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First year modules

Historical Concepts in the History of Art

This module provides a thorough foundation in the historical concepts and categories employed in the analysis of works of art. Examples include: the meaning of style; artistic 'schools'; iconography and symbolism; the meaning of 'genre' and different artistic genres; the distinction between 'fine' and 'applied' art; the figure of the artist.

These themes are explored in relation to individual artworks that are studied both in reproduction and also in situ, in the Barber or other museums and galleries in Birmingham. The module also includes study skills sessions that introduce students to conventions of academic research, reading and writing.

Debates and Methods in the History of Art

This module gives a thorough introduction to the various contemporary approaches and methods used in the interpretation of works of art, with a particular focus on the questions and debates that are prompted by their use in art history.

Examples include: formal analysis; semiology; the social history of art; gender studies; studies of patronage and the art market; biography; theories of visual culture. These themes are explored in relation to individual artworks that are studied both in reproduction and also in situ, in the Barber or in other museums and galleries in Birmingham. The module also includes further study skills sessions, including the opportunity to reflect on work submitted and assessed in the first semester.

Object and Medium

This module is intended to provide you with detailed knowledge of the materials and techniques used for paintings (in particular egg tempera and oil). It will also consider the various types and uses of paintings, the function of drawings in the creative process and the making of sculpture. During the second term, the course is aimed at providing detailed knowledge of the materials and techniques of prints and other visual media. It will focus throughout on European art c.1400-2000 but will also look at art from other cultures and periods and consider the various functions of art objects. The module will also provide some insight into architectural design by looking in particular at some of the public buildings of the city of Birmingham.

Having completed the course, you will be able to appreciate the many different techniques of works of art in museums and galleries. You will also be able to recognise many of the materials used in painting, drawing sculpture, printmaking and other arts, by inspecting works of art of many different periods in the original. You will understand how different materials allow the creation of different effects and how the form of a work of art can relate to its function. In addition, you will be able to understand some of the criteria of building design, and appreciate the various approaches to displaying works of art that are found in different galleries.

Ideas of the Renaissance

This module considers the concept of the Renaissance. Examining a range of works of art as well as textual sources, it explores the role that the Renaissance plays in the history of art and how this came to be, by looking at texts by Vasari and Burckhardt. As such, it explores ideas such as 'medieval' versus 'Renaissance', and 'the North' versus 'Italy'. It also examines artistic practice and the rise of the artist, gender and the Renaissance, and hierarchies of art forms.

Concepts of Modernism in the History of Art

This module considers the concept of Modernism. Examining a range of works of art as well as textual sources, it explores some of the defining practices of Modernism, such as: the Avant-Garde; 'Primitivism'; the role of feminism and photography in modern art. As an exploration of Modernism as an art historical concept, the module also considers more recent debates within art history over the meaning and use of the term.

Module outside the main discipline (MOMD)

An MOMD is a module in a subject which is not normally a part of the student's main degree programme but which may be taken for additional credit to enhance their study. Schools and Departments across the University open up modules to students from other areas in a wide range of subjects and disciplines.

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