Article title: Painter Alfred Krupa (1915-1989) was the very first man who invented the suitcase with wheels in the early 1950's

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Painter Alfred Krupa (1915-1989)¹ was the very first man who invented the suitcase with wheels in the early 1950's

By

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According to the UNTWO (World Tourism Organization) 1.2 billion people made an international trip in 2015 , and it is predicted that it will rise to 1.8 billion world travelers in 2025. Suitcase with wheels is known to all those who traveled but the real inventor of it is not known to everyone. Many journalists reported that in 1970, Bernard Sadow², then the owner of the American company U.S. Luggage (now part of the Briggs & Riley TRAVELWARE) invented and patented in 1972 first suitcase with wheels and so changed the world of travel. It is true is that **Bernard Sadow** was the one who patented with success suitcase with wheels but not the first man who invented it and use it in daily travelling. Those are, of course, two separate things. The fact of the history is that the painter **Alfred Krupa was the very first man who invented the suitcase with wheels sometime before or in 1954 (in period 1950-1954)**. And that is only one among his popular creations from early 1950's.

Who was Alfred Krupa?

Alfred Krupa (Alfred Joseph Kruppa³) was born in Mikolow, Poland in the Polish family of German and Jewish origin in 1915 (died in Karlovac, Croatia, Yugoslavia 1989). Alfred lost parents in early age. He and his brothers were raised by their mother's mom Therese during the difficult times of the young Polish Republic. After the grammar school he went to Krakow. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow until 1937 (a former pupil of famous Polish painter Józef Mehoffer). In an incredible carousel of events, like in a movie, in 1943 he reached Yugoslavia, where he crossed over to the partisans to eventually become one of the 13 core artists of the Art of Croatian Antifascist Movement (he exhibited at the historic first Partisan exhibition held in Topusko in 1944 on the free territory of Yugoslavia) and founder of the Watercolor Biennale of Yugoslavia (BAJ, 1979).

Alfred Krupa was among the partisans securing Randolph Churchill (son of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill) during a mission to Croatia in September 1944 ordered by Mayor-General Sir Fitzroy Hew Royle Maclean.⁴

¹

https://www.getty.edu/vow/ULANFullDisplay?find=Krupa+Alfred&role=&nation=&prev_page=1&subjectid=500355816

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/05/business/05road.html>

³ https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Alfred_Krupa/

⁴ <https://aktivirajkarlovac.net/2015/10/freddy-krupa-moj-djed-alfred-je-podcijenjen/>

Also he saved the US soldiers from the 449th Bomb Group when they was forced to land in Croatia, and one of those soldiers John R.Szablinski has become a long year friend of the family.⁵⁶

His sister Hildegard Marie was burned alive in the furnace of the KC Auschwitz - Birkenau on 1st February 1944. He himself is also officially registered victim of the Nazi regime by ITS Bad Arolsen.⁷

1 Alfred Krupa filmed with wife Štefica and son Mladen on the balcony of the house (JNA/Domobranska 8) where all of his inventions has been created. This place is connected to him and his family in almost iconic way.⁸ Photography is from mid 1960s. (Source: the Krupa family archive)

The artist and sportsmen Alfred Krupa from his youth in Poland always loved all technical. Including watches. As the factoid notion his collection once included from the Soviet made cheap exotic watches up to the Swiss made Doxa and Omega. The later one, legendary Omega Seamaster Compressor (1970) is still part of the Krupa family heritage.⁹

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4614159909659&set=a.1106187532542&type=3&theater>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4621292047958&set=a.1106187532542&type=3&theater>

⁷ <http://www.rodoslovlje.hr/istaknuta-vijest/prilozi-citatelja-hildegard-marie-ili-zatvorenica-broj-9772-zrtva-paljenica-obitelji-kruppa>

⁸ "Old Karlovac - streets, houses and people" by Radovan Radovinović, published in 2010.

⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8TfCYWpHb3/>

2 - Alfred Krupa in front of his home with the original suitcase on wheels in early 1950's (1954).

The original black and white photo has been colored (MyHeritage tool). (Source: KaFotka public photo archive)

3 - The same photo shows that his invention includes the wheels and the adjustable leather stripes for easier handling of a suitcase

Inventions of Alfred Krupa in context of his time

The public record photo from 1954 (published on 11th January 2014 at the popular Croatian online photo archive Kafotka¹⁰¹¹) taken in front of the family Krupa home (The Max Heinrich Palace) in the Domobranska 8 Street (then JNA 8) presents definitive proof of claim that Alfred Krupa made such an invention more than a decade and a half ago (or two) before mentioned Sadow.

