



# The International Trust for Croatian Monuments

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## PROGRESS REPORT 2023

### Dubrovnik, Split and Zagreb

Towards the end of January 2023, I was greatly surprised to receive a call from a lady in Dubrovnik telling me that the City of Dubrovnik had decided to give me an award for the work that we, the Trust, have done for the cultural heritage of Dubrovnik. Indeed, throughout the years, we have done a lot of work on behalf of Dubrovnik, but not recently, nor have I visited Dubrovnik for a number of years now. I was surprised, but also delighted and although it was all at a very short notice I decided to go.



Above: The Awards of the City of Dubrovnik

possessions, all take part. With my late husband, Henry, I visited Dubrovnik many times on these occasions. And always, as they say, the weather was kind.

Consequently, following a City Conference, attended by many worthy people including the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, Ms Nina Obuljen Korzinek, and held in the Marin Drzic City Theatre, decorated by the painter Vlaho Bukovac, 1855 – 1922, I received, with another six people, “The Award of the City of Dubrovnik”, a beautifully framed document and with it, a lovely painting by an artist from Cavtat, Antonija Ruskovic, which depicts a moment of St Blaise's celebrations in front of his church. It was a great honour and I much enjoyed being in Dubrovnik again and meeting old friends and making new ones and absolutely ravished by views and beauty of the Dubrovnik stones which some people have tried, in the past and again, to destroy.

Just to remind ourselves, I will now list different actions that we, the Trust, have undertaken to help Dubrovnik in her hour of need throughout the years:

Dec 1993 – our very first donation went to Dubrovnik, £1,000, directly from the then the Prince of Wales, for TRSTENO ARBORETUM.

This was to happen during the St Blaise festival, the patron saint of Dubrovnik, a tradition which goes back to the 9th century when St Blaise, the legend has it, saved Dubrovnik against a Venetian attack. St Blaise's Feast is celebrated on 3rd February and the day before, the day of “Our Lady of Candelora”, people go to churches to have their throats blessed against disease. On his Feast Day people, in their traditional costumes and from all around Dubrovnik, gather in front of St Blaise's Church, built by a Venetian architect and sculptor Marino Gropelli in 1715. Processions of people, church representatives displaying their most sacred and important church



Above: The Stones of Dubrovnik

From August 1994 to some years later, our contributions to the DUBROVNIK SUMMER FESTIVAL amounted to some £60,000. This was all due to Maestro Ivo Pogorelich and his concerts in aid of Dubrovnik, which was used to repair the roof of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival Palace, utterly destroyed.

On many occasions and through several years we helped the FRANCISCAN FRIARY. We repaired their main stone fountain in the cloister and contributed to the costs of another one. We helped their library and their music archives. While the conservators of the Croatian Conservation Institute were working within the premises of the Franciscan Friary, we helped them on several occasions and later, in Villa Stay, by purchasing a low pressure table. Our help also extended to Dubrovnik Libraries and the Baltazar Bogisic Collection in Cavtat.

Also, we paid for the costs of conservation of a number of paintings from the Franciscan Friary, paintings of a “second” category, which were conserved by students of the Conservation Department of the Academy of Fine Art in Split, under the guidance of Prof. Jure Matijevic.

In June 1999 we organised, with the help of Professor Nicholas Pickwood, a visit to Dubrovnik of a group of ten voluntary students from the Fondazione per il Restauro e la Conservazione dei Beni Librari from Spoleto to work in the libraries of the Franciscan and Dominican Friaries.

We made further contributions to the Trsteno Arboretum and for well over 10 years we supported the International Conservation Workshop on the island of Lopud. The Lopud connection still stands, for at least another year.

On the roof of the church of St Blaise, flanking the statue of the saint himself, stands the allegorical figure of FAITH. Our Trust paid for the conservation work needed on this sculpture, following a visit of six Royal Academicians to Dubrovnik in 1995, who depicted the town. Their paintings were then exhibited in the Friends' Room of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. This was recorded in the press and a permanent memento of this action remains not only in the sculpture of Faith, repaired and standing proudly on the roof of St Blaise church today, but also in a painting, “The Raising of the Flag”, by Anthony Eyton RA. Anthony Eyton is this year 100 years old and still going strong, and his painting was bought at the Royal Academy exhibition by Dr Wendy Barron for the Government Collection and since then in the British Embassy in Zagreb. I am also very glad to report here that Anthony Eyton received this year in the Honours List the award of OBE, richly deserved, for his “services to painting and to art community”.

While in Dubrovnik I visited my friends conservators in Villa Stay, Croatian Conservation Institute, who I have been supplying regularly with art journals from this country. There I saw much work taking place, on many paintings, from different places. As ever, they made me feel very welcome, even a special cake was made for the occasion.



Above: The Stones of Dubrovnik

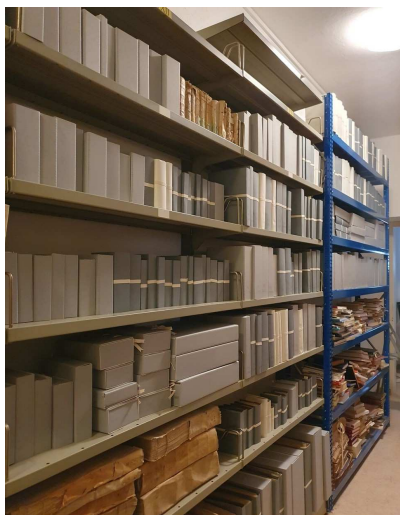
Below: The city harbour



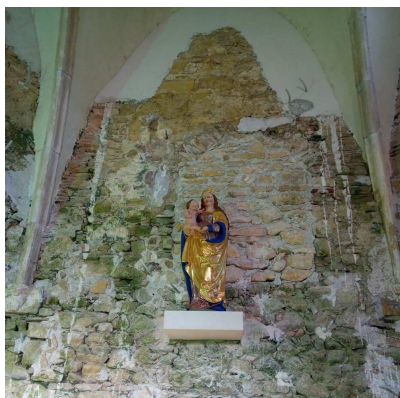




Above: Franciscan Friary, Poljud, Split, with Fra Bernardin Skunca, Fra Sime Skibola, Klaudia Hozjan, Dr Vanja Kovacic and Dr Radoslav Tomic



