

## **Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities**

The Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit civic association founded in 1952 for the purpose of preserving, taking care of and promoting Dubrovnik's rich and multifaceted cultural heritage. It was created before the establishment of the institutionalized service for the protection of monuments in Dubrovnik (1960), fulfilling its task in the first years. A unique civic association in national and European contexts.

## **Based on strong Dubrovnik and European Foundations**

On good Dubrovnik and European origins The Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquity belongs to a large European family of citizen associations that care for heritage, and are based on an idea that originated in the 18th century, when antiquarian or antiquarian societies were founded, which experienced their full development in the second half of the 19th century. Dubrovnik is also developing civil associations for the preservation of its heritage, in accordance with the large number of devastations of inherited treasures and alienation of art, especially during the Austrian administration, in times of general impoverishment and provincialization, but also in the framework of general pride and nostalgia for the glorious past. At the beginning of 1898, the civic association "Society for the Promotion of the Interests of Dubrovnik" was founded, with the aim of arranging the city, above all roads, promenades and parks, but the activity died out with the First World War.

## **Society "Dub"**

The activity of the "Society for the Promotion of the Interests of Dubrovnik" was continued in 1921 by the civic association "Dub", a society for the development of Dubrovnik and its surroundings.

He was the backbone of all interventions in the development of the city, in his organization the City bell tower is reconstructed, Gradac park, Posat, roads are re-arranged, benches are installed from Sveti Jakov to Boninov, the hygiene of the city is maintained, building aesthetics are monitored, reading rooms, libraries are established, museums, the scenario of the Feast of St. is being "redesigned". Vlaha - "manifestations of the Dubrovnik soul".

Thanks to the knowledge and intellectual breadth of the Society's administration, which included the art historian Dr. Božo Glavić, but above all its agile and very deserving president, Dr. Frano Dabrović, the society was and remains and is still respected to this day, enjoying a considerable reputation and its the ventures were followed with interest and broad public support, and

it compensated for the lack of creativity and indecisiveness of the municipal administration, it was a true test of civility.

The contributions of this Society to the restoration of the natural, urban and architectural heritage of Dubrovnik are immeasurable. "Dub" was the central place for attracting all the intellectual power of Dubrovnik, creating an atmosphere of historical responsibility towards heritage. Society "Dub" was the best thing that happened to Dubrovnik between the two World Wars, in a civil and all-round sense, and it paved the way for the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities.

### **The creation of the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities**

After World War II, the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities revived and carried on a valuable tradition, thanks to its founders, first and foremost Mr. Lukša Beritić, a meritorious conservator, the first president, truly committed to the heritage of his homeland, whose reputation as a researcher, operative, conservator earned the trust of the authorities that is the Society. In 1969, on the basis of already noted results, it entrusted the maintenance and management of its property, the most magnificent monument of the City - the Dubrovnik city walls.

But that goal had to be reached. If we look back to the period of the abolition of "Dub" in that politically sensitive period, at the time of the establishment of the communist government - the establishment of a civic association was equal to a feat! It was not easy to get them to approve the establishment of such a society, but it seems that acquaintance with several high-ranking "officials" of the time played a crucial role in this, who, in turn, saw the importance of Dubrovnik as a possible important factor in the promotion of the new state. There was no institutional protection of the monument in sight! And therefore they made it possible for the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities, a civil association, to be founded in 1952.

The main goal was to prepare the City Walls for visitors, as this brought in income. For the first few years, this was done with subsidies from the state, and when the walls were ready for sightseeing, they were opened to visitors with entrance fees, so money began to be collected for their further maintenance.

The Society is based on the principles of voluntary, independent, public, non-profit and democratic organization. Volunteers take care of the monuments with the help and supervision of professionals and professional institutions, bringing into their protection the awareness and conscience of the Dubrovnik regiment.

### **Lukša Beritić (1889–1969)**

Lukša Beritić was and remains the central figure of the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities. He is one of its founders, its first and lifetime honorary president. His vision of citizen volunteers taking care of their monuments with the help of professional institutions, bringing into their protection the awareness and conscience of the Dubrovnik regiment came to life and came true.

