

SOAS-Alphawood

Asian Art Programme

2026/27

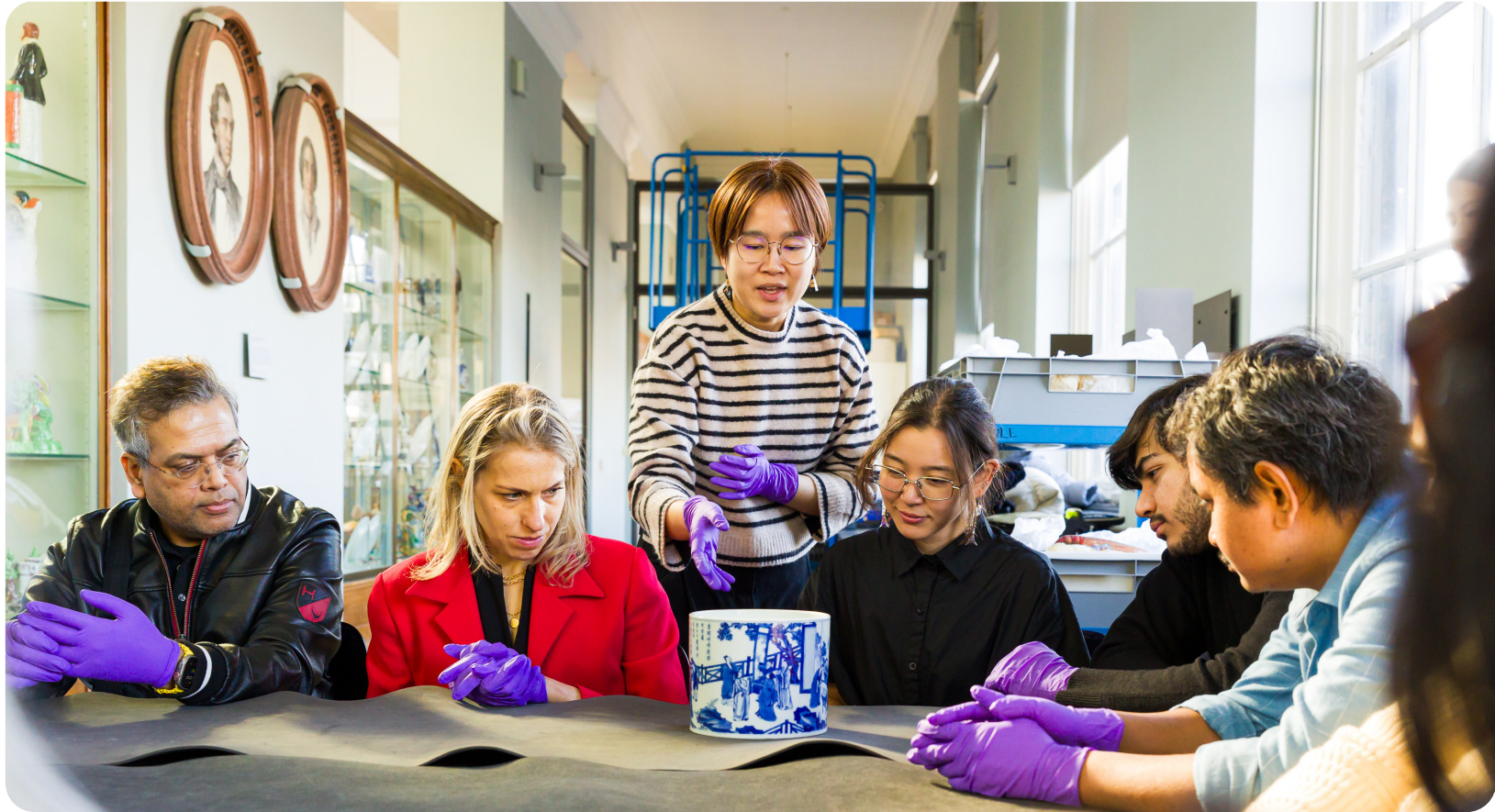


SOAS
University of London

in association with

The British
Museum





“ The superlative collections of the V&A and the British Museum make London one of the most important centres for the appreciation and study of Asian art and culture.

The SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme gives students unique access to these collections and to the expertise of those who curate them. ”

Anna Jackson
Keeper of the Asia Department
Victoria & Albert Museum

Jessica Harrison-Hall
Keeper of the Department of Asia
British Museum

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SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme

SOAS University of London
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

Phone: +44 (0)20 7898 4445

Email: AsianArt@soas.ac.uk

www.AsianArtProgramme.com

www.instagram.com/asianartprogramme 

www.youtube.com/@asianartsoas 

Programme Director

Dr Malcolm McNeill
mm133@soas.ac.uk

Programme Manager

Patrick Monger
pm50@soas.ac.uk





Welcome

The SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme offers a unique curriculum for the study of the Arts of Asia, the Middle East and North Africa: combining object-based learning within a rigorous postgraduate training in the critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of art historical scholarship.

Throughout your time with us you will hear from a wide variety of specialists, including SOAS faculty and the wider academic community, museum curators, and art market professionals. We foster a learning environment in which students evaluate diverse perspectives before coming to their own conclusions.

Our students' learning is supported by our formal association with the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum here in London, offering unique access to the collections of these museums – both physically and digitally – and to the expertise of the curators who care for them.

We offer three distinct exit qualifications at taught postgraduate level, all available either or in person or online:

- **MA in Asian Art**
- **Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art**
- **Postgraduate Certificate in Asian Art**

Our students receive tailored support from their programme director, module convenors, and dedicated administrative team. This support enables you to explore existing interests, discover new passions, and ask original questions, all while developing your academic abilities as an art historian.

In recent years our students have secured numerous internship opportunities unique to SOAS, with organisations and institutions including: the British Library, the British Council and Venice Biennale, and SOAS Gallery.

Our alumni occupy positions around the world in academia, museums and the art market. Many of our students join us while already working in the Arts and use their time at SOAS to diversify and deepen their knowledge and expertise, often developing assignments directly applicable in their professional lives. Others among our alumni go on to personally enriching voluntary roles, both alongside their pre-existing career or as a new project during retirement.

