

The Concept of Formgiving as a Critique of Mass Production

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Introduction

An article by Vjenceslav Richter entitled “The Basic Problems of Industrial Formgiving (*industrijsko oblikovanje*) in Our Country” was published in the 1966 book *Twenty Years of Technology and Economy in Yugoslavia*. Richter was an architect, designer, theoretician, and one of the founders of the art group EXAT 51, which began in 1951 in Croatia—one of the republics of the former Yugoslavia.¹ Ten years later, another article, “On Applied Arts Issues and the Significance of the Initial Exhibition of the First Zagreb Triennale” by Bernardo Bernardi, an architect, theoretician, and another founder of EXAT 51² appeared. The titles of both articles stress the significance of the issues (i.e., the “problem”), while the texts discuss the phenomenon known in today’s Croatian language and culture as, “*dizajn*” (design). Since Bernardi establishes the concept of the “artist in industry” and Richter discusses how industrial design is still a new and vague notion to many, and even unknown to some, a comparison of these texts is worthwhile, especially because both authors belonged to the same cultural scene in Zagreb and Croatia during the 1950s and later.³ But while Bernardi set the foundations of the new perspective of the applied arts in 1955, ten years later Richter claimed that industrial design had not yet acquired the full social meaning in the domestic environment. It also should be noted that, while the term “industrial formgiving” (*industrijsko oblikovanje*) is used in the title of Richter’s article, the term “industrial design” (*industrijski dizajn*) is used with the same meaning throughout the rest of the article.

1 Vjenceslav Richter, “Osnovni problemi industrijskog oblikovanja kod nas” (“Basic Problems of Industrial Formgiving in Our Country”) in the book *Dvadeset godina tehnike i privrede Jugoslavije* (*Twenty Years of Technology and Economy in Yugoslavia*) and in a special issue of the magazine *Tehnika* (*Technics*) published by Savez inenjera i tehničara Jugoslavije (Association of Engineers and Technicians of Yugoslavia), Beograd, 1966, 123–128.

2 Bernardo Bernardi, “O problematici primijenjene umjetnosti i o znacanju inicijativne izložbe Prvi zagrebacki trijenale” (“On Applied Arts Issues and the Meaning of Initial Exhibition First Zagreb Triennale 1955”) in J. Denegri and Z. Koscevic, *EXAT 51* (Zagreb: CKD SSO Zagreb, 1979), 325–326.

3 Jerko Denegri, *Umjetnost konstruktivnog pristupa* (*The Art of a Constructive Approach*) (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2000).

Since the culture of Croatia in the context of the socialist Yugoslavia of the 1950s has, apart from a few exceptions, still not been fully studied,⁴ it seems useful to examine these two texts, which discuss an important segment of that cultural planning for mass production. The creation of mass, machine-made products intended for Croatia's growing population gained importance as a part of the general trend of ideological modernization. The term most often used to describe activities connected with planning for mass production is "formgiving" (*oblikovanje*). In this article, I would like to deal with some indications significant for further study of the semiotic range of this term in the Croatian culture of the 1950s.

The Concept of Formgiving by Bernardo Bernardi and Zvonimir Radić

First of all, let me comment on the article by Bernard Bernardi. The text originated as a commentary to the First Zagreb Triennale that was held in Zagreb in 1955.⁵ The Croatian Association of Visual Artists of Applied Arts, a professional association founded in 1950 in Zagreb,⁶ organized the exhibition with the aim that this "initial exhibition," as it says on the cover of the catalog, should contribute to the integration of artistic creation and industrial production. Very illustrative of this is the introductory text in the catalog:⁷

But in order to achieve the full, more versatile success in this direction it is necessary to put our productive process into the right frame, i.e., it is necessary to establish a name for the artist-creator in this process and put him in the right position. He must enter (into) the industrial production as an integrator.

