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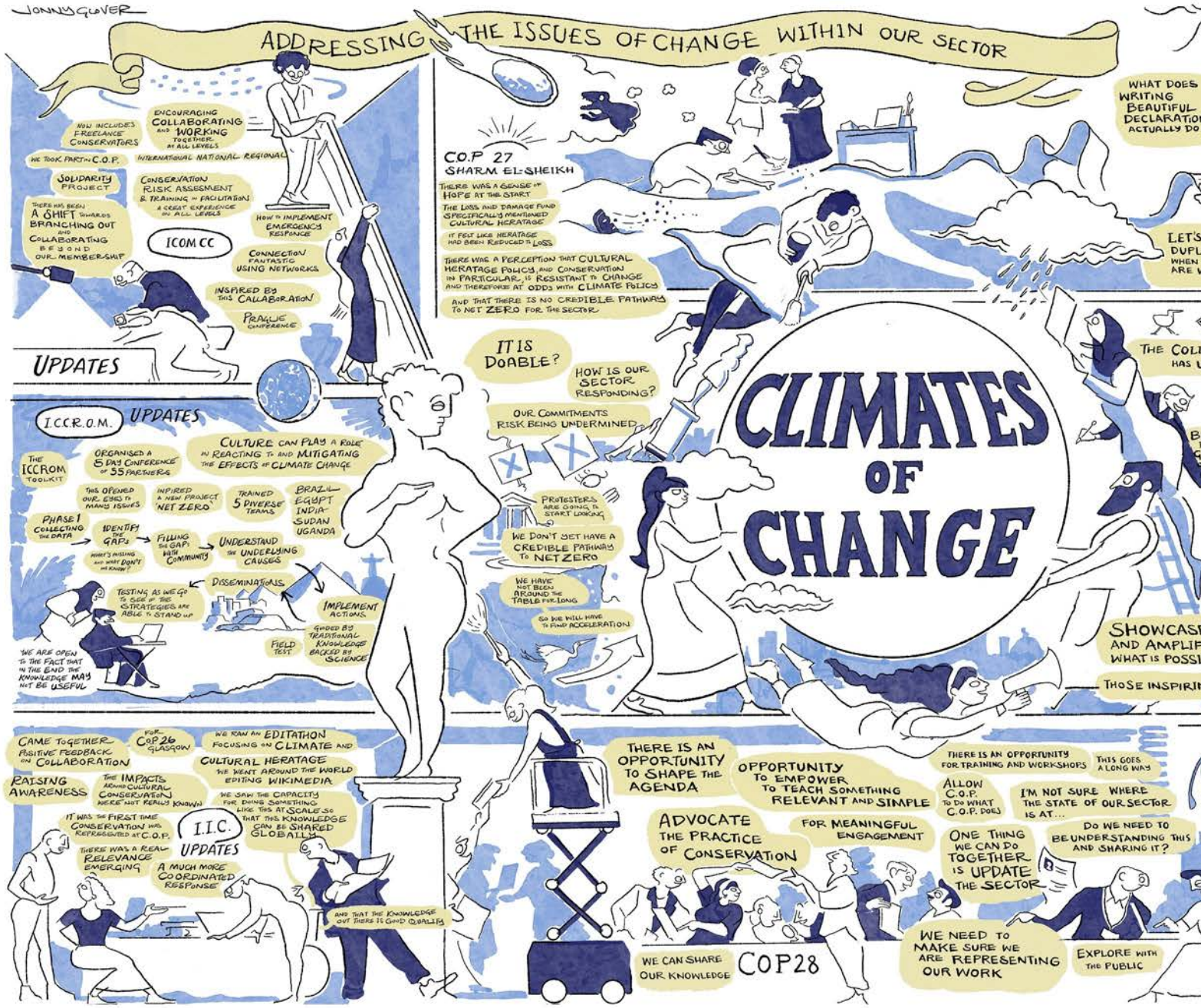


NEWS IN CONSERVATION

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC WORKS



Intangible Cultural Heritage | Mental wellness and conservation | When conservation gets political



COLLABORATION IS THE WAY TO CHANGE ISSUES IN CONSERVATION

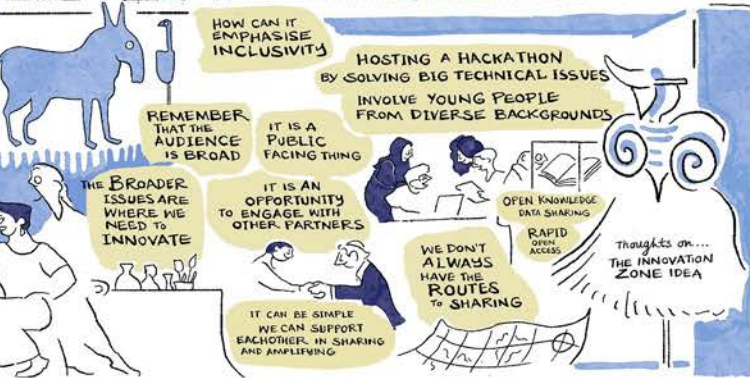
By Marina Herriges, NiC Associate Editor for Reframing Conservation Through Science

In 2021, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation (ICOM CC), and the IIC, released the Joint Commitment for Climate Action. Following up on this

agreement, on 20 January 2023, representatives from three of the leading international bodies supporting the conservation of cultural heritage were invited to a Climates of Change Roundtable for the main signatories of the Joint Commitment for Climate Action.



