

Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles

Sociétés de cour en Europe, XVIe-XIXe siècle - European Court Societies,
16th-19th Century

27 | 2025

Le stuc dans les grands décors en France et en Europe, de la
Renaissance à 1850

The Form and Material of Stucco Decoration: Developing Research Projects for Better Understanding, Conservation and Dissemination

*Forme et matériau du décor en stuc. Développer des projets de recherche pour
une meilleure connaissance, conservation et diffusion*

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/crcv/43715>

ISSN: 1958-9271

Publisher

Centre de recherche du château de Versailles

This text was automatically generated on November 14, 2025.

The Form and Material of Stucco Decoration: Developing Research Projects for Better Understanding, Conservation and Dissemination

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This contribution is part of the proceedings of the symposium 'Stucco in Grand Decors in France and Europe, from the Renaissance to 1850' (Versailles, Paris and Fontainebleau, 11–13 December 2023) published in the *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* (<https://journals.openedition.org/crcv/35837>).

This publication was made possible thanks to funding provided by the Erasmus+ Programme, KA 220-HED – Cooperation partnerships in higher education, project title: 'Stucco Decoration across Europe', 2022–5, project number: 2022-1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000085652.

Introduction

- ¹ The study of stucco decoration has always faced several difficulties, as stucco work has always been considered a minor art, the work of craftsmen and not of artists capable of giving form to a material that is extremely difficult to master and even to describe.¹ The word 'stucco' is in fact used to describe both the final decoration and the material used for its making.

- 2 Stucco decoration enjoyed great success from around the middle of the sixteenth century, when Vasari recorded how many artists throughout Italy had dedicated themselves to this practice, until the nineteenth century.² From Italy, this form of art quickly spread throughout Europe: stucco is particularly suitable for decorating both new and old buildings in a relatively short time, different materials can be used in its preparation across the continent, and it became over the centuries an essential component in the decoration of interior spaces, used in royal residences as well as in the houses of wealthy families. In many cases, stucco decorations were made by masters from the border region between the present-day canton of Ticino and Italy.
- 3 As a material, stucco is a composite mix that in itself does not have a standard recipe. It varies greatly, depending on whether it constitutes the body or the finish layer of the decoration, on the lime and the stones available at different sites, and on the everchanging conditions under which the work was carried out. In the southern part of Ticino, for example, from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, three-dimensional stucco decorations were usually made up of a supporting structure (bricks, stones, nails and metal bars, sometimes wood), covered first by a coarse layer of plaster used for creating volume (composed of lime and sand, sometimes with gypsum as an additive) and then by a finishing layer, of lime and marble powder, which might be given a surface polish or a whitening layer.³ This general basic recipe was reinterpreted with numerous variations by the different artists working in the same area.
- 4 Many publications over the last few decades have contributed to focusing attention on stucco decoration as a form of art, but only in the last few years has a growing interest developed among scholars, and the study of stucco has recently truly taken off.⁴ In addition to the rediscovery of the artistic and expressive value of these decorations and the ability of these masters to shape spaces and put together complex iconographic programmes, researchers have broadened the field of analysis by investigating more extensively the phenomenon of itinerant artists, their workshop organization, and the materials and techniques they used for their creations. The material, in fact, contributes substantially to the character of a decoration, and therefore needs proper consideration.
- 5 In this article, we will examine a few research projects that in recent years have helped to shed new light on stucco decoration, involving partners from different European countries, in particular Switzerland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Italy and Poland.

The influence of Ticino art creation on the art of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century

- 6 A first research project, developed between 2012 and 2013, saw the team from the University of Applied Arts and Sciences of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) – Giacinta Jean, Giovanni Cavallo and Stefania Luppichini – working with Lithuanian scholars from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas – the researcher Ausrą Vasiliauskienė and her supervisor Rustis Kamuntavičius – who were interested in investigating the places of birth of many artists, architects, painters and plasterers from different villages in the present-day canton of Ticino who had worked in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century.⁵ These artists left important traces

and shaped the artistic character of the country. Among their main works, it is important to mention the chapel of St Casimir in Vilnius Cathedral, commissioned from Matteo Castelli (1623–36) by Sigismund III Vasa, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius (1668–1701, decorated by Giovanni Pietro Pertti and Giovanni Maria Galli) (**fig. 1 and 2**), many private palaces belonging to the most prominent families such as the Radvilas, the Sapiegas, the Pacas, the Pliateris and others, and Pažaislis Monastery (1664–1674, with stucco decoration attributed to Giovanni Maria Merli).

Fig. 1. Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius, 1668–1701, decorated by Giovanni Pietro Pertti and Giovanni Maria Galli, dome.



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Fig. 2. Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius, 1668–1701, decorated by Giovanni Pietro Pertti and Giovanni Maria Galli, detail of the decoration.



