

What can I do with a degree in Art History and Theory?

Art History and Theory.



What is Art History and Theory?

We are constantly surrounded by objects and images: these things have meanings and affect our experiences. Art History helps you to find messages encoded within the visual world, and to think about the effects they have in and on society. In our courses, we study a range of artworks and objects – including paintings, moving images, crafts, buildings, and everyday things – and contextualise these within the places, histories, and cultures they are connected with.

Art History and Theory involves the study of visual culture, and the institutions and practices that support them such as collecting, patronage, art education, art criticism and iconography.

The 'visual literacy' Art History courses develop an extremely useful skill – highly applicable to many other subjects of study, and to a range of different career paths. Studying Art History also offers students the chance to develop expertise in how to look at things in detail, and to get the most out of what can be seen.

Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

Examples of professional bodies

- The Art Association of Australia and New Zealand www.aaanz.info
- New Zealand Art History Teachers' Association www.nzahta.org.nz

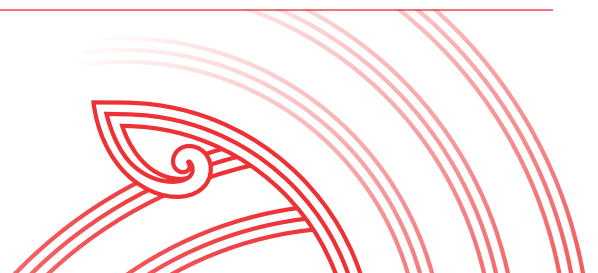
Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/art-history-and-theory
- Job profiles on career websites like www.careers.govt.nz
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Art History and Theory, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies. These can include:

- Highly developed skills in visual analysis and interpretation
- Knowledge of history, literature, philosophy, and religion as it relates to works of art and architecture
- Interpretive and analytical thinking
- Understanding of the influences on contemporary society
- Analytical and critical thinking; challenging ideas
- Creativity, initiative and enterprise
- Thinking critically and creatively, and challenging received ideas
- Logical and qualitative thinking
- Planning and organisation
- Problem solving skills
- Oral and written communication
- Research and computing skills
- Resilience and adaptability.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability are important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.*

*World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills

How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

Where have graduates been employed?

Art History and Theory graduates enjoy a wide variety of career destinations in a range of organisations and sectors that include:

- Museums
- Art galleries
- Fine arts auctioneers
- Arts management
- Art suppliers
- Government and policy
- Libraries, archives, databases and image libraries
- Heritage and conservation
- Journalism, media and communications
- Publishing
- Event management
- Education – tertiary, secondary
- Marketing and advertising
- Tech industry and start-ups.

What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

Marketing assistant / associate

- Collect and analyse market insights
- Prepare and implement marketing plans
- Work with others to promote goods or services

Sales manager

- Identify and develop new markets or businesses
- Manage client relationships and presentations
- Implement sales and marketing strategies

Arts administrator / manager

- Manage logistics, budgets, schedules for events, venues, managers
- Contribute to marketing materials and media
- Develop new projects and initiatives

Research officer / assistant

- Organise and conduct research
- Develop and test theories, interpret results
- Write reports and publish research

Database assistant

- Administer data infrastructure
- Maintain an organisation's database
- Provide analytical support to others

Assistant project manager

- Support project planning and coordination
- Facilitate team communication, monitor tasks, and address issues
- Maintain records and assist with budgeting and reporting

Curator

- Design and coordinate exhibitions
- Manage collections
- Conduct research and communicate information

Art gallery manager / director / assistant

- Assess and select art
- Plan and present exhibitions, events, seminars, outreach activities
- Work with artists and negotiate purchases

Librarian, library assistant

- Categorise and catalogue library materials
- Select materials for library use
- Help customers find and use materials

Policy analyst / advisor

- Identify and investigate issues and opportunities e.g. in society, law or governance
- Interpret existing policies and brief leaders
- Prepare reports and recommend changes

Editorial assistant

- Proofread material and coordinate changes
- Add elements in production e.g. graphics
- Answer publication queries

Secondary school teacher

- Prepare and deliver learning experiences in specialised subjects
- Understand the learning needs of rangatahi, observe progress to personalise support
- Promote the wellbeing of rangatahi

Digital content analyst

- Develop a brand's digital marketing strategy
- Increase web traffic and online engagement
- Oversee social media and search optimisation

Manager, project manager

- Oversee the effective use of resources
- Responsible for certain aspects or overall operation of an organisation, unit or project
- Plan, budget, supervise, and resolve issues.

Further study options

Art History and Theory graduates can progress their studies at honours, master's and PhD level. These degrees provide advanced research, project and writing skills. Postgraduate study can also lead to an academic career in teaching and research.

Many Arts graduates do additional training, for example in Teaching and Learning, Policy and Governance, Librarianship, Journalism or Digital Humanities. UC offers a popular Postgraduate Diploma in Art Curatorship.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study

How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

Career planning checklist

Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers



What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories



Petrena

Collection Curator, Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru

Master of Arts in Art History
Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Art History
Bachelor of Arts in Art History and Theory and English

How did your experience at UC help your career?

The study itself has been wonderful, but the people that you meet and work with are even more so. I have been really impressed by the support of lecturers at Canterbury who have been part of my journey and I think that an Arts degree is the sort of qualification that establishes you personally and professionally – whichever career path you choose. It was through the contacts I made at UC, what I learnt, and the opportunities that I gained, which has got me to where I am now.

Things really began to solidify for me when I did the BA internship. At the Macmillan Brown Library I experienced working in a professional team, and I learnt that my ideas and voice were valid in professional situations. Through the internship I made contacts and gained skills that have directly empowered me for what I am now. Furthermore, through my work for the AA Deans Trust, I gained experience in handling of, cataloguing and caring for artworks – these are skills which lead to a similar job for another New Zealand artist, Philip Trusttum, and then gave me the experience for the role that I now hold today at the Aigantighe Art Gallery. I always wanted to be an Art Gallery Registrar.

What do you find satisfying about your work?

What I really enjoy about what I am doing is that there is such a nice balance between research or seeking information, while at the same time building relationships with those involved in Canterbury's art scene. With my own research I really enjoy the opportunity to document part of Christchurch's history.

What advice do you have for those interested in Art History and Theory?

My advice would be trust your ideas of interest, take opportunities that come your way, and go for it!

Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers

Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

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