

**Tirza Mol**

Paul van Duin  
Welmoed Kreb  
Helbertijn Krudop  
Boudewien Westra  
(ed.)

## **Divine Interventions** Challenges in the conservation of wooden religious art objects

<b>Introduction</b>		
Tirza Mol		7
<b>Engaging religious artefacts: community collaboration case studies in the organic materials studio of the British Museum</b>		
Alex Owen		9
<b>Renewing devotion: transforming a wooden statuette through the treatment of its textiles</b>		
Circee Novick & Livi Andreini (Marjolein Homan Free & Ana Albano Serrano)		16
<b>A sacred Torah ark by Samuel Katz: tradition and innovation in American synagogues of the early twentieth century</b>		
Christine Storti		22
<b>The conservation of the 350-year-old interior in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, a delicate balance between preservation and adaptation</b>		
Frederik Franken		31
<b>The conservation of the heichal in the Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam</b>		
Pol Bruijs		40
<b>The history and mystery of the tebah: conservation of the tebah in the Portuguese Synagogue, Amsterdam</b>		
Joost Hoving		48
<b>The preservation of a 700-square-metre painted wooden ceiling in the Grote Kerk Naarden</b>		
Roos Keppler, Hinke Sigmond, Maurice Steemers & Johanneke Verhave		56
<b>Toolmarks from Stavanger Cathedral reveal fraud</b>		
Stina Ekelund Erlandsen & Michael Heng		64
<b>Technical analysis and conservation of a fifteenth-century polychrome sculpture of St. George</b>		
Paul J.C. van Laar & Charlotte Gleiß		74
<b>Matching expectations: an overview of the conservation of altarpieces</b>		
Ana Bidarra		88
<b>The conservation of the shrine (with its content) of Saint Constantine in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp</b>		
Nathalie Posson		102
<b>North-south collaboration in conserving sacred and spiritual materials in museums: the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art's African museology project</b>		
Davison Chiwara & Dana Moffet		112
<b>Social and cultural aspects of conserving Byzantine icons in Greek museums</b>		
Dr. Andreas Sampatakos & Dimitrios Chatzigiannis		121
<b>Holy, shiny, and yet so modest in its heart. Study and conservation of the Great Shrine of the Abbey of Saint Maurice (Valais-Switzerland)</b>		
PR. Jeanneret, P. Boesiger, P.A. Mariaux, C. Veuillet & D. Witschard		127
<b>Conservators' dilemmas with working ecclesiastical objects</b>		
Henning Schulze		135

<b>Ageing wood by heat treatment: a new, more durable technique for restoring incomplete marquetry</b> Kinga Enikő Papp	144
<b>Conservation of a fourteenth-century polychrome wooden <i>Crucifixus Dolorosus</i> from the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław</b> Paulina Staszkievicz	154
<b>Revealing Conrad Schick's 1879 model of the Temple Mount</b> Miko Vasques Dias	163
<b>Take a seat! – plain and useful but neglected Conservation-restoration of simple, vernacular furniture of the church Our Lady of Sunj on the Island of Lopud in Croatia</b> Andreas Krupa, Joško Bogdanović, Marianne Decroly, Charles Indekeu & Lisa Burkart	179
<b>Student conservation work on sacral wooden furnishings in St. Nikolai, Stralsund as part of the studies at the University of Applied Sciences Potsdam</b> Dr. Jörg Weber	188
<b>A temple souvenir: the conservation of a Grand Tour cork model</b> Helbertijn Krudop	195
<b>Posters</b>	206

servator. This black-and-white picture is one from a series that the Dutch television network NCRV made in 1963. We see Paul de Roos dressed up as a Bedouin and bent over the model that despite its different appearance is the 1879 Temple Mount model. Another amazing discovery was the existence of a short clip of the Polygoon Journaal (former Dutch News channel) from December 1964 on the exhibition 'De wereld van de Bijbel' ('The world of the Bible'), held in the Centraal Museum Utrecht in 1964/1965 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap. The model is filmed between 00:32 and 00:37. Scan the QR code at the end of this article for the clip at the Museum Beeld & Geluid.

<sup>20</sup> Staff magazine Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap (date unknown), photocopy available.

<sup>21</sup> This separate object was made by Schick some years after the model of the Mount but it wasn't part of the intervention in 2021. It's in a different scale to point out the interior holding the foundation stone. A place for it to sit was created inside the model of the Temple Mount by cutting a wooden rail and adding a piano hinge to facilitate its removal. The Dome interior is visible on various photographs.