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- 7 This project allowed the opening of two lines of research that had not been investigated before:
 - the role played by the plasterer in conceiving and executing a stucco decoration from the design of the overall ornamentation scheme (sometimes offering individually developed solutions, sometimes working under the supervision of the client or the architect) to the organization of their workshop;
 - the role of materials in the realization of a stucco decoration, understanding what was used and how, how many variations could be observed and how to relate the changes in the materials used to the final appearance of the stucco decoration considering the constraints of the working environment, trying to understand how these migrant artists were able to adapt their skills using different materials from what they were used to and working in very different climates (fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Church of St Peter and St Paul in Vilnius, 1668–1701, decorated by Giovanni Pietro Perti and Giovanni Maria Galli, close observation of the stucco decoration.



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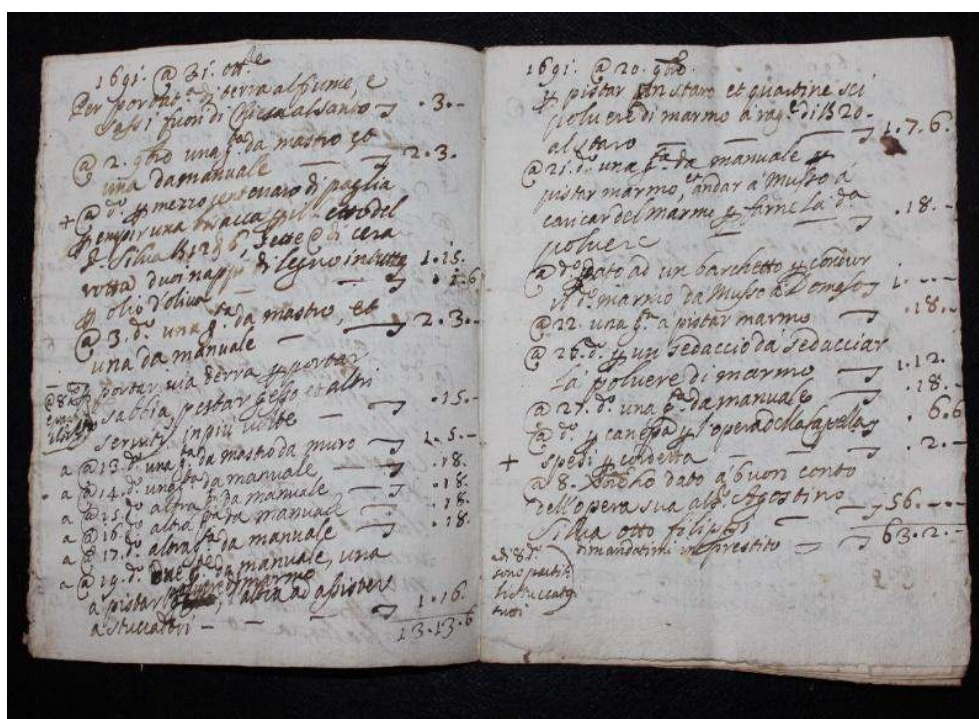
Art and industry of the Ticinese stucco workers from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century

- 8 It was possible to deepen these questions thanks to a larger research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, entitled ‘The art and industry of Ticinese “stuccatori” from the 16th to the 17th century’.⁶
- 9 Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century, plasterers from the canton of Ticino were in demand all over Europe to participate in the major building sites of the time. They were undoubtedly well organized professionally, capable of working in teams and quick to adapt to new fashions and ideas. All very important qualities, but these would probably not have been enough without a particular ability to master the difficult art of stucco. Despite the great number of studies and publications on the works of these artists and their cultural context, how these masters worked has never been investigated in order to understand how much their savoir-faire contributed to the vast professional success they enjoyed. The guiding question of this project was to understand whether it was possible to describe stucco art typical of the Italian-Swiss border, by observing whether all the local stucco masters had worked according to the same recipes and procedures, or if each artist, family or workshop had their own specific *modus operandi*, interpreting the use of materials and techniques in a completely original way.⁷

10 To answer this apparently simple question, it was necessary to set up a large interdisciplinary project, linking data drawn from:

- information on materials and techniques contained in written sources, kept mainly in archives (specifications, contracts, invoices, payments) hitherto little investigated but potentially very rich in data on the technical history of stucco;
- direct investigation of these works and their technical features;
- material characterization (with chemical, physical and petrographic analyses) of the works to understand mortar mixes and to compare the analytical data with the historical and material data;
- replica making to test hypotheses made during observations and material analyses⁸ (fig. 4a-c).

Fig. 4a. Multidisciplinary approach, combining study of different sources, direct inspections and material analyses.



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Fig. 4b. Multidisciplinary approach, combining study of different sources, direct inspections and material analyses.



