the interpretation of art and its function in the formation of national ideology was initiated, whose leader, among others, was Andra Stevanović and which had deeper and broader socio-political context.³² Combining national style with ethnographic, pagan symbols of rural areas was completely unacceptable in order to form a desirable vision of a nation that sought its roots in ancient dynastic lineages and a bright history, primarily to establish boundaries and justify territorial claims. It was absolutely impermissible for the individuality of artists to step past formative national cultural models. The facade of the Ministry of Education was designed according to the project of Branko Tanazević in 1912, most probably according to a sketch that was submitted in 1907, which is one of his significant achievements.³³ (Fig. 4) Given that Inkiostri’s sketch has not been preserved, it remains unknown whether and to what extent the Tanazević project relied on Medenjak’s original solution.

28 „По жељи г. Министра одсек је покушао да донесе решење за нацрт фасаде у стилу који истина није српски, али се може назвати српско византиским по томе што су мотиви примењени са српских црквених грађевина средњег века и то треће епохе, која почиње од доба Краља Лазара. Истина ми немамо мотива профаних грађевина те епохе, и у недостатку ових, одсек је нашао да се може са успехом учинити покушај у примени мотива са црквених на профане грађевине и тиме створити иоле не нов стил у модерном правцу као Слободан стил. А оно стил за профане грађевине које ће ности обележје српско византијско.” Ibid.

29 ЗЗСКГБ, досије зграде Министарства просвете, Краља Милана бр. 2.

30 Case of rejection of Konstantin Jovanović’s design for the building of Serbian Royal Academy: М. Павловић, „Девет деценија здања Српске академије наука и уметности”, *Наслеђе* 16 (Београд), 2015, 33.

31 М. Павловић, *Никола Несџоровић (1868–1957)*, Београд, 2017, 27.

32 А. Кадијевић, *Један век штражења националног стила у српској архитектури: (средина XIX – средина XX века)*, Београд, 2007; Н. Макуљевић, „Визуелна култура национализма и конституисање приватног идентитета”, *Годишњак за друштвену историју*, (Београд) 2004, 47–63; Н. Макуљевић, *Уметност и национална идеја у 19. веку*, Београд, 2006; А. Ignjatović, *У srpsko-vizantijskom kaleidoskopu: arhitektura, nacionalizam i imperijalna imaginacija 1878–1941*, Београд, 2016.

33 The sketch was developed by Svetozar Jovanović, who was at the time architect at Ministry of Civil engineering: М. Гордић, *Зграда Министарства просвете*, Београд, 1996, 46.



Fig. 4

In 1907, inspired by his friend and intellectual patron Alfred Melani, Inkiostri published a long-awaited publication, „The Revival of Serbian Art”, outlining his views on contemporary creativity with a focus on architecture that he considered to be the most important branch of art.³⁴ The publication was based on Inkiostri’s texts published in the daily press, as well as lectures explaining the necessity and possibility of forming a new national style, primarily in architecture, which forms an inseparable whole with decorative arts.

In the same year, 1907, a book review of “The Revival of Serbian Art” by Branko Tanazević appeared in the *Serbian Literary Gazette*, (Српски књижевни гласник) which depicted in a negative tone both the theoretical

34 Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Прејорођај српске уметности. Белешке из теорије уметности; из превађања у Уметничко-занајској школи у Београду*, Београд, 1907.