<sup>22</sup> The clip from the Polygoon Journaal (note 19) shows a quite bland image of the model, partly caused by the lighting conditions.

<sup>23</sup> Solomon's stables are a large subterranean vaulted structure, believed to have been constructed during the reign of Herod. Over time it has had different functions. For example, assumed storage area for the second Temple, and the Crusaders used them as stables for their horses. Nowadays it's part of the Aqsa Mosque praying area.

<sup>24</sup> Naturally, a visit to Christ Church and Paulus Haus in Jerusalem would have been the first and most important step. For various reasons this was impossible at that time: closed borders due to Covid, lack of funds and lack of time.

<sup>25</sup> A short clip of this procedure can be seen on YouTube by scanning the QR code below.

<sup>26</sup> These conclusions reflect my personal views; I have no knowledge of Schick's deeper intentions.

<sup>27</sup> The model is part of the exhibition 'Feest! Weet wat je viert' (Feast! Know what you're celebrating), focused primarily on children. The celebrations of the three religions are projected on the model with a voiceover explanation. In addition, a film about the restoration of the model is shown on a monitor.

#### Literature

- Hermine Pool, *Soli Deo Gloria. Het Bijbels Museum van ds. Leendert Schouten (1828-1905) als getuigenis van de profetische en historische waarheid van de Bijbel* (PhD thesis, 2021).
- Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* (c. 75 CE) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 79-94 CE).
- Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, Touchstone New York, 2002.
- Nikolaos Magouliotis, 'Miniaturizing Monuments: Conrad Schick and his Architectural Models of the Holy Sites of Jerusalem', *Architecture beyond Europe Journal*, 18/2021: <https://journals.openedition.org/abe/10216>.
- Ermete Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, Forgotten Books, 2018.
- *De Tempelberg / Haram al-Sharif. Heilige plaats voor joden, christenen en moslims*, Bijbels Museum Amsterdam, 2002.

#### Photo credits

- Photographs by author unless stated otherwise.

#### Video links

- Revealing Conrad Schick's 1879 Model of the Temple Mount - a short clip of uncovering Conrad Schick's original paint scheme by removing the overpaint layers with a scalpel. <https://youtu.be/OOSNyvDJWgI>



- Polygoon Journaal December 1964: <https://zoeken.beeldengeluid.nl/program/urn:vtme:default:program:2101608140120208031?q=tempelberg>

## Take a seat! – plain and useful but neglected Conservation-restoration of simple, vernacular furniture of the church Our Lady of Sunj on the Island of Lopud in Croatia

■ Andreas Krupa, Joško Bogdanović, Marianne Decroly, Charles Indekeu & Lisa Burkart

Churches are places for worship, parishioners, tourists and finally for restorers at work. The church treasures, the altars with their paintings and sculptures and other valuable furnishings attract our attention. Many richly and decoratively designed objects delight the eyes of the beholder. Alongside the magnificent works of art, some simpler but equally necessary church furnishings appear rather inconspicuous. This is obviously the case with a group of furniture from the church Our Lady of Sunj (Gospa od Sunja) on the Island of Lopud in Croatia, which was part of several working campaigns of the International Conservation Workshop Lopud (ICWL).

The group of furniture consists of a sedilium/

**Figure 1** Furniture of the presbytery of Sunj church after conservation-restoration: A. Priest's chair/sedilium, B. and C. altar servers' benches (2023)



priest's chair, two altar servers' benches (fig. 1) and a parament cabinet (fig. 2). What these pieces of furniture have in common is that they are decorated today in a similar or identical way with imitation wood painting.<sup>1</sup> Although the furniture was used intensively and constantly, it is obvious that it was not well cared for in former years and also more recently, when the church building was structurally renovated. The ICWL group became aware of this in 2011. The condition of the furniture was catastrophic! At the time, the ICWL group was working on the restoration of two seventeenth-century altarpieces. However, on inspecting the neglected furniture it quickly became clear that we wanted to prevent its further deterioration or even complete losses. With the authorization and under the supervision of the local unit of the Croatian Monuments Office the furniture was restored by ICWL students and teachers between 2012 and 2018. This conservation-restoration campaign is the subject of this article.

