KAREN FOLEY: The Arts Hub was an online interactive event. And you're about to watch a session from that. But I wanted to explain to you how it all worked. You're about to see the video stream of the studio, but our audience participated online through chat and through interactive widgets. And those ideas were fed through into the studio from the social media desk. Of course, because you're watching our catch-up, you won't be able to do those activities. But I do hope that you enjoy the discussion that follows.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hi, and welcome back to the Arts Hub. Well, we've had a fabulous day. We've had boxing matches with the philosophy department. We've had a picnic with the classics department. We've looked at lots of skills. Now, it's the turn for art history. So, without further ado, I'd like to welcome Kim Woods and Angeliki Lymberopoulo to the studio. Kim, thank you for this. It was very useful. I did blow it during the boxing match, but they weren't at all surprised. So I guess it's quite a regular thing. But, no, it came in very handy. Thank you.

KIM WOODS: Thank you. Well, I might need it.

[LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. OK, so we're going to be taking a look at A226, Art and Visual Culture. And I'd like to start by talking about the module. Because we have a wonderful thing here that I'd like to move on to next. So, firstly, what is in the module?

KIM WOODS: There are three module books. This is the first one, which Angeliki and I worked on. Angeliki's got the second. And, then, this one is the third. So very beautiful, glossy books.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, beautiful.

KIM WOODS: And what we do is, we look at a variety of media. The kinds of people that will be looking at works of art, the kind of social context in which art is made, issues like that, as well as, obviously, the art itself. We thought, though, that rather than taking you on a rather boring trawl through the module books-- and there's information on the website, students can find out about that if they want to-- we thought that what we would do is to actually do some art history.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, wonderful.

KIM WOODS: So we would show you the kind of things that we're doing in level one.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful.

KIM WOODS: So Angeliki has brought along something for us to have a look at.

KAREN FOLEY: Great.

KIM WOODS: Thank you.

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Before I start, can I say, what lovely shoes.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, thank you. They're nice. aren't they?

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: I love those shoes.

KAREN FOLEY: We weren't supposed to play that. No, not. Yeah, they're lovely, aren't they?

[LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Sorry. Back to the piece.

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Right. This is an ivory. Well, actually it's a replica. For those who are watching from Germany, it's still in the museum. This is not the original. Otherwise, Kim and I would have been on a trip to Hawaii right now. The original is an invaluable 10th century ivory going for a lot of money. Unfortunately, the museum wouldn't let me have the original, so this is what I brought here. It's a replica. As you can see, very small. We put it up on a pedestal as it deserves to be because Kim and I are both forensic art historians. We do not mind getting our hands dirty. We're actually looking at objects, touching them. We're not very much into theory, sorry. So we can just--

As you can see, this is a tiny little object, which probably means it was owned by a very lucky individual. It was in somebody's private property. And the original, as I said, is a 10th century ivory. And, basically, Kim and I are now going to dissect it. Literally see how, when you are confronted with it, it's a beautiful object, how you can get into it. What information does the actual object tell you.

KAREN FOLEY: Can you say something about being forensic artists? And then you talk about dissecting it and getting into it. Now, I'm a little worried considering some of the other antics that have gone on, I'll be honest. So what does forensic art history involve?

KIM WOODS: It's detective work. And that's the kind of thing that art historians, like us, have to do. Now, if you're working on art from the 19th century or 20th century, there are a lot of sources. You can read all about it. Lots of documents. Who painted it, where it hung, all this kind of thing. Whereas this kind of thing that Angeliki and I study, often you don't know anything about it at all. So we have to do some of the same work that the auction houses would have to do if they were selling something. You've got to work out what you've got. And to work out what you've got, you've got to look at it really closely and look for clues.

So, for example, Angeliki said that this was probably owned by a private individual. Now how do we know that? Well, it's a very basic thing around size. This is a very little object. And, you can imagine, if you put that in a great big church with 100 people in the congregation, you wouldn't be able to see it. Whereas an individual could look close up. And, actually, I don't know if the camera is able to zoom in on this, but there was a huge amount of detail in this little ivory. So to appreciate that, the kind of decoration on the arch here, the kind of detail, there's a little person up in the tree here, in the middle. So to appreciate those kind of details, you've got to look at it close too. So that would lead us to think that this was actually designed for an individual to look at, rather than for a wider audience. Do you want to take one, Angeliki?

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Yes, also, basically, as Kim said, the amount of detail, the craftsmanship, is absolutely amazing. But, also, you are supposed to be looking at it from close up. That's why it's so small, that, as Kim said, in a big church, it's just going to get lost. Now, because it's for private devotion, it's basically a Byzantine object, it comes from Byzantine art history. And it is what we call an icon, basically. It's for a person to get in private contact with it, to worship it, and, basically, pray in front of it.

