ESRARC 2019
11TH EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM
ON RELIGIOUS ART,
RESTORATION & CONSERVATION

PROCEEDINGS BOOK

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The Romanic arch exposed in the Museum of Colle del Duomo in Viterbo (Italy), 12th century Credit: Claudia Sorrentino

Hasmonean coin (Jannaeus) found in the ritual area of Magdala (Israel) archaeological excavations. Eight pointed star in diadem. Credit: Andrea Garza-Díaz Barriga

IR photo of the piece “Circle of Joos van Cleve, Crucified Christ, with the Virgin Mary, Saint Mary Magdalene and Saint John the Evangelist, oil on panel, 66.5 x 44.25 cm. Private collection” Credit: Marta Raich, Jessica Martí & Miguel Herrero

Adoration of the Magi from the Saint-Lazare cathedral in Autun (France, 12th century) Credit: Salvatore Sindoni

“The Madonna with Child” Church of Santa Maria la Mayor of Oliva (Valencia, Spain) - after the restauratio Credit: María Francisca Sarrió-Martín & Luis Bertomeu-Contrenas

Tryptic of Santa Liberata Italy 16th century - Painting detail during cleaning: removal of the first varnish layer Credit: Darii Advanti, Roberto Saccuman, Giorgia Agresti, Rosangela Faieta, Eduardo Caliano, Claudia Pelosi & Angela Lo Monaco

Embbouchure arch of the Saint Juan Nepomuceno’s Chapel, Church of Saint Andrew, Valencia (Spain), (1751 - 1778). Credit: Giannotta Gaetano

‘Deposition’ by Giorgio Vasari, Galleria Doria Pamphilij (Rome, Italy) (panel 297 x 188cm. Credit: Maria Beatrice De Ruggieri & Marco Cardinali

Liturgical book from Chapter Library, Valencia (Spain). Ms 125, fol. 2r. Credit: Maria Luisa Mandingorra Llavata & Vicent Pons Alós

11TH EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON RELIGIOUS ART, RESTORATION & CONSERVATION
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11TH EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM ON RELIGIOUS ART, RESTORATION & CONSERVATION

PROCEEDINGS BOOK

Edited by María Luisa Vázquez de Ágredos-Pascual, Iulian Rusu, Claudia Pelosi, Luca Lanteri, Angela Lo Monaco and Nicolae Apostolescu
Dear Colleagues,

Several years ago I had the immense pleasure to attend my first European Symposium on Religious Art, Restoration and Conservation, the driving forces for which are Romania and professor Iulian Rusu. Even then I believed that an international meeting such as this Symposium was a hugely important scientific initiative for Europe for several reasons. Firstly, because of what heritage represents for any population, which is of course identity. International Cooperation Master Plans continue to invest in heritage because the research, intervention and value enhancement activities carried out in this area reinforce the Cultural Identity of our peoples, thus contributing to the Local Development of countries, in both rural and urban environments. Work in the field of Cultural Heritage therefore requires a commitment to strengthening the community and promoting Human Development. If, in addition, this work centers on religious Cultural Heritage, the commitment is even greater since this type of heritage encompasses countless traditions, customs, beliefs, rites, chants, sounds, smells, and other thousand-year-old elements that make up the rich intangible heritage to which each culture feels strongly united generation after generation This is a sacred matter because it reminds us all of who we are. If, for centuries religions have opened the borders between peoples and cultures, and these borders are continuing to open, the aim of this European Symposium on Religious Art, Restoration and Conservation has always been to create an environment in which experts from different countries and creeds from both East and West can come together and debate. In this way, this Symposium has become a space for promoting scientific exchange and progress in which religion does not act as a barrier between cultures but as the argument that unites us all and a means for raising social awareness. In this edition of the Symposium we welcome contributions from researchers from Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Middle East, Mexico, and other regions. Contained within these pages are the religious heritages of the three great Western religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) in their ancient and contemporary contexts, as well as Orthodox art and artistic manifestations from other cultural worldviews such as the ancient Mesoamerican. It is clear, therefore, that religion is capable of creating spaces for promoting union and dialogue that are as edifying from the human and scientific perspectives as this European Symposium. Finally, we should also highlight another aspect of this Symposium that helps to make it a melting pot of knowledge in a multitude of directions: its interdisciplinary nature. The researchers who will present their work belong to a wide range of fields and disciplines and include historians, historians of art, restorers, architects, archaeologists, geographers, engineers, chemists, physicists, philologists and journalists, as well as experts in mass social media in view of the importance of their work for increasing the visibility of Cultural Heritage.

Last year in the beautiful city of Prague, when it was decided to hold this year’s Symposium in Valencia, we were extremely grateful and honored to assume such an important legacy. The cultural and religious mosaic that Valencia has always been lends meaning and significance to this choice. The fact that this Symposium will be hosted by the Universitat de València, the oldest university in our region with over 500 years of history dedicated to education and research, underlines this meaning and significance. It is also underlined by the fact that the Faculty of Geography and History, given its total commitment to Heritage, Culture and Society, will be the mouthpiece for this international conference. We are sure that this 11th European Symposium on Religious Art, Restoration and Conservation will enhance the quality of previous Symposiums and lay the foundations for future editions.

