

Editorial

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Issue 18 (2026) of the biannual scientific journal *diségno* is intentionally being published on 12 July. This date was not chosen by chance, but was established in September 2025, when the Editorial board - coordination proposed to the UID General Assembly that the call for papers be devoted to the research themes explored by Massimiliano Ciammaichella, member of the Scientific Committee for the 2024-2027 term, who was born on 12 July 1973 and passed away prematurely in August 2025. Symbolically, this issue of *diségno* represents today the gift of the UID scientific community to his memory on what would have been his fifty-third birthday. The call for papers, entitled *Συναψή (Synapse). Expressive and Relational Paths of Drawing*, was written by Gabriella Liva and Graziano Mario Valenti, Massimiliano's friends and research colleagues, joined, in light of the specificity of his scholarly interests, by Tatiana Sentamans.

The launch of the call was preceded by the scientific series *I Libro: I Disegno*, a format conceived under the auspices of UID from an idea by Laura Farroni, of which Massimiliano

was an enthusiastic founder. The session held on 24 October 2025 was dedicated to Massimiliano's memory, his intellectual legacy, and his scientific culture. On that occasion, his principal research directions were presented in accordance with the format of *I Libro: I Disegno*, through three thematic sessions (*Staging; Modelling and its dedensions; Genres*). Introduced respectively by the discussants Graziano Mario Valenti, Fabrizio Ivan Apollonio, and Alessandra Pagliano, these sessions found a 'counterpoint' in the participation of several scholars with whom Massimiliano had shared his daily research activity, including Gabriella Liva, Francesco Bergamo, and Barbara Pasa. The call for Issue 18 of *diségno* was officially launched on 1 December 2025. In order to convey the cultural significance of Massimiliano Ciammaichella's research – a sensitive teacher, deeply attentive to the value of the individual, scientifically accomplished, and capable of interpreting the discipline of Drawing from multiple, consistently original perspectives while remaining open to dialogue with a wide range of theoretical and operational forms of knowledge – the scientific curators

adopted the term *Σύναψη* (synapse) in the sense of a synthesis generated between two or more pre-existing bodies of knowledge, the outcome of a connective process resembling a dynamic structure whose fertility increases as researchers move beyond the established boundaries of knowledge and venture into unexplored conceptual territories. As in Massimiliano's own work, described by Benno Albrecht, Rector of Iuav Università di Venezia, in his farewell tribute as that of a "passionate and brilliant teacher; intellectually refined," such an endeavour requires –according to the scientific curators– "the ability to adopt a long-range perspective, unconstrained by the limits of traditional disciplines, and to pursue a genuinely transdisciplinary approach capable of traversing, connecting, and developing different forms of knowledge." Within the call, the scientific curators refer both to the most original and cross-disciplinary research themes cultivated by Massimiliano within the field of Drawing and to some of the most pressing contemporary issues, including equal rights and gender equality. Guided by this ethical commitment, Massimiliano had not only assumed the presidency of the Equal Opportunities Committee (Comitato Unico di Garanzia, CUG) of Iuav Università di Venezia, but, as the nationally most-voted representative of associate professors within the 2024-2027 Scientific Committee, had also promoted the establishment of a Commission devoted to investigating the role of Drawing in relation to gender issues, serving as its coordinator. On these premises, the scientific curators articulated the three focal themes of the call by characterizing the synaptic generation of knowledge as 'performative' (knowledge as project), sensory (knowledge as embodied and expanded experience), and social (knowledge as a critical act).

