East European Film Bulletin

ESSAY

The Non-Indifferent Space

Ivan Martinac's *Monolog on Split* (*Monolog o Splitu*, 1961) & Lordan Zafranović's *People (Passing) II* (*Ljudi (u prolazu) II*, 1967)

VOL. 136 (SUMMER 2023) BY FRÉDÉRIC TACHOU

Why return to a past and to works already abundantly commented on in former Yugoslavia and in Western Europe?[1] The title of this article evokes the Kino Klub Split (KKS), which is still very much alive and active today. Examining the potential artistic prospects of the KKS is a genuine focal point amidst the backdrop of a seventy-year-old history. Within this historical context, my article uncovers the history of the Klub alongside the intricate changes of former Yugoslav society, its impulses, weaknesses, failings, and eventual recoveries. To reflect upon its artistic potential and its prospects for development is a real subject set against the thick layer of a seventy-year-old history.

The choice of a retrospective consideration of *Monolog on Split* (1961) and *People (Passing) II* (1967) is motivated by the time that has passed since their production in the 1960s. No art critic would ever deny the weight personal bias represents when considering any period in the history of art, the means of artistic expression and such like. Still intuition lies in certain works more than in others, a particular incandescence resulting from the conjunction of numerous factors that can only be perceived with hindsight. Abraham Moles, who will accompany us throughout this article, spoke of "phosphorescence" to designate the effect produced by aesthetic sensation.[2] The phosphorescence of a work increases in proportion to the transformation it exerts on its receiver, giving rise to an ever closer and more coherent interweaving between semantic information (the immediately understandable denotative content) and aesthetic information (the transforming effects of artistic processes) until the "cipher"[3] of the work finally becomes apparent.

Monolog on Split by Ivan Martinac and *People (Passing) II* by Lordan Zafranović both belong to this category of phosphorescence. They are emblematic works that concentrate a great force within them, a force that is essentially due to

their formal structure. They perfectly represent the golden age of “amateur” cinematographic activity that had developed in the Dalmatian city of Split throughout the 1960s and which constitutes a corpus that critics and commentators of Yugoslav cinema have called the “Split School”.

Here I am already setting out some elements of the cultural and political context necessary to shed light upon the background from which these two works originated. Ivan Martinac characterized the essence of the Split School as “*sumanuta kontemplacija*,” which translates to “contemplative delirium.”[4] This phrase, drawn from Abraham Moles’ ideas on space psychology, provides a framework for analyzing the structure of both films. In my opinion, this will in turn enable us to finally approach each film’s “cipher”, the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and social dimensions of the works.

The relationship to the specific space of the Dalmatian city seems to be central to the aesthetics of the Split School. This is why the title of this article, with its idea of non-indifferent space, evokes first and foremost the space/psychology dialectic from which no one can escape. The space in which we evolve – its shapes, its contours, the constraints it imposes on us or the perspectives it opens up – determines our psychology. In return, we act on it by adapting our behavior and movements, modifying it according to our needs. In Split, where the relationship with space is marked by history, the space/psychology dialectic is highly specific. We shall see that Ivan Martinac draws on this originality to tend towards the sacred, while Lordan Zafranović tends towards social criticism.

I. Kino Klub Split

In the realm of culture, any project aimed at a socialist society rests on a fundamental principle: addressing the class inequalities of the capitalist world. This involves drawing on the interconnectedness of social hierarchy and counteracting unequal distribution of knowledge by creating systems that grant every individual access to comprehensive knowledge. Put into practice in post-1945 socialist Yugoslavia, this principle gave birth to an original project: *Narodna Tehnika* (Technique Culture).[5] In slogans, programs, and official texts throughout the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), this concept was accompanied by the following formula: “*Skola graditeljstva socijalizma*” (“School of the construction of socialism”). The appropriation of knowledge was conceived as a process in which the actors themselves determined the modalities of the processes that they managed. In fact, in the case of film clubs, no particular program, directive or instruction was fixed by an external regulative or prescriptive body. Each club established its own operating rules and the scope of its activities. Film clubs received low-level financial support from the delegations of Narodna Tehnika in the republics, the regions, and the municipalities. Fifty film clubs would be active in the SFRY at the end of the

1960s.[6]

The Kino Klub Split was officially founded on 27 March 1952 with Bozidar Domić as its president. This amateur filmmaker and film collector became the linchpin of the first activities of the club that was essentially devoted to film projections, training in 16 mm and 35 mm projection techniques, and offering classes in directing and shooting theory. The idea of making films arose quite quickly but came up against practical constraints. Production during the 1950s boiled down to a few medium-length documentary films made in part with the club's own means (which included cameras, a manual development system, and an editing table). Despite the important role played by the film club in the cultural life of Split, the end of the first decade of its existence was marred by an operating crisis and by accusations of mismanagement of the association's administration.

