



The Arts Society Henley

2025 Programme Details

Lectures



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

Thursday 16th January

Figures in the City: Picturing People in Post War London

Jo Walton

In the years after WW2 London was dark, grimy and gap-toothed by bomb damage. Yet alongside austerity and the frantic race to rebuild and refurbish, there was also enormous creativity and a longing for beauty and glamour. Young artists, such as Lucien Freud, John Craxton and John Minton were developing stark new styles of representing people, taking their inspiration from Surrealism, Expressionism and Romanticism.



Jo Walton has combined teaching and lecturing with a career in art book selling and has been a volunteer guide at both Tate Britain and Tate Modern. She is now a freelance lecturer for The Arts Society, The National Gallery, The Art Fund and local art societies.

Thursday 20th February

Lord Nuffield's Great Generosity to the Oxford Colleges

Liz Woolley

William Morris, Lord Nuffield, probably did more than any other individual to transform Oxford in the 20th century, physically, economically and socially. This talk looks specifically at Lord Nuffield's support of various Oxford colleges and the founding of the college which bears his name, Nuffield College.

Liz Woolley is a local historian specialising in aspects of the history of Oxfordshire and Oxford. She is an experienced speaker, guide, tutor, researcher and writer who is keen to help individuals and groups to enjoy finding out about the history of their local area.

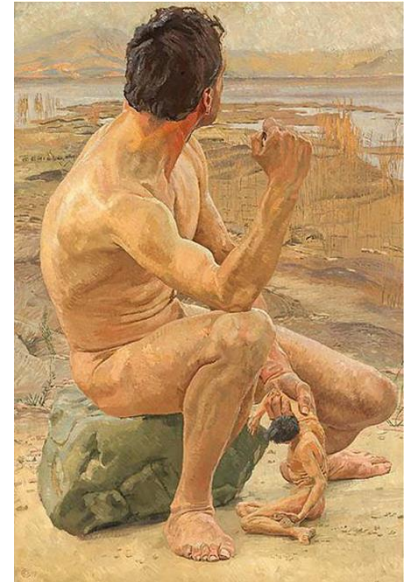


Thursday 20th March

The Fall into Knowledge: The Story of Prometheus and how his Plight has Captivated and Influenced Writers and Artists over the Years

Mary Sharp

Prometheus was a Titan who, according to Greek legend, created the human race and then famously incurred the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from the gods to preserve it. This lecture goes back to original sources to retell the story, explore the remarkable parallels with Adam and Eve and trace its influence from Reubens to Henry Moore and from Frankenstein, through Great Expectations to the Alien movies.



Mary Sharp is an experienced broadcaster and teacher with particular expertise in literature and drama. She has worked for many years for BBC Radio 4, latterly joining the senior management team as a Commissioning Editor. She now runs her own company which offers literature courses for adults.

Thursday 17th April

Persepolis: Art, Architecture and Ideology of the Persian Empire

James Renshaw

The Persian empire exploded into life during the middle of the 6th century BC and was the largest empire in the world for the next two centuries. In around 515, its third Great King, Darius I, commissioned the building of a new city, Persepolis, with his palace at its centre. What can this palace and its art tell us about the ideology of this extraordinary and influential empire?



Following a degree from Oxford University, James Renshaw has taught Classics since 1998. He currently teaches at Godolphin and Latymer in London. He has lectured for the V&A Academy and published a number of text books.

Thursday 15th May

British Art from Egg to Bacon

Lydia Bauman

This talk encompasses a hundred years of Art in Britain, from the Victorian Leopold Augustus Egg to Francis Bacon. Expect a tongue in cheek analysis of such popular British archetypes as the "stiff upper lip", "a nice cup of tea", "no sex we're British" and of course "the weather"!



Lydia Bauman has a BA in Fine Art and an MA in History of Art. She has divided her time between painting and exhibiting, as well as teaching at The National Gallery, and intermittently at The Tate Gallery and The National Portrait Gallery for more than 35 years. She delivers online lectures to her own group, Art for the Uninitiated.

Thursday 19th June

Soft Angelic Whispers: The Hidden History of the Medieval Harp

Sarah Deere-Jones

Illustrated with illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, wall paintings and with the aid of the many references there are in literature and household accounts of the time, Sarah reveals the hidden history of this delightful instrument and performs music and songs from medieval England on her own reproduction medieval harps.