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Fig. 4c. Multidisciplinary approach, combining study of different sources, direct inspections and material analyses.



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- 11 Looking at the materials and how they were combined in different ways helped to gain a different vision of stucco decoration. Prior to this project, stuccoes had been studied by art historians: formal and artistic expressions had been investigated or specific and

limited analyses carried out on some works to better set up conservation treatments, but never with a broad and multidisciplinary vision resulting from a close collaboration between specialists from different fields. During the course of this research, it was possible to observe the richness and the variety of approaches in working the plaster, a richness that is not only formal but also linked to specific knowledge and technical skills in transforming a few and simple basic ingredients (lime, plaster, sand, marble powder, sometimes gypsum and organic additives), which are readily available in the area, into sumptuous decorations in imitation of marble. It was also possible to observe and understand the multiple possible ways of using one single material – the stucco mix – very dynamically, by constantly changing and adapting the ratio of the basic components and adding organic and non-organic additives during the work, in order to master a material that is not easily malleable and that is highly sensitive to changes in climate (temperature and humidity) influencing its properties and setting time.

- 12 At the end of this project, it was possible to apply for a new grant from the Agora fund within the Swiss National Science Foundation, aimed at promoting the creation of a bridge between the scientific community and the general public.

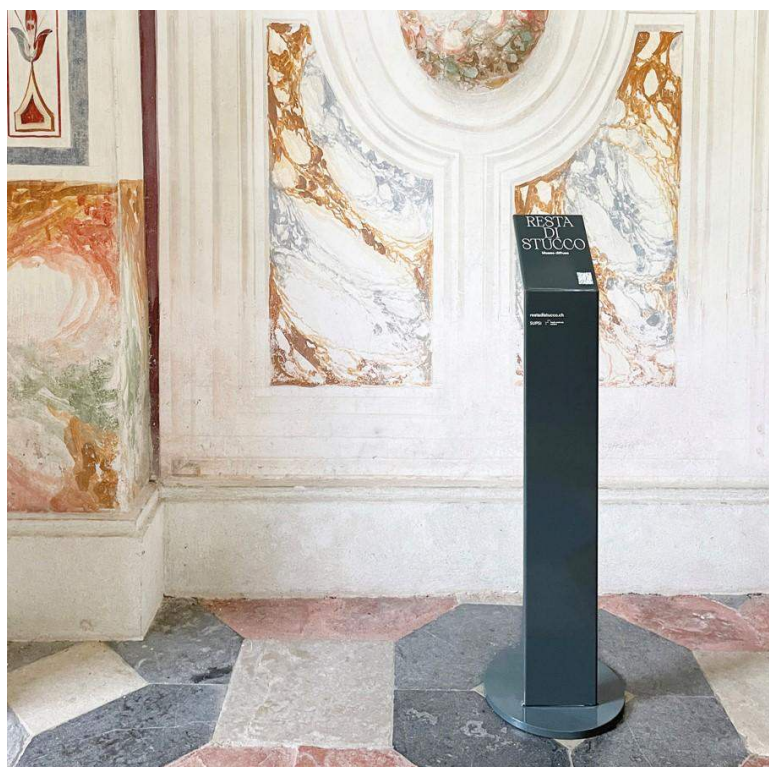
‘Resta di stucco’ (‘Left in Amazement’): discovering the masters of stucco in Ticino

- 13 This was a communication project that aimed to make local residents and the many tourists who visit Ticino aware of the magnificent stucco decorations that have been created all over the canton by local masters, when they returned home after several months spent abroad working in different European countries.⁹
- 14 The aim of the project was to invite the public to reappropriate this ‘everyday heritage’¹⁰ that is too often forgotten and invisible, even among members of the same church congregation. This issue relates to a more general disinterest in the historical and artistic past, and invited researchers to offer interpretation strategies and tools to fill this gap of appreciation and understanding, finding new ways to promote cultural heritage and to strengthen local identity, helping people discover the art of stucco decoration and feel pride in it, expanding the understanding of places and objects that already have emotional and religious meaning. In this project, visitors were also invited to acquire a different point of view from the traditional formal and stylistic reading of the works, reflecting on how these stucco decorations were created and the difficulties encountered by the masters who made them.
- 15 The development of this project represented a great cultural challenge, bringing the past into the present, translating testimonies regarding artistic history into modern-day language, comprehensible to the public of our time, and awakening a sense of curiosity that could stimulate a reclaiming of the territory and the traces of its history. The fundamental conception was that cultural heritage must serve to establish a dialogue between professionals, local communities and visitors, moving beyond simple knowledge to the recognition of the cultural, historical, artistic and social values such knowledge inherently contains.¹¹ In recent years, heritage specialists, administrators and policy makers have devoted greater attention to the benefits and challenges of communicating issues relating to cultural heritage to wider audiences, going beyond simple facts and information.¹² Article 14 of the Faro Convention promotes the use of

advanced technologies, from websites to augmented reality, as crucial media for enhancing access to cultural heritage.¹³ Also in recent years, in both the heritage and the business sector, storytelling has developed as a means of communicating with the public, triggering both resonance and participation: a technique obviously suited to the stories represented by museum objects and archaeological sites, and with a substantial body of publications on best practices.¹⁴