With this issue, the Editorial board - coordination has also introduced several innovations. In response to increasingly accelerated academic production contexts that do not always correspond to higher quality, greater critical responsibility has been required of prospective contributors. Authors were therefore asked to submit the full paper directly, rather than a preliminary abstract, together with an accompanying form summarizing the context and significance of the proposed topic, its relationship to the state of the art, the originality of the contribution with respect to the existing literature, the methodologies adopted, the expected outcomes, and a brief biographical profile including institutional affiliation, academic or professional position, and principal research interests. Upon completion of the double-blind peer-review process, this submission procedure –requiring only the full paper, accompanied by the research statement and the author's biographical profile– resulted in a lower number of submissions (15, compared with 22 for Issue 17 in 2025), but also in fewer rejected manuscripts (2, compared with 5 for Issue

17). This outcome reflects a greater degree of awareness among contributors, particularly with respect to the thematic focus of the call. The distribution of accepted papers across the three topics proved remarkably balanced (five papers in topic 1, four in topic 2, and four in topic 3), as did the international participation of authors, which accounted for between 30% and 40% of contributions, both in single-authored papers and in collaborations with Italian scholars. International submissions originated predominantly from Spain, confirming the longstanding scholarly relationship between the two countries and their close disciplinary affinity.

In this issue, the proportion of single-authored submissions by early-career academics (doctoral candidates, PhD holders, and university researchers) was significantly higher than in the previous Issue 17, where these scholars had participated more frequently in collaboration with senior academics (associate and full professors). A plausible explanation may lie in the accessibility of the topics addressed. The theme proposed for Issue 17 –*The Revealed Structure. Drawing between Construction and Form*– was more firmly rooted in the theoretical tradition of the scientific and descriptive foundations of Drawing and therefore required expertise grounded in the geometric and configurational analysis of architectural space. By contrast, the call for the present Issue 18 –*Σύναψη (Synapse). Expressive and Relational Paths of Drawing*– appears more open to contemporary issues and to the expressive role of Drawing, consequently requiring a lower degree of disciplinary specialization.

The opening essay, authored by the scientific curators Graziano Mario Valenti, Gabriella Liva, and Tatiana Sentamans, bears witness to the extent to which Massimiliano Ciammaichella's passion for Drawing was grounded in solid disciplinary roots capable of continually renewing themselves in order to embrace –and indeed promote– innovation. Like the pieces of a puzzle, the essay's individual sections introduce the principal research themes and, gradually assembled, compose an image capable of giving meaning to actions and signs.

In *Synapses. Expressive and Relational Paths in Drawing*, Valenti outlines Massimiliano's scholarly profile as that of a meticulous and rigorous researcher who was nevertheless capable of looking courageously beyond the limits of what is conventionally 'drawn,' restoring Drawing as an immaterial resource, an extension of both body and reason, a synaptic space in which things happen and continuously evolve, generating innumerable new relationships, trajectories, stimuli, and drawings.

In *The Theatre of Life*, Liva adopts the metaphor of the theatre to recall the passion she shared with Massimiliano and to introduce one of the fields of study he most deeply explored and cherished: Baroque theatre. This scenographic architectural space, conceived by masters of geometry and

optics, becomes an inclusive, social, and democratic environment in which the theatrical act –like the act of drawing– is a form of ‘representation,’ simultaneously signified and signifier; a place where perceptual processes are once again presented to consciousness.

Seeing with the body, seeing from below constitutes the concluding section of the opening essay and offers Tatiana Sentamans’ powerful reflection on the performative force of drawing and its capacity to signify worlds that would otherwise remain invisible. Here, Massimiliano emerges as the integral sum of images reflected both in the memories of those who truly knew him and in the body of his scholarly work.

With *Drawn Writings*, Agostino De Rosa reflects upon the motivations underlying the choice of the cover image and the youthful experiences that led Luigi Serafini to ‘write’ the *Codex Seraphinianus* in an intentionally indecipherable, asemantic script. Regarded as one of the most extraordinary –if not the strangest– illustrated books ever created, the *Codex* narrates surreal universes that stimulate the reader’s imagination, where every certainty of human knowledge is challenged by images that allude to meanings without ever coinciding with what they appear to represent. These fluid, colorful graphic images embody an inexhaustible search for meaning and, like endless metamorphoses, continually challenge every rational interpretation and every codified boundary. Few cultural references could more effectively introduce the concept of synapse and the expressive and relational paths of Drawing, capable of leading inquiry towards unexplored territories so deeply sought by Massimiliano Ciammaichella’s research.

