ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES CRITIQUES D'ART

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ART CRITICS

2nd General Assembly

VENICE

1950

SUMMARY-RECORD

PRESENT :

President : Paul FIERENS (Belgium)

Vice-Presidents : Raymond COGNIAT (France), Jorge CRESPO de la SERNA (Mexico), Gérard KNUTTEL (Netherlands), Eric NEWTON (U.K.), James J. SWEENEY (U.S.A.), Lionello VENTURI (Italy).

General Secretary : Mme S. GILLE-DELAFON (France).

Treasurer : Walter KERN (Switzerland).

Members : Charles BERNARD (Belgian Section President), Otto BENESCH (Austrian Section President), Walter SCHWARTZ (Danish Section President).
L.P.J. BRAAT (Netherland Sect. Secr.), Melle Palma BUCARELLI (Italian Sect. Secr.) Marinos CALLIGAS (Green Sect. Secr.), Robert L. DELEVOY (Belgian Sect. Secr.), J. E. MULLER (Section of Luxemburg Secr.), Benedict NICOLSON (British Sect. Secr.) Sigurd SCHULTZ (Danish Sect. Secr.) Victor SERVRANCKX (Belgian Sect. Secr.) James WHITE (Irish Sect. Secr.)

Umbro APPOLIONO (Italy), G. ARGAN (Italy), Jean BOURET (France), Bernard CHAMPIGNEULLE (France), Maurice COLLIS (U.K.), Léon DEGAND (Belgian), Bernard DENVIR (U.K.), Charles ESTIENNE (France), Alfred FRANKFURTER (U.S.A.), Fernando GAMBOA (Mexico), Maximilien GAUTHIER (France), Paul GENEUX (Switzerland), Mme GIEDON-WELCKER (Switzerland), Virgilio GUZZI (Italy), Gotthard JEDLICKA (Switzerland), Emile LANGUI (Belgian), Jacques LASSAIGNE (France), Frédéric LAWS (U.K.), G. L. LUZZATTO (Italy), Corrado MAUTESE (Italy), Mme G. NICCO FASOLA (Italy), Rodolfo PALLUCHINI (Italy), Georges PEILLEX (Switzerland), Louis PIERARD (Belgian), Herbert READ (U.K.), Alfred SCHEIDEGGER (Switzerland), Victor SERVRANCKX (Belgian), Denys SUTTON (U.K.), David SYLVESTER (U.K.), André WARNOD (France).

M. Berto LARDERA, representative of UNESCO.

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10th June

INAUGURAL MEETING

Pregadi Sall - Doges Palace

(Public meeting)

President Paul FIERENS opened the meeting and said that the Art critics from the Old and the New World had readily answered the call of their International Association and the invitation generously adressed to them by Biennial of Venice.

Venice was a place of confrontations and conjunction of intellectual exchanges when was prefigured that spirits Society, the bases of which the critics endeavoured to consolidate, while respecting both creative and critical freedom.

The members of the Association were meeting here to promote a pacific work, the edification of a moral world in which constraints were abolished, restrictions were eliminated, while regulations and separations became suppler, a world where each man and each nation might breathe better and give up his egoïsms. They knew that this ideal work responded to the wishes of the institutions which had been the first to grant their cooperation and their support.

Their gratitude towards the Biennial of Venice would express itself more completely when they would have been able to multiply their visits to the 25th international exposition which stirred up their eager curiosity and reserved to them more than a revelation. It was necessary also to mention UNESCO, which, had twice before, opened its House and had, in many ways, supported and favoured the activity of the Art critics.

M. Carlo IZZO welcomed the Assembly on behalf of the Mayor, the Municipality and the town of Venice and hoped that the work of this Assembly would stand as an example to those who had in their hands the peace of the world and the civil progress, results of the concordant endeavour of all the nations.

M. Lionello VENTURI, President of the Italian Section, welcoma the members of the AICA who came to the General Assembly, on behalf of the Italian Section. During the Congress of 1949, it had been proposed that a small Art exposition should be organized whenever a Congress would take place. This year, instead of this small exposition, the Biennial was offered to the partakers.

