



# THE MEDAL

Autumn 2011



# THE MEDAL

No.59 Autumn 2011

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- 74 New medals  
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# The artist and the model

Ivo Kerdić, William Chauncy Langdon and others

Ivan Mirnik

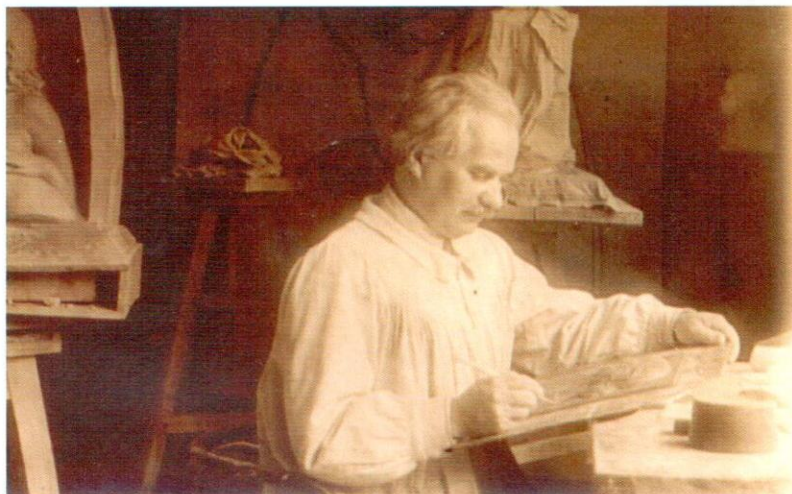
THIS ARTICLE DEALS WITH A SMALL PART OF the enormous medallist oeuvre of the Croatian medallist and sculptor Ivo Kerdić (1881-1953; fig. 1),<sup>1</sup> concentrating on the partly preserved correspondence between the artist and his American friend William Chauncy Langdon (1871-1947). These letters will intrigue anyone interested in the art of the medal between the two world wars, not only in Europe but also in the United States. Several letters exchanged between the two men refer to the creation of a portrait medal of Langdon.

In 2005 Vjekoslava Kerdić, the younger daughter of Ivo Kerdić, despatched to the Zagreb Archaeological Museum the medals remaining in her possession, along with photographs and a large number of documents relating to her father and the Kerdić family. Paintings, furniture and other items were deposited at Zagreb's Arts and Crafts Museum. Thanks to her generosity, the medals became the property of the Archaeological Museum's numismatic collection, whilst the remaining material was sorted, studied, partly photocopied or scanned, and then handed over to the Archdiocese of Zagreb archives. Among the photographs were several of individuals who can also be seen on the artist's medals (these will be discussed here), whilst others remain anonymous. These photographs were chiefly taken in profile, with the sitter facing either right or left. Although most of the portrait medals were made during sessions at the artist's studio, the photographs were used by the medallist as aids for modelling. Among the well-known medals by Kerdić that resulted both from a sitting and a photograph is that of Izidor Kršnjavi, the former minister of culture of Croatia, who, however, did not like his portrait and had all the medals thrown into the river Sava in 1915.<sup>2</sup> At the same time Kerdić also owned a wide range of photographs of animals,<sup>3</sup> including donkeys, bulls, horses and others, also taken in profile, as well as views of churches, monuments and other antiquities, which helped him in his work.

Among the old negatives, which were kept in cardboard boxes, was a glass negative plate showing the artist's Viennese wife Käthe, with in the foreground their one-year old elder daughter Vida, with her head in profile (fig. 2). A medal by the artist shows the fine-haired infant child facing right, the opposite direction from that of the photograph, suggesting that a print may have been made with the negative placed the other way round. The medal, which radiates the boundless love of a father for his infant daughter, was modelled in 1917 and has been exhibited on several occasions. A plaster specimen, presented by Vjekoslava Kerdić to the Zagreb Archaeological Museum, was shown at the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts in 1993 (fig. 3),<sup>4</sup> whilst a cast bronze example, once in the collection of Dragutin Mandl, is now the property of Zagreb's Modern Gallery.<sup>5</sup> Kerdić also made a silver brooch, with an identical portrait of his first daughter in a semi-precious stone surrounded by four dolphins and four malachites.<sup>6</sup> In 1921 Kerdić made a similar portrait of the child, who by this time had fuller hair.<sup>7</sup> Born on 13 March 1916, Vida Kerdić became an accomplished pianist, but tragically died on 9 January 1943 soon after giving birth; her baby also died. The Kerdić family never recovered from the shock.

Another photograph in the collection shows the noted Zagreb architect Dragutin Vajda (1881-1959),<sup>8</sup> a member of the Society of Engineers and Architects of Zagreb (fig. 4). The Zagreb Glyptothèque holds a related full-size plaster model for Kerdić's plaquette of Vajda made in 1928 (fig. 5). The same year also saw the making of a portrait medal of William Chauncy Langdon, the author of a two-volume history, *Everyday things in American life, 1607-1876*, which ran into several editions, and also a great promoter of Kerdić and his medals.<sup>9</sup> Dragutin Mandl wrote of Kerdić in 1953:

In this period we find two medals of his American friend William Chauncy Langdon, the director of



1. Ivo Kerdić in his studio,  
12 December 1931,  
photograph.

the New York Numismatic Collection, of which one was reduced and struck, as well as an original uniface cast medal of the beautiful American Marjorie Swan. We owe it to W. Ch. Langdon that there are so many medals by Kerdić in America (possibly more than in our public collections).<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that this was by no means the first case of a friendship between an illustrious Croat and a famous American. There is, for example, a late nineteenth- / early twentieth-century parallel in the friendship between the great Croatian soprano Milka Ternina (1863-1941)<sup>11</sup> and the famous Bostonian doctor William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), whose magnanimity greatly enriched the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

From the correspondence between Langdon and Kerdić, now preserved in the fine arts archives of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts in Zagreb (this was presented by Kerdić himself to the Academy's Glyptotheque) and the archives of the Archdiocese of Zagreb,<sup>12</sup> it is

established that their first contact took place in 1923 and grew up into a friendship that lasted until Langdon's death in 1947. The formal tone of the early letters gradually grows into a very cordial one, even though the two men never met, in spite of the artist's wish to travel to New York and work there for a time. As the correspondence is incomplete, it would be rewarding to discover whether any letters written by Kerdić to Langdon are preserved in the USA, either among Langdon's descendants, if they exist, or in public or private collections.

