



Bern University of Applied Sciences – Academy of the Arts (HKB) is one of the leading Art Universities in Europe with a broad range of Bachelor and Master Programmes, a variety of advanced-level courses and a doctoral school Studies in the Arts which it runs collaboratively with the University of Bern. Its four research institutes perform cutting-edge research on topics related to artistic practice in visual and performing arts, music, theatre, design and conservation.

Within the research project **Critical Conservation**, funded by the **Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)** and situated in the Research Institute Materiality in Art and Culture, we are seeking to appoint

## RESEARCH ASSOCIATE 40-50%

Commencing February 1, 2026, and concluding on January 31, 2030, this position is designed for an individual with experience in conservation, including research. It offers the opportunity to engage in focused research while benefiting from valuable mentorship.

**Critical Conservation** is a four-year research project that redefines conservation as a critical practice, theorizing it as a discursive, pluricultural, decolonial and epistemic activity shaped by politics, conventions, education, the economy and institutions. As a political and ethical activity—emerging from the critical-reflective developments of recent decades—Critical Conservation centers on cultural meaning, power dynamics and social responsibility. Our project aims to engage with contemporary *communities of practice*, including traditional knowledge holders, makers, artisans and craftspeople (broadly defined), who have historically been positioned outside the expert domain of professional and scholarly conservation. Through *transversal conservation*, the project fosters transtemporal and transspecialist dialogue, bridging separate fields of practice—such as the conservation of recent art, architectural preservation and the care of archaeological and/or “ethnographic” objects, as well as various forms of repair—that often operate in the silos of their specialisms. Lastly, it explores *experimental conservation* as a means to envision possible futures.

The Research Institute Materiality in Art and Culture explores the intricate connections among the materiality of art and cultural artifacts, their human and environmental contexts, and ongoing existence as spatio-temporal, economic and political constructs, whether within or outside collections. Through material and cultural analysis, reflective-theoretical approaches and addressing critical conservation questions, the Institute parses the human-made world and its expression in culture.

Join a dynamic team comprising both accomplished and early-career scholars, museum professionals and conservators for an opportunity to contribute to research at the forefront of discourse. The ideal candidate should showcase proficiency in independent research within conservation and critical heritage studies on the intersection of human sciences. Active engagement in current debates, critical reflection on existing sources and adeptness in interdisciplinary collaboration are essential skills for success in this role.

We require a candidate with a strong research record, committed to excellence and a high work ethic. The ideal candidate must demonstrate flexibility and dynamism in team collaboration to achieve project goals and contribute to knowledge through both written and oral publications. They should excel in communication, possess creative thinking skills, and engage confidently with practitioners and academic researchers. Essential qualifications include an MA or equivalent in heritage studies, conservation or related field, along with a keen interest in the project's questions.

This is a **40-50% FTE**, fixed-term position spanning from **February 1, 2026, to January 31, 2030**. The research associate collaborates closely with the Project Lead, **Prof. Dr. Hanna Hölling**.

## Main responsibilities

- Facilitate the successful completion of the Critical Conservation research project by providing dedicated support over four years
- Collaborate effectively with team members to ensure the effective delivery of all its components
- Contribute to the organization and facilitation of internal project and expert meetings, public forums, workshops, as well as other methods of communication and dissemination, aimed at academic and professional audiences
- Conduct field research on one of the project's subthemes, evaluate its results and translate into research outputs
- Work on a compendium, interview series and other project formats
- Research, write and publish academic articles in peer-reviewed formats
- Collaborate on the publication of a special issue of a journal, involving editorial tasks and correspondence with authors, publishers and other stakeholders.
- Play a significant role in the maintenance of the project's website, featuring its outputs and disseminating its key findings
- Work independently and support other members of the project team
- Deliver other agreed-upon outputs, such as writing oriented towards both the general public and professional readership as well as writing of final project reports
- Possess an excellent command of academic and spoken English. Proficiency in one of the Swiss national languages, preferably German, is beneficial

The interviews for this position will be conducted on **September 23 and 29, 2025, in person, in Bern**. Queries about this opening can be directed to [hanna.hoelling@hkb.bfh.ch](mailto:hanna.hoelling@hkb.bfh.ch)

Applications require: (1) a cover letter outlining the candidate's motivation for this position, (2) a statement of research experience and interests (max 2 pages A4), (3) a curriculum vitae including names and contact information of three academic referees able to speak to the candidate's suitability for this post (4) a list of publications.

Please note that we only accept online applications in English or German. The deadline for applications is **August 31, 2025**. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

To apply for this position, please follow the link on the [HKB Jobs website](#).