



**The Arts Society Henley
2026 Programme Details
Lectures**



**10:45am and 2:15pm at The Henley Rugby Club
Simultaneous Online Broadcast at 10.45am**

Thursday 15th January 2026

Banned: Savitsky and the Secret Hoard of Avant-Garde Art

Chris Aslan

Despite the flourishing of Russian avant-garde art during the first 30 years of the 20th Century, as Stalin rose to power, he banned all but Socialist Realist expressions of art. To own anything else was dangerous enough, but to collect it was unthinkable. And yet this is what Igor Savitsky did. He travelled throughout the Soviet Union, buying, bribing and cajoling until he had amassed the second largest collection of Russian avant-garde art in the world. Savitsky promoted Russian artists sent to Central Asia in exile and the works of the first Central Asian artists to paint their own people and landscapes. The State Museum of Karakalpakstan, situated near the south shores of the Aral Sea, is now a Mecca for art lovers.



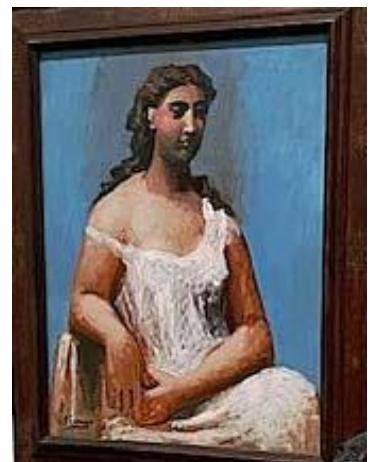
Chris Aslan is a writer and journalist who lived and worked in a number of Central European countries. He established a UNESCO workshop in Uzbekistan reviving 15th Century carpet designs and embroideries and later established a wood carving workshop in the world's largest walnut forest in Kyrgyzstan.

Thursday 19th February 2026

Picasso and his Women

Val Woodgate

Picasso told his biographer, John Richardson, that his work was like a diary – “To understand it, you have to see how it mirrors my life”. This lecture examines the way Picasso’s emotional life influenced what he painted and how he painted it. His response to each new love in his life can be seen in the different styles in which his many women were represented. When he fell out of love, that fact would be revealed first in his paintings. This lecture concentrates on the seven most important women in his life, two of whom he married.



Val Woodgate is currently a lecturer and guide at Tate Britain and Tate Modern, The Art Fund, National Trust, U3A and City of London libraries (Barbican and Guildhall). She is a member of the teaching team at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Her portfolio includes representing the Tate on P&O cruises, lectures at University of Cape Town and script writing for The Living Paintings Trust.

Thursday 19th March 2026

Edouard Manet and Music

Dr Lois Oliver

Music was a constant theme in Edouard Manet's life and art. His wife, Suzanne Leenhoff, was a gifted pianist, and regular musical soirées were held at the Manet family home. His pictures of musicians and their audiences range from major early canvases depicting itinerant gypsy musicians and Spanish dancers, through to paintings encompassing the full range of Parisian musical culture, from private performances to street entertainment, café concerts and the Paris Opera. Manet also designed cover illustrations for music composed by his friends.

Dr Lois Oliver is Professor in History of Art at the University of Notre Dame in London, Lecturer at Boston University London, and a Visiting Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute. She has worked as a Curator at the V&A, the National Gallery, and the Royal Academy. Lois is a keen violinist and plays regularly with Kensington Chamber Orchestra and the Endellion Festival Orchestra.



Thursday 16th April 2026: AGM at 10.30am, followed by 2 lectures:

1st lecture, commencing approximately 11.00am:

As If By Magic: The Secrets of Turner's Watercolour Techniques

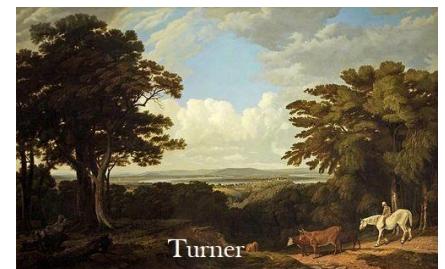
Nicola Moorby

J.M.W. Turner was arguably the greatest practitioner in watercolour the world has ever seen and his achievements still represent the benchmark for artists working today. Yet he left frustratingly few written records of his processes and was notoriously reticent about his methods. One brave soul apparently once asked him the key to being a successful artist and it is recorded that he rather grumpily replied "The only secret I have is damned hard work!". This lecture examines Turner's watercolour practice in detail, unlocking the mysteries behind his exceptional effects.



