

THE COMMISSION FOR GATHERING AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL MONUMENTS AND ANTIQUITIES IN OSIJEK – YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

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INTRODUCTION

Immediately after the Second World War, the Museum of Slavonia became the storage for numerous artistic, as well as cultural-historical items taken from Slavonian castles and Osijek bourgeois apartments. These objects belonged to families and individuals whose immovable and movable property was confiscated due to verdicts regarding their role during the war. The Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities (KOMZA) determined that items of museum value should be stored in the collecting point, for which space was secured in the Museum of Slavonia. Along with a few Osijek bourgeois families and noble families from eastern Croatia, whose ownership can mostly be traced, the items allocated by the Commission also came from the Office for National Property of

the City People's Committee and the City Administration of National Goods, where they had been brought from mostly still unidentified Osijek apartments. This paper aims to shed light on the facts surrounding the activities of the Osijek branch of the Commission: the circumstances of its founding and dissolution, the individuals involved in its work, and the locations from which objects were collected. It will also explore how the collected objects were handled, the extent to which they were researched and published, and their current status.

The history of the activities of the Commission's Regional Collection Centre in Osijek has been mentioned on several occasions by researchers who focused their attention on individuals, museum professionals active in the post-war period, or specific items and collections in Osijek's museum institutions.¹

The records of the Museum of Slavonia created during and after the Second World War is preserved in the Documents Collection of the Department of History. The collection has been prioritized for scanning, motivated by the participation of the staff of the Museum of Slavonia in the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII*. As a source of valuable information on objects collected for the museum during this period, the digitalized records are becoming accessible to researchers, while simultaneously protecting the original documents. A part of this paper will therefore be dedicated to the digitalization process: how it is conducted, what types of documents are involved, the possibilities for their processing and integration and the challenges encountered during the digitalization efforts. Finally, the authors

will highlight the possibilities offered by the processed documents – for further research by both museum professionals and other researchers, as well as for the analysis and integration of museum documentation with the museum collection itself.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

During the Second World War, the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia established the Commission for Ascertaining War Damage Inflicted by Occupying Forces on Cultural and Historical Objects and Natural Landmarks of the Federal Republic of Croatia and Their Return to the Country. In December 1944, the *Regulations on the Composition and Work of the Commission* were adopted.² The members of the Commission were delegates, that is, representatives of the Education Departments of individual federal units. According to Article 4 of the aforementioned *Regulations*, their task was to collect information and evidence regarding the looting, damage and destruction of objects. In February 1945, the president of the National Committee issued the *Decision on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities*, listing artistic and scientific ("educational") objects placed under state protection. It was further stated that objects of cultural and historical importance in private ownership could not, under any circumstances, be taken out of the country. In May 1945, the *Act on the Gathering, Preservation, and Distribution of Books and Other Cultural, Educational and Art Objects that Became Government Property According to the Resolution of the Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia*, was adopted.

According to this *Act*, all objects ("books, archival and museum objects, paintings and busts, scientific and musical collections and all other items of historical, scientific, or artistic significance") that became state property were transferred from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Industry, or the State Administration of National Goods, to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Article 2 of the *Act* specifies that the Ministry of Education would develop a plan and guidelines according to which the educational authorities of the federal units would collect these objects and preserve them until their final distribution. The distribution would be carried out by the Ministry of Education of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia in agreement with the educational authorities of the individual federal units. In June 1945, Minister of Education Ante Vrkljan issued a provision establishing the Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities in the territory of the Federal Republic of Croatia (later the People's Republic of Croatia). In November, he assigned the role of a Regional Collection Centre to the Commission for Gathering in the territory of Federal Croatia (according to the *Instruction for the Establishment and Operation of Collection Centres*), which was accountable to the Federal Collection Centre in Belgrade and, consequently, to the Federal Ministry of Education.³

The Educational Department of the Regional People's Liberation Committee (NOO) for Slavonia immediately in June 1945, following the provision of the Cultural and Artistic Department of the Ministry of Education, appointed a committee tasked with assessing damage and ensuring the care and preservation of cul-

tural, historical and artistic monuments in Slavonia.⁴ The committee included: Josip Bösendorfer, PhD, director of the Croatian State Museum in Osijek; Danica Pinterović, PhD, curator; Ante Brlić, curator; Ante Milošević-Šjor, from the city branch of the Unified People's Liberation Front; and engineer Kosta Ćutuković, retired city senior advisor. The committee members had two significant responsibilities: first, to register private collections in Osijek and Slavonia in order to prevent the removal or sale of valuable museum-worthy items, and second, to investigate the fate of small museum collections from municipal museums in Vinkovci, Brod and Požega, as well as private collections and archives of aristocratic families (Eltz, Khuen, Pejačević, Normann, Pfeifer). Detailed instructions for the establishment and operation of collection centres were prescribed, and a monthly report on activities was to be sent to the Educational Department of the Regional People's Liberation Committee for Slavonia, which would compile the data into its regular monthly report to the Ministry of Education.

Already on June 19, 1945, just a few days before the official appointment of the committee for Slavonia, Bösendorfer submitted a request to the Administration of State Goods (citing the *Decision on the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities* of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia from February 29, 1945) for a representative of the Croatian State Museum in Osijek to participate in a committee for accessing the interiors of apartments of Germans who had left Osijek. This was an effort to access items of artistic, cultural and historical importance kept in the apartments and store them in the mu-

seum as national property. He emphasized that the evaluation and selection of items could only be decided by museum staff. In Bösendorfer's request, six individuals whose property had been confiscated were listed: Franjo Josip Schmidt, Gabor Pfeifer, Ferdinand R. Schmidt, PhD, Lujo Plein, Stjepan Frauenheim and music teacher Josip (?) Majer.⁵ The City Administration of National Goods and the Education Department of the City People's Liberation Committee of Osijek transferred jurisdiction for the establishment of the commission to one another. Ultimately, no one from the museum entered those apartments, meaning that the potential museum collections, or cultural heritage, were lost. The exception is part of the estate of the Reisner family from Jägerova Street 16, which, based on the decision of the Education Department of the Regional People's Liberation Committee for Slavonia, was transferred to the museum in July 1945, when it was still located at the address Mažuranićev vijenac 1.⁶

