

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**INTERVIEWER:** Hello and welcome back to the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences showcase. In this session, we're going to take a look A344, Art and its Global History. And I'm joined by Warren Carter and Emma Barker from the module team, who are going to fill us in on this really new exciting third level module.

Now, you'll see some widgets that we'd like you to vote on-- whether you're most interested in art or history, which level you are starting, and whether or not you have a choice to make for your next module. We know that some people will have a clear pathway, but others of you may be on the open programme, and indeed we've had a lot of open programme students here throughout the day.

Warren and Emma, can you give us a brief overview, then, of some of the basics of the module? How many credits is it? Over how long? What's in the assessment?

**WARREN** Yes, it's 60 credits. It's a third level course. And it lasts a full academic year. There are five  
**CARTER:** TMA's and an EMA.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right.

**WARREN** And what's nice about the course is one, that the TMAs build very gradually, so those who  
**CARTER:** have never studied art history before can work their way into the subject. And they're weighted accordingly as well. So those at the beginning don't count for quite as much as those that come later. So when the students are more comfortable working with the materials. And an EMA's a lovely way to finish, because rather than the exam, which is unseen, they get to write about something they're very passionate and enthusiastic about hopefully they discovered whilst doing the course.

**INTERVIEWER:** Lovely. Now, there's no art history pathway yet, but this will appeal to a lot of different students coming in from a lot of different backgrounds. Do you need to have studied art history beforehand?

**WARREN** Not really. I mean, there's a second level course on history on empire. There's obviously  
**CARTER:** students who are doing classics. As I say, the course starts off quite gently, teaching you how

to look at paintings, how to deconstruct them, how to pick apart texts. So you're taught the basic visual skills of understanding images. And bearing in mind that the course is really thinking about art not just in its kind of rarefied form of art galleries and exhibitions but also everyday life material culture.

So we hope everyone will have some relationship with the everyday world and the visual culture that surrounds them, and the course very much addresses those kinds of issues. So we designed it to be as open and democratic as possible, so we'd like to think that you don't need to be an art historian to do this course. You can come in and we'll keep you the skills and teach you how to do it.

**INTERVIEWER:** So it's really nicely scaffolded so people will feel comfortable doing a lot of it. And how exciting as well that for the end of module assessment you get to write about something that really inspires you?

**WARREN CARTER:** Completely. I mean, the course starts off in the Renaissance and finishes in the contemporary world now. So there's bound to be something that students will find they really get their teeth into and want to write about. So yeah, that's very exciting, I think.

**EMMA BARKER:** Well, the thing is, I mean that art history has really changed in recent years, moving away from talking about famous paintings, sculpture, architecture by great artists. I mean, we still do do that, but-- and as Warren says, we do material culture much more. I think in terms of the theme of the course, which is about how European art has been transformed by Europe's history of engaging with the whole of the rest of the world. I think a lot of people who do this course will find that they've got things in their own house that reflect this history, that anybody who's got a piece of blue and white china in their house, that is something that traditionally comes from China, was a huge luxury import in the Renaissance, then got popularised in the 17th and 18th centuries, and then got imitated widely by British manufacturers.

And so that very simple pattern of blue and white is something that's absolutely central to this history that we're tracing in the course. So that we hope that this is something that will engage people, will help them to understand, and at least will have resonances with their own way of life. And then when it comes, as Warren says, to the EMA, the thing is you get to choose some one or two objects that you want to make the focus of exploring in depth in relation to the themes of the module.

**INTERVIEWER:** Excellent. We'll take a look through the blocks, if we may, in one second, but we've asked our

audience what they're most interested in. It's a very clear cut in the middle between art and history. So this is obviously art history, but again, just this idea that people could come to this from different pathways. However, only 17 of our students are watching right now and have a choice to make for the next module. The others are on a pathway that has been pre-determined. And most of our students are at level 1 and 2, just to give you an idea and a snapshot of who's out there at the moment.

So like you say, Warren, you've mentioned some of the material culture, and Emma, you're mentioning how things have changed in terms of what we consider art and the various artefacts that we're using. If we take a look then at the blocks and some of the exciting things that people might learn about throughout the module, block one is about European art in the wider world, and this is from the period 1350 to 1550.

**EMMA BARKER:** Yeah, that really, on the one hand, you do have some of the content in that part of the module is to do with the import of these new luxuries that came from other parts of world, like Chinese porcelain, which I've just talked about, which were incredibly luxurious and much sought about by royalty, aristocracy in their collections. But they also leave their trace in paintings of the period. We have a chapter that's dealing with altar pieces. These are absolute Italian and from other parts of the world, but altar pieces are an absolutely central form of Renaissance art. And this takes a new way of looking at them by showing that in these very familiar paintings of saints and religious subjects, you actually have many exotic subjects that are actually included in them, and that you also have the subject of the three kings, of the third king of the three kings at the nativity is usually depicted as a black king. And so that discusses what does that show about attitudes to other races?

