



Casa Professa, Palermo

# Stones of Palermo

## Cultures of Marble at the Mediterranean Crossroads

Summer School 10–16 July 2022

Sicily's "entrails," writes the Palermitan canon Antonino Mongitore (1663–1743), are "rich with mines of porphyry, jasper and the most valuable stones." This material wealth and its architectural and decorative applications have, at a crossroads of Mediterranean artistic and artisanal traditions, made an indelible contribution to the artistic and cultural identity of the city of Palermo. From imperial splendour to Byzantine refinement, from Siculo-Norman geometric intricacies to lavish baroque intarsia, from revivalist reinterpretations to a severe rationalist or indeed fascist rhetoric, marble and precious stones have formed a persistent cultural factor in the city. Taken together, they tell a story of contaminations and exchanges, of technical and cultural transfers.

From the Middle Ages to today, this summer school will trace that story. Marble and decorative stones will be approached as a key to understanding the complex tensions between the construction of a local artistic and cultural identity, the processes of negotiation at the crossroads of various cultural traditions, and the city's embeddedness in both a local and global ecology. Exploring the uses and associative meanings of marble in Palermo through the combined perspectives of art and architectural history, archaeology, heritage studies, geology, and the history of science, we will examine the material, technical and aesthetic values of these materials, their use and reception throughout history, and their role for the valorisation of Sicilian cultural heritage. Students will be able to discuss these issues with a group of experts, attend daily lectures at the monumental Palazzo Butera and gain first-hand experiences through on-site visits in the city of Palermo as well as excursions to Monreale and the quarries of Custonaci.

The summer school is organised by Prof. Joris van Gastel and Dr. Ariane Varela Braga (Zurich) and will involve contributions by Prof. Katrin Albrecht (St. Gallen), Nora Guggenbühler, MA (Zurich), Dr. Ruggero Longo (Lucca/Rome), Prof. Giuseppe Montana (Palermo), Prof. Patrizio Pensabene (Rome), and Prof. Stefano Piazza (Palermo).

We invite graduate and post-graduate (MA and PhD) students from the history of art and architecture as well as related disciplines to apply with a motivation letter and CV to be sent to the organisers at [joris.vangastel@uzh.ch](mailto:joris.vangastel@uzh.ch) by 15 May. Participation fees amount to 700 euro with accommodation or 300 euro without accommodation. Breakfasts, lunches, coffee breaks, visits, excursions, lectures, and further activities are covered by the fees. Common language will be English, a passive knowledge of Italian is recommended.

*In cooperation with the Università degli Studi di Palermo  
and the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome*



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