

**FIGS Conference
University of Pennsylvania
March 30th, 2019**

Keynote speaker : Prof. Daniel Jütte (NYU)

SECRETS

**"We others, we're looking for the Big Secret too."
Henri Michaux**

In a world of supposed transparency, the emergence of sex scandals, conspiracy theories and "truthers" reveals that we find ourselves constantly surrounded by secrets. These are often concealed electronically, textually or visually. But what does it mean to keep something hidden and what are the resulting implications ?

In both the French and Italian cultures, secrets have played a crucial and often controversial role. From Petrarch's *Secretum* to La Fayette's *Princesse de Clèves*, from Michaux's "Le grand combat" to the recent debate over Elena Ferrante's identity, secrets have served as a theme or subtext in countless stories. In the medieval tradition of *fin'amor*, secrecy functioned as a *sine qua non* for courtly love. Yet, what consequences arise from an adulterous relationship that has been kept hidden from the prying eyes of a judgmental and apathetic society ? During the Renaissance, the concept of secrecy was informed by ancient and previously unknown doctrines. This phenomenon revealed a series of issues : that of authorship, textual truthfulness and historical method. Even now, the presence of secrets in a work continues to be associated with some form of (im)materiality. And, as it is often the case, the pieces of the puzzle are not always immediately evident. In

light of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" for instance, what are the effects of implicit and explicit displays of secrecy ? The individual is therefore charged with the task of deciphering the clues embedded in a given work, revealing a multifaceted network of meanings and interpretations. But how is this process approached and what does it entail ?

The 2019 FIGS Conference, at the University of Pennsylvania, will consider how secrets influence content and/or form in the French and Italian world, and how they contribute to creating or liberating historical, political and social realities.



Please send a title and a 250-word abstract with your name and academic affiliation to :

upennfrenchitalian@gmail.com

by January 19th, 2019.

Presentations should be given in English and not exceed 15 minutes.

We welcome a variety of perspectives and fields of study, including (but not limited to) :

cultural studies, colonial/postcolonial, anthropology, (trans)gender studies, disability, psychoanalysis, comparative literature, cinema, fine arts, music, photography, translation, manuscript and genetic, religious studies, history and historiography, sociology, philology.

• Axes of reflection •

- Author, authority, authorship
- Censorship and cultural repression
- History of ideas, philosophical doctrines
- The question of the inexpressible
- Exposure of the private and private sphere
- Intertextuality, trans-textuality
- Trauma narratives, affect theory

- Silencing -
- Alienation -
- The unseen -
- Occult mystic -
- Detective novels -
- Media coverage -
- Subconscious -

