Editorial
By Marianne Frei, President

During summer 2010, Bhutan was at our doorstep through the exhibition at the Rietberg Museum «Bhutan – Heilige Kunst aus dem Himalaya» and the very many activities around it. At the opening on July 4th, the mayor of Zurich, Corinne Mauch, welcomed our chief guests Lyonpo C. Dorji and Dasho Penden Wangchuk and spoke about the longstanding development cooperation Bhutan – Switzerland. For the closing, we were honored by the visit of Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmey Y. Thinley and his delegation (see p. 6).

As a side program, Rietberg Museum, Helvetas, Songtsen House, Gartenflügel Ziegelbrücke and the Society Switzerland – Bhutan jointly organized interesting events such as speeches, panel discussions, concerts, films and others.

In September, the VI European Meeting of Bhutan Friendship Associations took place in Mantova with the topic «heritage preservation and valorisation». Mr. Phuchu Dukpa, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, gave a lecture on «Tradition and modernization in Bhutanese Architecture». Other experts from different countries highlighted various aspects. A very attractive side program in and around Mantova was organized by Prof. Maddalena Fortunati (President «Amici del Bhutan»).

With a fundraising campaign starting in December, the Society would like to support the heavily affected families and shopkeepers in Chamkhar/Bumthang. Our financial contributions will be an important sign of solidarity to our friends in Bhutan.

Events 2011:
On January 29, 2011, in Baar, there will be the opening of an exhibition of photos of young Bhutanese students at bim (Bhutan Institute of Media). Erik Huber-Hotz founded the Bhutan Institute of Media in the year 2000 (www.bimc-bhutan.com). The exhibition will be open for three weeks.

A second exhibition by the students of bim will be presented at the Gartenflügel in Ziegelbrücke.

General Assembly 2011
The General Assembly will take place at Kulturhaus Helferei Zürich on March 26th. We are very fortunate that Dr. Karma Phuntsho (Thimphu and Cambridge) will speak on the topic «Socio-cultural changes in Bhutan between tradition and modern times» on this occasion.

SSB – BSS Programs: latest stand
By Erwin König

Out of the projects proposed by SSB (see newsletter June), BSS, our sister organisation in Bhutan, retained the “School Children Scheme” as a starter of their field activities. Presently, BSS works on the implementation modalities. In the first weeks of 2011, details on these modalities will be published on our web page for your information and generous sponsorship.

The “Internet access scheme” for schools was not retained by BSS. It was felt that internet connection for schools will soon be mastered by the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB). Since Swisscom is a flexible and patient donor, BSS has been given some more time to explore alternative areas within the IT sector.

Last but not least, the viability of the “village stay” and “orchard diversification” projects needs to be further discussed and eventually re-oriented towards more basic poverty alleviation activities. BSS indeed feels that the gap between the poor and rich keeps on widening and tends to become a major challenge for RGOB.
News from Bhutan – Switzerland Society (BSS)

By Erwin König

Symbolic: On August 1st, the Swiss National Day, BSS held its first general assembly. The newly elected board members are: Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, President; Ashi Kunzang Choden, Aum Sonam Wangmo, Dr. Saamdu Chetri, and Dasho Jampel Nidup. Mr. Namgyel Tshering and Aum Tshewang Chhenzom, continue to act as Secretary and Treasurer. Since last January, BSS membership has been increasing steadily, it now counts over 80 members. SSB would like to reiterate its congratulations to the newly appointed President, Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji and also warmly thank the former president Lyonpo Dr. Pema Gyamtso for his personal involvement in getting BSS established.

BSS Registration: In the end, BSS chose to register with the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) as a “Public Benefit Association”. Actually it was pointless to register as a “Foreign Civil Society” to just preserve the “sister organisation” concept, and eventually also hinder the freedom of BSS to capitalise on the people to people approach. As these registration procedures are relatively recent, the finalising of the registration may take some time. However, RGOB encourages the organisations/associations to go on with their activities while completing formalities.

New area under investigation by BSS: The Small Scale Industry sector seems to suffer from an imbalance between available development funds and required specific technical know-how. Similar needs for specialized expertise seem to prevail in the health sector too. The later could be provided for by fielding volunteer doctors. BSS will liaise with representatives of the concerned sectors to identify needs.

