

[Black Artists in the Atlantic World](#)

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Call for Papers

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African American History / Studies, American History / Studies, Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Atlantic History / Studies, Black History / Studies

Special Issue Information

Dear Colleagues,

We are seeking submissions for a Special Issue of *Arts*, which will focus on black artists in the Atlantic World, ca. 1500-1900 CE. Invoking the modern/colonial racial category of “black” draws critical and much-needed attention to the role of race in the lives and careers of artists of African descent, and others who have had to negotiate being inscribed and socialized into blackness by Atlantic societies. We approach this topic hemispherically, considering both colonial and national socio-political frameworks bordering and/or shaped by the broader Atlantic arena, including the Americas, Europe, and Africa. In this way, we hope to foster a comparative conversation between scholars working on the various geographic spheres of the Atlantic in order to better understand the transnational and transimperial realities faced by black artists and how they have worked through their respective settings.

This Special Issue acknowledges and draws inspiration from recent scholarship on artists in the Spanish colonial territories throughout the Americas, such as the essay by Barbara Munday and Aaron Hyman, “Out of the Shadow of Vasari: Towards a New Model of The ‘Artist’ in Colonial Latin America,” *Colonial Latin American Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2015): 283-317; the monograph by Susan Verdi-Webster, *Lettered Artists and the Language of Empire: Painters and the Profession in Early Colonial Quito* (University of Texas Press, 2017); the 2019 Heschah symposium at the University of Florida, “Beyond Biography: Artistic Practice & Personhood in Colonial Latin America,” organized by Maya Stanfield-Mazzi; and the Special Edition of the *Colonial Latin American Review*, “Visualizing Blackness in Colonial Latin America,” co-edited by Kathryn Santner and Helen Melling, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2021. The study of black artists and image makers in the southern Atlantic has been further advanced by the work of scholars, such as Ximena A. Gómez, Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, Linda Rodríguez, and Miguel Valerio. These studies shed light on the methodological challenges as well as the importance of considering the lives, careers, and agencies of Spanish colonial artists in the writing of these regions’ social and cultural histories. Among the salient dimensions addressed by these projects is the role of race in shaping the professional lives of artists. For the northern Atlantic, which is situated later in time than those of the Ibero-Americas and the Caribbean and in contexts informed by Protestant conceptions and practices of the image, relationships between the artist, the art, the viewer, and race have been examined in such works as Kirsten Pai Buick’s *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History’s Black and Indian Subject* (Duke University Press,

2010), Anna O. Marley's edited collection of essays *Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit* (University of California Press, 2012), and Jasmine Nichole Cobb, *Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visual Culture in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York University Press, 2015).

Engaging with the subject of black artists in the Atlantic World raises a number of critical questions. How did racial blackness shape the professional worlds negotiated by artists in the Atlantic? How does race impact the ways in which we consider black artists in the Atlantic whose racial classification is not necessarily evident in the formal and stylistic properties of their work? If an artist is of African descent, must their art be a matter of race? What was the relationship between race, blackness, and the creation of the category of "artist" in the Atlantic? What other forms of making and imagery are at stake in this field of inquiry beyond artist and art, as institutionally redefined by academies of art? How has the discourse of race obscured African and African American agency, awareness, and negotiations of imperial/colonial power? How do we address the limits of the historic archive in recovering the stories of such artists? What can be learned by looking across national and imperial boundaries in the Atlantic with respect to the histories of black artists? These questions will be considered and addressed within this Special Issue.

Dr. Paul Niell
Dr. Emily Thames
Guest Editors

Manuscript Submission Information

Manuscripts should be submitted online at www.mdpi.com by [registering](#) and [logging in to this website](#). Once you are registered, [click here to go to the submission form](#). Manuscripts can be submitted until the deadline. All submissions that pass pre-check are peer-reviewed. Accepted papers will be published continuously in the journal (as soon as accepted) and will be listed together on the special issue website. Research articles, review articles as well as short communications are invited. For planned papers, a title and short abstract (about 100 words) can be sent to the Editorial Office for announcement on this website.

Submitted manuscripts should not have been published previously, nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere (except conference proceedings papers). All manuscripts are thoroughly refereed through a double-blind peer-review process. A guide for authors and other relevant information for submission of manuscripts is available on the [Instructions for Authors](#) page. *Arts* is an international peer-reviewed open access semimonthly journal published by MDPI.

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