

L'ERMA DI BRETSCHNEIDER: A REFERENCE POINT FOR SCIENTIFIC AND HUMANISTIC PUBLICATIONS SINCE 1896

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1. Introduction

Founded in Rome in 1896, L'ERMA di Bretschneider is a publishing house that has dedicated one hundred and twenty-six years to the production and international distribution of academic and scientific editions with a particular focus on the social sciences and humanities. Its aim is to present the results of unpublished research through the publication of scientific journals, monographs and reference works such as collections, manuals and catalogues. The mission of the publishing house is, in fact, to publish works of the highest academic standard in the field of social sciences and humanities. For the most part, the publications deal with the disciplines of archaeology and history, the conservation and management of cultural heritage, Roman law, the history of art and architecture and literary criticism. Today, L'ERMA di Bretschneider is unanimously recognized as the Italian publishing house par excellence for its scientific publications in the field of humanities, in particular archaeology, ancient history and art history. Its vast editorial catalogue boasts over a century of collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and its constituent bodies; in point of fact, L'ERMA di Bretschneider is the publisher of several publications produced by fifteen of the archaeological superintendencies in Italy. In addition, it collaborates with various Schools of Archaeology and International Academies. Its work for the Archaeological Superintendencies of Naples and Pompei, the Superintendency of the City of Rome, the Vatican Museums and the Pontifical Roman Academy of Archaeology and the History of Art, is noteworthy.

The publishing house has numerous titles to its credit deriving from archaeological collections housed in national and international museums (Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, USA), including the prestigious *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* and *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum*. It also collaborates with several American museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Getty Museum of Los Angeles and the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio and is actively involved in numerous partnerships with national and international Universities which have led to the setting up of important journals and editorial collections.

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L'ERMA di Bretschneider has been chosen by universities, superintendencies and international institutes for its high quality, attention to detail and distribution services. Its key strength is its ability to reach out and capture the interest of institutions, professionals, scholars and experts in the social sciences and humanities throughout the world, to promote its publications, spreading the value of Italian and international scientific research in archaeology, history and art. Its culture policy focuses primarily on a wide-ranging distribution of specialist publications, which besides Italy extends to the rest of Europe, the major English-speaking countries and all the continents. Its service to the sector of scientific publications and its ability to communicate makes L'ERMA di Bretschneider a privileged channel for the dissemination of research results in the humanities and social sciences.

Accredited as being synonymous with scientific reliability and editorial excellence it is also active in the same disciplinary fields as a consultant and organizer, and developer and promoter of advanced systems in research, events, museum installations and exhibitions [1].

2. History

Born in Crimmitschau in Saxony, Germany, Max Bretschneider was the founder of the publishing house and bookshop. He came to Rome in 1894 and formed a professional partnership with the publisher Herman Loescher. After the latter's death, Max, still in his twenties, bought the publishing house in 1896, preserving Loescher's editorial characteristics, style and spirit. In an era marked by a reawakening of interest in the classical age and archaeological exploration, as well as the start of important excavation works, Loescher had in fact directed his business toward the printing of manuals on Greco-Roman antiquity, some of which had been adopted as school texts in Italy and abroad [2].

In 1907, Max opened a bookshop in Rome, at number 60 Via del Tritone (Figure 1), which soon became an obligatory stop for all antiquity enthusiasts. After his marriage to Maria Hefner and the period of the First World War, fought in Germany, in 1928 Max moved the bookshop, publishing house and his home to number 19 Via Cassiodoro in Rome. His publishing merits (Figure 2) had earned him various decorations of the Kingdom of Italy and his election as a regular supplier of the royal house («Libreria della Real Casa») [2].

With the outbreak of the Second World War business slowed down and, in 1944, came to a halt during the troubled times of the final years of the war, and also because of the problems deriving from the German origins of the Bretschneider family.

When the British arrived in Rome, Max, his wife Maria, and their daughter Erminia, were imprisoned in the monastery of the Certosa di Padula together with most of the citizens with German names residing in Rome at that time. They were in prison for twelve months!

Imprisonment and the interruption of his work, along with the confiscation of the bookshop and most of his personal archive, was a distressing human experience which, however, did not discourage him.

Business resumed on 11th September 1945 when Max Bretschneider was seventy-three. The restart of work also coincided with the change of the firm's name to «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, where the quotation marks are part of the brand.

The term "L'Erma" had two meanings. Firstly, as an acronym it stood for «Libreria Editrice Romana Monumenti e Arte»; and secondly, it recalled a herm, a square-shaped



Figure 1. The poster for Max Bretschneider's bookshop in Via del Tritone, Rome (1919).



Figure 2. Title page of a luxury edition published by Max Bretschneider (1911).

