



Ivan Lacković: Three Women, oil on glass, 46 x 40 cm, 1969

ted in new aesthetic ideals that radically changed the understanding of artistic language. This new concept of an intellectual, neo-primitive circle of artists points to a curious interconnectedness with the magic reflections of instinctive neo-primitives - naïve artists. Most modern and naïve artists find spiritual affinities in archaic art, and connections can be found between modern artists and the first naïve painters. From 1886 onwards, the untrained painter Henri Rousseau exhibited at the *Salon des Independents*. He captured the attention of the public with his primitive forms and naïve, romantic view of the world. His paintings were displayed side by side with those of Signac, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh, Bounard, Matisse and Cezanne.

In the works of Henri Rousseau, Pablo Picasso found an analogy with his archetypal, pure and free creativity. He was particularly fascinated by the rediscovery of the primal in the works of this artist. It must be noted that fifteen years before Picasso took an interest in African sculpture, Rousseau depicted magic, enchanting scenes of a fantastic and exotic world, filled with glimmering colours and primal beauty. The childlike directness of Rousseau's painting was a supreme creative achievement greeted by the best-known avant-garde artists. By depicting dream-like reality, this artist transports us into a world where the real and surreal blend, as if he had anticipated the modern notion of artistic reality, based on harmonising the fantastic and concrete. The aesthetics and poetics of the artistic language of this first modern naïve artist also pointed at the existence of the artistic in the works of artists without academic training. Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee recognised this potential of originality, spontaneity and sincerity in the works of Rousseau, who worked "with a pure heart" and "with the wis-



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Arranged and published by: The coordinating committee of the "Heritage Trails through Dolenjska and Bela krajina" project and the Municipality of Trebnje; *Content:* Marko Kapus; *Text:* Marko Kapus; *Translation:* Amidas; *Photography:* Marko Pršina, photo archive of Trebnje Education and Culture Centre; *Production:* Agora Design; Trebnje, June 2005

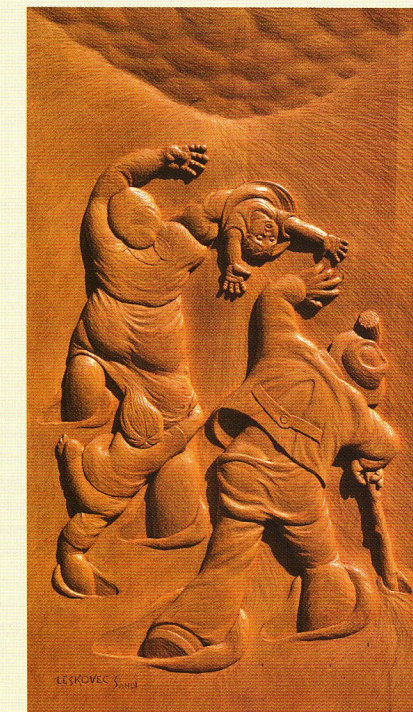
The publication was made possibly by: The Coordinating committee for the "On the trail of the heritage of Dolenjska and Bela krajina" project and Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Preservation of the Settlement of Slovene Rural Areas - Ribnica

TREBNJE



Cover: Viktor Magyar - Flying Man, oil on wood, 51 x 33 cm, 1972

GALLERY OF NAÏVE ARTISTS



Sandi Leskovec: Bridge of Love, relief, 93 x 54 cm, 1986

In Slovenia, naïve art was presented to the public in an organised form for the first time in 1962, when an exhibition of works from the collection of the Zagreb journalist, publicist and collector, Gerhard Ledič, entitled "The World of the Naïve", was put on display. The exhibition was organised by the Gallery of Kostanjevica na Krki. In 1967 the centre of naïve and other untrained artists in Slovenia was founded in Trebnje, where an international art camp and the Gallery of Naïve Artists were established. The most important among the artists from Ledič's circle, who in the initial period often worked in Trebnje, was the internationally renowned artist Ivan Lacković Croata, who painted poetical scenes from the Podravje region where he was born.

