

## **Report on the Work of CIHA**

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In our last Assembly on September 15, 2016, in Beijing, I was elected as the President of CIHA, Jean-Marie was elected as the Scientific Secretary, and Tristan was elected as the Treasury. In the past year, the three of us have worked closely to adjust the current state of affairs and administrations at CIHA. Jean-Marie and Tristan will report on membership and financial issues respectively. Now I will report on our work.

The past year has been a year of preparation. Now we are having the first official board meeting, following the one held in Beijing last year. After deciding on the approaches of dealing with many issues, we could carry on our works even without face-to-face meetings. Here lies the significance of this board meeting. Our colleagues in charge of specific issues will give detailed reports. Particularly, we wish our Italian and Brazilian colleagues' preparation for the next CIHA Congress will progress smoothly, and they will communicate with each other on relevant issues.

We hope that the next Congress/Congresses (?) will focus on two interconnected themes that can mutually enrich each other. The theme of the CIHA at Beijing last year is "Terms", dealing with different narratives of art and art history in different cultures across different times, as well as different interpretations of events or objects of the similar kind across different periods. This theme focuses on the diversity in art history. The theme of 31st Congress at Montréal, 2004 is "Sites and Territories of Art History". The 32nd Congress at Melbourne, 2008 is "Crossing Cultures: Conflict – Migration – Convergence". They also emphasize exchanges and interactions between cultures. The theme of 33rd Congress at Nuremburg is "Object".

In the coming years we will push forward some projects.

First, the website. It is a concrete project. We have communicated with our Mexican colleagues in the past couple of months. Peter, Mexican representative is also here today. We have come up with detailed arrangement. The website will become the core of our interaction. In addition to our current communication channels, we will expand our network through employing modern media and technology. When this board meeting has reached its final decision, the new official website will subsequently be open. With the website, we can strengthen two aspects of our work. Firstly, our activities and publications will be updated online weekly or even daily. Secondly, we should establish links with various countries. Not only should we have links to relevant websites of these countries, but also connect with art historical activities in these countries. In this way, news and events emerging in our member countries will be announced on the website and will reach our colleagues in other countries in a timely manner.

Secondly, publication. We have proposed to resume our CIHA journal and this issue has been discussed at length. Now we need to reach a decision. If we want to launch such a journal, then how to manage it; how to edit it; how to establish the editorial board. As for these questions, we need to carry out further discussions. This journal will represent a special viewpoint of CIHA.

Various perspectives and methods from different cultures will be taken into consideration in research, criticism, and publication. In the past several years, my colleagues and I have considered how to run the journal with a new approach. Focusing on the growth of knowledge, we have carried out many experiments. For example, at the Han Art Institute which I am taking charge of, (chronologically speaking, the Han dynasty coexists with the rule of Roman Empire, which is also the time when the Silk Road was thriving), when an article is collected into its database, related information and relevant articles can be found automatically in the database, which would serve as supporting resources and sources of inspiration for further research. When other scholars want to elaborate on a thesis, he/she can find new evidences and conduct further research with the help of the database. In this way, every published papers will be recorded with copyrights. It is a bit like sport records. One record may be broken in a couple of days or even a couple of hours. This process makes scholarship a lively, open, and efficient platform for discussion. Comprehensive collaboration and communication should be the new direction that CIHA will take in the future.

Thirdly, we hope CIHA will launch a shared program. For example, we can set up online courses on art history. New knowledge and new discoveries of different countries should not be limited merely to the reach of scholars but should be accessible to people in need. In the past, world art history could be displayed in a book or an atlas, such as in John Onians' contribution. Now it could be taught through online courses. New technology has made this possible. When a lecture is delivered in a specific language, a device could translate it automatically into other languages. People may first try a small section of the lecture and then decide if they want to take the whole course at some cost. This teaching mode has been widely applied in China in the past several years. One of my colleagues at Peking University has carried out his online course in this way. It has attracted more than 200,000 people. Since each individual paid about 30 USD dollars for the course, my colleague received 6 million USD in total. Half of the sum was paid for the website and its technical management, and the other half became his own earnings. This is only one example of the rapidly developing knowledge-based economy in China. I wonder if this way of offering online courses could be implemented by CIHA. I report this phenomenon for your consideration.

Last but not least, since CIHA is an academic association, I hope we can set up a shared database. In fact, in the 1970s, the older generation of scholars, such as Chastel, started setting up a database in CIHA. However, there was no real database as there was no internet at that time. Nowadays, with the internet widely accessible, we can develop an online database. Automatic translation technologies could be applied to the database, which would enable people from various countries to get access to new findings and new discoveries in the world, including new achievements of traditional research. Many museums have already contributed to the development of similar databases or shared knowledge systems. How to advance the cooperation between various countries, cultures, and systems could be an issue to be considered by CIHA. We can discuss all the details later.

I believe what we hope for will be achieved!