INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION
AND THE RESTORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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REPORT OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL
(Period, March 1, 1959 to June 30, 1960)
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I - Foreword

Under Article 6 of the Statutes of the Centre, examination and approval of the Council's reports and activities represent one of the tasks of the General Assembly. To this end the Provisional Council submits to the Assembly the present Report, covering the activity of the Centre from March, 1st, 1959, to June, 30th, 1960, i.e. the period during which the Provisional Council, in accordance with Article 12 of the Statutes has discharged additional functions which are normally vested in the General Assembly.

II - Creation of the Rome Centre

Problems related to the conservation of cultural property have acquired an ever-increasing importance over the last few decades. In order to try and meet the increased demand for scientific and technical aid, specialised institutions are steadily speeding up the rate of their research and development and increasing the number of their publications. On the other hand, the world has become increasingly aware of the tremendous task to be accomplished in safeguarding cultural treasures in countries where the available means are scarcely adequate for tackling the problems involved. The need for international cooperation in this respect and coordination of effort becomes more and more urgent.

In 1949, Mr. N. P. Chakravorti, then Director General of Archaeology in India, drew attention to this matter at a meeting of the UNESCO Museums and Historical Monuments' Division. In 1951, the UNESCO Swiss National Commission advocated setting up an International Centre with a view to the study and development of restoration methods. The suggestion was examined by the Swiss Government and the International Committee on Monuments, Artistic and Historic sites and Archaeological Excavations (established by UNESCO in 1951); and in July 1953, the ICOM General Assembly could welcome the resolution that "UNESCO envisages the creation of an International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property."

After further consultation between, the UNESCO Secretariat, ICOM, the International Committee on Monuments and the Italian Government, the UNESCO General Conference in its ninth session held during the months of November and December 1956 in New Delhi decided to set up the "International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property". The Conference adopted the Statutes of the Centre as well as the text of an Agreement with the Italian Government under which the new institution should be given its headquarters at Rome, where it could enjoy many advantages notably the cooperation of the Istituto centrale del restauro, of the Istituto della Patologia del Libro, of the Scuola centrale antincedi (all three being in Rome); of the Istituto d'arte per la ceramica (Faenza) of the Scuola del mosaico (Ravenna) and of the Istituto per le pietre dure (Florence) and of other institutions and laboratories.
in Italy. The agreement was signed in Paris on the 27th of April, 1957, by UNESCO and the Italian Government.

On June, 1st, 1960, the procedure of ratification by the Italian Parliament was completed by a vote of the Senate. The instrument of ratification may now be delivered by the Italian Government to UNESCO without further delay.

Conforming with Article 15 of the Statutes which stipulates that these Statutes shall come into force only after 5 countries have agreed to support the Centre, the Centre came officially into existence on May 1958 after the entry of the fifth Country, Poland; it became actually operative on March, 1st, 1959, with a still very limited personnel (Director, Assistant-Director, Executive Secretary one Short-hand and an Usher).

According to the Statutes the major tasks of the Centre are: to gather information and to classify it methodically as documentation for consultation and study; to coordinate and encourage the efforts of students of conservation and to promote international cooperation in this field; to act as technical consultant and scientific adviser and, broadly, to contribute by all available means to raising the standards of conservation and restoration work throughout the world.

Pending the meeting of the first General Assembly of representatives of the member countries, the statutory powers vested in the Assembly and in the Council were exercised by a Provisional Council (Article 12 of the Statutes). In compliance with the provisions set forth by this article, the Director General of UNESCO appointed as his deputy Mr. J. Van der Haagen, Chief of the Division of Museums and Historical Monuments. Mr. Guglielmo de Angelis-d'Ossat, Director General of Antiquities and Fine Arts, attended the meeting as representatives of the Italian Government. Dr. Paul Coremans, Director of the Institut royal du patrimoine artistique of Brussels and Dr. Cesare Brandi Director of the Istituto Centrale del restauro of Roma willingly accepted the roles assigned to them under the above-mentioned Article, whereas the Director General of UNESCO appointed as the fifth member Dr. Frédéric Gysin, Director of the Musée National suisse at Zurich and Chairman of the Advisory Committee of ICOM.