#### Lopud Island and the International Conservation Workshop Lopud

Lopud Island is a tiny but very beautiful spot in the Dubrovnik region (fig. 3). The island has about 120 inhabitants and is only about five square kilometres. However, its cultural wealth can be found in four old Croatian churches of the ninth century, numerous small chapels, the fragments of seven old monasteries and last but not least in four big churches of the fifteenth century. Lopud has always been associated with the Republic of Dubrovnik and the buildings show that the island developed to a great extent in the Golden Age, from the fifteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Lopud has been the ICWL's centre of operation for many years. Each year students and lecturers from several European universities meet on the island to carry out conservation and restoration work. The group is currently made up of members from the University of Dubrovnik, the École supérieure nationale des arts visuels de La Cambre Brussels

**Figure 2** Sacristy cabinet after conservation-restoration (2018)

and the Cologne University of Applied Sciences.<sup>2</sup> During their activities, the ICWL has primarily restored four altarpieces, carried out emergency work on two other altars and begun the restoration of a four-part choir stall. In fact, the ICWL and its predecessor groups<sup>3</sup> have been working on the island for more than three and a half decades and during this long period close ties have been established with the islanders as well as the colleagues of the Croatian Institute of Conservation in Dubrovnik. The work of the students and teachers is held in high esteem on this valuable and friendly island. The islanders and the competent authorities of the Croatian state offices support the workshops personally and with financial means.

In general, the ICWL combines student learning with the practical conservation-restoration of art treasures on site. Each year, lecturers and students of all academic years (fig. 4) meet on the island for just two weeks to restore various cultural artefacts. The special challenges of the workshop arise from work on site, the limited time, a long break during the rest of the year and the changing groups. The workshop language is English. Over the years, a stationary pool of materials, tools and equipment has formed on the island, which is expanded almost annually.<sup>4</sup>

### The church Our Lady of Sunj and its general renovation

One of the large churches of Lopud Island is the old parish church of Our Lady of Sunj. The church is located in the heart of Mediterranean nature, surrounded by the maquis, trees and the ruins of the former town of Lopud. The original building

in this place dates back to the beginning of the twelfth century and has been extended several times. The nave and the presbytery of the current building were built in 1488. With the two side chapels, which were built in the years 1527 and 1632, the ground plan of Our Lady of Sunj today forms a cross.

The interior of the church contains a very precious main altar and eight further side altars. The choir room is separated from the lay room by a beautifully carved stone fence and is vaulted by a carved and polychrome-painted wooden ceiling. The baptismal font of the parish church is also ornately decorated. Worth mentioning are three Tüchlein<sup>5</sup> that decorate the walls of the side chapels, which are unique in this region. The church also has a wooden gallery with the oldest organ in the region, a pulpit and many other interesting interior features. In short: Our Lady of Sunj is a place rich in cultural treasures.

A general renovation of the church began twenty years ago and continues to this day. The repair work on the building had become necessary because the roof and windows were leaking and the choir loft, which is built on a slope, was in danger of slipping. Before building work started, some important works of art were removed from the church. However, many objects remained in the church, including the side altars and the seating furniture.

A distinction must be made between two phases of damage: Before the building was renovated, water ingress through the damaged roof and building



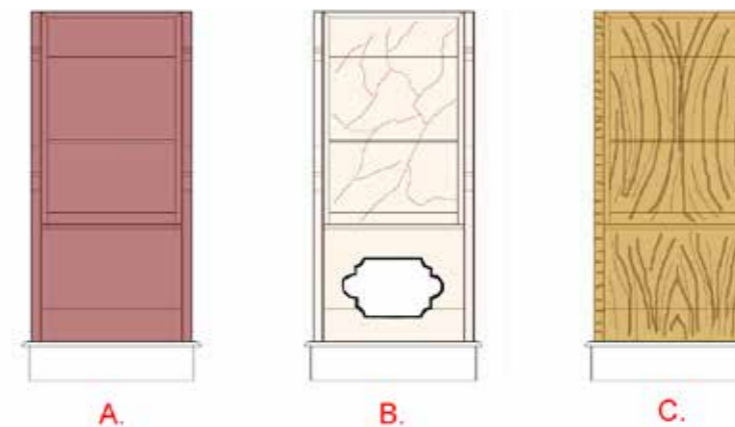
Figure 4 ICWL group 2023

openings led to severe damage of parts of the remaining interior. Secondly, during the construction work the exposure of the objects to building dust and the need to move the furniture from time to time caused particular stress. Well-intentioned but inadequate protective measures<sup>6</sup> were unable to prevent considerable damage to the works of art in this period.

