Autumn 2012

FRIENDS *of the* Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

No. 20

NEWSLETTER

An unknown view of the Shakhovskaya grave by Salomon Corrodi

Six months ago we received a request from a conservator in Russia to help identify the subject of a fine watercolour. We could quickly confirm that it depicted the grave of the princess Natalia Valentinovna Shakhovskaya (1825-1847; ZV.5.20). Not only is the family name legible in the watercolour but the grave survives today. The painting depicts other graves that are easily identifiable: for example, on the left margin there is visible the distinctive tomb of G.F. Parker (d.1844) surmounted by an urn with, to its right, the tomb of another American, the painter James De Veaux (d.1844), bearing his portrait medallion. In the background are the tower and cypresses that mark Shelley's grave. The princess's monument is enclosed by one of the iron railings that surrounded many tombs in the 19th century but were later removed.

Salomon Corrodi (1810-1892). *The grave of Princess Natalia Shakhovskaya*, 1863. Watercolour on paper, 18.6 x 15.3 cm. Signed and dated lower left: *Corrodi fec. 1863*. Private collection

The year before she died, aged 22, the princess – already ill – had been painted by the Austrian artist Michael Stohl. While in Rome in the 1840s, Stohl received the patronage of the daughter of Tsar Nicholas I and then became the court painter in St. Petersburg. A connection with the Russian court also helps to account for this watercolour of her grave. It is signed "*Corrodi fec. 1863*". Salomon Corrodi (1810-1892) had first arrived in Rome from his native

Princess Natalia Shakhovskaya,
painted by Michael Stohl (1813-1881) in 1846

Switzerland in 1832 and there he joined an artistic circle of such figures as Bertel Thorvaldsen, J. A. Koch, J. C. Reinhart, and F. Catel. In due course he excelled in producing *vedute* in watercolour, painted on the spot with close attention to detail and suffused with the golden Italian light. One of many that Rome residents can admire is his beautiful panorama of *Roma da Monte Mario* (1880) that is on display in the Museo di Roma in Trastevere. By then (1880) Corrodi had long been one of the most sought-after painters of *vedute* in Europe.

In 1845 his watercolours attracted the eye of the visiting Tsar Nicholas I at an exhibition organised in his honour in Piazza del

The grave today (in foreground)

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Popolo. The Tsar bought several of Corrodi's works and commissioned others. For the next 20 years Corrodi's main commissions were from Russians, both members of the court and visitors to Italy. His watercolour of the Shakhovskaya grave fits well into this context.

When did he paint it? A date of 1863, 16 years after the burial, seems unexpectedly late: Corrodi, known for his faithful reproduction of detail, has shown none of the graves that were made adjacent to the princess's between 1847 and 1863; moreover, the cypress trees planted around the tomb are depicted as young specimens, as if recently planted. By 1863 his signature usually took the form *S.Corrodi* or *Sal.Corrodi*, probably to distinguish his works from those of his two sons, Hermann and Arnold, who also became painters. (All three of them are buried in the Cemetery.) I suggest that in the early 1860s Corrodi completed a watercolour which he had painted on the spot some years earlier, possibly as a commission from the Shakhovskoy family in memory of the much lamented princess.

My thanks to Olga Glebova for information about the painting, for securing the owner's permission to publish and for both photos; to Angela D'Amelio for advice and to Paola Cattaneo for translating the inscription. For details of Corrodi's career, I have used published biographies by M. Hugger, S. Magnani and P.E. Trastulli. Responsibility for the opinions expressed here remains my own.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

A watercolour of the Scott monument (1838) in the Zona Vecchia

In the first twenty years after the "New Cemetery" was opened in 1822, a number of artists such as Salomon Corrodi (see above) were inspired to depict the Protestant burial-ground. Their paintings show many monuments that still exist and others that have since been removed. Not surprisingly, most artists adopted a viewpoint looking east so as to include the pyramid – the tomb of Caius Cestius - as a visual counterpoint to the modern tombs in the cemetery. Less common are views that adopt a different perspective such as one recently purchased in Rome and reproduced here.

