

# ALLISON CAPLAN

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Santa Barbara, California 93106-7080

## POSITIONS

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- 2019–Present Assistant Professor, Department of the History of Art and Architecture  
University of California, Santa Barbara
- 2019–2020 Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of the History of Art  
Johns Hopkins University

## EDUCATION

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- 2019 Ph.D., Art History and Latin American Studies, Tulane University  
Dissertation: “Their Flickering Creations: Value, Appearance, Animacy, and Surface in Nahua Precious Art,” Elizabeth Boone (chair), Stephanie Porras, Marc Zender, Kris Lane, and Joanne Pillsbury  
Association for Latin American Art Dissertation Award (2021)
- 2014 M.A., Art History and Latin American Studies, Tulane University  
Thesis (with distinction): “So It Blossoms, So It Shines: Precious Feathers and Gold in Pre- and Post-Conquest Nahua Aesthetics,” supervised by Elizabeth Boone
- 2011 B.A., Columbia University, Columbia College  
Comparative Literature and Society, Concentration in Art History  
Summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa

## PUBLICATIONS

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“Blowers of Sun-Excrement: Nahua Lost-Wax Gold Casting in the Florentine Codex Book 9, Chapter 16.” Nahuatl translation and scholarly introduction. *West 86<sup>th</sup>* (Fall 2021). (In press)

Review of *Truth in Many Tongues: Religious Conversion and the Languages of the Early Spanish Empire*, by Daniel I. Wasserman-Soler. *H-Net Reviews* (Sept. 2021): 1–4.

“Locking Eyes with the Sun: Perception, Landscape, and the Fame of Greenstone in a Sixteenth-Century Nahuatl Narrative.” *MAVCOR Journal* 5, no. 1 (2021): paras. 1–53. [10.223322/mav.ess.2021.3](https://doi.org/10.223322/mav.ess.2021.3).

“Birds and Feathers in the Ancient and Colonial Mesoamerican World.” Special issue, edited by Allison Caplan and Lisa Sousa. *Ethnohistory* 67, no. 3 (2020).

“The Living Feather: *Tonalli* in Nahua Featherwork Production.” In “Birds and Feathers in the Ancient and Colonial Mesoamerican World,” edited by Allison Caplan and Lisa Sousa, special issue, *Ethnohistory* 67, no. 3 (2020): 383–406.

“Bridging Biology and Ethnohistory: A Case for Collaboration.” By Allison Caplan, James M. Maley, and John E. McCormack. In “Birds and Feathers in the Ancient and Colonial Mesoamerican World,” edited by Allison Caplan and Lisa Sousa, special issue, *Ethnohistory* 67, no. 3 (2020): 355–382.

“Introduction: Knowledge of Birds and Feathers in the Ancient and Colonial Mesoamerican World.” By Lisa Sousa and Allison Caplan. In “Birds and Feathers in the Ancient and Colonial Mesoamerican World,” edited by Allison Caplan and Lisa Sousa, special issue, *Ethnohistory* 67, no. 3 (2020): 345–354.

“The Aztec Templo Mayor” (sidebar essay), 12 catalogue entries, and two co-authored entries. In *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury Arts in the Ancient Americas*, edited by Joanne Pillsbury, Timothy Potts, and Kim N. Richter. Exhibition catalogue. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2017.

26 Nahuatl art terms and definitions. Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) Online. Getty Vocabularies, Getty Research Institute, 2015. [www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat](http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat):  
altepemeh, amantecah, amantecayotl, chalchihuitl, chimalli, macehualtin, pipiltin, quetzalli, teixiptlahuan, tlahcuilohqueh, tlahtohqueh, tlahuiztli, tlamatinimeh, tlatecqueh, teocuitlahuahqueh, teocuitlapitzcayotl, teocuitlapitzqueh, teocuitlatl, teocuitlatzotzonqueh, teteoh, toltecah, toltecayotl, tzauctli, xihuitl, xihuhuitzolli, xihuzaloliztli.

“Pieter Claessins the Elder, *The Mass of Saint Gregory*, c. 1530” and “English school, *Henry VIII, Mary I, and Will Sommers the Jester*, c. 1554–1558” (catalogue entries). In *Early Modern Faces: European Portraits 1480-1780*, edited by Anne Dunlop. Exhibition catalogue. New Orleans: Newcomb Art Gallery, Tulane University, 2014.