The Documents Collection of the Museum of Slavonia also holds correspondence from the museum's director, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, with individuals or institutions outside of Osijek, containing reports on the condition of the museum or the collections and archives of noble families, as assigned by the committee for Slavonia.⁷

THE COMMISSION FOR GATHERING AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL MONUMENTS AND ANTIQUITIES IN OSIJEK

In April 1946, Ivana Vrbanić, the secretary of the Commission for Gathering and Pro-

tection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities, traveled from Zagreb to Osijek with the task of establishing a collection centre in Osijek. Based on the regulations for the transfer of responsibilities from the Ministry of Industry, the State Administration of National Goods, to the Ministry of Education, the *Instruction for the Establishment and Operation of Collection Centres* was issued. According to this instruction, the Ministries of Education of the regional governments were to establish district collection centres in places where district administrations of national property existed, including Osijek. The district centres were accountable to the National Collection Centre.

At that time, the situation at the Museum of Slavonia was very complex, as the City People's Committee of Osijek had handed over the former city hall building to the state museum, and museum staff were involved in a large-scale relocation of museum collections and other museum objects. Simultaneously, they were actively working on the return of cultural and historical items and libraries stored in the museum during the war, which were being returned to former owners or their legal successors, or to the Administration of State Goods. As a state institution, the Osijek museum had served as a storage space for items by order of the Office for Nationalised Property during the war. These items, according to the interpretation of director Bösendorfer, were only stored at the museum, remaining the property of the donors, and certificates with item lists were issued. Following this reasoning, as soon as the war ended, Bösendorfer wanted to quickly organize the return of these objects. A document from July 4, 1945, preserved in the Doc-

umentas Collection, shows that Director Bösendorfer informed the City People's Liberation Committee of Osijek that the Education Department of the Regional People's Liberation Committee had made a decision allowing items handed over, under the State Directorate for Restoration, to be returned to their owners or legal successors.⁸

As much as objective circumstances allowed, Danica Pinterović actively conducted field visits on behalf of the Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities. She visited the manor houses in Valpovo and Našice. She visited Našice in November 1945 and a report with a record was submitted to the Administration of the State Museum in Osijek, while the manor house in Valpovo she visited in December 1945 (Figs. 1 and 2).⁹ In the first half of 1946, items of museum value were transferred to the museum from the households of Rudolf Povischil, Jelisava Šmucer and Hella Reimann. Additionally, several items were selected and transferred to the museum from the former warehouse of the City Administration of National Goods, as noted by Danica Pinterović in her report to the Commission in early June, 1946.¹⁰ The report concludes with an answer to the question regarding obstacles in the work: a lack of funds and time due to the insufficient number of staff at the Museum.

Although the people of Osijek were aware that a significant portion of the materials falling under the Commission's jurisdiction in the city had already been distributed among various interested parties, this was only confirmed after meetings held by Ms. Vrbanić with members of the City and District People's Committees, the City Administration of National Goods,

and the District Court in Osijek.¹¹ To systematically handle the acquisition of items of museum value, Danica Pinterović was tasked with obtaining addresses of confiscated apartments from the District Court, where she would inspect artworks. According to the conclusion of the plenary session of the Commission and the travel report submitted by Ivana Vrbanić after her return to Zagreb (no. 135-1946 of April 15, 1946), the District/Regional Collection Centre of the Commission was established in Osijek, with a storage facility in the building of the state museum.

In September 1946, Danica Pinterović sent a proposal for new members of the Commission to Zagreb in order to more effectively carry out the identification and collection of artworks. For Osijek, the proposed members were Josip Bösendorfer, Adela Stošić and Kamilo Firinger, PhD; for Đakovo, Stjepan Bäuerlein; for Slavonski Brod, Julije Hoffmann; and for Požega, Prof. Ljuboslav Kuntarić.¹²

Reports on their work were sent to Zagreb on a monthly basis. Copies are kept in the Documents Collection of the Museum of Slavonia, and it is possible to reconstruct both the working methods and the progress of the members of the Commission's Regional Collection Centre: by months and years, as well as by families or individuals whose property was taken.

Field visits took place from 1946 to 1948. During these visits, the assessment, inventory, or transfer of items on behalf of the Regional Collection Centre in Osijek (while simultaneously carrying out regular museum work) involved: Danica Pinterović, Josip Bösendorfer, Adela Stošić, Hilda Hećej Tompak, Ivan Borić and Josip Leović.

The monthly reports contained correspondence listing the visited sites, who par-

ticipated in the visit, what was done with the objects and the condition of the sites, especially when visiting castles, most of which were abandoned (Ilok) or used as schools or orphanages (Našice, Valpovo). Attached to the correspondence were lists of museum-worthy items, temporarily stored in locked spaces at the site, before an appropriate method of transferring the materials to the Regional Collection Centre in Osijek could be found. The correspondence often mentioned that this sealed material was not secure from theft, and financial assistance was requested from Zagreb for carts, trucks, or railway transport to ensure the objects would be safely stored in Osijek as soon as possible. Once transport to the Osijek museum was secured, a list of the transferred items could be made. These lists were very detailed in terms of identifying the objects: the name of the item (often descriptive), its material, dimensions and condition. Each item was affixed with a characteristic round sticker with the Commission's reference number from the list along with the report or record, and the sequential number of the item on the list (Fig. 3).

