

The international colloquium, ***The Lives and Afterlives of Teaching Collections: Art Academies as Laboratories of Cultural Heritage***, brings together historians, conservators, and artists to reflect on the material, institutional, and intellectual legacies of academic teaching collections. From their establishment, and especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European art academies assembled extensive collections of paintings, sculptures, photographs, books, plaster casts, drawings, prints, and a wide range of instruments. Conceived as institutions for the training of artists and artisans, they developed complex pedagogical ecosystems in which making, copying, and observing were profoundly intertwined. In many cases, these holdings were closely connected to — or even constituted the nucleus of — newly founded museums of decorative and industrial arts, transforming the academy itself into a laboratory where teaching, research, and exhibition converged.

Over the course of the twentieth century, however, many of these collections suffered neglect, dispersal, or even destruction, particularly following modernist and neo-avant-garde critiques of academic tradition. Once central pedagogical and research devices and powerful instruments of cultural and ideological transmission, they gradually became marginal both within artistic practice and within art-historical scholarship.

The colloquium reconsiders academic teaching collections not as obsolete remnants, but as critical witnesses to the evolving relationships between pedagogy, heritage, and cultural identity. Established within the universalist paradigms of the Western canon, these collections now invite renewed interpretation through contemporary historiographic perspectives. Viewed in this light, they reveal complex material and epistemic histories shaped by fragmentation, displacement, reinterpretation, and institutional transformation.

Adopting a comparative and transnational perspective, the colloquium examines shared dynamics and local specificities across central European contexts, with particular attention to the gendered, colonial, and national frameworks that shaped the production, circulation, and interpretation of didactic models and copies. It also addresses the intertwined lives and afterlives of teaching materials, tracing their transformation from tools of artistic formation into cultural artefacts and heritage assets. At the same time, it considers how study collections illuminate broader questions of absence, power, and representation, while emerging fields of inquiry open new perspectives on these materials, situating them within contemporary cultural debates.

A central focus will be the historical moments through which these collections were produced, transformed, or damaged. Events, conservation histories, and institutional trajectories mark each collection as a distinct material sedimentation of time, while processes of loss and destabilisation provide a crucial interpretive lens through which their meanings and uses can be reconsidered.

By fostering dialogue among historians, conservators, and artists, ***The Lives and Afterlives of Teaching Collections: Art Academies as Laboratories of Cultural Heritage*** seeks to reactivate the legacy of art academies as living laboratories of knowledge and creativity. The colloquium will examine how these collections may be studied, preserved, and reimagined today—linking historical pedagogies with contemporary artistic practices while opening new perspectives for research, documentation, and critical reflection within higher arts education.

The event is organised within the framework of the project IartNET – International Platform for Artistic Research and Cultural Heritage at Italian Higher Arts Education Institutions, funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU and coordinated by Nicoletta Leonardi. The colloquium is organised by the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, in collaboration with Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.

iARTnet

INTERNATIONAL

THE LIVES AND AFTERLIVES OF TEACHING COLLECTIONS ART ACADEMIES AS LABORATORIES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

FRIDAY, 29 MAY 2026
SATURDAY, 30 MAY 2026
ACCADEMIA DI BELLE ARTI DI BRERA

CURATED BY NICOLETTA LEONARDI AND MICK FINCH

COLLOQUIUM

Fratelli Alinari, Intérieur de l'atelier de sculpture Bartolini avec plusieurs de ses modèles en plâtre (detail), 1857, Turin, Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti

Finanziato dall'Unione europea
Next Generation EU, Missione 4
Componente 1
CUP D43C24000580001

Finanziato dall'Unione europea
NextGenerationEU

Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca

Italiadomani
PIANO NAZIONALE DI SPESA E RESILIENZA

BRERA
ACCADEMIA DI BELLE ARTI

iARTnet

ual: central
saint martins

Friday, 29 May 2026**Istituto Lombardo · Sala delle Adunanze**

10.00 AM - 10.15 AM	Introduction Anna Mariani - Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera
10.15 AM - 11.10 AM	Opening remarks Giovanna Cassese - Accademia di Belle Arti di Napoli National Council for Higher Artistic and Musical Education
11.00 AM - 11.20 AM	Coffee break
11.20 AM - 12.20 PM	Teaching Collections as Epistemic Infrastructures: the IartNET project Nicoletta Leonardi - Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera Response Anne McCauley - Princeton University
12.20 PM - 12.40 PM	Q&A
12.40 PM - 14.00 PM	Lunch
14.00 PM - 15.00 PM	The copy of Michelangelo's Last Judgement (Paris, École des Beaux-Arts), from Sigalon to the After Michelangelo exhibition: a laboratory for artistic teaching Alice Thomine-Berrada - Beaux-Arts de Paris Response Ilaria Andreoli - INHA Paris
15.00 PM - 15.20 PM	Q&A
15.20 PM - 15.40 PM	Coffee Break
15.40 PM - 16.40 PM	Envisioning the Past from the Future. The Transhistorical Path and Curatorial Practice within the Vienna Academy's Collections Sabine Folie - Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien René Schober - Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien Response Jitka Šosová - UMPRUM Academy of Art, Architecture, and Design in Prague
16.40 PM - 17.00 PM	Q&A
17.00 PM - 18.00 PM	Changing status: tracing 258 years of the Royal Academy Cast Collection Eliza Bonham Carter - Royal Academy of Arts, London Hannah Higham - Royal Academy of Arts, London Response Gerardo de Simone - Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze
18.00 PM - 18.20 PM	Q&A
18.20 PM - 19.20 PM	Apero

Saturday, 30 May 2026**Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera · Sala Napoleonica**

10.00 AM - 10.30 AM	Value of the Copy: Hybrid Pedagogy, Reproduction, and International Exchange in Contemporary Art Education Martin Westwood - Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London
10.30 AM - 10.45 AM	Q&A
10.45 AM - 11.00 AM	Coffee break
11.00 AM - 12.45 PM	Round Table Discussion Chair Mick Finch - Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld , Reparative Encounters Network for Artistic Research, Aarhus University Nicola Lo Calzo - École nationale supérieure d'arts de Paris Cergy Linda Fregni Nagler - Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti, Bergamo Carl Johan Hogberg - Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten, The Hague Moderator Elizabeth Wright - Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London
11.10 AM - 12.30 PM	
12.30 PM - 12.45 PM	Q&A
12.45 PM - 13.15 PM	Closing remarks Éric de Chassey - Beaux-Arts de Paris
13.15 PM - 15.00 PM	Lunch