

Call For Papers: *Materiality of Objects*
14th Annual Art History Graduate Student Association Conference,
University of California, Riverside | May 16, 2026
CFP Deadline: April 15, 2026
Keynote Speaker: TBD

The University of California, Riverside's Art History Graduate Student Association is pleased to announce its 14th Annual Conference, *Materiality of Objects*.

The distant jadeite stone—its cool blue-green echoing young maize—was carved in the Olmec world into the sacred form of the Kunz Axe. Cobalt carried along Mongol-era trade routes met Jingdezhen's kaolin clay and, through kiln fired, produced blue-and-white porcelain. In Roman art, materials such as marble, bronze, and pigment shaped movement, light, and the sensory experience of power. Across cultures and histories, materials have shaped not only objects, but the conditions of making, meaning, and use.

This conference invites graduate students to examine materiality as an active force rather than a passive surface. Matter speaks: their voice awakening the impulse to make. Objects are encountered through the body and the senses: handled, worn, repaired, and transformed over time. Drawing on approaches including phenomenology, material culture studies, and new materialisms, we ask how materials carry memory, structure experience, and demand particular modes of making, care, and interpretation.

We welcome papers that attend to objects as physical and spatial presences—shaped by texture, labor, technique, and geology—and as agents embedded in systems of circulation, power, and belief. How do materials anchor art in specific places and ecologies? How do objects move through economic, colonial, religious, and institutional networks? How do processes of extraction, touch, decay, and repair entangle symbolic meaning with lived experience?

Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- **Materiality and facture:** craft, labor, technique, and embodied making
- **Extraction, ecology, material histories:** plants, minerals, animals, multispecies worlds
- **Objects in motion:** trade, circulation, migration, diaspora, displacement
- **Objects as archives:** cataloguing, classification, and knowledge systems
- **Copies, replicas, and reproduction:** print, casting, molding, digital technologies

- **Sacred materiality:** ritual use, devotion, iconoclasm, and afterlives
- **Surface and sensation:** tactility, aura, sensory experience, affect
- **Damage, ruin, and repair:** fragmentation, conservation, object survival
- **Museums and institutional power:** display, preservation, restitution
- **Indigenous material practices, epistemologies, land, relational worlds**
- **Gender, race, sexuality, politics, and material products**
- **Materiality across media:** photography, film, performance, digital objects

Please submit your abstract and CV to ahgsa.ucr@gmail.com by April 15, 2026, at 11:59 pm PST. We invite abstracts of no more than 300 words for online 10-12-minute paper presentations. Proposals from graduate students and independent scholars across the humanities will be considered, including Art, Art History, Anthropology, Classics, Literature, Dance Studies, Ethnic Studies, Global Studies, History, Media and Cultural Studies, Music, Religious Studies, and Philosophy, among others. Contact us at ahgsa.ucr@gmail.com with any questions. Selected speakers will be notified in April 2026.

The conference will be held via Zoom on Saturday, May 16, 2026. The conference is free and open to the public.