Conflictual Sociabilities (Rome, 6–7 May 27)

Rome, Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, May 6–07, 2027
Deadline: Dec 10, 2026

Diogo Rodrigues de Barros

Conflictual Sociabilities in the Making of Global Art Histories: Italy and Brazil in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century.

This workshop seeks to explore the role that conflicts played in the making of artistic and intellectual relations between Italy and Brazil, focusing on the period from the mid-1940s to the end of the 1970s. Rather than simply compiling a list of instances of dissent within Italo-Brazilian sociability, the event seeks to reflect on how conflict, rooted in colonialism or imperialism, was constitutive of the very writing of Brazilian art history and its dissemination abroad, shaped as they were by the need to please or reject the European gaze.

Conflict, rather than consensus, can function as a tool to rethink our understanding of the artistic and intellectual exchanges through which global art histories have been constructed. Studies of transnational artistic networks, cultural circulation and intellectual sociability have often emphasized connections and collaborations. Yet such encounters were also marked by disagreements, competing ambitions and unequal relations of power. Far from being merely disruptive, these tensions could play a constitutive role in shaping artistic practices, critical discourses, institutional relationships and art historical narratives.

Approaching conflict as a productive dimension of sociability invites us to reconsider the very nature of artistic and intellectual exchanges. In his reflections on sociability, Georg Simmel defined it as the form of pure pleasure one experiences in association with others, yet he also acknowledged that the “democratic structure of all sociability” is only possible within a single social class. Extending this limit to transnational artistic relations raises questions about how sociability operates across unequal geopolitical positions.

Although Brazilian and Italian critics and artists belonged very often to the same Western or Westernized cultural elite, the weight of colonial difference (Walter Mignolo) within their sociability seems to have caused some measure of discontent, particularly on the Brazilian side. Such tensions were markedly visible in debates surrounding the international recognition of Brazilian art. In 1952, writing from the Venice Biennale, the Brazilian critic Sérgio Milliet denounced the tendency of European critics to interpret Brazilian artworks primarily through their presumed dependence on European models. Similarly, following the extraordinary congress of the International Association of Art Critics held in Brazil in 1959, Mário Pedrosa criticized the expectation that non-European artists should conform to the latest developments in European art. These interventions suggest that the circulation of artists, artworks and ideas was inseparable from disputes over cul-

tural legitimacy, artistic autonomy and the authority to define art historical narratives.

By bringing these dynamics into focus, this workshop aspires to contribute to a transregional art history attentive not only to circulation and connectivity, but also to the asymmetries, negotiations and forms of resistance that shaped them.

The organizers welcome proposals for 20-minute papers in English addressing conflict within Italo-Brazilian artistic and intellectual sociabilities, particularly among artists, art critics and cultural institutions. Contributions may examine how disagreements, competing cultural projects, and unequal relations of authority affected artistic exchanges, the production and circulation of exhibitions, the writing and dissemination of art historical narratives and the development of critical discourse in both countries.

Proposal Submission
To apply, please send a single PDF containing the following to diogo.debarros@biblhertz.it by December 10, 2026:

- A proposal title
- An abstract (500 words)
- Five keywords
- A brief biography (250 words)

Please use "Workshop: Conflictual Sociabilities" as the email subject line.

The workshop wishes to minimize its carbon footprint and therefore discourages air travel. Online participation will be offered.

Scientific organization: Diogo Rodrigues de Barros (BHMPI), Anita Orzes (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) and Marina Barzon Silva.

Reference:
CFP: Conflictual Sociabilities (Rome, 6-7 May 27). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 2, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54806>.