“Never to be Seen Again: The Story of Mexico-Tenochtitlan’s Lost Copper Coins of 1544-1550.” *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 12, no. 1 (2013): 6–21.

Clement F. Bailey Memorial Award for Best New Writer, Numismatic Literary Guild (2013)

## **FELLOWSHIPS**

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2021–2022	Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Faculty Fellowship, UCSB
2018–2019	Sylvan C. Coleman and Pam Coleman Memorial Fund Predoctoral Fellow, Metropolitan Museum of Art
2016–2018	Ittleson Predoctoral Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art
2015	Summer Institute in Technical Art History Funded Participant, Institute of Fine Arts
2013, 2015	FLAS Summer Fellowships for Nahuatl, Instituto de Docencia e Investigaciones Etnológicas de Zacatecas (IDIEZ) & Yale University

## **GRANTS & AWARDS**

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2022	Engaging Humanities General Education Redesign Initiative Grant, UCSB (\$64,000)
2021, 2022	Academic Senate Faculty Travel Grants, UCSB (\$2,100)
2021	Association for Latin American Art Dissertation Award (biennial)
2019	Faculty Enrichment Grant, UCSB (\$35,000)
2019	Renaissance Society of America WAPACC Travel Grant (\$500)
2017, 2018	American Society for Ethnohistory Graduate Student Travel Grants (\$475)
2015	William J. Griffiths Award for Best Latin American Studies Teaching Assistant (for Intro to Latin American Studies I), Tulane University
2014–2019	J. E. Land Fund for Graduate Student Travel Grants, Tulane University (\$1,880)
2014	Summer Field Research Grant, Stone Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University (\$2,240)
2013–2018	Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies/Graduate Studies Student Association Travel Grants, Tulane University (\$2,160)
2013–2015	Stone Center for Latin American Studies Travel Grants, Tulane University (\$996)
2013, 2014	Art History Department Travel Grants, Tulane University (\$450)
2013	Best Campus-Wide Graduate Paper on a Latin American Topic, nominated by Marc Zender, Tulane University
2012–2015	University Fellowship for Graduate Study, Tulane University
2010	Dean Hawkes Prize in the Humanities, Columbia University

2010 James P. Shenton Prize in Contemporary Civilization, Honorable Mention, Columbia University

## **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

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“Recovering Nahua Aesthetics.” Invited lecture. Tenochtitlan: Imperial Ideologies on Display. Orgs. Elizabeth Boone, Leonardo López Luján, and Barbara Mundy. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, Washington, D.C. 8–9 April 2022. (Upcoming)

“Translating the Natural World: Book 11 of the Florentine Codex and its Drafts.” Re-orienting the History of Knowledge, ca. 1450–1700. Orgs. Jennifer Nelson and Raz Chen-Morris. Renaissance Society of America Conference, Dublin, Ireland. 30 March–2 April 2022. (Accepted)

“Ontologies in the Age of Entanglement.” Roundtable discussion. Org. Surekha Davies. Renaissance Society of America Conference, Dublin, Ireland. 30 March–2 April 2022. (Accepted)

“Body, Remembered: The Concept of Skin in Nahua Lost-Wax Gold Casting.” Invited lecture. Columbia University Seminar on the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, New York, NY. (Upcoming)

“Four Shining Houses: The Material Meanings of the ‘Toltec Houses’ in Colonial Nahua Manuscripts.” Intimate Nature: Indigenous Relationships with the Natural World in Central Mexican Codices Panel. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Durham, NC. 10–14 Nov. 2021.

“Assembling Bodies: Multimediality in Nahua Precious Costumery.” Polychromy, Multimedia, and Visual Complexity in Mesoamerican Art Panel. Orgs. Élodie Dupey García and Davide Domenici. Society for American Archaeology, San Francisco, CA. 17 April 2021.

“500 Years Later: Recontextualizing Tenochtitlan.” Roundtable discussion. Art, Design & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, CA. 25 Feb. 2021.

“Translating Bird Names in the Florentine Codex.” Invited lecture, Florentine Codex Initiative Working Group. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. 18 Feb. 2021.

