# A Transnational History of Museum Experience (Mendrisio/Lugano, 4-6 Nov 26)

Mendrisio / Lugano, Università della Svizzera italiana, Nov 4–06, 2026

Gaetano Cascino, Università della Svizzera italiana

From the Audiences' Side: A Transnational History of Museum Experience (16th–19th Centuries).

The international conference From the Audiences' Side: A Transnational History of Museum Experience (16th–19th Centuries) is the concluding event in the series organized within the SNSF research project Visibility Reclaimed, directed by Carla Mazzarelli. Following three international workshops devoted to the methods of analysis of institutional sources (Rome, 2023), literature (Durham, 2024), and visual sources (Madrid, 2025), this conference offers a shared reflection on new research perspectives that are reshaping the study of the first public museums in Europe and beyond, from the early eighteenth century to the long nineteenth century. At its core are audiences: their encounter and engagement with institutions, the construction of ways of seeing, moving through museum spaces, and the devices developed over time for the enjoyment and safeguarding of artistic and cultural heritage. By foregrounding visitors' perspectives and the experience of visiting, the conference seeks to rethink the history of museography, established geographies and historical periodisations, and the definition of the museum as a "space of knowledge" open to all.
Scholars from countries around the world (Europe, United States, Asia, Switzerland) working across diverse contexts, museum types, and chronologies, will open also an interdisciplinary dialogue on the aims and possibilities of the contemporary museum as a space of "immersive" experience and well-being - accessible and inclusive - while examining its genealogies and long-standing conflicts.

Programme

Wednesday, November 4th
Mendrisio, Accademia di Architettura
Palazzo Canavée, Room C0.61

Welcoming from 1:00pm

1:30pm
Institutional Greetings

1:50pm
Introduction (Carla Mazzarelli)
2:25pm I. Before Publics: Rethinking Visitors' Experiences in the Early Modern Period (16th–18th c.)

Chair: Christoph Frank (Università della Svizzera italiana)

2:30pm Linda Borean (Università degli Studi di Udine), From Private Collections to the Public Museum in Early Modern Venice: The Case of the Statuario Grimani and Its Visitors

2:55pm David García Cueto (Museo Nacional del Prado), Le visite all'Alcázar a Madrid nel Seicento

3:20pm Gennaro Toscano (Bibliothèque nationale de France - École nationale des chartes), Da Cabinet du roi al Museo della Bibliothèque nationale: uno spazio di sociabilità nella Parigi del Settecento

3:45-4:05pm Discussion

4:05-4:25pm Coffee Break

4:25pm II. Shaping First Publics, Tracing Itineraries: Rome as a Model?

Chair: Stefano Cracolici (Durham University)

4:30pm Chiara Piva (Sapienza Università di Roma), Le "vedute" di museo nel XVIII secolo: una nuova idea di pubblico o classico staffage?

4:55pm Christoph Frank (Università della Svizzera italiana), «This travel account is of the utmost brevity». A forgotten moment in the transition from Roman Neo-Classicism to Northern Romanticism

5:20pm Giovanna Ceserani (Stanford University), The 18th-century Grand Tour Digitized: British itineraries and Italian museums (online)

5:45-6:05pm Discussion

Break

6:30pm Exhibition Opening:
Il "Museo di Roma" alla prova del futuro: esperienze, materiali, progetti in dialogo
Academy of Architecture Library
Curated by Carla Mazzarelli, Angela Windholz
With the collaboration of Luca Piccoli, Gaetano Cascino, Luigi Trentin and the Partecipants of the Summer School in "Theory and Practice of Curatorship" (SS 2026)

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Thursday, November 5th
Lugano, USI Campus EST (Aula Polifunzionale)

9:00am III. Sharing Spaces of Knowledge. Networks and Paths during the Enlightenment

Chair: Dominique Poulot (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

9:05am Eleonora Pistis (Columbia University), Framing Knowledge: Architecture as an Epistemic Tool for the Public in the Early Eighteenth Century

9:30am Stefano Cracolici (Durham University), Conversation Pieces

9:55am Luca Piccoli (Università della Svizzera italiana), Museums between Paper and Stone: The Making of a Public Building Type in Eighteenth-Century Academies
10:20-10:40am Discussion

10:40-11:00am Coffee break

11:00am IV. Worksites for a New Museography: Spaces and Devices under Construction (18th–19th c.)

Chair: Chiara Piva (Sapienza Università di Roma)

11:05am Vincent Chenal (Université de Genève), Les débats sur l'adaptation des dispositifs muséographiques pour les divers publics à Paris autour de 1800

11:30am Adrián Fernández Almoguera (Madrid, UNED), Roma rinasce nel museo: intorno alla costruzione del Braccio Nuovo del Museo Chiaramonti

11:55am-12:15pm Discussion

Light Lunch

2:00pm V. Between Private and Public Spheres: Strategies of Display (18th–19th c.)

