

Universität Bern  
Institut für Kunstgeschichte

Bachelor of Arts in Art History (BA)  
Master of Arts in Art History (MA)

Special qualifications in:

- Curatorial Studies and Museology
- Monument Preservation  
and Monument Management
- History of Textile Arts

Doktorat (Dr. phil.)

Through a program of engaging lectures and seminars, the Institute of Art History provides in-depth knowledge of the global history of art and architecture from early medieval times to the present day. The Institute's extensive international network and close partnerships with museums and research institutions provide a unique opportunity to acquire knowledge from an array of sources. In the course of your studies, you will deal with all genres of the arts, including architecture, painting, sculpture, and applied arts, as well as photography, film, and digital media.

Studying art history is primarily comprised of the research and analysis of artistic production in its historical and cultural context. This includes the investigation of the social, cultic, and aesthetic functions of works of art; the differentiation of forms and types of works and monuments; research into their history; the interpretation of content; the investigation of artistic and literary reception; as well as art theory, art historiography, and methodology.



You are interested in studying art history because you want to deal with art at a professional level.

At the Institute of Art History (IKG), you will learn how to address questions to your objects of study:

- Who defines what art is?
- Is art also a craft?
- In what ways is art political?
- What judgments does art criticism make?
- What kind of analysis is art criticism?
- Who actually owns the pictures in a museum?
- Does art have limits?
- What makes architecture the art of building?
- What is the significance of art in society?

The Institute consists of five Chairs:

- ÄK Pre-Modern Art History
- KN Early Modern Art History
- MG Modern and Contemporary Art History
- AD History of Architecture and Monument Preservation
- TK History of Textile Arts

The program is enriched through additional events offered by visiting instructors with experience in a range of professions, as well as project seminars and a variety of excursions. The entire spectrum of Western art and its history is conveyed from early Christianity through to the present. Aside from such classical art genres as architecture, painting, sculpture, graphics, and crafts, forms of expression specific to modernity and the present – including new media – will be dealt with. The objects of study also include the historical and social conditions of artistic practice, as well as the cultic, social, and aesthetic functions of art and buildings, their forms and types, content and meaning, up to and including their artistic and literary reception. The analysis and history of art theory and art history are also an important component of the comprehensive program.

## Key features

- A Bachelor's program offering a broad education in all areas of art history from the Middle Ages to the present
- Career oriented Master's programs: curatorial studies and museology; monument preservation and monument management; history of the textile arts
- Focus on art and architecture's social relevance
- Innovative courses and individual support
- Project- and practice-oriented learning, participation in exhibitions and publications
- Handling of historical artefacts and texts, archive holdings; experience in working with library holdings and databases
- The Institute operates within an international network and maintains close partnerships with research institutions and museums in Switzerland and abroad
- Extensive range of excursions to New York, Shanghai, Venice, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Prague, Istanbul, Warsaw, and more

## Career Development

Exhibition curator, museologist, monument conservator, academic, art dealer – studying art history qualifies you for entry into a variety of attractive professions. Classical fields of work include art historical research, exhibitions and museums, the art market and art criticism as well as mediation and provenance research. With the choice of supplementary subjects, career-oriented internships and a wide range of continuing education opportunities, you can also focus on specific topics that will help you to become a sought-after specialist on the job market. Alongside experience in other humanities disciplines, knowledge of pedagogy, law, economics, additional foreign languages as well as digital humanities and sub fields of computer science (artificial intelligence) will increase your employment options.

## Pre-Modern Art History

Prof. Dr.  
Beate Fricke

The Chair of Pre-Modern Art History is devoted to the study of medieval visual culture. Prof. Beate Fricke's teaching focuses on the relationship between various artefacts, materials, and cultural contexts in the medieval arts, as well as the creation and circulation of objects in sacred and profane spaces, both private and public. The production of objects is as much of a research focus in the department as the staging and reception of artworks. The program of study provides students with knowledge about materials, techniques, genres, styles, and themes related to the history of European art in the Middle Ages. Equipping students with the methodological tools of the discipline is fundamental to the program, as is the investigation of new research approaches.

We place emphasis on interdisciplinarity and the study of global entanglements of the medieval world. The members of the ERC-project "Global Horizons in Pre-Modern Art" (2018–2024) investigated the historical meanings and functions of the horizon in visual and intellectual cultures of the pre-modern world on a global scale. We are teaching and researching in close collaboration with museums and research institutes in Switzerland and abroad. Excursions and our collaboration with the Bern Center for the Middle Ages (BMZ) bring students into direct contact with interdisciplinary research and non-European histories of art. The Chair fosters students' participation in international research programs, with the support of the Ellen J. Beer-Foundation.

## Early Modern Art History

Prof. Dr.  
Urte Krass

The Chair of Early Modern Art History offers an insight into the broad spectrum of media, genres and materials used in European arts and material culture in their global interdependencies. Seminars and lectures provide a foundation in the history, theory and historiography of art, historical and interdisciplinary research (15th to 19th century). The Chair's emphasis lies on questions posed within the frameworks of visual studies and the anthropology of art: How do images function in sacred and profane contexts? Which tasks were delegated to artefacts in different periods?

