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Celeja Revealed
An Example of the Presentation of Archaeological Findings in an Urban Space – The Celje National Hall

Key words: Celje, preservative archaeological excavation, private Roman-era baths, popularisation of cultural heritage, presentation in situ, restoration

The original title of the conservators' conference held in Celje on 18 and 19 October 2007 (RAZ(K)RITA dediščina) featured a pun in the Slovene language which juxtaposed the words "revealed" (*razkrita*) and "dug up" (*razrita*). This was no coincidence, since in Celje as in many other places in Slovenia a lot of places are being "dug up", while the task of our profession is to continually reveal, to put things on view. The discussions at the conference mainly focused on Celje's architectural archaeological heritage, the large and long-lasting archaeological excavations of the last two decades. And on the increasing importance of providing information to the public, presentations of the most important segments of individual sites to a wide circle of people and about the popularisation of cultural heritage.However, the presentation of the archaeological sites of parts of private Roman baths in the atrium of the National Hall did not focus on the issues of the problems of presentation with respect to assessment, modifications of the original structure, reconstruction, marketing and maintenance of the presented archaeological heritage, but on the issues which present themselves to the staff of offices for the protection of cultural heritage upon the discovery of archaeological sites, and the dilemmas and establishing of dialogues which are necessary in order to successfully integrate archaeological remains into newly built structures.In 2001, the investors Nepremičnine, d.o.o. and the Ministry of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia initiated an administrative procedure for the construction of an addition to the National Hall building. Since the building parcel lies within the area of a protected Celje archaeological monument – the Celje Archaeological Site[1] – Celje Municipal Unit of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia (IPCHS) set the carrying out of preservative archaeological research in the area of the planned construction work and the buffer zone as a condition for cultural protection. In March 2001, geophysical measurements were made at the planned construction site and the atrium of the National Hall building using georadar,[2] and in September of that year an archaeological excavation was begun in the construction site for the addition.[3] The construction site lay on the area of the Roman municipality of Celeja, right next to the western facade of the Late Antiquity and also medieval town wall. In the northern section of the excavation area, the remains of an Early Antiquity residential complex from the second half of the 1^{514} century were unearthed, with a partially preserved frigidarium – most likely private baths. During Late Antiquity, town walls were built over the older architectural remains with a tower which according to the available data is dated to the first half of the 4th century. In the southern part of the excavation area the Late Antiquity wall was entirely removed, most likely in order to build a moat for the Prince's Hall. On the basis of archaeological and architectural historical research the medieval wall was dated to the late 14th and first half of the 15th century.

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Owing to the changes in the project documentation (expanded ground plan for the addition), the archaeological excavations were continued in 2003, and the findings were connected to discoveries from past years.[4] From the historical analyses of the site the progression and main characteristics of the architecture of the Late Antiquity and medieval periods was clear from the initial stages, documented already upon the construction of the National Hall in 1898.[5] On the basis of data indicating that a bomb had fallen into the courtyard of the National Hall during the Second World War,[6] and on the basis of geophysical research which did not indicate or interpret the data as archaeological architectural findings,[7] continual archaeological monitoring of the area of the atrium of the National Hall was set as a cultural protection condition, with the possibility of temporary halting of construction work upon the discovery of archaeological findings and with the documenting of the current status. The conditions also included a clause that upon the discovery of exceptionally important findings, the Institute could on the basis of valorisation by the professional commission demand the presentation of the discovered remains *in situ*, and their inclusion in the addition project.The investor/contractor began the construction work in the area of the atrium without archaeological monitoring; in documenting the destruction we expanded the excavation area and among other things discovered two areas which belonged to the larger baths complex.[8] The eastern part with a small bathing pool was better preserved, while small hypocaust columns were preserved in the western part. The bath was preserved to a height of half a metre above the floor, covered with mortar, on which the foundations for the hypocaust columns lie. The columns support the up to 0.1 metre thick bottom of the bath, and a bench made of brick paving stones. The outer walls of the bath are lined with tubules (hollow bricks), which allowed hot air to circulate around the walls. In some places the tubules are preserved to the entire height of the walls, but owing to their brittleness they crumbled when the ruins were removed. The bottom of the bath was lined with marble tiles, and pieces of plaster with preserved frescoes and stuccoes were found among the ruins. The bathing pool with its hot air heating system was part of the private bathing complex in an opulent early Roman town residence.