Langdon, who worked for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company at 195 Broadway, New York, was chairman of the foreign medals committee of the American Numismatic Society (ANS). Having received information about Kerdić from both the president and the secretary of the South Slav Academy in Zagreb, he wrote a letter to the artist, dated 13 November 1923, in which he asked for information on Kerdić's medals as well as on Yugoslavian medallic art generally.



3. Kerdić: *Vida Kerdić*,  
1917, plaster, 126 x 135mm.,  
Zagreb Archaeological  
Museum.



2. Kerdić: *Käthe Kerdić holding her daughter Vida*, 1917, photograph.

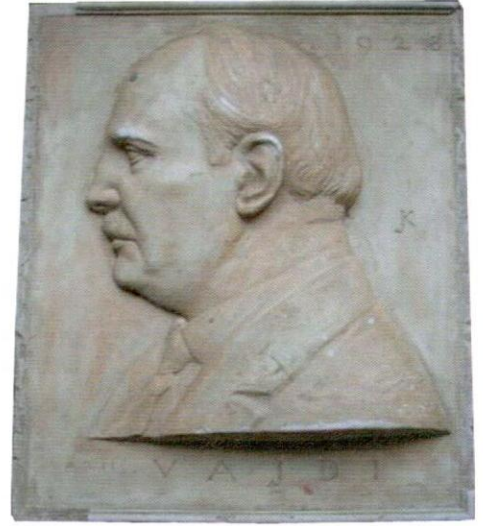
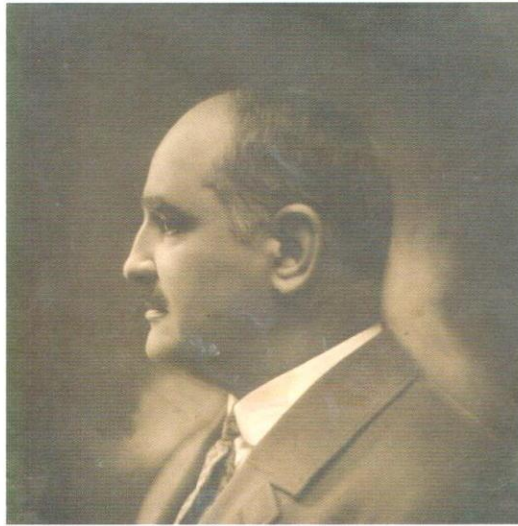
This letter was followed by an invitation, dated 15 March 1924 and sent to Kerdić by Edward T. Newell, the American Numismatic Society's president, to take part in a loan exhibition of medals by foreign artists, planned to open in New York on 7 November 1924. The society's aim was to show the development of medallic art since 1910, when the last such exhibition had been held. Each artist was invited to send from two to five medals made after that date. Kerdić had this letter translated into Croatian.

Langdon wrote a further letter on 28 June 1924, having received a letter from Kerdić, in which the artist listed some of his medals and their prices. This contained instructions on how the medals were to be packed, what customs declarations were to be made, and how they were to be sent to New York (further instructions and information were to follow on 22 August 1924 and 1 January 1925). It is interesting to note that Langdon had now extended the invitation to Anton Sever<sup>33</sup> in Ljubljana and Đorđe Jovanović<sup>34</sup> in Belgrade. This letter was

also translated into Croatian. On 10 July 1924 Langdon informed Kerdić that the ANS wished to acquire two of his works for the price of five dollars each: a 1908 medal of the Women's Folk Weaving and Embroidery Society of Petrinja and a 1912 city of Zagreb plaquette. In his reply Kerdić listed the five medals he proposed to send to New York: a medal of Petar Dobrović (1921), a medal of Vilko Gecan (1923), a portrait of Mrs Malešević, a Jockey Club medal (1920), and a Union of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes memorial medal (1918). He also mentioned the two medals destined for the ANS collection.

On 7 October 1924 Langdon confirmed receipt of the parcel, expressed agreement with Kerdić that the best of the medals was the Dobrović portrait, and gave his opinion on the prices proposed by the artist. In another letter, of 15 April 1925, he voiced doubts that the exhibition would be shown in other American cities:

The medal is not a popular form of art in America as yet. We have some fine medallic work done



4. Dragutin Vajda,  
photograph, c.1922.

5. Kerdić: *Dragutin Vajda*,  
1928, plaster,  
290 x 250mm.,  
Glyptothek of the  
Croatian Academy, Zagreb.

here, but they are about all either medals of award or subscription medals; they cannot be bought freely. This Exhibition is doing much to bring the fine art medal to the attention of Americans, however, and we gratefully appreciate your sending your medals to it.

Langdon also gave his opinion on the relative merits as medallists of Kerdić and Ivan Meštrović:<sup>15</sup> 'Personally I think your medallic work much finer than Mestrovic's.' This was an opinion that he was to repeat several years later.

Shortly afterwards Vilko Gecan,<sup>16</sup> one of the more outstanding Croatian painters of this period, arrived in New York with his wife Zora,<sup>17</sup> bringing several examples of his medals with him. Gecan called upon Langdon and gave him one of these medals and also, as a gift from Kerdić, an example of the Dobrović medal; this was acknowledged by Langdon in one of his longest letters to Kerdić, dated 3 August 1925. Thus both the ANS and Langdon personally began to collect the work of Croatian

medallists. Some of these were purchased, with the payment sent to the artist by international money order; some were gifts. Another package of medals was brought to Langdon by Dr Ivan Shvegel on 17 February 1926, and in his letter dated three days later Langdon listed nineteen examples of fourteen different medals by Kerdić that he had received. Other American collectors were also interested in his medals and were beginning to acquire them.

