

Tim Barringer, Slade Professor of Fine Art 2009-10

Welcome by the Head of Department, Dr Frank Salmon

This year sees the one hundred and fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Cambridge Slade Professorship of Fine Art by Felix Slade in 1869 and for the occasion we are especially fortunate to have attracted one of the world's foremost authorities on Victorian art and culture, Professor Tim Barringer, a graduate of Trinity Hall, who then studied at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York and at the University of Sussex, and who now holds the distinguished Paul Mellon Chair of the History of Art at Yale University.

I believe we are fortunate to have Professor Barringer back in Cambridge during a significant rite of passage in his intellectual life. Had you read the description he gave of himself on the Yale website a few months ago, it would have read something like: "everything Professor Barringer does is related in some way to John Ruskin and he cannot see that changing for the foreseeable future." Well, that phrase no longer survives on Tim's web profile and, if Ruskin (who, of course, founded Anglia Ruskin University as the Cambridge School of Art in 1858) were back in the city for this series of Slade Lectures, one can well imagine what he would have thought of the Sex Pistols' version of 'God Save the Queen' which, to judge from the image the professor has supplied for his lecture series, is to feature at its end! Whistler's audacity in "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face", as Ruskin infamously described the painter's 'Nocturne in Black and Gold', was as nothing compared to what Johnny Rotten and the record sleeve designer Jamie Reid did to the National Anthem and monarch's visage!

We are doubly pleased to have Professor Barringer here in that, like many great art historians of his generation, his work pushes at the boundaries of the discipline itself. Given the particular links between art and music in nineteenth-century aesthetic theory, there is much to anticipate in this forthcoming series and we are, of course, delighted to welcome colleagues and students from our sister Faculty of Music. Tim began his research on the subject of art and music in Victorian Britain with the benefit of a Getty Fellowship and has already co-curated an exhibition on the subject at Yale. These Slade Lectures are to be published as a book by Yale University Press. Tim is a musician himself, describing himself as a "stalwart" singer in Trinity Hall choir and CUMS chorus during his Cambridge years.

The lectures we are about to enjoy will all feature musical examples and consequently will be of full length. There will not be time for questions at the end of each, but Professor Barringer will be offering classes to students in the Department of History of Art at which the ideas he raises can be discussed further, and he can be contacted through the Department throughout the Michaelmas Term. Ladies and gentlemen, without further ado please join me in welcoming the Slade Professor of Fine Art for 2009-10, Tim Barringer.

