

MA in Contemporary Art



Chiara Shioto, K21, Dusseldorf, Germany

This twelve-month-long taught MA course, validated by the University of Manchester, is unique in combining rigorous academic study of contemporary art with the acquisition of skills of professional practice. The program is designed for those 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 at museums, commercial and not-for-profit galleries, auction houses, consultancies, journals, international art fairs and universities, to name but some of the potential career paths (see below for more details).

At the start of the year, students are allocated a personal tutor who supports their academic and personal development throughout the program. The course runs across three semesters (two semesters for Postgraduate Diploma students). The first two semesters are intensively taught on four (occasionally five) 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 (mid-May to mid-September inclusive) there is no formal teaching. In this semester, MA-registered students research and write their dissertation with the guidance of an individual supervisor.

Lectures are given by both members of the faculty and consultant lecturers, many of whom are active in the art world, thus facilitating networking opportunities. Study visits (both local and international) are an integral part of the program.

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Contemporary Art Faculty: [Dr Juliet Hacking](#), Program Director; [Dr Pierre Saurisse](#); [Dr Marcus Verhagen](#).

Guest Speakers: Guest speakers in recent years on the programme and at extra-curricular events have included the following major artists: Zarina Bhimji, Aleksandra Mir, [Martin Creed](#), Sonia Boyce, Hussan Musa, Heague Yang, [Jane Wilson](#) and [Louise Wilson](#), William Kentridge, [Anthea Hamilton](#), [Marcelo Brodsky](#), Lydia Ourahmane, [Tim Etchells](#) and Alfredo Jaar.

There are also regular lectures from leading scholars and art world professionals; talks in recent years have featured, among others, Dr Amelia Groom, [Dr Alison Green](#), [Professor Adrian Heathfield](#) and Dr Afonso Dias Ramos; also [Jonathan Watkins](#), Jenni Lomax and Martin Clark.

Consultant Lecturers: Regular consultant lecturers on the MA in Contemporary Art include Dr Mike Cooter, Dr Tom Snow, [Filipa Ramos](#), [Jennifer Thatcher](#), [Dr Flavia Frigeri](#), Dr Zehra Juhmabhoy, [Dr Anna Moszynska](#), [Dr Katie Hill](#), Dr Klara Kemp-Welch, Professor Anthony Downey, J.J. Charlesworth, Dr Emilia Terracciano, [Gilda Williams](#) and Professor Richard Noble.

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.



DURATION AND LOCATION

Master's programs are 12 months in duration. Those students enrolled for Postgraduate Diploma follow the first two semesters of the Master's program (9 months).

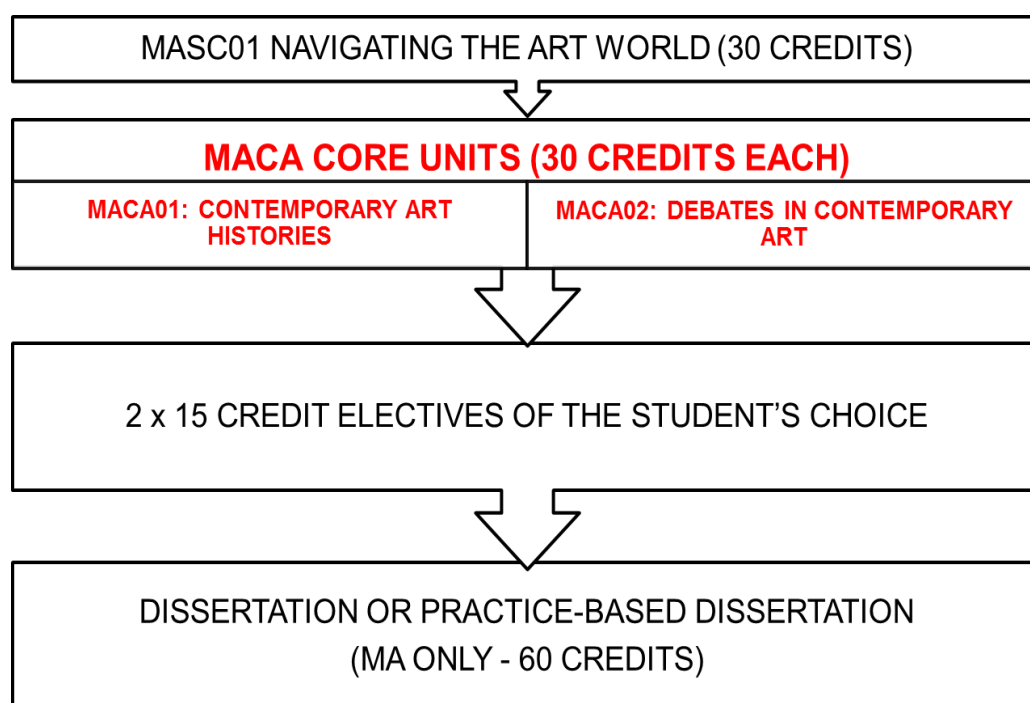
Classroom teaching takes place at Sotheby's Institute of Art-London in 30 Bedford Square and at other locations nearby.

