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## **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously-funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current Landmarks guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/landmarks/highered>

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces: Reinterpreting Italian American Public Art in New York City*

Institution: Fashion Institute of Technology

Project Director(s): Rebecca Hope Bauman, Amy Beth Werbel, Daniel Levinson Wilk

Grant Program: Landmarks of American History and Culture Higher Education

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Landmarks of American History and Culture

**Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces:  
Reinterpreting Italian American Public Art in New York City**  
Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY

**Attachment #1: Narrative**

**Nature of the Request**

*Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces: Reinterpreting Italian American Public Art in New York City* is an exploration of Italian American public art that examines how monuments and landmarks are created, interpreted, forgotten, or become sites of conflict. With the recent focus on monuments to Italian explorers and their relationship to issues of colonization and genocide, and in view of the prominent role Italian American immigrant artisans have played in making New York's monuments, public art created by and about Italian Americans is an especially rich means of exploring humanities-related socio-cultural concerns of aesthetics, power, and belonging.

This project consists of two workshops that will take place June 3-7 and June 17-21, 2024, hosted by the Fashion Institute of Technology. FIT is a public college of the State University of New York (SUNY) that is internationally recognized for its art and design programs and is located in the historic Garment District of Manhattan. Each workshop will have 20 participants and feature interdisciplinary presentations by ethnic studies scholars, art historians, labor historians, practicing artists, members of public arts commissions, and activists who will offer various perspectives on the role of public art in communicating multiple and divergent values over time. The workshops will enable educators to devise resources for place-based learning in higher education that offer critical, nuanced understandings of public artworks and their histories.

**Intellectual Content and Significance**

As home to the largest percentage of Italian Americans in the United States, New York City has long been the epicenter of Italian American cultural production. Public artworks made and/or funded by Italian Americans that celebrate Italian American heritage have become significant features of the urban landscape. Some landmarks have even exceeded the local sphere to become national symbols, such as the marble lions that guard the New York Public Library or the bronze Charging Bull statue at Wall Street. Others, such as the statue of Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi in Washington Square Park, are overt declarations of ethnic pride emerging from an era when Italian immigrants experienced widespread discrimination. The significance of these public pieces, however, goes beyond their aesthetic value or ethnic boosterism. Such Italian American monuments have become increasingly central to national debates on the ideological, social, and political significance of public art. An examination of these spaces is timely in helping to confront the challenges posed when public art holds widely divergent meanings and triggers strong emotional responses.

*Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* examines a variety of sites around New York City, including statues, sculptures, and architectural ornamentation by the Piccirilli Brothers; monuments to Columbus and other Italian historical figures; museums; community folk art; and memorials to Italian American laborers that attest to the Italian American experience, particularly as regards immigration, labor, and the quest for assimilation. During the period of mass migration from Italy to the United States (1880-1920), New York City was one of the primary points of entry. The majority of the migrants at this time came from the

impoverished southern regions of Italy, and most worked as unskilled laborers in the rapidly developing city. Only a small handful of migrants were members of the middle- and upper-classes, and these became known as the *prominenti*. As anti-Italian and anti-Catholic prejudice in the U.S. targeted the ever-increasing immigrant communities, the *prominenti* sought to assert their own status and develop a positive image of Italian identity through the commission of public statues of important Italian cultural figures, statesmen, and explorers. It is through these *prominenti* that statues of Dante, Giuseppe Verdi, Giovanni da Verrazzano, and Christopher Columbus began to appear throughout the five boroughs of the city, often sculpted or carved by Italian-born artists.

Italian migrant artists did not just work for their fellow countrymen but soon became sought after by the city's elite to embellish larger public works in Gilded Age New York. The most notable example from this period is the Piccirilli Brothers, whose work became integral to the ever-growing city's quest to vaunt its economic power and prestige. An Italian-born father and six sons who all trained as marble cutters and carvers, the family worked out of their atelier in the Bronx and soon became associated with some of the most important public buildings in the city. The carvings and creations of the Piccirilli Brothers adorn such prominent structures as the Brooklyn Museum, the U.S. Custom House, the New York Public Library, and the New York Stock Exchange, as well as important monuments in Central Park and Riverside Park.

While the Piccirilli Brothers were an example of successful public artists, most Italian Americans in turn-of-the-century New York were still living in impoverished conditions in overcrowded tenement slums, and it is unclear how much the Italian immigrants of the era were heartened by the success of the *prominenti* and the artisans whose works were being commissioned by New York City's ruling class. Italian American workers continued to labor in subway, street, and building construction, while others toiled in the sweatshops that made New York City the center of the American garment industry. The dangerous working conditions of immigrant laborers at times became deadly, as evidenced in the notorious Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that took place in 1911 in Greenwich Village, and killed 146 garment workers. Most of the fire's victims were young immigrant girls of Italian or Jewish origin, making the tragedy a narrative that intertwines the histories of two significant ethnic minorities in New York City.

Although the Triangle fire galvanized the growing labor movement and had long-lasting effects on government policy relating to working conditions, more than a century after the tragedy there has not been a large-scale monument at the site of the incident. Finally, after decades of lobbying and fundraising, a permanent memorial to the disaster will be erected in spring 2023. This ambitious work of public art consists of a bronze cast of a collective ribbon that will extend to the top floors of the building where the fire took place, and is etched with the names of the victims. The imprint on the ribbon was made of individual pieces of fabric that were donated and sewn together by volunteers in an event that took place at FIT. This memorial will form a significant site visit for the *Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* workshops, as it is one of the only works of public art that is dedicated to Italian American victims of labor disasters and that commemorates women in particular.

