

Vlaho Bukovac's Flag from the Parish Church of St. Nicholas in Cavtat

The painted flag depicting Saint Nicholas is the work of Vlaho Bukovac (Cavtat, 1855 - Prague, 1922), and part of the inventory of the pinacotheca of the parish church of St. Nicholas in Cavtat. It was created in 1902, during Bukovac's Cavtat phase, and it is a curiosity in the author's creative *oeuvre*.

Vlaho Bukovac is a central figure of Croatian modern art. He was educated in the class of A. Cabanel at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris (1877-1880). In 1894, after his success in Paris, he returned to his homeland and settled in Zagreb. He became *spiritus movens* of cultural life inaugurating modern artistic trends into Croatian painting such as *plein air* painting, divisionism and pointillism. His most active period, during which Bukovac established the central infrastructural components of modern visual life, ended when he moved to his native Cavtat in 1898. After a short stay in Vienna (1902-1903), he spent the rest of his life in Prague.

The flag from Cavtat (430 x 325 cm) is made out of a monochrome fabric composed of four full-width pieces sewn together. The edges of the fabric are unpainted, and a fringe is sewn down the entire length on the right side. The flag is lined with a lining fabric which was secured to the original on three sides with a sewing machine. St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children and sailors, is in the centre of the flag along with his symbols (a boat in a storm and resurrected children in a barrel). The saint is standing and dressed as a bishop. He is characterised by exceptional elegance and beauty, and painted in the manner of French academic painting.

Over time, the flag was exposed to direct sunlight, aerosol dust and other dirt in uncontrolled microclimate which made the original fabric unclean, fragile and brittle, as well as caused the colour to fade in some places. Changes to the original are especially evident on the painted portions of the flag and the edges, where the fabric was wrinkled and creased with extensive mechanical damage and recent inadequate interventions.

Conservation was carried out at the Section for Textiles of the Ludbreg Department for Conservation (Croatian Conservation Institute) from 2016 to 2019.

Photo, graphic and written documentation of the condition before conservation was made during the first phase, including documentation on all structural features. It was determined that the original fabric was made using five-end warp-faced weave. Microscopy identified textile fibres and found that the original fabric was made out of natural cellulose fibres (cotton). X-ray fluorescence and Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy were also used to perform stratigraphic analyses of the painted layers and the composition of pigments and binders. During the second phase, the flag was completely cleaned using a dry process. Partial separation of the artwork was performed separating the lining fabric from the original on two sides. Also, more recent inadequate interventions were removed that had permanently damaged the original, followed by straightening irregular folds and lining with an ultrasonic vaporizer. During the third phase, a new fabric of the same morphologic properties was prepared as lining for the entire flag. The local colour tone of the original was achieved on the new fabric with Solophenyl dyes for cellulose textile fibres. The same method was used to prepare the cotton thread in several colour tones to secure the new fabric where the original was damaged. The controlled process achieved uniformity and consistency of colour and reproducibility of results. Sewing with combined restoration techniques was used to repair the damaged areas in the last phase.

During conservation, financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, only reversible methods and procedures were used in order to preserve the condition of the original.

The St. Nicholas flag, painted by Vlaho Bukovac, is a historical textile that attests the history, religious customs and cultural achievements of the local community, but it is also an item of great national significance. Conservation of the flag is the result of collaboration between an interdisciplinary team of experts who, through the use of state-of-the-art research methods, restoration techniques and ethical principles, have contributed to its preservation for future generations.



Vlaho Bukovac, *Panorama Cavtata*, oko 1900. / privatno vlasništvo, Zagreb



Oslikana zastava Vlaho Bukovca iz župne crkve sv. Nikole u Cavtatu

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Oslikana zastava s prikazom sv. Nikole djelo je Vlaho Bukovca (Cavtat, 1855. – Prag, 1922.) i dio je inventara pinakoteke župne crkve sv. Nikole u Cavtatu. Nastala je 1902. godine, u njegovoj cavtatskoj fazi, te je kuriozitet u autorovu stvaralačkom opusu.

Vlaho Bukovac središnja je ličnost hrvatske likovne moderne umjetnosti. Formirao se u klasi A. Cabanela na pariškoj *École des Beaux Arts* (1877. – 1880.). Nakon afirmacije u Parizu, vratio se u domovinu i nastanio u Zagrebu 1894. godine, gdje je postao *spiritus movens* kulturnoga života, inaugurirajući moderne likovne tijekove u hrvatsko slikarstvo poput plenerizma, divizionizma i pointilizma. Plodonosno razdoblje u kojem je Bukovac u nekoliko godina utemeljio središnje infrastrukturne komponente modernoga likovnog života završilo je njegovim odlaskom 1898. godine u rodni Cavtat, gdje je živio do 1902. godine. Nakon kratkotrajnog boravka u Beču (1902. – 1903.), ostatak života proveo je u Pragu.

