

Events

UID2025. *èkphrasis*. Descriptions in the Space of Representation. 46° International Conference of Representation Disciplines Teachers

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From September 11 to 13, 2025, the 46th International Conference of Representation Disciplines Teachers, organized by the *Unione Italiana per il Disegno* (UID), took place in Rome at Sapienza Università di Roma and Roma Tre University. The event was coordinated in close collaboration by faculty members from the Representation departments of the two universities, as well as from the telematic Università San Raffaele Roma, and was held under the patronage of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Heritage. Rome, through its most representative institutions in the Science of Drawing, effectively promoted debate and exchange among hundreds of professors, researchers, and doctoral candidates in the discipline, not only from Italy but also from several international institutions.

The theme around which the organizers intended to engage participants –inviting them to respond to the call launched a year in advance– was that of *èkphrasis*, understood as a “conceptual imprint present in the two main digital methodologies currently undergoing widespread experimentation: procedural algorithmic description, expressed in written or visual language, and, even more evident, the prompting of generative platforms based on Artificial Intelligence”. Indeed, history has

handed down to us –especially through treatises– the ancient experience of theoretical and methodological description alongside the illustration of architecture, both in its formal aspects and, above all, in its technological and constructional dimensions, aimed at expanding the communication of information for a deeper understanding of the Art of Construction. Today, this term takes on “a broader, more general, and multidirectional form, making it plausible to use the term itself to indicate any expressive form of description and representation, whether verbal and visual, or visual and visual”.

The conference therefore focused on the description of theoretical, methodological, and applied aspects of research in the field of Drawing, investigating whether analyses, constructions, and generative carried out through Drawing may be understood as expressions of *èkphrasis* capable of advancing knowledge. It also examined whether drawings, images, and models, including their mutual representation, can be regarded as forms of *èkphrasis*, conceived as rigorous visual, theoretical, and methodological descriptions aimed at revealing new knowledge and opening previously unexplored pathways of inquiry. Within this theoretical framework on description in the field of Representation, the

organizers structured the submitted contributions –developed within ongoing research– along qualitative and temporal perspectives, grouping them into three specific thematic focuses. The first topic, on *Memories of the past*, encompassed research on built and intangible architectural heritage, but also extending to the environment, landscape, treatises, historical cartography, history of representation, history of science and the arts, recognition of cultural identity, and identification of theoretical foundations that constitute a legacy useful for implementing contemporary values of knowledge. The second focus, on Challenges of the present, addressed the new needs of contemporary society, providing answers to emerging cultural questions, in relation to sustainability, inclusion, communication, accessibility, standardization, physical prototyping, and digital modeling. Finally, the third focus, on *Visions for the future*, was devoted to defining and testing experimental activities to open new spaces of inquiry, including imaginative and utopian perspectives in the relationship between the sciences, arts and disciplines, experimenting with methods, techniques, and languages to conceive, prefiguring, and design. In response to the call for papers, 224 submissions were received, of which 218 successfully passed the peer

Fig. 1. Poster of 46° International Conference of Representation Disciplines Teachers. Roma, 11-13 september 2025.



review process and were subsequently published in the conference proceedings. The Conference opened on the morning of September 11 in the Aula Magna of Sapienza University, with institutional greetings from the Rectors of the Roman universities (Sapienza Università di Roma, Roma Tre University), Antonella Polimeni and Anna Lisa Tota, as well as from the Director of the Department of History, Drawing, and Restoration of Architecture at Sapienza University, Daniela Esposito. The UID President, Ornella Zerlenga, who, newly appointed and serving in this role for the first time, addressed the audience with authority and expertise, as well as with understandable emotion, gave the opening of the conference. The President presented the state of the Association and the significance of the annual conference for the entire Drawing community, now approaching its fiftieth year. Carlo Bianchini and Elena Ippoliti, as the principal organizers of the conference at Sapienza University, subsequently presented an overview of the conference's identity, organization, and three-day program. Mario Docci delivered the opening lecture of the Conference –the UID keynote– in his role as Honorary President of the *Unione Italiana per il Disegno*. Focusing on the theme of water culture in the Roman world, the presentation engaged participants with the extensive

body of studies conducted over time on aqueducts, baths, and, above all, the most renowned Roman fountains. With the introduction by Maria Grazia Cianci and Graziano Mario Valenti, the conference officially opened.

