

'Battle of Mount Isel' to be transferred?

There has been a vast reaction to the open letter on the 'Battle of Mount Isel' panorama in Innsbruck that IPC addressed to the officials and decision makers in Austria. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Medien.Kunst.Forschung in Linz/Austria wrote an own open letter supporting ours. The political support for our argument of the panorama being a unity of painting, building and other elements has not worked out: Tyrol's government argues that the transfer of the painting would help saving it because the original rotunda was in a bad shape. But the media have informed in various articles. It is not clear whether the Austrian federal office for the cultural heritage has yet been taking a decision on dividing the protection between the painting and the building. Different information about that has been provided. IPC has asked the federal ministry of Education, Art and Culture to bring light into this aspect. It neither is clear whether the painting is in a condition that allows the transfer. International renowned conservator Christian Marty (chief conservator of Bourbaki Panorama's restoration campaign 1996-2004) has been mandated by the Land Tyrol to examine the painting and to deliver a recommendation.

We are now waiting for the decision of the committee for Culture, Science and Education to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for their eventual support. A fact-finding mission of the committee to Innsbruck has caused an angry reaction by the governor of Tyrol about them interfering in local responsibilities. IPC has also contacted Europa Nostra, the pan-European federation for heritage (see Appendix I). They will discuss the matter on the meeting of their committee this week. ICOMOS Austria has signaled that they are also opposing the transfer of the painting. Their steps are being discussed with ICOMOS International. The President of the Austrian section of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works IIC also signaled the support of this institute. A local association in Innsbruck is preparing a website and a petition with the possibility to sign in online. This would then be the moment to act for all of you. You'll be informed as soon as the website is online. Would you please then forward the information to as many contacts as possible and ask them to inquire after the Innsbruck situation and sign in the petition.

Second opinion supports Panorama Mesdag

As was mentioned in Newsletter 11, Panorama Mesdag pleaded for time to have independent new studies done on the unanticipated danger of an underground parking garage being built extremely close to the rotunda. Applying for an injunction against the garage plan developer Lirema BV and his contractor BAM Civiel BV failed in December 2007. A new court appeal in January against the city of The Hague (that supplied the dangerous building permit) also failed, the judge claiming that no offence

of the permit had happened yet and the works being retarded anyway, so no emergency provision was imminent. The responsible city executive council member seemed annoyed by Mesdag's actions, but he and the city's Building department also grew worried about the real dangers of the garage project and the vulnerability of the Mesdag construction, the free 40 m¹ span of the roof included. The internationally unique role the original 1881 Mesdag panorama plays, the help that IPC partners are preparing, and the exposure of the panorama in local society, made a disaster quite unthinkable, and must have been influencing Town Hall decision makers. The city executive commissioned a second opinion from TU Delft professor in structural engineering, and Corsmit Consulting Engineers director, Jan Vambersky. Corsmit is part of the worldwide operating consultancy firm Royal Haskoning. Vambersky's study was issued on 5 February. It finally confirmed the stand Panorama Mesdag had taken since the worries increasingly grew in September 2007. The report surprisingly even supplied stronger evidence to support the panorama case than the Mesdag board and director Marijnke de Jong had expected.

Of course this does not mean that the Mesdag rotunda is out of danger. But Mesdag has won this important battle and has a more comfortable position to strengthen its arguments and to prepare for better solutions. The panorama's insurance company, Fortis, has commissioned a specialist study to prof.dr. Almer van der Stoel, director of CRUX Engineering in Amsterdam, geotechnical engineering and damage prevention consultants. He will review the Vambersky report and advise Panorama Mesdag on possible solutions to secure the 1680 m painting of the The Hague and Scheveningen North Sea coast in 1881. To visit the panorama site go to www.panorama-mesdag.com.

In the meantime all possible help is being activated. The unique Dutch panorama is an independently Mesdag-Van Houten descendants owned, not for profit operated State Monument. Both the city of The Hague and the National Service for Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Built Heritage (RACM), including its widespread network of both local and national monument and heritage organizations, are supposed to be important partners. The mission of this RACM Governmental Department is to take the lead in ensuring the legal protection, conservation, preservation and investigation of the country's heritage. Although Mesdag has long been uncertain about the Service's commitment to cooperate in fending off the recent threat for the panorama, expectations are slowly growing more positive.

