

# DOCUMENTATION COLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND MEDIA AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF DATA IN DETERMINING THE PROVENANCE OF MUSEUM OBJECTS

**ANUŠKA DERANJA CRNOKIĆ,  
MA**

Ministry of Culture and Media of the  
Republic of Croatia

*anuska.deranja-crnokic@min-kulture.hr*

## INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Culture and Media owns and cares for valuable documentation that has been created by the work of the conservation service in Croatia for more than a century. Today, amid the work on the methodology and research aimed at determining the origin of museum objects as part of the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII*, we recognise the importance of the availability of sources for researching the origin of works of art at the professional level. Therefore, this paper will provide a brief overview of the complementary documentary collections of the Ministry of Culture and Media that are relevant for individual research.

Since its inception, the Ministry's conservation profession has been strongly focused on documenting cultural heritage

through the written word, drawing techniques, photography and the collection of comprehensive documentary material, further motivated by the work and commitment of prominent individuals, which has left us with a diverse collection of material as a source of a large amount of information that is extremely useful today in researching the origins of works of art. In order to begin a systematic approach to the topic of confiscated works of art during and after World War II, the Ministry of Culture and Media, in cooperation with the Museum Documentation Centre, launched a *Pilot Project*<sup>1</sup> with a series of workshops, first of which took place on January 31, 2023, and the results of which were presented on April 23, 2024 at a scientific and professional conference organised by the Museum Documentation Centre and the Croatian Science Foundation, as part of the project *Provenance Research on Artwork in Zagreb Collections*, which is being carried out at the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.<sup>2</sup> The long-term goal of the *Pilot Project* is to develop an appropriate methodology and improve the professional capacities of the museum community to create a platform of knowledge for the systematic study of the provenance of artworks in museums and other heritage institutions.

## DOCUMENTATION COLLECTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND MEDIA

The documentation stored at the Ministry of Culture and Media is organised based on the type, scope and topic of the material into four main documentation units:

Central Documentation in the Field of Cultural Heritage, Collection of Photographic Documentation, Collection of Microfilm Documentation, and Special Library of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and Media.

Collections of Older Material of the Central Documentation in the Field of Cultural Heritage include documentary fonds of state bodies, institutions and other organisations relevant to the activity of cultural heritage protection. The materials are divided into four separate, indivisible units, of which the materials of the National Commission for Ascertaining War Damage to Cultural and Historical Objects for Croatia – Zagreb, known by the abbreviated name KOMRAT, created during 1945 and 1946, are of exceptional importance to researchers. The inventory book and archival fonds of these materials refer to 201 files created from 14 June 1945 to 14 October 1946. The documentation consists of reports on war damage and reports of war damage to immovable cultural monuments, museums, libraries, churches and schools, and war damage to private property was listed for castles. Damage is listed individually for settlements and collectively for regions. Metadata about KOMRAT documents (owner, address, type of artwork, registration number) has been entered into an Excel table for easier search.

The material created by the work of the Commission for Restitution of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Croatia (KOMREST), Department of Culture and Art – Zagreb, from 1947 to 1951, consists of twenty volumes, but has not yet been fully professionally processed. The collection entitled Protected Private Collections consists of 182 items, decisions

on the declaration of protection of confiscated works of art created by the work of the National Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Conservation Institute of Croatia from 1945 to 1961, which were partially digitised in 2019.

The documentation material created by the predecessors of today's conservation service within the Ministry of Culture and Media is of particular importance to the scientific and professional community, which include:

- The National Commission for the Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments in the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia in Zagreb (1910–1914)
- The Commission for the Preservation of Monuments in Zagreb (1914–1928)
- The Conservation Office in Zagreb (1928–1946)
- The Conservation Institute in Zagreb (1946–1967)
- The Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (1967–1990).

The documentation material includes part of the documentation, especially expert analyses and inventories, created by the conservation service after 1990:

- The Ministry of Culture and Education, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (1990–1995)
- The State Administration for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage (1995–1996)
- Ministry of Culture, Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (1998–2001)
- Ministry of Culture, Institute for Culture, Department for Information and Documentation Affairs (2001–2004)
- Ministry of Culture, Directorate for Cultural Development and Cultural

Policy, Department for Information and Documentation Affairs of Cultural Heritage (2004–2012).

