

COURTAULD INSTITUTE

#1
Art History

QS World Rankings
2026



Undergraduate Prospectus 2027–28

BA History of Art



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**



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About us

The Courtauld Institute is one of the world's most prestigious institutions for the study, conservation, curation and business of art.

Located in the heart of London, the Courtauld is also home to one of the world's greatest art collections.

Since 1932, we have led the way in how art is studied, interpreted and preserved. Today, we bring together the UK's largest community of art historians, curators and conservators – working together to research, teach and champion the visual arts.

We welcome students from around the world. With more than 700 students across our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, we have a close-knit, supportive community that embraces bold ideas and new ways of thinking.

We encourage students to look beyond the surface – exploring the stories, ideas, and people behind artworks and discovering how images influence how we see and understand the world.

Study in the heart of London's cultural scene

The Courtauld Institute is a small, specialist college, part of the wider University of London.

As an undergraduate, you'll study at our Vernon Square campus in King's Cross, in the heart of London's vibrant cultural scene. Vernon Square is just a short walk from iconic landmarks, like The British Museum, and within easy reach of other major museums and galleries, including

The National Gallery, Tate and the Royal Academy. Surrounded by world-class art, culture and entertainment, you'll find incredible places to explore around every corner.

Learn from the best

The Courtauld Institute is home to one of the largest faculties of art historians and conservators.

You'll learn from leading academics and experts in the field. We study, research and teach art from all over the world and across history. Our curriculum encompasses art in all its forms, from cathedrals, mosques and temples to painting, photography, sculpture, performance art and urban design.

Recently, we have expanded our teaching expertise to include growing specialisms in exciting areas such as Black Studies, the Indian Ocean world, and Buddhist Art History and Conservation – enabling our students to connect with art in powerful new ways.

A world-leading place to study art history

The Courtauld Institute is the world's top institution for the study of History of Art (QS World University Rankings 2026). This outstanding achievement reflects the Courtauld's long-standing position as a leading global centre for the visual arts, with an unwavering commitment to delivering academic excellence and a cutting-edge, progressive curriculum.



Internationally recognised research

The Courtauld Institute is at the forefront of research in art history and conservation. Our research was recognised as ‘world-leading’ in the most recent national assessment of research excellence (Research Excellence Framework, 2021).

The Courtauld’s lively research culture attracts leading artists, curators and art historians from across the world – creating a space to debate the latest ideas and bring art and its histories to life.

The Courtauld Research Forum hosts around 150 events each year, including lectures, conferences, workshops and seminars, covering diverse periods and themes in art history and visual culture. It also hosts Decolonising Action Groups, a cross-institutional initiative for students and staff to explore what decolonising art history might mean in theory and in practice. As a student, you’ll be encouraged to get involved in our lively research programme.

The Research Forum produces journals, online publications, podcasts and other digital resources, bringing our research to a wider audience.

Courtauld Gallery

As an undergraduate student, you’ll have unparalleled access to the Courtauld Gallery, home to one of the UK’s most important art collections.

Based in the magnificent, historical setting of Somerset House, the Gallery is famed for its collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works. This includes Van Gogh’s *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (1889), Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) and the most significant collection of works by Cézanne in the country.

Our research was recognised as ‘world-leading’ in the most recent national assessment of research excellence.

The collection houses remarkable artworks from the Medieval and Renaissance periods to the present day, including internationally renowned collections of prints, drawings and decorative arts.

The Gallery also hosts an impressive programme of exhibitions, displays and contemporary commissions. Recent highlights include:

- *The Griffin Catalyst Exhibition: Monet and London. Views of the Thames*
- *The Griffin Catalyst Exhibition: Wayne Thiebaud. American Still Life*
- *The Griffin Catalyst Exhibition: Seurat and the Sea*
- *The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour*

Courtauld Institute students get free, unlimited entry to the permanent collection and two free tickets for each temporary exhibition.



The Prints and Drawings Study Room and Object Study Room: the Courtauld Gallery houses one of Britain’s leading collections of works on paper, comprising approximately 7,000 drawings and watercolours and 27,000 prints, spanning the late Middle Ages to 20th-century and avant-garde art. Some of our teaching takes place in these spaces and across the Courtauld Gallery.