- 16 The wealth of knowledge developed in the previous project enabled the establishment of exchanges between researchers and the public on three major and closely connected themes:
 - the idea of a ‘distributed museum of stucco sites’: showing the widespread presence of stucco decorations all over the canton, and exploring the artists’ families and the intrinsic values of this heritage;
 - the art and technique of stucco: inviting understanding of the technical expertise involved in transforming a few simple materials into marble-like statues and how today these decorations are studied in an interdisciplinary way, combining methods from art history, observations on artistic technique and scientific investigations.
 - the great masters: illustrating the activity of some important artists such as Giovanni Antonio Colomba (1585–1650), Francesco (1580s–between 1643 and 1651), Agostino (1628–1706) and Gianfrancesco Silva (1660–1738), Alessandro Casella (1596–1656 or 1657) in the historical, artistic and cultural context of their time.
- 17 The team developed a set of tools and activities that could be used and experienced individually (online or on site) by different people, and a set of activities that were offered in person. All the material produced is available in Italian (targeting a local audience) and in English (for a Swiss and international public).
- 18 ‘Resta di stucco’ is first and foremost a distributed museum, signposted by metal totems (or ‘fingerprints’) placed at twenty-three locations (although there could be many more in the future). Each totem is equipped with a QR code that links to a free mobile, multilingual audio guide with more than 240 images and audio contributions (**fig. 5**). As a distribution platform, izi.travel was adopted, a free website that is very popular and provides over 20,000 downloadable guides with images, texts and audio.¹⁵ The images can be enlarged to view details not easily seen from the ground, or close-up images taken from the scaffolding which reveal details that are not normally visible. The map of the distributed museum in paper and digital format helps to connect the different sites and allows visitors to organize tailor-made tours¹⁶ (**fig. 6**). To encourage people to visit the places and participate in the activities with researchers, the map includes references to each totem in the form of embedded QR codes, which can activate connections with the website and with the izi.travel audio guide. To spread the word about the initiative, three different postcards, printed on paper with an embossed effect, were distributed across the canton through all the tourist offices (**fig. 7**). The postcards are enhanced by augmented reality, which allows Instagram users (through Instagram handle @supsi_conservazionerestauro) to interact with some of the masterpieces that have become visible in 3D (**fig. 8**).

Fig. 5. The metal totem post in Riva San Vitale, Temple of Santa Croce.



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Fig. 6. The map.



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Fig. 7. The postcards.



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Fig. 8. The postcards activated with 3D augmented reality.



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19 'Resta di stucco' is also a web platform (fig. 9). The interactive website (www.restadistucco.ch) offers an overview of the different topics and the opportunity for in-depth analysis through access to different interconnected sections:

- the *Project* section provides information about the aim of the project, the tools it offers, and the team of researchers involved;
- the *Map* provides a comprehensive view of all the different sites, and the interactive location markers can be clicked to access further information on each stucco decoration. The works and authors are presented in depth thanks to an extensive photographic collection of more than 750 images. The images, most of which were created for the project, are in high resolution and can be enlarged to view the details within the works. The contents can also be accessed via a catalogue organized by author, location, work and date of creation;

- the *Profile* about each site provides information on the context, the history, the artists involved and the technical qualities of the stucco decoration;
- the *Catalogue* of stucco sites allows a user to research stucco decoration in the canton of Ticino by topic (artist, place or date);
- the *Stucco* section explains the materials, tools and techniques of stucco making;
- the *Artists* section presents some of the most important families of artists;
- the *Glossary* allows the visitor to learn a variety of technical words that may be unfamiliar to the general public;
- the *Activities* section contains the list of all past and future in-person activities that have been held or are scheduled with the researchers.

Fig. 9. The website with the interactive map and its subsections.



