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Dado in expansion

Abstract: This essay reflects on the legacy of Montenegrin artist Dado (Miodrag Đurić, 1933–2010), who spent most of his career and life in France, in a context where new narratives in art history emerge giving more visibility to non-Western artists. Through the complex and fertile bond between the East and the West cultures, the importance of the landmark retrospective of paintings of the artist at the SASA Gallery in 2024, and the restoration of his in situ masterpiece, the Orpellières, his “Guernica in color”, the author shows Dado’s extreme contemporaneity. New insights, not only in art history, but also in aesthetics, philosophy and literature, show the fascinating echo of Dado’s work in our times.

Keywords: Dado (Miodrag Đurić), Danilo Kiš, Legacy, Catherine Millet, Orpellières, Germain Viatte

“I think that painting is an adventure, but a personal one.”

Dado^[2]

New stories, new insights

From one exhibition catalogue project to another, since I’ve been working for almost 24 years now at the Centre Pompidou as an editor, I notice how the narrative of art history has evolved through the

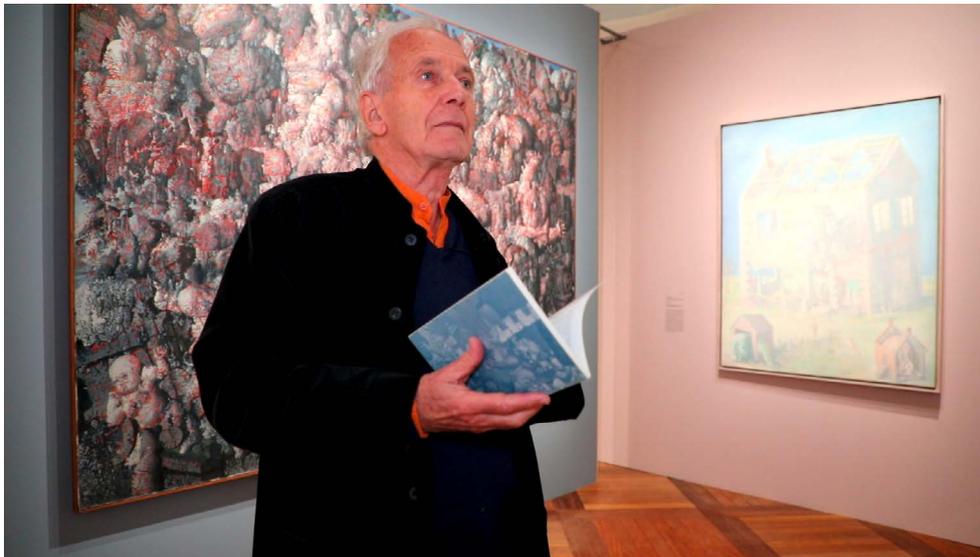
years, in a more and more globalized world – and not only in France, where I live. At the Centre Pompidou, in 2013, “Multiple Modernities, 1905–1970”, curated by Catherine Grenier, was a successful attempt to suggest other narratives, by showing other artists who have been overshadowed by the “big” official art history – mostly a Western one, with Western artists, and recalled by Western art historians – in order “to challenge mainstream discourse

[1] Author of the exhibition “Dado. Natural History, 1953–2000” at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, in Belgrade, 21 December 2024–2 March 2025, *Editor of Dado. Peindre debout. Entretiens, 1969–2009*. Strasbourg: Éditions L’Atelier contemporain. 2016, *Dado. Portrait en fragments. Propos recueillis par Christian Derouet, 1981–1988*. Strasbourg: Éditions L’Atelier contemporain. 2023, publisher of Dado’s official website www.dado.fr / www.dado.virtual.anti.museum / www.dado.me, Editor at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, Artist’s daughter.

