

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

Beyond Visualising Language

Thursday, 11 May 2023, 11:45 am – 6:30 pm CEST

Friday, 12 May 2023, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm CEST

Deichtorhallen Hamburg (Auditorium)
Deichtorstraße 1-2, 20095 Hamburg

Organised by Uta Lauer, Eva Jungbluth, and Jakob Hinze

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/register-workshop39>

Writing, according to Aristotle, is a secondary semiotic system representing the primary one, namely the words of a spoken language. These, in turn represent concepts that refer to ‘things’. While the former two are arbitrary, the latter two are ‘the same for all’. This classical idea is still prevalent in various academic fields, especially in linguistics and its various sub-disciplines. On this view, representation of a spoken language is the main criterion for distinguishing between writing and other visible signs that presumably do not constitute ‘true’ writing.

Since the European Renaissance at the latest, however, there has also been an undercurrent of views according to which some signs, for instance Egyptian hieroglyphs or Chinese characters, refer directly to ideas or ‘things’ without mediation by a spoken language. This position has recently gained new momentum. For example, based on the reappraisal of archaeological evidence, a more complex approach to early writing in the Near East and in China has emerged, which connects it to concrete contexts and practices rather than to abstract models of representing a language. Moreover, the notion of *Schriftbildlichkeit* (‘iconicity of script’), proposed by the German philosopher and keynote speaker Sybille Krämer, has inspired art historians who had always considered written signs not only as a means to convey words but also as generating meaning beyond a spoken language. Finally, the artist Axel Malik insists that his works are writing but do not represent anything other than themselves.

This workshop aims to unfold the whole range of perspectives on the nature of writing. On the one hand, the traditional linguistic approach takes it to be a secondary medium for representing language, thus reducing it to its use; on the other hand, the idea that writing is a medium *sui generis* makes the medium itself the main object of perception. Between these two extremes, a broad range of practices from diverse manuscript cultures provides rich evidence that the relation between language and writing is too manifold to be captured by a simple dichotomy.

On 11 May, eight lectures (in English) will shed light on the art of writing and writing as a form of art. On 12 May, science and art will engage in dialogue (in German). Six artists – Dagmara Kraus, Philip Loersch, Davit Maisuradze, Axel Malik, Timo Nasser and Mirko Reisser (DAIM) – will present selected works on site and, in conversation with researchers and the audience, explore the relationship between language and writing, words and signs, legibility and unreadability, functionality and adornment, and form and content.

Programme

Thursday, 11 May, 11:45 am – 6:30 pm

Lectures and Discussions (in English)

Chairs: Uta Lauer and Bruno Reudenbach

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| 11:45 – 12:00 | Welcome & Introduction |
| 12:00 – 1:15 | Sybille Krämer (Berlin)
<i>Thinking Writing Differently: Operational Features of Notational Iconicity</i> |
| 1:15 – 2:15 | Lunch Break |
| 2:15 – 2:45 | Jürgen Fuchsbauer (Innsbruck)
<i>Autochthonous Development and Foreign Influences in the Two Slavonic Alphabets</i> |
| 2:45 – 3:15 | Andreas Haug (Würzburg)
<i>Visualising Humanly Organised Sound</i> |
| 3:15 – 3:45 | Uta Lauer (Hamburg)
<i>Character Building: Meaning Embedded in the Outer Appearance of Chinese Writing</i> |
| 3:45 – 4:15 | Christiane Reck (Berlin/Hamburg)
<i>Features of the Calligraphy of the Manichaean Text Fragments of the Turfan Collection</i> |
| 4:15 – 4:45 | Tea & Coffee Break |
| 4:45 – 5:15 | Bruno Reudenbach (Hamburg)
<i>Art of Writing in Medieval European Manuscripts</i> |
| 5:15 – 5:45 | Annette Martini (Berlin)
<i>Between Halachah and Magic: Writing the Names of God into a Torah Scroll</i> |
| 5:45 – 6:15 | Shervin Farridnejad (Hamburg)
<i>Unreadability as an Aesthetic Strategy in Persian Calligraphy</i> |
| 6:15 – 6:30 | Round up |

