

ZRC SAZU, UMETNOSTNOZGODOVINSKI INŠTITUT FRANCETA STELETA



## ACTA HISTORIAE ARTIS SLOVENICA

Artistic and Architectural Heritage  
of the Nobility Between Old and New Regimes

Umetnostna in arhitekturna dediščina plemstva  
med starimi in novimi režimi

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ZRC SAZU, Umetnostnozgodovinski inštitut Franceta Steleta  
ZRC SAZU, France Stele Institute of Art History

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Založba ZRC

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# “Keep That German Kitsch Away from the Czech Hands!”

## Ethnic Cleansing in the Light of Material Culture: Furnishings of the Displaced Moravian and Silesian Nobility on the Post-1945 Brno Auction Market

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Abstract:

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Ethnic Cleansing in the Light of Material Culture: Furnishings of the Displaced Moravian and Silesian Nobility  
on the Post-1945 Brno Auction Market

1. 01 Original scientific article

The paper deals with the significant social restructuring and radical ethnic cleansing in post-Second World War Czechoslovakia borderlands as evidenced by the art market, where massive state appropriations and transfers of furnishings from the mostly ex-German and ex-Hungarian nobility residences manifested themselves in huge wave of frenetic auction sales. The uniquely preserved archive file on the Karel Ditrich Exhibition and Auction House in Brno enables us to reconstruct these processes within the scope of the entire Moravian and Silesian territory. The documents reveal the contemporary ethnic, social, and economic disputes, leading in the end to significant class and social transfers, i. e., new trends in living culture and collecting.

Keywords: Karel Ditrich, German and Hungarian nobility, noble residences, post-1945 Czechoslovakia, art market, confiscations of movable assets, social and class transfers, living culture, national labelling

Izvleček:

»Spravite ta nemški kič stran od čeških rok!«

Etnično čiščenje v luči materialne kulture: Stanovanjska oprema izseljenega moravskega in šlezjskega  
plemstva na dražbenem trgu v Brnu po letu 1945

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

V članku je obravnavano pomembno družbeno prestrukturiranje in radikalno etnično čiščenje na češkoslovaškem obmejnem območju po drugi svetovni vojni na podlagi analize umetnostnega trga. Množično podržavljenje zasebne lastnine in prenosi opreme iz nekdanjih nemških in madžarskih plemiških rezidenc so rezultirali v velikem valu mrzličnih dražbenih prodaj. Izjemno dobro ohranjena arhivska dokumentacija o razstavnih in dražbenih hiši Karla Ditricha v Brnu nam omogoča rekonstrukcijo teh procesov v okviru celotnega moravskega in šlezjskega ozemlja. Dokumentacija razkriva tedanje etnične, socialne in gospodarske spore, ki so nazadnje pripeljali do pomembnih razrednih in socialnih premikov oziroma novih trendov v zbirateljstvu in bivalni kulturi.

Ključne besede: Karel Ditrich, nemško in madžarsko plemstvo, plemiške rezidence, Češkoslovaška po letu 1945, umetnostni trg, zaplembe premičnega imetja, družbeni in razredni premiki, bivalna kultura, nacionalno označevanje

## Unhealed History as a Culture Topos

The post-war ethnic cleansing period in the Bohemian borderlands after the Second World War in Central Europe<sup>1</sup> belongs without doubt to one of the most sensitive, yet still not fully healed, moments of common Czech-German contemporary history. Certainly, the events during the war have left numerous traces on the Czech visual and literary culture of the time (fig. 1), yet they as a rule bear the substantive undertones of ideological manipulation and propaganda and thus should not be considered as impartial, objective reflections of circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Against this rather subjective—if perhaps from the present-day perspective attractive—reference framework, I prefer to emphasize the objective research value of the testimonies in the material culture. In this study, I work with a historical art market data set and documents, endeavouring to demonstrate their valuable potential in reconstructing and reconnecting the lost traces of historical memory and destinies of individual artefacts as well as their supra-national networking provenance research potential. All this, with the further intention to study these processes and transfers from the social point of view and relate them, if possible, to the period's national and class values, the various preferences and tastes that they represented and the interpretational contexts of which they were a part.

However, before I address this, let me bring to bear one of those inherent visual and literal symbols. In seeking a strong, multifaceted, expressive cultural sign of the events described, we perhaps need look no further than the 1967 novel by the Czech writer Vladimír Körner (b. 1939) named *Adelheid* (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> A film was made two years later (1969) at the end of the famous Czech New Wave era in cinematography<sup>4</sup> by the renowned filmmaker and director, an art historian by schooling, František Vláčil (1924–1999). Körner and Vláčil were the co-authors of the screenplay.<sup>5</sup> In the piece, the overall atmosphere of prevailing destruction and hatred is emphasized by choral music by the majestic Germanic composers such as Wagner, Bach or Strauss, accompanied by empathetic art camerawork by František Uldrich (1936–2013). *Adelheid* played the role of a movie dealing in an artistically exceptional and, ultimately, non-ideological manner with the post-war dramatic situation on the border. According to the plot, a former Czech soldier from the Western Front is assigned to a village as the administrator of nationalized ex-German property. He is accommodated in a residential villa where a local-active Nazi resided,<sup>6</sup> and where he meets the Nazi's daughter, Adelheid. In this visually strong story of tragic love, both confident, yet fragile and fatigued, characters are placed alongside. Still, all the “big history” is somewhat left behind, readable only in the various hints, side-characters or dialogues. The piece aspires to be impartial, even conciliatory in the narrative and the human profile of the Czech soldier, as he reveals—despite the

<sup>1</sup> For general information, see e.g. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*; Mlynárik, *Vortgesetzte Vertreibung*; Frommer, *National cleansing*; Curp, *A Clean Sweep?*; Hrabovec, *Vertreibung und Abschub*. From the local Czech sources, esp. Staněk, *Odsun Němců*; Arburg and Staněk, *Vysídlení Němců*; Kuklík, *Znárodnění Československo*.

<sup>2</sup> The movies *Border Village* (1948) by Jiří Krejčík, or *Boarding* (1952) by Otakar Vávra could serve as typical case examples.

<sup>3</sup> Körner, *Adelheid*.

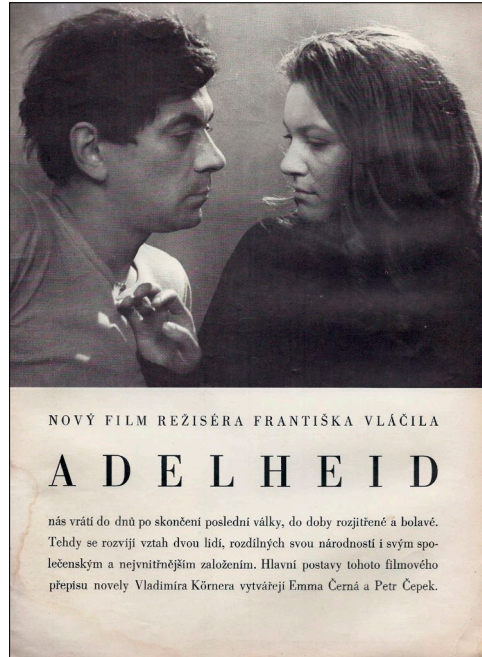
<sup>4</sup> Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*.

