

ICOM-CC Working Group Triennial Programme 2017 - 2020

Art Technological Source Research Working Group–ATSR Newsletter 2 – February 2020 (with a postscript May 2020)

Letter of Doris Oltrogge, Anne Haack-Christensen, Kathrin Pilz, Melina Smirniou & Maartje Stols-Witlox

Dear friends and colleagues,

When I wrote this newsletter in February, I did not imagine the changes we all experienced in the last months. I hope that you, your families and friends are well and safe. I apologise for sending this letter so late, but COVID-19 occupied so much time and attention that I missed to publish it earlier. The newsletter is mainly the text finished in February with an editorial written in April. I only slightly updated the calendar. As everybody knows the Triennial has been postponed to April / May 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific date will be communicated by ICOM-CC.

2019 and the beginning of 2020 have been rather busy for the Art Technological Source Research Working Group. In September, our interim meeting took place in Cologne and the final decision process of the papers proposed for the ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in Beijing has been completed. It was an important decision of the Board to continue with the publication although the Triennial Conference needed to be postponed.

Interim meeting »Reflecting on reconstructions« in Cologne 2019

The eighth interim meeting of the Art Technological Source Research Working Group was held at the Cologne Institute of Conservation Sciences (Technische Hochschule Köln) on 26 and 27 September 2019 on the subject »Reflecting on reconstructions. The role of sources and performative methods in art technological studies«. The eighteen papers and nineteen posters presented during the two-day meeting explored a whole range of questions concerned with reconstructions. They covered theoretical and methodological issues as well as case studies on sources and works of art from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Poster pitches were introduced at the end of each session for the first time in a working group's meeting, to stimulate a more vivid discussion in front of the posters.

The conference opened with two methodological papers. Indra Kneepkens discussed the tension between the claim for scientific objectivity and the subjectivity of experience and implicit knowledge of researchers performing reconstructions of historical sources on early modern oil painting. With a focus on printmaking, Ad Stijnman argued for a sharper distinction of reconstructions as epistemic tools to understand possibilities of historical techniques and materials against reconstructions in a literal sense of recreation – which is not possible.

The poster of Mark Clarke and Jorge Kelman presented reconstructions as a method to understand the meaning of the term 'staining' in late medieval English recipes. In her poster on reconstructions of verdigris paints, Charlotte Hoffmann compared these with analytical results of colour changes in

seventeenth-century paintings. Another aspect of seventeenth and eighteenth-century landscape paintings was the topic of Iris Schaefer's poster, the mimetic representation of foliage and the re-enactment of the painters' practices as described in contemporary literature. Karina Foppele and Maartje Stols-Witlox asked in their poster for attention to the possible influence of seemingly minor parameters like drying position of oil paints on the results of reconstructions.

The second section started with a paper on the history of paintings' restoration given by Joana Devesa. She investigated and re-enacted recipes for the cleaning of paintings written before 1900 and compared the results with deterioration phenomena found today on paintings to better understand deterioration processes. An interdisciplinary research project on Rembrandt's drawings was presented by Birgit Reissland and Frank Ligterink. Scientific analysis of the inks, historical research on contemporary ink materials and the analysis of surviving simplicia combined with image processing resulted in a virtual reconstruction of Rembrandt's drawing process and seventeenth-century virtual models of a possible 'original' appearance of the drawings.

A poster of Birgit Reissland and Jan van Daal offered a closer look at the simplicia collection investigated for the Rembrandt project. Stephanie Dietz and Diana Blumenroth turned back to reconstructions as a help for understanding analytical results, in this case, the presence of siccatives in oil paintings. Paul van Laar related in his poster recipes for grinding smalt pigments with honey to the condition of smalt in old paintings. Claire Bételu's poster rehearsed the new binders proposed by Borromée in his painting treatise published in 1862 and was accompanied by some real examples of her reconstructions.

The third paper session was devoted to subjects which are not so often the topic of the Working Group's meetings: archaeology and sculpture. Josef Engelmann and Sayuri de Zilva are part of a multidisciplinary group working on the critical edition of a Byzantine treatise on goldsmiths' work. They presented the archeotechnical methodology applied in their proper research as a combination of the interpretation of the written source, of surviving realia, mostly from archaeological findings, and of re-enactment. Giacinta Jean discussed the role of replication and surviving artisanal tradition in understanding baroque stucco techniques. From visual records and oral tradition, Agnès Le Gac formed a lively narrative of the invisible actors in the production process of monumental sculpture, the mould makers.

