

Go-ahead for Canova Monument: Conservation project to begin

EAR FRIEND AND SUPPORTER, It is a sunny December morning in Calcutta and I am about to enter St Paul's Anglican cathedral, a fine early Victorian Gothic building with a west window by Edward Burne Jones and an impressive colony of sparrows living in the rafters of its nave. An email flashes up on my phone from the Venice in Peril office in far-off London, announcing that a substantial anonymous bequest has been received, completely out of the blue. Light of heart, I mount the steps muttering the opening line of an old hymn, 'God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform', and, once inside, send fervent thanks in the general direction of the sparrows.

This astonishingly generous legacy enables us to give the go-ahead to the Soprintendenza, Venice's art and architecture conservation authority, so that the restoration of the monument to Antonio Canova in the basilica of the Frari can finally begin. The Soprintendenza will provide project design and direction services to UNESCO, which, through the UNESCO-Private Committees Programme, plays a key role in running the tendering process and the contract, alongside Venice in Peril. It is five years since we adopted this project. Now and then we have experienced our 'Can we afford

it or are we mad?' moments, but the gifts, both large or small, have continued to arrive and we have been heartened, particularly during the past year, by an increasing surge of goodwill towards us among lovers of Venice and all things Venetian, both in Britain and abroad.

Our latest bequest is an outstanding example of this humane and liberal appreciation, ensuring that Venice in Peril sustains its important work on the city's behalf. It does not, however, quite take us to our original fundraising target and we are hoping to raise the final £50,000 this year. You can choose, if you like, to adopt one of the monument's components - an allegorical statue (the Sleeping Genius, for instance, needs a spot of loving care), the lettering of the inscription or the railing around the pyramid. Art Pursuits Abroad has started the ball rolling by adopting the winged lion. Whatever you offer will be hugely valued by us, by admirers of Canova, by art-lovers throughout the world and, most significant of all, by the Venice you have helped to keep in being. We warmly thank everyone who has given to the project so far.

JONATHAN KEATES
Chairman of Venice in Peril Fund

We would also like to to a longstanding Friend of the Fundoth the 2013 Summer Newslette

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE FUND'S ACT

Spring Events 2014

26 FEBRUARY

Premio Venezia piano recital and reception by kind invitation of Bob and Elisabeth Boas at 22 Mansfield Street, London W1. Introducing Giulia Rossini, winner of La Fenice piano competition. Drinks at 7, concert at 7.30 and reception from 8.30pm. \pounds 50 (to include \pounds 25 donation to Venice in Peril Fund).

10 MARCH

Lecture: Jon Whiteley, Honorary Curator in the Department of Western Art, Ashmolean Museum, 'Giorgione: The Great Unknown', Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, WC1. Doors open 6.30 lecture begins at 7pm. \pounds 15 for members \pounds 18 for non-members.

31 MARCH

Lecture and Reception: Professor Charles Hope, former Director of the Warburg Institute, 'Patronage and Piety: the Scuole of Venice' at the Vintners Hall, London EC4.

Doors open at 6.30, lecture begins at 7pm with reception afterwards.

£75 (to include a £50 donation to Venice in Peril Fund).

Tickets available by email or online – see details on back of newsletter.

The Venice in Peril Fund would like to thank all those who have contributed to the Canova Monument Appeal, including:

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hank Bernard Gillman, d, for his generosity in sponsoring r and this Spring 2014 Newsletter.

Conservation at the Abbey of S. Giorgio Maggiore: City and Guilds of London Art School student bursary

ATARINA RAMALHO was awarded the 2013 Venice in Peril Fund bursary towards living expenses when she won a 10-week Internship at the Abbey of S. Giorgio Maggiore in Venice as an Outstanding Conservation Student following her graduation from the City and Guilds of London Art School. She had specialised in sculpture conservation, working on plaster casts and stonework.

The Abbey, which last year hosted another City and Guilds student, Maxwell Malden, gave Catarina two practical projects: the first one involved an assessment of the choir stalls to map the extent of woodworm damage, and the other involved remedial work on an intriguing 14th-century funerary sculpture of a Venetian naval hero, Capitano Pietro Civran, who is said to have cut the chains securing the gates of Zara (present-day Zadar in Croatia) to win back the city, after its citizens tried to throw in their

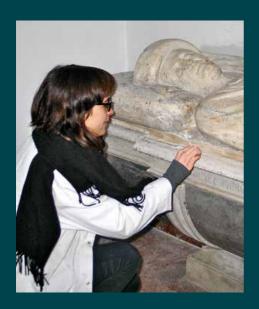
lot with King Ludovic of Hungary. It seems that this effigy was removed from its position in the old church and given a new blue marble catafalque in the 17th century, perhaps when Longhena was working there. The inscription probably dates from the 18th century, when a later member of the Civran family was Abbot.

