The 2020/2021 academic year at the Getty Research Institute will be devoted to the fragment. Issues regarding the fragment have been present since the beginning of art history and archaeology. Many objects of study survive in physically fragmented forms, and any object, artwork, or structure may be conceived of as a fragment of a broader cultural context. As such, fragments catalyze the investigative process of scholarship and the fundamental acts of the historian: conservation, reconstruction, and interpretation. The evolution of an object—its material and semiotic changes across time, space, and cultures—can offer insights into the ethics and technologies of restoration, tastes for incompleteness or completeness, politics of collection and display, and production of art historical knowledge. While the fragment has been described as the central metaphor of modernity and the paradigmatic sign of a contemporary worldview, its history as a trope runs much deeper. Cultures of the fragment have flourished throughout history under such guises as the reuse of architectural parts and the cult of relics, the physical and conceptual image-breakings of iconoclasm, and the aesthetics of repair. Fragmentation can occur through artistic processes, acts of destruction, or forces of nature. It can be willful, accidental, or inevitable, but it is necessarily transformative.

Applicants are invited to address both the creation and reception of fragments, their mutability and mobility, and their valuation and consequence throughout history.

Deadline: 1 OCTOBER 2019