ASSESSMENT

Students complete a range of assignments during the program that are designed to help them become sophisticated graduates with high calibre academic and vocational skills and knowledge, preparing them for success in the world of work. Object-based assignments foster students' skills of observation, description and attribution. Other assignments, such as essays, develop skills of research, analysis, contextualisation and criticism, and promote students' ability to present material in different written and spoken modes. Students are encouraged to consider the networks in which art is created, exhibited and collected. All students will be involved in assignments which simulate 'real world' tasks, projects and scenarios: for example, exhibition reviews, collection/catalogue entries, and planning for a hypothetical exhibition or journal.

For some assignments, students can tailor the task to embrace a topic that particularly interest them. Throughout the program, students are fully supported by tutors as they explore and develop their ideas. They also have a number of 1:1 feedback tutorials to aid their progression.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

SEMESTER I

The aim in Semester I is to give students a thorough grounding in the art of the period from 1968 to 1995 drawing upon the key philosophical, aesthetic, social and political debates that informed it. The teaching and learning in this semester is intended to develop both the student's historical understanding and their critical voice.



Olafur Eliasson, Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany

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 Semester 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 them. A short essay is undertaken on a related topic.

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 unit also considers the different ways in which art objects are displayed, interpreted and mediated. The major assignment for this unit sees students (working in small groups) apply this knowledge and understanding to a contemporary art project that involves creating (for example), a hypothetical exhibition or a new journal or webzine.

MACA01: Contemporary Art Histories

Art has evolved dramatically since 1968 in terms of production, dissemination, reception and modes of exchange. The overall ambition of this unit is to ensure that all students can situate key movements in contemporary art history within appropriate historical, social, economic, and philosophical contexts. The teaching encourages students to develop an understanding of how art objects circulate within networks of production, display and exchange and how these have changed with the increasing globalisation of the art world. The scope of the teaching and learning therefore extends outside Europe and North America.



Wolfgang Tillmans, K21, Dusseldorf, Germany

Lectures: These examine art from 1968 to 1995 (with some anticipating this chronology and some extending beyond it) not as a general survey but instead by focussing on specific periods, regions, tendencies and figures. A series of themed lectures looking at, for example, performance, institutional critique and conceptualism, will run alongside single-artist lectures and those examining key strands in critical theory. These lectures, together with the related seminar series, provide students with the knowledge and skills with which to develop their own critical positions.

Seminars: These are held every week, often more than once, typically with groups of 12-15. Some seminars are intended to help students develop their understanding of the context in which artists of the period were working. Others are given over to discussions of critical theory written in the period under review. Another strand examines specific art world debates and concerns, for example, around medium-specificity.

Visits: The course has an object-based philosophy which holds that an understanding of art should always begin with a direct experience of specific art objects. In accordance with this emphasis, students visit London museums and galleries to study artworks in situ. These are conducted as seminars, not as guided tours. There are also visits to smaller arts organisations and a major London art college, to exchange knowledge with the next generation of artists.

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Guest Lecturers: Guest speakers are drawn from a variety of professions in the contemporary art world including artists, curators, gallerists, editors, critics and auctioneers. The talks range from formal to informal and offer students exceptional opportunities to meet with significant figures in the art world.

Tutorials: Tutorials are an integral part of the course as they provide students with the opportunity to discuss assignments they are working on with a member of the teaching team and also to discuss the written feedback on their submitted assignments.