Visual minutes of the Climates of Change Roundtable. © International Institute for Conservation. Drawn by Jonny Glover: www.jonnyglover.com



TO FACE CLIMATE

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sustainability

ICOM-CC gave an update on the actions they have developed so far. Encouraging collaboration and working together were mentioned as key elements to implementing the emergency response. This subject is also included in conferences such as the [20th ICOM-CC Triennial Conference](#), which will be held in September 2023 in Valencia, with the theme Working Towards a Sustainable Past, supporting knowledge sharing within the subject. ICCROM presented their recent efforts highlighting the role of culture to mitigate the effects of climate change inspired by their new project [Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action](#) in which five teams from different areas in the world (Brazil, Egypt, India, Sudan and Uganda) have been working with traditional and local knowledge as well as conservation science to implement actions in the sector following five [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). IIC's updates presented the lack of acknowledgment of environmental impact and environmental responsibility around conservation, which was also highlighted during David Saunders' talk given at IIC's AGM in January 2023. It raised the importance of collaboration that will enable the field to give a much more coordinated response to the issue. The Institute also highlighted its recent events around climate action: two Edit-a-Thons in partnership with Wikipedia as well as participation in The Conference of the Parties of the United Nations in [2021 \(COP26\)](#) and [2022 \(COP 27\)](#).

Conservation is often presented as being resistant to change, but we know from IIC's Wellington Congress 2022 that "conservation is not about preserving stasis but managing change—and sometimes accepting what will be lost" (Julian Bickersteth IIC President, closing remarks). The agreement by world leaders at COP27 Sharm El Sheikh to establish a loss and damage fund, was an important milestone and acknowledgement for cultural heritage. Conservators will have an increasingly important role in facilitating shared decision-making and promoting fair and inclusive strategies on the ground to manage and reduce the impacts of climate change on heritage and

people. Conservators are trained to be problem solvers with an extensive science background; therefore we can support change.

During a conversation I had with a few IIC members, we discussed their use of the [Environmental Guidelines joint declaration by IIC and ICOM-CC](#) to guide the rationale at a local level, where professionals use it to acknowledge the importance of sustainability within their institutions and apply it, taking into consideration their local needs. Adaptation for local needs is key as different locations will have different demands.

During the roundtable, there was a consensus that avoiding the duplication of work is vital, and there is a need for amplifying and sharing what has worked so far. Such efforts are most successful when there are collaboration projects such as ICCROM's Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action, where the solidarity network enables professionals to voice their concerns, and individuals can see that everyone is on the same page.

During the meeting, there were some relevant tools highlighted by conservators that can help the field. One is the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), which can be a bit tricky to put into a conservation context; however, The Climates of Change Roundtable, supported by Henry McGhie, consultant at Curating Tomorrow, ICCROM and ICOM, did a great job of adapting the SDGs to museum and gallery environments. Still, it is essential to understand how to apply these guidelines in other contexts such as private practice and conservation education.

PATHWAY TO NET ZERO

Many sectors have committed to promoting credible pathways to net zero on a global scale including the education and university sector. In the meeting, IIC acknowledged the lack of a credible pathway to net zero within the conservation sector.

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Detail from the visual minutes of the Climates of Change Round-table. © International Institute for Conservation. Drawn by Jonny Glover: www.jonnyglover.com

The [United Nations for Climate Change](#) campaigns that all sectors should aim to reach the net zero target by 2050. Net zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible. In order to offset our emissions, we need a better understanding of our carbon footprint and must then follow up with a strategy to clean our emissions; this is a whole new idea for our sector, however, by committing to this agenda, we will support a worldwide scheme that has been followed by most other professions.

There is an acknowledgment to be made here: this is not the only action needed to face climate change. As professionals we will still need to work on improving in other areas such as choosing environmentally friendly materials, decision-making around treatments and working with communities to ensure diversity and inclusivity. The Joint Commitment for Climate Action forms the basis of action, but it is less of a scheme and more of a fair and inclusive initiative to promote positive change on the ground in our sector.

David Saunders said, during his AGM Talk, that throughout his 27-year career, the change in the field that he has clearly seen is that sustainability is at the centre of everything we are doing right now. We must acknowledge our impacts on the environment as well as foster our community connections to stay relevant for the future. Working together in collaboration will enable us to make a difference.



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