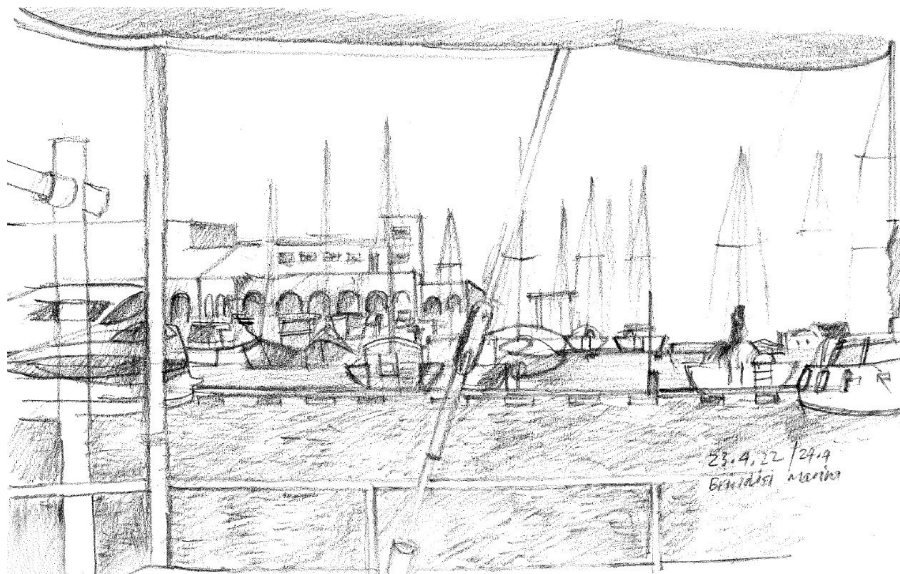


b o k o r

architecture+interiors

## ARCHITECTURAL OBSERVATIONS

### A Visit to Magna Graecia and The Eastern Andriatic



*Bocca Di Puglia Marina*



*Aragonese Fort Brindisi*

This indulgent reconstructed journal is written in the first person. My need to see the physical as a manifestation of history and memory, can be boring. A good friend, an eminent scientist, once told me “Why” is a religious question, belonging to an earlier age.



*Aragonese Fort Brindisi*

As we were worried about Covid, we spent 2 careful weeks in Paris, before flying to Brindisi on 17 April. That was when I relooked at my photos of my initial voyage to Australia in 1957 and realised it was exactly 65 years to the day our ship had berthed in Brindisi. There it took on board 400 young Italian men bound for Cairns, joining the 200 stateless Hungarians, who had left Hungary on exit visas. We were escaping the repression that followed the 1956 uprising; the young men were escaping the economic hopelessness of the Mezzogiorno.



*Bocca Di Puglia Brindisi*



We were warmly welcomed on board Fourseasons moored in the Bocca di Puglia marina. The weather was sunny but cold and windy. Huge waves were crashing over the breakwater, this spectacular event watched by the locals in the safety of their cars. Sophia discovered the 15th Century Aragonese fort, guarding the harbour had just opened for visitors after a long restoration and we were the perhaps the first group to have an escorted tour by an English speaking archaeologist. It was fascinating, impossible to imagine the effort involved in supplying the stone and the labour to construct it.



*Last Two Remaining Doric Columns Taranto*

“Magna Graecia”, is the collective name for Ancient Greek colonies in the south of Italy and Sicily so we set out for Taranto, the furthest destination of interest. The city has had a distinguished history. The land was colonised by Sparta around 700 BCE, probably attracted by its safe double harbour, and the fertile valley beyond, and it soon became the leading city of Magna Graecia ruling over most of the settlements by 500 BCE. Apparently, it had an estimated population in excess of 300,000, and was an important centre of learning and culture. Apart from agriculture it traded in textiles, pottery, wine and fish. As the Roman republic extended its rule over more and more of the Italian peninsula, the legions eventually attacked the city around 270 BCE. The population had grown comfortable, in the absence of external threats and like its neighbour Sybaris, entrusted their defences to Pyrrhus from Miletus. He was successful in battle, but sustained huge losses, leaving the city exposed. Both combatants suffered unsustainable losses giving rise to the expression “Pyrrhic Victory”. Although the Romans respected and admired Greek civilisation, their rule reduced the prosperity and importance of Taranto even although the Via Appia stopped there before its extension to Brindisi. The city, after the fall of the western Roman Empire, suffered from invasions, was razed to the ground and only 2 reconstructed Doric columns remain from its heyday.



*Taranto Fort*

It is now home to the Italian Navy, some industries, and is a trading port. The population is less than 200,000 and its administration is mired in scandal, bankruptcy and is struggling to deal with pollution. We admired the fort, churches and the medieval town that was rebuilt on the footprint of the original. The town was full of people, as it was Easter Monday, a public holiday. A city that was once so important and famous, had become a demonstration of almost everything that is wrong in the “Mezzogiorno”.



*Column at the End of Via Appia Lecce*

It was a leisurely drive on secondary roads to Lecce, a city very different to Taranto. Away from the sea, and protected by its fortifications, it was like an open air museum. The Roman amphitheatre, the fort and the Baroque town centre, all built in the beautiful local stone have remained intact. The exuberant richly carved baroque facades were spectacular in the spring sunshine. A roman column marking the end of Via Appia, originally from Brindisi, had its own vertical museum, a statue of a saint on top, who apparently saved Brindisi from the plague.