4 The most systematic contributions to the knowledge of visual arts culture in the fifties are the following articles from *Jugoslovensko slikarstvo seste decenije* (*Yugoslav Painting of the Sixth Decade*) (Beograd: Muzej savremene umetnosti [Museum of Contemporary Art], 1980): Boris Kelemen, "Bozo Bek, Slikarstvo seste decenije u Hrvatskoj - opsti pregled" ("Painting of the Sixth Decade in Croatia: General Overview"), 70–75; Boris Kelemen, "Figurativno slikarstvo sestog desetljeća u Hrvatskoj" ("Figurative Painting of the Sixth Decade in Croatia"), 75–82; Boris Kelemen, "Fantastično slikarstvo sestog desetljeća u Hrvatskoj" ("Fantastic Painting of the Sixth Decade in Croatia"), 82–86; Jesa Denegri, "Geometrijske tendencije u Hrvatskoj umetnosti seste decenije" ("Geometric Tendencies in Croatian Art

of the Sixth Decade"), 86–92; Zelimir Koscevic, "Likovna kritika u Hrvatskoj 1950–1960" ("Visual Arts Critique in Croatia 1950–1960"), 92–98; as well as Arijana Kralj's text in the catalog for the exhibition "Grafčki i industrijski dizajn 1950–1960" ("Graphic and Industrial Design 1950–1960"), Galerija Ulrich, May 10–31, 1983, Likum, Zagreb (without pagination).

5 The exhibition was held at Umjetnički paviljon (Arts Pavilion) in Zagreb. One photograph, the origin of which is unknown, was published in the catalog *Skica za portret hrvatskog industrijskog dizajna* (*An Outline for the Portrait of Croatian Industrial Design*), catalog of 27th Zagreb Salon (27. Zagrebački salon), Zagreb, 1992, 13. According to the catalog, 123 authors, members of which also published the modest catalog

designed by Ivan Picelj. The "Industrial Art" section of the exhibition is described on the unpaginated page over the initials "V.R."; probably Vjenceslav Richter. It states: "Industry—the only domain in which this problem of ours, the giving of form to our medium, can be solved... so that the industrial artist is provided a work place in industry, and formgiving becomes a recognized stage in the process of industrial production." These thoughts unambiguously express the same conviction as Bernardi and Radić (i.e., this new type of applied art, called "formgiving" or "industrial formgiving," is a synthesis of artistic creation and serial industrial production).

The exhibition was devised as a reflection of the then very influential international exhibition, Triennale di Milano, at which artistic production—connected through the common theme of the improvement of dwelling conditions—was presented in a similar way. In postwar Europe, this also was one of the more important social and cultural themes. The following domains were presented at the First Zagreb Triennale: architecture, scenography, painting and graphics, photography, textiles, contemporary fashion, ceramics, wood, metal, toys and dolls, as well as industrial art. The Triennale, held in the Arts Pavilion (Umjetnički paviljon) in Zagreb from November 5–25, 1955, was designed by Vjenceslav Richter.

The concept of the exhibition, organizing committee, exhibitors, and the design of the catalog undoubtedly confirm the exhibition's intention, which was to display the practical realizations and the possible social significance of the ideas first presented in Croatia at a public reading of the manifesto of the artists group EXAT 51 in October 1951. The manifesto stated, among other things, "that the group does not see any difference between the so-called pure and the so-called applied art."⁸ This conviction would be expressed on many later occasions, whereas the article by Bernardi previously quoted very clearly emphasizes the new concept of "applied arts" advocated by the group EXAT 51 and himself, who, as a kind of a spokesman, in fact publicly read the manifesto in October 1951.

Bernardi criticized the traditional meaning of "applied arts" which, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, expended its creativity ornamenting objects of mass production. Instead, he stressed the significance of the work of visual artists in the field of the so-called applied arts or, to be more precise, whose creative activity was directed at the formgiving of our plastic environment—and who, ever since the twenties, have been taking a new approach to solving these visual arts tasks.⁹ Bernardi did not say who those visual artists were, but one can confidently suppose that he meant the concept—the idea—as well as the individual authors related to the Bauhaus, and other avant-garde artistic and architectural trends that existed between the two world wars.¹⁰ He says that they have proved the necessity of their creative work to meet the needs of contemporary society and the possibilities offered by materials, new technology, and new production techniques.¹¹ Based on this, Bernardi established a vision of the new concept of a "visual worker" who "finds his creative impulse and realizes his idea of form within the conditions of function, material, and technology." It needs to be stressed that, under function, he meant more than functioning in its narrow sense. He considered function to be a complex unity of social, economic, scientific, technical, biological, psychological, and aesthetic conditions. Quite understandably, the boundaries outlined by these conditions are very wide, and the final result of the process of formgiving, by which we communicate through the form, depends on the artist's creative potential.¹²

6 Udruženje likovnih umjetnika primijenjenih umjetnosti Hrvatske (ULUPUH/ Croatian Association of Visual Artists of Applied Arts) was founded in 1950. At the plenary session of ULUPUH in December 1951, Bernardo Bernardi read the manifest of the group EXAT 51.

