

## **Charlotte Pearson (Economics) - Berlin, Prague, Budapest & Zagreb, September 2017**

I spent two weeks in September 2017 travelling around Central and Eastern Europe with the hope of improving my cultural and artistic understanding of the area. Economics is often considered a rather dry subject (the 'dismal science') and the course at Cambridge is maths based and largely theoretical, so I was greatly looking forward to immersing myself in something so different from Economics.

After a visit earlier this year to the National Portrait Gallery to see the 'Picasso Portraits' exhibition I became fascinated by the cubist art movement of the early twentieth century. I used the travel grant to further explore this period of art on my inter-railing trip. The trip also provided me with the opportunity to experience other forms of art as well as the culture and history of the places visited.

The trip began in Berlin, although a city not usually associated with cubism, the Museum Berggruen is home to more than 120 works by Pablo Picasso providing a sweeping overview of Picasso's career and development as an artist. The exhibition 'Picasso and his times' displayed several key works from different artistic periods in his life time. I particularly enjoyed the portraits of Dora Maar, who was Picasso's lover for over a decade. It was interesting to see how the portraits evolved with their relationship – early on Maar is painted with an almost comic air, but later she features in Picasso's study of suffering and the portraits begin to depict her in a taunting manner. The collection also features the work of Paul Klee, Henri Matisse and Alberto Giacometti. Having seen some of Giacometti's work at the Tate Modern earlier this summer, I enjoyed learning more about his sculptures at the Museum Berggruen. He is best known for his human figures which have become associated with existentialist ideas and a sense of post-war trauma. Seeing these sculptures in the flesh allowed me to appreciate the intricacies of his work and see the extent to which these sculptures are reduced to their very core. The Matisse artwork in Berlin was complemented by the 'Matisse in the Studio' exhibition at the Royal Academy that I saw back in London. The exhibition gave an insight into Matisse's working environment which influenced much of his work so it was interesting retrospectively to see this influence on his work exhibited in Berlin.

In Prague we visited the Museum of Decorative Arts – House at the Black Madonna. The House at the Black Madonna is a masterpiece of Czech Cubist Architecture, which gave us a completely different take on Cubism to that which we had seen in Berlin. The building itself exhibits the sharp points (particularly in the angular bay windows) and slicing planes that have come to define the Czech Cubist movement. Inside is dedicated to a permanent exhibition of Cubist Art curated by the Czech Museum of Fine Arts that focuses on cubist architecture and design. Much of the exhibition featured furniture with split horizontal and vertical surfaces that retrain the conservative design.

Our final stop of the inter-rail trip was Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Zagreb is greatly inter-twined with Croatia's recent history as a communist state under Yugoslavia. The trip made me realise how little I understood about this aspect of Europe's recent past, something that I'm hoping to change over the next year. In addition to a visit to the Museum of Zagreb and the history we soaked up, we also visited Galerija Klovicevi dvori – Zagreb's largest Art Gallery. The Gallery was exhibiting work solely by Vasko Lipovac, a Croatian painter and sculptor. Many of his paintings exhibited were bought to life by sculptures of the same design. A personal favourite was the installation *Cyclus* – a 40m long installation of fifty vividly painted sculptures of cyclists accompanied by two motorcyclists, representing the Tour de France.

My trip to Europe allowed me to discover new forms of art-work whilst adding to my understanding of the Cubist movement. I really enjoyed the experience and would like to thank Pembroke and the Jack Lander travel award for their contribution to my travels.