As mentioned earlier, in the first half of 1946, Danica Pinterović visited Našice, Valpovo, Ilok, and several Osijek households, submitting a joint report in June.¹³ In the second half of the year, members of the Commission visited Našice and Valpovo several times, since the objects intended for the museum remained in the rooms of the castles, sealed but still vulnerable to break-ins, theft and destruction. In November 1946, the library from Valpovo was transported to Osijek, but not including the library's shelves, table and ladders. Only in January 1947 were the objects from Našice, Valpovo and Ilok,

as well as the Roman sacrificial altar from Tenja, transported.¹⁴ A few items were transferred from the City People's Committee of Osijek. Several individual items from confiscated households in Osijek were also collected in 1948, either through direct visits to addresses (Agata Mirajter's, shroud and a banner with an anchor) or through the Office for National Property of the City People's Committee (Vjekoslav and Matilda Hengl, Irena Pfeiffer). In February 1948, with the transfer of the Pejačević family's library from Našice, the transfer of museum-worthy objects from this family was completed. In July, Kamilo Firinger visited the abandoned house of Baroness Elizabeta Tacco in Valpovo and the Eltz family's archive in Vukovar, marking the last visits to Osijek and its surroundings on behalf of the Commission's Regional Collection Centre.¹⁵ In June, Vladimir Tkalčić, PhD, the president of the Commission, visited Osijek due to the announced closure of the Regional Collection Centre in Zagreb. During his stay in Osijek, he, along with members of the Osijek Centre (Josip Bösendorfer, Danica Pinterović, Josip Leović), reviewed and evaluated the collected objects. The Commission made a decision that the Administration of the Museum of Slavonia should submit a proposal to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Croatia for all items of cultural, historical, artistic or practical value to be transferred to the museum, as they are linked to the history of Slavonia and Osijek. According to the compiled list, several items were proposed for removal from the Regional Collection Centre in Osijek and to be assigned to the National Collection Centre in Zagreb. Sixteen items were selected, mainly decorative and functional ceram-

ics, one pewter vase, a wooden spittoon, and a pair of silver-plated wall sconces.¹⁶ Finally, before the closure of the Osijek Collection Centre, an index was created for the lists of acquired materials by family and location, as well as a report on the total number of items stored in the Museum of Slavonia according to the Commission. The index for the Commission's records contains locations and record registry numbers: the People's National Committee, the Office for National Property, the household of Jelisava Šmucer (paintings, objects of artistic craftsmanship), the household of Vjekoslav Hengel, the household of Ante Eugen Brlić (artistic craftsmanship objects, paintings), the household of Gustav Reisner, the Povischil household (sculptures, paintings, furniture and small items), the household of Oto and Gabor Pfeiffer, as well as items brought from Našice, Valpovo, Ilok and Vukovar.¹⁷ Based on the report on the total number of the Commission's items, a list was created according to categories: furniture (170), paintings (320), sculptures (31), pedestals for statues (14), porcelain and glass (275), lamps (10), weapons (32), metal objects (27), clocks (18), candlesticks (16), small items such as boxes and medals (22), rugs and tapestries (7), frames (92), icons (20), albums (21), and books (8500), with a note that the numbers are approximate. It is interesting to recall the report by Ivana Vrbanić in 1946, where she wrote: "The objects falling under the Commission's jurisdiction in the territory of Osijek has already been quite widely distributed and divided among various interested parties."¹⁸

The analysis of the reports and records reveals three distinct types of locations and, accordingly, three different methods

of acquiring items for the Regional Collection Centre of the Commission in Osijek:

1. The office for National Property of the City People's Committee and the City Administration of National Goods, from which individual items belonging to Osijek citizens were retrieved. Ownership was identified for several items (e.g., Reimann, Šeper), but when it comes to items that arrived at the Collection Centre and later at the museum, the provenance was mostly unclear (Fig. 4).
2. Osijek families listed in the confiscated property registry, who were declared enemies of the state (e.g., Reisner, Povischil, Brlić, Šmucer, Hengl, Pfeiffer). In these homes, the owners were often present during the inspection and selection of museum-quality items, and the objects were mostly preserved and in good condition as they had been in use or properly cared for until their handover (Fig. 5).
3. Slavonian and Syrmian estates and castles: Valpovo, Našice, Vukovar, Ilok, Donji Miholjac. The owners abandoned the properties, and state users (institutions) moved in. The items from these locations were mostly damaged (Fig. 6).¹⁹

MUSEALIZATION OF OBJECTS COLLECTED THROUGH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION IN THE MUSEUM OF SLAVONIA

The newly acquired collection was used to form the permanent exhibition of the museum, which was officially opened in 1951 at the then Partizanski Square, today Holy Trinity Square. The objects were oc-

casionally recorded in the inventory books as early as November 1948. Since October 1949, however, systematic inventorying began, along with the creation of a file for the Applied Arts Collection (as it was then called, now known as the Applied Arts Department) began, where a large part of the collection acquired through the Commission was catalogued. The inventory was done according to the type of objects, starting with clocks, followed by paintings, furniture, and finally ceramics. At the same time, necessary repairs were carried out on these items.²⁰ All known provenance details and the Commission's registration number were recorded in the inventory book as well as on catalogue cards (Figs. 7 and 8).

In addition to the entries in the handwritten book, each object from the Clocks Collection and the Furniture Collection was assigned its own catalogue card, which contained cataloguing details. On the back of the card, the museum curator Jovan Gojković drew a detailed sketch of the object as a substitute for a photograph. This permanent exhibition was accompanied by the monograph *History of Furniture: Illustrated with Examples from the Museum of Slavonia*, featuring drawings by Jovan Gojković.²¹ An important part of the Commission's history is the introductory section of the catalogue, in which the author, Danica Pinterović, mentions the Commission and its duty to "save valuable antiquities from the abandoned noble estates of Slavonia and to remove art or historical items from other confiscated households in the city." She also notes that only a small number of artworks were thus saved: "It must be stated that a relatively small part was saved, as the owners, in most cases, emigrated during the occupa-

tion, taking many things with them, and much was lost during the battles for liberation. However, even these incomplete groups of saved objects – paintings, furniture, porcelain, bronze and tin (meaning pewter) decorative items, old weapons, etc. – represent a significant enrichment for the museum's two departments: the painting gallery and the applied arts department.”²² Censorship did not approve the previously printed catalogue that mentioned the Commission and its role in shaping the museum's collection, and as a result, the introductory part of the catalogue was shortened as a result of censoring and a new, modified edition was printed. Both versions of the catalogue are kept in the museum.