The professional commission of the Celje Municipal Unit of the Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and the Celje Regional Museum unanimously decided that the architectural remains of the private baths satisfy all of the assessment criteria (degree of preservation, rarity, typicality etc.) and that it was necessary to present the remains of the bathing pool, the Late Antiquity and medieval walls *in situ*, and include them in the project of the addition to the National Hall. The investors and the project planner were presented with a requirement for presentation, and at the same time they received estimates for the costs of cleaning and reinforcing of the walls, static rehabilitation and restoration of the bathing pool and partial reconstruction of the places which were damaged due to brittleness during the archaeological excavations or during the setup of the construction site for arranging the atrium. The investors' initial response was somewhat uncertain, primarily owing to a lack of understanding of to what extent the presentation would require a re-planning of the addition, the cost of the static rehabilitation and restoration, the time frame for carrying out these three procedures and with this the delay in completing the construction work etc. and the manner of concluding the new contract or annex to the existing contract for the execution of all of the required procedures. Citing the adopted schedule for the construction of the addition and the fact that the work had to be contracted and performed without delay, and in view of the fact that pursuant to the Cultural Heritage Protection Act in effect at that time[9] the Institute for the Protection of Cultural heritage of Slovenia was the sole contractor, the investors decided to select a contractor on the basis of the issuing of a public procurement order following a procedure of negotiations without prior announcement.[10] Since the estimated costs (the Institute's bids) had been drawn up according to current prices and standards and on the basis of the bids received from the restorer, potter etc. the Institute was unable to reduce the costs of the work, but owing to the urgency of the work offered professional assistance in the design of the information panels; this sufficed so that the Institute's bid was accepted and a contract for the work was concluded.The next step towards the preservation and presentation of part of the Roman-era baths required a partial alteration of the project documentation, which was already in the implementation phase; the bathing pool lay within the construction site, and the date for the completion of construction had been determined. The entire area of the atrium was intended for the installation of the work counters of the Celje Administrative Unit for issuing documentation, with a precisely determined and normalised number of jobs. With the

archaeological presentation the usable surface area of the atrium was restricted, the project planner was forced to redesign the location and design of the counters, free up the space for the presentation, modify the installation leads, the lighting design (minimal lighting, as set out in the technical regulations) and consequently reorganise the system for issuing documents. On the technical level the preservation of the Late Antiquity and medieval wall required special technical solutions for the construction of the foundation; since it could not lie directly on the Roman wall, the partition walls had to be moved back from the wall. Also, owing to the requirement that the medieval wall remain visible, it was necessary to change the purposes of some of the business areas. The opinion of the project planner, who by installing round work counters followed the vision of the fluidity of the space and the logic of the communication of the visitors, was that his original approach to the design of the interior was significantly restricted by the reduction of the usable space. After several coordinating sessions among the investors, the project planner and the Institute, a decision was adopted on the size of the presentation, the covering of the bathing pool with hypocaust columns with glass paving stones, the lighting design and the air conditioning, for which the project planner was supposed to have drawn up a separate section of the project documentation.

This was followed by restoration procedures for the rehabilitation and protection of the medieval and Late Antiquity wall: hand cleaning, injection of filler into the cracks, securing loose rocks, chemical hardening of stones and mortar, creating a protective coating against humidity and dirt,[11] and documentation of the walls (photogrammetric recording of Late Antiquity and medieval walls).

Rehabilitation was performed on the bathing pool, which was exposed to the negative influences of the weather throughout the time of the construction work – from rain and snow to fast and dramatic changes in temperature – which included partial cleaning, reinforcement, affixing of plaster which had become separated from the base, injection and static rehabilitation of the pool itself, which had begun to sink.[12] After that, a small canopy was built over the pool (among other reasons, because the construction work in the direct vicinity had caused minor physical damage, despite the fact that the architectural remains had been protected the whole time (covered with geotextile)), the construction of which complicated the construction process – it was too low, poorly lit, required heating due to the low temperatures, since otherwise the restoration procedures could not be carried out.

