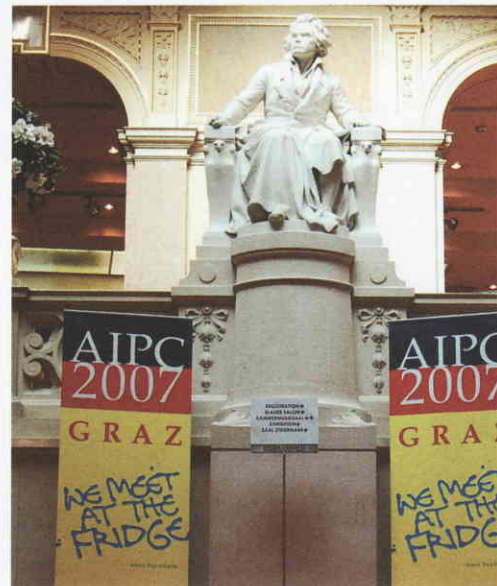


AIPC CONGRESS GRAZ

THE YEARLY INTERNATIONAL AIPC CONGRESS (INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES) WAS HELD IN GRAZ THIS YEAR WITH THE THEME 'RESPONDING TO GLOBAL CHANGE'. RETIRING PRESIDENT **BARBARA MAPLE** OF VANCOUVER OPENED THE 49TH CONGRESS. THE CONVENTION CENTRE GRAZ IS LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THIS CULTURAL TOWN AND - BEING AN OLD HISTORICAL BUILDING WHILE OFFERING STATE-OF-THE-ART MEETING FACILITIES - IT IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE HISTORICAL CONFERENCE CENTRES IN EUROPE (HCCE). THE HOST **NIKOLAUS BREISACH** LIVED UP TO HIS FAME, BEING A CREATIVE BRAIN WITH - AMONG OTHER THINGS - DARING, OUT-OF-THE-BOX DINNER THEMES, LIKE 'THE RICH AND THE POOR' AND EAT-ART DINNERS. HE DEMONSTRATED HOW YOU CAN CONVERT BORING GALA DINNERS INTO A POPULAR TOPIC OF CONVERSATION!

TEXT **CÉCILE CAIATI-KOCH**



At AIPC the educational programme is showing an upward trend, witness the quality of the keynote speakers, who were all high-quality this year, and on top of that they were all great orators! As regards content, the topics of the programme responded to the current issues in the meetings industry. The economy is doing great and that has an impact on the meetings industry, witness the results of the survey that AIPC had conducted among its members. However, the question rises: how can it be kept this way and how should the continuously increasing competition be dealt with?

To answer this, the organisers had invited guest speakers who treated subjects that gave concrete 'food for thought' on those matters to the participants from all over the world. **David Greuzel** of HOK indicated, as an architect, how the convention centre's design can have an impact on how people experience a destination. **Simon Anholt**, world-famous for his destination branding reports, which have been discussed in HQ Magazine, gave a survey on how to manage a reputation and which aspects have to be reckoned with. The message was clear: intelligent marketing. **Steven Powell** of IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) clarified the view of the hotel sector on the meetings industry and their prospects on the matter. **Warren Buckley** of Suntec Singapore used practical examples to show that changes can't

be stopped and that you rather need to embrace change.

A congress wouldn't be complete without a green discussion on the schedule. By way of introduction, **Geoff Donaghy**, CEO of the Cairns Convention Centre, gave an evolution: since 20 years people are considering the environment when it comes to the design of convention centres (waste management, energy policy), but a new age has dawned where climate change and global warming has become a real issue, and those early measures don't suffice anymore. The industry must take up its responsibilities and take further steps. A few concrete examples made this point clear: **Jacquie Rogers**, GM of ACC Liverpool, explained that they consider the environment in the construction of the new Arena Congress Centre Liverpool: 'green is not a usp (unique selling point), it has become unnegotiable'. **Michel Bouchard** of the Québec City Convention Centre gave an example of how to develop an eco-friendly congress resulting in a zero carbon event.

A client's perspective was represented by speakers from the association, corporate and exhibition world, who each informed the attendants about their needs and how you need to communicate with them. **Paul Wilson** of FDI World Dental Events indicated how his association selects its destina-

tions and what they expect from venues. Associations deal with mutual competition as well and the increasing merging of their sponsors means a more restricted budget. They also care more about their carbon footprint and they are looking



for ways - sponsoring, among others - to support that cause. **Luca Favetta** of SAP SA told how his corporation organises events on a worldwide scale and how the procurement department has gained importance within corporations.

A new element in the AIPC congress was the poster session that received 16 entries for the **AIPC Innovation Award** competition, a program begun this year to recognize projects or initiatives that represent the development of new, more creative or more effective approaches to any aspect of congress centre management, operations or marketing. Three awards were



WELCOME RECEPTION IN INSEL IM MUR



SIMON ANHOLT



NEW PRESIDENT EDGAR HIRT (LEFT) WITH HOST NIKOLAUS BREISACH (RIGHT)



ALL THREE AWARD WINNERS WITH BARBARA MAPLE. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: MTCC, CCIB AND WSCTC

made from the wide range of projects submitted for consideration:

The first winner was the **Metro Toronto Convention Centre** in recognizing the importance of 'green issues to congress centres through their Zero Waste program.

The second became the **CCIB Centre Conventions Internacional Barcelona** for their new program for the management of technology, and the

Washington State Convention and Trade Centre, Seattle, was the third winner, for the development of a food and beverage program that combined service, marketing and community relations.

Edgar Hirt of CCH-Congress Center **Hamburg** is stepping into the shoes of Barbara Maple as president of AIPC. In his speech he promised a constant growth and reinforcement of the AIPC principles and quality standards, which will establish AIPC as a hallmark in the meetings industry.

FUTURE AIPC CONGRESSES

The 50th AIPC Congress will be held in Singapore from 28 June to 2 July 2008. Pieter Idenburg (COO Suntec Singapore) roused everyone's interest in this congress: 'see you in the Lyon city!' La Coruña, Spain, was chosen as the destination for the 2009 Congress.

If you require further information or pictures, you can visit the AIPC website:

WWW.AIPC.ORG/ANNU_2007.HTML



From now on, I will put my thoughts about the world and the meetings industry on the great worldwide web:

MARCELSMEETINGMEMORIES.BLOGSPOT.COM