26 June 2019

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 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. You will receive information about your induction closer to the start of term, and 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 over the summer which cannot be answered by your college, please feel free to contact the History of Art Manager, Penelope Lane (email: manager@hoa.ox.ac.uk). Please do 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 (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.

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. Both 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 probably find yourself allocated to one of the other classes.)
The course to which you are allocated will be 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. 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.

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,

Professor Alastair Wright

Coordinator of the Preliminary Course, 2019-20
Department of History of Art
Summer Reading 2019 List for First Year History of Art Students

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

- Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1972 and later edns)
- Craig Harbison, *The Mirror of the Artist; Northern Renaissance Art in its Historical Context* (1995)

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/explorerflash/#/object_rxxK1Fg8QNSsmpXhCIAXQ](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/explorerflash/#/object_rxxK1Fg8QNSsmpXhCIAXQ)
- [http://artuk.org/](http://artuk.org/)
- [https://weareculture24.org.uk/](https://weareculture24.org.uk/)