



NEWSLETTER 2004, ICOM GLASS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING IN GENOA, 19-24 SEPTEMBER 2003

ICOM - International Committee for Decorative Arts and Design (ICDAD) And ICOM Glass

By the Secretary of ICOM Glass, Gunnel Holmér

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The 2003 Annual Meeting was organized by The Wolfsonian-Florida International University in Miami Beach and the Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection-Fondazione Cristoforo Colombo in Genoa. The meeting was sponsored by the Commune di Genova, the Regione Liguria, and the Fondazione Regionale C. Colombo.

A total of about 50 participants attended the conference. Nine of them were members of the Glass Committee and came from the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and USA. The topic of the meeting was *Benefit or Burden: Collectors, Curators, and Collection Management*. During the week in Genoa, the participants had ample opportunity to enter deeply into this subject due to a variety of interesting lectures and visits to various museums and institutions.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

The conference commenced in the evening with a reception in the Palazzo Ducale, setting out with greetings by Anna Castellano, Council Department of Communications and City Promotion, Commune de Genova. A light buffet dinner, sponsored by the Glass Committee, followed in the same location.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Following registration, the official opening of the meeting took place in the Palazzo Ducale. The group was welcomed both by Anna Castellano from the Commune di Genova and by Elisabeth Schmuttermeyer, President of the ICDAD Board.

The official introduction was followed by five lectures of Genovese scholars. Piero Boccardo, Galleria di Palazzo Rosso, talked about *The History of Collectors and Collections in Genoa*. The lecture discussed wealthy local families whose private collections of faience, tapestry etc. had been turned into public museums. The title of Anna Orlando's lecture was *Collecting ancient art in Genoa in the 20th century*. It

mainly focused on her grandfather, Mr. Angelo Costa, who had assembled an impressive collection of art. She also noted other collectors in Genoa and examined how their taste had changed between the end of the 19th century and the end of the 20th century. In his lecture *Examples of 20th century architecture in Genoa*, Francesco Saverio Fera, University of Bologna, described how the city of Genoa had changed and expanded over the last hundred years. Old medieval buildings had been enlarged and new blocks of flats had been erected on the hills around the city. Architect competitions in Genoa also had influence on the architecture. Matteo Fochessati, The Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection-Fondazione Regionale C. Colombo, gave a lecture about *Mitchell Wolfson Jr. and his collection in Genoa*. The collection with 7,000 items in Genoa is heterogeneous and includes paintings, applied arts, sculptures and design between 1885 and 1945, mostly Italian. In conclusion, Silvia Barsione of The Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection-Fondazione Regionale C. Colombo, talked about *Collecting decorative arts and design. The local production*. She focused on the innovation of ceramics, furniture, textiles etc. of the 20th century in Liguria and emphasized the work executed in the village of Albisola, which is known for its special ceramics with examples on view in the local museum.

In the afternoon, the group received a guided tour of medieval and cinquecento Genoa. The *Museo del Tesoro di San Lorenzo* was also paid a visit. This museum contains important artefacts including antique silver and gold, as well as works that relate to the religious and civic history of the City. The tour concluded at the *Museo Diocesano* with ecclesiastical artworks from the Genovese diocese including paintings, sculpture, silver and tapestries.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Nervi, La Spezia and Portovenere

The conference schedule continued with a full day excursion to Nervi, La Spezia and Portovenere. Worth seeing in Nervi was the *Museo Giannettino Luxoro*, an early 20th century home, which contains a diverse collection of paintings, furniture, clocks, ceramics, silver and nativity figures from the 17th and 18th centuries. Very interesting was also *Raccolte Frugone*, which is a 18th century villa with collections of 19th and 20th century art by Italian and foreign artists. The last museum on the tour was the *Museo Amedeo Lia* in La Spezia, with a wide range of glass objects from antiquity to the XIX century. The day ended with a marvellous dinner at a restaurant in the harbour of Portovenere.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

All day was reserved for lectures relating to the theme of the ICOM conference, *Burden or Benefit? Collectors, Curators and Collection Management in the Twenty First Century*.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many museums find themselves with an embarrassment of riches when it comes to objects in their permanent collections. Close examination of these holdings often reveals that many institutions have more to be embarrassed about than to be proud of. The growth of our permanent collections through purchase and donation has brought about a crisis in decorative arts museums today - the lack of human and financial resources to properly care for

these collections and to present properly to a public with ever-higher expectations.

Unplanned collection growth has been compounded by another twentieth-century phenomenon - the emergence of thousands of individuals around the world who have, with varying degrees of success, assembled personal collections with the intent of bequeathing them to public institutions with the intent of preserving them for posterity. Private collections contain a staggering number and variety of objects that reveal wide-ranging aesthetic and intellectual points of view while others were formed without these considerations in mind. Many of these objects present condition problems that would have deterred a museum from purchasing them, and others represent duplication of certain pieces in a collection. The acquisition of these collections, while done with good intentions, has put added strain on limited institutional resources, taxing curators and registrars and stretching the limits of exhibition spaces, and conservation and storage facilities.

Gifts and purchases should be made with full consideration of the museum's mission and of the legal, financial, and human resources needed for the care, conservation, research, interpretation, exhibition, and storage of objects. These concerns should be addressed in the museum's policy on collection planning and development. As directors and curators of these institutions we must develop appropriate solutions.