In the early 1960s, the arrival of Ivan Martinac, Mihovil Drušković, Lordan Zafranović, Andrija Pivčević, Vjekoslav Nakić, Ante Verzotti, Ranko Kursar, Martin Crvelin, Zvonimir and Kresimir Buljević, those whom historiographers call the "second generation" of the KKS, impelled an exceptionally fertile creative energy at the club. The amateur film festivals organized in Split in 1965 and in Zagreb in 1966 constituted decisive stages for the recognition of the originality of the School of Split and for its exertion of influence on future generations.[7] Within this predominantly male domain, Tatjana Dunja Ivanišević, the first female filmmaker in the KKS, embarked on her cinematic journey by creating a film in 1968.

Ivan Martinac played a very important role in the artistic direction of the club from 1961 to 1962 by promoting an explicitly experimental approach.[8] Alongside his studies in architecture, which he began in Zagreb and continued in Belgrade at the end of the 1950s, Martinac trained in film culture at the Kino Klub Belgrade, where he rubbed shoulders with already established filmmakers such as Dušan Makavejev, Kokan Rakonjać and Marko Baban. His cinephilia then took the form, apparently under Tomislav Gotovac's influence, of a growing interest in visual structures articulating plastic signs – aesthetic information, to use Moles's terminology – to the detriment of the narrative patterns or ideological issues that were dominant at the Kino Klub Belgrade at the time. It was precisely this so-called "formalist" direction that he brought back to Split, where it quickly spread in the very specific cultural climate of this Mediterranean city.

Lordan Zafranović, a native of the island of Šolta, which is situated not far off the coast from Split, is the other outstanding personality of the KKS. He would be the only one out of the group to become a professional filmmaker and follow a career that would turn out to be as important as it was erratic. His activity at the KKS, where he made a dozen films between 1961 and 1967, constituted the first steps of training to become a filmmaker.[9] He would complete his

studies in 1971 at FAMU, the internationally renowned Prague film school, which attracted many candidates from all over Southeastern Europe. *People (Passing) II*, which he made in 1966, cannot be considered a KKS production and, in fact, does not feature among the titles in their collection. However, the film is evidence for the milieu's transition from "amateur" to professional film, since it inaugurated the activities of the FAS (Film Autorski Studio), the first independent production company in the Republic of Croatia headed by Kruno Hejdler.

Monolog on Split and *People (Passing) II* present two faces of the same city, colored by the characteristic atmospheres of summer and winter. Like the Roman god Janus, they present a two-sided portrait of Split, showcasing stark contrasts at the juncture of the past and future: light and darkness, the joy of life and the pain of death, hedonistic carefreeness and indifferent cruelty towards the weakest.

II. A Bifrons Portrait of Split and the World

Monolog on Split

Monolog on Split was shot on 16 mm film during the summer of 1961. The technical conditions for filming and post-production still remain rather unknown.[10] The film begins with a 20-second black segment. A very short sound fade-in introduces Ravel's *Boléro*, right after the first cycles of the theme and counter-theme when the orchestra begins to set the rhythm for the film. It is precisely here, when this musical cadence is in place, that the first image appears: the footsteps of Ivan Martinac on the age-old marble paving stones of *Željezna vrata* (the Iron Gate).[11] The filmmaker filmed his own footsteps from directly above. A first card, written by hand on a white sheet gives the title, then the shot showing the footsteps resumes until a second card shows the name of the director.

