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The Croatian National Bank's photography collection

Ena Kurolt

'Whatever else a photograph may be about, it is always about time',¹ said the famous American landscape photographer, Richard Misrach. Photographs allow us to preserve important moments for eternity, to relive significant events later on, or to really feel the atmosphere of an historical period. This is true of the photographs held in the collection of the Croatian National Bank (CNB). This small collection has grown over the years to provide a record of important, and less important but interesting moments and experiences.

The CNB is celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of its establishment in 2021. The Constitution of Croatia, adopted in December 1990, designated the CNB as the central bank of the Republic of Croatia and defined its responsibilities, while the Regulation on the National Bank of Croatia on 8 October 1991 and the decision to replace the Yugoslav dinar by the Croatian dinar defined and specified the responsibilities and functions of the central bank. Due to its relatively short period of existence and some other factors, the photographic collection of the CNB remains small.

In 2001 the publishing department of the CNB proposed using photography to record the history of money in Croatia as well as the history of the CNB main building and in the same year permission was granted to take photographs of all employees for the purpose of their publication on the Bank's intranet site. This sparked an interest in recording events both inside and outside the

Bank. Since digitization the scope of work has increased with video and photography being used for various purposes. This provided an authentic picture of events and activities of the CNB at a particular moment or period of time. Only one camera was used at the beginning, while today there is complete equipment for taking indoor and outdoor photographs and video recordings, as well as for photography processing and video editing.

Notwithstanding the relatively short period of systematic recording of official and important as well as informal events, the collection has grown slowly and now includes more than 100,000 digital photographs, some fifty videos, as well as around fifty analogue photographs. Most photographs taken in the last twenty years are the property of the Bank. In addition, other photographs were purchased from specific photographers or institutions, such as national museums and archives, in order to preserve the Bank's history.

Unfortunately, the collection contains only a small number of photographs from the pre-1990s period. A photo album from the 1945–1963 period was found in the CNB's central archives, created by an anonymous author and containing black and white photographs of the buildings of the branch offices of the Head Office for the People's Republic of Croatia. The album, entitled 'People's Bank of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia—Head Office for the People's Republic of Croatia with branch offices', is a visual legacy of banking from the period when Croatia was a federal

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1. Croatian kuna banknotes, 2017



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2. Commemorative gold and silver coins, 2017
3. Last session of the Croatian National Bank Council, 2012
4. Vicegovernor Bojan Fras delivers a lecture on consumer protection during the Consumer Rights Week, 2018
5. Opening of the restaurant in the CNB building in Jurišićeva Street, 2009
6. Breakfast with journalists, 2014
7. Painting the walls and ceiling of the Former Arbitration Tribunal Hall ('Horseshoe Hall'), 2017



8. Lecture for pupils entitled 'Let's go back to school', 2019

9. Departure of CNB athletes for the Bankers Games, 2004

10. Stability ball, 2007

11. Blood donation, 2005

12. Moving documentation from the warehouse in Račkoga Street to the warehouse in Jurišićeva Street, 2004



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- 13. Banknote authentication at the National Counterfeit Centre, 2004
- 14. Lecture at the Former Arbitration Tribunal Hall ('Horseshoe Hall'), 2005
- 15. Christmas party, 2019
- 16. Opening of the renovated halls in the CNB building in Jurišićeva Street, 2008
- 17. Renovation of the façade of the CNB building in Račkoga Street, 2008
- 18. Redecoration of the Round Hall in the main CNB building, 2001



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- 19. Press conference of the IMF, 2001
- 20. Student debate entitled 'Financial Literacy Test as the Foundation for Borrowing', 2019
- 21. Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the kuna, 2019
- 22. Open days at the Croatian National Bank, tour of the Round Hall, 2018



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23. Press conference entitled 'Comparison of bank fees', 2018

24. Introducing the kuna into the Croatian Danube region. Head of the Working Group, Mr Adolf Matejka, and other participants in the project, 1997

25. Minting of kuna coins. Croatian Monetary Institute, 2014

26. Filming a documentary entitled 'KUNA – Creation of the Croatian National Currency', Čakovec, 2014

27. Round Hall, CNB, 2014

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state of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and, as such, is certainly worthy of attention.

The series of photographs are catalogued according to date and subject. The collection from the CNB's history includes photographs of all its governors and of the main building, which is a listed building, as well as photographs of furniture and other equipment and details of interior of great value. Photographs of professional conferences, gatherings, workshops, educational activities and other occasional events associated with CNB activities have been preserved, as have the participation of Bank officials and employees in gatherings and events organised by other domestic and foreign institutions. Periodic celebrations of anniversaries and events important for the Bank's history and operations, informal gatherings and Christmas parties and plays for children, and even events for donating blood have also been captured on camera.

It is worth mentioning the photographs taken in 1994 when the modern kuna (lit. 'marten', a reference to the historical use of the pelt of the marten as a unit of value in medieval trade) replaced the Croatian dinar as the national currency. As Governor Boris Vujčić pointed out in his speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the introduction of the kuna in 2014: 'Bearing in mind the time and circumstances of the kuna adoption and the fact that the cash changeover is an important event for any country and its monetary system, this may be noted as one of the most complex projects of the CNB, realised through joint efforts of many CNB employees as well as many institutions and persons outside the central bank'. As Croatia entered the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II) in July 2020—thus taking a huge step towards joining the euro area—the CNB will soon face new historical moments worthy of being captured in both photographic and video form.

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national currency, as well as the photographs of former Croatian currencies are frequently used in various projects. A new sub-series comprised of photographs of banknotes and coins is intended to be used for various educational activities, articles, website publications, and so on. As an element

of the CNB's visual communication, photography is integral to communication at the CNB, with photographs being used both for external and internal purposes, on the website, in publications and social networks. Although the archival documentation of the photography collection of the CNB has yet to be completed, it is a good starting point for future research because photographs

are like a time machine—they provide the opportunity to both present and future generations to look back on past times and feel that they are part of their country's history.

@ All photographs are part of the collection of the Croatian National Bank

Author's profile

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1 http://aaronshuman.com/misrach_interview.html accessed on 31 July 2020