[2] Rajko Cerović, RTCG, *Interview with Dado*, 1971, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/interview-tv-tograd-1971-video>, 10 min. 44 sec (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

and established hierarchies” (Grenier, 2013, p. 15). More recently, the brilliant exhibition titled “Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris” [Paris and Nowhere Else: 24 Foreign Artists in Paris] curated by Jean-Paul Ameline at the Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration in Paris in 2022, showed that after World War II, Paris, and France more broadly, still appeared as a magnetic pole for artists coming from all over the world, as was the case for Dado, encouraged to go there by his mentor, Marko Čelebonović, a close friend of sculptor Germaine Richier, whose career in France was remarkable. Ameline also underlined the influence of native countries in the creative process of most of the exiled artists based in France, such as Chinese artist Zao Wou-Ki, Senegalese paint-

er Iba N’Diaye, Haitian artist Hervé Télémaque (Ameline, 2022, p. 49). These reminiscences – in the case of Dado, the stone texture of the Montenegrin mountains – is patent after years of exile. With *Limbo* (1958-1959), *The Architect* (1959) and *Hérouval* (1967), Dado was present in the section “Voluntary exiles”, along with Eduardo Arroyo, Alicia Penalba, Judith Reigl, Antonio Seguí, and Hervé Télémaque. He was one of the first names mentioned to Ameline by Germain Viatte, one of the best connoisseurs of Dado’s work and a major figure of the institutional art world in France of the five last decades, who contributed to the foundation of the Centre Pompidou in 1977 and curated Dado’s first retrospective at the Centre national d’art contemporain in Paris in 1970 [ill. 1].^[3]



[Ill. 1] Germain Viatte, honorary director of the Musée national d’art moderne, commenting in the catalogue of the 1970 CNAC retrospective, at the exhibition “Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris”, Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration, 2022 (curator: Jean-Paul Ameline)
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[3] J.-P. Ameline, email to the author, 24 February 2025.

No wonder then that the place for a “great non-conformist in the history of art”^[4], to take up the expression of art critic Catherine Millet, is increasing as well as his reception in this new context, where non-Western artists are gradually brought to light. Millet uses the term of “re-evaluation”^[5], and underlines the fact that Dado’s work is above all classifications – which undoubtedly makes it difficult for academic art historians to integrate in their narratives. She also insists on the fact that Dado’s art is eternal, because unlike other artists of the same generation, it is not driven “by an explicitly political message, anchored in reality. [...] It is also maybe for this very reason that his painting will live forever, because it says the essence of things. [...] Dado goes to the root of evil. There are some artists who convey a message, who comment in a way the world, the evil in this world, and there are some, like Dado, who go to the root of evil.”^[6]

A complex legacy connecting the East and the West

It’s been more than 14 years now that I’ve been working on my father’s legacy. A difficult task, but

also a rewarding one, which request a daily commitment – as I always say, it is a work whose level is so high that we can feel only humble, and we can’t lie – unlike others which are in a way made for talks only. Dado was not only a “total” artist – who practiced different techniques with an unequivocal virtuosity, his ability to renew himself was also exceptional. He was also very lucid about the recognition of his work: “The value of a painting can only be recognized 10, 30, 40 or 50 years after it has been completed. Canvases need to be covered in dust before their quality can be judged. There has to be a distance. It’s exactly the same when you see Lake Skadar. When you swim in the lake, you can’t see it very well. You have to go up to Košćele^[7] to admire it. That goes for paintings as well as books.” (Dado, 2016a, p. 222). The Skadar lake, a region where his paternal grand-mother Janica was raised, seems pivotal in the building of Dado’s universe, as exemplified by the vision of the corpses of the horses, “the most lyrical, the most beautiful view”^[8], he recalled in 1969 to Marcel Billot and Germain Viatte, curators of his first retrospective at the Centre national d’art contemporain, or the trauma of the brutal death, precisely on the lake at the end of the 1950s, of his best friend Cugo, whose father owned a locksmith workshop, where the two friends

[4] Sanja Blečić and Snežana Nikčević, *Dado: ukrštanja / Métissages*, 2011, RTCG, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/metissages-rtcg-documentary>, 52 min., 52 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[5] *Ibid.*, 51 min., 54 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[6] C. Millet, conversation at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, 1st of February 2024, Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/syndrome.dado/videos/351683657693311>, 37 min. 14 sec.–38 min. 27 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[7] The place where Dado chose to be buried, in Montenegro, not far from his native town, Cetinje, in Montenegro.

