

## Report by the Secretary-General 2014

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the IIC Annual General Meeting here at the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining. This is the London home of the publishers of *Studies in Conservation*, Maney, and, before anything else, I would like to thank our hosts and Maney, in the person of Laura Bradford, here tonight, as it is thanks to Maney that we are able to hold our AGM here again this year. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Tom Learner of the Getty Conservation Institute and a reception; I hope you will all be able to stay for that.

I will summarise the events of the last reporting year, July 2012 to June 2013; you have a detailed account in the annual report. Publications will be discussed by the Director of Publications, Joyce Townsend and electronic communications by Julian Bickersteth, the Director of Communications.

First some farewells: at the last AGM, you may remember if you were present, we said goodbye to our former President, Jerry Podany, under whose leadership IIC has seen considerable changes and new activities, most notably his series of *Dialogues for a New Century*. (It is intended, incidentally, that these will continue; Amber Kerr has had productive discussions with Jerry and other colleagues on the logistics and on suitable topics.) Jerry has handed on a different, more forward-looking, perhaps more adventurous IIC to his successor Sarah Staniforth. Two of our Vice-Presidents, Gabriela Krist and Sharon Cather, both distinguished and long-serving colleagues, also came to the end of their terms of office. It is difficult to sum up all their varied contributions over the years, including keeping the status of IIC's regional groups to the forefront of our minds and the championing of those conservation institutions and individuals from less fortunate parts of the world through the Opportunities Fund. Our gratitude to them is immense. Tuulikki Kilpinen, Anne Rinuy, Mikkel Scharff and Naoko Sonoda also stood down as members of Council. Today we also say goodbye to Diane Gwilt, who has resigned after a sadly short time, having been elected last year, due to pressure of work. I should say now how extremely grateful we are to all those on Council or working with IIC in other roles as volunteers, on top of their normal work and family lives, sometimes travelling very long distances to be with us or meeting with us by skype at extraordinarily challenging times of the day – believe me, giving time to IIC is so worthwhile, but it is not a small commitment.

However, on a brighter note, it is a pleasure to welcome back Mikkel Scharff and David Saunders, also a former Council member, as Vice-Presidents to join Julian Bickersteth, who was re-elected in that role. IIC welcomes Velayudhan Nair and Austin Nevin as new members of Council; Shing-wai Chan was also elected, confirming his co-option earlier in the year, and Valentine Walsh and Cornelia Weyer were re-elected. Jo Kirby Atkinson was re-elected as Secretary-General and Velson Horie as Treasurer. In a recent change to the Articles, the position of President Emeritus was inaugurated in order to help the new incoming President in the early period of the role. At the May Council meeting, Jerry Podany was invited by the Council to take up this position for a period of one year initially and we are pleased to say that he accepted the invitation; he is not able to be with us today, however.

It is a pleasure to welcome Barbara Borghese, Tiarna Doherty, Clare Finn, Stavroula Golfomitsou, Gunnar Heydenreich, Mzia Janjalia, Nana Kuprashvili, Ingrid Neuman, Austin Nevin, Francesca Piqué, Tiina Sonninen and Jodie Utter, elected as new Fellows of IIC during the year.

The highlight of the year was the 24th Congress, *The Decorative: Conservation and the Applied Arts*, held at the new campus of the University of Vienna in September 2012 and organised in partnership with Gabriela Krist, of the University of Applied Arts Vienna and her capable team: in fact I am particularly happy to report that Gabriela's last act for IIC has been the organisation of such an enjoyable event. The Organising Committee, under the chairmanship of Gabriela Krist, ably assisted by Maria Gruber, then of the same institution, and Christa Hofmann, of the Austrian National Library, put together a varied and entertaining social programme, including receptions at the Kunsthistorisches Museum and MAK (Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst), the Congress Dinner, held in the Vienna Town Hall and visits to a wide range of conservation projects and studios. The *Dialogue for the New Century*, entitled *Not your Grandmother's Chair*, on challenges in the conservation of contemporary decorative and applied arts, was held at the Abbey of Klosterneuburg, a fascinating juxtaposition of the late medieval and extremely modern art works. To encourage participation by conservators from central European countries, Gabriela Krist invited Márta Kissné Bendefy from Hungary, Katarina Kosová from Slovakia and Petr Justa from the Czech Republic to serve on the Organising Committee and IIC would like to thank the whole Committee, and also the IIC Austrian Group, for the superb and efficient organisation and for giving us such a wonderful time. IIC would also like to thank the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, the Provincial Government of Lower Austria, Department of Art and Culture, and the Mayor of the City of Vienna for their support of the event. The Technical Committee, which was chaired by Sharon Cather, put together an excellent and high-quality technical programme of 40 papers and 39 posters, which you can see in the handsome preprints volume. This was the work of Joyce Townsend and the editorial committee and we would like to thank them all – and Joyce in particular – for their patient and thorough work and, in addition, the Clothworkers Guild who provided a substantial grant to cover the costs of publication. This volume is published as a supplement of *Studies in Conservation*, giving these papers the same academic status as the papers in the usual issues of *Studies*. authors, some discussing most unusual and challenging conservation problems.

As with every congress, every effort was made to ensure as wide a participation as possible, both from the point of view of subject matter and from that of the home country of the authors. Probably we have all noticed that attendance at international events has become expensive in both time and money; IIC endeavours to keep the costs of attendance down as far as possible, but the considerable costs of travel and hotels are outside its control and unfortunately this did affect congress attendance at Vienna. IIC is particularly grateful, therefore, to the Getty Foundation who provided substantial funding to enable some twenty three or so participants to travel from parts of Central Europe as well as more distant places including Belize, Lebanon and Mauritius.

