

Santiago 0:00

My name is Santiago. I'm from Portugal. And I've been living in the UK for five years. I did my BA at Sussex in Brighton. And then I decided to move to London because the art scene here is much bigger and more interesting. So I decided to do curating because it is a very practical course and I felt like I needed this practical experience that I didn't have with studying art history.

Philipp 0:23

And Phillip, I'm from Austria, and I did my BA in economics. But I wanted to switch kind of like my area of study, so I figured out curating would be the best for it. So, I applied for the MA, and I got super lucky to be here.

Academic Support 0:41

That's quite a big switch. Perhaps you could talk a bit about what sort of thoughts went through your mind but making such a big jump or was it a big jump?

Philipp 0:49

Um, I was always into art. So, I was painting already since I was six years old and my mother is a painter. So I was always into Art and interested and visiting museums. So I kind of like felt it was just naturally to combine the economics and the art world together.

Academic Support 1:10

So maybe now we have just a discussion about what you thought it was going to be like, and what was really like?

Philipp 1:16

I feel like London can be very overwhelming because it's such a big city with so many different people from different cultures and different nationalities. So, get used to maybe not from the beginning, to get quite along with everything and but it's just a matter of time before you figure everything out and how other people think. And it's a great thing to, to grow also in your personality and your practices.

Santiago 1:44

Yes, because I've been living in London before starting the course. And I still felt it was quite overwhelming and quite intense studying and kind of living in London at the same time and then working as well as you find a job part time. So yeah, it's quite difficult. I think intense is always good, like intensity is everything because it pushes. So, for me it's like perfect because otherwise it just becomes boring...

Philipp 2:11

Boring, yeah London is never boring. It's a city that never sleeps. So yeah, if you want to grow and have a little bit of action, London is the best place.

Academic Support 2:19

Any recommendations to somebody coming here?

Santiago 2:23

I think my first one would be to find a nice room or nice house because like, people don't pay a lot of attention to quality in terms of housing. If you don't have a good space for yourself, you'll struggle I think. It's really easy to find a cheap room that then is not good. And then you will struggle, I think.

Philipp 2:45

The best will be if you if you kind of like, prior to coming here, that you find already, like a very nice and suitable place and make some contacts. And ask maybe friends or people, where you can live because the living market in London is not not the best in the world.

Santiago 3:05

Yeah, I think that's a good thing. Having a bit of structure before coming here and knowing.. know a bit more about the city, before you can, like in terms of prices, transport, areas. Yeah, I think that's important. Otherwise it becomes too... there's too much to learn, in the beginning, and then if you start your course at the same time, I think there's a need for balance and kind of taking it easy, in the beginning. I think London is so... such a massive city in so many people but it's so easy, easy to like feel isolated and lonely. Because everyone is living their own lives in.. especially in the Masters, everyone is already like doing their things. It is not as like a BA when everyone is like very close together because people are from different ages and things. So, I think it's important to kind of make an effort to meet people into establish close relationships.

Philipp 3:59

So thats the tip to every upcoming students to maybe... not wait to the people to come to you to make friends but go out on your own, go out to student parties, meet a lot of people. Because what I learned is that it seems like the people are close here, but the fact is that people are really open here, especially from other nationalities and other cultures. Because at the beginning of course, there is always this barrier between cultures and because of different languages and different thinkings but when you engage them and introduce yourself and try to network and socialise more, you will find out that everybody here is super easy going.

Santiago 4:43

And I think it's makes it easier to kind of realise that everyone is a little bit scared and everyone is in the same boat. So if you think, you're struggling a little, like me, maybe it's... I don't overthink as much, and I'll be more forwards about meeting new people and being a bit. If you're shy... like some people struggle... I do, I do struggle, so I get that.

Academic Support 5:06

Who has been your support when you were struggling?

Philipp 5:10

Close friends and family of course.