Our programme welcomes applicants who do not have an academic background in the Arts and Humanities, who are returning to higher education after a protracted period, or who come from non-traditional backgrounds. We place particular value on the diversity of perspectives this brings to our classroom.

Please get in touch if you would like to find out more about our programme and determine if we are the right fit for you.

Dr Malcolm McNeill FHEA
Programme Director
Senior Lecturer in the History of Art
AsianArt@soas.ac.uk



What We Offer

We Offer:

- Postgraduate degrees accredited by SOAS University of London, taught at FHEQ level 7
- Auditing access to our postgraduate modules
- Specialist art short courses

We offer three entry points to our postgraduate programme in each calendar year: **September, January** and **May**.

We offer two distinct pathways, in-person and online, each combining object-based learning within a rigorous postgraduate training in the critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of art historical scholarship.

Both pathways feature:

- A range of module options allowing you to create a programme of study that best suits your aims and interests
- Object-based learning grounded in visual and material analysis
- Lectures, seminars and contributions from leading academics, curators and art-market professionals based at SOAS, in London and worldwide
- Close support through weekly one-to-one tutorials with your module convenors
- Access to SOAS' Library, the UK's National Research Library for Asia, Africa and the Middle East

In-Person Pathway

Study in London through immersive, full-time modules featuring:

- Gallery and reserve-collection visits to the British Museum, V&A and other institutions
- An intensive schedule of lectures, seminars and review sessions, supported by recommended readings and one-to-one tutorials
- Hands-on and close-up engagement with artworks to develop your skills and confidence in object-led visual and material analysis

Online Pathway

Study from anywhere in the world with:

- Professionally filmed virtual museum contributions
- A schedule of pre-recorded and live teaching designed for flexible study
- Weekly seminars and one-to-one tutorials delivered online
- A rich set of digital resources and activities that support an object-based approach to the History of Art

Both pathways provide a rigorous foundation for future study and professional roles in museums, galleries, heritage organisations and arts institutions internationally.

Who We're For

Students new to SOAS

Our programme is an accessible entry-point for postgraduate study at SOAS.

Recent graduates and aspiring professionals

Our programme is a proven pathway to a career in the arts. Our alumni work for leading universities, museums and commercial institutions across the globe.

Lifelong learners

We are committed to supporting students at all stages of life and pride ourselves on the diverse range of life experience in our classrooms. Whether you are seeking to deepen understanding of a long-standing interest, or to explore something new, we are uniquely positioned to help you develop your interests in and knowledge of Asian art.

Returning alumni seeking further enrichment

For those who have already studied with us at SOAS, our new modules will consolidate your knowledge and skills, and allow you to revisit topics that excite you with the exceptional academic and administrative support we offer, as well as introducing you to new areas of study.

Students with a recent degree from our programme can join further modules as an auditor. Those who earned a qualification with us prior to the 2022/23 academic year may be eligible to join for a new degree.

To find out more please contact: AsianArt@soas.ac.uk

Our Programme Director, Dr Malcolm McNeill, would be delighted to meet with you one-to-one to discuss if our programme is the right fit for you.



Programme Details

Find your ideal postgraduate programme by choosing:

1. Your mode of study

In-Person

Our in-person study mode requires full-time attendance in London and features on-site visits to museum galleries and reserve collections.

Online

Our online study mode is accessible from anywhere in the world, bringing the artworks of museum galleries and reserve collections – as well as the curators who care for them – to you virtually.

2. Your qualification

Postgraduate Certificate

(requires 60 credit points)

Postgraduate Diploma

(requires 120 credit points)

MA

(requires 180 credit points)

Auditor

Study for personal enrichment only

Programme Details (continued)

3. Your length of study

Full-Time

Requires consecutive periods of study from enrolment through to completion

Part-Time

Offers flexible study options over a longer period of time

Postgraduate Certificate

Full time: Three months
Part time: Up to one year

Postgraduate Diploma

Full time: One year
Part time: Up to three years

MA

Full time: Seventeen months
Part time: Up to three years

4. Your start date

We run three teaching sessions throughout the year and you can start in:
September, January or May

5. Your module options

Each qualification and mode of study offers a range of 15 and 30-credit module options for you to choose from, for a full list, see pages 12 (in-person options) and 24 (online options)



“ Apart from the opportunity to engage with outstanding scholars, I believe one of the greatest benefits has been the active engagement with the objects studied in the lectures.

From object study sessions to gallery and museum visits, I have been able to see and study artifacts in ways that no other program offers, and these experiences have definitely given me a competitive edge as a scholar and future educator. ”

Kevin Morales Bernabe, Puerto Rico

In-Person Study

In-Person Study Pathway Options

In-person **Postgraduate Certificate** (60 credits)

Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 1	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Arts of India - Arts of China - Arts of Japan & Korea - Arts of Southeast Asia - Arts of the Islamic World - Arts of the Buddhist World	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects - Asian Art in the Museum

In-person **Postgraduate Diploma** (120 credits)

Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 3	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Arts of India - Arts of China - Arts of Japan & Korea - Arts of Southeast Asia - Arts of the Islamic World - Arts of the Buddhist World	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online) - Asian Art in the Museum

In-Person Study Pathway Options (continued)

In-person MA (180 credits)			
Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 3	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1	Core Module 60 Credits
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Arts of India - Arts of China - Arts of Japan & Korea - Arts of Southeast Asia - Arts of the Islamic World - Arts of the Buddhist World	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online) - Asian Art in the Museum	Dissertation in Asian Art

30-Credit Module Schedule:

- **Arts of India**
28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually)
- **Arts of China**
18 January – 07 April 2027 (annually)
- **Arts of the Buddhist World**
03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)
- **Arts of Japan & Korea**
03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)
- **Arts of Southeast Asia**
May – July 2028 (biennially)
- **Arts of the Islamic World**
May – July 2028 (biennially)

15-Credit Module Schedule:

- **Analysing and Exploring the Arts**
Runs alongside every teaching session
- **Independent Study Project in Asian Art History**
Runs September to January and May to August (annually)
- **Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects**
Runs January to April (annually)
- **Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online)**
Runs September to December (annually)
- **Asian Art in the Museum**
Runs 26 July – 06 August 2027 (annually)



