

# ESRARC 2022

## 12<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on Religious Art, Restoration & Conservation

Proceedings book

### • Socio-spiritual values of the religious art

Artistic and cultural evaluation  
Historic, theological and social perspectives (past and present)  
Religion and modern cross-cultural communication  
Religion and globalization  
Religion, terror and the role of cultural heritage

### • Conservation, Restoration and Diagnostics of Religious Cultural Heritage

Environmental impact  
Analytical, diagnostic and intervention methodologies  
New materials for conservation and restoration  
Monitoring and scheduled maintenance

### • Sacral Sights in the Light of Tourist Trade Marketing

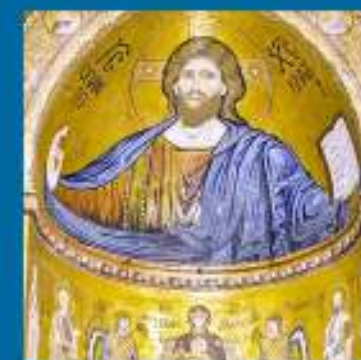
Marketing of sacral sights as universal cultural heritage  
Sacral sights as new dimension of secular tourism  
Sociocultural development in regions  
Sacral sights as new tools of war/as tools of politics  
Sacral sights and securitization discourses  
Sacral sights and cultural identity/image and Symbol in Antiquity

### • Religions and Media Communication

Religious media and their audience  
Modern communication of world religions

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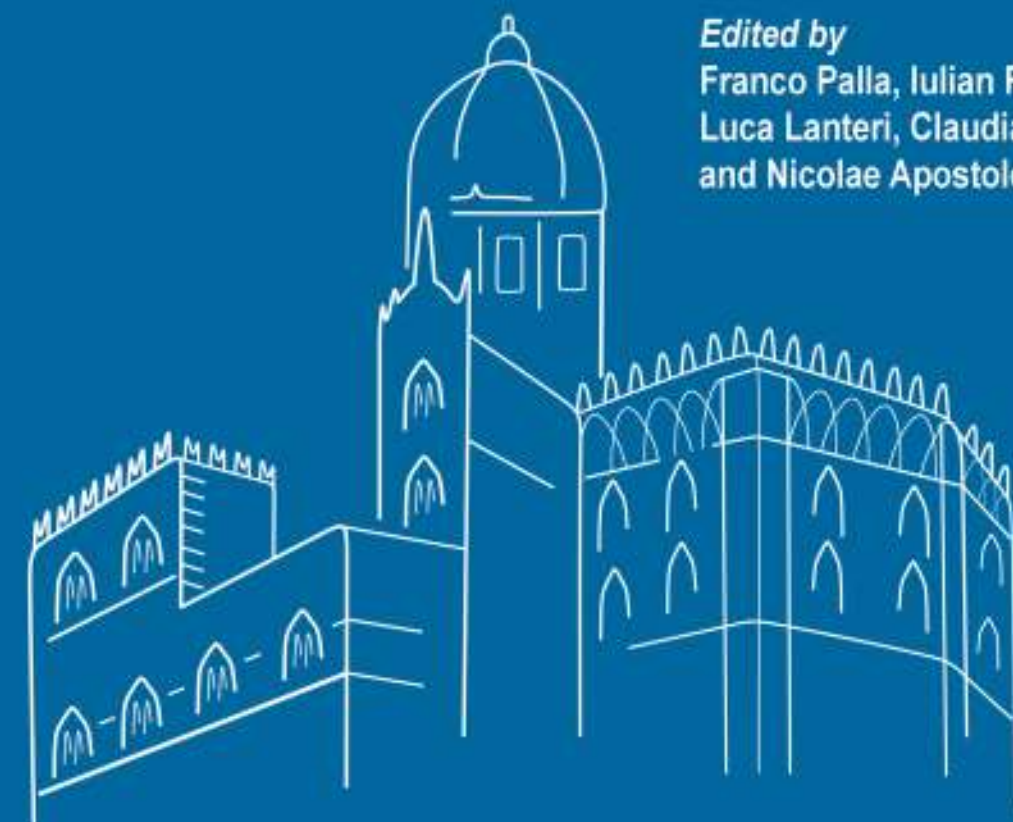
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Edited by  
Franco Palla, Iulian Rusu,  
Luca Lanteri, Claudia Pelosi  
and Nicolae Apostolescu