2nd lecture at 1.45pm: Turner versus Constable: The Great British Paint Off

This is the story of the alleged epic rivalry between the two giants of British art, J.M.W. Turner and John Constable. As unalike in background and temperament as their paintings were in style, these two creative geniuses transformed the art of landscape during the 19th Century. This lecture sets them head-to-head and examines their "signature" paints and how their differing approaches fared in the competitive arena of The Royal Academy. We also examine how they overcame



the technical challenge of sketching from nature, before witnessing the final showdown of their respective “showstoppers”. But who will ultimately be crowned star painter? As well as giving an overview of Turner and Constable, the subject provides an enjoyable overview of the British art world during the 19th Century.

Nicola Moorby is curator of British Art 1790 – 1850 at the Tate. She is an experienced lecturer and regularly teaches at The Courtauld Institute of Art. She has appeared on television and radio and is the author of “Turner and Constable: Art, Life, Landscape”, published in 2025.

Thursday 21st May 2026

The Port of Ostia – Rome’s Best Kept Secret?

Dr Sam Moorhead

About 18 miles west of Rome, at the mouth of the River Tiber, stand the impressive ruins of Ostia, Rome’s most important port. With wonderfully preserved streets, massive granaries and warehouses, tenement blocks, (the best anywhere in the Roman Empire), grand town houses, bath houses and taverns, it was a city bustling with activity, attracting people from all over the Empire. This is shown by temples dedicated to numerous gods and goddesses, including the oriental deities, Mithras, Cybele and Serapis. With many fine mosaics and wall paintings, the site rivals Pompeii and Herculaneum in its preservation.



Dr Sam Moorhead is the retired national finds advisor for Iron Age and Roman coins at the British Museum. He is an Honorary Lecturer at The Institute of Archaeology UCL. He has excavated widely in the Mediterranean and Britain. He was voted archaeologist of the year by readers of Current Archaeology and was awarded the Medal of the Royal Numismatic Society in 2019.

Thursday 18th June 2026

Wilde about Oscar: Famous for being Famous (and Infamous) 1854 - 1900

Simon Whitehouse

This lecture examines the extraordinary life and dramatic times of Oscar Wilde from his Irish roots to his days as a student at Oxford and his meteoric rise to the heights of celebrity. We travel with him to the United States and examine his starring role within the artistic and theatrical worlds of late 19th Century London. We visit his home in bohemian Chelsea and some of his favourite West End haunts. Finally, we learn how “Tired of being in the heights, he plunged into the depths” and became famous for being INfamous ...



Simon is a (recovering) actor, lecturer, presenter, Alexander Technique and voice teacher and award-winning London Blue Badge guide. He has worked as a guide lecturer in house at Shakespeare's Globe, the Royal Opera House, the BBC and the National Gallery, guiding both public and private tours.

Thursday 17th September 2026

Charles Rennie Mackintosh: More than just a Tea Room!

Stella Lyons

Did you know that when Charles Rennie Mackintosh died, his entire estate was valued at just £88?

Glaswegian-born Mackintosh, a designer, architect and artist, was the foremost Celtic exponent of Art Nouveau and had a considerable influence on European art. But he is an even more enigmatic figure today than when he was alive. Both Mackintosh's and his wife Margaret Macdonald's work has a distinctive character, one that captures the transition between the Victorian era and the Modern age. This talk will consider both Charles' and Margaret's life, work and legacy.



Stella Grace Lyons is a freelance Art History lecturer, speaker and writer. She spent a year studying Renaissance art in Italy at the British Institute of Florence and three months studying Venetian art in Venice. She also attended drawing classes at the prestigious Charles H. Cecil studios in Florence.

Thursday 15th October 2026

Exploring Handel's Messiah

Sandy Burnett

Handel's Messiah plays a central part in every Christmas celebration. The work has been a runaway success ever since its packed-out premiere in Dublin in 1742. Sandy examines Handel's revolutionary impact on Georgian music making, reflects on his brilliant librettist Charles Jennens, muses on performances over the years and celebrates Messiah's many unforgettable moments, not least the Hallelujah Chorus – just how did it become so famous?



Sandy Burnett combines broadcasting, performing and lecturing. After working as music director for the RSC, National Theatre and in London's West End, he spent a decade as one of the core team of presenters on BBC Radio 3. He is a highly sought after double bassist on the London jazz scene. and was appointed the Academy of Ancient Music's Hogwood Fellow for the 2018-19 season.



