

EDITORIAL

Second Symposium on Religious Art Restoration and Conservation (SRARC 2008)

On 8-9th May 2008, ‘Dumitru Stăniloae’ Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași hosted the second edition of the symposium ‘Religious Art Restoration and Conservation’ (SRARC 2008), jointly organized with ESSSAT (the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology).

It is the second symposium addressing this topic, held under the patronage of the Faculty of Theology, following the proposal of the Sacred Arts Department. It was attended by numerous Romanian and foreign personalities, among them participants on behalf of the following institutions: ‘Al. I. Cuza’ University of Iași (the Faculties of Orthodox Theology, Chemistry, Physics and Biology), ‘George Enescu’ University of Arts of Iași, Bucharest University (the Faculty of Orthodox Theology ‘Patriarch Justinian’), ‘Gh. Asachi’ Technical University of Iași, Sofia University, Bulgaria, University of Sussex, Falmer-Brighton, United Kingdom, ‘Bukovina’ Museum Complex of Suceava, the National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics, ‘Moldova’ Museum Complex of Iași, The Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of the religious patrimony ‘Resurrectio’ of the Moldavia and Bukovina Metropolitanate, the National Institute of Research for Conservation and Restoration – Bucharest, the Museum of Ethnography Brașov, Astra Museum Complex of Sibiu, Brukenthal National Museum of Sibiu.

The keynote addresses were delivered by Professor Fr. Viorel Sava – Dean of ‘D. Stăniloae’ Faculty of Orthodox Theology Iași, Professor Fr. Ion Vicovan, Vicedean of ‘D. Stăniloae’ Faculty of Orthodox Theology Iași, Dr. Iulian Rusu – Editor-in-chief of *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Dr. Nicoleta Melniciuc – the symposium’s President – who all emphasized the importance of convening such major cultural events. It was mentioned that it will become a regular event held every two years, while also stressing the importance of the partnership with ESSSAT.

The essays on both scientific and artistic topics were placed under three headings: *Ecclesial Art*, *Restoration of Document Books* and *Icon Restoration*. They evinced high academic proficiency, as they are the result of either individual, or (most often) collective research, undertaken by members of specialized research centres. They broached various topics, from theoretical issues pertaining to theological, artistic, scientific research into conservation and restoration matters, to practical issues, presenting the results of analyses carried out over longer or shorter periods of time.

The peculiarity of this symposium is its achieving a synthesis of two seemingly irreconcilable fields: that of scientific, denotative expression (the field of restoration), and that of artistic, connotative expression (the artistic field). It demonstrated that restoration is more than a mere remedial operation, dealing only with the material side of the work of art, but it contributes to revealing a rich artistic history, which without the investigation specific to the restoration-conservation process, is doomed to oblivion. The cleansing work may result in revealing unexpected artistic realities, utterly different from the items' current aspect, which construct a completely new aesthetic profile.

Thus, conservation-restoration cannot be confined to the mere scientific cleansing – or if necessary, blank portions filling and chromatic integration – but it is a process of giving birth to a work of art. What appeared to be mere removal of impurities, is actually a restitution of the original aspect, sometimes utterly different from the present one, thus re-establishing the historical truth.

The tumultuous history of art provides restorators with incomplete, chipped, darkened and dusty works of art, disfigured by successive repaintings, and the conservation-restoration activity becomes inquiring into its history, a detective work that marks the aesthetic stages peculiar to the respective item.

As with the previous symposium, the papers meeting the requirements and quality standards of *European Journal of Science and Theology* are to be published by this prestigious review.

The break on the symposium's second day, was dedicated to the vernissage of the exhibition containing the works of Sacred Arts students of 'D. Stăniloae' Faculty of Orthodox Theology - Iași. The participants appreciated the wide scope of the students' artistic and conservation-restoration activity, as well as the remarkable quality of their works, many of which are genuine works of art worthy of more mature authors.

The organizers addressed the audience again at the end of the session, mentioning that it had achieved its goal of establishing new contacts with personalities of the artistic and scientific realms, interested in the field of Sacred Arts, widening the department's research area, establishing contacts with ESSSAT members and other professional associations, and promoting the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași.

We gratefully thank His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, for his support of this activity and his steadily endorsing the Sacred Arts Department of 'Dumitru Stăniloae' Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Iași.

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