



ICOMOS – CAR Recent initiatives and achievements

*by Ulf Bertilsson**

ICOMOS Rock Art Survey, Analysis and Action Plan was presented at the World Heritage Durban Meeting in 2005. The report is based on an Inventory of Nomination Dossiers of Rock Art Sites Inscribed on the World Heritage List that was accomplished the same year.

- The Inventory encompasses 26 properties of which 14 constitutes “pure” prehistoric rock art sites. In the remaining twelve, rock art is an additional element.
- The information in the report is based on the situation at the year of inscription.
- A part II containing comments, analyses and updates of the information is planned.
- It can be concluded now that although an essential number of the world most outstanding rock art sites are inscribed on the WHL substantial gaps still exist. This affects the Credibility of the List and the Convention.
- A number of the sites are also affected by problems of sustainable management and Conservation.
- Although competent experts and specialists are present in many different parts and regions of the world there is a big need to further develop co-operation and Communication within this field.
- In order to improve the current situation in all this fields there is an immediate need for short and long-term Capacity building initiatives and activities.
- Hence, to improve the present situation ICOMOS International Scientific Rock Art Committee on Rock Art – CAR (Comité por l’Art Rupestre) has taken the following actions:
- The publishing of a World Report on Rock Art in 2004 - The Future of World Rock Art.
- The creation of a draft for a Charter on Rock Art that was presented in 2004 and will be finally approved in 2007.
- The launching of a new program of Regional Thematic Studies on Rock Art in co-operation with the World Heritage Centre.
- The creation of Pre-Nomination Guidelines for applications to the World Heritage List.
- A strong focus on Rock Art and the World Heritage List in the forthcoming Valcamonica Symposium in May 2007 as a joint venture of the Centro Camuno di Study Preistorici, UNESCO-WHC, CAR-ICOMOS and Soprintendenza of Lombardy.

THE RESULTS OF THESE ACTIONS WILL BE MANIFOLD:

- Better representation of Rock Art on the World Heritage List.
- Enhanced awareness, improved conservation and documentation, enforced management and protection of Rock Art world-wide.
- Enlarged global network of Rock Art specialists with evolved co-operation.

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ICOMOS – CAR, International Scientific Committee on Rock Art - Comité International Scientific pour l’Art Rupestre



The CAR-ICOMOS charter for the protection and management of rock art and rock art sites

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1. PREAMBLE

1.1 – This charter describes the special guidelines that the International Scientific Committee for Rock Art (CAR) recommends to all institutions and persons, public or private, concerned with rock art and rock art sites.

1.2 – The basis of this charter is the ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage (1990) and all subsequent Charters and Declarations of ICOMOS as well as the respective charters and recommendations of ICCROM and ICOM (www.icomos.org, www.unesco.org, www.icrom.org, www.icom.museum). These are to be adapted to the special demands of managing rock art and rock art sites.

1.3 – Rock art has been an integral part of human culture for more than 40,000 years and can be found in all parts of the world. It is the purpose of the charter to provide guidelines for the conservation, documentation and investigation of this heritage of mankind in order to preserve it for future generations.

2. Definition of rock art and rock art sites

2.1 – Rock art comprises all images, symbols or inscriptions painted on or drawn, carved, pecked or polished into all sorts of suitable stone surfaces. These may be on bedrock, earthfasts and boulders as well as on artificial constructions such as megalithic and other prehistoric or historic monuments.

2.2 – Generally, rock art is fixed at its original place and setting. These were chosen intentionally by their creators for specific purposes. Rock art, surfaces and landscape are inseparable elements of its messages. In contrast to many other archaeological remains rock art conveys an illustrated, pictorial insight into

the thoughts, desires or beliefs of its creators. Rock art constitutes petrified messages of past and present cultures.

2.3 – Rock art was created at a site or in a landscape of special importance for prehistoric as well as historic peoples. It is embedded in its surroundings. The topography of the site is believed to be part of its message. This means that not only should the rock art and the site be handled with maximum care but also its environment. To remove images from a site, therefore from their meaningful and multiple contexts, to take them into collections or museums, to alter a site or its surroundings means to destroy the messages forever.

