

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

San Francisco, RSA 2026

Deadline: Jul 27, 2025

Francesca Mari, Roma

Flowing Perspectives: The Perception of Water from Antiquity to the Renaissance.

RSA Annual Meeting San Francisco, February 19–21, 2026.

This panel will bring together diverse contributions that explore a fundamental element of human life and survival: water. The aim of the discussion is to explore how the visual culture of antiquity was reinterpreted in Renaissance art, focusing specifically on the theme of water, both in its practical significance and its symbolic representation.

Approaching this subject from a variety of perspectives, the panel seeks to understand what it was that inspired humanists and patrons to revisit ancient history, literature, art, and architecture with a new philological awareness. It will also examine how ancient culture was perceived, and how it was represented, adapted, or reinvented during the early modern period. Water will be considered both in its practical and material function and as a symbolic element, associated with concepts such as rebirth, purification, and fertility. In addition to the artistic and cultural dimensions, the panel also aims to investigate the role of ancient hydraulic infrastructures that were restored or reconstructed during the Renaissance. These efforts not only responded to practical urban needs, but also carried strong ideological and political messages, often linking Renaissance rulers to the legacy of ancient cultures.

To this end, we welcome contributions on topics including:

- The restoration, adaptation, or reimagining of ancient hydraulic structures in the Renaissance, and their significance in civic, political, and ideological terms.
- Representations of water and water supply systems in art and literature.
- Symbolic meanings attributed to water across time, especially in religious or mystical contexts, or in the transition from paganism to Christianity.

This panel is open to proposals from fields such as archaeology, history, art history, literature, architecture, and social or political sciences, that focus on the role and perception of water in the dialogue between antiquity and the Renaissance.

Please send your contribution to francesca.mari2016@gmail.com and mariaelisa.amadasi@sns.it including:

- a title of no more than 15 words
- body of no more than 200 words
- CV

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Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/50344>>.