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Wood of Chestnut in Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Chestnut wood was used as a structural material for important wooden building frames and artefacts of demo ethno anthropological interest. The wood of this species is found less frequently in artistic artefacts. So the aim of this work is to examine some artefacts of both artistic and above all devotional typologies.

Conservation problems are addressed with examples, in relation to modern methods of operation.

INTRODUCTION

The analytical approach to a wooden artefact of historical-artistic or demo ethno anthropological interest must be related to wood technology aspects. So, any intervention on such artefacts, from enhancement to study, from preservation to restoration, must consider several aspects: the wooden species, the deterioration processes, as well as the environment parameters like relative humidity and temperature (Genco et al., 2009). In fact the idea of work physicality as a value, has developed an interdisciplinary approach, with a stronger attention to diagnostic research (Brandi, 2005). Such a method has allowed a possible anamnesis and preserving interventions based on a scientific method which guides restorer's choices (De Santis et al., 2009). Diagnostic investigations provide often more information about an historical-artistic as well as philological study of the work of art (Corona, 1991, 1994).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper makes an examination of some panel paintings whose historical and artistic value is closely linked to their devotional significance. The Triptych of the Saviour in Tivoli (Rome), The Virgin of the Vena in the Sanctuary of the Holy Spring of the 'Vena' in Piedimonte Etneo (Catania, Italy) and the votive tablets in the Basilica of the 'Madonna della Quercia' (Viterbo, Italy) will be taken under examination. These panels are realized with chestnut wood and the conservation problems will be discussed during the treatment of the individual cases. The last paragraph will shortly deal with the disinfestations methods in the field of wooden artefacts with a view on some new methodologies.

THE TRIPTYCH OF THE SAVIOUR IN TIVOLI

In Tivoli's Cathedral a wooden panel with the image of the Saviour is conserved. This panel (75×160 cm) is characterized by a golden background and it is situated in the