[8] “I was on my usual walk with my friends to see Lake Scutari [Skadar], 10 kilometres from there, and then, round a bend, puff... We were... overcome by a stench... but incredibly violent, of putrefaction, you see. What was there?”

used to spend Saturday afternoons tidying up the tools (Dado, 2024a, pp. 220-221; Dado, 2024b, p. 263) – an important motif in Dado’s early paintings of the 1950’s and 1960’s, which could also refer to the well-known shoes factory of the Đurić family in Montenegro.^[9]

The reception of Dado’s work, a work which speaks to all generations, to all audiences, all cultures, has been increasing during those last years^[10] – also in a context where its themes are more contemporary than ever: war, poverty, despair, but such a view is a simplified one. What makes it also universal is the fact it reunites several cultures, in the most interesting and original way. Dado himself expressed this oscillation between two worlds in 2001: “I have become bicephalous. I have two heads: a Montenegrin one, and a supposedly Western one.”^[11]

This statement – which, not surprisingly, was printed on the introductory text of the room devoted to Dado at the “Paris et nulle part ailleurs” exhibition in 2022 at the Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration [ill. 2] – perfectly reflects

the irony that characterized Dado’s perception and attitude towards life in general. But it also enhances his immense capacity of absorption of the Western culture which started even before his arrival in France in 1956, from a very early age, with the discovery of Western painting thanks to Italian officers during World War II, who made friends with his family and showed him some art books with reproductions of works by Renaissance painters. Dado would later recall this introduction to classical painting to Rajko Cerović, in 1971, claiming that none of this painting could equal the beauty of the landscape of Rijeka Crnojevića in Montenegro: “The first paintings that amazed me, that I really didn’t admire, some Italian officers brought them, during the war, some reproductions of Raphael and such. Some crappy Renaissance, pardon me. They’re so polished there... creepy, actually.”^[12] Both statements speak volumes about the ambivalence that Dado felt throughout all his life towards the Western “grand” culture – a mix of genuine interest and fascination and a natural rebellion due to its predominance. Around 1946,

There were three horses that had been dumped like that on the side of the road, in the sun, and behind the three horses, there was Lake Scutari, the most lyrical, the most beautiful view you can imagine! Because the lake, one can see it from a bird’s eye view, 15 kilometres from there. It is no longer the blue one sees, with little waves and fish that are in there... One doesn’t see anything, it’s a thing, an extraordinary backdrop. So surely it’s elements like that which built the mind of a kid. Among other things, there is that, and then, I don’t know, to reminisce all those things...” (see: Dado, 2024 a, pp. 220-221).

[9] *The Late Shoemaker* (1969), exhibited at the CNAC retrospective in 1970 and in “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000” at the SASA Gallery in Belgrade in 2024 obviously refers to this factory.

[10] One significant example: in the 1960’s, Dado’s influence on German artists such as Georg Baselitz or Eugen Schönebeck (in their 1962 *Pandemonium Manifesto*) has been highlighted in 2012 by Gregor Jansen (see: Jansen, 2012, p. 18).

[11] Dado, quoted at the beginning of *Dado: ukrštanja / Métissage* (2011). Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/metissages-rtcg-documentary> (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[12] Rajko Cerović, RTCG, *Interview with Dado, 1971*, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/interview-tv-titograd-1971-video>, 5 min 2 sec.–5 min. 22 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

DADO

Cetinje, Monténégro, 1933
Pontoise, France, 2010

Miodrag Đurić (dit Dado) naît au Monténégro peu avant la guerre et l'occupation nazie de son pays, dont le souvenir douloureux hante tout son travail. Dans les années 1940, il étudie les Beaux-Arts à Belgrade, avant de partir en 1956 pour Paris. Il y rencontre le galeriste Daniel Cordier qui l'introduit dans la scène parisienne, impressionné par ses toiles représentant des bébés. Fasciné par le processus organique de la vie et de la mort, Dado peint avec virtuosité des êtres étranges, mutilés. Son obsession pour la représentation de la misère et de la souffrance humaines fait écho aux thèmes de la poésie orale populaire des pays slaves. À la fin des années 1960, Dado développe ses recherches par la gravure, le collage, la sculpture. Fuyant le tumulte parisien, il s'installe à Hérouval avec l'artiste cubaine Hessie et fait de son atelier un lieu d'« art total » occupé par ses fresques, ses sculptures et assemblages d'objets. À partir du début des années 1990, alors qu'éclate la guerre en ex-Yougoslavie, son œuvre s'étend de plus en plus à l'espace et il investit des bâtiments abandonnés de sa peinture et de sculptures. Il s'intéresse aussi au développement des arts numériques et conçoit lui-même un « anti-musée » virtuel, comme une sorte d'œuvre testamentaire.