Catarina found that the filler attaching Civran to his catafalque had crumbled, that cracks had appeared between the wall and the object and there had clearly been movement under the pillow on which the Captain's head rests. As part of her intervention she partially removed the filler to reveal about 5–8 cms more of the effigy than had previously been visible, before cleaning the whole sculpture and applying new conservation grade filler.

John Millerchip, Trustee in Venice, was able to help Catarina access laboratories to analyse the materials.

While at S. Giorgio, she also put together a network of conservators to look at future assessments and strategy. Catarina, who initially studied painting conservation in Portugal says, 'my interest in the different techniques, ethics and approaches used by different groups and companies, as well as my thirst for greater knowledge has led me to seek higher education in other countries'.

The bursary was funded by a Venice in Peril Fund trustee.



Catarina with the effigy of the 14th-century Venetian naval hero Capitano Pietro Civran after completing remedial work.

Protestant Cemetery on San Michele: A conservation plan for the Reparto Evangelico

A NEW CHARITABLE FOUNDATION has been set up to fund the conservation and management of the quietly atmospheric Protestant Cemetery in Venice. Among those buried in the Reparto Evangelico, as it is known, are Ezra Pound, the Nobel prize winner Joseph Brodsky and the founder of the Venice in Peril Fund, Sir Ashley Clarke, as well as many others known perhaps only to their descendants.

The walled Reparto adjoins the much larger Catholic cemetery on the island of San Michele just to the north of the Fondamenta Nuove. The foundation, to be known by its acronym ARECSM Onlus (arecsm@gmail.com), will enable the three Protestant communities, Lutheran, Waldensian (Methodist) and Anglican, to work together with the Comune of Venice and the Superintendency to address conservation problems and formulate a plan for the future. Archival, legal and conservation research has also been commissioned. The main problems relate to broken tombstones, caused probably by subsidence when the land was reclaimed and by inappropriate planting.

In 1684 the first Protestant cemetery was founded on the Lido, where Consul Joseph Smith and John Murray were buried in the 18th century and where the Venice in Peril Fund



Sir Ashley Clarke's tombstone



Plan of San Michele showing the Reparto Evangelico

contributed to a cleaning and consolidation programme in 1994–95. In 1719 the German Lutherans established a cemetery on an island next to San Michele called San Cristoforo della Pace. It subsequently became the new civic cemetery in 1813 after Napoleon ended the Venetian practice of burial in confraternity churches.

During the 19th century the cemetery was extended by piecemeal reclamation projects including that to join San Cristoforo to San Michele. In 1877–80 the Reparto Evangelico, along with a number of the monuments and tombstones, moved to its current site. Its vaulted gateway on to the Lagoon now leads to a piece of reclaimed land for which David Chipperfield is designing a further extension to the cemetery.

Venice in Peril Fund's association with San Michele and the cemetery goes back to 1999, when it financed the €500,000 restoration of the Renaissance Cappella Emiliana, whose Istrian stone dome is clearly visible when arriving from the airport by boat. In 2003–04 the Fund, along with 6 other committees, funded a survey of the graves. In late 2013 the Fund provided €10,000 to help ARECSM reach its initial fundraising target of €50,000.

Winged Figure with Elephant: Stonework conservation

SARAH QUILL

N THE THIRD COURTYARD of the Procuratie Nuove, Piazza San Marco, facing a staircase leading to the apartments of the ex-Palazzo Reale, an allegorical stone sculpture of a winged female figure with a small elephant can be seen. After years of exposure to the elements, both figures are now covered with a mantle of mossy green algae. Following a request from the Venetian authorities, Venice in Peril has agreed to raise funds for its treatment and conservation, at a cost of about £10,000.

The provenance of this appealing work, believed to be of the 17th century, is a mystery, because no records have yet been found to indicate how long it has been installed there. Nor is it listed in the catalogue of sculptures



from the Correr collection (at the Fondaco dei Turchi from 1887 and moved to the Archaeological Museum, Piazza San Marco, in 1922). Is it the work of a Venetian sculptor, or might it originate from another Italian city? Theories differ as to its meaning. John Julius Norwich has suggested that it might represent one of the Four Continents, raising speculation as to whether similar sculptures of the other three 'corners of the globe' might be found.

I believe that the female figure represents Vittoria, winged Roman goddess of Victory (Nike in Greek mythology), who was sometimes portrayed with an elephant. Victory/Nike was invariably depicted with wings, and wore flowing robes and sandals.

Gisbert Cuper's *De elephantis in nummis obviis exercitationes duae* (1719) illustrates (below) an Iberian coin struck in mid 1st century BC, at Osicerda, in Roman Spain, showing Caesar's elephant on one side, with Iberian script, and the winged Victory on the reverse. The elephant was viewed by the Romans as a symbol of military might; and centuries later was to hold similar associations for Napoleon. It may be significant that the sculpture has been placed near an entrance to the state apartments.

