

Conceptions and Configurations of the Image (Basel, 15–19 Sep 26)

Basel, eikones – Center for the Theory and History of the Image, Rheinsprung 11, Sep
15–17, 2026

Warja Tolstoj, eikones

Fragile Images: Conceptions and Configurations of the Image.

What is a fragile image? This workshop brings together scholars from art history, archaeology, and related fields to examine fragility as an image theoretical concept. The ERC project FRAGILE IMAGES shifts attention from images understood primarily as powerful actors towards their temporal instability, semantic ambiguity, and ontological self-reflexivity. In collaboration with eikones, the workshop places the project's research on Roman imagery in dialogue with contributions spanning different historical periods, geographical contexts, and media.

eikones – Center for the Theory and History of the Image
Rheinsprung 11
4051 Basel, Switzerland

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 15 September 2026

09:00–10:00: Welcome and coffee - Introduction by the organizers

Session 1 – Semantic Ambiguity: Images that sustain multiple readings and challenge stable interpretation.

10:00–10:30: Lidia Chiné Zapater (Kiel University)

“Strategies of Deliberate Pictorial Ambiguity in Miniature: Gardens in Axonometric Plan”

10:30–11:00: Magdalena Burlacu (University of Bern)

“The Architecture of Fragility: Configurations of the Imaginary and the Gaze in The Shepherd of Hermas”

11:00–11:20: Coffee break

11:20–11:50: David Bucheli (eikones, University of Basel)

“Flipping the Lid: A Case Study”

11:50–12:45: Discussion

Respondent: Caroline van Eck (University of Cambridge)

12:45–14:00: Lunch at eikones

Session 2 – Temporal Instability: Reuse, copying, archival survival, and changing meanings across time.

14:00–14:30: Marlis Arnhold (Kiel University)

“Shifting Meanings and Framings: A Temporal Perspective on the Reuse of Images of Gods from and/or in Cult Contexts”

14:30–15:00: Warja Tolstoj (eikones, University of Basel)

“Anchoring Fragility: A Copy of a Relic, a Relic of a Copy at Domine Quo Vadis”

15:00–15:20: Coffee break

15:20–15:50: Vera Elizabeth Allen (eikones, University of Basel)

“Seeing through Prisms: The Visual Playground of Deir el-Bersha, Egypt”

15:50–16:20: Alena Williams (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna/NOMIS Fellow at eikones, University of Basel)

“Ephemeral Futures and the Astrophotographic Archive”

16:20–17:00: Discussion

Respondent: Annette Haug (Kiel University)

18:15–19:30: Keynote lecture: Caroline van Eck (University of Cambridge) - “Fragile Images: Naturalism and Camouflage”

19:30: Apéro

Wednesday, 16 September 2026

09:00–09:15: Coffee

Session 3 – Ontological Fragility: Images between object, trace, presence, and interpretation.

09:15–09:45: Evan Allen (Kiel University)

“Pliny’s Fragile Paradigm: Destabilizing Meaning and Making in Pliny’s Natural History”

09:45–10:15: Paul Morrow (University College Dublin / NOMIS Fellow at eikones, University of Basel)

“Images on Trial: Semantic Ambiguity and the Legal Limits of Imagery”

10:15–10:35: Coffee break

10:35–11:05: Zuzanna Sarnecka (University of Bern)

“Fragile Masterpieces: Early Modern Ceramics at the Pharmacy Museum, Basel”

11:05–12:15: Discussion - Respondent Thomas Rainer (eikones, University of Basel)

12:15–13:30: Lunch break

Session 4 – Frames and Boundaries: Images shaped by conceptual and configurative boundaries, frames, and interfaces.

13:30–14:00: Giulia Bertoni (Kiel University)

“‘...In iis qui pictores parergia appellant’: Birds and Ontological Instability in Roman Wall Painting”

14:00–14:30: Gregor Krosigk (University of Basel)

“Figures as (A)Topoi”

14:30–15:00: Jiliang Zhang (University of Basel)

“Observation without Conclusion: Fragile Recognition in Two Miniatures from a Moralia in Iob Manuscript”

15:00–15:20: Discussion - Respondent: Warja Tolstoj (eikones, University of Basel)

15:20–17:30: Participant excursion to Robert Knöll Rahmen: frames and framing practices

18:15–19:30: Keynote lecture: Annette Haug (Kiel University)

“What We See Looks Back at Us: Gaze Relations in Pompeian Wall Painting”

19:30: Speakers’ dinner

Thursday, 17 September 2026

09:00–09:30: Coffee

Closing Forum: Fragile Images across Projects - Drawing connections across periods, methods, and media.

09:30–10:10: Opening synthesis by the organizers

10:10–10:30: Coffee break

10:30–12:00: Final discussion: Testing Fragility across Periods and Disciplines, Closing remarks

More information:

<https://eikones.philhist.unibas.ch/de/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/event-details/fragile-images-conceptions-and-configurations-of-the-image/>

Joint workshop of eikones – Center for the Theory and History of the Image, University of Basel, and the ERC project FRAGILE IMAGES (ERC Grant no. 101141247), Kiel University.

Organized by Marlis Arnhold (Kiel University) and Warja Tolstoj (eikones, University of Basel).

Contact and registration:

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Reference:

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