

July 2011

Dear Student

HISTORY OF ART – SUMMER PREPARATION WORK FOR UPCOMING 'AS LEVEL' STUDENTS

First of all a big welcome to AS Level History of Art at Hills Road. I am certain that you will enjoy the course and will gain a huge amount from it, not only in academic terms, but also in a cultural and personal way.

I know that you will have just come through exams and thinking about starting a new set of subjects might seem daunting.... so this document is designed to get you thinking in a 'gentle' way about some aspects of the Art History course. It is not summer homework that must be completed in advance but rather a few simple guidelines that you might follow in order to get the most out of your course when you begin it in full in September.

1. Visiting Galleries

Summer is the ideal opportunity to visit galleries both at home and abroad. I am sure many of you are jetting off to exotic locations so why not take the opportunity to visit any galleries that you can.

Of course, in Cambridge we have plenty of opportunities to see art. You should try and visit at least one local gallery, I would suggest the **FITZWILLIAM**, but you might also visit **KETTLES YARD HOUSE & GALLERY. CAMBRIDGE OPEN STUDIOS** also offers an ideal opportunity to see local artists at work. If you get the chance to visit London you may also go to the **TATE GALLERIES** or visit somewhere you have never been before. This might be **THE ROYAL ACADEMY, THE COURTAULD INSTITUTE or THE HAYWARD GALLERIES.**

2. Keeping a Visual Sketchbook

This should be at least A5 in size and can be used for collecting postcards, notes & information etc. It will also be used on the many visits and trips we undertake next year. I should emphasise that History of Art does not have any practical elements to it; however, you should be aware that keeping a sketchbook with notes and small studies can be extremely useful. When visiting galleries you should look out for anything that catches your eye and perhaps make a quick study of it. You then might want to try and find out any useful information about the piece of art (or architecture!).

It might be useful to think of the following when making notes about art:

- ***Feelings: How does the work make you feel? Do you find it calming, oppressive, frightening etc?***

- **Composition**: *How is the work put together, how are your eyes lead around the image?*
- **Colour**: *What colours have been used? How do they affect the appearance of the image?*
- **Context**: *When was the work produced, how does the work reflect the time in which it was made?*
- **Subject**: *What is happening to the image – what do you think the subject is?*
- **Symbolism**: *Are there any hidden symbols in the image? How might we read the colours symbolically?*

Please note that this book will not be assessed as part of your history of art course (but it does form a good reference point for revision.)

3. Reading

Don't panic, I am not setting lots of reading but it will be useful to get hold of one of the key texts in preparation for the course. When you arrive in September you will be given a number of text books, including Gombrich's 'Story of Art'.

However, it is recommended that all students of History of Art purchase the following book:

- **Honour & Fleming 'A World History of Art'**

This is also a core text (but not provided) and will be extremely useful for understanding the topics. A new copy can set you back about £35 but it is okay to get a second hand one – you might try eBay or Amazon marketplace. You will be given a full reading list in September so don't go mad buying lots of books! However, do look out for any interesting articles about art in journals and newspapers – you might perhaps start a cuttings collection! You could also read a novel that gives an enjoyable overview of a particular period; try any of the following:

- **Brunelleschi's Dome** by Ross King (*Good for Florentine Renaissance*)
- **The Yellow House** by Martin Gayford (*Discusses the turbulent relationship between Gauguin and Van Gogh*)
- **The Girl with A Pearl Earring** (*On Vermeer*) by Tracy Chevalier
- **The Moon and the Sixpence** By Somerset Maughan (*relating to the life of Gauguin*).
- **My Life with Picasso** by Francois Gilot
- **The Masterpiece** by Emile Zola
- **Light** by Eva Figueas
- **Rothko** by Glyn Hughes
- **The Lives of the Artists (Volumes I & II)** by Giorgio Vasari

4. TV & Film

Unusual to find a teacher telling you to watch TV as part of your homework! Nevertheless, there are lots of programmes on Art (nearly every week there is

something useful – especially if you have Sky and / or Digital). Get into the habit of studying the TV guide at the beginning of the week and try and start building up your own Art History reference library.

You might also watch programmes or films on DVD, there are many out there!

5. Visits & Trips

There are many opportunities in History of Art to visit galleries around the world. This year's lower sixth residential visit is to Amsterdam and is scheduled to take place in early December (TBC). Other visits include; Ely Cathedral, Kings College Chapel, The Fitzwilliam and the Department of Classical Archaeology.

5. And Finally...

Keep your eyes open, try to think about how the world looks around you and why things have been designed in a certain way. All is important for your visual development.

Well that's all for now, above all have a good summer and I look forward to meeting you in August / September. If you have any questions in the meantime then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Timothy Winn & Christopher Welander
History of Art