SOAS University of London
Postgraduate Diploma in
Asian Art
PROSPECTUS 2018/19
The Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art at SOAS University of London offers a programme renowned for its excellence. The course provides object-based study through lectures by SOAS academic staff, leading experts and museum curators. Due to a formal association with the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, students have the unique opportunity to handle objects in the reserved collection of both institutions. The Postgraduate Diploma will appeal to all those with a serious interest in Asian Art. It is also a pathway to further postgraduate study in Asian Art and careers in the art world.
The superlative collections of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum make London one of the world’s leading centres for the study of Asian culture. Object based teaching lies at the heart of the museums’ mission and the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art course, through both lectures and sessions held in our study rooms, offers direct and stimulating encounters between students, curators and collections.

By Jane Portal, Keeper of Asia, British Museum and Anna Jackson, Keeper of Asia, Victoria and Albert Museum
SOAS University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies) is the only higher education institution in the UK specialising in the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. SOAS has the largest specialist faculty concerned with the study of these areas in the world.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art at SOAS provides a unique object led study of the arts of Asia. It combines a concentrated survey of Asian art, and a practical approach to the study of objects. Lectures are given by leading experts on India, China, Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea, Buddhist Art and the Islamic world.

The course is designed for museum curators or collectors and others with an interest in the field. We prepare students for work in a variety of professions in the art and the museum world. The course also provides a pathway to a Master’s degree and PhD for those with no background in the subject. Many of our alumni have found employment in a variety of international museums, art foundations, galleries and auction houses. Students are from varied academic or professional backgrounds, ranging from those who wish to pursue a career in the art world, retired collectors and others with a serious interest in the art and culture of a specific region.

One of the strengths of the Diploma is its flexibility. Students can choose any number or combination of 12 week modules: Indian, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Japanese and Korean, Buddhist and Islamic Art. Students who successfully complete three modules over a period of one to four academic years will be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma. Those who successfully pass a single module will be awarded a certificate.

The fundamental aim of the course is to provide students with a broad understanding of Asian art covering all major periods and most media. Students will learn how to research, identify and document objects, setting them in their cultural context.

In addition to the academic setting, students will benefit from the guidance of museum curators and will handle objects from the reserve collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum, London. This provides an exceptional platform for the study of Asian art and privileged opportunity for students. A network of leading experts contribute to a challenging and stimulating lecture programme. The Course Director and tutors provide students with continuity, academic guidance and close individual support.

The lecture programme is supported by field trips to other museums, galleries and private collections. Students will be encouraged to develop research and writing skills and will have access to the renowned SOAS Library.

This combination of the theoretical and practical study makes the Postgraduate Diploma a unique programme. SOAS is the foremost institution in the world for studies of this kind. The course is accredited by SOAS University of London.

We look forward to welcoming you to SOAS in the near future.
The Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art offers six full-time modules, each 12 weeks in length. Any number or combination of modules can be taken. Candidates can begin the programme in October, January or April. The Postgraduate Diploma is awarded to students who successfully complete three selected modules within a period of four years.

The syllabus is designed for the student to acquire a broad understanding of Asian art, setting each culture in its historical and religious context. Students will be trained in visual analysis and the acquisition of research skills. Prior knowledge of Asian Art is not a requirement, though candidates are expected to have an interest in the study of the area. Issues and themes dealt with in weekly lectures are developed further through seminars, review sessions and frequent visits to museums and private collections.

Academic tutors give weekly review sessions and one to one tutorials.

**COURSE AIDS AND OBJECTIVES**
- To develop visual skills through the direct examination of objects
- To put material objects in their cultural context
- To develop research skills using primary and secondary sources
- To develop a sound visual method for analysing and documenting works of art
- To develop writing and communication skills: to formulate and structure an academic viewpoint and to use visual analysis to support and document this argument

**ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**

The award of the SOAS Postgraduate Diploma is made on the successful completion of three modules. A student who completes a single module will be awarded a certificate.

**CREDIT POINTS**

The Postgraduate Diploma has a CATS rating of 135 points. The certificate for the individual module has a CATS rating of 45 points.

