



The International Trust for Croatian Monuments

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PROGRESS REPORT 2021

MARKING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR TRUST

August 2021

This year our Trust, The International Trust for Croatian Monuments, reaches a significant milestone, 30 years since its foundation in 1991. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you, many individuals, charitable foundations, journalists and publishers, for your moral and financial support throughout these years, without which we would have ceased to function long ago. And there is still work to be done.

Sadly, I have not travelled to Croatia, or anywhere else, since March 2020. We are learning to cope, the best we can, always hoping and praying. I fervently hope that none of our friends have been affected, at least not to a significant degree.

Since my last visit to **Zagreb**, early in March 2020 and as reported in my last year's review, a few days after my departure Zagreb was struck by a devastating earthquake, since which it has still not recovered. Many individuals are affected, museums and galleries, too. In late December 2020, the country east of Zagreb, known as Banovina, with Sisak and Petrinja its main towns, suffered a series of earthquakes which still persist and which have brought, as one consequence, the appearance of deep holes at different locations. I know that much is going on to try to come to the root of this problem. The human suffering following these earthquakes is hard to describe.

Again, we were able to offer quick "First Aid" to the Town Library of Petrinja with a supply of conservation material and boxes, in cooperation with the conservation firm "Crescat". Later on, with a kind donation from The Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Settlement, we sent to the Library more conservation material and a much needed cabinet for preservation of important documents. It was the voluntary effort of the Croatian Group of the International Institute of Conservation who, with their swift action, assured prompt help to the Library in Petrinja. My sincere thanks to THE ART NEWSPAPER for reporting these new earthquakes in their February 2021 issue and to the International Institute of Conservation for their reports in THE NEWS IN CONSERVATION.

In this region of Croatia 26 parish churches suffered great damage. The Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Town Museum in Sisak were affected too. Some years ago, with kind donations from the Headley Trust and the Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Foundation, we helped the Town Museum in Sisak to equip their conservation workshop.

The Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts was one of the institutions in Zagreb which was gravely affected by the earthquake in March 2020. This is the only "Museum of Casts" in Croatia and it holds a valuable collection of museum objects from ancient sculpture to the present day. From the Archaic Greek to Roman times, the sculptures came from museums in Europe, Rome, Naples, Paris, Munich, Berlin, London, Florence, cast in well-known European workshops and foundries during the 19th century. More than three hundred and fifty holdings of their unique plaster models of Croatian sculpture and other plaster casts were damaged or destroyed. The structure of the building was also affected. With donations from two personal friends and, again, from The Sandy and Zorica Glen Charitable Settlement, our Trust is now helping to restore four of their antique plaster casts. They are:

- 1) The chancel Screen of the church of St Martin, Split, the original dating to the 11th century.
- 2) The portrait bust of Pericles

- 3) The portrait bust of the boy Drusus Caesar
- 4) Antique sarcophagus with representation of Centauromachy from Salona

Both the portrait of Drusus Caesar and the antique sarcophagus are at the time of writing at an exhibition *The Sculpture of Antique Salona from the holdings of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts* held at the Glyptothek until the end of July. If anyone wanted to read a fuller report about the restoration of these pieces of sculpture at the Glyptothek, please, let me know and I will send you a report from the curator of the Gallery, Magdalena Getaldić.

I am glad to be able to report that in **SPLIT**, in spite of the pandemic and difficulties that it has brought, the project to establish a Memorial Room at the Franciscan Friary at Poljud, continues as planned. This is in memory of our past trustees, Sherban Cantacuzino, John Julius Norwich, Peter Stormonth Darling and my late husband, Henry. It was Peter's idea and his initial donation for this project, with other contributions later, has enabled us to do so. A room in the Friary has been completely re-done and cabinets and conservation chests obtained, including up-to-date security equipment. This room will house the most valuable documents and archive material, works of art on paper, books up to the end of the 16th century, and be a "Studiolo" for researchers, but also open to the public. We have restored several pieces of antique furniture belonging to the Friary which will be in use in this room. With paintings on the walls, including a copy of the Lorenzo Lotto portrait of bishop Toma Nigris, the original kept in a secure place, with windows overlooking the lovely cloister, this will be a pleasant and comfortable place to work in. Marin Barišić, one of our first ex-students who came for further training in stone masonry to this country, has carved a beautiful plaque with all names recorded. The task to move the collections into these new surroundings still remains to be done and the custodian of the friary, Fra Anselmo Stulić, will be helped in this important process by the architect, Vanja Kovačić, Conservation Department of the Ministry of Culture at Split, and the art historian, Radoslav Tomić, who have been crucial to the whole project since its inception.

In **Split**, we have also been able to offer help to the Archbishop's Archives by supplying them with archival boxes and maps for better preservation of their parish books. With our donation, 195 parish books, so important for the history of each of those parishes, are now preserved, each book thicker than 1cm is now in its own archival box and 64 books of larger format deposited in archival maps. In their collection they hold 382 parish books and are continuing to collect others from the remaining parishes. Don Slavko Kovačić and Dr Ivan Balta, who run the Archives, hope and would be grateful for more financial aid which would enable them to protect in the same way all the documents they hold and thus assure their safe survival for the future. As reported by Don Slavko and Dr Balta, these documents are not only of local, but also of national importance.

