

From Canada to Armenia: School of Art student pursues passion through global research

By Sarah Marie Brazeal, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

Fiona Gray, who will graduate this fall with a BA in art history and a minor in religious studies, said her time at ASU not only prepared her for pursuing a career in academia but also allowed her to learn more about herself, her drive and her dedication.

"It may sound cheesy, but I really learned a lot about the importance of passion and drive," she said. "I felt immediately engaged with the curriculum. I don't think I could have sustained the workload associated with pursuing a four-year degree if I weren't as passionate about my field of study."

Looking ahead, the School of Art student said she plans to pursue graduate studies and eventually a PhD, with the goal of building a career in academia. She also intends to continue her research in medieval Armenian studies, examining the intersection of art history and religion.

Gray's current research focuses on medieval manuscripts of the Armenian Apostolic Church and their transnational circulation in the 20th century, particularly in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide. Her work offers a nuanced exploration of how sacred objects transform in meaning over time and across geopolitical contexts.

Gray, who is originally from Canada, was awarded a prestigious summer fellowship this past year through ASU's Melikian Center that allowed her to study in Yerevan, Armenia. There, she not only developed critical language skills but also deepened her understanding of the cultural and historical dimensions that underpin her research.

Faculty in the School of Art said Gray stands out for the advanced nature of her scholarship and the depth of her engagement with her field. They have described her work as reflecting remarkable curiosity, seriousness and passion. While a student, she also served in a leadership role as president of the Undergraduate Art History Association.

“Now, looking back at everything I’ve accomplished while pursuing my BA, I’ve realized how capable I am of doing anything that I put my mind to,” Gray said.

Question: Why did you choose ASU?

Answer: I am Canadian and grew up in northern climates/environments for most of my life. When it came time to choose a university, I really wanted to pick somewhere that was unlike anywhere I’d ever lived before. I was drawn to the desert atmosphere in Arizona.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: I feel very fortunate to have been surrounded by so many incredible faculty members in the history of art department. Collectively, they’ve all given me a lot of hope for the future of art history as an educational discipline and for academia in general. I’ve realized that it can be disheartening at times to think about the future of academia. However, having such passionate faculty members to look up to has provided me with a positive outlook for my future in academia. They have also inspired me to continue to pursue my studies with an open mind. They have taught me that the future of academia is not so much about defiance, but more about adaptation.

Q: What’s the best piece of advice you’d give to those still in school?

A: Build relationships with all of your professors! Always. I really cannot stress this enough. They are there to provide you with guidance and they want to help you! I speak especially to those pursuing a degree in art history here at ASU, our faculty really is incredible. We are very lucky to be surrounded by such intelligent and inspirational individuals.

Q: What was your favorite spot on campus, whether for studying, meeting friends or just thinking about life?

A: My favourite place to study is probably the Cartel Coffee shop off of University Ave. I love their coffee and the atmosphere in the building fosters a great environment to be productive.

Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: This question is very difficult, but I guess I would choose to donate the money to organizations that can provide primary education and resources to countries that do not have access to this. I would love to assist in making education more accessible on a global scale.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Gray in Armenia.