

SUMMARY

For almost five years we have been helpless witnesses to the physical destruction of the cultural heritage in Croatia. The data and precise information on the scale of the damage are collected by numerous professional and non-professional organisations. There is a long list of books, studies and reviews dealing with this staggering phenomenon. Regardless of the effort made to determine the extent of the war damage, it is clear that it will present an incomplete picture of the losses.

Apart from the war damage inflicted through military operations, which can be expressed in figures, there are many other forms whose scale cannot be measured. Theft and the illegal trade in works of art and other objects are just one of the accompanying phenomena. Numerous well-organised channels are used in the trade of objects, plunder from museums, private collections or devastated homes in occupied territories. We can already with great certainty conclude that the only thing which remains of the private collection (albeit not registered at the Regional Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Monuments in Osijek) of Mr Brana Crlenjak from Vukovar, which included not only his paintings and medallions, but also a representative selection of Croatian sculpture, paintings and archaeological material are memories in the minds of its owners. The scale of the destruction

of the town of Vukovar and of the plunder that followed leaves no room for hope. Even if works were to appear on the art market, the lack of documentation would make it hard to prove ownership and challenge the right to purchase. Perhaps we will be more fortunate in the case of private collections or the valuable inventories of houses in territory which is temporarily under occupation, but which has not been subject to destruction. An example of this is the cultural and historical collection of our colleague Mate Batoroviæ, the curator of the Ilok Museum, which has remained stored in several locations in Ilok.

The civilisational response to these processes is to keep them in our minds and to nurture a consciousness about that which has been lost, as well as to adopt an attitude that our heritage includes everything which we know belonged to this cultural and civilisational environment. The response should also include the understanding of the responsibility of preserving the existing heritage, not only through giving greater importance to museums and their communication with the public, but also through the social and professional recognition of collectors of items belonging to our heritage.

In order to draw attention to the great importance of private collectors and collections, we have planned this issue of "Muzeologija" to include a range of analyses of collectors and the fate of their collections in the 19th and the

beginning of the 20th century, leading to the main topic of this issue - art and cultural or historical donations which have had a "fortunate fate". We have left out the broad topic of contemporary collectors, since we were primarily interested in those collecting activities in which the individual act of private initiative is transformed into a new quality: the way in which objects continued their existence within other museum collections or as individual cultural entities.

Here, for the first time, we present comprehensive and accurate data concerning donations in the city of Zagreb. The results, which are certainly a contribution to our cultural heritage, can provide an example to others about the way in which donations should be cared for. We believe that this article will help many collectors in making decisions about donating their collections.

We extend our thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue for their willingness to provide a treatment of subjects in a way which differs from the one they deal with professionally. Collectors' enthusiasm and passion lies at the core of all museums: it should be respected, supported and promoted. We hope that this issue of "Muzeologija" is a step in the right direction.

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Apart from the war damage inflicted through military operations, which can be expressed in figures, there are many other forms whose scale cannot be measured. Theft and the illegal trade in works of art and other objects are just one of the accompanying phenomena. Numerous well-organised channels are used in the trade of objects plundered from museums, private collectors or devastated homes in occupied territories. We can already with great certainty conclude that the only thing which remains of the private collection (albeit not registered at the Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Zagreb) of the former Croats from Vukovar, which included not only bar paintings and medallions, but also a representative selection of Croatian sculpture, paintings and archaeological material are remains in the hands of its owners. The scale of the destruction