



The International Trust for Croatian Monuments

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PROGRESS REPORT 2022

Zagreb and Split

After an absence of over two years, I was finally back in Zagreb and Split in June this year. It was an emotional encounter with my family and friends and a pleasure to attend to some of the Trust's projects.

As it happened, the day after I arrived, there was "End of the Year Show" at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, including their conservation department. There I saw the splendid carved replica of the Gothic Madonna and Child, completed last year as a diploma work by one of their students, and now being "painted" by another student as his diploma work for this year. You can see more about it, alas only in Croatian, on this link - [ALU - INFORMACIJE - Dnevne::informacije i::obavijesti - Bogorodica iz kapele sv. Jakoba na Očuri](#). This can also be found on our website, www.croatianmonuments.org.

In my report of 2018, I wrote about this project, making a replica of a Gothic Madonna and Child rescued from the church of St James in Očurje, the largest Gothic church in Zagorje, the hilly countryside behind Zagreb. This is a pilgrimage church, dating back many centuries, and still venerated today. The latest research suggests that pigments used on the sculpture date to the medieval times. It is thought that the donator of this sculpture could have been Beatrice Frankopan, the wife of Ivaniš Korvin and the daughter-in-law of the Hungarian-Croatian king, Matijaš Korvin. At that time, the end of the 15th and beginning of 16th century, this family owned much land and towns in this part of Croatia, including the nearby Krapina. Ivaniš was the donator to the Lepoglava Friary, where he is also buried. Beatrice was left a young widow with two small children. Očura is right on the medieval route, dating to antiquity, between Krapina and Lepoglava.

This research, and much else that they have discovered, including 15 sculptures from this church, saved and restored, will be presented at a conference, "SOS for SAINTS", planned for this October.

There will be an exhibition and papers will be published. Our Madonna and Child will be returned to the church and placed in the sanctuary. Restoration of the church itself, much damaged in 1945, continues.

The Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb was founded in 1907. This year they are marking their 115 anniversary. Sadly, their original building, on one of the main streets of Zagreb, was very badly damaged by the earthquake in 2020. This year they have to move out of it, lock, stock and barrel, and go to a distant location out of town, a big challenge for both students and teachers.

Walking through Zagreb damage caused by recent earthquakes is evident. Many of the 19th century buildings, with rich ornamentations, have ropes along their facades, for fear of falling elements. Most of the main museums are shut, their collections in storage: The Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters, the Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Archaeological Museum, where I saw great restoration work taking place, the Museum of Ivan Meštrović, the State Archives, Gliptoteka, Croatian Museum of Architecture, Croatian History Museum, Natural History Museum, the Schools' Museum, the Cabinet of prints and drawings of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Mimara Museum.

The following day in Zagreb, I presented to the National and University Library the document about the passage of the polymath, Abe Rudjer Bošković, FRS, 1711 – 1787, to England in 1760. I wrote about the purchase of this document, on behalf of our Trust, in my last year's report. This is given to the Library in memory of Dr Dušan Ražem, with whom I did a lot of research here in libraries and archives, trying to find the portrait of Bošković by Robert Edge Pine. Although we have not been lucky in tracing the portrait, an exhibition, marking the 300th anniversary of his birth, was held in the Royal Society in 2011. More can be found about this on this link:

<https://www.nsk.hr/fond-nsk-bogatiji-za-vrijednu-ispravu-s-imenom-rudera-boskovica/>

<https://www.nsk.hr/en/nsk-receives-valuable-18th-century-document-mentioning-rudjer-ruder-josip-boskovic/>

This can also be found on our website: www.croatianmonuments.org.

I think this will be a happy home for this document and the Institute of Rudjer Bošković, where Dr Ražem worked for many years, will receive a copy. There is another connection between Dr Ražem and his wife, Branka Katušin-Ražem, and our Trust. Their scientific research and general help to many conservators in Croatia, with whom we have been also working, has been of crucial importance and Dr Ražem will be missed in many quarters.

