

Il mosaico della Basilica della Natività di Betlemme. Indagini chimiche sulle tessere vitree

The Mosaics of the Nativity Church, Bethlehem. Analytical Investigation of the Glass Tesserae

Marco Verità

The attribution of the mosaic decoration of the Nativity church in Bethlehem has been discussed with different conclusions. In the Late Middle Ages the mosaics were thought to date back to Constantinian times, or they were attributed to the reconstruction of the church building made by the Byzantine emperor Justinian in the 6th c.

According to the latest studies the complete mosaic decoration (only remnants in five areas are preserved today) would have been accomplished middle of the 12th c. under the patronage of the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus, the king of Jerusalem Amalric I and the Latin bishop of Bethlehem Roul as attested in a dedicatory inscription in the apse.

Nevertheless, two different decoration phases are supposed by some scholars: the transept and the southern wall mosaics were to be considered as belonging to the 12th c., while the northern wall mosaics of the nave were to be dated back to the beginning of the 8th c.

About thirty glass tesserae were sampled from the five mosaicated areas of the Basilica with the aim of ascertaining their quantitative chemical composition and identifying the colouring and opacification techniques. These data were then compared with databases of analyses of glass tesserae, in the attempt to establish provenance and dating of the tesserae.

The analyses disclose a complex situation; the tesserae may come from two-three workshops in the Byzantine and Islamic area. One specialized in the production of quartz opacified coloured tesserae, another specialised in making turquoise to green and yellow tesserae opacified with tin oxide, while the manufacture of metal leaf tesserae could have taken place in a third specialized site, or in one of the workshops where the coloured tesserae were made. The probable reuse of ancient tesserae opacified with bone ash recovered from dismantled mosaics dated between the 5th and the 10th c. in the Levantine area (maybe even from the Basilica) has been also attested.

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Venere piange la morte di Adone. Sguardi incrociati tra Michele Desubleo e Nicolas Régnier

Venere piange la morte di Adone ("Venus lamenting over Adonis' death"). Mutual glances between Michele Desubleo (1602-1676) and Nicolas Régnier (1588-1667)

Diego Cauzzi, Stefania Girometti, Claudio Seccaroni

This case study of "Venus lamenting over Adonis death" by Michele Desubleo in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna has three goals. Firstly, to make some light on the pictorial technique and the choices of materials by this Flemish-born and Italian-naturalised painter, whose works have never been investigated. The second aim is to show how Desubleo reworked ideas by Nicolas Régnier, his elder stepbrother, avoiding mere citations or repetitions of Régnier's structures and aiming to create strictly personal compositions. The third finality is to illustrate how Desubleo could be independent from Guido Reni, his master and model, by choosing themes less familiar to the master's repertoire and his circle, both for subject and for composition.

By introducing variations on the subject and mixing various canons of beauty, Desubleo brought up to the Bolognese milieu important novelties from Roman and Franco-Flemish traditions. This innovation made Michele Desubleo a much-appreciated artist among collectors of the seventeenth century.

It is therefore important to reassign him the merit that earned him the title of "pittore squisitissimo" (truly great painter).

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ABSTRACT

La disinfezione delle patine biologiche sui manufatti lapidei: biocidi chimici e naturali a confronto

Disinfection of biological patinas on stone artefacts: chemical and natural biocides compared

Marco Bartolini, Anna Maria Pietrini

In the present study, the efficacy of some biocides (New Des 50, Algophase, Algochene, Preventol RI80) and of 3 essential oils (*Origanum vulgare*, *Thymus vulgaris* and *Syzygium aromaticum*) was evaluated *in situ* for the disinfection of the biodeteriogenous photosynthetic microflora on outdoors stone artifacts.

The experimentation was carried out on two Carrara white marble tombstones, located in the Non-Catholic Cemetery for the Strangers in Rome, colonized by cyanobacteria and green algae with epilithic and casmoendolithic growth.

The evaluation of the biocides was carried out through analyses *in situ* and in laboratory.

It was found that the quaternary ammonium salts, above all Preventol RI/80, are more effective for the disinfection of complex biological patinas respect the essential oils and the biocides Algochene and Algophase.

Archeologia e architettura: il 'tema comune' delle coperture

Archaeology and architecture: the common thread of coverings

Giovanni Carbonara

Investigating this subject requires an interdisciplinary approach: first and foremost obviously archaeological but at the same time technical (regarding conservation requirements, the nature of nearby structures as well as questions on physical, technical and environmental matters) and, immediately followed by architectural matters (concerning relationships with the environment and the landscape, the urban context, the requirements of effective presentation, fruition and accessibility).

Faced with each new case, we have to reconsider the whole question and the relationships between problems of historical and philological interpretations, technical and conservation problems and the specific aspects of the project, knowing that it is not possible to find easy solutions a priori – due to the peculiar characteristics of each monument and every site.

Some of the best examples are often produced by youngish architects working in relatively small professional firms since in fact the most convincing answers do not come from routine teamwork but from a personal and generous touch, not delegable, which requires an artisan dedication to a unique and demanding commitment.

In the end, a proper attitude must be not only conservation-minded, defending the accepted historical and artistic evidence, but also intelligently innovative for all those decisions that, rather than restoration, might be better defined as protecting, safeguarding and valorising the environment.