

# PhD student position at the Institute of Italian Studies, Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society at USI Università della Svizzera italiana

Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) is a young and lively university, a hub of opportunity open to the world where students are offered a quality interdisciplinary education in which they can be fully engaged and take center stage, and where our researchers can count on having the space to freely pursue their initiative.

Established in 1996, USI is in constant evolution, always taking on new challenges while remaining true to its three guiding principles: quality, openness and responsibility.

The Institute of Italian Studies (ISI) is the only Italian-speaking university institution outside Italy. The Institute offers a curriculum focused on the study of Italian literature and language, within a broader framework of civilization defined by a shared knowledge that not only refers to the realm of words in its various forms but also to the realm of artistic and musical language. The Institute supports the work of its young researchers within a context that includes nearly all Swiss universities, engages various disciplines – from literature to the history of art and architecture, archaeology, and the history of music.

The Institute invites applications for a PhD student position (100%, 3 years with a potential one-year extension) for conducting research in the project entitled “Fable, Emblem, Poem, Performance: Renaissance Word and Image Tales” (project n. 218082 SNSF Starting Grants) led by Prof. Giuditta Cirnigliaro.

## The project

Renaissance artists and writers, including Leonardo, Giuliano da Sangallo, Antonio Grifo, and Raffaello, challenged themselves with the composition of original word and image tales of hybrid nature in the form of fables, emblems, performances, and poems. The project focuses on the evolution of word and image tales in the Renaissance with the aim of revealing the creative process of their authors. Being considered as fragmentary expressions aimed at courtly consumption, word and image tales are among the genres most practiced by artists and might offer valuable insights into the creative thinking of their authors. The project will employ digital technologies, such as TEI, IIIF and Virtual Reality, to reconstruct the development of word and image tales and shed light on the various traditions that inform their creative process. The aims and compositional techniques of these narratives are identified to reveal their transformation and uses encompassing different mediums and domains, from personal sketches to courtly performances. Finally, the common literary education of artists and humanists is investigated to discover whether and what role the combination of literary and visual techniques played within the defense that artists conducted of their discipline and prestige. The project integrates methodologies from word and image and material culture studies, contributing to recent developments in digital humanities to explore the interdisciplinary modes of expression of artists and writers in the Renaissance.

### **The Ph.D. Position**

The PhD student will work under the scientific supervision of Prof. Giuditta Cirnigliaro (<https://usi.to/bkka>). The successful candidate will be offered the possibility to work in a dynamic research team and in a multidisciplinary and international scientific environment; he/she will be enrolled in the doctoral program “Lingua, letteratura e civiltà italiana” at the Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society. He/She will participate actively to the project, working on different tasks:

- Writing and completing the doctoral thesis
- Presenting papers and on-going research results at congress and seminars
- Publishing scientific articles about the doctoral research
- Collaborating to the organization of seminars, workshop, congress and all the activities promoted by the project
- Participating to the activities organized by the Institute of Italian Studies with particular attention to the doctoral formation

The subject of the PhD thesis will be discussed and established in detail with the project leader and ideally it will involve the literary production of the writers-artists, such as Antonio Grifo and Leonardo da Vinci, and their relationship with the court environment (with a particular focus on Milan, and eventually Rome, Florence, Venice). Three of the possible research guidelines are the following:

- Creative work in Renaissance workshops/ateliers and creative process in the medias and in the contemporary cultural panorama (structures and analogies)
- Illustrated books, poetry books or emblem's treatises on Renaissance writers-artists
- Courts, workshops/ateliers, and Renaissance environments, across events, nature and architecture.

### **Candidates' profile**

Ideal candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- A Master's degree or equivalent qualification in Humanities, Architectural History, Art History, Architecture, Design, or Digital Humanities. Interdisciplinary profiles combining these fields are particularly welcome.
- Excellent oral and written command of Italian.
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- Ability to work independently, with strong skills in planning and managing one's own work.
- Knowledge and/or expertise in Digital Humanities tools, programs, and methods – including Digital Editions (TEI, IIIF, RDF), Data preparation and/or visualization, and Web Design and development frameworks (PHP, JavaScript, CSS) – will be considered an asset.

Preferred skills (not required, but greatly appreciated):

- A solid understanding of architectural history and sensitivity to spatial and structural analysis, alongside art-historical awareness.
- Familiarity with 3D modeling, scanning, and visualization software, such as Maya, 3ds Max, Artec Studio.
- Interest in the integration of architectural documentation and digital visualization methods for research and communication purposes.

### **Contract terms**

Admission to the Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Admission decisions are based on the candidate's background, interests, attitude and potential for academic achievement.

Successful enrolment in the Ph.D. program and the position as doctoral researcher are not compatible with a further professional activity.

The successful candidate will have the possibility to interact with an international network of collaborators.

Workplace is USI Università della Svizzera italiana, located in Lugano, Switzerland. Availability to travel to other parts of Switzerland and abroad (for purposes of collaboration and research) is required.

Starting date is 01.01.2026 (at the earliest). However, the position will be kept open until a suitable candidate has been found.

### **The Application**

Applications may be submitted upon acceptance of the Applicant Personal Data Processing Notice found at the following **LINK**. In the online form, you will be asked to declare that you have read and understood our privacy policy.

Applications should contain: (1) a letter in which the applicants describe their research interests and the motivation to apply, (2) a complete CV, (3) copies of relevant diplomas, certificates as well as the full transcript of records and (4) an electronic version of a research work (Master thesis or other scientific publication). A support letter written by an expert in the field who knows the candidate well is equally welcome.

Applications must be submitted ONLINE by filling out the form accessible through the following link: **APPLY**. You will also need to upload the documents listed above.

Requests for further information to Giuditta Cirnigliaro ([giuditta.cirnigliaro@usi.ch](mailto:giuditta.cirnigliaro@usi.ch)).

Applications received before 15.11.2025, will be given priority. However, applications will be received until the position is filled. Suitable candidates will be called for an online interview.

USI strives to be an equal opportunity and family friendly employer and is further responsive to the needs of dual career couples. We guarantee that the selection process will give equal opportunities to female and male researchers.

As an institution that values diversity, USI particularly encourages applications from women and from all individuals from underrepresented groups.

Lugano, 28.10.2025