Now, an icon, when we think of an icon, we usually think of panel paintings. But that's not true. For the Byzantines, icon could be in any medium. Ivory was one of them. You can have fresco, mosaic, a manuscript. Anything could have been an icon. Anything was, in fact, an icon. And, as you can see, as we look at it, obviously, you see there is a person sitting on a donkey walking towards the city. So we know that this is the entrance to Jerusalem, because, of course, to own that, you would have been of the orthodox faith. So you would have known

your bible, the gospels, very well to immediately identify that this is the entrance into Jerusalem, the moment that Christ goes into Jerusalem before his passion.

If you look closely at it, the spatial arrangement is absolutely nonexistent. The donkey looks as if it's flying. It's in the middle of the air, as are many other people. The little children here are holding a piece of cloth. Because Byzantine icons did not care about spatial formation. The laws of nature are not important. There's no gravity in Byzantine art. There's no laws of shadow for softening, nothing. And you can all see it in this particular object.

KIM WOODS: So, in forensic art history, that would be one of the things that you would seize on. Because you can get ivories in other parts of Europe as well. Paris was one of the main centres for producing ivories in the Middle Ages. But it wouldn't look like this. It would be made out of the same material. It would be a similar format. But it would actually look different. And this, sort of, floating thing might be one the characteristics that you might seize on to date this, and try to work out where it came from. What I was interested in-- now, this shows what a sad person I am-- when Angeliki showed me this, I was interested in the holes around the outside. Now, that's a weird thing to be interested in. But what I was getting at is that there must have been something attached to them. And I was trying to work out what it would have looked like conviction originally. Whether this is a complete thing, or whether it's part of a larger whole.

Now, I understand from Angeliki-- this is not my field. I don't really study Byzantine art. Angeliki is the expert on this-- but I understand that these two holes were used to attach framing to the front. So, originally, it would've looked even more rich and highly detailed than it does at the moment. Now, these holes at the side, I thought, looked like hinges. So I asked whether it could be a diptych, that to something that is composed of two different pieces. So you could fold m like you can a book. And I think that's what we've got here. We've got half of the diptych. And those holes are where the hinges used to be. So do you see what I mean about hunting for clues.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Absolutely. And, in order to actually combine it with-- I was showing it to Jessica earlier on with the--

KAREN FOLEY: What did she think of it?

ANGELIKI Well, no, Jessica was very interested in the figure of the Spinario here. You have the classical-

LYMBEROPOULO:- from classical antiquities, basically a boy who is sitting with one leg on the other and extracting a thorn from his foot. Quite painful. But it's a very, very famous ancient Roman sculpture. And what is it doing in a Christian-- imagine, why? Why would you have such a paganistic motive? Well, I believe, personally, and I think Jessica and Kim were very interested in that, that this is actually for the faithful. The person who actually believes in Christ being the Saviour. His passion is coming. And, during his passion, Christ is going to wear a crown of thorns. So this person here actually makes you, the faithful, engaged in what is about to come.

So all I'm trying to say is that Byzantine art is very complicated. It has very many levels. And you have to look closely. Not only Byzantine art. Mediaeval art, Renaissance art. Again, the forensic art history that we do.

KIM WOODS: Yeah. It's the same principle that the closer you look, the more you see. And the more you can put together what the viewing experience was meant to be like. Because one of the important things about what Angeliki is saying is that it was designed for an audience that would pick up the clues in the way that we no longer do.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

KIM WOODS: So, like the Spinario, this famous classical statue, I think one of the things we have to contend with, with art history is that we're looking in a very different way now. We've got a very different kind of culture, a different mindset. So one of the things we have to do is to try to get back to the social context of a particular work of art. And to get into the mindset of the kind of people that were looking at it, which is one reason, I think, why we think about what we called audience. Who is actually looking at these things? And what they were meant to see.

I said I was a sad person.

[LAUGHS]

The other thing I like is materials.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

KIM WOODS: And this is something made out of ivory. And ivory is a very precious material. I mean, it's a very politically contested material now, because it's becoming very scarce, because of hunting animals. Well, the interesting thing was, it always was a luxury material. It was always hard to get in Europe because it came from animals in Africa. And, at the period that this was made,

Europeans ' didn't even know Africa existed, or at least not the extent of it. So they had to buy ivory from, in mediaeval period, they brought it from Algiers and Alexandria. It was traded across Africa. But the supply was very intermittent. So, sometimes, you'd get ivory, and, sometimes, you couldn't. So the history of ivory carving varies a lot, according to what people were able to get, and according to the size of bits of ivory, that they were able to get.

KAREN FOLEY: I was going to say, would that have impacted on the size or scale of what people can actually do then?

KIM WOODS: Indeed. Indeed. There was something about loss of colonies, wasn't there?

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Yes. Basically, what we have in Byzantium, you can see that the ivory carving disappears around the 11th-12th century, which coincides with when Byzantium lost Africa. Because Africa was part of the Byzantine Empire. At some point in the seventh century, eighth century, this is no more a colony. And you can see not only how the ivory production stops in Byzantium, but, also, how the scale of ivory becomes increasingly smaller, and smaller, and smaller, because of course they were not able to get, anymore, so many more quantities of ivory. And, at some point, it stops.

