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Sergio Cortesini Receives First Annual Terra Foundation for American Art International Essay Prize

Sergio Cortesini of the University of Cassino in Italy has been awarded the Smithsonian American Art Museum's 2010 Terra Foundation for American Art International Essay Prize. Cortesini was selected by an international review panel for his essay "Unseen Canvases: Italian Painters and Fascist Myths across the American Scene."

Cortesini is the first winner of the prize, which recognizes excellent scholarship by a scholar in the field of American art history based outside the United States. The annual award, established in 2009, honors essays that advance the understanding of historical American art and demonstrate new findings and original perspectives. Essays written in foreign languages are translated into English for publication. The author receives a \$500 award and his essay will be published in the Spring 2011 issue of the museum's journal *American Art* (vol. 25, no. 1).

"I am delighted that Sergio Cortesini, the inaugural recipient of the Terra Foundation for American Art International Essay Prize, through his important essay about perceptions of Italian art in the mid-1930s, captures a global context for looking at art, which is what the award is meant to recognize," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Each year, a four-member review panel evaluates essays submitted for the prize following a call for papers. The 2010 reviewers were Michael Hatt, professor of art history at the University of Warwick in Britain; Ursula Frohne, professor of art history at the Universität zu Köln in Cologne, Germany; Eric de Chasse, director of the Académie de France à Rome, in Rome; and Rebecca Zurier, associate professor of the history of art and faculty associate in the program in American culture at the University of Michigan. The deadline for submissions for the 2011 prize is Jan. 14, 2011; additional information is online at americanart.si.edu/research/awards/terra/.

Cortesini's essay describes the Italian government's program to send a series of exhibitions of contemporary art to the United States between 1935 and World War II in an attempt to offset through cultural diplomacy Fascist Italy's belligerent image in America. In particular, it traces the reception of one

exhibition that toured to 12 venues across the country, including the Minnesota State Fair, from 1935 to 1936.

Cortesini teaches modern art history at the University of Cassino. He has a doctorate from the Sapienza-Università di Roma and a Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies in social anthropology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He has received postdoctoral fellowships from the The Getty Foundation and the Smithsonian, as well as a Terra Foundation travel grant.

In 2002 Cortesini published *Bice Lazzari l'arte come misura. Ritratto di una pittrice tra Venezia e Roma* (Rome, 2002), a monograph about the abstract painter Bice Lazzari (1900-1981). He contributed an essay to the exhibition catalog *Kunst und Propaganda* (Berlin, Deutsche Historisches Museum, 2007), and in 2008 he published an essay about Peter Blume's painting "The Eternal City" in the Italian journal *L'Uomo Nero*. He is a contributor to the exhibition catalog *Peter Blume: Nature and Metamorphosis* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2012) and is completing a book titled "One day we must meet": *La diplomazia dell'arte contemporanea italiana negli Stati Uniti di Franklin D. Roosevelt*.

The journal *American Art* is produced by the museum's Research and Scholars Center, which also administers fellowships for pre- and postdoctoral scholars and offers unparalleled research databases and extensive photographic collections documenting American art and artists. Information about subscribing, purchasing single issues or submitting articles to the journal, which is published by the University of Chicago Press, is available at journals.uchicago.edu/AmArt.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its main building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Follow the museum on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, ArtBabble, iTunes and YouTube. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Website: americanart.si.edu.

About the Terra Foundation for American Art

Through its fellowships and awards, the Terra Foundation for American Art seeks to enliven and expand the study of the history of American art by encouraging the participation of scholars worldwide. Information about its initiatives, grant program and collection are online at terraamericanart.org.

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