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- 20 'Resta di stucco' also offers a rich programme of activities in the area to raise awareness regarding the art of stucco through meetings, guided tours and practical workshops (often organized in collaboration with museums or cultural institutions).
- 21 It has been possible to reach a wide audience of residents and tourists, people of mixed ages and education, from primary-school students to families, seniors and visiting tourists (from Switzerland and abroad), thanks to collaboration established with:
- local museums (the Museo Etnografico della Valle di Muggio and the Museo Etnografico del Malcantone);
 - cultural associations (Dicastero Attività Culturali in Lugano, Centro Culturale e Biblioteca La Filanda in Mendrisio, Comune di Balerna, Associazione Beccaria in Coldrerio, BreggiArte, Confraternita San Rocco, Giornate Europee dei Mestieri d'Arte, Netzwerk Kulturerbe Schweiz);
 - tourist associations (Ticino Turismo, the team of art guides working in the Italian-speaking par of Switzerland, Mendrisiotto Tourist Board).
- 22 During the months of the pandemic (when the project was written), we all experienced dramatic moments of lockdown and learned from the main cultural institutions how to develop new online activities and encourage the use of digital content, offering positive experiences to all. In light of this, in addition to visits and on-site events, it was very important to consider online activities aimed at groups and individuals who, for various reasons, were unable to follow the live initiatives with researchers, such as activating the audio guide when visiting one of the twenty-three sites with the totem or

visiting the website. An online visitor can find material to prepare for on-site activities, or to take them further once they return home. This opportunity was revealed to be a great plus, allowing regular use of the resources offered to the public, independence and freedom to engage with the information on offer and to plan visits to the different sites. Our partners from the Ticino tourist office also stressed the importance of offering tourist activities that could be self-organized and the increasing demand for this kind of experience.

- 23 The project drew the attention of many local institutions and sparked increased interest in the topic. We are still receiving many requests for talks and presentations, and we will keep the attention alive even though the project is now over. In particular, the tourist guides from Italian-speaking Switzerland asked us to provide training on how to use all the material produced to help them lead specific tours of the stucco decoration across different sites in the Ticino region, from the largest cities of Locarno, Bellinzona and Lugano to the smaller villages around Mendrisio.
- 24 From 2013 to 2025, links were formed with other research groups in other universities that were working on similar or parallel projects. With the international conference organized at the Swiss Institute in Rome in 2021 titled 'Art and Industry of Stucco Decoration',¹⁷ we started to broaden our interest to several European countries: from Spain to Germany, Denmark, Holland, Poland and the Czech Republic, connecting Ticino to the rest of Europe.

STUDEC – 'Stucco Decoration across Europe'

- 25 All the experience and methodological approaches of previous collaborations have been brought together in the latest – and still ongoing – project, 'Stucco Decoration across Europe', funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships in higher education programme.¹⁸ The project aims at creating an international interdisciplinary network of specialists for the study and preservation of these precious stucco decorations which all over Europe are very often damaged by inexpert restoration (**fig. 10**). The partners will share their interdisciplinary know-how gained through practice and university lectures to train a new generation of specialists in order to break down the sense of isolation currently felt in the field and to preserve this common European cultural heritage.

Fig. 10. Site inspections in Kraków (Poland), with researchers and students.



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- 26 The working group consists of five partners from four European countries led by the University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic: SUPSI in Switzerland, the Università degli Studi in Turin, the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and the Institute of Applied Mechanics, part of the Czech Academy of Sciences, in Prague.¹⁹ The project also involves individual specialists from non-partner institutions who are interested in acting as freely associated researchers within the network.
- 27 The project was built, while also considering the objectives stated in the call for the grant programme, with three basic aims. The first aim was to establish a network of specialists in stucco decoration across the countries of present-day Europe (**fig. 11**). The study of stucco decoration is very often contained within the borders of European countries as defined by current geopolitical divisions. This brings various challenges in transcending local specificities and limits. Economic and linguistic barriers play a significant role, but scientists and restorers from different European nations also closed themselves off within their national borders and did not cooperate with their colleagues from other countries, leading to the development of distinctive local approaches to the preservation of stucco decoration. This art form has received varying degrees of attention in modern European countries, and stuccowork is still often not regarded as a piece of art. In most of Europe, this specific type of artwork is yet to be valued and appreciated.

Fig. 11. Site visit and discussion on conservation options inside the Oratorio Imbonati, Cavallasca (Italy).

