



Newsletter

March 2008

UKRG News is issued quarterly as a membership benefit of the UK Registrar's Group. Articles and news to be included in the newsletter are welcome from members.

Contributions should be emailed to: jules.breeze@culture.gsi.gov.uk

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Newsletter designed by
Dee Collins
fiveyears@fastmail.fm

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 **Don't forget you can contact the committee at <http://ukrg.org.index.php>**

VI European Registrar's Conference 2008

*Congress Centre, Basel, Switzerland
10-11 November 2008*

The UKRG is delighted to announce details of the VI European Registrar's Conference. Organised by our colleagues of the Swiss Registrars group, the event will take place over two days at the Congress Centre, Basel, with an opening dinner/reception on Sunday 9 November at the Herzog and De Meuron designed Schaulager Basel/Münchenstein. The reception will include guided tours of the building.

The conference is set to cover a range of interesting and informative sessions including: working with living artists, new media, documentation and storage and ethical issues in museum work.

A series of dinners, receptions and cocktail evenings will be offered during the event as well as tours to the old town of Berne (a UNESCO World Heritage site), a day trip to Alsace and a guided tour of Basel's old town. It promises to be a fascinating and stimulating two days.

Early booking for the event is recommended.

The fee for registration before 30 June will be CHF190, thereafter CHF 240. The deadline for registration is 30 September.

A full programme, registration forms, hotel reservations and events booking forms can be found on the Swiss registrar's website at www.swissregistrars.ch. The forms will also be distributed by email to all members by the UKRG Committee very shortly.

Get booking now!



By Nickos Gogolos, UKRG chair

WE WERE DELIGHTED to see many of you at the New Year's Party, which took place in the new Brunei Gallery at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and I hope you enjoyed the night and the talks.

This year will see the introduction of new legislation on Immunity from Seizure of works of art and new guidelines on disposals of museum objects.

We are committed to making members aware of these current issues, so our events will aim to table legal and ethical questions, as well as provide practical guidance.

Other subject areas we are considering are customs regulations and historic loans-in reconciliation.

If you would like to contribute to one of the above mentioned events or know of a speaker who has experience in these matters, please contact events secretaries Ann Chumbley or Janice Slater.

Should you wish to share your knowledge or experience in a brief article for the Newsletter, please contact editor Jules Breeze. Please also remember that we are always looking for exciting venues to host us.

Happy spring to everyone!

APRIL EVENT: ANTI-SEIZURE

Monday April 14 2008, an afternoon session to be held at The National Gallery, London

We are delighted to offer members the opportunity to hear from, and debate with, those directly involved in the negotiations leading to the anti-seizure provision for the Royal Academy's current exhibition 'From Russia'.

We will be discussing the implications for registrars – Government Indemnity applications, 'due diligence' and more – from a practical viewpoint.

Full details of timings and speakers will reach you via email in the next two weeks but please put a date in your diary.

NEW YEAR'S PARTY 2008

By Emily Davis, Supporting Member

This year's party was held at the Brunei Gallery, a little gem in the heart of London at the School of Oriental and African Studies. We were delighted to welcome more than 100 members and representatives of our corporate members to join us to celebrate 2007 and look forward to 2008.

This was our best-attended New Year's event for some time, so thanks to those who turned out on a chilly February Friday. Never one to waste words, Nickos Gogolos, chair of the Committee, gave a short speech which hinted at the exciting UKRG events to come later in the year and thanked our corporate members for their continuing support.

We were expertly looked after by the Brunei's staff,



One of the Brunei's exhibition galleries and night time view.

and the canapés were visually stunning and truly delicious. As always, the main appeal of the event was the chance to catch up with fellow members over a glass of wine or two and share the latest news.

John Hollingworth, exhibitions officer at the Brunei Gallery, gave a brief but illuminating history of the gallery and its working relationship with the Sultan of Brunei.



Few of us will get the opportunity to work with royal collections or royal patrons, but the difficulty of securing loans seems much the same. We also enjoyed the opportunity to see some treasures from SOAS's own collection in the Foyle Special Collections Gallery.

Whether you were able to come to the party or not, the Committee wishes you a very happy and successful 2008, and we hope to see you at one of the forthcoming events.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

● **June/July: Edinburgh and London: Understanding Customs Regulations**
These training events will be led by Momart. The aim of the sessions will be to guide registrars and non-registrars through the seeming labyrinth of

customs regulations. It will be workshop-based and focus on the particular areas which museum professionals need to be aware. Details are currently being finalised – an email update and invitation to follow.

● **Late September/October: A registrars visit to The**

Harley Gallery/Welbeck Abbey and Creswell Crags Heritage Centre, Workshop
An opportunity for registrars to visit three fascinating locations on the Derbyshire/ Nottinghamshire border. Full details of this proposed visit along with a request for expressions of interest will be sent out by email soon.

