

The first conference of the established section Science Diplomacy and Culture within EUSDA takes place in Venice at the Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi. The conference of the Science Diplomacy & Culture group is a biennial event and will be followed by a publication. It aims to discuss the role of science diplomacy for ancient and contemporary heritage, questions the importance of science and cultural diplomacy for power and aims to reflect on the contribution of contemporary artistic practice. At each conference, an artist is invited to make an artistic contribution to the conference theme.



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Science Diplomacy and Heritage: On the Politics of Fragments, the Role of Science, and the Perception of Lacunas



© Ali Cherri, *Angel of History*, 2023
Roman marble head of a deity, plaster, steel, 53 × 21 × 11 cm

**December 4th, 2025,
Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi,
San Marco 3260, Venice,
09:30–19:00**

EUTOPIA

Palazzo Grassi
Punta della Dogana
Pinault
Collection

University for
Continuing
Education Krems



Institute for the
Danube Region
and Central Europe



The Book of Mud Performance

The fascination with mud extends both as a tangible material and a symbolic metaphor. Its transformation into a building material represents a process as ancient as the history of humanity. Neither fully earth nor entirely water, muddy marshes have long been perceived as feared zones, enigmatic and ghostly places that evoke both fascination and dread. Inspired by the work of Ali Cherri on the relationship between civilization and landscape, *The Book of Mud* uses mud as a starting point for a journey through various narratives related to marshes, stagnant waters, and lowlands. This symbolic choice allows for the exploration of the multiple dimensions of earth and water, both physical and metaphorical, and reveals how these elements interact in shaping our understanding of the world and our own existence.

*If mud had a memory of its own,
what would it deem worthy of remembrance ?*



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© Ali Cherri, Book of Mud



© Samuel Kirszenbaum

Concept:
Christina Hainzl (University for Continuing Education Krems)
& **Eric Piaget (EUTOPIA)**

in collaboration with Palazzo Grassi-Pinault Collection, Venice,
and the support of the European Union Science Diplomacy Alliance
(EUSDA), the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe
and UNESCO.

Design: Alexandra Möllner

Ali Cherri

Ali Cherri's work is inspired by artefacts and the natural world. His sculptures, drawings and installations explore the temporal shifts between ancient worlds and contemporary societies. Using archaeological artefacts as a starting point, he investigates the boundaries of ideologies that underpin the foundations of nations and the myth of national progression. His work explores the links between archaeology, historical narrative and heritage, considering the processes of excavation and relocation of cultural objects into museums.

He received the Robert E. Fulton Fellowship from Harvard University (2016), the Rockefeller Foundation Prize (2017), and was nominated for the Abraaj Group Art Prize (2018). In 2022, he received the Silver Lion for his participation in the Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition, The Milk of Dreams. His works are part of many major collections, including MoMA: Museum of Modern Art (New York); Pinault Collection (Paris); British Museum (London); Art Jameel (Dubai); Centre Pompidou (Paris); MACBA (Barcelona); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York); Mathaf (Doha); SeMA: Seoul Museum of Art (Seoul); [mac] Musée d'art contemporain de Marseille (Marseille), Musée Bonnefanten (Maastricht).

Recent solo exhibitions include Les Veilleurs ([mac], Musée d'art contemporain de Marseille, 2025), Twenty Four Ghosts per Second (Bourse de Commerce, 2025), How I Am Monument (Baltic Art Center, 2025 and Vienna Secession, 2024), Envisagement (Giacometti Institute, 2024), Dreamless Night (Frac Bretagne, 2024 and GAMeC, 2023), Humble and quiet and soothing as mud (Swiss Institute, 2023), to name only a few.

→ www.alicherri.com

Introduction

Culture constitutes a foundation of human identity, yet it is often at risk in a rapidly changing world. In an era defined by increased tensions, climate change, and technological advancements, the intersection of artistic practice, research, diplomacy and heritage presents a fertile area for dialogue. This conference aims to bring together academics, curators, heritage and museum experts, artists, diplomats, and anyone interested in this transdisciplinary perspective to explore how cooperations can be developed, particularly in regions affected by conflict, environmental degradation, and socio-political instability, and in which way contemporary artistic practice can contribute. The conference tries to reflect experiences, socially and culturally constructed boundaries and aims to negotiate contemporary perceptions and forms of shared imagination. From using technologies like AI and satellite imaging for heritage preservation to the diplomatic dimensions of art and culture, such as negotiating the restitution of museum collections or balancing political dimensions, these topics will be central to the discussions. The first two panels deal with the dialogue of cultural heritage with scientific innovations and their diplomatic dimension. The artist talk and performance in the late afternoon and evening reflect the connection and the lacunas of contemporary social and cultural narratives. Set against the backdrop of Venice, a city known for both its rich cultural heritage and vulnerabilities, this conference provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the potentials of enhancing the collaboration between different fields. Venice's own challenges with climate change and mass tourism serve as a stark reminder of the need for common approaches to cultural preservation. At the same time, Venice, as a hub for contemporary art and culture, has become a laboratory of combining the old with the new and transforming it through contemporary artistic practice.

Admission free! Please register at:
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09:30–10:15
Welcome
Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi

Bruno Racine, Director, Palazzo Grassi-Punta della Dogana, **Viktoria Weber**, Rector, University for Continuing Education Krems, **Jan Marco Müller**, Team Leader Global Approach, Science Diplomacy – European Commission, **Magdalena Landry**, Director UNESCO Regional Bureau Science and Culture Europe, **Roland Hinterhölzl**, Rectors Delegate, EUTOPIA/Università Ca' Foscari, **Alessandro Lombardo**, Chair, European Union Science Diplomacy Alliance

10:15–11:00
Staying with the Fragments, Keynote

Dan Hicks, University of Oxford & Pitt Rivers Museum

11:00–12:45
Panel I
Monuments and Mindsets

Regina Rusz, Ambassador, Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director General Cultural Affairs, **Alessandro Garbellini**, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of Multilateral Cooperation, **Volker Erhard**, Federal Foreign Office, Germany, Head of Cultural Preservation, **Katalin Andreides**, Lawyer, Rome, **Ivor Agyeman Duah**, Manhiya Palace Museum, Ghana, **Samuel Partey**, UNESCO Venice, **Muhammad Adeel**, Embassy of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium & Luxembourg, **Pierre Bruno Ruffini**, AVRIST and Le Havre Normandy University, France.

12:45–14:00
Lunch Break

14:00–14:30
**Bridging Wisdom and Innovation:
Science Diplomacy for a Shared Planet,
Keynote**

Peggy Oti-Boateng, Executive Director, African Academy of Sciences

14:30–15:45
Panel II
Heritage in an Era of Uncertainty

Martina Schubert, Deputy Director, Diplomatic Academy Austria, **Abdelrazek Elnaggar**, EUTOPIA, **Nadia von Maltzahn**, Orient-Institut Beirut, **Francesca Tarocco**, NICHE, Ca' Foscari Venice, **Cengiz Günay**, Director, Austrian Institute for International Affairs

16:00–17:15
**Between the Old and the New—
Heritage of our Time**

Artist and filmmaker **Ali Cherri** and Director **Bruno Racine**, Palazzo Grassi-Punta della Dogana in conversation with **Christina Hainzl**

17:30–18:30
The Book of Mud

Performance by **Ali Cherri** in the atrium of Palazzo Grassi
Access to the performance is open to symposium participants and visitors with a valid ticket for the current exhibition at Palazzo Grassi

