



POLYCHROME SCULPTURE:

TOOL MARKS, CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES, DECORATIVE PRACTICE AND ARTISTIC TRADITION

Volume I & II Edited by Kate Seymour
Volume III Edited by Stefanie Litjens & Kate Seymour



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POLYCHROME SCULPTURE: TOOL MARKS, CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES, DECORATIVE PRACTICE AND ARTISTIC TRADITION

Papers and Posters

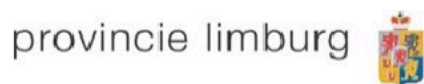
Proceedings of three Interim Meetings of ICOM-CC Working Group *Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration*

Volume I: Maastricht, October 2010 ~ Hosted by SRAL, Maastricht

Volume II: Glasgow, April 2012 ~ Hosted by Glasgow Life, Glasgow

Volume III: Tomar, May 2013 ~ Hosted by Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Tomar

Volume III: Stefanie Litjens & Kate Seymour
(Editors)



Front Cover Photograph: Niklaus Weckmann, workshop (active in Ulm) *St. George* ca. 1510, limewood (tilia sp.), Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen

Proceedings of three Interim Meetings of ICOM-CC Working Group *Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration*

Polychrome Sculpture: Tool Marks and Construction Techniques

(Maastricht, 2010)

Polychrome Sculpture: Artistic Tradition and Construction Techniques

(Glasgow, 2012)

Polychrome Sculpture: Decorative Practice and Artistic Tradition

(Tomar, 2013)

Selection of papers:

Kate Seymour: Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration (Maastricht, October 2010; Glasgow, April 2012; Tomar, May 2013)

Arnold Truyen: Assistant Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration (Maastricht, October 2010; Glasgow, April 2012)

Stephanie de Roemer: GlasgowLife, Burrell Collection, Glasgow, UK (Glasgow, 2012)

Ana Bidarra: Assistant Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration (Tomar, May 2013)

Conference Organisation:

Maastricht 2010:

Kate Seymour & Arnold Truyen
Assisted by: Siska Losse and Andrea Retrae

Glasgow 2012:

Kate Seymour & Stephanie de Roemer
Assisted by: Muriel King and Angel Puck

Tomar 2013:

Kate Seymour & Ana Bidarra
Assisted by: Merel Lantman, Claudia Falcao, João Coroado, Agnès Le Gac, Ricardo Triães, and Antonio Joao Cruz.

Conference Hosts:

Maastricht 2010:

Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg,
Maastricht, The Netherlands

Glasgow 2012:

Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums /
Glasgow Life, Glasgow, UK

Tomar 2013:

Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Tomar,
Portugal

Editors of the Proceedings:

Volume I & II. Kate Seymour: Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration. With the help of Assistant Coordinators Clare Heard and Ana Bidarra.

Volume III. Stefanie Litjens: Assistant Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration (2015-2017). Kate Seymour: Coordinator ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration (2008-2014). With the help of Coordinator Stephanie de Roemer and Assistant Coordinator Clare Heard.

Preface

'Polychrome Sculpture: Tool Marks and Construction Techniques' was the first of three Interim Meetings organised by the ICOM-CC Working Group Sculpture, Polychromy, and Architectural Decoration during the period 2010-2013 which focused on construction processes and decorative practice for polychrome sculptures. Papers given at the 2010 meeting covered the study of tool marks found on sculptures that relate to the construction process, whether these be related to the tools used to carve or mould the support or the periphery aids used by artisan carvers in their working practice, such as work benches or clamps. Registering, documenting and investigating the evidence of the working process can give insight into studio practice and if a large enough body of evidence is collected, may even provide tentative attribution to a specific studio or workshop. The meeting was hosted by the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (SRAL), in Maastricht and was attended by around 60 international specialists in the field of polychrome sculpture. Volume I of this compendium includes six of the nine papers and four of the five posters presented at the meeting.

The second meeting 'Polychrome Sculpture: Artistic Tradition and Construction Techniques' followed on in the theme outlined in 2010. This meeting was hosted at the Burrell Collection by Glasgow Life Museums, in Glasgow, UK in 2012. The two day symposium focused on artistic traditions within the field of polychrome sculpture. Papers were selected to follow on from themes touched upon in the preceding meeting in Maastricht, focusing on how artistic traditions influenced construction processes. Artistic practice from the Netherlands to Portugal, from the medieval to more modern times was outlined and links between different countries were emphasised. Seventeen papers and seven posters were presented during the meeting, of which twelve papers and six are published in Volume II of this compendium.

