

13th JBSC Conference (Delft/Rotterdam, 18–19 Nov 26)

TU Delft and Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, Nov 18–19, 2026

Deadline: May 28, 2026

Stef Dingen

(IM)MATERIAL—Architectural Memory in the Post-Digital Age.

The Jaap Bakema Study Centre is seeking contributions to its 13th annual conference through this call for papers. (IM)MATERIAL explores the state of architectural memory in the post-digital age. The event will be held at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at TU Delft and at the Nieuwe Instituut on 18 and 19 November.

We are well into the digital transformation of architectural knowledge, but the consequences remain unresolved. The old ways of understanding architecture through institutional archives and their material collections of drawings, models, photographs and manuscript fragments are therefore being undermined. Today, these information carriers have evolved into something qualitatively different and seemingly ephemeral, as the architecture discipline's objects, documents and institutions are datafied on a vast scale. Moreover, new comprehensive planetary infrastructures are being constructed to maximise observation and registration in order to prevent forgetting, while raising old questions about the economies of colonisation and extraction.

In response to the resulting dilemmas, this conference revisits immateriality as a problem to consider. Forty years after Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput staged *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Pompidou, the dematerialisation of architectural culture and knowledge has taken unexpected forms. The original exhibition explored how matter and memory are transformed by their mediating systems, at a time when digital networks were beginning to restructure knowledge on a large scale. We now ask the same question, against a backdrop Lyotard and Chaput could only have intuited: machine learning processes that archive faster than any researcher could ever hope to, the database supplanting the paper archive, and the boundary between the physical and digitised becoming a site of both creative possibility and genuine loss. While *Les Immatériaux* treated immateriality as an opening, we return to it as a crisis that needs further discussion and exploration.

The technopolitics of data have become pervasive, influencing every aspect of architectural knowledge. Yet, even within this infrastructural saturation of data, something generative persists. The translation process between physical artefacts and digital formats, and between incompatible data types and file formats, is never neutral: it is a moment of distortion, interpretation and unexpected production.

When the built environment is scanned into a point cloud, when a drawing is processed by a machine vision model or when an archive is migrated across storage formats, something is inevitably lost and something unforeseen is revealed. It is at these thresholds between materialities that the quietly operating black box becomes legible, and where architecture researchers, designers and archivists have begun to find new critical and creative ground.

Into this landscape, large language models have arrived as a new and still poorly understood actor. Trained on vast collections of text and images, they absorb architectural knowledge indiscriminately and without attribution. They produce outputs that are fluent yet epistemically leaky, flattening nuance and quietly reshaping what counts as architectural memory. The source recedes, and authorship is diminished.

Contributions

The conference asks how the post-digital condition gives rise to new ecologies of knowledge, and how the circulation of data is reshaping the way architecture is researched, designed and transmitted within institutions. For researchers, practitioners and stewards of knowledge platforms alike, what does it mean to maintain a critical grip on the material and conditions of that production?

(IM)MATERIAL invites architects, researchers, architectural historians and archivists working at the intersections between material transformations to contribute to a conversation on one of the following threads:

- The transformation of architectural archives through digitisation, AI and counter-archiving practices;
- Immersive environments, interactive platforms and gaming as modes of critical spatial research;
- The ruins and fragments of digital culture, including obsolescence, decay and computational loss;
- Post-digital returns to material, analogue and embodied methods;
- The systems and infrastructures of storage, from physical repositories to cloud platforms, as epistemic and political formations.

The 13th annual Bakema conference (IM)MATERIAL builds on earlier editions that have explored the impact of digital technologies on architecture, archives, research and design: *Architecture Archives of the Future* (2023), *Building Data* (2022), *Repositioning Architecture in the Digital* (2020), and *Between Paper and Pixels* (2016).

Abstract

Contributions are welcome from across the spectrum of architectural research and practice, including from PhD researchers and established scholars, designers, artists, archivists, activists and technologists grappling with what it means to know, preserve and transmit architectural culture in the post-digital age. Abstracts (300-500 words) and short biographies (100 words) should be sent to Stef Dingen for consideration. Selected authors will be asked to develop their abstracts into full papers for publication in the conference proceedings by the conference date.

Dates and Deadlines

- Submission of abstracts: 28 May 2026

- Notification of selection: 25 June 2026
- Submission of full draft papers (2,000 words): 27 August 2026
- Conference dates: 18-19 November 2026

Organising Committee

Dirk van den Heuvel (Nieuwe Instituut, TU Delft)

Eytan Mann (TU Delft)

Stef Dingen (Nieuwe Instituut)

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Tom Avermaete (ETH Zurich)

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Maristella Casciato (Getty Research Institute)

Carola Hein (TU Delft)

Georg Vrachliotis (TU Delft)

Locations

Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft

Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam

Selection

Abstracts will be selected based on their relevance and focus in relation to the call, their contribution to state-of-the-art research, their innovative and challenging approach, and their eloquent and evocative articulation. We aim to create a diverse group of speakers in terms of nationality, seniority and academic or institutional background to ensure productive and lively knowledge exchange. We are unable to confirm at this stage whether a limited number of travel grants will be available for selected participants.

Reference:

CFP: 13th JBSC Conference (Delft/Rotterdam, 18-19 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 4, 2026 (accessed May 19, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52353>>.