Then comes a long segment of alternating views, shot from directly above and at eye level, of the passers-by moving under the *Željezna vrata*. The summer clothes, the relaxed or busy attitudes of the people, the small sellers, the patches of sunlight on the ground, the sections of architectural elements in the shadows of which everyone circulates, are all elements that immediately qualify the location as a serene urbanity without ostentation that flows diffused in a space of great historical depth. The present inscribed in the very old, even the ancient, is witness to the endless succession of steps, traces, and generations. The bird's-eye views of passers-by moving over the weathered ground determine a semantic axis that is soon disrupted by two groups of allotropic elements: crosses in a cemetery, one of which bears the name of the famous sculptor Meštrović, and bathers enjoying the sun, lying down, or strolling on the famous city beach of Bačvice in Split. From this point on, three

spiraling thematic lines intertwine; their repetition produces an effect of an obsessive insistence on the idea of vanity and the temporary nature of life. The looping structure of the *Boléro* further reinforces this sensation linked to the awareness of the infinite repetition of the cycle of life and death.

The second part of the film introduces a new level of thematic development with, first of all, the memory of the disappeared shown in photographic portraits in private spaces where the gestures of daily life are repeated: shaving, doing housework and grinding coffee. Then follows the historical stratification portrayed by the foundations of Diocletian's palace, in which we can see a more collective dimension of memory. The film ends with a return to the shot of Martinac's footsteps, this time in the darkness of the palace's beaten-earth basement.

The filmic conception is based on the idea of framing rather than field of vision. Great attention is paid to the composition of the shots where structural lines and the relationships of contrasts and textural effects take precedence over any desire to document spaces and places. As for the editing, it is a strict application of Eisensteinian rules: the shots are activated through a variation of their length (metric editing) and their internal dynamism (rhythmic editing). The sound on the digital version is abruptly interrupted in a curious way, as if a hand had awkwardly lifted the stylus up from the vinyl record in the middle of the piece. It is difficult to know whether this is an effect that corresponds, for example, to the sound played separately during the projection of a silent 16 mm film in the way the film was originally supposed to be presented.

People (Passing) II

Shot in December 1966, *People (Passing) II* is the revival of a theme that Zafranović had already explored the year before in *Portraits* (*Passing*). The only copy of this first version shot in 16 mm disappeared during a trip between Belgrade and Split, so the filmmaker decided to redo the film, if possible, identically. This time Kruno Hejdler, with a newly created production company, provided the filmmaker and his cameraman Andrija Pivčević with professional filming equipment, in other words: 35 mm. The film was shot in winter in the damp and foggy atmosphere so typical of Dalmatian maritime cities, which gives Split a very different visual quality to the one seen in Martinac's film.

The film begins with two professional title cards, first mentioning the name of the production company, then the title. The bars of *Take Five*, the famous standard written by Paul Desmond for Dave Brubeck's quartet in 1959 resound at the moment when the conflicting dialog between the piano and the drums is established. Against the light, we see the silhouette of a man cumbrously emerging from a building in a narrow and dark street. In the background, we see a main street where the daily rhythm of the city life is seen. Interspersed

with fairly short shots of passers-by in the streets of Split, the progress of the man walking with the aid of a cane becomes the film's central theme. Unsteady, stooped, with an emaciated and toothless face, he drags a crooked foot to where he will sit and pass his time, perhaps begging.

From this referent character, a parallel editing structure clearly and quickly establishes an opposition between two types of populations: that of urbanites rugged up in their overcoats, walking at a brisk pace intent on their business, and that of the destitute who are shabby and suffering. There is the blind father begging with his wife who holds a young child in her arms, or those infested with parasites that devour them, like the bearded man wearing a beret who scratches vermin under the layers of his clothes. The children of "normal" city dwellers go on carousel rides and smile at the filming camera. Yet there is always this return to the shots showing the man with the cane now walking on all fours in the middle of the sidewalk to the general indifference of the passers-by. Outside Diocletian's palace, on a gray, damp day, no one offers assistance except for a curious young boy, hands in pockets, observing the man like a peculiar creature. The film's theme becomes unmistakably clear: the merciless cruelty embedded in social relationships that are purportedly grounded in fraternity, equality, and justice within a so-called "socialist" city.