The first focus, concerning *The Past*, coordinated by Carlo Bianchini and Anna Osello, included 15 presentations by approximately 30 authors. These contributions primarily addressed built architecture, especially of historical and monumental character; but also encompassed painted architecture, significant decorative elements, and landscapes analyzed through two-dimensional reconstructions, digital modeling, BIM, digital atlases, and 3D databases. The second focus, on *The Present*, coordinated by Alfonso Ippolito and Stefano Chiarenza, included 15 presentations by 50 authors. The contributions focused on digital reconstructions of objects and landscapes, digital twins, imaginary spaces, and spherical sequences, as well as algorithmic modeling, VR and AR developments, and applications of Artificial Intelligence. The third focus, on *The Future*, coordinated by Emanuela Chivoni and Caterina Palestini, featured 15 researchers by 47 authors. It should be noted that this edition of the UID Conference was distinguished by the absence of parallel sessions for research presentations. Instead, the conference

adopted a single-auditorium format, designed to maximize attendance and engagement for each presentation and to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of all topics to participating scholars. This approach, however, demanded careful organization of each presentation to allow delivery within a short time (5 minutes) without compromising the clarity, effectiveness, or impact of scientific communication.

The second day of the conference opened at Roma Tre University, in structures renovated for the university's teaching and research activities, with greetings from the Rector, the Director of the Department of Architecture, and the main organizers on site, namely Maria Grazia Cianci and Marco Canciani. The order of the focus sessions was inverted: the program began with *The Future*, continued with *The Present*, and concluded with the Past. The reopened Future focus, coordinated by Marco Canciani and Stefano Brusaporci, featured an additional 10 presentations by over 30 authors, addressing future scenarios through computational descriptions, VR, and generative AI. *The Present* session, coordinated by Maria Grazia Cianci and Francesca Fatta, included 15 presentations by 31 authors. *The Past* focus, coordinated by Giovanna Spadafora and Marco Giorgio Bevilacqua, featured 15 additional presentations by 32 scholars. A further *Past* session, coordinated by Daniele Calisi and Valeria Menchetelli, included 15 more presentations by 30 authors. Overall, the presentations expanded the concept of representation by addressing a variety of themes and modalities –managerial, symbolic, and narrative– across historical and contemporary contexts. They further extended the notion of representation to include sensory descriptions of a wide

range of content, employing diverse and multidirectional forms, in line with the concept of *èkphrasis*, as defined by the conference.

During the conference, several other talks were presented: Michele Cometa from the University of Palermo and the artist Kristin Jones delivered a lecture on *Surveying the Invisible*; Laura Farroni, Marcello Balzani, and Alessandro Luigini gave a presentation on research, innovation, and enterprise; and Anna Osello led a session on the outcomes of the PHD Summer School UID 2025 held in Venaria Reale (Turin), entitled *The Virtual Drawing of the Real*. The conference also featured collateral events, such as Urban Drawing along the avenue of the university campus in front of the main conference venue, as well as exhibitions of drawings, projects, and research outcomes from the teaching and research activities of the 'Roman' faculty members in the Representation area. The 2025 UID Young Researchers Vito Cardone Award was awarded to *VISION_E – Drawing: A Vision for Every Extended*

Intelligence, coordinated by Enrico Pupi. The project was selected during the summer as part of the exhibition of results.

On Saturday, September 13, following the presentation of the best papers awards for the individual sessions, the Congress of the Faculty Members –that is, the general assembly of the UID Scientific Association– took place. During this assembly, President Ornella Zerlenga presented the numerous initiatives launched over the past year; the work carried out by the Technical-Scientific Committee, and the perspectives for 2026, including a presentation by Marcello Balzani on the 47th UID Conference, which will be held in Ferrara in 2026. During the final morning, Francesca Fatta, Paolo Giandebiaggi, and Carlo Bianchini awarded the traditional UID Gold Plaques to Ornella Zerlenga, Laura De Carlo, and Guendalina Salimei, respectively. Guendalina Salimei, Professor of Architectural Design at the Roman University and a renowned architect, also presented to the participants the major works completed during her career.

During the assembly, a highly attended and emotional moment was dedicated to the memory of Massimiliano Ciamaichella, colleague and member of the Association's Technical-Scientific Committee, who passed away far too prematurely during the summer. Both the President, who recalled Massimiliano's commitment and the main achievements of his academic career, as well as his empathetic and enthusiastic character; and Graziano Mario Valenti, through a special dedication, sought to honor him through various initiatives. It was decided to dedicate the proceedings of this Roman conference to Massimiliano, as a testament to his vivid and enduring memory, along with other future initiatives that UID plans to carry out.

The assembly concluded to full satisfaction of the participants, with heartfelt thanks to the organizers and a warm farewell to all members and supporters, with an invitation to attend the next conference in Ferrara, to be held from September 10 to 12, 2026, entitled *Furious Drawing*.

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