

CITY MUSEUM OF RIJEKA, CROATIA

*merika*

*Emigration  
from Central Europe to America  
1880 – 1914*



Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island  
*Ellis Island, June 28 - September 4 2012*



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## ***MERIKA: EMIGRATION FROM CENTRAL EUROPE TO AMERICA 1880-1914***

This exhibition about emigration from Central Europe to the United States, organized by the City Museum of Rijeka, will take place at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, from June 28<sup>th</sup> through September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

The curator of the exhibition is Ervin Dubrović, Director of the City Museum of Rijeka. The exhibition's designer is Klaudio Cetina, a professor at the New Academy of Fine Arts of Milan. The New York exhibition is adapted from an exhibition held in Rijeka, titled "Merika, emigration from Central Europe to America 1880-1914," which won the annual award of the Croatian Museum Association in 2009.

Preliminary development of "Merika" began in 2005. At that time, interest in the subject of emigration peaked in Europe, and museums of emigration were opened in several former emigrant ports including Bremerhaven and Hamburg. Other museums, including Genoa's Museum of the Sea, gave significant attention to the subject of emigration. Comprehensive research was conducted, in collaboration with researchers and associates from the United States, Croatia, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, Great Britain and other European nations.

The big wave of emigration from the Austro-Hungarian Empire started to swell at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued until the outbreak of World War I. It was part of the biggest migration in the history of mankind, in which 50 million people moved to another part of the world. 5 million people left the Habsburg Empire alone during this time. Only Italians and Russian Jews were leaving their homeland in comparable numbers.

Economic conditions for the peasantry in Central and South-eastern Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were far worse than conditions for the same class in Western Europe. By that time, Western Europe had already experienced a large wave of emigration of its own.

This exhibition explores the currents of emigration from Central Europe, its developed organizational structure, steamships and steamship companies, emigration agents and ports, as well as the individual destinies of certain emigrants and their families. It concludes with a presentation of some successful Americans – descendants of these emigrants.

Numerous associates and institutions from Central and South-eastern European countries have cooperated in the development of the exhibition on Ellis Island. A comprehensive and descriptive exhibition catalogue, as well as a DVD publication will be published along with the exhibition.

Director of City Museum of Rijeka

Ervin Dubrović



## **MERIKA: EMIGRATION FROM CENTRAL EUROPE TO AMERICA 1880-1914**

*The real question is not why so many Europeans emigrated, but why so many stayed at home.*

Dudley Baines, *Emigration From Europe 1815-1930*,  
Macmillan, Basingstoke & London, 1991.

In the hundred year period of the emigrant tide, from 1815 to 1930, fifty million Europeans participated in the great transoceanic migration. That migration left deep traces on both sides of the Atlantic, both on the countries from which they left and on the countries to which they arrived.

The extent of that movement became a special phenomenon, displaying evidence of being a planned and carefully organized project, with a specialized infrastructure, having far reaching consequences.

Although contemporary Americans and Europeans are far removed from the struggles and experiences of their ancestors who participated in the great migration, more recent migrations and exoduses of the modern world remind us of the age-old problem of fleeing from one's birthplace and the constant human desire for betterment and progress.

Ervin Dubrović

City Museum of Rijeka, Croatia



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### **What Did America Give to Central Europe?**

America became a second home for emigrants from Central Europe, more comfortable and pleasant than their ancestral homes. Despite the difficulties confronting newly-arrived Central European peasants in America, the newcomers adopted to their new lives and used the opportunities given them, which they did not have at home. As a result, approximately three-quarters of all immigrants from Central Europe remained in America.

Those who did return to Central Europe became well-regarded citizens – “Amerikaci” - as they became known. Cash savings from America and American experiences brought a better life and proved to be an important spur to bettering of the lives of their families and the development of their homeland.

### **What Did Central Europe Give to America?**

Young people who faced the future and sought to exploit their opportunities came from the “heart of Europe.”

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a fourth of all immigrants came from Central Europe, with young people bringing the best that the Old World could give to the New. Some brought their brawn and others their intellect and entrepreneurial spirit.

While America awed Europe with its unseen possibilities of development and progress, Central Europe “conquered” America with its culture and the agility and inventiveness of its scientists and artists who united European and American traditions.



## **Ervin Dubrović**

Director of the City Museum of Rijeka, author of the exhibition *Merika*.

Art and culture historian, manager of several research projects on which researchers from many European countries and the USA have worked (The Rijeka Harbor, Adamić's Time 1780-1830, Rijeka's Torpedo – The First in the World).

Active participant in several scientific meetings in Croatia – Rijeka, Pula, Zagreb, Trieste, Dubrovnik – as well as Rome (Italy), Novi Sad (Serbia) and Reșița (Romania).

Author and co-author of several books and monographs regarding the history of art and culture in Rijeka.

Author of several guest exhibitions in Austria (City Museum of Graz), Hungary (Transport Museum, Budapest), Italy (Palazzo Gopcevich - City Museum of Trieste), Serbia (City Museum of Novi Sad).

He has managed the extensive project *Merika* on the topic of emigration from Central Europe to America from 1880 until 1914. Within the framework of this project eponymous exhibitions were organized in the City Museum of Rijeka (2008) and at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum (New York, 2012) and three books were published – he is the author of *Merika* (bilingual, Croatian and English edition, 2008) and *From Central Europe to America* (in English, 2012) and the editor of the comprehensive omnibus *Veliki val* (in Croatian, 2012).

## **Klaudio Cetina**

Author of the exhibition set-up and the graphic design of the accompanying exhibition publications.

Architect, product designer, exhibition designer, fashion designer, food designer, graphic designer.

He is the author of numerous projects in different disciplines of design/art production – graphic design, fashion, theater, exhibition set-up as well as architecture. He was the creative and art director of numerous advertisement campaigns in cooperation with different ad agencies (Saatchi&Saatchi, Publicis, OgilvyOne), he worked for Garnier, L'Oreal, Lancôme, BiothermHomme, Kodak, Renault, Mercedes, etc., and was the art director of several magazines. He designed more than 40 exhibitions in museums and galleries as well as more than 200 corporate identities for cultural events (including more than 100 books/catalogues) in cooperation with Electa/Mondadori and RCS Libri Milano.

He designed fabrics for various manufacturers, but he also created a fashion line of his own for clothes and school and office equipment.

From 2002 he has been teaching at the MA Futurarium in Milan, and from 2004 at the NABA (New Academy of Fine Arts) in Milan, at the department for fashion and graphic design, where he was also art director.



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**CITY MUSEUM OF RIJEKA/MUZEJ GRADA RIJEKE**

**FROM CENTRAL EUROPE TO AMERICA 1880-1914**

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*Assisted by*

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John P. Kraljic

*Graphic Design*

Klaudio Cetina

*Collaboration in researching, advising and proofing of catalogue and exhibition*

Ellis Island Immigration Museum

Statue of Liberty National Monument, National Park Service

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**MERIKA**

**Emigration from Central Europe to America 1880-1914**

City Museum of Rijeka

Exhibition at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum,  
Statue of Liberty National Monument, National Park Service, New York

June 28 – September 4, 2012

*Author of the Exhibition*

Ervin Dubrović

*Designer of the Exhibition*

Klaudio Cetina

*Coordination*

Jasna Milinković

*Translation to English*

John P. Kraljic

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