

Forma Scientiarum: Image (&) Translation (Norwich/online, 17 Mar 26)

University of East Anglia (Norwich, UK) / Online (Teams), Mar 17, 2026

Deadline: Mar 13, 2026

Benedetta Mariani

Translation/Translatio, in all its forms, was inherent to the shaping and practice of medieval sciences. Scholarship has long established that written ideas were constantly shifting from one form to another – from places, languages, and milieux. But what of images? Today, associating scientific texts with images is taken for granted. But what of medieval images? How did they complexify the communication of ideas and add new perspectives to written elements which could not be translated otherwise? Beyond the long-studied word/image relationship, how did images translate scientific concepts into a visual language of their own?

Images in scientific texts are usually considered through the lenses of standard and/or pre-existing iconographies. Yet, many were produced when new scientific ideas were translated (both physically and linguistically) into Europe and often there were no such visual traditions to refer to. How then did these images visualise the 'new'? Did they function as a cultural visual translation of sorts?

To tackle these questions, the day will be divided into three collaborative sessions. Firstly, participants will reflect on the 'forma scientiarum' of the Middle Ages by responding to a pre-circulated image or word. We conceptualise 'forma' as encapsulating different languages – textual, visual, and scholarly – which jointly work(ed) toward shaping medieval sciences. This will be followed by a second, smaller workshop discussing how scholars mediate(d) the role of visual translations into their own scholarship. These first two sessions will be held in a hybrid format. Finally, the day will close with an on-site only roundtable. For this session, willing participants will be asked to prepare and pre-circulate a short piece; this can take whatever form they find most useful. We are not expecting 'conference-style' papers and welcome more creative 'formae'.

If you are interested in participating, please send a short expression of interest (no more than 250 words) detailing your research interest and what you'd consider pre-circulating for discussion along with a short biography (no more than 150 words) to the organisers Benedetta Mariani and Lauren Rozenberg at b.mariani@uea.ac.uk and l.rozenberg@uea.ac.uk by 13 March 2026.

Reference:

CFP: Forma Scientiarum: Image (&) Translation (Norwich/online, 17 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 3, 2026 (accessed Apr 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51877>>.