



**NYU Center  
for the Humanities**

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**NYU Center  
for the Humanities**

Annual Report 2024–25



Photo by Kamyra Agarwal

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# A Letter from the Director

A vibrant conversation on Australian Aboriginal painting between anthropologist Fred Myers, art historian Terry Smith, and Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Maia Nuku collaboratively advances our understanding of Australian Aboriginal art, situating the works not merely as static artifacts but as dynamic elements within living cultural practices.

Musicologist Jaime LaRosa researches the often-overlooked auditory dimensions of everyday life. By meticulously recording and analyzing a spectrum of sounds—from hummingbirds and urban traffic to snippets of random conversations by passers-by to familial dialogue in Lima—LaRosa demonstrates how attentive, expert listening can attune us to the layered textures and narratives that constitute our sonic environments. His work exemplifies how the humanities can deepen our engagement with the sensory worlds that shape human experience.

Historian Subah Dayal's investigation into a 1692 letter penned by an Indian Mughal aristocrat to the Dutch trading company exemplifies the interpretive rigor—and imaginative prowess—required in historical scholarship. By dissecting the addressee's title and name, the seal of the sender, the envelope, the actual letter, and an appended note, Dayal reveals how even seemingly peripheral elements can yield critical insights into the broader socio-political and cultural contexts of early modern global exchange. This approach highlights the importance of examining all facets of historical documents to reconstruct the complexities often concealed within the archive.

Sometimes it takes experts in several disciplines to gain a deeper understanding of humanity's most extraordinary creations. These are just three examples of the conversations and collaborations at the Center for the Humanities that uncovered new dimensions of meaning in art, sound, and text across disciplines.

In the pages that follow, you'll find further glimpses into the work, conversations, and collaborations that made this year at the Center for the Humanities so rich. From unexpected connections between fields to the careful labor of close reading, listening, and looking, these projects remind us of the enduring relevance of the humanities: to enlighten, enrich, and edify us all. We are grateful to those scholars, artists, and thinkers from NYU and beyond who share their work with others at the Center, and look forward to another year of supporting inquiry, exchange, and discovery through the humanities across NYU's schools.



**Ulrich C Baer**  
Center for the Humanities  
Faculty Director, 2014-2025



# Who We Are

## Staff

- Ulrich Baer (2014–2025)**  
Director, Center for the Humanities;  
University Professor, Departments of  
German and Comparative Literature,  
Faculty of Arts and Science
- Cristina Vatalescu (2025–)**  
Director, Center for the Humanities;  
Professor, Department of Comparative  
Literature, Faculty of Arts and Science
- Caila Bowen**  
Communications and Program  
Administrator
- Miki Kaneda**  
Associate Director, Center for the  
Humanities
- Denelia Valentin**  
Administrative Aide
- Rajgopal Saikumar**  
Editorial Associate
- Eun Jeong Choi**  
Graduate Student Assistant
- Undergraduate  
Student Workers**  
Kamya Agarwal  
Iryn Delim  
Richard Gao  
Annika Osterlund

- Ulrich Baer, Chair**  
Director, Center for the Humanities;  
University Professor, Departments of  
German and Comparative Literature, FAS
- Gabriella Bastera**  
Professor, of Spanish and Portugese;  
Comparative Literature, FAS
- Una Chaudhuri**  
Dean for the Humanities and Vice Dean  
for Interdisciplinary Initiatives; Collegiate  
Professor & Professor of English, Drama,  
and Environmental Studies, FAS
- Georgina Dopico**  
Provost, Office of the NYU President;  
Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, FAS
- Karen Finley**  
Arts Professor of Art & Public Policy, Tisch
- Hannah Gurman**  
Associate Professor, Gallatin
- Marina Hassapopoulou**  
Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies, Tisch
- Miki Kaneda**  
Associate Director, Center for the  
Humanities

## Advisory Board 2024–2025

- Anna Kathryn Kendrick**  
Director of Global Awards and Scholarships,  
Clinical Associate Professor of Literature,  
NYU Shanghai
- Urayoán Noel**  
Associate Professor of English; Spanish  
and Portuguese, FAS
- Luis Ramos**  
Clinical Associate Professor of Liberal  
Studies, Liberal Studies
- Rachel Swarns**  
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- Thelma Thomas**  
Associate Professor of Fine Arts, Institute  
of Fine Arts
- Cristina Vatalescu**  
Associate Professor of Comparative  
Literature, FAS
- A.M. Maynor**  
Head of Digital Scholarship Services and  
Assistant Coordinator of Faculty Affairs,  
Division of Libraries
- Kelli Moore**  
Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and  
Communication, Steinhardt
- Jennifer Morgan**  
Professor of Social & Cultural Analysis;  
History, FAS
- Susan Murray**  
Professor of Media, Culture, and  
Communications, Steinhardt School  
of Culture, Education, and Human  
Development
- Karen Nercessian**  
Associate Vice Provost for Strategy and  
Implementation

# Faculty and Doctoral Fellows: Community, Connection and Rigor

This year’s cohort included seven faculty fellows and six doctoral fellows from eleven departments across five NYU schools. Together, they embodied the intellectual breadth and collaborative spirit of the Center for the Humanities Faculty and Doctoral Fellowship. Fellows pursued a range of humanities-driven research, from dissertations and book projects to original compositions and multimedia dance works.

Our weekly meetings served as a forum for sharing work in progress, exchanging feedback, and refining ideas across disciplinary boundaries. The year also featured special sessions, including an oral history workshop led by Sara B. Franklin and a publishing workshop with Susan Ferber (Oxford University Press), journalist Pamela Newkirk, and writer Theresa MacPhail.

