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Youth in Conservation of Cultural Heritage, YOCOCU 2012\*

## Preface - YOCOCU 2012, an efficient collision!

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\* Event organized by Italian Association of Conservation Scientists (IA-CS) and University of Antwerp

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In chemistry for a collision to be efficient, i.e. breaking atomic bonds allowing the formation of new molecules and compounds, the reagents have to collide with an energy that is proportional to the bond strength and a direction that depends on the molecular geometry. This is what happened during YOCOCU 2012 (YOUTH in CONSERVATION of CULTURAL heritage), that took place at the Hof van Liere in Antwerp, Belgium on 18-20 June 2012.

Young professionals, researchers, students and experts working in the field of cultural heritage met and confronted each other, showing a remarkable strength and will of interaction that made this event a real space of discussion, formation and exchange of scientific and cultural competences. A great relevance was given to the future of the young within the conservation of cultural heritage and to the role that the young have to assume in order to direct the future of this sector.

We wish to thank Nicoletta Barbabietola, Antonella B. Chiarandà and Alice Elia for the support in every phase of this adventure. Moreover we acknowledge the precious contribution of Ernesto Borrelli, Luigi Campanella, Enrico Ciliberto, Hilde De Clercq, Koen Janssens and all the members of the Scientific and Organizing Committee. YOCOCU 2012 was made possible by our host institution, the University of Antwerp, together with IA-CS, the Conservation-Restoration Department of Artesis Hogeschool Antwerpen and our sponsors Thermo Scientific, S.T.Art Test and Opus Instruments. We also want to thank all the reviewers who helped us so much, improving the quality and scientific value of this Procedia issue.

YOCOCU has entirely met its mission, hosting in three days 142 participants, 50% of which conservation scientists, 20% restorers and the remaining 30% from different disciplines. The 120 works that were presented, 46 talks and 74 posters, allowed an interdisciplinary confrontation on many different topics related to cultural heritage conservation. For a full list of participants and contributions, see <http://www.yococu.com>.

The interested participation, rich with questions and interventions, contributed to the success of this event, together with the communication and exchange network built by the participants to the past YOCOCU meetings.

This edition, compared with the previous one (Palermo, Italy, 2010), has shown a large increase of the number of countries represented (34), with two thirds of the participants from Europe and one third from the rest of the world. With this respect it is worth mentioning the presence of researchers and professionals from India, Mexico, Cuba, USA, India and Pakistan, and the confirmation of countries already represented in the previous edition such as Azerbaijan, Turkey and Chile.

In the 2010 edition in Palermo, the participants demonstrated, from the first instant, the will of sharing their experiences. This time in Antwerp the process was slower, after a first barrier of prudence was overcome. In fact the worldwide economic downturn has strongly touched the cultural heritage sector, with sharp effects especially on the younger members, who see the opportunity of being employed in the area for which they studied becoming smaller and smaller. Obviously, this general emotion limits the will of interacting. YOCOCU has treated this topic, with contributions that suggested how the creation of a network may be the solution to help and inform each other quickly (e.g. on EU projects and job offers).

Sustainability, meaning sharing resources and competences and using new methods and products that allow a better respect of the environment and cultural heritage itself, was the main topic of the 2012 Round Table. Regarding the scientific contents of the meeting, two main poles were present: on the one side many examples of case-studies and best practice of conservation-restoration, and on the other side a large number of archaeometric contributions, with the use of highly sophisticated techniques, that can only occasionally be applied to routine conservation. In the final discussion, new ideas and possibilities for the future of our network appeared, such as a further internationalization and the export of YOCOCU to an extra-European country, where there is a high need of expertise and exchange of knowledge in the field of heritage preservation.

That is why the Organizing Committee has decided to approve the candidature, proposed by the MIRAS Social Organization, of Baku, Azerbaijan as the next host city. We invite you to read the special feature of this Procedia issue, a contribution by our future hosts highlighting the efforts done in Azerbaijan to promote and preserve cultural heritage.

See you all in Baku in 2014!

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