

Article

Violence, Exile, and Homeland in Visual Arts in the Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina

Jaka Repič

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; jaka.repic@ff.uni-lj.si

Abstract: This article explores visual arts and literature in the Slovenian diasporic community in Argentina, founded by post-World-War-II refugees who fled Slovenia at the end of the war and the beginning of the communist revolution in Yugoslavia. Based on the ethnographic data collected among the Slovenes in Argentina and biographical interviews with selected Slovene artists, the article addresses how art and cultural production in the diaspora, imbued with social memories and themes of war, violence, mass executions in the post-war period, and exile from the homeland is encompassed in three levels of cultural policies: (a) an Argentinean framework of cultural pluralism that integrated migrant communities into the national identity and narrative, allowing them to preserve and express their ethnic and cultural backgrounds and identities; (b) a diasporic level that institutionalized specific themes important for diasporic ideologies, some explicitly related to violence, exile, and mass executions; and (c) a transnational level that facilitated the integration of artists from the diaspora into Slovenian and international “art worlds”. These cultural policies were often contradictory and required artists to shift between inclusion in the Argentinean art domain and the diasporic one, which favored partial social exclusivism.

Keywords: anthropology; Argentina; art; Buenos Aires; diaspora; mass graves; migrations; refugees; Slovenia; violence



Citation: Repič, Jaka. 2023. Violence, Exile, and Homeland in Visual Arts in the Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina. *Arts* 12: 93. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12030093>

Academic Editors: Marco Martiniello and Elsa Mescoli

Received: 1 March 2023

Revised: 21 April 2023

Accepted: 2 May 2023

Published: 5 May 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction¹

During my ethnographic research in Buenos Aires, I visited on several occasions the fine arts gallery of the painter and sculptor Marjan Grum, the *Museo Conventillo Marjan Grum*. The gallery is located in *La Boca*, a famous tourist neighborhood next to the old port, where Marjan Grum bought and renovated a workers apartment building (*conventillo*) (see Repič 2012, 2017; cf. Toplak 2008; see Figure 1). He showed me around the gallery, his workshop, and the permanent exhibition. Part of the latter shows Grum’s life and his migration from Slovenia, which he had left with his mother as a child, first to a refugee camp in Austria and two years later to Argentina. The exhibition shows not only his memories of the war and exile, but also his life in Argentina, his connections with the Slovenian migrant community, and his involvement in the Argentinean art world.

Although he has connections with the Slovenian diaspora, established by refugees after the Second World War, he discounted the influence of the Slovenian community in his work and stressed that he has established himself in the Argentinean art world and internationally as a self-taught sculptor and painter. In his own words, he rarely visits other Slovenians, perhaps because he married a non-Slovenian, but I have met him at various events organized by the community. He maintains a kind of ambivalent relationship with the Slovenian diaspora, with him being above all strongly integrated into the Argentinean art world as a professional artist. Nevertheless, a significant part of his artwork and permanent exhibition also shows memories of exile, war, and the post-war killings in his homeland. “*I made these in memory of my father, who was killed as a member of the Home Guard,*” he explained when he showed me an exhibition, depicting violence, executions, and mass

graves (see Figure 2). Moreover, most of the works from this series were prepared for the 1994 exhibition in Slovenia, with which Slovenian Cultural Action, the umbrella cultural program of the Slovenian community in Argentina, began establishing cultural–artistic connections with the homeland after Slovenia’s independence in 1991. This showcase serves as an introduction to an analysis of the diasporic art of Slovenian refugees after the Second World War and their descendants. Artistic production is considered contextually and through the interplay between the agency of the artists and diasporic, Argentinean, and transnational levels of cultural policies and their respective influences. The article presents the historical and political context of the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina, highlights three main themes in the diasporic artworks, namely depictions of violence, Slovenian landscape, and the search for roots and identity, and proposes theoretical and analytical possibilities for understanding interrelations between art and migration.



Figure 1. Museo conventillo Marjan Grum in La Boca, Buenos Aires. Photo by Jaka Repič, December 2010.



Figure 2. Marjan Grum, Executions. Part of the permanent exhibition in Museo Conventillo Marjan Grum, Buenos Aires. Photo by Jaka Repič, December 2010.

The link between migration processes and art and cultural production among migrants or their descendants, although not a new topic, has been a relatively underexplored area in the otherwise vast field of migration studies. Martiniello highlights that in the past two decades, attention in refugee studies has mostly been dominated by socially and politically pressing issues, such as “the growing number of migrants losing their lives in the crossing to Europe because of restrictive European migration policies... (and) the inhuman conditions in the encampment of asylum seekers and migrants” (Martiniello 2022, p. 3). This inattention is particularly evident in transatlantic migrations, which have been traditionally addressed from the economic perspective, implicitly denying migrants their artistic agency due to their social position and the role of workers in the economy (cf. Martiniello 2015, p. 2).

In the case of Argentina, historically and politically constituted by immigration from Europe, studies of the links between migration and the arts have been rare. Some research on the arts has focused on issues such as violence, memories of the dictatorship, the “disappeared” people, and human rights (Giunta 2014), appropriation of indigenous cultures and arts (e.g., Schneider 2000, 2006), or the constitution of the Argentinean art world and its involvement in the global “art world” (the concept was borrowed from Becker 1982). However, understanding the socio-cultural and political integration of migrants and their descendants, identity construction, social memories and narratives of migration, transnational relations with places of origin, cultural policies, and the influence of migrant artists in the local art world can be significantly informed by examining the links between art and migration.

The above example of Marjan Grum suggests that artistic creativity in the post-war Slovenian community in Argentina was, on the one hand, strongly dependent on experiences and memories of traumatic (post)war events and exile, but on the other hand not exclusively determined by cultural politics of the diaspora, namely cultural (re)production in the context of the community. Instead, the article examines the complex interplay between the artists’ agency and strategies and the several levels of politics shaping or influencing cultural production. Artistic and cultural activities in the diaspora that address the themes of memories of the war, violence, exile, and homeland, are intertwined with three parallel, convergent, and sometimes contradictory levels of cultural policies:

- (a) Argentinean cultural policies, based on the politics of cultural pluralism, which until the middle of the 20th century actively encouraged immigration from Europe and enabled the formation and preservation of migrant communities and identities (cf. Schneider 2006), while at the same time facilitating the integration of newcomer artists into the Argentinean art world;
- (b) Cultural policies of the Slovenian post-war diasporic community, which preserved and ideologically contextualized or framed the social memory of the war and the post-war violence, the experience of displacement, and the memory of the homeland, by promoting artistic exploration of themes relevant to diasporic identities and ideologies;
- (c) The transnational level of cooperation, which enabled the activities of Slovenian artists from Argentina in their country of origin after 1991.

Methodological Note

The research is based on a longer interest in migration between Slovenia and Argentina (Repič 2006). I conducted the ethnographic research with six months of participant observation between 2004–2005 and 2010–2011 in Buenos Aires and San Carlos de Bariloche, both cities with strong Slovenian communities. The participant observation gave me an insight into the daily life of the post-war diaspora. In addition, I conducted interviews with selected Slovenian artists in Buenos Aires and Bariloche during month-long visits in 2015 and 2017. The article also draws on historical sources, mainly from local production (publications of Slovenian journalism and literature in Argentina and exhibition reports).

I engaged with a more specific focus on art in the diaspora in 2015 and 2017, when I used two main methods: narrative biographical interviews or “life stories” and unstruc-

tured and semi-structured interviews with artists, discussing their respective artworks or exhibitions. I conducted focused interviews with ten male and female visual artists belonging to three generations—the actual post-war migrants and the first and the second generation born to migrants in Argentina.² Some of the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and notes were taken for all of them. When possible, I took photographs of the artwork.

