

PROGRAMME OF SPEAKERS 2026 – 2027



THE ARTS
SOCIETY
BOWDON

Monday 21 September 2026

THE GENIUS OF RENE LALIQUE



Known as the 20th Century's greatest glass designer/entrepreneur, Lalique's work was unrivalled, combining his unique visual sense with a perfect understanding of glassmaking technologies. This talk is a visual feast, covering his early work in jewels and furniture before he dedicated the remainder of his life to glass, producing works that can now command tens of millions of pounds.

Andy McConnell. Has a lifelong experience of antiques and journalism. Published author he has also run Britain's largest antique & vintage glass gallery in Rye, Sussex. Best known as the glass specialist on BBC Antiques Roadshow.

Monday 19 October 2026

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM – SAVING MODERN ART



In 1948 Peggy Guggenheim dazzled and dismayed visitors at the Venice Biennale with her own collection of modern art. This lecture introduces her collecting practices and how she in no small part saved the history of European modernism from Nazi hands, and explores how her landmark curatorial practice laid the future foundations for contemporary art galleries and for the Venice Biennale.

Sarah Jaffray. Currently head of art history at City Lit, London's largest adult education college, formerly curator in the Department of Prints Drawings at the British Museum. Lead educator for the Bridget Riley Art Foundation.

Monday 16 November 2026

THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY – 950 YEARS OF PROPAGANDA, INTRIGUE & SPIN



One of the most outstanding cultural objects surviving from the Middle Ages and long admired for its vivid narrative, today it is the unanswered questions that most intrigue us. This lecture looks at both its creation and its amazing afterlife. Timothy brings a lifetime's interest in Anglo-French relations to bear on this famous object set to become even more celebrated as it enters its next, surprising chapter.

Timothy Wilcox. Writer, lecturer & exhibition curator. He has curated exhibitions at the British Museum, V & A and Tate amongst others. Contributes regularly to the educational programmes at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Lectures in Europe and the USA.

Monday 14 December 2026

A DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS



Was Charles Dickens 'The Man who Invented Christmas'? Although he celebrated Christmas in numerous of his works, it is his enduring masterpiece, 'A Christmas Carol' published 19th December 1843 which immortalised the spirit of Christmas Cheer.

Bertie Pearce. Honours degree in Drama from Manchester University and Diploma Internationale from the Ecole Internationale du Theatre, Jacques Lecoq. Member of the Magic Circle. Lecturer and performer.

Monday 18 January 2027

THE WHOLE ART OF THE BOOK



Why is the art of bookbinding itself, surely the most complex of all hand crafts, as beguiling and enchanting today as it was when invented on the banks of the Nile, 2,000 years ago? This lecture tells the fascinating story of everything that makes a traditional hand bound book.

Dominic Riley. Bookbinder, artist & teacher. Dominic first learned book binding from Benedictine Monks at Douai Abbey in Berkshire. He has worked at the V & A and binderies in London, New York and San Francisco. His work is mostly the restoration of antiquarian books, for collections worldwide, including the British Library, the John Rylands Library and the Bodleian Library.

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Monday 15 February 2027

THE BRUGES OF VAN EYCK & MEMLING



In its heyday a vibrant cosmopolitan trading centre attracting an international merchant clientele as well as the Burgundian rulers of the Netherlands, who patronised the great painters Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling. In this lecture, their masterpieces, interwoven with sculptures, illuminated manuscripts and the buildings of Bruges itself, conjure up life in this medieval metropolis.

Paula Nuttall. Specialist in Renaissance Italian and Northern European art on which she has published widely. Collaborator on major exhibitions, formerly Director of the V & A Medieval and Renaissance Year Course, has taught at the Courtauld Institute and the British Institute of Florence

Monday 15 March 2027

EASTER PRESENTS FROM FABERGE



The Easter eggs made by Fabergé for the Russian Imperial family rank amongst the most extravagant and wonderful examples of the goldsmith's art with their exquisite design & ingenuity. This lecture is a celebration of these great works and the techniques by which they were created. It also explores the wider context of how Easter was celebrated in orthodox Russia in the decades leading up to the Russian Revolution.

Claire Phillips. A Jewellery historian and former senior curator at the V & A. Published extensively on jewellery including the definitive account of the V & A's collection, contributor to definitive works on the jewellery of Tiffany for Yale University Press and on Chaumet's Tiaras for Thames & Hudson. Curator of the exhibition 'Bejewelled by Tiffany' at Somerset House.

19 April 2027

2027 – THIRTY YEARS ON FROM THE ROYAL ACADEMY 'SENSATION' EXHIBITION



In 1997, The Royal Academy of Arts took the world by storm curating an exhibition of contemporary art - mostly owned by Charles Saatchi. The Main Galleries were transformed for this landmark show, and it gathered much controversy. This lecture will assess its impact, the artists and their works and how the exhibition ultimately launched contemporary art into the mainstream.

Pamela Campbell-Johnston. 30 years of lecturing - 12 years with Royal Academy, specialist in Modern British Art and British Domestic Architecture. Worked with Bonhams, Art Loss Register and National Trust.

17 May 2027

THE BIRTH OF MODERNISM IN BRAZIL



This lecture focuses on the extraordinary contribution Brazilian artists have made to 20th Century modernism. Their work infuses international influences with distinctive and vibrant visual culture, fuelled by diverse identities and the unique landscape of South America's largest country.

Cindy Polemis. A Modern History degree from Oxford University and a Master's in History of Art from Birkbeck College. Lecturer and art guide at Tate Britain and Tate Modern, Trustee at the Museum of the Home formerly the Geffrye Museum. Cindy is particularly keen to draw parallels with art and social history.

21 June 2027

COSMONAUTS & COTTON PICKERS – SOVIET CENTRAL ASIAN MOSAICS & THE USE OF PUBLIC ART AS PROPAGANDA



This lecture explores the birth of the mosaic from its roots in Islamic mosaics and Communist propagandist posters through to the question of preservation in post-Soviet Central Asia. How did Soviet artists deal with the uncomfortable reality that Muslim Central Asia was a Russian colonial conquest?

Chris Aslan. Chris has led a peripatetic life - Turkey, Beirut, then Central Asia for 15 years, establishing a UNESCO workshop reviving 15th Century carpet designs and embroideries. Years in Tajikistan, training yak herders to comb their yaks for their cashmere down. Cambridge to write 'A Carpet Ride to Khiva'. He now writes from his home in North Cyprus, and he leads tours to Central Asia where a large part of his heart lies.