Trust and Credit
The Mercantile Culture of Risk in Renaissance Italy

Nicholas Baker, Macquarie University

Renaissance Italy was a society in which the problems of how to trust and whom to trust presented perennial challenges; yet it also housed a vibrant, transcontinental, proto-capitalist economy that relied on trust for its functioning. This paper explores how Renaissance Italian merchants confronted and attempted to manage the problems of trust and the particular mercantile culture that resulted from this: a culture that blended apparently modernizing elements—such as probabilistic reasoning—with what appear to twenty-first-century eyes as irrational beliefs, religious faith, and ideas about personal standing. At its center lay new conceptions of time and the future, which provoked anxieties and offered possibilities in equal measure.

CO-SPONSORED BY THE CASA ITALIANA-NYU

FEBRUARY 22 | 6 PM
CASA ITALIANA ZERILLI-MARIMO | 22 W 12TH ST
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW
All events are free and open to the public.