Cavtatska zastava (430 x 325 cm) izrađena je od jednoboje tkanine sastavljene od četiri pole platna spojene šivanjem. Rubovi tkanine su neoslikani, a cijelom dužinom desne bočne strane strojno su prišivene rese. Zastava je u cijelosti podložena podstavnom tkaninom koja je za izvornik s tri strane učvršćena strojnim šivanjem. Središnji dio zauzima slikani prikaz sv. Nikole, zaštitnika djece i pomoraca, s njegovim atributima (lađom u oluji i oživljenom djecom u bačvi). Svetac je prikazan u stojećem stavu, odjeven u biskupsku odoru. Odlikuje se iznimnom elegancijom i ljepotom, a izveden je u maniri akademskog slikarstva francuske provenijencije.

Tijekom vremena zastava je bila izložena izravnom sunčanom svjetlu, aerosolnoj prašini i drugoj prljavštini te nekontroliranim mikroklimatskim uvjetima, zbog čega je izvorna tkanina postala nečista, krta i lomljiva te je mjestimično izbljedjela. Promjene izvornika naročito su vidljive na oslikanom dijelu i rubovima, gdje je tkanina bila naborana i izgužvana, s brojnim mehaničkim oštećenjima i recentnim neprimjerenim intervencijama.

Cjeloviti konzervatorsko-restauratorski radovi provedeni su na Odsjeku za tekstil Restauratorskog odjela Ludbreg Hrvatskog restauratorskog zavoda od 2016. do 2019. godine.

U prvoj fazi izrađena je fotografska, grafička i pisana dokumentacija zatečenog stanja, pri čemu su dokumentirane sve konstrukcijske karakteristike. Utvrđeno je da je izvorna tkanina izvedena u petoveznom osnovinom atlasnom vezu. Mikroskopijom su identificirana tekstilna vlakna te je utvrđeno da je izvorna tkanina načinjena od prirodnog celuloznog vlakna (pamuk). Također su rendgenskom fluorescentnom spektroskopijom i *Fourier* transformiranom infracrvenom spektroskopijom provedene stratigrfske analize slojeva oslika te sastava pigmenata i veziva. U drugoj fazi predmet je u cijelosti očišćen suhim postupkom. Izvedeno je djelomično odvajanje dijelova umjetnine, pri čemu je podstavna tkanina s dvije strane razdvojena od izvornika. Uslijedilo je uklanjanje recentnih nestručnih intervencija koje su trajno oštetile izvornik. Nakon uklanjanja nestručnih intervencija, provedeno je ravnanje nepravilnih nabora na izvorniku i podstavi ultrazvučnim raspršivačem pare. U trećoj fazi pripremljena je nova tkanina jednakih morfoloških karakteristika za cjelovito podlaganje izvornika. Lokalni ton obojenja izvornika na novoj tkanini postignut je procesom bojadisanja bojilima za celulozna tekstilna vlakna *Solophenyl*. Za učvršćivanje nove tkanine na mjestima oštećenja na isti je način pripremljen pamučni konac u više tonova obojenja. Tim kontroliranim postupkom postignuta je ujednačenost i postojanost obojenja te ponovljivost rezultata. U posljednjoj, četvrtoj fazi radova šivanjem su sanirana mjesta oštećenja kombiniranim restauratorskim tehnikama.

Tijekom radova, u cijelosti financiranih sredstvima Ministarstva kulture RH, primijenjene su potpuno reverzibilne metode i postupci u funkciji konzerviranja stanja izvornika.

Zastava s prikazom sv. Nikole koju je oslikao Vlaho Bukovac povijesni je tekstilni predmet koji svjedoči o povijesti, vjerskim običajima i kulturnim dosezima lokalne zajednice, ali bez sumnje ima i nacionalnu važnost. Provedeni konzervatorsko-restauratorski radovi rezultat su suradnje interdisciplinarnog tima stručnjaka koji su primjenom najsuvremenijih istraživačkih metoda, restauratorskih tehnika i etičkih načela pridonijeli njegovu očuvanju za buduće naraštaje.



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