The potential of reconstruction as an aid to understanding the aesthetic intentions of Otto Marseus and other seventeenth century painters using offprints of butterflies in their paintings were explored in the poster of V.E. Mandrij, accompanied again by some real examples. Theresa Neuhoff compared sources on stencils with findings on late medieval Cologne school paintings. Medieval containers for paints described and sometimes illustrated in recipe books were compiled in the poster of Claudine Brunon. Helena Melo confronted reconstructions of charcoal and black stone underdrawings to infrared images of Portuguese sixteenth century paintings.

The day concluded with a presentation and discussion of the role of source study and reconstruction in university programs for conservators and art historians with Monika Kammer from the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, Anne Krauter and Franca Mader from the Berner Fachhochschule and Herman den Otter from the University of Amsterdam, moderated by Jenny Boulboulé.

The second day started with two talks on plant dyes and lakes. Paula Nabais revisited the medieval recipes on folium and orchil dyes and compared reconstructions to findings in manuscripts. Eva Eis discussed her findings during the reconstruction of the 'Schüttgelb' recipes of a nineteenth century German pigment manufacturer, and the problems in getting the appropriate raw materials today.

Pigments were also the topic of the poster of Maria Melo, Juliana Buse and Vanessa Otero which discussed the replication of medieval copper green recipes and the analysis of reconstructed

samples. The poster of Rika Pause and Birgit Reissland posed the question of the interpretation of nineteenth and early twentieth-century information on lightfastness and the standards referred to. Jazzy de Groot and René Boitelle used the reconstruction of the structure of a nineteenth-century painting mounted on a cradled panel in their decision-making process for conservation.

The second session of this day presented two case studies on the possibilities of replication for the understanding and conservation of modern art. Joyce Townsend presented the goals and problems of a replication of a Picasso paper collage performed together with her co-author Charity Fox. Friederike Waentig discussed technical and ethical issues of replicas for the completion of an irreversibly damaged cellulose acetate component in a sculpture object of Moholy-Nagy.

Another modern plastic material, celluloid, and its technical history in Portugal was the topic of Artur Neves' poster. Marc Holly presented two papers on early synthetic dyes. The first described the production process and damage risks of Aniline Black; the second introduced a collection of dye samples at the Hochschule Niederrhein and problems of the conservation of historic collections of chemical compounds. The poster of Irina Petroviciu and her colleagues discussed a collection of popular dyeing recipes from early twentieth-century Romania which reflects the use of traditional natural dyes.

The focus of the last four talks of the meeting was again art and artisanal work of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Raquel Marques presented her evaluation and reconstructions of Winsor & Newton recipes for bitumen oil paints which should help to understand damages in nineteenth century oil paintings. Ângela Santos compiled and evaluated recipes of the same company for watercolours for Magic Lantern glass painting, related to the research on damage processes on Magic Lanterns in Portuguese collections. Daniel Sánchez Villaviciencio discussed reconstruction as a complementary method to understand the production technique of trade union banners painted by the company of George Kenning. Rika Pause traced the history and production of the Royal Talens company on the base of economic documents and art historical sources and discussed a concept for reconstructions to produce references for authentication and the understanding of damage processes.

Ad Stijnman's closing remarks summarised an inspiring meeting. Excellent papers and posters stimulated lively discussions between senior conservators, emerging conservation professionals, students, conservation scientists, art historians, and archaeologists. Eighty-five participants from Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Great Britain, Switzerland, France, Austria, Spain, Norway, Romania, and the United States attended the meeting, exchanged ideas and discussed future collaborations and projects.

Business Meeting

The Working Group business meeting was held during the lunch break of the first day. A main topic was the publication policy of ICOM-CC and its implications for the conference proceedings. Former Working Group meetings have been published with Archetype Publications. Due to some previous issues relating to copyrights and branding and in view of the huge project of the ICOM-CC Publication Platform the Board of ICOM-CC asks Working Groups not to continue this collaboration. Instead, the Board proposes to publish both the Triennial Conference papers and papers given at Working Group meetings on the ICOM-CC platform in the future. However, at the moment of the meeting, ICOM-CC cannot yet provide a date when this platform will be available, and the costs for layout that need to be paid by the Working Groups are not yet known. Therefore they could not be included in the conference fees. Doris Oltrogge reported that she had been recommended by ICOM Germany to contact Arthistoricum as a possible alternative publication platform. Arthistoricum is a non-profit scholarly online publication platform, financed by the German Research Foundation, specialised in

art history, archeology and museology. But at the moment of the conference, the Board has not yet approved any agreement with Arthistoricum or even expressed favorite to continue this path.

Members of the Working Group present at the business meeting expressed their disappointment with the publication policy of ICOM-CC, since the experiences with Archetype Publications have been most satisfactory. **[Editorial: The Directory Board views this statement in another light as Archetype has repeatedly refused to comply with ICOM guidelines for publication in the past].** Independently from the question of the publisher, a major concern was voiced by emerging professionals, who explained the need for peer-reviewed publication to advance their career. Therefore, the group unanimously urged the coordinators to negotiate further with the Board of ICOM-CC about ways to publish the contributions of the interim meeting. At the moment when this newsletter is published, the Board examines the possibility of an agreement with Arthistoricum and I look very much forward that the papers of the meeting will be published.

Concerning the task of Coordinators, the participants of the meeting expressed their support for the election at the Beijing Triennial Conference if the actual Coordinator and Assistant Coordinators would accept to continue for another term.

Paris was suggested as a possible place for the next interim meeting and was met with much enthusiasm. This option still needs to be discussed in detail in the next months.

[Editorial: The ICOM-CC Directory Board has reviewed the publishing regulations used by ArtHistoricum. Unfortunately these are not inline with those issued by ICOM for publication and that are used by ICOM's International Committees. An agreement was reached in April 2020 to include the Art Technical Source Research 8th Interim Meeting postprints on the ICOM-CC Publication Online Platform as part of the ongoing Publication Online Platform Special Project. A schedule has been drawn up for upload and these papers will be included in Round 2 which the Directory Board expects to take place in 2021 or 2022]

ICOM-CC Triennial Conference Beijing

The next important event for the Working Group and for ICOM-CC in general is the Triennial Conference in Beijing in September 2020. The Coordinators look very much forward to some interesting papers on art technological source research, however, as the final program will only be decided in a few months, group members will have to wait for the official program of ICOM-CC to know more about the topics. The Coordinators hope to meet many of you in Beijing. At the moment when this newsletter is published, the situation in China is still uncertain. But we trust that the Board will do its best to find a good solution for the Triennial Conference and inform in due term all members.

[Editorial: The ICOM-CC 19th Triennial Conference has been postponed to April/May 2021. See <https://www.icom-cc2020.org/> or <http://www.icom-cc.org/>]

Projects and developments in the field of art technological source research

Digitale Kunstpforte

In 2010 Christophe Zindel published a commented bibliography of edited or printed art technological from Antiquity to 1900 and recorded their contents in extensive technical indexes (Christophe Zindel: *Die Güldene Kunstpforte*. Bern 2010). In a project financed by the Swiss Research Foundation (SNF) Christophe Zindel added further manuscript sources from Swiss libraries. Anne Krauter (project leader) and Franca Mader (PhD student) researched images as art technological sources. The results

of the project are presented in a database run by the Hochschule der Künste Bern which offers access to a broad corpus of art technological sources.

Digitale Kunstpforte <http://www.digitale-kunst-pforte.ch/start.html>

The travel journal and book of recipes of Ulrich Daniel Metzger

The glass and reverse glass painter Ulrich Daniel Metzger (born 1671) left a booklet where he recorded recipes and experiences of his travels through Europe. This extremely revealing source for the life of an eighteenth century artist and for the glass painting technology of this period is studied in an interdisciplinary project at the Vitrocentre Romont. The aim of the project is to analyse the manuscript, to make it digitally available and intellectually accessible, and to use it to explore important questions concerning the history and technology of art.

<https://vitrocentre.ch/en/research/current-research/the-travel-journal-and-book-of-recipes-of-ulrich-daniel-metzger.html>

Calendar

- Covid-19 has changed activities all over the world. In the moment there is no event to be announced.

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