2.4 – Rock art and rock art sites comprise a fundamental part of our archaeological heritage, just like all other prehistoric or historic artifacts, sites and monuments.

3. MANAGEMENT, PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF ROCK ART AND ROCK ART SITES

3.1 – Each country's laws of antiquities should regulate responsibility and management of all classes of cultural heritage in the most efficient, scientifically and ethically safe way. If necessary, this legislation should be supplemented by specific measures adapted to the particularities of rock art surfaces and sites. If there is not sufficient expertise within this field, the advice of international committees is essential and should be sought by the responsible authorities. CAR will offer suggestions and advise on how to solve concrete problems or arrange contacts with international organizations and communities concerned with cultural heritage in general and rock art in particular.

3.2 – Rock art requires extreme care as it is not normally covered by protective layers or artificial constructions in contrast to many other prehistoric remains. On the contrary it is exposed to all kinds of natural or anthropogenic destructive agents. The influence of acid rain and other polluting factors, climatic variations, plants' roots, lichens and mosses, and trampling visitors may erode and eventually destroy even seemingly solid and compact rocks. Destructive agents and influences should be observed, documented, monitored and redressed systematically to prevent further and irretrievable devastation (www.w-heritage.org/RockCareweb/).

3.3 – Rock art is a shared, universal ancestral tradition, for which modern societies must accept the responsibility of protection for the benefit of everyone. If sites still constitute a part of a living tradition or religion, the responsibility of managing this heritage may pass to the respective community.

3.4 – Outstanding rock art sites should be given world heritage status regardless of prehistoric or historic age. That means that all concerned people and institutions must make the utmost efforts to give these sites special protection. An initial point of contact for gaining World Heritage Status is CAR.

3.5 – Authorities should make all efforts to protect rock art and rock art sites in the most effective and responsible way that the local circumstances will allow. After thoughtful examination and documentation of the specific local circumstances it may be necessary and useful to build discrete fences or enclosures or to restrict visits. Other measures may be to temporarily or permanently cover endangered rock surfaces with protective materials. However, it is of the highest importance that measures should be performed in ways that are as unobtrusive and noninterventional as possible in regard to the rock art and the environment. But in the long term it is more efficient to strengthen the interest, motivation and understanding of present and future generations in our archaeological heritage, instead of keeping the public away altogether. This can be achieved by promoting information, school education, guided visits, regular events and demonstrations etc.

3.6 – Direct measures to delay or prevent the destruction of weathered rock art surfaces may be necessary. Conservation methods should follow international guidelines (www.icomos.org/docs/guidelines_for_education.html). In principle, conservation should be reversible, invisible and nonintrusive. Documentation must be in place ahead of conservation work, and both the process of conservation and the end result must be recorded. Scientific tests and experiments should never be performed on original material.

4. DOCUMENTATION OF ROCK ART

4.1 – An important means for future preservation and understanding of rock art is the use of photographic, pictorial, descriptive and all other methods of documentation and recording. The making of casts may be an option provided that safe, non-intrusive methods are available. All tried and scientifically tested means should be employed to record and document rock art and its environmental contexts without any damage to rock surfaces, images and local settings.

4.2 – Rock art analysis should not cause damage to sites.

4.3 – Excavation of a site may only be undertaken in accordance with the national legislation and in accordance with The European Convention on the protection of archaeological heritage (www.councilof-europe).

4.4 – Laymen travelling even in the remotest areas of the world do much important prospecting work and documentation today. Their work should be governed by agreed international rules so that they do not inadvertently cause damage. They should not fail to report fully on their findings. The best way to enable this might be the creation of documentation centres and networks, to inform people about the importance of their work, to advise them how to deal with rock art and to encourage them to co-operate with these centers. This will prevent the danger of inadvertent destruction. (Existing documentation centers include CCSP (<http://www.rockart-ccsp.com/>) and RockCare (www.w-heritage.org/RockCareweb/)).

5. FINAL REMARKS

5.1 – Rock art, like all other archaeological and historical heritage, is the global heritage of mankind. International co-operation is therefore essential for the development and maintenance of management standards. CAR will assist by instructing authorities and all people doing work in this field.

