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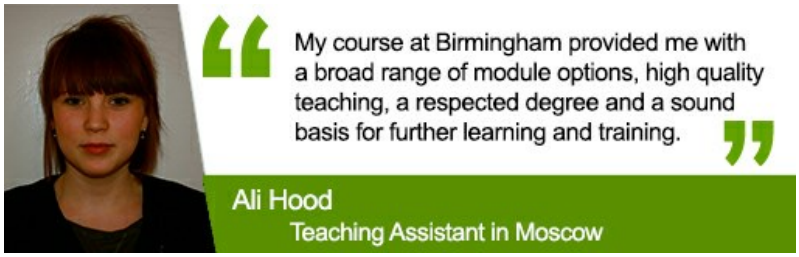
History of Art alumni profiles

Ali Hood, BA History of Art and Russian Studies, 2012



Ali Hood (BA History of Art and Russian Studies, 2012) is now working as a teaching assistant in Moscow and volunteering to gain experience in the area of Human Rights and International Development.

"My course at Birmingham provided me with a broad range of module options, high quality teaching and library facilities, a respected degree and a sound basis for further learning and training. I really valued the wide range of module choices available. On the Russian side in particular I could choose additional language modules or focus on Russian economics or politics. The intimacy of the CREES department provided a nurturing and supportive environment for studying and considering options post graduation."

The highlight of Ali's degree was the opportunity to study for a year in Russia. She said: "I studied at the universities in Yaroslavl and St Petersburg on intensive language courses. There were challenges in becoming acclimatised to a different culture, but the process was instructive and enhanced my life skills."

After graduating, Ali went straight into an internship in the Russian Art department of Sotheby's Auction House – perfect for her joint honours background!

"My internship was fantastic. I used my language skills to speak to high end clients, translate texts and research artists and art works to write material for the sale catalogue. My knowledge and understanding of Russian art increased greatly and I had an insight into the workings of a major auction house."

Ali advises students to work hard on their language skills and enjoy their time on campus: "Language skills are a great advantage when applying for jobs. The University of Birmingham provides a great scope of nationalities and backgrounds in its students. Meeting new and like-minded people in the many societies is a fantastic opportunity."

Katie Spencer, BA (Hons) English and History of Art, 2009

Katie graduated in 2009 with a **BA (Hons) English and History of Art (/undergraduate/courses/jointhonours/english-literature-and-history-of-art.aspx)** in 2009, and is now working as a Senior Production Editor for Oxford University Press.

"I first decided to get into publishing as a result of the English side of my degree, and after being Chief Editor of the English society's literary magazine. I was eager to get into academic publishing to utilize my experience and knowledge gained at Birmingham, and to remain within the academic sphere. After graduating, I almost immediately started a paid internship at a small academic publisher, Berghahn Books, which I landed by just emailing round a list of Oxford publishers and asking for some work experience. I enjoyed working in production during my internship, so I started applying for jobs in this area, and eventually was successful as an Assistant Production Editor in Journals at Oxford University Press. I was initially given a varied list of journals to manage the production for, with subject areas ranging from medicine to sociology. I soon took the initiative to ask for journals that reflected my background, and was given *Oxford Art Journal* and the *Journal of Design History* in return. I now have a fantastic relationship with the editorial offices of these journals due to my enthusiasm for the subject area. I most enjoy working closely with authors on the layout of their manuscripts, and also getting involved with cover design.

My challenging joint honours degree prepared me brilliantly for juggling the many tasks and responsibilities in my current role. I am now a Senior Production Editor and work on larger projects and developments, as well as managing a varying list of journals. However, no one has managed to pry my art and design journals from me yet!"

