

Antependium - from the Benedictine church of Zadar, with the figures of Virgin Mary, Saint Benedict and Saint Chrysogonus

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.: 18039 

Date of production: ca. 1360

Place of production: Venice (presumably);

Materials: metal yarn

Dimensions: height: 94 cm
width: 190 cm

This embroidered antependium originally hung in the Benedictine church dedicated to Saint Chrysogonus of Zára (today Zadar, Croatia) on the altar in the side chapel of the Virgin Mary. The pointed Gothic arches supported by twisted columns cover the central figure of Mary enthroned with the child Jesus on her lap to her left, Saint Chrysogonus the martyr, patron saint of Zára, with a lance and shield in his hands to her right, Saint Benedict with a book and shepherd's staff in his hands. The last two figures are further identified by their embroidered names, which are unusually written in half Slavic, half Latin script: SV CRISOGON, and SV BENEDIT. Above the columns in the spandrels are medallions with half-figure saints. The figure seen on the left side with a tiara on his head is likely Saint Gregory, the first Benedictine pope on the right, the miter wearing figure with the shepherd's staff is probably Saint Donatus of Arezzo. The two edges of the antependium are decorated with two lanes of braided vines and leaves, at the center of which narrow arches cover small figures of crowned female saints: Saint Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Margaret of Antioch. At the foot of the central figure of Mary enthroned kneels the figure of the praying donor in a Benedictine habit. The person cannot be identified with certainty, but perhaps he is Joannes de Ontiache, who was the head of the Benedictine cloister of Zára at the time this antependium was likely made, between 1345-1377.

The original red silk background of the embroidered antependium suffered damage from use over the centuries, and that is why later, probably in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Benedictine sisters of the Zára convent mended it: they cut around the original embroidered motifs and sewed it onto a new silk base.

The antependium appeared in the 1876 exhibition in Budapest held to raise money for the victims of the great floods, from which it found its way into the collection of Zsigmond Bubits (1821-1907), bishop of Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia), where it was included in the Millennium Historical exhibition in the room of monuments from the period of Kings Louis I (ruled 1342-1382) and Sigismund (ruled 1387-1437). (In the center of the same room stood a copy of the sarcophagus of Saint Simon of Zára). The antependium came into the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts with the rest of the Zsigmond Bubits estate. A similar antependium dated around 1330 can be found in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which comes from the cathedral on the island of Krk (see [here](#)).

Literature

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