**COURSE LOCATION**

The course is based at SOAS, Russell Square. It is close to many of London’s public and private galleries and within walking distance of the British Museum and the British Library.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**
- Lectures and visits (generally 10:00 to 15:30), Monday to Thursday
- Lectures given by SOAS academic staff, national and international experts and museum curators
- Guided visits to various galleries, museums, dealers and private collectors
- Exclusive handling of the reserve collection of the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum
- Weekly review sessions with course tutors: this involves revision and student participation in seminars and slide tests
- Weekly one to one tutorials

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

- Two submitted written essays of 3,500 words per module
- A written two hour examination per module
THE SIX MODULES OFFERED ARE:

- **Indian Art** (1 October – 19 December 2018) annually
- **Chinese Art** (7 January – 31 March 2019) annually
- **Islamic Art** (23 April – 14 July 2019) biennially
- **Southeast Asian Art** (23 April – 14 July 2019) biennially
- **Japanese and Korean Art** (20 April – 12 July 2020) biennially
- **Buddhist Art** (20 April – 12 July 2020) biennially

**INDIAN ART**
From 2500BC to the present day, the Indian Art module explores the monumental, fine and decorative arts of South Asia. The course deals with architecture, sculpture, miniature painting, carved jades, carpets, textiles, furniture, jewellery, arms and armour, and the rural arts.

The syllabus is broadly chronological and places the art in its religious and historical context. The course begins with an introduction to the Vedas, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism focusing on early Jain and Buddhist art and the principles of Hindu iconography, architecture, sculpture and wall painting. It emphasises the relationship between ritual and image in the study of Medieval Hindu sculpture and architecture. Lectures cover Buddhist, Jain and Hindu manuscript painting.

The course includes Tibetan and Himalayan sculpture and painting. The latter half of the term will explore Mughal and Rajput court art from the 16th century. It will give particular emphasis to miniature painting and jewellery. Terracottas, textiles and other rural arts will also be covered and there will be lectures on contemporary Indian painting.

**ISLAMIC ART**
(From Spain to Central Asia)
The Islamic Art module explores the origin and development of the arts produced in the central regions of the Muslim world from the 7th century AD to the present day: architecture, the arts of the book, ceramics, metalwork, glass as well as textiles and carpets.

A broadly chronological structure will be followed ensuring clarity and continuity and a coherent framework for study. Among the topics covered will be the use of decorative motifs such as calligraphy, the arabesque and geometric ornament and their evolution through different periods and regions. The course will explore what is particular to Islamic art and how artists in the Muslim world borrowed from other cultures as well as the impact Islamic art had on the West. The influence of the China trade, the exchange of luxury items along the Silk route, and the contacts with Europe and the Mongols in Central Asia will also be examined.

**SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART**
(The Arts of Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Burma)
This module covers the art of mainland and maritime Southeast Asia from prehistoric times to the present day. A wide range of art objects are considered from the ethnographical to the classical and monumental...
arts of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. Art historical, archaeological and ethnographic interpretations are presented side by side so that this interdisciplinary approach enhances students’ understanding of the vast artistic heritage of the region.

The course covers the ethnographic art of the outer Indonesian islands and New Guinea, and the fertility, ancestor and spirit cults it expresses. It surveys the Bronze Age and the later dramatic development in social complexity engendered as the maritime trade routes developed throughout Southeast Asia and linked China with the Mediterranean.

The profound impact of Hinduism and Buddhism is studied as these Indic systems rich in cosmology, philosophy and ritual infused the sacred monumental art and ‘real-politik’ of Cambodia, Java, Burma, Vietnam and Thailand and produced a boom in magnificent temple construction unmatched in human history.

The course ranges over this cultural tapestry to bring insight into its statuary and reliefs, its textiles, ceramics, painting, lacquerware, shadow puppets, metalwork, calligraphy, and wood-carving.

**JAPANESE AND KOREAN ART**

This module examines the Arts of Japan and Korea in relation to religious, historical, and social contexts. The course follows a broad chronological progression from pre-history to contemporary, with the first few weeks focusing primarily on religious art and architecture of ancient to medieval eras when the links between Japan and Korea were particularly strong. While the major part of the course is dedicated to Japan, the study of Korean art is integrated into the course in order to compare and contrast the cultural differences of the two countries. The relationship with China is also considered in a larger East Asian context of transmission of ideas and trade.

