



FRAGILE IMAGES fundamentally challenges the dominant notion of images as powerful actors. It moves away from the focus on the affective, persuasive, performative, and immersive image and instead focuses on its temporal instability, semantic ambiguity, and ontological self-reflexivity.

The conference will draw on ancient rhetoric and imagery in order to analyse the **semantic** functions of **ambiguity**. Its focus will be on polyvalent images in periods of political, social or religious transition such as Late Antiquity in order to understand the extent to which open images are used to navigate between competing and concurrent interests and worldviews.

Conference Location

Internationales Begegnungszentrum/IBZ
Kiellinie 5
24105 Kiel

Accommodation

Steigenberger Conti Hansa
Schloßgarten 7
24103 Kiel

Location Conference Dinner

Lagom Restaurant & Bar
Düsternbrooker Weg 38
24105 Kiel

Contact

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Kiel University
Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel



European Research Council
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SEMANTIC AMBIGUITIES

18 – 20 February 2026



Programme

Wednesday, 18 February 2026

14:00–14:30 Introduction

Session I: Textual Strategies of Ambiguity (Chair: Ruth Bielfeldt)

14:30–15:15 T. Fuhrer (Munich), Ambiguity in Transtextual Characters

15:15–16:00 L. Schmieder (Marburg), Writing Pictorial Ambiguities: the case of Roman poetry

16:00–16:30 Coffee Break

Session II: The Kippeffekt: Potential Images and Staged Bodies (Chair: Ruth Bielfeldt)

16:30–17:15 A. Grüner (Erlangen), Pareidolia

17:15–18:00 A. Haug (Kiel), Staging Ambiguity: Hermaphroditus in Roman art

18:00–18:45 G. Bertoni (Kiel), Poses of “Maximal Instability” and Visual Ambivalences

19:00 **Drinks Reception**

Thursday, 19 February 2026

Session III: Inconsistencies and Contradictions in Mythological Images (Chair: Lidia Chiné Zapater)

9:00–9:45 F. De Angelis (Columbia), Elinei, Φιλῶσνα, Casntra: semantic ambiguity and unstable myths on Etruscan mirrors

9:45–10:30 A. Reinhardt (Zürich), Comparatio sine qua non: reconstructing Roman hermeneutic strategies in reading Herculaneum’s Telephus relief

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

Session IV: Under- and Overcoding in Allegory, Metaphor, and Personification (Chair: Barbara Borg)

11:00–11:45 V. Räuchle (Munich), Metaphors in Flight: on the wings of Eros and their shifting semantics

11:45–12:30 M. Danner (Würzburg), Between Ambiguity and Aporia: revisiting the so-called Tellus on the Ara Pacis Augustae

12:30–14:30 Lunch

14:30–15:15 E. Günther (Heidelberg), Aeternitas and the Roman Empire: ambiguity and polyvalency of a concept in image and text

15:15–16:00 A. Klünker (Berlin), Unlabelled but Not Unreadable: rethinking ‘unnamed’ personifications on Roman coins

16:00–16:30 Coffee Break

Session V: Framing: Dynamic Ambiguities (Chair: Marlis Arnhold)

16:30–17:15 L. Chiné Zapater (Kiel), Framing Ambiguities: images of nature in public contexts in Roman art (1st c. BC – 1st c. AD)

17:15–18:00 A. Klöckner – U. Kelp (Frankfurt), Framing the Dead on Treveran Grave Monuments: openness and indeterminacy as complementary visual strategies

19:00 Dinner at Lagom Restaurant

Friday, 20 February 2026

Session VI: Ambiguity and its Spatial Effects (Chair: Nathaniel Jones)

9:00–9:45 N. Dietrich (Heidelberg), Conflicting Imaginary Spaces in the Roman Houses

9:45–10:30 B. Bergmann (Mt. Holyoke), The In-Between: shadow figures and apparitions on painted walls

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

11:00–11:45 F. Cassini (London, UCL), Making Sense of Space in Roman Art: representation and meaning

11:45–13:00 **General Discussion**