

Accompanying programme:
A guided exhibition tour with the curator
Saturday, 3 September 2022, 12:00

Crngrobsk' Turn Gallery,
Church of the Annunciation in Crngrob



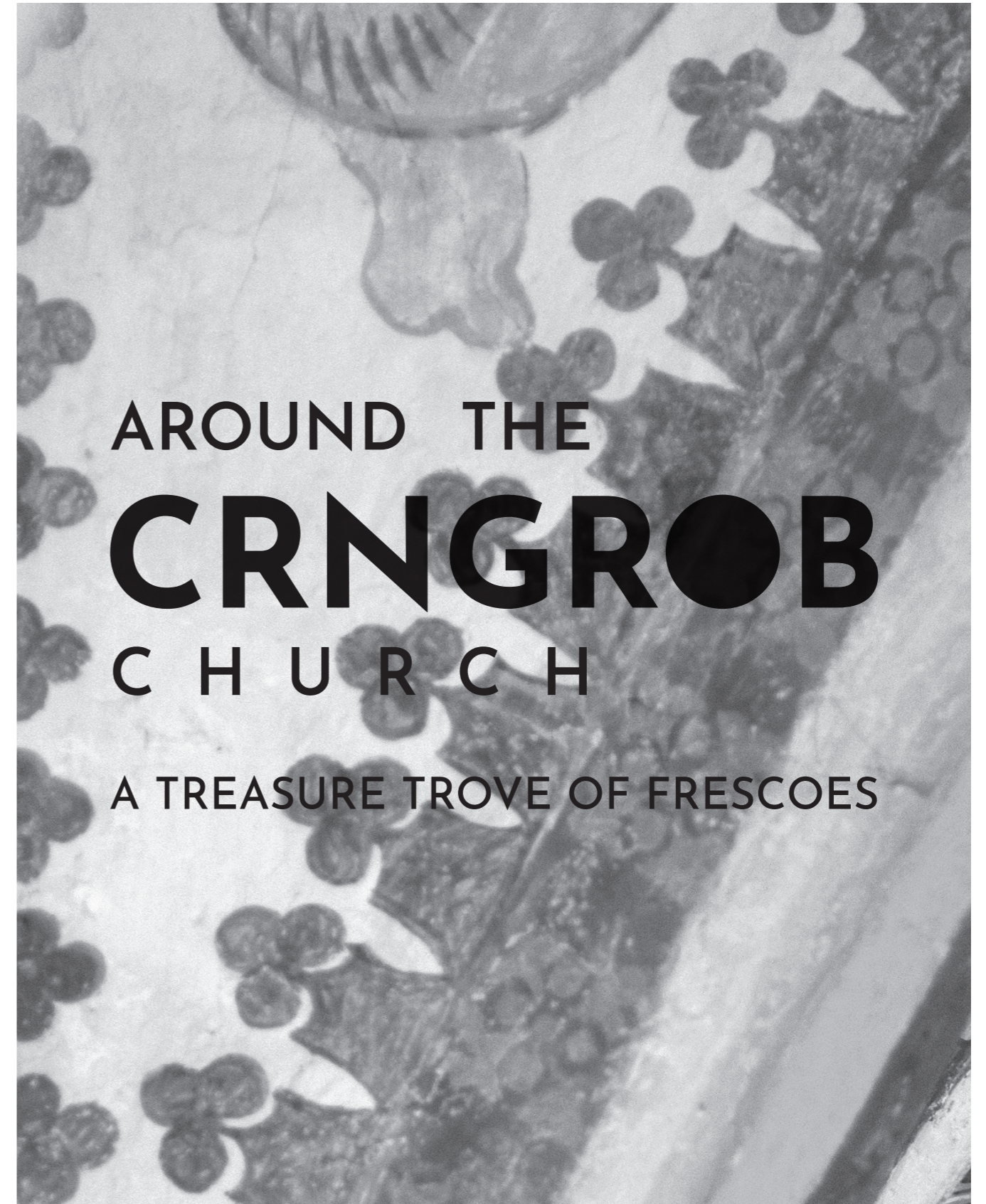
EXHIBITION

Around the Crngrob Church - a Treasure Trove of Frescoes

Crngrobsk' Turn Gallery, Church of the Annunciation in Crngrob
13. 7.-8. 9. 2022

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The project is co-financed by the European Union from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Republic of Slovenia under the 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund. The managing authority designated to implement the Republic of Slovenia's Rural Development Programme for the 2014-2020 period is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Responsibility for the content lies with the Škofja Loka Museum.

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The construction of the Church of the Annunciation in Crngrob started in the 13th century, possibly even earlier, the present-day appearance of the church, however, dates back to the 19th century. As early as the Middle Ages, the church was a popular place of pilgrimage and the pilgrims' substantial donations provided the means for several church enlargements, as well as commissions of a wealth of artworks, including the golden altars and the wall paintings created throughout most of the building's history. Some of the wall paintings are well-preserved, others, however, are either difficult to recognise or have even been detached and stored in gallery depots. The exhibition *Around the Crngrob Church - a Treasure Trove of Frescoes* presents twelve frescoes from different periods, between the late 13th and the mid-19th centuries.

Decorative church features, both interior and exterior ones, were common in a wider European area and are also characteristic of the territory of present-day Slovenia. In medieval churches, such as the Crngrob church, it is not

uncommon to find wall paintings in two or more layers. During remodelling works, older wall paintings were often covered with plaster, paint or whitewash, while some others were punched through, damaged in some other way or even destroyed. The damp and cold church interiors provide a perfect environment for frescoes, which thus dry more slowly, whereas the wall paintings on exterior walls dry too quickly, which makes them less durable. These wall paintings in particular are exposed to sunlight and temperature changes and in some cases photographs are the only surviving thing that can be used to reconstruct the original monument. Replicas and reconstructions of frescoes, such as the Sunday Christ fresco from the Škofja Loka Museum, have also proven to be of great help, and many details that have long since faded from the original fresco can thus still be admired. Most of the frescoes - which are also in a better state than others - have been preserved inside the Crngrob church, specifically in the north nave, which features restored frescoes by various masters and workshops from



four different painting stages. All of them were discovered in 1935, when the work was overseen by art historian and state conservator France Stele and restorer Matej Sternen.

Throughout history, the wall painting techniques and the materials used changed, there are, however, two main techniques. The best known technique is painting on freshly applied, wet plaster, which is called *affresco* in Italian. The other technique is the dry technique - *al secco* in Italian - where painting is done on a dry surface. Most of the wall paintings preserved in the Crngrob church were done on freshly applied plaster, they are, however, complemented by details painted using the dry technique. Since the latter is less durable, some details such as facial features have been lost.

In the Middle Ages, artists were considered tradesmen and as part of the social organisation known at the time, they joined up in guilds, i.e. professional associations of members who practiced the same trade. In line with strictly defined principles, painting work was done by a master aided by a number of assistants and



students, who often specialised in certain tasks (painting draperies, landscapes, hands etc.). It was not until the end of the Middle Ages, under the influence of Renaissance humanism, that artists as individuals began to stand out and were no longer known merely as being part of certain workshops. This is why medieval art - with few exceptions - has no names. Various descriptive names are thus used, such as the Crngrob Façade Master. Only some individuals like Master Bolfgang signed their works, and even this was not always the case.

In terms of the content, wall paintings feature depictions of heavenly protectors and saints, who believers pray to with their prayers of petition and intercession (St Martin and St Christopher were especially common around here), various biblical themes, the most common of which are scenes from Christ and Mary's lives and images depicting the end of the world and the fate of human souls after death - these are usually found near the main entrances.

Nina Misson