ABSTRACT

TO THE METAL! PRESERVATION OF THE COLLECTIONS DAMAGED BY FIRE AT THE KRASNA HORKA CASTLE

The publication presents the results of the Methodological Centre of Conservation of the Technical Museum in Brno work within the project of an international aid in rescuing the collections from the Krasna Horka castle damaged by the devastating events in 2012. Because of the fire, 342 pieces of collection objects from the extensive museum collection managed by the Slovak National Museum - Museum Betliar were damaged. The most devastated was an armoury exhibition installed shortly before the fire, which housed, for example, a collection of works from the 16th century, models of small cannons on wheeled carriages from the 17th and 18th centuries, firearms of famous European workshops, an early medieval sword with the inscription +Ulfberht+ or a Romanesque sword with a hollow head and a pattern-welded blade. Various types of damage were done to thebladed weapons of Oriental provenance, military kettledrums, complete armours, helmets and breastplates from the16th and 17th centuries. More than 77 of these unique artifacts were conserved or restored at the Methodological Centre of Conservation in the years 2013 to 2015. A representative sample of objects published in this book aims to contribute to the professional community awareness of the unique collection of historical arms and armour from the Slovak Republic and their process of conservation and restoration on concrete examples. A selection of objects in the catalogue section documents the required range of material research, the conservation and restoration work, and of course the quality of the craftsmanship and the beauty of Oriental weapons, which are still visible even after such a devastating disaster. The research described in the study in the first part of the book includes the specification and the assessment of the physical state of the objects after the fire and the extinguishing intervention, an identification of the extent of damage (using invasive and non-invasive methods of investigation), followed by an identification of the production technology and decoration techniques and the assessment of the possibilities of maintaining them. The intervention itself, including cleaning, conservation or complete restoration were carefully considered and consulted for each object and a range of an optimal intervention was individually determined, either by stabilizing the state and leaving the items as mementos of the devastating events, by cleaning and exposing the surface while maintaining only the original parts or by completing and fabricatingthe missing parts with an effort to restore the original appearance of the object. The publication is designed as a kind of methodological material with respect to the specifics of the optimal care of the collections hit by devastating catastrophic events. It also summarizes the current knowledge about the rare unique collection in a broader context (history, art history and museological research).

KEY WORDS: bladed weapons, firearms, armour, conservation and restoration, material research, damage identification, production technology, decorative techniques, fire damage, optimal intervention