The Triangle Fire Memorial is an example of how public art can testify to the forgotten protagonists of immigrant experience and make visible those who have been marginalized in public memory due to class, gender, religion, national origin or ethnicity. The completion of the memorial relates to mounting efforts to actively engage public art with issues of social justice. This endeavor underlies the controversies surrounding one of the most prevalent and divisive examples of Italian American monuments: the statues of Christopher Columbus. Since the murder of George Floyd in 2020, nationwide protests have demanded reckoning with symbols of imperialism, colonialism and genocide, and Columbus monuments, in particular, have become sites of conflict between anti-racism activists and Italian American heritage associations. New York City hosts statues of Columbus in four of its five boroughs, including the 76-foot

monument by Gaetano Russo at Columbus Circle. In 2018, the New York City Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers selected this Columbus statue as one of five sites to review in the light of fundamental principles the commission established to guide government in making decisions on erecting or removing monuments. After examining the history of Columbus' influence, the commission recognized the complexity of Columbus as representative of the genocide of Indigenous people, as well as an assertion of Italian ethnic pride. The commission's conclusion was to take an "additive approach," wherein the statue would remain, but its presence would be augmented by new monuments, school curricula, and other public engagements with the Columbus legacy that would move toward reckoning and reconciliation.

The issues that surround Columbus monuments have developed into a major focus of study within the fields of art history, ethnic and cultural studies, as well as urban planning and public policy. The task for humanities educators today is to connect such interventions with pedagogical strategies for place-based learning, particularly at the undergraduate level, where students are being introduced to these disciplines and the issues they entail. The scope of *Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* is to discover the ways in which educators can contribute to that process, both by directly investigating these debates and by focusing attention on the multitude of creative sites acknowledging Italian heritage that extend well beyond Christopher Columbus. We will accomplish this through the combination of site visits, critical readings, film screenings, lectures by experts in diverse disciplines, and pedagogical workshops that will help create new educational tools to address these issues. This approach invites scholars from various disciplines to consider ways to apply the New York Italian American case to other sites, experiences and histories. All these components of the workshops tell a different side of the Italian American story, and the collaborative work that will take place at these workshops can help shape dialogues regarding public art for years to come.

### **Curriculum Relevance and Application**

*Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* is concerned with generating a nuanced understanding of and access to creative public sites done in the United States by Americans of Italian descent. The interdisciplinary nature of the program is relevant to Participants who work in ethnic studies, U.S. history, art history, cultural studies, urban studies, and archeology. Utilizing a place-based approach, it will help educators develop teaching tools that guide students to analyze connections between their college-level curricula and their physical environment. In the aftermath of the pandemic shutdown, during which students were only able to approach their subjects virtually, the approaches introduced in this project will help students re-connect to a concrete sense of place, discover the complex histories that lie behind their built environment, and think critically about such spaces.

While the benefit of this kind of inquiry has an immediate effect on enhancing the study of Italian American culture and art, this project is designed to speak to educators who are interested in creating place-based pedagogical practices related to other ethnic groups and spaces across the United States. Similarly, these approaches are not constrained by geography: although the workshops focus specifically on New York City landmarks and sites of interest, the methodologies and resources created could be replicated in other locations, making these workshops meaningful to educators from all over the country. Early career scholars and graduate students who are embarking upon new research on these topics will find the project particularly beneficial, as they will be exposed to topics that have not as yet been fully explored in the academy, and they will have the opportunity to learn from senior scholars about the potential for further research in this field. The contributions from participating scholars will result in an open-source web resource entitled Landmarks of Italian America NYC, which will become a repository of locating and learning about sites related to the workshop's area of focus.

## Program of Study

The workshops will take place over five days and will combine collaborative group activities, presentations, roundtable discussions, a film screening, and directed site visits around the city. Readings distributed in advance will give participants background and context for the presentations and visits each day. At the conclusion of each day, participants will be invited to make use of the shared Padlet space to reflect on the day's activities and suggest content for discussions. All activities will begin at the FIT campus, except for the second day, when the workshop will be hosted by the Center for Italian Modern Art in Manhattan.

Monday, the first day of the workshops, will begin with introductions and some icebreaker activities in groups where participants can discuss their goals for the workshop and the particular lines of inquiry that are guiding their pedagogical objectives for place-based learning. The first speaker of the day will be **Dr. Michele H. Bogart**, an art historian who is one of the leading experts on the history of public art in New York City and has served as Vice President of the city's Art Commission. Dr. Bogart will give an overview of the issues that surround the creation, preservation, and removal of public monuments in the city. The next speaker will be **Dr. Mary Anne Trasciatti**, Professor of Rhetoric and Director of the Labor Studies Program at Hofstra University, Long Island, and President of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition. Her talk will discuss the intricate issues involved with creating a memorial for the victims of the disaster and how public art can cross-over to speak to different communities. Intersectionality will be highlighted, as one of the readings for the day is a reflection by Richard Joon Yoo, the designer of the memorial, who movingly drew on his own experiences as a Korean American in crafting the design. After lunch, Participants will travel to Greenwich Village by subway to view the newly installed memorial (scheduled to open Spring 2023), as well as other sites related to the Italian American presence in New York. This includes the work of the Piccirilli Brothers on the Washington Square Arch in Greenwich Village and the workshop of sculptor Giuseppe Moretti, located in the East Village. This tour will be led by labor historian **Dr. Daniel Katz**, founder of People's Heritage Tours.