One could adhere to such an analysis, but the film introduces a much more equivocal and ambiguous additional dimension: the filmmaker does not seem to feel the slightest empathy towards the people he films. Pivčević's camera is inquisitive, intrusive, and greedy for ugliness, it chases characters away and pursues them, provoking reactions of hostility, insults, and rude gestures. One sequence is particularly striking: the man with the cane, finally seated in the sun, lights a cigarette, but a clumsy gesture causes it to fall into a fold in his clothes. Searching for some time around his feet, he does not find it. Even though they were aware of the danger of this man burning himself, Zafranović and Pivčević do not intervene but continue filming for what seems like a long time. Zafranović, in an interview granted to a Croatian online magazine, justified this stance by saying that the camera is yet another face in the film, in other words, it shares the indifference of the other passers-by.[12]

On an aesthetic level, the film is characterized by extremely effective audio-visual coupling. In addition to *Take Five*, the film's sound score contains sacred organ music, layers of whistles and ordinary, simple sound effects. There is no direct or ambient sound. The sound effects used to illustrate the scrapping of the cane on the ground or the ironic laughter of the recurring figure of the rat-man selling lottery tickets, are not intended to intensify realism. They are inserted as signs because of their semantic usefulness and value.

The rejection of any effect of documentarity is enhanced by the use of skillfully handled injections of sound, which take the form of sudden ruptures. The fact that they are synchronized with the cuts in editing endows them with the

status of commentaries of the visualized situations. The conflicting sounds, between hectic and suspenseful, the silence of the whole (the street) and the noise of a detail (the cane), all underline, reinforce and express the insurmountable disharmony between “normal” city-dwellers, the poor living among them, and the eye of the filmmaker who takes a radically cynical look at this reality.

If many images were shot at random, like those of the passers-by and onlookers, others were clearly premeditated with the complicity of certain “characters”, for example the rat-man. We can therefore also wonder about the relationship that may have existed between the man with the cane and the filmmaker, the latter accepting, up to a certain point, that he exposes the former’s decline to satisfy his need to show it.

III. The Spirit of Split and the Psychology of Space

As we shall see, Martinac and Zafranović used identical formal means to establish profoundly different moral convictions in their respective films. While Martinac turns away from social reality to assert a spiritual vision of the world, which I describe as a search for the sacred in things, Zafranović is more critical, exposing the cruelty of social reality.

For Diana Nenadić, art historian and editorial director of the Hrvatski Filmski Savez, Split was the main subject of several documentaries from 1954 onward at the KKS.[13] But the importance of Split for the second generation was perhaps not so much due to a desire to perpetuate this documentary work, as it was an indication of the inspiring power of this space. Split stands as a city whose presence can be attributed to the vision of a historical figure: Diocletian, the penultimate emperor of the unified Roman empire. A Dalmatian, originally from Salona that was a Greek and then a Roman colony from 48 BCE, Diocletian retired upon abdicating in 305 CE to the palace-fortress he had built in a cove on the southern side of the peninsula protected from the terrible Yugo, a wind bringing gray and inclement weather. Moreover, for the inhabitants of Split, the Yugo is the wind which awakens the madness that explains neuroses and strange behaviors.

When Ivan Martinac spoke of “contemplative delirium” (*sumanuta kontemplacija*) to describe the general state of mind that reigned among the filmmakers of the second generation of the KKS, he was referring both to his own state of mind and to this typically Dalmatian mood, a mixture of boundless admiration for the beauty of the environment, the local cultural sedimentation, maritime spirit, nonchalance, humor, and elegance.

Martinac’s expression implies that the city of Split and its environment, through the “notion of contemplation”, have a combined influence on both cognitive

and psychological aspects. This shared influence shapes a collective way of being and a shared spirit that resonates in the films created by the filmmakers of the club. This gives me an opportunity to draw upon a few concepts by Abraham Moles relating to the psychology of space.

Moles distinguishes between two major “philosophies” in this area. The first relates to a perception of space placing the Self at the center of the world. From the Self, the world develops into shells and perspectives. This type of egocentric universe is, he says: “[…] the basis not only of animal behavior and the biological substrate of spontaneous human thought, but also the world of the child, the inhabitant, of the prisoner in his cell and of all the situations where a being, so to speak, adheres to himself without mediation or reflection.” [14] The second is a product of Cartesian thinking. Individuals are distributed in space according to the measurable criteria of distance and concentration. Whoever conceives such a space is projected into it as a point equal to all the other points (individuals), which are distributed there according to measurable criteria of distance, proximity, dispersion, or density. These two philosophies are antithetical. In the first, space is constructed from the self in an emotional-subjective mode; in the second, space is first constructed in a rational mode, before the subject projects itself into it. And yet, they constantly coexist within each of us, one taking precedence over the other and vice versa, to determine this or that behavior or this or that state of consciousness at this or that moment.

