Saint Sebastian. The Image of a Saint (Cagliari, 16-17 Oct 26)

University of Cagliari, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy, Oct 16–17, 2026

Mauro Salis

International Conference "Saint Sebastian. The Image of a Saint between Art, Literature and Visual Culture", University of Cagliari, 16–17 October 2026.

University of Cagliari, Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage, and University of Macerata, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, are pleased to announce the international conference "Saint Sebastian. The Image of a Saint between Art, Literature and Visual Culture", which will be held in Cagliari on 16 and 17 October 2026.

In 1976 the British filmmaker Derek Jarman chose the bay of Cala Domestica in Sardinia as the setting for his film Sebastiane, a work that decisively shaped the contemporary reinterpretation of Saint Sebastian, projecting him into an aesthetic, political, and queer dimension. Fifty years after that experience, scholars are invited to the University of Cagliari to reflect on the iconography of the Saint and the imagery it has generated, from medieval origins to the most immediate contemporaneity, from a global and interdisciplinary perspective. The aim is to outline an updated and plural map of the iconography and reception of Saint Sebastian, capable of intertwining art-historical, literary, cultural, and theoretical approaches.

Information at saintsebastianconference@gmail.com

Organizers: Rita Pamela Ladogana, Mauro Salis (University of Cagliari), Giuseppe Capriotti (University of Macerata)

PROGRAMME

Day 1 — Friday, 16 October 2026 (Cittadella dei Musei)

Aula Coroneo
09:00- Welcome
09:30- Institutional greetings
Prof. Francesco Mola, Magnifico Rettore UniCA
Prof. Lorenzo Tanzini, Vicedirettore Dipartimento di Lettere, Lingue e Beni culturali UniCA
Prof. Antioco Floris, Preside Facoltà di Studi umanistici UniCA

10:00- Keynote: Louise Marshall (University of Sydney), Performing Salvation: Sebastian's Posthumous Plague Miracle in Italian Renaissance Art
10:40- Q&A

--- Session A1 (Aula Coroneo) ---
From Absence to the Body: The Image of Saint Sebastian in Italy (11th–16th Centuries)
Chair: Luca Vargiu (Università di Cagliari)

11:20- Nicoletta Usai – Valerio Deidda (Università di Cagliari), Culto e rappresentazione. San Sebastiano e la Sardegna medievale: il perché di un'assenza

11:50- Domenico Laurenza (Università di Cagliari), Dal corpo matematico al corpo fisico. Analisi comparata dell'iconografia di San Sebastiano e San Bartolomeo tra XV e XVI secolo

12:20- Alessandro Rossi (Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milano), L'iconografia di San Sebastiano e la tematica amorosa petrarchesca. Il caso dei Leonardeschi tra sacro e profano
12:50- Q&A

--- Session B1 (Aula Rossa) ---
Theories of the Image: Beauty and Mortality
Chair: Filippo Contesi (Università di Cagliari)

11:20- Baptiste Tochon-Danguy (FNRS, UC Louvain, GEMCA - Group for Early Modern Analysis), Saint Sebastian in the Fifteenth-Century: Between Plague and Immortality

11:50- Florence Larcher (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Iconic Saint Sebastian: Sacred Likeness and Aesthetic Beauty

12:20- Anna-Lena Weise (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel), A Lonely Death – On the Increasing Lifelessness of Saint Sebastian
12:50- Q&A

--- Session A2 (Aula Coroneo) ---
The Cult in Southern Italy
Chair: Andrea Pala (Università di Cagliari)

14:40- Nicoletta Bazzano (Università di Cagliari), La tradizione del pellegrinaggio in onore di San Sebastiano a Melilli (Sicilia)

15:10- Giampaolo Chillè (Università di Messina), Di legno, marmo e mistura: San Sebastiano nell'arte siciliana del Rinascimento

15:40- Mariachiara De Santis – Maura Lucia Sorrone (Università del Salento), L'immagine di San Sebastiano nel Salento meridionale in età moderna
16:10- Q&A

--- Session B2 (Aula Rossa) ---
Devotion and Apotropaic Function: Print, Song and Civic Ritual
Chair: Mauro Salis (Università di Cagliari)

14:40- Ruggero De Blasi (Università di Genova), San Sebastiano e la stampa devozionale nel XV secolo: funzioni, usi e credenze apotropaiche

15:10- Sara Caredda – Ramon Dilla Martí (Universitat de Barcelona), Il culto civico di San Sebastiano a Barcellona: immagini, ritualità e politiche antipestilenziali

15:40- Milena Viceconte (Universitat de Lleida), Cantare il santo, invocare la salvezza: la diffusione del culto di San Sebastiano nella cultura visuale spagnola attraverso i gozos
16:10- Q&A