The Panorama Mesdag board and staff are also very excited about the possible help from Europa Nostra and its network partners. The action the IPC Executive Board

IPC International Panorama Council

www.panoramapainting.com

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has undertaken to inform the Europa Nostra Executive Director Dr. Andrea Schuler and his staff about the fact that two European Panoramas are endangered, the Innsbruck and the The Hague panorama, is being welcomed. Visit www.europanostra.org/newsletter/08.

September 2008 17th Conference in Germany

The 17th IPC International Panorama Conference in Dresden and Leipzig (Germany) on 12-14 September 2008 is presenting a fantastic possibility for the participants, who will have the opportunity to attend a conference on 11th September at Magdeburg with the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft that has opened an electronic panorama used for industrial design. The IPC conference will also include a pre- and post-conference tour.

Make reservations in your agenda in weeks 36/37/38 of 2008.

Historic US Panorama center reviving

Three Milwaukee, Wisconsin, organizations have committed themselves to conduct a most thrilling research project: the transcription, translation and subject interpretation of the Heine Diaries and other archive material relating to the Milwaukee School of Panorama Painters. The diaries panorama painter Friedrich Wilhelm Heine (1845-1921) wrote between 1887 and 1921 promise to reveal the lives and work of the German-American panorama painters active in Milwaukee. Although at some later point in time other organizations that also hold panorama materials might join, the initiating three institutions are:

- 1) the Museum of Wisconsin Art (the former West Bend Art Museum) – holders of a collection of studio paintings by Milwaukee's panorama painters and archive material of the same,
- 2) the Milwaukee County Historical Society – holders of the Heine diaries and primary archive material relating to the same, as well holder of a 1/10 scale panorama proposal of the (naval) Battle of Manila Bay and
- 3) the Max Kada Institute for German-American studies located at the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

The final project that will follow this Heine diary project will be a museum exhibition that will feature paintings by Milwaukee's panorama painters, translations of the diaries and interpretation of all newly discovered panorama material and a reevaluation of the existing material that has been available for some time. Hopefully this exhibition will be held in the future new Museum of Wisconsin Arts facility that also may host an IPC annual conference during the time of the museum exhibition. However this is going to be a very long project because of the complexities of all that needs to be done and the necessary funding.

Schneider glass negative treasure unveiled

With the help of a history detective, the Museum of Wisconsin Art (MWA) has unveiled an important photographic exhibition, for the first time ever, of the late panorama artist Bernhard Schneider (1843-1907). Born in Germany, Schneider died in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, and left a treasure of photographic negatives that were discovered and researched by Christine LaJoice. The exhibition runs through 30 March 2008.

On 17 February at 2:30 p.m. LaJoice will share her story of finding these glass plates and the tremendous job she did in tracking down what they were, who took them, who was in the pictures and the eerily strange connections to her own family.

Schneider began his art training in Munich and later transferred to the Düsseldorf Academy, where he studied under Oswald Aschenbach from 1866 to 1868. In 1878 he moved to Dresden, and eventually settled in Blasewitz, where he frequently exhibited his landscape paintings. When he arrived in Milwaukee in 1885 to work for the American Panorama Company, Bernhard Schneider worked on producing eight enormous canvases that would travel throughout the United States. When that industry concluded in 1889, Schneider moved to the little town of Cedarburg just north of Milwaukee.

Until a few years ago Christine LaJoice and her two children lived in Cedarburg. One day she discovered a stack of 3" x 5" glass negatives in her basement. Not knowing exactly what they were or who they were by, she had a friend make prints of them. Based upon clothing and buildings, she started doing research on Cedarburg artists at the turn of the century as several images showed painters and a painting studio. Comparing images of people in the pictures to definitively identified people from Cedarburg, she determined that they were taken by Bernhard Schneider, who, as it turns out, was also an amateur photographer. This is a major revelation within Wisconsin art history and specifically the panorama painters. Visit

www.wisconsinart.org/exhibitions/default.aspx.

Panoramas in Liverpool *Capital of Culture*

National Museums Liverpool is predicting a record breaking Liverpool '08 year with the 2008 *European Capital of Culture* program, covering music, art, industry and architecture.