7 In the same catalog, without pagination.
8 Denegri, Koscević, 1979, 35.

9 Bernardo Bernardi, "O problematici primijenjene umjetnosti i o značenju inicijativne izložbe Prvi zagrebacki trijenale," 325.

10 Namely, in the text published in 1959 in *Arhitektura (Architecture)* under the title "Definicija i značaj industrijskog oblikovanja" ("Definition and Significance of Industrial Formgiving"), see note 16. Bernardi in a more detailed way determines the significance of the Bauhaus school in the formation of the concept of "industrial formgiving" (Page 9). How ideas behind the Bauhaus influenced the leading theorists on the concept of formgiving is obvious in certain parts of the text by Zvonimir Radić. (See note 16 on page 61, and also at the end where three sources are quoted; two of which belong to *Bauhaus: László Moholy Nagy*, "Vision in Motion," and Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus 1919–1928.")

11 Bernardo Bernardi, "O problematici primijenjene umjetnosti i o značenju inicijativne izložbe Prvi zagrebacki trijenale," 325.

12 *Ibid.*, 326.

This longer quote seems very important because it clearly describes the meaning of the exhibition it introduces. So, not artists, but “visual arts workers” put their work on display at the exhibition. Their job is “formgiving” (*oblikovanje*), and the result is “form” (*oblik*). Bernardi further explains the meaning of the exhibition when he writes, “We want to prove that the artists from our association are able to solve all artistic tasks arising from our present social, economic, scientific, and cultural reality. With the help of a part of the exhibits we would like to explain that formgiving is a necessary and inseparable part of the entire process of industrial production. The artist in industry is a completely new type of an artist.”¹³ Despite the evident confusion in terminology, the intention is clear—establish a new type of cooperation between creative artists and mass production through the process called formgiving. In today’s terminology, we would say that Bernardi wrote a thesis for the introduction of design into production and social processes, but he did not use that term. His article, as well as the exhibition Zagreb Triennale, clearly emphasize the social need to obtain a higher quality product by investing in artistic imagination.

Further on, Bernardi explains the methodology of formgiving by claiming that the creative activity of the “artist in industry” begins with developing a product in cooperation with the engineer and other specialists who—each in his or her field of expertise—analyze different parts of the same, complex problem. It is necessary to analyze the purpose and the function of a product, research its social need, evaluate its commercial value, choose the most suitable materials, and then initiate the production process. In short, a number of analytical operations must be performed in order to collect the data necessary to start production. The task of the artist in industry is to bring together all of this data in a “form,” thus creating a harmonious unity—an industrial product.¹⁴ So Bernardi consequently established a theoretical basis for an ambitious coordination of different professional profiles in the industrial production that was, in a way, already envisioned by the theory and practice of education at the Bauhaus. Therefore, one could say that his term “formgiving” is equivalent to today’s term “design.” However, this semiotic equivalent should be observed and analyzed in the context of the social, economic, and even political environment of the ‘50s, since even Bernardi uses the term “formgiving” (i.e., the activity of the “visual arts worker”) in the context of the different social issues affecting the industrial product. Yet his text is the first clear elaboration of the term “formgiving” in the Croatian culture of the 1950s in the sense of the semiotic values attributed to the term “design” today. In the professional periodicals of the first half of the fifties, the term “formgiving” had been used only as an incidental or technical term that was not theoretically or critically elaborated.¹⁵

13 Ibid., 325.

14 Ibid., 326.

15 A bibliography of theoretical and critical articles from that period is included in the general bibliography of the catalog *An Outline for the Portrait of Croatian Industrial Design (Skica za portret hrvatskog industrijskog dizajna)* on page 27. Zagrebački salon (27th Zagreb Salon), Zagreb, 1992, 58–59. In almost all texts on design issues published during the fifties, the concept of “formgiving” is used as a stand alone concept or additionally described by the adjective “industrial.” Exceptions to this practice represent only the texts mentioned in this article.