### Brief introduction to the furniture

One group of objects that did not receive attention was the furniture, which is discussed here. Figure 1 shows three pieces of furniture – already after treatment – in their intended place in the presbytery. On the right-hand side of the picture is the priest's chair (A), which consists of a pedestal and the chair. On the opposite wall are two altar servers' benches (B + C), which were also part of the conservation project. The fourth piece of furniture we took care of is the parament cabinet in the sacristy, which is also shown after the treatment (fig. 2). It consists of a body with six doors,

Figure 5 Three phases of decoration of the priest's chair: A. The initial polychromic layers show ochre red; B. the second phase shows a baroque style decoration with marble imitation paint; C. the current paint layer shows an imitation wood painting.



two drawer tops and panelling attached to the walls of the niche. In the centre of the cabinet is a tabernacle, which obviously dates from an earlier period. At some point the parament cabinet and the tabernacle were combined into a single unit.

At first glance, the objects in this group of furniture appear to be from the same period in terms of the imitation wood on all sides. However, different object biographies were identified. The priest's chair, for example, shows several phases of painting reflecting different decorative concepts. At least three polychromic designs could be identified through intensive visual inspection and the microscopical investigation of cross-sections<sup>7</sup> (fig. 5). The parament cabinet, on the other hand, was only painted once with imitation wood painting, which indicates that it was created more recently. The altar servers' benches have two layers of decorations.

The materials used and the structure of the various pieces of furniture are also different, indicating that they were made in different contexts. The priest's chair is made of softwood planks, some of which show machine-sawn marks, while others were smoothed with a rough plane. The structure consists of boards of different thicknesses. The planks of the sides, for example, are 45 mm thick and give the seat stability and weight. All boards are joined together with forged iron nails. However, it is somewhat confusing that the mouldings forming a frame on the backrest were fastened exclusively with recent wire pins. This and other observations show historical changes to the construction. However, the priest's seat appears to be the oldest piece of furniture in the group.

The bodies of the altar servers' benches are made exclusively from less strong, 20 mm thick softwood boards. They also differ from the priest's seat in terms of material and some formal aspects. For example, several boards of the benches have drilled holes with large diameters of around 30 mm. These special holes appear in areas where no special function<sup>8</sup> is recognisable. Some are filled with dowels. Such holes do not occur in the sedilium. However, similar holes have already been found on several altarpieces in the same church as well as in some furnishings of other churches on the island. The holes could indicate one or more overarching (re)modelling phases, while the imitation wood paint only occurs in Our Lady of Sunj church.

Figure 3 Lopud Island: view from Rat Hill to the main town. In the background the hills of the mainland (2023)



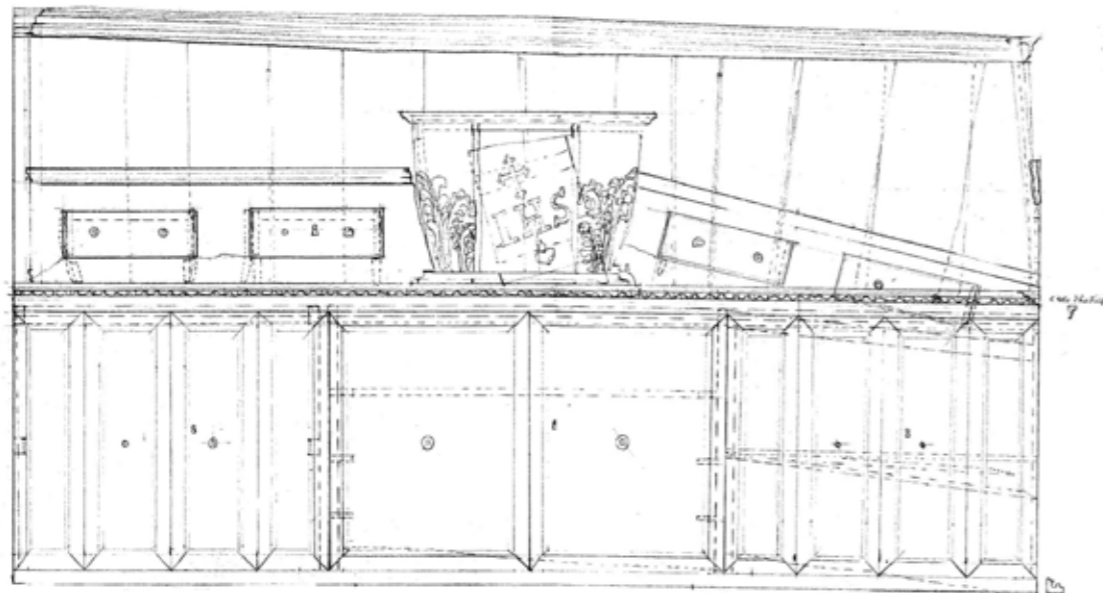


Figure 6 Parament cabinet (drawing by Lou Gils 2012). The right-hand side had completely collapsed.