Dado dans son atelier, Hérouval, 1960
Photographie: Christian Dreyer
© Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration

« J'étais plus nostalgique quand j'étais jeune,
trop attaché au Monténégro. Avec le temps,
je suis devenu bilingue, j'ai deux âmes.
L'une monténégrine, l'autre soi-disant occidentale. »

"I was more nostalgic when I was young, too attached to
Montenegro. As time went by, I developed two souls.
One is Montenegrin, the other is so-called Western."

Miodrag Đurić (aka Dado) was born in Montenegro shortly before the war and the Nazi occupation of his country, memories of which haunt his work. In the 1940s, he studied Fine Arts in Belgrade, before leaving for Paris in 1956. There he met the gallerist Daniel Cordier who introduced him to the Parisian scene, impressed by his paintings of babies. Fascinated by the organic process of life and death, Dado masterfully painted images of strange, mutilated beings. His obsession with portraying human misery and suffering echoes the themes of the popular oral poetry of Slavic countries. In the late 1960s, Dado developed his research through engraving, collage and sculpture. Fleeing the chaos of Paris, he settled in Hérouval with the Cuban artist Hessie and turned his studio into a place of "total art" filled with his frescoes, sculptures and object assemblages. From the 1990s, with war breaking out in ex-Yugoslavia, his work increasingly extended to space and he filled abandoned buildings with his painting and sculptures. He was also interested in the development of the digital arts and designed his own virtual "anti-museum", like a sort of testimonial work.

Cetinje, Montenegro, 1933
Pontoise, France, 2010

Écrit par Dado avec Christian Dreyer
dans le cadre de la préparation de l'exposition
« Dado. L'insupportable du trait »,
au Collège de France, Paris
Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration
19 novembre 2003 - 10 janvier 2002

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[III. 2] View of the introductory text of the room devoted to Dado, at the exhibition "Paris et nulle part ailleurs. 24 artistes étrangers à Paris", Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, 2022

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his discovery of modern art (Francis Bacon, Ivan Albright, Ben Shan) in *Life Magazine* was also decisive in the edification of his visual art vocabulary (especially, in the case of Albright, for the mineral period of the 1958–1962). Some ten years later, in France, Dado met decisive new “intercessors” of the French and European culture in the figures of artist Bernard Réquichot, who introduced him to the poetry of Henri Michaux, but also the Liencourt

couple, who both came from families from the French aristocracy, or renown Slavist Georges Nivat. In a recent interview for France Culture, the latter evoked his friend Dado in these terms: “He would transform everything into something grotesque: his house, the surrounding landscapes, himself, his own children... Everything had a sense of grotesque, and at the time there was a kind of hidden lyricism.”^[13] It is precisely this bridge between

[13] Georges Nivat, À voix nue, “Le sérieux et le loufoque”, 4/5, France Culture, 25 February 2025, available at: <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/a-voix-nue/le-serieux-et-le-loufoque-8548121>, 24 min. 57 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[Ill. 3] Dado, *Portrait of Old Lévêque*, 1959

Ink on paper, 32.5 × 43.5 cm

Private collection

Photo: Adam Rzepka

East and West that Dado personifies, as did his dear friend writer Danilo Kiš, with a similar “pathos and irony” (Kiš, 2023, p. 18) – a complex one though. French painting played a pivotal role in the bond with the adoptive country; Dado’s first visit, in August 1956, when he arrived in Paris, was to the Musée du Louvre. Three decades later, in 1988, he claimed: “French painting moves me deeply. Chardin, Fragonard, I love this. In fact, French painting is the only painting I know. Why? Because the light of this country is the only one I know” (Dado, 2023, p. 20). The encounter in 1958 with inhabitants of the village of Courcelles-lès-Gisors, in the Vexin region, so representative of a still very

rural France, was also decisive. At first rejected by the villagers, Dado confessed in 1988 to Christian Derouet that he had discovered in Courcelles “an extraordinary world, whose existence was totally unknown to [him], [...] the *true* proletariat, atrocious and beautiful at the same time” (Dado, 2023, p. 22), a big shock for an artist like him coming from a communist country where the idea of human equality was central. In a quasi-anthropological perspective, he made a “small chronicle of a village, which didn’t have access to running water at the time” (Dado, 2023, p. 21), by portraying the villagers of Courcelles in his drawings – and even in his paintings actually^[14] – of this period [ill. 3 and 4],

[14] For instance, a marginal with whom Dado started a friendship in 1958 in Courcelles-lès-Gisors, Old Lévêque (“Père Lévêque”), was the model for *Thomas More* (1958-1959), and Dado drew him several times [ill. 3 and 4].

