

The Architect and the Museum (Paris, 24–27 Nov 26)

Nancy and Paris (France), Nov 24–27, 2026

Deadline: Sep 30, 2026

Julien Bastoen

The architect and the museum. Professional interactions and historiographical issues.

What does the architect do in the museum(s)? What do museums do to architects?

One might think that these two questions have been extensively addressed in academic literature, both in the history of architecture and in art history. However, with the exception of a few now well-established topics such as the architectural history of museums (Texier and Civil, 2023; Hottin, 2024) or the history of museums and temporary architecture exhibitions (Schuck 1991; Bergdoll, 2014; Quantin-Biancalani, 2023; Fankhänel, 2024; Tichit, 2024, 2025), the rich interrelationships between architects and museums remain largely unexplored.

The aim of this call for papers is not so much to document the history of architects' involvement – whether theoretical or practical – in museum architecture, as to understand the place that museums occupy in the individual and collective career paths of architects in France, as well as in the writing of architectural history.

Thus, the first step will be to examine the presence of architects in museum collections and its implications for the writing of architectural history and the preservation of architectural heritage. A second line of inquiry will focus on highlighting the role of the architect as a collector, museum administrator or curator. A third line of inquiry will examine more directly the role of architects as visitors and how they utilise and showcase their artistic and museum-related knowledge. Finally, a fourth line of inquiry will examine the role of the architect in relation to museum commissions.

The aim of this call for papers is to help document the history of the architectural profession in France and to examine the professional culture of architects, both from a historical perspective and in the context of a current assessment of the profession. Consequently, whilst the conference will focus on France, we encourage proposals without restriction as to period or discipline.

Theme 1: The Architect on Display

This theme aims to document the history of the presence of architects' works within permanent museum collections by positing the hypothesis that this type of exhibition has specific characteristics. In particular, it will examine the representation of contemporary architecture and the issues surrounding the inclusion of this category of works in collections. Proposals may examine the context, scope and significance of the acquisition, donation or loan of works by architects to museums. They may address the figure of the architect-artist through the ages and the role of museums in strategies for achieving recognition—both individual and collective—for living architects.

Theme 2: The architect as collector, administrator and curator

This theme will examine architects' relationships with the museum institution. How do they engage with this milieu? Proposals may document their involvement in the founding of museums and conservation institutions, whilst also examining the question of their expertise, particularly in the artistic sphere. They will thus aim to shed light on the motivations and interests of architects in the establishment and development of these institutions, and to assess the recognition of their expertise, whether in terms of museographic choices or scientific approaches. Proposals will thus highlight figures such as architect-curators, administrators or architect-collectors. They may also document the relationships between architects and curators, whilst conversely highlighting the development of the latter's expertise in architecture, and address conflicts of expertise between these different professionals. The question of architects' networks in the founding and establishment of museums may be explored in order to reveal the professional strategies underpinning support for these ventures. More broadly, the aim is to examine the meaning and scope of architects' involvement with museums, as well as their professional culture throughout history up to the present day.

Theme 3: The architect as visitor

This theme will focus on the artistic culture of architects. Proposals may address how architects engage with museum-specific knowledge. They will thus provide an opportunity to examine how architects incorporate knowledge of collections not only into their discourse but also into their designs. Proposals may also examine the role of professional journals as vehicles for disseminating museum culture and analyse how this is presented by architectural commentators. They may also explore how this culture is utilised by architects in their discourse or to defend intellectual positions. Furthermore, the issue of architects' museum attendance may be examined. Thus, proposals may address the museum's educational role and examine the place these institutions occupy in the training of architects. More broadly, they will explore architects' experiences of visiting museums and how they narrate these experiences. Ultimately, the proposals sought should shed light on the role played by museums in shaping a professional culture throughout history.

Theme 4: The museum project in an architect's career

Proposals under this theme will examine the distinctive value of museum architecture projects within architects' professional trajectories. What role does an architectural project play in an architect's career? What professional added value is such a commission likely to bring? Proposals may thus examine the professional prestige associated with public museum commissions, whilst also comparing the architect's status against the backdrop of the growing privatisation of such commissions. Conversely, they may also explore how museum projects have potentially hindered an architect's career or, more broadly, contributed to the construction of a negative image of the profession.

Contribution guidelines

The conference will feature several thematic sessions of papers (20 minutes per paper).

Proposals, to be written in French, should include:

- a title
- an abstract of no more than 300 words
- a list of main sources and bibliographical references
- a short biography

- the author's surname, first name and email address

These should be sent by 30 September 2026 at the latest to julien.bastoen@paris-belleville.archi.fr and lena.lefranc-cervo@trifine.fr.

Provisional timetable

30 June 2026: launch of the call for papers

30 September 2026: deadline for submitting proposals

First half of October 2026: selection of proposals and notification to presenters

15 November 2026: submission of final abstracts and draft papers

24 November 2026: preliminary conference at ENSA Nancy

26–27 November 2026: conference at ENSA Paris-Belleville and at a Parisian museum (subject to confirmation)

Organising Committee

Julien Bastoen, Senior Lecturer in History and Architectural Cultures, ENSA Paris-Belleville / Ipraus

Léna Lefranc-Cervo, PhD in Art History, Teaching Assistant in History and Architectural Cultures, ENSA Nancy / LHAC

Scientific Committee

Maxime Decommer, Senior Lecturer in Humanities and Social Sciences, ENSA Bretagne, Rennes / Grief

Cécilia Hurley-Griener, HDR-qualified researcher, attached to the Special Collections, Head of the Heritage Department, University of Neuchâtel

Guy Lambert, Senior Lecturer in Architectural History and Cultures, ENSA Paris-Belleville / Ipraus

Françoise Mardrus, Director of Museum Studies and Research Support, Dominique-Vivant Denon Research Centre, Louvre Museum

Géraldine Masson, PhD in Art History, responsible for promoting the graphic arts collection at the Musée d'Orsay

Jean-Paul Midant, Senior Lecturer (HDR) in History and Architectural Cultures, ENSA Paris-Belleville / Ipraus

Lucile Pierron, Senior Lecturer in History and Architectural Cultures, ENSA Nancy / LHAC

Carmen Popescu, Professor (HDR) in History and Architectural Cultures, ENSA Paris-Val-de-Seine / CRH-Lavue

Nathalie Simonnot, HDR Research Engineer, ENSA Versailles / LéaV

Alice Thomine-Berrada, Chief Curator of Heritage and Head of Collections at the Beaux-Arts de Paris (ENSBA)

Reference:

CFP: The Architect and the Museum (Paris, 24-27 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 10, 2026 (accessed Oct 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/54166>>.