This day will focus on the guiding questions: *What aesthetic, economic, political, and practical questions influence the design and installation of public art and memorials? How do Italian American landmarks address the intersectionality of the Italian American experience with the history of other ethnic groups in the city?*

Tuesday's workshop will take place at the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA), a gallery and research space dedicated to Italian art that is located in the historic district of Little Italy. This day, the workshop will begin to focus on the complexity of viewpoints as they relate to Italian American public art. Participants will tour the exhibition galleries before hearing a talk by **Dr. Nicola Lucchi**, Executive Director of CIMA, who has done extensive research on the contested removal of Fascist-era monuments at the Palazzo d'Italia at Rockefeller Center. Following his talk, visual artist **John Avelluto** will give a slideshow presentation of his artwork and discuss how it references stereotypes of Italian American culture. He will discuss his own forays into public art, and the challenges of obtaining commissions for works that contradict more traditional and received ideas of expressions of Italian American identity. In the afternoon, participants will visit the newly renovated Italian American Museum (reopening Spring 2023), where they will see art and ephemera related to the Italian American presence in the city and gain greater insight into how such spaces craft a particular narrative of ethnic history.

This day will be guided by the questions: *How do contemporary artists of Italian descent address their heritage in public art? How has public art catalyzed internal debates within Italian American communities about ethnic belonging and identity politics?*

On Wednesday, Participants will return to FIT for discussions about what kinds of art, and what subjects, have been left out in the telling of Italian American history through public art. **Dr. Marcella Bencivenni**, Professor of History at Hostos Community College, City University of New York, will discuss her research on the artistic activities of radical Italian activists in turn-of-the-century New York. Following the lecture, participants will travel by coach bus to New York City's Staten Island, where they will view Our Lady of Mount Carmel Grotto (1937), which despite being listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places, is a relatively unknown landmark. The grotto is a remarkable example of folk art in line with such art projects as Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers in Los Angeles. The tour will include the Garibaldi-Meucci building, in close proximity to the grotto, and the Staten Island Museum. These sites will also reflect on how the Italian American presence on Staten Island has overlaid the original Lenape inhabitants; raising questions about the relationship of Indigenous peoples to Italian American public art that lays the groundwork for the following day's focus on Columbus monuments.

Upon return to Manhattan by Staten Island Ferry, participants will be in immediate proximity to three different examples of Italian American public art: contemporary sculptor Arturo di Modica's famous Charging Bull statue near Wall Street, from 1989; the recently installed statue of Mother Cabrini, the first American citizen to be canonized by the Catholic Church and the patron saint of immigrants; and the Piccirilli Brothers' carvings on Lower Manhattan's Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, from 1907. The U.S. Custom House houses the New York branch of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and inside the building, we will view the rotunda murals that represent Italian explorers, which will enable us to reflect further on the intersection between the early Italian presence in the Americas and the displacement of Lenape peoples. All of these artworks will lend different interpretations of how to conceptualize the meanings of Italian American public art.

The guiding questions of the day are: *What historical and cultural figures and artworks have been excluded or marginalized in the process of memorializing the Italian American experience? How can we think more critically about what kinds of creative works are categorized as public art?*

In Thursday's session, participants will engage more deeply with complexity, exploring the role of Columbus monuments in the city's history, and the debates regarding the future of these public artworks. A keynote address will be given by **Dr. Laura Ruberto**, Professor of Humanities at Berkeley City College, CA, who will discuss her research on Italian Americans' engagement with Columbus monuments. A roundtable discussion will follow with **Dr. Joseph Sciorra**, folklorist and Director for Academic and Cultural Programs at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College (City University of New York); **Dr. Jack Tchen**, Professor of Public History & Humanities and Director of the Price Institute at Rutgers University, and **Dr. Ruberto** about the role of Columbus monuments in public memory. There will then be a screening of *Stonebreakers* (Awen Films, 2022), a documentary about the protests and decommissioning of Confederate monuments and Columbus statues across the United States in 2020. Following the screening will be a discussion with **Valerio Ciriaci**, director of the film, whose work has also followed similar issues related to Fascist-era monuments in Italy and who can lend a transnational perspective to these localized discussions.

In the afternoon, the Participants will travel by subway to the most well-known Columbus monument in New York City, the statue by Gaetano Russo at Columbus Circle, which will be viewed along with the Piccirilli Brothers' sculptures on the U.S.S. Maine monument that faces Columbus Circle. The group will progress by subway to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, to the New York Public Library. In addition to viewing the Piccirilli sculptures and statues at the building's exterior, participants will have a research orientation with library specialists in NYPL's Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, as well as the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. This will begin to prepare Participants for the discussions on research methods and accessing a wide variety of archival resources for their own future pedagogical projects.

