

## **EDITORIAL**

### ***The 6<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Religious Art, Restoration and Conservation (ESRARC 2014, Florence, Italy)***

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The religious art, part of the cultural and spiritual patrimony, is a form of expression which links up the humanness with the religious sense. In all civilizations, the religious art has a double valence – spiritual and material – which renders it unique among the other forms of art. There is a connection between faith and art, and without this dialog, the art losses much of its meaning and its value in the expression of the religion.

The religious works of art are part of the religious experience of the community to which belong, reflecting a concentrated bundle of values and traditions, specific for that place, time, culture and spirituality. These characteristic items help to ‘read’ the religious art and to understand its intrinsic values, which deserve to be preserved for the future generations. For doing this, the interrelation between different experts involved in studying, restoration and preservation of the religious art is crucial.

The 6<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Religious Art – Restoration & Conservation, which was held in Florence, Italy, between 9 and 11 of June 2014, was a good opportunity for bringing together specialists in arts, Theology, Conservation science, History, and other scientific disciplines. All previous editions of this symposium, starting with the first one in 2006, were held in Romania, in Iassy (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> edition) or Alba-Iulia (5<sup>th</sup> edition). This 6<sup>th</sup> edition was a special event in the history of ESRARC symposium, since, for the first time, it was organized abroad Romanian boundaries, and making that the aspirations of the chief organizers (Faculty of Orthodox Theology from the University ‘Al. I. Cuza’ Iassy, and the European Journal of Science and Theology) to become true.

I was really honoured to act as a promoter of such an important event and, I sincerely appreciated the opening, interest and great support received from the Institute for the Conservation and Valorisation of Cultural Heritage of the National Council of Research, Italy (ICVBC-CNR), when I proposed to my colleagues to organize this event in Florence. So, in mid May 2013, my institute, accepted this challenge as principal organizer, and started to prepare the ESRARC 2014 with the help of the following institutions: Opificio delle Pietre Dure (Dr. M. Ciatti), Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra (Card. Dr. G. Ravasi), Ufficio Arte Sacra e Beni Culturali dell’Arcidiocesi di Firenze (Mons. Dr. T. Verdon), Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Sociali, Patrimonio Culturale

(Dr. R. Pozzo), ‘Petru Poni’ Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry of the Romanian Academy in Iassy (Prof. B.C. Simionescu), and, of course, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from the University ‘Al. I. Cuza’ Iassy (Prof. Dr. Melniciuc-Puică) and the European Journal of Science and Theology (Dr. I. Rusu).

Dr. Marco Realini, the interim director of ICVBC-CNR at that time, beside Dr. Piero Tiano, Arch. Rachele Manganeli Del Fà and me, have begun to make all the arrangements for preparing the upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> edition of ESRARC. The first think we did was to find a suggestive location, where art, religion and Science could meet, and the Auditorium Santa Apollonia located in the centre of Florence, was considered the most suitable one, as this space is actually a deconsecrated monastery church. Nowadays it is used by the University of Florence and Regione Toscana, as a conference hall, where, some frescoes of Bernardino Poccetti and the simple but solemn portal, attributed to the architect Giovanni Antonio Dosio, can be admired. Then, in September, Prof. Maria Perla Colombini became the new director of ICVBC-CNR, and she joined us on the way of a successful symposium preparation. In January 2014 the first call was lanced, and the official registrations for the conference stared.

We were very pleased about the positive replay of the specialists working with religious art. The participants in the conference were of high academic level and came from 18 countries: Belarus, Denmark, Egypt, France, Japan, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey. This wide interest of so many heterogeneous scientific figures confirmed us the necessity and utility of such an international conference.

The 6<sup>th</sup> ESRARC was focused on two main themes, related with (A) the socio-spiritual values of the religious art and (B) its conservation and restoration, in which significant scientific contributions were received. The topics of the symposium were divided in: (A1) Artistic and cultural evaluation, (A2) Historic, theological and social perspectives (past and present), (B1) Environmental impact, (B2) Analytical, diagnostic and intervention methodologies, (B3) New materials for the conservation and restoration, and (B4) Monitoring and scheduled maintenance. The B2 topic was the one with the biggest number of the contributions.

The symposium was introduced by three valuable experts. The art historian Prof. Dr. Giorgio Bonsanti initiated a talk on the significance of ‘Restoring the religious art – from theory to practice’. Then, Prof. Dr. Mauro Matteini, chemist and international expert in Conservation science, spoke about ‘The gilding techniques in the ancient sacred art’, while Prof. Dr. Massimiliano A. Polichetti, a researcher, historian of Art and Philosophy of Religion, made a very interesting introduction about the ‘Religious Indo-Tibetan art’.

The lectures of high professional levels presented within the 6<sup>th</sup> ESRARC underlined the values and ways to preserve the tangible and intangible religious art, by means of historical-artistic, theological, social and scientific investigations. The speakers imparted their experience and knowledge in

different fields, focusing their speeches on different religious aspects, type of objects and investigation techniques, with very interesting studies as the following: the megalithic burial monuments in the Basque Country; the expressional qualities in Anatolian Ottoman mosque architecture; the canvas support as materialization of religious – pedagogic propaganda; the anthropomorphic wooden reliquaries - from knowledge to restoration; the diagnosis, conservation and religious requirements in the case of the triptych of the Holy Saviour in the Tivoli Cathedral; ethical and technical concerns during the conservation process of a religious book; analysis of the egg-tempera techniques in late 14<sup>th</sup> century in Florence, or of the golden wood carved decorations (gilt-teller) in Portugal; the multidisciplinary approach to the conservation of polychrome terracotta sculptures; or the microclimatic monitoring of the Santa Croce Museum in Florence, and so on.

For giving more reward to this event, we considered useful, both for the participants and the interested specialists, to prepare a Proceedings Book containing the extended abstracts of all the contributions registered, published by Nardini Editore. In this way, the ESRARC event gained more visibility and its scientific level could be openly evaluated. Part of these contributions were then selected and peer reviewed, and these full text manuscript could now be read in this special volume of European Journal of Science and Theology.

I would like to thank all members of the scientific committee for their professionalism and availability, and in particular to Dr. Giancarlo Lanterna (OPD), Dr. M. Realini (ICVBC-CNR), Prof. M.P. Colombini (ICVBC-CNR), Prof. M.P. Suoto (University of La Laguna), Dr. D. Petranova (Faculty of Mass Media Communication of UCM), Dr. I. Rusu (EJST), Prof. Dr. N. Melniciu-Puică (Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University ‘Al. I. Cuza’), Dr. B. Mazzei (PCAS) and Dr. M. Gligor ('1 December 1918' University of Alba-Iulia).

Special thanks to all the ICVBC colleagues who devoted their time, energy and enthusiasm for preparing the conference, and in particular to R. Manganelli Del Fà, P. Tiano, D. Magrini, R. Iannaccone and S. Vettori.

Dear readers, I hope you will find interesting and enriching articles in this special volume of the European Journal of Science and Theology. Trusting in a developing future of this symposium, I would like to invite you to participate and bring your contributions about religious art within the future editions of ESRARC.

**Dr. Oana Adriana Cuzman**