Undergraduate Program in Museums and Society
“Museums are morphing. Once they were chroniclers or collectors... Now many have become crucibles: places where a cultural identity is hammered out, refined and reshaped.”

analyze collections and exhibitions.
Research cultural institutions. Engage in hands-on inquiry.
Museums matter. They safeguard the world’s heritage and support important research, but they are much more than storehouses or archives. In their galleries, knowledge is constructed and world views are shaped. Museums are also lightning rods for some of today’s most hotly contested issues, including debates over how to present history and questions of the ownership of culture.
The Johns Hopkins Program in Museums and Society offers wide-ranging opportunities for students to explore museums and their social significance, both past and present. Through interdisciplinary classroom experiences, creative museum-based projects, and independent study, students engage directly with these influential institutions.
Recent Museums and Society courses have investigated museums and the law, the history of scientific display, the interpretation of African art and culture in American museums, worlds fairs, literary archives, the conservation and care of archaeological objects, and museums from a global perspective. Students have curated exhibitions of prints, photographs, and rare printed books, Baltimore history c. 1810 and c. 1960, the development of Braille, ethnographic loans produced during historic expeditions, and ancient Roman objects of daily life. See our courses: krieger.jhu.edu/museums/courses.

An Archaeology of Knowledge, an installation by artist Mark Dion, afforded many opportunities for students, including research internships and serving as project registrar. In the future, students will build an interactive online database dedicated to this and other Hopkins collections.
Campus museums. Historical collections.
A community of diverse cultural resources.

An education at Johns Hopkins is enriched by access to a range of collections, both on and off campus. Studying an original object—an ancient oil lamp, a Baroque painting, or an early American printing press—brings academic work to life. Hands-on work in public settings stretches students to face new challenges and learn new skills, such as writing for a general audience and collaborating as a team to meet a professional deadline. More than 30 museums in Baltimore offer opportunities for our students, in classes and through independent work, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore Museum of Industry, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, Maryland Historical Society, Maryland Zoo—and many institutions in Washington, D.C., less than an hour away.

Since the program’s inception, Museums and Society students have worked with area museums on a range of projects and topics, including:

- Federal Foodies: From Farm to Table in Early Maryland. JHU’s Homewood Museum.
- Choreography in Color: The Art of Zelda Fitzgerald. JHU’s Evergreen Museum & Library (curated by Laura Somenzi, ’13, Evergreen Annual Student Curator and Woodrow Wilson Fellow, shown at right).
- Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe. Walters Art Museum.
- The Photography of Ara Güler. Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution.
- The Authority of Ruins. JHU’s Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Special Collections and Archives.

Find out more about these and other projects at krieger.jhu.edu/museums/projects.
My minor in Museums and Society has been the most enriching part of my coursework at Hopkins. It’s my only M&S course, and I’d had the unique opportunity to gain practical experience. At the Walters Art Museum, I worked alongside curators while researching and producing literature on the provenance of a 12th-century illuminated manuscript. I appreciated that my M&S courses attract a diverse cross-section of Hopkins students because of their interdisciplinary nature.

— Dianna DePoe ’11
Philosophy and German
History of Art major

It started in the Museums and Society Program as a first-semester freshman. I worked with Elizabeth Rodini, juniors, and seniors to put on an exhibition about the Hubble Telescope at the Walters Art Museum. That class remains, four years after, the most engaging class I have taken. It gave me an entirely new perspective on how museums work and the hundreds of decisions that go into putting on even the smallest exhibition. Students have the chance to complete a final project that will be seen by thousands of people, something few papers or presentations can ever do.

— Michael Szeto ’11
(Law student, New York University; Political Science major)

When I started my minor in Museums and Society, I was a first-year student. I thought I was just taking a course in my history of art major, but I ended up taking a course in the sociology of museums. It opened my eyes to an interdisciplinary field that combines the study of art history, anthropology, political science, and economics, and has given me an outlet to expand my work in this field.

— COURTNEY HASS ’11
Provenance Researcher, Commission for Looted Art in Europe

Opportunities to study abroad—for a year, semester, or during January intersession—provide valuable perspectives on the museum world. Students on this Paris trip studied important collections and the role they have played in constructing local history and identity.

An increasingly global curriculum offers access to similar questions and concepts to our students back in Baltimore.

— Dakota DeVos ’11
(Fulbright Scholar in Germany; History of Art major)

"It is impossible for me to put into words the impact M&S had on my education at Hopkins. The opportunities opened so many doors. Remember in particular a visitor we had in class who was doing work in the National Archives related to Nazi-era records of art looting. I had always had an interest in art looting and meeting someone who was working in that field during my sophomore year at Hopkins had a huge impact on me. It showed me that this was a possible career path I never applied to and got a job working in London as a provenance researcher, which is essentially my 'dream job'.

— Courtney Hass ’11
Provenance Researcher, Commission for Looted Art in Europe

International Studies and History of Art major"

“Museums and Society has opened my eyes to a truly interdisciplinary field that combines the study of art history, anthropology, political science, and economics, and has given me an outlet to expand my work in this field to include the exchange of art objects across borders and cultures. I have the hands-on classes and programs and the opportunity that I had at Hopkins as an independent study of the Chinese art market.”

— Elise Brown ’15
(Summer intern, Chinese Art, Walters Art Museum; International Studies and History of Art major)
Explore Museums and Society at Johns Hopkins—and beyond.

Students pursuing a minor in Museums and Society take courses in museum history, theory, and practice as well as in a variety of related disciplines—anthropology, archaeology, history, history of art, history of science and technology, and international studies, to name a few. Students from over 20 different majors, including behavioral biology, economics, psychology, public health, sociology, and biophysics, have completed the minor.

Museums and Society students intern all over the country. Beyond Baltimore, they have found positions at the Phillips Collection and the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Museum of Modern Art and the Jewish Museum in New York City, the Exploratorium in San Francisco, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Christie’s, Sotheby’s, and various art galleries.

Program alumni have enrolled in graduate programs in anthropology, art, art history and history, law, museum studies, publishing, information systems management, public health, and medicine, and include a Fulbright Scholar. They are pursuing careers in museum publishing, museum education, art law, conservation, and archival studies, and have held positions in many museums, including the American Visionary Arts Museum, the Glenstone Foundation, the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, James Madison’s Montpelier, and the Princeton University Art Museum.

Discover new ways of thinking about your major and the world around you. Engage in hands-on study and research. Connect with cultural institutions locally, nationally, and internationally. Explore Museums and Society at Johns Hopkins University.


Learn more about our students and alumni here: krieger.jhu.edu/museums/students-alumni.

Above, Emily Carambelas, ’11, prepares an object from JHU’s Sonneborn Collection for display. Background photo, a detail of an object from the same collection.
At right, hands-on work (clockwise from upper left): Print by Print interactive website at the BMA; “Examining Archaeological Objects” course; installing Jews on the Move on campus; braille exhibition at the BMI.

Front cover (left to right): student-led tour of Print by Print; installing Please Touch; research in the JHU Archaeological Museum.