**Paul Crossley, Slade Professor of Fine Art 2011-12**

**Welcome by the Head of Department, Dr Frank Salmon**

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2011-12 Slade Professor of Fine Art, Paul Crossley. In taking up the Chair this year Paul is returning to his roots, since he was an undergraduate at Trinity College here in Cambridge and completed his PhD, on medieval architecture in Poland, here and in Krakow. His book on fourteenth-century Polish *Gothic Architecture in the Reign of Kasimir the Great* was published in 1985. Paul’s academic career has been spent at the University of Manchester, where he taught from 1971 until 1990, and then at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, from which he has recently retired as professor. Under his guidance and by his example, Manchester and the Courtauld have been two of the great powerhouses for the study of Gothic architecture for the past four decades, and Paul’s many pupils now fill equivalent positions in other university departments.

The Department of History of Art is therefore delighted to be welcoming back one of its own most distinguished alumni. In addition to the lectures that Professor Crossley will give over the next eight weeks, he will deliver four classes in the Department, thereby giving students a chance to discuss his ideas with him in greater depth. (I should mention that because of this, and by convention, there are no formal question and answer sessions after the lectures themselves.) Paul has taken, as the title for his Slade Lecture series, ‘The Gothic Cathedral: A New Heaven and a New Earth’. Over the next eight weeks he will seek to bring to bear for us the fruits of a lifetime’s thought about the Gothic cathedral as a cultural entity.

One of the milestones in that thinking was his exceptional work in revising Paul Frankl’s 1962 Pelican History of Art volume on *Gothic Architecture* for Yale University Press, published in 2001. In reviewing that new edition, Svetlana Alpers wrote: “The brilliance of Crossley’s edition is to make one realize that the problem of establishing a basis for visual attention to architecture is still with us”. Another reviewer commented that “Crossley’s updating of the notes alone makes [Frankl’s history] once again an exceptionally valuable book … [representing] … the most comprehensive and up to date historiography on Gothic architecture.”

It is clear, then, that we could have no better scholar to tell us how, in the early twenty-first century, we might regard the Gothic Cathedral. And, I might add for those of you who have not heard Professor Crossley speak before, we could have no better lecturer. I have a personal reason for being glad to welcome Paul to this Chair this evening, since my first academic position was as the sole lecturer in architectural history in the School of Architecture at the University of Manchester, when he was teaching in that University’s History of Art Department. On 30th September 1989 I was a Cambridge PhD student and the following day I was giving my first lecture in Manchester to a crowded theatre on the pyramids, Le Corbusier and just about all of the rest of architecture! There was no training in how to teach and I believe I was all at sea until Paul stepped in, generously offering to save me by giving five lectures on medieval architecture. I learned a great deal about the subject, of course, but I also saw a model of lecturing that I have ever since striven to emulate. There could be no more consummate professional than Paul at the art of conveying complex art-historical ideas with unalloyed enthusiasm and excitement. I know, therefore, that we are in for a very great treat over the next eight Mondays, and I ask you to join me now in welcoming the 2011-12 Slade Professor of Fine Art, Paul Crossley.