

An evening in support of \_\_\_\_\_

ART  
HISTORY



LINK  
UP

DULWICH  
PICTURE  
GALLERY

06.11.2023

18:00

06.11.2023

# RUBENS & WOMEN

BY ART HISTORY LINK-UP

# CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS

Cover Image: Peter Paul Rubens, Portrait of a Lady c. 1625, oil on panel, 79.7 x 65.7 cm. Courtesy Dulwich Picture Gallery

I recently spent time with a group of (brilliant) Art History Link-Up students chatting about our personal responses to the 'Rubens & Women' and 'Sara Shamma: Bold Spirits' exhibitions at Dulwich Picture Gallery. The young people led me round their favourite paintings, pulling out things that they had learned and themes that interested them. As the conversations developed, we naturally found our voices becoming louder. The Gallery was open to the public at the time and we ran the risk of feeling self-conscious. One woman asked if we were giving tours, to which we replied 'no, we are just discussing art together'. I then noticed that a strange and wonderful thing started to happen: the gallery became noisier! Visitors started talking about the artworks they were looking at with far greater confidence, and much higher volume, than when we had first walked into the space. Describing art, enjoying art, being confident in responding to art, can be infectious. Dulwich Picture Gallery was richer that day because the AHLU students led by example and demonstrated how much more we can get out of looking at paintings when we feel relaxed enough to share our thoughts and ideas out loud.

I cannot fathom a system in which art is not valued as a credible subject. My life was changed by a school teacher who encouraged me to study History of Art at A level. The subject was a revelation to me. Through it, I discovered a way of engaging with the world that covers every facet of the human experience. Studying art history not only made me well versed in the possibilities of creativity, it has also attuned me to the complexities of history, politics and economics from ancient civilisations to today.

We have such an unfortunate tendency in society to compartmentalise knowledge. From an early age we are encouraged to define ourselves as 'scientific' or 'artistic' people. Art history reminds us to forge the links between both. Often, the best solutions to problems come from creative thinking.

by Jennifer Scott, Director,  
Dulwich Picture Gallery



'Jennifer Scott, Director, Dulwich Picture Gallery, in discussion with a group of AHLU - Kingsdale Foundation School students' © Rose Aidlín

My favourite example is the discovery in around 1427 of systematic linear perspective. It took a conversation between the architect Filippo Brunelleschi and the painter Masaccio to find a way to create the illusion of depth with the fresco of the 'Holy Trinity' on the walls of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Brunelleschi understood mathematics, Masaccio understood painting. Together, they opened up new possibilities for art forever.



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

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"As the Chair of Trustees of Art History Link-Up (AHLU), I am proud to be involved with this remarkable charity, and I want to share with you the reasons why I wholeheartedly believe in its mission.

AHLU's mission is simple yet profound: to unlock the world of art history for students from under-represented backgrounds. This resonates with me on a personal level, having attended a state school myself. I understand first-hand the transformative power of education, and the immense potential it can unleash for individuals who may face socio-economic barriers. AHLU's commitment to providing access feeds directly into socio-economic mobility, and I believe it is one of the most effective ways to bridge gaps in life opportunities.

This is all set to the current backdrop of the arts in the UK being undervalued, and under threat; provision of art history is already vanishingly small across the state secondary education system, with higher education provision coming under increased pressure; just at a time when it is arguably needed the most. We live in an ever increasingly visual world, so surely studying a subject that helps you decode that, whilst placing what you see into historical context, is a valuable skillset to have?

AHLU are a beacon of light, championing diversity and inclusivity in art history; our tailored programmes, delivered in partnership with prestigious cultural institutions, offer a fantastically enriching experience for our students, and can be foundational in building a career in the arts, or indeed beyond.

Supporting Art History Link-Up means investing in a brighter, more equitable future where art history is a more accessible field, recognised for the transformational subject that it is. I strongly encourage you to join me in supporting AHLU's mission, you can donate to us on monthly basis, join our Young Patrons scheme, or sponsor specific initiatives.

Art history matters. Let's save art history."

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*Toby Monk - Chair of Trustees*

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Peter Paul Rubens, Portrait of Isabella Brant c. 1626, oil on panel, 86 x 62 cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.