5.2 – The guidelines for managing rock art and international co-operation are to be found in the present and future Charters and Declarations of CAR - ICOMOS, as well as of ICOM, ICCROM which are to be adapted to the special demands of rock art.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CAR-CHARTER

In 1964, Emmanuel Anati founded the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici in Capo Di Ponte, Italy. One of the primary reasons for the foundation of the CCSP was Valcamonica's rock engravings, which were largely unknown at that time. They had to be documented, interpreted and published in order to expose them to the expert world. Through personal contacts, publications and congresses, the CCSP soon became an international centre, where experts and students from all over the world could obtain information and learn how to document and interpret rock art and similar testimony of ancient cultures. In the course of time, a network developed, joining experts and amateurs in their efforts to study and preserve this important heritage of mankind. It was a difficult journey because, apart from monuments like European Palaeolithic art or the paintings and engravings in Africa or Australia, less spectacular rock art was not appreciated as an integral part of prehistoric or archaic cultures by the "official" archaeology of most countries in the world. This attitude continued to predominate through the 70s and 80s of the 20th century. Therefore, systematic survey was largely left to amateurs and a few professional experts. Interest grew with the discovery of ever more rock art sites and in numerous countries, regional and national societies dedicated to documentation,



publication and preservation were founded. Concentration of these activities and the involvement of national and international bodies like UNESCO turned out to be necessary. In 1980, ICOMOS, the International Scientific Committee for Rock Art – Comité International pour l'Art Rupestre (CAR-ICOMOS) was founded in Warsaw. For more than 20 years, Prof. Anati and his colleagues at the CCSP were responsible for the co-ordinating CAR activities and its representation toward international bodies. Through his untiring personal commitment as chairman, Anati was able to promote rock art research and its appreciation, and to make CAR the global institution it is today. In accordance with the statutes, the chairman's term in office is limited to a maximum of 9 years, which is why, Jean Clottes took over as chairman in 1990. He was able to successfully carry on with the work that Anati had begun, in continued co-operation with the CCSP. In 1992, J. Clottes founded INORA, the International Newsletter on Rock Art, which has achieved high levels of circulation and contributes decisively to the speedy publication of new discoveries and methods worldwide. In the past decades, increasing industrialization, urban sprawl in regions untouched by man, pollution, climatic change, tourism and other factors have led to an alarming rate of destruction affecting rock art which had survived millennia without suffering damage. There is the danger that entire rock art sites may be lost in the near future. In order to better assess this danger and take appropriate countermeasures, the RockCare project was founded by Dr. Bertilsson, the chairman of CAR since 1999, and has seen great success so far. To face the new challenges also at an international and institutional level, the establishment of a Rock Art Charter seemed necessary. In this Charter, rock art and sites are considered to be a special type of monument in respect of archaeology and cultural history. For this reason, the ICOMOS, ICOM and ICCROM guidelines and recommendations also apply to CAR. However, they have been amended to include the specific characteristics and requirements that are crucial for the protection and management of rock paintings and their natural environment. On the basis of this Charter, CAR will formulate recommendations directed at national and international authorities and institutions.

REGIONAL THEMATIC STUDIES AND PRE NOMINATION GUIDELINES

The accomplishment of the Charter draft has also been followed by initiatives to perform Regional Thematic Studies and to formulate Pre Nomination Guidelines as supportive tools to facilitate the process of selecting sites with potential for WHL applications. This concept was originally developed by a group of ICOMOS people namely; Regina Durighello, Gwenëlle Bourdin, Susan Denyer, Ulf Bertilsson and Jean Clottes. It has been further developed in close co-operation with Nuria Sanz of the World Heritage Centre thanks to whom it was officially presented at the meeting in Basse Terre, Guadeloupe in May 2006. The report on Latin America & Carraibbean has now been finalized and the work has been performed in accordance to the following guidelines:

Thematic study of rock art: LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN:

CONTENTS

1. THE SCOPE AND VALUE OF ROCK ART

Rock art is the oldest form of art, and has experienced the longest and widest development in terms of time and in space. Rock art is distinguished from other forms of art by the fact that it has been preserved at the place where it was carried out and by the fact that the place very often determined the scope and realisation of the art. In evaluating rock art, it is essential to take into account, not only its artistic quality and cultural importance, but also the quality of the place where it is found and particularly its natural environment.

