

3 Sponsored Panels at RSA (San Francisco, 19–21 Feb 26)

San Francisco, CA

Saygin Salgirli

Renaissance Society of America - Islamic World discipline representative would like to invite paper proposals for the following three sponsored panels at the RSA Conference in San Francisco:

[1] Histories, Materials, Myths: Perceptions and Depictions of the Distant Past.

[2] Presence in Absence, Absence in Presence: Excavating Labour in the Early Modern World.

[3] Out of Sight: Early Modern Depictions and Narratives of the Unseen

[1] Histories, Materials, Myths: Perceptions and Depictions of the Distant Past.

Europe's burgeoning interest in Greco-Roman antiquity during the early modern period has been thoroughly explored, whether in debates surrounding the once quintessential definition of the Renaissance or in the context of antiquarianism.

In contrast, how the distant past, Greco-Roman or otherwise, was perceived and depicted in the Islamic World remains a mostly neglected topic; even though the vast territories of the early modern Islamic World were home to multiple ancient cultures with visible material remains, and there were indeed various literary, historical, and visual depictions of ancient societies, both real and imaginary.

This panel invites papers that explore this lacuna and investigate the perceptions and depictions of the distant past in the Islamic World. Papers on artistic production, material culture, architecture, and literature are all welcome. Rather than searching for the precise Islamic equivalent of Europe's engagement with antiquity, the panel intends to highlight differences. Hence, it aims to present global early modernity not as the multiple iterations of the same, but as a multiplicity of varying cultural and artistic practices that were nonetheless commensurate. Although priority will be given to papers that focus on the Islamic World, studies that draw comparisons with other parts of the world will also be considered.

Please submit:

- Presentation title
- Abstract (300-word maximum)
- 2-page resume/CV (pdf or doc)
- PhD or other terminal degree completion date (past or expected)

Please send your proposals by July 15, 2025 to Saygin Salgirli (saygin.salgirli@ubc.ca). Notifications will be sent by Aug. 1. Please consult RSA Submission Guidelines for additional details about RSA policies, including membership requirements.

<https://www.rsa.org/forms/FormResponseView.asp?id=1347254A-6557-43ED-B606-CC2BE85EFAB5>

[2] Presence in Absence, Absence in Presence: Excavating Labour in the Early Modern World.

Unlike the industrial world, in the agrarian economies of the early modern period, ownership of, or control over the means of production mattered less than controlling and effectively organizing labour. Lands without peasants, and mines without workers had little to no value.

Yet, while depictions of labour in early modern European art are comparably in abundance, in the arts of the Islamic World, there is a disproportionate absence, which requires labour to be sought out, excavated, and extracted from the most unlikely places. It is hidden in histories and chronicles, in calendars and astrological charts, in accounts of imperial festivals and in occult treatises.

This panel invites papers that investigate the absence and presence of labour in the arts of the early modern Islamic World from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. Lines of inquiry may include, but are not limited to: discussions of presence as a means of exclusion; relationships between economic indispensability and social discrimination; why certain forms of labour exist and others do not; how absence can be interpreted as unintentional inclusion, etc... Although priority will be given to papers that focus on the Islamic World, studies that draw comparisons with other parts of the world will also be considered.

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[3] Out of Sight: Early Modern Depictions and Narratives of the Unseen.

Early modern Islamic World was rich with depictions and narratives of things, places, and beings unseen. They include fantastic, imaginary, and supernatural places and entities, as well as geographies, fauna & flora, and peoples that were very real, but still unseen. Inevitably, such abundance encourages a series of questions about representation. How did such images and texts function, as they could not have been representations in the traditional sense of the word without any observed counterparts in the world? What kinds of knowledge did they rely on, and what kinds of knowledge did they produce?

This panel invites papers that explore these and similar questions in relation to depictions and narratives of the unseen in the Islamic World. Sites of inquiry may include, but are not limited to: the Wonders of Creation genre, geographical treatises, histories and chronicles, books of omens, eschatological manuscripts, histories of the prophets, etc... Although priority will be given to papers that focus on the Islamic World, studies that draw comparisons with other parts of the world will also be considered.

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Reference:

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