

CURRICULUM VITAE

John R. Elsner, FBA

Date of birth: 19 December 1962

Nationality: British

Current Positions: Humfry Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Art and Archaeology, Corpus Christi College, Oxford.
From October 1999

Professor of Late Antique Art, Oxford University.
From July 2014

Visiting Professor of Art and Religion, Divinity School and
Dept. of Art History, University of Chicago (2014-27)

Auswärtig Wissenschaftlich Mitgleid (External Scientific
Member), Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz (Max Planck
Institute) from September 2019

Previous Positions:

2018-19: Vice President, Corpus Christi College, Oxford
2012-18: Leverhulme Senior Research Keeper, British Museum
2003-14: Visiting Professor of Art History and Classics,
University of Chicago
2011-14: A.W. Mellon Project Co-ordinator, Futures of Art History
Institute of Fine Arts, New York University
1998-9: Reader in the History of Art,
Courtauld Institute, University of London
1991-8: Lecturer in Classical and Early Christian Art,
Courtauld Institute.
1993-6: Co-ordinator of the MA Programme in Art Museum Studies,
Courtauld Institute.
1990-1: Junior Research Fellow, Jesus College, Cambridge

HONOURS

From 2009: Foreign Honorary Member,
American Academy of Arts and Sciences,
Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St, Cambridge,
MA 02138-1966, USA

From 2017: Fellow, British Academy

From 2019: Scientific Member, Max Planck Society for the
Advancement of Science

DEGREES:

- 1982-85: King's College, Cambridge -
B.A. Hons. in the Classical Tripos.
First Class in both Parts.
- 1986-87: Courtauld Institute of Art, London -
M.A. in Art History, with Distinction.
Dissertation, entitled *What is an Icon?*, supervised by Professor Robin Cormack. Awarded the Baynes Prize, 1988.
- 1987-90: King's College, Cambridge -
Ph.D. in Classical Art (degree taken in the Congregation of May 1991).
Thesis, entitled, *Art and the Roman Viewer: the Transformation of Art from Augustus to Justinian*, supervised by Prof. Mary Beard, Prof. Roger Ling and Prof. Keith Hopkins, examined by Prof. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Prof. Anthony Snodgrass. Awarded the Hellenic Foundation Sixth Annual Award, 1992, and the Hare Prize, 1993.

ACADEMIC HISTORY:

- King's College, Cambridge -
1982-85: Undergraduate student
1987-90: Postgraduate PhD. student
- Jesus College, Cambridge -
1990-91: Junior Research Fellow
- Harvard University -
1985- 86: Postgraduate student
- Courtauld Institute of Art, London -
1986-87: Postgraduate M.A. student
1991-98: Lecturer
1998-99: Reader
- Corpus Christi College, Oxford -
From 1999: Humfry Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Archaeology

PRIZES:

King's College, Cambridge -

Entrance Scholarship (1982), Senior Scholarship (1984), Cooke Prize (1983), Jasper Ridley Prize (1984), Richards Prize for Classics (1985).

Jesus College, Cambridge -

Junior Research Fellowship (1990).

Cambridge University -

Waddington Scholarship (1984), Henry Arthur Thomas Prize (1984), Hallam Prize (1984), Browne Medal for Latin verse epigram (1984), The Chancellor's Medal for proficiency in Classical learning (1985), H.M.Chadwick Grant (1987), Worts Travelling Scholars Grant (1987), Allen Scholarship (1989), Research Studentship, Henry Arthur Thoman Fund (1989), Jebb Fund Grant (1989), Hare Prize for a dissertation (1993).

Harvard University -

Frank Knox Memorial Fellowship (1985),
Teaching Fellowship in Ancient History and Art History (1985).

Courtauld Institute of Art -

Lucas Travel Award (1987).
Fellow of the Courtauld Institute (1999-2004)

London University -

Norman Hepburn Baynes Prize (1988).
Research Grant for a study of art and pilgrimage from the Irwin Fund of the Central Research Fund (1994)

Hellenic Foundation, London -

Sixth Annual Award for the best doctoral thesis in the United Kingdom in Ancient History and Archaeology (1992).

