

## Studying History of Art at Oxford

Anything designed by human beings exhibits visual qualities that are specific to the place and period in which it originates. History of Art concentrates on objects generally described as 'art', though in Oxford this definition is framed broadly to embrace items beyond 'Fine art' or 'Western art'. History of Art aims to arrive at an historical understanding of the origins of artefacts within specific world cultures, asking about the circumstances of their making, their makers, the media used, the functions of the images and objects, their critical reception and subsequent history.

As well as educating students in the historical interpretation of artefacts in their cultural contexts, a degree in History of Art provides skills in the critical analysis of objects through the cultivation of 'visual literacy'. The acquired skills have broad applicability in a wide range of professional settings, as well as serving the needs of enduring personal enlightenment.

The University's collections, including the famous Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers museums, provide objects for first-hand study under the supervision of those entrusted with their care. The historic architecture of the University, the city of Oxford and its environs supplies a rich source of study in its own right.

The Oxford degree is designed to provide innovative insights into a wide range of world art, drawing its expertise from various University faculties and the staff of University collections, as well as from the department itself.

## Studying History of Art at St Anne's

St Anne's has a dedicated History of Art faculty, Dr Kate Keohane, who works exclusively with visiting students, serving as personal tutor and often as course tutor as well. Dr Keohane can offer a personalised approach to enrich your individual History of Art learning and interests. Dr Keohane's own research centres on the interplay between text and image and the ways in which art can offer alternative models for being-in-the-world.

Teaching has a strong emphasis on how primary visual and written sources from various periods and places can be analysed in relation to works of art and architecture. Students are also encouraged to explore what it means to call something a work of 'Art' and to consider images and objects that may not necessarily conform to traditional definitions of 'Art'.

## Study durations

You can apply to study History of Art as a single subject or jointly with another humanities or social science subject and in some cases with a science subject. You can apply to study History of Art as a single or joint subject for any study duration.

	Ext AY	AY	Fall Term	Hilary and Trinity terms	Studied with other subjects
<b>History of Art</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classics; Classical Archaeology and Ancient History; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; English; History; Medical Humanities; Modern Languages; Music; Philosophy; Economics; Law; Politics Computer Science; Experimental Psychology; Maths

Read more about the [September History of Art course](#).

## Courses

If you are offered a place to study History of Art at St Anne's for the:

- **Extended academic year** you will study 'Reconsidering British Art' during September followed by 4-6 courses across Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity terms.
- **Oxford academic year** you will study 4-6 courses across Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity.
- **Fall Term** you will take 'Reconsidering British Art' during September followed by 2 history of art courses during Michaelmas term.
- **Hilary and Trinity terms** you will study 3-4 History of Art courses.

## Teaching methods

Students are taught through a mixture of tutorials, lectures, seminars, and in-gallery sessions. As with all Oxford study you will undertake a high volume of independent self-guided academic work and research working in libraries, archives or museums. Visits to exhibitions and historical buildings will also be part of the course and you will be expected to explore the museum collections at Oxford to enhance your studies.

Please note:

- All courses are dependent on a student possessing the appropriate academic background, as deemed by St Anne's tutors and having fulfilled any required or necessary prerequisites.
- We cannot ever guarantee a particular course can be offered in any particular year, courses are always subject to change and tutor availability.
- Visiting students do not sit University examinations so your assessment methods will be based on your tutorials, essays etc. to be set by your Tutor at the commencement of the course.

**There are a wide range of History of Art courses you can indicate a preference for, these can include:**

### **Art and Modernity in Late Ottoman Istanbul, 1839-1922**

This course will introduce students to the history and visual culture of Istanbul, capital of the Ottoman Empire, during an era of transformative social, political, economic, infrastructural, and cultural change. Examining the period from establishment of Tanzimat reforms in 1839 through to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, this course looks at how the visual arts and parallel cultural institutions, such as the museum, were employed by both state apparatuses and private individuals to demonstrate Ottoman modernity. Designated the "sick man of Europe" and regularly portrayed in Western European arts and literature through an Oriental gaze, the Ottoman Empire in fact had a far more complex relationship with "modernity" and "Westernisation," adopting certain models of modernisation and forgoing others. This course seeks to illuminate these complexities and examine the networks of communication and transportation that created a highly mobile visual culture, focusing on principles of circulation and dissemination rather than seeing images as static objects. Subjects of the course will include official portraiture, official and commercial photography, archaeology, and the Imperial Museum, and will consider the broader history of the Ottoman Empire during this period as well as the empire's relationship to Europe.

### **Global Modernism(s)**

Since the 1990s, the growing introduction of non-western art into Western art-history classrooms – mirrored by an expanded representation in exhibitions, research and biennales – has raised a question of interpretation: can we apply the terms of Western art history to non-western art? The 'Global Modernism(s)' course will explore this question in relation to the history of Modernism. Western formalist teleology located the development and innovations of 20th-century Modernism only in the cultural 'centres' of Paris, London and New York (see for example the canonical volume *Art Since 1900*). Since then, attempts to pay closer attention to art from the 'peripheries' have ceded to a rejection of the 'centre-periphery' model itself, replaced by various temporal and spatial conceptualisations such as, in no particular order: global modernisms, multiple modernisms, local modernism, heterochronicity, transculturation, transversals, etc. Students will be introduced to current reappraisals of Modernism's temporal boundaries and aesthetic categories and encouraged to test these models against case studies from North Africa, Latin America, Asia and other non-western art histories.

