Caltagirone and the Staircase

Hill of vases, Queen of mountains, City of the ceramics: these are some of the names by which Caltagirone is remembered, whose name derives from the Arab Qal’ at Alghiran that means “castle of vases”.

The element of greater tourist interest of the city is the Saint Mary of the Mount staircase. The staircase was realized in the 1606 by the architect Giuseppe Giacolone with a set of 150 steps. The entire structure was remade in the 1843 by the architect Salvatore Marino who reduced the number of steps to 142. They exceed an unevenness of approximately 50 meters and are large 7 meters.

The staircase becomes protagonist when, in religious or civil festivity occasions, a spectacular manifestation is represented. The perpendicular disposition of the steps allows the composition of motifs that in remote times were only geometrics. Such motifs were obtained with paper goblets, white, red or green, that, oily lighted, diffused a faint light rendering a suggestive effect along the steps.

The staircase is only a container of fundamental elements in our scene: the staircase, the steps and the goblets. The artists who plan the staircase know these problems and (manually) correct the error due to the perspective deformation.

Our algorithm performs the same operation applying to the original (half-toned) image a “perspective anti-deformation”, which lengthens the farther part and shortens the closer part, in such a way that when the image is visualized on the staircase the perspective deformation “will correct” the ad hoc created artificial error.

Experimental Results