

ART IN ITALY: A STRENGTH TO RE-START

1. ART IN ITALY: A STRENGTH TO RE-START

With its 47 Unesco World Heritage sites, 4700 museums, 200 archaeological sites and the largest collection of works of art worldwide, Italy possesses a unique heritage. According to a recent ISTAT survey, Italian families allocate to cultural consumption on average 7.3% of their total expenditure, a trend which did not report significant changes during the last ten years. Among cultural activities, those involving at least one fourth of the population are visits to museums and exhibitions (28% of the population declare that they visit museums and exhibitions at least once a year). Art is one of the main tourist attractions of the Country, generating over 91 million presences a year and over 9.4 billion Euros of sales to tourists. According to the WTO (World Tourism Organization) cultural tourism is now consolidated and constantly growing: approximately 45% of foreigners visiting Italy have a city of art as their destination. And, as noticed by a recent CENSIS¹ survey, art is not just a profitable resource (potential business 10.2%, tourist attraction 21.5%) but also a national strength and identity (27%) and a point to start for recovery (41.3%). From an Ispo survey, it emerges that Italians are aware that art and cultural heritage represent a resource to invest in, even in periods of economic crisis, because they generate value².

2. TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW MEDIA AT THE SERVICE OF ITALIAN ART HERITAGE

Today millions of Italians use the Internet on a daily basis: 38.4 million people equal to 79.6% of the population declare that they access the Internet from any place and device. 16.8 millions access the Internet from their mobile and 2.7 millions from a tablet³. A global phenomenon with over 34% of the world population connected to the web (2.4 billions out of 7 billions of human beings) growing every year at a steady pace and that in the next decade will bring online an additional 3 billion people. In this ever-evolving context, Italian art and culture represent a great interest for web surfers. Just think that, on average, over 7.5 million searches are carried out on the Internet with “arte” as a keyword (30% in Italy, 70% worldwide) and over 61 million documents and information are indexed by generalist search engines. In the ranking of the most-searched words in the art field worldwide, Italy ranks top with examples like Leonardo da Vinci (1.2 million searches per month), Colosseo (100 thousand searches), Torre di Pisa (90 thousand searches)⁴. These numbers are remarkable, but they should not be misread: as the Museum Analytics⁵ weekly index reports, Italian museums are among the least relevant museums in the world in terms of absolute audience and interaction abilities (Facebook & Twitter), while the top rankings are firmly in the hands of Moma, Victoria&Albert, Tate, Louvre or Tokyo Museum. The reasons for this increasingly visible discrepancy between the importance of Italian art heritage and its ability to trigger a virtuous economic and cultural attraction cycle for our Country are multiple and can be summarized in one slogan: **lack of systematic approach**. Here, the technological innovation represented by the Internet and the new media is an opportunity that can't be missed to turn art into a driver of economic, educational and cultural development for Italy.

¹ Fondazione Censis “Ripartire dalla bellezza per uscire dalla crisi” – 2011 CENSIS survey, page11 January, 2012

² “Arte in tempo di crisi: l'importanza di investire in un settore chiave per la rinascita del Paese”, Ispo, 24 January, 2013

³ Audiweb / Nielsen, January 2013

⁴ Arte.it, “Arte & Internet” – 2011 NEXTA Internet survey

⁵ See Museum Analytics website: www.museum-analytics.org

3. ARTE.it, MAPPING ART IN ITALY

In the wake of these reflections, ARTE.it, a start-up that is a NEXTA spin-off (online publisher that is now part of the FIAT/La Stampa Group) developed ARTE.it, the **first systematic MAPPING PROJECT OF ITALIAN ART**. A project that works at multiple levels and has as its objective the recording of the Italian art heritage thanks to the use of Internet, mobile and new digital media.

