

CALL FOR PAPERS

Italy and its Pasts: an interdisciplinary conference

Association for the Study of Modern Italy Annual Conference 2010

**Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of London,
19-20 November 2010**



Italy is sometimes said to have the largest historical heritage in the world; it is also a country that many see as not fully ‘modern’, dogged by its pasts and traditions. Above and beyond these stereotypes, what is Italians’ relationship with the country’s pasts? How do its inhabitants (its population, its élites, its political leaders) relate to the country’s history and heritage? In what social, cultural and political arenas are Italy’s pasts mobilised? ‘Italy and its Pasts’ will be an interdisciplinary conference exploring the relationship of Italians with the past between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries. Its focus will be on Italians’ perceptions of and relationship with pasts beyond living memory, known indirectly through written and oral texts, objects and vestiges. The wider theoretical aim of the conference will be to analyse and interrogate Italian historicity, or in other words how Italians live *in* history and *with* history.

The conference will have a broad disciplinary spectrum and examine the ways in which Italian 'pasts' (ancient, medieval and early modern) were and are conceived and mobilized within politics, society and culture, both through narrative and through practices ranging from historiography, archaeology, museology, collecting and conservation to the revival of 'peasant' foods and 'folk' traditions, historic re-enactments and pageants. The chronological scope will also be broad, spanning the period from the eighteenth century to the present day which marks the country's move into political, economic, social and cultural modernity and (arguably) post-modernity, a process that has required and requires fundamental readjustments of the relationship between present, past and future. It is envisaged that the conference will include contributors from a range of disciplines including history, anthropology, art history, musicology, sociology, archaeology, heritage and geography. The aim of the conference is also to encourage dialogue with scholars working on the history and culture of Italy from earlier periods and before the formation of the Italian nation-state. It seeks to give historians of ancient, medieval and early modern Italian cities and regions (rather than just modern historians of Italy) the opportunity to consider the ways in which the history and material culture of these periods -- Italy's pasts -- have been represented, displayed, visualised and written.

Themes for contributions may include:

- **Knowledges of Pasts:**

Archaeology, Anthropology, Ethnography, History, Art History, Geography, Musicology as well as other disciplines about Italy's pasts; public understandings of the past.

- **Experiences of Pasts:**

Living in and with the past, including the role of monuments; the relationship with historic environments; the power of ruins; cared and uncared for vestiges and remnants of the past; attitudes to the countryside and to the urban environment.

- **Expressions of Pasts:**

Displays of the pasts in museums; heritage and *beni culturali*, management (and neglect) of the past; collecting and collections; the past in film and the media; festivals, performances and 're-enactments' of the past; the 'invention' of traditions and rituals; folklore and folk music revivals including the revival of food history traditions such as the 'Slow Food' movement.

- **Politics and Pasts:**

Uses of the past by political parties; the writing and rewriting of national history; the political use of archaeology and ancient monuments; origin stories and the legitimization of power; the politics of urban planning and heritage management.

Papers can be in Italian or English and should be no more than 20 minutes in length. Paper proposals of 250 words maximum should reach the conference organisers by 15 May 2010.

Conference organisers:

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