In order to better explain formgiving in the Croatian culture of the fifties, one should examine yet another article by Bernardi, as well as an extensive article by Zvonimir Radi, another architect and member of EXAT 51. Both were published in the same issue of the professional magazine *Arhitektura (Architecture)*, which was completely dedicated to formgiving, or what today in the Croatian language is called "*dizajn*" (design).¹⁶

Bernardi's 1959 article is an extended version of what he wrote for the Zagreb Triennale in 1955. At the very beginning, it clarifies the confusion arising from equating the term "industrial design" to "industrial formgiving." Also, the significance of the modern art and aesthetics is elaborated on in more detail, with special attention given to the impact that the Bauhaus had on the development of industrial formgiving. Towards the end of the text, there is a more or less identical definition of the term from 1955; the only difference being that now the adjective "industrial" is constantly used in describing formgiving as well as the term "artist" (i.e., "industrial artist").

Zvonimir Radić's article, "The Art of Formgiving," is a more detailed elaboration of Bernardi's mostly theoretical themes. He says: "Industrial art is that form of the artistic practice which instigates and performs an overall action of the visual art in that part of life's environment emerging under the influence of industry" and "Here we are not talking about some kind of copying or stylizing anymore, but about the deep and fundamental mastering of production and industrial methods to such an extent that they can serve as a constant creative instigator of the union of the plastic expression and the formation of concrete reality. Here we are not talking about cosmetics, but about the continual setting in motion of plastic principles that make up the backbone of a work of art, and are unique for each wholesome creation."¹⁷

It is especially important to note that Bernardi (much more obvious than in the first version of his 1955 text) and Radi unambiguously stress the social meaning of formgiving. They claim that "... industrial formgiving in the socialist economy acquires a completely different meaning from the one in the capitalist world"¹⁸ and "... due to the process of liberation and development of our industrial production and our society, the problem of industrial products necessarily stands out. This necessity is obvious and imperative due to the following circumstances: (1) the cultivated industrial form gains in significance as a more and more important factor in international trade, and (2) as a result of its freedom in quantity and space, the industrial form has an enormously intense and decisive influence on the consciousness of our man, thus presenting the most powerful social factor in the formgiving of his habits, life motivation, and philosophy."¹⁹

16 Bernardo Bernardi, "Definicija i značaj industrijskog oblikovanja" ("Definition and Significance of Industrial Formgiving"), *Arhitektura (Architecture)* 1:6 (Zagreb 1959): 6–21; and Zvonimir Radić, "Umjetnost oblikovanja" ("The Art of Formgiving"), *Arhitektura* 1:6 (Zagreb 1959): 41–70.

17 Radić, "Umjetnost oblikovanja," 62.

18 Bernardi, "Definicija i značaj industrijskog oblikovanja," 17.

19 Radić, "Umjetnost oblikovanja," 63.

20 Ibid.

21 Neven Segvić writes: "In our country, today, after the Revolution, when the means of production have been taken away from the speculators of human consciousness, when workers' councils took factories, workshops, and all work places in their hands the hands of those who produce it is the time to direct our efforts, synchronize with our general, advanced ideological attitude. Our objects of use have to become a part of the man, a part of his rational and emotional consciousness. They have to be functional, aesthetic, and economical." See note 7 (without pagination).

22 On page 46 of issue 1:6 (1956) of *Arhitektura (Architecture)* there is an article by architects Antonini, Babić, Bregovac, Frgić, and Richter of SIO – Studio za industrijsko oblikovanje (Studio for Industrial Formgiving) of the Croatian Association of Visual Artists of Applied Arts. The text states: "Presenting itself to the public at the exhibition 'Apartment' for our circumstances for the first time, SIO endeavors to create a transition from individual activity in the field of applied arts to the radical activity of giving form to industrial objects."

23 Catalog of the 1957 "Housing for Our Conditions" exhibition and symposium, held at Gospodarsko razstavice, Ljubljana May 26–June 3 1956. (The Permanent Conference of the Cities of Yugoslavia, Ljubljana 1957), 30–56. See also note 24.

