

Call for papers

11th International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture

THE MATERIALITY OF POLYCHROMY

9-11 November 2022, Rome, Musei Capitolini and Museo Nazionale Romano

Introduction:

In the study of the polychromy of ancient Mediterranean sculpture and architecture, the materiality of the object under investigation is a key factor. Most often textual evidence is entirely lacking and all we have is scant physical evidence, reduced to traces of the original surface treatments on architectural and sculptural monuments. In order to detect, characterize and interpret these traces, as well as ensure their long-term preservation, an in-depth technological investigation of their materials is required.

Considering the large variety of supports on which polychromy was applied (marble and other stones, bronze, clay, wood and ivory, etc.) and its own diversity/complexity in terms of materials and application techniques, an interdisciplinary collaboration is by now a recognized prerequisite of ancient polychromy research: classical archaeology, and all the other disciplines in the study of antiquity, as well as technical art history, must work together with archaeometry and conservation science.

In architecture, what we know of polychromy comes mainly from monumental sacred and public buildings. There, the choice of materials for architecture was often both symbolic and defined by the necessities of the constructions: wood, stone, and terracotta. The documented use of bronze as an integrated part of a building should not be overlooked. For architectural sculpture, stone and terracotta prevailed, often with details added in metal. The analysis of rich and important polychrome elements of buildings in the form of wall-paintings and mosaics it must certainly be taken into account, but lies beyond the ambit of this Round Table.

In sculpture, greater freedom reigned. Across time and space, from the colossal to the miniature, and as determined by function, cost and taste, a far wider variety of materials were used. Polychromy studies have hitherto focused on sculpture in stone and statuettes in terracotta. The polychromy of large-scale terracotta sculpture remains virtually unexplored, whether Greek or Etruscan. Only recently has attention been paid to the polychromy of bronze sculpture and to sculpture in ivory and precious stones. This is the case also of 'polymateriality', meaning the combination of a variety of materials in a sculpture – acroliths, chryselephantine statues, locks of hair made of lead, inlaid eyes, etc.

The format of the program will be hybrid, analogue and online. It will follow the model established by the 10th Round Table, 2020 in Berlin, with **two main sections devoted respectively to a theme and to Recent Research**.

1. For the theme **‘The Materiality of Polychromy’**, the aim would be to achieve a representative balance between contributions on archaeological aspects and those focusing on conservation science issues.

Importance will be given to the presentation of state-of-the-art technologies and methods of documentation, examination and analysis of ancient polychromy. Submissions on new multi-analytical protocols and original data-bases are also encouraged.

Topics of specific interest for the thematic session could be:

- Materiality and production of colours. Identification of hitherto unknown colour materials, production sites, technologies of production, economic aspects and trade.
- Materiality as a tool for attributing/dating objects. Standardization vs. local particularism in the use of techniques and materials, identification of specific workshop practices, evolution of chromatic patterns and colour fashion according to production areas and time.
- Materiality and visibility of polychromy/materiality as the basis of aesthetic experience. Discussion of aesthetic issues related to specific application techniques, degree to which a process is evident, texture of paint and variable thickness of the paint layers, effects of shine and depth, colour combinations etc.
- Intellectual engagement with materiality/materiality and the artists. How artists deal with materials? Artistic choices and social practices (cost of materials, properties, qualities ex. durability, toxicity etc.).
- Materiality and cultural meaning. Colour and cult, and the city, and the divine etc.
- Materiality and the senses. Emotions communicated through specific materials (intrinsic value of certain colours).
- Materiality and physicality of colour. Aspects that can be sensed by viewers. Between ancient materiality and modern physicality. What do we sense today vis à vis the ancient viewer and how does time affect our reading? This goes together with Materiality and endurance-time/weathering processes and conservation science issues/aesthetics of fragmentation and loss.
- Materiality and contemporary approach/reproducing materiality, problems and perspectives, museum communication and exhibition of polychrome artefacts. Should we use the same materials to reproduce modern reconstructions? What is the role of 3D reproductions through advanced technologies? Do we need to reproduce the materiality or only the appearance of ancient polychromy?

2. The section dedicated to **Recent Research** will be not related with the main theme, but it will host papers about polychromy on marble and stone, in accordance with previous meetings.

Abstracts (.doc or .docx format) should indicate the title of the paper, a short summary (max 1000 characters), authors and co-authors if any, affiliation(s) and - if available - an image (.jpg or .tif format) of the topic with caption. The image will be shared in open access before the Round Table.

Official languages of the XI Round Table will be English and Italian. In case of Italian abstracts, an English translation is also required.

Please indicate if your contribution refers to the thematic session or to the recent research session.

Abstracts should be sent to 11thpolychromyroundtable@gmail.com by **20 April 2022**.

The scientific committee will review the submissions and inform you on the decision by May 2022.

Papers should be no longer than 20 minutes, followed by a short discussion.

After the Round Table, proceedings will be published in English, after peer-review.

Organizing committee

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Paolo Liverani (Università di Firenze)

Nadia Agnoli (Musei Capitolini)

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