

The Cluster of Excellence  
**Understanding Written Artefacts**  
cordially invites you to the workshop

## **Generating Knowledge: Visualizing the Invisible in Handwritten Media**

Thursday, 9 February 2023, 1:00 pm – 5:45 pm CET

Friday, 10 February 2023, 9:30 am – 1:15 pm CET

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Hybrid Event

Organised by Szilvia Jáka-Sövegjártó  
and Polina Yaroslavtseva

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-workshop36>

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. Knowledge visualization is the utilization of visuals, e.g. images, illustrations, sketches, diagrams, models, graphs, charts or infographics, to create and transmit knowledge as well as ensure greater insights and new perspectives on a given topic. Various visualization methods were used long before the invention of information technology. The topic with regard to handwritten media has gained increasing attention recently concerning manuscripts from medieval and early modern Europe.

Visualizations aim to support cognitive processes in generating, representing, structuring, retrieving, sharing and using knowledge. The proposed workshop aims to explore visualization techniques in handwritten media with a special focus on knowledge generation by visualizations. For instance, many diagrams and other forms of (multi)graphic visualisation should not be treated as finished, as they represent not just a static and final arrangement of forms on a surface, but rather a point of departure for continuous processes of a controlled (re-)construction by the reader/viewer. Thus, the reader/viewer of the artefact turns into a co-author, re-constructing the message, as well as generating new meanings.

We are inviting case studies on multigraphic written artefacts with visuals depicting or illustrating abstract, intangible or imperceptible concepts with a theological, scientific or teaching background. Some of the questions the workshop will address are: When are visuals applied to generate knowledge or to support this process in handwritten media? What is the function of these visuals and how do they contribute to making knowledge more accessible? What factors may contribute to the transfer of these visualizations into another manuscript or into another culture of writing? How do visuals interplay with other contents of a multigraphic written artefact and how does the visual organization of the artefact inform us about these relations? What similarities and differences can be detected in the use of visual languages in various cultures of writing?

## Programme

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### Thursday, 9 February, 1:00 pm – 5:45 pm

1:00 – 2:00 Registration

2:00 – 2:15 Welcome

#### Visualization Esoteric Contents

Chair: Szilvia Jaká-Sövegjártó (Universität Hamburg)

2:15 – 3:00 Patrick Benjamin Koch (Universität Hamburg)  
*Visualizations of the Godhead as a Source of Knowledge in Kabbalistic Manuscripts*

3:00 – 3:45 Bidur Bhattarai (Universität Hamburg)  
*Notes on one of the Largest Known Puruṣa Ieporello Manuscripts Produced in 19th-Century Nepal*

3:45 – 4:15 Coffee break

#### Knowledge Generation by Diagrams and Musical Notations

Chair: Hanna Wimmer (Universität Hamburg)

4:15 – 5:00 J.R. Osborn (Georgetown University)  
*Archiving Diagrams. Conceptual and Comparative Considerations*

5:00 – 5:45 Matteo Nanni (Universität Hamburg)  
*Notational Practices in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Diagrammatological Observations*

6:00 Dinner

## Friday, 10 February, 9:30 am – 1:15 pm

### Visualizations in Ritual Contexts

Chair: Hanna Wimmer (Universität Hamburg)

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| 9:30 – 10:15  | Leah Mascia (Universität Hamburg)<br><i>How to Read a Magical Handbook: An Insight into the Practitioners of Roman and Late Antique Egypt</i>                           |
| 10:15 – 11:00 | Anne Burchardi (The Buddhist University, Copenhagen; Marpa Institute for Translators, Kathmandu)<br><i>Knowledge Visualization in Tibetan Manuscripts and Artifacts</i> |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Coffee break  |

### Interpretation by Verbal and Visual Means

Chair: Polina Yaroslavtseva (Universität Hamburg)

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| 11:30 – 12:15 | Malena Ratzke (Universität Hamburg)<br><i>'To human hearts, God's deeds are strange and incomprehensible.'</i><br><i>Interpreting Theological Knowledge in the Speculum humanae salvationis</i> |
| 12:15 – 1:00  | Federico Botana (University of London)<br><i>Young Illustrators and Learning in Quattrocento Florence</i>   |
| 1:00 – 1:15   | Closing remarks   |

## Abstracts and Contributors

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### **Bidur Bhattarai (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)**

*Notes on one of the largest known Puruṣa leporello manuscripts produced in 19th-century Nepal*

Thursday, 9 February, 3:00 pm – 3:45 pm

Last year, I had the opportunity to inspect a unique manuscript during my fieldwork as part of the on-going project 'Preserving the Written Cultural Heritage of Nepal' in Kathmandu. The manuscript is hitherto unpublished and is in the private possession of a family from Bhotahiti, Kathmandu. The manuscript contains a nude human figure in the centre that depicts the 'subtle body' and that is inscribed with and surrounded by various smaller pictorial elements, symbols, and text pertaining to Hindu tantrism as well as yogic tradition. Such a manuscript is an important specimen for manuscriptological, textual, cultural, religious, material and art historical studies in general and for tantric studies in particular. In this paper, I will discuss some aspects of the manuscript and present a few preliminary observations about it, comparing features of a few other manuscripts from the same area that contain largely a similar content.