#### Four “victims” of negligence – Poor condition

All the furniture was found in a very poor state of preservation. In fact, one of the former priests said in front of the badly damaged altar servers’ benches: “What are you doing there? Burn them!” Apparently, he thought the furniture could not be preserved due to its very poor condition.

The parament cabinet clearly suffered from severe water damage from the leaking roof. It broke on the right-hand side near the wall angle of the niche and collapsed (fig. 6). Rainwater had seeped into the building and into the area at the base of the cabinet. This led to damp wood and subsequent infestation by fungi and wood insects. The priest’s chair was moved to the sacristy and piled with books, flower vases, candle holders, lace doilies, etc. The worst fate befell the pews of the altar servers. They were hidden under scaffolding inside the church and were also loaded with various dirty and heavy objects without any consideration (fig. 7).



Figure 7 One of the altar servers’ benches in the terrible as-found-condition (2011).

#### Conservation-restoration

The following section is intended to provide a limited insight into the treatment of the furniture and will therefore only describe a few selected conservation-restoration measures.<sup>9</sup> The very first step of conservation was to obtain a better overview of the condition and so all furniture has been cleared from mess, disinfected for safe handling and superficially cleaned. All surfaces were disinfected with 70 per cent alcohol, which was applied using spray bottles. After brushing and vacuuming the dry surfaces, they received an initial cleaning with damp microfibre cloths<sup>10</sup>.

The structures of the altar servers’ benches and the parament cabinet showed severe damages, such as wood destroyed by insects and fungi, broken and detached boards, loose joints and, finally, missing parts. In view of the aim of reusing the furniture and ensuring that it will once again fulfil its purpose in the ecclesiastical context, the structural defects had to be repaired. But that’s not all: the repair had to be carried out in such a way that the benches and the cupboard could also withstand above-average mechanical impacts<sup>11</sup>.



Figure 8a – 8d Series of photos from the inside of the parament cabinet: Figure 8a Right-hand compartment of the parament cabinet before cleaning (2014); Figure 8b after cleaning and dismantling of several boards; Figure 8c insertion of an auxiliary structure made of Accoya wood; 8d the old boards are reattached to the scaffold; a ridge strip was installed to stabilise the tabletop (2016).

Figure 8 shows a series of four photos from the inside of the cabinet. Fig. 8a. clearly shows how badly the cabinet suffered from damp and biological pests. The boards on the right-hand side of the photo are almost destroyed. The boards were dismantled (fig. 8b.) so that they could be thoroughly cleaned of dirt and mould, and subsequently consolidated with liquid resins. An acrylic solution<sup>12</sup> was applied using syringes. In addition, the dismantling allowed a slightly modified reassembly – as follows – with the aim of achieving better ventilation of the cabinet interior.

One of the main objectives was to lift the collapsed part of the cabinet. In some areas, it was unavoidable to work with a permanent auxiliary supporting structure. Fig. 8c. shows an auxiliary structure used for levelling the tabletop and also as a base for reassembling the dismantled boards. The structure is made of Accoya® wood<sup>13</sup>, an acetylated wood, which resists moisture as well as insect and fungal infestation.

Figure 9 Replacement of missing parts: wooden stick filling with a veneer cover (2014).



In general, care was taken to save and preserve as much of the original substance as possible. All of the boards were reinstalled. Fig. 8d. again shows the view of the right-hand side wall. The boards are attached to the substructure and thus surround – with some gaps – the interior of the cabinet. At the top of the photo, you can see a beam that fixes and stabilises the tabletop in its original position.

Let us have a brief look at the conservation-restoration challenge faced by the altar servers’ benches. In general, the work steps were the same as for the parament cabinet. Well, the cleaning was intensified. Concerning intractable depositions of the internal bottom-boards several methods of cleaning were tested. A combination of pre-moistening with water-moistened cotton-pads<sup>14</sup> and subsequent saliva cleaning proved to be the most suitable. This method was used and the surfaces were rubbed “inch by inch”. Final cleaning was executed with water-moistened PVA-sponges<sup>15</sup>. After some tests, the painted outer surfaces were also cleaned. Cleaning was carried out with a surfactant-water solution<sup>16</sup>. Due to the poor state of condition, the cleaning processes were quite time-consuming.