In-Person 30-Credit Module Delivery

30-Credit Module Delivery

Our in-person 30-credit modules require full-time attendance in London for 10 weeks and feature:

- In-person lectures given by SOAS academic staff, leading national and international scholars, museum curators, and art market professionals, generally taking place between 10.00 and 13.00 Monday through Thursday
- Exclusive contributions from the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum, including access to their reserve collections
- Visits and object study sessions at a variety of museums, galleries and auction houses, generally taking place on Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoons
- A series of asynchronous online lectures exploring critical thinking and current methods with associated seminars
- Recommended weekly readings
- Weekly review sessions
- Weekly one-to-one tutorials with your module convenors

Assessment

Each module requires submission of three assessments:

- One object analysis of 1,500 words (20%)
- One written assignment 2,500 words per module (40%)
- One 48-hour, take-home slide test per module (40%)

30-Credit Modules Offered In-Person

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ■ Arts of India | 28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually) |
| ■ Arts of China | 18 January – 07 April 2027 (annually) |
| ■ Arts of the Buddhist World | 03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially) |
| ■ Arts of Japan & Korea | 03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially) |
| ■ Arts of Southeast Asia | May – July 2028 (biennially) |
| ■ Arts of the Islamic World | May – July 2028 (biennially) |



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews

Arts of India

28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually)

From 2500 BCE to the present day, the *Arts of India* module explores the monumental, fine and decorative arts of South Asia. The module 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 module 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 latter half of the module will explore Mughal and Rajput court art from the 16th to 18th centuries, with a particular focus on painting, jewellery and textiles.

Terra-cottas and other rural arts will also be covered and there will be lectures on modern and contemporary South Asian art.



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of China

18 January – 07 April 2027 (annually)

The *Arts of China* module examines the material and visual cultures of China from the Neolithic period to the 21st century.

The course covers developments in metalwork, jade, lacquer, ceramics, painting, calligraphy, sculpture, and textiles. Lectures on history, religion, philosophy and literature provide a contextual framework for understanding these developments.

The module also considers the importance of patronage (imperial, elite, and popular), the impact of systems of belief (Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism), and the role played by changes in the lives and social roles of artists. Technology and design approaches as well as the impact of interaction between China and the outside world are among the topics considered.



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of the Buddhist World

03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)

The *Arts of the Buddhist World* module introduces you to the religious, historical and geographic context for the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist art across Asia: from Buddhism's origins two and a half millennia ago in Northern India, to its current status as a global religion.

The module begins with a brief overview of the life and teachings of the Buddha and considers the earliest Buddhist images in South Asia. We then trace the movement of Buddhist images, ideas and beliefs across the deserts and mountains of Central Asia into China. Exploring the adaptations and developments of Buddhism in China, we go on to examine how these iterations of Buddhist art and culture acted as a catalyst for subsequent developments; first in Korea and Japan, and later in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, Java and Cambodia. The module also explores the distinctive expressions of Esoteric Buddhism developed in Tibet, and the distinctive forms of Buddhist art engendered by the tradition in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.

In exploring the diverse incarnations of Buddhist art across Asia, this module offers a broad and immersive introduction to the visual and material manifestations of one of the world's most significant religions.



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of Japan & Korea

03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)

This module examines the *Arts of Japan and Korea* in relation to religious, historical, and social contexts. The module 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 module is dedicated to Japan, the study of Korean art is integrated into the module in order to compare and contrast the cultural and art historical development 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 module examines secular traditions of painting, and a wide variety of decorative arts such as ceramics, lacquer, and textiles. The study of innovative modern and contemporary art, architecture and design towards the end of the module will encourage students to gain a sound understanding of both continuation and evolution of aesthetic ideas.



