The History of Drawings. Conservation and Its Ethics (online, 12-13 May 26)

Deadline: Feb 13, 2026

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Interdisciplinary online symposium hosted by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Rijksmuseum.

Drawings—like all works of art—are prone to physical and chemical changes caused by environmental factors, handling, display, and the natural aging of their materials. Paper and parchment may warp, tear, and discolor; ink and chalk are subject to abrasion, fading, and smudging. In response, conservators—as well as restorers and collectors before them—have developed treatments to remediate, stabilize, and improve the appearance of affected drawings. Examining the history of these practices, in turn, invites discussion on critical issues.

This call is open to art historians, curators, conservators, conservation scientists, and graduate students and seeks proposals for twenty-minute papers that address the history and/or ethics of drawings conservation, from its beginnings in restoration to contemporary practices. Successful proposals will engage with the theme, demonstrate original research, and incorporate examples from public and private collections.

While all topics will be considered, organizers encourage papers related to the following subjects:

- Historical practices based on textual sources and/or the firsthand examination of drawings;
- The impact of treatments on the reception and interpretation of drawings;
- The growing acceptance of deterioration as material evidence and part of a drawing's life cycle;
- Ethical and practical distinctions between treating drawings and other works on paper;
- Reversibility in drawings conservation treatment: aspiration versus reality;
- Methods for identifying previous treatment in the absence of documentation;
- The emergence of formal conservation training, its role in the professionalization of the field, and related shifts in the ethical framework;
- The expanded role of paper conservators in drawings connoisseurship and the integration of conservation science.

Please email proposals to drawings@getty.edu with "History of Drawings Conservation" in the subject line. Proposals should include author's name, title, affiliation, and an abstract not exceeding 500 words. The deadline for the submissions is February 13, 2026.

Reference:

CFP: The History of Drawings. Conservation and Its Ethics (online, 12-13 May 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 27, 2026 (accessed Oct 31, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51587>.