

## **VISUAL AND ICONOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION: AN ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The perception of our heritage is based on sign-functions which relate visual representations to cognitive types, allowing us to make perceptual judgements over physical objects. The recording of these type of assertions, and their differentiation in relation to the level of interpretation, is paramount for the comprehension and analysis of our heritage.

The article investigates a theoretical framework for the organization of information related to the visual works on the base of the identity of their single constituent elements. The partitioning of the process allows for the definition and differentiation between the diverse level of knowledge and sources relative to a statement, significantly improving the semantic clarity of the recorded assertions.

The distinction allows us to present the gestalt of an item as a first layer of meaning, following a component-based identity for the subject identification and the expression of a further content as symbolic value. The framework developed is, then, used for the formalization of an ontology which is constructed as an extension of CIDOC-CRM and present the possibility to record statements about the diverse elements present in a visual representation on the base of their act of interpretation. The result is tested with artworks coming from the Byzantine and Renaissance tradition, showing how we can express denotative and connotative meaning about iconographical objects unveiling the symbolic assignment towards certain type of visual object and clustering them in relation to the referenced entity.