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*Between tradition and innovation: A preliminary survey  
on the artistic heritage of the University of Genoa, Italy*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Italy has some of the oldest universities in the world and its university heritage is among the most significant in Europe. Botanical gardens and anatomical theatres developed in fifteenth and sixteenth century and were later introduced in other European universities. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Italian university heritage, both from the Italian academy, the Italian Council of Rectors (CRUI) and from national and international organisations such as the ANMS (Associazione Nazionale Musei Scientifici), UMAC (the international committee for university museums and collections of ICOM) and Universeum, the University Heritage European Network<sup>2</sup>.

The first organized form of higher education in Genoa goes back to the thirteenth century, with the establishment of several Collegi of law, theology, medicine and art studies. In 1569, the Senate of the Republic of Genoa introduced in the Collegio of the Jesuits the chairs of canon law, civil law, moral philosophy and mathematics. In 1640, this Collegio was located in what is today the Palazzo dell'Università. Following the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, the faculties of the University of Genoa have developed within the various political administrations that have governed that part of Italy. Today, the core of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a developed version of a communication presented at the Universeum Network Meeting 2009 (Toulouse, 11–13 June 2009): *Traditional methods and new models of research: AdAC, the Archive of Contemporary Art of University of Genoa*.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, recent initiatives to restructure university museums and collections at the Universities of Bologna, Pavia, Florence, Turin, Milan, among others. See also recent conferences and publications, e.g. C. Cilli, G. Malerba & G. Giacobini, *Il Patrimonio della Scienza. Le collezioni di interesse storico*, 2008. AMNS, Torino; M.I. Simeon, *I musei scientifici universitari: funzioni, caratteristiche dell'offerta, strumenti di valorizzazione*, Tip. E. Albano, Napoli 2005; E. Corradini & A. Russo (eds), *Musei universitari modenesi*, Editrice Moderna, Bologna 2008; Università di Pisa (eds), *Arte e scienza nei musei dell'Università di Pisa*, Plus-Università di Pisa, Pisa 2002; M.C. del Re & M.R. Ghiara (eds), *Decennale centro museale, Centro musei delle scienze naturali: Atti del convegno Riflessioni sul ruolo dei musei universitari – Napoli*, Medias, Napoli 2003, among others.

the 11 faculties is in the center of Genoa, although there are courses in the other provincial capitals of Liguria (Imperia, Savona, La Spezia). Today, the University of Genoa has c. 37 thousand. At international level, Genoa is mostly renowned for its research in the area of new technologies, thanks to the Italian Institute of Technology (IIT)<sup>3</sup> which is one of the most important scientific center in Europe.

Like so many universities in Europe, the very old and the very new coexist at the University of Genoa. The University holds considerable scientific and artistic heritage and the diversity, typology and historical relevance of its buildings, archives and collections have national and international significance. This paper intends to provide a brief and preliminary survey on the University of Genoa's artistic and historical heritage, through the identification of its main characteristics, challenges, and distinct nature. Although not the main object of the survey, scientific and technological heritage is also briefly analysed. A compilation of relevant literature and websites is also presented.

The idea of a survey began with a reflection on the role of the Contemporary Arts Archives (Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy), but several circumstances led me to expand the approach. First, apart from what is available online<sup>4</sup>, literature on Genoa's University artistic heritage is still scarce<sup>5</sup>. Second, the University of Genoa still lacks a broad management strategy for its historical and artistic heritage, as well as a forum for its in-depth and regular monitoring. Moreover, Genoa's scientific faculties seem to be recently paying more attention to their academic museums and collections. Finally, while Genoa's non-academic museums are increasing its public access and visibility through an online integrated system for communication and event promotion<sup>6</sup>, Genoa's university museums are systematically excluded from cultural programmes organized by the city. Therefore, a survey on the state of Genoa's University artistic heritage was in order, as a preliminary step towards increasing its visibility and relevance at the academy and the city. Methodology included a compilation of existing studies, website analysis and an update of current strategies of enhancement (e.g. recent and forthcoming publications, conferences, external collaborations and institutional commitments). The survey was conducted between March and November 2009 and it was greatly inspired by Franco Sborgi and Lauro Magnani, Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy professors