A conservator by profession, an engineer officer by education, an officer of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, after his retirement in 1940 in his fifties he educated himself, learned Greek and Latin, the skills of reading old manuscripts in the Dubrovnik archive, taught citizens that living in the beauty of the city and its surroundings is not only a privilege but also an obligation. Beritić was the first to write about many areas of Dubrovnik's past engraved in his work, he had no one to refer to.

He grew to become a dedicated researcher, scientist, and an engaged historian, focusing on Dubrovnik's urbanism, fortifications, military organization, and weaponry. This "quiet and modest worker," devoted to heritage, worked patiently, critically, and meticulously, showing deep affection for every fragment of Dubrovnik's legacy. His extensive bibliography stands as a timeless contribution.

Most current understandings of the urban development of Dubrovnik's historical core rest upon Lukša Beritić's scholarly achievements. Whether they involve fundamental facts, new insights, or interpretations, his foundational research provides a comprehensive view of historical Dubrovnik that has withstood the test of time and remains relevant today.

Lukša Beritić was and remains a conservator legend of undisturbed and untouched brilliance.

We cherish his legacy with pride and gratitude. The work of Mr. Lukša is a dedication to Dubrovnik, which inspires and pulls us forward again and again with its heritage.

Lukša Beritić remains a legendary figure in conservation, admired for his unmatched brilliance. We honor his legacy with pride and gratitude. His work is a tribute to Dubrovnik, whose heritage continues to inspire and propel us forward.

Whenever the Society goes out in public, it carries with it a large portrait medallion of its founder. It is a valuable work by the sculptor Ivo Jašić from Dubrovnik (1988), a portrait of Lukša Beritić in relief, cast in bronze, with large dimensions (545x700 mm). It was the first major medal that the DPDS issued in 1989 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lukša Beritić.

### **Vision and Mission of the Society**

#### **VISION – What and Why?**

From its inception, the vision and mission of the Society have been to encourage every citizen to become a guardian of cultural monuments, engaging in active, continuous, and voluntary work for the common good.

#### **MISSION – How and in What Way?**

With respectable enthusiasm and passion, the City Walls and the Ston fortification complex were built in order to support themselves with the income from the visits. And not only myself, but a multitude of movable and immovable monuments of the Dubrovnik region, a significant part of which would have been irretrievably lost if the funds collected from the City Walls had not been invested in their rehabilitation. The established paradigm: "From monuments to monuments", an effective principle of work unchanged to this day, means: the money brought by the monuments is returned to the monuments, reinvested in the restoration, research and presentation of the monuments. That ethical principle became and remained the foundation of the Society's successful work.

#### **“Restoration by the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities”**

While passing through the City or the walls, you will often see a white oval plaque on which it is written: "Repaired by the Society of Dubrovnik Antiquities". The people of Dubrovnik know that she is a pledge of trust, that they can be calm, that work is done well, because "She is ours. The stone of this city loves her. Seventy years ago, she unrolled the green carpet of ivy and capers from it and made a place for herself. Today, it shines on the peace of this city as an indivisible part of its stone being. Fortece got used to her like a car driver to a dear family pontapet; wrote a valuable member of the Society, the writer Irja Jerković, a member of the Great Council, at an anniversary event of this Society.

Society could not do much without its people. They love their city and their heritage, they are ready to help, each in their own way, to preserve its beauty for future generations.

It would be difficult to list all the works of the Society in the past seven decades, listing them individually would seem almost endless. After a long existence, despite its rich publishing activity, the Society only published a substantial Collection on its 65th anniversary, which includes the history and chronological list of activities on cultural monuments from 1952-2016. The intention was realized to present the history of the Society in the form of an assembly monument, fix its important moments, in chronological order, list the results of the work on the monuments year by year, meticulously and painstakingly as they were carried out in accordance with the possibilities. However, as each work is inseparable from life, from the personal biographies of the people who create that work - a review of the people enrolled in the "star path" of the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquity - is the greatest quality of this Collection.

