

MA in Contemporary Art

CORE PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND AIMS

This twelve-month-long taught MA course, validated by the University of Manchester, is unique in combining rigorous academic work with vocational training in the study of contemporary art.



Chiara Shioto, K21, Dusseldorf, Germany

It is designed for students who are fully committed to the study of contemporary art and who intend to pursue careers in the field. Past students have gone on to work in museums, private galleries, auction houses, consultancies, magazines, international art fairs and universities, to name but some of the potential career paths.

The course is taught over three semesters. The first two semesters are intensively taught on three to four days per week. In the second semester, specialist electives can be chosen from across all Institute Master's programs, meaning that a student can build a personalised Master's profile. During the third semester (June to September inclusive) there is no formal teaching, with students researching their dissertation topics under the guidance of individual supervisors. At the start of the year, students are allocated a personal tutor who supports their academic and personal development throughout the program. Lectures are given by members of the faculty as well as by consultants who are professionally active in the art world, thus facilitating networking opportunities. Study visits and trips are an integral part of the program.

ASSESSMENT

Students complete a range of assignments during the program, aimed to help them become sophisticated graduates with high calibre practical and theoretical skills and knowledge, preparing them for success in the world of work. Some assignments are intended to develop skills connected with research, analysis, contextualisation and criticism, and to promote students' ability to present material in different written and spoken modes. Object-based assignments foster students' skills of observation, description and attribution. Essays invite students to explore themes connected with artistic contexts, art business or the networks in which art is created, bought, collected and exhibited. Much assessment responds directly to the practical demands of employers, so that all students will be involved in assignments which simulate 'real world' tasks, projects and scenarios; for example, reviews, catalogue entries, exhibition projects and business planning.

For many assignments students can choose their particular focus, so as to develop more specialised knowledge and understanding in areas that particularly interest them. Throughout the program, students are fully supported by tutors as they explore and develop their ideas.

Quality assurance and validation



Sotheby's Institute of Art – London is proud of the high quality of its academic programs. It is an affiliated institution of the University of Manchester, one of the UK's largest civic universities and a member of the prestigious Russell Group of universities. The University of Manchester closely scrutinises the quality of Sotheby's Institute of Art – London programs and validates the MA.

Sotheby's Institute of Art – London is also reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education.

SEMESTER I

Semester I is the most intensively taught of the three semesters. The aim is to give students a thorough grounding in the art of the period from 1968 to 1995 and to analyse the debates that attended it. The training received in this semester forms the necessary basis for the development of the student's own historical understanding and critical voice.



Olafur Eliasson, Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany

COURSE COMPONENTS

Core Curriculum: *Navigating the Art World*

This unit brings students from all MAs together for an introduction to the art world. Taught from the beginning of Semesters I, it comprises lectures, seminars, visits and workshops that together provide a compelling set of critical understandings and professional skills that equip graduates for successful careers in the art world. These sessions focus on the key organisations, networks and relationships that constitute the international art world. They introduce students to aspects of art business and the art market, and the legal and ethical frameworks that influence their functioning.

The unit also considers the different ways in which art objects are displayed, interpreted and mediated. *Navigating the Art World* introduces students to a variety of postgraduate research skills and methodologies within the disciplines of art history and art business. The assessment in this unit applies this knowledge and understanding to a contemporary art project which involves creating (for example), a hypothetical exhibition or a new magazine.

MACA01: Contemporary Art Histories

The contexts and conceptual underpinnings of contemporary art have developed considerably since 1968. Art has evolved dramatically in terms of production, dissemination, reception and modes of exchange. Throughout this unit we trace these developments as they unfolded in the period up to 1995. Some lectures will examine periods prior to 1968 to fill in the historical backdrop, whilst some of the later lectures will consider critical debates that continued beyond 1995.

A series of themed lectures looking at, for example, feminism, land art and conceptualism, will be enhanced by single-artist lectures and others examining issues around critical theory. Attention will be paid to artistic practices developed beyond the Euro-American axis in another series of lectures, titled "Other Modernities".