Rock art sites, as a corpus of work, have huge potential for understanding human activity, both spiritual and temporal, over many millennia.

The aesthetic value of rock art can be appreciated without knowledge of associations. However, the full value of rock art sites, and their comparisons with other sites, usually only emerges once images have been documented and studied, to reveal an understanding of sequences, associated human activity and in some cases beliefs and traditions.

Without adequate inventories it is difficult to analyse rock art sequences and make comparative analyses. Many rock art sites have many thousands of images, considerable numbers of layers and can be said

intuitively to represent vanished societies. A clearer understanding of their specific significances, geo-cultural context and relationship to present day societies is needed to evaluate them fully and this usually emerges only after systematic analysis and recording.

ROCK ART AND WORLD HERITAGE

Rock Art is present within several geographical areas that are currently under-represented on the World Heritage list. Rock art sites thus have the potential to fill some of the “gaps”.

During the past five years a considerable number of rock art sites, or sites containing rock art have been nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. Evaluating these brought up considerable difficulties as few sites have adequate inventories and this inhibits proper assessment of their significances and value and make formal comparative analysis difficult. Several sites were put forward for their association with beliefs and practices, but only a few provided substantive evidence.

In some regions rock art is highly prolific and could be said to be the dominant cultural heritage type. Analysis of its images has the potential to provide key evidence into social, economic and spiritual dimensions of past societies. Analysis, recording and conservation of rock art sites can however demand considerable resources.

In order to target scarce resources, it is crucial that the key sites, which reflect their social and geo-cultural context and can be said to have outstanding universal value are nominated for possible inscription to the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS Regional Thematic Studies on Rock Art

In order to understand better future nominations as representatives of particular cultures or cultural traditions, ICOMOS is preparing a series of Regional Thematic Studies on Rock Art of which Latin America and the Caribbean is the first. These will amass data on regional characteristics in order to begin to link more strongly rock art images to social and economic circumstances, and strong regional or local traits, particularly religious or cultural traditions and beliefs.

Rock art needs to be anchored as far as possible in a geo-cultural context. Its images may be outstanding from an aesthetic point of view: more often their full significance is related to their links with the societies that produced them and the meanings with which they were imbued. In order to understand these links, further research may be needed on the context of rock art. It is hoped that the thematic studies will help identify where further support is needed.

ICOMOS Pre Nomination Guidelines for Rock Art sites

In order to provide more general support for those sites identified as having potential Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), ICOMOS is also preparing Pre Nomination Guidelines for rock art sites to address the particular issues that apply to the nominations of these types of sites.

2. ROCK ART IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Current state of knowledge for Latin America and the Caribbean

This section will summarise our current state of knowledge for the region

Rationale for dividing region into rock art zones

This section will explain how as there is a need to relate rock-art to its geo-cultural regions rather than national boundaries, this study will divide Latin America and the Caribbean into five Zones that mirror rock art distribution and are helpful as a tool to use in the selection processes for WH sites.

The five Zones, based on characteristics so far known, are:

1. Mexico (including Baja California) and Central America.
2. The Caribbean, including Venezuela and Colombia.
3. Brazil
4. West-north-west South America (north of the Andes, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay)
5. West-south-west and southern South America (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay)

This section will also summarise the data collected by consultants for the five zones on:



Profile of Zone
Known sites
Sites with potential to justify OUV in World Heritage terms
Links with other zones
Documentation
Research
Conservation and management issues
Threats

Value of Rock Art Sites

This section will consider the particular attributes that need to be considered in evaluating rock art sites. These will include not only the quality and number of images, but also their associations with past and present societies, evidence for social and economic activities, links with religious practices etc.

The section will also consider how rock art sites may be evaluated at local, national and international levels; ways of identifying Outstanding Universal Value and applicable WH criteria.

