

Dear History of Art First-Year Students,

Congratulations once again on being offered a place on the degree course. We hope this letter finds you well.

On arrival in your College you will be given, amongst much other information, a hard copy of the Department of History of Art Induction Programme for Week 0 and Week 1. If you have any questions before then that cannot be answered by your college, please feel free to contact the History of Art Manager, Penelope Lane ([email: manager@hoa.ox.ac.uk](mailto:manager@hoa.ox.ac.uk)). Please also contact Penelope if you have any specific learning difficulties, disabilities or long-term health conditions in order that we can ensure the Department is properly prepared to provide you with all necessary support throughout your studies (any such information will be treated confidentially).

As you look forward to the first year of the History of Art BA degree course at Oxford, please keep in mind that the best preparation is to hone your looking skills by reading art books, visiting museums and exhibitions, exploring local architecture, and generally developing a critical sensitivity to the visual environment in which we live. You should also do some preparatory reading before coming up to Oxford in the autumn, whether or not you have studied History of Art in a formal way at school. To this end, we have put together a Summer Reading List (below) that gives a select number of recommendations for you to choose from. If possible you should try to engage with a few of these texts, perhaps especially on topics with which you are less familiar.

There is no requirement for you to purchase any books, though you may wish to do so. At least some of these books should be available in your local library. We have also listed below a number of online resources (including links to recent lectures and events in the History of Art Department) that will help to stimulate your thinking about art history. We've concentrated on online resources relating to museums and libraries in Oxford to give you a sense of the rich collections that you'll be able to work with once you arrive, but we've also included some of our favourite sites from around the world that you might find interesting. There are, of course, innumerable art-related sites out there, so feel free to dip into whatever grabs your attention.

Finally, the first year BA course in Art History includes an introductory language course to enable you to lay the basis for using a foreign language in your academic work (and beyond your degree course). Three courses will be run in Italian, German, and French, and your cohort will be equally divided between the three language classes. All are intended for complete beginners, and the expectation is that you will have no knowledge of the language you take. (If, for example, you happen to have studied French to GCSE or higher level, you will find yourself allocated to one of the other classes.) The courses are taught with reference to art-historical materials, and you will find over the course of the year (whatever your previous experience or non-experience of language study) that you will be able to read Italian, German, or French texts in your field. A certificate is awarded at the end of the year, and facilities in the University Language Centre are available to enable you to continue your language studies on an individual basis after the first year. No preliminary preparation for the language course is required: you will be allocated a language class and introduced to the course as part of your induction to the degree.

Again, all of us in the Department and College are looking forward to welcoming you to Oxford.

With all best wishes,

Professor Alastair Wright
Coordinator of the Preliminary Course, 2023-24
Department of History of Art

2023 Summer Reading List for First Year History of Art Students

This is a short list of books and websites, any of which you might enjoy looking at over the summer before you come up to Oxford. Study at Oxford will entail widening your horizons, and these writers and their books should help you to embark on this now. As you read, think critically not only about the material discussed but about the particular methods used by the writer, and try reading about periods and subjects with which you are unfamiliar.

Books

- Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, revised edn (1996)
- Jas' Elsner, *Imperial Art and Christian Triumph: the Art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450* (1998)
- Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Glorious Visions* (1996)
- Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1972 and later edns)
- Geraldine A. Johnson, *Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction* (2005)
- Craig Harbison, *The Mirror of the Artist; Northern Renaissance Art in its Historical Context* (1995)
- Mariet Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (1996)
- Stephen Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art; A Critical History*, 4th edition (2011)
- H. H. Arnason and Peter Kalb, *History of Modern Art*, 5th edition (2002)
- Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (1996)
- James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997)
- Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, second edition (2009)

Online resources at Oxford

The History of Art Department

Events:

<https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/events>

Watch the 2020 Terra Lectures in American Art and this year's Image and Object workshop.

Blog:

<https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/oxford-hoa-blog>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/OxfordArtHist>

Follow History of Art

Ashmolean Museum

Young Rembrandt online exhibition:

<https://www.ashmolean.org/youngrembrandt>

Take a virtual tour of the Ashmolean's show.

Stories:

<https://www.ashmolean.org/stories>

Watch short videos about works in the Ashmolean's collection.

Treasures:

<https://www.ashmolean.org/treasures>

Read more about collection highlights.

Collections:

<https://collections.ashmolean.org/>

Explore the complete collection online.

Pitt Rivers Museum

Virtual Tour:

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=ns3yCKpUzSq&help=1>

Tour the museum's galleries in 3D.

Research projects:

<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/research>

Scroll to the bottom for fascinating online research.

Bodleian Libraries

The Art of Advertising online exhibition:

<https://visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/event/art-of-advertising>

Learn about British advertising design through Oxford's archives.

Stories:

<https://visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/online-projects>

Explore the curated content about the Bodleian's rich collections.

Sounds of the Bodleian:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/soundsofthebodleian/#radcam>

Listen to the library's sonic landscape.

Modern Art Oxford

Blog:

<https://www.modernartoxford.org.uk/blog/>

Explore the online content at Oxford's only public contemporary art space.

Online resources from around the world

Art UK

<http://artuk.org/>

Extensive digital resource on works in public collections in the UK.

We Are Culture 24

<https://weareculture24.org.uk/>

Research and outreach hub for museums and the heritage sector in the UK

Google Arts and Culture

<https://artsandculture.google.com/>

Explore the world's museums virtually.

The Palace Museum in Beijing

<https://en.dpm.org.cn/multimedia/virtual/>

Experience one of China's finest museums through an immersive digital reconstruction.

The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheLouisianaChannel>

Watch short video interviews with artists.

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo

<https://art.hok.no/>

Watch avant-garde performances online.

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/last-minute-michelangelo/>

Follow Getty curators through a Michelangelo exhibition, as filmed on an iPhone just moments before lockdown.

The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

<https://walkerart.org/magazine>

Read about the impact of the pandemic on contemporary art.

The Wellcome Collection, London

<https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/XeE-0hEAACEAtuqK>

See images of quarantine through history.

The Frick Collection, New York

https://www.frick.org/interact/miniseries/cocktails_curator

Enjoy cocktails with curators.