Thursday 19th November 2026

Ancient Egypt at the British Museum

Vicky Bailey

From pyramids to hidden tombs and pharaohs to mummies, uncover the stories behind the statues and the ways in which

the ancient Egyptians used art and hieroglyphs to ensure their survival into the Afterlife. Highlights include stories of how pharaohs gained power, myths and legends of the gods and goddesses and how cat scans have revealed health problems of the Egyptians and disasters in mummification!

Vicky Bailey became a London Blue Badge Tourist Guide in 2005, receiving an award as the 'Best Guide in Gallery Exams'. One of her main areas of interest is Ancient Egypt. She studied hieroglyphs and carried out volunteer work in the Egyptian department at the British Museum. She leads specialist tours at relevant sites across London and also delivers lectures on this subject. Highlights of her guiding career have included giving a talk on BBC Radio 4 about the execution site of Tyburn and writing a book on the British monarchy.

Thursday 10th December 2026

Snakes, Saints and Pawnbrokers: The Truth about Christmas

Dr Geri Parlby

Why do we bring a tree into our homes at Christmas? How did Santa become the patron saint of pawnbrokers and what has a snake got to do with it all? The truth about some of our Christmas traditions may surprise you.

Geri Parlby started as a news and investigative reporter via Mirror Group newspapers before becoming Head of Press for United International Pictures, handling major blockbuster publicity campaigns from Paramount, Universal, MGM & UA studios throughout the 1980s. She then set up her own London based film and video PR agency which she ran for eight years. Thereafter she studied for an MA in History of Art at the Courtauld Institute before gaining a theology PhD from the University of Roehampton. She has been lecturing worldwide for the past 18 years.



Special Interest Days 2026

10:30am – 3.30pm at The Henley Rugby Club

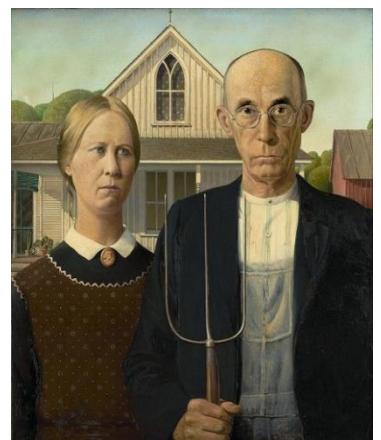
Thursday 5th February 2026

(Booking Thursday 11th December 2025)

The History of American Art in 25 Iconic Works

Dr Marie-Anne Mancio

Celebrating 250 years of American independence, we explore 25 iconic works of art, tracing the history of America through paintings, sculptures, land art and photography, including Grant Wood's 'American Gothic', Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother' and 'Hopper's 'Nighthawks''. These exemplify vital moments in American history like The Gold Rush, The Civil Rights Movement and more.



Dr Marie-Anne Mancio trained as an artist before gaining a DPhil in Art and Critical Theory from the University of Sussex. She has lectured in art history for the City Lit, Tate Modern, the Course, Art in London, V&A, Dulwich Picture Gallery, HENI films and Ben Uri gallery. She also runs art history study tours abroad for ACE and is a Director of InFems art collective for whom she curates exhibitions and writes.

Wednesday 6th May 2026

(Booking Thursday 19th March 2026)

She Loves You

The Music of the Sixties 1960-64

Steve King

By 1960 interest in rock 'n' roll had started to fade, its biggest star was moving on and a new generation of teenagers were seeking something different. It came in the form of the Beatles, who broke all the rules and all the records. This is the story of the 1960s, one of the most creative and innovative periods in the history of music, featuring all the major artists, important songs and principal musical genres.



Steve King has spent 35 years working in the radio industry as a broadcaster, programmer and events director. He has managed some of the biggest radio brands in the UK and has interviewed and worked with many well-known popular music artists. He has also directed over 50 multi-artist events at venues including the Royal Albert Hall, London Palladium and Manchester Arena.

Thursday 5th November 2026

(Booking Thursday 17th September 2026)

Sculpture from Epstein to Emin

Anna Moszynska

This day traces the exciting trajectory of British sculpture during the first half of the 20th Century, when British sculptors played a pioneering role. Considering "The Body as Place", we will look at the work of Antony Gormley, about whom Anna has written two books. Finally, contemporary sculpture and the public space will be examined through the works of Henry Moore, Anish Kapoor, Rachel Whiteread and others.



Anna Moszynska specialises in contemporary art. During the 1990s, she oversaw the development of the subject as the first Master's Degree at Sotheby's Institute. She has also taught at other institutions in London including The City Lit, the Royal Academy and Tate, as well as lecturing in cities ranging from Dubai to New York and Berlin to Sydney. She has written numerous catalogue essays on living artists, many of whom are women.