Friday, 12 May, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Mehr als nur Worte: Die Kunst des Schreibens (in German)

Moderation: Uta Lauer and Bruno Reudenbach

9:00	Einlass
10:00 – 10:05	Einführung
10:05 – 10:50	Philip Loersch & Martina Köppel-Yang <i>Spaziergang</i>
10:50 – 11:20	Kaffeepause
11:20 – 12:25	Dagmara Kraus, Axel Malik & Alexander Weinstock <i>Unlesbar, aber nicht unleserlich: Künstlerische und literarische Blickwinkel auf die Schrift</i>
12:25 – 1:00	Axel Malik & Jost Gippert <i>Palimpseste zu Goethes arabischen Schreibübungen: Transformative Experimente</i>
1:00 – 2:30	Mittagessen
2:30 – 3:15	Timo Nasser & Margaret Shortle <i>Unknown Letters</i>
3:15 – 3:50	Axel Malik & Shervin Farridnejad <i>Im Resonanzraum persischer Kalligrafie</i>
3:50 – 4:20	Kaffeepause
4:20 – 5:05	Mirko Reisser (DAIM) & Ondřej Škrabal <i>Graffiti</i>
5:05 – 5:50	David Maisuradze & Mariam Kamarauli <i>Georgische Kalligraphie: Interpretation des Texts</i>
5:50 – 18:00	Abschluss

Academic Contributors

Sybille Krämer (Berlin)

Thinking Writing Differently: Operational Features of Notational Iconicity

Thursday, 11 May, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

For too long, alphabetcentrism and the assumption that writing transcribes spoken language have obscured the view of the creative functions of writings beyond language notation (for example numerical scripts, formulaic languages, musical notations, choreographies, binary alphabet, programming languages, et cetera). This creative potential is addressed and examined from the perspective of 'notational iconicity' emphasising the connection between visibility, spatiality, and the operativity of graphic notations. Moreover, the anthropotechnical handling of written signs inserts writing into the horizon of a 'cultural technique of flattening': tables, writings, graphs, diagrams, and maps mostly represent invisible issues by means of two-dimensional, spatial, and visual arrangements. The inscribed surface becomes a laboratory, a workshop, and a playing field of communication, computation, cognition, and composition. How can this productivity be explained?

Jürgen Fuchsbauer (Innsbruck)

Autochthonous Development and Foreign Influences in the Two Slavonic Alphabets

Thursday, 11 May, 2:15 pm – 2:45 pm

The first Slavonic alphabet, Glagolitic, was brought into being in 862 by the Byzantine scholar Constantine the Philosopher, known by his monastic name Cyril, together with his brother Methodius and others. Glagolitic generally reflects Slavonic phonetics. And yet, as Constantine's conception of sounds and writing was determined by Greek, the alphabet shows a dominant Greek influence, which is, however, concealed in the aesthetic design of the letters. In contrast, Cyrillic represents an adoption of a contemporaneous Byzantine majuscule, which was supplemented by letters for Slavonic sounds based on Glagolitic.

Thus, both Slavonic alphabets are characterised, albeit in different ways, by a combination of Slavonic phonetics and the writing system of Greek. Both take different developments in their history. Cyrillic continued to develop independently but underwent a phase of intensive Greek influence in the 14th century. Glagolitic, on the other hand, was used in Catholic Croatia, where Latin writing traditions had a strong impact on it. In my contribution, I shall give an overview of how the emergence and further development of the two Slavonic alphabets was determined by

the striving for an optimal sound-letter correlation on the one hand and by the models of Greek and Latin on the other.

Andreas Haug (Würzburg)

Visualising Humanly Organised Sound

Thursday, 11 May, 2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

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Uta Lauer (Hamburg)

Character Building: Meaning Embedded in the Outer Appearance of Chinese Writing

Thursday, 11 May, 3:15 pm – 3:45 pm

Beyond visualising language, the various types and styles of Chinese writing also carry meaning. The outer appearance of writing may refer, inter alia, to a calligrapher of the past, a social group of writers, a time, or a place. The practise of quoting a particular form of writing was first established in the art of calligraphy, culminating in the 7th century. This evocative way of looking at writing still plays a major role in contemporary China, covering all forms of writing from advertisements to public inscriptions and brand logos.