In selecting interviewees, I tried to include people who were recognized as artists in the diasporic community (cf. [Svašek 2007](#)). The research participants therefore included self-taught and amateur artists who only exhibited in the community, as well as academy-trained, professional, and widely recognized artists. I worked with ten artists who exhibited in community centers or at the Slovenian Embassy in Buenos Aires. I also analyzed works by artists who were influential in art schools in the past (e.g., Bara Remec) or who have migrated to Slovenia since 1991 (e.g., Marjan Jerman and Marjeta Marija Dolinar).

The research focused on attitudes towards the refugee phenomenon, memory, and homeland in the artistic and cultural production of the Slovenian diaspora established in Argentina after the Second World War. In the analysis, I followed their explanations of artworks and their own understanding of the role of art in the Slovenian community. Three themes appeared particularly connected to the experience of exile and life in diaspora: themes of war and post-war executions and burial sites (often referred to as “the Slovenian tragedy”); depictions of the Slovenian landscape or important places (“the beauties of Slovenia”); and the ambivalence of identification (expressed as “searching for roots” or “living between two homelands”). These themes do not necessarily make up the majority of their artistic work, but they are the themes most closely associated with the experience of exile and life in the diaspora.

2. Anthropological Takes on the Arts and Migration

While anthropology has long been concerned with creativity, art, and cultural production, relatively little attention has been paid to the relationship between art and migration. Some examples include issues of music in transnational, refugee, or diasporic contexts (e.g., [Aparicio and Jáquez 2003](#); [Baily and Collyer 2006](#); [O’Neill 2008](#); [Kozorog and Bartulović 2015](#); [Molek 2017](#)), while performative and particularly visual arts in migration/mobility contexts have been less frequently studied from an anthropological perspective (e.g., [Toplak 2008](#); [Repič 2017](#); [Molek et al. 2017](#)). Examples from sociology and other disciplines have demonstrated for example the importance of studying the links between migration and art for understanding urban multicultural contexts (e.g., [Harris 2013](#); [DiMaggio and Fernandez-Kelly 2010](#)) or highlighted migrants’ political participation (e.g., [Lafleur and Martiniello 2009](#); [Martiniello 2014](#)).

The approach of this research was partly informed by anthropological debates on diaspora (cf. [Brubaker 2005](#)) and by the field of anthropology of art (e.g., [Gell 1998](#); [Svašek 2007](#); [Schneider 2006](#)), the latter focusing not so much on art objects but on the process of art and cultural production and on the social relations that make art meaningful. Although artistic creativity is the agency of the artists and arises from their intimate exploration and contemplation, it is also integrated into broader socio-cultural and political contexts that either reflect pressing social issues or arise from the mediation or reception of artworks by different institutions and audiences. Because of their social contexts, the arts have great symbolic and affective power.

Alfred Gell emphasized the contextual nature of art as embedded in a cultural and social matrix. He also asserted that art does not have an “inner” nature, one entirely independent from a relational context. Rather, the role of art in social and cultural reproduction can only be understood in a relational context ([Gell 1998](#)). Furthermore, Maruška Svašek emphasized the “processual nature of art production . . . (to) identify the many different factors that influence the ways in which people experience and understand it” ([Svašek 2007](#), p. 4). In some respects, this resembles Howard Becker’s understanding of art as a cooperative process between producers, mediators, recipients, institutions, and art objects,

except that it places a strong focus on the agency of artists and art objects. In this sense, art is not merely an individual or collective product, but a relational one that depends on socio-political processes as well as “different relations between institutions or individuals who produce, consume, give, take, buy, use, or display artifacts” (Svašek 2007, p. 5; cf. Becker 1982; Marcus and Myers 1995; Schneider 2006).

An anthropological analysis of art is informed by understanding the process of creativity on the level of the agency of artists and art objects as well as their embeddedness in social, historical, and political contexts. It traces the cognitive systems and modes of cultural and social (re)production in everyday life. Art reveals the intimate aspects of the lives of artists and their identity processes, but also the underlying layers of culturally, socially, politically, ideologically, and economically defined and communicated experiences. If addressed contextually, i.e., through historical and social contexts of lived experience, cultural production, representation, and consumption, artistic creativity is as much individual as social (Gell 1998; cf. Morphy and Perkins 2006).

To study the links between migration and art, Martiniello suggests a comparative and transdisciplinary approach that includes cultural, social, policy, political, and economic levels (see Martiniello 2015, pp. 3–5). This article is primarily concerned with the cultural and policy levels, namely the interrelationships between artists’ creativity within diasporic cultural production, Argentinean cultural policy, and transnational art collaboration. In this sense, artistic production in the context of migration is not only an expression of the personal or collective migration experience, but represents the agency of artists who explore, recontextualize and reproduce temporal, spatial, and ideological-identity aspects of migrant sociality, a process that is also influenced by cultural policies at the level of the Argentinean state, the Slovenian diaspora, and the transnational level.

Slovenian artists in Argentina are generally involved in the diasporic community as well as in Argentinean and international art institutions. The divergences between the levels of the cultural policies might be caused by ambivalence or antagonisms in the activities of expatriate artists in the Argentinean and transnational contexts, to the point of reflecting or even opposing diasporic and national-cultural ideologies. As one younger artist stated:

“Art fulfilled me, it liberated me . . . from the (Slovenian) community as well, which I love dearly but from whose expectations, limitations, I also needed to be free”.

In the following pages, the article describes the historical context of Slovenian refugees after the Second World War and the formation of the diasporic community in Argentina, discusses the concept of the diaspora and its fundamental dimensions that go beyond the mere communal–organizational aspect, and addresses some dominant themes in the arts in the Slovenian diaspora, connected to the memory of exile, war, and mass executions. Finally, it highlights the confluence of three levels of cultural policy that influence art and cultural production.

3. Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina: A Historical Outline

Slovenians in Argentina are a socially, culturally, and politically heterogeneous category, divided into different communities originating in several historical periods.³ This article only addresses the post-war community, labeled by some authors as “political emigration” (Žigon 2001), while I prefer to call it a diaspora because of its complex organization and preservation of the memory of displacement and homeland (Repič 2006).

Notably, post-war emigration was not the first emigration of Slovenians to Argentina, even though it is the most widely recognized, partly due to its clear political–ideological stance and its complex organizational structure. The migration of Slovenians to Argentina began as early as the late 19th century (Molek 2021, pp. 218–23), but the highest number of Slovenes arrived between the two world wars. They mostly emigrated from the littoral and westernmost region of Slovenia, which was annexed to Italy with the Treaty of Rapallo after the First World War (see Žigon 1998, p. 40; Sjekloča 2004, p. 79; Rant 1998, p. 16). They emigrated due to poverty, political pressures, and the Italian policy of ethnic assimilation.

Their political stances were largely at odds with those of post-WWII migration, which is why the migrants, who came to Argentina after 1947, did not integrate into the existing Slovenian diaspora community but rather formed their own organizational structure.

Emigration after the Second World War was not as extensive in numbers, but it was highly organized. The early organization and development of cultural activities began as early as 1945 in refugee camps in Austria. They shared traumatic experiences of exile from their homeland and the stories of mass killings of Home Guard soldiers, who opposed communism and were collaborating with the German army during the war. Among those victims were many captured in Yugoslavia and ostensibly those Home Guard affiliates who were returned to Yugoslavia by the British Army from the Vetrinj camp in Austria. “Ten to twelve thousand Slovenian Home Guard were turned over, which were then murdered by their Slovenian compatriots brutally and without trial”. (Corsellis 1997, p. 131). The refugees established schools, prepared cultural events and celebrations, began printing bulletins, schoolbooks, and other literature, and established the ideological basis for the later formation of the diasporic community in Argentina (Rot 1992; Corsellis 1997, p. 137; Arnež 1999; Švent 2007). After 1947, between six and seven thousand Slovenian political refugees immigrated to Argentina (Rant 1998, pp. 15–17). There, they associated with the central Slovenian Society, eventually renamed United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*), and nine local Slovenian community centers in Buenos Aires, Mendoza, and Bariloche.

