

The Architecture of Bell Towers (Rome, 13–15 Jan 27)

Sapienza Università di Roma, Aula Magna of the Department of History,
Representation and Restoration of Architecture, Piazza Borghese 9, Jan 13–15, 2027
Deadline: Sep 20, 2026

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The Architecture of Bell Towers from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. Form | Material | Structure.

Bell towers are structures characterized by a vertical development and by the presence, at their summit, of a system designed to transmit sound through bell installations. Two principal categories may therefore be identified: the bell towers associated with religious buildings, particularly Christian churches, and civic towers. Both types were historically equipped with resonant systems intended to summon the faithful to religious services or, in the civic sphere, citizens to public assemblies. This specifically western heritage, shaped by a range of historical factors, continues to define the skyline of many historic centers across the European continent, from major cities to smaller urban settlements. Like all architectural heritage, bell towers are the result of complex historical dynamics, diverse forms of patronage, specific local conditions, and articulated processes of design and construction. Moreover, precisely because of their vertical configuration, bell towers have frequently been affected by structural instability, collapses, and processes of material decay. These conditions have often necessitated restoration and consolidation campaigns employing materials and techniques generally consistent with the prevailing practices of their respective periods. Understanding these interventions constitutes an essential point of reference for contemporary questions concerning conservation and restoration.

The aim of this conference is to investigate this architectural heritage, which has often been overlooked in favor of more extensively studied monuments, within the chronological span extending from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. This timeframe has been selected in consideration of the substantial structural continuity observable across these centuries. The conference seeks to explore the historical, architectural, artistic, and conservation-related significance of bell towers. Particular attention will be devoted to identifying both the connections shared by the two principal categories across different geographical contexts and the specific characteristics that distinguish them over time. Contributions may address themes such as history, patronage, and design processes, or engage with broader and more transversal questions, including formal and stylistic vocabularies and the use of architectural orders. Special consideration will also be given to studies focusing on construction techniques, the identification of phases of transformation and intervention that have affected -or may affect- these structures, as well as methodologies of investigation, monitoring, and analysis concerning material and structural issues. Such themes may be explored through detailed case studies and/or broader thematic investigations adopting an approach capable of considering together “form, material, structure” and their implications for

the history and restoration of architecture.

Proposals addressing the themes outlined above will be organized into thematic sessions according to their specific focus and in relation to the abstracts received. The following topics are intended as indicative areas of inquiry:

- Patronage
- Construction phases
- Formal and stylistic choices
- Decorative programs
- Typologies and subtypes
- Circulation of models
- Hybridization of architectural vocabularies
- Construction techniques
- Architectural genesis and processes of transformation
- Vulnerability, structural failure, and consolidation
- Investigation and monitoring methodologies
- Restoration practices and interventions

The themes emerging from the conference sessions will be discussed in a concluding round table.

The conference will take place over three days, from 13 to 15 January 2027, in Rome, at the Aula Magna of the Department of History, Representation and Restoration of Architecture, Piazza Borghese 9. Participants unable to attend in person will be able to join remotely via Google Meet. The call is open to PhD candidates, early career scholars, faculty members, and independent researchers from all disciplines concerned with the conference theme. No conference fee is required.

Interested scholars are invited to submit, in Word format and in either Italian or English, the following materials:

- an abstract of no more than 2500 characters (including spaces),
- a maximum of two significant images,
- a curriculum vitae of no more than 2000 characters

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Submissions must be sent by 20 September 2026. Notification of acceptance will be communicated by 5 October 2026.

The proceedings, intended to contribute to current scholarship on the conference themes, are expected to be published by April 2028. Authors of accepted proposals will subsequently receive editorial guidelines for the preparation of the full paper, which may be submitted in Italian, English, or another European language. Papers should not exceed 30000 characters, including footnotes, and may include a maximum of twelve images. Full papers must be submitted by 30 March 2027. All full papers will undergo a double-blind peer-review process, and the results will be communicated by 30 April 2027.

Reference:

CFP: The Architecture of Bell Towers (Rome, 13-15 Jan 27). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 24, 2026 (accessed Jun

24, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52795>>.