

A Beginner's Guide to History of Art



Overview

In this course, we will consider some of the key questions that concern art historians, and explore them by looking in detail at important works from the history of art. In each session we'll discuss a key question relating to art and art history by considering 2-3 artworks, ranging from painting, to sculpture, to performance.

By the end of the course, you'll understand more about how art historians look at art, have an in depth knowledge of some key pieces from the history of art, and have the tools and confidence to make your own interpretations of artworks.

1 | How to read a painting

In this introductory session, we will consider some of the techniques (such as composition, colour, material and scale) used by artists to create certain impressions in their art, or to make viewers 'feel' a certain way. We'll use these techniques to help us 'read' an artwork and come up with our own ideas about what it might mean.

We can also spend time discussing the student's particular interests or any areas of art he/she would like to learn more about so that I can tailor the rest of the sessions to their preferences.



2 | What does it mean?

Interpreting artworks

In this session, we'll look more closely at the different 'tools' that art historians use to interpret artworks and have a go at making our own interpretations of an artwork from these different perspectives. We'll also think about whether we can ever really know how an artist wanted their work to be interpreted, and if this matters.

Sample artworks

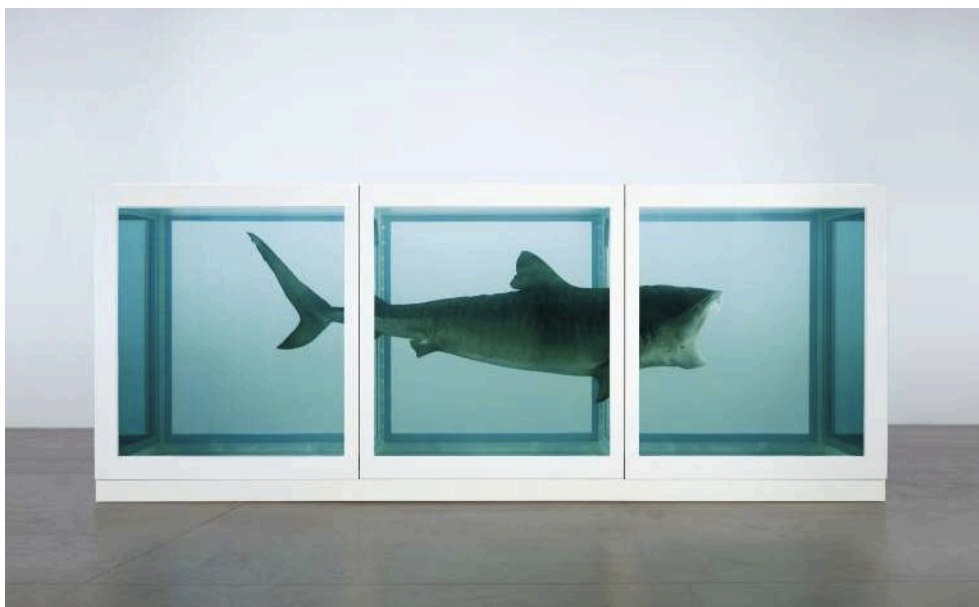


3 | What is it for?

The purpose of art

In this session, we'll discuss what inspires people to make art, and consider the different factors that have influenced the production of art throughout history, from religious belief, to the patronage of kings and queens, to the modern-day art market. We'll also discuss why it is that humans have always felt the urge to make art, and what this can tell us about humanity as a whole.

Sample artworks



4 | What can it tell us?

Understanding history through art

In this session, we will consider how art can help us to learn about the past, from historical events, to tastes in fashion, to changing power structures. We'll also consider what kind of art might be suitable to represent the present moment in time.

Sample artworks



5 | What counts as art?

Exploring conceptual art

In this session, we'll discuss what 'counts' as art. Does it have to be beautiful? Does it have to represent the world realistically? Does it need to have been made by an artist? We'll consider some famous examples of 'conceptual' art and discuss how these fundamentally changed the perception of what 'counts' as art.

Sample artworks



6 | Studying History of Art

In our final session, we'll talk about studying History of Art at school or university. We'll discuss the sort of things you might study, the skills you'll learn, the possible career paths that History of Art can lead to, plus any questions you might have.

We'll also leave plenty of time for questions or to discuss any extra topics that the student would like to cover.

