

Association Organization Panel
UCLA CMRS Center for Early Global Studies

Converting Natural Resources: Representations, Performances, Narratives

This panel considers visual, textual, material, and performative engagement with processes of commodification in the early modern world. It explores how images, objects, and practices converted environments into resources, natural resources into lucrative items with commercial and tax-yielding significance, and destructive forces and forced labor into idealized landscapes and aestheticized bodies. The panel shifts the focus from the collection and display of phenomena in cabinets of curiosities, to the mechanisms and processes through which raw materials were converted into commodities.

The commodity, and the creation of its idea, following Karl Marx, develops independently of its creators and is capable of triggering transformations of humans and landscapes. While worldly goods is a familiar theme from studies, for example, of still lifes and of tulip mania, this panel fastens onto resources, such as minerals, pearls, metals, pigments, glass, ambergris, sugar, and paper, and onto ways in which these materials accrued new values and meanings. Such conversions of resources into products often entailed material, formal, and social transformations, which were often managed through diverse media, re-mediation, and repetition. Accordingly, "Converting Natural Resources" considers how new audiences and consumers for commodities were cultivated through narratives, images, and artifacts.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- commodification of nature and trade
- describing and embodying challenges around the acquisition of raw materials
- economic thought and utilitarian value in natural history and scientific treatises
- displacements and processes of transculturation
- laboring, enslaved, gendered, and racialized bodies
- ecologies of commodities (affective dimensions, desire, environmental impacts)
- journeys and transformations of resources (narratives, serial modes of representation, processions)
- changing approaches to nature and artifice

Please submit proposals with:

- paper title (15-word maximum)
- paper abstract (150-word maximum)
- brief cv (.pdf or .doc upload)
- PhD or other terminal degree completion year (past or expected)
- full name, current affiliation, and email address.

by July 15, 2022 to both:

Elisa Antonietta Daniele, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, UCLA/University of Bologna, elisa.daniele3@unibo.it
Bronwen Wilson, Art History, UCLA, bwilson@humnet.ucla.edu