One of our doctoral fellows from the 2024-25 cohort shared their experience: “The fellowship helped me see the humanities as both a space of rigorous inquiry and a collaborative practice. It challenged the idea that humanities work is done in isolation or confined to the academy. It made me more committed to doing humanities work that is publicly meaningful and ethically grounded.”



Photo by Richard Gao



Angie Pittman dress rehearsal at BAM. Photo by Rachel Keane



Promo still from *Waste Commons* (2024). Waste pickers have been working together to recycle most of Dakar’s waste since 1968. Courtesy of Rosalind Fredericks and Sarita West.

# Faculty Fellows



**Amy Bentley**  
Professor of Nutrition and Food Studies, Steinhardt  
Amy Bentley is Professor of Nutrition and Food Studies and a 2024 Distinguished Teaching Award recipient. A food historian, she is the author of *Inventing Baby Food* and co-editor of *Practicing Food Studies* (2024). Her research explores meat and dairy substitutes, food waste, hospitals, and flavor’s cultural and health implications. In addition to her work as a food historian, she is involved in a wide range of food-related academic and applied projects.



**Subah Dayal**  
Assistant Professor, Gallatin  
Subah Dayal’s first book, *Between Household and State: The Mughal Frontier and the Politics of Circulation in Peninsular India*, is forthcoming (2024) with the University of California Press. At the Center for Humanities, she is working on her second project – a comparative study of the scribal cultures of Safavid and Mughal port-cities, with a focus on Bandar ‘Abbas, Surat, and Masulipatnam.



**Angie Pittman**  
Assistant Arts Professor in the Department of Dance, Tisch  
Angie Pittman is a dancer-choreographer whose work engages the Black Radical Tradition. Their choreography has been widely performed across major venues. A “Bessie” Award winner, their choreographic work has been supported by numerous grants and residencies. Pittman holds a B.A. in Dance from Old Dominion University and an M.F.A. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Myisha T. Priest**  
Associate Professor, Gallatin  
Myisha Priest’s teaching and research focus on African American literature and material culture. She has published articles mining this fruitful intersection in *The Crisis*, *Meridians*, and *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination*. Her forthcoming book is an interdisciplinary project that considers how figures of children and children’s literature impact African American writing.



**Rosalind C. Fredericks**  
Associate Professor, Gallatin  
Rosalind Fredericks researches urbanism, development, and political ecology in Africa. Her book *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor* in Dakar, Senegal (Duke University Press, 2018) won the Toyin Falola Book Award. She studies waste infrastructure in Dakar, Senegal, and co-directs NYU’s Discard Studies Collaborative. As a filmmaker, she produced the documentary film, *The Waste Commons*.



**Jaime E. Oliver La Rosa**  
Associate Professor of Music, FAS  
Jaime E. Oliver La Rosa’s music and research explore the role musical instruments play in shaping musical practice and material culture at large, as well as the role that Latin American avant-gardes have played in Western Music. As a composer, his work spans sound performance, installation, composition, and open-source software, and has received recognition through major residencies and international awards.



**Madina Thiam**  
Assistant Professor, Department of History, FAS  
Madina Thiam is a historian of modern West Africa. Her work explores the circulations of people and ideas connecting West Africa to the Atlantic and Saharan worlds; social histories of Islam in Mali and the Sahel; Malian women’s histories; and pan-Africanism. Her writing has appeared in several outlets, including the *Journal of African History*, *Revue d’Histoire Contemporaine de l’Afrique*, *CODESRIA Bulletin*, and *Islamic Africa*.

# Doctoral Fellows



**Eun Jeong Choi**

Ph.D Candidate, East Asian Studies, New York University

Eun Jeong Choi is a Ph.D. candidate researching modern and contemporary Japanese media, cinema, and culture. Her dissertation explores soundscapes in 1920s-30s Japan, examining cinema, noise, and urban sound from a postcolonial perspective. Supported by SSRC-JSPS, she conducted archival research in Japan from 2022 to 2024.



**Dantaé Garee Elliott**

Ph.D Candidate, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University

Dantaé Garee Elliott studies contemporary Caribbean art and migration, focusing on the barrel children phenomenon through what she terms “barrel poetics.” She holds degrees from Roanoke College and the University of Delaware, and serves as Editorial Assistant for *Small Axe*. She has curated exhibitions and participated in fellowships with the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, Mellon, and the Hemispheric Institute.



**Ryan Schnell**

Ph.D Candidate, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World

Ryan Schnell is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. A cultural historian of pre-classical Anatolia, Ryan Schnell researches the production and interpretation of writing as a physical medium, especially regarding issues of agency and cultural-linguistic signaling. He holds a B.A. from Brigham Young University and an M.A. from the University of Chicago.



**Ryan Healey**

Ph.D Candidate, Department of English, New York University

Ryan Healey is a Ph.D candidate in English and a founding member of the Digital Theory Lab at NYU. His work has appeared in *Representations*, *Bookforum*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The New Inquiry*. He will join the Digital Humanities Lab at the University of Basel as a postdoctoral researcher in fall 2025.



**Eesha Kumar**

Ph.D Candidate Department of Comparative Literature, New York University

Eesha Kumar studies enumeration, classification, and taxonomy through unexpected literary and philosophical sources. Her dissertation examines Sanskrit poetics, caste theory, and Western philosophy to reveal the power of enumerative thinking. Her writings on language philosophy, epistemology, and translation have appeared or are forthcoming in *Philological Encounters*, *Qui Parle*, and *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, among other venues.



