

DEFINING CULTURE, SHAPING RESEARCH.

INTERROGATING THE MEANINGS OF CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN IBERIA

RESEARCH
WORKSHOP

Organizers:

Elizabeth Blakemore, Gerard Rosich
Pagès and Diana Berruezo-Sánchez

BADEMS

the cultural history
of the Black african diaspora
in early modern Spain

 **20, 21 and 22 October 2025**

 **11 am to 2 pm**

 **Online Via TEAMS**

The BADEMS team comes together to tackle a core question: what do we mean by culture, and which understandings matter for our research?

Through shared readings and discussion, we will explore how practices were framed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—as norm, as art, as subversion, or as impossibility—and how these perspectives shape our work today. This workshop sets the stage for BADEMS' collective approach to Cultural History.

Participants: Diana Berruezo-Sánchez, Gerard Rosich Pagès, Elizabeth Blakemore, Eduardo Corona Pérez, Magdalena Díaz Hernández, Nuno Vila-Santa, Cristina Hernández Casado, Rubén Bracero-Salvat, Jessie Stoolman, Andrea Rueda Herrera, and Erica Feild-Marchello.



UAB Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Purpose of the Workshop

This three-day workshop will focus on one of the fundamental questions at the core of BADEMS: what do we mean by culture, and which understandings are most productive for our research? Through shared readings and structured discussions, we will explore how cultural practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were framed as norm, art, subversion, or impossibility, and how these categories inform our current work. The aim is to build a common ground for BADEMS' collective approach to Cultural History.

Format and Structure

- **Presentation** (10 minutes): framing the problem, challenges, and expectations (not a summary of the readings).
- **Discussion**: three guiding questions per day, one hour of discussion per question.
- **Final session** (Day 3): collective reflection on what we have learned, how the readings reshape our approach, and which questions we take forward (e.g. for the upcoming Seville workshop on Agency).

A live shared document will be available throughout. All participants are encouraged to add notes, questions, and reflections by Wednesday 15 October. This document will serve as the basis for discussion and preparation.



Schedule and Readings

Day 1: Definitions and Understandings of Culture

Led by Elizabeth Blakemore

20 October 2025

Key Readings

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Field of Cultural Production."
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms."
- Geertz, Clifford. *La interpretación de las culturas* (Capítulo: "Descripción densa. Hacia una teoría interpretativa de la cultura").
- Serna, Justo, and Anacleto Pons. *La historia cultural* (Introducción).

Questions

1. What do we mean when we talk about "culture"? What are our individual understandings/interpretations of the concept?
2. Who defines what is culture?
How do we make sense of the interpretation and intersection of West African and Spanish cultural practices and artistic productions?
3. Is there a difference between cultural practice, cultural production, and cultural history? How do they relate to one another? Are their differences dictated by a particular medium or socio-economic factor?
How do these different concepts relate to the BADEMS project's aims and understanding of cultural agents?

Day 2: Broadening Understandings – A Comparative Approach

Led by Gerard Rosich Pagès

21 October 2025

Key Readings

- Burke, Peter. "Introduction." *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*
- Lingold, Mary Caton. "Introduction." *African Musicians in the Atlantic World: Legacies of Sound and Slavery*.

Questions

1. ¿Qué permite identificar un determinado conjunto de prácticas culturales con un colectivo determinado (p.e., ¿"Música negra"? ¿Qué hace de un conjunto de prácticas culturales UNA CULTURA colectiva (p.e. "Cultura diaspórica", o "Cultura Morisca") y cuáles son las posibilidades, limitaciones y variedades de los procesos/resultados del "encuentro" entre culturas e imaginarios diversos? (p.e., hibridación, apropiación, choque, mestizaje, fagocitación, etc.)
2. ¿Qué constituye una herencia o tradición cultural? ¿De qué somos nosotros herederos? ¿Qué es una filiación cultural libre/autoconsciente?
3. ¿Cómo hacer la historia de prácticas culturales eminentemente inmateriales sin rastro en el archivo (sonidos ambientales, gestualidades y entonaciones, música y danzas populares minorizadas, poesía oral, etc.)? ¿Y cómo iluminar las huellas que dejan en el presente?

**Day 3: Readings in Practice – Music,
Painting, Theatre, Dance**

Led by Diana Berrueto-Sánchez

22 October 2025

Key readings

- Egginton, William. An Epistemology of the Stage: Theatricality and Subjectivity in Early Modern Spain (article).
- Gallego, Julián. *El pintor de artesano a artista* (Chap. VII: “La situación social de los pintores en el Siglo de Oro,” particularly pages 83–89).
- Knighton, Tess. “Daily Musical Life in Early Modern Spain,” in R. Cacho Casal and C. Egan (eds.), *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Early Modern Spanish Literature and Culture*.
- Sánchez, Antonio and Ordoñez Rodríguez, Javier. “Pensando con las manos: viejas y nuevas perspectivas en epistemología artesanal” (full article 2024).

Questions

- What did it mean to “make” or “perform” art in early modern Iberia, and how did such acts intersect with ideas of labour and skill (and perhaps identity)? What new directions might this open for our project?
- When someone created or performed art in early modern Iberia, what were they actually doing—socially, culturally, and imaginatively—and how did those actions shape the connections between artists, audiences, and shared cultural meanings?

Next Steps

- By 15 October (Wednesday): add your notes and reflections to the live document.
- 15 October: preparation meeting (Beth, Gerard and Diana) to review contributions and finalize guiding questions.
- 20–22 October: workshop sessions on TEAMS.