2 Sessions at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun-2 Jul 27)

Turin, Politecnico di Torino, Jun 28–Jul 2, 2027

ArtHist.net Redaktion

9th International Congress of Construction History.

[1] Black Marbles in Medieval and Renaissance Europe
[2] Words of the Building Site: Towards a Glossary of Early Modern Construction

--

[1] Black Marbles in Medieval and Renaissance Europe
From: Caterina Cardamone, Pieter Martens
Date: May 17, 2026

This session explores the use, circulation, and perception of a specific variety of marble in late medieval and early modern European architecture: black “marbles”, actually jet-black limestones, such as the ones quarried near Dinant in Belgium, or in Derbyshire, England. Since African quarries were no longer accessible to medieval and early modern Europeans, the “nero antico” used throughout Roman antiquity was available only as spolia of relatively small size.
While the use and meaning of black marbles in the architecture of antiquity still requires assessment, throughout the Middle Ages, black and dark stones were associated, because of the absence of divine light, with negative qualities: sin, chaos, mourning, lugubriousness, as in Isidore of Seville’s De Lapidibus et Metallis or in the constructions of La Cité des Dames.
This apparently changed in the fifteenth century, when black marbles became appreciated across Europe for funerary architecture, probably following a fashion initiated at the end of the fourteenth century by the sepulchral monuments of the dukes of Burgundy, made in Belgian black marble. Sepulchers in black marble of unknown provenance appeared in Florence since the 1480s, and black marble slabs from Dinant were used in Westminster for the English royal tombs since the early sixteenth century. It seems that the use of black marble was more widespread in northern Europe than in southern Europe, which also raises the question of whether it was associated with its mainly northern origins or instead referred to Roman antiquity.

We welcome papers that study single monuments or regions where the use of black marbles was particularly significant. They may address the role of patronage in the choice of this material as well as its trade, circulation, and transport. Did transportation routes influence the size of its slabs and blocks? Were large monolithic slabs perceived as more prestigious? Did its transportation also imply a circulation of specialized craftsmen and instruments? Was deep black marble preferred over dark grey varieties? Were uniformly black pieces without veins (“un bel nero uguale, e senza vene”, as one Florentine patron asked in 1604) valued higher or more difficult to obtain than black marbles with white or coloured veins?
Papers may also address issues of perception, terminology, and other specific connotations of black mar-

ble. They may be based on material analysis or on written sources, such as building accounts or ‘books of stones’.

This session seeks to overcome a long-standing historiographical limitation that excluded the possibility of significant north-to-south Renaissance influences in European architecture. Situated at the boundary of construction history, it seeks to engage both material and cultural dimensions, also raising technical questions concerning quarrying, supply routes, and the circulation of workers. By bringing together analyses of monuments, trade networks, patronage, and textual sources, the session encourages dialogue among archeologists, historians of construction, architectural historians, material culture scholars, and those working on the history of ideas.

--

[2] Words of the Building Site: Towards a Glossary of Early Modern Construction
From: Valentina Burgassi
Date: May 18, 2026

Construction sites in Early Modern Europe were multilingual, highly specialised environments in which skilled craftsmen, architects, engineers, and labourers negotiated their tasks through a shared yet stratified technical language. These vocabularies circulated across the European courts, major building sites, and transnational networks of artisans. Despite their historical significance, the terminology employed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century construction practice remains dispersed across archives, inconsistently recorded, and rarely examined as a comparative European phenomenon.

This session is anchored in the international European project COST ACTION CA24102 – EUROGLOSS, launched in 2025 with the aim of producing a multilingual digital glossary of construction techniques derived from archival reports, drawings, and specifications from Early Modern European courts. It presents the initial outcomes of this collaborative endeavour, which brings together construction historians, architects, linguists, archaeologists, and digital specialists to reconstruct the language, practices, and material culture of historical building sites.

By 2027, EUROGLOSS will have completed several key milestones, including the development of an initial corpus of terms and construction techniques that shed new light on the linguistic, material, and procedural dimensions of Early Modern construction. This corpus forms the foundation for a comprehensive glossary and offers fresh perspectives on the organisation of building sites, the transmission of knowledge, the geographies, and the expert language of early construction practice.

The session welcomes papers based on original research, particularly those addressing:
- the coexistence of learned terminology within the technical language of craftsmen;
- the cross-regional circulation of construction terms through craftsmen, architects and artisans mobility;
- terminology emerging from site reports, drawings, estimates, contracts, and other technical documen- ts;
- regional and linguistic specificities within European court contexts;

Contributions that highlight lesser-known actors, underexplored archives, or comparative perspectives across different European regions are especially encouraged.
The study of construction technical terms is essential to understanding historical building practices. Technical terminology reflects materials, techniques, tools, craft hierarchies, geographies, and the transfer of knowledge across Europe. This session responds directly to ICCH9’s call to foreground innovative methodologies, comparative analyses, and interdisciplinary approaches in construction history, introducing new

methodologies, datasets, and digital tools, including AI-assisted reading of archival material and collaborative, multilingual terminology work.

EUROGLOSS COST ACTION (Horizon Europe) supports the session by offering co-funding and/or conference grants for young researchers and participants, enabling participation and ensuring inclusiveness across broader regions. This will help create a forum for discussing terminology, techniques, and knowledge exchange in Early Modern construction history.

--

The ICCH9 will bring together researchers from different disciplines and continents to exchange recent advances, results, and insights in the vast and expanding field of Construction History. Special topics will be discussed in dedicated Thematic Sessions organized and chaired by leading experts, while the scope and diversity of Construction History will be reflected in the Open Sessions.

Researchers from all fields connected to Construction History are invited to submit abstracts of contributions for ICCH9. Abstracts must be submitted in English and must not exceed 400 words. All abstracts will be reviewed and selected for presentation by at least two members of the ICCH9 Scientific Committee, which includes the world's most respected researchers in the field. All papers will be published in an edited open-access proceedings volume and will be available, in digital form, at the congress.

Abstracts must be submitted exclusively via the website: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=icch9
Abstracts received by other means of communication (e-mail, etc.) cannot be considered. When submitting your abstract, please indicate which of the Thematic Sessions or Open Sessions topics would be the most appropriate for your paper.

Abstracts have to be submitted by June 28, 2026 (midnight CET). Delayed submissions cannot be considered. The decision of the scientific committee will be announced by August 20, 2026.
Full papers are due by October 30, 2026. Submissions will undergo a further review by members of the scientific committee. Only contributions that fully meet the scientific and language quality criteria will be accepted. Please note that only papers presented in person at the conference will be included in the proceedings.
More information: www.constructionhistorygroup.polito.it/icch

Reference:
CFP: 2 Sessions at ICCH9 (Torino, 28 Jun-2 Jul 27). In: ArtHist.net, May 19, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52495>.