Sarah Deere-Jones is a graduate and prize winner from The Royal Academy of Music and in 2015 was elected an Associate. She performs, writes and lectures about the harp worldwide both live and digitally.



Thursday 18th September

Hogarth at the Hustings: The Election Entertainment Series and the Birth of Political Satire

Rupert Dickens

At the root of the long British tradition of political satire is William Hogarth's Election Entertainment series of paintings and prints from the 1750s, setting the stage for later generations of satirists. We will look closely at the series, explain Hogarth's many jokes and references and reveal some themes with surprising topical relevance, from voter identification to the politics of immigration.



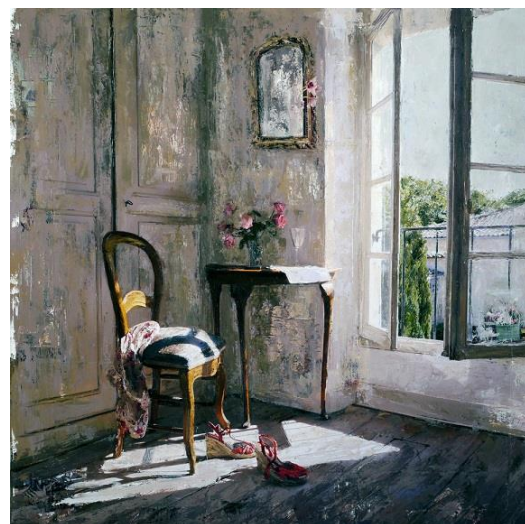
After 26 years as a BBC journalist, Rupert Dickens is now an Art Historian based in south London with a special interest in Dutch and Flemish 16th and 17th century painting. He works at The Wallace Collection as a guide and also as a tour director accompanying groups on art themed tours to European cities.

Thursday 16th October

The Empty Chair in Contemporary Art from van Gogh to Ai Weiwei

Angela Findlay

We all use chairs! But over the past 150 years, artists across the world have been using the humble chair as a conduit for profound ideas on themes from protest, absence and memory to domestic or everyday life. Starting with arguably the world's most famous empty chair by Vincent van Gogh, we move through 20th century Europe.



Angela Findlay is a professional artist, writer and freelance lecturer. She has a BA Hons in Fine Art, a Diploma in Artistic Therapy and her paintings have been widely exhibited both nationally and internationally. She is also a published author.

Thursday 20th November (post AGM)

A History of Inuit Art in the Canadian Arctic

Dr Henrietta Hammant

From religion to the environment, and colonial encounters to the power of the western art market, this talk explores the many interactions – expected and unexpected – that have shaped the history of Inuit Art in Canada. Drawing on collections in the UK and Canada, this talk will introduce you to the rich material heritage of the Canadian Arctic.



Dr Henrietta Hammant is a museum anthropologist with a love of the polar regions. She has worked in a variety of museums in the UK and Canada, including the Itsanitaq Museum in Churchill, Manitoba ('The Polar Bear Capital of the World') and the Polar Museum in Cambridge. She has recently completed a PhD in the anthropology of heritage, studying the impact of museum practice on the interpretation of Antarctic explorers of the 'Heroic Age'.

Thursday 11th December

Who is Santa Claus? Art from St Nicholas to Father Christmas

Chris Bradley

Nicholas was the Greek bishop of Myra, a 4th century port in Anatolia. Following his death, his legendary generosity established him as the principle gift-giving saint as well as the Patron Saint of Seafarers and Children. Over the centuries the image of St Nicholas changed until



the Dutch reinvented him as Sinterklaas. Later in the colonies in America he transformed into kindly Santa Claus, gradually emerging in Britain as Father Christmas.

Chris Bradley is an expert in the history of the Middle East and North Africa. He is a professional tour guide, lecturer, published author, photographer, film producer and camera man.

Special Interest Days 2025

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

Tuesday 11th March

(Booking Thursday 16th January)

Unravelling The Silk Road

Chris Aslan

Wool, cotton and silk have each played a crucial role in the history, economy, geography, politics and fashions of Central Asia and the wider world. The three lectures will look at the impact of each of these textiles - how they stratified wealth, displayed religious and political entrenchments and changed the fortunes of this fascinating area of the world.



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.

Friday 6th June

(Booking Thursday 17th April)

From Monochrome to Polychrome - How Colour Transformed the Art of Garden Design

Timothy Walker

Colour only became important in English gardens from the end of the 18th century. Prior to this, gardens worldwide were largely green. These three lectures propose that garden borders and contemporary paintings evolved along parallel lines in the last 150 years and will look at the relationship between fine art, gardening and science.



