

Dear Readers,

This Newsletter is to inform you about the programme **Culture and Development**, which is being carried out by Cultur Cooperation e.V. between 2005 and 2008.

The current main topic of the project, "The Loss and Restitution of Cultural Assets" is just as controversial and the subject of heated debates as was the question of the protection of cultural assets in Germany.

In this Newsletter you will find news about the topic, the outcome of the events and a preview of the project events in 2007.

With best wishes for a successful year 2007

Anja Kuhr und Lena Blossat

The CulturCooperation e.V. team

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CURRENT TOPIC: Theft of Art and Restitution: Double standards in German politics

In 2006 the case known as "Causa Kirchner", in which lawyers achieved the restitution of a famous painting by Kirchner, led to major controversy in large areas of the cultural politics scene about where significant cultural treasures should be kept. The nature of the discussion showed that double standards are applied to this question.

In the debate about Germany's own national cultural heritage not only do all those with political responsibility voice their opinions; heated arguments also take place about the huge significance of art and museum treasures, and the cultural heritage of the republic is defended. When it is a question of where the cultural heritage of other nations should be kept, things are completely different: The new law combating illegal trading in cultural assets will contain considerable concessions to the art trade (p.2). When two Sumerian roller seals stolen in Baghdad in 2003 were up for auction in Munich on 12th December, the authorities responsible commented on an official query from the Iraqi government: It was too late, as the auction had already taken place (dpa report, p.2). At the same time the German government is responsible, together with other European states, for destruction of unique sites of cultural historical importance in Eastern Turkey - through granting a Hermes export credit guarantee for the construction of the controversial Ilisu dam (p.3).

The government must also now face international criticism for continuing to tolerate the theft of cultural assets from other nations, in particular from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

On the official side there is also no progress in the question of cultural assets that should be restored. There are, however, practicable solutions that have been successful, for example in Heidelberg or Göttingen (p.2-3).

The Protection of Cultural Assets in Germany: News

Draft law remains inadequate

On 27th September '06 the Cultural Committee of the Federal Government hosted a hearing of experts on the ratification of the UNESCO Convention of 1970. The experts, including several persons who had already taken part in the international symposium in Hamburg (Newsletter June 2006), severely criticised of the draft law. However, the small but very powerful art trade proved to have the stronger influence: additional alternations to the law will make for good times for the free trade in antique cultural assets in Germany. Similarly to the UNESCO, archaeologists and museum experts criticised the inadequacy of the protection measures contained in the law. The final debate will take place in the Federal Parliament in February. The objections necessary to stop the law must now come as soon as possible from those Members of Parliament who were clearly in favour of improved protection of cultural assets at the beginning of 2006.

Auction of Sumerian Antiques in Munich – Iraq protested

Munich/Baghdad (dpa) - Iraqi authorities tried in vain to prevent the auction in Munich of two archaeological finds dating back to the Sumerian era. A representative of the customs investigation department replied to dpa that the auction of the objects, which are around 4000 years old, had been completed in Munich on 11.12.06. On Wednesday the government-friendly newspaper «Al-Sabah» quoted an official of the Ministry for Antiquities as saying that the antique objects had been stolen in Iraq. The customs official confirmed that the German authorities had commenced investigations on the basis of an official complaint registered in Germany but had had no legal possibility to prevent the auction. It is unclear who presented the Sumerian finds to be auctioned in Munich and who is currently in possession of the antiquities.

During the US invasion of Iraq, more than 14,000 items of the Sumerian, Babylonian and Islamic periods were stolen from the museums in the country. Only some of them have been found and returned to the museums.

Hermes Credit Guarantee for the controversial Ilisu dam

The Federal Government has decided in principle to secure a German export deal in connection with the construction of the controversial Ilisu hydroelectric dam in Eastern Turkey. This deal concerns the construction of a tunnel by the Germany construction company Züblin. Austrian and Swiss construction companies are also involved in the project, export credit guarantees were also confirmed in those countries back in November.

In the area to be covered by the reservoir there is the town of Hasankeyf, which is of archaeological significance, and where more than 10,000 people have to be relocated from the catchments area. If the project is realised, archaeological sites and unique traces of architecture from the 10,000-year-old history of the settlement will be lost forever under the waters of the reservoir.

