



PRESS RELEASE

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When a Monument Talks: A Groundbreaking Digital Revival of Saint Neophytos From Digital Twin to Memory Twin in Cyprus

The [UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage at the Digital Heritage Research Lab](#) and its Research Center Mnemosyne at the Cyprus University of Technology are proud to announce a major breakthrough from the [EU Digital Europe project EUreka3D-XR](#). The [12th-century Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos](#) together with Saint Neophytos the Recluse himself - is brought to life through high-quality 3D digitization, advanced Artificial Intelligence, and cutting-edge VR/XR technologies.

For the **first time in Europe**, this pioneering work goes beyond the concept of a Digital Twin to introduce a “**Memory Twin**” - a transformative approach where cultural heritage is not only digitally replicated but enriched with knowledge, narratives, and lived experiences. In this context, the project marks a defining moment: **when a monument truly “talks,” sharing its history, meaning, and cultural significance through advanced immersive technologies. This outstanding innovation was made possible through a collaboration between MIRALab in Geneva and the Digital Heritage Research Lab at the Cyprus University of Technology, both partners of the project.**

This milestone demonstration will be presented to the public on the **24th May 2026 at 10:00 am (after the liturgy)**, on site at the [Enkleistra of the Monastery in Tala, Paphos](#). The event forms part of the [Digital Heritage Summit 2026, taking place in Limassol, Cyprus](#), from **26–29 May 2026**, under the auspices of the [Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#).

EUreka3D-XR, funded by the Digital Europe Programme, builds upon the success of EUreka3D by developing innovative tools and scenarios for extended reality applications. The project transforms diverse cultural assets - 2D and 3D data, video, text, maps, and narratives - into immersive XR experiences, fostering new approaches to cultural heritage engagement across Europe. [The Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos represents one of three flagship](#) case studies, alongside the archaeological site of Bibracte in France and the Walls of Girona in Spain, whose results will also be presented during the Summit’s inaugural session.

The Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos: A Monument of Global Significance

The Enkleistra of Saint Neophytos is an outstanding Byzantine monument, not only for Cyprus but for the entire Orthodox world. Personally, selected and carved in 1156 by Saint Neophytos the Recluse, it served as his hermitage, place of study, and spiritual retreat. He later founded a monastery around it,

and upon his death, the site became his burial place—continuing to this day as a revered pilgrimage destination.

Artistically, the monument is equally exceptional. Its iconographic program, conceived by the Saint himself, reflects influences from the highest artistic traditions of the Byzantine capital, rather than provincial styles - an extraordinary feature given its remote location. As such, the Enkleistra stands as a prime example of Comnenian art and a monument of world heritage importance.

A First-of-its-Kind European Achievement

In collaboration with [MIRALab \(Geneva\)](#) and the [EU Digital Library Europeana](#), the UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage will present and demonstrate, for the first time in Europe, the results of a long-standing and pioneering partnership. This achievement marks the first fully integrated demonstration of the complete digital heritage pipeline - from the creation of certified high-quality 3D content to its enhancement through AI and its immersive presentation via XR technologies directly on site.

Building on the EU Innovation Award, which the Digital Heritage Research Lab received during the Fair of European Innovators in Cultural Heritage in Brussels in 2018, the UNESCO Chair has now achieved a major milestone in the documentation of the past through the Memory Twin Methodology - set to be presented under the CY Presidency of the EU Council at the **Monastery of Saint Neophytos** on the 24th of May 2026. **This breakthrough introduces a new paradigm -at the digital transition-during the digital 21st century, where cultural heritage is no longer static or descriptive, but becomes a living, intelligent repository of memory, knowledge, and human experience for the benefit of future generations.**

Engaging Society through Innovation

The project is designed to foster broad public engagement, with particular emphasis on students at all levels, while also addressing the needs of academics, multidisciplinary professionals, policymakers, and cultural stakeholders. It actively supports education, research, science- and cultural diplomacy, demonstrating the transformative potential of digital technologies in the heritage sector.

Setting a New Benchmark

By bridging cultural heritage with advanced scientific and technological innovation, EUreka3D-XR establishes a new benchmark for the field - reshaping how history is preserved, experienced, and shared with future generations. The introduction of the #MemoryTwin concept represents a profound breakthrough for the e-Documentation of the Past in the digital 21st century, opening new pathways for humanity to preserve not only the form but also the meaning, memory, and collective intelligence of cultural heritage in an increasingly digital world.