The past fifteen years have seen an explosion of interest in the study of liquid space, precisely because oceans and seas have brought together different parts of the planet for centuries. Salt water circulations provide a rich framework for crafting connected histories of the globe. Yet there is a central irony in much of this connected maritime history. Although salt water space is supposedly central, it often disappears. Across the humanities and the social sciences, seas and oceans as liquid spaces are transformed into voids. Our contemporary tendency to erase oceans and seas—to treat them like Joseph Conrad’s blank spaces on the map—is a vexing issue. Yet there are ways, tangibly, to engage with the long slow crossings of salt water space in Mediterratlantic circulations: to study the material traces dynamically generated by the very process of navigation itself. This talk explores two of those physical residues, eloquent fieldnotes from a watery world: ship’s logs and shipwrecks.

Byron Hamann (Ph.D. University of Chicago 2011) is an assistant professor in the Department of History of Art at Ohio State University. His work explores globalization, commodity circulation, religious tolerance and intolerance, and landscape interpretation.