

BRIAN E. McCONNELL

AGLI ALBORI  
DEL VIAGGIO  
MODERNO  
IN SICILIAIL GRAND TOUR DI THOMAS COLE  
E SAMUEL JAMES AINSLEY NEL 1842

DOMENICO SANFILIPPO EDITORE

## BRIAN McCONNELL MAKES KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

McCONNELL  
DISCUSSED HIS BOOK  
*AGLI ALBORI DEL  
VIAGGIO MODERNO  
IN SICILIA, IL GRAND  
TOUR DI THOMAS  
COLE E SAMUEL JAMES  
AINSLEY 1842*

Brian E. McConnell, professor of Art History and Classical Archaeology, recently presented the keynote address at the *X Rassegna del Documentario e della Comunicazione Archeologica*, a film-festival on archaeological themes that ran virtually from October 15 to 18, 2020 in Licodia Eubea in southeastern Sicily. McConnell discussed his book *Agli Albori del Viaggio Moderno in Sicilia, Il Grand Tour di Thomas Cole e Samuel James Ainsley 1842* (Domenico Sanfilippo Editore, Catania, 2014) in an extended interview with festival co-organizer Alessandra Cilio. This is the second year in which McConnell has participated in this festival, having served in 2019 as one of four jurors.

McConnell's book looks at the 24-day trip around the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies made in 1842 by the famous American artist Thomas Cole and his British traveling companion Samuel James Ainsley. The trip documented the first formal development of the island's cultural and natural resources. The Kingdom, which at the time stretched from the namesake island across to the southern Italian mainland as far as Gaeta, just north of Naples,

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McConnell's research interests span the Old World from prehistory through the Middle Ages. He concentrates on the island of Sicily, where he has conducted archaeological field research for over three decades, including FAU's summer study abroad excavation program at ancient Palikè (Rocchicella di Mineo). FAU President John Kelly and First-Lady Mrs. Kelly, Dean Michael Horswell, and a delegation of FAU supporters visited the site in 2019. McConnell teaches undergraduate art history surveys and upper division courses that focus on ancient and medieval cultures of the Mediterranean and Europe. He has taught graduate seminars on such varied topics as Picasso, Minimalism, the Art of Internment, Art and Human Rights, and Art and Sound.

*Agli Albori del Viaggio Moderno in Sicilia, Il Grand Tour di Thomas Cole e Samuel James Ainsley 1842* available for purchase at: [tinyurl.com/mcconnell-agli-albori](https://tinyurl.com/mcconnell-agli-albori)

Image right: FAU President John Kelly and First-Lady Mrs. Kelly, Dean Michael Horswell, and a delegation of FAU supporters visit McConnell in Sicily, 2019.

was a precocious laboratory for cultural heritage and historic preservation, and it had great impact on such figures as Eugene Violet-le-Duc, who honed his skills as an architect there and subsequently returned to save much of the Medieval heritage in his native France. The Kingdom was also a place where European travelers could see Greek and Roman antiquities much more easily than in the less accessible lands of the Ottoman empire to the east.

Thomas Cole, in particular, was interested in finding what he called 'storied landscapes' that he could use as models for dramatic, allegorical pictures of North America, which he saw as caught between nature and burgeoning modernity. McConnell's book brings together the extensive documentary evidence, including on-site sketch drawings, finished paintings, and a lengthy, handwritten trip diary into a *voyage pittoresque*, a genre between literature and watercolor graphics that had emerged at the time but that Cole himself could not create due to his untimely death from influenza in 1848. Samuel James Ainsley went on to become one of the early explorers and illustrators of Etruscan civilization in central Italy. Through a survey of emerging means of transportation (including the first ocean-going side-wheelers) and letters exchanged among the protagonists after the trip, McConnell contextualizes their observations and artistic output into the wider rapport that people have with Mediterranean antiquity today.

McConnell will be working with the festival co-organizers Alessandra Cilio and Lorenzo Daniele on a docu-drama regarding the archaeological site of Rocchicella di Mineo, where FAU has an agreement with the Sicilian Regional government to conduct field research and educational activities. This site in antiquity was the location of the most important sanctuary of Sicily's indigenous Sikel people.



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