

Recuperated “Non-Aligned” Histories of African Collections in the Museum of African Art and the Museum of Yugoslavia (Belgrade)

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This paper examines the discursive recuperation of “non-aligned” histories and non-alignment—understood as the set of ideas and values behind the Non-Aligned Movement established in the 1960s¹—in the interpretation of two African collections, the Museum of African Art: the Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection (MAU) and the Museum of Yugoslavia (MY), both in Belgrade, Serbia. Non-alignment shaped socialist Yugoslavia’s foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s, positioning the country aside the so-called Third World countries and associating it with the ideologies of anti-colonialism. Since anti-colonialism has influenced the interpretation of these collections, they offer a somewhat decentred case study within the ongoing global attempts to decolonize museums. However, the presence of non-alignment in these two museums has remained discursive, meaning that it was not immediately evident in their visual representation or museum methodologies. Such dependence on the prevailing political framework made it highly responsive to shifts in broader discourse, which underwent dramatic and significant transformations over time. Beyond the end of the Cold War, which reshaped global political and economic positionings, the wars in the former Yugoslav republics during the 1990s and the formation of newly created national narrations contributed to the effacement of most

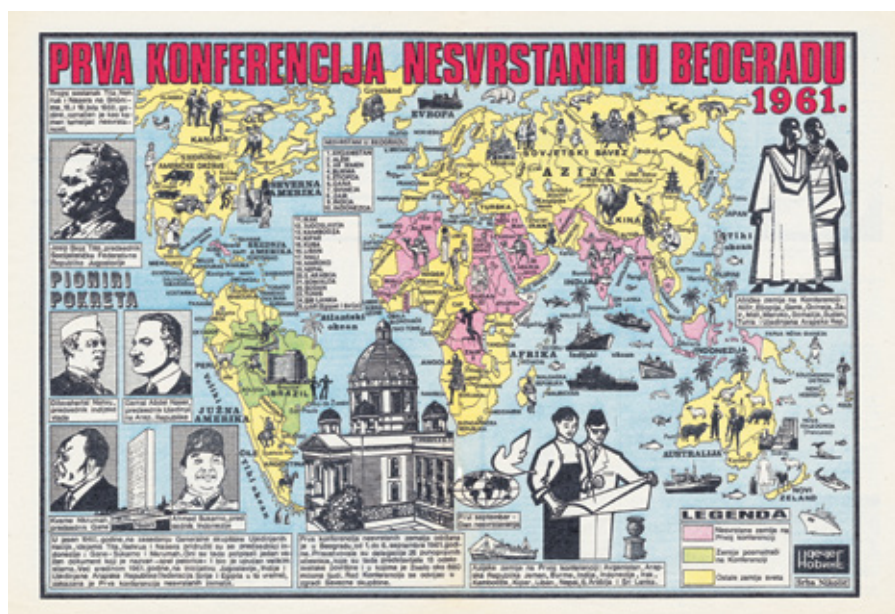
1 Yugoslav diplomat Budimir Lončar makes a distinction between non-alignment as an initial idea, non-aligned politics as an engaged political stance, and the Non-Aligned Movement as a structured approach based on certain principles, while recognizing them as parts of a larger whole. Tvrtko Jakovina, “Mr. Non-aligned i jugoslavenska politika nesvrstanosti,” *Up&Underground* 19/20 (2011): 89.

Yugoslav narratives, including non-alignment. This paper builds on previous research projects (Sladojević 2012, 2014, 2017, 2022) and over two decades of immediate professional experience with both museums, broadly tracing the discursive presence of non-alignment. It emphasizes two main approaches to reviving the non-aligned narrative in these two African collections. The first is artistic and theoretical engagement, which seeks to recuperate Yugoslav legacies as emancipatory guidelines for a more equitable society. The second is the Serbian state's current appropriation of these legacies, re-employing the Yugoslav non-aligned discourse for certain practical political gains, balancing historical meaning with redefined interpretations.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Non-Aligned Movement, non-alignment, African collections, Museum of African Art, Museum of Yugoslavia.

The two museums examined in this paper—the Museum of African Art: the Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection (MAU) and the Museum of Yugoslavia (MY)—are among the few institutions in Serbia that feature African art in their collections. While they differ in size, scope of the topics they cover, and the nature of their holdings, they share a common foundation in the Yugoslav politics of the 1960s and 1970s, especially the principles of non-alignment that shaped Yugoslavia's foreign relations during that period. However, since non-alignment functioned as part of a broader political discourse rather than an immediately visible or readable element of either museum, the decline of such discourse—which started during the 1980s and escalated in the 1990s with the breakup of the country and the wars in the former Yugoslav region—diminished its presence in museum representation.

Over the past decade, interest in these museums and their collections has steadily increased, particularly through the lens of the historical Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as a global constellation emerging in the 1960s (Eshun et al. 2014; Malaquais and Vincent 2016; Merhar 2019;



1. Map *Prva konferencija nesvrstanih u Beogradu 1961* (The First Conference of the Non-Aligned in Belgrade 1961), *Journal Dečje novine*, Gornji Milanovac, 1981, from the author's private documentation

Žemėlapis Pirmoji neprisijungusiųjų konferencija Belgrade 1961 m., žurnalas *Dečje novine*, Gornji Milanovac, 1981, iš autorės asmeninio archyvo

O'Reilly and Vesić, Jerić 2016; Piškur 2019; Sladojević 2016; Vučetić and Betts 2017; Sekulić 2016; Vuković 2016; etc.). With these two museums and their histories as my focus, I will explore the contemporary role of the ideas of non-alignment in the interpretation of their African collections.

Non-Aligned Movement and socialist Yugoslavia

During the Cold War, which caused deep polarization between the two dominant political blocs, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)² followed a somewhat different trajectory from the rest of Eastern or Southeastern Europe by taking an active role in the creation of the NAM. Historians, particularly those adopting a *longue durée* approach, tend to position the Movement within a much broader framework of global events, organizations, and collaborations (Dinkel 2019; Prashad 2008). In

2 Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1963), Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1992).

Yugoslavia's case, this re-orientation in international politics followed the Cominform resolution and the Stalin-Tito split of 1948,³ which placed Yugoslavia outside direct Soviet influence, bringing uncertainty, political and economic tensions, and a pressing need to seek potential partners and allies elsewhere (Vučetić 2017).

