

My body of work at the BSR sheds light on overlooked aspects of architectural history and underscores the importance of advocating for marginalized voices. By amplifying figures such as Sami Mousawi, the project contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive narrative of architectural heritage.

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HUGH LAST FELLOWSHIP

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Christian epigraphy of Rome, c. 590–1870

Inscriptions are everywhere in the Eternal City. They dominate the public spaces in front of its fountains and façades, and proliferate on monuments, walls and pavements inside its churches. Embodiments of power and memory, inscriptions shaped Rome and the experiences of its inhabitants – built environment, lived space and, for those who quarried and carved, working lives. Yet, apart from studies of lettering itself, the vast amount of writing on stone in Rome, from the end of antiquity (c. 590) and the beginnings of papal administration of the city until the breach of Porta Pia by the Italian army and the end of the temporal power of the Papacy (1870), is approached mainly for prosopographical or institutional-historical detail, as though it were transparent evidence merely illustrative of the past. In the research supported by the BSR Hugh Last Fellowship, I revisit the city's inscriptions as sites where the past is not simply commemorated but constituted; where ecclesiastical and political history meet the histories of labour, art and knowledge, and over a long period of time.

The bulk of my research at the BSR involved work on one element of the larger project: the edition of and commentary on all inscriptions employing the title *pontifex maximus* for the pope – extant, non-extant, late, anachronistic/spurious – purporting to be from or before the pontificate of Nicholas V. Putting this material on a solid footing – actually authenticating or dating vast amounts of material that often either does not survive or does not survive in its original context – is a first step towards being able to answer questions about a title that has been the object of much speculation and theorizing, from Thomas Hobbes onwards but also by modern scholars. Coming at this material as a scholar of humanism, rather than as a classical epigrapher, is an advantage, because in the early Renaissance people did not have the same understanding of ancient genre as would be recovered later. Thus, as my research shows, an early Quattrocento epigraph is highly revealing of its time and the literary context from which it emerged. A new understanding of epigraphic, humanistic and literary culture in Rome in crucial decades for the re-establishment of the papacy in the city and for the dissemination of humanism is the result of this work.

Highlights of my fellowship term included fieldwork in Spoleto and Alatri, as well as many site visits in Rome arranged by Stefania Peterlini. Stephen Kay and Elena Pomar generously provided assistance by means of photogrammetry to assess properly the architrave inscription of S. Stefano Rotondo. With careful archival work and time, I

have been able to piece together the history of lost inscriptions, to the point of authentication, including from the original and long-since-demolished buildings of La Sapienza, and of lost monuments in the Aracoeli. The most remarkable discovery was an unpublished fragmentary inscription of the future Pope Paul II in the Vatican Grottoes.

The Hugh Last Fellowship represented the start of what will hopefully be an ongoing collaboration with the BSR. I won a Leverhulme International Fellowship (LIF), with the BSR as host institution, which is enabling further months of research in Rome in 2024. The aim of the LIF is to provide support and time for developing further grant applications towards a new, collaborative venture for the systematic re-evaluation and re-publication of Christian epigraphy on sound philological, material and art-historical principles. As a first step I plan to establish a project for the digital annotation of the early modern and nineteenth-century sylloges in which the inscriptions have been recorded. Transforming these resources with up-to-date data and commentary promises to be a time- and cost-effective way to lay foundations for collective progress, allowing us to put Christian Rome's inscriptions at the disposal of scholars and a wider public alike, as real, layered, historical artefacts.

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MACQUARIE GALE SCHOLARSHIP

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The Trojan epic cycle within the Etruscan cultural identity/Etruscan scarab gems: new interpretations and approaches

The earliest literary reference to the Etruscans comes in Hesiod's *Theogony*, stating that the two sons of Odysseus and Kirke ruled the central Italian region. As such, from this early a period, the Greeks placed the Etruscans within their mythological understanding, particularly through the lens of the Trojan Epic Cycle. However, this Greek lens on the Etruscans persists into modern scholarship, even though much of the art depicting the Trojan Cycle in Etruria was created in parallel to the Greeks, not because of them. My first research project for the BSR focuses on the depictions and adaptations of the Trojan Epic Cycle within Etruscan cultural identity (a distillation of my 2023 Master of Research thesis). By examining a single iconographical repertoire over a selection of material culture, including pottery, bronze mirrors and tomb paintings, it is clear that the Trojan Cycle was integrated into this central Italian culture through adaptive selection rather than passive imitation. Specific themes and motifs were chosen to represent ideals and aspects of Etruscan culture, in many ways, differently from contemporary Greece, where the Trojan Cycle myth originated.

My six months at the BSR have been immensely important to my research. Not only have I been able to expand upon my thesis research with new examples found at Italian museums that have yet to be published, but I was also able to begin a second research project.

Scarabs are a ubiquitous symbol of ancient Egypt, yet in the first millennium BC, scarab gems can be found in central Italy. With a rounded half carved to resemble a