

Italian Sculpture from the 13th to the 18th Centuries: From Dispersal to Preservation as Cultural Heritage

- Rome | École française de Rome and Académie de France à Rome – Villa Medici | June 23 and 24, 2027
- Paris | Institut national d'histoire de l'art l'art and École du Louvre | October 11 and 12, 2027



Application deadline:
November 15, 2026

Edith Schiemann, *Salle de l'Altes Museum*, 1896, oil painting, 102 x 82 x 4,5 cm (including the frame), Berlin, Bode-Museum

Abstract

Between 1815 and the early 20th century, Italian sculpture experienced an unprecedented circulation throughout Europe, driven by the restitutions following the Congress of Vienna, the dispersal of collections, and the boom in the art market. This one-day conference aims to analyze the dynamics of this circulation, the formation of public and private collections, and the role of market actors. It will also address issues related to the restoration, reproduction, and dissemination of works, while examining the political, cultural, and heritage dimensions of these transfers. The goal is to integrate approaches from art history, economics, and politics in order to shed light on the transnational heritage status of Italian sculpture.

Call for papers

Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the early years of the 20th century, Italian sculpture—from the Middle Ages to the modern era—experienced an unprecedented circulation across Europe. The restitutions following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the gradual dispersal of numerous aristocratic and ecclesiastical collections in Italy, and the development of the international art market all contributed to a profound transformation in the status and perception of these works.

In the 19th century, many Italian sculptures left their original contexts to become part of private and public collections in France, England, and Germany. This phenomenon occurred during a pivotal period marked by the professionalization of art market participants—dealers, experts, and restorers—and by the gradual formation of specialized museum collections. The acquisitions made by certain curators and art historians played a decisive role in this process, contributing to the redefinition of the canon of Italian sculpture and the promotion of certain regional schools.

At the same time, the development of major European collections gave rise to significant political and cultural debates. The acquisition of Italian works became a matter of national prestige and fueled competition among museums. Thus, the formation of collections of Italian sculpture in European institutions sparked discussions about the place of foreign art within national museums, particularly in the press and scholarly journals. In this context, Italian sculpture also emerged as a key tool in establishing art history as a scientific discipline. Reproduction techniques—casts, tracings, and photographs—as well as the dissemination of works through specialized publications contributed to the development of a body of knowledge with a transnational dimension.

The goal of this conference is to bring together established researchers, as well as doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers, to explore the conditions of this circulation and this process of heritage preservation, by linking the history of collections, the art market, and museum institutions with the political history of heritage.

Several thematic areas will guide the conference's discussions.

- The first will focus on the circulation of artworks and the formation of collections, with the aim of better understanding the dynamics of the transnational circulation of sculptures between Italy and the rest of Europe. In particular, examining the transition from private to public collections will shed light on the curatorial choices made by European institutions, while also providing an opportunity to take a closer look at their acquisition policies. Building on these themes, the analysis will also focus on commercial networks, emphasizing the role of antique dealers, intermediaries, and experts, as well as their sales strategies and the development of an international clientele.
- Special attention will be given to the restoration and physical alterations of the works, including forgeries. The aim will be both to better understand the role of

the restorers who worked on these sculptures during the 19th century and to study the dissemination of technical expertise.

- The issue of the reproduction and dissemination of models will be another focus of discussion. Presentations will address, in particular, casts, tracings, and photography, as well as the effects of these processes on the understanding and reception of sculpture during this period. This perspective will allow for a deeper examination of the institutionalization of art history in the 19th century, with particular attention to the role of specialized journals in disseminating knowledge about Italian sculpture throughout Europe. To date, this aspect remains under-explored.
- Finally, the conference will provide an opportunity to examine the political and identity-related issues associated with museum collections. National acquisition policies and forms of competition among European museums will be analyzed, as will the public debates sparked by the presence of Italian works in foreign institutions. Issues related to heritage protection, particularly in Italy, will also be addressed, as will those of artistic nationalism and processes of heritage designation.

The conference will particularly encourage interdisciplinary approaches that bring together art history, cultural history, and economic and political history. Provenance studies, as well as the analysis of art market and museum archives, will play a central role. Specific attention will also be given to proposals that draw on methods from the digital humanities, particularly for the visualization of provenance data and circulation networks, or for mapping the circulation of Italian sculptures.

Presentations will last 30 minutes and may be delivered in French, Italian, or English.

Procedures

This call for papers is open to a broad community of specialists—art historians, curators, and conservators—from universities, museums, historic sites, and French and international research institutions. Proposals should include a brief introduction of the presenter (5 to 10 lines), the title and an abstract of the presentation (1 page), along with a brief CV including a list of publications (1 page), and must be submitted by midnight on November 15, 2026, to Giancarla Cilmi (giancarla.cilmi@efrome.it) and Marion Boudon-Machuel (marion.boudonmachuel@inha.fr).

SCIENTIFIC STAFF FOR THE PROGRAM

**Marion
Boudon-Machuel**
INHA

Federica Carta
Technische Universität,
Berlin

Giancarla Cilmi
École française de Rome

Daniele Rivoletti
Institut universitaire
de France/Université
Clermont Auvergne

Neville Rowley
Gemäldegalerie,
Berlin ; École du
Louvre, Paris

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Alicia Adamczak
Institut catholique
de Paris

Kira d'Alburquerque
Victoria and Albert
Museum, Londres

Lionel Arsac
château de Versailles

Andrea Bacchi
Fondation Federico-
Zeri, université de
Bologne

Oriane Beaufls
Villa Ephrussi
de Rothschild

Sarah Betzer
université de Virginie,
Charlottesville

Marc Bormand
musée du Louvre

Francesco Caglioti
École normale
supérieure de Pise

Valérie Carpentier
musée du Louvre

Laura Cavazzini
université de Trente

Anne-Lise Desmas
J. Paul Getty Museum,
Los Angeles

Grégoire Extermann
Haute école spécialisée
de la Suisse italienne-
SUPSI, université de
Genève

Aldo Galli
université de Trente

Virginie Guffroy
musée du Louvre

**Kelley Helmstutler
Di Dio**
université du Vermont,
Burlington

Sophie Jugie
musée du Louvre

Pascal Julien
université Toulouse
Jean-Jaurès

Emmanuel Lamouche
CreAAH – Nantes
Université

Michel Lefftz
université de Namur

Anne Lepoittevin
Sorbonne Université

Philippe Malgouyres
musée du Louvre

Tommaso Mozzati
université de Pérouse

Sarah Munoz
Université de Lausanne

**Pierre-Hippolyte
Pénet**
château de Versailles

Émilie Roffidal
Laboratoire
FRAMESPA –
Université de Toulouse

Fabienne Sartre
IRCL – Université
de Montpellier Paul-
Valéry)

Guilhem Scherf
musée du Louvre

Frits Scholten
Rijksmuseum

Philippe Sénéchal
université de Picardie
Jules-Verne, Amiens

Magali Théron
TELEMME –
Université Aix-
Marseille