The materials created from 1910 to 1940 have been professionally processed by the employees of the Department for Cultural Heritage Documentation. Users have access to an information tool with searchable data on the ordinal number of the file, catalogue number, the year of creation, the subject and description of the document, the creator and recipient, and notes. For the documents of the Conservation Office in Zagreb and the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments from 1941 to 1990, there are books of registration records, registers and associated indexes, a total of 46, which allow browsing the materials and finding individual files.

The material is arranged by year of creation and serial number of the items in 71 acid-free archival boxes, with a total length of 42.12 metres.

The documentation material provides insight into the history of the development of numerous institutions, and in the context of provenance research, the formal and legal development of museum institutions, knowledge of their ancestors, the way in which materials were divided or consolidated among institutions throughout history, and the creation of basic documentation such as museum inventory books and accompanying documentation, which is today at the centre of research into the history of each individual work of art. In addition, this material is the basis for studying the development of institutional protection of cultural heritage by type, monitoring the legal framework for the protection of monuments by period, and numerous other data on the care of

individual cultural monuments, as well as data on the relocation of movable monuments from individual locations/sites to museums and other institutions, and generally the basis for researching the fate of individual works of art or monuments. The materials of the Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities, the archival fonds of KOMZA, which was created from 1945 to 1950, were particularly useful in the work of the researchers gathered by the *Pilot Project*. These materials, processed and structured in twelve archival boxes, were kept at the Ministry of Culture and Media until the handover of the fonds on 13 February 2020 and the registration record on 22 February 2021 to the Croatian State Archives.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the documents have been available to the public upon request at the Croatian State Archives, and for the needs of the work of the *Pilot Project* experts in cooperation with the Archives it has also been made available in digital form using a secure protocol for examining documents, which has significantly facilitated and accelerated research.

In addition to the Collections of Older Material, other collections that can also be an important source of information for provenance researchers have to be mentioned because they sometimes contain unexpected data that form an indispensable part of the history of works of art. In this sense, the Topographic Collection with documentation on cultural heritage in Croatia and on Croatian cultural heritage abroad should be highlighted, as well as the Thematic Collection structured by topics related to prominent figures, important families, certain phenomena and concepts, which contain more than

3,500 maps and files. Part of the material has been digitised, specifically files for thirty settlements in accordance with the territorial organisation of the time,<sup>4</sup> while the remaining basic metadata has been entered into the Teuta cultural heritage information system and is therefore searchable by keywords from the document titles.<sup>5</sup> The Collection of Decisions on Registered and Preventively Protected Cultural Monuments is also a rich source of information because, in addition to decisions on protection and entry into the Register of Cultural Property for 2,802 immovable cultural monuments and decisions on preventive protection for 3,399 immovable cultural monuments, it contains decisions for 884 movable cultural monuments, of which 577 are permanently protected collections, 307 are protected individual objects and 146 are preventively protected movable monuments. The Collection of Decisions has been completely digitised for ease of use, and experts in movable cultural heritage and researchers will find the lists of objects attached to the decisions on the protection of museum and other movable collections particularly useful. This Collection was created from 1960 to 2012 and consists of a total of eight linear metres of material, while the decisions and their digitised data after 2012 are kept in the cultural heritage information system and stored in the Collection of Documents of the Register of Cultural Property of the Republic of Croatia.

From 1945 to 1995, after the completion of protective works on cultural monuments, data on the protective works carried out were collected into the established Collection of Dossiers and Studies on Protective Works on Immovable and Movable Cultural Monuments, which currently

contains more than three thousand studies with a total length of 46.8 metres. The collection of photographic documentation is a treasure trove of data, including on numerous works of art. The collection has around 40,000 negatives and around 70,000 photographs, of which seven separate units are protected as movable cultural property.<sup>6</sup> Conservators, museum workers, professional photographers from the conservation service, and numerous collaborators and enthusiasts of cultural heritage contributed to the establishment of this photographic archive. The photographs mostly depict architecture and landscapes, but there are also shots of the interiors of palaces, inventories of religious and traditional buildings, museum exhibition spaces, and individual works of art such as organs, pianos, etc. The photographic documentation is in the process of digitisation, and of the total number of photographs mentioned, 18,925 have been published and are available on the *eCulture* website.<sup>7</sup>

To safely record the documentation of cultural property and its protection, 95,000 recordings of technical documentation have been made since 1979 using the microfilming technique. The collection of microfilm documentation contains technical documentation created through field work by conservation departments, the work of institutions whose area of activity is immovable cultural heritage, such as the Croatian Conservation Institute, the Institute for Art History, the Institute for the Restoration of Dubrovnik and others, as well as technical documentation stored in museums and public institutions such as the Meštrović Foundation Zagreb – Split, the Brijuni National Park, the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and others.