The efforts of economically less powerful countries to remain independent from neocolonial influences and gain a voice on the global political stage in a profoundly divided world found expression at the founding conference of the NAM, held in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, in September 1961. Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito is considered one of the NAM's key initiators, alongside Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indonesian President Sukarno. NAM members united around several core principles, including the call for nuclear disarmament, peaceful coexistence, non-interference, and national sovereignty.⁴

As non-alignment became the predominant framework for reporting on newly independent African nations in socialist Yugoslavia, it also profoundly influenced the public reception of the MAU and MY collections. In other words, these museums, both materially and symbolically, reinforced a crucial aspect of Yugoslavia's self-perception, which was forged through its international relations, while simultaneously constructing a particular vision of modernity in relation to African countries. Over subsequent decades, Yugoslavia politically and affectively identified with the "Third World,"⁵ a term that became almost synonymous with non-alignment

3 "...a conflict erupted between Yugoslavia and the Cominform, when the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was declared 'heretical'; from being its closest ally, Yugoslavia became an enemy of the USSR." Jovana Nedeljković, *Prometheans of the New Century* (Belgrade: Nolit, 2005), 56.

4 "The Movement [...] was based on the 'five principles of peaceful coexistence' (mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; equality and mutual benefit; peaceful coexistence)." Mitja Velikonja, "Images of Friendship. Analysis of artworks, ethnological and applied arts gifts from non-aligned countries to the President of SFRY, Josip Broz," in *The Culture of the Non-aligned, the Clash of Cultural and Political Narratives*, ed. Barbara Predan and Daša Tepina (University of Ljubljana Press, 2023), 132.

5 The term "Third World" was introduced by demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952, drawing a parallel to the "Third Estate" before the French Bourgeois Revolution (Hadouchi, 2016). In the post-World War II context and the era of decolonization, it referred to the countries that chose the "third way" in regard to the already established Bloc division.

(Iveković 2006). This global imagining, in a sense, displaced socialist Yugoslavia, during the 1960s and 1970s, from its geographical and hence cultural positioning in Eastern Europe, aligning it more closely with anti-imperialist and anti-colonial nations. This proximity of causes was especially underscored through the comparison between the Yugoslav heroic anti-fascist partisan struggle during WWII and the anti-colonial resistance of nations seeking independence from colonial domination of foreign powers. Parallels were also drawn in their efforts to negotiate positions in the post-WWII global economy (Sekulić 2021; Stubbs 2021).

While the histories of these collections defined the context of their emergence and have re-emerged in their contemporary interpretations, they were not without interruptions. As previously noted, the end of the Cold War brought significant changes to the global political scene. Although the NAM formally continued to operate, the global decline of non-alignment was largely tied to shifting political power dynamics after the end of the Cold War, while in the regional context, its erasure took on a somewhat different trajectory, exacerbated by the wars in former Yugoslav republics during the 1990s.

As a discursive and representational field, the heritage domain is changeable and fluid, reflecting broader social and political shifts. Similarly, non-alignment, as part of Yugoslavia's legacies, was largely effaced from museum discourse, as Yugoslav values were removed from the semantic and visual fields in the 1990s. The trajectories of effacement varied across the former Yugoslav republics, depending on the dominance of newly established national rhetoric. In what follows, I will focus on Serbia and the two case studies of the MAU and the MY.

Discursive presence of non-alignment and anti-colonialism in museum representation

The presence of non-alignment in these two museums pertained to the broader ideological framework of public discourse in socialist Yugoslavia. As a result, it is difficult to precisely delineate its role within museum representation or methodologies, particularly since museum displays mainly relied on already existing models of representation, which remained deeply

colonial and universalizing within the dominant heritage discourse—a practice that persists in museums worldwide. Over the decades, both museums and their collections underwent a drastic transformation in representational discourse, thus illustrating the extent to which museum narratives are contingent upon the dominant national ideologies.

The Museum of African Art and the Museum of Yugoslavia are both situated in a residential area of Belgrade, near embassies and state-owned residencies. They are two of only three buildings in Belgrade built specifically to serve as museums during the 1960s and 1970s.⁶ From their inception, both institutions were imbued with distinctively Yugoslav narratives and international relations, with the Museum of African Art focusing on African countries and the Museum of Yugoslavia on the personality and politics of President Josip Broz Tito.

The collecting models of these museums differed significantly. The MAU followed the prevailing museological approach to African art of the time, acquiring objects that were considered representative of specific ethnic groups—a model that has since been widely critiqued and abandoned (Gagliardi and Biro 2019). In contrast, the MY's presidential collection was derived from high-level international relations, consisting primarily of diplomatic gifts exchanged during official visits. While the MAU adhered to a defined set of guidelines for its acquisitions, the collection of gifts to Josip Broz Tito (and occasionally to other state or diplomatic figures) lacked curatorial criteria beyond the act of gift-giving itself.

These differences in collecting methodologies were also reflected in the museums' displays. Interestingly, however, both permanent exhibitions that I will comment upon in the continuation approached African art from the ethnographic perspective, even though one museum presented itself as an art institution, as stated in its title (MAU), while the other (MY) housed a collection of presidential gifts in the broadest sense.

MUSEUM BUILDINGS

The MY is formally the fourth institution to occupy the same location, originally home to the May 25 Museum, which was presented to

6 The third one is the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, opened in 1965.

President Tito by the City of Belgrade in 1962 to mark Youth Day on May 25.⁷ Designed by architect Mihailo Mika Janković, the May 25 Museum subsequently became part of the Memorial Centre “Josip Broz Tito,” a complex comprised of the presidential residence and related buildings. The centre opened to the public in 1982, two years after Tito’s passing. Within this complex, the House of Flowers—originally a simple structure that served as a winter garden in Tito’s lifetime—was transformed into his resting place. The Memorial Centre housed a large variety of diplomatic gifts from heads of state, testifying to Yugoslavia’s dynamic international relations and the significance of the Non-Aligned Movement in fostering such exchanges. In 1996, parts of the Memorial Centre merged with the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities,⁸ forming the Museum of Yugoslav History, which was renamed the Museum of Yugoslavia in 2016.

The Museum of African Art: the Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection was established in 1977 around a single collection, with the ambition of expanding and eventually encompassing the artistic heritage of the entire African continent. Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar, the founders of the core collection and the initiators of the MAU, spent decades in African countries and were actively involved in the anti-colonial struggle in the late 1950s and early 1960s,⁹ documenting and supporting Algeria’s struggle for independence from French colonial rule (Hadouchi 2016; Radonjić 2017).¹⁰ Established by the City of Belgrade, the museum occupied a brutalist concrete building with a flat, grass-covered roof, designed by architect Slobodan Ilić. In 1989, a massive dome was added, overarching the original structure built in 1976–77 (Knežević 2017). Intended to create a monumental space for the NAM meeting in Belgrade that year, the dome was, however, never fully completed.

