

Open Session Title: Technology, Futurism, and the Modernist Aesthetic (1900-1945)

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Description:

In the minds of Italians, Milan is inextricably linked to the poet, editor, theorist Filippo Tommaso (F.T.) Marinetti (1876-1944). Futurism, which he founded in 1909, is the first avant-garde movement whose enthusiastic embrace of technology, industry, and the machine ushered in a modernist aesthetic sensibility that would eventually spread across the whole of Western culture. Milan is also the city of radio and television. Among the many “firsts” that took place here, one could mention the first radio broadcast of a sporting event, the Gran Premio di Milano (an equestrian competition) in June 1927, and some of the first experimental audiovisual transmissions during the first Congresso Nazionale della Televisione (National Conference on Television), in 1951. Additionally, the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia “Leonardo da Vinci” (one of the venues of this year’s SHOT conference) holds a number of priceless artifacts (magnetic detectors, receivers, condensers, etc.; see the museum’s website: http://www.museoscienza.org/dipartimenti/catalogo_collezioni/lista.asp?arg=ricevitore&c=1) connected to Guglielmo Marconi and his early experiments with wireless radio. These two men, Marinetti and Marconi, and their creations (Futurism, but, more in general, avant-garde art; and radiotelegraphy) have numerous, often surprising points of contact. They both led adventurous lives that often took them outside of Italy (London for Marconi, Paris for Marinetti), and their legacies are far-reaching and controversial: consider their complicated relationship with Fascism, their involvement in WWI (in which both men actively fought) and WWII (in which their ideas and discoveries played a significant role). This panel aims to explore those points of contact and how they influenced 20th century European art and culture.

Possible topics include:

- The immediate and long-term impact of radio on art and on Futurism and avant-garde art movements in particular;
- The influence of radio on literature (poetry) and theater;
- The role played by science and industry in defining the modernist aesthetic;
- The scientific laboratory as a metaphor for the artist’s studio;
- Marinetti, Marconi, and their relationship with Fascism;
- Technology, noise, revolution, and anarchy;

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