

Interview with Jane Armstrong

In February of this year, I was invited to take part in a documentary about the Shroud (whose working title is Remaking the Shroud), being made under the direction of British born Jane Armstrong, an archaeologist by training but now president of Cinenova Films, based in Stratford, Canada. The film was commissioned by the National Geographic.

The filming really was a race against the clock, and in between interviews Jane kindly took some minutes to talk about the documentary for the British Society for the Turin Shroud.

Now that you have been involved with the Shroud for some time, what are your overall impressions?

I think the first thing you notice is how much people care. Most people care in a genuine and wonderful way.

And have you come across a negative side to the Shroud world?

Yes. There is a lot of research being done, but there are other stories too. I have heard about people receiving hate mail and there is an extreme fringe. You are dealing with an object that whether it is authentic or not, is central to Christianity and the love that it preaches. The Shroud stands for this love and I find the fact that it can inspire hate most disturbing. This made me think about what to include in the documentary – not just a battle between those who think it is authentic and those who do not, but also about the Passion and Resurrection. A religious side to the story.

Will be in Turin later on this year to see the Shroud?

I would love to, but I don't know if I'll be able to. I enjoyed Turin very much when I was there for the film and I was made to feel very welcome there.

What impressions will remain with you when this project is over?

More than anything else, my overriding impression is the scope of what you need to know to understand the Shroud. It has taken me into periods of history that are really fascinating, the advantages of learning about Byzantium and the disaster of the Fourth Crusade – not the most edifying moment in our history. Something else that I have realised are the technical and artistic ideas imported into Europe from the East long before what we know as the Renaissance. A whole part of art history existed before everyone started painting and interpreting in art, like the Man of Sorrows.