

PRESS RELEASE

Giuseppe Mussardo from SISSA in Trieste wins the Cosmos Prize 2024 with *Maksimovič. The story of Bruno Pontecorvo*

The award is assigned by the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria for the best literary work of popularisation in the fields of physics, astronomy and mathematics



Trieste, 15 October 2024

The Cosmos 2024 Prize was awarded to Giuseppe Mussardo for his book *Maksimovič. The story of Bruno Pontecorvo* (Castelvecchi Editore). The award ceremony took place last week during the Cosmos Festival, an initiative held in Reggio Calabria with the aim of promoting dialogue between science, culture and society through scientific workshops, public lectures, exhibitions and seminars.

Giuseppe Mussardo, Professor of Theoretical Physics at the Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati - SISSA in Trieste, received the award for his work exploring the life and discoveries of Bruno Pontecorvo, one of the most important physicists of the 20th century. The scientific jury, chaired by Gianfranco Bertone of the University of Amsterdam, praised the book for «the reconstruction, with



complex detective work, of the adventurous and misunderstood story of one of the greatest physicists of the 20th century».

The Cosmos Prize, organised by the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs and the Italian Astronomical Society, is an award that aims to promote scientific culture in Italy.

«Bruno Pontecorvo's story,» Mussardo comments, «is one of the most enigmatic and fascinating stories of the 20th century, emblematic because it shows how scientists are immersed in the flow of history and can sometimes be swept away by it. We owe Pontecorvo ingenious insights into the physics of the neutrino that have opened up new and very important scientific paths. »

Mussardo's commitment to science communication

Giuseppe Mussardo is a theoretical physicist at SISSA in Trieste, known for his contributions to statistical physics and quantum systems out of equilibrium. At the same institute, he directed the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Natural Sciences and Humanities, promoting interaction between science and humanistic culture. In addition to his internationally renowned scientific production, he has contributed to the dissemination of scientific culture with works ranging from physics to scientific biography. His books include: *Due culture?* (2024) with Filippo La Porta on the dialogue between science and humanism during the 20th century; *Sky and Earth. Travelling with Dante Alighieri and Marco Polo* (2023) - An imaginary journey with two great historical figures; *L'infinita scienza di Leopardi* (2019) - co-authored with Gaspare Polizzi, combines science and literature; *The ABCs of Science* (2020) tells 26 stories of scientists and scientific concepts.

Mussardo has also written and produced several science documentaries exploring the lives and work of important figures in physics and mathematics. These include: *Boltzmann. The Genius of Disorder* (2007) dedicated to the Viennese physicist Ludwig Boltzmann, known for his research on entropy; *Chandra. The Journey of a Star* (2009), recounts the life of Indian physicist Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, winner of the 1983 Nobel Prize in Physics; *Abdus Salam. The Dream of Symmetry* (2011), a documentary on Pakistani physicist Abdus Salam, Nobel Prize winner in 1979 and founder of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics - ICTP in Trieste; *Maksimovič. The story of Bruno Pontecorvo* (2013); *Galois. The story of a revolutionary mathematician* (2017). These documentaries combine biographical, popular and scientific elements to offer a comprehensive portrait of the characters.

The Cosmos Prize

The Cosmos Prize is an initiative dedicated to promoting scientific culture in Italy, with a particular focus on the south of the country. It is divided into two main categories:

- Cosmos Prize for the best popular science work awarded in the fields of physics, astronomy and mathematics, with a jury of experts in the field assessing the works on the basis of their ability to make complex scientific topics accessible and interesting.
- Student Cosmos Prize in which high school boys and girls, both in Italy and abroad, read and review popular science works. The aim is to develop students' critical capabilities and promote interest in science in young people.

USEFUL LINKS

Cosmos Festival:

<https://cosmos.cittametropolitana.rc.it/>

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