**Matthew Raj Webb**

Ph.D Candidate, Department of Anthropology, New York University

Matthew Raj Webb’s research explores how fashion design, its material practices, cultural values, and political visions circulate across global and local contexts to shape emergent forms of creative expertise and social critique. He is the author of works on visual/photographic ethics, the global circulation of henna, and the politics of artisanal labor in the Indian fashion industry. He will join the Metropolitan Museum of Art as an incoming postdoctoral fellow in the History of Art and Visual Culture in fall 2025.





# Undergraduate Fellows: Expanding Perspectives and Imagining Alternatives

- Aizaz Bokhari Politics | College of Arts and Science
- Anand Kumar History | College of Arts and Science
- Annalisa Joash Global Liberal Studies | Liberal Studies
- Cheng Tu History | College of Arts and Science
- Emerald Lin Biology | College of Arts and Science
- Ishi Gupta Politics | College of Arts and Science
- Megan Nguyen Social and Cultural Analysis | College of Arts and Science
- Minha Choi English | College of Arts and Science
- Mya Sato Gallatin Gallatin School of Individualized Study
- Nicole Llopis-Martell Moros Media, Culture, and Communication | Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
- Ruohan Zhou Linguistics | College of Arts and Science
- Sarah Alessia Hortes Social Work | Silver School of Social Work
- William Moon Politics | College of Arts and Science
- Yelena Ye Arts and Science | NYU Shanghai
- Yuchen Zhang Arts and Science | NYU Shanghai
- Yuqi Liang Arts and Science | NYU Shanghai

One of the most popular sessions of the program, the Careers in the Humanities Roundtable allows our undergraduate fellows to connect with early-career professionals who have made careers out of their interdisciplinary studies. These professionals, all former NYU students, are often only a few years removed from the hustle and bustle of student life and thus have an intimate understanding of what it means to be a curious humanist in this current job market which often pushes for specialization. This year's panel featured Mary Ainomugisha, Doctoral Student in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, Kaitlin Booher, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Curatorial Fellow, Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, and Zoë Ozochiawaeze, Commerce Coordinator at Republic Records. Together this dynamic group showcased the versatility of a humanities degree, proving it can be a foundation for careers in academia, the arts, and business. Photo by Richard Gao

# Undergraduate Fellowship Program: A Conversation with Osman Osman



Director of the Undergraduate Fellows  
Mentorship Group, Osman Osman.

The Undergraduate Fellowship Program at NYU brings together talented students from across the university—visual thinkers, pattern recognizers, word specialists, and all kinds of minds—to engage in transformative interdisciplinary dialogue. Through bi-weekly meetings featuring discussions, field trips, and visits from professionals working in both academic and industry settings, Fellows explore expansive themes like power, archives, storytelling, and identity while developing critical skills in research, presentation, and cross-disciplinary communication. They also learn to offer nuanced critiques of institutional practices and imagine alternatives for how academic work can be done.

This year, we welcomed Osman Osman as the inaugural Director of the Undergraduate Fellows Mentorship Group. Osman is a PhD candidate in Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU whose research explores the sociology of media, political violence, and the intersection of state power and public discourse.

Center for the Humanities staff member Caila Bowen spoke with Osman about his experience working with the fellows and highlights from the year’s dynamic cohort.

**CB:** Can you share some examples of how the bi-weekly meetings, whether discussions, field trips, or visits from professionals, have significantly impacted the fellows’ understanding or career aspirations in the humanities?

**OO:** This year, our bi-weekly meetings featured visits from professionals working in both academic and industry settings, including scholars, writers, curators, and editors. These guests not only shared their career paths but also offered practical advice on navigating graduate school, building a portfolio, and pursuing meaningful work outside the university. One of the most impactful sessions was a breakout workshop where each fellow joined a small group based on their area of interest—whether academic research, media, or publishing. These smaller group conversations allowed students to ask targeted questions and hear directly from people working in the fields they’re considering. It helped them reflect on their own goals, clarify next steps, and often reimagine their professional directions in ways they hadn’t considered before.

**CB:** How does the program specifically encourage students from different disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary discussions, given that fellows are “selected from across the university”?

**OO:** We structure the fellowship around open-ended, thematic conversations—topics like power, archives, storytelling, and identity—that encourage dialogue across fields. A core strength of the program is its cohort diversity, as students come from STEM, the arts, social sciences, and humanities. We create intentional space for them to share disciplinary perspectives and challenge each other’s assumptions. In addition to structured discussions, we offer collaborative workshops that focus on real-world academic skills, including crafting abstracts, giving presentations, providing peer feedback, and translating research for broader audiences. These moments naturally surface disciplinary differences, but they also teach students how to communicate across them. The result is a space where a data science student might reframe a history student’s project, or a poet might inspire a policy student to rethink narrative structure. Fellows don’t just learn about interdisciplinarity—they practice it, week by week.

**“Fellows don’t just learn about interdisciplinarity—  
they practice it, week by week.”**

**CB:** How do you see the program continuing to adapt to the evolving landscape of the humanities and the interests of current NYU students?

**OO:** The humanities are always in motion, shaped by both academic developments and urgent social realities. What’s exciting about our fellows is that they often arrive already asking the big, complex questions—about climate justice, data ethics, cultural memory, AI, migration, and more. Our role is to create a flexible, responsive space where those questions can take root, evolve, and lead to meaningful inquiry. We design the program around themes that are porous and expansive, allowing students to bring their own disciplinary and personal lenses into shared dialogue. And as the year progresses, we see fellows become more confident not only in posing difficult questions, but in offering critical responses to the systems and structures that shape academic life. They begin to develop a language for challenging how institutions handle issues like access, representation, and intellectual labor—and, crucially, they start imagining alternatives. As they grow more comfortable, they begin offering one another nuanced, respectful critiques—of institutional practices, of academic norms, of their own work—and proposing ways to do things differently. Whether it’s rethinking citation practices, de-centering dominant narratives in research, or creating collaborative rather than individual projects, students learn to see the humanities not just as a field of study, but as a space of transformation.