By kindness of Mario Braun, now retired after many years at the Croatian Conservation Institute, and, as Mario had done for me two years ago, we travelled to Split. The main object of the visit was to go to the Franciscan Friary of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary at Poljud, to see the progress made in the Memorial Room, restored and equipped in dedication to the past trustees of our Trust. This “studiolo” will contain the most important documents and books held by the Friary and be opened to both scholars and public. Indeed, there was much progress since my last visit. All secure cabinets and chests are in place, conservation material waiting to be put to use, several pieces of furniture, belonging to the Friary, have been restored, also at our expense. The friars were delighted to welcome us, together with Radoslav Buzančić, head of the Ministry of Culture, Conservation Department, at Split and the architect Vanja Kovačić and the art historian, Radoslav Tomić. They have all been most helpful in this project.

At our suggestion, a young paper restorer, Mia Perković, from Split, who trained at the University of Dubrovnik, paper conservation, with two years of work experience in the National and University Library in Zagreb, currently unemployed, will do three months, starting in the autumn, preparing the material to be safely moved to this room. Together with Vanja Kovačić, Mia will make a plan how best to proceed. With the conservation material already there, Mia will make acid-free boxes for the most important books and carefully wrap up the documents with acid-free tissue paper and deposit them into the chests and cupboards. At the same time, the librarian who works in the friary, but only for one day a week, will learn from her and be able to use that knowledge in the future. Our Trust will cover the costs of Mia Perkovic for her work in the friary.

Radoslav Buzančić has big ambitions for the friary at Poljud. He hopes that with funding from the EU they could make a proper library and reading-room there, with a librarian employed full time. We must wish him well in this project as the collection of this Franciscan Friary is of both national and international importance.

The following day, before returning to Zagreb, we had a happy gathering with a number of my friends/conservators courtesy of the Cvito Fisković Art Historical Institute.

In my 2019 report, I wrote about the life-size sculpture of Christ on the Cross found in a church on the island of Lopud. As the sculpture was moved for conservation, to their astonishment, they found that it was as light as a feather! It transpired that the sculpture was made from maize fibre and that it came all the way from Mexico. There are many of these in Spain, but not so many in other European countries. Through kindness of a friend, we have now established contact with Professor Francisco Montes, University of Seville, who will find one of his post-graduate students to do the research in the Archives of Seville, to try to find the exact provenance of this sculpture. The research, under the title “Artistic Exchanges between Mexico and Croatia; a Study of Documentary Sources on the Crucified Christ of Lopud”, will be conducted under the direction of Professor Hans Portsteffen, University of Cologne, who has spent many years working with the International Conservation Workshop on the island of Lopud. Our Trust will cover the cost of this three-months research. There is hope that other interesting details regarding Croatia and trade with the New World may transpire.

We have also made a contribution towards the purchase of a painting by Vlaho Bukovac, 1855 – 1922, “The Weavers of Konavle”, for the Museum of Vlaho Bukovac in Cavtat. They had a very successful “crowd-funding” campaign to purchase this painting and they should be congratulated for their efforts. It is a small painting and of great interest to the Museum, as it is of such local significance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Trustees of the Sandy and Zorica Charitable Settlement for their generous, and last, donation of £10,000 to our Trust, as they will be closing down the Glen Charity in the coming months.

Returning to the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and their Conservation Department, we continue to support their team working on the mural by Branko Šenoa in the Museum of August Šenoa, his father and one of the most important Croatian Romantic writers. The mural was shattered in the earthquakes. Students of the Academy, under the guidance of their teacher Neva Pološki, have been restoring it for the last two years and we have been making contributions towards the conservation material needed for this purpose. The actual work is done at no cost to the Museum August Šenoa, it is the students' and the Academy's contribution towards the restoration of this museum.

The same applies, no costs, except conservation material, to the restoration of a wooden polychrome and gilded sculpture “The Queen of Heaven with a little Jesus”, unknown author, 16/17 century, by Andrej Aranicki, a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts at Zagreb. A full report on the conservation of this sculpture can be found on our website, www.croatianmonuments.org

Zagreb suffered greatly in a major earthquake in 1880. This important literary figure, August Šenoa, spent much time and energy recording damage and offering help in the aftermath of this earthquake. This effort caused his premature death at the age of 42.

