Dear History of Art First-Year Students,

First of all, congratulations once again on being offered a place on the degree course. In the case of those of you taking school exams this summer, we trust these have gone well. All being well with the results, all members of the History of Art Department look forward to welcoming you here at the start of October. On arrival in your College for the start of term, you will be given, amongst much other information, the History of Art Department Induction Programme for 6th and 7th October. If you have any questions over the summer which cannot be answered by your College, please feel free to contact the Manager of Administration for the Department, Rachel Leach (tel. 01865 286830; rachel.leach@hoa.ox.ac.uk). Please do also contact Rachel 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 (this information will be treated confidentially).

With regard 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 perusing art books, visiting museums and their websites, going to 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, the Summer Reading List sent together with this letter gives a select number of recommendations for you to choose from. You should try to engage with a few of these texts, perhaps especially on topics with which you are less familiar. At least some of these books should be available in your local library. Although you may wish to do so, there is no requirement for you to purchase any books.

Also in your first year, you will be required to take either a French or Italian for Art Historians course though the University’s Language Centre. No preparation is required before you commence your studies; you will have an introduction as part of your induction to the Department.

All of us in the Department are looking forward to your arrival. In the meantime, enjoy the remainder of the summer!

With all best wishes,

Dr Matthew Walker
Coordinator of the Preliminary Course