



MAPIRANJE PROSTOROV MODERNISTIČNIH MEST V KONTEKSTU NAČEL
CIAM-OVE ATENSKE LISTINE
MAPPING THE SPACES OF MODERNIST CITIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT
OF CIAM'S ATHENS CHARTER

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Meblo, the Contemporary Design that Built the Identity of the City

Klavdija Figelj

Nova Gorica is a city that has literally grown with industry, positioned in the eastern and southeastern parts of the city. The industry's flagship horse was the Meblo furniture factory, which, like the city, grew from nothing to a modern organization with its own design institute. The factory, which was the leading furniture factory in Yugoslavia and exported to all five continents, was a bridge between the old and the modern world but not only that, with a factory that furnished the emerging city with furniture, the new inhabitants of the city were aware of the feeling of a modern space. With the industry, the identity of the city was being built. Although thousands of residents worked in the industry, today it is difficult to show any restored industrial architecture, let alone a space where industrial heritage would be presented.

In the article, I will be particularly interested in the initial period in the development of the factory, but most of all, the time of operation of the Institute between 1964 and 1972, which was crucial for the development of furniture design. My research will be based on a comprehensive book of the Meblo factory by Beno Vodopivec¹ and the professional publications and archival sources I found in the Nova Gorica Provincial Archive.²

The furniture factory was created as a project of the economic policy of the industrialization of the new state of Yugoslavia. The decision to build the factory in Nova Gorica was made at a meeting of the College of the Ministry of Forestry and Wood Industry on 30th October 1947. Initially, this state-owned timber industrial company was based in Solkan, and from June 1948 onwards in Nova Gorica. In the area of Solkan, the carpenter's craft tradition was home in the first half of the century and the carpenters' craftsmen joined the factories in the beginning. The industry in the area was poorly developed at the time of joining Yugoslavia, there were no experts (designers and technologists) for the timber industry, but there were many skilled workers trained in the Italian economic area.³

With the help of the working brigades, the factory was built in August 1948, and it was opened on 1st May 1950. They wanted to get professional staff initially from Switzerland, but the deal failed,

1 Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica 1998.

2 Nova Gorica Provincial Archive (PANG), Meblo Nova Gorica, 415, Meblo institut, Zbor del. Skupnosti 1964–70, Statut instituta pohištvene industrije »Meblo« Nova Gorica, t. e. 389.

3 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1). pp. 18–23.

so the General Directorate for the timber industry selected the best experts from the country, who started the production process of the new factory. Its growth was almost organic, starting from nothing and climbing up to a leading furniture factory and one of the most modern companies in Yugoslavia. In the absence of experts, they first set up a school – an industrial timber school for professional staff, then school workshops, where factory workers taught. For the purpose of nutrition, they rented an agricultural estate and arranged their own food production, then a fire station, a transformer station, an ambulance, they started their own production veneer, they set up an upholstery department, where in 1950 they started making mattresses for beds, a year later sofas. When the factory gained market reputation with its products, it received a significant loan, so they modernized the technology of furniture production, built a sawmill, began to manufacture chipboards and to produce of mattresses *jogi*.⁴

With the constant development of the technology and hardware to meet new market demands, different departments were organized and reorganized. The important point came in 1963, when experts from Norway were invited to the factory to update the company, both financially, organizationally, they worked on marketing and technical improvements of the company. The factory developed rapidly until 1970, then followed the growth phase, which lasted until 1978. They increased and expanded production, and decided not to produce only living rooms and bedrooms, but all the home furnishings, and began a new program of furniture made of plastic and a new program of lamps. A new particle board factory was built and five subcontractors joined the Meblo at that time (Krn Klavže, Bovec Wood Industrial Company, Comfort Čepovan, Branik Furniture, Trnovo Joinery).⁵

In the 1980s the period of the crisis was happening. In 1989 the Law on Companies and Capital Management came into force, for the company it was a phase of renovation. Entrepreneurship finally ousted self-management, and in 1990, 14 companies owned by Meblo.⁶ The 1990s wanted to take a step forward, Meblo underwent a transformation between 1990 and 1996, Meblo Holding took a controlling and capital stake, becoming the owner of the knowledge and trademarks of Meblo and *jogi*.⁷ As of September 2019, Meblo Holding is in bankruptcy.

