



# TATTOO ICONOLOGIES

## BODY WRITINGS AND IDENTITY RELATED FLUCTUATIONS

*II International Study Conference*

### PALERMO

MUSEO INTERNAZIONALE  
DELLE MARIONETTE

DICEMBER 1-2, 2017

[www.circolosemiologicosiciliano.it/  
tattoo-iconologies/](http://www.circolosemiologicosiciliano.it/tattoo-iconologies/)



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CULTURE E SOCIETÀ

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The contemporary practice of tattooing is globally diffuse. From being a marginal anti-language, writing on the body has revealed itself as a globalized trend. While tattooing initially may have been a niche occurrence, being rather a minority practice, today its popularity confirms its normalization, hardly a trivialization: in 2015, about 30% of people in the United States, and 13% (which means more than seven millions) in Italy are tattooed. As for all the massive trends, not performing any tattoo begins to be an effective tendency as well, and is thereby facilitating its objectification.

Several Humanities have been dealing with this phenomenon, especially Criminal and Cultural Anthropology in their constitutive weavings with Sociology, Folklore Studies, Image Theory, Literary History and Cultural Studies, and – not least – Semiotics, that is Sense and Sign theory.

The issue of individual and collective identities, which involve the processes of building, transforming and denigrating the sign, flooding from somatic into social (and vice versa), however, only partially coincide with that related to the writing of the body. The practice of tattooing produces traditions – even invented – and translations beyond the strictly ethnic dimension, involving, today more than ever, the aesthetic dimension, i.e. sensory and somatic, but also visual, vestimentary, ultra-vestimentary and artistic factors.

The semiotic outlook, redoubling the plans of the problem (expression / content), allows not only to interpret its many anthropological paths but also the places where, while blocking, these same paths tend to institutionalize or, alternatively, dissolve, proposing original and 'creative' solutions. On the one hand, the body, stuck among suffered pains and sought aches, tends to become other-than-self, metaphorizing itself (What analogies do consequently exist between tattoo and street art, between tattooing and marking, between tattoo and branding or anti-branding?).

On the other hand, the so-called fluid society works to construct meanings that, by playing with the fate of the indelibility, just multiply by erasing each other (the self and the non-self, the group, and the other, the recognition and the disapproval ...). On the level of values, while marking is, historically, an affirmation of infamy, the tattoo is a positive revaluation. And if marking is, in other contexts, one of the narrative functions of magic fairy tales, which sanctions and emphasizes the quality of the subject of being the hero, the tattoo reverses the game again and, transgressively, characterizes the anti-heroes, the cursed, the different and the marginalized ones, now ready to form a legion.

In addition to carrying out a documentary review, the conference aims to extend the field and the methods of semiotics to the tegumentary mark in order to analyze the textual relationship between icons and bodies, between soma and serna (body paints, wounds, perforations, scarification, markings, etc.), as well as the enunciative tactics of the self-skin and his envelopes. The direction of the work is obviously twofold: on the one hand, the discourse (and the tales) over the tattoo, on the other one, the tattoo that, in itself, discusses and tells.

Semiotics – focused on the processes of "artification" and on the ways representation and meaning practices (body art, photography, street art, hip hop dance, etc.) become artistic – proposes the socio-semiotic examination of the various and unexpected ways in which tattoo art works (signed works, old genres, new schools, collections, galleries, critics, exhibitions, catalogs, magazines, books, movies, TV shows, websites and so on).



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Multiple perspectives and research foci are consequently of interest:

Tegumentary, dermatologic sign, redefinition of the trivialized concept of fashion - beyond the garment: naked and dressed relationship (cover / discover, hide / reveal, bewilder / surprise).

Comparison with other sign systems, especially writing (grammatology, inks and colors, calligraphic arts) related to body and skin; makeups, prostheses, liftings, scarifications, piercings, burnings, etc. and related connections, underlining the differences in the meaning of expression: somatic and semantic role, self-skin's misfortunes.

Bodygraphs.

Typologies of iconic genres and invention of tradition: new tribalism, primitivism, etc.

The specific role of the tattooist as a subject of enunciation in the particular relationship to the tattoo and its aesthetic and pathernic transformations.

Topology of the proprioceptive expressions. Esthesia: pain and its role, visibility and communication.

Performance, duration, corrections and deletions. Customization and Auto (Bio) - iconography.

Availability, multiplications, tattoo replications: body metamorphoses.

Debrayage and embrayage: tattoos placed on the body and tattoos inscribed in the body (casuality, 'nature': expression and physiognomy).

Tattoos' remediation: films, tele-visions, reality shows, specialized magazines, etc.

Tattoos and related practices: murals, street art, animal markings, branding.

Branding tattoo.

Tattoo removal.

Tattoo as ethno-medicine.

Tattoo, literary tales, ekphrasis.

Trauma and tattoo.

Tattoo and colonialism / post-colonialism.

Tattoo & gender.

Tattoo & biological quality.

## SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Communication proposals must be between 1,500 and 2,500 max characters (spaces included) plus a short bibliography of references (max 5 titles).

Proposals should indicate: Name, surname, institution of membership and role, e-mail address and telephone number.

Communications and related proposals may be in French, English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Proposals must be sent to both of the following e-mail addresses: [gianfranco.marrone@unipa.it](mailto:gianfranco.marrone@unipa.it), [alicegiannitrapani@libero.it](mailto:alicegiannitrapani@libero.it), referring to 'Tattoo Iconologies' in the subject line.

The deadline for submitting proposals is **September 30, 2017**.

Acceptance notification will be sent by **October 10, 2017**.

Presentations will last for up to **20 minutes**, with discussion at the end of a session.

## FEES

The fee for enrollment at the conference, which is necessary for those who intend to submit a communication, is **35 Euros for doctoral students and independent researchers**, and **70 Euros for full-time faculty** (to be paid in advance to a bank account, for which information will be provided at the time of acceptance of the proposal).

The enrollment fee for the conference includes coffee breaks, two buffet lunches.

Papers, depending on their quality, will be considered for publication in a conference volume.

## ACCOMODATION

Participants will be provided with a list of hotels and B&Bs that will offer discounted rates for presenters.

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Emiliano Battistini, Alice Giannitrapani, Dario Mangano, Francesco Mangiapane, Gianfranco Marrone, Marco Mondino, Rosario Perricone, Davide Puca, Ilaria Ventura.