THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSERVATOR DURING ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS, THE EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

"EXCAVATION WITHOUT CONSERVATION IS VANDALISM" (1). Although conservation, like all archaeological practices within archaeology: from excavation, researching, archaeometry and curating, has the same aim: to increase our understanding of past. In practice, there are still areas for improvement. Appropriate professionals responsible for conservation and preservation of cultural heritage are still rarely seen as a part of excavations or hired by archaeologists who direct archaeological projects. To reduce the risk of a scenario of a curator opening the box with artefacts and seeing only a pile of dust or asking where the artefact went, conservation of cultural heritage needs to begin from the very first moment of its exposure. The objects which were recently moved from their primary archaeological contexts to new surroundings with different climates have experienced abrupt decay. It particularly concerns organic, but also to a smaller extent, inorganic materials both in terrestrial and marine environments (2). An understanding of the environment the artefact originates from is necessary for the development of the most appropriate conservation procedures and creation of the optimal conditions of its storing and display, but also for the interpretation of the gathered information in the further examination. Having that said the collaboration between conservators-restorers and archaeologists is fundamental.

The Arts Academy of the University of Split has been conducting numerous underwater and terrestrial archaeological excavations. The students worked on the optimal conservation approach to human remains, ceramics, glass and metalwork already on the site, learning how to handle freshly found artefacts during their lifting and transportation, and how to implement conservation procedures in the laboratory.

The port of hellenistic colony of Issa, Vis, Island Vis 2011, 2013, 2016 Rescue underwater excavation. The students treated underwater archaeological artefacts immediately after they have been lifted from the sea bed and soil. They removed shells and hard encrustation as well as mud, algae and sponges from the surface of the objects using brushes, scalpels and chiselles. After cleaning, the objects were immersed in tap water for desalinization. All artefacts were catalogized and photographed.

The students are catalogizing and making photographs of artefacts on the archaeological site. They are ensuring also the best condition for artefacts to be safely transport to conservation laboratory. A complete documentation of each object is done before and after their treatment.

The port of Pharos the first hellenistic colony in Croatia, Stari Grad, Island Hvar 2014-2018 Systematic underwater archaeological excavation supported by Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia. The students are treating underwater archaeological artefacts immediately after they have been lifted from the sea bed and soil. They are removing marine encrustation and surface deposits of the objects.

The students of conservation were involved in excavation of multi burial tombs with fragments of ceramics and metal objects such as coins and one metal pendant. The students put the metal objects in the containers with the original soil to preserve the same condition for the objects until conservation treatmant in the laboratory. The human bones were packed into the paper bags. The bags were placed in the firm pvc container and immediately transported to University Department for Forensic Sciences, University of Split. The students were also involved in digital documentation of the archaeological site.

The students are working with the findings that have been found in last year’s research after 6 months of desalinization. They are gently cleaning ceramic surface with brushes and scalpels. They are tagging every single fragment of pottery. They are ensuring also the best condition for artefacts to be safely transport to conservation laboratory. The main challenge was excavation on fragile human skeleton that was found on a shallow sea water. Archaeologists and conservators removed the remains with the joint forces. They packed the bones in pvc bags and firm pvc container and immediately send it to The Anthropological Center of Croatian Academy Of Sciences And Arts in Zagreb for the further analysis.

The students are involved in excavation from the first moment of discovering of submerged parts of roman villa maritima. The students are taking care for all artefacts excavated from the submerged and terrestrial part of villa: pottery, glass, frescos and metals objects. They are cleaning, catalogizing and making photographs of artefacts on the archaeological site. They are preparing the best condition for artefacts to be safely transport to conservation laboratory. The Submerged parts of roman villa maritima, Island Scedro 2014 – 2018 Systematic underwater archaeological excavation supported by Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia. The students are involved in excavation from the first moment of discovering of submerged parts of roman villa maritima. The students are taking care for all artefacts excavated from the submerged and terrestrial part of villa: pottery, glass, frescos and metals objects. They are cleaning, catalogizing and making photographs of artefacts on the archaeological site. They are preparing the best condition for artefacts to be safely transport to conservation laboratory. The main challenge was excavation on fragile human skeleton that was found on a shallow sea water. Archaeologists and conservators removed the remains with the joint forces. They packed the bones in pvc bags and firm pvc container and immediately send it to The Anthropological Center of Croatian Academy Of Sciences And Arts in Zagreb for the further analysis.