The Council has likewise steadily availed itself of the cooperation of Mr. Georges-Henri Rivière, Director of the International Council of Museums. According to Article 7 of the Statutes of the Centre, this organization is entitled to send to the Council's meetings a representative without voting right and it has proved to be of the greatest value that the Director of ICOM himself found it possible to be the representative even though in the humble capacity of observer.
At its first session the Council chose as its Chairman Mr. Frédéric Gysin, and he has been unanimously re-elected at each of the four following sessions of the Council.

III - Preliminary organization

From December, 1958, to June, 1960 the Provisional Council has held five sessions as follows:

- 16th to 18th December, Rome 1958 CP/1
- 16th to 18th April, Rome, 1959 CP/2
- 28th June, Copenhagen, 1959 CP/3
- 8th to 10th December, Rome, 1959 CP/4
- 5th to 7th May, Rome, 1960 CP/5

The work of these sessions has made it possible to lay out the administrative and financial structure of the Centre; the Statuts du Personnel (CP 1/ADM 1 REV), the Règlement intérieur du Conseil (CP 1/2 REV), the Règlement financier (CP 2/ADM 1 REV), the Rules of the General Assembly (CP 5/6 REV) etc. (code numbers of the main documents etc. mentioned are quoted). On the other hand, consideration was given to problems arising from the appointment of "Corresponding Experts" (Art. 5 of the Statutes and Art. 25 of the Règlement intérieur du Conseil) a provisional list being drawn up by the Secretariat. The adjustment of relations with other organizations concerned with the preservation of cultural wealth, such as UNESCO, ICOM and the International Institute for the Conservation of historic and artistic works (IIC) etc. has been a constant preoccupation.

At its first session, the Provisional Council was glad to obtain, the cooperation of Dr. Harold J. Plenderleith, formerly Director of Research at the British Museum Laboratory, in the capacity of Director of the Centre, and of Mr. Paul Philippot, Professor of the History of Art at the Université Libre of Brussels, in the capacity of Assistant Director, both for a 5-year period.

On account of the time required for the material and administrative establishment of the Centre at Rome, the Council decided to postpone until December, 1960, the first meeting of the General Assembly. This decision was taken after the Council had consulted all supporting countries and received their approval.
IV - Publicity and Support

The first public statement regarding the Centre was made by the President of the Provisional Council in a short article published in the UNESCO periodical, "Museum" (UNESCO, Paris, vol. XII, N. 1).

With a view to making known the activities and aims of the Centre, a formal meeting was convened in Stockholm on the 8th of July, 1959, on the occasion of the Icom General Conference and this was attended by His Majesty the King of Sweden; during the meeting two discourses were given, one by the President and one by the Director of the Centre. The Director's address was later published in "Museum News" (Vol. 38, N. 2, October 1959), the official periodical of the American Association of Museums. It may be added that in response to a request made by the Association des Conservateurs français, the Director delivered a lecture (1) in the Louvre, Paris on 20th May 1960 in the course of which he described the aims and objects of the International Centre in Rome.

Since May 1958, membership has increased from 5 to 19 countries. The member-countries (June 1960) are the following: (in order of entry)

Austria 6.5.1956
Dominican Republic 20.2.1958
Spain 19.4.1958
Morocco 24.4.1958
Poland 10.5.1958
Israel 23.5.1958
Lebanon 2.6.1958
Jordan 6.7.1958
Ceylon 4.9.1958
Ghana 12.2.1959
Switzerland 23.5.1959
Netherlands 14.4.1959
Yugoslavia 10.6.1959
Belgium 29.6.1959
Lybia 31.8.1959

(1) The text of this lecture will be published in the text issue of the Journal of the Association "Musées et Collections Publiques"
United Arab Republic 29.9.1959
Bulgaria 25.12.1959
Roumania 19.1.1960
Italy (1) 1960

This list is complete to October, 17th, 1960

V - Achievements

In spite of limited staff and funds and of the considerable time necessarily entailed in drafting essential administrative documents and establishing the Institution, the Centre has been able, during its first year of activity, to complete certain important undertakings and to plan others of potential use to its members.

