

9th International Congress of the French Association for Archaeology of Glass



40th Meeting of the AFAV

Glass in the funerary Practices of the Roman Empire



France
— **LYON** — 25 - 27 November 2026 —

MILC - Maison Internationale des Langues et des Cultures

9th International Conference of Association Française pour l'Archéologie du Verre (AFAV)

Glass in the funerary Practices of the Roman Empire

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Research in funerary archaeology has considerably expanded over the past two decades, driven by the increasing number of excavations of burial areas, the application of new analytical methods, and **a renewed focus on funerary gestures** aimed at understanding **the modes of deposition and the role of artefacts within graves**. The materials selected, their quantity and quality, as well as the placement of deposits, all follow **a codified staging**. These rituals, grounded in religion and tradition, are found throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire and were adopted by populations united under a common administration and shared culture. However, the examination of burials shows that even when the same codes are shared, their implementation may vary. Do these differences reflect local or social identities? Are they the expression of settled populations or of groups of external origin who established themselves permanently? Or do they rather result from the circulation of objects and the influence of commercial exchange?

These questions—regarding **the relationship between the deceased, ritual practices, and the associated grave goods**—are not new, but recent approaches have tended toward increasing specialization. Several research programmes have explored deposits as a whole—whether focusing on the arrangement surrounding the funerary container (e.g. the GAAF Meetings in Chartres, 2020), practices concerning children (the ANR Project L'Enfant et la Mort dans l'Antiquité), or the reconstruction of gestures within cremation and inhumation burials (the work of F. Blaizot et al., in southeastern Gaul). Few studies, however, have concentrated on a single type of deposit, with the exception of the Sfecag conference in Autun (2016), dedicated to ceramics in funerary contexts.

Within this framework, glass—particularly glass tableware—offers **a privileged lens** through which to examine funerary practices. The first objective is to consider the role of glass during the various stages of the ritual: on the pyre, within the grave, in the construction of the tomb, or during commemorative practices. The functions of glass vessels must also be questioned: what functional types are represented? When associated with ceramics, are these functions complementary? How was glass employed within the funerary sphere? Addressing these questions helps us to understand the significance of this material **in the funerary process**.

Secondly, the analysis of glass invites broader reflection on supply networks and regional variation. Although glassware followed widely distributed formal models across the Empire, some productions stand out for their local specificities. These typological and technical differences provide an opportunity to examine how regional practices fit within a shared cultural framework while retaining distinctive expressions. The study of an extensive corpus—covering a wide chronological range and a large geographical area—will help determine whether assemblages evolve homogeneously or reveal particularities linked to cultural, social, or economic choices.

This conference forms part of **the FunGLASS collective research project**, supported by the Service Régional de l'Archéologie Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Inrap, Eveha, and AFAV. The first two years are devoted to the compilation of data from France, Belgium, and Switzerland; the conference will serve to enrich this corpus with material from neighbouring regions.

These meetings are intended for glass specialists, archaeologists working on funerary contexts, archaeoethnologists, and museum curators studying the period between the 1st and 4th centuries AD across a wide territory ranging from the British Isles to the Balkan Peninsula, and from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean. Support is also expected from various European research networks, including **AFAV** (Association Française pour l'Archéologie du Verre), **AHG** (Association for the History of Glass), the **Comitato Nazionale Italiano AIHV**, and the **AIHV** (Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre).



The organizers also intend to open the conference with a methodological introduction, outlining the operational chain from fieldwork to laboratory analysis. This will include presentations on interdisciplinary collaboration, sampling and conservation procedures, as well as methods of quantification, statistical analysis, and cartographic representation of data. This session will serve as a starting point for an open discussion with participants, paving the way for the subsequent thematic sessions. The proceedings will be published as a thematic volume, planned for release in 2028.

Each présentation lasts 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes for discussion.

To structure the discussion, three main themes are proposed :

1. Between structures, gestures, and deposits

The organization of glass deposits in relation to the deceased may vary from one burial to another, from one funerary complex to another, or even between regions. This theme will explore how graves are arranged, whether distinct patterns or glass assemblages can be observed depending on the type of burial, and whether the mise-en-scène correlates directly with the deceased (age, sex, or community). It will also consider specific or symbolic gestures such as breakage, mutilation, or removal, potentially explored through experimental archaeology.

2. Particular practices

This axis will focus on exceptional, unique, or markedly atypical phenomena—such as vessels of extraordinary size, unusually large numbers of containers, or atypical decorations possibly specific to a particular tomb, as well as special contents within the vessels. These singular practices will be analysed to assess their connection to the deceased and their socio-cultural identity.

3. Glass practices and repertoires: from micro- to macro-regional analysis

This theme will address typological repertoires and preferred or excluded forms within funerary deposits, aiming to define regional assemblages and produce comparative syntheses. Are these differences the result of “fashions,” traditions, influences from trade networks, production systems, or local customs?

**Proposals will be sent to funglassproject@gmail.com
before March 1st 2026**

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Last name	
First name	
Institution	
E-mail	

Type of proposal (fill the box)	Lecture	
	Poster	

Theme requested (check the box)

1. Between structures, gestures, and deposits	
2. Particular practices	
3. Glass practices and repertoires: from micro- to macro-regional analysis	

Title

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Abstract

Would you please join the abstract of your presentation within the title, the names of the authors and their affiliations in 400 words max. (word format)

Authors

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