

KOMZA OBJECT 153/45 – CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The Croatian History Museum was founded in 1991 by the merger of the History Museum of Croatia (successor of the National Museum) and the Museum of the Revolution of the Croatian People and has a history of almost 180 years. In that long period, objects arrived at the Museum in different ways: by donation, purchase, exchange, field research, collection and handover.¹ With passing of the law on museum activity, the method of acquiring museum objects is also regulated. In 1960, Croatia received the first *Act on Museum Activity* within the framework of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. From 1939 to 1956, i.e. before, during and after the Second World War, the acquisition of objects in museums was not part of a special law (*lex specialis*).² The Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities (KOMZA) began its work on June 5, 1945. Its task was to inspect public and private buildings taken over from the military and civil authorities of the Federal Republic of Croatia,³ as well as warehouses, i.e. collection points

for objects confiscated in accordance with the decisions of the Commission for Confiscation, as well as objects of museum, archival or library importance for which private ownership could not be proven with complete ownership rights. Some of the collection centres in Zagreb were Slaughterhouse (Heinzelova), National and University Library, Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, Croatian National Theatre and Museum of Arts and Crafts. There were also centres outside Zagreb, such as the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek. In the second half of the 1940s and the beginning of 1950s, the objects from the centres were sent to other institutions, among which was the current Croatian History Museum (then it operated under the name of the History Museum of Croatia).⁴

During the first phase of the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII*, it was determined that the Croatian History Museum kept more than five hundred (516) objects that arrived at the Museum through KOMZA. Most of them are in the Collection of Objects from Everyday Life (230) and the Collection of Paintings, Graphics and Sculptures (224). Through KOMZA, the materials came to the Croatian History Museum mostly from noble families, for example, the Ritter family from Poznanovec Castle, the Drašković family from Trakošćan Castle, the Ottenfels-Gschwind family from Bežanec Castle, the Steeb-Henneberg family from Golubovec Castle and the Eltz family from the castle in Vukovar. The objects of the above-mentioned families officially entered the Museum in 1952, a record of which is kept in the Museum's documentation. The register

number of KOMZA's records was indicated with the items, which made it much easier to determine the origin of the artworks during the first phase of the *Pilot Project*.

In addition to the fact that the choice of the case study was somewhat commemorative (2024 marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of the Trakošćan Castle museum), it was also motivated by a representative sample of objects that stand out not only for their artistic quality, but also showcase the war and post-war fates of noble collections from the territory of Croatia.

KOMZA OBJECT 153/45 – TRAKOŠĆAN CASTLE

Trakošćan Burg came into the possession of the noble Drašković family in 1569, when the Croatian Hungarian ruler Maximilian II entrusted the administration of Trakošćan and the associated lands by contract to the *ban* (the title of local rulers in Central and Southeastern Europe) and bishop Juraj Drašković as compensation for his performance as *ban*. During the 1580s, the new Croatian-Hungarian ruler Rudolf II, completed the ownership transfer process, leaving the entire management of the Trakošćan estate to Juraj's heirs.⁵ The Drašković family, with the exception of a short break in the 17th century, were the owners of Trakošćan until the middle of the 20th century, when the castle was nationalised.⁶ During the four years of the war, various military units, such as German, Home Guard, Ustasha, Circassian and Partisan, passed through the castle alternately. The respective share of damage to the inventory that was caused by some of the mentioned military units is not yet possible to determine precisely. It is only

clear that the post-war Commission, upon entering the castle, came across an area that was certainly affected by the events of the war, although not devastated.⁷

At the end of the Second World War, KOMZA took an inventory of the castle's art and on July 29, 1945, compiled a record numbering 240 items.⁸ Along with the mentioned records, the members of the Commission also signed a separate addendum in which they explained in eight points how they faced various issues when listing artworks. Among the characteristic problems and phenomena, the following stand out: lack of time and manpower and the inability to physically separate all listed, especially larger items in one separate place; the impossibility of cataloguing and securing the library material in a separate place for the same logistical reasons, with a note that the material is "largely deficient" since the wartime; impossibility of listing and securing archival materials from the attic; separation of paintings from the frames (also listed) that remain hanging on the walls, for which all notes related to the protection of art inventory apply; impossibility of physical separation and preventive protection of oversized furniture, marked "either with a red pen or a sticker with the current register number"; separation of smaller items into a separate and specially sealed room certified by the "official strip of the Ministry of Education 'Strictly forbidden to open'"; the impossibility of physically separating the paintings in the attic, which were ordered to be subsequently stored in a separate room of the castle; the retention of a large number of hunting trophies in the staircases and corridors of the castle, also due to the lack of adequate manpower and time for physical separation, and with