British Academy -

Research Studentship (1986)
Major Research Studentship (1987-8)
Overseas Conference Grant (1992).

British School at Rome -

Hugh Last Fellowship (1997)

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris -

Professeur invité (Maître des conférences) (1999-2000)

Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor -

Visiting Fellow and Visiting Professor (2000)

University of Chicago, Department of History of Art –

Visiting Professor (2003)

Princeton University, Humanities Council and the Classics Department –

Stewart Fellow (2007/8)

Dickinson College, Pennsylvania –

Roberts Lecturer (2008)

Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Center for European Studies –

Visiting Professor (2009/10)

Free University of Brussels, Humanities Division –

Professeur invité (2010)

UCLA, History of Art Department –

Distinguished Visiting Professor (2011)

University of Georgia, Athens, Art History Department –

Visiting Scholar (2011)

Humboldt University, Berlin –

Kosmos Fellow in Globalised Classics (2015-16)

University of Fribourg, Switzerland –

Visiting Professor of Art History (2019)

American Academy at Rome –

Lester K. Little Resident in Medieval Studies (2023)

GRANTS:

2011-13: Material Cultural Archives

Fell Fund, University of Oxford (£63,000) – two half time postdocs for 18 months each, PI with Prof Chris Gosden

2012-18: ‘Empires of Faith’

Leverhulme Trust: Visual art and the rise of religious iconography in Late Antiquity, 200-800 AD (£1.7 M) – 4 postdocs and 3 doctoral for 4 years each plus a curator and various curatorial secondments, between the British Museum and Wolfson College, Oxford, main research co-ordinator and PI. Outcomes including the exhibition *Imagining the Divine: Art and the Rise of the World Religions*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 19 October 2017 – 15 February 2018

2013-17: Heritage Environment Image Resource (HEIR) Project

David and Reva Logan Foundation (\$300,000) with matching funds from the Fell Fund (£100,000) and the Citizens’ Science Alliance (£50,000 in kind) and the Institute of Archaeology (accommodation), 2 half-time researchers for 4 years plus 1 full-time programmer for one year and other ad hoc support. PI. Outcomes including the exhibition *Sites and Images: The Archaeological Object*, OCAT Institute, Beijing, China, 15 September 2017 – 31 December 2017

PROJECTS:

Making Style: The Craft of Art History (funded by KHI Florence, from 2021)

Jesse Lockard (KHI) and Meekyung MacMurdie (University of Utah)

EXHIBITIONS:

Imagining the Divine: Art and the Rise of the World Religions, Ashmolean Museum, October 2017-February 2018, lead curator.

Sites and Images: The Archaeological Object, OCAT Institute, Beijing, China, September-December, 2017, lead curator

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

My teaching experience comprises the giving of supervisions, group classes and lectures at the Universities of Harvard, Cambridge, London, Oxford and Chicago.

My main speciality is the history of Graeco-Roman art and architecture, including early Christian and Byzantine art to 1000 AD. I have taught at all levels from undergraduate, via masters to doctoral, including numerous seminar courses in Chicago and MA courses at the Courtauld, as well as regular lecture courses in Oxford. Among the topics I have taught in

addition to my principal specialism are the history of Collecting from antiquity to the eighteenth century, the methodologies and historiography of art history, pilgrimage in antiquity and early Christianity, and issues in art and text including especially ekphrasis.

I have had a large number of doctoral students at the Courtauld Institute, Oxford University and Chicago, many of whom now occupy academic posts in the UK, Europe or the US. Their topics have ranged across the span of Graeco-Roman art, from the self-representation of artists and artisans in the arts of Classical Athens via various themes in the art and architecture of the eastern and western Roman empire and Late Antiquity to the reception of Classical sculpture in the German historiography following Winckelmann. Outside Classical art and its receptions, I have sat on dissertation committees in Chicago in areas that include medieval and early modern art history as well as pilgrimage studies in Anthropology, literary studies in Classics, and a number of themes in images and religion at the Divinity School.

