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PERSONAL MEMORIES OF NORFOLK LODGE

I would like to share some personal memories of Norfolk Lodge, Richmond, and what went on there just before and after Mitrinovic died in 1953.



*Norfolk Lodge
Richmond Hill*



It was a big, imposing house on the top of Richmond Hill, with amazing views right down the River Thames far below. It had a smallish garden behind it and at the end was a cottage with living quarters upstairs and a big converted room downstairs which we called Verulam, used for concerts once a month, and many meetings and social events.



Norfolk Lodge Garden

This is a group of close members in the garden of Norfolk Lodge, including my parents, David and Anne Shillan, Harry and Gracie Rutherford, Valerie Cooper and Ralph Twentyman. At two different times I lived in the Cottage, once with my family, and later with the Rutherfords. I can remember in 1953 looking out of the kitchen window and seeing into one of the three big rooms of Norfolk



The Red Room



Lodge where Mitrinovic was ill and bed ridden. There were always people coming and going to see him. The three large ground floor rooms all had different moods and functions. In the front, overlooking the view, was what we called The Red Room, all painted a very special red colour (which apparently had green in it). This was an artistic and social space with works of art, already spoken about by John. The Giacometti statue, the Magritte, a Roy de Maistre, a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture, a Japanese print by Hiroshige among many others. Also many books on art.



Ivan Meštrović

While Mitrinović owned art later in his life, I think it is worth remembering that in 1915 when he first came to England he helped to organize an exhibition of Ivan Mestrovic, the Southern Slav sculptor, at the Victoria and Albert, where he was a guide and lecturer. A very vivid account of this is given by Philip Mairet, who became intimately connected with Mitrinovic for over a decade.

'He was a little late, for which he apologised with the courtesy and charm of an accomplished diplomat. He was a tall, dark, handsome man, attired in the black frock coat of an official or business executive, who spoke with a strong foreign accent but with noticeable freedom, fluency and even eloquence.....

What moved me to admiration even more perhaps than the majestic vision of art and civilization that he unfolded, which indeed carried us far out of our depth, was the eloquence of his exposition. I had never heard anything

like it.. Here was a man who spoke with authority. What he said seemed to be guaranteed by what he was, for I felt almost as if I was listening to some messenger from a higher realm of knowledge about the predicament of mankind.'



The Red Room

In the photo of the Red Room you can see the big Roy de Maistre over the fireplace, the Greek torso and the art books. We are standing with our back to the window.



Gathering in the Red Room

Some regulars and some visitors used to meet in the Red Room every evening at 6 for drinks. Here you can see Ellen Mayne, David

Shillan (my father), Ralph Twentyman and Harry Rutherford. But it was also a time to keep in touch and share news.



Irenikon

The other front room was called Irenikon, or Peace, and held representations of many different religions - a Russian icon, a Buddhist sculpture, a Jewish candlestick, a fragment of a Jain image, and I can remember a large photo of Madame Blavatsky.



Irenikon

There were a lot of box files containing study material. We hardly used this room socially.



Academy

The third room was called Academy and was devoted to science and philosophy. There were photos and busts of philosophers like Socrates and August Comte and a library of scientific books. This was where Mitrinovic slept.



Academy

After he died we used this room for entertaining at social events, like the concerts and lectures over in Verulam .



Christmas Party

We even had our Christmas dinner there with charades, games and music spilling out into the Red Room.

In the basement was a room where for a long time a group of people copied out notes from their personal records to make them available. These are now in the Bradford Archive. We also had a little Adana printing press for posters, and from here, together with Vincent Morley, I produced the Renaissance Bulletin for 15 issues. This was taken over by Violet and John MacDermot. Different members of the group lived at different times in the upstairs flats and I can remember a basket on a long string hanging down the back stairs to help pass food up and down!

If one were to list all the people who took part in the life of Norfolk Lodge, as lecturers like Dr Ghose, Karl Konig, Dr Bake, or musicians like Eric Harrison, Ian Houston, or residents and audiences, it would go into the hundreds.

So it was a very rich experience that I took part in