Fig. 5

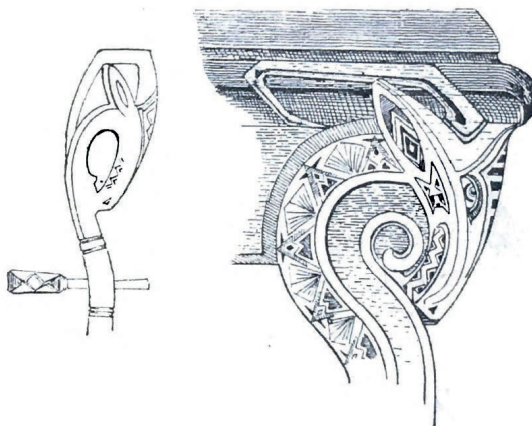


Fig. 6

and practical work of Dragutin Inkiostri.³⁵ Thus, this extremely brief account, where the pejorative labeling of Inkiostri gained the weight of factual reality found its echo not only in his contemporaries but also in Serbian historiography, where Inkiostri was interpreted as someone who did not have a good understanding and knowledge of the laws of architectural creation and, above all, of constructive relationships.³⁶ Such an observation cannot be taken as valid, since the construction of the furniture requires the knowledge of statics and forces, admittedly to a lesser extent, but the relations and regularities are the same. Analyzing the drawings as well as the individual interior design solutions, it is evident that Inkiostri's work is directly related to Art Nouveau, where columns or stairs take on interesting shapes inspired by folk elements with logically solved statics. (Fig. 5)

It is not uncommon in historiography quotation that Moša Pijade also expressed negatively about Inkiostri's work, in article in which he analyzed all attempts to create a national style from Inkiostri, through the creators of the Serb Byzantine style and Meštrović's work. Of all three attempts actually Moša gave the most credit to Inkiostri, who was also his teacher at Beta and Rista Vukanović Art and Craft School.³⁷

Tanazević's account of Inkiostri's book is arguably far from a scientific presentation of the publication; the negative attitude is not substantiated by facts, stating that Inkiostri's "notes" are completely incomprehensible and somewhat incorrect without actually stating those incorrect pieces. He then argued that: "... the author should not have accepted the work which was not within his reach and go into a field which was unknown to him, and that his confidence was given to him by the fact that all learned heads ignored his little texts too quietly. For, that the idea of using folk motifs is not new but that he was the only one trying to apply it, and not quite successfully as is usually the case with non-experts... it is impossible to apply folk motifs as the author imagined them – architectural forms came from constructive forms and

35 Б. Таназевић, „Препорођај српске уметности”, *Српски књижевни гласник* бр. 19, св. 11, (Београд) 1907, 865.

36 П. Васић, „Сецесија у примењеној уметности у Србији”, *Зборник радова Народне музеја* 13–2, (Београд) 1985, 73–82; Т. Корићанац, „Јован Цвијић и Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак”, *Годишњак града Београда* 36, (Београд) 1989, 174–210.

37 М. Пијаде, „Иван Мештровић и тежње за стилем у нашој уметности”, у: *О Уметности*, (Београд), 1963, 121–122.

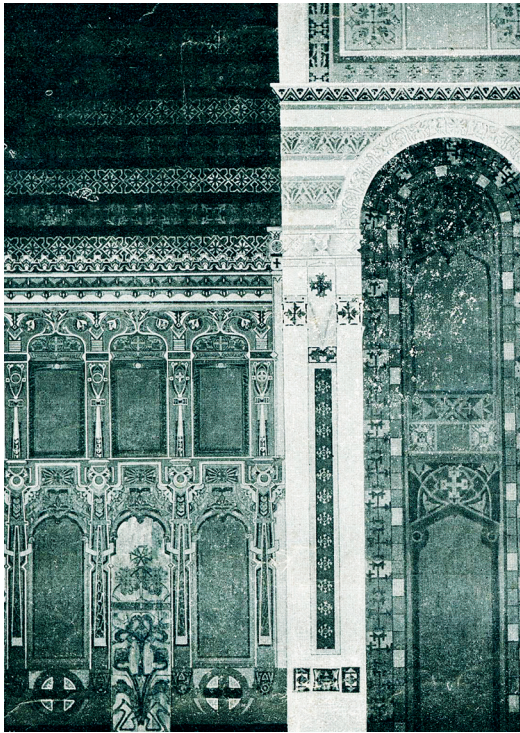


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

all that can be done to embellish these forms with folk motifs. Thus, national ornamentation is not the same as national architecture.”³⁸