The overall ambition of this unit is to ensure that all students can locate key movements in contemporary art history within appropriate historical, social, economic, and philosophical contexts. The unit pushes students to develop an understanding of how art objects circulate within networks of production, display and exchange. An over-arching concern here is for students to examine the globalisation of the art world and to gain a grasp of practices developed outside Europe and North America.



Wolfgang Tillmans, K21, Dusseldorf, Germany

Lectures: These form the major component of Semester I and provide a detailed survey of art from 1968 to 1995, focusing on specific periods, regions, tendencies and figures. Necessary background information on the preceding post-war years (1945-67) is provided in the introductory week. Students also attend a small number of lectures on theoretical perspectives that have had an influence on the production and reception of contemporary art. The lectures that are delivered over the course of this semester give students the knowledge on which to build and develop their own critical positions.

Seminars: These are held every week, typically with groups of 12-15. Certain seminars are given over to discussions of critical texts written during the period under review. These seminars are intended to help students develop their understanding of the backdrop against which artists of the period were working. Other seminars look at specific art world debates and concerns, around institutional critique/engagement for instance, and at theoretical models.

Sotheby's INSTITUTE OF ART

Visits: These are treated as seminars, never as guided tours. The course has an object-based and context-based philosophy which holds that an understanding of art must always begin with a direct experience of specific art objects. In accordance with this pedagogical emphasis, students visit museums and galleries to study artworks in situ.

Students are given the opportunity to discuss these works, in their contexts, with other students and tutors. In Semester I, several days are spent visiting exhibitions in London. One day is spent at an art college.

Later, in November, students travel to Germany with faculty to visit collections and galleries in Köln, Düsseldorf, Monchengladbach and elsewhere during an intensive five-day study trip. Institutions visited include the Ludwig Museum, Kolumba Museum, Langen Foundation, Haus Langer und Esters, Museum Abteiberg, K20, K21, Kunsthalle Köln, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Julia Stoschek Collection, and commercial galleries.

During Semester I students also visit Sotheby's, where they are shown around by auction house experts.



Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany

Research Methods: In order to assist the student in honing the practical and academic skills that are necessary for a career in the contemporary art world, a series of lectures and workshops on research methods are also provided in Semester I.

Guest Lecturers: Guest speakers are regularly invited to talk to the group about their work. These guests are drawn from a variety of professions in the contemporary art world; they include artists, curators, gallerists, editors, critics and auctioneers consultants (see list of previous speakers below). The talks are informal and offer students exceptional opportunities to both meet and question significant figures in the art world.

Tutorials: Each student has a personal tutor and has at least three scheduled tutorials during the semester in which to discuss his or her work and progress. These are an integral part of the course as they provide students with oral feedback on assignments submitted through the semester. They also give students a chance to discuss any assignments they may be preparing.

Assessed Elements

Review: each student writes a review towards the beginning of the semester. This gives tutors an opportunity to assess at an early stage the writing and critical skills of their tutees, and to offer appropriate feedback.

Museum Catalogue Entry: each student writes an entry on a given artwork in accordance with the usual format for such entries in museum catalogues.

Perspectives Presentation: students give presentations outlining the research they have done in preparation for their Perspectives essays and the positions they expect to advance in those essays.

Perspectives Essay: each student hands in a 3,000-3,500-word essay on artistic practices relating to a key debate in the period 1968-1995.

Project: students undertake one of two projects. They can produce one issue of a hypothetical art magazine — in a print or web-based format — or present a proposal for a hypothetical exhibition in a commercial or publicly funded gallery. For the project, each student writes an illustrated critical essay of 3,000 words. Students work in groups to learn teamwork skills. (This project is part of the Core Curriculum; it is the culmination of the student's work on "Navigating the Art World".)



Ugo Rondinone – Vocabulary of Solitude, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands

SEMESTER II

The focus in Semester II is on the period from 1995 to the present; and while students attend a series of lectures on developments outside the West during Semester I, the curriculum for Semester II is more emphatically global in scope, taking in the Middle East, Africa, South America, India, China and the Far East.

