

Decay, Persistence, Re-Possession (Florence/online, 30–31 Oct 25)

Online / Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut (Florence, Italy),
Oct 30–31, 2025

Natalie Arrowsmith

Decay, Persistence, Re-Possession. Ecologies of Cultural Heritage.

Workshop organised by the the Max Planck Heritage Network.

The Max Planck Heritage Network has formed as a collaboration of researchers from five Max Planck Institutes (Bibliotheca Hertziana – MPI for Art History, Rome; Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology, Jena; Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin; Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – MPI; MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle). The initiative responds to the growing prominence of cultural heritage, whose political, economic, environmental and emotional import appears to be steadily increasing. Conservation of what the past has left us is widely perceived as a moral imperative, a business opportunity and a stepping stone for development, with the remit of conservation no longer bound to the testimonies of power – palaces, cathedrals, museum masterpieces, state archives and large infrastructures – but extending to the traces of everyday lives and intangible practices, from festivals over crafts to soundscapes and cuisines. Public heritage conservation has also expanded beyond Europe where it first coalesced, with global organisations such as UNESCO spreading the attendant value systems and conservation principles and with nation states vying to make their pasts visible on the world stage. Research on cultural heritage has flourished accordingly, and while much of it focuses on technical and material aspects as well as the history of the heritage items, a growing body of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences takes a step back to analyse the dynamic context of heritage conservation, often with a critical eye to historical distortion, commercialisation, political instrumentalisation and the artificial separation of culture and nature.

PROGRAM

October 30

9:30 Welcome and Introduction

Hannah Baader, Christoph Brumann

Session I (heritage spaces)

Chair: Hannah Baader (Florence/Berlin)

10:00 Philipp Demgenski (Halle): “Preservation is always better than demolition!” Or is it? Reflections on Urban Renewal and Heritage-Making in Contemporary China

10: 30 Christoph Brumann (Halle): From the Few to the Many: Re-possession and the Heritage Moment

11:00 Break

Chair: Sinem Casale (Florence)

11:30 Mark Hudson (Jena) and Claudia Zancan (Venice): Japanese Eco-Nationalism and the Heritage of the Kofun Period

12:00 Parul Singh (Florence/Berlin): Making, Unmaking, Remaking: Heritage Spaces in Ayodhya and Banaras

12:30 Mannat Johal (Berlin): Fragmentary Inheritances: Forms of Memory-Work in South India's Deccan

13:00 Lunch

Session II (catastrophes and waste)

Chair: Christoph Brumann (Halle)

14:00 Francesca Borgo (Rome/St. Andrews), Ruth Ezra (Florence/St. Andrews), Chiara Capulli (Rome/Florence): Rethinking Heritage through Waste

15:30 Break

Chair: Lisa Onaga (Berlin)

16:00 Annette Hoffmann (Florence) in dialogue with AC(H)E: The Georgia Project at the KHI. Conserving the Gelati Monastery World Heritage Site

16:30 Gerhard Wolf (Florence), Lunarita Sterpetti (Florence), Nils Weber (Florence): Art Histories, Catastrophes, (Heritage), Ecologies.

18: 00 Visit FotolibRARY and/or Rare Books in the KHI Library (Costanza Caraffa, Jan Simane)
October 31

9:00 Site Visit: Ongoing Restoration (participants only)

Session III (data sets and archives)

Chair: Rafael Uriarte (Florence)

12: 00 Malte Vogl (Jena) and Aleksandra Kaye (Jena): Growing and Pruning the Archive

12: 30 Michael T. Fisher (Jena): Systems Integration for Archaeological Heritage Documentation: From Interoperability to Interoperation

13: 00 Lunch Break

Session IV (heritage ecologies and institutions)

Chair: Mark Hudson (Jena)

14: 00 Lisa Onaga (Berlin): The Art of Persistence – Singapore Live Turtle and Tortoise Museum Case Study

14: 30 Lakshmi Pradeep Rajeswary (Berlin): Coral Communities: Biocultural Heritage in the Lakshadweep Islands of India

15: 00 Break

Chair: Dwirahmi Suryandari (Berlin)

15: 15 Júlia Silva Meideros (Jena): Making Heritage in the Anthropocene: The Afterlife of Extractivist Cities in the Brazilian Amazon

15: 45 Costanza Paolillo (Rome): Fragile Landscapes and Heritage Governance on the Amalfi Coast: The Niemeyer Auditorium Controversy between Local Interests and Mass Tourism.

16: 00 Hannah Baader (Florence/Berlin) and Costanza Caraffa (Florence): The City as Archive. The Case of IAO and the Making of an Exhibition

16: 45 Break

17: 00 Final Discussion and Further Steps

18: 00 End

This will be a hybrid event.

VENUE

Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai
Via dei Servi 51
50122 Firenze, Italia

To participate online please register in advance via Zoom:

<https://eu02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/km9jneUzRQeGzMUT9cxf-w#/registration>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut
Via Giuseppe Giusti 44
50121 Firenze, Italia
+39 055 24911-1
info@khi.fi.it

www.khi.fi.it

khi.fi.it/newsletter

[instagram.com/khiflorenz](https://www.instagram.com/khiflorenz)

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Reference:

CONF: Decay, Persistence, Re-Possession (Florence/online, 30-31 Oct 25). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 24, 2025 (accessed Dec 19, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50980>>.