For life and art, Venice represented a lesson from the past. This lesson had to be understood, but it did not mean that it should be considered as a model to imitate. Experience of the time in which modern art is erected had to be added to the art works of the past. The Art Critics purpose was to make the past present, but to modern art itself belonged to single out in the past, what was alive from what was dead.

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M. Giovanni PONTI President of the Biennial welcomed the Assembly on behalf tof the Venitian Committee of organization and reception. Criticism was an element inseparable from the function of the Biennial which expressed in itself the character of justice peculiar to criticsm.

M. PONTI congratulated the Assembly for the character not only theoretical, but also practical and constructive of its studies, and whished that the present meeting might lead to a deeper understanding between nations different in language and in esthetical theories.

11th June

COMMITTEE MEETING

Secretariat of the Biennial, Ca'Giustinian

(Study Meeting)

President Paul FIERENS opened the meeting and announced that the Committee had to settle private questions.
First, Miss P. BUGARELLI, secretary of the Italian Section was elected as general Reporter.

Mme GILLE-DELAFON, General Secretary recalled that five national sections were being constituted in Australia, Austria, Luxembourg, Turkey and Uruguay. The admission of the Austrian Section, the President of which Otto BENESCH was present, and of the Luxemburger Section, represented by J.E. MULLER, was accepted.

The President proposed to put off till the next congress, the vote concerning the three others sections admission, none of their members having been present.

Mme GILLE-DELAFON reported that national sections would be formed too in Argentine and in Lebanon.

The President asked then that the Committee should proceed to the appointment of the six new members of the Committee who were to be elected.

The motions made by the representatives of the national sections, proposed to the vote ten names chosen without distinction among all the Sections : Carlo ARGAN (Italy), Marinos CALLIGAS (Greece), Bernard CHAMPIGNEULE (France), A. CLUTTON-BROCK (U.K.), Alfred FRANKFURTER (U.S.), Maximilien GAUTHIER (France), Waldemar GEORGE (France), J. de GRUYTER (Netherlands), Robin IRONSIDE (U.K.), Antonio SPITERIS (Greece).

The President whished that the vote should be proceeded to from an international standpoint, with a view to restore balance as certains sections had only a few representatives in the first committee.

M. Raymond COGNIAT, President of the French Section recalled that he had proposed once before that the French delegation, wich was very important, should be less favoured this time.

As the members of the Committee had to be elected by the General Assembly, the vote was put off to the meeting of the 13th of June.

It was then proceeded to the designation of the new members proposed by each of the National Sections (see new list of the AICA members), after which, President Paul FIERENS asked if the names of some of the new members could not be mentionned on the list of the new members of the Committee to be elected. After deliberation, the following names were added : Leon DEGAND (Belgium), Jean LEYMARIE (France), Giuseppe MARCHIORI (Italy), Mario SALMI (Italy), David SYLVESTER (U.K.), R. WITTKOWER (U.K.).

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12th June

PLENARY MEETING

Ridotto Theater, Calle Vallaresso

(Public Meeting)

President Paul FIERENS opened the meeting and thanked the Biennial for the welcome reserved to the members of the AICA who came to attend the General Assembly.

Mme GILLE-DELAFON read the moral report about the work of the Assembly during the previous year (text apart).

The President expressed his gratitude to Mme GILLE-DELAFON for her activity and said that the President's task had been very slight for he had been backed by the perfect running of the Bureau. He told the Assembly that the Committee had decided to give the members the following advantages :

1º- the International professional card
2º- the possibility to buy foreign art books at the same price as in the country of origin,
3º- important reductions on the publications "Arts".

Permission to speak was then given to the Presidents of the National Sections who had to present a report on the activity of their section during the year.

M. James J. SWEENEY President of the Amecican Section.
The activity of the American Section had been concentrated on two chief points : to collect the documentation for the members of the other national sections and to look for the most efficient ways to apportion it. Thirty-four New-York art Galleries had already promised to give their catalogues. Several Museums would increase the working off of their catalogues for the AICA.

