

MA History of Art

This programme provides you with the opportunity to pursue an in-depth study of specific areas in the History of Art. The programme comprises of a taught two-term 'Special Subject' module and a dissertation in the research area of your choice. Your dissertation is supported by a supervisor and is 15,000 words in length. Your studies will be supported by core modules in critical theory and research methodology. The taught module options offered each year on the MA will allow you to either choose from a range of subject areas and historical periods in the History of Art, or to specialise in early modern or modern and contemporary artistic periods.

[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham was awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx)

Course fact file

Type of Course: Taught

Study Options: Full time, part time

Duration: 1 year full-time; 2 years part-time

Start date: September

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[Department of Art History, Film and Visual Studies \(/schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/index.aspx\)](/schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/index.aspx)

Details

You will study two core modules:

- Criticism and Methods in the History of Art and Visual Culture
- Postgraduate Research Training and Methods

The specialised research skills module prepares you for both writing your dissertation.

You will also study a range of optional modules, choosing one Special Subject module and two 20-credit modules. Further module information is available below.

The programme culminates in a 15,000-word dissertation in a research area that you choose with the guidance of academic staff.

Why study this course

This programme aims to provide you with a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of:

- The visual culture, history, historiography and critical debates relating to a specific artist, period or movement
- The methods of art history and how to apply them to particular historical problems
- Recent, current and traditional theoretical and critical writing, both in the discipline of art history and visual studies and in influential cognate disciplines, such as film, literary criticism, psychology and history
- Subject-specific research techniques, especially those concerning the study of art objects, visual studies and relevant material culture
- Current debates in the discipline and the historiography of the discipline and its relevance for contemporary research

MA History of Art alumna Katie Hall describes her experiences of studying the programme:

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Modules

You will study two core modules:

Criticism and Methods in the History of Art and Visual Culture

This module looks at the historiography, methods and theoretical underpinning of contemporary practices of artistic and visual analysis. Based on close reading of key scholarly texts, you will engage with traditional art historical methods as well as more recent approaches to the study of art and visual culture. You will be asked to consider the relevance of these methods to a range of examples, including the potential topics for your final Masters thesis.

Postgraduate Research Training and Methods

This specialised module prepares you for both writing and researching your dissertation. It covers topics such as: referencing systems; writing a research proposal; literature reviews; approaching archives; and oral histories.

You will also choose one Special Subject module. These could include:

- After Modernism. Art and Culture since the 1970s
- Art and Revolution in France, 1789-1848
- Contemporary Visual Arts and Postcolonialism
- Fashioning Flesh and Technology: Modernism and the Body in Germany 1918-1933
- Inside Out. Interiors and Interiority in French Art, Design and Visual Culture 1840-1940
- Michelangelo
- Women and Artistic Culture in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period

You will also choose two 20-credit modules from a range including:

Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art

This module consists of a critical examination of topics in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. It considers subjects such as: art and the nature of aesthetic experience; beauty, ugliness and the sublime; symbolism and allegory; the aesthetics of modernism.

Architecture and public art in sixteenth-century Venice

The module will examine the architecture and the decoration of public buildings (e.g. the Doge's Palace; churches and scuole) in Venice and certain Venetian mainland territories during the course of the sixteenth century. It will examine, in particular, how the styles and subject matter changed during the period. It will also chronicle the emergence of new kinds of building (e.g. the villa and new kinds of palace and church) and chart the effects of changing artistic practices. The architects covered will include Sanmicheli (in Verona) and Palladio (in Vicenza) as well as Sansovino (Venice's official architect); among the artists studied will be Carpaccio, Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto. The module will place special emphasis on artistic traditions and themes that had a particular significance for Venice, and it will make regular reference to primary source material.

Art, Heritage and Digital Cultures

Digital Cultures offers you the opportunity to engage with History of Art through the application of digital technologies. This module will introduce you to the range of technologies that are becoming available and provide practical experience with a range of them. You will have the opportunity to work on material relevant to History of Art and Visual Studies. Significantly, this module will teach you the different cultures of engagement between your own disciplines and Digital Cultures to understand, for example, the difference in languages used. In this way, the module will focus on the breaking down of barriers to learning and engagement with cultural information in both practical and theoretical ways, offering you the chance to develop your own digital content and to demonstrate its value within your own disciplines and beyond.

Cultural Analysis

This module will introduce and explore questions of power, ideology, discourse, culture and (post)colonialism through discussion of the ideas of Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, the cultural theorists of the Frankfurt School, Frederic Jameson, Jacques Ranciere, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. One week will be devoted to study of the history of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and issues of identity, subjectivity, psychoanalysis, gender/queer theory, feminism and the body will be examined through discussion of the writings of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler.

The Body and its Representations in Visual Culture

This module analyses the representation of the body in western art and visual culture from the Renaissance to the present day. Rather than attempting a survey of periods we will analyse the body in visual representation according to a set of thematic concepts relevant to current debates. These might include: the body and western identity; body politics; technologies of the body; surface and interiority; performing the body; fashioning the body; self-representation and the body; feminism and the body; and the eroticised body.

Special subject and 20 credit module options may vary from year to year.

Fees and funding

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's [Postgraduate Funding Database \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx).

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

Entry requirements

Learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/pg/requirements\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/pg/requirements)

Learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx)

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our [country pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx>) to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx>)

How to apply

Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us** (<https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate>) to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx>)

Apply now (<https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL092.htm>)

Related news and events

Facing the Music (</schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/news/2012/facing-the-music.aspx>)

Partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, London (</schools/lcahm/news/2012/national-portrait-gallery.aspx>)

Tearing up History: The Art of Revolution (</research/impact/our/news/items/tearing-up-history.aspx>)

The Barber Institute at 80 (</news/latest/2013/01/barber-80.aspx>)

Learning and teaching

Most of the teaching on the MA programme takes place in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, which houses the Barber Institute Gallery, a valuable teaching collection, used by members of staff on a regular basis. It is an excellent and representative collection of post-medieval European art, including paintings, engravings and drawings by artists such as Rembrandt, Turner, Van Dyck, Veronese and Vigée-LeBrun, as well as a major collection of 19th- and 20th-century works by artists such as Degas, Gauguin, Käthe Kollwitz, George Grosz, Manet, Miró, Picasso and Whistler.

The Barber Institute is home to an on-site research library which, in conjunction with the holdings of the University Main Library and the Special Collections of the Cadbury Research Library, makes Birmingham one of the best resourced Departments of History of Art in Britain.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx>) which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/insessional/index.aspx>).

Related research

- **Centre for the Study of Cultural Modernity** (</research/activity/culturalmodernity/index.aspx>)

Related staff

Dr Camilla Smith (</staff/profiles/historyofart/smith-camilla.aspx>)

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

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Birmingham's History of Art graduates develop a broad range of transferable skills, including: familiarity with research methods; the ability to manage large quantities of information from diverse sources; the ability to organise information in a logical and coherent manner; the expertise to write clearly and concisely and to tight deadlines; critical and analytical ability; the capacity for argument, debate and speculation; and the ability to base conclusions on detailed research.

Our History of Art postgraduates also have the advantage of gaining hands-on experience at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts: the university's on-campus art gallery which is home to the Department of Art History, Film and Visual Studies.

Over the past five years, 100% of History of Art postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation. Many graduates enter occupations relating to gallery and museum curatorship, management and research; others pursue careers in academia. Employers that our graduates have gone on to work for include: Barber Institute of Fine Arts; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; Bodleian Library; National Portrait Gallery; Royal Birmingham Society of Artists; University of Birmingham; and Victoria and Albert Museum.

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