In **Zagreb**, as they inform me, the carving of the replica of a Gothic "Madonna and Child" is finished and the sculpture is now undergoing its second phase, the polychromy, by Marko Rizvić, another post-graduate student at the Academy of Arts, Conservation Department, in Zagreb. I look forward to the day when this fully copied sculpture will be taken to its home of origin, the pilgrimage church of St James in Očura, Zagorje, the hills behind Zagreb, from which the original sculpture was rescued in the late 1940s. The pilgrims who gather there on several occasions during the year will be glad to have their "Madonna and Child" in their midsts again.

I have often thought about a story, read in the APOLLO Magazine, about a group of tourists visiting the island of Melos and arriving at a spot where a notice read: "The fragments of the sculpture of Venus de Milo were found here. The sculpture is now in the Louvre Museum, Paris". Their disappointment was palpable. Would it not be good if the Louvre Museum had a copy made of this beautiful sculpture and installed it in this very spot, to the delight of the visitors and great benefit to the local economy?

In some of my previous reports, including 2019, I mentioned the small Poljice Museum in Gata, a village in the hinterland of Split, once part of the independent Republic of Poljice. The Museum, created by the local community, does need help and, with the financial contribution of one of our supporters, we are now restoring several items from their textile collection. Further help is needed to stabilise the conditions in the building.

In March this year, I was alerted by Flora Turner, who keeps a keen eye on auctions for anything Croatian, that a document, relating to the scientist, astronomer, polymath, priest and a Fellow of the Royal Society, Roger Joseph Boscovich, 1711 – 1787, was offered at Chiswick Auctions. It may be

recalled that in 2011 the Trust organised an exhibition at the Royal Society marking the 300th anniversary of the birth of Boscovich and the 250th anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Society. The exhibition was curated by the Royal Society and Dr Ivica Martinović. The document gave a free pass to Boscovich to travel to England with Conde de Fuentes, Spanish ambassador to England, as his chaplain in 1760. This is the year when Boscovich came to England, stayed here for six months and visited all the important personalities and scientists of the day. In January 1761, Boscovich was elected a Member of the Royal Society together with Sir Joshua Reynolds. During his stay in England, he was painted by Robert Edge Pine. This portrait has been alluding us! The late Dr Dušan Ražem in Zagreb, a scientist from the Rudjer Bosković Institute, on the internet and I here, spent much time trying to trace this portrait, so far with no success. The document will go to one of the Bosković Collections in Zagreb, in memory of Dr Dušan Ražem and as a gift from our Trust.

Earlier this year, I was contacted by the team of Monty Don, the world-famous gardener. They wanted to film in the Arboretum in Trsteno. One of the very first donations from our Trust, from His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, went to this Arboretum, to restore their beautiful “Gloriette”, overlooking the sea. As far as I know, the filming took place, also in other locations in Croatia, and I hope that one day this will be presented on TV here.

I would like to give my thanks here to our trustee Anna Somers Cocks OBE for writing an article on the web pages of the July issue of The Art Newspaper about an exhibition in Split, “The Figure of St Jerome and Renaissance Culture in Dalmatia”, which was held at the Museum of Croatian Archeological Monuments earlier in the summer. The full text of Anna's article can be found on our website, www.croatianmonuments.org. On our website you can also read an article about an exhibition on Gustav Klimt in Rijeka, published on the web pages of the June issue of the Apollo Magazine and written by Lea Vitezić.

Good news from **Dubrovnik**. Dr Fra Stipe Nosić, tells me that with their savings, they have been able to rehabilitate a house in their garden, known as “Voštarnica”, “Chandlery”, “wax workshop”, where candles and such like were made. This building has been lying in ruins for the last four decades. Now they have six extra bedrooms on the ground floor and a large room on the first floor, with wonderful views of Dubrovnik. Their garden is renown for its excellent produce including grapes, some of which we now grow in our garden in Yorkshire.

I am extremely sad to have to report that one of our faithful supporters, Liliana El-Minyavi, died in June this year. Liliana always encouraged me in my work and made regular contributions. I will treasure her memory. I feel deeply sorry for her son and daughter, Ivan and Yasmin, and for her family in Croatia.

The Trust continues to support scholars in their work. One of them, on hold from last year, will be attending the Attingham Trust Course, “The Historic Houses of Ireland”, in September this year. We continue to subscribe scholars to academic journals and encourage them to join groups and societies which may be of advantage to them. With the same view in mind, we obtain books for them.

The Linen Project, however small, continues. The Postcard Teas and Livingstone Studio still sell our towels, to the delight of our weaver, Nevenka Radočaj, who spends much time teaching youngsters to weave and participates at various fairs, demonstrating the art of weaving to public at large.

One more piece of good news. Dr Ana Šverko, from the “Cvito Fisković” Institute of Art History in Split, had an article published in the June issue of the Burlington Magazine. Entitled, “Clérisseau's journey to Dalmatia: a newly attributed collection of drawings”, this is, to my knowledge, the first time that a scholar from Croatia has been published in this prestigious and learned journal.

As always, I would be delighted to give more information on any of the subjects mentioned in this report.