July 2018

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 History of Art Department Induction Programme for 4th and 5th 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.

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). Two courses will be run, in Italian and French, and your cohort will be equally divided between the two 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 the Italian class.) 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 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,

Prof Gervase Rosser
Coordinator of the Preliminary Course