Visits in Bhutan in November / December 2010

By Werner Külling

From Nov. 20th - Dec. 5th, I visited Bumthang and got an impressive look into the reconstruction and rehabilitation work after the fire disaster in the bazar area. I also had meetings for the improvement and maintenance of the Wangdichoeling Hospital together with the Swiss Doctor Benedikt Holzer in Bumthang, followed by discussions in the capital Thimphu with representatives of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The idea of the creation of a Bhutanese Red Cress Society was also assessed and evaluated. Finally, together with Marianne Frei and the Tourism Council of Bhutan, a selection round was carried out for students/candidates of the second phase of the Bhutan Middle Management Hotel Programme.

During my stay in Thimphu, I was granted very friendly and interesting audiences by H.M. the Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the 4th Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, as well as the present young and dynamic 5th King of Bhutan, H.M. Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. It goes without saying that these very fruitful contacts will strengthen the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Bhutan and Switzerland.

Furthermore, in a meeting at the end of November, the Board of HELVETAS has decided to continue project activities until the year 2018, i.e. until the end of the 11th Five Year Plan of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Impressions of another group of SSB members who visited Bhutan in September / October will be published in our next newsletter.
New SSB Members
By Julia Menk
Since July 16 new members joined the SSB. We are very happy to see such a success of our Society, and would like to warmly welcome the following new members:

- Damaris Gutzwiller, Bern
- Doris & Adrian Muster Staub, Bremgarten
- Elisabeth & Thomas S. Coley-Saner, Bionay
- Hanspeter Maag, Marthalen
- Hansruedi Stierlin, Birmensdorf
- Herbert Bürge, Ottikon
- Kathrin Frey, Greifensee
- Laurence Mounier, Triengen
- Markus Berni, Zollikon
- Oswald & Vanessa Oelz, Wernetshausen
- Ralph-Remo Faes, Herrliberg
- Rudolf & Regula Dannecker, Hinterkappeln

We are looking forward to meet them at the General Assembly in March to toast to an interesting, long lasting mutual friendship.

Christmas is near
By Rosmarie Frey
Have you got all your Christmas presents? In case you are still missing some we have three good ideas for you:


2. For somebody who likes music and is interested in the actual daily life in Bhutan: "SMS from Shangri-La", DVD, 75 min., Fr. 30.- plus packing and postal fees. Order form: http://www.bhutan-switzerland.org/pages/dvd.php

3. For somebody who likes pictures of Bhutan and Bhutanese people and is interested in the different projects of Helvetas in Bhutan: "Calendar 2011" of Helvetas Bhutan 40x34 cm, Fr. 26.- incl. packing and postal fees. Order form: http://www.bhutan-switzerland.org/pages/calendar.php

DVD „SMS from Shangri-La“
By Patrick Vogel
It is with great pleasure to announce that all printed DVD’s (1’000pcs) are distributed among a small Bhutan-interested community. The majority of the DVD’s are sold and thus contribute a substantial amount of this year’s budget. The joint effort generates a net income of approximately 15’000 CHF.

Many thanks goes to Dieter Fahrer and Lisa Rösl who donated the net proceeds from sales directly to the Society, followed by the Rietberg Museum as one of the main sales point during the Bhutan Exhibition and the numerous members who themselves bought and sold the DVD in the name of the Society. Since we’re sold out, Dieter Fahrer printed another 400 DVD for future distribution. For those who would like to watch it on TV: Next show is on ARTE on Wednesday 16th March 2011 around midnight.

Big Senn & „SMS from Shangri-La“
By Patrick Vogel
The best thing to happen to a once closed project is the re-launch of it. It was always a wish of us to have the music of the « 2008 Bhutan tour of Big Senn » in the air again, but this time in Switzerland. Lacking time to manage such a project we had to leave it to Big Senn, and they took the chance. The band together with the ever capable tour manager Lilo Spahr teamed up with Dieter Fahrer and Lisa Rösl for a concert tour and film show. So far, they successfully performed in Zürich (Rietberg Museum), Ziegelbrücke, Bern, Solothurn, Nidau (Kreuz), Altstorf (Theater Uri) and Illanz. Unforgettable the night on 4th September 2010 at the Rietberg Museum, where three singers from the Muenzling School of Blind in Khaling (Trashigang) joined the band. Exactly the same way as it was in Bhutan!