What do we do with our ever-expanding collections? How do we determine what is worthy of the museum's collection? One critical solution to be explored is de-accessioning, as the most recent issue of ICOM News highlighted [vol 56, 2003, no. 1]. The elimination of objects un-worthy of a collection is of paramount importance, and curators need to address this topic. Another way to balance our collections without burdening them is to work more closely with private collectors to make certain that new acquisitions truly enhance our institutions. This latter process, however, comes with its own highly charged ethical concerns that curators must address.

Two lecture sessions at the Meeting in Genoa addressed these issues. All abstracts of the papers, received by the time of publication of the Newsletter, are appended to this *Newsletter*.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Excursion to Noble Houses in Genoa

In the morning, the group went to see the collections of Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola. This palace was the home of the Grimaldi, Pallavicino and Doria families, and finally Spinola, who donated it to the State in 1958. Originally constructed by the Grimaldi family in the 16th century, the palace was redesigned in the 17th and 18th centuries by the Spinola family. It contains furniture, textiles, porcelains, silver and important works by Genoese artists, including Valerio Castello, Bernardo Strozzi, Luca Cambiaso, Filippo Parodi, and Europeans such as Joos van Cleve, Rubens, van Dyck and Antonello da Messina.

In the afternoon, the Museo di Palazzo Reale was visited. The history of the Royal palace of Genoa (formerly the Balbi Durazzo Palace) can be divided into three phases of construction. In 1643 Stefano Balbi commissioned the architects Cantone

and Moncino to build a palace on the west end of town. The central part of the present building belongs to this first stage, completed in 1650. In 1677-79 the palace passed to the Durazzo family, who enlarged the building in 1685. In 1705 Eugenio Durazzo asked Carlo Fontana to unify the design. In 1823, the building was sold to the Sa-voias, the Italian royal family. During the 1840s, under King Carlo Alberto, many modifications were made to the building. The palace contains frescoes, furnishings, paintings, and sculpture.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Various Monuments in Genoa

In the morning, the tour went to the *Palazzo del Principe* (Prince's Palace), which is the Genovese residence of the Doria Pamphilj princes and is the most significant 16th-century monument and artistic complex in Liguria. It was constructed for Andrea Doria in the 1520s and is the only "royal" palace to have been built during the whole secular history of the Genovese Republic. The palace has conserved the cycle of mythological frescoes and stucco decorations created for Andrea Doria by Perin del Vaga, a pupil of Rafael. The rooms are decorated with furnishings of the 16th and 17th centuries, and include important paintings by Sebastiano Del Piombo, Bronzino, Domenico Piola and many others. The Galleria Aurea contains a cycle of tapestries from the 16th century. The tour finished with a visit to the Italian-style garden, recently restored according to the plans of the late 16th century.

Next stop was the *Archivio Storico della Pubblicità* with a large collection of advertising materials including posters, original designs, and other material from the mid-19th century until today. The participants then paid a visit to the Maritime Station at Ponte dei Mille, where a delicious lunch was served.

In the afternoon, there were two alternative tours: The first of them started with the Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection with decorative, architectural and propaganda arts from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries in Italy. Thereafter it went on by bus to the Piazza Dane (skyscrapers by U. Rosso and M. Piacentini), Piazza della Vittoria (war memorial), Piazza Rossetti and Staglieno Cemetery. The alternative was a visit to the *Palazzo Rosso*. Located on the via Garibaldi, Genoa's street of aristocratic palazzi, the Palazzo Rosso is one of the city's oldest and most sumptuous homes of the nobility. The palazzo's remarkable reception rooms, elaborately furnished and decorated with frescoes by Liguria's most important artists, showcase paintings collected over more than two centuries by the Brignole Sale family, including works by Dürer, Guercino, Veronese, Reni, Preti, Strozzi, Castiglione, van Dyck and Rigaud. There was finally also a possibility to see the interiors of the *Palazzo Campanella* at Via Garibaldi.

The day concluded with a cocktail at Castello MacKenzie and a farewell dinner at the Histoire Café Garibaldi.

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS MEETING
Genoa, Italy
September 22, 2003

1/ The Board

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Elected</u>	<u>Due to retire</u>
Chairman: Jutta-Annette Page	2001	2007
Secretary: Gunnel Holmér	2001	2007
Jan Mergl	2001	2007
Geoffrey Edwards	1999	2005
Kaisa Koivisto	2000	2006
Helena Horn	2000	2006

2/ Elections

No elections of new board members were made this year.

3/ Call for nominations of Board Members for 2004

A nomination of Joze Rataj of the Museum in Celje, Slovenia, as been received.

4/ Future venues for annual meetings

An official invitation for 2004 was received by the Glass Committee from Slovenia, and the Board decided to accept this. Previously proposed venues, aside from Monterey, Mexico, are the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, the Musée d'Art Décoratifs in Paris, the State Historical Museum in Moscow. (ICDAD resolved to hold its 2004 Annual Conference in Berlin.) For 2005, the Boards of ICOM Glass and ICDAD proposed a joint meeting with ICDAD in Turkey in 2005.

5/ Membership

The number of voting members increased from 85 in 2002 to 90 in 2003. Owing to a decision of the International Committee Reform Task Force, approved by the Executive Council last December 2002, the Secretariat in Paris can no longer provide the non-voting details. Our membership represents 30 countries.

The membership list provided by ICOM Paris is often inaccurate, as members are only removed from the mailing list if they (or their institutions) either do not pay the fees or they actively resign from the Committee. Addresses, email-addresses, telephone numbers etc. of the members should be updated by asking them to fill in a form, which is again attached to this Newsletter. Such information can also be submitted by email to the Committee's Secretary, Gunnel Holmér, at gunnel.holmer@telia.com.