PhD opportunities, AI and Visual Culture, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome

Bibliotheca Hertziana—Max-Planck Institute for Art History in Rome
Application deadline: Oct 31, 2026

Valentine Bernasconi, Bibliotheca Hertziana

The Machine Visual Culture research group at the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome is looking for prospective PhD candidates interested in applying to the Max Planck AI + X programme (MP-AIX) and potentially working with Leonardo Impett as a supervisor.

The MP-AIX programme funds PhD students to work on interdisciplinary research around artificial intelligence, co-supervised across two different Max Planck Institutes. Eligible Max Planck faculty are visible here: https://ai.mpg.de/members

We are interested in ambitious interdisciplinary projects at the intersection of AI with visual culture, art history, image theory, critical AI studies, or visual digital humanities.
We are looking for candidates with genuinely interdisciplinary interests and at least some technical background or training. This might come from computer science, engineering, data science or computational humanities; equally, we welcome technically trained candidates who want to develop a much stronger engagement with the humanities.
Successful candidates would join the Machine Visual Culture group in Rome and work with a second supervisor elsewhere in the Max Planck Society. Depending on the project and supervisory constellation, doctoral registration could potentially be through our International Max Planck Research School for Multimodal Digital Humanities with the University of Zurich, or through the University of Cambridge.

The current MP-AIX call is for the 2027 cohort, with applications due 31 October 2026. Application is done through the ELLIS portal: https://ai.mpg.de/how-to-join-phd

Intro & important dates
MP-AIX recruits doctoral researchers through a central recruiting process, run jointly with the ELLIS network: a single application in one portal is considered for both MP-AIX and ELLIS.

Candidates who are already employed in a prospective advisor's group cannot receive MP-AIX funding — MP-AIX co-funds new positions.

The application portal opens October 1 and closes October 31, 23:59 AoE (firm).

See the full cycle on the Participation timeline (review, interviews, decisions): https://ai.mpg.de/phd-call-2026

Application documents
All documents are uploaded as PDF:

Motivational letter (2 pages) — why you want to pursue a PhD within MP-AIX, plus a research statement describing your past research projects and interests and the future direction of your research. You may optionally name advisors you are interested in.

Curriculum Vitae — educational background, work experience, publications (with full citations), research presentations and awards.

Unofficial transcripts from all university studies (Bachelor's and Master's), with English translations.

Optional supplementary materials — e.g. your thesis, a published paper or a project portfolio, as a single PDF ≤ 20 MB.

Registration & Application: open until 31 October, 2026
Create an account in the joint ELLIS & MP-AIX application portal and start your application.

Using a single account, you can apply to the MP-AIX call, the ELLIS call, or both.

Upload the application documents above and submit before the deadline.

Reference requests must be sent through the portal before the application deadline. Referees may upload their references until 2 November 2026.

After submission your application enters the review phase; shortlisted candidates are invited to interviews with potential advisors.

The selection follows our Code of Conduct (fair, independent assessment; no pressure to accept prematurely): https://ai.mpg.de/codeofconduct?utm_source=chatgpt.com. The supervision you will receive is described in the Co-Advising Guidelines: https://ai.mpg.de/codeofconduct?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Reference:
JOB: PhD opportunities, AI and Visual Culture, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 1, 2026 (accessed Oct 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54507>.