

Editorial

ROGER FAYET, Managing Director



I have been fortunate in inheriting a competent, vital and well-functioning Institute from my predecessor Dr. Hans-Jörg Heusser. He deserves cordial thanks for the efforts he invested over many years in developing SIK-ISEA. The achievements described in this Annual Report are therefore also his. They are the basis and the incentive for continuing to build in the future.

The history of the Institute published to mark Hans-Jörg Heusser's departure – a volume that is at once magisterial and entertaining – draws home to us how much SIK-ISEA's distinctive strength lies, not so much in its various extraordinary achievements (also given their due place in this book), as in the perseverance with which the Institute, founded in 1951, has been pursuing its mission for sixty years – the mission of documenting Switzerland's artistic activities, investigating them and keeping them alive in academic discourse.

And yet there are some points akin to crystallisation where SIK-ISEA's work stands out with particular clarity. These include the *catalogues raisonnés* of Swiss artists, which were given a weighty boost in 2010: headed by Paul-André Jaccard, our *Antenne romande* published the *catalogue raisonné* on James Pradier. The oeuvre of the sculptor Pradier, born in Geneva in 1790, was explored in exemplary fashion by Claude Lapaire in one monumental tome – so exemplary was it, in fact, that the French *Syndicat National des Antiquaires* honoured this publication with their award for the best art book of 2010.

Another new and impressive volume has been published in our series of Swiss museum and collection catalogues. This is the painstakingly compiled description of the holdings of the *Peyersche Tobias Stimmer Foundation* in Schaffhausen. "The Expansion of Modernism", a set of essays published jointly with the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), addresses the art and culture of the 1950s, and it is the most voluminous book project so far in our «outlines» series.

The Institute's success should not, however, be measured simply in terms of its output, but also of its continuing strategic development. This is a field where SIK-ISEA has witnessed a truly successful year, demonstrated by the leading role which the Institute is playing in Europe's biggest network of artist and art archive databases. In autumn 2010, SIK-ISEA took on the strategic and operational management of www.european-art.net. In this manner we can ensure optimum synergies between our own web-based lexicon www.SIKART.ch and online services provided by other institutions, such as the *Documenta* archives in Kassel and the *Kunstbulletin* published by the *Schweizer Kunstverein / Société Suisse des Beaux-Arts*.

The art technology department also took a decisive step into the future. In November 2010, SIK-ISEA commenced operation of a micro X-ray fluorescence instrument, which is able to establish the chemical components in a painting by direct exposure and with remarkable accuracy. It can identify all 81 chemical elements between sodium and uranium, and this allows us to gain precise information about the material composition of paintings. These analyses also help in establishing authenticity.

An important waymark in the Institute's strategic development has been opening our outpost in the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland. The *Ufficio di contatto per la Svizzera italiana* is domiciled in the *Museo Vincenzo Vela* in Ligornetto near Mendrisio and supervised by Anita Guglielmetti. Its aim is to ensure that, as the Swiss Institute for Art Research, we do indeed have the competence to document artistic endeavours in all three linguistic regions and make them available on SIKART.

We note with pleasure that, with our current professorial fellows Prof. Oskar Bätschmann, Prof. Jaap Boon, and Prof. Beat Wyss and the six doctoral fellows, SIK-ISEA has managed to anchor itself as a productive and well-networked Institute for Advanced Study, becoming an attractive seat of learning for sabbaticals. Thus we were able to welcome Prof. Bernd Nicolai from the Institute of Art History at the University of Bern, who spent six months with us as a visiting scholar.

All the aforementioned patently shows that SIK-ISEA is providing a broad range of services. But this breadth also poses challenges, both professionally and financially. SIK-ISEA is only able to realise its projects thanks to the generous support of our benefactors and with substantial contributions from charitable foundations and companies. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of these, as well as to the public authorities and organisations such as the Swiss National Fund and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences. I combine these thanks with the hope that I may continue to count on their benevolence.

Thanks are due to our Board of Trustees, in particular to the President Anne Keller Dubach, as well as to the Academic Committee, the Finance Committee and the Association for the Promotion of SIK-ISEA. Very cordial thanks for their long standing support of the Institute's activities go to the members of the Board of Trustees who resigned last year: Annette Bühler; Dr. Thomas Wagner, former Mayor of Zurich, and Prof. Dr. Stanislaus von Moos. We are deeply grateful to Annette Bühler for her generous financial support.

My deep gratitude also goes out to our employees. Over this last year they have once again done an excellent job, and it is a pleasure and privilege for me to work with such a motivated and competent team.