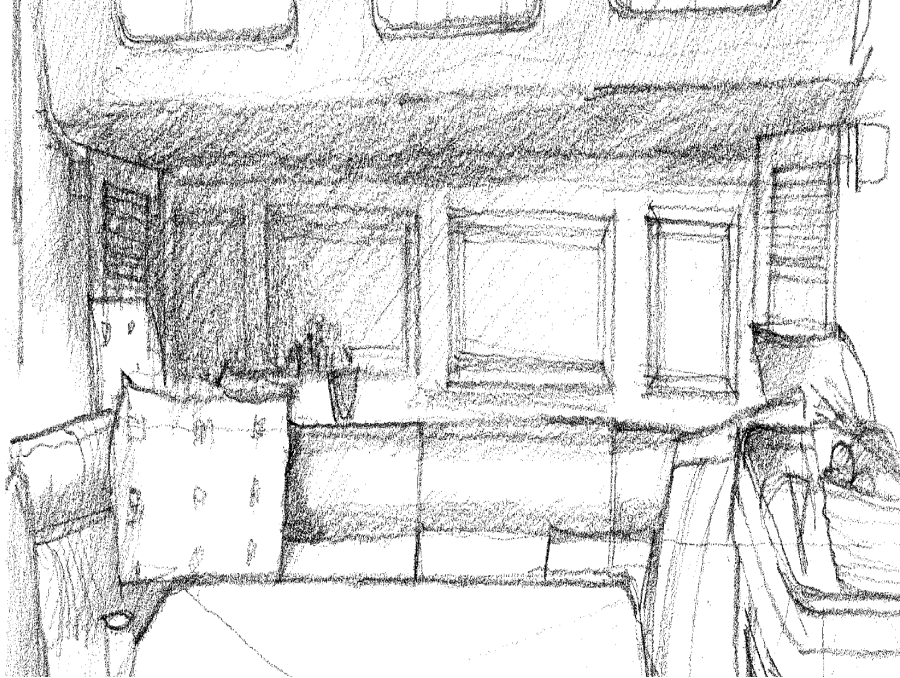




*Exuberant Carvings*

After a drive through the now rich agricultural areas, we reached Matera to visit the Sassi, the cave dwellings. Apparently continuously inhabited for 9000 years and the third oldest continuous human settlement. Carlo Levi's book "Christ Stopped at Eboli", that brought the living conditions there to worldwide attention prompted the authorities to relocate the Sassi's inhabitants to newly constructed accommodation in the town. The local tourist office recommended guide was available at 3pm after the siesta, so we lunched at a traditional restaurant, recommended by the tourist office. Great food and wines with very few tourists. A fellow diner, a dapper bachelor personally instructed the chef on how he wanted his meal cooked. He was obviously someone important. We continued our search for the definitive pink wine. The guide, turned out to be someone out of the comedy series "Don Camillo" impatiently took us through the main sights. He must have mentioned the word Tufa 100 times and frequently corrected our pronunciation of Matera. He was very interested in Australia, especially Mel Gibson and Nicole Kidman. We thought he might be a schoolteacher who lived with his mother. Since visiting 50 years ago, the place has been sanitised, but one could easily imagine how these caves were inhabited, on either side of a gorge with a spring fed creek. The cave dwellings have been turned into restaurants, small hotels, tourist accommodation and even day spas. Perhaps the crusaders who embarked at one of the ports lived in similar accommodation?





*Port Side Salon*



*Trulli*



*Starboard Side Salon*



After a leisurely drive through the Itria Valley with its olive trees, vineyards and orchards, it was bitterly cold and windy when we arrived at Locorotondo. Every building was white and it could be seen from afar. Once we reached there, there were fabulous views from the ramparts. The search for the restaurant mentioned in the guide book led nowhere. But we found a fabulous restaurant “U’Curdunn” in Via Dura. It had entrances from 2 streets and it was the best food we had. Puglia on a plate, home of the “slow food” movement and Cucina Povera, mostly vegetables expertly prepared, olive oil and interesting wines. Nothing to excess. It was after 3 pm when we left for Alberobello. What a unique idea to construct these mostly owner built dwellings in dry stone, each limited in size by its geometry, and cantilevered dome roof. Apparently, an enterprising landowner encouraged these settlements, as not using mortar avoided the tax, making the dwellings more affordable. A fascinating government policy having a major influence on built form, like the local councils in Sydney! Now they have been transformed into tourist facilities, and painted white, perhaps reminiscent of African villages. The form has been adapted to modern dwellings, some luxurious, the idea and form becoming a cliché. It was getting dark by the time we reached Ostuni’s great cathedral, and a late drive back to the boat.



*Ostuni Cathedral*



*From MN Toscana Immigrant Ship, Brindisi April 1957*



*Palm Tree Growth, Brindisi April 2022*

After the diesel engine was started, there was a lot of concern about the water vapour in the exhaust gases. We took the number 6 bus that went door to door into the centre of Brindisi. It arrived at the port and we walked to the streets I photographed with my little camera in 1957, from the deck of MN Toscana. Little had changed. The same buildings, the palm trees, frozen in time. Walking around the waterfront, we saw the famous column, and the port buildings under restoration. Most shops catered to the tourists who pass through on their way to other destinations. The only supermarket had a rather poor selection of vegetables, but many different hams and smallgoods, and indifferent bread.



*Bocca Di Puglia Marina*

We had all settled into a routine; the morning visit to the Marina Café, orange juice, coffee and pastries, sitting in the sun. The wind had dropped and the weather was sunny. Brindisi used to host the Italian Navy, and they left behind much infrastructure, behind barbed wire, adding to the rather desolate prison ground mood of the place. Shattered buildings, little in the way of shops or cafes. Everyone was waiting for the summer hoping that this year the tourists would return. The beaches had mostly pebbles, the original bathing sheds and cafes had been abandoned, while new temporary bars and artificial grass was being hastily built for the expected summer crowds.





*The Missing Column in Lecce*

We walked once again along the road to town to the square in front of the parish church, a little park in the shadow of the monument to the fallen Italian mariners. From here the port seemed close enough for a swim. A cart full of great vegetables was parked in front of the church, hoping for a brisk trade after mass, and we bought some great produce. Artichokes, yellow beans and wonderful peas.

We spent most of the day exploring the neighbourhood, back to the church square and having a closer look at the sadly abandoned bathing facilities near the Marina and walking along the neglected roads, being passed by slow runners. It felt like a boulevard of broken dreams, even the real estate prices seemed depressed, 100000 euros for an apartment. A field separated the roads, a no man's land used for dogs, and sprouting wild corn. In contrast the Marina Bocca di Puglia was a well maintained and designed complex, a restaurant, café, small shop, all laid out around a protected sunny courtyard. After another test run the boat was declared good to go, so we sailed after a dinner made with all the fresh local produce, for Montenegro, through the night. A peaceful uneventful night. The sea was mirror calm the whole way.



*Kotor*



*Fort of St. John Kotor, Brindisi April 2022*

Dawn broke, as the land came into view. We were approaching Kotor Bay. The town was at the very end of the fjord like inlet, and after slow formalities, we berthed opposite one of the town gates. We explored the markets opposite, full of genuine farm products, ham, all different cheeses, honey, olives, preserves, and vegetables. Later we explored the perfectly preserved town, that was once home to different navies, Venetian, Austro-Hungarian and Italian. The weather was sunny, and we sat in the large outdoor café, with an Aperol spritz, and a Montenegrin snack plate.



*Kotor*





*Remains of Venetian Garrison*

We set out to climb to the fort of St John overlooking the bay, some 280 metres above. There is a chapel on the way and the remains of barracks and guardhouses. Looking back into the valley through the openings in the walls, the zig zag road and the remains of a village can be seen, showing how the area was settled, outside the city walls. All in all, over 1600 steps, the path half steps half track, wound its way past beautiful abundant spring flowers. The fortifications were restored by worldwide public funding after the earthquake. A smart Scandinavian cruise ship berthed in the bay while we were at the top. The passengers quickly disembarked and crowded into the narrow streets, mindlessly following their guides. Shops selling leather and folk art, largely ignored. Once they retreated to the cruise ship, we more or less had the town to ourselves again. We went to the Maritime Museum, housed in the palace of a local landowner. The ship models, log books, photos and historical paintings and prints showed to advantage in a period setting. There was no one else there, it was like an invitation to a private house.



