Art, Extraction, and Knowledge in Central Europe & Beyond (Prague, 19–21 May 27)

Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, May 19–21, 2027
Deadline: Oct 1, 2026

Tina Asmussen

Metals, Minerals, and Material Worlds: Art, Extraction, and Knowledge in Central Europe and Beyond.
An International Symposium of the Minescapes Research Project.

We invite proposals for papers for an international symposium, Metals, Minerals, and Material Worlds: Art, Extraction, and Knowledge in Central Europe and Beyond, to be held at the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague on May 19–21, 2027. Proposals are due October 1, 2026 (see submission details below).

This symposium, organized by Tina Asmussen (German Mining Museum Bochum: Leibniz Research Museum for Georesources) and Pamela Smith (Center for Science and Society, Columbia University), with Sylva Dobalová and Martin Mádl (both Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences), is part of the ongoing series Minescapes: Socio-Natural Sites of Resource, Extraction, and Knowledge that investigates the complexity and dynamics of human-environmental interactions in mining landscapes using the concept of a “material complex.” Research on a material complex begins in a study of the natural materials and follows them through reciprocal interactions with human bodily practices, techniques, and skills into substances and objects that are given meaning, used, consumed, desired, and studied by human communities. Each of these stages—the materials; the human–material interactions via skilled practice; and the objects and subjects and their meanings in production, use, consumption, and afterlives—can and often do form self-contained sites of study and analysis. In contrast, the Minescapes events aim, through drawing upon the archives of nature (mines, forests, water systems) and society (archives, libraries, art collections), to bring together these often rich separate areas of study into a unified field in order to raise fruitful questions for individual disciplines as well as for the whole.

The Prague symposium brings together scholars from across disciplines to examine the material worlds of metals and minerals—following them from the geological and mineralogical conditions of their formation, through their extraction, smelting, processing, transport, and trade, into the objects, images, and substances they become, and on to their use, consumption, and afterlives. Central Europe—with its long and densely documented history of metal and mineral extraction, its merchant-capitalist enterprises, and its movement of materials across local and global networks—offers a rich setting for these questions, while contributions that extend the perspective beyond the region are equally welcome.

We welcome proposals from scholars in any discipline and at any career stage whose work speaks to the symposium theme. We are especially interested in contributions that bridge the disciplinary boundaries by which the study of metals and minerals has conventionally been divided. Relevant fields and approaches include, but are not limited to:
- the history of art and art conservation, including technical art history and conservation science, with particular interest in early modern sculpture, metalwork, and the material culture of metals and minerals
- the history of early modern science, technology, and medicine, including metallurgy, mineralogy, and alchemy
- environmental, economic, and political-economic history, including the organization of mining, labor, capital, and trade
- the history of mining and of mining knowledge
- the natural sciences, including geology, geochemistry, geography, forest science, and materials science

By bringing these conventionally separate fields into conversation, the symposium aims to construct a more integrated history of art and making as human engagement with the materials of the natural environment.

Practical information
This symposium is generously supported by the Getty Foundation's Connecting Art Histories program, through the project The Material Complex of Copper in Central Europe and Beyond. In keeping with the program’s aims, the symposium seeks to bridge the historical geo-political divisions that have long separated research networks across Europe, and therefore especially encourages the participation of scholars based at Central and Eastern European institutions. Scholars from all regions and institutions are warmly invited to apply; please note, however, that the symposium's capacity to provide full financial support for travel and accommodation will be limited.

Proposals should include full name, current affiliation, and email address; a paper title; an abstract of no more than 300 words; a short CV (max. 2 pages with PhD or other terminal degree completion year or expected completion).

Submissions are due October 1, 2026, and should be sent to minescapes2027@gmail.com.

Reference:
CFP: Art, Extraction, and Knowledge in Central Europe & Beyond (Prague, 19-21 May 27). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 12, 2026 (accessed Nov 14, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54168>.