

# MURALS, STONE AND ROCK ART WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2024, No. 1

## Editors

Leslie Rainer, Joshua Hill and Valerie Magar

## Coordination Team for 2023-2026

Leslie Rainer, Chiara Pasian, Joshua Hill, Abdullahi Abdulkadir and Valerie Magar



Twyfelfontein, Namibia. *Image: Valerie Magar*

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## **EDITORIAL**

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Greetings to the ICOM-CC Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group.

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2023-2026 triennium. I would like to thank the previous Murals, Stone and Rock Art coordination team, led by Terry Little, with Assistant Coordinators Chiara Pasion, Sibylla Tringham, Li Na, and Joshua Hill who did an excellent job leading this Working Group through the end of the pandemic and organizing a robust and stimulating Working Group session at the Triennial Conference in Valencia, Spain, in September 2023. Since then, we have new members of the Working Group coordination team, who I would like to introduce to you. I am Leslie Rainer, Wall Paintings Conservator and Senior Project Specialist at the Getty Conservation Institute, and Coordinator of the Working Group. We have four Assistant Coordinators:

Abdullahi Abdulkadir, Senior Conservator at the Birnin Kudu Rock Art Centre, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

Joshua Hill, Wall Paintings Conservator, Academic Fellow, Nottingham Trent University

Valerie Magar, Conservator and Unit Manager, Programmes, ICCROM

Chiara Pasion, Senior Lecturer, University of Gothenburg, Department of Conservation

As the coordination team, we have identified a series of topics which we feel merit further investigation including

- Challenges of climate change for the conservation of murals, stone and rock art heritage
- Sustainability and sustainable practices in the conservation of murals, stone and rock art
- Strengthen and expand the network of murals, stone and rock art conservation professionals
- Increase and strengthen collaboration between Working Groups
- The need for inventories and databases for murals, stone and rock art
- Encourage the study and understanding of lesser-known wall painting technologies

We have planned several activities for this triennium and have already delivered one - The Rock Art Roundtable at the Archaeology Association of Nigeria's Annual Meeting in March 2024. This roundtable was a great success and was thanks entirely to Terry Little and Abdullahi Abdulkadir for finding funding for the event, organizing it and putting it on at the conference. You can read more about it in this newsletter.

Other activities we have discussed are focused webinars on murals, stone and rock art conservation; a meeting on painted gypsum plaster; posting past Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group interim meeting publications on the ICOM-CC Online Publications Platform; strengthening our network through social media posts - announcing both ICOM-CC events and cross-posting events of allied organizations; and posting this Newsletter twice a year during the triennium with news items from within and outside of the Working Group. Finally, we will be organizing the Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group session at the next Triennial Conference to be held in September 2026 in Oslo, Norway. We hope that you will submit abstracts and actively participate in the Conference. We are happy to hear ideas from all of you that we can incorporate into this Triennial Programme.

We are looking forward to these next three years working with you to build on the efforts of past coordination teams to strengthen our network, grow our membership, and promote the conservation of murals, stone and rock art conservation. Please encourage friends and colleagues to join our Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group and feel free to contact us with questions, ideas and suggestions at [lrainer@getty.edu](mailto:lrainer@getty.edu).

Leslie Rainer

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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*News from the field* will welcome submissions from our Working Group members, to provide updates on activities and events. These texts should be brief (300-500 words) and may be accompanied by 1-2 images (see below for instructions to submit for this section).

### Report on the Round Table discussion on Rock Art, at the Archaeology Association of Nigeria Conference, Zaria, 2024

By Abdullahi Abdulkadir and Terry Little

With support from the Stichting ICOM-CC Fund, the Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group hosted a round table to explore the values of rock art in Africa. The activity was held on 12 March 2024 at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in Nigeria (ABU Zaria) during the 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the

Archaeological Association of Nigeria (AAN). A video welcome message from Leslie Rainer, Coordinator of the Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group highlighted how the round table complements the Working Group’s aim of raising awareness and strengthening professional networks by inviting the Head of the Earth Sciences Department at the National Museum of Kenya and one of the foremost rock art experts in East Africa, Dr. Emmanuel Ndiema, as the keynote speaker.

The opening statement by Prof. Abubakar Sule of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at ABU Zaria highlighted the importance of studying rock art to the field of archaeology. Terry Little, previous Coordinator of the Working Group and Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies as well as Advisor to TARA – Trust for African Rock Art, presented an introduction on Rock Art in Africa.



From left to right: Dr. Emmanuel Ndiema, Terry Little and Abdullahi Abdulkadir.

*Image: Abdullahi Abdulkadir*

Dr. Ndiema’s presentation, “Leveraging rock art for community engagement and heritage conservation in Kenya: a pathway to economic transformation and climate change mitigation”, explored the multifaceted roles of rock art in Kenya, emphasizing its potential in fostering community engagement and economic transformation. He highlighted how these ancient expressions resonate with contemporary community identities and practices by showing how some artworks echo the ancient practice of livestock branding. In conclusion, he called on a



concerted effort among archaeologists, policymakers, community leaders, and the global community to recognize the intrinsic values of rock art.