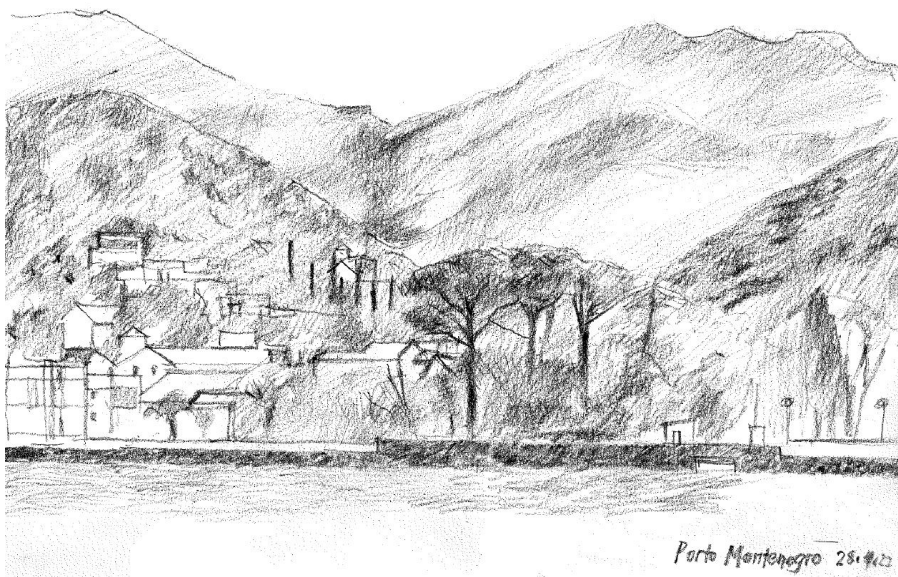
*Cathedral Kotor*



*Cavtat*



While we waited for the time for the refuelling of the boat to be confirmed we set out to explore the more modern town along the bay. One could sense a different atmosphere there. The hardy, tough people who have survived invasions, earthquakes and economic hardship, lived modestly. We encountered good looking young people, eager to practice English, working in hospitality. Again, all hoping the tourists would return this year. We left Porto Montenegro for the refuelling port, where we were surrounded by huge boats, some apparently belonging to Russian Oligarchs. Hemmed in by steep hills on all sides, the buildings were perched precariously and the landform dominated the settlement. Kotor, like most ports, had a history that was turbulent as maritime powers fought over the port and religions changed. The Axis powers were defeated in 1944, and finally Montenegro declared independence from the former Yugoslav Republic. We had to go through the formalities on leaving, reminding me of the communist state officials. It was evening when we arrived in Cavtat. A small distance from Dubrovnic, by sea it was much easier to find moorings without the constant crowds that invaded the narrow streets of Dubrovnic. It was a clever choice, the timing of our trip was perfect, the weather was fine and the cruise crowds were absent. I never realised the strict formalities involved in travelling by boat. We took a walk in both directions, from the old town. One way past the memorial and the monastery to the newer town, then in the opposite direction to Hotel Croatia, a large modern hotel on the waterfront, designed to resemble a cruise ship. How bizarre.



*Porto Montenegro*



*Dubrovnic*



*Dubrovnic*

Having carried our swimming tops all the way from Australia, we were determined to brave the waters. The inaugural swim gingerly walking over the pebbles. The waters were cold but beautifully clear. Later in the day we caught the little ferry to Dubrovnic. Amazingly intact fort city, rebuilt after the blockade and bombardment in 1991. Even the ramparts. We walked around the town and interestingly there was little individuality in the architecture, all buildings now mainly converted to tourist uses. The churches and palaces added a much larger scale to the environment. Evidence of the 1991 attack and blockade by the Yugoslav Army, mainly composed of Serbian troops, was displayed in museums, with photos of victims, keeping the hatred alive. We managed to find somewhere peaceful to have a good lunch, away from the wider streets that could accommodate the cruise ship passengers, who began to arrive in large numbers following their guides. The bus trip back proved too difficult so we returned by ferry. The obligatory palm trees lined the quay, in Cavtat, and seemed to be the hallmark of Adriatic ports. We booked into a recommended restaurant, and picked a fish to share, but after a promising starter, it was not well cooked.



*Cavtat*

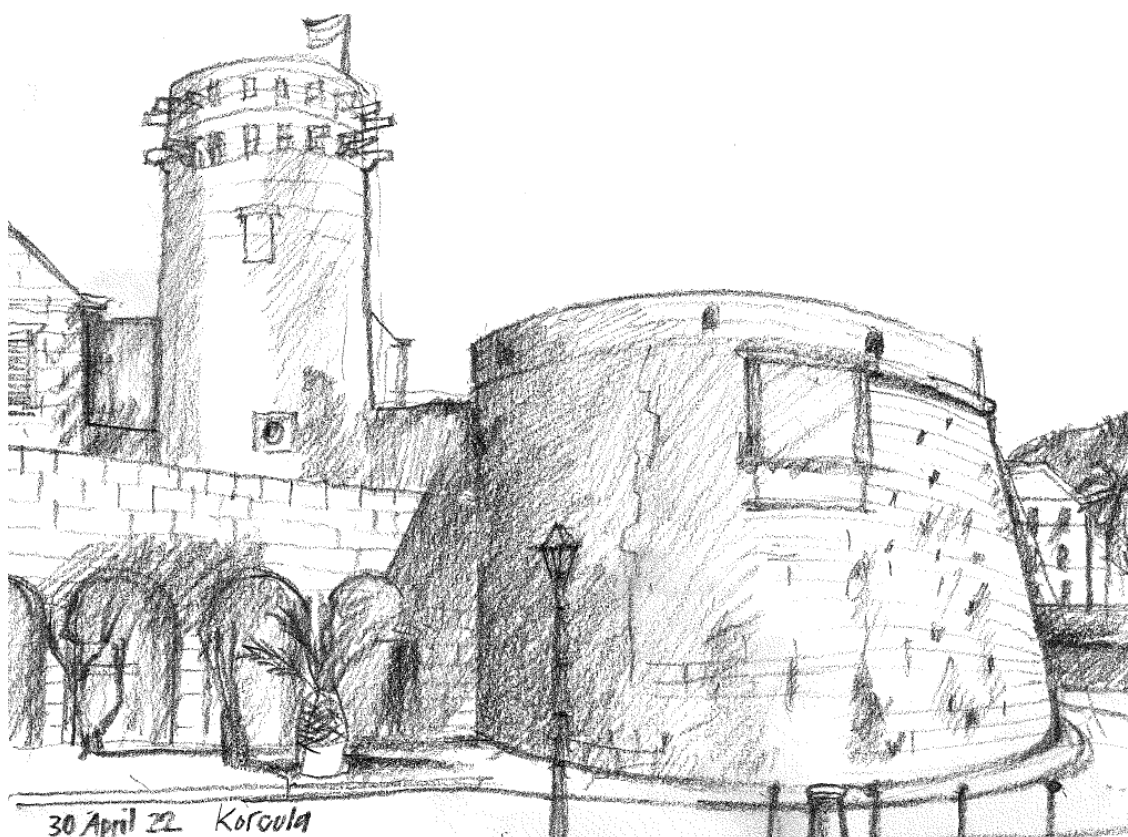




*Korcula*

Another beautiful day, we moored at the base of the old town, and disembarked. Little was open, and we walked into the old town, a typical fishbone plan. A main street, with gates at both ends, and narrow streets either side. The hills beyond were devoid of trees all probably logged for fuel, or shipbuilding. There were several impressive wine shops, with knowledgeable staff, and quite a lot of wine was purchased by Chris and Tim and stowed away for future use on the boat.