24 Except for The Permanent Conference of the Cities of Yugoslavia, the exhibition "Apartment for Our Circumstances" was organized by the following institutions: Savezna industrijska komora (Federal Chamber of Industry), Savezna gradjevin-ska komora (Federal Chamber of Civil Engineering), Savez zanatskih komora FNRJ (Association of Trade Chambers of Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia – FPRY), Savez drustava arhitekata Jugoslavije (Alliance of Yugoslav Associations of Architects), Savez urbanista Jugoslavije (Association of Yugoslav Town Planners), Savez gradjevinskih inženjera i tehnicara FNRJ (Association of Civil Engineers and Technicians of FPRY), Savez zenskih drustava FNRJ (Association of Women's Societies of FPRY). See also previous note, page 9.

Formgiving defined in such a way by Bernardi and Radić as a wider and generally understood "practice of the creation of plastic environment" and as "industrial formgiving," has a distinct significance in the real circumstances of the socialist concept of production, consumption, and education of the individual. Moreover, Radić obviously thinks that industrial formgiving can be used as a powerful factor for the education of the socialist individual because: "It happens that we are surrounded by the shapes that are school examples of all possible phases in the development of a product except by the one for which the socialist society is a precondition, and that despite the fact that our workers make use of and experience the most modern production methods."²⁰ So formgiving, according to two of the most significant Croatian critics of the 1950s, also has a distinct social mission within its semiotic range. This social, and to some extent even political, component of the term formgiving was clearly stressed in Bernardi's introduction to the Zagreb Triennale in 1955, and thus served as the basis for his 1959 article.²¹ It also should be mentioned that this exhibition was not the only initiative to try to win recognition for the theoretical premise of formgiving in the real world.

Public Initiatives for Affirmation of the Concept of Formgiving

In 1956, the group *Studio for Industrial Formgiving* was founded in Zagreb as a part of the section for industrial formgiving of the Croatian Association of Visual Artists of Applied Arts.²² The *Studio for Industrial Formgiving* had its public presentation at the exhibition *Housing for Our Conditions* that was held in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in 1956, and in the professional magazine *Arhitektura (Architecture)* which published a review of the exhibition.²³ The exhibition in Ljubljana brought a representative range of ideas to housing construction, decoration, and interior design of apartments from throughout Yugoslavia; mainly in the "industrial formgiving" of furniture from Slovenian and Croatian. *Housing for Our Conditions* was sponsored by very important political bodies, as well as professional organizations, which gave the exhibition a very clear programmatic value and even a political significance.²⁴ The *Studio for Industrial Formgiving* organized the Yugoslavian exhibit for the 11th Triennale di Milano in 1957, in cooperation with several Croatian and Slovenian companies that were mostly engaged in furniture production. At the Triennale, a living ambiance with the accompanying original furniture designs of different authors was presented. Yugoslavia was awarded the silver medal for its presentation as a whole.²⁵ The Second Zagreb Triennale was held in 1959. It was a continuation of the idea of the first exhibition in 1955, with an even more strongly expressed consciousness of the need for social affirmation of the visual art within the boundaries of industrial production. Vjenceslav Richter expressed this consciousness in his foreword to the exhibition catalog: "Though still at the beginning, we believe

the solution to the question of the dignity of visual art within the totality of our production to be the main news of the day, since it is through the very solution to this question that the visual art becomes a social factor of such a democratic strength on the cultural level that matches the one of the workers' self-management on social and political level." And further, "We are confronted with a task unprecedented in the history of art: to provide art to the working man so that he too takes part in its creation through the process of production and consumption, and enjoys its benefits."²⁶

The Second Zagreb Triennale also gave rise to a thematic issue of *Arhitektura (Architecture)* which included articles by Bernardi and Radić. Along with the foreword to the catalog, these texts constituted an important collection of ideas for understanding the concept of formgiving at that time. Each, in its own way, clearly defined the underlying elements of the concept of formgiving, as well as that part of its semiotic range applying to the social, economic, and even political aspects of its affirmation.

The above-mentioned social initiatives, and the formation of groups and exhibitions, helped create the distinct meaning of the concept of formgiving as an avant-garde artistic practice that, based on the fundamental ideas of artistic movements between the two world wars, negates the formalistic individuality of the concept of artistic creation as a self-sufficient one. In opposition to such a concept, Bernardi and Radić pleaded for establishing the concept of formgiving as a multidisciplinary activity for which artistic creation was the origin, and industrial production the realization. In his foreword to the catalog of the Second Zagreb Triennale, Richter clearly defined the social significance and political implications of formgiving.