The Society has always attended to even the smallest "details," valuing both tangible and intangible heritage. This included maintaining everything from the lanterns along Stradun and Orlando's sword to the battlements of towers, mortar recipes, and joint reinforcements. Their scope extended from the village chapel of St. Stephen in Topolo to the elegant restoration of the Divona Palace doors. Everyday life in Dubrovnik and its surroundings was also celebrated, from preserving the traditions of Primorje weddings to reviving traditional Dubrovnik recipes, and honoring Christmas in the City and the Feast of St. Blaise.

In this way, the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities fosters a profound and comprehensive awareness of its rich heritage.

On this occasion, it is worth noting that the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquity purchased space at Gundulićeva poljana 2, a historic space with a valuable interior and rare painted paper wallpaper, and made that space its home.

In the middle of the city is the luxurious building of the Bassegli-Gozze-Katić palace, and together with the surrounding representative ambience, it represents a highly valued and valuable part of Dubrovnik's residential architecture. This city palace, whose eastern facade overlooks the Cathedral of Our Lady and the Duke's Palace, has undergone many changes since the 16th century, the era of its creation, but the following centuries and architectural transformations added a new and measured outfit, which can be read on its exterior and interior. until the 19th century. Due to the integral value of the palace, the unity of the architecture and interior, including the wallpaper in the rooms of the first floor, this palace is an individually protected cultural asset.

Due to the combination of happy circumstances, primarily the connection with the heirs, but also the awareness of the value and significance of the monument - the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquity bought the first floor of the Bassegli - Gozze-Katić palace from Dr. Velimir Katić in 1998. for your new home. The interior of the palace was decorated in the thirties of the 19th century with a lot of knowledge, style and taste, and the wall coverings in the salons on the first floor are also from that time, because they are painted paper wall coverings from the first half of the 19th century from the French workshop of Jean Zuber & Cie from Rixheim, still active today. It is a depiction of a landscape called "Dame du Lac", which dates back to 1827. The drawings were made by the French painter Julien Michel Gue (1789-1843), one of the most talented Parisian artists of that era. He was inspired by Sir Walter Scott's famous work "The Lady of the Lake". It is important to note that this wallpaper pattern is registered in only four other private European collections: Rome-Italy, Dalsland and Ystad-Sweden, Appenzell-Switzerland. The second is a cycle of wallpapers, from the side salon of the palace, with depictions of the landscape called "Les Jardins Francais" from the first half of the 19th century, and they were created by the French artist Pierre Antoine Mongin. These wallpapers are registered in four other locations in private collections, also very rare in the European context.

The Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities was faced with a huge task: the upstairs areas were found to be in a difficult condition, full of moisture, which affected the damage to the wallpaper, which was unglued, stained, swollen from moisture, with tears, and in many places completely ruined. The moment for investment was very unfavorable, in the time after the Homeland War, impossible for the Company at that time. Thanks to the generous donations of its benefactors (the Dubrovnik family Iva and Ana Pastuović), the restoration of the first floor of the palace was started first. The designers incorporated modern electrical and mechanical installations into the space, so that the space could serve its new purpose. Thus, this valuable interior of the Dubrovnik palace from the 19th century was restored with minimal interventions and thus preserved.

The successor's work was not yet complete. Despite the lack of money, work was done on the preparation of documentation for the future restoration of wall hangings, despite the knowledge that there are no restorers in Croatia for this type of movable heritage. Three foreign offers were requested, and DPDS decided on the offer of the French restaurateur Elisabeth Traougott Queau with the generous help of the Dubrovnik-French company "Građevinar-Quelin". The wallpapers were carefully removed from the walls of the salon in 1999 under the supervision of Madame Queau, and stored in crates. The positive response

to the competition for republican funds of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and the considerable approved funds for their restoration meant confirmation that this is an extremely valuable and rare heritage, so the restoration process could begin in agreement with the Croatian Restoration Institute in Zagreb, the wallpapers were transferred to restoration center in Ludbreg where selected French women were restored under supervision. The Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities, aware of its heritage and inheritance, preserved the expensive wall wallpapers. In other words, more money was spent on the restoration of the painted wallpaper than on the restoration of the architecture, the interior of the first floor of the palace.