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<sup>3</sup> The Italian Institute of Technology is not an university center: "it is a foundation established jointly by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research and the Ministry of Economy and Finance to promote excellence in basic and applied research and to contribute to the economic development of Italy. The primary goals of the IIT are the creation and dissemination of scientific knowledge as well as the strengthening of Italy's technological competitiveness. To achieve these two goals, the IIT will cooperate with both academic institutions and private organizations, fostering through these partnerships scientific development, technological advances and training in high technology" (see <http://www.iit.it/>). See the complete list of research centers of University of Genoa at <http://www.unige.it/strutture/centri.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> For the history of *Palazzo dell'Università* see <http://www.unige.it/storia/>; for the history of the three buildings of Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy see <http://www.beniculturali.unige.it/page.php?ID=Cattaneo>, <http://www.beniculturali.unige.it/page.php?ID=Senareg>, <http://www.beniculturali.unige.it/page.php?ID=Raggio>.

<sup>5</sup> *AA.VV.*, *Il Palazzo dell'Università di Genova: il collegio dei Gesuiti nella strada di Balbi*, Genova 1987 – E. Gavazza, *Lo spazio dipinto: il grande affresco genovese nel '600*, Genova 1989, C. Di Biase, *Strada Balbi a Genova: residenza aristocratica e città*, Genova 1993.

<sup>6</sup> See the new website at <http://www.museidigenova.it/spip.php>. For approximately two years, the Comune of Genoa has launched the project *Genova Città Digitale*, which aims to improve interactive communication for Genoa's museums through social networks such as myspace, facebook, etc.

responsible for the contemporary and modern art collections respectively, and Antonio Camurri, responsible for Casa Paganini.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the heritage of the Faculty of Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences. The core of the survey is devoted to the artistic and historical heritage held by the University, with a focus on Casa Paganini, the monumental buildings of Via Balbi and two important university archives: the AdAC Archivio d'Arte Contemporanea (Contemporary Arts Archives) and the Archivio figure di scrittura popolare (Ligurian Archive for Folk Writing).

## **The scientific heritage of the University of Genoa**

The Faculty of Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences of the University of Genoa has four museums and one botanical centre: the Museum of the Department of Biology, the Museum of Chemistry, the Museum of Physics, the National Museum of the Antarctic and the Hanbury Botanical Centre.

The Museo Nazionale dell'Antartide (National Museum of the Antarctic) was established in 1996 by the National Department for Scientific and Technological Research<sup>7</sup> as a preservation and exhibition centre for the results of Italian expeditions after the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. The Museum operates at the three Italian university sites – Genoa, Trieste and Siena. As far as the Genoa section, the Museum has a space for display and education at the Porto Antico, an area renovated by the architect Renzo Piano in the heart of the old city. This outstanding location, coupled with the website<sup>8</sup>, enables the Museum to reach wider educational, touristic and cultural audiences. The Museum is a mirror for University research at the heart of city life: every material collected during the expeditions to the Antarctic is displayed there, especially biology and environmental-related findings. The display is dynamic and interactive, with videos and reconstructions of native habitats.

The Museum of Chemistry has two core collections: one associated with the work of Stanislao Cannizzaro, a professor at the University Genoa between 1855 and 1861, and the other resulting from research developed in the 1930s on the composition and properties of minerals. Although the preservation and cataloguing of historical instruments and books was initiated in 1990, the idea of a 'museum-laboratory' displaying objects according to their original contexts and uses was only developed in the late 1990s. Today, the Museum is constantly evolving thanks to studies, research on materials kept in storage and new donations. The Museum does not have an exhibition space in the city centre, but its location can be easily found. In the website, visitors can browse through an interactive map of the exhibitions and have access to in-depth information or to specific areas of the collections. This remote platform is useful to visitors before and after their visit.

The Museum of the Department of Biology holds collections of comparative anatomy assembled to support teaching and research. These include near complete skeletons, mounted specimens, a significant wet collection and models. Some items date to the

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<sup>7</sup> The Museum is dedicated to the memory of the Italian scientist Felice Ippolito, recently deceased.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.mna.it/> and [http://www.mna.it/italiano/Sedi/Sedi\\_set.htm](http://www.mna.it/italiano/Sedi/Sedi_set.htm).

early twentieth century. The Museum encompasses two rooms on the ground floor of the Department; presently, it does not have a website. The Museum of Physics has c. 600 cataloged scientific instruments, of which 276 date to the original Physics Laboratory established in 1784 with the first Chair of Physics at the University<sup>9</sup>.

