

Call for Papers:

Objects of Affection: Itineraries, Sensations, and “Thingness”

Date – **Friday, May 6th, 2022** (via Zoom)

Keynote Speaker – **Sally M. Promey** (Professor of American Studies and Religious Studies, Yale University)

The University of California, Santa Barbara’s Art History Graduate Student Association (AHGSA) is pleased to announce the 46th Annual Academic Symposium: “Objects of Affection: Itineraries, Sensations, and ‘Thingness’.”

We are inundated with objects. When we think about the inanimate things that surround us we tend to prioritize them in terms of their function or purpose or, in more Marxist terms, their “use-values.” Yet scholars throughout history continue to grapple with how to understand our relationships to, and with, things, asking: What exactly are things? What do they do? What are their affects?

The inspiration for this symposium on *Objects of Affection* comes primarily from the intersection between material studies and affect studies, and is best represented by three distinct threads of scholarship, each of which can be seen to build on and scaffold each other. Examining the ways in which material culture accumulates social value, Arjun Appadurai in *The Social Life of Things* discusses how the movement of things—“things-in-motion”—has the ability to reveal their human and social contexts. From this, we can think about the agency of objects and the conditions through which such agency can be performed and animated. The metaphor of object “itinerary” or biography is the natural extension to this line of thinking. According to anthropologist Rosemary A. Joyce, the object’s itinerary “traces the strings of places where objects come to rest or are active, the routes through which things circulate, and the means by which they are moved” (*Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, 3). Moving from the object itinerary, we may then begin to question how objects make us feel—or their affect value—which Sarah Ahmed investigates through looking at the sensorial associations with objects. What does it mean when an object makes us feel happy, sad, sentimental, or even nothing at all? More specifically, what does this mean for the art object or monumental building, or the material that constitutes them?

The University of California, Santa Barbara’s Art History Graduate Student Association welcomes paper submissions that focus on the power of objects and that are interdisciplinary in nature, including but not limited to art and architectural history, anthropology, archaeology, museum studies, religious studies, material culture, and other fields in the humanities and social sciences. Topics may also range from the following list:

- Object agency
- Affect theory
- Material culture/studies
- Commodification, spoliation, and modification of objects
- Thing theory
- Cultural heritage and object repatriation
- Sacred objects
- Museum objects, politics of display, and exhibition practices
- Phenomenology of things

We invite abstracts of no more than 300 words for fifteen-minute paper presentations. Proposals from enrolled graduate students in any discipline will be considered: MA, MFA, and PhD. This virtual conference is open to all graduate students, as well as the public, with no registration fee. To apply please email an abstract and CV to Victoria Jennings and Iman Salty at ObjectsofAffection2022@gmail.com by **Friday, January 28th, 2022.**

Successful applicants will be notified of acceptance by **February 25th, 2022.** Please contact organizers Victoria Jennings and Iman Salty with any questions.