## **'Portrait of Isabella Brant' by Peter Paul Rubens**

"This portrait shows Rubens' first wife, Isabella Brant, whom he married in October 1609. Isabella was described by Rubens as an 'excellent companion': the pair had three children together. Isabella died of the plague in the summer of 1626, the year this painting was made. It is believed that this painting represents Rubens' mourning of Isabella, with the vine in the background symbolic of love's triumph over death. A personal part of this portrait is Isabella's affectionate smile: it was uncommon for seventeenth-century portraits to display such lively emotion. Isabella's facial expression shows her and Rubens' playful yet intimate relationship, and Rubens draws the viewers' attention to Isabella's kind expression. Furthermore, Isabella is dressed in a black over-gown with a standing collar, her outfit is modestly coloured, yet the gold and jewelled chain draped across her bodice stands out against it, as a subtle nod to the wealth of both Isabella, and in turn, Rubens.

I found this painting captivating, again, largely due to Isabella's luxurious garments and pleasant expression, which I find charming. The surprising background to this detail highlights Rubens' relationship with Isabella.

In addition, I've had a hugely inspiring experience (in my four weeks of term to date!) with Art History Link-Up and very much enjoy the content and friendly atmosphere."

Jasper, Y12 Kingsdale School, and First Year Art History for Everyone student

# Letter from AHLU's Founder & Chief Executive



© Rebecca Reid

I founded Art History Link-Up (AHLU) in 2016, with the conviction that studying art history could be life-changing for everyone, but that the subject was under threat as never before. Unfortunately I was right. That autumn, Art History A level was withdrawn, for a range of reasons, including that it was taught in only a handful of state schools, and so its application was considered to be limited.

Meanwhile I'd started teaching a group of state school students free Art History AS level, on term-time Saturday mornings, in the Wallace Collection's basement lecture theatre. All of the students were from under-represented backgrounds, including a refugee and a looked after child. All loved studying Art History A level, and attending class every Saturday, despite many other demands on their time, including part-time jobs and caring responsibilities. Often young relatives would join us at the back of class. Today the course, Art History for Everyone, offers free hybrid Art History A level and EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) on term-time Saturday's at the Courtauld Institute of Art.



© Quentin Newark

When the A level was 'cancelled', our students provided tangible evidence that Art History really could be for everyone. AHLU became swept up in the movement, mentioned for example in a leader article in 'The Times', and in debates in the Houses of Parliament. I remember one debate well. I was sitting in my classroom at James Allen's Girls' School, where I had just started a part-time Art History teaching job, watching the debate online, and heard both myself and the Charity, mentioned by name - I nearly fell off my chair!

The A level was restored and JAGS' then headmistress, Sally-Anne Huang, offered AHLU invaluable support, including entering AHLU students for their A level and EPQ public examinations, support which continues to this day. Colleagues across the Foundation Schools became involved as volunteer EPQ mentors, including Dr Joe Spence, Master of Dulwich College. Joe in turn became and continues as a trustee of AHLU, and introduced us to Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Last spring, DPG hosted the first pilot of our Introduction to Art History courses for 13-to-15 year olds, as did the Courtauld Institute and the National Gallery, funded by the Band Trust. As a result of this support, we are now developing a second phase development of the Introduction programme, over three years, funded by the Rothschild Foundation. Our first iteration is based at and around Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, with the aim of expanding across the UK, developing an associated project-based qualification in Art History for 13-to-15 year olds, and who knows, even a GCSE. But that's in the future.



© Ed Hands

For now, we are eager to secure the future of our Art History for Everyone Course, free Art History A level and EPQ programmes for state school students, currently delivered online and at the Courtauld Institute of Art to over 80 students from across the UK on term-time Saturdays. This scheme has grown from the basement of the Wallace Collection, via a second scheme hosted by the National Gallery, to an entirely online iteration across the UK throughout the pandemic, to our current hybrid offer from Somerset House.



©Roz Hayes

We believe that studying art history is transformational for our students – they tell us so themselves – and that they in turn have the potential to transform the sector. Our alumni are entering careers in the sector, most notably via our partners, Christie's, and are studying art history at universities across the UK. AHLU is even currently a 'feeder' for the University of Cambridge's Art History department: four of our students recently started the first years of their History of Art degrees at Cambridge – around 10% of the total intake - joining other AHLU alumni in the second and third years in the department.