The Botanical Centre is part of the Department for the Study of Territory and Resources. It includes the Hanbury Vegetable Gardens<sup>10</sup> (originally a Jesuit garden) and the Hanbury Botanical Gardens<sup>11</sup> in La Mortola, a village near the French border. The Vegetable Garden of Genoa was among the first university centres for botanical studies in Italy, thanks to the contribution of Sir Thomas Hanbury, who developed a research center in the Gardens in the 1860s. Today, the Vegetable Garden hosts eleven degree courses related to four different faculties (Architecture, Sciences, Pharmacy, and Humanities). The Hanbury Botanical Gardens consists of eighteen hectares of exotic and Mediterranean plants. The park is one of the best-known nature and landscape landmarks in Liguria<sup>12</sup>.

## The artistic and historic heritage of the University of Genoa

In terms of heritage, the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy has a more complex setting than the Faculty of Mathematics, Physical and Natural Sciences. Apart from the Museum of Ethnomedicine “A. Scarpa”, the Faculty has the AdAC Archivio d’Arte Contemporanea (Contemporary Arts Archives) and the Archivio ligure di scrittura popolare (Ligurian Archive for Folk Writing). They are all located in the seventeenth century stately buildings at Via Balbi, a site partly declared World Heritage by UNESCO. In this section I will briefly describe their importance and main characteristics. I will begin, however, with Casa Paganini (Faculty of Engineering), given its innovative approach between art and technology.

### *Casa Paganini: An encounter between science, technology and art*

Casa Paganini<sup>13</sup> is an international centre of excellence created in 2005 as a “spin-off” of the research laboratory InfoMusLab<sup>14</sup>. It is located in the ancient Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie la Nuova, purchased by the University in 1987 and renovated in 2005 with the contribution of Regione Liguria. It is possible to visit the cloister, built in the fifteenth century over pre-existing medieval and roman settlements, as well as the decorative cycles painted between 1500 and 1700. Casa Paganini presents an experimental convergence of technological, scientific and artistic research, in a setting of great

<sup>9</sup> See [http://www.fisica.unige.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=45](http://www.fisica.unige.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=45) and <http://www.ge.infn.it/~opisso/museo.html>.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.polobotanicohanbury.it/>.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.amicihanbury.com/>.

<sup>12</sup> The park overlooks the sea and is managed by the University of Genoa in its scientific aspects. The Council for Environmental and Architectural Heritage of Liguria maintains the buildings.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.casapaganini.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> InfoMusLab exists since 1984 at the Department of Information Technology, System Theory and Telecommunication.

historical importance. Work is developed around innovative man-machine interfaces inspired by humanistic theories, especially digital music and methods for the making of string instruments (Fig. 1). At the same time, Casa Paganini is engaged in scenic and visual arts as well as applications for rehabilitation and therapy. Every project developed at Casa Paganini attempts convergence between artistic creation, technology implementation, didactics, theoretical and scientific study<sup>15</sup>.

Casa Paganini offers a singular and non-passive experience for the public. Electronic device applications create environments of enhanced reality in close relation to the historical site or to particular aspects of past and present art. As a result, audiences can actively enjoy the (university) heritage considered in two complementary forms: 1) artistic, architectural and historical heritage, 2) scientific research applied to performative arts and to life improvement.

### *The humanistic centre in via Balbi: Local and universal artistic heritage*

In 1613, the Genoese aristocratic family Balbi initiated the construction of a series of buildings that went through constant renovation and redecoration until the nineteenth century. These buildings are the core of Via Balbi, once an important carriageway linking the Doria residence (Palazzo del Principe) to the Palazzo Ducale, along the stately houses of Strada Nuova (via Garibaldi). Today, via Balbi is an important city street and the site of university faculties, museums, boards, churches and libraries.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the University of Genoa acquired four Balbi buildings to host the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy (Palazzo Balbi Senarega, Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo and Palazzo Balbi Raggio), the Faculty of Law and the Rector's Office (both at the *Palazzo dell'Università*, a former Jesuit College)<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 2).

Nearby are the Palazzo Serra, hosting the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, the Palazzo Belimbau and the *Albergo dei Poveri*<sup>17</sup> on the Carbonara hill, hosting the Faculty of Political Sciences. The Balbi colleges are a widespread *in situ* museum, presenting important university, architectural and artistic heritage linked to European history and culture, particularly when the Republic of Genoa was the centre of trade, artistic and political exchange between northern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea.