a note that this inventory is also protected by the *Act on the Preservation of Cultural-Historical and Natural Monuments and Valuables in the Territory of Croatia*.⁹ The work of KOMZA, however, did not end with compiling the record of July 29, 1945. Almost three years later, on March 19, 1948, KOMZA asked the Education Department of the Regional People's Committee in Ivanec for urgent approval to transport archival material and old portraits of members of the Drašković family from Trakošćan to Zagreb. At the same time, it is emphasised that the portraits of the members of the Drašković family were listed already in the summer of 1945, and that in the meantime, in 1947, the representative of KOMZA was "received so inconveniently by the manager of the castle" that this time it was "certainly necessary" for the Regional People's Committee in Ivanec to inform the manager in a timely and valid manner.¹⁰ On April 9, 1948, KOMZA submitted a record on the handover of items from Trakošćan to Zagreb, with a note that the taken items were partially listed in July 1945, and partially only during the re-compiling of the list for transport on March 26, 1948.¹¹ On the latter date, the members of KOMZA stayed in the castle again in order to agree with the manager that everything is finally going to Zagreb. At the time, however, and due to time constraints again, a revision of the entire material listed in July 1945 was not carried out. In this regard, the report on the trip made on March 26, 1948 reveals a number of problems related to the inventory, preservation and preventive protection of objects of artistic value in the post-war period.¹² It is precisely for this reason that one part of the report is presented in its entirety, as follows:

"The delegates wanted to inspect all the objects that were listed according to the above-mentioned list, but they concluded that all these objects had been moved somewhere in the rooms of the castle during the subsequent rearrangement, so for that the review took considerably more time than was available to the delegates. Therefore, before taking over the items for transport to Zagreb, an accurate revision must be carried out according to the mentioned list, because there is a fear that some items have been damaged, and maybe even disappeared. The whole confusion with the items is because it is still not clear who owns the castle and its furnishings. Regional People's Committee in Ivanec is not the owner of the castle nor its immediate surroundings, but only administers it. There is no expert to manage that castle, and there is not even enough staff to guard it. Currently, there is only one guard, and since various individuals as well as larger groups of people come to stay in the castle more often, it is impossible for this one unprofessional person to be responsible for keeping the object safe. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to bring order to the management of this castle, and to renovate the entire castle as much as possible with the existing inventory as well as with a new one, which should be acquired for the purpose of housing guests, and first of all for the labourers of our homeland, since the whole of Trakošćan was conceived as a tourist place anyway, and since the original idea to set up a museum of Hrvatsko Zagorje in Trakošćan was abandoned."¹³ Despite all the mentioned difficulties, the transportation of the art to Zagreb followed quite soon and by April 9, 1948, the objects were in KOMZA's warehouses. Judging by the preserved documentation,

the works of art for the then called History Museum of Croatia were already selected in March 1948 during the inspection of the materials in Trakošćan. However, they were handed over to the Museum only in the fall of 1950.¹⁴ In the *Record on the Proposal of the Commission for the Liquidation of "Komza" Appointed by the Ministry of Education on the Selection of Cultural-Historical and Artistic Objects for the Collections of the History Museum of Croatia and the Museum of Serbs in Croatia*, objects from Trakošćan are listed under serial number 75 and from 218 to 240.¹⁵ However, they did not stay long in the aforementioned institutions. During the spring of 1953, they were handed over to the Conservation Institute in Zagreb and returned to the Trakošćan Castle, which became a museum with a permanent exhibition in 1954. This is evidenced by the case handover record from April 2, 1953.¹⁶

Today, there are a total of nine paintings of Trakošćan provenance in the Croatian History Museum (Figs. 1–9), so it can be concluded that a smaller part of the objects in the painting category remained in the then called History Museum of Croatia. The retained works of art were inventoried and published in the catalogue *Portraits of the 16th-18th centuries* 1982. The author of the catalogue and the curator of the Collection of Paintings, Graphics and Sculptures, Marijana Schneider, transparently stated the sources of acquisition, clearly indicating that the items "from the Trakošćan Castle" were handed over "from KOMZA in 1952."¹⁷ On KOMZA's list from 1945, however, not all paintings can be definitively paired with their respective number. It can be assumed that, for example, the portrait of