# Dance Floors, Family Archives, Translation and More: A Year of Public Events

The conference room at the Center for the Humanities comes alive each Tuesday with vibrant conversations and thought-provoking interventions. This year, the Center hosted over 20 public events exploring a wide range of topics, from race and performance to translation and memory.

We kicked off the season with a book talk celebrating Julie Malnig’s *Dancing Black, Dancing White: Rock ‘n’ Roll, Race, and Youth Culture of the 1950s and Early 1960s*, examining race and media in dance and youth culture in mid-century America. In the spring, we also celebrated the publication of a collected volume *Scholars and their Kin: Historical Explorations, Literary Experiments*, whose authors challenge the notion that good scholarly research can’t also be deeply personal. Moderated by Ava Chin (author of *Mott Street: A Chinese American Family’s Story of Exclusion and Homecoming*), the conversation traced themes of responsibility, love, gendered and racial violence, family archives, as well as memory, omission, and misrepresentation.

Translation emerged as a resonant theme throughout the year. In December, acclaimed translator Damion Searls offered a close-up look at his craft of translation. This was followed in March by a panel discussion on the “Politics of Translation,” featuring poets, theorists, and translators Madhu H. Kaza, Matvei Yankelevich, Emily Apter, María José Zubieta, and Simon Leser who explored the political potential and the constraints of translation. In May, we welcomed translator Tess Lewis in conversation with author Cécile Wajsbrot, on navigating the rich interplay between translation and fiction in Wajsbrot’s novel *Nevermore*.



Madhu H. Khaza at the Politics of Translation event.  
Photo by Kamyā Agarwal

Featured Public Events 2024–2025

How to Think and Act Politically with Hannah Arendt

ft. Wout Cornelissen (Radboud University) & Thomas Bartscherer (Bard College)

special thanks: The Department of German, and the Deutsches Haus

SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

Dancing Black, Dancing White

ft. Julie Malnig, Michael Dinwiddie & Lynn Garafola (Barnard College, Columbia University)

special thanks: The Tisch Department of Dance at NYU, Gallatin, and the Center for the Study of Africa and the African Diaspora/Institute of African American Affairs

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Six Paintings from Papunya: A Conversation

ft. Fred Myers, Terry Smith (University of Pittsburgh) & Maia Nuku (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

OCTOBER 28, 2024

Disability Worlds: A reading and discussion

ft. Faye Ginsburg, Rayna Rapp & Mara Mills

special thanks: Center for Disability Studies, and the Department of Anthropology

NOVEMBER 4, 2024

The Philosophy of Translation with Author Damion Searls

ft. Damion Searls, Matvei Yankelevich, María José Zubieta & Emily Apter

special thanks: Jennifer Zoble, Translation Studies Group

DECEMBER 3, 2024

Disarming Intelligence

ft. Zakir Paul, Catherine Malabou & Hannah Freed-Thall

DECEMBER 10, 2024

Reading the Archival Revolution

ft. Cristina Vataulescu, Uli Baer, Zeb Tortorici & Miki Kaneda

FEBRUARY 4, 2025

On Revival: Hebrew Literature Between Life and Death

ft. Roni Henig, Shaul Magid (Dartmouth), Mikhal Dekel (CCNY) & Naomi Seidman (University of Toronto)

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

A Trialogue About Time

ft. Nitzan Lebovic (Lehigh), Stefanos Geroulanos, & Natasha Wheatley (Princeton)

Special thanks: The Berman Center for Jewish studies, Lehigh University, Remarque Institute, Department of Comparative Literature, Department of German, and the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Scholars and Their Kin: Historical Explorations, Literary Experiments

ft. Ava Chin (CUNY), Stéphane Gerson, Marianne Hirsch (Columbia), Martha Hodes, Martha S. Jones (Johns Hopkins), Amy Moran-Thomas (MIT) & Leo Spitzer (Dartmouth)

FEBRUARY 25, 2025

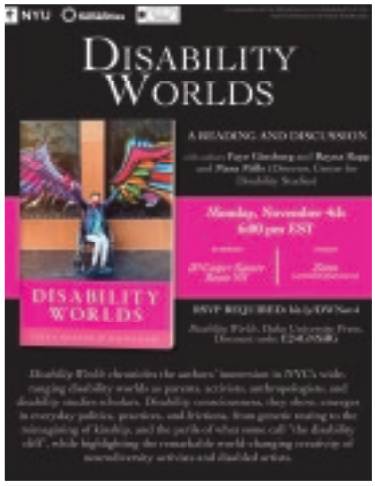
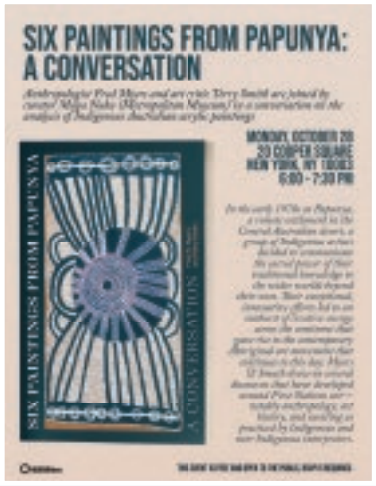


Photo by Kamyra Agarwal

Featured Public Events 2024–2025

Image Making: Book Launch for Shelley Rice’s Essays on Visual Culture

Ft. Shelley Rice, Marvin Heiferman & Robert Slifkin

MARCH 5, 2025

Deviant Matter: Ferment, Intoxicants, Jelly, Rot

ft. Kyla Wazana Tompkins (University at Buffalo), Marisa Solomon (Barnard Collge), Zachary Samalin & Whit Pow

special thanks: Gallatin’s Amplified Voices, Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, Department of Media, Culture, and Communication, and the Center for Disability Studies.