The building of the *Palazzo dell'Università* is contemporary to the first university in Genoa. It was constructed for the Jesuit Congregation between 1636 and 1670 and it hosts the University Library (once Jesuit Church, decorated by Domenico Piola in 1664), including a large number of books from the Jesuit collection, among which precious illuminated manuscripts and *incunabula*<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately, the collection is only partly preserved and accessible.

<sup>15</sup> See A. Camurri, L. Magnani, *Come un'onda premuta da un'onda. Memoria e Progetto a Casa Paganini. Una guida*, monographic essay in *Quaderni di Casa Paganini*, 3, Genova 2009, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Respectively via Balbi 4, 2, 6 and 5.

<sup>17</sup> The *Albergo dei Poveri* is the first Italian institution especially dedicated to provide hospitality and assistance to the poor. It was built in 1656, a time when accommodation for the needy was a crucial problem all over Europe. The founder of the institution, Emanuele Brignole, wanted the *Albergo* to reflect the magnificence of both its commissioner and the city. The high altar of the Church hosts the statue of the *Immacolata* sculpted by Pierre Puget in 1671. Visitors can still see the statues created as homage to the *Albergo's* benefactors.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.bibliotecauniversitaria.ge.it/bug/cms/bug/it/info/index.html>.

In early 2009, Lauro Magnani, a full professor of History of Modern Art, received from the Rector the assignment to promote University's artistic heritage. This mission presents several challenges. Artistic heritage appeals naturally to broad audiences but its protection, management and promotion is complex. At the same time, the University sites in Genoa have only recently drawn attention from local, national and international authorities. Dispersed works of art were recently returned to Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo and a publication was produced<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the renovation of the *Aula Magna* in the Faculty of Law and the classification of Palazzi dei Rolli as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006<sup>20</sup> have also contributed to raising public awareness towards the significance of the artistic and historical heritage of the University<sup>21</sup>.

Of the three sites of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, Palazzo Balbi Senarega has remained unchanged since 1644, when Francesco Maria Balbi had it enlarged. It consists of a central courtyard in the hall, an open staircase leading up to the main floors, an arcade; two wings of the building lean out towards the ancient harbour enclosing the garden and the *nymphaeum* (Fig. 3).

The vaults with fresco paintings on the second main floor (Department of Archaeology and Philology, Department of Italian Language Studies, Romance Philology, Arts and Performing Arts) are the result of decorations done during the second half of the seventeenth century. The mythological pictorial cycles were painted by artists such as Valerio Castello, Domenico Piola and Gregorio De Ferrari<sup>22</sup> (Fig. 4).

Challenges mentioned above could become an opportunity for Faculty students and researchers. For example, the course in Conservation of Cultural Assets can monitor structural preservation, particularly how present uses affect the building's architecture and baroque decorations<sup>23</sup>. The building has great scientific, artistic, historical and touristic importance but it needs constant attention and care.

As far as public access, guided tours to the building have been offered for several years now. In other occasions, the Faculty hosts installations or workshops during important national or international events (e.g. the National Culture Week, the Festival of Science<sup>24</sup>, the International Conference on New Interfaces in Musical Expression, NIME 2008, among others).

<sup>19</sup> It is a series of history, art and culture guides about Italian art cities, published by Skira. The guides are well-known in Italy. The volume dedicated to Genoa includes an essay about the University heritage "I palazzi del sapere" by professor Laura Stagno, in *Le città d'arte: Genova*, ed. by L. Lecci, Skira, Milano 2009.

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.irolli.it/>. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the Genoa Republic, the *Rolli* were lists of registered stately houses that could become, if necessary, public residences to host distinguished visitors or important foreign ambassadors. These buildings (about eighty, forty of which were declared World Heritage) belonged to the wealthiest and most influential families in Genoa and had distinctive architectural features (three or four floors, wide open salons, *loggias*, courtyards and roof gardens). See also the official report of UNESCO in <http://www.irolli.it/blog/2006/07/21/le-motivazioni-ufficiali-dei-palazzi-dei-rolli-patrimonio-dellumanita/>.

<sup>21</sup> UNESCO classification includes the building of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, the Faculty of Foreign Languages (Palazzo Serra) and the nearby Palazzo Belimbau.

<sup>22</sup> About the decorative cycles in Genoa's stately houses, see E. Gavazza, L. Magnani, *Pittura e decorazione a Genova e in Liguria nel Settecento*, Cassa di Risparmio di Genova e Imperia Foundation, 2000, E. Gavazza, *Lo spazio dipinto: il grande affresco genovese nel '600*, Sagep, Genova 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Initially conceived for a small number of people, today Palazzo Senarega is a university centre with thousands of students daily.

