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INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

# SOULS OF STONE

FUNERARY SCULPTURE: FROM CREATION TO MUSEALIZATION

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LISBOA, MUSEU NACIONAL DE ARTE ANTIGA, NOVEMBER 2-4, 2017

PRESENTATION



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### PRESENTATION

The Instituto de Estudos Medievais (IEM) and the Instituto de História da Arte (IHA) of the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (FCSH/NOVA), along with the Centro de Investigação e Estudos em Belas Artes (CIEBA) of the Faculdade de Belas Artes of the Universidade de Lisboa, and in collaboration with the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, are organizing the International Congress “Souls of Stone. Funerary Sculpture: from the Creation to the Musealization”. Historians, museologists, restorers and all the researchers in general working on the topic are invited to submit proposals

Funerary sculpture is definitely a precious source for the understanding of the Middle Ages. This can be observed in the light of a series of studies and projects produced in the last decades by the international scientific community. Those researches, belonging to different domains and representing various methodological approaches, are encouraging the reconsideration of some traditional points of view on the medieval times. The extent, the relevance and the potential of this field of research is therefore becoming very evident. In fact, funerary sculpture can provide a privileged window to the observation of some realities, which are difficult to access through other means and sources. Medieval tombs are testimonies of specific characters and processes; they materialize particular ways of thinking and intentions; they reveal the complexity of some concepts and ideologies, as that of the interactions between body and soul in the afterlife. Therefore, the funerary monuments present a continuous challenge to the scholar. They are, simultaneously, the result of spiritual aspirations and earthly expectations, an aesthetic product and a symbolic device, but also the place where to exhibit the concrete shape of the body (which is incorruptible and lays down at the top of the chest), while the gracefulness of the soul is manifested in stone reliefs, keeping the individual suspended in limbo, in a certain way. This complexity of the sepulchre, understood as an artistic, aesthetic, spiritual, historical, anthropological, sociological and cultural artefact, implies a true and authentic interdisciplinarity, which is one of this congress' main focus.

Moreover, the fact that the tombs were commonly taken out of their original contexts, so decontextualized and even manipulated and used in different visual discourses, is another source of challenges for the scholars. On the one hand, we have to figure out the impact of such processes on the current interpretation of those artworks and, subsequently, we have to try to understand them going back to the context in and for which they were produced. On the other hand, it seems relevant to think about the most suitable means to promote and respect the tombs within the context of a museum, but also to debate the possible ways of fostering an historical comprehension of those that remain in their initial settings.

Another important dimension of these artworks that we need to explore is their materiality, both the original one, resulting from the process of their creation, and the one they have been given throughout their existence. This is a central issue when we talk about the criteria that must sustain any kind of restoration work on the tombs, envisioning their preservation as a heritage for the future.

From the creation to the musealization: this is a sort of an extended and multi-layered cycle, within which we would like to think about funerary monuments and their “lives”. In order to discuss, to understand, to question and to contextualise the medieval tomb we aim to bring together scholars, museum curators and restorers from different countries who can promote an interdisciplinary debate.

The congress will be organised in four sessions, three of them dedicated to papers and the last one to the presentation of research projects carried on in the field of funerary sculpture.

All the sessions, including that of the projects, will be opened by keynote lectures, presented by well-known specialists of each scientific area.

The congress includes also a visit to the Monastery of S. Dinis at Odivelas, nearby Lisbon. This late 13th century foundation houses some royal tombs that are representative of Portuguese gothic sculptural production and that have recently been submitted to restoration works.

We invite the international scientific community – art historians, museologists, restorers, researchers, scholars – to submit proposals for the presentation of papers and projects in this specific field.

The *call for papers* and *call for projects* will be open until March 31, 2017.

The papers and projects presented at the congress will be published.

All this information and updates will be available on the official website of the congress, currently under construction.

**For more details on the submission guidelines and the organization of the congress, please check the calls in the other attached files.**

**Organizing Committee:** Giulia Rossi Vairo (IEM-FCSH/NOVA and CIEBA-FBA/UL), Joana Ramôa Melo (IHA-FCSH/NOVA and IEM, IEM-FCSH/NOVA), Maria João Vilhena de Carvalho (MNAA).

**Scientific Advisors:** Anna Maria D’Achille (Univ. La Sapienza, Roma), Francesca Español (Univ. de Barcelona), José Custódio Vieira da Silva (Univ. Nova de Lisboa), Julian Luxford (Univ. of Saint Andrews), Xavier Dectot (National Museum of Scotland).

**Organizing Institutions:** Instituto de Estudos Medievais, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Instituto de História da Arte, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Centro de Investigação e Estudos em Belas Artes, Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade de Lisboa.

**Partner Institutions:** Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Câmara Municipal de Odivelas.

