Peter Benson Miller

Nero su Bianco

The Mediterranean Sea is the focus of Benson Miller's study of African American artists and their interactions with Italy and Europe. The book explores the cultural and artistic exchanges that occurred during the mid-20th century, highlighting the contributions of African American artists to the European art scene.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many African American artists traveled to Italy to study and work. Miller's research examines the experiences of these artists, who found a place to express their talents in a culture that often denied them opportunities at home.

Among the most prominent artists was Jacob Lawrence, who spent time in Italy as part of the American Academy. Lawrence's work found a place to flourish, and he returned to the United States with a renewed sense of purpose.

The book also discusses the role of the American Academy in Rome, which provided a space for African American artists to work and experiment. Miller highlights the significance of this institution in the development of African American art.

Overall, Benson Miller's work offers a unique perspective on the cultural exchange between African American artists and Italy, shedding light on the enduring influence of African American art on the European art world.
ny of transformation.” Despite the fact that Eshetu’s work is intimately tied to Rome, its appearance in Nero su Bianco is the first time that it has been shown in the Italian capital.

Another lightning rod for complicated postcolonial attitudes was Franco Prosperi and Gualtiero Jacopetti’s Africa Addio, a sensationalized “shockumentary” about the end of colonial regimes in Africa that incorporated footage of the Zanzibar revolution. It was a resounding success with the Italian public when it was first screened in Rome in 1966, but there were allegations of inauthenticity, including the accusation that the co-directors staged the scene of the execution of a Congolese Simba rebel. Jacopetti was arrested on charges of murder, but later released when the filmmakers produced proof that they had arrived just before the actual execution took place. As part of an ongoing project, South African artist Bridget Baker explores the complex reception of that film, including a mock trial and debate sponsored by La Tribuna Illustrata and broadcast on the weekly Cordialmente State television program, in which a jury of twenty-three newspaper editors selected from Roman high schools were convened to determine if the filmmakers were guilty of racism. Among the charges was the accusation that the directors used different camera lenses to make African characters seem less photogenic than their European counterparts. During the proceedings, two witnesses for the prosecution, a Nigerian, Ibe Ekesie, and an Ethiopian, Tesfay Selassie, were questioned at length by the jury. Working with newsreels and footage from the Istituto Luce and the testimony of participants, Baker explores the complex dynamics of agency and the multiplicity of empowered voices in colonial and postcolonial narratives.

Overturning many of the tropes of travelogues written by Europeans in Africa, a narrative form that did a great deal to domesticate and colonize overseas territory, Vincenzo Latronico, here represented by a translated excerpt of his book Narciso nelle colonie. Un altro viaggio in Etiopia, also questions a conventional vehicle for the western gaze. In the romantic era, in particular, the illustrated travel account was often framed as a personal voyage of discovery in which the author’s self emerged in relation to the exotic other. Accompanied by the photographer and filmmaker Armin Linke, who contributed the photographs to the volume, Latronico set out in the early months of 2012 on a three-week trek through Ethiopia; their itinerary was planned with an eye to Latronico’s genealogy and his precursors’ ties to the colonial enterprise in the horn of Africa. They had intended, for example, to follow the route of the railroad built by Italian engineers, one of whom was Latronico’s grandfather. After this proved impossible, which frustrated a straightforward path to a so-called heart of darkness, the author’s self-conscious attempts to retrace his family history are interwoven with observations about present day Ethiopia. These tend to upend, rather than endorse, western assumptions about contemporary Africa. Linke’s photographs complement Latronico’s “archaeology of the present,” which acknowledges with every step the partialness of every single perspective. Images alternate between panoramic scenes of vast arid landscapes, which update and