

Art, Mobility and Border Politics: Italy/North Africa (Rome, 25–26 Sep 25)

Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, Sep 25–26, 2025

Giulia Beatrice, Bibliotheca Hertziana

Art, Mobility and Border Politics between Italy and North Africa: 1869 – 1993.

This workshop explores how the movement of art and artists between Italy and North Africa navigated—and often challenged—border politics from the age of empires to the Cold War and beyond. While modernity is tied to the rise of nation-states and nationalism in the 19th century, cross-border mobility grew due to global trade and new infrastructure like the Suez Canal (1869), which fostered Italian communities in Egypt and shaped Italian–Egyptian relations.

From the 19th century onward, Italy pursued shifting political and cultural agendas in North Africa, using cultural diplomacy and invoking a shared Mediterranean identity. In the post-WWII era, Italy leveraged its Mediterranean position to secure oil and resources, especially after Algerian and Libyan independence. The workshop examines how art responded to these historical dynamics—highlighting, negotiating, or resisting them—and aims to move beyond traditional ideas of “influence” to consider how power imbalances shaped artistic exchange.

PROGRAM

25.09.2025

2 - 2.15 : Welcome by Giulia Beatrice and Giulia Morale

Focus I: Material Culture

2.15 - 3 : Ava Katarina Tabatabai Hess (University of California Los Angeles, UCLA) - Sotto Vetro: Under-Glass Painting and the Production of Islamic Imagery between Italy and Tunisia

3 - 3.45 : Moad Musbahi (Princeton University) - The Legibility of Value and Fugitive Aesthetics in Tripoli, 1933 – 1962

3.45 - 4 : Coffee Break

Focus II: Travel

4 - 4.45 : Tommaso Zerbi (University of Edinburgh and British School at Rome) - The Middle Ages on the Move: Architecture and the Politics of Temporality in Colonial Libya

4.45 - 5.30 : Giorgio Di Domenico (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa) - “On the Mediterranean and Into North Africa”: Bob Rauschenberg, 1952-1953

5.30 - 6.15: Riad Kherdeen (University of Illinois, Chicago) - South by Southwest: Trans-Mediterranean Art Histories Between Italy and Morocco

6.15 - 7 : Giulia Beatrice (Bibliotheca Hertziana) - The Last Futurist in Cairo. Tullio Crali, 1961 - 1967

26.09.2025

Focus III: Micro-histories

9.30 - 10.15 : Filippo Petrucci (University of Genova) - Post-war Italian Politics through the Art of Maurizio Valenzi

10.15 - 11: Giulia Morale (Bibliotheca Hertziana and University of Oxford) - Art Writing from the Other Side: Toni Maraini and the School of Casablanca 1960s-80s

11 - 11.15 : coffee break

11.15 - 12: Sarah Dwider (Northwestern University) - Exiting the National Container: Fathi Hassan and Diasporic Practice in Italy in the Globalizing 1980s

Focus IV: Reception

12 - 12.45 : Erica Bellia (University of Cambridge) - Anthologizing Algeria in 1960s Italy

12.45 - 13.30: Arianna Desideri (Sapienza Università, Rome) - North African Artists in Rome Between the 1980s and the 1990s

13.30 – 14.30 lunch

Scientific Organization: Giulia Beatrice (Bibliotheca Hertziana) and Giulia Morale (Bibliotheca Hertziana and University of Oxford)

Reference:

CONF: Art, Mobility and Border Politics: Italy/North Africa (Rome, 25-26 Sep 25). In: Arthist.net, Sep 15, 2025 (accessed Oct 14, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50630>>.