University of Oxford
St Edmund Hall

Dear Fine Art Fresher,

Congratulations on your admittance to study Fine Art at St Edmund Hall. As the Director of Studies for Fine Art at St Edmund Hall and one of your History & Theory tutors at the Ruskin School of Art, I very much look forward to welcoming you to Oxford in October. Full induction sessions will be provided by the college and the Ruskin when you arrive to begin your course.

The role of the Director of Studies for Fine Art is to provide oversight and support of your artistic and academic progress throughout your degree. We will hold regular meetings at which we can discuss your progress and address any concerns you may have. This does not constitute part of your formal teaching, but it offers a valuable addition to the support provided for you by the college. I will also be able to advise you on matters such as applying for a College Grant to purchase additional materials necessary to your studies (up to £300 a year), opportunities for showing your work in the college, and how to access the appropriate welfare structures in case of need. Since the teaching for Fine Art takes place in the studios, workshops, and seminar spaces at the Ruskin rather than in college, the Director of Studies for Fine Art provides an important point of contact between the college and the Ruskin School of Art.

As preparatory material, we have provided a suggested summer reading list that offer a stimulating and lively introduction to the history & theory of art. Carrying out some of this preparatory reading should also help you to reflect on your own practice as an artist and how it relates to contemporary developments in the visual arts. I would advise you to try to view as much art as you can over the summer, especially work by contemporary artists. This can be difficult if you live away from one of the main city centres, but any exhibitions you are able to view - whether in person or online - will help to provide a context for your own practice and deepen your understanding of contemporary art.

With all best wishes,



Jason Gaiger
Professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory
St Edmund Hall | The Ruskin School of Art

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BFA (Fine Art) Freshers' Suggested Reading List, 2026

These are not set texts: they are simply suggestions of books that contemporary art students often find useful or stimulating. You are not expected to have read them all before commencing your studies.

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (Vintage, 1993)

Alice Correia (ed.), *What is Black Art?* (Penguin, 2022)

Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes, *Art and Climate Change* (Thames & Hudson, 2022)

Dan Hicks, *Every Monument Will Fall: A Story of Remembering and Forgetting* (Penguin, 2026)

Linda Nochlin, *Why have there been no great women artists?* 50th anniversary edition (Thames & Hudson, 2021)

Alice Proctor, *The Whole Picture: the colonial story of the art in our museums and why we need to talk about it* (Cassell, 2020)

Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (Verso, 2020)

Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago, 2009)

Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Penguin, 1979)

Julian Stallabrass, *Contemporary Art*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 2020)

Hito Steyerl, *Medium Hot: Images in the Age of Heat* (Verso, 2025)

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton, 2021)

We also recommend books that are published in these two series (here you might like to follow your own interests and chose one artwork or theme to explore in more depth):

- Afterall's *One Work* https://www.afterall.org/books/one.work/
- Whitechapel/MIT's *Documents of Contemporary Art* https://mitpress.mit.edu/series/whitechapel-documents-of-contemporary-art/

It is also very rewarding to read art magazines such as *Frieze* (https://frieze.com), *Art Monthly* (http://www.artmonthly.co.uk), and *e-flux* (https://www.e-flux.com).

The Tate Modern website has useful links to articles and videos on contemporary art and artists: https://www.tate.org.uk/art.