Above: 17th century books in protective boxes in the Franciscan Friary at Poljud, Split



Above: The replica of the Madonna and Child In the church of St James, Ocurje

Below: Conservators in Villa Stay with the low-pressure table



Jura Matijevic, conservator from the Academy of Fine Arts in Split, came to Villa Stay to take me to Split. Jura was made very welcome too and he looked with great interest at all the work that they were doing. In Split, we headed immediately for the Franciscan Friary at Poljud where everyone was waiting to welcome us. At this point, as is clear from Klaudia Hozjan correspondence and her photographs that Klaudia has successfully accomplished her work on the 17th century collection of books in the friary. They are all mechanically cleaned and stored in protective boxes. Anything requiring restoration will await government funding. Now, the 16th century collection of books and documents and works of art on paper is safely stored by Mia Perkovic and Heidi Vukovic in the Memorial Room and the 17th century collection is protected by Klaudia Hozjan. The latest news is that Heidi Vukovic may return to the friary in the autumn to continue work on the very large collection of 18th century books, to try to sort them out and protect. We are all very grateful for that.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Culture have approved funding for project documentation for the library and the museum and detailed architectural pictures of the friary have been taken, which will be used by architects, including all microclimatic and safety measures.

My visit to Zagreb was very brief, only one weekend, devoted to my family. I did manage to see an exhibition by my artist sister, Ljerka Njers, in Gallery Kranjcar.

Next time in Zagreb, I need to see the installation of the replica of the Gothic sculpture “Mother and Child” in “situ” in the church of St James in Ocurje about which I wrote in my last year's report. The same group of conservators are also responsible for a very successful exhibition in 2022, “SOS for SAINTS”, which received this year the award of the Society of Art Historians of Croatia for conservation and restoration of works of art.

Neva Poloski and the students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb continue their work on the mural by Branko Senoa in the Museum August Senoa dedicated to his father, August, an important figure in the 19th century Croatian literature.

Sadly, our research, entitled “Artistic Exchanges between Mexico and Croatia; a Study of Documentary Sources on the Crucified Christ of Lopud”, has come to a close. We paid for the three month research by a Spanish post-graduate student in the Seville Archives, but his research has yielded no results. Some hopes still remain for the future. I am very sad about that, but that was always a possibility and we took the risks. The costs were covered by the Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Settlement and I thank their trustees again. As I have said earlier in this report, this year may be the last time that we are helping with accommodation costs for conservators coming to work on the island of Lopud and the International Conservation Workshop.

The tour to Ireland, organised by the Attingham Trust took place in September 2022. Unfortunately, it was affected by Covid and the two participants from Croatia also suffered. Nevertheless, I think much was of a great benefit to them.

We continue to support scholars in their research and have made a contribution to Ivana Peskan and Vesna Pascuttini-Juraga, from Varazdin, to take part at an international conference organised by the Research Centre for late Antiquity and Middle Ages of the University of Zagreb and held on the island of Rab in May 2023. Their talk “Urban Transformation and Cultural Layers of Medieval Varazdin and Surroundings” was well received and I am glad that we were able to help them.

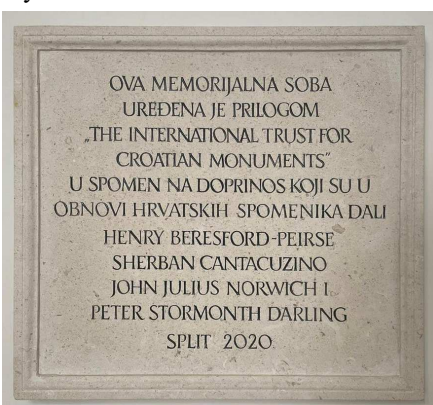
We also continue to supply scholars with subscriptions to art magazine and, indeed, I send many to Croatia by post. “Postcard Teas” is a star, they still continue to sell our linen towels, woven by hand, in their shop in Derring Street.

To mark the occasion of the coronation of King Charles III in Croatia, HE The British Ambassador to Croatia Mr Simon Thomas OBE chose the town of Osijek as his main place of celebrations. This was in remembrance of the very happy visit that the then the Prince of Wales and the Duchesse of Cornwall made to Osijek in 2016.

This summer my son Henry, as a trustee of ITCM, will have visited the Franciscan Friary at Pojud.

STOP PRESS....on 4th August this year, an important processional cross from the Franciscan friary in Zadar, stolen almost 50 years ago, will be returning to its original home. The cross was found and recognised as such in the “Amadeo Lia” Museum in La Spezia, by the English art historian Donal Cooper, who wrote a chapter on Franciscan art collections in Croatia in our book “Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and Cultural Heritage”, published by Frances Lincoln in 2009. With efforts on the part of Italian and Croatian authorities and great generosity of the Lia family, who bought the cross at Sotheby's in London without any knowledge of its provenance, the lovely and historically important cross is back where it belongs.

Below: The Memorial Tablet, carved by Marin Barisic



Below: Villa Stay, Croatian Conservation Institute, situated in one of the Renaissance villas of Dubrovnik