7 Also celebrated as Tito’s birthday.

8 Three buildings from the former Memorial Centre became part of the newly founded Museum of Yugoslav History: the May 25 Museum, the House of Flowers, and the Old Museum.

9 Photographs and documents bequeathed to the MAU by Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar reveal Yugoslavia’s support for the Algerian War of Independence.

10 Film theorist Olivier Hadouchi reconstructed some of the events and identified individuals in the photographs, taken by Zdravko Pečar and Abdelkader Laribi during the Algerian War of Independence. Historian Nemanja Radonjić provided additional details in reconstructing the lives of Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar in the exhibition *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* (2017).

THE COLLECTIONS

International relations were integral to socialist Yugoslavia's political self-positioning, with state visits serving as an opportunity for mutual self-representation. The map of Tito's travels, executed in sgraffito technique and displayed in the hall of the May 25 Museum,¹¹ illustrates his trips up to 1962. Tito met with numerous African leaders and high-ranking officials, both in Yugoslavia or abroad. These interactions, especially during his two extensive voyages to African countries in 1961 and 1970, involved the exchange of gifts.¹²

In terms of diversity and selection, the gifts presented to Josip Broz Tito were comparable to those received by other statesmen in the context of international exchange. For example, the objects that Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah donated to the Ghana Armed Forces Museum in 1960 and 1965—a shield and two spears which he had received from Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia (Fuller 2014)—are identical to gifts given to Tito. A similar comparison can be drawn between the Broz collection and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, where, due to historical synchronicity, some objects are almost identical.¹³

Ethiopia was among the first countries to which Yugoslavia sent technical and medical professionals as part of international collaboration

11 The map is integrated in the building interior as a bas-relief mural, adorning the spacious hall on the first floor. In 2007, it was concealed behind a plaster wall built for an exhibition. The wall was removed in 2011, and the map was symbolically “unveiled” by the then Minister of Culture, Information, and Information Society of the Republic of Serbia, Predrag Marković, during the opening of the exhibition *Non-Aligned: from Belgrade to Belgrade*. <https://www.danas.rs/kultura/otkriven-reljef-u-muzeju-25-maj/>.

12 “On his first Third World journey in 1954–55, after his initial trip to India and Burma, he visited Ethiopia and met with Gamal Abdel Nasser in Suez. He made the second trip in 1958–59 by visiting Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, and Syria. His longest trip lasted 72 days when—as part of the 1961 North and West Africa tour—he visited Ghana, Togo, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. [...] In addition to this journey, during the 1960s Tito visited Egypt (1962, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968), Sudan (1962), Ethiopia (1968), and Algeria (1965 and 1969). His last great African tour was to East Africa in 1970, when he visited Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Egypt, and Libya. Tito continued with travels to Africa until the end of his life. In the last few years, the focus was on North Africa: Egypt (1971), Algeria (1973, 1977, and 1979), and Libya (1977 and 1979).” Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts, eds., *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity* (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, 2017), 20–21.

13 Inv. No. 621 (MY) and <https://jfk.artifacts.archives.gov/objects/3982/bust-of-a-fulani-woman?ctx=5f4a975402c9cc03599196a400ca1fd79ac702d6&idx=59>.

in the 1950s. The objects received as gifts from Ethiopia varied in form and material value, ranging from gold and silver filigree decorative objects and jewellery to simple utilitarian items made of straw, ceramics, and metal, as well as kilims and carpets. The physical setting of the gift exchange also held significance. The spears and the shield presented to Tito at the site of the decisive Battle of Adwa (1896), in which Ethiopian forces, led by Emperor Menelik II, defeated the Italians (Sladojević 2017), symbolized African resistance to colonialism.

Gifts from African countries often reflected national cultural politics, articulated through the ideologies of *négritude* (Senegal), Pan-Africanism (Ghana), and *authenticité* (Zaire). This was evident in the tapestry from the town of Thiès, designed by artist Mamadou Wade¹⁴ and presented as a gift from Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, as well as in the gifts carefully curated by artist Kofi Antubam on behalf of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, among them a Kente cloth,¹⁵ accompanied by an explanation of its symbolism,¹⁶ along with a “golden chair” and a mankala game on a stand, both covered in gold leaf.¹⁷

Tito maintained a close relationship with Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the range of gifts from Egypt was just as diverse, including the Pharaonic legacy, such as an alabaster jar,¹⁸ as well as more commonplace items like a tablecloth and napkin set¹⁹ (discussed in more detail by Aleksandra Momčilović Jovanović, 2013). While contemporary

14 Inv. No. 729 E, D-1.

15 Inv. No. 2106/a – E.

16 “This particular cloth is a Kente, Ghanaian traditional hand-woven material, which is one of several designs, is called Ododow-ase-nnhye, and it is offered here to symbolize the wisdom of the saying, ‘We do not perish when we are many.’ A Brochure on THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF GHANA’S STATE PRESENTS to HIS EXCELLENCY JOSIP BROZ TITO President of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia and MADAME JOVANKA BROZ on the occasion of THEIR STATE VISIT TO GHANA 1961.” From The Archives of Yugoslavia, Archive of the President of the Republic, sign. KPR I-2 /13-1, date 11.I – 15.III 1961, The travel of Josip Broz Tito to Ghana, 28.II – 4.III and 7-11.III 1961.

17 At the conference titled “An Anticolonial Museum,” organized by the MAU in 2022, Elizabeth Asafo-Adjei, curator at the National Museum in Accra, Ghana, shed more light on the life and art of Kofi Antubam, the artist behind the design and message of these gifts (Asafo-Adjei 2022).

18 Inv. No. 2132 M.

19 Inv. No. 1657 E.

gifts were far more common than archaeological artifacts, when such objects were presented, they served to connect current politics with the ancient past, thus legitimizing the nation-state.

Unlike the MY collection, the MAU had a defined collecting methodology. Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar, the collectors of the core collection and initiators of the MAU, were determined to establish the MAU's anti-colonial position by distancing it from Western collections formed through "colonial plunder" (Sladojević 2012). As a result, all objects in the MAU collection were reportedly acquired with permits from their countries of origin, and significant effort was made to establish professional connections with museums in African countries. However, African art collecting remained a predominantly Western-centric practice in museums globally. It relied on the reproduction of expertise in ways that perpetuated the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano 2007). Nevertheless, this aspect of collecting was not recognized by the museum's founders or by the MAU's first director, ethnologist Jelena Arandelović Lazić, who played a key role in acquisitions and further guided the collectors towards particular types of objects in the later stages of finalizing the collection (Epštajn 2021). She believed that aligning the collection with the prevailing (Western) canon of African art would enhance the museum's international standing.