During Semester II students further develop their own critical perspectives, working with the tutors on the course to enhance their research skills and their ability to present their views in the form of cogent arguments.

MACA02: *Critical Debates in Contemporary Art*

The last twenty years or so have seen the rise of context-based artistic practices. Much recent installation and performance art, for instance, explicitly engages with an immediate context, be it geographical, institutional or social. Since the 1990s we have also seen a surge of interest in collaborative and participatory practices. This unit is designed with three objectives in mind.

First, it looks at artistic tendencies in the period from 1995 to the present, focusing in particular on these context-based practices. Second, it examines the debates which have developed around such practices, familiarising students with important critical positions on the issues of site-specificity, new media and participation; in the process it builds on knowledge gained in MACA01: *Contemporary Art Histories* and encourages students to hone their historical acuity. And third, again building on MACA01, it pushes students to sharpen and apply their practical skills as they work on assignments that mirror professional tasks in the art world.

The aim of this unit is to familiarise students with crucial art world debates in the period from 1995 to the present, and with artistic practices that inform, and are informed by, those debates, whilst deepening their understanding of practices and tendencies that have emerged outside the old (European and North American) centres of contemporary art production.

Seminars: Seminars form the main component of Semester II. The semester is organised around two seminar strands. The first strand is the continuation of Semester I's theory strand; and as in Semester I, each seminar follows a lecture on a given theoretical model or area of inquiry. In the second strand, "Critical Debates", students are invited to consider site-specific, new media and participatory practices as they consider the contexts in which artworks are made and experienced.

Lectures: As in semester 1, several lectures are monographic, each looking at a key artist in depth. Students also attend lectures on theoretical positions and on "Other Modernities", that is to say, on artistic practices that have emerged in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Students also attend one-off lectures by artists, gallerists, critics, auction house experts and other art world professionals.

Visits: As in Semester I, several days are given over to visiting galleries, museums, collections and artists' studios. Towards the beginning of the semester, students and tutors go on a three-day study trip to Paris, where we visit the Centre Pompidou, Musée d'art Moderne, Palais de Tokyo, Jeu de Paume, Cartier Foundation, and commercial galleries. Later in the semester, we undertake a four-day study trip to Belgium and the Netherlands. The purpose of this final trip is to visit institutions that have spearheaded new developments in curating, such as BAK and Casco in Utrecht, the van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and the Wiels in Brussels.

Guest Lectures: As in Semester I, the curriculum includes a large number of talks by visiting speakers.

Tutorials: Each student meets his or her tutor for at least three tutorials.

Assessed Elements:

Review II: a 1000-1200-word review of a show currently viewable in London.

Critical Debates presentation: a presentation outlining what the student intends to work on in his or her Critical Debates essay and research done to date.

Critical Debates essay: each student writes a research paper of 5000 words on one of three topics—the artist's medium, site-specificity and participation in contemporary art.

N.B. Transition to Semester III depends upon the successful completion of Semesters I and II. Students who successfully complete the first two semesters but are considered unlikely to complete a dissertation successfully, or opt not to write a dissertation, will be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma.



Barbara Kruger, Museum Ludwig

ELECTIVES

Students will choose two elective units from subjects across the specialist MAs at Sotheby's Institute of Art. These will be studied in semester two. Students may wish to specialise their study and focus on elective units which are based in their own program, or diversify their experience through pursuing interests based in other programs. Example electives options available to students are listed below. Students may also decide to choose electives which form concentrations in, for example, Curating Contemporary Art, Performance Art, Photography or Asian Art.