The guiding questions for this day are: *How can the debates over Columbus monuments create productive dialogues about the role of public art, social justice advocacy movements, and recognition for marginalized peoples?*

Friday will be the last day of the workshops, and it will take place entirely at the FIT campus. Here, Participants will learn more about resources for place-based learning and digital humanities initiatives and will work collaboratively on planning their own lesson plans. There will be presentations from FIT faculty with extensive experience in these areas, including **Dr. Kyunghye Pyun**, Associate Professor of Art History and Museum Professions and two-time NEH grant recipient, and Project Co-Director **Dr. Daniel Levinson Wilk**. **Dr. Mario Valerio**, Associate Professor of Spanish at FIT, will give a presentation on his course “Hispanic Cultures in New York” and discuss how to utilize new technologies, interdisciplinary sources and place-based learning to study ethnic cultures. Project Co-Director **Dr. Amy Werbel** and staff of the FIT Gladys Marcus Library will lead interactive discussions on how to leverage digital resources, including visual archives. Participants will tour The Museum at FIT and the Special Collections of the Library, to learn how fashion and design can be resources for “reading” and contextualizing monuments, as well as telling histories. In the afternoon, participants will work in groups to discuss how they can begin to implement place-based learning strategies in their own instructional practice. They will create lesson plans and share them with each other, before reporting back to the workshop at large on their findings and objectives. The project director and co-directors will then discuss plans for enlisting contributions to the Landmarks of Italian America NYC project before the conclusion of the workshop.

The guiding questions for this day are: *What lesson plans and digital resources can we create to integrate place-based learning about Italian American public art? How will these impart to students a more nuanced understanding of public art that incorporates multiple disciplines and perspectives?*

### **Project Team and Participation**

The combined expertise of the project team will help connect the many strands of inquiry that are relevant to project participants, who come from different disciplines within the humanities. **Project Director** is **Dr. Rebecca Bauman**, Associate Professor of Italian at FIT in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures. A specialist in Italian American cultural studies, she has extensive practice in teaching Italian American studies at a variety of public institutions, and her pedagogy emphasizes place-based learning for language and cultural studies courses. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Italian American Studies Association, as well as Film and Digital Media Reviews Editor of *Italian American Review*, a bi-annual, peer-reviewed journal investigating the history and culture of Italian Americans. In addition to utilizing her expertise to help lead the workshops and site visits, Dr. Bauman will be responsible for all internal and external communications regarding the project, as well as overseeing the logistical operations and the administration of the budget.

**Dr. Amy Werbel** is Professor of Art History and Museum Professions at FIT and is a **Co-Director** and **Replacement Director** of the project. A specialist in art of the United States, Dr. Werbel is experienced in leading students and colleagues through discussions of art controversies, past and present; this includes a focus on public monuments. She created a course at FIT entitled “Racism and Anti-Racism in Public Art and Architecture of the United States,” which helps students analyze and reimagine local sites, including Columbus Circle. As Co-Director of this project, Dr. Werbel will guide participants in learning how to frame dialogue about contested images and objects. She will also share administrative responsibilities with Dr. Bauman.

**Dr. Daniel Levinson Wilk** is Professor of American History at FIT and a specialist in American labor history. In 2018, he and Dr. Kyunghye Pyun won a \$100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the

Humanities to develop new curriculum, to teach art and design students the business and labor histories of the careers they plan to enter. Dr. Levinson Wilk is also a member of the board of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, an organization that most recently ran a design competition to build a work of public art on the building where the 1911 industrial disaster took place. As **Co-Director** of the project, Dr. Levinson Wilk will help lead site visits and will act as adviser in all areas of development of the project's content.

The development and implementation of the website, and continuing digital resources, will be spearheaded by **Prof. Joseph Anderson**, Digital Initiatives Librarian of the FIT Gladys Marcus Library. Following the close of the workshops, he will also work with the project team to integrate new materials and expand the reach of the resources created. He will work in collaboration with **Molly Schoen**, Visual Resources Curator at FIT, who will be instrumental in accessing and managing visual resources related to objects of study and will advise on issues of copyright and accessibility. A **student assistant** will assist with the administrative duties and communications throughout the period of the grant, and will coordinate with FIT's Library and curatorial staff to help maintain metadata and imagery related to the artwork and monuments that will be featured on the Landmarks of Italian America NYC digital map.

The keynote speaker for the workshop will be **Dr. Laura Ruberto**, Professor of Humanities at Berkeley City College, CA, who will discuss her research on Italian Americans' engagement with Columbus monuments. Dr. Ruberto is co-editor with Dr. Joseph Sciorra of the two-volume series *New Italian Migrations to the United States* (University of Illinois Press, 2017). A Fulbright recipient and ACLS/Mellon Faculty Fellow, Dr. Ruberto is also member of the Executive Committee of the Italian American Studies Association and is on the board of the journals *California Italian Studies* and *Italian American Review*.

All other **presenters** in the workshops are experts who represent different disciplines within the humanities and have been selected to offer various perspectives on the questions that guide each day:

**Dr. Michele H. Bogart** is Professor Emeritus of Art History and visual culture at Stony Brook University, State University of New York. She is the author of *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890–1930* and *The Politics of Urban Beauty: New York and Its Art Commission*, both published by University of Chicago Press. She was vice president of the Art Commission of the City of New York from 1999 to 2003 and is a member of an advisory group to the Commission. She will speak about the history of public art in New York City and the political, ethical, and aesthetic considerations that affect the installation, preservation and removal of public monuments.

**Dr. Mary Anne Trasciatti** is Professor of Rhetoric and Director of the Labor Studies Program at Hofstra University, Long Island, and President of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition. She is a co-editor of *Where Are the Workers? Labor's Stories at Museums and Historic Sites* (University of Illinois Press, 2022). Her talk will discuss the intricate issues involved with creating a memorial for the victims of the disaster and how public art can cross-over to speak to different communities.

