

ESO in Milan

Some Notes on the Assembly of an ESO Exhibition

The attentive reader of the *Messenger* may have noticed over the past years some articles dealing with the travelling ESO exhibition. Most recently, on September 21, 1992, our exhibition was opened at the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnica in Milan, Italy. This time we would like to tell you how the assembly of an exhibition is done. Few people realize how much time and work is needed to put together a 200 m² exhibition. As usual it begins five days prior to the official opening ceremony.

Day 1: The Material Arrives

The most important thing on this day is to find the lost expo! This may sound somewhat strange, but experience has shown that, for various reasons, the expo lorry carrying all the exhibition material from Munich to the exhibition site is almost always delayed. After a lot of telephone calls it soon becomes known that the lorry neither got stuck in a traffic jam nor had to fight its way through an endless maze of one-way streets but had been subject to a very thorough customs control at the Austrian-Italian border. Finally it arrives at the museum and thanks to the perfect equipment and efficient work of the museum people, more than a dozen heavy and bulky boxes are unloaded in less than two hours. They are then transported to the exhibition hall where a preliminary check of the material is the last action of that day. Fortunately, there seems to be no damage.

Days 2 and 3: the Exhibition Begins to Take Shape

In the morning of the second day we begin to unpack the many crates. Soon the enormous volume of photos, panels, light boxes and other material spreads on the floor and threatens to create a real mess. Order is now required! At this stage the work changes from the transport of bulky and dirty boxes to the careful handling of fragile exhibition material. Meticulously following the careful assembly plans which have been worked out before at ESO in Munich, the exhibition bottom panels are built up. Thanks to the skillful and friendly museum staff this work progresses rapidly. In the late evening of the third day the earlier disorder has given way to some system and the exhibition is now,

at least what concerns the larger elements, approaching the final shape.

Day 4: the Day of "First Light"

Although many exhibition sites have their own system of illumination, the ESO stand uses its own, specially designed lamps to give the right ambience.

Moreover, certain elements like the Milky Way panorama and sets for video presentation must be connected to the power net. Soon the house electrician realizes that three things are required: many metres of additional cable, larger fuses and, most of all, more time. In view of the many expected visitors, electrical safety requirements must be



Figure 1: Press conference at the opening of the ESO Exhibition in the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnica, Milan, on September 21, 1992. From left to right at the table: Prof. P. Tucci, Director of the Museum, Mr. de Mattei, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Museum, Prof. H. van der Laan, ESO Director General, Prof. G. Setti, Director of the Institute of Radioastronomy, Bologna, and Prof. G. Chincarini, Director of Milan Astronomical Observatory (Brera).



Figure 2: At the opening of the ESO Exhibition in Milan: from left to right: P. Tucci, H. van der Laan, G. Setti, G. Chincarini.

scrupulously fulfilled. The work progresses slowly and one by one the many cables are connected and disappear behind the panels. Finally, just before sunset the electrician finishes with his work and we have the "first light".

Day 5: Fine Tuning and Growing Excitement

The last day before the opening is the most important for the expo team. It includes a thorough control of all elements, small changes in the basic layout due to requirements of the hall and the preparation of information material for the visitors. Again the collaboration is excellent and at the end of this day all the persons who worked on the exhibition have one common thought: the anticipation of the visitors' reaction!

In the evening, the ESO Milan exhibition is opened in the presence of high city officials, the Board of the Museum,

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the ESO Director General and more than 200 invited guests. A press conference is held in the ball-room of a full-size model of the central section of a passenger ship. Speeches are given

and questions are asked. Finally, the traditional walk through the exhibition takes place. Few of the participants may be aware of the stress of the past five days!
H. ZODET, ESO

Professor Lodewijk Woltjer Elected to the French Academy of Sciences

Professor Lodewijk Woltjer, Director General of ESO (1975–1987), has just been elected Associate Foreign Member of the French Academy of Sciences, one of the five Academies which constitute l'Institut de France. Professor Woltjer is already a Corresponding Member of several other European Academies (The Netherlands, Belgium, UK) and a Member of the Royal Academy of Sweden.

This election honours first of all his scientific research from the study of the Supernova in the Crab Nebula to Quasars: his major role in the renaissance of European optical astronomy: assuming the leadership of ESO during 13 years, while ensuring the entry by

Italy and Switzerland into this organization of unequalled scientific and technological potential; stimulating the conception of the VLT project and carrying through rapidly and efficiently the negotiations with the ESO member States which led to the decision to build the VLT, thereby re-establishing Europe's central position in optical astronomy which it had lost since the beginning of this century.

Professor Woltjer's international role as future President of the International Astronomical Union testifies to the wide-spread esteem in which he is held. The French Academy of Sciences has been very appreciative of the continued attention which Professor Woltjer

has given to the collaboration with the authorities in various European countries, in particular in France, by providing wise and useful analysis of the desired evolution of national astronomy policies.

Professor Woltjer has also recently been nominated Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, the first grade of the supreme distinction which is granted by France.

*P. LÉNA,
Member of the Academy of Sciences, France*

Two European Astronomy Encounters in 1993

The situation in Europe is changing and so is European astronomy. The next years are bound to see an increasingly intense and fruitful interaction between astronomers from all regions of Europe.

The organizers of several astronomical meetings in Europe in 1993 are taking active measures aimed at promoting such connections, especially between West and East European astronomers. This is particularly true for two meetings which will be held in consecutive weeks in the second half of August 1993 and at a short geographical distance. This may induce some astronomers to participate in both and save some travel costs. Support for local expenses is also being generated.

The next meeting of the European Astronomical Society (EAS) "Extragalactic Astronomy and Observational Cosmology" will take place in Toruń, Poland, from 18–21 August 1993. It is followed by IAU Symposium 161 "Astronomy from Wide-Field Imaging" in Potsdam near Berlin, Germany, from 23–27 August 1993.

For further information about the EAS meeting, please contact Richard Wielebinski (Chairman of SOC), MPI für Radioastronomie, Auf dem Hügel 69, D-5300 Bonn, Germany, or Jan Palouš, EAS Secretary, Astronomical Institute, Budečská 6, CS-12023 Prague 2, Czechoslovakia (e-mail: ASTDSS@CSEARN.bitnet). For the Wide-field meeting, the address is: Astrophysikalisches Institut Potsdam (IAU Symposium 161), An der Sternwarte 16, D-O-1591 Potsdam, Germany (e-mail: fri@babel.aip.wtza-berlin.de).

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