In their new homeland, they preserved the memory of exile, creating a mythology of the *ancestral homeland* and of *return* at the fall of the communist regime in Yugoslavia in 1991. The experiences and memories of exile and the orientation towards the homeland, alongside the anti-communist position, became the constitutive factors of the diasporic social organization and ideological foundation (Repič 2016, 2019). They blamed the communist revolution as being the main reason for the fratricidal violence during and after the war and for their exile. For this reason, the anti-communist stance remains an important political–ideological pillar of the diaspora to this day, equally and even inseparably linked to the ethno-national (national identity, language, and culture) and religious foundations (Catholic faith). For example, in 1952 Dr. Alojzij Odar, during his speech at the commemoration of the victims of communist violence, expressed a direct link between national belonging, Christianity, and politics: “Our victims, who fell because of communism, are national, human, Christian victims” (Rant 1998, p. 369).⁴ These foundations were integrated into all aspects of life in the diaspora: schooling, religious services, rituals, preservation of culture and language, transnational connections with the homeland, a vibrant social and cultural life, and literary and artistic creativity (see Figure 3 with images of refugees, mass graves and their destination in South America).

Artistic and cultural productivity encompasses music, literature and other publications, theatre, and visual arts (see Rot 1994; Mislej 1995, 2001, 2003; Toplak 2008; Repič 2012, 2017). Art and cultural production have been linked to the survival and ethnic, cultural, and ideological persistence of the post-war diaspora. Often, the role of cultural production was seen in the general affirmation of “Slovenianness”, understood as the imperative to preserve the Slovenian language, culture, and the Catholic faith, as well as to maintain anti-communist ideology and the collective memory of exile and homeland.

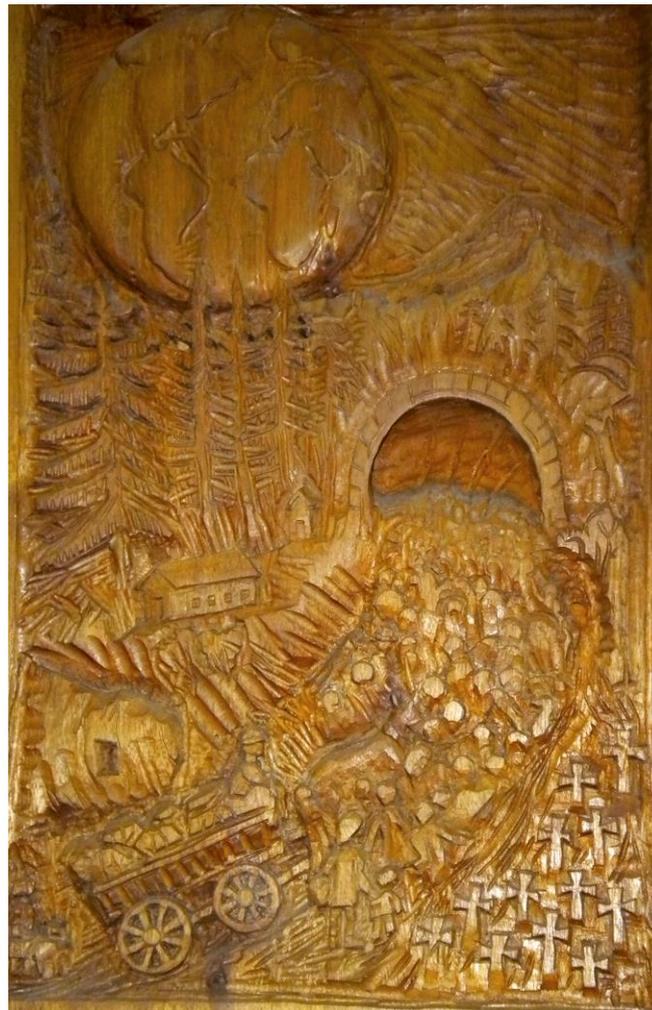


Figure 3. A carving on a wooden panel, depicting refugees fleeing across the Ljubelj Pass to Austria. Crosses in the bottom right corner represent graves and the globe in the upper left corner with the Americas represents the destination of the refugees. Author unknown. Located at the Slovenian Cultural Centre at San Martín, Buenos Aires. Photo by Jaka Repič, December 2011.

4. On the Analytical Usefulness of the Diaspora Concept

In the last three decades, there has been a profound shift in the understanding of the relationship between rootedness and mobility as two ontological realities of being and analytical approaches to understanding human beings. In anthropology, this is reflected in theoretical discourses and concepts that encompass more than just the treatment of migration: transnational connections and diasporas, not least the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006). In order to understand the historical and social context of migrations, community building, and the significance of artistic and cultural production within the community, the article draws theoretically on the concept of diaspora, which has gained prominence in anthropology and migration studies since 1991 (see Safran 1991; Povrzanović Frykman 2004; Brubaker 2005). The concept of diaspora is used here to enable understanding of the various levels of lived experience in specific socio-political contexts co-shaped by the experiences of displacement, Argentinean policy of cultural pluralism, and contemporary transnational relations and practices of (return) mobility.

Diaspora, writes James Clifford,

“... involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home. [It describes] not simply transnationality and movement, but political

struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement". (Clifford 1994, p. 308)

In such diasporic contexts, migrants and their descendants are often "torn" between their place of origin—symbolized by the ancestral homeland, language, and "authentic" culture—and the country of immigration. Diaspora is thus characterized by transnational connections and the experiences of mobility and immobility (e.g., an inability to return) in the migrant contexts, where there is a strong need for the formation of social bonds or a "community", the preservation of social memories of displacement, and the mythology of the homeland.

In migration studies and in anthropology, the concept of diaspora was introduced primarily by William Safran's article *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return* published in 1991 in the then-new journal *Diaspora*. Safran enumerates the main characteristics: diaspora is a network of people who: (a) live outside their home country; (b) maintain specific, often traumatic collective social memories; (c) preserve interests, visions, and myths related to their homeland; (d) feel excluded from their social surroundings; (e) maintain the aspirations of an eventual return; and (f) participate in social, economic, and political ties with their homeland, especially in its political reconstruction (1991, pp. 83–84). Safran therefore stresses collective memories, which may be based on traumatic events such as wars or exile, social ties within the expatriate community, and the role of the homeland.

Rogers Brubaker provides a somewhat simpler definition with similar emphases. He defines diaspora in terms of the following criteria: (a) dispersion or exile; (b) homeland orientation; (c) boundary maintenance, especially vis-a-vis the dominant culture (2005, pp. 5–7)⁵. Diaspora is not only an organizational entity, but also an ideological–political position in which the real or imagined homeland "represents an authoritative source of values, loyalties, and identity" (Brubaker 2005, p. 5). Maintaining relations with one's own or ancestral homeland is essential for the formation and persistence of relationships within the diaspora, group solidarity, and identity (Brah 1996, p. 180; cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2004, pp. 82–85). Return migrations, "root tourism", or other forms of return mobilities are also common (see Basu 2004; Repič 2016). King and Christou (2011, p. 425) argue for the emic perspective of the people, who might conceptualize their journeys as "returning" even if only as tourist visits.

The analytical concept of diaspora thus facilitates the understanding of several manifestations of social activity, including the *morphological* (complex organization of the diaspora community), *temporal* (social memories and interpretations of the past and future), *spatial* (meanings of homeland and return mobilities, economic collaboration or political engagement), *mythological and ritual* (ritual practices and mythologies related to memories, homeland, and return), and *ideological-identitarian* (political ideology, imperative to preserving ethno-national identity, frequently also as ambivalent identifications). In all manifestations of diasporic sociality, cultural reproduction of language, customs, social memories, etc., plays an important role.

5. Artistic and Cultural Production in the Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina

The historical introduction and the conceptual and theoretical framework are presented with the aim of illuminating the social context of the post-war Slovenian community, which affects its daily practices, shared ideological positions, identity processes, and cultural (re)production. In cultural production, the themes of war, exile, and homeland are often recurring. They appear in daily interactions, in church services and various rituals and celebrations, in Slovenian schools, at cultural events, and in literature, the press, music, and the visual arts.

