

## 5 Sessions at RSA (Philadelphia, 11–13 Mar 27)

ArtHist.net Redaktion, Mar 11–13, 2027

Francesca Borgo, University of St Andrews

73rd Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA).

[\[1\]](#) New Directions in the Study of Leonardo and his World

[\[2\]](#) The “Last Florentine Republic” at 500

[\[3\]](#) Cosmic Crises in Early Modern Art and Thought

[\[4\]](#) Drawn to Perfection: The Finished Drawing in Early Modern Europe

[\[5\]](#) New Perspectives on the Architectural Treatise: Architecture, Science and the Production of Visual Knowledge

---

[\[1\]](#) New Directions in the Study of Leonardo and his World

Organizers: Francesca Borgo and Maya Corry

Deadline: 07/01/2026

The Leonardo da Vinci Society (<https://www.leonardodavincisociety.org.uk/>) has joined the RSA list of Associate Organizations and will sponsor its first session at RSA Philadelphia 2027. Founded to support the study of Leonardo da Vinci and his world, the Society invites proposals for papers that reassess the assumptions, methods, and future directions of Leonardo studies.

Leonardo has long occupied an exceptional and often uncomfortable place in the history of Western art and science. His legacy remains a site of active discovery and continuous debate, offering a privileged vantage point on broader shifts in Renaissance studies, the histories of art and science, and the relationship between academic research and popular culture.

These sessions take the present moment as an opportunity to reassess what we know and do not know about Leonardo and his overlapping contexts, while also considering how the field is moving forward. We especially welcome proposals that bring new perspectives, new evidence, or new critical methodologies to Leonardo studies, including those that reflect critically on the publishing and exhibition industries, the art market, and the use of new technologies. Papers need not address Leonardo or his works directly, but may also engage broader questions shaped by the field.

Interested participants should upload the following materials to the link:

<https://keeper.mpg.de/u/d/604e8612dfe8436098ac/>

no later than Wednesday, July 1, 2026:

- paper title (15-word maximum)

- paper abstract (150-word maximum)

- resume (.pdf or .doc upload)
- PhD or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected)
- full name, current affiliation, and email address.

For questions, please email Francesca Borgo at fb95@st-andrews.ac.uk and Maya Corry at mcorry@brookes.ac.uk. Decisions will be communicated by July 15, 2026, allowing those not selected sufficient time to submit their proposals elsewhere.

Current RSA membership is required to present, as is membership in the Leonardo da Vinci Society. Membership in the Society is free for those under 30.

---

#### [2] The "Last Florentine Republic" at 500

Organizers: Nicholas Baker and Alessio Assonitis

Deadline: 07/15/26

In May 1527, following the sack of Rome, the inhabitants of Florence expelled the Medici family for the last time. This ushered the so-called "Last Republic" and began several years of crisis and transition in the city. For the second time in less than forty years, Florentines experimented with new social and political institutions and attempted to craft an effective, enduring government free from Medici predominance. This session seeks papers that reconsider and reinterpret the causes, experiences, and representations of the events of 1527 (and the years up to surrender of the city in August 1530) from across disciplines. The session will be co-sponsored by the Medici Archive Project and the RSA History discipline representative.

For submission please provide:

- paper title (15-word maximum)
- paper abstract (200-word maximum)
- resume (.pdf or .doc upload, maximum 2 pages)
- full name, current affiliation, and email address

Email submissions or enquiries to Nicholas Baker at nbaker2@richmond.edu and Alessio Assonitis at education@medici.org.

Submit proposals by July 15. Accepted presenters will be notified by July 31 or shortly thereafter.

---

#### [3] Cosmic Crises in Early Modern Art and Thought

Organizer: David Bardeen (LACMA / UCLA Clark Memorial Library)

Deadline: 07/15/26

The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library and the Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies (UCLA) will be sponsoring this panel (<http://www.1718.ucla.edu>).

In the past decade, new technologies, such as the James Webb telescope and LIGO, have provided new insights into the shape and behavior of the cosmos, both confirming and refuting theoretical propositions developed decades earlier. At the same time, the cosmos has re-emerged as a source of fascination and

anxiety in the popular imagination, with the advent of space tourism and press reports of aerial phenomena that seem to defy the laws of conventional physics. These developments recall earlier periods in which new technologies yielded information about planetary and stellar movements, and celestial events challenged longstanding theories about how the cosmos works.

This panel invites participants to consider how early moderns (1400-1750) responded to new ways of seeing and sensing the planets and stars and grappled with the “cosmic crises” that technological innovation and celestial events provoked. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these developments occurred during a period of unprecedented global exchange, requiring writers and thinkers to reconcile radically different cosmic systems. Furthermore, it was often artists, poets and philosophers who mediated the anxieties that these developments generated, or who shaped the social and political discourses around them.

Potential topics include:

- Cosmic events and mysteries, such as comets, meteor strikes, auroras, eclipses, and solar flares.
- New technologies to see or map the Heavens, including telescopes, astrolabes, and astronomical clocks.
- The exchange of such technologies between different cultures, polities, and epistemes.
- New visual or literary genres that grappled with cosmic phenomena or cosmic uncertainty.
- Technical and pictorial strategies to represent celestial phenomena, and the challenges of representation.
- The political and theological dimensions of astronomical discovery and its representation.