<sup>24</sup> For several years, Genoa hosts the *Festival della Scienza* (Festival of Science). During one week every Autumn, the Festival transforms Genoa into a national and international centre of scientific exhibitions and high-quality conferences.

As mentioned before, the restoration in 2004 of the *Aula Magna* of the Faculty of Law resulted in studies on the works of art in the former Hall, the Theology Room, the internal Oratory, and the Law Room of the College of the Jesuits<sup>25</sup>. In July 2009, a conference was held on the restoration and on the return of the paintings of the Cattaneo collection on display at the *Aula Magna* of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy<sup>26</sup>. This public conference aimed at disseminating and promoting the artistic heritage of the University and it was the first of a series of initiatives resulting from Lauro Magnani's assignment. In early 2010, a day of study devoted to the cultural and artistic assets of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy will take place, followed by a national conference about university artistic heritage at the end of the year. It is hoped that these meetings can lay the foundations for a broader discussion on the subject at international level in 2011.

Considered as a whole, the singularity of this heritage allows the development of innovative activities crossing several research areas. Nevertheless, there is need for well-defined projects, capable of involving non-academic audiences and attracting funds to sustain their development.

#### *Other collections of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy: A Contemporary Art Archive as interface between society and University*

Recent developments in promoting via Balbi's artistic heritage, combined with the UNESCO recognition, could have positive impact on other historical collections and archives at the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy. The Museum of Ethnomedicine 'A. Scarpa' is directed by Antonio Guerci and located at the Department of Anthropological Science in Palazzo Balbi Senarega. It preserves over 1,500 objects, among prescriptions, instruments, texts and documents, from different medical traditions across the world<sup>27</sup>. The collection has international importance and is a valuable resource for teachers, researchers and students, but it lacks visibility outside the academic sphere. In 2009, the *Museo delle Culture del Mondo* (Museum of the Cultures of the World) "Castello d'Albertis", in Genoa, opened an exhibition section dedicated to thematic and historic studies on medical traditions of different cultures<sup>28</sup>. The exhibition displays the collections of the University Museum of Ethnomedicine and could be useful to raise its public profile and visibility, even if this is only an experimental collaboration at the moment.

The *Archivio Ligure di Scrittura Popolare* (Ligurian Archive for Folk Writing) is another important collection and research centre. It collects and studies folk writing evidence in Liguria between 1800 and 1900, especially letters, diaries, notebooks, correspondence. The *Archivio*, which is directed by Professor Antonio Gibelli, is one of the main research laboratories at the Department of Modern and Contemporary History<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Among the art works displayed are the cycle of frescoes prompted by the Jesuit's ideals of wisdom painted by Giovanni Andrea Carlone; the *Virtù* by the Flemish sculptor Giambologna; the frescoes by Domenico Parodi; the eighteenth-century stucco works; the ten paintings with religious themes and the bronze relief works on *Storia della Passione* by Giambologna.

<sup>26</sup> After restoration works in the *Aula Magna* of the Faculty of Law, a short academic report was made by Lauro Magnani, Andrea Leonardi, Anna Manzitti and Margherita Priarone (unpublished).

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.disa.unige.it/index.aspx?page=3208&lang=ITA>.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.castellodalbertisgenova.it/>.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.dismec.unige.it/?section=40>.

(Palazzo Balbi Raggio) and it collaborates with non-academic institutions to develop exhibitions, cultural events and conferences.

Another interesting project developed around a historical archive is the AdAC *Archivio d'Arte Contemporanea* (Contemporary Art Archive). AdAC is part of the Department of Italian Language Studies, Romance Philology, Arts and Performing Arts, located on the last floor of Palazzo Balbi Senarega<sup>30</sup>. Although not unique in Italy<sup>31</sup>, AdAC is one of the few Italian university institutions aimed at collecting and studying materials relevant for the understanding of historical phenomena related to international art from the 1940s until today. Among these materials are magazines, photographs, exhibition catalogues, books and audiovisuals, as well as *ephemeral* such as invitations to exhibitions, press releases, artists and art critics' correspondence, posters, newspaper articles and manuscripts. As Enrico Crispolti<sup>32</sup>, an eminent art critic in Italy has said, this documentation may be designated "grey material", a short-living source of information but at the same time crucial for the definition of contemporary art phenomena<sup>33</sup>.

