

Attachment B

Call for entries Between 50h Film Contest – suggestions on territory, history and culture for the development of the project for the short film

Since the theme and subject of the short film are already outlined in the introductory section of the call, this attachment offers a series of historical-cultural information and suggestions relating to the places hosting the *Between Festival*. The intent is not to provide a detailed description of the spaces, but to suggest how these, both in a concrete and symbolic sense, can embody and reflect the central themes of the event:

INTERCULTURALITY

PLURAL IDENTITIES

RICHNESS OF DIVERSITY

CULTURAL ENCOUNTER AND EXCHANGE

Archaeological Park of Morgantina and the Villa Romana del Casale (*Unesco Site*), Piazza Armerina, Aidone, Mazzarino, Pietraperzia

In the heart of central Sicily, between the provinces of Enna and Caltanissetta, lies a hilly area where history, culture and landscape come together in a fascinating mosaic. In this area, which includes the Archaeological Park of Morgantina, the Villa Romana del Casale and the municipalities of Piazza Armerina, Aidone, Mazzarino and Pietraperzia, **ancient civilizations** - Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman and Bourbon - **are intertwined and have left deep traces** in stone, rituals, architecture and collective memory.

Today, this territory continues to tell that story made up of encounters, transformations and beauty, where memory has never disappeared, but has evolved, enriched by each era that has left its mark there.

Piazza Armerina

Historical and cultural background information:

Piazza Armerina, nestled in the heart of central Sicily, is a fascinating village that holds centuries of history and culture. Famous for the extraordinary Villa Romana del Casale, a unique heritage site thanks to its magnificent mosaics, the city preserves in its historic center the traces of the civilizations that have passed through it: from the Romans to the

Normans and the Bourbons. Its cobbled streets, palaces and monuments tell of a past steeped in Byzantine, Arab and medieval influences.

In this context rich in cultural stratifications, **monasteries** played a central role in medieval times, not only in Piazza Armerina but in the whole area of inland Sicily. True spiritual bulwarks and guardians of Christian and classical tradition, monasteries were also **extraordinary intercultural centers of encounter and exchange**. Within them, men from different corners of Europe, united by the Latin language, integrated with local communities, contributing to the construction of a common European identity.

Their influence left a deep mark on the land: not only through churches, cloisters and works of art, but also through tending the fields, raising livestock, and caring for the poor and sick. Monasteries revived a declining civilization, reinterpreting the legacy of the Roman Empire and passing on knowledge, practices and values to future generations. They were beating hearts of social, economic and cultural life, capable of shaping the surrounding landscape and society.

Items of interest for the Between 50hFilmContest:

- cultural stratification of the area: Piazza Armerina witnesses centuries of history, with Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman and Bourbon influences coexisting in the urban fabric;
- monasteries as social poles of encounter between cultures from all over Europe and the development of modernity.

The Roman Villa of the Casale

Historical and cultural background information:



A few kilometers away, the Villa Romana del Casale, located in the territory of Piazza Armerina, is one of the most extraordinary examples of a **late antique Roman villa**. Built between the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD, a famous late antique residence of the 4th century AD, it saw settlement realities persist in the area until the 15th century, after Lombard settlers arrived in Sicily following the Normans. It is also

highly relevant that its more than **3,000 square meters of perfectly preserved mosaics** were **made by African artists** who influenced the iconographic program, including the well-known **image of bikini-clad women in the attitude of exchange in the game of ball**.

A disarming modernity that is striking not only because of the absolute beauty of the mosaics-while they recount scenes of daily life, such as fishing or hunting, and depict exotic animals along with elegant imperial-style costumes-but above all because they express **the meeting of different worlds**, Romanity and Africa, which find in artistic expression a perfect synthesis of great emotional impact.



Included in the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1997, the Villa remains today, above all, a living heritage of the area, a meeting point between the past and a new idea of cultural reception.

Items of interest for the Between 50hFilmContest:

- scene of bikini-clad women passing the ball to each other, an iconography adopted by the Festival, symbolically represents exchange, evoking the meeting of different traditions and cultural identities;
- the meeting of Romanity and the Mediterranean: mosaics made by African artists.

Aidone and the Goddess of Morgantina

Historical and cultural background information:

Aidone, a small town in the heart of Sicily, preserves in its museum an immeasurable treasure: the Goddess of Morgantina, a statue (2 meters and 20 cm) from the fifth century B.C., symbol of an entire territory, which only a few years ago (2011) returned to its place of origin. Attributed to an artist close to Phidias, the Goddess still testifies to the deep imprint of art and Demetra and Cerere-a myth still alive in Greek culture in the territory. There is concordance, in fact, in recognizing her as Demeter, **Goddess of female fertility and the fields**.



For centuries, this statue remained immobile at the site of Morgantina, becoming part of the daily life of local communities, until it was stolen in the second half of the 19th century. This theft represented a painful tear in the identity mosaic of the area. After a complex story of passing from hand to hand, culminating in its purchase at auction in London by the Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, thanks to an international dispute won jointly by Italy and the Region of Sicily, the Goddess of Morgantina was finally **returned to the Archaeological Museum of Aidone**.