© Ed Hands

However, we need your help, in order to ensure that we can continue to offer this high level of support and engagement to all our students. Please be in touch to find out about the many ways in which you can play your part in our extraordinary journey towards access to the arts for all. Thank you.

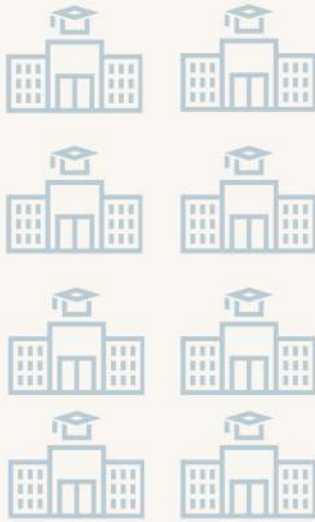
**Rose Aidin, Founder and Chief Executive,  
Art History Link-Up**

Email [rose@arthistorylinkup.org](mailto:rose@arthistorylinkup.org) to get in touch with Rose personally



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# Art History by Numbers



Fewer than

# 8

UK state schools  
teach Art History  
at A-Level

equivalent to only **0.19%** of all UK state  
secondary schools as compared to

# 5%

UK State Schools reached  
through Art History for  
Everyone



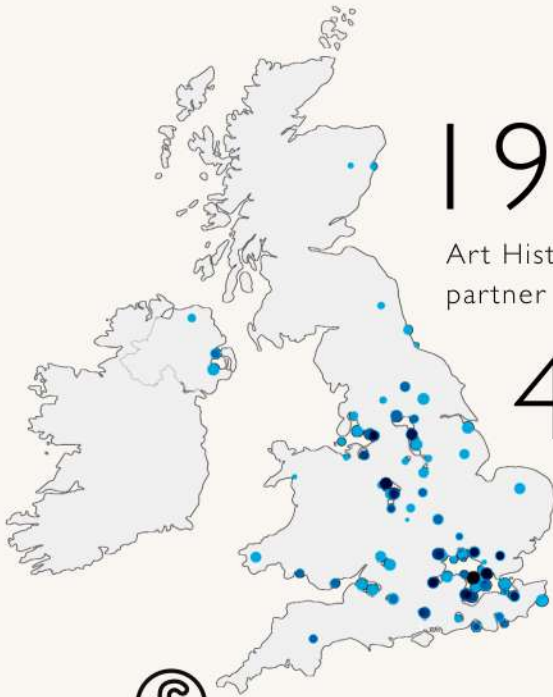
# 500

approximate number of students that have  
participated in our art history programmes  
since AHLU was founded in 2016

AHLU has reached  
**24 times** more state schools  
than those that currently teach  
Art History A-Level



# Art history by Numbers



197

Art History Link-Up  
partner schools across the UK

48%

of Art History for Everyone  
students come from  
outside London.

map depicting AHLU partner schools



**£109 Billion**

Creative Industries Contribution to the UK Economy in 2021.

**3 MILLION** jobs filled by the  
creative industries in 2021



c.£600 average cost of  
Art History for  
Everyone per student

AHLU's total combined core and  
direct programme delivery costs  
amount to approximately 1.91%  
of an average secondary school's  
annual budget.





AHLU Student Operations Officer  
**Ludo Amory**



© Ed Hands

# RETHINKING RUBENS

I have been teaching Peter Paul Rubens since I started at Art History Link-Up in 2019.

Four years of the same paintings and the same course yet the students have driven the conversation around his work to a different and totally unpredictable place each year.

From beautiful descriptions of the dense shadows crowding his 'Landscape by Moonlight' to insightful analysis of Baroque theatre in 'The Descent from the Cross', they have continued to inspire a deep appreciation for Rubens in me.

One recent conversation with an Art History Link-Up student saw them seamlessly compare the self-portrait in the Rubens and Women exhibition to 'Las Meninas' by Diego Velázquez.

I noticed other visitors to the exhibition quietly eavesdropping on our conversations, perhaps thinking that our student was a curator.

Our students have such a fresh take on the history of art and it is such a privilege to watch them realise this and grow in confidence that their ideas are important and needed.



