

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

San Francisco

Deadline: Jul 15, 2025

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

[1] Early Modern Worldbuilding

[2] Material and Sensory Worlds of Early Modern Festivity

[3] Mineral Transformations: Representations, Conceptions, and Manufacture of Stone in Early Modern Visual Culture

[1]

Early Modern Worldbuilding

From: Matthew Gin

Deadline: July 30, 2025

The term “worldbuilding” describes the process of constructing an imaginary world replete with its own customs, politics, history, language, and geography. While worldbuilding is often associated with contemporary media like the novels of Octavia Butler or the films of Walt Disney, the conjuring of worlds long occupied the early modern imagination. Books like Thomas Moore’s *Utopia* and Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* fabricated for readers strange new worlds in both text and image. Cartographic representations were also vehicles for creating worlds. Allegorical maps spatialized emotions like love while maps of distant lands animated European constructions of cultural and racial others. Worldbuilding was not limited to the space of the page. The illusionistic interiors of the Palazzo del Te, for instance, conjured a fantastical fully immersive world of horses and giants. Ships, fortresses, and Maroon communities might also be understood as acts of worldbuilding due to their enclosed nature and the specialized conditions of their making, use, and habitation.

This panel invites papers that address worldbuilding from across all forms of media. Among the questions to be considered are: How did early modern artists and writers leverage new technologies to realize ever more evocative worlds? How did they negotiate the relationship between worlds real and imagined? What is the role of images in worldbuilding? How did religion inform worldbuilding practices? In what ways did worldbuilding serve as an arena for testing, critiquing, or resisting social or political ideas? How did worldbuilding move from the space of the page into real space? How did worldbuilding transform genres or give rise to new ones? What does worldbuilding reveal about histories of empire? Papers that take an interdisciplinary or global approach to these and other pertinent questions are especially welcome.

Please submit a 200-word abstract and a 2-page CV to the chair: Matthew Gin (mgin@charlotte.edu)

[2]

Material and Sensory Worlds of Early Modern Festivity

From: Casper Thorhauge Briggs-Mønsted

Deadline: August 1, 2025

This session explores the rich material culture that shaped early modern European court festivities. While court festivals are often recognized for uniting the arts into grand expressions of political, philosophical, and religious ideals, this panel expands the focus beyond canonical art forms to encompass the broader spectrum of objects, craftsmanship, and sensory design that underpinned elite celebrations—from large-scale public spectacles to private, intimate gatherings.

We invite papers examining the material dimensions of festivity—empirically or theoretically—including costumes, soundscapes, sensory environments, architectural transformations, and surviving artefacts.

Topics of interest may include:

- How attire, materials, and craftsmanship shaped the symbolic and sensory dynamics of celebration.
- The creation of festive soundscapes through instruments, acoustics, and mechanical devices.
- The orchestration of multisensory experiences via texture, scent, taste, light, and sound.
- The role of architecture and spatial adaptation in transforming venues into theatricalized spaces.
- The involvement of diverse experts and artisans in staging elite festivity.
- Methods for using museum objects to reconstruct the material practices of courtly celebration.

Building on the RSA San Juan 2023 session on ephemeral inventions in court festivals, this panel seeks to broaden the discussion to all material aspects that brought these spectacles to life.

Please submit the following information to Casper Thorhauge Briggs-Mønsted (ctm@hum.ku.dk) by August 1, 2025:

Submission Guidelines:

- Name, affiliation, and email
- Paper title (max. 15 words)
- Abstract (max. 150 words)
- 1-page CV
- PhD completion date (actual or expected)

[3]

Mineral Transformations: Representations, Conceptions, and Manufacture of Stone in Early Modern Visual Culture

From: Jérémie Koering

Deadline: July 30, 2025

Stones put human transience into perspective, providing a concretization of the planet's unfathomable age. From our short time horizon, they are like a still image of a distant state of molten lava, fossilized sedimentation of organisms and violent movements and compressions of continental plates. In this sense, they carry a dynamic quality and potential of transformation, despite their apparent static solidity.

The panel explores this duality between permanence and transformation through close readings of representations and conceptions of stone in 15th-early 17th century art and architecture. We invite abstracts for papers on some of the ways in which stone has been manufactured, used and thematized in images, sculpture, decorative arts and architecture.

By making stone the focal point of the analyses, this session draws attention to the many layers of meaning that can lie in the physical, concrete nature of art and architecture and its entanglement with artistic invention and production.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- stone as a motif or material for sculpture, decorative arts and buildings
- stone as a ground for or ingredient (pigments) in painting
- stones as place markers or signs of cultural identity
- quarrying, production, processing and trading of stone
- painting and other surface treatments of stone
- states and temporalities of stone (fragments, spolia, ruins, conservation)
- conceptions of stone, underground and raw materials in art theory, aesthetics or similar

Please submit the following materials in an email to Maria Fabricius Hansen at mfhansen@hum.ku.dk and Jérémie Koering at jeremie.koering@unifr.ch by July 30, 2025:

- Paper title (15-word maximum)
- Paper abstract (200-word maximum)
- Brief CV, including full name, current affiliation, and email address
- Ph.D. or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected)

Accepted presenters will be notified by August 8, 2025.

Reference:

CFP: 3 Sessions at RSA (San Francisco, 19-21 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 10, 2025 (accessed Aug 27, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49667>>.