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

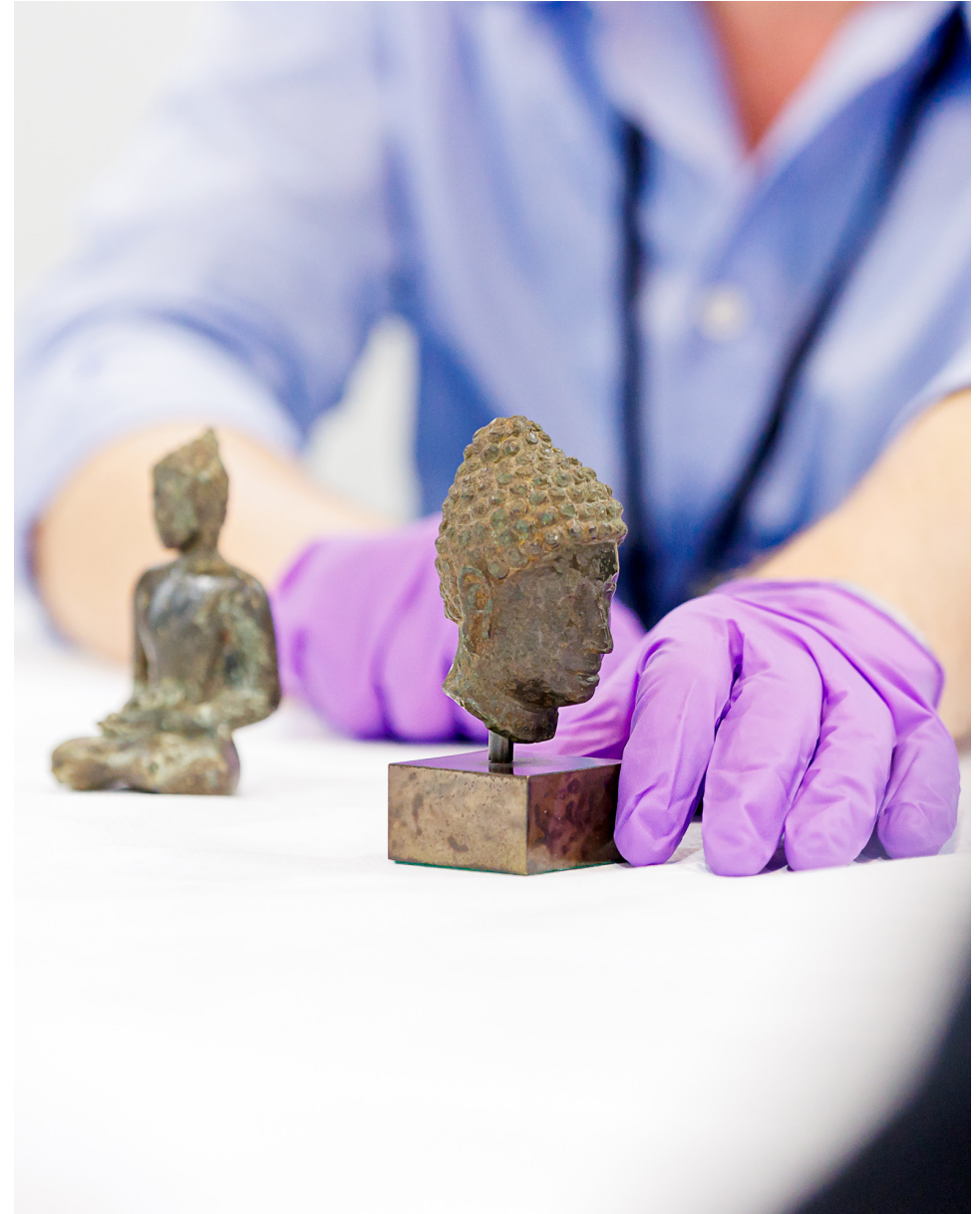
Arts of Southeast Asia

May – July 2028 (biennially)

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 module 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 module ranges over Southeast Asia's cultural tapestry to offer insight on its statuary and reliefs, its textiles, ceramics, painting, lacquerware, shadow puppets, metalwork, calligraphy, and wood-carving.



In-Person 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of the Islamic World

May – July 2028 (biennially)

The *Arts of the Islamic World* module explores the origin and development of the arts produced in the central regions of the Muslim world from the 7th century CE to the present day: architecture, the arts of the book, ceramics, metalwork, glass as well as textiles and carpets.

The module follows a broadly chronological structure, ensuring clarity and continuity, and providing 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 module 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 Europe. 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.



“ I was very grateful that I did not get left out from receiving an education at SOAS with the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art programme being accessible online. I knew it would be challenging to live up to the high expectations SOAS imbibed into their students alongside my family and job, but it was also an exclusive access to the specialists developing the integrous research in Asian art history I did not want to pass up on. Having completed the course in a year, it is almost surreal to realise I did it! The autonomous learning platform designed well with manageable tasks meant I could find a harmony that inspired me to work in depth on my specific interests while learning about how they relate to and are relevant to art history scholarship as a whole. The online course was an exclusive journey led by energetic, intuitive, and highly intelligent authors. On the friends I met online, their work and stories from their parts of the world make me feel honoured that I was a fellow traveller on their critical thinking paths. Thank you for making such an intensive online course elegant and engaging. ”

Candice Bressmer, Singapore

Online Study

Online Study Pathway Options

Online **Postgraduate Certificate** (60 credits)

Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 1	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Asia's Art Histories - Curating Asian Art - Arts of Southeast Asia (online) - Arts of the Buddhist World (online)	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online) - Asian Art in the Museum

Online **Postgraduate Diploma** (120 credits)

Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 2 or 3	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1 or 3
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Asia's Art Histories - Curating Asian Art - Arts of Southeast Asia (online) - Arts of the Buddhist World (online)	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online) - Asian Art in the Museum

Online Study Pathway Options (continued)

Online MA (180 credits)

Compulsory Module 15 Credits	Guided Options A 30 Credits - Select 2 or 3	Guided Options B 15 Credits - Select 1 or 3	Core Module 60 Credits
Analysing and Exploring the Arts	- Asia's Art Histories - Curating Asian Art - Arts of Southeast Asia (online) - Arts of the Buddhist World (online)	- Independent Study Project in Asian Art History - Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online) - Asian Art in the Museum	Dissertation in Asian Art

30-Credit Module Schedule:

- **Asia's Art Histories**
28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually)
- **Curating Asian Art**
18 January – 07 April 2027 (annually)
- **Arts of Southeast Asia (online)**
03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)
- **Arts of the Buddhist World (online)**
03 May – 21 July 2028 (biennially)

15-Credit Module Schedule:

- **Analysing and Exploring the Arts**
Runs alongside every teaching session
- **Independent Study Project in Asian Art History**
Runs September to January and May to August (annually)
- **Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects (online)**
Runs September to December (annually)
- **Asian Art in the Museum**
Runs 26 July – 06 August 2027 (annually)

“ As junior curator of Southeast Asian Art of the Ferenc Hopp Museum, Budapest, it was immensely useful to join the online modules provided by the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme.

Quite naturally, to somebody whose living and working conditions are located outside of the U.K. this online pathway is just the perfect choice to be able to broaden their professional knowledge and perspective as well as to get acquainted with the most recent trends and development of their prospective fields.

With the kind support of my convenors, I could frame my assignment in line with my professional interests and current work/research at the Museum.

I consider my time at “Virtual SOAS” as a fun, demanding and also necessary step in my professional development”. (And it was even more exciting to visit the university and meet the team in person as a closing accord/chapter of my studies.) ”

Anna Vécsei, Hungary

Online 30-Credit Module Delivery

30-Credit Module Delivery

Our online 30-credit modules offer you an immersive foundation at postgraduate level in a richly rewarding field of study, with a unique range of digital resources and exceptional pedagogical support over 10-weeks.

Our online modules are designed to be accessible from anywhere in the world, and with those who will have other professional and/or personal commitments in mind (although we do recommend allocating 30 hours of study time per week).

Online modules consist of a variety of different modes of learning, including:

- Asynchronous, online lectures given by SOAS academic staff, leading national and international scholars, museum curators, and art market professionals
- Exclusive contributions filmed in the exhibitions, galleries, and reserve collections of the British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum
- Recommended weekly readings
- Live, weekly seminar discussions conducted via Zoom
- Recommended weekly readings
- Online discussion fora facilitated by module convenors
- Weekly one-to-one tutorials with your module convenors

Assessment

Each module requires submission of three assessments:

- One written assignment of 1,500 words or 15-minute presentation (20%)
- One written assignment of 2,500 words (40%)
- A reflective curatorial or cataloguing exercise (40%)

30-Credit Modules Offered Online

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Asia's Art Histories | 28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually) |
| ■ Curating Asian Art | 18 January – 07 April 2027 (annually) |
| ■ Arts of Southeast Asia (online) | 03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially) |
| ■ Arts of the Buddhist World (online) | May – July 2028 (biennially) |



Online 30-Credit Module Overviews

Asia's Art Histories

28 September – 16 December 2026 (annually)

This module will introduce you to the latest ideas, concepts and approaches shaping art history today through focused case studies from across Asia.