The first hint that the possibility of a portrait medal of Langdon was in Kerdić's mind occurs in a letter he wrote (and had translated) on 9 October 1926: 'already the last time I had intended to ask you to send me your photograph, as I would like to know such a warm friend by his face, when it is impossible for me to know him personally. I take the liberty of sending you my photograph enclosed.' In the same letter Kerdić informed his American friend about other objects he was making: 'a lot of applied art work, especially candlesticks, lamps adorned with sculptures, and various goblets



8. Kerdić: *W.C. Langdon*, 1928, bronze, 45mm., private collection, Zagreb.



6. *W.C. Langdon*, photograph, 19 January 1928.

7. *W.C. Langdon*, photograph, 19 January 1928.

for sporting societies', as well as medals. He also enclosed some photographs of his latest medals. These were acknowledged by Langdon in a letter of 19 March 1927, in which he also announced his intention of writing an article on Kerdić and his work for a British journal, the *Slavonic Review*.

By 22 May 1927 Langdon had sent Kerdić the requested photograph:

Before you receive this you will already have received the photograph of me which you asked me to send you. I have done so with great pleasure. My friends tell me it is an excellent likeness. I myself of course do not know, as I have never seen myself except when I was shaving and so did not notice what I looked like or when I deliberately looked into a mirror and was consequently somewhat self-conscious and not looking like myself.

In his letter of 22 July Langdon's habitual greetings, 'My dear Mr Kerdić' and 'My dear

Professor Kerdić', are suddenly replaced by 'My dear Friend'. After discussing various other matters, he wrote:

It is a decided honor you are proposing, to make a medal of me. I greatly value your thought and desire. I wish it were possible for you to do it from life! For you to attempt it merely from a photograph would be working at such a serious disadvantage. Let us defer it for a year or so! Who knows, one of us may be crossing the ocean, and then it would be possible. I know how great an expense it would be to make a medal and there would be no sale for it over here except such as your own fine art would create, for I am not known here at all. If you could do it later, from life, then you would have a fair opportunity for your art and the result would be sure to do you justice. For me to let you do it from photographs would be for me to tie your hands and then say, 'Now, my kind friend, let us see what you can make of me?' As far as sending you a profile picture of myself, I should be glad to have one

9. Kerdić: W.C. Langdon,  
1928, plaster, 307mm.  
(obverse), 267 mm.  
(reverse), both Glyptothèque  
of the Croatian Academy,  
Zagreb.



taken for the purpose, if I knew which profile you preferred. In any event, I assure you, I cordially appreciate your thought and your desire to do this not merely as an honor from so fine artist but as a hearty hand-clasp from a true friend.

In a postscript he asked Kerdić whether there were any good medallic artists in Roumania or Bulgaria.

The proposed article for the *Slavonic Review* recurred in a letter Langdon wrote on 7 August, in which he also asked the artist for an example of his plaquette of the great Croatian actress Nina Vavra:

One of the editors of the *Slavonic Review* is coming to New York this coming Friday and I am expecting him to come in to see me. I shall show him the article on your medallic work at that time. So you see things are really moving with it. In that connection, and for the exhibition of your work at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Washington, can I get an exemplaire [sic]

of the portrait of Nina Vavra? I admire it most sincerely and I am specially speaking of it in the article. It is a remarkable piece of portraiture. I should like to be able to show it at the exhibition, as the historians will have read about it in the article and as I am going to urge that it be one of the illustrations. You say it was ordered by the Association of Actors for her 25th anniversary. I earnestly hope they will consent to your sending me a copy for this purpose. If it may be bought, please tell me the price of it, as I should like very much to have it myself, and should also want to see if I could not get the American Numismatic Society to buy one. If it is possible, I trust you will send an exemplaire along to me.

Langdon ended by asking more questions about the artist's works for the article, and the questions continued in the following letter of 16 August. This letter also reveals that he received direct help from Gecan and his wife, who visited Langdon's office, giving him the opportunity to read them a draft and discuss





10. Kerdić: *W.C. Langdon*, 1928, plaster, 304mm., Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy, Zagreb.

it. However, the information they provided was not enough, and in the letter Langdon went on to list his questions:

1. What year was it you went to Paris, when you studied with Roty?
2. What year was it you went to Vienna, after your father's death?
3. Is the Gillar Bronze Foundry the correct name of the place you worked and where you became foreman? If not, what was it?
4. What was the name of the figure you executed, that stood opposite the Stock im Eisen in Vienna? Who was the artist of it?
5. What are the first names of the professors you studied with in Vienna? Rudolph Mayer? Stephan Schwarz? Rudolph Marschall?
6. What year was it you were called for military service in the Austrian army, while you were at Vienna, and after which you studied with Professor Marschall?
7. What year did you make the coins for Bulgaria? What denominations were they?

8. What is the date of the Jockey Club medal? Where is the Club – Zagreb?

9. How old was Neda in 1916, when you made the medal of her?

10. Can you tell me any more about Dobrovic's escape from death? Do I understand correctly he is now in Paris? What is his address now?

I shall gratefully appreciate it if you will please let me have answers to these questions at your early convenience.

A letter of 12 October gives more information about the progress of the *Slavonic Review* article, which had now been sent off to London. Kerdić had expressed his wish to travel to the USA and work there for some time, but Langdon was discouraging:

I fear there would be little opportunity here to encourage you to come to America. We have some fine medallic artists, but it is quite impossible for them to make a living from their medallic work. They all do it incidentally, on the side. I hope to do a little help to create a market here for medals,

11. Kerdić: *W.C. Langdon*, 1928, steel die, 73mm., Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy, Zagreb. Made by Griesbach and Knaus.

12. Kerdić: *W.C. Langdon* (reverse), 1928, steel punch, 63mm., Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy, Zagreb. Made by Griesbach and Knaus.



but it is a slow work, very slow work.