Santiago 5:13

I have a lot of friends from my course, working in Sussex, and most people are from London so... but it's still difficult when everyone was already like doing their thing and

like with jobs, you're already and adult, I feel like. That idea that like everyone is growing up so quickly and there is not much time to kind of be spontaneous. So like just meet up whenever. There's more a need for like, structure and planning and it's a bit more kind of sad when you think about it all.. I think.

Philipp 5:40

Yeah, it's because everybody has its own life.

Santiago 5:42

Yeah. Exactly

Philipp 5:43

His own project. His own friends. Everybody moves its own way. Different paths. So can be sometimes really hard. If you have already friends here, kind of like find out that everybody's starting something out. So that's why I think it's so important to make friends also in the course. So you share like all the same fears and the same struggle and overcome them.

Santiago 6:03

Because if come from abroad, you won't have your family here so

Philipp 6:07

Exactly.

Santiago 6:08

Yeah, so what else can you count on?

Philipp 6:11

So this was super hard for me at the beginning, not to have someone close you can talk to in person. But it's manageable half the time, so you find out you will find friends and people you really like so...

Academic Support 6:25

What about studying here, any thoughts about the differences in studying maybe to what you've been used for? What's the best approach to that?

Philipp 6:36

I'm where I'm from Austria, our universities are more publicly funded. We don't, we don't get that that much attention from the professors or the tutors, like you do here, in London. So it's like way better I think. Because here you get ...you have your own own briefings with your professor. That's something that you don't have, for example, in Austria because there's so many people studying. So it's basically around 300 students per tutor. So that's something that I really like here in London, that you have like a close relationship with your tutors, and your course leaders. So, whenever you have a problem, or you feel like trapped in something, regarding the course, you can always engage them and ask them for help or advice. And that's something that's almost impossible in Austria.

Santiago 7:26

Yeah, I don't know, the sort of difference from my BA. I think the structure of the course is completely different because it's way more practical, and there's way more group projects and collaborations and your teamwork. Because my BA was quite like you did your essays and that was it. I only notice it from that. Because I never studied undergrad level back in Portugal, so I don't know how to compare with.

Philipp 7:50

It's like publicly funded right?

Santiago 7:51

You still pay, but it's super... way cheaper than here. There is one lot of contact hours, quite intense, but then you don't have a lot of time to do independent study, which I think is also important. Because 30 hours of university, you don't have the time to study by yourself and kind of focus on your own things.

Academic Support 8:12

Maybe we should move on talking about assessment, marking, judgment, criticism, grades?

Philipp 8:24

I think it's great. Like I said, in Austria, you don't have this kind of contact with your tutors. So I really liked that you get like more criticised for your ... get more advice on your practices. Because that's how you learn and that's how you grow when you make mistakes and someone is there telling you what you did wrong. So, I think it's super important that we have tutors who tell us what we did wrong and how to improve ourselves.

Santiago 8:54

Yeah, definitely think it's more insightful, this kind of contact and feedback. We get like constant feedback all the time, which is very helpful. I mean, depends how you take criticism, I think criticism is important otherwise you can't you can grow. But when projects become too personal, criticism also becomes very personal. And it's sometimes really hard to take it and just be kind of unbiased about it or just like, take it because you need it. It's not an attack. It's just a suggestion to make you better, I guess. But it's sometimes it's hard...

Philipp 9:24

When you put so much work and you put your life into this and your heart.

Santiago 9:29

It's just just a very effective way of telling you... telling you to improve. So sometimes, I struggle.

Philipp 9:37

And you always need to distinguish between like, personal opinion and the opinion of your tutors of what can you do better.

Santiago 9:45

Yeah, of course, but then you also, you become quite close to your tutor. So it's kind of difficult.

Philipp 9:50

That's what we like about our course we have like really a close relationship with our course leaders in it.