Romantic Activism and Industrial Art

Despite all similarities and congruity, it should be noted that Radić's texts are more general and theoretical dealing with the problem as a whole, and not referring directly to any field of application. On the other hand, Bernardi was more concerned with the problems related to giving form to dwelling spaces and their contents. It was, indeed, a subject that became extremely popular in the post-war years. However, Bernardi also was active as a practitioner in this field, while Radić concentrated on creating very strong theoretical foundations for formgiving. Thus, there is a certain distinction evident in interpreting the concept of formgiving in the works of Bernardi and Radić. This opens up the field of further research of its meaning in the cultural context of the fifties.

As a result of Bernardi's interest in dwelling-related issues concerning space for individuals within the collective space, the concept of formgiving in his texts includes elements of romantic activism in the sense of a willingness to improve the existing order of things. While this definitely does not mean going back to former

25 Mostra internazionale dell'abitazione ("International Home Exhibition, Yugoslavia."), catalog of the exhibition XI Triennale di Milano, 1957.

26 Catalog of the exhibition "2. Zagreb triennale" ("2. Zagrebacki triennale"), April 22–May 20, 1959 (without pagination). The exhibition was held in three locations. The Didactic Exhibition of Industrial Formgiving was held in the Graphic Cabinet (Graficki kabinet). The Dwelling Culture Exhibition was held at the Society of Architects (Drustvo arhitekata); and individual creations were shown at the Arts Pavilion (Umjetnicki paviljon). 16. See note 8.

values, he expresses opinions that sound more like a rational defense of certain social values from the second stage of Croatian modernization within socialist Yugoslavia, as defined by sociologist Ivan Rogić.²⁷ These social values can be identified as an affirmation of the individual in the sphere of the collective (i.e., as in fighting for an articulated space for the individual in the general shrinking of the space intended for an individual). It is a concept of giving form to a dwelling place that is minimal, but furnished with quality materials in order to secure a decent space of self-realization for each and every individual, and in a political environment that puts the common identity before the individual one. It is at this level of rational social activity that the concept of formgiving found its realization in Bernardi's design of products for dwellings. Most of the writing from the fifties in keeping with the postwar period of reconstruction and building, and the trend toward urbanization, discusses problems related to the quality of a dwelling space. To that end, Bernardi, through his theoretical work and practical activities, continued to make contributions even in later years. In 1960, he developed the "Apartment of the Near Future" as an exhibit for the didactic exhibition *Family and Household*. It was a living environment adapted to the conditions of a socialist society that, at that time, was still waiting for the "near future," even after several years of endeavors by theorists, critics, and activists.²⁸ This private, intimate space was a minimal version of the much larger, modern, middle-class, pre-World War II apartment. It can be concluded that, in its affirmation of the dwelling space, Bernardi's concept of formgiving had certain characteristics of romantic activism reflected in the affirmation of a private apartment versus the factory, which represented the collective in both a real and a symbolic sense. The concept of formgiving, therefore, also can be interpreted as an affirmation of the middle-class sense of individuality within the growing trend toward collectivization.

In Radić's texts, however, the acceptance of a machine as a production factor is very clearly stated. Unlike mass production, the machine is seen in a positive light, a view which Radić found in the theory of the Bauhaus.²⁹ Such concepts historically emerged as an attempt to assign value to mass production through the intensified presence of designers trained in aesthetics and highly aware of the production process. This vision of the industrial production raised awareness of man as "homo faber," but using production machines instead of hand tools. The concept of the machine as a means of humanization, as Radić saw it, brought the new aesthetics as a communication model, as well as the distinct social engagement as its program of activities. Such an orientation is clearly expressed in Radić's texts through an acceptance of the machine as unavoidable, so there is an even stronger intention to interpret the actual social modernization of the day on the basis of the ideas developed by the avant-garde artistic movements of the twenties and thirties. Based on this approach, Radić makes a distinction between "formgiving" and

27 Ivan Rogić, *Tehnika i samostalnost* (*Technics and Independence*) (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada [Croatian University Press], 2000).