Literature and music are particularly well developed in the diaspora, as they also function in preserving the Slovenian language. Singing, choir singing, and other forms of Slovenian music take place in schools, at cultural events, in church mass, and at social gatherings (Mislej 1995; Vovk 2004). Slovenian music also has its place in Argentinean media, for example in the Slovenian radio program Window to Slovenia (*Ventana a Eslovenia*),

which, according to the program host, is dedicated to “broadcasting the Slovenian word and music to different generations of the audience”.

Cultural production within the community has been very active since its settlement in Argentina, especially with publications of newspapers (e.g., the weekly *Svobodna Slovenija* (Free Slovenia) and journals such as *Duhovno življenje*, *Rodna Gruda* and *Meddobje/Intersiglo*, the arts and culture periodical *Glas Slovenske kulturne akcije* (Voice of the Slovenian Cultural Action), and the publication of numerous poetry collections, prose, school, and religious literature. An important role of literature was the documentation of stories and memories of the war and post-war events (see [Žitnik 2001](#)). Works include accurate records of testimonies from the war and from survivors of the post-war killings⁶ (e.g., [Kocmur 1965–1971](#); [Zajec et al. 1998](#)). Many publications broadly relate to the Second World War and the communist revolution, or to Slovenian history, poetry, and prose. Publications in the Slovenian language were issued by the umbrella Slovenian society United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*) and the Slovenian Cultural Action, which supported the cultural, scientific, and artistic activities of the diaspora (see [Mislej 1992, 1995](#); [Rot 1992](#); [Papež et al. 1994](#); [Žigon 2001](#), pp. 136–38). Memories of the war, post-war violence, the homeland, and exile were important for the formation and persistence of the community. One of the interviewees summed this up in succinct words: “We are here because of the historical injustice that our parents had to suffer. I should have been born in Slovenia!”

Similar themes appear in sculptures and the visual arts. Cultural and artistic production was not only essential for the preservation of social memory, but also represented the vibrant life force of the community, producing a rich cultural output. The main goal of Slovenian Cultural Action was to bring together artists, scientists, writers, and poets, especially within the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina, but also in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. It maintained five sections: political philosophy, literature, music, the visual arts, and theatre. With a strong organizational background, it enabled the publication of literature in the Slovenian language in Buenos Aires, while providing visual artists with a variety of opportunities to create and stage exhibitions in Argentina and internationally (after 1991 also in Slovenia).

Of all the modes of cultural production, the visual arts were the least dominated by the diasporic cultural and political ideology and were consequently the most integrated into the Argentinean art world.⁷ Within the Slovenian Cultural Action, an art school was organized as early as 1955, with the aim to gather established artists, among them France Ahčin, Bara Remec, Marijan Marolt, Milan Volovšek and others, to promote art production among Slovenians and to support the education of younger artists. However, they were reluctant to subject their artistic expression to the imperatives of the political–ideological agenda of the community as was expected by its political elite. Instead, the school was primarily intended to provide space for the development of the younger generations of artists (see [Rot 1994](#); [Mislej 2001](#); [Toplak 2003, 2008](#), pp. 87–101). In later years, some of these younger artists became more integrated into the Argentinean artistic circles, either by studying art or by exhibiting in galleries and other art institutions in Argentina.

Nevertheless, a clear influence of the cultural politics of the diaspora can also be seen in the visual arts with prevailing ideological themes and the need to preserve the Slovenian identity in the diaspora (cf. [Toplak 2008](#), p. 94). The themes most directly connected to the diasporic experience and memory often included imagery of violence, war, prison camps, and post-war killings, of exile and homeland (e.g., hometowns, churches, and nationally significant or sacred places), and the search for identity between two homelands, namely Argentina and Slovenia.⁸

5.1. Violence, War, and Post-War Killings

Images of war, post-war killings, and mass graves are common in diasporic literature as well as in other forms of cultural production, including the visual arts. In order to preserve the memory of war and exile, diasporic ideology encouraged artistic and cultural production to depict violence, war, and post-war killings—events that were “silenced” in

the homeland (see Figures 4 and 5). Some of the clearest examples should be mentioned here: Bara Remec⁹ contributed a series of illustrations for the Slovenian press that showed images of death, violence, mourning, blood, barbed wires, mass graves, etc. Marjan Grum, a well-known sculptor and painter in the Argentinean art world and to some extent removed from the diaspora community, created several artworks depicting mass executions, graves, skulls, dead bodies, and images of bloodied and imprisoned human figures when he was invited by the Slovenian Cultural Action to participate in a group exhibition in Slovenia in 1994. In the interview, he said:

“During the executions, people were shot and fell into the pit caves. Some escaped from the caves, including my father. He managed to climb out of the cave and get to Austria. But he was sent back. I never saw him again”.

“I made these in memory of the Home Guard soldiers, but also in memory of my father. It was in a pit cave, in Kočevski Rog, where the Home Guard soldiers ended up after they were executed. They were killing them in large numbers in Kočevski rog and in Slovenia. These (paintings) are a reminder of that”.



Figure 4. Maria Margerita Dolinar, Slovenian Guernica. Source: <http://www.lipa-sprave.si> (accessed on 12 October 2022).

It was only during the preparations for the visiting exhibition in Slovenia that he produced works commemorating the killed Home Guard soldiers, including his father, who was executed in the forest of Kočevski Rog. He also showed artworks that are only indirectly related to the violence in Slovenia. One of the sculptures depicts the grinding of people, and he explained: “This work shows how individuals are repressed, either in wars or by state terror. Not only in Slovenia, but also here in Argentina, during the dictatorship”. One of the sculptures shows a head of an indigenous person, being torn apart: “This shows how Argentina has treated the indigenous people throughout its history and still today”.



Figure 5. Bara Remec, Hidden crimes. Source: <https://www.zaveza.si/zaveza-st-67/> (accessed on 12 October 2022).

One of the artists of Slovenian descent was influenced by Marjan Grum's depiction of violence. He showed a sculpture he made in memory of friends he lost in the war over the Falkland Islands. "I made this for two friends who lost their lives in the war. I had to make this, it felt like something was missing inside me . . . It was not until I saw works of Marjan Grum that I connected the war in Slovenia with violence in Argentina, you know it is just suffering". Other well-known painters, on the other hand, regularly and extensively depicted the "Slovenian tragedy", for example with images of prison life, torture, massacres, or mass graves. Bara Remec and Andreja Dolinar also portrayed the executions in Kočevski Rog, while Marjeta Dolinar addressed the "Slovenian tragedy" in a painting entitled *Slovenian Guernica*, which she created after the discovery of the mass grave in the Huda Jama cave in 2009 (see Figure 4). "The lower vertical fragments represent the three mine shafts of Huda Jama, where several thousand victims were killed and buried. The middle segment represents barriers installed to close the victims in the shafts, and the upper fragment represents God and resurrection". (Source: <https://radio.ognjisce.si/sl/106/slovenija/1660/slovenska-guernica.htm> (accessed on 12 October 2022)).

5.2. Homeland, Home, and Sacred Sites

Frequent motifs in the fine arts are the images of home places, state symbols, cultural landscapes, and iconic memorials or sacred sites and objects (e.g., churches or cemeteries). It is often precisely artistic representations of landscape that carry a powerful symbolic reference to home, belonging, and identity (cf. Repič 2016).

Marko Jerman was born in Argentina to Slovenian parents. He studied art in Argentina and specialized in the production of vitrage (stained glass window) after moving to Italy in

1981. After learning this technique, he moved to Slovenia in 1991. He makes stained glass windows for churches, the content of those often clearly religious, while some also depict the Slovenian landscape (e.g., Lake Bled with its island, and various mountains). During a visit to one of the interlocutors in Bariloche, I noticed a vitrage with a mountain motif in his home and asked whether if it was made by Marko Jerman. Indeed, the vitrage depicting Mount Jalovec in the Julian Alps was a gift from the artist, and as I was told, was made before he ever visited Slovenia (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Marjan Jerman, Mount Jalovec. The vitrage is located in a family house in Bariloche. Photo by Jaka Repič, October 2015.