### **Society Achievements**

Today, Dubrovnik's City Walls stand as one of the best-preserved and researched fortification complexes in Europe. The admiration of millions of visitors, along with the recognition from international organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, is a testament to over seven decades of exemplary work. The Society's achievements are indeed impressive, extending not only within Dubrovnik but throughout its historical surroundings—from Sokol and Molunat in Konavle to Ston, Pelješac, the Elaphiti Islands, Lastovo, and the Primorje region.

The Society's work encompasses the protection and acquisition of monuments as well as publishing and exhibition activities. Restoration investments are rooted in scientific findings and projects in cooperation with the relevant conservation authorities, alongside the expertise of top specialists spanning generations. Over time, the Society has attracted Croatia's scientific elite in historiography and art history, providing them with ideal working conditions and occasionally inviting experts from Europe and beyond for collaboration. In all areas, from preparation to presentation, the Society's work has been open to the public, regularly shared with citizens, experts, and the cultural community through publications and media. This transparency has earned the Society a distinguished place in Croatian conservation practice. Today, it stands as the largest investor in Dubrovnik's cultural heritage.

### **Unique on National and European Levels**

There is no comparable organization in Croatia in terms of the scope and continuity of the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities (DPDS), making it unique on a national scale. Similarities, however, can be found in certain English societies where civic responsibility, a deep appreciation for cultural heritage, and prudent financial management converge in almost ideal ways. On a European level, a fitting comparison would be with the National Trust for Places

of Historic Interest in the UK, founded in 1895, which manages and restores a significant part of Britain's cultural heritage. DPDS boasts a solid tradition and can stand confidently in comparison, yielding notable results.

In our more modest setting, the Society's revenue from restored monuments has funded the preservation of heritage. Such funding relieves both the city and state from the financial burden of heritage investment, essential given that

## Major Projects

Notable achievements include:

- reconstruction of Minčeta, restoration of the **Upper Corner Tower** with a magnificent presentation of the historical metallurgical foundry located beneath the Minčeta Fortress.

It all started in 2003, with the intention of the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities, to restore the Gornji uago tower. Archaeological investigations, and then discoveries conducted inside the Gornji uago tower, resulted in the gradual discovery of a metallurgical foundry, which, to the delight of researchers, archaeologists supported by archaeometry as "forensics", gave birth to a real industrial miracle during the three-year duration of the research (2005-2008)! An industrial zone in the heart of the city from the 15th century, buried after the Big Cherry in 1667, was discovered - which spread over about 600 square meters, with the remains of architecture and original parts of the production process (smelter, molding shop, water basins, settling tanks, sand storage ), and all for the purpose of gunpowder production, bronze casting, but the most important was the production of weapons: cannonballs and cannonballs of various sizes, which the Republic of Dubrovnik exported to The Mediterranean and the Balkans. A large, sensational discovery made possible the creation of an archaeological museum "in situ", a joint presentation of the foundry complex with the interior of the Gornji uago tower, which served as a museum of mobile archaeological finds through excellent restoration. Dubrovnik, on the other hand, got a new attraction, a new content within the magnificent city walls. A real cultural treat!

- restoration and establishment of the **western bastion from Minčeta to Bokar, including the archaeological site "Na Andriji"**, continuing to provide from the mentioned archaeological site and museum "in situ" - along the line of the western pre-wall to the intriguing archaeological site "Na Andriji", where old granaries and the remains of female Benedictine monasteries were discovered.
- restoration of **Sokol Fortress in Konavle**.



- the integral area of Ston and Mali Ston, including the restoration of the imposing fortification complex, with the reconstruction of the unique Veliki Kaštio fortress, which is indeed in every segment, in terms of the complexity of the project, one of the greatest restoration achievements of this Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquity
- the restoration of the Benedictine monastery and the church of St. Marije on Lokrum, a very demanding research, conservation and restoration work and achievement. Namely, the Romanesque Benedictine monastery and the church of St. Marije, the Lokrum Abbey founded in 1023 on the neighboring island of Lokrum for strategic reasons - is a treasure trove of all kinds of information about the history and culture of the island and Dubrovnik. Namely, the research of this complex was included in the protection works program of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in 1998, and the works started in 2003 are still being carried out today thanks to the Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities.