It will also consider how comparative evaluations of individual sites can be assembled and give details of where documentation may be obtained that is specific to this Region.

Conservation

This section will summarise information for South America and the Caribbean, based on information given collected for each of the five zones. It will include information on methods and materials used in practical conservation; preventive conservation methods; main threats – changes to surrounding vegetation; climate change etc; limitations in funding; pros and cons of different conservation approaches.

Management

This section will summarise the current state of situation in region – based on analysis of evidence from zones; it will include: main agencies involved in management; arrangements for management of rock within sites protected for natural values; links with local communities; contemporary use of rock art sites; access arrangements; limitations in resources.

Protection

This section will provide a description of existing laws and other official protection systems and mechanisms.

Conclusions

The final section will provide a profile of the region in rock art terms from the data collected and consider the potential of the Region to contribute to the WH list.

It will also provide a summary of the previous chapters, setting out recommendations for the future on documentation, conservation, management etc.

BRIEF FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The proposed ICOMOS Thematic Study will divide Latin America and the Caribbean into five zones, as follows:

1. Mexico (including Baja California) and Central America.
2. The Caribbean, including Venezuela and Colombia.
3. Brazil
4. West-north-west South America (north of the Andes, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay)
5. West-south-west and southern South America (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay)

For each zone, Consultants are asked to assemble the following information:

Profile of Zone

Based on defined rock art traditions in relation to distribution in space and time and to archaeological context.

Links with other zones

i.e. overlaps in rock art cultures.

Known sites

Including cultural and natural WHSs; sites on WH Tentative Lists (all these already identified and listed by ICOMOS).

Sites with potential to justify OUV in World Heritage terms

Documentation

Analysis of the current situation including:

- Details of which sites have been inventoried;
- Type of records (eg standard data sheets, physical or digital);
- Photographic records;
- Location of documentation;
- What material is available to help with comparative studies.

Research

How far have rock art sites be researched for their associations to societies both past and present particularly significances which indigenous populations give (or have given) to the decorated sites.

Protection

Existing laws and other official protection systems and mechanisms.

Conservation

As complete and as correct picture as possible to include:

- Information on methods and materials used in practical conservation;
- preventative conservation methods;
- pros and cons of different conservation approaches.

Management: to include:

- Main agencies involved in management
- Management arrangements including a management of rock within sites protected for natural values; which sites have active management
- Do Management plans exist
- Traditional management arrangements
- Links with, and involvement of, local communities
- Contemporary use of rock art sites
- Access arrangements
- Limitations in resources

Main threats

For instance:

- Changes to surrounding vegetation
- Rock fissures/laminations/water ingress
- Climate change
- Limitations in funding
- Lack of management
- Inappropriate uses

Conclusions for the Zone:

Conclusions on:

- Scope and extent of evidence
- Documentation
- Problems with management and conservation as well as good practice
- Threats
- What Pre-Nomination support might be needed
- Potential of Zone to contribute sites to the WH list
- Recommendations for the future



Rock Art – our Priceless Heritage Endangered

by Ulf Bertilsson

Rock art is a global phenomenon that is represented in all continents and all climatic zones except for the true arctic areas. It is probably the most widespread testimony of the existence of prehistoric humans, reflecting their myths and beliefs from around 40,000 years BP to the present. It constitutes one of the most valuable cultural heritage categories of humanity and as such its preservation deserves special attention. By conserving rock art, we are not merely saving the images for the future: we are preserving a key to ancient beliefs, traditions and rituals and handing these on to future generations. However, regardless of all the efforts that have been made, and which are continuously being made in many countries throughout the world, our rock art heritage is still very vulnerable and under almost constant threat. Even with “normal conditions”, many sites are lost due to deterioration caused by climatic factors such as heat and freezing. In many instances this deterioration is “enhanced” by human effects of which the most obvious and widespread is environmental pollution including acid rain and global warming. Yet another risk, and possibly the most dangerous one, is the development of infrastructure and modern landscape planning. Dr Clottes of France highlighted this growing threat to rock art in an ICOMOS report on World Heritage Rock Art sites in the middle of the 1990s. But, the situation has not been halted, let alone reversed, and there are regular reports of rock art sites being lost all over the world.