# 12<sup>th</sup> ESRARC PALERMO 2022



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degli Studi  
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ESRARC 2022  
12<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM  
ON RELIGIOUS ART,  
RESTORATION & CONSERVATION

*PROCEEDINGS BOOK*

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12<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON RELIGIOUS ART,  
RESTORATION & CONSERVATION  
*PROCEEDINGS BOOK*

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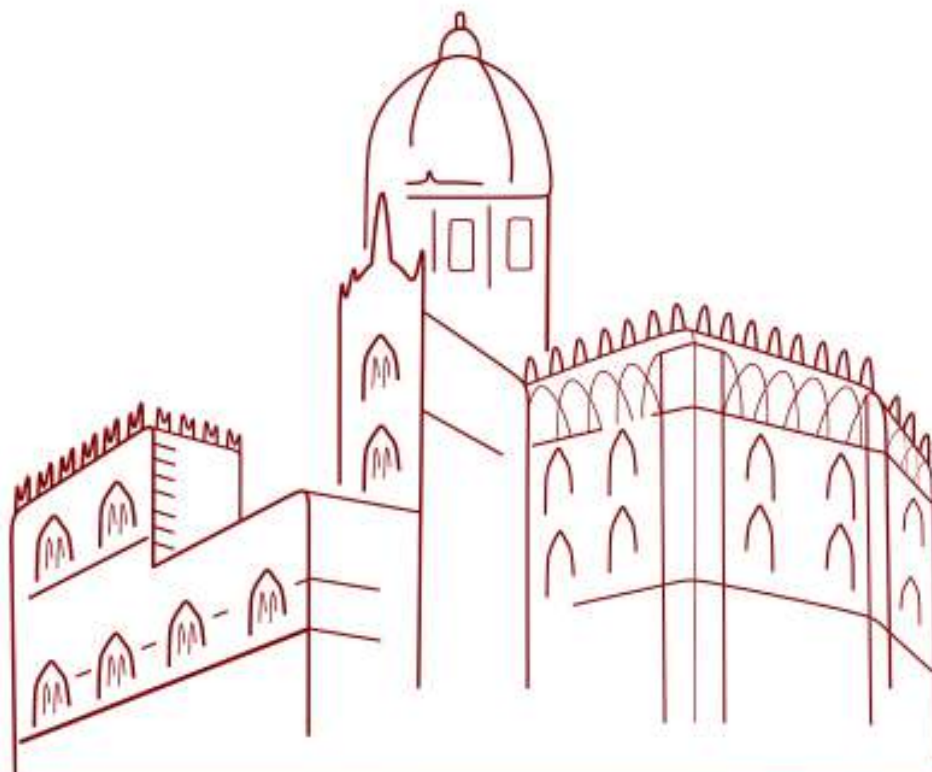
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# 12<sup>th</sup>ESRARC PALERMO 2022

*in cooperation with*



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Dear Colleagues,

The 12<sup>th</sup> European Symposium of Religious Art, Restoration and Conservation takes place in the city of Palermo, in a very complex world historical period and referring to religions, thus assuming an important meaning.

Palermo, founded around 734 BC by Phoenicians, became during the centuries the melting point of several cultures such as Arab, Jewish, Greek, Latin, engendering a unique artistic and architectural heritage. The city is a casket that holds unique treasures. Some of them are UNESCO world heritage sites, such as the Arab-Norman route listed in 2015, which extends from the Steri Palace (Rectorate of the Palermo's University) to the Norman Palace (with Palatine Chapel, related to the Norman Kingdom in Sicily). The symposium also pay attention to new research centers, active in the city area, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Institute of Sciences and Technologies (IEMEST), which hosts some sessions of the symposium.

