Matching Couples (Paris, 20 Mai 26)

Paris, Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France, May 20, 2026
Deadline: Mar 14, 2026

Domitilla Giordano, Paris

Matching couples. Artworks and the meaningful connections among their parts.

As an increasing number of studies are demonstrating with growing clarity, the analysis of certain aspects - or more precisely, components - of paintings through the lens of their materiality can reveal crucial insights into the artwork itself. These include not only the materials in the strict sense, such as canvas, wood, or nails, but also their composition as a whole, understood as a unified entity, essential to the artwork.
Beyond the information provided by individual components and materials, as evidenced by technical analyses or studies - i.e., the RKD's innovative research on marks found on works of art - it is also necessary to consider some clues that might be revealed by elements, often regarded as minor or of limited importance. These can enrich the study of an artwork not only from a stylistic perspective, but also from an aesthetic, or even symbolic and iconographic one.
Elements such as the decoration of the reverse, the continuity between the painted surface and the frame, the design of the frame itself - whether pictorial or sculptural - or the relationship between the work and its intended setting (for example, in terms of lighting or architecture), are part not only of the artwork, but also constitute a precious source of information. These can relate to the artist, the patron, the context of creation, the artistic and cultural environment, and the materials used and available at the time of execution, as well as the various modifications the work has undergone throughout time.
For instance, paintings and their frames, two elements that are often separated today, originally shared a closely intertwined history that conveys fundamental information about the conception, meaning, function, and materiality of the work. Subsequent separations, resulting from the passage of time and from various historical and material vicissitudes, have therefore caused not only a physical distance between elements understood as intrinsically connected, but also, in many cases, a loss of essential information. Significant research has been carried out or is currently underway, such as Bart Fransen's study of the frame of the Ghent Altarpiece or the research recently initiated by our team at the C2RMF on the frame of the Beaune Altarpiece, and the results are often surprising.

The organizers of this workshop (Maddalena Bellavitis and Domitilla Giordano) invite papers exploring issues that shed new light and open new interdisciplinary research on paintings and their constituent elements, such as frames. Contributions from perspectives including history, symbolism, materiality, and technical analysis are welcome. For this reason, we encourage submission for original and unpublished presentation proposals from any discipline, within both Humanities and Science.

Lectures will be in English or French and those who are interested in taking part in the workshop are requested to send a proposal of up to one page for a 20-minute contribution and a short bio in English in a single pdf file by 14th March 2026 (maddalena.bellavitis@gmail.com). The final selection will be notified by the end of March.

Reference:

CFP: Matching Couples (Paris, 20 Mai 26). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 2, 2026 (accessed Sep 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51868>.