The city panorama offered to the eyes from Diocletian’s palace is extraordinary. To the south opens a vast maritime perspective where the silhouettes of the islands of Šolta, Brac, Hvar and then Vis are seen. To the west the bay of Salona and to the north, in our back, the mountainous barrier of karstic formations that separates the coast from the hinterland.

Diocletian’s palace still remains visible today, albeit swallowed up, disfigured and cluttered. It is like a ghost that materializes in every corner of the historical city, the omnipresent power of the Emperor’s “Self” that makes everything exist from him. He is truly the center of the world. The space and its perspectives appear as so many things created by and for him. And these things are so perfect that their modification is inconceivable.

All the inhabitants of Split “naturally” acquire the awareness of this centrality. In relating to the space surrounding them, each and every one of them is constantly invited to replay, reiterate and duplicate the position of this ontological self that has become mythical.[15] If, on the other hand, we accept Moles’s definition of the sacred as a by-product of the lack of our own mastery over the universe, we can say that the space of this city is sacred, for neither reason nor objective historical determination allow us to reduce the effect it produces on the Cartesian notion of space.[16] Everywhere, the power of an ordering Self reigns. We are drawn to it yet always remain in its shadow.

Monolog on Split shows the sacred character of this city because life flows through it with its vanities and fatalities without ever modifying its founding structure. This is no doubt why the filmmaker, although moving around on foot, draws a trajectory that is not horizontal but vertical, and that ends among the foundations of the palace where shadow takes precedence over light. Perhaps this is an essential aspect of the spiritual truth that the filmmaker wanted to set down: the powerlessness of reason to explain the space between what is permanent and what is just simply passing through. *People (Passing) II*, on the other hand, seems at first sight to negotiate nothing with the sacred. However, a discerning eye will immediately see that the man with the cane and no doubt most of the recurring protagonists of this allegory, all inhabit the very core of the city; they are both a product of it and disgorged by it. The sacred, summed up by the blissful admiration of inaccessible abstractions and inexpressible beauty, is a product of the psychic history that the film confronts with the products of social history.

At the time, the critics who violently attacked Zafranović accused him of having distorted the image of Dalmatia and Split, and of damaging what is sacred. But the sacred has masked and will most probably always mask social reality.

IV. Psychology of Space and the Poetic

For a psychology of space based on centrality, the surrounding world develops in concentric circles where the intensity and value of presences decrease with distance. There is a certain elasticity in this type of space, since the points which occupy it do not refer to equivalent values and equal measures. Moles completes the description of this psychology by borrowing from Jakob Johann von Uexküll the notions of *Umwelt*, *Außenwelt* and *Merkwelt*, respectively designating the surrounding world specific to each species, the elsewhere, and the signs emanating from the world that reach me. On the basis of this segregation, he says: “[…] all things are organized in relation to me in function of my boldness to discover.”[17] Boldness determines both the capacity to explore the “elsewhere” and the recognition of the “Other” as a remarkable entity in my environment. When considering these notions, the shots in *Monolog on Split* or *People (Passing) II* come to mind, where bodies and faces emerge, encounter one another, and sometimes collide. These figures become a multitude of “remarkable entities” within the frame, actively inhabiting the space at varying distances, from close-ups to distant perspectives.

One could certainly point out that this captures the very essence of the photographic image, which extracts autonomous cells structured from a specific “point of view” from space. But here the tight framing on the faces, cutting the bodies into sections (the bathers of *Monolog on Split*), the bird’s-eye views that crush the silhouettes in spaces without depth, and above all the

editing structures (that never seek to establish a spatial axonometry by using shot reverse-shot and eyeline matching techniques or combinations of axes) deliberately prohibit mentally recomposing the coherence of a continuous and homogeneous space in which one could locate, situate, measure, report and project. These constants in Martinac's cinema are found in *Život je lijep* (1966), *Atelier Dioklecijan* (1967) and *Sve ili ništa* (1968), and they can also be found in many films of the Split School of the 1960s such as *Bageri prozdiru zemlju* (1967) by Martin Crvelin, *L'Abandon* (1967) by Vjekoslav Nakić, and especially in *Café Manon* (1967) by Ranko Kursar. In the latter, the camera literally pursues the café waitresses in perpetual motion. Positioned as close as possible to their faces, it is impossible to construct the slightest overall representation of the space they navigate. It would also be impossible for a resident of Split who did not know the Manon café to guess where it is located in the city.