Development of the Institute (1964–1972)

The turning point in designing their own products was the founding of their own institute. Already in 1959, with the help of foreign experts, they set up a development department, in January 1964 they decided to establish an independent development institute - the Meblo Nova Gorica Furniture Industry Institute. They decided to develop the products and technology themselves, research the materials and organize the company. In the same year, the institute was employed

4 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 24–32.

5 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 42, 57.

6 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 125.

7 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 131.

by architect Ljerka Finžgar, a year later by architect Bogomir Zorman⁸ who had been the bearers of furniture design for two decades. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, immediately after studying the industrial design in Venice, designer Oskar Kogoj joined for two years. Ljerka Finžgar remembers the Institute as "a place of creativity and a shared will to do something, even though many things did not go into production."⁹ Oskar Kogoj said of the role of the institute: "Industry must have development, if it does not invest in development, there is no success, because in the industry everyone rushes forward and if you do not develop, you stay behind."¹⁰ They also underlined that they had a lot of support from the factory management, especially with the director Oleg Vrtačnik, who ran the factory with ambition and clear vision.

The Meblo Furniture Industry Institute in Nova Gorica, which was registered as an independent legal entity, was approved by the Republican Secretariat for Research and Higher Education on 11th May 1964 and entered in the Register of Scientific Institutes. How ambitious he was, we can see from the list of research assignments he has registered for: research into the proper utilization of native and exotic species of wood and their waste; functional and aesthetic design of furniture; structural typing and standardization of products; research and study of materials for binding and surface treatment of wood; research and study of basic materials (plastics and metals) that will replace wood in the furniture industry in the future; exploring new technological processes and woodworking; studying the mechanization and automatisisation of technological processes; study of methodologies for market processing; studying the problems of modern scientific organization of work; informing the professional staff of the wood industry of new achievements and providing technical assistance; cooperation with related domestic and foreign scientific institutions; publication on the scientific and professional findings of colleagues; constructing prototypes and testing their properties from a technical, technological, functional, aesthetic, economic and market point of view.¹¹

The institute had its leader and thirteen employees (two architects, chemical engineer, mechanical engineer, timber engineer, modelers), seven of them worked in a prototype workshop to produce new patterns and improve existing products. They received money in the form of *tantiems* from sold products, from the sale of samples and from payments for arranging fairs. Besides the Stol factory, Meblo was the only furniture manufacturer to start creating its own products. They also started making advertising gadgets. In the sample workshop, new products had to be fully prepared for regular serial production at the lowest possible cost. Meblo was soon launching itself in the market with a number of new products, which were entirely the result of their own knowledge. At the furniture fairs in Yugoslavia, they received awards for products

8 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 44.

9 Klavdija FIGELJ, Prispevek k preučevanju industrijskega oblikovanja in oblikovanja modernega sloga na Goriškem, v: *Industrijska dediščina na Goriškem* (ur. Inga Miklavčič-Brezigar), Nova Gorica 2015, p. 52.

10 FIGELJ 2015 (n. 9), p. 52.

11 PANG, Meblo Nova Gorica, 415, Meblo institut, Zbor del. Skupnosti 1964–70, Statut instituta pohištvene industrije »Meblo« Nova Gorica, t. e. 389.

and for the arrangement of the exhibition space. Through intensive marketing, he gained the role of the leading furniture manufacturer in Yugoslavia. After 1972, when they moved to the organization by work units, the institute was terminated and the activity was partly carried out within the Meblo design service, which was part of the marketing sector. Institute's prototype workshop was included in the Furniture unit, architects became an independent department.¹² The policy of the company, which transitioned to a market economy, changed when it was no longer a problem to produce but to sell.¹³

The Products

From the point of view of furniture development and design, the production of the first bedrooms started already in 1948, the first plans and designs were made in Ljubljana. In the years 1952–65, plans were already signed by experts from the Meblo School of Furniture and the Ljubljana Technical School: Anton Mihelj, Angel Susič, Julij Batistič and others. These were the bedrooms *Trstelj*, *Gorica* (which was one of the most popular on the market, the door had an S-shaped section), *Soča*, *Okroglica*, *Olga*, *Jelka*, *Marta*, *Marika*, *London*. Although affected for industrial production, there was still a lot of manual labor, especially carpentry, the women in the production assembled veneer and pulped with shellac. In addition to the bedrooms, they also produced bulky furniture, especially bookcases and combo cabinets, as well as radio cases.¹⁴ They made furniture also for customers from abroad, but they were making plans. Quality bedrooms for the English market have been made, double veneered, rounded in shape, made of walnut root. Also demanding was the production of office furniture for the U.S. Army in Germany. In France, they used to sell wardrobes, which were the cornerstone of the development of A-program foldable furniture.