We explored the rest of the town walking along the foreshore, with many access points to the little beach below. At the end was a church, where we saw many families, arriving for the service. Catholicism appears to be as strong as ever. Religion an integral part of everyday life. The climb to a modern building on the hill, with food and homeware shops yielded little in the way of food, the fish shop closed for the holiday.



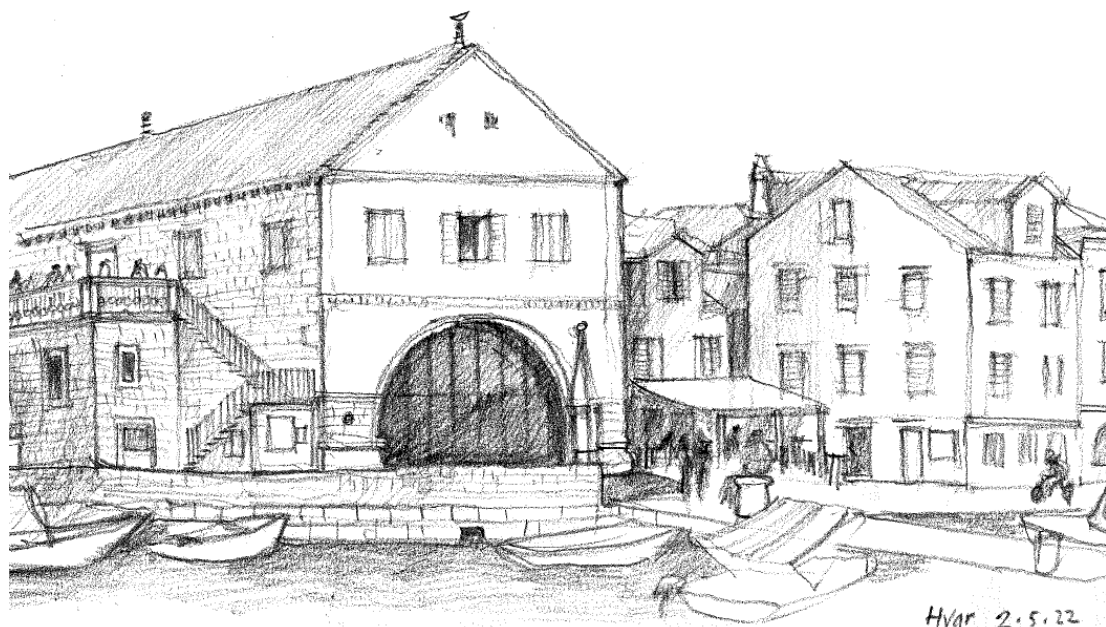
*Venetian Fort*

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*Korcula Old Town*

An absolutely lovely town, different to others with most of its public spaces related to the waterfront. It had an arsenal, and one of the first theatres in the country was built on top of the arsenal sometime later. All the buildings, even the paving, were in the same pale limestone. As usual we visited the markets, found a laundromat and a dentist. Hvar is reputedly a party town but it was quiet there before the season. There is a common history to all the ports we visited, regular change of rulers, piracy, destruction and rebuilding. All largely ruled by foreigners, who cared little for the indigenous inhabitants. Whenever we strayed off the waterfront into the narrow streets ascending the hill, there were well looked after gardens in every available space. We climbed along the winding path through a neglected botanical garden to the fort that was closed. Everywhere bars and restaurants were open and ready for the season. The scale of the cloisters of the monastery and the courtyard of a small palace being renovated, showed the careful and sensitive approach to restoration.



*Arsenal and Theatre Above*



This approach seemed universal in the historical cities we visited, all with similar histories and timelines. It amazed me, so a little research revealed that heritage protection is part of the written constitution of independent Croatia, and strictly administered by the Ministry in Split. The website warns that illegal projects, will be reported by the locals, who have plenty of time to gossip in the winter. A bit like the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. Walking in the other direction, past a memorial park, was the ugly modern Amfora Hvar Grand Beach Resort, thankfully separated by these gardens, from the historical town. In fact, all large new hotels in the towns have been similarly sited, away from the historical centres, the heritage impact carefully considered. On the way we managed to buy swimming sandals to deal with the stony beaches. The hotel had a large pool and a harbour pool, but was poorly integrated into the topography. A meal of freshly caught scorpion fish and John Dory, cooked on wood-fire the best meal of the trip.



*Palace of Diocletian 305 C.E. Peristyle*

Trogir seemed to be built on flat land on an island surrounded by canals. There was a fort at one end, and the city walls were mostly intact. It had sophisticated architecture with several squares, religious buildings and sundials. It looked magic in the night light. The inevitable palm trees were there. We were permitted to berth at the foot of the city walls, by a rather eccentric harbourmaster on a bicycle who had an eye for stylish yachts. We visited the extensive markets, across the canal, bought good produce, but little in the way of seafood. Incidentally the Hungarian King Bela IV escaped to Trogir following the Tatar invasion of 1241.

