

Asian Design History 1400 to the present

One of three specialisms taught on the acclaimed RCA \ V&A History of Design programme, 'Asian Design History – 1400 to the present' interrogates the role of Asian design in the texture of everyday life by bringing together the different methodological perspectives of art history, material culture studies, and the decorative arts.

We live in a time where Chinese porcelain and Bokhara carpets, Game Boys and Issey Miyake fashions have given Asian design and material culture immense significance in the contemporary globalised world. This is the first MA specialism that seeks to historicize the study of design in Asia, taking into account the local cultures of China, Japan, Korea, India, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, the connections among these regions, as well as their relationships to Britain, Europe and the Americas.

By examining specific objects and production practices, the student is able to focus on historical and contemporary issues previously ignored or obscured. The specialism fosters empirical investigations and interpretations through first-hand study, while at the same time addressing larger issues about how design is integral to the production and circulation of meaning. In defining their own research subjects in the period, students on the MA course can develop an interest in a particular geographical and chronological area, or develop cross-cultural expertise in the history of Asian design.



Mechanical toy birds
China, late 20th century



This full-time, two-year MA course offers an exceptional opportunity to study the world of Asian design and material culture at an advanced level. It benefits from the unique resources of the V&A which, along with its collections, houses the National Art Library as well as from the highly creative environment at the RCA. The course combines a rich taught programme with considerable opportunities for original research.

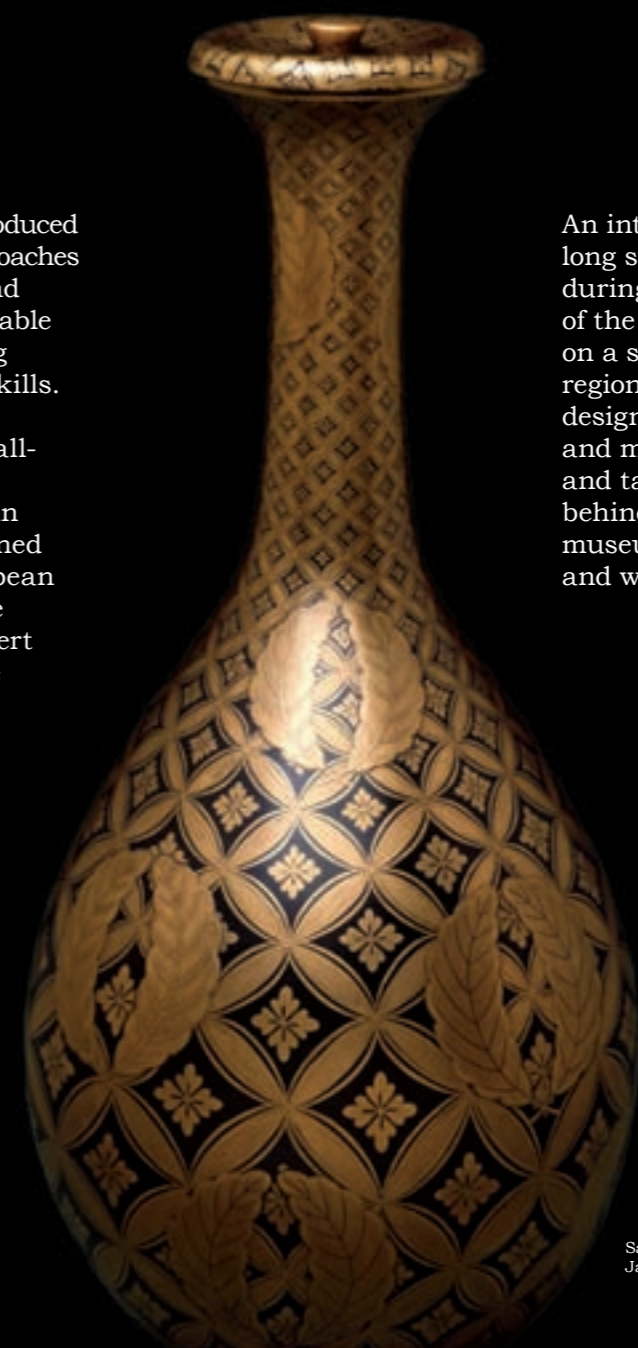
Students are introduced to a range of approaches to the subject and develop considerable research, writing and analytical skills. All classes are presented in small-group, seminar format. Objects in the world-renowned Asian and European collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum provide a remarkable opportunity for direct study.

Florets anklet
Maharashtra, India, c.1900



An intensive week-long study visit, held during the first year of the course, focuses on a single city or region as a centre for design, production and material culture, and takes the group behind the scenes in museums, archives and workshops.

The programme welcomes applications from students with an undergraduate degree in the humanities or art and design practice particularly those who have previously studied an aspect of Asian culture. The great majority of graduates of the course at MA level find employment in closely related fields or go on to further research degrees. Graduates of the course can be found as curators in museums around the world, academics teaching in universities, writers and researchers in the media and design consultants.



Sake bottle
Japan, late 17th century



Earthenware tile
Iran, c.1444



Further Information

Bursary details / financial support

Students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland are eligible for the extensive student bursary scheme administered by the Royal College of Art. These bursaries provide a maintenance grant and part of the fees. Applicants from other European Union countries may apply for a 'fees-only' award. Full details are published on the RCA Website.

In addition to the bursary scheme, individual scholarships are funded by the Friends of the V&A and the Oliver Ford Trust. These are open to Home and EU applicants.

Research Degrees

The History of Design programme also supervises research degrees (MPhil and PhD). Staff research interests and areas of supervision are described on the History of Design section of the RCA Website.

Contact Details

Full details of the course structure, the staff team, graduate destinations and the course facilities can be found at www.rca.ac.uk



For further details contact the Course Administrator, Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington, London SW7 2RL
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RCA \ V&A
History of Design



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A full-time MA Degree
with student bursaries

Front Cover: Model Doll Festival Bombori lamp. Japan c.1880-1930
Overleaf: Head of the Buddha. Lopburi, Thailand, 13th century
Above: T-shirt by Vivienne Tam. Hong Kong, China, c.1995-1998
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Design by Tom Wilson



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