Professional Practice: During Semester I students typically visit Sotheby's auction house for a bespoke tour of the contemporary art preview and have a classroom workshop on the auction process. Students also hear from other professionals about their experiences of working in the Contemporary Art world; these are in addition to events organised by the Careers department.

International Study Visits: There is one international study visit in Semester I. This is typically either to Venice for the Biennale (and for other venues such as the Prada Foundation), or to Germany (usually based in either Cologne or Dusseldorf). Institutions visited on previous trips to Germany 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.



Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany

MACA01 Assessment

Exhibition Review I: each student writes an exhibition review of a current show 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 Collection Entry: each student writes an entry on a given artwork in accordance with the format for such entries in museum inventories, websites and/or catalogues.

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MACA01 Essay Presentation: students give an oral presentation outlining the research they have done in preparation for their essay and set out the positions they expect to advance in those essays.

MACA01 Essay: each student submits an essay on artistic practices relating to a key debate in the period 1968-1995.

The Project: The Project is the culmination of the student's work on "Navigating the Art World" (the Core Curriculum). It is undertaken within the home program and is supervised by MA in Contemporary Art tutors. Organised into groups of 3-5 students, each group undertakes 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. The students pitch their project to their tutors and cohort and create written documentation in support of it. In addition to group project materials, each student submits an individual written submission.



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. Students further develop their own critical perspectives, working with the tutors to enhance their skills of research and writing, and their ability to present their views in the form of cogent arguments.

MACA02: *Critical Debates in Contemporary Art*

This unit is designed to enhance and develop the understanding and skills gained in Semester I. The teaching and learning examines the artistic tendencies in the period and the debates that informed and developed around key practices (with an emphasis on site-specificity, new media and participation). The teaching and learning aims to deepen the students' understanding of practices and tendencies that have emerged outside the more traditional centres of contemporary art production. Students continue to hone their vocational skills as they work on assignments that mirror professional tasks in the art world and meet with art world professionals.



Barbara Kruger, Museum Ludwig

Lectures: As in Semester 1, a number of lectures are monographic, each looking at a key artist in depth. Students continue to receive lectures on critical theory and key themes in art practice, not only in Europe and the U.S. but also the Middle East, China and Latin America.

Seminars: As in Semester I, seminars are a core element of the teaching in Semester II with the critical theory strand continuing across the semester. In other (text-based) seminars, students are invited to consider site-specific, new media and participatory practices and their theorisation.

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Visits: As in Semester I, visits are typically made to London galleries, museums, collections and artists' studios.

International Study Visits: There are two international study visits in Semester II. These visits are typically to one of four destinations: Venice for the Biennale (every two years), Germany (see above), Paris (e.g. Centre Pompidou, Musée d'art Moderne, Palais de Tokyo, Jeu de Paume, Cartier Foundation, and commercial galleries) or Amsterdam (taking in other cities in the Netherlands and also Brussels).

Guest Lectures: As in Semester I, Students also attend talks and lectures by scholars, artists and art world professionals.

Tutorials: Tutorials remain a key element of the teaching and learning. For MA students, in Semester II there are tutorials dedicated to the development of possible topics for the dissertation.

MACA02 Assessment

Exhibition Review II: a review of a show currently viewable in London.

MACA02 Essay Presentation: a presentation outlining what the student intends to work on in his or her MACA02 essay and research done to date.

MACA02 Essay: each student writes a long research paper on one of three topics— new media, site-specificity or participation in contemporary art.

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.

Art and Authentication	International Art World: Public Sectors
Contemporary Chinese Art	Market for Western Antiquities and Old Masters
Contemporary Design and its Markets	Modernism and its Markets
Curating Asian Art	Performance Art
Curating Contemporary Art	Photography and its Markets
East Asian Painting	Photography: Image and Power
Ethics, Law and the Art Trade	Strategic Management for the Art World
Emerging Markets	Work Placement Unit (accredited internship) <i>*Admission to this unit is subject to application and selection during the academic year.</i>
<i>NB. Not all electives are offered each year and are contingent upon sufficient enrolment.</i>	

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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.

Students need not be resident in London for all of this period (subject to the agreement of the Program Director).

N.B. Transition to Semester III depends upon the successful completion of Semesters I and II (see below for Semester III).

Assessment

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

CAREERS AND ALUMNI

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