Part of it will be the unveiling of an iconic architectural portrait of Liverpool by the Llandudno (North Wales) born artist Ben Johnson (1946). Concluding the commissioned work of three years for himself and six assistants, a panoramic painting will be finished at the 1877 Walker Art Gallery before joining an exhibition of Johnson's cityscapes in *The Liverpool Cityscape 2009* and the *World Panorama Series*. This exhibition will include Johnson's cityscapes of Paris, Hong Kong 1997, Jerusalem 2000, Zurich 2003 and Chicago. The exhibition will be open 24 May – 2 November 2008. The Liverpool panorama painting will finally be on permanent exhibition in the future Museum of Liverpool. Go to:

www.benjohnsonartist.com and www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/liverpoolcityscape.

Earlier the Walker Art Gallery (that opened in 1877!) will have lined up a blockbuster paintings exhibition, *Art in the Age of Steam*, capturing the fear and excitement of early steam train travel (18 April – 10 August 2008), partly coinciding with the World Museum Liverpool's major exhibition *The Beat Goes On* (12 July 2008 – 1 November 2009), inspired by Liverpool's significant contribution to popular music over the last 60 years. The first exhibition of its kind, *The Beat Goes On* will draw together material from record companies, institutions and private collectors, and will possibly include the restoration of the historic Beatles stage. Re: the Liverpool Museums site and www.24hourmuseum.org.uk.

The People's Panorama of Canary Wharf

Ben Johnson also has inspired and organized a multi-artists production of London from the top of Canary Wharf. It is named most appropriately The People's Panorama. It was built up from 1280 squares of 76,2 mm each, drawn by some 1200 amateurs, children and adults alike, who were each handed a small section of a panoramic photograph to copy. The result, a drawn image of 1.22 x 6.10 meters in total, made with huge enthusiasm, can be visited at www.thepeoplespanorama.com.

Edinburgh awaits elliptical E-Cyclorama

Sanford Wurmfeld, IPC Executive Board Member and host of our 2004 IPC Conference at Hunter College in New York, is halfway painting his new elliptical E-Cyclorama. Once finished it will for the first time be shown at the Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland, curated and catalogued by Duncan Macmillan. The opening will be around the third week of July, and it will be on show continuing through August. Actual information later at www.eca.ac.uk or via sanford.wurmfeld@hunter.cuny.edu.

Aldo Hoeben active panorama photographer

Dutch panorama photographer Aldo Hoeben showed his art and techniques last year at three major events: the first International VR Photographers Association Conference in Berkeley, California, the Panotools Meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland, and our 16th IPC Conference in Plymouth, Great Britain. His presentations are on view at http://youtube.com:80/watch?v=4N1EBBqr_us (*Delivering on the promise of Virtual Reality*), www.panotools.org:80/talks07/spiv and http://river-valley.dreamhosters.com/conferences/ipc2007/quicktime/Aldo_Hoeben.mov.

He also shot panorama photographs at the 2007 Sziget Pop Festival, among others of Pink and Sinéad O'Connor performing. Go to www.sziget2007.com. Hoeben also will be present at the Bright Live 2008 Festival in Amsterdam, Holland, on 4 and 5 April (www.bright.nl) and www.brightlive.nl) and the 2008 Photokina in Cologne, Germany, Europe's most impressive photography event, 23-28 September 2008, www.photokina-cologne.com. The shots he made together with other IVPRA colleagues at the 2006 bicentennial Photokina are on view at www.photokina.ivrpa.org.

The Grand Illusions Ltd. Toy Shop

The Grand-Illusions Ltd. of London, England, has recently added two new optical illusions to their Internet toy shop stock. *The Moving Picture* – http://www.grand-illusions.com/acatalog/info_82.html – is a cut and pre-folded cardboard construction kit that assembles to make a panorama of London. Hang the picture on your wall, and as you walk past the whole picture moves to follow you. Clearly not an example of veridical vision! There is also a version that shows a Mondrian style picture, rather than the London panorama.