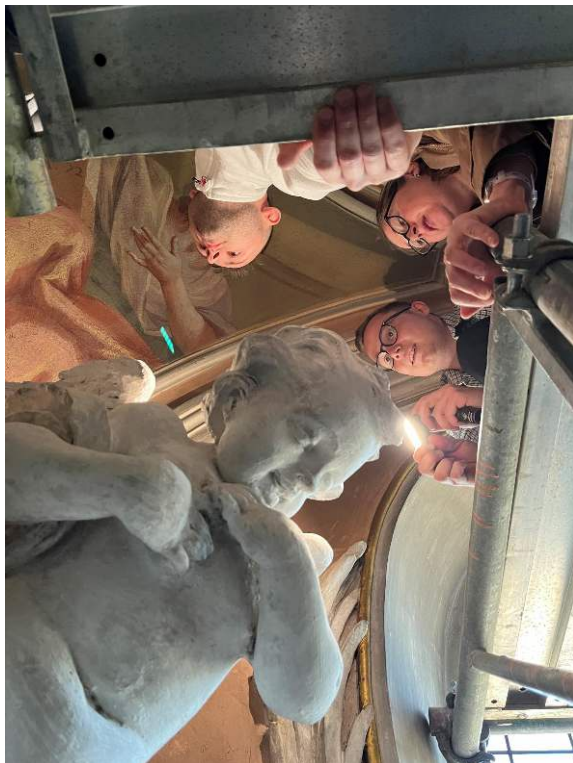


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- 28 It should also be remembered that present-day political boundaries are very often different from those that existed at the time each work was created. Political boundaries have changed over the centuries, which causes many difficulties in today's study. At the same time, plasterers worked mostly for clients across the European continent, without being much restricted by the political boundaries of the day. To understand the significance of stucco decoration for local contexts, it is also necessary to look for other possibilities rather than applying the traditional paradigms of 'writing art history from the position of the centre', or more generally the method of centres and peripheries.²⁰ New avenues for interpretation from this perspective are provided, for example, by Piotr Piotrowski's horizontal art history, which investigates the concepts of transnationality and horizontality.²¹
- 29 In addition, approaches to the restoration of stucco works changed significantly in the various modern European countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, rather distinctive trends in stucco restoration can be observed in different regions of Europe, ranging from reconstruction of the missing parts and repainting of the surface to a more cautious and respectful approach aimed at the preservation of the original material. This is a crucial issue, especially in relation to the works of one particular master stucco artist and his workshop, located in several present-day countries. The work of Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733), an outstanding plasterer of European importance who was active in what is now Switzerland, Italy, the Czech Republic and Poland, is exemplary.²² This stucco maker was chosen by the STUDEC team as the starting point for study, but the aim of the project is to develop a method that could help establish future closer cooperation across Europe.

- 30 The second aim of the STUDEC project is the equal involvement and the closest possible cooperation of all three basic specializations involved in the study and conservation of stucco decoration: art historians, conservators/restorers and specialists in material analysis.²³ This principle represents the greatest challenge the project has ever faced, and probably marks the beginning of a very long path (**figs 12 and 13**). It may seem that applying this principle of collaboration would come naturally. However, the reality in the field of stucco-decoration studies is that, despite various public declarations of interdisciplinarity, there is still not the necessary²⁴ degree of real collaboration between specializations in the spirit of technical art history and its application to the area of stucco works.²⁵ As already mentioned, the aim of the project is to promote the closest possible cooperation between art historians, conservators-restorers and conservation scientists, improving exchange using common terminology and the development of a common work. Through the STUDEC project, the teams aim to spend time together studying selected stucco works in international interdisciplinary workshops. They exchange information from their respective specializations and learn to listen to each other, even though they each use the vocabulary of their own field of expertise. It turns out that just listening to what the other is doing and how they appreciate the values of stucco decoration helps to change the collaboration and leads to a better and more complex understanding of the work and its value, which both need to be protected.

Fig. 12. Access to the scaffolding allows close-up inspections (here the team is in the Collegiata di San Vittore, Balerna, Switzerland).



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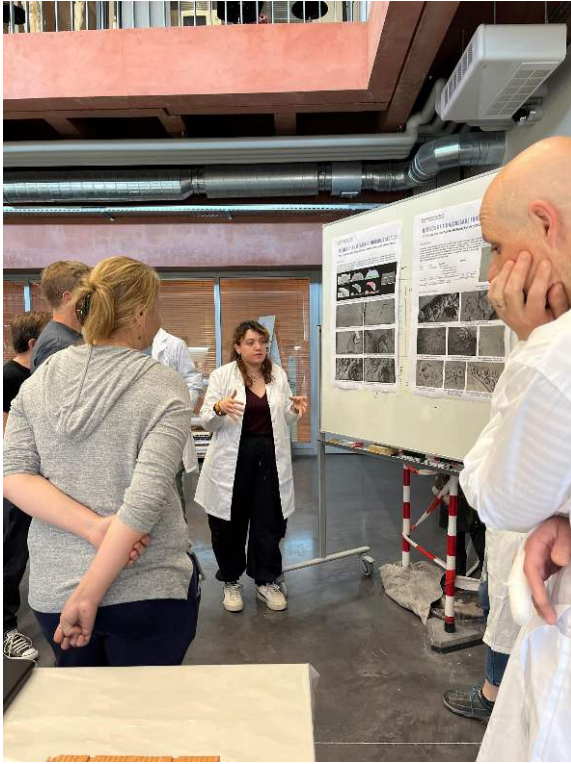
Fig. 13. Detached elements of stucco decoration make it possible to observe construction details such as the different layers of stucco mortar used for building up a hand.