The three thematic focuses are each introduced by invited contributions. The essay *Drawing through Phantasmata. On the Synaptic-Performative Expression of Sign*, authored by the philosopher Romano Gasparotti, formerly Professor of Phenomenology of the Image at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, opens the first focus, *Performative Synapses*. Following an unquestionably rich and erudite discussion, abundant in etymological analyses and textual references, in which Gasparotti generously reconstructs the various ways in which Western culture has historically sedimented the interpretation of the term *synaptein*, he concludes with a section entitled *Nothing is what it is*, affirming that: “Drawing is not signification –at least not in its ideal, symbolic or juridical sense. Rather, it is a performative, synaptic and improvised becoming of thought without subject and without object” [Gasparotti, p. 33].

Building upon this learned introduction, the contributions collected within the first focus explore reflections and case studies in which drawing embodies a performative synapse. These range from the scenographic backdrops of opera productions (Cicalò); to drawings understood as manifestations

of the creative process conceived as an event of connection between author, material, and context (Battelli, Pirari); to drawing as an interpretative device employed for the virtual reconstruction of the original location of the *Aphrodite Sosandra* within the Archaeological Park of the Baths of Baia (Campi, Camerino, Falcone, Lafuente Sánchez, López Bragado, Marcos González); to the operational thesis according to which the creative act of drawing cannot be reduced to a merely illustrative function but instead constitutes the outcome of a cognitive, visual, semantic, and dynamic process (Pettoruso); and finally to the critical interpretation of the diagrams produced by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) as hybrid devices through which drawing constructs relationships, makes design choices explicit, and organizes the architectural project (Bartolomei, Vignoli).

The second focus, *Sensorial Synapses*, is introduced by the thought-provoking essay *What is a Drawing*, authored by Daniele Zavagno. A faculty member at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Zavagno’s principal research interests concern the psychology of perception –particularly visual perception and the psychology of art. Bringing these fields into dialogue with cognitive neuroscience, he highlights the potential of Drawing as a two-dimensional representation capable of activating not only visual perception but also ‘cues,’ namely “units of visual information that must be learned through experience” [Zavagno, p. 104], which evoke spatial three-dimensionality and the relationships between objects and their context, body and place.

This relationship between the body and visual perception constitutes the *leitmotif* of the contributions selected for this focus, in which Drawing is presented as an expression of sensory synapse: from drawing as an autonomous device for understanding the work of art, as demonstrated in the case study of the sculptural work of Giuseppe Penone (Trevisan); to the synesthetic recontextualisation of drawing, whereby, as a synaptic process, it transfers the entire spectrum of the sensory experience of investigated places into atmospheric maps that are perceptually tangible while simultaneously charged with immaterial qualities (Cirafici, De Bona, Küht, Palmieri); to the synaptic landscapes of Joaquín Sorolla and contemporary site-specific experiences that, by retracing their natural settings, restore Drawing as a connection between temporal and sensory perceptions (Eixerés Ros); and finally to the case study concerning the generative design of ceramic surfaces and the role of two-dimensional drawing in identifying sensory characteristics subsequently materialised through 3D printing (Di Nardo, Spennato, Alfarano).

Social Synapses: Situated Knowledge and the Deconstruction of Privilege between Law, Drawing, and Practice-Based Inquiry is the title of the opening essay for the third focus,

Social Synapses. The contribution is authored by Barbara Pasa, Professor of Comparative Private Law at luav Università di Venezia, where she also teaches courses on Rights and Gender Policies within the Master's Degree Programme in Theatre and Performing Arts. Their shared interest in these fields brought Massimiliano and Barbara together, leading them to engage in transdisciplinary reflection on these issues for more than a decade and, during the final months of Massimiliano's life, to co-author several scholarly works, including *Image and Performance of Non-Conforming Bodies* (presented on 13 June 2025 at the International Study Day *Gendered Visualities. Architectures, Images, Languages*, coordinated by Starlight Vattano at the University of Trento and currently forthcoming in print) [1], and *Representations of Embodied Identities in the Design Universe of Lee Alexander McQueen* (presented in September 2025 by Gabriella Liva at the 46th UID International Conference held in Rome) [2].