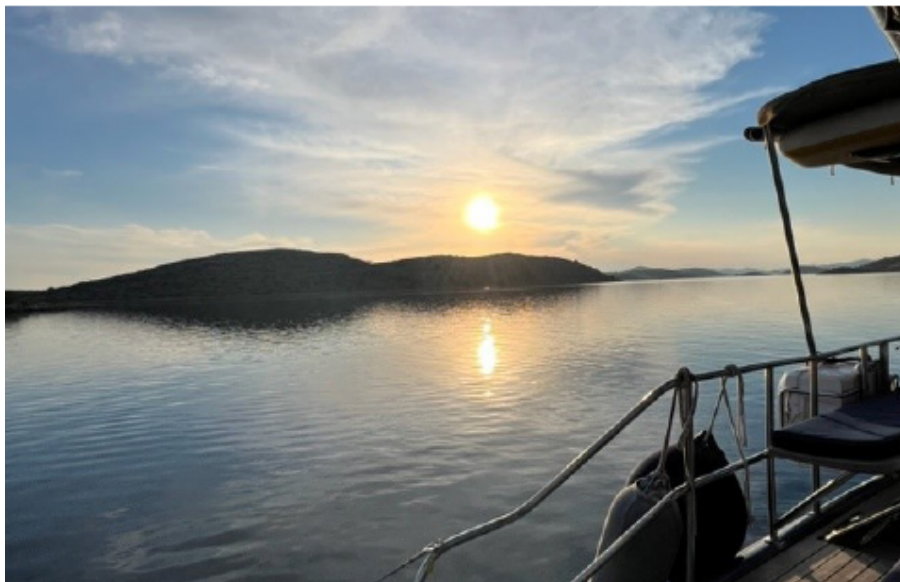


*Palace of Diocletian 305 C.E. Split*



*Trogir 3.15.22*

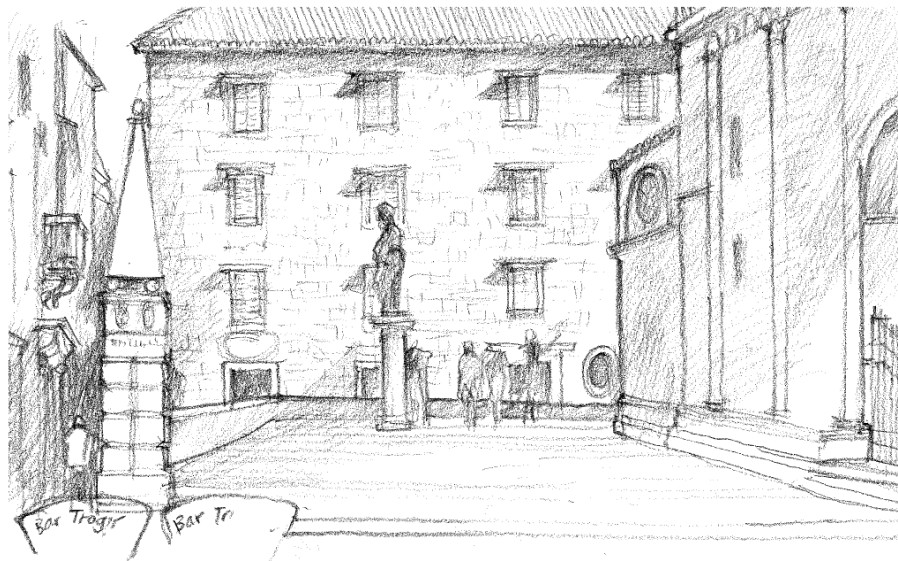
*Trogir*



*Island of Croatia*



We caught the local bus to Split. It was far better to stop outside these large cities, and approach by road, making the mooring so much calmer and the intimate towns much more enjoyable. A rather longer ride than we imagined, past quite ordinary ribbon development, and fertile land. We had no time to look at the Roman Archaeological Park at Solin, supposedly Diocletian's birthplace. Split is the second largest city in Croatia with 200,000 inhabitants. It is also home to the National Heritage Office, that plays such a critical role in the preservation of historical towns. So, it's busy part modern, part old, town, showing how life is lived away from the somewhat sanitised tourist areas. Split happens to have the most amazing group of buildings that formed the original retirement home of Diocletian, adjoining the harbour, on one side. His apartments originally overlooking the sea, he apparently loved. Built around 300 AD, the walls are relatively intact on 3 sides with 3 gates, the side facing the sea has been turned into more contemporary accommodation, and only some of original fabric remains. Inside the walls is the peristyle, the mausoleum and the temple of Jupiter, fairly intact, and recycled for Christian use, with a constructed bell tower. No doubt the footings and cisterns, were reused, and the later buildings roughly follow the outline of the original barracks and other buildings. It was probably an economical solution to house refugees from other towns, during the turbulent times after the fall of the Roman Empire. Somehow the most important features were saved and other parts used as a quarry. The giant limestone blocks can be identified throughout



*Trogir*

In spite of the crowds, mainly from a couple of cruise ships, we found a sophisticated restaurant that also had a shop where smartly packaged superior local products were sold. It was an amazing experience. On the way home the bus was really crowded with students and elderly residents, the students with earphones plugged into their devices, not one of them offered their seat to the local elderly or indeed to us. It is the same the world over.



*Diocletian's Palace Split*



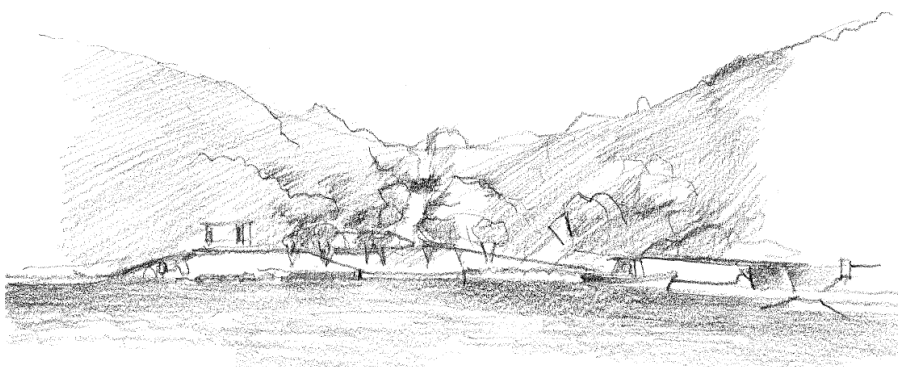
*Nature Park Dugi-Otok*

We left Trogir, calling in at the island of Dugi-Otok, where we alighted at the Telacerka nature park. Only camping style accommodation and facilities were provided there, but walking around the inland lake to the cliffs, and back, we saw what the original vegetation and forest must have been like, before settlement. The Kornati islands for example are apparently barely inhabited, only by shepherds in overnight accommodation, the cleared paddocks, divided by extraordinarily long dry-stone walls, descending from the ridge. I'm not sure when and why the forests were cleared, probably for fuel or shipbuilding. A few vain attempts to terrace the land for agriculture and capture rainwater were largely abandoned. The effort of building walls to define land ownership must have been colossal and generally only worked where the land was arable. Zadar is a largish city, a busy port, the old town containing Roman ruins confined to a peninsula, accessed by a modern bridge. We had drinks in the shadow of the Roman forum, experienced the water organ, and visited the markets. The produce was now very different, more influenced by the Austro-Hungarian occupation, even Hungarian cottage cheese was sold. We managed to buy very good seafood to cook on the boat; scorpion fish, john dory, and mussels.