Following analysis of samples of the algae at the Misericordia laboratory in Cannaregio, the restoration work, due to begin in spring 2014, will be directed for the Superintendency by Annalisa Bristot, assisted by Lucia Bassotto.





Vasari's ceiling painting 'Faith': Thoby Kennet remembers

In our Summer 2013 Newsletter it was announced that Venice in Peril Fund had contributed to the purchase of Vasari's panel painting 'Faith'. It is is now undergoing cleaning in the Soprintendenza's Misericordia workshop in Canneregio.

CANNOT REMEMBER the time before Faith, as we called Vasari's *La Fede*, lived above the drawing room fireplace in our house in Bayswater, in London.

She arrived – an imposing presence on a 1.5 x 1 m panel – in a simple gilt frame, from Sotheby's in about 1963, having been consigned to auction from Germany. A family legacy had enabled my mother, Elizabeth Young, to buy her. So there she was – big, imposing and representing not just Faith but also appearing to embody other virtues, especially, for some reason, Justice. There is something of Justice's equanimity in her pose.

From her commanding position, she missed nothing. She supervised our birthdays, Christmases and Easters. For half a century she has been with us at our only complete annual get-together, when thirty of my family unite for Christmas lunch. Occasionally, the passing of a close relative would be solemnly observed, before Faith helped us to find something to celebrate, even in death.

In the '6os, my father Wayland and mother Liz entertained many distinguished, and notorious, characters in Faith's presence. They were mostly from the literary and political scenes and the flavour was Labour Left. Arthur Koestler – small, low forehead, lots of slicked hair, the living epitome of a man of experience – did a few seasons on our sofa. Henry Kissinger broke through and became a close family friend for a while. The revolutionary Sandinista government of Nicaragua sent their most glamorous representatives to dinner. For

years afterwards, when in search of an excuse for a toast over a meal, my father would fall back on 'The revolution!'.

As children whirling to musical bumps and, later, as teenagers, my sisters and I entertained under Faith's protective auspices. Then, as my parents aged, Faith became more important, more meaningful. Growing up there were decisions, announcements, bust-ups, comings together all conducted under Faith's protection. Did she make a difference to how we communicated with each other, and the world at large? Was she our witness? Was her presence in our lives important? I think so.

The plan for Faith had always been that we would try to reunite her with the other surviving panels from the 1560s Venetian cassettone ceiling for which she had originally been created. Last year, in my mother's 91st year and five years after my dad's death, Faith went back to Venice. She had spent her first 200 years there, followed by 200 more elsewhere in Europe, ending up in Germany before her 50 years in London.

As Faith returns to the place of her birth, we send, with the painting, all the goodwill and hope for the future that she has embodied for us: the belief that good things can happen, that there is no problem that cannot be resolved, no disagreement so great that friendship must be lost over it and that hard work brings results.

Faith has been good to our family. We hope that she is good to Venice; and that Venice, and her millions of visitors, will be good to Faith.

Now she is needed in Italy more than ever.

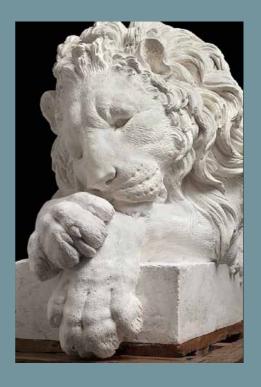
Canova's Lions: Post-restoration

ANOVA'S REZZONICO PLASTER LIONS featured, before restoration, in the Summer 2013 Newsletter, have now emerged gleaming from Daniele Angellotto's care and one is shown here, having had its internal supports and wooden pedestal repaired and renovated. The lions are now ready for the new Canova Room being prepared in the Accademia Galleries as part of the massive new statefunded €26 million reorganisation which will double the size of the museum space.

The first phase of the work was unveiled last month and the project has opened up Palladio's magnificent courtyard facade of the convent he designed for the Lateran Canons. It includes a spectacular oval staircase and former sacristy, which will be the first of a suite of rooms containing the Canova exhibits.

The gesso lions will be exhibited alongside Canova's bozzetti – clay models – whose conservation was funded by Venice in Peril in 2012. The Accademia delle Belle Arti, which was founded in 1750 and is where Canova studied and later became an Academician, only moved from this site recently. One of its most distinguished directors was Leopoldo Cicognara, the moving force behind the 1820s campaign to raise funds across Europe to build Canova's Monument in the Frari.

Another exhibit will be the Byzantine porphyry urn, given to the Accademia delle



Belle Arti by the Treasury of San Marco on Canova's death, in which the artist's right hand was preserved. The urn, which was giver neoclassical gilt-brass mounts in the early 19th century, has also recently undergone conservation in the Misericordia laboratories, funded by the State.

If you would like to know more about our projects or how you can donate please contact us at

THE VENICE IN PERIL FUND

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