Christiane Reck (Hamburg/Göttingen)

Features of the Calligraphy of the Manichaean Text Fragments of the Turfan Collection

Thursday, 11 May, 3:45 pm – 4:15 pm

Mani, the founder of the Manichaean religion (3rd century CE), established his religion as a religion of books and of arts. He is known as the author of a series of books and letters to save his religion from corruption. He is famous also as a painter who illustrated his teachings for better understanding, for example in his famous, often mentioned but lost Book of Pictures. In this way the composition of the Manichaean books and the style of the script was meaningful from the very beginning. Unfortunately, we have no remnants from this starting time. But parts of the libraries of Manichaean communities survived at different places. In this presentation, I will concentrate on the Manichaean text fragments from Turfan, mainly housed at the Berlin Turfan collection. These Manichaean text fragments have not been written only in the Manichaean script but also in Sogdian, Uyghur, and Runic script, respectively.

What distinguishes calligraphy from ordinary writing? We know several manifestations of the Manichaean and the Sogdian script, on which I will focus here. There are formal and cursive forms. The special calligraphic form is a kind of intentional styling of the letters.

What are other characteristics of calligraphy? Adorned headlines, special signs for interpunctuation, lines at the margin and between the lines, special forms of letters, especially for initials and headlines. The presentation will show examples of these calligraphic forms and look for the possible reasons for that special design.

Bruno Reudenbach (Hamburg)

Art of Writing in Medieval European Manuscripts

Thursday, 11 May, 4:45 pm – 5:15 pm

In the manuscript culture of the European Latin Middle Ages, phenomena that we can call *Art of Writing* are not spontaneous, arbitrary, and freely applicable artistic inventions. In the dominant manuscript form, the codex, this art is instead confined to specific locations in the continuum of pages. There, letters, words, ornamentation, and occasionally images are highly artificially combined and interwoven. Initials and initial pages are the most important example of this. Neither a fixed theory nor any kind of discourse can be proven for this form of writing in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, a systematic of its forms and applications can be deduced from the numerous surviving testimonies. The mentioned restriction to certain positions in the codex also means: *Art of Writing* is always in correspondence with passages written in simple 'normal' script. In the juxtaposition, this not only reveals fundamental differences in the type, size or colour of the scripts, but also in the legibility of writing or even in the direction of reading. This art is not only a demonstration of artistic skills; it fulfils certain functions in the visual organisation of a codex and can also convey symbolic values and contents by combining characters with other forms.

Annette Martini (Berlin)

Between Halachah and Magic: Writing the Names of God into a Torah Scroll

Thursday, 11 May, 5:15 pm – 5:45 pm

Since antiquity, the copying of a ritually pure Torah scroll is tied into a dense halachic texture of writing rules. The rabbinic concept of a kosher Torah includes not only the writing materials – the skins, the ink, the utensils, which should conform to the Jewish conception of purity and holiness – but also the layout, the correct letter forms, and the special characters. The rabbis determined who was permitted to write, what attributes this scribe should have, and what ritu-

als the act of writing itself was subjected to. This presentation will address a particularly sensitive question in scribal literature: the writing of the names of God. Selected sources are presented to illustrate magical, ritual, and religious-legal perspectives on the writing of the holy names into scrolls for liturgical use and to raise the question of the idea behind this extraordinary act of writing.

Shervin Farridnejad (Hamburg)

Unreadability as an Aesthetic Strategy in Persian Calligraphy

Thursday, 11 May, 5:45 – 6:15 pm

The *Nasta'liq*, which is known as the 'bride of calligraphy scripts' and first appeared between the 8th and 14th century, is still the predominant script in Iranian calligraphy. Together with the other calligraphic script *ta'liq*, it is largely regarded as 'The Persian script' since it thrived primarily in the hands of Iranian calligraphers. However, it was also widely used in Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It is still the most popular contemporary style among classical Persian calligraphy scripts. Within the practice of *Nasta'liq* writing, which is the most unambiguous calligraphic script, there is an extraordinary and unique calligraphic practice called *Sīyāh-māšq* (black practice), which is intended to be intertwined and 'unreadable'. Beginning in the 7th to 13th century, it seems to be contractual at first glance. This presentation will address the notion of unreadability as an aesthetic strategy in Persian calligraphy with reference to the *Sīyāh-māšq* and the question of ambiguity in Persian calligraphic art.

