

## Nancy Alicia Martínez

### Fragile Eternities: Textual Mortality in Maya Writing

How do we experience time not as something observed within a text but rather as a medium through which it lives? Via a network of media theory, book history, and Maya ts'ib, Martínez draws out the varieties of meaning generated by understanding time as a communicative feature of Maya writing. This involves two scales of temporality: first, the lifespan of an inscribed object, and second, the duration of the reading process. An awareness of the text's tentative mortality and the ephemeral process of reading enables new layers of kinetic and affective meaning to surface from inscribed objects. Martínez interweaves these newly surfaced meanings with the semantic as transmitted through written language, thus joining the materiality of inscribed objects to their textuality. Interpretations accumulate through the iterative process of reading, traveling along the body and mind of each reader. With the multisensory mode of reading that emerges, Martínez cultivates methodological links between written language and other modalities of Maya recorded knowledge. Thus, time acts as a new compass with which to explore Maya creative production, amplifying the potential of written language while decentering it as an essential mode for communicating knowledge across history.

**March 6th, 2024**  
**2:00 - 3:30pm**  
**Kaplan Hall 365**



Nancy Alicia Martínez is a PhD candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at Stanford University. Her work focuses on the materiality of different systems of recorded knowledge with emphases in 20th- and 21st-century Spanish-, German-, and K'iche'-language texts from Central America and Central Europe. Her dissertation, *Breaking the Book: Maya and German Literary Experiments Since 1945*, reconceptualizes the book and inscribed objects as fundamentally four-dimensional, constantly delivering meaning through written language, spatiality, and temporality. Her work has been supported by the Fulbright Program and the Freie Universität Berlin.

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