Santiago 9:56

And then we also we also have the crit, which is a kind of a type of assessment where everyone including your classmates, give feedback on your projects, and they can be a bit challenging as well. Because your friends so sometimes you want to be honest but then you also want to be nice and you don't want to like expose them or expose their kind of mistakes, in front of the teachers or front of everyone else. So I think that's quite interesting. I'm kind of enjoying it, balancing this this, like, need to be assertive but also be polite and being honest. It is like really tricky, but I think it's an important skill to have and I feel like learning it.

Philipp 10:31

I'm sure there are like cultural differences in how you you get along with criticism and how you use it. Some people may take criticism serious and don't see this as time of... something to grow but rather like, 'oh my god, I'm not... I'm not good at it, I got criticised for it. That's that's super bad.' But I think the European mentality is more like, okay, we get criticised, that's a good thing because that's... that's where we can improve.

Santiago 11:05

Yeah, I think it's interesting to see how people, different people, different cultures or different countries know, kind of deal with this. But I think it's rather it's quite uniform, if you think about it, and of course, I don't see great disparities.

Academic Support 11:23

To what extent have you changed as a result of being here in terms of your own understanding of yourself and of the world?

Philipp 11:33

You can do everything on your own, and even more as a group. That I learned so much, that for example, in group shows, that communication is everything, that everybody's opinion is being heard. That something that many people forget sometimes, because it's often happened that somebody has an opinion, but he's maybe too shy to express his opinion. So it's a very important you also as a team member, to listen to everybody's opinion. To get an idea what everybody's thinking, not just bring your own idea, but to get the whole context, so you understand what's the best for the whole team.

Santiago 12:12

I think I definitely became more... maybe a bit more cynical and a bit more self aware. Because this constant... like we're constantly doing project and constantly getting feedback on those projects. And before I was kind of naive, maybe thinking I was like, good enough.

Philipp 12:27

And as for me personally, I'm more calmer now. I feel like more... I'm thinking twice before engaging something, that's super important, especially when you have like group mates and... yeah.

Santiago 12:41

I think... I think self awareness is, I think I'm becoming more myself, I think that's good. It makes you like a bit more unsure. I think, you need to reflect on your own progress or your process of doing things. So I think this is good, even though you're a bit more shaky at times.

Academic Support 12:57

What's your ways of reflecting?

Philipp 13:00

Usually, I usually like to reflect before going to sleep. I can think about the day I went through, what was good, what was bad, what could I have done better? So it's kind of like shaking everything off before going to sleep.

Santiago 13:17

I just think a lot, like at the point of overthinking. But I like to look back at what I've done, like in terms of essays or exhibitions or collaborations, and even conversations with people. I think it's good to look back and kind of realise maybe what you should have done differently, or you what we did well. It's as important to know like, what actually things you've improved on. There is no way of like reflecting, you have to like, see when you're overthinking, that's when is dangerous because then you don't do anything.

Philipp 13:47

I think that that's what most people do. It's like a normal human thing like overthinking sometimes, then you need to realise and remember yourself, take it easy. You're just a human being and everybody's making mistakes, and you learn from it. In the end of the day,

Santiago 14:01

You learn to not overthink, I think. When you like if you like....

Philipp 14:04

Yes, yes, exactly.

Santiago 14:05

So like...

Philipp 14:07

But also don't be too too confident ... you should... sometimes it's good to overthink and sometimes it's good to take it easy. So you need to understand, in which situation it's suitable. Understand, in which situation it's it's, it's suitable.

Academic Support 14:27

Cool it's a very good answer. It's very thorough. And next question I have is just about research, what's research? And why is it important? Is it important? How does it help you?

Philipp 14:42

I'm doing currently research on virtual reality and technologies in the art space. So I think it's very important to research these fields in terms of to have a look in the future, what is what is coming up for us? How can we prepare those as humans, in different spaces, because that's what research is for. And if we look into these spaces, and all these different areas, we have a better understanding of what can come up to us and we can adjust in every aspect.

