



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Ishibashi Foundation Graduate Programme in Japanese Art History and Multimodal Heritage Curation 2026/27 at the University of Zurich (UZH)

The Chair of East Asian Art History at the Institute of Art History, University of Zurich invites applications for the Ishibashi Foundation Graduate Programme in Japanese Art History and Multimodal Heritage Curation 2026/27.

Made possible through the special support of the Ishibashi Foundation, this non-degree advanced studies initiative is designed for graduate students enrolled at universities in Europe. It offers a combination of advanced academic study in Japanese art history and multimodal curation, encompassing both traditional, object-centred curatorial practice and the digital curation of Japanese art and cultural heritage. Alongside access to specialists in Japanese art history at the Chair of East Asian Art History and advanced Japanese language training at the Chair of Japanese Philology (Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies) participants will work with internationally recognised visiting scholars and museum curators, engage directly with Japanese art collections in Switzerland, gain insight into the rapidly evolving landscape of museum and heritage work shaped by digital transformation, and take part in an intensive, week-long residential workshop in Zurich.

All courses are taught in English, and successful participants receive a programme certificate. Academic credits from the University of Zurich will be issued for enrolled students, and credit transfer may be possible depending on the practices of the students' home institutions.

The programme is fully funded and **free of charge for participants**, including teaching-related costs, travel, and accommodation during the residential period in Zurich.

Programme Overview

During **autumn semester 2026**, students attend a hybrid **lecture course on Japanese art history** taught by our visiting scholar **Prof. Dr. Julie Nelson Davis** (University of Pennsylvania, US), as well as a curatorial practice course co-led by a museum curator, **Dr. Khanh Trinh** (Museum Rietberg Zurich). These courses culminate in a week-long **residential workshop** held in the last week of October at the University of Zurich and at Museum Rietberg housing rich collections of Japanese art and material culture. The workshop focuses on Japanese art history, art collections, and curatorial practices (research, conservation, object handling, exhibition development). It includes site visits to additional collections, as well as opportunities for networking and exchange. Participants also attend a lecture from the public *Zurich Lectures in East Asian Art History* series, which regularly features leading international scholars in the field.



In the **spring semester 2027**, the focus shifts to an **online course on the digital curation of Japanese cultural heritage**, with particular attention to the cultural specificities of Japanese objects. Participants engage with new topics and technologies used in museology today such as virtual and hybrid exhibitions, metadata and cataloguing strategies, digital storytelling, and the use of immersive technologies to expand public access and engagement with collections. In addition, students have the opportunity to further develop their Japanese language skills by attending an **online advanced Japanese language course** provided by the Chair of Japanese Philology at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich. This course is recommended but not a required component of the programme. Participants without Japanese can complete the programme successfully, while those with language skills will benefit from an enhanced learning experience. Instructors for these two online courses will be announced shortly.

Academic Credits and Certification

The programme complements existing degree studies and does not lead to the award of an academic degree. Students enrolled at the University of Zurich (UZH) receive academic credits awarded by the University of Zurich. External participants may arrange credit recognition through their home institutions (for example, via internship or mobility schemes) and will receive an official Programme Completion Certificate.

Professional Benefits

This programme is primarily designed for students who aspire to pursue careers in academia, museums, cultural heritage, and the broader arts sector. We look forward to welcoming outstanding applicants for the 2026/2027 cohort.

Who Should Apply

The programme welcomes PhD candidates and MA students in the final phase of their studies, specializing in Japanese art history enrolled at universities in Europe, including non-EU countries such as the United Kingdom. Applicants should have a strong academic background in Japanese art history. As all courses are taught in English, applicants are expected to have a high level of English proficiency. Japanese language skills are recommended but not required for the successful completion of the programme.

Admission is competitive: candidates will be selected by a screening committee composed of academics and curators in the field, based on academic merits, demonstrated motivation, and the fit of their background with the programme's objectives. Five places are reserved for excellent students enrolled at UZH and ten for outstanding external applicants from European universities.



Application Requirements

Applicants should submit **one combined PDF** (in English) containing:

1. A statement of motivation (1 page)
2. Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages) and academic transcript
3. One academic writing sample (seminar paper, MA thesis chapter, or published article, max. 10.000 words)
4. One letter of academic recommendation (submitted with the file or separately)

Timeline

- **Application deadline:** March 1st 2026
- **Online interviews:** March 2026 (exact date to be announced)
- **Final selection and invitation of participants:** April 2026
- **Programme start:** September 2026

Applications should be submitted electronically to:

ishibashi-kgoa@khist.uzh.ch

Enquiries may be directed to:

Programme Director

Prof. Dr. Ewa Machotka
Chair of East Asian Art History
Institute of Art History, UZH

Programme Coordinator

Ms. Saskia Goldschmid
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We look forward to welcoming outstanding applicants for the 2026/2027 cohort.

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