

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
Summer School
Italian Spaces and Identities: Museums and Restoration
Rome, École française de Rome, 20–24 July 2026

The École française de Rome, in collaboration with: Fondazione Gilardi, Montagnola; Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institut, University of Turin (Department of Historical Studies); and Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Department of Humanities), within the framework of the project "2022KMSWRF Italian restorers move to America", funded by PRIN 2022 funds, CUP H53C2400136000.

Curators

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Scientific Committee

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The Summer School *Italian Spaces and Identities: Museums and Restoration* is part of the project *Spazidentità. Material and Immaterial Spatialities of Italianità from the Cisalpine Republic to Fascism: Territories, Cities, Architectures, Museums*, supported by the École française de Rome and its partners (Programme structurant 2022–2026). The project investigates the relationship between spatial dimensions and the construction of a sense of Italian belonging. On this specific occasion, the aim is to explore the modes of formulation, representation, and transmission of Italian identities through two privileged fields of observation: museums and the practices of art restoration.

Starting from the perspective of the conservation and narration of artistic heritage, the initiative is conceived as an opportunity for interdisciplinary reflection on the theme of Italian identities, deliberately expressed in the plural to highlight their historically stratified, plural, and at times conflictual nature.

Between the age of the Sister Republics and the Fascist period, museum spaces in Italy became crucial sites for the elaboration of narratives concerning national identity and its local and territorial articulations. These narratives evolved in relation to changing critical and disciplinary perspectives, historiographical orientations, as well as the socio-political and legal conditions that shaped their emergence, transformations, changes in management, and functions. Museums thus emerge as cultural and political devices, in which practices of study, conservation, selection, and display of heritage intersect, as highlighted by scholarship in history, art history, museology, and museography.

At the same time, within the same chronological framework, restoration cultures underwent a progressive theoretical and practical articulation. Already in the nineteenth century, restoration responded to multiple and sometimes divergent pressures, linked both to the development of private collecting and to the emergence and expansion of major public museums, first in Europe and subsequently in the United States of America. In this context, restoration practices occupied a position at the intersection of conservation needs, demands for aesthetic enhancement, and the requirements of the art market.

The publication of the first reports and manuals, together with the intensification of international debate, gradually contributed to defining not only methods and operational procedures, but also the historical, social, and political significance of restoration interventions. Choices concerning the aesthetic restitution of works of art in fact contributed to the formulation of specific ideas of the work, the artist, the school, and, more broadly, of cultural identity, within a context marked by constant tension between localist demands and centralising ambitions—particularly in the post-unification period—as well as by propagandistic aspirations.

Within this framework also lies the progressive definition of restorers' specialisations, a profession not yet clearly separated from artistic and artisanal practice and fully embedded in the dynamics of major professional and cultural migrations within Europe and towards the Americas. The circulation of skills, technical knowledge, and operational models thus contributed to the construction of national and transnational traditions of restoration.

Over the course of the twentieth century, and particularly around the mid-century, restoration also became one of the symbolic and cultural forerunners of *Made in Italy*. The founding of the Istituto Centrale del Restauro (1939) responded to the Italian state's desire to promote a unified mode of intervention, recognisable as "national", while from 1963 Cesare Brandi's *Theory of Restoration* was translated, taught, and exported.

Museum institutions, as well as the various sites of private collecting and the gathering of works of art, together with restoration cultures, are involved both in major historical events and in the micro-histories unfolding across different territories and within diverse national and international relationships. Likewise, the dynamics connected to the management of cultural heritage are closely tied to the evolution of protection legislation, which over the long period considered experienced moments of stagnation as well as phases of strong acceleration.

The Summer School will be structured around lectures delivered by scholars from the various disciplinary fields involved, beginning with the keynote speakers Dominique Poulot (emeritus, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) and Orietta Rossi Pinelli (formerly Università La Sapienza, Rome); external visits to museums and heritage institutions (including the Istituto Centrale del Restauro, the Vatican Museums, the Museo Napoleonico and the formerly Ministry of Corporations); and presentations of participants' own research by the selected attendees.

Target Audience

The call is addressed to PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers working in the following disciplinary fields:

- History
- Art history, museology, and museography
- History of architecture
- History of political thought
- Legal history

Submission of Applications

The application dossier must be uploaded by **10 April 2026, at midnight**, to the École française de Rome website:

<https://candidatures.efrome.it/ecoledeteespacesetidentitesitaliennesmuseesetrestauration>

At the time of application, candidates must specify whether they intend to participate as auditors or whether they wish to propose a short paper to be discussed during the Summer School. In the latter case, applicants are invited to submit proposals related to ongoing research, consistent with the themes of the Summer School.

The Scientific Committee will select **10 participants**.

The working languages will be primarily Italian and English. Participation requires comprehension of both languages and the ability to express oneself in at least one of them.

The application dossier must include:

- A Curriculum Vitae;
- A letter of motivation;
- A letter of recommendation written by the PhD supervisor or by a faculty reference for postdoctoral researchers;
- Where applicable, an abstract of the proposed paper, with a maximum length of **10,000 characters including spaces**.

The results of the selection process will be communicated by **15 May 2026**. The final programme of the Summer School will be sent in June.

Coverage of Expenses

Participation in the Summer School is free of charge.

Travel expenses will not be covered. The Summer School will, however, cover accommodation in Rome at the École française de Rome guesthouse in Piazza Navona—from the night of 19 July to the night of 23 July—as well as lunches and **two dinners** (a kitchen will be available to participants).

Information

For further information, please write to the following addresses, specifying “Summer School Spazidentità” in the subject line:

- Maria Beatrice Failla: mariabeatrice.failla@unito.it
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