The teaching comprises established fields of modern art history (Italian Renaissance, cult and art image questions, questions on the relationship between image and body, political iconography), as well as more recent themes of a constituent global art history (art and expansion, global image transfer, trans-cultural intertwining processes). In addition to Italy as an important point of reference for modern art, the focus is on the art and material culture of Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands, as well as on pictorial and object cultures in non-European territories, especially Portugal. The critical examination of historical and contemporary approaches to art history in modern times is an integral part of the Chair's research and teaching.

Cooperation with museums and participation in interdisciplinary and international research programs is strongly supported.

## Modern and Contemporary Art History

Prof. Dr.  
Peter J. Schneemann

Starting with the modernist movement, art began to engage with reflexive questions, reinventing itself on various occasions, and opening itself up to exploration in all conceivable directions. The ever-expanding field of contemporary art is rich in innovative approaches. The research questions it necessitates can be posed to artists, gallery owners, and intermediaries such as curators alike: Who defines what art is? What is the relationship between art and politics? And what role does art history play in the reception of art? The Chair of Modern and Contemporary Art History approaches such questions through its conception of art as a constant process of social negotiation.

The task of creating critical instruments for describing and investigating the development of art requires contextualisation, art theoretical knowledge and an awareness of the social conditions of contemporary practices. Interdisciplinary approaches, in collaboration with philosophy, psychology, sociology, film, literature, theatre studies, and other disciplines, are proving to be essential to the further investigation of our objects of study. Art history analyzes social and aesthetic accumulations of value and is directly involved in them. Current focal points are the role of contemporary art in ecological change and in the process of digitalisation. Teaching takes into account all visual cultures as well as all cross-media genres.

## History of Architecture and Monument Preservation

Prof. Dr.  
Laura Hindelang

The Chair of Architectural History and Preservation provides an overview of the history, theory, and historiography of architecture from the Medieval period to the present day. The history of architecture as part of art history encompasses the visual culture of buildings and cities, from drawings to postage stamps. At the same time, architectural history involves the study of the three-dimensional building as an artistic object and material evidence that provides information about historical building practices and sociocultural use. Therefore, site visits and field trips are important components of the course offerings. Teaching and research focus on the built environment and its global entanglements in the context of migration, exile, colonization, and globalization, especially across Europe and the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). In the critical reflection of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches (Gender Studies, Environmental Humanities), new perspectives are developed for the inclusive and sustainable treatment of historical building culture in the 21st century.

The Master's program with special qualification in "Monument Preservation and Monument Management" enables students to specialize in recording, evaluating and managing of architectural heritage. In close cooperation with experts and institutions in preservation in Switzerland and abroad, we teach the history, theory and ethics of monument preservation in the context of architectural history as well as the practice of monument preservation and its social responsibility.

## History of the Textile Arts

Prof. Dr.  
Corinne Mühlemann

With the Abegg Foundation Professorship, the textile arts have been studied and researched as part of art history at the Bern Institute of Art History since 2009. In the master's program with a focus on "History of the Textile Arts", the department offers a comprehensive insight into the interdisciplinary field of textile research (from the early Middle Ages to the present). Textile artefacts – that is, embroidered, knitted, printed, tapestry-woven, and woven fabrics made of various materials, as well as the three-dimensional objects made from them, such as covers, pieces of clothing, and room furnishings (public, sacred, and private) – continually cross medial, geographical, epochal, and disciplinary boundaries.

Teaching and research address the production, use, perception, staging and circulation of textile objects in their respective cultural contexts and introduce the methodology, theory and historiography of textile research. In addition to Europe, the focus of the department is on the non-European areas of the Islamic world, which, as the connecting space between Europe and Asia, plays a central role in the history of the textile arts. The rich collection of textile artefacts in Swiss and international museums enables students to study the textile arts in their full breadth. Field trips, museum internships, and scholarly conferences are part of the curriculum and promote access to current issues in conservation, preservation, presentation and mediation of textile artifacts.

## World Art History

Prof. Dr.  
Elize Mazadiego

What role can art history play in a world where global processes are increasingly important for understanding cross-cultural exchanges and interactions? What are the approaches to modernity and cultural politics that have developed in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and other regions outside, but in connection with the West? What does contemporary art teach us about decolonization, migration and identities? How can world or global notions of art destabilize old hierarchies and static frameworks in the field of art and art history?

The professorship for World Art History is part of the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art and the Center for Global Studies. It develops synergies with interdisciplinary graduate programs of the Walter Benjamin Kolleg, specifically the master's in World Arts and Music. World Art History explores and critically examines globality within art and cultural production. Through a close study of objects and discourses, World Art History enables reflections on processes and paradigms, such as transculturation, polycentrism and relationality. It is invested in tracing diverse worlds, forming new modes of analysis and developing alternative historiographies. Research and teaching focuses on the examination of non-Western art, with a special emphasis on Latin America within global and transnational contexts.