The Special Library of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and Media is one of the largest specialised libraries profiled for the needs of conservation and restoration activities in Croatia. The establishment of the library is associated with the establishment of the National Commission for the Protection of Artistic and Historical Monuments in the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia in 1910, and over time the area of its professional activities expanded, which was accompanied by the growth of the library's holdings. Today, the library has 18,301 volumes of books and 350 titles of periodicals with a total of 8,936 volumes that are publicly available in the library's online catalogue<sup>8</sup> as well as in its physical space.

The Press Clippings Archive also has to be pointed out, which contains a total of 37,700 articles, and of particular importance for this topic are the 3,900 articles covering the period from the establishment of the library to 1977, with 971 articles that have been digitised from the first two books, out of a total of sixteen books of the Press Clippings Archive, and published on the *eCulture* website.<sup>9</sup> The articles deal with various topics, and in addition to specialised issues regarding monuments, there are also articles on painting exhibitions, famous architects, artists, cultural workers and institutions, and individual monuments and works of art.

In addition to the documentation units of the Central Documentation in the Field of Cultural Heritage, the Architectural Plan Archives of Cultural Heritage should certainly be mentioned, due to the attractiveness of the information, in which the legacies of important Croatian architects and conservators (Viktor Kovačić, Stjepan Podhorski, Gjuro Szabo, Mijat Sabljar,

etc.) and collections of architectural plans, technical drawings, sketches, drawings, associated written and other materials are kept.<sup>10</sup>

## THE ROLE OF DOCUMENTATION COLLECTIONS OF HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS

In the research of provenance, close co-operation between museum workers and other employees of the archive, library and museum community, as well as with the scientific community from universities and institutes, is necessary, to which the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII* contributes greatly, precisely designed so that scientists with theoretical and practical experience in the field of provenance research and museum workers with professional and scientific titles and experience in inter-institutional cooperation at the international level can transfer their special knowledge to as many experts as possible in order to develop the most acceptable methodology for provenance research in our museum institutions. This will improve the necessary knowledge and professional and scientific work in heritage institutions and create a kind of professional platform required for the establishment of a provenance research department in Croatian museums, modelled on the already established practice of world museums.<sup>11</sup>

## IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

Access to archival sources and documentary material, as well as all other relevant data sources, is crucial in the sometimes lengthy and exhausting research into the

origins of museum objects confiscated during and after World War II. Given the importance of the availability of material for research, basic information and an overview of some of the documentary material held by the Ministry of Culture and Media are provided here to make the material more accessible to researchers and the interested public.

The documentation and archival material have not been sufficiently researched, presented or published.<sup>12</sup> To begin work on a comprehensive analysis of the Ministry's conservation documentation and the documentation of the competent conservation institutes, an internal working document entitled *Status and Condition of Conservation Documentation*<sup>13</sup> was prepared in 2022 to improve the professional processing and conditions for the preservation of documentation, strengthen human capacities and ultimately design its presentation and better accessibility. In this sense, it should be emphasised that the development of new technologies contributes to facilitating access to and searching for various digital cultural and heritage content from numerous heritage institutions, including the materials of the Ministry of Culture and Media's collections on the *eCulture* platform, which is extremely valuable to researchers in all scientific fields, especially in the field of provenance research.<sup>14</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> More about the first workshop held as part of the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII*: Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske, "Održana prva radionica u okviru Pilot-projekta utvrđivanja podrijetla muzejske građe oduzete tijekom i nakon Drugog svjetskog rata," Febru-

ary 1, 2023, <https://min-kultura.gov.hr/vijesti-8/odrzana-prva-radionica-u-okviru-pilot-projekta-utvrdjivanja-podrijetla-muzejske-gradje-oduzete-tijekom-i-nakon-drugog-svjetskog-rata/23492> (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> More about the project *Provenance Research on Artwork in Zagreb Collections* on the website: ZagArtColl\_ProResearch, "Održan znanstveno-stručni skup *Pilot-projekt utvrđivanja podrijetla muzejske građe oduzete tijekom i nakon Drugog svjetskog rata – rezultati prve godine istraživanja*," <https://zagartcoll.hazu.hr/2024/04/25/odrzan-znanstveno-strucni-skup-pilot-projekt-utvrdivanja-podrijetla-muzejske-grade-oduzete-tijekom-i-nakon-drugog-svjetskog-rata-rezultati-prve-godine-istrazivanja/> (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> The transfer was carried out based on the *Decision on the transfer of public archival materials to the Croatian State Archives* adopted on November 29, 2019 (no. 023-03/19-01/0256, reg. no. 532-04-01-03-01/3-19-1).