The third interim meeting Polychrome Sculpture: Decorative Practice and Artistic Tradition reviewed how decorative practice was linked to artistic tradition. Here seventeen papers and seventeen posters were presented, the majority of which are published in Volume III of this compendium. These focused on the surface effects created by artisans working on polychrome sculpture. Several decorative techniques have been addressed: painting techniques from different regions and epochs, gilding, estofado, use of incised and punched patterns, varnishes, lacquers, applications, and conservation methodology used to deal with challenging problems. Presentations showed that local practitioners are influenced by international taste and developments. The meeting was hosted and jointly organised by the Instituto Politecnico de Tomar (IPT) in Tomar Portugal.

Volume III

Polychrome Sculpture: Decorative Practice and Artistic Tradition (Tomar, 2013)

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Polychromy in modern Italian sculpture. New perspectives and case studies of works by Marino Marini and Leoncillo Leonardi.

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Picasso's influence on Italian art was great after the Second World War. Sculptors as well as painters, found in his work an inexhaustible source of inspiration [1]. Marino Marini (1901-1980) and Leoncillo Leonardi (1915-1968) were among the major Italian sculptors of that time. Notwithstanding their differences, it is interesting to compare their conception and use of polychromy in that period as a way to face and recreate the revolutionary pictorial approach of Picasso.

Marino Marini started his career at the end of the 1920s, and his focus on polychromy was influenced by the painted surfaces of the recently rediscovered Etruscan tombs and sculptures. Featuring a great curiosity towards various artistic sources from all over the world, he added to the major interest in Etruscan art the update to the artistic sources from the farthest areas, such as the Chinese Tang Dynasty ceramics and medieval wooden sculpture. The many sculptures Marini made on the subject of the horse and rider point out the key role played by the ancient sources in the reception and interpretation of Picasso's legacy [3]. *Little Rider* is a polychrome terracotta made in 1942 [Carandente 1998, 124-125]. The artist applied layers of colour directly on the surface, without any preparation underneath. The use of strokes to shape the essential structure in the forms echoed Picasso's late cubist work of the 1930s, whereas the use of subtle colours, the geometric decoration of the rider, and the overall effect of opacity refer to archaic objects, namely Etruscan terracottas. Marini resorted to this artistic background in his larger size work as well, such as in the famous *Rider* (The Town's Guardian Angel), made in 1949 [Carandente 1998, 236-237]. As usual in Marini, there are many versions in different materials, one of which features polychrome wood, a favoured material for the larger scale sculptures from the beginning of the 1930s. The artist drew the iconography of the upright *Rider* and the use of wood from medieval sculptures of Northern Europe. However, Marini applied colour in an unusual way compared to the traditional medieval technique of polychromy. In fact, as in the above mentioned small terracotta, the artist did not apply any preparation layer underneath the polychrome layers, so the rough wooden surfaces are visible through the colour. This effect recalls another 'primitive' source, namely the polychrome Sub-Saharan wooden idols. By using a very essential palette of earthy tones and highlighting the basic contours of the figures through bold dark lines, the artist conveyed the sense of a pure, quite geometric structure underneath the figurative subject matter. The 'abstract' concern for the structure of reality was a key issue in the heritage of Picasso's cubism in postwar Italy, that Marini precociously showed in his work. The iconography itself, linked to the symbolism of the surviving western tradition after the tragedy of the war, is akin to the social engagement conveyed by *Guernica*, the most renowned work by the Spanish master.

In the same years, in Rome, Leoncillo Leonardi made two sculptures, *Telephone Operator* and *Typist* [4] [Carloni 1979, 117-118]. The technique is really different from that used by Marini. In fact, they are polychrome enamelled terracottas, featuring different concerns for decoration and sculpture. Marini was older than Leoncillo, and considered his work within the 'classic' opposition between the practices of painting and sculpture, so he conceived polychromy as basically a sort of three-dimensional painting. Significantly, he was a prolific painter and draftsman [5]. On the other hand, Leoncillo belonged to a younger generation, so he was more experimental in techniques and practices. In fact, the conception and practice of making three-dimensional polychrome sculpture was closely related to the sculptural technique itself. While Marini was basically a sculptor, Leoncillo's work stood at the crossroads between fine and applied arts. He was a talented ceramist thanks to a long training in producing ceramic pieces of

furniture. Leoncillo chose ceramic at the beginning of his career, in the second half of the 1930s. Ceramic was the only technique through which to convey a sense of tonal density in round sculpture (the colour is more transparent in his glazed terracottas, more opaque in the enamelled ones). The artist's concern for colour was influenced by the artistic context he would be in touch with soon after moving to Rome from his birthplace. The art world in the city during the 1930s was featured by the expressionist painters and sculptors of the so-called 'Scuola Romana', by Scipione or Fausto Pirandello for example. *Telephone Operator* and *Typist* are dated in 1950, and show the later outcomes of Leoncillo's work within an artistic context of that kind. They belong to a series of sketches and variants focusing on subjects taken from everyday work and life, which were linked to the artistic debate about socially engaged realism after the Second World War. The medium size and the technique were also meant to renovate the Italian tradition of ceramic in the renaissance and baroque. The relationship with baroque art is more evident in the artist's earlier work and was typical of the artistic context in Rome that influenced Leoncillo [6] [Catalano 2011].