MARCH 6, 2025

Aesthetics of Repair: Indigenous Art and the Form of Reconciliation

ft. Eugenia Kisin & Luke Parnell

MARCH 11, 2025

The Politics of Translation

ft. Madhu H. Kaza, Matvei Yankelevich, Emily Apter, María José Zubieta, & Simon Leser

MARCH 18, 2025

Berlin Before and After

ft. Wendy Lesser, Juliane Camfield, & Ulrich Baer

APRIL 8, 2025

The Painting of Modernity

ft. Eyal Peretz (Indiana University, Bloomington) & Christopher Wood

APRIL 15, 2025

Opening Doors

ft. Hasia Diner, Kevin Kenny, Lila Corwin Berman, & Sandra Fox (Jewish Theological Seminary)

special thanks: Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, Goldstein Goren Center for American Jewish History, Department of History, Ireland House

APRIL 22, 2025

The Art of Editing Lecture Series with Yahdon Israel

ft. Merve Emre (Wesleyan University)

Presented by the Shapiro Center for Creative Writing and Criticism

APRIL 22, 2025

A Novel in Translation: Translation as a Novel

ft. author Cécile Wajsbrot and translator Tess Lewis

APRIL 29, 2025

Jump Start Your Summer Writing

ft. Cristina Vataulescu, Eric Schwartz (NYU Press), Theresa MacPhail (Stevens Institute of Technology) & Ulrich Baer

MAY 13, 2025



# Celebrating the Publication of *Six Paintings from Papunya* and Five Decades of Collaborative Humanities

**Myers, Fred R. and Terry Smith. *Six Paintings from Papunya: A Conversation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2024.**

BY MATTHEW RAJ WEBB

Center for the Humanities Doctoral Fellow, 2024–2025

When Fred Myers first arrived at the Pintupi outstation of Yayayi in Australia’s remote Western Desert in 1973, he could not have imagined that documenting acrylic paintings would become central to his life’s work. Yet this serendipitous encounter—spending mornings with painters in their secluded workspace, recording the stories behind 267 paintings—would launch a remarkable five-decade journey of collaborative research that exemplifies ethical engagement in the humanities.

On October 28, the Center for the Humanities celebrated the launch of Myers’ new book, *Six Paintings from Papunya*, co-authored with art historian Terry Smith. The book represents a culmination of Myers’ pioneering work bridging anthropology and art history. In a conversational format, the authors interrogate six paintings created between 1971 and 72, the foundational years of what became a globally significant Indigenous avant-garde movement. Their dialogue makes visible how different disciplinary perspectives can illuminate these works—Myers bringing ethnographic depth from his deep relationships with the painters and collectors, Smith offering art historical analysis of their aesthetic innovations. *Six Paintings from Papunya* demonstrates how patient, dialogical research can illuminate the transformative power of human creativity. The book continues Myers’ long-term project of revealing how Pintupi paintings assert Indigenous presence in prestigious global galleries while maintaining their grounding in local and ancestral knowledge, achieving what the painters always insisted: these are not just pretty pictures, but truths made visible. Through five decades of reciprocal engagement, Myers shows us what humanities scholarship can be: a practice of deep listening, learning, and generous engagement with the perspectives of those with whom we work.

The event itself embodied the collaborative spirit that has defined Myers’ career. Moderated by Māori scholar and Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Maia Nuku, the conversation between Smith and Myers drew together diverse voices from the art world, including longtime collector John Wilkerson, whose collection features prominently in *Six Paintings*. The event underscored Myers’ ability to bring deep cultural insight into understanding these paintings while emphasizing their ongoing social significance—modeling the spirit of translational dialogue that Myers has long fostered through teaching in the Department of Anthropology, where scholarship becomes a catalyst for bringing together artists, collectors, curators, and home communities.

As his student, I’ve witnessed Fred’s remarkable ability to make complex theoretical ideas come alive through storytelling. When he recounts conversations with Pintupi painters from decades past, their words are vivid in his memory. Fred uses these moments to illuminate broader questions about art, circulation, and value. His many students and colleagues have long valued him for this gift—weaving ethnographic detail with theoretical insight, always returning to the human relationships at the heart of his work.



Fred Myers with Kiwirrkurra people during a consultation for returning recordings and photos and heritage documentation. Photo by Hannah Corbett, June 2024.

**“...weaving ethnographic detail with theoretical insight, always returning to the human relationships at the heart of his work.”**



AUTHORS IN THE HUMANITIES

©Braddock Jr.: Courtesy of NYU Photo Bureau



©Braddock Jr.: Courtesy of NYU Photo Bureau

## Celebrating Authors in the Humanities

On April 29, 2025, the Center for the Humanities hosted its annual reception to honor faculty and NYU staff for their book publishing achievements. The event celebrated 134 authors who collectively published over 165 works in the past two years. Cohosted by NYU Press, the NYU Bookstore, and with support from Gallatin and Arts & Science Dean for the Humanities, the event brought together scholars from across NYU—including Arts & Science, Gallatin, Steinhardt, Tisch, the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU Law, Tandon, Liberal Studies, and global sites in Abu Dhabi and Buenos Aires—highlighting the depth and diversity of humanistic research at the university.

