



Co-funded by
the European Union



Conservation of the Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow awarded the European Heritage Award / The Europa Nostra Award 2023

Brussels / The Hague, 13 June 2023

The [European Commission](#) and [Europa Nostra](#) have announced today the **winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2023**. This year, **30 outstanding heritage achievements from 21 countries** have been awarded **Europe's top honour in the field** (see the full list below). **Among this year's winners in the Conservation category was the [Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow](#)**. The altar carved in the years 1477–1489 by an artist who came from Nuremberg is widely recognized as a masterpiece of the Gothic style. Its meticulous conservation, based on in-depth research, was carried out in situ for over 1,000 days and involved a team of the best specialists from all over Europe.

The Award winners were selected by the [Jury](#), composed of heritage experts from across Europe, upon evaluation by the [Selection Committees](#) that are responsible for examining award applications, which this year were submitted by organisations and individuals from 35 European countries.

Reacting to the announcement of the 2023 winners, **Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, who is currently in charge of Culture, stated: *“Each winning achievement of this year's European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards is the result of extraordinary skills and commitment, collective and individual, spanning heritage places and traditions across Europe. By honouring these achievements, we also reiterate our firm commitment to protecting our shared cultural heritage, because it is vital for our sense of togetherness as citizens and communities of Europe.”*

Cecilia Bartoli, the world-renowned mezzo-soprano and President of Europa Nostra, stated: *“I warmly congratulate this year's winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards on their well-deserved recognition. They are inspiring examples which truly contribute to building a more beautiful, sustainable and inclusive Europe. Their success stories demonstrate how adversity can be overcome through pooling expertise, dedication, creativity and innovation. I look forward to meeting them in person and celebrating all the winners at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony in our beloved World Heritage City of Venice.”*

The winners will be celebrated at the **European Heritage Awards Ceremony on 28 September** in the [Palazzo del Cinema](#) in **Venice**. This prestigious event will be honoured with the participation of **Cecilia Bartoli**, President of Europa Nostra. **Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President of the European Commission, is also expected to attend this high-level event. During the ceremony, the **Grand Prix laureates** and the **Public Choice Award winner**, chosen from among this year's winners and entitled to receive €10,000 each, will be announced. The ceremony will be a highlight of the [European Cultural Heritage Summit 2023](#), organised by Europa Nostra with the support of the European Commission, on 27-30 September in the World Heritage City of Venice.

Heritage supporters and enthusiasts are now encouraged to **discover the winners and [vote online](#) to decide who will win the Public Choice Award 2023**, entitled to receive a monetary award of €10,000.

Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary's Basilica, Kraków, Poland

The Historic Centre of Kraków with St. Mary's Basilica was recognised as one of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1978 for its outstanding heritage value. St. Mary's Basilica is particularly famous for its Gothic altar of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, carved by Wit Stwosz (Veit Stoss) between 1477 and 1489. A remarkable project to restore the altarpiece, undertaken in situ, has returned it to its former beauty.

The project was co-financed by the Civic Committee for the Restoration of Kraków Heritage (SKOZK), the Polish Ministry of Culture and Cultural Heritage in Poland, the Municipality of Kraków and St Mary's Parish.

The altarpiece originally stood at 18m high and 11m wide and its figures are based on residents of medieval Kraków, who sat as models for the artist. It is therefore an interesting source of knowledge on the culture, customs, and history of the city at the time.

In 2012, concerns were raised about the condition of the altarpiece and a commission was established to assess its stability. It concluded that the altarpiece was “stable, yet threatened”. To preserve this priceless piece of heritage, a programme of research, conservation and preventive measures was required.

In 2015, in order to keep the altarpiece in place in the Basilica, a workshop was established behind the altar where conservators would continue their work for over 1000 days. Special scaffolding was built in front of the altar, allowing visitors to watch the conservators at work. The team worked on over 200 figures, with the largest weighing in at 250kg and exceeding 3m in height, as well as thousands of individual sculpted elements.

The conservation performed by the experts from the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków involved a full spectrum of scientific possibilities. The structural wood was consolidated, cracks were filled and the original fillers were respected. Remnants of repainting from a later period were removed, and the arrangements of figures and microarchitecture on the corpus and predella were amended. These works uncovered the original Gothic complexion of the figures and the framing, revealing the original intentions of the Nuremberg master. Research and analysis also served in developing guidelines for fire prevention and emergency evacuation.

Extensive international consultations were an essential part of the project, involving experts in Gothic sculpture conservation from Poland and Europe, who exchanged knowledge and ideas, in turn yielding many new discoveries.

“The restoration of this magnificent altarpiece is a unique and exceptional achievement. The meticulous conservation of the Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary’s Basilica, based on thorough research, was carried out by professionals who demonstrated great respect and sensitivity towards the original work. The project brought together people from different countries, reflecting the international importance of the site and the need for cooperation in preserving European heritage”, the Awards’ Jury commended.

“At the same time, it is an achievement on an impressive scale, being one of the largest Gothic altars in the world”, the Jury added.