He then reverted to the topic of the portrait medal:

I hope I have not seemed unappreciative of your desire to make a medal of me. It would please me greatly. If you care to do it, I shall gladly send you some photographs. In a few days I will have a couple taken specially to enable you to study the formation of my head. So that if you undertake it from photographs, it may be from several photographs, not from only one. The other day, as I was walking along the street I saw a new machine called the Photomaton. You sit down, put a 25c coin in the slot and at intervals turn the head. Here are the results! But in a short time I will send you some real photographs. Some of my family say these are good; some that they are awful. Whether good or bad, I send them to you for the fun of the thing!

Finally two good photographs of Langdon arrived, showing both profiles and taken by De

Witt Ward of New York; they are dated in Langdon's handwriting on their backs 19 January 1928 (figs 6, 7). These enabled Kerdić to go ahead with his medal (fig. 8)<sup>18</sup> The full-size plaster models were deposited by him at the Zagreb Glyptothèque in 1947.<sup>19</sup> There are two versions of the obverse, one showing Langdon in profile, facing to the left and clad in what appears to be a Roman toga, accompanied by the legend WILLIAM CHAUNCY LANGDON and a diminutive lime branch, a device the artist sometimes used as a signature. (fig. 9). The other has the same legend, but shows him in civilian clothes and in a three-quarter view facing left (fig. 10). The reverse bears a dedication, TO MY AMERICAN FRIEND, with a female figure in classical dress, standing upon a pedestal, her body facing and her head turned left, and holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a medal in her right. Both the figure's hands are disproportionately large. An olive tree to the left, with its branches chopped back, so that only one bears leaves, and an owl perched on it show that she is intended

13. Ivo Kerdić in his studio, surrounded by Andrija and Vera Milčinović and an unknown man, c.1935, photograph.



as Athena. To the left is a scroll to which seals are attached, and on the right side are the date 1. 4 1928 and a pitcher. The signature JK appears in the exergue. Also in the Zagreb Glyptotheque are the steel die for the obverse (fig. 11) and the punch of the reverse (fig. 12), which were made by the Zagreb firm of Griesbach and Knaus, as is shown by the presence of its stamp on the edge of the die.

On 1928 Langdon informed Kerdić that Sir Bernard Pares of the *Slavonic Review* had informed him that the article would be printed in the summer number. Several months later, on 30 November, he was able to tell Kerdić that he had been informed by Jean Babelon that another article he had written about him and his medallic work would be printed in the July 1929 number of the French art periodical *Aréthuse*.

In a letter of 7 January 1931 Kerdić wrote to tell Langdon that he had asked his friend, the painter Ivan Gundrum,<sup>20</sup> to take some photographs and medals (of Stjepan Radić, Vladimir Bečić and Langdon) to the United States to and

send them on to Langdon from there. At the same time he informed Langdon that a numismatic society had been founded in Zagreb, with about eighty members and Benko Horvat<sup>21</sup> as its president. This was the Croatian Numismatic Society, formed in 1928.

Another person to take on the role of courier was Vera Milčinović-Tashamira,<sup>22</sup> nicknamed Čuča or Čučica, the daughter of Kerdić's old friends Andrija<sup>23</sup> and Adela Milčinović (fig. 13).<sup>24</sup> Milčinović-Tashamira was a well-known dancer, charming and beautiful with a Garboesque appearance, who travelled to New York early in 1937, carrying some medals for Langdon. Her first attempt to find him failed, as the address given to her by Kerdić was wrong (175 instead of 195 Broadway). This she explained in her letter to Kerdić of 13 January 1937, but even when, on 10 February, Kerdić sent her the right address, she was little more successful, as Langdon had retired in the autumn of 1936 on account of his age. She did, however, meet his former secretary, a Czech woman named Anne Rolicheck,

14. Kerdić: *Self-portrait*, 1941, bronze, 55mm., Zagreb Archaeological Museum.



15. Ivo Kerdić, photograph, 8 September 1940.

who took the medals and informed Langdon, who had moved to a new address in Bronxville, about the visit. The entire story was explained to Kerdić in a letter from Langdon dated 25 February, in which he expressed his thanks for the medals he had received previously (the Croatian amateur theatrical and Quiqueran Beaujeau medals, both of 1935), but also asked Kerdić not to send him any more, as he had had to discontinue every unnecessary expenditure since his retirement. A few weeks later, in a letter of 9 March, he acknowledged receipt of the three medals brought to him by Milčinović-Tashamira (two depicting Alexander I Karađorđević, king of Yugoslavia, and a plaquette of Kerdić's niece Vera Pija Pilar of 1906), expressing his great admiration for all the three. The following day Milčinović-Tashamira also wrote to Kerdić, thanking him on behalf of her mother and sister Deša, who were already with her in the United States, for the gift he had sent them of the medal struck for the Croatian Ball in Vienna in 1912.

Vera Milčinović-Tashamira, who, as a little girl, had been portrayed by Kerdić on a plaquette in 1914,<sup>25</sup> had decided to become a ballerina when she was still a child. She had studied Dalcroze eurythmics,<sup>26</sup> and early in her career became a member of the famous Rudolf Laban Company,<sup>27</sup> which performed in Zagreb in 1924. In 1928 she danced in Zagreb in a ballet named *Nicotine*, choreographed by the Russian dancer and choreographer Margarita Froman, who had established herself in Zagreb after the Russian revolution, and she was frequently depicted in the Zagreb illustrated review *Svijet (The World)*. She went on to have a successful career in the United States, dancing in various Broadway theatres. She appeared in musicals and also on television during its early years, and devised choreography for this new medium. In 1947-48 she gave a series of solo performances in South America, and she gave lectures and demonstrations of the dances of different nations at New York's New School for Social Research.