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- 31 The third aim emphasizes the need to share know-how and educate the younger generation.²⁶ The project therefore places great emphasis on having the widest possible diversity of representation, involving people at different levels, from undergraduate to Ph.D. students, from professionals to researchers and university lecturers (**figs 14 and 15**). Through close collaboration, representatives of the younger generation can quickly acquire new knowledge and skills about stucco decoration, and experience real interdisciplinarity, thinking in an international environment and acquiring an essential mindset to preserve this common European cultural heritage.

Fig. 14. The team is in the workshop at SUPSI, Mendrisio, working to understand the properties of different mortar mixes for creating a stucco decoration.



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Fig. 15. SUPSI, Mendrisio, hands-on work.



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Conclusions

- 32 The ambitious goal of all these initiatives is to open up research to a European dimension, considering stucco decoration as an artistic expression that goes beyond borders, understanding that these plasterers travelled and moved around with incredible difficulty between warring countries, avoiding battlefields, adapting to new circumstances and new materials, putting in place complex adaptive strategies that are difficult to imagine and very challenging to study.²⁷ All these activities are also related to establishing a connection between research and education, between researchers and the public, between the study of the artworks and their preservation. Our aim is to promote knowledge at all levels, not only in the scientific field. Stucco decorations are public art that is there for all to see and within everyone's reach (without paying an entrance ticket), but that must be known to be appreciated. We all hope that the community of different actors and stakeholders, sharing the principle that heritage is an essential component to fostering the cultural identity of places, will continue to grow.

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NOTES

1. For the definition of the term see GAPPER, 1999.
2. VASARI, 1991, p. 56.
3. See JEAN and FELICI, 2025.
4. For an understanding of stucco decoration and the complex relations between artists, clients, places and materials, see the foundational text by CASEY, 2017, and the more recent works of QUAGLIAROLI and SPOLTRE 2019; GIANNOTTI et al., 2022; ROMERI, 2022; and the forthcoming JEAN and FELICI, 2025.
5. This project was supported by a grant from the Swiss Confederation for its contribution to the wider European Union (CRUS – now Swissuniversities – sciex.ch, project 12.093). More information on the results are available in KAMUNTAVIČIUS, VASILIAUSKIENĖ and LANZA, 2013.

6. See <https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/160092>. The project was coordinated by Giacinta Jean and Alberto Felici and carried out in collaboration with Lucia Aliverti (for the historical-archival research), Giovanni Nicoli (for technical analyses), Stefania Luppichini (for data management) and Marta Caroselli and Giovanni Cavallo (for scientific analyses).
7. The background and the results of the project have been treated in depth in JEAN et al., 2020 and in JEAN and FELICI, 2025.
8. See JEAN et al., 2019.
9. Information on the project is available at <https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/199786> and at <http://www.restadistucco.ch>. It was developed between 2021 and 2024 by an interdisciplinary team that combined the historical, technical and scientific skills of researchers from the SUPSI Institute of Materials and Constructions (Giacinta Jean, Alberto Felici, Marta Caroselli, Giovanni Nicoli and Anastasia Gilardi) with the skills in communication techniques of colleagues from the Design Institute (Luca Morici, Giancarlo Gianocca and Desirée Veschetti).
10. On the definition of 'everyday heritage', see MOSLER, 2019 and GIOMBINI, 2020.
11. See COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2005 and *Davos Declaration*, 2018.
12. 'Heritage interpretation is connecting people with the legacy of their past. It turns experiences into sources of inspiration and creativity. To do so, it relates to people, it provokes their curiosity, it includes narratives that might be relevant to them, and it encourages reflection' (INTERPRET EUROPE, 2017, p. 9).
13. See note 11 on the Faro Convention 2005 and BONACCHI and MOSHENSKA, 2015.
14. For an overview see VOLPE, 2020. On public archaeology and the challenges involved in enabling people and communities to discover and own their cultural heritage, see also GRIMA, 2017 and PALLECCHI, 2017.
15. See <https://izi.travel/en/7604-resta-di-stucco-distributed-museum/en>.
16. Available at https://restadistucco.ch/media/pages/progetto/facdb488e1-1685629180/230522_a2_mappa-crop.pdf.
17. See <https://www.istitutosvizzero.it/fr/conferenza/the-art-and-industry-of-stucco-decoration/>; the extended publication following the conference see note 3.
18. Erasmus+ Programme, KA 220-HED - Cooperation partnerships in higher education, project title: 'Stucco Decoration across Europe', duration: 2022-5, project number: 2022-1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000085652 (web site: <https://studec.upol.cz/en/>).
19. The leaders of the national teams are Jana Zapletalová (Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic, principal investigator), Giacinta Jean (SUPSI, Mendrisio, Switzerland), Michał Kurzej (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland), Serena Quagliaroli (Università degli Studi, Turin, Italy), Jan Válek (Institute of Applied Mechanics at the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic).
20. See CASTELNUOVO and GINZBURG, 2019.
21. On the horizontal history of art, see PIOTROWSKI, 2008; RAMPLEY, 2021; and the texts by Maria Rakusanova, Milena Bartlova and other authors in the same issue devoted to a reflection on Piotrowski's theory and polemics with Matthew Rampley's text (*Umění*, vol. 69, no. 2).
22. On Baldassarre Fontana, see KARPOWICZ, 1990; KARPOWICZ, 1994; and KURZEJ, 2018.
23. Within the framework of the project, the research group organizes international week-long workshops with the aim of studying selected works from the perspectives of different disciplines. In addition to large international workshops, always organized in one of the partner countries, the research group organizes smaller study excursions across specialisms and countries. These activities are open, depending on capacity, to individuals outside the network.
24. On an interdisciplinary basis, but only on a national scale, some previous major projects of other scientific groups have been implemented, such as 'Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco in

