



# The International Trust for Croatian Monuments

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## PROGRESS REPORT

August 2019

Visits to Croatia in the autumn of 2018 and May/June 2019

The International Trust for Croatian Monuments now has a new Trustee, Sir Timothy Clifford. Sir Timothy's knowledge and experience will greatly help our efforts to preserve the artistic heritage of Croatia. To recall, Sir Timothy was one of the authors who kindly took part in writing chapters in the book, *CROATIA: ASPECTS OF ART, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE*, published by Frances Lincoln in 2009. Two editions of this book, made possible through generous sponsorship of INA Industrija nafte d.d. and JADRANSKI NAFTAOVOD, Joint Stock Co. (JANAF), have been sold out and are no longer available. I thank Sir Timothy now for joining our Trustees and for his support all along.

Due to the generosity of our Trustees and friends, the Trust holds some funds to be used in Croatia in memory of my husband, Henry, and in memory of Sherban Cantacuzino and John Julius Norwich. It will take time to decide what may be best to do in this respect. During my last visit to Croatia in May and June this year, I looked at particular possibilities. I depend on my Trustees and friends in Croatia to arrive at the best solution. My husband gave the Trust much of his time and energy, his encouragement never failed me. The same can be said of Sherban and John Julius. Their names opened all doors for me in this country and they deserve a lasting memory in Croatia.

As outlined in my report last year, we have done several things to help with the collections of the privately owned Museum AUGUST ŠENOVA in Zagreb. The legacy of this important 19<sup>th</sup> century Croatian novelist is lovingly cared for by members of his family and open to public. Last year, we started to work with the Conservation Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. This academic year, 2019/20, conservation students of the Academy will begin work on the mural painted in his studio in the 1930s by the writer's son, Branko, an artist in his own right. This follows the visit of two specialists in conservation of wall paintings from Italy who came to Zagreb last autumn and held a week's workshop. Our Trust helped to fund this workshop. The restoration of the mural by Branko Šenoa will be done at no cost, our Trust will be paying only for the conservation material needed.

Our collaboration with the Academy continues. In my report last year I wrote about the chapel of St James, in Zagorje, the hills to the north-west of Zagreb. The church, since its Gothic origins, underwent major upheavals. However, it is still, and nevertheless, a place of pilgrimage when Mass is held at particular points of the year as, for example, at Easter and St James's Day, 25th July, with processions and fairs and many worshippers coming from the neighbouring villages. A student from the Academy will replicate the wooden polychrome figure of the Gothic "Madonna and Child", rescued from the church in the 1950s and since on show at the Museum of Arts and Crafts. This will give the church and the people who go there a better alternative to what they have had so far, a poor plastic statue.

We are pleased to be able to make a contribution towards this project. It will be in memory of Dr Anthea Brook, a devoted supporter of the Trust, helped by donations collected for this purpose. It will also give the student, Luka Krešimir Stipičić, a great opportunity to carve a copy of this important piece of Gothic sculpture.

With a generous and kind annual donation from The Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Settlement we continue to support the International Conservation Workshop on the island of Lopud about which I have written several times in my past reviews. There has been an exciting discovery there. The life-size sculpture of the crucified Christ in the church of Gospa od Šunja, on which the conservators have worked for some time, may be, apart from Spain, quite unique in Europe. The sculpture has always posed a question, being very light, in spite of its size. Professor Hans Portsteffen, of the Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences, and the conservators working with him, in collaboration with the Mexican art historian, Pablo F. Amador, have now established that the sculpture is made of maize stalks, a technique used exclusively in the Mexican art of the 16<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the inhabitants of the island of Lopud have, throughout centuries, been sailors and have always brought home votive offerings for their churches, it is easily explained. There is documentary evidence which supports this theory. Professor Portsteffen and his collaborators have written an extensive piece about their findings in “Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung”, Vol.2/2018. We hope that their findings will be published also in this country and then perhaps be followed by an illustrated talk, which would bring this interesting discovery to a wider audience.

This year there will be 17 students and five teachers from the Universities of Antwerp, Brussels, Dubrovnik and Cologne working on Lopud for two weeks, end August /beginning September.

The Conservation Workshop in Komiza, island of Vis, led by members of the Arts Academy at Split, was held in the fortress-church of St Nicholas for the third consecutive year this June. The church holds a fine collection of historic textiles, among others. Some years ago, with a generous donation from the Headley Trust, we bought for them a conservation chest for the safe keeping of these precious vestments. They tell me that they would need another chest, in order to preserve their collection safely. I hope that we shall be able to do so, funds permitting. I would suggest to anyone going to the island of Vis to go and see the church of St Nicholas and ask for the priest, Don Ivica Huljev, who would be delighted to show their collection and the work done so far.

