

Call for Papers

13th International Round Table on Polychromy in Ancient Sculpture and Architecture

Polychromy and the Senses: Integrating Scientific, Cognitive, and Aesthetic Perspectives on Ancient Colour

November 18-21, 2026

Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki - Thessaloniki, Greece

The 13th Polychromy Round Table, *Polychromy and the Senses: Integrating Scientific, Cognitive, and Aesthetic Perspectives on Ancient Colour*, foregrounds the sensory and experiential dimensions of colour as a way to move beyond a purely technical understanding of ancient polychromy. Building on decades of archaeometric advances and a rich tradition of philological engagement with ancient texts, the chosen theme aims to integrate material analyses of pigments and surfaces with the evidence of language, metaphor, and colour terminology preserved in literary, philosophical, and technical sources. By bringing these strands into dialogue with cognitive science, sensory archaeology, and digital reconstruction, the *Round Table* highlights how colour in Antiquity was theorized, named, and experienced not only as a visual property but as part of a broader multisensory, emotional, and conceptual field that shaped ancient ways of seeing and knowing. The 13th Polychromy Round Table seeks submissions for papers related to innovative projects and methods in interdisciplinary polychromy research under two rubrics, the principal theme “Polychromy and the Senses” and, as customary, “News from Current Research.”

Abstract submissions, with a maximum of 400 words, must include the title of your contribution, author(s), and affiliation(s). Please submit these to PRT13@amth.gr by March 15, 2026. Presentations should be either 20 minutes long, followed by a 10-minute discussion, or shorter 10-minute lightning presentations as determined by the scientific committee. Physical presence in Thessaloniki is required for all speakers, although presentations will also be live-streamed. Please indicate if your contribution falls under the category of “Polychromy and the Senses” or “News from Current Research.” A scientific committee will review all submissions and make decisions in Spring 2026. We anticipate that the proceedings of the *Round Table* will be published in the Institute of Historical Research’s (National Hellenic Research Foundation) international series, MELETEMATA.

During the conference, special tours of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki collections, special exhibitions, as well as conservation and scientific facilities will be available. Additionally, there will be two optional visits to the Archaeological Site of Aigai, the Museum of the Royal Tombs, and the new Polycentric Museum of Aigai.

Possible topics to be addressed include

Seeing Colour – Ancient Theories and Modern Perceptions

Explores ancient literary, scientific and philosophical sources related to colour, and examines how modern cognitive and perceptual science reshapes interpretations of ancient chromatic experience.

Cognitive and Emotional Frameworks for Ancient Colour Perception

Explores how ancient viewers may have perceived and emotionally engaged with polychrome artworks through cognitive science and sensory archaeology, including memory, attention, affect, eye-tracking, and experimental reconstructions.

Multisensory Dimensions of Polychromy

Investigates non-visual aspects of coloured surfaces—such as texture, touch, smell, and acoustic by-products of pigment preparation—as key to the holistic, social, and ritual experience of ancient colour.

Aesthetic Strategies – Polychromy in Artistic Practice

Addresses the role of colour in composition, symbolism, and visual communication, linking archaeological evidence to questions of style, iconography, regional and chronological variation, and the interplay of colour, light, and viewer response.

Experiencing Colour – Reconstructing the Polychrome Sensorium

Brings together interdisciplinary methods to revive ancient polychromy as an immersive multisensory phenomenon, using digital proxies (e.g. virtual reality (VR), mixed and augmented VR, AI-enhanced VR, 3D modelling) and physical facsimiles while critically assessing authenticity, sensory fidelity, and ethical issues in reconstruction and museum display.

Interdisciplinary Project Design and Collaborative Networks in Polychromy Research

Invites reflections on innovative project models, data sharing, and cross-disciplinary collaboration among conservation scientists, archaeologists, art historians, philologists, and cognitive researchers.

Material Colour – Analytical Innovations

Focuses on advanced archaeometric methods (e.g. spectroscopy, imaging, material stratigraphy) to identify pigments, binders, and application techniques in painting, sculpture, and architecture.

News from current research

It welcomes contributions that, while not directly related to the main theme of the round table, present recent research on ancient polychromy in sculpture and architecture.

Organisers:

Hariclia Brecolaki (National Hellenic Research Foundation)
Anastasia Gadolou (Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki)
Styliana Galiniki (Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki)
Christos Katsifas (Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki)

Members of the Scientific Committee:

Mark B. Abbe (University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, U. S.A.)
Eleni Aggelakopoulou (Acropolis Restoration Service, Athens, Greece)
Brigitte Bourgeois (Emeritus curator, Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France, Paris, France)

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