

ICOMOS TheoPhilos ISC Conference

'Authenticities Reimagined': Living Heritage and the Future of Conservation, 150 Years after the SPAB Manifesto

29th Conference, 18th in Florence

Florence (Italy), Tuesday 9 – Wednesday 10 March 2027

Palazzo Coppini (Via del Giglio 10)

Conference Organizers:

ICOMOS THEOPHILOS international council on monuments and sites

FONDAZIONE ROMUALDO DEL BIANCO

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TRAVEL TO DIALOGUE

MUSEO PALAZZO COPPINI

1. ISSUES OF THE CONFERENCE

In 1877 the Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) gave conservation one of its most durable ideas: that the authenticity of a building lies in its historic material. To renew that material, however skilfully, was to falsify the building. For 150 years this idea of material authenticity has shaped conservation doctrine and practice, and it remains a powerful defence against the loss of historic fabric.

Since then, the understanding of authenticity has evolved. While the Venice Charter (1964) envisages authenticity in material terms, the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) recognised that it is judged differently in different cultures. The Faro Convention (2005) placed communities at the centre of heritage. Most recently, the ICOMOS General Assembly in Kuching (2026) took Living Heritage as its theme, and the TheoPhilos sessions there asked whether doctrinal texts and living heritage are at all compatible. On a living-heritage view, what gives a place authenticity may be the continuity of its use, its meanings and the people and practices that sustain it, as much as the survival of its fabric.

The pressures of the coming decades make this question urgent. Climate change, the energy transition, demographic change and the loss of traditional skills will all demand change to historic buildings, and sometimes their loss. The conference takes the Manifesto's anniversary as a starting point for looking forward rather than back. What should authenticity play going forward? Can respect for material and respect for living practice be held together, and how can they be resolved?

2. AIMS AND THEMATIC SCOPE OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference will explore how the idea of authenticity might develop to meet the future, setting the material authenticity of the SPAB tradition alongside the claims of living heritage. It will draw on experience from different countries, regions and cultures, and will address the following themes:

1. **Material authenticity revisited:** what the SPAB idea of authenticity in fabric still offers, and where its limits now lie.
2. **Authenticity as living process:** continuity of use, meaning, traditional knowledge, craft and community practice; the roles of communities, knowledge bearers and craftspeople in deciding what is authentic.
3. **Authenticity under pressure:** climate adaptation, energy transition and human development; how far change can go before authenticity is lost, and whether accepting loss can be part of conservation.

4. **Doctrine for the future:** how future doctrinal texts should express authenticity, and whether material and living-heritage approaches can share common principles.

3. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

We invite representatives of all ICOMOS International Scientific Committees and National Committees, as well as researchers, practitioners and doctoral students, to submit proposals. Events organised by TheoPhilos are open to all, whether to attend or to propose a paper.

Abstracts of proposed papers should be submitted via this web form: **https://forms.gle/udimqPExUcwattxdA**. Abstracts are limited to 2,000 characters (around 300 words). Authors will be asked to indicate which of the four themes their paper addresses.

Deadline for abstract submission: Saturday 9 January 2027

Notification of reviewers' decision: Monday 1 February 2027

Papers will be selected by reviewers appointed by the Organising Committee. Presentations will be limited to just **10 minutes**, allowing half of each session for discussion between presenters and audience.

Sessions will be recorded. By taking part, speakers agree to the publication of session videos on the TheoPhilos YouTube channel.

TheoPhilos conferences are primarily in-person events; a small number of presentations will be selected for virtual presentation, with priority given to those based outside Europe.

Selected papers will be published in the peer-reviewed journal *Protection of Cultural Heritage*, published by ICOMOS Poland, ICOMOS ISC TheoPhilos and the Lublin University of Technology. Journal submission information for authors.

The Organizing Committee: ICOMOS ISC for Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration (TheoPhilos). Contact: theophilos@icomos.org

Click HERE to submit your proposal

PALAZZO COPPINI

“Museum of the Gratitude” of the Romualdo Del Bianco Foundation

https://www.museofondazionedelbianco.org

History of the Palace



The **ancient via del Giglio**, where it is located, whose origins date back to at least the 14th century, connected two important religious realities of the city such as the basilica of San Lorenzo and the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Vigne (later Santa Maria Novella). The street followed a **section of the city walls** built by the Florentine Republic between 1173 and 1176.

A circuit of walls, the fifth in chronological order, had a short life. In fact, the demographic explosion of Florence at the time - fourteenth-century chroniclers attribute to Florence at that time a figure of 100,000-120,000 inhabitants - led the Republic, just over a century later (1286), to deliberate a new large circle of walls enclosing an area of about 520 hectares.



Coppini Palace stands out among the Florentine buildings of particular interest, since in the ensemble of its structural and furnishing elements, it is possible to identify some fundamental periods of the city enclosed by the Arnolfian walls. The first period relates to what remains of the **original medieval building**, identifiable in the section of one of those city towers "scraped" in 1250 by decree of the government of the First People, and then incorporated into noble residences. The second period is represented by a phase of **planimetric and structural expansion dating back to the sixteenth century**, and among the prominent elements we mention a **beautiful spiral staircase** in stone and an **elegant fountain** located in a niche and surmounted by a mask typical of Mannerist grotesque. The third period, nineteenth century, is characterized above all by an increase in its volumes, which is part of the almost total restructuring of the oldest noble area, and reflects in the **restorations in style, the neogothic and neo renaissance taste** between the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

“Museum of the Gratitude” of the Romualdo Del Bianco Foundation
A Monument to Diverse Cultures and Human Relations

The Museum Foundation Del Bianco physically represents the culmination and symbol of the decades-long work carried out by the Romualdo Del Bianco® Foundation - Life Beyond Tourism®, and its international network, to recognize human relationships, openness to others, and mutual understanding through tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage as indispensable needs of the 'Human Family'.



Located in Palazzo Coppini, the Museum Foundation Del Bianco is a vital part of the Congress Center at the Duomo, which the Romualdo Del Bianco® Foundation has established and annually supported as a Research Study Center on the themes of travel, heritage, and dialogue among cultures, developing and realizing the concept of interculturality among peoples through the Life Beyond Tourism® Ethos in over 25 years of activity.

Within its walls, it preserves, communicates, and exhibits for study, education, and enjoyment a private collection of gifts, received during travels or delivered personally, made available to the citizens. This collection encompasses various sectors of culture related to the traditions, customs, and practices of over 83 countries that share the Foundation's commitment to developing communication between peoples.





It houses a rare library with over 6000 volumes written in 51 languages and 12 alphabets from around the world, largely focused on tangible and intangible world heritage.

The museum also boasts precious collections of objects that, in addition to their invaluable material worth, represent gratitude and esteem towards the Foundation from individuals, public, and private institutions who have donated them wholeheartedly.