Santiago 15:14

Also, projects are good because you work with people as someone you have to work by yourself as well. So I think that research is good in terms of like your own, how you do, like your methodologies, and what you think is important how you kind of manage all this, the process of research, and then putting things together.

Academic Support 15:33

Where do you have the boundaries for research, where does it stop?

Santiago 15:35

I think at some point, you have to stop doing research, and just in terms of like the practical... at some point, there is no like you have to start doing... you have to start doing you know, like, if you're researching for a projects, you then eventually have to start doing the project. Like again, you can do research like, like it never stops.

Philipp 15:56

That's like the over thinking thing, doing research, you thinking so much about what you write in some point someone has stopped writing and maybe do something do something people write about it instead of just writing.

Santiago 16:10

Yeah, that makes sense.

Academic Support 16:13

What you think it means be part of an academic course, what does academic mean?

Santiago 16:19

Maybe I'm wrong, for me means rules and structure, which sometimes I struggle with. Even like with my course, like my sometimes I criticise the course, like there's too much structure, I want to do my own thing, I want to be more experimental. And you have to like act within these norms. And I think academia, writing, academic writing, academic research, it's all like, has like, a specific type of doing of doing it. I think that's what it means for me. And everyone's kind of the same. They speak the same, they write the same, they present the ideas the same. Which is good... it's like having doctors or having lawyers all the same kind, you know what I mean?

Philipp 16:57

No, I agree that everything's the same, because you can you can like get influenced by your tutors and leaders.

Santiago 17:05
Yeah

Philipp 17:06
That's a good thing. Because you can like get their opinions, but it's everywhere like this, it's also in fine art.

Santiago 17:11
Yes. But in fine art, for instance, you have more freedom, they allow you the expression

Philipp 17:16
Of course, but don't forget, the influence is always there, because even in Fine Art, out you have the opinion of your, of your course leader. So there will be always this kind of like a little bit of influence, a little bit of advice from that one person you look up to,

Santiago 17:30
But it's more... it's easier for them to stand out. Because we don't... how do you stand out as an Academic? It's so hard like to be like really good, which is...

Philipp 17:38
Well you can make up some crazy thesis

Santiago 17:41
But then I think it's easier to get a bit... faded out I think. Personally, just become too much involved in like academics, I've said a lot of people that I admire, and then I research them and I become a reflection, like an extension of what they say or what they think. And then it's for me, it's difficult to kind of find your like own individuality within the area of research, you know, because it's so influenced by what the canon has said. Sometimes, I mean, you need to criticise it, but then if you agree with it more, it's easier to kind of get lost in what they say. And just become like an echo of that.

Philipp 18:16
You grow and you get influenced by your surroundings, you share your ideas, of course, you get influenced because you listen to their ideas. And you think about their opinions. And it's influencing you, you too in your own way of thinking. So that's I think it's the main point of being an academic to learn from other academic people and get their opinions and their advice and to evolve.

Santiago 18:44
But also you then need to stick with academia like it, like this is a tool to like, make you like we do somewhere else. I don't know, it doesn't have to stick with academic kind of this academic field, I think there's like sometimes people think you have to...

Academic Support 19:00
Is there anything you think you'd like to have known a bit more about that you might be able to help with?

Philipp 19:06

The best thing is to come here and experience everything by yourself, like jump into the cold water and engage everything on your own. Like without making some prior views. That's the best thing.

Santiago 19:21

I think your views might change. Because I was so sure what I was gonna what I wanted to do with this course and what I wanted to be after this. And I'm like not sure at all. I don't know.

Philipp 19:33

Don't makes so many plans.

Santiago 19:35

Because it's so insightful. And then you meet so many people, you get a bit disorientated, because there's so much and then like, I'm not sure what I want to do now. Before I had an idea and now I don't... like it's fair to say I think. So I think it's like, that's my mind. Don't take it for granted. That's what meant I say. It's good, because then you're like, you'll get more frustrated, I think. But then sometimes things don't work. So you have to kind of be flexible and have to adapt to whatever is thrown at you I think, this might be sound like a cliché, but it's true.

