

Queer Counter-Narratives in the Mediterranean, 1800–2000 (Pisa, 12–13 Dec 22)

Pisa (Italy), Dec 12–13, 2022

Deadline: Aug 20, 2022

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Theater

On Other Shores: Queer Counter-Narratives in Southern Europe and Mediterranean Art History,
1800-2000 circa

International symposium

Essere dell'altra sponda (being on the other shore) is an idiomatic Italian expression that can loosely be translated as "playing for the other team". We take it both literally as being geographically decentered (namely, in Southern Europe and along the Mediterranean shores), and metaphorically as being outside of a sexual norm.

Eccentric subjects, alienated by the feeling of not fitting the measure of sexual, gender, or physical normativity, have historically developed strategies of dissimulation or adaptation before daring more explicit forms of contestation and dissident counter-narratives. Starting from the 1970s, the organization of gay, lesbian and transgender movements (from the 1990s under the acronym LGBT) provided the first discursive framework and history of proud resilience and anti-patriarchal struggle, along with feminist theories. In the last two decades, issues of gender and sex have converged into the more inclusive queer cultural theory, in which the idealistic goal of achieving a dissolution of identity labels often coexists with the political need of giving visibility to an increasingly articulated constellation of "multidimensional subjectivities", where eroticism and gender intersect with ethnicity, class, and ability identities.

The symposium at the University of Pisa aims at stimulating a tradition of Art History studies inflected by queer perspectives complementary to the Anglo-American and North-Continental theoretical and historiographical canon. We encourage new contributions to the historiography of Italian art aimed at reading it 'against the grain' and bringing to the surface previously neglected queer subtexts. Furthermore, we welcome investigations into works and experiences from Southern Europe or the Mediterranean basin that express forms of subjective identities of resiliency and invention, hybridity and dissidence with respect to social norms, engaging the themes of desire, eroticism, and body.

Southern Europe and the Mediterranean are commonly considered the custodians of a more persistent patriarchal heritage than North-Continental Europe or the Anglo-American axis. Yet, the symposium proposes a heuristic hypothesis, suggesting that archaic cultural motifs irradiated dur-

ing the centuries across the Mediterranean (e.g. hermaphroditism, religious eroticism, Dionysianism, zoomorphism and the savage dimension, to name but a few) have been mobilized and re-semantized in modern/contemporary artistic practices of emancipation from patriarchy. More generally, we invite to investigate visual works in any medium (from painting and sculpture to experimental cinema, video art, digital media, illustrations, fanzines, etc.) which have not only contributed to challenging social categorizations but have also fostered emancipatory discourses pivoting on subjectivity, and identifying the body and eroticism as the roots of new meanings for the self. Artistic experiences since 1970 were often developed in performative or audiovisual languages—structurally apt to destabilize the boundaries between arts, media, and genders—and have benefited from the intertwining of the emerging discourses of feminism, LGBT movements, and decolonialism. Instead, previous experiences characterized by the dominant classicist or realist styles have predominantly chosen pictorial, sculptural, and photographic languages. Studies exploring practices of queer resilience before the historical avant-garde are thus particularly welcome.

Submissions may include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- (Self)-Representation practices that challenge the social categorizations of gender, sex, ethnicity, and normal corporeality;
- Queer subtexts in the 19th century;
- Queer experiences and resilience practices under dictatorships and oppressive regimes;
- The contribution of the artists to the burgeoning LGBT movements in the 1970s and 1980s in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean;
- Queer practices fostering new ways to interpret and valorize Southern Europe and Mediterranean cultural heritage;
- Queer spaces and places: collections and collectors, art galleries, curating, criticism and art historiography practices, magazines, fanzines.

The conference languages are Italian and English.

Participation in the symposium is free of charge. The organization offers accommodation for the stay in Pisa and—subject to the number of accepted proposals and availability of the budget—a partial or total reimbursement of travel expenses, giving priority to untenured scholars or scholars from the Southern shore.

After the symposium, the most relevant papers will be considered for publication in a volume of proceedings.

Please submit your proposal (no more than 300 words), together with a short CV, to altresponde@yahoo.com by August 20, 2022. The outcome of the selection will be communicated by September 10, 2022.

Reference:

CFP: Queer Counter-Narratives in the Mediterranean, 1800-2000 (Pisa, 12–13 Dec 22). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 21, 2022 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36992>>.