**Dr. Daniel Katz** is Adjunct Professor in the School of Labor and Urban Studies, City University of New York, and author of *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York University Press, 2011). He is founder of People's Heritage Tours, a New York City-based organization that leads site visits that recount the histories of women, immigrants, youth, people of color, queer people, artists, intellectuals and working people. He will lead a walking tour of sites and monuments in the neighborhoods of Greenwich Village and the East Village that relate to Italian American artistic production, labor history, and the intersection of Italian American communities with other ethnic groups.



**Dr. Nicola Lucchi** is Executive Director of the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA), an exhibition and research center in New York City dedicated to advancing the study of modern and contemporary Italian art in the United States. A specialist in twentieth-century Italian art and literature, industrial history, labor history, and the reception of Italian culture in the United States, Dr. Lucchi will give a presentation on the contested history of Fascist-era public art in New York City, focusing on the example of the Palazzo d'Italia murals at Rockefeller Center. He will also host the workshop for a half-day at CIMA.

**John Avelluto** is a visual artist based in Brooklyn, New York. He received his MFA from Brooklyn College, City University of New York. He works in sculpture and painting, and his work incorporates Italian American vernacular culture and examines linguistic and verbal tropes of ethnic identity. In his talk, Mr. Avelluto will discuss his own forays into public art, and the challenges of obtaining commissions for works that contradict more traditional and received ideas of expressions of Italian American identity.

**Dr. Marcella Bencivenni** is Professor of History at Hostos Community College, City University of New York. Her research focuses on the histories of immigration, labor, and social movements in the modern United States, with a particular interest in the Italian diaspora. She is the author of *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940* (New York University Press, 2011). She will discuss the less-known history of radical Italian artists in New York City in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Dr. Joseph Sciorra** is a folklorist and Director for Academic and Cultural Programs at the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College (City University of New York). He is author of *Built with Faith: Italian American Imagination and Catholic Material Culture in New York City* (University of Tennessee Press, 2015), and numerous articles and edited volumes on Italian American migration. He will speak about his research with Dr. Ruberto on Italian Americans' engagement with Columbus monuments, as well as guiding the workshops in exploring the hidden vernacular culture of Italian American communities in New York City.

**Dr. Jack Tchen** is Professor of Public History & Humanities and Director of the Price Institute at Rutgers University, State University New Jersey. Dr. Tchen is co-founder of the Museum of Chinese in America in New York City and served as an advisor for the New York City Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers. Dr. Tchen will speak in the roundtable discussion on Columbus monuments and will discuss his place-based field work and activism with Munsee Lenape communities.

**Valerio Ciriaci** is an Italian-born documentary filmmaker and director of the award-winning film *Stonebreakers* (2022), which chronicles the conflicts around monuments that arose in the United States during the George Floyd protests and the 2020 presidential election. In the discussion following the screening of his film he will address how the shifting discourses on monumentality in the United States have linked history and political action as a means of confronting the past.

**Dr. Kyunghye Pyun** is Associate Professor of Art History and Museum Professions at FIT and is a specialist of Asian art, Asian American studies, and European medieval art. She has served as the Principal Investigator on two NEH grants that focus on utilizing the humanities to teach the history of labor and business to pre-professional students. Dr. Pyun will discuss her experience in collaborating with faculty from various disciplines in creating open-sourced digital teaching resources for educators in higher education.

**Dr. Mario Valero** is Associate Professor of Spanish at FIT who specializes in race and the scientific imagination in Latin American art, photography and literature. An expert on the use of new technologies in the classroom, Dr. Valero will give a presentation on how to augment place-based teaching of ethnic cultures with the use of software such as Padlet, Sketchfab, and Adobe Spark, using as a model his course “Hispanic Cultures in New York.”

### **Project Recruitment**

The recruitment for Participants will take place across a variety of different platforms, utilizing email listservs, social media, as well as communications facilitated by the project presenters. Announcements will also be distributed via the listservs of relevant professional organizations of which the project director and co-directors are members, including the Association of Historians of American Art, the Association for Ethnic Studies, the American Historical Association, the Modern Languages Association, and the American Association for Italian Studies. The wide reach of these national organizations will facilitate the team’s ability to locate both early career and senior scholars. The Italian American Studies Association (IASA) will also be an important source for locating participants. As a member of IASA’s Social Media committee, Dr. Bauman will coordinate communications to the IASA membership and followers on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. We will also contact relevant graduate programs at universities in the region, to distribute the announcement to graduate students and early career scholars. Prospective Participants will be required to submit an updated curriculum and a 300-word statement of interest explaining the relevance of their attendance to their teaching and research. Drs. Bauman, Werbel and Levinson Wilk will review all the applications and select the attendees, ensuring that the appropriate number of spots are reserved for early career scholars, non-tenure track faculty, and graduate students.

### **Project Dissemination**

With the assistance of Prof. Joseph Anderson and Molly Schoen, a website will be created in advance of the workshop with information regarding the objectives and format of the workshop, links to relevant critical readings and locations, speaker bios, and other logistical information. Shortly before the workshops commence, a shared Padlet page will be distributed, where Participants can address opening questions related to the topic and begin discussion of what they hope to achieve at the workshops. At the termination of the workshops, an online survey will be distributed to participants in order to assess the efficacy of the format and to suggest new directions for inquiry. The Padlet pages created for the workshops will remain open, so that they can become forums for Participants to continue to discuss the material presented; it will also provide an opportunity for Participants from both workshops to see each other’s work, to promote further interdisciplinary outreach.

