



Active volcanoes observed through Art: the contribution offered by the social networks

Marco Neri (1) and Emilia Neri (2)

(1) Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Osservatorio Etneo - Sezione di Catania, Piazza Roma 2, 95123 Catania, Italy , (2) via Mollica 13, 95021 Aci Castello (CT), Italy

Volcanoes have always fascinated people for the wild beauty of their landscapes and also for the fear that they arouse with their eruptive actions, sometimes simply spectacular, but other times terrifying and catastrophic for human activities. In the past, volcanoes were sometimes imagined as a metaphysical gateway to the otherworld; they have inspired the creation of myths and legends ever since three thousand years ago, also represented by paintings of great artistic impact. Modern technology today offers very sophisticated and readily accessed digital tools, and volcanoes continue to be frequently photographed and highly appreciated natural phenomena. Moreover, in recent years, the spread of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.) have made the widespread dissemination of graphic contributions even easier. The result is that very active and densely inhabited volcanoes such as Etna, Vesuvius and Aeolian Islands, in Italy, have become among the most photographed subjects in the world, providing a popular science tool with formidable influence and usefulness. The beauty of these landscapes have inspired both professional artists and photographers, as well as amateurs, who compete in the social networks for the publication of the most spectacular, artistic or simply most informative images. The end result of this often frantic popular scientific activity is at least two-fold: on one hand, it provides geoscientists and science communicators a quantity of documentation that is almost impossible to acquire through the normal systems of volcano monitoring, while on the other it raises awareness and respect for the land among the civil community.