

History of Art alumni profiles

Dr Connie Wan, MA History of Art, 2006 and PhD History of Art, 2012

Dr Connie Wan ([MA History of Art \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/histart/history-art.aspx\)](#), 2006 and [PhD History of Art \(/postgraduate/courses/research/histart/history-art.aspx\)](#), 2012) is currently working as curator of Pop Art at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Connie's Masters at University of Birmingham helped to prepare her for the working world: "There are so many volunteering opportunities whilst you study. I volunteered at the Education Department in the Barber Institute where I showed school children around and helped at the open days. One of the other students on my course was the Director of another gallery and suggested I volunteered there – this led to my first real job after graduating. The opportunities I received at Birmingham really helped me to get my foot in the door in a career I love."

Her favourite memory of Birmingham is "my induction at the University. I was taken on a tour by one of my lecturers to see the Barber Institute. From that moment I knew I wanted to be a curator.

The people at Birmingham are really enthusiastic which creates a really friendly place to learn. The teaching staff are supportive and encouraging which is a great motivational tool for success. The Barber Institute of Fine Arts is a wonderful environment to work in too - there are masterpieces right on your doorstep - this was the main reason why I applied and continued on to undertake a PhD."

Connie talks about the positive aspects of her career: "Sharing my knowledge with others and working with famous works of art! I feel very fortunate to be researching one of the most outstanding collections of Pop Art in England. Working with other people that share your passion for art is a true highlight of my career."

Her advice to current students is "use your initiative! Make sure you get involved with the Barber Institute – it's a blessing to have it right here on campus. They are always prepared to listen to your ideas regarding activities and voluntary workshops so get involved. If you think you want to work in museums, get that all important experience and make sure it's the career for you."

Katie Hall, MA History of Art, 2009

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Katie describes her experiences of studying [MA History of Art \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/histart/history-art.aspx\)](#) at the University and the job opportunities that this has opened.

Tess Radcliffe, MA History of Art, 2009

Tess Radcliffe graduated with an [MA in History of Art \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/histart/history-art.aspx\)](#) in 2009. She now works as the Learning and Community Engagement Manager (soon to be Cultural Learning and Participation Manager) for The Galleries Museums and Archives of Wolverhampton.

Tess tells us about her degree, "the most positive aspects of my MA were being able to study within a really elegant and uplifting architectural space (The Barber Institute of Fine Arts). Having access to some of the best Western European paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures by the best European artists in history is a very special environment to work and study in. I also enjoyed learning about all the different theories you can apply to artworks and therefore varied interpretations –I still find myself referring to theories I encountered on my MA now when I'm delivering talks at work or thinking up ideas for new courses or projects!"

Tess talks about her career as Learning and Community Engagement Manager, "the best thing about my job is being surrounded by art and museum objects and people who love art and heritage every day of the week. I can indulge my curiosity and appetite for art on a daily basis and get to think up lots of new ideas for projects related to collections and exhibitions.

I've worked incredibly hard and prioritised my career. I was lucky and got a job as Learning and Access Officer at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts where I studied my MA just a few months after graduating - I absolutely adored the job and it's a truly amazing place to work. From there I applied for my current job as Learning and Community Engagement Manager as I wanted to test myself and see how I got on at a much higher level as a senior manager, managing two teams of people in education and visitor services across 4 sites with a substantial budget and financial responsibilities."

Her advice for current students is, "volunteer as much as you can early on whilst studying; apply for internships and placements or for casual work, even as a gallery invigilator as you will learn or absorb a lot just by being in a gallery space amidst art every day. Be willing to adapt, change and diversify your skills, experience and knowledge by working in a variety of galleries and museums."

Richard Horley, MA History of Art, 2009

Richard completed an [MA in History of Art \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/histart/history-art.aspx\)](#) in 2009 and is currently an Online Peer Review Assistant for Cambridge University Press.

"My studies, I believe, have directly led to where I am today. Without my MA in History of Art, I would never have had the subject knowledge nor depth of understanding to do what I have done thus far after university. Without getting involved at the Barber Institute at the University, I would never have had the opportunity to work at the V&A,

and without my time at the V&A being spotted on my CV, I might never have been considered for the jobs here at the Press.

In terms of actual skills, I have demonstrated that I can synthesise and analyse more complex systems of thought, that I can articulate argument to a higher level and can deliver distinction-level presentations. All the stuff I got involved in, particularly with the Barber Institute, I believe was of tremendous benefit. What I missed in reading time through getting involved with everything, I made up for in practical experience and the general benefits of getting stuck in. Also, I have the brains too! Some of my marks for MA weren't too shabby."

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