Day Visits 2026

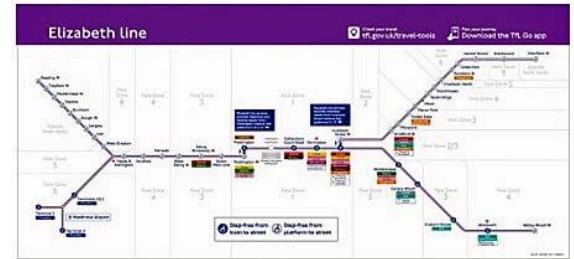
Please note that Day Visits require a good level of mobility as there is nearly always a fair degree of walking, often with steps and sometimes on uneven ground. (Please ask for more information if this is a concern).

Wednesday 25th March 2026

(Booking Thursday 15th January 2026)

Art and Architecture of the Elizabeth Line - A Walking Tour

Meet at Paddington Station at 10.30am. Join our two guides on this unique journey along London's newest underground development – The Elizabeth Line. Starting at 10.30am at Paddington station, we will be introduced to this cathedral of railways before descending into the new Elizabeth Line station, opened by Queen Elizabeth II, to take the train. Stopping off at Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road and Farringdon, we will hear about the engineering challenges, see the longest escalator in the world, discover art installations by Richard Wright and Douglas Gordon and look at artwork by Darren Almond. At Farringdon we will go topside for a unique introduction to the New Museum of London site before heading through the Barbican with exclusive access to the gardens. After two further stops our tour will finish at Canary Wharf where there are plenty of places to have lunch before taking the Elizabeth Line back to Paddington.



Tuesday 12th May 2026

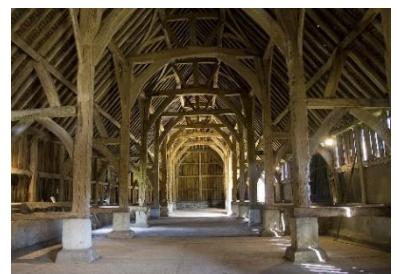
(Booking Thursday 19th March 2026)

Syon House and Harmondsworth Great Barn

Join us for a private tour of Syon House, the spectacular London Home of the Duke of Northumberland, designed by Robert Adam in 1762 and renowned for its glorious interior decoration, furniture and paintings. Syon House is set in a 200 acre park, partly designed by Capability Brown, which also contains the famous Great Conservatory. There is also a café, a restaurant, a wonderful garden centre, a butcher's and cheese shop to visit.



On our return journey we will have a private tour of Harmondsworth Great Barn. Built in 1462 by Winchester College and celebrating its sexcentenary in 2026, it is the largest timber-framed building in England and an outstanding example of medieval carpentry.



Wednesday 24th June 2026

(Booking Thursday 16th April 2026)

Compton Verney Art Fund Museum of the Year 2025 finalist, Compton Verney has a lovely art gallery in a Grade 1 Listed Georgian Mansion, with six permanent galleries and changing temporary exhibitions. The house is set in an informal sculpture park in a 120

acre garden designed by Capability Brown. We will have a private tour of some of the galleries with time on your own to explore the others or stroll about the lake and beautiful gardens. There is a lovely café for lunch, or the garden is an ideal place to enjoy a picnic.



Wednesday 7th October 2026
(Booking Thursday 17th September)

Behind the Scenes Tour of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Covent Garden

Join us on a magical journey through theatrical history at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, the oldest theatre in the world on the same site. Still in operation, it has a rich history spanning over three and a half centuries, hosting some of the most iconic productions and performers in British theatre. Nestled in the heart of Covent Garden, it has survived tragedy, fire, bankruptcy and even murder. Immerse yourself in the birthplace of the musical, modern pantomime, moving scenery, regular rehearsals and naturalistic acting, in this beautifully renovated theatre. Discover the origins of theatrical terms such as Crew, Props and Box Office. See the art works adorning the halls and stairways. Who knows, you may even get to see one of Drury Lane's famous ghosts! After the tour you will have time to have lunch in one of the many nearby restaurants and cafés and see some of the wonders of Covent Garden.



Holidays 2026

Our spring holiday to Glasgow will take place from Monday 27th April 2026 to Friday 1st May 2026, organised by Heritage Group Travel. Please email chloe@grouptravel.co.uk to send a written expression of interest.



Our autumn holiday to Portugal will take place from Monday 5th to Friday 9th October 2026, organised by Success Tours. For information please email enquiries@successtours.com or telephone Success Tours on 01225 764205. Details of both holidays are on our website.



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