

London: an art *dilettante's* delight

“THERE REALLY IS NO SUCH
THING AS ART. THERE ARE
ONLY ARTISTS.”

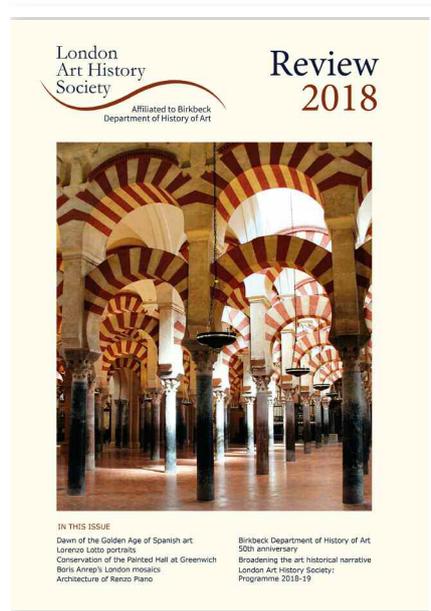
Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*

Have you recently relocated to London and are searching for a fun and interesting way to make friends and explore its rich culture? Try enrolling in one of the plethora of art history and contemporary art courses that the capital has on offer.

After moving to London from New York in 2004 and settling my children, then aged five and seven, into their respective schools, I too was looking for a way to embrace this new culture that I was so fortunate to have the opportunity to experience. The question, however, was how? As serendipity would have it, a new friend of mine suggested that I look into taking an art history course. As I investigated this idea, I soon discovered that London is an art dilettante's delight!

Thanks to the group known as the Young British Artists, just out of Goldsmith's College in the late 1980s and including the likes of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, London's new art scene was born. In fact, London has since become a major hub for the international art market, including a gallery scene that is one of the most exciting in the world. The capital plays host to both traditional and contemporary art museums, as well as world-

renowned private collections and international commercial galleries. With roughly 1,500 galleries, London now rivals New York and Paris as one of the most important centres in the art world. Furthermore with London's close proximity to the rest of Europe, it's just a hop, skip and a jump to any European destination to further enhance your art studies.



If London's art scene is your new passion too, then one way to dive in it is to become a member of a club or institution. One example is **The Kensington Chelsea Women's Club** (KCWC) (www.kcwc.org.uk). The KCWC is an organisation of British and international women which offers an array of art courses as well as many other cultural activities. It provides the opportunity to meet fellow members while attending art lectures, visiting galleries and travelling throughout the UK and Europe. Another option is a membership in **The London Art History Society** (www.londonarthistorysociety.org.uk), which is available to anyone who would like to acquire a greater understanding of the history of the visual arts in a friendly and stimulating environment. They provide a varied programme of lectures, courses, seminars and schools, study days, walks, visits and tours, all at affordable prices.

For the more serious art lover, **Christie's Education** (www.christies.edu) offers a host of degree and continuing education certificate courses. One notable course is the Certificate in Modern and Contemporary Art. What is unique about

this course is its flexibility. You can sign up to complete their year-long course which ultimately requires two essays in order to receive a certificate, or you can choose to forgo the certificate and simply attend the lectures and afternoon museum visits on a full year or term-by-term basis. Delivered on an equally esteemed platform, **Sotheby's Institute of Art** (www.sothebysinstitute.com) offers a number of degree and short courses. Short courses are conducted during the day or evening and usually as two-hour classes which run once a week for two months. Each of their courses include complimentary museum and gallery visits. Finally, the **V&A** (www.vam.ac.uk) offers short-term and year-long courses relating to their own collections, past and present. A most notable recently offered course was: *Frida Kahlo: Her Art, Life and Times*.

If your availability is more limited, then **London Art Studies (LAS)** (www.londonartstudies.com) could be an interesting alternative for you. Conceived in 2011, Kate Gordon, its founder and CEO, developed a program which gathered small groups of art enthusiasts for lunch and a lecture. In response to their popularity, LAS has since augmented its local offering with a curated digital hub that reaches a global audience. They have launched what they describe as the world's first online arts subscription platform, which allows participants to have access to their informative art lectures from wherever they are in the world. Although they've gone high-tech, LAS continues to offer intimate, two-hour sessions with their well-regarded lecturers at the Bulgari Hotel, 171 Knightsbridge, London, SW7 1DW.

Supporting a charity or a London museum as a patron is another way to get involved. Patrons of **The Contemporary Art Society**

(www.contemporaryartsociety.org) support a charity that purchases important works of art in order to place them in public collections across the UK. Alternatively, patrons of the **Royal Academy of Art (RA)** (www.royalacademy.org.uk) play an important role in this institution's ability to function as an independent, charitable organisation. Their patronage supports the RA's world-class exhibition programme, maintains their historic library collection, and helps to provide free tuition for talented students who wish to attend RA schools. Similarly at the **Tate** (www.tate.org.uk), patrons support key acquisitions, help conserve existing art and enable learning opportunities. As a patron of any of these organisations, you will receive a range of bespoke benefits including, but not limited to, exclusive access to contemporary artists, curators and collections in the UK and internationally.

From a personal perspective, participation in many of these programs over the years has truly helped me to acclimatise to life in London. Not only have they provided me with opportunities to make many new friends from around the world, but they have also given me numerous opportunities to travel throughout the UK as well as to countless European destinations. They have helped me to better understand British and European cultures and histories through a visual medium, and to receive that knowledge from a variety of perspectives. Importantly to me, there is lasting evidence to my journey into the



Christie's



The Contemporary Arts Society



Royal Academy

world of art, as I am now proudly an avid collector... mostly British artists, of course!



Sotheby's

Royal Academy of Art



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