The concluding paragraph states that we have enough expertly educated architects who, if unable to create something new, can still evaluate what can be done in the folk spirit. In his second publication, “Our Architecture” from 1907, which may have been a response to Tanazević’s account, and was certainly a response to the rejection of his facade design, Inkiostri elaborates on the importance of forming a new national style in architecture, (Fig. 6) noting that “...the structural part of architecture has so far been separated from decorative, with only construction being considered as architecture and the decorative part being subjected to the technical side.” He wrote that “...today, if we want to create something new to find a new form, we must also look for a new way of construction”³⁹ explaining that iron is now widely used but that houses are still built as if they were made of stone, although iron is more resistant than stone. At the same time, he reiterated his view of sacral architecture, the inspiration for which should

38 „...аутор није требало да се прихвата посла за који није дорастао ... и који прелази у поље које му је непознато... да му је крила дало то што су све учене главе прећутно прелазиле преко његових малих текстова. Да идеја о примени народних мотива није нова али да је једино он то покушао да примени и то не баш срећно као што то нестручни људи обично раде... Немогуће је применити народне мотиве тако као аутор замишља – архитектонске форме су произашле из конструктивних форми и све што може да се учини јесте да се те форме украсе народним мотивима. Национална орнаментика није исто што и национална архитектура.”: Б. Таназевић, „Препорођај српске уметности“, *Српски књижевни гласник* бр. 19, св. 11, (Београд) 1907, 865.

39 Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Наша архитектура*, Београд, 1907, 7.



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

not be sought in medieval buildings, built by “the mediocre masters brought it from outside” and that it is “just one branch of the Byzantine tree”.⁴⁰

Carried away by the need to form a new style, and after experiencing an architectural work in Belgrade, Dragutin openly expressed his disappointment with Belgrade’s architectural profession, criticizing architects as under-talented and uninterested, while rejecting the idea of creating a national style based on medieval sacral architecture. (Fig. 7)

“However, today, unfortunately, it must be said that what for many centuries the Turks have not been able to alienate us [from national art]... thanks to our architects, it is being successfully achieved.... There are even Serbian professors who say that the style that lies in the ethnography of a people is nothing but a fashion that changes every season... Our architects sit on high inaccessible thrones wrapped in a priestly mantle and throw to the people, in a grand style, a few phrases learned by heart, with incomprehensible content, like Oracles...”⁴¹

Over the next two years, the articles of Branko Tanazević “Something about the construction of village schools”, “Decorative painting of our church buildings”, “Serbian architecture, its restoration and its application to church and profane buildings” accompanied with articles of Dimitrije T. Leko, were published in the Serbian Technical Gazette (Српском Техничком листу).⁴² The series of texts, as an indirect response to Inkiostri’s theory, were intended to reinterpret ideas and theories from the “Revival of Serbian Art” and “Our Architecture”, so that they are rendered acceptable without much change of substance, except

40 *Ibid.*

41 „Међутим данас се најжалост мора рећи, да оно што кроз више векова Турци нису могли да нас изроде... заслугом наших архитеката са успехом се постижава... Чак има и наших професора који веле да стил који лежи у етнографији једног народа није ништа друго него мода која се мења сваке сезоне ... Наши архитекти седе на високим неприступним престолима увијени у неку свећеничку мантију и отуда бацају раји у великом стилу неколико фраза напамет научених несхватљиве садржине попут Оракула...”: *Ibid.*, 5–7.

42 Б. Таназевић, „Нешто о грађењу сеоских школа”, Српски технички лист год. 19, бр. 11, (Београд) 1908, 2–3; Б. Таназевић, „Декоративно сликарство наших црквених грађевина”, *Српски технички лист* год. 20, бр. 23, 24, 25, (Београд) 1909, 185–187, 193–195, 201–203; Б. Таназевић, „Стара српска архитектура, њено обнављање и њена примена на црквене и профане грађевине”, Српски технички лист год. 20, бр. 7, 8, 9, (Београд) 1909, 49–51, 57–58, 65–68 ; Д. Т. Лeko „Мисли о могућности примене српског стила”, *Српски технички лист* год. 19, св. 25, (Београд) 1908, 233–234.

