**Graduate Diploma in the History of Art**

**Preliminary Reading**

Dear Students,

Following our recent online Offer Holder event, I write to welcome you to The Coutauld Graduate Diploma Programme and share a few important notes.

Please explore the updated Offer Holder page, which also has updated FAQs: [www.courtauld.ac.uk/gd-offer-holder](http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/gd-offer-holder)

My successor, Teresa Lane, Associate Lecturer at The Courtauld, will be in contact with you closer to the start of the new academic year. In the meantime, I offer you, below, a selection of books and articles to consult before you begin your course this Autumn. They are not set texts, and they are not necessarily connected to the specific courses you will study. Rather than reading to accumulate knowledge, try to use these books and articles to acquire some background on the texts and contexts on which many works of art and architecture are based, on how art history is practiced, has been written, and has expanded its parameters relying on a wide range of historical backgrounds. Obviously, we do not expect you to have read all (or even many) of them. Rather, we hope you try to read some. You will find many of these also useful as the semesters progress. Most are in print and reasonably priced, or you might find that sections available through platforms such as Google Books to be useful. Many articles are available as well on authors’ Academia pages or online access provided by journals.

If circumstances allow, we encourage you to visit museums and galleries, and

explore all fields and geographies as much as you can before starting the programme. Do take the opportunity to study collections digitally as well to familiarise yourself with both the contents of London (and worldwide) collections and the ways in which curatorial teams have chosen to make works of art available. Once the course begins, we hope you can visit museums and galleries and connect your readings and preparatory explorations to works of art and architecture relevant to your particular

modules.

Above all, start the course feeling refreshed - it is a fast paced and demanding year! We look forward to welcoming you to the Institute in late September.

All the best,

Professor Sussan Babaie

**Art History as a Discipline**

\*Please note that the recommendations below are not alphabetical but that is not to say they are in any way appearing in prioritized order. Enjoy reading widely!

We recommend everyone to read the following. It is not art historical but excellent entry into our community-wide readings and discussions on decolonizing the curriculum. We started last year and plan to continue this academic year. You will be invited to join a reading group in due course.

Saidiya Hartman, ‘Venus in Two Acts,’ *Small Axe,*no. 26, vol. 12, no. 2 (June 2008), 1-14 (available online)

See also: Special issue of *Third Text*: 'Exhibiting the Experience of Empire: Decolonising Objects, Images, Materials and Words', vol. 33 (2019), especially 'Dismantling the Master’s House: Thoughts on Representing Empire and Decolonising Museums and Public Spaces in Practice: An Introduction' (open access)

**Art History – some key texts and approaches**

There are now many good primers on ways of studying art history; some include key texts with some discussion, others seek to describe and analyse the different approaches, such as biography, formal analysis, style, semiotics, iconography, aesthetics, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, gender studies. Architectural history is part of our teaching, and you will want to prepare yourselves to look at and learn through space and the built environment.

* C. Klonk, M. Hatt, *Art History: A critical introduction to its methods* (Manchester, 2006)
* E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods, a Reader* (1995)
* D. Preziosi, *The Art of Art History* (Oxford, 1998 and new eds)

For a very different approach, try:

* Kirsch and R.S. Levenson, *Seeing through Paintings. Physical Examination in Art Historical Studies* (New Haven and London 2000), which shows what kinds of things can be learnt from technical examination.

Writing art history

Remind yourself of proper punctuation, language and writing style with:

* Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: the Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (London, 2003)
* E. Partridge, *Usage and Abusage* (various editions) is a very useful handbook of proper English usage.
* A, d’Alleva, *How to Write Art History* (London 2006 and recent new edition).

**Recognizing Subject Matter**

To remind yourself of some basic Judeo-Christian religious iconography, consult the Bible (especially the books of Genesis, Judges, and I Kings in the Old Testament; and one of the Gospels in the New Testament, as well as the Acts and Revelations). See also B. Williamson, *Christian Art, A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford 2004).