With the transition from handwritten inventory books to the use of the computer program M++ (or Modulor++ for inventorying and processing museum collections), structured data entry became possible, allowing for searching and linking objects based on different indicators. In the period from 2004 to 2012, handwritten books were transcribed and previously un-inventoried items, including some objects assigned through the Commission, were entered into the inventory. The museum's computer program allows for the integration of data about objects categorized into different museum collections. This involves an agreement among curators on how to phrase specific data. Several fields are crucial for identifying the listed objects, including: *acquisition method*, *source of acquisition*, *type of identification number*, and the *identification number*.

The objects allocated to the museum through the Commission's activities currently mostly hold the same status

as donated or purchased items. After inventorying and cataloguing, and any necessary conservation-restoration work, these objects are published and presented to the professional and wider public at academic and scientific conferences and exhibitions. Furthermore, they are part of an important digitalization project of heritage collections that has been intensively carried out in Croatian museums in recent years, including the Museum of Slavonia. As part of the museum's website, collections are presented with descriptions and catalogues of selected artworks, including specific details and photographs. The museum also participates in the project by the Ministry of Culture and Media, *eCulture – Digitalization of Cultural Heritage*. For this project, a homonymous website was developed, ensuring access to and searchability of digital collections and publicly showcasing the heritage cared for by heritage institutions of the Republic of Croatia. While provenance data is not available in the public catalogue, the works are visible and accessible to the public based on various indicators, allowing for the creation of personal virtual collections.²³

The opening of heritage institutions to the public and a greater emphasis on researching the provenance of artworks have enabled the identification of museum collections acquired through the Commission's activities and their accessibility through exhibitions, publications and online posts. At the Museum of Slavonia, there are two cases in which the heirs of the object's owners are legally seeking the return of items assigned to the museum through the Commission, or compensation for the seized property. According to the decisions of the County

Administrative Department for Property and Legal Affairs, these movable items, as cultural goods of the Republic of Croatia, are granted ownership to the heirs while remaining in the possession of the Museum of Slavonia.²⁴

In line with the growing public interest in museum collections and the need for more accurate and detailed information about their overall history, it is important that curators and other researchers have access to all preserved records. Computer processing and digitalization not only enable easier accessibility (such as simple searching, remote access, etc.), but are also crucial for the protection of the physical documents themselves, as mentioned earlier.

SCANNING AND DIGITALIZATION

Scanning and digitalization are key concepts in the context of preserving and making museum records accessible, but it is important to understand the difference between these two processes. Scanning refers to the technical procedure by which physical items (museum objects) such as books, photographs, documents or drawings are converted into a digital format using a scanner.²⁵ This process creates files that faithfully reproduce the original material, but without further processing. In contrast, digitalization is a comprehensive process that, in addition to scanning, includes additional stages such as file processing, quality optimization, metadata entry, as well as archiving and file organizing.²⁶ In the context of museum records, digitalization does not only involve creating digital copies but also ensuring that the data is structured, easily searchable, and

stored in a way that guarantees its long-term preservation and future accessibility for research use.

Scanning is one step within the broader process of digitalization, but digitalization in museums encompasses a range of activities aimed at the permanent protection and accessibility of cultural heritage in digital form.

The Ministry of Culture and Media has developed the *Guidelines for Digitalization of Cultural Heritage* as part of the *eCulture – Digitalization of Cultural Heritage* 2020 project, which were updated in 2023.²⁷ The *Guidelines* provide essential information for professionals responsible for the digitalization process, guiding them through all stages, from preparation and selection of materials to the technical aspects of digitalization. The document outlines the criteria for evaluating and selecting materials, technical requirements for file formats, and procedures for ensuring the long-term storage and protection of digitalized materials. The *Guidelines* assist professionals in making informed decisions, ensuring that the digitalized materials are of high quality and that legal frameworks related to copyright are respected.

SELECTION OF OBJECTS FOR SCANNING AND DIGITALIZATION

The Museum of Slavonia is a participant in the *Pilot Project to Determine the Provenance of Museum Objects Confiscated During and After WWII*, initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Media. As part of the project, the Museum scanned exceptionally valuable records from its Documents Collection and Museum

Archives (regular records) related to this historically significant period.²⁸ The scanned materials cover the period from 1933 to 1959, including more than 21,000 files, as well as the Commission's records with 518 files, i.e., 382 records.

The records have been scanned, and the files have been transferred to directories named according to the year the records were created, with the file naming based on a pre-agreed template: *year-month-day-number_serial_number*.

The following text will focus exclusively on the digitalization of the Commission's records, which represents the first phase of this ambitious project. The Commission's records are extremely valuable, complex and important for the museum and researchers, as previously mentioned. After the successful digitalization of this smaller subset, the plan is to do the same for the Documents Collection and Museum Archives (regular records) covering the period from 1933 to 1959. It is important to note that digitalization is a lengthy and complex process requiring significant financial resources, personnel and technical support, so further work will proceed gradually, considering the museum's available capacities and priorities.

THE DIGITALIZATION PROJECT OF THE COMMISSION'S RECORDS

Digitalization of museum collections is a complex process that requires precise planning and execution to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of digital objects. The process can be divided into several key stages.

PREPARATION

The analysis of the physical condition of the files is the foundation of a successful digitalization process. During the review, all damages (tears, creases, bends, stains, insect traces, etc.) and the presence of foreign objects that could potentially damage the equipment or affect the quality of scanning (such as staples, ribbons, stickers, etc.) are recorded. Dry cleaning is used to remove surface dust and other small contaminants that could affect the quality of scanning.