Besides its core collection of approximately 1,200 objects, the MAU also received gifts from Yugoslav collectors, African museums, and state dignitaries. Museum curator Aleksandra Prodanović Bojović presented a particularly illustrative selection in her contribution to the exhibition marking the MAU's 40th anniversary. Among these gifts is a bronze figure of an antelope from the Republic of Benin (formerly the Republic of Dahomey), presented by President Tito on the museum's opening day (1977), a Bwom Kuba mask from the Democratic Republic of Congo, donated by Yugoslav Ambassador Dragoljub Najman (1978), a replica of a Benin bronze head from the National Museum in Lagos, gifted on the occasion of the Nigerian Independence Day celebration (1983), a copper relief depicting a genre scene, presented by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (1987), and a contemporary Shona sculpture by Thomas Kuwenge, donated by the

National Gallery in Harare (1988), among many others. Prodanović Bojović underlined that “[m]ore recent gifts represent echoes of the anticolonial narrative and proverbial friendship with Africans. Such is the example of an exceptionally valuable ceremonial cape of the Ethiopian Orthodox cantor, about a century old—the gift of H.I.H Prince Asfa-Wossen Asserate (2012), a friend of the Museum. Similarly, two traditional musical instruments were given by the Algerian Ministry of Culture (2013) as an expression of historically friendly relations between the two countries” (Prodanović-Bojović 2017).

THE MUSEUM DISPLAYS



2. The permanent display of the Museum of African Art, Photo by Ana Sladojević, 2022

Afrikos meno muziejaus nuolatinė ekspozicija.
Anos Sladojević nuotrauka, 2022

Interestingly, the original MAU display from 1977 has remained intact through various discursive and architectural transformations. It is the same exhibition visitors encounter today, only with minor upgrades—primarily a fresh coat of paint and reprinted photographs, refreshed for the MAU’s 40th anniversary in 2017. Architects Slobodan and Saveta Mašić designed the original exhibition using a repetitive modular system of triangular-based plinths, painted green on the lower section and blue on the upper

and stacked to create a dynamic display. While the Mašićs were responsible for its modern and bold graphic look, another crucial—yet now absent—feature of the exhibition was the natural light coming from the roof lanterns, an integral part of the original architectural design before the overarching dome was built (Knežević 2017).

Jelena Arandelović Lazić was responsible for shaping the exhibition content, opting for an ethnographic approach in the display's narrative and the arrangement of objects. Until just before the MAU's opening, she still remained formally affiliated with the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade. During this period, she dedicated time and effort to familiarizing herself with West African museums, visiting Benin, Ghana, and Togo, and subsequently extending her visit to Ivory Coast and Nigeria—where FESTAC 77 was taking place in Lagos.²⁰



3. Cover of the MAU's catalogue *Oshogbo School of Painting. Modern Expression of the Traditional African Community's Identity*, Drago Muvrin, 1988

Afrikos meno muziejaus katalogo *Ošogbo tapybos mokykla. Tradicinės Afrikos bendruomenės tapybės šiuolaikinė išraiška* viršelis, Drago Muvrin, 1988

20 Also known as the Second World Festival of Black and African Art and Culture (the first one was held in Dakar in 1966).

While temporary exhibitions at the MAU occasionally showcased contemporary art from African countries—some of the leading names in modern and contemporary African art, such as Twins Seven Seven, Yinka Adeyemi, and Jimoh Buraimoh from Nigeria, as well as Kofi Antubam, Nii Amon Kotei, and Albert Osabu Bartimeus from Ghana, can be found in the MAU's catalogues from the 1980s (Arandelović Lazić 1979; Kuhar 1980; Muvrin 1988)—the museum did not actively pursue its collection. The more experimental aspect of the MAU lay in its aspiration to function as a cultural and educational centre (Ličina 2017; Sladojević 2012; Sladojević 2022), hosting poetry readings, music performances, lectures, and discussions.

We can conclude that despite its visually ethnographic setup, the MAU was indeed perceived—both domestically and internationally—through the dominant political discourse of non-alignment and anti-colonialism. This perspective was shared by Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, then Director General of UNESCO, who visited the museum in 1977. A strong advocate for the restitution of African art from Western museums, M'Bow did not object to the creation of another African collection in Europe. He stated:

Through the artwork exhibited at the Museum of African Art, one can observe the richness and diversity of the artistic creation, which finds its inspiration within the deep life experience of the peoples of Africa. Art and life are inseparable. Artwork does not only express a personal impression but a vision of a part of the populated world, including the diversity of its physical and human dimensions. An artwork takes part in life, whether it contributes to avoiding unfortunate pitfalls or to celebrating what inspired it.

Congratulations are due to everyone who contributed to creating and establishing this museum, as they made it possible to bring to life in this Yugoslav soil a part of Africa, the true Africa that has long been denied.²¹

21 "Preko izloženih dela u Muzeju afričke umetnosti mogu se sagledati bogatstvo i raznovrsnost umetničkog stvaralaštva, koje nalazi svoju inspiraciju u dubokom životu naroda Afrike. Umetnost i život su nerazdvojni. Umetničko delo ne izražava samo lični doživljaj, nego viziju jednog dela sveta u kojem se živi, kao i raznolikost njegovih fizičkih i ljudskih dimenzija. Umetničko delo učestvuje u životu bilo da doprinosi da se izbegnu zlehude zamke ili da se slavi ono što ga je nadahnulo. Treba čestitati svima onima koji su doprineli da se stvori i postavi ovaj muzej, oni su omogućili da se na ovom jugoslovenskom tlu oživi deo Afrike, one prave Afrike koja je dugo bila nepriznata." October 6, 1977. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, Director General of UNESCO. Publication *Savski venac*, municipal information paper, no publication date. From the MAU documentation.

