

Diplomatic Interiors (Zurich, 19–21 Nov 25)

Zurich, Nov 19–21, 2025

Charlotte Rottiers

"Diplomatic Interiors: Spaces, Practices, and Infrastructures in Historical Perspective" is an international conference hosted at the gta Institute (ETH Zurich), CDHM (Geneva Graduate Institute) and the UN Palace of Nations. It explores historical relationships between interior spaces and diplomacy.

We invite researchers from a variety of disciplines to examine how settings such as embassy buildings, permanent chancelleries, and temporary conference venues have been shaped over time by social, technological, and material infrastructures in support of diplomatic representation, negotiation, and collaboration.

Organised by Andreas Kalpakci, Charlotte Rottiers, and Davide Rodogno.

Conference Dates: 19-21 November 2025

Conference Venue: ETH Zurich, Geneva Graduate Institute, UN Palace of Nations

Conference Website: <https://diplomaticinteriors.ethz.ch>

We are pleased to announce the full program for the upcoming conference. Registration is now open to join the conference in person or online.

The panels, keynote lecture and group discussion taking place at ETH Zurich will be livestreamed. Participants can rejoin the sessions throughout the day at any time. Please visit <https://diplomaticinteriors.ethz.ch/registration.html> for all details on in-person attendance or to register for the livestream.

Program

Day 1 – Wednesday, 19 November, 2025, Zürich

12:45-13:00 Introduction

ETH Hönggerberg, HIL E 71.1

13:00-15:00 Panel 1 - New Spatialities for New Institutions

ETH Hönggerberg, HIL E 71.1

Designing Defence: Interiors, Infrastructures, and Imperial Sovereignty from Whitehall to the Veld
Matthew Wells (University of Manchester)

Designing Debt Diplomacy: Deutsche Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt Administration
Eva Schreiner (KHI Florenz)

Envirotech and the League of Nations' Construction of "International Geneva"

Alex Levine (UCLA) Global

Interior and Symbolic Americanism. The "Caracol" Assembly Hall by Emilio Duhart (1960-66) at the United Nations building in Chile

Verónica Esparza (Universidad San Sebastián, Chile), David Caralt (Universidad San Sebastián, Chile)

15:00-15:30 Break

15:30-17:30 Panel 2 - Artefacts and Apparatuses of Diplomacy

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Rearranging: The Danish Mess and the Making of a Multi-Scalar Diplomatic Interior in Beijing (1912–1920)

Sean Yuxiang Li (University of Copenhagen)

German Diplomacy via Chairs, Chandeliers and Central Heating

Christiane Fülcher (FH Dortmund)

Not Just Moscow: Interiors of Soviet Embassies from the Cold War Era

Olga Kazakova (HSE, Faculty of Humanities)

Cables, Keyboards, and Carpets: Digitalisation and the Making of European Bureaucratic Space, 1970s-1980s

Marco Ninno (KU Leuven)

17:30-18:00 Break

18:00-19:30 Keynote Lecture

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Olga Touloumi (Bard College)

Day 2 - Thursday, 20 November, 2025, Zürich

09:00-11:00 Panel 3 - Agency, Actors, and Authorship

ETH Hönggerberg, HIL E 71.1

Building for Democracy or Dictatorship?: Chloethiel Woodard Smith's United States Chancery and Residence in Asunción, Paraguay

Kathleen James-Chakraborty (University College Dublin)

Negotiating Peace on a Round or Square Table? The Diplomatic Interiors of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission at the DMZ in Korea through the Lens of the Swiss Military from 1953 to 1970

Denise Bertschi (ETH Zurich)

Democratically Negotiated Representation: Debating the Interiors of Swiss Embassies in the 1980s

Jonas Hirschi (University of Bern)

Diplomatic Interiors and Atmospheres: Sensing the State Through the Finnish Embassy in Washington D.C

Bradley Reynolds (University of Turku), Onerva Kiianlinna (Aalto University)

11:00-11:30 Break

11:30-13:00 Panel 4 - Social Spaces for Diplomacy

ETH Hönggerberg, HIL E 71.1

Furnishing the Spaces of l'Authenticité. The Interior Designs of New Form/Ndako Ya Sika in 1970s Kinshasa

Johan Lagae (Ghent University) and Igor Bloch (Ghent University/VUB)

Diplomatic Landscapes of Recreation: From the Inside

Fanti Baum (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Beyond the Hemicycle: Informal Spaces in the Brussels' European Parliament

Sanja Banjeglav (KU Leuven), Sven Sterken (KU Leuven)

13:00-14:00 Break

14:00-16:00 Panel 5 - Adaptations and Provisional Settings

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From Spaces of Local Power to Spaces of International Representation: Barcelona and the "International Conference on Communications and Transit" (1921) of the League of Nations

Eva March (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Empire's Technical Stage: The Technische Hoogeschool Bandoeng and Technical Diplomacy at the Margin of Empire

Nanda Nugraha (EPF Lausanne)

Bandung Conference and the Interior of Merdeka Building: South-South Diplomacy and Architectural Practices

Rina Priyani (University of Virginia)

IAEA's Early Interiors: Vienna 1958–1979

Anna Livia Friel (TU Wien)

16:00-16:30 Break

16:30-18:15 Group Discussion

ETH Hönggerberg, HIL E 71.1

Group discussion on the setup and future activities of an international research network on diplomatic spaces

Moderated by Angela Gigliotti (Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences/ ETH Zurich/Syracuse University)

With Sacha Zala (University of Bern/DODIS Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland), Anne-

Françoise Morel (KU Leuven), and Davide Rodogno (Geneva Graduate Institute/HION History of International Organizations Network)

All participants join in the brainstorming

Day 3 - Friday, 21 November, 2025, Geneva

10:30-11:00 Welcome to the Geneva Graduate Institute

Geneva Graduate Institute, Petal 2, S12

11:00-12:00 Workshop: Digital Humanities

Geneva Graduate Institute, Petal 2, S12

Interventions by the Centre for Digital Humanities and Multilateralism community on ongoing research on multilateralism and digital tools

Moderated by Davide Rodogno (Geneva Graduate Institute)

All participants join the workshop and discussion

12:00-14:00 Break

14:00-15:00 Study Visit: The Palace of Nations

Palace of Nations

Visit to the Palace of Nations Historical Interiors

15:00-15:30 Break

15:30-17:30 Roundtable: Archival Research

Palace of Nations, Room VIII

Roundtable to critically reflect on sources, methods, frameworks, and concepts for approaching diplomatic interiors and the associated methodological challenges

With Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert (UN Archives Geneva), Fredie Floré (KU Leuven), Olga Touloumi (Bard College), Denise Hagströmer (National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo), and Giorgio Ennas (Utrecht University)

All participants join in the discussion

17:30-18:00 Concluding Remarks

Palace of Nations, Room VIII

Reference:

CONF: Diplomatic Interiors (Zurich, 19-21 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 2, 2025 (accessed Dec 28, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51049>>.