<sup>4</sup> Bjelovar, Čakovec, Daruvar, Donja Stubica, Donji Lapac, Drniš, Duga Resa, Dugo Selo, Dvor, Đurđevac, Garešnica, Glina, Gračac, Grubišno Polje, Ivanec, Ivanić-Grad, Jastrebarsko, Karlovac, Klanjec, Kostajnica, Krapina, Križevci, Novska, Ogulin, Otočac, Ozalj, Pag, Samobor, Slunj, Vrbovec.

<sup>5</sup> Lana Križaj, "Informacijski sustav kulturne baštine RH Teuta," *Muzeologija* 41/42 (2004): 196–204.

<sup>6</sup> Legacy of Večeslav Henneberg, Z-6700; Legacy of Vladimir Horvat, Z-6825; Photographic collection of the Treasury of the Zagreb Cathedral, Z-7044; Photographic collection of pipe organs, Z-7281; Photographic collection of the Millennium Exhibition in Budapest in 1896, Z-7300; Photographic legacy of Emil Laszowski, Z-7462; Photographic legacy of Josip Brunšmid, Z-7486.

<sup>7</sup> Photographs are available on the website: <https://ekultura.hr/> (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Online catalogue can be found at: <https://katalog.min-kultura.hr/pages/search.aspx> (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> The Newspaper Archive collection is available at: <https://ekultura.hr/osearch/items/?all=yes&q=&in>

stitutions=Ministarstvo+kulture+i+medija&collections=Hemeroteka+kulturne+ba%C5%A1tine (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> More about the Architectural Plans Collection is available on the website: Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske, "Planoteka Središnje dokumentacije za zaštitu kulturne baštine," <https://min-kultura.gov.hr/eu-kultura/kulturna-bastina/dokumentacijske-zbirke/sredisnja-dokumentacija-s-područja-kulturne-bastine/planoteka-sredisnje-dokumentacije-za-zastitu-kulturne-bastine/16642> (accessed October 28, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Jasmina Najcer Sabljak, "Znanstveni kolokvij *Znanost u funkciji kulturne baštine*," *Osječki zbornik* 39 (2024): 8–11.

<sup>12</sup> Lidija Zrnić, "Ostavština prof. Gjure Szaba Konzervatorskom zavodu u Zagrebu," in: *Gjuro Szabo u hrvatskoj kulturi: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog simpozija, Novska, 25. rujna 2010.*, ed. Jozo Marević (Velika Gorica and Novska: Marka and Novljansko akademsko društvo, 2010), 296–318; Lidija Zrnić, "Ostavština Većeslava Henneberga u arhivima Ministarstva kulture RH," *Godišnjak zaštite spomenika kulture Hrvatske* 36 (2012): 23–34; Sanja Grković, "Lika i lovinački kraj u fototecu kulturne baštine Ministarstva kulture i medija," *MemorabiLika* 3, no. 1 (2020): 29–54; Petra Vugrinec and Valentina Galović, eds., *Nino Vranić: Kulturna baština okom fotografa: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 18. 6. – 21. 7. 2019.* (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2019); Sanja Grković, "Emilij Laszowski, njegovatelj kulture sjećanja, konzervator i fotodokumentarist," in: *Stoljeće nakon Laszowskog: zbornik radova sa znanstveno stručnog skupa*, eds. Mario Stipančević i Tajana Pleše (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2016); Anuška Deranja Crnokić, Goran Zlodi, Sanja Grković, Marija Jenić Pugelnik and Ivanka Maroević, "Zbirke fotografiske dokumentacije Uprave za zaštitu kulturne baštine Ministarstva kulture: od dokumentacije do prezentacije i promocije u virtualnom okružju," *Informatica Museologica* 49 (2018): 144–147; Sanja Grković, "Fotografska ostavština Vladimira Tkalčića u kontekstu suvremenih digitalizacijskih procesa i pitanja regulacije

