

## Reviews

# Lights on...cultural heritage and museums!

## Review of the International Congress Porto, 20-22 July 2015

by Paula Menino Homem



The International Congress *Lights On... Cultural Heritage and Museums!* was held at the University of Porto (UP), Portugal, on 20-22 July 2015. It was an initiative of the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory (LabCR) which includes as co-organizers the Interdisciplinary Research Centre Culture, Space and Memory (CITCEM), the Department of Heritage Studies (DCTP), all units at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLUP), the Northern Regional Directorate of Culture (DRCN) and the New York Conservation Foundation (NYCF).

Facing serious times of change, museums and other cultural institutions, discuss and reflect, in an interdisciplinary way on their role in resilience, sustainability and quality of life in 21<sup>st</sup>-century society. The 21<sup>st</sup>-century is seen as the *Century of Light*,

as light and light-based technologies are recognised as major economic drivers with the potential to revolutionise it.

The congress coincided with the international initiatives on the International Year of Light 2015 (<http://www.light2015.org/>; <http://ail2015.org/>), promulgated by UNESCO. The concept of light was explored in its broader meaning, that is, not only the form of energy associated with the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum but also all other invisible radiation; one aim was to promote awareness for the potential and crucial role of technology in access, research, communication, mediation and preservation of cultural heritage, especially in an inclusive museum context.

Assuming a multi and interdisciplinary character, this event strengthened the co-operation between professional, scientific and educational communities and provided a lively, fruitful and multi-generational platform for sharing experiences and knowledge about important scientific and technological advances in the field.

The congress was organised into eight thematic sessions, linking up and focusing on the following topics:

1. Science of vision. The perception of colour as a function of illumination
2. Lighting systems in museums / historical buildings / monuments. Requirements and scientific and technological developments
3. Built environment. Solutions. Energy resources and sustainability
4. Study and safeguard of heritage associated with the production of energy and electric lighting
5. Scientific examination of heritage and analytical applications using different radiation. Research on
  - Materials, technologies, functions and producers
  - Alteration processes and diagnosis
6. Technologies of communication and mediation
7. Curative conservation and restoration
8. Integrated risk management. Preventive conservation.

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The sessions were concluded with a question and answer session moderated by experts.

Luís Miguel Bernardo (University of Porto, Portugal), João Pernão (University of Lisbon, Portugal), Matija Strlič (University College London, United Kingdom) and Jonathan Ashley-Smith (independent consultant, United Kingdom) were the invited speakers and the number of registered participants totalled 114. Of them, 51 participated as (co)author, with oral presentations, posters and workshops. Several countries were represented including Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States. Integrated in this group were several students from different scientific fields who had the opportunity to discuss the results of their research in oral and poster presentations. Together with other (co)authors, 21 universities were represented, as well as many cultural institutions and public and private entities of recognised international strategic importance to the field.

Five workshops ran in parallel, all animated by motivated and experienced lecturers, very interesting participants and traditional and innovative, state-of-the-art resources:

1. Multi-light Reflectance Technologies: The RTI and PS Techniques for Museum Collections and Field Work, by Hendrik Hameeuw (University of Leuven and Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, Belgium)
2. Workshop for Conservation: Microscopy and Documentation 2D/3D Measurements for Surface Characterization, by Giancarlo Parma (Leica Microsystems)
3. X-ray Fluorescence: Principles and Practice, by Lee Drake (Bruker and University of New Mexico, United States)
4. Using Natural Light in Historic Properties, by David Thickett and Boris Pretzel (English Heritage and Victoria & Albert Museum, respectively, United Kingdom)
5. Microfading Testing: A Tool for Informed Policy Development and Materials Testing, by Jacob Thomas and Tomasz Łojewski (Gothenburg University, Sweden, and Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, respectively).

In addition to the scientific programme, a social and cultural programme was developed in collaboration with different organisations. These social events helped in promoting interaction, dialogue, easier collaborative relationships, shared knowledge and, according to participants, enriched their overall experience providing memories of pleasant moments and experiences.

Among the participants there were also professionals from heritage allied fields and private companies. An electronic publication related to the event is now being prepared, to be published in spring 2016.

To learn more about the congress, please, visit: <https://lightsonchm.wordpress.com/>.



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