Archives Unbound (Florence, 2-3 Feb 26)

Florenz, Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai, Feb 2–03, 2026

Elisabeth Ansel

Archives Unbound: Time and Memory in Romantic Visual Culture.
In the Romantic period, the archive was more than a repository of the past: it was a living site of imagination, reconstruction, and desire. Today, archives are again central to debates on memory, preservation, and the recovery of histories. In an age of information overload, media excess, and destabilising fake news, the archive has become a hotly contested field: as verifiable record (resisting distortion) and as partial repository (erasing as much as it preserves). "Archives Unbound: Time and Memory in Romantic Visual Culture" seizes this moment to discuss Romanticism in dialogue with European and global perspectives, asking how art historians can engage the past with rigour, ethical awareness, and creative scope.
The workshop is a collaboration between the University of Jena's research group "European Romanticism or Romanticisms in Europe?", the University of York's Department of History of Art and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz (KHI). Set against the backdrop of Florence—itself a city-as-archive—the event will examine the archive as both repository and dynamic system of knowledge, memory and power. The workshop coincides with "The City as Archive", a major KHI exhibition juxtaposing historical photographs with contemporary works by Armin Linke.

Programme:

Monday, 2 February 2026
9:30 Welcome (Hannah Baader & Costanza Caraffa) and Introduction (Elisabeth Ansel & Christin Bates)

1 EXHIBITION
10:00 THE CITY AS ARCHIVE
Project & Exhibition
Hannah Baader & Costanza Caraffa

13:30 Lunch Break

SESSION I
2 Michael Smith (York)
14:30 John Flaxman's Roman Archive

3 Gemma Shearwood (York)
15:15 Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral as Archives of National and Imperial Memory

16:00 Tea Break (30 min.)

SESSION II
4 Mira Claire Zadrozny (Jena)
16:30 The Archival City in Distress: Time and Memory in Images of Paris' Ephemeral Ruins

5 John Norrman (Jena)
17:15 The Image of the Barricade: Illustrated Periodicals as Archives of a Social Practice of Imagining Crisis, 1848

Tuesday, 3 February 2026
9:30 Greeting

SESSION III
6 Andrin Albrecht (Jena)
9:45 Ludic Romanticism, or, the Five-Color Archive of Magic: The Gathering

7 Kohta Nakajima (York)
10:30 Metaphor as Fragment: Visualising Shakespeare in William Blake's 'Pity' within Eighteenth--Century Reading Culture

11:15 Tea Break

SESSION IV
8 Selina Kusche (Jena)
11:45 Stories of a Single Figure? How Understanding History Paintings Requires a Mental Archive

9 Jacob Bolda (York)
12:30 Archives of Intimacy: The Portrait Miniature and the Romantic Subject

13:15 Lunch Break

SESSION V

10 Elisabeth Ansel (Jena)
14:15 Fragmented Archives: The Manifold Aesthetics of Memory, Time and Ecology in Ossianic Landscapes

11 Christin Bates (Jena)
15:00 Memories in Stone: Ruskinian Ecologies and Images as Climate Archives

15:45 Tea Break

12 Kate Nankervis (York)
16:15 'The air itself is one vast library': Atmosphere as Archive in British Romanticism

17:00 Final Discussion

Organising Institutions: University of Jena, University of York and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut
Organisers: Elisabeth Ansel, Hannah Baader, Christin Bates, Costanza Caraffa, Johannes Grave and Richard Johns

Reference:

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