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Dado in expansion



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[III. 4] Dado, *Thomas More*, 1958-1959
Oil on canvas, 162 × 130 cm
Private collection, courtesy Galerie Baudoin Lebon
© Jacques Bétan

a way of giving back to these humble people their dignity. In the same series of conversations with Derouet, Dado had also this sharp sentence, a very meaningful one: “You need to know whether you are a humanist or not” (Dado, 2023, p. 123). Such a fertile and ambivalent oscillation between two universes wouldn’t have made been possible without the exile – in Dado’s case a “voluntary” one –, which nurtured deeply the work, throughout the years, from the early mineral period to the last bronzes series titled *Angels of Montenegro*.^[15]

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“Dado, Natural History, 1953-2000” at the SASA Gallery, Belgrade, December 2024

The title of the exhibition, supported by the Foundation for the Serbian People and State and the Plavo Foundation, is of course a reference to Dado’s fascination for the *Histoire naturelle* of 18th-century French naturalist Buffon, which gave birth to a whole series of paintings in the 1980’s and to the *Cabinet d’histoire naturelle*, a set of “dadoised” armchairs in the studio of Hérouval [ill. 5]. My purpose was to sketch a *Natural history* of Dado himself, through a first retrospective of the most impressive paintings from the early years [ill. 6] – beginning with the portrait of the tutelary figure of Marko Čelebonović (1953) – to the extraordinary



[Ill. 5] Entry of the exhibition “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000”, SASA Gallery, Belgrade (author: Amarante Szidon)
© Enter media, Srbija



[Ill. 6] An exhibition view of “Dado: Natural History, 1953–2000”, showing the paintings of the 1950’s
© Enter media, Srbija

[15] It was exactly one of my main purposes when I decided to add notes for the two books of interviews, *Peindre debout* (2016) and *Portrait en fragments*: explaining to the French readers some facts or even notions at the core of Dado’s background through his early years in Yugoslavia, almost unknown in France. *Angels of Montenegro* has been chosen as the title of the exhibition of the collection of Novica Jovović at the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in Podgorica (Montenegro), in February 2025. (see: Dado, 2016b; Dado, 2023).

creative rejuvenation of the 1990s and 2000s [ill. 7]. It was the first time that as many works from different periods were gathered – and especially for the Belgrade years with the exceptional loan of the three jewels of the 1950’s by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Belgrade. The high quality of the Serbian private collections, which I’ve known and appreciated for almost a decade and increased thanks to the Cordier auctions at Sotheby’s Paris in 2018 and 2021^[16], was undoubtedly a decisive trigger to achieve this project, thanks to the determinant help of Nikola Stojčević and Borko Petrović, real and sincere admirers of Dado’s work. In order to make them accessible to a larger audience, my texts were translated into English by Paul Buck and Catherine Petit, whom I first met professionally at the Centre Pompidou for our project of the Picasso’s drawings album (Lemonnier, 2023) and with whom a much more personal connection was established very quickly thanks to the multiple echoes in our lives – through a dear friend of Paul, French writer Bernard Noël, who wrote two important essays on Dado.^[17] With more than 42,000 visitors, the exhibition, the first retrospective of paintings since my father’s death, was perceived and understood as it was: a gift to the town where everything begun for Dado, who started “doing Dado” in Belgrade with *The Cyclist* (which features a cross of Lorraine, emblem of



[Ill. 7] An exhibition view of “Dado: Natural History, 1953-2000”, showing the paintings of the 1990’s

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the French resistance!) and *Holy Virgin*, after his release from jail in May 1955, where he was imprisoned with other outsiders during Khrushchev’s official visit (Dado, 2024b, p. 280).