Another challenge was to stabilise the two benches. This task was tackled in several steps. Firstly, the wood was consolidated with acrylic resins<sup>17</sup>. Then, defects were filled with wooden sticks<sup>18</sup>, veneers and putty<sup>19</sup> (fig. 9). Missing mouldings

(fig. 10) were complemented not just for aesthetic purposes. The added mouldings<sup>20</sup> also proved to increase the stability of the delicate bottom edge of the furniture. It is to be expected that seated persons will bump their feet against this part.

We opted for two further stabilization measures for the furniture stands (fig. 11). Supporting boards (B) were attached to the inside of the reinforced but still weak furniture legs. Additional legs (A) made of Accoya® wood were installed to give each bench a secure stand. The benches now rest safely on these low supports. Their feet are 10 mm higher than the feet of the furniture. It can be said that the original parts of the furniture now hover just above the floor. This measure is intended to protect the original substance from moisture from the floor slabs, e.g. from condensation, or mopping water. The first seat tests were carried out during the work. Figure 12 shows two test arrangements with students. The stabilisation concept of the steps described above proved to be successful.

#### General policy of ICWL

The ICWL brings together students and lecturers from various European universities. All participants come with different perspectives and backgrounds from their degree programmes and with different perceptions concerning conservation-restoration. On the island, these approaches need to be balanced and require a consensus. Over the years, concepts and red lines have been developed in many intensive on-site-discussions. As a result, a few fundamental approaches/principles have crystallized.

In all projects, the ICWL advocates the concept of “moderate intervention”. In relation to the furniture, this meant that no components were sacrificed, even if their condition seemed to justify this, e.g. the boards of the cabinet destroyed by insects and fungi. All parts were refurbished and reinstalled. All additional components were precisely matched to the existing structures without any parts of the original substance being cut away or removed. The auxiliary structures were designed to lie flush inside the object and take the weight. However, the supporting frame of the cabinet and the foot stands of the altar servers' benches were connected to the respective pieces of furniture by a small number of stainless screws in order to connect the parts to the furniture and enable safe



Figure 10 Replacement of missing mouldings (2016).

handling. The approaches outlined before combine respect for the original substance with minor pragmatic adjustments referring to the expected stresses and strains of utilisation.

Moderate interventions deviate from the concept of minimal intervention and are essential in this case because the furniture is to be used again. Therefore, we also decided to carry out minor re-touching and to apply a new protective transparent coating on top of the existing surface paint. The meticulously cleaned and stabilised old surfaces were first retouched with acrylic colours<sup>21</sup> to homogenize the general aesthetic appearance of the furniture. Afterwards they were top-coated with a varnish solution based on long-lasting resins diluted in non-polar solvents (fig. 13).<sup>22</sup> This measure led to an increased depth of light and homogeneity.

As a further preventive conservation measure, cushions were made to protect the seats during use. In view of the problematic environmental conditions in the church, the cushions were created of durable materials. The filling is made of Ethafoam® and the cover fabric is a moisture-resistant polyester textile. Thus, the moderate interventions have a considerable influence on the overall appearance and a positive perception of the furniture.

Figure 11 View underneath the bench: A stand made of Accoya wood (A.) now forms the stable base for the bench. The two supporting boards (B.) for the furniture legs can be seen behind the feet of the stand (2016).



Figure 12a, b The students test the stability of the altar servers' benches: Stricter test arrangement in figure 12 b (2016).



Figure 13 Application of protection varnish: the varnished surface on the right improves the appearance (2018).

#### “Divine intervention”?

In the beginning, the work on the furniture was in some ways just a labour of love for the students and teachers involved. In 2011, when the ICWL's main work projects focused on the side altars of Our Lady of Sunj church, the furniture literally fell apart! It was foreseeable that the furniture, which

was supposed to have been made for this church, would soon deteriorate beyond repair and would be thrown away.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the ICWL proposed to conserve it and, fortunately, the proposal was accepted by the responsible person in the Dubrovnik unit of the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media.<sup>24</sup> Even though the support of the priest in charge was not there at the beginning, the results finally convinced both the priest and the parishioners. All the furniture is once again back in use.

With the help of the investigations and research the historical significance of the furniture was brought to light. This was an important moment for everyone involved. The simple furniture now appears in the context of the island's history. Visitors to the church may still only notice it marginally, but it completes the presbytery and sacristy and thus contribute to the particular spatial experience. If the furniture could not have been saved, replacement solutions should have been found. In view of the predominantly old furnishings<sup>25</sup> in the church, this would have been unfavourable.