Each week, Asia's Art Histories will present you with a mix of pre-recorded lectures and professionally filmed pre-recorded virtual visits to the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum. Each week your lectures and virtual visits are centred on a common theme and feature a range of speakers, including leading scholars, curators, and art market professionals. During the course of the module you will explore case studies from the following regions, religions and cultures: South Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Islamic world and the Buddhist World. All case studies will focus on a common weekly theme.

An indicative list of themes include:

- Art historiography
- Art historical approaches to archaeological material
- Approaches to material arts and material culture
- Analysing architecture, space and environment
- Approaches to visual arts and culture
- Religious and ritual uses of objects, artworks and architecture
- Gender and agency
- Collection histories
- Modernities
- The contemporary

Asia's Art Histories offers you an immersive foundation at postgraduate level in a richly rewarding field of study, with a unique range of digital resources and exceptional pedagogical support. The module enables you to identify and consolidate your academic interests among the diverse artistic and cultural traditions of Asia.

Online 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Curating Asian Art

18 January – 07 April 2027 (biennially)

This module introduces you to the curation of Asian art, and visual and material culture. You will explore a diverse range of contexts in which Asian art is curated: from museums, to monuments, to commercial and private spaces.

Each week you explore a distinct theme or topic connected to curation and museology. These themes link your programme of study to current discussions and debates shaping curatorial practice and museological scholarship today. Each weekly theme is supported by carefully selected case studies, drawing on the diverse areas covered in the SOAS-Alphawood Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art: South Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Islamic World, and the Buddhist World. These case studies are delivered by a wide range of SOAS faculty and guest speakers, exposing you to a unique range of perspectives from across the museum, university and commercial arts sectors.

You will engage in practical, reflective assignments, with options to select projects and case studies that are relevant to your interests, aspirations, and the collections and institutions you have access to locally.

Curating Asian Art offers an in-depth introduction to curatorial and museum practice today. You will reflect on past and present curation of Asian art, while also developing skills and knowledge that will equip you to help shape the future of Asian Art's curation.



Online 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of Southeast Asia (online)

03 May – 21 July 2027 (biennially)

This module covers the art of mainland and maritime Southeast Asia from prehistoric times to the present day, with a strong focus on pre-modern Hindu-Buddhist material. 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 inter-disciplinary approach enhances students' understanding of the vast artistic heritage of the region.

The module 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 module ranges over Southeast Asia's cultural tapestry to offer insight on its statuary and reliefs, its textiles, ceramics, painting, lacquerware, shadow puppets, metalwork, calligraphy, and wood-carving.



Online 30-Credit Module Overviews (continued)

Arts of the Buddhist World (online)

May – July 2028 (biennially)

The Arts of the Buddhist World module introduces you to the religious, historical and geographic context for the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist art across Asia: from Buddhism's origins two and a half millennia ago in Northern India, to its current status as a global religion. The course begins with a brief overview of the life and teachings of the Buddha and considers the earliest Buddhist images in South Asia. We then trace the movement of Buddhist images, ideas and beliefs across the deserts and mountains of Central Asia into China. Exploring the adaptations and developments of Buddhism in China, we go on to examine how these iterations of Buddhist art and culture acted as a catalyst for subsequent developments; first in Korea and Japan, and later in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, Java and Cambodia. The course also explores the distinctive expressions of Esoteric Buddhism developed in Tibet, and the distinctive forms of Buddhist art engendered by the tradition in Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.

In exploring the diverse incarnations of Buddhist art across Asia, this course offers a broad and immersive introduction to the visual and material manifestations of one of the world's most significant religions.



Our 15-Credit Modules

Our 15-credit modules are offered on both our in-person and online pathways.

They are all designed to support, enrich and expand your learning on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme.

All students on our postgraduate programme must complete (at least) two of these modules to earn an academic award.

For a full list of module selection options please see page 12 (for in-person study) or page 24 (for online study).

15-Credit Modules Offered:

■ **Analysing and Exploring the Arts** (compulsory)

Runs alongside every teaching session

■ **Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects**

Runs online September to December and in person January to April (annually)

■ **Independent Study Project in Asian Art History**

Runs September to January and May to August (annually)

■ **Asian Art in the Museum***

Runs 26 July – 06 August 2027 (annually)

On campus, in London

*Requires supplementary fee

Analysing and Exploring the Arts

This module is compulsory and will be taken alongside (or prior to) your first 30-credit module.

Analysing and Exploring the Arts provides core training in object-based approaches to the History of Art for students on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art programme, through a combination of practical and reflective learning activities supported by multiple contributors.

The module explores the mechanics of art historical research, writing and argumentation, reflecting on different contexts for and priorities in the production and reception of art historical knowledge. Through a reflective process we support you in maximising the opportunities offered by in person encounters with objects, artworks and sites on this programme, while also cultivating a critical awareness of the conditions that shape those encounters. By comparing and contrasting approaches to analysis, interpretation and curation in museums and cultural institutions, auctions houses and commercial galleries, arts journalism, and academic writing we support you in situating objects of Asian Art and the narratives through which they are interpreted within the at times contested priorities of arts, culture, commerce and academia.

Assessment Methods

- A reflective portfolio, delivered as either a 2,500-word or 15-minute recorded submission (100%)

Our 15-Credit Modules (continued)

Asian Art: Theories, Practices and Objects

In this module, you will explore the theories and practices that have shaped the study of the arts of Asia, the Middle East and their diasporas.

You will critically interrogate a plurality of voices that shape modern and contemporary art historical theories and methodologies. These will be examined alongside analysis of contemporary, modern and historic aesthetics, art discourses and art practices. Via synthesising a wide variety of materials, you will develop a critical understanding of historic development of art historical inquiry in Asia.

The module aims to bring together theoretical perspectives, practical examples and object-based encounters, fostering critical and considered engagement with your course material and allowing you to develop your own lines of enquiry.

