

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
announces an Evening Lecture

by

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**Invisible Script, Illegible Letters. Decorated Pages
in Early Medieval Liturgical Books.**

It is well known that books play an important role in Christian liturgy. This is especially true for Gospel Books in the liturgy of the mass. Containing the four gospels as the word of God they represent like the Eucharist Christ himself and this status becomes evident not only in liturgical actions. Often, this high rank of the book as Sacred Scripture is also expressed by precious material like gemstones or ivory on the cover and by an elaborate artistic appearance of the pages and the script. Widespread in early medieval liturgical books are highly decorated pages with initials or Incipits, pages that are so filled with ornament that the initial letter or the few words of the beginning of the text are difficult or impossible to read. Sometimes the gospels start with pages that show only fields of colour or ornament without any text. If we assume that reading and proclaiming the Word of God in the Mass is one of the most important liturgical functions of a gospel book, then the prominent place of highly decorated but illegible pages is astonishing. Art historians mostly refer to them as “decorated” or “ornamental pages”, but beyond “decoration” these pages, which conceal script in colours and ornament, can also be understood as reflections on the status of writing and, in particular, of script, which is Holy Scripture.

Friday, 7 December 2018 at 6.15 pm
Room 0001, CSMC