Anon, *The Scott monument in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome*, 1838-39(?)
Watercolour on paper, 20.4x15.3 cm. Private collection

The watercolour shows a tall gentleman contemplating a monument surmounted by a broken half-column, symbol of a life cut short. He is dressed in black in mid-19th century style. As in the Corrodi watercolour, the tower of the Aurelian wall and the cypress trees around Shelley's grave form the background. The monument with the half-column is identifiable as the grave of Charles Andrew Scott (ZV.12.7). The inscription on his tomb states that he died on 7 April 1838 in his twenty-first year. Of the surrounding graves depicted in the watercolour and extant today, none dates to later than 1838. This evidence, together with the apparently fresh condition of the tomb's surroundings, suggests that it was painted – artist unknown – soon after construction.

But who was Charles Scott who died at this young age? The tomb inscription in Latin describes him as the elder son of William and Alicia Scott of Woll in the county of Roxburgh (in Scotland), and records that his mother survived him. We have confirmation of these facts thanks to a will registered with the Edinburgh Commissary Court, which proved the wills of most Scots who died abroad. Mrs Alicia Scott, "mother of the defunct" (no mention of his father) registered the will of "Charles Andrew Scott of Bridgeheugh" who died in Rome on 7 April 1838.

The Scott monument today

We might have known no more were it not that Bridgeheugh was adjacent to the home of one of Scotland's best-known authors, Sir Walter Scott. His house at Abbotsford was some three kilometres away and the two families were friends as well as neighbours. In his diary entry for 4 August 1827, Sir Walter Scott recorded: "When I returned I found Charlotte Kerr here with a clever little boy, Charles Scott, grandson of Charles of the Woll, and son of William, and grand-nephew of John of Midgehope. He seems a smart boy, and, considering that he is an only son with expectations, not too much spoiled." By the time of his premature death in Rome, Charles Scott evidently had a younger brother; but, sadly, he himself was not destined to fulfil the hopes that Sir Walter Scott had placed in him ten years earlier.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

WHO THEY WERE...
Julius Olivier de Montalant (1823-1878)

Carte de visite
of Julius Olivier de Montalant,
circa 1860s-1870s, daguerreotype.
Private collection

In researching the colony of American artists in nineteenth-century Rome, information on the landscape painter Julius Olivier de Montalant has proved surprisingly - and frustratingly - elusive. Did his colleague, the painter Elihu Vedder, perhaps capture the truth of the matter when he wrote in his memoirs: "Montie was remarkable for there being so little to remark about him" (344)? Yet there are some anecdotes that make one think there had to be something more to the man. For example, the esteemed American landscape painter Sanford R. Gifford, visiting Rome in 1857, discussed Montalant's camaraderie as they participated together in the annual Artists' Festa at Cervara, shared the contents of their sketchbooks, and walked on Palm Sunday to the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Testaccio, where they picked violets and myrtle from the graves of Keats and Shelley.

The Philadelphia writer and amateur painter Henry P. Leland fictionalized Montalant as the sympathetic "Rocjean," a Franco-American artist who wears "a bournouse, with a fez on his head, a long chibouk in his mouth, smoking away" in his 1863 novel *Americans in Rome* (117). Together with "Dexter" (the English painter Charles H. Poingdestre), they embark on a rather inebriated and adventure-filled sketching tour of the Roman Campagna in the summer of 1858. All very intriguing, but what are the facts about the man as we know them today?

Julius Olivier de Montalant was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1823. His father Eugene (1800-1852), an immigrant from Angers, France, married his mother Marie Rose Celestine Boutin (1807-1861) in her hometown of Norfolk the year before. Her paternal grandparents had originally hailed from Paris but moved to Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola, where they had a plantation and where her father was born. There is scant information on Julius's upbringing or that of his four younger siblings, and it is unknown whether he received any formal art instruction during his youth. He did visit his ancestral homeland at least once, returning to the United States in 1840. From around 1841 to 1845 he served as a non-combatant clerk on board the U.S.S. *St. Louis*, making graphite drawings of the exotic locales he visited as part of the East India Squadron, such as a church in Rio de Janeiro, a graveyard in China, a temple in Macau, and a waterfall in New Zealand (U.S. Navy Art Collection).