Collections-based teaching: You’ll often have the chance to get up close to the art you’re studying, with access to the Courtauld’s extraordinary collections, as well as museums and galleries across London and further afield. Subsidies are available for group trips, and you can also apply for individual research grants – especially for your final-year dissertation.

Partnership with King’s College London

Thanks to this partnership, you’ll get to enjoy fantastic facilities across both institutions,

including learning resources and libraries, cafés and sports clubs.

As a Courtauld Institute student, you’ll have access to King’s five campuses, including the Strand Campus – right next door to the Courtauld Gallery and Somerset House.

You can also take modules through King’s world-leading Arts and Humanities departments. In your first year and beyond, you’ll have the opportunity to study a language at King’s Language Centre, helping you build a well-rounded skillset for your future career.

University of London

While the Courtauld Institute is small and specialist, it’s also part of the wider University of London – giving you the best of both worlds. So, you can make use of facilities like the Senate House Library and the University of London’s Housing Services.

Student stories

Julia

“While studying at the Courtauld Institute, I’ve been able to develop not only academically but also as a person.

I’ve taken classes on topics ranging from Northern Renaissance art to contemporary American art. At the start of my degree in 2024, I wouldn’t have thought of diving into these topics. However, by attending lectures and seminars which prompt deeper thinking and discussion, I’ve been inspired. I would describe the teaching as phenomenal.

The Courtauld has broadened my art-historical thinking, and I’ve gained knowledge and understanding across a wide spectrum of topics.



In my first year, I served as the Disabled Students’ Officer in the Students’ Union. It felt great to be making meaningful, visible change to other people’s university lives. This year, I took on the role of Executive Officer for Student Environment. I was part of a close-knit group of like-minded individuals striving to make the Courtauld the greatest it could be.

I decided to take a King’s College London Language module again in my second year, offered as part of the Courtauld’s partnership with the college. I study Italian, the language I always wanted to learn but never had a chance to in secondary school and sixth form. I’ve met new lifelong friends from various degrees, and I plan to continue learning Italian next year.”

Zain

“I applied to study History of Art because I wanted to spend my days doing the thing I loved the most: visiting museums and art galleries, and learning more about the people who make and display works of art.

The Courtauld allows you to take that interest and run with it. In my first year, I took a course on public architecture in London. We explored the city’s historic neighbourhoods, learning to describe what we saw. I was taught to ‘read’ the messages encoded in buildings and how they ‘spoke’ about national identity and power.

I am interested in how the art world can engage thoughtfully with decolonial issues. I helped organise events for the Decolonising



Action Groups. We invited students and staff to critically engage with the Courtauld Gallery collection and imagine how writing and displaying art can be more inclusive of Global Majority artists and audiences.

There is an incredible array of culture and opportunities in London. Alongside my studies, I work as a tour guide at a heritage building. Engaging with world-class exhibitions – and experimental art spaces in London’s neighbourhoods – has been vital in shaping my appreciation and knowledge of the art world.”

Our BA History of Art programme



Why History of Art?

Studying at the Courtauld Institute will challenge how you think and inspire new ways of seeing the world.

History of Art explores visual art and architecture from around the world, spanning antiquity to the present day. When you study art history, you're not just looking at works of art as objects. You're seeing how art helps us understand people, places and the societies in which they were created.

You'll explore important questions and debates such as: what influenced the artist's choice of subject matter or form? What does the artwork reveal about society at that time? How were power, beliefs or emotions visualised? How was the art received when it was first created or displayed? Have perceptions about the object changed since then? How do we read art today? What is the place of art in society now?

By delving into these topics, you'll deepen your understanding of how people have lived, thought and made sense of the world around them.

Art history combines the rigour of a history degree with the visual skills required to interpret art. It will help you develop key skills to stand out in today's job market – art historians go on to work in academia, law, finance, technology, design, politics, museums and galleries.

If you enjoy history, literature or languages, love looking at art, and are fascinated by the relationship between people, art and the world we live in, then art history could be the subject for you.



Our BA History of Art

UCAS code: V350

Study: full-time

Duration: three years (September–June)

Intake: 90–100 students

The Courtauld Institute offers one undergraduate degree: our world-renowned BA History of Art.

The curriculum covers an exceptional breadth of art forms across time: from Byzantium to the Early Modern Islamic World, from Medieval and Renaissance Europe to International Modernism, and from contemporary China to Black art histories.

