

# Preface

LaoZhu

At a council meeting of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (CIHA) in 2012, Professor Thierry Dufrêne, Professor Peter J. Schneemann and I jointly proposed the restoration of the *CIHA Journal*.

The prototype of the journal is *Mitteilungen des K.K. Oesterreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* (*Communications of the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry*) published in Vienna in 1873. It is in this pioneering journal that *Fortsetzung*, the meeting minutes of the *Erster Kunstwissenschaftlicher Kongress* in Vienna (the 1st Art History Congress, held from September 1–4, 1873) was first released. The journal went on hiatus intermittently over the years. For instance, it appeared in the form of *Bulletin du CIHA* (*Bulletin of CIHA*, Paris) from 1965. But it eventually went into a prolonged suspension.

Having a journal is important to any learned society. What we hope to achieve is a sustainable journal of our own so as to bring societies and scholars of our member countries closer together.

In today's world of art history, there is clearly no shortage of journals. Therefore, we need to be extremely thoughtful when starting a new one. Our conception started to take shape during the preparation for the 34th World Congress of Art History CIHA in Beijing.

The holding of the Congress in China signifies that art history, a discipline mostly built on the Western understanding of art, ought to reexamine its concepts and methods so as to enlarge its disciplinary scope, which will expand

its universality and enable the discussion of phenomena and issues related to the entire human race's art practice—and form a global perspective.

Western art history usually studies history through the analysis of the recreation of reality by art and images and their correlations (mimesis); however, not all arts are documented in the form of historical images and phenomena, that is the visual evidence of history. In fact, those aspects of the functions, purposes, and significance of art which are not represented in images are often neglected or even concealed in the current framework of art history. With this in mind, the Chinese committee of the 34th Congress set the purpose of the Congress—to explore art and art history in different eras and cultures.

After consulting delegates of different nationalities, the CIHA secretariat accepted Peter J. Schneemann's proposal and adopted the theme "TERMS," intending to, under the guidance of the CIHA principles, expand CIHA's work to a global scale. While exchanges on the international level usually happen between countries with similar cultures, shared values, methods, and ideologies, exchanges on the global level mean the inclusion of individuals, arts, and art histories from every part of the world.

As a discipline, art history welcomes the solution of one problem with different methods. Therefore, CIHA strives to include all art phenomena from every culture, to highlight their differences, and, ultimately, to promote communication and exchange between cultures. And it is with this mission in mind that we restart the journal of CIHA, taking it to the future that we want to create.

The world is currently facing many emerging issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, to the extent that an anti-globalization trend is now spreading. At the same time, however, almost all the scholars in the field of art history agree that we should focus on, understand, and respect other people, their cultures, and their differences. It is exactly the differences that call for our concern, care, and respect: the greater our differences, the harder we should try to understand one another. With that common ground established, differences in art history ought to be foregrounded; the seeking of which ought to be an aim

of the discipline. It is therefore our job as art historians and art researchers to understand, respect, and share these differences, to manifest them and to promote their co-existence. This is also the main concern of our journal.

With this issue, our journey has begun. The theme Professor Thierry Dufrêne and Professor Peter J. Schneemann picked for this first issue is “Engagement.” The contributors are from different nations and speak different native languages. In fact, the organization of such a multi-cultural dialogue had already been proposed in the 2004 Montréal meeting and again in Melbourne in 2008. The journal, guided by the spirits of these previous efforts, is a trend-setter for future research.

We need to understand different historical periods in human history and how different cultures create different art traditions. Those differences are so valuable, subtle yet profound. They are worthy of our research, our preservation and imitation, and particularly our yearning, respect, and appreciation. Only with such care for each other and mutual respect can humanity achieve peace and glory.