Italian capital of culture in 2018, Palermo is the third Italian city where ESRARC takes place and where, at the local University, a Master Degree Course in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage is active from 2012, whose several practical activities are closely related with the conservation and restoration of religious artworks.

The 12<sup>th</sup> ESRARC meeting allows interdisciplinary connections based on the symposium's topics (socio-spiritual values of religious art, conservation, restoration and diagnostics of religious cultural heritage, sacred sight in view of the tourist marketing and communication), creating or strengthening bridges between generations and different studies and research fields.

Based on interdisciplinary approaches fifty-six papers, involving hundred-forty authors, have been submitted demonstrating a fruitful activity in the academic environment and other cultural-research institutions, able to stimulate the development and deepening of current knowledge on religious artworks, under the architectural, conservative and social-cultural points of view.

I warmly thank the participants of the 12<sup>th</sup> ESRARC, which in addition of making the symposium an excellent cultural event, certainly allow the establishment of collaborating opportunities as well as friendly contacts.

Franco Palla – Chair of Symposium  
Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy

The 12<sup>th</sup> European Symposium on the Restoration and Conservation of Sacred Art, welcomed and strongly supported by Prof. Massimo Midiri the Rector of Palermo University of Palermo and curated by Prof. Franco Palla, who for many years held the role of Coordinator of the Master Degree Course in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. The technical-practical activities developed in the five years Course involves and deepens also the Sacred Art in all its several aspects, addressing the related problems by giving important methodological indications.

Evaluating how much Christian art is widely and finally expressed in all its values by decorative works of art, we perceive the importance of the realization in Palermo of the European Symposium on the Restoration and Conservation of Sacred Art, which deals with these wide-ranging issues. Sicily is, in fact, a focal and emerging center for decorative art works and above all sacred art, as demonstrated by the huge amount of studies realized, promoted and collected by the "Maria Accascina Observatory for Decorative Arts in Italy", which spreads also online specific research on this field ranging from liturgical furnishings in gold, silver, coral, gems and precious materials, to stucco and marble decorations, of which marmi mischi (mixed marbles) are a characteristic and characterizing example.

In prestigious venues such as the Chiaramonte-Steri and Norman Palaces, precious treasures of the city, the Conference address salient aspects of Sacred Art, from its social and spiritual values to the conservation, restoration and diagnostics of the religious cultural heritage, from iconography and iconology to materiality and to the meaning of sacred art and architecture.

With a clear methodological indication of the path of the Symposium, there are also important artistic places in Palermo, such as the Cathedral and the church of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria, and there is no lack of references to UNESCO sites such as the extraordinary Cathedral of Monreale.

The task of scholars, as the Symposium allows us to underline, is to indicate the path of conservation and transmission to future generations of a huge artistic heritage as long as possible, by maintenance or, when needed, promoting scientific restorations also extended to all works of art, including the simplest liturgical furnishings, as well as promoting interest and research to correctly pass on the memory. The Master Degree Course in Conservation and Restoration of the University of Palermo also operates in this sense and has been committed for years.

The Symposium, through a dense network of relationships, demonstrates the scientific work towards which the University of Palermo is strongly committed. The collaboration with the Dioceses of the Island, as on this occasion with the Archdiocese of Palermo, is fundamental and indispensable both for the promotion of conservation and restoration activities, and for devotion and / or fruition, in order to disseminating historical-artistic peculiarity related to inseparable spiritual and catechetical function.

Maria Concetta Di Natale

Consultant to the UNIPARector for the design,  
realization and management of Exhibitions events

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## ANTONELLO GAGINI AND THE "MAJESTIC MACHINA MARMOREA" OF THE CATHEDRAL OF PALERMO, ITALY, IN THE "GAGINO REDIVIVO" BY VINCENZO AURIA

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### ABSTRACT

The paper examines the description of the tribune of the Cathedral of Palermo by Antonello Gagini published in *Gagino redivivo* by Vincenzo Auria, contextualizing it with other sources related to the monument, both written and iconographic. Auria's detailed description, together with the latter, has allowed a complete reconstruction of the tribune and of its iconographic programme.