The American Section proposed that a kind of International Office should be established in Paris for the diffusion of Art bibliography. The Section has dealt with the question of art pictures. As the members of the American Section thought that the AICA might be a powerful strength which would officiently defend certain common standpoints, they proposed the following motion :

1º- the artist had a right to the freedom of creation of exposition and of publication of his works;
2º- free men had a right to have different opinions about taste and this right involved a mutual tolerance;
3º- every action which tended to bound the freedom of the artist and of his expositions for some reasons unrelated to art was deplored.

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M. Charles BERNARD President of the Belgian Section explained in his report how the "Belgian Art Critics Association", which succeeded to the "Union of the Belgian Artistic Presse" had constituted itself. He reported that the Belgian Section had steadily supplied the office of international and artistic documentation of the AICA. It had been possible to send 2.500 catalogues thanks to the assistance extended by the secretariat of artistic propaganda by certain publishers and a few art galleries.

M. Eric NEWTON , President of the British Section, stated that the British Section with its 22 members was now firmly constituted. Catalogues had been dealt out and publications "Art News and Review" sent to all members of the Association. Il would be necessary to specify which should be the essential conditions required to be admitted as a member of the AICA, the expression "Art critic" being rather vague. In England the level of art critic was high but there was a disproportion between criticism and public interest.

M. Raymond COGNIAT, President of the French Section, wished to remind the Assembly of the loss underwent by the French Section in the person of Louis CHERONNET, dead last month after a prolonged disease. As to the very activity of the section, it was mixed up with the General Secretary's.

The President associated with M. COGNIAT's words for the memory of Louis CHERONNET. As a sign of mourning, the Assembly observed one minute of silence.

James WHITE (Ireland) adressed the meeting in M. Thomas Mc. GREEY's place, President of the Irish Section, who was absent. He explained how the Section organization was taking shape.

M. Lionello VENTURI, President of the Italian Section, told that the Italian Section activity had been restrained. However, dispatches of catalogues had been steadily adressed to the General Secretariat.

Rodolfo PALLUCCHINI (Italy), General Secretary of the Biennial offered the catalogue of the Biennial to the members of the AICA and placed its record offices at their disposal. Italian art critics having come in quite a large number to the General Assembly, they could not be all admitted as members of the AICA but he invited all those who dealt with art to adhere to it as associates.

M. Jorge J. CRESPO de la SERNA, President of the Mexican Section.
The Mexican Section had established constant relations with the cultural artistic Institutes, just as with the Universities. Applications had been made to the Ministry of Public Instruction to obtain a lightening for the importation of works of art. The 15 % tax would be suppressed. Exhibitions of young painters has been promoted. Whenever an artistic manifestation would be organized, the members of the Section would now be invited by the Government to form a part of the jury.
The Mexican Section wished that the 1953 AICA Congress should be held in Mexico.

Mme GILLE-DELAFON recalled that the town of Tanger had likewise proposed to receive the Congress without settling the date.

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M. Walter KERN, General Treasurer, in M. Pierre COURTHION's place, President of the Switz Section, who was absent, accounted for the formation of the Switz Section. The collection of the expositions catalogues had just been organized in Switzerland.

M. Lionello VENTURI adressed the meeting again to emit a few suggestions. He wished that relations between Art History and Art Critic should be studied in the next Congress so as the organization of temporary exhibitions in Museums. Temporary exhibitions only were apt to fill up gaps existing between Museums. UNESCO had already promoted those exhibitions, but it should be necessary that this habit might get international and allow exchanges.

The President reckoned that suggestion quite important; one should have to study it whit the cooperation of the Museums.

M. Louis PIERARD (Belgium) rallied to this proposal. On the other hand, the multiplicity of expositions incited the art critics to reserve themselves a right to make a choice among the various manifestations and to decide which were to be mentionned.

M. Jacques LASSAIGNE (France) deemed that temporary exhibitions in Museums were necessary to show all what Museums preserved in their reserves.

M. Jean BOURET (France) interfered to propose another subject to study. Editors publishing a contemporary work of art ran counter a Society claiming prohibitive rights of reproduction. Considering that situation in France, in a next future, no publisher could any longer publish any other books than those dealing with ancient art.