It should be noted that he did not hide his work, as matter in fact his inventions was known, used and presented in Yugoslavia.¹² It is not anything new, many older people still remembers how he walked on the Korana river. In 1957 he exhibited his **glass bottom boat for**

¹⁰ <https://www.kafotka.net/4297>

¹¹ <https://www.kafotka.net/oznake/alfred-krupa>

¹² <http://kaportal.rtl.hr/karetrovizor-americki-novinari-s-ironijom-kazu-kako-su-ljudi-prije-hodali-po-mjesecu-nego-imali-kofer-s-kotacima-no-to-nije-bas-tocno-davno-prije-izmislio-ga-je-karlovac-slikar-krupa/>

sightseeing¹³ (another mega popular thing today) and his other inventions on "Sajam tehnike i tehničkih mogućnosti u Beogradu" (Fair of Techniques and Technical Opportunities in Belgrade, report about it in Sunday edition of the „Borba“ on 25th August 1957).

Documentation shows his attempts to patents his inventions first the authorities in Belgrade, and then through the British Embassy but at the time they didn't want to against or aside authorities in Belgrade.¹⁴

Alfred Krupa pored svog platna

Snimio: Nikola Perić

Slikar - partizan na obali Kupe

Izložbenom dvoranom karlovačkog Zorin-doma sece omalen čovjek – slikar i sanjar, nekadašnji partizan i izumitelj, putnik i sportaš. Mnogo riječi za Alfreda Krupu, ali mi ih još nedostaje, jer ga je njegova radionica vodila u mnoge vode u kojima se zadržavao dok ga je to zanimalo, pa plovio dalje. Slikarsko platno i ksil i past nije nikada napuštao osim u dijelu ratnih godina kad ih nije imao, ali je rano po „šakarcima“ risao svoje druge borce i dio toga izložio, zajedno s partizanima-slikarima na prvoj izložbi naših umjetnika u Topuskom 1944. godine.

strane nisam vidio ni jednog poginulog. Preda mnom su bili bori Sestre ličke. Kad se sve smirilo, Krupa se pojavio iz zaklona i za sekundu bio opkoljen partizanima.

Prisao mi je jedan, stavio pistoli na stjepočicu i nešto vikao. Nisam razumio što govori, ali sam znao da nije ništa dobro. Prišao je partizanki, kašnje sam saznao, bolničarka, i udarila ga po ruci. „Ja Polak! Ja Polak!“ govorio sam.

Natasa se tu neki Ličanin koji je razumio polski i pita Krupu zeli li s njima ili hoće kuci. Kad se odmah opredijelio da će s njima,

Profesore, vas se život nije sastojao samo od borbe i slikarskog rada. Bili ste radomili, bavili se mnogim drugim stvarima.

Radomno sam i danas. No zdravije mi ne dopušta da sa 64 godine idem u avanturu, kao još prije, desetak godina, kad sam se biciklom iz Karlova uputio u Crkvenicu i stigao, slikao i – vratio se. No, tada sam još bio mlad!

Na tehničkoj izložbi u Beogradu svoje dobio je bio, izložen, članac što ga je snimio Alfred Krupa. Činac je na dnu imao posebne prozore za promatranje podvodnog svijeta.

Predlagao sam da se takvim čamcima opreme svi naši primorski hoteli za posebne izlete gostiju i dala. Mislim da je ideja još aktualna, premda su od tada prošla tri desetljeća – kaže Krupa.

Podvodni svijet odavijek je fascinirao Krupu. Negdje pedesetihi godina ronio je u blizini Vrbnika – onako, na dah. Onda mu je palo na pamet da izradi masku i dugo disalicu. Počeo se spuštati sve češće i dublje u podmore, a kašnje je posebno pretražio papir i boje i zacurio da slika milijune mehurica u prozirnoj vodi i sjene kupusa. – Izlagao je 1951. godine u Zagrebu ciklus slika nastalih pod morem, ali ga je službena kritika „sahranila“ zbog bizarnosti. („Mnogo godina kašnje prečtao sam negdje kako je jedan Amerikac na toj ideji stvorio usosan biznis“)

Krupa je bio vrstan sportaš – majstor u borilačkim vještinama, odgojio je generacije karlovačkih boksača, učio mladiće dizati i dizati zrcicu u vrijeme kad se govo i nije analo za te vještine. Eksperimentirao je svojim izumom – specijalnim pješčanim cipelama i nudio ih tvorcima, sagradio skije za vodu i njima se zabavljao po karlovačkim plažama, silao vodu iz sebe i slikarski pribor da ih nadraška bura ne baci u more. Ispao poljima i rijekama, kilometrima oko Karlova.