**A work of expansion: The Orpellières,
one of the places where Dado
“expressed [himself] at the best”^[18]**

The “*Guernica* in colour” (Jouffroy, 1999, p. 40) of Dado has been facing deterioration through the years since its inauguration in 1999, and it seemed to me essential to integrate this work

[16] “Dado”, Galerija Hexalab, Belgrade, 28 March–15 April 2015; Dado, Moderna Galerija, Valjevo, 25 September 2017– 1 January 2018.

[17] See also: www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/bernard-noel. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

[18] “The painting, with the frames, and this furniture aspect, is the perfect example of the bourgeois art. Which isn’t the case of a leper house or a disused wine making concern. It’s here where I expressed myself at the best” (Dado, in Jorge Amat, *Dado tagueur*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXroEV_ggbU, 1 hour 3 min. 24-40 sec. Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 8] The team of restorers at work on one of the walls of the Orpellières, Sérignan, 2022

© Conservatoire du littoral / Фотографија Maixent Collado

into the narrative of the Belgrade retrospective with a documentary made by the Montenegrin television in 2023.^[19] Thanks to an ambitious restoration program implemented in 2020 by the Conservatoire du littoral, a French state body in charge of the preservation of the littoral, run by Agnès Vince, it was saved – at least for some time [ill. 8] (Aussilloux-Correa & Szidon, 2023). It is precisely this risk, this struggle with nature which is particularly relevant in Dado's original approach – who as early as the 1950's, driven by

lack of economic means, favoured crude supports, like the covers of mattresses sent by his own father who worked at the Cetinje hospital. In the 1990's, leaving the comfort of the studio, he chose to work in other places: first in a village house in the Aveyron region (1992); then in the Orpellières, in Sérignan (Hérault) (1994), in the Embassy of the 4th International in Montjavoult (1996), in the Chapelle Saint-Luc in Gisors (1999) [ill. 9], in a blockhouse in Fécamp (Normandy) (2003). For Dado, it was also a way

[19] Sanja Blečić in collaboration with Snežana Nikčević, *O prolaznosti i trajanju/On the Ephemeral and the Eternal*, RTCG, 2023, Available at: <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/orpellières>. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 9] Chapelle Saint-Luc, Gisors
© Ville de Gisors

of emancipating himself from the art market, and he chose deliberately to get supported by a few faithful collectors, instead of being alienated by an art dealer. Created between 1994 and 1999, during the war in Yugoslavia (hence the ironical “humanitarian aid” inscription and the hospital beds, among other elements), the Orpellières offer an insight into Dado’s realm on many levels. Indeed, the place bring together two aspects that had always fascinated Dado: an exceptional flora and fauna, and also the presence of a non-academic language, the graffiti, on the walls of this former wine yard – the motif of the wall being another crucial motif from the