The company has long felt that toys can have a role in the classroom when it comes to helping to make science more fun. Many of the toys shown on the web site demonstrate physics principles, and many teachers and educators buy toys to use with their students. Last year a UK university used some of the toys as the basis of mini projects for their mechanical engineering students to explore. The university had found that they were getting a high drop out rate of students by the end of the first term of the course, and they wanted to see if they could do anything about this. A total of 21 toys were analyzed by the students, who were tasked with explaining all underpinning scientific and engineering principles, to dismantle the toys for further investigation, and to suggest alternative applications and also alternative designs. The project was reported to be a success, and the student retention rate improved. The company hopes to be able to announce a new project later this year.

International Stereo Day in Holland

On Friday 28 March 2008 the Netherlands Society for Stereo Photography NVvS will host the First International Dutch Stereo Day in 'Het Visnet' in the town of Huizen (near Amsterdam) which will be open to members of international stereo clubs like the DGS, ISU, NVvS, IG-3D, Stereoscopic Society, Stereo-Club Français, etc. Entrance fee is expected to be € 10. The program is still under development. The idea is to have a fully digital international projection program (2800x1050 pixel stereo pairs), and possibly an 'analogue versus digital' test could be prepared to see if a scanned slide projected digitally looks worse or better. If interested send your inputs to: internationalstereoday2008@3d-info.com. On Saturday 29 March the society will have an Open House and Technical Information Day at the same premises. Info at www.stereofotografie.nl.

As a matter of fact of interest to panoramaniacs: the principle of stereoscopic sight was not discovered by Leonardo da Vinci, although he was intrigued by the fact that he seemed to be unable to realise the depth he encountered in reality in his paintings. Most often he turned his curiosity into a vision, a discovery or an invention. In the case of stereoscopic sight Da Vinci (1452-1519) didn't. The binocular roots of three dimensional perception were discovered by the English physician Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875) in 1838. Half a century after Robert Barker invented the way to experience a painted panorama in 1787.

Moving Garibaldi Panorama digitalized

The digitalized version of the Moving Panorama 'Garibaldi's campaign' is now online on <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/garibaldi>. (See Newsletter 11, January 2008)

Panorama rotunda architect John Carrere

Charles Warren is the co-author of a monograph on the architects firm Carrere & Hastings. John Carrere was the architect of at least one (in Chicago) and probably several panorama buildings. Does anyone have information on other panorama rotundas constructed by Carrere? Please address your information directly to Charles Warren at cwarren@charleswarren.com. Hewitt, Mark Alan et al., Carrere & Hastings. Architects, 2-volume boxed set, New York 2006 (The Chicago panorama rotunda is mentioned in the book)

New publications on panoramas etc.

Masepov, Yuri I., Svetlana P. Günerfaut and others, *Papers on the International Conference 'Panorama painting in the world history'* on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Panorama 'The Defense of Sevastopol 1854-1855' in Sevastopol, Ukraine, on 24-29 May 2005, issued by the Sevastopol City Government and the 'Museum of the Heroic Defense and Liberation of Sevastopol'. The papers are in Russian and German, with a summary in English by Ernst Storm, Sevastopol 2007, ISBN 976-966-8389-61-0.

These collected papers include contributions on the Sevastopol Panorama, its painter Franz Alexeevich Roubaud (in Russian Rubo, 1856-1928), and the function of the panorama in cultural history education, respectively by the Museum Director Mr. Yuri Masepov, the Panorama Manager Ms. Svetlana Günerfaut, and Ms. Zoya M. Dudnikova, Manager of the Scientific and Guiding Department of the Sevastopol Panorama.

International contributions to the conference papers

include 'The Borodino Battle Panorama' by the same painter in Moscow, delivered by Ms. Irina A. Nikolaeva, 'Panorama Mesdag, part of a mania' by Ernst Storm, 'Battle Panoramas in Poland' by Romuald Novak, 'Panoramas of the Hero City of Zarizyn-Stalingrad-Wolgograd' by Ms. Svetlana A. Argaszeva, 'Battle Painting in Museums in the Far East of Russia' by Ms. Larisa V. Korneva, 'A War Panorama without a Battle, the Bourbaki Panorama in Lucerne: Unique in Panorama History' by Patrick Deicher, 'The Role of the Vladivostok Battle near Volochayevska Panorama in Promoting Historic Heritage' by Nikolai Ruban and A.W. Chestakov. IPC President Ernst Storm also delivered an overview of the history of painted panoramas under the title 'Panoramas Worldwide'.