The evening reinforced NYU’s commitment to research, publication, and public engagement in the humanities. As Provost Georgina Dopico noted in her remarks, “in a moment where we urgently need to reflect on and understand the human experience, the humanities have never been as important as they are now.” She emphasized that such events not only showcase faculty excellence, but also “forge connections across the humanities and build community among humanists at NYU.”

Organized as part of the Center’s mission to support interdisciplinary collaboration and public scholarship, the event reflected institutional pride and a shared sense of purpose. With the published works displayed throughout the venue, the gathering radiated joy, intellectual curiosity, and community, offering a space to recognize and reaffirm the enduring relevance of the humanities.

AUTHORS IN THE HUMANITIES

# NYU Authors in the Humanities By the Numbers

For this year’s event, NYU members contributed to 165 books, representing the collaborative scholarship of 134 faculty, staff, and graduate students. Their contributions span authoring complete works, serving as editors, providing translations, and crafting essays for collections. Among these publications, eight books featured multiple NYU contributors working together.

SCHOOL OR UNIT	NUMBER OF BOOKS	NUMBER OF NYU MEMBERS
Arts & Science	84	70
Gallatin	8	8
Institute of Fine Arts	6	4
Liberal Studies	15	15
NYU Abu Dhabi	17	13
NYU Buenos Aires	1	1
School of Law	1	1
Steinhardt	16	12
Tandon	1	1
Tisch	12	9

Total	165	165
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# Cosponsorships

Digital Humanities Reception  
October 1, 2024

Conference, Surrealism and Anti-Fascism:  
The Political Imagination Between Reason  
and Dream  
November 15, 2024

Conference, Migration and  
Human Rights  
November 15, 2024

Conference, Hidden in Plain Sight: Black  
African Lives and Visual Histories in the Early  
Modern World  
Jan 17, 2025 – Jan 19, 2025

Exhibition, Afromayores  
Spring 2025

Roundtable, Blackface in Conversation: Racial  
Geographies and Transatlantic Entanglements  
April 10, 2025

Conference, Translation/Transnation at 25  
May 5, 2025

From the program Stress and Jest at Judson  
Memorial Church (New York) with Barnett Cohen,  
Marcel Alcalá, NIC Kay, Brianna Rose Brooks,  
Milton García Ninja, and Luna Luis Ortiz. Photos by  
Maria Baranova



Yangday La interviews Nidup Zangmo as she rolls incense by hand at Gapur Poezokhang. Photo by Tierney Brown

# Centering Community: Next-Generation Approaches to the Public Humanities

## Humanities Centers Initiative Public Humanities Fellowship

Humanities New York and its nine partner universities, comprising the Humanities Centers Initiative, supported graduate students in their efforts to establish themselves as public scholars and develop public projects. Awarded projects incorporated humanities topics and methods in ways that are substantially public-facing: intended for public audiences, engaging members of the public as collaborators, and/or partnering with community groups.

In addition to funding in support of the project, awarded fellows participate in Humanities New York grantee cohorts, which provide the opportunity to collaborate with public humanities professionals across New York State. They also receive invitations to Humanities New York workshops, gatherings, and events.

For 2024–2025, two NYU projects received this award for innovative work showcasing the breadth of humanities-based research rooted in community history, methods, and practices.

Tierney Brown, a student in the Department of Anthropology, received an award for Drawn from Thimphu, a public humanities project empowering young Bhutanese perspectives and research on everyday ways of navigating tradition and change. In Brown’s words, “methods such as drawing do not simply substitute for photography, but actively draw out Bhutanese relationships to material culture.” A public-facing website will feature younger generations’ reflections on objects encountered in daily life: incense, cheese, carvings, colorful textiles, and worn heirlooms. Their accounts offer new insight into how young Bhutanese people are navigating tradition and change.

Tisch graduate students Leto Ybarra and Blanca Ulloa co-curated Stress and Jest at the Judson Memorial Church, a public program that examines how violence, entertainment, and spectacle are intertwined, placing particular emphasis on how tragicomedy, dis correlation, or “the cartoonish” can expose structural dynamics as well as create spaces for renewal. The evening featured performances, poetry readings, workshops, talks, and a concluding discussion that engaged participants across multiple artistic and literary disciplines.

# Thinking Beyond the Humanities— From Scent Molecules to Planetary Politics

Working Groups funded by the Center for the Humanities build community and foster interdisciplinary exchange on topics with a humanistic focus. This year, the Center awarded two-year grants to three faculty-led groups exploring a wide range of topics. Each team brought together NYU faculty and graduate students to host workshops, meetings, and public events that fostered vibrant discipline-crossing discussions and opened up possibilities for future collaboration.

**The Environment and Power working group** attended to the growing scholarly interest in the evolving and historical relationship between political power and the environment. Their work builds on a field that has rapidly grown in recent years, driven in part by the acceleration of natural disasters, mass extinctions of plant and animal species, depleting aquifers, and the planetary crisis of climate change. The group explored this relationship through empirically driven methods including ethnography, oral history, and archival research. Led by a core group of anthropologists and historians of the environment, the group fostered an intellectual community centered on collective discussion of cutting-edge scholarship and works-in-progress of group members on the theme of environment and power. In 2024–2025, the group hosted screenings, workshops, and a book launch, fostering intellectual exchange. These events sparked unexpected connections across fields, such as between the humanities and biology, highlighting shared concerns and opening new possibilities for collaboration.

