



Dear Fellow Experts, Researchers, and Specialists:

We are pleased to invite you to the **9th International Architectural Finishes Research Conference**, taking place in Vienna from **3–6 November 2027**. The event is jointly organized by the **Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (AKbild)**, the **Austrian Association for Restorers (ÖRV)**, and the **International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works Austria Section (IIC Austria)** and is supported by the **Austrian Federal Monuments Authority**.

The conference will be held at the **historic Semperdepot** (built in 1877), originally constructed as a production and storage facility for stage sets of the Vienna Royal-Imperial Court Opera and Theatre. Today, it houses the Academy's studios (Atelierhaus Lehnargasse 8) and the Plaster Cast Collection of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, an inspiring setting for the exchange of knowledge and research in the field of architectural finishes.

Architectural finishes are more than surface treatments, they carry cultural evidence, revealing the evolving stories of buildings, their users, and the societies that shaped them. The 2027 conference theme explores how **Architectural Finishes Research (AFR)** contributes to uncovering and interpreting these layered histories in the context of built heritage conservation.

Tracing History – Layers of Cultural Evidence

9th Architectural Finishes Research Conference

AFR examines the visible and hidden layers of interior and exterior surfaces in historic buildings and structures. These finishes are more than decoration; they are material witnesses to changing tastes, shifting economies, evolving social practices, and functional transformations. Studying them offers a systematic method to identify original and later decorative schemes, trace developments over time, and reveal the values and decisions of past occupants. As a multidisciplinary field, AFR bridges conservation, history, technical art history and material culture, offering essential **cultural evidence** for understanding the complexities of built heritage.

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Academy of Fine Arts Vienna



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 **international institute for
conservation of
historic and artistic works AUSTRIA**

The 9th AFR Conference in Vienna invites submissions that critically examine the practices, methodologies, narratives, and frameworks shaping AFR today. We highlight the role of finishes as tangible cultural evidence that not only illuminates technical and material histories but also connects us to intangible human experiences, stories of people, place, and time.

Our six themes reflect a holistic approach to AFR, addressing how finishes are investigated, analysed, interpreted, conserved, and communicated as well as how the discipline is taught. We welcome contributions from across disciplines and professions that advance knowledge, foster innovation, and enrich the global discourse on architectural finishes.

Theme 1: Framing the Brief – Purpose, Practice, and Professional Judgment

Examining how and why AFR is commissioned, and how research intent aligns with project outcomes and professional frameworks.

This theme explores the professional decisions and intentions behind commissioning architectural finishes research. Why is AFR commissioned, and how are research questions defined and aligned with project goals? We invite papers that critically reflect on commissioning processes, expectations versus outcomes, and the evolving professionalization of AFR. Submissions may also explore interdisciplinary collaboration, client engagement, and examples of 'good practice' in project briefings. This theme focuses not on standards, but on the practical integration of AFR into wider project narratives and delivery.

Theme 2: Exploring Investigative Methods: From On-Site Observation to Scientific Analysis

Broadening AFR through integrated field observation, non-destructive testing, and laboratory analysis

This theme invites contributions that examine the full range of investigative approaches in AFR, from in-situ observations to advanced scientific analysis in the laboratory. We encourage submissions that demonstrate how non- or minimal-destructive field investigations can reveal hidden elements such as coatings, sealed openings or signs of ritual use. Similarly, traditional laboratory methods such as cross-section analysis or pigment identification can contribute to a better understanding of historical materials and techniques. We are particularly interested in work that integrates field observations, archival research and scientific analysis in a cohesive, minimally invasive approach. Studies that emphasize non-destructive testing and its value for the preservation of historic building fabric are also particularly welcome. This theme aims to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and broaden the methodological scope of AFR.

Theme 3: Towards Best Practices – Refining, Defining, and Applying Standards and Guidelines of Best Practice

Exploring how existing AFR standards can be improved, adapted, and effectively applied across projects and contexts.

While foundational standards and guidelines for architectural finishes have been established, there remains significant scope for refinement and enhancement. This theme invites commissioners and AFR researchers to reflect on current standards, exploring their application, challenges, and areas for improvement. Contributions discussing the development of more specialized guidelines or handbooks, tailored to diverse contexts and focuses, are encouraged. The Group "AFR09 – Best Practice for AFR Guidelines Project" will be presenting a dedicated paper during a fixed slot at the conference, sharing insights on preparing more comprehensive and actionable guidelines. Submissions featuring examples or case studies of where standards have been implemented are particularly welcome: Did these standards succeed in practice, and what factors influenced their effectiveness?

Theme 4: Advancing Knowledge – Improving Education and Training in Architectural Finishes Research

Focusing on the skills, pathways, and future of AFR training through education, CPD, and mentoring. What skills and knowledge do AFR practitioners need, now and in the future? This theme explores the development of AFR expertise across academic programs, apprenticeships, internships, mentoring, and continuing professional development (CPD). We invite reflections on the evolution of training in AFR, looking back at historical models, examining current practice, and imagining new directions for education and knowledge-sharing in the field.

Theme 5: Narratives of Architectural Finishes – Stories, Diversity, and Cultural Contexts

Exploring how AFR uncovers hidden histories, interprets cultural contexts, and examines the global diversity of architectural finishes.

This theme examines the narrative power of Architectural Finishes Research (AFR) to reveal hidden histories, interpret cultural contexts, and showcase the global diversity of materials and practices. We welcome contributions that integrate documentary sources, highlight regional traditions, address cross-cultural interpretation challenges, or employ creative methods such as historic paint reconstructions. Case studies demonstrating how AFR engages diverse audiences, reframes historical understanding, or supports exhibitions and international collaborations are particularly encouraged.

Theme 6: Building the Knowledge Infrastructure – Recording, Archiving, and Sharing AFR

Addressing how AFR outputs are stored, shared, and made accessible for future research and use.

Ensuring the long-term accessibility and usefulness of AFR outputs is a critical yet often overlooked challenge. This theme focuses on practical and digital solutions for storing, archiving, and sharing research findings, reports, datasets, and physical samples on local or national level. Submissions should consider issues of access, storage, reuse, and signposting, including alignment with FAIR principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse). We invite case studies and proposals that strengthen robust, sustainable knowledge infrastructures for AFR, with the potential to inform continental and global solution frameworks.

Stay tuned for more information at <http://afrconference2027.at>. The homepage will be continuously updated, with further details and news to be published soon.

Details on abstract submission will be provided in the **Call for Abstracts, to be released with the opening of the submission platform in January 2026**. The **deadline for paper abstracts is scheduled for 1 May 2026**.