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| International Art World: Public Sectors | Photography and its Markets |
| Strategic Management for the Art World | Art and Authentication |
| Emerging Markets | Contemporary Design and its Markets |
| Ethics, Law and the Art Trade | East Asian Painting |
| Market for Western Antiquities and Old Masters | East Asian Ceramics |
| Curating Contemporary Art | Curating Asian Art |
| Performance Art | Contemporary Chinese Art |
| Photography: Image and Power | Work Placement Unit (accredited internship)* |
| Modernism and its Markets** | Art World Logistics and Operations** |

**Admission to this unit is subject to application and selection during the academic year.*

*** Subject to approval of validation by the University of Manchester.*

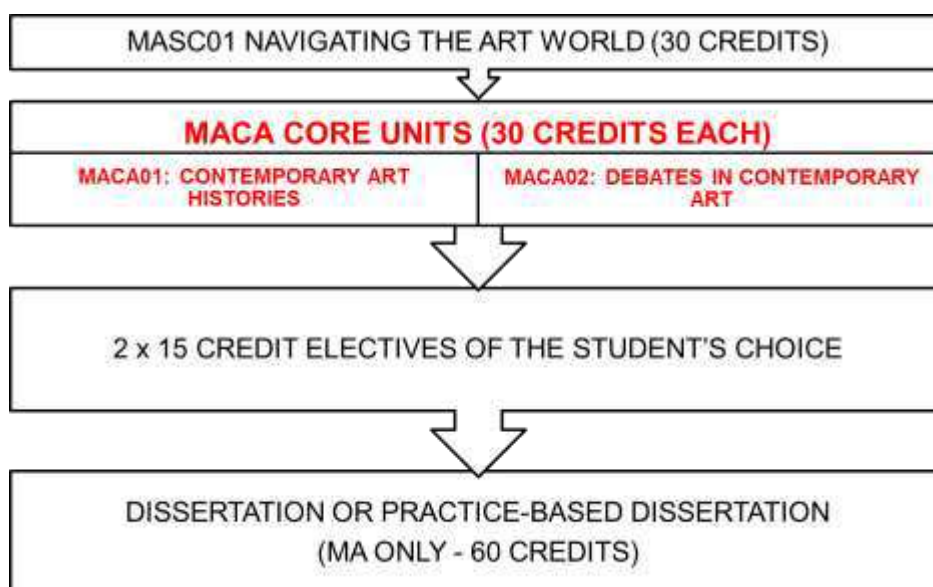
SEMESTER III

In this semester students develop a more specialised area of study and show their ability to engage in sustained research, weigh evidence and present a complex argument. They will spend the semester preparing and writing either a 12,500-15,000-word dissertation, or a Practice-based Dissertation consisting of a creative and/or practical component plus a reflection/analysis of the above of 8,000-10,000 words. The Practice-based Dissertations are on topics that are chosen by the students in conversation with their tutors.

Students need not be resident in London for all of this period. Tutorial assistance will be available throughout.

Assessed Elements:

The Dissertation: Three copies must be handed in, typed and complete, in September.



Lecturers

Dr Marcus Verhagen, Program Director

Dr Pierre Saurisse

Dr Juliet Hacking

Dr Lauren Rotenberg

Careers in the art world following the successful completion of the Masters in Contemporary Art

Since its inception in 1991, MACA alumni have assumed positions of note across the international art world, in both the private and public sector. Whilst a majority of students chose to work in private sectors — commercial galleries, auction house, art fairs, and consultancies — a significant number also work in private foundations, public museums and not-for-profit organisations. Alumni have also acquired positions in academe as lecturers, researchers and professors and a significant number have gone into online arts publishing, another area of growth in the art world today.

A select list of institutions currently employing our students at entry-and director-level would include: Gagosian Gallery, London and New York, Houldsworth Gallery, London, MOMA, New York, Tate Modern, London, The New Museum, New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, Phillips de Pury, London, Grosvenor Gallery, London Christie's London, Timothy Taylor Gallery, London White Cube, London, Creative Time, New York, Sotheby's London and New York, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, Hauser & Wirth, London, GALERIE8, London, Gyeonggi MOMA, South Korea, Kukje Gallery, Seoul, South Korea, Whitechapel Gallery, London Serpentine, London, Karsten Schubert, London, Stephen Friedman, London, Sies and Hoke, Dusseldorf, Bloomberg Projects, London, Urs Fischer Studio, New York, Damien Hirst Studio, London, and Josh Lilley Gallery, London