The threat from infrastructure can best be exemplified by the current situation in two of the most prominent World Heritage sites with rock art: at Tanum in Sweden and Valcamonica in Italy. These two sites represent the artistic peak of European Bronze Age culture. Recently, a rock art site in the Draa Valley, Morocco, was

partly destroyed by the quarrying of the rocks for building purposes. In Ningxia, China, an area of rock art has been crossed by a new road, which has destroyed several engraved surfaces depicting Neolithic images some 5,000 years old. The construction of a dam and bridges is endangering important concentrations of prehistoric rock art in the Guadiana/Alqueva area in Spain and Portugal by drowning them with a dam for production of hydroelectric power.

The threat from infrastructure can also be exemplified by the current situation in two of the most prominent World Heritage sites with rock art: at Tanum in Sweden and Valcamonica in Italy. These two sites represent the artistic peak of European Bronze Age culture.

In recent years, there has been a marked shift in the focus of research from interpretation to documentation and conservation. Not that interpretation as a theme has become less interesting, on the contrary. But since the basis of interpretation is based on the images, the engravings have to be preserved or at least documented before they vanish. This is reflected in the Air Pollution Project of the National Heritage Board that was carried out between 1988–1996. The results from the analysis of the effects of environmental pollution that were undertaken, indicate that almost 75 % of the rock art sites were suffering from negative effects. Although the task of recording the damages is not yet complete, we have already learnt from analysis of the data that has been collected, that some of the rock art masterpieces in Tanum will already have disappeared in our lifetime.

In addition, it is now recognised that the setting of a panel, not only its images, is fundamental to understanding its message. Therefore, a first priority of CAR is that rock art should be preserved in its original environment. Consequently, the measure to cut out and remove rock art panels in order to save them from destruction is never recommended by CAR. If it is still applied, as inevitable in some cases, one must be aware of the fact that this rock art has been robbed of its original context and thus becomes a sort of relic that, of course, can still be worthwhile preserving as an art-piece. When rock art panels are cut loose from the bedrock and brought to a safer environment they also require future care and preservation. Most conservation institutions and museums are located in big cities and since the environment in cities can be much polluted and of worse air quality than out in the countryside, this relocation may pose new threats to the rock art. If such actions have to be taken into consideration it is therefore vital to place the object in an adequate climatic environment. Problems of rock art conservation are not only connected with World Heritage sites. These sites can be said to be easier to protect because of their global status, regardless of the threats discussed above. The situation for the many more common sites and areas is often troublesome. In some countries, there is a whole suite of problems connected with the conservation and management of rock art. These include a series of factors ranging from negative effects of infrastructure development to a lack of legislation and financial resources.

This is well illustrated by the situation in Russia where the Centre for the Conservation of Historic-Cultural Heritage in Irkutsk (Siberia) has implemented a rock art conservation project along with extensive recording and an inventory of rock art sites. This started in 1987 at rock art sites of the Upper Lena River and in 1992 it commenced for the Lake Baikal area. Experts in interpretation, conservation, biology and geology formed

the research teams and management strategies were developed based on international experience in the field

of rock art conservation. Nevertheless, its adaptation to local circumstances and the analysis of the results,

received after the first years of the project's implementation, revealed the following problems: 1. From the 1960s to 1980s, industrial development caused the main rock art deterioration. This disintegration of the limestone cliff with engravings at the Lake Baikal shore might result from a change to the water level caused by the construction of a hydro-power station. In the 1990s, there was a reduction of the general impact of industrial development due to the economic recession, but already existing problems continued.

2. Political changes brought the problem of a revision to the legislation and its effectiveness for heritage management.

3. The threat of vandalism of the rock art was ongoing. This problem can only be overcome with an improvement to legislation and an increase in public awareness of rock art through publications and the promotion of adequate information.

4. The conservation, methodologies and monitoring required could be provided by the RockCare team but a long-term conservation project lacks adequate funding.

