

## Session at SAH (St. Paul, 18–22 Apr 18)

Saint Paul, Minnesota, May 9–Jun 15, 2017

Deadline: Jun 15, 2017

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Lauren Jacobi

### Thalassic Architecture: Medieval and Renaissance Italy and the Sea

In his seminal text, *Nomos of the Earth* (1950), the political theorist Carl Schmitt studied the concept of “sea-appropriations.” He observed that such declarations of territory were powerful extensions of traditional terrestrial sovereignty, which included juridical rights over land, applied to the space of the sea. Schmitt asserted that land and sea spatialities became relational during pre-modernity. It was then that the globe was extensively measured, resulting in the first *nomos* of the earth.

Using Schmitt’s claim as a departure point, this session, organized by the Italian Art Society, offers a provocation to probe how architecture impacted and was shaped by water bodies—including the Mediterranean, but also lakes and rivers—as they were territorialized. How were watery borders delimited, negotiated, and even extended through architecture? In late medieval Genoa, for example, massive earth- and sea-work transformations were undertaken to provide larger areas for anchoring vessels; how might such projects be thematized as thalassic architecture and infrastructure? Additionally, given present realities and politics about climate change, what ecological stakes were at play in late medieval and Renaissance thalassic architecture?

Papers might investigate topics including the construction and use of ocean-inspired architecture such as boats, arsenals, and customs houses; harbor fortification; the production of knowledge about maritime environments and their architecture; resource extraction; and how monuments such as light beacons and religious maritime shrines structured Italian navigation and experience of the sea. Important legalistic issues were key to seafaring trade; did maritime insurance impact sea vessels? Papers might explore how the multiethnic and plural aspects that characterized ports were inflected in architecture, or how such places constructed and projected their identity through architecture. While papers focused on Italy are preferred, submissions that address similar issues in other geographic places will be considered.

Session Chair: Lauren Jacobi, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Please submit an abstract through the SAH website

Deadline: 15 June 2017, at 5pm CDT.

Reference:

CFP: Session at SAH (St. Paul, 18-22 Apr 18). In: ArtHist.net, May 15, 2017 (accessed Jul 14, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/15491>>.