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### **Federico Botana (Institute of English Studies, University of London)**

*Young Illustrators and Learning in Quattrocento Florence*

Friday, 10 February, 12:15 pm – 1:00 pm

Images have always played an important part in learning. In the words of Aristotle 'when the mind is actively aware of anything, it is necessarily aware of it along with an image'. Like children of today, Florentine Latin-grammar students drew on the margins of their schoolbooks. The few examples that have survived are not just doodles: they relate to subjects in the text and can therefore be considered illustrations. Moreover, these drawings attest to how readers assimilated knowledge. In addition, a few illustrated manuscripts of vernacular texts produced by youths for their own use have come down to us. Their illustrations contain visual references to subjects foreign to the text. By introducing those references, young illustrators were associating the knowledge provided by the text with their experiences of the surrounding world. In so doing, they were transforming abstract into practical knowledge.

In my presentation, I will first discuss drawings in schoolbooks. I will continue with the illustrations produced by Romigi di Ardingo de' Ricci and Zanobi di Pagolo Perini. Romigi was the son of

one of the wealthiest men in Florence, whereas Zanobi's father was just a merchant in grain. Yet, their interests, notably on subjects such as civic identity, had much in common.

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**Anne Burchardi**

*Knowledge Visualization in Tibetan Manuscripts and Artifacts*

Friday, 10 February, 10:15 am – 11:00 am

Visualization as a method for generating and supporting knowledge plays a vital role in the Tibetan and Himalayan cultures, both in religious and secular contexts; in the scholastic setting of monastic institutions and in the contemplative settings of secluded hermitages.

Early examples of visual language is found in Indian Mahayana buddhist scriptures that describe the setting of the Buddha's discourses [sutras] using exceptionally lavish imagery. However, it is in the tantric development of buddhism that visualization reaches its apex as the instrument par excellence for transforming the perception of self and surroundings from 'a public non-reality' to a divine image of being in the world.

Using examples of visual language and artifacts of Tibetan buddhism this study will investigate the importance of ritual as a trigger for imagination and recollection; it will look at how certain features of Tibetan visual language has been appropriated and graphically modulated in the transfer of Tibetan buddhism into modern Western culture. Furthermore it will compare the visual language found in manuscripts and visual artifacts of the Tibetan buddhist traditions and the religious traditions of medieval [and early modern] Europe, and finally briefly touch upon how Tibetan visual imagery has found a place and function in the mainstream culture, where e.g. the mandala principle has become almost a household concept.

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**Patrick Benjamin Koch (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)**

*Visualizations of the Godhead as a Source of Knowledge in Kabbalistic Manuscripts*

Thursday, 9 February, 2:15 pm – 3:00 pm

Knowledge of the Sefirotic system constitutes the basis for the study of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah—a Jewish-esoteric tradition that deals with the structure of the Godhead and the human impact on the upper world. The Sefirot—divine attributes that are connected by channels and located between the earthly sphere and the Infinite (ein sof)—are usually depicted in form of a hexagonal structure that has a vertical line at its lower end. In medieval kabbalistic

manuscripts such visualizations are relatively rare and usually very simple in their elaboration. However, the situation changes quite dramatically in the early modern period with the advent of Lurianic Kabbalah, a specific current of theosophical-theurgic school named after the kabbalist Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534–1572). This new development is mainly due to the fact that the Lurianic understanding of the divine worlds is much more spatial than earlier conceptualizations. What is more, Lurianic thinkers used a different superordinate structure, which resulted in a hitherto unprecedented complex imagination of the Godhead.

The centrality of static visual representations of a dynamically conceived divine sphere, common to both the simple diagrammatic and the detailed visualizations, raises the question of how they relate to the written word, which itself oftentimes utilizes strong visual language?

In my presentation, I will explore this question by discussing various depictions of the Godhead against the background of the texts with which they are intertwined. Particularly, I will focus on Lurianic examples that shall serve as a point of departure to suggest several of the possible functions these visualizations may have had.

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**Leah Mascia (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)**

*How to Read a Magical Handbook: An Insight into the Practitioners of Roman and Late Antique Egypt*

Friday, 10 February, 9:30 am – 10:15 am

Any modern reader who approaches the so-called Greco-Egyptian magical repertoire is undoubtedly struck by the variety of images and symbols accompanying incantations. While at first glance, these visual devices do not seem to bear any particular significance, each figural representation had, on the contrary, a specific function in the performance of ritual procedures. Thus, they provide invaluable information on the activities of ritualists living and operating in the cities and villages of Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt, who offered their services to devotees in search of a protective device, a love charm, or even a curse against an enemy. Like the instructions preserved in magical handbooks tell us, images of deities, demonic creatures, and animals having a precise significance in the Pharaonic tradition  $\frac{3}{4}$  like the ass, the snake, the falcon, and the crocodile  $\frac{3}{4}$  are representations of drawings concretely made by practitioners on altars, tripods, house walls even on the ground to empower the ritual that they were going to perform. Others, such as *charaktères* so often found inscribed on papyrus amulets, lead curse tablets and other magical artefacts, were also strictly associated with a specific ritual praxis. The simple act of writing these apparently unintelligible signs on magical artefacts constituted a fundamental