The second part of the course examines secular traditions of painting, and a wide variety of decorative arts such as ceramics, lacquer, and textile. Lectures on cultural activities such as tea ceremony and garden making will also provide an overview of the artistic expression that is unique to the region. The study of innovative contemporary architecture and designs towards the end of the course will encourage the students to gain a sound understanding of the continuation of aesthetic ideas.

Visits to museum collections will provide an opportunity for object study to complement the course which combines academic discipline and practical skills. By the end of course, students should be equipped with analytical tools and conceptual framework that will allow them to pursue research interests with greater confidence.

**BUDDHIST ART**

The Buddhist Art module includes the religious, historical and geographical context for the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist art from Northern India to Central, East and Southeast Asia. The course begins with a brief overview of the life and philosophy of the Buddha and considers the earliest Indian Buddhist images. We then trace the movement of Buddhist images across the mountains and deserts of the Silk Road to China. It brings together the Buddhist art in Tang China that was to be so influential in Korea and Japan and later in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, Java & Cambodia. It includes a survey of the later centuries when Esoteric Buddhism reached its apogee in Tibet and Theravadin Buddhism in Sri Lanka engendered gentle forms of Buddhist art in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.

The course will give greater emphasis to the importance of faith and religion than is currently possible in the Indian, Chinese or Japanese and Korean modules of the Postgraduate Diploma. The course also addresses the lack of coverage of Sri Lanka in the Indian module. It includes Buddhist monuments, sculpture, manuscripts and the ritual arts. The syllabus will be broadly chronological and regional.
The Postgraduate Diploma is a pathway to further study or a career in Museums and the art world. Many students, some with no formal background in art, go on to complete a master’s in the History of Art & Archaeology Department at SOAS or other institutions. A number continue to PhD level.

Alumni from the course are currently working in UK and international Museums, auction houses and galleries including: British Museum, V&A, Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Bonhams (New York and London) the Asian Civilisation Museum Singapore, Simon Ray Gallery and many more.

“Having spent my career based in London and Hong Kong with frequent visits to China and other Asian countries I was keen to learn more about the arts of Asia. This carefully structured, intensive Postgraduate Diploma course, delivered by expert tutors and other world leading authorities in the field of Asian art, has given me in one unforgettable year a deeper and broader understanding than I could ever have imagined possible. The course has prepared me with knowledge and skills that will be invaluable for further study and research and has ignited within me an insatiable thirst to know more.”

Ralph Barber.

“There is no doubt that those who get to do the courses offered for the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art are a very privileged group, who find themselves presented with a vast amount of information by people who, it is clear, love what they are doing. Before I began, a friend said to me: “You will not be the same person when you have finished the course.” How very true that is. One learns not only to look more closely, but to see with new eyes; not only to learn fact, but to learn to experience in all senses of that word; not merely to remain within one’s usual world, the world of one’s own culture perhaps, but to open oneself to new concepts and to the idea of wholeness. Sincere thanks and gratitude to all those involved.”

Celia Gordon-Gray.

“My experience at the Postgraduate Diploma of Asian Art turned out to be crucial to my further study in Art History. The lectures were taught by different tutors, scholars and curators, which gave us a variety of approaches to the subjects. The museum and gallery tours were valuable opportunities for me to handle the artwork, and communicate with the professionals. I liked the friendly atmosphere here and the fact the lectures gave a lot of support to the students. The knowledge and skills I gained in the program helped me with my future study in a Master Degree.”

Bella He.

“The SOAS Postgraduate Diploma was an exhilarating learning experience that has greatly enhanced the focus of my work in education. My chosen three modules were India, Southeast Asia and Japan and Korea. We covered a vast range of subjects delivered by renowned specialists and the required course work trained us to focus and critically evaluate the detail without losing sight of the wider picture. Studying at SOAS also offered me a dynamic environment to establish treasured friendships amongst the international attendees and to form a valuable network of contacts through which we still learning and sharing.”

Nikke Ariff.
The Postgraduate Diploma values students’ feedback and experience. The flexible nature of study, allowing students to complete the Postgraduate Diploma over four academic years is aimed to fit around those who work or have personal commitments. As each module is a self-contained course and assessed separately, this ensures that students who study one module each year or all three achieve similar results.

