

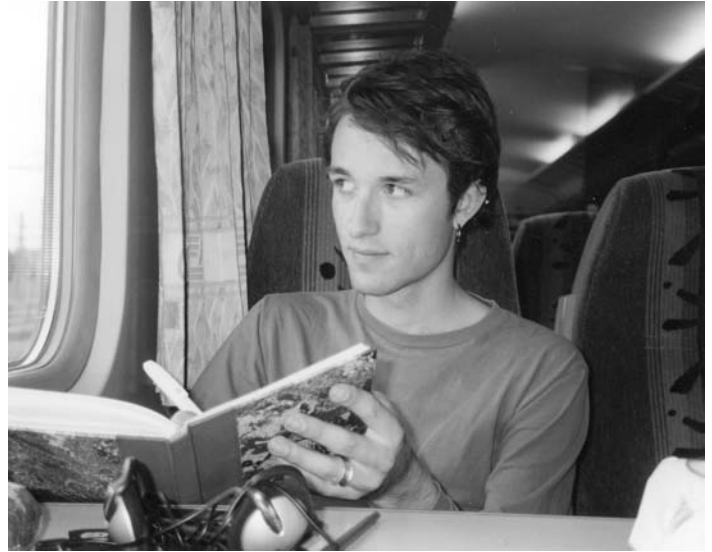
The Prague Field School and the Travel Study Award

—Jerry Zaslove

In 2002 The Institute for the Humanities provided two stipends to assist humanities students to attend the Prague Field School. The program is organized through the Office of International and Exchange Student Services and the Humanities Department. In this eighth year of the credit program with Charles University, twenty students were resident in Prague for eight weeks of in-depth study of Central European culture, art and society. The program includes courses in language, art history, film, literature and political science. In two short essays, Tim Came and Keir Niccol— SFU undergraduates and recipients of the stipends—reflect on aspects of their experience and their encounters with the contemporary European world and its legacies. Information about this program can be obtained through the Office of International and Exchange Student Services. Information about the Travel Study Award can be obtained through the Institute for the Humanities.



Jerry Zaslove and Prague Field School students at Rimov in Sumova —“Stations of the Cross”



Keir Niccol

Shades of Apprehension

—Keir Niccol

Driving away from the airport and down an unnamed highway, more like a byway, the bus veers around a corner into what I surmise to be a suburb. Rolling down the small road, I gape at the brown and tan stucco residences on either side, trying to glean as much as possible from these first few, crucial moments of fatigue-filtered, jet-lagged impression. Rounding the road's arc, I glance to my left and notice a single slender figure atop a pillar. The pillar's grey stone culminates in a same-coloured nymph, balancing in a moment of stride upon one nimble, slight leg. A ribbon, trapped against the motion of her chest, streams behind the figure's torso, her arms rising above to push the moment—of victory, celebration, emancipation. In fact, it is not at all clear that it is a she; the form of the androgynous body's willowy limbs plies the light air in a frozen moment of flight.

The pillar passes from view, vanishing beneath rising fingers of flora scattered in the yard around the statue. The bus continues its meandering introduction to Prague's streets, its welcome includes a shake shuddering up from thousands of cobblestones. Another corner, another trance-inducing vision atop the horizon—St. Vitus's Gothic spires prick the sky, tearing the heavens into a soot black and brown stone cascade of crockets, gargoyles, bowing and falling priests, kings and peasants, all spilling from its rent. The cathedral, surreal and stunning in sudden rearing stasis, seems to be slowly rotating upon a dais, aging aspects appearing in full, each in turn. A moment imbued with old time expires, a new excitement occurs, belying even St. Vitus's longevity. The building nears, then disappears, its four corners and sky-spearing spires are like pillars and pilings demanding eternity of their foundations.