Dr Joe Spence in conversation with fellow AHLU trustee Dr Judith Jammers and AHLU alumna student Maddie at a reception for AHLU at the Belgium ambassador's residence in June 2023. © Scott Garfitt

# WHY ART HISTORY MATTERS

The search for the perfect school curriculum is a fool's game, but that history of art is taught, formally, to only a few hundred fortunate children across the United Kingdom is one of the idiocies of our educational landscape.

History of art is a subject which encourages empathy and deep thinking. It requires an understanding of the context of one's learning, to a greater extent than many other subjects. It affords students an introduction to every aspect of our cultural heritage. It is creative and analytical, and involves an understanding of elements of science, to a greater extent than is generally realised.

From what I've seen of those who have taught or studied history of art, it is never a soft option. I'm delighted that it hasn't been erased from the curriculum completely at A Level, as seemed likely some seven years ago, and I would urge all schools to look for ways to introduce it to their pupils at as early an age as possible. I've spent a good deal of my adult life catching up on the art, artists and architecture that I wish I had been introduced to in primary or secondary school.

I think that as a nation we are only now, at last, having always promoted a word-oriented culture, developing a visual sensibility which makes us look more carefully at how we fill and decorate public spaces and our homes. It would have been criminal had History of Art A Level disappeared from the curriculum in 2016, and I hope that the rear-guard action fought to keep it alive in schools will lead to it becoming, in due course, a core subject.

Art History Link-Up is dedicated to fighting to 'Save Art History' because we still need to strive to make politicians and policy-makers accept that the creative arts are integral to a proper education. To know something of the history of art is to understand why this is so.

To deploy the most famous dictum associated with history of art, it is a subject that helps us to develop a wider range of "ways of seeing" – and of seeing not just works of art but the world around us.

Dr Joe Spence  
Master, Dulwich College and AHLU Trustee

# FROM THE STUDENTS



© Ed Hands

Attending Art History lessons with AHLU has been an amazing experience. I am a Fine Art student and approached the course with a view to learning about art and how different artists work, and looking to apply this knowledge to improve my own practice. At first, I was worried that I wouldn't have enough knowledge about History or Classics to be able to enjoy the class, especially when learning about the Baroque, but the teachers at AHLU never made this a problem. We are never expected to have previous knowledge: the classes are a place where discussion and personal interpretation are celebrated. In this environment, it is easy and enjoyable to learn new technical information and most importantly to explore new ideas, whether individually or as a group.



© Ed Hands

I have particularly enjoyed having access to the Courtauld Gallery and having time to enjoy the beautiful Impressionist collection, as well as the numerous exhibitions that take place, I particularly enjoyed exploring the Peter Doig exhibition. Writing an EPQ with the help of my mentor Dr Joe Spence was challenging but very enjoyable. Exploring my chosen topic, on the role of art in regard to the climate crisis, has thoroughly informed my practice as an aspiring artist. AHLU has greatly improved my art analysis skills, my appreciation for all types of art and has meant that I have met lots of new, interesting, and kind people, thank you!

Lucie, Y13 Kingsdale Student and Art History for Everyone alumna

# ALUMNI PATHWAYS



© Scott Garfitt

## ROSY AKALAWU-ELLMAN

"I found out about AHLU on Instagram, I still look back to that day as a very important moment for me and my relationship with social media as for the first time I found tangible value in my usually inconsequential feed scroll. Social media advertising made AHLU very accessible and their focus on state school students with no prior knowledge of the subject made the group easy to join, as I didn't feel intimidated or out of place. I have just started the first year of my History of Art degree, at the University of Cambridge. AHLU guided me to understand the value of visual literacy, with my fine art and art history work feeding into one another and my comprehension of our increasingly visual world. You can never be certain of anything, but I doubt I would've studied Art History without AHLU, as I likely never would've been exposed to it, having gone to a state secondary school and sixth form. My general plan for the future is to contribute to the mission that AHLU pursues – making art history education accessible to all, as I believe that there is no subject more important or relevant to our times."

