

Report by the Secretary-General 2016

It is our pleasure to welcome you here to the Linnaean Society and the 2016 AGM. Last year's AGM was the setting for the most recent in the *Dialogues for the New Century* series, on 'The Future of Heritage Science'. I am delighted to say that the formal business of this year's AGM will be followed by a talk by Professor Peter Stone, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace at Newcastle University, on 'The Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict', something which sadly has been very much in the news recently. I hope you will all be able to stay for that.

First the more formal events of the reporting year, which I should remind you runs from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. At the 2015 AGM, we were very sad to say goodbye to Rick Kerschner as a Council Member after six years. A constant source of useful advice, whatever the time of day here in London, it seemed that Rick would be there when we needed him, on Skype, with the coffee percolating in the background. Indeed, this is not a final goodbye, as we retain his advice and wise counsel on a whole range of matters. At this point I would like to emphasise how much we value the links we make with all our colleagues and members world wide, on the IIC Council or more informally: people matter. In the light of this, IIC is delighted to welcome new Council Members Stephen Koob and Tom Learner, elected onto Council at the AGM last year, as well as Amber Kerr, who was re-elected for a further three years. Jerry Podany was confirmed as President Emeritus for a further year and Joyce Townsend was re-elected as Director of Publications.

The award of IIC Fellowship is an internationally recognised acknowledgement of professional achievement in the field of conservation and, as Fellows are elected by their peers, this is a significant professional award. It is, therefore, a very great pleasure to welcome the new IIC Fellows elected during the year: Kilian Anheuser, Susan Catcher, Yunsun Choi, Ylva Dahnsjö, Vinod Daniel, Andrew Durham, Kathleen Garland, Paul Harrison, Adrian Heritage, Alison Heritage, Vicki Humphrey, Dilys Johns, Nobuyuki Kamba, Bertrand Lavédrine, Tom Learner, Angela Liu, Colin MacGregor, Marcelle Scott, Kay Soderlund, Kristiane Strætkvern, Morten Ryhl Svendsen, Alice Tsang, Indra Tuna and Evita Yeung.

The award of IIC Honorary Fellowship was established almost 60 years ago to recognise an outstanding contribution to heritage conservation. In recognition of their many and considerable achievements, it was a very great pleasure to make two awards of Honorary Fellowship during the year. These were to Robert Brill at the Hong Kong Congress in 2014, where it was accepted on his behalf by Stephen Koob, and to John S. Mills, former IIC Vice President and Editor of *Studies in Conservation*, and, as some of you will remember, this was accepted in person at the Annual General Meeting of 2015.

The most recent event in our calendar, the third Student and Emerging Conservator conference, falls outside the current reporting year, but I should mention it in order to say thank you to our hosts and its organisers. The conference, on the theme *Making the Transition: from Student to Conservation-Restoration Professional*, was held in October 2015 at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts and I would like to thank Marzenna Ciechanska, Dean of the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Monica Supruniuk and all the student organisers for what was a very entertaining and useful event. This series is proving to be very successful and worthwhile and it is worth reminding you that the topics discussed are generated by the students themselves from matters that are of concern to them.

The most significant and enjoyable event of the year was the 25th IIC Congress, held in Hong Kong from 22–26 September 2014. The theme was *An Unbroken History: Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage* and it was organised with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) of the Hong Kong Government under the leadership of Shing-wai Chan, aided by Evita Yeung, Maggie Pang, Alice Tsang and their wonderful and enthusiastic staff, and I am delighted to say that we have Shing-Wai and Alice with us here this evening. The congress was attended by over 500 people, including many participants from China and other parts of south-east Asia. There was a stimulating technical programme of about 50 papers, with simultaneous translation between English and Putonghua – modern Standard Chinese, as well as evening events at the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, the Jumbo Floating Restaurant in Aberdeen Harbour and the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, a beautiful building rehabilitated from ammunition storage buildings of the 19th and early 20th centuries, surrounded by a peaceful rainforest garden. Those who attended the Congress Dinner at the Jumbo Floating Restaurant were entertained by Chinese lion dancers, who could only perform after their eyes had been ‘dotted’ by Sarah Staniforth. IIC is extremely grateful to Dr Louis Ng of LCSD, Shing-wai Chan and to all his staff for their hospitality and their superb organisation of an unforgettable event. We would also like to thank the Technical Committee, under the chairmanship of Austin Nevin, for the selection and organisation of the technical programme, and particularly Amber Kerr and the Student Poster Committee, who selected 20 excellent posters. The attractive volume of preprints was produced in English and Putonghua as parallel texts, the first time we have published a volume of preprints in this form. We must thank Joyce Townsend, the Editor-in-Chief, and her team, Barry Knight, Shayne Rivers and Austin Nevin, and our colleagues in Hong Kong who, as well as the local organisation, were responsible for overseeing the translation to and from Putonghua and communicating with the Chinese authors. IIC is also most grateful to Tru Vue Inc. for their sponsorship of the volume and I’m delighted to say that Jennifer Booth of Tru Vue is also with us here this evening.

