

ART HISTORY

CAREER GUIDE

**Fine Arts
Career Services**

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FINE ARTS CAREER SERVICES OFFERS:

ONE-ON-ONE ADVISING

Resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, graduate school advising, general career exploration. E-mail us for appointments!

JOB BOARD

Fine Arts Works is exclusively for COFA students and alumni. Check it out at www.bit.ly/fawjobs

PROGRAMMING

Tips and Tiffs professional development workshops, *Industry Insights* guest speaker series, info sessions on FACS-specific initiatives, and COFA Careers Week

FUNDING

Intern Scholarship, Professional Development Travel Initiative (PDTI), New York Seminar Scholarship, and more. www.bit.ly/facsfuns

AND MORE

Online internship classes, New York Seminar spring break trip, Networking Night, Undergraduate Professional Development Committee, and more

*Written by Nicole Anderson with excerpts adapted from previous art history career guides
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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on taking the next step in thinking about your career in art history! Whether you are a freshmen or nearing graduation, now is a good time to start thinking about your future. This career guide is meant to give you lots of broad information to consider as you picture yourself working in different environments. We hope reading through this will spark your own curiosity and that you will come meet with the Fine Arts Career Services office for a one-on-one appointment. We are highly skilled in helping you to find the perfect job, internship, or just to brainstorm different career paths.

ABOUT ART HISTORY

Art history investigates human history through the study of visual arts, architecture, and artifacts. It is arguably the most classically academic major within COFA.

Most art history coursework involves a process of developing ideas and arguments, locating and selecting quality sources to support arguments, and presenting and defending arguments.

The art history major is research and writing-intensive, and these are highly transferable skills that will extend to both the academic world and beyond. Art history is an especially interdisciplinary major as it combines elements of history, economics, political science, architecture and gender studies. Art history graduates can easily branch out into many fields because of their varied studies.

TRADITIONAL CAREER PATHWAYS

Many careers on the traditional art history pathway are highly specialized and require graduate-level education for entry especially in the fields of museums, collections, and academia.

There are some entry, level jobs in these fields that are available to art history bachelor's degree holders, but it should be noted they are often extremely competitive, and often a graduate degree would be required to receive promotions and "move up the ladder".

It is especially important for all art history students to engage in internships and long-term volunteering. Gaining this experience while an undergraduate is the most direct pathway into both competitive entry-level jobs in the art history field and entry into graduate art history programs.

TRADITIONAL CAREER PATHWAYS *(cont.)*

Museums and collections are a popular career goal for many art history students. Curators oversee and help conduct the institution's research projects and related educational programs. They also authenticate, evaluate, and categorize specimens in a collection. Closely related to curation, archivists collect, organize, and control a wide range of information critical to the collection. Registrars help curators by preparing and taking care of museum items. They may answer questions from the public and help curators and outside scholars use the collections. Other areas include exhibition design, publications, conservation, museum education, and community engagement.

Private organizations have many opportunities for art history graduates. Art consultants advise clients on art acquisition, planning, and maintenance of artwork. Clients can range from private collectors to brand new hotels to public institutions. Many art consultants work independently, and others work at art-consulting firms. 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. 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 work. Museums and conservation firms employ conservators, but some conservators work independently.

Arts administration is well-suited for art history graduates as graduates have developed time management, organization, writing skills, and cultural appreciation, which are critical for arts administration. Arts administration is the work done to support arts organizations, venues, and projects, and it includes the areas of development, marketing, and operations. For more information, check out our Arts Administration Career Guide!

ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATHWAYS

We want to state extremely clearly: to have an art history undergraduate degree without a graduate degree ***does not*** mean unemployability! Rather, there are many career pathways available to art history students and graduates in varied careers, both inside and outside of the arts, that might not be immediately on an art history student's radar.

Writing is a critical skill gained by all art history students, and students could explore the possibilities of careers in journalism, development and grant writing, marketing, publishing, and technical writing.

Research is an important component of many jobs, so art history students could also consider pursuing research-oriented careers in library science, public policy, consulting, and research assistance.

Art practice-based careers are not limited to students with studio art degrees. Students can explore careers including design, studio art, and architecture.

Sensitivity to cultural viewpoints and interpreting cultural values and beliefs are keenly developed by art history students, so you are also well-suited for careers in people-centered fields including social justice work, education, and art therapy.

Most of these fields have a variety of entry-level jobs available to individuals without graduate degrees. This information is intended to help art history students think exploratively about their career pathways. However, this career guide is by no means comprehensive, and if you would like to explore your options in-depth, Fine Arts Career Services highly recommends that you set up a meeting with a Career Advisor.

JOB TITLES

Archivist
Art Appraiser
Art Authenticator
Art Critic
Collections and Exhibitions Assistant
Curator
Curatorial Assistant
Curatorial Research Associate
Development Associate
Docents and Tours Associate
Exhibition and Installation Technician
Exhibition Designer
Marketing Associate
Membership Associate
Museum Educator, Family and Community Programs
Museum Educator, School and Teacher Programs
Professor
Public Relations Associate
Registrar
Security Associate
Social Media and Digital Content Associate
Teacher

Note: The word “associate” in this context implies jobs around entry level. You could substitute “manager” or “director” for higher leadership roles which would require several years of experience and a graduate degree.

LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

Salaries within art history vary widely, and we encourage all students in every discipline to research within their field as early as possible so you know what to expect. Our office's favorite resources specifically for salary research is Glassdoor (www.glassdoor.com). The Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh/) is also a great resource because it provides average salary ranges, estimated growth for various industries, and more. It is compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor.

FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION

If you're studying art history, you've likely given lots of thought to graduate school. If this is a step you're considering, it is critical to maintain strong grades, have internships, and do research.

A *Master of Arts (MA)* is typically awarded for two to three years of academic and research-based study in fine arts and humanities fields. MAs are offered in related topic areas including conservation, art education, museum studies, and arts administration.

A *Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)* is the terminal degree in the humanities and the primary credential for college-level teaching. Some PhD programs can be entered directly after receiving a bachelor's degree and will typically award a master's degree in the process, and some PhD programs require a master's degree for entry. The PhD typically consists of four to six years of full-time study in addition to the master's degree.

As with career pathways, if you have a bachelor's degree in art history, you are not limited exclusively to graduate degrees in art history. Each graduate program in every industry has slightly different standards for admission, so it's important to do your research no matter what graduate program you are researching. Doing your research is also critical when pursuing art history graduate degrees because you'll want to pursue your education in a space that matches your academic interests. For example, if a university has a terrific program for collections management and that's what you want to pursue, that's important to research before the application period.

Additionally, a certificate in *Museum Studies* is offered by the College of Liberal Arts that could help you build skills or learn more about this industry.

...NOW WHAT'S NEXT?

Maybe reading this has left you with even more questions, and feeling even less sure about what career opportunities you may want to explore.

That is okay!

Setting up an appointment with Fine Arts Career Services is a great place to brainstorm possible career pathways and help to make your application materials reflect you in the strongest way possible.

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