Contact: Msgr. Dariusz Raś, PhD | archiwum@mariacki.com | mariacki.com/en

From Norway to Portugal, from France to Ukraine:

these are the winners of the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards 2023¹

Conservation & Adaptive Reuse

[Steam Engine Brewery, Lobeč, CZECHIA](#)

[Friluftsskolen Open-Air School, Copenhagen, DENMARK](#)

[Hôtel de la Marine, Paris, FRANCE](#)

[Royal Gardens of Venice, ITALY](#)

[Museum of Urban Wooden Architecture, Vilnius, LITHUANIA](#)

[Wit Stwosz Altarpiece in St. Mary’s Basilica, Kraków, POLAND](#)

[Mudéjar Ceilings of the Cathedral of Funchal, Madeira, PORTUGAL](#)

[Deba Bridge, Gipuzkoa, SPAIN](#)

[Ruins of the Monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza, Gradefes, SPAIN](#)

Research

[Scientific-Archaeological Studies for the Preservation of Ererouyk, ARMENIA/FRANCE](#)

[Proto-Industrial Architecture of the Veneto in the Age of Palladio, ITALY](#)

[Safeguarding of the Artisanal Fishing Technique “Arte-Xávega”, PORTUGAL](#)

Education, Training & Skills

[MADE IN: Crafts and Design Narratives, AUSTRIA/CROATIA/SLOVENIA/SERBIA](#)

[ACTA VISTA, Marseille, FRANCE](#)

[Carpenters without Borders, Paris, FRANCE](#)

[National Centres for Restoration of Historic Vessels, NORWAY](#)

¹ The winners are listed alphabetically by country

[Pathfinders of the Waters, Danube Delta, ROMANIA](#)

Citizens' Engagement & Awareness-raising

[Village Square Meer, Antwerp, BELGIUM](#)

[Budapest100, HUNGARY](#)

[Museum of Literature Ireland \(MoLI\), Dublin, IRELAND](#)

[Open for You, ITALY](#)

[ALMADA Project, Lisbon, PORTUGAL](#)

[Via Transilvanica, ROMANIA](#)

[Un-archiving Post-industry, UKRAINE](#)

Heritage Champions

[Hambis Tsangaris, CYPRUS](#)

[Sergio Ragni, ITALY](#)

[Cláudio Torres, PORTUGAL](#)

[Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online \(SUCHO\), UKRAINE/INTERNATIONAL PROJECT](#)

Europa Nostra Awards 2023 for outstanding projects from the UK

This year, Europa Nostra Awards go to two remarkable heritage projects from a European country not taking part in the EU Creative Europe programme.

[Cleveland Pools, Bath, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Conservation & Adaptive Reuse)

[MINIARE: The Art & Science of Manuscript Heritage, Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM](#) (Research)

Two decades of showcasing heritage-related excellence in Europe

The [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#) were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. For 21 years, the Awards have been a key tool to recognise and promote the multiple values of cultural and natural heritage for Europe's society, economy and environment.

The Awards have highlighted and disseminated heritage excellence and best practices in Europe, encouraged the cross-border exchange of knowledge and connected heritage stakeholders in wider networks. The Awards have brought major benefits to the winners, such as greater (inter)national exposure, additional funding and increased visitor numbers. In addition, the Awards have championed a greater care for our shared heritage amongst Europe's citizens. For additional facts and figures about the Awards, please visit the [Awards website](#).

The Call for Entries for the 2024 edition of the Awards is now open. Applications can be submitted online through www.europeanheritageawards.eu/apply. Submit your application and share your know-how!

PRESS CONTACTS

EUROPA NOSTRA

Audrey Hogan, Programme Officer

ah@europanostra.org,

T. +31 70 302 40 52

Joana Pinheiro, Communications Coordinator

jp@europanostra.org,

M. +31 6 34 36 59 85

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Sonya Gospodinova

sonya.gospodinova@ec.europa.eu

+32 2 2966953

EUROPA NOSTRA HERITAGE HUB IN KRAKÓW

Katarzyna Jagodzińska, Head

katarzyna.jagodzinska@krakowheritagehub.org

[Kraków Heritage Hub website](#)

TO FIND OUT MORE

[Press release in various languages](#)

About each Award winner:

[Information and Jury's comments](#)

[Videos](#) (in high resolution)

[Photos & e-banners](#) (in high resolution)

[Creative Europe website](#)

Background

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. It is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, covering over 40 countries. It is the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Founded in 1963, Europa Nostra celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered Programme](#). It celebrates and disseminates excellence through the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#). Europa Nostra actively contributes to the definition and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the [European Heritage Alliance](#).

Since 1 May 2023, Europa Nostra has led the European consortium selected by the European Commission to run the [European Heritage Hub](#) pilot project. Europa Nostra is also an official partner of the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative developed by the European Commission, and is the Regional Co-Chair for Europe of the [Climate Heritage Network](#).

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the EU programme that supports the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe's society, economy and living environment. With a budget of €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations in the fields of heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music, and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, cultural and audiovisual professionals.