Designed to give both depth and range, the degree builds strong subject-specific knowledge, alongside transferable skills for your future career. You'll study works of art first-hand and explore how new ideas and approaches can change the way we think.

You'll be taught by leading academics and researchers who are working at the forefront of the field globally. Our teaching team share their knowledge and discoveries with you through lectures, seminars, tutorials and gallery visits.

Programme modules reflect the latest research research, so they regularly change, ensuring your learning stays fresh, engaging, and relevant.

What you'll study and when

Each year, you'll take a mix of core and elective modules totalling 120 credits (360 credits over three years).

Year 1: Dive into the foundations of art history, with modules exploring different periods, places and methods. Some classes take place in London galleries and collections. You'll also have the option to choose a modern language to study, equipping you with further valuable skills for your future career. An academic skills module gives you the tools you'll need to succeed in academic reading and writing, as well as core art historical skills such as close looking.

Year 2 is all about examining art in new ways. You'll take two core modules – Physical Histories and Exhibiting Art – where you'll explore works of art as material objects and the role that museums, galleries and exhibitions play in society. You'll take elective modules that explore different art histories and critical approaches. There is also an option to take modules in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Language Centre at King's College London.

Year 3 is your opportunity to specialise and go deeper. Special Options and further electives allow you to delve into specific areas of art that interest you. Again, this includes options from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Language Centre at King's College London. You'll also carry out your own independent research project – bringing together everything you've learnt in a final-year dissertation.

We do our best to match students with their preferred choices and keep class sizes small, usually seminar groups of 12 to 16. So, there's plenty of time for discussion, questions and one-to-one support.

You'll have a dedicated personal tutor throughout your degree, who will check in with you regularly, support your progress, help you choose modules and offer advice on next steps after graduation.

Assessment methods include coursework, exams and a final-year dissertation, giving you the chance to show what you can do in different ways.

Programme structure

Want to learn more about our BA History of Art? Head to: courtauld.ac.uk/ba

Year one

Foundations 1 and 2 (30 credits each):

These two modules, which run in both semesters, introduce you to major themes in art history from late antiquity to the present day, and from across the globe. You'll learn through lectures and small discussion groups (around 16 students), helping you develop your critical thinking, interpretation, writing and communication skills.

Topics change regularly, but recent lectures have covered:

- Classical and Byzantine Art
- Medieval Art
- The Buddhist Arts of Asia
- Vision and Knowledge in Britain, 1600–1900
- From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter
- Early 20th-Century Avant-Gardes

Topics (15 credits each):

In each semester, you'll complete a module that takes you out into London – making the most of the incredible art, galleries and museums the city has to offer. You'll study in small groups (of around 12 students) that meet weekly.

You'll often have the chance to get up close to the art you're studying, with access to the Courtauld's extraordinary collections.

Indicative topics include:

- Chinese Art in London Collections
- Architecture and Identity
- Decolonising the Gaze
- Techniques and Meaning in 20th-Century Art
- Contemporary Art in London
- Medieval Sculpture in London Collections
- Craft and Material Culture in Medieval Islamic Art

Principles of Art History (15 credits):

Throughout your first year, you'll take part in sessions that help you transition smoothly into undergraduate-level work. These sessions focus on learning how to read critically, write with clarity and explore art analytically – all essential skills you'll need to thrive in your degree and future career.

Language (15 credits):

You'll have the opportunity to study a language at the Language Centre, King's College London. You can choose from a wide range of modern languages, such as French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Mandarin, from beginner to advanced level*. By learning a foreign language, you'll develop deeper cultural insights, access new ways of thinking and gain valuable complementary skills.

*Some restrictions apply, depending on previous experience and timetabling.

Year two

Physical Histories (15 credits):

In the first semester, you'll take a unique module created with our conservation experts. This module encourages you to explore and interpret works of art by closely observing their physical and material characteristics.

Exhibiting Art (15 credits):

In semester two, the focus shifts to the role of museums, galleries and exhibitions in societies (past, present and future) and how different display techniques can shape (and limit) our understanding of works of art and architecture.

Drawing on London's art collections for inspiration, you'll think analytically about the display choices, methods and narrative approaches adopted by different museums and galleries.