<sup>5</sup> František Vláčil, *Adelheid*, Filmové studio Barrandov; Kouzlo Films Společnost, Czechoslovakia, movie, April 6, 1970, 99 min. See Fiala, Vláčil and Körner, “Adelheid;” Gajdošík, *František Vláčil*; Vogelová, “Letting the Demons.”

<sup>6</sup> The small chateau is described in the novel as a seized Jewish property, bought originally from a Teutonic Knight order. See Körner, *Adelheid*, 43.



1. Václav Chochola: *The feeling of a social change, 1940s in Prague* (© Archive B&M Chochola)



2. *The period promotion on František Vlácil's film Adelheid, 1969* (© private collection)

circumstances—his love and affection for the German girl who is about to be deported. However, a more profound reconciliation turns out to be unattainable, as the roots of mutual misunderstanding penetrate much further than simply language.

Thus, the work embodies a distressing message on the impossibility of mutual comprehension and compassion, and the class, ethnic and gender stereotypes and prejudices of both heroes deepened by their lived war traumas. It seems, for both novelist and movie director, the subject constituted a personally experienced theme, as they originated from north Moravian families, the regions addressed by this paper. Thus, the intransigent realities in the piece, including the damaged chateau architecture in the cold wide depopulated hilly landscape, with the random fragments of porcelain and other furnishings in interiors, are expressed with a surprising naturalistic persuasiveness.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the picture captured by Körner and Vlácil creates a telling topos that seems to be sufficiently illustrative to provide an insight into the circumstances of the seized residences and their large sets of movable assets, i.e., their remarkably radical treatment, translocations, monetization, as well as their incidental dismantling or re-labelling. This question is addressed below.

<sup>7</sup> For further comparisons of the novel and original script with the movie version, forcibly shortened and released during the beginning of the political “standardization” period in Czechoslovakia, i.e. after the Soviet invasion in August 1968, see Hlaváčková, “Osamělost;” for reception of period reviews, see Šrajfer, “Prliš viditelné.”

## Ditrich Auction House Files

The transfers and auction sales of artistic assets originating from residences confiscated after 1945 under the authority of the decrees issued by the President of Czechoslovakia constitutes an area of research that is definitely topical but still not yet fully contextually clarified.<sup>8</sup> Systematic research in the previous decades has been hindered not only by insufficient time distance and, to a certain extent, by the surprisingly persistent nature of the theme's moral sensitivity, but also, above all, by the lack of any comprehensive primary archival sources.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it appears to be part of the specificity of this sector of business, i.e. auction sales, that its operators, especially during troublesome historical periods, strive to leave behind little in the way of documentary files. Often, only the auction catalogues, if they were even published, survive as a trace of their activities, and sometimes even only in fragments.<sup>10</sup> In this context, the complexity and informative value of the extensive archive collection on the Karel Ditrich Exhibition and Auction House (fig. 3), preserved in the Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno, has been of immense value to us.<sup>11</sup> According to the available documentation, the company can be characterized as the leading art market trader with state authority to sort, transport, store and merchandize tens of thousands of seized artefacts originating in the confiscated estates, mansions and residences from the entire territories of Moravia and Silesia, i.e. from more than four dozen localities related to displaced German or Hungarian nobility.<sup>12</sup>

Quite uniquely, this beneficial source offers us an insight into the mechanisms of these dramatic and large-scale property transfers that resulted in an anonymous and fast-moving auctions market. The files of the auction house cover its most turbulent period, between 1947 and 1950, and capture two transformations in its proprietary status: from a private post-war licensed trade run by the collector and connoisseur Karel Ditrich (1913–?)<sup>13</sup> to a company run by politically assigned national administrators, and then, two years later, its final transfer to the branch of the state network of the antiquities trading company Antikva. Concurrently, this gradual nationalization process, taking place against the background of the extensive sales of seized artefacts, could be considered key in understanding the preservation of documents in such atypical width, depth and richness. As part of this documentation, the beneficial communication between national administrators, state and local authorities and institutions—primarily the National Land Fund (Národní pozemkový fond – NPF), the Regional

<sup>8</sup> On the issue of movable asset transfers and destinies esp. Uhlíková, *Národní kulturní komise*; Uhlíková, *Šlechtická sídla*; Uhlíková, “Zestátněné památky;” Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*; Rusinko, “In the ‘Public Interest;’” Uhlíková, *Konfiskované osudy*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*, 73–98; Slavíček, “Chuť kupovat;” Slavíček, “Cesta do hlubin.”

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Hopp, *Kunsthandel*, 15–17; Golenia, Kratz-Kessemeier and le Masne de Chermont, *Paul Graupe*, 13–14, 84–91; Francini, “Jüdische Kunsthändler.”

<sup>11</sup> Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň (Karel Ditrich exhibition and auction hall), fund no. H 984, Moravský zemský archiv v Brně (MZA). The Ditrich fund was preserved as part of the fund Obchodu klenoty, hodinami a starožitnostmi Brno.

<sup>12</sup> For Czech territory, with Prague as a natural centre of the auction market, we expect the position of the legitimate trader of the large sets of assets confiscated according to president Edvard Beneš decrees during the first post-war years to be held by the Václav Hořejš Auction House, based at Mikulandská street no. 7. However, we lack any systematic documentation on the running of this major company. Interestingly, this company was, at least during the critical year 1948, legally and financially connected to the Karel Ditrich Auction House Brno. See Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*, 85–86.

<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, we find the transcription “Ditrich” in documentation. However, here, I stick to the prevailing “Ditrich” form. See Slavíček, “Dopis sběratele;” Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*, 73, 82.

3. *The location of Karel Ditrich's auction house in Brno, Náměstí Rudé armády, today Moravské náměstí, 1946*  
(© Archiv města Brna)



National Committee in Brno, later also the National Cultural Commission (Národní kulturní komise – NKK) and the company Antikva, as well as the former owner—has remained preserved.

For many borderland localities, the archive contains extensive inventories of furnishings provided by the NPF, labelled as “released” for sale. As a rule, we can establish in which auctions the items from individual mansions were auctioned and what the initial and sometimes also the final prices were.<sup>14</sup> The accounts of the national administrators to the NPF and detailed reports on the trades and management of the company have also been preserved. In the case of items eliminated from the auctions by the NKK as objects of special cultural value with assumed further use in the public sphere, we can identify which institutions they were intended for. Certainly, many of them can be found in these public collections even today and their original provenance identified. However, no doubt many other records were intentionally destroyed, especially concerning the early period when the original owner Ditrich operated the socially and politically sensitive but profitable business, already aware that the state bodies could take over the files and the whole company soon, i.e., before December 1948.<sup>15</sup>

### Apartment Filled with “Chateau Furnishings”

Thus, from the available files, we have been able to learn a great deal about the personality of the original dealer as well. Ditrich was a skilled exhibition organiser and modern art collector, maintaining extensive contacts with living artists, and acting as a secretary official of their local association in Olomouc between the years 1937 and 1945. In addition, he had astonishing domestic academic contacts. As an international art agent, he specialized in attractive numismatic deals, having a couple of top world commercial contacts within the field.<sup>16</sup> His auction house located

<sup>14</sup> For more detail on the individual auctions in terms of financial analysis and links to concerned localities, see Rusinko, “Perské koberce.”

<sup>15</sup> For the general historical and political context and interpretation of the communication in the light of the often-contradictory interests of involved authorities, see Rusinko, “Dražby mobiliářů.”

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Henry Grundthal (1905–2001), American Numismatic Society of New York; and other contacts to Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, Netherlands.



in Brno<sup>17</sup> obtained an official state authority permit for trading the selected movable assets from seized chateaus and residences during February 1948.<sup>18</sup> Over the next months, until November 1948, he promptly organised five extensive auction sales, monetarizing the seized objects originating from almost two dozen Moravian localities, with a total turnover of 3.5 million Czechoslovak crowns [Kčs] and an average charge of 19%. So far, none of Ditrich's antiquities auction catalogues from this period have been found.<sup>19</sup> During this period, the sales participants and clients came both from Brno and more distant parts of the country, and often from abroad. Also, all the major private collectors and museum representatives were present as buyers, as he later noted.<sup>20</sup>

Of the confiscated inventories taken over by Ditrich for auctioning in the course of 1948, it is worth mentioning the collection originating in the so-called Bauer chateau in Brno, modified in the mid-1920s for the then owner by the leading European modernist architect Adolf Loos (1870–1933). Originally a classicist mansion, the residence, located today in the area of the Brno exhibition ground, belonged to the family of the sugar entrepreneur, traveller and thinker Viktor Bauer Jr. (1876–1939).<sup>21</sup> The furniture released for sale from this location, referred to as Bauer's ramp, was successively auctioned over five of Ditrich's auctions. With a total reported yield of 609,000 Kčs, it became the most significant location in the history of this hall's auctions. None of the other nationalized noble or business residences in the territory of Moravia and Silesia provided such a significant amount of property to the art market at this time. Yet, only Persian carpets of this provenance, offered in the number of twelve pieces in the September 1948 auction sale, were auctioned for a total of 262,000 Kčs. The most expensive piece, the *Tebriz* carpet (340 x 240 cm), had a reported final price of a hard-to-believable 76,000 Kčs, an amount that largely defies all known contemporary auction results. Bauer's carpets *Zaha* (320 x 260 cm, 38,000 Kčs), *Heriz* (365 x 277 cm, 36,000 Kčs) and *Heriz* (450 x 250 cm, 32,000 Kčs) finished with a final price above the symbolic level of 30,000 Kčs. The set of carpets from Bauer's ramp, stored in one of Ditrich's warehouses from August 1948, were subject to special instructions from the NPF: the *Teppiche* were not to be handed over for sale without a direct instruction from the Fund's management.<sup>22</sup>

However, the documents refer to by no means rare illegal trades, for example, Ditrich's frequent bidding in his own auctions, intentional property, data and record manipulations on the expense of the state, efforts to prioritize the personal material interests before the public one.<sup>23</sup> From

<sup>17</sup> Firstly, at his private address Dra Bedřicha Macků no. 77 (today Údolní street), from October 1948 then at the Náměstí Rudé Armády no. 12 (Red Army Square, today Moravské náměstí). See Rusinko, "Dražby mobiliářů," 41.

<sup>18</sup> However, we know from Ditrich's local press advertising that he auctioned Persian carpets and the other (seized?) antiquities at least from April 1947. See Čin: *Zemský orgán československé sociální demokracie na Moravě* 3, no. 78 (1947): 4.

<sup>19</sup> His numismatic activities are well-documented through four catalogues from three sales realized in 1947 and one in 1948.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Schneider to Regional National Committee Brno, December 13, 1948; Karel Ditrich, exhibition and auction hall Brno, investigation into the operation and financial situation of the company, inv. no. 21/1, carb. 1, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.

<sup>21</sup> Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 1: 51; Kořínková, *Adolf Loos*.

<sup>22</sup> Bauer's ramp carpets billing, October 6, 1948, inv. no. 39/2, carb. 2, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA. Worth noting is the amount of average gross wage per month, which reached 823 Kčs in 1948. More in detail, for an industrial worker the average was 725 Kčs, for technical engineer 1,194 Kčs. See Průcha, *Hospodářské*.

<sup>23</sup> Manipulations within the lists of extensive inventories and in financial estimations seem to be among the most typical. As documented, the highly valued hand-made Persian carpet could be listed as a common machine-made one; multi-piece sets of valued Meissen porcelain or furniture as less-piece sets for the same financial appraisal, etc.

those records, we learn that Ditrich's Brno apartment was literally crowded with various noble antiquities originating from liquidated mansions.<sup>24</sup> In accordance with these findings, by the end of the year 1948, the highly profitable auction house had been taken over by assigned public national administrators. The local accounting manager at the Provincial Pawn Office, Jan Honek, remained in office as the Ditrich's company national administrator for the next two years. Between March 1949 and September 1950, he organised eleven large auction sales supplied by the seized artefacts from three dozen, as a rule more distant, borderland localities with a total turnover of 4.2 million Kčs and a supplementary charge of 27 percent.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, even Honek's activities were not free of the accusations regarding purposeful object and data manipulations on the account of private benefits. In relation to Ditrich, in December 1948, the local authorities filed a complex criminal complaint against him, resulting in a lawsuit with an extensive charge, extending to multiple paragraphs.<sup>26</sup> Yet, Ditrich, as an active member of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, took advantage of remarkable personal protection coming from the highest political circles. Thus, in the dispute he was acquitted under rather unusual circumstances, which enabled him to continue his professional engagement in the field.<sup>27</sup>

### Case Destinies of Residences and Inventories

The destinies of the seized residences in Moravian and Silesian territory varied widely. Some of them were simply used for accommodation purposes and adapted according to local officials' needs, including local authorities' offices, schools, kindergartens, facilities for the elderly. Yet, many abandoned small mansions gradually fell into disrepair and after several decades were nearly or completely ruined. Numerous mansions did not undergo full reconstruction until the 1990s. There were also edifices, in which the museums, monuments of national heritage institute or sometimes even depositories were located. In fact, multiple affected localities were situated in the north border region of Moravia and Silesia, with little access and unsuitable infrastructure, far from Brno. This was already an issue during the expropriation processes, when various inventories were made, the items subsequently sorted out, and some of them transferred to the Brno auction house Ditrich for further sale.

A valid example of a lost, destroyed residence is Solca (Solza), belonging to the family of Count Larisch-Mönnich, situated until 1953 in Karviná (Karwin) in Silesia. The last proprietor, Count Johann Larisch-Mönnich (1872–1962), was a lawyer and aristocratic businessman in the coal mine

<sup>24</sup> Letter from National administrators to Regional National Committee Brno, December 23, 1948; Letter from National administrators to Regional National Committee Brno, January 14, 1949, inv. no. 21/1, carb. 1, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.

<sup>25</sup> For detailed tables with the turnovers link to individual seized residence localities and realised auction sales, see Rusinko, “Perské koberce,” 128–31. For the period of the national administrator, all the auction catalogues published between March 1949 and September 1950 have been found in the archive file.

<sup>26</sup> Legal action of the District Prosecutor in Brno against Karel Ditrich, October 2, 1950; Acquittal judgment of the District Criminal Court in Brno, December 12, 1951, TV 294/50, carb. 1040, fund no. C153 IV, Okresní lidový soud trestní (District People's Criminal Court), MZA. Among the accusations: fraud, embezzlement, obstructing the execution of a court decision, violation of the duty of a public official.

<sup>27</sup> More on the specific political background of political purges and s. c. Rudolf Slánský (1901–1952) trial connected to the agency of Karel Ditrich in the auction business with sensitive items, in Rusinko, “Dražby mobiliářů,” 47–51. For the general literature see e.g., Kaplan and Kosatik, *Gottwaldovi muži*.



4. Count Johan Larisch-Mönnich (1872–1962) with his collection of figurative porcelain  
(© Státní okresní archiv Karviná)

industry, as well as a member of the Reichstag in Vienna before 1918 (fig. 4). The Solca Chateau was situated in a region with rich coal deposits. It was burned out already during the war in 1944 (fig. 5). Seriously damaged, and according to period authorities, also “undermined”, the official bodies tore it down in 1953.<sup>28</sup> Contrary to this, the chateau residence Chudobín (Chudwein) near Litovel, belonging to the family of Count Tersch, widely recognised in the region, provides an example of a mansion that was preserved thanks to its new functions. The residence served as an agricultural school, a recreation and training centre of the Sigma industrial enterprise, or a hotel facility. However, the Tersch family also owned the Pavlínin dvůr (Paulinen Hof) residence near Šumperk (Mährisch Schönberg), functioning today as a local museum. From the related records we learn that it was, for instance, at Chudobín Chateau, that the entire dozen valuable Persian carpets originated. In the Brno auction sale, they achieved maximum prices.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the well-preserved South Moravian residence Budišov (Budischau) Chateau met the fate of a complex which has been serving as monument, an exposition and depository facility for the Moravian Museum in Brno. The original noble proprietor, Richard, Baron of Baratta-Dragono (1867–1946), acted as a Czech

<sup>28</sup> Matroszová, *Rod Larisch-Mönnichů*; Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 1: 533; Hazdra, Horčíčka and Županič, *Šlechta střední Evropy*; Jelínková Homolová, *Šlechta v proměnách*.

<sup>29</sup> The most expensive ones reached 37,000 Kčs (“Persian variegated” 175 x 350 cm); 39,000 Kčs (“big pink” 400 x 350 cm).



5. Solca Residence before the Second World War (© Státní okresní archiv Karviná)

deputy, a clerk, a landowner and a lawyer. As the family had owned the place since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Baratta-Dragono lived in the residence until 1945. He passed away in March 1946 in a deportation camp in near Třebíč.<sup>30</sup>

However, the case of Letovice (Lettowitz) Chateau deserves particular attention. This dominant feature of the landscape north of Brno, originally owned by the Hungarian family of Counts Kálnoky von Köröspatak had been equipped with abundant furnishings and collections. The last proprietor was Count Alexandr Kálnoky (1888–1965).<sup>31</sup> The Kálnoky collection was uncommonly rich, containing some oriental archaeological objects, among other things, parts of mummified bodies, as the family received a part of the archaeological collection from the Hungarian noble family Waldstein-Wartenberg.<sup>32</sup> Some three thousand items from that household were designated for sale. As noted above, in happier, yet rather isolated cases, the selected artistic assets sorted for auction finally ended up as eliminations for regional, national or local museums. This also happened in the case of several artefacts from Letovice that were designated for the local Moravian Museum picture gallery and are still part of Moravian Gallery Brno collections today (fig. 6); the most valuable item among them is *Portrait of Countess Waldstein, née Kálnoky* (1874), by Hans Makart (fig. 7).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 1: 46.

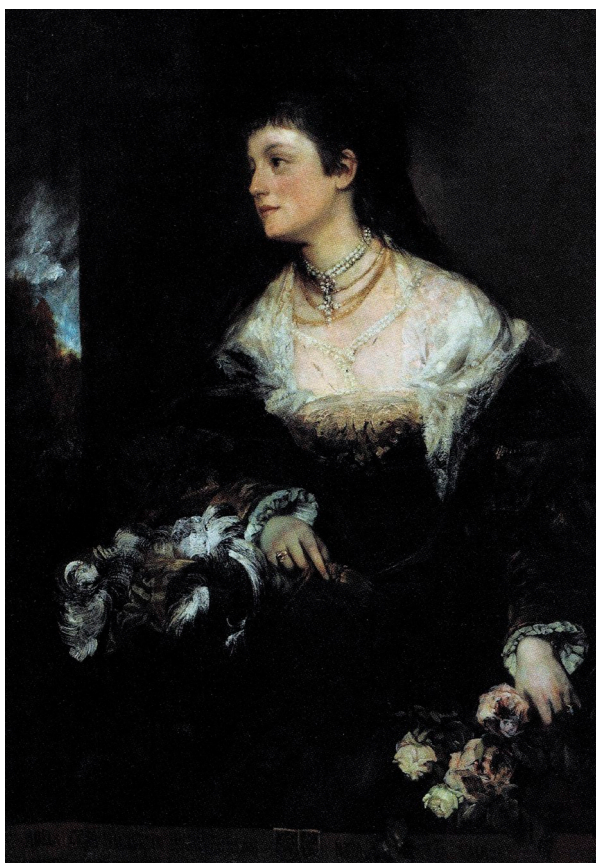
<sup>31</sup> Jelínková Homolová, *Šlechta v proměnách*, 287–91; Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 1: 434–35.

<sup>32</sup> This aspect interconnects the topic with the ongoing research of Hajnalka Boncz from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on the Waldstein family collecting cultures. See Boncz, “Több mint másolat.”

<sup>33</sup> Tomášek, *Moravská zemská obrazárna*, 216–17, kat. no. 130. *Marie Adele Waldstein – Wartenberg*, 1874, oil on canvas, 136.5 x 96 cm, inv. no. Z 2665.



6. *Jakub Bauernfreund: Die Habsburg, drawing, formerly in Letovice, now Moravian Gallery, Brno (© Moravská galerie v Brně)*



7. *Hans Makart: Portrait of Countess Waldstein, née Kálnoky, 1874, oil on canvas, formerly in Letovice, now Moravian Gallery, Brno (© Moravská galerie v Brně)*



8. Simone Mezzione:  
*The Abduction of Proserpine*,  
formerly in Jindřichov ve  
Slezsku, now Moravian  
Gallery, Brno  
(© Moravská galerie v Brně)

Both the Letovice and Luhačovice (Luhatschowitz) residences of the Hungarian family of Earl Serényi and the last proprietor Alois Serényi (1893–1957) can be recorded among the examples of successfully restituted mansions. According to the files, about a thousand items from the Luhačovice Chateau inventory were sold in Brno auctions between 1949–1950. Again, a large set of valuable antique furniture and large sets of valuable Meissen porcelain were included.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the original proprietors of the Silesian border chateau Jindřichov ve Slezsku (Hennersdorf) were the barons Klein von Wisenberg, known as builders of the railway network on Czech territory and beyond; the last proprietor was Adalbert Klein von Wisenberg (1896–1959). This Empire style monument, surrounded by a vast 17<sup>th</sup>-century garden park, which served for a long period as a local social facility, is today administrated by the municipality, and several of its pieces can also be found in the Moravian Gallery Brno collection (fig. 8). Furthermore, the documents on this charming distant locality, preserved in the Ditrich fund, point to repeated violence towards and losses of seized artefacts. A large section of the inventory was stolen or destroyed by the population in the period between the inventory being carried out and the items being transported to Brno. Notably, the social, class and national dispute solved in “civilized” Brno through correspondence in an initiative by living artists, as illustrated below, was—in the case of Hennersdorf—answered by an immediate act of violence.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, far from all the seized artefacts and furnishings were sold on the auction market. Many of them were simply transferred to large depositories, warehouses, and then sorted out and transferred to other localities, or national monuments, often very far away. That way, in general, the historical memory of assets and their original provenance was forgotten. They were as a rule cut off their original localities, proprietors and destinies. Thus, the most valuable items on the inventories,

<sup>34</sup> Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 2: 213.

<sup>35</sup> Mašek, *Šlechtické rody*, 1: 461; Rusinko, “Perské koberce,” 125–26.

such as valued Persian carpets of all kinds, historical pieces of furniture, larger sets of branded porcelain or fragments of ancestral picture galleries were either moved to other monument localities, or often just “released” for auction sales. In this way, they generally found new owners among the currently established elites, or higher middle class, but also fell into the hands of various cross-border traffickers or illegal dealers.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, small utilitarian objects and worn clothing without a real market value often found a quick sale even in the seat of the “liquidated” residences among the needy population.

However, even for the objects transported to Brno warehouses, waiting for further processing while being prepared for public auction sales, additional exceptional treatment could be applied, as in the case of required representative office furnishing equipment for the new political elites or extraordinary direct export orders. Concerning the request of NPF to Ditrich’s auction house dated October 1948, an order was subsumed to release a set of confiscated objects for the leading Brno politician Ferdinand Richter (1885–1950), at that time the deputy chairman of the National Assembly. This applicant from high political circles should have had a priority right to purchase the furniture at estimated prices. Richter requested for himself a complete branded porcelain set for 12 people, including cutlery, a complete set of glassware for 12 people, a matching set of table linen, as well as decorative glass and porcelain objects and, of course, Persian carpets and paintings. Ditrich was supposed to enable the politician to inspect the objects and help in their selecting and evaluating. The whole set was then financed by the Fund (NPF) by deduction from the invoiced sales. “When it comes to the selection of carpets, due to their limited number, the NPF can release a maximum of 2 Persian carpets for the applicant, in the case of a request for more pieces, let’s offer a different carpet—a machine-made one,” as the Fund’s instructions to Ditrich stated.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, in a note dated August 16, 1948, a set of rare highly estimated antiquities from the assets of the Moravec (Morawetz) Chateau in the district of Žďár nad Sázavou (Saar) were designated for sale to Switzerland. The note concerned an 11-arm porcelain Meissen chandelier valued at an amount of 60,000 Kčs; four porcelain Meissen wall sconces (28,000 Kčs); “a round table with nine pictures and a porcelain, plastically decorated leg” (48,000 Kčs); and two porcelain vases and another candlestick, again labelled with Meissen branding (2,500 and 600 Kčs).<sup>38</sup> A similarly documented directive on antiquities sales to Western countries fulfilled a clear mission to earn as much as possible in scarce foreign currencies for the state budget in the economically critical post-war period. Thus, we can expect here not only a careful selection of luxurious enough artefacts but also a reasonable exaggeration of the estimated prices, which would not have been easily feasible in the domestic market.

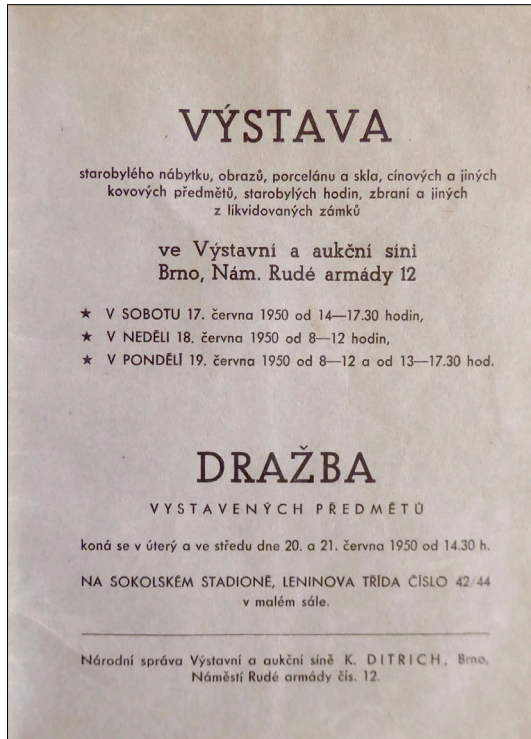
### Kitsch from Disposed Mansions: Labelling and Promotion

During the economically uneasy Czechoslovakia early post-war period when basic food was only accessible through state coupons and the same shortage manifested itself in basic consumer goods such as shoes and clothing, multiple sale announcements on “exhibition of ancient furniture,

<sup>36</sup> Uhlíková, *Národní kulturní komise*, 34–58.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from NPF, signed by Dr. Placht, to Karel Ditrich on elimination of objects for Ferdinand Richter, October 15, 1948. inv. no. 9/1, carb. no. 1, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.

<sup>38</sup> Inv. no. 57/3, carb. no. 3, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.



9. The cover of the auction catalogue for the National Administration of Karel Ditrich, June 1950 (© private collection)



10. Karel Ditrich advertising the auctioning of coins, medals, antiquities and works of art (Numismatické listy, no. 6, December 1948)

paintings, sculptures, porcelain and glass, tin and metal objects, ancient clocks, weapons, etc. from the disposed, liquidated chateaus,” appeared in the periodicals (fig. 9).<sup>39</sup> The promotion of the large sales of seized objects was evidently aimed at the general public as it was published in the most common daily press; yet, at the same time, it built on the uncommon variety and richness of the goods (fig. 10). The message had often been expressed by rather lapidary proclamations, ensuring a buyer that the range of the available items spans “from the Chinese porcelain sets to the bedroom furniture in the Louis XVI style”, as in the instructive article published in *Práce*.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the reality of the large-scale sales of confiscated goods—at least in the case of Brno where it is documented—triggered a prompt oppositional protest reaction of living artists and their local association. The secretary of the Association of the Fine Artists of Moravia (Blok výtvarných umělců země Moravskoslezské – BLOK), the merchant, collector and functionary František Venera (1901–1979)<sup>41</sup> sent an indignant official note to Prague NPF authorities, of which Ditrich was one of the recipients, in November 1947, shortly before the auctioneer was even granted the legal auction concession.<sup>42</sup> Venera states:

<sup>39</sup> The sales advertising annotation from local periodicals, a fragment from *Rovnost. List Komunistické strany Československa na Moravě*, August 1949.

<sup>40</sup> Jindra, “Starožitnosti.”

<sup>41</sup> Slavíček, “František Venera;” Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*, 100, 156, 192, 216, 251, 297.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from František Venera – BLOK to NLF, Praha X-Karlín, in copy to Karel Ditrich, Brno, November 25, 1947, inv. no. 29/2, carb. no. 2, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.



According to our information, you sent your expert to evaluate and sort the paintings that are in the Brno warehouses from the Moravian-Silesian confiscations, and your representatives intend to auction off a large number of paintings in a cafe in Brno before Christmas. Our visual artists do not have a bed of roses these days. If you flood the Brno Christmas market with products of German provenance, you will damage not only the artists, but also our work, and that very noticeably.

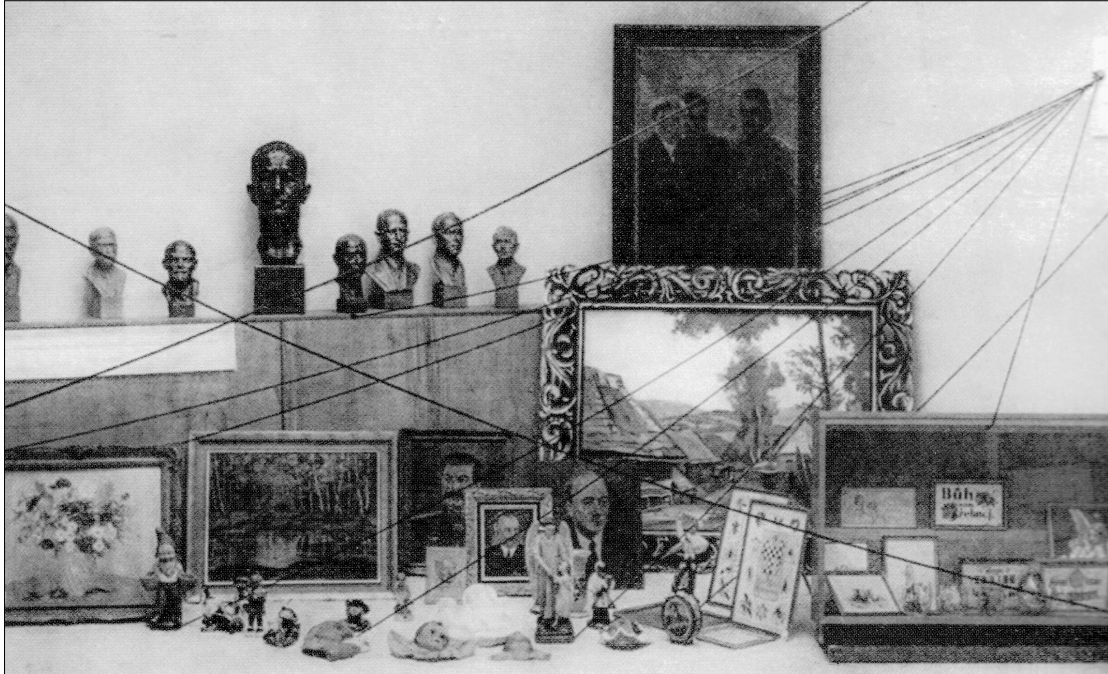
According to him, contemporary artists have already “protested several times so that kitsch not to be sold”. The BLOK association, via Mr. Venera, demanded the whole issue of the sale of confiscated items be entrusted to a committee of living artists. Venera asked that at least two of his colleagues “would be invited to the committee to sort out the kitsch that must not come into Czech hands”. Therefore, he “protests with all seriousness against the sale of paintings of German provenance without the statement of an expert commission,” we read in the correspondence.

The fact that the statements presented above, which suggest clearly negative labelling, both in terms of nationality and quality, did not appear in a private letter exchange, yet in the official correspondence between authorities, is worthy of our attention. Venera situated himself literally in the position of spokesperson for the whole group of regional living artists and thus represented a professional majority opinion in a certain sense. Above all, the surprising sovereignty of his stance mirrors the restless and emotionally heightened dynamics of regional Czech majority public opinion—embodied with a naturalistic persuasiveness seen already in the late 1960s literary and cinematic topos *Adelheid*. Thus, not only business, but ultimately much more deeply rooted national and social class conflicts also played a role here.

The huge business with confiscated artefacts had by all accounts a severe impact on the contemporary living art market sector. In this sense, the association’s fight by all available means, seems to be understandable. Well, let’s focus on what was expected to be “sorted out” during the sales by the expert Czech living artists committee and thus really labelled as a kitsch. While examining the catalogues, we notice a certain prevalence of academic 19<sup>th</sup>-century German provenance paintings or drawings, often of middle-range or low quality. This kind of artefact, abundant in the affected localities, were—at least according to the modernist and avant-garde perspective widely spread among the Czech modern artists and Czech bourgeoisie middle class buyers—generally considered to be of second-best quality.<sup>43</sup> We can thus assume that the dispute concerned mainly painting as a medium, as it constituted a direct competitive product on the market—as the majority of the artists in the association were painters. The other forms of merchandized artefacts, such as furnishings, art industrial objects, carpets, etc., were less of a concern. Noticeably, the secondary reference, which may ultimately be the essential message behind this dispute, points out that the lifestyle, taste and preferences of the expelled nobility as a “declining” social class were considered rather traditional and outdated. For the prevailing Czech middle class buyers and cultural intellectuals, this represented an out-of-date style, the spread of which had to be fought. Yet, further context clarified the topical exhibition entitled *Art and Kitsch (Umění a kýč)* organised by the Venera and BLOK association in Brno during summer 1948.<sup>44</sup> Venera claimed authorship of the exhibition, both ideologically and

<sup>43</sup> The general differences between German and Czech artists in Brno and their associations, in terms of taste, modern art referencing and a certain progressiveness in their orientation were discussed at least at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. See e.g., Janás, “Brněnské malířství.”

<sup>44</sup> *Umění a kýč*, between June 6 and July 11, 1948.



11. The “kitsch” sample section in František Venera’s educative exhibition *Art and Kitsch*, Brno House of Arts, 1948 (*Blok 3*, no. 3, 1948–1949)

creatively, as well as the authorship of the catalogue.<sup>45</sup> The concept of the show was primarily educative and instructive, based on a thorough explanation of the Czech modern art visual language, its position and quality, the ways in which artists capture reality, while containing rich visual case examples of Czech contemporary artists’ work and sample works of traditional popular folk culture, juxtaposed in the end with the “kitsch” samples (fig. 11).<sup>46</sup>

These last items mentioned were represented—as far as we can see from the published photo in this section—by a selection of souvenir porcelain figures and cheap prints, portraits of politicians, both painted and plaster casts, and a set of traditional landscape paintings. Applying the comparative visual method to demonstrate relations by using threads, arrows and short comments, Venera allegedly demonstrated “the social meaning and function of artistic creation,” and “the connection between folk and so-called high art, as well as the comprehensibility of modern artistic expression and the banality of kitsch”.<sup>47</sup> However, the range of national, political and business concerns, discussed only a few blocks away from where the large scale sales of confiscated goods happened, seem undeniable, as multiple statements in the catalogue called for reasonable, well considered purchases, avoiding “junk traders” and motivating the public to refuse such “kitsch traders” and consult their association or experts before buying.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the Venera exhibition could be perceived as circumstantial evidence of the contemporary unequivocal class, taste, quality and ultimately also national identity labelling of the confiscated artefacts in the

<sup>45</sup> Venera, *Umění a kýč*.