The origins of the AdAC date back to the early 1980s, when Corrado Maltese, Professor of History of Medieval and Modern Art, donated his personal archive to Franco Sborgi, a Professor of History of Contemporary Art. Maltese's archive consisted mostly of Italian and international exhibition catalogues. After the donation, Sborgi initiated its organisation and institutionalization at the University of Genoa in order to make it accessible for learning and research. Today, after intensive work of development, cataloguing and digitalizing, AdAC is a research laboratory recognised by Regione Liguria, although not yet well-known across Italy<sup>34</sup>. Being a university archive necessarily means that AdAC's main mission is to provide students with the necessary resources to achieve the best in their educational and professional development. Several students have written graduation theses using AdAC materials, considered as important sources as other publications<sup>35</sup>. The Archive is presently a relevant complementary tool to more traditional book-oriented approaches to learning. It provides students with the opportunity to directly handle primary history of art sources, therefore resulting in a more effective and meaningful training. Every year, AdAC organizes seminars devoted to the study and

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<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.adac.lettere.unige.it/>.

<sup>31</sup> For example, the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' has two different types of collections in contemporary art: the Archivio Lionello Venturi, which collects letters, magazines, books, manuscripts and photos related to the activity of the important critic and art historian lived in the first half of Twentieth century (see <http://w3.uniroma1.it/alv/>) and the Museum Laboratory of Contemporary Art (see <http://www.luxflux.net/museolab/museo.htm>). Although not university heritage, others important archives are the Biennale of Venice Archive (ASAC – *Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee*, see <http://www.labiennale.org/it/asac/>) and the *Archivio del '900* of MaRT – *Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto*, see [http://www.mart.trento.it/context\\_archivi.jsp?ID\\_LINK=273&page=2](http://www.mart.trento.it/context_archivi.jsp?ID_LINK=273&page=2)).

<sup>32</sup> Enrico Crispolti is also the founder of an important archive of contemporary art in Rome, see <http://www.archiviocrispolti.it/fHome.asp>.

<sup>33</sup> See E. Crispolti, *Come studiare l'arte contemporanea*, Donzelli, Roma 1997, pp. 145–159.

<sup>34</sup> During the project's crucial stages, Franco Sborgi (director of the Archive) has been assisted by researchers Leo Lecci and Paola Valenti, who still are members of the teaching staff at the Department of History of Contemporary Art, University of Genoa.

<sup>35</sup> For example, AdAC keeps many rare documents, such as catalogues, brochures, letters and articles about the realist period of the 1940s and the first post-war decades.

cataloguing of the photograph collections<sup>36</sup> or, for example, information systems suitable for the critical definition of contemporary art.

Nowadays, AdAC is at a turning point in its activity. Aware that its collections need more visibility, accessibility and public fruition, it initiated a renovation process through the investment of efforts and resources in two related and complementary directions: a) the institution of a digital archive, and b) the promotion of AdAC's activities outside the university context. As a result, a significant part of AdAC's materials has been indexed and made available online. A fusion between AdAC's digital resources and the more advanced CatalogArt.it<sup>37</sup> is being planned. CatalogArt.it is one of the most important private archives in Italy and it is located in Genoa. The union of the two databanks would enable cross-reference for a considerable number of documents from the nineteenth century to the present-day. This collaboration is important because it represents a university-private institution partnership, which is still relatively rare in the field of humanities. The digital archive represents a fundamental tool to share heritage and research with other European academic partners.

The role played by the Archive in the national cultural life is also being enhanced through participation in exhibition and editorial projects outside the University. When AdAC supports a research project or the popularization of contemporary art, it can provide a high quality scientific and documental support while at the same time promoting its own collections<sup>38</sup>. The real challenge, so far with successful results, is the mediation between the contemporary art system and the academic activity. Researchers permanently monitor the art world and organise seminars, conferences and meetings between students and prominent figures of the art scene, namely artists, curators, critics, among others. These are often experimental in nature and they aim at bringing the University back to a central role in the intellectual debate<sup>39</sup>. At the same time, the Archive promotes joint curatorships with lecturers, researchers and students to develop exhibition projects in non-academic public or private spaces. These exhibitions are important platforms

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<sup>36</sup> Among the most substantial photograph collections, there is one on Italian sculpture between 1800 and 1900, one on painting and sculpture between 1940s and 1960s, and another about exhibitions layouts and artist studios (slides).