Starting from the launch of the website on 20 November, 2010 at the Florence FLORENS exhibition, ARTE.it is constantly evolving. Today the art mapping project includes **10 Italian art cities**, the most important cities in terms of artistic importance and ability to attract tourists: Rome, Venice, Florence, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Naples, Lecce and Palermo. The mapping included identifying, georeferencing and writing description factsheets of over **10,000 landmarks** (POI, i.e. museums, monuments, churches, art galleries, works of art), accompanied by the factsheets of the main Italian artists and divided into editorial itineraries and author itineraries. All of this is linked to a news report on art and cultural information that is updated on a daily basis, 7 days a week and a calendar of exhibitions and art events in the Country. In terms of representation of information, ARTE.it offers two methods: a traditional one, in the form of lists of texts and images (applicable to any multimedia content format, such as videos and animations), and **interactive maps**. Access to all content is free, **via web** (www.arte.it) and **via mobile** (through the iPhone applications freely available on the Apple Store). All the ARTE.it content is already available in Italian. The translation into English is already under way and today it is available for the city of Rome, Venice, Caserta and Aquileia.

4. ARTE.it, AN EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT FOR A SEMANTIC ART SEARCH ENGINE

In parallel with the development of the mapping project of Italian art, ARTE.it started an experimental project for the development of a semantic search engine on art and cultural heritage. The ARTE.it search engine uses statistical-mathematical algorithms and semantic logics to select, index, classify, organize and connect documents and information gathered from the Internet in Italy and worldwide on the topic of Italian art. today the search engine has over 2 million results indexed in Italian and 1.5 million results in English.

5. ARTE.it, NEW FOR 2013

During the first months of 2013 ARTE.it completed a set of new publications. In March 2013 **Aquileia. World Heritage**, an interactive iOS web and mobile guide was released, in Italian and in English, thanks to the partnership with Fondazione Aquileia. Over 100 art and cultural landmarks of the Friuli town and approximately 60 local hospitality and tourism facilities were mapped.

The (web and mobile) mapping project of the Reggia di Caserta and the UNESCO heritage sites of the Caserta area was also completed, thanks to the appointment by the Superintendence for Architectural, Landscaping, Historical and Ethno-anthropological Heritage of the provinces of Caserta and Benevento. The guide, soon available in Italian and in English on iOS web and mobile, aims at networking the rich local art heritage starting from the Reggia and its Park. "**La Reggia di Caserta e il suo territorio**" includes over 200 art and cultural Landmarks, 400 images, 8 theme and author itineraries, and approximately 80 addresses of tourist facilities of the provinces of Caserta and Benevento.

Thanks to the partnership agreement with Società Dante Alighieri, a Foundation with a mission to protect and spread Italian language and culture worldwide, represented by 97 committees in Italy and 423 committees in the rest of the world, ARTE.it will shortly release a pilot project on **Percorsi della Lingua Italiana a Firenze** in a mobile and web version.

6. ARTE.it, AT THE 55TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION - BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Finally, ARTE.it will launch on 10 June, 2013 the *custom* edition of its Venice Guide, exclusively developed for the Vaporetto dell'Arte. The guide is in Italian and English and available for smartphones and tablets (Apple and Android). In addition to being a complete guide of the city mapping over **100 museums, churches and landmarks, work and artist factsheets, as well as suggestions for special itineraries**, the new application will be completed by a calendar of local events and exhibitions and by a variety of interactive services such as the timetables of local transports also viewable in augmented reality. The guide will be available from June, 2013 during the opening of the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

7. ARTE.it, A COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM

ARTE.it is today the first Italian independent technological platform for art and cultural heritage. It is an easy method to quickly and effectively accomplish the recording of the Italian art and cultural heritage for all the stakeholders involved (public administration, state and local museums, cultural and local public and private entities, foundations, publishers...). The ARTE.it mapping platform is open to collaboration and partnership with whoever wishes to speed up the recording of the art heritage of our Country. There are different options for working together with ARTE.it: from digitalizing content and information sources, to georeferencing and interactive mapping, to developing dedicated technological solutions for the Internet, to developing mobile applications, to the integration of Open Data and Open System-based dynamic databases. This will give a two-fold advantage of making available to the partners an active web and mobile communication system, which can connect the new local maps with existing ones favouring connections and exchange of native information between different entities and systems on geographical, territorial and thematic scales.

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