Assessment Methods

- Literature Review (1,000 words) or presentation (ten minutes) (30%)
- Essay (70%)

Independent Study Project in Asian Art History

The Independent Study Project in Asian Art History allows you to develop a focused project on a single topic in Asian Art history. You will consolidate the skills and approaches you have developed throughout your programme, by applying them to a single output. Your output can be an essay (3000 words), an exhibition proposal with selected object catalogue entries (3000 words), an extended presentation (20 mins), or a guided tour of a museum gallery (20 mins). You will work with a supervisor to select a topic, develop a formative proposal, select and appraise appropriate sources, and research and deliver your final output. This is an opportunity for you to pursue a singular, focused passion, communicating and consolidating your understanding, enthusiasm and critical engagement with the content of the SOAS-Alphawood Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art programme.

The Independent Study Project in Asian Art History includes five workshops that help you conceive, focus and develop your project, and six 30 minute 1-1 meetings with your supervisor.

You can complete this course alongside your final 30-credit module or in a future term (visa permitting), so long as you complete within your maximum period of registration.

Assessment Methods

- Annotated Bibliography, 500 words (10%)
- Final submission of 3,000 words or a 20-minute presentation (90%)

Our 15-Credit Modules (continued)

Asian Art in the Museum

26 July – 06 August 2027

Runs annually, **in-person** in London

This course is an intensive, two-week immersion in object-based study of Asian art.

You will explore a range of objects and artworks in situ, predominantly in the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum, meeting with the curators who care for these collections.

The course is built around ten focused case studies, each consisting of a lecture, seminar, and related gallery or reserve collection visit. Case studies are drawn from the full range of regions and contexts covered in the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme: South Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Islamic world and the Buddhist world. Each of the two weeks focuses on a single theme or topic that is central to art history and/or museum curation today. You will contextualise the objects encountered on this course within the diverse geographies, cultures and contexts from which the objects you study originate, and through which they have travelled to arrive in London today. You will actively contribute to class discussions and informal presentations in museums and galleries.

This module provides an immersive introduction to the object-based study of Asian art. It is an ideal complement to students studying any of our online distance learning modules who wish to acquire hands on experience of object based learning.

Assessment Methods

Halfway through the module you will submit a short reflection on your experience of direct study of objects in museum galleries and stores. Feedback on this short assessment will help you to hone your final submission: either an analytical essay or a curatorial proposal.

Ways to join Asian Art in the Museum

As your first module

Begin your journey on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme by joining us for *Asian Art in the Museum* and you will earn 15 credit points at FHEQ level 6.

This route requires a supplementary fee of £1,840.

At any other time

Complement your journey on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme by completing *Asian Art in the Museum* at any other point within your maximum period of registration and you will earn 15 credit points at FHEQ level 7.

This route requires a supplementary fee of £1,840.

As an independent programme

Asian Art in the Museum is available to take independently of further study for a fee of £2,500 and you will earn 15 credit points at FHEQ level 6.

Accommodation

Please note that accommodation is not provided and must be arranged at your own expense.



Our Dissertation Module

Dissertation in Asian Art

Runs January - May 2028 (in person)
and January - September 2028 (online)

For those enrolled on the MA in Asian Art (in-person or online), our dissertation module will be your capstone module, taken after you have completed 120 credit points in other modules.

This module is an opportunity for you to develop a chosen project in depth and detail. You will be supported by a dedicated supervisor, as well as a dissertation convenor who will work with you as a cohort.

You do not need to begin your dissertation module with a fully defined project, only an area of interest or indicative topic framed with some initial research questions.

We will support you in shaping your project and developing your research and writing with 5 hours of lectures and 5 hours of workshops.

Supervision will involve 3 hours of one-to-one tutorials with your dedicated supervisor.

You will have full access to the SOAS Library - the UK's dedicated research library in Asia and Africa.

Assessment Methods

- Annotated Bibliography, 700 words (10%)
- Dissertation of 10,000 words (90%)



Auditing

Auditing Policy

We offer auditing spaces on our modules to those who are not seeking an academic qualification.

Those who choose to audit the course enjoy full access as a SOAS student to all teaching on the programme, university resources and even the option of weekly one-to-one tutorials with their module convenors, but are not required to complete any assessments.

Auditors receive no credit points and cannot earn an academic award for their time on the programme.

Application process

Auditors must be eligible for study on the programme as per our entry requirements and must submit an application to join each teaching session as an individual course of study.

Transferring to accredited study

Should you wish to do so, we will endeavour to support auditors transferring to accredited study within the first two weeks of the teaching session. This may not be possible for in-person study if visa restrictions apply.



2026/27 Auditing Fees		
	Per 30-Credit Module	Per 15-Credit Module*
In Person	£3,910	£1,955
Online	£2,330	£1,165

* Does not apply to Asian Art in the Museum, which is charged at the full fee

Fees and Payments

2026/27 Tuition Fees

	Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits)	Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)	MA (180 credits)
In Person (with Asian Art in the Museum)	£8,670 (£10,510)	£17,340 (£19,180)	£26,000 (£27,840)
Online (with Asian Art in the Museum)	£5,160 (£7,000)	£10,320 (£12,160)	£15,480 (£17,320)

Deposits and Payment Schedules

Successful applicants must secure their place on the programme by making a £500 deposit payment, which will be credited towards your total tuition fee. The remaining fee balance must be paid at least five weeks prior to your start date.

Students studying part-time can opt to pay in three installments (60 credit blocks). Installments paid in future academic years will be subject to any annual increase in tuition fees.

Annual Fee Increases

Tuition fees are subject to annual increases (applied from each September). Part-time students paying in installments are protected from any annual increase exceeding 5%.

Alumni and Family Discount (in-person study only)

A 25% reduction in tuition fees is available to all alumni who have an Undergraduate degree in any subject from SOAS, but no higher qualification. The same discount is available to any applicant whose family member (defined as grandparent, parent, sibling, child or spouse) is a SOAS graduate or staff member.

Please note that the reduction only applies to the first year of a full-time course or equivalent part-time enrolment.

