

Pseudo-Scripts: (Il)legibility and Ornamentation (Pisa/online, 2-3 May 25)

Pisa / Online, May 2-03, 2025

Deadline: Dec 8, 2024

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Ornaments and their (il)legibility have long intrigued scholars of visual culture, gaining traction in scholarship [e.g. Necipoğlu, Payne 2016]. Pseudo-scripts in particular – lines that resemble writing but are ultimately in toto or in part illegible – have become a privileged focus of interest when approaching the broader phenomenon.

This conference asks the question of what makes the appearance of script so compelling even when it is stripped of its content. What lingers of its function that has made script a privileged form of ornament across times, cultures, and artistic media? Whether in painting, sculpture, architecture, or any other media or technique, pseudo-script appears across a wide range of objects and materials, both hard and soft – its function often depended on how it was applied in these different forms. Often, the appearance of script carries multilayered meanings, referring to something “beyond”. The act of imitating a particular script may evoke various interpretations, and places objects in a specific (assumed) cultural or geographic context.

With this conference, we seek to investigate pseudo-scripts, ornaments and their (il)legibility from a broad, interdisciplinary and transcultural perspective. We invite scholars from diverse fields to present their research on objects that engage with these themes in multilayered ways. Case studies from premodern to contemporary art from diverse geographic contexts as well as historiographical and theoretical discussions are welcome.

Conference contributions should be 20 minutes long, held in English, followed by a 10-minute discussion. The two-day conference will take place at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa and will be conducted in English. It will be available online as a hybrid format. The conference includes a visit to Pisa’s Museo Nazionale di San Matteo, designed as an opportunity to discuss the topic and a choice of relevant case studies in situ.

Please send your abstract with the planned titled of your presentation (max. 350 words) and a short bio (max. 250 words) by e-mail to pseudoscripts2025@gmail.com.

The deadline for submissions is December 8, 2024. Please note that we cannot cover the costs for travel expenses. Contributions in person or online are both welcome. Researchers who find it difficult to attend due to teaching assignments or travel funding are explicitly encouraged to submit their contributions anyway. We plan a publication of selected papers from the conference.

2-3 of May 2025, Hybrid Format: Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa; Museo Nazionale di San Mat-

teo, Pisa; Online

Concept and organization:

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Reference:

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