The first living room, entirely designed by the newly established Institute and also awarded at the Belgrade Fair, was the *Cortina* Living Room (1966), designed in brownish red, contemporary designed, with clean, straight lines, sharp edges, minimal design elements armchair, combination of full (cabinets, buffet, drawers) and empty spaces (bookshelves, empty shelves). In addition to *Cortina*, *Alenka* and *Carmen* bedrooms were also manufactured for the domestic market. But these were bedrooms that were for sale in sets, and soon they were no longer suited to the needs and taste of the modern man, who wanted furniture adapted to the needs of the apartment. That's why in 1967 they developed a new A-program, which was the first composite program of furniture in Yugoslavia and with which they also became competitive in the European market. The basis of the program was the construction of wardrobes, which could be complemented by new products such as a bridge, a buffet, a bookcase, linen closet, bookcase, bed, men's closet or

12 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 57.

13 Leon ČERNUTA, Meblo design, *Glas upravljalca, Glasilo delovne skupnosti Meblo tovarne pohištva Nova Gorica*, 12, 1 March 1973, p. 35.

14 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 24–29.

toilet with mirror. The characteristic of this program was that the user was able to assemble the furniture set according to his taste and needs, he could later purchase certain pieces of furniture and include them in the assembly, and thirdly, furniture from the A-program could be equipped with different rooms, so daily room as double or single bedroom, hotel room, etc. The A-program envisaged a number of different designs, ranging from lacquered white lacquers to oak veneer and mahogany.¹⁵

The most important creation in the field of design and furniture innovation and a big marketing success was the compliant E-program, designed by Ljerka Finžgar. E-program soon replaced the A-program. The E-program differed from the A-program; it no longer placed cabinets side by side, but directly, by joining upright and transverse elements, and offered the user even more options for assembling furniture according to their own needs. Consisting of 27 basic planar elements, three widths and heights and two depths, the base color was white. The E-program was presented at the Belgrade Furniture Fair in 1970 and was awarded a gold key, a year later it received a golden joint in Ljubljana.¹⁶ According to the factory newspaper *Glas upravljalca*, the compatible program is becoming more and more established on the Yugoslav market. The designer Ljerka Finžgar said that their goal is to produce as much individual furniture in the most industrialized way possible. The goal is to make custom-made furniture for every individual, easily for industrial production. The Meblo program was judged by an expert jury to be independent and advanced, and the only one comparable to foreign manufacturers.¹⁷

Among the most well-known Meblo products was the *jogi* mattress, which was modelled after German technology in 1961. It was the first mattress of its kind in Yugoslavia and in the following decades became synonymous for the mattress. In fact, even today it gives its name to the mattress. The first logo they used was a stylized fakir figure, and the later sign became recognizable, further stylized to pure lines and geometric shapes with the addition of the *jogi* inscription. In addition to the mattresses, *jogi* beds were also designed in Meblo, which was characterized by a double suspension (a mattress was also placed on the spring base) and the fact that they had no front cheekbones and the edges were soft and sharp.

Meblo's design also builds its recognition and quality on the seating sets or individual armchairs, recliners. The *Fjord* velvet sets and *Neptune*, a leather cube compound linked to leather straps, were designed in a modern way. The furniture and combination of leather and curved wood, called *Lahti* and *Bergen*, were also characteristic and modern in design. According to designer Ljerka Finžgar, the *Bergen* armchair is one of her favourite pieces.

A recliner that has received much attention from the Institute and has received a lot of attention among professionals are the *Gondola* recliner series, designed by designer Oscar Kogoj in

15 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 47–49.

16 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 62–63.

17 U.M., Mnenje žirije: Meblo ubira svojo, neodvisno pot kvalitete, *Glas upravljalca*, *Glasilo delovne skupnosti Meblo tovarne pohištva Nova Gorica*, 11, 15 November 1970, p. 3.

1970, "bravely and without prejudice."¹⁸ The ergonomically designed resting shell was made of polyester, for which numerous material studies were carried out and placed on a single leg, which had a moving mechanism inside. Kogoj designed several versions of the *Gondola*, a whole team of experts from different fields participated in the design.