“Constructing Color: Relational Color and Representation in Aztec Turquoise Mosaics.” Invited lecture, Form beyond the Aesthetic Conference. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD. 6 March 2020.

“Skins of Wax, Skins of Gold: Materializing Process in Ancient Mexican Cast Goldworks.” Recursion, Reflexivity, and Self-Referentiality in Ancient American Art Panel. Orgs. Claudia Brittenham and Andrew Finegold. CAA, Chicago. 13 Feb. 2020.

“The World in Words: The Evolution of the Florentine Codex’s Book 11.” The Power of Language: Exploring Agency in Nahua Alphabetic, Pictorial, and Oral Sources Panel. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, State College, PA. 27 Sept. 2019.

“Performances of the Skin: Knowledge and Making in Late Postclassic Nahua Lost-Wax Gold Casting.” Working Through It: Practice and Process in Early Modern Art Panel. Fellows’ Colloquia, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 12 April 2019.

“Invisible Knowledge: The Expertise of Central Mexican Nahua Gold-Casters.” Renaissance Society of America Conference, Toronto, Canada. 17–19 March 2019.

“Of Teeth like Corn: Color Terminology and Representation in Nahua Turquoise Mosaics.” CAA, New York, NY. 14 Feb. 2019.

“Speaking Value: The Forms of Value of Nahua Luxury Materials.” Value and Beauty in the Ancient and Colonial Americas Panel. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Oaxaca, Mexico. 11 Oct. 2018.

“The Roots of Our Art: Divergent Visions of Change in Artistic Practice in the Nahuatl, Spanish, and Images of the Florentine Codex Book 9.” The Florentine Codex: A Universal History of the Aztec World Panel. Orgs. Kevin Terraciano and Diana Magaloni Kerpel. International Congress of Americanists, Salamanca, Spain. 15 July 2018.

“Contingent Color: Language and Color Practice in Nahua Mosaic Art.” Shoptalk Presentation. Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 11 Jan. 2018.

“*Queniuhcatic*: Nahuatl Color Naming as an Improvisational System.” Co-written with Jeff Pynes. First European Nahuatl Conference in Memory of James Lockhart. Center for Research and Practice in Cultural Continuity, Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw, Poland. 17 Nov. 2017.

“*Quemman huetzca, pehua pepetlaca inenepil* [When he laughs, his tongue begins to glitter]: Rediscovering Cipactli’s Tongue in Huastecan Oral Tradition and the Central Mexican Codices.” Co-written with Jeff Pynes. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Winnipeg, Canada. 14 Oct. 2017.

“Tlan camohtic, ¿no yamanic?: Cequin tlahtolli tlen axcanah zan quimanextia ‘color.’” [If purple, is it also soft?: Terms that signify more than just color.] Presented in Nahuatl. Co-written with Jeff Pynes. Field School: Documentation, Participatory Research, Teaching, and Revitalization of Endangered Languages. Orgs. Justyna Olko, Beatriz Cuahutle, and John Sullivan. San Miguel Xaltipan, Mexico. 26 Aug. 2017.

“Life’s Semblance: Translation and Vitality in the Gold-Working Chapters of the Florentine Codex.” Art Histories and Terminologies III: Languages, Lexica, Aesthetics. Orgs. Hannah Baader, Gerhard Wolf, and Monica Juneja. Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Florence, Italy. 12 Dec. 2016.

“The Morphology and Syntax of a Nahuatl Rhetorical Trope.” Co-presentation with Jeff Pynes. Student Conference in Linguistics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. 8 Apr. 2016.

“The Living Feather: Animacy, Materiality, and Craft in Central Mexican Featherwork.” Birds of a Feather: Human-Bird Interactions in the Americas Panel. Editor’s Session. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Las Vegas, NV. 7 Nov. 2015.

“Writhing Feathers and Shivering Gold: Movement and Brilliance in Pre- and Post-Conquest Nahua Aesthetics.” Mixed Systems for Multiple Audiences: Textual and Visual Communication in Colonial Mexico Panel. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Indianapolis, IN. 11 Oct. 2014.

“Researching *Early Modern Faces*.” Roundtable, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. 22 April 2014.

“The Touch of Unfamiliar Eyes: Motolinía’s Representation of Indigenous Viewership in the 1538 Tlaxcalan Corpus Christi.” Cross-Cultural Interactions during the Reformation Panel. Sixteenth Century Society Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico. 25 Oct. 2013.

