



Delft University of Technology

Disciples, Devotees, Scholars, and Friends

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DOI

[10.52200/docomomo.72.ed](https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.72.ed)

Publication date

2024

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

DOCOMOMO Journal

Citation (APA)

Pottgiesser, U., & Quist, W. J. (2024). Disciples, Devotees, Scholars, and Friends. *DOCOMOMO Journal*, 72, 2-3. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.72.ed>

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable). Please check the document version above.

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EDITORIAL

Uta Pottgiesser & Wido Quist

Editors-in-Chief

DISCIPLES, DEVOTEES, SCHOLARS, AND FRIENDS

It is a long-standing and well-appreciated tradition of Docomomo International to emphasize its diversity expressed in buildings, sites, and neighborhoods due to different geography, language, education, and personalities. The term *multiple modernisms* has been coined to express regional, stylistic, and constructive differences in the formal and philosophical expression of Modern Movement across the globe, within the continents, and even within countries. Docomomo conferences and Docomomo Journals have used and interpreted the term over the last 30 years to express and acknowledge the diversity in the growing community of national working parties. We only need to refer to the recent Docomomo Journal no. 67 (2022) on *Multiple Modernities in Ukraine*¹, or no. 36 (2007) on *Other Modernisms*², published in parallel with the 2006 Docomomo International Conference in Istanbul and Ankara (Turkey) with the same title. Other issues highlighted local and regional particularities together and, at the same time, referenced common roots and personal links, such as the preservation technology dossier no. 13 on *Perceived Technologies in the Modern Movement 1918-1975* published by the International Specialist Committee on Technology (ISC/T) in 2014. In that publication, the specific and long-term collaborations of architects with engineers and artists were explored often leading to exceptional solutions in structure, design, and function.

The current issue of Docomomo Journal on the architects Dušan Grabjčan (1899-1952) and Juraj Neidhardt (1901-1979) keeps with this tradition of collaboration and discourse. The authors investigate, describe, and interpret the friendship, exchange, and works of both architects and their role in the modernization of Yugoslav architecture since the 1920s based on their international experience. Grabjčan, the first graduate of Jože Plečnik at the University of Ljubljana, went to study in Paris in 1925-26, and Neidhardt worked in the studio of Le Corbusier in Paris from 1933-35. Grabjčan left an extensive archive currently hosted by the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) in Ljubljana and containing correspondence with Neidhardt and other architects, like Milan Sever. While a large part of Juraj Neidhardt's private archive was tragically lost during the Siege of Sarajevo, an important portion was preserved and is now held at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another part of Neidhardt's archive, primarily representing the research and designs from his later career, was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2021. Celebrated for their dedication to integrating international modernist ideas with the local architectural and cultural traditions of the

Balkans, they shaped a unique architectural discourse that responded to both global and local contexts. “Through their work and teaching they disseminated modernist ideas to the territory of former Yugoslavia.” as Zupančič wrote³.

Grabijan, unlike many modernists who sought to break entirely with the past, remained committed to exploring the potential of vernacular architecture. He can be seen as a scholar devoted to the idea that regional architectural languages could provide solutions for modern challenges, and he practiced these principles in his pedagogical work at the Secondary Technical School (STS) in Sarajevo. His work was not merely nostalgic for a lost past but an effort to show how the local could shape the future of architecture.

Neidhardt was deeply committed to modernism, but he recognized that any architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina had to respond to the unique social, historical, and environmental context of the region. His approach to regionalism was neither romantic nor conservative; instead, it was dynamic and future-oriented, using local tradition as a springboard for modern innovation. Neidhardt’s work and writings after Grabijan’s early death in 1952 carried forward the central ideas they had developed together: architecture needed to serve the local population and respect local traditions while embracing the future.

The legacy of Grabijan and Neidhardt lies in their ability to act as intermediaries between two architectural worlds: the global modern movement and the local traditions of the Balkans. Their work emphasized that architectural innovation does not need to come at the expense of cultural continuity. They contributed to the broader narrative of Yugoslav architecture, which in the post-WWII period was characterized by an exploration of how socialist modernism could be adapted to different regions of the country. Their approach foreshadowed the later ‘critical regionalism’ movement and viewed regionalism not as a rejection of modernity but as a more sensitive and responsive way of embracing it.

Both Grabijan and Neidhardt played crucial roles in articulating a Yugoslavian architectural identity that straddled modernism and regionalism. Their work in Bosnia and Herzegovina was groundbreaking in its insistence that modern architecture could not simply be imported from the West; it had to be adapted to the local climate, materials, and ways of life. They both remain influential in the study of how architecture can reconcile the tension between modern abstraction and regional specificity, and their work continues to be studied as a model for integrating global and local architectural practices.

We thank our guest editors Nataša Koselj and Mejrema Zatrić to bring the characters of Dušan Grabijan and Juraj Neidhardt to our attention and for their passion and continued efforts in shaping this issue of the Docomomo Journal, published both in print and online via www.docomomojournal.com.

- 1 Pottgiesser, U. & Quist, W. (eds.), (2022), *DOCOMOMO Journal* 67, p.112. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.67>
- 2 Tournikiotis, P. (ed.) (2007), *DOCOMOMO Journal* 36, pp. 116. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.36>
- 3 Zupančič, B. (2024), Letters from Paris and Architect Dušan Grabijan’s Archive. In: Koselj, N. & Zatrić, M., *DOCOMOMO Journal* 72, p. 72. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.72.01>