

## FOREWORD – PRÉFACE – VORWORT – PREFACI

The Corpus Vitrearum family was last able to meet face to face in Antwerp in the summer of 2018. Although only four years ago, the impact of a worldwide pandemic in the interim means that this feels like a lifetime ago, and another world entirely. The patience and commitment of the Catalan committee of the Corpus Vitrearum in bringing this international community together again is therefore all the more remarkable, and ensures the continuance of this international scholarly exchange despite interruption and delay. During our brief meeting in Antwerp, members of the secretariat of the International Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Stained Glass raised the possibility of reuniting the colloquium of the Corpus Vitrearum and the technical forum of the ISCCSG. Much to our delight, the Catalan committee was very willing to make this possible, recognition that the future of our fragile heritage of stained glass relies upon the close collaboration of art historians and conservators. It is entirely fitting that during this 2022 meeting, delegates from both disciplines and from all over the world will gather in Girona to marvel at the medieval glaziers' tables and the windows made from them. No better way to celebrate the reunion of our international stained-glass community could be found!

*The International Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Stained Glass*

The Corpus Vitrearum project (originally Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi) was born out of the International Committee on Art History in 1952 and was adopted in 1954 by the Union Académique Internationale (UAI).

The Barcelona Committee of the Corpus Vitrearum, under the auspices of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC), was created in 1957 and the following year presented its programme for Catalonia at the meeting of the UAI. The state political situation made it impossible to develop the programme until 1979, when the Catalan Corpus Vitrearum team was created, made up of specialists from different fields.

Since then, first under the direction of Dr. Joan Ainaud (✝), then of Dr. Manuel Ascani Mundó (✝) and finally of Dr. Xavier Barral i Altet, all the known Gothic stained-glass windows in our country have been studied, and the five volumes of our Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi have been published.

Once the five medieval volumes had been completed, and again with the support of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and also of the Generalitat de Catalunya, a first inventory, which extends to the first third of the 20th century, of the civil and religious stained-glass windows of our country has been made. We have been doing research all over our country for ten years, which has resulted in the study and inventory of most of our stained-glass windows from that era. Digitization of all materials has also begun. Now that this phase is closed, we do not want to stop there: we must continue on this path of study and conservation of heritage and include in our inventory other works and research that can be carried out. The discovery made in the Cathedral of Girona, at the end of 2019, of a medieval stained-glass window behind an altarpiece confirms that the search never ends. And for this task we hope to have the help of the corresponding institutions.

The 13th Stained Glass Colloquium was held in Catalonia (7–11 October) in 1985. The two stained-glass tables in Girona, unique in the world at that time, had recently been identified. We must keep in mind the exceptional fact that the stained-glass windows made with the tables of Girona are still preserved in the cathedral of this city. For an incipient Catalan committee of the CV, the celebration of this congress was a real challenge that allowed us to join the great family of Corpus Vitrearum.

Thirty-five years after that meeting, we have taken up the challenge of organizing a new Corpus Vitrearum colloquium, and we have also added the organization of the Forum; thus, in a single week the two most important meetings of this international organization are united. We have responded to this new challenge thanks to international support and also that of local institutions. Initially scheduled for 2020, the global pandemic situation forced us to postpone the 30th Colloquium and the 11th Forum first to 2021 and then to 2022.

So, after more than two years of pandemic, we can finally hold these meetings. The forum sessions take place in Girona and Barcelona and are organized by the Catalan committee of the Corpus Vitrearum in association with the International Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Stained Glass (ISCCSG) in conjunction with the Institut d'Estudis Catalans. The UAI and various Catalan institutions and foundations support the organization of these meetings.

The theme of this Forum will focus on the preservation of the 'identity' of historic stained glass in the intervention process. The search for balance between the values embodied in these pieces is a matter of great importance for this fragile heritage to be conserved correctly. This Forum will offer the opportunity to reflect upon and bring new solutions to this complex subject. The fragmentary nature and fragility of stained glass is widely accepted. To a greater or lesser extent, historic stained-glass windows, exposed to physical attack and weathering conditions over time, have suffered damage that has altered their appearance. These deteriorations are in addition to changes introduced by restorations, reconstructions, and interventions of varying extent and degree. All of these factors impact on the stained-glass windows that we see today. With every intervention they make, those responsible for maintaining this heritage face a series of decisions that are of great importance for the future reading and understanding of these pieces.

The response to this theme is a key factor in the creation of conservation plans, which can ensure the correct transfer of the piece to future generations. How should we combine the conservation requirements of the window with respect for all of the historic materials in and around it? How far can we go without diminishing the integrity of the piece? How can we make alterations in the surface or structure of the work while also respecting its antiquity and originality? At what stage, or level of quality, does an intervention gain historic value?

We have gathered in this volume the texts presented at the 11th Forum which have been the basis of the established discussions and which we hope will shed light on these topics.

We must thank all those who have remained faithful to our meetings for their patience, and we must mourn the loss of those whose illness or death has prevented them from being with us today.

In two years there have been many changes in the way we see the world, but stained glass is still the focus of our professional and personal attention. Thus, despite the still uncertain international situation, people from many parts of the world participate in the meeting. We present here 23 articles of great interest for the conservation of stained glass, texts by authors from points far away from each other: from Europe, where most of the papers are from, to America and Australia.

You are all welcome.

*Corpus Vitrearum Catalunya*