Griffiths, Alison, 'The largest picture ever executed by man': panoramas and the emergence of large-screen and 360-degree technologies, in: Fullerton, John (ed.), *Screen Culture: History and Textuality*, London, John Libbey Press, 2004, ISBN 0 86196 645 7, £ 22,50, pp. 199-220.

Kloss, Hans (ed.), *Stauferrundbild. Monumental-gemälde in Kloster Lorch. Geschichte als Erlebnis für das Auge*, Texts by Hans Kloss and Dr. Gebhard Streicher, Schwäbisch Gmünd 2007 (in German, ISBN 978-3-936373-35-6, € 14,80, www.einhornverlag.de).

Call for information on panoramas etc.
Please check our website www.panoramapainting.com
and send any new information on panoramas and
panorama activities and publications to the IPC
Secretary: info@panoramapainting.com.

Appendice I : Text of the letter addressed to Europa Nostra asking for support for the two endangered panoramas in The Hague and Innsbruck

Europa Nostra
Attn: Dr. Andrea H. Schuler
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Lange Voorhout 35
NL-2514 EC DEN HAAG

Lucerne, 31 January 2008

Panorama Heritage at Risk: Appeal for the Future of two Panoramas

Dear Dr. Schuler,

The Executive Board of the International Panorama Council (IPC) is eager to draw the attention of the Europa Nostra organisation and network to two panoramas at risk. As representatives of a world wide panorama network, we of course are aware of the fact that you primarily deal with and rely on local organisations for your information. Panoramas, however, are scarce, and they often have to hold out as single institutions, hardly being able to play a role in the local and national organisations for cultural heritage. That is why the IPC feels obliged and takes the liberty also to direct this cry of distress directly at your highly esteemed organisation.

Panoramas do share a popular common root in the 1870-1920 era, and earlier in the 1787 Barker invention and patent, but they are of very different trusteeship. Their very different ownership situations and varying position in local societies (sometimes very pronounced and educational, sometimes almost obsolete and obscure) account for their late start in joining forces. In 1992, during a conference on 'Past, Present and Future of Panoramas' in the Móra Ferenc Museum in Szeged, Hungary, a resolution was adopted to establish a 'common interest group', by representatives of the Battle of Borodino Panorama in Moscow, Russia, Bourbaki Panorama in Lucerne, Switzerland, Feszty Panorama in Ópusztaszer, Hungary, the Battle at Lipany Panorama in Prague, Czech Republic, the Kreuzigung Christi Panorama in Altötting, Germany, Panorama Mesdag in The Hague, Holland and Panorama Raclawicka in Wrocław, Poland.

Since 1992 the group has expanded to a truly international network, voluntarily uniting some 230 panorama professionals (from painters and restorers to researchers and managers) in 40 countries world wide. The focal point of IPC is a yearly conference to discuss issues of common interest and exchange panorama knowledge. An overview of the conferences is attached to this letter, as is a list of existing panoramas, dating up to the Second World War.

The actual concern of IPC is the situation two member panoramas have fallen into. It concerns the Battle of Bergisel Panorama in Innsbruck, Austria, and Panorama Mesdag in The Hague, almost around the corner from your office. An outline of their situations is given in the attached IPC Newsletter 11 of January 2008. Although their situations are very different, for both the result may be the annihilation of the panorama, in spite of the fact that both are recognised and certified as a National Monument.

'The Battle of Bergisel' in Innsbruck

The discussed or rather locally agreed plan to dismantle the sensitive artistic ensemble of this 'Panorama', whereby the circular painting shall be extracted from its present building and transferred to a new building complex at the Bergisel is, in our view, an irreversible and unacceptable intrusion into Europe's artistic and cultural heritage.

The Innsbruck Panorama is an outstanding landmark of a historic art form, only very few examples of which are still preserved worldwide. The ensemble of the Innsbruck Panorama which combines the circular painting, the foreground, the building and the optical setup (admission of natural light) is worldwide one of the heritage examples just like 'Mesdag' where the interaction between these elements is largely preserved in its original form.