*Remains of A Roman Forum Zadar*

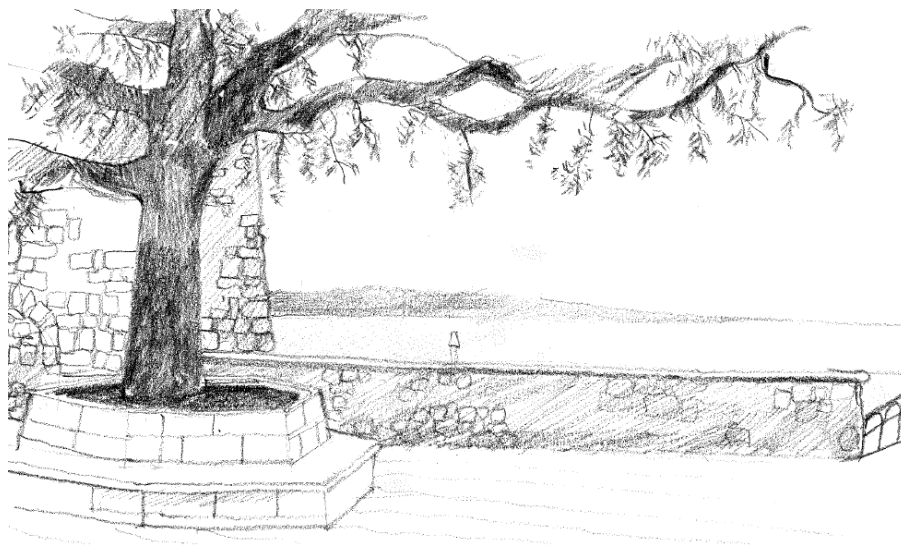


*Nature Park Dugi-Otok*



*Rab*

We berthed at the town wharf, opposite numerous bars. Rab is a peninsular town, with fortifications overlooking the sea. The pattern was one or two main streets, with small perpendicular lanes, with churches and little squares, typical of peninsular towns and apparently the town is thought to resemble a ship with the four church towers the masts. At the opposite end to the fort is a surprisingly large botanical garden separating the more recent developments, from the old town. We saw a contingent of men and women, in historical costumes head to the town rampart. Curious as to what the event was, we followed them. Croatia has a chequered history, invasions, religious and racial wars and they performed a re-enactment of the repulsion of probably, a Venetian Sea attack. Much shouting, presumably blank guns fired and sabres rattled, cross bows and swords lined along the town wall. There was much cheering as the vessel was beaten off and the participants headed to the bars. It was a demonstration how history is presented, the hatred carried onto the latest generation. A rowing race and then a yacht race were to take place and we were invited to participate in the yacht race. We watched the hapless vessels try to cope with little wind and eventually left the race. A fun day, with the darker message of barely suppressed hatred. History there is full of religious tensions, alignments with the wrong side and the recent 1991 interstate wars, after Croatia declared independence. Ethnic cleansing took place on both sides. In the morning the bars were full of single men, having a heart starter of some alcoholic drink that looked like coca cola. No women in sight. The aggression was palpable. Working in the tourist industry, the main employer in these lovely towns, after 2 years of Covid, could lead to this frustration. The Covid outbreak hit the country hard, with 20 % of its GDP from tourist industry.



*Rab Scene of Re-enactment of Venetian Battle*



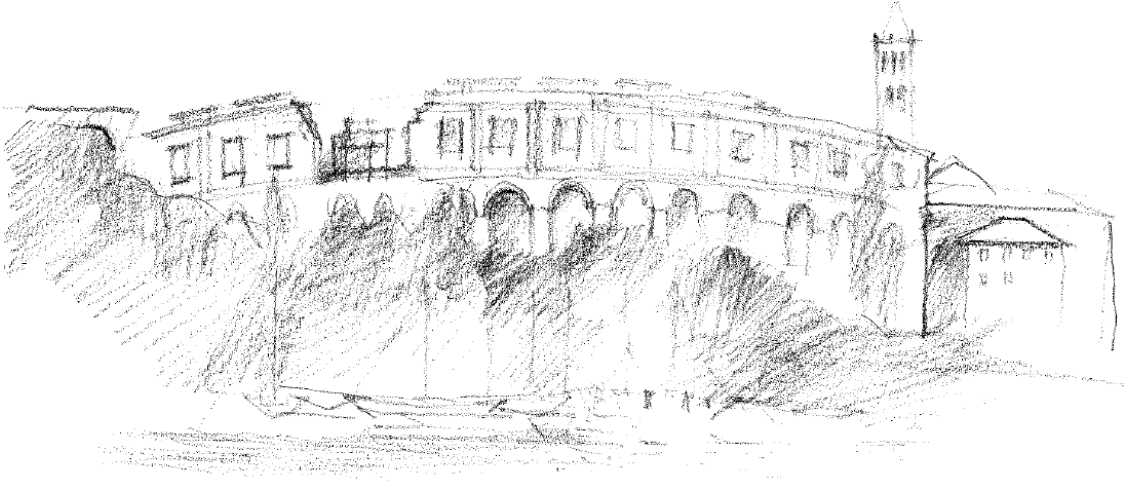


*Rab*



*Roman Amphitheater Pula*

We arrived in the middle of a yacht race, as we tacked into the harbour, I was allowed to take the helm, which I enjoyed very much. The time lag was significant between turning the wheel and the reaction. We avoided the race but it was fun to watch and we berthed at the wharf. We explored the old town, missing the entrance to the fort. The amphitheatre is world famous, and we were almost the only visitors, soaking in the atmosphere, its amazing size, the Roman settlement must have been substantial. There were also baths, aqueducts and defensive structures. The museum, within the footings showed the reconstructed structure and objects found by archaeologists. We almost had a private view, so much more poignant than following the hordes around the Colosseum in Rome. Slave labour must have played a big part in the construction of these structures. We settled into an outdoor restaurant under trees in a square, served by a Romanian waiter, who had worked in many countries. He told us he found the Hungarians the most unpleasant to work for. Once more history plays a part. We set out for our next stop Rovinj.



*Pula*



*Grand Park Hotel Rovinj*

A full moon, and once again we beat the tourists, and had the town practically to ourselves. It must have been the way our parents travelled in the Mediterranean, without the crowds. The old part of the town was on a rocky peninsular, the church at the summit. The rest of the town level, the coastal walk leading to beaches, hotels and finally the ultra-smart Grand Park Hotel, where we managed to have a swim. Found the markets, and a butcher where we bought young lamb to cook. A lady from Kosovo who spoke good English, having spent time in Australia, had a stall, where we bought truffles and condiments. I'm not sure whether they were value for money but she had an interesting story. She told us she preferred her uncertain life in Croatia to a boring existence in Australia. We finally found a laundromat hidden down a blind alley among many nice shops selling jewellery, and had drinks on the waterfront in the gentle sunshine while we waited for the washing. Tim organised dinner at a restaurant perched on a cliff at the edge of the old town. The sea below us, a wonderful meal of seafood and interesting Istrian wines.