Franjo I Ksaver Drašković (HPM/PMH-8764) appears under the number 122 on the KOMZA list from 1945,¹⁸ and is listed under number 75 in the handover records from 1952.¹⁹ The remaining pictures could be found under general categories that provide very tentative information about the series of objects, such as the forty portraits listed under number 142 in the KOMZA list from 1945,²⁰ that is to say, under number 224 in the record of handover from 1952.²¹ The back sides of the items are also of little help. Most of them, as can be seen from table 1, do not contain a characteristic alphanumeric mark. Portrait of Charles VI as a hunter under the inventory number HPM/PMH-8728 has a label on the back with the prominent number 140, which could correspond to the number 140 on the 1945 list. However, the information pertaining to this number relates quite generally to "four paintings, oil on canvas" presented as "copies of different portraits."²² The portrait of Wolfgang Drašković under the inventory number HPM/PMH-8760, on the other hand, contains the inscription "TRAK-15" in red pencil, whereby the number 15 cannot be connected with the number on the list from 1945, considering that in this specific case, we are talking about a different portrait of a girl in front of a red curtain.²³ The last painting with more specific inscriptions on the back, under the inventory number HPM/PMH-26880, shows a bust, that is, a silhouette in profile of Janko Drašković, with "358/KOMZA II" written on it. This is obviously a record of the curator of the Collection, Marijana Schneider, perhaps from 1952, given that the information refers to number 358 of the second part of the record from the same year. Under this number,

however, “etchings and watercolors with figures of various military and noble figures, as well as landscapes”²⁴ are listed. At the same time, on the left side, in addition to the number, the incorrect marking of the KOMZA object “300/46-66” is indicated, so it could easily be that during transport in the KOMZA collection point or later in the Museum itself, a typographical error was created when grouping similar objects from different locations. Finally, it must be mentioned that most of the paintings have undergone a restoration process at some point in the last seventy or more years, so the inscriptions with stickers on the subframes may have been simply erased or removed. All of this, ultimately, greatly complicates the specific connection of the object with the post-war records and lists.

CONCLUSION

The Croatian History Museum is one in a series of museums in Croatia that received material after the Second World War through the Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities (KOMZA). Today, thanks to the museum’s documentation, i.e., the data recorded by the former curator of the Collection, Marijana Schneider, and the research of Marina Bregovac Pisk, a total of nine paintings from the Trakošćan Castle were kept and finally inventoried in the Museum. According to the preserved KOMZA records, these objects physically entered the Croatian History Museum by the end of 1950, while they were officially released from the Commission’s warehouse by the end of May 1952. Trakošćan artefacts were listed twice by KOMZA, the first time in 1945 and the second time in 1948. The experiences of the members

of the Commission from the trip to Trakošćan clearly point to a bad situation on the ground, especially burdened with logistical and financial problems. It is not surprising that a specific museum object cannot always be linked with a specific number on the post-war list. The example of Trakošćan presented here confirms the importance of preserved museum documentation, and especially of longitudinal scientific research carried out within the framework of curatorial work.

NOTES

¹ Briefly about the history of the Croatian History Museum, see: Jelena Balog Vojak, *Vodič kroz dokumentacijske fondove Hrvatskog povijesnog muzeja* (Zagreb: Hrvatski povijesni muzej, 2020), 11–12.

² *Ibid.*, 7–8.

³ Federal Republic of Croatia (FDH) was established at the Third Session of State Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) in Topusko and was proclaimed by Vladimir Nazor on May 9, 1944.

⁴ More on the Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities (KOMZA) see in: Iva Pasini Tržec, “Osnutak, organizacijski ustroj i djelovanje Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje kulturnih spomenika i starina,” *Peristil* 62 (2019): 123–138.

⁵ Iva Mandušić, “Povijest obitelji Drašković u 16. i prvoj polovici 17. stoljeća,” (doctoral thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2020), 90–91.

⁶ Klara Macolić, “Stilsko restauriranje Dvora Trakošćan sredinom 19. stoljeća,” *Podravina: časopis za geografska i povijesna multidisciplinarna istraživanja* 19, no. 37 (2020): 218–219. For more information on the history of the Trakošćan Castle see: Siniša Krznar, *Trakošćan: burg – muzej* (Trakošćan: Dvor Trakošćan, 2007).

⁷ Bartol Fabijanić, “Slike u Strossmayerovoj galeriji starih majstora iz nekoliko međuratnih plemićkih zbirki kontinentalne Hrvatske,” *Peristil* 64 (2021): 119.

⁸ There are several objects listed under individual numbers, so it is not possible to speak of a total of 240 objects. See: Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-2117-2-124, KOMZA 153/45, “Zapisnik sastavljen u dvoru ‘Trakošćan’ po članovima Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje Kulturno-historijskih spomenika, starina i biblioteka, osnovanoj na temelju Zakonske odredbe KNOJ-a od 20. februara 1945. o zaštiti i čuvanju kulturno-umjetničkih spomenika i starina,” 1–10.

⁹ Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-2117-2-124, KOMZA 153/45, “Dodatak Zapisniku sastavljenom u dvoru ‘Trakošćan’ po članovima Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje Kulturno-historijskih spomenika, starina i biblioteka, osnovanoj na temelju Zakonske odredbe KNOJ-a od 20. februara 1945. o zaštiti i čuvanju kulturno-umjetničkih spomenika i starina,” 11.