On 12 July 1937 Kerdić wrote to Langdon,

16. Kerdić: *Self-portrait*,  
1941, plaster, 195  
x 195mm., Zagreb  
Archaeological Museum.



saying that the medals that the dancer had brought him were intended as a gift and announcing his trip to the Holy Land, Greece and Egypt. The occasion for this visit was the consecration by Alojzije Stepinac, archbishop of Zagreb, of a chapel in Bethlehem dedicated to the Blessed Nikola Tavelić, which was entirely decorated by Kerdić. Photographs exist of this voyage.

Several more letters were exchanged between the two in the years 1939 and 1940. On 7 March 1940 Kerdić informed Langdon that he had mailed him his latest medal, struck for the medical history congress held in Zagreb in 1938, and promised to send him a portrait of Dr Vladko Maček, president of the Croatian Peasant Party. He began the letter:

My dear friend, I am afraid that I did not write since I received your kind letter of August 23rd last. The reason for this delay was the outbreak of this terrible war, which is threatening to destroy the civilisation and culture of the whole world. You Americans and we Jugoslavs are not

yet, thank God, inflicted in this struggle, but we, who live in the dangerous vicinity, are very much afraid of all eventualities which may still occur. You know very well that 'inter arma silent Muses' [sic], and I fear that this will prove again.

Contact between Langdon and Kerdić ceased after 1940, only to be revived late in 1945, when Langdon sent Christmas greetings to his old friend. He was now living in Roseville Road, Westport, Connecticut. A letter by Kerdić, drafted in Croatian and translated into English and dated 22 March 1946, informed his friend that he had survived the war with much pain, having lost his elder daughter Vida, and that his own life had been threatened on several occasions. He was still teaching at the Fine Arts Academy in Zagreb and promised to send Langdon a medal that had been struck for his sixtieth birthday. On 14 April Langdon informed the artist that the following inscription had been placed along with some flowers on the altar of his local church during the Easter services:



18. Kerdić: *Ivo de Mošinsky*, 1938, bronze, 76mm., Zagreb Archaeological Museum.



17. *Ivo de Mošinsky*, c.1935, photograph.

Easter. Christ and Holy Trinity Church, Westport, Connecticut, April 21st 1946  
 In Memory of Vida Kerdić of Zagreb  
 Pianist and War-Victim  
 And Thanks for the Survival of her Father  
 Ivo Kerdić of Yugoslavia  
 Sculptor and Patriot  
 Who was at several times at the point of death.

The last letter from Langdon was written on 29 December 1946. In the following year Kerdić received a sad letter written on 19 March by Langdon's wife, Marion:

It will sadden you to know that my husband is very ill and has been so for the past two months. Your very beautiful medal reached him here on February 13 just six days after your letter and at that time he was here at home and able to read the letter and enjoy the medal when it arrived. He thought it so beautiful and he wept over it and your kindness in sending it to him in the midst of your troubled life. We planned then to write to

you immediately and he told me what he wanted to say to you in my letter.

It was not however possible for me to write just then as he became so violently ill that I was unable to do anything but take care of him. He was taken to a nearby hospital on Feb. 15 and has been there ever since. It will not be possible to bring him home as he has to have blood transfusions and X-Ray treatment and try to keep him somewhat contented but of course he wants nothing but to come home.

He is suffering from leukemia and as far as I know there is no cure for it – but we can only hope that some miracle will spare him to us for a while. He suffered a stroke in October and he never recovered from it and from Christmas time on he grew steadily worse. He is now in his seventy-sixth year and we cannot expect him to have the strength that a younger man might have.

You will realize how deeply he was touched by your sending the very beautiful medal and will rejoice with me that it came while he could still enjoy it. Indeed I have taken it over to the hospital

21. *Mihovil Abramić*,  
c.1945, photograph.



19. *Mihovil Abramić*,  
c.1925, photograph.

20. *Mihovil Abramić*,  
c.1925, photograph.

twice since that he might renew his pleasure in it but I always bring it back here for safe keeping.

This medal mentioned by Marion Langdon, the last that Kerdić was to send to her husband, was the self-portrait medal of 1941, which the artist had promised in March (fig. 14).<sup>28</sup> Modelled after photographs (fig. 15), the full-size plaster of the obverse is now in the Zagreb Archaeological Museum (fig. 16). On the reverse there is a rural scene from the area in which Kerdić was born, showing the courtyard of a wooden peasant house, with a well, figures in folk costume, horses, apple-trees, and so on. The legends translate as 'O Slavonia' and 'To my family and friends'. The medal was engraved by Teodor Krivak (1900-80) after Kerdić's models, and struck in silver and bronze.

Vjekoslava Kerdić still owns the unpublished memoirs of her father, a 153-page typescript, which she considers too personal to make public. However, with her kind consent, here is the section dealing with Langdon, which appears in a chapter entitled 'My friends':

Another good friend of mine was the American Langdon, the great lover of the art of the medal, for some time director of the numismatic collection in New York and a great collector of medals. It was from him that I came to know something about America. As the director of the numismatic museum he was interested in all European medallists, therefore by chance via Austrian medallists he came upon me, because I was nowhere recorded as a Croat. In order to be promoted in America I would have had to pass via Paris or Moscow to America. Several works of mine were shown at an international exhibition and I attracted some attention as a newcomer. I broke the ice with my portrait of Dobrović and this portrait was purchased for the New York numismatic collection. From that moment my dear friend tirelessly did whatever he could to make me known in America and in Europe, to give me a place among the leading medallists. Besides the articles published in American numismatic periodicals, he also wrote for the Slavonic Review, in order to draw the attention