For classical iconography, see Ovid, made most accessible in T. Hughes, *Tales from Ovid* (London 1997).

Once you are at the Institute you will have access to other resources in the library and on-line which include very useful guides to particular fields and relevant iconographies and stories.

Much of European histories of art refer to Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists,* various editions (eg Penguin Classics). There are equally compelling material for the beginnings of writing histories of art in China, Japan, and Persia, for example.

**Denaturalising ‘sight as a universal sense/experience’**

To begin to ‘see’ through different historical and cultural perspectives:

Dana Leibsohn and Jeanette Favrot Peterson, eds., *Seeing Across Cultures in the Early Modern World* (Routledge, 2012)

Kristina Kleutghen, ‘Peepboxes, Society, and Visuality in Early Modern China,’ *Art History* 38:4 (2015), 762-777.

Stephen Whiteman, ‘Beyond the Perspectival Paradigm: Early Modern Pictorial Space and Digital Challenges to the Field’, *Art Bulletin* 103:2 (2021), 8-23.

**Some historical and critical texts for background reading**

You will find it helpful to read beyond Euroamerican ambit. The following are some basic recommendations.

* Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019)
* Edward Said, Saïd, Edward. *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). available online.
* Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (Thames and Hudson, 1989)
* J. M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of Europe* (Harmondsworth, 2004).
* N. Davies, *Europe: A History* (London, 1997).
* P. Spufford, *Power and Profit, The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London 2002)
* Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London 1994).

**Period- and geography-specific art history texts and new critical reflections on art history as a discipline**

There are some very good ‘survey’ texts covering some of the areas you will be taught in the foundations course: a selection is below, some of which are written by Courtauld staff, past and present, several from the Oxford History of Art series. Others are more specialized but still wide ranging and often very influential. As you will find, there is little time to read extra material as the foundations course is actually happening alongside your other courses so any reading done on this now will be very useful.

* M. Beard and J. Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (Oxford,

2001)

* J. Elsner*, Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford 2000)
* Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early*

*Modern China* (Honolulu, 2004)

* J. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997)
* Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture.* New Edition (Thames and

Hudson, 2021)

* N. Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford 2002)
* M. Camille, *Gothic Art* (London, 1996).
* Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist* (1972)
* S. Nash, *Northern Renaissance Art* (Oxford 2008)
* E. Welch, *Italian Renaissance Art* (Oxford 1997)
* Craig Cluna, *Art in China* (Oxford Art History, 2009).
* M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style,* 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1988).
* S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the 17th Century* (Chicago, 1983)
* T. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven and London, 1985)
* D. Solkin, *Painting for Money* (New Haven and London, 1993)
* R. Brettel, *Modern Art 1850-1929* (Oxford 1999)
* Green, *Art in France 1900-1940* (New Haven and London, 2001)
* Hopkins, *After Modern Art* (Oxford, 2000)
* Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Architecture Since 1400* (Minneapolis 2014)

# Gülru Necipoğlu and [Alina Payne](https://press.princeton.edu/taxonomy/term/17032), eds., *Histories of Ornament: From Global to*

# *Local* (Princeton 2016)

* Terry Smith, *Art to Come: Histories of Contemporary Art* (Chapel Hill, NC

2019)

* J. Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* (1996) also *Contemporary Art. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2006)
* J. Applin, *Eccentric Objects: Rethinking Sculpture in 1960s America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012)

<http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=9755>

Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson, ‘Afrotropes: A User’s Guide,’ Art Journal 76, nos. 3–4 (2018), 7–9.

Leah Dickerman, David Joselit, Mignon Nixon, “Afrotropes: A Conversation with Huey Copeland and Krista Thompson,” October 162 (Fall 2017), 3-18

Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II and Mabel O. Wilson, eds, *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Pittsburgh 2020)

Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin, ‘Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World,’ *Art History*(Special Issue), vol. 38, no. 4 (September 2015)

Janet C. Berlo and Ruth Philips, *Native North American Art,*Oxford University Press, 1998