

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION WORK ON THE BANNER OF THE VARAŽDINSKE TOPLICE VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE

The need for organized fire fighting emerged almost two centuries ago. At that time, fire brigades were established which, due to their mass character and general need, have remained in function to this day. Each brigade had its own Regulations, and the greatest pride of each brigade was its Banner. The Varaždinske Toplice Volunteer Fire Brigade was established in 1889, and its 84-year-old Banner (the symbol of fire fighting) has remained preserved to this day. The Banner of the Varaždinske Toplice VFB dates to the beginnings of the 20th century. It is rectangular in shape. It was made by the J. Neškudla Artistic Embroidery Institute in Ljubljana (Slovenia). The banner's dedication ceremony was held in Varaždinske Toplice on 24-25 July 1926.

However, the brigade's first Banner is in poor condition because of regular use and inadequate storage conditions, as well as detrimental physical and chemical influences. It therefore requires help from conservators and restorers in order to remain preserved for future generations.

The red ribbed fabric on the banner's front has been entirely preserved. Mechanical damage is particularly visible along the external edges and in the lower right-hand corner. The silver threads are broken in places, while the inscription has assumed a dark hue due to oxidation caused by atmospheric conditions.

The back of the banner, made of white ribbed fabric, has sustained considerably greater damage, particularly along the external edges and on the left half of the banner, which has reduced its mechanical properties. On the image of St. Florian in the central section of the banner, the red dye has visibly migrated to the surrounding applied pastel-coloured fabrics. The tassels adorning the banner's edges have not been entirely preserved.

As far as textile artefacts are concerned, they are most often made of a variety of fabrics, in several layers, and using a combination of weaving, embroidering and sewing techniques. This banner was also made in this manner, necessitating a multidisciplinary approach to its conservation and restoration, guaranteeing that all conditions are met for the artefact to be preserved from further degradation. Care for an artefact must be shared between conservator-restorers and the owners of the work of art.