Film tour "Cracks in the Mask": Discussion on possible solutions concerning the contents of colonial collections

Cracks in the Mask: The Australian film maker Frances Calvert supplied fascinating entertainment and also constructive discussions in ten cities in Germany in 2006. The film tour was accompanied by the film maker and offered experts and an interested cinema public the opportunity to see the loss of cultural goods from the point of view of those affected by it. In the discussions following the film, the question was raised again and again how the European museums are going to justify keeping their colonial collections and how they will present them.

In the discussions it was never questioned that the countries of the South should be allowed to claim restitution of their cultural assets or at least be able to loan them. Discussions centred rather on possible solutions to the problem. The series of films offered the opportunity to discuss concrete models:

Various exhibition projects were presented which were created in cooperation with museums from the country of origin of the collections, and the presentation had taken place in both countries – with great success. In 2006, the famous Pacific Collection of the discoverer James Cook normally to be found in Göttingen was shown and celebrated in Honolulu, among other places, under the title of "Return to Paradise" – at least for a few weeks.

In September 2006 the Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg officially returned a 10cm-sized fragment of the famous Parthenon frieze to Greece. The pro-rector Prof. Chaniakis commented: "We have made a start. That is why this is so important."

Film Special "Cultural Heritage at Risk": German Government gives the green light to the Ilisu dam

In Hamburg two further film and discussion evenings were presented in the film series "Cultural Heritage at Risk". Following a review of the history of a throne from Cameroon which today stands in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, the topic turned to the current situation concerning the destruction of cultural assets in Eastern Turkey: The flooding of the historically significant town and the archaeological site of Hasankeyf is due to start very soon – thanks to a huge export credit guarantee from the governments of Germany, Austria and Switzerland for the construction companies involved from their countries. The planned construction of the controversial Ilisu dam, also criticised by environmental and human rights groups, is to commence. It means the loss of cultural heritage for an entire region and for 10,000 years of European settlement history. Halil Gülbeyaz, maker of documentary films and author of non-fiction books, showed some of his film work from the area of the GAP project including the area to be covered by the Ilisu dam and discussed with Anja Kuhr of CulturCooperation possibilities of protest against and resistance to the construction of the dam. Information and protest letters are available from the action group "Save Hasankeyf": www.hasankeyfgirisimi.org

Campaign: Nefertiti's travels

This campaign, which is being carried out by CulturCooperation together with numerous partners involved in cultural work and development cooperation, informs the public about the unequal distribution of cultural treasures today and about current claims for restitution. An internet forum offers large quantities of material about the most spectacular case, the Nefertiti bust in Berlin, and invites people to join in the debate and cast votes. Should Nefertiti be allowed to travel to Egypt?

The campaign is to take place from Mid-April to the end of June in Germany and Europe.

European Network – "Conference Culture and Development"

From 25th – 27th January 2007 there is a conference for European actors involved in culture and development. The aim of the conference is the discussion of common interests, methods and the aims of a European network for culture and development.

Speakers on the importance of culture in development cooperation will include Els van der Plas from the Prince Claus Fund Amsterdam, and Johannes Gehringer from EuropeAid Brussels.

The conference is to take place in the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and is organised by the Vienna Institute for Development and Cooperation (vidc) in cooperation with CulturCooperation e.V.

Declaration Culture and Arts for Sustainable Development

"Cultural education, the development of art and music, cultural diversity and cultural identity are also important elements of sustainable development. They are the basis of culture and ethics that are to be capable of being carried forward into the future."

On 6th October 2006 at the 1st Federal Congress Interkultur in Stuttgart, the declaration "Culture and Art for Sustainable Development" initiated by the Pan y Arte e.V. was presented to the public.

The signatories of the "declaration for close cooperation between Foreign Cultural Politics and Development Cooperation" calls for the German federal government to give new impulses to cultural politics as part of its foreign relations. It contains 11 guidelines for cultural-political foreign relations.

CulturCooperation is one of the signatories of the declaration.

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The next Newsletter will be published in March 2007.



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