The modes of museum representation in the Memorial Centre, which were later inherited by the Museum of Yugoslavia, were rather generic in both concept and appearance. One of the buildings within the Memorial Centre, known as the “Old Museum,” which became part of the current Museum of Yugoslavia, housed an ethnographic collection that included African objects.²² This long, corridor-like building featured five cascading rooms connected by staircases, with showcases lining both the left and the right walls. This linear layout posed a challenge to any attempt at a decentred narrative, instead guiding visitors through the exhibition from one showcase to the next. The collection ranged from Yugoslav ethnographic artifacts, including textiles, household items, ethnic costumes, and weaponry, to similarly diverse selection of objects from different countries around the world. Among them were carved chairs from Zaire,²³ ceramic vessels from Tipassa in Algeria,²⁴ a lion’s mane headgear from Ethiopia,²⁵ and a carved tortoiseshell from Angola.²⁶ The primary focus remained on Yugoslavia’s self-narration through these objects, and more specifically, on the legacy of its lifelong President.

The absence of a specific expertise, curatorial vision, or methodological approach in assembling the collection actually created early visibility for objects that were always dismissed as second-rate in African art museums. In this sense, it disrupted the prevailing image and discourse of Western-type museums displaying objects from African countries (Sladojević 2016). However, this lack of methodology does not constitute a methodology in itself—particularly not a decolonial one.

The effacement of Yugoslavia’s affirmative legacies during the 1990s and early 2000s manifested differently across these museums. In an attempt to adapt to a shifting cultural and political framework, they placed an asymmetrical emphasis on whatever content or methodology remained available.

22 The building, designed by architect Branko Bon and constructed in 1964–65, occasionally served as a museum storage. The permanent exhibition, curated by Ljiljana Cetinić following the concept of Ethnographic collection, opened in 1986–87.

23 Inv. No. B-731.

24 Inv. No. 978.

25 Inv. No. 3408.

26 Inv. No. 1131.

In the context of the MAU, expertise and authority in African art became a stronghold, yet this discourse led to an increased exoticization of objects, stripping them of their anti-colonial message. Even during the early 2000s, the museum remained disconnected from its past, erasing the significance of its founders, Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar, from most of its narratives—despite their names remaining in the formal title of the museum. It was only through subsequent historicization efforts during the 2010s, particularly the previously mentioned exhibition *Nyimpa kor ndzi-dzi* (2017), that their role was re-established in the museum’s narrative.

Meanwhile, at the MY in the 2000s, the focus shifted towards (Yugo) nostalgia and time-exoticization of the socialist past (Velikonja 2010). Both museums featured representations of “imaginary travel”—such as the *Afro Festival*²⁷ at the MAU and *Around the World in 23 Minutes*²⁸ at the MY—without critically addressing the coloniality of knowledge promulgated through the traveller’s gaze.



4. The permanent exhibition of the Museum of Yugoslavia in the Old Museum building, as it appeared between 2009 and 2016, Photo by Ana Sladojević, 2011

Jugoslavijos muziejaus nuolatinė ekspozicija Senojo muziejaus pastate, 2009–2016. Anos Sladojević nuotrauka, 2011

- 27 An annual event showcasing art, craft, dance, music, and cuisine, which also brings together the African community in Belgrade.
- 28 In 2009, there was a call to update the existing setup to distance the main narrative from the image of Tito (Bogdanović 2009). The next stage of re-thinking representation, “The Storeroom Opens,” was initiated in 2014 and opened in 2016, as a rhizomatic display challenging the linear exhibition narrative.

Re-engaging the discourse of non-alignment in art and theory

In the past two decades, and especially over the last ten years, contemporary art and theory projects have increasingly engaged with counter-histories, seeking to offer an alternative interpretation of mainstream historical narratives. Yugoslav history has emerged as an inspiring and rich example. The interest in non-alignment, however, has coincided with a broader surge in discussions on anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and solidarity. These concerns have been linked to emancipatory movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the United States, challenging systemic racism, and calls for the decolonization of heritage and public spaces in South Africa and the United Kingdom. In Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the discourse has been shaped by the increased migration along the—by that time already infamous—“Balkan route” (2014), provoking responses ranging from solidarity to overt racism (Rexhepi 2023).

As was already mentioned, since non-alignment functioned as part of a broader political discourse rather than as an immediately visible or explicitly readable content of either museum, the decline of such discourse—which started during the 1980s and escalated in the 1990s, following the dissolution of the country and the wars in the former Yugoslav countries—affected its visibility in museum representation.²⁹ However, from the mid-to-late 2000s, following the post-2000 democratic changes in Serbia,³⁰ institutions such as the Museum of Yugoslavia and the Museum of African Art, which had remained somewhat marginalized and detached from mainstream politics, became spaces of primarily artistic and theoretical re-engagement with effaced and forgotten histories and revived Yugoslav narratives.

Both museums provided a space for debate and deliberation on the emancipatory ideas of Yugoslavia—though this was understandably more prominent in the case of MY, where otherwise fragmented regional research on Yugoslav history found a platform for communication and connection (the programmes *A New Old Museum*, 2009, *Yugoslavia: From the Beginning to the End*, 2013, among others). Alternatively, the MAU often served

29 Even at the time of the MAU's foundation and opening, Belgrade's professional heritage community was somewhat hostile towards the project, viewing it as overtly political and executed at the expense of other potential projects that might have focused more on national culture. This insight comes from conversations with the MAU's senior curator, Nataša Njegovanović Ristić.

30 After October 5, 2000, which marked the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević's autocratic rule.

as a space for various artistic and theoretical visual interventions that not merely mirrored the Western practice of institutional critique but made an original contribution to the ongoing reassessment of heritage, particularly in its role as a site of remembrance of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and solidarity. Notable among these were the exhibition *Black Body, White Masks* (2004), proposed by curator Dejan Sretenović and referencing Fanon's seminal work (*Black Skin, White Masks*), as well as artworks by Barthélémy Toguo (*Transits and Hommage to Zdravko Pečar*, 2006) and Zoran Naskovski (*Precious Memories*, 2005; *Black, Red and White*, 2006; *AAA, The Sound I Saw*, 2011–2013), commissioned by the MAU director at the time, Narcisa Knežević-Šijan.

The renewed interest in the MAU and MY collections among contemporary artists and curators was initially sparked by the long absence of their content from public view, which imbued their de-normalized objects and architecturally unchanged spaces with a sense of uncanniness. While they remained only vaguely recognizable in connection to the socialist era, they had become so detached from any dominant cultural or political narrative that they were semantically illegible to most visitors—even to professionals in art, culture, and historical research. Early curatorial and artistic engagements with these museums, which relied significantly on their “curiousness,” along with the archival turn in contemporary art and the influence of postcolonial and decolonial theory, further contributed to their more contextually informed interpretation.