For Moles, in phenomenological reality, "the philosophy of Centered Space is a philosophy of conflict, of a combat between the preeminence of the Self and the preeminence of the Other."[18] Because if the Other is like Me, who is the center of the world? In cinematographic representation, it is whoever has the camera who is the center of the world. This explains the fact that in both films dealt with here, space is represented on the basis of a psychology of centrality, which is probably a product of the specific history of the place, allowing for a poeticization of space. Poeticization is due to the formal choice of an "original" rather than a "realistic" representation of space. The originality results from the fact that there is no logical connection between the shots, hence a very low level of redundancy (predictability in terms of intent). The poeticization of space is characteristic of an account by a navigator or a distant traveler. It is a poetics of an "elsewhere" that operates in opposition to the imagination of the geometer or the surveyor, who describe space in a rational way and precisely record each thing in its place. It would be interesting to recreate the project pursued in the films discussed above through a conceptual and even mathematical approach, which would sit well with the prominence of Cartesianism in the post-Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence, including Split.

In a text entitled "Autour du ballet mécanique", the painter Fernand Léger stated:[19]

> Money is against art, excessive technical means are against art. The creative genius is used to living with constraints; he knows that, and the best works are generally from poor origins.

At first glance, this seems to apply perfectly to the socialist-era KKS. The filmmakers of the club constantly struggled to gather the means to shoot. This condition of a shortage of equipment and film does not, however, in itself explain the cinematographic genius that manifested itself during the club's

“golden age”. The creative direction they took towards experimentation, driven mainly by Ivan Martinac, deliberately shrugged off the subject of politics. Meanwhile, for the Kino Klub Belgrade which was located in the same “space” as the seat of power, politics were an important issue. Martinac promoted a more “spiritualized” relationship with the cinematographic material by using *a priori* concepts far removed from the aesthetic field, the most curious of which is undoubtedly that of describing the editing process as a “film cardiogram”. It was therefore not a question of prescriptive aesthetics nor a question of renouncing any “higher-order” obligations and any discourse concerning art. The constraints of creative genius mentioned by Léger are therefore perfectly illustrated by the situation of the filmmakers of the KKS, where it was a question of harnessing the sophistication of intellectual means to the simplicity of technical ones.

The result of this equation was to considerably increase the aesthetic charge at the cost of semantic information, in particular by largely renouncing discursive conventionalism in the intent, any documentarism, any information that could invoke the rules of aesthetic predictability (redundancy) or any form of political discourse. The question of the intelligibility of the cinematographic message was resolved by playing on the effects of the repetition of signs, such as the repetition of crosses in *Monolog on Split* or the portraits of passers-by in Zafranović’s film. It is interesting to observe that by tending towards opposite poles, Martinac on the side of the sacred, Zafranović on the side of the political, the messages of their films, which I called “spiritual truth” above, arise from techniques and similar formal configurations characterized by extreme simplicity. It’s interesting to observe that, while consciously tending in different directions – Martinac towards the sacred, Zafranović towards social criticism – the messages of their films, which I called “ciphers” above, emerge from similar techniques and formal configurations characterized by extreme simplicity. Genius – that big word – also lies in cleverness, improvisation, and play. Ante Verzotti made a very interesting observation on this point: “We were playing with another world that was not concrete, but which in fact was, in another sense, perhaps only clear to us.”[20] If we replace the word “world” with the word “space” in this sentence, we find precisely the trajectory that I have chosen to unearth the “ciphers” of the two films.

By showing the convergence of a psychology of space, the salient aspects of the formal structures of some films of the Split School, and a poetics of an Elsewhere, I have endeavored to understand the meaning of Ivan Martinac’s “contemplative delirium”. Obviously, not everything can be summed up in a formula. “Abracadabra” does not sum up magic, but “abracadabra” points to the heart of magic. In the same way, Martinac’s formula points to something more precise than a creative atmosphere, but rather to the spiritual matrix from which the sensitivity and imagination of the filmmakers of the School of Split unfolded in the singularity of “Split space”.