**“We have had attendees coming from not only the humanities, but even disciplines as far away as biology (who have humanistic interests) and have discovered and begun to explore common intellectual concerns.”**

**The Rethinking Materialism group** convened scholars across disciplines to explore materialism through embodied and sensory practices with connecting with wide-ranging research and teaching projects in Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, Computing, Food Studies, Art, Animal Studies, Plant Science, Transgender Studies, and Performance. In 2024–2025, the group’s activities included a hands-on sensory geography workshop with human geographer and perfumer Leonora Zoninsein, a book panel and discussion on *Deviant Matter: Ferment, Intoxicants, Jelly, Rot* (NYU Press, 2024) with author Kyla Wazana Tompkins, and a listening session with Chinatown Records. Each event emphasized experiential engagement, creating space for cross-generational, cross-disciplinary dialogue and experimental collaboration that extended beyond traditional academic boundaries to center personal histories, affect, and embodied knowledge.

**In its second year, the working group Music Theory For Whom?** continued its work to reimagine NYU’s undergraduate music theory curricula at CAS and Steinhardt through anti-racist, decolonial, and global frameworks. The group aims to diversify course content by centering underrepresented composers, popular music, and global traditions across more than 18 core and elective courses. The group responds to urgent student and disciplinary calls for inclusive pedagogy. Activities included collaborative curriculum development, guest lectures, and a short video series. By addressing the needs of an ever more diverse student body, the group’s work contributes to national efforts to redefine who music theory serves and how it can inform one’s relationship with the music (and world) around them.

**Environment and Power**

**Robyn d’Avignon**  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Arts and Science

**Amy Zhang**  
Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
Department of Anthropology  
Arts and Science

**Dean Chahim**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Environmental  
Studies  
Arts and Science

**Rethinking Materialism:  
Experimental Methods in  
Critical Humanities**

**Sybil Cooksey**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Gallatin

**Fanny Gribenski**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Music  
Arts and Science

**Whit Pow**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Media, Culture, and  
Communication  
Steinhardt

**Music Theory for Whom?  
A Comprehensive Reform  
of Music Theory Curricula  
Across NYU**

**Clifton Boyd**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Music  
Arts and Science

**Sarah Loudén**  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
Music and Performing Arts  
Professions, Steinhardt



Photo courtesy of the Rethinking Materialism group

**Event Recap  
Sonic Histories: Living Room Listening  
Session with Chinatown Records**

April 24, 2025 at Think!Chinatown

Guided by the prompt, “What is the soundtrack to your living room?” members of the Rethinking Materialism group organized a listening event in Manhattan’s Chinatown, partnering with Chinatown Records (華埠錄音) and hosted by the community organization Think!Chinatown. The event was co-led by Chinatown Records resident DJ’s yiuyiu (瑶瑶) and Buckley Yung (翁百里), who have soundtracked countless Chinatown Block Parties and living room listenings together ever since yiuyiu taught Buckley to DJ in 2023. As the organizers put it, “from our favorites on the radio to the conversations woven over them, our living rooms ring with the sounds and stories of our families.” Presented by Chinatown Records, the program explored how intimate living room listening brings together music and oral history through the music we love and the histories behind them. Pulling from the ever-growing Chinatown Records archive of over 30 personal record collections inherited from family and neighbors, attendees listened together to songs that have long filled Chinatown living rooms—along with the histories and memories that come with them. Rooted in the belief that we can all be DJs and oral historians, the Chinatown Records session also invited audience members to choose a song from their archives or bring a personal favorite to share, whether on a vinyl record or online. Among the friends, colleagues, students, and locals, in attendance were Professor Pow’s family and relatives who are longtime Chinatown residents. While the intellectual questions of immigrant histories and affective archives were central to the event, they were far more than academic arguments. Significantly, the event offered a powerful reminder of what it means to come together in community, with music, history, and archives as living, loving, public practices that bear witness to stories of displacement and opportunity that may be passed on to a new generation.

# Digital Humanities Awards

On October 1, 2024, NYU Libraries, NYU Research & Instructional Technology, and the NYU Center for the Humanities hosted the 2024 Digital Humanities Showcase, celebrating the vibrant DH work taking place across the university. Since its inception in 2021, the Seed Grants program has supported 25 faculty-led projects, while the Graduate Fellows program, launched in 2022, has funded 39 students.

The 2024 showcase highlighted a dynamic range of research spanning multiple schools, disciplines, and methodologies, offering a fascinating look at how digital tools and approaches are shaping scholarship at NYU. The 2024-2025 awarded faculty projects exemplify the innovative, cross-disciplinary spirit of DH at NYU:

**Kalinago Living Language Project: Digitizing Lexical Resources for Indigenous Survivance**

*Isabel Bradley (French Literature, Thought and Culture, GSAS)*

A digital dictionary and lexical archive reviving and translating rare 17th-century Kalinago language texts using AI tools.

**Colonial Networks: Remapping the “Paris” Art World in a 1786 Map of Haiti**

*Meredith Martin (Art History and Institute of Fine Arts, GSAS) and Hannah Williams (Art History, Queen Mary University of London)*

An interactive map tracing art world ties to colonial plantations in 18th-century Haiti, revealing hidden networks of wealth, labor, and culture.

**Hidden Legacies: Slavery, Race and the Making of 21st Century America**

*Rachel Swarns (Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, GSAS)*

A digital archive connecting slavery to modern institutions, offering public access to scattered archival records through mapping and visualization.

**Bridging Degrees and Critical Perspectives: Creating an Open Source Peer-Reviewed Journal for Interdisciplinary Library Science Graduate Students**

*Roxane Pickens, Alexandra Provo, Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, and Laurie Murphy (Division of Libraries)*

NYU Manifold's first student-led, open-access, peer-reviewed journal, supporting interdisciplinary library and information science scholarship.