Nikada nisam volio atletičarsko slikarstvo, već sam radio u neposrednom dodiru s prirodom. To radim i danas – kaže Krupa, kada je iz njega 25 samostalnih i sto-tinjak drugih izložbi. (Ova posljednja u Zorin-domu u Karlovcu izložio 35 godina poslije prve u Topuskom)

Karlovanici toga nekadašnjeg profesora umjetnosti na Krau u Karlovcu i član-danas susreću u skrivenim zakucima grada kako bijeli neobična svjetla vode i gruča na vrbama i ne smetaju ga u vječnom poslu – slikanju prirode u prirodi, izvan ateljea, kojega usput budi rečeno, nikada nije ni imao ni previše želio.

Nikola Perić

Podvodni svijet

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U dodiru s prirodom

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Nikola Perić

4 "Vjesnik" (Sunday edition, 2nd September 1979) "Painter-partisan on the bank of Kupa river"

¹³ <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=10684>

¹⁴ https://actacroatica.com/en/memory/Alfred_Krupa/

„Vjesnik“ one of the largest daily newspapers in Yugoslavia, reported about the fact that Krupa was the very first man who painted under the sea classical painting oil on paper. It was in the summer 1950 in Vrbnik at the Krk island. He hand-made a dive mask from truck tires and glass, a tube for breathing under water and he tied himself and a painting stand to the bottom. Unfortunately those works exhibited in Zagreb in 1951 are lost at present. Criticism buried him for being too bizarre.¹⁵

5 Skis for walking on water (26th August 1951) at Korana river. Colored black and white photo with the MyHeritage tool . (Source: the Krupa family archive)

Some other inventions include a complex **system for preventing the sinking of ships**, **water walking skis** (in 1951, his variant of the Leonardo da Vinci idea), **lightweight folding impregnated canvas catamaran**, **portable hanger ie body support** (for example, in the

¹⁵ "Vjesnik" (Sunday edition, 2nd September 1979) "Painter - partisan at the bank of Kupa river"

trains of that time / early 1950s), **boxing gloves inflated with compressed air** (he was also a boxer) and many other.

Water walking skis today has been patented by others and produced in a number of variants in various productions. Similar situation as with the glass bottom boat for sightseeing.

A complex **system for preventing the sinking of ships** has been seriously discussed at one point at the Naval Institute in Zagreb (Brodarski Institut est.1948) but nothing was realized from their part.

6 Lightweight folding catamaran made of the impregnated canvas. Filmed in the early 1950s. (Source: *the Krupa family archive*)

7 Alfred Krupa recorded in the train at the Central Station in Karlovac with his portable hanger ie body support
Early 1950s, there was objective everyday need for such small practical inventions. (*Source: the Krupa family archive*)

Historical credit and the legacy

Krupas ideas at the time has not been met with understanding at the official Yugoslavian authorities (unlike his work as an artist and sportsmen) and eventually lacking support and encouragement, feeling defeated, he dropped any idea to force patent registration anymore. But he continued to flourish as an artist and humanist until his death in 1989.

He was decorated with a number of awards and decorations including the Medal for Bravery (for extraordinary courage showed in combat given by Marshall Tito), Order of Republic with

Silver Collar, Karlovac City Award, Plaque of ZAVNOH (highest social distinction in Republic of Croatia in period 1982-1990) etc.¹⁶

As sort of post mortem recognition Croatian journalist called him "Leonardo of the 20th century".¹⁷

Destiny prevented Alfred Krupa to become very rich man, but now (at least) we can give him the long time ago deserved historical credit.

At the end it is interesting to note that his son Mladen Krupa M.Sc. (1949 -) continued family tradition and invented the metal bunker Kruppa-M91 in 1991. One example (inv.no. GMK-IKMP-13074) from the real battle today is restaured and exhibited at The Homeland War Museum in Karlovac.¹⁸¹⁹ He also worked on further development of his fathers complex system for preventing the sinking of ships.

That and some other inventions asks for additional study and presentation.

¹⁶ <https://likumzg.wordpress.com/2015/05/31/u-susret-100-godisnjici-rodenja-slikara-alfreda-krupe/>

¹⁷ Karlovački tjednik, 16th October 2004 „Noble in life, aristocrat in painting“

¹⁸ <https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kruppa-M91>

¹⁹ Zbirka naoružanja Domovinskog rata na Turnju, str. 28, Brigadir u miru Dubravko Halovanić, Karlovac: Matica Hrvatska, 2009. ISBN 978-953-55627-0-2