Further events are planned for 2011.
Dr. Peter König, the 5th Resident Coordinator of HELVETAS in Bhutan, passed away
By Werner Külling

It is with deep sorrow that we have to inform the members of the Society Switzerland-Bhutan (SSB) and the many friends of Bhutan in our country that Prof. Dr. Peter König passed away at the age of 70 in his home in Forchi/ZH after a serious stroke occurred some months before. Peter König, an economist and mathematician, former member of the top management of SWISSAIR and after a hobby cheese maker in the Prätigau was serving as the 5th Resident Coordinator of HELVETAS Bhutan in Thimphu in the period of 1996 – 1999, and ad interim for a short period again in the year 2001. He paid a few visits to Bhutan after these assignments and maintained close contacts with his many friends there.

Later, for a couple of years, he also became a Board Member of HELVETAS Switzerland in charge of finances. He was highly liked and respected for his human and professional abilities by all those with whom he came in contact. He was a man of high integrity and a great friend of Bhutan, of HELVETAS and its crew as well as the SSB. We will miss him very much forever. We thank him for all he has done for the SSB, HELVETAS and especially for Bhutan.

The members of Bhutan-Switzerland Society (BSS) and the staff of HELVETAS Bhutan offered a thousand butter lamps at the Memorial Chorten on 10th December 2010 to mark the sad demise of Dr. Peter Koenig.

We would like to offer our sincere condolence to his family.
MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE
Bhutan Exhibition at the Rietberg Museum Zurich, Summer 2010

By Alix Przychowski, curator of the Rietberg Museum (Translation Erik Allgoewer)

This summer, Bhutan could be reached from Zurich by Tramway! – The exhibition, Bhutan - Sacred Art from the Himalaya, showed a selection of more than 100 of the most exquisite Tankas and statues from Bhutan offering a glimpse of the culture present in this small Himalayan nation. These works of art, all coming from monasteries and temples and still today in regular use, clearly impacted all visitors through their spiritual charisma.

Rarely, the spirit of an exhibition was so heart-felt and absorbed by the visitors; many spent hours on end in the exhibit, quite a number visited several times and some came regularly. The daily rituals in the exhibition were a particularly attractive moment. The Bhutanese monk-community had chosen two Lamas, Kinzang Thinley and Lopen Nima, as spiritual caretakers of the holy objects during their journey. The "Sand-Mandala", which the gifted artist, Lama Nima, sprinkled every day, fascinated the visitors greatly. Very often a huge amount of onlookers besieged the fragile sand-picture so closely that the overseers had to invite people to step back.

We were particularly happy about the rich selection of films that the public enjoyed and made use of. The film SMS from Shangri-La, 70 minutes long, gathered a big audience who, on average spent more than an hour letting itself be caught by it. The magnificent films of the Bhutanese producer, Ugyen Wangdi, literally transported many spectators during 90 minutes to Bhutan.

During the exhibition period, the Rietberg Museum registered more than 42'500 entries. Thereby, the "Bhutan-Exhibition" ranks among the six most successful displays in the history of the Museum.
Visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, in Switzerland
By Werner Külling

From November 15th – 19th, 2010, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, paid a visit to Switzerland, Geneva, Zürich, Berne, accompanied by Lyonpo Yeshe Zimba, Minister of Works and Human Settlements, the Foreign Secretary Dasho Daw Penjo and a delegation of 13 other representatives of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

In Geneva, the Prime Minister was received by the Ambassador of Bhutan, H.E. Yeshey Dorji, and he met several friends of Bhutan from the time when he was the Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Bhutan himself.

A big event was the visit in Zurich on October 17th, the closing day of the famous Bhutan-exhibition at the Rietberg Museum, where Lyonchhen gave an excellent and outstanding speech on “Gross National Happiness” followed by a dinner party at the “Zunfthaus zur Zimmerleuten” organised by HELVETAS and the Society Switzerland-Bhutan. He there was received by City Councillor Martin Vollenwyder, Dy. Mayor, and met also Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger and the former Federal President Ruth Dreifuss as well as former Federal Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz.
In the capital Berne, Lyonchhen had meetings with Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey and the Federal President Doris Leuthard. He also paid a visit to the Parliament with the Speaker, Chairlady Pascale Bruderer. The delegation was offered a lunch at the “Von Wattenwyl House” hosted by former Federal Councillor Ruth Dreifuss, a friend of the Prime Minister. In the evening, a dinner-meeting took place with the Board and Management of the Swiss Red Cross Society regarding the idea of creating a Bhutanese Red Cross Society.

