Thinking with Materials Across Histories & Practices (online/Prague, 1-2 Oct 26)

Technology Center UMPRUM, Cinema Room (3rd Floor), Mikulandská 134/5, Prague 1 / online, Oct 1–02, 2026

Monika Drlikova, UMPRUM, Prague

The Centre for Doctoral Studies UMPRUM is pleased to announce an international conference focused on materials and materiality in the methodology of art history.

In a discipline as object-oriented as art history, the material from which its objects of study are made might seem an obvious starting point for research. Yet learning how to think about objects is inseparable from the discipline's historiography, methodological approaches, and theoretical vocabularies, in which material itself has not always held as self-evident a place as one might expect. Or is this too sweeping a claim?
Thinking with Materials Across Histories and Practices turns to materials themselves as starting points for inquiry, asking what their properties, behaviors, and transformations can reveal that written sources alone may not. At the same time, the contributions gathered here complicate the idea that materials have simply been overlooked, tracing histories of material-oriented thinking through local and regional traditions, overlooked voices, and forms of knowledge rooted in making and craft.

Across six panels – Making as Knowing, The Nature of Materials, Rethinking Art-Historical Categories, Agency Between Art and Matter, Storied Matter, and Nature as Co-Artist – doctoral and early-career researchers will approach materials from diverse historical, geographical, and methodological perspectives. Moving between conservation and historiography, craft and artistic practice, and natural and manufactured materials, the papers consider material agency, processes of making, ecological entanglements, and the categories through which we have learned to describe objects.

For two days in Prague, we will think with and through materials. Tune in, hands on, cause we are living in a material world!

Programme:

DAY 1 | THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2026
Technology Center UMPRUM, Cinema Room (3rd Floor)
Mikulandská 134/5, Prague 1

10:00 Registration
10:30 Welcome and Introduction

Panel 1: Making as Knowing
Chair: Veronika Soukupová
11:00 Leah Warriner-Wood (University of Lincoln): “Threads of Identity: Conservation as Material Historiography in the Doddington Hall Tapestry Interiors” (online)
11:20 Marta Wódz (KU Leuven): “Following Red: Contemporary Artists Unravelling the Histories and Ecologies of Natural Dye”
11:40 Saar Meganck (Architecture Academy Maastricht/KU Leuven):
“The Hand Across Time: A Material-Hermeneutic Method: Re-activating Colour as Material Intelligence in the Archive of Wim van Hooff”
12:00 Q&A
12:20 Coffee break

Panel 2: The Nature of Materials
Chair: Monika Drlíková
12:50 Yixin Xu (University of Oslo): “Amber Connections: Extraction, Crafts and Material Hierarchies in the Late Imperial Sino-Burmese Borderlands”
13:10 Jiří Melzmuf (Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague): “Vital Matter, Dead Labor: Debating Materialist Approaches to Photography”
13:30 Ana Rodríguez Castillo (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid): “From Blue to Yellow with Nothing in Between: Filling a Chromatic Gap in the 18th Century”
13:50 Q&A
14:10 Lunch break

Panel 3: Rethinking Art-Historical Categories
Chair: Tomáš Klička
15:10 Monika Čejková (National Gallery, Prague) and Dunja Stevanović (Academy of Fine Arts, Prague): “Beyond “Combined Technique”: Material Ambiguity and Art-Historical Language in Czech Informel” (online)
15:30 Thomas Cooper (Lincoln College, University of Oxford): “What might art history gain by examining critically the historiography of textile scholarship?”
15:50 Anna Kipke (Leuphana University Lüneburg / Free University Berlin): “Craft as Blind Spot: Reconstructing the Role of Craft in Art Therapy/Art History”
16:10 Q&A
16:30 Coffee break

17:00 Keynote: Prof. Ann-Sophie Lehmann (University of Groningen)
18:30 Wine reception

DAY 2 | FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 2026
Technology Center UMPRUM, Cinema Room (3rd Floor)
Mikulandská 134/5, Prague 1

10:00 Keynote: Prof. Milena Bartlová (Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague)
11:30 Coffee break

Panel 1: Agency Between Art and Matter
Chair: Veronika Králíková Červená

12:00 Jiří Pitrmuc (Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague): “Living Ambiguity and the Materiality of Contemporary Painting”
12:20 Santa Sleiksa (Art Academy of Latvia): “Material Agency under Ideological Pressure: The Technological Discourse of Georgs Kruglovs’ Ceramics” (online)
12:40 Amy C. Llewellyn (London): Paper works: the function of folded paper within the printed matter, politics and power/knowledge of the Association of Autonomous Astronauts
13:00 Q&A
13:20 Lunch break

Panel 2: Storied Matter
Chair: Denisa Dolanská
14:20 Victoria Anastasyadis (University of Groningen): “The Red Thread: Unravelling the Work of Dutch Textile Artists Herman and Désirée Scholten”
14:40 Ben Caro & Kat Cutler-MacKenzie (London): “The slow slough of stone: surface encounters in The Skin of Stone”
15:00 Magdaléna Volejníková (Palacký University Olomouc): “Before the Material Turn? Viktor Kotrba and the Shifting Status of Brick in Czech Medieval Architectural Historiography”
15:20 Q&A
15:40 Coffee break

Panel 3: Nature as Co-Artist
Chair: Monika Drlíková
16:10 Marie Luise Geissler (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg):
“Implicit natural materialities in the early modern sottobosco genre”
16:30 Piermario De Angelis (University of Bergamo): “Stretched into deep time. Earthly visions and geological imagery of painted stones through the writings of Roger Caillois and Jurgis Baltrušaitis”
16:50 Elias Ghekiere (University of Hasselt / PXL-MAD School of Arts):
“Skin as Region: Reading and expressing vital beauty through the process of glass-weathering”
17:10 Q&A

To participate online, please register in advance via Zoom: https://cesnet.zoom.us/meeting/register/agoTvcvlReagq5rlxNPudA

After you register, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to join the meeting.

Reference:
CONF: Thinking with Materials Across Histories & Practices (online/Prague, 1-2 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 15, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54261>.