Although both museums served as anchors for deliberation on Yugoslavia, anti-fascism, non-alignment, and anti-colonialism, none of these discourses were a continuous or intrinsic feature of either institution. It was only through the sustained, long-term efforts of numerous theorists, artists, and both in-house and independent curators that they were brought back into the spotlight.

The interest in non-alignment within the curatorial and art fields, although present since the mid-2010s, grew even further toward the end of the 2020s, expanding beyond the two museums in question. This broader context is important in understanding their multiple current roles as well.

Among the earliest, pre-2020 projects were *Travelling Communiqué*, an exhibition by Milica Tomić, Doreen Mende, and Armin Linke (MY, 2014); *Non-Aligned Modernisms*, a project initiated by Zoran Erić, with contributions from Jelena Vesić, Vladimir Jerić Vlidi, Rachel O'Reilly, Dubravka Sekulić, Vladimir Kulić, Stevan Vuković, Olivier Hadouchi, Dominique Malaquais, Cédric Vincent, and Ana Sladojević (MSUB, 2012–2016); *A Non-Aligned Museum*, a conference proposed by curator Katarina Živanović (MY, 2016); exhibitions *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* (NKN), *(Re)conceptualization of the MAU*, curated by Ana Sladojević and Emilia Epštajn (MAU, 2017), *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity*, curated by Ana Sladojević and Mirjana Slavković (MY, 2017), *Reading Museology*, a film by Koštana Banović (first presented within the *Contexts and Representations programme*, MAU, 2017), the exhibition *Unprotected Witness*, curated by Ana Knežević, Jelena Spaić, and Milan Popadić (MAU, 2019), which featured artworks by a group of invited artists, notably the installation *An Anonymous African* by Ana Vujović (MAU, 2019, 2022), and the tangentially related films by Katarina Zdjelar, *Malaika* (2012) and *Into the Interior, Last Day of the Permanent Exhibition* (2014), both shown at the MAU in 2022 as part of the exhibition *An Anti-colonial Museum*, curated by Ana Sladojević, along with a conference of the same title and other projects that followed.

Art history and art research books published outside Serbia, such as *Non-Aligned Modernism* (2018) by Bojana Videkanić and Ivana Sidjimovska's postdoctoral publication *Out of the Periphery, Museum of Art Solidarity* (2023), albeit differing in research approaches, both address the legacies of non-alignment. Efforts of art historians, art theorists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and artists from the region to bring a more critical, multi-, and transdisciplinary perspective to Yugoslav non-alignment have resulted in projects and editions examining how non-alignment was perceived in culture and art. Among them is *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement* (Stubbs 2022) and *The Culture of the Non-Aligned. The Clash of Cultural and Political Narratives* (Predan and Tepina 2023), books that explore cultural aspects of these newly established collaborations. Another particularly notable project that has contributed to the visibility of most

other regional institutions and art and theory projects about non-alignment³¹ is the exhibition *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned*, curated by Bojana Piškur. Developed as a platform for expanding participation and generating more questions, the exhibition evolved through subsequent iterations in Ljubljana, Gwangju, Rijeka, Skopje, and London.³² Another significant contribution, drawing on film reels from *Filmske Novosti*, is Mila Turajlić's film diptych *Non-Aligned & Ciné-Guerrillas: Scenes from the Labudović Reels* (2022). Although it has been critiqued for its lack of self-reflection and a Yugocentric perspective (Stubbs 2022), much like Videkanić's book, it remains an important and internationally well-received contribution to the broader visibility of non-aligned histories.

These efforts signal an awareness—both historical and contemporary—of Western-centric cultural imperialism and the monopolization of the domains of culture, art, language, and, perhaps most importantly, knowledge production and information accessibility. Belgrade-based curator Jelena Vesić, continuing her long-term engagement with the ideas of non-alignment, presented the concept *Solidarity in Time* in a lecture performance for the Sharjah March Meeting (2023). Offering a critical overview of regional engagements with non-alignment, anti-colonialism, and solidarity, she emphasized a shift from historical context to contemporary urgencies. This shift connects to *Applied Yugoslavia* (CZKD/Center for Cultural Decontamination, 2022)—a conference and an ongoing project that Vesić and Ana Miljanić used to critically address the capitalist, extractivist, and exoticizing exploitation of socialist-era imagery and meanings, including those of non-alignment. The renewed attention to institutions like the MAU and the MY, along with their historicized discourses, has inevitably led to numerous uncritical and superficial interpretations, opening the door to a completely different use of these legacies.

31 Including examples such as the International Biennial of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, the Podgorica Centre for Contemporary Art of Montenegro (established in 1984 as the “Josip Broz Tito” Art Gallery of the Non-Aligned Countries in the Titograd), as the only gallery established under the auspices of the NAM, the Koroška Gallery of Fine Arts in Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia (founded in 1957 as the Art Pavilion), the MAU, the MY, and Skopje Museum of Contemporary Art.

32 *Solidarity Spores* (Asia Culture Center, Gwangju, South Korea, 2020), *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned – It is not Enough to Write a Revolutionary Poem* (“Drugo more” Gallery, Rijeka, Croatia, 2021), *WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?: On the Non-Aligned Decolonial Constellation* (National Opera and Ballet, Skopje, North Macedonia, 2022), *Constellations of Multiple Wishes* (The Mosaic Rooms, London, UK, 2023).

Political uses of “non-aligned” legacies

While theorists, researchers, and artists in the second decade of the 21st century revisited historical non-alignment in search of emancipatory values, Serbia’s governing elite became increasingly aware of how these discourses could be politically repurposed. As a national-level institution, the MY has already been re-instrumentalized as one of the most frequented museums in the country. Unsurprisingly, the first time the NAM reentered the museal focus in Serbia was at the MY in 2011.³³ At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, an exhibition titled *Non-Aligned: From Belgrade to Belgrade*, curated by Ana Panić and a large team of associates, served as both a showcase and a reminder of Yugoslavia’s role in founding the NAM—staged for the 50th anniversary of the movement. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia at the time, Vuk Jeremić, sought to reactivate the sentiments within the NAM to garner support against the recognition of Kosovo’s independence.³⁴

The exhibition featured objects representing each of the 25 states that took part in the 1961 conference, along with items from later NAM member states that hosted summits. The majority of exhibits came from the Museum of Yugoslavia, with a few loans from the Museum of African Art—including stone sculptures by artist Fanizani Akuda from Zimbabwe. A large, life-size print of the iconic photograph featuring all participants from the first conference dominated the exhibition space at the House of Flowers, the resting place of Josip Broz Tito. As curator of the MY’s ethnographic collection at the time, I was engaged in welcoming guests of the ministerial conference—those who chose to come and pay their respects at the site and view the exhibition. It was an event charged with mixed interests and emotions, a sentiment accurately captured by Mila Turajlić in her text mentioning this occasion (Turajlić 2021). The ties between Serbia and the history its government sought to evoke seemed tenuous—if not entirely severed—at the time.