## SIMONE MIZOVA

"Because of an evening that Christie's did with AHLU, where they introduced the company and the apprenticeship, I applied after my A Levels and got a position as the 20th /21st century Private Sales Apprentice. No doubt the skills I could show, my willingness to be proactive and my passion for art history all developed by AHLU, helped me to be accepted onto the programme. Thanks to the close partnership between Christie's and AHLU, I have been able to talk about my amazing experience with AHLU more widely. After a year and half of the apprenticeship, during which I also finished the History of Art A-Level with an 'A' alongside an EPQ about repatriation of art, I gained a job at Christie's as Auction Sale Coordinator, covering 19th Century European art, British Drawings and Watercolours, Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite and British Impressionist art."



© Hikaru Funnell



© Hikaru Funnell

## ANDREW DEARMAN

"My experience with AHLU sparked my love of art history, gave me innumerable transferable skills, and introduced me to countless opportunities within the art world, including the Christie's Apprenticeship programme which I joined in 2022. I was able to use the skills I'd learnt at AHLU to assist with research and cataloguing, and I am thrilled to have stayed on at the company as Sale Coordinator for the Ancient Art and Antiquities department".

## EDEN ROBERTSON

As a result of AHLU's partnership with AHLU Eden undertook an internship with London Art Week. Eden is currently studying architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

"Art History Link-Up fostered confidence in having a voice in the world of art history and academia. The continuing care and opening of doors to all AHLU students, even beyond completion of the course, is something I have found unique to this organisation. Around a month ago the opportunity to intern at London Art Week arose, something that wouldn't have been possible without London Art Week's partnership with AHLU.

My month interning was a joyous one whilst also an educational in itself; first-hand experience of the inner workings and care put into creating a successful major art event in London. As I reach my final year as an Architecture undergrad at The Bartlett, I wish to embrace Art History Link-Up's mission to make Art History education accessible to all."





Hannah Rothschild in discussion with AHLU alumni about 'Why Art History Matters' at AHLU's Supporter's Holiday Party, 2022 © Hikaru Funnell

# HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE ART HISTORY

Join the heart of our community as Patron or Benefactor. Your gift will save art history by funding the core operations that make all our work possible.

Join our Supporter's Circle with annual donation of

Benefactor	£5,000
Patron	£1,000
Young Patron	£250



As a Patron, you are invited to lectures, discussions, and events in association with Art History Link-Up's partners.

Principal Benefactors and Benefactors are also invited to the prestigious annual AHLU Chair's event alongside our most significant funders and partners.

If you are aged between 18 and 45, you may like to consider our Young Patrons programme.

*"Art History Link-Up is a fundamental bridge in enabling talented individuals from diverse backgrounds to step into the art world. Christie's is enormously proud of our close association — helping us all through education to fully understand the relevance of art in the modern world"* – Orlando Rock, Chairman, Christie's



Art History Link-Up is a registered charity, no. 1172792  
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Rubens & Women at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Photo by Graham Turner

# With thanks

Art History Link-Up is hugely grateful to the Foundation Schools and to Dulwich Picture Gallery and to all who have supported this splendid private view of 'Rubens & Women'.

Thank you to:

**The Dulwich Picture Gallery** team and especially Jennifer Scott, Director, Alex Bowie, Schools Programme Manager and Caitlin Collinson, PR Manager

**Alleyn's School**, and especially Jane Lunnon, Head and Alleyn's Team

**Dulwich College**, and especially Dr Joe Spence, Master (and AHLU trustee), Laura Jones, Philanthropy Manager, and Julia Metzner, Head of Events

**James Allen's Girls' School**, and especially Alex Hutchinson, Headmistress, and Karen Doyle, Head of Development and Alumni Relations

**AHLU's board of trustees**, led by Chair Toby Monk, and Vice Chair, Katherine Taylor, for their much-appreciated support of our students and our work

**AHLU's team** as ever, and especially event coordinators Kate Bock and Amelia Poole, and Student Operations Officer, Ludo Amory, for their dedication and commitment and to our **alumni event volunteers**

**Taymoor Atighetchi**, Papier Founder and CEO (and AHLU trustee), for the kind donation of Papier invitations

And most especially the **AHLU alumni and current students at Kingsdale School** for their dazzling interpretations of 'Rubens & Women' as expert guides, and to their teachers for their help, especially Lili Maria Montero, Art Teacher/Gifted, Talented and Scholars Coordinator



**Jags**



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