In each module, art history of the region is introduced in a broadly chronological method and key cataloguing skills are taught alongside broad academic skills such as essay writing and group work presentations, ensuring that candidates who do not have an art background are able to adapt quickly to art academic writing. Many of our students come from varied sectors including law, finance, and engineering, and we ensure that they are well equipped to handle the material alongside students from an arts background.

“The Postgraduate Diploma was an exact fit, with its precise balance of theory and practice in the curriculum. For instance, the numerous object reviewing and handling sessions formed an integral part of the object-oriented learning process. From Mughal spinels to folios from Dunhuang, we had the opportunity to experience a breath of pan-Asian material culture, which would be difficult if not impossible to access under ordinary circumstances. Another highlight of this course has been the people who constitute it: from accessible and helpful tutors, to friendly and efficient administrative staff and fellow classmates from diverse backgrounds, all contributing towards an ideal learning environment.”

Thupten Kelsang.

“Having never studied Art History formally in the past, it was vital for me to have a solid foundation to begin an academic study in Tibetan art. And the Postgraduate Diploma was an exact fit, with its precise balance of theory and practice in the curriculum. For instance, the numerous object reviewing and handling sessions formed an integral part of the object-oriented learning process. From Mughal spinels to folios from Dunhuang, we had the opportunity to experience a breath of pan-Asian material culture, which would be difficult if not impossible to access under ordinary circumstances. Another highlight of this course has been the people who constitute it: from accessible and helpful tutors, to friendly and efficient administrative staff and fellow classmates from diverse backgrounds, all contributing towards an ideal learning environment.”

Alexa Cooper.

“Having graduated with an undergraduate degree in history, I soon found that I needed to undergo further study to progress in my career in the art world. The Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art provided the perfect means for me to acquire a thorough foundation in the history of Asian art, and to begin to make contacts in the field. The courses were stimulating and inspiring; having the opportunity to learn from different tutors from a range of institutions, all experts in their field, was a true luxury. The unique object-based focus of the course also provides a training that is necessary to appeal to auction houses, museums and galleries. Having completed the Diploma did a Masters in Indian and Islamic painting and then went on to work for a leading dealer of Indian art. Neither of these would have been possible were it not for my experience of the Diploma.”

Alexa Cooper.
Short specialist art courses have become an integral part of the Postgraduate Diploma programme. Introduced in 2006 these courses are aimed at students from a wide variety of backgrounds wanting to broaden their knowledge on specialised areas in Asian Art. Short courses are also ideal for those who do not have the opportunity to attend our full time programme and also serve as a taster to the longer modules.

The courses enable us to specialise in specific areas which are not covered in depth within the postgraduate Diploma modules. The four day course structure includes 3 lectures and a visit per day. Lecturers are given by leading experts and curators and where appropriate we also include practising artists, musicians and handling sessions. An attendance certificate is given on completion of the course.

SPECIALIST ART COURSES 2018/19

Maritime Silk Route: Across the Seas of Asia
5 - 8 November 2018

The Arts of the Book
11 - 14 February 2019

Collecting and Collectors
28 - 31 May 2019

Arts of Eastern Christianity
8 - 11 July 2019

Please see our website for more details.

I was so glad to attend the short course in the History of Japanese Ceramics at SOAS. The program was very well-designed with each day filled with lectures on fascinating topics delivered by experts in their fields who were also excellent speakers. Visits to world-renowned museums in London to meet and hear curators speak about their collections made the course even richer. Meeting so many cultured and educated people from all over the world made my trip from California all the more worthwhile.

Laima Kardokas. Docent at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

The most fantastic courses. Inspirational, educational and beautifully organised. I have come away from these courses with new reading lists, museum visits and travel and have made friends for life. They have actually changed my life.

Victoria Hickie

I have participated in a number of the short courses and they are always a highlight of my year. You get an intense immersion in a specialist topic, taught by engaging experts in convivial company. I have found the four day courses either an excellent taster for an unfamiliar area or a refresher of a much beloved topic - ideal when you can only spare a few days or are about to visit an exotic location. You are welcomed with warmth and leave with new knowledge and friends.