The 1850 U.S. Census recorded Montalant living in Philadelphia as the head of a household that included his mother and siblings. He declared his profession as "Gentleman," perhaps indicating that he was studying art at the time. From 1851 to 1856 he exhibited landscape paintings at the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and provided a local address. However, the range of his subject matter - from Lake George in New York State, the White Mountains in New Hampshire, to Angers, France, and Athens, Greece - suggests the scope of his travels in pursuit of picturesque views. In July 1856 he applied for a new passport and the following year he was resident in Rome, ensconced among the American and French artists there. For the next five years Rome continued to be the base for his journeys in southern Italy and North Africa.

In 1861 Montalant exhibited *Temples at Paestum* at the Paris Salon, to be followed in 1863 by two views of Algeria and 1864 by *Temples at Agrigento, Sicily*. In these last two years he described himself as living in Paris as a pupil of the French marine painter Jean-Baptiste Henri Durand-Brager. While Montalant is not considered a marine painter per se, he undoubtedly found in Durand-Brager - himself an inveterate explorer - a kindred spirit. By 1868 Montalant was again living in Rome after having completed a sketching tour of Spain and probably Turkey. From 1872 he kept a studio in Via Margutta, Rome's legendary street of artists, until his death on 13 April 1878. "How such a man could die I can't imagine -- but he did," Vedder later reflected. "His pictures paid for his funeral and not a cent was left over. No one was glad or sorry; but someone once noticed that his place at the Caffé Greco was vacant" (344). Thus, while Montalant the man may not have left an indelible impression on his era, his oeuvre of landscape art survives as testament to his talent and continues to find an appreciative audience in the twenty-first century.

Contributed by Mary K. McGuigan, independent art historian

Julius O. de Montalant, *View on the Roman Campagna*, 1868. Oil on canvas.
Private collection

Gifford, Sanford R. European Letters. Archives of Amer. Art, Smithsonian Inst. Microfilm.
Leland, Henry P. *Americans in Rome*. New York: Charles T. Evans, 1863. Print.
Vedder, Elihu. *The Digressions of "V": Written for His Own Fun and That of His Friends*. Boston: Houghton, 1910. Print.

Lars Leksell (1907-1986)
Ludmila Leksell, née Soubotian (1918-1965)
George Soubotian (1887-1961)
Eva Soubotian (1889-1987)

On February 7, 1986 my paternal grandfather, Lars Gustav Fritjof Leksell, was united in the Zona Vecchia of the cemetery with his wife Ludmila, some 300 metres from the grave (Zona 3.3.2.12) of his father-in-law, George Soubotian, later joined by his wife Eva Soubotian.

My grandfather was born in Gothenburg in 1907, the son of Lina (née Fogelqvist) and Gustaf Leksell. His brother Johan was a nationally famous artist and the Leksells were related to the family of Ivar Jonsson (1885-1970) who sculpted the headstone on Ludmila's and Lars' grave (Zona V.13.15). As one of the most appreciated sculptors of his age, Ivar Jonsson created monumental public works of art such as the fountain *Morgon* (Morning, 1960) in the former Government Chancellery Building in Stockholm. The headstone is a copy of part of *Morgon*.