EDITORIAL

Editorial Boards:

Art History 1995-2000

Journal of the History of Collections from January 1999.

Journeys: the International Journal of Travel and Travel-Writing, from October 1999

Maria: A Journal of Marian Studies, October 1999 – October 2004

Millennium: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr., from January 2004

Perspective: La revue de l'INHA, from October 2005

Images: A Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture, from October 2005

Oxford Art Journal, from January 2008

Classical Receptions Journal, from December 2008

The Classical Tradition (main editors: A. Grafton, G. Most, S. Settis), Cambridge, Mass. (Harvard University Press) 2010

Cambridge Classical Journal, from October 2012

RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, from October 2012

Word and Image, from June 2013

Journal of Roman Archaeology, from September 2020

Convivium, from January 2024

Journal of the International Ovidian Society, from March 2024

Learned Societies:

Council of the Roman Society (1999-2002)

Advisory Council of the Institute of Classical Studies (2000-2003).

Scientific Advisory Board, Max Planck Institute for the History of Art, Florence (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), 2012-2019.

British Academy: Section 11 (Art History and Music). Standing committee, from 2017. Chair from 2022

Oxford University: Management Committee of TORCH, the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, from 2021

Board of Governors of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, from 2022

Book Series

Greek Culture in the Roman World, a CUP monographs series. From 2001, founding editor with Sue Alcock, Simon Goldhill; now with Simon Goldhill, Constanze Güthenke and Michael Squire.

Ashgate Series on Pilgrimage a monograph series with Ashgate. From 2012-16, founding editor with Simon Coleman, Dee Dyas and John Eade.

Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism From 2016, with Simon Coleman, Ian Reader, Dee Dyas and John Eade.

Oxford Studies in Byzantium, OUP series, from June 2013.

Visual Conversations in Art and Archaeology, founding editor of OUP series of group volumes initially on comparative and global themes in antiquity, from January 2016

LECTURES, PAPERS AND SEMINARS in the last 5 years:

2020:

Jesus Goes East: Beyond the World of Christian Hegemony in Late Antiquity,

Zoom Seminar, Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florenz, March 2020

Entering the Gallery: The Proem of the Imagines of Philostratus, Zoom Classical Seminar, Oxford, April 2020

Visual Epitome in Late Antique Art, Yale University Late Antique and Medieval Seminar, by Zoom, September 2020

Rome, India, China: Comparison and Meaning in the Relief Sculpture of Late Ancient Eurasia, Annual UTM Classics Seminar, Toronto, by Zoom, September 2020

Icon and Narrative: The Amarāvātī Buddhapadas, University of Toronto, by Zoom, September 2020

Heavens, Utopias and Other Worlds in Late Ancient Eurasia – from the Roman Empire to India. International Symposium on Utopias in Art, Kyoto University, by Zoom, November 2020

2021:

Comparison and Meaning in Material Religion, Material Religion Classical Archaeology Seminar, Oxford. By Zoom. January 2021

Religion and Comparativity in the Visual Culture of Late Ancient Afro-Eurasia, Corso di Alta Formazione in La Tarda Antiquità, Università di Roma “La Sapienza”. By Zoom. February 2021

Archaeological Art History and Imaginative Restoration. Corpus Christi Classics Centre Lunchtime Seminar, Oxford. By Zoom. February 2021

The Dreamwork of Positivism: Archaeological Art History and the Imaginative Restoration of the Lost, Microscopias Seminar in Art History, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid. By Zoom. April 2021

Dover’s Art History, Kenneth Dover Centenary Conference, Corpus Christi College Oxford. September 2021

Jesus Goes to China: Early Christian Art outside the World of Christian Hegemony, Cambridge Late Antiquity Network Seminar (CLANS). Cambridge Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge. By Zoom. October 2021