Figure 14 Presbytery of Our Lady of Sunj (Gospa od Sunja) church. View from the nave in the direction of the missing main altar (2023).



The work on the furniture had no particular religious dimension. However, the restored seats and the sacristy cabinet will now be available again for church purposes and thus serve the historical and traditional aspect of the practice of faith, which is strongly experienced on the island.

Finally, the parishioners love their island and its monuments and treasures. It is their homeland, their cultural heritage. The response of the residents concerning the activities of the ICWL is very positive, which is a great affirmation and motivation for our working groups. In 2023, a Croatian restoration student who lives on the island took part for the first time. Hopefully, this will further strengthen the links with the island community and maybe this will also lead to an increased attention for the care of the restored art treasures.

### General outcomes and prospects

Various goals were achieved. The furniture was saved and returned to its intended use (fig. 14). Thanks to the comprehensive restoration, the inconspicuous furnishings are likely to attract more attention than before. The results of the investigations and research contribute to a better understanding of the history of the Sunj church, even if many details remain hidden. It is possible that the restoration work on the furniture will help to increase the attention of the public and experts for the neglected group of simple church furniture.

It is worth mentioning that the workshops also have a positive outcome for the studies of the individual participants and for international exchange between the partner universities. The ICWL workshops are well received and remembered by the students. Some students combine the work on the island with their coursework and return to the island to realise the concepts they have developed during the year. The tasks on the island have already led to the development of measures and techniques that have subsequently enabled long-term monitoring. In the case of the furniture, we will observe whether the auxiliary structures and the protective varnish prove their worth. In this way, student research and development work contribute significantly to mutual inspiration and the further development of conservation-restoration methods on an international level.

Our Lady of Sunj church is still a building site today and it is currently difficult to imagine the church in its fully restored splendour. However,

it is planned that the restored barrel vault ceiling in the presbytery will be reinstalled in 2024.<sup>26</sup> The main altar, which was restored by Croatian colleagues from the workshop of the Croatian Conservation Institute at Dubrovnik<sup>27</sup>, can then also return to the church. Hopefully, the Gesamtkunstwerk Our Lady of Sunj will soon be complete again. Everyone involved is looking forward to that day!

Andreas Krupa (University of Applied Sciences Cologne University, Germany)  
Joško Bogdanović (University of Dubrovnik, Croatia)  
Marianne Decroly (La Cambre – École nationale supérieure des arts visuels Bruxelles, Belgium)  
Charles Indekeu (University of Antwerp/Bertem, Belgium)  
Lisa Burkart (University of Applied Sciences Cologne, Germany)

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In addition to the four pieces of furniture, the wood imitation can also be found on other pieces of furniture, such as the frames of paintings and antependia, the cover of the baptismal font and many other objects.
- <sup>2</sup> At the time of beginning also students and teachers of the University of Antwerp and the University of Split have been part of the ICWL.
- <sup>3</sup> From 1987 to 1990 and after the Yugoslav War's again from 1996 to 2002 students and teachers of the Cologne University of Applied Sciences formed the first working groups on Lopud island, before the ICWL came into being.
- <sup>4</sup> In small steps! During the campaign 2023 we benefitted for the very first time from the presence of work tables. Hopefully, one day it will become possible to establish a restoration studio on the island.
- <sup>5</sup> Our Lady of Sunj houses three wall hangings, which have been executed in the manner of a Tüchlein. "These are paintings on unprimed fine silk or linen fabric [...]. Due to the lack of priming, the painting, which is executed with an aqueous binder, is visible on both sides of the picture support." H. Kühn, *Erhaltung und Pflege von Kunstwerken und Antiquitäten*, Keysersche Verlagsbuchhandlung München, 2nd Edition 1981, p.16.
- <sup>6</sup> Protective measures mainly comprised the hanging of makeshift foil curtains. An avoidable consequential damage caused by the curtains was the formation of mould on top of the surfaces of nearly all objects.