**Digitizing Cultural Heritage: The Walter Feldman Collection of Turkish Classical Music**

*Panayotis Mavromatis and Adem Merter Birson (Music and Performing Arts Professions, Steinhardt)*

Preservation and public access to rare recordings of Turkish classical music from the Walter Feldman collection, highlighting the Ottoman Empire’s intercultural soundscape.

In addition, the showcase featured the work of ten graduate students funded through the 2024 NYU DH Graduate Student Fellowship Program:

**Alexandra Bliziotis**, Graduate Student in Media, Culture and Communications (Steinhardt)

*The Language of Trans-Misogyny in News Media*

**Devin Joyner**, Graduate Student in Dance Education (Steinhardt)

*Dance Griot*

**Elena Georgieva**, Doctoral Student in Music Technology (Steinhardt)

*Evaluating Voices: A Computational Analysis of Skill and Expression in Singing and Narration*

**Katelyn Landry**, Graduate Student in Archives and Public History (GSAS)

*Finding Mestizaje in Archival Metadata*

**Maria Paz Almenara**, Doctoral Student in Media, Culture and Communications (Steinhardt)

*Visualizing Post-Extractive Time*

**Mariana Veras**, Doctoral Student in Sociology (GSAS)

*Ohio Jails Repository*

**Marlas Yvonne Whitley**, Doctoral Student in English (GSAS)

*The Purple Perspective*

**Nabil Hassein**, Doctoral Student in Media, Culture and Communications (Steinhardt)

*A digital archive of Arabic-based programming languages*

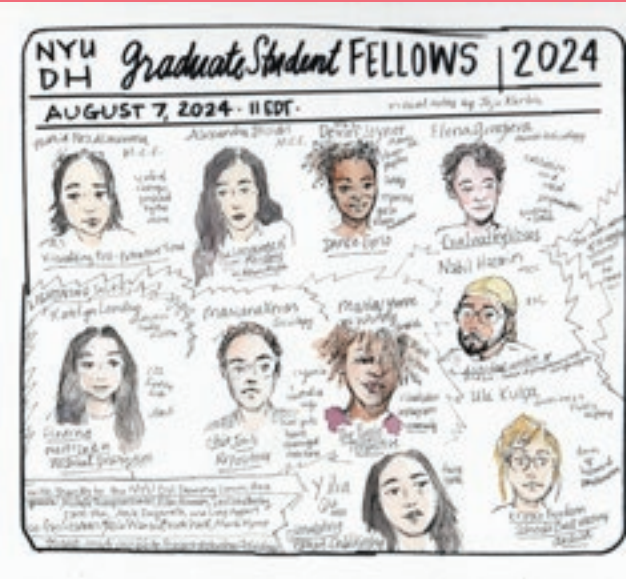
**Yilia Qu**, Graduate Student in Media, Culture and Communications (Steinhardt)

*You Are Your Own Child: Explore Alternatives For Baby Simulation Games*

**Ula Kulpa**, Graduate Student in Archives and Public History (GSAS)

*Knoxo Freedom Schools Oral History Archive*

For more information about these projects, past fellows, and grant recipients, visit <https://digitalhumanities.nyu.edu/>.



Courtesy of Jojo Karlin



Image from Meredith Martin's Colonial Networks project. Screenshot from Colonial Networks web resource; Plan de la plaine du Cap François en l'Isle St. Domingue, Phelipeau, René, active 1748-1784. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

# Book Subvention Awards

This year, the Center for the Humanities proudly supported nine faculty authors from seven NYU departments through our publication grant program. Their forthcoming books span academic and trade genres, and include powerful translations that bring important texts to new audiences.

**Jens Andermann**

Professor, Spanish and Portuguese, FAS  
*Mundo inmundo: cine, desastre y sobrevida*

**Tal Correm**

Clinical Assistant Professor, Liberal Studies  
*The Palgrave Handbook on Frantz Fanon*  
Palgrave Macmillan

**Gaston Giribet**

Clinical Professor, Physics, FAS  
*Heidegger on the Margins of Science*

**Marina Hassapopoulou**

Assistant Professor, Cinema Studies, Tisch  
*Interactive Cinema: The Ambiguous Ethics of Media Participation* – EPUB Edition  
University of Minnesota Press

**Alex Jassen**

Ethel and Irvin Edelman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, FAS  
*Violence, Power, and Society in the Dead Sea Scrolls*  
Cambridge University Press

**Luis Ramos**

Clinical Associate Professor, Global Liberal Studies  
*Between Reason and Revolution: Mexican Jesuits on New World History, Universal Rights and Spanish American Independence*  
Oxford University Press

**Sophia Rodriguez**

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
Administration, Leadership, and Technology, Steinhardt  
*Undocumented in the U. S. South*  
Rutgers University Press

**Jeffrey Rubenstein**

Skirball Professor of Talmud and Rabbinic Literature  
Hebrew and Judaic Studies, FAS  
*The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Hebrew translation)

**María José Zubieta**

Clinical Professor, Spanish and Portuguese, FAS  
*From Uruguay to the World: A Bilingual Edition of No* by Idea Vilariño  
Carnegie Mellon University Press



# Our Supporters and Affiliations

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## Memberships

We are proud members of the following organizations:

**Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes**

**Humanities New York**

**National Humanities Alliance**



Faculty Fellow Jaime E. Oliver La Rosa (FAS, Music) records and analyzes the sounds of hummingbirds in his hometown of Lima, Peru, using them as the foundation for his research-based compositional method. Photo by Diego Oliver La Rosa Colibrí