

## **ARLIS/NA IRC Study tour to Venice, Italy**

**June 10-16, 2019**

### Attendees:

1. Nina Bogdanovsky (Boston College, Boston MA)
2. Jessica Ranne Cardona (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY)
3. Annabelle Curran (Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia PA)
4. Caitlin Curran (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.)
5. Kristin Fowler (Ellenville Public Library & Museum, Ellenville NY)
6. Holly Hatheway (Princeton University, Princeton NJ)
7. Thomas Hill (Vassar College Art Library, Poughkeepsie NY)
8. Milan Hughston (Museum of Modern Art, New York NY)
9. Katie Keller (Stanford University, Stanford CA)
10. Roger Lawson (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)
11. Dennis Miller (New York NY)
12. Laura Morris (Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York NY)
13. Christina Peter (Frick Reference Library, New York NY)
14. Faith Pleasanton (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY)
15. Mark Pompelia (Rhode Island School of Design, Providence RI)
16. Shari Salisbury (University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio TX)
17. Chantal Sulkow (Bard Graduate Center, New York NY)
18. Tad Suzuki (University of Victoria, Canada)
19. Rina Vecchiola (Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis MO)

Organizers: Isotta Poggi and Spyros Koulouris

Study Tour website: <http://www.arlisna.org/studytour2019-Venice/>

Symposium program: [http://www.arlisna.org/StudyTour2019-Venice/docs/Symposium\\_BuildingBridges1.pdf](http://www.arlisna.org/StudyTour2019-Venice/docs/Symposium_BuildingBridges1.pdf)

Group Flickr Site: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/3161321@N21/>



The ARLIS/NA IRC Study Tour to Venice, Italy began on Monday June 10th, with the group arriving in Venice between Sunday and Monday morning. We met for the first time on Monday for lunch at the San Giorgio Cafè on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, and spent the afternoon at the [Cini Foundation](#) visiting the monastery and library, the photo archive and the Manica Lunga, the magnificent reading room designed by architect Michele De Lucchi. In the evening the group returned to the San Giorgio Cafe for dinner, with a view of the sunset over the San Marco Basin. We had our first Italian Spritzes and we tasted rice with asparagus, pasta alla norma, octopus, and beef with potatoes.

Day two, Tuesday June 11th, began with a visit to Biblioteca **Marciana National Library**. Librarian Susy Marcon guided us through the historic monumental rooms of the Marciana and described the history of the library, which was designed by Jacopo Sansovino. Our tour included the reading rooms, librarians' offices, and the 16th century Palazzo della Zecca (the official government mint of Venice), now part of the library's facilities.



After a break for lunch, we met for an afternoon visit at the **Museo Correr**, one of the museums managed by the city of Venice. Valeria Cafà, curator of the museum, offered the group a preview of an exhibition organized to celebrate the 400th anniversary of **Francesco Morosini's** birth, while librarian Monica Viero and her colleagues presented a selection of rare books and manuscripts from the **museum's library** collection. We concluded the day visiting **Save Venice's** headquarters at Palazzo Contarini Polignac, where we learned about the institution's newly established Rosand Library and attended the Rosand Memorial Lecture. Save Venice is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of Venice's artistic heritage, and at the reception held after the lecture, we met the local community of art historians and enjoyed the view of the Grand Canal!

Day three, Wednesday June 12th, started with a visit to one of the most important repositories in Europe, the **Archivio di Stato** (State Archives of Venice). Our wonderful hosts, archivists Monica del Rio and Salvatore Alongi, guided us through the spaces of the old Franciscan convent of the Frari which now houses the archives. Our group was overwhelmed by the richness of the archive's collections, which count approximately 70km of shelves! We also discussed the realities of budget cuts happening in government-funded institutions in Italy.



The Archivio di Stato tour was followed by a visit to the **Querini Stampalia foundation**, where we saw the beautiful art collection once owned by the Querini family. It was interesting to learn of the synergies between the library at the Querini, which is a public institution, and the city of Venice council. A few years ago a collaboration between the two entities resulted in an agreement extending the opening hours of the library until midnight, with the help of police officers working as guards. The visit concluded in a dinner with librarian Nada Furlan at the foundation's Caffè Letterario.



On day four, Thursday June 13th, we travelled to Marghera, a borough of Venice, to visit the [Biennale Archives](#). We are deeply grateful to archivists Elena Cazzaro and Michele Mangione who spent several hours showing us their amazing collections. The holdings of The Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts, ASAC, include artists files, photographs, audiovisual materials, posters, and the rich institutional records of the Biennale and its related events since 1895, when the first Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte was held. In the afternoon we continued our discovery of modern art resources by visiting the [Ca' Pesaro](#) museum. Curator Matteo Piccolo and librarian Antonio Padoan talked to us about the history of not only the museum and its library but also of the sizable artists' files and archival collections preserved there, comprised of many rare catalogs and brochures related to early 20th century exhibitions of the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa and the Biennale. The day was dedicated to modern and contemporary art, but concluded with a visit to [Fornace Orsoni](#), the only historical furnace that has permission to operate within Venice. We are very grateful to Liana

Melchior who shared her knowledge of glass production techniques, mosaics, and the history of the furnace. The furnace's "Library of Colors" was an extraordinary experience, as we became utterly immersed in the color samples of this unique materials library. The entire group enjoyed the aperitivo and buffet with local dishes served in Orsoni's garden.



