

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen....

it is a great honor and pleasure to say some words as member of the advisory committee of dOCUMENTA (13) and as honorary president of ICOMOS international. Besides I am happy to see Babur Garden and Queens palace again, where ICOMOS worked in cooperation with AKTC, in ruins after the war, but now, also thanks to significant funds from the German Foreign office a living monument and perhaps a future UNESCO World Heritage. In the last years ICOMOS has taken care for the the Giant Buddhas of Bamiyan. That is why we could give advice and support to the very successful Michael Rakowitz seminar "What Dust Will Rise" in Bamiyan. The results of our cooperation, fragments, sculptures and documentation are now presented in Kassel and here in Kabul at the exhibition opened today. Michael Rakowitz worked together with the German artist Bert Praxenthaler, leading restorer in the ICOMOS team. The seminar took place at a large historic cave near the Giant Buddha, that might serve in the future for further artistic seminars and conferences. 12 participants worked a whole week with mallets and chisels, that had been prepared by the local blacksmiths after collecting



the stones, travertine and marble at the historic quarries. Rakowitz introduced his personal idea of sculpture to the students and Praxenthaler explained the art of Gandhara and our work in trying to safeguard the fragments of the Buddha statues.

After three days the

Afghan sculptor Abbas Allahdad joined the seminar. On the last day the students could present their sculptures to Dr. Habiba Sarabi, the governor of Bamiyan.

The theme destruction and reconstruction of historic buildings and works of art links the cities of Kabul and Kassel, both heavily destroyed during the war. The pluralistic concept of Carolyn Christov-Bakargieff for dOCUMENTA (13) opens up fascinating new perspectives in the relation of art and conservation - "Denkmalpflege" as art of

conservation, not only in the spectacular case of the Buddha fragments. Parallels to the results of preservation endeavors are found already in the 70s of the last century, most noticeably in the international art movement dedicated to securing traces (Spurensuche) or in the parallel between land art and archeological excavations (for example stratigraphic depictions transformed into art). New trends in conservation has of course also to do with new tendencies in modern architecture. In the so called "postmodern age" conservation of monuments even becomes a sort of avant garde: preservation practice dealing with the authentic evidence of all epochs, opening windows into history and joining different periods as a "Gesamtkunstwerk". In this sense we also could look at the work of Michael Rakowitz, especially his stone books representing destroyed books from Kassel sculpted in stones from Bamiyan. I hope the dOCUMENTA(13) exhibition in Kabul will contribute to cultural continuity in a changing world.

Michael Petzet

