

# A Career Guide for Art History Majors

Art History concerns itself with human history through the study of painting, sculpture, architecture and the graphic and decorative arts. Art History considers these arts as creative processes—as expressions of human ideas, feelings and conditions of life. The study of Art History allows students to immerse themselves in cultural and aesthetic issues.

Through the study of Art History, students gain an awareness of the values and social conditions

embodied in great works of art. This knowledge is shaped by a familiarity with the art and architecture produced by world civilizations and an ability to analyze and understand the quality of art from diverse cultures and periods.

Within the broad field of Art History, there are many areas of specialization including culture, time-period and medium.

## Skills

The study of Art History develops a knowledge of the different ways in which civilizations express themselves artistically, in addition to forging a critical analysis of the quality, purpose and meaning behind diverse art works. Well-developed writing and

communication skills, along with visual sensitivity, enable graduates to contribute to and succeed in many professions. A sample of representative skills and abilities follows:

Visual and Data Analysis	Communication	Human Relations	Research/Education
Defining quality	Writing and speaking critically	Developing sensitivity to cultural viewpoints	Working with primary sources
Analyzing the artistic qualities of everyday objects	Presenting and defending theories/ideas	Understanding how the making of art has changed across time	Gathering, analyzing and organizing information
Weighing values	Conveying complex information	Interpreting a culture's values and beliefs	Examining evidence
Recognizing the school/period/artist of a work of art	Describing impressions about art	Explaining the present by referring to the past	Evaluating research results
Comparing art works/comparative analysis	Clarifying others' thoughts and ideas	Participating in groups	Determining origins of art works
Thinking critically	Speaking to groups		

## Career Opportunities

The skills and abilities developed through a major in Art History serve as the building blocks for a wide range of occupations and career paths. The employment outlook for graduates is competitive, but jobs are available in art publishing, art journalism, libraries, public art councils, art galleries and companies specializing in furniture and architectural restoration. There are some entry-level jobs in museum work, but most jobs in this field require advanced degrees.

### Appraisal

Appraisers use their knowledge of art, the market and research skills to assess an artwork's dollar value, usually for tax, insurance or estate planning purposes. Appraisers could work for auction houses, insurance companies or independently.

### Art Consulting

Art consultants advise clients on art acquisition, planning and maintenance of artwork. They may work independently or for an art-consulting firm.

## Arts Administration

Arts organizations, like most for profit companies, have a number of administrative, business or management functions. These roles require people with creativity and an understanding and passion for the arts, as well as skills in a range of areas from finance and marketing to education.

The specific positions available at an arts organization will depend on what the organization does and how large its budget and staff are. Since arts managers are needed in virtually every arts organization, from theatre companies to museums, many opportunities exist in this field. For example, a museum is likely to have staff members in education that work with school groups to introduce children to the exhibits. An opera company, concert hall, or theatre needs box-office and front of the house workers to manage ticket sales, write press releases, market the productions in the community, and create visibility. Some theatre companies need general managers to schedule tours, monitor union agreements, and run the business side of performances.

Over the last decade, arts management has become a growing field with increasing specialization and training. A number of new graduate training and certification programs have emerged. These programs may be useful, depending on your interests and goals. Some arts managers, for example, suggest eventually pursuing a business degree with a specialization in nonprofit management. Almost without exception, however, arts managers advise getting work-related experience first and considering graduate study later on. If you decide to investigate graduate study, begin by asking professionals what programs they think are valuable and respected in the field.

## Museum Technicians

Museum technicians, commonly known as registrars, help curators by preparing and taking care of museum items. Registrars also may answer

questions from the public and help curators and outside scholars use the collections. Registrars usually need a bachelor's degree related to the museum's specialty, training in museum studies, or previous experience working in museums, particularly in designing exhibits.

## Conservation

Conservators maintain and preserve works of art and other materials. They must be knowledgeable about art methods as well as the science behind preserving and restoring art. Museums and conservation firms employ conservators, but some conservators work on a freelance basis.

## Curatorial/Archival

Curators usually work with objects of cultural, biological or historical significance. As they direct the acquisition, storage and exhibition of collections, they also need to negotiate and authorize the purchase, sale, exchange or loan of these collections. In addition, they are responsible for authenticating, evaluating and categorizing the specimens in a collection. Curators oversee and help conduct the institution's research projects and related educational programs. Today, an increasing part of a curator's duties involves fundraising and promotion, which may include the writing and reviewing of grant proposals, journal articles and publicity materials, as well as attending meetings, conventions and civic events.

A closely related profession is that of an archivist. Archivists collect, organize and maintain control over a wide range of information deemed important enough for permanent safekeeping. This information takes many forms: photographs, films, video and sound recordings and electronic data files in a wide variety of formats, as well as more traditional paper records, letters and documents. Archivists mainly handle records and documents that are retained because of their importance and potential value in the future.