“Colonial Eyes: Reading Folios 29v and 30r of the Codex Telleriano-Remensis.” Colonial Resonance Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. 27 Sept. 2013.

“Twisted Words, Forgotten Falls: The Myth of Adam and Eve in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis.” XXXIII Annual ILASSA Student Conference, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX. 8 Feb. 2013.

“Mapping the Past, Mapping the Present: Cultural Assimilation in the Mapa Tlotzin and Mapa Quinatzin.” LAGO Graduate Student Conference, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. 18 Jan. 2013.

## **CONFERENCE SESSIONS ORGANIZED & CHAIRED**

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Chair, “Wings and Feathers in Early Modern Art and Thought” Panel. Meanings, Media, Materiality II: Feathers. Orgs. Jeanette Kohl and Barbara Baert. Renaissance Society of America Conference, Dublin, Ireland. 30 March–2 April 2022. (Accepted)

“Intimate Nature: Indigenous Relationships with the Natural World in Central Mexican Codices.” Co-organized with Dominique E. Polanco. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Durham, NC. 10–14 Nov. 2021.

“Indigenous Languages of the Americas and the Language of Art History.” Co-organized with Kristopher Driggers. CAA, New York, NY. 14 Feb. 2019.

“Value and Beauty in the Ancient and Colonial Americas.” Co-organized with Martín Vega. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Oaxaca City, Mexico. 11 Oct. 2018.

“Birds of a Feather: Human-Bird Interactions in the Americas, I and II.” Editor’s Sessions. American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Las Vegas, NV. 7 Nov. 2015.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

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**University of California, Santa Barbara**, Dept. of the History of Art and Architecture, 2019–2022  
Mexican Manuscripts (Upper-division lecture)  
Art of Colonial Mexico (Upper-division lecture)  
Mexican Featherwork (Undergraduate seminar)  
Mexican Manuscripts, Chicana Codices (Graduate seminar, taught with a visiting exhibition by Sandy Rodriguez at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum)

**Johns Hopkins University**, Dept. of the History of Art, 2019–2020  
Jade, Turquoise, Feathers, and Gold: Valued Materials in Aztec Art (Undergraduate seminar)  
Art and Language in the Indigenous Americas (Graduate seminar)

**Tulane University**, Stone Center for Latin American Studies & Dept. of Art History, 2013–2015  
Intro to Latin American Studies I (Lecture with Service Learning, taught with a visiting exhibition on Guantánamo at Tulane and the Ashé Cultural Arts Center)  
Intro to Latin American Studies II (Lecture with Service Learning)  
TA, Colonial Art of Latin America (Upper-division lecture), with instructor Elizabeth Boone  
TA, Contemporary Latin American Art (Upper-division lecture), with instructor Megan Sullivan

## **MUSEUM EXPERIENCE**

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2020–2021 Baltimore Museum of Art, Consultant  
2015–2016 Getty Research Institute, Director’s Office, Paid Graduate Intern  
2013–2015 New Orleans Museum of Art, Native American and Pre-Columbian Art, Curatorial Intern  
2011–2012 American Numismatic Society, Curatorial Assistant  
2011–2012 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Education Department, Teaching Corps  
2011 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, Paid Summer Intern  
2010 International Center of Photography, Roman Vishniac Archive, Curatorial Intern  
2009 Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Katzenberger Foundation Exhibitions Research Intern

## **LANGUAGES**

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English (native), Spanish (fluent), Nahuatl (advanced), Chinese (intermediate)

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

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2020–Present Faculty Chair, UCSB LGBTQ+ Staff & Faculty Collective Executive Board  
2016–Present Volunteer Translator, Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition  
2013–2014 President, Art History Graduate Association, Tulane University  
2012–2013 Gallery Educator, Newcomb Art Gallery, Tulane University  
2012–2013 Research Assistant, Latin American Library, Tulane University  
2009–2011 Editor in Chief, *Avanim: The Jewish Literary and Art Magazine*, Columbia University

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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American Society for Ethnohistory  
Association for Latin American Art  
College Art Association  
Latin American Studies Association

Renaissance Society of America  
Sixteenth Century Society and Conference  
Society for American Archaeology