

“SISS meets early careers”

A seminar series organized by the Italian Society for the History of Science

2nd series 2025

4.30pm CET

25th March 2025

Dr Anca-Delia Moldovan (University of Warwick)

Title: *Artisans and Mother Nature in Stradano’s Nova Reperta (1580s)*

Abstract

In the late 1580s, the Florentine nobleman Luigi Alamanni commissioned the Flemish artist Jan van der Straet, otherwise known as Giovanni Stradano, to design the *Nova Reperta*, a series of nineteenth prints showcasing post-classical inventions and discoveries. In this talk, I will examine what the *Nova Reperta* engravings can tell one about the major sixteenth-century changes that governed the relationship between nature and human art. I will do so through the lens of the workshop, which Stradano foregrounded in many of his prints. Workshops are male-dominated spaces in which craftsmen, as alchemists, refine and bring nature to completion to the benefit of humanity: the wilderness is turned into cultivated lands; olives in oil; silkworms in silk; and plants in medicine. The engravings display the superiority of modern Europeans both over native Americans and over the ancients. It was in the post-classical Florentine and Netherlandish workshops that technologies, such as the mechanical clock, the magnet, the compass, and the astrolabe, necessary to the navigation of great distances, were developed, in the collaboration between artisans and between artisans and the learned. Stradano personified the continent America as a native Indian woman willingly surrendering herself to the rule of art, technology, and catholic religion brought to its shores by the Florentine Vespucci. In doing so, Stradano depicted men imposing the order of art upon the unruly creative forces of mother nature.

Bio: Anca-Delia Moldovan is a Marie Skłodowska Curie Eutopia-SIF COFUND Fellow at the University of Warwick. She gained a PhD in History of Art from the University of Warwick (2020) having previously studied at the Universities of Florence and Bucharest. She held fellowships at I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence; Warburg Institute; Newberry Library; and Herzog August Bibliothek. Her work investigates calendrical and agricultural representations at the intersection of art, science, intellectual, and environmental histories in Early Modern Italy. Her current project examines the environmental, artistic, and intellectual history of the olive tree in the Medici Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Moldovan published articles in the *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura*; *Renaissance and Reformation*; and *Renaissance Quarterly*. Her forthcoming book *Illustrating the Year: The Iconography of the Calendar and Its Cultural Impact in Early Modern Northern Italy* was awarded a Weiss-Brown Publication Subvention Award.



29th April 2025

Dr Matheus Alves Duarte da Silva (University of St Andrews, United Kingdom)

Title - When Infectious Diseases Became Wild: Plague, Yellow Fever, and Disease Ecology in the Brazilian Hinterland (1920-1975)

Abstract:

Between 1920 and 1975, Brazil was pitted against an unprecedented sanitary phenomenon. Plague and yellow fever, two urban diseases, progressively advanced towards the Brazilian hinterland, where they infected rural populations and wild animals, such as rodents, marsupials, and primates. The history of diseases moving from cities to wild spaces complexifies current mainstream interpretations about emerging infectious diseases. Exploring this difference, in this presentation I will ask: which knowledge about diseases becoming wild emerged in Brazil? How did Brazilian health authorities control these wild diseases? What were the social and environmental consequences of anti-wild disease measures in Brazil? In reconstructing the epistemological, political, social, and environmental dimensions of wild diseases in Brazil, this presentation aims to complexify the global history of disease ecology.

Bio: Matheus Alves Duarte da Silva is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of St Andrews in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on the global history of microbiology, tropical medicine, and disease ecology. He has co-edited the books *Beyond Science and Empire* (Routledge 2023) and *Rural Disease Knowledge* (Routledge, 2024).



27th May 2025

Dr Duygu Yildirim (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA)

Title: *From Tunis to Florence: Materiality, Everyday Encounters, and the Limits of Knowledge*

This paper examines the dynamics of knowledge exchange between Italy and the Ottoman world in the seventeenth century. Focusing on two case studies—Giovanni Pagni, an Italian physician working in a pasha’s household, and Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, an Italian naturalist who was captured and enslaved in an Ottoman pasha’s service—it highlights the collaborative and dynamic nature of early modern knowledge production. However, not all interactions led to the creation of knowledge, even when intended. Efforts to gain hands-on expertise from enslaved individuals often relied on intermediaries, whose involvement could either enable or hinder these exchanges. This paper explores the complexities and limitations of early modern knowledge exchanges, revealing how materiality and everyday encounters both facilitated and constrained the flow of knowledge at the crossroads.



Duygu Yildirim is assistant professor of history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She received her PhD in History from Stanford University in 2021. She is the co-editor of *Natural Things in Early Modern Worlds* (Routledge, 2023) and her articles have appeared in *Journal of Early Modern History*, *British Journal for the History of Science*, *History of Science*, *History*

of Religions, among others. She is currently completing her first monograph, *Uncertain Knowledge: The Making of Slow Science between the Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*.

10th June 2025

Dannylo de Azevedo (University of Pisa and University of Lisbon)

Title: *Intermittency in the scientific collaboration networks of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences in the Late 18th Century*

Founded on December 24, 1779, the Lisbon Academy of Sciences was established to promote the scientific development of Portugal and its empire. Under the patronage of the Portuguese state, the institution fostered intellectual and scientific sociability among intellectuals and statesmen from diverse backgrounds, spanning various European countries and more distant locations across the Portuguese empire. To this end, the Academy structured and institutionalized scientific collaboration networks as effectively as possible through a membership system. This system included resident members, primarily based in Lisbon, who actively participated in the institution's daily activities, and corresponding members responsible for communicating with their metropolitan counterparts regarding objects and topics of technical or scientific significance. These collaboration networks, therefore, involved individuals who engaged with the institutionalization of scientific activity in different ways. In this context, although the Academy effectively functioned as an important central institutional reference, the dynamics of its collaboration networks were, at various moments, marked by the intermittency of communication or interaction among the individuals and groups that comprised them.

Dannylo de Azevedo is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Pisa, Italy, and the University of Lisbon, Portugal. His research examines the intellectual production of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences between 1779 and 1822, focusing on its political role in shaping economic reform projects for the Portuguese Empire. He holds a BA in History (2014) and an MA in Economic History (2018) from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. His master's research explored the circulation of agricultural books within the Portuguese Empire in the late 18th century.