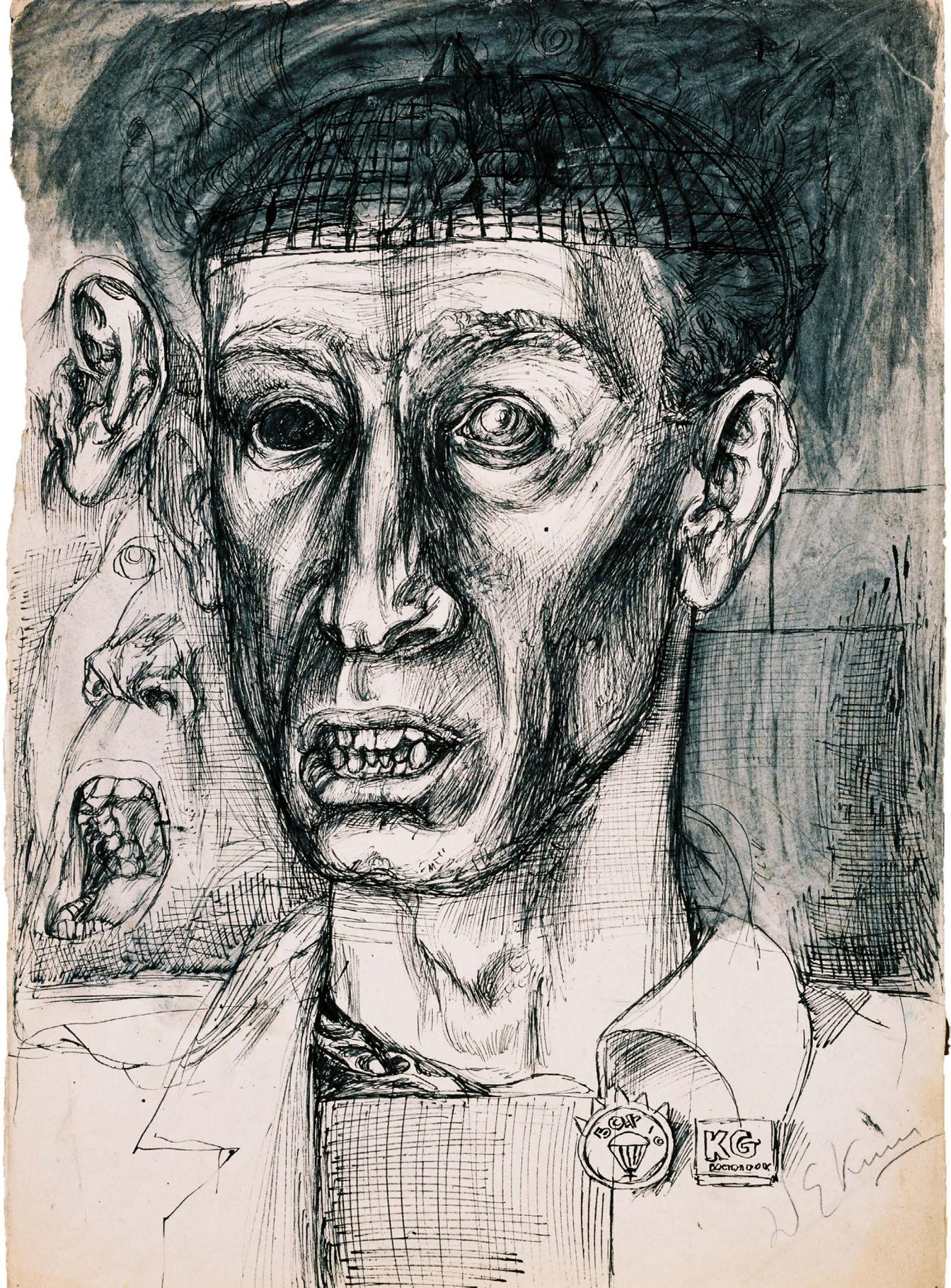
early years. Understanding and restituting “the phenomenon of life” was Dado’s major preoccupation since his childhood, and the tutelary figures of his grand-father, Dr Jovan Kujačić, and his mother, Vjera, contributed largely to it. Painting on the existing graffiti, Dado started a dialogue with anonymous artists, and integrated some monumental assemblages such as elements taken from the scenery he created for *Tamerlano* (1992) and *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* (1996) and car wrecks, among others – featured the two partisans hung by the Nazis in Cetinje in January 1944 with two boards hung on the ceiling [ill. 10]. In a “dadoised” bookshelf, one



[Ill. 10] Les Orpellières, Sérignan. On the left: the two partisans hung by the Nazis in Cetinje in January 1944
Photo: Bernard Rivière

also notices a dedicated book by his dear friend Danilo Kiš, *Grobnica za Borisa Davidoviča* [*A Tomb for Boris Davidovitch*], to whom Dado paid many tributes in his late bronzes of the 2000's, and portrayed as early as 1955 [ill. 11]. In that *in situ* masterpiece, which should be opened to the public in 2026–2027, some reminiscences of the works of the Belgrade years also emerge: for instance, the columns in the painting *Untitled*,

[Ill. 11, page 125]
Dado, *Portrait of Danilo Kiš*, 1955
Ink on paper, 41.5 × 30 cm
Former collection of Jernej Vilfan
Photo: Domingo Đurić





[Ill. 12] Untitled, 1954-1955
Oil on canvas, 70 × 92 cm
Zoran Popović collection

1954-1955 (shown at the Belgrade exhibition) [ill. 12] seem to be made real in the Orpellières [ill. 13]! The coherence of the work appears here in the most brilliant way.

“Being ever present”^[20]

Today, the influence and the role model of Dado is patent among young generations of painters and artists, not only from Montenegro, Serbia or ex-Yugoslavia, but also in France – in this regard,

[20] It is the title of the poem of Paul Buck, who performed it on January 31, 2025, at the SASA Gallery.