Histories (15 credits each):

In each semester this year, you'll also take up to two 'Histories' modules that focus on a particular period, theme or event. Through lectures and small seminar groups, you'll explore how art has been interpreted or created in different times and places.



Examples of 'Histories' modules include:

- Latin American Modernisms
- Artists, Radicals, Mystics: European Art, 1760–1830
- Image, Object, World: American Art 1945–75
- Art, Travel and Imagination in the Middle Ages
- Reality and Fantasy in French Art, 1863–97: From Haussmannisation to Enchanted Ground
- Italian Renaissance Art in Global Perspective
- Art and Cold War Politics
- Mongol Bling: Nomadic Taste and the Art of Seeing

Approaches (15 credits each):

In each semester, you'll take an 'Approaches' module designed to introduce you to the theories and methods that shape how we think and write about art and art history. Our weekly small-group seminars give you the freedom to explore your ideas and express yourself in a supportive environment.

Indicative modules include:

- Art History and Social Justice
- Approaches to Islamic Ornament c.650–1350
- Thinking with Things: Theories of Materiality and Material Culture
- Sexual Politics
- Art and Magic in the Pre-Modern World
- Ways of Seeing and Being Seen: The Politics of Vision in Modern and Contemporary Art
- French Writers Think with Contemporary Art
- Approaches to Global Art History
- Sisters/Outsiders/Citizens: Black Feminisms as Praxis

Elective modules at King's (15 credits):

You can swap one of your 'Histories' modules for an elective in selected humanities departments or from the Language Centre at King's College London.



Our weekly small-group seminars give you the freedom to explore your ideas and express yourself in a supportive environment.

Year three

Special Options (30 credits each):

You'll take two Special Options – one in each semester – taught in small seminar groups that meet twice weekly. These in-depth elective modules take a closer look at specific topics and methods at an advanced level, preparing you for further study and a wide range of careers.

Examples of Special Options include:

- Modernist Art in Theory
- Art and the Modern Nation: from Medieval Islam to Post-Modern Iran
- The Global Print
- The Black Imaginary in Art
- Sea of Dreams: A Tidalectic Approach to Modernism
- Global Constructivism: Art, Politics and the Everyday

Approaches/Histories/Electives (15 credits each):

You'll take two further 15-credit modules: one from our range of 'Approaches' and the other either a 'Histories' or King's elective. This gives you even more flexibility to tailor the degree to your interests and future career goals.

BA Research (30 credits):

Beginning in semester one, you'll start planning your independent research project, defining your topic, chosen research questions and methods. With one-to-one supervision, you'll write a 7,000 to 8,000-word dissertation, which is handed in at the beginning of the summer. For many students, the dissertation is the highlight of the degree – a chance to explore a specialist topic in depth and develop advanced research skills.



How we assess your progress

- You'll need to pass your first year with a minimum mark of 40% to progress to the second year.
- Your second year makes up 40% of your final degree mark.
- The third year counts for the remaining 60% of your mark.

Entry requirements

We welcome students from all backgrounds, and you don't need any previous experience in art history to apply.

If you come from a socio-economic group underrepresented in Higher Education, we are able to make you a lower offer than our typical entry requirement as part of our commitment to widening access.

Typical offers

- A-Levels: Grades AAA–ABB
- International Baccalaureate (IB): 35 points minimum overall
- European Baccalaureate: 80% overall

For full details of our equivalent entry requirements, visit: courtauld.ac.uk/ba

All applications should be made through UCAS.

Resources and support

We're here to support you every step of the way during your studies. Whether you need guidance on writing your first essay, financial advice or someone to talk to about your wellbeing, we're always happy to help.

Financial support

We have a range of funding opportunities, scholarships and bursaries available, including:

The James Hughes-Hallett Undergraduate Scholarship – designed to support UK students from groups underrepresented in Higher Education (worth £10,000 over the three-year degree).

The Courtauld Bursary – if you're a UK (Home) student and meet certain criteria, you may be eligible to receive up to £3,000 per year.

The Courtauld Emergency Support Fund can provide emergency financial support for those experiencing unexpected, short-term financial difficulties.

