Art History

Overview

As an art history major, you explore the aesthetic qualities of art through the framework of a piece's historical, social, political, economic and religious contexts. We offer a wide range of courses in European, American and non-Western art and architecture and you learn, in part, by closely observing and handling objects. We manage several on-campus collections, including 1,600 prints and drawings in the Wetmore Collection, 200 Chinese paintings in the Chu-Griffis Asian Art Collection and a sizeable number of modern and contemporary sculptures. You might also work as an intern or collaborate on exhibitions, events and educational programs at the nearby Lyman Allyn Art Museum, the Florence Griswold Museum or one of dozens of major museums in New York.

International Opportunities and Study Abroad

Most art history majors spend a semester studying art abroad. We are closely affiliated with programs in Florence and Rome, and other options include Vietnam, India, China, Denmark, France, England and Germany. Recent interns have worked at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Museum of Contemporary Art in Beijing, Newport Art Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Special Opportunities

You can pursue a topic in great depth through an independent study or honors thesis. Recent honors theses have focused on exhibitions of Italian Futurism, the political role of modern art in post-colonial Senegal and the history of Connecticut College’s architecture. Two architectural historians support a separate interdisciplinary major in architectural studies. We also offer a certificate program in museum studies.

Q: Why Connecticut College?

A: After four years at a large public high school, I consciously decided on a school that would foster my educational needs as an individual. I wanted small classrooms and the opportunity for student-faculty engagement.

Q: What has been your most challenging or rewarding class?

A: “Renaissance Art in Northern Europe from 1400-1500” was both my most challenging and rewarding course. The demand for rigorous analysis of primary documents and concise writing kept me up very late into the night. But it also forced me to think critically about my writing. I am most proud of the papers I struggled with in this course and owe much of my writing ability to my professor’s assignments and feedback.

Q: What role has the Office of Career and Professional Development office played in your experience?

A: The career office has been an invaluable resource. When I was a sophomore, my career adviser guided me through resume drafts, cover letters and networking skills that eventually led to an internship at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. Junior year, I got incredible support and advice in landing an internship at Christie’s auction house.
Faculty

Joseph Alchermes, Associate Professor of Art History; Director of Architectural Studies Program; Chair of Art History and Architectural Studies Department
B.A., Wesleyan University; M.A., Ph.D., Institute of Fine Arts, NYU
Roman art; Early Christian and Byzantine art; medieval architecture; Islamic art and architecture

Karen Gonzalez Rice, Sue and Eugene Mercy Assistant Professor of Art History
B.A., M.A., University of Texas at Austin; Ph.D., Duke University
Contemporary art (1945-present); experimental art; performance studies; contemporary art and the body; American studies; contemporary art in America; religion in contemporary art; trauma studies; art and ethics

Robert Baldwin, Associate Professor of Art History
B.A., New York University; Ph.D., Harvard University
Late Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque art, early modern cultural studies; Mercantile culture in Renaissance art and literature; Landscape in European art and literature, 1350-1920; Music in European art, literature, and society, 1400-1700; Gender and art, 1300-1930; Post-Impressionism

Emily C. Morash, Interim Associate Dean of the College; Dean of First-Year Students
B.A., Smith College; M.Arch., History, University of Virginia; Ph.D. Candidate, Brown University
Modern and contemporary architecture; Italian architecture; American architecture; architecture and media

Christopher B. Steiner, Lucy C. McDannel ’22 Professor of Art History and Anthropology
B.A., M.A., The Johns Hopkins University; M.A., Ph.D., Harvard University
African art; art market and collecting; images of race and ethnicity in film and visual culture; outsider museums and visionary art; censorship, museum controversies and ethics

Karen Gonzalez Rice, Sue and Eugene Mercy Assistant Professor of Art History
B.A., M.A., University of Texas at Austin; Ph.D., Duke University
Contemporary art (1945-present); experimental art; performance studies; contemporary art and the body; American studies; contemporary art in America; religion in contemporary art; trauma studies; art and ethics

Examples of Student Research in Art History

Telayah Sturdivant ’15
I Am Project: An Analysis of the Representation of Homelessness in American Visual Culture

Cannea Ferguson ’14
Representing Ethnic Minorities in Modern Chinese Art

Lydia Stitsel ’14
The Promotion of Cultural Heritage: Conservation, Restoration and Presentation of Archaeological Art and Artifacts in Sardinia, Italy

Selected Courses

Mona Lisa to Instagram; African Art; Islamic Art; Classical Mythology in Western Art; High Renaissance Art in Italy; Nineteenth-Century Art; History of Photography; Pop Art; Domestic Architecture in the United States; the Architecture of Connecticut College; Contemporary Architecture; Museum Censorship and Ethics; Costume History; Imagining Otherness in Visual Culture.

About Connecticut College

Connecticut College educates students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens in a global society. A leader in the liberal arts since 1911, the College is home to nationally ranked programs for internships, community action, arts and technology, environmental studies and international studies. Our beautiful 750-acre arboretum campus is located in the historic New England seaport community of New London, Conn.