22. Jakac: *Mihovil and Dragica Abramić*, 1947, engraving.

of the English public to my oeuvre, and through this journal the attention of other Slavic nations, for which this periodical was published. Thanks to this periodical, our numismatic society took part at the congress marking the centenary of the London Numismatic Society in 1927 [in fact, 1936]. There my friend and secretary Ivo Uzorinac, who spoke English well, gave a paper on my art at the congress. In the miscellanea dedicated to this centenary of English numismatists and medallists, one of my medals, together with those of six other European medallists, was presented. Although our government, that is, the Yugoslav consul, did everything to prevent this lecture, and even had Uzorinac arrested – as a politically divergent element at Davor – he managed to reach London at the very last moment and gave the paper. I owe this to the energetic position taken by the director of the numismatic museum in London. At the same time my friend wrote an article in a French journal for the French public, with reproductions of my medals in [*Aréthuse*]. Thus was paved my path to America. I became more and more known

there and numismatists bought my medals in dollars, which currency helped me to build my house. I was helped even more by my dear American friend thus that, together with Iegvi and Španjel, I was able to sell one of my medals to the museum yearly, which were accepted even without a jury. This happened with my plaquette of Stjepan Radić, and later they also ordered the medal of Alexander Karadorđević. These medals were well paid for. My friend took care not only that I should become esteemed by the Americans, but also that my works became better represented in America than in Belgrade or Zagreb. He tried to get me for America and through a connection almost got me to go to a mint that was being set up in south America. He was also in touch with my cousin Marijan Majcen, who at the time was with the Ministry of Construction, and through him tried to get me for this mint. Because of my family problems and illness, this never happened. This fortunate opportunity was accepted by my pupil Besediček, but he did not take up the position. He remained in South America as a free-



23. Kerdić: *Mihovil  
Abramić*, 1950, bronze,  
61mm., Zagreb  
Archaeological Museum.



lance artist and became quite well-known. Some time later he was reported as killed, drawn by the desire to visit some Inca tribes in [...], because of the heads they used to shrink with the use of unknown methods. This year, however, I received after 15 years the news that he was alive in [...]. This made me very happy, because, as I have already said, he was my first pupil.

Until three months ago I exchanged letters with my dear friend, a correspondence lasting 25 years. The last letter was written by his wife, in which she told me that he had been taken to hospital with leukaemia, and now I was told he had died. I twice made the portrait of this good American, whom I never had the fortune to meet, relying on photographs. I lived in the hope we might meet each other perhaps in Europe, America or England, on the occasion of the centenary of the numismatic society, where he intended to come, but why he never came to Europe I never knew. Just before the war started he was about to organise an exhibition of three European medalists, but the war prevented this. During the war

he enquired whether I was alive through the Red Cross, and when the war ended he wrote to me again and sent me his sympathies on the death of my daughter Vida, giving me consolation. Soon after this, my only friend, whom I esteemed and respected, was also gone. As a mark of friendship I place this American among my best friends. The Croatian nation too must thank him for his linking the Croatian art of the medal with the American one. He is dead now, and I have noted down these lines as important events in my life.<sup>29</sup>

The Langdon correspondence is only a small section of the Kerdić archive, preserved in the archives of the Croatian Academy and the Archdiocese of Zagreb and containing information on many commissions for statues, reliefs, medals, including those of saints, tokens, and pilgrimage badges.

In 1938 Kerdić used a photograph to make a portrait medal of his close friend, Ivo Fedor Mošinsky (also spelled Mosinszky, Mošinszky and Mošinski) de Zagreb-grad (1874-1945; figs



24. Kerdić: *Mihovil Abramić*, 1950, steel dies, 89mm. (obverse), 86mm. (reverse), Zagreb Archaeological Museum.

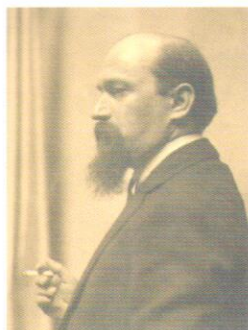
17, 18).<sup>30</sup> The aristocratic Mošinsky family came from Poland and was apparently related to the Radziwills. Ivo was the son of Adolf de Mošinsky (1843-1907), who, from 1892 to 1902, was one of the most effective mayors in the history of the city of Zagreb; he was further ennobled by Emperor Franz Joseph I on 25 March 1899.<sup>31</sup> Ivo's wife was Vika Engl (1885-1943), a noted soprano, who sang not only at the Zagreb Opera, but also in Berlin, Hanover and Vienna. The photograph and the medal of Ivo Mošinsky both show an elderly gentleman with his hair neatly combed backwards and sporting a small moustache, facing right. A card bearing the family coat of arms, now preserved in the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts, carries a message written by Mošinsky on 24 June 1938 from the popular Slovenian spa of Rimske Toplice:

I am constantly looking at the plaquette [medal] and the longer I contemplate it, the more I like it. However I have a request. My ear is, to speak

frankly, too long. I do not possess such a donkey's ear. Please do have my ear made shorter during the engraving process, by at least 2 millimetres, then the medal will be much more beautiful. I constantly keep measuring my ear, but it is really not longer than my nose<sup>32</sup>

Nine years later, in April 1947, Kerdić deposited at the Glyptothek the plaster model for the obverse of the medal<sup>33</sup> and a cast bronze model of the reverse,<sup>34</sup> which bears Mošinsky's name and coat of arms. The artist placed the die for this reverse in the Zagreb Glyptothek in 1954.<sup>35</sup>

A later work by Kerdić included a portrait of Mihovil Abramić (1884-1962), director of the Archaeological Museum in Split, founded in 1821. The earliest surviving letter, relating to this project was written by Abramić from Split on 5 August 1949. Along with the letter, Abramić sent Kerdić his last off-print of an article he had written on an exquisitely beautiful Greek marble relief from Trogir of the god of the propitious moment, Kairos (or Bonus Eventus),<sup>36</sup>



26. Ivan Meštrović, c.1950, photograph.

which he wished to have on the reverse of his medal. In the letter Abramić gave instructions for the embossing of a metal platter, which were intended for an artist whose first name was Slavko, and he also enclosed books containing images of various ancient Greek coins. Further personal contacts arose when Abramić visited Zagreb, and postcards were exchanged between the two men on 21 August, 11 October and 24 November 1949. Abramić also provided some photographs of himself taken in profile. Two of these dated from the 1920s (figs 19, 20), whilst a more recent one showed a more gaunt head (fig. 21). He also sent a photograph of portraits of himself and his wife Dragica (*née* Bratkovič) engraved by the Slovenian painter and print-maker Božidar Jakac (1899-1989), which was intended to help Kerdić in his work (fig. 22). It is clear from the last postcard that Teodor Krivak was entrusted with the execution of the reverse and engraving the dies. His signature can be seen on the reverse.