After the close of the workshops, the website will be expanded to become a repository for sample lesson plans, so that educators from various disciplines can access a range of teaching activities that can be modified to fit their curriculum. The website will also host a digital mapping project entitled, Landmarks of Italian America NYC, consisting of an interactive map of the city and the surrounding area, with locations and sites of Italian American public artwork, memorials, monuments, plaques, and sites of interest. Utilizing pre-existing sites such as monumentlab.com, this resource will cross-reference locations, subject matter, artists, and historical dates across the region. In addition to the cross-referencing data provided, entries will include short informational and critical interventions on the history and significance of each entry. Landmarks of Italian America NYC will enable scholars to cross-reference artifacts across geographical spaces, to enrich the story of Italian American culture in a way that is not only meaningful to the study of Italian American art, but is also relevant to significant discussions taking place in the United States regarding public art and memory. Ultimately, this tool will be useful for students in humanities fields such as U.S. history, art history, ethnic studies, cultural studies, urban

studies and archeology, as well as a host of other areas. It will be a teaching resource that can expand and fortify the knowledge of the Italian American experience, as well as serving as a template for similar practices across other spaces and communities.

### **Institutional Context**

FIT has established itself as an international leader in design education, while also offering exceptional humanities programs, as well as Bachelors and Masters degrees in humanities disciplines. A School of Liberal Arts and Sciences spearheads humanities requirements in all core curricula at FIT. The college also serves as a learning hub for educators from other campuses and across the U.S., through grant-funded and other public programs. The college is located in a dynamic urban center and has a strong legacy of using New York City's history, landmarks, art, organizations, and diverse voices to inform curricula. Programs such as *Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* realize FIT's longstanding mission and strategic commitment to interdisciplinary, innovative and inclusive approaches to learning.

The campus has fully accessible facilities, easy access to public transportation, and easy access to diverse and moderately priced food options. The accessibility of program sites is of primary concern in schedule planning and transportation arrangements. Participants will be contacted in advance of the workshop start dates, to address any potential mobility or access issues. While FIT cannot house Participants on campus, the college has discounted rates with two convenient area hotels, and the Academic Affairs office will provide guidance on housing.

FIT is also committed to ensuring that web-based learning resources developed through *Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces* are available, maintained and accessible on publicly available platforms beyond the project period. The Gladys Marcus Library is committed to ensuring the availability of open-source educational resources for the FIT campus and others. Additional support is provided through the FIT Office of Communications and External Relations. Both divisions have successfully provided ongoing support, management of materials, and visibility for public, grant-funded humanities education programs. Strategy and implementation for the dissemination of resource materials will be spearheaded by the project Co-directors, in partnership with Prof. Joseph Anderson, Digital Initiatives Librarian, and with the support of Visual Resources Curator Molly Schoen. This will include conference attendance; visibility in relevant journals and social media platforms; promotion through FIT web-based communication vehicles such as *FIT News*; outreach to the academic press; and other efforts in partnership with the FIT Office of Communications and External Relations. The Fashion Institute of Technology welcomes the opportunity to host faculty and exchange diverse expertise and ideas, share and explore the City's rich legacy of monuments and public art, and facilitate a significant contribution to the resources of humanities teaching and learning, nationally.

**Creative Spaces/Contested Spaces:  
Reinterpreting Italian American Public Art in New York City**

Landmarks of American History and Culture  
National Endowment for the Humanities

**Attachment #3: Program Schedule and Detailed Reading list**

*NB: All activities take place at Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY campus (227 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan) unless otherwise noted.*

**Monday: Italian American Art and Labor in the Urban Context**

**Guiding Questions:** *What aesthetic, economic, political, and practical questions influence the design and installation of public art and memorials? How do Italian American landmarks address the intersectionality of the Italian American experience with the history of other ethnic groups in the city?*

**Readings:**

Ruberto, Laura E., and Joseph Sciorra. “Disrupted and Unsettled: An Introduction to Monuments, Memorials, and Italian Migrations.” *Italian American Review* 12.1 (2022): 1-35; Deschamps, Bénédicte. “‘The cornerstone is laid’: Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants’ Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.” *European Journal of American Studies* 10.10-3 (2015); Richard Joon Yoo, “The Fabric of Memory,” in Giunta and Trasciatti, eds., *Talking to the Girls*, 267-278.

**8:30 a.m. Greeting and Introductory Remarks:** Drs. Bauman, Werbel and Levinson-Wilk

**9:00 a.m. Icebreaker Activities:** Breakout groups discuss pedagogical objectives for place-based learning

**10:00 a.m. Presentation by Dr. Michele H. Bogart**, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Stony Brook, State University of New York and former Vice President of the Art Commission of the City of New York, on the history of public art in New York City and the political, ethical, and aesthetic considerations that affect the installation, preservation and removal of public monuments.