Launch of the Museums Association Disposal Toolkit

On 25 February the Museums Association (MA) launched its Disposal Toolkit as part of the Effective Collections programme. At the launch, Sandy Nairne, MA vice-president and director of the National Portrait Gallery, spoke about the benefits of museums having coherent strategies for the development of their collections and addressed the ways in which disposal forms a part of that development.

"Museums must use their collections for the benefit of today's public, while ensuring they are well-managed and sustainable for the future. Occasional responsible disposal of items will be increasingly important."

Publication of the toolkit follows a two-year review of the guiding principles on disposal by the MA, which resulted in its members voting to approve changes to the Code of Ethics for Museums at the AGM in October 2007. The Disposal Toolkit has been developed to support the changes and to help museums think through the practicalities of the disposal process.

The Disposal Toolkit is available online at www.museumsassociation.org/collections as part of a growing resource of case studies and further information

about disposal. Also available to download is the Disposal Digest, a leaflet introducing the subject and the guidance that is available and, from 14 March, Unlocking Local Treasure, a joint publication with the Local Government Association about collections management, including disposal, in local authority museums.

From April 2008, the Effective Collections programme will provide training in use of the Disposal Toolkit to help people who work in museums to apply its content in their organisations. Free half-day training workshops will be held around the UK in partnership with a range of regional agencies, federations and museums.

The full list of dates for these sessions will be advertised on the MA website and within each region during March.

In conjunction with these training sessions, the MA is also holding regional workshops to begin inquiries with the sector on the subject of sustainability, ahead of publishing a discussion document in spring 2009.

Sally Cross
collections co-ordinator
Museums Association

Coming In From The Cold

A diary of events leading up to the opening of 'From Russia'

By Lucy Hunt, exhibition organiser,
Royal Academy of Arts, London

Four Russian museums, 124 loans, 14 trucks, nine days for unpacking and installation, 20 couriers, 10 VIPs, several 'comfort' letters between the Russian and British governments and many bitten nails later – the Royal Academy's latest exhibition 'From Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings 1870-1925 from Moscow and St Petersburg', received more than 143,000 visitors through the Royal Academy doors exactly one month after it opened to the public.

A few small miracles were achieved during the months of December 2007 and January 2008 with the help of many people here in the UK, Germany and Russia. Following is a diary of the, at times, extraordinary sequence of events leading up to the day of reckoning, Tuesday 22 January 2008 – press day, the opening reception and the lenders' dinner:

February-November 2007

Fairly normal exhibition preparation ensued with frequent communication between the first venue, the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf, and the RA.

But looking at the transfer of the exhibition we found ourselves faced with huge customs problems due to the immense value of the exhibition and the guarantee for the VAT that had to be in place before anything could be transported out of Germany. There were also problems with the transfer dates, which fell at the start of the Russian Orthodox Christmas, and we began to wonder whether there would be any couriers available to accompany the works.

Provenance checks on all works

were underway and the intricacies of the contracts were discussed and finalised with the lenders and sponsor. The exhibition opened in Düsseldorf on 15 September with great success; but focus quickly turned to the Immunity from Seizure law in the UK.

The deadline for the law being passed in Parliament came and went, and a slightly worried tone started to filter through in emails, telephone calls and faxes from the lenders as it became evident that this delay was in danger of affecting the exhibition.

Letters of support between the British and Russian premiers were exchanged and filed, and fingers were crossed.

7 December 2007

The Department for Culture Media and Sport sent out the first letters of 'comfort' to the four Russian museums. We were told that the wording had to be revised and another four were posted. We waited with baited breath to find out whether these would be sufficient.

19 December 2007

At precisely 8.01am we found out from Hasenkamp, the agent in charge of transferring the works from Düsseldorf to London, that due to the missing Immunity from Seizure law, the Russian ministry of culture would not allow the works to be exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Word spread rapidly to the newspapers, and our inboxes soon filled with words of support from many colleagues. We urgently needed help at the highest level and, thankfully, this came from the Secretary of State for the DCMS.

Another flurry of letters was exchanged between the two

ministries and we all worked harder than ever to resolve the worsening situation. Thankfully the bad news did not halt the RA staff From Russia-themed Christmas party, which went ahead as planned with some wonderfully inappropriate fancy dress outfits.

20 December 2007

On the *World at One*, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport announced that new legislation would be put in place early in the New Year specifically to make the exhibition possible. A glimmer of hope and more hard work lay ahead.

22-26 December 2007

Some time off at last, although the lines of communication were kept open between various members of RA and DCMS staff dotted around the country.

27-31 December 2007

Back to the RA for an interesting few days of lengthy report writing on the due diligence procedures undertaken by the RA to comply with Immunity from Seizure. The report was hand-delivered to the DCMS at approximately 7pm on New Year's Eve, the day that the new legislation came into effect.

6 January 2008

The exhibition closed in Düsseldorf and we waited patiently for news from Russia. The first delivery planned for 9 January was looking highly unlikely.