**Keywords:** tribune, cathedral, Palermo, Vincenzo Auria, sources

### INTRODUCTION

The tribune of the Cathedral of Palermo, commissioned to Antonello Gagini by Archbishop Giovanni Paternò in 1507 [1] and completed in 1574 by the sons of the same Antonello [1], who died in 1536 [2], is among the most regrettable lost works of the Italian Renaissance, following its dismemberment in 1797 during the restoration works of the Cathedral directed by Ferdinando Fuga [3]. The surviving sculptures and decorations are now visible inside the Cathedral itself and in the Diocesan Museum of Palermo [4], which also houses an accurate scale reconstruction of the entire monument (Fig. 1) [5]. Given the incalculable damage that the destruction of the work has caused to the historical-artistic heritage, the memory of the tribune has fortunately been preserved over time. If the iconographic sources, in fact, still today give back its overall appearance, the general structure and the visual impact in the context of the Cathedral's interior, the written ones have made it possible to reconstruct the entire corpus of the sculptures and their precise location within the elegant architecture conceived by Antonello [6]. Particularly effective in this sense is the description made by Vincenzo Auria in his *Gagino redivivo* [7], as detailed as it is functional to a complete recovery of the iconographic programme of the work.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The text by Vincenzo Auria of 1698 *Il Gagino redivivo o'vero Notitia della Vita, ed Opere d'Antonio Gagini, nativo della Città di Palermo, Scultore Famosissimo*, published in 1698 by the Stamperia Giuseppe Gramignani of Palermo was examined. The text has been contextualized with the other sources related to the monument studied here.

### OUTCOMES

The main iconographic source related to the tribune is the engraving by Gramignani concerning the acclamation of King Ferdinand of Bourbon inside the Cathedral (Fig. 2), published in 1760 in Domenico Schiavo's chronicle [8]. From it Gioacchino Di Marzo obtained his re-proposal of the detail of the tribune (Fig. 3) [1, p. 216-217], which later inspired the graphic reconstruction of Krufft (Fig. 4) [9] and the already mentioned model in the Diocesan Museum of Palermo. In the above-mentioned work by Vincenzo Auria, the author introduces the treatment of the tribune taking inspiration from the brief description of the work previously provided by Fazello [T. Fazello, *De rebus Siculis decades duae, apud Ioannem Maidam et Franciscum Carraram, Palermo (1558), Prioris Decadis, Liber Octavus 175-176*], and then gives emphasis to the artistic expertise of Antonello, reporting an anecdote according to which even Michelangelo Buonarroti, when asked for a drapery for a statue of Christ replied "Go get them dressed by Gagini". Auria cites as the source of the anecdote Francesco Baronio and his *De Maiestate panormitana* [10] and the episode is also reported by Agostino Gallo, who questions its truthfulness on the basis of Michelangelo's well-known reluctance to praise others, as well as the exceptional skill of Michelangelo himself in the technique of drapery [11]. Auria then moves on to an accurate description of the subjects and the disposition of the statues inside the tribune: "And to return to his aforementioned most worthy work, the Main Chapel, ennobled by Gagini's majestic marble work, is divided into three well-arranged orders, which occupy the interior of the

Chapel up to the vault, and part of the exterior of it. In the middle of the first order is the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, accompanied by many angels, and below her the Apostles in mid-relief in an act of admiration. Next to the Gospel are statues of seven Apostles, namely. St Peter, St John, St James Minor, St Thomas, St Philip, St Bartholomew and St Paul. On the Epistle side, however, there are seven other statues of these Saints, namely. St Andrew, St James the Greater, St Matthew, St Jude Tadeus, St Simon, St Matthias and St John the Baptist. All of these statues are of white marble, larger than human stature by about eight palms, placed on well-crafted plinths, and in niches also of marble; and above each one of them can be seen a half-relief angel: each niche is between pillars with its plinths, and marble capitals, adorned with excellent work, and above them runs a proportionate border.