Artists can depict landscapes from memory, from images and photographs, or from descriptions. Slovenian cultural centers or private homes are often decorated with works of art or souvenirs representing the Slovenian landscape. They are often not entirely realistic. One interlocutor, herself an artist, described the paintings of her father as dark and conveying the experience of exile and invoking emotions of grief and loss even though he did not depict actual violence or exile:

“My father was a self-taught painter who painted mainly for himself, as a form of expression of the inner world In his works, he often portrayed the landscape of his childhood before his exile, but he tended to use dark colors, for example when depicting forests or landscapes. His works were generally dark, morose, I think because they were filled with the pain of the experience of displacement”.

In this sense, artworks themed with imagery of the homeland, loss, suffering, or nostalgia have the power to recreate specific memories and socialities of the diaspora by evoking a sense of shared experiences. Artworks depicting the landscape can be understood as symbolic expressions of identity, belonging, and home, but they also go beyond these symbolic meanings. Several artists I interviewed told me their works were not mere symbolic depictions of a place or landscape but were produced when they artistically explored the issues of spatial and social relations and identifications—meaningful subjects to the people living in a diaspora. One of the artists said: “For years I was moving back and forth between Slovenia and Argentina. But it was more and more that I started painting Slovenian landscapes and places I feel close to”. From landscape painting, she eventually moved into religious motifs.

5.3. Ambivalence and the Search for Identity

Another common motif in the diaspora is the ambivalence and relations between two homelands. Kristina Toplak (2008, p. 141) mentions an artist who often used themes of water to depict uncertainty and remoteness between her two homelands, Slovenia, and Argentina. On a wall of the Slomšek Centre in the Ramos Mejia neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Andreja Dolinar painted a large mural that on the one side portrays Argentina (Buenos Aires and the obelisk on the main street Avenida 9 de Julio) but on the other side merges into the Slovenian landscape (with images of Lake Bled, snow-capped mountains, and Ljubljana Castle). This duality of the home was summarized:

“We walk two paths, I and the other artists. We participate in the Slovenian community because we are connected to it. At the same time, we are present in the globalized world and must participate and exhibit here in Argentina. All this enriches us because we develop in two cultures at the same time. Nevertheless, like many of us, I have this persisting feeling of being torn between two homelands”. (Toplak 2008, p. 130)

Several artists stated in the interviews that they grew up hearing stories about the beauties of the homeland, but also of the “Slovenian tragedy”. For the younger artists, life in the diaspora can also be associated with identity challenges, although many of them are well integrated into the Argentinean art world. Cecilia, for example, embodied her sense of ambivalence between two homelands in early works. Art critic Ana Sitar expressed this in the catalogue of the exhibition *Plameni iskanja* (Flames of Searching):

“In her work, two worlds, two homelands, meet. South America is the world of her childhood, the world where she grew up and where she was constantly aware of another world, the homeland of her ancestors. The diversity of (her) works confirms the eternal connection and interweaving of not only two actual worlds and homelands but the interrelation of the experienced world to the vast world of memory”. (cf. Repič 2017, p. 15)

The intertwining between worlds is also reflected in the question of cultural hybridization and appropriation, another prominent theme in Argentinean art (cf. Schneider 2006). A younger artist of Slovenian origin, who is fully embraced by the Argentinean art milieu, often explores the phenomenon of cultural hybridization. In several of his paintings he depicts a fusion of cultures and worlds (e.g., depictions of Babylon symbolizing Argentinean migration), but also the chasms between, and hybridization of, social classes (images of gauchos and industrial workers) (see Figure 7). “I often play with some archetypes and put them into paintings and see what happens. This painting shows Argentina, its industries, mate tea, the river, and the Babylon tower representing the mix of people here . . . I am connected to the Slovenian community, and I am happy to exhibit there. But I live in Argentina, and I am concerned with issues here and in the world”. He maintains an ambivalent attitude toward the Slovenian community. On the one hand, he mentioned its importance in daily life but also downplayed its influence on his artistic work. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the opportunities for artistic expression in the diaspora (exhibitions in

the community and strong support of older, established colleagues) and consequently its value in the transnational context (exhibitions at the Slovenian Embassy in Argentina).



Figure 7. Daniel Leber, *Babylon*. The painting represents social, cultural, ethnic, and class hybridities in Argentina. Photo by Jaka Repič, December 2015 in the artist's atelier, Buenos Aires.

6. Confluences of the Three Levels of Cultural Policies with Cultural and Artistic Production in the Diaspora

The socio-historical context of the diaspora can be quite clearly and unambiguously represented in the visual arts, for example in those works that directly address exile, killings, and mass graves. Images of the homeland are also integrated into the broader diasporic mythology of the homeland, which presents it as a source of cultural, religious, and moral values. A common and recurring motif, especially among descendants of migrants, is the internal divide between two homelands and the associated ambivalence of identifications. This does not mean that visual artists deal exclusively or predominantly with these themes. Some of them are primarily active in diasporic cultural production, while others are mostly engaged with the Argentinean art world.

Notably, though, the motifs of violence, suffering, and death may also resonate with the Argentinean experience. In the interpretation of their artworks addressing themes of violence and terror, two of the artists compared the Slovenian post-war killings with the violence against the indigenous peoples in Argentina's past and with *el proceso* in times of the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. In Argentina's public space, the theme of the murdered and the disappeared during this dictatorship is very present, for example in monuments and memorial parks,¹⁰ at regular public events, in literature, and in the visual arts:

“Contemporary Argentinean art is strongly characterized by the influence of memory./.../It is not the revival of memory related to various eras of Argentinean history, but largely that of the recent brutal dictatorship. Its persistence, even in new art, reflects the development of a broad repertoire of related themes searching for various ways of contextualizing the tragic events that took place”. (Giunta 2014, p. 1)

In an analytical sense, the visual arts are the least tangible part of cultural production because, although the interpretation of their artifacts depends on their creators, they also have the capacity to “act” on their own through their symbolic and affective power. Above all, art does not emerge in a social, historical, and ideological vacuum, but is necessarily related to various social contexts and cultural politics. The artistic activity of Slovenians in Argentina, who explore, depict, or exhibit motifs of war or post-war violence, mass graves, exile, their homeland, and the search for identity, can be understood as a cultural (and ideological) reproduction, influenced by three levels of cultural policies: the Argentinean cultural pluralism and the associated possibility to integrate into the local art world, the cultural politics of the diaspora, and the transnational connections after 1991 that made cultural and artistic collaboration with their homeland possible.

The formation of complexly organized ethnic communities, such as the Slovenian post-war exile community, would not have been possible without a history of positive attitudes towards European immigration to Argentina and the state policy of cultural pluralism (*pluralismo cultural*). This policy was established by the Argentinean authorities in the second half of the 19th century to encourage European immigration, in order to populate the country’s territory and provide its elite abundant immigrant workforce. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, ideologist and president of Argentina in the years 1868–1874, “characterized the immigration as a Europeanization or ‘regeneration of the races’” (Schneider 2000, p. 72). The politics of cultural pluralism was racially biased as non-European migrants were practically not accepted into the country. At the same time, the state held a profoundly negative attitude towards the indigenous peoples, which spurred the genocidal and assimilationist conquest of the territories of the Pampa and Patagonia (*La Conquista del Desierto*). The indigenous peoples were deprived of their land and many were sent to reservations, used as servants, forced into compulsory labor, or killed. The main goal in the 19th century was the establishment of a modern South American state with a “white immigrant society” (Schneider 2000, p. 63) based on the Creole identity.

