**Learning Goals: History of Art Major**

Study of the History of Art cultivates a deep understanding of humanity’s fundamental impulse to create. The History of Art traces how artists across all time periods and regions confronted their environment, society, and religion, and thereby produced artifacts of lasting resonance and insight into the cultural practices of their age. Such acts of visual expression find diverse articulation as works of painting, sculpture, graphics, architecture, urbanism, garden design and spectacle, not to mention the stunning versatility of modern and contemporary media. Whereas Studio artists dedicate themselves to the making of Art and catalyzing the further evolution of these media, the History of Art promotes a retrospective analysis of the art of the past, while critically engaging the present. Though a separate major, our curriculum overlaps with the Studio side of the department. We jointly aim to imbue the studio artist with a rich historical perspective, and grant the historian a hands-on exposure to practice.

The History of Art faculty offers broad coverage of the major periods, not only of artistic production but also of scholarly focus since the founding of the discipline in the late nineteenth century: Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, and Modern. Cross-listed courses from Classical Studies in Greek and Roman art and archeology offer students full exposure to these cultures, whose systematic study since the Enlightenment both foreshadowed and complemented the development of the discipline. A global perspective is fundamental to our curriculum, as our faculty specializations in the art and architecture of Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East testify. In association with the Rose Art Museum, the department provides extraordinary resources for the study of twentieth-century and contemporary art.

In additional to its temporal and geographic scope, the History of Art major emphasizes the modes of inquiry it shares with other fields that analyze cultural activity, such as semiotics, social history, psychoanalysis, and gender studies, as inflected through its unique competency in visual analysis and iconography. Like literature, film, music and drama, art served as a platform for narration and manifesting cultural prerogatives throughout its history. Unlike the focus of other disciplines on texts and ideas, the history of art is also the study of objects, which had and have value as icons and commodities. In the realms of architecture and urban development, the objects of our inquiry were often the major economic enterprises of their time, in addition to their religious, aesthetic and social significance. As such, the critical study of art cultivates knowledge in the history, principles, and social dynamics of economics and material culture.

The major is structured to provide a foundation in the art history of a variety of historical periods and geographic regions, as well as in the field’s most important methodologies. Through the range of courses undertaken, the student is further encouraged to develop a focus that reflects his or her own interests.

**Core Skills:** A major in the history of art will cultivate the following skills:

* Master visual literacy, thereby developing an astute capacity for analyzing the formal principles of architecture, sculpture, painting, photography, and graphic arts, as well as contemporary media such as film, performance and video.
* Master the terminology of the discipline, so that visual analysis can be accurately and engagingly conveyed in both oral and written form.

* Hone the critical tools for identifying and classifying works of art according to period, geographic origin, school, artist, and/or stage in an artist’s artistic development.

* Refine the capacity to think critically, both in the process of visual analysis and in the evaluation of contemporary sources and scholarly literature.

* Systematically gather evidence and present findings clearly and compellingly as a persuasive argument in both written and oral form.

* Identify and develop research topics, and then craft them into cogent, well-written essays that incorporate the scholarly discourse of the field according to professional standards of research.

* Through courses devoted to a single artist, a precisely delimited time period or region, and/or the optional honors thesis, the major will master a specialized body of scholarship, formulate key issues to investigate, and arrive at reasoned conclusions.

* Cultivate self-expression and basic proficiency in some aspect of Studio Art – painting, sculpture, printmaking, architectural design and/or photography – to enhance one’s comprehension of the techniques and ingenuity of the artists studied.

**Knowledge**: The History of Art major will acquire the following types of knowledge:

* Achieve a solid familiarity with the core monuments and major artists and trends from each of the principal subfields: Ancient and Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, Modern and Contemporary, and Non-Western.

* An understanding of the varied techniques, styles, and media of artistic production throughout human history.

* The major inevitably creates a specialized focus in at least one of the subfields by taking multiple courses therein. This will provide a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, economic, political and religious factors that motivated artistic production and aesthetic expression.

* The major will undertake an interdisciplinary approach to learning through the intersections of the history of art and architecture with literature, rhetoric, music, religion, politics, etc., and thereby achieve some basic knowledge of these fields as well.

* The major will develop a critical understanding of how primary cultural documents and secondary scholarly literature shape the reception and evaluation of the art of the past and present.
* The major will learn and actively implement the various methodological approaches that define art history as a discipline and have expanded its parameters in recent decades.

* Through elective courses in Museum Studies and the Economics of Art, or Internships at museums, galleries, or auction houses, a major can develop a basic understanding of curatorial stewardship, exhibition design, cataloguing, the art market, collections management, and preservation.

Social Justice:

* Art is the expression of societal values, whether promoted by political and religious elites or demanded by oppressed and marginalized classes. Through reflection and inquiry, the History of Art major will analyze how various artistic media throughout the ages both broadcast official ideologies and provided platforms to articulate protest and demands for social change according to evolving, culturally informed, notions of Justice.

* The critical and historical study of architecture, in particular, focuses on how the built environment conditions human behavior, facilitates ideological manipulation, comes to epitomize the power of political and religious elites, and, at times, galvanize resistance.

* The global expanse of the discipline will instill a deep admiration and respect for the varied forms of artistic expression among diverse communities throughout human history.

Upon Graduating: A Brandeis History of Art major will be prepared to:

* Pursue graduate study of Art History as an academic discipline.

* Embark upon professional training in Museum work, whether through entry-level jobs at institutions or specialized graduate training.

* Employ one’s capacity for judging periods, styles, and aesthetic quality though a career in the art market, whether in auction houses or private galleries.

* Apply the mastery of visual analysis and verbal self-expression to any numbers of fields, including law, journalism, urban planning, design, education, library science and archives.

* Along with some work in design (that Brandeis Studio Art courses can provide) and physics, a mastery of art and architectural history is a fundamental prerequisite for professional training in architecture.

* Knowledge of artistic techniques and styles that results from the Major is essential for professional training in art restoration and conservation.