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:](mailto:manager@hoa.ox.ac.uk).) 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 is required for the language course. Before the start of term, you will be sent a poll asking you to indicate your preferred language (note: this must be a language you have not previously studied), so be sure to check your emails regularly. We will do our best to assign courses based on preferences, but we cannot guarantee that you will receive your first choice. The course will be introduced 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,

Dr Marko Ilic

Co-Convenor of the Preliminary Course, 2025-26  
Department of History of Art

**2025 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**

* Thames and Hudson’s *World of Art* series (a comprehensive series of over books dealing with individual art historical themes and subjects and written for non-specialist audiences).
* The Whitechapel's *Documents of Contemporary Art* (anthologies that deal with an individual theme in contemporary art/ visual culture).
* Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, ‘Decolonizing Art History,’ *Art History*, 43: (February 2020): <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-8365.12490>
* Maria Loh, ‘After the Plague: The state of Renaissance Art History,’ *Art in America* (3 August 2021): [https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/new-books- renaissance-art-history-1234600744/](https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/new-books-%20renaissance-art-history-1234600744/)
* Geraldine A. Johnson, *Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).
* Sria Chatterjee, ‘The Arts, Environmental Justice, and Ecological Crisis,’ Conversation Piece in *British Art Studies*, Issue 18, Available here: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-18/arts-environmental-justice-ecological-crisis>
* Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today,* (London New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).
* Kobena Mercer, *Annotating Art’s Histories: Cross-Cultural Perspectives in the Visual Arts*, (a series of four publications, published by MIT Press between 2005-8).
* T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology,* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).
* Tina Campt, *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021).

**Online resources at Oxford**

**The History of Art Department**

Events:

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

Bluesky:

<https://bsky.app/profile/oxfordhistoryofart.bsky.social>

*Follow History of Art*

**Ashmolean Museum**

Ashmolean from Home:

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

Includes stories, videos and online exhibitions.

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**

Stories:

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

*Explore the curated content about the Bodleian’s rich collections.*

**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*.

**Google Arts and Culture**

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

*Explore the world’s museums virtually.*

**The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark**

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

*Watch short video interviews with artists.*

**The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles**

<https://www.getty.edu/news/>

**The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis**

<https://walkerart.org/magazine>

**Tate Galleries, London**

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers>

Tate Papers, an online research journal publishing articles on British and modern international art.

**Afterall Contemporary Art Research Centre, London**

<https://www.afterall.org/>

**L’internationale, a European confederation of museums, arts organizations and universities, founded in 2009**

<https://www.internationaleonline.org/>

Follow their open access e-books and publications.

**MoMA, New York**

<https://post.moma.org/>

Post: notes on art in a global context