One and Done: Single Object Studies (Charlottesville, 25-26 Mar 26)

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, Mar 25–26, 2026
Deadline: Dec 1, 2025

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University of Virginia Art & Architectural History Graduate Symposium.

The Art History Graduate Association (AHGA) at the University of Virginia is excited to announce our upcoming graduate research symposium titled "One and Done: Single Object Studies" with keynote speaker Dr. Jennifer Raab, Professor of History of Art at Yale University. The symposium is scheduled for March 25th and 26th, 2026, at UVA in Charlottesville, Virginia. The deadline to submit to this symposium is December 1st, and applicants will be notified by December 20th.
Keynote Address: Dr. Jennifer Raab, Professor of History of Art, Yale University.
Author of "Relics of War: The History of a Photograph" (Princeton University Press, 2024)

This is a symposium about single objects. Dr. Jennifer Raab's recent monograph, "Relics of War: The History of a Photograph," examines how one photograph—carefully staged by Clara Barton through acts of collecting, naming, and labeling—transformed salvaged artifacts from a Civil War prison camp into material testimony, serving as both evidence of absence and witness to wartime suffering. Inspired by her methodological commitment to writing about a single photograph, this symposium turns to the potential of singularity.

"One and Done: Single Object Studies" invites graduate students across disciplines to share the intellectual, methodological, and narrative possibilities of centering a singular object of study—whether an artifact, image, monument, architectural structure, manuscript, or unique material form. In turning to the singular, this interdisciplinary symposium asks: How does a focused examination of one object–or one object type–open up expansive questions and stimulate critical discussion? What sorts of approaches can be taken when we examine an object? What roles do materiality, affect, or embodied engagement play when our research dwells with a single object over time? How do practices of display, collection, and conservation shape our understanding of singularity and its interpretation? And what are the rewards–or the risks–of asking one object to stand in for many?

We welcome submissions from graduate students at all stages whose work engages with visual, material, spatial, or object-centered inquiry across discipline, time, and geography. Paper presentations should be 20 minutes in length and will be followed by a Q&A session. Submissions should be original but may include previously published/written material that has been substantially reframed to focus on a single object.

Possible approaches include, but are not limited to:

- Object’s biography and afterlives
- Techniques of making and materials analysis
- Social, cultural, and/or ritual contexts
- Relationships between individuals and objects (makers, patrons, viewers, collectors)
- Mobility and circulation
- Spatial/Distribution analysis
- Categorization and decategorization of a particular form

Please submit a CV and a 250-word abstract along with an image of the studied object (with full caption) as a single PDF to uvagradsymposium2026@virginia.edu by December 1, 2025. Applicants will be notified by December 20, 2025. The symposium will be held in person at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville on March 25-26, 2026. Limited funds will be available to help cover expenses associated with presenting at the symposium.

Reference:

CFP: One and Done: Single Object Studies (Charlottesville, 25-26 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 31, 2025 (accessed Nov 10, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51032>.