Maria Luisa Vázque de Ágredos-Pascual
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BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE. RELIGIOUS ART IN SICILY IN THE DIARY OF A SPANISH TRAVELER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The diary of Antonio Desbrull y Boil De Arenos’s trip to Sicily offers the possibility to observe directly the perception of the sacred art of the author, characterized by an enlightened cultural profile, but far from the neoclassical taste that is the fundamental trait common to many of the contemporary travellers. Desbrull’s testimony also allows us to examine some main religious buildings on the island, the works contained therein and the architectural decoration, an expression of a baroque taste that strikes and fascinates the author. Sacred art is considered here as a mere aesthetic phenomenon, devoid of the spiritual dimension that lies at the basis of both the commissioning of the works and their realization.

Keywords: sources, historical, perspective, social

INTRODUCTION

In the context of travel literature on Sicily and the cultural phenomenon known as the Grand Tour, the figure of the noble Majorcan Antonio Desbrull y Boil De Arenos is an exception, both because in the period of Spanish rule the island never exercised a natural curiosity on the Iberians, so strong was the feeling of material correspondence with their land, and because even in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the fashion for travel to Sicily was stronger in Europe, not only the Spanish kept away, but was also reduced the dissemination in Spain of the books of foreign travellers to the island. The journey of the Marquis Desbrull y Boil is therefore known as a “precious and isolated tourist and literary episode” [1]. The work in which is reported the account of the trip to Sicily of the Spanish nobleman, entitled ‘Descripción del viaje hecho fuera de la España col el ilustre señor don A.D. y B., cavallero del hábito de San Juan y de la Real maestranza de Valencia, con todas las particularidades que hemos notado en las ciudades vistas’, was probably written by a secretary who was travelling with him and reports on an itinerary that began in Barcelona on 24 July 1789 and ended in Rome, probably between July and August of the following year [2]. Desbrull landed in Sicily on October 1, 1789, in Portopalo, three miles from Capo Passero, and arrived in early November in Palermo, where he remained twenty-one days [3]. Here he admired the organization of the city, governed by a Viceroy of ‘great reputation’ (Francesco d’Aquino, Prince of Caramanico), the urban layout of the city, marked by the intersection of Cassaro (now Corso Vittorio Emanuele) and Via Maqueda, and the beautiful nobility he observed during his walks. But it also exalts the ‘excellent’ churches and the Benedictine Monastery of San Martino delle Scale, where it was received with great respect and which it considers more splendid than that of Catania. The observations on religious buildings by Desbrull y Boil offer interesting hints for reflection on the perception of sacred art in the context of the travel literature of the second half of the eighteenth century, which affect not only the figure of the author mentioned here, but the entire European travel literature of the period.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The text of the anonymous author of the travel report of the Marquis Antonio Desbrull y Boil De Arenos, as published in the volume edited by Ferruccio Ramondino ‘La peste di Messina of 1743, Il terremoto di Calabria of 1783, Sicilia, Napoli e Roma, in three unpublished Spanish reports of the eighteenth century’, published in 1943 by the Stamperia Mossén Alcover of Palma di Majorca, has been examined. The text has been contextualized with the cultural profile of the author, outlined through the study of the bibliography relating to it and the analysis of his treatise production, with the historical-artistic studies relating to the monuments and works cited, and with the contemporary travel literature.

