

Caring for Naturecultures – The Cryosphere (Zurich, 12 Jun 26)

Zurich

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Hanna Barbara Holling

Join us for the symposium Caring for Naturecultures: The Cryosphere and the opening of the accompanying exhibition at the Collegium Helveticum in Zurich.

As glaciers retreat under rapidly warming climatic conditions, they emerge not only as indicators of environmental transformation, but as complex conservation objects navigating natural and cultural worlds. Melting ice releases archaeological artefacts preserved through freezing rather than intentional conservation; geotextile coverings transform Alpine landscapes into sites of technological intervention and ecological grief; Antarctic heritage sites expose the entanglements of preservation, geopolitics, and climate instability; and artistic practices confront the emotional, ethical, and material contradictions of caring for environments undergoing irreversible change.

Responding to these transformations, Caring for Naturecultures – The Cryosphere reconceives conservation as a cross-domain practice of care that exceeds conventional distinctions between natural and cultural heritage. Bringing together perspectives from art history, anthropology, archaeology, conservation, environmental humanities, glaciology, natural sciences, and artistic practice, the symposium approaches glaciers as natureculture hybrids: living archives shaped by climate, memory, extraction, scientific knowledge, and political imagination.

Structured around themes of glacial loss, emotional and spiritual responses to disappearing ice, glacial archaeology, environmental politics, Antarctic heritage, and artistic engagements with the cryosphere, the program explores how melting ice destabilizes inherited notions of permanence, stewardship, and preservation. Across discussions of mourning, geoengineering, migration, emerging archaeological objects, and complex ecologies, glaciers appear not as passive landscapes, but as active agents within Earth histories and as sites of planetary responsibility.

With: Philip Ursprung; Jean Chamel; Nathalie Dietschy; Giovanna di Pietro; Dennis Hansen; Hanna Hölling; Kati Lindström; Thomas Reitmaier; Adam Sébire; Ester Vonplon.

Please note that this is an in-person event only.

13:00–13:15

Welcome and Introduction: Hanna B. Hölling and the Collegium Directorate

Session I – Vanishing Ice: Conservation, Loss, and Emotional Worlds

13:15–13:40

Nathalie Dietschy

A Landscape of Despair: Alpine Glaciers Covered with Geotextiles

13:40–14:05

Kati Lindström

Melting Heritage on the Continent of the Future

14:05–14:30

Jean Chamel

In Love with a Glacier: Stories of Companionship— Attachment, Personification, Loss and Reinvention

14:30–14:45

General discussion

14:45–15:00

Coffee Break

Session II – Glacial (After)lives: Archaeology, History, and Political Memory

15:00–15:25

Philip Ursprung

Mattmark and the Politics of Natureculture Glaciers

15:25–15:50

Dennis Hansen

Scheuchzer's Glacial Cataclysm: An Early Enlightenment Thought Experiment

15:50–16:15

Thomas Reitmaier

Glacial Archaeology: A Brief History

16:15–16:40

Giovanna di Pietro and Johanna Klügl

Bark Objects from Swiss Ice Patches

16:40–16:55

General discussion

Session III – Caring for the Cryosphere Through Artists' Eyes

Ester Vonplon

Adam Sébire

Artists and filmmakers reflect on glaciers as sites of memory, transformation, conservation, and loss through moving image, sound, documentation, and speculative imagination.

17:35–17:45

Closing Remarks and Transition to Exhibition Opening

Followed by the opening of:

Caring for Naturecultures – Glaciers

18:00 | Collegium Helveticum

For the information about the exhibition, and special guided tours during Zurich Art Weekend, follow [this link](https://collegium.ethz.ch/events/fellow-year-2025-2026/caring-for-naturecultures-glaciers):

<https://collegium.ethz.ch/events/fellow-year-2025-2026/caring-for-naturecultures-glaciers>

The exhibition runs from June 12 to July 10.

Reference:

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