

## King's Student Perspectives

### History of Art

Louis, 1st year

*History of Art here is such a fantastic course. The first year gives you a really broad grounding in the basics, with a good degree of freedom in both the weekly essays and the short dissertation.*

### Had you studied History of Art before Cambridge?

*I'd never studied the subject formally before, only had an interest in it for several years. Although this felt*

*slightly intimidating at first (there were some people who had done History of Art at A Level) thanks to the introductory nature of the first year, we were soon all on a level playing field. I'd read*

*Gombrich's The Story of Art in preparation, and tried to visit as many galleries as I could, both in London and in Europe where possible.*

*The only slight issue I found was the essay writing; I studied*

*Geography, Maths, and Latin for to A2 at school, so never really found myself writing long, analytical essays as we do*

*here. Supervisions soon helped to iron out the creases, though, and taught me how to structure a good argument, as well as details such as footnoting and bibliographies.*

### What do you study in first year?

*The first year in History of Art is divided into three parts: Objects of Art History; the Meaning of Art and Architecture; and the Making of Art. **Objects of Art History**, which runs throughout the whole of the first year, takes the form of twice-weekly seminars in and around Cambridge, looking at the rich art and architecture that fills the city. **Meaning of Art** gives a general survey of religious and secular iconography*

*from the 15th to 17th centuries, whereas **Meaning of Architecture** gives a survey of architectural theory from antiquity to the twentieth century. **The Making of Art** looks at the process of making paintings, sculpture, prints and drawings from the 13th to 20th centuries, including techniques and style.*

*These units are assessed in five exam papers at the end of first year, three of which are based on visual analysis and comparison, while the other two are essay-based.*



*The History of Art department, up the road from King's*



*Meeting everyone on the first day - I'm on the right*

*Thanks to the introductory nature of the first year, we were soon all on a level playing field.*

*The first year in History of Art is divided into three papers.*

## What is the workload like?

*There's one essay to write and one supervision discussion on it every week, which is a nice amount of work. Supervisors rotate around at the end of each topic so that you always get a specialist in the area that you are studying. The essay titles that we are set vary hugely. Sometimes they require a large amount of reading, but often they need nothing more than background research to back up visual analyses and your own arguments. As a result, the course teaches an incredible range of skills with respect to both research and argument, which come to a T with the short dissertation that has to be written during the first year on any work of art or architecture in Cambridge. I did my dissertation on one of the Degas sculptures from the Fitzwilliam Museum, because we are lucky enough to have three of his original wax models in the collection. There was help available from our Director of Studies, as well as other members of the department.*

*The course teaches an incredible range of skills with respect to both research and argument.*



*Lunch in Chetwynd Court – I'm on the left here*

## How did you find the application process?

*The application process was actually incredibly straightforward. All it required was one piece of work to be sent in after I applied, followed by two interviews in December. I sent in an essay I had written on Pop Art for a school essay prize, although others sent in work from school subjects.*

*One of my interviews was what I expected, with general questions on art as well as some based on my UCAS personal statement. There was a visual analysis of a painting, which was difficult but it didn't seem like the interviewer was looking for anything too complex. The other*

*interview was more abstract, requiring a higher degree of thinking, but it was incredibly interesting too. It was difficult to know what was expected of me: I just tried to think logically and respond to the different questions individually.*

## What is King's like?

*King's is a really fun place to study and live. There is a real sense of community around the whole college. The fact that History of Art is such a small subject doesn't matter. In fact, the way that supervisions are spread around different colleges, and both lectures and seminars are so small, allows you to get to know people from all around the university.*

*Each new student is assigned college parents in the year above, and these college families allow inter-year bonds to develop. Participation in any of the many societies and*



*Sunset over College*



King's M2' rowing crew – I'm the cox

sports within the college allow further links to grow. I myself am part of the King's boat club, which is a really welcoming environment for beginners, and has a diverse range of entertaining events throughout the year. KCSU (that is the student union for King's) is also really accessible and does some real good around the College.

The food here is really good: in the canteen, there are always at least three options for both lunch and dinner every day, and a fantastic selection of desserts. Formals (served dinners) take place once a week, which is less than most colleges and they cost more but it's definitely worth it. They are a fantastic evening and one of the best events that go on in College, although this makes demand for tickets very high.

The architecture and the art around King's are astonishing to be surrounded by, most obviously the Chapel and its Rubens' altarpiece (*The Adoration of the Magi*). However, the Fitzwilliam Museum just up the road from King's also contains many fantastic pieces that are lent to them by King's, and there are a few gems spread around obscure rooms in College too.

The only downside about King's is the tourists on King's Parade, who sometimes form a nearly impenetrable barrier in front of College. This is more than made up for by the extremely convenient location of the college and the heritage and beauty that surrounds the place, however.



Master of the von Groote Adoration – triptych displayed in the Chapel

## The city of Cambridge

As both a city and a university, Cambridge is a joy. There is always something going on somewhere around the city, from theatre and journalism to sport and politics.

Personally, I've got involved in two of the student papers - *Varsity* and *The Tab* - writing theatre reviews and culture pieces. It was very easy to join these papers despite not having any previous experience. Next term, I will also be directing a play for the first time as part of the lively theatre scene here, which puts on at least four shows every week of term. The ADC Theatre has big productions of a professional level, whereas Corpus Playroom (which is incredibly close to King's) puts on more intimate performances of a diverse range of genres.



The Corpus playroom in St Edwards passage, just opposite the College

Sport is also huge around the uni, from blues sport (playing at a high standard for the University) to amateur levels. King's College Boat Club (KCBC) is really accepting of everyone, and participates in all the big races throughout the year, including Lent and May Bumps. The Bumps are big races which all Colleges participate in (each one normally has several boats of different standards). Each crew tries to catch (or bump) the boat ahead whilst avoiding being bumped by the boat behind! As well as rowing, there's also

*football, rugby, mixed lacrosse and other sports at the college and almost any sport you could think of somewhere in the university (and city).*

*At times, Cambridge inevitably fills up with tourists but you find ways to become acclimatised to that and there are plenty of places in College that are immune to this, such as the big garden.*

*September 2014*



*The garden is large and always peaceful, and the gardeners work hard to keep it looking great.*

### **A note to current King's History of Art students**

If you would like to write about your experiences of studying History of Art at King's for our prospective students to read, please email Kristy in the Admissions Office for further details: [undergraduate.admissions@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate.admissions@kings.cam.ac.uk)