

# EDITORIAL

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In early 2017 a group of researchers from different disciplines and hailing from at least 8 different universities, published a *call for papers* for a conference to be held at a small private university in the mountains on the border between Italy and Austria.

In late November.

The promoters would have been quite satisfied if the call had been answered by a few dozen young researchers, because they wished to discuss a topic that had been of interest to everyone for some time, but that each investigated independently relying on their own disciplinary tools.

When the call ended, there were more than 300 authors and approximately 220 submissions.

And at the end of the conference, it also snowed.



If it hadn't actually happened, the prologue to this editorial might be a good idea for the incipit to a *genre novel*. But that is exactly what happened to us and to some of our colleagues who are promoting this new journal with us.

On November 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, about 200 scholars gathered in Bressanone-Brixen, a lot more than we could have imagined (and perhaps even wanted): with some teething problems that may easily be forgiven in a nascent project, the conference proved stimulating, very profound, open and informal. As organizers, one of our greatest satisfactions was to walk through the hallways during the pauses between the parallel sessions and see an art historian engaging with a mathematician, a pedagogue with a designer, an architect with a neuro-scientist, to discuss the role of images in their research: the interdisciplinary approach, which we had been seeking from the moment we chose the title of the conference, was working.

*IMMAGINI? International and interdisciplinary conference on image and imagination, between representation, communication, education and psychology.* A rather unusual name, so long as to seem inappropriate, but which contained the seed from which the new *IMG journal* has now germinated: scholars of representation and graphic science, graphic designers, pedagogues and psychologists. Of course, one could easily argue that these are not the only areas in which the themes of images and imagination are studied and investigated, but for us they represented the four vertices of a skewed figure, so distant from one other as to define a wide area that could accommodate many other intermediate and interdisciplinary points of view (Luigini, 2018, Luigini and Panciroli, 2018).

The ample and unexpected participation in *IMG2017* convinced us of the need to reflect on the potential of this project, and among the many possibilities, all together, we decided to confirm the space for discussion that had been created and to make the conference biennial and itinerant, so that the following one was held in July 2019 at the Department of Architecture in Alghero: an open and interdisciplinary project might have run the risk of waning if it was always held in the same place. But when we decided to propose the conference again, we felt that something was still missing. After a long period of further reflection, we came to understand that the size of the conference, given the figures confirming that *IMG2019* would also be widely attended, would make it impossible to explore some of the research studies as deeply as they deserve. To the horizontal connection of the conference, where ideas and disciplines confront and cross-pollinate one another, we wished to add an opportunity for vertical study, which only a scientific journal can provide.

## IMG journal

These were the premises for founding the *IMG journal* – *interdisciplinary journal on image, imagery and imagination*, a journal that aims to collect and disseminate interdisciplinary research revolving around the themes of image, imagery and imagination.

The magazine will be published every six months, with issues in autumn and in the spring, and each issue will focus on a monographic theme. One in every four issues will be inherent to the biennial *IMG conference*, while the others

will each be handled by one or more issue curators, and will include a thematic and monographic focus. Each issue will also contain a *composite* section that will feature articles not pertinent to the monographic theme, so that research which responds to the questions that the journal raises in general, may be published in a timely manner for scientific dissemination. The term *composite* is intended to evoke not only its miscellaneous nature, but also, in the science of materials, the characteristic of a material that, formed of different components, takes on the best characteristics of each giving rise to a better material: a perfect metaphor for the added value of interdisciplinarity.

The journal will be full English, but will give the authors the opportunity to publish their text in their mother tongue as well; all texts sent by the authors in their mother tongue will be published only on website in only-text format. Last but not least, the magazine will be completely *open access* in all its contents because we are firmly convinced of the need to share knowledge. Our choice of *open access* is a conscious one, perhaps the only one which we have never had to discuss or argue: our intention is to publish valid research but also to create connections, and open access is the only context in which these connections are free to develop, even independently from the promoters of the journal.

The place of the journal in the scientific context of reference deserves mention.

It is evident that the project was born with all the requisites to aspire to international circulation –full English, open access, free, ready for indexing– but the main reference, at least for now, is the Italian academic system. Specifically, the criteria for recognition by ANVUR (National Agency

for the Evaluation of Universities and Research) have all been guaranteed, but perhaps the most important aspect of our project does not favour the journal's placement: interdisciplinarity. Recent ministerial policies, it seems, have rewarded a structure based on disciplinary sectors and the primary evaluations for research products (ASN, VQR, ANVUR journals) become problematic in most cases for research and publications considered "borderline", interdisciplinary or simply at the margins of the disciplines. However, while respecting the "rules of the game", we believe it is important to promote open and interdisciplinary scientific research. For this reason, we have resolved to meet the needs of all the main sectors to which the promoters of the journal belong –both bibliometric with indexing and non-bibliometric with the assignment of an ISBN to each monographic issue– and we hope to find space for publications from different backgrounds.

## Issue 01. Manifesto

We decided to use the first issue of the journal to explain the interdisciplinary and collective nature of *IMGjournal*: in fact, we asked the members of the scientific committee and the associated editors to voluntarily submit a text, synthetic or extended at their discretion, that would present a disciplinary or personal point of view on issues related to the focus of the journal, proposing experiences in both basic and applied research.

Scholars of representation, visual communication, education, psychology –with incursions into art history, semiotics or aesthetics– present in this *Issue 01* a multiplicity of points

of view that all, however, focus on the core concern of the magazine: images, what they are, how they are conceived, how they are produced, how they are perceived.

Ultimately, we believe that the heterogeneity of the first Issue is one of the aspects that qualifies the project positively, as a collective project. Issue 01 is thus configured as an actual *Manifesto*.

A collective *Manifesto*.

## Post Scriptum: one final note

Among the supporters of the journal there are many eminent scholars from different scientific fields. The composition of the scientific committee reflects this support as well as the national and international scientific relationships we have developed. We are grateful to everyone, but in this list it is impossible not to notice the absence of one name. The name of the person who, by irony of fate, was the first supporter and the one who most insisted on launching the journal, but who died prematurely in April 2019. We owe a great deal to Prof. Vito Cardone: for this project his absence is and will remain tangible.

We would like to remember him by quoting the words with which he opened another interdisciplinary conference sponsored by UID during his presidency, in which he referred to the *IMG2017* conference. Words that, when we read them today, appear as an indelible cultural testament.

*“Individually and as a scientific community, we must open up new avenues, accept difficult and stimulating challenges, [...] it is also about meeting and dialoguing, working together, with other scientific communities [...]. We cannot not cultivate transversal, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary relationships, or as I prefer to say, transdisciplinary ones: because we must not limit ourselves to meeting and engaging in dialogue with experts from other disciplinary sectors. We must also make an individual effort to reach beyond our borders. Without descending into a deleterious polymathy, we must seek a deeper understanding of the specificities and reasons of others, to move confidently forward with them.”*

(Cardone, 2019, p. XIV)

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