Schneider discusses two basic notions of creolization (*criollo*) in Argentina, one that refers to the upper class and the descendant of colonial Spaniards, and the other being egalitarian, referring to descendants of colonial Spaniards and indigenous people (Schneider 2006, pp. 6–7). The first one was awkwardly suggested by the Argentinean president Alberto Fernández at the Spanish–Argentinean political summit on 9 June 2021, where he said:

“Octavio Paz once wrote that the Mexicans originate from the Indians, Brazilians from the jungle, while we Argentineans came aboard ships from Europe”.¹¹

The Argentinean political narrative favored this view, with art and cultural production often showing strong European influences. Buenos Aires in particular, described as the “Paris of South America” (Schneider 2006, p. 6) and the Argentinean and South American art capital, also represents the place of multiculturalism and multilayered identity processes. There is, however, a growing opposing (national) narrative that juxtaposes the *portenos* (traditional name for the inhabitants of Buenos Aires) with the inland indigenous population, promoting an “American aesthetic”, indigenous art, and cultural revival and resulting in the appropriation of indigenous art by many contemporary artists (Schneider 2006, p. 7).

The policy of cultural pluralism was a foundation of Argentinean nation-building from the mid-19th century and encouraged immigration from Europe until the mid-20th century, supporting the formation and preservation of specific ethno-national migrant communities, languages, identities, and artistic expressions. “The migration experience

fundamentally reshaped both the Creole as well as the immigrant population, (which both consequently/ . . . /embraced a new, Argentinean identity" (Schneider 2000, p. 28). This resulted in the possibility of establishing migrant or ethnic communities, some with their own cultural production. This also enabled simultaneous inclusion into different social, institutional, and ethno-national contexts. Slovenian artists generally integrated themselves into the Argentinean art world and its institutions (art academies and schools, galleries, etc.), but still maintained their connections to the diaspora.

Within the post-war Slovenian community, diasporic cultural policy initially had a relative influence on artistic and cultural production by preserving, ideologically framing, and instrumentalizing the social memory of war and post-war violence, the experience of exile, and the mythology of the homeland. An important reason for preserving these memories was the safekeeping of "historical truth" and the testimonies of the "Slovenian tragedy". At the commemoration held in 1969, the president of United Slovenia emphasized the duty to preserve the testimonies of war for future generations:

"We firmly believe that such times shall come when the Slovenian people will make pilgrimage to their forgotten graves . . . and in the places where our brethren spilled their blood there will be shrines where the whole nation will celebrate the memory of the fallen heroes . . . Until that time, we expatriate Slovenians must safeguard these sacred treasures of ours". (Rant 1998, p. 402)

The social memories and mythology of the homeland are the expressions of a distinctly anti-communist ideology, in whose episteme communism bears the main blame for the violence during and especially after the war and for the exile. The preservation of "Slovenianness" was therefore essential, at least until the "liberation" from communism which took place in 1991.¹² This ideological stance also tried to shape cultural and artistic production. However, in the art school, established in 1955 as part of Slovenian Cultural Action, artists resisted the expectations that art should primarily represent "the Slovenian tragedy". This break was especially important for artistic independence and inclusion of the artists into the Argentinean art milieu. Nevertheless, the themes encouraged by diasporic cultural politics left their mark. Even for younger artists who are well integrated into the Argentinean art world, certain fundamental issues they address in their art may arise, at least indirectly, from the experiences of life in the diaspora.

Some younger artists were searching for their identity and possibilities to connect their two homelands together through art. One female artist from the younger generation, on the contrary, rejected the imperative of infusing her artworks with the ideological themes of the diaspora altogether. She went even further and described art as something that enables her to be free from the rules and expectations of the Slovenian community.

Since the end of the last dictatorship in 1983, the Argentinean art world has adopted new practices and topics, including memories of the Dirty War, violence, exile, human rights, and the memory of the disappeared people (*desaparecidos*).¹³ Another influential process was the revival of migrant and ethnic identities and transnational connections of artists with their parental/ancestral homeland. An important process analyzed by Arnd Schneider was the appropriation of indigenous art and culture, based simultaneously on indigenous cultural revival, a general break from the European past, and an adoption of Latin American identity (as for example apparent in the new migrations from neighboring South American countries and the image of Buenos Aires becoming more like other Latin American cities (Schneider 2006, p. 8). Finally, the art world in Argentina is increasingly dominated by private-sector institutions. Schneider gives an example of the *Museo de Arte Latinoamericano Buenos Aires* (MALBA), established by the private collector Eduardo Costantini, a case which "indicates that future activities are to be expected from the private sector rather than from the largely discredited state institutions" (2006, p. 18). In this sense, since the 1990s and especially since the economic crisis in 2001, there has also been a general reorientation of the Argentinean art world towards the global art market.

All of these processes also affected Slovenian artists. Their integration into the globalized art world is rare, but many are involved in the transnational connections between

Slovenia and Argentina that have been restored since 1991. The third level of influence of cultural policies on the diaspora and art production is therefore the transnational level.¹⁴ Marjan Grum returned to Slovenia for the first time in 1994, upon the invitation of the diaspora-based art program Slovenian Cultural Action, which aimed to demonstrate in the homeland the cultural strength and creative richness of the Slovenian community in Argentina. Several artists of Slovenian origin, born in Argentina, decided to migrate to Slovenia, some of them referring to this as return migration. In Slovenia, similar themes were preserved in their art production. One example is Marjeta Dolinar, who painted the *Slovenska Guernica* (Slovenian Guernica) and organized an exhibition in 2010, following the discovery and exhumation of human remains from the Huda Jama Cave, one of the most prominent mass graves of the post-WWII period.

Several national and non-governmental organizations support the social and cultural cooperation between Slovenia and Slovenians in Argentina. For example, the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Buenos Aires organized a cycle of art exhibitions entitled *Dobri vetrovi za kulturo* (Tailwinds for Culture) by Slovenian–Argentinean artists. Due to political reasons, transnational connections became increasingly evident after 1991. Slovenians from Argentina (not only from the post-war community) often “returned” to Slovenia or traveled there to visit their ancestral homeland and, at the same time, participated in the cultural–artistic social life in the country. Cultural policy after 1991 supported the cooperation of the Slovenian artists in Argentina with art institutions in Slovenia.

7. Conclusions

This article addresses visual artists in the post-World War II Slovenian diasporic community in Argentina and analyzes some of the themes inextricably connected to diasporic experiences (displacement, homeland, and the search for identity). Art that inherently questions social realities is examined through an anthropological approach that emphasizes its relational context (Gell 1998). The article therefore traces the influences of collectively shaped memories of exile, mythologies of the homeland, and lived experiences in the Slovenian community, as well as the influences of cultural policies that operate on multiple levels, namely the level of Argentinean cultural pluralism, the diasporic level, and the transnational level.

Although the main goal of the article is to understand how visual art reflects the experiences of exile and life in the diaspora, this presents challenges and limitations for ethnographic research. In order to understand the aspect of art and cultural production most closely related to the experience of exile, I have drawn on not only interviews but also historical sources and ethnographic research of the organizational, ideological, and other aspects of the diaspora. In this sense, visual art cannot be separated from daily life, diasporic institutions, and other means of cultural production, especially literature and performative art. To deepen this research, one could also look more closely at other aspects of cultural production in the diaspora. However, all forms of cultural production share, among others, themes related to exile. In the post-war Slovenian community in Argentina, artistic and cultural production have great affective and symbolic power, especially when it reflects the motifs of wartime and post-war violence, killings and mass graves and relations to the homeland. These were not only the themes often expressed by the artists but also the themes that are relevant in the diaspora, in its schools, during celebrations, etc. The artists, who address the experience of war and displacement, life in exile, and the making of meaningful relationships with their homeland, are therefore critically reflecting as well as co-creating diasporic sociality. Even though visual arts were most removed from the ideological and cultural reproduction of the diasporic institutions and programs such as Slovenian Cultural Action, their artworks were widely accepted and appreciated in the community. They were published (as in the case of Bara Remec) or were often exhibited in community centers and art galleries in Argentina, and recently in the Slovenian Embassy in Buenos Aires, and even in Slovenia as part of transnational collaborations.