5. The project needs both informational support (introduction to internationally approved standards and expertise) and financial support. The professional community in Russia recognised the following problems for the management of its rock art:

- A lack of legislation and activity of heritage protection organisations.
- The need for introduction of the internationally approved standards and expertise.
- An increase of public awareness: popularisation of rock art as an integral part of cultural heritage.
- Development of ethics and strategies in rock art documentation, management and research.

This summary of the situation in Russia is applicable to many other areas and sites in the world.

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Rock Art – CAR recognises these problems and the urgent need for counteractions. Several immediate measures are planned to enhance co-operation, the spread of expertise and the development of long-term strategies.

A first step is to produce this global report on the state of rock art based on reports and inventions by the active members: *The Future of Rock Art – a World Review*. The committee has started work to set up a web page connected with the ICOMOS server in order to inform the public about its activities and to encourage cooperation among members. Further, it has initiated the management of sites open to the public. Due to a lack of accurate documentation and adequate information for visitors, opening up sites for visitors might turn out to be a counterproductive step. An example is the habit of infilling engravings with red paint to make them more

visible to visitors, a frequent practice in Scandinavia. If done with inadequate skill, this method can “deform” the engraved images and therefore also degrade the visitors' experience. Further, it can destroy substrates on the rock surface that may be possible to date in the future. The same applies for the use of the so-called polychrome method during the documentation process, where the panels are cleaned and painted with a white colour solution made up of water and chalk-powder. Competent specialists should only apply these substances in urgent cases and with the utmost caution.

The Committee considers it to be most important not to deliberately increase culture tourism to sites that have not been secured in terms of their documentation and preservation. Otherwise one runs the risk of fast and severe weathering of panels and sites. It is recommended that the basic procedure always will be the following:

- Survey of an area and documentation of panels using appropriate techniques and methods (see www.w-heritage.org/rockcareweb for information about recent developments).
- Inventory and mapping of damages and signs of erosion, exfoliation and cracks etc.
- Adequate conservation methods should be applied. (If the site is in great need of such treatment, it



should not be opened to the public!)

- Construction of wooden walkways, signposts and production of interpretation maps, folders etc.

Walkways and signposts should be constructed in harmony with the requirements of the site, in order not to disturb the landscape and the visitor's experience. If the site belongs to a certain group of people like the indigenous population, it is a fundamental prerequisite that they are invited and consulted at every step of this process.

- If images are not visible because of overgrowing mosses, lichens and algae, they should be cleaned in a harmless way without the use of dangerous chemical substances.

- Opening of the site or panel to the public. This measure should always be preceded by a close analysis of the "carrying capacity" of the site that should never be exceeded.

An alternative to opening a site to the public is to leave the actual site or panel in its natural setting undisturbed by visitors and instead present it to the public in the form of copies made by casts, as is the case in Mont Bego, France, and Tanum, Sweden. However, since taking casts implies the use of certain chemical substances that might be harmful to the bedrock, a safer method might be to use enhanced photographs or similar images. In order to eliminate the negative elements of casts, it is advisable to use other non-tactile/physical methods for copying, such as a laser-scanner. Such an application based on the use of an easily movable, high-speed laser-scanner for field documentation was developed in the RockCare project.

The use of protective coverings based on geo-textile materials is another important and less expensive method that was developed in the EU project, INTERREG "Rock Carvings in the Borderlands", which was a joint Swedish-Norwegian project. The coverings can be easily applied and removed when necessary. Their main use is to reduce the oscillation of the temperature of the rocks, especially their passage through zero degrees. This will minimise the length of time below freezing and prevent exfoliation and other sorts of deterioration and will considerably prolong the life of some panels. Full-scale testing has been taking place in Sweden for a couple of years, and this year an evaluation of the results will be made. But, regardless of the ambitious efforts made by researchers and experts all over the world rock art is constantly at risk.

The destruction of our rock art heritage does sometimes cause big noise and receive a broad coverage in the press when it is being threatened or destroyed. But we need to become more proactive to prevent such events. Rock art is priceless interface with man's past. But these pieces of a patrimony that preserves the roots of human history are being lost every day. CAR therefore urges all positive forces to act before it is too late!

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