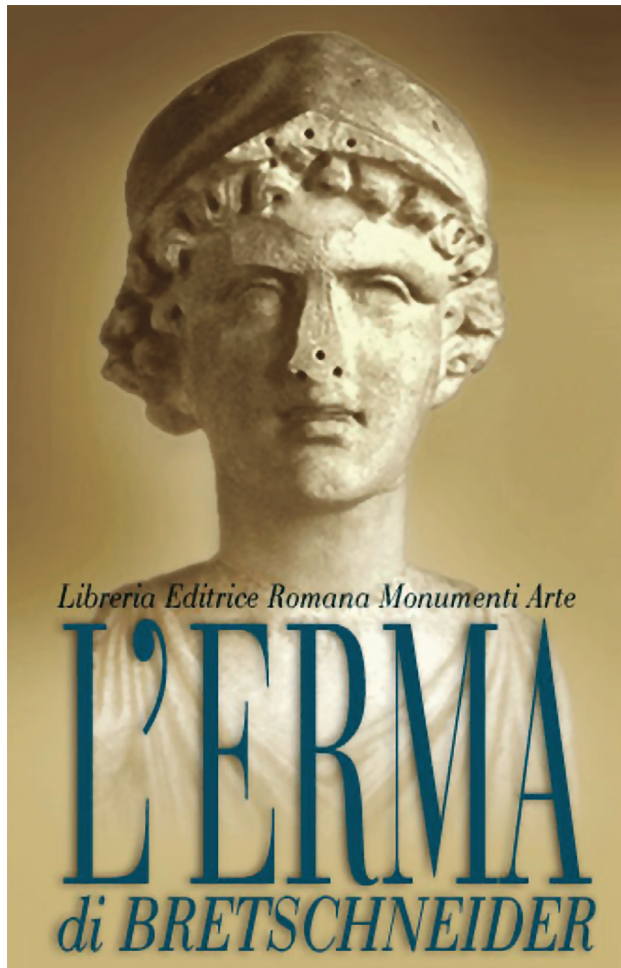


Figure 3. The herm, sculpture on a column, in Via Cassiodoro, Rome.

pillar with a sculpted head on top, a piece which still welcomes visitors to Via Cassiodoro and a symbol of the classical world representing the publisher's choices (Figure 3).

Max taught his six children the profession and they became partners in the business. He died on 28th December 1950. In 1959, two of his children, Erminia and Giorgio, took over the shares of the other four and managed the firm together until 1973, when Giorgio left the publishing house.

With her children, Roberto, Francesco and Maria Silvia Marcucci, Erminia set up a new firm in 1974. After her death, the chairmanship of the board of directors was taken over by her son Roberto, who is still at the head of the publishing house, alongside Elena Montani, the managing director [1].

In 2021, on the occasion of the 125th year since its founding, two short commemorative volumes were published to celebrate the event [3,4].

3. Prizes

The editorial and cultural work of L'Erma di Bretschneider has been honoured with receiving the Prize for Culture, awarded by the Italian Office of the Council of Ministers, in 1985, 1988, 1990 and 1997.

In 1992, the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage conferred the export prize for Italian books (Premio per l'esportazione del libro italiano) for the volume of books exported abroad, in view of coming first among the scientific publishers and tenth among the Italian publishers.

Over the years, L'Erma di Bretschneider has also established prestigious prizes of its own:

- «L'Erma» Prize for Archaeology;
- «L'Erma» Prize for Art.

3.1. «L'Erma» prize for Archaeology

In 1978, in order to encourage and support studies in the archaeological field, Roberto Marcucci, the editorial director of «L'Erma», set up the «L'Erma» Prize, a competition in honor of Max Bretschneider. The prize is intended for unpublished scientific works in the field of classical, medieval and oriental archaeology, as well as in the research of prehistory and can be proposed in Italian, German, English, French or Spanish. Participation is open and free of charge and authors can present one or more titles which are then submitted to the verdict of a jury composed of Italian and foreign academic specialists in the previously mentioned subject areas. The selected work is then published free of charge in volume form by «L'Erma» and added to its catalogue; in addition, the author receives a sum of money. The initiative aims to reduce the difficulties young researchers face, when trying to have the results of their studies published.

2.2. «L'Erma» Prize for Art

In 2005, a second prize was set up, «L'Erma» Prize for Art, which is held annually, and is dedicated to the history of art. The selected works are honoured by being published in the prestigious book series L'ErmArte, specially created for the purpose.

4. The catalogue

L'Erma has gained an outstanding position in the history of Italian publishing, remaining faithful across three centuries to its vocation, which has made it a reference point in the industry for its scientific and humanistic publications. Its works, the result of almost nine thousand authors, can be found in more than two thousand seven hundred libraries and seventy countries spread over the five continents, bearing witness to the efficient distribution network it manages. The significant catalogue, which includes collections and journals of high standing, and the intense research activity in historical, archaeological and artistic disciplines, conducted with leading experts in the field and the most

prestigious universities in the world, constitute today an invaluable cultural heritage which is available not only to scholars and enthusiasts, but to the entire community [1, 4].

