

Clodagh Brook, Florian Mussnug, and Giuliana Pieri, *Intermedia in Italy: From Futurism to Digital Convergence*, Cambridge, Legenda, 2024, 248 pp., €120.

In today's hyperconnected world, where boundaries between different artistic disciplines and media become increasingly difficult to identify, the concept of "intermediality" and the research related to it are more relevant than ever. In this context, *Intermedia in Italy: From Futurism to Digital Convergence*, an analysis of the evolution of intermedial practices in Italy from the early 20th century to 2020, is particularly significant. The book demonstrates the fundamental role that ever-closer relations between artistic practices have played in shaping Italy's creative and cultural landscape throughout the 20th and 21st centuries and reveals "the development of intermedial practice as one of the most significant paradigm shifts of the last twelve decades" (p. 2).

Written by Clodagh Brook, Florian Mussnug, and Giuliana Pieri, this collaborative work draws on the expertise of scholars from Italian Studies. Brook is a Professor of Italian at Trinity College Dublin, Mussnug is a Professor of Comparative Literature and Italian Studies at University College London, and Pieri is a Professor of Italian and Visual Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London. Although they collaborated as authors, each contributed expertise in specific areas: Pieri on art, design, and fashion; Mussnug on literature and music; and Brook on cinema, video, and intermediality. The final product reflects their joint efforts, resulting from over ten years of cooperative work enriched by exchanges with colleagues and events such as workshops, summer schools, and conferences.

Published by Legenda, the Modern Humanities Research Association's book imprint for new research in the Humanities, *Intermedia in Italy* is the sixth volume in the Visual Culture series. It was released simultaneously as a hardcover and an open access e-book, which will eventually be followed by a paperback version. The monograph represents groundbreaking research on the

interconnections between arts and media, being the first comprehensive study in English to focus on these interactions within the Italian context. It aims to delineate a process that has, until now, been outlined only fragmentarily.

The book is structured into eight chapters: an introduction and seven chapters focused on significant years between 1915 and 2020 that help explore the concept of intermediality. It balances broader analyses of intermedial exchange with focused case studies related to each key moment. In chronological order, each chapter centres on a specific year and an overarching concept that reflects and guides artistic practice during that period.

The introduction provides an overview of the history of intermedial scholarship, both in general and in the Italian context. It also outlines developments in the field of Italian Studies, the authors' starting point. In this section, Brook, Mussnug, and Pieri introduce their methodology and some key terminology, clarifying their own definitions of "intermediality" and explaining how their conceptions align with or diverge from those by other scholars in the field, such as Henry Jenkins, Irina Rajewsky, and Werner Wolf.

In the second chapter, the authors discuss the concept of revolution in relation to the year 1915, portraying the Futurists' revolutionary efforts to fuse the arts. By analysing the Futurist movement and the manifesto "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," they illustrate how Futurist artists challenged the boundaries between different art forms, including painting, sculpture, poetry, and music.

The third chapter focuses on the year 1932 and the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This chapter explores the Fascist regime's cultural policy and its attempt to construct a total work of art using art as a propaganda tool, demonstrating how the fusion of artistic disciplines could be both an aesthetic phenomenon and an ideological project at the time. It emphasizes the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* as a pivotal moment in this totalizing vision of the arts, showing how political influences shaped artistic endeavours during this period.

Chapter four revolves around the concept of experiment in the year 1963. In a time of accelerated modernization and unprecedented wealth that expanded access to art, Gruppo 63, Italy's most influential neo-avant-garde movement, emerged. The authors discuss the prevailing sense of optimism and opportunity in Italian society during the 1960s and its impact on Gruppo 63, which was experimental yet criticized for being elitist and politically disengaged.

In chapter five, the term "collapse" is associated with the year 1972, a time marked by a wave of terrorist attacks that fostered a dark and violent mood in

the country. During this period, a sense of political urgency dominated the work of many writers and artists, with the more radical voices calling for the abolition of all hierarchies of social and cultural privilege. The interplay between art, performance, and politics reveals the revolutionary potential of intermediality in this context.

The sixth chapter addresses hybridity in relation to the year 1994, a time when television dominated as the most mainstream of new hybrid forms. Artistic hybridity became institutionalized with Silvio Berlusconi's rise to political prominence, leading to the commercialization of once-radical associations. Consequently, intermediality in this period was linked to ever-expanding, commercial mass media and a loss of its political edge.

In chapter seven, the authors discuss the year 2007 and the term "convergence." This period was marked by widespread internet access, enabling intermedial experimentation among activists and artists through emerging digital technologies. Such technological changes facilitated the convergence of art forms, exemplified by the *Manituana* website by Wu Ming, which served as a tool for transmedial storytelling. The year 2007 highlights the importance of collaboration and co-creation among artists and the public, alongside an intensification of intermedial boundary-crossing and a renewed spirit of experimentation.

The eighth and final chapter serves as an extended conclusion, posing open-ended questions and speculative conclusions that provide a basis for further exploration. Focusing on the year 2020 and the term "contagion," the chapter addresses the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The physical isolation and increased reliance on virtuality fostered a profound sense of interconnectedness. In the arts, engagement with virtuality expanded, becoming more intensive, creative, and diverse as a result of the pandemic. The authors highlight virtual spaces for exhibiting artworks and some artistic productions created during the lockdown while noting that the pandemic accelerated processes of virtualization and intermedial connection that were already in motion.

As this overview demonstrates, *Intermedia in Italy* is a specialized yet accessible text. While prior knowledge of the subject can be helpful, the volume's extensive documentation and solid theoretical framework make it inviting for lay readers interested in exploring the field of Intermedial Studies, particularly those with a background in Italian Studies. Moreover, specialized readers will find the work particularly compelling, as it is one of the rare

monographs that specifically integrates intermedial criticism with the Italian cultural and artistic context.

The book offers a thorough and well-documented analysis of intermedial practices in Italy, demonstrating the centrality of these phenomena in the evolution of the Italian artistic culture. The depth of research is evident through the extensive use of endnotes, with each chapter containing an average of eighty. The absence of a complete bibliography at the end of the volume, however, is a minor shortcoming, as it would have facilitated matters for readers seeking to explore the topic further. Additionally, while the illustrations included are helpful, the subject matter would benefit from more visuals to fully capture the richness of the intermedial processes discussed.

It is a remarkable achievement that the volume maintains such thematic coherence across its expansive historical span. The authors adeptly illustrate how the contamination of artistic disciplines has not only fuelled Italian creativity throughout the 20th century but continues to resonate in today's cultural landscape. *Intermedia in Italy* stands as a pivotal and authoritative contribution to the field of Intermedia Studies, opening up new avenues for inquiry and inspiring future research.

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