

# DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP TO DOCUMENTING THE EPHEMERAL. THE DIGITAL MODEL OF AN ARTIFACT DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION: THE CARRO TRIONFALE OF THE MADONNA DELLA BRUNA IN MATERA, ITALY

**Dr. Enrico Lamacchia**

Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Italy

## ABSTRACT

Culture, art, faith, and popular tradition come together every year on July 2<sup>nd</sup> in the extraordinary setting of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Southern Italy. The Feast of the Madonna della Bruna, the Patroness of the city, is a centuries-old celebration that exemplifies both tangible and intangible heritage. Central to the event is the grand Triumphal Cart: an elaborate machine in papier-mâché that carries in procession the statue of the Madonna. Each year, this baroque work of art is newly created by local artisans only to be destroyed by the crowd at the climax of the festivities, an act rich with symbolic and apotropaic meaning. This study addresses the challenge of preserving and disseminating knowledge about such ephemeral cultural artifacts. Digital technologies, particularly photogrammetry, offer innovative means to document, archive, and share its artistic and cultural significance. The research aims to investigate how photogrammetric documentation can serve as both a preservation tool and a medium for enhancing public engagement with intangible heritage. Using high-resolution image capture and 3D reconstruction workflows, the author produced detailed digital models of the 2022 and 2023 Triumphal Carts. These models were analyzed to assess accuracy, aesthetic fidelity, and their potential applications in virtual exhibitions and educational contexts. By combining traditional craftsmanship with digital innovation, this research highlights a productive intersection between visual arts and heritage science.

**Keywords:** Digital survey, Photogrammetry, Cultural Heritage, Craftsmanship, Papier-mache, Matera

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary field of cultural heritage preservation faces a unique challenge when confronted with ephemeral artifacts, objects and rituals designed to exist only temporarily, yet deeply embedded with social, artistic, and spiritual meaning. The Feast of the Madonna della Bruna, celebrated annually in Matera, Southern Italy, represents one such case in which tangible craftsmanship and intangible ritual intersect dramatically.

Matera is worldwide known for its architectural heritage represented by the *Sassi*, its UNESCO awarded historical districts. There is considerable academic debate on this topic, and survey, documentation, and virtual viewing techniques for architectural heritage are well developed today. Can the same techniques be adopted for the documentation of movable, and especially temporary, assets?