

HIDDEN WRITING—A Workshop

April 11, 2016

Petteruti Lounge

Stephen Robert '62 Campus Center, Brown University

sponsored by the Program in Early Cultures

Writing is basic to human messaging. Few studies, however, target “hidden writing,” the notations that, by form or placement, challenge and puzzle the reader. “Hidden” scripts include “insect” or “bird writing” of early China, Maya full-figure glyphs, stylized texts in Arabic, and sundry calligraphic excesses. All disinvite legibility. All engage in play with the reader. By physical concealment, yet other texts focus on magical effects or supernatural reception. But here is a central paradox: with care and effort, hidden scripts are supposed to be read. After struggle and coy resistance, they will yield their sound and meaning. This conference uncovers hidden writing in civilizations around the globe. It draws on distinguished scholars, some at Brown, some elsewhere, each absorbed in the serious fun of graphic ingenuity.

The *Program in Early Cultures* at Brown, directed by John Bodel and Stephen Houston, fosters collaboration, critical exploration, and interdisciplinary scholarship on the comparative study of ancient civilizations.

8:45 am ***COFFEE + SNACKS***

9:10 am ***Welcome + Introduction***

Stephen Houston, Department of Anthropology, and
John Bodel, Department of Classics, Brown University

9:30 am ***'tit r tit' – The Foregrounding of the Sign as Sign and Altered Reading in Egyptian Enigmatic Writing***

Andréas Stauder, École Pratique des Hautes Études,
IV^e Section, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, Paris

Andréas Stauder is Directeur d'études at the École Pratiques des Hautes Études, Paris. His research interests include the linguistics of Egyptian-Coptic, earlier Egyptian literature and written culture, and complex writing systems. He co-directs the module “Materiality and Semantics of Complex Writing Systems” at the “eikones” project (University of Basel and Swiss National Science Foundation) and the section “language” of the UCLA *Encyclopedia of Egyptology*.

10:15 am *Buried Writing and Camouflaged Writing in Ancient China*

Wang Haicheng, School of Art + Art History + Design,
University of Washington, Seattle

Wang Haicheng is Mary and Cheney Cowles Endowed Associate Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology at the University of Washington, Seattle. His research centers on the art and archaeology of ancient China and the comparative study of early civilizations. Recent publications include *Writing and the Ancient State* (Cambridge, 2014) and a chapter on urbanization and writing in volume 3 of *The Cambridge World History* (2015).

11:00 am *COFFEE BREAK*

11:15 am *Un- or Intentional Obfuscation? Hidden Writing in Ancient Greece*

Graham Oliver, Departments of Classics and History
Brown University

Graham Oliver is Professor of Classics and History at Brown University and an ancient historian who works with inscriptions. His research focuses on the history of ancient Greece, especially from the fourth century BCE to the time of imperial Rome. He is writing a book, *The Cambridge Manual of Greek Epigraphy*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

12:00 pm *Archaism as Atemporality in Chinese Script*

Jeffrey Moser, Department of the History of Art and Architecture,
Brown University.

Jeffrey Moser specializes in the artistic and intellectual history of China during the Song-Yuan era (tenth to fourteenth centuries AD). His research focuses on the ways in which sensory engagement with material things transformed historical approaches to the challenges of making and reasoning. He is currently completing a book manuscript entitled *Nominal Things: Bronzes, Schemata, and the Hermeneutics of Facture in Northern Song China*.

12:45 pm *LUNCH*

2:30 pm *Squaring the Circle: Angular Arabic Writing and the Supernatural*

Scott Redford, SOAS, University of London

Scott Redford is the Nasser D. Khalili Professor of Islamic Art & Archaeology, Department of the History of Art & Archaeology, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London. He studies the art, archaeology, and architecture of medieval Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean. His most

recent book is *Legends of Authority: The 1215 Seljuk Inscriptions of Sinop Citadel*, Turkey (Koç University Press, 2014).

3:15 pm ***Thwarting Text: Animation, Vitalism, and Full-Figure Glyphs among the Maya***

Stephen Houston, Department of Anthropology,
Brown University

Stephen Houston serves as the Dupee Family Professor of Social Sciences at Brown University, where he also holds an appointment in Anthropology. A specialist in Classic Maya civilization, writing systems, and indigenous representation, Houston is the author of, among other volumes, *Temple of the Night Sun* (Precolumbia Mesoweb Press), *The Maya* (with Michael Coe, now its 9th edition), and *The Life Within: Classic Maya and the Matter of Permanence* (Yale University Press), winner of a PROSE Award in 2014.

4:00 pm ***COFFEE BREAK + SNACKS***

4:15 pm ***Reed-writing: The Visual Rhetoric of Decipherment in Medieval Japanese Sacred Scrolls***

Rachel Saunders, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Associate Curator of
Asian Art, Harvard Art Museums

Rachel Saunders is the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Associate Curator of Asian Art and a specialist in Japanese art. She earned her BA in Japanese from the University of Oxford, her MA in East Asian Art History from the University of London, and her PhD (2015) in History of Art and Architecture and East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University. She was a visiting fellow at the University of Tokyo from 2011---2014, and was the Ittleson Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts (CASVA) at the National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC) 2014-2015.

5:00 pm ***DISCUSSION***

5:30–6:30 pm ***RECEPTION***