1 Session at RSA (Philadelphia, 11-13 Mar 27)

Philadelphia, Mar 11–13, 2027
Deadline: Jul 31, 2026
www.rsa.org/page/RSAPhilly2027

liliana leopardi

Processional Grandeur: Civic Identity and Baroque Processions in Early Modern Sicily.

In Early Modern Sicily, the Baroque procession was not merely a religious ritual but a highly orchestrated multimedia spectacle that articulated civic identity, negotiated political power, and transformed urban space. Under Spanish viceregal rule, cities like Palermo, Messina, and Catania utilized ephemeral architecture, music, and performative piety to project both local pride and imperial loyalty. Central to these moving spectacles were the sacred objects carried through the streets. This panel investigates the mechanics, aesthetics, and socio-political implications of Sicilian Baroque processions. We welcome papers that analyze the material culture and agency of the processed objects themselves—including polychrome wood statues and elaborate silver reliquaries—alongside the design of ephemeral structures (such as triumphal arches and macchine). We also invite research on the role of confraternities and guilds in organizing these events, and the sensory experience of the moving crowd. Furthermore, we encourage research that addresses the tension between sacred devotion and secular display, or the ways in which these processions responded to crises such as plagues and earthquakes. Through an interdisciplinary lens, this session will re-evaluate the procession as a vital site of cultural production, material devotion, and urban negotiation in Baroque Sicily.

Please send submissions to Liliana Leopardi (Leopardi@hws.edu), by July 31, please also include a 2-page CV and contact info.

Reference:
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