Student finance – some UK students are eligible for government loans to help cover university tuition fees and living costs. Please see: gov.uk/student-finance

For full details on funding and costs, visit: courtauld.ac.uk/undergraduate-funding-and-scholarships

Learning resources and support

The Courtauld Library is home to one of the UK's major art history collections, with more than 200,000 books, journals and exhibition catalogues, as well as millions of digital resources. Highlights include over 63,000 printed exhibition catalogues, alongside our special collections and archives.

As a student, you'll also have access to libraries beyond the Courtauld, including:

- **Senate House Library** – offering extensive humanities collections, online resources and additional study spaces in Bloomsbury.
- **King's College London Libraries** – providing print and online resources across a wide range of subjects, plus study spaces at the Strand campus.

Academic and writing support

We offer a wide range of support and services to help you succeed in your studies:

- **Book a Librarian** – one-to-one guidance on finding resources, referencing, and developing your digital and research skills.
- **Academic Skills Tutor** – support with academic writing style, presentation skills and developing effective reading strategies.
- **Royal Literary Fund Fellows** – tailored advice to help you write with greater clarity and confidence.



Wellbeing support

University life can be thrilling and rewarding, but it can also feel overwhelming at times. Whatever you're dealing with – whether it's money worries, health issues or something else – our dedicated Wellbeing team can help.

We offer a variety of services, including:

- counselling
- wellbeing check-ins
- help with applying for the Disabled Students' Allowance
- support with agreeing reasonable adjustments for disabilities
- help with applying for the Emergency Support Fund and more

We offer a safe, confidential space where you can talk through any worries and get the support you need.

If you're neurodiverse, have a mental or physical health condition that might affect your studies, or a Specific Learning Difference, our team will work closely with you to put tailored support in place.

Students' Union

Our Students' Union (SU) is the representative student body at the Courtauld Institute – ensuring that everyone feels welcome, included and heard.

The SU organises some of the biggest annual events, including Welcome Week, the Winter Party, and the Summer Ball. Events are often organised by students themselves.

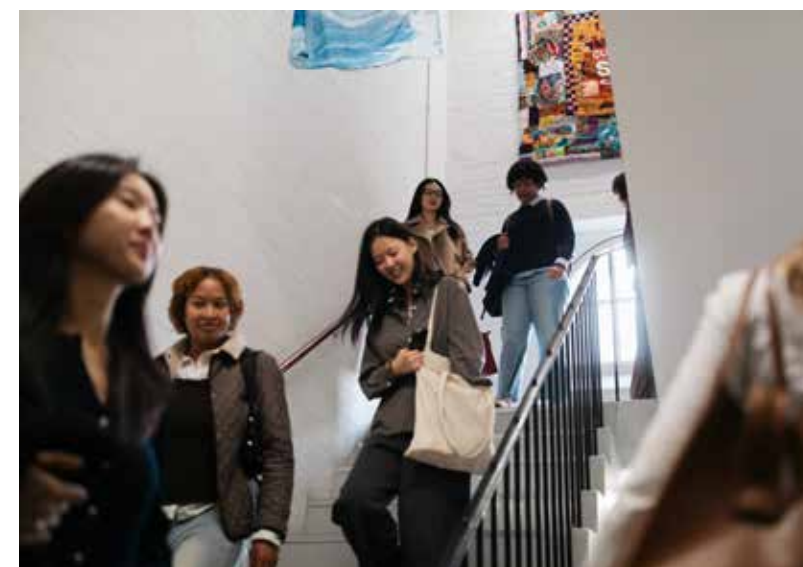
You can join all kinds of societies, catering for every interest – from architecture to fashion design and film. You can get involved behind the scenes by running for roles such as Students' Union President, Vice President or Executive Officer. There are also representatives for our LGBTQIA+, Disabilities, International and Global Majority communities. We encourage you to play your part in shaping student life.

The Courtauldian

This is our student-run publication, with a termly magazine and regularly updated online content covering everything from art and design to politics, culture and student life. Whether you're into writing articles, reviews, creative writing or graphic design, there are plenty of ways to get involved and gain new skills.

East Wing Biennial

The Courtauld's very own student-led exhibition is a brilliant opportunity for students to engage directly with contemporary art and gain hands-on experience in exhibition design and management.



Your future career

Where could our BA History of Art take you?

Our undergraduate degree equips you with highly transferable skills that are in demand across the arts and cultural fields, and many other industries.