For full information, please see: www.soas.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/

Scholarships

The Alphawood Scholarships

Alphawood scholarships are available to support residents of Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar/Burma, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam) in completing the SOAS-Alphawood Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art via either our in-person or online pathways and the MA via online learning.

The scholarship covers full tuition fees for the complete programme as well as a stipend to cover living costs during term time. For scholars studying in person, financial support is also available to cover travel, visas and other preparatory costs.

Alphawood scholarships also provide support for our students to advance their English-language proficiency through dedicated courses at the SOAS Department of International Foundation Courses and English Language Studies (IFCELS).

The Alphawood scholarships form part of an academic programme which is generously supported by the Alphawood Foundation (Chicago). The remit of the programme is to support and advance, through study and research, the understanding and preservation of Southeast Asian Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture from ancient to pre-modern times.

Alphawood scholars are selected with the expectation that they, as alumni, will be in a position to apply the learning and skills they gain while on award to the benefit of the galleries, museums, heritage organisations, universities, government departments and other institutions in the Southeast Asian region in which they may go on to work.

Since 2014, Alphawood has provided for over 100 scholarships which supported Southeast Asian scholars' postgraduate study at the Diploma, MA and MPhil/PhD levels at SOAS.



Scholarships (continued)

The Hettie Elgood Scholarship

This scholarship covers full tuition fees for the in-person pathway of the SOAS-Alphawood Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art and an allowance to cover living costs during term time.

The scholarship is open to anyone, anywhere in the world who is not financially able to pursue the course without a full scholarship and stipend.

We strongly encourage applicants who would not have considered the programme without the opportunity afforded by this scholarship.

We hope the scholarship will be a transformative opportunity, enabling the successful applicant to pursue a career related to Asian art, such as academia, curatorial or museum work, or a position in the commercial art world.

Online Postgraduate Certificate Scholarship

This scholarship covers full tuition fees for the online pathway of the SOAS-Alphawood Postgraduate Certificate in Asian Art.

The scholarship is open to anyone, anywhere in the world who is not financially able to pursue the course without a full scholarship and stipend.

For full details on all scholarships (including availability and application deadlines) please visit: www.soas.ac.uk/soas-alphawood



Entry Requirements

Entry Criteria

We will consider applications with the equivalent of a UK undergraduate degree at 2:2 or above. International qualification equivalents are listed on [our website](#).

In addition to degree classification, we take into account other elements of the application including a supporting statement and references. While references are optional, they can help build a stronger application profile if you fall below the 2:2 requirement or have non-traditional qualifications.

Our programme welcomes applicants who do not have an academic background in the Arts and Humanities, who are returning to higher education after a protracted period, or who come from non-traditional backgrounds. We place particular value on the diversity of perspectives this brings to our classroom.

Accessibility

Applications are considered on the standard academic criteria, regardless of any disability. We do recommend that you contact the Disability & Neurodiversity Team on disabilities@soas.ac.uk before submitting your application so that any potential adjustments can be discussed and so that you can decide if SOAS is suitable for you.

We will do all that we can to make it possible for you to study at SOAS but in the unlikely event that we are not able to make the adjustments necessary we will let you know as soon as possible.

Visa Requirements for In-Person Study

All international students (non-UK and Irish nationals) looking to study in-person will be required to follow UK Visa and Immigration policy.

International students are required to study our in-person programme via our **full-time** route and programmes of study lasting longer than six months (Postgraduate Diploma, MA) will require a **Student Visa**.

International students completing an in-person MA must begin in January to comply with the above.

Programmes of study lasting fewer than six months (Postgraduate Certificate, auditing a module) can be joined as a standard visitor to the UK.

You can use the [UK Government's visa checking tool](#) to find out which type of visa you will require for periods of in-person study over or under six months.

Asian Art in the Museum can be joined as a standard UK visitor if it is your only period of in-person study with us as part of your programme.

Please note that individuals in the UK with Graduate Visa status are not eligible to enrol on our in-person programme.

There are no visa requirements for online study.

Please be aware that, regardless of any offer you hold for our programme, permission to enter the UK is always at the discretion of the UK Visa and Immigration authorities.

Entry Requirements (continued)

Language Requirements

All international applicants not from a government-recognised Majority English Speaking Country must be able to show that their English is of a high enough standard to successfully engage with and complete the programme.

The required standard for direct entry is IELTS level 6.5 overall with at least 6.0 in all sub-scores.

More information about these requirements, accepted forms of evidence, and exemptions can be found at:

www.soas.ac.uk/international/english-language-requirements



Preparatory English Courses

For applicants who don't yet meet our language requirements, SOAS offers preparatory English courses via our International Foundation Courses and English Language Studies (IFCELS) department:

www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels

Study Restrictions

Students cannot be enrolled on more than one SOAS programme at any one time.



How to Apply

Application Procedure

Our [online application form](#) is accessible via our website.

A completed application form must be submitted along with:

- A personal statement outlining your background, interests, and why you are applying for the course (approximately 500 words)
- Validated evidence of your degree (transcript and/or certificate, officially translated into English if international)
- Evidence of English Language ability (if required)

Although we do not have a closing date for applications, early application is advised for all programmes.

Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.



Interviews

Applicants may be invited to attend an informal interview with the Programme Director, who will assess the candidate's commitment and aptitude. No special preparation for this interview is necessary.

Accommodation

London/UK residency and full-time attendance is required for in-person modules. Those relocating to London are responsible for their own accommodation and are strongly advised to allow ample time to make suitable arrangements before their course begins. SOAS offers support for finding a variety of accommodation options, including halls of residence for postgraduate students, shared student housing or private rental.

For more information see: www.soas.ac.uk/accommodation

Terms of Enrolment

Those responsible for the programme reserve the right to amend the content and timing of the courses.

The information in this prospectus is accurate at the date of publication.

For the most up to date information, please see our website: www.soas.ac.uk/soas-alphawood



The Student Experience

Support

Ensuring you have the best possible experience as a student on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme is our utmost priority. While studying with us, you will be fully supported by the programme director, manager, a dedicated administrative team and your module convenors, who will each do their best to see you get the most out of your time with us.

Learning

The flexible nature of study, allowing you to select your modules and complete the course on a part-time basis, is aimed to fit around those who work or have personal commitments.