Figure 1. Left. Marino Marini, Little Rider. 1949-50, polychromed wood, 180 x 107 x 107 cm, Komaki City, Komaki, Aichi, Menard Art Museum. © Fondazione Marino Marini, Pistoia/Menard Art Museum, Komaki City, Komaki, Aichi.

Figure 2. Right. Leoncillo Leonardi, Typist. 1949, front, Polychromed and enamelled terracotta, 72 x 40 x 16 cm, Faenza, International Museum of Ceramics. © Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza.

By this technique, the artist provided an original interpretation of Picasso's influence that featured most of the artistic trends in postwar Italy. The artist opened to the environment the cubist structure of the two sculptures, made of flat pseudo-geometric colourful surfaces, through the bright palette of colours and the effects of light conveyed by the typical reflecting surfaces that only the moulding in enamelled ceramic can create. In the work of Marini the figures seem abstract archetypes, while in Leoncillo they have a body or a weight, they are exposed to light and atmosphere and seem to be made of a kind of colourful flesh, although colours and forms are not strictly 'realistic'.

As mentioned, Leoncillo also made ceramic pieces of furniture, like chimney pieces. The concern for polychrome sculpture was rooted in his awareness of the traditional decorative function of polychromy in architecture. By renovating a traditional renaissance technique through the

influence of Picasso's cubism, the artist created a truly 'environmental' sculpture. In fact, he conceived the figures of his work as opened to the surrounding space and the light and represented them as architectures of coloured surfaces and volumes. The decorative elements in *Telephone Operator* play this role, and demand a unique point of view as if they were made for a decorative panel to hang on a wall, as in traditional Italian reliefs made in enamelled terracotta during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

In conclusion, Marino Marini and Leoncillo Leonardi represent two really different ways of making and employing polychromy in twentieth-century Italian sculpture, even though the two artists both reacted to the shocking spread of Picasso's modern mastery by enhancing the traditional concerns and practices of sculptural techniques of ancient, western and non-western art.

Endnotes

[1] An essay dealing with the widespread of Picasso's work among the Italian sculptors after the exhibition of *Guernica* in 1937 has not been published, however some references could provide insightful points of view on the most relevant ways through which the Italians reacted to the work of the Spanish master, such as [Mantura et al. 1998] [Barbero et al. 1997].

[2] Unfortunately, the bombings over Milan during the Second World War destroyed the artist's studio, so most of the work and the library kept there had been lost (see the artist's biography in the catalogue raisonné) [Carandente 1998, 343]. Nevertheless, the museum of the sculptor in Pistoia, Tuscany, holds the books the artist gathered until his death, spanning the sources of his interests and concerns (i.e. Etruscan, Medieval and Chinese art) [Sauerlandt 1926] [Ducati 1941] [Goldscheider 1941]. Earlier critics such as Lamberto Vitali pointed his interest in ancient Chinese art [Vitali 1937, 18-19]. To have an insightful view of Marini's activity and sources, see the essays authored by Mattia Patti and me [Giusti 2012, 41-65, 107-125] and the recent catalogue of the collection of Marino Marini's work at the Museo del Novecento in Milan [Fabi 2015].

[3] As discussed Marini's approach is highly influenced by Picasso's art [2] [Giusti and Salvadori 2012, 107-125]. Marini knew Picasso in person, and saw his work many times. Just to mention one relevant source about Picasso's work, the artist's library includes the huge book about *Guernica* published by Curt Valentin and gifted by the dealer to the artist [Larrea 1947].

[4] A full and reliable entry about the works has been published in the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition organised at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome in 1979 [Carloni et al. 1979, 46-47, 117-118].

[5] The critics found the most insightful links between the work of Leoncillo and contemporary painting since the beginning of the sculptor's career [Moravia 1947] [Longhi 1949]. Although his work has been so relevant within the artistic context in postwar years, an exhaustive scholarship about Leoncillo is still missing. Actually, the catalogue of the 2002 exhibition in Matera is the major source on his life and work [Appella et al. 2002].

[6] An interesting interpretation of the artist's approach to polychromy and matter through his own words is provided by Maria Ida Catalano [Catalano 2011].

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