

RESTORATION OF NAVIGATING BOATS. A CHALLENGE TO MAINTAIN USABILITY OF OUR NAUTICAL HERITAGE

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Abstract.

In Italy, restoration applied to Nautical Heritage is a new field. The beginning of the link of the words 'restoration' and 'boats' can be settled in 1980s. During that time, associations aimed to unify ancient and historic vessels under a unique flag were born. Those associations started to organize events and regattas entirely dedicated to nautical heritage. Therefore, the re-born cultural interest for historic vessels started its spreading. Owners of ancient boats started to better understand the cultural value of their 'old' boats and, finally, conservation of historic vessels started to be a cultural matter to be faced up. It was no more only an artisan problem of reparation that could be solved by shipwrights.

Nowadays, nautical floating heritage fleet is composed by different kind of vessels that can be generally divided in: traditional boats and yachts.

Nautical Heritage will continue to live if its scope, navigation, will continue to be maintain. Therefore, usability and functionality are one of the firsts challenges during restoration.

The relationship between usability, function and restoration can be analysed by different point of view: vessels are floating and navigating objects that spend the most of their lives in a difficult ambient, the sea; rules for navigation change and develop very often, adding and changing technologies and instruments that must be on board during navigation; traditional boats change their function from boats for working to pleasure boats. That is the only way to preserve the consistency of the boats that will be differently abandoned and lost. The same happens to regattas yachts that will continue to sail for pleasure and only sometimes for taking part to historical regattas; most of the historical navigating yachts belong to private owners who, during the restoration, demand modification aimed to an easier or more comfortable usability.

Differences between the restoration that anyone is used to see (architectural, art, furniture etc.) and nautical restoration are many. Some extreme characters of boats together with the need of maintaining function, create interest around the emerging theme of conserving historical boats.

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