**11:00 a.m. Presentation** on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial by **Dr. Mary Anne Trasciatti**, Professor of Rhetoric and Director of the Labor Studies Program at Hofstra University and President of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

**12:00 p.m. Roundtable Discussion** on FIT, the Garment District and Italian Americans in Fashion led by **Dr. Levinson Wilk**

**1:00 p.m.** Lunch

**2:00 p.m.** Travel by subway to Greenwich Village

**2:30 p.m. Site visit:** Walking Tour of Italian American monuments and artists in the Greenwich Village and the East Village (Manhattan) led by **Dr. Daniel Katz**, historian and founder of People's Heritage Tours. Sites visited include the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial (2023) by Uri Wegman and Richard Jean Yoo (23-29 Washington Place); the Piccirilli Brothers' contributions to the Washington Square Arch (1895) and the Garibaldi Statue (1888) by Giovanni Turini (Washington Square Park); former site of the Italian Labor Center which housed Local 48 of the ILGWU, also known as the Italian Cloakmakers Union (231 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street); Giuseppe Moretti studio (249 ½ W. 13<sup>th</sup> Street)



**5:00 p.m.** Adjourn

### **Tuesday: Dialogues on Public Art Within the Italian American Community**

*NB: Attendees will not meet at FIT but will convene at the Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA, 421 Broome Street, Manhattan)*

**Guiding Questions:** *How do contemporary artists of Italian descent address their heritage in public art? How has public art catalyzed internal debates within Italian American communities about ethnic belonging and identity politics?*

**Readings:** Zebracki, Martin, Rob Van Der Vaart, and Irina Van Aalst. "Deconstructing *public artopia*: Situating Public-art Claims Within Practice." *Geoforum* 41.5 (2010): 786-795; Pierre, Caterina Y. "Attilio Piccirilli's *The Outcast* (1904–08) and *Eternal Youth* (1935): Immigrant Instability and the Italian American Experience." *Public Art Dialogue* 11.2 (2022): 153-179.

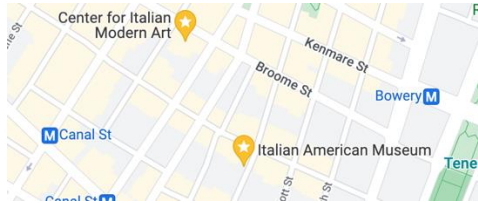
**9:00 a.m.** Breakfast at **Center for Italian Modern Art (CIMA, 421 Broome St, Manhattan)** and gallery tour

**10:00 a.m. Presentation** by **Dr. Nicola Lucchi**, Executive Director of CIMA, on contested public art and the case of the Fascist-era Palazzo d'Italia at Rockefeller Center

**11:00 a.m. Presentation** by visual artist **John Avelluto** on creating public art in the Italian American context followed by **discussion** on contemporary art and Italian American constituencies

**12:30 p.m.** Lunch in Little Italy

**3:00 p.m. Site visit:** Short walking tour of Little Italy and visit to the newly reopened **Italian American Museum** (151 Mulberry Street)



**5:30 p.m.** Adjourn

### **Wednesday: Ephemeral, Marginal and Un-commemorated Landmarks**

**Guiding Questions:** *What historical and cultural figures and artworks have been excluded or marginalized in the process of memorializing the Italian American experience? How can we think more critically about what kinds of creative works are categorized as public art?*

**Readings:** Bencivenni, Marcella, “The Sovversivi and Their Cultural World,” *Italian American Radical Culture in New York City: The Politics and Arts of the Sovversivi, 1890–1940*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

**9:00 a.m. Presentation** on Italian American radical art in New York City by **Dr. Marcella Bencivenni**, Professor of History, Hostos Community College, City University of New York

**10:30 a.m.** Working groups and discussion

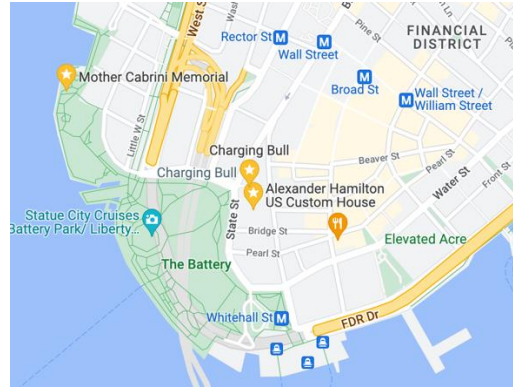
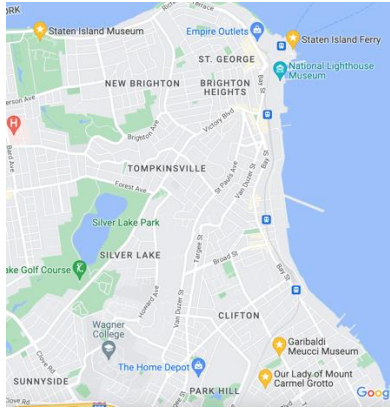
**11:30 a.m.** Travel by charter bus to Staten Island

**12:30 p.m.** Lunch

**1:30 p.m. Site visit: New, lesser-known Italian, and unregistered public art sites in Staten Island.** Our Lady of Mount Carmel Grotto (36 Amity Steet, Staten Island); the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum (420 Tompkins Ave., Staten Island); travel by charter bus to Staten Island Museum (1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island)

**4:00 p.m.** Return to Manhattan via Staten Island Ferry

**5:00 p.m. Site visit: New, lesser-known Italian, and unregistered public art sites in Lower Manhattan.** Mother Cabrini Statue (2020) by Jill and Giancarlo Biagi (Battery Park City Esplanade); the Charging Bull statue (1989) by Arturo Di Modica; Piccirilli Brothers sculptures (1907) on the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House (1 Bowling Green)



**6:00 p.m. Adjourn**

### **Thursday: Public Art as Contested Spaces**

**Guiding Questions:** *How can the debates over Columbus monuments create productive dialogues about the role of public art, social justice advocacy movements, and recognition for marginalized peoples?*