Chair: Giovanna Capitelli (Università Roma Tre)

2:05pm Lucia Germani (Sapienza Università di Roma) «Vedere le Belle e rare stampe che sono in questa Biblioteca di Casa Corsini»: Spaces, Collections, and Practices of Visiting the Corsini Library in the Eighteenth Century

2:30pm Teresa Montefusco (Università della Svizzera italiana) "Stampe come pitture": conservazione, fruizione e display nelle collezioni di stampe degli amatori di primo Ottocento

2:55pm Hortense de Corneillan (Haute-école de conservation-restauration ARC, Neuchâtel) From the Shop to the Museum: The Castellani, Exhibition as a Strategy

3:20-3:40pm Discussion

3:40-4:00pm Coffee Break

4.00pm VI. "Ways of Seeing": from Educating to Disciplining Visitors (18th–19th c.)

Chair: Maria Pia Donato (CNRS/IHMC)

4:05pm Hangyul Kim (Chonnam National University), Making Knowledge Visible: Public Lessons and Displays at the Muséum d'Histoire naturelle in Late Eighteenth-Century Paris

4:30pm Jordan Kistler (University of Strathclyde), The British Museum and the British Public: Shaping Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century (online)

4:55pm Carla Mazzarelli (Università della Svizzera italiana), Facing the Exposed Body: Museums between Performance, Discipline and Censorship

5:30-6:00pm Discussion

6:15–6:45pm Break

6:45-8:00pm Il Museo indisciplinato. Corpi e spazi in movimento
Public Event in collaboration with Istituto di studi italiani
With Riccardo Blumer, Michele Di Stefano, Maddalena Giovannelli
USI, Palazzo Rosso, Room A-12

Standing Dinner

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Friday, November 6th
Mendrisio, Accademia di architettura
Palazzo Canavée, Room C0.61

9:30am VII. Open Museum? Nation Building and Geographies in Motion

Chair: Gianna Antonia Mina (Former Director Museo Vincenzo Vela)

9:35am Giovanna Capitelli (Università di Roma Tre), Latin American Elites in Rome's museums in the Age of Restoration

10:00am Elsa van Wezel (Independent Researcher), Museum Visitors in Berlin, 1830–1880: Museum for All?

10:25am Marina Beck (Institut für Kunstgeschichte Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)
State Museums and Their Audiences: Strategies for Knowledge-Sharing in the Nineteenth Century

10:50-11:10am Discussion
11:10-11.30am Coffee Break

11:30am VIII. New Needs for New Publics: Issues of Technology, Comfort and Accessibility

Chair: Sonja Hildebrand (Università della Svizzera italiana)

11:35am Ludovica Scalzo (Università Roma Tre), From the Photographers' Side. A New Audience at Work in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Roman Museums

12:00pm Gaetano Cascino (Università della Svizzera italiana), «Nobody Ever Thought of Being Comfortable There»: Visitors Grappling with (Dis)Comfort in the Nineteenth-Century "Museo di Roma"

12:25pm Anna Bernardi (Università della Svizzera italiana), La nascita dei Children's museums (1899–1925) come chiave di lettura della progettazione dello spazio museale per una pluralità di pubblici

12:50-1:10pm Discussion

1:10-3:00pm Light Lunch

3:00pm IX. From the Genealogy of Immersive Spaces to the Digital Reconstruction of Immersive Viewing

Chair: Daniela Mondini (Università della Svizzera italiana)

3:05pm Nicoletta Leonardi (Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milano), Constructing Immersion: Photography, Display, and Spectacle in the Nineteenth Century

3:30pm Sophie Raux (Université Lumière Lyon 2), Christophe Renaud (Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale), Illuminating Sculpture by Flame Light: Historical Immersive Viewing and Digital Reconstruction

4:10-4:30pm Discussion

4:30-5:00pm Final Remarks and Conclusion (Carla Mazzarelli)

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Directed by: Carla Mazzarelli

Scientific Committee: Giovanna Capitelli, Stefano Cracolici, David García Cueto, Christoph Frank, Daniela Mondini, Chiara Piva

Advisory Board: Maria Pia Donato, Andrew McClellan, Carole Paul, Dominique Poulot, Sebastian Schütze

Final Conference of the Research Project Visibility Reclaimed. Experiencing Rome's First Public Museums (1733–1870). An Analysis of Public Audiences in a Transnational Perspective (SNSF 100016_212922).

Scientific Coordination: Gaetano Cascino, Luca Piccoli

Information and streaming: visibilityreclaimed@gmail.com

Reference:
CONF: A Transnational History of Museum Experience (Mendrisio/Lugano, 4-6 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 29, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54753>.