The expression "naïve art" denotes the paintings and sculptures of untrained artists who do not work under the influence of the historical development of art styles and trends. This art does not have its own development, according to Dr Zoran Kržišnik. Naïve art is therefore as old as humanity. "It was born on the same day as art," wrote Gerhard Ledič. Its characteristic features are figural, objective creativity, simplified drawing, local colours and flatness of representation.

Naïve art emerged in the 19th century as a response to the creativity of academy-trained artists. In the early 20th century, when it won its first recognition, it represented a rebellion against art saturated with tradition and academism. This rebellion was at first evidenced in the work of some academy-trained artists, such as Paul Gauguin, as a quest for spontaneity, primitive poeticism and isolation from civilisation. The journey to the sources of archaic primitive art led to new work, a multitude of various consciously created artistic combinations and subconscious deformations of the real. This resul-



Jože Peternelj-Mausar: Village Fair, oil on canvas, 55 x 75 cm, 1987

dom of a child". He followed the logic of his desires and passions, completely oblivious to his evident lack of knowledge and experience. They were fascinated by the new artistic possibilities anticipated by this ordinary little Douanier, whom Max Beckman called "Homer at a toll station". The phylogenetic share of "archaic heritage" in the formation of the concept of modern art obviously points at the emergence of primary subconscious ideas, fantasies that originate in the human being, the future artist, and call to his individuality from the archetypal depths of the subconscious, from the times of the anonymous artist of Altamira to the present.

In the mid-1920s, many naïve painters worked in France, Italy and the Netherlands and their influence mostly spread via Paris.



Josip Pintarić: Ten Commandments, oil on canvas, 80 x 110 cm, 1974

In Croatia, the academy trained painter Krsto Hegedušić, along with Ivan Generalić and Franjo Mraz, founded the renowned "Hlebin School" in 1930.

In Slovenia, the emergence of naïve art in the 1930s was facilitated by the Baroque tradition of painted beehive panels, painted glass and painted furniture in the countryside. Various styles and trends have influenced the untrained painters working on the border of naïve art until the present, although usually they do not perceive nor present this art as an expression of their existential or ideological views. Since 1973 the Zagreb Gallery of Naïve Art has included the works of several Slovene artists in international exhibitions in Croatia and abroad and in its collection (Greta Pečnik, Anton Plemelj, Zlata Volarič). Contacts with the post-war generation of the Hlebin School were maintained by Viktor Magyar, who reached the limits of the naïve grotesque message. As a renowned naïve painter, Magyar significantly contributed to the idea of bringing naïve artists together in Trebnje.

In the late 1960s, when naïve art was extremely well received by the public



Tamas Galambos: Mother Earth, oil on canvas, 40 x 80 cm, 1981



Franjo Mraz: Lunch, oil on Sekurit, 34.5 x 49 cm, 1972

and when the artists of the Hlebin School, the discovery of the primal, and the salvation of the soul of contemporary man were debated across Europe, the Camp of Naïve Artists was established in Trebnje, where from 1968 onwards solitary artists gathered every year to work together and exchange experiences, while retaining their distinct individual character and originality. There, artists were given the time and opportunity to refine and enrich their individual artistic expression. With the help of these camps and the gallery, many unknown naïve artists became known and renowned in Slovenia and abroad. Works created at the camps were bequeathed to the town of



Giuliano Zoppi: Mercato in piazza, oil on wood, 50 x 60 cm, 1995



Jutta Borchert: May Time, oil on canvas, 40 x 45 cm, 1982

Trebnje and, after 1971, to the Gallery of Naïve Artists. A collection was created that now consists of 950 works of art - paintings, reliefs and sculptures - created by 240 artists from 35 countries, both from Europe and from other continents. The gallery participated in several exhibitions abroad. Particularly successful was the presentation of 176 works from its collection at the International Museum of Naïve Art in Vicq, near Paris, in 1997. The gallery received an honorary award for the national collection at the Insite '94 world exhibition of naïve art in Bratislava.

