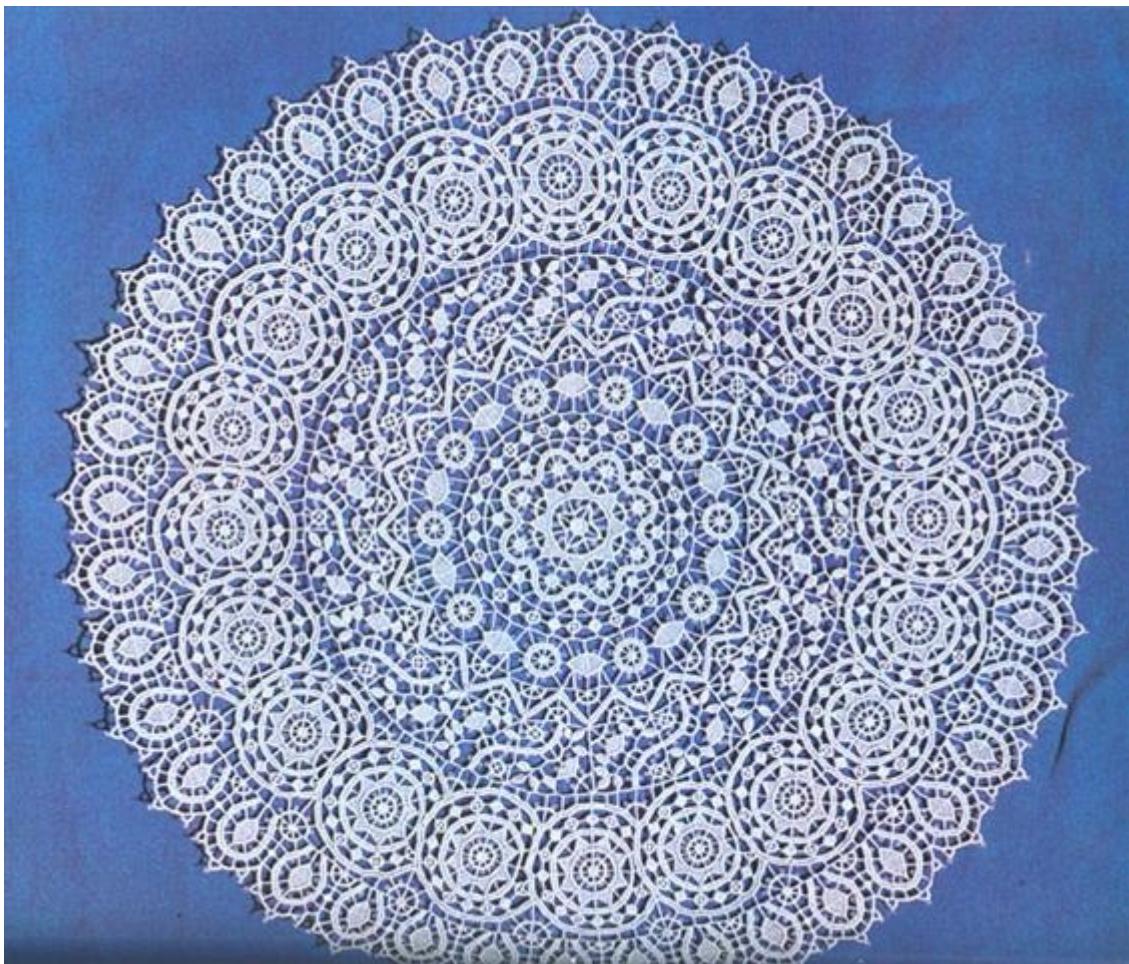


Beautiful Lace from Croatia

At least three distinct traditions of lacemaking in Croatia persist today, centred on the towns of Pag on the Adriatic, Lepoglava in northern Croatia and Hvar on the Dalmatian island of the same name.



Pag needle-point lace was originally used to make ecclesiastical garments, tablecloths and ornaments for clothing. The process involves embellishing a spider web pattern with geometrical motifs and is transmitted today by older women who offer year-long courses. Lace-makers of Pag did their teg (work) without any drawings. Each woman used works from her mother and grandmothers as examples, each adding a personal touch, something unique and special. Each lace piece is a symbol of the anonymous, modest and self-sacrificing life of its maker.

In 1939 Pag lacemakers participated at the world exhibition in New York. The Pag lace-making school existed back at the beginning of the century and the person who deserves credit for the preservation of Pag lace-making is Austrian Natalie Bruck-Auffenberg. In 1911, she wrote a book Dalmatia and its Folk Art. She searched for the lost Dubrovnik lace all along the Dalmatian coast and, visiting the islands, discovered Pag lace. She bought Pag lace for herself, for exhibitions in Paris and an Austrian museum, and for the Archduchess Maria Josephine, Otto von Habsburg's grandmother.

Only a few days after receiving the first lacy blouse from Pag, Maria Josephine arrived in the town. She was the first person to make an order to the old Pag lacemaking school. The orders from Emperor Ferdinand and the Romanian queen, Carmen Sylva, soon followed. The same lace that was prized by emperors is still made today. A new lacemaking school is led by Pag natives Neda Oroz and Urica Orlic.

Lepoglava bobbin lace is made by braiding thread wound on spindles, or bobbins; it is often used to make lace ribbons for folk costumes or is sold at village fairs. The skill of making ribbon bobbin lacework from flax fibres that the rural women from Lepoglava made for decorating their garments or for sale, resulted in the making of fine lace with different forms. An International Lace Festival in Lepoglava celebrates the art every year.

Aloe lace is made in Croatia only by Benedictine nuns in the town of Hvar. Thin, white threads are obtained from the core of fresh aloe leaves and woven into a net or other pattern on a cardboard background. The resulting pieces are a symbol of Hvar.



Each variety of lace has long been created by rural women as a source of additional income and has left a permanent mark on the culture of its region. The craft both produces an important component of traditional clothes and is itself testimony to a living cultural tradition.

Lace first appeared in Renaissance period on the Mediterranean coast and Western Europe. The difference between the lacemaking in European countries and Croatia lies in its creators. In Europe, lacemaking was in the hands of nuns, bourgeoisie and nobility, while in Croatia it was transferred from them to the hands of rural women in small villages. They have made lace for traditional clothes and furnishings.



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