



The International Trust for Croatian Monuments

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PROGRESS REPORT

August 2018

Visits to Croatia in the autumn of 2017 and in January and May/June 2018

This is a sad year for the International Trust for Croatian Monuments. Serban Cantacuzino died in February and John Julius Norwich, Viscount Norwich, in June this year. They were both our trustees since the inception of the trust in the autumn of 1991.

At the time, Serban Cantacuzino was the President of ICOMOS (UK), International Council of Monuments and Sites. I remember calling this organisation, not knowing anything about them, and speaking to Tina Murdoch, explaining that I had organised an exhibition of photographs of damage to the cultural heritage of Croatia in The Building Centre and would they, please, come and see it and help Croatia! And they did, in every way. And the Patron of ICOMOS (UK), His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, came and saw the exhibition, too. We were under the wing of ICOMOS (UK) until 1994, when by kindness of the late Matthew Wrigley, lawyer, cousin and a friend, we were established as an independent charity.

I also remember telephoning John Julius Norwich, without any recommendation from anyone, explaining to him what was happening in Croatia and inviting him to come and see the exhibition. There was even a possibility that we should become a part of the World Monuments Trust as John Julius Norwich was then the Chairman of their branch in England. The exhibition of photographs was then transferred to the Courtauld Institute of Art and there, in their foyer, with everybody coming and going, it was on view from the late autumn of 1991 for four months. This was due to the kindness and commitment of the late Dr Anthea Brook at the Witt Library at the time.

These exhibitions of photographs, sent to me by the late director of the Gallery Klovićevi Dvori (then known as "Muzejsko Galerijski Prostor"), Ante Sorić, were shown in other locations. For example, in the Museu de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, the Photographers' Gallery and the Royal Festival Hall in London, and in the Royal Institute of Scottish Architects in Edinburgh, all during 1992, with the full support of our trustees, John Julius Norwich and Serban Cantacuzino. Sir Roger de Grey, the then President of the Royal Academy of Arts, was also a trustee at this crucial period at the beginning until his premature death in 1995. Their support proved of great importance when we were organising the first recital by Ivo Pogorelich in the Royal Festival Hall in October 1992 in aid of Dubrovnik. This is when His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales wrote a very strongly worded introduction to the concert and gave us his support, too.

In his obituary to Serban Cantacuzino in the March issue of the Art Newspaper, Martin Drury quoted: "Serban Cantacuzino was a prince by birth, an architect and a gentleman by education and an Englishman by mistake". Both, Serban Cantacuzino and John Julius Norwich were, on top of all the other qualities that they had, lovely people to know and great fun to be with. We shall all miss them and our Trust in particular. I will never be able to express my infinite gratitude to them for being our trustees and for helping Croatia in her hour of need and beyond. However, I know that they would wish us to continue, and with the unfailing support of Peter Stormonth Darling and my sons, Henry and Johnny, I will continue to do so.

The obituaries of Serban Cantacuzino and John Julius Norwich can both be found on our website, www.croatianmonuments.org.

While in Zagreb in the autumn of last year, my attention was drawn to a rare institution in Croatia, a private museum, dedicated to the memory of August Šenoa, 1838 -1881, a premier 19th century Croatian Romantic writer. I wrote fully about this museum in the last year's issue of THE BRIDGE, the annual publication of the

Croatian Catholic Mission in London. This article can also be found on our website. The Museum needed financial help for different projects. On this occasion, I was appealing only to the Croatian community living in this country, or in other parts of the world, and not to our British supporters as the legacy of this writer, on whose novels we have all grown up, fully deserves their help. I have succeeded to some extent, with the generosity of Croatian friends living in England who have always supported us.

Some funding we have raised will go towards roof repairs, always a priority, in the hope that the majority will come from sources in Croatia. An embroidered screen, from the studio of Branko Šenoa, 1879 -1939, the writer's talented second son, a painter, has been restored and conserved with a particular donation. I am especially happy that through the Museum of August Šenoa I came in contact with the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and their Conservation Department. In the 1930s Branko Šenoa painted a mural in his studio which needs to be consolidated and conserved. This autumn the Academy is organising a workshop about conservation of wall paintings, with two Italian specialists coming to Zagreb. We are helping them towards the costs of this workshop. These specialists will also visit the Museum and give their advice. In the following academic year, 2019/20, Neva Pološki, who is in charge of this project, and her students will begin work on the mural by Branko Šenoa. This will be a very important experience for the students, at minimal cost, to which we shall possibly make another contribution.

On similar basis, with students and their teachers from the Conservation Department of the Arts Academy in Zagreb, just covering the basic costs, a 19th century painting of St Anthony of Padova will be restored, as well as a 17th century polychrome wood sculpture of Madonna and Child. Both these works of art were in the collection of August Šenoa.

With another member of the Academy, Zvezdana Jembrih, I visited the chapel of St James (Sveti Jakov) in Očura, near Radoboj, the largest Gothic chapel in Zagorje, the undulating hills behind Zagreb. This chapel has had a very unhappy history since it was built in the late 14th century, beginning with Turkish invasions in the 15th century. In the 18th century, as new ideas and aspirations spread, it acquired a rich Baroque interior. In time, the chapel gradually deteriorated and finally, in 1944, it was bombed and the roof collapsed. St James's chapel has always been a pilgrimage church, on one of the Roman routes, and this continues to this day. Twice a year, on Easter Monday and on the day of St James, 25th July, fairs and processions are held, even sometimes a mass in the chapel. It has remained a place of devotion for people living in its vicinity.

