

The 25th anniversary of the Sacred Art in Iași

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Abstract:

The article entitled The 25th anniversary of Sacred Art in Iași included three parts followed by conclusions. First part included few aspects about the history of Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași. Second part highlights about milestones within past and present of the specialization of Sacred Art of Iași (old name Orthodox Theology - Cultural Heritage). The celebration of 25 years of university education in conservation and restoration of religious art is pointed in last part of paper.

Keywords: *Sacred art, Cultural heritage, conservation, restoration, Orthodox Theology*

1. History of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași

The Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași is one of the four founding faculties of the University of Iași, on October 26, 1860, along with the Faculties of Law, Philosophy and Medicine.

Due to the unfavourable historical context, arguing the lack of students and teachers, the faculty closed in 1864 (Vizitiu, Popa 2007: 27). In 1926, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Iași reopened in Chișinău, but later it was closed down by the communist authorities, most of the teachers being transferred to Bucharest following 1941.

At the initiative of the new Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava, Most Reverend Daniel, the current Patriarch of Romania, starting with the academic year of 1990-1991, the Theological Institute of University Degree was reactivated within the Metropolitan Church of Iași and in 1991 it became a member of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași.

In the 30 years since its reopening, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology has faced the challenges of a long period of transition, while

also falling into line with the new national and European academic requirements.

Currently, the only faculty of theology in the North-East of Romania is training specialists in two fields (Theology and Visual Arts). The Theology field is developing following three directions of study, Pastoral Theology, Social Theology, Didactic Theology, while the Visual Arts field studies Sacred Art. The faculty includes all levels of study: Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology. Currently, the number of young people studying at “Dumitru Staniloae” Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași is 948, at the level of the academic year of 2019-2020.

2. The specialization of Sacred Art of Iași (old name Orthodox Theology - Cultural Heritage). Past and present

Under the initial name of Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage, the specialization of Sacred Art from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași was the first such specialization established in the country, in 1993.

By opening the specialization of Cultural Heritage, the Orthodox Church aimed first and foremost at training restoration specialists, trained in the spirit of the church to show greater sensitivity to religious heritage, a heritage that represents about 80% of the national heritage assets. The first courses in icon and old book conservation and restoration began in the autumn of 1993, the specialization including 24 students. Given the profound interdisciplinary nature, the subject matters that were taught to the first series of graduates (1993-1997) and to those who followed, can be grouped into three categories:

- Theological subject matters: Old Testament Study, New Testament Study, Universal Church History, Romanian Church History, Dogmatic and Fundamental Theology, etc.
- Artistic subject matters: Art History (universal and Romanian), Study of drawing, Study of colour, Study of artistic techniques, Artistic anatomy, The methodology of intervention on the artwork. Materials and technologies, General theory of restoration, Icon restoration and polychrome wood, Specialized practice, etc.

- Scientific subject matters: Chemistry, Physics, Study of materials, Notions of physics and chemistry, Etiopathogenesis of the artwork, Scientific investigations, etc.

Most of the subject matters that were taught then are found in the current curricula, proving a clear vision of its mentor from the very beginning, the priest counselor Lecturer Mihai Vizitiu, PhD. By reorganizing the curricula according to the current legislation and the declaration from Bologna (which provides for 6 semesters for the bachelor's degree), starting with 2005 the share of some subject matters was reduced while new ones appeared, the latter being necessary for a solid specialized training of the students (Melniciuc Puică 2010: 157-165). Currently 75% of the subject matters in the curricula are specialty subject matters and only 25% are subject matters in the field of theology, foreign language and information technologies. The content of the program is permanently renewed by introducing new knowledge, results of scientific research, the artistic creation activity and scientific give-and-take with educational and cultural institutions in the country and abroad.

As of 1999, a new development direction has been established within the section of Cultural Heritage, named Church painting. From then on, until 2017, the three development directions of the specialization are: Icon – polychrome wood conservation and restoration, Document-book conservation and restoration and Church painting. Currently, at the bachelor's level, full-time learning form of education, the specialization is training students for the development directions of Conservation Restoration and Church painting. At the same time, the Sacred Art section in Iași is the only specialization in the country that prepares specialists in religious miniature.

Table 1 provides specific data on the didactic activity of the Sacred Art specialization, over time (Melniciuc Puică 2010: 157-165).

