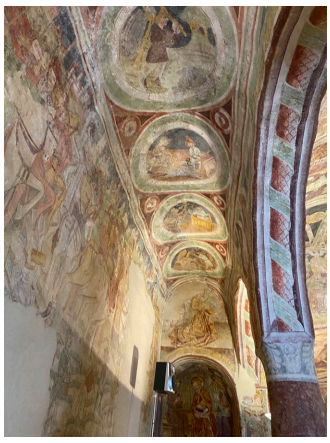
As part of the Erasmus project in Slovenia, our group had the chnace to explore the country's cultural and historical heritage through educational excursions. For a better understanding of the region we visited several significant locations: the Holy Trinity Church in Hrastovlje, the Karst Border region, and the historic city of Trieste in Italy. Each destination offered us insights into the area's rich architectural traditions, historical narratives, and cultural diversity.

The Holy Trinity Church (Cerkev svete trojice):

The Holy Trinity Church (Cerkev svete trojice) is located in the southwest of Slovenia, in a small village called Hrastovlje. The church was built in the 15th century and consecrated in 1475. It consists of a belltower, a surrounding wall, and two watchtowers. The watchtowers and the wall were built 100 years later and served as protection from the Turks and Austrians until the year 1511. It is a three-nave Renaissance church with a polygonal chancel. The naves are divided by two rows of columns with barrel vaults. The walls and roof of the church are made of stone. The windows were added later. The interior of the church is painted with frescoes from the late Middle Ages. These were painted by Janez van Kastav in 1490, as indicated by his signature, which is still preserved. The interior of the church was discovered and restored in 1951 under the leadership of Jože Pohlen.



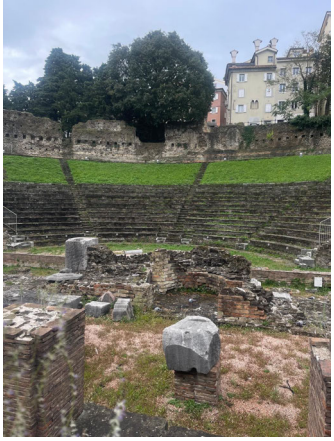
The frescoes in the Holy Trinity Church are the largest and best-preserved wall paintings in Slovenia. The frescoes cover the walls, vaults, and ceilings and are painted in earth tones. They are typical of the Middle Ages and depict biblical scenes and motifs. In the vault of the central apse, there is a mercy seat and the apostles. In the northern apse, the Three Wise Men are shown on a throne, and next to them are the holy Kosmas and Damian. Beneath this painting is the signature of Janez van Kastav (Johannes de Castuda) as well as the date 1490. Above the door in the southern apse, the patron saints St. Rochus, St. Sebastian, and St. Fabian are depicted. One part of the wall shows the Coronation of Mary, and in the

vault of the main nave, scenes of the creation of the world are depicted. In the side vaults of the southern nave, the months January to July are shown, and in the northern nave, the months August to December. Each month represents a typical activity for that time of year. The most famous motif in the church is the "Dance of Death," which shows the procession of different people from society at the time. Each person holds the hand of a skeleton, and they walk together toward their death. The motif comes from the time of the plague and symbolizes that everyone, regardless of their social position, will die.

The Karst Border:

The Holy Trinity Church in Hrastovlje is located in a special region called the Karst Border. This region lies between the Mediterranean and the continental zone and marks the end of the coastal zone and the beginning of the Slovenian hinterland. The underground of the Karst region consists of limestone, which was formed by water and weathering over millions of years. This led to the development of karst springs and rivers, which often run underground. The vegetation in this region is diverse, as typical Mediterranean plant species such as olive trees, grapevines, fig trees, and cypresses grow here, along with low shrubs and hardy grasses. The climate in this region is Mediterranean, with warm and dry summers and mild, wet winters. Furthermore, this region has low precipitation, which is typical for karst regions. Agriculture focuses on wine, olive oil, and figs.

Trieste:



Trieste is a border city, with both Central European and Mediterranean influences. This is a result of Trieste's diverse past. In Roman times, it was a colony (established in 177 B.C.). By the 3d century, barbarian invasions had passed through, and after that, Trieste was under the control of the Lombards (Langobardi). At that time, it was a very important city because of its port.
In 1382, after strong tensions with the Venetian Republic, Trieste was ruled by the Habsburg's. Later, from 1809 to 1813, it briefly

fell under Napoleon's Illyrian provinces, only for the Austrians to reclaim it. While under Austrian control, Trieste became the most important port city in the Austrian Empire, even ranking as the second most important city after Vienna.

Trieste has always been a multicultural city. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was also the second city with the highest number of Slovenes, right after Ljubljana. Nearly the entire city was populated by Slovenes. Before World War I, national tensions began to rise, and in Trieste, due to the high number of Slovenes, Italians started to think that Austria was favouring the Slovenes over them. Under the Italian nationalists, led by Wilhelm Oberdank, the tensions began to escalate.

After World War I, Italy gained control over Trieste as a reward for joining the Allies. Trieste, however, became a marginal Italian port, and the Slovenian population faced persecution and forced Italianization (changes to names, factory names, language restrictions, Italian-only schools, etc.). These tensions escalated dramatically with the start of World War II, as Slovenes rebelled against the treatment they had endured after Austrian rule ended.

During and after World War II, multiple groups claimed Trieste as their own (Italians, Slovenes, and others). There was a strong fascist, and later Nazi, collaboration unit in Trieste, which led to the establishment of a concentration camp with a crematorium at the Risiera di San Sabba (a former rice factory). Here, thousands of Slovenes and Jewish people were killed (more than 5,000) or sent to other camps.

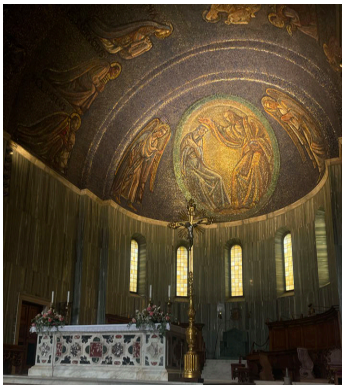
In May 1945, Yugoslav partisans took Trieste from the Germans, but by 1954/57, the entire area ultimately became part of Italy — a decision with which many did not agree to. Today, however, the past has largely been left behind.

Overview of San Giusto Martire:

The cathedral San Giusto Martire is one of the most important buildings and symbols of the city. The cathedral we can see today was build in the 14. Century and got build from two old churches called Santa Maria and San Giusto. In the old monument has elements of the roman and gothic architecture and is typical for the age and region of the Trieste. Furthermore noticeable is the massiv tower of the church which is not only architectonic, also historic very important.

Architecture and art:

The cathedral is known for its roman gothic style and the decoration of the apse with mosaic. The mosaics that date back to the 12th and 13th century show the holy and religious events in golden and blue colours. Additionally the byzantine style of the mosaics expresses the cultural influence of severe kingdoms. Important to add is the statue of the holy San Giusto, who is the patron saints of the city and is the buildings main meaning.



Historial importance:

The cathedral San Giusto Martire is not only a holy place but also a symbol for the multi cultural history of Trieste that is caused by many folks and cultures. The constructional way of the cathedral and the artistic design show the long history and the influence of many cultures from severe kingdoms and ages.

Charlotte Coordes, Nika Jäger and Lareen Sadik

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