So we come to the 10th and 11th century, and, effectively, from the bigger scale ivories-- which will have some fabulous-- it's all at home, actually. Tried to pinch them from the museum.

KAREN FOLEY: Is there a database as well?

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Yes, in the Cortauld, I think, yes?

KIM WOODS: Yes. This is an example of the way that modern technologies is being harnessed to art history, actually. Because they've developed an ivories database at Courtauld Institute, and it's open to the public. So students who want to have a look at it, they could. If you just type into your search bar, Courtauld ivories database, it will come up. And you could do a search. So if you wanted to do a search called entry into Jerusalem, which is the subject we've got here, you'll get about a thousand examples, I think. I tried to tell you, then I thought, maybe I ought to narrow myself a bit.

[LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Because you were talking about some of the larger items as well, Angeliki?

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: Yes, just, basically, in the 10th and 11th century, we get smaller scale, primarily because there's not much ivory around in Constantinople. We believe that this was produced in Constantinople. Again, something we have to be very cautious about. Just because something is beautiful doesn't mean that it was produced in the major centres. But, yes, this is tiny. This is really, really small. It's because it reflects the loss of the colonies, and how difficult it was for the Byzantines to obtain ivory.

KAREN FOLEY: Was there any sort of meaning attached to any of these materials? I mean, apart from size. Is there any other weight that you would add in terms of actually looking at what these materials had, apart from that, I guess, there would be trends, wouldn't there?

KIM WOODS: I think value is crucial here. And it leads back into the audience and social context themes. Because some materials are very much, more scarce and expensive than others. So rich people have them, and prestige was attached to them. You sometimes hear it suggested that white materials have symbolic connotations. And that's a bit problematic, actually. Because although this looks white now, it probably did have some pigments originally. So it would have been coloured. But, nevertheless, sometimes meanings are attached to white as well.

But I think one of the main reasons we picked on this, apart from the fact Angeliki owned it, was that it does show that there was more art than paintings that you hang on the wall. But there's a huge range of stuff out there. And the other thing we wanted to highlight is that it's not all about famous artists. Because we don't know who did this, or these works of art are completely anonymous. And, indeed, they are meant to be anonymous in the Byzantine tradition. Whereas, in the Western European tradition, the name of the artist is everything. So, for example, the other work of art I brought in is my Rembrandt, my Rembrandt etching. And Rembrandt's name, of course, is paramount.

KAREN FOLEY: So whose is more valuable?

KIM WOODS: Actually, neither of them are valuable.

[LAUGHS]

I hope I don't need to tell you it's not a real Rembrandt. I wish it was. But it is an etching that was made in the 1970s, by hand, from a plate that had re-produced exactly the original copper plate of Rembrandt. And it was bought in the Rembrandt house in Amsterdam. But it does look

very convincing. And, in fact, when I brought it into my office last night-- I brought it in yesterday to make sure I didn't forget it-- and, just as I was leaving, I turned it face down, just in case any one walked past my office and thought, "there's a Rembrandt".

[LAUGHS]

And the details of the etching are written on the front for the same reason, I think, to put off burglars. No, it's not real. Don't bother.

[LAUGHS].

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: I'm actually married to a Rembrandt. My husband's name is really Rembrandt.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow.

ANGELIKI LYMBEROPOULO: So we do have access to the Rembrandt house in Amsterdam.

[LAUGHS].

KAREN FOLEY: Thanks for bringing these in. It's been really interesting. But, of course, our students are going to be studying a lot of this in books. And so, could you say something to wrap up the session about how you're actually teaching students, and how there is a difference, I think, in terms of being able to hold an object, and see the light. And we put a link, by the way, to the ivories database in the chat. But experiencing things online, or in real life, or, I guess, in color printing, that there's so much else that would add to that. How are you teaching students about some of those complexities, and conveying that experience?

KIM WOODS: Well, it's a good question because we're both big champions of actually seeing the real thing. But I think there is a difference between general study and research. If you're doing research, you've got to see the real thing. But if you're studying, the kind of opportunities that are open to our students now are huge, with the electronic resources that we offer them. So you can see things online, and you could zoom in, you can see details. So although you're not seeing the real- say that this ivory was in, which, of course, it isn't, you would be able to zoom in and see those holes I was so excited about. So it's a mixture of very high quality books and electronic resources that allow you access to pictures that you can zoom in on. There are interactive things as well. It's a very, kind of, rich experience that's open to everybody,

regardless of whether they live in a place where they can see works of art, or can travel, and go and see museums and galleries. So, yeah, we'd recommend it.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Well, thank you both very much, Kim and Angeliki. That's been a really useful session. And what we're going to do now is, we're going to have a quick break of the live stream, which means we're going to cut everyone off, and you can come back in. So just refresh your screens in a minute. And we do that to make sure that we. hopefully, don't drop out at any time later. So we're going to do that. And we're also going to watch a short video on avoiding plagiarism, a very important topic, I would think, Kim.

[LAUGHS]

So we're going to be doing that. And then, we'll be back shortly. Grab a cup of tea. Don't forget, if you've got any questions, do pop those in the chat box, and we'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING].