where "the unity of the presented folk art [served as] an affirmation of the unity of the race and the nation."[17]

To this extent, the French journalist and writer Pierre de Quirielle also identified Slovak folk art as a permanent cultural phenomenon that was the "traditional and original, vivid expression of the soul and aspirations" of a country which used it as a weapon against its oppressors, the Magyars.[18] And Slovaks were the people of John Ruskin; their expressions were the manifestation of their "sense of natural and spontaneous" art.[19] De Quirielle's reference to Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement stemmed out of the belief that Slovak folk art had a permanent, pre-industrial quality that preserved traditional forms and techniques despite the adverse influences of the outside world.

Czech commentators on the exhibition also stressed a degree of "charming" primitivism contained in the displayed works. The writer Jaroslav Nauman, for instance, reported in the liberal journal *Volná myšlenka* (A Free Thought) that "many visitors were captured by the simple, almost naïve, and still enchanting, beauty of the products of our mothers, standing in such sharp contrast with the refined [art] all around" in the Louvre.[20] Yet the emphasis on the timeless quality of the folk art on display and its pre-industrial roots were key for creating a sense of artistic tradition for foreign viewers. Linking Slovak and Czechoslovak folk art to the ideas of Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement made the arts relevant and comprehensible to international viewers. Such art could not be seen as an obsolete, outlived phenomenon, it had to be appreciated for its individual craftsmanship and skill in the face of machine produced art and design.

Searching for a representative style

The dichotomy between traditional visual expressions found in folk art, on the one hand, and machine-made design on the other was an ongoing topic of debate between both organizers of Czechoslovak interwar exhibitions and their critics. The polemic, as well as the search for appropriate representative modern artistic expression, were initiated already at the first substantial participation of Czechoslovakia at a truly international exhibition. It was The Centennial International Exhibition in Rio de Janeiro in 1922 where the

17 Quirielle, "Une exposition," 1.
18 Quirielle, "Une exposition," 1.
19 Quirielle, "Une exposition," 1.
20 Nauman, "Dojmy," 5.

Czechoslovak presence was originally planned as purely commercial, aiming at exploring new trade opportunities and markets of South America. This became more important after it became known that Germany—one of the main competitors—would not take part in this event, which opened more possibilities for the new state.

The artistic side of the presentation nevertheless played an important role, and many objects of art and design were displayed here in the hope of generating sales. This was the first international appearance of the work of František Kysela, a versatile artist and designer from the School of Decorative Arts in Prague, whose works were also featured at the Parisian exhibitions of 1925 and 1937. His stained-glass window in the Czechoslovak pavilion at Rio de Jane depicted the state emblem above the central entrance of a pavilion designed by the architect Pavel Janák as a building with colorful ornament. For Janák the ornament had a purely decorative function, but the entire structure made strong references to folk traditions in the architectural features too. Most prominently, the central entrance was flanked by an archway reminiscent of the painted archway, or *žudro*, of Moravian villages that also featured in the 1920 Paris exhibition.

The search for a suitable national style that architects engaged in in Czechoslovakia and transferred to the national pavilion in Rio de Janeiro was not dissimilar from the local attempts to establish a Brazilian architectural language that would correspond to the modern Brazilian identity.[21] Here, the so-called Brazilianness (*Brasilidade*) in architecture started developing to distinguish national architecture from the Portuguese colonial heritage.[22] It drew on a variety of traditions that included indigenous, African as well as Portuguese influences in which it was similar to the somewhat eclectic nature of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia.[23]

The dialogue between the modern and the traditional in Czechoslovak art and architecture was an important component of the more general search for the new visual identity of the state.[24] Following the end of the war, many architects and designers were aware of the need to find an appropriate visual language which would express the new political situation and serve the new state and people. Janák was one of the architects who experimented with references to local folk tradi-

21 Angela Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form: Tracing National Identity in Modernist Architecture in Brazil, 1922–1968," Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of New Jersey Institute of Technology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Newark, May 2020.

22 Starita, "Brasilidade."

23 Hugo Segawa, *Architecture in Brazil. 1900–1990* (New York: Springer, 2013).

24 Filipová, "Traditions," in *Modernity,* 145–177, Lada Hubatová-Vacková, "Užití, využití i zneužití folkloru a lidového umění," in *Budování státu,* 180–244.

tions, which he believed could form the basis of new national architecture.[25] The Czechoslovak pavilion in Rio de Janeiro was an example of such vernacularism that became the expression of "a modern artistic current, characterized by the attempt to break free from the old classical models by introducing elements of national culture."[26] This culture was seen as that of the peasants whose linear motifs from embroidery were effectively translated into the building's ornamental decoration and presented as part of the modern artistic expression.

The state in arts and crafts

It is one of the paradoxes of interwar world's fairs, aimed at showcasing universal modernity and progress, that they enhanced the need for national difference and exceptionalism. The Parisian *International Exposition of Industrial Design and Decorative Art in Modern Life* in 1925 exemplifies such developments, as the official goal of the organizer was to establish a new decorative movement, which would emerge in France and be successful commercially on an international scale. France tried to re-establish itself as a producer of applied arts, having to face increasingly strong competition from Britain and Germany, as well as from the USA. To remove the association that France, at exhibitions or elsewhere, adhered to historicism and old-fashioned décor, all imitations of old styles were banned.[27]

The French organizers and exhibitors, however, struggled to agree on what *modern* meant and they presented varied views and understandings of modern art and design. The poet Paul Géraldy, for example, pointed to France's reluctance to embrace modernity wholeheartedly in his review of the Exhibition; he claimed that the modern here tried to negate "France's history and heritage for the sake of fashion."[28] Expanding the notion of France's unique position in the visual arts, the jeweler and designer René Lalique suggested that the decorative arts of the future should be again elitist. "Elitist art," in his interpretation,

25 Vendula Hnídková, *Národní styl, kultura a politika* (Prague: VŠUO, 2013), Marie Benešová, *Pavel Janák* (Prague: Nakladatelství československých výtvarných umělců, 1959), Norbert Kiesling, *Pavel Janák* (Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2012).

26 Ruth Lévy, *A Exposição do Centenario. E o meio arquitetônico carioca no início dos anos 1920* (Rio de Janeiro: EBA Publicações, 2010), 231.

27 Julia Kostova, "Spectacles of Modernity. Anxiety and Contradiction at the Interwar Paris Fairs of 1925, 1931 and 1937," PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2011. Makaryk, *April in Paris*; Marc Gaillard, *Paris. Les Expositions Universelles de 1855 à 1937* (Les Presses Franciliennes, Paris, 2003).

28 Paul Géraldy, "L'Architecture vivante," in *L'illustration*, special section on L'exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes (April 15, 1925), Kostova, "Spectacles of Modernity," 94.