The medal was struck in 1950 and commem-

orated the thirty years that had elapsed since Abramić had arrived at the Split museum (fig. 23).<sup>37</sup> Upon receiving it, Abramić wrote: 'I not only owe you a perfect work of art ... but ... I thank you from the very bottom of my heart.' The medal's resemblance to a cast rather than a struck piece is explained by the unpolished surfaces of the dies, which were purchased by the Zagreb Archaeological Museum in 2003 (fig. 24).<sup>38</sup> Whether the dies remained unpolished through the wishes of either Abramić or the artist or because there were no proper tools at Kerdić's disposal in those post-war times is unknown. Several medals were polished after striking, and others were patinated. Abramić presented his friends and colleagues with the medal, which was sometimes set into a piece of marble, so as to be used as paperweight.

One of the last relief portraits by Kerdić is a double portrait of Queen Elizabeth II and the duke of Edinburgh of 1952,<sup>39</sup> the images most probably taken from the *Illustrated London News*, which was very popular among the

25. Kerdić: *Ivan Meštrović*  
1953, plaster, 230mm.,  
Zagreb Archaeological  
Museum.



English-speaking citizens of Zagreb. The very last portrait medal Kerdić modelled in the year of his death was that of his old friend, the sculptor Ivan Meštrović (fig. 25),<sup>40</sup> which remained unreduced and was cast at full size in plaster and bronze. For this work he depended on his memory and on a photograph (fig. 26). The medal has two reverses, one of which shows Meštrović's sculpture, *Croatian history*, which now stands in front of the rectorate of the Zagreb University.

The Kerdić archive, and particularly the Vjekoslava Kerdić donation, is a valuable source for the history of the art of the medal in Croatia in the first half of the twentieth century, and it is hoped that it will be used frequently in the future. The story that it tells of the friendship between a Croatian artist and his American admirer is just one indication of its treasures. <sup>M</sup>

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Vjekoslava Kerdić, the artist's daughter; Vesna Mažuran Subotić of the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts; the staff of the fine arts archives of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts; and also Sonia Wild Bičanić, Marko Šarinić, Igor Krajcar and Filip Beusan.

