YOCOCU APS

Youth in Conservation of Cultural Heritage

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

"OLYMPUS" AWARD

for Innovative Research in the Restoration and Diagnostics of Cultural Heritage

1st Edition — Year 2026

Article 1 — Purpose of the Award

YOCOCU APS — Youth in Conservation of Cultural Heritage, a non-profit association of social promotion, establishes the "Olympus" Award, dedicated to a research work that demonstrates concrete usefulness in the field of cultural heritage.

The Award offers as prize a vintage microscope, as an instrument of observation capable of connecting history with innovation: a narrative continuity grounded in the principles of science, which embody the evolution of the cultural heritage field.

The Award aims to recognise research works that propose:

- new methodological, technological or material solutions for the restoration, diagnostics, preventive conservation and monitoring of cultural heritage, or
- significant optimisations of methods, protocols, instruments, formulations or materials already in use in the sector.

The guiding criterion is the demonstrable and transferable usefulness of the contribution to conservation practice.

Article 2 — Thematic areas

Eligible research works include, by way of example and not exhaustively, the following areas:

- Non-invasive and micro-invasive diagnostics, multispectral/hyperspectral imaging
- Green chemistry applied to restoration and new sustainable materials
- Reformulation of products and protocols with a focus on safety and sustainability
- Analytical techniques and characterisation of materials
- Sensors, environmental monitoring and preventive conservation
- Data fusion, artificial intelligence and statistical analysis applied to conservation
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and environmental impact evaluation of restoration processes
- Simplified, low-cost or open-source procedures for the sector

Article 3 — Eligibility

The Award is open, with no age limit, to:

- researchers, PhD candidates, research fellows, post-docs;

- restorers, conservators, diagnosticians and professionals in the field;
- master's or specialisation students who have defended a thesis in the field;
- freelance professionals who have developed the research independently.

Requirements:

- **Submitted work**: master's thesis defended within the 24 months prior to the deadline; PhD thesis defended within the previous 36 months; peer-reviewed scientific article published within the last 24 months; applied project or documented case study completed within the last 24 months.
- **Language** of the documentation: Italian or English.

Both individual and group applications are accepted. In the case of group works, the Award will be delivered to the first author or to the reference person indicated in the application form.

Article 4 — The Award

The winner will receive:

- an original Olympus POS microscope from 1979, complete with accessories and case, in working condition, accompanied by a certificate of provenance and a value statement (estimated market value: approximately €500);
- an official plaque of the Award;
- the publication of an abstract of the work on YOCOCU APS's institutional channels;
- the opportunity to present the work at an event or conference organised by the Association.

The Committee may, at its discretion, grant up to two special mentions, which will receive a plaque of recognition without the instrumental component.

Article 5 — Evaluation criteria

Submissions will be evaluated by the Committee based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Brief description	Weight
Usefulness and applicability in the cultural heritage field	Response to a real problem; transferability to case studies or operational practice	**35%**
Scientific quality and methodological rigour	Soundness of the research, reproducibility, quality of the documentation	**25%**
Innovative or optimising character	Novelty introduced or significant improvement of existing solutions	**20%**
Sustainability and responsible design	Environmental impact, safety for operators and works, life cycle	**10%**
Quality of scientific communication	Clarity, structure, ability to make the work accessible	**10%**

Article 6 — Evaluation Committee

The Committee will consist of a number of members between 3 and 5, appointed by the YOCOCU APS Board, selected among academics, senior restorers, diagnostics experts and representatives of the Association. The composition of the Committee will be made public upon publication of the call or, at the latest, at the time of the communication of the winner.

The Committee's decision is final. The Committee reserves the right not to assign the Award should none of the applications received be deemed meritorious, and to request clarifications or additional materials from the applicants.

Article 7 — How to apply

Applications must be submitted by email to the address indicated in Article 11, including the following documents:

1. The Application Form (Annex A) duly completed and signed, in PDF format.
2. A single PDF file (max 20 MB) containing supporting documentation: extended description of the research, data and results, images, bibliographic references, any publications in full or as extracts, and any other material deemed useful for the evaluation.
3. A copy of a valid identity document of the applicant (first author in case of group applications).

The email subject line must read exactly: "Olympus Award Application".

Applications received after the deadline or lacking the required documentation will not be accepted.

Article 8 — Timeline

Applications open	from the date of publication of the call
Application deadline	**August 31, 2026, 11:59 PM (Italian time)**
Committee evaluation	within 60 days of the deadline
Announcement of the winner	by November 2026
Award ceremony	during an official YOCOCU APS event

Article 9 — Personal data processing

Personal data provided by applicants will be processed by YOCOCU APS, as data controller, pursuant to EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR), exclusively for the purposes connected to the management of this call, the evaluation of applications and the communication of results. Data will be retained for the time strictly necessary and may be shared with the members of the Committee. Applicants have the right to access, rectify, delete and object, by writing to the email address indicated in Article 11.

Article 10 — Intellectual property and use of materials

The submitted material remains the intellectual property of the applicant. By submitting the application, the applicant grants YOCOCU APS the non-exclusive and free of charge right to cite the work, publish an abstract of it on its institutional channels and disseminate its

essential content for the purposes of communication and promotion of the Award. Any further use will be agreed in advance with the author.

Article 11 — Contacts

For information, clarifications and submission of applications:

YOCOCU APS — Youth in Conservation of Cultural Heritage

Email: aps@yococu.com

Website: www.yococu.com

Email subject for applications: “Olympus Award Application”

Article 12 — Final provisions

Participation in this call entails full and unconditional acceptance of all the clauses contained herein. For anything not expressly provided for, reference is made to the applicable legal provisions and to the statute of YOCOCU APS.

The President of YOCOCU APS
Dr. Andrea Macchia