We've also got part of that block is dealing with places where you had different cultures mixing. So that we have Spain, which was ruled by the Muslims right up to the Arabs, right up to the end of the 15th century. So that really talks about the way that you get the visual culture, the [INAUDIBLE] architecture of the Christian, the Muslim, and the Jewish populations, and deals with some very beautiful and amazing buildings, like the Alhambra. And there's also a chapter that deals with Venice, which was this great melting pot where you had a great trading centre, where they did trading with North Africa, with the Middle East. And in Venetian paintings, you have all these amazing, again, exotic figures, turbaned figures.

So it's really offering a new view of Renaissance art that shows how, even in this kind of classic period of European art, there's actually all of these different influences of cultures of

the rest of the world helping to shape it.

**INTERVIEWER:** We then move on in time and look at art, commerce, and colonialism.

**EMMA BARKER:** That's me again.

**WARREN** She's the editor of that one, so I think she [INAUDIBLE].

**CARTER:**

**EMMA BARKER:** So that's really talking about the period of the 17th and 18th centuries. And that's really the heyday of the great trading companies. The Dutch East India Company, the famous, the British East India Company, and how you have a massive increase in these imports into Europe, of how they transform art in Europe. And not just art but also wallpaper, ceramics, and so on. But also as well this is the time you get large scale colonisation, particularly in the Americas.

So we have a very new and exciting chapter that deals with art in Latin America, which we certainly have never done in any of our modules before, and it's not really very often been taught in art history courses in this country at all, and showing how the Spanish, who mostly ruled most of Latin America, were trying to spread Christian art and religion, but the result is this extraordinary hybrid exotic art. They're really gorgeous paintings, and very decorative, and very spectacular, and I think people will really, really like that.

And then we also have a bit about Dutch-- nobody much knows that the Dutch colonised Brazil, but there are some amazing paintings of the Brazilian natives that were produced, were commissioned by the Dutch governor-general of Brazil. And I happened to see those paintings. They're huge paintings of the indigenous people of Brazil, also of some African people who had been imported as slaves to Brazil. And I saw them in a museum and I was just bowled over. They're the most spectacular and extraordinary paintings of indigenous peoples. That these images existed really bowled me over, and so I was very happy to have the opportunity to write about them for the course, and I hope people find them as exciting as I have done.

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you, Emma. Let's take a quick trip to the hot desk. Sophie and HJ, how's everyone out there this afternoon?

**HJ:** I think we're doing very well. We're happy and positive, and some people are still doing their

EMAs, but it all sounds good, and everyone's prepared, which we're very happy about. We've got people popping in and out from the different sections that they're interested in, the different modules. So Debra has a question about suitability of the module. She says, "what if you're coming from health and social at level 1 or 2. No art subject. Would it be wise to do this module at level 3?"

**WARREN**

Well, as I said, the way the course works, the way it's built is it starts off with a gentle

**CARTER:**

introduction to art history. So I would be very hopeful that there was no reason to stop this person doing this course. So you don't really need to already have an art historical academic background to do this course.

**INTERVIEWER:**

Yeah. Find out, Emma. Speak to some of the careers advisors-- the advisors. So just go through to your student support team, and see if you can talk to one of them about the pathways and the various things that you might want to do to scaffold and build up to that. HJ?

**HJ:**

I think on that front, then, in the chat, we're interested in whether there is anything you would suggest that students new to this area have a look at before the module starts? Maybe some OU resources, or are there any OpenLearn courses around this area?

**WARREN**

At the moment, as a department, we're producing a project called Travelling Objects, which is

**CARTER:**

designed to go into sixth form centres and schools as a way to try and encourage A-level studies to think about doing art history at a degree level. Not just at the OU, anywhere, because the subject's been under attack recently, and it was looking like it might be phased out at A-level. So we decided we want to play some part. Did you have anything to say?

**EMMA BARKER:**

I'm just going to say that it's called Open Art Objects.

**WARREN**

Oh, I get the two confused. There's two projects rolling at the same time.

**CARTER:**

**EMMA BARKER:**

So we have two projects. One that's called Open Art Objects, which are short films with supportive material, which are about introducing some of the basics of art history, as Warren says, particularly for schools that will get them thinking about engaging with art history. And we're also working on a somewhat different project, which is called Travelling Objects, which will be online material which is focused case studies of some examples of these kinds of objects. So I'm not entirely sure when that's going to go live, but the Travelling Objects project would be a nice thing for people to look at if they are thinking about doing this module and

want to get a little bit of a taster of the kinds of objects and issues that they'll encounter in the module.

**WARREN** Both projects are heavily [? rated ?] to A3344 in terms of the personnel doing both and the  
**CARTER:** overlap of things moving around, etc.

**INTERVIEWER:** Excellent. No, that's great. And also OpenLearn, do check that out, because there's often material there. Warren, can you give us a whistle stop tour of blocks 3 and 4? So block 3, Empire and Art British India.