Table 1: Name of Bachelor's degree, form of education and number of students per series, since establishment

Academic year	Name of Bachelor's degree	Form of education (full-time learning)	Number of students per series
1993-1994	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	24

1994-1995	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	64
1995-1996	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	113
1996-1997	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	143
1997-1998	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	173
1998-1999	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	180
1999-2000	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	177
2000-2001	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	175
2001-2002	Orthodox Theology – Cultural Heritage	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	153
2002-2003	Didactic Orthodox Theology – Conservation and Restoration	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	149
2003-2004	Didactic Orthodox Theology – Conservation and Restoration	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	128
2004-2005	Didactic Orthodox Theology – Conservation and Restoration	Bachelor's level – 8 semesters	124
2005-2006	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	127
2006-2007	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	128
2007-2008	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	122
2008-2009	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	95
2009-2010	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	99
2010-2011	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	86
2011-2012	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	89
2012-2013	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	88
2013-2014	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	87
2014-2015	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	94

2015-2016	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	97
2016-2017	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	85
2017-2018	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	78
2018-2019	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	73
2019-2020	Sacred art	Bachelor's level – 6 semesters	77

The students for the Bachelor's degree come from the seminars in the counties of Moldova (Romania) especially from the classes from the Theology Heritage profile of "Veniamin Costachi" Orthodox Theological Seminar from Neamț Monastery, "Sf. Vasile cel Mare" Orthodox Theological Seminary from Iași and "Sfântul Gheorghe" Orthodox Theological Seminary in Botoșani, to whom are added graduates of the theoretical or industrial high schools, rarely of art high schools (Melnicuic Puică, 2003: 405-414).

The specialization of postgraduate studies was established within the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași, as of 2003, initially in the form of advanced studies and as of 2005 until now, the Master's degree is in place. Information about the academic activity of the Master's specialization over time is presented in Table 2 (Melnicuic Puică 2010: 157-165).

Table 2: Name of Master's degree, form of education and the number of master's students per series, since establishment

Academic year	Name of Master's degree	Form of education (full-time learning)	Number of master's students per series
2003-2004	Theology - Cultural Heritage (conservation restoration book, document and icon)	Advanced studies - 2 semesters	9
2004-2005	Theology - Cultural Heritage (conservation restoration book, document and icon)	Advanced studies - 2 semesters	8

2005-2006	Theology - Cultural Heritage (conservation restoration book, document and icon)	Master's degree – 4 semesters	15
2006-2007	Theology - Cultural Heritage (conservation restoration book, document and icon)	Master's degree – 4 semesters	36
2007-2008	Theology - Cultural Heritage (conservation restoration book, document and icon)	Master's degree – 4 semesters	40
2008-2009	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	53
2009-2010	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	51
2010-2011	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	45
2011-2012	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	38
2012-2013	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	36
2013-2014	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	38
2014-2015	Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	36
2015-2016	Cultural Heritage /Sacred art in Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	35
2016-2017	Sacred art in Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	35
2017-2018	Sacred art in Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	36
2018-2019	Sacred art in Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	39
2019-2020	Sacred art in Cultural Heritage	Master's degree – 4 semesters	46

Most of the master's students enrolled in this specialization were and are graduates holding a Bachelor's Degree in Sacred Art from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași.

As of its establishment up to the present, the specialization of Sacred Art aimed at training heritage assets conservators, icon – polychrome wood and document-book restorers as well as at training

church painters. By attending the pedagogical module, part of the graduates who graduated until 2005 teach Religion in schools and, following 2005, the graduates have the opportunity to become Art Education teachers in pre-university education.

Over time, the Sacred Art section had a maximum of 11 tenure professors and a variable number of associate professors, coming from Moldova Iași Museum Complex and “G. Enescu” Arts University in Iași. They established, from 1994 to 2008, a department called Conservation and Restoration, initially led by lecturer Mihai Vizitiu, PhD (1994-1997), and subsequently by lecturer Mariana Mustață, PhD (1997-2003) and associate professor Nicoleta Melniciuc Puică, PhD (2003-2008). After 2008, as it included a small number of professors, according to the university regulations in force, the group of professors was included in the Department of Orthodox Theology of the faculty, currently led by associate professor Iulian Constantin Damian, PhD.

Currently, the specialty tenured professors are the following: professor Nicoleta Melniciuc Puică, PhD, associate professor Georgeta Merișor Dominte, PhD, lecturer Stelian Onica, PhD, lecturer Mina Adriana Moșneagu, PhD, lecturer Elena Ardelean, PhD, assistant Vasile Tudor, PhD and assistant Bogdan Cojocă, PhD. The priests tenured professors from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași and from Al. I. Cuza University in Iași and Mr. Assistant Professor Petru Sofragiu, PhD contribute to the academic activity of the specialty. Mrs. Eng. Angela Leonte contributes to the good performance of laboratory activities.