## Job Titles

The activities represented by these job titles are found in business, government, educational institutions, museums or non-profit agencies. A curator, for example, might be employed by a corporate archive, a county museum or a university. Similarly, an arts writer could be working for a foundation, local arts council, national magazine or federal agency. In general, an advanced degree is required for those occupations marked with an asterisk (\*) on the list that follows:

Appraiser	Gallery Assistant
*Archivist	Grants Specialist
Art Consultant	Education Coordinator
Arts Writer	Event Planner
*Curator	Museum Technician
Development Associate	Research Assistant
Editor	Historical Preservation Coordinator

## Employers of Art History Majors

Auction Houses	Government
Conservation Firms	Libraries
Corporations	Museums
Educational Institutions	Nonprofit Organizations
Foundations	Publishers
Galleries	

## First Jobs Held by Recent UT Graduates

Assistant Development Officer	Community Developer
Artist's Assistant	Research Assistant, Medical School
Curator	Gallery Assistant
Fellow in Museum Education	Publicity Assistant
English Teacher, Japan	Media Producer
Furniture Maker	Exhibition Coordinator

## Earnings

The median annual wage of curators was \$48,450 in May 2010. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$27,640, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$86,450.

The median annual wage of museum technicians and conservators was \$37,310 in May 2010. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$24,440, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$68,250.

Curators in large institutions may travel extensively to evaluate potential additions to the collection, organize exhibits, and conduct research. However, for curators in small institutions, travel may be rare. Most curators, museum technicians, and conservators work full time.

From: **Occupational Outlook Handbook** at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/curators-museum-technicians-and-conservators.htm>

## Graduate School Options

There are numerous graduate school programs in and related to Art History. The two most common degree options are the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). Other degrees that may be of interest for art historians include the Master of Library Science and Master of Science. With proper planning, Art History is an excellent background for professional programs such as Law, Arts Management, Business and Medicine, among others. For a thorough explanation of the different degrees related to Art History, see the College Art Association's Graduate Programs in Art History directory available in Fine Arts Career Services.

**Master of Arts (M.A.):** This is typically a one to two year academic degree that is course and/or research

based and typically requires a thesis. Specific areas of study in art history cover all chronological periods from prehistory to contemporary art, and all geographic areas including Africa and Asia. Art history is increasingly interdisciplinary, considering art in the larger political and social context of its culture. M.A.'s are offered in related topic areas including conservation, art education, museum studies and arts administration.

**Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.):** The Ph.D. typically consists of four to six years of full-time study and requires completion of a dissertation. This is the terminal degree in the humanities and the primary credential for college-level teaching.

## FACS Resources for Art History Majors

Fine Arts Career Services keeps a small library of arts career and job search related books, many of which are not available at other University of Texas libraries. Students may come by the office (DFA 1.103) to browse books during our regular hours.

Art and Art History Fellowship Opportunities  
Art Dealer's Field Guide  
Art History Resumes and Curriculum Vitae  
Art/Vision/Voice: Cultural Conversations in  
Community  
Beginner's Guide to Community-Based Arts

Careers in Art  
Corporate Art Consulting  
Global Art Information Directory 2004  
Introduction to Museum Work  
Museums: Planning Museum Careers  
PhD's in Art History

\* For a complete list of FACS Resources visit <http://www.utexas.edu/finearts/careers/career-information>

\* Visit [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/fal/collections/current\\_periodicals/index.php](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/fal/collections/current_periodicals/index.php) for a complete listing of art history journals available in the Fine Arts Library

## Online Resources for Art History Majors

### Fine Arts Career Services

#### HireUTexas

<http://recruit.utexas.edu/hireutexas/>

UT's online job and internship database which posts professional opportunities for all majors.

#### Fine Arts Works

<https://finearts-utexas-csm.symplicity.com>

Fine Arts Career Services' database of art-related opportunities. Fine Arts students can post a resume and view job postings and upcoming career events.

## Job Listings

### **Alliance of Artist Communities**

<http://www.artistcommunities.org/>

The Alliance of Artists Communities is the service organization for the field of artists' communities and residencies. They maintain artist residency listings, advocate for artist residency programs and communities, and offer professional development for artists. Their website includes job postings.

### **Americans for the Arts**

<http://jobbank.artsusa.org>

This advocacy organization supports the arts in many ways. Their job bank is the premier electronic recruitment resource for the industry and includes national job listings for all of the fine arts. It includes postings in academia, arts administration and management. Check out the rest of their site for other helpful arts resources.

### **Art Job**

<https://www.artjob.org/>

Comprehensive, up-to-date national listings of jobs, internships, fellowships and other employment opportunities in the arts. Contact Fine Arts Career Services for the username and password.