In December 2018 Fra Ljubo Šimunović, who leads the Croatian Catholic Mission in this country, kindly published in his annual journal THE BRIDGE/MOST my article about the library of the friary of St Lawrence in Šibenik. This article is on our website, [www.croatianmonuments.org](http://www.croatianmonuments.org). In the June issue of this year, the International Institute of Conservation reprinted the article in their journal, using different photographs. I take this opportunity to thank the Institute for giving this subject more publicity. <https://www.iiconservation.org/publications/nic> .

In the meantime, we bought for the Franciscans in Šibenik another de-humidifier, so essential for the safekeeping of books.

Earlier in the year the Franciscan friary of St Anthony at Poljud at Split asked for a secure cupboard for some of their valuable library holdings. I am glad that we were able to do that. In May this year I visited their friary and was happy to see the portrait of Bishop Tomo Nigris by Lorenzo Lotto again. As you may recall, this portrait was lent to the exhibition “Lorenzo Lotto Portraits”, held at the Prado in Madrid last summer and at the National Gallery in London this year. Experts from the National Gallery in London told us that there was not a single painting at the National Gallery in its original frame dating from that period, 1527, which makes this painting rather special. In 2020 this friary will be celebrating 570 years since its foundation.

Also in February this year the Trust made a contribution towards publishing costs of an English edition of “Historiography of Croatia”. Written by professors Nikola Glamuzina of the University of Split and Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš of the University of Zagreb, the book gives much information, which is sorely needed, to anyone who is interested in the development of Croatia from the beginnings to the present day.

In May I visited briefly again Poljice, the beautiful hinterland of Split, and looked at the Museum of Poljice and the church of St Cyprian in the small village of Gata. The Museum needs help, vitrines or cupboards to display their holdings safely. In the 1960s the incumbent of St Cyprian decided to remove the valuable Baroque altar. A modern altar was installed. The priest today would like to return the original, very beautiful altar to the church. Luckily, the marble mensa still exists and is in good condition in spite of the passage of years. The rest is in bits and pieces, but stored, and could be re-assembled. This may be done by a local stone

conservator, an ex-student of the Academy in Split, and our Trust would like to help them do this, if we possibly can. By the ancient church of St Cyprian in Gata there is a mighty, old oak tree, with all the symbolism that a sacred oak tree conveys.

We continue to pay subscriptions to journals and memberships to institutions of excellence in this country on behalf of individuals and institutions in Croatia. We support art historians to attend and present papers at conferences. We also help scholars from Croatia to attend courses abroad and thus acquire further and up-to-date knowledge in their field of study. This year, several scholars/specialists will have our support -

In June, Martina Bagatin, from the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, attended The Spring School, "Recent Advances in Characterising and and Preserving Photographs", at the Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation, in Paris.

In September, Dr Jasminka Najcer Sabljak, from the University of Osijek, who specialises in histories of collections, will be our Attingham Trust Scholar attending their "Royal Collections Studies Course".

Also in September, three students of conservation/restoration from the University of Dubrovnik will attend an ICOM-CC Conference, "Recent Advances in Glass and Ceramics Conservation", at the British Museum.

In October, Marija Kalmeta, from the Moderna Galerija in Zagreb, will attend a course, "Retouching Modern and Contemporary Painted Surfaces", at Tate Britain.

By kindness of friends, a collection of The BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, some 11 boxes, dating from the 1980s to about 2014, has been sent to the Art Historical Institute in Zagreb. I am sure that this will be a welcome gift to many art historians in Croatia and I am most grateful to our English friends here who have made it possible.

Our hand-woven linen towels are still available at POSTCARD TEAS and LIVINGSTONE STUDIO. I thank Tim D'Offay and Inge Corsden very much for their generous support.

As always, our sincere thanks to all who have supported our work in Croatia for so many years. I would be delighted to give more information on any point raised in this report.



Left:  
Mr and Mrs May with Gabriele Finaldi, Director of the National Gallery, at the opening of the "Lorenzo Lotto Portraits" exhibition, London, January 2019.

The marble mensa of the rejected altar from the church of St. Cyprian.

Zvezdana Jembrih and her conservation students on the scaffolding of the Zagreb Cathedral.

Middle:

The rescue of the Gothic "Madonna and Child" from the church of St James in the 1950s.

Franciscan Friary, Poljud, Split. Fra Bernardin Škunca with Radoslav Buzančić and the portrait of Bishop Tomo Nigris.

Right:

Conservation students from the Arts Academy, Zagreb, working on the mural by Branko Šenoa, in the Museum August Šenoa.

An annotated copy of a book from the library of the Renaissance poet and humanist Marko Marulić, a Franciscan friar, in the collection of the Franciscan Friary at Poljud in Split. The drawing shows the exact positioning of bells in the bell-tower of the Split Cathedral.

King Henry VIII had a book by Marulić in his library, which he himself annotated. The book is in the British Library today.