The professors are particularly involved in the scientific research activity, numerous scientific papers being published in specialized magazines and with publishing houses recognized by CNCSIS. The involvement of some professors (professor Nicoleta Melniciuc Puică, lecturer Elena Ardelean) in national research projects (PAPHERCON, ANTIQUE LEATHER, LACORE) has led to the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment for the Sacred Art section of which we mention (www.erris.gov.ro):

Spectrophotometer Vertex 70 and accessories, Demineralizer for humid treatments, Air-tight sandblasting chamber, Mobile Dust Collectors, Thermohygrometer with electrode holder and accessories, Low pressure tables for restoration, Trinocular polarizing microscope,

Stereomicroscope with mobile arm and PC camera, Mobile filtering extractor with charcoal filter used in restoration, Professional Biological Microscope, Portable pH meter, Portable Luxmeter, Leucometer for measurement of the whiteness degree of the paper, Paper thickness micrometer, Particle Counter + embedded videocamera, Forced air laboratory oven, Articulated lamps with trolley for restoration, Digital microscope etc. This apparatus are part of Research Laboratory in the field of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, research laboratory of Sacred Art specialization within Faculty of Orthodox Theology.

Both professors and students from our specialization participate in the research activity, fundamental or applicative (through participation in conferences, symposia, exhibitions, workshops, creative camps and artistic projects).

Amongst the performances of the professors and students of the Sacred Art section we mention the organization and participation in national and international exhibitions and symposia. In 2018 alone, the professors and students organized 10 national exhibitions with works of sacred art.

Starting with 2006, the faculty organizes a prestigious international symposium entitled Symposium on Religious Art Restoration and Conservation (ESRARC), which took place in Iași – Romania (in 2006, 2008, 2010, 2017), Alba Iulia – Romania (2013), Florence – Italy (2013), Trnava – Slovakia (2015), Viterbo – Italy (2016), Praga – Czech Republic (2018) and Valencia – Spain (2019). This symposium has contributed to the accomplishment of collaborations with specialists from the country and abroad.

Through the Erasmus program, exchanges of professors and students take place annually with the faculties of the European universities, which have concluded partnership agreements with our faculty.

The aforementioned aspects underline the fact that the Sacred Art section from Iași has been noted in the specialized higher education national system through consistency, depth and specificity.

3. Celebration of 25 years of university education in conservation and restoration of religious art

Between December 2018 – January 2019, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Iași initiated and organized a jubilee exhibition of special importance entitled “A quarter of a century of icon and old book restoration at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology - Sacred Art - in Iași: 1993 -2018”.

The exhibition - of restored icons and old books, was organized by the lecturer Mina-Adriana Mosneagu, PhD, lecturer Elena Ardelean, PhD, assistant professor Vasile Tudor, PhD and professor Nicoleta Melniciuc-Puică, PhD. The exhibitors were students, master students and graduates of the specialties of Sacred Art (Bachelor's degree) and Sacred art in cultural heritage (Master's degree): Mădălina Arbore, Ionuț Baci, Maria Boca, Ana Bodnar, Geanina Bratu, Andreea Burlacu, Georgiana Chirilianu, Simina Ciucă, Loredana Constantin, Mădălina Cozmescu, Ionuț Dogaru, Laura Gireadă, Alina Grosu, Valentin Harabagiu, Andreea Iacob, Ana-Maria Ioviță, Lavinia Ivaș, Elena Martinov, Ana Misoagă, Bogdan Mohor Obreja, Marius Munteanu, Gabriel Oroșanu, Vasilica Necula, Ecaterina Nică, Florentina Pipoș, Remus Popa, Mihaela Postolache, Simona-Gabriela Romaniuc, Alexandru Samuilă, Dumitru Săvoaia, Mariana Spătaru, Alina Tomniuc, Cristina Tudor, Elena Tun, Emil Ungureanu, Anamaria Ursaciuc (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Exhibition poster

The opening of this exhibition took place on November 27, 2018, in the presence of the department head Lecturer Iulian Constantin Damian, PhD and a large audience. The event was organized according to all modern standards (Melniciuc Puică 2008: 139-156), at the Baptisterium hall of the Museum of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Bucovina (Figures 2 a,b).



(a)



(b)

Figures 2. Aspects from the opening of the exhibition (a) and some participants of the event (b)

The exhibition included the restoration works of some valuable icons and old books, which are now kept in museums, storehouses or places of worship. It was an event full of excitement, the meeting with the rewarding graduates of the specialization being unforgettable.

This jubilee moment comes to mark a year full of homage activities: exhibitions, conferences, symposia and student groups.

4. Conclusions

Cultural heritage is a fragile and limited resource, being threatened with irreparable damage or loss not only because of the passage of time and the change of society, but also because of the great economic and social changes in the last years. Knowing the problems that cultural heritage faces, its conservation and restoration is a constant concern for the specialists because that which it is not preserved today, now, is lost forever.

Many generations have been careful to hand over to their followers, in good condition, the inherited icons and the religious books - testimonies of centuries of Romanian Christian faith - and to preserve the iconographic tradition of church painting. The goal of the teaching staff of the Sacred Art specialization is to continue, together with the new generations, the efforts of the predecessors and, at the same time, to place the scientific knowledge in the fields of cultural heritage conservation and restoration in line with the European standards. This goal gives us, the professors, the power to continue with each new series of students, the undertaking to enrich the creation with new meanings, with humbleness, to the glory of God.

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