Bohemia and Moravia' (University of Pardubice, Faculty of Restoration, principal investigator: Petr Fidler, 2018–22).

25. On technical art history in general or focusing on other art forms, see e.g. BOMFORD, 1998; HERMENS, OUWERKERK and COSTARAS, 1998; AINSWORTH, 2005; FREEDBERG, 2006; HERMENS, 2012; CARDINALI, 2017; DUPRÉ, 2017; DE JONGH et al., 2019; BURNSTOCK et al., 2023, and many others.

26. Within the framework of the project, the research group is organizing international workshops involving BA, MA and Ph.D. students from partner universities, and several educational and dissemination activities. The research group considers it very important that partners should share their know-how through practice and university lecturing in order to train a new generation of specialists with an interdisciplinary mindset, so necessary to preserving the common European cultural heritage.

27. Accounts of travel, accommodation and everyday struggles have survived from the plasterers themselves, who wrote letters to their families back home. These letters were transcribed in MARTINOLA, 1963.

ABSTRACTS

This article presents some research projects that have been conducted in recent years with the aim of investigating stucco decoration beyond its formal components, analyzing the fundamental role of technique within artistic expression. In 2015, the team at the University of Applied Arts and Sciences of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) started to work on 'The Art and Industry of Ticinese Stucco Artists from the Sixteenth to the Seventeenth Century' to analyze the artistic process through which different stucco artists from southern Switzerland created important works of art in their homeland. An interdisciplinary working method was established allowing participants to study stucco decoration in a more comprehensive way. This project was followed in 2021 by 'Resta di stucco' or 'Left in Amazement', an initiative aimed at communicating with the wider public on this heritage that is little valued by local residents. Finally, in 2023, the international Erasmus+ project 'Stucco Decoration across Europe', led by the Department of Art History at Palacký University in Olomouc, offered the opportunity to create an interdisciplinary network of specialists ready to understand and preserve stucco decorations. The partners will share their interdisciplinary know-how gained through practice and university lectures to train a new generation of specialists in order to break down the sense of isolation currently felt in the field and to preserve this common European cultural heritage.

L'article présente des projets de recherche qui ont été menés ces dernières années dans le but d'étudier la décoration en stuc au-delà de ses composantes formelles, en analysant le rôle fondamental de la technique dans l'expression artistique. Depuis 2015, l'équipe de la Haute École des arts appliqués et des sciences de la Suisse méridionale (SUPSI) a commencé à travailler sur le projet « The Art & Industry of Ticinese Stucco Artists from the 16th to 17th Centuries » (L'art et l'industrie des stucateurs tessinois du XVI^e au XVII^e siècle) afin d'analyser le processus artistique avec lequel différents stucateurs de Suisse méridionale ont créé d'importantes œuvres d'art dans leur pays d'origine. Une méthode de travail interdisciplinaire a été établie, permettant d'étudier la décoration en stuc de manière plus approfondie. Ce projet a été suivi en 2021 par « Resta di stucco » ou « Left in amazement », une initiative visant à communiquer avec le grand public sur ce patrimoine peu valorisé par les habitants de la région. Enfin, en 2023, le projet international

Erasmus+ « Stucco Decoration across Europe », dirigé par le département d'histoire de l'art de l'université Palacký d'Olomouc, a permis de créer un réseau interdisciplinaire de spécialistes pour l'étude et la préservation des décors en stuc. Les partenaires partageront leur savoir-faire interdisciplinaire acquis grâce à la pratique et l'enseignement universitaire pour former une nouvelle génération de spécialistes, afin de rompre le sentiment d'isolement dans ce domaine et de préserver ce patrimoine culturel européen.

INDEX

Keywords: technical art history, Europe, canton of Ticino, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, materials and techniques, communication, conservation

Mots-clés: Histoire de l'art technique, Europe, Canton du Tessin, République tchèque, Italie, Pologne, matériaux et techniques, communication, conservation

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