### **ArtSearch**

<http://www.tcg.org/artsearch/>

The publication from the Theatre Communication Group for full-time, part-time, seasonal, year-round and internship opportunities in the performing arts. Contact FACS for the username and password.

### **Art Staffing**

<http://artstaffing.com/>

Thomas & Associates, Inc. places permanent and interim staff in museums, art businesses, and nonprofit organizations nationwide. Includes job postings.

### **Greenlights**

[www.greenlights.org](http://www.greenlights.org)

Greenlights is a provider of nonprofit strengthening and support services including professional development events, workshops, and a job board containing hundreds of postings by member organizations.

### **Idealist**

<http://www.idealist.org/>

Idealist.org connects people with job, volunteer and action opportunities posted by 90,000 organizations around the world.

### **Museum Employment Resource Center**

<http://www.museum-employment.com/>

This site lists job vacancies and has information on museum studies programs and cultural resource links.

### **New York Foundation for the Arts**

<http://www.nyfa.org/>

This website provides a number of services for artists including job and internship postings, funding opportunities, arts advocacy and services for artists. They also maintain an online newsletter covering current issues affecting artists.

### **Texas Association of Museums**

[texasmuseums.org](http://texasmuseums.org)

The TAM represents museums, art and science centers and more. Contains a job bank that features positions in Texas museums.

### **USA Jobs**

<https://www.usajobs.gov/>

USAJOBS is the U.S. Government's official system/program for Federal jobs and employment information. They offer an excellent page dedicated to students and recent graduates seeking Federal jobs.

## Overseas Job Opportunities

### **Going Global**

<http://www.goingglobal.com/>

Search for job openings and internship opportunities in countries around the world. Listings are updated daily! Additionally, Going Global career and employment resources include more than 10,000 pages of constantly-updated content on topics such as: job search sources, work permit/visa regulations, resume writing guidelines and examples, employment trends, salary ranges, networking groups and cultural/interviewing advice.

## **Museum Jobs**

<http://www.museumjobs.com/>

This site lists museum jobs, primarily located in the United Kingdom, with a few listings from the United States and other countries.

## **Regional Organizations**

### **The Contemporary Austin**

<http://thecontemporaryaustin.org>

Austin's major art museum. Their website also features information on their lecture series and teacher resources.

### **Austin Creative Alliance**

<http://www.austincreativealliance.org/>

As a nonprofit arts service organization, ACA focuses on sponsoring projects and programs that both strengthen Austin's performing arts community and bring new audiences to the arts. Find links to some of the Austin-area arts organizations.

### **Austin Museum Partnership**

<http://www.austinmuseums.org/>

The Austin Museum Partnership is a consortium of thirty-two Austin area museums organized in 1998 to promote collaborations for the mutual benefit of the public and the museums.

### **In the Galleries Austin**

<http://www.inthegalleriesaustin.com/>

A collection of museums, galleries and alternative spaces working to promote visual arts in Austin.

### **Texas Commission on the Arts**

<http://www.arts.texas.gov>

Includes links to numerous sites, opportunities and assistance for visual and performing artists. View their employment links by going to New Opportunities.

### **Texas State Agencies List**

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/app/lrs/agencies/index.html>

The list contains an entry for each current Texas state agency with links to contact and other information about the agency.

## **Professional Organizations**

### **American Alliance of Museums**

<http://www.aam-us.org/>

AAM serves all types of museums and professionals and nonpaid staff who work at museums. This includes job listings as well as other pertinent professional information.

### **American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works**

<http://www.conservation-us.org/>

The professional organization for conservation professionals, It includes information on becoming a conservator and job, internship, and fellowship listings in the Career Center section.

### **Art Museum Network**

<http://www.artmuseumnetwork.com/>

Over 200 of the world's largest and most prestigious art museums have joined forces to provide free access to information about their collections, exhibitions, and services.

### **College Art Association**

<http://www.collegeart.org/>

An important group for aspiring artists and art historians, specifically those who plan to teach at the college level.

## **Other**

### **Career Alternatives for Art Historians**

<http://www.nd.edu/~crosenbe/jobs.html>

Comprehensive list of career paths for art historians. Includes education requirements, skills needed, and links to professional organization.

### **Resources In Art History for Graduate Students**

<http://members.efn.org/~acd/resources.html>

An online newsletter that lists grants, fellowships, internships and study abroad opportunities for graduate students in art history and closely related areas such as humanities and visual art studies.

### **Smithsonian Museum Studies**

<http://museumstudies.si.edu/>

This site lists information about opportunities at the Smithsonian and also includes excellent museology links including museum associations and educational materials.

*The information in this guide was compiled from resources available online and in DFA 1.103.*

*Updated July 2015*