33 Serbia became a NAM observer state in 2001.

34 Kosovo was an autonomous administrative region in the SFRY and a southern province of Serbia. The war in Kosovo, which took place between February 1998 and June 1999, led to NATO intervention in 1999. Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, 2008. As of the time of writing this paper, the Republic of Serbia still does not recognize Kosovo’s independence.

However, this event marked the beginning of the Serbian government's gradual interest in Yugoslavia's non-aligned heritage as a platform for adopting various political positions rooted in 20th-century solidarities. In 2017, Maja Gojković, then Chairperson of the Serbian Parliament, visited the exhibition *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity*, which I co-curated with Mirjana Slavković. The exhibition, focused on the MY's photographic collection, coincided with the exhibition *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* in the MAU. Both exhibitions were well-received internationally—*Tito in Africa* continued its tour in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Wende Museum in Los Angeles, while *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* was partially incorporated into *Southern Constellations: the Poetics of the Non-Aligned* in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Gwangju, South Korea.

Four years later, on the 60th anniversary of the first NAM conference in Belgrade in 2021, the Serbian government approached this part of our history with greater confidence and ease in referencing past events and allegiances. To mark the occasion, both museums staged NAM-themed exhibitions: *The NAM World* at the MAU (curated by Emilia Epštajn, Ana Knežević, Milica Naumov, and Nemanja Radonjić), which was inaugurated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Nikola Selaković, alongside Maja Gojković, now serving as both Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and Information, and *Prometheans of the New Century* at the MY (curated by Ana Panić and Jovana Nedeljković), a project also initiated and supported by Gojković.³⁵

While curatorial teams navigated with care how to articulate anti-colonial and decolonial perspectives, while simultaneously critically addressing the appropriation of the past (Panić 2021), the opening speeches by high-ranking political figures struck a different tone. Blending Serbian nationalism with references to the NAM's legacies, they framed Serbia as the rightful successor to Yugoslav politics, asserting the continuity of meanings.

This shift in interests propelled the MAU into the sphere of international relations. Within this context, "Selaković concluded his speech by pointing out the importance of the Museum of African Art as the only

35 "We owe special gratitude to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and Information Maja Gojković, who initiated the idea of the exhibition, convinced of its unique character and multiplicity of meanings." Foreword by Neda Knežević, M.A., Director of the Museum of Yugoslavia, in *Prometheans of the New Century*, 17.

anti-colonial museum in Europe, symbolizing friendly relations between non-aligned African countries and non-aligned Yugoslavia.”³⁶ In the last week of December 2022, the MAU was transferred from its founder, the City of Belgrade, to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, elevating its status to a nationally significant cultural institution. Once a small and almost forgotten museum, it was now reaffirmed as a political asset. This seamless appropriation of the affective heritage of non-alignment and anti-colonialism by Serbia’s governing elite suggests an urgent need to critically reassess it in the future beyond its original context.

Conclusion

The museums examined in this research and their collections have undergone numerous transformations—from their origins as overtly political institutions to periods of neglect in the 1990s. Today, however, both museums have been fully re-established within Serbia’s official cultural, political, and heritage domains.

The conclusions of the research suggest that non-alignment served as a key lens through which Yugoslavia viewed the art and culture of African nations in the 1960s and 1970s. In a sense, with the partial recuperation of histories of non-alignment—albeit in a different context—this perspective continues to shape interpretations of these cultural legacies today.

The theoretical and art-related projects that revived the legacy of non-alignment in the late 2000s and 2010s did not explicitly challenge coloniality embedded in museum procedures and methodologies, possibly because this was never their primary goal. Instead, they sought to recuperate the affirmative potential of non-alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, solidarity, and a more empowered self-perception of Yugoslav history. In this process, certain ideas from the Yugoslav past were sometimes replicated without sufficient self-criticism, possibly due to their perceived fragility—having already been subjected to extensive (and often unfounded) criticism in public discourse during the 1990s and 2000s.

36 The official Ministry web page cover of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Selaković’s speech. “The exhibition ‘Non-Aligned World’ is an introduction to the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement,” September 1, 2021. <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/mediji/vesti/selakovic-izlozba-nesvrstani-svet-uvod-u-obelezavanje-60-godina-pokreta-nesvrstanih>.

A striking example of this lack of self-criticism and self-reflexivity is the treatment of race and racism. Namely, even nowadays, there is a persistent denial of the consequences of deeply ingrained stereotypes—particularly those related to Africa, African art, and African peoples, but more broadly, to the coloniality of knowledge and the notions of race and racism, which are seldom if ever used in the theorization of the Southeast European context (Baker 2018; Bjelić 2018; Rexhepi 2018; Savić 2017). This dire lack of self-reflection in the post-Yugoslav space regarding cultural stereotypes extends beyond colonial and imperial knowledge production to include the enduring prominence of 1960s non-aligned discourse. Socialist Yugoslavia's ideological rupture during WWII—first from the imperial West and then from its own pre-WWII culture—rendered such deliberations unnecessary, as they were associated with its bourgeois past that had already been denounced. This historical break with previous ideologies appeared to absolve current ideological positions from the need for self-reflection on deeply ingrained stereotypes. The conceptual framework of socialist brotherhood and unity, extended to other nations—particularly those undergoing or emerging from anti-colonial struggle—promoted a form of colour-blindness to racism that paradoxically presented itself as anti-racism. In the current context, this colour-blindness has become an obstacle to further inquiry into these matters. However, ongoing academic research on race and racism within the non-aligned context seeks to untangle these positionalities (Radonjić 2020; Rucker-Chang, in writing; Wright 2022).³⁷

Even the rekindled discourses reveal their adaptability to shifting contexts—most notably in the Serbian government's recent political re-appropriation of non-aligned and anti-colonial discourse. However, it is important to recognize that this political repurposing initially had a relatively narrow focus: the already mentioned lobbying effort against Kosovo's independence in 2011. Only later did this agenda expand to incorporate

