

Sotheby's INSTITUTE OF ART

Sotheby's Institute of Art - London: Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the legally-established right of members of academic and academic related staff to express their opinions without fear of losing their jobs because of other people's hostility to those views. It underpins the right of academic staff and students to exercise their own best judgement in the pursuit of knowledge and the conduct of research. Without the underlying guarantee of academic freedom, it would be considerably more problematic for Institute staff and students to engage freely in research of their choosing, to pursue the path of their research where the logic of the results, their intellectual curiosity and professional expertise may lead them, and to publish the results. Professional integrity in research would be endlessly compromised by staff and students having to weigh the potential consequences of their expressions of opinion for their continuing employment or post-graduate study.

All members of the Institute's academic community, both students and staff, have freedom within the law to:

- hold and express opinions;
- question and test established ideas or received wisdom;
- develop and advance new ideas or innovative proposals;
- present controversial or unpopular points of view.

In the exercise of this freedom we acknowledge that as members of a welcoming and inclusive community we have responsibilities to each other and to the wider society to:

- value diversity and recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture and that this difference brings great strength;
- treat others with courtesy and respect, challenge inequalities, and anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances;
- respect the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and views and to express them through appropriate contribution to discussion and academic debate;
- communicate in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely, and exemplified by transparency and constructive dialogue.

The Institute therefore makes the following commitments:

- We will be academically rigorous, justify our views with evidence and academic argument and be willing to recognise the gaps and weaknesses in our own arguments.
- In promoting our ideas, we will make every reasonable effort to minimise the risks of any harm, either physical or psychological, arising for any person, institution or community.
- We will be aware that some academic opinions and arguments may cause offence to some people but that this is not, of itself, a sufficient reason not to express those opinions and arguments. We will, nevertheless, be sensitive to the views of others and we will not present or challenge views in a way that is hostile or degrading.
- We respect the right of others to challenge our views, provided that it is based on accurate evidence, facts or reasonable argument and that it is thoughtful and made in appropriate fora.
- We will always be careful to distinguish between our personal views and those of Sotheby's Institute of Art – London or any other person, group of people or organization with which we may be associated.

- We will consider the legal implications of our actions. We recognise that there may be consequences if we act in breach of the law, including the Prevent Duty and will only involve others with their express consent.
- We will reflect upon and apply these principles in our teaching, research, study, and debate.
- We will be proactive in protecting academic freedom for ourselves and for others and use it responsibly for the promotion of knowledge and understanding.