The *Gondola* series was exhibited as a design object in Ljubljana's Arcades, Zagreb, Venice, and in 1973 in Denmark. It received the highest Slovenian award in the field of culture, the Prešeren Fund Award for a series of recliners.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the *Gondola* did not go into mass production, apparently because of the complexity of the technological process and the financial conditions.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, plastics was the new topic of design and so, in the late 1960s, the Institute began to study those materials. In the prototype workshop, experiments were being made, technology was newly developed and, in 1972, a work unit was also created to design new products, made of polyester recliners of the *Gondola* series. Polyurethane made famous products from the *Jurček* system also came out, designed by Bogomir Zorman, which was a system of merging individual elements into different products; chairs, tables, bar chairs, bar tables, ashtrays, hangers.²⁰

In the early 1970s, a brand new product appeared in the Meblo program, namely plexiglass acrylic luminaires, which also became one of the most significant products of the factory, created in collaboration with the Italian company Harvey-Guzzini. The Italian partner provided the technology and production program, the Meblo spatial conditions. As many as 33 types of lamps were produced, in different colours (mainly orange, brown, green, yellow, red) and circular shapes that complemented the furniture design of the furniture.

Worth mentioning here is the Furniture Factory logo, which has remained in use throughout. After 1963, when they chose the name of the factory - Meblo, a new company logo was established. After the preliminary image of the sign, which has a carpenter's toolbox in its essence, was designed by the head of maintenance Anton Repič and after redesigned by designer Oskar Kogoj, high school student at the time.

Design to be presented at fairs, showrooms, public buildings

After founding the institute in 1964, Meblo started to appear at international furniture fairs in Milan, Paris, Cologne, later in Bari, Tripoli, Nairobi, regularly appearing at all major furniture fairs in Yugoslavia (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Skopje). Among the most important was the Belgrade Fair, where they first appeared in 1966 and received a diploma for the Cortina living room, which was the first product of the Furniture Institute.²¹

18 Stane BERNIK, *Plastični počivalniki*, Arkade Ljubljana, Nova Gorica 1970, p. 9.

19 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 86.

20 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 85–86.

21 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), p. 44.



Fig. 1: Furniture A-program, the first composite furniture programme in Yugoslavia, design: Ljerka Finžgar (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).



Fig. 2: Furniture A-program, the first composite furniture programme in Yugoslavia, design: Ljerka Finžgar (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).



Fig. 3: Assembly furniture E-program, design Ljerka Finžgar (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).



Fig. 4: Assembly furniture E-program, design Ljerka Finžgar (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).

Meblo's products were also presented in specially designed showrooms, which featured complete production programs. In 1970, in Nova Gorica, according to the plans of architect Kamil Kolarič, the Furniture Salon was built, the year after that they opened a salon in Varaždin, Novi Beograd, in 1972 in Karlovac, 1974 in Novi Sad, by 1984 there were seventeen salons throughout Yugoslavia.

Meblo's design as a whole could also be seen in public buildings. The furniture was furnished by the Argonavti Hotel in Nova Gorica, the retirement home of Nova Gorica, with the seats of the Novi Sad Cultural Center and the Gallus Hall of the Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana, numerous hotels in Yugoslav cities (Belgrade, Zenica, Banja Luka, Portorož), sports halls and a conference hall in Gabon, fair in Lagos, Nigeria, hotel center in Yalta, 250 student rooms in Belgium, one of the largest was the equipment of the Sava Convention Center in New Belgrade in 1977.²²

The best mention of the quality of the products is the awards they received at the fairs. The Belgrade Fair was of great and prestigious importance for Yugoslav furniture manufacturers. Since its debut in 1967, Meblo has received 14 gold and 7 silver keys, the highest of all participants. A remarkable feat and a record not repeated by anyone behind him occurred in 1969, when Meblo received three of four gold keys. The A-program furniture, the *Kameleon* soft foam seat and the HO furniture system were awarded. The author of all three products was Meblo's designer Ljerka Finžgar.

Meblo's design in professional publications

Probably one of the biggest achievements of Meblo's design was the publication on the cover of the special issue of magazine *Industrial design - The Science of seating*.²³ The cover published Oskar Kogoj's recliner - a drawing, the curve of his *Gondola*, and inside the journal short article titled Chair Mechanics with photos and drawings where Kogoj's recliner was compared to a recliner designed by Yrjo Kukkapura.