The digitalization of the files, which covered more than twenty thousand units, required careful planning and organization. To ensure efficiency and protection of the materials, detailed preparation was carried out, including sorting, creating lists and preparing the files for scanning. Despite the large number of documents, simultaneous work on two scanners with the involvement of multiple staff members allowed for the successful completion of this part of the project.

SCANNING

For the digitalization of the collection, multifunctional devices Canon imageRUNNER ADVANCE C2220L and C3025i, already owned by the museum, were selected, as their technical features were deemed suitable for the scope and specificities of the project. Although the TIFF format would be preferable for long-term archiving due to lossless compression, storage limitations and the need for quick processing of a large number of files led to the choice of JPG format. Scanning at a resolution of 300 dpi and 24-bit colour depth ensured sufficient image quality for optical character recognition (OCR) and

further text analysis, while simultaneously optimizing file size. A subsequent visual check confirmed the good readability of the text and the preservation of details on the scanned documents.

FILE ORGANIZATION

Before scanning, the files, like all other documents in the Documents Collection, were stored in archival folders. The Commission's files were divided into several sleeves by the museum library employee, Ivan Medved.²⁹ After scanning, the original division was retained, and the files were transferred to an archival box. Within each sleeve, the files were further divided into those with the registry number "K" (referring to the Commission) and those without it.

The files created through scanning were organized in a hierarchical directory structure that reflects the physical organization of the fonds – according to the year of creation. This structure allows for intuitive navigation through the scanned documents and aligns with the way the physical files were organized. The file naming convention follows the template *year-month-day-number_serial_number*. For example, a file named "1942-11-12-1" denotes the first of several files created on November 12, 1942. When a file consists of multiple pages, each page is assigned a unique serial number (e.g., "1942-11-12-1_2," "1942-11-12-1_3"). This systematization allows for easy identification, search and management of individual records, and has been applied to all scanned files.

Given the specific nature of the Commission's files, a two-tier directory structure was adopted within each calendar year.

The first directory, *Date*, contains files organized by the date of creation, following the aforementioned naming template. The second directory, *Ur. br. K* (registry number of the Commission), contains files grouped by the Commission's registry number, using the template *year-registry number_serial number*. This organization was created in consultation with the curators as it provides flexibility and clarity when searching and working with data during this part of the digitalization process.

Division of the Commission's Files:

- 1944–1947 – Regulations
 - 11 files (23 pages)
- 1944 – Storage
 - One file (two pages)
- 1945–1948 – Indexed List of the Commission
 - Total number of items (one page)
 - Index for the Commission's file (three pages)
 - 33 pages of the list; one handwritten page, note on the reverse side
- 1945
 - Six files (ten pages)
- 1946
 - Nine files (16 pages)
 - 29 files (53 pages) – Reg. No. of the Commission
- 1947
 - Seven files (eight pages)
 - 182 files (215 pages) – Reg. No. of the Commission
- 1948
 - One file (one page)
 - 134 files (151 pages) – Reg. No. of the Commission
- 1949
 - One file (one page).

The files represent various correspondence, travel orders, decisions, proposals,

etc. Many files contain multiple pages, and some of them have additional elements that needed to be scanned (e.g., labels on the sleeves in which the files were placed, handwritten notes on the reverse side, etc.).

METADATA

In the context of the digitalization project, special attention was given to the structured description of files after scanning. Metadata, simply put, refers to data about data.³⁰ In the context of museum digitalization, these are pieces of information that describe digital objects such as images, documents, or 3D models. Metadata can be descriptive (author, title, keywords...), structural (number of pages, indexes, subtitles...), and administrative (copyrights, type of software support, when the file was created...).³¹

The Dublin Core, or Dublin Core Metadata Element Set, was chosen as the foundation for describing digital files due to its wide acceptance, adaptability and potential for expansion.³² This standard allows for the description of a document using fifteen core elements: title, creator, subject, description, publisher, contributor, date, type, format, identifier, source, language, relation, coverage, and rights.³³ Considering the scope and complexity of the scanned documents from the Commission, a structured approach to entering metadata was agreed upon. A table in Excel was created to serve as a checklist for data entry (Fig. 10). The table contains the following fields: year/date of creation, unique document identifier (regular museum registration number or Commission number), unique identifier for related documents, people and institutions mentioned in the document, description

of the document's content, sender of the document (person, institution), recipient of the document (person, institution), type of document, type of museum objects (if applicable) and a field for additional notes. This data organization allows for efficient management of large amounts of metadata and ensures consistency in their entry. Below are some examples of how this is represented in practice in the Excel table:

- Sender of the document: Zagreb (Ministry of Education, Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities at the Ministry of Education – National Collection Centre, Conservation Institute...), Osijek (Regional People's Liberation Committee for Slavonia, City People's Committee, District Collection Centre, Regional Collection Centre, City Transport Company...), Vukovar (District and City People's Committee of Vukovar...) and others (individuals or institutions)
- Recipient of the document: Zagreb (Ministry of Finance, Commission for Gathering and Protection of Cultural Monuments and Antiquities at the Ministry of Education – National Collection Centre, Conservation Institute...), Osijek (District Collection Centre, Regional Collection Centre, five different names for the Museum of Slavonia...), Vukovar (District and City People's Committee of Vukovar...) and others (individuals and institutions)
- Type of document: memo, report, request, order, will, command, notification, calculation, decision, approval for payment, regulation, letter, list, confirmation, judgment, registration, proposal, travel order, invoice, solution, telegram, request, acknowledgements, law, petition, record

- Type of object: sculpture, book, furniture, painting, clock, porcelain, vase, weapon, piano, etc.

OCR

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is a technology that converts images of text into a format that computers and machines can understand. This process enables the searching, indexing (automatic cataloguing) and other manipulation of scanned or photographed text as if it were originally created in an electronic environment.³⁴ OCR is an indispensable step in the process of digitalizing museum documentation, which comes with numerous challenges (Figs. 11 and 12). The quality of OCR results depends on various factors, including the quality of the scanned document, the type of font, damage and the settings of the OCR software. Old documents are especially challenging because they are often damaged, use unusual fonts, contain different languages and include elements such as tables, sketches, graphs, etc. Manuscripts, illegible and altered text parts, as well as special symbols and signs, pose significant problems for OCR (Figs. 13 and 14). Final review and correction by an expert overseeing the process are crucial for achieving a high-quality final result.

