



EGI

Epigraphy, Graffiti, Iconography

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Journal**

**Graffiti, heritage and context:
the act and significance of writing**

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Editorial

Pedro Soares Neves

This inaugural issue of EGI – Epigraphy, Graffiti, Iconography marks the beginning of a journal dedicated to the study of writing, marking, and visual inscription across time, media, and cultural contexts. The journal emerges from a shared concern with how signs are produced, experienced, and interpreted in relation to space, materiality, and social practice. As a first issue, it sets out both the intellectual scope of the journal and its commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue between epigraphy, graffiti studies, art history, archaeology, visual culture, and writing theory.

The issue is inspired by the panel “Graffiti, heritage and context: the act and significance of writing”, organized by Professor Philippa Steele (Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge) within the Urban Creativity Conference.

The panel brought together scholars and practitioners working across ancient, medieval, and contemporary contexts, united by an interest in writing not merely as text, but as action: an embodied, situated, and often contested practice that shapes relationships between people, places, and histories. This issue develops that conversation, extending it through peer-reviewed articles that foreground writing as material intervention, performative gesture, and cultural signal.

Several contributions explore the deep historical roots of graffiti and informal inscription. *Mount Hyettos, Athens: A Holy Place for Writing* examines a landscape where writing itself became an object of ritual attention, tracing the continuity of inscription from the Geometric period to the present and foregrounding the sacred

dimensions of marking and sign-making. *Graffiti in Plautus’ Comedy* (Merc. 409–412; Asin. 759–760): *Visuality, Agency, and Property* shifts the focus to literary representation, reading graffiti in Roman comedy as a site where questions of visibility, authorship, and ownership are negotiated through humor and performance.

Other articles address the movement of epigraphic forms across media and sensory regimes. ‘Carved in Stone, Captured on Canvas’: *On the Medial Transformation of Epigraphic Elements in 15th-Century Painting* investigates how inscriptions migrate from architectural and monumental contexts into pictorial space, revealing changing attitudes toward writing, authority, and visual framing. *On Jacob’s Path: Text, Layout, and Orality* in a Late Antique Jewish Pilgrim’s Temple Mount offers a close, multimodal reading of a rare Hebrew graffiti, showing how layout, repetition, and spatial positioning invite oral response and devotional participation, and how graffiti functioned as a means of reinscribing presence within contested sacred spaces.

Contemporary practices of writing and mark-making are addressed in *The Rhythm of the Cursive Line: Reframing graffiti, tagging, writing, cursive, and calligraphy*, which approaches graffiti through embodiment, rhythm, and gesture. By placing cursive graffiti in dialogue with calligraphy and writing traditions, the article challenges dominant regimes of legibility and authorship, proposing writing as a relational and temporal mode of dwelling in the world.

The issue concludes with a review of *Graffiti Scratched, Scrawled, Sprayed*, a publication that brings together historical, archaeological, and contemporary perspectives on graffiti across cultures and periods. The review situates the book within current debates in graffiti and epigraphic studies, highlighting its contribution to understanding graffiti as a broad and heterogeneous field that cuts across distinctions between ancient and modern, official and unofficial, sanctioned and unsanctioned writing.

Taken together, the articles and review in this first issue establish EGI as a platform for examining writing beyond conventional textual boundaries. By attending to graffiti, epigraphy, and iconography as practices embedded in material conditions, social relations, and sensory experience, the journal aims to foster conversations that cross disciplinary and temporal divides. This inaugural volume sets the tone for future issues by affirming writing as a dynamic act—one that leaves traces not only on walls, objects, and images, but also in the ways communities remember, contest, and inhabit space.