



## L'Aquila - The Future of the Historical Center: A Challenge for Art History

Summer School of the Kunsthistorisches  
Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

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Concept and organization:  
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The devastating earthquake that struck L'Aquila on 6 April 2009 created a major rupture in the social and cultural history of the city. After dealing with the immediate aftermath of the natural disaster through the construction of the so-called "New Towns," the necessity of securing the city's buildings has paralyzed the historical center. Today, ongoing restorations are accompanied by a lively debate, requiring the expertise of specialists from various disciplines. It is crucial that art historians participate in the discussions on the complex issues of reconstruction, restoration, and preservation, that are deciding how to return the city to its citizens and to ensure the survival of its monumental heritage.

The KHI summer school invites young art historians and scholars from neighboring disciplines to discuss the future of historic centers, focusing particularly on the critical as well as the ethical roles of Art History. The case of L'Aquila provides an opportunity to reflect broadly upon the effect of natural disasters on civic life and cultural heritage and its management.

Located on site, the summer school will take a diachronic approach to the study of the city of L'Aquila, both inside and outside the walls, beginning with its medieval foundation as a free 'civitas' disputed by popes and emperors, through Spanish rule, up to the urban transformations of the Fascist period. Located in a strategic position on the 'Via degli Abruzzi', L'Aquila has long been a market town; its main raw materials, wool and saffron, reached the markets of northern Italy and beyond the Alps. The city of L'Aquila serves as a shrine that houses the bodies of Pope Celestine V and Bernardino of Siena. Throughout its history, the city has therefore been a place of exchange, a center of culture and artistic patronage, and an important pilgrimage site beginning with the institution of the plenary indulgence in 1294 at Collemaggio.

The close study of the historical city, its urban structure, its works of art, and its dispersed and decontextualized collections, together with an awareness of the dynamics of destruction

and reconstruction of its cultural heritage, will call attention to the future of L'Aquila and to the methodological questions related to the preservation of its past.

What techniques and methodologies allow mediation between aesthetic and historical values? Is it possible to find a balance between the protection of heritage and the needs of the citizens of L'Aquila; between the desire for change and the impulse to return to the forms of the past? Issues such as reconstruction, integration, and authenticity versus fake are central topics to be addressed.

The KHI summer school welcomes applications from the fields of Art History, History, Architectural History, Urban History, Conservation and Restoration, from graduate students, doctoral candidates, and scholars who are embarking on post-doctoral research. The number of participants is restricted to 15. Each participant is expected to contribute to the success of the course not only with a presentation, but also by actively engaging in the discussions, which will be held primarily in English.

Applications should include: a letter of interest comprising a research statement, a one-page CV, and a presentation proposal (300 words). These materials can be written in English, German, or Italian. It is not necessary for proposals to deal with all the questions introduced above. Presentations will be held in English and can address an object, a monument, or a topic regarding L'Aquila, its collections, or its surroundings (including sites such as Rosciolo, Bominaco, Fossa, Sulmona), as well as issues of conservation and restoration.

Accommodation will be offered by the Institute, which will also reimburse participants for half of their travel costs and provide a per diem.

Applications should be sent by May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 to:

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