



## **Creative & Artistic Encounters in the Western Mediterranean**

### **Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Aberdeen (5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022)**

This conference examines the relationship between the arts, cultural encounter, politics and power across the societies that straddle the Western Mediterranean (including, but not restricted to, Algeria, France, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia). Focusing on colonial and postcolonial periods (from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day), the event explores how different artistic media (music, film, theatre, art, literature) have been instrumentalised by communities and institutions for diverse social and political ends. These may include colonial propaganda, identity formation (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexuality), tourism, heritage preservation and cultural diplomacy.

The arts are often side lined in scholarship on the region due to an emphasis on politics, economics and history. Our aim is to explore how the arts construct intercultural relations across communities and nations in this region. We are particularly interested in the multiple potential meanings of “encounter” from creative and artistic perspectives: practically, politically, culturally, philosophically. What sorts of encounters emerge and how are they conceptualised by artists, scholars, audiences? What are the cultural and political ramifications of these encounters? How does multilingualism (across the arts) break or reinforce political or cultural boundaries? What can the arts bring to wider scholarly debates around key topics such as history, empire, international relations and migration in the region?

Existing scholarship on artistic practice in the Western Mediterranean has tended towards isolated geographical case studies and methodological nationalism, with less consideration of the intersections across the different geographical and temporal spaces of the Western Mediterranean. Recent work has encouraged scholars to examine the transnational connections/networks and the links between contemporary geopolitical configurations and the legacies of colonial power and knowledge (e.g., Hannoum 2021; Stenner 2019; Talbayev 2017). A key focus of this event is to consider how the arts can help us disentangle the complex web of relations across the geopolitical borders that demarcate ‘Europe’ and ‘North Africa’, framed against trans-colonial histories and legacies of power.

We welcome research that addresses the following and related questions from a range of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., anthropology, film studies, history, international relations, literature studies, musicology, theatre studies):

- How are the arts utilised for projects of cultural diplomacy and nation branding, and what is their efficacy? How can we move beyond analyses of diplomacy at an institutional level and examine its repercussions for everyday artistic encounters at a ‘grassroots’ level?

- How are the arts implicated in the politics of heritage? How do communities respond to the safeguarding or appropriation of tangible/intangible heritage?
- What role do the arts play in cultural tourism and the 'festivalization' of culture across the Western Mediterranean?
- How are the arts used to negotiate internal societal issues such as those faced by minorities, women, LGBTQ+ and other marginalised communities?
- What stories of migration, conflict and racism can the arts tell us, especially in diasporic contexts?
- What traces of colonial knowledge and power might we observe in international relations in the region?
- How can the arts help us to problematise geopolitical spaces such as 'the Maghreb' and 'the Mediterranean' and the interactions between those spaces?

### **Conference Format and Presentations:**

The conference will be fully hybrid with the opportunity to present in person or online. If you wish to submit a proposal, please send the following information for the relevant presentational formats to: [matthew.machin-autenrieth@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.machin-autenrieth@abdn.ac.uk).

*Academic Paper (20 minutes + 10 minutes Q&A):* submit a 300-word abstract, including the name of the presenter, institutional affiliation and any technical requirements. Please indicate whether you prefer to present in Aberdeen or online.

*Organised Panel or Roundtable Discussion (90 mins or 120 mins – including Q&A):* submit a 300-word panel abstract, plus 300-word abstracts for each individual presenter. The panel chair should also send a list of the names of the presenters, their institutional affiliations and any technical requirements. Please indicate whether the panel will be in-person, online or hybrid.

*Film Showing (up to 90 minutes to include Q&A):* we welcome proposals for film showings (such as ethnographic films). Please submit a short clip/trailer for the film, plus a 300-word outline. Please include the name of the presenter/film maker and institutional affiliation. Also please indicate whether you would prefer to present live in Aberdeen or online.

Poster Presentation: we welcome proposals for poster presentations, which can be displayed for the entire duration of the conference in one of the networking areas. Please submit a 300-word abstract for your poster.

\*\*\* Please note: if you would like to propose an alternative format to those listed here, please get in touch with the conference organisers \*\*\*

### **Deadline for submissions: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022**

This conference is part of the European Research Council funded project, 'Past and Present Musical Encounters across the Strait of Gibraltar' (MESG\_\_758221). For more information on the project, see: [www.musicalencounters.co.uk](http://www.musicalencounters.co.uk).