

## EDITORIAL

### *Join cultures, diffuse knowledge, preserve and valorise religious cultural heritage*

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Since 2006 the European Symposium on Religious Art Restoration and Conservation (ESRARC) has been diffusing the knowledge of religious art throughout Europe, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Iulian Rusu founder and father of this conference.

Religious art is part of cultural and spiritual heritage, and its preservation for further generations is imperative and necessarily involves wide multidisciplinary approaches. In fact, many specialists participated to the symposia organized in different countries, in particular: historians, theologians, art historians, conservators, archaeologists, scientists, media and marketing communicators, representative of Churches.

This issue is devoted to the 2016 edition of the symposium that was organized in Viterbo (Italy).

The city of Viterbo is well-known as the city of the Popes, thanks to its history and, in particular, to the famous conclave (the first and longest of the history of conclaves) which concluded with the election of the Pope Gregorio X in 1271. Viterbo was the Papal see for 24 years, from 1257 to 1281.

In Viterbo we had the participation of colleagues from ten different European countries and covering the three thematic areas: Socio-spiritual values of the religious art; Diagnostics, conservation and restoration of religious cultural heritage; and Sacral sights in the light of tourist trade marketing.

The introductory invited lecture, 'Preservation of Sacred Art', was held by Professor Arnold Nesselrath, Delegate for Scientific Departments and Laboratories of Vatican Museums.

Both tangible and intangible values of religious art were examined during the conference. In fact, cultural heritage in general and religious heritage specifically generate enormous economic benefits through tourism and related opportunities. Moreover, religious cultural heritage also provides numerous intangible benefits, such as the strengthening of the sense of identity and belonging to a community, the increasing of social cohesion and dialogue.

A relevant number of contributions concerned the topic on Diagnostics, conservation and restoration of religious cultural heritage, demonstrating the great interest of scientific communities in the investigation of sacred art. In particular, we would like to stress the choice of non-invasive, low cost and open access facilities for the analysis, documentation and general investigation of sacred art. The choice of these kinds of techniques is due from one hand to the

necessity of studying the artefact without sampling or without damaging it and, on the other hand, to the increasing request of un-expensive methods.

In fact, some contributions referred to these kinds of techniques, such as multispectral methodologies and 3D low cost documentation for evaluating the state of preservation of the artefacts [1].

The contributions presented at the symposium in Viterbo covered a wide range of cultural heritage typologies: from goldsmith to wooden panels and artefacts, from wall paintings to illuminated manuscripts and paper works, including churches and other sacred places.

Several different kinds of objects with a religious significance have been presented. According to our opinion this represents the great relevance of sacred art for people [2].

The preservation of this great and wide heritage requires a specific approach which necessarily should take into account the peculiarity of sacred art [3]. Also in this case, during the symposium specific methodological approaches were presented in relation to the restoration and conservation of religious edifices and artworks.

The increasing interest in religious art conservation, restoration and diagnostics, encourage us to devote further efforts to develop the topics of the symposium and also to try finding forms of association and collaboration between scholars from Europe countries.

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## **References**

- [1] C. Pelosi, L. Lanteri, G. Agresti and U. Santamaria, *Eur. J. Sci. Theol.*, **12**(1) (2016) 271-281.
- [2] A. Lo Monaco, C. Giagnacovo, C. Falcucci and C. Pelosi, *Eur. J. Sci. Theol.*, **11**(2) (2015) 73-84.
- [3] C. Parisi, C. Pelosi, U. Santamaria, P. Pogliani, G. Agresti, S. Longo, *Eur. J. Sci. Theol.*, **12**(2) (2016) 235-244.

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