1. Publications issued or ready for issue

The close cooperation between the Centre and ICOM made it possible to publish in May, 1960, an "International Inventory of Museum Laboratories and Restoration Workshops", which represents a basic contribution in the field of museum laboratory and atelier cooperation; it is a kind of world directory which the Centre will endeavour to keep up-to-date and develop with a view to periodic republication. The book contains the list of all the leading institutes in the world that specialise in conservation, their personnel, equipment, main subjects of interest and desiderata, adequately indexed with the names of persons and contents.

A monograph on "Climatology in Museums" prepared by the Centre largely from material made available and resulting from an ICOM survey of the subject, will be published in a special issue of "Museum" scheduled to appear at the beginning of the month of November. It represents an effort to satisfy two requirements, being at once an introduction to the subject and a useful reference book for conservators in museums, picture galleries, libraries and archives.

The problem of the conservation of wall-paintings, a major preoccupation in countries throughout the world, is a particular interest of the Centre shared with ICOM. ICOM had already initiated studies in mural paintings in which the Centre has now been invited to participate and it will further these studies in the capacity of "rapporteur". Meantime, a publication entitled: "The Conservation of Mural Paintings in Different Countries - Report on the Situation" has been prepared and will be issued shortly. This communication is designed to drawn attention of the public to the most serious aspects of the problem, and to pave the way for a

(1) Italy's position has been referred to above (see on page 4)
thorough analysis now being undertaken by the Centre jointly with ICOM, and the "Istituto Centrale del restauro". A preliminary list of the services in different countries charged with the responsibility of preserving paintings has been compiled and will be found in this publication.

Finally, the Centre, since its inception, has been concerned with the training of personnel for the vocation of restorer. A general approach to this subject has been made in an article contributed to "Studies in Conservation" and, furthermore, a fact-finding survey is being carried out on an international scale by the method of questionnaire which should supply much useful information of practical value.

2. Publications envisaged

In order to meet the demands of the wide variety of interests that are shared with its members, to help art historians, archaeologists, directors in all categories of museums, as well as laboratory researchers and restorers, the Centre has in mind to add to its series of publications as opportunity permits.

It has been pointed out that a brochure entitled "First aid in excavations" would be welcomed. It would be devoted solely to the first aid treatment of objects in the field. The booklet might be offered in several languages and would certainly be provided with a basic bibliography to enable students to continue with more advanced studies.

In the pamphlet on the "Conservation of Mural Paintings" already described as a joint interest of the Centre and the "Istituto Centrale del restauro" under the sponsorship of ICOM, an elaboration is foreseen of these studies to cover techniques of wall paintings of all kinds, their alterations and the phenomena to which these give rise as well as the possible remedies that are available. It is considered that a further valuable contribution to the experience built up by the Istituto in this field will be made by the cooperation of experts from other countries.

The Centre proposes to avail itself of the good offices of the "Scuola Centrale Antincendi" in Rome and of the accumulated experience of other experts bodies in compiling a small monograph on the measures to be taken in museums, galleries, libraries etc. for the prevention and control of fire.

It is also intended that the Centre should translate and publish certain articles considered to be of lasting importance dealing with the theory of restoration.
3. Documentation and Abstracts service

The gathering together and the methodical classification of a comprehensive documentation for study and diffuson represents one of the major tasks of the Centre. A system of classification has been devised based partly on an analytical arrangement and partly on a complementary drafting of "experts", which should make it possible to collect quickly all information related to a given subject whether it be related to some craft or technique or be concerned with some preservation problem. The Centre will thus be able to help research students and museums by providing bibliographic references. A parallel service yet to be developed is that of providing photocopies of the documents it has available. It hopes to be able to work out a system of cooperation both with ICOM and with IIC in the near future for the publication of current technical abstracts the value of which is universally acknowledged.

4. Consultations

Apart from the various undertakings initiated by the Centre itself, mention should be made of some of the more important services which it has been called upon to render in response to appeals coming from outside.

Though the services of the Centre are obviously available to member countries only, the Council decided in its second session that during the first year, the Director might receive favourably requests coming from countries which have not yet joined the Centre provided that the acceptance of such requests did not involve much expense.

