



Vereinigung der
Kunsthistorikerinnen
und Kunsthistoriker
in der Schweiz

Association suisse
des historiennes
et historiens
de l'art

Associazione
svizzera delle
storiche e degli
storici dell'arte



Verband österreichischer
Kunsthistorikerinnen und
Kunsthistoriker

BEYOND BORDERS: AUSTRIAN AND SWISS ART HISTORY IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

7. – 8. NOVEMBER 2025
NATIONAL MUSEUM ZÜRICH

International Conference of the Swiss Association of Art
Historians (VKKS | ASHHA | ASSSA) in cooperation with the
Association of Austrian Art Historians (VöKK)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The first joint conference of the Association of Austrian Art Historians (VöKK) and the Swiss Association of Art Historians (VKKS | ASHHA | ASSSA) was held in the Kunsthaus Bregenz in 2007, on the topic of “Across Borders: Surveying a Cultural Scene”. To continue the discussions initiated there, the two associations are now planning a further meeting in Switzerland, to be held on 7 – 8 November 2025. In an era of globalization, the title of the second meeting is to be: “Beyond Borders: Austrian and Swiss Art History in the Global Context”. The host and partner for the second event is the National Museum Zurich, which holds objects and items that document the historical relationship between Habsburg Austria and the Swiss Confederation. As the museum’s current exhibition “colonial. Switzerland’s Global Entanglements” (13.09.2024 – 19.01.2025) shows, the National Museum Zurich is an institution with a perspective that extends well beyond Switzerland’s own borders.

The conference will have two sections: The first section will aim to examine cultural and artistic exchanges between Austria and Switzerland and the countries’ mutual views of one another from the Middle Ages to the present day. To mention only a few examples: Baroque masters from Vorarlberg such as Franz Beer built monasteries and churches in Switzerland; architects, stuccoists and painters from the cantons of Graubünden and Ticino built – or converted to the Baroque style – monasteries, churches and residential palaces in Austria. In 1904, Ferdinand Hodler achieved his international breakthrough at the 19th Exhibition of the Vienna Secession, of which he was a corresponding member. Following an extended visit to Vienna’s Hohe Warte district, the Swiss painter commissioned Josef Hoffmann to design his apartment in Geneva. To promote exports and bring in urgently needed foreign exchange into the country, the Wiener Werkstätte in 1917 opened a branch in Zurich’s Bahnhofstrasse and had textile designs printed by Swiss companies such as Textil-Werke Blumenegg

and Clavel & Lindenmeyer. Following Germany's annexation of Austria on 12 March 1938, politically persecuted and Jewish artists and art dealers flooded into Switzerland, which became a hub for refugee assets and art works that had been declared "degenerate".

Like Switzerland, Austria also struggles with its neutral status. Both countries are now, rather belatedly, coming to terms with their (quite different) colonial histories. What influence are these topics having on art-historical research, contemporary art, and on the two countries' relationships?

The second section will consist of shorter panel discussions with specialists, on common current research topics such as: the dialogue between artists and scholars; the way in which contemporary artists are engaging with topics such as war, climate change, the decolonialization of collections, and cultural participation.

The potential and opportunities for future bilateral research collaborations between Austria and Switzerland will be explored in a concluding discussion.

Suggested topics for the first section are requested in the form of an abstract (max. 2'500 characters, including spaces) along with a short curriculum vitae, in either German or English to the VKKS office: info@vkks.ch. Submission deadline: 15 November 2024.

Concept and Organization

Prof. Régine Bonnefoit, President of VKKS / Université de Neuchâtel; Prof. Noémie Etienne, University of Vienna; Dr. Christina Hainzl, 1st Board Member VöKK / University for Continuing Education Krems; Andrea Winklbauer, Mag., 2nd Board Member VöKK / Jewish Museum Vienna

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