Report on the APA Berry Fund for Public Philosophy Grant
Ideational Franciscanism – Gavin Keeney

In December 2022 the APA Berry Fund for Public Philosophy kindly awarded a grant of 1,000.00 USD for research associated with the PhD dissertation project, Works for Works: “No Rights” – in specific, a co-funded research residency in Venice, Italy, at the Giorgio Cini Foundation. The PhD project, carried out under the auspices of the Post-graduate School, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia, concerns a Franciscan-inspired, elective abolition of Intellectual Property Rights.

Research Grant and Co-funded Research Residency, “Ideational Franciscanism,” Berry Fund for Public Philosophy, American Philosophical Association, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, USA, in association with the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities, Giorgio Cini Foundation, Venice, Italy, March 9-April 9, 2023

Image (left) – Blue Venice. Courtesy of Ilenia Maschietto.

Research conducted in Venice concerned why El Greco is considered a “Franciscan artist.” This was the third such study of an artist considered to be “Franciscan,” with research on Cimabue and Giotto conducted at the Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, and the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, in late 2022. The Venice-based research was formally transcribed to an essay, “The Peregrinations of El Greco,” which will be included in the monograph, Works for Works, Book 2: “No Rights” – to be published by the open-access, scholar-led press, Punctum Books, in 2024, following upon Works for Works, Book 1: Useless Beauty, published by Punctum in 2022.

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The budget for the project was made tenable by mutual support from the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities, which reduced the cost of the stay at the Cini Foundation’s Branca Centre by 50% – i.e., the residency was essentially underwritten or co-funded by the Cini Foundation.

APA-Cini Co-funded Research Residency, Venice – Room 216 – March 9-April 9 (31 nights) – 871.00 EUR = 949.39 USD

Additional costs included travel to Venice from New York, and, in Venice, numerous three-day vaporetto passes before, eventually, the purchase of a Unica travel card for the vaporetto.

JFK-LHR – Delta DL 3, Monday, February 20 – 714.35 USD
Depart JFK 10:00pm, Arrive LHR 10:30am, Tuesday, February 21

LHR-VCE – British Airways BA0582, Tuesday, February 21 – 92.53 USD
Depart LHR (Terminal 5) 1:30pm, Arrive VCE 4:50pm

VCE – THREE-DAY VAPORETTO PASSES X4 (45.00 EUR x 4) = 180.00 EUR = 195.91 USD
VCE – FIVE-YEAR UNICA CARD = 100.00 EUR + 20.00 EUR = 120.00 EUR = 130.61 USD
VCE – UNICA CARD = 20.00 EUR = 21.76 USD

Total cost of the venture (for travel and accommodations) was, therefore, 2,104.55 USD. This did not include travel to and from Ljubljana, where I stayed in advance of the Cini Residency and to where I returned after the Cini Residency.
The glorious library of the Cini Foundation (Manica Lunga) was “homebase” for the research agenda on El Greco. Open-shelf resources, increasingly rare in libraries today, provided 22 books to “process” across four weeks. Four to five hours a day reading in the library, followed by late-afternoon forays to Giudecca and occasional strolls through the calli of Venice, served to process the day’s discoveries – i.e., it was all that was required to close up the research and convert it to essay form in installments.

The entire experience was also recorded as an episode called “Blue Venice,” in diaristic mode, in the anti-memoir, anti-novella that mirrors the PhD thesis manuscript, which is also the monograph to be published by Punctum. That narrative mirror is known as /S/4: Ego-histoire, and is currently circulated privately, episode by episode, through a network of fellow artist-scholars.

The following excerpt from /S/4: Ego-histoire summarizes the existential nature of the APA-Cini co-funded research foray as of Day Nine (March 18):

The next day, Saturday, March 18, I forced myself to begin the process of “writing” the essay on the peregrinations of El Greco. For the first three days of reading, I had felt paralyzed by the art-historical hysteria surrounding his so-called catalogue. What was the bloody point, to use a Britishism? It smacked of the usual largesse of legerdemain (hocus pocus) – that old sleight of hand that art historians love to indulge to outdo one another. One-upmanship, anyone? Points on the ladder to nowhere? Now duly warned about the effete set, by the Holy Ghost, Lionello Puppi, or an anonymous bungler, I set out to lodge a complaint and summarized in 895 words (1,976 words counting the assiduously compiled footnotes complying with the absurdist standards of the day) my initial understandings of El Greco’s “record” as he crossed Italy en route to Spain, both forms of exile that I had an inner sense of empathy for. This was written in several sessions – actually three. The first session was before I set out to Zattere to buy yet another three-day vaporetto pass, still unwilling to spend 100.00 EUR on a UNICA pass, as the Branca POS gadget was still OOS (i.e., dead). The second session was when I was sitting with the locals at the café/pub at Palanca and waiting for the tobacconist to open at 4:00pm (they closed midday every day). Along the way, prior to settling in at the café/pub at Palanca, I went for another armload of provisions at the grocery store just past Il Redentore. The timing with the tobacconist had thrown me somewhat. I had planned to get back to San Giorgio before Vaporetto Pass #2 expired and save launching Vaporetto Pass #3 until Monday. I was now doing three days on, one day off, in rotation, to minimize the damage.

At the café/pub, with a Moretti Rossa and few cigarettes, I managed to knock off another round of writing as I sat in the cold on the embankment enjoying the spectacle of the locals disembarking at Palanca to head home with dogs, strollers, husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends, etc. Across the canal it was tourist hell. Here it was different. The only tourists that got off the vaporetto at Giudecca either made a huge mistake or they were headed for the one or two cultural objets d’art – including, alas, Il Redentore. The third session was when I arrived back at San Giorgio and more or less failed once again to do next to nothing. The last, third session was the dabbling in footnotes, which usually meant taking my handwritten notes and transcribing them to back up my narrative. The narrative and the notes were actually two narratives. Things I did not wish to say in the main narrative could be slipped into the notes, and the notes were preemptive strikes on anyone who dared question how well-documented the narrative was, even with its leaps into the wild blue yonder to escape mere discursive argumentation. El Greco was finally coming alive for me. His work was becoming mesmeric for me. I only needed to sustain the foray. I was one week in … I had three more weeks to go.

March 18, 2023

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Botwnnog, NW Wales
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