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.catalogart.it/>.

<sup>38</sup> Among recent examples of collaborations in the exposition and promotional fields are: L. Lecci, F. Sborgi, L. Bochicchio (eds), *Savona Futurista. Esperienze d'avanguardia da Marinetti a Tullio d'Albisola*, Fortezza Monumentale del Priamar, Savona, 12 December 2009 – 14 February 2010, De Ferrari, Genova 2009; F. Casorati, D. Lauria, L. Lecci (eds), *Daphne Maugham Casorati*, Villa Faravelli, Imperia, 18 July – 13 September, De Ferrari, Genova 2009; P. Valenti, *Lucio Fontana in dialogo con lo spazio: opere ambientali e collaborazioni architettoniche 1946–1968*, De Ferrari, Genova 2009, F. Sborgi (editor), *Materiali per lo studio del Realismo in Italia nel dopoguerra*, AdAC – De Ferrari, Genova 2003.

Recently, AdAC has made available several documents for a documentary project promoted by the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, by Giuseppe Baresi and Simonetta Fadda. The documentary aims at retracing the artistic situation that developed in the Milan district of Brera around the 1960s. The involvement of AdAC in this project has reaffirmed the potential of its collections and the opportunity to stand side by side with other types of documentation, such as videos, interviews, pictures and multimedia reconstructions.

<sup>39</sup> In several occasions, the AdAC has promoted events organized by students' associations, for example the conference *if/ Interfacce nell'arte contemporanea. L'Arte come interfaccia contemporanea*, organized by the Corrado Maltese Student Association (see <http://www.diras.unige.it/associazioni/>). Among the latest meetings, the debate with conceptual artist Emilio Isgrò and the conference *Art and Electronic Media*, held by Edward A. Shanken should also be mentioned.

designed to disseminate more broadly the results of research and well-experimented critical approaches outside the academic circle<sup>40</sup>.

## Discussion

The heritage of the University of Genoa is complex, diverse and of international scope. It includes old aristocratic palaces, scientific and ethnographic museums, botanical gardens, art collections, historical archives and old book collections. This heritage reflects the history of academic tradition of Genoa and the town's strategic location between Mediterranean and Europe, and it materializes an intense flux of cultural, political and commercial exchanges since the late middle age. Notwithstanding such significance, the University of Genoa has not developed specific policies for heritage preservation and management. Moreover, its museums and collections have low visibility when compared with other museums or cultural institutions in Genoa.

Recent developments suggest that this situation could be changing. In general, the recognition of Genoa's university heritage has increased in the past years. The UNESCO classification was important in raising its public profile. Over the last ten years, museums and archives have procured audiences beyond the traditional academic audience. When compared with non-academic museums, university museums have the advantages of a well-constructed network of relations with other universities, the work of students and researchers, as well as more autonomy. These advantages can lead to increased public success and innovative professional challenges without neglecting the core values of teaching and research.

In terms of historical and artistic heritage (typically associated with the Humanities), a greater interest is confirmed by a recent series of actions aimed at: the official creation of a delegation aimed at the promotion of artistic heritage and the organization of a conference in 2010; the restoration of two historic decorated rooms in two different buildings (*Aula Magna* of the *Palazzo dell'Università* and *Palazzo Balbi Raggio*)<sup>41</sup>; the inclusion of some university buildings on the UNESCO list; the return of an ancient collection of paintings (Cattaneo collection); the inclusion of university heritage in tourist

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<sup>40</sup> Another project promoted by the AdAC in partnership with student associations Ko.Ji.Ku. – *Consorzio di Giovani Curatori*, was the exhibition *La grande abbuffata. Scarti, scorie, sprechi. Risorse Energetiche?*, presented in Spring 2009 at the *Centro per l'immagine* in Genoa (Museum of Palazzo Rosso). Among other exhibitions curated by AdAC, the site specific presentation by Rebecca Ballestra at the Museum Borea d'Olmo in Sanremo (2008) and a solo exhibit of the Pisa collective StudiOlo on the premises of Galleria Studio44 in Genoa should also be mentioned. Possibly the most important event, resulting in an effective collaboration between students and teachers from the History of Art course and institutional sponsors, was the development of *Yard*, a part of the exhibition *Allan Kaprow Art as Life*, organised by the Haus der Kunst in Munich and by the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven for the contemporary art museum of Villa Croce (Genoa, 30 November 2007 – 10 February 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Besides the *Aula Magna* of the *Palazzo dell'Università*, the interior restoration of *Palazzo Balbi Raggio* (in the opposite side of *Via Balbi*) is just finished. The *Palazzo* hosts the Departments of History, Ethnology and Italian Studies, as well as the Humanities Library. The restoration has focused on the decorations (stucco, stone, wall painting) made by Cesare Viazzi during the renovation by architect Luigi Rovelli in 1890. Viazzi painted seven allegories of the Risorgimento and celebration of the Savoy dynasty. During the same renovation, painter Luigi Gainotti made the fresco of the Allegory of Liguria in one of the boardrooms.