The student posters, selected by a separate international Committee under the chairmanship of Amber Kerr, were of particularly high quality; indeed, the winners of the Student Poster Prize, Mariana Almarez Reyes, Emmanuel Lara Barrera and Ana Lanzagorta Cumming, have achieved further acclaim in their home country, Mexico, for their poster entitled 'The Conservation Process: Revitalizing a Collection of Hand Fans'. We are very grateful to Amber and her colleagues for their work selecting the posters and for their advice to the students in producing the final works.

The 2012 Keck Award was awarded jointly to the Acropolis Museum, Athens,

Greece, for the conservation and restoration of the Caryatids in collaboration with the Institute of Electronic Structure and Laser at the Foundation for Research and Technology in Crete (IESL-FORTH), and to Anglo-Saxon CSI: Sittingbourne, Kent, UK, a community conservation laboratory.

The awards and grants received and administered by IIC are quite varied and their administration is fairly complex: as well as the Keck award, for example, they also include a travel grant awarded for conservation of modern sculpture by the Gabo Trust, the most recent beneficiary being Rachel Rivenc; this is administered by IIC. It was therefore decided at a recent council meeting that a small committee should be formed under the guidance of Richard Kerschner to look into these and perhaps rationalise their administration. This is already making progress and we look forward to its report later in the following financial year.

The first meeting for IIC Fellows, organised by Cornelia Weyer, was held during the Vienna congress, partly as a social occasion, partly as a forum for discussion on the place of IIC in the conservation community now and how this might be changed. The meeting was followed up with a questionnaire, later sent out to all Fellows by e-mail. The responses, together with the discussion at the meeting, have been compiled into a document by Cornelia Weyer, which has been sent out to all Fellows. The salient points resulting from this were that IIC should be responsive to ongoing ideas and discussions, such that it can set ideas and directions; that it should increase in internationality and diversity; that it should co-operate with other international conservation bodies and should hold an outstanding position among them; it should work to maintain relationships with present and former regional groups; it should increase its membership. Suggestions were made about developing the format and content of congresses and comments were made about IIC publications. The role of Fellows and the need for increased IIC membership were also discussed. IIC is already aware of most of these points and is working hard towards addressing them; the need to address IIC's gradually falling membership is one of the most urgent and a Membership Committee under the chairmanship of Velson Horie, tasked with investigating the reasons behind this and suggesting possible solutions within the next financial year, is being set up. It is, however, clear that the Fellows Meeting and subsequent questionnaire together formed a valuable exercise and we are most grateful to Cornelia Weyer for initiating the concept and for putting so much energy into compiling the results into a useful document. Comments on this document and on further ideas are always welcome. The Fellows Meeting was also an enjoyable social event and will be repeated at the next IIC Congress.

One point raised was IIC's relationship with other international conservation groups. We are very happy to say that, during the Vienna Congress, a memorandum of understanding between IIC and ICOM-CC was signed by Jerry Podany, then President of IIC, and Lisa Pilosi, Chair of the Directory Board of ICOM-CC. We hope that this will assist greater co-operation between our two organisations in the future and IIC is actively working towards this. We hope also to renew our friendly relations with ICCROM in the near future.

The 25th biennial Congress, with the theme *An Unbroken History: Conserving East Asian Works of Art and Heritage*, will be held in Hong Kong in September 2014 and is being organised with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of the Hong Kong Government. This will be the first time IIC has held a conference in a sub-tropical region, with the very particular conservation problems such an environment

may bring. The congress is to be held at the Hong Kong City Hall and preparations, organised by Shing-wai Chan and his extremely capable team, are already well advanced. The Technical Committee, under the chairmanship of Austin Nevin, has made a selection of papers and posters from well over 200 abstracts submitted for papers, slightly less for posters. A high proportion of these were submitted by authors from China and other parts of East Asia. The official language of the Congress will be English, with simultaneous translation of the presentations into and from Putonghua (modern Standard Chinese). Registration for the congress will open very soon and a list of the paper titles will be available

Although it took place outside the current reporting year, I should mention the extremely successful second Student and Emerging Conservator Meeting, held in Copenhagen in September 2013. The meeting, entitled *Conservation: Obstacles or Opportunities?* was held at the central Copenhagen site of KADK, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts Copenhagen, Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation who provided considerable support for the conference as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the School of Conservation. This was a wonderful event, fully booked and also attended over the web by students and newly qualified conservators worldwide. As with the 2011 London conference, it was organised by students, they chose the topics for discussion, they organised the visits and IIC would like to thank them, and their chairman Mikkel Scharff, for a thoroughly enjoyable time.

The Opportunities Fund, supported by contributions from IIC members through the World Membership scheme, is at present supporting ten institutions and three individual members. Three of the institutions took up IIC's offer of financial support to send a representative to the Vienna Congress and the representatives made full use of their time to network with other conservators. Probably the most efficient use of the Fund in the future will be to target areas where there was felt to be a need; targeting in South America, for example, had resulted in help being given to one very active institution in Lima. The target should now perhaps shift to South-East Asia, in parallel with the forthcoming Hong Kong congress.

It is pleasing to report IIC's increasing activity, but at the same time this has resulted in very much more work for the office. Council agreed that an additional part-time employee was needed and we are pleased to announce the recent recruitment of Teresa Dewane in this role. The office has been helped for several months with a backlog of routine work on a volunteer basis by Debby Byzantine, who has recently returned to the USA. IIC is very grateful for her invaluable help. We would like to thank IIC's Executive Secretary, Graham Voce, and the Membership secretary, Valerie Compton Taylor, for their continuing work on at IIC, and also David Compton Taylor for help during the Vienna Congress period.

*Jo Kirby Atkinson, Secretary-General*