

# USEFUL CHARLATANS: THE FASTING CONTEST OF GIOVANNI SUCCI AND STEFANO MERLATTI IN PARIS, 1886

A public lecture by Agustí Nieto-Galan  
Wednesday October 26, 4.30-5.30 pm  
The Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University

The lecture analyzes the public fasts of two Italian “hunger artists,” Giovanni Succi and Stefano Merlatti, in Paris in 1886, and their ability to forego eating for a long period (thirty and fifty days respectively). Through the eyes of the French caricaturist Albert Robida, it discusses how contemporary witnesses described Succi and Merlatti as clever frauds, but others considered them to be interesting physiological anomalies. Controversies about their fasts entered academic circles, but they also spread throughout the urban public at different levels.



**About the speaker:** Agustí Nieto-Galan is Professor of History of Science at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), ICREA Acadèmia Fellow (2009 & 2018), and director of the Institut d’Història de la Ciència (iHC) at the UAB. He is the author of *Science in the public sphere: A history of lay knowledge and expertise* (Routledge, 2016), among numerous other publications.

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**Contact:** Eugenia Afinoguénova, [eugenia.afinoguenova@marquette.edu](mailto:eugenia.afinoguenova@marquette.edu).