OUTCOMES

Knight of the Order of St. John of Malta, like his brother José [4], Antonio Desbrull and Boil De Arenos is fully involved in the cultural climate that is affirmed in Spain with the government of the Bourbons, marked in the cultural field by the
affirmation of the theories of the Enlightenment and their declination in every sector of public life. Desbrull’s social position guaranteed him a solid education and a political career that led him to be designated in 1812 as Political Head of Majorca [5]. His numerous writings show the profile of a strong supporter of physiocracy and enlightened despotism, oriented towards a moderate liberalism, for the fear aroused in him by the degeneration of the French Revolution before and after the Napoleonic campaigns. Desbrull probably arrived in Sicily from Naples and Syracuse was the first stop on his journey. Unlike contemporary travellers, who were also profoundly influenced by Enlightenment theories, here Desbrull was not fascinated by classical antiquities, giving only a small quote to the Fonte Aretusa, which he described as ‘muli mal conservada, de modo que sirve para lavatorio publico’, an observation that was almost identical in many English, French and German travellers of the time. From Syracuse, he moved to Catania, which he appreciated for the air of modernity that he breathed there, linked to the massive reconstruction to which the city was subjected after the catastrophic earthquake of 1693. Here he admires ‘la anchura de sus calles, rectas, largas y perfectamente ensasadas’ and the numerous ‘curiosidades’, among which the Benedictine Monastery [6]. The reconstruction of the monastery was begun in 1727. The construction of the church proceeded slowly until 1738, when it is documented the construction of the covered stone staircase that led to the new parlor by Giovan Battista Vaccarini, architect active in the main construction sites of the city, who directed the site until 1745. The direction of the works then passed to Francesco Battaglia, who completed the construction of the church and the southern wing of the monastery. Among the authors of the mixed marbles that characterize the decoration of the church and the monastery stands out Giovan Battista Marino, nephew of the homonym who was among the authors of the chapel of the Crucifix in the Cathedral of Monreale. Marino, one of the main exponents of the group of marble workers called to Catania by Bishop Pietro Galletti and Vaccarini, worked with the same Vaccarini at the main sites of the time, including the Benedictine monastery, the Cathedral, the Palazzo Senatorio and the church of Santa Chiara [7]. Desbrull expresses similar admiration for the Cathedral of Messina [8], at the time of his visit dominated by the canopy of the chapel of the Letter behind the apse, destroyed by the fire that broke out after the bombing of 1943 and later rebuilt, which framed the high altar with mixed marbles and bearing the icon of the Madonna of the Letter in the upper center [9], which then had to be covered with the golden mantle made by Innocenzo Mangani in 1659, now on display in the Museum of the Opera del Duomo [10]. Mangani himself collaborated in the realization of the canopy, begun in 1628 on a project by Simone Gulli and originally located in the right apse, where at the time there was the chapel of the Madonna della Lettera, together with Antonio Guerreria, Giacomo Calcini, Pietro Juvarra, Giuseppe, Giovan Battista, Nicolò and Placido Donia, Francesco and Giovanni Maria d’Aurelio, Francesco Caiazzo and the Neapolitan Andrea Gallo, who replaced Gulli in 1657 [11]. In addition to Mangani, both Juvarra and the Donias are mentioned among the major silversmiths of Messina at the time [12]. In confirmation of his inclination towards art chronologically closer to him, Desbrull does not make any mention of the Norman cathedral when he arrived in Cefalù, except for a canvas depicting Saints Peter and Paul, enriching the large number of his contemporaries who were characterized by indifference or violent aversion to medieval sacred art, sometimes dedicating invective heavy ones, for example, to the mosaic decoration of the Cathedral of Monreale. When he arrived in Palermo, Desbrull stayed there for three weeks, amusing himself with the beautiful nobility who frequented the numerous cafés, the walks, the Villa Giulia, the Botanical Garden and the numerous churches. The latter, as well as for the author, are of interest to most foreign travellers who visit the city in this period, so that the itinerary for their visit is often repeated identically from one travel report to another [13]. In addition to the cathedral, often mentioned for the royal tombs, the lapis lazuli tableaux by Cosimo Fanzago and the silver urn of Santa Rosalia [14], the churches that recur in the stories of travellers are those characterized by the decoration with mixed marbles [15] that so admires Desbrull in Catania and Messina: the church of Jesus of Casa Professa (Fig. 1), Santa Caterina (Fig. 2) and San Giuseppe dei Teatini, just to name those located along the axis of the Cassaro, a coordinate of fundamental reference for foreigners in Palermo [16]. The three sacred buildings effectively represent in their decorative apparatus the development of mixed decoration from the first half of the 17th century to the forties of the following century, arousing admiration in travellers of all nationalities for the richness of the materials, the virtuosity of the execution, the luxuriant polychromy, and probably constituting
the most characteristic expression of Palermo’s Baroque.

CONCLUSIONS
The travel diary of Antonio Desbrull y Boil De Arenos offers the opportunity to observe the attitude of an 18th century illuminist towards Sicilian sacred art of the time. Immune to neoclassical seductions, the author’s attention is focused on artistic events chronologically closer to him, of which he appreciates the modernity and richness. His visit to Sicily therefore takes place among walks with the nobility, evenings at the theatre and visits to sacred places, experienced as art treasures, rather than as places of spirituality, and as manifestations of an aesthetic taste that, although attributable to the full baroque, also manages to fascinate Desbrull, culturally inclined to the rationalism typical of the Enlightenment sensibility, yet far from the neoclassical rigor that is the most characteristic aesthetic feature of the Enlightenment. The author thus fits into the context of the travel literature of the time as an exception, precisely because of his distance from the most common aesthetic canons, and at the same time offers the opportunity to examine the main manifestations of sacred art of the period, which he lives as a mere aesthetic phenomenon, devoid of the spiritual value that instead inspired its customers and its performers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Fig. 1 – Palermitan workmaships, mixed marble decorations, last quarter of the seventeenth century, 
Palermo, Chiesa del Gesù

Fig. 2 – Sicilian workmaships, mixed marble decorations, end of the seventeenth century, 
Palermo, Chiesa di Santa Caterina