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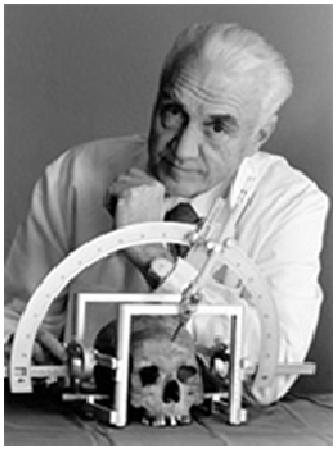

Lars Leksell in the lab

In 1935 Lars graduated in medicine in Stockholm and, after training in general surgery, joined the Swedish pioneer in neurosurgery Herbert Olivecrona at the Serafimerlasarettet. At that time this was the only university hospital in Stockholm, and heads of departments were in general professors at the medical school of the Karolinska Institute. My grandfather collaborated with the future Nobel laureate Ragnar Granit, focusing on the neural connection between the brain - spinal cord and the muscles. His methodological innovations using sophisticated state-of-the-art amplifiers that he constructed himself and a keen analytical skill enabled him to register minute electrical variations in the peripheral nerves controlling muscle action. His thesis, presented in 1945, opened up an entirely new scientific field. Even so Lars did not continue with basic research since he preferred to be a clinician focusing on patient care and developing tools to improve treatment of the serious diseases that could afflict the brain.

The system he had developed meant that small structures deep in the brain could be reached with surgical instruments, but it still required a burr hole to be made in the skull of the patient, with all the risks involved. So Lars and the physicist Börje Larsson developed the Gamma Knife (1968). This was a great advance since the combined gamma irradiation from 179 spherically located radioactive sources with a common focus could now reach pathological structures located deep in the brain that had previously not been accessible with traditional surgical techniques.

The sculpture by Ivar Jonsson on the Leksell grave

In 1943 he married Louise de Laval and my father was born. They divorced in 1945 and in 1949 he married Ludmila Soubotian, the daughter of Eva and George Soubotian, Eva being of Russian and George of Armenian-Persian origin. Ludmila was born the youngest of four children in Rostov-on-Don in Russia. Fleeing Russia during the revolution via Odessa, the family stayed briefly in Bulgaria and then settled in Halle in eastern Germany where George found work as an engineer.

In the early 1930s the Soubotians, probably because of increasing tension in Germany, moved to Paris and then, after a few years, to Barcelona when George found a position in Mallorca. Political unrest had become part of the Soubotians' European *émigré* life. With the Spanish revolution in 1936 the family was once again dislocated and fled to Rome where Ludmila graduated in law at the University in 1939. In the tumultuous years of the Second World War Ludmila, after a short marriage to a Norwegian, spent time in Brazil, Canada and England, and finally at the end of the war settled in Oslo. She met Lars at the first meeting of the Scandinavian Neurosurgical Society in 1948, they married in Paris the following year, and Lars accepted the position of chair of the neurosurgical department in Lund. In 1960 the family moved back to Stockholm when Lars succeeded Herbert Olivecrona as professor of neurosurgery at the Karolinska Institute. In 1966 Ludmila died after a short illness.

With his considerable contributions in both basic and clinical science, my grandfather had a strong impact on the worldwide evolution of neurosurgical clinical practice. He was a member of international scientific societies and of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

In many respects Ludmila and Lars had a multifaceted and rich life together that was cut short by the early death of Ludmila. With cosmopolitan and different cultural and religious backgrounds, their final resting place in the Cemetery under the cypresses and the sculpture by Ivar Jonsson was an appropriate choice.

Contributed by Beatrice Leksell Clasaeus, grand-daughter of Lars Leksell

NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

Another palm tree removed

No, the Director has not purchased a drone to monitor visitor behaviour! In June we removed the second of the two palm trees outside the chapel since it showed no signs of re-growth following infestation by the red palm weevil (see *Newsletter* 10). Stefano Raiano of the specialist tree firm Alberando took this photo of the hydrangea-filled Zona Terza while monitoring the palm tree's health from an adjacent pine tree.

COME DIVENTARE UN AMICO

Questa Newsletter è resa possibile grazie al contributo degli Amici del Cimitero. Gli Amici aiutano anche a finanziare il mantenimento degli alberi del cimitero e il restauro delle tombe. Potete aiutarci diventando Amici? Troverete il modulo associativo nel sito:

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