Although written from the perspective of a legal scholar—as Pasa herself acknowledges at the beginning of the article—the objective of the contribution is unequivocal: “to map a number of study and research trajectories through which ‘social synapses’ may be activated as practices of resistance, with the aim of interrogating the conditions of possibility of a form of knowledge—specifically that related to the field of Drawing—that is capable not of reproducing discrimination and privilege, but of deconstructing them from within” [Pasa, p. 163].

In accordance with the aims of the call for papers, the articles selected for this focus examine the construction of latent social identities within contexts that are often exclusionary. They range from the design of the uniform worn by female railway workers (Ena); to the aesthetic and ideological representation of the Castilian rural landscape in opposition to dominant urban modernity (Santos-Aranaz); to the accessibility of parametric information within the complex relationships linking individuals, institutions, architecture, and data (Droghetti); and finally to the governance of data through diagrammatic drawings operating as synaptic interfaces (Gaetani).

The selection of volumes featured in the *Readings/Rereadings* and *Reviews* sections reflects the thematic orientation of the call. For *Readings/Rereadings*, Francesco Bergamo revisits, with evident emotion, one of Massimiliano Ciammaichella's last works devoted to theatre, the monograph *Scenography and Perspective in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in Venice: Preconditions and Developments of Baroque Theatre*, published in 2021. For the *Reviews* section, the Editorial Board selected the monographs authored by Alessandro Meloni (2025), Emanuela Chiavoni, Giulia Pettoello, Giorgia Potestà, Federico Rebecchini (2025), and Renato Angeloni (2024), reviewed respectively by Massimiliano Lo Turco, Alessandra Avella, and Flavia Camagni. In the *Events* section, Laura Farroni outlines the state of the art of the scientific series *Il Libro: Il Disegno* at the conclusion of the 2025 calendar year, employing diagrammatic drawings to illustrate both the thematic distribution and the editorial production flow of monographs and edited volumes published between 2020 and 2024. The increasingly numerous initiatives sponsored by UID are reviewed by Michele Valentino, *IMG2025*, Cettina Santagati, *TALES*, Giuseppe Antuono, *FortMED2026*, Adriano Magliocco, *The P(r)o(b)lem*, Maurizio Perticarini, *VL2026*, and Marco Giorgio Bevilacqua, *EGA2026*. Finally, the issue presents the renewed version of *The UID Library*, edited by Laura Farroni and Vincenzo Cirillo. In conclusion, I am confident that this issue of *disegno*, the result of a responsible and genuinely collaborative effort, will remain in the hearts of all those who knew Massimiliano Ciammaichella. At the same time, his authentic and empathetic charisma will undoubtedly reach those who never had the opportunity to know him personally but who, through the pages of this volume, will nevertheless perceive the profound sensitivity that characterized his exceptional ability to listen to others.

This issue is published on Massimiliano's birthday—a particularly meaningful day, as it is also the birthday of his life companion, Stefania Catinella. It is my sincere hope that, through the reading of this issue, she may receive the warmest embrace of the entire UID scientific community and the wish that Massimiliano's ‘Drawing’ may continue to live within all of us.

Notes

[1] The paper co-authored by Barbara Pasa and Massimiliano Ciammaichella and presented in Trento is currently forthcoming with La scuola di Pitagora in the series *Temi e Frontiere della Conoscenza e del Progetto* (Vol. 26/2026). In its final version, the contribution was revised by Barbara Pasa in memory of Massimiliano and published under the new title *Non-Conforming Bodies and the ‘Right to Exist’: Contemporary Visual Culture and Algorithmic Futures*.

[2] Ciammaichella, M., Pasa, B. (2025). *Representations of Embodied Identities in the Design Universe of Lee Alexander McQueen*. In L. Carlevaris et al. (Eds.), *ékphrasis. Descrizioni nello spazio della rappresentazione / ékphrasis. Descriptions in the Space of Representation*. Proceedings of the 46th International Conference of Representation Disciplines Teachers. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 2585-2608. DOI: 10.3280/oa-1430-c889.