[Ill. 13] A column in the Orpellières, Sérignan (France),
circa 1994
Photo DR

the selection of Dado as a tutelary figure at the section “Immortelle. Un regard sur la peinture figurative en France” [Immortal. A Focus on Figurative Painting in France] curated by Amélie Adamo and Numa Hambursin in Art Paris at the Grand Palais in April 2025 thanks to the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger is very significant. Let us hope this recog-

nition by new generations may contribute to the development of academic research which could bring to light the multiple and singular connections between different cultures, this fertile and complex bridge between East and West. One can regret that the importance of each culture is not yet analyzed in depth and developed by the scholars of the “opposite” world, as it appears to me to be a crucial point to understand the universal character of Dado’s legacy.

As I wrote in my preface in the Belgrade exhibition catalogue, the early years of Dado in Belgrade still need to be explored (Szidon, 2024b, p. 17). As strange as it may seem, no photographic archives of Dado’s presence at the Academy of Fine Arts have been found yet; and there is still much to learn about the close relationship that Dado seems to have developed with his mentor Marko Čelebonović, as well as the important visit of Henry Moore in Belgrade in Spring 1955, who immediately noticed the profound originality of Dado’s work (Szidon, 2024a, p. 90).

In February 2024, when we presented the two books published by the Éditions de l’Atelier contemporain, *Portrait en fragments* and *Dado. Le temps d’Hérouval*, at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Catherine Millet shared a very pertinent thought. “Dado invented the gestural figuration”, she claimed, in an echo of the well-known “gestural abstraction”.^[21] She was probably inspired by the beauty of the photographs of my late brother, Domingo Đurić, showing Dado almost dancing at work in his

[21] C. Millet, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/syndrome.dado/videos/351683657693311>, 41 min. 05 sec. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).



[Ill. 14 and 15] Dado in his studio, Hérouval, 1980

Photos: Domingo Djuric

studio in Hérouval at the beginning of the 1980's [ill. 14 and 15], which were selected in the book *Dado. Le temps d'Hérouval*.

In the same brilliant manner, Kamini Velodi, of the Royal College of Art [ill. 16], delivered a lecture on Dado and French philosopher Gilles Deleuze at the SASA Gallery in January

31, 2025. Basing her demonstration on the letter that Deleuze sent to Dado in December 1994, at the dusk of his life (he committed suicide the year after)^[22], and especially on Deleuze's formula "a terror where the matter is man", she highlighted the "points of resonance and affinity" between Deleuze's philosophy and Dado's work, opening a

[22] <https://www.dado.virtual.anti.museum/gilles-deleuze-letter-to-dado>. (Accessed on March 11, 2025).

new insight into Dado's universe, where the motifs of the animal and the machine were determinant from the early years, as exemplified in *The Crucifixion* (1955), a work which enabled Deleuze to "enter into a personal, secret relationship" with Dado's work [ill. 17].

Dado's deep connection with literature is also still to be analyzed in depth, and not only through his friendship with Danilo Kiš and Henri Michaux – as in the latter's poetry, the correspondences with Dado's work are so troubling, exemplified by the choice of the title of a poem of Michaux, *Meidosem*, for a series of paintings. "An orphan of language", as he used to define himself, Dado was fond of Russian and French literature. *The Large Farm*, his tribute to Bernard Réquichot (1962-1963,



[Ill. 17] Dado, *The Crucifixion*, 1955
Oil on canvas, 50 × 40 cm
Private collection
Photo: Domingo Đurić

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[Ill. 16]
Evening "Dado through Words and Paintings",
SASA Gallery, 31 January 2025
From left to right: François-Marie Deyrolle
(Éditions l'Atelier contemporain), Amarante
Szidon, Kamini Vellodi (Royal College of Art,
London), Paul Buck
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Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris) is a direct reference to the *Dead Souls* of Gogol, one of his favorite writers. No wonder that Dado inspires writers in his turn – as his fruitful collaborations with Claude Louis-Combet or Matthieu Messagier show (Louis-Combet, 1992a, Louis-Combet, 1992b, Messagier, 2004). Recently, Paul Buck made us a moving gift last January 31 at the SASA Gallery by writing a poem, reflecting his perception of Dado's paintings. Dado's work, by many ways, opens to us an endless variety of approaches. As a model of freedom, of a work which never fell into the trap of compromises, it definitely incites us to invent new narratives and insights to capture its very essence.

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