

Technologies for Cultural Heritage: Leonardo and Beyond

(Oxford, 1 October 2008)

Welcome Address by Minister Giovanni Brauzzi,
Italian Embassy in London

- I am delighted to be here for the opening of this important Seminar. I convey the warmest wishes of Ambassador Aragona, who has been kept in London by the visit of a member of the Italian Government.
- I wish to congratulate the organizers, especially Professor Roberto Amendolia, for their vision and tireless effort in shaping and implementing such an interesting programme.
- I am glad that the Science Office of the Embassy has been successful in securing Magdalene College in Oxford as the venue for the Seminar.
- I am especially pleased by the excellent collaboration established with Italian Studies in Oxford. At the Embassy we attach the utmost importance to this ambitious and far reaching project. We have worked hard in the last couple of years to help its take-off. We are extremely happy that we are now passing from words to deeds. I am confident that many more initiatives will follow soon.
- A couple of quick comments about the theme of the Seminar.
- Firstly, I hope that such a distinguished “oxoniensis” audience will be tolerant enough to allow me a quotation from a famous speech given almost 50 years ago ... in Cambridge ! I refer to the Rede Lecture delivered on 7 May 1959 by Charles Snow on the so called “Two Cultures”. His message was that the breakdown of communication between sciences and humanities is a major hindrance to solving the world’s problems. I suspect it is still by and large the case.
- Any attempt to bridge this gap is therefore highly welcome. Your Seminar certainly goes in this direction. There is not only Leonardo but also a long list of great Italians of the past, fully conversant with art, science and technology at the same time.
- This bring me to my second and final point. It is about the importance for Italy of cultural heritage, probably being for us a sort of main national commodity. We therefore need to nurture and harvest it with the best available technologies, in order to seek the maximum returns from the human and material resources we are investing in this area. We are proud to illustrate them here, thanks to the important speakers Roberto Amendolia has been able to gather.
- Their presentations will be complemented by a short video on the recent repatriation in Ethiopia of the Axum Obelisk. This has been a major operation, carried out successfully with cutting edge technologies. We want to share with you this extremely interesting experience. We feel it is of relevance to this Seminar.