QUALITY CONTROL

One of the final steps in the digitalization of museum collections, quality control, involves a comprehensive verification of the accuracy and completeness of digital copies. Once the documents have been prepared, scanned, organized and processed using OCR, expert staff carry out a detailed analysis of the work performed.

The human factor in this phase is indispensable, as it allows for the detection of subtle errors that automated systems cannot identify, such as misrecognized characters, missing details or inconsistencies in the entered metadata.

STORAGE

The digitalized files are stored on a secure local museum server, with access restricted to only two authorized administrator staff members. Special attention was given to capacity, security and reliability when selecting the hardware. A copy of the files has been stored on a separate external disk. An additional layer of protection and security is provided by keeping two previous versions of backup copies in case of unforeseen human errors, catastrophic hardware failures or software malfunctions.

For daily work and processing, the expert team has access to the working version of the digitalized files stored on the museum's network drive. Although backup copies are not currently made at strictly defined intervals, but rather as needed after completing specific phases of the project, plans are in place to implement automated procedures for regular backups in order to increase efficiency and reduce the risk of data loss.

Monitoring standards and selecting adaptable solutions should facilitate the transition to new technologies when the time comes, all aimed at the long-term preservation of digital materials and ensuring access for users and researchers.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The digitalization of the Commission's files opens up numerous new possibili-

ties for research and analysis. The plan is to expand the aforementioned Excel table with new fields after the quality control process is completed. After the digitalization and OCR processing, the files in PDF/A³⁵ format will be stored on the local museum server. The table will include a field with links to each of these files, which will allow employees to easily search, filter data and quickly find relevant information.

Linking the digitalized documents to a relational database creates the possibility of connecting the documents with museum objects processed in the M++ relational database for inventorying museum collections, as well as in the S++ relational database for managing secondary museum records. Ultimately, all of this will be integrated and made accessible on the data management and digital content platform, Modulor++.³⁶

CONCLUSION

One of the fundamental goals of museum work and the core mission of museum professionals is the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of Croatia. When it comes to the Museum of Slavonia, this goal was particularly evident in the work of curators in the post-war period, when, under challenging conditions, they managed to save at least part of the cultural and historical objects from Osijek and the estates of eastern Croatia from theft and/or destruction. Not only were these objects securely stored, but their musealization ensured their protection and accessibility to the public. As this paper demonstrates, the work of museum staff never stops, and by analyzing records related to museum materials, more effective

processing and broader dissemination of information is made possible. With the use of new technologies, curators employed at the Museum, nearly a century after World War II, can still contribute to shedding light on the role and significance of the Commission and, from new perspectives, process individual objects and collections as a whole.

NOTES

¹ The regular museum activities of curators also include the research of the provenance of the items under their care. Based on data from museum records, research extends to other sources preserved in the Department of History and the Library Department of the Museum of Slavonia, as well as other heritage institutions such as the State Archives in Osijek and the Croatian State Archives. Numerous data regarding the museum's acquisitions immediately after the World War II are still found in the museum's inventory book and have yet to be published in exhibitions or written articles. Two doctoral theses were created based on the research of the provenance of artworks that arrived at the Osijek museum institutions immediately after the end of the World War II: Jasmina Najcer Sabljak, "Umjetničke zbirke vlastelinskih obitelji u Slavoniji i Srijemu" (doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, 2012); Marina Vinaj, "Knjižna zbirka Prandau-Normann kao muzeološki fenomen" (doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, 2012). An exhibition project by four heritage institutions in eastern Croatia (the Museum of Slavonia, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Valpovo, and the State Archives in Osijek) brought together artworks from the legacy of the Valpovo nobility through an exhibition and a catalogue: Danijel Jelaš et al., eds., *Valpovački vlastelini Prandau-Normann: katalog izložbe: Osijek – Valpovo, ožujak – lipanj 2018.* (Osijek and Valpovo: Muzej likovnih umjetnosti, Državni arhiv u Osijeku, Muzej Slavonije and Muzej Valpovštine, 2018). Numerous articles in professional journals have highlighted the role of the Commission in collecting artworks in eastern

Croatia: Ante Grubišić, "Zasluge dr. Josipa Bösendorfera u spašavanju kulturne baštine tijekom i neposredno nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata," in: *Intelektualci i rat 1939. – 1947.: Zbornik radova s međunarodnog skupa Desničini susreti 2012.*, dio 1., eds. Drago Roksandić and Ivana Cvijović Javorina (Zagreb: FF Press, 2013), 487–508; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, "Tragom umjetnina grofovskе obitelji Pejačević," *Našički zbornik* 7 (2002): 209–220; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, "Skriveno blago podgoračkog dvorca," *Osječki zbornik* 20 (2011): 159–179; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, *Bakrorezi i bakropisi iz plemičkih zbirk Slavonije i Srijema* (Osijek: Muzej likovnih umjetnosti, 2015); Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, "A Pejacsevich család našicei ágának művészeti öröksége," in: *A Pejacsevich Család Művészeti Öröksége*, ed. Ferenc Veress (Šopron: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Šopronu, 2016), 5–21; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, "Danica Pinterović i muzealizacija zbirk slavonskog plemstva," *Osječki zbornik* 34 (2018): 99–107; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak and Silvija Lučevnjak, *Likovna baština obitelji Pejačević* (Osijek: Muzej likovnih umjetnosti, 2013); Jasminka Najcer Sabljak and Silvija Lučevnjak, "Zaboravljena baština obitelji Pfeiffer i slikar Hugo Conrad von Hötzendorf," *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice* 24 (2017): 163–189; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak and Silvija Lučevnjak, "Moderna umjetnost u zbirkama slavonskog plemstva," in: *Imago, Imaginatio, Imaginabile: Zbornik u časi Zvonka Makovića*, eds. Dragan Damjanović and Lovorka Magaš Bilandžić (Zagreb: Odsjek za povijest umjetnosti Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2018), 247–265; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak and Silvija Lučevnjak, "Pitanje transfera i provenijencije umjetnina na primjeru zbirk obitelji Eltz i Odascalchi," *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti* 47 (2019): 121–132; Jasminka Najcer Sabljak and Silvija Lučevnjak, "Umjetničke zbirke slavonskih plemičkih obitelji," in: *Umjetnost slavonskog plemstva – vrhunská djela europske baštine*, eds. Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, Silvija Lučevljak and Valentina Galović (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2021), 8–120; Marina Vinaj, "Obiteljska knjižnica Prandau-Normann – spomenička muzejska baština," *Osječki zbornik* 30 (2011): 265–274; Marina Vinaj and Žarka Vujić, "Muzealnost Knjižnice Prandau-Normann u Muzeju Slavonije Osijek," *Muzeologija* 48/49 (2012): 124–132.