Let’s leave the last word to contemporary Croatian poet Gordana Benić. A line from her poem *Observers of the Visible and the Invisible* echoes the idea behind *sumanuta kontemplacija*:[21]

> When the dreams of the Palace diffuse infinite expanses, this other horizon is luminous and thick: something absolutely unreal floats in the air.

Translated by Wayne Malm

References:

1. Ivan Martinac’s work has been the subject of much critical analysis, some of which can be found on a website dedicated to his corpus: http://www.ivanmartinac.com/ [Accessed on 24 October 2023].
2. Abraham Moles. Théorie de l’information et perception esthétique (Information Theory of and Aesthetic Perception). Denoël, 1972; 245.
3. I do not use the concept of cipher with the same meaning as Michel Onfray in Le chiffre de la peinture: l’œuvre de Valério Adami (Gallilé, 2008). Indeed, for Onfray the term designates the unconscious of the creator sedimented in the deep layers of the work, a way of re-actualizing the Baudelairean aesthetic for which the work serves as a pivot for the synchronization of two subjectivities: that of the artist and that of the receiver. The use that I make here of the cipher of a work is closer to what Adorno called the “truth content of the work’’, which incorporates the collective social, cultural, historical and technical dimensions all at once.
4. Quoted by Diana Nenadić in Splitska skola filma, 60 godina Kino kluba Split (The Split Film School, 60 years of film club in Split). Kino Klub Split, 2012; 44.
5. The initial mass education program was launched as early as 1945 under the name Organizacija Tehnika i sport (Technical and Sports Organization), before sports-related activities, which were much easier to implement, were separated from the others. The Narodna Tehnika

Program was defined during 1946. See Adriana Perojević. Splitska skola filma, 60 godina Kino kluba Split. Kino Klub Split, Hrvatski filmski savez; 111.

6. The 2010 catalog of the Alternative Film/Video Belgrade festival is an important document for learning about film clubs in SFR Yugoslavia: Vreme kino klubova, The Cine-Club Era, Akademski filmski centar, Dom kulture Studenski grad, Beograd 2011 (bilingual Serbian-English catalog).
7. The film production of Yugoslav film clubs would gradually gain international recognition thanks to festivals with open-access programming such as the GEEF in Zagreb that ran between 1963 and 1970, MAFAF, which took place in Pula from 1965 through to 1990, Aprilski Susreti in Belgrade (1972-1977), Sabor Alternativnog Filma in Split (1977-1987), and the Alternative Film/Video Festival, which was launched in 1982. One of the first echoes of the film club culture in France came from the critic Peter Rubin in CinémAction (issue 10/11, 1980).
8. Born in Split in 1938, died in 2005.
9. See the filmography on the filmmaker's official website: http://lordanzafranovic.com/eng_filmography.html [Accessed on 24 October 2023].
10. My inquiries directed at the current members of the club did not provide answers to some questions concerning the technical procedures used at the time. That is why my commentary will relate specifically to the digital version edited by the Hrvatski filmski savez (Croatian Film Association): Hfs/dvd Edition 01#, ivan martinac 2007. The film can also be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/253878202 [Accessed on 24 October 2023].
11. An important and highly symbolic place in Split, since it marks the pivot point between Pjaca, the first medieval extension of the city established during the 7th century, and the palace of Diocletian, built around 305, in which the populations living in the nearby colony of Salona had taken refuge to escape the Avar and Slav invasions. Even today, this door is one of the tourist hot spots of the city.
12. https://www.dokumentarni.net/2016/10/24/lordan-zafranovic-danasnje-rasulo-posljedica- je-sutnje/ [Accessed on 24 October 2023].
13. Ibid.
14. A. Moles. Psychologie de l'espace (Psychology of Space). L'Harmattan, 1998; 30.
15. All schoolchildren in Split learn the history of their city, of the palace and of "their'' emperor.
16. Mole 1998, 116.
17. Ibid., 30.
18. Ibid., 32.
19. Fernand Léger. Fonctions de la peinture (Functions of Painting). Denoël, 1965; 165.
20. Interview by Marina Barun in 2019 for the KKS: https://kinoklubsplit.hr/dogadanja/intervju-ante-verzotti/ [Accessed on 24 October 2023].

21. Gordana Benić. Les forgerons de l’ombre (Blacksmiths in the Shadows). Domaine Croate/poésie, L’Ollave, 2014 [French translation by Brankica Radić].