A panorama is more than just a circular painting. It is an indivisible whole formed by the circular painting, the faux-terrain, the viewing platform, the building and the optical machinery (admission of natural light). The Panorama is a global artwork which can only function if all elements of the presentation interplay in a coherent way. Without the central-plan structure of the exhibition building – a construction type of its own - there is no panorama. The right and proper interaction between these elements leads the visitor to an invaluable experience and creates the phenomenon of a three dimensional spatial illusion. Therefore, unlike in a museum, the content cannot be separated from its envelope. Extracting the circular painting in order to transfer it to the new museum compound planned at the Bergisel would be tantamount to destroying this rare heritage ensemble, its historic coherence, its proper 'essence'.

The Innsbruck panorama can avail itself of eighty years of ongoing unity between the building and the circular painting. Hence, we are dealing with a monument ensemble that by virtue of the ICOMOS Charta of Venice (Art. 6 – 8) must not be dismantled.

The cultural importance of panoramas has changed during the second half of the 20th century. Today, they are considered as monuments of collective memory and reflection on historic events and conditions. Presently, we experience a world wide grow of the panorama art. However, new developments cannot do without historic archetypes and reference items. Their preservation is therefore of utmost importance.

We support the original assertion of the Office for the Monument Protection whereby there shall be no transfer of the painting. We hope that it will be possible to stand up to the pressure exerted upon the heritage authorities and that the unity of the panorama will be protected as a monument, in the way this is handled by the Bavarian Monument Protection. The political idea to create a new Museum of the Traditional Culture at the Bergisel is sending a wrong signal. The concurrent rehabilitation of the 'Kaiserjägermuseum' at the Bergisel should not be used as an argument to put in danger a monument in a historical location and to dissolve the panorama ensemble.

Over the last 15 years, several historical panoramas have been restored. The IPC has partly documented these measures, always taking a professional view on the matter. The gigantic dimensions of the old paintings require basic parameters for their preservation which are a particular challenge. The transfer of such paintings to other exhibition places is a highly risky enterprise. And it does remain so, even where precise previous investigations are carried out by restorers with great panorama-experience.

'Panorama Mesdag' in The Hague

The 'Panorama Mesdag' in The Hague, the Netherlands, is in serious danger of being seriously damaged by building activities next door. The start of building activities have already caused an alarming – three times larger than expected – shift of some columns of the panorama's steel construction. At a distance of only some two meters from the panorama rotunda, a two story deep parking garage is being built in the unpredictable sub-soil of the Dutch Government city at the North Sea coast. City Council representatives, the project plan developer Lirema and the Dutch-based building company BAM have assured from the beginning of the garage planning in 2006, that the panorama rotunda and its 1680 square meter historic panorama painting will not suffer. But the panorama management and board have drawn a different conclusion after monitoring showed that some columns of the original rotunda building, dating from 1881, have sagged 10 mm already, instead of the expected (and calculated) maximum of 3 mm. And the neighbouring site works have only just started.

Now that building an underground parking garage appears to endanger this oldest 'traditional' 120 meter panorama the panorama management has been forced to act. Recently it has applied for injunctions both against the developer and the contractor next door as against the city of The Hague, pleading for time to do new studies on the building permit requirements and the necessary stability of the panorama building. In their verdicts on December 21st and January 10th the judges have attached more importance to the building company's plea not to lose time in a postponement of their building activities, which at the time still were within the building permit's limits, and to the fact that no serious damage was visible yet.

A petition versus the city of The Hague is now on the agenda of the City Council's Appeal Committee meeting on 5 February, appealing to the city's neglect in restricting possible consequences, while issuing the permits not complying with the city regulations for building activities next to a monument such as the Mesdag panorama. The Hague, boosting itself as an international city of peace, justice and security, seems not to be aware yet of the international importance and leading position of Panorama Mesdag.

