

Online Conference - 2021

November 11th - 12th

New Needs for Modern Museums

& Future Steps

ICOM international
council
of museums

ICAMT ICOM
international committee
for architecture
and museum techniques

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PDF ISBN 978-88-97910-02-2

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Day 1 - November 11
Time: 14:10 CET

Stefano Della Torre

Milano Politecnico

Stefano Della Torre is a full professor in Conservation. Graduated in Civil Engineering and in Architecture, in 2012-2019 he served as the Director of the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering in Politecnico di Milano. Stefano Della Torre is a President of the Italian Scientific Society for Architectural Restoration (SIRA). He is the author of more than 380 scientific publications.



Day 1 - November 11
Time: 14:20 CET

Maddalena d'Alfonso

Md'A Design Agency

Maddalena d'Alfonso is an architect. In 2019, she founded the Md'A Design Agency, a Milan based cultural consultancy and architectural design studio, offering sustainable solutions for architecture, design and cultural projects, emphasizing on accessibility to visual culture. The ICAMT Board Member is qualified Associate Professor, following the *cum laude* doctorate in Interior Architecture, Museography and Set-up. The architect has received the 2016 Red Dot Award and the Representation Medal of the Presidency of the Italian Republic for her previous projects.

Stefano Della Torre

Former Director of the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering - Politecnico di Milano, Italy

The focus of the present contribution is the need of a systemic vision of the museum functions, which are so many and sometimes are seen separately. ICAMT and Politecnico di Milano started their cooperation in the frame of the executive master program on “Management dei Beni e Istituzioni culturali” (MABIC), whose perspective is exactly to develop “transversal” skills, as every day managers have to bridge different issues. A museum requires high specialization in different fields, there are of en a special theme and a special mission characterizing the institution, technical issues require technical excellence as well, but the solution of problems require the capability to see the connections and to exploit the opportunities.

Museums are no longer understood as steady repositories, their mission, and broadly speaking the mission of cultural activities at large, is to connect people, to foster citizenship, to engage individual and to strengthen communities (Sacco, Ferilli & Tavano Blessi 2018).

Not paradoxically, museums are laboratories for cognitive innovation. Museums are required to stand in the middle of digital and green transition. A

bit of augmented reality, some QR codes, websites including virtual visits, online ticketing, and so on, are the first signals of a change, which still seems to be far from the bulk of what digitization could be. On the other hand, reducing the energy consumption is good and correct, but humankind needs much more, and places where culture is created could give a terrific contribution to building awareness and engagement.

That kind of tasks require to face new challenges in museum management, encompassing the role of technologies and the kind of organization, which has to meet the needs of creating and exploiting connections, without overlooking some missions that in some cases are deemed as not mandatory (such as research). This is the reason why our executive master program takes a great benefit by the contents on architecture and building technology of museums, actually speaking not only of museums, but of historic buildings at large as a matter of protection and valorization; and also the reason why soft skills, understood as the art of collaborating on the basis of a holistic vision of the organization, and digitization have a special place in the program.

To cite an example, the Museo Egizio in Turin is providing cutting edge examples of how digital technology can be central for innovative researches, attractive for communication, but also a tool to improve the integrated management of the many functions of a museum, developing and interoperable environment (Greco, Rossi & Della Torre 2020).

To give another example, in the frame of the MABIC program new interesting perspectives have been developed for a special kind of cultural heritage, that is the heritage of universities.

The history of Italian universities produced a long-term tradition of studies: since 1997 fostered by a dedicated Centre involves several Italian universities, being part of a European network on Digital Academic History, which every year organises a conference on the development of digital tools in the field of academic history and heritage. As for University museums, at international level, the working group UMAC exists in the frame of ICOM, besides the UNIVERSEUM network. The Università di Modena e Reggio promoted a National network including several museums, mostly devoted to scientific themes.

In our perspective, based on experience in Italian universities, a positive transition is ongoing from small collections owned and managed inside the departments, to integrated management models, in which the functions are thoroughly analysed and attributed to the actors in an effective

way. Centralised management models for university museums have been set up by some athenaeums, such as Bologna, Palermo, Torino, Padua: as every change there are resistances and sometimes steps backwards, but the direction is clear, and the scope is getting wider, including a more comprehensive planned conservation and valorization of historic buildings. Many universities are still the proud owner of their old colleges, and also the youngest universities have often got the task to regenerate old abandoned complexes. The case of SiMuA (Museum System of the University) in Palermo is a paradigmatic example of an enduring commitment, targeting non only the development, but also the dissemination of scientific knowledge, including the architectural assets. On that line, the recent inauguration of the MUniPa (Museum of the University), in the restored spaces of the monumental complex of the Steri (Di Natale, Nobile & Travagliato 2020), is one of the practices enabling Palermo University to interact with society, by activities of public engagement. It's a way of developing the role of universities as leaders of social innovation (Fassi et al. 2020).

The mutual influence developed between the universities and the cities where they have had their premises is an extremely interesting example of coevolution. Such relationships, being decisive in the very foundation of the institutions, influenced their development over the centuries, with important consequences on demography,

economy, culture and the urban structure. The understanding of this point becomes a basis for the management strategies of university heritage, but this is only an example of how broadening the vision can contribute to a more successful and timely management of museums, making also the implementation of technologies more integrated and sustainable.

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