Reviewing Slovenian professional journalism, as Alenka Di Battista writes,²⁴ in the field of industrial design, architect Majda Dobravec mentioned in *Sinteza* magazine the participation of the Nova Gorica furniture factory in the exhibition "Modern Equipment" at the Jurček Pavilion at the Ljubljana Exhibition Hall in 1964. The event wanted to be the first in a series of permanent residential exhibitions intended to educate and inform home buyers, and the selection of works indicated possible directions for the future development of domestic commerce and industry. The furniture factory Nova Gorica presented at the exhibition a shelving wall for the living room and bunk bed for the children's room according to the plans of the Studio for Apartment and Equipment under the direction of France Ivanšek, also the organizer of the event. The

22 VODOPIVEC 1998 (n. 1), pp. 58–59.

23 *Industrial design*, 18/5, 1971.

24 Alenka DI BATTISTA, Urbanizem in arhitektura Nove Gorice skozi oči slovenske strokovne publicistike, *Goriški letnik*, 41, 2017, p. 53.



Fig. 5: Recliner *Gondola*, design: Oskar Kogoj (source: Stane BERNIK, *Plastični počivalniki*, Arkade Ljubljana, Nova Gorica 1970).

establishment of the development institute of the Furniture Industry Institute Meblo Nova Gorica played a decisive role in establishing cooperation. Among the key designers employed by the institute between 1969 and 1971 is Oskar Kogoj. Synthesis has repeatedly reported on his creative work, thanks in particular to magazine editor Stane Bernik. As a consultant, he participated in the development of prototypes of *Gondola* plastic recliners and described the process of their creation in word and picture. At the exhibition of Kogoj's recliners in Ljubljana and 1970, which is prepared in terms of content and design Bernik, the magazine also issued positive reviews of the exhibitions of Ješa Denegri and Želimir Koščević, as well as the photographic report by Petar Dabac. In particular, Denegri praised Kogoj's efforts by justifying new methodological approaches in the design and production of industrially designed objects and highlighted the process of scientific research that led the author to the final shape of a plastic usable object. In a similar way, Koščević emphasized that recliners reach not only utilitarian values, but also aesthetic categories characterized by design inventiveness. He also praised the efforts of Meblo to introduce new technological processes and explore new design options, which were novelty on the Yugoslav scale and indicate good business ideas and long-term business policy programming.²⁵

25 DI BATTISTA 2017 (n. 24), p. 53.



Fig. 6: Lamps *Meblo – Harvey* (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).

The fact that the Meblo furniture factory with its products was recognized as a concept of modern design is also evidenced by the entries in the Belgrade magazine *Industrial Design and Marketing* from 1973, which in an article entitled *Meblo design* states that it is "one of the few companies, which uses design in propaganda messages."²⁶ To see how furniture design really works, editorial staff have even traveled to Nova Gorica. The town itself surprised the editorial staff as something new, a masterpiece of architecture, a city where young people live and where problems are solved faster and better than elsewhere in Yugoslavia. The first condition for the development of the design was attributed to this exceptional environment, ready to accept the new. The second element they saw was the development path that led to the design department itself, whose basic features were the creation, designing not only of the furniture but also of the corporate identity of Meblo.

Peter Krečič, former director of the Museum of Architecture and Design, Ljubljana, points out the importance of the Meblo Institute. In his analysis of the state of industrial design in the Federal Republic of Slovenia, it is stated that the Meblo Institute enjoyed the greatest independence. The department had a considerable amount of free hand in setting and developing design tasks, and it was in this climate that the first original compatible programmable furniture E-program was created in 1969 by Ljerka Finžgar and Bogomir Zorman and a family of plastic recliners.²⁷

Krečič also deals with the *Gondola* resting series in the aforementioned Analysis. It ranks them

26 Vanja STANKOVIĆ, *Meblo design*, in: *Industrijsko oblikovanje i dizajn* (ed. Miroslav Fruht), Beograd 1973, pp. 19–21.

