

Report by the Secretary-General 2011

Thanks are due to the Courtauld Institute for very kindly making this lecture theatre available to us for the AGM and to Sharon Cather, one of our Vice Presidents, for arranging this for us

My first half year as Secretary-General, since I took over from my predecessor David Leigh at the AGM this time last year, has coincided with an extremely busy period and some interesting developments which I think will be important for IIC in the future. During the year, IIC concentrated primarily on three activities: preparations for the 23rd Congress to be held in Istanbul; negotiations over the publication of *Studies in Conservation*; and what I can describe broadly as developments in IIC's outreach to its members, its potential members and the general public: the important, and linked, initiatives of World Membership and the Opportunities Fund. The Congress has, of course, taken place after the end of IIC's financial year in June, but such an important event cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

Changes have taken place within the organisation of IIC and its Council during the year. Eleanor McMillan stands down as Vice-President at this AGM and we would like to thank her for her loyalty and service to us in the past years. At the last AGM we welcomed Sharon Cather and Julian Bickersteth as Vice-Presidents and Valentine Walsh and Cornelia Weyer as new Ordinary Members of Council, together with Tuulikki Kilpinen, Anne Rinuy, Naoko Sonoda and Mikkel Scharff who were re-elected. We said our grateful goodbyes to those standing down, Joyce Hill Stoner and Ashok Roy, who stood down as Vice-Presidents, and Leslie Carlyle. This is the first public opportunity I have had to thank my predecessor as Secretary-General, David Leigh, for his generous support and guidance and I think we would all like to thank him and also Sandra Smith, Velson Horie's predecessor as Treasurer, for their loyalty and dedication to IIC. In his article in *News in Conservation* in February 2010, David Leigh drew attention to the fact that, in common with very many organisations, all the members of Council, our President, the web editors Athanasios Velios and Eike Friedrich, those working on the Istanbul Congress and the officers are volunteers; they give their time most generously to IIC for nothing but the camaraderie and the feeling that they are making a difference. It is worth volunteering for IIC: you will indeed be making a difference to your fellow conservators and to heritage conservation worldwide.

Last June, the final arrangements were being made for the IIC Istanbul Congress, on *Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean*. This coincided with Istanbul's year as European Capital of Culture, giving delegates the chance to experience many varied events in this historically important and vibrant city as well as the congress. Our hosts in Istanbul, the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, with the Sakıp Sabancı University and Sabancı Holdings, with Vista Tourism, provided a wonderful venue for the conference and the Round Table discussion 'Between Home and History: managing the interface between preservation and development of living historic places', and we would like to express our enormous gratitude to Nazan Ölçer, Director of the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, and the conference Advisory Committee in Istanbul. The Congress Technical Committee – Talal Akasheh, Terry Drayman-Weisser, Hande Kökten, Ravit Linn, Hossam Mahdy, Austin Nevin and Paul Schwartzbaum – was chaired by Sharon Cather who put a huge amount of effort into the task. The wonderfully varied

range of papers they selected aimed to give a programme reflecting the ancient and varied cultures and preoccupations of the region. The preprints were edited by Christina Rozeik, Ashok Roy and David Saunders, to whom we are most grateful. We would particularly like to thank Duygu Çamurcuoğlu in London, and Nurçin Kural Özgörüş and Ayşe Aldemir Kilercik at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum and Begum Birvural of Vista Tourism in Istanbul for their tireless help in preparations for the conference. Although the conference itself falls outside the reporting year it would be strange indeed not to comment on what was a happy, indeed joyous, and wonderfully successful event, attended by delegates from over 40 countries. Before the event, some concerns were expressed that the travelling circus of IIC would move into Istanbul, have its congress and move on, without engaging with the local conservation community and its concerns. Nothing could be further from the truth: the Round Table discussion – and a PDF of this is available on the IIC website – was very much devoted to local issues and conservators from Turkey and other eastern Mediterranean countries attended in large numbers. They met colleagues from their own and other countries with similar problems; they had the opportunity to talk and get involved. Most excitingly, a group of conservators from Arabic countries met and have decided to set up an IIC Arabic Regional group. IIC made a lot of friends in Istanbul and will work very hard to maintain these friendships. It is important also to encourage students and young conservators; these people are our future: without them the profession is nothing. For the first time in Istanbul, a selection of student posters was on display with the posters from established professional conservators and scientists; these, too, will be available on the website and thanks are due to the student poster selection committee, chaired by Amber Kerr-Allison.

It is a reflection of the very wide interest in the subject matter, the culture of the Eastern Mediterranean region, and the host city, Istanbul, that the number of applicants for grants to attend the conference, made available from the Brommelle Memorial Fund (for students) and thanks to the generosity of the Getty Foundation and the Gabo Trust was greater than ever before, far more, in fact, than the number of awards available. Applicants came from as far afield as Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mexico. The Getty Foundation very generously sponsored ten Turkish delegates in addition to the 25 from other countries it had already agreed to support; the Sakıp Sabancı Foundation supported 70 Turkish delegates.

IIC is working to engage with conservators all over the world through the conferences, through its publications and increasingly through its website. Conservators need the best tools to do their work, including collaboration and exchange of information with their colleagues around the world. This is where IIC plays a vital role. One important feature of IIC's outreach worldwide has been the launch of the World Membership scheme, to which is linked the Opportunities Fund, the renamed and extended Professional Development Fund. The Professional Development Fund was open to applications by individual conservators who were unable to afford IIC membership; the Opportunities Fund aims to support conservation institutions, as well as individuals, with the gift of membership, with the associated publications and other advantages, for two years, renewable for a further two years. This is an efficient use of resources to help more conservation professionals than is possible by supporting single individuals. The first institutions to benefit from the fund are CENCREM, Havana, Cuba, the Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, and the Hudogestvena Akademia, Sofia, Bulgaria. In support of the

Opportunities Fund the World Membership initiative was launched in January 2010 to encourage IIC members to donate towards the scheme. This can be seen on the renewal form: a scale of donations meriting the designation of Bronze, Silver or Gold member (with the names to be published in *News in Conservation*), depending on the amount given. Again, the results of the first group of donations fall outside this reporting year, but I am happy to say that Jerry Podany put pen to paper to write personally to a substantial number of Gold, Silver and Bronze World Members.

IIC has links to the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter, with a very large number of Facebook fans, thanks to Amber Kerr-Allison and Joyce Hill Stoner, and these methods of communication are extremely important for many people. If the IIC website is to be an efficient means of communication, it requires more specialist attention than the IIC office, together with the paid advice received, is able to give it. Our two volunteer web editors, Athanasios Velios and Eike Friedrich have made great improvements to the site, both to the pages visible to the visitor and behind the scenes; they respond to the requirements of the IIC office, the officers and the President with patience and good humour: we are enormously grateful. The site was constructed about ten years ago and it is now being asked to accommodate things for which it was not designed. Research on the redevelopment of the site has been carried out throughout the year and it is expected this will begin shortly.

Dialogues for a New Century continues to be a most successful and interesting series, one that is very much the creation of our President, Jerry Podany. The translation of the transcripts into several different languages, downloadable from the website, is an extremely important initiative and I sincerely hope something we can extend in the years to come: an international organisation should endeavour to make its information available to its membership and to the public in a range of languages. We have made a start, but more volunteers for translation will be needed and will be very welcome.

Most importantly, we owe a huge vote of thanks to IIC Executive Secretary Graham Voce for his tireless work on behalf of IIC, in which he has been ably assisted by Valerie Compton Taylor and, over the period of the Congress, David Compton Taylor.

Jo Kirby Atkinson, Secretary-General