
EDITORIAL



CHIMIA's request to coordinate a special 'Art and Chemical Sciences' issue coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Swiss Institute for Art Research this year. The fact that, not for the first time, a chemistry journal was interested in publishing on the application of chemistry to works of art and their preservation [1] showed how fascinating this topic is. It is attractive to focus on the state of the art on this field in Switzerland. This country has great traditions both in chemistry and the collecting of art, and a surprisingly large number of institutes is engaged in the numerous problems associated with the arts and monuments. This collection of papers is supplemented by an up-to-date contribution concerning a top-class research project in the Netherlands. I wish to thank personally all authors in this special issue for their commitment to contribute and for their excellent papers. Also in the name of the authors a special 'thank you' goes to the

Editorial Board of CHIMIA who made it possible by means of a special agreement to publish the colored figures that are essential for the presentation of works of art.

The complex subject matter 'Art and Chemical Sciences' is unlimited in terms of several dimensions: time, geography, materials, and methods. This field of interest is reasonably divided by the type of question: On one hand there is the study of the art object itself in the context of the humanities. For this the terms 'Archaeometry' and 'Technical Art History' (after David Bomford) were defined. On the other hand, problems of the deterioration of art objects and their preservation are investigated. This division also guides the sequence of the contributions in this issue. The first part comprises articles on archaeometry and art technology in roughly chronological order. The second part of the issue is dedicated to investigations in the conservation of works of art. From the contributions in this issue some newer trends in analytical methods can be seen: Mass spectrometry as well as non-destructive Raman-microspectrometry seem to play an increasing role in the analysis of art objects.

The frequently evoked 'interdisciplinarity' is indeed inherent to the application of science to problems of the humanities discussed here. Furthermore, methodological problems have to be solved by application of the scientific disciplines themselves. However, the purpose of the scientific investigation on an art object must never be an end in itself but must serve the study of the object or its preservation. Some readers may wonder whether a special education for scientific investigation on works of art is offered somewhere. In fact, attempts to integrate the requirements of this field into an advanced training of scientists as 'conservation scientists' have been made recently [2].

Finally, it is my wish as Coordinating Guest Editor not only to offer the reader a range of interesting contributions but also to encourage scientific discussion. Every scientist seriously engaged in the investigation of art objects and their preservation will appreciate any suggestions or advice from his or her fellow chemists.



Dr. Christoph Herm
Swiss Institute for Art Research
Zollikerstrasse 32
CH-8032 Zürich
Tel.: +41 1 388 51 51
Fax: +41 1 381 52 50
E-Mail: christoph.herm@sikart.ch
www.unil.ch/lisea

[1] a) A. Oddy, *Chemistry in Britain* **1995**, 31, 611–612; L.R. Green, V. Daniels, *Chemistry in Britain* **1995**, 31, 613–616; A. Quye, *Chemistry in Britain* **1995**, 31, 617–620; A. Burnstock, *Chemistry in Britain* **1995**, 31, 621–624; D.A. Scott, *Chemistry in Britain* **1995**, 31, 626–630; b) L.R. Ember, *Chemical & Engineering News* July 30, **2001**, 79, 51.

[2] 'The 'Bologna Document': Definition of the Conservation Scientist', *International Council of Museums – Conservation Committee (ICOM-CC) Newsletter* **2000**, 19, 17.

It is with great pleasure and appreciation that the Editorial Board of CHIMIA warmly thanks the coordinating guest editor Dr. Christoph Herm of the Swiss Institute for Art Research for the most successful realization of the demanding task to get together a group of renowned authors on the topic of the present issue on 'Art and Chemical Sciences'.