



PRIVATE VIEW

Throw away the bluffer's guide to art. Specialist courses bring you up to speed with conversation and contacts on the side.

Lucy Humphries puts her name down

If you want to be accepted as a person of taste and intelligence, you need to know about art. You must have a view, your own view, not just the accepted wisdom that often follows fads and celebrity. From smart dinner parties to the office water cooler, people discuss the latest show, gallery, or controversial artist. You want to take part, but how? What if your tastes are rubbish and people laugh at you? Where to begin and how can you learn confidence and judgment?

— In the past, you would simply go to art galleries and look at things until you get the point. But that's time consuming and we all want quick, easy solutions. The answer is the specialist art course, tailored to your own needs and timetable with small classes

and a flexible schedule.

— Kate Gordon's London Art Studies is one of the best, combining enthusiastic, specialist lecturers in an agreeable salon-style setting. This autumn, there are 20 different daytime lectures covering a broad range of subjects including timely previews of major exhibitions in the capital. You can choose Contemporary art and the art market; the Pre-Raphaelites and Klimt; Picasso and Cubism; and British art from 1850 to the Turner Prize. There are lectures on jewellery, photography, Pop Art, and the ever-perplexing subject, What is Post-Modernism?

— Gordon, formerly CNN Global arts producer and Sotheby's head of public programmes, knows her audience. "For years I've been trying to find courses that are modern, relevant and don't require long-term commitment" she says. "These lectures are like a work-out for the mind, blending education with entertainment. You're not obliged to sign up for the whole programme, you can dip in and out, or even sample a single day to see if the format suits you."

— Each event lasts from 9.45am - 2.30pm and Gordon has chosen an informal but sophisticated setting - Pierre Koffmann's chic and comfortable restaurant in Knightsbridge. This is no dusty classroom.

— The lectures take place in the private room with a maximum of 16 people who range from collectors to beginners. All are motivated by an interest in art and the small group encourages conversation and sharing. With inspiring lecturers and useful course notes to maintain your interest beyond the day, and with sociable

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Left: *Mariana*
by John Everett
Millais, 1851, at
the Tate Britain
Pre-Raphaelites
exhibition until
13 January 2013.
Right: Kate
Gordon

TATE PHOTOGRAPHY





— Above: *Guitar, Compote Dish and Grapes*, 1924, by Pablo Picasso. Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

breaks for coffee and a delicious lunch in the restaurant, this is a uniquely agreeable way to learn and build your confidence.

— Individual lectures including lunch from a bespoke menu by Pierre Koffmann, are priced at £175; season tickets including six lectures of your choice, £875. Visit londonartstudies.com for more information.

COURSE WORK

London offers a broad range of art courses to hone your skills, perception and judgment.

■ Saatchi Gallery

A Beginner's Guide to Contemporary Art with Ben Street, a writer, teacher and curator who has worked at major museums in New York and London. Over five separate Saturday afternoons, Ben Street gives an overview of the Contemporary art scene looking at private collections, commercial galleries, artists' studios, museums and exhibition spaces. For more information and to book your place, email admin@saatchigallery.com or visit saatchi-gallery.co.uk

■ Victoria & Albert Museum

The much-loved V&A is an essential destination for visitors. It also has an extensive programme of courses and study groups focusing on the museum's temporary exhibitions and permanent collections.

For more information, visit vam.org.uk

■ Sotheby's and Christie's

London's two major auction houses both have short courses, study days and evening courses across a broad range of subjects relating to art and the business of art.

— Amongst other subjects, Sotheby's is offering a Frieze art fair course; the history of art (part 1) from Renaissance to Rococo; and art and finance in the global market. Sothebysinstitute.com

— Christie's offers various art modules covering artistic creativity and the art market, art law, and valuation and appraisal, as well as the world of the Pre-Raphaelites, and the Christie's wine course. Christieseducation.com

■ Contemporary Art Society

This distinguished organization, more than 100 years old, is devoted to supporting and developing public collections of contemporary art in the UK. Membership of CAS, at different levels of annual subscription, gives access to tailored programmes, tours and courses for art lovers at all levels. Serious collectors can enjoy studio visits, seminars and access to private collections. For more information visit contemporaryartsociety.org/membership

READING LIST

The BBC's arts editor, Will Gompertz, has published a guide to the runaway success of modern art over the last century. He claims contemporary art was born on April 2 1917 when Marcel Duchamps bought a porcelain urinal from a plumbing firm on Fifth Avenue. Gompertz looks at Andy Warhol, Conceptualism, Minimalism, Postmodernism, and significant figures such as Bruce Nauman and Maurizio Cattelan. He acutely observes the rise of interactive art such as Carsten Höller's cheerful slides at Tate Modern, describing it as 'artertainment', or more precisely, 'the slippage between modern art and mainstream entertainment'. While this book can't compare to the literary panache of *The Shock of the New* by the late Australian critic Robert Hughes in the 1980s, Gompertz is a witty and perceptive commentator. *What Are You Looking At? 150 years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye*. Published by Viking, £20.