Artists

Dagmara Kraus

Unlesbar, aber nicht unleserlich: Künstlerische und literarische Blickwinkel auf die Schrift

(with Axel Malik and Alexander Weinstock)

Friday, 12 May, 11:20 am – 12:25 pm

Dagmara Kraus (*1981 in Wrocław, Poland) lives as a poet and poetry translator between Strasbourg and Hildesheim, where she teaches literary writing and literary studies. Her most recent publications are her collection *liedvoll, deutschyzno* (kookbooks 2021), the essay *Murfla und die Blocksbärte. Die Verwandlungen des Miron Białoszewski* (Wunderhorn 2022) and *Poetiken des Sprungs* (Urs Engeler 2023). In 2021, she received the Honorary Award of the German Schiller Foundation and the Merano Poetry Prize. Since 2022, she is a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts.

Philip Loersch

Spaziergang (with Martina Köppel-Yang)

Friday, 12 May, 10:05 am – 10:50 am

Philip Loersch was born 1980 in Aachen, Germany. Since 2023, his works come to life in Wessling nearby Munich. In his drawings (which don't look like drawings), he always wants to cause surprise and amaze the viewers. So Loersch uses his hand-drawn letters as a tool at his disposal – and ready for seduction.

David Maisuradze

Georgische Kalligraphie: Interpretation des Texts (with Mariam Kamarauli)

Friday, 12 May, 5:05 pm – 5:50 pm

Calligrapher David Maisuradze works with Georgian script. He is a co-founder of the Georgian Calligraphers Association and has his own calligraphy school. For him, calligraphy is an interpretation of the text: its task is not only to visualise the spoken language, but also to express the momentary feeling that the text arouses and that the artist has at the moment of creation.

Axel Malik

Unlesbar, aber nicht unleserlich: Künstlerische und literarische Blickwinkel auf die Schrift

(mit Dagmara Kraus und Alexander Weinstock)

Friday, 12 May, 11:20 am – 12:25 pm

Palimpseste zu Goethes arabischen Schreibübungen: Transformative Experimente

(mit Jost Gippert)

Friday, 12 May, 12:25 pm – 1:00 pm

Im Resonanzraum persischer Kalligraphie (mit Shervin Farridnejad)

Friday, 12 May, 3:15 pm – 3:50 pm

In 1989, Axel Malik began his project of ‘writing’, which he calls ‘the scriptural method’ and which has continued uninterrupted to this day. The unreadable but not illegible writing process consists of precise, sign-like, non-repetitive settings. Large-scale installations in libraries and writing performances are focal points in his work. He continuously pursues the idea of establishing an axis between artistic and scientific impulses.

Timo Nasser

Unknown Letters (with Margaret Shortle)

Friday, 12 May, 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm

Timo Nasser was born in Berlin in 1972 to a German mother and an Iranian father. He began his artistic career as a photographer before turning to sculptures, drawings, and installations. His work combines influences from Islamic and Western culture. It is inspired by specific memories and religious references as well as mathematical and linguistic archetypes and the inner truths of form and rhythm.

Mirko Reisser (DAIM)

Graffiti (mit Ondřej Škrabal)

Friday, 12 May, 4:20 pm – 5:05 pm

Mirko Reisser created his first graffiti works in 1989. In 1991, he began to work as an independent artist and from then on called himself ‘DAIM’. His programme includes both the construction and the deconstruction of a word. His graffiti are formations that seem to change constantly, are on the run, cannot be grasped, and thus remain free and sovereign. With each new DAIM piece, Mirko Reisser takes possession of the world a little more...