



The University Gallery of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst is pleased to present *The Thin Veneer: The Peoples of Bosnia and their Disappearing Cultural Heritage*, an exhibition of photographs, books, maps, graphic materials, and original artwork. Guest curators Walter Denny, Professor of Art History, and Joel Halpern, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, worked with Exhibition Coordinator Roxanne Stanulis to select images that show the multicultural heritage of traditional Bosnia and its subsequent destruction during the latest period of civil strife. The exhibition is on view from April 13 through June 7, 1997 with an opening reception on Saturday, April 12 from 4 to 6 p.m.

Dismayed by the present climate of ethnic intolerance in Bosnia, Professors Denny and Halpern conceived of an exhibition that would demonstrate with visual evidence a broader view of that country's history. By depicting the rich multiculturalism of traditional Bosnia, Denny and Halpern challenge those who have attempted to erase this history. As with every exhibition, *The Thin Veneer: The Peoples of Bosnia and their Disappearing Cultural Heritage* also reflects the individual interests of its organizers. Art historian Walter Denny brought a comprehensive knowledge of Islamic art and architecture to the project while anthropologist Joel Halpern provided an intimate understanding of the Bosnian people.

This unique collaborative effort has produced an exhibition that utilizes a variety of graphic materials to define the various ethnic groups, to document a tradition of coexistence prior to the present conflict, and to symbolically record the widespread destruction of architectural monuments since the civil war began. Joel Halpern's photographs of Bosnian life taken over several decades, complemented by reproductions of 19th century engravings, define the various ethnic groups in Bosnia -- Serbians, Croatians, Muslims, and Jews -- and establish a tradition of interaction between these people in traditional Bosnian society.

Another section of the exhibition juxtaposes recent photographs documenting the destruction of several architectural monuments with earlier images showing the monuments intact. Although the monuments represent only a fraction of the losses to Bosnia's cultural heritage, their juxtaposition makes a powerful statement about the overall devastation to the country's people and culture. Also included in *The Thin Veneer* is a selection of graphic works from an exhibition entitled "Sarajevo '92." The prints were created by the faculty and graduate students at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Sarajevo from June to September 1992. Individually and together, they present a powerful testimony of the artists' experiences of living in a city under siege.

A catalogue documenting *The Thin Veneer: The Peoples of Bosnia and their Disappearing Cultural Heritage* will be available for purchase at the University Gallery. In conjunction with the exhibition, a symposium co-sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities will be held on Wednesday, April 23rd at 7:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall on the University campus. This event is free and open to the public.

Generous funds for the exhibition, catalogue, or symposium were provided by: the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, New York; Islamic Council of New England; Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts; Center for European Studies at Cornell University; Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles; the Chancellor's Office, Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, University Gallery, Middle Eastern Studies Program, and the UMass Arts Council of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For more information, please call the Gallery at (413) 545-3670.