**WARREN** Yeah, well, block 3's a bit different than the other-- block 3's different from the other three  
**CARTER:** blocks because it's a particular case study. So rather than ranging around the continent, it's set in British India. And just a few things to throw out. Just in terms of this idea of-- I mean, in the first two books, there's this overarching concept of hybridity, objects having this hybrid nature formed between two different cultures.

In book 3, Renata, she talks about the transcultural. Sorry?

**EMMA BARKER:** The editor of the book.

**WARREN** Editor? Yeah, sorry. Editor of book 3. It talks about the transcultural. And the art of the  
**CARTER:** transcultural is, even though you have the unequal meeting, obviously, between empire and colony, Britain and India, the way they impact upon each other culturally is very interesting and very distinct. An example would be the Kashmiri-- what do you call it? The scarf.

**EMMA BARKER:** Paisley scarf.

**WARREN** Paisley. Yeah, Paisley scarf. So originally in the 18th century, they were being produced in  
**CARTER:** Kashmir in India. And they caught off, so therefore Paisley in Scotland started to mass produce them there. And then that impacted back on how they were being reproduced in India itself. So there's this weird kind of movement of objects in the material cultures.

Another one would be the Great Exhibition of 1851, where they got Indian craftsmen over to produce traditional artisan works, which had a massive impact on art school education in Britain, which then impacted back into India, as they were taught these ways of doing it in terms of mass production ways. So artisan [? on the ?] way to mass production.

And lastly, a lot of artists who were self-taught in India started to adopt sort of academic British

conventions in producing painting, often combining these with images of gods and animals, etc, which then fed into early Hindi cinema in terms of the iconography of Bollywood. So these are constant movements between empire and colony, and these objects, these transcultural objects that come out of it. So I think that's fascinating. This is all new to me as well. So very, very interesting.

**INTERVIEWER:** No, it sounds-- it sounds really, really varied, and you can see how students would be moving from one thing to another. You wouldn't get bored with both the skills you were looking at, and the subject areas, and the artefact. Block 4, I know, Warren, you're very, very passionate about. And just to conclude, this is about Colonialism and Globalisation, Art after Empire.

**WARREN  
CARTER:** So in many ways, the thing that ties the whole course together is that it charts off colonialism, of the meeting of the West and the rest of the world, of particular important event would be 1492, Columbus discovering the world. And so in many ways, from the particular vantage point of the present, the now, there's this very dominant idea about globalisation, which goes back to the late '70s, '80s, and the idea that, increasingly, that divide between first world, second world, third world has been obliterated since the fall of the wall, the end of the Cold War, the absorption of China into the world market. And therefore that was really the spur for setting up this new challenge to art history and the traditional canon.

We now live in a globalised world, and therefore, academics have to reflect that new period. What this course is trying to do, really, is go back and say, well, actually the world has been globalised since 1492, when everything started to tie together.

**EMMA BARKER:** Which is when Columbus discovers America.

**WARREN  
CARTER:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So book 4 is really the starting point in terms of art history. We're then thinking back through the other books. And book 4 comes up to date and looks at what's happened in terms of 20th century art and art up to the present and how that really operates in a globalised world. So the first two chapters are about looking at how 20th century modernist artists, like Picasso or Matisse, used African or Oceanic masks and imported that into their art works to change the history of Western modernism.

My chapter's on Mexican muralism, which I very luckily got flown out to make two films about, which was absolutely fantastic. I loved it. And then the last two chapters were about now, the globalised present, thinking about things like the Venice Biennale, and how the Biennale circuit is moving the world over, the kind of collectors and artists that move with it.

**EMMA BARKER:** Those are the big international exhibitions that contemporary-- that the modern art world has become incredibly global, that there are these international exhibitions all over the world.

**WARREN** Yeah, so it brings it right up-to-date basically.

**CARTER:**

**INTERVIEWER:** And of course globalisation is something that everyone has a purchase on.

**WARREN** Everyone has a perch on it. Everyone uses the internet. Yeah, so.

**CARTER:**

**EMMA BARKER:** But yeah, as Warren says, it does, in the light of this moment, that we're very conscious that we live in this connected, globalised world, in which things that happen all over the world can impact on us here, wherever we live. But as he says, it's really tracing back the history of art, showing how ever since-- in fact, the starting point of the course is 1350. So just showing how actually Europe has always been, and Britain of course as well, has always been connected with the rest of the world.

So looking at all of the visual arts that we discuss in the module and the material culture that goes with it is to show that we're really using them as ways of understanding how we got to be here. So I think it really sheds a light, not merely on the history of art but really on the history of how we got the world that we live in today.

**INTERVIEWER:** Excellent. That's all we have time for, I'm afraid. You've given us such a wonderful flavour of the module. So Emma Barker and Warren Carter, thank you so much for joining us now. And if you like history, join us for our next session. So stay tuned. We'll be watching a brief introduction to the British Isles and the Modern World, 1789 to 1914. We'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]