The known rock art of Nigeria is characterized by paintings in the northern part of the country and carved stone monoliths in the southeast. Dr. Abu Edet, Associate Professor from the University of Calabar, Department of History and International Studies, has studied the carved monoliths in Cross River State for over three decades and presented “The conservation and promotion of rock art of Nigeria: their preservation and challenges”. Otobong Enefiok Akpan, a PhD student from the ABU Zaria, presented “Cross River monoliths rock art of Southern Nigeria: their preservation and challenges”. Also known as the Bakor monoliths and on Nigeria’s Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, recent projects have documented over 300 of these monoliths in 25 sites.



Participants of the round table. From left to right: Aminu Salisu Musa, Terry Little, Otobong Enefiok Akpan, Abdullahi Abdulkadir, Dikko Idris, Dr Abj S. Edet and Dr Emmanuel Ndiema. *Image: Abdullahi Abdulkadir*

Many of the rock art painting sites in Northern Nigeria are located in the states of Jigawa and Bauchi, and the Rock Art Interpretation Centre in Birnin Kudu is responsible for conservation and curation of the sites. Dikko Idris is Deputy Director and Curator of Rock Art Interpretation Centre, and presented a paper entitled “The rock art of Northern Nigeria: a valuable heritage of humankind”. Abdullahi Abdulkadir, a Senior Conservator at National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria and an Assistant Coordinator of ICOM-CC Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group presented a paper entitled “Engagement of community at Birnin Kudu Rock Art Centre towards sites conservation”. He also used the occasion to talk about the Working Group and encourage membership.

The discussion at the end of the presentations, moderated by Prof. Sule, attracted several interesting questions from the audience of around 100 students and professional archaeologists from around Nigeria and seems to have stimulated a number of the master's degree students to express interest in pursuing the subject for their dissertations.

## **ESSAYS AND PROJECTS**

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Our section on Essays and Projects will offer space for our Working Group members to share reflections from the field, as well as more in-depth information on ongoing or recent projects with colleagues. These texts should be 2000-3000 words, including references, and may be illustrated with a maximum of five images (see below for specific instructions for submissions).

## **RECENTLY COMPLETED THESES**

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We are keen to share abstracts of recently completed theses on topics relevant to conservation of murals, stone and rock art. Please submit abstracts of up to 500 words as well as the name of the student, the Institution, and the course. You are welcome to include means of contact, if desired, and a link to further information on the thesis.

## **RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

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This section will gather recent publications linked to conservation and management of mural paintings, stone and rock art. We would also love to receive book reviews from our members!

## **NEW APPOINTMENTS**

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We are happy to publicize new appointments in the Murals, Stone and Rock Art community. Please provide a brief statement outlining the appointment (*ca.* 200 words).

## FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS

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We plan to publish the Newsletter in May and in November of each year. Contributions for the newsletter should be sent by **1 April** for the May volume and by **1 October** for the November volume.

All submissions must be sent in Word format and may be accompanied by images (\*.jpg or \*.tiff format with a resolution of 300 dpi and a minimal size of 1.5MB). Use only images for which you have permission to use and publish. Add a caption for the images, including the credit for the image.

- **News from the field:** 300-500 words and maximum two images
- **Essays and projects:** 2000-3000 words, including references (APA format) and maximum five images
- **Recently submitted theses:** abstracts of up to 500 words as well as the name of student, Institution, and course
- **Book reviews:** 300-500 words

All submissions are subject to review by the editors.

If you would like to contribute to our Newsletter or have ideas for the Newsletter please get in touch!

We welcome texts in English, French, Spanish or Italian.

Please send all Newsletter submissions to: [joshua.hill@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:joshua.hill@ntu.ac.uk)

## HOW TO JOIN ICOM-CC AND THE WORKING GROUP

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In order to join ICOM-CC, you need to join ICOM itself. This is done through the ICOM National Committee in your country of residence. The cost of ICOM membership varies from country to country - enquire with your National Committee. Once an ICOM member, select ICOM-CC as your official International Committee via your National Committee.

Some of the benefits of joining ICOM and ICOM-CC are:

- The ICOM card which grants free (or sometimes reduced rate) entry to most museums around the world.
- Reduced registration fees at ICOM-CC Triennial Conferences and Working Group Interim Meetings (where applicable)
- Priority consideration for paper/poster acceptance at the ICOM-CC Triennial Conferences
- The possibility to join any Working Groups you like and receive regular updates, news and announcements.

For those of you who are already ICOM-CC members but without an ICOM-CC web account, all you need to do is request an online account at [www.icom-cc.org](http://www.icom-cc.org) and then choose Murals, Stone and Rock Art as one of your Working Groups. If you already have an ICOM-CC web account, then go to the Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group webpage and click on the “Join This Working Group” button.

Please make sure to join the Murals, Stone and Rock Art Working Group as the majority of communication will only go to members.

For anyone with an institutional ICOM membership please contact Joan Reifsnnyder ([secretariat@icom-cc.org](mailto:secretariat@icom-cc.org)) if you are interested in becoming a designated representative (there can be a maximum of three per institutional membership).

Join us on social media:



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