AAIS Prize 2022 - Award winners.

Literary and Cultural Studies

**Francesca Vella, Networking Operatic Italy. The University of Chicago Press, 2022.**
The author places the analysis of opera in the context of a localized and materially determined network of mobile performances and in relation to other technologies of communication. By contextualizing operatic practices within a wide arrange of theoretical, textual, visual, and sonic sources, the book delivers an innovative look at operatic culture in the context of Italy’s national formation and the Risorgimento. It is a fresh approach to mobility and transnational studies, one that makes the connection between a “locality” such as Piacenza, commensurably relevant vis-à-vis the globality of Milan or Venice. For the rigor and originality of its primary sources, for the brilliancy and clarity of its argument, and for the refinement and elegance of its eloquence, *Networking Operatic Italy* is worthy of praise.

Visual Studies, Film and Media

**Elena Dellapiana, Il design e l’invenzione del Made in Italy. Turin: Einaudi, 2022.**
Remarkably researched and impeccably argued, *Il design e l’invenzione del Made in Italy* details the cultural origins and historical articulations of an expression whose universal comprehension, pertaining to decorative and applied arts, including furniture, ceramics, and fashion, has often elided its evolution. Resonating with the widely admired artistic excellence of the Renaissance, “Made in Italy” identified traditions of craftsmanship and artistic ambition, associated with historic districts, later codified through universal expositions, before and after the country’s political formation. Embraced by fascist cultural policies as expressions of national ethos, “Made in Italy” revealed, in times of increased industrialization, a new alliance with the notion of design, as inspiring convergence of modern production, consumption, and taste.
History, Society, and Politics

Rocco Rubini, *Posterity: Inventing Tradition from Petrarch to Gramsci* (University of Chicago Press, 2022)

An ambitious new intellectual history of Italy that convincingly returns Petrarch and Petrarchism to a position of centrality, this book offers a powerful and generative account of the Italian tradition as a process of “tradition making.” With innovative accounts of such seminal figures as Vico, Goldoni, De Sanctis, and Croce, Rocco Rubini demonstrates how, across time, a concern with the shared past has shaped Italian thought and opened new possibilities for the future.

First Book

Winner:


In his beautifully illustrated and meticulously researched study, David Escudero showcases with great originality the dense and largely underdeveloped range of connections between neorealist cinema and architecture. Developing an argument that relies on findings from public and private archives, specialized magazines, and large-circulation periodicals, and which includes a wealth of photographs, drawings, and film stills, Escudero traces multidimensional connections between neorealist films’ representations of housing and the postwar construction of popular buildings and quarters, mostly developed and administered by the state agency INA-Casa. The resulting interplay of cinema and architecture affected physical spaces and their representation. Specifically, it informed specialists’ ideas of dwelling and housing policy, common individuals’ daily existence, and public perceptions of postwar life.

Honorable Mention:


Brilliantly argued, the book fills a gap in Renaissance scholarship on the commonalities and interplay of two cultural practices - oral and musical poetic improvisation and humanist practices of neo-Latin writing and erudition. By studying in great detail the activities and performances of Florentine *canterini* and the debate on poetic improvisation among the literary circles of influential humanists such as Marsilio Ficino and Poliziano, Coleman shows how humanist culture itself was not only prone to the contamination of oral practices, but it intermingled its theory of ancient poetry with the
cultural practices of oral and musical improvised performance in Quattrocento and early Cinquecento urban culture. A solid work of scholarship and an impressively mature command of primary and secondary sources for a first book.