*Rovinj*



*Trieste Piazza Unita d'Italia, Author on the way to  
Australia 1957*



*Same place 65 years later, Author in 2022*

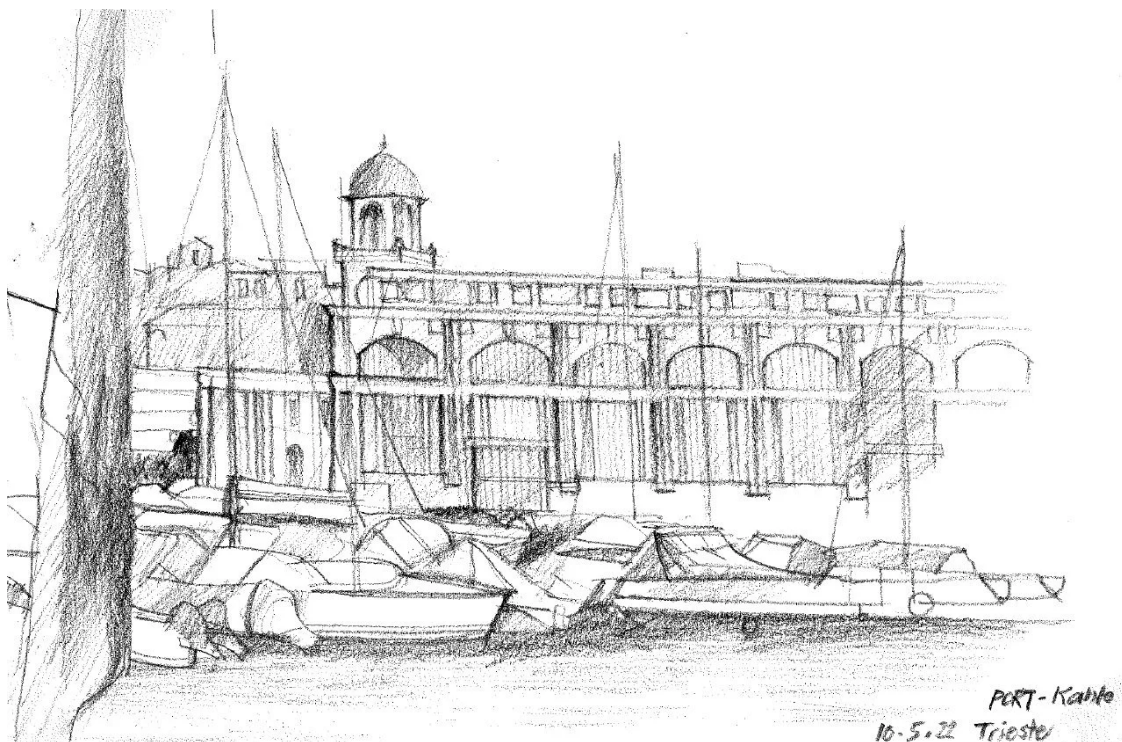


*Hotel Colombia 1957*



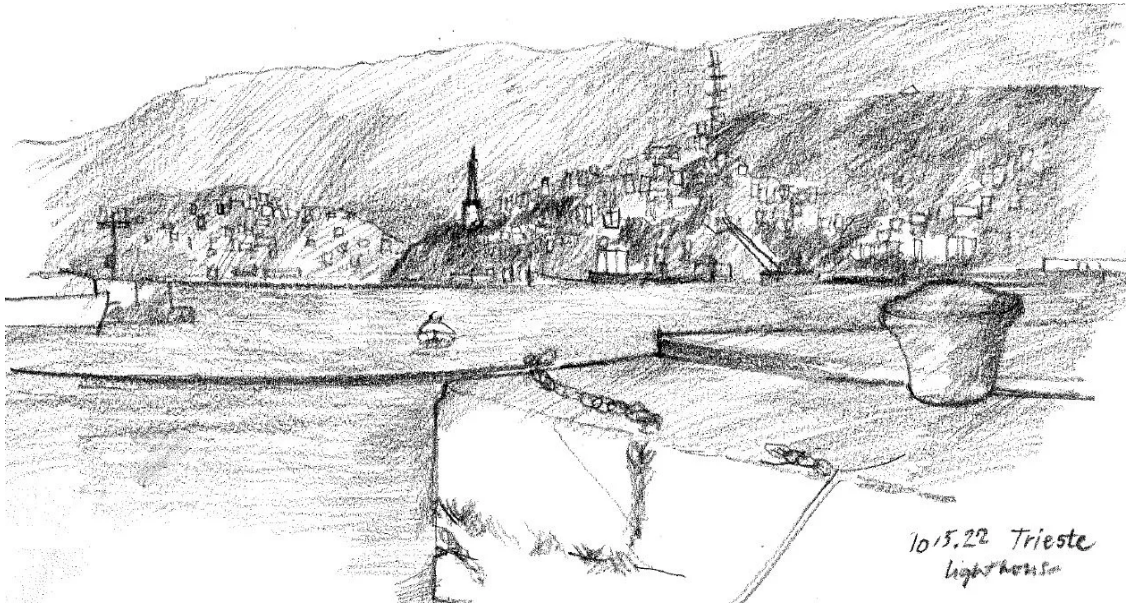
*Hotel Colombia 2022*

After an overnight sail, we arrived early at the marina. The waters were not like those in Croatia which were crystal clear. There were many large jellyfish and what looked like industrial pollution. Trieste with its complicated history, passing from the Austro Hungarians to become a free port and then finally Italian. The home town of Lloyd Triestino, where our ship left from the main wharf in 1957, bound for Australia. I was later able to find the square where I was photographed feeding pigeons, my mother looking on, and the Hotel Colombia where we stayed waiting to board the ship. Owned by the same family for 3 generations, the present owner was born in 1957. She was excited to see the photos I took in that year. A lively real town, not just catering for tourists. Next to the disappointing covered markets, housed in a nice modernist building was a bar that served the Trieste speciality snacks called "Cicchetti"; small open sandwiches, rice balls and ham. We enthusiastically made our selections. The other customers engaged us in conversation, in adequate English, and we were made very welcome. The only museum of interest in town was the Revoltella Palace. It was founded by a wealthy merchant banker who even invested in the Suez Canal. There was an early and more modern art collection. The palace itself was rebuilt and the 3 buildings cleverly integrated but some of the decorations were, I thought, over the top. Later we visited Miramare Castle, Maximilian's Palace built at the edge of the hill overlooking the sea, with romantically laid out gardens behind. It was built in the 19th Century, for the Habsburg Prince before he was made Emperor of Mexico. We went both ways by bus, going in the wrong direction first, and had a surprisingly good lunch in a restaurant at the bus terminus on the waterfront. That evening, on the boat, we watched the BBC programme of Monty Don visiting Miramare Garden in the Italian Gardens series, to a hilarious commentary from the viewers.



