Art History

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/art-history
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Available degree options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MA</th>
<th>MA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Honours</td>
<td>Joint Honours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art History</td>
<td>Art History and one of 24 other subjects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous knowledge of subject required? No

You will study art from the mediaeval to the modern periods, focusing on painting, sculpture and architecture as well as applied arts, graphics and photography. You will learn to assess images both critically and perceptively.

What will I study?

We provide a context in which you will gain intellectual breadth and learn to become verbally and visually articulate. You will learn to assess images, artworks and architecture of all kinds, both critically and perceptively. We do not teach technical or practical art skills - although previous experience in these, perhaps in the context of a Higher or an A-Level, would certainly provide a useful background.

We focus on the histories of the so-called ‘major arts’ (painting, sculpture and architecture) but also encompass the applied arts, graphic arts and photography. A wide range of factors are considered: the analysis of style, content and meaning, politics, patronage and social significance; broad questions of theory and aesthetics.

First year

We offer two main areas for study. The first comprises the art of Renaissance Italy and northern Europe. This provides you with a chronological survey covering painting, sculpture and architecture in Italy and Northern Europe 1280 – 1580. The second is a survey of European art and architecture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This begins with a study of Baroque art and architecture in Italy and then moves to the Low Countries, Spain, France and Britain.

Second year

You will study one course in the history and theory of European art, architecture and design from the French Revolution to Vienna 1900. This focuses on the most significant art-historical developments of the long nineteenth century. Our second course covers art, culture and politics from 1900 to now. Here you will explore some of the most compelling episodes and issues of international twentieth- and twenty-first century art.

Third and fourth years (Honours)

You can choose subjects from a wide range of options, most of which correspond to the research interests of individual members of staff. In the third year, all Single Honours students take a core course in the first semester (optional for Joint Honours students). This is designed to further your understanding of major art-historical issues.

Entry requirements

We consider all aspects of every application, including context, equivalent qualifications and the Personal Statement. Offers may be higher or lower than the grades stated here. See also page 146.

SQA Highers: AABB
GCE A-Levels: AAB
International Baccalaureate Points: 35

The Art History programme starts with the Renaissance period and progresses up until the modern day, training us to look beyond the artwork and understand the political, historical and social context. The first two years serve as a foundation for the specialisation undertaken in Honours, where the focus is on narrower topics. The support from the staff is great; they are always available to offer guidance and advice.”

Valeria (Chisinau, Moldova)
Art History

The following topics (among others) are currently taught, although applicants are advised that this list is subject to change in line with the availability and teaching cycles of staff; art of the medieval period, Gothic architecture, Renaissance painting, sculpture and architecture, nineteenth-century art, history of photography, Orientalism and art, Russian art, Islamic art, twentieth-century modernism, contemporary art.

If you are thinking of a career in teaching you can also take the Communication and Teaching in Arts and Humanities course.

Study abroad
Art History students participate in the University-wide St Andrews Abroad programme. You may also have the opportunity to participate in our School Abroad exchange programme. For information about study abroad options, please see: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study-abroad

Careers
A degree in Art History from St Andrews will provide you with an excellent foundation for a career in a wide range of fields, not least those associated with the arts.

Graduates in Art History often work in museums and galleries, arts administration, the art trade, or teaching.

In addition, many go on to careers in: publishing, media, marketing, public relations, law, business and finance, retail, catering and hospitality.

Graduates in Art History are popular with employers because they have numerous highly significant transferable skills. At St Andrews students are trained to present in various media (orally and visually, as well as through written work), to meet deadlines, hone their editorial skills, provide critical appraisals, and to work collaboratively with other students.

In recent years our graduates have secured employment in a wide range of positions, including at the BBC, Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Legal and General, National Museums Scotland, the British Library, Phaidon Press, Country Life magazine, Vertigo Films, The Week magazine, Tiffany and Co., as well as numerous regional museums and galleries.

A good number of Art History graduates go on to further study. This can be in the discipline itself, or in associated fields, or other humanities. Those seeking careers in museums and galleries, particularly as curators or administrators, often take relevant postgraduate degrees for these, including the Museums and Gallery Studies programme at St Andrews.

“Art History allows you to view the world and its history through an aesthetic and social perspective. We cover a huge breadth of western art history, from the Renaissance to the present. The course is also quite broad including lectures on Islamic art and includes field trips to galleries in Edinburgh and Glasgow.”

Gemma (Hong Kong)