Frozen Accidents: Fixed Choices and Enduring Legacies (Paris, 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 Renaissanc

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 (Paris, 20 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 16, 2026 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54665>.