During the last 70 years much has been done to restore the structural damage and to return the church to a place of homage. As there was no roof for an extended period, the ingress of rain washed down the walls and revealed the original Gothic frescos which had been painted all around the church. Very little of those remain today. Of the rich Baroque interior, photographed by Gjuro Szabo, 1875 - 1943, an eminent historian and museologist, in about 1910, very little remains either. All together, around 13 polychrome wooden sculptures of saints, some already restored and waiting in storage in the diocesan museum of the Cathedral of Zagreb, and some still under conservation with students of the Arts Academy in Zagreb, remain today.

In the mid 1950s Ljubo Karaman, another eminent Croatian art historian, rescued a polychrome wooden sculpture of Madonna and Child, the original, Gothic sculpture, which survived in the church throughout centuries, and since then in the collection of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb. As it is hoped that, with the dedication of the people concerned, this church will one day be fully restored, we are contemplating having a replica of this Madonna carved by one of the students of the Academy to be placed in its original position in the church. Although the titular of the church since the 18th century has been St James, the church has also had dedications to the Mother of Christ and this sculpture is an important artefact of veneration.

In the Domitrović Tower next to the Cathedral, named after Petar Domitrović, bishop of Zagreb from 1613 to 1629, I saw an exhibition entitled, Master of Zadobarje, a small place in the vicinity of Karlovac, wall paintings from the church of St Anthony of the Desert dating to about 1539 and discovered in 2005. There is a whole chain of small churches with Gothic style wall paintings in this part of Croatia attributed to this master and a group of so called "Croatian wall painters". In the Domitrović tower they plan to hold an exhibition, "SOS FOR SAINTS", with the intention of drawing attention to the condition of sculptures still remaining from the church of St James in Očura.

In October 2017 several conservators from Zagreb and Split came to London to attend the "GELS IN CONSERVATION" conference held at the Tate. The Trust helped them financially to do so and I had a great pleasure taking them to the conservation departments of the National Gallery, the City & Guilds of London Art School and to the studio of Valentine Walsh. They found these visits inspiring, making new friends and learning on the run.

We continue to support the International Conservation Workshop on the island of Lopud, with the kind help of the Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Settlement. The workshop in Komiža, on the island of Vis, about which I wrote in my last year's report, took place again at the beginning of June. As last year, two teachers from the Academy of Arts in Split and their students spent a week working in the church of St Nicholas, their expenses covered by the Ministry of Culture and the local community. We still hope that this workshop will one day develop into an international project.

We continue to make subscriptions to journals and institutions for scholars in Croatia and to help them in their research. The Linen Project, although very much reduced in scale, is surviving. Our beautiful, hand woven linen towels are still available from Postcard Teas, the Livingston Studio and from me at home. This year, we have made another contribution towards publishing costs of a book, "THE CONSERVATION OF SCULPTURE PARKS", result of an international conference held in Sisak in 2015, the year designated as the European Industrial and Technical Heritage Year. Copies from www.archetype.co.uk.

In January this year, a very popular and well attended exhibition of paintings by Vlaho Bukovac, 1855 – 1922, covering his Parisian and English periods, 1877 – 1893, was held in Klovićevi Dvori, Zagreb, with two important loans from England, the portrait of Samson Fox from the Mercer Art Gallery in Harrogate and of Laura LeDoux from the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. Alex Kidson and I were among the contributors to the catalogue. Two more exhibitions, in 2019 and 2020, will be dedicated to this important Croatian painter. With the help of Alex Kidson and many other English friends, including the press, we have tried hard to find the untraced paintings by Vlaho Bukovac in this country. Hope springs eternal! Please, see our website.

In February this year, on a very cold night, Maestro Stefan Warzycki gave a most warmly received piano recital in the enchanting Leighton House Museum with works for the left hand only. The recital was attended by HE Mr Igor Pokaz, the Croatian Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

There were conferences and workshops held in Split during the past year, which have connections with our Trust. The RECH4 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, Retouching of Cultural Heritage, with Sandra Sustić, Lana Kekez and Sagita Mirjam Sunara involved in the organisation, and "THE TRAINING OF CONSERVATORS: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW", organised by Sagita Mirjam Sunara.

In June this year, an exhibition entitled, LORENZO LOTTO PORTRAITS, opened at the Prado Museum in Madrid. The portrait of Bishop Tomo Nigris, 1527, from the Franciscan Friary of St Anthony in Poljud, Split, is included. As a footnote to this painting, the curators of the exhibition found the notes by Sir Timothy Clifford in one of his chapters in our book, CROATIA, ASPECTS OF ART, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, published by Frances Lincoln in 2009, extremely useful. The exhibition transfers to the National Gallery in London in November. There are hopes that a cooperation between the Prado Museum Conservation Department and conservators in Croatia may be established in the future.

I would like to thank most sincerely all our supporters and, as ever, I would be delighted to give more information on any of the subjects touched upon in this report.

