

The Ireland Funds Monaco Residential Bursaries



Liz Nugent

About the Author

Liz Nugent is an award-winning writer of radio and TV drama and has written short stories for children and adults. In early 2014 her first novel, *Unravelling Oliver*, was published. It went straight to the top of the bestsellers list and has been translated into eight languages. *Unravelling Oliver* won the Crime Novel of the Year at the Irish Book Awards. This book is available in French as *Oliver, où la fabrique d'un manipulateur*. Her second novel, *Lying in Wait*, (Profil Bas en Français) was published in July 2016 and went straight to number 1. It also won the RTE Radio Listener's Choice prize at the Irish Book Awards. It is currently in the UK Sunday Times bestseller list and has been chosen for the hugely popular Richard & Judy Bookclub Spring 2017 list.

Awarded biannually, The Ireland Funds Monaco Residential Bursaries were established to enable writers born or living in Ireland to pursue a current project during a one-month residency at the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco. We are pleased to present this personal reflection written by author Liz Nugent on her experience in Monaco.

I am incredibly grateful to The Ireland Funds

for awarding me the Monaco Bursary as Writer in Residence at the Princess Grace Irish Library [home to over 12,500 books dealing with all aspects of Irish culture]. It was a great honour and a privilege to be there, but also a great pleasure.

As part of my next novel (working title: *Skin Deep**) is set on the Riviera, there was no better way to absorb the atmosphere of the places I needed to describe. I believe that one must never write about a place unless one can smell it. Inhaling great lungfuls of Mediterranean air could only improve the authenticity of my work.

Working in the library was a dream come true. Surrounded by artefacts and some 500 books belonging to Princess Grace, I sat on a blue armchair underneath a painting by Jack Yeats and wrote for about six hours every day. Any questions I had were answered immediately by the library's Administrator, Judith Gantley, the most efficient person I have ever met. Five minutes after my question was answered, I would receive an email with links to the answers to my queries and the names of people with whom I could consult further. Judith also sought out books and maps that would help me in my research and introduced me to many fascinating people that I may touch base with later as my work progresses.

Judith went out of her way to make sure that I had everything I needed, including beautiful apartment accommodation in Beausoleil overlooking Larvotto beach, a bus pass for the month and trolley bags for my shopping. I think I have made a friend for life.

I wrote over 30,000 words in my four weeks in the library, roughly a third of a book. I have never achieved that rate of wordage before.

My fingers were not permanently glued to the keyboard though, and several events gave me an opportunity to meet with readers, students and visitors.

While Writer in Residence, the library hosted a talk and Q & A session about my work with the Trustees and Friends of the library. It was a wonderful and lively evening, and it ended with a book signing and small reception.

Also, with the approval of English teacher, Jean-René Fonquerne, I gave a creative writing workshop to a group of industrious and charming students from the local Lycée Albert I.

Another day, I spoke to a visiting group of Friends of the National Gallery of Ireland, led by the indefatigable Sighle Bhreathnach Lynch. I also had the huge privilege of reading for a visiting group of Royal Librarians of Europe, led by Thomas Fouilleron, director of the Monaco Palace Archives and Library.

The hard work I did was tempered by social events and birthday parties. I will not easily forget the stunning views on my daily commute to work.

I cannot speak highly enough of the experience I have had in Monaco. Fingers crossed that it will all bear fruit in the publication of *Skin Deep** to be published by Penguin in September 2017. I am eternally thankful.