IIC is very grateful to all our sponsors at the Congress: Sharon Cather and David Park, of the Courtauld Institute, and the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Centre for Buddhist Art and Conservation at the Courtauld Institute for their generous sponsorship of the closing reception at the Asia Society; AXA Art Insurance and Crystal Computer Graphic Limited who sponsored the Monday and Tuesday receptions. The British Consulate-General in Hong Kong and UK Trade and Investment hosted a reception for the delegates funded by UKTI and other guests. The whole point of a congress is participation, however, and 90 delegates from China were supported by the Bei Shan Tang Foundation in Hong Kong, while funding from the Getty Foundation and UK Trade and Investment enabled participants from a range of countries to attend. Most of all, we would like to thank you, the IIC members who give generously every year to the Brommelle Memorial Fund, set up to help student members of IIC attend the congresses. So many students have expressed their gratitude for this financial help at the beginning of their careers, without which they would not have been able to participate in these important international events.

The Hong Kong Congress had two important outcomes. The first was concerned with appropriate conditions of temperature and relative humidity within museums, the subject of much discussion in recent years. The results of a survey carried out by a joint IIC / ICOM-CC working group, co-ordinated by Julian Bickersteth, IIC Vice President, to investigate the current positions taken by museums and galleries on environmental conditions and advise on a suitable route forwards, appeared in *Studies in Conservation* shortly before the 2014

Congress, together with articles giving the historical background to the debate and discussing future progress. Copies of this issue of the journal, reprinted for the Hong Kong congress with abstracts of these articles in Putonghua, were included in the conference packs as background material for the discussion session devoted to environmental conditions within a museum or storage environment. A similar session, held at the 2014 ICOM-CC Congress in Melbourne the previous week, had resulted in a draft document summarising the position of IIC and ICOM-CC on environmental guidelines. This, the IIC and ICOM-CC Joint Declaration on Environmental Guidelines, was finalised and signed at the Hong Kong congress and the document, an important step forward in providing guidance on how to provide sustainably responsible environmental conditions for collections, may be downloaded from the IIC website.

The second outcome, deriving from the award of the 2014 Forbes Prize to Dr Shan Jixiang, Director of the Palace Museum, Beijing, was his generous invitation to IIC to collaborate in the foundation of a conservation training institute, to be hosted and funded by the Palace Museum, with training to be provided by IIC, primarily IIC Fellows. The agreement between IIC and the Palace Museum is initially for three years and the first course to be held at the IIC International Training Centre for Conservation (IIC-ITCC), entitled 'Scientific Approaches to Preventive Conservation', took place in September 2015. This too is outside the current reporting year, but there were about 20 participants, half from China and many of the remainder from regions of the world where access to up-to-date information, facilities or even discussion with colleagues is not straightforward. I would like to thank Dr Shan Jixiang, Dr Song Jirong and all our Palace Museum colleagues for their superb and generous hospitality and particularly Katherine Xiaoji Fang at the Palace Museum and Casey Liu in Hong Kong for the organisation.

We are very happy to say that, during the Annual General Meeting held in January 2015, the memorandum of understanding between IIC and ICOM-CC signed in 2012 was renewed and signed again by Sarah Staniforth and Kristiane Strætkevorn, Chair of the Directory Board of ICOM-CC. A similar memorandum of understanding between IIC and ICCROM has also very recently been signed, by Sarah Staniforth for IIC and by Stefano de Caro, Director-General of ICCROM.

Finally, as always, we would like to thank IIC's Executive Secretary, Graham Voce, and the Membership secretary, Valerie Compton Taylor, for their tireless work on behalf of IIC.

Jo Kirby Atkinson, Secretary-General