Prohibitions of drawing topographies or architecture have rarely been a topic of art history or visual studies, although they can be accounted for in Europe since the 16th century. Such interdictions prove the power that was ascribed to on-site drawings of landscapes, cities, and fortifications. They were a widespread reaction to the production, collection and storage of maps and images of potential enemies’ terrains, and their objective was to prevent espionage. It can be assumed that these military restrictions of civilian artistic practices not only shaped the historic representations of land- and cityscapes and of architecture that still exist in collections and archives today, but that they also informed historic artistic practices of sketching and drawing on the spot.

The colloquium sets out to investigate the effects of military interdictions of drawing through a series of case studies, proposing that such restrictions informed both the perception and the visual representations of landscapes, cities and buildings.