After training at Oxford Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Savill Garden, Windsor, Timothy Walker was Director of the Oxford Botanic Garden for 26 years. The garden has won many prestigious awards, leading to Timothy being elected a Fellow of the

Linnean Society of London. He is a tutor in plant biology at Somerville College, Oxford.

Thursday 6th November

(Booking Thursday 18th September)

I Know It So Well: Classical Musicals and their Inescapable Hit Songs

John Snelson

Stage musicals have been the source of some of our most well-known and lasting songs. Using sound, video and live performance at the piano, this day explores how those hit songs spread from the stage into shared culture. Included in this celebration of musical theatre on the stage and beyond are,

amongst others, Jerome Kern, Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lionel Bart, Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber.



John Snelson currently lectures at Goldsmiths College, London, having worked for 20 years at the Royal Opera House. His interest in musical theatre led to a PhD and many publications on the subject. He has especially studied the society and culture around musicals to reveal what makes them so appealing, enduring and important.

Day Visits 2025

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).

Monday 3rd March

(Booking Thursday 16th January)

Spencer House, London

A Private Palace in the Heart of St James's

Ever since its creation for the first Lord and Lady Spencer between 1756 & 1766, Spencer House has been widely admired as one of the most beautiful houses in London. The main façade overlooking Green Park is faced in Portland Stone and consists of a giant Doric Portico. The pediment is topped with statues of three gods – Ceres, Bacchus and Flora - resembling a classical temple dedicated to hospitality, love and the arts.

After a ten year restoration Spencer House was reopened in 1991 by Diana, Princess of Wales. It comprises eight magnificent, noble State Rooms, each with its own distinctive design, character and history.



Thursday 8th May

(Booking Thursday 20th March)

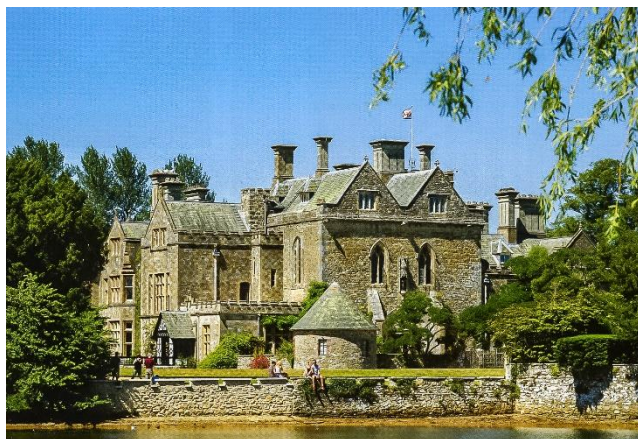
Beaulieu, Home of the Montagu Family So many treasures to explore

Overlooking the Beaulieu River millpond, **Palace House** has been in the Montagu family since 1538 and is now a rare example of a fine Victorian country house.

From the earliest motor carriages to classic family saloons, the world-famous **National Motor Museum** has one of the finest collections of cars, motorcycles and motoring memorabilia in the world.

The 800 year old tranquil **Abbey** is a conserved ruin. It was originally founded by King John in the 13th century before being destroyed on the orders of Henry VIII.

Beaulieu's **Clock House** is currently home to the UK's first dedicated Soviet Russian art gallery. This is a showcase for the Art Russe Foundation, founded by Ukrainian-born entrepreneur Andrey Filatov.



Thursday 17th July

(Booking Thursday 15th May)

Knole House, Kent A stunning house, full of treasures, owned by the same family for 400 years

One of the fifth largest properties in England, the house has seven acres of roof and 400 rooms. In the 1400s it was owned by the Archbishop of



Canterbury, thereafter a Royal Palace and latterly the Sackvilles' family home. From the beginning it was designed to impress, containing the rarest and most well preserved collections of Royal Stuart furniture, paintings, objects and textiles. The conservation department is also open for us to view their activities.

Wednesday 22nd October

(Booking Thursday 18th September)

Leighton and Sambourne Houses Ornate Studio-Homes of Two Victorian Artists: Two Victorian Wonders

Step into a painter's world in the house and studio that Frederick Leighton (1830-1896) built, lived and worked in. Gorgeously decorated and hung with many of his paintings, his home embodies the Victorian idea of how a great artist should live.

