

THE JOURNAL «CONSERVATION SCIENCE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE»: THE CULTURE OF EVALUATION IN LEARNING AND RESEARCH

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The study of cultural and environmental heritage – archeological, architectural, historical-artistic, archival-book, musical and naturalistic, urban and landscape – must undoubtedly be managed in an interdisciplinary way and include different experiences and competences all of which are necessary to achieve the common objective of protection and valorization.

Furthermore, the uniqueness, the specificity, the non-reproducibility of cultural and environmental heritage, also in the variety of the specialist fields, require the application of correct analytical methods. They refer not only to the anamnesis and investigation of a historical-artistic and aesthetic nature, but also to the characterization of the constituent materials, the quali-quantification of their degradation, the appropriate method to use for restoration interventions, as well as knowledge of the conservation environment of the artifacts and consequent problems.

In this perspective, we believe the achievement of having reached an international level of the historical-technical Journal «Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage» to be emblematic. Founded in 2001 at the University of Bologna with the fundamental support of the Alma Digital Library, it publishes scientific papers by researchers from different schools and countries in both a paper version, “hard copy” and an electronic version, “open access”, meeting the requirements of interdisciplinarity and internationalization, also with its Scientific Board and the involvement of Universities, Ministries, Institutions, Academies, Research Centres, national and international. Having obtained quality certification from Institutions and organizations in various continents, the Journal also has an educational function for the professional figure who has to appropriately deal with and help to find solutions to the numerous problems connected to the different scientific areas of a historical-humanistic, technical-experimental, social-managerial nature in the sector of cultural and environmental heritage.

And bearing this in mind, it is necessary to encourage forms of cooperation between the players who are on the supply and demand side, and operate in the sector: universities, ministries, the territory, in other words a cross section of the institutional pluralism that today characterizes – and will probably continue to characterize – the sector of training and education.

But it is just as true that from a scientific point of view, quality, relevance, originality, innovation are the objectives related to the research published in the Journal, that is subjected to an evaluation by Qualified Reviewers, in the context of a culture of evaluation founded on criteria and methods that interest the whole scientific community: universities, the Ministry of Culture, research institutions, the productive world.

It is therefore no longer based solely on philological and historiographical research, but also from the point of view of the history of artistic techniques, thus, the material constitution of the work, which can be defined as the “data of material culture”. The aim

is to show how historical-artistic research can be taken a step further towards objectivity, addressing it from new, more stimulating points of view and using a different investigation method. Thus, the material of an artwork may be considered, as “the historical starting point” for a detailed examination based on objective data, also including the traces, unintentionally left by the people who operated, and which are connected to the concept stated by Cesare Brandi about the centrality of the knowledge of the material in the critical study of the work.

This is not done only in order to carry out research as an end in itself, but also to guarantee its safeguard, according to a pragmatic approach and practical research.

We wish to reiterate, therefore, the uselessness of research related to the knowledge and protection of cultural heritage based on historiographic data and passed on through time without being criticized or applying a different type of approach, as may evidently be that relating to the material aspect of the work and connected to experimentation.

The word experimentation should not lead us to believe that cultural heritage must be considered a “testing ground for research”: being aware of the useless – as well as dangerous – debates on the protection of cultural heritage, which are easily started when such topics are addressed, we are sure it is necessary for “old” topics to be dealt with from new points of view. They must be advantageous for its protection, intended essentially as the knowledge and respect of that specific reality which, as a unique and exceptional material testimony of cultural evolution, is always contained in the work of art.

Therefore, it is a matter of providing new ways of interpreting which must not replace the work but act as tools, that are a means and not an end in the hands of research: this is the task we want to address here, aware of the essential importance of the contribution provided by the various competences involved in this research. This is what is found in the historical-technical Journal «Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage», whose articles are the result of knowledge attributable not only to the human sciences but also to the experimental sciences.

And it is also on these principles and aims that the research activity within the context of the Soprintendenza Speciale di Archeologia Belle Arti Paesaggio of Rome of the Ministry for Culture, rests and that I, as Director (Soprintendente), have had the honor to manage. To conclude, I would like to mention some of the interventions that are in progress.

Gabii

In the ancient city of Gabii, located on the edge of Rome’s territory, interdisciplinary research has been underway for many years and has involved various universities and institutions. In many respects it is a special area that offers an impressive stratification both from an archeological and landscape point of view: from the lakeside village that dates back to the 15th century BC to the medieval evidence when it was the seat of an episcopate. Currently, excavations and research are in progress under concession to the Musée du Louvre, with the University of Michigan, in the urban area of the majestic temple of Juno Gabina. The Archaeological Superintendence of Rome, in collaboration with the University of Roma Tre, is instead examining in detail an excavation on the *regia*, a building belonging to the monarchic power of the 6th century BC, when Gabii was competing with Rome to gain control of the territory.

It is an exceptional discovery, made about 15 years ago, thanks to excavations carried out by the Superintendence, and whose different aspects are, today, being examined once more.

Nymphaeum Museum

At the origin of the recently inaugurated Nymphaeum Museum in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele square, is a preventive archeological excavation under the building of the Enpam headquarters (offices dedicated to services for healthcare professionals). I would like to underline how this new exhibition space is the result of the activity of a research laboratory which lasted five years, where millions of unearthed finds were classified, studied, restored and recreated. In the end, about three thousand were selected and then displayed where they were discovered, fully respecting the context. And it was only thanks to this meticulous research on the materials, plants, animals and decorations, that the museum is not only an exhibition of objects, but the reconstruction of the life of a territory, its history, its development over the centuries from the origins of the Urbs to our days and made possible by the extensive collaboration between public and private institutions.

The Archaeological Box on the Aventine

On the Aventine the Archeological Box displays archeological evidence through a multimedia installation that has been very successful. In this case too, the research, carried out by archeologists from the Superintendence in collaboration with other institutes, was fundamental in reconstructing the events that marked, firstly, the construction of a defensive structure, then the terracing of a functional area for residential constructions, and finally the realization of a luxurious *domus*, until it was abandoned due to underground galleries that compromised its stability. Another case study of how the landscape, and in particular the orography of the slopes of the Aventine, conditioned the material history of this place across the years.

The research demonstrates not only that interdisciplinarity is useful and necessary and is able to virtuously combine the different fields of knowledge for protection that cannot happen without a deep understanding of heritage, but also sharing, by publishing scientific papers in *open source* as happens in the Journal, and by offering the general public, a conscious use which can only come from study, knowledge, intelligence.