

2 Sessions at RSA (San Francisco, 19–21 Feb 26)

San Francisco, CA; 72nd Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA), Feb 19–21, 2026
www.rsa.org/page/RSASF2026

[1] Motivating Materialism: Conspicuous Consumption in the Genoese Century (1550-1650).
[2] Silks Stories: Women in the Early Modern Silk World.

[1] Motivating Materialism: Conspicuous Consumption in the Genoese Century (1550-1650)

From: Kris Kryscynski

Deadline: 27.07.2025

At the end of the sixteenth century, Genoa was a maritime republic with an unrivaled banking system and a trade diaspora that stretched around the globe. The interest generated by loans to the Hapsburgs brought incredible wealth to the city, increasing aristocratic net worth by a factor of four in just twenty years. This launched a period of tremendous artistic patronage as wealthy Genoese Republican families sought to demonstrate their parity with princely courts through lavish new buildings. As the primary port of call between Hapsburg Spain and its Northern Italian holdings, Genoa frequently hosted dignitaries traveling through the city with elaborate ceremonies designed to display their vast material wealth in a strategy that has been characterized as 'conspicuous consumption.' Some of the mediums employed were performative and ephemeral, such as balls and feasts, while others lie outside of traditional art historical inquiry, such as the display and gifting of Genoese silk. What other motivations might we find in these extravagant outlays? Although there was a dramatic increase in wealth, there was also financial instability associated with repeated Hapsburg bankruptcies, religious reform, plague, famine, and a continuing emphasis on Republican identity in the city. What messages were conveyed through the public and private positioning of bodies, art installations, and sartorial signaling? How were their holdings in Sicily, Naples, and the Americas represented? What manifestations of their trade with Africa and Asia were present?

This panel seeks papers exploring the variety of motivations behind Genoa's cosmopolitan tastes and artistic patronage at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century. Papers could focus on material evidence or documentation of performances and ephemera. Papers on a variety of mediums are welcome, including but not limited to silk, silver, wood, coral, gardens, buildings, and paintings.

Please submit papers to Kris Kryscynski: kgkry@uw.edu by July 27. In your submission, please include your paper title (15 words max), an abstract of 200 words, and a short CV.

[2] Silks Stories: Women in the Early Modern Silk World

From: Victoria Bartels

Deadline: 15.07.2025

This panel explores the vital yet often overlooked roles of women in the early modern silk world. In Renaissance Italy and beyond, women participated in every stage of silk production: they cultivated mulberry trees, raised silkworms, spun thread, dyed textiles, wove patterned fabrics, and embroidered intricate garments. They also played key roles in domestic economies, artisanal innovation, and knowledge transmission. Despite their centrality, women's contributions to the early modern silk industry remain underrepresented, as scholarship in silk production and trade has largely focused on male artisans and formal institutions over the labor and knowledge of women.

We invite papers from scholars working in art history, economic, social, and cultural history, as well as related fields, to explore these understudied silk narratives and to illuminate the diverse roles women held across the silk industries of early modern Europe. Contributions may draw on archival sources, visual materials, material reconstructions, and narrative historical approaches to examine how women's labor, skill, creativity, and embodied knowledge shaped the material practices, economic structures, and cultural significance of silk production in the early modern period.

Please submit the following materials to Victoria Bartels (victoria.bartels@aalto.fi) by 15 July 2025:

- Title
- Abstract (200 word max)
- CV (2 page max)

Organizers: Paula Hohti and Victoria Bartels

Reference:

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