Under each statue of this order, as well as under the statue of the Virgin of the Assumption in fifteen small squares, are the most remarkable works of each of the aforementioned Saints; where in the smallness of the stature of the figures, in the delicacy of the work, in the symmetry of the design, and in the spirit-like attitudes, the incomparable genius of Antonio Gagino shines forth in wonderment. In the second and third order there are 26 other statues in as many niches, and between pillars and capitals of the same form. The Saints, which the statues depict are as follows, namely. The four Evangelists St. Luke, St. John, St. Matthew, and St. Mark. The four Doctors of the Church St. Gregory the Great, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome. Six Martyrs, namely St Lawrence, St Stephen, St Christopher, St Sebastian, and St Cosmas and St Damian. Four Patriarchs, namely, St. Anthony Abbot, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, and St. Francis, and finally eight Saints, which are, St. Christina V. and M. Patroness of Palermo, St. Nymph V. and M. Patroness of Palermo, St. Catherine V. and M. and St. Mary Magdalene, St. Agatha V. and M. Palermitana, St. Oliva V. and M. Palermitana, St. Lucy V. and M., and S. Cecilia V. and M. In the middle of these two orders, one sees the statue of Christ Our Lord Risen, with soldiers around the Sepulchre guarding it. [...] Then, in the most sublime place, a God the Father was added to the marble structure of this large chapel, of great and majestic size, made of stucco: the work of Vincenzo Gagino, son of our Antonio.” [7, p. 24-27]

From the Auria's description, thirty years later Giovanni Maria Amato in its *De Principe Templo Panormitano* [12], which describes the tribune with as much precision and detail, will take inspiration.

Agostino Gallo's report [11, p. 11-12] will be more summary, reconstructing instead with extreme care the context of the realization of the work, both as regards the commission and the activity of Antonello and his workshop. In addition to the subjects and their arrangement in the architecture of the tribune, Gioacchino Di Marzo provides an accurate description of the decorative apparatus of the monument [1, p. 215-237], still today constituting both an essential point of reference for the study of Gagini's production and one of the main initiators of studies on the Decorative Arts in Sicily [13].

## CONCLUSIONS

Vincenzo Auria's description of Antonello Gagini's tribune in the Cathedral of Palermo, together with the other sources cited here, represent a fundamental resource for the reconstruction of the now lost monument, as well as confirming a precise methodological approach that sees the critical re-reading of historical sources as the starting point for scientific research aimed at the rediscovery of works, collections and historical-artistic contexts otherwise irrecoverable.

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Fig. 1 – Plastic of the Tribune by Antonello Gagini made by the students of the Chair of Sculpture of the Academy of Fine Arts of Palermo, under the guidance of Prof. Salvatore Rizzuti, 1998-2000, Palermo, Museo Diocesano.



Fig. 2 – View of the Cathedral, engraving by Antonino Bova, 1760 (Photo by A. Bova).



Sezzione della Tribuna del Gagini nel duomo di Palermo  
da una stampa del 1760

Fig. 3 – View of the Tribune, engraving from Di Marzo, 1880.

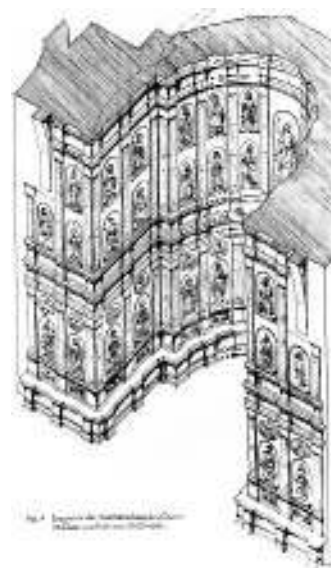


Fig. 4 – Reconstruction of the Marble Tribune of the Cathedral, from Krüft, 1980 (Photo by H.W. Krüft).