48 | 14 La revue des musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie

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2 | 2027 – CFC: Art, Matter and Environment (1848–1927)

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2 | 2027 – CFC: Art, Matter and Environment (1848–1927)

OUTLINE

The Theme
Possible Axes (non-exhaustive)
1. Resources, environments, and the material conditions of creation
2. Life, agency, and the vulnerability of materials
3. Preservation in an unstable environment
Submission Guidelines
Dates
Bibliography

TEXT

Deadline for the submission of proposals: **30 janvier 2026**

The Theme

1 In 1884, John Ruskin gave a lecture on what he called the "storm-cloud of the nineteenth century," indicating both a new type of atmospheric pollution linked to industrialization and the sign of a troubled era. The critic's diagnosis resonates deeply with the concerns of artists at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Witnesses to a world in full transformation, through their works they conveyed an ambivalence characteristic of the period. Anxiety over the transformation of the environment mingled with curiosity, even exhilaration, stirred by new materials, energies, and techniques offered by modernity.

2 Over the past twenty years, the environmental turn in art history (Thomas, 2000; Mathis, 2005; Michalsky and Nova, 2009; Eisenmann, 2010; Zhong Mengual, 2021), nourished in particular by the work of Philippe Descola, has led to a broadening of art history's perspective by considering the ecosystems within which art is situated and operates. Researchers now attentively examine artistic production as it interacts with living beings, the environment, and matter. At the

same time since the 1990s, the material turn has placed matter back at the center of art critical and art historical analysis. No longer apprehended solely as images or representations, works of art are examined as genuine "things" (Brown, 2001), inscribed in technical, economic, and social networks (Latour, 1991, 2005) and endowed with intrinsic properties (Ingold, 2007). Within this framework, the theory of agency developed by Alfred Gell (1998) has renewed the understanding of artistic objects by considering them as agents capable of acting upon the world and human relations.

3 These approaches converge fruitfully. The environmental history of art necessarily involves the question of matter, whether living or inanimate, while the study of the materiality of artworks leads to an examination of the environmental stakes of artistic creation. These issues relate to the extraction, transformation, circulation, use, and conservation of materials (pigment, stone, wood, metal, textile, glass, etc.), as well as the exploitation of natural resources (water, wood, charcoal, etc.). Attention to materials thus opens a reflection on their impact on natural and human environments as well as on their own vulnerability, their conservation, and their future.

4 The second issue of 48-14 will explore these questions from a perspective in art history that is both multidisciplinary (visual arts, decorative arts, architecture, photography, film, etc.) and globalized, while at the same time focusing on the period covered by the collections of the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie, that is, from 1848 to 1927.

5 Priority will be given to proposals that concern specific objects and discuss various ways in which artists conceive of the relationship between matter and environment—whether this relationship challenges or bolsters the supposed opposition between nature and culture (Descola, 2005). We enthusiastically seek proposals over a wide gamut of artistic media, including photography, film, decorative arts, architecture, sculpture, painting, and the graphic arts. In its selection the editorial board will ensure a balance among these different fields. Our call is addressed to researchers at all career stages, from all relevant professional backgrounds, and from all regions of the world. For reasons of cost and expertise, submissions

must nevertheless be in French or English (see submission conditions below).

6 The proposed title for this issue of 48-14 is a working title and may be modified.

Possible Axes (non-exhaustive)

1. Resources, environments, and the material conditions of creation

- Extraction, circulation, and transformation of natural and industrial resources
- Colonial expansion and appropriation of animal, vegetal, or mineral resources
- Globalization of materials and their artistic uses (pigments, papers, metals, glass, etc.)
- The role of the studio as a material, sensory, and experimental environment
- The capture and representation of light, air, and transparency
- Accelerated transformation of landscapes by extractive industries and infrastructures
- Artistic forms of environmental perception and of the feeling for nature
- Animal materials and issues related to the living (exploitation, domestication, extinction)

2. Life, agency, and the vulnerability of materials

- Matter as a living organism, a site of vitality
- New materials and their effects on modern sensibilities
- Industrial, transformed, prefabricated materials
- Fragilities and limits of materials
- The toxicity of materials for the environment as well as for artists, artisans, and workers
- Materiality and temporality: alterations, losses, and disappearances

3. Preservation in an unstable environment

- Early ecological reflections and movements for the protection of nature, in parallel with debates on the durability of artworks
- Translocation of artworks to different climates
- Heightened vulnerabilities in the face of natural disasters and climate disruptions (fires, floods, humidity, heat)
- Effects of climate change on matter (cracking, corrosion, discoloration, swelling, mold, destruction)
- Contemporary practices of conservation and restoration in a context of climate change
- Alternative strategies: replicas, casts, photographs, virtual reconstructions, digital reproductions, and their environmental impacts

Submission Guidelines

7 Submissions to this call for papers must include:

- An abstract (650 words max., including spaces and notes, with abbreviated bibliographic references, Word file) specifying the subject, the research question, the originality of the proposal, and the main hypotheses, as well as a provisional title
- Primary material and/or bibliographic references
- In a separate document: a biography of the author (250 words max.), accompanied by a list of their most significant publications

8 Proposals, which may be written in French or in English, should be sent to **48-14@musee-orsay.fr** no later than **30 January 2026**. The journal's editorial board will select between six and eight proposals, ensuring representativeness across fields. Authors will be informed of the decision in March 2026.
Final articles must be submitted by **15 October 2026**. The texts (25,000 characters, including notes and spaces) will then undergo peer review.

9 The journal will obtain the images to publish and the rights to publish them and will also cover the costs of translation.

Dates

10 Responses to the Call for Papers: 30 January 2026
Selection by the Editorial Board: March 2026
Submission of manuscripts: 15 October 2026
Review from the Editorial Board on the manuscripts: January 2027
Publication: October 2027

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