Session at RSA (San Francisco, 19-21 Feb 26)

San Francisco, Feb 19–21, 2026
Deadline: Aug 1, 2025

Joris van Gastel

72nd Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA), San Francisco, February 19-21, 2026.

"Art and Ecology in the Iberian World", session organised by Joris van Gastel (CCHS, CSIC, Madrid).

In his recent book 'Exchanges, Crisis and Climate: Readings on Early Modern Iberian Globalism', literary historian Juan Gil-Osle has highlighted the convergence of the Age of Discovery and the onset of global climate change, not only drawing parallels with the global ecological crisis today but also stressing its significance for a cultural history of the Iberian World. Whether or not there is an actual causal connection between the two phenomena remains, as Gil-Osle acknowledges, at the level of hypothesis. Yet, there is no doubt that the ecological impact of Iberian expansion was profound.

Colonialism, it has often been shown, is intrinsically connected with extractivism, the latter defined as the system 'predicated on the large-scale appropriation of nonhuman nature and human labor'. As such, Iberian expansion was directly linked with the extraction and circulation of materials – materials that frequently served the art world: silver, gold, coral, pearls, tortoiseshell, pigments, dyestuffs, woods, precious stones, and more. While the study of the ecological impact of extractivism and the global circulation of materials has gained traction in recent years, scholarship deals primarily with more recent history. Significant exceptions seldomly explore connections with artistic production. Art historians, in turn, though much concerned with question of materiality, have for a long time ignored related ecological issues; entanglements with colonialism have been largely overlooked.

This panel welcomes proposals for 20-minute papers from the field of art history and related disciplines that focus on any connections between art, materiality, ecology, and colonialism in the Iberian World.

Please submit the following materials to Joris van Gastel: joris.vangastel@cchs.csic.es by August 1, 2025:
- title (15 words max.)
- abstract (200 words max.)
- short CV (2 pages max.) including affiliation and PhD completion year in a single PDF file

Presenters will be notified about acceptance before August 8, 2025.

Reference:

CFP: Session at RSA (San Francisco, 19-21 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 7, 2025 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/49651>.