

Session at Association of Art Historians Conference (London, 10–12 Apr 14) [3]

London, Royal College of Art, Apr 10–12, 2014

Deadline: Nov 11, 2013

Molly Duggins

Sea Currents: The 19th-Century Ocean World (AAH Annual Conference, London, Royal College of Art, 10-12 April 2014)

Convenors of Session: Kathleen Davidson (University of Sydney) and Molly Duggins (University of Sydney)

Vast and fluid, the oceanic spaces of empire in the 19th century inspired an imaginative and multi-faceted aesthetic discourse that intersected with colonial and scientific expansion. From the seashore, which emerged as a site of leisure, liminality and transgression, to the seabed, which was perceived as a perilous but alluring frontier, marine environments captivated contemporary practitioners and audiences alike on a local and global scale.

This session presents a new perspective on the art and history of empire as manifested through maritime traditions. Whereas, the oceanic imperium has been viewed in terms of its formal presence and official exchanges across the globe – often with regards to naval power, exploration and navigation – this session will take a closer look at more informal imperial ocean networks. Changing conceptions of the marine world were shaped by increased immigration and maritime trade, steam travel, the fluid circulation of media and technology, the diversification of science, the popularisation of rational entertainment, the rise of spectacular exhibitionary culture, and a gender system in flux.

Taking a comparative approach, this session will address the informal and intimate encounters and exchanges that occurred across 19th-century empires by artists, scientists, travellers, theorists and cultural critics, publishers, and consumers. We invite papers that explore how various individuals and groups considered and negotiated the relationship between different visual, tactile and abstract representations of the ocean environment mediated through art, science, architecture, design, craft, text or performance.

Abstracts (max. 250 words) for papers of 25-30 minutes are to be sent to Kathleen Davidson (k.davidson@ozemail.com.au) and to Molly Duggins (mdug3194@uni.sydney.edu.au) by 11 November 2013.

For more information on the 40th Annual Association of Art Historians conference:
<http://www.aah.org.uk/annual-conference/2014-conference>

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