Open College of the Arts launches one-year pre-degree Foundations in Photography course

Thursday 4 September, 2014

Higher education charity The Open College of the Arts (OCA) has launched a pre-degree course, Foundation in Photography, in time for the start of the 2014/15 academic year. Designed for photographers interested in gaining the skills and confidence to study at degree level, the course aims to equip them with visual and technical skills in photography and help develop ways of thinking about and understanding photography.

The course is built around practical projects and experimental exercises and covers composition, framing, light and shadow, shapes, form and colour. Students are expected to study the work of other photographers in galleries, libraries and online to gain a perspective on different genres and creative possibilities. As well as practising the technical skills of photography, acquiring new knowledge and producing their own work, students also learn the discipline of structuring their study time to balance practical projects with research.

The course is delivered through online and distance learning, with students studying at their own pace to fit in with work and family commitments. Every student has a personal tutor who is experienced in teaching in higher education as well as being a practising photographer. All students can participate in OCA's web forums to meet and learn from other students. *Foundations inPhotography* takes around a year to complete and students can enrol at any time.

Each of the five parts of the course is dedicated to one of the main genres of photography: landscape, the portrait, narrative, still life and concept. There is an assignment at the end of each part of the course. Once students have completed the course and the five assignments, their tutor advises them on whether they are ready to study at degree level. The course takes around 12 months to complete, studying for eight hours a week. The course fee is £995.00, and can be paid in instalments of £100.00 a month. A free extract from the course can be downloaded at http://www.oca-uk.com/subjects/photography/foundations-in-photography.html.

OCA Chief Executive Gareth Dent said: 'This is an exciting time for photography. Thanks to the relatively low cost of digital cameras and the prevalence of smart phones, more people are taking and sharing photographs than ever before. *Foundations in Photography* provides an accessible and stimulating way for those who want to increase their skills, develop their ability to communicate through photography and find out whether studying photography at degree level is for them. '

OCA's Foundations in Photography Part one Workflow: Landscapes and environments - basic compositional skills, control and emphasis of light and shadow, shutter speeds

Part two Image: The portrait - image-making skills and creative strategies, advanced compositional skills and skills to make portraits

Part three Communication: Narrative – telling stories, exploring visual themes and exploring the meaning of photographs

Part four Experimentation: Still Life – arranging everyday objects to create a scene, methods for combining images

Part five Exhibition: Exhibition: Concept – developing a blog
For students studying photography at degree level, OCA has introduced a new level 1 (equivalent to the first year of undergraduate study) course, Expressing your vision. The course has been designed to help students explore the technical possibilities of the camera, with the emphasis on using photography as an investigative tool to initiate personal responses to briefs. Students produce practical work which demonstrates personal engagement, enquiry and experimentation at the same time as developing an understanding of contemporary, historical and experimental approaches to photography. The course takes around 12 months to complete, studying for eight hours a week. The course fee is £795.00, and can be paid in instalments of £100.00 a month. A free extract from the course can be downloaded at http://www.ocauk.com/subjects/photography/expressing-your-vision.

Over 1,500 students in the UK and beyond are already studying for a photography degree with OCA, an education charity which aims to widen access to creative arts education at undergraduate and graduate

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level. Students can also study for a BA (Hons) degree in creative writing, painting, textiles, visual communications and the creative arts. OCA's MA, Fine Art, is the first postgraduate degree in Fine Art in Europe to be offered through distance learning. All OCA's undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are validated by the University for the Creative Arts.

It costs just over £3,000 per level (2014/15) to reach degree level with OCA - around a third of the cost of an undergraduate degree programme at a conventional university in England. Payment is by course so most students pay as they go over a period of five to six years.

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