

History of Art Suggested Reading

History of Art is the study of the changes and development in the art of different civilisations, across history. It is rewarding both in the study of art alone, looking at how artistic styles and techniques emerge and evolve, and through examining how changes in art reflect the political, social and economic change of the society in which it is based.

1. **E H Gombrich, *The Story of Art*** is the bestselling book about art of all time, a great introduction to how Western art has evolved across the ages. Gombrich sets out to tell the history of art as a continuous story, focusing on Western art and picking out particular pieces and artists along the way.
2. **Umberto Eco, *History of Beauty and On Ugliness***. In these twinned works, the novelist, essayist, and cultural critic Umberto Eco attempts a grand-scale study of the history of these two concepts in art, from the classical era through to the present day.
3. **Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation*** Documentary, available on Youtube. This is the first Art history documentary shot in colour, under the auspices of David Attenborough, and as such is a seminal moment in the development of Art history as a discipline .
4. **The National Gallery** houses the national collection of paintings in the Western European tradition from the 13th to the 20th centuries, and all for free. A good approach is to make connections, taking two wildly different pictures and see if you can find anything that connects them.
5. **Royal Academy of Arts** on Piccadilly hosts regular free lunchtime lectures on art-history topics by major scholars in the field.
6. **Tate Modern**, Southbank, hosts various talks and discussions, many are free and if not, you can watch them online. There are also free ten-minute collection talks at 1pm on Saturdays and Wednesdays plus free guided tours around the gallery every day. (11am/12pm level 3 and 2pm/3pm level 5). For more information see www.tate.org.uk.
7. **The Wallace Collection** has a sumptuous combination of master painting, furniture and decorative arts, from across Europe. A reminder that the history of art is not just confined to painting and sculpture.