Please submit proposals with:

- title (15-word maximum)
- abstract (200-word maximum)
- brief cv (.pdf or .doc)
- PhD or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected)
- name, affiliation, email

By July 15, 2026 to:

David Bardeen, PhD (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), [dbardeen@lacma.org](mailto:dbardeen@lacma.org).

---

[4] Drawn to Perfection: The Finished Drawing in Early Modern Europe

Organizers: Jasmine Clark and Emma P. Holter

Deadline: 07/15/26

Early modern drawings were typically conceived as preparatory steps towards the creation of a painting, object, or architectural structure, yet rarely do we consider the instances when drawings appear as independent artworks. Rendered meticulously, these highly finished sheets obscure the labor of their making by concealing pentimenti and underdrawings. They often defy strict categorization, cherished by patrons, artists, and friends rather than used as ephemeral workshop sheets. A burgeoning European market of collectors fueled this shift towards graphic autonomy. The practice flourished in Northern Germany through the works of Altdorfer, Baldung, and Goltzius, and emerged in Italy alongside theories of *disegno*, epitomized by Michelangelo's intimate 'presentation' drawings.

With its broad European scope, this panel examines the materiality, purpose, circulation, and afterlives of

'finished' drawings from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. Moving away from traditional debates of attribution and patronage, our inquiry centers the drawings themselves. It seeks to explore the fluidity of graphic boundaries, their diverse modes of presentation, and the novel narrative and compositional strategies employed. Central to our inquiry is how these sophisticated drawings could convey themes, subjects, and philosophies with an immediacy rarely matched by other media.

This session builds upon a growing momentum in the field, including the upcoming Medici Archive Project workshop "Marking Completion," and recent scholarship on the physical properties of drawing, from colored grounds to novel draftsmanship techniques. Potential topics might include portrait drawings, model books, gift exchange, collection history, and drawings that resist classification. Contributions addressing marginalized or understudied artists are especially welcome.

Prospective speakers should send their full name, current affiliation, email address, paper title (15 words max.), paper abstract (200 words max.), brief CV (2 pages), PhD or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected) to session organizers Dr. Jasmine Clark ([jasmine.clark@courtauld.ac.uk](mailto:jasmine.clark@courtauld.ac.uk)) and Emma P. Holter ([emma.p.holter@temple.edu](mailto:emma.p.holter@temple.edu)) by July 15. Applicants will be notified by July 31.

Speakers will need to be members of RSA at the time of the conference. Please refer to the RSA's website for possible funding support.

---

[5] [New Perspectives on the Architectural Treatise: Architecture, Science and the Production of Visual Knowledge](#)

Organizers: Elizabeth Merrill and Livia Lupi

Deadline: 07/15/26

The development of the treatise was a defining exponent of Renaissance culture. It was instrumental in the dissemination of modes of writing and language; the codification of classical ideals; the proliferation of historical and contemporary narratives; and the establishment of scientific methodologies. Within the fine arts, the architectural treatise enjoys a particular distinction, on account of the number of texts and the breadth of their subject matter. Scholarship considers it one of the discipline's most consequential developments, as illustrated by a wealth of research on four key issues: the didactic function of images in printed theory; disparate understandings of antiquity, as revealed in the treatises' drawings and prints; the importance of ornament; and the connections between visual and literary cultures in artistic invention. Yet, this research has seldom considered the relationship between architecture and science, often circumscribing the latter to the closely related subjects of mathematics and engineering. Even more, the relationship between architectural illustrations and scientific images is a largely underexplored subject.

This session posits that architecture represented a bridge between historical pursuits and scientific thought, broadly defined, from mathematics to botany, astronomy, alchemy and anatomy. Ample scholarship has focused on the relationship between science and art, relating naturalism and verisimilitude in the arts to artisanal knowledge and artists' intimacy with the natural environment. But how does this thinking extend to architecture? The images of architectural treatises, which borrow visual clarity and aesthetic qualities from artistic practice, while at the same time appealing to ideas of 'scientific rigour', offer new insights. They ask us to consider the interaction between architecture and the rapidly evolving cultures of scientific inquiry of the Renaissance. Did scientific treatises use visualisation in ways comparable to architectural treatises? How were these representational standards established? What kinds of understandings

do they promote? How did they affect the social, intellectual and professional status of architectural practitioners and scientists alike?

In addition to these overarching queries, papers might explore:

- Strategies of architectural representation employed in illustrated theory
- Architectural theory without text
- The use of measurement and scale in architectural drawings
- The function of bound compilations of architectural drawings and their perceived cultural value
- The quantity of examples in visual treatises and the impact of this information
- Methods of graphic reproduction employed in the assembly and dissemination of theoretical images
- Visual strategies for the representation of antique architectural forms
- Methods of visualisation employed in scientific treatises and their transferability to other disciplines
- The language and literary form of architectural treatise writing
- The illustrated treatise as a benchmark for the new architecture professional

Please send proposals for 20-minute papers to Elizabeth Merrill ([Elizabeth.merrill@ugent.be](mailto:Elizabeth.merrill@ugent.be)) and Livia Lupi ([livia.lupi@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:livia.lupi@warwick.ac.uk)) by 15 July 2026. Each proposal should include paper title (15 words max), abstract (200 words max), and CV (2 pages max).

----

On March 11–13, 2027, the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) will hold its Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. Further information can be found on the conference website:

<https://www.rsa.org/page/RSAPhilly2027>.

Reference:

CFP: 5 Sessions at RSA (Philadelphia, 11-13 Mar 27). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 15, 2026 (accessed Jun 15, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52721>>.