² For more information on the establishment and operation of the Commission, its authorities, and its particular role in the territory of Croatia, see: Iva Pasini Tržec, "Osnutak, organizacijski ustroj i djelovanje Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje kulturnih spomenika i starina," *Peristil* 62 (2019): 123–138.

³ Museum of Slavonia, Department of History, Documents Collection (hereinafter: MSO, PO, DZ), reg. no. 347/45, "Naredba o organizaciji Zemaljskog sabirnog centra od 27. studenoga 1945.," December 3, 1945, *Narodne novine* 83/1945.

⁴ MSO, PO, DZ, correspondence from June 28, 1945.

⁵ MSO, PO, DZ, memo dated June 19, 1945, addressed to the Administration of State Assets for the City of Osijek, ref. no. 82/45. On June 21, 1945, Director Bösendorfer sent a memo to the Educational Department of the Regional People's Liberation Committee, requesting the establishment of procedures for the return of items taken by the State Directorate for Restoration, which are stored in the museum's basement rooms. MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 85/45.

⁶ A list of acquired items (books, Baroque bedroom furniture, decorative arts, and artworks) was sent by Director Bösendorfer on July 23, 1945, to the District Administration of National Goods (MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 75/45). MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 133/45, "Obavijest ravnatelja Bösendorfera Okružnoj upravi narodnih dobara od 20. srpnja 1945. o prijenosu baroknog namještaja starinske spavaće sobe."

⁷ MSO, PO, DZ, reports on condition, reg. no. 184/45, 185/45, from 191-1 to 191-8/45. Replies: reg. no. 231/45, 235/45, 250/45, 262/45, 263/45, 269/45, 289/45, 306/45, 330/45, 362/45.

⁸ MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 108/45. In addition to numerous certificates of the return of artworks, in the case of doctor Branislav Grčić, a court ruling from the District People's Court in Osijek regarding the return of movable property stored in the (then) City Museum has been preserved. The ruling was issued on September 22, 1945, and the items were handed over the following day, September 23. The handover was signed by Dr. Grčić's wife, Jela (Jelena) Grčić, on behalf of Dr. Grčić, and Bösendorfer on behalf of the Museum. MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 204/45.

⁹ For Našice, the document was not registered; for Valpovo, it was. Reg. no. 368/45, MSO, PO, DZ.

¹⁰ MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 143/46 and K-3/46. In the report by D. Pinterović, the situation in Ilok is also mentioned, where she found only a few marble busts and reliefs that she could not transport to Osijek.

¹¹ One example of such wastage of museum-quality items is the mentioned bedroom from the property of Gustav Reisner, transferred to the Museum in 1945. A memo from Director Bösendorfer to the secretariat of the City People's Committee has been preserved, in which he notes that during the transfer of culturally and artistically valuable items from Gustav Reisner's apartment, the bedroom was transferred, but the mirror from the room was kept by the then head of the City Administration of National Goods. Bösendorfer requests that the mirror be returned to the Museum as soon as possible, as part of the complete set of the room (MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. 657/46). The mentioned example is just one case where the artwork was tracked down and returned to the Museum, but there are many more instances where it was not known where the items were transferred, or whether they were even destroyed.

¹² MSO, PO, DZ, box KOMZA, reg. no. K-15/46.

¹³ See notes 9 and 10.

¹⁴ It is interesting that in the monthly report to the National Collection Centre, Danica Pinterović notes that the transfer of items involved "members of the Commission and the State Museum in Osijek," which again points to the problem of a lack of personnel to participate in the tasks of the Commission, while at the same time meaning that the regular work at the Museum was stalled. It is worth noting that the members of the Commission were also Museum employees. MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. K-17/47.

¹⁵ Firinger, on behalf of the Osijek Repository of the State Archives in Zagreb and as a member of the Commission, sent a report to the Museum of Slavonia regarding the condition of archival material in the apartment of Baroness Elizabeta Tacco, who at the time was living with her daughters in Gorica (most likely Gorizia in Italy, as it was believed she was an Italian citizen), and the house

was managed by Gustav Burian as her proxy. MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. K-13/48.

¹⁶ MSO, PO, DZ, reg. no. K-19/48, "Zapisnik o izlučivanju predmeta s popisom," June 22, 1948; reg. no. K-29/48, "Potvrda primitka kulturno-historijskih predmeta," August 31, 1948.

¹⁷ The index for items and typewritten lists are kept in the Documents Collection of the Museum of Slavonia under the Commission's file.

¹⁸ HR-HDA-2117-2-294, KOMZA 135/46, "Izvještaj o putu /u Osijek, Vukovar, Vinkovce, Požegu i Slav. Brod/".

¹⁹ In part of the Valpovo castle, the owner, Countess Julijana Normann von Ehrenfels, lived until her departure to Austria in 1952, but she did not have access to the rest of the castle, which was used as an orphanage.