On Friday June 14th, day five of our trip, we met researchers Michela Agazzi and Giulio Zavatta, who offered us a behind-the-scenes tour at the archives and photography collections of Ca' Foscari's (State University of Venice) [Art History department](#). Among the materials in their collection, we saw the photo archives of art historians

Sergio Bettini, Antonio Morassi, and Wladimiro Dorigo. The tour also included visiting the facilities and collections of BAUM, the university's [Humanities Library](#).



After lunch we walked to the [Fondazione Ugo and Olga Levi](#), where we visited the exhibition “Leonardo e la sua grande scuola” as well as the Portuguese and Bulgarian pavilions of the 2019 Biennale. The Levi is a foundation dedicated to the study of music and was the hosting institution for the symposium which was organized by the IRC, titled “[Building Bridges: art libraries between Venice and North America](#)”. We are immensely thankful to [Facsimile Finder](#), who generously sponsored the event, and also to the staff of the Levi Foundation. Thanks to their dedication and support the event was attended by sixty people, including study tour participants, scholars, and librarians from Venice as well as other parts of Italy. The post-symposium reception proved to be a wonderful opportunity for friendly mingling and connecting with our Italian colleagues.



Saturday June 15th, day six, was the last day of the trip and optional guided tours were made available to participants. One group visited the Palladian Villa Barbaro, located in Maser, near Treviso. Built in 1550, the villa was hosting the opening of a contemporary art exhibition, “[Casa di Vita - Armonia del Tempo](#).” Titled after a quote by Andrea Palladio “Home of life / Time harmony,” this exciting exhibition explored the relationships between architecture, nature, and the environment through art. Twenty artists from Austria, Germany, Israel, and Italy were invited to engage with the beautiful interior spaces of the villa, frescoed by Paolo Veronese, the harmonious front gardens overlooking the Veneto countryside, and the intimate space of the secret garden behind the villa. A second group organized a visit to three Palladian villas in the Veneto region. A third group visited the two main venues of the [Biennale](#), the Arsenale and the Giardini. Our guide Roberto spent three hours accompanying the group through various pavilions and artworks of 80 artists. Venice’s 58th International Art Exhibition, curated by Ralph Rugoff, addresses current issues such as “fake news”, climate change, and



immigration, and is titled “May You Live In Interesting Times,” a phrase of English invention that long has been mistakenly cited as Chinese curse. The IRC is grateful to the **Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation** for its generous grant that covered not only the group purchase of Biennale tickets, but also Chorus passes to Venetian churches, and week-long transportation passes for the Venice vaporettos.



Participants had free time on Saturday afternoon to organize other visits around the city based on personal interests; by Sunday most of the group had departed from the Cini Foundation to go on to their next endeavors, and some extended their stay to further explore the city. Venice has seemingly endless offerings, as an ancient city with a human dimension. The city can be navigated through two complementary networks: by boat on the interconnected canals, or by foot through the *calli*, the Venetian streets, constituting the double fabric of the city. Today, Venice’s unique and magical qualities face enormous threats from cruise ships dwarfing the tallest multiple-story buildings and bell towers spread throughout the city. Furthermore, Venice is severely threatened by mass tourism, pollution, and global warming. This is a city that has always been fragile;

during our visit to Ca' Pesaro we heard stories of how during World War II, the city's cultural institutions were faced with the challenge of implementing plans to protect their priceless collections by means of relocation, removing them from the threat of bombings. Hearing stories such as this on behind-the-scenes tours of institutions, ranging from libraries in museums and foundations to those of academic organizations, gave us an even greater appreciation of the importance of the preservation of these treasures for the benefit of future generations.



### **Conclusion:**

Overall, the study tour met participants' expectations. The tour planning process was very successful and the fact there were two co-organizers was essential. We would like to thank IRC chair Beverly Mitchell and past chair Deborah Kempe for introducing us and recommending that we work together. It would have been impossible to manage the complexities of logistical planning and to carry out the plan during the actual trip without our team work. We are grateful to the IRC for their continuous support.

This year marked the second time that IRC offered a study tour scholarship. Chantal Sulkow, this year's winner, played a key role in promoting our activities to the larger

ARLIS/NA community through social media, and she also offered invaluable assistance with the symposium. Although organizing the symposium was a challenging task, this experience proved to be very important in terms of creating deeper connections with our Italian colleagues, and we were successful in that several members of [AIB](#) (the Italian Association of Libraries) participated in the initiative. We believe it is essential to identify in the visiting city a professional community that is receptive to the ARLIS/NA tour goals, and this can be achieved by tapping into local professional library organizations. Recordings of the symposium proceedings will be soon made available through ARLIS/NA's Learning Portal.

The IRC will update the study tour planning guide and will make suggestions to improve procedures. It also recommends the future establishment of a direct communication channel with HQ in order to more efficiently streamline payments and to resolve issues in a timely manner. The IRC is very grateful to Facsimile Finder and the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation for financial support and to all the hosts and hosting institutions for their generosity.



We would like to close our report with a quote from one of the study tour participants that we feel makes our efforts well worth pursuing:

*“The study tour flew by in the blink of an eye, its amazing richness and variety turning into unforgettable memory - there’s always a moment of sadness when that happens. It was a tour perfectly put together, presenting a gamut of resources from archives dating back to the Middle Ages to manuscripts, biennale materials, private collections, photoarchives (quite a lot of which have been digitized), and a fantastic “library of colors,” comprised of a huge collection of glass tiles”.*

