

### Roundtable #3

Two Italian luxury brands – Smeg and Dolce & Gabbana – have collaborated since 2018 to sell brightly colored and expensive kitchen appliances. Smeg, hailed for its retro styling, capitalizes on nostalgia and Italian design sensibilities. Dolce & Gabbana, known for embracing Sicilian influences, is notorious for its racist and exclusionary commentary from its namesake designers. The collection, called “Sicily is my love” draws upon vivid imagery and motifs to celebrate what the brands hail as a distinctly Sicilian identity, yet the marketing itself does little to explain what exactly makes one Sicilian. One particularly striking product is a refrigerator called “Jousting Paladins” that costs \$50,000 USD. True to its name, a hand-painted image of armored men jousting adorns the bottom half of the refrigerator door. In my roundtable discussion, I unpack the medievalism of this refrigerator and the broader collection to interrogate what these two luxury brands mean when they declare that “Sicily is my love.” What kind of Sicily do they have in mind? Is it a heterogenous Sicily that reflects a diverse history of Byzantine, Muslim, and Norman conquest? Or is it an exclusionary Sicily, which adds to Dolce & Gabbana’s rap sheet of controversial practices? Indeed, I am interested in how ideas about the medieval, about Sicily, and about identity formation converge in this collaboration, and I argue that this is a distinctly Mediterranean phenomenon given Sicily’s location and history.