The Panorama Mesdag board statutorily consists of the heirs of the famous Dutch sea painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag and his wife, painter Sientje Mesdag-van Houten. As a couple they have donated their home and their private collection, including the museum at Laan van Meerdervoort in The Hague (the third oldest museum that was built as a museum in Holland) to the Netherlands State. In 1910, after the death of his wife, Mesdag endowed the panorama, which he considered to be his best work of art, to his 33 then living nephews and nieces, making them and their descendants responsible for the future of the panorama. After his long time personal care for 'his' panorama the way Panorama Mesdag is being governed since 1910 as a successful non profit family business also makes it into quite a unique cultural heritage.

The panorama is supported by the Panorama Mesdag Preservation Foundation. This Foundation stems from the 100-year jubilee of the panorama in 1981. Former mayor of The Hague Ad Havermans presides over it. The Panorama Preservation Foundation is on the edge of a major restoration and extension project of the panorama and its facilities, to preserve and strengthen its position as a State Monument, deserving heritage protection in all possible ways.

Both Bergisel and Mesdag

The Battle of Bergisel and Panorama Mesdag are among the world's very best preserved specimens of the panorama era between 1870 and World War I. Mesdag is even the oldest remaining panorama in its original rotunda and at its original location, a worldwide unique category consisting of only a handful of panoramas. After returning from London, where the painting earned international appraisal, the Bergisel battle painting has been part of the 1907 rotunda, which replaced near-identically the original 1896 rotunda that burned down in 1906.

Both 'Mesdag' and 'Bergisel' are a renowned part of a remarkable European communication and event 'hype' that has spread to the other continents as well. About a hundred million visitors viewed panoramas in their reign supreme, during the last quarter of the 19th century, before the movie theatre replaced their prime function. Those few traditional panoramas that have survived still astonish a million visitors each year. Young and old are attracted by their virtual reality effect, which is highly relevant in modern society. Many Schools of Art, for instance, stimulate and facilitate the creation of new 3D or virtual panoramas, finding a way back to the historic panorama phenomenon that was originally invented in 1787 by the Irish painter Robert Barker while living in Scotland.

Our request

What do we hope for? First of all your kind attention. We will be most happy to receive your representatives in all panoramas concerned.

Secondly, we would love to talk to you on the ideas and support you may be able to give us before the cultural heritage organisations in both cities and regions of Innsbruck and The Hague, for instance by discussing matters with local, regional and/or national authorities.

And finally there is a wide range of other interesting possibilities. Discussing your agendas we will undoubtedly be able to present ideas to hitch on to them, or vice versa.

We also would hope for your mentorship in developing ideas to relate to the European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World, as was proposed by the European commission in its Communication of 10 May 2007.

Panoramas can play a tantalising role both in the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and in international relations, because the relatively few existing panoramas are traditional and contemporary culture at the same time. They often highlight specific events in the history of European nations, and they also have deep rooted relations with panoramas in America, Australia and Asia, both traditional and contemporary.

The potential of panorama culture as a catalyst in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy can also be relevant: both IT professionals and youngsters experiment on a huge scale with panorama making in photography and virtual reality. The contemporary exhibition in Panorama Mesdag is even devoted to a tryout of a new and not yet marketed software program, designed by Microsoft, enabling the future user to assemble panorama pictures from a certain amount of traditional 2D photographs, for instance taken of a certain object, a family get together or a public space. It would also help to boost the experience and quality of space.

The European priority actions for the Work Plan 2008-2010 may also be relevant for the panorama world. Panoramas may improve the mobility of artists and other professionals in the cultural field. Panoramas as space phenomena and cultural heritage are a cherished and very low access threshold to culture, offering synergy with education, in particular in the fields of art and history. And last but not least panoramas could very well develop into cultural tourism. That really would be the opposite of its roots: panoramas used to travel throughout the world, to bring the culture of times past and other lands to the public, long before the era in which mass tourism developed Europe into 'Europa Nostra', and the world into our global heritage.

As you will have grasped, our relatively young and still underdeveloped organisation has high hopes that a meeting with you would enable us to find new ways of expressing and realising our goals in general, and in particular would help the panoramas in Innsbruck and The Hague in their different struggles for life.

We hope you will be so kind to arrange for a meeting and to grant your obliging attention to the endangered cultural heritage of the panoramas in Innsbruck and The Hague.

Sincerely yours,

Patrick Deicher M.A.,

Member and Secretary of the Executive Board