In parallel with the restoration work it became clear that part of the original tubules discovered during the excavation were in such poor shape that it was not possible to reinforce and rehabilitate them, so we sought a potter who performed the complete process of creating replicas of the tubules.[13] Since we were unable to find examples of the procedure for creating and firing the tubules, the potter made a sketch of a tubule based on one of the originals including measurements and all details, and through trial and error attempted to reconstruct the procedure of designing and making tubules. The makeup of the clay (clay content, plasticity etc.) was determined on the basis of the composition of the original ceramic, as well as the way it was fired. A wooden tool was created for forming the tubules; complications arose with the technique of wrapping the tubule (i.e. the clay) around the tool, since the potter's fingerprints, notches, contact points and thickness of the replica did not correspond to those of the original. After many attempts the potter was able to figure out the correct forming technique. The biggest problem was the composition and granulation of the sand which served as a basis for the preparation and forming of the tubules, and the contraction of the clay; the dimensions of the new tubules after firing did not match the original. After several unsuccessful attempts we managed to determine the percentage of shrinkage so that the size of the replicas matched that of the originals. At the end the replicas were aged using colour pigments and built in to the northern side of the pool using reversible materials, while the southern side was left exactly as it was when it was discovered, i.e. after the archaeological research had been performed.

Primarily owing to the unfavourable weather conditions and the delay in the contractor's schedule due to the covering of the atrium there were problems with the restoring, since the heating of the presentation area did not provide suitable conditions for completing the work; some procedures had to be repeated due to the poor conditions. Owing to the difference between the exterior temperature and that in the presentation area the humidity rose significantly in the presentation area, so the area had to be dried out repeatedly. Despite our excellent cooperation with the investors we were unable to complete in its entirety the difficult work on the special part of the project for a presentation with glass panels, a lighting system and forced-air ventilation. During the implementation of the project, the project planner

developed a partial solution, but not the entire project. The completion of the reinforcement of part of the private baths unfortunately concluded with the installation of glass panels, which basically conform to the needs and requirements of the presentation, but the lighting system is restricted to only a sufficient number of light sources, which however are unsuitable (light bulbs were chosen that strongly diffuse the light, as a consequence of which parts of the presented architecture are in shade) and in inappropriate locations. There is no forced-air system, owing to which (also due to the light bulbs, which overheat the space) in the last year a large quantity of algae or mould has formed on the floor of the presentation area. Also the information panels were not designed in total conformity with the guidelines issued; they were made on transparent glass, which significantly reduces the readability of the information.
The final result of the cooperation of the investors, project planner and professionals is nevertheless the presentation and preservation of a segment of the wealthy material culture of Roman Celeja; the enrichment of the interior of a pubic place where a large number of people gather every day, and another piece in the mosaic of the tourist attractions of the town of Celje.

Notes

1 The monument, in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (OG RS No 16/2008) is listed in the Heritage Register at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and was proclaimed a cultural monument through the Decree on the proclamation of cultural and historical monuments in the Municipality of Celje (OG RS No 28/86-1364).
2 Performed by Dr Branko Mušič, Archaeology Dept., University of Ljubljana in cooperation with Zorty, d.o.o., Ljubljana; Report on georadar research at the Celje – National Hall site. IPCHS Archive, Celje MU.
3 Carried out by Arhej, d.o.o., Sevnica, Report on the archaeological research at the Celje – National Hall Site – 2001 addition. IPCHS Archive, Celje MU.
4 Carried out by Arhej, d.o.o., Sevnica, Report on the protected archaeological excavations at the Celje – National Hall Site in 2003. IPCHS Archive, Celje MU.
5 Emanuel Riedl, Baureste der "Claudia Celeja" – Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentral-Kommission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale, N.F. 26, 1900, p. 32–37.
6 Bojan Himmelreich and Jure Miljević, Letalski napadi na Celje med drugo svetovno vojno [Aerial Attacks on Celje during the Second World War]. Exhibition catalogue. Celje Historical Archive 2005, p. 33 and 47.
7 See note 2.
8 Carried out by Tica sistem, d.o.o., Brezovca pri Ljubljani, Report on the archaeological research at the Celje – National Hall Site – 2004. IPCHS Archive, Celje MU.
9 Up to 1 March 2008, the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (OG RS No 7/1999; Articles 20 and 60) was in effect.
10 Public Procurement Act (official consolidated text) (ZNJ-1-UPB 1, OG RS No 36/2004 of 13 April 2004, not in effect since 23 December 2006).
11 Carried out by Matej Turnšek, academically trained sculptor and restorer.
12 Carried out by Aleksander Šiles, academically trained sculptor and restorer, with colleagues.
13 Potter: Igor Bahor s.p., Topolšica.