

Gabriella Johnson

Rome Prize “Press Release” for Insight and UD Art History Department’s website

Gabriella Johnson, Ph.D. Candidate in Art History (advisor Professor Emeritus David M. Stone) has won the Samuel H. Kress Foundation/Marian and Andrew Heiskell Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies at the American Academy in Rome for 2023-2024. This highly competitive fellowship will support research for Johnson’s dissertation, “Galatea’s Realm: The Art of Coral, Shells, and Marine Fossils in Early Modern Sicily, Naples, and the Maltese Islands,” which studies how the sea influenced artistic production in the western Mediterranean world.

The American Academy in Rome is a leading American overseas center for independent studies and advanced research in the fine arts and humanities. With an acceptance rate of 3.6 percent, the Rome Prize is one of the most prestigious fellowships in the arts and humanities. From an international pool of 988 applicants, only 36 were awarded Rome Prize fellowships. Each winner receives the gift of “time and space to think and work” in the form of a stipend, workspace, and room and board at the Academy’s eleven-acre campus on the Janiculum Hill in Rome starting in September 2023.

Johnson is currently a Fellow (2022-2023) in Naples, Italy, at the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities – a research residency supported by the University of Texas, Dallas and the Museo di Capodimonte. The Center, or “La Capraia” (nicknamed as such because the Center is housed in an eighteenth-century goat manger in the Real Bosco di Capodimonte) supports nine months of onsite research in Naples for advanced pre-doctoral students. Johnson is conducting research in specialized libraries, archives, and art collections to study Neapolitan marine-themed still life painting alongside developments in early modern gastronomy, music history, folklore, and medicine. Drawing from ecomaterialism and the history of science, her work demonstrates how artistic materials extracted from the sea played an active role in shaping religion, science, and geopolitics over the seventeenth century.



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Giuseppe Recco, *Still Life with Fish and Turtles* (detail), 1671. Oil on canvas. Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.



Bernardo Cavallino, *Triumph of Galatea* (detail), c.1650. Oil on canvas. National Gallery, DC.



Trapani coral workers and Palermo silversmiths, *Triumph of the Immaculate Conception* (detail), late 17th century. Coral, gilded copper, silver, and enamels. Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo.



Pietro Novelli, *Miracle of St Francis Xavier* (detail), c.1631-33. Oil on canvas. Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo, Naples.