in the domain of sacral architecture. Tanazević explains that at Andra's initiative in 1907, a budget for the study of antiquities and handicrafts was set up, to be dealt with by an archaeologist, an architect and a historian. He also informs his readers that Stevanović, in his works "Old Serbian Church Architecture and Its Significance" and then in the text "Sketches for the New Church in Topola" explains very well which models are needed and desirable in forming a national style, primarily those of sacral architecture in Serbian-Byzantine style.⁴³

After 1907, the professional reputation of Inkiostri was shaken. The same year his friend and patron, Jovan Cvijić, entrusted him with the decoration of his own house, including the entire furnishing.⁴⁴ In this work, Inkiostri succeeded in realizing his vision of a new national style through total design, imbued with the Art Nouveau movement incorporating folk motifs and symbolism. (Fig. 8–10) The interior of the house of Jovan Cvijić as a unique preserved interior before the First World War testifies to the creative achievements of Dragutin Inkiostri, which are conceptually based on the *Stile Floreale* imbued with knowledge of the ethnographic motives of the Balkans. Although the press described it as a remarkable and possibly some of the best of Inkiostri's work, the interior of the house of Jovan Cvijić did not improve the position of Inkiostri in Belgrade.⁴⁵ Over the next two years, he received fewer orders and mainly devoted himself to the study of folk motifs throughout Serbia while giving lectures on the new folk style. In 1910 he produced a large exhibition, which sublimated his research into 240 drawings made over the past two years, with a lecture on Serbian folk ornamentation and style. The attendance of the lecture and exhibition was extremely poor, although it was positively followed in the press.⁴⁶ Dragutin's exploration of Serbian folk decorative art and his attempt to revive it through artistic work receives confirmation in recognition given to him in 1910, on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition, whose signatories were prominent Serbian artists, architects, and scientists: Petar Ubavkić, Đorđe Jovanović, Petar Bajalović, Jovan Ilkić, Simeon Roksandić, S. Zorić, Jovan Dučić, Đorđe Bajalović, S. Todorović, D.S. Stevanović, Uroš Predić, Jovan Cvijić, Marko Murat, J. Konjarek, Rista Vukanović, B.S. Nikolajević, S. Trajanović.⁴⁷

However, even this recognition did not substantially change his shaken position – jobs and orders were small and not overly significant – until the invitation to decorate the Serbian Pavilion for the 1912 Turin Exhibition. However, as the work was done under the supervision of architect Branko Tanazević, Inkiostri was completely stifled and failed to realize his ideas, which was a fundamental objection to the foreign depictions of the Serbian pavilion.⁴⁸ After the 1912 exhibition in Turin, Inkiostri left Belgrade.

43 Б. Таназевић, „Стара српска архитектура, њено обнављање и њена примена на црквене и профане грађевине”, *Српски технички лист* год. 20, бр. 7, 8, 9, (Београд) 1909, 49–51, 57–58, 65–68.

44 Т. Корићанац, „Јован Цвијић и Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак”, *Годишњак трага Београда* 36, (Београд) 1989, 174–210.

45 Анон., „Инкиостро Цвијићу”, *Трговински гласник* (Београд), 15. 03. 1908; Анон., „Уметност др. Цвијићеве куће”, *Србија* (Београд), 24. 04. 1908.

46 Анон., „Јавно предавање”, *Вечерње Новост*и (Београд), 08. 05. 1910.; Анон., „Предавање о српској орнаментици и стилу”, *Самоуправа* (Београд), 08. 05. 1910; Анон., „Поводом Инкиостријевог предавања”, *Ново време* (Београд), 12. 05. 1910.

47 Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Нови српски стил*, Београд, 1910, 43–44; Д. Инкиостри Медењак, *Моја Шестија. О новој декоративној српској уметности и њеној примени*, Београд, 1925, 9.

48 С. Вулешевих, *Драгушин Инкиостри Медењак, иџонир југословенској дизајна*, Београд, 1998, 28.

