

PARIS, 3 August 1948

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

COLOUR REPRODUCTIONS

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

from 7 to 8 July, 1948

REPORT OF THE RAPPORTEUR

M. JEAN CASSOU (France) CHAIRMAN

Present:

Mr. René d'HARNONCOURT (United States) RAPPORTEUR
Mr. Paul RAINVILLE (Canada)
Count Francesco PELLATI (Italy)
Mr. W. SANDBERG (Netherlands)
M. G. SCHMIDT (Switzerland)

Secretariat:

Dr. Julian HUXLEY, Director-General
M. Jean THOMAS, Assistant Director-General
Mr. P. BELLEW, Acting Head of Arts and Letters Section
Sr. M. LARDERA

The Committee of Experts named by the International Council of Museums in accordance with Resolution 4.1.4.2. to assist Unesco in its programme of preparing lists of high quality colour reproductions of works of art and of recommending portfolios of such reproductions, met at Unesco House, Paris, from 7 to 8 July, 1948. After the election of officers, the Acting Head of the Arts and Letters Section, Mr. Peter Bellew, outlined to the Committee the history of the project and the progress made to date towards its realization.

He pointed out that at the General Conference of Unesco held during November, 1947, in Mexico, the Director-General was instructed to implement the following Resolutions:-

4.1.4.2.

To draw up, in collaboration with experts selected with the assistance of the International Council of Museums, a list of available high quality colour reproductions designed to illustrate the most important phases and movements in art. A list of these works and others not yet available in fine reproductions, but considered essential properly to illustrate such phases and movements, should be published and distributed throughout the Member States.

4.1.4.3.

To secure expert counsel for the preparation of portfolios containing series of colour reproductions of fine quality covering specific fields in the arts.

The project, he said, was designed both to improve the quality of reproductions of visual art and to increase the availability of such reproductions to educational authorities, art institutions and private individuals throughout the world. As the number of great works of art was limited, and because of the impossibility of transporting the world's art treasures from country to country to enable them to be seen by people throughout the world, the circulation of first class reproductions was the only means of familiarizing the great majority of people with the world's art heritage. It was recognized, naturally, that no reproduction, however fine, could ever take the place of the original, but it was obvious that without reproductions the mass of people, denied as they were contact with the originals, could never hope to gain an understanding of the various great periods and phases of world art.

Because of the vast scope of the project, the Mexico Conference had recommended that the Secretariat concentrate mainly during the current year on a few specific periods or phases of art. It had been further recommended that the Secretariat make every effort to assemble an archive of sample reproductions to be used for demonstrations and as reference material. In accordance with these recommendations, and in consultation with expert members of the International Council of Museums, the Secretariat selected for particular attention during 1948

- (a) Modern Art from 1860 to the present
- (b) Italian Renaissance Art
- (c) Persian Art.

When funds for the project became available in March 1948, the Section of Arts and Letters employed experts in editorial and research work to develop a system for the assembly of data, make lists of publishers and makers of reproductions, and commence to assemble a preliminary list of colour reproductions of modern art. They also began to collect sample reproductions for the permanent Unesco archive. By 15 June, 149 publishers had been contacted, 661 entries had been made in the permanent file catalogue on modern painting, and 300 samples of colour reproductions had been received.

While these activities were being carried on, the Secretariat also approached the Italian Government with a request to assemble a full catalogue of existing colour reproductions of works of art of the Italian Renaissance located in Italy, and negotiations were under way to obtain data of works of art from that period known outside Italy. Final discussions were taking place between the Secretariat and the Vatican concerning reproductions of a series of approximately 25 portfolios containing 25 plates each of the frescos in the Vatican, and arrangements were being made, with the collaboration of the Italian Government and Italian printers, for the

first of a series of folios illustrating Italian Renaissance art in State and private collections.

The International Council of Museums was also being approached to recommend experts to assist in the Persian Art field.

Mr. BELLEW then submitted to the Committee of Experts four specific problems in which Unesco sought their advice and co-operation.

1. Establishment of criteria for the final selection of prints to be included in the list of high quality reproductions.
2. Procedure for the application of such criteria.
3. Recommendations for additional lists covering further phases of art to be prepared during the coming year.
4. Recommendations for portfolios of prints illustrating specific phases of art to be selected next year.

The Committee discussed the points presented at length, and made the following recommendations and comments:-

- (1) Establishment of criteria for the final selection of prints to be included in the list of high quality colour reproductions.

The Committee recommends that only reproductions of paintings of outstanding merit be included in the list.

The Committee recommends that reproductions eligible for inclusion in the lists should be those in which colour values, form and texture are of such high fidelity that they can be considered close facsimiles of the originals.

(Several members of the Committee suggested that the catalogues should include an introductory statement concerning the advantages and limitations of the various colour reproduction techniques. It was agreed that each catalogue should contain an explanatory introduction of the period or phase of art to which it was devoted).

- (2) Procedure of selection.

The Committee recommends that M. Jean Cassou, Director of the Musée de l'Art Moderne in Paris, and Mr. René d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Curatorial Department of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, be designated to make the final selection of reproductions for the list "Modern Art from 1860 to the present", to be issued this year.

In the case of the reproductions of works of art of the Italian Renaissance, the Committee recommends that Count Francesco Pellati represents the Committee of Experts when the selection is made by the Committee already

established by the Italian Government. Copies of both these lists would be sent to other Committee members for their criticism and comment. This method of selection was suggested by the Committee in order to make possible the publication of these two preliminary lists during the current year. The Committee believe that the comments which will be received on these lists from experts and educators will serve as an excellent guide for the development of further catalogues.

(3) Recommendations for Portfolios of prints illustrating specific phases of art to be selected next year.

The Committee recognize that the number of desirable portfolios is almost unlimited and that it is exceedingly difficult to give priorities to subjects on the basis of their relative value. The Committee also believes that during the coming year plans should be worked out recommending the assembly of portfolios from all phases and periods of art history. The preparation of the following portfolios was suggested for the near future, because the Committee believed that these specific portfolios could be rapidly brought together.

- (a) Portfolio on Modern Mexican painting.
- (b) Several portfolios on miniatures.
- (c) Several portfolios on the paintings and mosaics of Greece and Rome and their colonies on the shores of the Mediterranean.

It was realized, however, that the Secretariat, in the light of progress made during the year, would be in the best position to judge which periods and phases would be most suitable, and that the above were merely tentative suggestions.

(Signed) RENE D'HARNONCOURT

RAPPORTEUR