In Zagreb, in the Klovićevi Dvori Gallery, I saw two impressive exhibitions, “Vlaho Bukovac in Zagreb, Vienna and Cavtat, 1893 – 1903” and “Klimt in Rijeka; Love, Death and Ecstasy”. In one of the recent online reports by the Apollo Magazine, they had a review of the Klimt exhibition by Lea Vitezić from Rijeka.

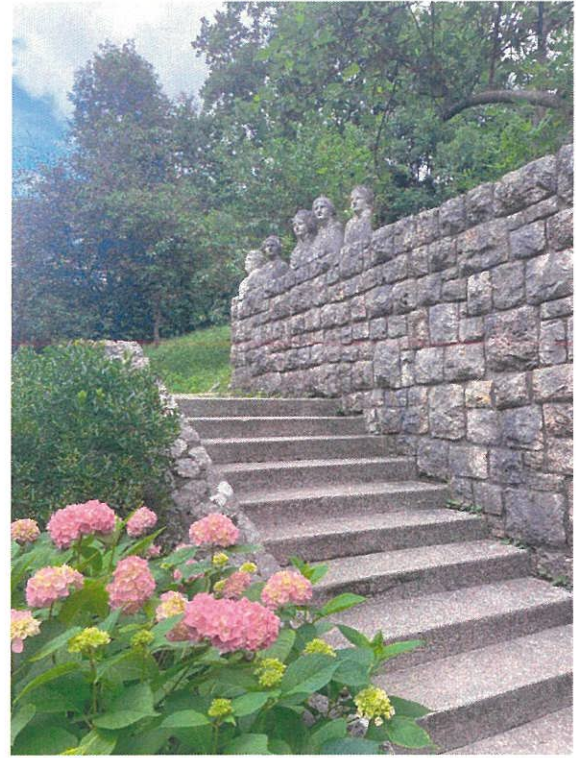
In this period of not travelling and unusual circumstances, I have been sending books to conservators in Croatia, very gratefully received. One of them was “Painting in Stone: Architecture and Poetics of Marble from Antiquity to Enlightenment” by Fabio Barry. John Sandoe's Books kindly sent a second copy at no cost to us, as the first never arrived, for which I thank them.

This September the Attingham Trust “Irish Tour” will finally take place.

In November last year, I visited Anthony Eyton, RA, who was one of the six Royal Academicians, including Paul Hogarth, Donald Hamilton Fraser, Ken Howard, Brendan Neiland and Norman Ackroyd, who went to Dubrovnik in 1995 and depicted the town. Their paintings were exhibited in the Friends' Room of the Royal Academy of Arts. With generous contributions from the artists from paintings sold, which we shared with the Friends of the RA, the allegorical figure of Faith, from the roof of the church of St Blaise, was restored. Anthony Eyton will be 100 years old next year. When I last visited him, he was going strong, painting large canvases and looking forward to his exhibition next year! We must wish him much good health and success.

We continue to support scholars in their research and to subscribe them to academic journals. The linen project continues, however small. Our traditional towels are still available from Postcard Teas and Livingstone Studio. There are also books on Croatian arts to be found at Thomas Heneage and South Kensington Bookshop.

As reported in my Progress Report of 2021, the Trust marked its 30s anniversary last year. I recall here our past trustees, John Julius Norwich, Sherban Cantacuzino, Peter Stormonth Darling and my late husband, Henry, who made it possible for the Trust to achieve what we did achieve in the first three decades. I thank here Timothy Clifford, Anna Somers Cocks and my sons, Henry and Johnny, for their encouragement and help to the Trust and hope that, in spite of our dwindling resources, we shall be able to continue a little longer.



Top left, Franciscans at Poljud, Split
Top right, The Art Academy, Zagreb

Middle, "My Nest", Vlaho Bukovac,
Klिवicevi Dvori Gallery.

Bottom left, Conservator friends in Split
Bottom right, Anthony Eyton, RA, with his
large canvas