In each in-person module, art history of a particular region or religious tradition is introduced in a broadly chronological framework. In our online modules, you are introduced to current themes and approaches in art history through focused case studies.

Skills

Across the programme, you will develop key skills in documenting, analysing and contextualising objects, alongside transferable academic skills in essay writing and presentation. This ensures that candidates who do not have an art history background are able to adapt quickly to art historical academic writing. Many of our students come from varied academic and professional backgrounds and we ensure that they are well equipped to handle the material alongside students from an arts background, with dedicated training offered in our 15-credit module, Analysing and Exploring the Arts.



Careers and Further Opportunities

The SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme is a pathway to further study or a career in museums and the art world.

Many of our graduates, including those with no prior background in art history or archaeology, go on to further study, including taught postgraduate and PhD projects at SOAS and other institutions worldwide.

Alumni from the programme have gone on to work in UK and international Museums, auctions houses and galleries including: the Asian Civilisation Museum Singapore, the British Museum, Tai Kwun, The Victoria and Albert Museum, the Hong Kong Palace Museum, Bonhams, Christies, Sotheby's and many more.



“The SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme was a life-changing experience for my academic and professional career. The lectures are dynamic and thought-provoking, and the convenors frequently invite truly inspiring specialists to lecture on a wide range of amazing topics. This learning experience is complemented by seminars and visits to museums, galleries, and auction houses.

Object handling sessions were unique opportunities for students to develop an intimate relationship with Art objects, combining the theoretical approach with practical and sensorial experience. I have never met anywhere such a vast range of diverse individuals so affectionately devoted to Asian arts. The course is an intense immersion in this field, offering great learning and exchange opportunities with lecturers, students, and professionals who work with art.

The program's multi-focal organization is efficient, adapting and corresponding to the demands of students who intend to engage in academic research or those looking for Museum and Galleries positions or working in the art market. The convenors were always available for advice and guidance, and it was through their support that I was able to develop my Ph.D. proposal. I feel that I am more prepared for the next steps in my academic career and have more professional opportunities after getting this Diploma.”

Diogo Farias, Brazil

Careers and Further Opportunities (continued)

Internship Opportunities

Students on our programme are supported in applying for internship positions when they are made available.

Examples of internship opportunities available to our students in recent years include placements with:

- The British Council and the Venice Biennale
- The British Library
- The British Museum
- The Fondation Chu Teh-Chun
- SOAS Co-Creator Internships
- SOAS Gallery



“As part of my time as the 2024/25 Dr Hettie Elgood scholar on the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art Programme, I was fortunate to also be selected by the university and British Council to undertake a fellowship at the 19th Venice Biennale of Architecture with the British-Kenyan Pavilion.

I engaged visitors to Venice from around world with an impactful exhibition examining architecture and colonisation as parallel, interconnected systems.

The fellowship provided an invaluable opportunity to observe how site, materiality, and narrative converge within a major international exhibition and these ideas will continue to inform my ongoing research into systems of interbeing within the material world—the relationships between objects, their environments, and the people who engage with them.

Being in a city as unique as Venice alongside a cohort of incredible students from universities around the UK, as well as meeting other Fellows to the Biennale working at the Peggy Guggenheim museum and other national pavilions from Romania to the United States was a singular experience.

These new friends enriched my understanding of how architecture, technology, material culture, and creative practice intersect, particularly in the context of addressing colonial legacies and environmental sustainability. ”

Vy Tsan, Australia



Specialist Art Short Courses

Alongside our postgraduate degrees, our specialist short courses have become an integral part of the SOAS-Alphawood Asian Art programme.

These courses are open to all and aimed at those from a wide variety of backgrounds seeking to broaden their knowledge of specialised areas of Asian art. Short courses are ideal for those who do not have the opportunity to attend our full-time programme. They also serve as a taster to our longer, more immersive modules. These courses enable you to explore specialist areas which are not covered in depth within our postgraduate modules.

In-person specialist art courses explore a single topic over an intensive four-day programme, including lectures by leading experts. Where appropriate we also include practising artists, musicians and object-study sessions.

Online specialist art courses offer eight weekly lectures by leading experts from academia, museums and the art market. Lectures are followed by in-depth discussions moderated by the course convenor.

In 2026/27 we are thrilled to offer a combination of weekly, online short courses as well as four-day, in-person courses.

There are no entry requirements for our short courses.

For more information regarding our upcoming courses, please visit:

www.soas.ac.uk/art-short-courses

or contact asianart@soas.ac.uk



Our Global Alumni Network

Our Alumni

All who engage with our programme, be it as a postgraduate student, auditor or attendee of a specialist short course are welcomed into our global alumni network of over 1,500 like-minded individuals passionate about the Arts of Asia, living in over 50 countries worldwide.

Our Alumni have access to:

- A series of exclusive events run by our Founder and Director of the Global Alumni Network, Dr Hettie Elgood, including museum and gallery tours, as well as tours of private collections both in the UK and worldwide
- An annual Distinguished Lecture Series and Alumni Party event
- International tours run in partnership with Distant Horizons
- Access to free lectures and events

Graduates of our postgraduate programme are also eligible for:

- Lifelong free access to the SOAS Library (with the option to upgrade to a borrowing membership at a discounted rate) as well as online resources such as JSTOR for access to thousands of scholarly articles digitally
- Lifelong access to the [SOAS Careers Service](#), for support with job searches, networking opportunities and more



Ready To Take The Next Step?

Contact Us

If you have any questions about our programme, pathways, application process, or anything further we can help you with, contact us on:

Phone: +44 (0)20 7898 4445

Email: AsianArt@soas.ac.uk

Book a One-to-One Meeting

Our Programme Director, Dr Malcolm McNeill, would be delighted to meet with you to discuss your goals and help you explore whether our programme is the right fit for you. Meetings can be arranged in person, via phone or via Zoom.

Email: AsianArt@soas.ac.uk to set a time and date.

Apply

Applications are open year-round, with entry points in **September, January** and **May**.

Find our application form at:
www.AsianArtProgramme.co.uk

Connect With Us

Follow us for updates on our programme and related news and events:

Instagram: [@asianartprogramme](https://www.instagram.com/asianartprogramme) 

YouTube: [/asianartsoas](https://www.youtube.com/asianartsoas) 





www.AsianArtProgramme.com

