

Finzi Scholarship Report Form

Ailís Ní Ríain (2012) Classical composer

I am very grateful indeed to the Finzi Trust for awarding me a scholarship in 2012 to undertake a period of travel and research into the former Yugoslavia with a view to a new music project I am hoping to bring to fruition in a number of stages starting in early 2014.

I used the scholarship to visit four countries – over a 14 month period - that once comprised the former Yugoslavia: Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia. I have been interested in post-war states and the subject of trauma and renewal in my work for a number of years. My visits were short – none longer than 6 days as I was fitting them in alongside a three day a week part-time job.

The trips allowed me to meet artists, research local arts and music traditions (in the context of these 'new states', visit historic exhibitions (often war related). The scholarship enabled me to begin what will be a longer relationship with these Balkan states.

My experience of each country was quite different and in the case of Sarajevo and Belgrade sometimes shocking as the standard of living and public services are very poor. This made getting around difficult at times and finding the people I wanted to interview often tricky.

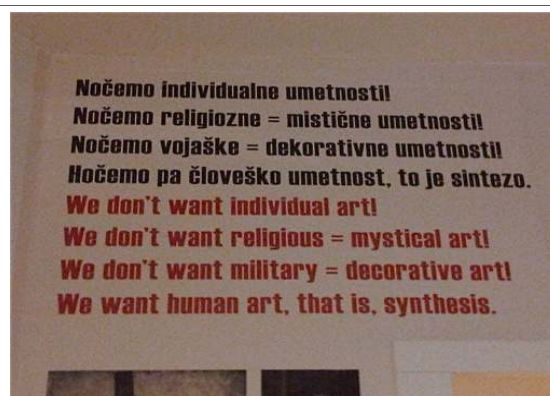
Slovenia - May 2012

Slovenia was by far the most prosperous of the four, as part of the EU and also the common EU currency. My trip coincided with a theatre festival of young new writers, this was a good opportunity to see work that is very rarely shown here and live music was used heavily in some of the productions. This was of interest to me and I investigated further while I was based in Ljubljana (capital of Slovenia). In addition I visited a number of art galleries and found the work of the artists in my age group to be overwhelming political. I spent one full day in Ljubljana's main cemetery, I had been told I should visit and it was good advice. It gave me an idea to document the main cemeteries in the countries I would visit.

Some pictures:



The Contemporary Art Central Gallery



The Contemporary Arts Museum



Meeting two classical musicians



Cemetery



The green dragon is the symbol of Ljubljana



Tribute to war dead

Serbia – August 2013

Serbia was my final of the four trips, I was very curious to see what the 'oppressor' looked like, I was very surprised at the level of poverty in Belgrade and towns surrounding. The wars have cost the Serbian's dearly. My trip to Serbia was a less successful one on a personal level as I became ill the day after I arrived, my luggage got lost and the temperatures were very high indeed making getting around difficult when I felt so ill. My luggage turned up after three days and then my flight back was cancelled! Serbia was incredibly disorganised and difficult to establish contact with art professionals. Two meetings I had set up needed to be cancelled much to my disappointment. However, I was very anxious to get Belgrade's principal cemetery which I managed to do despite my soaring fever. I got to see what I had become so interested in and got some terrific photographs and some film. This latter interest feeds into my research into middle European cemeteries and remembrance.



Orthodox Church



Principal Orthodox Church



War ravaged Ministry of Defence



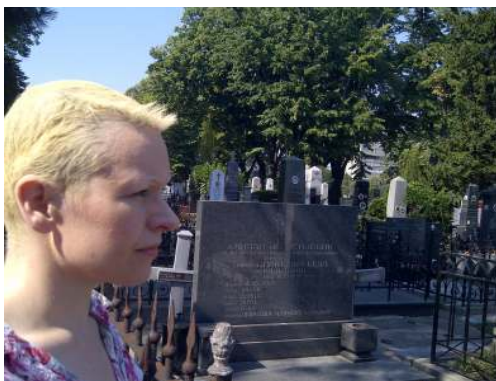
Orthodox Art exhibition



Moscow Hotel in Belgrade



Belgrade Cemetery



Cemetery

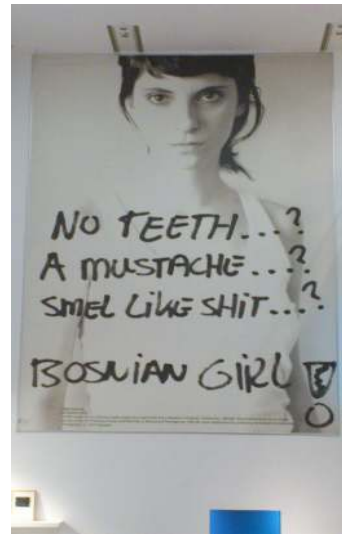


Central Belgrade

Croatia - October 2012

A trip to Zagreb was satisfying as I had planned my trip to coincide with an arts festival in the city. I got to see and listen to a range of work in addition to meeting up with a musician and young writer both of whom were useful in helping put the Croatian post war experience in some context in terms of the divide between their ambitions and those of their parents. I was able to access a number of museums and found the curators very helpful in placing the work in context of the country's recent history. I spent another day at the Zagreb cemetery adding to my knowledge and documenting headstones, votives and 1990's war graves of young men. Powerful but upsetting.





Bosnia – February 2013

This was a productive and sometimes challenging trip. I was lucky enough to meet with several well-established artists and made some excellent contacts. I was very taken by Sarajevo and am certainly going to return as I felt inspired by the people I met and the recent history of the region. I will self-fund a return visit in Spring 2014 to research a new music-based project which I hope will be performed in the UK and Bosnia in 2015 working alongside a Sarajevean photographer and local Sevdah folk singer. Sarajevo is a city still struggling from massive corruption and considerable funding cuts for cultural bodies.

I am hoping to apply for European funding to support my new music project and aim to apply in early 2014. I want to sincerely thank The Finzi Trust for supporting my research trips, the outcomes will take time to come to full fruition. I have much more research to do now and a lot to learn historically and politically about the area which I feel is crucial to informing new artistic work.



View from my accommodation



Gun fire marks on city residential buildings



Sarajevo 'Roses' – mark where a civilian was shot dead.



Memorial to dead Bosnian in 1990's war



Sarajevo main cemeteries



Sarajevo siege Exhibition



Srebrenica memorial exhibition.