## SNSF-PRIMA Professorship

Prof. Dr.  
Manuela Studer-Karlen

The SNSF research project "Love and War on Gothic Ivory" (2021–2026) addresses not only materiality but also the rhetoric of images and the socio-semiotic aspects of image communication. Despite military, social, and pandemic crisis situations, ivory carvings as luxury goods experienced a heyday in the 13th and especially 14th centuries. This apparent contradiction evokes questions about the value and meaning of these luxurious objects in elite society. A large number of preserved utilitarian objects such as boxes, combs, and mirror capsules show profane depictions of courtship or episodes of contemporary romance. Furthermore, the contrasting of love scenes with warlike motifs is reminiscent of the historical crises that society faced. The analysis of these images provides insights into the main interests and social structures of the courtly owners. In this way, the profane ivory artworks reflect – albeit idealized – the lives, tastes, and literary knowledge of the elite. With these questions the project integrates itself into the current ivory research. An international conference was held in Bern in October 2022 and its proceedings published. Another conference, dealing with the different owners of the objects (Middle Ages, history of collection), will be held in October 2024 with the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Museum in London.

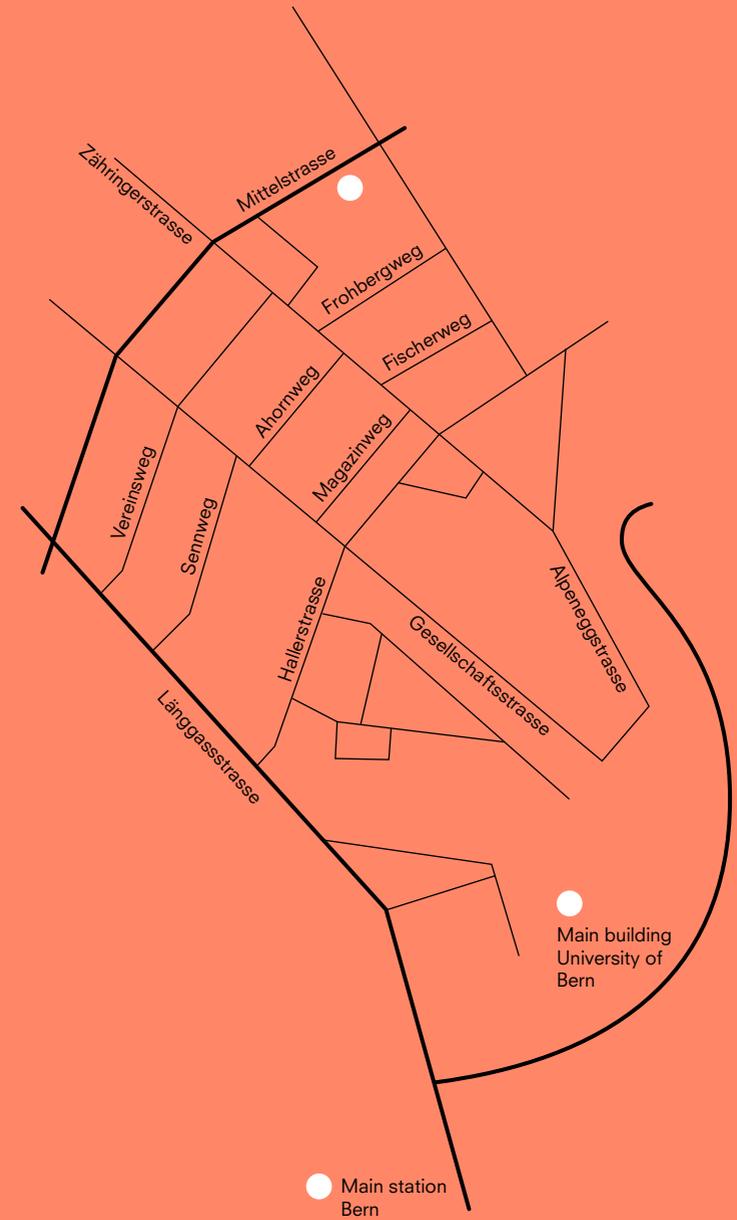
## Doctoral Degree Programs at the Faculty of Humanities

Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities

The Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities (GSAH) at the Walter Benjamin Kolleg at the University of Bern offers emerging scholars a structured, interdisciplinary doctoral program in which they can develop their PhD research. Three facets of the program are of particular interest for doctoral students in the history of art: "Studies in the Arts" (SINTA) is offered in collaboration with the Bern University of the Arts. It is directed toward artists and academic researchers interested in the relationship between theory and practice in the arts. The "Global Studies" (GS) section of the program provides a forum for investigating aspects of globalization and processes of global cultural intersection and exchange. "Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies" (ICS) encourages the development of interdisciplinary dialogue about key concepts and methodologies in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

[www.gsah.unibe.ch](http://www.gsah.unibe.ch)

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