²⁰ In addition to the museum's primary documentation, a valuable source of data is the handwritten work diaries of Danica Pinterović, kept from January 1, 1947, to June 1, 1974. She systematically recorded daily tasks performed at the museum, field visits, meetings with donors and collectors, and the first three diaries, from 1947 to 1954, are an important source for the topic of items brought to the museum through the Commission.

²¹ Danica Pinterović, *Povijest namještaja: ilustrirana primjerima Muzeja Slavonije* (Osijek: Muzej Slavonije, 1952).

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ The catalogue of the Museum of Slavonia is available at the link <https://katalog.mso.hr/> (accessed August 29, 2024), and catalogue of the *eCulture* project is available at the link: <https://ekultura.hr/item-sets/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

²⁴ Partial solution of the Office of State Administration in Osijek-Baranja County, Department for Property-Legal Affairs, reg. no. 2158-04-01/6-18-15, from August 13, 2018, and the Decision on appeal from September 17, 2021, reg. no. 514-04-02-01-01/08-21-02 (reg. no. MSO 218/2021), regarding a painting owned by Kornel Šeper from Osijek. Since the inheritance of the Normann family is large and is located in several museum institutions, proceedings are still ongoing. The resolved part was settled in the same manner as in the case of the Šeper family: items are transferred to the

ownership of the heir but remain in the possession of museum institutions (for items in the Applied Arts Department of the Museum of Slavonia, reg. no. MSO 2158-1-10-23-73, for example).

²⁵ Struna: Hrvatsko strukovno nazivlje, s. v. "skeniranje," <http://struna.ihjj.hr/naziv/skeniranje/2285/#naziv> (accessed August 29, 2024).

²⁶ Renée Dhingra, "Document Scanning vs. Digitization," hubTGI, August 20, 2023, <https://hubtgi.com/document-scanning-vs-digitization/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

²⁷ Ministarstvo kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske, "Smjernice za digitalizaciju kulturne baštine," <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/izdvojeno/izdvojena-ljevo/kulturne-djelatnosti-186/digitalizacija-kulturne-bastine-9828/smjernice-za-digitalizaciju-kulturne-bastine/15034> (accessed August 29, 2024).

²⁸ The regular records of the Museum of Slavonia created until 1953 are part of the museum Documents Collection, while records from 1953 to the present are part of the museum archive.

²⁹ He worked in the museum library from 1942 to 1949. After retiring, he continued coming to the Museum to organize materials in the newspaper archive. Marija Malbaša, "Stručno osoblje zaposleno u Muzeju od osnutka do danas," *Osječki zbornik* 16 (1977): 351–361, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/344958> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³⁰ Celia Paulsen and Robert Byers, *Glossary of Key Information Security Terms*, NISTIR 7298, Rev. 3 (Gaithersburg, MD: National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2019), s. v. "metadata," <https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/metadata> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³¹ University of Texas Libraries, "Metadata Basics: Key Concepts," <https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/metadata-basics/key-concepts> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³² Dublin Core, "DCMI: Metadata Basics," <https://www.dublincore.org/resources/metadata-basics/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³³ Nacionalna i sveučilišta knjižnica, "Dublin Core Metadata Element Set, Version 1.1.: Referentni opis," <http://stari.nsk.hr/izdavaci/dc1/about/verzija1.htm> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³⁴ Željko Trbušić, "Zašto je arhivima potreban sustav za optičko prepoznavanje znakova?" @rhivi 6 (2019): 6–7, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/242826> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³⁵ The PDF/A format is specialized for archiving and long-term storage of electronic documents because it preserves all fonts, colour profiles, and other necessary elements within the document itself, ensuring that the display of the PDF is always the same, regardless of the device, location, or method of file usage. PDF Association, "PDF/A FAQ," <https://pdfa.org/pdfa-faq/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

³⁶ Link2, "Baze podataka i repozitorij," <https://www.link2.hr/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

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

Muzej Slavonije, Povjesni odjel, Dokumentarna zbirka (MSO, PO, DZ)

KOMZA U OSIJEKU – JUČER, DANAS, SUTRA

U radu se istražuje djelovanje Komisije za sakupljanje i očuvanje kulturnih spomenika i starina (KOMZA-e) u Osijeku nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata. Muzej Slavonije postao je čuvaonica velikog broja umjetničkih i kulturno-povijesnih predmeta dopremljenih iz slavonskih dvoraca i osječkih građanskih stanova, čime je postavljen temelj za osnivanje Pokrajinskog sabirnog centra u Osijeku. U radu su obrađeni osnivanje i gašenje osječke podružnice KOMZA-e, osobe koje su sudjelovale u njezinu radu te lokacije s kojih su preuzimani muzejski predmeti. Prikazano je kako se postupalo s prikupljenom građom, do koje mjeru je istražena i publicirana te koji status ima danas. Dokumentacija prikupljena tijekom i nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata čuva se u Dokumentarnoj

zbirci Povijesnog odjela Muzeja Slavonije, a u sklopu Pilot-projekta utvrđivanja podrijetla muzejske građe ta je dokumentacija skenirana te je započet proces digitalizacije. Taj proces digitalizacije detaljno je opisan u radu, s naglaskom na izazove i mogućnosti koje nudi digitalizirana dokumentarna građa za daljnja istraživanja i obradu muzejske dokumentacije.

Zaključno, autori ističu važnost obrade i dostupnosti dokumentarne građe i za muzejske stručnjake i za širu istraživačku zajednicu. Digitalizacija je ključni korak u očuvanju kulturne baštine, a rad Muzeja Slavonije na tom polju doprinosi boljem razumijevanju i zaštiti muzejske građe, s posebnim naglaskom na predmete prikupljene djelovanjem KOMZA-e. Ovaj rad stoga ne samo da dokumentira povijesne aktivnosti KOMZA-e već i osigurava kontinuitet njezina doprinosa s pomoći suvremenih digitalnih praksi.