Notes on Lucian’s Art History, Corpus Christi Seminar, Oxford. October 2021

Amarāvātī: Art and Buddhology, Buddhist Studies Seminar, University of Bristol, November 2021

2022:

Religion and Story-telling in Ancient Art between India and the West. Corpus Christi Seminar, January 2022

Archaeology and the City, Archeologia in città Conference, Luigi Rovati Foundation, Museo Etrusco di Milano, Milan, March 2022, by ZOOM

Rostovtzeff’s Dura. Dura-Europos Past and Present Conference, Yale University, April 2022

Visual Thinking in the Round. Art and Attention: An Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Chicago Art History Conference, April 2022

On Narrative and Comparativism: Between Late Ancient Buddhist Art and Early Christian Art. Franke Institute of Humanities Faculty Lunchtime Seminar, University of Chicago, April 2022

Imagery and Cosmology on the Drum Reliefs of Amaravati, Ancient Indian Art Colloquium, University of Chicago, April 2022

Presence, Absence and the Problems of Comparison: Archaeological Art History from Buddhism to Byzantium. 15th Nikos Stangos Memorial Lecture, University College London, June 2022

The Virtualities of Ekphrasis: The Poetic Series from Myron's Cow to Brueghel's Icarus, Ekphrasis: Ancient to Modern/Visual to Literary Conference, Durham and NUI Galway, June 2022, by Zoom.

Comparing Buddhist and Christian Art: Questions of Presence and Absence. Forging the image of the divine in Byzantine Christianity and Chinese Buddhism Conference, Vienna and Fudan Universities, by Zoom. June 2022.

Dover's Inch: The Art History of Greek Homosexuality, Classical Archaeology Seminar, University of Munich, Germany, July 2022

Lucian's Art History, Ekphrasis Seminar, University of Munich, Germany, July 2022

Art, Personification and Rhetoric: Pictorial Allegory through a Philostratean Lens (with Michael Squire) in *Reading across Divides: Imperial Allegory, its Cultural Contexts and Intermedial Entanglements* Classics Colloquium, Cambridge. September 2022

Ekphrasis, Classicism and Christian Poetics: Ausonius and Julian of Egypt on Myron's Cow, Late Roman Seminar, Classics Faculty, Oxford, October 2022

Myron's Cow Revisited: The Late Antique Ekphrastic Series in Ausonius and Julian of Egypt. Keynote paper to *Imago Imaginis* Conference, Basel Art History and Classics Departments, October 2022

Archaeological Fragments in Indian Buddhist and Byzantine Art: Some Problems of Comparison. Workshop on *Globalization in Visual Cultures* Leipzig, October 2022
Cosmography in the Stūpa at Amarāvātī, Workshop on Ancient Cosmographies, Cambridge University by Zoom, December 2022

2023:

Thoughts on Replication in Roman Art. RAVE Art History Workshop, University of Chicago, March 2023

Reflections on Replication in the Imagery of the Buddhist Stupa at Amaravati, Ancient Societies Workshop, University of Chicago, March 2023

Landscape and its Meanings in Roman Painting, Lennox Family Lecture, San Antonio Museum of Art and Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, March 2023

Making in Ancient Art, New Antiquity Conference, Bard Graduate Centre and Columbia University, New York, April 2023

Relief and the Sacred Monument: Entering the Space, Global Ancient Art Conference, University of Chicago, April 2023

Making the Space: Reliquary and Setting in a Florentine Church Vessels Beyond Containment Conference. KHI, Florence. June 2023

The Late Antique Ekphrastic Series: Material Theology or Myron's Cow Revisited, Creativity Under Constraint in Early Christianity Conference: Australian Catholic University, Rome. September 2023

The Beginnings of Christian Art, University of Dallas, Due Santi Rome Campus. November 2023

2024:

Amarāvātī: Cosmography of an Ancient Stūpa, Tibetan Graduate Student Seminar, Oriental Institute, Oxford, February 2024

