

Frozen Accidents: Fixed Choices and Enduring Legacies (20 Nov 26)

HiCSA research center, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris 1), Galerie Colbert, Salle Vasari, Paris, Nov 20, 2026

Sefy Hendler, Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne/Centre d'Histoire de l'Art de la Renaissance

In 1968, Francis Crick suggested that the genetic code might be a “frozen accident”: an arbitrary outcome of historical chance that, once established, could never be undone.

But are frozen accidents really frozen? Can they be reversed, or escaped? Are some apparently contingent outcomes inevitable after all? And do frozen accidents even exist?

Frozen Accidents: Fixed Choices and Enduring Legacies brings biologists, art historians, and literary scholars together to explore these questions. We will take Crick’s idea as a starting point, not as settled truth, and ask where it helps us think, where it breaks down, and what happens when very different disciplines take on the same question.

Every talk is designed for non-specialists, so no expertise in any particular field is needed to follow the discussion. Debate is not only welcome: it is the point.

Organized by Sefy Hendler, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (HiCSA), and Oded Rechavi, Tel Aviv University, the conference welcomes colleagues, students, and anyone curious about these questions.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

Each presentation consists of a 30-minute talk followed by 5 minutes for questions and discussion.

09:00–09:15 – Welcome

Sefy Hendler, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (HiCSA), and Oded Rechavi, Tel Aviv University

09:15–09:50 – Science

Nick Lane, University College London

The original frozen accident – is it real?

09:50–10:25 – Art

Sefy Hendler, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (HiCSA)

Not a Feature, a Bug: Ex Uno Lapide Between Ancient Myth and Renaissance Construction

10:25–10:45 – Coffee break

10:45–11:20 – Science

Virginie Courtier, Institut Jacques Monod, CNRS / Université Paris Cité

Frozen accidents over the course of genetic evolution

11:20–11:55 – Art

Guillaume Cassegrain, Université Grenoble Alpes

Débusquer les rats. L'histoire de l'art et la question animale

12:00–13:30 – Lunch

13:30–14:05 – Art / Literature

Eran Horowitz, Université Grenoble Alpes

In a Frozen Environment There Are No Accidents

14:05–14:40 – Science

Martin M. Hanczyc, University of Trento

Animated Droplets

14:40–15:00 – Coffee break

15:00–15:35 – Art

Francesco Benelli, University of Bologna

Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and James T. Reason on Ancient Roman Topography

15:35–16:10 – Science

Oded Rechavi, Tel Aviv University

The cold never bothered me anyway

16:10–16:45 – Art

Carolina Mangone, Princeton University

Michelangelo's "Non-Finito" and Rodin's Modernity: A Frozen Historiographical Accident?

16:45–17:15 – General discussion

Do frozen accidents exist? If they do, can they be unfrozen?

17:15–17:30 – Closing

Summary and closing remarks

Free admission subject to availability, no livestream of the conference will be available.

Reference:

CONF: Frozen Accidents: Fixed Choices and Enduring Legacies (20 Nov 26). In: Arthist.net, Oct 16, 2026
(accessed Oct 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/54665>>.