¹⁰ Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-2117-2-1083, KOMZA 149/48, “Prepiska oko prijenosa arhivalija i predmeta iz dvorca (161/48, 168/48, 189/48, 198/48),” 1.

¹¹ For the lists from 1948 see: Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-2117-2-1083, KOMZA 149/48, “Popis preuzetih predmeta iz Dvorca Trakošćan, Popis preuzetih knjiga iz biblioteke grafa Draškovića (260/48),” 16, 19–28.

¹² Croatian State Archives, HR-HDA-2117-2-1083, KOMZA 149/48, “Izvjestaj o putu u Trakošćan (182/48),” 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The issue of the transfer of museum material from Trakošćan to Zagreb, that is, to the warehouse of the Commission and the then called History Museum of Croatia, was dealt with by the museum advisor, Marina Bregovac Pisk, PhD, to whom we would like to thank for her help in the work and for all relevant information related to the artistic heritage of Trakošćan Castle. For more information see: Marina Bregovac Pisk, “Obitelj Drašković kao naručitelji i kupci umjetnina (na primjeru dvorca Trakošćan),” (doctoral thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, 2012), 405.

¹⁵ Documentation Department of the Croatian History Museum, “Zapisnik o prijedlogu Komisije za likvidaciju ‘Komze’ imenovane od Ministarstva prosvjete o izlučivanju kulturno-historijskih i um-

jetničkih predmeta za zbirke Povijesnog muzeja Hrvatske i Muzeja Srba u Hrvatskoj,” May 30, 1952, I, 4; II, 8–9.

¹⁶ Bregovac Pisk, “Obitelj Drašković,” 406.

¹⁷ See: Marijana Schneider, *Portreti 16-18. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Povijesni muzej Hrvatske, 1982), 76, 79–81, 83–84, 103–104, 106.

¹⁸ “Painting: oil on canvas, portrait of a man in a blue coat and red waistcoat. Dimensions 99 x 71 cm. Around 1800.” See: “Zapisnik sastavljen u dvoru ‘Trakošćan,’” 6.

¹⁹ “Painting, oil on canvas – figure of a standing nobleman shown to the hips in a light blue coat, red waistcoat and blue trousers. Edges of the coat and collar of white lace. Coat and waistcoat trimmed with gold cord.” See: “Zapisnik o prijedlogu Komisije za likvidaciju ‘Komze,’” I, 4.

²⁰ “Zapisnik sastavljen u dvoru ‘Trakošćan,’” 7.

²¹ “Zapisnik o prijedlogu Komisije za likvidaciju ‘Komze,’” II, 9.

²² “Zapisnik sastavljen u dvoru ‘Trakošćan,’” 7.

²³ Judging by Bartol Fabijanić’s research, it is a type of mark that does not belong to KOMZA, but more likely originates from the period of the Second World War, when some of the objects were transferred to the Museum of Arts and Crafts by the owner of the castle’s proxy, Janko Vranicani Dobrinović. See: “Zapisnik sastavljen u dvoru ‘Trakošćan,’” 2; Fabijanić, “Slike u Strossmayerovoj galeriji starih majstora,” 119.

²⁴ “Zapisnik o prijedlogu Komisije za likvidaciju ‘Komze,’” II, 13.

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IZVORI/SOURCES

Dokumentacijski odjel Hrvatskoga povijesnog muzeja

Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), Komisija za sakupljanje i očuvanje kulturnih spomenika i starina, HR-HDA-2117

PREDMET KOMZA 153/45 – STUDIJA SLUČAJA

U članku se obrađuje slučaj inventarizacije slika iz dvorca Trakošćan dospjelih posredstvom Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje kulturnih spomenika i starina u Hrvatski povijesni muzej (nekadašnji Povijesni muzej Hrvatske). U uvodu se raspravlja o načinima ulaska predmeta u Muzej s naglaskom na ratno i poratno razdoblje četrdesetih i pedesetih godina 20. stoljeća. Među ostalim, donosi se presjek najvažnijih izvora nabave te ukupan broj trenutačno poznatih predmeta koji su u Hrvatski povijesni muzej ušli posredstvom KOMZA-e. Potom se, u središnjem dijelu teksta, raspravlja o sudbini slika popisanih nakon završetka Drugoga svjetskog rata u Dvoru Trakošćan, odnosno o njihovoj poslijeratnoj selidbi u ustanove smještene u Zagrebu te konačnom povratku većeg dijela umjetnina u Trakošćan i inventarizaciji manjeg dijela u Hrvatskome povijesnom muzeju. Cilj članka bio je objediniti i objaviti sva slikarska djela trakošćanske provenijencije iz Hrvatskoga povijesnog muzeja te istaknuti važnost dosadašnjih istraživanja spomenute muzejske građe s naglaskom na čuvanje pripadajuće muzejske dokumentacije.