28 Stane Bernik, Bernardo Bernardi, Graficki zavod Hrvatske i Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka, Zagreb, 1992: 98–99.

29 Radić, "Umjetnost oblikovanja," 61–62.

the applied arts of the nineteenth century, since the symbolic function (appearance, decoration) of objects is only one of its integral parts, such as its material function. These properties of machine production are observed and explained in the context of the contemporary environment, along with the thesis that formgiving is not only the successor to the idea of the connection between the designer and the machine, but a kind of daily life regulator. Such a regulator emphasizes the need of establishing a “formgiving-like” approach which aims to improve the objective reality, and thus improve the quality of life of all those who use these objects.

This implies that modernization is only possible when it is done in the interest of end users (i.e., through a well-thought out and practically realized process of formgiving). This methodic concept bears reference to the avant-garde modernistic idea about the total control of the machine (i.e., about the machine as a subject of the new industrial value). The machine, however, is not just a subject of the creation of a new value in the material sense, but also, as Radi emphasizes, in the social and psychological sense. That is because “The industrial form has an enormously intensive and crucial effect on the consciousness of our man, and it is the most important factor in shaping his habits, motives, and psychology.”³⁰ The industrial art producing this form (i.e., that *should be* producing it, since Radic still speaks theoretically, *pro futuro*,) is a discipline consisting of the synthesis of art, science, and technology; that is to say a powerful means of modernization. Radic, however, unambiguously exposes to criticism the situation in local conditions, because local Croatian producers in the 1950s were still very far from such a complex understanding of formgiving, and were more engaged in the decoration of symbolic functionality of the object. In a way, the criticism of the actual conditions of the day puts Radic’s methodical concepts among the romantic visionary attempts to improve the actual conditions of mass production. His ideas corresponded to the actual order of things within the industry of the day, but the concept of formgiving as a method in the context of mass machine production was, at that time, still not integrated in the system of self-managing socialism. Not until the beginning of the sixties can the renewed theses for acceptance of the concept of “*dizajn*” (design) as a new synonym for the concept of formgiving³¹ be found in the professional critical and theoretical literature. And that was in connection with the introduction of free market elements within the social concept of planned economy during the social and political reform of the mid-sixties.

Formgiving as Design

During the 1950s, however, other critics and theorists also used the concept of formgiving in their texts when referring to specific issues³², and it is important to mention that the concept of design occurs occasionally in the professional literature of the day, as the Croatian derivative “*dizajn*” or an Anglo-Saxon original design. We

30 Ibid., 66.

31 Matko Mestrovic, I.C.S.I.D., Venice 1961, “Covjek i prostor” (“Man and Space”); 108–109, (Zagreb 1962).

32 Fedja Vukic, “Od oblikovanja do dizajna” (“From Formgiving to Design”), Meandar (Zagreb 2003).

already have stated that Bernardi himself at the very beginning of terminological explanations in his text from 1959 equates the concept of design and industrial formgiving which, from today's perspective, allows it to be designated as the design practice behind theoretical elaborations of the Croatian culture of the 1950s. Apart from the two texts, thus far I have not identified the presence of the concept of design in the theoretical and critical texts of the 1950s. The first one, written by Milan Lentic, is "Art and Industry," in which the terms *dizajn*, design, and designer are used, and in which the concept of design is identified with the concept of industrial formgiving.³³ The other one, written by Vera Sinobad-Pintaric, is entitled "XI triennale," and published as a review of the 1957 Triennale di Milano. Here, the concept of "industrial design" is defined as "industrial drawing."³⁴

In order to additionally clarify the meaning and historical development of the concept of formgiving in the Croatian culture of the 1950s, it is useful to quote several sentences from the previously mentioned manifesto of the group EXAT 51, especially since Bernardi, Radić and Vjenceslav Richter were founders of the group and co-signed the manifesto. It is thus claimed that "In relation to the understanding of our reality as a desire for progress in all aspects of human activity, the group sees the necessity of fighting against attitudes and production manners that have outlived their usefulness in the field of visual arts: the group finally maintains the synthesis of all kinds of visual arts to be its main task."³⁵ This quote represents a clear platform of the ideas elaborated by Bernardi and Radić in the formerly-quoted texts, and the concept of formgiving appears in this sense as that desired synthesis of art—the synthesis that also is mentioned several times in the quoted texts, and sometimes is terminologically defined as integration.³⁶ An instructive text for understanding the concept of synthesis in the context of the culture of the fifties, and also for further elaboration of the concept of formgiving, was written by Vjenceslav Richter: "The Prognosis of Life and Art Synthesis as an Expression of Our Epoch."³⁷

