

Welcome to the fifteenth CEPIC Congress

Malta, the besieged island, its capital Valetta, once the most bombed area on earth: it is not hard to find parallels with our industry in the throes of its endless digital revolution. Can we survive, can we be better? But the first siege gave Malta the glorious Renaissance city of Valetta, the second gave it the George Cross, to be seen on their flag today.

We all know the problems and the promise of the digital age. Globalisation used to mean Associated Press and United Press International, transitioning into The Image Bank and Tony Stone. Then it meant Reuters, Corbis, Getty, Jupiter. Now it can mean any one of us who partners here at Congress.

Sturdy independents outlived their time and toppled, others baited a trap and sold out for gold, some made strategic alliances, some adopted new business models, some specialised, some took on verticalisation, some found crowd sourcing. We thought we had seen it all until the recent arrival of free pictures, “you can’t beat free”, as everybody then said. And then Getty, always the rider on the biggest surf until now jumped the dump and sold to serious money.

Are we on Easter Island and has our civilisation collapsed? Or rather are we the latest civilisation peering nervously down the greatest highway system since the Romans? Which sign post to follow?

We can study Kodak and reinvent ourselves as they have done by going back to source, the image, and this is what this Congress is designed to help.

In Florence there seemed within that great beauty, a world weariness with 10 years of relentless focus on technology. We cannot ignore this as it is the highway for delivery of quality, in time, it is the defeater of the tyranny of distance, so we offer seminars at Malta on Metadata for Better Business, the IPTC second world conference, the MILE conference, but the turn of the tide is there, we will be looking again at pictures.

First we have an innovation, the Copic Cinema. Here we show shorts on industry presentations, competing for the ACE (Award for Copic Excellence) prize which will soon be extended to ACEs for the way pictures are used in publishing, rather different to the overcrowded prize market for best pictures, then we have a showing of the prize winning Shooting the Past with the express best wishes of its distinguished maker, Stephen Poliakoff, then we have by popular request a return showing of

Duclos’ “Off Limits” plus any other good pictures we come across. As a result of a meeting I had in Slovakia we have a dramatic exhibition by Peter Bielek of the true story of the Spring of Bratislava 40 years ago, and his struggle for correct attribution to famous pictures which affected the course of history. And we blast off on Wednesday with a look at 100 Hero Photos and a talk from Gerry Badger, author and presenter of last year’s BBC programme The Genius of Photography.

Interwoven through this visual feasting we have economic geographer Professor Glückler, who knows more about our industry than any other academic I know. He will present early findings on our EU industry survey. Then on new trends we have Bruce Livingstone of iStock, and who better to tell us? Selling Stock’s Jim Pickerell seminars his ideas on pricing strategy, Bapla experts wonder if UK pricing is a barometer for others. Copyright as usual is under attack in all directions and we have seminars with Professor Dreier, Professor Hassler, Rupert Grey, Nancy Wolff and Klara Kanska from the EU Commission who will reveal some of what is in the mind of the EU which is a gauge for much of the world.



In the delegates bags there will be the first issue of ITI, Image Trading International, full of reference articles and attempts to foresee the future, plus a directory of members and friends. Social events include the welcome reception, a beachhead barbecue, a visit to Mdina, the silent city, the old Arabic influenced capital with the Mayor to greet us who is the direct descent from the Mayor who defenestrated the Frenchman led to the expulsion of the Napoleonic French and the reluctant arrival of the British for the next 150 years, and the closing gala dinner on Saturday night includes a private performance for us in the glorious Co-Cathedral and a walk to the dinner on the Baracca Heights overlooking the amazing deepwater Grand Harbour, the only place that was large enough to hold the American and British Fleets in the second world war.

At the opening session on Wednesday we shall hear why Professor Glückler thinks we are “a cultural giant and an economic pygmy”, I hope we leave Malta in a better position to level up.

Oh, and by the way, next year we will be at Dresden.

Alan Smith
President.