Susan Hazledine
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
Students should normally possess a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Other qualifications such as published works or appropriate professional experience will also be considered. Applications from mature students are encouraged. Non-standard applicants are considered on their merits and may be asked to submit written work for appraisal and/or attend an interview.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
Fluent, written and spoken English to British Council IELTS Level 6.5 is required. Details of preparatory English courses can be obtained from International Foundation Courses and English Language Studies (IFCELS) at SOAS:
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7898 4800
Email: ifcels@soas.ac.uk
Click here for more information

APPLICATION PROCEDURES
The following should be included with candidates’ applications:
- One application form and a statement of personal interests
- Two academic or professional references to be email directly to asianart@soas.ac.uk
- Mature students are expected to provide at least one professional reference
- A validated copy of school and/or university transcripts
- Documentation of English language ability, if English is not the applicant’s first language

Early application is advisable for all courses.

INTERVIEWS
Applicants may be invited to attend an interview with the Course Director, who will assess the candidate’s commitment and aptitude. Interviews can be arranged throughout the year. No special preparation for this interview is necessary. Enthusiasm and motivation are essential. Telephone interviews can be arranged if required.

FEES
£4,950 per module. To confirm their place on the course candidates must pay a deposit of £450 when accepting their place on the course. Deposits are non-refundable. The fee balance is payable 8 weeks before the start of term.

SCHOLARSHIPS
There are a limited number of half fee scholarships available for each module. These are competitive and awarded on the basis of academic merit. Applicants must provide a written statement explaining why they should qualify and a recently submitted piece of academic work at least 2000 words in length.

ACCOMMODATION
Students are responsible for their own accommodation and are strongly advised to allow ample time to make suitable arrangements before their course begins. A list of local accommodation is available on request.

TERMS OF ENROLMENT
Those responsible for the programme reserve the right to amend the content and timing of the courses. Where possible, notice will be given but this cannot be guaranteed. They also reserve the right to discontinue any whole or part of any programme. The information in this prospectus is accurate at the date of publication.

“ In my opinion the Diploma in Asian Art is invaluable to those wanting to study Asian art at postgraduate level without a relevant first degree. My first degree was in Sinology, and without a background in Art History I would have found it extremely challenging to study for an MA in Art and Archeology. Not only does the Postgraduate Diploma give you a wonderful overview of the art of China, India and the other regions, the lectures are all given by people who are experts in their field.”

Marlies Weston.
The prospectus is a guide for applicants for the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art. Inevitably, the matters covered by the prospectus are subject to change from time to time, although every effort is made to ensure the information is accurate and up-to-date. For most up-to-date information about the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, please visit www.soas.ac.uk/art. If applicants require further information they should contact the Postgraduate Diploma Office.

All offers of admission to the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art as a registered student of SOAS are made by the Course Director of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art or the Diploma Manager. No promise or purported offer made otherwise than in accordance with this regulation has any validity.

SOAS University of London reserves the right to alter or withdraw any courses or parts of courses.

The Postgraduate Diploma provided an excellent practical training for entering the commercial Asian art business. Its unique curriculum combined a strong grounding in all the major subjects and styles from the continent as well as two opportunities per module to delve into subjects, such as Buddhist bronzes, that really grabbed me. The course has a focus on connoisseurship, which is hard to find in academia today, and it helped me to develop my eye for quality. The many handling sessions allowed me to build confidence with handling antiquities and make up-close observations of some remarkable museum pieces. One of the most privileged of these was our rare private viewing of the famous Admonitions Scroll, widely considered to be one of the most important works in Chinese art history.

After a lot of research into rival programmes, I also opted for the Diploma, turning down several MAs, because of its unrivalled networking opportunities. Attracting a diverse student body, I shared the classroom with collectors, dealers, consultants, and other aspiring young professionals. The many gallery and museum visits enabled me to make professional introductions with some of London’s most respected Asian art dealers and curators. What is more, a Diploma lecturer facilitated the introduction which lead to an internship with one of my favourite London galleries. I joined Bonhams, New York in 2013 and am now Head of Sale in Indian, Himalayan, Southeast Asian art.

Mark Rasmussen.