This would provide an opportunity to remind applicants of the advisability of their nations joining the Centre.

a. Preservation of Nubian monuments

On the invitation of the Director General of UNESCO, the Director of the Centre took part in an international meeting of experts called together in October, 1959, with the object of devising suitable means for safeguarding such Nubian sites and monuments as were threatened with submersion by the construction of the new Assuan dam. This was, indeed, the first occasion on which the Centre was publicly acknowledged as an authority appropriate to consult on major questions of world importance relating to conservation;

Though of the greatest interest, the work of the experts' group is too involved to be discussed in detail here. Suffice it to say that plans for a "rescue operation" as regards the tombs and temples threatened by the rising river were discussed in detail and embodied
in a report which has provided a basis for international action in taking measures to safeguard these monuments.

The adherence of the United Arab Republic to the Centre was a welcome sequel.

b. Conservation of the wall-paintings of Bonampak (Mexico)

UNESCO likewise applied to the Centre for advice with relation to the preservation of the Maya wall-paintings in Bonampak, Mexico. After examining all the available data, the Centre decided that certain essential information had still to be obtained to complete the survey upon which conservation treatment would be based. The survey, which has already been the subject of many letters, is now actually being completed, and the Centre will soon be in a position to make a definite recommendation.

c. Conservation of the wall-paintings in Thailand

The problem of the preservation of the rather unusual wall-paintings in Thailand has been submitted to the Centre through UNESCO. The Centre is examining the possibility of sending a specialist to make a detailed examination and the training of a local expert, preferably a Thai national, for the treatment of the works is envisaged.

5. Director's travels

In addition to the above mentioned undertakings it was considered necessary for the Centre to make contact with conservation services in certain countries with which it is not in normal correspondence in order among other things, to urge the advantage of a closer relationship. To this end, during this first year of activity, the Director, on the advice of the Provisional Council, made two important journeys. In the first he travelled from Stockholm to Finland, USSR and Poland; in the second to Nubia, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

a. Eastern Europe

Finland

Leaving from Stockholm where he had taken part with the Assistant Director in the Vth General Conference of ICOM, the Director travelled to Finland where he contacted the Fine Arts Administration and made several excursions from Helsinki to visit sites of special interest. The country has available only four trained restorers and the works of conservation and also of archaeological excavation are considerably hindered by the unfavourable climate.
There are more than one hundred ancient churches scattered all over the country requiring frequent attention. Laboratory and atelier activities are carried out during the long winter months, while summer is more advantageously utilized for visits to monuments and for giving such treatment as is necessary on the site. The responsible personnel are fully aware of the gravity and importance of their task, but they have to meet with many difficulties. It was considered to be a great help that the Director was able to establish contact between the Finnish restorers and the laboratory and atelier of the National Gallery in London.

USSR

After spending three days in Finland the Director travelled to Leningrad, where through the kindness of Prof. M. Artamonov, Director of the Hermitage Museum, he was received by Dr. Loewinson-Lessing. His one-week stay enabled him to contact the Museum’s staff and to discuss with them the main problems of conservation, and particularly those inherent in wall paintings, textiles, wood from excavations and icons.

When in Moscow he was invited to attend an interesting demonstration at the Central Institute for Conservation. The Director, Mr. M. Filatov, was unfortunately absent on account of illness. A visit was paid thereafter to the Pushkin Museum where he was received by Mr. Zamoshkin, Director, and discussed particularly various problems that arise in connexion with the preservation of prints, drawings and manuscripts.

Several of the prominent USSR experts expressed the hope of seeing their country join the Centre.

Poland

In Poland, the Director was received by Professor Bohdan Marconi, Chief Conservator and Director of the Central Laboratory for the Conservation of Historic Monuments, both on his own behalf and on behalf of Dr. Stanislaw Lorentz, Director of the National Museum of Warsaw. The Director of the Centre, led by Professor Marconi had the advantage of visiting the main centres in Poland which have so much of interest to offer from the view point of reconstruction and conservation (Warsaw, Gdansk, Poznan, Krakow). Everywhere, problems were discussed and relations were established in an atmosphere of cordiality.