autorskog prava," *Etnološka istraživanja* 27 (2022): 119–132; Sanja Grković, "Vladimir Tkalčić i fotografsko dokumentiranje baštine," *Informatica Museologica* 49 (2018): 110–119; Sanja Grković, "Fototeka kulturne baštine Ministarstva kulture i medija RH – na razmeđi stručne radno-operativne zbirke i široko dostupnog informativno-obrazovnog izvora," *@rhivi* 10 (2021): 23–27; Sanja Grković, *Fotografija u službi zaštite kulturne baštine* (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture RH, 2007); Milan Pelc, Krešimir Galović and Martina Juranovač Tonejc, *Slike baštine – između dokumentacije i umjetnosti*, katalog izložbe (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture RH, 2012); Martina Juranovač Tonejc, *Putne bilješke Mijata Sabljara (1852.-1854): crkveni inventar* (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture RH, Uprava za zaštitu kulturne baštine, 2010); Martina Juranovač Tonejc, *Institucionalni razvoj zaštite pokretnе umjetničke baštine u Hrvatskoj od 1850. do 1990. godine* (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture i medija RH, Uprava za zaštitu kulturne baštine, 2021); Ana Kaniški, "Spomenici kotara varaždinskog – o značenju neobjavljenog rukopisa Gjure Szabe i pripadnoga fotografskog arhiva," in: *Gjuro Szabo 1875. – 1943.: zbornik radova znanstveno-stručnog skupa Hrvatski povjesničari umjetnosti*, ed. Marko Špikić (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 2018), 129–144; Anuška Deranja Crnokić, "Dokumentacijske zbirke," in: *Pregled kulturnog razvoja i kulturnih politika u Republici Hrvatskoj*, eds. Romana Matanovac Vučković, Aleksandra Uzelac and Dea Vidović (Zagreb: Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske, 2022), 113–117.

<sup>13</sup> *The Status and Condition of Conservation Documentation study* (Zagreb, November 2022) was created based on data and analysis from the Documentation and Register of Cultural Assets Service of the Directorate for Archives, Libraries and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Media and conservation departments.

<sup>14</sup> Anuška Deranja Crnokić, "Baštinske ustanove i njihov doprinos znanosti," *Osječki zbornik* 39 (2024): 13–20.

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Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske. „Planoteka Središnje dokumentacije za zaštitu kulturne baštine“. <https://min-kultura.gov.hr/eu-kultura/kulturna-bastina/dokumentacijske-zbirke/sredisnja-dokumentacija-s-područja-kulturne-bastine/planoteka-sredisnje-dokumentacije-za-zaštitu-kulturne-bastine/16642> (pristupljeno 28. listopada 2024.).

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la muzejske građe oduzete tijekom i nakon Drugog svjetskog rata – rezultati prve godine istraživanja“. <https://zagartcoll.hazu.hr/2024/04/25/odrzan-znanstveno-strucni-skup-pilot-projekt-utvrdjivanja-podrijetla-muzejske-grade-oduzete-tijekom-i-nakon-drugog-svjetskog-rata-rezultati-prve-godine-istraživanja/> (pristupljeno 28. listopada 2024.).

## DOKUMENTACIJSKE ZBIRKE MINISTARSTVA KULTURE I MEDIJA KAO VAŽAN IZVOR PODATAKA U UTVRĐIVANJU PODRIJETLA MUZEJSKE GRAĐE

Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske posjeduje i skrbi se o vrijednoj dokumentaciji koja je nastala djelovanjem konzervatorske službe u Hrvatskoj tijekom više od stoljeća. Budući da je pristup arhivskim izvorima i dokumentacijskoj građi ključan u procesu istraživanja podrijetla muzejske građe oduzete tijekom i nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata, a imajući u vidu da dokumentacija i arhivsko gradivo koji se čuvaju u Ministarstvu nisu u dovoljnoj mjeri poznati, istraženi, predstavljeni ni publicirani, u ovom radu daje se kratak osvrt na dokumentacijske zbirke Ministarstva kulture i medija relevantne za istraživanje provenijencije. Predstavljen je sadržaj četiri osnovne dokumentacijske cjeline (Središnje dokumentacije s područja kulturne baštine, Zbirke fotografске dokumentacije, Zbirke mikrofilmske dokumentacije i Specijalne knjižnice Ministarstva kulture i medija) te način na koji je građa obradena, usustavljena i dostupna korisnicima.