

champ, and Paul Nash.⁹³ The entire Czechoslovak display also collected positive reviews in the American press and exhibition publications. The *New York Times*, for instance, noted that “the picturesqueness [...in] these portrayals of Slovakian countryside and its people” seen in “the glimpses of costume, pastime and the occupations of daily existence” provided a “further insight into racial characteristics of the artists and of their land.”⁹⁴ Slovakia and its art were reduced to a simplified and selective, yet externally successful image.

The fine art from Czechoslovakia that was displayed in the USA therefore emphasized a more restrained modernist language derived from traditional sources of folk art and realistic painting. This was caused by the fact that those responsible for the selection and supply of the works tried to estimate what works would send out the most favorable picture to the visitors. The art on display had a more illustrative function and communicated basic information about the state—it depicted primarily its landscape and folk traditions.

Conclusion

Much of the criticism of the 1937 pavilion as well as other art and design displays in Czechoslovak representations at world’s fairs revolved around the elitism and exclusions in the selection of artists as well as designers. The question of who should represent the state and with what art was therefore not settled during the interwar period. The visual objects chosen for display in the national presentations ranged from fine art and luxury decorative arts to utility design. They could be largely linked to the market economy, whether it was collecting art or commercial sales of design products and operated outside the purely representational status.

With such international exposure that world’s fairs offered, the artists selected for the national pavilions and their work would be necessarily associated with the nation and national art. Moreover, these choices to an extent helped to establish the canon of modern art in Czechoslovakia, further validated by numerous awards received at the international exhibitions. This included the members of Mánes, representatives of the UMPRUM, the Association of the Czechoslovak Werkbund as well as the Slovak landscapists.

93 “Cream of Contemporary Europe’s Art Exhibited at Golden Gate Fair,” *The Art Digest. The News and Opinions of the Art World*, March 15, 1939, 37.

94 “Contemporary Slovakian Art,” *New York Times* (November 13, 1938): 185.

Not all artists, however, were accepted in the canon of modern art in the interwar period. Kysela's decorative objects evoked a nostalgia for "primitive" pre-industrial age and premodern crafts displayed in 1925 were replaced by less conservative works in later pavilions. At the same time, Pešánek's avant-garde sculptures represented the other extreme and their appreciation most probably fell victim to the imminent war and insufficient contextualization. The displays of modern art in the Czechoslovak pavilions were therefore very pluralistic, while the presentation of modernism quite restrained.