Trieste Port





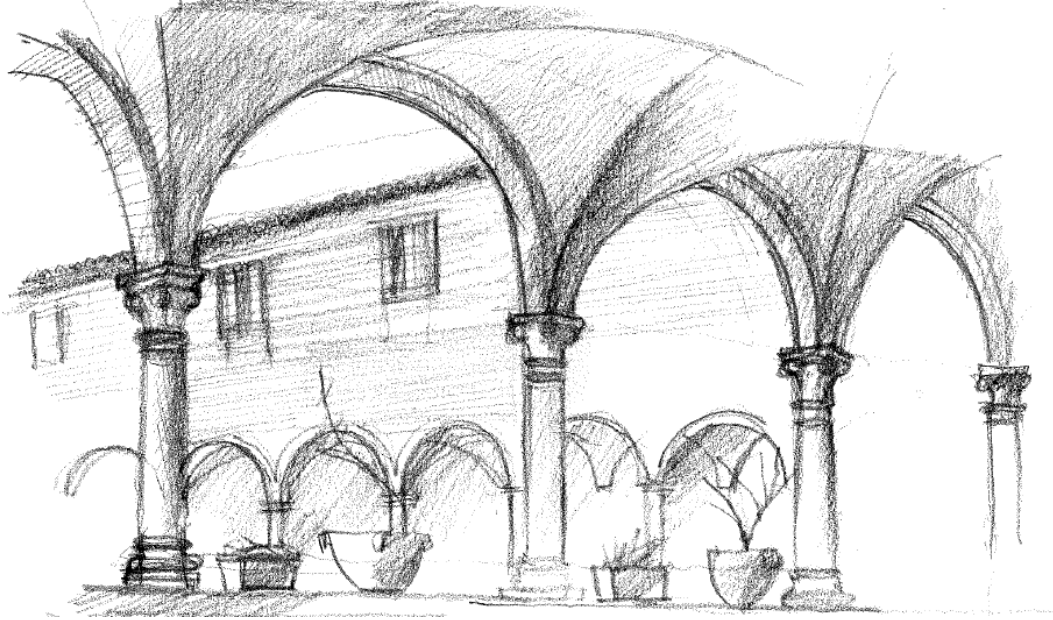
10/3.22 Trieste  
Lighthouse

*Trieste - Lighthouse*



*Trieste - Miramare*





*Cloister Monastery Sant Elena*



*Grand Canal*



*Local Cafe Island of Sant Elena*



Sailing south we called in at a boatyard that was under consideration for slipping the boat in winter, located in part of the huge river delta system around Venice amongst what looked like fields of rice.

The approach to Venice, was along a channel marked by timber piles. Once we were within sight of the town we hoisted sail, and to the sound of Mahler symphony 5, as we sailed past the Doge's Palace, St Mark's Square up the Giudecca Canal, before tacking and sailing to the mooring at the Santa Elena Island Marina. It was a truly magical experience, the sun was shining, even the colours made it feel like being in a Canaletto painting. The marina was alongside the 12th century church of Sant Elena. Inside a glass coffin contained a dummy body in the side chapel. The tower and façade were built later. An island, the land has been filled and connected to Venice by bridges. The area was developed in the 1920's, and included the Giardino across the canal, and a small football stadium. It was a lovely residential area, an ideal place to stay on a visit to Venice. The vaporetto stopped at the end of the waterside park. There were some good local bars and restaurants and one upmarket hotel. Each day we took the vaporetto, to visit the sights starting with the Doge's Palace, where the Anselm Kiefler huge paintings were displayed. We then went to the Olivetti showroom and the other Scarpa refurbishment at the Palazzo Querini Stampada. There, in one room, was an exhibition of 67 canvases depicting everyday life in Venice in the 18th century by Gabriel Bella. These showed St Mark's Square then full of temporary buildings maybe built to house fairs. It was not always an empty space with tourists and restaurant tables and chairs as it is now.



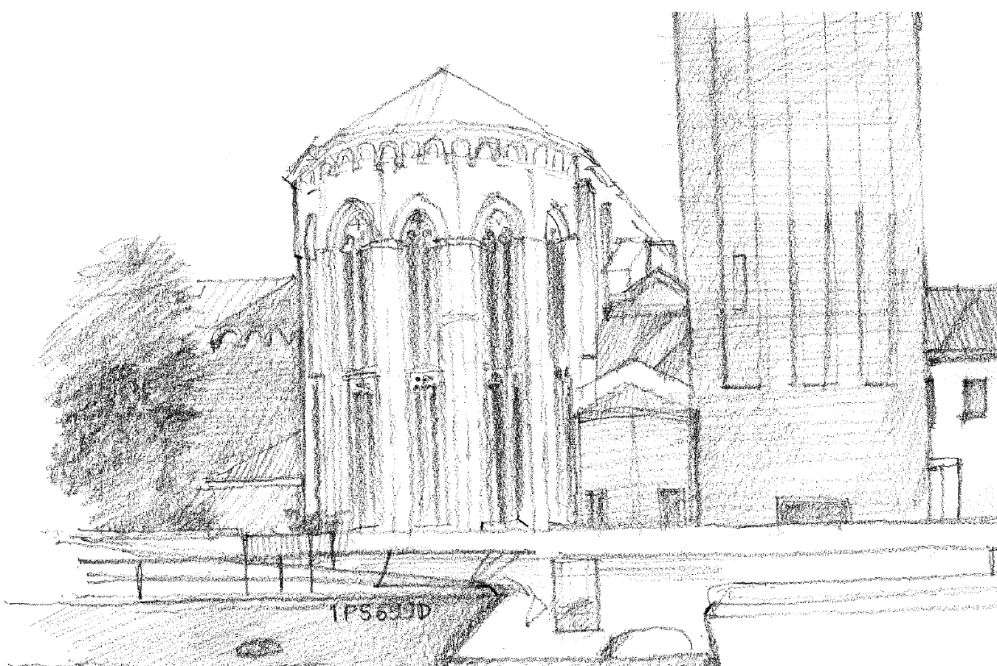
*Anselm Kiefler at Doge's Palace*



*Danish Pavilion*

We saw the recently opened restoration of a bank in the Piazza San Marco, by David Chipperfield, where Louise Nevelson had a major exhibition. Venice has such a unique history, its birth, institutions unlike any other. I need not add to the literature, but to me it's a city of spectacle. The theatricality, the masks, the scenes that are recorded by Canaletto and others. Casanova, the courtesans and excessive finery, even the decorations of the cathedral are theatre. The biennale, in the magnificent Arsenale, more spectacular than the art, or the National Pavilions are also about shock and spectacle. It goes without saying the art had to be spectacular to be noticed.

The contrast between the grand open space and the narrow canals and streets, the constant fear of getting lost, brought back memories of "Don't Look Now" and "Death in Venice". We took a speed boat taxi to the railway station, it was the final spectacle, going up the Grand Canal.



*Sant Elena 11th Century Church*

*Intino*



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