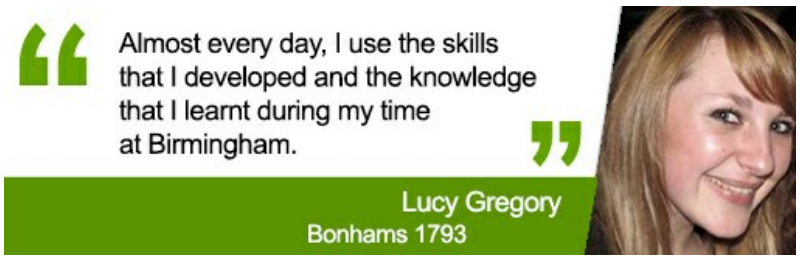
Kaylee Jenkinson, BA History of Art, 2009

Kaylee graduated in 2009 with a **BA in History of Art (/undergraduate/courses/histart/history-art.aspx)** she is now working as Co-curator and Co-director of Art Historian Collective Porter & Jenkinson, and also as a Retail and Admissions assistant at Imperial War Museum North, in Manchester.

"My History of Art degree has been instrumental in my various roles in art galleries; nowhere more so than in the exhibition organised as part of Porter & Jenkinson. My dissertation at Birmingham, which was about 1890s Britain, provided the inspiration for my first exhibition – which was a selection of contemporary artists' responses to the strange and dark aesthetics of the Victorians. Studying in the incredible surroundings of the Barber Institute has been invaluable too, from working with curatorial files in individual essay writing, to giving presentations in front of artworks in the gallery. More than anything, studying History of Art in these surroundings made me even more determined to pursue a career in galleries and museums.

Studying History of Art at the University of Birmingham was absolutely vital in securing my internship with the Research and Cultural Collections team, which has in turn been the more important work experience of my career so far. I have also found History of Art a great basis for gallery based jobs, in particular the method of research and writing which you take for granted when studying. A degree has been the minimum requirement for all jobs and internships which I have so far had; although beyond this I have found that a Masters level degree has been necessary for many job applications."

Lucy Gregory, BA History of Art, 2008



Lucy Gregory (**BA History of Art (/undergraduate/courses/histart/history-art.aspx)**, 2008) is now working as junior silver specialist at Bonhams 1793 (a fine art and antiques auctioneers) where she is responsible for cataloguing and valuing items as well as producing sale catalogues and preparing for auctions.

Lucy said "After graduating, I undertook a Master's degree in Fine and Decorative Art in London. After interning for 6 months at an auction house dealing in silver and arms and armour I was offered a trainee job with the South African Painting Department at Bonhams. 14 months later, I was offered my current position with the silver department."

Almost every day, I use the skills that I developed and the knowledge that I learnt during my time at Birmingham. One of the most important parts of my job is

deconstructing objects on the spot in front of clients. Being able to study and analyse objects, as well as iconology such as identifying saints, during my degree gave me excellent practice. A sound knowledge of social and economic history, which features heavily in the History of Art BA, is also crucial."

Lucy recommends that students make the most of University of Birmingham's outstanding art collections housed in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts:

"Read as much as you can and see as much art as you can. Don't just focus on paintings - objects such as furniture, ceramics and silver also have a very large part to play in the history of art. It is also worth thinking about what you want to do after your degree – if you want to work in an auction house try and get some work experience before you graduate!"

Kathy Sharpe, BA History of Art, 1999

Kathy completed a **BA in English and History of Art (/undergraduate/courses/jointhonours/english-literature-and-history-of-art.aspx)** in 1999 before going on to complete an **MPhil in History of Art (/postgraduate/courses/research/histart/history-art.aspx)** in 2000. She is currently working as the Internal Communications Co-ordinator at Leeds City College.

"After leaving Birmingham, I gained a job at The Federation of British Artists (an organisation which manages various art societies and The Mall Galleries). I worked there initially as a receptionist to get a foot in the door, and progressed to working as the Press Officer after a time. Having moved into Marketing, and finding it was something I really enjoyed, I then got a job in the Public Relations department at King's College London where I worked for several years. After this, I moved to Leeds to be with my then partner (now husband, and fellow Brum alumni from the Engineering dept!) and got another Press Officer Job at Park Lane College.

I still work in the marketing team but instead of external relations, am now responsible for internal communications - to 2,000 staff and 55,000 students all spread over 20 different campuses and sites. Writing is what I do, and my degrees were the foundations of that. Writing dissertations of tens of thousands of words was the best preparation I could have had. It was only as a result of my degree that I managed to obtain a job in a gallery."

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