--- Session A3 (Aula Coroneo) ---
17th-Century Iconographies
Chair: Giuseppe Capriotti (Università di Macerata)

17:00- Jeffrey Fraiman (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco), St. Sebastian Thrown into the Sewers: Notes on an Unusual Iconography

17:30- Marika Takanishi Knowles (University of St Andrews), Scale, empathy, and immensity in Jacques Callot's The Martyrdom of Saint-Sebastian

18:00- Mathilde Legeay (Université de Nantes), The Miracle and the Healing: Women Gathered Around the Body of Saint Sebastian
18:30- Q&A

Day 2 — Saturday, 17 October 2026 (Cittadella dei Musei)

--- Session A4 (Aula Coroneo) ---
Transposing the Image: Circulation, Court and Colony
Chair: Priyesh Mistry (National Gallery, London)

08:30- Đurđina Lakošeljac (University of Zadar), Depictions of the Martyrdom of St Sebastian on Nuremberg Brass Dishes

09:00- Éléonore Villalba (Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris), The Dressed Saint Sebastian: An Aristocratic Iconography in Early Renaissance Spain

09:30- Morgane Thro (Sorbonne-Université), Saint Sebastian as a Colonial Martyr? Image, Evangelization, and Indigenous Reception
09:50- Q&A

--- Session B4 (Aula Rossa) ---
A Queer Icon from the Avant-Garde to the Present
Chair: Rita Pamela Ladogana (Università di Cagliari)

08:30- Ana Redondo Plaza (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Frecce contro il canone: San Sebastiano nell'opera di Salvador Dalí e Alfred Courmes

09:00- Stefano Mudu (Università di Bergamo), David Wojnarowicz, Peter Hujar, Yukio Mishima e San Sebastiano: erotismo come pratica di resistenza nel contesto della crisi di HIV/AIDS

09:30- Marzia Avallone (IUAV, Venezia), Queer e Ferita. Trasfigurazioni di san Sebastiano tra modelli classici e interpretazioni contemporanee

09:50- Q&A

--- Session A5 (Aula Coroneo) ---
Queer Reinterpretations: Fashion, Cinema and Curatorship
Chair: Annabel Bai-Jackson (National Gallery, London)

10:40- Julia Kafizova (Berlin University of the Arts, UdK), Gum in the Sauna: Bodily Anachronism and Reclaiming History in Derek Jarman's Sebastiane

11:10- Yoan Guez (Fondation Azzedine Alaïa / Lesage, Paris), The Saint Sebastian Costume by John Galliano in Tribute to the Marchesa Casati

11:40- Weronika Plińska (University of the National Education Commission in Cracow), Reimagining St. Sebastian: Creative Documentary Filmmaking as a Method in Visual Studies

12:10- Víctor Ramírez Tur (Universitat de Barcelona), Queer Erotohistoriography through Saint Sebastian in British Art Galleries
12:40- Q&A

--- Session B5 (Aula Rossa) ---
Reinventing the Sacred Body: Saint Sebastian in Modern and Contemporary Art
Chair: Simona Campus (Università di Cagliari)

10:40- Sergio Cortesini (Università di Pisa), L'omoerotismo di San Sebastiano nell'arte italiana tra le due guerre

11:10- Massimiliano Ferrario (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria), Corpo, identità e memoria. San Sebastiano nella ricerca di Luigi Ontani e Giulio Paolini fra autoincarnazione e sottrazione

11:40- Francesco De Pau (Università di Cagliari), "Dichiaro di non essere San Sebastiano". Emilio Isgrò e la risemantizzazione del sacro

12:10- Valentina Lixi (Università di Cagliari), Dal martirio alla resistenza. Riscritture femministe del corpo trafitto di San Sebastiano
12:40- Q&A

--- Session A6 (Aula Coroneo) ---
Chair: Antioco Floris (Università di Cagliari)

13:00- Sergio Naitza (Filmmaker, professional journalist, film critic), Loving Sebastiane. A documentary on the trail of the debut film by Derek Jarman, Sebastiane

--- Session A7 (MUACC - Museo Universitario delle Arti e Culture Contemporanee) ---
EVENT HOSTED BY THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAGLIARI

15:30- Institutional greetings

16:00- Presentation of the activities of the MUACC

16:30- Screening and talk: The dance of the sun on the water | Saltatio solis in aqua by Ming

Wong, 2025 Artist in Residence, National Gallery, London
Ming Wong (Artist)
Priyesh Mistry (Associate Curator of Modern & Contemporary Projects, National Gallery, London)
Annabel Bai-Jackson (Dorset Curatorial Fellow for Modern and Contemporary Projects, National Gallery, London)

18:30- Open discussion

19:00- Closing remarks

Reference:
CONF: Saint Sebastian. The Image of a Saint (Cagliari, 16-17 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 12, 2026 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54590>.