On leaving Poland, the Director had, unfortunately, to abandon a projected visit to Hungary for reasons beyond his control.
b. Middle East

U. A. R. - Egypt

At the conclusion of his mission in Egypt, as a member of the UNESCO experts' group for safeguarding the Nubian Monuments, the Director extended his stay in the Country at the invitation of and as a guest of the Government, with the object of discussing several national problems relating to the conservation of Egyptian antiquities in the Museum of Cairo and mural paintings at Beni Hassan.

He had planned on leaving the United Arab Republic to visit countries in the Middle East. The schedule was to include a stay in Israel and Iraq, but it was unfortunately necessary to give up for the moment his visit to these two countries.

Lebanon

Taking as starting point Beyrouth, where he was received by Mr. Sarraf, Chief of the Museum Laboratory, and enjoyed the generous hospitality of Emir Maurice Chehab, General Conservator of Antiquities, the Director was enabled to visit during his 5-day stay Baalbek, Byblos, Beit el Dine and other archaeological sites, to study the Beyrouth Museum and to discuss the development of the latter's laboratory. He was interested to learn about the treatment proposed for the conservation of an old drusian House - a difficult task which had to be accomplished in a short time by the limited personnel of the laboratory.

U. A. R. - Syria

In Syria, where the Director was received by Dr. Abdul Hak, Director of Antiquities, he devoted particular attention to an examination of the Museum of Damascus, on the basis of a recent report by Dr. Coremans, which was found to express the local position admirably. It was clear to him that if the recommendations made in this report were implemented, and should the scientists required be available, the Damascus Museum would be likely to become the main research centre for museum studies in the Middle East. The Director was particularly asked for advice on the preservation of two beautiful Roman parade helmets, in the same category as a helmet from Homs, which had received special treatment at the British Museum Research Laboratory. It was decided, provisionally, that one of the two helmets might be submitted to treatment at the British Museum; Mr. Raif Hafez, Chief Restorer, might come to London and be present during the treatment, so that, after observing
what had been done he himself might apply similar treatment to the second helmet in Damascus.

**Jordan**

On his way back through Beyrouth, the Director went afterwards to Jerusalem where he contacted Mr. Saad, Director of the Archaeological Museum; during this visit he was shown the priceless collection of fragments of ancient texts of the Bible upon which an international team of scholars is at work. The location of the museum approximately one mile and a half from the military no man's land, gives rise to a serious problem of safe custody.

The Director then met Dr. Dajani, Director of Antiquities, and could acquaint himself with some of the many problems confronting the Director of Antiquities of Jordan. Of these one of the most complicated was undoubtedly the conservation of the Roman amphitheatre of Amman. He visited Jerash and Petra with Dr. Steckeweh - an architect sent to Jordan as adviser by UNESCO, who seemed to be doing excellent work - and he established friendly relations with the members of the Antiquities' Department of Jerusalem, who allowed him to visit the restoration works at the Dome of the Rock. Though information on the subject is far from clear, it appears that it has been decided to use for restoration work modern glazed tiles offered by Turkey and considered identical with the ancient ones. The roof will be covered with anodized aluminium in imitation of its former covering, gold. However, the permanence of this material seems to be some doubt as its golden hue is due to a thin oxide layer which will have to withstand the fine spray of wind-blown sand without changing its colour.

Studies of the conservation of monuments being carried out in the Middle East prompt a remark of a general character on the utilization of cement for the strengthening of stone work. Cement is readily obtainable everywhere; it is cheap and easy to use and gives quick results. But undoubtedly its utilization for the specialised purpose of restoring buildings has not yet been studied enough in relation to its colour, texture, hardness, weathering qualities etc. and, in general, to its harmonization with ancient building materials such as tufa or the different sandstones. Here is a subject in which the Centre might profitably become interested.