The visit was extremely warm and successful, strengthening the existing excellent and longstanding relations, friendship and development cooperation between Bhutan and Switzerland. No doubt that this will continue also in the years to come. Tashi Delek!

**Meeting Point**

*Workshop in visual arts at bim – bhutan institute of media, Thimphu, 29/9-15/10 2010*

By Doris Staub Muster, lecturer and artist, bim-bhutan institute of media

„Unbelievable“ was my comment after reading some of the 10 pages reports on Bhutanese monasteries, written and illustrated by bim students, aged 19 to 22. After only 6 month of genuine training, these 10 students of photography, journalism and IT/design made the impossible possible.

Just 6 months ago, they had never opened a computer or worked with a camera. And me, the lucky one to guide these highly motivated young women and men through a 3 weeks workshop in visual arts.

We started with 3 stones, a Buddhist game, first round throwing the stones in the circle we were sitting around, and second round placing them on purpose. With the idea of chaos (E. N. Lorenz) and order in mind throughout the following weeks, we set off for 18 different projects with apple halves transformed into sculptures, chilis placed on impossible locations (they created a poster with chilli hot-pants!) or transferring the official classroom into an installation by means of hanging the official dress, kira and gho, neatly on a laundry line between their computers.

Later they illustrated what happens when you break some of the rules you learnt. With their colourful dresses they created a beautiful cloth ball and shaped it with their hand-woven belts, afterwards packing it with transparent plastic material and pinkie nylon strings. [www.jeanneclaudecristo.net](http://www.jeanneclaudecristo.net) and Korean artist [Kim Sooja](http://www.kimssoja.com) had made it possible.

My young students step by step sharpened their awareness and got a new perception of their surroundings and how to photograph it. They also took photographs of tourists taking pictures of Bhutanese. Further, they had to provide their own “manual” photoshop with some particular tricks and tools and handed in some fabulous results without any ACDSee or photoshop-programs.

When they realized what Meret Oppenheim’s famous “fur cup” alias “pelztasse” was all about, they were eagerly waiting to create an object of their own. The outcome of the 18 different projects (based on theory lessons with immediate practical transfer) was beyond my expectations.
I had to cope with Bhutanese reality: Bhutanese art is illustrative. They rarely do abstracts. The students realized quickly, how little effort it needs to change for example waste into new shapes and forms and they eagerly developed their own ideas. The final outcome are 10 accurately composed photo-booklets. They are a precious documentation about a unique learning process for both students and teacher.

My feelings are still the same. The ten young Bhutanese students made the impossible possible!

Please read their own comments:

- Working with nature things I got peace and satisfaction in my heart and I`ll keep the same spirit throughout my life. Tashi
- We can explore our new knowledge in different fields and our minds become broad in thinking and creating. Dorji
- Now I am redeveloping my keen interest in doing creative things. Chimi
- From visual arts I learned that failure can be a pillar of success. Sangay

- One of the most important things in visual arts is commitment and passion in association with communication. Chencho
- The simplicity of the visual art class transported profound meaning and wisdom. Kencho
- I feel fortunate to try new things of which I have never dreamed in my life. Sonam
- Throughout our fieldtrip to cherry monastery I really had the best time in my life. Sumitra
- The crazy ideas helped me a lot and I frankly became more creative. Those who can see invisible things can do impossible things. Namgay
- Knowledge is not given only for us but should be shared with one and all to bring the dreams into reality. Arjun

Contact: www.dorisstaubmuster.ch; bim-bhutan institute of media: www.bimc-bhutan.com

And don’t forget!

Under the heading “Meeting Point” the SSB Newsletter regularly features interviews with Bhutanese and Swiss people working, studying and visiting in the respective host country. It will give insight in the experiences and activities of Bhutanese and Swiss people in contact.

Contributions to this rubric from members of SSB and BSS, as well as the circle of readers of the Newsletter are most welcome!