7 January 2008

Still waiting. Packing commenced in Düsseldorf and the RA art handlers began preparing the galleries in London.

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Chair:
Nickos Gogolos
020 7814 5589
ngogolos@museumof
london.org

Treasurer:
Varshali Patel
0121 303 3986
varshali_patel@
birmingham.gov.uk

Secretary:
Rebecca Wallace
020 7942 2636
r.wallace@vam.ac.uk

Membership secretary:
Sarah Hodgkinson
0161 275 1592
sarah.hodgkinson@
manchester.ac.uk

Newsletter editor:
Jules Breeze
020 7323 9335
jules.breeze@
culture.gsi.gov.uk

Corporate officer:
Josephine Barry
01798 342207
josephine.barry@
nationaltrust.org.uk

Events secretary:
Ann Chumbley
0114 278 2613/
ukrgevents@yahoo.
co.uk
ann.chumbley@
sheffieldgalleries.org.uk

Events secretary:
Janice Slater
0131 624 6313
jslater@

nationalgalleries.org
Web officer:
Stephanie Bush
020 7401 5047
stephanie.bush@
tate.org.uk

Co-opted member:
Emily Davis
020 7730 0717
edavis@national-army-
museum.ac.uk

8 January 2008

Still waiting.

9 January 2008

Our luck changed! Finally, the customs problems were solved thanks to the hard work undertaken by the British and German transport agents – the Russian minister for culture gave the green light for the works to be transported to London.

10 January 2008

The first trucks departed Düsseldorf.

11 January 2008

My phone rang at 5.15am: it was Momart telling me that the first shipments had arrived in Dover and they were in the process of clearing customs. It was finally becoming real! The next truck and trailer departed Düsseldorf.

12-20 January 2008

The first works were unpacked and so the Russian around (sorry – I had to fit it in somewhere) and the long process of deliveries, unpacking and installation began. The last work was finally hung on 20 January; it took a while to work out whether I was dreaming or not.

22 January 2008

We made it; the long-awaited press day had arrived and a collective sigh of relief was heard in London, Düsseldorf, Moscow and St Petersburg. The response to the official press day was overwhelming, and the Russian VIPs flown over to attend the opening ceremonies were delighted with the inaugural speech made by the Secretary of State.

Some very passionate and impromptu speeches were also delivered during the lender's dinner which wrapped up a very great day. The highlight had to be witnessing Malevich's granddaughter being photographed in front of the *Black Circle*, *Black Cross* and *Black Square*.

I can say now that the stressful situations we sometimes found ourselves in and the problems encountered along the way were all worth it. It is a pleasure to see so many people enjoying the exhibition, and the ever-increasing visitor figures are a testament to the hard work and commitment from so many people.

HISCOX GLOBAL MARKETS

The latest in our series of corporate member articles designed to give UKRG members information about products and services

AS A FINE ART underwriter at Hiscox, I have the great fortune of working with museums worldwide, of every different size and variety. Hiscox has been specialising in fine art insurance for more than 40 years, and our breadth of experience means that we can provide tailored solutions to meet museums' specific needs, both in terms of cover and budget.

The extraordinarily foolish and thoughtless crime of art theft was thrown into stark relief recently with a \$160m heist from a museum in Zurich. The works, among them Degas, Cezanne and Van Gogh, were so well known that they were literally priceless; untouchable in the open market. Two of the pictures have now been found, abandoned in a parked car a stone's throw from the museum, and the police are actively searching for the remaining works.

We can only hope now that in their brief time spent away from the museum, the found works were unharmed and wish for a swift return for the others. Museums will and can never be fortresses – their *raison d'être* is making their works accessible to the public and academic community. But the Zurich case serves as a reminder of the vulnerability of public collections, and of our responsibility to helping our assureds find practical ways to protect the collections in their custody.

Hiscox is always on hand to provide our assureds with

complementary risk management and best practice advice, whether it be for the avoidance of thieves, floods, visitors who trip into Qing dynasty vases or the multitude of other perils, foreseen and unforeseen.

We pride ourselves on our imaginative approach to our underwriting, and it is often the museum community that throws us the juiciest risks. Just recently we have been the proud insurers of Chris Burden's *Flying Steamroller* in mid-flight, Simon Perry's neon cement mixers suspended from windows and mermaid-inspired performance art on the Cornish coastline.

We are also avid collectors, and our own collection includes works by Gavin Turk, John Virtue, Damien Hirst and Grayson Perry. Not only does it engage us and add interest to our offices (as well as offering a sometimes pleasant distraction), but it also helps us to better understand the concerns of collectors and keepers of collections.

Through Hiscox Art Projects we are also able to support and represent young talented artists, and we organise frequent shows in our small independent exhibition space in the City.

Robert Korzinek
Fine Art, Specie & European Household
Hiscox Global Markets
Tel: +44 (0)20 7448 6000
Mobile: +44 (0)7920 199344
www.hiscox.com

UKRG corporate members

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