Presence, Absence and the Problems of Comparativity: Archaeological Art History and the Imaginative Restoration of the Lost, Keynote Address, 'Between Image and Text', CRASIS Annual Meeting of Classics and Classical Archaeology, Groningen, February 2024

Helen Rosenau: Woman in Art, Conversation with Griselda Pollock, Jewish Book Week, London, March 2024

Image as Aggression in Courbet, The Uses of Hatred: A Symposium, Department of English, UCLA, March 2024

Rhetoric, Intermediality and Virtuality, Colloquium on Ancient Rhetoric: Spring 2024 Colloquium: Writing Histories of Greek and Roman Rhetoric, New York, online May 2024

Amarāvati: The Art of Indian Buddhism, Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence, May 2024

Myron's Cow in Late Antique Poetry, Joint Seminar on Late Antiquity between University of Pisa and Scuola Normale, Pisa, May 2024

Landscape, Meaning and the Place of Personification in Roman Painting, Scuola Normale, Pisa, May 2024

Classics and Materiality, with Michael Squire, in 'Language, Sexuality, Narrative: Classics and the Arts and Humanities: A Symposium in Honour of Simon Goldhill', Institute of Classical Studies, London, June 2024

Relief and the Sacred Monument, University College Dublin, Art History Department, September 2024

Veils and Curtains, Textiles and manuscripts workshop, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, September 2024

Amarāvati: Art and Buddhism in Ancient India, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, October 2024

The Foundations of the Faith: Classical, Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Sistine Chapel Frescoes before Michelangelo Sixtus' Sistine Chapel as Sensorium Conference, Australian Catholic University, Rome, October 2024

The Double-Sided Object: Reflections on the Sculptures of the Great Stupa at Amarāvati, Indian Art Circle, SOAS, London, November 2024

Amarāvati: Art and Buddhism in Ancient India, Ancient India & Iran Trust, Cambridge, November 2024

The Culture of the Cover: Curtains, Occlusion and Revelation in European Art, St Andrews Research Lecture in Art History, University of St Andrews, November 2024

The Crisis of Humanities in the Aftermath of World War II, The Idea of the University Conference, University of Chicago Conference, December 2024

2025

Curtains: Concealment and Revelation in European Viewing, The Renaissance and Early Modern Art Seminar, Trinity Hall Cambridge. February 2025

Community, Solidarity and Collective Engagement in the Fifteenth century Campaign to Paint the Sistine Chapel, Art of Community Conference, St John's College Oxford, March 2025

Cover and Curtain in European Medieval Art, Yale Lecture in Medieval Studies, Yale University, March 2025

Movement and the Monument: Inside the Processional Passage at the Amarāvati Stūpa, Global Ancient Art Conference, Chicago Art History Department, April 2025

Thinking with Images in Later Greek Epigram: Julian of Egypt on Myron's Cow, Thinking with Images in Later Greek Epigram Conference, Cornell University Art History and Classics Departments, April 2025

Amarāvātī: Art and Buddhism in Ancient India, Dean's Forum, Divinity School, University of Chicago, April 2025

The Double-Sided Object: Reflections on the Sculptures of the Great Stupa at Amarāvātī, After Rome and Further East Seminar, Oxford May 2025

Inventing Christian visuality in the realm of the dead: sarcophagus, catacomb and inscription in the Roman tombscape, International Conference on Christian Sarcophagi: Iconography, Textual Sources and Models, Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Rome, September 2025

Curtains and Art in European Culture, Kyoto University, Japan, September 2025

Curtains and the Art of the European Tradition: Concealment and Revelation Wakeda University, Japan, September 2025

Monument, Movement and the Ritual Body: Explorations in Ancient Indian, Roman and Greek Art Haynes Lecture, British Museum, October 2025

Between Historicism and Anachronism: Reflections on an Inescapable Dialectic in Art History, Art History and Historical Distance: Dialectics of Time, 1000–c.1550 conference, Dutch Art Historical Institute, Florence (NIKI), November 2025