The fact that the concept of design is used neither in the most distinguished texts of the fifties by Bernardi and Radić, nor in the texts by other writers, possibly indicates an attempt to create an original theory of visual arts synthesis for the purpose of serial industrial production. Furthermore, this is especially emphasized in the quoted texts by Bernardi and Radić, and in the quoted foreword to the catalog of the Second Zagreb Triennale by Vjenceslav Richter, which was an attempt to find that originality in becoming involved with the reality of the socialist production, economy, and self-management of the day. Whereas the texts by Bernardi and Radić are theory-based and politically neutral, except in the sense of a general humanistic point of view, the texts by Richter and Segvic are more ideological in their search for the meaning and justification of the positioning of formgiving within the industrial sphere. By the way, all four of them are architects, and it seems that it is not accidental

33 Milan Lentic, "Umjetnost i industrija" ("Art and industry"), "Čovjek i prostor" ("Man and Space"); 61 (Zagreb 1957); 1–4.

34 Vera Sinobad Pintaric, XI triennale, "Čovjek i prostor" ("Man and Space"); 66 (Zagreb 1957); 4–5.

35 Denegri, Koscevic, 1979, 69.

36 Radić 1959, 1957, and later.

37 Denegri, Koscevic, 1979, 319–324.

that exactly Bernardi, Radić, and Richter were the main theorists of the group EXAT 51 and the whole concept of formgiving, since there has been a tradition of social involvement by architects in the Croatian culture ever since the 1930s. This ideological involvement continued after 1945, and expresses itself mostly in housing-related issues, within which the idea of formgiving as a new applied art emerged, operating together with industry in creation of original objects for apartment furnishings.

However, let us go back to the beginning once again (i.e., to the quoted text of Vjenceslav Richter from 1966). As we have shown, during the fifties, the concept of formgiving emerged rather strongly in the critical and theoretical literature, and in the foundation of groups and the organization of exhibitions. However, summing up the economic and technical results of the state in the past twenty years, one of the main protagonists of the cultural and artistic scene of the fifties uses the concept of formgiving only in the title, but “design” in the rest of the text. That points out the significance of industrial formgiving in the total economic picture of the state. Apart from that, the whole text is very critical, since the author notes that industrial design has not been completely integrated into the social structures as it should be, considering numerous initiatives and the political need from the fifties mentioned in the text.³⁸ Basically Richter’s text continues to advocate the concept of merging the artist with industry, but it now also introduces the profession of a “*dizajner*” (designer) (i.e., “*industrijski dizajn*” [industrial design]), which replaced the concepts of visual arts worker and industrial formgiving from theoretical and critical texts by Bernardi and Radić.

Conclusion

In mass production based on the socialist self-management of the sixties, the need for affirmation of formgiving in the production process did not arise in spite of initiatives and an elaborated concept. The issues outlined here await further research. First of all, the professional periodicals as well as critical articles from the first half of the sixties should be researched (i.e., texts published before Richter’s article), in order to find out how much and with what semiotic range the concept of formgiving and design were used. This is especially important since, in 1964, the Center for Industrial Formgiving (*CIO-Centar za industrijsko oblikovanje*) was founded in Zagreb, with Richter as one of the founders. The idea behind this institution was to function as an agency connecting artistic creation with industrial production within the newly reformed social environment.³⁹ This further research could produce additional elements for understanding of the total range of meaning of the concept of formgiving in the socialist culture of the fifties, and maybe even some elements for the evaluation of the consequences of such a concept of art in industry in a production process defined by self-management.

38 Vjenceslav Richter, 1966.

39 Fedor Kritovac, “Deset godina Centra za industrijsko oblikovanje” (“Ten Years of the Center for Industrial Formgiving”), *Arhitektura (Architecture)*, 150 (Zagreb 1974); 39–42.