stage in the sacred procedures staged by ritual experts. This gesture was thought to empower the magical text, thus establishing a dialogue between the living and supernatural entities. As this paper will try to demonstrate, the study of these figural representations in their interaction with magical texts peculiar to the Greco-Egyptian magical *repertoire* of Roman and Late Antique Egypt offers us the possibility to reconstruct the context in which these ritual acts were performed and to have a glimpse into practices that have left only a few archaeological records.

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**Matteo Nanni (Universität Hamburg)**

*Notational Practices in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Diagrammatological Observations*

Thursday, 9 February, 5:00 pm – 5:45 pm

In my paper I would like you to join me in pondering the historical prerequisites for diagrammatical depiction of music and its visual logic. Discussing some theoretical premises of this strategies of visualization I will ask where the idea comes that musical intervals can be represented graphically on a vertical axis, and look more closely at the visual logic involved in transferring the medium of sound to that of writing. Finally, I wish to explore and discuss the concept of diagrammatical visual logic which is probably one of the fundamental historical prerequisites for many types of medieval musical notations. Looking at some examples from early notational practices in the ninth and tenth centuries I will show that the visualization of musical phenomena needs a visual logic that I wish to call the disposition of the diagrammatical. This specific notational visual principle is involved in transferring the medium of sound to that of writing and is based on a binary idea that projects intervals on a vertical axis and time on a horizontal axis. Operating with a metaphorical two-dimensional spatiality based on the categories of above and beneath these diagrammatical idea gives a fundamental correlative of the sonic and the visual in the early forms of notation.

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**J.R. Osborn (Georgetown University)**

*Archiving Diagrams. Conceptual and Comparative Considerations*

Thursday, 9 February, 4:15 pm – 5:00 pm

This talk outlines a number of conceptual considerations for the comparative study of diagrams. It begins with an examination of the term “diagram” in relation to practices of writing and technical inscription. Conceptual insights draw upon the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, who defines the diagram as an iconic sign which models relationships, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who

employ the term as an “abstract machine” in their complication of semiotic categorization, and Kenneth Knoespel, who proposes an archeology of diagrammatic practices. These thinkers suggest that the diagram always operates in a state of in-between: between language and image; between brainstorming and developed theory; between written message and reconstructive reading.

Building upon Knoespel’s suggestion, the talk introduces the Diagrammatica archiving project, which collects key diagrammatic examples in order to analyze how their representational and visual strategies might inform future practice. Currently limited in scope, the project seeks to incorporate a wide range of historical and cross-cultural examples. How might the study of manuscript cultures inform this project? A variety of multigraphic visualization practices border upon the diagram. These include calligraphy, cartography, scientific illustration—indeed, any visual practice that employs different registers of aesthetics, graphics, and text to contribute to a singular communicative artifact. How shall we delineate the concept of diagram in order to support a robust, yet focused, database of multiple traditions?

Diagrams offer pedagogical and heuristic maps of intellectual and methodological relationships, and archiving diagrams helps to identify novel modes of knowledge visualization. Emphasizing the diagram opens new horizons in archival research, the sociology and genealogy of knowledge, and intellectual exchange. Towards this end, the talk concludes with a few hypotheses involving the intersection of diagrammatic research and manuscript practices, as well as the ways in which these insights might inform current and future academic practice.

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**Malena Ratzke (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)**

*‘To human hearts, God’s deeds are strange and incomprehensible.’ Interpreting theological knowledge in the *Speculum humanae salvationis**

Friday, 10 February, 11:30 am – 12:15 am

With a combined total of more than 400 Latin and vernacular manuscripts, not counting block books and moveable-type print, the *Speculum humanae salvationis* is one of the most successful types of devotional literature in the European late Middle Ages. A bible-typological framework forms its basic structure, juxtaposing episodes from Christ’s and Mary’s lives (‘antitypes’) with corresponding episodes of the Old Testament which were understood as their prefigurations or ‘types’. *Speculum* manuscripts usually visualize this idea of a typological relation of Old and New

Testament by arranging pictorial elements and script in conventionalized forms of visual organization. This multigraphic concept is explicitly tailored to the needs of a lay audience and their religious teachers.

The paper investigates the *Speculum's* twofold objective of presenting basic theological knowledge and facilitating hermeneutic interpretation by verbal and visual means. Focusing on German translations, with glances at the Latin tradition, the paper addresses three aspects: 1., the interplay of pictorial and verbal visualization meant to guide processes of understanding, interpreting, and contemplating Scripture, 2., the effects of visual organization on these processes; and 3., the status of material images visualizing abstract motifs (rather than depicting narrative episodes). Guided by these aspects, the paper sheds light on the role of multigraphic artefacts in religious reading practices.