Art History is the study of the visual world, both past and present. It looks closely at a wide array of images, objects, buildings, and sites in order to better understand human societies. Art History operates with the understanding that visual/material artifacts may speak more directly and deeply about a culture than its written record. This is called "visual literacy" and it is an invaluable skill in our increasingly visual world.

As an Art History student, you’ll learn to analyze a wide variety of artifacts from all geographic regions and historical eras, including our own. Not limited strictly to the so-called "fine arts," Art History seeks to understand visual and material culture more broadly: from paintings and sculpture, to architecture and urban design; from scientific illustration and political posters, to performance art and street graffiti.

Through engaging closely with these and other forms of visual expression, students of Art History become adept practitioners of the following skills: visual analysis and interpretation, original research and careful argumentation, image-based thinking and communication, and clear and persuasive writing in a variety of modes (e.g., analytical, creative, and journalistic).

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major

When you study Art History at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the
liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts prepare students for the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

“I have gotten really lucky in certain ways by meeting the right professors and having the right advisors, and finding out about the ‘right experiences. They're really invested in their students. I'm grateful for that—it helped me a lot.”

Read more about Ashley's story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.

Student Experiences

Internships in Art History: Gain Valuable Experience in the Twin Cities and Beyond

Did you know? Our department has its very own internship reflection course! Students taking an internship can use this course to reflect on ways that their work experience is preparing them for successful careers - and receive credit for the work.

Learning Abroad Options in Art History: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy
Learn more about study abroad for Art History majors.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

- Art History Undergraduate Association (AHUGA)

Meet Our Faculty

“When you're teaching the Middle Ages you have to account for religion in order to understand what's happening; the majority of the artwork that's produced in the Middle Ages is religious in nature.” Jennifer Awes-Freeman, visiting assistant professor of medieval studies, shares about her approach to teaching and experience at the U.

Read more about Professor Awes-Freeman's work.
Jane Blocker reflects on her first year as Associate Dean for Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts. “I am participating in the life of the College in a broader way... I have an even deeper admiration for the amazing research and teaching being done in my own department and across CLA, and I have an opportunity to advocate for the arts and humanities.”

Read more about Professor Blocker's work.

Meet Our Alumni

Alumna Emily Rohan began her year-long advanced-level internship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum this past September. She reflects on her undergraduate experience at the University and her internship at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, which set her on the path to becoming a museum curator.
CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.”

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman

You might also explore

Art
Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature
Global Studies
History

Associated Careers

Archivists Conservators, Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers, Exhibit
Designers and Museum Technicians, Historians, Museum Curators, Postsecondary Teachers

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information

TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

- Did you know? CLA Transfer Advising has created an official "transfer guide" for a number of degree programs, including Art History, to help you determine which credits will transfer, and how.

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below!

- Course plans before transferring
- Estimated time to graduation
- Career preparation in CLA
- Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
- Connecting with major/minor departments