27 Peter KREČIČ, *Analiza stanja industrijskega oblikovanja v Socialistični republiki Sloveniji*, Ljubljana 1973, p. 29.



Fig. 7: Chair *Jurček*, design: Bogomir Zorman (source: Beno VODOPIVEC, *Zgodba o Meblu*, Nova Gorica, 1998).

right after the famous chair designer Niko Kralj. As the second pole in the design of seating furniture, he calls the Furniture Factory Meblo with its plastic recliners after the design of Oscar Kogoj. Krečič also notes that these Kogoj recliners, thought of as ergonomically appropriate shells for resting and sitting in reinforced polyester, are not the first attempt to design in this direction (Tatjana Coloni and Ignac Cedilnik conceived the polyester shell earlier and implemented IMGRAD from Ljutomer in 1969). "What matters most is that he was able to fully complete the design of the Gondola recliner as part of a completely untested polyester injection molding technology, so that after three years of development, they came into series production."²⁸ Designing seats he used anthropometric and ergonomic findings, and by working with them he emphasized not only the specific aspects

of plastic furniture design, but the whole range of issues from the role of the designer in the production process to interdisciplinarity in the design process and the concrete position of the designer in Slovenia. Krečič remarked that good form was unfortunately disqualified by the overpricing. However, Kogoj acknowledges pioneering in plastics design

The 1970 exhibition at the Arkade in Ljubljana, where they presented a series of designs of Kogoj plastic recliners *Gondola*, Krečič named as the first solo exhibition of an industrial designer in Slovenia.²⁹ Stane Bernik, however, writes that "with the theme he set out in the framework of the seat furniture - in Slovenia it is also considered as a test stone of design - he strongly indicated a more comprehensive use of anthropometric, psychophysiological and ergonomic achievements and knowledge in order to answer the problem of sitting and resting in the best possible dimensions."³⁰

The fact that the Meblo design is still present in the consciousness of users and the professional public is evidenced by the award for timeless design, which Ljerka Finžgar received two years

28 KREČIČ 1973 (n. 27), p. 33.

29 KREČIČ 1973 (n. 27), p. 10.

30 Stane BERNIK, Sodobno oblikovanje sedežnega pohištva v Sloveniji, in: Vesna Bučič, *Stol v petih tisočletjih*, Narodni muzej, Ljubljana 1973, p. 47.

ago, in 2018, 48 years after she has made a design for the furniture E-program.(1970). The award is presented by Big Institute, the Center for Creative Economy of Southeast Europe.

Finžgar received a design award that stood the test of time and proved of lasting value. In justification, they wrote that in the 1970s and 1980s, she was the driving force behind Meblo, one of the most successful and recognizable home furnishers in our country. She has signed on to the most successful programs and individual products of this iconic company and has received numerous awards and recognitions for them. Her program of furniture E from 1970 stands out in particular. With it, it broke a long tradition for the user of a fairly rigid production of furniture sets. With a seemingly simple modular system of type pages, elements and joints, it has provided numerous options for furniture assemblies, allowing each individual to create an ambience more freely suited to their wishes, options and spatial characteristics. Program-E is well-functioning system that, with its myriad of configurations and modifications, gives you a simple, elegant and unobtrusive upgrade frame that transforms your place into a home.³¹

The characteristic of Meblo's design and the identity of the city

The furniture factory and the town of Nova Gorica were created at the same time, building almost one another. Since they were created in an empty space, identities were also being created. Architecture and urbanism brought clean shapes to the city, with straight and smooth roads. The coldness of the drawing tool was felt, straightened and moved, if we recall the words of Edvard Ravnikar, the concept of a new life and housing value emerged. The city was establishing new lines of recognition and markers of space that were not present in the area and were characteristic only of these cultural space. Just like that, the furniture that used to come from the town's factory, to which three thousand inhabitants of the new town and the surrounding area went to work every morning. Furniture of straight lines, clean shapes, bright colors, furniture that is mobile and customizable. The modern style was a great turning point for the new residents of the new city, ornamentation and massive dark-coloured furniture disappeared from view, replaced by empty space, glass, concrete and greenery. The environment for the creation of a new human being has been established.

"The new political order after World War 2 interrupted the direction of development of companies. The post-war period was marked by radical changes in their ownership (nationalization), a great need for reconstruction of the newly created country, and increased migration from rural areas to cities. The socialist policy of the state demanded a new, different standard of living. Circumstances influenced several aspects of product development and thus the role of design."³² Post-war development policy supported the development of the working class, the middle class increased, which also required the development of new

31 <http://zavodbig.com/portfolio-items/program-pohistva-e-ljerka-finzgar/> (access 12 January 2020).