Although the analyzed themes make up only a part of the artists' works, the older generation depicted the "Slovenian tragedy" and their homeland more explicitly, especially through images of the landscape or meaningful places. Younger artists were more invested in the motifs of the two homelands, the search for identity, and making sense of the ambivalence of diasporic life and identities. Younger artists, in particular, are fully integrated into the Argentinean art milieu but also relate to the diaspora.

The contextual aspect of art is also addressed from three levels of cultural policies, which often have harmonious but sometimes also divergent or contrasting influences on artistic activity. Superior in this sense is the level of cultural policies in Argentina, especially the policy related to cultural pluralism. This represents the broader historical and ideological framework of immigration, the formation of expatriate communities, and the preservation of ethno-national identities and ideological views in a culturally pluralistic society. "Cultural pluralism" favored ethno-national narratives and facilitated the formation and persistence of organizationally complex and interconnected communities, including the Slovenian diaspora with its own cultural production. However, it also enabled the simultaneous inclusion of artists into various social, institutional, and ethno-national contexts. Since the end of the last dictatorship, there has been an opening towards new issues and themes, including violence, some of which resonated with themes important for the diaspora.

The next level is that of diasporic politics, which understood art and cultural production as a means of preserving, ideologically framing, and representing the experiences of violence and exile, as well as shaping social memories and mythologies of the homeland. This ideological stance also attempted to shape cultural and artistic production, but it was least accepted by the visual artists. The article shows the influence of the diasporic cultural policy both on the themes of violence and exile explored by artists, as well as on the activities of cultural programs, for example, Slovenian Cultural Action as a key institution in diasporic cultural policy. However, it also emphasized artists' agency in their involvement in such issues or even opposition to include the themes important for the diaspora in their artworks.

The last level of cultural policies refers to the integration of artists into the globalized art world. On the one hand, the Argentinean art world is increasingly integrated into global art trends and connections. For many Slovenian artists, however, what is most important is their involvement in the new transnational connections that emerged after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Slovenia's independence in 1991. The transnational connections between the Slovenian community in Argentina and the state of Slovenia also extended to the field of art. New forms of transnational collaboration emerged either through return migrations (migration to Slovenia) or through involvement in the Slovenian state or art institutions, for example, with exhibitions in Slovenia. For some artists, this transnational level can offer new career opportunities. However, transnational collaboration can still deal with topics important for the diaspora, but these topics are also highly politically contested in Slovenia, favored by right-wing parties, and are sometimes seen as part of an attempt at a revision of history.

The Argentinean, diasporic, and transnational levels of cultural policies also produce some friction. For example, artists often emphasized their efforts to gain creative independence from the expectations and limitations of the Slovenian community. They also stressed the ambivalences that occur with their integration into the Argentinean art world, which is particularly vital to their career and creative development. These interferences manifest artists' agency in reflecting, co-creating, or sometimes even opposing diasporic sociality and national-cultural ideologies. However, they also show the influences of diverse cultural policies on the process of art production.

Funding: This research was funded by The Slovenian Research Agency as part of the bilateral project *Art in the Diaspora: Anthropological Research of Creativity among Slovenians in Argentina and Return Migrants* (BI-AR/15-17-010) and as part of the research program *Ethnological Research of Cultural Knowledge, Practices, and Forms of Socialities* (P6-0187).

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank the editors of the special issue Arts and Refugees: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives (Vol 2) Marco Martiniello and Elsa Mescoli for the invitation to contribute the article and for their comments. I am also grateful to the reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

Notes

- 1 The research was conducted as part of the bilateral project *Art in the Diaspora: Anthropological Research of Creativity among Slovenians in Argentina and Return Migrants* (BI-AR/15-17-010, research manager J. Repič). The project was co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency from the national budget (for project results see Molek 2017; Repič 2017; Toplak 2017). The research is also part of the research program *Ethnological Research of Cultural Knowledge, Practices, and Forms of Socialities* (nr. P6-0187), co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency from the national budget.
- 2 All of the interviewees are not referred to by their real or full names: full names are mainly used in cases of publically available information (e.g., exhibition catalogues, gallery and web publications, etc.). The article contains summaries of the interviews and some quotations from the transcriptions. In addition to the interviews with artists, I also conducted various types of interviews with non-artists during my research carried out in 2004–2005 and 2010–2011.
- 3 There are also people of Slovenian descent who do not participate in any of the ethnic organizations and some who have only recently “discovered” their ethnic origin.
- 4 The commemoration of the victims of communist violence has been a central political ritual in the Slovenian diaspora since 1948, with recurring themes of violence, war, mass executions, and exile (see Repič 2019).
- 5 Brubaker simultaneously warns of the preponderance and uncritical use of the term diaspora, which potentially erodes its analytical value (Brubaker 2005, pp. 3–4).
- 6 On post-war killings and mass graves, see e.g., Ferenc (2005).
- 7 “Art worlds” as contextual frameworks of artistic activity, trade, and consumption were summarized by the art sociologist Howard Becker (1982). Becker views art not only as the creative activity of individual artists but as a cooperative, multi-layered process involving a range of actors (artists, mediators, and consumers), art structures, and institutions (galleries, schools, and cultural policies). For a further discussion on Argentinean artistic social circles, see Schneider (2006).
- 8 While these themes are usually only part of the opus of individual artists, they are directly related to the diaspora experience.
- 9 See a portrait of Bara Remec, a renowned Slovenian refugee artist in Argentina, by Kristina Toplak (2021).
- 10 For example, the *Memorial Park* in Buenos Aires on the Avenida Costanera with monuments to the victims of state terrorism, the *Museum of Memory* in Rosario, or the *Memorial Museum* (formerly ESMA) in Buenos Aires.
- 11 Octavio Paz, Mexican writer, poet, and Nobel Laureate in Literature, wrote: “The Mexicans came from the Aztecs, the Peruvians from the Incas, and the Argentineans from the ships”, satirically commenting on the stereotype that Argentineans are a European society in Latin America (<https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-06-09/la-cita-fallida-de-alberto-fernandez-los-mexicanos-salieron-de-los-indios-los-brasileros-de-la-selva-pero-los-argentinos-de-los-barcos.html> (accessed on 12 October 2022)).
- 12 What is highly interesting is the unproblematized transference of ethno-national into political and vice versa. Namely, “Slovenianess” in Argentina is anti-communist per se, while communism was considered a foreign influence (see Repič 2019).
- 13 This was also influenced by investigations into the violence, deaths, and atrocities of the military regime in *el proceso* (*El Proceso de la Reorganización Nacional*), such as the investigation by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, documented in the *Nunca Más* (Never Again) report.
- 14 Among the artists interviewed, Marjan Grum in particular was heavily involved in the global art world. His exhibitions took place in Paris, Japan, and Slovenia, among other places.

