

The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2025**The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute Exhibition**
*Creativity and World War II Italian POWs in the United States***May 1, 2025–September 26, 2025****On view Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm**

New York, NY... The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute is proud to present its exhibition *Creativity and World War II Italian POWs in the United States*, consisting of creative work made by Italian soldiers who were imprisoned by the Allied forces during World War II, with a focus on those held in the United States. These objects, often made from salvaged materials, ranged in size from a small inlaid ring to a large Catholic chapel with a 65-foot bell tower. The exhibit is based on Dr. Laura E. Ruberto's (Berkeley City College) research, including historical photographs, rare artifacts, written accounts, and oral testimonies. Dr. Ruberto co-curated the exhibition along with the Calandra Institute's Dr. Joseph Sciorra.



Italian Service Unit member crafting an inlaid wooden box, unknown date and location. Courtesy National Archives

Designed by Polly Franchini, this exhibition brings together a selection of these objects, images, and stories to present this little-known history. Highlighting the artistry of incarcerated Italian servicemen (some of whom maintained allegiance to Fascism) is not meant to trivialize the atrocities of war or to minimize the resistance of those who fought at great sacrifice. Rather, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the myriad ways that identity and imagination are shaped materially during the adverse conditions of war. Funding for this exhibit comes from the Calandra Institute, the Australian Research Council, and the Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies.

About The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute

The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute is a City University of New York research institute operating under the aegis of Queens College. Founded in 1979 and located in Midtown Manhattan, the Calandra Institute is dedicated to the study of Italian American histories and cultures and to promulgating the varied experiences and creative output of people from the Italian diaspora. The Calandra Institute is located at 25 West 43rd St, 17th floor, in New York City. It is free and open to the public Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. For more information, visit calandrainstitute.org.

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The Calandra Institute is a university institute under the aegis of Queens College.