## **Korean Modern and Contemporary Aesthetics**

This course presents an overview of Korean art and aesthetics, with a focus on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Each of eight weeks introduces a different theme around which to center reading, writing, and thought in the Korean context: modernism, art under authoritarianism, queerness, film criticism, North Korea and the DMZ, diaspora, contemporary art and activism, and the Hallyu (K-Wave). A combination of readings with intersecting connections to history, art, aesthetics, sociology, literature, cultural studies, queer studies, media studies, film criticism, critical theory, and other fields provides background for writing and further study. Overall, the considerations and impacts of Koreanness and Korean identity are explored, deliberated, and questioned through the various theoretical lenses advanced by this syllabus.

## **Theories and Methodologies of Art History**

This course provides students with a sophisticated set of methodological tools, as well as a historiographical apparatus for analysing texts, images and objects encountered in their other studies. The student will learn to combine visual analysis with critical engagement and to put theory into practice when applying wide-ranging approaches to specific images and objects. One of the purposes of this course is to understand how a historiography of the discipline of art history has been constructed – its canon of texts, historians and practitioners. However, we will reflect on how these narratives can be re-thought, in particular through the lenses of gender and post-coloniality. Can we construct alternative historiographies of the modern discipline? How and why have certain historiographical narratives endured?

## **Painting and Culture in Ming China**

This course, which assumes no prior knowledge of Chinese art or culture, looks at the cultural role of painting as a practice in one specific historical period, that of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). It will look at painting, long sanctioned by the Ming period as one of the four canonical leisure pursuits of the elite (along with calligraphy, music and a board game of strategy) from the point of view of both its production and its consumption, and will be based on readings of the extensive literature of the period in translation, along with a wide range of surviving pictures. These include not only the culturally sanctified monuments of so-called 'literati' painting, associated with named elite figures for whom painting was part of a total cultural persona, but also the work of anonymous artisan painters, working for the imperial court and for clients drawn from a wider range of social statuses.

## **Photography, the Document and Spectatorship**

The idea that a photograph is, by its nature, evidence of what it depicts, has shaped the history of photography since its inception. Following the inventor William Henry Fox Talbot's proposal that photographs be used to testify in a court of law in 1844, the medium's supposed indexicality has been placed in service of a wide range of documentary claims. From its first practitioners in nineteenth century Britain, to the emergence of documentary in the Depression-era United States and its subsequent postmodern critiques, the discussion of the photograph's evidentiary function, and of the role of the spectator, have remained central. Examining the conceptions of photography put forth in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Allan Sekula, Ariella Azoulay and others, we will analyse the work of photographs within archives, newspaper reports, protest movements and the work of different artists in order to question how photographs have served both to exert power and to mount resistance in a range of settings.

## **Pop and Art of the 60s**

The course will examine aspects of Pop Art and other related art movements from the later 1950s to the early 1970s. The primary focus will be on British and American Pop Art, but we will also consider other sites of development. Assigned readings will include the writings of artists and critics and period discussions of issues ranging from the mass media to the Vietnam War. Topics will include the relationship between art and mass culture; the avant-garde's relationship with and/or contestation of the art market; art's engagement with race, gender, and sexual orientation and the vital role played by female, BME, and queer artists; and the impact of May 1968 and the Vietnam War on art.

## **Travel, Empire, and Orientalism**

This course looks at the intersections of travel, tourism, imperialism/colonialism, and the visual arts during the 18th and 19th centuries. The course will examine the ways in which the works of (largely) European artists were intertwined with contemporary discourses on race, history, and civilization and how these works could function as justifications for imperial exploitation and evidence of preconceived ideas about non-European cultures. The course will focus primarily on Orientalism, that is, the representation of people and places from the “Orient,” usually designating the modern-day regions of North Africa and the Middle East, but also encompassing representations of South and East Asia. We will consider diverse textual and visual media such as travelogues, paintings, illustrated books, photographs, and maps in order to understand the persistent borrowing of images and tropes between genres and to track if and how representational schemas shifted over time. The course will also foreground the production of non-European artists on the “other side” of the Orientalist gaze so as to consider how these individuals could, in the works of Zeynep Çelik, “speak back to Orientalist discourse.”

### **Visualizing “Japanese-ness”: Visual Arts of Japan in a Transcultural Context, 1610s-1930s**

This course introduces the visual arts of early seventeenth- to early twentieth-century Japan through a selection of objects and themes. The course invites students to think about the visual arts of

Japan and art historical discourses on “Japanese-ness” in a transcultural context, considering Japan’s isolation from and connectedness with the outside worlds. Students will learn to critically analyze how artistic trends and tastes were formulated and instituted at given moments of Japanese history. Consisting of assigned readings, one-to-one classroom discussions, object study sessions, and research papers, this course is designed to develop skills of close looking, critical thinking, and writing about the visual arts.

### **Understanding Museums and Collections**

The classes will provide students with an introduction to four main areas in the study of museums and collections: the history of museums; museums and time; museums, culture and nature; and collections as practices. These areas will be explored through examples drawn from the earliest archaeological evidence for collecting (including hoarding and deposition) through the first museums in the ancient world, to medieval, early modern, modern and contemporary collections and museums. The development of 19th- and 20th-century ideas of preservation and heritage will also be introduced. The tutorials will provide students with the opportunity to explore aspects of particular museums and collections through a series of themes, including the history of ideas of assemblage and collection; art and aesthetics; science and the natural world; objectivity and knowledge production; curiosity, performance and colonialism; identity, politics and cultural repatriation; material, digital and virtual museums; and preservation and heritage.

A **supervised extended essay** course option focusing on a building, object or image in Oxford is also available in any term as a full or half course and if you already know the area you would like to focus on please indicate this on your application. This can also be discussed further with your personal tutor once in Oxford.

### **Pre-requisites**

Visiting students applying to study History of Art need to already have a background in the subject, although in some cases an introductory background may suffice. You may also be studying a related subject such as anthropology, archaeology, classics, English, fine arts, or history.

### **Additional information**

Department website: <https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/>