

Notes on Italian Camp (New York, 10–11 Oct 25)

New York University, Casa Italiana, Oct 10–11, 2025

Deadline: May 15, 2025

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Camping Italia. Notes on Italian Camp.

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Fabio Cleto

“Protean and duplicitous, as much as it is slippery”, the semiotic existence of camp has always battled against immobilizing attempts at theoretical formulations, favoring, instead, to “fashion itself in the transfiguration of reality” (Cleto 2019). Of unknown origins, the word has been related to the French *se camper* and the Italian *campeggiare* in its theatrical connotation (Cleto 1999).

Before the (relatively) recent codification of Susan Sontag, the term was already in use in late 1800s Great Britain and would later become entangled with a specific space of production and reception – the city – and with a variety of genres and performance-centered creativity – theatre, Opera, burlesque, ballet, cinema, cabaret and music-hall – alongside decadent literature and its circles. At once elusive and indispensable, enlightening and misleading, self-aware and innocent, camp has been used – often retroactively – to embrace a variety of authors, movements, genres, and artistic expressions. In her seminal essay on the matter, delivered in the form of notes, Sontag defined camp as a “sensibility” and a “taste”, that challenged the principle of aesthetic judgement, and that could more effectively be grasped through the multiple forms it inhabited, rather than through hierarchized stances of theoretical description.

Framed as “more elusive and ephemeral than its foreign counterparts” (Cleto 1999), Italian camp has rarely inhabited the spaces of scholarly research. Even though, as Woods writes, camp finds its extraordinary strength in its ubiquity (2008), we call for a localized, if comparative, analysis of camp in relation to the Italian context, and to the ways in which it has crossed disciplines, spaces, communities, and forms of artistic expression across the past two centuries.

We call for contributions that investigate from an Italian perspective the contradictions of camp and the disidentifications (Muñoz) they might entice; that analyze and challenge the notion that camp is “disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical” (Sontag). We look for papers that examine camp as the aesthetics, the language and survival strategy of queer communities. We invite for context-specific reflections upon forms of camp in the Italian world, and for a comparative investigation of queer aesthetics and the performance subject.

We welcome contributions that explore, but are not limited to, the following areas of interest:

- the role of Italy and Italianness in the definition of camp;
- the critical reception of camp in the Italian context;
- Italian camp figures in literature, visual arts, performing arts, fashion, film, pop culture;

- camp and Italian queer culture;
- camp and ephemerality;
- camp and the archive;
- camp appropriation and mainstreaming, from the 1960s to the 2019 MET exhibition
- camp and the construction and perception of space (and the space of Italian cities more specifically).

Submission Guidelines:

We welcome proposals for 15-minute presentations from doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers, and established scholars. Papers may be presented in English or Italian.

Please submit as a single PDF document:

- An abstract (300-500 words)
- A brief biographical note (150 words)
- Current institutional affiliation
- Contact information

The organization will not cover transportation or accommodation costs.

A remote option will be available, if requested, for scholars based outside of the U.S. If you expect remote participation to be likely your case, please let us know in your proposal (ie: "I expect to be presenting my paper remotely").

Submission Deadline: May 15, 2025

Notification of acceptance: May 30, 2025

Send proposals to: am11534@nyu.edu; giorgio.didomenico@sns.it

Reference:

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