lished in collaboration with INCA—a nonprofit organization that encourages the diffusion of knowledge,with particular emphasis on the importance of the chemical sciences to protecting the environment. In order to pursue its mission, INCA is involved in a wide range of activities that span from research to publishing.

Green Chemistry in Africa originates from the passionate work of academicians based in African institutions and it aims at familiarizing African students with the principles of clean and sustainable chemistry. The book is meant as an introduction to the challenges of green chemistry. Its primary objective is to highlight the major roles of chemistry in the study of the problems that were discussed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (held 26 August to 4 September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa) and in the design of valuable solutions for those same problems. The Subcommittee on Green Chemistry hopes that this book will attract researchers' and students' attention to the importance of chemistry to sustainable development.

www.iupac.org/publications/books/author/tundo.html

Vermeer's Camera: Uncovering the Truth Behind the Masterpieces

Philip Steadman
Oxford University Press, 2002 (ISBN 0-19-280302-6)

Reviewed by Hans Bouma

Do you like detective stories? No, not the ones in which the blood flows in liters but the real ones, in which the detective, after finding a nail clipping and a postage stamp of 39 eurocents is able to infer that the suspect's alibi is faulty. Or are doctoral dissertations more in your line? Are you interested in art? And you are involved in education in one of the sciences?

Well, then you must not go past this book. It explains, step by step, with compelling logic, that Vermeer used a camera obscura for his paintings, in which room this happened, and which dimensions lens the camera had, how the painter employed them, and how in that way the paintings were produced. From the two dimensions of the paintings, Steadman is able to derive the three dimensions of Vermeer's world.

In nine chapters the logic line is drawn: first the camera obscura, then Vermeer with testimonies that he worked with a camera obscura, an idea of the room-studio and of the way the objects (their dimensions verified and compared with reality) are grouped in this room, the reconstruction, and the new evidence then forthcoming. To make sure, the author also deals with the arguments which are contrary to the idea of the camera with Vermeer, and he outlines the influence of it on his style of painting.

Now here you can see how fertile the application of science to objects of art is, this time not in connection with restorative activities, but to penetrate more deeply into the work. Not all questions can be solved, as Steadman honestly admits. But he also shows which tricks in perspective are applied by the painter, and, in the last chapter, he succeeds in penetrating into the artist's soul.

There is an elaborate account in notes and an impressive list of references. The author, too, gives the impression that he is well versed in 17th century Delft and in Holland in general, and that renders the book even more readable. He even is able to report that the bricks used in the houses around the Delft market had, in those times, a length of 16 centimeters.

You can sense that I am terribly enthusiastic. My only refutation that I deemed a length of 1.80 metres for a seventeenth century Dutchman quite sturdy is disproved by clear evidence in the book.

A book about paintings by a great researcher of a great painter. Cordially recommended!

Hans Bouma is an IUPAC Fellow and former member of the Committee on Teaching of Chemistry.

www.oup-usa.org/isbn/0192803026.html

Reports from Conferences

Bioinformatics 2002: North-South Networking

by Prasit Palittapongarnpim

Bioinformatics is rapidly emerging as a new branch of science. It is widely believed that scientists in developing countries will be able to significantly contribute to the progress of this field since the capital investment needed for bioinformatics research may be much smaller than for experimental biological sciences. However, the advancement of bioinformatics science in developing countries requires not only competent human resources, but also good ideas and problems. Without good communication with state-of-the-art experimental laboratories, there is a clear danger that small bioinformatics teams in developing countries may try to address irrelevant questions. Without good communication with state-of-the-art bioinformatics laboratories, there is a danger of using suboptimal technology to address the problems. To avoid these dangers, there must be forums