Graduates go on to take up roles as:

- heads of major museums and galleries
- curators
- conservators
- art dealers and auction house experts
- lawyers
- entrepreneurs
- publishers
- academics and teachers
- banking and finance professionals
- media professionals and journalists
- marketing and communications specialists

You'll develop all kinds of job-ready skills, including:

- **analytical and critical thinking skills** – ideal for evaluating complex information from art to AI-generated content.
- **visual literacy** – a huge advantage in today's image-dominated culture.
- **strong communication skills** – enabling you to express complex ideas clearly and succinctly.
- **time and project management** – essential skills for success in any workplace.
- **digital fluency** – helping you build a strong

- profile on job search platforms.
- **cross-cultural awareness** and understanding – building emotional intelligence to thrive in diverse contexts.
- **adaptability and resilience** – must-have skills in any fast-moving industry.

Planning your next steps

Our career consultants are here to support you. Through one-to-one guidance, workshops and networking events, we'll help you:

- explore career paths – from museums and galleries to publishing, media, marketing, heritage and other industries.
- write a standout CV/cover letter and prepare for interviews.
- find internships, work experience or volunteering opportunities.
- plan your next steps, including postgraduate study or training for careers in curating, conservation or academia.

The Courtauld Institute Careers Programme

We run regular events to help you explore your career options and build confidence, including:

- panel sessions with graduates from a range of industries.
- talks from recruitment and careers experts on the skills employers are looking for.

- skills workshops on interview techniques, career planning and other topics.
- networking events with leading employers in the arts and heritage sectors.

You'll also get access to a huge library of online resources, including practical guides on CV writing and careers.

Employment opportunities and internships

Many of our students take on jobs or internships during the holidays, gaining hands-on experience, making new contacts and earning money along the way. It's also possible to take on part-time work during the semester. Students are supported to find a balance between paid work and their degree studies.

Our students have worked in:

- museums and galleries
- auction houses
- digital heritage organisations
- creative consultancies

There are also exciting opportunities for students to work within the Courtauld, from helping out in the Gallery to becoming a digital ambassador or assisting with Research Forum events.

Our amazing alumni

The Courtauld Institute may be small, but our impact is mighty. Our alumni community spans more than 80 countries, shaping the arts and cultural sectors worldwide.

Many world-renowned museums and galleries are led by Courtauld Institute graduates. Our alumni also go on to become leaders in tech, law, journalism, marketing, politics and finance.

Wherever their career paths lead, our graduate apply the core skills they learnt here – to think critically, challenge conventional thinking, and make a difference to the world around them.

Alumni mentoring programme

We run a dedicated alumni mentoring programme specifically designed for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Every year, selected students are matched with a Courtauld Institute graduate working in a field that interests them. Each of these students receives personalised career support and advice on life after graduation.

Come and meet us

There are many ways to learn more about life at the Courtauld Institute, whether you want to visit us in person or connect with current students online.

Open Days are usually held in the summer and autumn – the perfect opportunity to learn more about our undergraduate degree and student life here in London.

Campus and Gallery tours: Join one of our regular term-time tours to hear first-hand from a current student about life and study here.

Book your place: courtauld.ac.uk/open-days

If you can't attend in person, you can watch our virtual Open Day presentation online at: courtauld.ac.uk/ba

Ask a student: Chat online with a current student. Find out all about the course, student life and even where to grab lunch! Start the conversation: courtauld.ac.uk/ask-a-student

Explore art history with our free programme for 16- to 18-year-olds

If you're interested in art history, conservation or curating, our Young People's Programme is a great way to get involved... for free!

These fun events take place online and in person:

- **Summer University:** A week-long taster of life as a Courtauld Institute student.
- **Seminar Sessions:** Bite-sized seminars led by research students.
- **Insights into Art History:** Creative workshops exploring the Courtauld Collection, covering all kinds of art, periods, geographies and themes.
- **Free School/College Workshops:** Online and in-person sessions for students in state schools and colleges across the UK – designed to support your curriculum and spark an interest in art history: courtauld.ac.uk/take-part/schools

For more information on our Young People's Programme, visit: courtauld.ac.uk/young-people



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Disclaimer: All information in this prospectus is correct at the time of publication (September 2026). Please check our website for the latest programme information and updates.

Look deeper, see further