## NOTES

- Ivan Mirnik, 'Ivo Kerdić', *The Medal*, 16 (London, 1990), pp. 53-7.
- Ivan Mirnik, 'A medal from the bottom of the river Sava', *The Medal*, 39 (London, 2001), pp. 47-50.
- Miroslav Montani, *Ivo Kerdić* (Zagreb, 1958), p. 53; Lida Roje-Depolo and Vesna Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić, Retrospektivna izložba* (Zagreb, 1993), pp. 88, 95, 131, nos 172, 173. Kerdić was a good animalier, but the best Croatian animalier on medals and plaquettes remains Robert Frangeš Mihanović (1872-1940) and in large-scale sculpture Branislav Dešković (1883-1939).
- Roje-Depolo and Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić*, p. 126, no. 132. 112 mm.; Vinko Zlamalik, *Medalja u Hrvatskoj [The medal in Croatia]* (Zagreb, 1964), p. 80, no. 142; Vinko Zlamalik, *Memorijal Ivo Kerdića* (Osijek and Zagreb, 1980), p. 47, no. 28; Vinko Zlamalik, *Kroatische Medaillen und Kleinplastik 1906-1979* (Berlin, 1981), p. 58, no. 24.
- Montani, *Ivo Kerdić*, p. 71; Roje-Depolo and Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić*, pp. 70, 123, no. 92.
- Montani, *Ivo Kerdić*, p. 43.
- Dragutin Mandl, '50 godina medaljerskog rada prof. Ive Kerdića. (Zusammenfassung:) 50 Jahre Medaillearbeit Prof. Ivo Kerdić', *Numizmatika*, v (Zagreb, 1953), p. 95.
- William Chauncy Langdon, 'The medal work of Ivo Kerdić', *Slavonic Review* (London, June 1928), pp. 171-8; William Chauncy Langdon, 'Ivo Kerdić', *Aréthuse* (Paris, 1929), pp. 27-8, pls 5-6. Kerdić obtained an off-print of this article and a translation into Croatian for his archive. The two other great champions of his art abroad were Ivo Uzorinac of Zagreb and August von Loehr of Vienna. See Ivo Uzorinac, 'The medallic work of Ivo Kerdić', in J. Allan, H. Mattingly and E.S.G. Robinson, (eds), *Transactions of the International Numismatic Congress organized and held in London by the Royal Numismatic Society June 30 - July 3, 1936 on the occasion of its centenary* (London, 1938), pp. 482-6; pls XXVI, XXVII; August von Loehr, 'Ivo Kerdić', *Mitteilungen der Numismatischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, xvi, 29-30 (Vienna, May-June 1929), p. 81.
- Mandl, '50 godina medaljerskog', p. 95.
- See Ivan Mirnik, 'Benno Elkan's portrait of Milka Ternina', *The Medal*, 23 (London, 1993), pp. 27-8.
- The surviving letters written by William Chauncy Langdon, his wife Marion, Kerdić (surviving as copies), and other persons, such as Edward T. Newell, Howland Wood and Vera Milčinović-Tashamira, total about sixty: 13 and 15 November 1923; 15 March, 28 June, 10 July, 22 August and 7 October 1924; 1 January, 15 April, 19 May, no date, 3 August, 9 October and Christmas (a card) 1925; 23 January, 17 and 20 February, 1 May, 5 September and 9 October 1926; 19 and 24 March, 22 May, 22 July, no date, 7 and 16 August and 12 October 1927; 7 March, 30 November and Christmas (a card) 1928; 7 January 1931; 13 January, 10 and 25 February, 9, 10 and 17 March, 2 April, 12 July and 11 August 1937; 9 and 23 August 1939; 7 and 31 March and 2 May 1940; no date 1945; 22 March, 14 and 21 April, 20 August, 26 September and 29 December 1946; and 19 March 1947.
- Anton Sever (1886-1965), a leading Slovenian sculptor and the first Slovenian medallist after Schega.
- Dorde Jovanović (1861-1953), a key figure in Serbian sculpture and the first Serbian medallist.
- See Ivan Mirnik, 'Medals by Ivan Meštrović', *The Medal*, 30 (London, 1997), pp. 65-78.
- Vilko Gecan (1894-1973), Croatian painter and a friend of Kerdić, whom he portrayed in oils in 1921.
- Zora Gecan (1896-1978), wife of Vilko Gecan.
- Mandl, '50 godina medaljerskog', p. 95; Montani, *Ivo Kerdić* 1958, pp. 9, 11, 49, 51; Zlamalik, *Memorijal Ivo Kerdića*, p. 54, no. 166; Nada Todorović, *Jugoslovenske i inostrane medalje. Médailles yougoslaves et étrangères* (Belgrade, 1964), pp. 141-2, no. 438.
- Act of 4 April 1947, no. 39, inv. no. 3(52). This list contains 257 items. Fine Arts Archives of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts in Zagreb, inv. no. 758, Signature D200/185, box XII. Several letters which had remained in the possession of Vjekoslava Kerdić are now in the archives of the Archdiocese of Zagreb.
- Ivan Gundrum (1892-1967), Croatian painter and scenographer.
- Benko Horvat (1874-1955), numismatist and collector, founder of the Croatian Numismatic Society and initiator of its publications. He made a considerable bequest to the city of Zagreb and to the Vinkovac City Museum.
- Vera Milčinović-Tashamira (1906-95.) Thanks to the courtesy of Bruce Burroughs, former editor of *Opera Quarterly* and biographer of the soprano Zinka Kunc Milanov, I have received the following information: 'The Social Security Death Registry lists a Vera T. Milcinovic (nothing at all under Tashamira), U.S. Social Security #109-16-8533, issued in the state of New York before 1951. This lady was born 20 August 1904 and died 24 March 1995. Her last place of residence was Rodeo, California (zip code 94572). That is the northern part of California (as you know, it is a huge state and has the fifth largest economy of any governmental entity in the world), in Contra Costa County. I am assuming this is the correct lady and that, like most performers (especially female), she took a few years off her age at the beginning of her career (thus your reference book says "1906").'
- Andrija Milčinović (1877-1937), Croatian writer, playwright, theatrical critic, and curator of the Arts and Crafts Museum in Zagreb. His second wife, Olga (1877-1971), was involved in the anti-Nazi movement during the Second World War.
- Adela Milčinović (1880-1968), Croatian writer, playwright and journalist. During the Second World War she was a Voice of America speaker for Croatian language broadcasts.
- Roje-Depolo and Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić*, pp. 80, 126, no. 129.
- Émile Jacques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), Swiss music and dance teacher and composer.
- Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), dance theorist, dancer and choreographer. Laban's female dancers were too tall for classical ballet.
- Zlamalik, *Medalja u Hrvatskoj*, p. 60, no. 200; Todorović, *Jugoslovenske i inostrane medalje*, p. 122, no. 350; Roje-Depolo and Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić*, p. 134, no. 196; Ivan Mirnik, *Ivo Kerdić* (1881-1952). *Medalje i plakete iz fundusa Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu. Medals and plaquettes from the Zagreb Archaeological Museum* (Zagreb, 2004), p. 33, no. 73; Ivan Mirnik, *Zbirka medalja Berislava Kopača. The Berislav Kopač medal collection* (Zagreb, 2005), p. 112, no. 325.
- Ivo Kerdić, *Moj život i uspomene [My life and memories]* (Zagreb, 1944-50), manuscript, pp. 145-7.
- Montani, *Ivo Kerdić*, p. 10.
- József Gerő, *A király könyvek az I. Ferenc József és IV. Károly király által 1867-to'1 1918-ig adományozott nemességek, főnemességek, előnevek és címerek jegyzéke* (Budapest, 1940), p. 145.
- Signature D-200/139, no. 707.
- Act of 4 April 1947, no. 4, inv. no. 3(166).
- Act of 4 April 1947, no. 211, inv. no. 270.
- Act of 25 June 1954, p. 6, no. 208.
- Mihovil Abramić, 'Novi reljef božanstva Kairos', *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* (Split, 1928/29), pp. 1-12. This off-print has a dedication that translates as, 'To the excellent master Professor Ivo Kerdić as a sign of respect and acknowledgment. Dr M. Abramić, 5 September 1949.' It is also in the Kerdić archive.
- Zlamalik, *Medalja u Hrvatskoj*, p. 61, no. 205; Zlamalik, *Memorijal Ivo Kerdića*, p. 66, no. 114; Ivan Mirnik, 'Radovi Valdeca, Frangeš-Mihanovića i Kerdića u Numizmatičkoj zbirci Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu (Works by Valdec, Frangeš-Mihanović and Kerdić in the numismatic collection of the Zagreb Archaeological Museum)', *Peristil*, xxxii (1989), p. 275, no. 87; Roje-Depolo and Mažuran-Subotić, *Ivo Kerdić*, pp. 104, 135, no. 205; Mirnik, *Ivo Kerdić* (1881-1952), p. 36, no. 91.
- Mirnik, *Ivo Kerdić* (1881-1952), p. 36, no. 90.
- Mirnik, *Ivo Kerdić* (1881-1952), p. 37, no. 93.
- Zlamalik, *Medalja u Hrvatskoj*, p. 61, no. 207; Zlamalik, *Memorijal Ivo Kerdića*, p. 67, no. 118; Zlamalik, *Kroatische Medaillen*, p. 61, no. 100.