<sup>46</sup> For more period discussion on the topic of kitsch, see Pech, “Umění a kýč,” Pech, “Diskuse o kýči.”

<sup>47</sup> Venera, “Nové formy,” with the reproduced photos of the installation of the show.

<sup>48</sup> Venera, *Umění a kýč*, 4, 5–6, 10; Pech, “Umění a kýč,” 322.

society. Although here, Venera avoids directly linking the terms kitsch and German as in the correspondence,<sup>49</sup> the general pejorative meaning designating “the old regime” representatives, their taste and values, was strongly rooted and subject to wide discussion during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Second World War period.<sup>50</sup>

### Class and Social Transfers: New Trends in Living Culture

However, it is legitimate to ask, where the seized furnishing and objects of the expelled population merchandized in the Brno Ditrich auctions ended up. Who were the final receivers and buyers—not institutions but private individuals—what were their motivations? According to what we know of the troublesome early post-war economic conditions in Czechoslovakia, the basic motivation for acquiring was driven mostly by the financial and supply situation, specifically long-term monetary uncertainty accompanied by the severe lack of basic food and goods.<sup>51</sup> Thus, a general tendency to weather currency fluctuations and invest spare funds that could not be used during that period for anything else could also be considered as fundamental motives for the general public.

Moreover, it was poor economic status that was decisive in why the items were purchased by buyers, with the revenue of these sales going to the NPF and ultimately the state budget. During the first few years, the interests of the state were clearly expressed by the requirements to merchandize the huge amounts of available seized goods as soon as possible, which was apparently reflected in the symbolic, i.e., strikingly low level of the real initial starting prices for most of the artefacts.<sup>52</sup> However, even if Venera’s exhibition explained and emphasised the creative position of Czech modern living artists illustratively enough, their prices were—compared to those of the confiscates—uncompetitively high, so that they could not match the wide section of the market motivated basically by pure economic needs.

Additionally, based on the partial data relating to final auction prices, we acknowledge a gradually weakening response in demand. While during the first few months when Ditrich alone managed the business, numerous valuable items enjoyed significant, several-fold price increases, the same was not true for the consequent years when national administrators ran the business. Later, the willingness of the population to react to supply decreased noticeably. The market seemed to be already saturated enough. At the same time, the priorities of the state bodies slowly moved from pro-monetary motives further towards the tendency to control the whole process of property transfer and to select culturally valuable artefacts<sup>53</sup> and preserve them in institutions. Thus, the quality of supply alone weakened and multiple items had to be auctioned two or three times before finding a buyer prepared to meet the starting price.

<sup>49</sup> The reason could also be rather prosaic and pragmatic—an expected closer personal and business contact between him and Mr. Ditrich. As we learn from the consequent letter exchange, Ditrich contributed to the BLOK association’s activities as an exhibition curator but also financially, as a donator. Letter from Venera to Ditrich on the joint exhibition of Karel Svolinský arrangements, January 26, 1948, inv. no. 35/2, carb. 2, Karel Ditrich, výstavní a aukční síň, fund no. H 984, MZA.

<sup>50</sup> Pech, “Umění a kýč,” 325, 326.

<sup>51</sup> See Kaplan, *Proměny české společnosti*, 9–29, 91–124.

<sup>52</sup> Rusinko, *Snad nesbíráte*, 73–98.

<sup>53</sup> See Uhlíková, *Národní kulturní komise*, 34–58.

In our efforts to clarify the other than purely economic motives for the transfer of objects to new owners during the period under discussion, owners belonging to social classes not typically associated with such purchases, we may be rather surprised by the answer. We are considering here specifically the destinies of the innumerable art industrial artefacts and furnishings—as they were in terms of potential new identity labelling much less ethnically and nationally identifiable than typical “kitsch” painting from Czech German noble or bourgeoisie interiors. This answer is connected to changes in lifestyle, living culture and taste, as well as trends in leisure time spending, which experienced a surprising shift in dynamic with the upcoming post-war decades.

Within this, we can see how immediately—during the first two decades—the seized furnishings became a sovereign unquestionable element of the legitimate cultural context. The most illustrative is the example of a leading local post-war lifestyle and living culture periodicals, *Domov* (Home), the Czech home design magazine published since 1960, following the example of Western European magazines focused on interior design and living space improvements. In the early issues of the unusually progressive *Domov*, we can find various hints and advice recommending readers to improvise in their living culture and to apply an eclectic mixture of neo avant-garde up-to-date structural abstraction canvases with 19<sup>th</sup>-century, early modern or even older, seized furniture items that were still cheaply accessible in official state shops many years after ethnic cleansing was carried out. Such synthetic, individual and creative living culture home sets, ideally, should be accomplished by Asian or other exotic details, which had already established itself as a typical feature for first modern era collectors.

Not surprisingly, these texts, which applauded the incorporation of the seized and traded noble furnishings into modern cultural standards were often written by professional art historians and theoreticians themselves, as they evidently were among the first ones to apply these furnishing strategies in their own apartments. Thanks to same young non-conformist editorial team, despite of all the restrictions and prejudices at the time, *Domov* were already publishing features between 1962 and 1963 on completely modern Czech interiors dominated by large-scale structural abstractions by the artists Mikuláš Medek (1926–1974) and Jan Kotík (1916–2002), long before these artistic expressions appeared in mainstream fine art periodicals. In this sense, one of the first articles in a unique series titled *Zabydlený interiér* (The Homey Interior) presented the renovation of a basement apartment in Prague’s Vinohrady district, which was the home of modern and contemporary art historian and editor Antonín Hartmann (1925–2007) and his wife, Ludmila Hartmannová (1929–2012),<sup>54</sup> an art historian and editor specializing in applied art (fig. 12).<sup>55</sup> The article was accompanied by exhaustive photographic documentation, a floor plan, and commentaries.

Decorated with distinctly “non-socialist” taste, the interior was dominated by a harmonious eclectic range of styles and times, combining contemporary furniture with historical solo pieces purchased “cheaply at Antikva and craftfully restored,” decorative art objects, modern sculptures, and abstract gestural paintings. The room designated in the article as the “wife’s living room”—Hartmannová was the daughter of Professor Antonín Kybal (1901–1971), a member of the magazine’s editorial board, which certainly played a role—was quietly dominated by a vertical abstract composition by Mikuláš Medek, which hung next to a “Chinese willow tendril in an Art Nouveau vase”, although the painter was not named in the article. The atmosphere of the man’s study, on

<sup>54</sup> See Horová and Slaviček, “Hartmann Antonín;” Horová, “Hartmannová Ludmila.”

<sup>55</sup> “Zabydlený interiér,” no. 2.



