



# LACUNA

CONSERVATION, LAW, AND THE ETHICS OF THE INCOMPLETE

ROME

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DECAY, LOSS,  
AND CONSERVATION  
IN ART HISTORY

In conservation, a lacuna marks a rupture in the material continuity of the artwork. Modern conservation practice insists on preserving the visibility of such loss and offers a model for inhabiting incompleteness ethically: acknowledging the gap without either prematurely closing it or aestheticizing it into melancholy. The conserved lacuna is neither repaired nor celebrated; it is held, made visible, and integrated into an ongoing relationship between the work and its viewers.

This conference approaches the lacuna as a historically produced condition that is materially identifiable, epistemically consequential, and politically charged. Bringing together art history, conservation, and legal theory, it examines how lacunae structure knowledge, shape canon formation, and reveal asymmetries in power, responsibility, and recognition. From the ethics of conservation to juridical concepts such as *non liquet*, lacunae reveal systems of exclusion, neglect, and deferred judgment. We invite contributions that address lacunae as sites of interpretation, decision, and critique across disciplines.

