

Session at ASESC (online, 28–29 Mar 25)

55th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, online,
Mar 28–29, 2025

Deadline: Sep 20, 2024

Erin Hein, University of Delaware

ASESC 2025 panel: The Aesthetics of Chance, Risk, and Contingency in the Long Eighteenth Century.

Joseph Litts and I are delighted to solicit 20-minute papers for a panel we are co-chairing at the ASESCS 2025 Annual Meeting. The conference is online and our panel is scheduled for the March 28/29 time block. We welcome submissions from scholars and graduate students at all stages. Please also consider sharing our CFP with those who may be interested.

The eventscloud portal should be used to submit proposals, which are due on September 20.

Please reach out to Joseph (jlitts@princeton.edu) and Erin Hein (erinhein@udel.edu) with any questions.

The Aesthetics of Chance, Risk, and Contingency in the Long Eighteenth Century [ID 119]

Being an artist is—and has been—risky business. Increased attention to and anxiety about uncertainty coincides with a period of increased transit, globalization, and industrialization from around 1650 to 1850. Fires and shipwrecks upended workshops and destroyed finished artworks, while open art markets led to financial instability. New and old media behaved unpredictably: marble cracked, oil paints did not cure, printmaking inks and acids went rogue, early photography capriciously captured and lost images. How did artists negotiate the unexpected? Amidst growing global trade, makers struggled to understand and manipulate new materials and subject matter. Printing errors paradoxically increased the value of impressions in Paris art markets. British and Dutch painters depicted maritime disasters for merchants whose treacherous voyages put lives and their own profits at stake. Artists from Giovanni Battista Piranesi to Alexander Cozens encouraged looking to random blots, tangled lines, and stains for inspiration. How did artists, collectors, and artworks convert chance, failures, mistakes, and risk into profits of all kinds?

Modern insurance, the stock market, and art itself converted loss into reward. For example, even the catastrophic financial losses of the South Sea Bubble became profitable for satirical artists who capitalized on the sudden inversion of fortune. Building on recent scholarship by Nina Dubin, Meredith Martin, and Madeleine Viljoen, as well as Charlotte Guichard and Matthew Hunter, how were artists visualizing and participating in systems of uncertainty? And how were art objects entangled in these networks? Attention to chance, risk, loss, and profit unsettles the fixedness of eighteenth century history and aesthetics.

While this panel takes the Atlantic as its point of departure, we encourage contributions on a

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broad geographic range of materials and makers. We welcome submissions from scholars at all stages.

More information and submission portal:
<https://asecs.org/meetings/asecs-2025-annual-meeting/>

Reference:

CFP: Session at ASESC (online, 28-29 Mar 25). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 9, 2024 (accessed Apr 17, 2026),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/42548>>.