12. The apartment of art historians Antonín Hartmann and Ludmila Hartmannová, combining abstract paintings, exoticisms and confiscated antique furniture (*Domov*, no. 2, 1962)

the other hand, was shaped by a poured gestural painting styled on Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) or Pierre Soulages (1919–2022), but which was most likely the contemporary extremely abstract style of Prague painter Richard Fremund (1928–1969): “This composition of diverse elements certainly does not adhere to the style rulebook. On the contrary, it is an experiment and an entirely free composition of fantasy and personal fancy,” the article describes.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, other published “homey interiors” of the cultural intelligentsia promoted combining cheap available furnishings (believed to have originally been the property of former German, Hungarian or Czech social elites) bought at the state-owned antique stores Antikva and Bazar with old, secular, religious (fragments apparently from churches), and quite contemporary non-conformist pro-Western art. The apartment featured in the second issue of the 1963 edition follows in this spirit, combining a large four-piece Chinese decorative panel, a Biedermeier chest, a Vietnamese mat, a large early modern crucifix, and a large contemporary painting by Jan Kotík—here, too, the magazine omitted his name apparently intentionally.<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, however, a columnist in the third issue of the 1963 edition openly expounds on how, at a professional graphic artist’s studio, “Medek’s blue canvas stands out perfectly against the black background,” while Pravoslav Rada’s sculpture, plate, and vase are “incorporated into the fireplace structure as a whole” and František

<sup>56</sup> “Zabydlený interiér,” no. 2. Given the circumstances, the author of the column may possibly be Ludmila Hartmannová, née Kybalová. This would explain the professional emphasis that the article places on design and decorative art objects; the context suggests to the reader the idea that paintings are merely colorfully decorated accessories, even though the article seems to intentionally promote Medek’s work, as Hartmann himself was the co-curator of Medek’s first solo exhibition and a co-author of a later monograph, and a friend of the painter. Cf. Mráz, *Mikuláš Medek*, cat. no. 49, *Rustling and Silence*, 1961, enamel and oil, 162 x 100 cm, collection of Dr. L. Kybalová.

<sup>57</sup> “Proti zabydlenému interiéru.”

Tichý’s mounted drawing creates an interesting minimalist detail.<sup>58</sup> It seems that discussions on home design in the early 1960s allowed for the publication of such liberally designed living spaces, masterfully furnished with completely up-to-date Czechoslovak art, complemented by available decorative art objects and furnishings originating from the property of former social elites.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion: Homey Interiors Based on “Washed” Memory

Surprisingly, dramatic ethnic cleansing and expropriations also brought with them rather innovative strategies, transfers and translations in the middle class living and collecting culture. The uncompromising anonymization of the artefacts on the totalitarian art market, the act of systematic denial and deletion of the individual object’s memory, linked as a rule to noble or bourgeois previous owners, boosted these processes. The public auction house showrooms such as Ditrich’s now took on the position of the symbolic transitional infrastructure, fulfilling not only the role of the official authorized “memory obliterate agent”, but also the role of “value obliterate agent”. In terms of cutting the objects away from their historical bonds and deleting memory trails, the auction house acted—during the months when turnover reached its highest levels—literally as a certain kind of highly effective factory whose production chain started with collecting transfers often from relatively distant residential borderland localities and ended with auctioning the anonymized artefacts to a wide public.

The related deconstruction of the objects’ exceptional social, status and culture-forming value certainly constituted one of the essential ideological paradigms of incoming state-socialism. As the already enormous wave of confiscates that flooded the market during the first post-war years lowered the prices of artefacts to a fraction of their original levels, from 1949 onwards on the nationalized auction market, it was then manifested in additional intentional price manipulation, levelling and distortion, often attacking the sector of modern living art, the most valued during the interwar period, as it definitely represented the complex taste and cultural identity imprint of the “defeated” Czech bourgeois society.

This radically effective double agency—making the objects anonymous, literally “washing” or “cleaning up” previous layers of identity and rendering them sufficiently financially available—helped to bring them ultimately into a brand-new secondary life within dissimilar social, class and taste coordinates.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> “Zabydlený interiér,” no. 3.

<sup>59</sup> This inspiring concept of living culture benefiting creatively from the “available” artefacts resonated with the many representatives of cultural intelligentsia, as well as, for example, with the Czech photographer and collector Alexandr Skalický (b. 1932) and his outlook on life. For many such young intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain, the private living space represented the essential and only sphere of free self-realisation, a form of “escape” from the ever-present ideological pressure. See Rusinko, “Alexandr Skalický’s.”

<sup>60</sup> The research for this article was conducted in the scope of the project *Mobilita uměleckých artefaktů na Moravě po roce 1945: Etnický, kulturní a sociální transfer* (*Mobility of art artifacts in Moravia after 1945: Ethnic, cultural and social transfer*) funded by Masaryk University Brno (MUNI/FF-DEAN/1579/2022).

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## »Spravite ta nemški kič stran od čeških rok!«

**Etnično čiščenje v luči materialne kulture. Stanovanjska oprema izseljenega moravskega in šlezijskega plemstva na dražbenem trgu v Brnu po letu 1945**

### *Povzetek*

Pomembno družbeno prestrukturiranje in radikalno etnično čiščenje na obmejnih območjih na Češkoslovaškem po drugi svetovni vojni je bilo mogoče temeljno osvetliti med drugim tudi na podlagi raziskave trga sodobne umetnosti. Množično podržavljenje zasebne lastnine in prenosi opreme iz nekdanjih nemških in madžarskih plemiških rezidenc so na eni strani povzročili velik val mrzličnih dražbenih razprodaj, ki so jih organizirali državni organi v središčih v notranjosti države, na drugi strani pa se je močno povečal uradni in neuradni izvoz starin. Čeprav podrobnejši viri o teh prodajah običajno niso ohranjeni oziroma dostopni, nam izjemno dobro ohranjeno arhivsko gradivo razstavne in dražbene hiše Karla Ditricha v Brnu omogoča rekonstrukcijo teh procesov na celotnem moravskem in šlezijemskem ozemlju. Kartoteka ne omogoča le raziskave o preničnem premoženju posameznih plemiških družin, ki je bilo odneseno iz rezidenc in prodano, ampak služi tudi kot podlaga za raziskave o provenienci, ki jih je mogoče izvesti npr. za predmete, ki so bili pozneje dodeljeni državnim muzejem. Mnoge pomembne povojne muzejske pridobitve so še vedno v muzejih, vendar se obravnavajo kot anonimne, brez individualnega zgodovinskega spomina.

Dokumentacija, povezana z množičnimi dražbami premoženja, ki je bilo zaplenjeno predvsem nekdanjemu nemškemu plemstvu, razkriva tudi obdobje etničnih in socialnih sporov na trgu, ki so eksplicitno nastali med prodajalci zaplenjenega blaga in predstavniki sodobne češke umetnosti. Ta večnivojski, nacionalno in očitno tudi ekonomsko utemeljeni konflikt je povezan z bistvenimi razlikami med življenjskim slogom in okusom izgnanih nemških plemiških elit ter vzporedno grajeno sodobno umetnostno identiteto in pričakovanji češkega srednjega razreda kot potencialnega uporabnika in kupca. Z določeno svobodo bi lahko manifestacije takšne zamere interpretirali kot zadnje poglavje ambivalentnih zgodovinskih procesov, povezanih s slabljenjem plemiškega elementa v dobi modernizma.