

FOREWORD

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Art and economics may appear reciprocally stranger, and somewhat conflictual. History clearly shows that the development of art has always responded to the need for identity on the part of communities sharing values, beliefs and desires in every part of the world. Such a delicate and powerful representation of a common self has grown in the urban fabric, supported by institutional investments and generating diffused richness and well-being.

Not only we owe much of our complex identity to the centrality of Pericle's Athens, Medici's Florence, many Popes' Rome, but also small towns have been the cradle for creativity, ideas, views, and the market for exchanging artefacts, artworks and masterpieces. In such a way the urban fabric is the material and symbolic infrastructure in which the local identity is being consolidated and shared, and at the same time travellers, pilgrims and adventurers have fertilized local identity with their visions.

In a period in which the economic, social and economic paradigm is radically changing, substituting the tired and often abused serial manufacturing system with an unpredictable world where connections, hybridations and a new cooperative orientation will presumably prevail in the value hierarchy, hosting a critical and multi-disciplinary debate on how art and economics can represent a consistent frontier for growth and welfare in the urban framework where intensive flows of ideas, resources and talents will converge in the next years, establishes a dialogue with the spirit of time.

The University of Reggio Calabria adopted the label *Mediterranea* in order for our unique past, where knowledge was crafted for centuries, to sustain a credible future made of hybridations and creativity. The debate on art, economics and the city presented in this book effectively fulfils our ‘third mission’: to adopt, valorize and apply knowledge to the social, cultural and economic development of society. The complexity of the current years and the crucial position between the Mediterranean basin and the European continent gives the University of Reggio Calabria the opportunity to play a significant maieutic role, encouraging critical discussion and intensive research.

Many scholars took part in the debate hosted in Reggio Calabria, with the ambition of emphasizing the need for reciprocal listening, interdisciplinary elaborations and versatile projects. Not only different professionals and experts have been involved in the debate: architects, urbanists, philosophers, economists, sociologists; but also an inter-generational exchange of intuitions and experiences makes the book a stimulating synopsis of a wide spectrum of issues, controversies and interpretations. The *Mediterranea* University is proud of such a rich elaboration, and is firmly oriented towards further challenges for dense debate and valuable research.