A cultural wealth of the land, a primeval deity of agriculture, crops and vegetation. **Cerere** is the **Roman version** of the more archaic **Demetra** also belonging to **Greek mythology**. From the very union of Jupiter and Ceres, mother earth, comes Proserpine (the Roman version of the Greek Persephone), a beautiful maiden who is abducted by Cuton (Hades for the Greeks, God of the underworld), and out of grief Ceres makes the earth infertile. After Jupiter intervenes and assigns her daughter to both Pluto and her mother, the cycle of seasons is born: during Proserpine's absence, the earth generates nothing (autumn and winter), but when she lives with her mother on Olympus, the earth flourishes again and life is reborn (spring and summer)

Elementi di interesse per il Between 50hFilmContest:

- the Goddess of Morgantina, a Greek symbol returned to Sicily, reflects the interweaving of ancient cultures (Greek and Roman) deeply rooted in the territory;
- the dialogue between Greek and Roman deities, between ancient art and contemporary sensibility, reveals the continuity of values and narratives between ages and peoples;
- the myth of the cycle of the seasons becomes a metaphor for cultural regeneration, for returning to and rediscovering one's roots.

The archaeological area of Morgantina

Historical and cultural background information:

The archaeological site of Morgantina, near Aidone, today offers an evocative itinerary among the remains of a civilization that was able to welcome and integrate different cultures over the centuries. Founded by the Siculians and later transformed by contact with Greeks and



Romans, the area preserves structures and artifacts that testify to this continuous overlapping of identities. In addition to the impressive agora, among the largest in Sicilian antiquity, the site includes **two distinct theaters**, one older, the other Hellenistic, that show the evolution of the forms and functions of public space.

And then the artifacts: vases, statues, everyday objects that tell of lives, trade, religions, contaminations. The famous *Venus of Morgantina*, returned from the United States in

2011, is its symbol: a goddess who travels through time, carrying with her the identity of a people.

Items of interest for the Between 50hFilmContest:

- the site reflects a continuous contamination of styles, practices and symbols through the centuries;
- the existence of two theaters from different eras testifies to the social evolution and adaptation of theatrical traditions to the changing cultural context.

Mazzarino



Historical and cultural background information:

The imprints of the intense and extensive interculturality as a vocation of the territory are numerous and evident. Mazzarino, with its archaeological area of Sofiana, a statio of late antiquity, whose architecture and materials confirm its persistent existence until the Frederician era, that is, for about 2000 years.

Until the 1940s, Mazzarino represented **one of the most latifundist territories in Sicily**, with as much as 70 percent of the agricultural area consisting of fiefs. In the new cadastre of 1937, the extent of arable land occupied almost three-quarters of the agricultural and forest area, with the largest component represented by grain, an essential element for feeding the population and animals. It is evident that the main economic source of the various eras was precisely the production of this grain. However, this was for the almost exclusive benefit of landowners. The history of rural populations was, thus, marked by endemic poverty, exploitation and suffering, forced to struggle for survival as the seasons passed and oppressed by levies and taxes. These conditions have led, over time, to numerous episodes of struggle and revolt

Even the origins of wheat on the island date back some 8,000 years, to the Neolithic period, when the first farming communities settled there. With Greek colonization, wheat became an important economic resource, and the rich plains were widely used for grain production. The Roman conquest of Sicily in the 3rd century led to a systematization of wheat cultivation, which was then exported to



Rome to meet the needs of the growing urban population, becoming a key resource that reinforced the economic and strategic importance of the island and places, such as the Mazzarino area, that offered huge amounts of production.

The archaeological area, the **Statio Philosophiana**, was an obligatory passage of the wheat convoys that through the road axis, called "Itinerarium Antonini," led to Rome. Since Sicily was conquered by the Romans following the First Punic War, we can certainly say that the cultivation and use of wheat in the various eras has become an index of civilizational evolution for populations. An indicator of wealth and well-being that we intend to resume and relaunch in a vision that is certainly anthropocentric but very attentive to the ecosystem and its sustainability.

The city's present name has a direct and explicit reference with golden ears of corn. Its ancient origins date back to 265 B.C. when the city of Macarina was founded, from the ruins of ancient **Mazaris**, whose Greek root "Maza" translates to "**bread-focaccia**".

Wheat has shaped daily life and local traditions that still live on today with **festivals and festivals related to agricultural harvests or religious holidays**, such as St. Joseph's Day, during which farmers offered harvested wheat as a sign of devotion and thanksgiving, preparing altars and votive breads decorated with symbolic motifs related to wheat and the land. Bread, a symbol of life and abundance is, therefore, a strongly identifying element of these lands, capable of connecting the present with the past. But while in Christian religious traditions wheat has retained an important significance in festivals and rituals, ancient beliefs and local culture have been strongly influenced by the Greek myth of the Goddess Demeter symbolizing the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Items of interest for the Between 50hFilmContest:

- Mazzarino and the archaeological area of Sofiana testify to a cultural continuity that spans ages and civilizations;
- the production and trade of wheat, from a local resource to a strategic asset so much so that it was called the "Granary of the Roman Empire," not only fostered economic and cultural exchanges, but were a central element of the landscape and natural value.

Web page of the Archaeological Park of Morgantina and the Villa Romana del Casale:
<https://parchiarcheologici.regione.sicilia.it/morgantina-villa-romana-casale/>

Projects, described max in one folder, along with a submission form with personal details, **should be sent by midnight on May 31, 2025** to mg@associazioneglobart.it.