32 Miha KLINAR, *Oblikovanje kot dejavnik povečevanja konkurenčnosti slovenskega gospodarstva; pregled položaja oblikovanja v Sloveniji*, Ljubljana 2008, pp. 4–5.

products. The new standard of living was reflected in the rapid construction of apartments, which needed to be furnished in a new way, with furniture, no longer with large massive cabinets, but with lighter and foldable furniture that could be brought by lift. The revolution of consumer goods, home appliances, radios, phones, etc. has begun. Already at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, as elsewhere in Europe, an era of modern trends, fashionable clothing, light furniture, contemporary architecture, everyday goods, all shaping a new lifestyle.³³

"Lifestyle is changing. People are looking for a more informal, easier and freer way of life. People would not want to be burdened with many static possessions that are only used one way. On the contrary, they want to change their environment,"³⁴ they wrote in *Industrial Design* in 1971.

The point of modernist architecture is to have a life of its own, that is, to be mobile, to adapt. As Ljerka Finžgar noted, our lives are changing so fast that it is unethical to expect us to live the same way our grandparents lived. Social policies and urban policies replace investment and new social policies. But when it came to issues of residence, Finžgar liked to turn to Scandinavia, emphasizing that Scandinavians devoted themselves deliberately to the study of man, his ways of living and his needs. Finžgar's starting points for furniture design, as she pointed out in our conversation, were based on local conditions. "Throughout the cities at that time, homes have been crowded with extended families. From the knowledge of this situation, I designed the components that made it possible to create a sleeping, habitable place in the same room, which was certainly an idea to create a space in which a wider family can coexist."³⁵

When designing furniture elements, especially in Scandinavian countries, anthropological measurements have been taken into account, ergonomics has become an integral part of modern industrial design. "The rigid and etiquette-prescribed lifestyle is dying and leaving the city more relaxed, unconventional. All that uncomfortable and painful (domestic work) is being replaced by technical gadgets."³⁶

Finžgar loved the Scandinavians not only for their simplicity, minimalism and functionality, but also for the deeper emotional need of a person for a tidy and functional home. The Meblo Institute also studied the culture of the home, they studied about man and his needs. It was believed that architects had the task of examining a person's needs and of teaching him to care where he sleep or how he live. They wondered how we would live tomorrow, with what needs, what materials we would use. Oskar Kogoj brought courageous and uncompromising exploration of new materials, innovative technologies, ergonomic designs and teamwork.

33 KLINAR 2008 (n. 32), pp. 4–5.

34 J. Roger GUILFOYLE, Chair mechanic, *Industrial design*, 8/6, 1971, pp. 26–27.

35 FIGELJ 2015 (n. 2), p. 52.

36 Ljerka FINŽGAR, Stanovanje včeraj, danes, jutri, *Glas upravljalca, Glasilo delovne skupnosti Meblo tovarne pohištva Nova Gorica*, 8, 15 August 1970, p. 3.

Finally, it can be concluded that architects and designers with their developing work in Institute, of course, with the considerable support and encouragement of the company's management, were not only the driving force, but also the creative spirit that brought the culture of modern man into many apartments. With their active approach, they designed not only furniture, but a sense of space and quality of life, which was part of the identity of Nova Gorica and Yugoslavia as well.

Today, in Nova Gorica, where many homes are still equipped with Meblo furniture and the factory is long gone, we have neither a space nor a medium to show how the furniture factory was built in this area and with it the design that was recognizable, advanced, unique and setting new standards in the culture of being. Nova Gorica would, therefore, urgently need a space where Meblo's top-class, as well as all Slovenian design, could be recognized as "a space of creativity and shared will," if we use the words of Ljerka Finžgar.

Meblo, sodobno oblikovanje, ki je zgradilo identiteto mesta

Povzetek

Nova Gorica je mesto, ki je dobesedno zraslo z industrijo, postavljeno v vzhodni in jugovzhodni del mesta. Paradni konj v industriji je bila tovarna pohištva Meblo, ki je tako kot mesto prerasla iz nič v moderno organizacijo z lastnim oblikovalskim inštitutom. Tovarna, ki je bila uspešna in svoje izdelke izvažala na vseh pet celin, je bila most med starim in sodobnim svetom, a ne le to, s tovarno, ki je nastajajoče mesto opremljala tudi s pohištvom, so se novi prebivalci mesta začeli zavedati občutja modernega prostora. Z industrijo se je gradila identiteta mesta. A danes je od vse te industrije, v kateri je delalo na tisoče prebivalcev, težko pokazati kakršno koli obnovljeno industrijsko arhitekturo, kaj šele prostor, kjer bi bil predstavljen industrijski dizajn oziroma industrijska dediščina nasploh.