Leafing through the last catalogue, one is pleasantly surprised by the long list of published titles and the variety of topics that are addressed which range from classical archaeology to epigraphic studies, from Mediterranean archaeology to papyrology studies, from research on the ancient Arab world to Etruscology, from research on the conservation and management of cultural heritage to the study of art history and architecture, from contemporary art research to studies of literary criticism and philology and finish with studies on fashion history, Roman law and the history of medicine.

Since issue N.20 (2020), the historical-technical Journal, Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage, has been included in the catalogue.

The pulsating heart testifying to L'ERMA's special editorial mission is evident in the diversified and, at the same time, detailed description of the content of the topics presented in the catalogue.

We were therefore, instinctively attracted by this statement of intent and declared objectives, which had become over the decades, unconditionally, a fundamental guiding principle, dictating and providing contributions of a highly scientific and educational nature to schools of thought, institutions, researchers and scholars.

Hence, the start and continuation of the reciprocation of the aforesaid intent and objectives, based on the principles which characterize the Journal, Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage, interdisciplinarity and internationalization.

5. Conclusion

The historic publishing house has evolved through the years maintaining its quality and authoritativeness, but without forgoing the latest innovative challenges which the publishing sector is currently being confronted with, and fervently supporting the evolution and protection of the sector, also from a technological point of view.

L'ERMA is strongly committed to the use of digital technologies, to multilingualism and the dissemination of its texts in the most important libraries and international institutes, in order to lead the two worlds of paper and technological information along the path of modernity, integrating the specific qualities of each one and expanding the boundaries of knowledge that the publishing sector has always preserved, conserved and extended, while at the same time, safeguarding traditions.

References

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Biographical notes

Andrea Natali carries out research, didactic activities and consultancy in the sector of heritage conservation. He has a degree in Heritage Conservation and a Master in Community Narrators, DIBAF, at the University of Tuscia (Italy). He has received two research grants from the University of Bologna (Italy). He has done scientific research in the Department for Cultural Heritage and Department for Architecture and Territorial Planning at the University of Bologna and the Institute for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR). He has taught and continues to teach on university courses, in academies, Masters and schools with two-year programmes specialized in the sectors relating to conservation environments, restoration, art diagnostics, the authentication of artworks, heritage and landscape management and valorization and the planning and promotion of artistic and cultural events. He is the Director and a teacher at the Scuola Biennale di Alta Formazione in Archeologia Giudiziaria e Crimini Contro il Patrimonio Culturale set up by the Centre for Criminological, Legal and Sociological Studies. He is the owner of the company Andrea Natali "Cultural Heritage Conservation". He is a mediator/moderator. He is the Editorial Secretary of the Journal "Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage" and a member of the Scientific Committee and works in the Scientific Coordination of the journal "Scienze e Ricerche". He has been an Expert in the Chamber of Arbitration for public contracts at the National Authority for Anti-corruption (ANAC). He is the author and coauthor of more than 60 publications in the sector of conservation and valorization of cultural heritage which include scientific monographs and treatises used as university course textbooks. He has also been a speaker in more than 60 conventions and conferences.

Salvatore Lorusso was formerly a full Professor in Chemistry of the Environment and of Cultural Heritage at the University of Bologna. He is a Foreign Member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences; Emeritus Professor of the Cultural Heritage Institute of Zhejiang University (China); formerly a Visiting Professor at the Academy of Social Science of Zhejiang University, China; Visiting Professor of the Faculty of Arts, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia; formerly vice-president and Councilor of the Società Italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze (SIPS, established in 1839). He is the General Director of the Accademia della Cultura Enogastronomica. His biography appears in the 2016 Marquis Edition of Who's Who in the World. He is the author of over 445 publications in national and international journals and 25 volumes and monographs covering commodity science, cultural heritage and environmental issues. In 1997, he founded the Diagnostic Laboratory for Cultural Heritage at the Ravenna Campus of the University of Bologna and was head of the Laboratory for eighteen years. In 2001 he founded the historical-technical Journal "Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage" of which he is Editor-in-Chief. His scientific work deals mainly with the study of the "system: artifact-environment-biota" and diagnostic, analytical, technical and economic evaluation within the context of the protection and valorization of cultural and environmental heritage.

Summary

Founded in 1896, L'ERMA di Bretschneider is a historic publishing house, whose mission is to publish works of excellent academic reputation. The topics covered by the

publications include archaeology, history, heritage conservation and management, Roman law, history of art and architecture, and literary criticism.

L'ERMA di Bretschneider is unanimously recognized as the Italian publishing house par excellence for its scientific publications in the field of humanities, in particular archaeology, ancient history and art history.

The intense research activity in historical, archaeological and artistic disciplines carried out by L'ERMA in collaboration with leading experts in the field and the most prestigious universities in the world, and the vast editorial catalogue which boasts over a century of collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and its constituent bodies and includes prestigious series and magazines, constitute today an invaluable wealth of cultural heritage, available not only to scholars and enthusiasts, but to the entire community.