37 There are also artworks that further explore the relevance of this shared part of our history, such as Christian Guerematchi's dance theatre solo *NAM—Non-Aligned Movement* (2020), the performance and film *Crni Tito—Blaq Tito Addressing the Parliament of Ghosts* (2022), Ana Hoffner's *Spiritual Decolonization, PART I* (2022), and Koštana Banović's *Reading Museology—Gallery of Modern Art Podgorica* (2024), both filmed at the former Gallery of the Non-Aligned Countries, and Petra Matić's *The City That Has Peace* (2023), which focuses on Zagreb's International Student Friendship Club and the NAM foreign students in Yugoslavia.

other narratives, most visibly during the 60th anniversary of the NAM in 2021 in Belgrade. By that time, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian Federation had been granted observer status in the NAM, and Sergei Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, addressed the gathering. The current political instrumentalization of the NAM's legacies underlines a somewhat paradoxical situation: terms such as the Global South, non-alignment, and anti-colonialism today are assigned to different—if not opposing—meanings depending on the position from which we speak. Emancipatory concepts historically associated with the Left have, with remarkable ease, been co-opted into an anti-Western nationalistic rhetoric on the Right. It all unfolds in parallel to the normalization of war, displacement, and migration, which further emphasize the pressing matters of the racialized hierarchies of power.

Although the significance of non-aligned politics in international relations and Yugoslavia's economic relations with African countries create an impression of true proximity among these countries in the second half of the 20th century, the region's cultural counter-archive or decentred archive remains fragmented, and in some respects, even contradictory. What once seemed like a rich and extensive historical record is overshadowed by centuries of negative racialized representation and models of racialization, which were never thoroughly questioned in the region.

And yet, the affective memory of this heritage persists. This became particularly evident during the 2022 discussions with constituencies at the MAU, held under the title *Towards an Anticolonial Museum*.³⁸ While the representational logic in the 1960s and 1970s did not fully acknowledge the coloniality pitfalls within existing museological methodologies, the intention and the discourse that shaped the MAU were anti-colonial in their affirmative stance toward the African nations' decolonial struggles. Today, the museum's constituencies identify themselves as anti-colonial, regarding non-aligned histories as part of their heritage. However, there remains little to no recognition of the need to decolonize this anti-colonial affective heritage. The uncritical invocation of legacies like non-alignment in the present fails to engage with the critique of their interpretation, posing a key

38 A programme organized ahead of the exhibition *An Anticolonial Museum* (Sladojević, 2022).

discursive and representational problem that hinders a truly critical examination of these collections.

In conclusion, recuperating (counter)histories is only a first step, just as the decolonization of representation—still unaddressed in either of these museums—constitutes just a fraction of the work needed to decolonize knowledge production. This process must respond to the urgencies of the present, which have propelled these discussions to the forefront in the first place. Understanding the context in which the images circulated and their shifting meanings—including their current re-appropriations—requires a more thorough understanding of complex international relations. Thus, not only the museums and collections examined here but also the discourses surrounding them—and non-alignment itself—should be critically reassessed from a decolonial perspective (Kušić et al. 2019; Stubbs 2021; Tlostanova 2012). The coloniality of knowledge has long shaped the concept of the modern nation-state, influencing both newly independent African countries in the 1960s and Yugoslavia alike. Consequently, it permeated most of the cultural and artistic representations, including those found in museums. While the cases of the MAU and the MY should not be simplistically labelled as colonial, the decolonization of the mind (Fanon 1962) and the unlearning of imperialism (Azoulay 2019) are ongoing global challenges that demand reflection on all forms of representation and cultural narration.

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Santrauka

Afrikos meno muziejaus ir Jugoslavijos muziejaus (Belgradas) afrikietiškų kolekcijų susigrąžintos „neprisijungimo“ istorijos

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Reikšminiai žodžiai: Jugoslavija, Neprisijungimo judėjimas, neprisijungimas, Afrikos meno kolekcijos, Afrikos meno muziejus, Jugoslavijos muziejus.

Šiame straipsnyje autorė permąsto neprisijungimo istorijų reikšmę interpretuojant Belgrado Afrikos meno muziejaus – Vedos ir dr. Zdravko Pečarų kolekcijos bei Jugoslavijos muziejaus afrikietiškų eksponatų rinkinius. Neprisijungimo politika buvo socialistinės Jugoslavijos užsienio politikos dalis, ypač XX a. 7 ir 8 dešimtmečiais. Kurį laiką, ypač XX a. paskutiniame dešimtmetyje ir XXI a. 1 deš. pradžioje, Jugoslavijos palikimas buvo nuosekliai trinamas iš viešojo diskurso Serbijoje ir visame regione. Tuo tarpu naujausiuose tarptautiniuose menotyros projektuose vis labiau pripažįstama šių muziejų simbolinė reikšmė puoselėjant antikolonializmo ir solidarumo idėjas.

Ryžtingesni raginimai dekolonizuoti paveldą visame pasaulyje suteikia dar vieną galimybę permąstyti ir iš naujo aktualizuoti šias vertybes muziejuose, kurie buvo decentralizuoti lyginant su Vakarų šalių muziejais. Viena vertus, atsiranda poreikis pripažinti Jugoslavijos palikimo emancipuojančias vertybes, tarp jų – neprisijungimą, kaip pagrindinę diskurso priemonę pristatant ir aiškinant antikolonializmo ir antirasizmo sąvokas Jugoslavijos visuomenėje. Kita vertus, tiek dekolonijinis mąstymas, tiek postkolonijinė teorija pabrėžia nuoseklaus kritiško požiūrio į patį muziejų būtinybę, kai muziejus yra suprantamas kaip eurocentrinė institucija, glaudžiai susijusi su kolonializmu ir prisidedanti prie stereotipų bei hegemoninio diskurso įamžinimo.

Autorė apibrėžia temą, pateikia istorinį kontekstą, padedantį geriau suprasti Jugoslavijos ir Neprisijungimo judėjimo santykį, ir apibūdina abu anksčiau minėtus muziejus bei jų afrikietiškas kolekcijas, sutelkdama dėmesį į eksponatų įsigijimo ir pristatymo būdus. Išvados, remdamasi šiuolaikinės menotyros prieigomis reappropriuojant neprisijungimo istorijas, taip pat atsižvelgdama į dabartinę politinę realybę ir atgimusį abiejų institucijų panaudojimą politiniams tikslams, autorė pabrėžia kritiškesnio, savirefleksyvesnio, labiau niuansuoto ir dekolonizuoto žvilgsnio į susigrąžintą istoriją ir jos naratyvus būtinybę.