- <sup>7</sup> The microscopical examination of cross-sections was carried out at the universities' labs between two campaigns.
- <sup>8</sup> Such holes often mark spots, where disturbing knots are removed by drilling to eliminate tensions within the board. These holes normally are closed with long grain dowels made of "sane" wood. In the case of the omnipresent holes in the furnishings of the Lopud churches the wood textures surrounding the holes show that there haven't been knots before. We strongly believe that these holes originate from rafting trunks and boards over rivers and the sea to the Dubrovnik region.
- <sup>9</sup> Parallel to the work on site, a comprehensive restoration report was produced, which summarizes all the measures.
- <sup>10</sup> The microfiber cloths were bought in drugstores. Care was taken to ensure that they were dry and not containing cleaning agents.
- <sup>11</sup> The condition found at the beginning of the work seems to give rise to fears that the future handling of the furniture will again hold some stressful moments.
- <sup>12</sup> Acrylic resin Plexigum® PQ611 20% diluted in Shellsol® T.
- <sup>13</sup> According to the "Wood Information Guide" of the producer ([https://www.accoya.com/app/uploads/2020/04/Accoja\\_WoodInfoGuide-1.pdf](https://www.accoya.com/app/uploads/2020/04/Accoja_WoodInfoGuide-1.pdf), 10.5.2024) Accoya® wood is not susceptible to moisture penetration, swelling and shrinking. Thus, it is highly stable and durable and insect resistant.
- <sup>14</sup> Cotton wool was bought at common drugstores.
- <sup>15</sup> The Blitz-Fix® Suction Block was used.
- <sup>16</sup> Warm water with anionic surfactant Surfynol® 61.
- <sup>17</sup> See footnote 12.
- <sup>18</sup> The working with wooden sticks followed the system first developed by Christoph Müller and Ursula Heiduk Vrana in the 1980s. Wooden sticks with cross-sectional dimensions of 2 x 2, 2 x 3, 3 x 3, 3 x 5 and 5 x 5 mm were fitted to the defects by adjusting single sticks to the irregular shaped edges of the areas which had to be mended. The fitted sticks were glued to each other using acrylic binder Plexitol® D 498 or wood glue (PVAc).
- <sup>19</sup> Medium to big voids were filled with putty made of the following mixture: two parts acrylic binder Plexigum® PQ 611 diluted 50:100 in a 9:1-mixture of Shellsol® T and toluene, two parts sturgeon glue 10% in demineralized water and one part of cork-granulate with a particle size of 0.1 to 0.3 mm. Small voids were filled with a mixture of three parts Plexigum® PQ 611 diluted 20% in Shellsol® T, three parts sturgeon glue diluted 10%

in demineralized water, one part of Champagne chalk, one part of phenolresin micro-hollow-spheres (Phenaset BJO 930) and one part of cork powder.

- <sup>20</sup> The mouldings have been manufactured at the conservation department of the University of Antwerp.
- <sup>21</sup> The retouching was carried out with colours from Golden® Artist Colors. These were also applied for the integration of the auxiliary parts.
- <sup>22</sup> The varnish solution consists of a 1:1-mixture of acrylic binder Paraloid™ B67 (25% diluted in boiling limit benzine 100/140 with 2% UV-absorber Tinuvin® 900) and aldehyde resin Laropal® A81 (40% diluted in a 1:1-mixture of Shellsol® T and Shellsol® A, with 2% UV-absorber Tinuvin® 900). The varnish was developed by a student of CICS during a bachelor-thesis and was applied with the intention of long-term observation.
- <sup>23</sup> Amongst the so-called "Ten Agents of Deterioration" of the Framework for Preserving Heritage Collections the abandonment of objects applies to the phenomenon of "Custodial Neglect & Dissociation" ([https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Ten\\_Agents\\_of\\_Deterioration](https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Ten_Agents_of_Deterioration), 15.5.2024). Here it is said that "One type of custodial neglect occurs when active care is not taken to preserve the collection [...]. In the case of the furniture, the parish has a certain custodial role. In the best-case scenario, the conservation-restoration of the furniture could help to ensure that this task is better performed once the renovation work in the church is complete.
- <sup>24</sup> The project has been accepted by the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media at Dubrovnik (Ministarstvo culture I medija – Konzervatorski odjel u Dubrovniku, <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/the-structure-of-the-ministry-16807/conservation-departments/16809>, 15.5.2024).
- <sup>25</sup> The only furniture dating from more recent times is an electronic organ, two simple garden tables and a few garden chairs. The garden furniture was apparently used as a replacement for or an addition to the damaged church furniture.
- <sup>26</sup> The wooden ceiling was dismantled by a group from the ICWL in 2001 and then restored by K-R-Centar, a Croatian restoration company (<https://www.k-r.hr/home.htm>, 15.5.2024).
- <sup>27</sup> Conservation department of the Croatian Conservation Institute at Dubrovnik Mokošica (<https://www.hrz.hr/index.php/zavod/ustroj/sluba-za-odjele-izvan-zagreba2/restauratorski-odjel-dubrovnik>, 15.5.2024)