References

- Aparicio, Frances R., and Cándida F. Jáquez, eds. 2003. *Musical Migrations: Transnationalism and Cultural Hybridity in Latin/o America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Arnež, Janez. 1999. *Slovenski Tisk v Begunskih Taboriščih v Avstriji 1945–1949*. Ljubljana and Washington: Studia Slovenica.
- Baily, John, and Michael Collyer. 2006. Introduction: Music and Migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32: 167–82. [CrossRef]
- Basu, Paul. 2004. Route Metaphors of ‘Roots-Tourism’ in the Scottish Highland Diaspora. In *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. Edited by Simon Coleman and John Eade. London: Routledge, pp. 150–74.
- Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Brah, Avtar. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. The »Diaspora« Diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28: 1–19. [CrossRef]
- Clifford, James. 1994. Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 302–38. [CrossRef]
- Corsellis, John. 1997. The Slovenian Political Emigration 1945–1950. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 8: 131–59.
- DiMaggio, Paul, and Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, eds. 2010. *Art in the Lives of Immigrant Communities in the United States*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Ferenc, Mitja. 2005. *Prikrito in Očem Zakrito: Prikrita Grobišča 60 let po Koncu Druge Svetovne Vojne*. Celje: Muzej Novejše Zgodovine.
- Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Giunta, Andrea. 2014. Arte, memoria y derechos humanos en Argentina. *Arteloge: Recherche Sur les Arts, le Patrimoine et la Littérature de L'amérique Latine* 6: 1–29. Available online: <http://journals.openedition.org/arteloge/1420> (accessed on 12 October 2022). [CrossRef]
- Harris, Anita. 2013. *Young People and Everyday Multiculturalism*. New York: Routledge.
- King, Russel, and Anastasia Christou. 2011. Of Counter-Diaspora and Reverse Transnationalism: Return Mobilities to and from the Ancestral Homeland. *Mobilities* 6: 451–66. [CrossRef]
- Kocmur, Marijan. 1965–1971. *Odpri Grobovi*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Baraga, vols. 1–4.
- Kozorog, Miha, and Alenka Bartulović. 2015. The Sevdalinka in Exile, Revisited: Young Bosnian Refugees' Music-making in Ljubljana in the 1990s (A Note on Applied Ethnomusicology). *Narodna Umjetnost* 52: 121–42. [CrossRef]
- Lafleur, Jean-Michel, and Marco Martiniello, eds. 2009. *The Transnational Political Participation of Immigrants: A Transatlantic Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Marcus, George E., and Fred R. Myers, eds. 1995. *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*. California: University of California Press.
- Martiniello, Marco, ed. 2014. *Multiculturalism and the Arts in European Cities*. London: Routledge.
- Martiniello, Marco. 2015. Immigrants, ethnicized minorities and the arts: A relatively neglected research area. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38: 1229–35. [CrossRef]
- Martiniello, Marco. 2022. Researching arts, culture, migration and change: A multi (trans)disciplinary challenge for international migration studies. *Comparative Migration Studies* 10: 7. [CrossRef]
- Mislej, Irene, ed. 1995. *Kulturno ustvarjanje Slovencev v Južni Ameriki*. Ljubljana: Znanstveni Inštitut Filozofske Fakultete.
- Mislej, Irene. 1992. Slovenski tisk v Argentini po drugi svetovni vojni. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 2–3: 185–94.
- Mislej, Irene. 2001. Pregled slovenskih izseljenih likovnih ustvarjalcev. In *Slovensko Izseljenstvo: Zbornik ob 50-Letnici Slovenske Izseljenske Matice*. Edited by Milica Trebše-Štolfa and Matjaž Klemenčič. Ljubljana: Slovenska Izseljenska Matica, pp. 89–105.
- Mislej, Irene. 2003. Znana in neznana likovna ustvarjalnost slovenskih umetnikov v izseljenstvu: Diskusijski prispevek. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 17: 107–32.
- Molek, Nadia, Juan Carlos Radovich, Juan Esteban de Jager, and Amalia Perez Molek. 2017. Representations of Memories through Art: The Artistic Work of Zdravko Dučmelic in Argentina. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 46: 57–70.
- Molek, Nadia. 2017. Songs from the Homeland—Popular Music Performance among Descendants of Slovenian Refugees in Argentina: The Case of Slovenski Instrumentalni Ansambel. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 46: 23–37.
- Molek, Nadia. 2021. *Procesos de Configuración Identitaria de los Eslovenos de Argentina: Perspectivas Transnacionales Desde el Siglo XIX Hasta la Actualidad*. Doktorska disertacija. Buenos Aires: Univerza v Buenos Airesu.
- Morphy, Howard, and Morgan Perkins, eds. 2006. *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- O'Neill, Maggie. 2008. Transnational Refugees: The Transformative Role of Art? *Qualitative Social Research* 9: 59. Available online: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0802590> (accessed on 11 July 2017).
- Papež, France, Marijan Eiletz, and Stanko Jerebič, eds. 1994. *Zbornik Slovenske Kulturne Akcije 1954–1994*. Celje: Mohorjeva Družba.
- Povrzanović Frykman, Maja. 2004. Transnational Perspective in Ethnology: From 'Ethnic' to 'Diasporic' Communities. In *Transnational Spaces: Disciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Maja Povrzanović Frykman. Imer: Malmö University, pp. 77–100.
- Rant, Jože. 1998. *Zbornik Dela v Zvestobi in Ljubezni—Zedinjena Slovenija 1948–1998*. Buenos Aires: Društvo Zedinjena Slovenija.
- Repič, Jaka. 2006. »Po Sledovih Korenin«: *Transnacionalne Migracije Med Argentino in Evropo*. Ljubljana: Filozofska Fakulteta.
- Repič, Jaka. 2012. Umetnost, urbanost in diaspora: Kulturni center Museo conventillo Marjan Grum v Buenos Airesu. In *Antropološki Vidiki Načinov Življenja v Mestih*. Edited by Jaka Repič and Jože Hudales. Ljubljana: Znanstvena Založba Filozofske Fakultete, pp. 211–30.
- Repič, Jaka. 2016. Tracing roots: Slovenian diaspora in Argentina and return mobilities. In *Moving Places: Relations, Return, and Belonging*. Edited by Nataša Gregorič Bon and Jaka Repič. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 85–104.
- Repič, Jaka. 2017. The Impact of Mobilities on Visual arts in the Slovenian Diaspora in Argentina. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 46: 7–22.
- Repič, Jaka. 2019. Yugoslavia from the Other Side. Memorialization of the Yugoslavian Communist Revolution Among Slovenians in Argentina. *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 58: 117–34. [CrossRef]
- Rot, Andrej. 1992. Slovenski tisk v Argentini po drugi svetovni vojni. *Dve Domovini* 2–3: 209–35.
- Rot, Andrej. 1994. *Republika Duhov: Štiridesetletnica Slovenske Kulturne Akcije*. Ljubljana: Državna Založba Slovenije.
- Safran, William. 1991. Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora* 1: 83–99. [CrossRef]
- Schneider, Arnd. 2000. *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

- Schneider, Arnd. 2006. *Appropriation as Practice: Art and Identity in Argentina*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry. 2006. The New Mobilities Paradigm. *Environment and Planning* 38: 207–26. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Sjekloča, Marko. 2004. *Čez Morje v Pozabo: Argentinci Slovenskih Korenin in Rezultati Argentinske Integracijske Politike*. Celje: Fit Media.
- Svašek, Maruška. 2007. *Anthropology, Art, and Cultural Production*. London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press.
- Švent, Rozina. 2007. *Slovenski Begunci v Avstriji 1945–1950*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- Toplak, Kristina. 2003. Umetniška šola Slovenske Kulturne Akcije. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 18: 135–43.
- Toplak, Kristina. 2008. »Buenas Artes«: Ustvarjalnost Slovencev in Njihovih Potomcev v Buenos Airesu. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC SAZU.
- Toplak, Kristina. 2017. Artists' Mobility in EU: Between Opportunities and Impediments. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 46: 71–85. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Toplak, Kristina. 2021. Med ustvarjalnostjo in migracijami: Biografski portret umetnice in begunke Bare Remec. *Dve Domovini/Two Homelands* 53: 45–61. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Vovk, Joži. 2004. Antropologija Glasbe: Slovenska Glasbena Kultura in Njen Vpliv na Ohranjanje Etnične Identitete med Slovenci v Argentini. Bachelor's thesis, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Zajec, Milan, France Kozina, and France Dejak. 1998. *Ušli so Smrti. Poročila Treh Rešencev iz Množičnega Groba v Kočevskem Rogu*. Klagenfurt, Ljubljana and Vienna: Mohorjeva založba.
- Žigon, Zvone. 1998. *Otroci Dveh Domovin: Slovenstvo v Južni Ameriki*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- Žigon, Zvone. 2001. *Iz Spomina v Prihodnost: Slovenska Politična Emigracija v Argentini*. Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU.
- Žitnik, Janja. 2001. Književnost slovenskih izseljencev. In *Slovensko Izseljenstvo: Zbornik ob 50-Letnici Slovenske Izseljenske Matice*. Edited by Milica Trebše-Štolfa and Matjaž Klemenčič. Ljubljana: Slovenska Izseljenska Matica, pp. 77–88.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.