

Early Modern American Hydrography between Art, Science and Politics

Deadline: Sep 30, 2026

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Early Modern American Hydrography between Art, Science and Politics will be an edited volume that examines the crucial role played by bodies of water—such as rivers, lakes, and streams—in shaping the cultural, artistic, and political histories of the early modern Americas. This interdisciplinary collection highlights the active participation of Indigenous agents involved in the transmission and interpretation of knowledge about hydrographic landscapes.

The book will critically explore how early modern European colonial powers, particularly the Iberian nations, combined classical traditions, Christian interpretations, and Indigenous narratives to legitimize territorial claims and delineate borders. Iconic cases, such as the myth of "Brazil as an Island"—closely tied to the Treaty of Tordesillas—demonstrate how hydrographic knowledge could be manipulated to assert imperial domination. The volume will also address contested geographies of legendary water bodies like Lake Parime and Lake Manoa, which were entwined with European dreams of wealth and resource extraction.

By incorporating elements of environmental history and multispecies perspectives, the book will investigate how interactions among humans, non-human entities, and water shaped biocultural landscapes. Drawing from diverse fields such as art history, environmental history, and Indigenous studies, this volume will seek to reframe hydrography as a vital space where water, power, spirituality, nature, and culture intersect and become a central agent of cultural constructs, political borders, economic ambitions and collective imagination.

Although the book will primarily focus on the early modern period—from the 16th to the early 18th centuries—submissions that engage in dialogue with other time periods are also welcome.

The book will include, but is not limited to, papers addressing the following topics:

- Indigenous knowledge systems and their role in early modern hydrography
- The interplay between European colonial powers and Indigenous narratives in mapping and controlling water bodies
- The political use of hydrography in territorial disputes, such as the myth of "Brazil as an Island."
- Mythical lakes, like Parime and Manoa
- Artistic and scientific representations of rivers, lakes, and other water bodies in the early modern Americas
- Environmental histories that explore human and non-human interactions with water landscapes
- The role of multispecies perspectives in shaping hydrographic encounters
- The cultural and symbolic significance of water bodies in Indigenous and colonial societies
- The use of hydrography as a site of negotiation between art, science, and politics

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Please send an abstract of approximately 400 words, a proposed title, and a short biography to the editors by September 30th. Authors will be notified by October 30th.

Reference:

CFP: Early Modern American Hydrography between Art, Science and Politics. In: ArtHist.net, Jul 12, 2026 (accessed Jul 12, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/53451>>.