guides; the display at the Museum of the Culture of the World of the university ethnographic collection of medicine and the presence of the Archive of Contemporary Art in many public projects.

This paper presented a preliminary survey and state of the art of the University of Genoa's artistic and historical heritage. Several initiatives are being developed at the moment but a lot remains to be done at a broader level. First, it is necessary to create a permanent *forum* for the study and management of artistic and historical university resources and bring them closer together to the University's scientific heritage. A common and coherent policy for the heritage of the University of Genoa, materialized through a single management structure, is essential to increase its internal recognition and use by students and researchers, as well as its visibility among larger audiences, particularly Genoa's museum audiences. Secondly, collaborative partnerships with other universities in Italy and in Europe should be seen as opportunities to share knowledge and methodological approaches. As in part already happens (e.g. Casa Paganini), each center should implement partnerships with similar European institutions to promote research at multidisciplinary level and increase collections accessibility through databank networks, conferences and publications, and joint research projects.

The challenges facing university heritage in Genoa are similar to many universities in the world: increased awareness, recognition and accessibility, as well as consistent preservation and management policies. It is hoped that these recent developments will improve the general status of artistic, historical and scientific heritage at the University of Genoa, thus contributing to the visibility and sustainability that its heritage needs and deserves.

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*STRESZCZENIE**Pomiędzy tradycją a innowacją. Wstępne badanie dziedzictwa artystycznego uniwersytetu w Genui, Włochy*

Złożone i różnorodne dziedzictwo uniwersytetu w Genui ma ogromną wartość dla wielu narodów. W jego skład wchodzi stare arystokratyczne pałace, muzea naukowe i etnograficzne, ogrody botaniczne, kolekcje sztuki, archiwa historyczne i biblioteki. Spuścizna ta odzwierciedla zarówno akademicką tradycję Genui, jak i strategiczne położenie miasta między obszarem śródziemnomorskim a pozostałą częścią Europy. Ukazuje intensywne strumienie kulturowych, społecznych i handlowych wymian pomiędzy tymi obszarami, które nastąpiły od okresu późnego średniowiecza.

Tak jak w wielu europejskich uniwersytetach, również na uniwersytecie w Genui tradycja współistnieje z nowoczesnością. Archiwum Sztuki Współczesnej znajduje się w jednym z najstarszych budynków, ostatnio wpisanym na listę światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO. Casa Paganini stanowi natomiast centrum prezentujące eksperymentalną zbieżność badań naukowych, technologicznych i artystycznych. Ośrodek ten mieści się w klasztorze Santa Maria delle Grazie la Nuova. Podczas gdy znacząca część dziedzictwa uniwersytetu w Genui znajduje się w budynkach mieszczących poszczególne wydziały, kolekcje i muzea potrzebują nowatorskich strategii dla ich promocji i reklamy.

Artykuł ten jest krótkim i wstępnym przeglądem artystycznego i historycznego dziedzictwa uniwersytetu w Genui. Ma na celu określenie głównych cech tej spuścizny i jej odrębności, a także zamierzeń związanych z jej szeroko pojętą prezentacją.

Luca Bochicchio



Fig. I. The research center Casa Paganini – InfoMus in 2009, with a Quartetto di Cremona working session during a project on computational models to measure social signals (empathy, entrainment, leadership). All happens between the frescoed walls of the ancient convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie la Nuova (photo by Antonio Camurri)



Fig. II. The entrance of the Faculty of Law (photo by the author)



Fig. III. A detailed view of the garden with nymphaeum (seventeenth century), Palazzo Balbi Senarega, Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy (photo by the author)



Fig. IV. Palazzo Balbi Senarega, second main floor. *Il carro del Tempo* by Valerio Castello is a mythological decoration of the central gallery, which is part of Library of the Department of Arts (photo by the author)