CONCLUSION

Since most of Inkiostri's work has been lost over time, it is difficult to assess his creative oeuvre, but in the early twentieth century in Serbia he certainly represented a unique artist who, with undoubted talent, created works of high quality in almost every field of applied art. Today he is known as the founder of applied arts in Serbia. In his work in Serbia and Belgrade, he had no contemporaries who were active in all fields of applied art and had no direct followers. The more serious engagement and acceptance of applied art in Belgrade began only after the First World War, especially in the field of graphic arts, and the significance of interior decoration in Belgrade came through the work of the young post-war generation of architects.

Inkiostri's attempt to uniquely perceive architecture and interior remained permanently marked by the negative qualification of contemporary architects, preventing the development of a style that could have been unique. It was not possible to achieve steps and a different expression, with the rethinking of established dogmas in a small and closed environment intertwined with family, friendship and business relationships by a partial foreigner. Dragutin Inkiostri's work deserves a deeper and more comprehensive analysis and reevaluation in the light of a comparative analysis of the actions and influences of *Style Flo-rale* and his protagonists with whom the Inkiostri was involved.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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НОВО ЧИТАЊЕ НАЦИОНАЛНОГ СТИЛА ДРАГУТИНА ИНКИОСТРИЈА МЕДЕЊАКА – СЕЦЕСИЈА ИЛИ ТРАДИЦИЈА / ДИЗАЈН ИЛИ АРХИТЕКТУРА

Резиме: Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак рођен је у Сплиту 1866. године. Читавог живота био је посвећен уметности. Од најраније младости радио је као помоћник свог оца архитекте, да би од 1892. године похађао школу сликања у Фиренци. Понесен патриотизмом и панславенском идејом 1905. године долази у Београд, где се запошљава као предавач фолклорно орнаменталне декорације у Уметничко занатској школи Бете и Ристе Вукановић. Инспирацију за своје стваралаштво црпео је из народне декоративне уметности, сматрајући да је она одраз истинског духа једног народа. На основу истраживања, поткрепљених сопственом инспирацијом, формира теорију националног стила коју излаже у објављеним делима као што је књига Препорођај српске уметности или Наша архитектура. Драгутинов уметнички и стваралачки опус током боравка у Београду, обухватао је широки дијапазон послова од израде декорације и намештаја за угледне представнике интелектуалне елите до сликања на свили и графичког дизајна. Међутим, убрзо после почетног прихватања у београдској средини, већ 1907. године теоријске поставке али и стваралаштво Инкиострија бива изложено критикама и то превасходно од родоначалника националног стила у Србији, Андре Стевановића и Бранка Таназевића. Повод је била Инкиостријева тежња ка интеракцији архитектуре и декорације, презентована путем предлога декорације за фасаду зграде Министарства просвете у сопственом новом стилу и два објављена теоријска дела Препорођај српске уметности и Наша архитектура. Узрок измене става архитектонске стручне јавности према делу Драгутина Инкиострија Медењака, налазио се у сурењивости архитектонске струке, јер је примењена уметност била перципирана као другоразредна, као и уметници који су је стварали и такође због Инкиостријевог изношења ставова који су били у супротности са идеолошком перцепцијом националног стила. Критика Стевановића и Таназевића првенствено је оспоравала Инкиостријево разумевање архитектуре односно могућности интеракције декорације и конструкције чиме је уједно довођено у питање и његово теоријско полазиште примене али и разумевања народне орнаментике и националног стила у функцији архитектонског стваралаштва.

Како је већи део Инкиостријевог стваралаштва временом нестао валоризација његовог уметничког опуса је незахвална, али је он засигурно, у Србији почетком двадесетог века, представљао јединственог уметника који је са несумњивим талентом креирао дела високог квалитета у готово свим областима примењене уметности. Инкиостријев покушај јединственог перципирања архитектуре и ентеријера остао је трајно обележен негативном квалификацијом архитеката савременика, чиме је онемогућен развој индивидуалног и самосвојног стила у архитектонском стваралаштву Србије.

Кључне речи: Драгутин Инкиостри Медењак, национални стил, сецесија, примењена уметност, ентеријер