The 73rd IIW on-line Annual Assembly, first time On-line: Tradition Renovates

Designing the concept

After the worldwide pandemic outbreak in February 2020, the IIW took the difficult decision to cancel the Annual Assembly originally planned in Singapore by developing the concept of the on-line Annual Assembly, to be held around the same dates (July 15th to 22nd). This was considered a premiere as the Assembly involves over 25 units meeting simultaneously with a targeted participation stably over 500 participants.

After the selection process for a Professional Event Organiser, the IIW developed the concepts to ensure a participation experience as close as possible to a face-to-face assembly, to allow progression of the IIW activities and social engagement, still ensuring everyone safety by staying at home or in their offices. For these reasons:

- All the meetings were held between 13:00 and 16:00 CEST, to accommodate different time zone to the higher possible extent
- Up to 10 session were held form Monday to Saturday, allowing participants to virtually jump from one session to another and to participate to different units
- Opening and closing speeches, as well as the IIW Awards Ceremony were available on-demand to all participants
- Virtual booths were made available to sponsors, including per recorded videos and presentation of products, display of products and a live chat feature to let them interact with the audience
- A Welded art exhibition was included, showing welding also from the artist’s perspective
- An enrolment approach for companies was developed, to allow multiple participation from the same organisation at a dedicated rate.
The project was developed in a period of three months by the new IIW Secretariat, who has started in 2020 leaded by Dr. Luca Costa and managed by IIS, the Italian institute of welding.

Registration started on June 1st and the virtual conference centre was opened on July 8th.
Figures of a great success

During his opening speech at the 73rd IIW Annual Assembly, the IIW President Doug Luciani said “Any organization must be fluid and flexible to adjust to circumstances, and there is no better example than what we’re currently dealing with under the Covid 19 pandemic”. Referring to the on-line platform, he commented “This environment, although unique, I’m sure will provide us the opportunity to interact and further enhance the global welding and joining industry”.

As the event is now closed, the IIW is proud to announce that the virtual on-line assembly was a great success as number show participation exceeding the targeted audience, with the usual significant and prolific technical production:

- 39 Countries represented
- 50 sessions of different units
- 150 hours of meetings in 48 sessions
- 240 amongst scientific papers, standards and IIW position documents, best practices, and guidelines presented, discussed and developed.
As usual, participants were grouped in delegations managed by the IIW Members, the national welding organisations form 50 countries; 39 were represented at the 73rd IIW Annual Assembly.
During the Assembly, several individuals were recognised with 2020 IIW Prizes and Awards for their outstanding contribution to welding, joining and allied processes and for their support to the work of the organisation:

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In the frame of the Annual Assembly, IIW also held the second IIW Welded Art Exhibition, with a significant increase in participation form 33 artists from all over the world. Exhibitors range from world renowned artists and sculptors, to hobbyists, part time business owners, researchers experimenting with newer processes such as additive manufacturing, a photographer bringing the viewer closer to the world of technology and welding from the perspective of fine art photography and an up-and-coming nine year old representing the face of the next generation.

A frame from the video of gratitude of Dr. Alexis Chiocca having won the 2020 “Welding in the World best paper

A page of the Welded art exhibition catalogue. The welded art “Mouse” was made of metal waste, sheet material and pipes.

A new IIW President

As considered in the IIW Constitution, Mr Douglas Luciani (Canada) ended his three-years term as IIW President with the closure of the Assembly, his position having been taken by Mr. David Landon (USA). In absence of a physical ceremony, the handover was managed with recorded videos.
Doug Luciani (IIW President 2017-2020) during the closing speech

When I look back over the last three years, it’s extremely gratifying see what we have accomplished together, said Luciani during his closing speech at the Assembly. He then listed some of these achievements, including the IIW 5 years strategic plan with the IIW vision “To be the leading global community linking industry, research and education to the advancement of welding and joining for a safer and sustainable world”; the shifting of the management of the organisation to IIS in Italy after numerous years of great services delivered by IS in France, the new 5 year agreement with EWF for the delivery of the IIW qualifications and certification globally.

When future generations will look back into the history of the IIW, there’s no doubt in my mind they will come back at your Presidency as being some of the most impactful through years of the IIW history, commented David Landon. He has been working for the last 28 Years at Vermeer corporation, a global manufacturing of industrial and agricultural equipment. He has been active in IIW since 1997 and serving as a member of the IIW board of Director for the last 4 years, including the last one as IIW President-Elect. He is also an active member of the USA welding community, having been a member of the AWS Board
of Directors and AWS President in 2015. During his speech, he underlined that participating in IIW has provided a positive impact to his company both from a technical standpoint as well as the IIW IAB products allowed finding team members and partners to the company acting internationally. He concluded “When I look at IIW and to the value proposition in participating to the IIW, I'm looking through the eyes of an end user of IIW Products”.

The future of IIW Events

With the current uncertainty associated with the COVID pandemic, IIW is closely monitoring the situation in relation to the dense set of IIW events planned in the following months. The experience with the 73rd IIW Annual Assembly held on-line demonstrated the viability of on-line meeting technology and proved the strength and dedication of the IIW Community, but also highlighted the importance of personal interactions as they were heavily missing during this unprecedented time of limitation in personal relationships.

The IIW is looking forward to gathering the welding, joining and associated processes community during the next Regional and International Congresses, the Associated events held in cooperation with its partners, and mostly at the next 74th IIW Annual Assembly and International Conference in Genoa (Italy) on 20- to 25 June 2020.

*The venue for the 74th IIW Annual Assembly and International Conference in Genoa (Italy), 20 to 25 July 2020*