**Readings:** Ruberto, Laura E., and Joseph Sciorra. “‘Columbus Might Be Dwarfed to Obscurity’: Italian Americans’ Engagement with Columbus Monuments in a Time of Decolonization.” *Public Memory in the Context of Transnational Migration and Displacement*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020: 61-93; Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Arts, Monuments and Markers Report to the City of New York, January 2018.  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/monuments/downloads/pdf/mac-monuments-report.pdf>

**9:00 a.m. Keynote Address** by **Dr. Laura Ruberto** of Berkeley City College, CA on Italian Americans’ engagement with Columbus monuments

**10:00 a.m. Roundtable discussion** on monuments, memory, and ethnicities with **Dr. Jack Tchen** of Rutgers University, NJ; **Dr. Joseph Sciorra** of the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College (City University of New York) and **Dr. Ruberto**

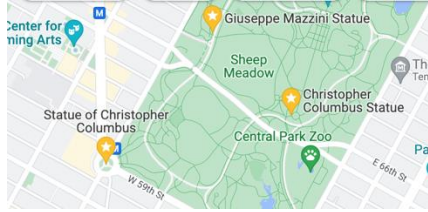
**11:00 a.m. Screening of *Stonebreakers*** (Valerio Ciriaci, Awen Films, 2022) and **post-screening discussion** on the de-commissioning of Confederate and Columbus monuments with filmmaker **Valerio Ciriaci**

**12:30 p.m. Lunch**

**1:30 p.m. Travel** by subway to 59<sup>th</sup> Street and Columbus Circle (Manhattan)

**2:00 p.m. Site visit:** Columbus Statue (1892) by Gaetano Russo and the U.S.S. Maine National Monument (1913) by the Piccirilli Brothers (59<sup>th</sup> Street/Columbus Circle); bust of Giuseppe Manzini (1878) by Giovanni Turini (Central Park); Christopher Columbus statue (1892) by Jeronimo Suñol (Central Park)





**3:00 p.m.** Travel by subway to New York Public Library

**3:30 p.m. Site visit:** New York Public Library (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street). View Piccirilli Brothers' contribution to the lion statues, "Patience" and "Fortitude" (1911) and pediment sculptures and cornice figures (1917). **Research orientation** at Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy and Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs

**5:45 p.m.** Adjourn

### **Friday: Creative Approaches to Place-Based Pedagogy, Leveraging Visual Resources and Digital Mapping**

**Guiding Questions:** *What lesson plans and digital resources can we create to integrate place-based learning about Italian American public art? How will these impart to students a more nuanced understanding of public art that incorporates multiple disciplines and perspectives?*

**Readings:** Zitcer, Andrew, and Salina M. Almanzar. "Public Art, Cultural Representation, and the Just City." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 42.7 (2020): 998-1013; Wagner, Johanna Rossi. "The Digital Archive and the Italian American Classroom." *NEMLA Italian Studies* 39 (2017): 72-83.

**8:30 a.m. Presentation** by **Dr. Levinson Wilk** and **Dr. Kyunghye Pyun** on creating open-source digital resources to teach labor and working-class histories using the humanities

**9:30 a.m. Presentation** on place-based learning in ethnic studies by **Dr. Mario Valero**

**10:30 a.m. Roundtable discussion** on leveraging visual resources: **Dr. Werbel**; Gladys Marcus Library at FIT staff

**11:15 p.m. Site visit:** Museum of FIT and Special Collections and College Archives, Gladys Marcus Library

**12:30 p.m.** Lunch

**1:30 p.m. Breakout Groups and Participant Presentations:** Creating sample lesson plans and discussing contributions to the mapping of Italian American creative spaces

**4:30 p.m. Closing remarks:** **Drs. Bauman, Werbel and Levinson Wilk**



## Suggested Background Reading and Reference Works

Adams, David and Peter Larkham. "Contesting Urban Monuments: Future Directions for the Controversial Monumental Landscapes of Civic Grandeur." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28.8 (2022): 891-906.

Bogart, Michele H. *The Politics of Urban Beauty: New York and Its Art Commission*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Connell, William and Stanislao G. Pugliese, eds. *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

D'Acerno, Pellegrino. "From Stella to Stella: Italian American Visual Culture and Its Contribution to Arts in America," in P. D'Acerno, ed., *The Italian American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2021.

Giunta, Edvige, and Mary Anne Trasciatti, eds. *Talking to the Girls: Intimate and Political Essays on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire*. New York: New Village Press, 2022.

Krase, Jerome. "Italian American Urban Landscapes: Images of Social and Cultural Capital." *Italian Americana* 22.1 (2004): 17-44.

LaGumina, Salvatore J., Frank J. Cavaoli, Salvatore Primeggia, and Joseph A. Varacalli. *The Italian American Experience: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Levinson, Sanford. *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Mangione, Jerry and Ben Monreal. *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Sciorra, Joseph. *Built with Faith: Italian American Imagination and Catholic Material Culture in New York City*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2015.

Senie, Harriet. *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.

## Digital Resources:

- Historical Marker Database: <https://www.hmdb.org/>
- Central Park Conservancy: <https://www.centralparknyc.org/>
- Italianità-Contemporary Art Inspired by the Italian Immigrant Experience:
- <https://www.italianita-art.com/view/75689/1/0/5600727>
- New York City Parks Permanent Arts and Monuments: <https://www.nycgovparks.org/art-and-antiquities/permanent-art-and-monuments>

- New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission:  
<https://www.nyc.gov/site/lpc/index.page>
- National Register of Historic Places database:  
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>