**VI - Correspondence and visitors**

It is not possible in this Report to make a complete analysis of the correspondence or the list of persons who have visited the Centre. For this, recourse would have to be had to our Record books. Suffice it to say that the questions submitted to the Centre, though still few in number
are important and generally worthy of serious study. The Centre has received visitors from the most widely divergent regions of the world: Europe, Canada, USA, Venezuela, Japan, India, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Afghanistan - and this has made it possible to discuss aspects of conservation in these countries. It has often been possible to help with advice or to provide scientific or technical information immediately that otherwise might have been difficult to obtain. It may be of interest to mention in this connexion the invitation of Mr. John Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation, to examine the problems relating to the conservation of the collection (paintings, furniture etc.) in the Villa Serbelloni on the lake of Como. The requirement was to take the most suitable measures for the preservation of the villa and its contents without making it look too like a museum. Experience of this kind is of undoubted value and we welcomed the opportunity that was afforded us to learn as well as to give practical assistance.

Finally, the Director’s opinion has been regularly solicited by the University of New York in regard to the establishment, within the framework of its Institute of History of Arts, of a Conservation Centre.

VII - Projects and advantages offered by the Centre

The development of the services offered by the International Centre will obviously depend upon the support it receives from Member Countries as this is the factor determining its income. From every point of view therefore it is desirable to add to the list of supporters. From the balance struck at the end of this first year of activity it is possible to evaluate achievements in terms of finance but it should be born in mind that the first year is always exceptional as the first budget must of necessity be somewhat erratic and unconventional.

The support, both moral and financial, of UNESCO, of all the Member Countries and of Italy has made possible the implementation of this first program. During this early period, the Centre has constantly enjoyed UNESCO support; it is no secret that the annual allocation of $12,000 granted to it by UNESCO has been the major factor in determining its activities and development. It is therefore to be expected that unless nations rally in support of the Centre, difficulties will certainly arise from the fact that the UNESCO allocation is designed to last for the first four years, only, of the life of the Centre. The future life of the Centre is therefore clearly in jeopardy unless the list of supporting countries can be increased so as to provide, after 1963 an annual income of at least an additional $12,000 and this threatens to overshadow the development of a long term programme.
The Centre nevertheless envisions being able to supply a number of useful publications. It envisages participating actively in the programmes of ICOM, as, for example, in the formulation and publication of reports based upon the work of the ICOM syndicates and surveys. Moreover it is confident that it will be able to make a helpful contribution to the training of skilled restorers. The Italian Government has demonstrated its faith in this aspect of the Centre's activities by placing at its disposal four scholarships which will enable the Centre to direct the studies of future specialists in conservation work who desire to improve their skill in Italy. Should a similar formula be adopted by other countries, the scope of the services which the Centre could provide in this field would be put once and for all beyond doubt.

To recapitulate and to sum up, the aims pursued by the Centre, almost all of which are envisaged in Article 1 in the Statutes, are as follows:

- to collect, study and diffuse documentation concerned with the scientific and technical problems involved in the conservation and restoration of cultural property.

- to publish works providing up-to-date information on matters of common concern in its field; to distribute such publications to members either free of charge or, depending on circumstances, at cost price.

- to coordinate, stimulate and sponsor research on problems concerned with conservation and restoration by encouraging international meetings and the interchange of ideas or of entrusting experts or groups of experts with special tasks related thereto.

- to advise and make recommendations on general or special matters concerning the conservation or restoration of cultural property; to act as consultant in specific cases; to set up conservation services, to develop methods for the treatment or protection of various objects, to carry out laboratory tests etc.

- to contribute to the training of research students and technicians with a view to the attainment of higher standards in restoration work.

- to formulate research programs and to referee and recommend the granting of scholarships (UNESCO and the like).

- to organize short missions to supporting countries with a view to giving advice on specific problems on site.
- to act as scientific advisors to UNESCO when called upon to do so and to provide information with respect to the possibility of sending experts on specific missions.

It should be observed that such aims are in harmony with the desiderata expressed by the many national institutions appearing in the "Répertoire" and these specialised institutions are perhaps best qualified to give expression as to what professional help would be of most value in the world of today.

The gradual evolution and expansion of the activities of the Rome Centre in conservation work - so much to be desired - is contingent upon the increased financial support that would be given by still more nations adhering to the Centre. A skeleton team is in existence in Rome that has faith in its ideals of self-sacrifice in the service of construction; in the conservation of all that is worth while in art, archaeology and culture generally. UNESCO is at present largely responsible for this. It is for the nations to decide whether or not the idea of a world centre for studies in conservation is premature or whether by its acts the Rome Centre has merited their support.