Academic Support 20:09

Can you just talk a bit about experimentation and failure? And your attitude and what role you think failure plays in learning, in this opportunity this year's learning for you?

Philipp 20:22

I think you, you only learn from failures, I think, because that's the thing you can like regret. And if you do fail and regret it, you make sure you're not making it twice. So I think if you if you make fearless, it's the most important thing in life. I think when you make failures you're like super intelligent, when you make the same mistake, the same feel advice, you're like super super stupid.

Santiago 20:48

So I think course is a perfect place to mistakes and just be experimental. And like, in the beginning, I was being super serious about these projects and trying to be super professional and like I'm going to be serious curator now. And then it's not fun, because everything you do is so, so traditional. And then, yeah, this is a perfect place to kind of experiment and just do things because you want to do them.

Philipp 21:11

You can't even even close to understand everything.

Santiago 21:13

Yeah, I think that's what the course is important. You get an introduction, and then you have space to create your own projects and to create something. But it's I think it's good not to take it too seriously. Because, like it's more like you need to have fun.

Otherwise, I mean it there's a balance, but you need to kind of be experimental, and just allow yourself to make mistakes.

Philipp 21:35

So that's all you want to say, make a lot of mistakes because now when you're not a professional you can afford it to make it and learn from them. Learn from everything you do.

Santiago 21:46

Yeah

Philipp 21:47

Don't take it for granted that you have you have your... all these people here, and it's like super normal, because at some point in life, you will get into a job and I feel like networking will maybe fall off and will be less. So, really appreciate it that you have so many people from different backgrounds and different nationalities, and different cultures, because now it's that time to really make friendships. And yeah, then just go and do a lot of networking, because you're young. And now... now you have a lot of time to do it actually and who knows maybe in the future, you will work together with your other colleagues your teammates.

Santiago 22:25

I also want to talk about networking, but in the other way. I think there's a lot of pressure to do network and to kind of throw yourself out and.. just like especially in like exhibitions and getting to know curators and artists and there's so much pressure. And sometimes you feel like you can't do it and it doesn't come up as natural as other people. You don't to know everything and like be super, like sociable and super like fluent and super polished. Like when they throw you into those openings.

Philipp 22:54

It always depends on where you want to stand in the future. Like, do you really want to be an influential person in the art scene, then it's needed that you like it, in the open space, you show your face that you like.

Santiago 23:04

Yeah, that's true, I agree with that.

Philipp 23:06

So that's why it's also very important to focus on a lot of people you you get know.

Santiago 23:11

It can come across as forced, and when it's forced it won't work, in my opinion. For me it's like, literally don't take it too seriously.. because its not that serious.

Philipp 23:26

I feel like I've already grown so much. But I'm looking forward to grow even more. So let's see, I'm really happy to face new challenges and I hope to keep making new mistakes, and to learn from them. And let's see what the world can bring to us.

Santiago 23:46

I think right now I'm just focused on the course and I just want to do it and finish it and do well. And then I'm not sure what I want to do if I want to say London or if I want to go somewhere else. But I think I'm just focused on the course right now and trying to finish it, as good as possible.

Academic Support 24:05

And it's really great that both of you got different views, but not to obviously get on really well.

Santiago 24:09

Yeah, we do.

Philipp 24:11

We should we should start a podcast show.

Santiago 24:15

A podcast

Philipp 24:15

Our own radio show

Santiago 24:15

And I think it's also interesting. We come from different backgrounds. Like I don't know anything about economics, like I didn't know you did economics before.

Academic Support 24:21

Thank you very much for your contribution.

Santiago 24:24

Thank you.

Philipp 24:24

Thank you for having us

Santiago 24:26

Thank you