M. Raymond COGNIAT proposed to solve the problem in a general way. He asked M. Berto LARDERA that it should be set forth on the international ground by the UNESCO.

M. Berto LARDERA (Representative of UNESCO) recalled that there was at the UNESCO an office dealing with royalties which had made investigations about this matter throughout the world.

M. Paul FIERENS reckoned that another question to be studied andwhich had already been proposed by Jean CASSOU (France) was that of the critics' royalties. One should too consider the possibility of a federation with the Art historians.

The motion proposed by M. James J. SWEENEY was voted by acclamation at the end of the meeting.

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13th June

MEMBERS' MEETING

Ridotto Theater, Calle Vallaresso

President Paul FIERENS gave M. Walter KERN (Switzerland) permission to speak about the financial report.

M. Walter KERN (General Treasurer). Difficulties of money transfers compelled the Presidents of the National Sections to collect the clubbings in their country, Presidents remained responsible for the funds.
The cards of the members of the AICA would be given to the members against the payment of the clubbing (The statement of the adhesion dues and of the clubbing had been published apart).

The President thanked M. KERN and specified that the amount of the members' clubbings could remain, in each country, at the disposal of the General Treasurer, but that the amount of adhesions should be deposited at the General Secretariat which underent enormous expenses.. To conserve the idea of the Statutes was meant also the following point : the adherents' clubbings belonged to the national section.

President FIERENS set forth then a model of the AICA member card and read the text which would be printed on the card in five languages.

It was they proceeded to the election of the six new members of the Committee according to the list previously established.

Were elected :

Alfred FRANKFURTER (U.S.A.) 22 votes, Léon DEGAND (Belgium) 20 votes, Jos de GRUYTER (Netherlands) 17 votes, Giulio Carlo ARGAN (Italy) 14 votes, R. WITTKOVER (U.K.) 14 votes, Jean LEYMARIE (France) 11 votes.

The President hoped that the AICA, which had been once before referred to about a international prize, might be admitted to the consultative statutes. He gave then permission to speak to the delegate of the UNESCO.

M. Berto LARDERA, representative of the UNESCO, expressed his pleasure to attend the AICA General Assembly which had shown as early as its 2nd Congress, that it was an international organization quite alive. He transmitted the text of a contract of the UNESCO proposing to charge the AICA with three international investigations. As to the AICA admission to benefit by the consultative statutes he begged President FIERENS to send his request to the UNESCO for it to consult the State-members.

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He wished taht the project of forming a single office between the AICA and the Art Historians should be carried out, for it would save a dispersion of forces and both associations might cooperate for certain works.

The President expressed his satisfaction about the proposed contract. He announced then that the next congress would be held in Netherlands and gave permission to speak to M. Gérard KNUTTEL, President of the Dutch Section.

M. Gérard KNUTTEL, President of the Dutch Section, reported that the Board of Education had promised a subvention to the Congress. The Museum of Amsterdam put its halls at the disposal of the congress. La Haye wished to receive the congress too. The Dutch Festival would take place at the same time and art expositions would be organized at this occasion. The congress was intended to give the foreigners a better knowledge of modern Dutch Art.

The President thanked and proposed that the date of the congress should be settled on the first fortnight of July. He set forth a sketch of the questions studied during this 3rd AICA Congress : relations between art history and art criticism, Psychology of art, temporary exhibitions in Museums, Rights of reproduction of the works of art.

M. David SYLVESTER (U.K.) suggested that the question of customs regarding the works of art should be studied.

M. Lionello VENTURI proposed a method of working. The office would appoint a reporter for each topic studied. The reporter should send to the office a summing up of his report in due time so that this summing up might be dealt out to the Congressists and that they might prepare their answer.

The President ended the meeting and closed the General Assembly by expressing his thanks to Italy, the town of Venice and the Biennial for the reception reserved to the members and also to the Secretariat of the Biennial for its support during the works of the Congress.

(The general report, the moral report and the financial report were pulled off apart).