### **Duke's Palaces**

The latest endeavor of the Society is a remarkably complex, in the truest sense of the word, project: the rescue, acquisition, and restoration of the Duke's palaces, the seats of dukes and captaincies throughout the entire territory of the former Republic of Dubrovnik! From Pelješac and Lastovo to Konavle, it promotes the axiom that the entire area of the former Dubrovnik, not just the City within the walls, is part of its historical identity (some palaces have already been restored: Slano, Pridvorje, Lopud). The Society's correct policy of managing the administrative sites of the former duchies is worthwhile because these are often buildings that have been forgotten, collapsed, or abandoned; even the closest neighbors do not know what used to be there or where it is located. Hence the Society's desire to restore the old and create new values. Centuries of Dubrovnik's administrative division have created micro-entities (Primorci, Konavljani, Župljani, Stonjani, Mljećani, Lopuđani, Šipanjci, Kalamotci...) that are connected with the borders of administrative areas. Restoring the Duke's palace in Slano, for instance, meant restoring the memory of how the Dubrovnik coast came into being, sparking a conversation about its boundaries, and raising awareness of a sense of belonging, above all, identity. Acquiring the ruins of the Duke's palace in Lopud, receiving a generous donation from the Caboga Stiftung foundation through the kindness and efforts of Mr. Ivo Felner, means witnessing a realized dream—the restored and "repeated" complex of the Palace in Lopud, which was opened to the public in September 2023.

The Society continues to work, firmly rooted in tradition, love, and devotion to heritage, and its members are proud to be its guardians.

### **Conscience of the City – Restoring the Respect of Its Citizenship**

Society is not only an institution that makes money, repairs and pays, which is concrete and very important. It has people who spread sensitivity and love for heritage among the citizens of Dubrovnik. Numerous memberships, both in the City and around the world, testify that being a member of the Society is, above all, an honor. To belong to a group of people who devotedly love their city and thus consistently and seriously take care of it.

One wonders how it was possible for a local society of enthusiasts, lovers of heritage, to achieve all this on a voluntary basis, as a civil society association. It was possible because it wanted to, because it dared to protect, restore, and love its City, its homeland, and its heritage.

It was possible because it gathered experiences, because it "listened" to the City, and because it reacted to phenomena that were not in line with conservation and civilized behavior. In a word, the Society was a kind of "conscience" of the City, its corrective, and nothing was too difficult!

Especially in the post-war period, after the Homeland War, when the identification with heritage reached its peak—perhaps the most productive time in a spiritual sense for the work of this Society. The Society's stance was respected—motivated by the virtue of respect, as it included prominent individuals of various educations. It was a Society of equals, where the opinions of each member were valued and contributed to the respect for the profession.

However, not everything in the life of the Society was an untroubled idyll. The last decade of the Society's work was marked by politically motivated events and upheavals that weighed heavily on the "shoulders" of the Society. The moment the Society's income became significant due to the enormous wave of tourism that Dubrovnik struggled to manage, the already existing worldview of understanding heritage as a commercial resource that generates profit became even more entrenched. Despite everything, the Society resisted these encroachments; moreover, in difficult days, it managed wisely and responded with new investments and new major endeavors.

### **Living in a Global Era**

Living in a global era where circumstances change rapidly, the Society should be viewed as a civil society institution serving the protection of heritage, in a partnership with city administration and authorities, through which important and valuable interests are successfully realized: the preservation and restoration of heritage as an identity value. Alongside all that has been said, the cultural and social mission of the Society is indispensable, indelibly woven into the essence of Dubrovnik.

The Society of Friends of Dubrovnik Antiquities, whose role must not be questioned, is ready to accept transformations as a necessity of life (along with socioeconomic changes and digital ones, which it does in its own way) but with the condition of preserving its ethical principles. It must remain true to its spirit: (Dubrovnik) traditionalism and conservative (inclusive) cosmopolitanism at the same time—thus being itself (in mentality and worldview) but open to the world and connected to it!

For reputation is built over decades but can be shaken very quickly (as this fast and superficial time suggests!). This must be recognized. Our Society needs to strengthen and multiply the respect of its citizens, spreading positive and affirmative information about its work, nurturing heritage for the future, inviting young and younger members, and sensitizing them to their own heritage. That is its mission and its path, and we hope and believe, a long life ahead.

Maja Nodari